

SHADOWRUN

HAZARD PAY



THE ENDS OF THE EARTH AND BEYOND!

Dark alleys, abandoned buildings, wet streets stabbed with neon light—shadowrunners know all these places. They also know that they aren't the only places work gets done. A good shadowrunner should be open to anything, to runs that might take them anywhere. From the cold of Antarctica to the heat of the Sahara, from the life-filled dark of the deep oceans to the empty void of outer space, there is work to be had for runners brave and resourceful enough to take it. Of course, there are also dozens of new ways to die, so you should probably see if Mr. Johnson will chip in a little extra pay.

Hazard Pay takes shadowrunners into different extreme environments across the Sixth World, providing the descriptions, plot hooks, gear, and other information gamemasters and players need to use these environments in their game. From mysterious monuments under the sea to battered jalopies that just might make it into orbit without disintegrating, *Hazard Pay* presents myriad challenges for runners who are prepared for trouble and ready for anything.

Hazard Pay is for use with *Shadowrun, Twentieth Anniversary Edition*.



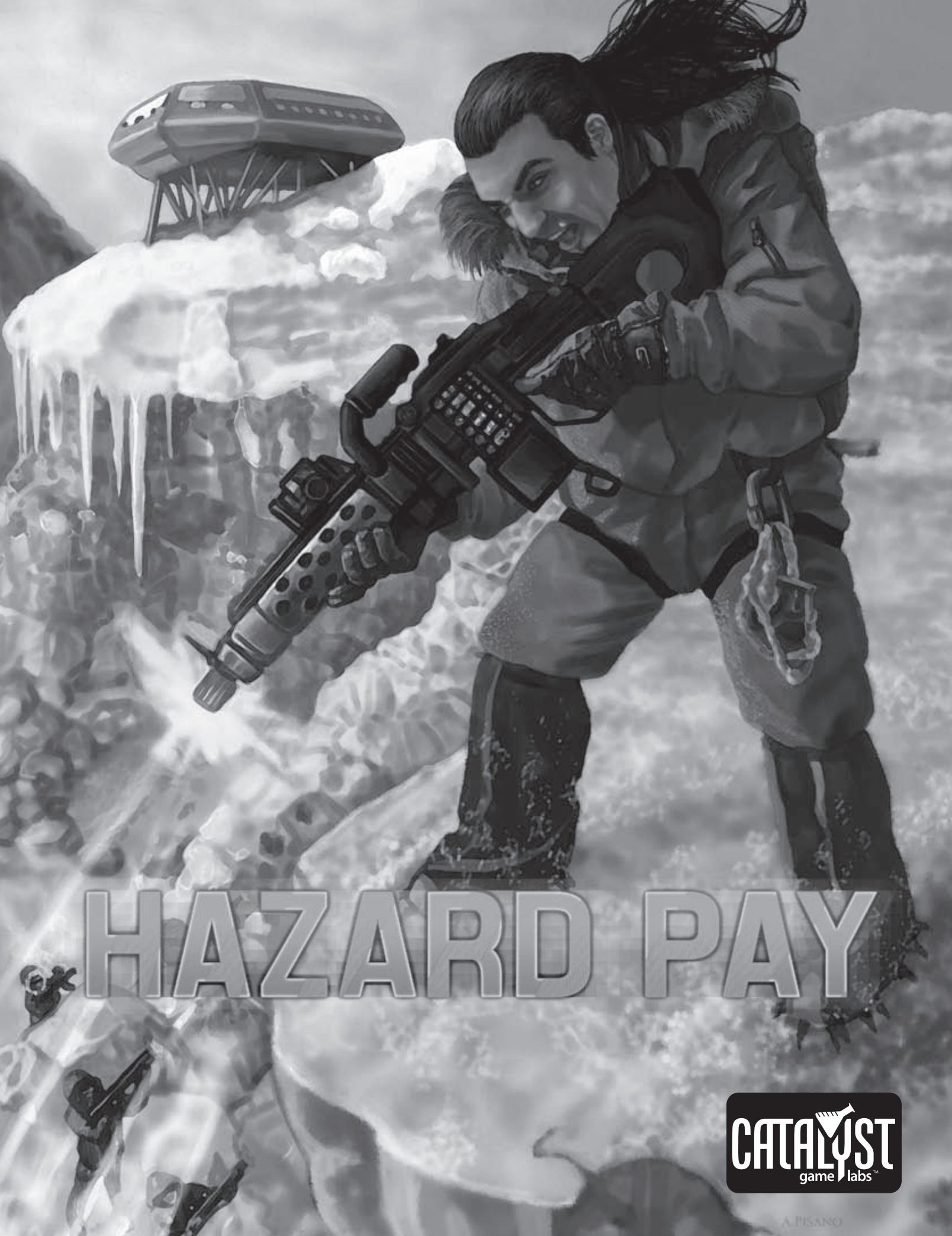
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SHADOWRUN

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HAZARD PAY



A. PISANO



Snow Emergency	5
Protectors and Despoilers	9
Deep Sea	38
Arctic Wastelands.....	64
Space	113
Deserts.....	144
Game Information	158

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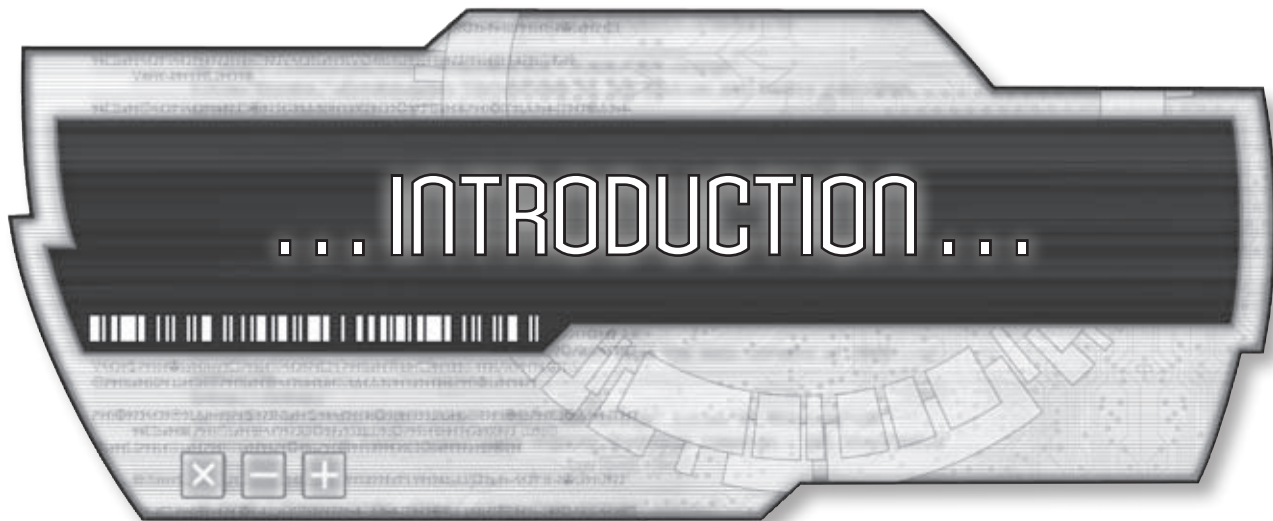
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First Printing by Catalyst Game Labs, an imprint of InMediaRes Productions, LLC
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... INTRODUCTION ...

Sometimes you have to leave home. Home is nice, home is good, home is where you'd probably want to be if you had a choice, but you don't always have a choice. Sometimes the heat's coming down on you and you have to go away, far away, to places where people wouldn't think to look for someone like you. Sometimes the jobs have dried up at home and you need to travel a little farther than you would expect to find work worth doing. And sometimes you want to test yourself, throw yourself into some of the bigger challenges that are out there and see how you come out.

We're all familiar with the fact that sometimes the world wants to kill us. We've seen storms raging through the barrens, earthquakes turning the world upside down, and volcano eruptions obliterating small towns or even cities. But those are special events, things that rage up and then subside. There are other parts of the world that are trying to kill people full-time, twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year. Because most of us are blessed with at least a minimum level of sanity and self-preservation, we don't wander out to these areas often, but we know they're out there, waiting for us, ready to challenge us or hide us if we need to. If you run in one of these places, you won't be comfortable, but you can at least tell yourself that the people you're after—or the people who are after you—won't be comfortable either.

It seems like the reasons to go out into these extreme environments is increasing, so I thought it was time for a rundown on what's going on out there, what you can expect to encounter if you venture into one of these areas, and what new innovations have cropped up to help you deal with these spots. I've assembled a crack team of the usual suspects, along with some special guests, to fill your heads with all sorts of knowledge. First up, Ecotope (yeah, there was no way you were going to be able to avoid him in this posting) gives us a rundown on some of the organizations out there who are trying to protect or clean up parts of the environment, as well as individuals intent on finding creative ways to introduce even more pollution into this world. Pay attention, because the organizations in the first group are often willing to put up a nice bounty to anyone who will go after people in the second group for them.

Next up, Sounder takes us into the water. Ever since we had that series of postings about jobs involving the rich and the powerful that I decided to call *Jet Set*, I've been thinking about the undersea club off the coast of Hong Kong that was making

some news. Underwater places like that are still something of a novelty, but it's not the only such facility out there—far from it. There are some much larger structures sitting in waters across the world, carrying on all sorts of activities, some of which can result in paydays for us. Water covers two-thirds of the Earth's surface, so finding a way to make money in the big blue seems like a good idea to me.

Then Traveler Jones takes us to the top and bottom of the world. Ever since organizations across the world started chasing after the Piri Reis Map, with its mysterious depiction of an ice-free Antarctic coastline, interest in what's going on in the world's southernmost continent has grown. Not to be left behind, the Arctic has plenty of weird stuff of its own going on—it's more than just oil and gold up there, but even if were only that, that would still be enough to draw some interest from people like us.

After that, for a change of pace we go off the planet. Yeah, Orbital DK is an obvious choice to write about it, but it's obvious for a reason—she knows that stuff backward and forward. Did you know that space is divided up into five or so regions? Neither did I—until I read DK's post. With new protocols in place and new security roaming around, space has become a challenging place, but we also have a mass driver and a space elevator, so there are more possible ways to get off the planet than their have ever been. You need to know the ins and outs of space, along with the possible reasons for going up there, and DK's got all that.

Finally, we go to the furnaces of the world, the deserts. I know all of you have heard some wild rumors about what happened at the end of the Metahumanity Ablaze! festival in the Mojave a couple of months ago, and you also might have heard that whole desert has been hopping with spirit activity. Am-mut will brief us on that, while also noting that it's not the only strange occurrence happening in the long stretches of sand—there are mysteriously appearing cities, Muslim-hunting hobgoblins, and a being in the Outback that might be a spirit or might not, but whatever it is, it's pissed. Add to that the Desert Wars franchises that blast their way through various dry spots, and you've got plenty of fun.

So that's the rundown. Now you don't have to listen to me anymore—pick your favorite area, dive in, and learn how you can pull a little bit of life, or at least money, out of the places that want you dead.

—FastJack



Connecting JackPoint VPN ...
... Matrix Access ID Spoofed.
... Encryption Keys Generated.
... Connected to Onion Routers.
> Login

> Enter Passcode

... Biometric Scan Confirmed.
Connected to <ERROR: NODE UNKNOWN>

"Few enterprises of great labor or hazard would be undertaken if we had not the power of magnifying the advantages we expect from them."

JackPoint Stats

77 users currently active
in the network

Latest News

* <042874> I've had it with these patchy satellite connections. Anyone that wants to pitch in and help me buy our own satellite, let me know. -FastJack

Personal Alerts

* You have 11 new [private messages](#).
* You have 3 [messages](#) queued for anonymous re-routing.
* You have received 4 new [Metalink Friends](#) add requests.
* You have 10 new [responses](#) to your JackPoint posts.
* PDA: Your mechanic is wondering just how you managed to get sand in there. So is your physician.
* PDA: The other members of your team have voted down your suggestion of naming a spacecraft *The Century Peregrine*.

First Degree

You are hidden from all contacts.

Your Current Rep Score: 33

(49% positive)

Current Time: April 28, 2074, 04:04

PREFERENCES

FEEDS

TASKS

LINKS

HISTORY

Welcome back to JackPoint, omae;
your last connection was severed: 37
hours, 59 minutes, 12 seconds ago.

Today's Heads Up

- * You only think you don't need to know about plants if you don't know where drugs come from. [Tag: [Parabotany](#)]
- * Is good car! Is good bargain! Will take you many places, yes? [Tag: [Used Car Lot](#)]

Incoming

- * Some people call us shadowrunners. Others call us criminals. To still others, we're heroes. And to a few, we're appetizers that need just a bit more warming. [Tag: [The Clutch of Dragons](#)]
- * Some lizards will lose a tail to escape with their lives. What would you give up? [Tag: [Sacrificial Limb](#)]

Top News Items

- * Nicholas Whitebird issues statement on Ghostwalker: "His status is as it has always been: in charge of Denver." [Link](#)
- * Knight Errant calls reported sightings of an unidentified dragon in Seattle "completely unfounded." [Link](#)
- * Julian Sergetti sponsors presentation by Danielle de la Mar to the NEEC on the topic of Matrix controls and re-structuring. [Link](#)



CHAT

MESSAGES

FILES

POSTS

NEXUS

SEARCH

Active



TomStar
Firewall

Active



Jack-in-the-Box
Antivirus

Active



SpamWatch
Filter

On/Receiving



Commcode

Excellent



Signal

Active



Hidden
Mode



Local
Map

HAZARD PAY

Invited Guests: Coldnaught, Winter Warlock, Polaris

Posts/Files tagged with
"Hazard Pay"

Protectors and Despoilers
Deep Sea
Arctic Wastelands

[More]

CONTINUE

ADVANCED
SEARCH

SAVE

... SNOW EMERGENCY ...

“Who the hell comes up with the names for these places?”

Kane smirked as the AR window popped into view. He shifted his legs to keep them from cramping. The temperature was well below freezing, and he was at a height where the wind felt like a shotgun launched every gust. His ride was chatty and cute, so he took a moment to reply.

“Most of the time places like this have unrelated code names. But they probably figured that nobody would be dumb enough to try to hit a remote place like this. Or maybe it was a warning.”

He flicked on his thermals just to keep count. Four guards on a standard patrol. Eight more inside the building. His target designator shimmered sickly green over a dwarf-sized heat blob.

“Yeah,” said his ride, “but Avalanche? Isn’t that like naming a desert base Heatstroke?”

Kane scanned the horizon one final time. The caches were in place. The only weapon he had on him outside of his cyberware was a ten-centimeter blade. Guns jam when they are frozen. Blood on the snow stands out like a candle in darkness. He had to take out one of the guards quickly and without opening a wound. He just had to decide which one.

The wind kicked up again. Kane saw one of the guards glance back toward the entrance. He stalked forward through the snow. Fortunately, the cold rendered the guard sluggish. The guard stamped his feet and rubbed his hands. He was thinking too much about the cold, not enough about intruders. That made him vulnerable.

Kane moved low across the blowing snow, sinking knee deep in the drifts. In front of him, the guard crossed his arms for warmth. That would give Kane another second at contact. He approached from behind and to the guard’s left, and hit the guard low. The guard’s knee buckled and thudded against the ground. Kane’s arms slid around the guard’s neck in a naked choke. The guard struggled for a moment before his body went slack.

“Okay,” he said to his ride. “On my way in. Keep the engine running and the radio silent.”

“Roger,” she replied, “What’s next. Knocking out a guard?”

“No. Changing into his gear without losing anything important to frostbite.”



The radio cut in just as Kane secured the helmet.

“The weather’s getting rough. Chen is calling us in until the storm passes.”

Kane did what he could to keep the guard warm. If everything timed out, they’d find the other guard just before any major frostbite set in. He might lose a finger or two, but his corporate insurance would cover replacements. He stood up, adjusted his thermals one last time and fell in line behind the other guards heading inside.

The facility was prefab with insulated walls for the main buildings. Each small room was connected by heated hallways that made Kane think of pet-store playhouses painted over with drab colors. The lighting twitched with the wind. Though the building was heated, the system didn’t seem to be up to the task. Kane was glad he was going to stay in the guard’s thermal armor for the rest of the mission. While the other guards headed into the locker room and took off their heavier gear, Kane walked into the latrine and sat in one of the stalls with the doors closed.

He flicked his thermographics on again. Outside, the guards took a few moments to chat and get comfortable before leaving. Kane stowed the rifle he had taken from the guard behind the tank. Going unarmed made him nervous, but it was part of his plan. He unzipped a pocket and pulled out the one piece of equipment he brought with him when he changed clothes.

He unwrapped the device and put the wrapper back in his pocket. It was a ClickStick, a disposable camera and digital recorder. He had picked it up at the airport on his way out. The gadgets were marketed to tourists who wanted to get pictures on the beach without running the risk of dumping their commlink in the ocean. They were surprisingly hardy, but Kane’s preferred use for them was as a decoy. Get caught, and they expect you to hand over the images. He’d give them the ClickStick, and they usually didn’t check them closely enough to notice the camera in his eye.

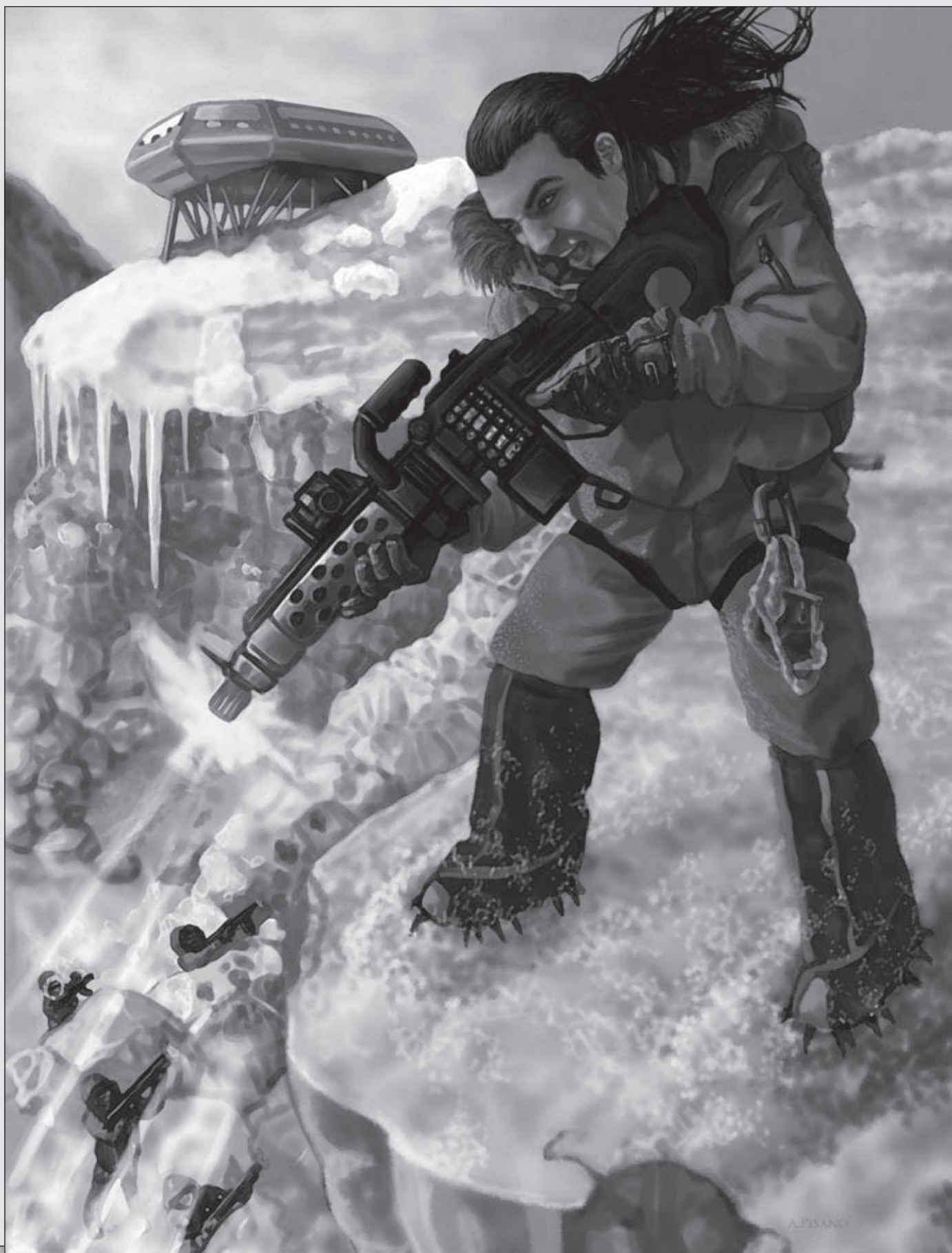
The hallway leading to his objective was empty. His thermographic vision made it easy to keep track of everyone—warm bodies stand out especially well in the cold. He found the door leading to the center of the facility. He reached for the guard’s commlink. Hopefully, the guard had access to the central room. If not, he’d have to fall back on one of his workarounds.

He glanced at the door and smiled. No lock. Leave it to the lowest-bid contractor to not put a lock on the room containing the reason the damn building was here in the first place. Like too many people down here, they thought that the weather would take care of most of their security for them.

