

SHADOWRUN

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DRAGONS

OF THE SIXTH WORLD™



WKGAMES

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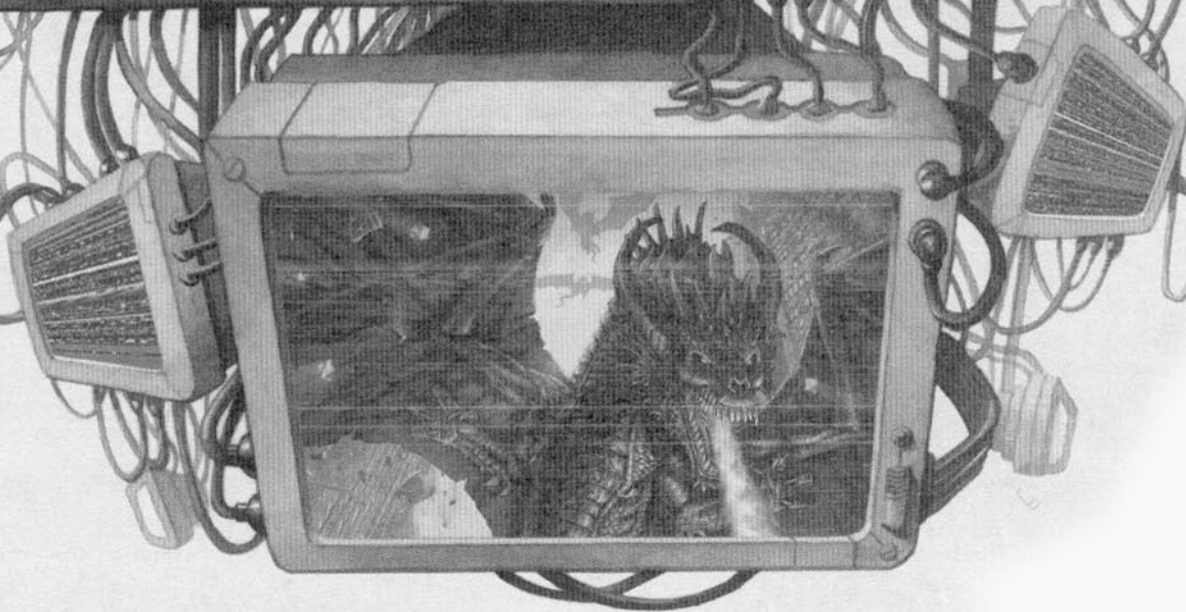
Man Yasso

DRAAGONS OF THE SIXTH WORLD



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INTRODUCTION



Dragons of the Sixth World looks into *Shadowrun*'s most dangerous and mysterious entities: dragons. In the wake of a titanic ritual designed to determine the future prospects of dragonkind (as described in the *Shadowrun* campaign *Survival of the Fittest*), the great dragons of the world are re-assessing their roles in world affairs, taking up new interests, creating new alliances and scoping out potential rivals. This book investigates ten of the most important great dragons and also reviews the impact of dragons in the shadows.

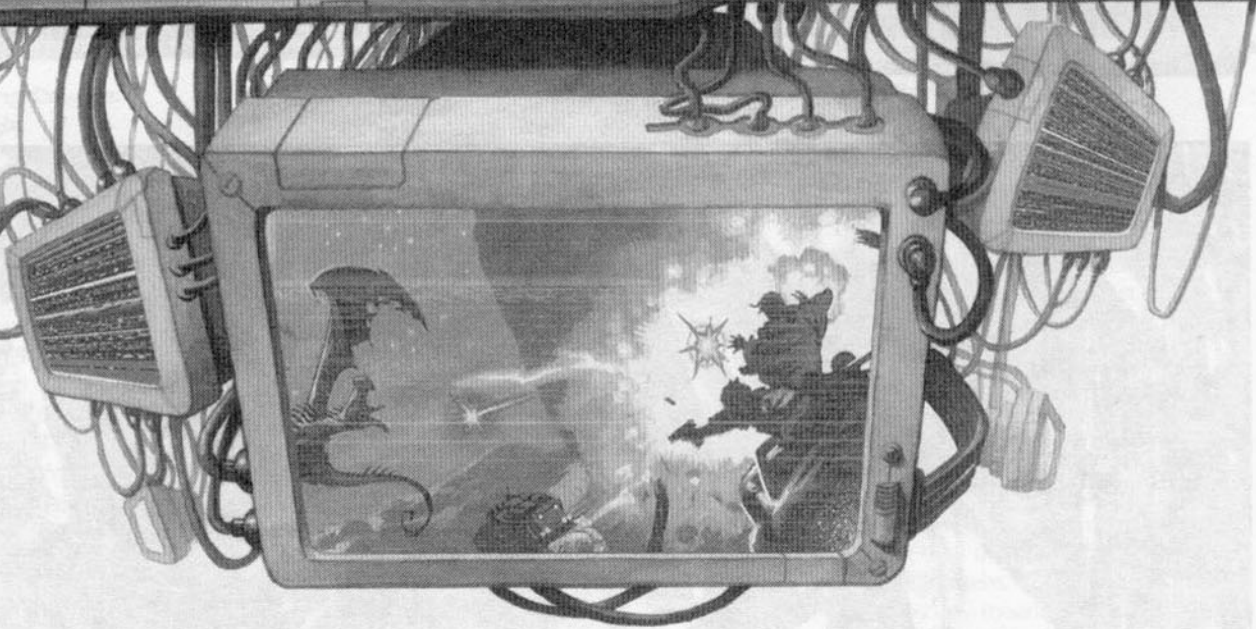
Dragons of the Sixth World is presented as a series of electronic documents posted by Captain Chaos, sysop of the vast Shadowland archive and data haven—the number one source for shadowrunners on what's going on in the world of *Shadowrun*. The documents come from a variety of sources, both underground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

the gamemaster to decide what information is correct and which is just filling, as appropriate to his or her game.

The first document, *Dragon Download*, provides a complete overview of dragon biology, life cycle, customs, servants and magic. These details are useful both for accurately portraying dragons as characters in your game and as plot hooks for potential adventures. The second section, *The Draco Foundation*, looks into the agency that carries out the wishes and agenda of the great dragon Dunkelzahn long after his death. Following these sections, ten great dragons are detailed in individual chapters, outlining their history, agendas, power bases, allies and enemies. A follow-up chapter, *A Nest of Serpents*, provides additional details on another sixteen dragons (adult and great), some of which are completely new to *Shadowrun*.

Wrapping it all up is a *Game Information* section that details dragon powers and provides advice for using dragons in gameplay, as well as incorporating them into standard and vehicle combat. Expanded rules are also given for the drakes that were originally introduced in *Threats 2*, including using drakes as player characters. Additional gamemaster details are also provided for the Draco Foundation and each of the ten great dragons previously discussed.

HERE THERE BE DRAGONS



Once upon a time, dragons used to sleep on a hoard of gold and gems in dank and gloomy caverns. In these modern times, however, the hoard is stock options and portfolios, the caverns are corporate boardrooms and the dragons are doing anything but sleeping.

Up until recently, most of dragonkind have operated below the radar. Sure, there have been some notable events where they wrecked entire cities or ran for president, but for the most part they move like a whisper in the forest. No one knows where they live, what they're doing, or why they're doing it. That means they use the shadows to disguise their tracks and deal with obstacles in that quiet tussle sort of way. In fact, wyrmkind may play the shadows better than any of us—how else are they going to get shadowrunners to deal with them?

In recent years, though, dragon activity has ratcheted up a few notches. More than ever we're seeing those reptile snouts on the newsfeeds as they take increasingly visible roles in world affairs. Where they used to pass through the shadows with barely a ripple, this past year we've been rocked by tsunami-like waves as they clashed. Some sort of draconic shadow-war was clearly raging, though no one can say for sure exactly what the prize was or who won.

I know some people that will point to this as proof that the great dragons are secretly running the world. But I disagree. Even Lofwyr has limitations, and I think it's more apt to view dragons as highly competent and influential creatures rather than seeing scaly talons behind every plot. To prove that point, I've assembled this collection of top-rate files to expose dragon activity and rip away the mystique. It focuses on ten of the most prominent great dragons, but also delves into the Draco Foundation and dragonkind in general. These files won't answer everything; in fact, they may just lead to more questions and conspiracies, but they should also help individual shadowrunners to get a better feel for what they're facing.

Despite all your precautions, I guarantee that if you stay in the shadows long enough, you will have to deal with a dragon eventually, like it or not. So take a peek at this collection before your turn with the wyrm comes, and you'll have a better chance of walking away intact.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 16 February 2063 at 08:20:00 (PST)

DRAGON DOWNLOAD



Dragons. Whether you consider them to be scaly Machiavellian puppet-masters, the shining saviors of metahumanity or something in between, there's no denying that wiz-wyrms are some of the primary movers and shakers in this world of ours. It may be difficult for "puny mortals" like us to understand the motivations and driving instincts of these overgrown and long-lived lizards, but every little bit of data helps. The following information may equip you enough to survive an encounter with a dragon—great, adult or newly hatched—should you ever be unfortunate enough to have one.

The file below comes to me from a friend close to the Draco Foundation. It's part of a document put together by the Foundation to help newly Awakened drakes get acquainted with their world and their erstwhile dragon masters (see the *Threats 2* file if you missed the info on drakes). It's a treasure trove of information about the wily wyrms, and one we're not likely to see again. Read it fast—I don't know how long it'll stay up.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 16 February 2063 at 08:28:38 (PST)

If you're reading this file, you've probably got a lot of questions. That's understandable—you've experienced some profound changes in a short time, and no doubt they haven't all been pleasant. We at the Draco Foundation are pleased that you have allowed us to help you, and that's why we've put together this guide.

As you no doubt know by now, drakes were originally created by great dragons as servants. We don't know how or when or why, but we do know that your kind has unique abilities. Many (but not all) dragons expect you to use these abilities on their behalf, as per their ancient customs and ways. Though you live in a more enlightened age today, your life is still inextricably tied to dragonkind, even if you should choose not to resume a traditional relationship with one.

• Frag that. Slavery went out of style centuries ago. No way am I going to live my life at the end of some lizard's leash. I'm grateful for the not-so-natural abilities, but I didn't sign any lifetime contracts for dragon duty.

• Drake



DRAGON TIMELINE

A few major events concerning dragons in the Sixth World.

2011: Ryumyo Awakens in Japan on December 24. Other dragons Awaken in years to follow.

2020: Aden razes Tehran in retaliation for jihad declared against Awakened.

2034: Hualpa, Surrug and another dragon lead an Awakened takeover of Brazil, establishing Amazonia.

2036: Lofwyr joins the Tir Tairngire Council of Princes and assumes control of Saeder-Krupp.

2042: Dunkelzahn begins "Wyrms Talk" trid show.

2057: Dunkelzahn runs for UCAS President, is elected and then assassinated on Inauguration Day. The Draco Foundation is established to administer his Last Will and Testament.

December, 2061–January, 2062: Ghostwalker appears through Dunkelzahn's astral rift, takes over Denver.

June 2062: Lofwyr and Nachtmeister duel over Frankfurt; Nachtmeister is killed.

July 2062: Lofwyr retires from Tir Council of Princes, Hestaby replaces him.

• Slavery is such a crude analogy. "Employment" is more apt. If one of the world's most well endowed entities offered you a full-time position with a luxurious salary, maximum benefits and undreamed-of perks, wouldn't you be a fool to turn it down? Surely such an offer deserves reconsideration ...

• Scale

In short, you need to know about dragons—their history, biology, customs and habits—in order to survive. While you might not be interested in them, they most certainly will be interested in you. In your case, what you don't know *will* hurt you, so read and learn. And good luck.

DRAGONS IN THE SIXTH WORLD

Dragons have been part of our modern world since the Awakening, when Ryumyo first scared the drek out of a trainload of passengers near Mt. Fuji in 2011. They've been with us a lot longer than that in spirit, though. A significant chunk of the world's major cultures have dragon legends that have persisted throughout history, despite the fact that the real deal has been asleep underground for thousands of years.

Just to hit a few highlights, dragon myths are prevalent in Chinese, Japanese, Scandinavian, Greek, Egyptian, African, Babylonian, Aztec, Mayan, Native American, Indian and European cultures—and that's just the start. Some cultures, such as those of the Far East, saw the dragon as a positive force—the benevolent harmony of matter and spirit. Others, like the Christian West, portrayed the serpent as an evil bringer of chaos and defiler of purity. Though the details dif-

fered, the basic idea was the same—a large, reptilian creature of enormous power and intelligence.

• Pre-Awakening, the prevailing theory for the pervasiveness of the dragon myth was that people were trying to make sense out of dinosaur bones. Of course, Ryumyo's Awakening kind of discredited that one.

• Professor

• Wait a minute—so that bit about sleeping dragons isn't just jetwash? They really were asleep all that time?

• Black-Eyed Susan

• That's the story they're telling. Supposedly they rise and fall with the cycles of magic—they're so magical that they can't function in times when the mana level is low, so they go into some sort of hibernation underground and wait it out. That's why they weren't around in the Fifth World, before the Awakening.

• Winterhawk

• So if we're in the Sixth World, does that mean there was a Fourth World and a Second World where dragons were around too?

• Brick

• It makes sense, but it seems like every time somebody brings up the question to one of them, they change the subject in a hurry.

• Wyrms Watcher

• Let's get back to this sleep thing again. So you're telling me that dragons could stay asleep for thousands of years, then just wake up and start business as usual? Even a creature as smart as one of them would take some ramp-up time to cope with a world this different, right?

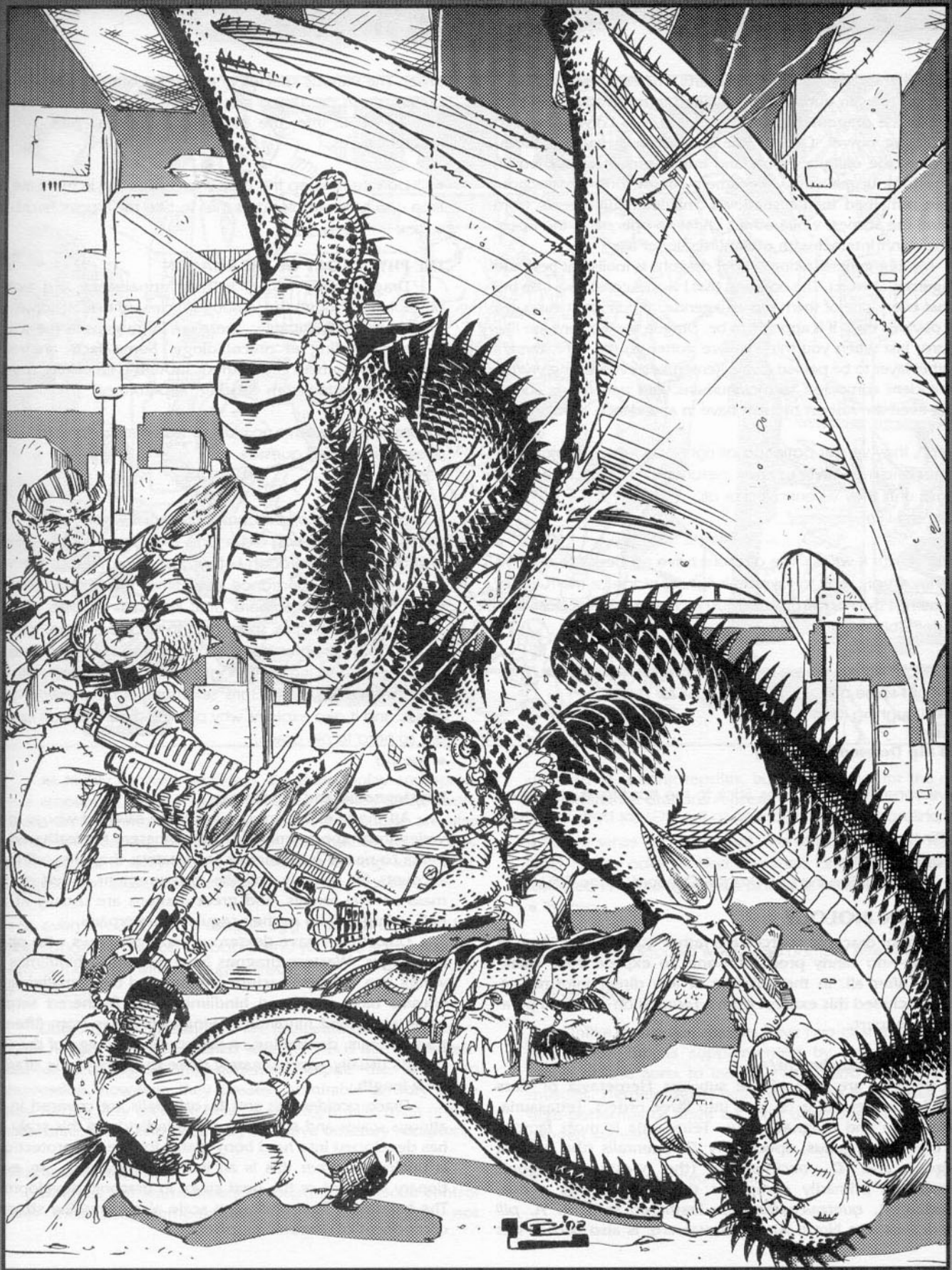
• Harker

• Again, they're not talking, but I heard a theory once that dragons don't sleep like we do; some parts of their minds are active even during hibernation. If this is true, maybe they use it to pick things up by telepathic osmosis while they're underground. It would explain a lot—like how they were able to function so quickly after their Awakenings. And if their astral forms can go traveling while their physical forms were in hibernation, that might explain all the dragon sightings and myths in the Fifth World.

• Wyrms Watcher

• For that matter, who's to say the dragons are giving us the whole story? Perhaps if they were disturbed, their physical forms might have occasionally been active as well. It's possible that some of those sightings were dragons nipping out for a tasty human snack before going back to sleep.

• Winterhawk





Like their historical counterparts, modern dragons have taken on roles in our society as varied in motivation and purpose as the dragons themselves. Some, like Lofwyr, focused on gaining power. Others, like Dunkelzahn, devoted themselves to the enlightenment and improvement of our world. Some took up causes while others sought only destruction. Some remained in the shadows, manipulating events from behind the scenes, while others chose to operate in the open. Some don't interact with metahumanity at all.

Making generalizations about dragons is foolish at best and dangerous at worst. The only one that I would consider a safe bet is that every one of them has an agenda, and in most cases it's not obvious even if it appears to be. Dragon motivations are like onions: just when you think you've gotten to the core, there's another layer to be peeled away. Remember, even young wyrms are ancient compared to metahumans, and patience is something even the rashest of them have in abundance.

- Yeah, they've got patience all right—patience to play their games and maneuver us lowly metahumans around like chess pieces until they've enslaved us all.
- Conspir-I-See
- You've got it wrong. The dragons have no desire to enslave us. They simply seek to take their rightful place as the rulers of the beings they have created, just as it was in times past.
- Sister Goldenhair
- *Cough* My my, where to begin? Frag, never mind. You'll figure it out some day.
- The Laughing Man

[8.8 Mp Deleted by Sysop]

- Everyone knows the rules. Stick to the hard facts, and keep the philosophizing and flaming to the SIGs (or better yet, take it offline).
- Captain Chaos
"Faithfully Serving Our Dragon Overlords Since 2051"

DRAGON BIOLOGY

Official draconic sources are rather quiet on the issue of anatomy—no canny predator wants to expose their weaknesses, after all. In the absence of any direct information, we've included this excerpt from a Foundation-affiliated parasitology expert.

//Begin File Attachment//

Dragons are part of the subclass Herpetavia of class Reptilia. Herpetavia is divided into three orders, Tetrasauria, Alatophidia and Magnavaranus. Tetrasauria is most famous for the *Draco* genus, specifically *D. orientalis* (the eastern dragon) and *D. occidentalis* (the western dragon). Alatophidia primarily comprises the *Alatuserpens* genus, including *A. quetzalcoatlus*, the feathered serpent. *A. pill americanus*, the North American wyvern, is also part of this

order. The various species of drake (firedrakes and icedrakes) previously in the *Draco* genus were more correctly reclassified in 2058 into the *Neovaranus* genus, part of order Magnavaranus.

- I'll be sure to keep the proper classification in mind the next time one of these bleeders tries to bite my friggin' head off.
- Slick

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF THE DRAGON

Dragons vary widely in their appearance and external physiology, though the various species do exhibit some common traits. Unfortunately, there are large gaps in the scientific understanding of dracobiology. Some facts are readily known, with others established through painstaking research and extrapolation from existing herpetology.

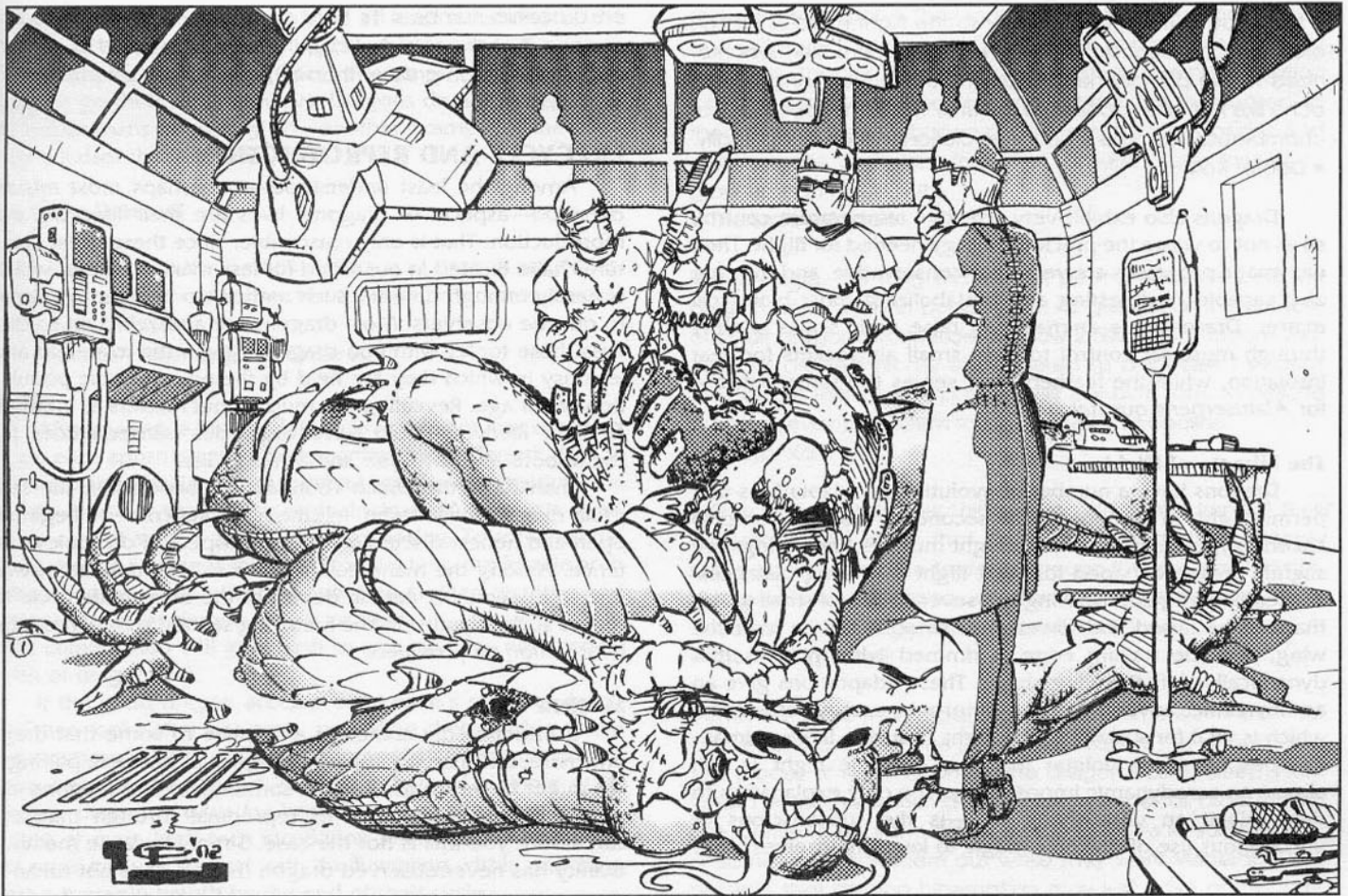
- Translation: we have no clue, so we've made a whole bunch of semi-educated guesses.
- Phage
- I was perusing various conspiracy hosts when I came across a little gem. Some slag did a forty-year comparison of images and data on the dragon Lofwyr, just to prove that the wyrm has changed appearance over time. The differences were small, but they were there. Stuff like shifting scale patterns, adjusting horn angles, spike growth and shrinkage, tail elongation and a brightening of his coloration. His theory was that dragons were so innately magical that they engaged in constant, subtle body structure self-manipulation. Pretty cool, I guess, and it also explains why physiological facts on dragons are so hard to pin down.
- Sascha

Physiognomy and Physiology

All the draconic species are large saurians whose length varies from approximately twenty meters for feathered serpents to nearly forty meters for western dragons; tail length accounts for roughly half the measurement. Adult dragons mass several tonnes, and great dragons are usually at least half as large again as their regular counterparts.

Draconiforms have dexterous and agile paws with opposable digits. Western dragons have forelimbs, hindlimbs and wings, the wingless eastern dragons and their smaller sirus cousins have fore- and hindlimbs, and feathered serpents have wings and hindlimbs. Wingspan varies from fifteen to thirty meters, depending on the species and age of the dragon; it's usually approximately three-quarters of the dragon's total length.

Draco occidentalis and *D. orientalis* are covered in keratinous scales and scutes; in some individuals this scaly coat has developed into hard bony plates for greater protection. It is unclear whether this is an individual variation, an evolutionary remnant or the next stage in draconic development. The keratinoid fiber of dragon scale also forms the structural component of draconic eggshells.



As highly evolved predators, dragons display an impressive amount of natural weaponry. They possess sharp teeth, talons and commonly a tail barb; many individuals are also armed with flaming or toxic breath. Information on draconic development is sadly incomplete, but herpetology knowledge suggests that these defenses may be present from birth.

- So even if you do find a dragon egg to adopt or sell off, the little fragger inside can probably rend you limb from limb anyway or roast you with a cough. Great.
- Manticore

Dragons, though sentient, are incapable of vocalization—it has not yet been determined whether this is due to anatomical or neurological impediments. Despite the barrier to expression, however, they possess admirable sensory faculties, having very accurate hearing and sight. Like most predators, dracoforms also have very sensitive olfactory receptors.

Draconic Metabolism

Dragons are warm-blooded, exerting metabolic control over their body temperature. This is rare, though not

unheard-of, among reptiles, but is necessary for the ecological dominance dragons represent.

- Makes sense. You need that kind of flexibility to be top of the food chain; cold-blooded creatures are too environmentally restricted. Herpetologists think dinosaurs were warm-blooded, too.
- Tanaka
- Being cold-blooded would also hamper effective flying ability.
- Doctor Karl

Unlike mammals, reptiles have two-chambered hearts. In dracoforms this is supplemented by an auxiliary cardiac pump on the aorta to increase the blood flow to the flight muscles. Herpetologists believe that this is essential to allow high-performance flight for long durations without suffering oxygen starvation.

- So dragons have two hearts?
- Twisted Sister



- Not exactly. The primary artery to the flight muscles has an area of highly contractile tissue with a “pacemaker” synchronized to the primary heartbeat. Without it, their wings would ache like hell after about five minutes’ flight. The reptilian two-chambered heart is a bit of an evolutionary handicap, really.
- Doctor Karl

Dragons also exhibit very effective temperature control, so as not to waste the precious energy needed for flight. Their enzymatic processes are very heat-conservative, and they are also capable of digesting and metabolizing most biological matter. Draco-genus animals can raise their scales slightly through muscular control to form small air pockets for heat insulation, while the feathery coat serves the same purpose for *Alatuserpens queztaoatlus*.

The Miracle of Flight

Dragons have a number of evolutionary adaptations that permit flight. In addition to the secondary vascular pump to speed oxygen transport in the flight muscles, their wings are slightly crescent-shaped for swift flight over long distances. The leading edge of the wing has several rows of small scales that can be raised and lowered to smooth airflow over the wing, and the trailing edge is rimmed with muscles that dynamically shift the wing shape. These adaptations give an aerodynamic advantage and improve energy efficiency, which is vital for sustaining the flight of such a large animal.

Despite these unique features, draconic flight is still almost an aerodynamic impossibility. The only explanation to date—albeit an unsatisfying one—is the subconscious or unconscious use of draconic magic to keep themselves aloft.

- No drek. I was in a dogfight with an eastern dragon once—you know, the kind of dragon that likes to snub gravity so much it doesn’t even have wings—and it pulled some aerial maneuvers that were simply aerodynamically impossible. I’m talking a full end-to-end vertical spin with a lateral roll while in a steep dive, just so it could bite the tail-rotor off my bird. Unbelievable.
- Spike

ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS

Dragons are very large predatory animals with an immense energy requirement to be able to sustain flight. The majority of this energy is obtained from animal protein, though dragons can subsist omnivorously if they must. It is understood that they generally hunt cattle and other large animals as live prey. To avoid ecological depletion, dragons tend to have a large hunting area they protect as their territory. Though we lack concrete information, it is assumed that draconic reproductive rates are relatively slow—given their long life expectancies—to avoid overpopulation.

//End File Attachment//

- In these modern times, when most meat proteins have been replaced by soy from our vast, bountiful soy-farms, there’s not that much livestock left for dragons to hunt. Without hard data

on draconic numbers it’s hard to be sure, but there’s a fair chance that the world’s ecosystems can’t support a dragon population much greater than at present.

- Tanaka

LIFECYCLE AND REPRODUCTION

Among the least understood—or perhaps *most misunderstood*—aspects of dragons’ lives are their lifecycle and reproduction. That is only reasonable, since these great creatures have existed in our world for less than a century, which is hardly enough time for such matters to become apparent to outside observers. Most dragons are also reluctant to discuss these topics with non-dragons, given the awe, fear and jealousy in which they are held by the non-draconic population of our age. Revealing too much about matters as intimate as their lifecycle could have disastrous consequences for them, both as individuals and as a species.

Thankfully, the Draco Foundation’s benefactor, the late great dragon Dunkelzahn, felt the time had come to begin an open and honest discussion of every aspect of draconic existence. Among the mandates he gave to the Foundation was one to disseminate certain details of the dragon life cycle to drakes such as yourself. The following section summarizes the information he provided.

MATING

It undoubtedly comes as a surprise to some that dragons mate. Because we see no examples of draconic pairings, we might be led to assume, as some have, that dragons are parthenogenetic creatures or reproduce through magic. I can assure you this is not the case. Simply because metahumanity has never observed dragon mating does not mean it does not occur, even in our present age, when dragons remain rare.

Unlike metahumanity, dragons view mating as a duty rather than a pastime. They do not obsess over it, but treat it with the solemnity it deserves. There is no “mating season;” female dragons may choose to mate and conceive at any time in their adult lives. They take this matter seriously and do not choose to conceive rashly or without good reason. To dragons, the continuation of the species is a sacred duty of their kind; it is not entered into lightly.

- Sounds to me like they’ve taken all the fun out of it.
- Bad Karma

When a female is ready to conceive, she seeks out an appropriate male, whom she deems worthy based on a range of attributes, most particularly intangibles like intelligence and wisdom. Unlike metahumans, physical attributes are less significant since all dragons are, by nature, remarkable physical specimens. It is these “higher” qualities that female dragons hope to pass on to their offspring, which is why they seek them out in potential mates.

If the chosen male agrees to the union, the two dragons may mate. The act itself takes some time, often days, and is easily mistaken by the uninitiated as combat, since it might



appear as such. I am certain that at least a handful of the reports of draconic “brawls” reported in the media were in fact examples of mating. Once the act is completed, the dragons go their separate ways. Dragons do not mate for life as metahumans frequently do—another example of the practical mindset that animates them.

[12.6 Mp Deleted]

- Ok, enough with the bestiality spam and dragon sex stories. Keep your dirty thoughts directed towards dirty crimes, please.
- Captain Chaos

“Faithfully Slaying Spam Since 2051”

EGGS

After mating, a female dragon lays three or four speckled eggs, each approximately thirty centimeters in length. Just as the male and female do not remain together after mating, the female does not tend to her eggs. Instead, she entrusts them to the care of a great dragon of her choosing. To convince the great dragon to accept this monumental task, the female both speaks highly of her offspring and their sterling qualities and praises the great dragon for his or her own, suggesting that their combination will give birth to a remarkable new generation of dragonkind.

If the great dragon accepts the female’s entreaty, he or she then looks after the eggs, providing them with a warm environment in which to grow, preferably a sandy pit hidden deep beneath the ground. Under the care of a single great dragon, dozens of eggs are kept warm by natural heat vents, magic or even high-tech incubation techniques. Over time, the eggs grow in concert with the hatchling within, reaching over a meter in length by the end of their cycle.

During incubation, the caretaker dragon telepathically communicates with the baby dragons, teaching and molding their minds before they even hatch. The magical influence of the caregiver over an egg is so great that a hatchling ultimately takes the physical form of its caregiver rather than its parents. Thus, all the eggs cared for by an eastern dragon, for example, will emerge as eastern dragons, even if the eggs come from western dragons or feathered serpents.

This little factoid has some interesting connotations. I suspect that most dragons don’t know or even care who their actual parents are. The egg caretaker is the primary figure for young dragons. This may explain why so many great dragons seem to have younger dragons working for them.

- Socio Pat
- Anyone know how long it takes a dragon egg to hatch?
- Inquisitor
- Why, you keeping one warm under your seat?

In all seriousness, no scientist has ever had a live one to study (well, no scientist that will admit to it). I happen to know that Universal Omnitech got hold of some egg shell fragments

(now there’s a story). They took a look at the keratinoid layers and estimated the egg had undergone almost a half-century of growth. That’s right, a full fifty years. There was no indication whether the beastie had hatched or been, ah, terminated, so theoretically the incubation period may be even longer. And metahumans complain that their children take forever to grow up and move out.

- The Smiling Bandit
- Interesting. This long maturation period certainly puts the dragon population in perspective. I’d guess that the number of adult dragons worldwide is below 2,500, which means that dragons are technically endangered as a species. I suspect their death rate also surpasses their low birth rate, so despite their longevity they seem to be a species in decline.
- Doctor Karl
- Don’t forget that their “hibernation” may also impact their survivability. We know that great dragons and presumably some adults were able to sleep through the low mana-cycle, but there’s no indication whether any eggs did. They may have lost an entire generation for all we know.
- The Smiling Bandit

They lost more than a generation. In my time working for first Dunkelzahn and then the Draco Foundation, I’ve picked up a few pieces of information on the dragon’s Long Sleep. From what I’ve put together, a significant number of dragons did not survive to hear the alarm clock go off. As in, something—or someone—took them out while they were vulnerable. It’s possible that dragon hibernation may just have an accompanying high casualty rate (a lot can happen in several centuries after all), but I got the distinct impression that foul play was at work.

- Jane-in-the-Box
- Janey, are you suggesting that someone has been around for as long as dragons have, murdering them in their sleep? You’re asking us to believe a lot here. Not only did someone have the gall and the capability to kill off dragons, but they also have been around for centuries and they knew where to find them? That’s pretty heavy stuff.
- Magister
- I’ll say. Too heavy to be true. I’d chalk those sleeping dragon deaths up to earthquakes, ice ages, oil drilling and things like that.
- Skeptic
- The down-cycle was just the beginning of the Great Hunt. The Awakening has flushed our prey from their hidey-holes. Soon our work will be complete.
- Son of Sigfried



• Crackpot alert. Chummer, if you're going to get cranked on this board, you have to share with the rest of us. Otherwise we're just not going to take you seriously.

• Slick

• I'm taking this seriously. As I suspect many of the dragons do.
• Jane-in-the-Box

• That must be why they're stockpiling eggs up in Madagascar.

• Vavoom

• Not that rumor again. Yeah, I've heard the stories, the tall tales from "Darkest Africa," but I don't believe them. There are too many pirates operating out of Madagascar to miss something like a dragon egg repository. Besides, you think the great dragons would let any metahumans know about it and live?

• Inquisitor

• Don't be so sure, mate. Madagascar's a messed up place. No one's lived there permanently for half a century and a lot of crazy stuff goes down in the interior. Who knows what's in the jungle?

• Down Under

• I know; I've just come back from Madagascar and I was lucky to make it back alive.

I can vouch for the truth of the rumored dragon egg repository. In fact, that's why we—my colleagues and I—went there in the first place. Why else would anyone go? VITAS practically killed off the island's entire population, and it's had a bad rep ever since. There are lots of stories of how wrong the place is and how some big nasty monster inhabits it. Until now, I never believed the stories myself.

The Malagasy—back when there were any—feared snakes. No surprise, considering how many of the things there are the island. Mind you, lots of places have snakes and the locals don't fear them half as much. Of course, those places don't have the Fanany either.

The Fanany's a local legend: a giant snake with seven horned heads, a bad temper and a taste for human flesh. Nobody ever took the legend seriously, but I can tell you the Fanany is no legend. I know; I've seen her. Yes, her.

You see, the Fanany's no ordinary snake. She's not even an extraordinary one—unless you consider a great dragon a snake and I certainly don't. Most of the rumors you've probably heard are just that, but the rumors about dragon eggs are true. Deep within a cave system that makes Anjohibe look like just another hole in the ground is the mythical home of the world's dragon eggs, watched over by a female dragon I'm calling the Fanany.

• Uhuru

• Anjohibe?

• Haring Ibon

• It's a giant cave on the west coast of Madagascar. Very impressive.

• Down Under

• Hey, Uhuru, tall dragon tales are two SIGs over, next to Urban Legends. Go spew your buldrek where it will at least be appreciated as art.

• Skeptic

• Frag that. There's proof.

I trust you'll understand if I don't explain the precise details of who hired us or how they knew just where to look for the eggs. Suffice it to say that we were hired by someone whose uncannily accurate information allowed us to get close—closer than any metahuman has ever been. Admittedly, I didn't go into the caves myself, but I viewed my colleagues' simrig transmissions, so I saw everything.

We were sent in to retrieve a single egg. What my colleagues found was a magically heated chamber with dozens—maybe hundreds—of eggs. And there were other chambers they only got a glimpse of.

Make no mistake, friends. The dragons are not in any danger of extinction. Not unless someone carries a nuke down there. But they'll have to deal with the great feathered serpent guardian—Fanany—that killed my friends. And who's to say there aren't other depositories just like it?

• Uhuru

• Drekl You think they're creating some kind of dragon army or something down there?

• Tomtom

• Well, it's going to take fifty plus years for that dragon army to hatch, so you've got time to stop it and save the world. Chop chop. Maybe that will keep all you conspiracy nuts off the boards for awhile.

• Bung

• Except that we don't know how long those eggs have been stewing for, do we? I have a bad feeling about this. What if the dragons are using magic or technology to speed-grow the next generation in those caves? We may see a dragon population explosion overnight!

• Bad Karma

• Uhuru, you say there's proof? Sim recordings? I'm interested. What's the asking price?

• Dragonslayer

• The price is that you get to risk your own neck. There are recordings, but I stashed 'em in a secure hiding spot with the



rest of my gear before I cut and ran. I didn't want anything slowing me down on the hike out. There's no way I'm going back there, but I'll gladly sell you the coordinates.

• Uhuru

• Brilliant! I haven't seen such a well-crafted scheme for misdirection in years. Such ingenuity brings a tear to my eye.

• The Laughing Man

BIRTH AND GROWTH

At birth, dragons are over three and a half meters in length and look very much like winged serpents. They lack forelimbs, but they do possess a pair of stubby hind legs. Their tails also end in wicked, poisonous barbs.

Many hatchlings do not survive birth as the process of breaking through the hard shell of their eggs is quite difficult. The young dragons use their fiery breath inside the eggs, weakening the walls sufficiently to allow them to break through. If the hatchling does not do this properly, it may accidentally cook itself alive rather than escape the egg.

• You think that's bad. I've heard that hatchlings sometimes eat their brothers and sisters who don't make it out of their

shells. Now, admittedly, I've never seen this. I mean, who has? But if it's true, it sure does make me a lot less inclined to ever trust a dragon—not that I was ever all that keen to begin with.

• Miss Tick

From birth, dragons are far from helpless. Though it takes time for them to learn to fly and hunt, hatchlings are quite adept at most other basic tasks from a very young age. Indeed, instructing the hatchlings is one of the most important tasks that their caregiver performs, since it is from them that they learn the rudiments of draconic life.

By "draconic life," I mean a wide variety of things, not simply instinctual matters such as the capture of prey or even the use of magic (which is an innate ability rather than a learned one). Included among the lessons are the elements of dragon society: traditions, customs and etiquette. In many ways, these lessons are far more important to the growth and development of a dragon than anything else, since they ensure its survival among its fellows in the wider world. Dragon society depends heavily on each generation knowing and abiding by the traditions of their elders. Without such stability, who knows what might result?



- Great. I always suspected that dragons were a bunch of authoritarian jerks. You gotta love a universe where no matter where you go, you're surrounded by a bunch of fascist morons who use "tradition" to keep the youth in line. And here I thought dragons might have been enlightened creatures with ages of wisdom guiding them.
- Dogface Joe

- Aren't they? That's the lesson I'm getting out of this propaganda. Looks to me like the DF is trying to convince us that we should all just accept our minor place in the world and bow down before the dragons in humble servitude.
- Vavoom

By metahuman standards, dragon growth is simultaneously very slow and very fast. It is slow in that it takes an exceptionally long time—several centuries—before a dragon reaches true physical and mental adulthood. At the same time, a young or adolescent dragon remains a remarkably powerful creature capable of wreaking great carnage if provoked.

To an outsider, it is difficult to distinguish young dragons from adolescent ones. Size is a great indicator of age, but that might not be obvious to the uninitiated. A better indicator, perhaps, is mental state. Adolescent dragons are more irrational and obsessive than their younger counterparts. They are as territorial as adults but lack the judgment and wisdom of their elders. Consequently, they engage in petty bickering with other dragons, take offense at minor slights and lose control of their tempers quite easily, exploding in destructive tantrums.

- Fantastic. Sullen teen dragons with raging hormone problems. Do they steal from daddy's hoard and skip firebreathing lessons too?
- Nacht
- Why haven't we seen any examples of these rampages? It's not exactly the kind of thing you could hide real well.
- Inquisitor
- Maybe there aren't any young dragons around—just the big boys left over from the last time the wheel turned.
- Miss Tick

ADULTHOOD

If an adolescent dragon survives—and many do not—he will return to his place of hatching and prepare for adulthood. After a period of metamorphosis, the adult dragon assumes one of the forms we are all familiar with, gaining the forelimbs and other characteristics that adolescents lack. The process of change is a slow and difficult one that partly relies on the dragon's magical ability. If successful, the dragon emerges as a fully-grown member of his species, ready to take his place in draconic society.

- Maybe this is a crazy thought, but couldn't wyverns be dragons who never grew up? They sure look like adolescent dragons.
- Bad Karma

- I used to think the same thing, BK, but I'm not so sure anymore. I met this elf in Britain who insisted this theory was totally off base. He believed wyverns were something wholly different, kind of draconic equivalents to apes—superficially similar to dragons but really an entirely different species.
- MoJo PoJo

- I'm with MoJo on this one too. A couple of months back, I made a run investigating a supposedly abandoned dragon's lair. Yeah, I know, but the money was good. Real good. Turns out the lair wasn't exactly abandoned. There was no physical sign of the dragon, but there was some really weird presence on the astral plane—some sort of astral "cocoon." I'm not sure, but I think the dragon might have been wrapped up inside of it—or at least, the dragon's astral form. I have no idea where its body went.

Anyway, I think the dragon in that cocoon was transforming into something else—maybe an adult? Perhaps that's what our friend here means when he says growing up uses a dragon's magical ability. If he's right, I can't see how wyverns can be immature dragons at all.

- Bruce Tzu
- So dragons are like—what?—giant butterflies or something? Yeah, right.
- Bad Karma

Once an adult, a dragon is no longer under the authority of his caregiver and may act as he pleases. He establishes his own lair and may choose to mate to produce the next generation of dragons. Naturally, adult dragons continue to hone their physical, mental and magical abilities, becoming epitomes of the draconic form. Adult dragons are dangerous creatures and not to be trifled with. Their power and influence is greater than that of all but a handful of other beings in our world. Metahumans would be wise to avoid getting in their way unless absolutely necessary.

- You sure this guy works for DF? Sounds more like a flak for Lofwyr, if you ask me.
- Dogface Joe

GREAT DRAGONS AND DEATH

As you undoubtedly know, dragons have immensely long lifespans. How long a dragon may live is unknown. It is probable that, like metahumans, dragons have no set lifespan, but rather a typical length that certain individuals can exceed if they are both cunning and lucky.

Dragons certainly live centuries at the least. Those who live exceedingly long become great dragons. Though it appears to outsiders that a great dragon is simply a very



long-lived and powerful dragon, the truth is more complex. In fact, a great dragon is another stage of draconic life, as different in some ways from adulthood as adulthood is from adolescence. How a dragon becomes a great dragon is a matter of conjecture even at the Draco Foundation. It is an area in which our benefactor's bequest to us was lacking. We continue to investigate the matter in the name of science.

- Ah, science—always a good excuse for sketchy behavior.
- Vavoom

Eventually, all things die, even dragons. Again, we have no clear sense of how long a dragon may live before death claims him. It is likely that the span of time is probably numbered in millennia rather than centuries. In this respect, they are no different than you or I—a comforting thought in an odd way. All beings are ultimately united in the certainty of death, no matter how powerful they were in life.

- If great dragons get old and die too, why don't we see any decrepit geezer reptiles hobbling around? How can we be sure they aren't pretending to be mortal just so we don't get worried?
- Dogface Joe
- Chummer, whenever I think of dragons, I am worried.
- Dragonslayer

CULTURE AND TRADITION

If you haven't been paying much attention so far, this is the time to start. Some of the information you'll learn in this section might very well save your life, so you'd be wise to take note. Dragons are notoriously contentious creatures; knowing the right ways to deal with them could make the difference between a good working relationship and ending up on the wrong end of the food chain.

MIND YOUR MANNERS

Dragons, even some of the less traditional of their kind, are obsessed with etiquette. Their entire society is based on it. No wonder: when you've got a collection of huge, carnivorous, magic-wielding beings all looking out for their individual interests, rules are a necessity; otherwise, you'd be safer putting a few hundred kilos of TNT in a room and lighting a match. Many people have speculated over the years why there isn't more conflict over territory and circles of influence between the world's great dragons; this is the reason.

Dragon etiquette rules are carefully designed to acknowledge the pecking order while avoiding behavior that could lead to aggression or conflict. Each dragon accords other dragons the proper respect while carefully sidestepping anything that could be viewed as a challenge. Metahumanity sees few examples of these rules in action because the dragons don't extend the same level of courtesy to what they call "the young races." These rituals of etiquette also extend to matters of spirituality, magic and life and death. The "Dance of Death" that several dragons performed when Dunkelzahn

died is one of these, though it didn't show up on film so we're forced to rely on eyewitness accounts. Dragons have rituals for greeting, parting, mating, the raising of young, communication, conflict resolution and just about everything in between.

- Some dragons are more hung up on this than others, of course. I doubt Dunkelzahn would have gotten more than mildly irritated at not being referred to in the right way, but some of the more traditional dragons like Lung and Mujaji are another story.
- Wyrn Watcher
- One thing not mentioned here is that dragons don't refer to themselves by their "real" names. They would never call each other "Lofwyr" or "Hestaby," for example, as this familiarity would be considered a grave insult. Instead, they use more indirect names when addressing each other and even when referring to each other to third parties. For example, Hestaby is called "Orange Queen."
- Eyebright
- You mean the Orange Queen who posts around here sometimes is—?
- Prole
- You were expecting Anita Bryant?
- Orange Queen

I could write a whole book on the finer points of dragon etiquette, but let me just bring up one more thing before we move on: the concept of the Loremaster. Dragons don't have much of a written language, and they don't produce books. Instead, they keep their accumulated knowledge in magical gems called "memory crystals," which, to put it crudely, are kind of like modern day memory chips. All dragons have some of these but there's always one dragon who is responsible for keeping the store of knowledge for all of dragonkind. This dragon is given the formal title of Loremaster. Why am I telling you this? Because it was at the center of a big shake-up in the dragon ranks over the past year. See, the Loremaster for this age was none other than Dunkelzahn, and when he died, the way he chose to pass on the title was unorthodox, to put it mildly. Everything was fine until Ghostwalker showed up—then he decided the traditions should be upheld, so most of the great dragons got together to fight over the right to claim the title.

- So who won?
- Holly
- They didn't exactly print the box scores in the Seattle Intelligencer, but my money goes on Lofwyr.
- Hangfire



- I hope you didn't bet the rent.
- Orange Queen

DRAGON COMMUNICATION

Dragons communicate with each other and with the world in much the same way metahumans do—they use the Matrix, telecom, fax and other products of our modern technology. As necessary, they also make use of spirit messengers and astral projection. Because they can't speak directly to metahumans, they generally rely on interpreters to convey their thoughts, the most famous of these interpreters being our very own Vice President, Nadja Daviar.

- So it's true that dragons can't talk at all? That seems pretty limiting for creatures as powerful as they are.
- Hairy Houdini
- They can't speak like we do because they don't have the vocal apparatus to do it. They can magically vocalize and they can speak telepathically, which is what they do with the interpreters. But that doesn't work over electronic channels, plus it tends to freak people out if they're not used to it. It works better to find some attractive, charismatic metahuman to be their mouthpiece.
- Jane-in-the-Box
- Believe me, that dragon telepathy stuff can be pretty unnerving—they're not just talking to you, they're picking stuff up from your mind while they do it. It's almost like a mind probe, but a lot subtler.
- DragonIX
- You mean the wyrms can read our private thoughts? That's all we need ...
- Dragonslayer
- It's okay, Dragonslayer—just keep your tinfoil hat on and you'll be just fine.
- Class Clown

Wymr in the Machine: Dragons and the Matrix

Almost all dragons use the Matrix, even if it's only to send the occasional email or check up on their stock holdings. Some of the more progressively minded wyrms rely on it heavily.

- Aside from the late, great Big D, only a few other dragons have pursued a strong Matrix presence. Some, like Hestaby and Celedyr, have made "personal" appearances on Shadowland and other data havens. I've also heard about a youngster named Eliohann who's making some big waves.
- FastJack

Dragons don't take to datajacks well, but they can access Matrix information in a number of effective ways even without the implants. The most common method is to assume human form and use a trode rig, though I've heard rumors of dragon-size rigs for those wyrms who don't like to (or can't) change form. Dragons can also telepathically "ride" or possess metahuman deckers, using them to get the job done.

Body Language

The subtlest aspect of dragon communication is one that most people overlook: body language. Perhaps due to their size and the fact that their faces are not as expressive, dragons have evolved a complex "language" of postures and poses that indicate everything from agreement to submission to challenge. If you ever get the opportunity to see two or more dragons together in their true forms, watch for this. If you know what you're looking for, you can infer more about the dragons' relationships by their postures than by their words.

- Interesting. A bit like different types of bows in Asian cultures.
- Li
- And also a bit like kinesics—the reading of "tells" (subconscious human behavior) to determine emotional state. Who needs an Analyze Truth spell when you can tell a fragger is lying because of the way he sits and the nervous gestures he makes? I have no doubt that dragons are smart enough to note these things.
- Social Adept
- Hey, is there any truth to this rumor I heard about a dragon gathering? Do the wiz-worms ever get together for a big party, to socialize and have some draconic face time? I've always gotten the impression they can't stand each other's company too much. Was someone pulling my leg?
- Random
- Not necessarily. I doubt they feel the need to socialize, but I could see them gathering to discuss matters of major importance. If the dragons hold meetings like this, you can be sure they don't invite metahumans to them. I'd think that they're too territorial to gather in one dragon's domain, so they must have designated "neutral spots." I suspect that they'd gather in astral form too, rather than physical, to cut down on the temptation to jump on and eat each other. They probably wouldn't do it often simply because it's not practical to gather all the greats together in one place—the scheduling conflicts alone are intimidating.
- Jane-in-the-Box
- Impractical, sure—and also a security nightmare. Can you imagine what would happen if somebody managed to drop a tac-nuke on an assembly of most of the world's dragons?
- Hangfire



- I'd call that a good start.
- Dragonslayer

HOARDING

One of the classic images of dragons has them squatting on top of huge piles of gold, jewels and other treasures. Like most legends, this one has a grain of truth, though it's a gross oversimplification. Yes, dragons are rich. Most of them, especially the greats, are the richest beings on the planet, and they got that way partly by gathering material wealth. That's only scratching the surface, though. Ever wonder why dragons get fragged off when some of their loot gets stolen? With all they have, you'd think they wouldn't miss one or two baubles, right? That would be true if the baubles represented only material wealth, but that's not the case.

Hard as it is for us ephemeral metahuman types to comprehend, dragons attach significance to every object in their

hoard. Kind of like how we keep boxes of holopics to remind us of periods in our lives, dragons keep items that have significance to them. Because they live so much longer than metahumans and have so many more experiences, this can translate into a lot of items. It might look like a disorganized pile of fantastic wealth to us, but if we were to select any item from a hoard, the dragon keeping it could tell us all about it—where and when he got it, what the weather was like that day, what he was feeling like and so on. So what might seem to you like stealing a few pretty shinies might, to the dragon, represent the plundering of his very memories. It's no wonder they get annoyed.

- This also explains why dragons traditionally have so many gems in their hoards—a big chunk of them are probably those memory crystals mentioned earlier.
- Sally



- Does anybody else think that these "memory crystals" sound a lot like the "Jewel of Memory" that the Big D left Lofwyr in his will?
- Curious George
- I wondered about that too. He sure showed up fast enough to pick it up—I heard that they barely got the doors open at the Draco Foundation before he was there, Loffy-on-the-spot, to claim it.
- DeeCee Insider

Another aspect of hoarding that most people don't think about (but most dragons do) is more abstract in nature: the hoarding of information. The wyrms know as well as any of us do that information is power, and most of them pursue it with the same zeal they use to pursue their other objectives. In our modern age with its instant access and constantly changing data, most dragons consider being up-to-date on their subjects of interest to be even more valuable than possessing material wealth. Wealth is a good thing, but how often has the right information been the difference between success and failure of a venture? With their superior intellects and their matchless ability to focus or divide their attention, dragons are well suited to drink deeply from the firehose of information available to us every day.

- He's not kidding. A chummer of mine once had occasion to be in one of Lofwyr's private offices (no, don't ask—I like my friend and I'd like to keep him around awhile). He said the wyrm had two full walls lined floor to ceiling with trid monitors, each tuned to a different channel and in multiple languages. Lofwyr was paying attention to all of them while simultaneously carrying on a mental conversation with my friend.
- Riker
- Celedyr's another one who's rumored to be a big info-junkie. Word is that he spends more time in the Matrix than most deckers.
- DangerMouse

LAIRS

Q: Where do great dragons live?

A: Anywhere they want to.

Flippant, but essentially true. The history of the Sixth World has been full of stories of dragons who Awakened and claimed territory they desired, ignoring protests from the area's previous owners. In many cases, the dragons are reclaiming territory that was rightfully theirs before the Sleep; in others, the dragon simply found a preferred location and settled in.

- And sometimes they simply drive innocent people from their homes and cities, killing hundreds or thousands in the process.
- Vaquero
- Oh, get over it, will you?
- Bronco Fan

Most dragons have more than one lair. They tend to prefer remote areas: mountaintops, caves, undersea grottos, volcanoes (active or dormant) and similar places where they are not likely to be disturbed. In addition to more classic lairs, many dragons who can assume metahuman form maintain residences in or near metahuman settlements.

Before you get any ideas about dropping by for an unannounced visit, think twice. It should come as no surprise that the defenses around dragon lairs make most corp security setups look like a cheap lock and a "Do Not Enter" sign by comparison. In addition to heavy-duty magical protection, dragons can use all the standard security tricks: paracritters, drones, cameras, metahuman guards and whatever else their devious minds can come up with. And if that isn't enough to deter you, this should be: dragons have an innate sense of what's going on in their lairs. Think of a dragon in his lair as the ultimate security rigger—if you set foot inside, he's going to know it and he *will* be watching.

- This can't be completely true—I've heard too many stories about runners who've broken into dragon lairs and lived to tell about it to believe it's as bad as he describes.
- Cutter
- Remember, dragons aren't always home—and sometimes when they are, they have reason to let you think you're getting away with your intrusion.
- Orange Queen

WORKING FOR THE WYRM

Dragons are more than just powerful creatures. What really makes them influential and important are the power bases they build. No dragon, especially a great, is complete without a network of servants and minions to do her bidding and aid in pursuing her agendas. Though this breakdown isn't exhaustive, it hits the major highlights.

DRAKES

No doubt this is going to be the one that interests you most—what are you and what are you doing here? The answer is simple, though you might not want to hear it: The original drakes were magical beings created by dragons to be their servants. These drakes were inextricably bound to their dragon creators, and when they reached the ends of their lives, they simply returned to the stuff of which they were made.



- Sounds like these drakes were originally a special type of ally spirit, created in the dragons' own self-image.
- Lilith

Some time in the distant past, however, dragons figured out a way to create drakes that bred true, and these are the ancestors of today's drakes. Throughout most of this age we have been locked in metahuman form, unaware of our true heritage, but recent increases in magic have set many drakes free without any knowledge of who and what they are.

- Orks, trolls, changelings, drakes—makes you wonder how many other subsumed creatures we have out there that are still "locked in metahuman form," waiting for an upsurge in the mana level for them to discover what they really are. The scary thing is, the dragons seem to know what's coming, but they're leaving the rest of us in the dark. Fraggers.
- Hyde

One thing you most certainly are is rare. Only great dragons and very few adults had the magical knowledge and experience to create our kind, and most of them made only a small number. Some created none at all. Only a small percentage of drakes were capable of breeding, and only a few of their descendents survive to this day. The few non-breeding drakes that exist today were created in this age and are under the tight control of their dragon masters.

- Hey, we know that dragons can take human form, right? Has anybody wondered about whether it's possible for dragons to interbreed with metahumans?
- Neon Wraith

- You mean like actually have babies together? There's something I'd rather not think about.
- Toasty

- That's probably wise.
- Orange Queen

I see where you're going with that, Wraith. This whole drake thing could explain a lot. Haven't people been speculating for years about certain people who've popped up out of nowhere and suddenly hooked up with dragons? You know, people like Nadja Daviar or David Dragonson from the Children of the Dragon. Remember how Dunk dumped Holly Brighton like last week's garbage when Nadja showed up out of nowhere? And is it a coincidence that Dragonson picked up sudden magical powers around the time he visited the DeeCee riff?

- Reid

- You know, Reid, you might be on to something.
- Wyrn Watcher

Now that you've Awakened to your true form, you must be aware that by your very nature you are interesting to dragons. Because you are so rare and so useful, they will seek you out and attempt to persuade you (or force you) to do their bidding. Some of you might find this attractive—I, for example, was honored to serve Dunkelzahn until the day he passed on. Others might wish to use the knowledge of their true natures to avoid the dragons and attempt to carve out an independent life. Whichever you choose, your best ally is knowledge.

SPIRITS

Most dragons use spirits as servants, summoning them and commanding them to do their bidding just as any metahuman magician would. Some even cultivate relationships with particular spirits, choosing to make use of them in preference over others, though it is rare for a dragon to have ally spirits. It is also not uncommon for a dragon, particularly a great, to have learned the true names of one or more free spirits—these are highly prized because of their initiative, but also watched closely for signs of resentment or betrayal. In general, most dragons consider spirits to be useful and desirable servants.

AWAKENED CREATURES

Some dragons prefer employing Awakened creatures as guards or servants, either by using magic to bend the creatures to their will or by persuading the creatures to cooperate by providing them with something they value (such as protection or personal domains). Dragons who are known to make extensive use of Awakened creatures as servants are Rhonabwy, Hualpa and Mujaji, though as you might expect, their individual methods and motivations differ.

- Rhonabwy's got a whole fraggin' menagerie surrounding his lair in Wales, including some things you wouldn't think could survive there. Don't ask me how I know this.
- Paddy

- So, Paddy, how is your hoop healing up, anyway?
- Aberkombi

OTHER DRAGONS

Does it surprise you that dragons would use members of their own race as servants? It shouldn't—after all, metahumans have been employing each other as both servants and slaves for as long as there has been recorded history. In the case of dragons, the relationship tends more toward that of lord and vassal or student and teacher than that of master and servant, but whatever you want to call it, there are instances of adult dragons who have chosen to pledge themselves to a particular great dragon master. These relationships can be



short-lived or maintained for many years, depending on the personalities involved.

- A good example of this is Naheka, a feathered serpent who has sworn fealty to Ryumyo.
- Kahuna
- Why would a dragon want to serve another dragon, anyway?
- Lara
- Probably for the same reason metahumans serve other metahumans: for training, experience and guidance, or because the older dragon has something the younger one wants. I've even heard of some dragons serving masters of different dragon types—maybe they want to broaden their horizons.
- Wyrms Watcher

METAHUMANS

Finally, we come to metahumans. Dragons often employ metahumans to carry out their plans, though it is rare for a metahuman to be granted a formal position close to a great dragon. From the dragon's viewpoint, the "young races" (even elves) simply do not live long enough to make effective dedicated servants, so they aren't as valued as spirits or younger dragons. Because metahumans are so numerous and so ubiquitous, however, they often make excellent operatives when the dragon needs something done and other servants would be too conspicuous.

- I thought dragons and elves have been giving each other the hairy eyeball since they both showed up. You'd think the wyrms would like having a few pointy-eared servants around to keep 'em amused.
- Bung
- Yes, those wacky elves make great servants—always doing what they're told and never fragging up the wyrms' carefully laid plans.
- The Laughing Man

As for the reasons why metahumans work for dragons, they're as varied as the reasons the dragons want them in the first place. Motivations run the gamut from pure greed to powerlust to ideological and religious purposes—not to mention those who do it unwittingly or those who have been coerced (magically or otherwise) by their dragon employers.

- Working for a dragon can be a dangerous thing to do, especially in areas where the wyrms aren't in favor. A chummer of mine almost got torn apart by a mob in Cairo because they thought he was on Aden's payroll.
- Claymore

In general, dragons prefer not to become directly involved in the affairs of the world, choosing instead to make their moves subtly, through agents. Metahumans can blend in places where even a drake might be suspect, and their wide range of skills, abilities and talents makes them a favorite choice of all but the most antisocial dragon.

Dragons, of course, also employ metahuman organizations, from policlubs and criminal cartels to governments and megacorps. Everyone knows about Lofwyr and Saeder-Krupp, or the late President Dunkelzahn and the UCAS. But dragon influence has worked its way into metahuman affairs throughout the world, often in places where it is undetected and unexpected.

- Is he trying to say that dragons are in the shadows behind every major organization on Earth? That's not a very comforting thought.
- Conspir-I-See

- Don't get paranoid. Even dragons can't stick their scaly fingers in every pie—there just aren't enough of them. If you start seeing dragons around every corner you might as well just stay in bed.
- Wyrms Watcher

- Let's not forget about "dragon fan-clubs" like the Children of the Dragon. All it would take is some smart wyrms (like, say, Ghostwalker) to make a few of the right noises and these slags would be eating out of his talons.
- DeeCee Insider

- Be careful, unbeliever—those who blaspheme the Great Dragon Spirit often meet unpleasant ends.
- Sister Goldenhair

DRAGON MAGIC

by Talon

All right kids, gather around while Uncle Talon works off some of what he owes his friends (remember this, Janey) and tells you all about dragon magic.

The first thing you need to know about dragon magic is that nobody—including me—really knows all that much about it, except for dragons, of course, and they're not talking. Even the normally chatty Dunkelzahn was remarkably close-mouthed when it came to the topic of draco mojo. So what little we know about dragon magical abilities is based on observation, speculation and the little hints that the wiz-wyrms have dropped here and there over the years.

The ability to do magic is very common among dragons. It's apparently an innate racial trait, but since we don't really know where the Talent comes from, it might be something else entirely. Safe to say that most dragons are able to learn and use magic. In fact, all of them may be able to learn it, it's



just that some aren't inclined to bother or just don't get around to it for a few hundred years or so. That means the odds are good that any particular dragon you encounter knows at least *some* magic. Lots of dragons know a *lot* of magic, and the great dragons are apparently all magicians on a scale that dwarfs most, if not all, of us mere mortals.

So where do dragons learn how to use magic? From what I've seen and heard, a lot of it is inborn—pure instinct. There are certainly cases of newly Awakened people getting off spontaneous spells or calling up spirits without having any idea as to how they do it, much less any grounding in magical theory. Dragons seem to be even more like that, able to tap into their magical abilities just like another creature learns to walk or fly.

Dragons also get some instruction from their elders. Since the wyrms are all telepathic, their educational methods are a good deal more efficient than ours are. We have to rely on clumsy things like language to explain something to someone else. Dragons may be able to simply impart knowledge to each other, if they want to, though it's more likely similar to regular teaching, just much faster and more efficient.

- That's true. I learned a couple spells from a dragon that way. It's hard to describe in words, like Talon said. The images and ideas just came into my mind and I followed along, concentrated and bang! I was able to pick up on the spells much faster than trying to learn them from a metahuman teacher or puzzle them out from a grimoire. The hard part about it was that the information was so ... abstract, different from the kind of magical formulae and rituals I was used to. It was more primal, like almost touching the pure source of magic itself.

- ZauberPunk

- If I had a nuyen for every time I heard "a dragon taught me this spell," I could retire from the biz tomorrow. Dragons don't just go around showing punk wizzkids how to toss killer fireballs and drek like that. The stories about people trained by dragons are just that, stories.

- Magister

- Some are stories, but some are true, my friend.

- Trey

I remember when somebody in my "Theories of Thaumaturgy" class at MIT&T asked the professor what magical tradition dragons followed. She got real quiet for a moment, then said, "I suggest that the next time you see a dragon, you ask it." More than a few people (including me) have managed to ask that question over the years, but the dragons just aren't forthcoming with the answer. Are they hermetics, shamans or something else altogether?

Odds are the third answer is the right one. Keep in mind that the oldest dragons may be older than all our magical tra-

ditions put together, so the way that dragons understand and practice magic probably isn't based on anything that metahuman magicians use these days. In fact, it's much more likely that the stuff we do is based on *their* magical tradition (whatever it is) rather than the other way around.

Whatever their tradition may be, dragons seem to cast magic a lot like we do, only a lot more powerfully. A dragon has a lot more innate magical potential than a metahuman. That means they can channel and control more power, letting them cast more powerful spells with less effort. Just like a dragon's physical muscles are enough to crush most puny metahumans, their magical muscles are strong enough to lob spells that can level buildings.

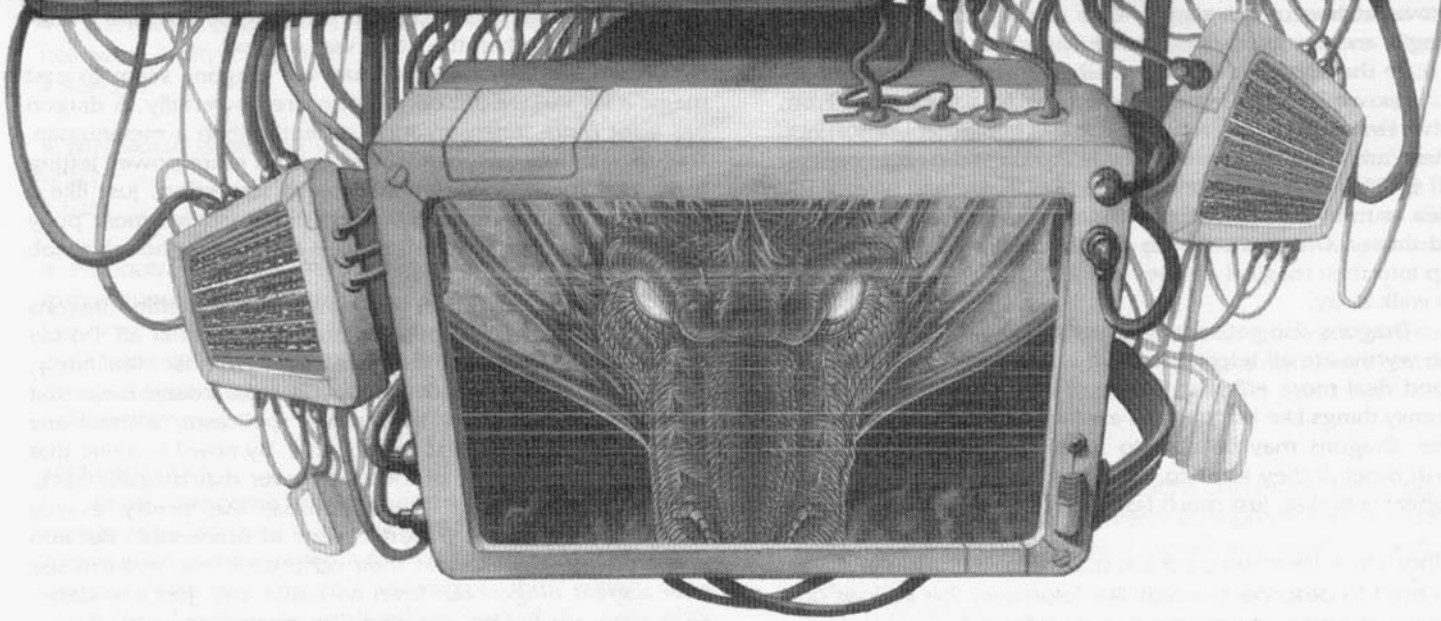
If they decide to turn that power down a little, dragons can toss small, simple spells without any effort at all. I'd say that an adult dragon can cast small spells almost indefinitely, while the great dragons can probably toss around mojo that would exhaust or kill a metahuman spellcaster without any exertion at all (or, at least, hardly any). By now I imagine that you're getting an idea of the real power that dragons have. Sure, they're physical powerhouses, but pretty evenly matched with a modern fighter plane or drone tank. But add in the power of sorcery at their command, and you can see how a great dragon can level an entire city. Just ask somebody who was in Denver when Ghostwalker showed up.

So what kind of spirits can dragons summon if they're not mages or shamans, you ask? Good question! The answer apparently is "all kinds." Dragons have summoned elementals, nature spirits, watchers and other spirits that no one has positively identified over the years. They don't appear limited in the types of spirits they can whistle up like we are, and, you guessed it, they can usually call up spirits much more powerful than the ones most magicians can conjure. On the rare occasions when a dragon has gone house on a city (be it Tehran, Manaus or Denver), it has always had some powerful spirits backing it up.

So, basically, in addition to being as tough as a tank, you can also expect a dragon to be the equal of a high-grade initiate, backed up by any number of powerful spirits. As if that weren't enough, dragons (especially great dragons) often pick power sites for their lairs. Dragons seem drawn to power sites and similar drek. It might be some kind of ancient instinct for a magical species but more likely it's a deliberate choice. Look at most of the known dragon lairs. Hestaby's Mt. Shasta, Lung's lair on T'ai Shan, Aden's lair on Mt. Ararat, all strongly magical places. That means if you have to face a dragon in its lair, it will be even more powerful, since it will have the energy of the power site to draw upon. There's also a fair chance that the power site may be aspected *against* anyone else's magic.

As the saying goes, "Meddle not in the affairs of wizards, especially if they're also lizards." Class dismissed.

THE DRACO FOUNDATION



President Dunkelzahn may be gone, but his legacy ensures that he'll never be forgotten. A big piece of that legacy is the Draco Foundation, the organization set up to carry out Dunkelzahn's last wishes and administer the vast amounts of swag that the First Wurm left behind. Over the past six years, the DF has become a power-player to rival some megacorps, both in international politics and in the shadows. Despite that fact, not much is known about them, how they operate or what their ultimate goals may be. We set about trying to correct that oversight, and tapped our own DC Insider to give us the scoop on this mysterious and influential organization. Scan this one over before you move on to some of the documentation that we acquired from the Foundation itself. Some of the answers may surprise you.

- Captain Chaos

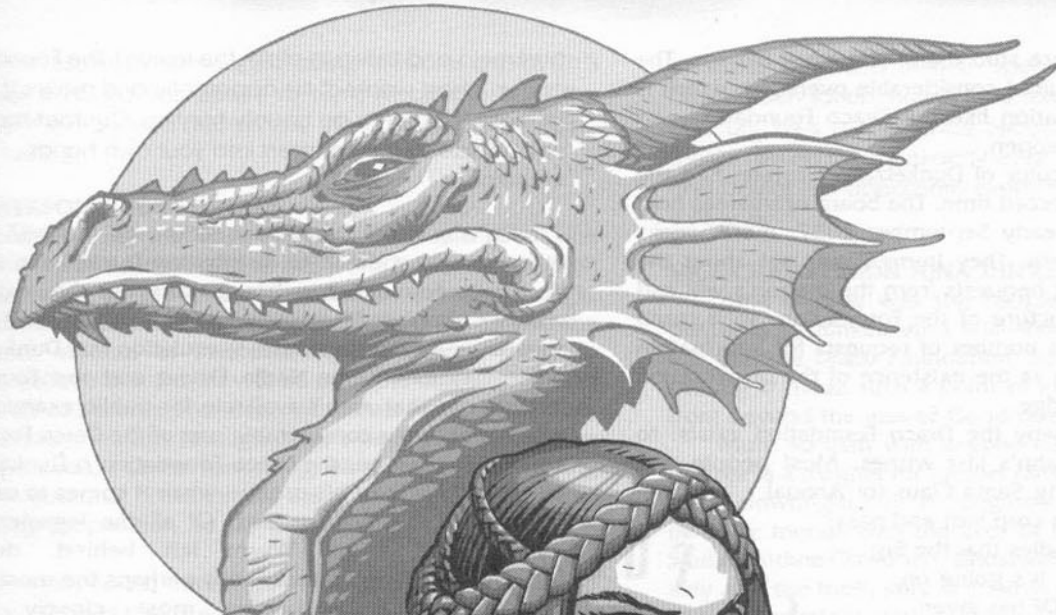
Transmitted: 16 February 2063 at 08:31:28 (PST)

by DC Insider

There was a time, not that long ago, when it was fairly easy to keep track of all the power-players in DeeCee. There were the politicians, the corporate suits, and organized crime. Beyond that, everyone else on the DeeCee scene was a wannabe or strictly small-time. Everyone who was anyone fell into one of those three categories, but no longer. The Election of '57 transformed DeeCee's political landscape in more ways than one. Now we've got up-and-coming political parties pushing their agendas, powerful magical orders, religious cults, and maybe the biggest and most powerful non-profit organization in the world: the Draco Foundation. The Foundation (or simply the DF, as they are known) has forever altered the way business is done, both in the DeeCee shadows and elsewhere. They're a power to be reckoned with, and their real agenda ... well, I'll get to that. But first a little background information, so that you understand exactly what I'm talking about.

THE FOUNDATION'S MANDATE

Dunkelzahn's will brought the Draco Foundation into being and established the massive trust fund that runs it in order to administer to the bequests and last wishes outlined in the great dragon's last will and testament. As pretty much everybody knows by now,





Dunkelzahn owned more stuff than most small nations. The redistribution of it required considerable oversight, which is why an entire organization like the Draco Foundation was necessary to make it happen.

Nadja Daviar, executor of Dunkelzahn's estate, had the DF up and running in record time. The board of trustees held their first meeting in early September 2057, mere weeks after Dunkelzahn's death. They immediately set about the business of distributing bequests from the dragon's will and setting up the infrastructure of the Foundation, so it could handle the tremendous number of requests for information that poured in as soon as the existence of the organization became public knowledge.

Officially, that is why the Draco Foundation exists: to administer to Dunkelzahn's last wishes. Most people think that means playing Santa Claus (or Annual Gift Man, if you were a corp kid) and passing out the various goodies that the Big D left behind. Thing is, it's going on six years now, and the DF has given out most of what the dragon left to give out. All that remains are the few ongoing bequests and unclaimed items or cash.

- I've got to wonder about some of those, too. I mean, Dunkelzahn's will put a bounty on the heads of both blood mages and toxic shamans, dead or alive. How can the UCAS (or any other government) countenance what amounts to the Draco Foundation openly paying for wetwork?

- Tom-Tom

- It's a sticky legal issue, to be sure, but remember that you're talking about countries that decide what rights people living in them have based on whether or not they're "registered" citizens or "legal non-entities" (to use one of the more common terms). It's hardly the first time that the UCAS or some other first-world nation has decided that a particular class of "citizens" has no legal rights. After all, several nations still have bounties for ghouls, vampires and numerous other creatures. There have been legal actions filed against the DF, but their crack cadre of lawyers have always gotten them thrown out based on those precedents.

- Legal Beagle

- I have heard that the DF quietly discourages the active hunting of blood mages and toxics, simply because they don't want people going off and cacking any mage or shaman that they meet, then claiming they were into some

bad mojo and trying to claim the reward. The Foundation has its own "most wanted" list apparently and makes it available to those looking to go bounty hunting. Contact them before you decide to take matters into your own hands.

- Whisper

So why is the Draco Foundation still around? That's the other part. In addition to distributing Dunkelzahn's goodies, the Draco Foundation exists to carry out the dragons "last wishes," supposedly as outlined in his will. There's considerable (and no doubt accurate) speculation that Dunkelzahn left other instructions for Nadja Daviar and the Foundation—instructions that *aren't* available for public examination but which make up a considerable part of the Draco Foundation's agenda. In essence, the Draco Foundation *is* Dunkelzahn—or at least his proxy—when it comes to carrying his plans forward. Of all the legacies that the First Wurm left behind, the Draco Foundation is perhaps the most powerful and the most closely tied to Dunkelzahn's agenda when he was still around, whatever that was.

- There's no real guarantee of this, however. Who is to say just how much the Draco Foundation reflects Dunkelzahn's wishes and how much it has been co-opted and perhaps redirected by the agendas of the various trustees? Sure the Draco Foundation seems devoted to the ideals Dunkelzahn espoused in his election campaign, but how much of that is pretense and how much of it is real? (For that matter, how much of it was real for the dragon? You know what they say about politicians ...)

- Bitter Lemon



THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

A board of trustees appointed by Nadja Daviar runs the Draco Foundation. The Foundation's charter allows the board to appoint new trustees as needed, though they haven't done so yet. The board votes on all matters relating to Draco Foundation business and approves allocations of resources, hiring and firing of employees and all other such administrative activities. The board convenes for one week each month, usually starting on the third day of that month, though occasionally board meetings have gone as much as two straight weeks to handle all of the Foundation business that needed to be dealt with.

- Nadja didn't just handpick some chronies to run the DF; the Big D left her a list of names. She ran with it, but she may be regretting some of the choices now. The clash of egos on the

board has resulted in some spectacular fireworks displays. It's not clear if Nadja has power to remove people from the board or if it requires a decision by the Trustees themselves.

- Grid Reaper

CHAIRPERSON NADJA DAVIAR

What can I say that hasn't already been said about one of the most powerful women in the world? As if her position as chairperson of the Draco Foundation weren't enough, Nadja Daviar is also the vice-president of the UCAS and the right-hand woman of President Kyle Haeffner. Many in DeeCee believe that Daviar will be both the first woman and the first elf to become president, whenever Haeffner decides to hand over the reins (though there's no sign that it will be any time soon). Given how long elves may live, having Daviar as potential president-for-life of the UCAS could be an interesting proposition, to say the least.

- I've actually heard rumblings that Daviar doesn't want to be president, and that she'll decline the nomination when it's offered so she can focus on her work with the Draco Foundation. In fact, there are near-constant rumors that she's going to resign as VP in order to do that.

- Bitter Lemon

- Wishful thinking on the part of many in DeeCee, I think.
- La Marquise

- How is it that Daviar can be chair of the Draco Foundation and VP of the UCAS? Isn't that a conflict of interest? Aren't there laws against that or something?

- Nacht

- In the UCAS? Hardly. Though the UCAS government maintains the pretense of objectivity, nearly everyone in the halls of power has some sort of corporate ties, and most politicians have considerable personal wealth and bulging stock portfolios. If anything, Daviar's involvement with the Draco Foundation is more above-board than usual since the Foundation is a non-profit organization, to say nothing of the PR she gets from her work "to carry on Dunkelzahn's legacy." To many, the Draco Foundation is like a living memorial to Dunkelzahn (I read that in one of their press releases, I think).

- The Chromed Accountant

Though Daviar keeps up to date on the activities of the Draco Foundation and finds time to attend most of the board meetings, her day-to-day involvement with the organization is limited. This woman is scheduled within a millimeter of her life, so she has to leave a good part of running the organization to her fellow board members and the Foundation's hand-picked administrative staff.

- Daviar does find time to spend with one person at the Draco Foundation, however, a fellow by the name of Ryan Mercury. He's a "freelance security consultant" working for the DF (which means exactly what you think it means) and he and Daviar are apparently pretty tight.

- Peeper

VICE CHAIRPERSON AINA DUPREE

Aina Dupree was the recipient of one of the oddest bequests in Dunkelzahn's will—hope, plus a direct plea that she join the Draco Foundation. So who is this woman, that the Big D made such a point of making her a power player from beyond the grave? Good question.

More so than with anyone else on the DF board, Aina Dupree is a magnet for rumors ranging from the very strange to the downright silly. Among other things, she's rumored to be close friends with the likes of Lugh Surehand, Eهران the Scribe, Aithne Oakforest, Ghostwalker and Lofwyr (and probably also the tooth fairy and Santa Claus). She's supposed to have connections with someone high up in the Tir na nOg government, which seems odd if she's buddy-buddy with even one of her supposed friends in Tir Tairngire. (The two Tirs don't care for each other much. But then, you never can tell with elves.)

Known facts amount to very little. She's a dark-skinned elf with white hair, of indeterminate age. She looks about fifty, but has to be at least eighty if my research is correct. That would place her birth well before the Awakening. She could be as much as five hundred years old, depending on which story you believe. One apocryphal tale that swirls periodically around the art world is that Rembrandt painted her portrait. Of course, the alleged painting is among the many "lost" works of that particular artist. (Any bets on whether it'll ever turn up?) She's also extremely rich, and she likes her privacy. Officially, she lives "somewhere off the coast of Scotland." Anything more specific than that is fragging tough to come by.

According to my digging, Aina Dupree is (or was) Anna Sluage, who became the Countess of Arran by purchasing the defunct earldom sometime around the turn of the 21st century. She's lived in a small house on the estate since then (hence my guess of eighty as a minimum age—that would make her about twenty years old at the time of purchase). A few day workers hired to refurbish the house and Arran Castle were approached by tabloids eager for news about the "mysterious buyer" of the earldom—according to articles published at the time, Ms. Sluage went off on trips a lot, and no one ever knew where (or what for). She supposedly has a hoard of art objects that would make a dragon drool, acquired from heaven-knows-where.

Ms. Dupree handles Draco Foundation business when Daviar isn't around, which means that she practically runs things on a day-to-day basis. If this is the source of any friction between her and Daviar, it doesn't show. The two women seem to work together quite well. Among other



things, Aina Dupree was involved in helping broker some sort of deal between the Draco Foundation and Ghostwalker, though the details remain unknown.

- Anyone got anything else on our mystery woman?
- La Marquise
- Guess not.
- La Marquise

• For those of you who may be underestimating Ms. Dupree (or whatever her real name is) don't. She's not just some seat-warmer who stands in for Daviar at board meetings. This woman has stood up to Ghostwalker, Lofwyr, and several other great dragons. She has stood up at megacorporate board meetings to inform them that they have not met the conditions for one of Dunkelzahn's bequests and, until they do, they're not getting a damn thing from the Draco Foundation. No matter how difficult the situation, Aina Dupree's attitude seems to be, "I've seen worse." Nothing fazes her.

- DeeCeelOT

FRANK HARDY

According to his friends, Francis Eamon deValera Hardy describes himself as "a wandering Celt, born and bred far from home." He's a UCAS native from Prince Edward Island—and a fomor, a type of troll allegedly found only on the Emerald Isle. (Conventional wisdom loses again.)

The Hardys have been gentleman farmers on PEI since the early 19th century, and Frank still runs the old family place. He has advanced degrees in botany and uses his acreage as a testing ground for hybrid plants intended to grow under varying harsh conditions—drought, poor soil, artificial light instead of sunlight, etc. Samples of Hardy's plants can be found growing in all kinds of places around the world, though few local people know where they came from.

Hardy markets some of his hybrid greens through a small company named Silver Branch, which funnels them to larger agribusinesses and international concerns for further sale. Records of sales begin in 2035, in which Silver Branch made whopping profits for a teeny start-up outfit. For some reason I can't figure, though, none of the Big Boys in agribusiness paid Silver Branch the slightest attention, takeover-wise. They just bought seeds, paid 'em their cred and left 'em alone. All those profits went straight back into the farmstead, so Silver Branch hasn't become a player in the stock markets, either. Just a little family business, doing what it does best—and no corporate sharks sniffing after its hefty balance sheets. Go figure.

Incidentally, Frank Hardy doesn't appear to have a birthdate, and no one who knows him will speculate on how old he is. He apparently has a taste for fine pipe tobacco and the company of a lovely woman (or two).

• Some rumors link Hardy's business to the Knights of the Red Branch, a terrorist organization made up of Celts displaced by the creation of Tir na nOg who want to overthrow elven rule and restore Ireland to its "true" people. Hardy certainly doesn't seem overly fond of the Tir government, but there's no indication that he sympathizes with the Red Branch, either, and the terrorists are notoriously anti-metahuman, so it may just be a rumor.

- Finn

• Hardy is more than just a skilled botanist and agronomist: he's also a shaman of no small power, a master of communing with nature spirits, which he uses to help him create and nurture new plant species. Silver Branch has also worked with some companies down in Amazonia on projects like soil reclamation and new plant species for reforestation.

- Myst

MANUEL TORRES

Compared to some of his fellow board members, Manuel Torres is almost ordinary. He's a painter from Caracas who specializes in Diego Rivera-style large-scale murals. He's little known outside of northern Amazonia, except to art connoisseurs. He earns enough cred to keep eating by taking the occasional public commission, as well as teaching classes and picking up odd jobs. (All kinds of odd jobs—if you get my drift—according to people in the know in Caracas.)

Among other things, Manuel makes and sells small devotional objects—Virgin Mary paintings, crosses, Mayan and Toltec jewelry, that kind of thing. He won't do Aztec art for any amount of cred. The story is that for the right price, or if you "feel right" in some way, Manuel will make a trinket that is also a magical talisman—but otherwise, they're just pretty artworks. If Torres is a shaman, then he's entirely self-taught, since there are no records of him ever earning a degree in magic from anywhere, and no one who knows anything about him studying with any teachers in or around Caracas.

• There are more ways for a shaman to follow the path than attending school. All you have to do is listen to what your totem tells you and do it.

- Dogsboddy

• About nine years ago, well before Dunkelzahn's death and his appointment to the Draco Foundation board, Torres received a commission from none other than Maria Locasin, Hualpa's translator and right-hand woman. He supposedly designed and painted an amazing mural map of Amazonia for her and personally delivered it. Rumor has it that the map wasn't entirely accurate: it showed Amazonia stretching across all of South America and most of Central America, including the Yucatán. Wishful thinking, prophecy or magical spell? You be the judge.

- Windwalker

- Geez, with all these artsy types on the Board of Trustees, the Draco Foundation could have a pretty wizzer art collection, what with all those "lost" masterpieces and such that Dunkelzahn supposedly had. I've heard some stuff about the DF being interested in certain *objets d'art*. I wonder if that's from Dunkelzahn, or just personal interest from the board?
- Artful Dodger

MILO CZERDA

I can already hear the shaking of a thousand heads on this one—but it's chip-truth. Milo is a centaur. Yes, one of those half-horse, half-human "critters" that Dr. "Half the Facts, Ma'am" Danchecker wrote up years ago in Paterson's Guide to Paranormal Animals of Europe. Only if Milo's any indication, at least some centaurs are anything but animals.

- Wait just a fraggin' second. I thought that centaurs couldn't even speak, much less read or write. What's the deal here?
- Feral
- You know as much as we do, chummer. It's quite clear that Czerda not only speaks, but also writes quite well. He only speaks Czech, apparently, and relies on a translator to understand English. I've heard things that suggest it's not so much a matter that centaurs can't speak; it's that they choose not to, at least in any human language.
- Doc

Milo Czerda hails from what used to be Central Europe—the slopes of Mt. Igman in old Bosnia, to be exact. According to the little public information I found, he's an extremely talented poet whose works have been published in a few European countries, but not so far in North America (which is why plenty of us have never heard of him). Milo's own editors never saw him; they assumed he was a (meta)human with a Matrix connection and a thing for solitude. All his submissions came to them via e-mail, and they sent him his royalties the same way (care of a local bank branch in what's left of Sarajevo). He's also written an extensive volume on the healing properties of plants.