The room was lit by halogen lamps; four of them shone down a hole in the ice. Kane didn’t see any cameras, but that didn’t mean they weren’t there. He approached the hole cautiously, ClickStick in hand. He took a few pictures, and every time he pushed the button, his eye camera snapped an image as well. He walked past several pieces of industrial equipment. There were cutting lasers, space heaters, and a small desk.

Five meters down at the bottom of the ice sat a huge stone. It was embedded in the rock below the ice, like a capstone or a manhole cover. A huge gem sat in the middle of the stone. Kane checked his filters to confirm it was glowing on its own. There was an unknown script circling the gem, spiraling outward and possibly continuing into the ice.

Urgent Message.....



A. PISANO

"Sir, you seem to be lost."

Kane froze. The feed to his ride cut out suddenly.

"May I direct you to the gift shop?"

Kane extended his arms wide at his sides. The guards were on him immediately. As soon as they grabbed the ClickStick from his hand, he carefully folded his hands on the top of his head. Then he turned around slowly to assess the situation.

Two of the guards flanked the leader, their assault rifles pointed at his chest. The leader wore a jumpsuit that was slightly unzipped to reveal a thermal layer underneath. He was Asian, though he spoke accent-free English. The leader couldn't hide the smirk on his face as the third guard handed over the ClickStick.

"He looks tired, doesn't he? Coming all this way for some pictures."

The third guard jabbed the rifle into the back of Kane's knee. Kane dropped forward and put his forearms out to keep from smashing his face on the ice. He pushed himself back up into a kneeling position with his hands on his head, then slowly began to count to himself.

1 ... 2 ... 3 ...

"He's not armed, Mr. Chen." said the third guard. Kane didn't like that. If the guards are using a name in front of the prisoner, they probably think they are going to bury him in a shallow grave soon.

"You must be wondering why you are not dead," Chen said. Kane took in a deep breath. He had gotten the drop on the guard outside, but these ones seemed to be more alert and put together. They weren't taking any unnecessary chances. Each was just far enough away from the others that they would be clear to fire if Kane made a move. Chen also looked like no pushover. He was lightly dressed compared to everyone else in the building. The trinkets tied in his shock white hair were probably foci. The lined coat was well tailored. There was the hint of ozone in the air, and Kane guessed it came from the spell Chen was using to heat himself.

47 ... 48 ... 49 ...

"If you take the shot," said Kane, glancing at the men with guns, "you damage your prize. A stray bullet, even one that passes through my skull, could hit the stone all this ice is protecting. Or maybe my dead body, spewing all sorts of things, falls into the hole. Even if it wasn't astrally active, that could set your project back by weeks in cleanup alone."

"Very clever," said Chen, as he looked at the ClickStick in his hand. "Especially for someone without any talent."

"I've worked with enough mages to learn a few things," Kane said with a smirk. Chen walked forward and tapped Kane on the cheek with the ClickStick

"And I have worked with enough street samurai to recognize a Mitsuhaman NZ-800 cybereye suite. The ClickStick is a nice touch, but anyone who knows photography will tell you the only good pictures you'll get are fuzzy nudes of the girl you hooked up with over Spring Break."

163 ... 164 ... 165 ...

"Photography, magic, hairstyling. What other classes are you taking online to pass the time up here?"

Chen smiled without his eyes. "I know you have been well-compensated for your attempt here. As a fellow man of bought loyalty, I understand the urge to stay quiet and think of a way out. But you must know that escape is impossible. You have arranged a certain time for your transport to arrive. If you are not in the extraction zone, that transport will leave without you."

228 ... 229 ... 230 ...

"I'd be happy to hear your counter-offer," said Kane. His cyberware began to kick in.

"If you tell me who sent you, I will let you leave and only take one eye."

Kane stared at Chen long and hard.

299 ... 300.

"So, you're a mage, right?" Kane asked. "Those things in your hair aren't just decorative? What can you tell me about spirits?"

Chen looked puzzled for a moment. Perfect.

"Spirits can be bound into services and summoned as allies. Which I'm sure you already know."

"You forgot something."

Chen raised an eyebrow. "Did I?"

"You can push them around with your power, or you can talk to them."

A vicious wind tore through the room.

"Ask them to do something," said Kane over the rising wind.

Snow smashed its way into the room.

"Especially if they want to do it," shouted Kane.

The snow began to collect into a monstrous form towering over everyone in the room.

"All you have to do is, say, set a door to open in five minutes and have the *silap inua* outside come in to talk to you about wrecking its domain with your installation here."

The vicious spirit reared back its head. Chen stood unmoving in stunned silence. Kane took a moment to get close to Chen's ear, using him and the other two guards as human shields.

"Man," whispered Kane, "he looks *pissed*."

The blast knocked everyone in the room off their feet. Even with three men in front of him to soften the blow, Kane was thrown in the air for a few meters. He hit the ground and rolled as much as he could. As soon as he was up, he scanned the room for a weapon. The barrel of an AK-97 jutted up from a fresh meter of snow laid down by the angry spirit.

Kane grabbed for the gun the same time one of the guards got to it, clutching the barrel. Kane let go and the guard was put off balance by the gun jerking free. The grip and trigger cleared the snow, and Kane snapped his fingers around the grip. The gun let out a burst to let the guard know he was in second place permanently. The other guards were still motionless. One had an angle to his neck that made Kane think he was never getting back up.

Kane brought the rifle up to his shoulder. Chen's back was to him. Chen was concentrating on the spirit, trying to bind, dispel, do anything to the *silap inua*. The target acquisition tone sang like an angel, framing Chen's head like a halo. Kane paused just for a second. Chen could have taken him out without a second thought but didn't. And no matter what his reputation said, Kane wasn't the type of person who would shoot someone in the back.

Kane lowered the muzzle a couple degrees and pulled the trigger. He could, however, shoot Chen in the ankle just fine.





The drifts were hip dip by the time Kane made it to the door of the facility. The *silap inua* would keep Chen and any other guards busy for a while. He moved as quickly as he could out of the facility. He heard the shouts and squawks of the other personnel over his radio trying to figure out how to deal with the situation.

He had won the spirit's cooperation three days ago with the help of an Inuit shaman. The strange thing was that the shaman didn't have to summon the spirit. It was truly upset about the existence of the facility in its domain. The hard part was convincing it to wait until Kane could get in and get what he needed before it tore the place down.

The equipment cache was right where he left it. He unzipped the bags and removed the gear quickly. Inside were two skis, a disposable commlink, a self-sealing plastic bag, and two ski poles. He stepped onto the skis. His display flashed for a moment. He angrily clicked off the "new hardware" indication and activated the commlink. His fingers were already shivering as he brought up the pre-loaded hacking suite. The commlink worked to copy the photos of the target while trying to get around the assault rifle's firewall.

Over the roar of the wind, a new sound joined the chorus—the high-pitch of small rotor engines. Kane cursed. Drones. There was no evidence of drones in the snow because they were all aerial drones. He never even thought they would have used drones up here with the winds. But now there were four, by the sound of them, heading toward his location. He glanced down at his body. His heat signature was lighting up his thermographic vision. He was going to be an easy target in the subzero temperatures.

The commlink beeped twice. It downloaded the paydata and rebooted the smartlink on the AK-97. He picked up the rifle for a few moments and set his preferences, then swooped the gun in a low arc and tagged three drones. He dropped the commlink into the self-sealing bag and stuffed it into his coat pocket. He just had to make a slight adjustment to his extraction zone.

He opened a channel to his ride.

"Change of plan. Pick me up in Zone V."

"Are you serious? I'm glad you paid in advance."

He closed the window just as the first drone began firing. The poles dug into the snow, and he pushed himself forward as hard as he could. The ski program has having a little bit of trouble integrating with his other systems. There was a sound of sleigh bells that he just couldn't figure out how to turn off. The SkiTrainer agent was in his ear already, warning him that he was going too fast. The ammo counter for the assault rifle glowed red over the SkiTrainer's face.

Kane turned his skis toward the trees. Red arrows circled his peripherals to track the tagged targets. He set the gun to blind fire, so that whenever the odds of hitting a target went over eighty percent, the gun would go off automatically. He swung the rifle over his head. It let out a burst.

The three drones replied in unison. Snow kicked up all around him. A few splinters cracked off from a nearby tree. The SkiTrainer

chimed in; Kane angrily dismissed him. Yes, he knew he was heading for a cliff. That was the point. All the numbers on Kane's display were dropping. Ammo in the AK-74 was in the single digits. The accuracy of the autofire was spiraling. The distance to the edge was ticking down.

One drone zipped into his forward view. Kane knew what the rigger was doing. He either had to focus on the drone heading straight at him or get chewed up by his fire. But if he did, the two behind him would close in and take him down. Kane made some quick calculations and decided to take his chances with the strafing drone. He switched the rifle to single-shot and shot twice. The drone spat sparks and smashed into a tree. He could hear the other drones chewing up the ground on his trail. Kane had a second to celebrate before the world dropped out from under him.

Kane whirled as he sailed over the cliff. He emptied the rest of the magazine as he spun. He caught one of the remaining drones in the rotor. It stayed airborne but wobbled like a plate spinning on a stick. The fresh drone, meanwhile, kept firing. He felt two slugs strike him in the chest. The ocean below rushed up to greet him. He left go of the rifle. The muzzle on the drone kept flashing. He slapped his boots, and the skis disconnected and tumbled away. He flipped into a feet-first position and entered the freezing water—hard.

The shock of cold hit him like a thousand small, sharp knives. Kane was paralyzed for a moment, then he shook it off and flipped around, diving deeper into the water. He stripped as he swam down into the blackness. Soon he only had a wetsuit and the plastic bag clutched in one hand. After the hiss of the wind and the buzz of so many bullets, being alone in the dark was comforting.

A light flashed below. The submersible rose to meet him. It positioned itself to let him ascend into an airlock. As soon as he was inside, the running lights that had turned on to guide him died quickly.

Kane sat in the airlock shaking his head, then he looked at the commlink in his hand. Two slugs had punctured the bag, cracking the case of the commlink. Sometimes the backups are useful in other ways.

"That's a good look on you," said his ride.

"King of Atlantis?" he asked.

"Wet dog."

The submarine sank back into the shadows: quietly, slowly, dead.



... PROTECTORS AND DESPOILERS ...

Everyone from the Thaumaturgical Department of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Thaumaturgy knew this was going to be an unpleasant meeting, with a lot of uncomfortable questions. One professor in particular, Wendell Ballantine, would be the subject of most of the questions, though he wouldn't be around to answer any of them. On the morning following his shocking disappearance, the faculty gathered in somber silence in a lecture hall, waiting for the dean to begin the meeting.

Elizabeth Andrews did not begin the meeting quietly. "How could this have possibly happened to our institution? How could one of our most esteemed professors be an insect shaman? This is a disaster! I have a meeting with the president in two hours. I need to know what we intend to do about this."

Professor Taylor Morgan of Advanced Metamagics was the first faculty member to speak up. "Doctor Andrews, allow me to present my opinion on the matter. Ballantine was a tenured professor. He has been with MIT&T for over twenty years. Being a tenured professor, this allowed him certain liberties, such as being allowed to skip astral screenings and psych examinations that non-tenured professors and other faculty must undergo every year. Had he been required to meet these standards, we might have caught this much earlier, and the damage done to the Institute's reputation may have been marginalized."

"That is bull-drek and you know it, Taylor," interrupted Professor Cheryl Kramer from the Astral Studies program. "Dean Andrews, with someone as powerful and as skilled in the arts as Ballantine, it would have been a simple matter for him to mask his secrets from detection, even from the Fellowship of Isis to which he belonged. Everyone knows that the wagemages on staff are nowhere near as potent as our faculty. Astral screenings are merely a pretense of magical security, a limp formality to give us a false sense of security. I would almost call it antiquated. And the psych evaluations, even in this day and even combined with

magical detection spells, can be fooled by a true sociopath. Even if Ballantine had been required to undergo these screenings, there is no guarantee he would have ever been caught. Trying to insinuate that Ballantine's tenure privileges are what allowed him to operate in secrecy for the past three years is ludicrous, and only serves to out your agenda, Taylor. He could have easily taken those screenings and been cleared by the magical security department. The magical security department is not totally unfamiliar with the concept of complacency, especially with employees with employment records as long as Ballantine's."

"Or he might have been caught by those screenings, Professor Kramer. We will never know, will we?"

"What has the Fellowship of Isis said about this?" asked Andrews. "Was there any complacency or negligence on their part that must be addressed? Professor Thompson, I believe you speak for your magic society. What does it have to say on the matter of Ballantine?"

A tall, balding human man in his late fifties stood up to address the dean. "Dean, we have looked into Ballantine's activities since he came to the university and joined our society twenty-two years ago. He has consistently met our strictures. He has attended our meetings, paid his dues regularly over the years, and also donated an additional fifteen thousand nuyen for the upkeep of our society. Up until three years ago, he was very active in our public functions and was considered a model member. Near the end of the spring semester in 2071, Ballantine informed us that he wished to reduce his involvement in our society. Given that he had been a very active and loyal member since 2052, we were disappointed, but we knew he had made his contribution, and then some, so we didn't have any problems with that. So he attended fewer meetings and chose to no longer initiate with our group."

Professor Sydney Flask of the History of the Magical Arts program spoke up next. "Considering the long lifespans of elves,



there is no reason he should have been allowed to retire from his involvement in your magic society so soon. The Fellowship of Isis should have seen this as a red flag."

"Forgive me, Professor Flask, but that seems a bit stereotypical, don't you think? So he can live a couple hundred years, if not longer. Does that mean he has to remain active in the magic group for—what, at least seventy-five or a hundred years in order not to look suspicious? What kind of crap is that? And what kind of precedent does that set? Perhaps Ballantine had no desire to initiate any further. The Fellowship's records show that he is already a ninth-level initiate. No, what you are proposing, Professor Flask, is a slippery slope that could lead us to bringing back a variation of the inquisition. 'That student has a dragonfly tattoo?' Must be an insect shaman. 'That faculty member doesn't like to socialize outside of work?' Must be an insect shaman."

"Please, Professor Thompson, let's not move this meeting into the realm of the absurd proportions," Flask said. "Like it or not, we have to figure out ways to improve our detection methods for finding magical threats among our ranks, particularly among our higher-ranked and potentially very dangerous initiates. And historically speaking, suddenly deciding not to initiate with your magic group has long been held as a telltale sign that something is wrong."

"And I'm countering that that logic is flawed," Thompson snapped. "People have legitimate reasons for no longer initiating. It seems to me you're proposing extremes like mind-probing every-

one and starting up new witch hunts. I'm sure you're probably suspecting I'm an insect shaman too because of my protests."

"Enough, professors," barked the Dean. "This lack of decorum does not befit our stature in this grand institution. Professor Thompson, does the Fellowship of Isis maintain a material link for Ballantine, and can that material link be given over to Knight Errant or the FBI to help track Ballantine down?"

"I am afraid to report, dean, that there was improper management of the material link samples. Ballantine had not donated a sample for at least six years, and the refrigerating unit containing the materials failed ten months ago. The members whose material links were in that unit had not yet been contacted to resubmit new materials. All that is to say any samples we had of Ballantine are no longer of any value, magically speaking."

"Unbelievable," Taylor Morgan said. "This proves the point about complacency in our system."

The dean folded her hands. "I have heard enough. It is obvious to me we need to revise certain protocols and safeguards to ensure this doesn't happen again. With our passions as inflamed as they are, I don't think we're going to make any more progress in this discussion. Instead, I am going to ask all department heads to submit written reports outlining which protocols need to be revised, and how. Reports must be submitted by the end of the week. We will gather again once I have put together a preliminary document outlining proposed changes. This meeting is hereby adjourned. I will need to have a word with you, Professor Thompson, in private."

Posted by: Ecotope

Various academic, governmental, and media sources all continue to paint a very bleak picture about the world we live in and the future that we appear destined to inherit. There are frequent reports of new chemical spills or industrial accidents despoiling the last of our pristine wilderness areas, consuming vital swaths of natural habitats that had been left unscathed by the Resource Rush in the later part of the twentieth century. Each year there are new reports of cities that have no choice but to use water from sources contaminated with carcinogens, heavy metals, and other toxic materials. Technology that purifies water sources is helping deal with contaminated water supplies, but it is not keeping up with the expansion of contaminated water, particularly in the poorer areas of the world. Life expectancy and birth rates are expected to drop in areas that are relying on tainted water sources for sustenance over the next ten years. Acid rain is becoming a much more prevalent problem for developed urban sprawls as well.

Unmodified natural food supplies (meat, vegetables, and fruit) continue to dwindle while more people are left feasting on bland soy products. There are a growing number of official reports listing more animal species (both mundane and Awakened) as

endangered. Every few years it seems we hear about a new species that has gone completely extinct. We seem to receive updates from the Draco Foundation on an almost weekly basis detailing new appearances of toxic shamans. When one bounty gets collected from the Draco Foundation for a toxic, two more are posted. Speaking as a mage, I tend to agree with the commonly held perception that the problem with toxic shamans is growing progressively worse. There are at least two shamans I personally know of who are on the invisible boundary that all Awakened individuals fear, the line between sanity and the toxic path. I am certain there are people here on JackPoint and elsewhere who know of other shamans, adepts, or mages who are at that same critical juncture in their lives, when they must decide between maintaining their daily grind in this oppressive world with very little hope or choosing to abandon what little they have and diving into a dark but powerful abyss. Unfortunately for all of us, there are too many good people choosing to go down the wrong path. And when the number of toxics swells, toxic domains expand, and poison slowly creeps into the world, corrupting it into a living nightmare.

And it gets worse. Toxic shamans are hardly the only threat to our world's survival. If you have been working in the shadows for any length of time, you have likely seen how the megacorporations





INCOMING FEED.....



abuse and exploit the environment for their own gain. You also probably have seen the lengths they go to find profit in any natural resources they can reach, and then exploit them until they are utterly depleted. In the meantime, they turn surrounding areas into wastelands burdened with airborne pollution, contaminated soil, and polluted water. The evidence is everywhere. For years, the citizens of the Tsimshian Protectorate have endured widespread ecological disasters that Mitsuhama Computer Technologies inflicted on them due to its many years of unchecked strip mining, toxic waste dumping, and aggressive logging operations. Even though MCT departed that part of North America quite some time ago, the ecological damage remains. The “war” Aztechnology and Aztlan waged over the years on the ecosystem contained within their borders became so bad that the earth itself rebelled. This is the same megacorporation and nation that brought us such fascinating public health hazards as the city of Tenochtitlan and its dirty-pudding air. And this is but one reason why Amazonia is fighting so desperately to make sure that the same extreme level of exploitation does not decimate the Amazon rainforest. In the North Sea, many environmentalists are outraged by the pollution that smaller corporations like Proteus AG have spilled into the world. And we are not even talking about irradiated sites such as Chernobyl, Glow City, and the SOX that will remain uninhabitable to a vast majority of metahumans for thousands of years. These are the despolers of the environment that so many of you have worked for on a daily basis.

But they are not alone. There are so many other despolers out there, people and groups that you would never consider working for. They are the ones that make shadowrunners like us earn our

hazard pay. These smaller groups are the ones that I want to talk about, because they are the ones we are most likely to encounter, and thus the ones we need to be most concerned about. They’re also the ones we really should be fighting. They are killing our world, and if we let them go, they’ll keep us from having any kind of a future. I am not traditionally given to strong rhetoric, but they are the ones that we must hunt like devil rats and other vermin if we want the world to be a safer place.

- Can we get past the lecture and get to the part where we talk about people who are going to pay us to do stuff? I’m in a career where, on some jobs, my life expectancy does not go beyond tomorrow morning. I can’t worry too much about the future of the planet when I have to spend my time and energy keeping myself alive. I’m not happy that the planet’s screwed, but a woman’s gotta make a living.
- Hard Exit
- Living as we live does not require the abandonment of ideals. Or hope.
- Aufheben

Fortunately, while there are numerous groups destroying the environment, there are just as many organizations trying to improve the current conditions. They’re not only trying to repair damage themselves, but they occasionally hire runners like us in their efforts. Some of these “protectors” you may have already heard about, as they are very public in their works. Others labor in obscurity. Not to editorialize, but if you ever cross paths with



these groups, you should consider offering your help to them. Even though you might not see a whole lot of profit from working with these groups, your actions might make it possible to recover some of the land or water sources that have been lost to pollution, and help get the world on the track to recovery.

- Or you could get caught up with a group that preys on the good intentions of people and uses them in ways that seem good on the surface but are secretly nefarious. Or you could get wrapped up with people who are nice enough but incompetent, and they tie you up in a project that seemed like a good idea but instead becomes a downward-spiraling clusterfuck. It's a world of possibilities!
- Pistons

THE PROTECTORS

It has been a while since we've heard from some of these groups. Senior members have retired, and new faces have risen through their ranks to take their places. Even though these groups continue to fight for the same things that were important to them decades ago when they first came into being, some of their methods have changed over time. A few of these groups have become more aggressive over the last few years and are hiring more shadowrunners. Others are relatively new or work in rather obscure locations, out of the public eye. These organizations are good if you are looking for work that takes you out of your home city for a while. You can disappear for weeks or even months at a time, and missions from these groups may take you to some of the most remote parts of the world—places where you will not be recognized. So instead of seeking out a safehouse to avoid a Johnson and sitting around eating soy cakes for months at a time while waiting for the heat from your last job to dissipate, you may wish to consider working with these groups. You would be able to stay in shape and keep your skills sharp while doing something worthwhile for the environment and the world at large.

AQUA ARCANA

Aqua Arcana started out as a small-time, eco-friendly aquaculture company staffed with a high percentage of Awakened employees. Initially they focused on using magic as a tool to heal the oceans from pollution and other environmental damage, but as their organization developed, they looked into ways to work with sapient sea creatures to carry out negotiations between them and third-party metahuman interests for the safe use of the seas. These negotiations are credited with saving thousands of lives, both sea creatures and metahumans alike, and likely avoiding many dangerous incidents of violence from groups clashing with each other over territory and usage rights. Aqua Arcana is held in high regard by the public, particularly around coastal areas in North America, and this popularity often translates into political influence. Candidates running for public office in the coastal areas often receive a boost to their campaigns if they receive the endorsement of Aqua Arcana, which means that influential political figures often court Aqua Arcana's endorsement and will sponsor legislation that Aqua Arcana supports (which does not, of course, mean that they will actually vote for said legislation, but

that's politics). This has elevated Aqua Arcana's standing within coastal cities.

- They're a powerhouse that often clashes with other environmentally friendly special interest groups such as the United Talismonger Association and Sierra, Inc., for funding of their pet projects. Since local governments only have so much capital to spend on environmentally friendly projects, sometimes shadowrunners are called in by Aqua Arcana to remind the politicians of who got them elected to office in the first place, and more importantly, where their priorities should lie. Shadowrunner involvement typically makes a difference in whether a project gets approved this year, next year, or dies a slow death. Aqua Arcana seems to be pretty stable, but for other groups, getting a project funded now instead of a few years down the line may be the difference between survival or shutting their doors for good.
- Kay St. Irregular

Aqua Arcana was established in 2042 by three magicians: Isabel Madira, a Porpoise shaman; Michael Paul, an Orca shaman; and Alexander Greyson, a mystic adept specializing in the study of water in magic. The three magicians established Aqua Arcana as a for-profit business whose sole agenda is to protect the oceans. They also designed the company to be completely owned by its employees, provided they stayed with the company at least five years. These rather unconventional business models have defied the odds (and many critics) and proven extremely profitable for Aqua Arcana over the last three decades. The company has grown into a multinational corporation with its own aquacities off the coasts of Big Sur, Seattle, and Kodiak Island in the Pacific Ocean, and Manhattan, Boston, and Miami in the Atlantic.

The AA corporation started out in the California Free State with approximately thirty-five employees. Over the next thirty years, the three magicians rapidly expanded their workforce to include three hundred employees, with fully twenty percent of them Awakened. Aqua Arcana has also built up quite a fleet of seafaring vessels for research, exploration, salvage and diving operations. In addition to carrying out negotiations between sapient sea life and metahuman corporations, Aqua Arcana has been involved in its share of sea-life rescues, directly saving the lives of literally hundreds of sea critters from hazards such as becoming hopelessly beached, poisoned by various toxins in the water, or tangled in floating debris.

- So does this mean that Aqua Arcana is considered a magic group as well, with so many of its employees being magical in nature?
- Nephrine
- First and foremost, Aqua Arcana is a corporation. They have many more mundane employees than Awakened ones and are not considered a dedicated magic group like, say, the Shasta Shamans. Its mundane members are certainly not members or even associate members of the magic group. The magic group that Aqua Arcana runs is only an aspect of the much larger company. The strictures of the magic group are such that if you don't want to spend a good part of your career working for Aqua Arcana, they are probably not the group for you. I've heard rumors that Aqua



Arcana is looking to open up a college in the Sacramento area to train magic users. This college would train the magically gifted from all types of backgrounds and traditions, including adepts. Although there are a lot of steps in front of them before they make this a reality, the advantage of this college is that Aqua Arcana could recruit heavily from the student body and greatly expand its magical user base. Any students they don't recruit would, ideally, be instilled with a love for the ocean and the need to protect it. Seems like a win-win scenario.

- Lyran
- They need to be careful. They're still small enough that they aren't making too many ripples. If they get too cocky, especially in the political arena, they'll be seen as rivals to the bigger fish in the proverbial sea; that is, the Illuminates of the New Dawn and the Black Lodge. Those groups do not like having potential recruits siphoned away from them.
- Plan 9

Aqua Arcana has also turned the search for and recovery of refuse in the oceans into a priority and a profitable venture. Each year, thousands of tons of garbage are illegally released into the oceans; most of it could have been recycled if anyone had cared enough to do so. The corporation uses its fleet of ships to seek out and recover those products and materials that can be reused from oceanic dumping grounds, and they sell the valuable materials they recover. There is no shortage of debris and refuse for Aqua Arcana to find—illegal dumping in the oceans has been a common practice for centuries. With Aqua Arcana leading the way, don't be surprised if the megacorporations start taking notice and forming their own fleets to hunt for recyclables—in fact, Ares is looking to put together a fleet of ships just for that purpose. Unsurprisingly, the board member proposing the pilot program is Arthur Vogel, the dwarf who has long had a soft spot for environmental causes.

In addition to its salvage and mediation services, Aqua Arcana provides consultation services to corporations looking to either start or expand operations in the oceans. The corp helps them have the least impact possible on the surrounding ecosystem. Aqua Arcana can often tell a client how to establish operations in ways that pose the least amount of problems for the native inhabitants, which in turn prevents conflicts and future issues. Aqua Arcana's management are acknowledged experts in oceanography, and the corp is considered a strong, independent source of data for oceanic and marine life matters.

- In recent years, Aqua Arcana has put that professional reputation at risk. In 2071 and 2073, there were two oceanic projects that had been given Aqua Arcana's seal of approval; one was a deep-sea drilling operation spearheaded by Renraku, the other was an aquafarm run by Universal Omnitech. Two years after Renraku started drilling, their drill snapped and pipe lines ruptured, releasing nearly five hundred and eighty thousand gallons of crude oil into the Pacific Ocean. An investigation by the Corporate Court revealed that the project suffered from gross negligence, poor planning, and serious design flaws in the drilling platform. These were all things that the Aqua Arcana folks should have caught and warned Renraku about. But they didn't.

A similar incident happened in 2073. Aqua Arcana gave Universal Omnitech its blessing to build an aquafarm on the condition that the growth hormones Universal Omnitech would be using on its fish would be contained in its facility. Months after the facility came online, however, there was a serious malfunction, and thousands of gallons of the hormone were released into the Pacific Ocean. This pollution made native fish inedible to the merrow tribes and other sea life surrounding that facility. Even close to a year later, there is still dead sea life washing ashore off of the West Coast of North America, most of which starved from not being able to find food they could eat.

- Sounder
- You can blame Michael Paul for those incidents. In 2068, Isabel Madira passed away from a malignant brain tumor. A year later, Alexander Greyson retired from Aqua Arcana, allegedly due to bad blood between him and Paul. Coincidentally, two weeks after Greyson retired, he died in a car accident. Some speculated that Greyson was going to go public with his many complaints about Paul's leadership and accuse him of bringing the corporation to the edge of ruin. With Greyson dead, those complaints never went public. And without Greyson, there is almost no one inside of Aqua Arcana willing to challenge Paul on his practices. A shame, really, as Aqua Arcana had so much potential.

There has been plenty of speculation about the incidents Sounder mentioned, and most people believe Aqua Arcana's decisions were heavily based on how much kickback would be flowing their way. I've heard amounts between five hundred thousand and seven hundred and fifty thousand nuyen were sent Aqua Arcana's way to buy their endorsement. There is no telling how many more projects Paul has rubber-stamped with his fake findings, but those are the only major projects (for now) that seem to have bitten Paul on the ass. I hope, for the good of those who are investing their hard work and passion into Aqua Arcana, there won't be any more fiascos to jeopardize Aqua Arcana's reputation.

- Cosmo
- Sometimes you don't have to be a toxic shaman to ruin the environment; sometimes all it takes is people being greedy like Paul. He may have been idealistic in his younger days, but unfortunately, just as the tides can erode the shorelines, time can erode a person's moral conviction.
- Frosty
- Ecotope talked a little about who Aqua Arcana is, but he doesn't talk about all the runner opportunities available from Aqua Arcana. First, Aqua Arcana does a lot of work in the open seas. This means that they have higher-than-average chances of encountering pirates. So Aqua Arcana regularly hires runners to protect their ships, which have valuable research equipment and possibly salvage and can be tempting targets. These protection details run from a few days to six weeks or longer. Second, Aqua Arcana makes a lot of enemies when they release reports describing the misdeeds of megacorporations or governments. As we all know, these groups can be pretty vindictive if they think outsiders are interfering with their projects. I've seen one government impound two Aqua Arcana research vessels for eight months after they made some bogus accusations that they

were involved in smuggling. Some of these groups are not above sinking AA ships merely out of spite. Aqua Arcana boats have also been harassed by the Azzies. If their projects get too close to Aztlan waters, the Azzies harass their crews, accusing them of spying. They may even board these boats and detain the crews. So far, those attempts have not been successful, thanks to the runners that they have hired for protection jobs.

- 2XL
- There's also money to be made working against Aqua Arcana, or at least not in tandem with them. Many Johnsons are interested in the data that Aqua Arcana collects but does not release, such as the locations of some of the rarer and endangered sea creatures that some poachers would love to find or unclaimed sites of natural resources that Aqua Arcana would like to remain undisturbed. They also have information on the locations of various shipwrecks that could be the target of future salvage operations. If your Mr. Johnson needs information about the oceans, Aqua Arcana is a good place to steal it from. Remember that Aqua Arcana has ties to the Save Our Seas eco-activist group, which is another good source of information about what's going on in the water.
- Haze

Incoming Message

AQUA ARCANA MAGIC GROUP

Purpose: The Aqua Arcana magic group is available to the Awakened employees of the corporation. It allows the corporation to train its employees on how to use their skills to better serve the needs of the oceans and its inhabitants.

Members: 60

Resources/Dues: Middle. Each month, 150¥ is taken out of the employee's pay for their dues.

Strictures: Limited Membership (Awakened employees only). The Aqua Arcana magic group accepts members from a wide variety of magic traditions (except from those that advocate harm to the oceans). Aqua Arcana accepts adepts as well. Members, in their oath ordeals, must pledge to work for Aqua Arcana for at least five years to be accepted into the magic group.

Patron: Aqua Arcana

Description and Customs: Each aquacity that Aqua Arcana runs has space set aside to allow members of the magic group to meet, learn spells, and prepare for various projects that the corporation assigns to them. Many ordeals for this magic group involve solving problems, both magical and mundane, facing the ocean or its sea life.

ASTRAL SPACE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

The Astral Space Preservation Society (ASPS) has been around since January 2058, when Dunkelzahn's Will directed the Draco Foundation to establish such a group and to put it under the administration of the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research (DIMR). The bequest established the following mission

for the ASPS: "To monitor potential abuses of astral space and its denizens; to protect the rights of denizens of astral space; to establish parameters that will facilitate a working relationship between spirits and metahumanity; and to create a sanctuary in astral space for beings in search of a safe retreat."

The Astral Space Preservation Society faced some daunting challenges right off the bat. First, the Draco Foundation assembled a board of eight members for the ASPS without giving them much of a budget. Many of the originally selected board members who were picked for the ASPS would have preferred to serve with the DF or the DIMR instead, since they assumed the ASPS would be a career dead-end. Even as the members accepted their positions with the ASPS, half were already looking for a way out. Within three months, four of the original ASPS members had to be replaced. Even with the high turnover, the DIMR began directing the ASPS to accept massive undertakings such as researching the Dunkelzahn Rift, tracking all toxic astral domains around the world, and making arrangements to begin research projects in the toxic astral nightmare that is Chicago. All these projects put a tremendous strain on the ASPS, its small membership, and its limited resources. In the first year of operation, the ASPS was operating with an eight hundred and ninety million nuyen deficit. At that time, many of its members felt as though as they were intentionally being set up to fail.

- They probably were. It sounds like from the very beginning, both the Draco Foundation and the DIMR treated the ASPS as their whipping boy, letting them do all the grunt work so that they could eventually take all the credit. If I had to hazard a guess, it's likely there were some people in the DF and the DIMR that did not even see the need for the magic group. They probably felt that if they failed, it would be no big loss. I suppose even lofty institutions like the Draco Foundation and the DIMR can still act like snobs, even to their own "subsidiary."
- Slamm-0!

In the many months that followed, frustrations began mounting inside the ASPS. In the first two and a half years alone, the ASPS went through five different Executive Directors, who resigned out of sheer frustration from the bad position the DF and the DIMR seemed to be putting them in. By the middle of 2060, a new Executive Director was elected: a free spirit that went by the name of Ibu Air. Instead of relying solely on the scraps of funding that the DIMR was throwing their way as her predecessors had done, Ibu Air convinced the ASPS board to open up the Astral Space Preservation Society to fundraising events and to outside, private donations. The free spirit was determined to turn things around for the ASPS, to make them a legitimate magic group with a strong standing on its own in the world of academia, to be able to meet the demands of both the DF and the DIMR, as well as pursue goals that their board was clamoring for, such as long-term research field studies within the Amazon rain forest as well as studies of the spirits within the Mojave Desert.

Under Ibu Air's reign at the ASPS, it did not take long for private donations to start rolling in and to make up for the deficiencies that the DIMR was (intentionally or not) leaving them with. Ibu Air proved skillful at winning over donations from wealthy philanthropists. Between 2060 and 2062, Ibu Air



not only wiped out the ASPS debt but also more than tripled their operating budget. With that windfall, Ibu Air hired sixty new employees while elevating the Astral Space Preservation Society's profile in the media. Ibu Air, through her dwarf translator, had two papers published that brought her group both international recognition and accolades: *Overcoming Long-Term Background Counts* and *Predicting Problem Areas in the Astral*. But one of the biggest patrons by far that Ibu Air brought in to ensure the financial prosperity of the Astral Space Preservation Society was none other than the great dragon, Hestaby.

- Ibu Air brought in Hestaby as a donor? You must be joking. Hestaby likely pulled strings in the newly formed Draco Foundation and the DIMR to make sure all significant revenue streams for the ASPS were cut off. That's the only thing that makes sense as to why the Draco Foundation, with as many resources as they had available from Dunkelzahn's horde, could not properly fund the ASPS from the start. And then, when they were the most desperate, Hestaby conveniently arrived on scene and made Ibu Air an offer the free spirit couldn't refuse. You don't think Hestaby is capable of being that devious? Just look at the twenty-five corporations that she allegedly shut down using financial schemes similar to this, for the very sake of protecting the environment. I would not even put it past Hestaby to have planted the idea of the ASPS splitting from the DF and the DIMR in the first place.
- Doctor Spin
- Following that logic, it would seem that it is no coincidence that today, there are three members who sit on the now twelve-member ASPS board who are not members of the ASPS magical group, but rather, are members of the Shasta Shamans.
- Axis Mundi
- So who has the paydata on Ibu Air?
- Haze
- There is very little known about Ibu Air apart from what she has released in interviews and conversations with her financial patrons. She was among the original eight board members chosen for the ASPS (who didn't defect to another post), and continues to serve as its Executive Director even into 2074. From what she has said in conversations, Ibu Air is slightly over a thousand years old. It is believed that no metahuman has ever been able to see past her aura masking to see her true power. It is possible that Hestaby or any of the other great dragons have, but they aren't saying anything about it. Ibu Air has made it known that she has a deep mystical connection to the island of Bali. Many from the Buddhism religion believe Ibu Air is a Bodhisattva, an enlightened spirit that has chosen to remain behind to help individuals reach Nirvana. Ibu Air has chosen to remain silent on the issue of those metahumans beliefs.
- Lyran
- Ibu Air is not the only interesting personality to come out of the ASPS. Eliza Bloom, a candidate for the 2074 Gubernatorial race in Seattle, used to be a board member of the ASPS. She served on the board for nearly four years, from 2069 to 2073, before

stepping down to "consider her options." Apparently, one of those options included running for public office.

- Kay St. Irregular

Shortly after Hestaby began contributing large sums of nuyen to the Astral Space Preservation Society as one of their patrons, easily dwarfing what the DIMR was investing in the magical group, the ASPS board voted to become an independent entity, to separate itself from both the Draco Foundation and the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research. Though both institutions were incensed by its decision to leave, neither the DF or the DIMR chose to publicly protest the request, due in large part to the negative publicity that would have been generated from them opposing a living great dragon and what she was trying to accomplish for this organization, which had already built up for itself a positive public image. The split from the Draco Foundation and the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research officially happened on September 4, 2064.

- To the public, this split between the ASPS and the DF and the DIMR seemed amicable, but in fact it was quite the opposite. Whenever ASPS applied for grants or other endowments from either the DF or the DIMR, their applications were all but denied as soon as either one received them. It came to the point that Ibu Air and the ASPS board stopped even trying. And then there was the small matter of all the research projects that the ASPS was doing. Both the DF and the DIMR still felt entitled to that research material and they wanted it, no matter what they had to do to get it. As such, even to this day, there are frequent runs being initiated by both the DF and the DIMR to obtain paydata from the smaller magical group. The runs are so frequent that the ASPS has had no choice but to retain runners to protect their assets from these incursions, which threaten papers, reports, and articles that would inevitably bring in more prestige and profits for the ASPS. If the contents of those articles are released to the DF and the DIMR prematurely, the ASPS risks losing the articles to either one of those institutions, which could bring the material to publication first. After Nadja Daviar reappeared and returned to the DF, Ibu Air attempted to discuss with Daviar the possibility of smoothing out the relationship between the DF and the ASPS. It seems Daviar is not willing to play ball yet, either with the free spirit or with the ASPS.
- Axis Mundi

After it gained its footing, the Astral Space Preservation Society published its own journals on astral phenomena, including on Dunkelzahn's Rift. Beginning in 2062, the ASPS entered into a long-term agreement with the UCAS to aid their Army magicians in the study of that astral rift. Some of those findings were published, but other findings, including translations of symbols that were found manifested on people and items located near the rift, have been restricted by the UCAS government and declared as "classified." The ASPS is currently involved in studying the events surrounding the rift's destabilization and closure in DecCee, its relationship to the artifacts and the reappearance of Ghostwalker, and how he had returned to the world without reopening a new rift. In addition to its long-time work with the rift, the ASPS has studied dozens of types and forms of alchera;

astral terrain that occasionally manifests on the physical plane. The ASPS has studied a wide variety of alchera, including sites that have appeared near Stonehenge; medieval castles throughout Europe, once believed to have been destroyed and lost to history forever; tombs that mysteriously appeared out of nowhere; the Deep Lacuna in Los Angeles; and reported sightings of ships long lost at sea. The Astral Space Preservation Society has become the leading expert on alchera in the world, surpassing even the Draco Foundation and the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research with its expertise, knowledge, and experience with these types of astral phenomena.

The Astral Space Preservation Society has also been involved in high-profile studies of mystical power sites, ley lines, mana ebbs, and mana warps, and their influence over astral space. The ASPS has led numerous expeditions to study the urban blight in Los Angeles responsible for twisting and damaging so many spirits of man, the Veil surrounding Tir na nÓg, mana warps in Aztlan, astral space near the North Sea, ley lines in the United Kingdom, and even the Bermuda Triangle. In more recent times, the ASPS has led excursions to the Amazon to study the effects the war has been having on the Awakened rainforest and the dual-natured critters that live there. The ASPS has also been involved in Bogotá, with research meant to identify the threat posed by the shadow spirits identified as Maelstrom and Oblivion. Their investigation of the shadow spirits mirrors the work they did in the Javanese Republic, at the Borobodur temple complex in 2061, where they discovered hostile spirits that they could not classify. Although they successfully helped the Javanese military contain the vast majority of these dangerous spirits, believed to be able to possess and control metahumans, even mundane metahumans, they are certain they did not get every one of them. Even to this day, the ASPS has a bounty on the successful capture of these escaped spirits, numbered anywhere from five all the way up to eighteen specimens. Despite years of research by their leading experts into those spirits that were initially found at the Hindu monument, the ASPS still has not been able to classify them.

- Doing what the ASPS does is inherently dangerous work. Every year, the group loses a half dozen or so magicians to the threats that they are studying, or the problems they are trying to solve. In 2072 and again in 2073, South America proved to be particularly deadly for its members. Before the war broke out, the ASPS lost nine of its members when one of its expeditions to the rain forest encountered one of the ghost cartels. The members of this ghost cartel robbed and brutally murdered these magicians. No matter which side of the war the cartels fall under, they are still vicious thugs. In 2073, in Bogotá, the ASPS was researching Maelstrom and Oblivion, the two shadow spirits that are exponentially growing in power as a result of the war, and are basically building up an army for themselves. Apparently, the shadow spirits got wind of what the ASPS mages were in town for, and attacked them en masse. Maelstrom and Oblivion lost several of their followers to the ASPS mages, but in the end, the shadow spirits killed the ten-member team. The ASPS has yet to send down another team to continue the investigation of the shadow spirits. But when they do, they will need to hire more shadowrunners to protect them lest they lose yet another field team to them.
- Sticks

- Signing up for an expedition with the Astral Space Preservation Society usually means you are going to be away from home for quite some time. Expeditions by the ASPS usually last about a year. So if you need to get lost for a significant length of time, these might be the jobs for you.
- The Smiling Bandit

What I have already mentioned about the Astral Space Preservation Society barely scratches the surface of the accomplishments it has made in such a short period of time, especially for a group that numbers only one hundred and forty members at its current peak. The ASPS is credited with either expanding upon or developing the Cleansing and Filtering metamagics. Using these metamagics, ASPS mages have worked tirelessly to clean up six different toxic domains around the world. This number may seem small, but you have to remember that when cleaning up a toxic astral domain, you must first deal with the contaminants in the physical world. Cleaning up an illegal dumping ground or a contaminated underground aquifer is time-consuming and requires an enormous amount of resources. And dealing with free spirits that may have become poisoned by the toxic domain can present a new host of dangers.