- I wonder if Milo is connected in any way with Dunkelzahn's bequest to the centaurs of Lake Louise. Apparently whole herds of them live there, and have since the Big D moved into the area. Dunkelzahn set the land aside for them and the Draco Foundation and the NAN authorities protect them from outsiders. Czerda apparently visits Lake Louise from time to time—maybe to keep from getting homesick, or is there some other reason?
- ParaSci

MIDORI KANEMATSU

If you dig deep enough beneath the surface of the Tokyo Stock Exchange, you'll find evidence of Midori Kanematsu—

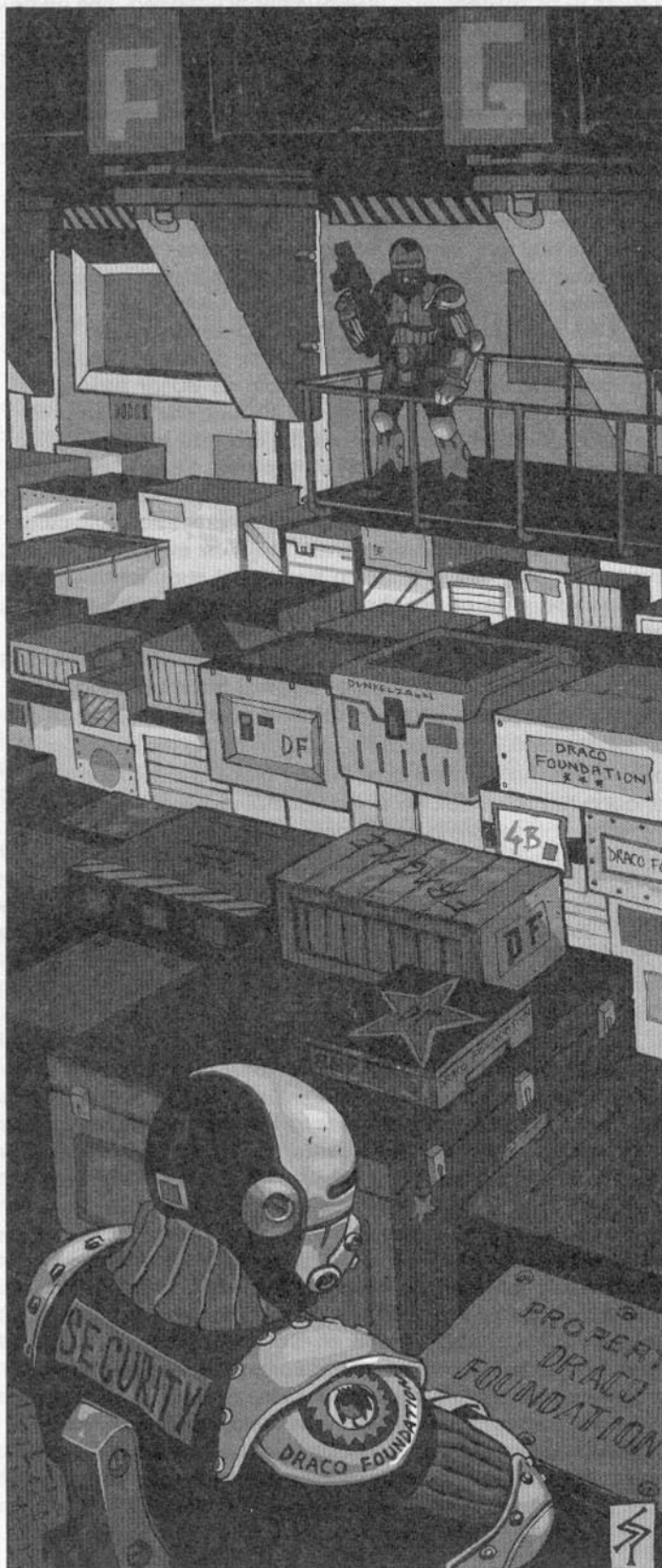
a woman of mystery who is very, very rich indeed. She owns a staggering amount of stock, none of it in major megacorps. Instead, she controls or owns outright dozens of start-up and smaller corps, which together give her enough clout to match a megacorp on her own. Large chunks of her stock are in things like aerospace tech, techno-magical research, bio-medics and such. (She also owns a few oddball things, among them a toy-making outfit that specializes in beautiful, expensive handmade dolls.) No megacorp has ever tried twice to buy out one of Midori's concerns—the few that have tried once all failed, and the object lesson apparently took hold.

Like most of the other trustees, Kanematsu's past is an almost complete blank. She looks to be in her 30s, but with a good biosculpt job could be as old as 80 or more. She doesn't have any visible cyberware, though she has no problem with modern conveniences. In fact, she seems to like having various techno-toys around. She's a true clotheshorse. Rumor has it that if she closes out her Lacy's charge account they're planning to retire her account number. She shows up for board meetings in everything from cutting-edge business attire to traditional eighteenth-century Japanese garb or see-through neo-spandex with moving optical "tattoos."

- Rumors claim that Midori is everything from a spirit to a fox shapeshifter, a powerful magician or adept, or even that rarest of creatures: an ordinary human being that has fought her way to the top and aims to stay there. She was fortunate enough to be in DeeCee when disaster struck Japan (assuming luck had anything to do with it). Since then, she's been spending a lot of time back home, and rumor has it that she's in good with the new emperor and his allies. There doesn't seem to be much doubt that the Draco Foundation backs the new regime in Japan, which probably isn't earning them points with the likes of Mitsuhamma or the other Japanacorps.
- Sakura
- Kanematsu is apparently friends with Buttercup, the free spirit on the Yamatetsu board. The two of them have been spotted out at nightspots in Tokyo before the disaster, and have been seen together since in Japan and Seattle. Whether their relationship is personal or business, I don't know.
- Skeleton Hunter

GRACE FRIEL

I saved the weirdest one for last (and with this crew, that's saying a lot). Grace Friel, AKA "Gracie," is a top-notch decker working out of Edinburgh, Scotland, where she immigrated from Tir na nOg in 2035. (For the history-challenged, that's the year Ireland became the Tir—which might suggest something about Grace's feeling toward the Powers-that-Be in that country.) Very often she "signs" her work with a small flashing neon-sign icon that blows up to read, "Say good-



night, Gracie!" Now, here's the weird part. Lots of people know about her (though not by her full name), but no one ever knows where to find her. If someone wants her services, they leave a message at a certain Matrix e-mail drop and Grace will turn up for a meet within a few hours. She always knows where to find the person who wants her, and will not attend any meet that anyone else sets up. Her uncanny ability to find anyone anywhere, and to avoid being found except when she wants to be, have earned her a reputation for amazing decking ability. Some people even think she's a free spirit.

The favorite rumor, though, is that Gracie is a faerie being. She's not any of the kinds we know about, from her description—apparently human, tall and slender, with gold-white hair and bright blue eyes. She's said to favor deep greens and silvers, and won't wear synthleather. A few folks insist she's got a sixth finger on her left hand. (Doesn't exactly sound like your average leshy or domovoi or knocker, does she?) And the final oddity—allegedly, no one has ever seen her eat or drink. Certainly the faerie powers of fading and glamour would explain how she avoids notice except when she wants to—from all I hear, you can't even assense her unless she feels like letting you. A faerie fascinated by technology would also have a lot in common with the late lamented Dunkelzahn, who was another magically powerful being with a thing for high-tech. But until someone finds more info, the jury's still out.

One wrinkle on the "faerie being" theory claims that Gracie is connected with the otaku—but exactly how, no one knows. Some claim she's one of them (which would make her the oldest otaku ever), others claim that she's a good friend of theirs, a few even claim that Gracie had something to do with creating the otaku. My personal favorite—Gracie is Dunkelzahn's "ambassador" to the otaku, who trust her more than they would normally trust an "outsider" because of her dazzling decking skills. Does her appointment to the Draco Foundation board add weight to this rumor? Stay tuned.

- Bulldrek. Gracie is an elite decker, that's for sure, but all this stuff about her being a "faerie" is pure drek. She's just a decker from the Tir with a thing for faeries and Celtic myth. Haven't you people ever heard of a reality filter? Custom Icons? That's what it's all about.

- Switchback

- I'm not so sure, Switchback. What DC Insider says about Gracie's ability to find anyone anywhere online is true, and I for one would love to know how she does it. It may be magic or it may be pure skill, but it's a damn good trick, whatever it is.

- FastJack

DRACO FOUNDATION ASSETS

The Draco Foundation has a lot going for it, probably more than most people realize. It's not just a clearinghouse



for the dragon's hoard, it has wealth, resources and influence of its own to call upon, and the trustees have shown that they're willing to use them in order to get the job done.

DUNKELZAHN'S LEGACY

First of all, the Draco Foundation has whatever Dunkelzahn left it, which is basically everything that the dragon didn't give away to someone else in his will or other bequests. How much is that? We don't know, since the Foundation doesn't have to disclose its holdings to anyone. It's a safe bet that it's enough wealth to fund a megacorporation, maybe even to qualify the Draco Foundation as an A- or even AA-level megacorp. A lot of that wealth is probably tied up in things like stock investments, real estate, art treasures and other non-liquid assets, but the Foundation's operating budget makes it clear they have money to burn.

The Draco Foundation has branch offices scattered around the world, including Atlanta, DeeCee (the main HQ), Seattle, Denver, Hannover (in Germany), Hong Kong, London, and a couple dozen others. Some of these branch offices are little more than a suite that handles local business while some (like the Hannover and Denver offices) are more substantial. Rumors abound regarding secret facilities owned and operated by the Draco Foundation, ranging from hidden caches or warehouses stuffed with treasures (from Dunkelzahn's hoard or more recently acquired by the Foundation), to secret shadowrunner training camps and drake hideaways.

Then there are the other goodies that Dunkelzahn may have left in the Draco Foundation's care. We've all seen the list of stuff from the dragon's will. Now imagine the things that Dunkelzahn *didn't* give away, but left in the hands of the Foundation and its trustees. It may include magical items, art treasures, stocks and (perhaps most important) information gathered by Dunkelzahn and his agents over the years.

- And there's a long list of people who would pay top nuyen to know exactly what the Big D did leave to the Draco Foundation, and what they're doing with it.
- Wraith

I know for a fact that more than a few people find it tough to sleep wondering exactly what the Draco Foundation knows about them and what they're willing to do with that information. We know that Dunkelzahn knew a lot more than people gave him credit for. You can bet that they're trying not to make the same mistake where the Draco Foundation is concerned.

- Of course, the Foundation had better have the means to back up those concerns. Sooner or later, someone is going to test just how much the Draco Foundation is capable of. If they show weakness, you can bet that their enemies will tear them apart.
- Prime Runner

SHADOW ASSETS

I'm sure that it comes as no shock to anyone that the Draco Foundation has shadowrunners in its employ (if it does, then you're in over your head, chummer). The Foundation has been hiring shadowrunners almost since day one, since a lot of Dunkelzahn's bequests are best handled quietly behind the scenes and some were not entirely legal. The Foundation also needs information and it has enemies that it needs to either keep an eye on or deal with (we'll talk about them in a bit).

The Draco Foundation also keeps some shadowrunners on retainer as regular "company men" of a sort. The best known hired-runners they've got are Assets, Inc., a shadowteam that has a sizeable (and well-deserved) reputation. Their leader is a fellow who goes by the name Ryan Mercury. He's an adept and apparently knew Dunkelzahn. The team's decker goes by Jane-in-the-Box, and she definitely knows her stuff (as many on Shadowland can attest, I'm sure). They're the people you want to get in touch with about the Foundation's shadow-business, and odds are good that they're around here at any given time.

- Thanks for the kind words, DC. I check in on the hiring hall on a regular basis and I like to keep up on who's reliable in the biz. Shoot me your brag sheet if you're interested in some DF work, but only if you seriously think you can handle it. I've got no time to deal with amateurs. Your first test will be finding the right Matrix address to send your response to. <display_grin>
- Jane-in-the-Box
- Fraggin slitch, who does she think she is, making us jump through hoops? Like I need the fraggin' Draco Foundation and their cred!
- Dr. Death
- Janey thinks she's one of the best deckers in the biz, chummer, and she's right. But it looks to me like you don't have to worry about working for the DF—or anybody else, for that matter—in the near future. Try to remember: 'Tis is better to be thought of as a fool than to post to Shadowland and remove all doubt.
- Talon

DRAKES

The other thing that the Draco Foundation has going for it is the most mysterious one. Folks who have been keeping up on the latest Shadowland news know that there are apparently some people out there with the ability to transform into small dracoforms. (And by small, I mean like three meters long instead of ten to fifteen meters, still big enough to tear a troll in half.) They started showing up along with all the other comet weirdness and apparently the great dragons are very interested in them. So is the Draco Foundation. They've



been offering asylum and assistance to these “drakes” since they showed up. So what is the Foundation’s interest in these drakes and did Dunkelzahn tell them about them, or is this a new wrinkle that the Big D didn’t know about?

Whatever the case, it looks like at least some drakes (and who knows how many there are) have taken up the Draco Foundation up on its offer. No great surprise since the alternative seems to be ending up a “guest” of a great dragon for who-the-frag-knows what. These new shapeshifters represent a real wild card that the Draco Foundation can call upon, since nobody really knows what they’re capable of. On the other hand, it’s a fair bet that collecting all these drakes has hacked off some or all of the great dragons, which doesn’t put the Foundation in a great position. Makes you wonder why they’re bothering. These drakes must be worth a lot to take that kind of risk.

- Or it could be that the Draco Foundation knows the fate that awaits them and wants to save them simply because they’re intelligent creatures and it’s the right thing to do.

- Deborah

- Lady, what color is the sky in your world? There’s no such thing as a free lunch, and you can bet that the Draco Foundation isn’t doing anything out of the goodness of its (non-existent) heart.

- Prime Runner

- Hmm, no comment from anybody at the DF on this one? Not that I’m surprised, of course, we’ve all got our secrets.

- Miss Tick

- I’ll tell you, chummers, the Foundation helped pull my hoop out of the fire and they’ve treated me well. They’ve helped me try to get a handle on what’s happened to me and protected me from all sorts of people after me. All they’ve asked in return is for me to help them to help others like me. Say what you want. The Draco Foundation saved my life. They’re good people, and if you’re like me you’d be smart to contact them and trust them. I don’t think you’ll like the alternative.

- Drake

ALLIES AND ENEMIES

You don’t get to be as big as the Draco Foundation (even overnight) without picking up some friends and enemies. The Draco Foundation has plenty of both, enough to keep any dealings with them from ever getting dull. The Foundation walks a careful line to keep its allies on its side and to keep its enemies at bay.

NATIONS

The Draco Foundation has cordial relations with the UCAS government. After all, their chairperson is the VP of the country and their founder was President, even if only for a short while. For the most part, the Foundation tries to downplay any ties with the UCAS, and does its best to make it clear that its not officially affiliated with any government. That's not an easy position to maintain, however, and everyone thinks that the Foundation and the UCAS government are in bed together. That can make dealings with other governments somewhat strained, depending on their relations with the UCAS.

Surprisingly, the NAN doesn't seem to care about the Draco Foundation's other ties. They're cordial and cooperative when it comes to dealing with the Foundation and its representatives. Maybe it's because Dunkelzahn lived so close to NAN territory for such a long time or because the NAN has a greater respect for tradition, but when the Draco Foundation calls, they do what they can to help out, so long as it doesn't threaten their own interests. Cooperation between the NAN and the Foundation (along with the UCAS) had a lot to do with resolving the situation in Denver with Ghostwalker.

Speaking of Ghostwalker, it seems like the Draco Foundation scored some serious points with the CAS by helping broker the deal that got Aztlan kicked out of the city and turned their sector over to the CAS. Previous to that, the CAS was a little frosty toward the DF, seeing them as a "UCAS" organization that had little to offer the CAS. That view is changing, though there are still some in the CAS that don't trust the Dracos.

- Funny how that worked out, isn't it? Representatives from the Draco Foundation contacted Ghostwalker not long after he first appeared. Then, after that, the other Denver signatories cut a deal with Ghostwalker turning Denver over to him and kicking Aztlan out. Ghostwalker got Denver, the CAS got Aztlan sector, and the Draco Foundation got a grateful CAS suddenly willing to cooperate with them. All they had to do was frag over Aztlan, who hates the DF anyway.

- Conspir-I-See

Most other nations don't seem to care much about the Draco Foundation one way or another unless there's a serious amount of cred involved. The nations that don't care overly much for the Foundation are Aztlan and, to a lesser degree, Tir Tairngire and Tir na nOg.

Aztlan has all but banned the Draco Foundation from its borders, claiming that it "sponsors terrorism" against its citizens. They've accused it of being behind everything from attempts to overthrow the government to inflation. The DF doesn't seem to give a flying frag what Aztlan thinks, and keeps going about its business as usual.

Tir Tairngire and Tir na nOg have rather frosty, but not openly hostile, relations with the Draco Foundation. Dunkelzahn offered something called "The First Key of Power" in his will to either nation, whichever one first disclosed the complete personal histories of all of its high government officials, under the supervision of the Draco Foundation. The Foundation annually renews the offer to both nations, and it has always been refused. The Foundation seems to take an understandable measure of delight in dangling the offer, even though it is clear neither side will ever accept it.

- Of course, that doesn't mean that either nation hasn't tried to acquire the key some other way. Word is that either government will pay a prince's ransom for information leading to the recovery of the key. Attempts have been made to get it from the DF, but they failed.

- Dough Boy

MEGACORPORATIONS

One of the things megacorporations distrust more than anything is a charitable organization with the power and influence to actually make a difference in the world. The idea of any group operating for reasons other than profit is just so alien to the megacorporate mindset as to be scary. It would be fair to say that no megacorporation is allied with the Draco Foundation and that all of them keep a wary eye on them, given the Foundation's ability to upset the status quo.

The reality is a good deal more complicated than that, but any alliance between a megacorp and the DF is strictly temporary (just like any alliance between the megacorps themselves). For their part, the Draco Foundation has shown a reluctance to enter into alliances with the corps, preferring to remain as independent as possible.

- If there's one megacorp that the Draco Foundation has ties with, it's probably Ares. Daviar has dealings with Ares and Damien Knight, and it's pretty clear that they don't like each other, even though they cooperate. Ares is heavily invested in the UCAS and backs the current UCAS administration. If push came to shove, the DF could probably get help from Ares, but you can be sure that it wouldn't be free.

- Errant Knight

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Though the Draco Foundation is the largest organization of its kind, it's certainly not alone. Dunkelzahn's will spawned various other organizations, some with similarities in purpose, and there are all sorts of other special interest groups that deal with the DF in one way or another.

Organizations like the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research and the Astral Space Preservation Society, also part of Dunkelzahn's legacy, generally get along with the Draco



Foundation. The main area of friction seems to be familial: the desire of these “younger siblings” to get out from under the shadow of the DF while maintaining ties with their “big brother” that has most of the wealth and resources. Nothing annoys one of the “dragon babies” quicker than being referred to as part of the Draco Foundation (which, of course, they’re not).

Organizations with a magical or Awakened bent tend to either be allies of the Draco Foundation or see themselves as rivals. In the former category are most Awakened-rights organizations, many of which receive grants and donations from the DF. In the latter category are groups like the Atlantean Foundation and the Illuminates of the New Dawn, both of whom are no doubt jealous that the DF has so many wizzer toys that they don’t get to play with. Though officially there are no problems between the Foundation and other organizations, folks like the Atlanteans clearly like to make things difficult for the DF when and where they can.

- Since the Draco Foundation got started, there’s been a quiet, behind-the-scenes competition between them and the Atlantean Foundation, with the Atlanteans doing their best to keep tabs on the DF. If there are any signs that the Draco Foundation is going to sponsor a dig or unearth some treasure, the Atlanteans try to swoop in and nab it first. Naturally, the DF has upped security on these projects, but the Atlanteans will pay good cred for useful information about what their rivals are up to. For their part, the Draco Foundation seems to consider the Atlanteans annoying cranks, but I’ve also heard stories about DF-sponsored grabs of Atlantean finds. Whether they’re the real deal or sour grapes, I don’t know.

- Digger

One organization that many assume has an official relationship with the Draco Foundation but doesn’t is the Children of the Dragon. The Draco Foundation goes out of its way to point out that they do not sponsor, endorse, or support Children in any way, apparently considering them something of an embarrassment. The Children seem to think that the DF is withholding Dunkelzahn’s legacy from the general populace (again, because they got all the best toys). The matter has only become more complex with the establishment of the Church of the Dragon Reborn in Denver, with which the DF also claims to have no involvement.

- I’ve heard that David Dragonson (the founder of the Children of the Dragon) has approached the Draco Foundation privately, assured that Dunkelzahn left some secret message or instructions, having known that he and his followers would arise after his death. From what I heard, the Foundation all but laughed in his face, told him to go back home and stop playing high priest of a cult that Dunkelzahn never would have wanted. Ever since then, the DF has been a tool of the devil as far as the Children are concerned.

- Serena

- That is because Dragonson is not the true Messenger that Dunkelzahn foresaw. He was Brother Morningstar, but the Draco Foundation denied him, and he proved unworthy of the burden placed upon him. Now it is up to us to carry the torch of humanity’s salvation through the Great Dragon Spirit.

- Brother Whitefire

DRAGONS

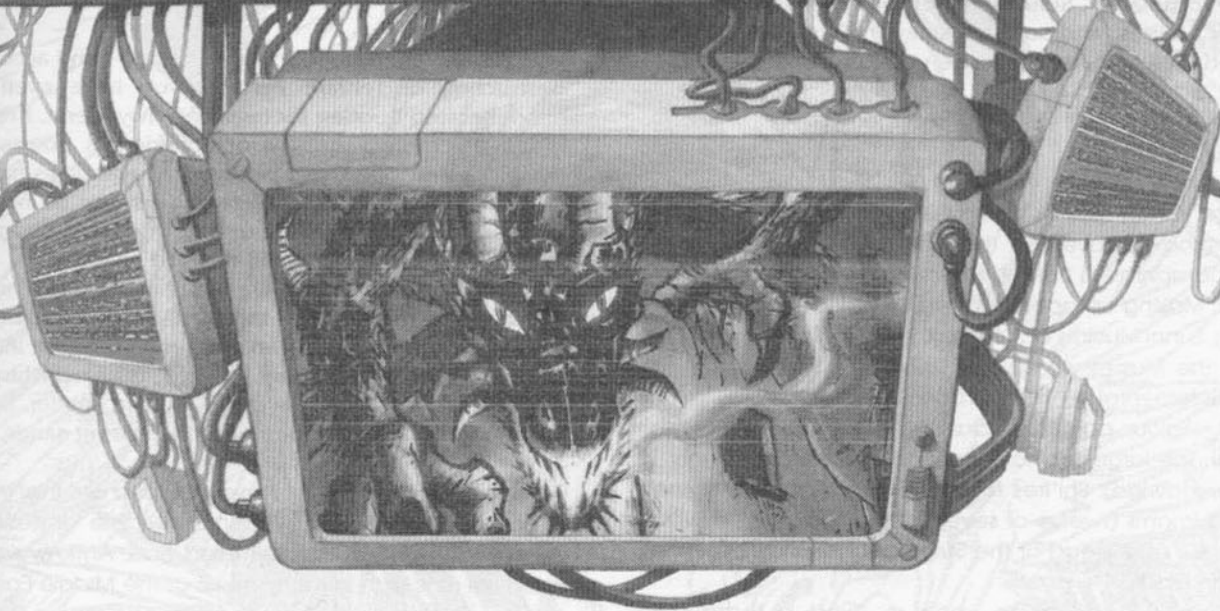
So, what do the dragons think about the organization that Dunkelzahn created to handle his will? Not too much, if what we’ve seen is any indication, though the big wyrms do seem to at least respect the resources the Draco Foundation has at its disposal. Initially, relations between the DF and the great dragons were cordial but cool. The Foundation passed out Dunkelzahn’s bequests, and most of the dragons accepted them peaceably (and quickly). Beyond that, there didn’t seem to be any formal relationship. None of the great dragons had anything to say about the DF, good or bad.

More recently, however, things seem to have changed. On the one hand, the Draco Foundation has had more contact with some great dragons. In particular we know that DF representatives have met with both Ghostwalker and Hestaby, the two great dragons geographically closest to the DF, and that their meeting with Ghostwalker, at least, may be partially responsible for the resolution of the situation in Denver.

On the other hand, there’s the issue of the drakes, which the Foundation seems to be sheltering from the great dragons. That can’t be going over well, which suggests some tension between them and the wizwyrms. How serious it is, I have no idea. Maybe the DF cut a deal with Ghostwalker and Hestaby where the drakes are concerned? Whatever the case, I’d lay some serious nuyen on the likelihood of some shadow-conflict between the Foundation and one or more of the great dragons. When one of those dragons is Lofwyr, you can bet that things will start to get interesting real soon.

Keep an eye on the Draco Foundation, chummers. Things are happening there.

ADEN



They say silence is golden, but in our biz, silence can mean death. For the past forty-three years, the Sixth World has heard the sound of silence from the remote eastern mountain of Ararat, lair of the great dragon Aden. After leveling Tehran in 2020, Aden disappeared into eastern Turkey near Mount Ararat and wasn't heard of until Dunkelzahn's will left the mysterious great dragon the Shroud of Shadows.

Now we know why. The first of the two files concerning Aden below were sent along by an enterprising decker who claims they were liberated from a construction company somewhere in the Middle East. It strongly implies that Aden is backing a range of dissident groups opposed to the rule of the Arabian Caliphate (and Saeder-Krupp). The second file was part of a grab bag of Mossad reports dumped on the Nexus by a double agent just a few weeks ago. Together, these two documents form the bulk of what little we have on the dragon Aden. Comment away.

- Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 16 February 2063 at 10:34:08 (PST)

THE QUIET CONSPIRATOR

To: #4453~!struction Corporat--.:%%442

! Importance: High

! Cipher Key Accepted. Decrypting ...

Allahu akbar! My friend, I tell you it has been too long since we last shared a strong cup of Turkish coffee. Surely as the sun rises in the East, we must sit once again and speak of the best things in life. I have been told that you are uneasy with our relationship with our new mutual friend. Be at your ease, for surely you do Allah's work. You wish to understand our friend better, to know his motives and his plans. I will ask that you indulge me, as I cannot tell you everything I know, nor do I know everything there is to know.

- For the reading-between-the-lines-impaired, the "mutual friend" being discussed is Aden.

- Captain Chaos

"Confused? Mystified? Good. My work here is done."



Let me begin with a primer on our friend's personality. We know that popular opinion in our homeland is to despise him; indeed, he is sometimes vilified as a fiend in the mosques. Fortunately, Sunnis are not too eager to leap to the defense of Shi'ites, and so his display in Tehran many years ago served well to quiet the more vocal mullahs.

- Sunni? Shi'ite? What's the deal with them?
- GnuB

• One day GnuB, you're going to have to learn to use a search engine. To save you the pain and remind everyone else, I've paraphrased from the Encyclopedia Orient:

Sunni: Making up approximately 75 percent of all Muslims worldwide, Sunni Muslims adhere to the Caliph of Arabia as the leader of the Muslim world. They follow the Sunnah, a set of guides supplemental to the Koran, and the Shari'a code, a total system for religious, political, social, domestic and private life.

Shi'ite: The largest minority faction of Muslims (roughly 10 percent worldwide), Shi'ites follow the leadership of divinely appointed Imams (twelve or seven, or more, based on which sect you look at) instead of the Sunnah that Sunnis base their law on. Iran is a Shi'ite state.

The important thing to keep in mind is that unlike Westerners, Muslims do not see a division between religion and social and political matters—under Islam, these are all intertwined. The various factions of Islam developed originally as a dispute over who would succeed Mohammed as leader of the Islamic world and eventually developed stronger philosophical, political and religious practice differences. The Sunni place more emphasis on the hajj (pilgrimage) to Makkah, for example, while the Shi'ites are allowed to publicly deny their faith in order to avoid social problems. The Shi'ites and other factions (such as the Druze, the Bohra and the Sufis) tend to be oppressed minorities in Sunni areas. Shi'ites are often linked to movements that oppose Arabian domination of Muslim affairs.

- Ammar

Our friend can be considered a traditionalist amongst his kind. While I am not an expert in the field, I have had it explained to me in a manner that leaves no doubt. What does this mean for you, my friend? It means that should you ever address our friend directly, you should do so respectfully, as you would your own grandfather or elder. Only this elder is much, much older than you can possibly imagine. We are the blink of an eye and he is the lasting stone.

- Gag me with the metaphors. This is like reading datafiles infected by low-grade poetry viril. What gives?

- Gropos

• It is the nature of our author's mother tongue, Arabic. The language naturally lends itself to exaggeration and translation software has to make a best guess as to the intent. From the metaphors chosen, I would guess that the author wanted

to really impress upon his reader the deference that must be shown to their "mutual friend." When an Arab repeats something several times emphatically, he usually really means it.

- Lexicon

You have, no doubt, heard the first-hand accounts of the destruction of Tehran. Perhaps you have even seen the unadulterated bootleg footage of it. My friend, I tell you: this is but the merest amount of our friend's power. It was to make a point, one that I believe the ayatollahs have learned well so far. Those were different days, but do not think that they cannot come again. Our friend will not permit the anti-Awakened clerics another ill-advised jihad.

Do not be misled by the fact that you have not seen our friend in the media since that day, unlike so many others of his kind. Both you and I are well aware of the influence the German wurm wields, how his voice is heard whispering into the Caliph's ear. Our new friend is even subtler, however, an unseen force as unstoppable as the shifting sands.

• Aden's "message" may have stomped out that jihad before it got started, but it also cemented the opposition to the Awakened many fundamentalists had. Anti-Awakened sentiment still runs high in many areas of the Middle East, and anything associated with a dragon carries a stigma that's hard to defeat. Saeder-Krupp's managed to circumvent this by hard work and operating behind subsidiaries and false fronts, but I suspect Aden's soft treading has as much to do with avoiding this bias as it does with simple privacy.

- Socio Pat

Our friend is not the glory hound of the decadent West. He uplifts those who have been oppressed and gives us the chance to retake our way of life from the apostates in Riyadh. This is why the Armenians and Kurds are welcome, my friend. Despite your reservations for both, they serve our friend's interests.

- Armenians? Kurds? These are strange bedfellows. Why would all these groups work together?

- GnuB

• The Kurdish Labor Party (PKK) has had connections with the Armenian underworld for decades, if not longer. While they agitate for an official state of Kurdistan, they need access to weapons, supplies and technology. It just so happens that the Armenians have an excellent distribution network for the opium and marijuana product grown in Central Asia. And drug money is just as good as any other when it comes to funding your own revolution—just ask Aztlan. Of course, if you look at a map and see where Mt. Ararat sits, you can draw another conclusion ...

- Conspir-I-see

• That there's a rather large dragon sitting between the Armenians and the Kurds, and he wants them to play nice.





ADEN

Great Eastern Dragon (Sirrush Variant)

Sex: Male (unverified)

Coloring: Sand-colored scales with bronze highlights

Metahuman Form(s): Unknown

Primary Lair: Mt. Ararat, Turkey

Translator: None known

Timeline

July 21, 2012: Aden awakens on Mt. Ararat and is seen flying west.

2020: Aden destroys Tehran after the ruling Ayatollah Hamidullah declares a jihad on the Awakened.

2043: Kurdish Autonomous Zone declared in eastern Turkey by Kurdish nationalists.

2057: Aden is left the Shroud of Shadows in Dunkelzahn's Will.

Given that kind of motivation, even I could get along with my own mother. "Enemy of my enemy is my friend" indeed.

• Faisal

• It is, however, an interesting choice of allies. It would seem that Aden is deliberately choosing some of the more down-trodden groups as his chess pieces. I would hazard a guess that this is because those groups have the most to gain by associating with him, despite the general distaste in the Middle East for the Awakened.

• Socio Pat

• Is this an indication of a dragon-friendly sect of Islam? I would imagine there are muftis tearing their beards out over that.

• Ammar

• I would say the muftis would have more to worry about if Aden recited the shahada, performed the salat, tithed the zakat, observed the sawm and undertook the hajj. I don't think even Ibn Elsa would be able to deny Aden entry to Makkah should he decide to.

• Amitri

• Merciful Allah, the chaos that would cause ...

• Ammar

You must know, my friend, that our friend is waging a struggle for our homelands. He will not suffer it to come under the sway of the German wyrm, nor will he allow the Infidel to abuse our hospitality. You may be asked for many sacrifices in the future, my friend, but they will not be for nothing. I will contact you later with some bids we need you to win. There is much work ahead of us if we are to do Allah's will.

Al-Masri

• That's odd. I know of a Mohammed Al-Masri. He's an antiques dealer here in DeeCee. He's Egyptian, an expat since the late forties, I believe. Anyone have the scan on him?

• Marley

• Al-Masri is legit through and through as far as the eye can see. He regularly attends prayer services at a local Mosque, pays his taxes on time, has no unusual debts and hasn't spent a lot of money on flashy items. He's well respected in the local Muslim community for his charitable works.

• DeeCee Insider

• He might not be so legit. I checked into why he left Egypt all those years ago, and the files were conveniently erased. Someone's gone to great pains to clean up his trail. I spread a little cash around to some people and came up with some answers. It seems he said some things that got on the bad side of some fundies. I was able to trace him across the Maghreb to Morocco where he disappeared. Rumor had it he slipped out on a boat to Gibraltar minutes ahead of a hit squad. Take it for what you will.

• Maghrebi Monster

ADEN'S OPERATIONS

Mossad Intelligence Briefing: Eyes Only Report

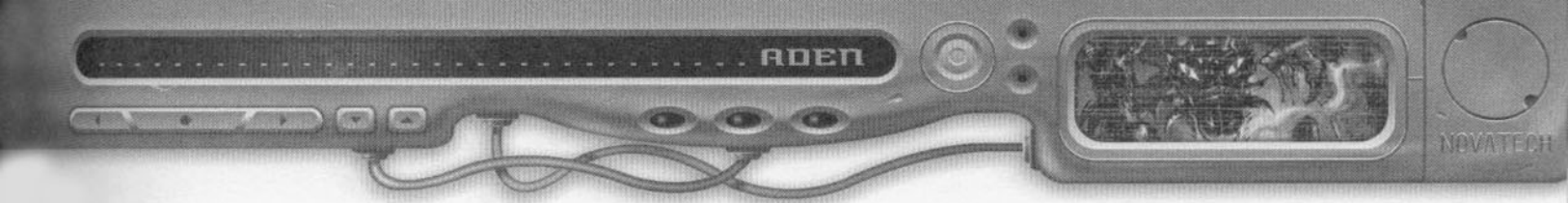
The great dragon known as "Aden" has operations throughout the Middle East and the Maghreb (ref: NAFRICA/DAGON/ADEN). Though Intelligence has identified no formal organizations that act in Aden's interests, we suspect links between the dragon and a wide range of criminal groups, terrorist networks, Islamic splinter factions and other armed cells. We suspect many of the groups themselves are unaware of their ties to the dragon.

On a personal level, Aden is a mighty creature, with all the keen intelligence and destructive power a great dragon can bring to bear—as witnessed in Tehran. Aden is the only known sirrush great dragon, a variant of the eastern dragon with longer limbs and head and a shorter tail. It is rumored that some of the unidentified adult sirrush active in the Middle East work for Aden, but this is unconfirmed. Intelligence has not yet identified any of Aden's metahuman forms, perhaps indicating that the dragon refuses or is incapable of taking such forms, but more likely inferring that Aden frequently changes forms to stymie identification.

• The sirrush shows up in Babylonian mythology. It is found on the Ishtar Gate to Babylon and was the symbol of the god Marduk who slew Tiamat. Makes you wonder, eh?

• Indy

• Waitamminute, how exactly does anyone know Aden is male? From what I gather, most people assume a dragon's gender from the metahuman form they take, or what they've said publicly—but Aden's meta form hasn't been seen, and there



haven't exactly been a flood of press statements issuing from Mt. Ararat. So how does anyone know? You can't really ask a great dragon to, you know, lift its leg to check the equipment. What's the scan?

- Poster X
- Given how magical dragons are, Aden could be anything. Dragons are not predictable things.
- Mushussu
- If Aden wanted to pass unnoticed, a female form would work wonders. Despite all the noise about gender equality in Islam, the reality is far different. The more conservative a place is, the less notice a woman has—assuming she doesn't violate Shari'a or offend the Religious Police.
- Amifri

Aden's ultimate objectives and goals remain unclear; we can only speculate at this time. Some activities presumably sponsored by Aden have conflicted with Israeli interests; others have coincided with Israeli goals. Current policy is to monitor, analyze and respond to Aden-linked groups and operations on a per-case basis.

CONFLICTS

Despite a lack of information on Aden's agenda, Intelligence has identified hostilities directed by the dragon at three other forces that are also of concern to Israel. The first is the great dragon Lofwyr and his enterprises in the region. The second is the "Islamic Unification Movement" (IUM). The third is the nascent "New Islamic Jihad" (NIJ). All intelligence reports have been verified to the best of our field agents' abilities.

- Spook-speak for "this drek changes every minute." Not that I blame them, intelligence in the Middle East is a very fluid commodity.
- Spook

Lofwyr

Lofwyr is one of the most influential forces in the Middle East. From his near-total control of the Arabian oilfields to the numerous shell companies fronting for Saeder-Krupp, Lofwyr directly and indirectly affects many of the business interests both in and around Israel. The majority of Saeder-Krupp's Middle Eastern concerns are veiled behind front companies and subsidiary operations to avoid the strong undercurrents of Islamic sentiment against dragons.

Embarrassing links to Saeder-Krupp have recently turned up in news outlets, sparking at least one backlash of violence against the company so fingered. While these leaks have not been attributable to any one source, a definite pattern has emerged, aimed at exposing Lofwyr's holdings to a suspicious populace.

- That one instance of violence was the torching of a Fatima Petrochemicals office. The official report chalked it up to over-

zealous students, but the unofficial report indicated an organized attack that included magical and Matrix attacks. One wonders if the leak and thugs came from the same source.

- Faisal

These incidents and countless others lead us to believe that an agency with considerable socio-political influence is waging a quiet "shadow-war" with Saeder-Krupp. On first glance these may seem to be isolated incidents, but when viewing the overall picture, many of the clues point to Aden as being responsible.

This subtle conflict has picked up in pace over the past year. Even Saeder-Krupp's key official in the area, Saied Bey, seems to have fallen prey to it. For several months, Bey has been suspiciously inactive and unreachable, making no public appearances. According to our informants, he is suffering the effects of a developing drug habit, but this remains unconfirmed.

- Buldrek. Bey's not the type to let a monkey crawl on his back. Lofwyr's too smart to let people with addictive personalities take key roles.
- Felix

Saied Bey has had the most unfortunate luck lately, but not due to a drug habit, chip or otherwise. It all started after a dinner party at his opulent Istanbul quarters, where the usual suspects gathered—with the addition of one striking woman of unknown identity. Soon thereafter, Bey was driving to a meeting with some shadowrunners in Beirut. On the way, the car's brakes failed and it rear-ended a lorry filled with pig offal. Bey curtailed his movements after that, canceling meetings with various power brokers. Word is that Bey is cursed. I can't say for certain, but it seems that Aden has subverted Lofwyr's linchpin in the Middle East, at least for the moment.

- Canaan

- Istanbul? I thought it was Constantinople? What's the deal?
- GnuB

That's nobody's business but the Turks. Seriously though, you'll find that Westerners call it "Constantinople"—after all, the city declared itself independent and was recognized by the West. And every Arab will call it "Istanbul," a throwback to when they still possessed the Crown of the Bosphorus.

- TMBG

Islamic Unity Movement (IUM)

Intelligence has kept its eyes on the IUM since Badr al Din Ibn Eisa started his movement in Al-Basrah in southeastern Iraq (ref: EMEA/IRAQ/BASRAH). Analysis indicates that a major portion of early financial backing of the IUM came through a holding corporation traced to a bank in Singapore, operated (through intermediaries) by Saeder-Krupp. S-K's interests are clear: the incessant political upheaval and destabilization threatened their near-monopoly on petroleum production in Arabia, so they provided support to the IUM to stabilize the region.



Over the past decade, a network believed to be directed by Aden has conducted a campaign of sabotage against key IUM leaders and symbols, resulting in some significant setbacks. Intelligence has tracked the origins of some of these agents and operations to Kurdish areas in northern Iraq. Though these operations have occasionally benefited Israeli interests, accusations have also framed Israel as responsible for them, hampering foreign relations. Our own plans have also been frustrated when IUM personnel were assassinated or extracted before our operations regarding them were complete. Twice, agents of Aden posing as Mossad agents have kidnapped IUM sympathetic officials. Our best efforts could not track their whereabouts; they are presumed dead.

• I can name a terrorist attack that has Aden's name all over it. Remember the bombing of the IUM headquarters in Beirut? Check this out. A Lebanese construction firm called Hourani Construction built the HQ with a fatal flaw in the southern support beams. Who would know, right? Well, some decker sliced Hourani's host and liberated a bunch of design files. Two days later, a truck packed with semtex explodes right next to the weak point. Coincidence? I don't think so.

• Scud

• This data dump started with a file from a construction company ...

• Lone Gunman

Aden's campaign against the IUM seems to indicate that the dragon is opposed to a united Muslim political force. In fact, Aden seems intent to destabilize the region and prevent any unified bloc from gaining control. Decentralization and instability make the region less accommodating to corporate interests and corporate attempts to achieve a stranglehold, as they have done in other parts of the world. Such a plan is to Israel's advantage so long as we are not painted as the scapegoat. A united Arab military would wield far too much force to be silenced as quickly as Libya was.

• So why wouldn't Aden just want to subvert a unified Arabia to dance to his tune instead of Lofwyr's?

• SJT

• It could be that Aden simply doesn't want anything connected to Lofwyr to have more than a clawhold in the Middle East. But the more logical explanation is that if Lofwyr



designed it, he could take it back whenever he wanted. Aden obviously doesn't want to play the Golden Oldie's game, so he's shaking the tree to see what falls out.

- Ammar

The New Islamic Jihad (NIJ)

The speech given by Ibn Eisa just after his alleged resurrection was the spark that ignited the New Islamic Jihad (NIJ). In that speech, Ibn Eisa declared that the IUM's work in uniting Islam was nearly done and that a new path must be forged to deal with Islam's enemies. Many of his supporters have interpreted his new declarations as a call for militancy and warfare; some are steering the IUM in new directions while others are working outside of it—and quickly consolidating as a new movement. It is important to note, however, that not all supporters of the IUM have flocked to the NIJ's banner. Several corporations have cooled their support considerably, especially ones with close contacts to Saied Bey.

Speculation remains over who is responsible for the "assassination" of Ibn Eisa. Intelligence has confirmed that Mossad did not authorize or stage this assassination, despite rumor to the contrary. Aden is not ruled out as a possibility, considering his attempts to undermine the IUM. We have traced the assassins only as far as Cairo, Egypt, which we determined they had entered by illegal means.

- Probably on camelback from Libya. That border is so porous I could run a flight of T-birds through it at top speed without raising an eyebrow.

- Steel Runner

- And Libya is home to the Desert Wars, which would be the perfect recruiting ground for mercs willing to take a near-suicidal mission to whack Ibn Eisa (though I hear the 10,000 Daggers will take even near-impossible odds for the right price). I only wonder how they managed to smuggle arms into Makkah.

- Faisal

- Who would hire these mercs though? To assassinate Ibn Eisa in Makkah is a serious statement. Rather than mercenaries, I would look at the covert training camps run by various factions in the desert.

- Saevar

- Typical Zionist propaganda. They take any opportunity to portray all of Islam as bloodthirsty savages, ready to pounce on each other at a whim. They will be driven into the sea by the will of Allah.

- Mullah Omar

Intelligence indicates that Aden is engaged in probing the supporters of the NIJ, though it is unclear if the intent is to gather intelligence, infiltrate, feel out allies, determine weaknesses to exploit or to take advantage of the growing

friction between the NIJ and other Islamic powers (including the Arabian Caliphate). We suspect that several missing NIJ operatives are in Aden's hands, and we have also linked Aden to the two dozen NIJ partisans in central Morocco who were tortured to death by Berber tribesmen.

- How are these Berber guys of central Morocco linked to Aden?

- SJT

- Well, there have been a score of unconfirmed sightings of a dragon matching Aden's description up in the High Atlas Mountains. It's likely that Aden has a lair up there, smack in the center of Morocco, bordering the Saharan desert. And that desert would be where a lot of the Berbers live. Maybe the Israelis think Aden has a group of Berbers guarding his lair ... which then makes me ask what the NIJ was doing sending people up there.

- Barber

- Aden also has another lair in Iran, in the Alborz Mountains north of Tehran. Maybe he likes to keep track of his handiwork.

- Qom

- Or perhaps a vassal of his keeps an eye on it for him. No one has seen the Alborz dragon clearly enough to say it is Aden.

- as Sadiq

Intelligence has also been concerned with evidence pointing to potential joint operations between agents of Aden and NIJ-sponsored terrorists. Reliable reports indicate that a group of Kurdish commandos known previously to work on Aden's behalf assisted with the sabotage of an Exxoco Petrochem refinery in Arabia that was facing political pressure from the NIJ. An alliance between Aden and the NIJ would be severely detrimental to Israeli interests, so we must be on guard to prevent such collusion.

RESOURCES

Intelligence has identified three major groups that Aden acts through: Kurds, Armenians and Lebanese agents.

The Kurds

Located primarily in parts of Turkey, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Kurds have long been an oppressed minority in just about every Islamic nation in the Middle East. There is also a large expatriate community across the globe. They can be found in any trade or profession and are predominately Sunni Muslims. Their distribution across the Middle East makes them ideal agents for a foreign power. The known lair of Aden is situated somewhere on Mount Ararat in the extreme eastern edge of Turkey, deep in the traditional "Kurdistan."

Kurdish "freedom fighters" were periodically slaughtered in repressive clampdowns in Turkey, Iraq and other areas, but the Kurdish people continued to rally for independence. In



the 2020s, the various Kurdish political factions ceased their infighting and consolidated behind the Kurdish Labor Party, or PKK. This philosophical change is linked to the appearance of the charismatic leader Ahmed Massoud. Western-educated at Cambridge University, Massoud brought a moderating influence to the PKK, making it more appealing to the other Kurdish factions, before revving up the radicalism again two decades later.

- The Kurds have a tough reputation, so Ares hired Kurdish mercenaries when the insect hive in Constantinople was assaulted in 2056 to act as scouts and guides. The lessons those Kurdish merc outfits had learned in the Islamic invasion of the Balkans served them well, as they were ferocious fighters.

- Grey Knight

- That reminds me of something. Back in the days of the Alliance for Allah and their foray into "empire building" in the Balkans (the "Second Ottoman Jihad," aka Euro-Wars, Part Two), a cadre of real hardcore Kurdish mercs joined up. They were the top shock troops, breaking the lines of the Europeans time and time again. Then in 2034, as the combined forces of MET2000, Czechoslovakia, Austria and the Ukraine launched a major offensive, the Kurds vanished. Without their elite troops, the Islamic forces were ground to a halt. When the Islamic push faltered, the tentative alliance backing it collapsed.

- Janissary

Under Massoud, and with the experience of the Euro-Wars under their belts, the PKK and their allies were able to successfully proclaim the creation of the Kurdish Autonomous Zone in 2043. Turkish and Iraqi troops were surprised to be facing a particularly well-armed insurgency and urgently retreated. An uneasy truce remains active to this day. In retrospect, it seems that Aden may have played an influential behind-the-scenes role in this chain of events.

- The creation of the Kurdish AZ was a blow to Ankara. That region might not be bursting with natural resources, but the control of overland trade routes and smuggling lines was an invaluable source of revenue.

- Saevar

While not all Kurds are affiliated with Aden, all militant Kurdish factions should be monitored for terrorist activities.

The Armenians

Armenians comprise the next known group affiliated with Aden. Armenia's proximity to both Mount Ararat and the Central Asian drug route make it an ideal location. Intelligence indicates that several of the Armenian drug families combined their resources at approximately the same time that drug interdiction became non-existent in eastern Turkey and Armenia. Shipments of raw and refined opium as well as marijuana have increased exponentially along the Black Sea coast of Turkey. These Armenian drug caravans

have occasionally enlisted Kurdish escorts, lending credence to the rumor that Aden condones the trafficking of drugs.

- As distasteful as drug trafficking is, not to mention forbidden by Islam, this trade has continued for centuries and has been quite profitable for certain countries like Armenia and Afghanistan. And Islam has not, unfortunately, abated the taste for hashish and opium by Muslims.

- Ammar

There is also a significant minority of Armenian Orthodox Christians in Israel. These groups are all primarily religious orders, however, they have been known to provide shelter to various individuals wanted for questioning in connection with terrorist acts both in Israel and abroad. Earlier this year, five Kurds wanted for questioning in connection with a bombing in Syria were seen entering an Armenian chapel in Bethlehem, only to be missing when Mossad agents gained the necessary clearance to enter.

- This in itself is not too surprising. Israel hasn't treated its Christian citizens much better than the Muslims. They don't go out of the way to raze their homes, but neither do they take any pains to spare them. A couple of old monks letting some Kurds sneak out of the city and away from the Mossad does not mean they are pawns of Shaytan.

- Amitri

Lebanese Dissidents

Several dissident factions in Lebanon are also believed linked to Aden. Even before the IUM occupation of Lebanon, several business leaders and Christian groups in the country opposed the growing Islamist movement. Their fears were realized after the Maronite Christian President Elias Khouri was killed in a suspicious car accident in 2061. The Prime Minister, Abdul Karami, seized control of the government and "invited" IUM-backed Syrian forces in for "peacekeeping." Resistance movements appeared almost overnight in the back door social clubs in both Shi'ite and Christian communities. Tracking membership in these clubs is extremely difficult, and Mossad agents have failed to discover any links to Aden in the few that have been penetrated. We have, however, linked several Lebanese businesses such as Hourani Construction to terrorist incidents against the IUM, Syrian troops and Saeder-Krupp interests.

- No one ever seems to leave Lebanon alone. Of all the Middle Eastern countries besides Israel, Lebanon had the most prosperous middle class. After all the chaos and warfare of the late twentieth century, Lebanon had done an admirable job building itself into a prosperous nation once again. But thanks to the IUM-backed takeover, sectarian violence is back with a vengeance. Foreign investment capital is fleeing and the mostly-balanced system of government is being torn apart. And now the NIJ is rallying around it, setting it up as the spark for a new period of warfare and violence in the Mideast.

- Levantine Son

- Peace will be achieved only if you submit to the Movement. Do you not wish to join your Islamic brothers against the corrupt West?

- Unity

- I submit to Allah alone, and bend knee to no man. The West is no more corrupt than the Caliph and his cronies. They preach a "pure" Islam with one side of their mouth, then drink imported Scotch and smoke hashish with the other. Perhaps those in Denver have it right.

- Levantine Son

- The Mossad fail to mention one last group:

The Kharijites

The Kharijites first broke off from Islam in 658 AD, predating the Shi'ite movement. The current crop isn't the same kind of radical as their ancient predecessors, but they pull no punches. They're perfectly willing to bomb, shoot, torture and terrorize anyone to accomplish their goals. They consider all Muslims equal, but they follow the convenient loophole doctrine of takfir, which essentially allows them to kill Muslims they've labeled as infidels (Islam otherwise forbids the killing of Muslims except in special circumstances—like that's ever stopped anybody). Naturally, supporters of the Caliphate and the IUM are at the top of their list. How this bunch hooked up with Aden is unclear, but it seems to have drawn upon disaffected Sunnis as well as Shi'ites for the bulk of its membership.

- Seceeder

- The leaders of the Kharijites trace their ideology from the Ibadis out of Omar. When Kallim Sa'ud was able to consolidate the entirety of the Arabian Peninsula with the help of Ibn Elsa's IUM and political cunning, the Wahhabist Saudis persecuted the once-dominant Ibadis of Omar. They were driven from their homes and mostly resettled in the Maghreb where the Kharijites had found sanctuary before. They were predominately well educated and wealthy, and so have integrated themselves well into other states, especially the more liberal Western states of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

- Intifada Papa

- The surviving Berbers are sympathetic to the Kharijites' cause. They have sheltered fugitive Kharijites in the desert first against IUM and now NIJ agents. There are still communities of Berbers in Egypt who can smuggle you from one side of the Desert Wars to the other—for the right price. And the assassins of the Caliphate still fear the silent knives of the Berbers. |





have heard tales that the Fellahin have contacts with the Kharjijs as well, but nothing reliable.

- Silent Knife

- Gibraltar is the back door into the Maghreb and thus the Middle East. The tradition of Mediterranean piracy is alive and well along the once infamous Barbary coast. They can smuggle just about anything in and out of North Africa. It would be an obvious lifeline for any underground movement. I know I certainly wouldn't want to depend on an overland route through Africa. Bugs, ghouls and toxics, oh my!

- Hangfire

- Bzz! Now I remember where I've heard that Al-Masri name mentioned at the beginning—he's the leader of the Kharjijs! His name turned up in interrogation, after the mind-probing of a Kharji assassin who'd taken down my MET 2000 boss at the time.

- Mongol Merc

- You expect me to believe that a nice, quiet, antiques dealer living in the middle of the UCAS capitol, surrounded by spooks and law enforcement types, is really the brains behind a violent religious sect that conducts murderous terrorist acts? If that's him, he's simply too slick. He hiring?

- Scab

IDENTIFIED AGENTS

Three major individuals have been identified as having possible links to the dragon Aden: Stepan Markaryan, Ahmed Massoud and a fixer known only as "Bel."

Stepan Markaryan

A drug baron from Armenia, Markaryan consolidated three of the major crime families in a short but brutal war. Markaryan makes his headquarters in the capital of Yerevan in a fortified compound. Local reports indicate that Markaryan has bribed a significant portion of the law enforcement and judiciary of Armenia and operates with a free hand within the borders of his country. He is identified as an unaugmented human male with graying blond hair and blue eyes. Markaryan is careful to not allow too much of his product get to the streets in Armenia, knowing that even his money can't silence the authorities if a substance abuse problem escalates. While he has no compunctions about employing violence to achieve his goals, Markaryan shows remarkable restraint in abstaining from open warfare with other syndicates. Armed men can be seen throughout the capital, guarding various businesses and buildings that Markaryan has an interest in. Israeli and various European police forces have issued warrants for his arrest for illicit narcotics trafficking, restricting his ability to travel openly.

- Why doesn't the Mossad just snatch him from Yerevan? For a crew that's been known to grab terrorist leaders from their beds, it seems suspicious that they haven't picked up a gimped drug baron.

- Skiptracer

- That limp you refer to is from a car bomb that the Mossad used to try to rub Markaryan out. Apparently they tried to erase him while he was meeting an unidentified Arab fixer of his. That Mossad team didn't make it home, and now I've heard they just observe him. It's strange.

- Enfield Six

- The Mossad do more than observe him. Markaryan has cut a deal with the Israelis. In return for not knocking him off, Markaryan slips the Israelis information on any terrorist groups that he deals with. Funny, none of his information includes any dirt on Kurds, Lebanese or Maghreb-based groups. I guess a death threat from the Mossad only goes so far.

- Ersatz

Ahmed Massoud

As leader of the PKK, the obvious reason for Massoud to enter into a partnership with Aden is to secure backing and support for an independent Kurdistan, a homeland for the Kurdish people (presumably with him as the leader). Thanks to weapons, financing and other aid, Massoud now exercises de facto control over large portions of eastern Turkey and northern Iraq, even outside the self-declared Kurdish Autonomous Zone. A large contingent of trained and battle-hardened guerillas are at his beck and call, to be dispatched wherever Massoud needs them—even as far away as Europe and the Americas.

Recently, reports indicate that Massoud has developed an unknown interest in Iran. He has dispatched PKK agents on operations there, even as far as the Lout Desert. One rumor suggests a connection to the secretive Black Scorpions.

- The Scorpions are a dangerous wild card, if this and the ties to the current Ayatollah are to be believed. An alliance, however unintentional, between Iran and Aden could prove deadly.

- Zion's Shield

- Worried about a little payback, Zion? Don't sweat too much; I think that Ibn Eisa has a lot more to worry about from the Scorpions than you.

- Saevar

Massoud's headquarters is in the eastern mountains, near Lake Van.



"Bel"

Bel is an Arab fixer who operates throughout the Middle East and Maghreb. His origin is unknown—he is presumed to be Iraqi or Iranian. No solid evidence links him to Aden, though he is often seen with PKK bodyguards. The jobs he hires local and foreign shadowrunners for often seem to be at cross purposes. One run will aid the IUM, another will crush IUM plans, while a third will act against certain corporate interests. Intelligence hasn't been able to penetrate Bel's security, either physical, Matrix or magical. Bel has been seen with both Stepan Markaryan and Ahmed Massoud, strengthening links to the great dragon Aden. His source of funding is unknown at this time, as are any backers.

- A real enigma, this one. He's avoided all of the traps the Mossad have planted for him and seems to operate wherever he wants to. The Mossad aren't the only ones who want him, either—a half dozen spook groups are keen to pick his brain. And the corporate interests all seem to have a German connection. You do the math.

- Ersatz

SPECULATION

- Ok, so I understand that Aden and Lofwyr are competing for influence in the Middle East. But my question is: who's winning? Can anyone make sense of this chaos and print up a scorecard?

- GnuB

- Well, let's start back at the beginning. It was Ayatollah Hamidullah who declared the Jihad on the Awakened that sparked Aden's attack on Tehran. How could a senile old man like Hamidullah, best known for his incoherent muttering and fondness for young boys, fire off enough neurons to denounce anything?

- as Sadiq

- Lies! Your impure insinuations blacken Islam!

- Crescent Moon

- It's worth noting that around the time Aden was making an example of Tehran, Hassayn PetroChem became a wholly owned subsidiary of Fatima Petrochemicals. Normally, a deal like this would attract much more notice—but not when there are dragons running amok. Looks like Lofwyr either set it up and/or took advantage of the distraction to grab Arabian oil reserves for his industrial schemes in Europe.

- The Chromed Accountant

- Are you both suggesting that Hamidullah was someone's puppet, and that he was sacrificed to goad Aden into destroying Tehran?

- Skeptic

- I suggest nothing, I merely point out possibilities.

Consider this, for example. The destruction of Tehran may have stymied the jihad, but it also pissed off a lot of people. In fact, it may be one of the key events that saw a resurgence of radical fundamentalists rising to power across the Middle East. These new regimes later joined forces, formed the Alliance for Allah and invaded the Balkans during the Euro-Wars.

Kurdish mercenaries drove the spearhead into Europe for the AfA. Then, in the midst of the war, the Kurds suddenly withdraw and consolidate their own power when they've never shown more initiative than blowing up Turks, Iranians or Iraqis.

- as Sadiq

- Those Kurds were pushing deep into Lofwyr's back yard when they bailed. The patchwork of Christian and Islamic states left behind when the war fell to pieces has been a thorn in the side of Lofwyr ever since. Score some for Aden.

- Samson

- Except that failed war is what drove Ibn Eisa to form the Islamic Unity Movement. Under Ibn Eisa's direction, and with Lofwyr's backing, the Sunnis were unified into a political force. When the IUM guided all of Arabia into consolidating under the Caliphate, the shift of power in the Islamic world tilted drastically in their favor. With the largest petrochem conglomerates in Arabia also at his beck and call, Lofwyr was riding high.

But then someone assassinated Ibn Eisa, and everything went to drek again.

- Riyalpolitik

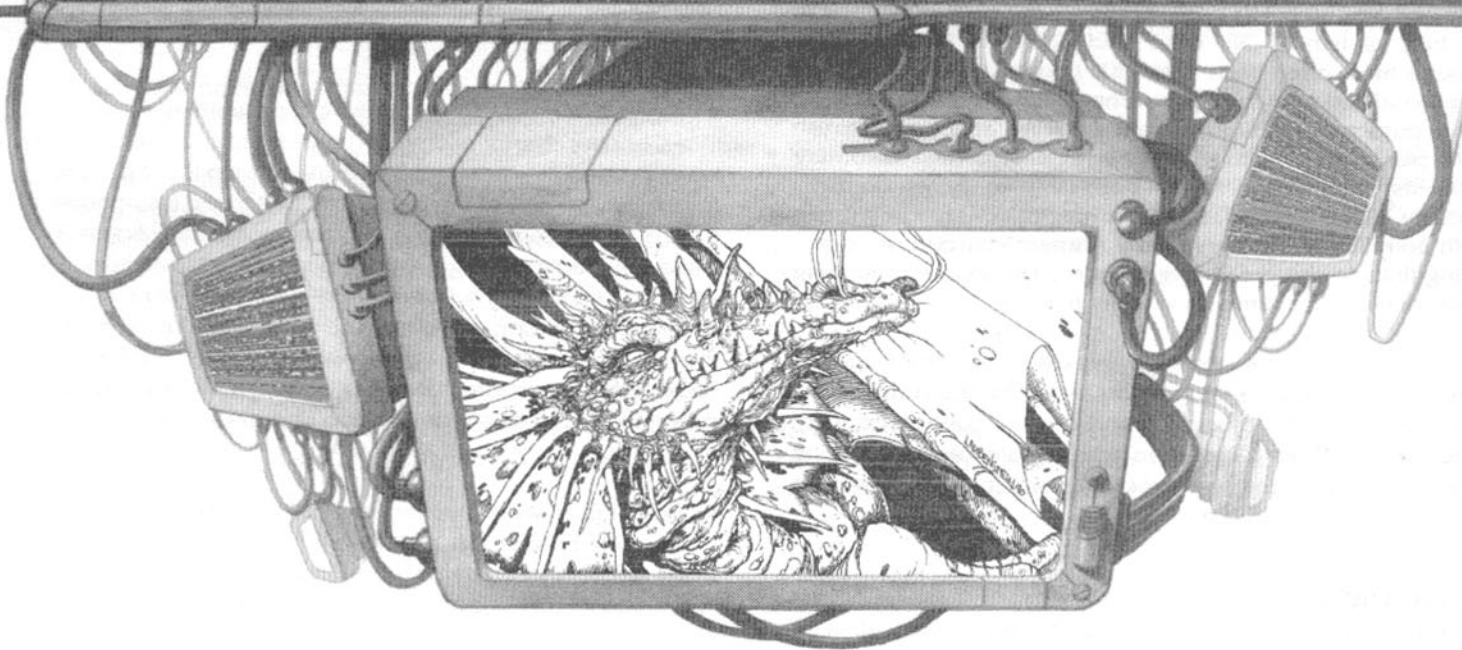
- The Lone Gunman has an Arab cousin?

- Crescent Moon

- If this is Aden at work, he's a crafty wyrm. Taking on Lofwyr's corporate power head-on would be suicide. It may be that Lofwyr miscalculated when seizing the oilfields of Arabia and then trying to get the region to dance to his tune. Dynasties never last long in the Middle East, especially when another great dragon opposes them.

- Wyrm Watcher

CELEDYR: DRACO DIGITALIS



Everyone knows about Lofwyr and how he runs the show at Saeder-Krupp. And when Dunkelzahn passed from this world into the next, we all discovered he was a major backer of Ares through his Gavilan Industries shell company. Well, it looks like another dragon has some notable corporate ties as well. Late last year, the great dragon Celedyr made an unprecedented appearance at a Transys Neuronet board meeting, where he not only is a major shareholder but also holds a directorship through a proxy. At the meeting, Celedyr forced a vote against then-CEO Liam Riley and got him booted out of Silicon Glen, to be replaced by one of the wyrm's claw-picked candidates.

But that's just the tip of the iceberg. From what I've heard from the wags at Manchester, Celedyr's becoming more involved in Transys to get more support for some of his Matrix projects. Apparently the wyrm is a real online junkie and spends a lot of time surfing the Matrix.

With that in mind, I called up a few blokes from across the Pond to give us the lowdown on the Welsh wyrm. The first part comes from Money Man, who follows the European business scene. He's been watching the whole Transys Neuronet situation pretty closely, so he knows about what took place, and what we can expect from the new Transys.

• Captain Chaos

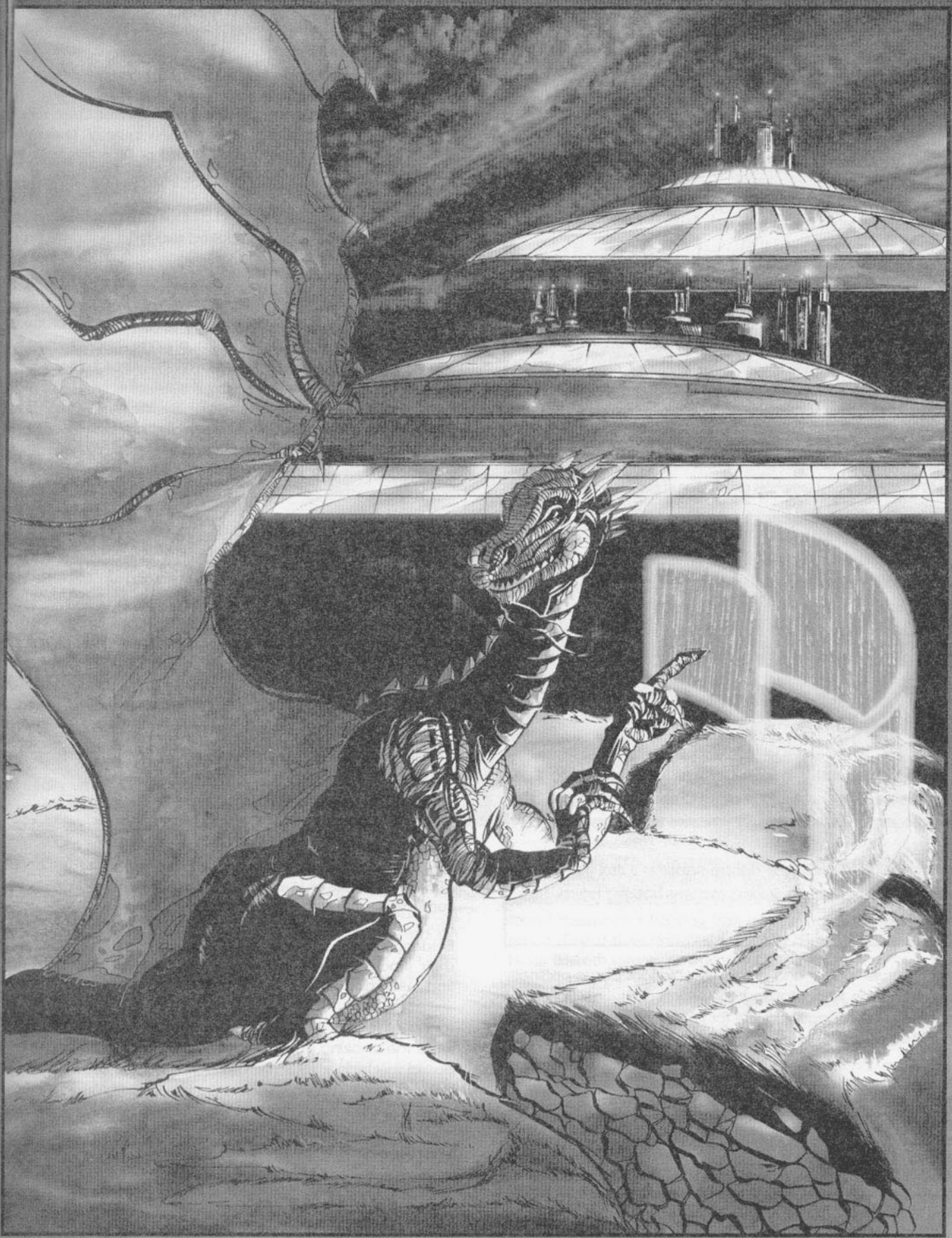
Transmitted: 16 February 2063 at 10:36:38 (PST)

THE NEW TRANSYS NEURONET

by Money Man

I've got some hot stock tips for you, chummers: first, buy Transys like there's no tomorrow. Also, sell HKB, 'cuz it doesn't look like they'll *have* a tomorrow.

Ever since Fiona Blareth replaced Liam Riley as CEO, it's like Transys Neuronet's been a whole new company. Many of the talking heads on the business channels had gloomily predicted the shakeup up top would bring the company down, but just the opposite's been happening, as Transys made some aggressive and successful moves in the fourth quarter of 2062 that are still ongoing now. Recent statements from the company have indicated that Transys may even exceed its revenue and earnings forecasts for the first quarter of the 2063 fiscal year.





CELEDYR

Great Western Dragon

Sex: Male

Coloring: Dark silver with brassy highlights

Metahuman Form(s): Human male, pale features, brassy hair

Primary Lair: Caerleon, Wales (UK)

Translator: Per Engströmm

Timeline

2013: First reported sighting of Celedyr in Caerleon, Wales

2026: The Knights of Rage appear in the Southwark neighborhood of London (later to be known as "the Squeeze")

2041: Second sighting of Celedyr in the Nubian Desert in Sudan

2043: A chapter of the Knights of Rage assembles at Caerleon and pledges its loyalty to Celedyr.

2044: Transys Neuronet completes construction of a major research installation around Caerleon, with cooperation from Celedyr.

2054: Transys Neuronet is linked to a string of murders in London by a serial killer addicted to a "Jack the Ripper" personafix BTL. Transys's stock price plummets, allowing Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal (HKB) to buy a majority share.

2055: Celedyr obtains a seat on the Board of Directors for Transys Neuronet. He designates Fiona Blareth as his proxy representative to the Board.

2058: The HKB-controlled board of directors fires CEO Sir Iain Greig and replaces him with Liam Riley.

March 2062: Celedyr appears at a directors' meeting and calls for a vote of no confidence against Liam Riley. Riley is ousted from CEO position at Transys Neuronet, and Fiona Blareth elected as new CEO. Celedyr appoints Per Engströmm as his new proxy representative to the Transys Board of Directors.

September 2062: The dragon Elohann negotiates a deal with Transys Neuronet, which buys out the dragon's company, Emerging Futures, from Ares Macrotechnology.

- A lot of those "doom and gloom" predictions came originally from the London Financial Journal, which everyone in Europe knows to be a propaganda shell for HKB. Sounds more like sour grapes than financial analysis to me.
- Anthony

So what caused this shakeup at the top? Why, only a little shadow war between the two major shareholders, the great dragon Celedyr and the financial conglomerate Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal (HKB), for control of one of the world's major communications pioneers. You probably haven't heard of it, since most of you terms were paying more attention to things

going on in North America than in Europe. (Okay, not many Europeans noticed either.) But while you all were watching a dragon run for president and most of the West Coast turn into the Western Front, Celedyr has been quietly undermining HKB's dominance of the Transys Board of Directors.

- That can't be right. I thought Celedyr and HKB were in it together. With HKB's money and all that novahot research coming out of Caerleon, Transys looked ready to become the next Fuchi.
- Phantom

• Sure, Phantom. Checked the tech SIGs lately? For the past several years, the hot tip's been anyone and everyone but Transys Neuronet. Most of the innovative research projects coming out of Caerleon have usually stalled after four to six months on average due to internal politics. By the time Transys gets its act together, Renraku or Fuchi/Novatech steals the idea and beats Transys to the market, leaving the suits at Silicon Glen to play catch-up.

- Arioch

• Back during the Corp War three years ago, a lot of Eurocorps were making shadowruns and acquisitions against Fuchi Pan-Europa while the megacorp was breaking up and the blood was in the water. ECC Eurotronics and Erika in particular made off like bandits picking from Fuchi's carcass. Guess who was noticeably absent from the scavenger hunt? That's right, Transys Neuronet. Other than acquiring Götaland Telekom in Scandinavia, Transys was a latecomer to the party and usually ended up getting outmaneuvered. If HKB was preoccupied fighting Celedyr, that would explain why Transys couldn't bring HKB's financial backing and takeover expertise to bear.

- The Keynesian Kid

DAGGERS IN MEN'S SMILES

The truth is, despite a public show of solidarity and cooperation, Celedyr and HKB have been struggling for control of Transys Neuronet ever since HKB took control of the board in 2054. For those of you who don't remember, that was when some serial killer on a personafix chip thought he was Jack the Ripper and started carving up the ladies on Whitechapel Row. Evidence leaked to the media linked "Jack" to Transys and their stock took a nosedive, which allowed HKB to waltz in and take control.

• And never has a greater lie been told in all of this century. For while the smoking gun may have been Transys's, it was HKB that pulled the trigger. HKB infiltrators created the clone that would be Jack, HKB executives selected the victims, and HKB agents gave the killer his personafix motive. Even now it pains me to admit my own unwitting role in perpetuating this fraud to public exposure.

- Geraint

- Geraint, you spineless bastard! You knew this and you never told us?
- Rani

• I did not intend to deceive you or Francesca, dear Rani. Merely to withhold how badly we were manipulated. But now that HKB has gotten their due, perhaps the truth is ready to be revealed.

- Geraint

HKB hadn't enough time to settle into the recently-vacated corner office when Celedyr suddenly buys up enough of the remaining shares early in 2055 to obtain his own seat on the board. Nobody knew it then, but Celedyr had already been investing in Transys through proxies and shell companies. The purchase needed to get on the board, however, was rather large and difficult *not* to notice. Once on the board, Celedyr withdrew again from the public eye, leaving Fiona Blareth as his designated proxy to the board.

- So, anyone have any dirt on this Fiona slitch? Other than the fact that she's the wyrm's stooge and now the CEO?

- TPY

- Ah, yes, our dear Lady Irondrawers. She got that nickname with good reason—she regularly eats young interns for breakfast, and she terrorized the HKB directors in the boardroom. She also gets results, which is probably why she's the wyrm's favorite.

There isn't that much about Irondrawers that's out of the ordinary. A product of the Oxford system, she spent her early career climbing the corporate ladder. She can still turn heads at a respectable 42 years' age. Too bad she's already spoken for; she's married to Joss Khartinde, an African term she met while on assignment in Kenya. (Though what she sees in him I have no idea.) Were it not for the fact that Celedyr appointed her his proxy, you couldn't even tell she had a connection to the wyrm.

- MesoStim

- Irondrawers Fiona may be clean, but her dear hubbie is another matter. Though they met in Kenya, Khartinde is actually Sudanese, claiming his family fled from the Nubian region when he was still a child. He is also a mercenary and was acting as a "security consultant" when he met Fiona. Odds are pretty good that Khartinde is a member of Celedyr's Knights of Rage.

- Mista

- Any chance Fiona may be one of these drakes we've heard about lately?
- Grim

- Irondrawers? Not a chance. Her personnel files have always shown her to be a mundane. The recent security screening she underwent when she took the CEO job shows this hasn't changed.

On the other hand, her replacement as Celedyr's proxy—a Norwegian slag named Per Engströmm—I'm not so sure of. When he showed up at his first Transys board meeting, there was a little bit of commotion with the Transys security mage. The party line is there was a protocol frag-up and the wagemage didn't know Engströmm was magically active. But from what

I've heard, the wagemage did know; it's just that when he read Engströmm's aura, he penetrated Engströmm's masking and saw something that freaked him out.

- Mole Man

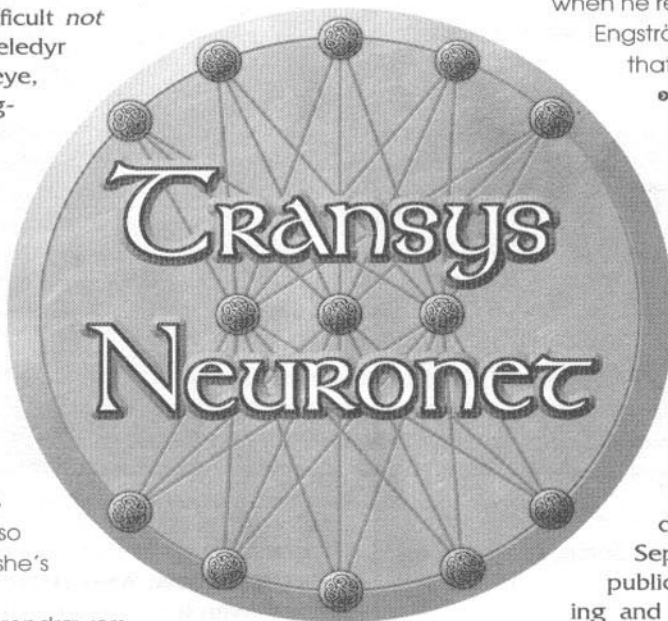
WAR BY PROXY

Though withdrawn again from public view, Celedyr remained busy behind the scenes, using various means (including "unconventional" ones) to erode HKB's share majority. About five months ago, though, Celedyr began working his stockbrokers into late overtime to make a final putsch.

Key Transys shareholders suddenly dumped their shares, forcing a downturn in the share price. In September, Celedyr made an unusual public appearance at a Transys board meeting and called for a vote of no confidence against Riley for the sudden plunge of Transys's share prices. When the dust had settled and the final vote was counted, Celedyr and his supporters had over 70 percent of the votes against Riley, while HKB, to their sudden dismay, found themselves holding less than a quarter of the representation. Faster than you can say *coup d'état*, Riley was out and Fiona Blareth was in as the new CEO.

- You know, that explains a lot of things about a run my group pulled recently. This African Johnson with a funny accent hired us to extract a bigshot Transys executive. Turns out it was an involuntary extraction, since the mark wasn't expecting or happy to see us. I'll save the details for later, but after we grabbed the mark and got out, we were told to fly to Paris to deliver the guy to his new employer. We ended up handing him over to a bunch of suits for Renraku Europe.

After we got back to London I had our decker do a follow-up on that guy. Turns out the Transys suit was invested with about





TRANSYS NEURONET

World Headquarters: Edinburgh, Scotland (UK)

President/CEO: Fiona Blareth

Chairman of the Board: Sir Archibald Leigh-Hunt

Corporate Status: Public

Major Shareholders:

Celedyr (37%)

Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal (22%)

Major Divisions:

Transys Neuronet Great Britain

Head Office: Bristol, England (UK)

Division Head: Colin Rayford

Major Subsidiaries: Bristol Optics; Commonwealth Enterprises, Transys Data Services

Transys Neuronet Europe

Head Office: Stockholm, Sweden (Scandinavian Federation)

Division Head: Lili Gessle

Major Subsidiaries: Mindstrom Neurotechnologies, Götaland Telekom

Transys Neuronet Asia

Head Office: Shanghai

Division Head: Lao Yengtai

Major Subsidiaries: Suzhou Biotechnology, China Cable Ltd., TriCom Telecommunications

Transys Neuronet America

Head Office: Toronto, Ontario (UCAS)

Division Head: Jeremy Thomason

Major Subsidiaries: Iris Software, InterScience Inc., Belle Mead Communications

twenty-thousand shares of stock options, but because of his sudden "job change" all of those options suddenly got voided out. And our Johnson? No one in Renraku knew him. Hell, no one in Transys knew him either.

• Sabalom Glitz

• I think I heard about your little run. Was your mark Nicholas Waterford? His job change has been the topic of discussion in Renraku circles lately. Not because of who he is, but because of the payment Renraku made: fifty thousand shares of Transys voting stock that Renraku Europe owned through a holding company. In light of Money Man's account, that makes a lot more sense now than when I first heard of it.

• Renraku Fox

HKB ON THE HIT LIST

So now the wyrm has his pet company back. Do you think he's going to stop there and rest on his laurels?

No, neither do I.

There were many runs made against HKB before Riley's ouster, but lately it seems there have been even more than ever, like Celedyr wants to rid Transys Neuronet of every last vestige of HKB's presence. Furthermore, HKB's other divisions—not associated with Transys Neuronet in any way—have also become the target of many shadowruns. I don't know whether this is more of Celedyr's doing, or if the other Eurocorps are circling like vultures. Regardless of which is true, I'd strongly recommend dumping any HKB stock in your portfolio.

• Say Geraint, you might be interested in this little bit of paydata: since 2055, each and every executive and middle manager involved in the initial takeover of Transys has apparently met an untimely (and usually gruesome) end. The latest victim was Roger Bernal, a nephew of HKB founder Paul Bernal Jr. and supposedly the mastermind behind the entire takeover. Roger must of got wind of what was happening, skipped to Bermuda around 2061, and managed to disappear for the next two years. Well, yesterday morning a package arrived at Bernal's corner office in London. Inside were the gnawed bones of his hapless nephew. And yes, the marks were consistent with the teeth marks of a large western dragon.

• Valeyard

• Looks like Stoney is adopting some tricks from his sire's partner.

• The Laughing Man

• Former partner. Unfortunate, too; they could accomplish much together if they'd only get over that little spat.

• Orange Queen

TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW

With a new CEO at the helm and the board of directors very much tilted in Celedyr's favor, Transys Neuronet has undergone almost a complete makeover. Unfettered from previous infighting, its core businesses have made some impressive breakthroughs, while the new CEO Blareth has directed some bold acquisitions to expand into new fields.

Core Businesses

Ever since the corporation's founding from the merger of four British firms in 2013, Transys Neuronet's primary businesses have been computers, biotechnology and cybernetics. That triad still serves as Transys's power base, but under the new leadership it is realigning towards different priorities.

Transys Neuronet is largely regarded as a specialist in the cybertech industry, but that specialty—neuralware and the man-machine cybernetic interface—touches on every aspect of cyberware, giving Transys an almost ubiquitous presence



behind the scenes. Though still dominant in the headware and Matrixware fields (particularly with skillwires), Transys Neuronet has recently been branching out into a new direction: cyber-implantation in animals and paranimals. Transys Neuronet has always surpassed the other corps in this field, but recently it's launched a frenzy of new projects, throwing around research capital left and right. The most recent and splashiest of these is Transys's recent acquisitions of the Emerging Futures think-tank (and its owner-slash-guinea-pig Eliohann) from Ares Macrotechnology.

- Which probably makes Transys the odds-on favorite to claim those four Z-O accounts left in Dunkelzahn's will.
- Hotwire
- Don't forget the personal visit from Lofwyr. That should be an interesting visit, seeing as how Transys is challenging Saeder-Krupp's domination of the European telecommunications market.
- Felix
- I think there's more to it than claiming a prize out of the Will. Nearly all of the new critter implantation projects deal in some

way or another with reptilian species. I think Celedyr may have some personal interests involved here.

- Dibber
- Hey Money Man, you forgot to mention the delta clinic Transys Neuronet operates around Oslo.
- Audun

As befitting their name, Transys's Neuronet's biotechnical assets primarily revolve around neurology and neural bioware, though they have been known to dabble in related fields, such as eye and ear biotech. Recently Transys's biotech subsidiaries have revived one of their old projects: biocomputers, organic brain tissue used as processor components in mainframe computer systems. I'm no brain surgeon, but apparently the brain uses logical processes significantly different from computers and can perform some decision-making processes faster than ordinary computers. Their hope is that biocomputers can make more intuitive decisions than ordinary computer linear logic.

- This line of research has attracted some unwanted attention. Transys's renewed interest in biocomputers has touched off a rash of shadowruns between it and Mitsuhamu, which appar-



ently has similar projects in the works. Most of these runs have occurred in the UCAS, particularly in the Northeast, where both Transys and MCT have biotech subsidiaries in close proximity.

- FastJack

- Geraint's little "confession" earlier reminded me of something interesting. A couple of years ago, an internal ruckus arose at Transys's UK division, when someone tried to contact some biotechnicians and found they didn't exist anymore. The techs in question were transferred to the biocomputer project, but the department had no personnel records of them. Further investigation (later suppressed, of course) indicated that they came from the infamous cloning project implicated in the Whitechapel murders. I have a chilling feeling those biotechnicians were the HKB plants. I suspect they now serve as subprocessors for one of Celedyr's mainframes at Caerleon.

- Sagacity

Transys's computer science and technology assets lean heavily toward the software side of the industry. Though Transys does have some computer tech assets, it is generally a minor player, specializing in Matrixware and skillsofts. Transys's computer expertise falls into one of two fields: programming and neural networks (computer nodes engineered to model neural tissue). Neural networks particularly excel at pattern recognition, so they're often used in linguistic software, as well as drone and robot sensor recognition programs. Lately Transys has also been expanding into computer and electronic encryption, so they may soon develop a third field of expertise.

- There's another field of expertise that Transys doesn't advertise very much: psychotropic software, particularly those used in psychotropic IC, California hots and BTLs.

- Neurosis

- Transys has been making a big push into the linguistics applications of their software. A lot of their work is being fielded out into Transys's Asian division, which concentrates mostly in southeast China, particularly Taiwan and the Canton Confederation. That division has also been getting a lot of encryption development work involving some of the lingual inflections commonly found in southern Chinese dialects, particularly Cantonese.

- Hei Yu

- Bulldrek on the encryption work. Transys gets its best encryption software and code from Caerleon. That's what the dragon gives them in exchange for building a research lab over his lair. Anything the Canton offices get is just farm work and debugging.

- Sionedd

- Transys's American division has also been putting in a lot of computer work up in New England and New York, and they've also been expanding their operations in the Pueblo Corporate

Council. Recently Transys acquired Iris Software, one of the Pueblo's larger software companies specializing in Matrix operating systems. Makes you wonder what the wyrm has in store.

- Sidewinder

New Expansions

Under Blareth's direction, Transys Neuronet has been expanding into new fields outside its core businesses. While many of these were side interests that received little attention until lately, some are new acquisitions.

- On a similar note, Transys used to keep its secrets close to its chest in its Great Britain division, due in no small part to the infighting between Celedyr and HKB. That's changed recently, though, as Transys is trying to boost its international presence for some reason and so is now pushing more of its R&D work abroad to other divisions.

- Sagacity

Much as the new management may want to purge themselves of HKB's taint, there's one legacy they may retain: the expansion of Transys's Data Services branch. Under former CEO Riley's direction, the branch vastly increased Transys's grid presence, particularly in China and southeast Asia. Recently Data Services has turned its attention towards the European grids, particularly in the Scandinavian Federation through its acquisition of Götaland Telekom from the former Fuchi Pan-Europa.

- Transys has also been making overtures to the Scandinavian telecom giant Erika to join as a partner in their ambitious Wireless Matrix Initiative. What's interesting is that Saeder-Krupp had also been offering assistance, no doubt so that the megacorp can suborn any would-be challenge to its domination of the European grids. Though Erika hasn't made a commitment either way, insiders have hinted that they are warming to Transys as a "white knight" against Saeder-Krupp.

- Deeweef

- I wish Transys luck, because they're going to need it in spades. Saeder-Krupp practically owns the continental grid, and any attempt by Transys Data Services simply has to appear as a challenge into their demesne. I have to wonder if all this is some sort of proxy struggle between Celedyr and Lofwyr.

- Coeur des Ombres

- You are much closer to the truth than you think.

- Orange Queen

- Transys may fare a lot better than you care to hope. For the past six months or so Saeder-Krupp has suffered some unexpected setbacks, not only in the telecom industry, but on a lot of other fronts as well. In particular their North American and Middle Eastern operations have been reeling, and insiders have suggested that Lofwyr himself has been somewhat distracted of late.

- Gretchen



One new and somewhat unexpected expansion Transsys recently undertook was in the media industry, particularly the North American markets. Transsys had already established contacts in the media through its computer technology, but its recent acquisition of Belle Mead Communications represents its first actual foray into the field.

- C'mon Money Man, why don't you come out straight and say Transsys sells the networks its psychotropic programming for the media's subliminal advertising campaigns?
- Kidd Trideo

DRAIG GAN Y CARREG

• This next bit comes from a runner who lives and works in the Cardiff-Bristol region. Though Celedyr is rarely seen, he does ply the shadows a lot, so Hyfrydol has gotten plenty of dirt on this particular "client" of his.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 16 February 2063 at 10:38:24 (PST)

by Hyfrydol

On the surface, Celedyr (sometimes known in these parts as *Draig gan y Carreg*, or "Dragon of the Stones") seems like a real enigma and a recluse. Dragons are already wrapped up in their own aura of mystique and, with a few notable exceptions, have as little to do with metahumanity as possible. This seems especially true in Celedyr's case, who's been seen out of his lair less than a half dozen times in the past fifty years. Since he's hardly seen and almost never talks to anyone, or so the conventional wisdom goes, no one knows anything about him, and he has no interest in the modern world.

Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Though Celedyr rarely appears in the physical world, he is a very active participant in the virtual world of the Matrix. You may not know this, because Celedyr is the penultimate lurker. Chances are good, however, that several of you may have encountered his dracobots scouring cyberspace for paydata. Some of you may have actually chatted with him in a SIG, without even being aware of it. Even I wasn't aware that I had worked for Celedyr on many occasions until I had investigated after the fact.

- Even with less than six appearances in fifty years, the wyrm gets out more than some deckers I know.
- FastJack

• Hey Jack, don't you know what they say about people living in glass houses throwing stones?

• Bung

DRACO ONLINE

Celedyr maintains his lair in the once-sleepy town of Caerleon, which lies a few dozen kilometers north of Newport. Prior to the dragon's awakening, Caerleon was a tourist trap, attracting day-trippers to see the ancient Roman ruins around the city and hear the speculation of the town's legendary location as Camelot. Though the dragon and his corporate partners

overshadow them now, occasionally some people still come just for the ruins and legends.

• Lately there's been a growing dissident movement called the Pendragon Underground that's been gaining attention for opposing the Lord Protector and his druidic supporters. The Underground uses lots of Arthurian symbolism to rally its followers and recently tried to organize a rally in Caerleon, due to its legendary links to Camelot. The planning got squashed flat quickly, though—and by none other than Transsys Neuronet security forces. Apparently Celedyr doesn't approve of this type of thing.

• A. H. Nastyface

• Really? That's surprising. HKB actively supports Lord Protector, which must make him guilty by association in Celedyr's eyes. Maybe the wyrm has other plans in mind for Whitehall.

• Dalgleish

• Or maybe he remembers the real story of Camelot and doesn't want to see that stupid dolt Ar'thu get more credit he doesn't deserve.

• The Laughing Man

All that changed in 2013, when the great dragon Celedyr awoke from his millennia-long slumber, rising out of the Roman amphitheater above his underground lair (and frightening quite a few tourists in the process). That event set off a long transformation that concluded when Transsys Neuronet completed construction of its major research complex right next to the amphitheater (restored from Celedyr's first appearance), turning ancient Isca into Silicon Glen south.

• Interestingly enough, Caerleon's LTG is sculpted to resemble the old Roman town, complete with its famous amphitheater, which serves as the icon for Transsys's public host system (the juicy stuff is offline). Most of the personas take on classic Roman figures, but every once in a while you'll see some freaky Egyptian-looking personas in the area. Stay away from these, if you know what's good for you.

• Neurosis

Matrix Surfing, Dragon Style

One thing's been apparent from my years working for Celedyr (both unwittingly and knowingly): the dragon possesses an unusual fascination for communication and languages. One major (and growing) subset of this obsession is the wyrm's interest in telecommunications and the Matrix. Besides his well-known ties to Transsys, Celedyr also has investments with other communications-related companies, such as Tan Tien and UCAS Data Systems. In many cases the dragon actively seeks out new developments in communications, if for no other reason than personal edification and curiosity.

• Celedyr's fascination with communication isn't just limited to newfangled modern technology. The wyrm's also accumulated



an extensive collection of ancient artifacts with significant linguistic value as well. I understand that the wyrm has among his possessions the original Rosetta Stone, a first-print Gutenberg Bible and transcripts relating to the Navaho code-talkers who served the United States in World War II.

- Tremain

- That reminds me of an odd run my group pulled a couple of years ago. My team and I were hired to recover some stone tablets near Riga, Latvia. We went in expecting opposition from the usual suspects (the Atlantean Foundation, Saeder-Krupp, MCT), but when we got there, we ran into two groups we didn't expect: Tir Tairngire Paladins and Tir na nOg TRC! Luck was on our side, however, as the two elf ninja groups were fighting each other and didn't pay us much attention. We managed to slip in, grab the goods and slip out with a minimal amount of fighting.

When we looked at the tablets, we could see why the two Tirs were after them. Those stone tablets had a lot of writing carved on them that our rigger Patrick identified as some kind of Sperethiel. (Patrick's from Ulster, so he oughta know.) Just something for you elf conspiracy nuts to hyperventilate over.

What was funny about the run were two things: first, our decker Sandy pegged our Johnson as belonging to Transys Neuronet when she first checked him out. We thought that was a cover for his real employer, though, since Transys doesn't deal in this kind of thing. Second, when we delivered the goods, we were told to meet our Johnson in Cardiff, not London where we usually meet. Now that I think about it, I think we may have pulled a run for Celedyr.

- Kong

- Kong, my dear fellow, you have no idea how lucky you are to be alive. Do you realize you stole one of the few surviving written texts of ancient Sperethiel? Both Tirs would kill to have an ancient relic validating their language's heritage.

- Elijah

Celedyr also has a flair for linguistics and knows just about all living languages and dialects (and a lot of dead ones, too). It's also a trait he prefers in his followers; I understand that Ms. Blareth, Celedyr's handpicked CEO, is also fluent in Cantonese, Gaelic, Swahili, Latin and Egyptian in addition to English.

- That's true for his operatives also. I was on a run for the Atlantean Foundation to "liberate" some ancient Assyrian tablets in Syria from a Saeder-Krupp dig. We were about to split when a third party jumped us. One thing I remember was that they were jabbering to each other in some foreign language. Corky, one of our mercs, eventually picked up that they were speaking in Lakotan! (Corky lived in Denver for a while, so he should know.) We beat off the ambush, though, and managed to bag one of their guys for interrogation. Imagine our surprise to discover they were members of the Knights of Rage!

- Gimp

Now that Transys Neuronet is firmly in the wyrm's grasp, it's apparent why the megacorp decided to build a major research facility in this backwater Welsh town. In return for the dragon's insight on telecommunications, linguistics, and encryption, the company provides Celedyr his own private LTG for surfing the Matrix.

And does he surf! I think the only dragon who ever spent more time online was the late Dunkelzahn. Don't expect to see him using any sort of dragon-like icon, however; Celedyr is very net-savvy and uses at least a dozen aliases. Some of his better-known aliases are Tsangara, Goldminer, TGND and Script-Diver.

- "Script-Diver"? LOL! Wind Master would be amused at the wordplay.

- Orange Queen

- At least I'm not as obvious as some others, my dear.

- Script-Diver

Even when he's not online, Celedyr has his own army of searchbots (or dracobots, as they're known) data mining the Matrix for information. These aren't as hard to peg as Celedyr himself; usually his bots use a reptilian, draconic or stone-related iconography. Just watch out for the cyberdrakes, though; that's what deckers around Britain call Celedyr's SKs—if you've seen their icons, you know why. The wyrm doesn't go for subtlety with his cyberdrakes.

- If you ever find yourself crossing paths with one of these semi-sentient proggies, watch out. Most of his other bots (particularly the mining bots) are usually just out searching for routine information, but he reserves his SKs for very important jobs. If you cross paths with one (and survive!) you may want to reconsider the run you're taking.

- Marquis de Lignes

- I wouldn't be surprised. If he knows his way around the Matrix and with all that great dragon brainpower behind him, Celedyr must be one killer coder. He could probably write some frosty IC-busters and knowbot frames, while simultaneously making stock trades, browsing Shadowland and organizing his sock drawer!

- HeadKase

Consequently, Celedyr's interest in the Matrix has given him more than a rather good acquaintance with most of us digital dwellers. He provides silent minority sponsorships to several data havens, including Manchester, Kalinin and the Helix. It's behind several screens, but I understand it's enough for him to get some "special privileges" online. Celedyr has also shown a more than passing interest in many of the Matrix's oddities, particularly the otaku and the Deep Resonance.

- Word on the channels is that Celedyr is looking to get friendly with some of the otaku tribes, particularly the emerging com-



munities in Europe. Apparently he's looking for an "introduction" to the Deep Resonance.

- Shorty
- I've heard that Celedyr has been taking some newfound interest in the Deus-Renraku conflict. I don't think he's favoring any side; it's more like he's an interested observer. Apparently some of those Knights of Rage blokes that work for Celedyr have been seen in Seattle trying to snatch several of Deus' otaku to bring back to Caerleon.
- Neon Wraith
- Otaku isn't all the wrym's interested in, either. My guys got a job from what I think was one of these Knights of Rage chummers. The odd thing was that we were supposed to raid a Renraku morgue and retrieve one of their wageslaves that had recently cacked. Turns out this wageslave was an Arcology survivor who got pulled out when they retook the arcology.
- Marcelles
- Can you tell us which one?
- Ronin
- Yeah. Rich Wendy, geeked by the Red Samurai. The party line is he was one of Deus' sleeper agents, but everyone who knew him says it ain't so.
- Marcelles
- He wasn't. Thanks. That helps a lot.
- Ronin

DIGGING IN THE DIRT

The Matrix may be Celedyr's prime passion, but it isn't his only one. Celedyr also takes a serious interest in the earth. No, not environmental issues, but in the ground itself: geology, archaeology, speleology and mineral alchemy in particular. If there are any secrets to be held in or under the ground, Celedyr is interested in digging them up.

- Nice to see that "Script-Diver" hasn't completely abandoned his sire's craft. Root Protector would be disappointed in his star pupil if he did.
- Orange Queen
- I have not forgotten Root Protector's teachings, Orange Queen. But one thing he did teach was to appreciate the craftiness of the Young Races, and you must admit, this Matrix they have built is something that rivals, maybe even surpasses, anything we could have developed.
- Script-diver
- You sounded just like Doll Maker then. You two have more in common than you think.
- Orange Queen

When it comes to matters involving the earth, Celedyr is an expert at his craft. I suppose in the age before the Matrix was invented, the wrym spent plenty of time learning the secrets of the underground. From what I have heard the wrym can astrally project underground with ease and instinctively determine his direction burrowing.

- He can do more than that, chummer. My crew and I were hired to find a Yamatetsu spy sub that was snooping somewhere around the Maldives near India. We caught them in the act of blowing open an underwater cavern that had previously been completely sealed. Next thing we knew, all sorts of earth spirits and elementals came out of the walls attacking the sub. All of a sudden, I saw a dark silver dragon physically phase through the seamount wall and crush the sub. I thought we were lucky to escape, but now I wonder if maybe the dragon let us live to deliver a warning.
- Boonrai

Snowdonia

Snowdonia sits at the opposite corner of Wales from Caerleon in the northwest and consists of the three Welsh counties of Anglesey, Conwy and Gwynedd. Ever since the current Countess of Snowdon, Rhiannon Glendower, assumed her title, she's had pretty much free reign of Snowdonia and pays mostly lip service to Parliament. Probably the main reason she gets away with this is that Celedyr silently supports her reign. His support is more than merely political; he also gave her some of the magical secrets needed for constructing the fearsome Snowdonian cyberknights as well.

More importantly, however, the dragon also gave Countess Glendower the location and extraction methods for extracting naturally occurring orichalcum from Mount Snowdon and Blaenau Ffestiniog. Snowdonia's orichalcum extraction has been taking place for at least a decade before Halley's Comet came round and all these other veins starting popping up elsewhere. Even now, as these mysterious veins are drying up as inexplicably as they appeared, Snowdonia still churns out a steady supply. From what I've heard the Snowdonians actually "harvest" the orichalcum, formed in 5 to 30 gram nodules, from translucent pear-shaped quartz stalactites a meter's length or longer.

- There's something weird about the orichalcum that comes out of Snowdonia. It's not like those other veins that popped up two years ago, nor is it like the "artificial" stuff created by alchemists. For one, the texture is a lot smoother; it's closer to amber than it is to gold in its texture. Also, an enchanter I know in Liverpool says Snowdonian orichalcum is "fruitier" than ordinary orichalcum, whatever that means.
- Falcon
- That's because it's not orichalcum, dummy. It's some sort of fake; one of my talsmonger friends said it was just several worthless metals mixed with some alchemical dross to create a funny aura. Fool's orichalcum, nothing more.
- Blastoma



- Maybe your friend isn't as good a talismonger as she thinks she is.

- Falcon

- Even if it is "fool's orichalcum," why would Snowdonia go through so much trouble to make it and sneak it on the market? Do you think they're making something else there and this fool's orichalcum is a red herring?

- BethSheba

The only question that no one seems to have a decent guess at is what does Celedyr get in return? Presumably he can visit Mt. Snowdon and Blaenau as often as he wants, but beyond that? Either Countess Snowdon owes the wyrm one hell of a favor, or there's something else going on under the table.

- Actually, from what I heard, what Celedyr gets out of the bargain are the quartz stalactites that encase the orichalcum. The quartz stalactites are the product of some natural refining process, and the "orichalcum" is waste residual. So the wyrm gets the quartz, Snowdonia gets the orichalcum, and everybody's happy.

- Siobhan

- What does Celedyr want with that quartz?

- Penny

- Mood crystals.

- The Laughing Man

- Hush, you.

- Orange Queen

Pueblo Underground

Recently Celedyr opened a new lair in the Pueblo Corporate Council, in the Sandia Mountains east of Albuquerque. (Where, of course, Transys Neuronet has a facility for its subsidiary Iris Software.) From what I've heard the wyrm made contact with the Pueblo Awakened, an underground tribe that makes its home in the various caverns underneath the Sandias. The Underground Awakened formed after the Night of Rage to escape the race riots shaking up the Southwest and took to the caves for protection. Since then the tribe has eschewed most uses of advanced technology and live as naturally as possible. What a cyberjunkie dragon would see in them is beyond me.

- What the dragon probably sees in them is that the tribal shamans in the Sandia caverns are in close communion with powerful mountain spirits called the gan. (The gan are actually from Apache mythology, but since they used to live in the same area, I guess it's close enough.) The shamans commune with the gan during rituals held in grottoes deep underneath the mountains—places that you'd need sophisticated spelunking

gear to get to. Celedyr is most likely getting cozy with the Underground Awakened so he can visit the gan.

- Slynagephoya

- OK, but why does Celedyr want to talk to the gan?

- Sandsnake

- Good question. Anyone have a good answer?

- Slynagephoya

- I think it's more like the gan want to talk to him than the other way around.

- Umber Hulk

Pontus

Pontus is a region in northeastern Turkey bordering the Black Sea currently under the control of Islamic theocratic factions. Celedyr used to have a lair here in ancient times, but he hasn't occupied it since his Awakening. In fact, Celedyr's gone to great lengths to keep others out, especially his fellow dragons.

- From what I've pieced together, back in ancient times Celedyr had conducted some sort of experiment there that failed disastrously, forcing him to abandon that lair.

- Ruthven

- Hmm. A dragon with an interest in communication and linguistics conducts an experiment at Pontus that fails disastrously. I wonder if this is the source of the Tower of Babel myth?

- Elijah

- Babel? I thought that was further down south in the Mesopotamian river valley, where Babylon used to be.

- Scary Bob

- That's the drek you hear on those "discovery" sims. But the Pontus theory has been around since 1999 and has been gaining growing, if slow, acceptance with historical scholars and archaeologists. Numerous expeditions have gone up to confirm this, but all of them have met with failure (in many cases caused by sabotage and misinformation).

- Holly

- You think maybe Aden had a hand in Pontus' failure? It would add more fuel to the fire on why the two dragons don't seem to get along.

- Amitri

Nubia

The Nubian Desert lies in northeast Sudan, east of the Nile from the fifth cataract to Lake Nasser. For the past couple of years the Nubian Desert has been a hotbed of rebel activity against Sudan's Islamic government, and despite Sudan's best efforts—with aid from Saeder-Krupp, the Frankfurt Bank



Association and Sudan's Islamic neighbors—the Nubian rebels have had free run of the desert. Recently the rebels made a big push and broke government forces in a massive fight just north of the sixth cataract. Sudan's control has effectively been whittled down to the Nile valley south of Omdurman; the rebels control most of the country to the north, and the deserts west of the Nile are effectively on their own.

- A situation that makes unlikely allies of Celedyr and Aden, in that they are both fighting against Saeder-Krupp's expansion into the Middle East.
- Saevar

Apparently Celedyr has some longstanding interest in this region. Back in 2041 the dragon was seen flying over Nubia, the second time he was spotted since his Awakening. More recently, however, several of the advisors helping the rebels in their fight have been pegged as members of the Knights of Rage. While some of them are from London, the majority have been identified as part of the Knights' Caerleon contingent. Additionally, the Knights have been sponsoring some independent British archaeologists in their digs in the Nubian Desert, particularly in the northeastern reaches of the desert

bordering Lake Nasser and eastward to the Red Sea Hills. The odd thing is that most of the digs are taking place far from the Nile (where Nubian civilization flourished) but rather deep into the desert. I've heard the name "Nubozzi" bantered around a bit, though I don't know what that's about. Presumably the Knights, no doubt with help from their dragon master, know something most other archaeologists don't.

- I'll say. There's never been any record of a name like Nubozzi around that area.
- People Watcher
- Probably because the Nubozzi ceased before recorded civilization began.
- Orange Queen
- Archaeology isn't the only thing going on. Recently long-range recon scouts for MET 2000 spotted the Knights escorting Dr. Sarah Manning, a notable British arachnologist (spider expert) to a dig site somewhere northeast of Kerma. The Knights definitely know something we don't.
- METalhead



THE KNIGHTS OF RAGE

These terms deserve special mention. Originally the Knights of Rage were a mixed-race African street gang in Southwark, located on the southern banks of the Thames in London before it got crammed into the Squeeze. Then in 2043 Celedyr appeared amongst their leadership (disguised in human form) bearing some tablets he had unearthed from Nubia. Apparently these tablets were sacred to the Nubians, and the gang leaders pledged their loyalty to the dragon. Celedyr picked what he thought were the best members and took them back to Caerleon to serve as his Praetorian guard.

Since then both branches of the Knights of Rage have expanded and grown under their service to Celedyr. Both groups still proclaim their original Nubian heritage, and they display it in an unusual mixture of African, Egyptian and Celtic traditions. The original African street gang still remains in London, though it's expanded its membership to include some whites (mostly of Austrian, Bretagne or Celtic descent); apparently the London gang is a "recruitment center" that picks the best for service to send to Caerleon. The Knights also have some smaller chapters in Bristol, Newport and Cardiff, though these are predominantly composed of Welsh Celts.

- There's an interesting theory that ties the Celts of Wales and Cornwall to the ancient Nubians of Sudan. Apparently the Nubians had a culture of their own, predating the ancient Egyptians. The Nubians were dominant during the Bronze Age and warred with the early Egyptians, until the pharaohs got the upper hand, defeated the Nubians and assimilated their culture into its own (a lot of Egyptian culture is based upon the Nubian civilization).

In any case, some surviving Nubians escaped from their Egyptian masters and set off in search of a new homeland, passing through Austria, Germany and Brittany, before heading up the coast and settling in Wales and Cornwall, where they became Celts. There does appear to be some credence to this, as ancient Celtic artifacts recently unearthed have born striking similarities to Egyptian and Nubian artifacts. Also, the engineering and astronomical knowledge used to construct stone circles like Stonehenge or the Brynngwydn Gorsedd is very close to ancient Egyptian engineering. Other than that it's a bit of a stretch.

- People Watcher

The chapter in Caerleon, however, is the one that bears watching. These guys are the dragon's eyes, ears and claws around the world. Don't confuse them with the gangs you'll find in the Squeeze or in Cardiff; the Caerleon Knights are head and shoulders above them. Occasionally they'll cull bodies from their "farm leagues" for extra backup, but the Caerleon Knights are the cream of the crop.

- The Knights of Rage are masters of encoding, encryption and decryption. The Caerleon contingency boasts a significant number of deckers and drone riggers in their ranks. Also, Celedyr teaches them many obscure languages, making them even more difficult to infiltrate. I understand it's standard practice among them to carry secure messages in some obscure or dead language or dialect.

- Roto

- I haven't seen it brought up yet, but recently Transys Neuronet's been the target of some ecoterrorist harassment, as groups like GreenWar and TerraFirst! have been targeting various Transys facilities in Europe and North America. The thing I can't figure out, though, is why. Transys's environmental record is pretty average: nothing like major polluters like Saeder-Krupp, Mitsuhamma or AG Chemie. But this latest round of eco-harassment has been pretty virulent, as bad as the big boys.

- Ecotope

- Don't kid yourself. All corps are polluters, and all of them will pay for the wounds they've dealt to the planet.

- Deep Green

- Spare us the propaganda. Actually, I've noticed it too, plus a few other things. First, most of the eco-groups that have sponsored these attacks have ties to Amazonia; independent groups, like the Green Cells, have stayed out of the action so far. The other thing I noticed is that these attacks more or less started after Celedyr's involvement in Transys Neuronet became more or less public knowledge. Maybe the attacks aren't so much against Transys's eco-record, but rather a message to the wyrm behind Transys.

- Clash

- It is a message to one who was entrusted with great responsibility and abandoned it in the hour of need. Those who now tend to the remains of the Great Tree will not be so negligent.

- Jungle Cat

- Root Protector and I did all that we could, and we made our own choices. I didn't see you there helping out.

- Script-Diver

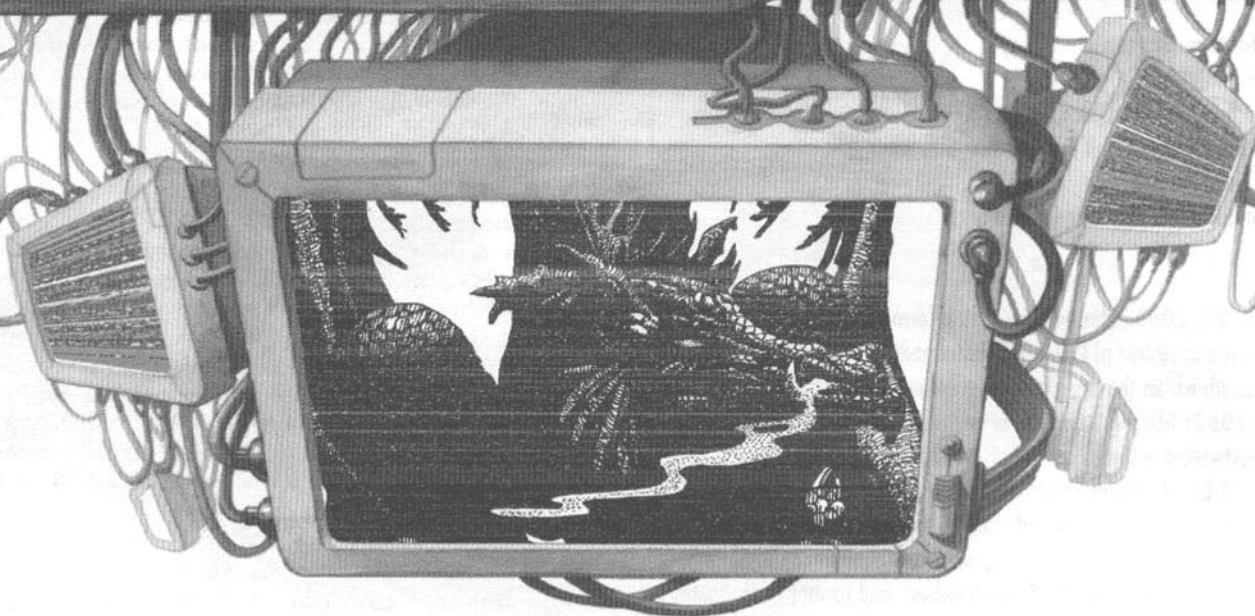
- Enough. It will not happen again. Far Scholar has appointed a new steward, and we can only hope that the failures of some do not haunt us all.

- Glitterfrost

- The past is past. I stand by my actions.

- Script-Diver

GHOSTWALKER



It's getting so you can't tell the wizwyrms without a scorecard these days, but the dragon that may be the best known right now, the dragon the world is watching, is Ghostwalker. Ever since he appeared out of the rift over in DeeCee on the fiftieth anniversary of the Awakening, Ghostwalker has been making news and breaking heads. He's already a power that has the nations of North America willing to negotiate with him, and he may have set at least some of them down the road to war. He has everyone asking the same questions. Who is Ghostwalker? Where did he come from? What does he want? What will he do now? And, of course, the big question on Shadowland: How can I make some cred off of this without becoming dragon-chow?

I won't tell you that the file Crystal has put together has all the answers, but it's a good start and it asks some of the right questions. If anybody else knows more than we do, the file is open, as always, so post away.

- Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 16 February 2063 at 10:40:11 (PST)

- What a joke! That the Nexus even pretends to be an unbiased source of information about Ghostwalker makes me sick! The Shadowland Nexus is practically in the dragon's back yard, and I know that Ghostwalker has had his lackeys visiting there and talking with people on the inside. Nicolas Whitebird, Ghostwalker's "translator" and Ork Friday has even been there, all to negotiate some sort of deal. You Nexus skags talk about the truth, but what about the truth about your secret deal with Ghostwalker?

- Zero

- Okay, I nearly deleted Zero's inflammatory post outright, but I'm not going to do that. Despite the fact that he's a diseased meat-puppet with his jack shoved in the wrong end, he's got a point. Shadowland is about the truth, about free information, so here it is.

Yes, Ghostwalker contacted us. It didn't take the wyrm long to figure out that the Nexus is a unique resource, or that we are an important part of the shadow community. Say what you will about Ghostwalker, he's smart, or advised by some savvy people, or both.



GHOSTWALKER

Great Western Dragon

Sex: Male

Coloring: Pale ivory with blue highlights

Metahuman Form(s): Tall male human with white hair

Primary Lair: Denver

Translator: Nicholas Whitebird (male ork)

Timeline

December 24, 2061: Ghostwalker's astral form emerges from the astral rift in the Federal District of Columbia. He immediately goes to Denver and launches an attack on the city shortly thereafter in physical form.

January 2062: Ghostwalker and the Council of Denver meet and discuss terms. Ghostwalker assumes control of the Front Range Free Zone. Aztlan is forced out by CAS troops, which seize its sector of the city. The Zone Defense Force is created and placed under Ghostwalker's command.

February 2063: Ghostwalker grants an audience to Joshua Morningstar of the Church of the Dragon Reborn and formally recognizes the organization.

Basically, Ghostwalker offered us a deal. He leaves the Nexus alone and lets us do what we do. In return, we don't frag with him, and we keep an eye on the Denver grid for anything that might threaten it (mainly Azzie knowbots and virus programs these days, nothing we haven't been able to handle). That's in both our best interests.

That's it, our whole "secret deal" with Ghostwalker. If you think there's more dirt, you're welcome to look for it, but don't come poking into our datastores unless you're ready to deal with me, so ka?

Oh, and one other thing. Ghostwalker knows about Shadowland (and so, probably, do the other great dragons). This place is as open to him and his kind as it is to the rest of you skags. Keep that in mind.

• Crystal

by Crystal

I never totally understood the "it can never happen here" mentality until recently. Denver has been through so much over the past fifty years—has existed in such a state of constant tension—that I figured I had seen it all. But nothing could have prepared us for what happened when Ghostwalker returned.

Yes, returned. Ghostwalker has made it abundantly clear that the area where Denver now sits was once his and, to the dragon's mind, remains so. He wasted no time in staking his claim once again and Denver got a first-hand taste of what a hacked-off dragon looks like close up. Let me tell you, chummers, it ain't pretty. Though Ghostwalker showed con-

siderable restraint compared to some of his fellow dragons (just take a look at the ruins of Tehran or Brasilia sometime), he still made his power abundantly clear.

Everyone who has hasn't been living under a rock for the past year knows the basics of how Ghostwalker showed up and took control over Denver. This file tries to piece together what we know about Ghostwalker, what he's up to, and what he may do next.

NATURE

Ghostwalker is a great dragon, and clearly one that commands some respect from the other wizwyrms, given their reactions to his sudden (and apparently unexpected) appearance. Vid-footage shows that Ghostwalker is good sized for a great western dragon, with pale, ivory-colored scales that earned him his current name (along with his penchant for summoning and commanding spirits to do his bidding). Ghostwalker seems to have adopted the media's tag for him as his own. He's never mentioned his true name, nor have any of the other dragons that have talked about him.

• No great surprise there. After all, names have power, and dragons must know that as well as anyone. It seems pretty clear that most (if not all) of the names that dragons use are pseudonyms of one sort or another.

• Wyrn Watcher

In some respects, Ghostwalker bears a striking resemblance to Dunkelzahn. They have somewhat similar facial and body features, and extensive image analysis has shown some the possibility of more than a passing connection between them. What it is, I don't know, but there's other evidence of ties between Ghostwalker and the late Dunkelzahn: Ghostwalker emerged from the rift left by the explosion that killed Dunkelzahn. Dunkelzahn first appeared in the Denver area, which Ghostwalker claims as his domain. The great dragon Rhonabwy offered "condolences on [Ghostwalker's] loss." Could he have been referring to Dunkelzahn's demise?

• More than a few people think that Ghostwalker is Dunkelzahn reborn, not the least of whom are the Children of the Dragon in Denver. I'm as skeptical as they come, but is it a possibility? I mean, we know so little about how dragons, especially great dragons, live and die.

• Jaron

• Well it's possible, of course. If the Sixth World has done nothing else, it has proven that just about any damn thing is possible. That said, I still doubt it. Ghostwalker just doesn't seem like Dunkelzahn. There are similarities, like Crystal says, but he just doesn't strike me the same way. I tend more toward the possibility of a familial relationship. Ghostwalker could be a relative of Dunkelzahn's, which would explain their physical





resemblance, their close proximity (in terms of lairs), and Ghostwalker's overall attitude toward all things Dunkelzahn.

- Serena

Whatever his connection to Dunkelzahn may be, Ghostwalker definitely doesn't handle things like the Big D did. Whereas Dunkelzahn came off as an affable television personality (whether or not he actually was behind the scenes), Ghostwalker made it abundantly clear from the moment he appeared that he would brook no defiance. Everyone in Denver knows that Ghostwalker is in charge, and that seems to be just the way he likes it.

The interesting thing is, now that he is in charge, Ghostwalker's attitude and behavior have softened somewhat. He's not the tyrannical dragon overlord that Aztlan makes him out to be, and he seems genuinely interested in the future of Denver and the people living in his domain. That's not to say that Ghostwalker is a soft touch, by any means. The Zone Defense Force—under the dragon's command—has made it clear that acts of terrorism or rebellion against Ghostwalker's rule will be swiftly and harshly dealt with. Ghostwalker isn't a "dragon of the people" like Dunkelzahn, but he is involved in both running and rebuilding Denver.

- I've heard that Ghostwalker eats people and the main reason he wants Denver is to keep his larder well stocked.

- Dixie

- Oh, please. Rumors like that are circulating all over the Matrix.

- Bung

- Actually Ghostwalker has been known to make an object lesson (and a quick snack) of people who cause him trouble. He doesn't subsist on a diet of metahumanity or anything, but he also doesn't hesitate to point out who's at the top of the food chain in Denver, literally.

- Ranger X

SERVANTS

Ghostwalker's got various flunkies to take care of business in and around Denver. Some of them are in tight with the dragon, while others just want to be on the winning side and do as they're told.

NICOLAS WHITEBIRD

In spite of his current celebrity status (or perhaps because of it), Ghostwalker's translator Nicholas Whitebird is an almost complete unknown. He has been at Ghostwalker's side since shortly after the dragon appeared in Denver and currently serves as Ghostwalker's right-hand and official mouthpiece. Whitebird appeared out of nowhere in the company of a man known only as the Guide during one of Ghostwalker's rampages through the city. Ghostwalker stopped what he was doing to speak with the Guide and

then took Whitebird with him. The two have been working together ever since.

- Who is this Guide? What does he have to do with Ghostwalker?

- Dancer

- The Guide is some street shaman who operates in Ute Sector. He seeks out kids that have the potential to become shamans, and sees about matching them up with suitable teachers. Occasionally, he's been known to take and train some kids personally. As creepy as the whole thing sounds, he commands tremendous respect among the Ute and in the NAN sectors in general. As far as I know there are no official records on him. Everyone just seems to know who he is and respects his opinions. Apparently, that includes Ghostwalker.

- Psyche

Whitebird is an ork, apparently of at least some Native heritage. His age is unknown, and could be anywhere from 16 to 26 or so (assuming that he was born an ork and didn't undergo the change later in life). There are no records of a "Nicolas Whitebird" anywhere in Denver, so he may be SINless, or born outside of Denver. Whitebird is soft-spoken and apparently pretty intelligent, though how much of that is him and how much of it is Ghostwalker putting words in his mouth, I don't know.

- I know someone who's willing to pay a lot of cred for details on Whitebird's life before he became the dragon's pet. The pay is even better for details on how and when the Guide found and began teaching him. If interested, reach me through the usual channels.

- Link

- Good luck. You'll find nothing but blank stares when you ask around about Whitebird. Anyone who knows anything also knows enough to stay quiet.

- Otto

Whitebird is apparently also a magician, probably a shaman. That fits in with his association with the Guide. Whitebird doesn't use magic much, but he has been seen to astrally project and cast some minor spells. The conflicting accounts that I've heard don't give much of a clue as to his totem (if he's actually a shaman).

- Oh, he is. I would have thought that his totem was pretty obvious.

- Priest

- Is it? I've heard that Whitebird follows Eagle, chummer, which says some interesting things about him and his position with Ghostwalker. What totem do you think he follows?

- Wiz-Kid

- Sorry, kid, if anyone wants that information, it's going to cost them.
- Priest

Whitebird remains at Ghostwalker's side most of the time. He spends a lot of time in Council Hall dealing with the Denver Council and acting as Ghostwalker's spokesman on those occasions that the dragon can't attend. Even when Ghostwalker assumes human form to attend Council meetings, Whitebird is there, sitting beside him, to answer questions and sometimes translate certain terms or concepts for his boss.

On the occasions when he does leave Council Hall, Whitebird often travels unattended by any visible security. He has developed a reputation in Denver as an "ork of the people," willing to stop and chat with people on the streets and listen to their concerns or hear petitions for Ghostwalker. More than a few people are afraid to go near him, and rumor has it that the dragon can see and hear everything that Whitebird does, but some people have warmed to the ork's presence in the downtown area.

- Note, no *visible* security. You can be certain that Whitebird is watched, carefully watched, whenever he goes out wandering, and that back-up is no more than a suspicious movement or a call for help away. In some respects it's almost like Whitebird is going out looking for trouble, like he (or Ghostwalker) is just daring someone to try and kidnap or cack him.

- Zippy

- At least part of Whitebird's confidence comes from the fact that he's not just a shaman, but a very powerful shaman, trained by the Guide and now by Ghostwalker. Despite appearances, Nicholas can take care of himself quite well. I pity the skags who try to mess with him.

- Myst

- I've also heard that Whitebird has some spirit bodyguards assigned to him by Ghostwalker that can appear at a moment's notice.

- Gollum

SPIRITS

Since Ghostwalker's arrival, there's a lot more astral stuff going on in Denver according to the spell-slingers that I've talked to. In particular, there are more spirits hanging around than ever before. Some are the guardian spirits protecting government buildings and other key points in the city, others keep watch over the borders and some zip around on whatever business they have, unknown to us mere mortals. The interesting part is that nobody really knows who summoned all of these spirits. The Ute have always used spirits to help protect their borders, for example, but now they're everywhere. The evidence points to Ghostwalker, or magicians working for him.

Ghostwalker hasn't officially commented on the number or types of spirits he employs, or even what they're doing. Though some of the spirits are under the command of Zone Defense Force officers or government officials, most of them answer to no one except Ghostwalker (and possibly Nicholas Whitebird). These spirits don't like to be kept from their work, either, so people in Denver are learning to give them a wide berth and not to get in their way.

- There are all kinds of spirits in the Free Zone these days, too. Not just elementals but nature spirits, watchers, spirits of the elements and some I haven't been able to identify. Ghostwalker seems able to summon and command any of them however he pleases. There are elementals and nature spirits guarding buildings in Denver, city spirits patrolling the streets at night, watchers zipping around delivering messages (or just plain spying on people). Sometimes it can be like an astral traffic jam in the city.

- Aleph

- I'd say that a good number of the spirits in and around Denver these days are actually free spirits, which raises the question: are they working for Ghostwalker of their own free will or has he bound them in some way? In either case, it means that Ghostwalker has considerable magical clout and a lot of spiritual power to call upon if he needs it.

- Kane

- Yesterday's news. There have always been a lot of spirits in and around Denver, they just weren't this active before. Ghostwalker has got them all stirred up these days, but there have been freebies in the Denver shadows for as long as I can remember. The interesting thing is that there's word in the spirit world that Ghostwalker is actually hunting some spirits and it has them all falling over each other trying to get out of the dragon's way or to keep him happy and stay off his hit list. As to why Ghostwalker is hunting spirits, and which ones, I don't know yet.

- Zephyr

- My team was actually hired by one of these spirits about a month ago. I won't say what he wanted us to acquire, but let's just say it was hard to find and, ah, unusual. Our mage asked what the spirit what he needed it for, and he said it was necessary to "build something," whatever the frag that means.

- Mort

- Interesting. I've heard that Ghostwalker is also gathering a lot of contemporary data on conjuring and spiritual studies from various databases, universities, research foundations and so forth. Word is he even requested some information from that European dragon, Schwartzkopf. Sounds like the dragon is catching up on the state of the art in summoning these days.

- Serend



- Might have something to do with the fact that all of Ghostwalker's spirits are elementals and nature spirits, and tons of watchers, but no spirits associated distinctly with metahumanity. No ancestor spirits, no loa and definitely no blood spirits or anything like that. Makes you wonder if they're something new that Ghostwalker hasn't figured out yet, or if they're simply beyond a dragon because they're so tied to humanity.
- Hex

THE ZONE DEFENSE FORCE

One big ace that Ghostwalker made a part of his deal with the Denver Council is the Zone Defense Force. The ZDF is a permanent standing military and security force, made up of personnel on loan from the five signatory nations, under Ghostwalker's direct command. That means the dragon has his own personal army to take care of problems in Denver and, unlike regular military troops in the city, the ZDF is empowered to cross the zone borders to investigate or deal with problems anywhere in Denver. While the security and military personnel of the individual sectors still handle largely internal matters, the ZDF handles the overall security of the Free Zone including government buildings, airports, exterior borders and all land routes in and out of Denver.

- The ZDF's been cracking down hard on smugglers that don't play according to Ghostwalker's rules. I know at least

one smuggler who was given a free pass in and out of Denver on the condition that she supplies Ghostwalker with any intel she scrounged while making her rounds. If the same is true of other smugglers, Ghostwalker may be developing a mobile network of data-collectors.

- Mort

Now it may seem that the ZDF gives Ghostwalker all the cards when it comes to controlling the Free Zone, but keep in mind that the organization hasn't existed all that long, and it's made up of regulars from the sector militaries. When it comes right down to it, where do their loyalties lie, with their own nations or with Ghostwalker? I'm not sure if push came to shove that Ghostwalker could depend on the ZDF's complete loyalty and support.

- Maybe not, Crystal, but you can be sure that the screening and approval process for ZDF personnel is rigorous, and may even include a brief personal meeting with Ghostwalker. I've heard stories that Ghostwalker has the high-ranking officers of the ZDF swear an almost feudal-style oath of fealty to him, and that every one of them feels that oath is binding in some deep, mystical way. There's no one in the higher ranks of the ZDF that even wants to think about crossing Ghostwalker, so the dragon may have more control over the Defense Force than most people give him credit.
- Argent



- Ghostwalker also doesn't rely on the ZDF one hundred percent. Recently, he's been recruiting some private security from the Church of the Dragon and from the shadows. Ghostwalker is definitely building a core of loyal personnel to handle things too sensitive to put in the hands of the ZDF (and thereby risk exposing to the Council). There are more than a few people glad to get in on the ground floor of that kind of operation, but the screening process is even tougher than for the ZDF.

- Zak

- Ghostwalker recently hired some shadowrunners to steal the Maltese Falcon from the Smithsonian a few months ago. Word is the run left a trail of bodies through DeeCee and Denver before the FBI recovered it. Any idea why the Big G wanted it?

- Haunter

- He's a fan of old flat-screen vids?

- Turner

THE CHURCH OF THE DRAGON REBORN

Finally, how many dragons have worshippers? Well, probably more than a few, but Ghostwalker has gone and set up his own religion. He's not actually the one who started it, but he's definitely the one in charge of it now.

The so-called "Church of the Dragon Reborn" (also known as the "Church of the Dragon" or, less complimentarily, as "the Cult of the Dragon") started as a splinter group of the Children of the Dragon, the movement that began following Dunkelzahn's death. Joshua Morningstar claimed that he had a vision when Ghostwalker first appeared that the Big G was the incarnation of the "great dragon spirit" and therefore the future savior of metahumanity. Morningstar led a schism in the Children of the Dragon that seized control over several of their temples, particularly the one in Denver, where Ghostwalker made his home.

For months, Morningstar and his followers petitioned Ghostwalker for an audience to recognize them as his followers and the dragon refused. Then, suddenly, Morningstar up and disappeared for a little while. Then Ghostwalker gives his official blessing on Morningstar's enterprise and suddenly his little rebel faction is legit and has more clout than the Children of the Dragon (seems that having a real dragon on your side counts for a lot).

- On the other hand, Ghostwalker has also never outright claimed that Morningstar was right or that he is the savior of humanity. In fact, the dragon has had almost nothing to say about the doctrine of the Church (such as it is), or any other religion, for that matter. Other than legitimizing Morningstar's claims to leadership and recognizing the cult, Ghostwalker has generally kept his distance from the Church that supposedly worships him.

- Padre

Now the Church of the Dragon is the fastest growing religion in Denver (and in some other parts of North America). Locally, it's not so much because everyone believes in Ghostwalker's divinity but the fact that members of the church seem to get preferential treatment when it comes to indulgences from Ghostwalker and from other members of the church (who often hold positions of authority). Whether they're just paying lip service or not, more and more people are bowing before the altar of the dragon.

- And that's just the way Ghostwalker wants it. Like a lot of the other stuff going on in Denver, Ghostwalker's handling of the Church of the Dragon is eminently practical. He knows that these people are going to worship him, so they might as well be working for him. By encouraging others to join the church, Ghostwalker increases its ranks, inculcates some additional loyalty and support among the populace and increases his number of supporters.

- Traveler Jones

- I hear that the motivating factor behind Ghostwalker's decision was an attempted coup within the Church of the Dragon. Apparently one of Morningstar's followers decided that Morningstar would make a better martyr than a leader and tried to arrange for his unfortunate demise. Ghostwalker got involved and, well, he decided that he liked Morningstar where he was and the assistant-who-would-be-king ended up as a light snack and an object lesson in why not to hack off a dragon. Now Morningstar's followers are more fanatically devoted than ever, and when Ghostwalker says frog the Church of the Dragon jumps.

- Hex

ALLIES AND ENEMIES

I started breaking down Ghostwalker's allies and his enemies, then I decided to put them together, because it can be hard to tell sometimes which is which. Aztlan makes no secret of the fact that it would like to see Ghostwalker dead (and an Azzie military force occupying Denver) but other than that refreshing display of outright hostility, everyone else seems to be hedging their bets where Ghostwalker is concerned. Nobody else openly opposes him—understandable, given what happened to Denver—but there are plenty of stories about what's going on behind the scenes.

THE COUNCIL OF DENVER

They say that politics makes for strange bedfellows, and there's no better proof of that than the makeup of the Council of Denver. Originally a group of seat-warmers, largely exiled by their respective governments to the unenviable task of governing the madhouse that is Denver, the Council suddenly stood center-stage when Ghostwalker decided to redecorate his new home to suit his taste (which clearly does not run toward neo-Aztec modern).

Since Ghostwalker took power, the Council of Denver has taken on real responsibility for running their respective



sectors of Denver, under the watchful eye of the dragon, of course. Officially, the Council acts as “foreign administrators” to keep Denver running smoothly. What a lot of people are curious about is where the Council’s loyalties lie, with their own nations or with Ghostwalker’s new order in Denver? Thus far it looks more like the former, but as time goes on, and things change in Denver, who can say?

- None of the treaty signatories is going to allow that to happen. They still need Denver and they all want to keep an eye on Ghostwalker, but if one of their reps starts showing signs of too much independence, you can bet that they’ll be recalled and replaced in a cold minute.
- Poly-Sci

- If Ghostwalker allows it, that is. The dragon has made it clear that the Council of Denver continues to exist solely at his sufferance in order to handle the mundane matters of running the city and to act as ambassadors to their respective nations (giving Ghostwalker access to most of the governments of North America). If those governments decide to stack the Council with less cooperative people, Ghostwalker may just decide that it isn’t worth bothering with and do away with it altogether.
- Holly

GOVERNMENTS

The sector governments of the Front Range Free Zone all willingly negotiated with Ghostwalker to end his assault on the area and reach an agreement to co-exist. All except one, of course. Ghostwalker showed considerable antipathy toward Aztlan from the moment he appeared in Denver, and it’s clear that the feeling is mutual. After the dragon destroyed the Aztec *teocalli*, negotiation between Aztlan and Ghostwalker ceased to be an option, but Ghostwalker got the other sector governments to back him and pushed Aztlan out of Denver.

That put the dragon right at the top of Aztlan and Aztechnology’s hit parade. Ghostwalker has been officially declared a “terrorist” in Aztlan and is charged with numerous “acts of war against Aztlan and its people.” For his part, Ghostwalker doesn’t seem to give a flying frag what Aztlan thinks or says, so long as they stay away from his territory. He has made it clear that any aggression on the part of Aztlan will be met with equal force. Though Aztlan proclaims itself the injured party long and loud to anyone who cares to listen, there isn’t all that much they can do about it right now. Right after the Azzie government was ejected from Denver, both the Pueblo Corporate Council and the Confederation of American States made it clear in no uncertain terms that any move by Aztechnology military forces toward Denver would be seen as an act of war. Though the Azzies did perform some “training exercises” along their northern borders, they haven’t stepped over the line ... yet.

- The PCC’s move into LA and southern California couldn’t have come at a worse time for Aztlan, since once they were kicked out of Denver, the Azzies found a line of PCC troops and military way-stations strung along their border. Couldn’t have gone better if Ghostwalker and the PCC had planned it that way, neh?

- Rojo

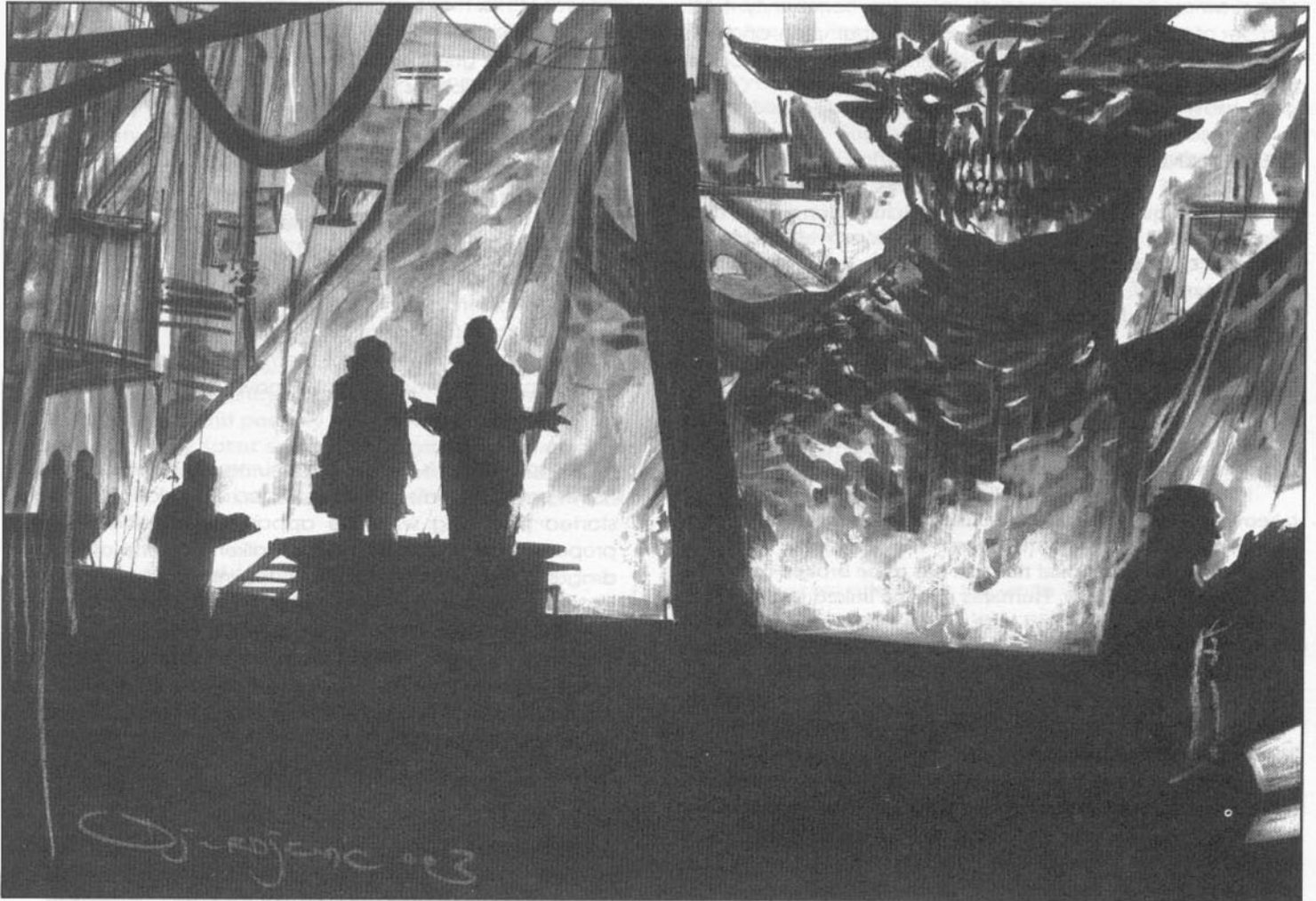
- Aztlan’s (and Aztechnology’s) solution to the “Denver problem” has been to strike at Ghostwalker through intermediaries rather than direct military action (which would just provoke a war against the NAN and the CAS—and Ghostwalker—which Aztlan probably couldn’t win). Instead, they’re supplying and supporting pro-Aztlan terrorists in Denver and also doing their best to shake things up in Los Angeles. If things in LA get really bad, either the PCC will withdraw, letting Aztlan move right in, or they’ll stay. The Pueblos will be forced to allocate more and more of their already stretched-thin military forces to keeping the peace in LA, giving Aztlan the chance to roll right over the border, if and when they decide to make their move.
- Pyramid Watcher

The other signatories of the Treaty of Denver remain at least ostensive allies of Ghostwalker for the time being. None of them are particularly happy about the state of events in Denver, but they also don’t think there’s much that they can do about it. All of them also have bigger problems to deal with than losing control over a metroplex that all of them mostly held on to out of pure stubbornness and political pride. Any hopes that people had about the sector governments banding together to oust Ghostwalker are pretty much dead at this point. They’ve acknowledged the dragon’s rule and they don’t seem inclined to change it.

CORPORATIONS

Though Ghostwalker was new to the megacorporate game when he first showed up, he seems to have adapted to it as quickly as he has to everything else. For the most part, Ghostwalker and the megacorporations seem content to leave each other alone, and business continues much as usual in the Mile-High City, which is all the corps care about. There are, however, a couple notable exceptions. One in particular is no surprise to anyone paying attention.

When the time came to start handing out contracts to rebuild damaged parts of Denver, Ghostwalker made one thing very clear to the Council and the Denver administration: no part or subsidiary of Saeder-Krupp Heavy Industries was to have any part in the reconstruction. Though Ghostwalker hasn’t gone so far as to ban Saeder-Krupp from Denver, he has made it more difficult for Lofwyr’s company to do business there and has always deliberately favored S-K’s competitors. Saeder-Krupp’s response has largely been silence, though there were a few occasions where S-K attempted to buy out or take over one of the companies that did hold contracts for the Free Zone. That has led to various non-transferral clauses cropping up in the newer contracts.



- Though neither has said so outright, it's clear there's no love lost between Ghostwalker and Lofwyr. It's also worth noting that Ghostwalker scragged a couple of S-K owned facilities in Denver in his initial appearance. As time goes on, a lot of the "random" destruction the dragon inflicted on the city isn't looking nearly so random after all.

- Hotfoot

Other than the occasional "frag you!" to Saeder-Krupp, the only area of business where Ghostwalker seems concerned is small business. The dragon apparently likes to support the little guy, because the Denver administration has been awarding more contracts to small local companies, and offering economic incentives for them to stay or move into the area. Many pundits believe that Denver is heading for economic free zone status, not unlike Hong Kong, except with some controls in place to keep the megacorporations from being the only ones to benefit from it.

- It's becoming pretty clear that Ghostwalker is cultivating businesses that are small, fast, information-intensive, environ-

mentally aware and often with an Awakened slant to them. Gaeatronics, for example, has been welcomed into Denver with open arms, whereas Shiawase Atomics is getting frozen out. Matrix-based business is encouraged, and word is that stiff ecological requirements are coming down the pike. Not so fast or stringent that they'll cripple Denver's economy, but tough enough that some of the megacorps will have to scramble to comply with them. Probably no coincidence that one of the worst offenders in that area is Saeder-Krupp.

- Wiley

- Great, on top of it all Ghostwalker is a tree-hugger.

- Zak

- Hardly, Zak. The dragon is playing it smart. Denver is already becoming something of a haven for the Awakened. It started with the Children of the Dragon and all the crystal-waving wannabes. Add in the changelings that have moved into the area from the surrounding countries, and you have the start



of a growing Awakened and metahuman community. A fair number of them see Ghostwalker as their champion, and he's doing what's good for them, in addition to what's good for the Denver area in the long term.

- Misty

THE HUMANIS POLICLUB

In one of his less apt political moves, Ghostwalker took out the headquarters of the Unity polyclub, along with their leader, Glennis Shand, not long after his arrival in Denver. The local chapter of the Humanis Polyclub quickly absorbed the remnants of Unity. The two polyclubs had been on the outs for a while, but the appearance of Ghostwalker, accompanied by SURGE and all the other craziness surrounding the comet, galvanized the organization. The bigots put their infighting aside and decided it was time for "real humans" to stand shoulder-to-shoulder against the "inhuman" menaces that threaten them. Not surprisingly, Ghostwalker is at the top of their list in Denver.

Publicly, the Humanis Polyclub denounces Ghostwalker's takeover of Denver and particularly his murder of Glennis Shand and other Unity members. They organize protests, pickets and the occasional riot that has to be broken up by the ZDF. Behind the scenes, Humanis may be linked to the rise in metahuman and Awakened hate crimes in the area, and word is that they've got some serious backing from Alamos 20,000, Human Nation, Aztlan, or possibly all of the above.

- More than that, chummer. Rumor has it that Glennis Shand left behind some sort of "legacy" for Unity, one of those "in case of my sudden and mysterious death" kind of things. It might be a secret bank account, weapons cache, blackmail information (good for extorting serious cred from some megacorp) or something else altogether; it's something different every time I hear about it. Whatever it is, though, it has definitely given the Humanis a leg-up in Denver, and I'd be willing to bet that Ghostwalker will handsomely reward anyone who takes care of that little annoyance for him.
- Sundevil

THE DRACO FOUNDATION

The Draco Foundation probably falls into the "ally" column for Ghostwalker, but it's pretty hard to tell. There was some contact between Ghostwalker and the Draco Foundation, strictly unofficial, not long after Ol' Pale Scales started kicking hoop all over Denver. What passed between them, nobody knows (or, at least, nobody's talking). Since then, Ghostwalker's contact with the Draco Foundation seems fairly limited, and both sides seem okay with that. The DF has an office in Denver, located in the UCAS sector, and you can bet that the Foundation is keeping an eye on Ghostwalker but that seems to be about it.

- The truth is that things are a little friendlier than that. Ghostwalker and the DF do keep in contact, but not through the Denver office. I've noticed some traffic through the

Denver Matrix that suggests Ghostwalker has a private line to the DF (or someone in it) that he keeps in semi-regular contact with. My guess would be Nadja Daviar, but there are a few other possibilities.

- Mole Man

- You couldn't be more off, Mole. The truth is that Ghostwalker can't stand the Draco Foundation and he doesn't even want them in "his" city. He made it clear to them at that meeting that they had better stay out of his way or else, but the Foundation has something on him, probably something that Dunkelzahn left behind. It's either something Ghostwalker wants or something that he's afraid of, so he can't move against the DF. So the two of them circle each other, looking for an opening to make the first move.

- Firelight

- That something is the drakes, chummer. Ghostwalker didn't have any problems with the Draco Foundation until they started poaching what he apparently considers "dragon property." The word is that Ghostwalker (and the other great dragons) will pay handsomely for information about the whereabouts of these drakes, and even more if you bring them one alive, but that the Draco Foundation has been getting the jump on them. It's probably because they're offering a safe haven to the drakes, while nobody really knows why the dragons want them. Personally, if I was a drake, it wouldn't be a hard choice for me.

- Myst

- Hey has anyone found any information on that butt-ugly halfer who attended that now not-so-secret-meeting between Ghostwalker and those Draco Foundation skags? He's the only one that hasn't been ID'd yet.

- Pan

- That intel isn't available for free, chummer. If you're serious and not just curious, contact me and we can talk.

- Priest

DRAGONS

Last, but certainly not least, are Ghostwalker's relations with his fellow great dragons. I don't know that I would call any of the big lizards chummy, and Ghostwalker seems to be no exception, though his relations with some dragons seem more cordial, or at least not outright hostile.

One of those is Ghostwalker's nearest great dragon "neighbor," Hestaby. Initially, Hestaby seemed to welcome Ghostwalker's presence, and she described his actions in Denver as "understandable," something that a lot of people in northern California picked up on. Bet they started wondering just what Hestaby considered "understandable" behavior. There was no contact between Hestaby and Ghostwalker for some time, but fairly recently it seems that Ghostwalker visited Mt. Shasta accompanied by his translator. What he and



Hestaby may have discussed, no one knows, but the meeting has been the subject of considerable speculation.

- My nuyen is on the possibility of an alliance between the two. Hestaby has her claws into the region of North America that Ghostwalker doesn't influence. She has ties with California and Tir Tairngire while Ghostwalker is cultivating them with the NAN, UCAS, and CAS. Neither of them seems overly fond of Lofwyr and they've both got connections with the Draco Foundation. Seems like a natural, but time will tell.
- Wyrms Watcher

Rumor has it that Ghostwalker is also on good (or at least speaking) terms with Hualpa, the great feathered serpent in Amazonia. Ghostwalker received a feathered serpent visitor that was apparently an emissary from Hualpa carrying some sort of news and possibly a peace offering or tribute for Ghostwalker. They spent some time together and parted on amiable terms. Amazonia has since officially recognized Ghostwalker's position as head-of-state for the Denver Front Range Free Zone.

- As much to hack off Aztlan as to placate Ghostwalker, I suspect. Still, an alliance between Ghostwalker and Hualpa could put Aztlan in between two great dragons, which is not a particularly pleasant place to be, if you ask me. Of course, the resources of Aztechnology are nothing to sneeze at, and it's questionable whether or not Ghostwalker would come to Amazonia's aid if Aztlan decided to expand its borders further south.
- Pyramid Watcher
- Trust me, Ghostwalker's help wouldn't be needed. Amazonia is well defended as it is, and Aztlan knows it.
- Yanamamo

- One other draconic visitor that Ghostwalker has received is Masaru, though it was kept very much on the Q.T. Still, I saw Masaru visit Ghostwalker's compound in Denver in his astral form. The wards and guardian spirits parted to let him in. I didn't stick around to see when (or if) he left, but since I haven't heard anything about Masaru's sudden disappearance or anything, I have to assume that their little get-together didn't end too badly.
- Spiritus

The few dragons that were actually in the Denver area when Ghostwalker showed up have either gotten the frag out of Dodge (and who can blame them?) or they've quickly done everything in their power to show Ghostwalker that they're on his side. For his part, Ghostwalker doesn't seem

to pay much attention to these other dragons, as long as they toe the line and stay out of his way.

One dragon that Ghostwalker seems to have it in for is Lofwyr (and can you blame him?). In addition to deliberately snubbing Saeder-Krupp at every opportunity, word on the street is that Ghostwalker is willing to pay handsomely for information on Lofwyr's activities, especially as they relate to North America.

- Be careful about this one, chummers. I've also heard that this rumor was started by one of Lofwyr's watchers to find out who knows what and to plug any information leaks in Lofwyr's network. Deal with dragons at your own risk.
- Muzik
- Nope, the offer's legit, Muzik, and Ghostwalker's cred is good. Just make sure you don't waste his time with worthless or (worse yet) false information. A chummer of mine got greedy and ... well, let's just say that some of the stories about Ghostwalker's diet are true.
- Weaver

- The payscale offered by the white wyrm on S-K data is second-rate compared to the going rate for data on Ghostwalker. I think just about every other great dragon in the world, friend or foe, is keeping tabs on the new wyrm in town. What better time to get the goods and maybe sneak a mole inside than when he's still consolidating his power base? I hear there's a lot of specific interest in Ghostwalker's long astral journey. Whatever Ghostwalker was up to in the meta-planes before he popped out of the rift has the other wyrms nervous and concerned.
- Fidget

The origin of Ghostwalker's conflict with Lofwyr (if it can be called that) remains a mystery. The two dragons don't seem to have any interests in common. Lofwyr runs the world's largest corporation while Ghostwalker has set himself up with his own personal fiefdom. Lofwyr is in Europe while Ghostwalker is in North America. Saeder-Krupp's interests in Denver are barely significant by megacorp standards. All we can assume right now is that it's some sort of dragon thing, and that it might go back a long, long way.

- Now there's a candidate for understatement of the decade. It'll be interesting to see if Ol' Pale Scales learned any clever new tricks while he was away.
- The Laughing Man
- Oh, yes. You'll soon see.
- Ghost in the Machine

HESTABY



Most dragons aren't high profile movers and shakers like Dunkelzahn and Lofwyr, preferring instead to operate beyond prying eyes. Frankly, that's fine by me. Usually, when a dragon takes a visible role in something, the intelligent person tends to keep a safe distance of a continent or two from the event. Hestaby, however, has broken this mold over the last year or so, suddenly appearing in a much more open and public manner without stirring up a ton of trouble—and even showing signs of benevolence. Yes, I just used the word “benevolence” in reference to a great dragon.

As is the case with all of the great wyrms, there's more to the story. To get the lowdown on the First Lady of Dragonkind, I enlisted the aid of Eyebright, an occasional visitor to Shadowland and former cohort of Hestaby's. A word to the wise—Eyebright is no longer a friend or fan of Hestaby. You'll find a lot of vitriol in this piece, but it also includes enough bulls-eye paydata to make it worth posting. If nothing else, Eyebright's claims and arguments are food for thought; just be sure to take her words with a dragon-sized grain of salt.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 16 February 2063 at 10:50:06 (PST)

by Eyebright

Chummers, it's no secret—the Sixth World is neither the safest nor the friendliest place. We all think we have enough to worry about without another paranoiac fanning another flame. Well, sorry, but this fire is raging too fiercely to be ignored. A beast influences all of our lives, whether you know it or not, and poses a substantial threat to us all. Its existence has been common knowledge for decades, but its true nature and power have only come to the fore in recent months. Allow me to provide you with a true introduction to the great dragon Hestaby.

- Sheesh. Lay on another layer, will ya? I'm not sure the melodrama is quite thick enough yet.
- Slamm-O!





HESTABY

Great Western Dragon

Sex: Female

Coloring: Deep Bronze/Copper

Metahuman Form(s): Human, long, auburn hair, striking features

Primary Lair: Mount Shasta

Translator: None

Timeline

2053: Hestaby makes her first public appearance when she stops Tir Tairngire's assault on California's Northern Crescent by pushing their troops back and settling in the area of the Shasta Dam. She claims the forty-mile area surrounding the dam as her own.

2053-2057: Hestaby firmly establishes the Mount Shasta region as her lair. The redwood forests in the Shasta region spread at an unnatural rate. Sporadic reports of unidentified flying creatures begin to trickle in.

2057: In his will, Dunkelzahn leaves Hestaby a private Zurich-Orbital data store containing unknown information.

2062: Hestaby is named to the Tir Council of Princes when Lofwyr steps down. Northern Crescent Californians suspect she is "selling them out" to the Tir. Mount Shasta grows as a power site, literally glowing in the astral plane.

- Chummer, if you knew what I know, you'd probably say I was understating the case.
- Eyebright
- Funny, that's exactly what Humanis's official line on Hestaby is.
- Green Thumb

A little background for those of you who don't know me, just to prove I'm not talking out my hoop: I was a member of the Shasta Shamans for five years and worked my way very close to the wiz-wyrm in that time. I thought I had met a great dragon worthy of a person's trust, despite all the warnings I had heard over the years. I devoted my entire being to the whims of this creature for years, and I contributed, in no small part, to several major "events" during my service to her. I thought I understood her motives and goals. I believed I was a part of something worthwhile, even beautiful. I truly felt I was valued as a friend and ally. One word: *bulldrek*.

The rose-colored Zeiss-Nikkon goggles have been smashed, and I finally know the real scaly slitch. Don't be fooled by her façade, chummers; she is as cold-blooded as Lofwyr, as driven as Ghostwalker and as well connected as the late Prez Dunkelzahn. Here's some of the major information I have on my former patron.

- I've had some regular work from Hestaby over the last few years, and she's shot straight with me every time. After all the

jobs I've pulled for her, she hasn't fragged me once. You'd think if she was really so devious, I'd have gotten the shaft by now.

- Smiley
- Quit thinking in metahuman time, chummer. "A few years" is a grain of sand in dragon time. She may still be in the early stages of setting you up. Remember, a dragon's plans span centuries while we worry about what time we're gonna eat lunch.
- Dragonslayer

THE COLD-BLOODED PERSONA

Hestaby styles herself as a champion of equality, a guardian of righteousness in a Sixth World gone mad. She has picked up the mantle of Dragon Keeper of Metahumanity from where Dunkelzahn left it behind. This self-appointed protector role is deliberate, as it paints her as the "good guy." It also provides a useful cover story for sinking her talons into other people's business.

Hestaby constantly rambles on about "the responsibility of those with the power to change things" or "the duty to safeguard the future for all living creatures" and other pseudo-liberal political drek. Her primary concerns are those which will earn her a reputation as caring, sensitive and egalitarian—and she is very concerned with her reputation. She wants nothing less than to be viewed as Mother to the World.

- Oddly poignant statement, wouldn't you say?
- Script-Diver
- Touché, old friend. For once, you beat me to the quip!
- The Laughing Man

Cultivating this image even further, Hestaby has masterfully opened herself up to the media without granting a single interview. Over the past year, her media presence has increased exponentially as news of her activities is consistently "leaked." These leaks are carefully created to boost her celebrity status and improve the public's perception of her.

- Eyebright's got a point. Hestaby gets almost nothing but good press. In the past few months alone, I've seen reports of her aiding metahuman refugees from the Central Valley, initiating economic reforms to help the poor in Tir Tairngire, convincing Prince Surehand to grant pardons to imprisoned Rinelle leaders and contributing funds to help clean up a toxic chemical spill in the Salish-Shidhe. Talk about a philanthropist. It's simply too good to be true.
- Maher
- My favorite was the "private correspondence" from Hestaby to Saito that KSAF "somehow" acquired. That was entertainment! Too bad they censored the story in the Californian Protectorate.
- Weatherman



• It's also interesting to note how the press portrays Hestaby in comparison to some of the other more visible great dragons (Ghostwalker, Masaru, Lofwyr, Ryumyo). Hestaby comes across as the level-headed, moderate of the bunch. From what I can gather, she's also leaked a few occasions when she's paid visits to other dragons. I'm sure some were unhappy about this publicity, but the benefits of their scheming with her must be worth the unwanted attention, because none of them have refused her visits. My guess is that Hestaby wants the world to believe that the relationships between her kind are not always Machiavellian plots for world domination.

• Socio Pat

Hestaby has also increased the frequency of her public appearances, most of them chosen to maximize her media exposure. She does little to disguise her comings and goings so the media hounds are alerted and prepared. Factor in that she almost always publicly appears in her natural form, using spellcraft to speak rather than a translator intermediary, and you can guess what an impact she makes.

• Most dragons assume metahuman form in public or use a spokesperson, so that they don't intimidate and scare us little folk. But if the building or room can accommodate her size, Hestaby will appear in her full reptilian glory. Rather than freaking people out, this shock tactic has worked in her favor and even made her a bit of a media darling. I suspect she hopes to get the average wageslave used to the sight of a great dragon so that they're accepted as a normal part of life in the Sixth World.

• Socio Pat

• That's right. If we see those reptilian teeth enough, we'll get used to them, and won't see them as the threat they are anymore. But anyone who falls for that has never been on the receiving end of an annoyed glance from a creature whose fangs are the size of your forearm.

• Eyebright

Hestaby's outreach is focused specifically towards the populations of Northern California and Tir Tairngire, in an attempt to quell fears and hostilities. So far, this move to come out in the open has been quite successful—she is no longer the shadowy, menacing figure hiding behind the emerald curtain, skulking around the edges of the public's conscience. Now she is an accessible wyrm.

• Whatever that means. Accessibility for a dragon is a relative term. She is only as accessible as someone like Damien Knight or Ebran the Scribe. You ain't gonna run into these "accessible" types at the Stuffer Shack.

• The Digs

• True, but much of the otherworldly awe usually associated with dragonkind is definitely diminished, and I've got a feeling her scaly friends don't appreciate it.

• Mr. Peeps

As with most celebrities, her disinterest in making statements directly to the media makes her even more interesting to them. She manipulates their own habits and lures them into doing her bidding and they don't even know it. The press can be gullible, but her degree of puppet-mastery is unmatched. While a carefully chosen segment of Hestaby's affairs has been thrown open to the world, this is but a smokescreen. A small loss of privacy in one area is in truth a calculated sacrifice, a buffer against anyone digging into her affairs, providing a useful distraction from the dealings she keeps carefully hidden.

PLANS WITHIN PLANS

Hestaby's agenda revolves around two primary foundations. First, she supports ecological preservation and restoration efforts in all areas of the world, especially where it concerns astral ecology. Second, she backs metahuman and Awakened rights all over the globe and makes no bones about her stance. She not only supports organizations that promote them, but also publicly roasts those that maintain outdated prejudices.

Unlike most other dragons who try to keep a low profile or seem noncommittal on controversial issues, Hestaby sticks to her professed principles even in the face of public scrutiny. She likes to appear uncompromising and true to her convictions in the public eye. The truth is she needs to lull the followers of these causes into trusting her so she can manipulate their organizations to her own ends.

Both of Hestaby's pet causes have mass movements with some specific qualities the dragon can exploit: they are global in scope, have their noses in everyone's business, command incredible loyalty from their followers and everyone considers them to be the "good guys."

• There's one other cold, hard business benefit to dealing with these types of organizations: many of them are non-profit groups. They take in vast contributions from an incredible array of sources, including many anonymous donations. This makes them extremely useful places to launder money and very effective financial entities through which to funnel contributions you want made untraceable.

• The Chromed Accountant

• Gaining control over a handful of these groups could also be a really useful way to manipulate lower-level corps. Organized protests and other kinds of bad publicity can be seriously damaging to a baby corporation. This could be a way for her to put the thumbscrews on people from time to time, either to manip-



ulate a company towards her own ends or drive their stock down and gobble them up.

- The Keynesian Kid

ORANGE DRAGON, GREEN INTERESTS

Hestaby's primary concern, without question, is environmental preservation. She meddles in this field through a variety of entities, commanding a wide spectrum of influence over her interests. She gives modest financial support to the Green Party in various countries and supports some moderate eco-policlubs such as Globewatch and Earth Guard. In addition, Hestaby treats the magical environment with as much conviction as the mundane. She isn't just concerned with the effects of ecological abuse on the physical plane, but also for the various forms of "magical pollution" such as toxic magic, blood magic and the abuse of magical power sites.

- I've heard that some of the Shasta Shamans aren't satisfied with using cleansing metamagic to clean up areas that are astrally despoiled. With Hestaby's help, they're researching a technique that would allow them to "brace" an area to make it more resistant from developing a background count and astral pollution in the first place. They specifically hope to use it in sterile corporate areas or places thick with metahuman misery or despair. Makes me wonder if it would have some sort of side effect that manipulates the people in this areas to be "happier." The corps would love that. Scary thought, neh?
- CrimeThink

I trust Hestaby's motives only as far as I can throw her, but in this one thing I think she's sincere. Even here I cannot condone her activities, however, for she handles them with reptilian ruthlessness. Hestaby's true ecological politics rival those of the most misanthropic GreenWar fanatics; she grants no mercy to anyone complicit in ecological or astral pollution. The same accounts that bankroll moderate green groups also funnel cred to vicious eco-terrorists, who call for the dismantlement of modern society and have no compunctions with spilling blood to do so. She even grants these sociopaths access to her lands so they can practice their destructive methods in secret training camps deep in the woods. She considers metahumans expendable when it comes to protecting wildlife or plants and secretly harbors a desire to see an industrial collapse and return to a more primitive society.

- Let's cut the crap and get a few things straight. Yes, Hestaby throws down support for some direct action eco groups—including a few that ethically stray beyond sabotage and property damage into actually harming the polluters themselves. But she draws the line when it comes to toxics or any of the deep green types that think the only way to save the planet is to exterminate metahumans. If you ask me, Eyebright's got a grudge against anyone that thinks technology might be hurting more than helping our planet's situation.

- Green Piece



- Well, from a dragon's point of view, technology is one of the things that levels the playing field between dragons and metahumans. I'm not surprised to hear that a dragon might think a more primitive society would be more conducive to it getting its way better when dealing with us little talking monkeys.

- Reality Czech

- In my experience, an awful lot of Hestaby's biz ties into her obsession with ecology. Most dragons are eco-friendly, except maybe Lofwyr, but Hestaby has a serious compulsion going on. Every story I've heard about pulling a job that traced back to Hestaby had some sort of environmental angle worked into it. It's a bit frightening to think of a great dragon with an unhealthy obsession about something, isn't it?

- Holly

- Hestaby is a champion of nature in all of its forms. The astral plane is just one more frontier mankind seems to be hell-bent upon defiling, just as it has with the air, land and sea. I'm glad she's on our side.

- Shasta Sam

- Open your eyes, chummer. Dragons ain't on anyone's side but their own.

- Bung

TO SERVE MAN

Hestaby's second pet project, metahuman and Awakened rights, is possibly even more widespread and complex than the first. She's an honorary member of the board of Mothers of Metahumans, a virtual spokesdragon for the United Talismonger's Association, appeared at the last national convention of the Ork Rights Council as a guest of honor and gave the American Association for the Advancement of Thaumaturgy an incredible two million-nuyen contribution last year. As much as she supports these groups, she is even more energetic in her opposition to groups residing on the other end of the spectrum. Humanis and similar policlubs, plus their underground allies like Alamos 20K and the Human Nation in particular, bear the brunt of Hestaby's open criticism—not to mention shadow ops.

- Our meeting hall in Bieber suffers the repeated abuse of vandalism, burglary and sabotage from Hestaby's agents. You don't see any of us attacking her because we don't agree with her beliefs. See the kind of monster we're forced to deal with?

- Buzz

- Yeah, it must have been her. No one else is interested in harassing a bunch of poor, innocent Humanis members. Certainly not me. Ahem.

- Bull

- Hestaby understands that those with the power and resources to help the less fortunate have a moral obligation to

do so. Her support in both word and deed has given us more than we would have ever dreamed.

- MOM

- Yeah, I'm sure her reasons for helping you come from a deep sense of "moral obligation."

- Cynic

- It's important to note she views intolerance against any sort of Awakened subgroup as racism and supports the rights of these groups, such as sasquatch, merrow and ghouls accordingly. She is as equally concerned for the tolerance of magic wielders and all magical phenomena as she is for race. To her, the existence of metahumans is just another manifestation of the Awakened world in which we live.

- Kohen

Hestaby's meta-friendly politics strongly influence her dealings in international affairs. She has already used her position as a Tir prince to challenge the blatant institutionalized racism that stigmatizes that country. She has also praised the actions of the new Japanese emperor, Yasuhito, for his courage in overturning entrenched racist practices and his demonstrated interest in bringing Japan into the twenty-first century. And she has openly challenged and condemned the reports and claims made by General Saito. Hestaby's media persona seems driven to even greater outrage every time Saito institutes a new segregation program to corral and intimidate metahumans.

- Hestaby's had to tone down her challenges a bit; even she has trouble competing with the Human Nation's media machine. Saito's propaganda is sophisticated enough that Hestaby has to take care when contradicting it, and more than once the press has framed Hestaby as a threat-leveling war monger based on the claims she makes and opposition she has voiced. I expect the chess game to continue as each tries to rile public and international opinion in their favor.

- Black Lung

THE UNDERLYING AGENDA

On the surface, Hestaby's actions appear benevolent, molded perfectly to enhance her maternal image. All dragons have extremely long-term goals, but hers seem within the reach of metahuman minds. Put simply, her public agenda is to make the world a healthy, pleasant, and fair place to live for all forms of life. Not a bad platform for popular support, eh?

The truth—benevolence has nothing to do with Hestaby's ultimate goal. She cares about one thing, and one thing only—the expansion of her empire, until the entire world is within her fold.

That's right, chummers. The dragon lady's long-term plans are nothing less than total dominion of our fair Earth. She has learned from years of human (and possibly dragon) history that force and tyranny are not the proper way to subjugate a population. She favors the velvet glove—the image crafting, opin-



ion manipulation and manufacture of consent that will convince the world that we want to be her loyal subjects.

Think about it. She champions the underdogs, gives them a reason to love her, to trust her, to follow her, to devote their lives to her and their redemption. If her plans come to fruition, think of the size of that support base! All the poor, lowly, downtrodden metahumans and oppressed Awakened species whose causes she supports; if they ever get their due, who will they want to thank? What more loyal constituency could a ruler want?

- Oh, drek, she's right!
- Tom Tom

• Jeez, even I find this a bit hard to swallow. There are just too many leaps of logic, too many other explanations that make just as much sense. Without some hard evidence, it just comes off as character assassination.

- Lone Gunman

Don't believe me? Take this one example. Hestaby's first public move was to involve herself in the border dispute between California and Tir Tairngire. She played both sides of the conflict beautifully, allowing her to entrench herself securely in the region. When Tir Tairngire made an aggressive move to take the territory from CalFree, Hestaby swooped in and stopped the elves, but then proceeded to claim the territory as her own in what she proclaimed was a move to avoid future conflict between the two nations. A peacekeeping maneuver. The result? Excellent PR and a little sovereign territory of her own—the beginning of Hestaby's empire.

Now look to the present, where Hestaby has taken a leadership role in the Tir and faces off against a devilish foe to the south. As she wins popularity in the Tir, she will heroically move to unseat a racist despot and free the people of California from Saito's regime. Even the Tir elves will rally behind her, as Saito is no friend of theirs. Before long, she will control the West Coast from Portland to the Big Sur. A wise and benevolent Orange Queen.

- Oh drek. What if those elven Tir Princes and Hestaby have had this planned all along? What if the Tir-Cal border war was staged—a media stunt to set Hestaby up as the good guy? We've been duped!
- Tom Two

WINGSPAN

Every dragon has a network of allies and acolytes to take care of the dirty work and Hestaby is no exception to this wyrm rule. The following are just a few of her "tools."

TIR TAIRNGIRE

A position on the Tir Tairngire Council of Princes is a tremendous boost to Hestaby's power and public image. With one political appointment, the entire world changed its opinion of her. For better, worse or even just different, every-

one had to stop and re-evaluate her. Before, she was known as a great dragon of obvious power, but now she owns a spot recently vacated by Lofwyr, which speaks volumes as to how far she has come. Without even using her power as a Tir Prince, Hestaby has effectively unbalanced enemies and opponents everywhere.

- Hey, while we're talking about rethinking, how about someone explain what happened with Lofwyr and the Council and why Hestaby now has his position?

- Squire

• Golden Snout simply had a disagreement with the Council over something. Then they agreed he should go elsewhere. The Orange Queen got his seat because she had an incentive that suited his taste.

- The Laughing Man

- Oh, please. Isn't that quite enough of that?

- Wordsmyth

- Forget I asked. I somehow think I know less than I did before.

- Squire

Hestaby's acceptance of the seat was a cunning move, as she now has the power to keep the Tir out of California for as long as she wants. Simultaneously she has neutralized an enemy and ensured the security of her own domain. She has also gained a key ally against Saito and gained influence on an entire country that supports her ecological ideals. As a prominent political figure, she can now draw attention to the conservation efforts of herself and the Tir and solicit support and challenge the policies of less conscientious nations. On the other hand, race relations in the Tir are downright medieval, and she now has the chance to change it from within. Any change in Tir law or policy advancing metahuman rights will be a huge feather in Hestaby's global activist cap.

So far, Hestaby has played a far more active and visible role in the Tir than Lofwyr ever did. Though many Tir residents still fear her, she has maneuvered herself into position as the champion for the Tir's new openness and economic expansion. Her approval ratings are soaring as Tir residents who have been toiling in hard economic conditions for years now see her as the underdog prince, rooting for change on their behalf. Some of the other princes clearly feel that Hestaby is taking pushing the envelope and taking advantage of her privileges, but their own infighting hampers their ability to slow her down with serious opposition.

- Hestaby has also been spending quite a bit of time behind closed doors (in really big rooms) with Sean Laverty. The two of them share a few interests; they're both really gung-ho about the environment, support some oddball magical groups and have a fetish for power sites. Who knows what kind of deals those two are cooking up together?

- Cork

• Something doesn't add up. For a few years now, I've been sure Hestaby was backing certain cells of Rinelle ke'Tesrae. There were a few too many odd coincidences and actions that benefited Hestaby as much as they did the rebels. I've had regular contact with some of those Rinelle slags, so I did my homework. I uncovered an admittedly fragile money trail leading back to a dragon all right. But it wasn't Hestaby—it was Rhonabwy!

• Longshoreman

• Makes sense. Rhonabwy's a financial whiz and a well-known troublemaker in elf-governed areas.

• Spes

• Yeah, but I can't shake the feeling that it's not right. Some of this stuff has Hestaby's scent all over it. Take the Rinelle action in Salem last month. Rinelle could only have pulled that job off if they had outrageous luck—or if they had inside knowledge. The kind of inside intel a Tir prince would have. Like Hestaby.

Of course, Hestaby can't afford to be tied to any Rinelle groups while working as a member of the Tir government. That would compromise her council seat. But it would certainly be in her best interests if she could play both angles—destabilizing things by supporting Rinelle while working towards her own goals from the inside.

• Longshoreman

• Are you suggesting that Rhonabwy and Hestaby may have some sort of deal going on? That Rhonabwy deals out aid to Rinelle according to Hestaby's wishes, in exchange for some favor in return? What is Hestaby doing for Rhonabwy?

• Conspir-I-See

• I'm not suggesting anything. I'm just putting some details out there. Make your own conclusions.

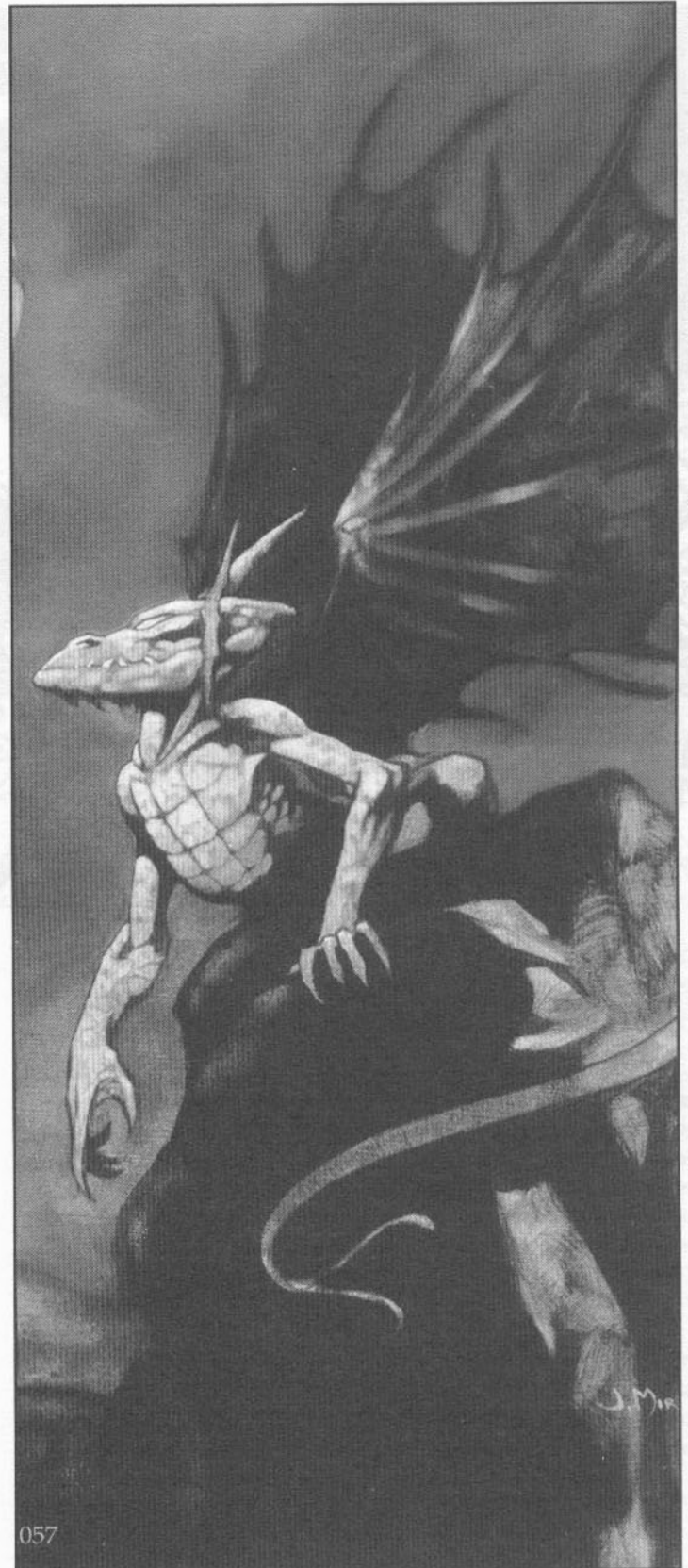
• Longshoreman

CORPORATE HOLDINGS

Most of Hestaby's financial affairs are limited to small, low-level corps. She has selectively picked some choice companies, either because they fit her agenda or because they have strong potential for future growth. Corporations that deal in ecological-friendly or restorative technology are prime candidates. I also know of at least one instance where she intentionally pursued leverage in a company that was infamous for its environmental negligence, then used her power to halt the polluting practices and refocus the corp's procedures and approach. In the process, she put several thousand people out of work, but now it serves as an example of an eco-friendly company that can compete with corps that still use "outdated and destructive" methods.

• Great. One down. Now only about ten million corps to go.

• Reality Czech



057



Rather than spreading herself thin across dozens of corps, she picks the cream of the crop and covertly gains control over them (through outright ownership or major percentages). The exceptions are her investments in a number of small but important subsidiaries of certain megacorps—though she holds only minority positions compared to the controlling megacorps, she is able to watch what they're doing and occasionally even influence their affairs in minor ways.

- These smaller corps also allow her to mask and obscure some of her money moves and, of course, to hire shadowrunners from behind a corporate "front."

- The Chromed Accountant

Hestaby shows particular interest in monitoring various shareholders who do *not* hold board seats in the corps in which they are invested. In fact, she maintains a "watch list" of several dozen individuals on whom she keeps a close eye, for reasons I do not fully understand. I do, however, remember two of the names: Aikiro Tokunado of Seattle and Louis Mendroit of Vancouver.

- I can hazard a guess here. Chances are, since she is trying to keep a low profile in the corp world, she is interested in obtaining proxy votes. So she's probably looking for nice, fat, juicy voting blocks that are being voted by proxies, as opposed to trying to buy stock outright, which would attract more attention. From what I can dig up on Tokunado and Mendroit, both happen to be big investors and they both happen to own voting stock in Shiawase. Both also show little interest in the corps they invest in, as long as they make money—in other words, they allow proxies to vote their stocks. I suspect Hestaby is looking for leverage on them so she can convince them to let her take their votes.

- The Chromed Accountant

- Hey, what if Hestaby is the one voting Eiji Yakamura's stock in MCT? Wouldn't that cause some sparks between her and Ryumyo?

- Kensai

Hestaby does have a few substantial holdings in larger AA corps, such as Phoenix Biotechnologies and Lami Look Pagkaon. Her growing interest in some AAA's, however, leads me to think she may be preparing for the big leagues. If her past track record is any indication of how she will proceed, she will bide her time until she is certain she can do things properly, and then her actions will take everyone by surprise.

- Hey, Masaru is investing in Lami Look also, and he's been trying to get Gaeatronics into the Philippines for a while. Maybe he and Hestaby are working together on some of these corps.

- Tikbalang

- Or against each other.

- D Bunker

- Look for plenty of lucrative work if Hestaby decides to dabble in the megas. There will be some major shifts in power if another great dragon decides to shove her snout into that pool.

- Prime Runner

Dunkelzahn's Legacy

Hestaby has made a point of illustrating to the public that she is a strong supporter of the Draco Foundation. In fact, you can easily get the impression that they work closely together, though this is not quite true. The Foundation has sought Hestaby's advice at several points, and the dragon lady has created media spectacles out of several joint meetings and contributions she has made, somewhat to the DF's chagrin. She spoke highly of Dunkelzahn when he died, displaying grief and offering support for the dispensation of his will. Whether her feelings are genuine or for show, she clearly she seeks to paint herself as the dragon heir to Dunkelzahn's legacy

- I have held my tongue so far, but this I cannot let pass. Dunkelzahn was the bravest of my kind and a true visionary by any standards. His death was a loss to the world and I will grieve for many years. Say what you will about my intentions, but never challenge whether or not my feelings for him are genuine.

- Orange Queen

In this vein, Hestaby pursues a direct interest in several small corps across the world that were either created or heavily retooled to claim some of the bounties in Dunkelzahn's will. She has even been known to match the contributions made by Dunkelzahn in several cases where recipient corporations were still struggling. One example of this is Starfield Botanical Engineering, a small CAS corp that hopes to claim the prizes for underwater cacti and air pollution eating plants. Another is Harburgh Detox Labs, a small company in Boston whose sole business is detoxifying polluted areas under continuous grants from the Draco Foundation.

- I'm pretty sure Hestaby also owns MechAnima, a small but bleeding-edge think tank in Sacramento. Supposedly, they were created for the express purpose of winning both the perpetual motion machine and mechanical magic effect prizes.

- Lefty

Hestaby is also the primary sponsor of the Astral Space Preservation Society; playing a role in this group that dwarfs the Draco Foundation's involvement.