The ASPS has also been busy since its founding in establishing a free spirit haven in astral space, per Dunkelzahn's wishes. It is believed that the ASPS eventually found a specific metaplane that could be used for this sanctuary, and established a gateway for the free spirits to reach it. There is widespread speculation that free spirits can use the ritual circles contained in the ASPS offices in Seattle, Los Angeles, Dallas, and Atlanta to access this metaplane (provided they don't already have the astral gateway ability). It is also a commonly held belief that none of the ASPS offices in Chicago are set up to access this metaplane (for what should be obvious reasons). There have also been rumors of a safehouse that the ASPS used that could grant access to this metaplane. This safehouse was also used by the Draco Foundation for sheltering drakes that were being hunted by the great dragons. Since the falling out between the ASPS and the DF, it is likely that this safehouse has been abandoned by the ASPS, and any access points to the free spirit sanctuary shut down.

- Prior to 2073, the ASPS sought Ghostwalker's approval to conduct a study of free spirit activity in Denver. The purpose was to see what worked with Denver that helped facilitate relations between spirits and metahumans. Because the ASPS was founded due to Dunkelzahn's will, as you can imagine, Ghostwalker was reluctant to allow them any kind of access to the Front Range Free Zone. But for whatever reason, Ghostwalker permitted the study, and even allowed the ASPS to open up offices in Denver. But as soon as Hestaby delivered her speech, Ghostwalker kicked whatever assets the ASPS had on the ground out of Denver. And Ghostwalker has made it clear that it would be a cold day in hell before the ASPS is permitted to have operations in Denver again, due to their ties to Hestaby. This has denied the ASPS a wealth of information on a thriving metahuman city that interacts with spirits on a much higher level than most places in the world. And it has created tensions within the ASPS board. The longer the



dragon conflict carries on, the more opportunities might be denied to the ASPS because of their cozy relationship to Hestaby. You can bet some of the board members, including Ibu Air, may be reevaluating their relationship to Hestaby, and how much value her financial contributions may now have for their organization (as opposed to being completely neutral to all dragon interests).

- Fianchetto

Incoming Message

ASTRAL SPACE PRESERVATION SOCIETY MAGIC GROUP

Purpose: The Astral Space Preservation Society magic group was formed to carry out the wishes of Dunkelzahn, to protect astral space and its inhabitants, to create a sanctuary for free spirits, and to investigate ways to allow free spirits and metahumans to coexist peacefully. Out of the 140 employees of the Astral Space Preservation Society, 120 of them are full members of the magic group. Ten employees of the ASPS are completely mundane, while another ten employees belong to other magic groups sympathetic to the Astral Space Preservation Society's mission (such as the Shasta Shamans) and are members of the organization but not the magic group itself.

Members: 120

Resources/Dues: Middle. Members are expected to pay 75¥ per month.

Strictures: Limited Membership (Awakened employees or Free Spirits only). The Astral Space Preservation Society accepts both hermetic mages and shamans; however, due to their executive director being a hermetic mage, the membership skews toward mages. Ordeals are carried out in protection of astral space and its inhabitants. ASPS members must always be respectful of the spirits that they summon. They cannot bind spirits indefinitely (i.e., binding spirits over and over once their services are used up). ASPS members can only bind spirits once. ASPS members must learn the Cleansing and Filtering metamagics.

Patron: Astral Space Preservation Society

Description and Customs: The Astral Space Preservation Society specializes in astral quest ordeals. Because of their interaction with magical threats in astral space, members specialize in astral combat, and learn spells that will aid them on the astral plane (Astral Armor, Mana Barrier, Mana Net, etc).

GAIA'S FORSAKEN

The Yucatan Peninsula has seen years of warfare with Aztlan, and has been left with deep scars because of it. The terrain itself was traumatized by scorched-earth tactics that both sides employed against each other in an effort to gain the upper hand. Hundreds of kilometers of wilderness areas have been poisoned from chemical and biological agents, changing them into permanent wastelands. Numerous mana warps stain astral space in the Yucatan nation. Massive pools of chemicals and other toxins still seep into and poison the earth in the Yucatan, preventing any widespread healthy growth of vegetation. Air quality is among the worst in Central America. The Yucatan population not only suffers from some of the highest levels of metahuman genetic disorders and birth defects, but also suffers from the highest levels of free toxic spirits and shamans found anywhere in the world. Many saw the Yucatan being turned over to the dragon Pobre as a hopeful sign of change in 2064. However, since that time, nothing has really changed as far as the condition of the environment is concerned. The government under Pobre has been very slow to react to the problems associated with the ecological disasters, let alone investing any serious nuyen into the cleanup efforts of the toxic waste zones.

- Providing further proof that Pobre is truly a toxic dragon, as so many people in magic circles have speculated over the years. Why would he be motivated to clean up something that grants him power?
- Man-of-Many Names
- Wait a minute. I thought that the ecosystem was basically carrying out its own war against the pollution? There used to be reports that the earth was regenerating itself even faster than most Awakened rainforests. Has something changed in the Yucatan?
- Marcos
- I'm afraid that those are old reports from 2062. Most of those instances of the earth spontaneously healing itself in the Yucatan happened at the peak of the Year of the Comet and continued only for a few months after it departed. Since that time, the Yucatan ecosystem has returned to a state of slumber. This has only allowed the contamination to spread and to wipe out much of what was gained during that period of rejuvenation. There is a sense of urgency in the Yucatan that if something isn't done soon, much of the Yucatan ecosystem will no longer be able to support metahuman life. It's truly a worrisome thought.
- Glasswalker

Since 2064, eco groups such as the Astral Space Preservation Society, Sierra, Inc., and Save Our Seas have been trying to work with the locals to rehabilitate the ecosystem in the Yucatan, and to make up for the government's indifference to the problem. Unfortunately, many outside eco groups have faced bureaucratic roadblocks in getting help to the environment. Visa requests for the eco groups have been delayed for months. Even when their visas were finally approved and their members allowed into the nation, government officials have kept a close eye on the eco activists. Pobre's agents were all too eager to arrest the activists for being Aztlan spies or on some other trumped-up charge that could get them either kicked out of the country or imprisoned. In



spite of these obstacles, these groups, along with large numbers of local activists, were able to make some progress in their efforts to fix the damage inflicted on their part of the earth. Unfortunately, that progress has only amounted to saving up to three percent of the Yucatan's total land and water masses. The rest remains contaminated, and highly dangerous to metahumans.

Given the limited scope of outside help the Yucatan receives from eco-activist groups, many former insurgents from the Yucatan War are coming together for another fight. This time, their goal is to overcome the resistance of Pobre and his agents in the government to allow for the ecosystems in the Yucatan to be cleaned up. Beginning in 2068, a group called Gaia's Forsaken emerged at a toxic site approximately forty kilometers northeast of the city of Uxmal. There, the former insurgents captured the site from the government soldiers, and began an independent cleanup of the area. In a week's time, Gaia's Forsaken did more to clean up the toxic waste site than Pobre's government did in four years. They removed nearly eighty thousand liters of toxic water, removed nearly three metric tons of contaminated soil, laid down nearly six tons of good soil, and planted new native trees and other vegetation. They also identified all the soldiers guarding the site and evaluated the magically active guards. They did not hesitate to summarily execute those they deemed to be toxics. Those who were not Awakened or had not fallen to the toxic path were freed once Gaia's Forsaken had accomplished their mission. Since 2068, Gaia's Forsaken has struck two dozen or so toxic sites and has performed a certain amount of rehabilitation on the areas. Pobre's response to Gaia's Forsaken has been all too predictable: He says the government cannot entrust militants to clean up these toxic waste sites. They are not professionals, and with their good intentions, they could cause an accident that could make the situation worse. Pobre has made it clear that these ecological vigilantes cannot be tolerated, so he has beefed up security around the toxic waste sites, ensuring that encounters between his troops and Gaia's Forsaken members will be much more violent. Pobre has issued arrest warrants for members of Gaia's Forsaken and has placed bounties on their heads. So far, not a single bounty has been claimed on a member of the group. Those who have been arrested by Pobre's troops have managed to escape custody, demonstrating clearly where the people's loyalties lie when it comes to this group.

For safety reasons, the leadership of Gaia's Forsaken is not discussed much inside the Yucatan. Local runners who have been hired by the group believe that one of the major leaders is a former member of the Flame of Freedom insurgency group named Mateo Cruz. Cruz is a local hero in many parts of the Yucatan. From 2056 to 2064, Cruz participated in a dozen major campaigns against Aztlan and Aztechnology forces, and at the beginning of 2063, Cruz began to help organize campaigns against the Azzies. Ten of the eleven campaigns he planned were considered successful. Many runners believe that his inner circle consists of former members of the Flame of Freedom insurgency group.

Although the Gaia's Forsaken's membership has exploded in recent years and is believed to be approaching nearly two thousand strong, Cruz maintains tight control over their activities. It is believed that Cruz and his leadership forbid their members and any runners they hire from killing anyone who is not a toxic. It is also believed that Cruz expects his members not

to sell any of the chemicals cleaned up from the environment. Instead, he has been working with his followers to convert bunkers and tunnels that were once used to fight and kill Azzies into a means to safely store the contaminated water and sludge from their cleanup efforts.

- Cruz may be opposed to selling the chemical or biological materials they are cleaning up, but he doesn't seem to have a problem with selling any weapon caches or leftover ordnance that he finds in those old bunkers. Most of that material is being sold and smuggled down to Amazonia, where Amazonians can put it to good use, while Gaia's Forsaken uses the proceeds to buy new equipment to help them in their cleanup efforts.
- Hard Exit
- Gaia's Forsaken has been using runners to break into restricted toxic sites, and they've also hired a few runners to watch over the areas they have rehabilitated in order to prevent the government from starting up projects or bringing in corporations that will only re-pollute the area. At two rehabilitated sites, Pobre approved agreements allowing Shiwase and Mitsuhama to set up factories. It took constant fighting with corporate and government troops, along with healthy doses of sabotage and vandalism over the course of three years to convince the two megacorporations that developing those sites would not be in their best interests.
- Marcos

GLOBEWATCH

Despite a popular misconception, not all groups interested in hazardous environments and how to fix them are magic-based. Globewatch is the perfect example of a group that likely does not have a single magician within its ranks. Composed of thousands of anonymous hackers (and likely a few technomancers), this group's membership spans all four corners of the world and all demographics, from national citizens and disgruntled corporate wageslaves who consider themselves to be eco-activists to government whistleblowers. These hackers have made it their mission to come together in various data havens to share information and to expose polluters and their illegal activities. Exposing these groups typically involves Globewatch either leaking their activities to the media or to other watchdog groups or tipping off law enforcement agencies. If there are individuals who have profited by their acts against nature, the hackers of Globewatch have been known to hack into their bank accounts and steal all of their ill-gotten nuyen. This nuyen is then distributed throughout the rest of Globewatch or is given to other eco-friendly groups to continue the fight against polluters. In rare instances, members of Globewatch have been known to hire runners for more direct action when these traditional practices do not stop the misbehavior, or prove to be too slow to get the desired results. This direct action usually takes the form of sabotage, blackmail, Matrix vandalism, or other forms of coercion with which most runners are well acquainted.

- Globewatch sometimes needs help acquiring some of the paydata they post. Not all the information they get is accessible by simply hacking into government or corporate nodes. They need help with the legwork to know where to look for the scoop, or they need help

breaking into facilities and grabbing information sitting in off-grid systems. If you have a contact who works with environmental groups, they might be able to find you a job with Globewatch. The group maintains a board in their data havens listing projects they would like help in investigating. Sometimes groups come back and report that projects are on the level, but more often than not runners find some dirt. And from what I hear, Globewatch pays fairly decently for its jobs.

- Sticks

It is commonly believed that Globewatch began in the late 2040s with a decker known as "Phantom Marauder." The group started out with only a few Matrix sites and only a few dozen members. But with each new success, the eco-friendly Matrix group gained greater numbers of new recruits who were willing to contribute to Globewatch's flow of information, and to give Globewatch even greater reach in both the public and private sectors.

One of the first major news stories that earned Globewatch international attention was shortly after the Renraku arcology was reclaimed from Deus by UCAS troops. As the Metroplex guard began cleaning up tons of hazardous materials and debris from the arcology from the many months of brutal fighting to end Deus' siege, Globewatch targeted and exposed the Seattle Metroplex Guard for carrying out improper and illegal dumping of those hazardous materials. Globewatch obtained records showing that spent ammunition, destroyed drones and military vehicles, dangerous chemicals, and large amounts of building material debris were simply dumped into Puget Sound. The information they uncovered found that this illegal dumping operation released tons of dangerous refuse into the ocean. As a result of the publicly leaked trideo and documentation from Globewatch surrounding the illegal dumping and the public outrage that followed, two UCAS military officers and sixteen enlisted personnel from the Metroplex Guard were given a general court martial and imprisoned. Following the scandal that Globewatch touched off, the UCAS military was then forced to clean up the hazardous materials from Puget Sound, costing them an additional one hundred and fifty million UCAS dollars above what they would have paid had they chosen to dispose of the materials properly in the first place.

Another major environmental issue that Globewatch helped to expose happened during the Year of the Comet. Globewatch was very active between 2061 and 2062, exposing numerous mining safety violations from megacorporations that were rushing to harvest orichalcum deposits that seemed to appear out of nowhere as a result of the approach of Halley's Comet. During that time, corporations felt that they had to stake their claims quickly and set up their mining operations almost overnight to ensure they could take full advantage of the veins of orichalcum before they dried up. By setting up these operations in a haphazard way, the corporations put their profits before the safety of their workers as well as the welfare of the planet by ignoring certain safeguards and gambling that accidents would not happen. Although the megacorporations will never admit it, Globewatch likely saved the lives of hundreds of miners and prevented dozens of incidents of soil and water contamination during that time by challenging their sloppy practices and calling public attention to them. Surprisingly, many of the mining safety violations came

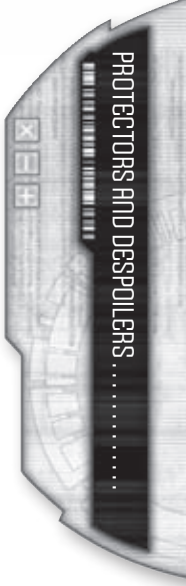
from Wuxing, a corporation that typically has a better track record of being environmentally conscientious.

- When will these damn corporations ever learn that it is much easier to take steps to avoid an ecological disaster than it is to actually clean one up? And that even after a site has been cleaned up, that it takes years, even with today's magic and advanced science, for an area to recover completely?
- Aufheben

After the Crash 2.0, Globewatch gained more international recognition by exposing Shiawase Atomics for using substandard materials to repair many of its nuclear reactors. Following the release of materials Globewatch acquired, countries using these reactors demanded that they be shut down until governmental inspectors could check out the facilities. Many reactors were required by the various governments to be refitted with the proper materials, which ended up costing Shiawase Atomics millions. Many other corporations and nations were exposed by Globewatch for trying to take quick and easy routes to clean up after Crash 2.0. In the years since, Globewatch has become proficient in seeking out projects where kickbacks have been made to government agencies to encourage them to ignore environmental rules. Over the years, materials that Globewatch released have resulted in the conviction of nearly one hundred government officials.

- Take that figure with a grain of salt. Remember that governments are not the major powers in the world, and that these convictions are often the result of corporations ordering someone from the government to act as a fall guy so that they can continue their normal procedures.
- Kay St. Irregular

Globewatch made many powerful enemies from those it has targeted. Aztechnology, Aztlan, Mitsuhama, Proteus AG, AG Chemie Europa, Saeder-Krupp, and Universal Omnitech have all been frequent targets of Globewatch's hackers. Things finally came to a head in 2066, when certain members of the Corporate Court had enough of Globewatch's antics and authorized an operation to arrest members of Globewatch on trumped-up charges ranging from corporate espionage to violating proprietary laws. It also used the excuse that Globewatch was aiding and harboring known eco-terrorist groups such as GreenWar in their VPNs. Between 2066 and 2067, the Corporate Court arrested about one hundred and fifty Globewatch members, including its alleged founder, Phantom Marauder. For a few years, Globewatch maintained a low profile, trying to rebuild its leadership after the Corporate Court raid. In that time, Globewatch appeared to be directionless, not sure which targets to go after or what their ultimate goals would be, and the organization was consumed by infighting and group politics. During those years, Globewatch and their environmental warnings faded from the public spotlight, and the organization was in very real danger of collapsing on itself due to the power vacuum. But in 2069, a new leader took charge of what was left of Globewatch. His (or her) Matrix handle is the Jade Sentinel. The Jade Sentinel has been working hard to rein in the group's members and to once again get the eco-organization to working as one group instead of several splinter cells.



- Jade Sentinel, huh? Sounds like a super hero name ripped from the trids.
- Slamm-O!
- Since the arrest of Phantom Marauder, Globewatch has tried to distance itself from eco-terrorist groups such as the Awakened Liberation Front and Terra First! They simply do not want the attention or the scrutiny that those much more violent groups tend to bring down on their allies, real or perceived. Globewatch closed down those VPNs that the eco-terrorist groups were using and has forbidden its members from being overtly active in their ranks. The hope is that if one of these eco-terrorist groups does something radical, that it would not bring the wrath of the Corporate Court down upon Globewatch once more. For many in Globewatch, once was enough. Now, whether the megacorps actually believe that Globewatch has tried to distance itself from the extremist groups is another story altogether.
- Hard Exit
- In the three years that Globewatch was left with very little leadership, an extremist element within its ranks arose, one that wanted to go beyond merely reporting on the grave offenses being committed against Mother Nature. There were some in Globewatch who advocated killing those responsible for the illegal dumping grounds, strip-mining, and deforestation operations. They wanted to make sure these individuals could not commit the same crimes in the future. During that time, nearly a dozen individuals who had been targeted by Globewatch ended up dead. When this Jade Sentinel took over, he made it clear that these killings were not authorized by the organization and that they had to stop. Around that same time, a few hackers associated with that extremist element within Globewatch disappeared. Although no further deaths of metahumans who have been investigated by Globewatch have occurred, there are still some members who want to do more than act like glorified investigative journalists.
- Dr. Spin

Currently, Globewatch has its attention set on the Corporate Court's space elevator project. Recent documents leaked by Globewatch suggest that several safety reports had been falsified with the space elevator. These reports appear to have been written in such a way as to shave off nearly fifty million nuyen in much-needed safety measures for the space elevator. Other postings by Globewatch seem to suggest even more shady construction and business practices that have yet to be exposed but will be soon.

SHASTA SHAMANS

Due to recent dragon-related events, most people on the planet have likely heard about the Shasta Shamans. Their founder and former leader, Elliot Eyes-of-Wyrm, was assassinated on July 23, 2073, an event that many believe kicked off the fierce conflict between Hestaby and Lofwyr and extended to other dragons. I am not here to comment about the disappearance of one of the Shasta Shamans' technomancers, Randall Dancing-Star, and how it could relate to Lofwyr. I am not here to comment about the disappearance of one of the Shasta Shaman's technomancers, Randall Dancing-Star, and how it could relate to Lofwyr. Those subjects are best left up to Snopes or Plan 9. Rather, I am here to

talk about the Shasta Shamans as they relate to being protectors of the environment, and what projects they have undertaken recently or are invested in to improve their world.

Since their founding in 2055, the Shasta Shamans have been the caretakers of the redwood forests surrounding Mount Shasta. Although the Shasta Shamans are self-sufficient mainly due to their talismongering of telesma and reagents, the Shasta Shamans do so in a way that has almost no impact on the Awakened forest. The shamans grow their herbs and plants that they use for enchanting, and those that they don't grow, they harvest in a way that does not put a burden on the ecosystem of Mount Shasta. Hunting animals in the forest is also strictly controlled and managed so that wildlife populations are not harmed. The shamans go so far as to thin out forest growth so that it is less susceptible to forest fires. The Shasta Shamans have garnered support from the Northern Crescent gypsies, homesteaders who had been forced to flee their original homes and property when Tír troops invaded the Northern Crescent areas of the California Free State. Several of their members have also taken up residence at Mount Shasta, and they continue to work closely with the Shasta Shamans.