- Something the wags at the DF aren't too pleased with, I hear. From what I gather, the DF expected the ASPS to lurk in their shadow and toe the party line, but Hestaby came along and gave them the means and the motivation to chart their own independent course.

- Huck



THE SHASTA NETWORK

In the decade since Hestaby first took up residence on Mount Shasta, she has made the surrounding area hers in every possible way. No one knows where she laired before, but she certainly maintains no other lair of significance now and hasn't for many years. Nestled in a seemingly precarious location, between the violently opposed nations of Tir Tairngire and the California Free State, Hestaby's Shasta domain is surprisingly tranquil. Her entire network branches out from the Shasta Enclave, and all of them have pledged their undivided loyalty to the Orange Queen.

The Shasta Shamans

The most prominent of Hestaby's support organizations is my own former Lodge, the Shasta Shamans. I will give only the publicly available information on the Shamans themselves, as I have no desire to betray my brothers and sisters, misled as they are. The Shasta Lodge was founded in 2065, starting in a defunct ski lodge on the slope of Mount Shasta. The founder and still current head shaman of the Lodge is Elliot Eyes-of-Wyrm, whose totem is, of course, Dragon.

• I've been doing some digging, but can't come up with a fragging shred of info on this Eyes-of-Wyrm character. Anyone know something I don't?

• Spook

• As far as I can tell, Elliot Eyes-of-Wyrm did not exist before the founding of the Shasta Shamans. He has no record of birth or education anywhere in North America, though from his voice, appearance and personality, he seems Californian. His face registers no match in any database I can get into (which is almost all of them) and his name, as far as I can tell, is a complete cipher. It's anyone's guess.

• FastJack

• Maybe he's a bigwig in the Tir, then ... or come to think of it, maybe he's involved with the Draco Foundation. Oh, I know, he probably wandered right out of the Australian Outback and hopped a plane straight to Redding, CA. Frag, doesn't anyone have a past anymore?

• Dragonslayer



From the beginning, the Lodge enjoyed Hestaby's patronage. They hold her exclusive permission to harvest the extremely powerful telesma of the Shasta region's forests, allowing them to develop a very healthy income independent of Hestaby's support. A small cottage industry of telesma harvesting and foci enchanting has expanded into a major enterprise. After only two years of existence, the Lodge counted over 75 members (not all of them shamans) and showed great competence, stability and financial acumen. Five years later, the Lodge now has over 200 members and its power, both magical and temporal, has grown substantially. One would expect little else from a sequestered magical group enjoying the sponsorship of a great dragon living just up the street. The Shasta Shamans repay Hestaby's support with unquestioning, absolute loyalty. They serve her till the end. I can say little else.

- The Lodge has a tight relationship with the United Talismonger's Association, especially on the business end of things. Tamara Nimbus, the UTA head, is practically an honorary Lodge member. The UTA funnels some high-paying unique/hard-to-find type requests to the Lodge, and in return the UTA gets exclusive deals. The UTA also lobbies hard to protect the Northern Crescent forests—and by default helps Hestaby and the Lodge monopolize the area's magical resources.

- Silicon Mage

- Needless to say, the Lodge acts as the primary security force for Hestaby's domain. And if she needs to trot out some mojo muscle for backup on a black ops job, she'll recruit from the Lodge as necessary—though she avoids this so as not to risk a run being linked back to her.

- Willowspear

Gypsies

The gypsies of the Californian Northern Crescent have grown increasingly fond of Hestaby over the last five years. In addition to the lands granted them in Dunkelzahn's will, Hestaby has given them free, unopposed passage throughout the Shasta Enclave. The gypsies do not take this gift lightly. Not only is the land pristine and beautiful, it is also unpopulated by any other group. As the gypsies are not overly fond of strangers, they serve as an unofficial but effective border patrol and ranger service for Hestaby, keeping unwanted guests out of the area, especially Tir border guards. The gypsies may not have bleeding-edge tech, but they are tough and dedicated, and as a group are extremely adept at guerilla tactics in their familiar forests. Hestaby prefers a low-tech atmosphere in her domain, and the gypsies are perfectly suited to such an environment.

- It's not just the Northern Crescent gypsies that Hestaby has co-opted. She uses gypsies, nomads and travelers all over the world as her eyes and ears.

- Serephim.

- Pretty fraggin' smart, if you think about it. Tight-knit, family-oriented groups, virtually impervious to infiltration. They roam throughout their indigenous areas, literally melding into the landscape. You can't hide anything from gypsies when in their lands (especially the jewelry!). They seem like an ideal spy network.

- Snatch

The Clutch

The odd group out in Hestaby's menagerie is her pet group of otaku, who call themselves the Clutch. There are somewhere between ten and twenty of them, each slowly gathered to the Shasta node by Hestaby. I've never seen one in person—they stay out of sight and dealt with Hestaby's other servants through vid-conferences. They all sport "dragon-ish" names, and their leader calls himself Dracobyte.

- What? Bulldrek! Not only does the wyrm have a pet shamanic lodge, she's got her own gang of otaku also? I know these dragons all have some pretty heavy resources, but this seems a like a private army.

- Dragonslayer

- It's no joke, omae. They're otaku, all right. Trust me. I managed to locate the Shasta node and went for a little self-guided tour. The first thing I noticed was that the IC is layered evenly. It's pretty respectable just trying to get in, but the surprise is that it doesn't let up much once you're inside. They're dedicating an awful lot of system resources to protecting something in there. Anyway, here I am, minding someone else's business, when these two other deckers come sizzling up beside me. Each of them had a dracoform icon, and they made it clear right from the get-go they wanted me to leave immediately. Never one to go along easily, I resisted. That didn't last long. These kids were drek-hot, even by otaku standards. I bailed out of there like Deus was coming, and I am gonna spend some time recovering before I try going back. Who the frag am I kidding—I ain't ever going back!

- Bloodyguts

- I hear some members of the Clutch were "kidnapped" from their original otaku tribes—some are still looking for their long lost friends. I'm not sure if the claims are accurate; Hestaby may have simply lured them with a good deal, or maybe there's something about the Shasta Matrix they really like. In any case, a few of those old tribes have figured out where their former comrades went, and they aren't too pleased ...

- Grid Reaper

The Clutch handle all of Hestaby's Matrix needs, from basic information gathering to heavy-duty data theft, and generally keep their electron eyes open for anything globally important. They try to please her in any way they can, and they sometimes pull juvenile pranks against those they know she



dislikes to gain her favor. Their biggest task is defending the Shasta Matrix systems, and there are no fewer than two of them patrolling it at any time.

• So what gives here? I've dealt with some otaku kids in the past, and they were so warped by their interactions with technology that they were barely human anymore. That doesn't exactly jive with Hestaby's clean eco-slant. What's the missing link?

• Rubik

• You're staring at it. You're right, the otaku are a prime example of the potentially dehumanizing effects of technology. Hestaby is intrigued by their abilities, and hopes that the proper, nurturing atmosphere can affect and help them. She seeks a method by which to meld the wonders of the Matrix with the beauty of magic and nature!

• Shasta Sam

• Riiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiight. Any other theories?

• Rubik

• Only this one. Dragons can ride the Matrix by telepathically hitching on a decker, right? The way I scan it, Hestaby tried this trick with an otaku. I'm not exactly sure what the results were—it's possible the otaku mindset really fragged with the wyrm's head in some way. But I'll bet my trusty Predator that she liked the experience ... so much that she decided to get her very own flock of otaku, just so she can score her regular fix.

My question is, do her pet otaku get the same thrill?

• Dirty Bunny

• You're one sick puppy, DB.

• Rubik

Mount Shasta

No treatise on Hestaby can be complete without mentioning Mount Shasta itself. The region around the mountain sings with mana and literally glows in the astral plane. A formidable power site, the Shasta area is increasingly aspected towards nature magic. Hestaby remains very concerned about the astral energies, carefully monitoring the ebb and flow and subtly manipulating it to further her own ends. She has so attuned herself to Mount Shasta's power that she seems able to consciously alter its mien. She once demonstrated this by stripping one shaman of her ability to tap into the sacred mountain's power as punishment for a slight grievance. I expect that, over time, Hestaby will have full mastery of the mountain's potential.

• Ooooh, could this be the source of our little tiff with Hestaby? The wizworm won't share the mojo, so one of her pet shamans jumps ship and squeals?

• Marek

• Frag off, Marek. Everyone knows you wouldn't know loyalty if it bit your hoop off, so I'm sure betrayal is a foreign concept to you.

• Eyebright

The potency of Mount Shasta also manifests in the enclave's wildlife. Over the past few years, the Redwood forests have taken on a life of their own, thickening and expanding at a frighteningly abnormal rate. What should have taken centuries has happened in only a decade. Some say the forest is waking up, and those who set foot upon its ground for the first time are often overcome by a sense of dread. It took me a while to get used to it, and I was welcome; uninvited guests have it a lot worse.

The nature spirits of the region are extremely hostile towards strangers, especially those who do not take care or who despoil the woods in some way. They will go to great lengths to chase intruders out of the woods and protect its inhabitants. One of the region's most staunchly protected creatures is the elusive Shasta Deer. A source of speculation for years, the Shasta Deer provoked enough interest to warrant a bounty from Tir Tairngire (recently repealed by Hestaby). They continue to appear in unusual numbers and in strange situations. They act quite unlike normal deer, having little to no fear of man.

• I have been keeping my mouth shut for a few months now, but this sounds too familiar to pass up. I've got a weird story that goes along with this creepy forest topic. Last fall, me and my chummers pulled a little freelance job, trying to collect the bounty on these freaky deer. According to the rules of the Tir bounty, all the deer has to do in order to qualify is "exhibit undeniable proof of magical activity." Well, we figured it would be simple to tell if a deer was doing anything magical and shouldn't be hard to catch—its just fraggin' Bambi, after all. We should've known nothing's ever that easy.

Within two days of hitting the edge of the redwoods, we had seen half a dozen deer, but the only magical thing they seemed to be doing was avoiding being caught. I swear I had my tranq rifle beaded on one of those things at least twenty times, and when I'd blink, it was gone. Not just moved out of my scope. Gone.

Anyway, after a week or so, we started venturing closer to the mountain, more out of boredom than anything else, when we ran into something we weren't expecting. Into this clearing where we're setting down for chow comes a fragging wyvern! Yeah, I know they're not native to the region and all that drek, but it's pretty hard to mistake anything else for a wyvern. Anyway, it comes in heavy, nailing our shaman with its stinger on its first pass, so we open up on it. After days of slinking around the woods, I was itching to get my fix of fully automatic stress relief anyway. The damned thing took out a good friend of mine



before we got the edge on it, and we were about to put it to rest when all of a sudden it stopped cold. We were so surprised we quit shooting at it.

That's when I started to get this creepy feeling, like something was slowing my thoughts down. I didn't feel up to fighting anymore. My brain went all sluggish, like I was drugged. I look over to the clearing, and there were two of those fraggin' deer we had been chasing, just standing there stock still. I swear they were staring the wyvern down. When I glanced back, they were gone again, but instead of empty turf, there were two guys standing there. I was still feeling really out of it, and was beginning to wonder if I was dreaming. I don't know how much time passed. They didn't say a word; they just acted like they were waiting for something.

All of a sudden, out of the thicket comes this massive stag of a deer. It must have stood two meters tall, with a rack of antlers that would snap a troll's neck. Its presence was awe-inspiring, and I somehow knew it was the source of the weird feeling. It just looked at us for a second, and then it glanced over at the wyvern. This is gonna sound crazy, but I swear the wyvern looked embarrassed and it turned tail and launched up into the air without a second to spare. Then the stag looked back at us and told us to leave. It didn't speak out loud or anything, but I heard a voice just the same, and so did all my chums. It said we were uninvited and we should leave and not come back. The thing also promised it would remember us, and if it caught us again, it would not be so forgiving. Chummer, I believe it. We got our hoops out of there as fast as we could trot. No bounty on the planet will get me back in that forest.

• Eddie Phoenix

• You know, I've heard some stories about strange, unidentified flying creatures around Mount Shasta for a while. Maybe this wyvern is some kind of pet of Hestaby's. It would explain those rumors. I don't know about the talking deer thing, though.

• Sagan

• The voice in the head Eddie describes sounds suspiciously like dragonspeech. Maybe the stag was Hestaby in some other form. How about those two other hard cases, though? Maybe ally spirits or something?

• Dragonslayer

• Maybe the Shasta Deer are some kind of rare shapeshifters.

• Wright

• And maybe Eddie was just the victim of some serious illusion magic.

• Cynic

THE 411

How does this all add up? Simple. Hestaby has been dealing with metahumans for years now. She has figured out what buttons to push to win their allegiance, what movements to support to build her image and how to turn that support into worldwide influence. She has developed a network of fanatical followers, the power of a Tir Prince and a magically charged empire a hundred miles in diameter, the borders of which she guards like a mystic Fort Knox. You can believe her press releases if you like, but I know the truth. It's only a matter of time. And while it may seem like all a dragon has is time, and we have nothing to worry about in our measly lifetime, I fear Hestaby's time may be coming a lot sooner than you think. This is one wyrm you don't want to turn your back on.

• I'm sorry, but these unverified insinuations are a stretch for me. I need to know the story between Eyebright and Hestaby if I'm gonna buy a word of this.

• Skeptic

• Dog teaches loyalty, generosity and dedication, but that allegiance isn't a one-way street. I gave years of my life and the lion's share of my power to further her causes. I believed in Hestaby. I believed that she had metahumanity's best interests at heart. But then I saw the real monster that lurked behind the friendly veneer. I watched her give orders that she knew would result in the deaths of innocent metahumans ("necessary casualties"). I witnessed her lie and deceive those who trusted her ("for their protection"). I heard the stories of how she dealt with unwelcome intruders ("burned alive"). Over time, I saw her harness the power inherent in Mount Shasta, hoard it for her own use, and deny it to others who had an equal right to it. And I was there when she traded an imprisoned metahuman to another great dragon like he was nothing but a prize in some game—and I was the one who found his chewed-off arm from where it had fallen out of the sky.

Loyalty only goes so far. I will not protect or serve a creature that plays games with us, viewing us as pawns at best, food at worst. Anyone that does so is betraying metahumanity.

I'm certain my days are numbered. I'll fall prey to an accident as soon as enough time has passed to lift suspicion. Shadowrunners get cacked all the time, right? But I'm not without resources of my own, and I'll be fragged if I'm going to stop trying to expose the truth with the time I've got left.

• Eyebright

• Interesting story. Make no mistake, friends, that's all it is.

• Dracobyte

• Oh, and you're an unbiased source?

• Cynic

HUALPA

Though we at Shadowland pride ourselves on the quality of the information we provide for you, we'll be the first to admit that the people who compile most of our offerings are not journalists or professional writers. Most of our authors are people struggling to make it in the shadows just like everyone else around here. But from time to time we run across someone who combines the qualities of both shadowrunner and journalist—underground journalism to be sure, but serious reporting nonetheless. Nicola used to work as a reporter for a newsfax outfit in the CAS before she ran into some trouble over some of her more controversial reporting. She's strictly "freelance" now, providing the real skinny to the people who want to know the truth. She knows recent events going on in Central and South America as well as anyone out there, so when we wanted to dig up info on the wyrms south of the border (namely the great feathered serpent Hualpa) we got in touch with her, and she didn't disappoint.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 16 February 2063 at 11:05:28 (PST)

by Nicola

I was fortunate to have an old school journalism professor when I learned the reporter's trade. No situational ethics, no politically correct talk about how it was impossible to be objective. While the rest of the world was tossing journalistic ethics and good taste out the window, he stood as a bastion of what he saw as the true values of journalism. "A journalist has the responsibility to report the facts of a story (no more and no less) without bias and without coloring the facts to suit his slant."

The job of a journalist is to answer five questions: who, what, where, when and why. I've carried that idea with me through the jungles of the Yucatán and Amazonia and the urban jungles of Seattle, Dallas-Fort Worth, and New Jersey. I think it's made me a better reporter, but it has also opened up my eyes to an unpleasant fact. Most people in the world don't want honest, unbiased reporting. They don't want the facts. They want comforting lies that help everything to make sense to them, that let them forget the world is a strange, often dangerous, place. And the Powers That Be don't want the truth told, either, because the truth is something (sometimes the only thing) that can hurt them.



So I'm not going to lie to you. I'm not going to make things up. I'm not going to sugar coat. I'm going to tell you what I know and what I've learned about an individual who may be one of the prime movers on the world political scene, though you may not know it yet.

WHO: HUALPA

The only thing more dangerous than a dragon operating in the open is a dragon operating behind the scenes. Pretty much everyone with a trideo set knows dragons like Dunkelzahn, Lofwyr, Hestaby and even Masaru. They're some of the public faces of dragonkind. Eastern dragons like Lung and Ryumyo are getting more press of late, too. But the dragons people know very little about are *Alatuserpens Quetzalcoatlus*, or feathered serpents as they are more commonly known—in particular, the great feathered serpent Hualpa.

Hualpa was one of the first feathered serpents spotted after the Awakening. His first known appearance was on January 3, 2012, when tourists on the Yucatán peninsula reported seeing the feathered serpent flying overhead. Hualpa paid a visit to the ruins of Chichen Itza, but didn't land. He flew in circles over the ruins, then disappeared into the Yucatán jungle. He (or other feathered serpents like him) were spotted in the following years, but they had little interaction with metahumanity, particularly in comparison to western dragons like Dunkelzahn.

- Lady, compared to Dunkelzahn most people I know have "little interaction with metahumanity." I mean, the dragon gave a live broadcast interview when he first appeared! Just because someone (or something) shuns the limelight doesn't mean they're up to something.
- X-Over
- It does when you're talking about a dragon, chummer. Dragons are always up to something.
- Wyrms Watcher

Hualpa didn't give any interviews. In fact, nobody even knew he was the one spotted in the Yucatán for decades, until the feathered serpent got involved in world events in a big way.

On August 28, 2034, an army of Awakened creatures invaded the city of Manaus, Brazil, led by three great dragons: two feathered serpents and a western dragon. They seized control of the city in a short and relatively bloodless coup, then began systematically working their way outward from the heart of the Amazon jungle. After two months of fighting between Brazilian forces and the army of the Amazon Awakened (as they came to be known), the capitol city of Brasilia fell and the Brazilian government was forced to surrender to the Awakened forces on November 2, 2034.

- I've heard a lot about the Amazonian Awakened seizing Brazil, but not much about the makeup of the army. Exactly what kind of "forces" are we talking about here?
- TomTom

- That's still somewhat unclear, even to this day. Keep in mind that when the invasion took place, over 25 years ago, there was even less understanding of magic. News and military reports from the time talk about "nature going mad" and "creatures from the jungle" attacking and seizing key military and political centers. From the sound of it there were a lot of spirits, mostly nature spirits. There were various kinds of jungle animals, which might have been spirits in physical form, or shapeshifters, or animals under magical control. Sounds like there were probably some nagas, leshy, basilisks and numerous other paranatural creatures that weren't identified. And on top of that you had at least three great dragons along with a number of adult feathered serpents. The Brazilians, lacking serious magical support, didn't have a prayer.

- Decker del Sur
- What about the dragons involved in the alliance? Which three great dragons were involved?
- Grid Dancer
- Well, Hualpa, of course, a western dragon generally identified as Sirurg, and another feathered serpent, who has never been positively identified. It's smaller than Hualpa, but substantially larger than most feathered serpents (leading to the belief that it's also a great dragon). It may be a female, which points to the possibility of either Mujaji or Arleesh, two known female great feathered serpents. Personally, my money is on Arleesh.
- Wyrms Watcher
- The only oddity about that is Arleesh isn't believed to have been active back in 2034. She didn't show up anywhere else until around 2049 or so. If the third feathered serpent is her, then what was she doing in the intervening fifteen years?
- Dragon IX

Hualpa addressed the country to declare the creation of the new nation of Amazonia. Or, more accurately, Hualpa appeared on a nationwide broadcast with his translator, Maria Locasin, to make the announcement. In it, the feathered serpent made it clear that the people of the former nation of Brazil would not be held accountable for the damage they'd done to the environment, but that the deforestation of the Amazon and other practices "harmful to the Earth" would cease immediately. All Brazilians were offered citizenship in Amazonia and the coastal cities would be maintained as "enclaves," but the nation's interior would be given over to the Awakened to restore the damage that had been done and to protect it for future generations. Manaus was declared the new capitol of Amazonia, and the new government immediately began the work of securing their borders and repairing the damage that had been done.

This ecological crusade was the public reason given for the Awakened coup that toppled Brazil's government, and the recently established Native American Nations supported it—except for one. Not long after the Sovereign Tribal Council offi-





HUALPA

Great Feathered Serpent

Sex: Male

Coloring: Dark green with brilliant colored feathers

Metahuman Form(s): None known

Primary Lair: Amazonia

Translator: Maria Locasin

Timeline

January 3, 2011: Hualpa appears over the Yucatán Peninsula briefly. He is sighted in several places over the next few days, then drops out of sight.

August 28, 2034: Hualpa and two other great dragons lead an army of Awakened creatures to capture the city of Manaus in Brazil. Two months of war against Brazilian military forces follows.

November 2, 2034: Brazil surrenders to the Amazonian Awakened. Hualpa declares the establishment of the new nation of Amazonia.

August, 2057: Dunkelzahn leaves the Elemental Scrolls of Ak'le'ar to Hualpa in his will, along with the Pale Orchid and the Ashes of the First Tree, which he leaves to Amazonia. The dragon and the nation are quick to claim their bequests.

cially recognized Amazonia, Aztlan seceded from the NAN. Among its reasons for doing so was an objection to the Brazilian coup, despite the fact that the other Native American Nations were created by a similar war in North America. Aztlan refused to officially recognize Amazonia and continues to do so to this day.

- In fact, Aztlan agitated for the NAN to intervene on the side of the Brazilians during the Amazonian War. The Sovereign Tribal Council absolutely refused to do so because the NAN didn't have the resources and didn't want to become embroiled in another war so soon after gaining their independence. There was also considerable sympathy for the Amazonian cause. The similarities to the Ghost Dance War certainly weren't lost on the NAN. When it became clear that the NAN was going to recognize Amazonia, Aztlan took its toys and left, but by then there wasn't much they could do to stop Amazonia from coming into existence.

- Pyramid Watcher

The world's megacorporations were also reluctant to recognize Amazonia, given the hostile stance of the Awakened toward any potential polluters. There was concern about the possibility that Amazonia would either attempt to nationalize all local industry, or simply wipe it out. In fact, neither happened, and representatives of the new Amazonian government quickly entered into negotiations with the Corporate Court over the status of the new nation and of the corporate assets within it. They made it clear that corporations willing to

play by Amazonia's rules would receive concessions and preferential treatment, while those that refused would be banned from the nation. In a surprise move, the Corporate Court did not oppose the formation of Amazonia (though they withheld official support as a matter of form until the United Nations officially recognized Amazonia).

In the decades that followed Aztlan's secession from the NAN, it quietly annexed the nations of Central America while Amazonia expanded northward, leaving only a small region of contested land between the two nations, centered around Bogota in the former nation of Columbia. That region has seen limited border conflicts over the "proper" borders between Aztlan and Amazonia. Otherwise, Amazonia's presence has effectively blocked Aztlan's expansion into South America. What if the establishment of Amazonia was not only to help protect the eco-sphere, but to serve as some kind of "firewall" against Aztlan aggression? If so, it implies that Hualpa (and possibly the other leaders of the Amazonia Awakened) knew of Aztlaner plans to expand toward the south years before it actually happened.

- Of course, it doesn't take a genius to see something like that coming, given Aztlan's history. But it's an interesting theory. It's quite possible the Amazonian Awakened made the grab for the basin (and Brazil) in order to deny it to Aztlan.

- Conspir-I-See

- Especially since the Azzies would probably be clear-cutting the place right now (or dumping defoliants on it to root out rebels) if they were the ones in charge of the Amazon.

- Breeder

WHAT: THE AMAZONIAN AWAKENED

Naturally, Hualpa didn't create Amazonia alone. He had the aid of an entire army of Awakened allies, generally known as the Amazonian Awakened. Where did Hualpa raise such an army for the invasion of Brazil and what are the forces the feathered serpent commands like now? Information on both topics is hard to come by, but there is some out there if you know where to dig.

The Amazonian Awakened includes four main groups: metahumans allied with Hualpa, intelligent paranormals, spirits and other dragons. The first group makes up the "public" face of Amazonia and serves as a buffer of sorts between the non-*Homo sapiens* of the movement and the general population of the country. Hualpa apparently made contact with a number of groups in the twenty-plus years between his awakening and the Brazilian invasion. The people involved were always Awakened-sympathizers, often metahumans or magicians of one kind or another. They also included members of various ecological organizations, particularly radical or "fringe" organizations that saw the potential the Awakened had for restoring or repairing the natural environment. The few remaining native tribes of the Amazon are included in this faction, and their shamans have considerable influence in Amazonia.



- Let's not forget the toxic shamans, shall we? While they're certainly not a majority (or even a very large minority) there are toxic shamans working with the Awakened in Amazonia. They're complete zealots when it comes to protecting the sanctity and purity of the Amazon Basin from "polluters." A cabal of Amazonian shamans wiped out a small village that was clearing land for farming because they didn't like it. There was no warning, just the unleashed fury of nature. Hualpa and the rest of the Amazonian alliance supposedly keep these shamans on a short leash, but they sometimes go off and do things on their own, especially when they feel strongly about something.

- Rio

- Nicola also leaves open the question of exactly how Hualpa gathered his metahuman allies in the years between his first appearance and the Brazilian coup. No doubt the feathered serpent was working through various agents, and perhaps in metahuman form during that time. It's interesting to note that a number of modern eco-activist groups really began to crystallize into their current forms during the late 2020s and early 2030s. Was Hualpa involved in giving groups like TerraFirst! and Greenwar a leg up?

- Rainbow

- One other possibility is that the Amazonian Awakened skimmed much of the cream off those eco-activist groups, giving them the first real shot at making change they ever had. Once they joined Hualpa's crusade, all that was left behind were the really bitter hard-core eco-warriors who formed the nuclei of the eco-terrorist groups we know today.

- Baxter

The next part of the alliance is made up of various intelligent paraspecies Hualpa cultivated as allies, including more than a few species not (yet) recognized as sentient. A large number of shapeshifters are part of the Amazonian Awakened, including (but not necessarily limited to) jaguars, eagles snakes, and crocodiles. The 'shifters spend the majority of time in their natural (animal) forms, but they can and do mingle among the metahumans of Amazonia and are accorded all the rights of full citizens.

- Unlike many nations, such as the UCAS, which still consider shapeshifters animals, despite the fact they are clearly intelligent and even capable of taking on humanoid form.

- Deborah

- They're also real twitchy about things like registering for a SIN and getting fingerprinted, Debbie. Hell, there are plenty of real people governments like the UCAS don't recognize because they don't have SINs. To them it's no different. If you're not in the system, you're a non-person. Intelligence (or lack thereof) has nothing to do with it.

- Digits

- I've never heard of snake or crocodile shapeshifters before.
- Gamma

- They're not very common in North America, G. They have been documented, however, down in Central and South America. Snake 'shifters are big fraggers, constrictors like the anaconda, not little snakes like American rattlers. They can grow up to eight meters long. The crocs are pretty big, too, even in human form, and I hear that some croc 'shifters look more like orcs or trolls in their humanoid form.

- Fauna

Other paranatural allies include Awakened primates, harpies, leshy, merrow, naga, sasquatch, wyverns and possibly other paraspecies unknown outside of the Amazon Basin. Additionally, Hualpa and his allies may control a far larger number of other, less intelligent, paranormals covering the entire gamut of species found in the lush ecosystem of Amazonia.

- And that's a lot of species, let me tell you. The Amazon Basin is one of the most biologically and ecologically diverse areas on Earth, at least before it was being destroyed at an astonishing rate. Now that the deforestation is halted, who knows what might be living in the jungles, rivers and wetlands of the Amazon? Unfortunately, the Amazonian government has been reluctant to allow scientists to visit the area to study and collect samples, so we know very little about the variety of species (paranatural and otherwise) that might live there.

- Doc

- The influence of the Amazonian Awakened extends beyond just the land, too. They include a number of merrow tribes among their allies, living in both the river and in the shallow waters near the seashore. Amazonia may also have ties with pods of storm dolphins, Awakened whales and (if you believe the story) sea dragons living out in the Atlantic Ocean.

- Deep Six

Lastly among Hualpa's allies come spirits and fellow dragons. Amazonia is a haven of sorts to all kinds of spirits, and they were a substantial element of the Amazonian Awakened forces. It remains unclear how many of these spirits are free-willed and how many were conjured by allied shamans and magically-active beings like Hualpa himself. Certainly reports claim that the Amazon Basin is teeming with free spirits that live in the jungle environment and make up a substantial part of Amazonia's border defenses. I've heard stories of Aztlan troops along the border running into spirits that sent them wandering lost through the jungle, caused mechanical failures or bad weather to slow them down, or outright attacked them and sent them running for safety.

- The number of spirits active (or at least outwardly active) in Amazonia seems to have increased over the past few years, too. The exact reason for it remains unknown but there are a



number of possible explanations, including the more hospitable environment, the presence of so many shamans and other Awakened beings, shifts in the mana field, sympathy with the Amazonian cause and so forth.

- Nightshade
- The ancestor spirits of the Amazonian tribes are also powerful allies to the Awakened. When Hualpa recruited the surviving native tribes of the Amazon, their shamans called upon the spirits of their ancestors and their totems to aid them in reclaiming their land and the spirits answered in a big way. The power of their ancestral spirits is the main thing (apart from Hualpa's apparent esteem) that makes the tribal folk so influential in modern Amazonia.
- Bruja

THE PINNACLE OF THE PYRAMID

At the apparent top of the Awakened hierarchy in Amazonia are the dragons. There are at least seven feath-

ered serpents in Amazonia other than Hualpa, but we have no way of knowing for certain exactly how many dragons are living in Amazonia at this point. There may be others.

- I'm sure there are. A pretty fair number of feathered serpents migrated from Aztlan to Amazonia over the past twenty or thirty years, since Amazonia is a safe haven for them while Aztlan has become increasingly hostile territory. Ironically, the feathered serpents are practically worshipped by the common folk in Aztlan, but Aztechnology has made it clear that serpents that can't toe the company line aren't welcome. Of course, there's more than one feathered serpent working for the Big A, too.
- Pyramid Watcher
- There certainly is. Curious, isn't it?
- The Laughing Man
- There's no love lost between Amazonian and Aztlan feathered serpents either, let me tell you. I did some work down in



the disputed area around Bogata, and once I saw two feathered serpents mix it up. One flew down from Aztlan territory; it hadn't even reached the border when another feathered serpent emerged from the jungle and flew out to meet it. The two of them circled around each other for a while, like they were checking each other out. Then suddenly they gave these hissing roars and launched themselves at each other. They fought tooth and claw, bodies winding around each other, wings beating, with a screeching that filled the air. After a couple minutes, they crashed into the jungle along the border. We got orders to go in and investigate, but by the time we got there, both serpents were gone. We found some traces of blood and feathers, but that was it.

- Rojo
- I don't know if that proves undying hatred between Amazonian and Aztlan serpents, Rojo. What you saw could just as easily have been a dragon mating ritual, for all we know.
- Doc

The great western dragon Surrurg was also involved in the Amazonian coup, but he has remained an elusive figure. Shortly after the destruction of EuroAir flight 329, world attention focused on Amazonia as a possible hiding place for Surrurg. Other governments accused the Amazonians of "harboring terrorists," but the official statement was that Amazonia had no involvement in Surrurg's affairs. (Note that the Amazonians never confirmed or denied that it was Surrurg that attacked Flight 329, only that they had nothing to do with it one way or another.) No one was willing to sanction an invasion or reprisals against Amazonia without further evidence, so the matter was left unresolved. If Surrurg is still in Amazonia and still associates with Hualpa, he may be deliberately staying out of the public eye because of this.

- It also provides Amazonia with a level of deniability, if true. Surrurg gets a safe haven and lair (probably deep in the Amazonian rain forest) and the chance to pursue his own interests (whatever the frag they are) while Amazonia gets a great dragon hoop-kicker they can break out when they really need to teach someone a lesson. Best of both worlds.
- Zander
- There are rumors in Amazonia that things aren't all peach-es and cream between Hualpa and Surrurg, though. Seems that Surrurg has been content to let Hualpa run the show for the past thirty years or so but that now he's getting impatient and wants to see more progress. If true, Surrurg might decide to take matters into his own talons again, which could mean trouble for anyone who has hacked him off as well as trouble for Amazonia if things get traced back to them.
- Myst

Hualpa definitely appears to be in charge of the show in Amazonia, at least publicly. The feathered serpent claims the title of "spokesbeing" for the Amazonian Awakened, but orders regarding how things are done in the country come from Hualpa, via his human translator, Maria Locasin. Hualpa doesn't seem to get directly involved in the day-to-day affairs of Amazonia too much, leaving most of that to the largely metahuman civil service, but the great dragon's power in the country is undisputed.

- What about this Maria Locasin chica. What's her story?
- Cimmaron
- Maria Locasin, Born: 11/02/2012, Nationality: Mexican. Locasin attended Texas A&M as a student in Ecological Studies. She worked with several ecological organizations in college, including alleged links to radical groups like TerraFirst! In 2032, at age 20, she simply disappeared on a trip to the Yucatán. She showed up working with Hualpa down in Amazonia two years later as his translator and human spokesperson. Though she was apparently a devout Catholic as a teenager, she drifted away from the church in her college years. By the time she was working for Hualpa, she was a fully capable shaman (follows Snake, apparently in more ways than one). Since 2034, she's been publicly working for Hualpa. Officially she's just his translator and sort of girl Friday, but unofficially she's the most powerful woman in Amazonia and has considerable influence. She's rumored to be the head of a cabal of shamans that answer directly to Hualpa and handle various magical things for Amazonia, possibly including the regeneration of the rainforest.
- Bitter Lemon
- Interesting coincidence: Brazil surrendered to the Amazonian Awakened on Locasin's 22nd birthday. I don't know if that means anything, but with the Awakened, you can never tell.
- Aster

WHERE: AMAZONIA AND THE YUCATÁN

Hualpa has focused on two main areas of interest since his appearance: the Amazon Basin and its surrounding area (Amazonia) and the Yucatán Peninsula where he first appeared. One is Hualpa's present home and power-base. The other is a cause-celèbré turned ecological nightmare, which may have serious implications for Amazonia and its relations with the outside world.

AMAZONIA

Hualpa's interest in Amazonia seems clear, at least for the most part. The feathered serpent is the spokesbeing of the nation's powerful Awakened faction, which has accomplished many of its stated goals. These include the reforesta-



tion of the Amazon, the protection of natural resources and tribal cultures there, and the creation of a safe haven for Awakened beings and people in that corner of the world. Hualpa remains an influential force in Amazonia and continues to speak (infrequently) for his nation and its people.

Hualpa maintains a lair in the capitol city of Manaus in the heart of the Amazon Jungle. He makes his occasional public broadcasts to the nation from there and interacts with diplomats and visitors to Amazonia, accompanied and assisted by his translator, Maria Locasin. Manaus is the largest city in the Amazonian interior (and one of the largest in the country). Its population is strictly controlled and immigration is limited. Manaus also has a large metahuman and Awakened population, possibly greater than that of any other city in the world, though that is difficult to tell given that some of the population isn't counted on any official census.

- But Hualpa doesn't seem to have any trouble keeping track of them, or at least getting the word out to the Awakened community when he wants to. It could be some sort of dragon mojo or maybe just a really good grapevine among the Awakened down in Amazonia.

- Hervé

Most of Amazonia's population centers are outside of the Amazon Basin itself, along the coastal regions, where the larger cities have been maintained as "enclaves" and points of contact between Amazonia and the outside world. These are the places where most of the nation's human population live. Some parts of Amazonia have undergone a rebirth as tourist and vacation spots, while others have been in decline since before the establishment of the nation. The Awakened seem to show little interest in reclaiming them.

By far the largest city in Amazonia is the Rio-São Paulo *Metrópole*, a vast sprawl formed by the merging of two of Brazil's largest cities as they slowly grew toward each other. The area's population swelled during and after the Amazonian War and the sprawl has knitted closer together as the area surrounding it is restricted to check urban growth. Commuter trains link the distant ends of the sprawl. A high-priced bullet train makes the trip from one end to the other in about an hour, but the more economical commuter trains make frequent stops and require at least four hours to cross the entire sprawl (longer during the peak travel hours of the day). The *Metrópole* is maintained as a "free enclave," meaning that it is largely unrestricted in terms of business and immigration, save by the city-limits and the edge of the jungle. That means there's a significant corporate presence, and arcologies and similar corporate hives have become increasingly common, building upward and downward to deal with the limited amount of space available.

- Rio-São Paulo is an amazing place. It makes the Seattle Metroplex look small by comparison. It's not a match for the

NEMA Sprawl in the UCAS, but its far more concentrated. Surrounded by the sea on one side and the potentially hostile jungle on the other, the *Metrópole* is like a human pressure-cooker. You can find everything from shining corporate high-rises, arcologies and the best resorts on the beaches of Rio to some of the most desperate slums and burnt-out barrens in the world, often within view of each other. It's a place that the Awakened barely tolerate and everyone knows it, wondering if and when the forces in the jungle will decide that they're not going to put up with any more urban blight and try and push the whole place into the sea.

- Christobal

- It's also worth mentioning that Rio-São Paulo isn't nearly as unified as the name implies. The cultures of the two sides of the *Metrópole* are still distinct and both sides aren't particularly fond of each other. Many people still identify as being from either Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo rather than the combined whole, and it's only the outside pressure applied by Amazonia that keeps the alliance between the two together. In fact, some have suggested that the Awakened are deliberately forcing the often opposed cities together, either in hopes of creating peace and understanding or provoking conflict that will solve the problem of getting rid of the cities for them.

- Morales

THE YUCATÁN

Hualpa's involvement in the Yucatán is somewhat less clear than his interest in Amazonia. The feathered serpent was first seen in the Yucatán. In the first two decades of the Sixth World, he continued to appear in that area. Even after the establishment of Amazonia, Hualpa apparently made trips to and from the Yucatán for reasons known only to him, though those visits appeared to become less frequent as the conflict between Aztlán and the Yucatán rebels continued to escalate. In the past five years, there have been no sightings of Hualpa in the Yucatán at all, though other feathered serpents have appeared there before and during the final conflict between the Yucatán rebels and Aztlán military forces.

- Here's my theory: Hualpa first appeared in the Yucatán. Now we know from Dunkelzahn that dragons apparently "sleep" in hidden lairs until the magic comes back and they can emerge into the world again. Odds are good that Hualpa's lair—where he spent his naptime—is in the Yucatán. If Hualpa has even half as much dreck as Dunkelzahn had, that's a lot of stuff to move, especially if you don't trust anyone else with the location of your lair. So Hualpa kept things in the Yucatán until the Amazonian situation stabilized. Then he established a new lair down there and slowly began the process of transferring everything from one lair to the other. If



he was doing it alone it would take a lot of time, especially if he made infrequent trips to avoid attention.

- Wyrn Watcher
- Which again seems to imply a foreknowledge of what was going to happen. It seems like the great dragons have some sort of precognitive abilities. Could they be using some kind of divination magic?
- D-Con
- I don't think it's magic so much as the benefit of experience, D-Con. Think about it. If what they say is true, the great dragons are almost impossibly old by our reckoning. They've literally seen it all. If history does indeed repeat itself, once you've seen enough history it's probably not too hard to predict what's going to happen next in a given situation. They're

like chess masters who can see the game ten, fifteen moves or more in advance.

- Wyrn Watcher
- It's also quite possible that events in the Yucatán caught Hualpa off guard and he hasn't finished clearing out his old lair, but now it's too dangerous for him to go anywhere near the Yucatán personally. I wonder if the old serpent isn't going to be looking for some shadowrunners to handle moving some things, or if Aztechnology is going to start sponsoring "survey teams" in the Yucatán.
- Oolong

WHEN: CURRENT EVENTS

It's Hualpa's interest in the Yucatán that ties in with recent events, namely the war between the Aztlan govern-



ment and the Yucatán rebels. I've had more than a little experience with that conflict, having visited the Yucatán and even interviewed one of the feathered serpents that was involved in leading the rebellion.

The rebel forces were well trained and dedicated to their cause. It was during our interview that Pobre (the feathered serpent) mentioned factions within Amazonia that supported their cause against Aztlan. That hardly came as any great shock to me, since Amazonia and Aztlan have been at odds since the very beginning, but what was less clear was which factions of Amazonia supported the rebellion and what assistance they offered.

The story on the rebellion was only published as I wrote it here on Shadowland. The version the rest of the world saw made the Yucatán rebels out to be terrorists and monsters out to topple the Aztlan government, rather than to secure independence for their small peninsula. I did some digging into matters in Amazonia to find out where assistance to the rebels was coming from. Officially, Amazonia had no comment on the rebellion save for the fact that they support the cause of peace in the Yucatán and always have. Unofficially, I've talked to smugglers working in the Caribbean who say they've moved shipments of arms and supplies from the Amazonian coast (and out of places like New Orleans in the CAS) to the Yucatán to deliver them into the hands of the rebels.

- If Amazonia was so behind the people in the Yucatán, why didn't they send troops instead of just supplies? Or for that matter, why didn't Hualpa and his dragon buddies just fly in and kick hoop like they did in Brazil?

- Slick

- Simple, if Hualpa and Amazonia openly aided the rebels, it would have been a declaration of war between Amazonia and Aztlan. That's a war Amazonia can't win right now, and Hualpa knows it. Sure, the Amazonians can hold off small Aztlan forays into their territory with spirits and magic, but if it comes down to a serious invasion, Aztlan has a powerful, high-tech army with all the modern toys a megacorp like Aztechnology can supply. Amazonia has a military that's outdated at best, backed up by a lot of paranormals, spirits and magic, but probably no more than the Azzies have got with their shamans and blood mages and drek. Hualpa's alliance took over Brazil because they were fighting a military force with little or no magical support in territory that favored the Awakened, namely the Amazon jungle. That's why Amazonia "officially" stayed out of it.

- Findler-Man

- Besides, who's to say Amazonia didn't send troops to help the rebels on the sly? I don't think all the feathered serpents in the Yucatán were natives, and it's a good bet at least some of them had ties with Amazonia.

- Calcutter

- While I think it's true that Amazonia doesn't want to openly declare war on Aztlan, I'm not so sure it's because Amazonia doesn't have a chance. If that were the case, why hasn't Aztlan pressed on into Bogota and South America? You might say because Aztlan doesn't want to look like the aggressors, but that didn't really stop them in Central America, so why now? I think Amazonia has more up their collective sleeve than people think something big enough to make Aztlan blink and provide Amazonia with a measure of tactical and strategic equilibrium. What is it? Magic. Oh sure, Aztlan has blood magic and all that drek, but look at what's happened in Amazonia over the past thirty years. Millions of acres of rain-forest have regenerated almost completely and neither scientist nor sorcerer can explain how. The Amazonians clearly have some major mojo—I'm betting the equivalent of the Ghost Dance or a magical nuke—that keeps Aztlan thinking twice before they step over that line.

- Magister

The earthquake that shook the Yucatán and the events that followed devastated both sides of the conflict and left most of the peninsula in ruins. There is little information about the fate of the rebel forces, though civilian casualties in the region were high. Still, Aztlan military forces have been withdrawing from the Yucatán, and there are reports of conflicts between spirits in the area, conflicts that don't appear related to either side's military forces. Not long after the earthquake, Amazonia offered aid to the Aztlan government in handling the crisis, which was refused. So for the time being Amazonia and Aztlan maintain their uneasy stand-off, though it remains to be seen how long Hualpa and his nation will stand by and watch tragedies like the Yucatán occur before they are forced to take action. Perhaps that's something Aztlan has already considered.

- There's been a lot of speculation that the Yucatán rebels actually caused the earthquake. The Ghost Dancers did drek like that during the war. If Amazonia really does have major mojo like a lot of people think, maybe they used magic as some kind of desperate, last-ditch effort.

- DV8

- But what would be the point? Everybody in the Yucatán caught it on the chin, not just the Azzie troops, but the rebels, the civilians, everyone.

- ASDF

- Well, I said it would have been an act of desperation.

- DV8

- Speaking of Hualpa in the news, I recalled a little tidbit that may be related. In Dunkelzahn's will, the Big D left Hualpa something called "the Elemental Scrolls of Ak'le'ar." Hualpa



apparently sat on the scrolls for a while but eventually agreed to let the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research have a look at them. The DIMR worked in cooperation with MIT&T, but the scrolls disappeared from the high-security MIT&T lab they were in. Supposedly, the investigation is "still ongoing" according to Knight-Errant, who holds the security contract for the Boston Metroplex. Now, not too long after Hualpa's scrolls go wandering, all manner of natural disasters break loose, including the drek down in the Yucatán. Coincidence?

• Digital Kid

• I don't understand why Hualpa let the DIMR get their hands on the scrolls in the first place. I mean, if they're some major magic, why let them out of his sight? If they're not, then who cares what happened to them?

• Krystal

• My guess is Hualpa was looking to score some points with the board of the DIMR, which has reps from several pretty major Awakened nations, including both Tirs and the NAN, and through them with the Draco Foundation. Sort of a "I'll let you play with my new toy in exchange for some help in the future." Now that they've gone and lost the scrolls, the DIMR really has egg on their faces, and they owe Amazonia a real big favor. Come to think of it, maybe that's why Hualpa agreed to loan them the scrolls and why they subsequently disappeared ...

• Matchmaker

• Interesting theory, MM. Of course, if it's true, Amazonia is making a good show of it. Hualpa has discretely made an offer of a substantial reward for information regarding the current whereabouts of the scrolls and whoever was involved in snatching them. Personally, I wouldn't want to be those people.

• SilveryK

• I hear that the missing scrolls have actually turned up again in Amazonia, back in Hualpa's possession. No word yet on how they got there, but there are also stories about some dust-ups in the coastal city of Macapa involving suspected Aztlan agents that may be connected. More as I hear about it.

• Dosa

WHY?

This is the one question I can't answer without stepping a bit outside the traditional role of the journalist and into

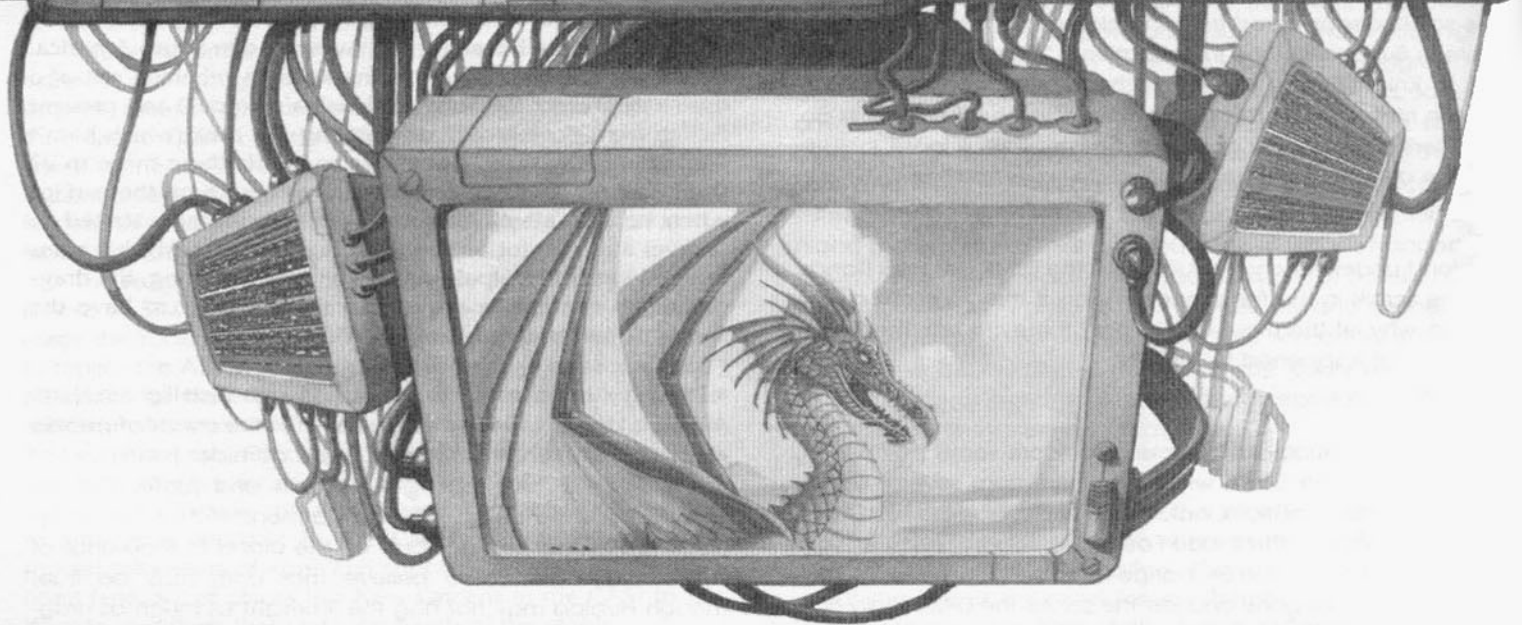
speculation, simply because there aren't enough facts to draw a solid conclusion. On the face of it, Hualpa got involved with the Amazonian Awakened and the formation of Amazonia out of a desire to stop an ecological catastrophe and create a haven for the Awakened in South America. Amazonia got involved with the Yucatán rebellion out of a desire to protect the Yucatán (Hualpa's home?) and prevent Aztlan from ecologically devastating the area (which hasn't worked out too well). But I have to ask, is there more to it? Dunkelzahn's motives looked simple enough on the surface when he was alive. After his death, the façade started to unravel and we got an idea just how far-reaching his plans were. What are Hualpa's plans? For the time being, the dragon seems content to allow others like Lofwyr to have the spotlight, but that may not last forever.

• Though Hualpa hasn't exactly been in the spotlight in North America and Europe, he's very much in the minds of people in Central and South America. Some consider him a sort of mystical savior for creating Amazonia and protecting the ecosphere, while others think he's a monster that has set up his own personal fiefdom, built on the blood of thousands of innocent people. Some believe that both may be true. Though Hualpa may not hog the limelight as much as dragons like Lofwyr or Ghostwalker, keep in mind that this dragon effectively rules not only a nation of millions, but perhaps the most important ecosphere on Earth. Hualpa—and Amazonia's—power is considerable, and I don't think it'll be much longer before we get to see it in action.

• Horatio

The one observation I have to offer is that it seems the great dragons in the world have carefully divided things up between them. Not just geography—though each great dragon seems to claim a nebulous territory as its own—but also other areas of modern life. For example, Lofwyr's influence in the business world is undisputed. There are other dragons involved with corporations, but none even come close to Lofwyr. Lung and Ryumyo each seem tied in some way to China and Japan respectively, and each backs elements of those cultures. Hestaby is involved with Mount Shasta and the mystical side of things. Hualpa is big on ecology and Awakened rights. Are these just hobbies for great dragons or something more? Why are the great dragons so carefully positioning themselves around the world, as if they are waiting (or perhaps preparing) for something to happen?

LOFWYR



I was planning to put together a report on the dragon everyone loves to hate, when the following file landed in one of my Nexus drops on January 25. Backtracking the file as far as the Zurich Orbital PLTG was easy, probably on purpose. That makes it a fair assumption that the author is who she says she is. If we're to believe the file, the following exposé was put together by Wilhelmina Graff-Beloit, the unmatched expert on Lofwyr—his agendas, his agents and his holdings. For those of you who need background, the file covers the origins of the blood feud between Mina Graff-Beloit and Saeder-Krupp's dragon master. You all also need to know that on June 21, 2062, at approximately 21:34 CET, Mrs. Graff-Beloit suffered a massive stroke that left her paralyzed and wholly dependent for life support on Z-O's medical systems. This turn of events set off the inevitable wheeling and dealing over the final distribution of her fortune; meanwhile, the old hag kept a stubborn grip on life for almost a year. As it turns out, she was getting her affairs in order via DNI. According to official Z-O sources, Mrs. Graff-Beloit passed away on January 25, 2063. The file attached is her parting gift to her nemesis.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 16 February 2063 at 11:07:34 (PST)

To whom it may concern,

My name is Wilhelmina Graff-Beloit. I am the widow of Michel Beloit, the mother of Anikka and Dietrich Beloit and I was once the most powerful woman in Europe. I understand that may mean little to most of you, so I'll come to the point. I am the woman from whom Lofwyr stole his empire.

I will remember it to my dying day. The casual arrogance with which the Wyrm stood at the shareholders' meeting and in a matter of minutes destroyed all I had built and fought for—that day bred the desire for revenge that I will carry to my grave. I retaliated at the time, only to receive a visit from Lofwyr with a clear message: try again and I would die. I lived, which I suppose in its own way was a show of respect.

I am no fool. I saw that the Wyrm had stacked the deck too well in his favor, forcing me to pursue another course as subtle as that of my nemesis. If I could not strike at him, I would have others do the job for me. To that end, over the years I've collected as much





intelligence as possible on the dragon Lofwyr and made sure it reached the people who could best put it to use. Though many might find it incredible—having been weaned on tales of Lofwyr the all-powerful—I have found more than one vulnerable spot in his vaunted invulnerability.

To quote a cliché, “if you are reading this, then I am dead.” I chose, however, not to go quietly into the night. I am sending similar files to corporations, governments, policlubs and individuals whom I know will best use their contents to damage the Wyrms’ schemes. What follows is a necessarily brief overview of the dragon’s current operations, pawns and goals as best I have been able to establish.

SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

Though I’ve watched the Wyrms for the better part of three decades, I’m no closer to understanding his motivations. That is assuming he has any, beyond the accumulation of power and wealth.

Though Lofwyr’s ultimate goals remain elusive, his methods and agendas are less obscure. His influence extends through various spheres, all of which interact on multiple levels. This makes tracking his interests difficult. His flair for multifaceted plans is renowned, and the subtlety of his schemes often boggles the unwary. With enough care and enough money, however, one can discern recurring elements.

As my intelligence-gathering progressed, I became more and more certain that Lofwyr had over-extended himself. He has gotten mired in the details of his own plans and grown careless and slower to react to sudden developments. Take advantage of this weakness if you can.

ECONOMY: SAEDER-KRUPP

I’ll start with the most obvious source of the Wyrms’ power, and probably the most important weapon in his arsenal—the megacorporation Saeder-Krupp, whose tentacles extend almost everywhere around the globe. Like an emperor of old, Lofwyr sits enthroned atop a corporate structure that is dazzling and varied beyond most people’s imaginations. Saeder-Krupp is not a monolith; literally hundreds of corporations owe it and him allegiance. The corporation is built around a core group of visible subsidiaries organized under Saeder-Krupp regional umbrellas, which together represent enough economic clout to place S-K at the top of the AAA lists. Below this level, hidden through an intricate chain of proxies, lies an even bigger empire of companies in all sectors, with employees numbering in the millions rather than thousands, many of whom have no idea who ultimately signs their paychecks.

- A common misconception is that Lofwyr’s behind every single S-K related plot. Saeder-Krupp is one huge living entity, the world’s biggest megacorp. Despite what he might want us to think, no one—not even a wizworm—can operate alone on this level.
- Espion

- Are you sure?
- Corp Watcher

What many fail to understand is that Saeder-Krupp is merely a tool. Lofwyr wields it expertly, but its actions conform to his *personal* goals rather than to sound corporate economics. Time and time again I was baffled by reports of Saeder-Krupp investing in fields that were obvious money sinks with little apparent return, and of S-K operating at a loss in certain countries. I came late to the truth because I was thinking too much like an executive. My perspective blinded me to the obvious—S-K adapts to Lofwyr’s plans rather than its own.

But you probably know all this, so I will focus on the areas in which S-K has been most active recently. Keep in mind that the divisions and individuals described below answer ultimately to the dragon, rather than to Saeder-Krupp’s bottom line. Sometimes these roles are indistinguishable; other times, telling them apart may mean the difference between life and death.

Saeder-Krupp Prime is often portrayed as S-K’s consulting and trouble-shooting branch, but this is half the truth at best. Saeder-Krupp Prime is actually far more; it combines S-K’s economic strategists, data analysts and intelligence divisions. Its agents have powers outside normal corporate hierarchies and can intervene in any subsidiary at any level when required. With this power comes direct accountability to Lofwyr and to S-K Prime’s operational director, Rolf Bremen.

Though it is probably only starting to trickle down to the denizens of the shadows, S-K has been harried and troubled for some time in Eastern Europe. On more than one occasion Rolf Bremen has had to intervene, and recently Lofwyr brought back Stanislaw Wiacek to head S-K Prime Eastern Europe. The troubles that began when Yamatetsu moved to Russian soil have only increased as MCT and Shiwase have begun to wedge themselves between the Eurocorp and local governments, replacing S-K politicians with their own yes-men. To add to the troubles, Lofwyr’s regional agenda has suffered setbacks in Austria, where subtle manipulation placed an ultranationalist party in power.

- Am I reading this right? Did she just insinuate that she pulled this off right under the dragon’s snout?
- Mach-2
- The Austrian Heritage Party’s surprise victory was backed by an unexpected push from MCT-owned Mediasim, which rules the local media scene. I fail to see how that ties in to Graff-Beloit.
- Danau-hack
- Depends on how you look at it. Ask yourself how the frag do European nationalist politicians broker a deal with the Japanacorp?
- Tell



Rolf Bremen

If I hadn't known his parents, I'd say this viper was Lofwyr's own get. There's a reason he's head of S-K Prime—long before Rolf became Lofwyr's master problem solver, he was cracking all the right heads for MET 2000 in some of the toughest war zones imaginable. Crisis management is his specialty. Recently, he's been occupied with coordinating strategies to oppose MCT's and Yamatetsu's growing presence in Eastern Europe and Russia. Make no mistake, Bremen is probably the most dangerous man in Europe. In addition to having S-K's considerable resources at his disposal, he can also call on a huge network of personal contacts and top-notch shadow talent whenever he needs dirty work done.

- Bremen has been spending a lot of time in Russia, Ukraine and the Baltic Republics recently, fighting off Yamatetsu's and MCT's advances, rallying local subsidiaries against the Japanacorp. The area has been an S-K stronghold for decades, but the corp's grip is finally slipping.
- Weaver
- Except that Bremen went missing a few months back on a trip to Moscow. His security went crazy combing the shadows for leads. Wiacek was dispatched from Linz to step in until Bremen showed up a month later, apparently unharmed. Anyone got the dirt on this?
- Moscobyte
- Anyone?
- Moscobyte
- Regardless of what actually went down, Lofwyr's likely worried that Bremen may have been compromised. If he has, this is a huge blow to S-K as a whole. Even if he hasn't, the seeds of mistrust have been planted. Nasty double-play by someone.
- Jane-in-the-box

Stanislaw Wiacek

If you live in Eastern Europe, you must have heard of this Polish Minister of State who recently resigned from the Rybinski government. Before he took office, Wiacek used to work for Saeder-Krupp; now he's publicly returned to the fold, though in truth he's been an S-K man all along. Gifted with a head for business, Wiacek made his career lobbying and peddling influence with ministers, Cabinet secretaries and politicians in the region. Like many of Lofwyr's agents, Wiacek's reach goes far beyond the corporate and political arenas—he also has ties with another power in Eastern Europe, the Russian Vory.

Though Wiacek's resignation came as a surprise to corporations and the Polish establishment, which is currently at odds with pro-democracy rebels, it was not unexpected. Lofwyr has been making a concerted effort to distance S-K from the unpopular regime, and Wiacek's falling out with Rybinski was foreseeable.

- Wiacek is one slippery customer. I have it on good authority that he authorized security forces to open fire on protesters

LOFWYR

Great Western Dragon

Sex: Male
Coloring: Golden
Metahuman Form(s): Human, Caucasian, long steel grey-hair, golden eyes
Primary Lair: Saeder-Krupp Headquarters, Rhine-Ruhr Megaplex, German Alliance.
Translator: None

Timeline

- March 2012:** Awakens at Mäuserberg near the Dauner Maare in the Eifel region. In contrast with other German dragons, Lofwyr talks his way right past the German military forces that surrounded him following the first sighting.
- May 2012:** Lofwyr steps into a fight between recently Awakened dragons Nebelherr and Kaltenstein, taking the side of the former. Kaltenstein vanishes after the skirmish.
- 2036:** Lofwyr surprises the world by accepting a seat on Tir Tairngire's Council of Princes.
- August 2036:** Lofwyr steps forward at shareholder meeting as the majority shareholder of the BMW/Krupp empire with a 63 percent voting block.
- 2036–38:** Incorporation of various holdings, including Commerzbank, Dresdner Bank, Krupp Manufacturing, Ruhr Nuclear, and the Eurocar Consortium into Saeder-Krupp Enterprises.
- 2042:** The Mäuserberg lair is destroyed during the eruption of the Eifel volcanoes
- 2057:** President Dunkelzahn leaves Lofwyr the Jewel of Memory in his will.
- 2058:** Saeder-Krupp performs a hostile takeover of the Swiss Bank Corporation during the Corporate War.
- 2061:** Saeder-Krupp begins prospecting for orichalcum in the former Mäuserberg region.
- June 2062:** Lofwyr resigns from Tir Tairngire's Council of Princes for unexplained reasons.
- June 21, 2062:** Lofwyr and the great dragon Nachtmeister fight over Frankfurt. Nachtmeister loses and is presumed dead.
- 2062:** Saeder-Krupp assets and personnel are subject to an apparent campaign of terror, including kidnappings, destruction of minor facilities and theft. The culprits are not identified.

during what's now known as the Martyr's Uprising, which kicked off the current wave of anti-government violence.

- Poly Tick
- If that's true and he dropped out of the Polish government to avoid retaliation, then I know some people who will want a word with him.
- Battle Pole



Mariene Carstairs

A formidable opponent, Mariene was a close companion of mine before the Wyrm took over. To this day I respect her, unlike others in Lofwyr's inner circle. Over the years she proved her worth to the dragon, first as a top dealmaker and later as a Corporate Court Justice. Accordingly, she now gets exceptional control over her own operations—meaning they are not routed for approval via S-K Prime and are much harder to track.

As director of S-K Asia, Mariene Carstairs uses co-op ventures to sound the waters for expansion and then snaps up local corporations—mostly Indian and, recently, Southeast Asian corps. So far, local governments and other powers have offered little opposition, but I expect S-K will either find or create enemies sooner or later. Likely sooner, given Lofwyr's usual methods.

Despite the difficulties facing foreign assets in Asia, my intelligence confirms that S-K has infiltrated the Pacific Prosperity Group. Though I cannot confirm it, my principal candidate is the Vietnamese Khouang Combine. They're low profile enough to draw little attention, but just big enough to get a place on the Council—and more importantly, access to PPG intelligence.

late the city fr...
rush on basic supp...
crushed by police, only

... been

A STEP FORWARD OR A STEP BACK?

Posted 02-02-63

Brussels E.C. (New Statesmen)— Given the chaos that currently reigns over the international scene, what is likely to be the most significant development in European politics of the past two decades finally became reality following the Eurocorp Summit in November 2062. A united front of fourteen AA-Eurocorps joined Triple-A Saeder-Krupp in presenting Western European governments with a pre-packaged deal for the creation of a regional, political-corporate institution: the New European Economic Community.

In return for signing on, the corporations promised Europe's governments increased input in the European macroeconomy and corporate funding for NEEC-sponsored (and much needed) social, ecological and cultural programs. With the European economy going through a period of weak growth, it came as no surprise that many governments agreed to sign up despite outcry from policlubs and nationalist groups.

In June 2063, Euro-governments and corporations are expected to gather in Brussels E.C. to sign the Constitution Act that will create the New European Economic Community. Unlike its ill-fated predecessor, the European Union, the proposed NEEC is sleeker and limited to pan-European economic and social issues. Its sponsors eschew any significant political agenda, instead proclaiming as their goal a return to the free transit and open markets of the truly globalized pan-European economy that vanished with the Balkanization and recession that followed the Euro-Wars.

Khouang is an industrial third-party component supplier with solely regional interests. Their microtronics turn up in systems built by Yamatetsu and Tan Tien.

- I'd expect Lung to take this invasion of his domain seriously no matter how tied up he might be with other problems. It strikes me as strange that he hasn't moved yet.
- Wyrm Watcher
- Sounds promising for biz. Anyone wanna bet Mina sent another of these files to the PPG?
- Rimmer

POLITICS: EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

There is no denying Lofwyr has a political agenda beyond his other goals. Whether it's rooted in some draconic territorial imperative or one of the Wyrm's nefarious schemes, the truth is his claws are sunk deep into the backs of uncouneted European and Middle Eastern political figures and groups. His undeclared goal seems to be uniting each region politically; the question that remains unanswered is: why?

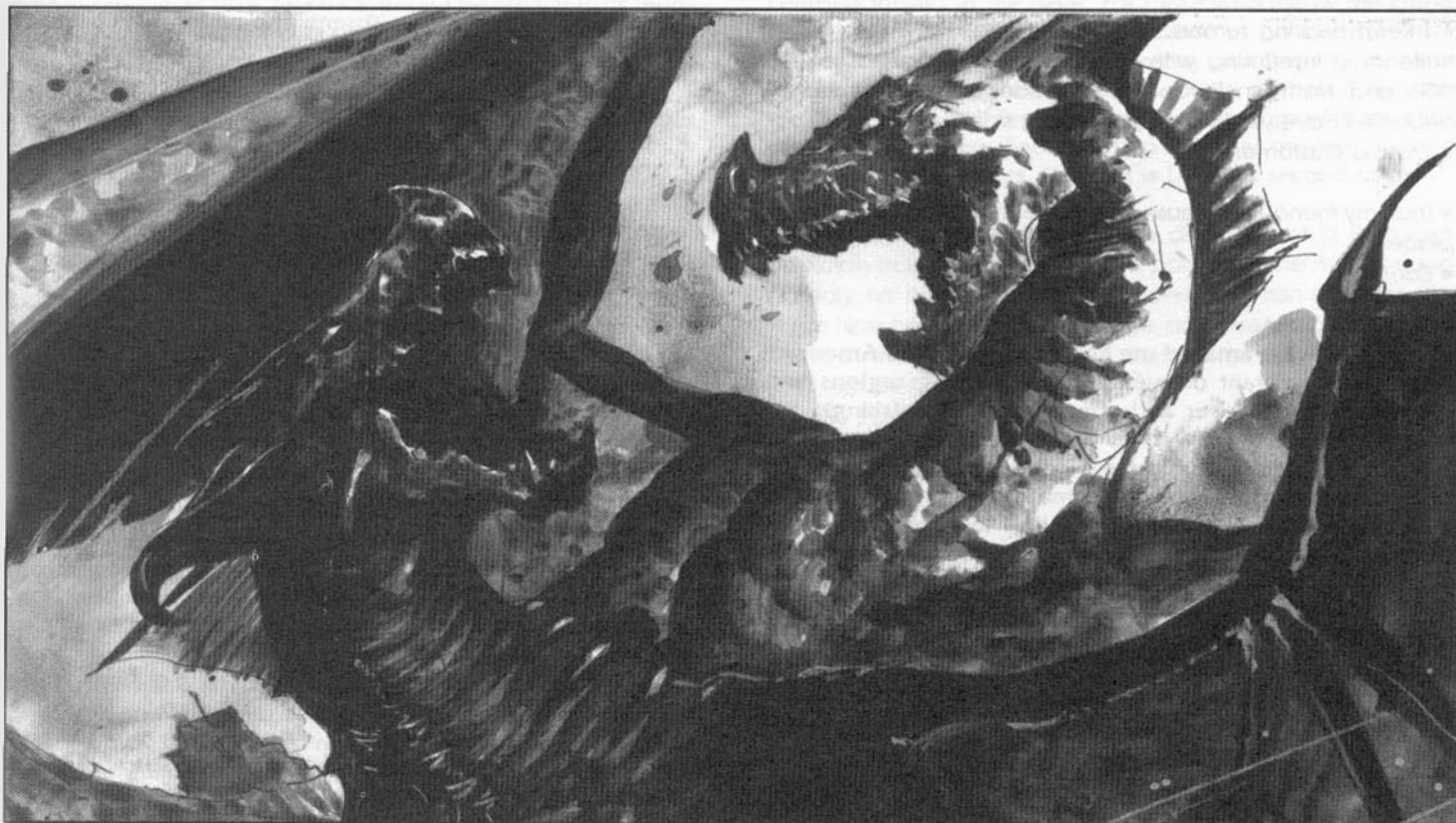
Europe

Let us start with the Old World, the heart of Lofwyr's domain, where his strength is greatest and most visible. Most of you surely know that the Wyrm was behind Prime Minister Helger's European Restoration proposals in the Thirties. If that revelation didn't shock you, recent headlines should—specifically, the plans for a New European Economic Community.

The way Lofwyr has supported the project makes little economic sense. The post-Euro-Wars wave of privatization dropped enough essential services and industries into the hands of Lofwyr's subsidiaries to give him influence over most governments. Add to that his covert sponsoring of political parties across Europe; the fact that he has half the German, Scandinavian and Polish politicians in his pocket; and that his agents are adept at exerting pressure on the rest, and it makes even less sense for the dragon to embroil his corporation in *unprofitable* pan-European politics. Even if the NEEC makes life difficult for the non-European megacorps, it's hardly worth the overall cost—unless we look at it outside of the economic context. What if Lofwyr wants to truly rule his domain? What if he wants to control Europe?

Imagine the Restoration as a trial run. Even in failure, Lofwyr brought his opposition out of the woodwork, and even today the masses don't associate him with the project. Saeder-Krupp is in bed with half the governments and political parties in Europe and the Wyrm has had 25 years to prepare. Can we afford to ignore this possibility?

- Economically, she's right. The only megas giving Lofwyr a run for his money in the Old World are Ares, MCT, Shiwase and Zeta-ImpChem. S-K owns shares in both AG Chemie and the ECC consortium. With Nachtmeister gone, the Frankfurter Bankverein is defanged. Second-liners like



German Proteus and British HKB may pose a threat locally, but overall S-K rules the playground. Getting deeper into politics than they have to is an economic blunder for any corp.

- The Chromed Accountant
- Whether Mina's suspicions are true or not, I'm getting reports from friends that Zeta-ImpChem, Ares and MCT are having a harder time blocking Lofwyr's lobbies. The number of political black ops in Northern Europe has skyrocketed and things will only get dirtier from here.
- 0111011001
- Don't rule the Bankenverein out just yet. You never know who'll be on top when the dust settles.
- Weaver

Western Europe is just the tip of the iceberg, however—a place where Lofwyr still has to waltz around problems like democracy and public opinion. To advance the agendas behind his political goals, whatever they may be, he manipulates politicians through outright corruption, campaign financing, social peer pressure and inter-party deal-broking.

In Eastern Europe, his machinations are far clearer, since politics there are often obviously tied to corporate interests. S-K has no problem cooperating openly with various governments and institutions, and until recently held unchallenged sway over politicians from Russia to Poland.

Don't mistake what you can see for the full picture, however. Even in Eastern Europe, Lofwyr prefers to be discreet. Many of his agents in the region appear to have no association with his corporation. Eastern European countries provide a secondary market for Saeder-Krupp and a geo-political buffer zone that protects Lofwyr's core domain from its turbulent neighbors in Central Asia and the Middle East

Julian Sergetti

Sergetti is Lofwyr's chief political lobbyist and one of the unsung masterminds of the NEEC proposal. Though you'll never see him claim credit in public, he was instrumental in bringing the Eurocorps together. He's been working on regional governments ever since. He is possibly the most powerful man in Brussels and the one to watch if you follow political developments. Sergetti is a Neapolitan by birth, a consummate manipulator, smart and suave, frequently busy pushing legislation through or putting pressure on reticent politicians. Though he exerts his considerable influence in forwarding the dragon's political agenda for Europe, officially no connection exists between him and S-K.

- I turned down a hit on Sergetti for an FBV Johnson months ago. I refused the job because I had other business at the time and thought nothing of it. Everyday politics in the Old World as far as I'm concerned. The thing is, the dossier I received mentioned none of this stuff.
- Red Menace



- I keep hearing rumors of other dragons like Alamais and Kaltenstein interfering with Lofwyr's political agenda in the AGS and Northern Europe, but besides the Nachtmachen debacle I have yet to dig up anything significant.

- Curious Customer

- That, my friend, is because you've been looking in the wrong places.

- Ecotope

The Middle East

It has always amazed me how Europeans and Americans can remain ignorant of events in neighboring regions until those events spill over and affect them. Astonishingly few people realize that Lofwyr has been quietly fighting a covert war in the Middle East and the Maghreb for decades. All my sources indicate that he was behind the attempt to stabilize the region through the Islamic Unity Movement, opposing the efforts of at least one other of his kind, the great dragon Aden. The two have been shadow fencing for a long time, but now a wild card has been thrown into the equation in the form of Ibn Eisa. As best I can tell, Ibn Eisa is countering both dragons' machinations.

Though I would love to take the credit for ruining the Wyrms' well-laid plans, I fear the situation may be escalating beyond anyone's control. Ibn Eisa's followers are growing increasingly fanatic in their opposition to any and all mega-corporate interests. While that may sound like business opportunities to many reading this file, some of us had other interests in the region.

- About six months ago there were a lot of extraction contracts on bigwigs with the IUM and Ibn Eisa's inner circle floating around Constantinople. Then they suddenly dried up.

- Dagger

- Read on. That probably had something to do with Saled Bey. The way Ibn Eisa has been clashing with Saeder-Krupp's interests, I'd expect Lofwyr to have had him removed by now. He must have an ace up his sleeve to live this long with the enemies he's making.

- Felix

Saled Bey

Lofwyr's most important representative in the Middle East until recently, the exceptionally well-connected Bey has kept Lofwyr's plans on track despite the complications of regional politics, often bridging the growing gap between fundamentalists and Westernized factions. Though he occasionally second-guesses the Wyrms, Bey has remained stubbornly loyal to his master.

Just when Lofwyr needs him most, however, Bey has vanished from public sight. He's barely left his Constantinople mansion in the past two months. With the situation in the Middle East and Turkey so unstable, I expected to see him smoothing the ruffled feathers of all the usual suspects, but

he remains conspicuously absent. The rumor mill claims that Bey recently suffered several attempts on his life and is being haunted by *djinni*.

- Several well-known mystics and dervishes have visited Bey's mansion, among them a cousin of my second wife. He says Bey is indeed haunted by malevolent imps, as he calls them. I care not for magic, but he tells me no banishment works and that Bey is truly cursed. He cannot take a step outside his house without accidents befalling him.

- Scimitar

- Whoever or whatever's taken Bey out of the picture, it wasn't with Lofwyr's best interests at heart. Attacks on S-K subsidiaries by Jihad partisans are at an all-time high, and friendly faces in Middle Eastern governments are disappearing left and right. Expect Lofwyr to retaliate at any moment—don't get caught in the crossfire.

- Sheik Omar

- Before becoming indisposed, Bey was hiring for operations in Arabia and Turkey.

- Flak Jack

SOCIETY: THE GREAT GAME

In today's world, the highest levels of politics, the economy and the media have become indelibly connected. The widening gap between the elites and the rest of society has fostered a particular social scene the likes of which have not existed in more than a century, and nowhere more so than in Europe.

Major social events provide the chance for politicians, media stars and corporate heads, normally at each other's throats, to rub shoulders and socialize—not to mention forming the perfect smokescreen for them to meet in person, hammer out multi-million euro deals and reaffirm networks of influence.

Lofwyr has learned to tap this social network to subtly extend his influence over many sectors normally outside his reach so that he can sound out public opinion, political trends and business opportunities. The Wyrms is rarely seen at these events, preferring instead to use pawns apparently unconnected to either him or his corporation for careful manipulation. Some are unassuming aristocrats and executives, but one in particular stands out: Claudia Romanov.

Claudia Romanov

My old friend Claudia is living proof that a soft word in the right ear is worth a million nuyen. She gets the right people together and places a little peer pressure in the right spots. We ran the European social seasons together in the Twenties, and she was the one who introduced me to Michel.

Claudia is Lofwyr's subtle tool. She has the power to make or break a reputation in the airy circles of high society; she knows and is known by the beautiful people on three continents and has the respect and admiration of corporate leaders



and flaky socialites alike. Her background before her Paris modeling career is misty, but over the past thirty years she's racked up an impressive number of liaisons, friendships and admirers.

- Romanov is a gorgeous elf who doesn't look a day over twenty, but by my math is going on fifty. She has homes in Lisbon and Monaco, but prefers to globetrot with the rest of the jet-setting crowd. She's a staple of the Grand Tour and the person to know if you want to break into this circle.
- spion
- Romanov keeps her nose clean most of the time, but you wouldn't believe the amount of shadowbiz that goes on behind the spit and glitz of the whole high-society scene.
- Spider

OTHER AGENDAS

I've chosen to qualify the following as secondary agendas simply because they are less related to Lofwyr's overall goals of amassing wealth and power. This qualification may be misleading or erroneous, however, since despite my best efforts I still have not determined Lofwyr's true intentions in these areas.

TIR TAIRNGIRE AND NORTH AMERICA

Many who follow Lofwyr's exploits were shocked to the core by his unexpected resignation from Tir Tairngire's Council of Princes last year. For years, I had trouble understanding why Lofwyr would waste time with the self-absorbed government of a minor North American nation, until a few newfound friends in the Tir confided in me. Apparently the dragon had reason to believe that elements of the Tir's ruling Council posed potential threats to his long-term goals. To keep an eye on their schemes, he forced himself on the Council during the country's formative years.

My sources have since dried up, and I can only speculate that his withdrawal from the Council is related either to Aithne Oakforest's resignation or to some covert agreement with the dragon Hestaby.

- Another reason Lofwyr stuck round all this time was cause he had a nest of eggs in the Tir. I should know, I seen 'em back in '53.
- Kham
- My friend speaks the truth. Not everything is as black and white as Mrs. Graff-Beloit makes it seem. Other agendas were at work here. Ask yourselves why Glasgian Oakforest hasn't been seen in months.
- Neko
- Yeah, right, and we wouldn't have heard of it before now?
- Diglaxe.

But Lofwyr's interests in the Tir did not end with his stepping down. Less than a week later, unfettered by conflict of interests, S-K North America opened offices in Portland with

Ludmilla Reanka at the helm. For those who follow the corporate rumor mill, this move likely came as no surprise, since Saeder-Krupp has invested discreetly but heavily in North American countries during the last couple of years. First came the CAS, where Rolf Bremen attended meetings with the ERLA in 2062 and where Saeder-Krupp recently moved its North American headquarters. Portland is Lofwyr's second target.

- Reanka is another mystery. The daughter of a Pomoryan politician publicly opposed to S-K policies in the AGS, she supposedly hit it off with Lofwyr at one of Eهران's parties. The wyrm hires her fresh out of college, and three years later she's head of the spanking new Tir division. Tell me what's wrong with that picture.
- Socio Pat
- Maybe even dragons succumb to infatuations.
- Gossip
- Damien Knight's and Richard Villiers's ties to the Haeffner administration limited S-K's expansion in the UCAS for a long time. The CAS provides much better growth potential, but you've got to ask yourself, why now?
- Belle

MATRIX DATA CONTROL

Unlike many of his kind, Lofwyr was quick to realize the potential of the Matrix for intelligence gathering. The Wyrm doesn't hack hosts, but uses his ownership of the Matrix backbone hardware to filter through data sent over the grids.

THE GRAND TOUR

Posted 08-01-62

[Globetrotter]—When we say jet-setting and high society these days, you can't help but think of the social event of the year: the *Grand Tour*. For anyone who's anyone on the international social scene, it's a must. Whether the Summer or Winter season, the *Grand Tour* is one huge traveling party that goes on for weeks and draws the crème de la crème of international high society: corporate hot shots, media novastars, European aristocrats and their collective entourages.

The Tour has become a unique tradition that brings together such corporate leaders, political figureheads and social luminaries as Lucien Cross, Damien Knight, Zoé de Paris, Johnny Spinrad, Prince Juan Carlos of Spain, Claudia Romanov, and the Habsburg and Bourbon royal families. It's the ultimate star-studded opportunity for travel and social intrigue that we all love to gossip about. Whip in the obligatory hangers on—budding starlets, boy- and girl-toys, washed-up sim stars desperate to hold the limelight—and you have a one-of-a-kind escapade that provides unending entertainment and scandal for the masses and the media.

By invitation only. Jacket and tie mandatory.



The processing power needed to keep track of a single day's traffic is staggering, but there is no other way to explain how he gets access to certain information.

His data interception abilities are cutting-edge, far ahead of most of the competition. This kind of data traffic overwatch operation is naturally the purview of S-K Prime. For maximum efficiency, the system must be lodged within RTG operating systems run by Matrix service providers. My latest information puts seven of the twelve major Matrix service providers in Europe under Lofwyr's control, including the two largest: Ruhr Datafax in the AGS and Hermes Eurocom in France. That gives the Wyrms control of RTG and LTG networks in a dozen countries, not to mention the MSPs' own grids. Recent deals in the CAS and the Maghreb threaten to extend that control even further.

- This is way beyond SOTA. Where is Lofwyr developing the tech for this? None of the S-K subsidiaries I've been watching is developing anything remotely along these lines.
- Felix

There is a wrinkle, however, in Lofwyr's scheme. Recent leaks indicate that the Wireless Matrix Initiative in the Scandinavian Union, once tested and implemented, will allow PLTGs and LTGs to link directly via cellular or satellite hookup. This technical feat would revolutionize grid architecture and routing, forcing Lofwyr to spend billions to keep up with the technology curve. The threat of such a change explains why S-K subsidiary Siemens-Nixdorf is buying up WMI sub-contractors. Erika Telecom is handling most of the system hardware and dozens of smaller startups in Norway and Sweden are developing the software, but Lofwyr is not the only one interested in this next generation of Matrix tech. Transys Neuronet and the dragon Celedyr have made overtures to Erika Telecom, currently the WMI's leading corporation.

- Actually, negotiations are farther along than Mina claims. Despite several setbacks, Transys and Erika have settled on an R&D exchange program as a first step in an extended joint venture. Last-minute news has it that Transys outbid S-K by offering Erika access to proprietary knowbot software.

- Munin

- One of those setbacks cost my team a couple of able bodies. Serves me right for taking a job from Brackhaus.

- Audun

DRAGON MOVES

Though most of you may understandably not have noticed, events over the past few months hint at an ongoing covert war involving several great dragons. One of the private intelligence agencies I hired first identified a series of attacks on S-K assets during mid-2062. Further investigation revealed several apparently unrelated operations for and against Lofwyr during this period, among them a major strike by an unidentified eco-terrorist group on the Essen offices that caused millions in damage.

I have not yet established hard facts, other than Lofwyr is deeply involved, the strikes seem restricted to various dragons' interests and this covert war has not spilled over into open conflict. The motivation behind these events still eludes me. They may be connected to Lofwyr's slaying of Nachtmeister, to President Dunkelzahn's bequest or to something else entirely. Whether these events relate to Mr. Bremen's disappearance or Mr. Bey's current problems has yet to be confirmed, but something has the dragons of the Sixth World at each other's throats.

As for operations set in motion by Lofwyr, the Wyrms had a hand in eliminating a Chinese warlord and also in an action in Denver involving Espejo Aztlan partisans. His most visible operation is the destruction of a major GreenWar training camp in Amazonia.

- Back in '57 following Dunkelzahn's assassination, I uploaded an extensive file on the events and fallout surrounding the Big D's will. Some of you may remember a series of messages by Shadowland regular Orange Queen (which bear reviewing in light of the current file) and someone going by the handle Loremaster. Those messages were cut short by a post directly from S-K HQ. At the time we couldn't backtrack the messages, but we eventually dug up the addresses. I think you'll be interested to know that Loremaster's messages were routed through the Frankfurt/AGS RTG from a Frankfurter Bankverein PLTG address.

- Captain Chaos

- Not entirely unexpected. Lofwyr and Nachtmeister had been butting horns for years through their respective corporate gollaths (Saeder-Krupp and the Frankfurter Bankverein, or FBV), until they decided to have it out last year.

- Corp Watcher

- For those not following international news, Lofwyr and Nachtmeister duked it out in the skies over Frankfurt on June 21, 2062. Apparently Lofwyr challenged Nachtmeister to some kind of dragon duel. They fought for hours until Nachtmeister crashed to the ground in flames. You probably won't be surprised to hear no body was recovered. S-K troops immediately cordoned off several blocks of downtown Frankfurt around the crash site. Trid images of the battle that reached international broadcasters from Frankfurt were severely corrupted—no one knows why.

- Labrat

- Why does that date sound familiar?

- Lost&Found

- Check Cap's introduction. That's the same date Mina Graff-Beloit suffered her stroke. Coincidence? Not likely!

- Conspir-I-See



ENEMIES OF THE WYRM

• After that report, I thought it might be an eye-opener to upload another gift that was dropped in my account by parties unknown. According to the attached message, a "friend" took the following file from Mina's personal archive. The file hasn't been tampered with and the voice recognition software gives me a 96 percent match between Widow's voice and public records of Mina Graff-Beloit's. Save your comments for the end.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 16 February 2063 at 11:09:22 (PST)

- >>> **Z.O.LTG.subhost activate log.**
- >>> **Theta Encryption Protocols enacted. Satellite comm-link established.**
- >>> **Voice Comm. Activated. Recording**
- >>> **Widow ID Logging on.**
- >>> **Weaver ID Logging on.**
- >>> **Isoblocks raised. Subhost/ground link secure.**

Widow: Welcome, my friend. I am sorry for the voice-only connection, but in my current state I have trouble processing full ASIST. I hate this ruin my body has become.

Weaver: No apology is necessary. How are you? I have been worried. Little news trickles down to me.

Widow: I am not well. I doubt I will ever be well again. My doctor says that if my condition continues to deteriorate, I may be fully incapacitated within another few weeks.

Weaver: I am truly sorry.

Widow: Spilled milk, my dear. I shouldn't have let things get to me—so many well-laid plans put to waste, so much time and effort—it was just too much. I have few friends and fewer I can trust. I appreciate your concern, but we have far more important things to discuss ... while I still can.

Weaver: Agreed. We must put this behind us and move on.

Widow: Yes. We ... you must dig deeper, pry open a vulnerable spot in his armor. Use others to do your dirty work and save yourself to strike only when you have loaded the board in your favor. A lesson learned from Lofwyr himself. But be careful. Nachtmeister was a warning to us all.

Weaver: I'm not so sure. I think we may be overestimating the Wyrm. I've seen nothing to indicate he has identified the network. No further retaliation. I don't think we've been compromised. Granted, it was a terrible blow, but we've always known that Nachtmeister was the most vulnerable of our coterie. He had his claws in too many of Lofwyr's pies, far more than either of us or our elven friends. The Frankfurter Bankenverein had been chiseling away at Lofwyr's empire for years ... it was bound to come to this. How often did you warn us his arrogance would put us at risk?



Widow: True, the FBV's interference in the Eurocorp Summit would have posed a threat that Lofwyr could not allow. But we should not dwell on unknowns, we don't have much time. Let's review what we've learned of the Wyrms' Brussels agenda. I'm convinced it is vital to his master plan.

Weaver: Do you think it's possible? It's immense. I think you may be overestimating him again. Surely even he couldn't have manipulated so many players.

Widow: I don't put anything beyond him. My sources tell me you should keep an eye on Julian Sergetti. If Lofwyr has anything planned, he's the one to watch.

Weaver: Don't worry, I've already placed an operative on his staff. My agent is reliable and will feed me any developments.

Widow: What of the French situation?

Weaver: No details yet, just suspicions ...

Widow: Worrisome, especially given my NEEC reservations.

Weaver: Ironic, too. Lofwyr strikes in our backyard after we've thrown a monkey wrench into his plans with the Austrian elections. Bringing together the Austrian Heritage Party and MCT was a touch of genius and impossible to backtrack to us ... though it helped that Bremen went missing from Moscow and Wiacek had to be dispatched from Linz. I wonder what happened there. The timing couldn't have been better.

Widow: Inconclusive data. My intelligence points to a one-off operation. Bremen reappeared a month later unharmed, unfortunately.

Weaver: I see echoes of our extraction of Josef Goldman.

Widow: I doubt there is a connection. The operation was flawless and Goldman's intelligence on the government was essential in buying us Yamatetsu's trust for Phase Two. This feels like something different.

Weaver: Bremen is back to worming his way between Yamatetsu and the Russians and Wiacek's distracted with the Austrian situation. Neither suspects how deep our plans go.

Widow: Don't underestimate Bremen! Once he realizes what's going, he'll pull out all the stops to drive a wedge between the Japanacorps and the governments. This is his game. You must be prepared.

Weaver: Give me some credit, my friend. I have some experience with damage control myself.

Widow: [chuckle] Yes, you have. Have you prepared the next step?

Weaver: Everything is in motion. This will put an end to the belief that the Wyrms is unbeatable.

Widow: A popular misconception that we've proved wrong before. The promissory notes Dunkelzahn left me tipped us off to Lofwyr's true plans for the Swiss Bank. We were too late to compromise the takeover, but Nachtmeister's financial contacts leaked enough on the corps S-K was using as cover to put the Swiss on guard, and it cost Lofwyr a billion more than he expected. He did not come out of the Corporate War unscathed.

Weaver: Very true. Have your sources uncovered anything further on the infiltration of the PPG?

Widow: I have two teams in the field collecting data. The prime candidate remains the Khouang Combine, but they've found it difficult to arrange for a trustworthy local source.

Weaver: Now that you mention it, I'm hosting a party for my friend Emanuel Salles in Lisbon and he's asked to have Wu Lung-Wei on the guest list since they're in business together. I might have a word or two about Khouang ...

Widow: My dear, you will make a fine replacement.

Weaver: Thank you for the praise, but let's not dwell on such morbid thoughts.

Widow: It is inevitable. My condition worsens by the day and there's nothing the doctors here can do. There's no telling how long ... but let us continue. I'd like you to arrange for surveillance of Ludmilla Reanka. I am not at all convinced Oakforest gave us the full story, and he remains unreachable since he resigned his office. I'm wary of trusting our other allies until I find out what really happened.

Weaver: Well, you'll be surprised to know she was in Monaco at my Grand Casino Ball, being presented by Claudia. Lucien, who seemed to already know her, introduced me. She's nothing like Claudia, though, far more practical and professional than the usual blasé aristocrat. Beautiful woman. I'm sure I can arrange for someone from Portland or Seattle to look into it, but why?

Widow: Lofwyr's interest alone merits attention. If she's being presented in Europe, something has to be going on that we're not seeing. Claudia must know, of course. She's as influential and powerful as I was in my day. Partying and making headlines while pulling all the right strings behind the scenes ...

Weaver: Little chance she will let anything slip! Too smart for that. Her wiles never fail to impress. The way she twists situations to the Wyrms' advantage boggles the mind. Still, she underestimates the extent of my own contacts after Marseille.



Widow: While we're on the subject of elusive connections, have you any further data on the one known as Scale? As I recall, during our last conversation you said you might have something.

Weaver: Yes. Based on the intel we received from Oakforest, we know Scale was in the Tir in early 2060 handling the scandal between S-K and Universal Omnitech. He was sent in to sanitize the situation, because S-K North America wasn't up and running yet and Bremen was elsewhere. From the Tir we tracked his outbound flight to the UK, specifically Wales. At first I couldn't figure out why. Only much later did my operatives track several flights by the same aircraft during '61 and '62.

Widow: So where has Mr. Scale been traveling?

Weaver: At first I didn't realize there was a connection. Few locations held any recognizable interest for Lofwyr. Of course that meant little during '61; a number of places suddenly became very interesting during that year. But even comparing them with known hotspots, we got very few matches. I decided to have my data analysts look at oddities—not the big events that made the headlines, but the small stuff that passed most people by. Eventually they found something. Mostly by accident, I must admit.

Widow: I have little time for all this suspense, my dear. Please cut to the chase.

Weaver: Apologies. One analyst located a reference that was a close match for a couple of Scale's stopovers—one in Jakarta and the one in Wales. Both showed up on a Shadowland SIG discussing a type of SURGE changeling. Apparently in both cases the individuals changed into some sort of human-dragon hybrid.

Widow: I seem to recall more reports on the matter in the news.

Weaver: Indeed. A little digging turned up close to a dozen occurrences worldwide, and guess what?

Widow: They match Scale's travels.

Weaver: Close enough to make me suspicious. I'll send you another file my agents retrieved from Shadowland about these "drakes" which puts the whole thing in an even more ominous light. It's complicated, but boils down to this: these beings are not changelings at all, but a new type of creature somehow connected to dragons. Apparently the Draco Foundation is offering them refuge from other parties who are hunting them.

Widow: If that's the case, Mr. Scale and his hunting need watching.

Weaver: It won't be easy. He's damnably hard to track. We've become far too dependent on the Matrix, too. I will follow your advice and outsource some of the intel work to private agencies to reduce the chance that it might be traced back.

Widow: Good idea. Stay with lesser-known corps like Aegis Cognito and InFolio. Have your specialists figured out how Lofwyr is listening in?

Weaver: Not yet. You have to understand, the technology we're talking about here is light-years ahead of SOTA. We have a lead, however. During our last conference, Nachtmeister sent me some manifests his agents retrieved from an S-K logistics hub. The documents list a series of shipments for delivery over the course of two weeks in '59 to all European S-K Prime offices. They stand out because of their peculiar point of origin: Antarctica—specifically a Saeder-Krupp installation listed as a mining station. I will keep you apprised of any developments.

Widow: My dear ... we've talked for long enough. I'm feeling drained and it's becoming hard to focus. I have some last advice for you, just in case we are unable to communicate again.

Weaver: You shouldn't talk like that.

Widow: I prefer to face the facts, and those are clear. You must be prepared to take over from me. If there's one thing I've learned, it is that we can't hope to face him head on. We've brewed enough trouble to keep him busy on a dozen fronts, but we've barely touched his center of power. His claws are locked too deep in Europe—if we hope to defeat him, it must be there.

Weaver: Understood. But without Nachtmeister and yourself, we'll be at our weakest.

Widow: That is why you must seek allies. I've drawn up contingency plans should one of us be eliminated, but the network remain uncompromised. Despite my misgivings, an alliance with another dragon would be ideal. Nachtmeister proved that there is information only their kind are privy to. I've ruled out Lofwyr's brother, Alamais—our intelligence indicates he is far too untrustworthy and unstable. Better possible candidates are Celedyr, Rhonabwy and Kaltenstein. Their agendas all conflict with the Wyrms'. Kaltenstein has actively interfered with S-K operations for years, but his motivations remain unclear. Celedyr and Rhonabwy however have been prowling the edges of Lofwyr's corporate domain, and their agendas are more obvious.

Weaver: And outside Europe?

Widow: We have insufficient information on Masaru and Ryumyo to consider them. Ghostwalker's agenda needs fur-



ther analysis before any overture, and Hestaby is out of the question until we receive some clarification on events in the Tir. Of the other great dragons, Mujaji and Aden must be furious with Lofwyr's actions in their backyards, but I haven't managed to establish contact with either of them. Lung is a strong possibility, depending on the depth of his involvement with the PPG. Maybe we should petition a hearing.

Weaver: I'll sound out Wu Lung-Wei. I think he might make for an interesting contact, given the way Wuxing has been expanding.

Widow: I agree. We've earned enough markers with the Japanese. It's just a question of feeding them the appropriate information. I doubt the other Triple A's will make serious moves on Saeder-Krupp's home ground. I think it's time to start sounding out the locals. Plenty of Eurocorps are tired of having S-K trample all over them. It's all about the bottom line when dealing with them, of course. Beyond that, you can't trust them. They're valuable sources and pawns, but don't bring them into the circle. I'll put you in touch with some friends I can vouch for on Zeta-ImpChem's board. Given the situation in Scandinavia, I think you'll find friends there soon.

Weaver: It seems I'll be traveling more than I expected.

Widow: I suggest we take an active hand in the Bankenverein as well—it's too important a tool to lose. We may not have Nachtmeister, but we should ensure that whoever steps into the vacuum has the proper priorities.

Weaver: Leave it to me. I'm sure Anikka will help too. She's becoming quite the heavyweight in the AGS and Northern Europe. You must be proud.

Widow: I am. She's still very idealistic, but maybe it's time she learned her mother isn't just a crazy old hag with a revenge fixation. She still thinks I gave up after the warning in '36. Maybe she will rise to the challenge. She hates the Wyrms as much as I do for what he's done to our family, but I've kept her in the dark about our little network. Maybe she should know, before it's too late.

Weaver: And what of Dietrich?

Widow: No. My son is spineless, he wants nothing to do with the "family feud," as he calls it. Leave him to Proteus' internal bickering ... that's what he's best suited for.

Weaver: My friend, are you all right?

Widow: Just feeling tired ... and old. Very old.

Weaver: Then we should say our goodbyes.

Widow: Yes. Always remember, Lofwyr might be the most dangerous being on Earth, but he is not infallible. Goodbye, my dear.

Weaver: Goodbye, my friend. I hope to talk to you again, soon.

>>> **Widow ID Logged off.**

>>> **Weaver ID Logging off.**

>>> **Isoblocks offline. Satellite/ground link disconnected.**

- Okay, I'll take the bait. Who is this Weaver and what's his connection to Mina?

- Loss

- From hints in the conversation, I've got a fair idea who it might be, though I doubt most of you will remember him. The mentions of Marseille and Monaco are dead giveaways.

- Tell

- Enough with the suspense already. If you've got a theory, let's hear it.

- Red Wraith

- I wasn't being coy. I really don't think many of the current bunch on Shadowland would recognize Johnny Spinrad. Spinrad Industries was a cutting-edge player in biotech, cybertech and fashion in the Thirties, until its involvement in the Marseille Scandals of 2051 was exposed. It got slapped with unprecedented fines by the French government and lost its AA rating to sanctions imposed by the Corporate Court. It's no secret Spinrad blamed Lofwyr for the media leak that nearly ruined the company. Spinrad made the mistake of snubbing Lofwyr on the Monaco Reconstruction project, and their dislike was bound to boil over.

- Tell

- That makes sense. Spinrad was always one to play "see and be seen" in these circles. After laying low for a few years following the scandal, he's back to being a Grand Tour staple, and from what I hear his corp is on the up-and-rising list.

- Socio Pat

- Not for long. Once Golden Snout sees this file, ol' Johnny's fortunes may see another sudden reversal.

- The Laughing Man

LUNG: SUBTLE YIN



For a long time the two great dragons of the Far East, Lung and Ryumyo, remained hidden from the public eye, playing a secret but high-stakes game of real-life Go. The playing pieces were their puppet syndicates, the Triads and Yakuza respectively, and the playing board was the Ring of Fire, the string of volcanoes and fault lines encircling the Pacific Rim.

Apparently the rules of the game have changed. After decades hidden in obscurity, Lung suddenly emerges and makes a very public landing on top of T'ai Shan Mountain last year. Since then he's been very much out in the open, issuing statements and remaining very much in the public eye. Furthermore, it seems that encircling the Ring of Fire isn't the only game he's playing; he's also engaged in some serious Coin collecting, not to mention playing King of the Five Sacred Mountains.

I put out a general call for info on Lung, but for a while nobody could come up with anything really meaningful. Even our friend in Hong Kong, Lei Kung, didn't have much to say; I guess there are some secrets the Triads wouldn't let him find out, much less tell us. Finally, however, I got something from Xiao Renwu, the enigmatic Chinese wujen who posted on the secrets of geomancy for the recent SOTA upload. The folks at MagickNet tell us the guy's been spot on, so I trust him to deliver here as well.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 16 February 2063 at 11:11:07 (PST)

by Xiao Renwu

I do not claim to be an expert on dragons; I doubt that anyone could. Who knows what thoughts pass through their ancient heads or why they do the things they do? The best one can do is to forget trying to understand them and instead accommodate as best as one can.

THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN

Lung is exactly a case in point. For as long as many have been watching him, the wyrm was content to remain hidden behind the scenes, manipulating events through his puppet Triads. Then all of a sudden, without any warning, Lung flies out of nowhere, lands at the entrance of the Temple of Pi Hsia Yuan Chun, and declares the entire range as his lair with the



appropriate dire warnings to would-be intruders. And since that day, the ninth of February, Lung has remained on the mountain for all to see.

- I hardly think that Lung's occupation qualifies as "unexpected." After all, just about all the warring states in that region were converging on the T'ai Shan range after all those weird sightings from visiting pilgrims. Heck, even the Canton Confederation was getting into the act by sending up a naval blockade. Lung probably stepped in before the other Chinese messed up whatever plans he had.

- Skeptic

- Yes, but why did he wait until February to act? At least three weeks passed from when the first signs of weird stuff started appearing on T'ai Shan until when Henan made its offensive on the mountain. Plenty of time for Lung to have heard and intervened before the fighting started. Likewise, Lung didn't exactly intervene at the eleventh hour; most sides had deadlocked and were digging in—no one was going anywhere for a week at least.

- Giles

- It may have slipped from the attention of you gwai lo, but have you looked at the date of Lung's actual arrival? Lung landed on the mountain precisely at midnight, 9 February, Chinese New Year, at the start of the Year of the Horse.

- Lo Fu Chee

- Gwai lo?

- Maelwys

- Gwai lo is Cantonese for "ghost person." It's a mild insult Cantonese speakers in southeast China use for Caucasian folks.

- Ming

Since then, Lung has been making frequent public appearances on the mountain, meeting with various Chinese dignitaries and posturing with the Chinese media. His public persona is a very traditional Chinese one, weighted with a lot of Confucian conservatism. One interesting characteristic about Lung is that he has never used a metahuman translator, as other dragons are wont to do. When a metahuman voice is necessary (such as for trid transmissions), he directly transforms into human form to speak for the cameras, usually wearing traditional Mandarin robes, but sometimes appearing in sharp business attire. One thing is consistent, though: whatever his form and whether in public or private audience, Lung is completely inscrutable, even compared to other dragons; he has what Westerners would call the perfect poker face.

- Jeez, what's with all the public appearances? Is Lung thinking of becoming the Chinese Dunkelzahn?

- Serwach

- Blame it on that little "peace summit" he had right after landing on T'ai Shan. The Chinese believe that what you do on Chinese New Year sets precedence for the rest of the year. Since Lung made a public announcement on Chinese New Year, he's been China's media slut for the rest of the year. You'll notice that his public announcements have dropped off after the 29th of January, this year's Chinese New Year. He's more visible than several years ago, but compared to last year he's been a practical hermit.

- Chan

- Lung may not use any official translators, but he does have a circle of metahuman confidants that he calls his "family." For example, Lung calls Mei-Lung Choi, his initial emissary in Sichuan, his "daughter." Apparently, in ancient times the Eastern dragons adopted especially favored servants and their descendants directly into the dragon's household as family members, with all the privileges it included (which may explain why familial ties are so important in the Far East).

- Mei-mei

- Yes! Then Wu Lung-Wei is part of Lung's family, and Wuxing is under Lung's sway! I AM VINDICATED.

- Dragonslayer

- In your dreams, Dragonslayer. Judging by how Wuxing and Lung clash in the shadows, if Wu Lung-Wei were part of Lung's "family," then he'd be the Prodigal Son.

- HK Kid

Though his public messages have covered the wide gamut of topics, there do seem to be several common threads that have run through them. The biggest theme (but also the most veiled) has been his call for the return of traditional values, morality and spiritual revival. In particular Lung has been lashing out at the secular vision and lack of faith amongst the Chinese, taking plenty of shots at communism as the cause of these ills.

- You know, there's one thing I've never understood: Why does Lung hate communism so much? The way he rants against it, you'd think Chairman Mao killed his brother or something.

- Red Eye

- I think it has something to do with Marx's claim of religion as the "opiate of the masses." By the turn of the millennium, Chinese communism had evolved to the point where it only paid lip service to Marx, Engels and Mao, but the Party still embraced its tenet of atheism—witness its persecution of spiritual movements like the D'alai Lama and the Falun Gong. It's this secular worldview that Lung really hates about communists.

- Minnie

In fact, Lung's calls for spiritual revival have also resulted in the dragon becoming a silent sponsor to many religious





charities across Asia. Not just Asian religions like Buddhism and Taoism, but also Islamic and Christian charities as well. As long as they promote some sort of faith and belief in a higher power, these faith-based organizations find favor with Lung.

- Untrue! Lung supports religious groups only because religion is a good way to manipulate people. Look closely at his "charitable" donations, and you'll find that Lung only supports smaller, independently run charities. On the other hand, he actively opposes large organized groups like Catholic Missions or the United Islamic Charities.

- Dragonslayer

- Distorting the facts again, I see. While it's true that Lung favors smaller charities and avoids larger organized religious groups, it's usually because those groups distort their teachings in favor of secular politics and power. To use your own examples, Catholic Missions is mostly a propaganda front promoting blind obedience to the Vatican, while the UIC has ties to the New Islamic Jihad and serves to scout for terrorist recruits for Ibn Eisa.

- Tailor Hudson

- Speaking of religion, one of Lung's "sons," a Chinese ork by the name of Li-Lung Pak, was seen meeting with several Shinto mikos up in Hokkaido recently. Apparently there's a small movement of miko dissenters who believe Ryumyo's exploitation of the dragon lines caused Japan's problems. Before they can begin restoring Japan, they have to stop Ryumyo's exploitation first.

- Metsuke

One other thing I should warn you about Lung: he displays a fondness for puns and word play. Of course, around here that's not unusual; Chinese is a highly inflected language in all its dialects, and lots of Chinese place value in words that sound the same or similar. Lung, however, takes it to a whole new level. So if you ever hear anything he says, pay close attention; often there is a second meaning that may show his true intentions.

- I'll say. Several months ago me and some other runners around the Bay got hired by one of the Triads to bury an object at the peak of Telegraph Hill in San Francisco. The artifact turned out to be a miniature model of a mountain made from solid gold, with a Chinese pictogram stamped in one side. (I later found out it was the Chinese character for dragon: "lung.") It wasn't easy—we had to deal not only with Saito's Marines, but also some Yakuza who got wind of it, but we got the job done.

I didn't figure out the pun until a month later, when I was retelling the story to a Chinese chummer of mine. Never saw a guy spit soybeer out of his nose like that before! When he recovered, he told me that in Mandarin, San Francisco is called "Jiu Jin Shan," which literally translates as "Gold Mountain!"

- Tuskadero

Reaction to Lung's public appearances has been generally positive but somewhat mixed. Most Chinese approve of the dragon's messages, but they don't give him the pop-star celebrity adulation that media-savvy dragons like Dunkelzahn or Masaru receive. Lung's message is also not received so well in all the former provinces. The Henan neo-communists, of course, denounce Lung as a threat to their so-called worker's paradise. Likewise, the Western-oriented Canton Confederation and Taiwan dismiss the dragon's pronouncements as irrelevant throwbacks to "an outmoded past."

- The Confederation government may say what they want, but everyone knows the real power in the Confederation lies with the Triads. (Or more precisely, Lung's Triads.) In fact, they actually like it that way, because it distracts the public while the Triads carry out Lung's agenda.

- Shen Yang Li

- "Shen Yang Li" wouldn't happen to be Chinese for "conspiracy theorist," would it?

- Skeptic

AN ANCIENT FEUD

Some of you, I am sure, may have heard of the rivalry between Lung and the great dragon Ryumyo. I have heard some describe this as a mere contest between peers, while others think there's an all-out shadow war raging the breadth of the Pacific Rim. While I do not claim to be a close confidant of Lung, I have managed to piece together a comprehensive picture of their true relationship.

A long time ago, when magic was still in the world and the dragons still roamed about, Ryumyo was once an apprentice to Lung—and a very talented one at that. The two personalities, however, were polar opposites of each other; Ryumyo was an impatient firebrand who favored immediate action, while Lung's contemplative temper favored subtle restraint. In some ways, the two dragons are the feng shui personified, with Ryumyo's fiery yang counterpointing Lung's solid yin.

- If you look closely enough, you can see this dichotomy at work in the syndicates the two manipulate. The Yakuza (representing Ryumyo's yang) go for big, short-term results, and retribution from them is bound to be violent and heavy-handed. On the other hand, the Triads (Lung's yin) take a longer-term strategy, sacrificing immediate gain for future growth. Likewise, if you cross the Triads, they may not retaliate immediately, but instead quietly and subtly strike back over time, first targeting your associates, then friends and family and ultimately finishing you off.

- China White

Lung and Ryumyo's opposite natures strained at the bond between master and apprentice and eventually resulted in a parting of ways. Those who have held audience with the dragon retell that Ryumyo stormed out of his master's household in a fit of pique to find his own power. But in doing so, the



younger dragon created messy disturbances that Lung, as his former master, was obliged to clean up. The rift between the two spread further apart.

Even after several millennia, the feud still glowers like warm embers, occasionally flaring into heated confrontations between agents of both dragons. It has never, however, erupted into a full-scale struggle. For that I suppose you can thank the Asian predilection on honor, etiquette and courtesy (something they picked up from the dragons, according to Lung). There's an old joke in the Far East that the more a person dislikes someone, the more polite he will be in his presence. And these two are the pinnacles of courtesy in each other's company.

- It sounds strange, but it's true. When Lung landed on T'ai Shan on Chinese New Year, one of his first visitors was Ryumyo in human form, dressed in a bright red kimono and bearing traditional gifts of tangerines and oranges. Similarly, in April Lung visited Ryumyo for the Spring Cherry Blossom Festival, where the two (assuming human forms) went to Hitachi to see the cherry blossoms and play a game of Go. For two wyrms that hate each other's guts, they sure go to great lengths not to show it.

- Chan

Strange Bedfellows

Recently, however, Lung may have found an ally against his former apprentice in the great dragon Masaru. Masaru's sponsorship of the Philippine rebels and his much-publicized dislike of most things Japanese makes common cause between the two. Additionally, Masaru has displayed eagerness in learning from the elder wyrm; Lung, on his end, seems to regard Masaru as a more receptive, if somewhat less talented learner than Ryumyo ever was. Whether he formally takes Masaru under his wing (so to speak) is yet to be seen.

- The signs of an alliance of sorts may already be forming. There's been a lot of Filipinos seen working the shadows of Hong Kong and Macao the past few months. That's Lung's territory, so Masaru must owe him for the favor.

- HK Kid

- I'd be careful if I was in Masaru's shoes. It's one thing to be united against a common enemy, but learning Lung's secrets is one big debt. Wonder what's going to happen when Lung decides it's time to pay up?

- Judy

THE RING OF FIRE

Nothing exemplifies the rift between the two more than their jockeying for position over the Pacific Rim, sometimes known as the Ring of Fire. The Ring of Fire itself refers to the giant tectonic plates covering the Pacific Ocean. The edges of these plates rub against the plates forming the Asian, Australasian and American continents, creating fault lines and active volcanoes at various junctures.

Through their various proxies, the two have maneuvered to secure key sites on the coasts and islands surrounding the

Pacific. These sites are aspected in some way to favor Eastern dragons like Lung and Ryumyo. Hence the legendary name for these mana lines, called "dragon lines," is indeed true to form.

- Check the Ryumyo file elsewhere in this download. A more authoritative writer has something to say about them.

- Captain Chaos

"Vote Dunkelzahn in 2064. The best president is a dead president."

Because of the magical power radiated from these lines, it is clear why these two great dragons race to secure as many sites as possible. What doesn't appear clear, however, is what Lung does with the ones he controls. With Ryumyo it is easy to see, as his rituals clearly siphon as much mana as possible. Lung's rites, however, do not draw off as much mana from his lines; in some cases, he doesn't appear to get *any* mana from the lines.

In truth, Lung is not tapping the dragon lines for the power itself. Rather, he is tapping the dragon lines to *harmonize* the mana flowing from them. The yin-yang dichotomy applies to dragon lines as well as people. Lung's rituals serve to draw (or rather, *siphon*) the mana from the sites in a manner that balances the yin-yang cycle of the site.

- So, in other words, Lung is performing global acupuncture?

- Raven

- It's probably more complicated than that, but I think you've pretty much hit upon the gist of the idea.

- Talon

- Actually, the global acupuncture may help explain a few things we saw when Halley's Comet passed over. As you may remember, the comet's passing caused the Ring of Fire to shake, rattle and roll, but if you look carefully, most of the SR&R took place in Japanese-controlled territory. Sure, China got some tremors and all, but they were pretty mild. Nothing like the devastation we saw in Japan. If Lung is harmonizing his dragon lines, while Ryumyo was just strip-mining the mana with no regard, then that could explain why Japan took it on the chin.

- Metsuke

- It also ties in a bit to Lung's big spirituality kick as well. It's generally understood that people in large groups have a tempering effect on the ambient manasphere, like control rods in a nuclear reactor, and in some cases shape the mana to the culture. (This partly explains where urban totems and Spirits of Man come from.) One of the reasons that Lung is pushing spiritual revival is that real faith promotes harmony between Man, Society and Nature. On the other hand, secularism can throw the balance out of whack, which throws the mana out of whack. So if Lung promotes faith, he harmonizes the mana flow, which harmonizes the dragon lines.

- Twist



- Lung's "global acupuncture" hypothesis kind of dovetails with a theory that's been making the rounds at MIT&T, UCLA, Heidelberg and other places. The theory is that mana lines are stress points where excess mana vents. If there's a mana surge—as happened when the comet swung by—all that surplus mana pressures the mana lines and creates physical side effects, such as earthquakes, volcanoes and the like. Think of it like the cleavage or fracture lines on a gem or mineral. If true, things could have been a lot worse on the Pacific Rim if it weren't for Lung's "global acupuncture."

- Magister

- Yes, but why was it only the Pacific Ring that was rocking and rolling? There are still plenty of other non-dragon mana lines around the world. Why didn't we see anything on the Atlantic Rim?

- Nocturne

- Many a gorsedd circle, cairn and stelae have served as a locus for metahumanity.

- Tsangara

Recently, however, Lung's been making a big push to acquire some of the mana lines. Some of it, no doubt, takes advantage of the Japanese withdrawal, particularly from Australia and south-east Asia; Triad activity has been on the rise in Bangkok, Singapore and Cairns. But Lung's also been making overtures elsewhere where Ryumyo hasn't been, places like Kamchatka, Athabaska and Chile. What's more, these expansions seem to have a sense of urgency, as if Lung realizes he's running out of time.

- He can probably blame a Western dragon for that. The word on the street is that Hestaby sent some of her agents here to Hong Kong back in October to tamper with the dragon lines and redirect some of their power Ryumyo's way. No one knows why, though. Maybe she's trying to get a favor out of Ryumyo to use against Saito.

- China Doll

- That's torqued Lung off some, but I think the expansion started earlier than that. Up here in Vladivostok there was an upswing of Triad activity back in August as some new bosses came in, shook things around and then left for Petropavlosk, right on Kamchatka Island. All of this before Hestaby's agents were in Hong Kong.

- Bogatyr

- I don't know if this is related, but down here in Chile Lung has been showing particular interest in Easter Island. A couple of months ago some Chinese bigwig



called Chiin-Ngaan flew into Santiago. The dominant Triad gang, the 28 Cranes, were falling over themselves carrying out his orders. Less than a week after he arrived, he flew out again, this time heading for Easter Island. The 28 Cranes are in Lung's camp, so something's definitely up.

- Valpo Vic
- Chiin-Ngaan? That guy is Lung's spymaster in Hong Kong. A wujen I know says his aura's real funny.
- Lei Kung
- How better to gaze upon the Eye of Heaven than with A Thousand Eyes?
- Sheung Gwau Yeh
- The Year of the Comet is but a foreshadowing of things to come. Let us hope Wind Master succeeds before more serious changes arrive.
- Tsangara

THE COINS OF LUCK

About six years ago, Dunkelzahn bequeathed to Lung what was called in the dragon's will the "Second Coin of Luck." In the same will the late wurm also bequeathed a "Third Coin of Luck" to Chiang-Wu Sharon, wife of Wuxing CEO Wu Lung-Wei, and the First Coin of Luck to an old fisherman known as Sun Yat-Sun. In the Hong Kong shadows there's been buzz about a Fourth Coin of Luck as well.

I can sense you are asking what the Four Coins of Luck are, so I will relate an ancient geomancer tale. The Four Coins of Luck were gifts given to humanity by the Dragon Kings a long time ago. The four coins are named, in order, as Lu, Shou, Feng and Fu, representing wealth, longevity, fertility and happiness.

From what I have heard amongst the Triads, Lung has told his servants to look for the First and Fourth Coins, no doubt so he can add to his collection. Lung only wants those two, however, so that he would possess just three of the four coins; the dragon has expressed no interest in acquiring all four.

- Interesting. Is Lung trying to make nice with Wuxing? Especially considering how often their pet Triads have been at each other's throats?
- Tegan
- Typical gwai lo thinking. The reason has nothing to do with Wuxing, but with numbers. Amongst the Chinese, three (saam) is a lucky number, because it sounds similar to the word for "giving birth." On the other hand, four (sze) is a very unlucky number, because it sounds almost the same as the word for "death."
- Lo Fu Chee
- So if Lung has three coins he's creating (giving birth to) luck, but if he has four it dies? I see what Xiao means about Lung being adept at word play.
- Jumper

- There's also superstition to keep in mind as well. Lu, Fu and Shou are also the names of the three star gods of wealth, happiness and longevity, and during Chinese New Year people often greet each other by wishing them to be blessed by the three star gods.
- Aa Chu

- One thing to keep in mind is that several numbers have double meanings in Cantonese. (This is particularly important when dealing with the Triads, because a lot of them came from Hong Kong and the Canton Confederation.) Eight (baak) is a very lucky number because it sounds similar to the word for wealth (faat). (Ever notice how many Triads have the number 8 in their name?) This is particularly true when paired with 2 or 3: 28 (yi baak) sounds similar to "easy wealth," while 38 (saam baak) sounds similar to "create wealth." On the other hand, five (ng) is an unlucky number because it sounds the same as the word for not (m'). Ever wonder why Wuxing used a Mandarin term for its name, despite being headquartered in a Cantonese speaking city? That's because the Cantonese equivalent would sound similar to "nothing."
- Tai Ho Leng

- That gives new meaning to the term "38 Special."
- Bung

- *Groan* Hey Bung, you ever thought about running for Lung? You two should hit it off real well.
- Digger

So where are the First and Fourth Coin of Luck now? The old fisherman who held the First Coin of Luck lost it (and his life) as quickly as he received it to a group called the Sons of Thunder. The Sons of Thunder in turn gave it to the Yellow Lotus Triad, but they in turn lost it as well. Where it is now is anybody's guess.

- I respect Xiao for his concise knowledge so far, but here he is mistaken. I was one of the Sons of Thunder, and we had gone to see Sun Yat-Sun about the coin, but only for investigation purposes. While we were seeing him, however, the Yellow Lotus ambushed us and killed the fisherman. I had recovered the Coin from him, but to save our own necks we gave it to the Triads.
- Lei Kung

- Sorry, Lei Kung, but you were set up, and not by the Yellow Lotus either. Yakuza infiltrators posed as the Yellow Lotus to distract Lung and create infighting amongst the Hong Kong Triads. Ryumyo has the coin now.
- Sauvix

- More like had the coin. Someone snatched it from Japan about six or so months ago.
- Gorai



• Actually, it showed up here in Denver about that time. Apparently Ghostwalker ordered the theft, but when his agent showed up here to hand it over, Azzie operatives jumped him. (I heard they hit him with a bus before snatching the coin). There was a big stink-up in the shadows for the next couple weeks as various factions—including Ghostwalker, the Azzies, the local Triads, the Atlantean Foundation and even the FBI if you believe it—tried to recover it. I don't know who got it in the end, but I can tell you one thing for sure: It ain't in Denver anymore.

• Southern Cross

• The FBI wasn't involved. They were here to track down the Maltese Falcon theft, and they arrived in town the same time the coin went missing.

• Rump Roast

The Fourth Coin apparently turned up in Vancouver shortly after the Sons of Thunder lost theirs, but is now missing again (Whether these two events are connected remains to be seen).

MOVING MOUNTAINS

I think by now everyone's aware of Lung's occupation of T'ai Shan on the eve of Chinese New Year and his declaration of the mountain as his new home. What everyone may not be aware of, however, is that T'ai Shan is but one of Five Sacred Mountains in Chinese myth. And naturally, Lung is casting his eyes at the other four.

The Five Sacred Mountains sit in China's heartland, representing the four cardinal directions of the compass (plus the center). They also have very important geomantic value, representing the five vital elements of wuxing. T'ai Shan, Lung's lair and the most prominent of the five, represents the East and the element Wood. The other four mountains are Hua Shan, Song Shan and two Heng Shans (one to the south and one to the north).

Hua Shan

Hua Shan is the westernmost of the Five Sacred Mountains and sits in the province-state of Shaanxi, close to its border with Henan. Hua Shan actually consists of five peaks, arranged together in a lotus flower pattern, and the only path to the peak is a meter-wide trail that is treacherous to ascend. Hua Shan is associated with the element Metal.

Recently Hua Shan has become the focus of military action by several of the local states. Shortly before Lung occupied T'ai Shan, the Henan neo-communists mobilized troops across the border and dug in around Hua Shan. Recently Sichuan military forces mobilized near Ankang on the Shaanxi-Sichuan border. Liang Hong, president-general of Sichuan, issued an ultimatum demanding Henan withdraw its troops, or he would forcibly remove them. Henan in turn dismissed the ultimatum as an empty threat, and a tense standoff has resulted.

As everyone in China knows, Lung hates the Henan neo-communists, and as Hua Shan is a Sacred Mountain, its fate would be important to him. What everyone may *not* know is that Liang Hong, the president-general of Sichuan has ties to

Lung. (It was in Sichuan that Lung awakened, after all.) It looks as if Lung may be using Sichuan to dislodge Henan from Hua Shan.

• Lung should have good reason to get rid of Henan. In feng shui, metal dominates over wood in the control cycle; a metal axe fells a wooden tree. Lung may have occupied T'ai Shan for its power, but he'd better seize Hua Shan to protect that power.

• Ang

• Both sides appear to be very serious about the entire situation. It's been a buyers' frenzy in Macao lately, with lots of merc contracts available for both sides and Shaanxi caught in the middle.

• Johnny Hotel

Song Shan

Song Shan represents the Center and is associated with the element Earth. It is also located in the heart of enemy territory, in the center of Henan. Song Shan is the home to the Shaolin Temple, birthplace of Zen Buddhism; the Zhungyue Temple, one of the earliest Taoist temples; and the Songyang Academy, one of the great academies of ancient China. It seems rather ironic that such important symbols of Chinese spirituality reside in the heart of an atheistic country.

• Despite Henan's strict atheistic stance, the temples at Song Shan still remain active. Apparently powerful spirits reside within the temples and protect them from attack.

• Yau Ma Tei

• Spirits that Lung seems to know. I have seen messenger spirits from T'ai Shan arrive to converse with the temple spirits.

• Poppyseed

• After one hit of opium or two?

• Skeptic

• Poppyseed is right about the messenger spirits, but he's wrong about their origin. They don't come from T'ai Shan, they come from Vladivostok.

• Gusli

• What would Buttercup want to do with Song Shan?

• Glitch

• Why don't you go ask her?

• Gusli

Heng Shan (Zhurong Peak)

The southern Heng Shan sits in the Hunan province of the Canton Confederation and represents the element Fire. Heng Shan actually consists of 72 peaks, the highest of which is named Zhurong Peak, at 1,290 meters above sea level. Surrounded by woods and overlooking the west bank of the



Xiangjiang River, Heng Shan is well renowned in China for its natural beauty.

- It's also probably the Confederation's saving grace against Sichuan. President-General Sichuan has a deep hatred of the Confederation and has threatened to go to war against them, but apparently Lung is holding him back. It turns out that Heng Shan is under Lung's control, and he doesn't want Llang's personal vendetta threatening it.

- Hei Yu

Heng Shan (Xuanwu Peak)

The northern Heng Shan sits in Shanxi province and represents the element Water. Like its southern counterpart, Heng Shan north consists of multiple peaks, the highest being Xuanwu Peak (el. 2,017 meters above sea level). The summit of Xuanwu Peak is the site for the thousand-year old Beiyue Temple. Other features include the Huanging Temple, constructed over a precipice halfway up, and the Ying Wood Pagoda as well.

THE DRAGON'S CLAWS

Despite Lung's change in tactics, one thing hasn't changed: Lung still has many agents at work to further his agenda. Here are some of the more important ones to him.

TRIADS

The Triads are Lung's primary eyes and ears in China and across the Pacific Rim. The Triads' mystical trappings and nationalist sentiments made it very easy for Lung to win over their loyalty. Furthermore, their underworld activities give them a ubiquitous presence throughout China and most of the Pacific Rim, and their criminal ties allow Lung to exert strong but hidden influence in Asia.

- Lung only wishes it was that easy. As the saying goes, every man has his price, but in some cases, that price may be more than Lung's Triads may be willing or able to pay. Henan is one case in point. The Henan neo-communists crack down hard on organized crime—the government can't stand competition. So Lung has a hard time trying to undermine them from within.

- Chan

- While Lung may control many Triad gangs, he doesn't control all of them. China has a long history, and so do the Triads, which means that lots of different gangs have sprung up with lots of different agendas. Many of the older Triads have longstanding hatreds against rival Triads that even Lung can't reconcile. Witness the ongoing feud between the Red Dragons and the White Lotus Society.

- HK Kid

The Red Dragon Triad

The Red Dragon Triad is the strongest of all the Triads in Hong Kong, which tends to make it the first among equals of all the Triads around the Pacific. The subsequent power and

LUNG

Great Eastern Dragon

Sex: Male

Color: Ruby red with gold highlights

Metahuman Form(s): Chinese human typically dressed in either Mandarin robes or business attire

Primary Lair: T'ai Shan Mountain, Shandong

Translator: None.

Timeline

2012: Lung emerges from his lair on Mt. Emei, near Leshan, Sichuan (then part of communist China). He is later seen flying northeast over the Great Wall of China.

2018: The Canton Confederation declares its independence from the People's Republic of China. Sichuan and many other provinces follow suit in the same year, effectively ending Communist rule of China.

2021: The Sichuan provisional government collapses as incursions from its neighbors sparks civil unrest. The Chinese heartland is the scene of intermittent warfare.

2044: The mage Liang Hong seizes power in Sichuan and establishes rulership over the region.

2057: Lung receives the Second Coin of Luck from Dunkelzahn's Will.

2062: Lung occupies T'ai Shan Mountain and claims it as his lair. Placing the mountain under his protection, Lung warns of dire consequences against any military action taken against the mountain.

2063: Sichuan initiates military action against Henan neo-communist forces around Hua Shan Mountain

prestige the Triad enjoys subsequently makes the Red Dragons Lung's best and most effective agents of change. (The gang is called the "Red Dragon Triad." Lung is red. You figure it out.)

- Their word may carry a lot of weight overseas, but don't think for a minute that their word is Triad law. Far from it, truth be told, especially in Triad Central. The long-standing rivalry with the White Lotus Society dates back at least a century and a half (back to when the Red Dragons were known as the Red Fists), and they've also been taking a lot of fire from the Yellow Lotus, based on Hong Kong island. The Yellow Lotus has ties to Wuxing, so you may expect to see the Red Dragons taking a fall.

- Ma'fan

- Yesterday's news, chummer. Yeah, the Red Dragons were in some serious trouble from the Yellow Lotus and on their way out. But about five months ago, the Red Dragons pushed back. Hard. I think it'll be a few more months before we hear from the Yellow Lotus again.

- China Doll



The Red Dragons don't always have to rely on their influence alone, as they have branches established overseas. Down under in Australia, the Dragons operate under a front group called the Golden Triangle Society. For a long time the Golden Triangle had been the runt of all the Triads in Australia, but they recently made some quick moves into Cairns after the Japanese left, so their status in Australia is on the rise.

Over in North America, the Red Dragons moved far inland and established a stronghold in the mile-high city of Denver, located in the CAS sector. (They actually predate the CAS, as well as all the treaty nations, having arrived shortly before the turn of the millennium.) They laid low for a while shortly after Ghostwalker arrived in town, but now that things have settled down they're back in business.

- The Denver Red Dragons answer to an eastern dragon known as Choi Mu. On Chinese New Year last year, she showed up at Ghostwalker's liaison office in the Sioux Sector, bearing the traditional gifts of oranges and tangerines—and a giant red ruby bigger than a human's head with a personal greeting from Lung himself. Since then she's been a regular visitor, acting as some sort of liaison between the two dragons.
- Delta Juliet

The Octagons

The Octagons operate in the Seattle Metroplex, where they labor in the shadows of the two major triads, the Yellow Lotus and the Eighty-Eights. A good part of why they're so weak is that they took some early hits from the Seattle Mafia and Yakuza, which allowed the other two to profit at the Octagons' expense.

- Recently the Octagons joined in an alliance with the Yellow Lotus, the most powerful of the Seattle Triads, to gang up on the Yaks and Mafia. This has helped improve the Octagons' fortunes, particularly at the expense of the Shotozumi-rengo. They're still pretty weak, though, and must rely on the Yellow Lotus for protection.
- Smiley
- An arrangement that seems to suit the Octagons just fine, it seems. Though way smaller than the Yellow Lotus, lately it seems as if the Octagons have been the ones calling the shots and telling the Yellow Lotus what to do. It's almost like the Octagons have some sort of hold over the Yellow Lotus leadership.
- Greely



The Octagons' connection to Lung is their Incense Master, Chen Kwan-Ti. Chen was a wizard from Sichuan who came to Seattle in 2055, and it's believed that he trained under the dragon himself. As soon as he joined the Octagons he became an invaluable advisor to Lodgemaster David Gao and the Octagons' fortunes turned around quickly. Though Gao still leads the Octagons, it's obvious to all that Chen is the real power behind the throne.

- And maybe not just the Octagon throne. Recently Chen was seen meeting with his opposite number at the Yellow Lotus: Su Cheng, a real Fu Manchu type of fellow, including the moustache. During the meet Chen gave Su Cheng a vase, which apparently the wizard was very happy to receive. Looks like Su Cheng is returning the favor by seeing that the Yellow Lotus agrees with the Octagons.

- Gardener

- Is Chen out of his mind? Su Cheng is an ancient vampire and had part of his soul hidden in a vase that the Yellow Lotus Lodgemaster kept to ensure Cheng's cooperation. If that's the same vase that Chen Kwan-Ti gave, there's no stopping Su Cheng.

- White Tiger

- With creatures like Su Cheng, you don't need a piece of their soul if you already know their Name.

- Feng Xiansheng

The Twenty-Eight Cranes

The Twenty-Eight Cranes, operating out of Santiago, Chile, have been gaining visibility recently. During the Resource Rush, Chile attracted an increasing amount of trade with China through their mutual association in the APEC Consortium. After China broke apart, a large number of Chinese, particularly from the northern coastal provinces, made the long trek over the Pacific to this Andean country. Along with them came the Cranes.

Recently the Cranes have been on the offensive, seizing a larger share of the Santiago underworld and expanding their influence further northward. Triad influence has always been strong in Chile, but it looks like the Cranes are consolidating that power. Lung may possibly have plans to reinforce his power base here.

- He may be getting ready to make a move against Ryumyo in Peru. Though the Imperial Marines are gone, Ryumyo still has some influence in the local government.

- Brujo

- Don't forget that visit by Chin-Ngaan also. Lung may be making a move, but his target might be Easter Island instead of Peru.

- Llama Mama

- Or maybe both.

- Valpo Vic

DISCORDANT HARMONY

This group deserves special mention. Discordant Harmony is the name of a geomancer cabal in service to Lung. From what I understand, Discordant Harmony is Lung's "special forces" group, but not in the manner one would expect. Normally, special forces infiltrate deep behind enemy lines and blow up or sabotage important facilities like command posts, supply centers or industrial plants. Well, these geomancers certainly infiltrate deep into hostile territory, but they don't perform sabotage in the conventional sense. Instead, they sabotage the yin-yang flow of a location by altering blueprints, rearranging furniture or even blowing strategic holes in walls or cluttering key empty space with rubble. By disrupting the chi flow, they can bring bad luck on a place, or at the extreme end, create surges of wild magic.

- I think I may have worked for one of these Discordant Harmony slugs before. We got hired by this Chinese Johnson to do a little "rearranging" of an office complex in one of the Mitsuhamas towers in Seattle. Specifically, she wanted us to blast away a few walls, blow out several windows, and destroy some sculpture on several floors. We couldn't figure out why, though; the floors she wanted these done on were just office pools for wage slaves and middle management, and nowhere near anything valuable. Still, we did the job and got paid for our work. For the next several weeks MCT Seattle got hit with a string of misfortunes. Several employees were arrested in an embezzlement scandal, a middle manager committed suicide for no apparent reason and one of the security guards suddenly snaps and starts shooting up people. I've always wondered if there was a connection to our little run, and now I think there was.

- Brick

- Rumor has it that some of these Discordant Harmony mooks have been seen up around Vladivostok and in Siberia. Some have even been seen as far west as Lake Baykal, and a couple of stories have placed them in the Kashmir. It looks like Lung may have some interests in Asia beyond the Ring of Fire.

- Golomyanka

SICHUAN: LAND OF THE FOUR RIVERS

Lung has his talons spread far across the breadth of China, but if there's one place where his grasp is strongest, it's in the place of his awakening: the militaristic, magocratic state of Sichuan. Centrally placed in the river valleys of China's heartland, Sichuan holds a commanding strategic position, capable of throwing its weight against many of the Chinese splinter states. Which, as can be seen, is what it's doing right now.

As with the other successor states of the People's Republic of China, Sichuan saw its beginnings in the collapse of the Chinese Communist Party in 2018. As the party fractured, Sichuan's provincial government declared its own independence, but the government found it a tough row to hoe. As the



party crumbled, so did internal peace and order, and internecine fighting turned the Sichuan heartland into a war-torn wasteland.

But all things come to an end, even wars. In 2042, a young combat mage named Liang Hong earned fame in Sichuan by defeating raiding forces from the Canton Confederation. The grateful militia anointed him a general, and the new General Liang turned his attention inward towards Chengdu, Sichuan's capital. In 2044, Liang's forces had stormed the capital, and the victorious general named himself the new president of Sichuan.

- Ever since his first victory, there have been suspicions that Liang had help from Lung in his campaign to seize power in Sichuan. Before he took command, Liang was a rather ordinary magician, but during his campaign he commanded powerful spirits and used metamagic unheard of at that time. Likewise, he had a reputation as an unimaginative staff weenie before taking command, but he displayed unusual strategic brilliancy afterwards.

- Ma'fan

Since then Sichuan has rebuilt itself from a war-torn region into a powerful nation under General Liang's guidance. (The rank is purely honorary, but many in government still address him as "General.") Both its military and economic strength compare to its Confederation neighbor, and Sichuan has managed to enlarge itself by annexing portions of Gansu, Shaanxi and Hubei.

- The "General" title is more than honorary. Sichuan may be a constitutional republic with a legislature and judicial system and all, but it means just as little as it did in the old People's Republic of China. The army still is the real power in Sichuan; the civilian government just rubberstamps whatever the army wants.

- Hei Yu

- Hardly. The army is a smokescreen for Liang Hong's cabal of magicians, who run both the army and the government. Liang's cabal has turned Sichuan into a magocratic state that gives preferential treatment to the Awakened; in some cases, you cannot hold some higher offices in the bureaucracy unless you are a magician. The Sichuan government justifies it as "enlightened meritocracy in action," but it's really just magical apartheid.

- Siu Mai

- Sounds like the UCAS if the Initiates of the New Dawn ran it.

- Cam

- The scary thing is, you're probably right. Think about that when you go to the ballot box next year.

- Prof

If there is anything troublesome about Sichuan's current state of affairs, it is the continuing hostility towards the Canton Confederation. I guess the General still bears a grudge against the Confederation from those early warring days; the Confederation border's been the most heavily armed (until the recent Hua Shan offensive), and there have been plenty of border skirmishes between the two. It's a miracle a full-scale war hasn't broken out between the two states.

- The reason it hasn't happened yet is that Lung is holding him back. Back in 2057, when everyone was scrambling over the Coins of Luck that Dunkelzahn had bequeathed, it looked like Liang was really going to invade the Confederation for good. But just as the tanks were about to roll, the General fell violently ill and had to be taken back to Chengdu, where he remained bedridden for two weeks. I've heard that during that time Lung personally saw the sick Liang and told him in no uncertain terms his army was going nowhere.

- Hei Yu

- Why is Lung so intent on protecting the Confederation? It's not like they do him any favors or anything. Hell, next to those Henan neo-communists, the Confederation probably gives Lung the most grief.

- Chan

- Who knows why dragons do anything?

- Dragonslayer

Leshan

Other than Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan, the next most important city is Leshan, which is not far from Mt. Emei, the site of Lung's awakening. Prior to occupying T'ai Shan, Lung frequently traveled to various hidden lairs across China, but nevertheless stayed active around Leshan. Even after occupying T'ai Shan, Lung still maintains a presence here; Mei-Lung Choi, a local woman whom Lung adopted as his "daughter," still lives in Leshan, and a contingent of spirit guards still watches over his lair on Mt. Emei.

- Mei-Lung does more than just answer the telepathic telephone for her master. She also runs a magical academy in Leshan teaching mages, wujen, and geomancers in the arcane arts, Chinese style. From what I've heard the entrance exam is tough and the attrition rate is high. Those that graduate, however, go on to become excellent magicians wherever they work—except the top of the class. Those go to T'ai Shan to serve Lung.

- Chun Li

MASARU



We knew that dragons had more plots than a graveyard, but even the fallout from Dunkelzahn's death hadn't fully prepared us when we decided to put together this little guide. It looks like Buttercup's been taking an active role in many of these schemes, and even trying to figure out what the big wyrms are up to. In Masaru's case, she may have been the most successful. We intercepted this report from one of her agents entirely by accident, though I won't apologize for using it. Considering events in the Philippines and Masaru's growing visibility, it's more important for everyone to see what the Filipino wyrm is really like before his burgeoning media presence makes people forget. Dunkelzahn, as good as he seemed, was able to pull the wool over everyone's eyes. It won't happen again.

- Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 16 February 2063 at 11:18:39 (PST)

To: My Lady Buttercup

From: Marta Stepanova

Please forgive the straightforwardness of my report to you. I understand that your work with Yamatetsu, among other agencies and powers, may leave you with little time to read through over-familiar sentiments, and my own activities while traveling in Masaru's company have prohibited the writing of lengthy polite discourses. Masaru does not keep an older man's schedule and prefers to have a translator on hand even when he appears in human form.

- A little background: Marta Stepanova was an elven adept and agent for Buttercup since shortly before Yamatetsu's move to Popov Island in Vladivostok. Her family has had long ties to the Vory, and she had friends within the Byelmodin faction.

- Bogatyr

- Was? Had? I talked to her just yesterday.

- Chiun

- I am sorry to tell you, but Marta turned up missing from a Hong Kong hotel room this morning. Beyond noting that her disappearance may have been an abduction, preliminary reports



MASARU

Great Eastern Dragon

AKA: Mameleu (Filipino, Hiligaynon)

Sex: Male

Coloring: Black, shading to blue on the underbelly, white horns.

Metahuman Form(s): Young Human Filipino businessman

Primary Lair: Visayan island of Panay, Philippines

Translator: Summer Crosbie

Timeline

April 15, 2014: Masaru Awakens during a full lunar eclipse from underneath Mt. Mayon, Luzon.

2042: Masaru formally becomes a great dragon and buys a sprawling complex on Vancouver Island.

2057: Downtown Seattle sees a brief fight between Masaru, unknown gunmen and Lone Star. It ends after the dragon retrieves a large black case and flies back to his lair.

2059: Masaru's manifesto is published on Shadowland.

February, 2062: The Huk, with Masaru's backing, spark a revolution in the Philippines after Japanese Imperial troops are pulled away from Yomi Island (Lagu-lagu).

have been noticeably vague concerning evidence and the circumstances; we're working on getting more detail as I speak. Her report appears to have shown up here at the Mosaic data haven shortly after her disappearance.

• Spirit

In keeping with what you asked me to take note of, I have attempted to organize my information in order of importance to you. If at any point my words are unclear, I hope I may be able to expound upon them in the future. Masaru will soon announce his choice for the job as his permanent translator, and I am confident of my fitness for the task. The other two candidates, details about whom I include for completeness, seem unsuitable.

The first, Summer Crosbie, is an odd choice. She gained immediate fame and public sympathy when she broadcasted live for KSAF the first report of Ghostwalker's rampage in Denver. In a dramatic scene replayed thousands of times, her newscopter was struck down in an apparent collision with the dragon. Summer, however, survived the crash, though she required extensive time in the trauma ward. Reconstructive surgery gave back her trid-quality face, cosmetic surgery enhanced it, and over half of the rest of her body has been replaced with top-of-the-line cybernetics and bioware. I have even seen changes in her personality; though she has become meticulous to the point of obsession, her natural charm and poise seems to have been greatly amplified. This effect is more noticeable when Masaru is near, as if she were his puppet.

• She also has a strange fascination with Ghostwalker; she curses him and blames him for what happened to her, yet can't talk about him without mentioning again and again her desire to speak with him. She sounds almost starstruck when she says it. I saw this happen a few times in the hospital, and it was very creepy.

• Nurse Betty

• I traced the payment on Summer's hospital bills back to Masaru. He's made quite an investment in her. And since I saw Ms. Crosbie make a big media splash about Marta on the trideo early this afternoon, it's safe to say she's already making good on it as his mouthpiece.

• Priest

• I'd say that makes her and Masaru suspects number one and two in Marta's disappearance. I find it hard to believe that Marta would be able to keep her little secret from Masaru, so it isn't a stretch to figure Masaru wanted a loose end dealt with. As for Ms. Crosbie, the perks involved in being a dragon's personal lackey must be considerable; with Marta out of the way, suddenly she has the job. Imagine that.

• Sceptic

There is nothing special about the second candidate, Rafael Kilayko, however. He shares Masaru's love for art and philosophy but is otherwise a quiet and unassuming young Filipino. These are my impressions; I have not had enough time to properly investigate him or speak with him apart from formal occasions.

• Actually, Kilayko is an artist and a changeling, able to see the astral but unable to project. He's a rising star in the art world, sharing exquisitely painful renderings of the astral in the Philippines. His watercolors have had price tags as high as several hundred thousand nuyen. Scuttlebutt says he'll occasionally enchant a piece, but I've yet to come across requests to acquire any such thing.

• Saint

On the other hand, Masaru and I have had long chats over games of poker and glasses of vodka. The subjects of our talks make up the rest of this document.

HIS PLANS

The first and foremost of Masaru's concerns is his revolution in the Philippines and what he hopes to accomplish in the aftermath for what he regards as his country. There are many facets to his involvement here, which I will try to set down in as much detail as I can recall.

Second is his apparent desire to increase his standing in dragon society, the workings of which are arcane to me. We often visited his fellow dragons and some of them—mostly other greats—have left me with more questions than answers.

Third, by my observation, he wants to attempt to fill the role that Dunkelzahn left vacant—that of an accessible, media-





visible member of his race. You will have noticed his increased media presence by this time. What is not entirely clear to me, though I have some ideas, is why he wishes to play this part.

Finally, Masaru has recently developed an interest in learning what he calls "metahuman magic." Apparently dragons wield magic in an entirely different way from metahumans, and though he also wishes to expand his knowledge in this area, he finds our traditions fascinating. He is particularly taken with traditions centered around religion as well as the cultures that sprang up around the Pacific Rim.

THE PHILIPPINES

I know of no one who isn't aware of Masaru's position with the Huk and his desire to see the Philippines under its own democratic government versus Imperial Japanese rule. Even so, the dragon has been playing more discreetly lately in an effort to win more support for his cause while redoubling his efforts. Corporations, fellow dragons and even the new Japanese Emperor have given him private audiences.

- If that's discreet, I'd be interested to know what would constitute a neon sign.
- Jaxon
- In comparison to ranting on the trideo, as some revolutionaries and terrorists are prone to doing, it's actually more discreet than you know. If you think you could get a straightforward answer out of a dragon, particularly about another dragon's affairs, then you're more of an idiot than I originally took you for.
- Aunt Acid
- The occasional trideo appearance hasn't hurt, either. The more he's given a spotlight, the more sympathetic others can grow towards "the Philippine situation." Any footage that might damage the image of the Huk and other Filipinos as being downtrodden and fighting for what's right gets carefully shepherded toward a safer airing time.
- Cynic

What sort of government he plans to set in place when the revolution is done draws upon his interest in post-realist (or humanist) philosophy, post-interdependence political theory (better known as globalization) and what went into drafting the 1987 Philippine Constitution (post-Marcos regime). During a meeting I attended between Masaru, Filipa Salonga, Julio Ocampo and the remaining leaders of the Huk, the dragon proposed forming a council-based government, taking what he considers the better ideas from some of the NAN governments. The members of this council, democratically elected by direct vote from the people, would represent different areas or functions of Philippine life: education, labor, the corporate sector, the Awakened and so on. Those elected leaders would then elect a chairman, to oversee the council's activities and facilitate smooth governmental operation.

Ocampo and his cronies balked initially at the inclusion of the corporate sector, but softened their stance when they

learned that corporations wishing to have a say in the government must surrender a percentage of their yearly profits for the government's operational use. The idea, as Masaru explained it, was to encourage true investment in the people of the Philippines. This would in turn encourage the people to invest in companies that participate, thereby increasing the governmental budget.

- Adam Smith and Cleisthenes must be spinning in their graves.
- Keynesian Kid
- With that kind of a setup, I wondered where Masaru's seat was; after all, he has Ghostwalker, Lofwyr and Hestaby as examples. But looking at it again, I'm betting that he, or a representative, will claim or be handed the Awakened seat. The revolution would be dead in the water without him, and you can bet that people won't be allowed to forget it.
- Skeptic

The revolution itself is far from over. The Imperial governor, Fukatsu Saru, and Carlos Consuni, the current puppet president, have been forced to operate the Imperial Japanese side of the Philippine government more or less in exile as the Japanese slowly but steadily lose ground to Philippine opposition. The islands are ostensibly under martial law, but the only ones heeding the rulers' edicts are the Japanese corporations and their citizens. On the islands that the Huk don't control under the banner of the Republika ng Pilipinas, there are pockets of resistance in various cities and villages.

- Their Republika, as it stands, is a strange hodge-podge that changes with shifts in the tides of battle. The only islands that have consistently remained under Huk control are Yomi, Samar, Negros, Panay, Palawan and Jolo. The fighting is fiercest in the Visayans, sometimes turning into bloodbaths with innocents caught in the middle. The slaughter spoken of at the Renraku facility on Leyte in the recent mercenary upload is a prime example: my sources say it was targeted by accident, though the more extremist among them admit they would do it again. Very black and white mentalities; they rationalized that the workers were more concerned about serving the interests of a monolithic corporation than in helping their fellow Filipinos, and so they were enemies.
- Johnny Hotel
- The corporations and the Huk alike have created no-go zones. For example, Subic Bay and nearby Olangapo on Luzon is where MCT and the Imperial government are headquartered. Though Mitsuhamma has the Baguio arcology up north, they also have offices in Olangapo and they still own the naval base (not to mention the air base on the other side of the island). Between them and "civic-minded" Japanese (read: Ichiwa-kai Yakuza), the place is locked up tight.
- Tonkin



- Not quite as tight as you think. If you really want to slip in, you can arrange to be sent in with a smuggler's next shipment of cargo or pay a mercenary group to let you be a temporary member. Business is booming for those job markets, increasing as the Japanese lose ground.

- Tikbalang

- Lucky you don't need to use any of those tactics, Tik-tik.

- Masaru

Masaru requested a private audience with the Boy Emperor to—as the diplomats put it—"discuss the situation," though he had to adjust his plans to account for the events immediately following the passing of Halley's Comet. Nonetheless, his plans are coming together and he would like to see the situation resolved as peacefully as possible. He believes that if the Emperor will agree to turn rulership of the Philippines over to its people, it would eliminate a good percentage of the violence. I am sorry to say that I do not know the outcome, but I am given to understand that the dragon will need to speak with the Emperor again before a decision is made. Knowing your concern for the Tenno Heika, perhaps

next time you will be able to arrange to attend. Yamatetsu's interests in Japan and the Philippines would surely make it difficult to deny you.

On a related note: based on my research, Masaru may, as you suspected, have custody of the Emperor's siblings. If so, I think they may be located on P#3xe0w6! ... though I have no proof. Should that be the case, I have no doubt that the dragon will not hesitate to use them as a bargaining chip with the Emperor.

- Let me guess: someone's corrupted the file? Now who would do that?

- Bung

- That was actually a slip-up on our end. We do apologize for the inconvenience.

- Spirit

- Right. And maybe a big fragging wyrm didn't ask you nicely to tweak things for him?

- Bung



Aside from Yamatetsu, Masaru has made overtures to other members of the Pacific Prosperity Group, mostly in regard to future cleanup efforts and doing business in the Philippines. Wuxing's cooperation is uncertain at this time—vague sentiments were expressed, nothing concrete—but Gaeatronics and the Malaysian Independent Bank have both expressed interest in investing in the Philippines' future as Masaru has proposed thus far. Offers from Shibata Construction and Engineering were also received well; he knows of your involvement with the company, and hopes that his dealings with you and Yamatetsu may grow out of that.

- Something that just came to me—there's an entry in Dunkelzahn's will where he left Mountain King Engineering to MetaErgonomics so that "both may benefit from serendipity." With the extensive cleanup needed in the Philippines and MetaErgonomics already entrenched there, would this be it? Could Dunkelzahn have foreseen this happening and basically told Buttercup to give Masaru a hand?

- TomTom

- What I'm more curious about is how Masaru's plans may change now that some of them have been exposed.

- Naginata

- If you really think they have been. I have a hard time believing that anyone, much less a dragon, would tell the full story. Were I Masaru, I'd be feeding everyone as many stories as they'd swallow at once.

- Ley Lo

Masaru has not confined his corporate dealings to the Pacific Rim; you will be interested to know that during my time with him, we have visited with Cross Applied Technologies, Ares Macrotechnology and Novatech. He believes Cross and Ares will be easy enough to attract to the Philippines, given their ongoing competition. Novatech he is less sure of, but the megacorporation's rocky start has led him to believe that Richard Villiers will want to expand and consolidate what holdings he has. The Philippines represents a potentially lucrative gateway to the East and areas south other than Hong Kong or Vladivostok.

- Ongoing competition? That's a mild way of putting it. Marta may not want to say it outright, but as soon as Cross learns that Masaru's courting Ares beyond getting more weaponry for his pocket revolutionaries, they'll be wanting to play in the dragon's backyard too.

- Hangfire

- That's a slick little deal the dragon's offering. "Come help me out, and you can set up shop here as soon as I have the place sewn up." If it weren't for the Corporate Court, they'd probably be heading there in droves to kick out Shiawase, Mitsuhamu and the other Japanacorps.

- Nuyen Nick

- What's to say they haven't been? I've seen more mercenaries around here lately, along with plenty of folks that feel corp through and through. All they're lacking is uniforms. The best thing about it is that they're totally deniable, so Masaru and the corps involved can claim innocence should someone ever find out for sure who employs these jokers.

- Fury

- Masaru is betraying us! All we will end up doing is exchanging one form of imperialism for another.

- Kalapaw

- And you can clean and fix up the islands all by yourself? If you have the money and equipment, where have you been hiding while the rest of us have been trying to set things right? Don't talk to me about betrayal until you've been in the trenches working toward a self-governing Philippines.

- Salonga

Lung is another resource that Masaru has cautiously contemplated tapping. I was honored to accompany him to a meeting with the Chinese great dragon not long after the Chinese New Year; we were graciously welcomed. Though Lung seems primarily interested in quashing the squabbling Chinese provinces that surround his lair in T'ai Shan, he did hint that he and Masaru may have a common cause. I would be a poor agent indeed if I did not realize that he spoke of the great dragon Ryumyo. Clearly, Lung can offer Masaru quite a bit, but I remain doubtful as to how useful Masaru is to Lung.

- Hong Kong and Macao, places where Masaru (or his agents) can hire mercenaries, invest money, cultivate underworld connections and hire smugglers, are both considered to be in Lung's territory. Masaru may be finding it a little easier there to track down the people and things he needs while he's deciding if he wants to be Lung's best friend or not.

- China Doll

DRAGON SOCIAL CLIMBING

Though what I know of the great dragons and their society comes from you and Masaru, I still feel that I do not see the full picture. The inner workings of dragon society are complex and daunting, so what follows are my guesses, based on what I have observed.

At this point in time, Masaru is well aware that he is the youngest of the greats, having achieved that status approximately twenty years ago by his count. That means he has something to prove. His attitude doesn't always bear this out—he does not turn giddy when older greats wish to speak with him, for example. But I have seen more than a touch of grave sincerity in nearly all of his interactions, which indicates a healthy respect for his elders.

Of the great dragons, Masaru has demonstrated a particularly high regard for Hestaby and Ghostwalker. I would place Celedyr among their number as well, but he has only been mentioned once (and I will explain why further on). Lung he



considers a possible ally, but is wary of putting himself too deeply in the Chinese dragon's debt. He seems neutral toward all the rest, except perhaps Ryumyo and Lofwyr.

Were Masaru human, I would say he had a crush on Hestaby. I gather something happened recently that set the great dragons astir and possibly against each other—Masaru referred to it distractedly once as a contest, in which he had both gained and lost—and she had acquitted herself well. He refused to say what exactly she did, but has since spoken of her more highly than the others.

- There's gotta be more going on here. Hestaby's and Masaru's projects and agendas are right up the same alley. They clearly should be allies, but they seem to have little interaction—which makes me mighty suspicious.
- Grid Reaper

Aside from that, he has initiated several discussions with her, all of them centered around Tir Tairngire. Portland received the most attention, as he wishes her to try to use her influence, such as it is, with the Council of Princes to open up that city further for trade. He is thinking in the long term, looking to the day when the Philippines are more stable than they are now, and sees Tir Tairngire as a prospect for growth other than Seattle.

- Seattle, Portland, Hong Kong, Macao, Vladivostok ... all port cities. Any special significance to that?
- GnuB
- Other than the fact that you're simple? Masaru is from the Philippines. His home is in the Pacific Ocean, on the Pacific Rim. Of course he's interested in port cities.
- Bay Jewel

Ghostwalker is not quite a role model, but Masaru has shown a great deal of interest when speaking of the white dragon. He seems to view Ghostwalker as a potential ally, but is hesitant to make any overtures. There's something about Ghostwalker that Masaru is wary of—what I'm not sure.

- He's probably taking notes on Ghostwalker's rulership style for when it comes time to have his own little fief in the Philippines. Oh wait, it's going to be a democratic country.
- Skeptic
- His admiration for Ghostwalker didn't stop Masaru from stealing from him. A huge fragging pearl used to be in the possession of the ugly no-name dwarf who works for Ghostwalker, and I know the fella who hired us to get it wasn't from Denver. The furthest we could trace our Johnson was Vancouver Island.
- Quinn

Celedyr is a special case. Last year, he gained custody of Masaru's egg, or "flesh of my flesh," as Masaru put it. I expected him to be upset about this, since I have seen parents turn weepy when forced to part with their children, but instead the

very idea elated him. He would not speak more about this when pressed, and has not mentioned it since. These two dragons share a fascination with metahuman inventions, so the egg is going to a good home.

- I wonder ... this has to be the same egg stolen from him back in '57. Masaru nearly went Godzilla on downtown Seattle; I saw the battle, but didn't know the whys of it until I asked a few connected friends. He's had "differences" ever since with the Shotozumi-rengo, who were supposedly involved in the theft.
- Brick

Other than what I have already said about Lung, Masaru hopes to learn from him. Masaru spoke more than once of Lung's mastery of the secrets of "dragon energy," and he clearly hopes that Lung will impart some of this wisdom.

Masaru's rivalry with Ryumyo stems primarily from Ryumyo's activities in the Philippines; between the Imperial Japanese government and the Shotozumi-rengo Yakuza in Seattle, he has enough fodder for irritation, if not full-blown dislike. Apart from that, it seems their personalities clash. Masaru sees Ryumyo as pushy and overbearing, treading where he has no right. Underneath his surface sentiments, however, I have sensed a modicum of respect and a desire to learn more from his Japanese cousin.

- Which makes him the prime suspect for the disappearance of the Utsuro Sapphire. It belonged to the Okitsu family, who are known in certain Japanese circles for having discreet ties to Ryumyo.
- Maneki Neko
- Masaru's demonstrated that he definitely doesn't dislike all Yakuza, whether they're connected to Ryumyo or not. My friends in the Kawaru-gumi here in Vladivostok claim to have met with a Filipino businessman. He gave them gifts, inquired into their health and families, and even invited them to visit his home. Make of that what you will.
- Oni

Lofwyr is another special case, which should come as no surprise considering the sheer status the golden wyrm wields even in metahuman society. If Masaru behaves cautiously toward Lung, whom he views as a potential ally, his actions toward Lofwyr verge upon none at all. He recognizes that he has much more to lose than gain, even were he to cultivate the other great dragon as merely a friend. This viewpoint has recently softened somewhat; I can only guess the change has something to do with Hestaby, the contest and Lofwyr's leaving the Council of Princes in Tir Tairngire.

- I wonder why she doesn't mention the dust-up in Australia?
- Black Knight
- If you're referring to Saeder-Krupp's Awakened World Research snatching from underneath Masaru's feet the proper-



ty he had all set to buy here in Darwin, it could be just a matter of pride. The kid reached out to get something for himself, and got his hand smacked. Hasn't stopped the Philippine wizworm, though; he's got another bit he's about to close a deal on. Hearsay goes he wants to go trekking beyond the black stump.

- Ranger
- That so? Could be he's looking to have a chat with Tjurjunga and his like. Good luck to him, I say.
- Glaive

INCREASING HIS MEDIA PRESENCE

Masaru has interests beyond the Philippines, though his home's plight is first among many. Some you will have heard about, because he is determined to draw attention to them through the media. Whether he knew Dunkelzahn's true agenda or not—whatever it may have been—he sees himself as picking up where the other dragon left off, and looks for opportunities to speak with press and trideo reporters. Aside from private meetings, nearly everywhere we went we were greeted by mobs of media personnel (by "we" I mean Masaru, myself, Ms. Crosbie, Mr. Kilayko and a small entourage of secretaries, gofers and bodyguards).

- I'll say. When he came back to Vancouver Island to speak at an eco-conference between Sierra, Inc., the World Wildlife Fund and other politically-minded eco-groups, there were so many reporters yelling for his attention and cameras clicking, humming and flashing that I thought I'd landed in some mechanical bug hive.

- Dvixen
- This is where his savvy shines through; everyone was as curious as cats about Summer Crosbie and how she'd fared after her run-in with Ghostwalker, and what Masaru had to do with that. Ms. Crosbie became an instant media darling, much like Holly Brighton after her first interview with Dunkelzahn. Her connections with KSAF and other news agencies virtually assure Masaru of always being able to dig up someone with a camera and a load of questions.
- Holly, Wood & Vine
- Rumor has it that Masaru even wants to revive "Wyrms Talk" with Terri Ann Riberio at the helm. If so, it may take quite a few negotiations, as the Filipino wyrm isn't as well known as Dunkelzahn was. Terri Ann may also be hesitant to let her show simply become a vehicle for Masaru's political agendas, as much as she'd love to cater to rabid dragon-fans everywhere.
- Media Watcher

- Hey, the more the merrier, chummer!
- Mooch
- If you ask me, Masaru's media strategy is tied carefully to Hestaby's. Both dragons are trying to make their names into

household terms as friends of metahumanity. Masaru's taking the direct and accessible approach, like a good public figure, while Hestaby's playing hard-to-get, like a sim-star. They're working their own angles, but they're covering a lot of ground and even playing off each other in the screamsheets and newsblips.

- Digger
- Are you sure they're cooperating and not competing? Maybe they don't want to share the spotlight as the Dragon Darling, Heir to Dunkelzahn.
- Cecil

- Increased publicity means increased susceptibility. The bigger their reputation, the harder it will crash around them when some scandal gets invoked by a rival.
- Weatherman

- And you think that a great dragon like Masaru doesn't have a damage control team standing by?
- Grid Reaper

- Masaru has stated his intent to join some event in Europe called the Grand Tour. I don't know how receptive to him the bigshots are, to begin with; think they'd welcome a herd of paparazzi tagging along as well?
- Social Adept

METAHUMANITY AND MAGIC

For as long as I have known Masaru, which is admittedly not a very long time when considering how old he must be, he has appeared sincerely intrigued by metahumans and how we think. In addition to a massive store of datafiles, he maintains an old-fashioned library of actual books on various aspects of metahuman philosophy, logic, religion, etiquette and more.

Of particular interest to him, however, is the way we view magic, both as practitioners and observers. Of late, his focus has been shifting toward magical paths that are religion- or culturally-based. He has sought out Sylvestrines in the Philippines (the Catholic order that practices and advocates magic as a gift from God), wujen in Hong Kong, Shinto miiko around Japan, *houngans* in Seattle from New Orleans, *koradji* in Australia and scores of others. He has heard of the Unified Magic Theory put forth by Prague scholars but is not a proponent of it, believing that there is a fundamental difference between the way dragons and metahumans perform feats of magic. "Dragons," as he said once, "are innately magic, and so our learning process is about self-control and self-discovery. Metahumans are not. Even those born with the ability need constructs through which they can understand and wield this force that has defied the most learned of your scholars."

He also believes that these constructs have, on occasion, allowed metahumanity to tap into aspects of magic and the spirit world that are usually closed to dragons, though now and again his kind have found ways around this. By attempting to understand these modes of thought, he hopes to gain an approach to magic unique from that of the renowned



dragon scholar Schwartzkopf, with whom he has developed an academic rivalry.

- This puts his forays into Australia in a slightly different light, particularly if he's interested in the use of mana lines like Lung and Ryumyo. The koradji (and Australian dragons, I'd bet) are adept at sensing song lines in a different manner than wujen, so he could easily be curious about precisely how they differ.
- Bespectacle

HIS PERSONALITY

My Lady, if I have been doing my job adequately, then this section of my report should be extraneous. Nevertheless, as you ask I shall deliver. What I know of Masaru shall be laid bare: his hopes, his fears, his dreams, his quirks, his dislikes and what he is capable of. With this knowledge, you should be able to make an informed decision as to his usefulness for your plans.

CHAMPION OF THE DOWNTRODDEN

Masaru sees himself as not only the savior of his people, but as an uplifter of souls elsewhere as well. He is an idealist and visionary, though not artless or naïve; despite his affinity for humanist philosophy, he has centuries' worth of knowledge and experience as a dragon to draw on. Where he sees an imbalance, he seeks to correct it out of his own sense of fairness.

- I wonder if this was on Marta's mind when Masaru had her kidnapped. If so, then maybe it served as a terrible lesson that even the most idealistic dragon has a streak of ruthlessness a mile wide.
- Dragonslayer
- You are so sure he's behind it that other possibilities haven't even occurred to you, have they? There are many other potential suspects at this point—Summer Crosbie, MCT's pet Yakuza in the Philippines, Lung and others—but someone has done a phenomenal job at misdirection. You, sir, are a discredit to your kind.
- Cerberus

MINIMIZE BLOODSHED

Even as he seeks to liberate the Philippines from Imperial Japanese rule, he fears that the revolution will devolve into butchery or that the Huk will disintegrate, torn apart by factional infighting. He has condemned the hysterical reports from the besieged Imperial government and megacorps that categorize all Filipinos as terrorists or that liken Huk freedom fighters to bloody-minded mobs.

- Masaru's claims haven't quashed the stories being spread through Japanese communities about the alleged horrible atrocities that Huk rebels are committing against prisoners, Japanese people and corporate citizens. If you were to buy the stories, you'd think the Huk were bloodcrazed rapists and demons. So that makes it okay to gun down random Filipinos if they do anything "suspicious" or "threatening." Nice spin job.
- CrimeThink

Masaru has also kept in near-constant contact with the leaders of the various factions and wings of the Huk, reminding them of their true goal and asking for updates. He goes out of his way to resolve disputes and factionalism before they explode into major rivalries. The last thing he wants to see is for Filipinos to spill each other's blood.

- Which may not do any good if someone in one of those factions decides they can do a better job than the current leader. All it takes is one charismatic individual who sees his target audience every day to upset the apple cart.
- Socio Pat

ADVOCACY

Taking his cue from Dunkelzahn, or perhaps from the tales regarding the relationship between Eastern dragons and humanity, Masaru looks forward to the day when dragons and metahumans may have a closer relationship than they do now. Much as the UCAS New Century political party advocates blending the best of technology and magic to benefit metahumanity's future, so Masaru believes that dragons and metahumans have much to offer each other.

I understand that most of the other great dragons consider Masaru's vision to be idealistic at best, foolish at worst. They seem to think that dragons are better off keeping some distance, though they obviously have no qualms with interfering in metahuman affairs. But Masaru fully advocates the integration of dragons into metahuman society. Though he himself has not done so (he argues there is too much that requires discretion still be done), he has convinced the adult dragon Marcupo to take on such a lifestyle. A resident of Cebu City, Marcupo was already familiar with metahuman affairs and has seamlessly integrated himself into a Huk-favoring community there.

- No drek. This Marcupo character actually works a job, cooks dinner for an extended "family" and even babysits the kiddies. He spends most of his time in human form, except when he needs to give someone an airlift or when the kiddies want a "dragon-back ride."
- Wyrn Watcher
- I don't buy it. Dragons have seen and always will see us as nothing but pawns for their own little games of one-upmanship.
- Blackwing

ETIQUETTE

No matter the situation Masaru finds himself in, he has continually astonished and delighted others with his knowledge of their customs, language and idiosyncrasies. He insists on acting, dressing, drinking and speaking in a proper fashion for each circumstance, behavior that has won him friends and admirers in even the most difficult conditions. I have begun to think that perhaps there may be more to this than simply being an exceptional student of social customs. Masaru's magnetic personality and force of presence can be hard to separate from the instinctive adulation that his kind garners, an ability that serves him well in his desire to fill the late Dunkelzahn's shoes.



SERVANTS AND AGENTS

I am sorry to say that my list of these is not as complete as I would like, but the following organizations and individuals comprise the bulk of Masaru's network of agents and the occasional servant (for lack of a better term, as servitude is not something Masaru generally encourages). They are fairly widespread and diverse, and some have their own networks of contacts.

HUKBO NG BAYAN LABAN SA HAPON

The Huk are inextricably linked with Masaru, at this point, which has worked both for and against him. They have a mixed reputation outside of the Philippines and Japan; some sympa-

thize with their cause; others, hearing horror stories, believe they are no better than terrorists. In truth, though Masaru is aware of a majority of the Huk's membership, even he does not know every individual or sanction every raid.

- And this is supposed to reassure?
- Water Nymph

Masaru cannot conceivably control the Huk, with its broad-base and widely varying factions; he can only offer leadership, influence a few specific groups and leaders, and sink his tendrils throughout the group's membership. Just as he provides the Huk with direction, support and advice, the Huk also provides for Masaru. While raiding, smuggling and sowing chaos on land or sea, they take whatever they can that isn't nailed down. They know that even if they do not have a use for it, Masaru will. A surprising amount of weapons, research, antiques and any other oddity that comes their way have somehow ended up in the dragon's talons. It is also understood that various cells function as his eyes and ears in his native land. Some have also served as guardians for his lair on the island of Panay.

- Which has probably been moved now.
- Tikbalang

- Yes and no. He keeps a home for his natural form on Panay, which means he makes use of the various caves and tunnels in the mountains near Iloilo, Capiz and Antique. Even if you knew precisely which cave he's using this week, you might not find it again without a good guide. Or you might find he's no longer there, having moved to another cave. The Visayas are Masaru's home, and we intend to keep it that way.
- Arimaonga

Huk members range as far as parts of Indonesia, China and Korea; through them, Masaru keeps abreast of others' movements. They tend to know various pirates and smugglers, having worked with them in the past or even currently. So if Shiawase hires mercenaries in Macao, he knows. If Renraku is sending a shipment to its Underwater Living facility from Kuala Lumpur, he knows. Now and then things slip by—the Yakuza tend to use their own networks, for example, much more often than they use outside help like smugglers—but the Huk generally serve him well in uncovering information.



- One of the best examples of this was the attack on Tev Greenwaldt's mansion on Negros. Tev, the head of Renraku Philippines, was understandably feeling a mite antsy after Yomi, and requisitioned additional guards and security from the nearest Renraku home base: the arcology at Bandar Seri Begawan in Brunei. He might have asked his Ichiwa-kai Yakuza girlfriend Christina Roxas, but apparently she had bigger matters to attend to. Not only did he not receive what he asked for, but he found his place overrun by Filipino men and women wielding the Ultimax guns the Red Samurai would have carried.
- Death Angel

Not every member of the Huk completely agrees with Masaru. The Anti-Corp faction, ever since the meeting with the dragon where he outlined his vision of the Philippines' future government, has been what I would call reluctantly cooperative, at best. They recognize the role that money will play in rebuilding their homes and their livelihoods, but many, like their leader Paolo Montalban, firmly believe that they will be able to raise it without corporate intervention. They have also strongly favored a somewhat more socialist government on the order of Saint-Simonism, despite the practical concerns raised by other factions.

In addition, a small but devout and vocal core of Muslim fundamentalists in the Huk see some of Masaru's more recent activities in a less than favorable light. At this time, they, like the Anti-Corp faction, have shown that they are currently more concerned with regaining control of the Philippines. My rare interactions with them, however, lead me to believe that they will not remain silent, and could even be a detrimental voice in future discussions with corporations, the Tenno Heika and other diplomatic opportunities.

SHADOWRUNNERS

Despite the events that led him to move his primary lair from Vancouver Island back to the Philippines, Masaru harbors a fondness for Vancouver and the Seattle sprawl and likes to visit when he can. He retains strong ties with many of the various people he met and frequently employed in one capacity or another; the most prominent of these are described below.

Walter

Known to me only by this single name, Walter is an especially large troll, generous but shrewd, as befits a fixer working out of Seattle's Ork Underground. He usually concerns himself with the Underground's denizens and favored issues, but also arranges for transportation out of Seattle and finds the occasional job for shadowrunners. He ran the shadows himself until the onset of arthritis—for which he refuses to get treatment—slowed him down.

- Don't mind the traitorous slitch (knew she was too good to be true); I still sling a mean shotgun, if any of youse got a mind to take a poke at me.
- Walter

Green World

These Seattle Green Watch trideo pirates are Masaru's favorite watchdogs when it comes to environmental abuse. Combining the serious with the slapstick, they have a unique and entertaining style when they're not being preachy. No one knows how they get their information, but their actions suggest that they hire shadowrunners if they can't track down what they want to know themselves. Water samples, pictures of dumped hazardous waste and victims of environmental abuse ranging from children to animals have all found their way into Green World's illegally broadcast show.

- Masaru turns to these guys when he wants a report sent to the World Wildlife Fund about the newest dumping techniques or the effects of a particular hazardous material on metahumans. Their leader, Gawaine Marshall, is not afraid to literally get his hands dirty when investigating.
- Silver

Penny Lane and Barry Fields

This duo operates out of Vancouver Island. Barry, a taciturn elf, is a gun runner with a penchant for hunting. Penny is a human hermetic mage who works with local land conservationists. Both are prone to extreme paranoia. Their help enabled Masaru to secure the land not far from the cave system he uses in his natural form, for building his large estate. Lane and Fields are his link to magical resources and weapons, as well as personnel of all stripes.

- Penny also has the most phenomenal—or abysmal, depending on your viewpoint—luck. Her nickname around here is Bad Penny, because she manages to turn up just like one. From what I know about her, her real use to Masaru is probably her unerring sense of timing and instincts about places, people and things. I wouldn't quite call it divination, nor has she checked the astral first in any instances that I can recall. Whatever it is, and despite our jokes to the contrary, it's done nothing but benefit the folks she calls friends.
- Dvixen

Gaspar De Sevilla

A colorful man, Gaspar is a smuggler whom Masaru met in the port city of Tauranga at the Bay of Plenty, New Zealand. Originally from Amazonia, he and his family are Sephardic Jews, whom he claims can trace their lineage all the way back to the banishment of the Jews from Spain by Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492.

- His story gets better every time he tells it. Gaspar is actually a free spirit, albeit an old one. He's also a bit of a trickster. His occasional prank is usually harmless and all in fun, but the moment you get on his drek list, it's no longer about games.
- Kiwi

Gaspar's smuggling operations take him to virtually every port in the Pacific, and he has a story about each one. He will



and has smuggled anyone and anything to a myriad of locales. Lately he's been concentrating on areas south of the Philippines, including Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, New Zealand and Australia.

- Yar, and he's no stranger to piracy, either. I crewed with the bastard, and he's always got some kinda paint thinner he calls alcohol. I've sailed with a few other crews (one of 'em Triad-based), and I wouldn't be surprised at all if the Filipino wizard hired them to do some of his dirty work.

- Krist

- Gaspar's wanted by several corporations (Aztechnology among them) and governments for piracy, smuggling, theft, murder, vandalism and drug possession.

- Legal Beagle

Zhu Mei Li

To be blunt, Mei Li is a prostitute. She works in Hong Kong not far from the business district, and lives out of a houseboat in the harbor.

- What Zhu Mei Li is or isn't actually comes down to cultural differences. Mei Li is an acupuncturist, massage therapist and general professional companion, preferring to use a combination of techniques from East and West. Either Mei Li or Masaru must have been having one over on Marta with the boat thing; she lives in a very nice hotel room just a few blocks from the Wuxing Skytower, not on a houseboat in that smelly harbor. Charming girl, really.

- Michael Sutherland

- A charming girl who owes loyalty to the Red Dragon Triad. They launched her career, and frequently remind her of it.

- Lei Kung

She is also an adept, useful to Masaru for the people she knows and the places she can go both socially and physically. She has yet to miss any of Wuxing's parties, for example, except the one that unveiled the modifications to the top five floors and the Jade Dragon of Wind and Fire. Were it not for that missed opportunity, I believe Mei Li would have been Masaru's primary candidate as translator; they spoke as long and intimate friends over cups of tea.

- Sounds like jealousy to me, since she popped out the word "intimate."

- Brick

- Please. I know for a fact that Masaru's into other dragons, like a certain lady in Denver. Choi-Mu and Masaru, sitting in a tree, k-i-s-s-i-n-g ...

- JFS

- Hotel in Hong Kong? Jealousy? Maybe it was the other way around. Mei Li just became another suspect in Marta's disappearance.

- Conspir-I-See

HIS RESOURCES

Masaru's resources are as diverse as his interests and associates, running the gamut from old to new and from magic to cutting-edge technology. He has given to and taken money from a variety of institutions, from the corporate to the academic, as well as hoarded his share of gold, gems, artifacts, antiques and art. Like most of his kind, he constantly keeps a dragonish eye out for more.

CORPORATE INTERESTS

Most of his corporate investments consist of shares in AA-rated and smaller companies, with occasional support of small divisions in the larger companies. Masaru has attempted to expand recently, hoping to lure some other members of the Big Ten to the Philippines. The following corporations are among those to which he has paid more attention lately.

Ares

Masaru's influence in Ares lies with Arthur Vogel—a man not to be taken lightly, despite his being the dragon's only apparent source of leverage. The actual connection between them remains somewhat sketchy, but I think Masaru may have been one of Vogel's financial backers when Vogel raised the money to buy Aurelius' shares, perhaps in partnership with Hestaby. Regardless, dragon and dwarf have a mutual interest in Sierra, Inc., and the dragon may try to bring up that link in any future negotiations to bring the megacorp to the Philippines.

- Hestaby's involvement is a red herring. You're better off looking elsewhere in northern California.

- Eyebright

Lami Look Pagkaon

Though smaller than AA-rated Yakashima Corporation, this A-rated company nevertheless continues to rebuff every effort Yakashima has made to buy it out, relying on the Pacific Prosperity Group and Masaru's money. The dragon has made a concerted effort each time to ensure that Pagkaon remains independent of the Japanacorps, so that at least one company in the Philippines will be 100 percent receptive to Filipino employees. The possibility of earning some credit from Dunkelzahn's will is also a worthwhile prize.

- And which entry would this be referring to? As if there weren't enough.

- Bung

- Growing cactus on the sea floor. The other half requires growing wheat in low earth orbit, which they don't have the



resources to do. Several corporations in the PPG, however, do have those resources—notably Yamatetsu. I wonder what price tag they'd present to Masaru and if 20 million nuyen is an attractive enough goal.

- Grid Reaper

Pacific Rim Computer Consultants

Masaru may have known that eventually he wanted Novatech operating in the Philippines. Or perhaps he'd simply been looking for a solid company to invest in. Regardless, Masaru's shares in this fairly important Novatech subsidiary will make it easier to hook Richard Villiers into coming to the Philippines rather than jumping straight to other financial hubs in Asia and other parts of the Pacific Rim.

INSTITUTIONS

Not quite charities but not quite corporations, either, these entities nevertheless share in Masaru's money and influence, and in return have supplied him with less tangible assets that he deems as important as wealth or power.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

When the megacorporations were rebuilding New York, they devoted less attention to the Met than to more immediately useful places. As long ago as the 2040's, it showed. Masaru is not the sole patron contributing to the museum's full restoration—a respectable roster of wealthy individuals and shell companies comprises its entire patronage—but he has been one of its most proactive members. Charity dinners, auctions and more have served to haul the Met back to its rightful place in cultured society, and the dragon has exploited every event as an opportunity to meet with the right people.

- I don't think I have to mention just who the right people might be. Nearly any name you can think of has attended one of these events at one time or another.

- Social Adept

- Kilayko recently became Masaru's social liaison in this area, parceling out the wyrm's time and influence as it's given. So far, the New York glitterati have embraced him, but time will tell if this is a genuine welcome or simply reaction to a novelty.

- Stalker

The New Library of Alexandria

Egypt lies outside Masaru's usual realm, but he visits now and again, particularly to look in on the progress of the new Alexandrian Library. His visits are brief, sporadic and in heavy disguise to avoid arousing anti-dragon sentiments (Masaru keeps an acceptable representative in the country to keep abreast of developments). Like others participating in and funding the library project, Masaru wants to see this once-legendary institution reborn in the modern world. Even though the potential contents of this library can be found in the Matrix, the goal is to house paper-and-ink books. Such is Masaru's enthusiasm that he has donated several of his favorite tomes from his London lair.