- Besides Amazonia, Mount Shasta is among the top locations in the world to harvest pristine telesma for enchanting purposes. Despite the arcane defenses of the forest in addition to the defenses of the Shasta lodge, many talisleggers still try to venture into the Shasta Shamans' property for its reagents. In the past, if talisleggers were caught, they were likely only to be forcefully removed from the premises, but at least they were still very much alive. Given that the Shasta Shamans are now perceived as targets by the other great dragons, and given that they lost their founder to a trespasser, I would not expect them to show the same kind of restraint as they have in the past. So if you got chummers wanting to make a little extra nuyen by illegally harvesting reagents, you may want to try and steer them clear of this particular hornet's nest, if only to avoid getting caught up in dragon politics and the still-raw emotions of the shamans over the loss of their leader.
- Lyran

The Shasta Shamans' first large-scale environmental restoration project took place in the Northern Crescent. Fighting between the homesteaders and the Tír troops had a tremendously negative impact on the natural landscape of the area. Homesteads were brutally destroyed by the fighting and burnt to the ground. Some of the fires led to forest and brush fires; fire-ravaged neighborhoods had to be abandoned. When the Tír attempted to rebuild those neighborhoods and repopulate them with their own citizens, they came under repeated attack by the gypsy groups who were not willing to cede any land to the Tír invaders. Many of the bands of gypsies laid down booby traps, makeshift landmines, and other improvised explosive devices in the wooded areas to try to kill as many Tír troops as possible. Since the gypsies resembled a rag-tag militia more than a formal military, very few people knew where all the booby traps and improvised explosive devices had been placed. These devices were believed to have numbered in the thousands and were capable of stopping both Tír foot patrols and convoys. Over the years, these devices led to many innocent civilians being maimed or killed. Besides the danger from the landmines, many of the lakes and streams of the

area ended up becoming poisoned during the most intense fighting between the Tír troops and the homesteaders. No one knows specifically how the lakes and other water sources became poisoned; homesteaders blamed the Tír, and the Tír blamed the homesteaders. Whatever the truth of the matter may be, the Shasta Shamans spent their early years helping return the Northern Crescent to a somewhat natural state. In a parallel effort, Hestaby and Eliot Eyes-of-Wyrm worked over the years to pursue long-term peace in the contested area between the homesteaders and the Tír so that the Shasta Shamans' efforts to rehabilitate the environment would not be in vain.

- They may have worked hard, but tensions are on the rise in the Northern Crescent region. Speculation is that runners are being brought in to stir up old resentments between the Tír citizens that moved into the region and the homesteaders that had to fight to protect their property. My guess would be that by destabilizing the area, they hope to cause problems for Hestaby that she probably assumed had been resolved a long time ago.
- Frosty
- It doesn't help the stability in the region that Hestaby is no longer a Tír Prince. Many of the Northern Crescent natives feel as though she can now work full time on their grievances instead of trying to put on a balancing act between the two worlds, and the Tír citizens that have established roots in that area have to be worried as to whether Hestaby will pull a Ghostwalker and get them evicted. I would put good nuyen on the fact that hostilities will break out in this region, and it might not have anything to do with those outside forces that oppose Hestaby.
- Kay St. Irregular

The Shasta Shamans' next major undertaking involved the remnants of the Tsimshian Nation after the Second Matrix Crash. After Crash 2.0, Mitsuhama withdrew from Tsimshian, leaving behind an ecological disaster on a scale rarely seen, even in this modern day filled with acid rain and wild magic. It is believed that only Aztlan has seen worse ecological disasters on its soil than what the Tsimshian Protectorate is currently experiencing.

The Shasta Shamans spent the years since 2064 cleaning up water tables polluted by chemicals and heavy metals released from Mitsuhama's mining operations. They have also helped replant nearly two hundred square kilometers of trees over the last ten years, using magic to stimulate and sustain the growth. Due to the soil contaminations left behind by MCT, nearly a quarter of the attempts to repopulate forested areas with trees have ended in failure, requiring even more exhaustive work to clean up the soil contamination. This comes on top of the fact that much of Tsimshian's existing wildlife has been transformed into mutant or toxic critters. Even though cleansing and filtering metamagic techniques have been regularly employed, magic in these parts is still hampered by the ecological damage. No matter the precautions the Shasta Shamans take, nearly half of the spirits they try to summon to aid them in the cleanup efforts in these areas manifest as hostile toxic spirits. By the Shasta Shamans' own estimates, it will take at least another thirty years of cleanup and rehabilitation efforts before the lands of the Tsimshian Protectorate start to resemble what they were before Mitsuhama arrived on the scene.

- Healing the land is only half of the reason why the Shasta Shamans have been so involved in Tsimshian. Between the frequent military skirmishes involving Tsimshian and the Salish-Shidhe Council as well as the environmental destruction of the land thanks to MCT, there are a lot of toxic shamans now inhabiting this devastated area. For whatever reason, groups like the Draco Foundation have not paid a whole lot of attention to the Tsimshian Protectorate and its high population of toxics. The Shasta Shamans are doing their best to deal with the problem at hand and have reached out to the Astral Space Preservation Society to help them deal with the corruption of astral space. Unfortunately, many of these toxic shamans have almost limitless open lands and toxic domains in which to hide. On top of that, many of these toxics were involved in underground political groups such as the Haida National Front and the Long House Brotherhood that trained them in guerilla tactics. Because of the difficulties that have presented themselves in dealing with the toxics, the Shasta Shamans have traditionally hired shadowrunners to help them hunt down and deal with the toxic shaman population in the Tsimshian Protectorate. Even today, the Shasta Shamans continue to offer contracts for these toxics. So if you're not afraid of dealing with toxics in their own domains, these could be the contracts for you.
- Black Mamba
- During its work in the Tsimshian Protectorate, the Shasta Shamans came across several caches of unused biological agents left over from the war between Tsimshian and the Salish-Shidhe Council. Neither the Tsimshian Protectorate government nor the SSC wanted to claim ownership over the biowarfare agents. As such, the Shasta Shamans removed the dangerous biological agents and turned them over to Ares for proper disposal.
- Cosmo
- Ares? Seriously? How can they be trusted to not just analyze them, but work to make something more dangerous out of them, and then add the original canisters to their arsenal along with the new versions? That seems to me to be a colossal mistake on the part of the Shasta Shamans.
- Elijah
- I heard the Shasta Shamans turned the materials over to Arthur Vogel himself, and he and the men loyal to him inside of Ares made sure the biological agents were destroyed. From what I have heard, Knight fumed about Vogel's secret operation and that wasted opportunity for weeks.
- Sticks

A third major undertaking for the Shasta Shamans has been assisting with cleanup efforts in Los Angeles following the 2069 earthquakes. The earthquakes crippled much of Los Angeles, left whole neighborhoods destroyed, and tattered much of the city's ecosystem. Immediately following the natural disasters, dozens of groups came forward to help Los Angeles and the PCC recover from the powerful quakes. Only the Shasta Shamans and a few select groups, however, chose to stay long after the earthquakes ceased being headline news. The Shasta Shamans have been focusing their attention on rehabilitating Hollywood, Pasadena, Covina, and the Downtown districts. The Shasta Shamans have





reported significant progress in repairing the ecological damage in these areas, but members believe it will take another five years of uninterrupted rehabilitation efforts to fully restore Los Angeles.

- It's interesting to note that the Shasta Shamans have never reported recovering any kind of files or data in their work, not even in the Downtown areas of LA. Given how much of LA was buried and entombed by mud and collapsed buildings, you would think they would have found something by now. Makes me wonder what things they may have uncovered, and what they may have funneled up to the patron of their magic group for closer examination.
- Thorn

Since the assassination of Eyes-of-Wyrm, the Shasta Shamans have suspended their operations in Los Angeles and the Tsimshian Protectorate. Many of their shamans have been recalled and sequestered at their lodge for their own safety. There is no telling when the Shasta Shamans will be released to resume their work. They have also suspended selling foci and telesma to outsiders, and the grounds for the Shasta Shamans have been locked down. Very little information about the internal happenings of the Shasta Shamans are available to the public, but there has been talk in the magic community that the Shasta Shamans have held a vote on a new leader, and the victor is widely believed to be a Phoenix shaman by the name of Wings-of-Fire.

- There's an interesting story there. The new leader was indeed going to be Wings-of-Fire, based on a preliminary vote of the shamans in attendance. Hestaby, however, did not wish the Shasta Shamans to be led by anyone other than a Dragon shaman. So, after some nudging, the Shasta Shamans went with a woman named Sarah Heart-of-the-Dragons.
- Glitch
- Glitch, how in the hell did you find out about that? Even my sources close to the Shasta Shamans were not aware of that.
- Frosty
- I am also at a loss. How did you get this scoop that has proven elusive even to us magicians?
- Winterhawk
- Trade secret, I'm afraid. But trust me, it's accurate.
- Glitch
- One thing to keep in mind about the Shasta Shamans: They have a lot of influence with other magical groups in the Pacific Northeast region of North America. Not only do the Shasta Shamans have members on the board of the Astral Space Preservation Society, they also have members in the American Association for the Advancement of Thaumaturgy. In addition, they have collaborated on more than a few projects with the United Talismongers Association. If you need something from any of these magic groups, get in good with the Shasta Shamans; chances are, they likely have the influence to make things easier for you with the other groups.
- Kay St. Irregular

Incoming Message



THE SHASTA SHAMANS

Purpose: The Shasta Shamans are tied closely with their patron, Hestaby, and her agenda. Much of Hestaby's agenda is still unknown to the rest of the world, making the Shasta Shamans just as mysterious. The Shasta Shamans have been involved in environmental programs to help rejuvenate and restore parts of the environment of North America to its natural, pristine state. The Shasta Shamans have been active with other organizations with which Hestaby herself is involved, such as the Astral Preservation Society. The Shasta Shamans are extremely loyal to Hestaby.

Members: 300

Strictures: Limited Membership (shamans only). There are such things as associate members; they do not have access to the actual lodge building, but they can gain entry to certain locations around Mount Shasta, such as nature trails, talisman shops, and gypsy camps. Members are required to make an oath of loyalty to both the lodge and to the great dragon Hestaby. They are also expected to be obedient to the bylaws of the organization and to the requests of Hestaby. Members include shamans who follow a wide variety of mentor spirits; following the Dragon totem is not a requirement, but it can help you gain status in the organization.

Resources/Dues: High/None. The Shasta Shamans are self-sustaining, thanks largely to their ability to harvest telesma from Mount Shasta's redwood forests. The telesma from Mount Shasta are very potent and sell extremely well on the open market, bringing in enough nuyen to sustain the lodge and making it unnecessary for the shamans to rely on Hestaby for financial support.

Patron: Hestaby

Description and Customs: The main building for the Mount Shasta Lodge is the old Mount Shasta ski resort, which has been converted into a magical lodge. There is enough room at the Mount Shasta Lodge and surrounding buildings to house up to fifty individuals at any one time. In the woods, there is a large conclave of gypsies that is permitted to enjoy the natural surroundings of Mount Shasta. They often serve as the eyes and the ears of Hestaby and the Shasta Shamans. The Northern Crescent gypsies act as a ranger service and border patrol for the Shasta Shamans. In addition to the gypsies, the redwood forest surrounding the lodge possesses its own magical defenses. The redwood forest can feel imposing and unwelcome to those with hostile intent or a callous disregard of the forest, and that feeling becomes even stronger the closer such individuals get to the lodge. There are also many paranormal critters roaming the forest near Mount Shasta, including the rumored Shasta Deer.





UNITED TALISMONGERS ASSOCIATION

There are more than a few groups that are hard to pin down as to whether they belong in the “Protectors” or “Despoilers” category. The United Talismongers Association is definitely one such group.

The United Talismongers Association (UTA) was started in the early 2050s by an elven woman named Tamara Nimbus in Arcata, California Free State. The UTA started out as a coalition of local and small-time talismongers and lore shops looking to protect and advance their business interests while also promoting themselves as caretakers of the environment. In the beginning, the United Talismongers Association worked hard on developing a positive image for talismongers in the Northern Crescent region, attempting to convince the highly eco-conscious and skeptical population that not all talismongers are out to rape the Earth and plunder all its resources. The UTA developed procedures on how best to harvest reagents and how to get the most out of them during the enchanting process while at the same time leaving the smallest possible footprint on the surrounding ecosystem. The procedures the UTA developed and published on talismongering later became the standard for most legitimate talismongers in North America. Even today, these techniques and standards are often taught to students at most colleges and universities around North America with a thaumaturgical program, and they are also used by larger institutions including the Draco Foundation and the DIMR.

In its first few years of existence, the UTA made it a point to clearly define what is proper and ethical in talismongering and what is not. The UTA set forth standards to which they expected members to adhere. When members failed to live up to these standards, they were kicked out of the UTA and were on their own from that point forward.

The United Talismongers Association did everything they could to allow its members to compete with megacorporations like Aztechnology and Mitsuhama. On the behalf of its members, the UTA worked with governments to secure access to sites that normally would be off-limits to talismongers. The governments that the UTA approached included the NAN. Some of the NAN member countries were receptive to the UTA based on what they said they were trying to accomplish and their past achievements, while others flatly denied their requests. Nimbus also helped elevate the stature of the United Talismongers Association by publicly announcing that she and the Shasta Shamans, under Hestaby’s and Elliot Eyes-of-Wyrm’s guidance, would work to create magical and nature preserves. In addition to the standards of talismongering she helped establish, Nimbus also worked with the members of the UTA to develop a quality of enchanting that is rarely seen, even from the megacorporations. As a result of all these factors, in a short amount of time the UTA grew in size from an original group of twenty-six talismonger and lore shops to nearly one hundred and fifty shops scattered throughout the California Free State.

As the UTA grew to control almost all of the independent sources of teslama and ritual materials in California, they increased their influence and political muscle. The United Talismongers Association became a powerhouse in the magical communities of the California Free State, as well as a voice of moderation when it came to environmental policies. It is for these reasons



that I have chosen to label the UTA as one of the protectors of the environment. But make no mistake about it, I have lingering doubts about that characterization.

- In some parts of the Northern Crescent, there are trees that have shown both intelligence and a hostility toward metahumans. They have attacked loggers and strip miners as well as innocent bystanders. The UTA took the lead in mapping out those areas and establishing preserves for those trees so that they would have limited encounters with metahumans. By establishing those preserves, the UTA saved the lives of dozens of metahumans and earned themselves positive media coverage for their various works.
- Lyran

My primary apprehension about the UTA comes from the fact that what it has said and done in public has not always been reflected in what goes on behind closed doors. Despite enacting strict rules banning the practice of gathering enchanting materials from endangered species, the UTA leadership deemed that some of the reagents produced by these specimens were too desirable and too valuable to be ignored entirely by the UTA. So instead of having its members dirty their hands in collecting those materials themselves, Nimbus and the leadership within the UTA would hire shadowrunners to collect those materials for them, thereby bypassing the restrictions on poaching for the membership. Nimbus would then approach the governments from where those thefts occurred and offer the UTA's services in helping to protect those tesma-rich territories. This is a perfect example of bait and switch tactics that many in the shadows believe happen on a regular basis with the UTA.

If shadowrunners could not harvest illegal materials from endangered species on their own for whatever reason, Nimbus and the UTA leadership have not been afraid to send runners after the materials possessed by its rivals in the magic community, starting with Aztechnology and Mitsuhama. Many shadowrunners in the area, particularly the Awakened ones, know that the UTA runs a black market of illegal reagents and ritual materials worth millions of nuyen. If anyone outside the UTA noticed and complained, or if any members within the UTA objected to this practice, Nimbus or other UTA leaders would not hesitate to contact runners and ruthlessly silence the opposition. There have also been lingering suspicions that the UTA has been using runners to bribe government officials in getting what they want, going far beyond just supporting a candidate with campaign funds and endorsements. As further proof that the United Talismongers Association isn't all that it seems, rumors persist that the United Talismongers Association added an Oath of Silence to their strictures.

- The UTA and Aqua Arcana are often in competition with each other in the field of politics, especially when it comes to supporting up-and-coming political candidates. When the UTA supports one candidate, Aqua Arcana often moves to support the opposition. During election years, things can get pretty ugly between these two groups. For years, Aqua Arcana has tried to convince people that the UTA was behind a string of illegal whaling operations off of the coast of Northern California targeting meistersingers. Unfortunately, because those operations were strictly handled by runners who were paid by certified credstick, there was no way to

track the whaling operations back to those who funded it. And the UTA, especially in recent years, has been bashing Aqua Arcana for the two incidents with Renraku and Universal Omnitech. Expect many shadow ops to be carried out between the two during the next election cycle.

- Sounder
- When that happens, two groups will benefit the most from that explosion: Save Our Seas and Sierra, Inc. Once both groups have given each other black eyes, their donors and supporters will look elsewhere to support causes that aren't marred by scandal and backstabbing.
- Ecotope
- The UTA has been having a difficult time in the CFS recently. Many have attributed the problems to either Aztechnology or Mitsuhama, both of whom have put pressure on banks to foreclose on any UTA properties that might be even a little behind on mortgage payments, as well as hiring groups to firebomb UTA-aligned businesses. But it is just as likely that the UTA has stepped on the toes of the Illuminates of the New Dawn, and they are making a point. So far in 2074, business for the UTA-affiliated talismonger shops is down by eight percent. This on top of the fact that in 2073, business for UTA talismonger shops declined nine percent. Sixteen talismongers have been forced to go out of business because of this, while eight others have disappeared. Some believe the disappearances are related to the dragon factions that are attacking metahuman talismongers for selling or dealing in dragon reagents. But I don't buy it.
- Plan 9
- You never know, especially if those talismongers might have been dealing dragon reagents under the table, in one of the UTA's "after hours" specials.
- Sunshine

No matter what shady dealings the UTA may be involved in, so far the UTA has not been tied to any of them publicly. Nimbus was able to ride a wave of public popularity for the United Talismongers Association in 2057 to become Loyola University's representative on the board of the Dunkelzahn Institute for Magical Research, and she continues to sit on the board today. Although Nimbus retains the position of president of the UTA, most of the day-to-day operations are handled by her senior VP, Vincent Gold. Conveniently, since Nimbus made it onto the DIMR board, new business opportunities for the UTA have opened up. Every time that Nimbus led an expedition or conducted research on behalf of the DIMR, UTA members have been invited to attend and participate along with DIMR members. This has allowed the talismonger organization to expand its connections, broaden its knowledge base, and overall refine its techniques. Since 2057, when Nimbus was appointed to her prestigious post inside the DIMR, the UTA has extended itself past the California Free State into the Seattle Metroplex, the SSC, the Pueblo, the Athabaskan Council, and the Algonkian-Manitou Council. Nimbus and Gold are currently working with the Tir Tairngire and Quebec governments to allow the UTA to recruit talismongers from their nations and set up establishments inside their borders. With the perceived DIMR backing, these



negotiations are likely to succeed. It is believed that as of 2074, the UTA has close to three hundred and fifty members, though that number likely does not take into account any employees that handle the UTA's shadow affairs. By my estimations, those shadow assets, with no official records within the UTA, could number anywhere between ten and thirty employees.

Incoming Message

THE UNITED TALISMONGERS ASSOCIATION MAGIC GROUP

Purpose: The United Talismongers Association magic group allows magicians and adepts skilled in enchanting and talismongering to work together, hone their skills, learn from each other, and craft quality fetishes and foci to sell to the outside world. Approximately seventy-five percent of UTA members are part of this magic group. Those who are merely part of the UTA's business endeavors are not as involved in its inner workings, or even made aware of them.

Members: 263 (out of 350 potential members)

Strictures: Limited Membership (shamans, mages, or adepts capable of enchanting only). Membership is limited to those talismongers who own their own store or shop. New members of this magic group are required to take an Oath of Loyalty and an Oath of Silence. Members are restricted from gathering reagents from endangered species themselves; as a result, many members use shadowrunners to gather these materials for them so that they do not break the letter of the stricture.

Resources/Dues: High/???. Dues are paid by every talismonger or lore shop that is a member of the UTA. It is not required that all members of the UTA become members of the UTA magic group, but it is highly recommended.

Patron: United Talismongers Association

Description and Customs: The United Talismongers Association

for, occasionally you might be able to claim more than one bounty on a single target, or you may have the option of choosing the most lucrative bounty to collect or which organization will benefit from your services. These bounties tend to be one-time events, so a long-term commitment to an unpleasant part of the world is not necessary. And oftentimes, these bounties are worth more than what any of these eco-friendly groups are able to pay out for most experienced shadowrunners.

It is important to keep in mind that governments and corporations post these bounties precisely to encourage shadowrunners and bounty hunters to take all the risks inherent in capturing or killing these dangerous individuals. Why should the UCAS or Lone Star or Knight Errant expend their own personnel and resources hunting down these threats? "Better them than us" is their unspoken creed. Which is why many of the bounties are now written as "payable upon the successful capture and delivery of the individual to Knight Errant," or "payable upon the death of the individual with remains being delivered to Lone Star," as opposed to rewards for "information leading to arrest and conviction of said individual."

In any event, these despoilers may represent a different kind of work for shadowrunners interested in having a positive impact on the environment, allowing them to make a decent profit while they're at it. The despoilers listed here include toxic shamans, insect shamans, shadow spirits, and blood mages, but remember that there are so many more despoilers than we have space to discuss here. Particularly in the ranks of the megacorporations.