- Their goal is fairly daunting. Even the Vatican or the UCAS Library of Congress could find itself dwarfed by the sheer volume of books to be stored here. There's a rumor that the Atlantean Foundation is another heavy backer, and that they want to build on the site of the old library.

- Bibliophile

- This is actually the second attempt at rebuilding. The first attempt, which began in 1991, sputtered to a stop shortly before they were due to start laying the foundation. It's not precisely where the original library stood, but it's close enough. Lofwyr and Saeder-Krupp are supposedly also funneling money into the Library, but if so, the big wyrm has been very quiet about it.

- Black Knight

- "Quiet" meaning "not happening." Or were you not paying attention when the muffs said no dragons? On the other hand, Masaru's ability to visit now and then, even in disguise, speaks of inside help. The going theory says Aden is involved.

- Kephalos

World Wildlife Fund

Masaru doesn't fund this charity so much as manage its money, which entitles him to all kinds of privileges within the organization and even a few outside it. Even if the rest of his interests didn't allow him to go jetsetting, this one would. The WWF goes almost everywhere, investigating environmental abuse, setting up programs to protect endangered species (plant and animal), and promoting proactive plans for encouraging conservation, among other things.

- "Proactive plans," indeed. Masaru isn't just a Filipino terrorist, he's an eco-terrorist too. Some of the folks involved with these plans work hand-in-glove with organizations like TerraFirst! and GreenWar, usually creating more chaos in their wake than the companies and individuals they target.

- Conservative

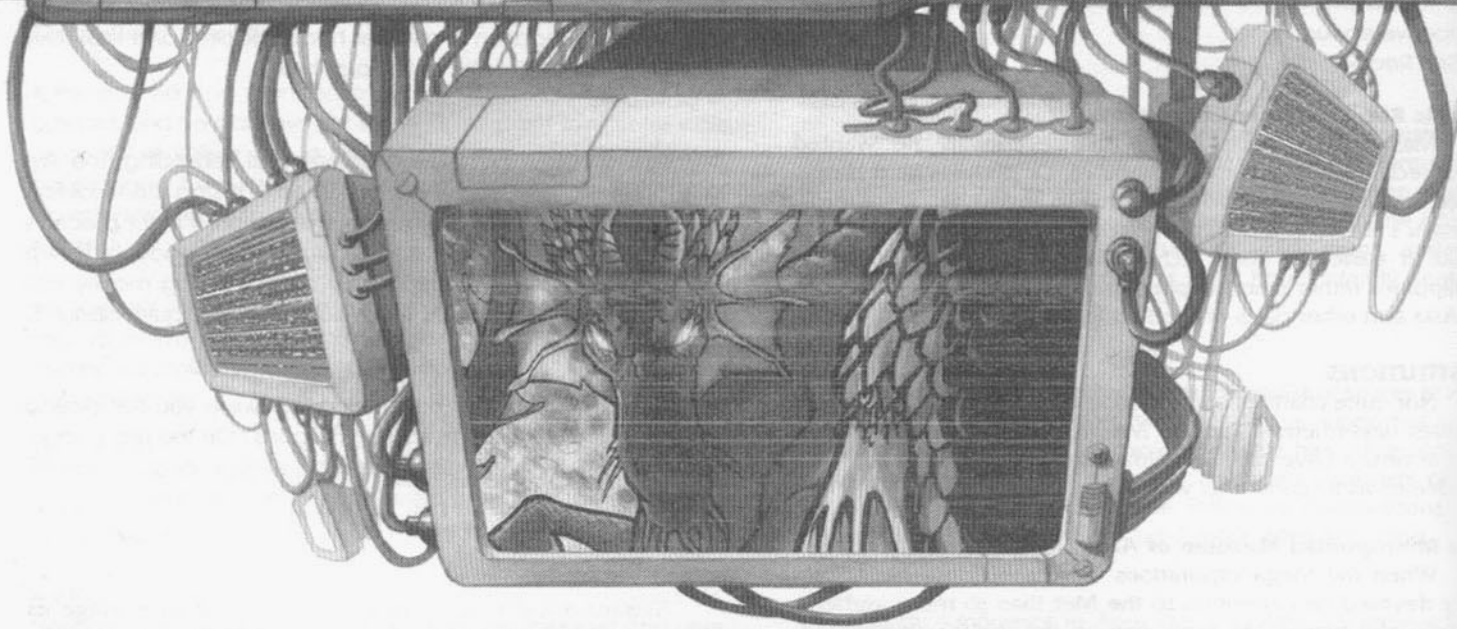
- You're out of the loop. The WWF has actually worked against some of the very groups you mention, which is the true cause of the chaos you've seen. When two entities share the same goal but don't coordinate their efforts, frequently all they do is bump heads.

- Deep Green

- Some of the Japanese corps, like Shiawase and Mitsuhama, have also contracted out jobs to sabotage Masaru's projects while gathering intelligence on the dragon. They don't dare oppose him directly, for a myriad of reasons, so these tend to be small jobs. If it weren't for loyalty to an old friend, I'd cash in on the ridiculous sums of money they're paying for snooping.

- Tikbalang

RHONABWY AND THE SEA DRAGON



We're going to depart a little from the format and present two dragons together in this section. Those of you who have been paying attention to the activities of dragonkind will understand why—Rhonabwy and the so-called "Sea Dragon" have been linked by legend and rumor since before the Awakening. Up until recently, nobody was even sure if the Sea Dragon really existed. Well, events of late have cast a bit more light on the situation, so I've asked Rhys, an old friend from Wales, to give us the scoop on Rhonabwy.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 16 February 2063 at 11:22:01 (PST)

RHONABWY: DDRAIG GOCH

by Rhys

With the possible exception of Amazonia, Wales has the largest concentration of dragons of any country on Earth. Do we have so many dragons because our land is so rich with their legends, or do the legends stem from half-forgotten racial memories of the dragons' existence in some bygone age? Either way, between Celedyr, Rhonabwy and the mysterious Sea Dragon, not to mention a horde (flock? herd? cabal? murder?) of younger dragons, there is little doubt in anyone's mind the Welsh lands are particularly favored by dragonkind. Even the design of our flag and our national motto, "Y Ddraig Goch Ddyry Chchwyn" ("The red dragon leads the way") reflect our long association with the wyrms.

I suppose you could say I have a personal interest in Rhonabwy—you see, the two of us arrived on the scene on the same day: February 22, 2012. My family was living in Llandeilo then, a few kilometers outside Caerfyrddin where my father worked. Even decades later, he still tells the story of the day the dragon burst free of his underground lair outside the city and rampaged like a mad, rabid beast, destroying everything in his path. Over 150 people lost their lives that day. I've seen videotaped news accounts of the event but my father says they cannot compare to being there—the ground shaking beneath your feet, the crazed, piercing roars of the scarlet dragon, the stench of burning flesh. All anyone could do was pray for the horror to end.

The aftermath provided an almost equivalent shock—a few days following the outburst, the dragon issued a formal apology. Yes. Your eyes do not deceive you. A formal apology from a dragon. He introduced himself as Rhonabwy and attributed his behavior to "post-



RHONABWY

Great Western Dragon

Sex: Male

Coloring: Scarlet with green eyes

Metahuman Form(s): None known

Primary Lair: Llandoverly, Wales, UK

Translator: None known

Timeline

February 22, 2012: Rhonabwy breaks out of an underground cavern beneath Caerfyrddin (Carmarthen), Wales, destroying a significant part of the town and killing 150 people. He later apologizes, attributing his rampage to "post-hibernation trauma," and finances much of the town's rebuilding.

February 27, 2012: Rhonabwy relocates to Llandoverly, Wales, giving the locals an ultimatum: sell their property for double its value and vacate or suffer the consequences. In the subsequent months he takes over the town and begins burrowing deep underground.

August, 2057: Dunkelzahn bequeaths the Silver Songbird to Rhonabwy.

hibernation trauma," then proceeded to provide significant funds to rebuild the town's ruined areas.

- Thanks to the undefined legal status of dragons, the authorities couldn't really prosecute Rhonabwy for mass murder, and the Animal Control Department didn't exactly have the resources to put him to sleep either. So when Rhonabwy settled with the various victims' families out of court for large, undisclosed sums, the matter was pretty much dropped. But there are a few families that still hold a grudge ... and are looking for a way to score revenge.

- Dragonslayer

At the time, everyone thought the wyrm was going to remain in Caerfyrddin, but the surprises were not over yet. Only a short time later, Rhonabwy relocated to Llandoverly and issued an ultimatum: sell your property and move on or suffer the consequences. Before long the town belonged to the dragon, who set about burrowing underground to create himself a vast lair. He remains there to this day.

- That's odd, isn't it? Why would he emerge in one place, then go to all the trouble of moving a week later?

- Fletcher

- Nobody's sure, but I've heard rumors of some significant veins of gold and other precious minerals under Llandoverly. Maybe he needed some more startup capital.

- Tenshi

In the years since his arrival—once things settled down, at least—Rhonabwy has proven himself to be a surprisingly good neighbor. He is rarely seen, and the farmers and other residents who live on the fringes of his territory have actually grown to appreciate his presence—as long as they stay off his land, they enjoy the protection of the nature spirits and paranormal creatures patrolling the area.

- This is true. The Big R might keep some pretty exotic beasts around his lair, but the ones prowling around outside his land are every bit as dangerous, especially to small farmers who raise livestock.

- Adny

- I heard somebody (my money's on Celedyr) hired a team recently to break into his lair as part of some kind of challenge and steal the Silver Songbird that Dunkelzahn left him—from the story I got, they had a slitch of a time dealing with his pets. Everything from shapeshifters to naga to some kind of weird critter that changed from a dog to a cat to a crow.

- Hangfire

- They're not the worst though. A piece of advice: if you're ever in Rhonabwy's neighborhood and you run across a pretty elf lady named Branwen, behave yourself.

- Firelight

PLAYING THE MARKET

It's taken a bit more research to get the skinny on what Rhonabwy has been up to over the past fifty years, but as I said before, he's a hobby of mine, so I've cultivated a few sources able to provide solid information. Apparently, the wyrm is devoting both his time and his resources to a couple of entities. It's not well known because he likes to keep a low profile, but Rhonabwy is a corporate power player only a couple of steps below Lofwyr. He keeps this under wraps and off the business pages because, unlike Lofwyr, who has vast amounts of power centralized in one corp, Rhonabwy prefers to diversify. He's got a stock portfolio that would make the most jaded Wall Street raider drool—though hard numbers are difficult to nail down. Rumors abound he owns 4 percent of Ares and at least 6 percent of Shiawase, in addition to holdings in a whole slew of mid-grade European corporations, ranging from 10 to 15 percent in each. And all this is on top of his early investments in financial corporations, including Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal and several Swiss banking operations.

- This is old news—I heard those numbers years ago. These days it's more like 5 percent of Ares, about 8 percent of Shiawase, and he's branched out into a few other megacorps including Novatech and Yamatetsu. In addition to all those European corps, he's also got money in Azania, CalFree, the Carib League, and a couple of the NANs. And that's just the stuff I was able to track down. This is one wealthy wyrm, kids.

- The Chromed Accountant

- HKB is rumored to be one of the places where he learned his market savvy soon after he Awakened.
- Corp Watcher
- It appears they could use a bit of that themselves these days.
- Script-Diver

ELVEN EQUALIZER

Despite all his corporate activities, though, Rhonabwy's primary focus is elsewhere. For whatever reason (even I, with all my sources, have not been able to figure out his motives), he seems to have a strong aversion to elves in power. It is far too simplistic to say he dislikes elves, especially since he has been known to support some of them—I know, for example, a decent chunk of his money has gone toward supporting the secessionist elves in northern Wales—but there are far too many examples of areas where he has used his resources to destabilize elven-controlled regions for it to be mere coincidence. When dealing with a being whose actions often appear contradictory until well after the fact, a trend like this is too obvious to ignore.

- How about some examples?
- Mook
- I've got a couple: Azania, the Zulu Nation. Both the Swazi bandits on their borders and the Xhosa, their traditional enemies, have received ongoing support from an "unknown source." And in Tir na nOg, he's rumored to be financing a couple of the larger non-elven paramilitary organizations.
- Lynch
- Interesting. I wonder if he had anything to do with the shakeup in Tir Tairngire recently. It can't be very stabilizing to have chunks of your Council of Princes resigning and people disappearing—and that doesn't even bring up Lofwyr's resignation. Rhonabwy's not powerful enough to engineer that, is he?
- Local Yokel
- Rhonabwy's careful not to cross paths with Lofwyr. But power manifests in many different ways, especially when you take the long view of things.
- Orange Queen
- I'd bet a lot of cred that if he's not behind the Rinelle ke'Tesrae movement, he's got his money and his claws in there somewhere.
- Jurian
- Almost certainly. His associate Branwen has visited the Tir numerous times, and she's been spotted more than once in the company of known Rinelle operatives.
- Marker
- She's made at least one side trip to the Shasta area, too.
- Jack B





• If Rhonabwy is playing an elaborate chess game against the elven-controlled factions of the world, why doesn't he get more involved in his own backyard? Yeah, Lynch mentioned he's propping up a few non-elven organizations in Tir na nOg, but that's small potatoes compared to what he could be doing. It's almost like a token effort, especially when compared to some of the operations he's pulled in the rest of the world. What gives?

• Ira

• The way I see it, there are two possible explanations. First, he's only one dragon and he can't do everything, so he's concentrating on areas he can have the most influence. Think about it: Tir na nOg is the largest elven nation on Earth, and they keep to themselves. Maybe he's building up to them after he's messed with a few of the smaller ones. Second, even dragons aren't all-powerful, and the place is right in his backyard. Out of all the elven nations, they're probably in the best position to cause him some trouble right back.

• People Watcher

• I suspect if you checked around the Manchester data haven, you'd find some folks running ops against the Tir who have received unexpected aid from unknown sources.

• Diamond Jack

• Rhys didn't mention it, but Rhonabwy's dislike of elven control doesn't seem to extend to areas run by other metahumans. In fact, he's actually been known to help them out—look at the Grand Duchy of Westrhine-Luxembourg, f'r instance. Those dwarfs were in a bad way a few years ago, and he bailed them out by subsidizing some of their exports.

• Goblin-Boy

• We've paid him back in spades since then, by the way. Don't think any dragon does anything out of the goodness of his heart.

• Adolphe

THE RED DRAGON WILL LEAD THE WAY

I hesitate to mention this because I have nothing but vague rumors to back it up, but these rumors suggest Rhonabwy has picked up a new hobby—politics. If you believe certain individuals (whom I won't name for their safety and mine), the wyrm has started to surreptitiously poke his nose into the affairs of Caerdydd (Cardiff), with an eye toward furthering the cause of Welsh independence from Great Britain. If this rumor is true, Rhonabwy is proceeding with more subtlety than ever—even the rumors have been veiled in secrecy and I have not been able to corroborate them. More than likely, his influence will be felt indirectly (as is his habit), but if he chooses to throw his weight into a more active role, it could be enough to tilt the scales in the direction of a movement that has been gaining more support with each passing year.

• This wouldn't surprise me, especially when you consider that quite a few of the newer Parliament members have been in favor of secession. If Rhonabwy is behind them, that could explain a lot.

• Dafydd

• He's supporting them with more than his money, if what I hear is true. Nobody can prove it, of course, but rumor has it his agents were behind the—how do I put this?—sensitive information that led to the resignation of Peter Llewelyn last month. That was quite a plum coup for the secessionists, since his successor, Ceridwen Morgan, is in their pocket.

• Zeitgeist

• Don't forget about Snowdonia. Rhonabwy and the Countess of Harlech have been rumored to be allies for years.

• Bitter Lemon

• I wonder why he's decided after all these years to get involved. Has something changed?

• Gaz

• Maybe he's been involved all along. Or maybe he felt it was time he took an interest in the way the place was run. Civic pride or something—he is on the flag, after all.

• Cymric

TO SOOTHE THE SAVAGE BEAST

Rhonabwy has another passion, minor in comparison to his other activities, but I'll include it because I think it's an interesting insight into the "soft" side of this enigmatic being. Rhonabwy is a music lover, with a particular enchantment with Welsh choral music. While it isn't publicly known, his wealth certainly backs several of the finer choirs in Wales and the United Kingdom as a whole.

• Supposedly these include the Duvant and Pendyrus male choirs, two of the oldest in Wales. He's also said to enjoy opera (particularly Italian opera) and some of the African capella styles like mbube and iscathamiya. The common denominator seems to be strong beautiful voices. He has a knack for finding talented but struggling musical companies and supporting them handsomely.

• Raoul

• He's also a major contributor to the National Eisteddfod, a sort of annual festival and competition for musicians and other artsy types.

• Cerdd Dant

Further, I have heard he occasionally attends performances in his human form. A less reliable rumor suggests Rhonabwy himself has a magnificent voice and once arranged for a private performance where he joined in as a guest soloist, but I have not been able to corroborate this.

- Not surprised. If he did this at all, he probably arranged for the performers to conveniently forget about how they spent their evening. Probably the only proof is a recording in the Big R's lair.
- Pagliacchi

THE SEA DRAGON

- This next file came to us in a rather roundabout way. It was originally delivered to the Merseysprawl Shadowland node by a chummer named Jolly Roberts, captain of a pirate ship that spends most of its time cruising around the waters off the coast of the United Kingdom. I'll let him tell the rest in his own words—I couldn't do anything to embellish it.
- Captain Chaos
Transmitted: 16 February 2063 at 11:24:48 (PST)

I knew that dwarf was going to be trouble from the moment I laid eyes on him and his two flunkies. I should have turned him down, but the money they were offering was too good to decline. All they wanted us to do was deliver them quietly to a particular spot, drop anchor and cool our heels for a few hours or so while they did some diving, then take them back under cover of darkness. I didn't ask what they were looking for, which was probably my second mistake. But like I said—the money was good, the job looked easy, and in my line of work it's not polite to ask too many questions.

The job was easy, actually. We did what they asked, setting off from the coast of Aberystwyth well after dark and arriving at their chosen location somewhere in the middle of Cardigan Bay around midnight. The dwarf—Edwin Carring was his name—and his chummers gathered up a bunch of gear in bags, got into their diving suits and went over the edge. I was nervous about waiting in one place for too long, but in a few hours they returned as expected and we were underway for the coast.

- Edwin Carring? I've heard that name before, but I can't place where.
- BethSheba
- He's hooked up with the Atlantean Foundation—operates out of Edinburgh if I remember correctly. He's a freelance "procurement specialist."
- Bard

I should have known things never go as planned, though, especially after the little job we pulled last month on Brannagan and his crew. They had been gunning for us ever since, and they picked that night to find us. I don't know if they followed us or just got lucky, but here's the short version: we were fraggin' fortunate to get out of the fight with our hoops and our boat intact. Unfortunately, by the time we drove them off, two of my crew were dead, along with Carring and his two chummers.

It would have ended there except for two things. One, when my guys checked out Carring's gear bag, they found some surprises—loads of intricately crafted jewelry, fancy weapons and other items I'd bet a year's pay they didn't have

THE SEA DRAGON

Great Leviathan
Sex: Female
Coloring: Silver-green with black eyes
Metahuman Form(s): None known
Primary Lair: Cardigan Bay, Wales, UK
Translator: None known

on them when they stepped on board (including a hunk of orichalcum the size of my fist). Two, my decker Yancy did a little snooping on the side and discovered Carring was keeping a journal in his headware. He called me up as we prepared to head back to Aber, saying, "Boss, I think you'd better see this."

I'm sending this file on to Shadowland because frankly I don't know what the hell to do with it myself. Maybe if you post it somebody will be able to make sense of it. I hope so, because I think the waters around here have just gotten a lot more dangerous.

- He isn't kidding. Jolly Roberts's ship went down in the Irish Sea last week with all hands. A freak storm, they say.
- Liam
- Yes, and if you believe that ...
- Claddagh
- The items he referred to disappeared without a trace as well. Whether they ended up in Davy Jones's locker or somewhere else is an open question.
- Diamond Jack

JOURNAL OF EDWIN CARRING
10/24/62, 18:56 GMT

Tomorrow is the day. After biding my time and waiting patiently for far too long, I have at last had a message: she has finally agreed to receive us. Though not inclined toward emotion, I was barely able to conceal my excitement as I responded with my gratitude.

We are instructed to charter discreet transportation to take us to coordinates supplied by her representative. Once there, we are to initiate a dive and wait for further instructions. I am allowed to bring two companions, and I have already chosen Jackson and Korinsky who are both known for their discretion. I have not yet shared with them the purpose of our expedition—trust only goes so far, and I will not leave any potential for information leaks. Not until we return, in any case.

We have secured passage on a ship whose captain's reputation has been vouched for by trusted sources. I suspect it is a pirate ship, but if we take care they will not glean anything about our mission.

10/26/62, 01:23 GMT

We have arrived at the designated location and are preparing for the dive. I pause to record this as I stand on the threshold of an experience shared by only a handful of people on Earth.

10/26/62, 05:47 GMT

We were only a few minutes into our dive, waiting for a sign with our insignificant lights in the pitch-black waters, when they arrived. We could not identify them at first, but as they drew closer we saw to our shock they were merrow! There were five of them; two carried lights and the other three held spearlike weapons. They motioned for us to follow them; we did so, exchanging glances of amazement between us. Though rumors have long persisted regarding the sapience of the merrow race, most scholars have written the rumors off as wishful thinking.

- Not quite; the current pet theory in marine-parazoology circles claims there are actually different subspecies of merrow, some more intelligent than others. It's also been documented that some of them use tools.
- Sagan

By the time it occurred to us that these merrow might not be the sign we were waiting for, we arrived at an underwater cave entrance hidden by an outcropping of rock. The merrow entered and indicated we should follow. After a few meters, the entrance widened and we found ourselves in a large air-filled pocket. One of the merrow reached into a bag it carried and offered us jeweled amulets, miming to put them on. We did so, and moments later consciousness left us.

I awoke in a panic—my companions and I were once again underwater, but our diving gear had been removed! It took us a moment to realize we were breathing normally and that the amulets were probably responsible. We couldn't talk, and had to rely on gestures. We were in another passageway with solid rock at one end. There was only one way to go, so we went.

The narrow passage opened into a vast cavern and suddenly, she was there. We stopped and simply stared—she was magnificent, framed against the bioluminescent plant life that draped the entire cavern. Smaller than the great dragons of the land, her wingless body was long and sinuous, graceful as a dancer in the sea's currents. Her small scales shimmered silver and green and blue, her filmy tail stretched out in a plume behind her like a mermaid. Her eyes, black and liquid and ageless, regarded us as her head swiveled on a long slender neck. "Welcome to my home," her voice spoke in our minds. She spoke her name then and the flowing syllables had the cadence of the deep; I fear I cannot repeat it with my inadequate vocal apparatus nor could I hope to spell it, so I hope she will forgive me for referring to her here simply as the Sea Dragon.

- Wait a minute—the Sea Dragon is nothing but a legend. Supposedly she and Rhonabwy have been at each other's throats for centuries, but she's never even been seen once

since the Awakening. You mean to tell me she's just now getting around to showing up?

- The Kid
- Maybe she didn't have any reason to reveal herself before now.
- Sasha
- Okay, so if that's true, why now? Has she just gotten tired of hanging out with the fishies, or is there some reason why she's making contact after all these years?
- Pollolagarto
- Perhaps she has finally grown tired of the way we metahumans have so callously polluted her domain.
- Deep Green
- Maybe the surface world just didn't interest her before, but the recent dragon political maneuverings have forced her to get involved. Then again, just because this Carrington fellow recently made contact doesn't mean she's been idle over the past few decades. She may have just been subtle and quiet about it.
- Zydeco

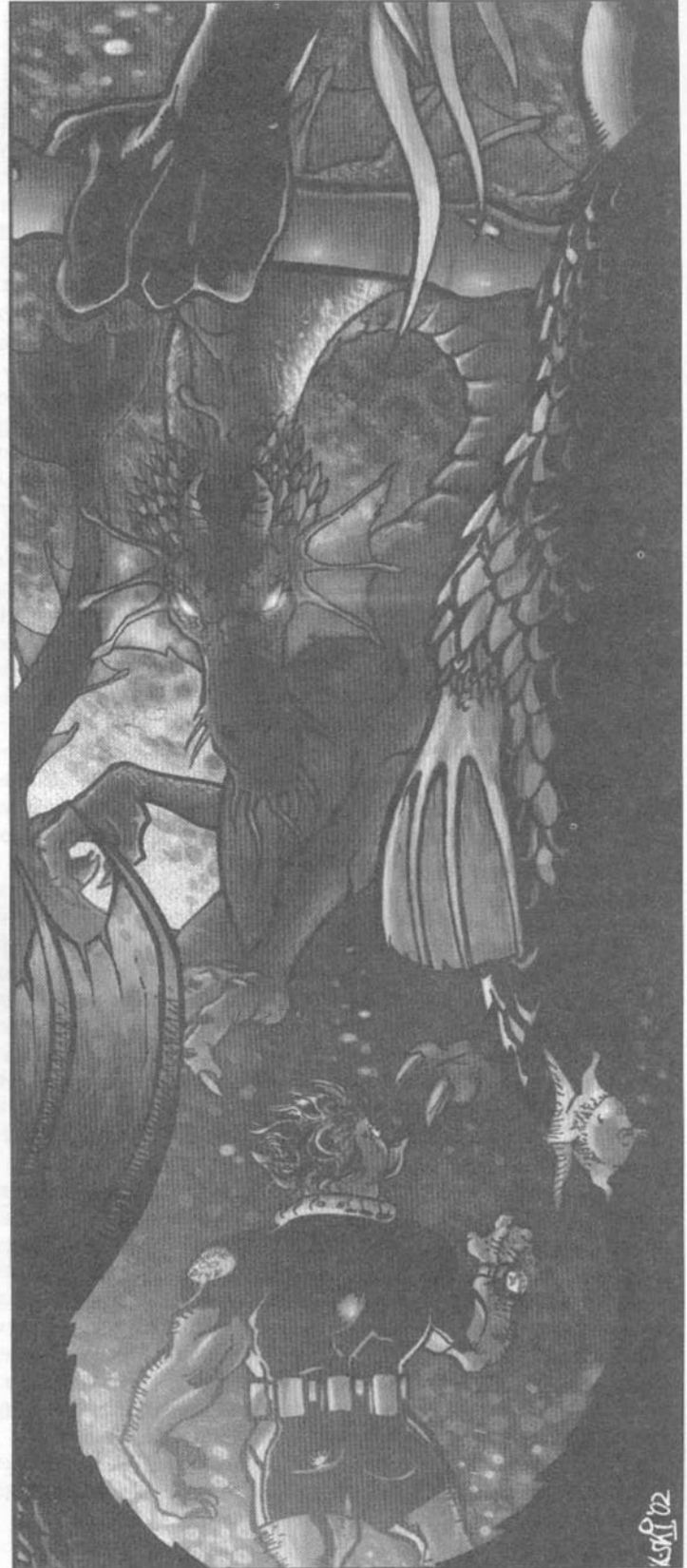
I thanked her for her kindness in receiving us and our honor at being so chosen, but she ignored my attempts at niceties, instead asking if we had done as she had directed. I hastened to update her on what we had accomplished and the intelligence we had gathered—she seemed particularly interested in the *Vulcan* incident and the results of the Helgoland operation. In both cases, her gifts had been used to great success.

- Anybody know what he's talking about?
- Cletus
- Not sure, but somebody hit one of the supply ships serving one of Saeder-Krupp's deep-sea mining operations in the North Sea in mid-'62, destroying some key replacement parts and setting their schedule back at least three months. And "Helgoland" is Proteus's Helgoland Arkoblock, which was attacked by some kind of mutant sea serpent not too long after the first incident.
- Apres Glow

"You have done well," she told us. Without any obvious indication from her, two of the merrow swam toward us carrying a large bag between them. We did not open the bag then, not wishing to risk offense—there would be time enough later to examine the artifacts she had provided in exchange for our service. Instead, we waited for her to continue. It was much different from dealing with her usual emissaries—all of us knew how precarious our position was, and how easily she could withdraw her power from the amulets that allowed us to breathe.

At the beginning, her instructions were the same as before, but she said she was now ready to increase her level of involvement. We were directed to sell the orichalcum she supplied to trusted sources and use the funds to support a list of operations she would supply us. She briefly described what the first few of these operations would entail. As before, I was surprised at her level of knowledge about surface activities. I wondered if there were others such as myself, but again I did not deem it wise to ask.

- She must be richer than Midas if she's got hunks of orichalcum to hand out. Maybe I've been looking in the wrong place.
- Slipstream
- She's got interesting timing—I wonder if her newfound activity level hasn't something to do with the comet last year. If she had an orichalcum vein down there, she and her merrow compatriots could have mined it without any interference from surface-dwellers and made obscene amounts of money before it petered out. Perhaps she's looking for something to do with it all.
- Winterhawk
- Anybody got any idea what these operations she supports are?
- Curious George
- Wouldn't be hard to make a few educated guesses, extrapolating from the two jobs Carrig described. It looks like she's targeting corps with deep-sea interests, particularly ones with less than high environmental standards, like Saeder-Krupp. She probably also supports eco-groups focused on the sea.
- Anthony
- There's a group of Welsh druids who have become more active around environmental issues in the past few years and are particularly protective of the Welsh coastline. They recently "convinced" a certain North Atlantic oil concern not to bring their cargoes anywhere near Welsh shores—they've had enough "accidental spillages," thank you very much. Word is the druids have an unknown patron bankrolling some of their activities ... perhaps a certain hydrophile reptile?
- Deep Green
- If so, maybe she reminded them that stewardship of the earth includes the wet parts too.
- Kelpie
- There are a lot of Green Cells out there with mysterious sources of funding, and more than a few focus on sea-based operations. And I've heard stories that a splinter group of the Klabauterbund is re-forming (without the toxics) after getting a healthy infusion of funds from somewhere.
- Edelweiss



• So what? I know a Dutch corp called Purec Engineering that's been making amazing strides in cleaning up the toxic sludge along the North Sea shore. But just because I don't know where they get their cred doesn't mean some water wrym is backing them. Everything posted so far has been speculation. Let's see some facts. Can anyone explain why the Sea Dragon is working through the Atlanteans?

• Leendert

• This is just hearsay so take it with a grain of salt, but I heard that Carring was poking around the Welsh shoreline about a year back for the Atlanteans when he made a discovery. Nobody seems to know what it was since they hushed it up in a hurry. My theory is they discovered her lair and she cut a deal with them—an organization looking for old magical goodies could do worse than hook up with a dragon. Think about it—she gets eyes, ears, and warm bodies on the surface along with silence about her existence, and the Atlanteans get access to some of the swag from her treasure chest plus whatever knowledge she wants to share with them. I wouldn't screw up a deal like that if I had one.

• Bard

• The question is, how much was this Carring's op? Sure, he had the AF's backing, but did he let the foundation in on the full story? I'd bet that a decent chunk of the AF's leadership wouldn't support making deals with dragons even if it does further their ends. And with Carring gone, is the relationship over, or will the AF continue it? Or will someone else try to horn in on the deal? I'd watch for a shake-up in the ranks, especially since this file's gone public.

• Casper

She moved in closer then, her ageless black eyes meeting mine and mine alone. I could tell from her penetrating stare that my companions were not receiving her message this time, and I was overcome with equal parts fear and pride that she would trust me so. *"Because you have proven yourself an able ally,"* she said, *"I have another job I wish you to perform for me. Do you know of one called Hestaby, the Orange Queen?"* When I assured her I did, she continued, *"I wish for you to find a way to infiltrate her lair, or to seek knowledge of her activities. She may have in her possession something I have great desire to see returned to me, and any who can aid me in its successful return will be rewarded beyond his wildest dreams. Do you understand me?"*

When she saw I was confused by her words, she continued: *"I do not wish to discuss my personal history with you, but I will tell you this: the object you seek knowledge of is a clutch of eggs. These eggs do not belong to Hestaby. They must be returned to me so I might raise them properly and ensure the continuation of my kind. Do you understand?"*

As she spoke in my mind I could hear her voice becoming more agitated—she spoke almost as one who had been seized

by madness. Her final words exploded in my head with such force I felt my brain would come loose from its moorings. I clutched my head and stammered, "I understand, I understand. I understand," over and over till the fury ceased, even though I privately feared that crossing another dragon would certainly result in my death.

She dismissed me, and it was with great trepidation and some relief that my companions and I allowed ourselves to be sedated once again. We awoke in the presence of the merrow escort, who returned to us our diving gear. As we returned to the surface and our waiting ship, I wondered if I would be able to fulfill her request, and if I would live long enough to report my findings if I did.

• And this is exactly why they say never deal with a dragon.

• Dragonslayer

• Okay ... let's try to make sense of this. Somehow the Sea Dragon's eggs ended up in Hestaby's possession? How does that work?

• Burgermeister

• Apparently when dragons mate, they hand off their eggs to great dragons to raise for them. From what I've heard it's very rare for them to raise their own eggs.

• Bobwyr

• So what type is the Sea Dragon? She's not a western—Carring said she was wingless. But if she's Welsh it makes sense that would be her type, wouldn't it?

• Captain Jack

• Some of the old legends speak of "leviathans"—there's even one mentioned in the Bible. People used to think they were giant whales, but what if they were undersea dragons?

• Isaiah

• There must not be many of these out there—I can't recall ever hearing of any sightings, unless the Loch Ness Monster is one of 'em.

• Skein Dhu

• Are you joking? There have been lots of rumors of strange creatures and strange sightings in the oceans since the Awakening—and not just around Cardigan Bay. The ocean's a deep, dark place. Who knows, there might be a drekload of sea dragons—especially if they don't have reason to interact with us surface-dwellers. For all we know, they could have sea dragon cities down in the ocean deeps. I'm relieved to hear that this one is concerned about the eggs and continuing her kind—I'm guessing that means there aren't many.

• Big Blue



• Interesting ... but what I'm more interested in is why Hestaby has these eggs. And where's the daddy dragon? Is he a dead-beat dad?

• D-Ghost

• Wait a second. I've got a really wild-ass theory here and I'm probably full of drek, but bear with me, okay? What if Rhonabwy is the father?

• Cymric

• You are full of drek.

• Bitter Lemon

• No, hang on. He might be on to something. Think about it—there have been legends since Arthurian times of two Welsh dragons locked in eternal conflict: one red and one white. I've never seen dragons mating, but I'd imagine it's possible we puny metahumans might have mistaken it for combat. Or maybe it was a lover's spat. In any case, Rhonabwy's red, and from Carring's description, the Sea Dragon's silver color could be taken for white.

The question remains, though—why does Hestaby have the eggs, and does Rhonabwy care?

• Dragon Watcher

A FAIRY TALE

• Okay, things just got more interesting. The file below showed up at my place today. Yes, you heard me right: my place. Not Shadowland—my home. I don't know where it came from—whatever left it didn't set off any of my security measures, which doesn't make Uncle Cap feel all warm and fuzzy. The file was part of a leather-bound book that looked very old; my visitor had helpfully marked the right page. I almost put it aside for later because I don't read Welsh, but then I caught the word "ddraig."

Given our current topic of discussion, I scanned the file in, ran it through a translator, and cleaned it up. I thought long and hard about posting it, because I don't want to encourage every crank out there to spin a fantastic yarn and send it off to yours truly, but if half the stuff in here is based on truth, it needs to be seen. I'm closing the file itself to comments, but I'm counting on all you chummers out there in Shadowland to pop in at the end. If anybody can prove someone is yanking our chains, I'll take it down.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 1 March 2063 at 10:08:15 (PST)

Once upon a time long ago, there lived a dragon. He was a fine and handsome dragon, scarlet of scale and green of eye, and he lived in a beautiful land full of rolling hills and green fields. His lair was a magnificent cavern set into a vast hillside, and his riches were without compare in all the land. Even with all his wealth, however, what he valued most of all was the

beauty of music. This dragon ventured far and wide in search of more and more beautiful songs, and even commissioned the local people to write music for him. Still, it was not enough. The music was indeed beautiful, but something was missing. For all his searching from one end of the world to the other, the dragon could not find what he sought.

Then one day, as the dragon sat outside his lair and began to despair, a sound reached his ears. It was a song. Quiet at first, it rose until it filled the dragon's entire being with the beauty of its melodies and of the voice that brought it forth. The dragon had never heard anything so beautiful in all his life. Quickly, he left his lair and followed the sound until he reached the seacoast, and there he saw its source.

It was another dragon—a dragon of the sea, with shimmering silver scales and liquid seal-like eyes—and as she swam gracefully, she sang. On the shore, the scarlet dragon was transfixed by the sheer perfection of her song: it spoke to something deep within him as no music before had ever done, and was so full of longing, it made his heart ache. He watched her without moving until she sank back beneath the waves, and as she did so, he knew he must have her. After hearing her song, he could no longer live without it. Though he was past the mating age, he felt a stirring within him, a compulsion he could not deny. He tried to return to his life but the memory of her song would not leave his mind. Even in his dreams it haunted him. And so, he began to plot.

In his travels around the world, the dragon had never seen another of her kind, another dragon of the sea. It was then he realized the sea dragon's song was indeed one of longing—longing for another of her kind to share her life. And thus the scarlet dragon's plan took form.

Employing the most powerful magic at his command, the scarlet dragon disguised himself as a male dragon of the sea. When her song rose over the land again, he answered it with his own. Her reply was even more beautiful than her original song—full of joy and celebration at the prospect of at last having her calls answered. The scarlet dragon experienced a moment of regret at his subterfuge, but her song took over his mind and his reservations were washed away with the sound of it. He went to her and the two of them rose up into the sky as one, for even the wingless dragons of the deep soar high when in the throes of passion.

His plot may have succeeded, but for the sheer joy the song brought forth in him. At the moment of their joining, his disguise slipped for a moment and she saw him as he truly was. Her song of passion turned to a scream of rage as he returned to his true form, and she struck out at him again and again. Their battle filled the sky and frightened all across the land before she sank once more beneath the deep, never to be seen again by the surface. Before she left, she cried out to the scarlet dragon that she would raise her children to hate the sight of him and the sound of his very name.

It was then the scarlet dragon regained his senses. The passion had left him along with the sea dragon's song and he began to consider the future. There would be eggs, of course,



and he could not allow the undersea dweller to carry out her threat. If she raised them, they would become as she was, denizens of the deep. If she indeed made good on her threat, they would grow under her influence and eventually they would rise against him. This he could not allow. Further, deep in his heart, in a place he would not acknowledge, the scarlet dragon harbored a secret hope that one of the children would share its mother's voice.

So, the scarlet dragon made a deal with another dragon, a wise female dragon he had met on occasion during his travels. This dragon would take the eggs far away and raise them, safe from the deep-dweller's influences. Because the new dragon was of the same type as the scarlet dragon, the hatchlings would be so as well. Although the scarlet dragon still felt some regret at his actions, his mind was no longer clouded by emotion. In exchange for this favor, the scarlet dragon agreed to ally himself with the new dragon and to aid her in her plans when it was possible. The deal thus made, the scarlet dragon arranged to have the eggs spirited away from the sea dragon while she was hunting, and a magically disguised set left in their place. The sea dragon settled down for a long sleep soon after, and thus, it was many years before she discovered what had occurred. Her rage knew no bounds, but she could not hope to prevail against the two who were allied against her.

So, that is how our story stands to this day. The undersea dragon bides her time, plays her game, and gathers her minions, seeking always others of her kind while continuing to search for ways to return her clutch to her before it is too late. The scarlet dragon and his ally continue to support each other when it is expedient, and together their machinations have been felt far and wide. Meanwhile, the eggs grow closer to hatching ... and so it will remain to be seen who will live happily ever after.

THE END.

- Drek.
- Jaws

• Okay, I think I've got most of this—the scarlet dragon is Rhonabwy and the undersea dragon is obviously the Sea Dragon, and the female ally has got to be Hestaby. If this little story has any truth to it, it sounds like she and Rhonabwy have some kind of alliance. This could certainly explain why Rhonabwy and the Sea Dragon are rumored to hate each other—especially why she hates him. If he mated with her but then stole the eggs and gave them to somebody else to raise—yeah, that'd do it.

• Argonaut

- Ah, dragon custody battles. Better than soap operas. Popcorn, anyone?
- The Laughing Man

• True, the ally is probably Hestaby, but we can't be certain from this account. Even the Sea Dragon didn't seem 100 percent sure. Could be Mujaji, or Arleesh, or even some female dragon we've never heard of. Heck, this whole story could be deliberately planted misinformation. Rhonabwy could have given the eggs to Lofwyr, or stashed them on Halley's Comet for all we know.

• DragonIX

• So let me get this straight: Rhonabwy tricked the Sea Dragon into a mating because he liked her singing?

• Bung

• Hey, I've seen it done for less.

• Class Clown

• Hold on a minute. There are a few things more important here than dragon love stories. Like who wrote this piece in the first place? Who delivered it? What have they got to gain by releasing it? And if Rhonabwy and Hestaby are in bed, what kind of implications does that have for the recent unpleasantness in the Tir, if any?

• Cynic

• Let me add a little fuel to the discussion. As some of you know, I used to be a member of Hestaby's inner circle, until she betrayed us by joining the Council of Princes and throwing her lot in with the elves. As such, I had significant access to her lair and saw a lot of things—including several clutches of eggs she keeps well guarded at the center of Mount Shasta. It would not surprise me if she was raising a clutch as described in the file.

• Eyebright

• Still at it, Eyebright? Your nose will grow if you keep it up.

• Shasta Sam

• The truth will speak for itself some day, Sam.

• Eyebright

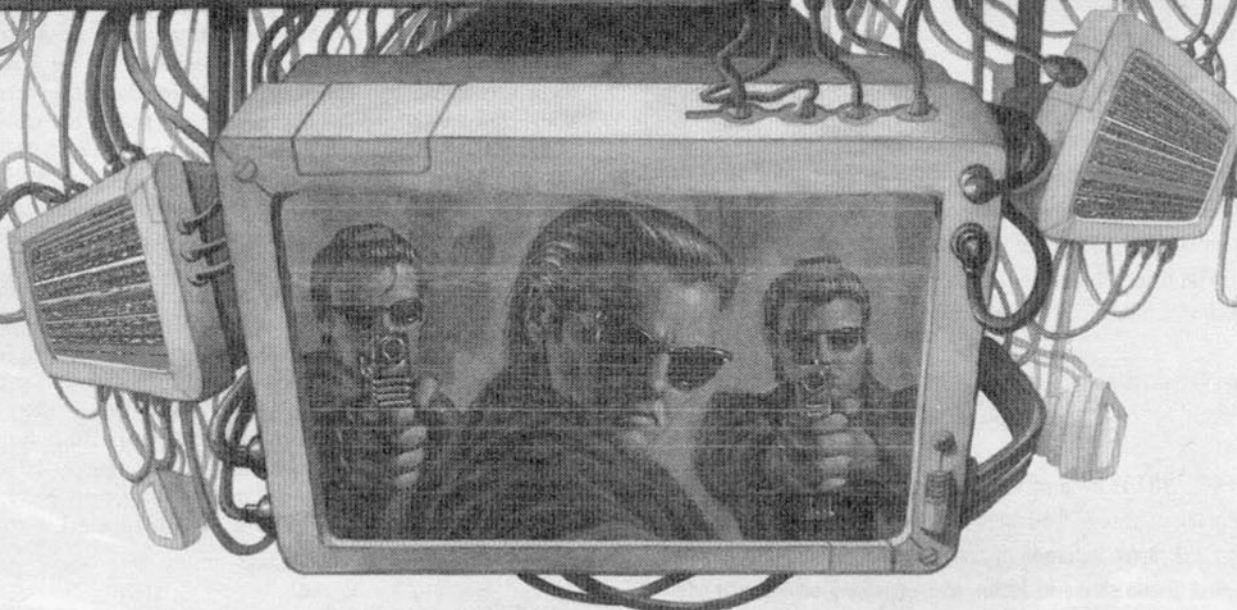
• Will you two take it offline? I'm interested in Cynic's last question—is this little alliance connected with the Tir shakeup?

• Duck

• Well, there are some pretty strong rumors that Rhonabwy supports the Rinelle ke'Tesrae movement—maybe stepping up his destabilization activities in the Tir was part of his deal with Hestaby. I can't see either of those two actively working against Lofwyr, but once he stepped down she filled the vacuum pretty quickly—almost like she was expecting it to happen.

• Conspir-I-See

RYUMYO: RAGING YANG



Well, I have to say I never expected a file like this one when I went looking for info on Japan's own great dragon. The standard stuff like runner's notes, dead-drop letters, that sort of thing, sure, but not this. Not that those aren't helpful—they are, so keep posting 'em—but they can hardly compare to a file written mainly by the Big D. That's right, this file was authored by Dunkelzahn.

Now, before you all start yammering about how you knew he was still alive, let me just point out that his part of the file was written in July 2057, a good month before our dear President bought it. It appears he was putting a group of files together to help his minions deal with the other great dragons. The wyrm's info is of course only current until 2057, but someone (any guesses?) has kept the file updated (those additions are highlighted by offset text). The anonymous decker who uploaded this claimed it was snatched from the Draco Foundation, and I believe it—I expect they have files like this one on all the greats, and most of the not-so-greats. I think it's authentic—judge for yourself.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 16 February 2063 at 11:34:44 (PST)

If you have access to this file, my dear, then I must already be dead and gone. (A cliché, I know, but no less true for all that.) I am sorry that is the case, and even more sorry that you and others named elsewhere must now deal with the machinations of my kind alone. This file, and others like it, are intended to help you do just that, and serve as a surrogate for me, though of course they cannot replace me completely.

This particular file concerns one of the most volatile and energetic of my brethren, the great dragon Ryumyo. Solidly based in Japan, Ryumyo seeks to control the entire Ring of Fire region, drawing upon hidden power there in an attempt to become something greater.

LUNG: FROM MASTER TO RIVAL

The great dragon Lung is as established a part of the remnants of China as Ryumyo is of Japan, and the two seem to be locked in an eternal struggle. It was not always so, however. Their relationship is complicated and involved, but influences much of what Ryumyo

RYUMYO

Great Eastern Dragon

Sex: Male

Coloring: Silver, with a ridge of red back spikes.

Metahuman Form(s): None in particular. Ryumyo uses a nondescript form for each major metahuman race on the rare occasions when he changes shape, and none have established identities—he adopts a new name and background each time. In most cases, he speaks through his minions or in his natural form.

Primary Lair: Mt. Mihara, on the island of O-shima, with a secondary lair in Mt. Fuji.

Translator: Akane Ishino

Timeline

December 24, 2011: Ryumyo wakes up inside Mt. Fuji and heads outside, much to the surprise of the Japanese people. He visits two areas with high background counts before disappearing again: Ise Jingu in Ise, the most important Shinto shrine in Japan, and Enryaku-ji on Mt. Hiei near Kyoto, the seat of Tendai Buddhism.

August 22, 2017: Ryumyo physically travels to Hawai'i and helps establish Danforth Ho as King Kamehameha IV, remaining a secret power behind the throne.

October 18, 2017: Angry at Kamehameha IV's disobedience, Ryumyo sends Naheka to subvert the rebel group ALOHA and keep the king in line.

August 7, 2027: Ryumyo sends a servant to contact Akira Watada during the Yakuza heir's pilgrimage to Mt. Fuji, starting his involvement with the Yakuza.

February 22, 2028: Akira Watada becomes head of the Watada-rengo. Ryumyo's influence within the Yakuza grows.

2058: The dragon Masaru actively joins the rebellion in the Philippines, and his rivalry with Ryumyo flourishes.

October 29, 2061: The Japanese government recalls troops from San Francisco, Peru, Northern Australia and the Philippines to deal with disaster relief.

does and so deserves a closer look. They were friendly once, if not actually friends. In much the same way that early Japanese culture was heavily influenced by China, a young Ryumyo drew much of his knowledge and culture from the older Lung. Once his teacher, Lung now opposes Ryumyo, the solemn yin to Ryumyo's yang.

In an earlier age, Ryumyo was delivered to Lung as an egg for protection and raising. Lung was already a great dragon then, though relatively new to that station, and even then was an attractive choice for dragon parents looking for homes for their eggs. As Ryumyo grew, Lung gave him a thorough grounding in those things a dragon hatchling must

know, and found him a very quick study. Ryumyo always wanted more, and Lung gave it to him—up to a point. When he became an adult, Ryumyo gave himself in servitude to Lung in exchange for more knowledge and greater secrets, a common arrangement. After many years, however, all Lung had left to teach were the greatest secrets he knew. Judging Ryumyo to be too emotional and (excuse the term) fiery for such deep wisdom, Lung refused to teach his pupil anything more, instead releasing him from service and telling him to go and learn on his own (a decision I applaud, by the way). Believing that Lung was holding him back, Ryumyo judged himself betrayed and left after a tense confrontation with his old master.

Ryumyo achieved high status as the years went by, but his anger at Lung never cooled. The few meetings between the two were icy, restrained affairs that accomplished little. Their feud never quite blossomed into open warfare, and so it remained as that elder age passed. When they Awakened in the modern age, Ryumyo picked up their feud where it had left off and Lung was more than happy to oblige him. Their close locations made this resumption easy, especially as both had their eyes on the power hidden within the Ring of Fire.

- So Lung raised Ryumyo, and now they're enemies because he pitched a fit? Man, kids these days ...

- DNF

- It's nowhere near that simple, chummer. These guys have had literally thousands of years to nurse old grudges and make new ones. It sounds like they could both use some serious therapy.

- Maxus

Though he would deny it, Ryumyo still takes some of his cues from his old teacher. It was only after Ryumyo saw how effective Lung's Triad minions were that he began looking for his own soldiers, finally settling on the Yakuza. He sees his path to power as running along the dragon lines, in imitation of Lung, but his use of that power is more heavy-handed and lacks a certain style. Of course, there are differences as well—Ryumyo's energy, for example. Lung is solid and certain, while Ryumyo burns with an inner drive, and because of it has accomplished quite a bit in short periods of time. They truly are yin and yang, and observing their interaction has provided me with no end of entertainment.

- The Big D makes it sound like Lung is basically blameless in all this, but I think that's a bit off. The way I see it, Lung thinks Ryumyo is an ungrateful upstart with no self-control, and Ryumyo sees Lung as a greedy backstabber jealous of his power and abilities. It takes two to tango, and both wyrms feel they have a reason to dance. Ryumyo may have started it, but Lung sure as hell helps keep it going.

- Slamm-O!





THE RING OF FIRE

The area known by your kind as the Ring of Fire has been the focus of Ryumyo's, and to a slightly lesser extent Lung's, efforts since they Awakened in this age. The Ring of Fire is a belt of seismic and volcanic activity made up of volcanic arcs and oceanic trenches that encircle most of the Pacific Ocean area. Around 70 percent or so of active volcanoes on the planet are in the Ring of Fire. It also coincides with the edges of several tectonic plates that are the cause of all the seismic action—as your human scientists have noted, plates rubbing together or even ramming each other create volcanoes, earthquakes and the like. Some manaline junctions exist at volcano sites, but nothing powerful enough to warrant all the draconic attention. Or so it would seem.

So much for metahuman knowledge. Prepare, my dear, for the rest of the story. It starts, as so many things do, in the far past. In the Pacific Ocean somewhere (exactly where is unimportant), there was a land where dragons of Ryumyo's kind met to discuss their differences and enjoy each other's company in a most civil manner. Commendable, really. This island was not like other such places—it floated in the air far above the sea. Long since, it settled to earth and sank beneath the waves, though it lives on in some of the legends of your kind. At that time, the area was filled with manalines. Each volcano was a junction for at least two, and usually more.

- Well, there's the Atlantean Foundation connection. They've been looking for "unspecified anomalies" in the Pacific for years. That can't make Ryumyo a happy wizworm. Having them in his way all the time must be frustrating, and I doubt he deals well with frustration. End result: Ryumyo and the Atlanteans don't get along.

- Prime Runner

- You'd be surprised how much work you can hunt up with just a subscription to The Atlantean, their monthly members' magazine. Last year they found a number of unidentified artifacts churned up from the sea floor by all the seismic activity in the Ring, and in 2058 there was an article about cave paintings in Hawai'i that indicated a more advanced form of life lived there centuries ago. I know people who got shadow work based on both of those articles.

- AnimaTed

- They've been running into a lot of problems with their digs and investigations recently, and those problems are spelled Y-a-k-u-z-a. Ryumyo wants them out of his sandbox, and he's pushing hard.

- Sten

- Maybe this post is the Atlanteans' push back—they reveal a bunch of his secrets to Shadowland, and life is likely to get a little harder for the dragon. I think the Atlanteans will lose this game, but you have to admire their stones for even playing, if not their brains.

- FastJack

Therein lies the secret—the manalines are more than they appear. The dragons used that network to access the region's mana. Even though the island that was its center is lost, the actual network—the dragon lines—is a natural thing and still remains. Anyone with the proper knowledge can access the network, though the influence and use of it by so many "Eastern" dragons (to use your people's term) over the ages has affected it. The lines have become much more receptive to Ryumyo's kind, responding more easily and strongly than for others who access them. Aspected, I believe modern magicians call it. Have someone you trust travel the Ring of Fire astrally and look at it for you—extremely close inspection, now that you know what to look for, will reveal the traces of these aspected manalines. They are dragon lines in truth, not merely in name.

- He's right. I've always wondered why those Ring of Fire manalines were supposed to be so important—they aren't particularly powerful—but now that I know what to look for, close astral examination shows their aspected nature.

- Talon

The power of these dragon lines has drawn Ryumyo and Lung. Most of my brethren ignore them, as they are virtually useless to us, but to "Eastern" dragons they are like pure gold—difficult to resist.

Lung's use for that magical energy is a tale for another time, but to Ryumyo it represents the chance to finally reach the potential he feels Lung denied him so long ago. How he plans to do so is still a bit of a mystery, even to me, but my instinct tells me he will try to gather enough power to transform himself into something even greater than a great dragon, though what that might be I do not know. Uncontrolled drawing of mana through the dragon lines cannot help but have consequences, however. Someday the Ring of Fire will become unbalanced and the earth itself will complain. Currently, Lung is acting to keep the dragon lines balanced, but his focus is more near his home, and I fear that the Pacific area may be in for a nasty time someday.

- Say WHAT? He's sucking power out of the earth so he can become some freaky draconic butterfly? You have to be with me on this one, people—that's insane and just plain wrong. What have I been telling you? Dragons are bad news!

- Dragonslayer

- This one, maybe. Condemning an entire family of sentient creatures based on the actions of one member is just as bad, though.

- Socio Pat

- I cannot believe you people. This is ridiculous.

- Dragonslayer

Prophetic words. Our sources tell us that the massive damage recently caused to Japan, the Philippines and other islands in the Ring of Fire were



likely caused by a mana surge traveling down these dragon lines. This is no problem if the lines are in balance—a few volcanoes gurgle, and maybe one erupts—but thanks to Ryumyo, they weren't. All hell broke loose, and he lost a lot of ground because of it.

The damage to Japan caused the Imperial Japanese government to recall troops from the Philippines, San Francisco, Peru and Cairns, Australia. The first three places are all part of the Ring of Fire, and those troops were Ryumyo's main means of controlling most of them through his pawns in the Diet. Apparently, he has no one to blame but himself for the setbacks.

The lines regained some balance during the recent dragon activity. We're not sure what happened exactly, but some trick was pulled to help reduce seismic and volcanic activity for now. It's only a temporary solution, however, unless Ryumyo stops messing with the dragon lines—or at least becomes more careful.

- I bet the damage would have been even worse if Lung hadn't been working to maintain balance as much as possible. Heh—in a way, Ryumyo owes Lung for coming out of this as well as he did. That has to bother him.

- Satchmo

- Yeah, and even more ironic is the fact that Ryumyo, the icon of Japan, is the one responsible for Mother Nature ravaging a chunk of it. That has to go down his scaly craw hard.

- Amitri

AREAS OF INTEREST

The entire Ring of Fire is of interest to those concerned with Ryumyo, of course. More specifically, there are several places where Ryumyo has either gained or lost power that should be addressed in more detail.

Hawai'i

In August of 2017, Ryumyo flew to Hawai'i and supported the ascension of Danforth Ho to the throne as King Kamehameha IV—for a steep price, no doubt. Apparently Kamehameha angered Ryumyo a few months later, and so the dragon sent the feathered serpent Naheka to take over the ALOHA revolutionary group and keep the king in line. ALOHA has become much less active over time, as the king has faithfully followed orders since. This inactivity has caused its own problem—bored ALOHA agents who act on their own and must be punished by Naheka.

- So Ryumyo runs the government and the revolutionaries? Talk about covering all the bases.

- McHugh

Philippines

Ryumyo's early agents in Mitsuhamma made sure that the corp owned all the land the Imperial Marines needed when they arrived in 2021. This gave him enough power to ensure himself access to the many junctions of volcanoes and dragon lines in the area, and he has stayed active here ever since.

This situation has changed greatly within the past few years. The arrival of fellow great Eastern dragon Masaru in the area and his decision to help the Filipino people altered the balance of power, and the removal of troops from the islands by the Imperial Government has all but eliminated Ryumyo's influence in the Philippines. All that remain are his agents in Mitsuhamma, and they are hard pressed.

- Masaru showing up and the Japanese pulling out has well and truly frugged any plans Ryumyo had for the Philippines. He is a great dragon, though, so I can only assume he has at least one contingency plan. Don't expect him to give up just yet.

- Mason

Western Central America

Ryumyo moved too slowly here, and Aztechnology blocked him out. Removing them will take more than I happen to think he is capable of alone.

Western South America

As with western Central America, Ryumyo faces considerable challenges in this region, mostly from Aztechnology and Amazonia. The only exception is Peru, where Imperial Japanese troops have given Ryumyo and Japanese corporations a small foothold on the continent. Buildups by Lung in Chile to the south and the proximity of Mujaji are Ryumyo's main worries in the area, I expect. His interest in Peru seems to be with the Nasca lines.

- Are the Nasca lines part of the whole aspected dragon lines thing too?

- Darius

- I don't think so. They look different on the astral than the dragon lines anyway—much brighter. I think Ryumyo is just curious, or maybe he knows who made them and is remembering old times.

- Decker del Sol

Even after Japan erupted and the troops pulled out of Peru, Ryumyo retained his influence there. He has several agents in government positions relating to the policing and investigation of magical phenomena, so not much has changed.



Western North America

Most of this continent is within Ryumyo's reach—except the parts he is most interested in, like Crater Lake and Mount Saint Helens, both of which lie in the Ring. His Yakuza influence allows him to travel freely, and San Francisco is wide open to him.

The removal of troops from San Francisco and the emergence of General Saito as a power have done much to limit Ryumyo's access in San Francisco. Denver has become Ghostwalker's domain, but little else has changed in this region.

Japan

Last but not least is Ryumyo's new home. His control here is strong, bolstered by considerable influence in the Diet as well as agents among the officers of the Imperial Marines, and even a good relationship with Emperor Kenichi and other members of the Imperial Family. His chosen voice is a media darling named Akane Ishino, a woman beloved by the people. Finally, of course, there is the Yakuza—more on them later.

If any place can be said to belong to Ryumyo, it is Japan, though there are many within Japan's corporations and government who fight Ryumyo's influence—when they feel they can get away with it, or when they do not realize who they oppose. Ryumyo's spirit servant, Jurojin, takes care of any of these "obstacles" that get in Ryumyo's way.

This situation has changed a little since Kenichi was killed and the boy Emperor installed. Ryumyo seems to have little influence over him or his advisors, though they appear to have struck a deal of some sort—the new Emperor has done little to impede Ryumyo, who in turn has not truly opposed him. For how long will this truce—if it is one—hold?

- Spirits, this Ring of Fire thing is a lot bigger than I thought it was. I mean, Mount Saint Helens? Peru? Wow.
- Deeny
- This isn't anywhere close to a full list, Deeny. The Ring of Fire includes the Andes mountains, the coastal regions of Central

and North America (think waacy in from the coast), the Aleutian and Kuril Islands, Kamchatka Island, Taiwan, East Indonesia, New Zealand, the Japanese and Philippine Islands, and a whole drekload of smaller islands all over the Pacific. That is one big area Ryumyo and Lung are fighting over.

- Mapman

THE YAKUZA CONNECTION

Many of your kind are developing the mistaken notion that Ryumyo controls all Yakuza, from every gumi and rengo. This is untrue, but the fallacy has served Ryumyo well on occasion—so well that he even feeds the rumor from time to time. In fact, Ryumyo controls or has a great deal of influence with a few specific Yakuza groups, and some influence with others that I will describe. Of course, many of his servants have influence of their own with other Yakuza groups as well. Still, clashes between the various Yakuza clans are by no means uncommon.

- Ryumyo was behind the assassination of most of the Korean Yakuza in Seattle in 2043. He thought they were all secretly working for Lung, so he had them eliminated.

- Phineas

- Uh-huh. Got any proof? I don't think Ryumyo is prejudiced—to him, if you aren't a dragon, you rate as low as everyone else—but I know for a fact that Akira Watada hates Koreans. I'm not sure why, but he does. It's more likely he was behind the murders, treating them like some sort of deranged housecleaning.

- Takanoba

Watada-rengo

This was the first group to serve Ryumyo, and they remain the most loyal. Jurojin approached Akira Watada in 2027 on Ryumyo's behalf. They struck an agreement that would allow Akira to become a powerhouse in the Yakuza world while giving Ryumyo a small army to work with. The rengo (and Watada-gumi) is based in Chiba, Japan, but a number of gumi in the Pacific Northwest, including Seattle, are also members. The Karatsa-gumi in San Francisco is also part of the rengo, and they are quite colorful. Their bio-luminescent tattoos have earned them the nickname "Sons of the Neon Chrysanthemum." So far, Ryumyo has relied little on them, preferring to use other means to get his way in San Francisco.

The Watada-rengo lost its hold on Seattle in early 2058 when the Shotozumi-gumi broke off and formed the Shotozumi-rengo, taking the Nishidon-gumi and Shigeda-gumi with them. Shotozumi has since solidified his hold on Seattle and appears to be planning a return to Japan. With all that has happened in San Francisco, the Karatsa-gumi have become Ryumyo's primary agents in the area and he is using them more and more.

- They ain't kidding about Shotozumi. He's proved he can hold off the Watada-rengo and keep his own house clean, which has impressed a number of other gumi. If he were ever to have a chance at expanding back to Japan, now would be the time, with all the reconstruction and political maneuvering going on.

- Spook

Yamato-gumi

A smaller gumi based in Denver, the Yamato keep an eye on things and act as Ryumyo's hands there. The oyabun, Kasigi Toda, was a kobun in the Watada-gumi twenty years ago. For his devoted service he was rewarded with the opportunity to form his own gumi. He recently led his gumi to victory over his rivals in Denver, the Naito-gumi, driving them from all areas except the Aztlan sector. The Yamato have clashed a number of times in the past with Lung's Red Dragon Triad, based in the CAS sector, and they are likely Toda's next target.

During Ghostwalker's arrival and subsequent rampage the Yamato laid low, going back to business as usual after things settled down. The Naito abandoned the Aztlan sector when the CAS attacked, and have yet to reestablish themselves.

- These guys like to play the various sectors off of each other, grabbing stuff that's legal in one sector and selling it in another where it's not. They got a real sweet setup in place. They're also heavy in chips and have a lock on illegal drugs.

- Maverick

- The Yamato are all about keeping their heads down right now. They have orders to avoid offending Ghostwalker, but otherwise go about business as usual. At the moment, they've retreated from the CAS sector to avoid noisy confrontations with the Red Dragons. It's working so far, but that may change soon if the Red Dragons start taking advantage of the situation.

- Soryo

Yamaguchi-rengo

The largest Yakuza organization in the Federal District of Columbia, this rengo includes the Yamaguchi-gumi and the Saidoh-gumi. The Saidoh act as spokesmen and intermediaries with the UCAS government for the rengo, and even for other Yakuza gumi (for a hefty fee, of course). They have influence with a number of politicians and functionaries, and have smoothed over UCAS/Imperial Japan relations several times in the past at Ryumyo's behest.

The Yamaguchi-rengo nearly doubled in size in 2057, when the Matsui-gumi and Sessho-gumi joined up. The rengo put into action several plans to fleece tourists drawn by Dunkelzahn's death and the



rift (blood-suckers!). The other gumi knew sharp business sense when they saw it—they agreed to stop fighting the Yamaguchi-rengo and join up instead. Others in the rengo still don't quite trust the Matsui and Sessho, but the newcomers are slowly gaining ground.

- A Yakuza group with serious government influence is scary enough. Add in a great dragon and I'm glad I live in Atlanta.
- Moving Target

Mita-gumi

The Mita make their home in Tokyo and control most of that city's illegal chip distribution. The gumi is quite large and was offered membership in Watada-rengo, but declined. The oyabun, Hoshi Mita, prefers to remain independent from other gumi to better retain the loyalty of his kobun. Hoshi considers Jurojin a friend, if not an official advisor, and the two have known each other since Hoshi was born—his father and Jurojin were also friends, and the spirit was one of the newborn child's first visitors. Hoshi considers himself in Ryumyo's debt for allowing Jurojin to have such a relationship with him, and is therefore quite open to suggestion from the dragon.

- He wants to be independent, but he takes orders from a wyrm. What the frag? How is that independent?
- Jeeves
- He doesn't take orders, Jeeves, he just takes Ryumyo's suggestions very seriously. He's independent—he just owes a debt and is more inclined than not to help out his friend's boss.
- Takanoba

Wanibuchi-gumi

The second of three gumi based in Tokyo and one of Ryumyo's latest acquisitions, the Wanibuchi are fairly new and still somewhat small. Oyabun Tomu Wanibuchi broke off from the Mita-gumi in 2050 with Hoshi Mita's blessing, gained after Jurojin interceded for him. Wanibuchi acknowledges the debt, and has proven quite useful to Ryumyo ever since. Nearly all the gumi's members are deckers, and they often act as Ryumyo's electronic eyes and ears. Their true focus, however, lies in information sales, and they often work closely with (and sometimes for) the Mita-gumi. Were Hoshi Mita not so independent, the two gumi would have formed a rengo by now.

- At least one of these guys is good—very good. He tried to trash this file and almost beat our defenses. He got away, too—we could only trace him to Tokyo before he lost us. I've beefed up protection on this file, so it shouldn't be a problem again, but I have to admire this guy's talent and skill. If you ever decide to leave the Yaks, chummer, contact me—I might have a job for you.
- Captain Chaos
"Next time you won't be so lucky!"

• Domo arigato, Captain. Such praise from you is great indeed. I appreciate your offer, but must decline—I am Yakuza for life. I have been ordered to tell you, however, that there will be no more attacks on this file by my gumi.

- Hari
- Right. Like we should believe that. Why would Ryumyo have them stop now?
- Dragonslayer
- Baka. The file has been circulated to many data havens now—it would achieve nothing to destroy the Shadowland copy. Think before you speak, and you will appear less foolish.
- Hari
- Wyrmslave.
- Dragonslayer

Tsukigata-gumi

This is the only gumi active on Shikoku, the smallest of the four main Japanese islands. It is quite large, and its people work for Ryumyo purely for nuyen. The Tsukigata are mercenary to a degree that puts other gumi to shame, and allow no prejudice or personal grudges to keep them from doing business with a client. As a result, this gumi has a large number of clients other gumi won't touch—nonhumans, gaijin and anyone else who can come up with the credsticks. Ryumyo has them on a large retainer and often uses them as a liaison with said unmentionables. He keeps a careful eye on the gumi, however, to ensure that nobody pays them more to betray him.

- These are the guys to go to for a quiet way into Japan. Pay 'em right, and they'll treat ya right, no matter who or what you are. If at least half the gaijin who sneak into Japan "outside the law" don't pass through Tsukigata hands first, I'd be very surprised.
- Liza

RYUMYO AT HOME

Though his influence extends all over the globe, Ryumyo's power is based in Japan, where he lives. Most of the people there love the idea that a great dragon calls their land home. Stylized images of him have been popular in advertisements, decorations and just about everything else ever since he Awakened. In fact, Ryumyo rivals Mt. Fuji as a symbol for the nation, and they are often shown together. The Japanese refer to "their" dragon's sighting in 2011 as "the second Japanese miracle," the first being Japan's incredible economic boom following World War II. All this is despite Ryumyo's very few public appearances since Awakening. He has turned to your kind for help with public relations, and they have come through beautifully.

- No kidding. There's at least one Ryumyo store in every city in Japan, and usually more than one. All they sell is stuff with the

wizworm's image on it—dolls, clothes, deck cases, bento lunchboxes, you name it. I checked to see where the money goes, and guess what? After passing through several holding companies, it all goes straight to the Watada-rengo. I have no doubt Ryumyo gets a big cut.

• Gyra

Ryumyo is as much a part of the government of Japan as the Prime Minister. He has his claws dug into nearly half of the Diet through his Yakuza servants, corporate connections, fear (most of your kind do what a great dragon tells them if he visits them at home, no matter what form he takes), or even respect (some people in the world simply believe it wise to do what a great dragon says). At least three members of the Supreme Court and countless lesser judges work for him as well, which is one reason why Yakuza gumi tend to have no problem following their master's orders. Ryumyo's Yakuza spend less time in jail, if they go at all, than other Yakuza, thanks to his network of servants in the judiciary system. While the government can balk Ryumyo, it doesn't happen often—if he chooses to call attention to it, the officials who voted against him are likely to lose any chance they have for re-election. The Japanese people love Ryumyo, and acting against him publicly is a quick road out of office.

The new Emperor's plans and initiatives have moderated this influence somewhat. The nation's ruler is even more of a symbol of Japan to the people than Ryumyo is, so that advantage is gone. Still, Ryumyo retains his power in the Diet and the judiciary, so he has hardly been declawed. The decision to call the Imperial Marines home was one of the few times where the government acted against Ryumyo's wishes, and the biggest pushers behind that plan have already announced their retirements or succumbed to horrible accidents.

• Or had vid footage released of them doing bad things to several small boys and a troll woman (seriously—and unfortunately, the public outrage erupted over the troll). Needless to say, Ryumyo was not pleased with those politicians.

• Spazz

• Ryumyo and the new Emperor are still feeling each other out, and there's been no overtly antagonistic action yet. I can't imagine them not butting heads at some time in the future, though. There just isn't room in Japan for both of them.

• Glaive

Ryumyo can also claim influence among Japanese religious and magical practitioners. Shinto miko follow a tradition of magic almost unique to Japan, venerating their ancestors and a large number of kami, which include personified gods and spirits of nature. Japan has been called the land of eight million kami, and a number of them don't even have

names. The Emperor is recognized as a kami, believed to be descended from Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess. Why is this important, other than because I find it interesting? Because, my dear, a small number of miko believe Ryumyo to be a kami also, and that number is growing. Those miko are a potentially powerful tool—they see Ryumyo as divine and will therefore do just about anything he says. Ryumyo has yet to make effective use of this resource, but I am sure it is only a matter of time.

• At least two of these miko guys have chosen Ryumyo as their totemic patron kami. Interesting how true belief affects magic.

• Black Book

• So they worship him as a god, and can somehow use him as a totem? What the frag? That is some seriously messed-up stuff.

• Jeeves

• I don't buy it. If they can do that, why aren't magicians from the Children of the Dragon taking Dunkelzahn or Ghostwalker as totems?

• Sereena

• Who says they aren't?

• Lone Gunman

Ryumyo personally asked a number of these miko to help heal their shattered land, and have been working to help Japan recover from the devastation inflicted during the Year of the Comet. Their efforts have produced few results so far, but they seem to be getting help from various spirits as well. A small number of miko who claim Ryumyo raped the land and caused the destruction have gathered together to oppose him as the Susano-o Society, named after the kami who once slew a dragon.

Like most great dragons, Ryumyo sees the megacorporations as yet another tool to be used. His greatest influence lies with Mitsuhama, where he began planting agents and subverting workers only a few years after Awakening; he owns large shares of a number of that corporation's subsidiaries. This strategy has paid off as his chosen workers advanced within the megacorp; in addition to being a shareholder, Ryumyo has access to high-level data through his agents. His power is concentrated in Mitsuhama's magic subsidiaries, but his Yakuza connections also give him a lot of pull with the Board of Directors. His status as a symbol of the nation doesn't hurt, either—it has as much meaning for many of Mitsuhama's workers as it does for any other citizen. He does not by any means control Mitsuhama, but his ability to shape its actions is considerable.

Ryumyo has placed agents within many other corporations as well, usually but not always in magic-related areas.



He is a shareholder in Shibata Construction and Engineering, Suichini Magical Mechanics, Furin Inc., and Shishi Conglomerated, as well as a number of smaller, mainly Japanese, corporations. Ryumyo's corporate interest seems to be confined mainly to businesses based in Japan, which is short-sighted of him and will likely cause him trouble in the future. He rarely uses his corporate connections and operatives for anything other than data gathering, preferring to rely on his Yakuza or government servants to accomplish other things.

After Fuchi's collapse, Ryumyo washed his hands of that corp instead of investing in Novatech. A number of his old Fuchi agents moved on to Novatech, however, and keep him updated just as they always did. The sudden rise to power of Wuxing pushed Ryumyo to invest more there as well and increase the numbers of agents in that corp. Those agents keep an eye on Triad activity within the Wuxing, spying on Lung. This gambit has yet to prove effective.

- That's because Lung knows who all of them are. He knows how Ryumyo works, and spotted the new agents right away. The older ones are another story.
- HK Kid

SERVANTS AND ALLIES

Many dragons have helpers. Unfortunately, not all great dragons have great helpers. (Just a little joke there, my dear.) Like the rest of my brethren, Ryumyo's goals, whims and interests are too wide-ranging for him to attend to them all himself. As a result, a number of other beings help take care of Ryumyo's needs. Some are mere servants and pawns, useful but of no real consequence. Others are allies, who help in return for Ryumyo's aid with something later. A precious few are more than that.

Naheka

A feathered serpent of considerable age, Naheka is Ryumyo's representative in Hawai'i. Upon Awakening, Naheka soon understood that he lacked the adaptability to swiftly understand how things in this age worked. Rather

than lose all chance at establishing himself, Naheka looked for a more powerful dragon to whom he could hitch his star. In a previous time Naheka had served Mujaji, but felt he could find a better mentor in the new age. He found Ryumyo and agreed to serve the great dragon in exchange for help carving out a domain for himself (that little victory for Ryumyo has strained relations between he and Mujaji quite a bit). The domain Ryumyo chose for his new ally was Hawai'i. In return for his service, Ryumyo promised Naheka Hawai'i after a century. According to their servitude agreement, Naheka "inherits" Hawai'i in 2117, though we shall see what really occurs if Ryumyo hasn't finished with it.

Naheka is loyal to Ryumyo and is a powerful dragon in his own right, but still many centuries away from achieving great dragon status. He knows his own limits and is a careful and cautious strategist. Working for Ryumyo has changed him a bit, however, and he puts more energy into his duties than he did forty years ago. As a feathered serpent, Naheka is a bit self-conscious about working for one of Ryumyo's kind—it is a sore spot that you would be wise not to bring up if you ever speak with him.

- The wyrm's got guts, I'll give him that. Telling a great dragon "I quit" even if you're going to serve another one is risky. Relations between Ryumyo and Mujaji are poor, but I can only imagine how they are between Naheka and his old mentor. Yikes.

- Discus

Jurojin

Rarely will a great dragon summon an ally spirit. The idea simply does not appeal to us. Or, rather to most of us, as that is exactly what Ryumyo has done. The ally spirit in question, Jurojin, was first called by Ryumyo soon after he achieved great dragon status, to help him in his battles with Lung. Jurojin served him for many years before that age passed, then watched over Ryumyo's slumbering body until he Awoke again in the modern age. Of all the beings on Earth, Jurojin is probably the only one Ryumyo can truly call friend.

- Can dragons have friends? Isn't it against the dragon code or something?

- Trouble

- Whoa. You mean this spirit has been around and active that long? Is that even possible?

- Airwasp

- I hadn't really thought about it, but I think so. We don't know if spirits age like we do, or have a set lifespan. Drek, we barely know anything about them. So why not an ancient ally spirit? If anyone could pull off something like that, a great dragon could.

- Carter

Jurojin is an extremely powerful spirit, having been improved innumerable times by Ryumyo over the years. His knowledge of sorcery and his raw power are the equal of many dragons, and Ryumyo has used some of the mana drawn from the dragon lines in the Ring of Fire to gradually empower Jurojin even more. A counterpoint to Ryumyo in many ways, Jurojin is slow to act and cautious. In temperament he is much like Lung, something Ryumyo likely unconsciously imprinted in him during his original summoning. Jurojin seems to be to his summoner, in a way, what Ryumyo wanted Lung to be to him.

- Dunkelzahn, you smooth talker—now you've got me feeling sorry for Ryumyo.

- The Laughing Man

- I can't believe you fell for it! He's just trying to lull you into a false sense of security!

- Dragonslayer

- You're an idiot, Dragonslayer.

- The Laughing Man

In his natural form on the astral plane, Jurojin appears as a shining star, brilliant and pulsating. He has been given many physical forms, but the one he uses most is that of an elderly Asian man, short of stature, with brilliant green eyes and snow-white hair and beard. His fingernails are long and he wears a blue kimono embroidered with silver Eastern dragons. An Eastern dragon tattoo is coiled around his left wrist—actually not a mere tattoo, but a very good likeness of Ryumyo, and the mark of Jurojin's summoner. Jurojin used this form to contact Akira Watada on Mt. Fuji in 2027, and this is the body Jurojin wears when he meets with Hoshi Mita. He is quite comfortable in it, and often chooses to wear it even while alone with Ryumyo.

Ryumyo rarely makes appearances in public, and Jurojin serves as his voice to less-than-wholesome groups such as the Yakuza. He is a counterpoint to Ryumyo's other mouth-piece, former singing idol Akane Ishino, in the darker parts of society, links to whose denizens could damage Ishino's all-important reputation.

Jurojin also serves as Ryumyo's voice to the new Emperor, though Akane remains his spokeswoman to the rest of the government.

- Check out Jurojin on the astral, if you ever get the chance. I did, and yikes! He looked like a big pointy ball of pure power. I've conjured great form spirits that scanned like wimps compared to him. Dunkelzahn is right—Jurojin is easily the equal of most (non-great) dragons, and of about anything else I can think of.

- Magister



Akane Ishino

Akane is Ryumyo's voice to the public and government of Japan. In her mid-forties now, she was one of many idoru in her youth, the musical idols who capture the Japanese imagination so completely and for such short periods. For several years Akane's was the voice every Japanese teenager wanted to hear and every salaryman dreamed about. Then, inevitably, a new idoru arrived, and Akane was quickly forgotten—by everyone except Ryumyo, who had heard her singing and found it breathtaking. With her career dead, Akane began searching for other prospects; when Jurojin approached her about being Ryumyo's public voice, she immediately accepted.

Akane quickly proved to be much more than a voice. Her time in the entertainment business had taught her much about the value of an image, and she set out to ensure that Ryumyo had the best one possible. Before Akane, the Japanese respected Ryumyo but knew nothing about him. When she was through, they adored him (and still knew nothing about him). At the same time, as his declared representative, the people also loved Akane, and she put that affection to good use. Akane is constantly being interviewed on trid shows, making appearances and doing anything else necessary to ensure that Ryumyo remains fresh in people's minds. She knows quite well how fickle the public can be, and works hard to see that Ryumyo is never abandoned as she was.

Aside from the good graces of a great dragon, which is no small thing by itself, Akane also receives the adoration she once commanded as a singer. She is known as the "dragon's little virgin princess," and whether that is true or not, she works to keep her image as clean and pure as snow. She knows it is the image the people truly love, and is careful to make certain nothing damages it for long. Akane can be vicious and heartless to those who threaten her lifestyle, and Ryumyo takes care of anything she cannot.

- Akane is the darling of Japan. I was in a music store in Chiba where they were playing one of her old songs, and a guy asked them to turn it down. No kidding—they booted him out of the store and asked him not to come back. When these people are fans of something (or someone), they do not kid around.

- Ms. Thing

- She really is hard-core about her image. One of Tokyo's more suggestive newsfeeds ran an editorial that pondered

whether Akane could possibly still be a virgin. Within a week, the entire newsfeed had been bought out and shut down.

- White Rabbit

Akira Watada

The aging head of the Watada-rengo, Akira owes his position to the intervention of Ryumyo through Jurojin, and has taken Jurojin to be his shingiin, the Yakuza term for head advisor. The fiery young man who originally made the deal with Ryumyo has grown old and lost much of his energy. He is still strong enough to run the rengo, but relies more and more on Jurojin's advice when making decisions. He is nearly a puppet now and in a few years may choose to retire from his position. Jurojin is already preparing for this, investigating potential new oyabun. In truth, Jurojin will decide Akira's successor, and the candidates know this. Whomever Jurojin chooses, the Watada-rengo will remain firmly in Ryumyo's claws.

- Akira is still around and running the show, and has yet to name a successor. Maybe even he knows it's just a formality.

- Yakkity-Yak

- What about that thing Ryumyo inherited from Dunkelzahn, the Ring Ouroboros? Did he ever pick it up? Anyone have any idea what it does, if anything?

- Darien

- Jurojin went to the Draco Foundation office in DC about a month after it opened and left with a crate several meters across. It seems likely it was the Ring, though I can't say for sure.

- DC Insider

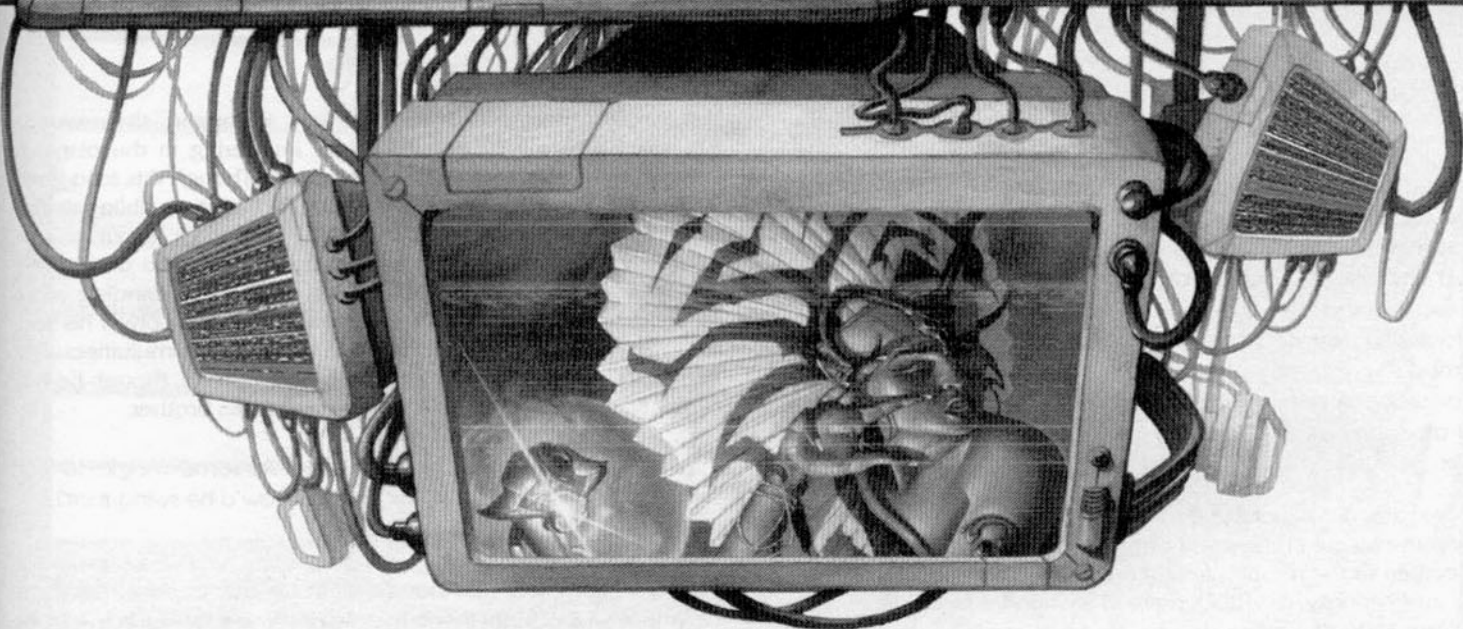
- That's an awfully big ring. Is it just a sculpture, I wonder, or is it actually a dragon-sized ring that can be worn on a claw? If so, that's one hell of a fashion statement.

- Glitz

- The Ouroboros is a serpent biting its own tail. It shows up in mythology around the world, including Norse, Hindu, Egyptian, Greek, Phoenician and Chinese. It usually signifies rebirth or an eternal cycle, but is also sometimes used to represent yin and yang. I wonder if maybe the Ring doesn't actually do anything, but was meant as a warning to Ryumyo to keep balance in mind or he would wind up launching the cycle of his own destruction.

- Socio Pat

A NEST OF SERPENTS



I wouldn't want to apply the phrase "and last but not least" to the dragons in this file (they might take offense) but I've pulled together a series of brief write-ups on some of the remaining known greats and a few of the notable adult wyrms out there. The fact that they're here doesn't necessarily mean they're less impressive or important or powerful than the ones who got major coverage—most of them simply haven't been as active (or at least visibly active) or just don't interact with metahumans enough to warrant the full treatment. One thing you can be sure of, though, is that these files don't tell the whole story. There are dozens (if not hundreds) of other adult dragons out there in the world and, who knows, there might even be another great or two lurking in the shadows, just waiting for the right moment to make an entrance. There are even a few dead ones that it pays not to forget (Nachtmeister, Haesslich and Chong-chao come to mind)—assuming they are dead, and not just faking it (*cough* Alamaïs *cough*). Just think of how Dunkelzahn is still impacting our lives ... and good luck getting a good night's rest tonight.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 16 February 2063 at 11:43:56 (PST)

ALAMAIS

Great Western Dragon

by Cipher Hunter

As a child I used to stare up at the towering corporate monoliths downtown, wondering if the men peering down on me were gods. In a sense they were gods, because they wielded power greater than I could imagine. These corporate lords were so much larger than life that they could crush my world with a thought. As children, we crush insects because they are less than we are; nuisances. We are gods to those beneath us. The appearance of dragons reminded humanity that there was something greater. But what beast reminds the dragons that there is something greater than them? If there is no greater beast than dragons, doesn't that make them gods, if not in reality than in their own minds?

• Unless my research is mistaken, Cipher Hunter is actually Dr. Barbara Schoepke, formally of the University of Berlin's Archeology Department. Most of her research centered on tying artifacts and

Norse legends to the Awakening. She proposed the theory that the ancient Norse heroes were actually elves in a previous age.

- Study Hound

- That explains why the Atlantean Foundation has been spending so much time digging up Norse artifacts.

- Konwacht

- Schoepke is a die-hard hands-on researcher. Somehow she heard about Alamaïs and sprouted a real obsession about him. She seemed to think he could affirm or prove some of her theories. At any rate, she took a hiatus from the university and was last seen scrounging around the German shadows trying to make contact with Alamaïs's agents. She disappeared, and everyone assumed she had moved on to a new life, either as a meat puppet or dragon chow. I guess she must have gotten to the wyrm after all.

- Felix

No dragon venerates himself more than Alamaïs. He is among the oldest of the great dragons, covered in golden scales that darken to the red of a hearth fire along his spine. His experience and tenacity is visibly marked in hundreds of dents and scratches, including a vicious, unplated scar near the center of his chest, the source of which is unknown. Though he hides himself from the public eye, Alamaïs does not hide his views towards the "lesser races," as he calls us. He considers us (metahumanity) fools for not accepting the superiority and leadership of dragonkind and demands from us the respect due to an exalted superior. In fact, he has hinted more than once that metahumanity owes a large debt not to just to dragonkind, but to Alamaïs himself, though he refuses to speak of what this might be. Alamaïs should not be viewed as an inherently evil creature, but his overarching goal is to see metahumanity "return" to the guidance and leadership of great dragons.

- Most of the world still seems to be unaware of Alamaïs's existence. He's a player in the shadows, but he's dodged the public spotlight except for that mention in Dunkelzahn's will.

- Fastdos

- Speaking of that fruitcake—I think my team was responsible for delivering it a few times. After the Big D died, our old fixer was exposed as one of his "watchers." Well, it just so happens that this fixer sent us on a mission every year to deliver a "x-mas present," usually somewhere in Europe, but occasionally elsewhere in the world. Out of curiosity, we opened the box a few times, and it was a damn fruitcake all right. Usually we dropped it off somewhere, but one year we were paid to drop it at some suit's restaurant table in the middle of a power lunch. Our mage happened to be scanning the suit when we placed it on the table (boy, was Mr. Suit displeased—I swear his eyes flashed gold for a sec), and he bugged out something fierce at the guy's aura. He never would tell us what he saw, though.

My guess is that the fruitcake was how Alamaïs and Dunkelzahn tested each other's resources, sort of like dragon tag. I wonder if Alamaïs has anyone to play with now that ol' Dunkie is dead?