BLOOD MAGES

SHOICHI BAISETEI

Active Bounties: Renraku (150,000¥), DIMR (75,000¥)

Requirements: Renraku (paid upon death), DIMR (paid upon capture)

Shoichi Baisotei was a member of Locus Elementum, a Renraku magic research group based out of Neo-Tokyo. Baisotei is believed to have been a member of the secretive "fifth element," the element of "spirit," which is suspected of practicing blood magic. Baisotei was a leading researcher who had worked for Locus Elementum for nearly fifteen years.

According to official records, Baisotei was listed as having been terminated from the magic group on November 8, 2073. All supporting documents pertaining to the termination as well as any data relating to Baisotei's research project were meticulously scrubbed from both Renraku's and Locus Elementum's files, both in electronic and hard copy. No copies of Baisotei's most recent research project are believed to have survived this data purge. Renraku and Locus Elementum went to tremendous lengths to cover up what happened during that research project, which is believed to have been some variant of a blood ritual. According to stories whispered by Renraku personnel, something unexpected occurred during the ritual and everyone involved in it was killed—except for Baisotei. In the aftermath of the botched ritual, Renraku and Locus Elementum members noticed a distinct change in Baisotei's personality. He manifested a severe form of paranoia, as well as an obsessive need to recreate the ritual. Baisotei also became much more belligerent and confrontational with investigators in

THE DESPOILERS

Some of you may simply not be interested in working directly for these so-called protectors. That's understandable; this type of work is not for everyone. It is work that often entails specific skill sets and can demand huge investments of time and energy. The work these protectors do is typically in parts of the world that you never wish to visit. You would be hard-pressed to find any of these groups setting up shop in luxurious locations such as Hawai'i. And frankly, a lot of times, the work these groups do can be mind-numbing and tedious.

Going after the despoilers listed in this file, however, may be of more interest to you, as many carry significant bounties on their heads. Some despoilers carry more than one. Depending on how the bounties are worded and what the sponsoring organizations are asking

the hours following the incident. When Renraku officials decided that Baisotei needed to be subjected to a mental evaluation and possible treatment, Baisotei misinterpreted those intentions and snapped. According to witnesses, he broke out of the Locus Elementum building, killing anyone who got in his way. He allegedly unleashed a full arsenal of magic weapons and techniques that he hadn't known before the ritual and that were not recognized by any observers. They also didn't recognize the language Baisotei was chanting as he used his newfound abilities. The magic appeared to be very draining—witnesses suggested that the more Baisotei used this new magic, the less powerful he became. Some in Locus Elementum suspected that his aura was somehow charged in an unique way by the blood magic, while others theorized that he was somehow receiving power from somewhere else, and that without the ritual and ritual circle sustaining him, his connection to that power waned. Again, according to these unnamed witnesses, Baisotei escaped from Locus Elementum prior to the Red Samurai arriving on scene. During his escape, Baisotei is said to have killed sixteen people; twelve were members of Locus Elementum, four were Renraku executives.

- I've heard that two attempts have been made to use ritual tracking to find Baisotei and kill him. My contacts said that both times Baisotei proved to be untraceable through astral tracking, so the ritual spellcasting just wasn't going to happen. There's no record of Baisotei learning the flux metamagic during his time at Locus Elementum, which has led to some imaginative theories that the botched ritual may have given Baisotei some unusual qualities, including being resistant to ritual and astral tracking.
- Stone

Mundane investigations have led Renraku authorities to believe that Baisotei has sought refuge in Sub-Tokyo. Renraku executives would prefer that shadowrunners deal with Baisotei, as they would prefer to keep as much distance from the blood mage as possible. Since Baisotei has shown up in Sub-Tokyo, multiple ritualistic deaths have taken place. Each time, eight inhabitants of Sub-Tokyo have died; one as a sacrifice, and seven as participants in Baisotei's desperate attempt to finally succeed at his failed ritual. Those seven unwilling metahumans have always been Awakened. These rituals have been conducted on four different sites. Adding in the deaths at Locus Elementum makes an estimated total of forty-eight metahumans Baisotei is believed to have killed. At present, Baisotei is thirty-six years old.

Human

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
3	6	6	5	5	6	4	6	12	7	6	12(15)	1(4)

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 13/11

Armor (B/I): 8/6

Skills: Arcana 6, Assensing 5, Astral Combat 5, Blades 6, Climbing 4, Conjuring skill group 4, Counterspelling 6, Disguise (Camouflage) 6 (+2), Dodge 5, Escape Artist 4, Exotic Melee Weapon (Kusarigama) 6, Exotic Melee Weapon (Sai) 4, Gymnastics (Tumbling) 3 (+2), Infiltration 6, Outdoors skill group 5, Palming 6, Perception 5, Pilot Ground Craft 3, Ritual

Spellcasting 6, Shadowing 4, Spellcasting 6, Unarmed Combat 5
Qualities: Astral Chameleon, Home Ground (Sub-Tokyo), Magician, Tough as Nails (15 BP)

Spells: Armor, Astral Armor, Clean (Water), Detect (Infected), Improved Invisibility, Increase Reflexes, Laser, Manaball, Manabolt, Night Vision, Nova, Petrify, Stunbolt, Stunball, Thought Recognition

Spirits: Beast spirit (Force 5), 2 blood spirits (spirits of air, Force 5), 1 spirit of water (Force 6)

Initiate Grade: 8

Metamagics: Centering, extended masking, great ritual, invoking, invoking blood spirits, masking, sacrifice, shielding

Gear: Camouflage Suit, 1 x sustaining focus (Force 3), 1 x summoning focus (Force 4), 1 x counterspelling focus (Force 4)

Weapons:

- Kusarigama [Exotic Melee Weapon, as Sickle, Reach 1, DV 5P, AP —, as Weighted Chain, Reach 2, DV 4P, AP —]
- Sai [Exotic Melee Weapon, Reach —, DV 4P or 4S, AP —]

KURT BROACH

Active Bounties: Atlantean Foundation (300,000¥), DIMR (150,000¥)

Requirements: Atlantean Foundation (paid upon capture), DIMR (paid upon capture)

Kurt Broach is a mystic adept who became a blood magic practitioner. Ironically, Broach worked for the last eight years as a researcher for the DIMR. It is unclear what precipitated Broach's fall or even who or what he killed that confirmed to the DIMR that he had become a blood magic practitioner. Everything about Broach's work and personal life has been buried by the DIMR. Fortunately, though, there are some of us who are good at digging up what's supposed to be hidden.

Broach got his Master's Degree in Thaumaturgy from the University of Athens in 2065. His studies and dissertation focused on magical threats—identifying them, tracking them using certain profile characteristics, neutralizing them, and knowing their unique pathologies. This background makes him very difficult to track. Allegedly, runners have found Broach's trail in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Miami. Each time they thought they were getting close, though, they lost him. Some of the runners on those chases now feel that they were never that close to him, that he was intentionally leaving datatrails behind as a means to toy with his adversaries. It is not clear where Broach is at the moment—it's anyone's guess as to what continent he's on.

Broach has been described as being methodical with narcissistic tendencies. He is thirty-four years old. Although the DIMR will not admit this, rumors persist that before he left the DIMR, he hired shadowrunners to systematically scrub DIMR facilities containing his material links, destroying them all before abandoning his post.

Human

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
4	5	5	4	4	4	5	6	11(5/6)	7	6	9	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/11

Armor (B/I): 8/6



Skills: Assensing (Astral Signatures) 5 (+2), Arcana 4, Astral Combat 6, Banishing 6, Binding 4, Blades 5, Counterspelling 6, Disguise 5, Dodge 5, Enchanting (Alchemy) 4 (+2), Outdoors skill group 1, Perception 4, Pilot Ground Craft 4, Ritual Spellcasting 6, Shadowing 6, Spellcasting 6, Summoning 6, Unarmed Combat 3

Knowledge skills: Ritual Tracking 4, Magical Threats (Blood Mages) 5 (+2)

Qualities: Mystic Adept

Adept Powers: Analytics 3 (0.75), Astral Perception (1), Berserk (1), Cloak 4 (1), Critical Strike 3 (0.75), Elemental Strike (Electricity) (0.5), Nerve Strike (1)

Spells: Armor, Astral Armor, Lightning Bolt, Stunball, Stunbolt, Wreck (Bone), Slay (Troll)

Spirits: 1 blood spirit (spirit of man, Force 4)

Initiate Grade: 5

Metamagics: Cannibalize, invoking, invoking blood spirits, power bleed, sacrifice

Gear: Armor jacket (8/6), commlink (Device Rating 5), counterspelling focus (Force 2), 5 disposable commlinks, 6 x fake SINS (Rating 6), weapon focus (katana, Force 3)

Weapons:

Katana [Blades, DV 5P, AP -1, Reach 1]

Notes: Broach has devoted five points of his Magic rating toward Magic skills and six points toward his Adept powers

EMMA JEAN CHEVALIER

Active Bounties: DIMR (150,000€)

Requirements: DIMR (paid upon death)

If you contact the DIMR for this bounty, chances are you'll hear as much (or more) about who Emma Jean Chevalier used to be as who she is now. She was a southern belle, originally from Atlanta, who came from an old family with an old family curse. You'll dig up rumors saying that in every generation of her matriarchal family line, at least three quarters of the family members turned out to be criminally insane. Chevalier had that heritage, and then she added to that the fact that she Awakened in her teens. But this is the not the most interesting part of Chevalier's story. The fact that Chevalier was previously captured by runners and turned in for the bounty on her head for being a blood mage in 2060 is. For fourteen years, it appears that Chevalier has been in the custody of the DIMR. Many believe that she escaped from wherever they were holding blood mages and is now out in the wild. It would also seem as though Chevalier has developed a fierce hatred for the DIMR and an unquenchable thirst for revenge. Since the new bounty on her head has appeared in different data havens beginning on March 15th of this year, eight researchers from the DIMR have been killed—not just murdered, but sacrificed in blood rituals. Eight more members of the DIMR were killed by ritual spellcasting. These killings were carried out throughout the UCAS, including DeeCee and Manhattan. Another element making this bounty unique is the fact that the DIMR does not wish to pay out for a live Emma Jean Chevalier. They want her dead. This seems to contradict the directions indicated in Dunkelzahn's will, and could very well cause an uproar due to this change in policy. Speculation has already started as to why the DIMR wants this woman dead. Leading theories include: the DIMR has no more

options to try and “treat” Chevalier for both her insanity and her addiction to blood magic; Chevalier is too dangerous to leave alive; and the DIMR is afraid that she knows precisely what the DIMR has been doing to blood mages, and they need runners to silence her before she exposes something.

- How about the fact that she killed eight DIMR researchers? Do they really need to invent more justification?
- Hard Exit

Emma Jean Chevalier is forty-four years old and is believed to be a powerful initiate. She doesn't just rely on magic to do her dirty work—she likes to get her hands dirty, and her weapons of choice are monofilament whips and garrotes. The DIMR has attempted on three occasions to try and track Chevalier based on material links they possessed of her. Due to her fluxing abilities, Chevalier is making ritual tracking very difficult to perform on her. The DIMR has recently sent four runner teams after her, and she has eluded or killed all of them.

Elf

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
6	6	5	5	8	7	6	6	14	6	6	12(15)	1(4)

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 11/11

Armor (B/I): 12/7

Skills: Assensing 4, Arcana 6, Astral Combat (Magicians) 5 (+2), Banishing 5, Binding 6, Con 6, Disguise 6, Dodge 5, Escape Artist (Cuffs) 6 (+2), Exotic Melee Weapon (Monofilament Garrote) 6, Exotic Melee Weapon (Monofilament Whip) 5, Infiltration 6, Perception 5, Pilot Ground Craft 3, Sorcery skill group 6, Summoning (Blood Spirits) 6 (+2), Unarmed Combat 5

Qualities: Exceptional Attribute (Intuition), Magician, Mentor Spirit (Adversary)

Spells: Agony, Control Actions, Control Emotions, Decrease Attribute (Agility), Detect Enemies, Foreboding, Ignite, Increase Reflexes, Invisibility, Manaball, Manabolt, Mass Agony, Poltergeist, Shapechange, Slaughter (human), Turn to Goo

Spirits: 3 blood spirits (guardian spirits, Force 7), 3 spirits of fire (Force 6), 2 spirits of earth (Force 5)

Initiate Grade: 8

Metamagics: Absorption, Centering, Flux, Invoking, Invoking Blood Spirits, Masking, Sacrifice, Shielding

Gear: Armor jacket, form-fitting body armor (half suit), 2 x sustaining foci (Increase Reflexes, Foreboding, both Force 3), 4 blood fetishes (Mass Agony, Control Actions, Control Emotions, Improved Invisibility)

Weapons:

Monofilament Whip [Exotic Melee Weapon, Reach 2, DV 8P, AP -4]

Monofilament Garrote [Exotic Melee Weapon, Reach —, DV 8P, AP -4]

Notes: Adversary gives Chevalier +2 dice for Manipulation spells, and +2 dice for Counterspelling. She must also make a Willpower + Charisma (3) Test whenever she receives instructions that do not match her beliefs or desires. She has Increase Reflexes sustained on herself at threshold 3.



OLIVER “BRASS BALLS” HARRISON

Active Bounties: Knight Errant (10,000¥) DIMR (100,000¥)

Requirements: Knight Errant (paid upon death), DIMR (paid upon capture)

Oliver Harrison is a former member of the Ancients who had a long history of violence, as documented by Lone Star and then Knight Errant in Seattle. Dozens of simple assaults, half a dozen assaults with deadly weapons, and four charges of assault with magic appear on Harrison’s rap sheet. Despite (or possibly because of) this violence, Harrison rose through the Ancients’ ranks to become a trusted lieutenant, running his own hideout with his own crew of eight or so members. One night in 2072, Harrison’s hideout was overrun by vampires, and he was infected with the HMMHV. It turned him into a banshee. When that happened, something inside of Harrison snapped. He became driven to kill vampires and other infected types to repay them for what they did to him. Most people might be grateful to him for dealing with the vampire problem, but unfortunately, Harrison turned to blood magic as a means to get his revenge.

Harrison is considered to be highly unstable. He uses squatters and the SINless populations to provide food and power his rituals. Harrison is believed to have killed up to two dozen infected, and perhaps twice that number in innocent metahumans. Harrison is believed to still be in Seattle, hiding in Tarislar. He is believed to be just over twenty years old.

- This is a good time to get into the anti-vampire biz. The Mealtime Killer is contributing to growing anti-Infected sentiment, and Harrison stands a good chance of being able to off a few vamps without anyone looking too carefully.
- Clockwork

Elf

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
5	6	5	4	6	4(5)	3	6(7)	8	6	4	10	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 11/11

Armor (B/I): 8/6

Skills: Assensing 5, Athletics skill group 3, Arcana 3, Astral Combat 5, Banishing 4, Binding 6, Blades 4, Clubs 4, Con 5, Disguise 5, Dodge 3, Intimidation 4, Longarms 3, Negotiation 4, Perception 5, Pilot Ground Craft 2, Pistols 3, Sorcery skill group 6, Summoning (Blood Spirits) 4 (+2), Unarmed Combat 4

Qualities: Banshee, Magician

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Smell), Essence Drain, Fear, Immunity (Age, Pathogens, Toxins), Infection, Mist Form, Natural weapon (Bite/Claw, Reach -1, DV 3P, AP —), Regeneration

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild), Dietary Requirement (Metahuman Flesh), Essence Loss

Spells: Detect (Infected), Earth Wall, Extended, Foreboding, Improved Invisibility, Mask, Mob Control, Petrify, Physical Mask, Sterilize, Stunball, Stunbolt

Spirits: 4 blood spirits (spirits of man, Force 5)

Initiate Grade: 4

Metamagics: Invoking, Invoking Blood Spirits, Masking, Sacrifice

Gear: Armored jacket

Weapons:

Forearm Snap-Blades [Blades, Reach —, DV 4P, AP —]

Remington 990 [Shotgun, DV 6S, AP +1, SA, RC (1), 8(m), loaded with gel rounds]

LEO SALAZAR

Active Bounties: Amazonia (75,000¥), Aztlan (90,000¥), DIMR (75,000¥)

Requirements: Amazonia (paid upon capture), Aztlan (paid upon death), DIMR (paid upon capture)

After serving in the Aztlan army for eleven years, Leo Salazar gained the rank of captain, and he displayed the same ferocity in his new rank that he showed while he moved up from the lower ranks. In a battle near Bogotá in 2072, Salazar summoned blood spirits and unleashed them onto unsuspecting Amazonia forces. That set a pattern for his combat in the war—it is believed that he has been personally responsible for summoning nearly eighteen blood spirits to date, many of which still roam free in the Amazonia rainforest. According to his service record, Salazar applied to be transferred into the elite unit known as the Blood Daggers. When he was denied that transfer in November 2073 due to possessing “undesirable characteristics,” Salazar deserted the Aztlan military killing three other soldiers in the process. Subsequent investigations revealed that Salazar left Aztlan, and he is now believed to be hiding in Dallas. Those who have encountered him say that he has left almost everything connecting him to Aztlan behind, except for his macauitl. During his military career, Salazar had a number of tattoos on his body based on Aztec designs, but they are now gone. Amazonia wants him taken alive in order to gain any intelligence he may have on the Blood Daggers, as well as knowledge of any other blood mages he might have worked with in his career. Amazonia also wants to try him for war crimes.

Salazar is twenty-nine years old.

Ork

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
7	4	5	8	6	5	4	6	10	5	6	10	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 12/11

Armor (B/I): 8/6

Skills: Assensing 4, Athletics skill group 4, Arcana 3, Astral Combat 5, Automatics 4, Banishing (Spirits of Plants) 6 (+2), Binding (Blood Spirits) 6 (+2), Blades 4, Clubs 3, Disguise 4, Dodge 3, Enchanting (Vessel Preparation) 4 (+2), Infiltration 3, Intimidation 5, Perception 5, Pilot Ground Craft 3, Pistols 3, Sorcery skill group 5, Summoning (Blood Spirits) 6 (+2), Unarmed Combat 5

Qualities: Magician

Spells: Lightning Bolt, Manaball, Manabolt, Napalm, Resist Pain, Shape (Blood), Spirit Zapper

Spirits: 2 blood spirits (spirits of beasts, Force 7)

Initiate Grade: 4

Metamagics: Invoking, invoking blood spirits, masking, sacrifice

Gear: Armored jacket, commlink (Device Rating 4)

Weapons:

Ares Predator IV [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP -1, SA, RC 0, 15 (c), w/ smartgun system. Loaded with Regular ammo]

Berretta Model 70 [SMG, DV 5P, AP 0, BF/FA, RC 0, 35 (c), w/ top-mounted laser sight and barrel-mounted sound suppressor. Loaded with Regular Ammo]

Macauitl [Blades, Reach 1, DV 6P, AP —]





INCOMING FEED.....



INSECT SHAMANS

While the DIMR has been instructed by Dunkelzahn's Will to specifically hunt down blood mages and toxic shamans, insect shamans are a bit of a grey area, especially since the DIMR does not officially define insect shamans as a subset of toxic shamans. According to the DIMR, insect shamans have a totally different and distinct pathology. Though insect shamans can have a very detrimental impact on the world around them, especially if they are successful in establishing a hive or nest, the DIMR simply has no directives from Dunkelzahn's Will to pursue them. That means you will find hardly any bounties on insect shamans from the DIMR or even the Draco Foundation. The Astral Space Preservation Society is a different story, though; they are quite interested in the insect spirit phenomenon and are well aware of the inherent dangers of insect shamans. This means that the ASPS has taken the lead in posting bounties for insect shamans. While the ASPS is succeeding on its own terms, it does not have the resources that the DIMR and the Draco Foundation have. That makes the ASPS bounties much lower than what you would get from the DIMR or the DF. The entries listed below are just a few of the bounties on insect shamans that the ASPS, along with other organizations, have placed on these magical threats.

WENDELL BALLANTINE

Active Bounties: Knight Errant (15,000¥), ASPS (25,000¥)
UCAS FBI (50,000¥)

Requirements: KE (paid upon capture) ASPS (paid upon capture or death), UCAS FBI (paid upon capture)

Doctor Wendell Ballantine was a tenured professor at Massachusetts Institute for Technology and Thaumaturgy, in their thaumaturgy department, and he has written dozens of academic papers on magical threats, including bug spirits. The first sign that something was amiss with him came three years ago, when Ballantine began publishing articles in academic journals that were sympathetic toward bug spirits, saying that they were no longer quite the threat that they used to be. Ballantine's ranting stirred quite the controversy and scandal in many academic circles, though many dismissed the ramblings as a sign of his advancing age (despite the fact that Ballantine was an elf). Another sign that something was wrong was the mysterious disappearances of students from the thaumaturgical department. Records showed that a dozen students dropped out of the university over the course of three years, and they seemingly dropped off the Earth once they left school. Family members and friends lost all contact with them and had no idea where they had gone. Knight Errant and the UCAS FBI investigated, but since it appeared that the students willingly dropped out of college prior to disappearing, they didn't look too closely at MIT&T or its faculty. A private investigator, hired by one of the families of the missing college students, checked the students' schedules and noticed that they all had taken classes from Ballantine within the last three years. The dropouts and subsequent disappearances didn't happen immediately; it usually came about a semester or two after they completed one of Ballantine's classes. Since so much time had passed between when the students were in Ballantine's classes and when they disappeared, no one except the private investigator believed this connection had any significance. The private

investigator went over to Ballantine's residence to do more digging and found a lot more than he expected. Ballantine, as it turned out, was a practicing insect shaman, and his residence was hosting a wasp spirit hive. Needless to say, the private investigator did not survive the encounter; the only evidence of what happened to him was cybereye footage he had transmitted to his home node while he conducted his exploration. Not knowing who the private investigator may have told of his suspicions, Ballantine fled instead of risking capture, making sure to cover his tracks. He set his residence on fire, destroying the physical hive as well as any ritual materials in his house. His vehicle was found eighty kilometers outside of Boston, with the interior having been bleached and sterilized through magic. Once Ballantine was gone, Knight Errant and the FBI began piecing together what had happened.

Wendell Ballantine is currently on the loose. He is sixty-three years old and is an accomplished magician. Ballantine was a hermetic mage before falling to the call of the Wasp mentor spirit. Because of his accomplishments and his depth of knowledge of magic, he should be considered very dangerous.

Elf

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
6	5	5	4	8	5	5	6	15	3	6	10 (13)	1 (4)

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/11

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 14/12

Skills: Assensing 3, Astral Combat 3, Blades 4, Con (Fast Talk) 5, Conjuring skill group 6, Counterspelling 5, Dodge 4, Enchanting (Vessel Preparation) 5 (+2), Etiquette 3, Instruction (Academic) 6 (+2), Intimidation 5, Leadership 5, Perception 6, Spellcasting 5, Stealth skill group 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Qualities: Magician, Mentor Spirit (Wasp), Focus Addiction (Moderate)

Spells: Acid Stream, Ball Lightning, Deflection, False Impression, Heal, Improved Invisibility, Influence, Levitate, Manascape, Mass Sight Removal, Trid Phantasm, Petrify, Physical Mask, Resist Pain, Toxic Wave

Spirits: 4 caretaker spirits (Force 3), nymph spirit (Force 3), 5 soldier spirits (Force 3), 2 worker spirits (Force 4)

Initiate Grade: 9

Metamagics: Absorption, armor, extended masking, flux, Invoking, masking, metamorphosis, shielding, spell masking

Gear: Armored jacket, counterspelling focus (Force 4), power focus (Force 4), sustaining focus (Armor, Force 6), sustaining focus (Increase Reflexes, Force 3), weapon focus (Force 3), 5 fetishes (Acid Stream, Heal, Improved Invisibility, Mass Sight Removal, Toxic Wave)

Weapons:

Katana [Blades, DV 5P, AP 0, Reach 1]

Note: Ballantine has Armor at Force 6 and Increase Reflexes at Force 3 sustained on him.

HERMAN DYAR

Active Bounties: Corporate Court Crisis Coordination Committee (500,000¥), ASPS (50,000¥), CAS DDI (100,000¥)

Requirements: C5 (paid upon capture) ASPS (paid upon capture or death), CAS DDI (paid upon capture)

The thought of trying to collect a bounty on Herman Dyar should raise the hairs on the back of everyone's necks, because Dyar's story is terrifying. Herman Dyar was a hermetic mage and researcher at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. In his work, he became quite accustomed to testing how specimens of very dangerous viruses and bacteria reacted to mana and magic, and also determining which specimens had significant arcane resistance. In his work, he had access to some of the world's most deadly pathogens.

What was going on in Dyar's head that led to his break with the CDC is unknown; all we know is what actually happened. In late 2073, Dyar took a fellow co-worker home after a date. Instead of ending in a romantic encounter, Dyar attempted to forcibly merge her with a cicada spirit. The woman escaped, though, and alerted Lone Star, who responded with a Fast Response Team. Dyar was gone, but not without leaving behind considerable alarm of what the insect shaman may have had access to at the CDC. It is not known what pathogens he took with him when he left—or how he intends to unleash his knowledge on the world.

- Dyar might not be as tough to handle on a one-on-one basis as some of the other people listed here—just don't go in with a lot of bullets flying. Breaking any glass in a facility where Dyar is holed up brings about a strong possibility of unleashing something vicious right into your lungs. I'd rely on magic if I was going after him, and I'd be ready for him to be a pretty good counterspeller.

- Haze

Human

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
3	3	4	4	6	4	7	6	9	3	6	8	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/11

Armor (Ballistic/Impact): 6/4

Skills: Assensing 5, Arcana 6, Astral Combat 5, Banishing 3, Binding 4, Blades 3, Chemistry 4, Con 5, Counterspelling 5, Disguise (Camouflage) 6 (+2), Dodge 5, Enchanting (Vessel Preparation) 4 (+2), Escape Artist 4, Infiltration 6, Medicine (Diseases) 5 (+2), Palming 6, Perception 5, Pilot Ground Craft 3, Ritual Spellcasting 4, Spellcasting 6, Summoning 6, Unarmed Combat 3

Qualities: Exceptional Attribute (Logic), Magician

Spells: Armor, Catalog, Combat Sense, Detect Enemies, Manaball, Petrify, Stunball

Spirits: 4 caretaker spirits (Force 4), 2 scout spirits (Force 4), 3 soldier spirits (Force 3)

Initiate Grade: 5

Metamagics: Centering, metamorphosis, masking, quickening, shielding

Gear: Armor vest



FRANKLYN NOCKAI

Active Bounties: KE (75,000¥), ASPS (15,000¥), UCAS FBI (75,000¥)

Requirements: KE (paid upon capture), ASPS (paid upon capture or death), UCAS FBI (paid upon capture)

Franklyn Nockai was a practicing divorce attorney in Boston in 2072. His law practice of eight years was thriving and he was financially secure. Socially, however, he was a recluse. He worked eight to five, was home by six, and generally didn't go out again until morning. No one suspected Nockai of being an insect shaman because no one knew he was Awakened. The first signs of trouble came when his neighbors complained to Knight Errant about loud noises, strange smells and other odd things coming from Nockai's house. When Knight Errant showed up, they made a horrifying discovery: Nockai's house had been transformed into a nest for roach spirits, with three metahumans in the process of being merged with the insects. The initial Knight Errant cops were brutally killed by the spirits before back up arrived. By the time SWAT teams came into the site, Nockai and his spirits had disappeared. A follow-up investigation by both Knight Errant and the UCAS FBI uncovered a new horrible fact: Nockai had been using his divorce practice as means to discover Awakened talent. Through his conversations, he learned which ones would be missed and which ones would not be. He targeted socially isolated magicians for recruitment. Nockai's records show that he successfully recruited ten other shamans to the Roach mentor spirit. Eight others allegedly refused to turn themselves over to the Roach, and Nockai had them infused with roach spirits as punishment. Only three of those insect shamans that Nockai helped recruit have been tracked down. The other seven are believed to have left Boston to set up their nests elsewhere. Knight Errant and the UCAS FBI fear Nockai because they are afraid he will set up shop elsewhere, build a new nest, and recruit new shamans to further Roach's goals. Records from Knight Errant indicate that the mother spirit Knight Errant encountered at Nockai's house was disrupted, but not destroyed. Nockai has not hit either the FBI's or Knight Errant's top ten most wanted only because they did not want to incite a panic. The bounty on Nockai's head has risen three times since 2072; both Knight Errant and the FBI want Nockai captured quickly and quietly.

- I love the idea of not inciting a panic. Are there really people out there who don't know how bad things are in the world?
- Sounder
- Yes, because corporations work hard to get their employees to see the world the way they want them to.
- Dr. Spin

Dwarf

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
5	4	5	8	6	4	4	6	10	3	6	10	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 11/11

Armor (B/I): 8/6

Skills: Assensing 3, Astral Combat 3, Blades 4, Con (Fast Talk) 5 (+2), Conjuring skill group 6, Counterspelling (Combat Spells) 6 (+2), Dodge 4, Enchanting (Vessel Preparation) 4 (+2), Forgery 5, Instruction (Insect Shamans) 6 (+2), Intimidation 5, Leadership 6, Outdoors skill group 3, Perception 6, Spellcasting 5, Stealth skill group 5, Unarmed Combat 3

Qualities: College Education, Magician

Spells: Agony, Bugs, Control Actions, Control Emotions, Control Thoughts, Heal, Influence, Mass Agony, Swarm

Spirits: 5 scout spirits (Force 4), 4 soldier spirits (Force 5), 2 caretaker spirits (Force 4), 1 nymph spirit (Force 3)

Initiate Grade: 5

Metamagics: Flexible Signature, Invoking, Masking, Metamagic, Metamorphosis

Gear: Armor jacket, commlink (Device Rating 5), disposable commlink, 3 x fake SINS (Rating 6)

PURA SEVERN

Active Bounties: Ares (100,000¥), ASPS (50,000¥), CAS government (200,000¥)

Requirements: Ares (paid upon capture) ASPS (paid upon capture or death), CAS DDI (paid upon capture or death)

One of the worst scandals for the CAS Marine Corps occurred on April 20th of this year when an arrest warrant for Col. Pura Severn was issued. Severn, on record as a Wise Warrior shaman, was under investigation for being a practicing insect shaman. When officials arrived at her house to arrest her, she was already gone, having fled Norfolk Naval Base forty-five minutes earlier. A preliminary investigation revealed that Severn had received a call tipping her off to the arrest warrant. In addition to Severn going AWOL, twelve other Marines (two of whom were military police) disappeared at the same time. It is possible that Severn invested these twelve Marines with insect spirits. A sweep is being conducted of all military and civilian personnel at the CAS naval base to ensure that base personnel have not been compromised and make double sure that there is not a hive or nest on base with a queen or mother roaming about. CAS investigators believe Severn was close to summoning a queen or mother, but they could not verify if she had done so yet. Investigations are also being carried out on CAS naval vessels, as Severn could have planted spirits on board any of these vessels. Almost all vessels in the CAS fleet are being swept for insect spirits. The concern is that any vessel that docked at Norfolk could be at risk for bug spirit infiltration.

It is unclear at this time what kind of bug spirits Severn may have been summoning. Because of the threat to Ares interests, the megacorp is carrying out its own inspection of personnel stationed at Norfolk. There are no indications of how long Severn was a practicing insect shaman. Severn had a career that stretched twenty-three years. She has been stationed at five CAS naval stations.

- Let's be clear here—Ares is not panicking that there may be bugs out there. Ares is panicking because they're worried there may be some insect-related activities going on that they don't know about.
- Sticks





Elf

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
5	7	6(7)	4	8	4	6	6	13	3	4	10(11)	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/11

Armor (B/I): 12/10

Skills: Assensing 4, Arcana 6, Athletics skill group 3, Astral Combat (Spirits) 5 (+2), Automatics 4, Banishing 5, Binding 6, Computer 4, Con 6, Data Search 4, Disguise 6, Dodge 5, Enchanting (Vessel Preparation) 6 (+2), Hacking 5, Infiltration 5, Leadership 4, Perception 6, Pilot Ground Craft 3, Pistols 4, Shadowing 6, Sorcery skill group 5, Summoning (Ant Spirits) 6 (+2), Throwing Weapons 3, Unarmed Combat 5

Qualities: Magician, Mentor Spirit (Ant)

Spells: Acid Stream, Alter Memory, Armor (Quickened, Force 6), Camouflage, Heal, Improved Invisibility, Manaball, Manabolt, Physical Barrier, Physical Mask, Vehicle Mask, Shape (Earth), Sterilize, Stunball, Stunbolt

Spirits: 3 caretaker spirits (Force 3), 4 soldier spirits (Force 2), 2 scout spirits (Force 3), 2 worker spirits (Force 3), 1 nymph spirit (Force 3)

Initiate Grade: 9

Metamagics: Absorption, extended masking, flux, invoking, masking, metamorphosis, quickening, reflecting, shielding

Augmentations: Wired reflexes 1

Gear: Chameleon suit, insect spirit ritual materials, power focus (Force 5), 2 fetishes (Physical Barrier, Physical Mask)

Weapons:

Browning Ultra-Power [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP -1, SA, RC —, 10 (c) w/ top-mounted laser sight]

Ingram SuperMach 100 [SMG, DV 4P, AP —, SA/FA, RC 3 (4), 60(c), w/ folding stock]

HELENA WESTLUND

Active Bounties: Atlantean Foundation (250,000¥), ASPS (25,000¥)

Requirements: AF (paid upon capture), ASPS (paid upon capture or death)

Helena Westlund joined the Mystic Crusaders and the Atlantean Foundation in July 4, 2068. From 2068 until the middle part of 2073, her service was nothing short of impeccable. The only unusual trait noticed in Westlund was that she stopped initiating in 2070. Those familiar with magic groups know that if something had happened with Westlund (like, say, if she had broken strictures of the Mystic Crusaders), they likely would have detected that betrayal during her initiation ordeals. This means that it is likely Westlund has been an insect shaman since at least 2070.

There was no real reason to be suspicious of her back then, though, and Westlund continued to lead expeditions and carry out the wishes of the Atlantean Foundation. In February 2073, Westlund and her team of five mages were sent after one of the major artifacts that had drawn so much attention: Shantaya's Compass. A month and a half later, Westlund got her hands on it. But instead of returning to the Mystic Crusaders, Westlund and her team disappeared with it. An investigation of Westlund's recent activities and the erratic behavior of her team led Mystic Crusader investigators to one conclusion: Westlund had fallen and

had become an insect shaman. The investigators also concluded that between 2070 and 2073, Westlund had invested insect spirits into the rest of her team. When the Mystic Crusaders moved to eliminate her and her team using their material links, they found another surprise. Some time before Westlund's departure, she had the samples swapped out for material links belonging to other Mystic Crusaders. When the Mystic Crusaders carried out their ritual spellcasting, they eliminated an innocent team based on the wrong material links. Although Westlund no longer possesses the compass, that does not mean she isn't still dangerous, and that doesn't mean that she won't try again to find the compass and the other artifacts. The Mystic Crusaders have allocated resources to finding her, but they have placed this bounty on her head to expand the number of people looking for her. Westlund's bounty from the Mystic Crusaders is a rare dead-or-alive offer.

Human

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
6	5	5	5	5	6	5	6	11	5	6	11	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 11/11

Armor (B/I): 10/8

Skills: Assensing 5, Arcana 6, Astral Combat 5, Athletics skill group 4, Blades 5, Clubs 4, Conjuring skill group 6, Counterspelling 5, Demolitions 4, Disguise 5, Firearms skill group 4, First Aid 4, Infiltration 4, Influence skill group 5, Palming 4, Perception 6, Ritual Spellcasting 5, Shadowing 3, Spellcasting 5, Unarmed Combat 4

Qualities: Magician, Mentor Spirit (Beetle)

Spells: Antidote, Chaos, Confusion, Cure Disease, Heal, Mob Mind, Nutrition, Physical Mask, Powerball, Powerbolt, Shape (Earth), Slay (Troll), Stunball, Stunbolt

Spirits: 5 soldier spirits (Force 5; these are her former Mystic Crusader team)

Initiate Grade: 5

Metamagics: Centering, extended Masking, flexible signature, masking, metamorphosis

Gear: Full body armor w/ helmet

Weapons:

Browning Ultra-Power [Heavy Pistol, DV 5P, AP -1, SA, RC —, 10(c), w/ top-mounted laser sight, APDS ammo

Sandler TMP [SMG, DV 5P, AP —, BF/FA, RC (1), 20 (c), w/ folding stock, internal smartgun system]

SHADOW SPIRITS

This section of these bounties for the despoilers may seem thin, especially since there are dozens if not hundreds of shadow spirits out harming metahumanity and the ecosystem they inhabit. But currently, Maelstrom and Oblivion are the two shadow spirits that have everyone's attention.

MAELSTROM

Active Bounties: Aztlan (350,000¥), ASPS (50,000¥)

Requirements: These bounties will be paid after the spirit is destroyed, not just disrupted.

Maelstrom first made his presence known in Bogotá when the war between Aztlan and Amazonia started. Since that time,



Maelstrom has grown dramatically in power, gorging itself off the hate and homicidal rage the war is generating. Maelstrom has developed two sites of power for itself inside of Bogotá: the Palace of Justice and the Pemex Arcology. Maelstrom has smaller wraith spirits that follow it and obey its commands. These spirits are considerably weaker, but they too are growing in strength from the abundant negative energies of Bogotá. Maelstrom and its forces were able to defeat an expedition of St. Sylvester priests that the Catholic Church sent to the Palace of Justice to investigate. A year later, neither the Vatican nor any other group has been willing to send more representatives to either spot. Having grown so powerful, Maelstrom is starting to become more belligerent toward the metahumans in the area. Its foot soldiers have been steadily increasing their metahuman kills. In physical form, Maelstrom appears to be an obese, human-shaped figure, surrounded by blood-red clouds of mist.

Force 15 Wraith

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
17	15	18	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	33	2

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 17/16

Armor (B/I): 15/15

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Con, Dodge, Intimidation, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Astral Form, Astral Gateway, Banishing Resistance, Compulsion (Homicidal Rage), Confusion, Desire Reflection, Fear, Immunity to Normal Weapons, Influence, Energy Drain (Karma, LOS, Stun Damage), Magical Guard, Materialization, Mimicry, Personal Domain, Sapience, Spirit Pact, Weather Control

OBLIVION

Active Bounties: Aztlan (350,000¥), ASPS (50,000¥)

Requirements: The requirement of these bounties is they will be paid after the spirit is destroyed, and not just disrupted.

While Maelstrom is gorging itself on hate and destruction, Oblivion is feasting off the other part of the war's emotional spectrum: misery, despair, and desperation. Those emotions are plentiful in present-day Bogotá, so this parasite has no difficulty finding a meal. Oblivion and his ilk have set up shop in neighborhoods in Zona Norte and have been busy making a bad existence even worse for many Colombians. Since it difficult to accurately keep records in a feral city and war zone, there are no reliable statistics on how much damage Oblivion and his followers have wrought on the population. Each day, new bodies appear in Bogotá, the remains of metahumans that have committed suicide. Like a contagion, the urge to self-destruct radiates out of the areas where Oblivion and his force lurks. Oblivion is not as aggressive as Maelstrom, but it is having just as large of an impact in the city through its corrosive influence.

- Together, these two are devastating, and it's not like you can bargain with them. They already have pretty much what they want, and their gameplan is to keep taking more and more. Someone's going to have to take them out, and that someone better be pretty amped up.
- Marcos

- Get an ally. There are some powers in the world that would dearly like to see these two go down—if they want to hire you, convince them to put some skin in the game and come along with you.
- Glasswalker

Force 15 Wraith

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
16	14	17	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	31	2

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 16/15

Armor (B/I): 14/14

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Con, Dodge, Intimidation, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Astral Form, Astral Gateway, Banishing Resistance, Compulsion (Sorrow), Fear, Immunity to Normal Weapons, Influence, Energy Drain (Karma, LOS, Stun Damage), Magical Guard, Materialization, Paralyzing Howl, Personal Domain, Psychokinesis, Sapience, Search, Shadow Cloak, Silence, Spirit Pact, Weather Control

TOXIC SHAMANS

FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

Active Bounties: DIMR (250,000¥ each or 1,000,000¥ for all four), C5 (150,000¥ each)

Requirements: DIMR (paid upon capture or death), C5 (paid upon death)

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are toxic shamans that first appeared around 2070. Many people did not take these toxic shamans seriously, as they figured they were simply using mythology to raise their profiles and make them appear more menacing than they truly were. Plus, the fact that these four shamans were working on separate continents caused many organizations to overlook the threat they posed. But in 2071, intelligence came out from the DIMR that these toxic shamans were working as a cohesive group. In Africa, the toxic shaman known as Famine has been waging a sophisticated campaign against food supplies, using the weather control power of toxic water spirits (sludge spirits, to be specific) to create droughts that have gravely impacted hundreds of hectares of farmland. The toxic shaman has also used acid spirits to destroy the crops of independent farmers. Over the last three years, Famine has not been afraid to attack corporate facilities, which are generally less dependent on weather patterns than independent farmers are. Famine has attacked Aztechnology, Horizon, and Shiawase assets throughout Africa, and the shaman was not alone in his brazen attacks. Dozens of metahumans follow the toxic shaman like a cult leader and join him in his ever-more-damaging raids. Many of the followers died in the strikes on megacorporate holdings, but in the end, Famine wiped out those farms and ranches, which has increased food prices around the world.

In Asia, wherever the shaman known as War travels, the death rate spikes. Violent crimes rise, feuds between organized crime syndicates intensify, riots of disenfranchised SINless spark, and poor and oppressed people are spurred into rebellion. In Europe, particularly in the cities of Paris, Brussels, and Bern, metahumans



have been dying with no identifiable cause. Experts from the DIMR have stated that the areas where the deaths occurred were slightly tainted in a fashion similar to toxic domains. The astral signatures left in the wake of these deaths are believed to belong to the toxic shaman identifying himself simply as Death. The shaman called Pestilence has not been as active recently due to the fact that he is a replacement; the original Pestilence was killed by a runner team at the end of 2071. This toxic shaman is considered the weakest link in this organization because he is the newest and the lowest-grade initiate. Unfortunately, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse's growing doomsday cult will make getting to Pestilence harder, as the others are making sure he is protected by a solid network of cultists. If you want to take any of these shamans down, you'll first have to make your way past a dozen or more of their followers, and that number may be doubled around the current Pestilence.