- Sheridan

Among some elements of the European underworld, Alamaïs has earned a reputation for interfering in the plans of Lofwyr (and occasionally paying the price). Though this feud goes far deeper than many suspect—it is, in fact, a bitter sibling rivalry extending from events long lost to the past—it is but one of Alamaïs's many driving goals. In fact, his desire to undermine Lofwyr's affairs has been abated as some long-standing plots recently came to fruition. Satisfied that he has cost Lofwyr his seat on the Tir Council (and diminished other foes simultaneously), Alamaïs's attention is now focused on other goals, though he will certainly not bypass any chance to subvert his brother.

- Whoa—hold the train. Alamaïs worked some magic to get Lofwyr booted from the Elf Only Table? How'd he swing that?

- Cracked

- Here's how I scan it. About a decade back, young Glasgian Oakforest was caught in the middle of some scandal in the Tir. His dad covered his back, though, and Glasgian walked away unscathed. I heard an unsubstantiated rumor that Glasgian had done something bad with a dragon egg. Any guess whose?

Now, anyone who's ever met Glasgian knows he's a spoiled rich brat that couldn't find his own underwear drawer, so there's no way he could have masterminded a plot to steal something precious of Golden Snout's. My bet is that someone fed him the info, then set him up to take the fall—say, some other wyrm with a grudge against Lofwyr.

Glasgian had daddy's protection for awhile, but something must have cut loose last year, cuz now he's missing and Lofwyr's persona non grata ... you do the math.

- Fenian.

- Smooth. I also heard that someone pulled a wizzer run on S-K HQ last year and got away with it. Rumor is they even made off with that Jewel of Memory Lofwyr received from Dunkelzahn. Only another dragon has the guts to try a scam like that. My money's on Alamaïs.

- Walker

From his primary lair on the sparsely populated island of Spitsbergen, Norway, Alamaïs directs his vast network of minions, pursuing his interests through a range of methods and eclectic tactics. Like a hydra, he approaches his targets through multiple unconnected avenues of attack, striking from different directions. Where one plan falls through, another one may succeed with similar results.

Alamaïs favors underground groups of all flavors and stripes, from terror cells and policlubs to cults and smuggler rings. He'll use whatever is most appropriate for his agenda, infiltrating factions and subverting the leadership, then discarding them when





he's through. He rarely sticks with one group for long, and many have not survived association with him. His association with Der Nachtmachen, which he molded into the strongest opposition to Lofwyr's vision of a unified Europe, is a prime example.

- Policlubs are just the shell of Alamais's network. He finds them easy to infiltrate, and they tend to have fringe members who are easily manipulated. Just ask the Revenants. But it's dangerous to say he doesn't care about the policlub's political agenda—he's more likely to seek out groups that will be opposed to his enemies, though usually for vastly different reasons.

- Hood

- Winternight was one of the most recent groups to be infiltrated by Alamais. He managed to subvert one of their European cells. Word is that other cells in Winternight weren't too pleased about the dragon messing with their people—they consider Alamais to be an enemy, allied with Loki, the trickster figure of Norse mythology.

- Deprogrammer

- What interests me is Alamais's involvement in the Tirs. I've dredged up some links between him and certain anti-government factions in both elf lands. It took some doing, because the evidence was buried even deeper than usual for Alamais. My question is, why is Alamais interested in disrupting the Tirs?

- Felix

- Frag, who isn't? What I want to know is: is he in cahoots with Rhonabwy and Hestaby?

- Conspir-I-See

- Somehow, I don't think so—they seem to be anti-Tir for different and opposed reasons. Rhonabwy and Hestaby seem to be interested in limiting the abuse of elf power in the Tirs, whereas Alamais just seems intent to cause trouble, like he's settling an old score or something.

- Diamond Jack

Though Alamais will use metahumans as pawns, he never fully trusts them. As a result, he takes a very hands-on role in his projects, micro-managing the critical stages of his operations personally. His servants never know when he might be lurking nearby in human or astral form, overseeing their progress and watching for hints of betrayal.

- Sounds like a paranoid freak to me.

- Tesetilaro

- Sounds like Lofwyr's modus operandi too.

- Felix

- Alamais has learned some lessons about his direct-interventions. About a decade back, a certain corp he was messing with lulled him into revealing his hand, then nailed him with an orbital laser

shot when he popped into dragon form. Now that's the way to teach a dragon a lesson! Too bad the toasty bugger survived.

- Dragonslayer

ARLEESH

Great Feathered Serpent

by Gecko

Everybody's heard that old expression "Never deal with a dragon," right? Well, I've got another one: "Never get in Arleesh's way when she wants something." Anybody who thinks she's not as ruthless as her fellow great dragons because she didn't wake up until 2049 or so has never been between her and something she wanted. How do I know this? Sit back, kids, and let Unca Gecko tell you a story.

See, a couple of months ago my team and I were hired to do a nice simple snatch job. A museum in an unnamed city was storing some artifacts from a recent archaeological expedition, and our employer wanted us to liberate a few of them before they were put out for display.

- This is probably the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Tenochtitlán. They hushed up a recent theft to avoid embarrassment, but word is that quite a few things went missing.

- Cur8or

- Rumor is the Atlanteans were behind the job.

- Casper

The job went like clockwork, I think partly because none of us could figure out why anybody would want to lift this stuff. Small statues, a few rusty old weapons and armor, some crude jewelry—nothing to write home about. But we were getting paid to boost it, so we boosted.

The weird stuff happened when we showed up to deliver the goods and get our cred. Instead of our Johnson, a woman was there. She introduced herself as Arleesh. She looked human but she didn't, you know? Anyway, she immediately zeroed in on this one old crusty knife. "I will take this," she said. "It will be destroyed as it should have been long ago." When we tried to protest, she got this driven look in her eyes and told us that it would be wise if we didn't try to get in her way. Except we didn't hear it with our ears—we heard it with our *minds*. The odd thing was that our mage hadn't liked that dagger from the moment he touched it. He said it felt "wrong."

- That sounds like Arleesh all right. She seems to be after old magical stuff, but only particular old magical stuff. She's on some kind of crusade to track down all sorts of things like that—I've personally heard of several cases where she's either commissioned the runs herself or swooped in to claim the spoils. Word is she's not a bad boss as long as you do what she wants. If you try to frag her over—well, she is a great dragon. You do the math.

- Blackstone

- So is that the "work" the Big D was talking about when he promised the Draco Foundation's cooperation in his will?

- Arclight

• Probably, I've got a chummer who's worked for them, and he said they've been helping her track down whatever it is she's looking for. He wouldn't tell me what was on her list, but apparently some of it is bizarre stuff—and it's not all things, if you get my gist.

• Findler-Man

• The fact that she's got a mole inside the Atlantean Foundation can't hurt either.

• Dragonslayer

• If rumors can be believed, she hired a team a few months ago to break into Hestaby's lair for something. That takes cojones.

• Goblin-Boy

• Funny that those two would be at odds, since they both seemed to be Dunkelzahn's golden girls.

• Switchback

• Don't believe everything you hear.

• Orange Queen

CALOZERCA

Adult Western Dragon

by Invisible

Ok, I have something pretty heavy to report, though I can't say I understand all of the implications. Let's just say that there's a new dragon loose in the world—yes, *loose*—and he may be trouble.

Our team was hired last fall to escort our Johnson, a man with Aryan looks and a Scandinavian accent, into the Carpathian Mountains, in Poland. The area was tense territory at the time, thanks to "disputes" between some rebellious Poles and some cranky Russians. We avoided trouble though and hiked up to the GPS coordinates were given, in the Jura Krakowsko-Czechstochowska. We found a cave entrance there, and that's when things got weird.

We entered the cave and Johnson unwrapped the meter-long package he'd been carrying. Out comes an ebony staff with strange symbols engraved in orichalcum—I asked our mage later, and she said she couldn't identify them, much less read 'em. In any case, Johnson had us stand guard while he plunged the staff into the ground and performed a ritual that took the better part of twelve hours. As he finished, the pole started to rotate and gave out a humming sound. He then told us it was in all of our best interests to get far away from the area. So we double-timed it out of there. As we left, there were some strange sounds and lights coming from that cave.

We got away clean, got our cred and moved on, glad to wash our hands of the whole deal. But then we heard a short while later about an incident with a strange gray-and-gold dragon that ripped apart a town in the Malopolska region near Krakow—right near where we had been. We couldn't shake the bad feeling that we had set something free—something that maybe should've stayed locked up.

• Well, that's the way to open up a whole new can of wyrms. <chuckle>

• The Laughing Man

• Quiet, you. In this case, it would have been best to let sleeping dragons lie.

• Orange Queen

• I don't like the looks of this. Am I right in thinking that this new dragon may have been "locked up?" Why else wouldn't he have woken up already? I don't know how dragons do things, but usually people get locked away for good reasons. If this wyrm is bad news, are they going to do something about it? Are the dracocops going to take this fugitive back into custody? Or did he just finish serving his time and now he's on parole?

• Attica

• Considering how slow dragons are to react, I suspect most are watching to see how things develop before they take any action.

• Wyrms Watcher

• You are all assuming that it was other dragons who locked this one away.

• Greif

• Good point. And obviously someone thought it was a good idea to spring him, so he's got support ...

• Assata

The Polish Army was actually called out, and then they called in some Russian special forces as backup. But this dragon wiped them out, swallowing more than a few of the troops whole, in big gulps. Then it disappeared. The authorities hushed the whole incident up, blaming the disturbance on anti-Russian terrorists. But the locals still talk about "Calozerca," naming it after a dragon from Polish myth. Others call it "Olophagus," based on its tendency to eat people whole.

The story doesn't end there. From what we've pieced together, Calozerca set up camp in the Tatra Mountains. The Russians have been watching him, and there are rumors that he's made links to the Polish freedom fighters. Word is spreading that he's already helped them stage a few successful guerrilla attacks, and that he's pledged his support to remove the pro-Russian puppet government. Propaganda? Hard to tell. The Russians are sure taking it seriously.

• If this Calozerca involves himself in overthrowing the current regime, he'll be drekking in Lofwyr's pot. That's treading on dangerous ground.

• No_Name_Hero

• The Russians aren't the only ones keeping an eye on the new wyrm. A certain Brackhaus has been making inquiries in Krakow,



and word is that some other great dragons have taken a keen interest in the matter.

- Spook

- Calozerca hasn't been easy to track. He's been in and out of the country multiple times, with half a dozen sightings in various

parts of the world. The oddest: he was spotted cruising the Veil that surrounds Tir na nOg. Checking up on old friends?

- Conspir-I-see

“DAMON”

Adult Western Dragon

by Kestrel

When you think of dragons, what's the first thing that comes to mind? If you said “big scheming super-intelligent lizards whose favorite pastimes are gathering piles of wealth and hatching Byzantine plots to bend the world to their will,” you'd probably have a lot of company. Okay, so maybe they wouldn't all say it quite that way, but the thought's what counts. Dragons are devious and they *always* have at least one ulterior motive, right?

I think I might have met the exception.

Let me rewind a little here and start at the beginning. See, I'm a bit of a party girl. I work hard and I'm damn good at what I do, but on my off hours I like to hang out at nightclubs, have too much to drink, check out the boys and see what develops. I don't go home alone very often, and rarely with the same guy twice, which means I'm always on the lookout for new hunting grounds.

- I know Kestrel—she's a street sam who's been around the block enough times to know what's up. She's not kidding: she goes through guys like I go through ammo. Funny thing is, she stays friends with most of 'em afterward.

- Ocelot

So it goes without saying that I was looking forward to the opening of Club Overdrive in Boston last week. I managed to get hold of some invitations to opening night (don't ask how—I have friends in the oddest places) so some chummers and I set out in anticipation of a memorable evening of music, libation and debauchery.

I was hanging out at the bar when I saw him. Anybody who knows me will agree that I'm pretty jaded when it comes to physical attractiveness—there's so much bod-modification, magic and plastic surgery out there that you can't believe anything you see is genuine—but from the moment I spotted this guy I couldn't take my eyes off him.

I wasn't the only one, either—he was drawing the gazes of almost every woman in the place, and even a few of the men. He was beautiful, that's all I can say. He barely looked old enough to get into the place at all, and everything about him was perfect. That sounds crazy, I know, but it was true. And his eyes—I figured they had to be either high-class Zeiss cyber or else magically enhanced, because eyes don't come in that shade of bright violet naturally. It wasn't just that, though, that drew me to him; it was something *in* his eyes. I hate to sound like some drooling teenager, but they were wise and merry and *alive* like I've never seen before, especially around this sprawl.

He spotted me looking at him and asked me to dance. We got to talking—he introduced himself as “Damon.” I asked him why I hadn't seen him before, since I'm pretty familiar with the club scene and there's no way I'd have missed somebody who looked like him. He laughed and told me he'd only just gotten

into town—he didn't stay anywhere too long. "There's too much fun to be had for that," he said.

The night went on and we hit it off, so he asked me back to his place. He drove his tricked-out Dynamit like a madman, but nobody hassled us even though I saw at least two cops on the way. When we reached his building, a high-rise that looked like living there cost more than I make in a year, he got out, looked up at it, and grinned at me. "Up for some fun?"

When I told him that was kind of what I had in mind, his eyes twinkled. "First we have to get there," he said, and I'll be fragged if he didn't start *climbing up the side of the building!* He stopped about two floors up and hung there, looking down at me. "Coming?"

Far be it from me to turn down a challenge (thank goodness for cyberware!) so I followed. Every time I caught sight of his face, he looked like a kid at Christmastime. He was eating this up!

Long story short, we spent the night together and he dropped his little secret on me in the morning. I won't say any more about that (nice girls don't tell) except for this: if this is what it's like to deal with a dragon, then bring on the dragons!

- Uh ... Cap? Did this one get in here by mistake? I thought this file was about dragons, not a fluff piece about some playboy kid.
- Tekno

- You don't catch on too quick, do you, Tek?
- People Watcher

- Are you saying—? Uh oh ...
- Tekno

- Yup. It's not exactly the world's best kept secret, but he doesn't go around yelling it from rooftops, either.
- Belle

- If this guy's a dragon, how come we haven't heard more about him?
- Cheshire

- That's easy: because he's almost never seen in his true form—for that matter, he's almost never seen in the same form, though he does seem to prefer the one Kestrel described. I dated him for awhile in New York before he moved on to a new city (he was calling himself "Dion" then) and he told me a few things. He likes being in human form, experiencing life from the human perspective. Having fun, going to parties, driving fast cars, pulling daredevil stunts, interacting with all sorts of different kinds of people—that's what he enjoys. I remember he said once that the dragon world was too "stuffy" for him, that he's got plenty of time for that when he grows up. He doesn't try to hide what he is—in fact, it's his little game that all his metahuman forms have those violet eyes, so you can spot him if you're looking for him. Nobody seems to know his real dragon name though.

- Belle

- Interesting names he uses: Damon and Dion. This might be a stretch, but Dion could be short for Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, who was said to have been born in the form of a serpent. Daemons (Damons?) were a kind of guardian angel Zeus assigned to various gods and VIPs—and which generally appeared as either a handsome young man or a wise serpent. In-joke, or am I reaching?

- Bullfinch

- Knowing his sense of humor, I'd go with in-joke.
- Kestrel

- He's got a lair somewhere up near Toronto, but he almost never uses it. When he moves to a new location (which he does fairly frequently) he just buys a new place—usually a penthouse apartment right in the heart of the city where the action is. He's got stakes in quite a few nightclubs, casinos, trid entertainment complexes and other things like that. Anywhere where people are having fun, especially if it involves risk, you'll find him there eventually. He's a dragon adrenaline junkie.

- Cobalt Blue

- Doubly so, if he does this in metahuman form. I guess being more vulnerable adds to the thrill.
- XTreme

- I hear once in awhile he takes on female forms, not just other metatypes. Heck, why not—I'd do the same if I were him.
- Trans Action

- This is bull-drek. He's got to be hiding something. Every dragon, young or old, has ulterior motives. It's in their blood.
- Dragonslayer

- Maybe so, maybe not. There are certainly enough metahumans out there who just want to have fun and live life as it comes—what's so strange about the possibility that a dragon might feel the same way? They can't all be big scary puppet-master types, can they?
- Puget Deb

- Apparently the only other dragon he has anything to do with is Perianwyr—he's dropped into Peri's new club in Denver a few times to check out the talent. I'll tell you, you haven't lived until you've seen two dragons on a righteous bender.
- Bronco Fan

- I wonder how the rest of the wyrms feel about him.
- D-Con

- Oh, he'll grow up one of these days. It's too bad, really—he's one of the easier ones to deal with.
- The Laughing Man



- That's only because he doesn't know you as well as we do, dear.
- Orange Queen

DZITBALCHÉN

Adult Feathered Serpent

by Santiago

A lot of people think that the feathered serpents Zacaultipán and Dzitbalchén went to the Great Lair in the Sky following a recent altercation with Ghostwalker that destroyed Zacaultipán's Denver club, the Serpent's Feather. No such thing—the two squabbling siblings are just keeping a lower profile after finally realizing that their worldviews make working together a potentially explosive proposition.

The story on these two is a bit complicated, so a little history's in order. Years ago, Dzitbalchén and Zacaultipán both used to work for the Big A, but the two had a tiff awhile back. Zac turned up in the Aztlan sector of Denver, still supporting Aztechnology but more in it for herself than anything.

- Santiago should know—he used to work for Aztechnology back in the day. No doubt he keeps up on the gossip.
- Maria

After Ghostwalker showed up and did his Big Dragon on Campus routine, Dzitbalchén made a surprise visit at the Serpent's Feather, calling his sister back to Aztlan and telling her to bring all her goodies and paydata home. She told him to frag off; she wasn't going anywhere. Heated words turned into a physical fight. Enter Ghostwalker to split up their little spat.

- Word is Dzitbalchén was sent home with a "message" to the Big A from Ghostwalker. The content of that message is a mystery, though.
- Conspir-I-See

• That's bull-drek—Dzitbalchén went back because it's easier for him to intercept the aid his sister and Henequen are sending down that way to the Yucatán rebels. Between that and sending his own care packages to Los Espejos back in Denver, it makes sense for him to be where he can get support.

- Zapatista

• Actually, you two are both right. I have reliable intel that after D-boy went into Aztechnology HQ to deliver the "message," he left looking like someone kicked the drek out of him. Seems something bigger inside the Big A was fragged off and took it out on the messenger. Dzitbalchén wouldn't talk about it, though.

- Pyramid Watcher

At last sighting, Dzitbalchén is back in Aztlan, which adds fuel to the rumors that he's taking a more active role in Aztechnology's operations. No doubt he's continuing in his efforts to oppose his sister.

- He and the Big A aren't as cozy as they used to be. I've heard he's not so keen on the whole Yucatán situation and how the

Azzies handled it. He's been openly critical of the "slash and burn" tactics, and apparently he's been quietly poking around trying to find an alternate solution.

- Nova

• I wouldn't be too sure about that, especially after what a chummer of mine saw a month or so ago. He and his team were down near Oaxaca and they came across some shamans doing some nasty juju. They didn't stick around long enough to investigate, but my chummer swears it was blood magic—and their team's mage says he spotted a feathered wyrm in the nearby astral. He couldn't tell which one, of course, but I heard later that Dzitbalchén was in the area on business. Whoever he was, he was keeping an eye on things.

- Hampton

- Watching—or participating?
- Dragonslayer

• Dzitbalchén's a slippery one. More than one rumor has him cautiously trying to effect change on Aztechnology from the inside—and that he's met with Oliver McClure at least a few times.

- Pyramid Watcher

• Don't believe it. You're right that he's slippery—a lot more than you think. Dzitbalchén supports exactly one thing: Dzitbalchén. He's playing sides against each other within Aztechnology to further his own ends. The only question that remains is what those are.

- Eli

• That's not quite true. Surprisingly enough, the one other thing he's known to support is his sister—if anybody else messes with her, that is. Apparently they can snipe at each other till the cows come home, kill each other's agents and generally do their best to drek up each other's parties, but you mess with Zacaultipán and her brother will be all over you like ugly on an ape.

- Hawkeye

ELIOHANN

Adult Western Dragon

by Neurosis

The great dragon Celedyr does not carry as much name-to-company recognition as Lofwyr and Saeder-Krupp; nevertheless those who are even marginally interested in Transys Neuronet are aware now that Celedyr is just as inextricably linked. Celedyr isn't the sole dragon involved, however. Keeping him company in the trenches is a malachite-green dragon named Elio hann. In fact, Elio hann may be the key that allows Transys to crack the barrier to developing Matrix connections for the selection of (par)animals listed in Dunkelzahn's Will. And how is this, you might ask?

Because Elio hann is the only known dragon to have a functioning datajack.



• Hold on a tic—If Elohann has a working datajack, why hasn't anyone announced it before this? Doesn't he want to cash in on Dunkelzahn's will? You have to admit that this is pretty big news. What's the story behind it?

• Lex Tallonis

• It's a simple story, but it happened about ten years ago. It started with an R&D company called Emerging Futures, which was under contract with Ares to try and hook animals up to the Matrix. When that didn't work, they turned to paranimals and managed to catch Elohann. It was Emerging Futures who installed the dragon's datajack.

Ares, however, had not officially authorized this project; it was one of their ambitious middle managers. After Ares found out what was happening, Elohann had already figured out the way the world worked and bought the majority of Emerging Futures' shares, putting him in charge. He had just jacked into the Matrix for the first time—an excruciating experience which brought about a temporary case of amnesia afterward—when a professional hit team hired by Ares arrived. Elohann, maddened from the pain, managed to escape. Those with cooler heads at Ares prevailed and later negotiated for buying Emerging Futures and hiring Elohann as a researcher, instead.

• Cerberus

• Speaking of yourself in the third person. Cerberus? Perhaps that datajack isn't working as well as it should be, or your time in the

Matrix has affected you more than you believe.

• Grier

• I remember you, Ms. Grier; let's just say that you occupy a special place in my thoughts. While the original datajack installed years ago had been troublesome, the upgraded datajacks I now bear courtesy of Transys Neuronet are a vast improvement. You have no idea what I can accomplish here.

• Cerberus

Back in 2057, Celedyr and the people at Transys Neuronet first learned of Elohann's existence and capabilities. Since Elohann was an employee of Ares at the time, as well as the head of Emerging Futures (the company which had installed the datajack), convincing Elohann to defect to Transys required series of negotiations and shadowruns. I was involved in the most important run—Elohann's extraction—and after what my team and I went through, I've made it my personal duty to keep up with events concerning both of them.

• Nice fiction, but it doesn't quite jive. Neurosis was the name of the decker on that run, but he died; Ares black IC scorched his brain. Elohann picked up the Neurosis name and started using it, just like Cerberus. The dragon's got multiple personality disorder—and probably bigger problems—thanks to the chrome in his head. Animals, dragons or not, were never meant to jack in.

• Burning Chrome



- Let that become your mantra. Delusion becomes you.
- Tsangara

It's after the reading of Dunkelzahn's will that things truly get interesting. Eliohann seems driven to give other creatures the ability to jack in as he does. Not only that, but there's another, related entry in the will that he's been given the green light to pursue: communication between the very same species he wants to plug jacks into. Some sources in Transys say that he views communication as the logical next step after the installation of a datajack or other Matrix connection. Should he be successful at that, it will net him an island of his choice in the Caymans.

- A good spot for a new Transys Neuronet facility.
- MesoStim
- More likely that's where Emerging Futures will end up. Right now it's settled uncomfortably among Transys Neuronet's holdings in the London area.
- Shetani
- There're also the four accounts with Zurich-Orbital to wonder about. Notice how Dunkelzahn always mentioned specific amounts of nuyen in the will? No such mention with the Z-O accounts. It could be money, but my bet is information.
- Conspir-l-see

Eliohann's fascination with technology and the Matrix has led him to investigate the culture surrounding them, as well. His Matrix icon, a silver three-headed mastiff with glowing green eyes, has been spotted wandering in Matrix clubs, partaking in games and even taking in a Silicon Surfers concert.

- He's not there just to see the sights; he's there checking out his investments. I have it on good authority that he owns part of the Silicon Surfers' management. Between cracking the management's Matrix node through an Aztechnology backdoor and demonstrating some very shrewd business sense, they were quick to bring Eliohann aboard.
- Neon Wraith
- I've heard that. Any truth to the rumor that he's setting up an independent record label? I know a few artists who'd be interested, dragon or no dragon, just because they'd like to travel in the same circles as the Surfers.
- Sonic
- That's just noise. MCT is putting that out as a screen behind which they can try to talk to Eliohann. They make it look like their media divisions want to help him out, when it's really the bullyboys from Parashield. The Big D's money still draws them.
- Slipstream

FEUERSCHWINGE

Great Western Dragon (Deceased)

by Pooltizer

Feuerschwinge is one of the most obscure dragons, surrounded by countless mysterious stories and speculations since the wyrm's first and only appearance. None of them have been proven, however, and nobody knows the truth except for the dragon's comrades, but they aren't telling.

Feuerschwinge was first sighted in May 2012 above the German Harz Mountains, when he began systematically destroying villages and towns in the region. Army and air force units were activated against the dragon, resulting in a heavy fight and the loss of multiple fightercraft. Eventually, the orange-scaled dragon was shot down above the SOX, the irradiated region ravaged by the Cattenom-GAU meltdown in 2008. Army reports indicate that Feuerschwinge fell in the small town of Völklingen, but there are no official records of a carcass ever being recovered.

- Ignorant people. SHE spread HER wings around the SOX to rebuild it. And when the day arrives, SHE will arise from the ashes like the phoenix and bring the flames of truth to the Earth!
- tOXic
- Poor misguided soul. Hey, wait a sec. "She?" Feuerschwinge is/was a female?
- LabRat
- Kind of an indiscreet question. Perhaps you should address that query to Kattenstein. <chuckle >
- The Laughing Man

If you ask the Ghost Rats (SOX smugglers) on the whereabouts of Feuerschwinge, you will hear a lot of lunatic stories. Some glowpunks follow a dragon cult there calling themselves "Disciples of the Cleaning Fire." Some of them are toxic shamans, using magic with weird radiation effects. Supposedly led by a woman of unknown origin and age, this cult has significantly increased in numbers over the past decade. The Kontrollrat, which oversees the SOX, seems unable to determine their true goal and considers them a threat to corporate interests.

- That leader-chica gives me the creeps. Radiation burns dripping with pus, terrible scars, you wonder she's still alive. She named herself "Ignifera." Some believe she's the dragon, fused with the toxic background and trapped in her human form.
- X-Ray
- Unlikely. There is an alleged sighting of Feuerschwinge in Iceland in 2015.
- Wyrms Watcher
- What if the dragon that was seen in Iceland was just her astral body? Maybe it is true that her body died and she only exists on the astral plane?
- Rad Warrior

- But astral forms die after a limited time if they don't return to their body."

- Magister

- Oh yeah, what about Ghostwalker? It looks like he was in the metaplanes in astral form for centuries!

- Skeptic

- I heard some interesting stories from some MET 2000 lads whose lips were loosened by hard liquor. They told me that in 2058 the Kontrollrat directed MET 2000 to destroy the village of Völklingen and eliminate the glowpunk infestation there. Apparently the punks put up a meaner fight than expected, and the MET guys claimed the punks actually had a dragon fighting on their side.

- Lab Rat

- It could have just been the materialised form of a spirit the cult summoned. Maybe a great form spirit.

- Magister

- Hot news: the Ghost Rats have been offered good cred to provide a safe passage out of the SOX for several of the cult's members. Why would they want to leave? Oddly, the Rats tell me they've also been smuggling some unknown people into the SOX lately. Some sort of weird exchange program?

- Rasputin

Whatever the truth may be, no one has ever located Feuerschwinge's original lair. Many speculate that there is an unprotected dragon hoard just waiting to be found, and some scavengers have spent the better part of fifty years scouring the Harz Mountains for it. Others suspect that the other great dragons cleaned out and closed the lair long ago.

- Or maybe adopted it as their own. For that matter, who's to say that someone didn't already find it, and just isn't telling?

- Dragonslayer

- I hear that Kaltenstein has his dragon eyes watching the SOX. It doesn't matter whether he's looking for a body, a lair or some sign that Feuerschwinge lives—it doesn't pay to mess with dragon affairs.

- Wyrm Watcher

HENEQUEN

Adult Feathered Serpent

by Cheyenne Pepper

Now that the cat's out of the bag and everybody knows Henequen's a feathered serpent instead of just a friendly neighborhood import/export guy, it might be worthwhile to have an update on his activities. We haven't heard much out of him recently, because he's been too busy regrouping after Ghostwalker gave him his walking papers out of the Denver Sioux sector. Lately he's been occupying himself with re-establishing Henequen Enterprises in Cheyenne.

- That's an odd situation. I've seen it implied in a lot of places that Ghostwalker is on Henequen's drek list for booting him out of his plum little spot in Denver, but I don't think it's so. For one thing, I know Henny's been back a couple of times since then and Ghostwalker hasn't exactly chased him out of town.

- Squire

Though it might appear to the casual observer that Ghostwalker kicked Henequen out of Denver with his tail between his legs (well, if he *had* legs), anyone who believes this doesn't know much about dragons. What really happened was that when Ghostwalker showed up and reclaimed his domain, Henequen respected his claim and chose to relocate. The two of them actually maintain fairly cordial relations, mostly based on the fact that neither of them is exactly Aztlan's best friend. Ghostwalker has too much on his plate to get directly involved, but Henequen and other agents like him are very useful in funneling arms to the rebels (and intelligence in both directions).

Now that Henequen has resumed business in Cheyenne, the local authorities have been surprisingly cooperative with their new neighbor—though the wyrm's forays into the Cheyenne shadows have made the local underworld types more than a little uncomfortable.

- Old Whiteclay has been a little less anxious to get in Henequen's way since it's come out that he's a wyrm. Rumor is Whiteclay tried to have him cacked before he found out the whole story, and Henequen sent two of his best lieutenants home in a box. A really, really small box.

- Rubik

- Don't let this flurry of local yokel activity fool you, either—Henequen's focus is the same as it ever was: providing support and arms to the rebels in Aztlan. A friend of mine who should know says he's set up a pipeline with himself at one end and another feathered serpent named Pobre on the other end.

- Mile High Mindy

- Don't be too sure that's still true—I've heard Pobre has other things on his mind these days.

- Picador

- It's also rumored that Henequen is working closely with Zacaultipán, the feathered serpent who used to own the Serpent's Feather in Denver until Ol' Pale Scales kicked her (and her Azzie-employed brother) out.

- Cyclone

- Unlike what's apparently happening with Henequen, Ghostwalker really did boot those two out. Nearly killed 'em both when he intervened in their little spat. Henequen helped Zacaultipán out, and in exchange she's paying back a debt to him. I've heard he has her doing all his remote business, leaving him free to mind the store at home.

- Siouxzi



- Henequen had just better be careful—as the Azzies get more desperate, they're going to take bigger chances. They've already taken down one wizwyrm and I doubt they'd be reluctant to send some big guns after another one.

- Pyramid Watcher

KALTENSTEIN

Great Western Dragon

by Ecotope

If you believe everything you read, then you might think that the great dragon Kaltenstein ("Cold Stone") is long dead. According to several reports, Kaltenstein was attacked by Lofwyr and Nebelherr in 2012, just a few short weeks after his Awakening somewhere in the polluted North Sea. After a prolonged aerial battle, he plummeted to Earth near the Black Forest. Missing for years, he is officially presumed dead. But some of us on the fringes of society know he's still around and laying low.

- Reports on that dragon dogfight have always been confused at best. The press played it up like Lofwyr took out a rival, but actual eyewitness accounts indicate otherwise. It was Kaltenstein who furiously attacked first Nebelherr and then Lofwyr when he came to the younger dragon's aid. Recent reports say it took both dragons to keep Kaltenstein from entering the SOX, and he fled the fight severely injured.

- Ahab

- Keep in mind that this fight occurred right after Feuerschwinge had a fatal run-in with the German military and was shot down in the SOX.

- Felix

- Am I getting this right? Sounds to me like Kaltenstein was rushing to Feuerschwinge's aid, but Nebelherr interfered and tried to stop him from taking a trip into Meltdown Central. Then Kaltenstein went nuclear on Nebelherr, but Lofwyr arrived just in time to save Nebelherr's hoop. How's that scan?

- GnuB

- Why not let Kaltenstein have his way in the first place? The military could have shot his scaly hoop down too. Or maybe the rads in the SOX would've fried him. The dragons would have lost a rival and we'd all have one less wyrm to deal with.

- Dragonslayer

- Even Lofwyr has been known to show compassion—which is more than can be said of you.

- Orange Queen

From the shadows, Kaltenstein has secretly funded and aided various eco-activist groups for years, from the Green Cells to the Klabauterbund. But rather than simply fund the activist's operations, Kaltenstein always asks for favors in return—typically, investigations and spy jobs. He takes a very dim view of groups under the sway of toxic shamans. From my observations, he pays

special attention to European toxic zones like the SOX, North Sea or the Scottish Fringe.

- Kaltenstein's been known to hire runners to purge Green polyclubs and groups of the "corrupting" influence of toxics.

- Pooltizer

Corporate and government intelligence reports speculate that Kaltenstein kept a lair in the Feldberg region of the Black Forest Troll Kingdom (not far from where he fell after his battle with Nebelherr and Lofwyr). There has been some speculation that Kaltenstein played a secret role in the so-called "Troll-Wars" (2038–44) in southern Germany that led to the foundation of the kingdom. These rumors reached new heights with the still-unsolved disappearance of troll monarch King Berthold I in mid-2061.

- Berthold I was officially reported missing on July 21st, 2061, after not attending his scheduled meetings. To date, in-depth investigations into his whereabouts have come up empty handed. His successor, Chancellor Hugo von Hasslach, took over the scepter in a surprisingly short time.

- Rübzahl

- Kaltenstein's suspected lair was "discovered" not long after Berthold's disappearing act. The Troll Kingdom authorities kept it hushed up and put it under guard. Even so, I hear a corporate team raided it to make sure it was as "cleaned out" as the rumors suggested. No word yet on if they found anything.

- Flint

Countless theories are making the rounds in the wake of these events. Some suggest Berthold was Kaltenstein in metahuman form, others indicate the troll king served as the dragon's public voice, with Kaltenstein pulling his strings from behind the throne. Some of us know the truth, but it matters little now. Be assured, though, that Kaltenstein's support for the troll kingdom's cause has not dried up.

- Recent unconfirmed reports have Kaltenstein "shaking claws" with a high ranking official in the Commission of Metahuman Rights at the United Nations HQ in Geneva. It seems likely he's focused on a new project, wherein the UN plays a critical part.

- Ambassador

- Maybe he's preparing another "Troll-War," considering the metahuman prejudice that's marked the Swiss government for decades. Politics aside, with Lofwyr's takeover of the Swiss Bank corporation, Kaltenstein may also be trying to settle old scores.

- Rübzahl

MUJAJI

Great Feathered Serpent

by Sefu

I will begin this narrative by stating that I am frankly astonished by the fact that my companions and I are still alive. It has

been five days since we returned from Table Mountain, and every hour I look back over my shoulder expecting to see the Rain Queen or one of her minions waiting to pounce upon us like a lion on an unsuspecting antelope.

We should not have taken the job. I know that now, but an empty belly and the prospect of riches can do much to cloud the judgment of even those with our level of experience.

- Who is this Sefu guy?
- Tenshi

• Mercenary. Mostly works out of northern Africa, though he and his team have been known to take jobs to the south if the price is right.

- Asad

We had been making a lucrative living for the past year or so with the orichalcum rush—between guarding shipments leaving the area and doing a bit of surreptitious mining on our own, we'd made enough to replace most of our equipment with prototypes from the Desert Wars black markets. Because we did not expect our good fortune to desert us so quickly when the comet moved on and the mines dried up, however, we were less prudent than we should have been and soon found ourselves once more in need of employment. The offer, made to us late one night in a bar in Cairo by an elf who called himself Scale, was too good for us to pass up. We simply had to go to an area near Table Mountain in Azania, sneak into a particular nature preserve, and return with a lion cub. For this, we would be rewarded with enough cred to keep us all happy for at least the next year.

- Wait a minute—Scale? Doesn't he work for ... ?
- Slafer

- Yeah. Big, gold and nasty.
- Findler-Man

• What's Lofwyr want with a lion cub, anyway? If he wants a pet couldn't he just get a robodog like the rest of us?

- Tango

- You go right ahead and ask him.
- Bung

I fear our greed got the better of us—how else can I explain how we consented to accept a job that involved stealing a creature protected by Mujaji, the Rain Queen? I think we rationalized it by telling ourselves that we did not actually have to violate the Rain Queen's domain, for I don't think any of us would have been foolish enough to do that. She cannot be watching everywhere at once, we told ourselves, and if luck was with us we could be in and out before she was aware of our presence.

- Question: Why is Mujaji called the Rain Queen?
- Yankee

• Her legend actually predates the Awakening. Both names are actually titles—the first Mujaji supposedly took political and ceremonial power back in the 1800s to avert a crisis among the Lovedu people in the Transvaal. Even then, Mujaji was described as both a woman and a dragon. Traditionally, she's the protector of the Xhosa people of South Africa against the Zulus—a job that the modern-day Mujaji takes pretty seriously. The "Rain Queen" part comes from the fact that the legend says her moods influence the weather—when she's happy we get gentle rain, but when she's angry the rain turns to violent storms.

- Xhosite

We arrived at the designated place under cover of darkness the next night. The lions were not difficult to find—we had seen several of them during the day and had identified a lioness with a single cub as our target. It was not until we made our move that everything began to go wrong. One moment we were preparing to shoot the lioness with a tranquilizer dart, and the next moment we were losing consciousness from the effects of some unknown attack. Before I blacked out I thought I saw one of the lions rise up to its hind legs and roar something that almost sounded like speech.

- It probably was speech. I've heard tell of lion shapeshifters in that area, and I've also heard that they have some kind of agreement with Mujaji. If these slags tried to grab one of their cubs I'm surprised they didn't end up as a midnight snack.
- Twister

When we awoke, we were lying on the ground in the center of a grove of trees. Our weapons were gone, of course. Surrounding us were several warriors who did not speak, but merely stood as if waiting for something. After an hour or so, they suddenly stood at attention, though we heard nothing, and turned toward one side of the grove.

A woman entered, flanked on each side by a magnificent lion. Despite myself I almost felt compelled to bow to her, so regal was her bearing. She stood tall and striking, her skin the color of rich chocolate and her eyes flecked with all the hues of the rainbow. A headdress of iridescent feathers rose high above her head. Though I possess not a shred of magical blood, even I felt the strength of her aura.

"Why do you seek to disturb what is mine?" she asked. Her voice was a rich, deep contralto.

I am not too proud to admit that I was shaking, for I knew who she was even though she did not display her true form. "I—"

Her eyes probed mine like twin lasers. I could feel her in my mind, but I was powerless to stop her. In a moment she nodded once. "I see," she said. "He shows his arrogance, to strike at me so close to my home." She regarded me sternly for a few more seconds, then removed something from her flowing garment. "Take this," she told me, handing me a small and intricately carved wooden sculpture in the shape of a lioness. "Give it to your employer, to show that I have rebuffed his challenge."



- Challenge? Is Lofwyr trying to pull something on Mujaji?
- Tumbleweed
- I wouldn't be surprised. She's actively opposed Saeder-Krupp's activities in Africa—she doesn't take kindly to his polluting her home turf.
- Colonel Cobra
- She doesn't take kindly to pollution period, though she's more concerned with protecting animal species than land. I understand that she and Hualpa over in Amazonia have gotten together a few times to compare notes about that very subject. She's also rumored to be a heavy contributor to the World Wildlife Fund and other critter-friendly organizations.
- Keller
- I wonder if Sefu ever went back to Lofwyr with her message, and if so, how tasty a snack he made.
- Billy-Bob
- Sefu, if you're out there, tell us the end of the story, chummer.
- Hangfire
- Sefu?
- Hangfire

NEBELHERR

Adult Western Dragon

by BAVARIA

You think all dragons are conspiratorial and inscrutable? That amicability is not in their nature? Never, ever trust a dragon, no matter how friendly he is rumored to be? Well then, let me give you this wyrm to chew on, because Nebelherr ("Mist Lord") may not fit into this (sometimes appropriate) dragon cliché.

Unlike many other dragons, who operate behind the scenes and who busy themselves with a web of nefarious activities, Nebelherr has cultivated an image as a public (if reclusive) and leisurely dragon. From his lair on the island of HerrenChiemsee (in the Chiemsee lake, in Bavaria, Allied German States), Nebelherr lives a quiet and relaxed lifestyle. Though he requests privacy and avoids dealing with metahumans, he regularly appears in public, going out for a swim or sun bathing. In fact, he has become a popular tourist attraction in Bavaria, blithely ignoring the trid choppers that hover above his island and the tourist ferries that cruise by at a close distance. He also appears in the AGS newsfeeds on a regular basis, though so far he has refused any requests for interviews.

Can it be true Nebelherr is a true "bon vivant" of dragonkind, as some people think of him, disdaining draconian plots and schemes? Let's take a look at what we know.

Nebelherr first appeared in 2012, bursting forth from beneath the basement of a crowded Bavarian drinking hall. A few weeks later, he was spotted attempting to prevent the great dragon Kaltenstein from entering the radioactive SOX territory. After taking a beating, Nebelherr was saved by the intervention

of Lofwyr. Together the pair defeated Kaltenstein and drove him away.

- Without Lofwyr's intervention, Kaltenstein would have crushed Nebelherr without a second thought—by all accounts, he was in a frenzy. The golden wyrm saved Nebelherr's gray-white hoop on that day.
- Pulitzer
- So what does that mean in draconic tradition? Does Nebelherr now owe his life to Lofwyr? Did Nebelherr have to shine Lofwyr's scales for ten years?
- Zwieblblootz
- True words so lightly spoken. Nebelherr is no vassal; Lofwyr keeps all his lackeys on tight leashes, after all. But to owe such a debt, especially to one such as Lofwyr, is a heavy burden.
- Script-Diver

I tried to dig up some dirt on Nebelherr, but came up nearly barehanded. He really does seem to be uninvolved in word affairs—at least for now. He does quietly own some corporate assets, the nucleus of which is the Dallmayr Corporation, which he bought up in the 30's during the political unrest and economic recession in the Southern Germany. The Munich-based company supplies corporate, government and political clients with basic food, catering, cleaning and office supplies. It is hardly the shadow operation one would expect a dragon to run, and he seems to use it for little, though he does receive regular reports.

- Nebelherr uses Dallmayr primarily to gather intelligence: with the supply contracts come access to a lot of restricted information and access for Dallmayr personnel to various secure facilities. That old lady with the foodcart and the Dallmayr logo on her dress may be looking over your shoulder as you work. Same with the Dallmayr guy who sorts through your trash before emptying it and the pretty caterer who listens to all the gossip as she offers you canapés at the annual shareholder's meeting. All of these grunts work for a dragon, natch.
- Rasputin
- But why collect data like this if he doesn't use it?
- Skeptic
- Nebelherr also owns stock portfolios in several media companies like DeMeKo, covering media from Matrix feeds to trid networks. I also suspect a few personas that regularly visit and post queries to certain newsboards and online forums may be Nebelherr, or an agent of his. He keeps himself pretty well informed on what's going on in the world, you ask me. But so far he only watches and doesn't act.
- Konwacht
- If Nebelherr is in debt to Lofwyr, maybe he's staying inactive to avoid being drawn into the Golden One's schemes and having



to deal with the inevitable fallout.

- Zwieblbloatz

- That could be the reason why he plays the public game. He's intentionally placed himself under the media spotlight and public eye, which would make using him for shadow activity a risky proposition.

- Pooltizer

PERIANWYR

Adult Western Dragon

by Gahbardi

A friend of mine mentions that Captain Chaos is putting together a download on the dragons of the here and now. So of course he comes to me. Why? B'cuz I'm one of the fools who dealt with a dragon—and I'm a rich man because of it.

I met the dragon named Perianwyr almost a year ago. I had just retired from the spell-slingin' shadow life after losing one body part too many; it's hard to party when you're waiting for your arm to re-grow. So I bought this old warehouse in Denver

and blew most of my money turning it into a club named the Weekday Eclipse. Don't really know about the name, just kinda liked it. Unfortunately, all my knowledge about running a club comes from being in one, usually while heavily intoxicated. So the place tanked pretty fast. I called in a few favors with some friends, and they managed to pull in a miracle: I booked Maria Mercurial to play at my little dive.

- You're welcome.

- Dvixen

It was a last ditch effort, and I knew that even this desperate stunt couldn't save my hoop, but it was worth a try. The concert was great, packed house and all. But afterwards, I find a guy almost passed out at a booth near the back, bawling his eyes out. I noticed one thing about him right away: He didn't look like a guy you'd find crying in a nightclub. He wasn't real tall or real muscular, but his face, even all red and puffy from tears and booze, had a hard edge to it, like he was carved out of granite. He wasn't a bad looking dude; his dark hair and goatee probably made all the women swoon. I figured he was on the bad end of



a break up, and it was my luck to toss him out. What does he do as I'm dragging him across the dance floor? He passes out, then promptly turns into a fraggin' dragon!

Fortunately, I'd drunk quite a bit that night as well, so I couldn't summon the mojo to sling a spell. I'd probably have been dragon food if I had. Luckily, even having a blue and black dragon suddenly appear in the middle of my dance floor didn't kill my buzz. Not knowing what else to do, I let him sleep it off. I sent the staff home and crashed on the bar.

- Statistically, a dragon would need to drink most of a bar's stock of alcohol to even feel the effects, let alone get falling down drunk. How much did this dragon drink?

- Wright

- I think Peri can "let" himself get drunk if he wants. He seems to enjoy the occasional bender, and he's been nothing but a "happy" drunk since that first night. I've seen him get tipsy on a couple of beers, and I've seen him match a troll shot for shot and stay stone cold sober, so it's probably a conscious act on his part.

- Gahbardi

When the big lizard finally woke up, he was calm and cool and transformed back into his human self, like nothing happened. To this day he won't say what was bothering him that night. Despite him being one very cool chummer, I'm not about to press him for details. He's still a dragon, ya know?

- Perianwyr used to be partners with an assassin named Kyle Morgan; they were Aztechnology's top freelance hitters for over 10 years. They suffered their first failure with a job involving Mercurial and some data she had sealed away in some headware. Rumor has it they failed the job on purpose. If the dragon is as big a music fan as he seems, that could be reason enough. The pair left Aztechnology after a second job went bad a couple years later. Morgan's location is currently unknown, and Perianwyr is listed as an unreasonable cost expenditure to recapture—especially since he's made his home in Ghostwalker's realm.

- Pyramid Watcher

- Kyle Morgan's dead. His past just finally caught up with him. You know how they say that to become the number one assassin in the world, you have to kill the current number one? Well, Kyle was Number One for a very, very long time. He got careless a few years back during a flight out of Cleveland, and someone arranged for an "engine malfunction" on his plane.

- Bull

Now, Peri's **nothing** real special as far as dragons go. He's not famous, he doesn't own a megacorp and he didn't run for president. No, his biggest claim to fame came from a dragon who did run for office, though. The Big D left Peri a present when he went to that big dragon hoard in the sky: his music collection. And let me tell you, this was one hell of a music collection. We're talking a warehouse of chips, disks and even fraggin' cassettes,

vinyl and some drek called an 8-track. It's beautiful, man. Stones, Beatles, early Concrete Dreams, classic Psychedelic Phlegm. You name it, chances are good it's in this collection.

- Before they handed it over, the Draco Foundation appraised Dunkelzahn's music collection. It was hard to judge because a good portion of it consisted of demo tapes, audition reels and other one-of-a-kind pieces, but the figures I heard put the value somewhere well into the 8 digit figures.

- Nuyen Nick

So why would the Big D leave Perianwyr his music collection? Because that's what Peri is all about. He loves art, especially music. Doesn't matter to him if it's some classic slag like Mozart, the latest in destruction metal, or some old hillbilly country tune. He just loves music, all of it. Me, my tastes run pretty skim most of the time, but not this guy. He's all over the charts and off them most of the time.

Anyway, back to my story. Peri tells me he's a music lover and that he has some ideas that could make this club the hottest place in Denver, if I'm willing to take on a partner. Three months later, the Weekday Eclipse re-opens with some remodeling. I have a new partner and we're playing live music 7 days a week. Don't ask me how he finds 'em, but the wurm has a knack for finding pure and raw music talent. You heard the latest from Blitzkrieg that's been clogging every music broadcast in the UCAS and CAS? Peri picked them up on a street corner near here three months ago, busking for rent money.

- The Weekday Eclipse is rapidly becoming the place to go for music in Denver. It may even eclipse Underworld 93 as the hottest place to play for up-and-comings, if you'll pardon the pun. Talent scouts and execs from most of the music labels show up on a nightly basis to see what Peri has to trot out.

- Neon Blue

- And at least twice someone's tried to snatch the talent after a set, likely an extraction for some music Johnson who wants first crack at the band. Peri personally intervened in at least one case.

- Fidget

- While Peri and Gahbardi don't manage the new groups they discover, they do keep a finger in the pie. In exchange for showcasing the new bands and hooking them up with record execs, they ask that the band give them licensing rights to play and sell some of their music through the Matrix, mostly stuff recorded live when the band plays at the Eclipse. It doesn't really hurt the band, since it gets some of their music out there months before an studio album gets cut, and the guys make some good nuyen off the live recordings.

- Blitz

- Don't make the mistake of thinking that Perianwyr has settled down. No runner is ever truly retired, least alone a dragon. He's pulled a few ops in the Denver area since he got involved with his

new club. Rumor has it his "Mr. Johnson" was the big white wyrm that's running Denver these days.

• Mac

So yeah, that's my dragon. He's like a little kid at Christmas when this place is packed, the speakers pumping out his latest musical find. We have record execs lining up to get in every night. It's unreal, man. Eight months ago I was worried about living on the street, and last night I got invited to dinner with sim-star Patrice Kim. "Never deal with a dragon?" I'll deal with this dragon any day of the week.

POBRE

Adult Feathered Serpent

by Aguilar

Except for an interview back in '56, the feathered serpent Pobre has kept a low profile (Azzie dead-or-deader contracts have that effect on people). The rebel wyrm (who still calls himself "Mexican" to show his pride in his true heritage) has been content to direct his forces' activities from behind the scenes. Over the past year, though, some disturbing reports about Pobre have trickled out of the war-torn jungles of the Yucatán.

Though sightings of the serpent—even by his own forces—have become increasingly rare, intelligence reports from the area suggest that Pobre's behavior is growing progressively more erratic. In fact, some of the wyrm's own forces have deserted in fear for their lives, joining up with other isolated rebel groups instead. These deserters tell stories of Pobre's sudden unfocused rages, frequent bouts of irrationality and general decline in appearance. Though he still remains by all accounts focused on his goal of removing Aztlan's presence from the Yucatán, his tactics have reportedly become random, inexplicable and dangerous.

• Nothing inexplicable about it. Sounds to me like he got caught in the Azzies' scorched-earth party and picked up a few too many nasty chemicals. Dragons might be tough, but they're still living organisms like the rest of us. If he was in the wrong place at the wrong time and got a snootful of Chemical X, he's got to be hating life.

• Mad Chemist

• Right church, wrong pew, MC. What's happened to Pobre is the same thing that happened to a lot of shamans down there—he's going crazy from all the bad stuff flying around in the astral. I've even heard rumors that he's about a hair's-breadth away from going toxic, but he won't admit it. That's what's making him act so strange.

• Zapatista

• From what I've heard, it's not making his dragon chummers too happy, either. Hualpa is especially nervous, particularly given some uneasy rumors that Pobre's opened up a communications link with Sirurg.

• Raptor

• A toxic feathered serpent and a terrorist great dragon—yeah, I can see how that could make lots of people nervous. Including me.

• Dragonslayer

Following the spontaneous uprising of spirits in the Yucatán Peninsula and the pullback of the Aztlaner troops, Pobre has once again disappeared into the jungles. His whereabouts are currently unknown.

• Don't be too sure about this whole toxic thing—it might be a ruse to keep people away from him. I won't say where I heard it, but there's talk that Pobre is actually working on some kind of major regeneration mojo like they used in Amazonia to reclaim the Yucatán. If he and Sirurg are working together, this might be why.

• Brujo

• Hold on—didn't I read something about a rebel-associated feathered serpent getting shot down by an Azzie helicopter?

• Boondocker

• That wasn't Pobre. Not too many people got a good look at the body, but best guess is it was Sonador. He was hooked up with the rebel movement too—one of the leaders of the Aztlan Freedom League.

• Jungle Creeper

• What about Henequen? I've heard from more than one source that he and Pobre have set up a pipeline to filter arms down to the rebels.

• Bronco Fan

• That used to be true, but it's old news. Henny's still in business, but he's looking for a new partner.

• Arctic White

• Are you sure? Zacautipán's been seen down in that area recently—I wonder if Henequen didn't send her to try to straighten things out.

• Isabel

SCHWARTZKOPF

Great Western Dragon

by Reality Czech

If anyone attempts to categorize the Sixth World's wizards into archetypes, the "Educated Mentor" would be the label I'd stick on Schwartzkopf. Most of you probably only know him from the media blitz during the Orichalcum Rush of late '61, when he thwarted AG Chemie's and Eastern Star Pharmaceuticals' mining operations in the German Marienbad Council, forcing the corps out. Though he trod all over the corporations' toes, the Marienbad population welcomed his actions. Using this popularity as leverage, Schwartzkopf unified the numerous baronies and duchies and installed himself as the



Council's "Protector." But don't be fooled, the anti-corp campaign was nothing but an orchestrated coup to expand his turf.

- Schwartzkopf roughly translates into "Blackhead," which is also the translation of "Schwarzkoppe," the mountain he woke up on.
- Wyrm Watcher

Soon after, Schwartzkopf contacted a select few local companies to answer the demand for orichalcum and other natural resources the discerning spellslinger craves. While a small amount of Marienbad's exports do indeed reach your corner talismonger shop, Schwartzkopf actually channels most of it into his other main field of interest, the University of Prague. Since the addition of arcane studies to the university's curriculum in 2022, the great dragon himself has lectured in Arcane and Metamagical Theory, Alchemy and Spell Design. That's right, Europe's premiere University for the Magical Arts boasts one professor that really enforces "draconian methods" on the students.

- Schwartzkopf usually lectures in his dwarf metahuman form, though he's also known to lecture in his dark-green scaled true form—only on special occasions, of course.
- Magister

Since his arrival on campus, Schwartzkopf has established close ties not only to Czech Wiccans and Prague street witches, but also to a plethora of circles and societies within other "minor" traditions prominent throughout Europe. A strong supporter of the Unified Magic Theory (UMT) that first appeared among Prague scholars, Schwartzkopf has even lured a growing number of the city's Awakened Jewish population into the halls of academia.

- Swartzky relies on street witches in particular to serve as his eyes and ears in the shadows. Several gypsy tribes are known to act as henchmen for him as well. Both groups have large memberships, but have little influence outside their niche, due to internal rivalry and conflicts between each other.
- Prof M.

There's quite a collection of spell-slingers with odd traditions walking the back streets of Prague—and not just European traditions. We're talking Hawaiian Nene shamans, qabbalists, wujen and druids—not to mention the folks whose styles aren't even classified. Schwartzkopf does everything he can to learn about their traditions and metamagical techniques. He "collects" Awakened metahumans the way entymologists study new types of insects. Persistent rumors state his interests are not limited to theories alone, but with experiencing the practical side of the traditions' rituals and conjurations first hand.

- Audun
- Are you implying that Schwartzkopf is learning techniques that are unique to particular traditions? That's simply not possible!
- Skeptic

- Come to Prague and see.
- Mentat

At Schwartzkopf's behest, the university's dean arranged for the construction of a lair underneath the university district of the Czech Republic's capital. Clay homunculi, commonly known as "golems," are rumored to guard the lair. Schwartzkopf now mostly resides in Prague, sending his "voice," Tatjana Romanov, to Marienbad to handle his political affairs.

- I know what you're thinking when you read the name Romanov. Coincidence? I think not! We're talking about dragons after all. No family ties with jet setting Claudia Romanov have come up, but I have feeling it's a question of time.
- Wyrm Watcher

- A certain tale is making the round in the Jewish quarters of Prague lately, referring to the legend of Rabbi Loew and the Golem—wherein the Rabbi created the first golem to protect Jews from persecution during the 1600s. This latest version says the Rabbi didn't create the golem, but rather found it in ancient burrows beneath the city, left behind by the great dragon to protect the place upon which Prague was built centuries later.
- No_Name_Hero

That's a rumor spread by the dragon to lure the city's qabbalists into his sphere of influence. By showing interest in all our traditions and paths, Schwartzkopf uses the precepts of UMT only to his own ends. Like a scientist, he's studying us—the Awakened and our skills. His curiosity towards the objects of his studies is no more or less than ours when watching a rat trying to work her way through a maze.

- LabRat

- A far more pertinent metaphor than you would ever realize. There are interesting similarities between the UMT and the wyrms' own understanding of magic.
- Wordsmyth

Au contraire, mon ami: While he indeed prefers to interact directly with the "young races," his motivations and intentions are far from straightforward. By teaching the young races he is learning from them. Of all the greats currently interfering with metahumanity's course, he may in fact be the most interested in understanding the Sixth World's diversity in culture and magical traditions. As he's been known to put it himself, "Born from your unique but incomplete understanding of the higher forces." He seems genuinely impressed by our advances in the use of the arcane.

- Greif

To further the "academic cause," Schwartzkopf is funding magical research and development in almost every culture and arcane tradition in the world. He sponsors research programs, PhD fellowships and scholarships, all the while promoting open

exchange of knowledge in the magical fields. Officially, he's pursuing the establishment of a "Great Library" on the University's Campus in Prague, a library that (when completed) will dwarf even the one at Germany's Jena university.

- Which puts him at odds with fellow dragon Masaru and arcano-archaeology outfits like the Apep Consortium and the Atlantean Foundation—especially since he spares no effort to "acquire" ancient artifacts and tomes from right under their noses. Also, corps like S-K and MCT aren't too happy with him either, since they've been exploiting the colleges' dependence on outside funds to shoehorn them into co-op research programs that ultimately benefit the corps' own magical R&D divisions.

- Magocrat

- After three decades of lecturing, Schwartzkopf isn't limited to shadowy methods alone when looking for new items to add to his library collection. He's established his personal old boys' network with many of his former students now working in the field as top-notch arcane research eggheads. Schwartzky keeps in touch with them, watching their careers, helping on occasion and funding their research in exchange for a first look on freshly uncovered tomes and artifacts.

- Alma mater

- It's not all just gadgets and grimoires—he offers huge bounties for magical oddities like blood mages, Aleph members or even shedim and other odd spirits. "Welcome to Prague, please declare any dangerous magic on entry."

- Concrete

- Read the signs. Add it up: a great dragon, the Unified Magic Theory, magical threats and downtrodden magical traditions. He's arming himself for magical war!

- Dragonslayer

SIRRURG

Great Western Dragon

by Vindicator

There are those in this enlightened age who would have us believe that the great dragon SIRRURG is not a terrorist. He is a crusader, they say—a freedom fighter for the cause of the Awakened and of those who turn their backs on the technological advances of the modern day.

They are wrong. SIRRURG is a destroyer. I have spent a fortune and many years in Amazonia researching this elusive dragon, and what I have found might surprise you. The fact that he has not made any definitive moves recently means nothing—dragons are patient beings, and SIRRURG, powerful as he is, must balance his plans carefully against the wishes of his fellow great dragons. Until then he waits, playing his games in Amazonia, preparing for a time when he can make his move.

- Who is this guy? The Lone Gunman's looper brother?

- Hangfire

- No, I've met him. He seems surprisingly sane in person, if a tad driven. I won't reveal his name, but I will say that it matched a last name on the passenger list of a certain EuroAir Flight 329.

- Jenner

- He's related to somebody on that flight SIRRURG took down back in '41?

- Bung

- It wasn't a common name.

- Jenner

SIRRURG has never revealed himself to the world except in very public—and very potent—displays of power. His first known appearance was leading the Awakened takeover of Amazonia, alongside Hualpa and another unidentified dragon. On his own, SIRRURG wreaked uncounted devastation on Brazilian defenses, destroying entire units, neighborhoods and villages.

- He didn't get the nickname of "The Destroyer" for nothing. My mother was one of the few who escaped with her life after he attacked Belo Horizonte in '34. She says he annihilated most of the city's industrial areas, killing thousands in the process.

- Alvaro

- SIRRURG may have helped to found Amazonia, but he and Hualpa aren't exactly best buddies, though—it's more like they tolerate each other, though word is that neither of them is very happy about what's going on in the Yucatán. SIRRURG's even more of a back-to-nature type than Hualpa, setting himself up in the Amazonian interior with a collection of nasty Awakened beasties and no people to speak of. He eats anybody he catches in his domain.

- Lynch

In the years that followed, SIRRURG was accountable for a scattering of strikes on various corporate and government targets in Europe and South America, culminating with the tragic and senseless attack on an airliner full of innocent beings in 2041. He is also suspected of terrorist attacks in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, though he leaves few survivors to attest to his involvement.

- So anybody know anything about the guy on that plane who held the wyrm off with magic?

- Smiley

- EuroAir tried to keep it quiet, but to this day nobody knows who he was. He was traveling under an assumed name, and when they went to look for his next of kin, they found out no such person existed.

- Airline Amy

Following this series of attacks, SIRRURG dropped out of sight, remaining hidden for 20 years. In reality he simply took his oper-



ations underground, directing a network of terror from his home base in Amazonia.

Who are his targets? This remains a mystery, though some have clearly been attacked for their blatant use of technology to despoil the land. Sirurg's ultimate aim appears to be returning the world to its more "natural" state—even if that means destroying metahumanity and its gains to do it.

- He's been known to hire agents, but he uses spirits and other Awakened creatures as intermediaries. Nobody he's worked for has ever met directly with him.

- Jesse Windwalker

- The most frightening things about Sirurg are that the targets of his attacks are seemingly random and he has no regard for collateral damage. I once talked to a guy who claims to be the only witness to an attack in the mid-40's where Sirurg himself destroyed a train car—along with the rest of the train and the bridge it was crossing at the time. This witness insists that the dragon was targeting one particular car.

- Meistersinger

- I remember this—it was in Argentina. The supposed target was a higher-up for a particularly nasty mining company. Officially it was blamed on structural failure of the bridge, but nobody believed that. I hadn't heard the dragon angle, though.

- Francisco

- I'd be surprised if several unsolved "no witnesses, no survivors" attacks didn't have Sirurg's mark—it seems to be the way he operates.

- Mad Merc

- Not all of Sirurg's targets can be chalked up to eco-polluters. In many cases, he's clearly targeted select individuals with no eco-destroying connections. Unfortunately, there's not usually much left to ID the victims by, or in some cases figure out which corpse was the one he was after, so it's hard to construct a pattern.

- Lynch

- Ah, Big Green. Hunting the hunters I see.

- The Laughing Man

TJURJUNGA

Adult Dragon (Type Unknown)

by Tamino

I wanted to give you all the gen on the Down Under dragons, since folks seem to be curious, but the trouble is there's just not that much information to give. As far as I've been able to establish, yes, there are dragons in Outback Australia, and some folks have even had contact with them. The reliable data stops there, though, and it becomes a matter of hearsay and conjecture. I've collated this after talking to a lot of mates from back home and piecing together the fragments.

The most commonly-discussed dragon in Australia is one who frequents the heart of the Outback, to date identified only by coloration and behavior. He (or she) has been described as sinuous and snake-like, perhaps twenty meters long with slender limbs and no wings. His scales are colored in shifting shades of ochre that serve as effective camouflage in the desert, and his underbelly is a pale tan.

This dragon—if it is one individual—ranges all about the Simpson and Strzelecki Deserts. He hunts by secrecy and stealth, picking off individuals until he's ready to stage a more comprehensive assault. He's reportedly decimated corporate resource hunters, talismongering expeditions and camps of tourists alike, though some survivors have successfully escaped—or have been allowed to escape.

- So what about the rumors of Oz dragons hunting those who find out about them? I remember Glaive saying something of the sort once.

- Thumper

- Well, our antipodean serpents certainly seem to like their privacy. I wouldn't even feel comfortable about posting this if I weren't sitting in nice rainy Seattle, seven thousand miles from home.

- Tamino

- Hell, Australia's wildlife is pretty fraggin' hostile in general. Most of the fauna would probably hunt us all down and kill us if they could.

- Glaive

Contrary to these reports, some of the more communicative koradji have made mention of a similar-sounding dracoform who occasionally cooperates with them. They refer to him as Tjurjunga, a name intrinsically connected with their belief in the Dreamtime, though his true appellation is anyone's guess. They're not a talkative bunch, but they do say that Tjurjunga will work with them to protect the traditional tribes, and the land itself, from the depredations of Western settlement. They respect him greatly, and ascribe any number of abilities to him; everything from skill as a hunter far outstripping their own to dominion over local animals and the weather itself.

- He may help the koradji and their people if pressed, but he's hardly the Dudley Do-Right of the draconic world. If it's the same dracoform I've heard of, he's irritable and anti-social, and very jealous of his privacy. Would-be intruders tend to be met with tooth and claw, and thankfully no one these days is dumb enough to try looking for his lair.

- Umanyi

- That hasn't stopped the corps from trying, mind you. There's hefty compensation going for anyone foolhardy enough to join an expedition to hunt him, find his lair, or otherwise get in his way. The reward would pay for a nice funeral, at any rate.

- Rolinox

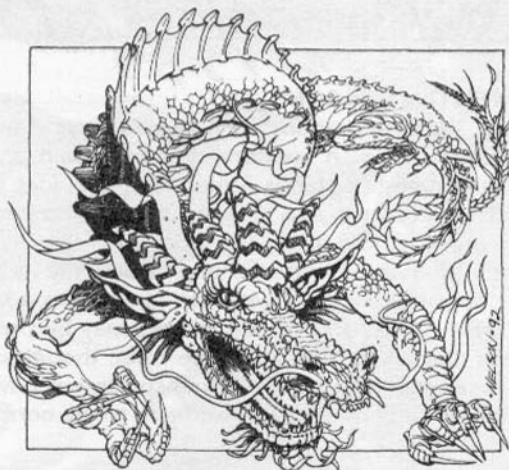
GAME INFORMATION



This section presents general information on dragons and dracoforms in *Shadowrun*, expanding on the material found in the *Spirits & Dragons* chapter of the *Shadowrun, Third Edition* rulebook. In some cases it reprints material from that chapter for ease of reference, slightly revised and updated. In the case of any differences, the material in this chapter should be considered the most recent and "official."

DRAGON TYPES

There are several different types of dragons found around the world. They are all large saurian creatures of great intelligence, and match descriptions of mythological dragons and great serpents from the areas where they are found. What little is known about dragons comes from interviews with the great dragon Dunkelzahn. Most dragons are solitary creatures that avoid unnecessary contact with other beings.



EASTERN DRAGONS

Eastern dragons are native to Asia. An eastern dragon's head and body measure 15 meters in length. Its height at the shoulder is 2 meters. Its tail is an additional 15 meters long, and the creature weighs some 7,500 kilograms. It has a serpentine shape, with a broad, low head adorned with a fringe of whiskers along the chin and along the rear portions of the skull. Pairs of horns rise from behind the eyes, and a pair of barbules descends from beneath the pronounced nasal region. Scaly armor covers the body, neck, and tail, which are surmounted by a ridge of membrane-connected spines. The highly dexterous paws are four-fingered, with each digit ending in a large claw. The most common pattern of eastern dragon coloration is

iridescent green with golden whiskers and belly scutes, but various other color patterns are known.

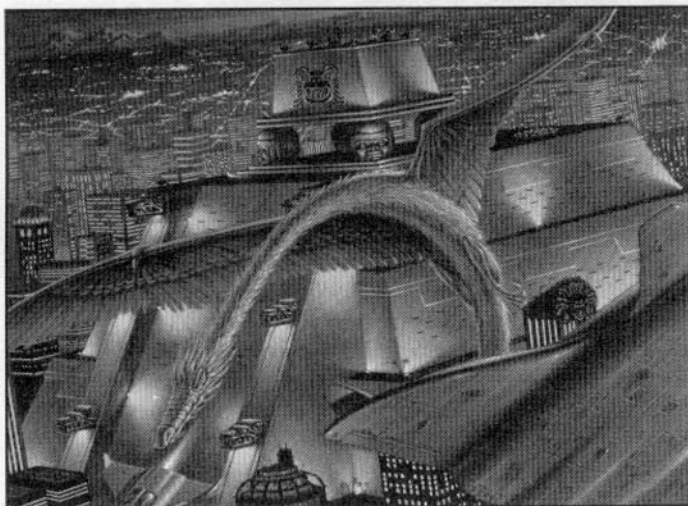
Sirrush: The sirrush, indigenous to Asia Minor, appears quite similar to the eastern dragon, but its limbs are longer and its tail shorter. Its head is narrower and deeper, and it lacks whiskers and barbules. The digits of the sirrush's hind paws are all forward facing and show limited dexterity. Its scales tend to be less colorful, more often in earth tones of brown, gray, gold and terra cotta. A sirrush's game stats are identical to those of a normal eastern dragon.

B 14/8 **Q** 8 (x3) **S** 35 **C** 9 **I** 8 **W** 8 **E** (6 + 1D6)Z **R** 8

INIT: 8 + 2D6, **Astral INIT:** 28 + 2D6

Pools: Astral Combat 12, Combat 12, Spell 7-9

Attacks: 14D, +2 Reach



FEATHERED SERPENTS

Feathered serpents are native to South and Central America and Africa. A feathered serpent is a long-bodied dracoform with one pair of wings and one pair of limbs. Most feathered serpents are 20 meters in length from head to tail and have a wingspan of 15 meters. Their contour feathers and prominent feathered ruff are often a dazzling rainbow of colors. Membranes stretch between the extended finger bones of their large wings. Behind the wings is a pair of limbs that end in paws. These feet have five digits, one of which is an opposable thumb, giving it sufficient dexterity to manipulate objects. Many specimens have a tail spine connected to a venom sac, or similarly equipped fangs.

B 12/8 **Q** 6 (x4) **S** 30 **C** 8 **I** 8 **W** 8 **E** (6 + 1D6)Z **R** 9

INIT: 9 + 2D6, **Astral INIT:** 28 + 2D6

Pools: Astral Combat 12, Combat 11, Spell 7-9

Attacks: 12D, +2 Reach

SEA DRAGONS

Sea dragons, or leviathans, are found in deep salt-water habitats. A sea dragon's serpentine head and body measure approximately 25 meters in length. It has four stubby limbs equipped with powerful, webbed claws. Though they have opposable thumbs on their forelimbs, sea dragons have poor manual dexterity. Slow and clumsy on land, a sea dragon is capable of swimming swiftly and gracefully using the movement of its body and limbs. Sea dragons are capable of breathing both water and air, though no sea dragon has ever been seen on land. The long, flat head is equipped with powerful jaws, and a strip of long kelp-like hair running down its dorsal ridge. Sea dragon scales are small and fine compared to their land-dwelling brethren, usually an iridescent blue-green in color, lighter toward the belly and slightly darker toward the spine.

B 13/8 **Q** 6 (x4) **S** 35 **C** 8 **I** 8 **W** 8 **E** (6 + 1D6)Z **R** 8

INIT: 8 + 2D6, **Astral INIT:** 28 + 2D6

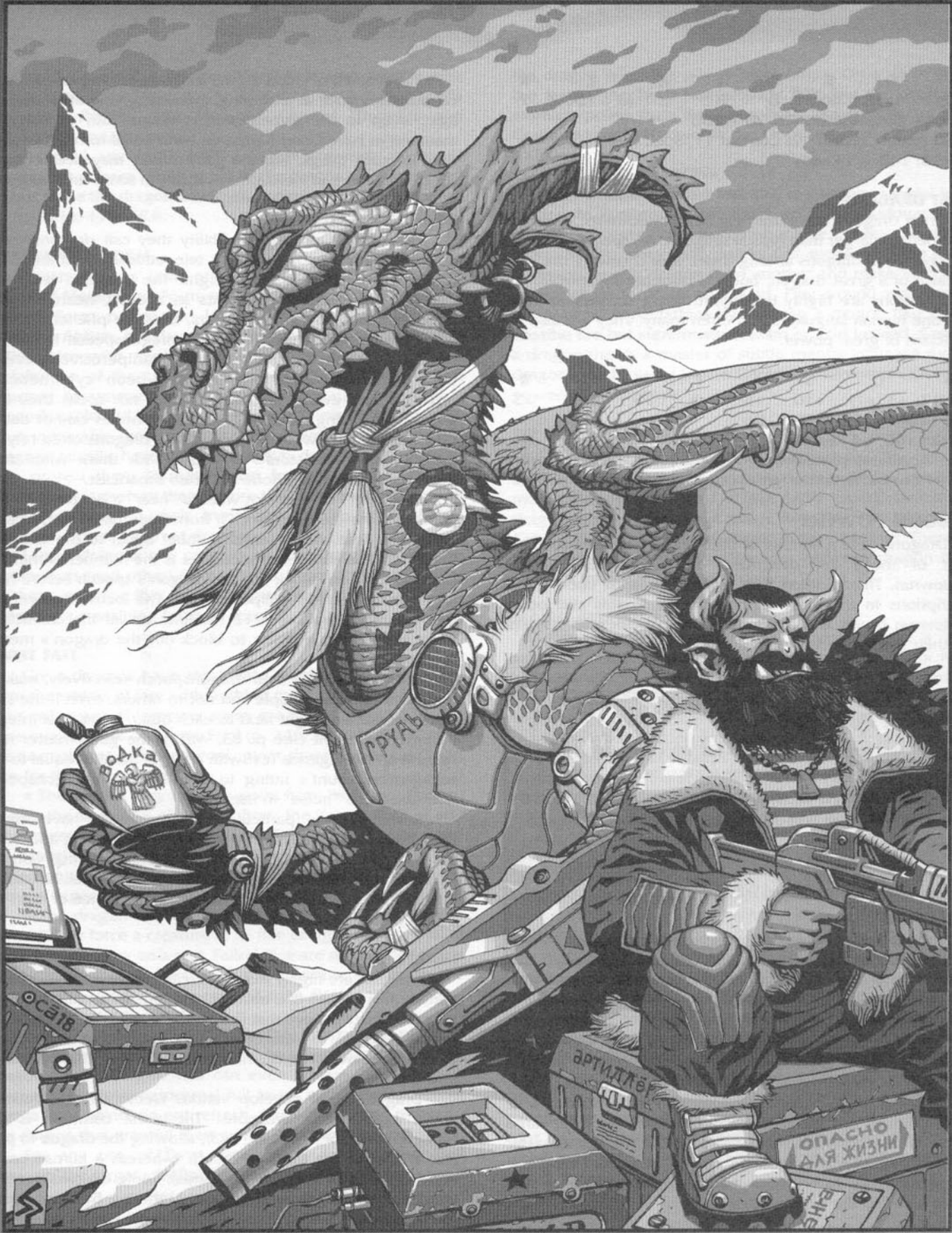
Pools: Astral Combat 12, Combat 11, Spell 7-9

Attacks: 14D, +2 Reach



WESTERN DRAGONS

Western dragons are native to Europe and some parts of western Asia. A western dragon's head and body are 20 meters long. It stands 3 meters at shoulder height, its tail is 17 meters long, and its wingspan is 30 meters. The western dragon has four limbs and a pair of wings. Its horned head is mounted at the end of a long neck. Only its forepaws exhibit opposable digits, with the hind paws adapted into feet. Dorsal spines and/or membranes may be present. The western dragon is usually a single color, though darker along the spine, with a pale belly. Some specimens have dermal armor formed of bony plates, in addition to the normal heavy scales.



B 15/8 **Q** 7 (x3) **S** 40 **C** 8 **I** 8 **W** 8 **E** (6 + 1D6)Z **R** 7

INIT: 7 + 2D6, **Astral INIT:** 28 + 2D6

Pools: Astral Combat 12, Combat 11, Spell 7-9

Attacks: 14D, +3 Reach

GREAT DRAGONS

Great dragons are extremely large specimens, often up to 50 percent larger than typical dragons. All species of dragons have great dragons among them. Size is usually the best indicator of a great dragon, but it is not entirely reliable. All great dragons are highly intelligent, being conversant in at least one human language, and often many. They are also all magicians of great power.

B +10/12 **Q** +3 (+1) **S** +10 **C** +5 **I** +5 **W** +5 **E** 12Z **R** +3

INIT: +1D6, **Astral INIT:** +1D6

Attacks: 16D, +4 Reach

Note: Attributes preceded by a (+) should be added to the normal Attributes for the great dragon's type.

DRAGON POWERS

Dragons have a number of different powers and abilities. Most of these are described on pages 260-265 of *Shadowrun, Third Edition*. This section expands upon those descriptions in the light of the material in this and other *Shadowrun* books and looks at additional draconic powers and their game effects.

DRAGON POWERS

The following powers from *SR3* and the *Critters* sourcebook are known among dragons. New powers are described below.

Innate Powers: Astral Armor, Dragonspeech, Enhanced Senses (Enhanced Smell, Wide-Band Hearing, Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision), Hardened Armor

Individual Powers: Animal Control, Compulsion, Corrosive Saliva, Empathy, Fear, Influence, Magical Skills, Innate Spell (various, see below), Noxious Breath, Venom

Great Dragon Powers: Metahuman Form, Twist Fate

DRAGON KARMA

Dragons can and do have Karma Pools, often sizeable, to reflect their great experience and capabilities. The average adult dragon should have a Karma Pool of 10 to 20 points, while a great dragon may have a Karma Pool of 50 points or more! Dragons can use their Karma Pool for all of the same things as regular character (p. 246, *SR3*). The gamemaster may wish to limit a dragon on buying additional dice and buying successes to no more than a number of dice or successes equal to the original dice pool.

The amount of Good Karma available to dragons for magical purposes (such as anchoring, quickening, and other metamagic) is up to the gamemaster. A dragon can generally be assumed to have Good Karma on hand equal to half its Karma Pool for such things, but the gamemaster may decide that a dragon has more or less Karma available in some circumstances.

DRAGONSPEECH

Dracoforms all have an ability they call *dragonspeech*, allowing them to communicate telepathically with any creature in their unaided line of sight. The intended recipients perceive the dragon's thoughts as speech, heard in their minds rather than with their ears. Like the phenomenon of astral manifestation (p. 173, *SR3*), dragonspeech is entirely psychic in nature, so any living being can perceive it, even if their natural hearing organs have been cybernetically replaced, and even if the dragon does not speak their language. Non-living machines like microphones cannot detect dragonspeech, however, which is why dragons often rely on metahuman "translators" to vocalize for them when they must speak on a vid-phone or trideo broadcast.

Characters who do not wish to "hear" a dragon's mental speech may attempt to block it from their minds by making a Willpower Test with a target number equal to the dragon's Charisma. The number of successes is the number of minutes the character can block out the dragon's speech before having to make another Willpower Test. The focused concentration required imposes a +2 modifier on all the character's other actions while trying to block out the dragon's mental "voice."

Dragons can use their dragonspeech selectively, making it audible to some people and not to others, even if the subjects are standing right next to each other. In areas of intense background count (see p. 83, *MITS*), the gamemaster may require an Intelligence Test with a target number equal to the background count's rating to properly hear dragonspeech over the astral "noise" in the area.

Some dragons (particularly great dragons) have refined their dragonspeech ability and learned to use it in additional ways. A dragon may acquire the powers of Animal Control, Compulsion, Empathy, Fear, and Influence, as well as various Innate Spells by using dragonspeech to influence or scan the minds of other creatures.

INNATE SPELL

Dragons are highly magical creatures, and often develop certain innate spell-like abilities. Modern thaumaturgists and parazoologists believe that the draconic ability to fly is at least partially magical in nature, an innate magic that allows them to defy the laws of aerodynamics and lift their massive forms into the air.

Dragons often develop various Elemental Manipulation spells as offensive weapons. The most common is the Flamethrower spell (p. 197, *SR3*), allowing the dragon to project a blast of fire from its mouth (whereas a human caster appears to throw fire from his hands). Some dragons develop elemental spells like Acid Stream, Lightning Bolt and Steam (p. 145, *MITS*) instead of (or in addition to) Flamethrower.



Finally, some dragons develop their dragonspeech ability to acquire some Detection and Control Manipulation spells like Mind Probe, Alter Memory, Control Thoughts and Influence as innate spells.

As usual, any innate spells a dragon possesses are usually cast with a Force rating equal to the dragon's Essence, and do not cause the dragon any Drain. Innate spells are sustained normally (p. 178, SR3).

METAHUMAN FORM

Great dragons (and only great dragons) acquire the power of Metahuman Form, which is similar to the free spirit Human Form power (p. 118, MITS). With an Exclusive Complex Action, the dragon can assume a metahuman form of its choice, with physical abilities equal to those of a normal metahuman of the chosen race. Great dragons tend to be reluctant to assume metahuman form because they find it uncomfortable and limited, and because it leaves them somewhat vulnerable (compared to their powerful natural form). Dragons usually have various magical defenses in place to help protect them in metahuman form so that a surprise attack doesn't destroy them before they can resume their true form. Returning to their true form is also an Exclusive Complex Action for great dragons.

Lesser dragons are capable of using magic to assume metahuman (and other) forms, but it is not an innate ability for them, meaning that the magic must be sustained or maintained by a sustaining focus or something similar.

TWIST FATE

Great dragons have the innate magical power to influence the whims of fate with nothing more than their tremendous willpower. This power gives great dragons some influence over the use of Karma Pool (p. 246, SR3). In addition to the normal uses of Karma Pool, great dragons can use Twist Fate for the following effects:

- The dragon may spend a point from its Karma Pool to negate the spending of a point from the Karma Pool of any other creature that it can see. The effects of the Karma point are canceled, but the point is still expended. This is a Free Action on the dragon's part. Dragons cannot negate the permanent expenditure of Karma Pool in order to buy successes.

- The dragon can spend a point from its Karma Pool to immediately force a creature in its line of sight to re-roll all of the successful dice on a test. Failed dice are not re-rolled. The target keeps the new result. This is a Simple Action for the dragon. The target may spend a Karma Pool point to automatically resist this effect.

- Finally, a dragon using Twist Fate can take points from its own Karma Pool and give them to other characters in the dragon's line of sight. This can even increase a recipient's Karma Pool above its normal full level, but these additional Karma Pool points do not refresh. Once used, they return to the dragon that granted them when its Karma Pool refreshes.

For any use of Twist Fate, make an Opposed Test between the target's Willpower and the dragon's Essence. If

the dragon wins, the power takes effect. On a tie or win by the target, the Twist Fate attempt fails, but the dragon still expends points from its Karma Pool. Initiates may add their Grade to their Willpower in the Opposed Test.

CUSTOMIZING DRAGONS

Gamemasters should feel free to use the material in this section to customize dracoforms in their *Shadowrun* campaigns. The right combination of unique powers (particularly Innate Spells), personality quirks and appearance can help to differentiate one dragon from another and make each one a unique character in its own right. Play around with some of the players' expectations by creating a dragon that doesn't breathe fire but superheated steam or acid instead. Consider a dragon that is a master of subtle mental influence through dragonspeech, using innate Control Manipulation spells and powers like Influence.

DRAGON MAGIC

Dragons are powerfully magical creatures. They are often accomplished magicians, and great dragons are among the most powerful magicians in the Sixth World. Generally, a dragon follows the normal magic rules from the *Shadowrun, Third Edition* rulebook and *Magic in the Shadows*. There are, however, some notable differences between dragon magic and that employed by metahumans.

MAGIC ATTRIBUTE

Dragons with the Magical Skills power have a Magic attribute equal to their Essence rating. A dragon's Magic attribute affects its use of magical skills just like a normal character's does. Dragons also check for magic loss like other characters (p. 160, SR3) except that dragons roll 3D6 rather than 2D6 when making a magic loss check. A total roll equal to or less than the dragon's current Magic attribute means that the rating decreases by a point, unless the dragon chooses to accept a geas on the Magic point to retain it (see *Geasa*, p. 31, MITS and *Initiation and Metamagic*, below). A roll of 3 *always* indicates the loss of a Magic point.

Note that the Astral Initiative, Astral Combat Pool and Spell Pool statistics listed only apply for dragons with the appropriate Magical skills.

TRADITION

Dragons follow a unique magical tradition of their own that has particular effects on their uses of magic, described below. A character following another magical tradition (in other words, a non-dragon) attempting to understand a draconic spell or other magic has a +2 modifier to any relevant Skill Tests. If the character has the assistance of a dragon teacher or tutor (a rare opportunity indeed), this modifier does not apply, since the draconic point of view allows them to adapt easily to other magical traditions. Non-dragons cannot learn or follow the draconic magical tradition, though they may learn spells and such from a dragon willing to teach them.



SORCERY

Dragons use the Sorcery skill for spellcasting, spell defense and dispelling like normal characters (p. 177, *SR3*). With their high Magic attribute, Willpower and Sorcery skill ratings, dragons are typically capable of casting spells of a much higher Force than most metahuman spellcasters can. Dragon spellcasters are subject to the normal rules for spell-targeting, spellcasting, drain, etc. given in *Shadowrun, Third Edition*.

Ritual Sorcery

Ritual Sorcery (p. 34, *MITS*) works a bit differently for dragons than it does for other spellcasters. First, dragons do not require a circle, lodge or other special place to perform ritual sorcery. They may do so wherever they wish simply by taking time to prepare the location astrally. This requires a base time of 6 hours and a Willpower (4) Test. Divide the base time by the number of successes to determine how long it takes. A failed roll means that preparation takes twice the base time.

A dragon can ritually cast a spell of any Force that it knows. Dragons can participate in any ritual team, regardless of magical tradition, because they are so strongly attuned to the forces of magic. Draconic ritual sorcery does not require any materials (nor does any ritual spell led by a dragon). A material link or symbolic link (see *SOTA: 2063*) is still required, as usual, if the target is not in line of sight.

CONJURING

Dragons may use Conjuring to summon, control and banish spirits according to the normal rules given in *Shadowrun, Third Edition*, but a dragon's power over spirits is more extensive than that of a metahuman magician. Dragons may conjure elementals, nature spirits, spirits of the elements and watcher spirits. Conjuring any of these types of spirits is an Exclusive Complex Action for the dragon and follows the normal rules for conjuring. No special materials or location (such as a circle or lodge) are required. Dragons may bind a number of spirits equal to their Charisma at any one time, and they can summon multiple nature spirits in overlapping domains (but only one nature spirit of any given type).

Dragons with the Invoking metamagical technique may summon great form spirits and dragons can also summon ally spirits normally (p. 107, *MITS*), though dragons rarely summon allies. Dragons that know the metamagical technique of Sacrificing can summon blood spirits, but this is considered a serious crime among their kind. Dragons may attempt to take control of any type of spirit they can summon following the normal rules (p. 189, *SR3*).

Like other characters, dragons can only attempt to summon and bind a free spirit if they know the spirit's true name (p. 115, *MITS*). Given their power, dragons are often able to bargain with or even command free spirits without knowing the spirit's name. This is not the same as magically binding the spirit, but free spirits may serve dragons of their own will.

Dragons cannot summon or control ancestor spirits or loa spirits, which are unique to metahumanity. They can use

Conjuring to banish any type of spirit, just like anyone else. With their high Magic, Charisma and Conjuring skill ratings, dragons are quite effective in both summoning and banishing spirits of all types.

ENCHANTING

Dragons rarely create foci of any type, since they don't often have need of them. If and when they do, they follow the normal rules for creating and enchanting various sorts of foci given in *Magic in the Shadows*.

Any part of a dragon's body that is separated from it, such as scales, claws, horns or teeth, are considered virgin tesma if the dragon chooses to enchant the part as a focus. Such foci may be retained by the dragon or given to very trusted associates (since the focus remains a potential ritual link to the dragon as well as the character that bonds it).

INITIATION AND METAMAGIC

Dragon magicians are nearly always initiates, with the exception of fairly young dragons. Great dragons are all initiates of considerable power and high grade (usually Grade 10 or higher, except for very young great dragons). Dragons never belong to magical groups and are always self-initiated.

Dragon initiates know metamagical techniques according to their grade, just like other characters. Masking and Shielding are the two most common techniques among dragons, while Divining and Possessing are fairly uncommon. The gamemaster should choose the metamagical techniques that a particular dragon knows. Dragons have access to the additional technique of Sensing from *Target: Awakened Lands*, and Absorption, Filtering, Psychometry and Severing from *State of the Art: 2063*. Dragons rarely learn Channeling metamagic (also from *T:AL*).

At the gamemaster's discretion, dragons (especially great dragons) may know secret metamagical techniques that remain undiscovered by metahumanity. Among other things, various dragons are capable of magically influencing astral space, summoning unusual types of spirits, creating permanent magical alterations in living and non-living matter, and even creating life. The exact limits of draconic magic (and metamagic) are left for the gamemaster to decide according to the needs of the adventure and the campaign.

ASTRAL INTERACTIONS

All dracoforms are dual-natured beings, existing simultaneously on both the astral and physical planes. That means they are aware of the astral plane at all times and do not suffer the usual +2 penalty for performing physical actions while using astral perception. Embodied dragons use their normal physical attributes when interacting with both physical and astral beings, and they are capable of using magic on both physical and astral targets (though astral targets are only affected by mana type spells).

Dragons with magical skills (including all great dragons) are capable of astral projection, just like other magicians (p. 172, *SR3*). Like other characters, dragons substitute their Mental attributes for their Physical attributes while in astral



form, meaning they are somewhat weaker in astral form. They have their Astral Armor power, however, which makes them formidable astral opponents. Dragon initiates also gain the benefit of their Astral Pool (p. 58, *MITS*). Dragons follow the normal rules for astral project and interaction given in *Shadowrun, Third Edition*, and *Magic in the Shadows*.

Dragon initiates can and do project to the metaplanes, though dragons most likely visit different Places than metahuman astral questors. Dragons may have access to metaplanes or metaplaces that humanity has yet to discover, or simply cannot reach. The great dragons in particular have a much deeper understanding of the metaplanes than that of any mere mortal.

DRAGONS AND TECHNOLOGY

Dragons, like everyone else, have had to adapt to the technology of the 21st century or find ways to adapt it to them. Some dragons are intrigued by the possibilities of modern technology, others simply find technology a useful convenience and some dragons are anti-technological to one degree or another.

DRAGONS AND CYBERWARE

One place where dragons tend to draw the line regarding technology is cyberware (including other sorts of implants like bioware as well). Invasive implants tend to have an adverse effect on draconic physiology and, more importantly, psychology. When a dragon with cyberware or bioware is in a stressful situation, roll 1D6, plus the dragon's Bio-Index. If the total exceeds the dragon's Essence, the dragon experiences a brief regression (2D6 combat turns) to a feral, primitive state. The dragon is likely to attack anything threatening during this time and is incapable of rational thought or action.

Cyberware for dragons must be custom-designed, of course, making it the equivalent of deltaware (pp. 44–45, *M&M*) with an additional cost multiplier of 4, for a total multiplier of 12 times the normal cost. Additionally, dragons suffer double the normal Essence loss or Bio-Index for adding cyberware or bioware, and they require the services of expert surgeons skilled in Parabiology (Dragon) to perform the implant operations. For these reasons, most dragons have nothing to do with cyberware or bioware.

DRAGONS AND THE MATRIX

Dragons are capable of accessing the worldwide computer grid, but their physiology—and their avoidance of cyberware—limits their ability to interact with the Matrix. A dragon in metahuman form can use a trode-net or a tortoise to access the Matrix like anyone else. Dragons in their natural form have some difficulty using trode-nets, since they must be custom-designed for them, costing 20 times the normal amount. Dragons often find simsense flat and artificial since it doesn't appeal to their heightened senses (including their astral awareness).

Dragons can acquire the Computer skill, though it's still fairly rare among them. Most dragons prefer to have metahu-

man hirelings capable of handling Matrix-related tasks for them.

Dragons have one additional option when it comes to dealing with the Matrix. They can use dragonspeech (p. 178) to "hitch along" with a decker, like using a hitcher jack (p. 208, *SR3*). This allows the dragon to experience the Matrix through the decker's mind, making the decker the dragon's "translator" in the virtual world (much as they use metahuman translators in the physical world). It also insulates the dragon from the effects of things like dumpshock and IC, since wyrms are reluctant to expose themselves to such hazards. Hitching in this way requires some significant concentration on the dragon's part and is considered an Exclusive Complex Action. To attend to matters in the real world, the dragon must first break off its mental link with the decker.

DRAGONS AND RANGED COMBAT

When a character targets a dragon in ranged combat, apply a target number modifier between -2 and -4 (gamemaster's discretion; standard of -3) to account for the creature's large size.

DRAGONS AND VEHICLE COMBAT

Dragons often have the mass, speed and firepower to go toe-to-toe with many kinds of vehicles and emerge victorious. Listed below are some guidelines for incorporating dragons into vehicle combat.

Dragons can achieve significantly faster speeds while airborne than on the ground. A flying dragon has an equivalent Speed rating equal to its Quickness times 50, and it has an equivalent Acceleration equal to its Quickness times 3. Dragons have a flight ceiling (maximum flight altitude) of 15,000 meters.

Flight Tests

As with vehicles, dragons do not have to make Skill Tests to fly from one point to another. If the dragon wants to perform a maneuver with any amount of difficulty (for example, swooping down and picking up a character), the gamemaster may call for a Flight Test to see if it succeeds.

The procedure for making a Flight Test is the same as a standard Vehicle Test (p. 134, *SR3*). Consider the dragon's flight "skill" to be equal to its Reaction, and consider its Handling rating to be 3. Apply modifiers per the Driving Test Modifiers Table (p. 134, *SR3*) as appropriate. A dragon may use its Combat Pool as a Control Pool and add Combat Pool dice to the test, up to a maximum equal to its Quickness.

The test succeeds if the dragon achieves a certain number of successes, based on the difficulty of the task. A simple task (flying through a narrow gap) may only require one single success, while more difficult tasks (flying through a warehouse window, grabbing a character in its claws, circling around, and flying out the same window) may require more, based on the gamemaster's discretion.

If the dragon does not achieve the required number of successes, the maneuver fails, but the dragon can circle around and try again. If the dragon does not achieve any suc-



cesses, it loses control temporarily and must make a Crash Test. If the dragon gets all 1s on the Flight Test, the dragon crashes automatically.

Vehicle Combat

In a scenario where dragons are fighting vehicles, gamemasters may opt to treat the dragon as a vehicle and use the vehicle combat rules—either the standard combat rules on p. 138 of *SR3* or the alternate combat rules on p. 80 of *Rigger 3*.

When using the standard vehicle combat rules, a dragon has a Vehicle Points value of +30. (See p. 140 of *SR3* for further explanation on vehicle modifiers.) When making the driver Open Test, a dragon uses its Reaction attribute in lieu of Control Pool dice. For vehicle combat maneuvers, a dragon uses its Reaction in place of the Vehicle skill, and the base target number is 3 instead of the Handling rating.

When using the alternate combat rules from *Rigger 3*, a flying dragon has a Walking movement speed equal to its Quickness times 3. Its Running movement rate is equal to its Quickness times 10. A dragon may fly faster than its Running rate by making a full move, up to a speed equal to its Quickness times 50.

Dragons and Vehicular Attacks

Dragons attack vehicles using the standard critter combat rules on p. 265 of *SR3*. Effects for magical spells cast against vehicles follow the rules for vehicles and magic on p. 150 of *SR3*. Dragons may make melee attacks against vehicles, provided the dragon has closed to melee range. Remember that vehicles cannot make a melee attack to counterattack (see p. 80, *Rigger 3*).

Dragons may also ram or be rammed by vehicles. If using the alternate ramming rules on p. 81 of *Rigger 3*, an adult dragon has an equivalent vehicle Body rating of 4, while a great dragon has an equivalent vehicle Body rating of 6. Note that this equivalent vehicle Body only applies for determining the base Damage Level of a ramming collision; the dragon still makes its Damage Resistance Test using its normal Body attribute.

Dragons may be targeted by vehicle weapon systems using manual or sensory-enhanced gunnery, or by missile fire. When targeting by manual gunnery, apply a -3 modifier on Gunnery Tests due to the dragon's large size. When targeted by sensor-enhanced gunnery or missile attacks, a dragon has an equivalent Signature of 4.

If a missile attacks a dragon, the dragon can normally dodge the missile but it can also try to counterattack with its breath weapon. To do so, the dragon must hold an action (usually its last action, since missiles strike on Phase 0 of the last initiative pass). On Phase 0 of the last initiative pass, the dragon unleashes its attack against the missile. Man-portable missiles have an equivalent vehicle Body of 1, while vehicle-launched missiles have a Body of 2. (Anti-ship missiles already have a specified Body Rating; see p. 94, *Rigger 3*.) Destroying the missile prevents it from striking the dragon.

A dragon resists damage from vehicle weapons in the same manner as characters. Note that dragons have hardened

armor, which automatically deflects attacks with a base Power less than the Armor rating, but their armor can still be reduced in half by APDS and AV ammunition and weapons. (Note also that dragons can and do cast Armor spells on top of their natural armor, which is often necessary to survive attacks from heavy antivehicular and antiship missiles.)

DEALING WITH DRAGONS

Dragons are among the most powerful creatures in the world of *Shadowrun*, so they require some special and careful handling on the part of the gamemaster. Dragons aren't (or shouldn't be) simple critters to pit the runners against, but cunning and powerful beings in their own right. This section offers some suggestions on how to deal with and use dragons in your *Shadowrun* campaign.

DRAGONS AS ADVERSARIES

A dragon is one of the most powerful adversaries a team of shadowrunners may face, and a great dragon makes a suitable nemesis for an entire campaign's worth of adventures. Dragons are powerful creatures, and a confrontation with one is more than likely to leave a group of player characters dead. Worse, the use of enough heavy firepower may allow a team of shadowrunners to kill off an unprepared dragon, which can cheapen their fearsome reputation.

The key is not to treat dragons as mere "monsters" for the player characters to fight and kill, but as the cunning, powerful and *intelligent* foes that they are. Dragons in the Sixth World don't sit in their dark caves atop piles of gold and gems waiting for intrepid shadowrunners to come along and slay them. Dragons are active in the world in one way or another. They use their impressive wealth and influence to buy protection against unwanted intrusion. A dragon's "lair" may be a high-rise or converted warehouse just as easily as a dark cave or extinct (or active!) volcano. High-tech security systems may protect the lair against intrusion (see pp. 232-237, *SR3*, for some ideas).

At first, shadowrunners may not even know that their adversary is a dragon. Dragons often work through intermediaries and are just as capable of hiring shadowrunners to deal with problems as any other employer. Even if the runners do discover the true identity of their foe and go to a confrontation armed with auto-cannon and rocket launchers, they shouldn't find taking a dragon down easy. Remember that most dragons are capable magicians, able to use spells like Armor, Barrier, Confusion and Hot Potato to their advantage. A dragon may also have servitor spirits or other critters as guards.

Dragons are intelligent (often *very* intelligent) so they're likely to have contingency plans in place. They're also capable of negotiating with troublesome shadowrunners; either to bargain their way out of trouble or simply to stall them long enough for the dragon's contingency plans to go into effect. Of course, some dragons do fall victim to their own arrogance, and they may sometimes underestimate the abilities of a group of "mere mortals," which gives shadowrunners a chance of actually overcoming a young or foolish

dragon (keep in mind that great dragons are neither young nor foolish).

While many of the great dragons described in this book have vast amounts of resources and influence, it is important to note that their power is rarely direct or complete. Great dragons do not secretly control the world, though they are capable of influencing powerful entities (from political leaders and corporate CEOs to entire megacorps) and so can sometimes affect or shape the course of events. Such influence is typically utilized in slow methods, over time, and so even great dragons may have difficulty affecting the outcome of rapidly occurring events.

DRAGONS AS EMPLOYERS

Dragons may employ shadowrunners for the same reasons that others do so: the ability to accomplish things outside the law with a measure of deniability if the shadowrunners mess things up. In fact, dragons are quite prone to using various metahuman pawns simply because it can be difficult for them to handle certain things directly. If the dragon works through various fixers and intermediaries, the shadowrunners may not even know their employer's true nature.

Though many dragons have economic interests, and may hire shadowrunners to look after them, they also have a number of other tasks where it is useful to have agents. Conflict between dragons tends to be highly ritualized and circumspect, to keep the number of outright physical confrontations to a minimum. That means dragons may hire and use shadowrunners as pawns in games of dominance and prestige (such as the events in the *Survival of the Fittest* campaign book).

Dragons may hire shadowrunners to pursue a particular goal of theirs (see the individual descriptions in this book) or they may employ shadowrunners for reasons largely incomprehensible to others. This may include sending runners off on jobs simply to see how they handle them, having shadowrunners steal apparently nonsensical things or arranging for the acquisition of certain rare objects the dragon wishes to add to its collection. A dragon may even want a particular rare critter as either a pet or a meal.

For a suitably high-level campaign, a dragon may act as a regular employer or patron of a team of shadowrunners, keeping them "on retainer" for various jobs. In this case, the runners are the dragon's personal agents and may become involved in all of its various affairs, including struggles against the dragon's enemies, maintaining good relations with their employer's allies, and furthering the dragon's overall agenda. Imagine a group of shadowrunners as the personal special agents of a great dragon like Hestaby, Lofwyr or Ghostwalker (or any of the other great dragons in this book) and you can see a number of different adventure possibilities.

DRAKES

Drakes are a fairly new phenomenon to the Sixth World, but not to some of the inhabitants of it. Long ago, in the previous Age of Magic, dragons felt the need for trustworthy servants. Using complex magical rituals they created drakes, miniature dragons with the ability to assume human (or



metahuman) form and therefore move easily among the mortal population. The primary limitation of drakes was that they had to be created from nothing, requiring considerable time and effort. At some point, the dragons discovered a means of breeding a race of drakes that could reproduce naturally but were less powerful than their dragon-made brethren. When the previous Age of Magic faded, and the dragons entered their long slumber, some of their drake servants went with them, since they were designed to need magic in order to survive. The race of drakes faded, like all other Awakened races, into the mists of legends.

In the beginning of the Sixth World, the power of magic was too weak for drakes to return, but now it has grown strong enough. A small number of people around the world have displayed drake abilities, awakening to a heritage from a drake ancestor. The great dragons show great interest in them. Great dragons also have some drake servants they have created, though the knowledge of making drakes is extremely specialized, even among dragons.

In their natural form, drakes look like miniature dragons of one of the four types, about two to three meters in overall length. They can also assume a single human or metahuman form (see below). Regardless of cosmetic differences, the attributes of drakes are largely the same in dragon form. Their physical attributes in metahuman form tend to be slightly above average for their apparent race, but the gamemaster may feel free to vary them as needed. Mental attributes remain the same for both forms.

The attributes given here are for average drakes in dracoform; individuals may have different attribute ratings and powers. Drakes in human or metahuman form use their own statistics (note that true drakes in metahuman form have an Essence of 8).

TRUE DRAKES

True drakes are magically created beings. The great dragons create drakes using secret rituals known only to them. These drakes tend to have higher attributes and additional powers, notably Hardened Armor, Magical Guard, and Regeneration. All true drakes are either magicians, adepts or magician adepts. Though they are given life experience, knowledge and identity during the process that creates them, true drakes are still sometimes unfamiliar with certain facets of life in the Sixth World. True drakes are completely obedient to their dragon master, though they do possess free will.

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
10	5 (x4)	9	4	5	5	8Z	6

INIT: 6 + 2D6, **Astral INIT:** 25 + 2D6

Pools: Astral Combat 7, Combat 7, Spell 6

Attacks: 9M, +1 Reach

Powers: Astral Armor, Enhanced Senses (Enhanced Smell, Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision, Wide-Band Hearing), Hardened Armor, Innate Spell (Flamethrower), Magical Guard, Magical Skills, Metahuman Form, Regeneration.

BRED DRAKES

Bred drakes are born and not made. At some point in the distant past, dragons discovered a means of breeding a race of dragons that could reproduce on their own. The resultant drakes were somewhat less powerful than true drakes, but considerably easier to create, though they had to be allowed to grow and mature to adulthood on their own. In the Sixth World, some people possess a sufficient heritage from a drake ancestor that they awaken as drakes when exposed to the right levels of mana. Drake transformations have been triggered in recent years by events like the appearance of Halley's Comet (see the *Year of the Comet* and *Threats 2* sourcebooks) and exposure to powerful magical sites.

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
7	4 (x4)	7	3	3	3	6Z	4

INIT: 4 + 2D6, **Astral INIT:** 23 + 2D6

Pools: Astral Combat 4, Combat 5, Spell 4

Attacks: 7M, +1 Reach

Powers: Astral Armor, Enhanced Senses (Enhanced Smell, Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision, Wide-Band Hearing), Innate Spell (Flamethrower), Metahuman Form. Some have Magical skills or adept powers.

DRAKE ABILITIES

As Awakened creatures, drakes have certain innate magical abilities, which generally work as given in *Shadowrun, Third Edition* and *Critters*. A few drake abilities require further explanation.

Magical Skills

Drakes often—but not always—have the ability to learn and use Magical skills like full or aspected magicians or adepts. Their initial Magic rating is based on their Essence, and drakes can become initiates according to the normal rules from *Magic in the Shadows*. Drakes can cast spells, conjure and/or use their adept powers (and all other magical skills and abilities) while in dracoform. Drakes with ability to astrally project can do so in either form.

Note that the Astral Initiative, Astral Combat Pool and Spell Pool statistics listed above only apply for drakes with the appropriate Magical skills.

Metahuman Form

Drakes can transform from their dracoform into a single human or metahuman form. The transformation requires an Exclusive Complex Action to perform. Any clothing or equipment worn or carried by the drake is not transformed and may in fact be ripped or destroyed by the transformation process.

Drakes in dracoform are dual beings, existing on the astral and physical planes simultaneously. Drakes in humanoid form are capable of astral perception, but can turn the ability on and off with a Simple Action. Drakes with Magical skills can also astrally project like magicians in either humanoid or dragon form. It is possible, though difficult, to



detect a drake's true nature using astral perception. It requires at least 3 successes on an Astral Perception Test to detect a drake's true nature in humanoid form, 5 successes if the drake is not yet "awakened" and hasn't experienced its first change. Initiated drakes may, of course, know the Masking metamagic technique, allowing them to further disguise their auras.

Drakes in metahuman form can have any of the skills or abilities of normal metahumans, but they suffer double the normal Essence loss or Bio Index from implants due to their highly magical nature. Any implants a drake has do not function (effectively do not even exist) while it is in dragon form. Naturally, drakes tend to shun implants, but many drakes are adepts or magician adepts in humanoid form, giving them access to other powers.

DRAKE HUNTING

A bred drake's first transformation sends a faint "ripple" out through the astral plane that great dragons (and similarly powerful magical beings like free spirits) can sense, letting them know that a new drake has awakened. When they sense the presence of a new drake, most great dragons take steps to ensure that they will control it. That means all newly awakened drakes find themselves hunted by the great dragons and their agents (usually shadowrunners or other drakes). Already confused by their transformation, drakes are easy prey for the hunters who pursue them (as easy as any being that can turn into a small dragon, that is).

Shadowrunners who have earned a measure of trust from a dragon employer might be hired to recover a newly awakened drake or two. They might also find work protecting a newly awakened drake from the parties pursuing him, though the drake may not reveal *why* these people are after him (assuming that he knows the reason himself). Having a client turn out to be a shapeshifting drake can be an interesting twist for a shadowrun.

USING DRAKES

Drakes are particularly useful for a *Shadowrun* gamemaster interested in including dragons in the campaign because drakes, while powerful creatures, operate closer to the level of most shadowrunners than their dragon creators and masters. Some great dragons also use drake servants to accomplish their goals, meaning that shadowrunners are more likely to run into a drake in the midst of a run than they are to bump into a dragon. Drakes make good antagonists, and their shapeshifting ability allows them to blend in with a crowd.

Drakes can also present a dilemma for some shadowrunners. Some bred drakes don't care for the idea of becoming the servants of great dragons simply because of an accident of birth. Do the shadowrunners help these creatures, who have lived as metahumans all their lives, to escape and maintain their freedom, or do they turn them over to one of the factions hunting that's them? What if the drake in question is an old friend, family member or romantic interest of one of the characters?

DRAKE PLAYER CHARACTERS

It's possible that players may wish to run drake characters in a *Shadowrun* game. The gamemaster may allow this, but the decision should be thought through and taken quite seriously, as it is likely to have a major impact on (and perhaps be the focus) of the game. It is recommended that only bred drakes be permitted as player characters.

Bred drake characters are considered Priority B for Race, with the other Priorities allocated normally (aspected magician or adept drakes must assign Priority A to Magic). If using the build point system of character creation from the *Shadowrun Companion* (recommended in this case), being a bred drake costs 25 points.

Additionally, bred drakes automatically receive the maximum 6-point Hunted Flaw (p. 30, *SRComp*) without receiving any Build Points from it. This factors in the fact that a "free" drake is likely to be hunted by most (if not all) of the great dragons in the world and probably by quite a few other parties as well. If the gamemaster is planning on going easier on the drake character and starting him off under the protection of a great dragon or the Draco Foundation, then the Hunted Flaw may be dropped, but an equivalent high-point Edge must be purchased instead. For example, a drake under Ryumyo's protection may need to purchase a unique 6-point Dragon Patron Edge. This new Edge means that the drake character won't be hunted (well, at least not as much), but he or she will be expected to work for the protecting dragon and do its bidding (or become lunch).

Great care should be taken when including drake player characters in a campaign. Unless *all* of the player characters are drakes (which can make for an interesting game), the drake's abilities and enemies are likely to dominate the game, making the other players feel less effective and important.

THE DRACO FOUNDATION

The Draco Foundation was created to carry out Dunkelzahn's last wishes—not only those outlined in his will, but also those mandated privately to the Foundation's Board of Trustees. Given the Foundation's vast resources and the far-reaching plans of Dunkelzahn, the Draco Foundation plays in the big leagues alongside megacorps, nations and great dragons. The individuals on the Board, while committed to Dunkelzahn's legacy, each have their own desires and goals, and collectively these have an impact on the Foundation's projects and pursuits.

DRACO FOUNDATION NPCs

The Draco Foundation is able to afford the best, so gamemasters should consider characters such as the members of Assets, Inc. to be Superhuman NPCs (p. 84, *SRComp*) with attribute and skill ratings generally 3 or more points greater than those of the player characters. If you're running a high power-level *Shadowrun* game, the Draco Foundation NPCs may be Superior or even Equal characters, although they're not likely to be Inferior unless the player characters are supremely capable. The exact abilities of Assets, Inc. (and



other shadowrunners working for the Draco Foundation) are up to the gamemaster.

RUNNING FOR THE DRACO FOUNDATION

The Draco Foundation offers a tremendous wealth of employment opportunities for shadowrunners, both long- and short-term. You can use the Foundation just like any other Mr. Johnson in your *Shadowrun* game, or the organization can form the basis for an entire campaign. Here are some typical Draco Foundation shadowruns:

Deliver the Goods: The Draco Foundation needs to deliver a particular bequest to its rightful owner, but needs to do it quietly and under the utmost security. They hire the shadowrunners as special couriers to get the goods where they need to go safely. The bequest could be almost anything, from a computer file to a ten-ton bronze statue. The runners may have to deliver it to almost anyone (from some squatter in Pretoria to Lofwyr himself) and various factions may be after it.

Recover the Goods: The Foundation hires the runners to recover something that was stolen from them. It may be an item that was in Dunkelzahn's will that someone else wanted (or someone didn't want to fulfill the conditions to acquire legally). It could also be a bequest that Dunkelzahn left to the Foundation or something the Foundation acquired on its own.

Dunkelzahn's Last Requests: Dunkelzahn left many instructions for the Draco Foundation, so it may hire shadowrunners to carry them out. They may include kidnapping a particular person at a pre-determined place and time, recovering someone who has been kidnapped, investigating a mystery, finding a lost artifact, or just about anything. The job may involve a very precise timetable or a time limit in which it must be performed, or arcane restrictions that the Foundation refuses to explain. Such runs may appear to make no sense, at least from the runners' limited point of view.

Gather Information: The Draco Foundation needs information about its various enemies (and allies), dragons and drakes, and groups like the Children of the Dragon (see *Year of the Comet* and *Survival of the Fittest* for more information). Shadowrunners can go on surveillance missions and datasteals against these and other groups.

Drake Hunting: Finally, the Draco Foundation wants to recover drakes and may hire shadowrunners to do so. The runners have to locate the newly awakened drake and convince it to come with them or else use force to capture it (no easy task). They have to deal with the agents of the various great dragons also after that drake, along with any other factions (corps, cults, magical groups, etc.) that may be interested.

The Draco Foundation Campaign

To run all of the adventures described above, the gamemaster may want to player characters to work for the Draco Foundation long-term. The Foundation may sign on a group of capable and trustworthy shadowrunners to work for them like Assets, Inc., perhaps even as part of that team. Just like any other campaign where the characters have a regular

patron, it's easier to assign them missions (not much in the way of negotiations, they get their assignment and they go). The runners can also deal in-depth with the Draco Foundation's agenda, its allies and its enemies.

A Draco Foundation campaign is well suited for a high-powered *Shadowrun* game where the characters are dealing regularly with great dragons, heads of state and other power-players of the Sixth World. It's also an opportunity to introduce drake player characters into the game, if desired (see p. 185).

RUNNING AGAINST THE DRACO FOUNDATION

There are three main ways that shadowrunners are likely to go up against the Draco Foundation:

Intelligence Gathering: The Draco Foundation has many secrets, not the least of which are the exact nature of the bequests left to them by Dunkelzahn and the dragon's instructions to the Foundation. More than a few people (and spirits and dragons) would like to be privy to that information, and they may hire the shadowrunners to acquire it.

Theft: The Draco Foundation also has a lot of stuff, mainly bequests from Dunkelzahn's will and his estate. A beneficiary may hire shadowrunners to steal a bequest rather than comply with the conditions Dunkelzahn left on it (such as with the elven nations and the First Key of Power, for example). Someone might also hire shadowrunners to steal a bequest so that the intended beneficiary doesn't receive it. The Foundation also has assets of its own—things that aren't public knowledge—that the runners' employers may want. A variation on this theme is hiring shadowrunners to kidnap a particular person associated with the DF, such as a trustee, though dealing with the likes of Nadja Daviar or Aina could spell *serious* trouble for a group of shadowrunners.

Drake Hunting: Shadowrunners can also approach the drake hunting adventure hook from the opposite side, working for a great dragon or megacorp interested in acquiring one of these new drakes and having to outwit the Draco Foundation team sent to recover it.

ADEN

Aden is a player from behind the scenes. Characters will not encounter him directly outside of extreme circumstances (see, for example, the scenario *Rest* in *Survival of the Fittest*). Most contact with Aden will be through his agents and lackeys (or even the lackeys of his agents), though Aden is careful to keep a distance from all but a handful of pawns. Aden influences a wide range of groups and individuals (the Armenians and Kurds are just the beginning), operating under a variety of guises and behind multiple false fronts.

A Note on Sex: To the world at large, Aden's sex is unknown; the dragon has never bothered to identify itself one way or the other. It is generally assumed that Aden is male, so in this book the dragon is identified by that gender. Aden may in fact be female, neuter or otherwise; choose whichever best fits your campaign. It is certainly true that if Aden were female, her gender would have an impact on how she is perceived by those with patriarchal attitudes in the Middle East ...

PERSONALITY

Aden is a strict draconic traditionalist. He is a draconic supremacist and so views all metahumans as inferior pawns and not worthy of the kind of respect that Dunkelzahn and Hestaby show them. He has no tolerance for disrespect or for threats against his kind, as made clear by his destruction of Tehran. Aden has no compunctions against using major physical force and fear to accomplish his goals, but he realizes that the numbers and technology of metahumanity pose a threat to his kind, so he prefers to act through intermediaries.

Aden is a solitary dragon, preferring to keep a distance from his fellow dragons. He is content to engage in his studies and contemplate weighty matters undisturbed. He rarely concerns himself with the affairs of other dragons, though he will oppose those that meddle in his affairs and territory. Though he opposed the way in which Dunkelzahn distributed his hoard in defiance of draconic tradition, he was also reluctant to engage the other dragons in a Rite of Succession (as detailed in *Survival of the Fittest*). Nonetheless, Aden views himself as a strong candidate for Loremaster, so he couldn't resist the temptation to play a role in the Rite.

The fallout from the Rite of Succession, however, challenged Aden's long-held beliefs. While he still clutches onto his traditional views for now, more and more he finds that Dunkelzahn's policy of engagement with the younger races provides better results. To this end, Aden is becoming more personally active in Middle Eastern affairs. Dragons are long-lived creatures, however, and are not prone to quick change, so Aden's outlook may be in flux for some time to come.

ADEN'S AGENDA AND GOALS

Aden's attention is focused almost exclusively on the Middle East and North Africa, the area he considers his personal domain.

1. Destabilize the Middle East. As an unseen manipulator, Aden prefers to exercise his influence over a wide range of small actors, rather than operating through large and powerful (and more noticeable) ones. To this end, Aden seeks to prevent any major power blocks from forming in the Middle East. Divide and conquer is his motto, and a hundred small factions are much more conducive to his activities than a handful of major ones. This means that Aden actively encourages certain conflicts and takes ample advantage of the ones that exist. In some cases, Aden may play two or more sides against each other, each unwittingly serving his goals. Warfare and strife also serve as useful smokescreens for his activities.

2. Drive Lofwyr out of the Middle East. Lofwyr is the only other great dragon with major influences in the Middle East, and Aden views Lofwyr's activities as an intrusion in his domain. Aden's long-term goal is to undermine, dismantle and eject the agents and power structures that Lofwyr controls.

3. Subvert or control the Islamic Unity Movement. The IUM is in direct opposition to Aden's plans for spreading division and chaos within the Middle East. So far, thanks to Lofwyr's strong backing, Aden's attempts to disrupt the IUM have had only minor effects. Ibn Eisa's militant turn, howev-

er, has pulled the IUM away from Saeder-Krupp's grasp. Aden still views the IUM as opposition, but now sees a chance to manipulate the group for his own ends. Aden now seeks to identify and support conflicted factions within the IUM, in the hope of either breaking the group apart or subverting it from within.

4. Contain and control the New Islamic Jihad. The NIJ has too much potential for Aden to allow it to proceed unchecked. Luckily, he has experience with manipulating militant movements in the past, as illustrated by his subtle efforts within the Alliance for Allah's Second Ottoman Jihad during the Euro-Wars. Aden now seeks to gain influence over the NIJ so as to guide their course in the future, but he remains wary of Ibn Eisa's intentions.

ALLIES AND ENEMIES

Aden's name is generally reviled in the Muslim world, given his destruction of Tehran. Though some see his actions as a (extreme) response to the Ayatollah's (unwise) jihad, many Muslims view the dragon as a personification of evil. To this end, Aden is occasionally hunted by would-be vigilantes, from sophisticated dragon hunters to suicide bombers.

Aden's primary foe, however, is Lofwyr. Aden has an advantage in their struggle for dominance, given that he focuses his efforts in the Middle East and has the "home turf" advantage. Though Lofwyr's attention is distracted by endeavors across the world, he also has more resources and powerful minions at his disposal—such as Saied Bey. Bey's recent difficulties and Ibn Eisa's political shift have both been severe setbacks for Lofwyr's plans, and Aden hopes now to press the advantage.

Aden has not yet made any overtures to other great dragons to form alliances of convenience against Lofwyr; though recent events have given Aden pause to reconsider this. Aden has no other dragon allies aside from the various adult sirus that discreetly work for him. Instead, Aden relies on the Armenians, Kurds and a hundred other small metahuman groups and factions that he has discovered how to influence.

RUNNING FOR ADEN

Runners who work on Aden's behalf will most likely be hired by groups under his influence. They may be asked to make a hit on a rival Armenian drug lord, aid Kurdish mercenaries making a strike on a Saeder-Krupp facility, or kidnap an influential member of the IUM. Almost all such work will take place in the Middle East, though Aden may choose to strike at Lofwyr elsewhere to catch him off guard.

RUNNING AGAINST ADEN

There are many forces that would like to know more about Aden and his plans, from Saeder-Krupp to Israel to the IUM to the Arabian Caliphate. The runners may be hired to scout out his suspected lairs, research an identity to determine if it is Aden's metahuman form, or extract one of Aden's minions for interrogation.



CELEDYR

Unlike other dragons, Celedyr is not a power player by nature, but rather a scholar and a progressive at heart. He has two main passions in life: communications (particularly Matrix communications) and discovering the secrets under the earth. Recent events, however, have prompted him to take a more active role in the world to safeguard his interests.

CELEDYR'S AGENDA AND GOALS

Celedyr is currently pursuing a number of interests, listed below in order of importance.

1. Facilitate direct Matrix access for dragons. Celedyr is a net-junkie and spends most of his time connected to the Matrix. Celedyr cannot directly link to the Matrix via datajack like most metahumans, however, so he's pushing Transys Neuronet to develop dragon-friendly cyberware. Transys' recent buyout of Emerging Futures and Celedyr's new partnership with the dragon Elio hann (see p. 162) are further

proof of this. In doing so, he may also win the prize in Dunkelzahn's Will.

2. Punish HKB. Back in 2054, HKB waged an insidious campaign to undermine and buy out Transys Neuronet, a plan that threatened Celedyr's web of communications projects. Though Celedyr has won back control of Transys after a prolonged shadow war, the dragon intends to make an example out of HKB for interfering with his plans. Shadowrunners can find plenty of work from Celedyr in dismantling the financial conglomerate piece by piece. Alternately, a desperate HKB may hire shadowrunners to thwart the dragon and ensure its own survival.

3. Promote Matrix development. Celedyr humbly admits that the Matrix is one area of development where metahumanity has surpassed dragonkind. He sees much potential in it for advancing both metahuman and dragon interests. Enabling that, however, requires information and data to flow freely on the Matrix, so Celedyr has been quiet-



ly supporting various data havens around the world. Additionally, Celedyr has been steering Transys Neuronet into the data services market, a move that challenges Saeder-Krupp's domination of the European Matrix. Most notable in this strategy is Transys's offer to ally with the Scandinavian telecom giant Erika in its Wireless Matrix Initiative project.

4. Underground exploration. Celedyr has an extensive knowledge of earth elemental magic and can move about freely underground. He uses this ability to explore the underworld and expand his knowledge of the earth. As a result, he has access to many places and things thought long lost and buried by time. He consistently seeks out new avenues of learning and exploration, whether working with the gan spirits of the American Southwest or uncovering the lost civilization buried under the sands of the Nubian Desert. He also uses his skills and vast knowledge here to ensure that some secrets—and some dangers—remain buried for good.

5. Communications and linguistics research. Celedyr is particularly fascinated by communications in general and languages in particular and is always on the lookout for new developments in communications technology or ancient relics of significant linguistic value. Celedyr may also hire shadowrunners to steal plans and prototypes for new telecommunications technology to satisfy his personal curiosity, as well as linguistic artifacts relating to ancient or obscure languages.

EARTH MAGIC

Celedyr and any true drakes he has created have the special ability to move through the earth at will and instinctively navigate through it. They may astrally project through the earth normally with no impediment. Additionally, Celedyr and his drakes can *physically* pass through the earth, at a movement rate equal to their Walking Rate. Note that this ability only affects movement; natural earth still serves as an astral barrier for spells and determining LOS. This ability also has no effect on artificial substances, such as brick or concrete.

Celedyr and his drakes also have a special version of the spirit Search power (p. 265, SR3) for locating people, places or objects underground.

CELEDYR'S DRACOBOTS

Celedyr uses a number of smart frames, agents and SKs to scour the Matrix for information. Listed below are some sample stats for them.

Routine Search Dracobot (Smart Frame)

Frame Core (MPCP/B/E/M/S): 10/1/1/4/4

Initiative: 10 + 1D6

Pilot: 3

Utility Payload: 34

Typical Utilities: Analyze 6, Browse 6, Camo 4, Deception 5, Evaluate 5, Decrypt 4, Sleaze 4

Typical Detection Factor: 4

Icon: Coal miner with pickaxe and helmet lantern.

Combat Dracobot (Agent)

Frame Core (MPCP/B/E/M/S): 10/6/6/3/5

Initiative: 10 + 5D6

Pilot: 5

Hacking Pool: 10

Utility Payload: 38

Typical Utilities: Analyze 4, Armor 3, Attack-M 6, Crash 4, Deception 4, Lock-On 3, Medic 4, Shield 3, Sleaze 4, Steamroller 3

Typical Detection Factor: 4

Icon: Giant stone lizard.

Cyberdrake (Semi-autonomous Knowbot)

Frame Core (MPCP/B/E/M/S): 8/5/6/7/6

Initiative: 8 + 5D6

Pilot: 6

Hacking Pool: 8

Utility Pool: 12

Utility Payload: 44

Icon: Western dragon with shimmering iridescent colors.

USING TRANSYS NEURONET

Transys Neuronet is a specialty AA megacorp, focusing in particular on cybernetic interfaces, biotechnology and information technology. Its expertise and corporate mission attracted Celedyr's attention and investment, and in return Transys Neuronet pursues projects which suit Celedyr's goals.

After waging a protracted shadow campaign, Celedyr has won control of the company from HKB, but HKB still retains a significant presence in the megacorp. Shadowrunners may be involved in this continuing internal struggle, either working for the wurm in completely eliminating HKB's interference or for HKB in retaking control of Transys Neuronet.

Additionally, with new leadership at the helm, Transys Neuronet is undertaking an ambitious plan to expand its corporate holdings by expanding into the data services (particularly grid management) and entertainment industries. This means Transys Neuronet will be encroaching on others' territories, however, so plenty of shadowrun opportunities will arise working either for or against Transys as it expands into new business opportunities.

USING THE KNIGHTS OF RAGE

Originally a London street gang, the Knights of Rage are Celedyr's personal agents that he uses for projects outside of Transys' sphere of influence. The Knights are an eclectic mixture of African, Celtic and Egyptian cultures and share many of the quirks their master displays.

As Celedyr's eyes and ears, the Knights are the most likely interaction between the characters and the dragon. Characters are equally likely to be working for or against the Knights. When working for them, the Knights act as the characters' Mr. Johnson, representing the dragon. When working against them, however, the Knights are effective "company men" sent to make sure the characters don't interfere with the dragon's plans.

**TRANSYS NEURONET
MEGACORPORATE ATTRIBUTES**

Intelligence	4
Counterintelligence	6
Publicity	4
Efficiency	8
Black Ops	6
Security	7
Magical	7
Matrix	9
Physical	5

Special Intelligence Modifiers: -2 to tests concerning cyberware and bioware; -1 to tests concerning the Matrix

TRANSYS NEURONET ASSET RATINGS

Aerospace	0
Agriculture	0
Biotech	8
Chemicals	5
Comp. Engineering	8
Comp. Science	6
Consumer Goods	1
Cybernetics	9
Entertainment	4
Finance	4
Heavy Industry	4
Military Technology	4
Mystic Goods	2
Service	4
Total	59

Knight NPCs may be any type of character and metatype, though they must be Nubian or Celtic in their ethnic descent. Knights of Rage working for Celedyr should be treated as Equal or Superior NPCs, while gang members in Cardiff or London are generally Inferior NPCs. Additionally, the Caerleon Knights of Rage are proficient in multiple languages, particularly obscure or dead ones. Gamemasters should give these NPCs proficiency in at least two more foreign languages (one active, one obscure), with a minimum spoken skill rating of 3 and a minimum written skill rating of 2.

GHOSTWALKER

Though he may be the newest player in the game of great dragons in the Sixth World, Ghostwalker has played the

game before, and he plays it well. His recent return has left the Dragon of Denver with some catching up to do, but Ghostwalker is something of a scholar among his kind, and has adapted quickly to the modern world.

Gamemasters can find more information about Ghostwalker's return and early activities in *Year of the Comet* and more about his domain of Denver in *Shadows of North America*. This section looks at Ghostwalker's plans and goals, and one of the secrets of Denver that ties in with them.

THE SPIRITS OF DENVER

A part of Ghostwalker's recent activities and plans involve a group of free spirits formerly active in the Denver area, spirits that were once all part of the same spirit, Zebulon, the so-called Spirit of Denver.

Zebulon was a powerful free spirit that dwelled in the Denver area even before the Awakening. After 2011, a number of magicians became aware of Zebulon's existence. During the Ghost Dance War two of them—a Native American shaman and a United States military mage—attempted to summon and bind the free spirit, at the exact same moment. The summoning ritual sundered Zebulon into two parts, and resulted in the deaths of the magicians. Following the end of the Ghost Dance War and the signing of the Treaty of Denver, the shattered spirit was broken into six independent entities, one associated with each of the sectors of the Denver Front Range Free Zone. Each spirit pursued its own agenda and plans, influenced by the tenor and character of its new home.

When Ghostwalker arrived in Denver, one of his first orders of business was hunting down the fragments of Zebulon. The great dragon destroyed the spirits' physical forms and captured their magical essence. He intends to reintegrate the spirits, believing that Zebulon will be a useful ally and that the process may also begin to mend the rifts in Denver and help stabilize his domain. Even with his tremendous knowledge, however, Ghostwalker isn't entirely certain how to meld the six spirits back into one, or what the result will be. Therefore he's taking his time and studying all facets of the problem before going any further.

At the gamemaster's discretion, it's also possible that Ghostwalker hasn't yet recovered all of the fragments of the Spirit of Denver. Now occupied with other matters, the dragon may need agents capable of hunting down, overcoming and capturing a powerful and wily free spirit or two, agents like a group of shadowrunners, for example.

For more on free spirits and their powers, see *Magic in the Shadows*. The fragments of the Spirit of Denver are powerful free spirits, ranging in Force from 7 to 10 and in Spirit Energy from 3 to 6 or so.

GHOSTWALKER'S GOALS

Ghostwalker is a busy dragon, to say the least. The other great dragons have had decades to move their own plans forward, so Ghostwalker has a fair amount of lost time to make up for. Fortunately, he is a fast learner, and a handful of decades isn't that much time to a great dragon. Ghostwalker

has a few more short-term goals than his fellow dragons, things he needs to take care of before he can tackle larger matters. Ghostwalker's goals (in rough order of priority) are:

1. Establish and stabilize his domain. First and foremost, Ghostwalker needs to establish and stabilize his own domain in and around Denver, giving him a stronghold to work from and a position of influence in the world. He has already made considerable strides toward this goal, having the agreement and at least outward support of the major signatories of the Treaty of Denver and having ousted Aztlan, the prime opponent of his rule. There is still much, however, to be done. Ghostwalker faces challenges to his power in the form of Aztlan-supported rebels, government power-plays and intrigue and other dragons that want to keep him occupied with problems at home, so he doesn't have the opportunity to turn his attention elsewhere.

2. Learn about the modern world. Ghostwalker has been out of touch for a considerable time. Though he has absorbed much about the Sixth World since his return, there is still a great deal to learn. Ghostwalker spends a portion of his time practically soaking in information about modern technology, society, culture, history and dozens of other subjects. He has already begun to grasp many of the possibilities inherent in things like the Matrix, the Corporate Court, space technology, cyberware and so forth. Ghostwalker doesn't like all that he's learned, but he has found it all useful thus far. Even once he has caught up sufficiently, Ghostwalker will need to keep up to date on new innovations and current events, especially given the fast pace of change in the Sixth World.

3. Restore the Spirit of Denver. One of Ghostwalker's prime goals that no one outside of his immediate circle knows of is his effort to restore the shattered Spirit of Denver (see above). In addition to giving him a strong ally, Ghostwalker believes restoring the Spirit will help to strengthen his claim over Denver and unify the city under his guidance. Given the unique circumstances of the Spirit's sundering, it is unknown how long it will take Ghostwalker to restore it, or even if it is possible at all. To accomplish this goal, Ghostwalker may need additional magical aid, unusual components, ritual assistants or ancient, lost magical relics or lore.

4. Expand his influence. Ghostwalker's broadest goal is to gather power and influence that he will need in the Sixth World. His power base in Denver is only the beginning. He has already acquired some allies, such as the Church of the Dragon, the Denver Nexus and possibly the Draco Foundation and Hestaby (see *Allies and Enemies*, pp. 65–68). Ghostwalker knows that he needs more influence if he is to remain the equal of his fellow great dragons, so he looks for opportunities to cultivate new alliances.

5. Study and practice conjuring. Ghostwalker is acknowledged as perhaps the greatest conjurer and expert on spirits among his kind, meaning that he may be the greatest expert on the subject ever. Ghostwalker devotes some of his time to studying the nature of spirits and the astral plane, particularly exotic types of spirits, such as the shedim (p. 149, *Year of the Comet*), which appear connected with his reap-

pearance in some way. He particularly seems interested in blood spirits, ancestor spirits and loa spirits (see *Magic in the Shadows* for details). Ghostwalker is also interested in free spirits, especially their true names (p. 114, *MITS*) which he can use to control them.

6. Rebuild damaged areas of Denver. Though he did a fair amount of damage to Denver in reasserting his dominance over the area, Ghostwalker wants to see the damage areas rebuilt and his domain improved in general. He has a particular interest in the damaged areas of Aztlan sector and the astral space there. He will take steps to ensure that new construction in Denver follows the right lines to enhance the magical power of the site and cleanse it of any remaining taint from the presence of the Aztec *teocalli* and the blood magic that was performed there.

7. Look toward the future. Finally, Ghostwalker has many plans for the future, once his immediate concerns are taken care of. Most of these involve stronger alliances with some of his fellow great dragons and taking up the some of Dunkelzahn's hopes for metahumanity and the Sixth World. Whether or not Ghostwalker will be the dragon able to make them happen remains to be seen.

RUNNING FOR GHOSTWALKER

Ghostwalker is fairly new to the shadowrunning game, which may prove an opportunity for a group of up-and-coming shadowrunners willing to deal with a dragon (whether they know it or not). Ghostwalker may work through a series of intermediaries and fixers to hire shadowrunners for various jobs, evaluating their performance with an eye toward recruiting long-term agents. Working for Ghostwalker could be the opportunity to get in on the "ground floor" of the great dragon's new network of operatives, provided the runners sufficiently impress Ghostwalker with their abilities.

Consult Ghostwalker's goals for shadowrun ideas. The dragon of Denver might hire runners to track down the troublesome Los Espejos rebels, gather information on things happening in one or more sectors of the city, spy on the main Children of the Dragon cult on Prince Edward Island, find one of the aforementioned Spirits of Denver, track down obscure magical components or lore or any number of similar things.

RUNNING AGAINST GHOSTWALKER

Ghostwalker has his share of enemies and rivals, any of whom might hire shadowrunners to do their dirty work for them. Most runs against Ghostwalker aren't likely to directly involve the dragon himself (unless the shadowrunners are very capable). They're more likely to involve Ghostwalker's various interests in Denver and elsewhere. Los Espejos might need to smuggle weapons into Denver. A power struggle may erupt within the ranks of the Children of the Dragon (or between the disparate sects). Another dragon may want to interfere with Ghostwalker's plans. Someone (a dragon or powerful magician, most likely) may hire shadowrunners to capture one of the Spirits of Denver before Ghostwalker does or to steal the essences of the captured spirits from Ghostwalker's lair.



HESTABY

As detailed in the campaign *Survival of the Fittest*, Hestaby recently earned her place at the top of the great dragon hierarchy, besting even Lofwyr and Ghostwalker in a massive ritual challenge. Though she declined to take the role of Loremaster, leaving that in Lofwyr's claws, she is using her victory to direct dragonkind down a new path—a path originally blazed by Dunkelzahn.

Like Dunkelzahn, Hestaby feels that the dragons need to adapt to the modern world and discard outdated traditions (though certainly not all traditions need to be trashed—each must be evaluated on its own merits). In Hestaby's view, attitudes that dominated dragonkind in the past, particularly those that claim metahumanity should or must have dragon leadership and protection, must be reconsidered. Metahumanity has proven just how far it can go and what it can achieve without great dragons—a lesson many of them are unwilling to swallow. Rather than make enemies, servants or slaves out of metahumanity, Hestaby desires a new age where dragons and metahumans forge a better future together.

To this end, Hestaby is following Dunkelzahn's lead and taking a more proactive role in world affairs. With her media savvy and public concerns for environmental protections and social justice, she is rapidly becoming one of the world's most prominent dragon faces.

It is important to note that while Hestaby certainly admired Dunkelzahn and sees the validity of his cause, she is *not* Dunkelzahn. Hestaby does not wear the affable public image that Dunkelzahn did, she does not have the same resources, network of watchers or political connections that he did, and she was critical of the way he handled some affairs. Hestaby's projects and methods of doing things are sure to have a style and flavor that are different from Dunkelzahn and unique to her.

HESTABY'S GOALS

Hestaby now has a reputation to live up to, so she takes on new projects on a daily basis. These are her current top interests:



1. Destigmatize dragons in the public eye. Dragons get a bad rap in the media, not all of it undeserved. For Hestaby's vision of a future society to succeed, then dragonkind needs to be made more accessible and less threatening. Hestaby is trying to lead by example, carefully cultivating an image as an ethical and socially responsible philanthropist and trying to acclimatize the public to her natural reptilian form.

2. Safeguard the global environment. Hestaby realizes that technology is here to stay and that dragons need to get used to it, but she hopes to steer the world towards technology and ways of living that are ecologically low-impact and non-pollutive. She throws many resources and her public persona in support of mainstream environmental protection groups, and she also provides clandestine support to eco-activists who target polluting corps where it counts—their checkbooks. She draws the line, however, at toxics.

3. Support the rights of metahumans. Hestaby realizes that if she hopes metahumanity will one day interact with dragons on equal terms, then metahumanity first needs to be able to relate to itself without prejudice and racism. As a major public proponent of metahuman equality, she funds a number of meta rights groups and covertly supports direct action against corporations and other groups that are discriminatory or outright prejudiced, particularly Humanis. She takes care to be certain that certain activities cannot be traced back to her, as the reactionary backlash would do more harm than good.

4. Defend and secure the Shasta Enclave. Hestaby values her private domain and promotes it as both as a protected wilderness area and as a sanctuary for refugees and exiles. She will brook no violations of her border control, and is diligent in her maintenance of its integrity. While her position on the Tir Council effectively neutralizes the Tir as a threat, there are some within the Tir who still view Hestaby and her land as an obstacle to be removed. Hestaby is carefully watching Saito's movements, looking for signs that he intends to extend north, and preparing her own defenses.

5. Foster cooperation with other dragons. Though Hestaby has some allies (Rhonabwy, Masaru, and to a lesser degree Hualpa and Ghostwalker), for her plans to reach fruition she needs to convince many other great dragons to adjust their ways—a not inconsiderable task. She has used her recent victory to press this advantage, attempting to build stronger relationships and mediate problems between others. Some are very receptive to her overtures, while many others view her interventions as unwanted meddling.

RUNNING FOR HESTABY

Hestaby's wide range of interests present many opportunities for extensive shadow work. Hestaby has a tendency to keep reliable and loyal employees for repeated work; she is not averse to repeated interaction with the same group, so long as they are professional and reliable. Some of the runs she might hire for include: spying on General Saito, collecting evidence of a corporation's polluting practices, preventing an

enemy from tarnishing her public image, keeping reports of a dragon-on-metahuman attack out of the news, or gathering leverage over a corporate shareholder so she can gain control of their proxy votes.

RUNNING AGAINST HESTABY

The other great dragons recently learned a sharp lesson in underestimating Hestaby, and few of them are likely to do it again. While they tread carefully around her for now, they are each taking the chance to scout out her resources and operations and re-evaluate the threat she poses to their own agendas. Some of these dragons may hire runners to probe her defenses or otherwise gather intelligence. Only the most audacious would consider shadowruns involving her personal enclave—the spirit-infested, gypsy-patrolled redwoods are a formidable defense. Most runs will instead target her other resources, such as allied eco-groups, corporate holdings or gypsy informants. Humanis and the Human Nation—particularly General Saito—view Hestaby as a grave threat, and will seek to undermine her projects or expose her private dealings to the public media if possible.

HUALPA

Though he seems to have the best interests of the ecosphere and the Awakened at heart, Hualpa is just as cunning and devious as any dragon, perhaps more so since he chooses to shun the limelight and work behind the scenes as much as possible. Also like other dragons, Hualpa rarely runs only one scheme at a time, but juggles multiple plots to further his goals and undermine the goals of his enemies, a complex web that characters can become entangled in.

HUALPA'S GOALS

Hualpa's goals are manifold. In approximate order of importance they are:

1. Safeguard Amazonia's borders and interests. Amazonia is Hualpa's stronghold and base of operations and therefore must be protected. Hualpa will not compromise the needs of Amazonia to fulfill his other plans and he looks after the nation's interests. This sometimes calls for compromise or patience regarding his other goals.

2. Protect the natural world from harm and corruption to ensure a healthy world. Hualpa makes no secret of this goal. It is one of the reasons he engineered the creation of Amazonia and maintains ties to ecological groups worldwide. To the dragon's mind, the corruption of the environment, twisting it into a toxic domain, is a dire threat to all life. In order to further this goal, Hualpa does sometimes work with toxic shamans of the Avenger type (p. 124, *MITS*), but never with Poisoner shamans. The ecological extremists are useful but often-dangerous allies, since their zeal can be difficult to control.

3. Protect important power sites, keeping them out of the wrong hands. In Central and South America, "the wrong hands" generally means Aztlan and Aztechnology. Another reason for the creation of Amazonia was to protect power



sites in the Amazon Basin and to block Aztlan's expansion toward power sites in South America like the Incan ruins in Chile. Hualpa wants to see such power sites harnessed for "good" (meaning to further his own goals).

4. Undermine Aztlan and Aztechnology. Hualpa and his allies are opposed to Aztechnology (and its puppet government in Aztlan) for a number of reasons: their extensive use of blood magic, their pollution of the environment, and their sheer ruthlessness in maintaining their place among the most powerful of the world's megacorporations. Though Hualpa would like nothing more than to restore independence to Central America (and even overthrow Aztlan in general), he understands the dangers of opposing Aztechnology too openly. For the time being the dragon works against the megacorporation from behind the scenes.

5. Further Awakened rights. Hualpa does not share other dragons' appreciation for modern society. Though the dragon understands and respects technology, he believes the Awakened have a greater understanding of the real nature of the world, therefore they should be allowed to guide mundanes in proper behavior, and have a duty to use their abilities to protect nature from the ignorance of others. For this reason, Hualpa encourages tribal societies to rebel against colonial oppressors, and the Awakened to seize control of unspoiled lands to protect them from harm. Hualpa is not an unkind ruler, but he is something of a racist. To his mind it's obvious the Awakened are superior to mundanes, just as dragons are superior to other races, a natural chain of command dictated by nature.

HUALPA'S ALLIES & ENEMIES

Naturally there are those who support Hualpa's goals and those opposed to them. Hualpa's allies include ecological groups (including eco-activist organizations like TerraFirst! and eco-terrorists like GreenWar) and Awakened nations like Siberia (and, to a lesser degree, the Native American Nations). The dragon's foremost enemy is Aztechnology, which would like nothing more than to eliminate Hualpa.

Hualpa is on neutral terms at best with his fellow great dragons. Hualpa's major draconic ally is Sirurg, and he is an ally that Hualpa doesn't like to call upon often, simply because of Sirurg's unpredictable temper. The only great dragons Hualpa might count among his allies are Hestaby and Mujaji, though Hualpa has also made overtures to Ghostwalker. Ghostwalker's forceful removal of Aztlan from Denver has definitely favorably disposed Hualpa toward him. It remains to be seen if Ghostwalker returns Hualpa's good will.

Most megacorporations other than Aztechnology are fairly neutral toward Hualpa and Amazonia. A number of megacorps, particularly those with investments in biotechnology and agriculture, would like to find ways to loosen Amazonian restrictions on their business in South America, but don't wish to openly oppose Hualpa for fear of losing what opportunities they have. Instead, these corporations work behind the scenes to create opportunities for profit.

RUNNING FOR HUALPA

Working for Hualpa and Amazonia offers a number of opportunities for shadowrunners. All of Hualpa's goals above may require shadowrunner assistance. Runners can spy on Hualpa's enemies, gathering information about Aztechnology and Aztlan (or even other dragons!). Runs against Aztechnology are common and may suit shadowrunners that share a grudge against the corporation, though they're also likely to be dangerous in the extreme. Runners can smuggle information and supplies to ecological or Awakened rights groups supported by Amazonia, running up against countering interests in the area. For example, characters might be hired to aid the Awakened in Siberia, something Yamatetsu might object to, especially if it threatens their facilities in Vladivostok.

RUNNING AGAINST HUALPA

Any corporation would love to get information about some of the paranatural plants and animals in Amazonia, and might send characters looking for samples. Aztechnology has many uses for shadowrunners, using agents to thwart Hualpa's plans and gather information about them. It's also an easy matter for characters to become involved in a complex chess match between another dragon (or dragons) and Hualpa, settled according to their own arcane rules and sense of fairness.

LOFWYR

To get the most from some of the references and characters featured in the Lofwyr chapter, a prior knowledge of the information in the Saeder-Krupp chapter of *Corporate Download* is helpful but not essential.

PERSONALITY

Lofwyr is misunderstood. No matter how complicated and inscrutable his objectives may seem to everyone else, to him they are quite simple. Were he human, his personal maxim would be "That which does not kill you, makes you stronger." His defining trait is his belief in his own superiority.

Though Lofwyr's presence is felt everywhere, it conceals the fact that most of his actions go unseen. It's been said before, but Lofwyr is the ultimate puppet master, a chess player on a global scale; subtlety and misdirection are the hallmarks of his schemes. Lofwyr's power is felt indirectly, through pawns in various walks of life advancing his agendas—be they social, economic, political or military. All of them interweave in the wyrm's machinations. Everything is a piece in a Great Game that is played on so many levels that only Lofwyr's intellect can keep track of all the plays and feints.

Lofwyr views every challenge and obstacle as an opportunity to test and hone himself. He never backs down and will go to any length to win. In his own mind, every victory proves his superiority. To Lofwyr, this is more than a personal philosophy; it has defined his goals and plans across centuries. It is

this perspective that has let him adapt so quickly to the Sixth World—the developments he encountered upon waking were but new tools to master and new challenges to overcome.

Lofwyr is a believer in dragon superiority because of his own brand of Darwinism, in which dragons happen to be the peak of evolution. He disagrees with Alamais's views in that he thinks in terms of individuals and their relative place in the scheme of things. He doesn't believe dragons automatically deserve respect and awe, but rather that this respect is due any being of such strength, influence and sheer personal power. The strong are made to rule, the weak and meek to follow.

USING LOFWYR

Lofwyr's understanding of the world is feudalistic and hierarchical—something that has served him exceptionally well in the neo-feudal corporate society of the Sixth World. In his mind, it is the duty of the enlightened sovereign to guide the lives of his inferiors, to lead by example (and reap the rewards). This certainty in his own superiority leads to his greatest flaw: hubris.

Thanks to his draconic arrogance and sense of superiority, Lofwyr is a control freak. He rarely trusts any but his top servants to do things right, and so he has the tendency to micromanage his empire. He has the unnerving (some would say irritating) habit of personally checking on projects. He does not tolerate failure or suffer fools well, and he is vindictive to the point that those who cross him can expect to pay for it dearly, sometimes years down the line.

GOALS

Though Lofwyr's goals can be summarized under "world domination," the following are key components of his long-term strategy:

1. Dominate Europe. Lofwyr spent the first three decades after the Awakening quietly and carefully setting the pillars of an empire. After staking out his domain through pawns and proxies, he rose into the spotlight when his power could no longer be disputed. He further carved out his private domain during the recession that shadowed the Euro-Wars years. Though Saeder-Krupp and its European holdings are the heart of this empire, Lofwyr's power reaches into countless boardrooms, official public offices, bureaucracies and social settings around Europe. He does not control Europe, but he exercises an unparalleled amount of influence. Even his failed attempt at a European Restoration, served to draw out his opposition and set in motion his Second Restoration, the first step of which is the New European Economic Community. A united Europe will be a testament to his power and vision, and an example to the rest of the world and his would-be peers.

2. Extend his power base. Lofwyr is not content to restrict himself to Europe, nor does he refrain from intruding on the territories of other great dragons. Lofwyr seeks to his personal interests into the Middle East, Africa and North America. Saeder-Krupp is in the vanguard of this expansion, but Lofwyr also pursues power through other avenues, using both brute force and subtlety.

3. Lead dragonkind as Loremaster. Though Hestaby claimed victory in the recent Rite of Succession (see *Survival of the Fittest*), Lofwyr still retains both his role as Loremaster and possession of the Jewel of Memory. These events have given him pause to reevaluate his beliefs and opinion of others. In search of answers, Lofwyr has begun to delve deeper into the Jewel of Memory, seeking answers in the ageless wisdom of dragonkind stored therein. How this will affect his outlook remains to be seen.

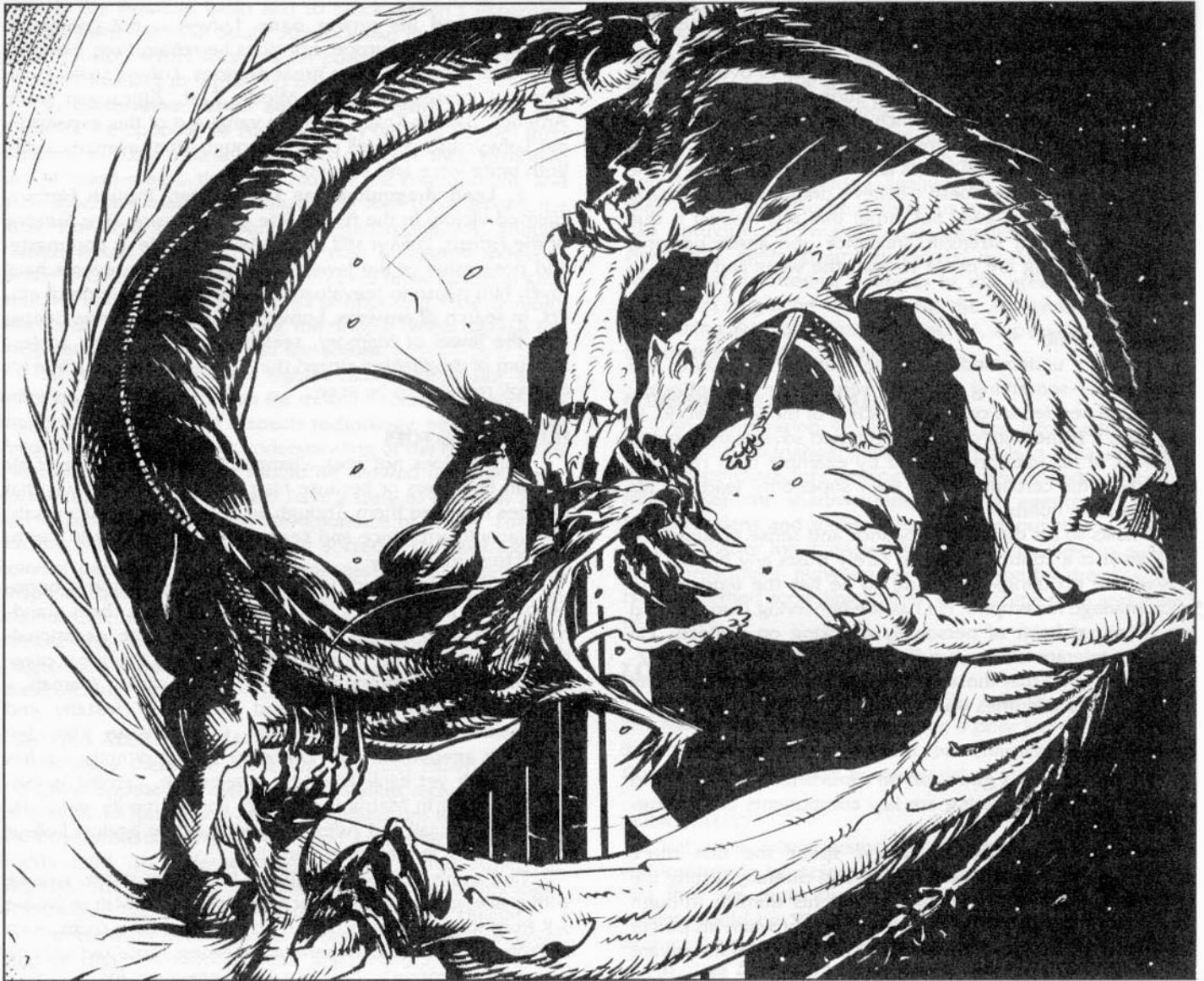
FRIENDS AND FOES

Lofwyr does not seek alliances, whether because of his disdain for others or because his personal philosophy is that he does not need them. Though he does make use of vassals, his draconic arrogance and sense of superiority leads him to never trust them fully.

On the other hand, Lofwyr's list of enemies and opponents reads like a Who's Who catalogue. Like a chess grandmaster, he plays various boards at the same time, occasionally turning these foes on each other. Among the great dragons, his enmity is strongest with his clutch-sibling Alamais, a blood feud that will only end in death. Hestaby and Ghostwalker are potent enough to challenge him, but Hestaby's agenda does not challenge Lofwyr directly, nor has Ghostwalker yet established his powerbase. Celedyr is outpacing Lofwyr in Matrix technology and so merits watching, while both Mujaji and Aden are taking action against Lofwyr for interfering in their own domains.

Tied as he is to Saeder-Krupp, Lofwyr must also wrestle with challenges from the other megacorps who wish to unseat S-K from its dominant position. Other major Euro-corps, such as Proteus and Zeta-ImpChem, are business rivals and so have economic incentive to interfere with Lofwyr's plans.

Lofwyr's greatest foe, however, may be an alliance of influential opponents with a vendetta. Unknown to Lofwyr until recently, a core group of his enemies had been conspiring against him for some time, including Wilhelmina Graff-Belot, Nachtmeister, Aithne Oakforest and recent addition Johnny Spinrad. Recent circumstances have thrown this coterie's plans into disarray—not the least being the deaths of Nachtmeister and Graff-Belot. But the conspirators may have other allies, and they can certainly appeal to individuals within the corporate elites, reactionary clergy, ultra-nationalist policlubs or anyone with a sufficiently big grudge against Lofwyr.



LUNG

Lung is an enigma wrapped in a mystery covered by a riddle. What makes Lung dangerous is not his great strength, fearsome claws or powerful magic (though he has all that if he needs it), but instead his millennia-long accumulation of knowledge, lore, and experience. Additionally, the wyrm is incredibly difficult to read, even by dragon standards, and keeps his rivals (and sometimes his allies!) always guessing. If Lofwyr is the chess grandmaster manipulating his pawns into a cunning endgame, then Lung is the poker hustler who's always smiling, so you never know if he's bluffing with a pair of twos or beating you with a royal flush. And just when you think you've figured out the game he's playing, he suddenly changes the rules. Witness his sudden public appearance on T'ai Shan after years of manipulating events from behind the scenes.

ROLEPLAYING LUNG

Lung is the quintessential Chinese dragon. He displays many of the odd quirks common in Chinese culture (or rather, Chinese culture could be said to have developed around his quirks). Listed below are some helpful suggestions to assist gamemasters in roleplaying Lung's personality.

First and foremost, Lung is a stickler for etiquette and courtesy. Even to sworn arch-enemies like Ryumyo, Lung acts very politely and is the epitome of social grace. (In many cases, Lung is more polite and formal in front of his enemies, and more casual and relaxed before his friends.) Likewise, Lung expects the same in return, in particular the respect and deference owed to a wyrm of his age and experience. Runners who have crossed Lung may mollify him if they show him deferential courtesy and politeness. Conversely, rudeness, boor-



ishness, and a lack of tact will further antagonize the wyrm and cause him to deal with such loutish foes more harshly.

Lung is also a spiritualist. He deplores the atheist stance of communism and dislikes the largely secular mindset pervading the Sixth World. Characters demonstrating a steadfast faith in religion or a strong code of values will tend to earn favor with Lung. On the other hand, atheistic and amoral characters will put Lung off and cause him not to associate with them.

One unusual quirk is that Lung loves word games and is a notorious punner who can spin out plays on words that would make even Harlequin groan. Anything that Lung says usually contains a hidden second meaning, and this second meaning often can serve as a better indicator of Lung's motives and reasons. When planning Lung's plots, gamemasters should consider the play on words and disguise his actions using that guide. Additionally, whenever Lung or his minions provide assistance to the characters, usually it will come in the form of a riddle.

On a related note, Lung pays close attention to numbers, since in the Chinese language many numbers often sound the same as important words. In Chinese culture, two, three and eight are very lucky numbers, so Lung's collections will be in combinations of those numbers, while his minions will tend to aggregate in them. On the other hand, four and five are considered unlucky numbers, so Lung and his associates will studiously avoid them wherever possible.

LUNG'S AGENDA

Lung has a number of irons in the fire, any (or all) of which can serve as themes for gamemasters to play with. They are listed below in order of importance.

1. Expand his influence over the Ring of Fire. Lung is engaged in a race with Ryumyo to gain control over the various power sites and dragon lines across the Ring of Fire. In Lung's case, however, the race is not just a grab for power, but also a mission to harmonize the mana lines before certain future events come to bear. With the withdrawal of Japanese forces from across the Pacific Rim, Lung has a freer reign in expanding his sphere of influence, particularly into southeast Asia and Australia. Additionally, Lung is also making forays into territory previously unbreached by the two, including Siberia, Athabaska and Chile. This could bring Lung into potential conflict with non-dragon adversaries, such as Awakened Siberia or Amazonia.

2. Collect three of the Four Coins of Luck. Dunkelzahn left Lung the Second Coin of Luck in his will, and Lung is interested in adding another two (and only two more) to his collection. This can bring conflict with Wuxing (who has the Third Coin and wants all four), Ryumyo (who simply wants to thwart Lung), and various collectors of arcane relics (like the Atlantean Foundation). Ideally Lung would prefer the First and Fourth Coin, but he's not above taking Wuxing's Coin if one of the other two isn't available.

3. Expand his influence over the Five Sacred Mountains. The Five Sacred Mountains play an important role

in Chinese feng shui, which make them important to Lung, the master geomancer. While some remain under his indirect control, others are not, which Lung will want to remedy. Of particular concern is Hua Shan, which is the site of a military standoff between the Henan neo-communists and the warlord of Sichuan, who owes his allegiance to Lung. The fight for control of Hua Shan can be an adventure seed for an ongoing merc campaign.

4. Keep Ryumyo in check. Lung is opposed by his former apprentice Ryumyo and is always working to keep him in check. Though they sometimes compete for the same goals, Ryumyo has his own agenda, so Lung will want to keep abreast of his ex-pupil's plans. To that end, Lung has been courting Masaru for an alliance due to his mutual rivalry with Ryumyo, allowing the younger dragon to operate in his territory and learn some of his secrets.

MASARU

Masaru may be the most friendly and approachable of great dragons; this does not, however, make him a teddy bear. He is quite capable of violent and ruthless action but chooses instead to find other avenues for problem solving where possible. He is the youngest of the great dragons, which surfaces in his choice of philosophy and adaptability to the modern world, but he is still older than any nation, with years of hard-earned experience and wisdom.

The gamemaster should keep in mind that Masaru has a genuine curiosity about metahumanity in general, and is most receptive to downtrodden segments of metahuman society.

MASARU'S AGENDA

Perhaps more than the other great dragons, Masaru's agenda is focused on (relatively) short-term goals. His long-term strategy remains unknown, or perhaps undecided. These are some of his immediate goals:

1. Guide the revolution in the Philippines. Masaru has committed himself to the Filipino people and their struggle to overthrow the yoke of Japanese imperialism. By virtue of his knowledge and resources, he has become an ad hoc leader and public spokesdragon for the Huk, and his voice will undoubtedly carry weight in determining the structure of society in the Philippines once the Japanese are driven out. Masaru is working hard to see that the Huk do not devolve into infighting and factionalism, and he hopes to deter acts of terrorism and other atrocities common to such conflicts. Not all of the Huk appreciate Masaru's aid, however, and some factions are suspect of his intentions, particularly his plans to involve various corporations in rebuilding the war-torn nation.

2. Develop alliances with other great dragons. Masaru is still finding his place in the great dragon social network and strategic alliances are a way for him to solidify his position and further his own goals. To this end, he has actively sought out joint ventures with those great dragons who have philosophies similar to his own, or those who serve to benefit from an alliance against a mutual foe—specifically, Hestaby, Lung and Celedyr.



3. Increase his media presence. Like Hestaby, Masaru feels it is important for great dragons to be stewards of metahumanity and help to guide them in the future. The first step is to make great dragons familiar and appreciated faces in the public eye. To this end, Masaru has maximized his media presence and is working on revitalizing Wyrms Talk, the show once hosted by Dunkelzahn. Other dragons may not appreciate the exposure, however, and may sabotage his plans.

4. Further the study of magic. Masaru is intrigued by the magical traditions of metahumanity, particularly the paradigm constructs that allow metahumans to tap into magic that dragons have not yet explored. Masaru's research and public commentary in this area have led to an academic rivalry with the dragon Schwartzkopf. To further his research, Masaru seeks to study and learn from practitioners of esoteric metahuman traditions.

RUNNING FOR MASARU

Masaru can be a powerful patron for the right group of shadowrunners, or he can serve as a one-time employer. He is willing and able to supply them with a reasonable amount of equipment (usually weapons) or magical knowledge so long as they produce the desired results to the best of their abilities. Masaru may use runners to aid the Huk, sabotage Japanese corporate interests in the Philippines, deliver something to an allied dragon or procure rare books, art and/or antiques.

RUNNING AGAINST MASARU

The most likely employers for runs against Masaru are likely to come from Japanese corporate security forces. As an identified leader of the Huk, MCT and other corps are eager to spy on Masaru's activities and agents, and they will attempt to undermine his revolutionary plans however possible. Most of the corporations defending their Philippine interests wouldn't mind taking down Masaru entirely, though assassinating a great dragon is certainly a tall order.

Runners may also face Masaru on jobs from the Atlantean Foundation, DIMR or similar arcane/archaeological groups seeking to obtain specific relics. This may involve snatching something from an archaeological dig, trekking to an art dealer to dicker over price, or stealing directly from Masaru's hoard.

RHONABWY

Rhonabwy is a careful great dragon, relying on far-reaching, subtle influence and never putting all of his eggs in one basket.

RHONABWY'S GOALS

Rhonabwy's goals are as follows:

1. Political agitation against elven power. Rhonabwy is an equalizer, particularly with regard to elven political factions. For reasons he has not revealed, he actively opposes the concentration of too much power in the hands of elves. He does not, as many believe, dislike elves—in fact, he has been known to generously support them when they are the

minority (such as in the case of the secessionist elves in northern Wales). It is only when they establish elven-privileged regimes and oppress other metatypes that he acts against them, using his vast resources to fuel their opponents.

2. Increase his personal holdings. Unlike fellow corporate power-player Lofwyr, Rhonabwy prefers to act in the background, amassing wealth and power through shrewd investments, untraceable holding companies and secretive, behind-the-scenes dealing. To this end, the dragon does not hold controlling interest in any individual corporation, but instead has dedicated a sizeable chunk of his hoard to a diversified portfolio of investments that include everything from megacorporations like Ares and Shiawase to a wide range of mid-size corps throughout Europe. He is a canny corporate player second only to Lofwyr and is highly adept at spotting and exploiting trends far in advance of most other investors. Further, Rhonabwy employs some of his equalization principles in the corporate world as well, using his power and funds to destabilize corps he perceives as gaining too much power over smaller nations.

3. Block the Sea Dragon's efforts to regain the egg clutch. Rhonabwy is not nearly as invested in his ongoing battle with the Sea Dragon as she is in hers against him, but his primary concern is to ensure that the Sea Dragon does not regain control of the stolen egg clutch given to another dragon (Hestaby?) to raise. He is dedicated to opposing her efforts both directly (by working against any plans she makes to recapture the eggs) and indirectly (by sponsoring operations that require her attention to counter, thus diverting her focus away from the eggs).

4. Further the cause of Welsh independence. Rhonabwy is working from behind the scenes to support organizations and individuals who are pushing for the independence of Wales from Great Britain. He has recently stepped up his activities to this end, using his agents and his wide range of connections to support Parliament members who share his views.

5. Support the arts, particularly fine music. This goal is incidental compared to Rhonabwy's others, but he has long been known as an aficionado of beautiful music, particularly Welsh choral music. He dedicates a portion of his holdings to supporting talented and deserving musical organizations, with a special emphasis on male choirs.

RHONABWY'S ALLIES AND ENEMIES

Rhonabwy's primary draconic ally is Hestaby, with whom he has a complex relationship based on a series of exchanged favors. He is also favorably disposed toward Mujaji (and she toward him) due to strikes he has engineered against the Zulu elves in Azania. He has been known to associate with the adult dragon Perianwyr, but this association is largely based on their mutual love of music rather than on any draconic power playing.

Rhonabwy is far too slippery to cultivate active enemies among dragonkind, but it is no secret that he is more than a little fearful of Lofwyr—a feeling that has increased following the golden dragon's ascension as Loremaster. He does not



consider Celedyr, his fellow Welsh great dragon, to be an enemy, though he distrusts his motives and would like to know more of his plans. His traditional enemy is of course the Sea Dragon, but from Rhonabwy's point of view he considers her less an enemy than an opponent in a vast game that has been going on for thousands of years.

Rhonabwy also numbers many Awakened creatures and spirits among his allies. The most loyal of these are the drake Branwen and the wolf shapeshifter Volk, both of whom live on his land along with a menagerie of Awakened critters. He has associations with numerous spirits, both free and bound, and makes use of them as agents and Johnsons when he requires shadowrunners to further his ends.

RUNNING FOR RHONABWY

Runners working for Rhonabwy can rarely be sure of their true objective. The scarlet dragon has more ulterior motives than trolls have bumps, and only he knows the reasons behind the jobs he hires runners to perform. He almost never hires teams directly, preferring to work through his network of Awakened and spirit contacts. Jobs Rhonabwy is likely to seek shadowrunners for include: operations against corporate interests that the wyrm has some reason to want to undermine (and these reasons change constantly because of the sheer scope of his interests); runs that directly or indirectly target a powerful elven group (for example, in Tir Tairngire or the Zulu Nation); or runs to confound the Sea Dragon's plans in order to keep her off guard.

RUNNING AGAINST RHONABWY

Rhonabwy's political and corporate enemies would certainly make use of shadowrunners to thwart the dragon's plans, usually in the form of strikes (covert or overt) against Rhonabwy's holdings. Because of the wide scale of both Rhonabwy's activities and his corporate portfolio, it is difficult to strike him more than a glancing blow—he can quickly recover from most attacks unless they are multi-pronged and particularly well coordinated.

RYUMYO

Ryumyo is a complex and driven character and careful thought should be given before introducing him to your game. His best use may be for campaigns involved in or around Japan; Ryumyo's image is so prevalent there that it is nearly impossible to ignore, and the adoration the public has for him makes it easy to simply use the great dragon as a bit of color.

RYUMYO'S AGENDAS

Ryumyo has several goals, any one of which might provide a way to introduce him into your campaign.

1. Control the Ring of Fire. Simply put, Ryumyo wants all of the mana in the Ring of Fire's dragon lines for himself. Whether he just wants power, is attempting to transform himself, or has some other reason is up to you. The Ring of Fire is large and includes Japan, the Philippines, Seattle, San

Francisco, part of Aztlan and a number of other areas. Runners based in one of these places could easily run afoul of one of Ryumyo's plans, or even be hired by him.

2. Capture Lung's secrets. Ryumyo is convinced that Lung withheld secrets of power from him long ago, and in fact he is correct. Ryumyo still strives to learn these secrets, either by stealing them from Lung or through his own research. Ryumyo would like nothing better than to prove himself Lung's superior.

3. Keep Lung in check. Much of Ryumyo's time is spent devising ways to counter moves that Lung has made. The two are in a constant state of balance and keep it that way by constantly attacking and defending through agents. A group of runners could easily be caught up in this feud without ever knowing it, working for one great dragon or the other to accomplish these almost chess-like maneuvers.

4. Complete domination of Japan. Ryumyo does not control the entire island of Japan. He has the support of the common people, and an enormous amount of influence, but to claim he rules Japan absolutely would be to make a big mistake. He has many enemies in the government—especially among the corps—and constantly has to watch himself to ensure he does not fall into a position of weakness. He also does not have the same influence over the new boy Emperor as he did over the old—a situation he hopes to soon correct. Ryumyo is quite proactive about maintaining his power and will strike at perceived enemies first to eliminate the threat the pose.

RUNNING FOR RYUMYO

With a massive criminal network at his disposal (the various Yakuza factions he controls), Ryumyo has less need for runners than other dragons. Runners are likely to be used for jobs that Ryumyo does not wish to be linked to, or for jobs in areas where his Yakuza servants have no base or are already occupied. Runners who work for Ryumyo in Japan may find that many opportunities will open up for them, as Ryumyo's influence runs deep. It may be easier for them to get information or equipment from the right sources, and Ryumyo may call the Yakuza in to back the runners up if the job calls for it. Ryumyo rewards excellence, and runners who perform well in his service or help him (knowingly or not) are likely to receive more work from the dragon in the future.

Ryumyo may hire runners to steal secrets from Lung, in the form of memory crystals or ancient texts. The runners may be hired to interfere with Lung in other ways, particularly undermining Lung's control over power sites or areas with powerful dragon lines. In many such cases, the runners are likely to find themselves in a shadow war between Ryumyo's Yakuza and Lung's Triad allies.

Runners might also be hired by Ryumyo to blackmail political figures, steal corporate plans, assassinate a corporate leader or otherwise eliminate threats to Ryumyo's power base in Japan. Likewise, Ryumyo may send runners to spy on Masaru, who poses a challenge to Japanese operations in the Philippines. Finally, Ryumyo is consistently seeking to establish power bases around the Pacific Rim to better control the



Ring of Fire, so runners may be used to eliminate rivals or broker deals to bring other power players to Ryumyo's side.

RUNNING AGAINST RYUMYO

The various megacorporations that jockey for power in Japan are well aware of Ryumyo's popularity and influence. They may employ runners to eradicate Ryumyo's influence from their own corporations or frame-up a competitor so that it draws Ryumyo's ire. Masaru may be eager to score points against Ryumyo in order to earn advantage with Lung, just as Lung is interested in monitoring Ryumyo's activities. When Ryumyo finds his assets under attack, he is likely to send out the Yakuza in response, though some situations may require direct intervention from Naheka, Jurojin or Ryumyo's pawns within Japan's power structure. Runners who side with Lung (knowingly or not) are forever enemies, and can expect problems in the future, especially from Yakuza gumi.

THE SEA DRAGON

The Sea Dragon is primarily concerned with ocean depths, the domain of her and her kind. The surface world has increasingly intruded upon these depths, however, with pollution, deep-sea mining and undersea research stations and arcologies.

THE SEA DRAGON'S GOALS

In order of importance, the Sea Dragon's goals are:

1. Protect the undersea world and its denizens from surface-dwellers. As one of the last (perhaps *the* last) of the great leviathans on Earth, the Sea Dragon considers it her duty to safeguard her domain from interlopers, especially those who seek to damage its fragile ecology. To this end she supports causes dedicated to the protection of the sea and sea life, and opposes undersea drilling and mining as well as the creation of underwater arcologies.

2. Regain her egg clutch. At the heart of the Sea Dragon's long-running conflict with Rhonabwy is the possession of an egg clutch that was originally to be the Sea Dragon's to raise. She is determined to regain custody of at least some of the eggs, and her sense of urgency is increasing due to the fact that the time is quickly approaching when she will no longer be able to imprint her own nature upon the hatchlings.

3. Undermine Rhonabwy. The Sea Dragon has a very long memory, and she has not forgiven Rhonabwy for his past trickery. She avoids direct confrontation with him, but will take what opportunities she can to identify his projects and sabotage his activities using subtle and indirect methods.

THE SEA DRAGON'S ALLIES AND ENEMIES

The Sea Dragon has little use for most surface-dwellers, with a few exceptions. She has been known to indirectly support organizations that oppose what she considers to be the rape of the sea and its denizens, including pirates and sea-focused eco-activist organizations. She maintains a working relationship with the Atlantean Foundation, to whom she supplies coveted undersea treasures in exchange for their efforts on her behalf, and with the Welsh druids, whom she has reminded (rather to their embarrassment) that their duty to protect the land also extends to the sea. Finally, the Sea Dragon has access to a large network of Awakened undersea creatures, including her growing group of magically enhanced merrow, dolphins, and whales. She maintains particularly cordial relations with sea drakes, which rumors suggest are actually immature leviathans.

The Sea Dragon has almost no contact with most of the other great dracoforms, as their interests rarely coincide with hers. Exceptions to this are occasional rare alliances with Hualpa and Mujaji, both of whom are dedicated to ecological causes.

RUNNING FOR THE SEA DRAGON

The Sea Dragon's activities have increased in both quantity and scope in the last year due to an influx of capital from undersea orichalcum deposits. She almost always acts through intermediaries and agents, usually recruited from her Atlantean Foundation or druid allies. Jobs for which she might make use of shadowrunners include strikes or sabotage against undersea mining operations and construction projects, along with runs against Rhonabwy's corporate or political interests. As she grows increasingly desperate to regain her eggs from the clutch in Hestaby's possession, she might even seek to send teams against Hestaby's Mount Shasta lair.

RUNNING AGAINST THE SEA DRAGON

Following the identification of the Sea Dragon as the architect of several attacks on undersea arcologies, mining operations, and ships, corporations who do business on or under the sea might hire shadowrunners to supplement their regular security forces for particularly valuable shipments or projects, or to infiltrate one of the sea-based ecological organizations to gather intelligence on the Sea Dragon's plans. Further, a number of entities including wealthy collectors and corporate magical R&D departments might be interested in the Sea Dragon's magically enhanced merrow tribe and might hire runners to "extract" one of them for study.

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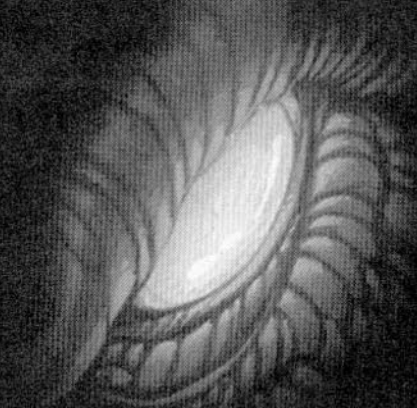
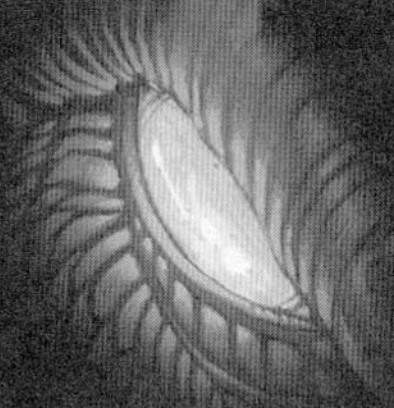
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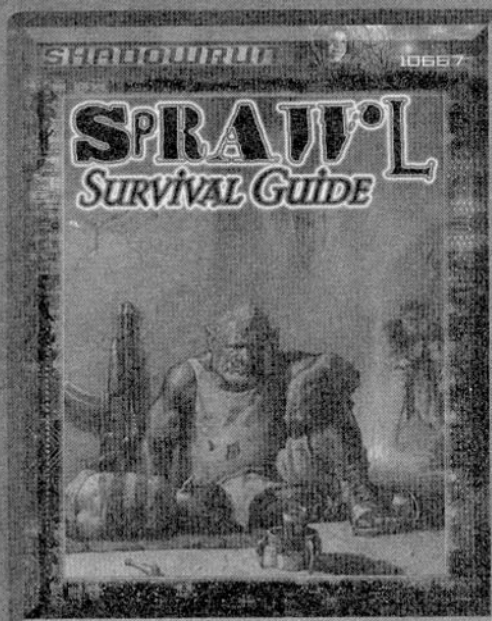


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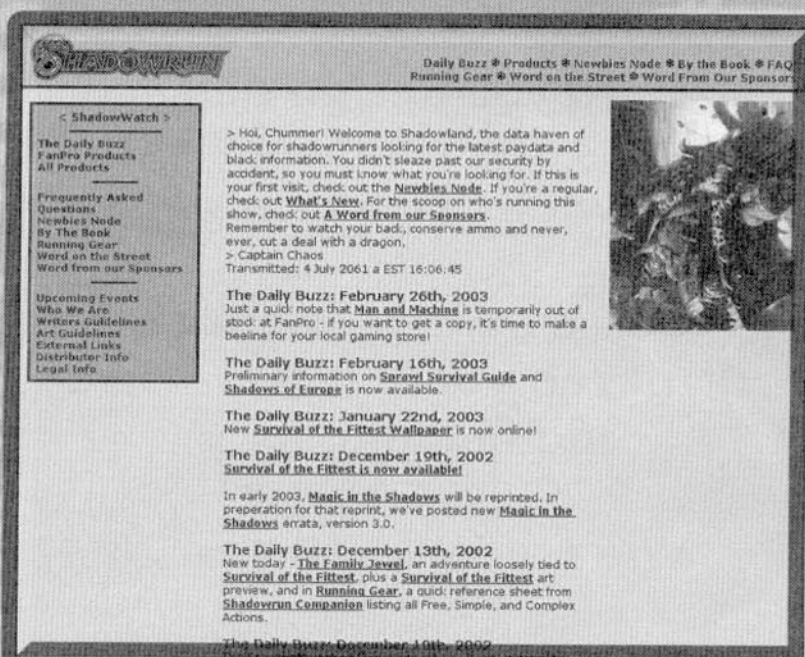
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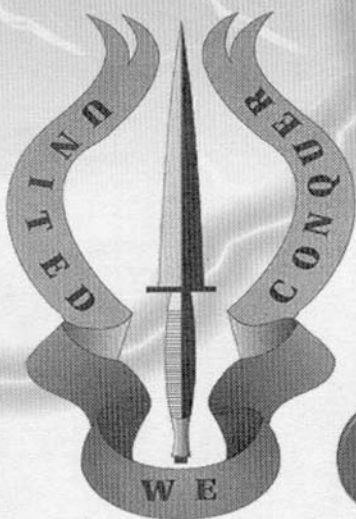
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