Due to the dangers associated with the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, the DIMR is offering to pay runners for either the capture or death of these toxic shamans. The DIMR understands that capturing these particular shamans may not be the preferable option. The DIMR is giving the runners an option to either go after all four or simply collect the ones they wish to go after. The Corporate Court Crisis Coordination Committee is also getting in on the act, offering one hundred and fifty thousand nuyen for each Horseman. The C5 is paying their bounty for deaths only—they are not interested in capture. This means that an enterprising group could kill a single Horseman and collect two bounties.

War (Asia)

Troll

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
9	6	4	9	4	3	4	6	13	6	6	7(10)	1(4)

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 13/11

Armor (B/I): 14/12

Skills: Assensing 4, Athletics skill group 3, Arcana 6, Astral Combat 5, Blades (Swords) 4 (+2), Chemistry 5, Clubs 3, Conjuring skill group 6, Counterspelling (Combat Spells) 6 (+2), Disguise 5, Dodge 3, Enchanting (Artificing) 6 (+2), Infiltration 5, Intimidation 5, Leadership 4, Outdoors skill group 3, Perception 4, Riding (Horse) 4 (+2), Ritual Spellcasting 5, Spellcasting (Combat Spells) 5 (+2), Unarmed Combat 5

Qualities: Exceptional Attribute (Agility), Focus Addiction (10 BP), Magician, Mentor Spirit (Doom)

Spells: Acid Stream, Astral Armor, Armor, Combat Sense, Control Emotions, Death Touch, Demolish (Gun), Detect Enemies, Extended, Fire (Aura), Fireball, Flamethrower, Increase Reflexes, Influence, Improved Invisibility, Lightning Bolt, Manaball, Mob Mood, Napalm, Slay (Elf, Human, Ork), Silence, Resist Pain

Spirits: Abomination spirit (War Horse, Force 6), 2 carnage spirits (Force 5), harbinger spirit (Great Form, Force 6)

Initiate Grade: 7

Metamagics: Centering, corruption, great ritual, invoking, reflecting, shielding, taint

Gear: Medium military armor, summoning focus (Force 4), sustaining focus (Increase Reflexes, Force 3), weapon focus (Claymore, Force 5)

Weapons:

Claymore [Sword, Reach 2, DV 9P, AP —]

Kris [Knife, Reach —, DV 6P, AP —]

Mace [Club, Reach 1, DV 8P, AP —]

Notes: Doom is the apocalyptic mentor spirit that believes in heralding the end times. Doom provides a +2 dice pool modifier for toxic spirits of guidance (for War). War must succeed in a Willpower + Charisma (3) Test to maintain attachments with others that he sees as “unnecessary.” War has Increase Reflexes sustained at Force 3.

Famine (Africa)

Dwarf

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
2	3	3	3	6	5	5	6	10	4	6	8(11)	1(4)

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 9/11

Armor (B/I): 9/9

Skills: Assensing 4, Arcana 4, Astral Combat 5, Binding 5, Chemistry 4, Counterspelling 5, Disguise 6, Dodge 6, Enchanting 4, Exotic Ranged Weapon (Dart Pistols) 5, Intimidation 4, Leadership 3, Outdoors skill group 3, Perception 4, Pistols (Semi-Automatic) 6 (+2), Riding (Horses) 3 (+2), Ritual Spellcasting 6, Spellcasting 6, Summoning 6, Unarmed Combat 4

Qualities: Changling (15 BP), Magician, Mentor Spirit (Doom)

Spells: Agony, Alter Temperature, Astral Armor, Armor, Bugs, Control Pack, Decrease Attribute (Body), Deflection, Enabler, Emaciate, Increased Reflexes, Foreboding, Mass Agony, Petrify, Physical Barrier, Physical Mask, Sight Removal, Sludge (Vegetation)

Spirits: Abomination Spirit (War Horse, Force 6), 2 spirits of acid (Force 5), 3 Sludge Spirits (Force 4)

Initiate Grade: 4

Metamagics: Geomancy, leeching, shielding, taint

Gear: Sustaining focus (Armor, Force 6), sustaining Focus (Increased Reflexes, Force 3)

Surge Qualities: Animal Pelage, Deformity (25 BP), Dermal Alteration, Granite Shell, (15 BP) Nasty Vibe (5 BP), Quills (10 BP),

Weapons:

2 Parashield Dart Pistols [Special Weapon, DV as toxin, AP -2, SA, 5(c). Loaded with the bedlam variant known as carnage, which attacks the Body attribute. Carnage: Vector: Injection, Speed: 3 days (3), Penetration 1, Power 6, Nature: Toxin, Effect: Agony, Attribute Debilitation]

3 gas grenades [Grenade, DV as chemical, AP —, 15 m radius. Loaded with Croisade biowarfare agent. Vector: Inhalation, Speed: 2 days (20), Penetration: 2, Power 4, Nature: Viral, Effect: Agony, Self-Devouring]

Notes: Doom is the apocalyptic mentor spirit that believes in heralding the end times. Doom provides a +2 dice pool modifier for toxic spirits of man (for Famine). Famine must succeed in a Willpower + Charisma (3) Test to maintain attachments with others that he sees as “unnecessary.” Famine has one custom spell: Emaciate. Emaciate is similar to Decrease Attribute (Body), except



that for every two net successes, the spell permanently reduces 1 point from the target's Body attribute. The victim can regain the lost attribute points(s) by spending karma to raise his Body attribute per normal character advancement rules. Famine has Armor sustained at Force 6 and Increase Reflexes sustained at Force 3.

Pestilence (South America)

Human

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
6	6	5	4	4	6	6	5	7	4	5	11	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 11/10

Armor (B/I): 12/10

Skills: Assensing 6, Arcana 6, Astral Combat 5, Blades 4, Binding 4, Chemistry 6, Counterspelling 6, Disguise 4, Dodge 6, Enchanting 4, Intimidation 4, Leadership 2, Outdoors skill group 5, Perception 3, Pistols (Semi-Automatic) 6 (+2), Riding (Horses) 3 (+2), Ritual Spellcasting 6, Spellcasting 6, Summoning 4, Unarmed Combat 5

Qualities: Magician, Mentor Spirit (Doom)

Spells: Acid Stream, Armor, Convert Blood to Ichor, Decrease Attribute (Agility), Decrease Attribute (Body), Deflection, Inflict Disease, Melt (Flesh), Petrify, Powerball, Powerbolt, Rot, Silence, Stench

Spirits: Abomination Spirit (War Horse, Force 6), 3 contagion spirits (Force 6)

Initiate Grade: 2

Metamagics: Masking, shielding

Gear: Full body armor (w/ helmet, chemical seal), Power Focus (Rating 6)

Weapons:

Monofilament Sword [Blades, DV 5P, AP -1, Reach 1]

Notes: Pestilence has three custom spells: Inflict Disease (VITAS), Convert Blood to Ichor, and Rot. Doom is the apocalyptic mentor spirit that believes in heralding the end times. Doom provides a +2 dice pool modifier for toxic spirits of guidance (for Pestilence). Pestilence must succeed in a Willpower + Charisma (3) Test to maintain attachments with others that he sees as "unnecessary." Pestilence has lost a point of Essence from conducting experiments with his pathogens.

Death (Europe)

Troll

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
8	4	4	9	4	4	4	5	11	4	6	8 (11)	1 (4)

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 12/11

Armor (B/I): 11/9

Skills: Assensing 6, Arcana 3, Astral Combat 4, Blades 6, Banishing 6, Binding 4, Chemistry 3, Counterspelling 6, Disguise 5, Dodge 6, Enchanting 4, Infiltration 6, Intimidation 6, Leadership 4, Outdoors skill group 4, Perception 5, Riding (Horses) 3 (+2), Ritual Spellcasting 6, Spellcasting (Combat Spells) 6 (+2), Summoning 4, Unarmed Combat 6

Qualities: Magician, Mentor Spirit

Spells: Acid Stream, Armor, Death Touch, Demolish Gun, Firewater, Hush, Increase Attribute (Strength), Increase Reflexes, Manaball, Napalm, Petrify, Powerball, Slaughter (Dwarf, Elf, Human, Ork, Troll), Sludge (Flesh), Shape (Air), Shape (Earth), Silence, Sound Barrier, Toxic Wave, Wreck Gun

Spirits: Abomination spirit (Warhorse, Force 6), 2 carnage spirits (Force 5), nuclear spirit (Great Form, Force 6)

Initiate Grade: 5

Metamagics: Centering, Corruption, Invoking, Masking, Shielding

Gear: Camouflage suit, sustaining foci (Force 6, Death Touch), 2x sustaining foci (Force 3, Armor, Increase Reflexes)

Weapons:

Scythe [Blade, Reach 2, DV 7P, AP -1]

Notes: Doom provides a +2 dice pool modifier for toxic spirits of man (for Death). Death must succeed in a Willpower + Charisma (3) Test to maintain attachments with others that he sees as "unnecessary." He has Armor and Increase Reflexes sustained at Force 3.

ABSOLUTE EQUILIBRIUM

Active Bounties: Amazonia (250,000¥), Aztlan (100,000¥), DIMR (200,000¥)

Requirements: Amazonia (paid upon death), Aztlan (paid upon capture), DIMR (paid upon capture)

Absolute Equilibrium is a frightening toxic shaman. He is among the most rare of toxic shamans in the world—a sterilist. Many fear sterilist shamans due to their separation from basic emotions and creativity. Their cold and efficient mannerisms scare even other toxic shamans. The importance of fighting Absolute Equilibrium and his counterpart, Final Judgment, is perhaps the only thing Aztlan and Amazonia can agree on. In Bogotá, intelligence sources suggest that Absolute Equilibrium has not just been killing everyone and everything he sees but has been taking opportunities to recruit shamans to the sterilist cause. There have been appearances of sterilist shamans as far away as Europe and North America who can be traced back to Bogotá and Absolute Equilibrium. Absolute Equilibrium knows how to persuade shamans to fall to the toxic path, and he uses that ability effectively. With Final Judgment's assistance, Absolute Equilibrium has cleared the Francisco Pizarro neighborhood of all life and has spread his vision of balance to surrounding neighborhoods. The neighborhoods of La Aurora, Fidel Suarez, and Molinos are believed to be under Absolute Equilibrium's influence and are dying along with their inhabitants.

Absolute Equilibrium is believed to be a native of Colombia or Venezuela from the days before Aztlan and Amazonia devoured those nations. Absolute Equilibrium is believed to be in his mid-thirties; because of his generous use of physical mask and improved invisibility, it is difficult to get an accurate physical description of him.

Human

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
4	4	5	4	6	5	5	6	10	3	6	10	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 10/11

Armor (B/I): 8/6



Skills: Assensing 3, Astral Combat 3, Blades 4, Conjuring skill group 4, Counterspelling 4, Dodge 4, Instruction (Sterile Toxic Shaman Path) 6 (+2), Intimidation 4, Leadership 6, Outdoors skill group 2, Perception 5, Ritual Spellcasting 3, Spellcasting 6, Stealth skill group 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Spells: Alter Memory, Armor, Control Actions, Control Thoughts, Fire Aura, Improved Invisibility, Frag, Influence, Manaball, Mob Mind, Mob Mood, Physical Mask, Shred, Slay (Human), Slaughter (Human), Stealth

Spirits: 6 toxic spirits of man (each one knows the Influence spell)

Initiate Grade: 4

Metamagics: Extended masking, masking, shielding, reflecting

Gear: Camouflage suit, summoning focus (Force 5), weapon focus (vibro sword, Force 6)

Qualities: Magician, Mentor Spirit (Toxic Eagle mentor spirit)

Weapons:

Vibro Sword [Blades, Reach 1, DV 4P, AP -2]

FINAL JUDGMENT

Active Bounties: Amazonia (250,000¥), Aztlan (100,000¥), DIMR (200,000¥)

Requirements: Amazonia (paid upon death), Aztlan (paid upon capture), DIMR (paid upon capture)

While Absolute Equilibrium appears to be the “talker” in this odd relationship of toxic shamans, Final Judgment is the straightforward muscle. Intelligence agencies including the Dawkins Group believe Final Judgment to be a higher-grade initiate who knows invoking and has been witnessed summoning a great form toxic spirit. Despite Final Judgment’s magical power, many feel that the real danger in this partnership is Absolute Equilibrium, since he is the one actively spreading the sterilist message. Final Judgment is believed to be a native of Central America, possibly a native Azzie. It is unknown how Final Judgment came to meet up with Absolute Equilibrium, or how they came to establish their partnership. Final Judgment is believed to be in his mid-thirties.

- I’m not saying sterilists make good allies, but there are definitely times an anti-nature agenda overlaps with megacorporate goals. Absolute Equilibrium and Final Judgment have power and some charisma, but they also are helped out by occasional corporate funding. Want to know who? Remember that Final Judgment is rumored to be an Azzie, and note how low Aztlan’s bounty is—almost as if it’s a token bounty, not something seriously targeted toward bringing the shaman in.
- Marcos

Human

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
5	6	4	5	6	5	4	6	12	7	6	9 (12)	1(4)

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 11/11

Armor (B/I): 10/8

Skills: Assensing 6, Astral Combat 6, Blades 7, Conjuring skill group 6, Counterspelling (Combat Spells) 6 (+2), Dodge 6, Instruction 3, Intimidation 6, Outdoors skill group 3, Perception

4, Ritual Spellcasting 4, Spellcasting 6, Stealth skill group 3, Unarmed Combat 4

Qualities: Aptitude (Blades), Changeling (15 BP), Magician, Mentor Spirit (Adversary)

Surge Qualities: Arcane Arrester, Gills, Extravagant Eyes (dark blue eyes), Nocturnal, Scent Glands

Spells: Acid Stream, Armor, Astral Armor, Blast, Combat Sense, Detect Enemies, Extended, Improved Invisibility, Increase Reflexes, Lightning Bolt, Manaball, Manabolt, Offensive Mana Barrier, Petrify, Physical Mask, Powerball, Powerbolt, Resist Pain

Spirits: Carnage spirit (Great Form, Force 6), 2 harbinger spirits (Force 5), 3 harrow spirits (Force 5)

Initiate Grade: 7

Metamagics: Centering, corruption, divining, extended masking, invoking, masking, shielding

Gear: Full body armor, counterspelling focus (Force 4), power focus (Force 3), summoning focus (Force 4), sustaining focus (Increased Reflexes, Force 3)

Weapons:

Katana [Blades, DV 6P, AP -1, Reach 1]

Notes: Adversary bestows a +2 dice pool modifier for Manipulation spells and for counterspelling to Final Judgment. Final Judgment must make a Willpower + Charisma (3) Test to follow orders that do not match his own desires.

“ARTAXIAS”

Active Bounties: Horizon (200,000¥), Renraku (250,000¥), Saeder-Krupp (500,000¥), Mitsuhama (150,000¥), DIMR (200,000¥), Wuxing (180,000¥)

Requirements: All bounties for Artaxias are listed as “paid upon capture”

“Artaxias” is a Greek form of the Persian name “Ardeshir,” which means “great warrior” or “lion-king.” This name has been adopted by a lion shapeshifter. Unfortunately, with this particular lion shapeshifter, there is no sense of nobility or honor that normally befits the image and stature of a lion. Artaxias is a toxic shaman who first appeared in Asia around 2070 and has been known to associate with extremist neo-anarchist cells. Artaxias has been involved in numerous attacks against all the megacorporations, particularly Mitsuhama, Renraku, Shiawase, and Saeder-Krupp. Captured neo-anarchists who have worked with Artaxias have explained that the toxic shapeshifter is outraged by the ongoing pollution and destruction of wilderness areas, the loss of hunting grounds, the poaching of the dwindling numbers of lions that are still wild and untamed, and the capture of lions to be exotic pets for the ultra-rich. The DIMR has classified Artaxias as a reaper toxic shaman. He is believed to have been responsible for as many as forty-eight kills, and his death count continues to climb. Artaxias is a fairly rare specimen of a toxic shaman shapeshifter, and as such, many organizations with a decent magic program have a bounty on Artaxias’ head. Artaxias is believed to be in his mid-twenties, and he was last seen in Hong Kong on February 13, 2074.



Lion Shapeshifter

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
5	8	6	6	4	3	3	5	12	5	6	9	1

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 11/11

Armor (B/I): 8/6

Powers: +1 Reach while in Lion form, Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Low light vision, smell), Natural Weapons (Bite/Claw: DV 5P, AP —), Regeneration, Sapience, Shift (Human)

Weaknesses: Allergy (Silver, Severe), Vulnerability (Silver)

Skills: Assensing (Wards) 6 (+2), Arcana 3, Astral Combat 5, Banishing 6, Binding 4, Chemistry 3, Counterspelling 6, Demolitions 3, Disguise 5, Dodge 6, Enchanting 4, Infiltration 6, Intimidation 4, Leadership 4, Outdoors skill group 4, Perception 5, Shadowing 5, Spellcasting (Combat Spells) 6 (+2), Summoning 4, Unarmed Combat 5

Qualities: Magician, Mentor Spirit (Toxic version of Lion mentor spirit)

Spells: Ball Lightning, Death Touch, Demolish (Gun), Detect Enemies, Extended, Improved Invisibility, Lightning Bolt, Manaball, Powerball, Powerbolt, Silence, Stealth

Spirits: 4 abomination spirits (Force 5, female lions that Artaxias considers to be his pride)

Initiate Grade: 6

Metamagics: Centering, corruption, extended masking, geomancy, masking, shielding

Gear: Armored jacket

Notes: Lion mentor spirit provides +2 dice for Combat spells, +2 dice for Banishing Tests. Artaxias must make a Willpower + Charisma (3) Test to forgive a slight, back down from a fight, or refuse a challenge.

LEWIS HARTFIELD

Active Bounties: MCT (50,000¥), DIMR (50,000¥),

Requirements: MCT (Paid upon death), DIMR (Paid upon capture)

Lewis Hartfield is no “Bubba the Love Troll.” He is twenty-six years old, a troll shaman who was convicted of four counts of armed robbery and sent to serve fifteen to twenty years in the Sioux Nation’s and MCT’s most infamous prison, Blackstone Penitentiary, which holds Awakened criminals. Hartfield arrived at Blackstone to serve his sentence on October 28, 2067. During his time there, his chummers on the outside worked to spring him, hacking into the prison’s nodes, bribing guards, and the like. It took nearly a year and a half of planning to get everything in place to make the attempt, but they went for it, and the plan worked. Hartfield was sprung, but his chummers found him to be a changed shaman. Neither friendship nor nuyen drove him any longer—violence was his sole motivation, and it had become an uncontrollable lust. Hartfield was determined to find surroundings similar to Blackstone Penitentiary and make it even worse, poisoning it with violence, mayhem, and destruction. He no longer followed Oak, his original totem, but switched instead to follow Rabid Dog. He turned on his chummers, killing each and every one of them. He did everything to eliminate anything that could be tied back to him, then he took off.

The last time there was any kind of confirmed sighting of him was July 18, 2071 in Chicago. Hartfield has been reported to be active in Chicago, doing everything he can to make sure the city can never be cleaned up. He pits gangs against one another, starting bloody turf wars. He manipulates warlords into going after one another. He attacks smugglers, steals their goods, and blames it on another smuggler, stirring up even more strife. He and his crew—which generally consists of whoever will take his money—attack projects designed to rehabilitate the Chicago landscape and sabotages them. Both MCT and the DIMR have active bounties out on the head of Hartfield, but if you go to Chicago, you’ll certainly find more bounties on him from the locals. Bloodthirsty is a very good description for this toxic shaman.

Troll

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	M	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
10	5	4(6)	10	4	3	3	5	10	6	5	7(9)	1(3)

Condition Monitor Boxes (P/S): 16/11

Armor (B/I): 10/8

Augmentation: Synaptic booster 2

Skills: Assensing 3, Astral Combat 4, Automatics 5, Banishing 6, Binding 4, Clubs (Maces) 5 (+2), Con 5, Counterspelling 6, Disguise 4, Dodge 6, Infiltration 5, Intimidation 6, Outdoors skill group 5, Perception 6, Pilot Ground Craft, Pistols 4, Spellcasting (Combat Spells) 6 (+2), Summoning 6, Throwing Weapons 3, Unarmed Combat 6

Qualities: Magician, Mentor Spirit, Tough as Nails (15 BP)

Spells: Alter Temperature, Armor, Control Thoughts, Detect Enemies, Fireball, Flamethrower, Heal, Influence, Levitate Manabolt, Powerbolt, Pulse, Stunball, Resist Pain

Spirits: 2 harrow spirits (Force 4), 2 spirits of air (Force 4)

Initiate Grade: 5

Metamagics: Absorption, centering, flux, taint, shielding

Gear: Centering focus (Force 4), full body armor, power focus (Force 4), 2 fetishes (Fireball, Flamethrower)

Weapons:

Berretta Model 70 [SMG, DV 6P, AP —, BF/FA, RC —, 35 (c), w/ explosive rounds]

Colt Government 2066 [Heavy Pistol, DV 6P, AP -1, SA, RC 1, 14 (c), w/ explosive rounds]

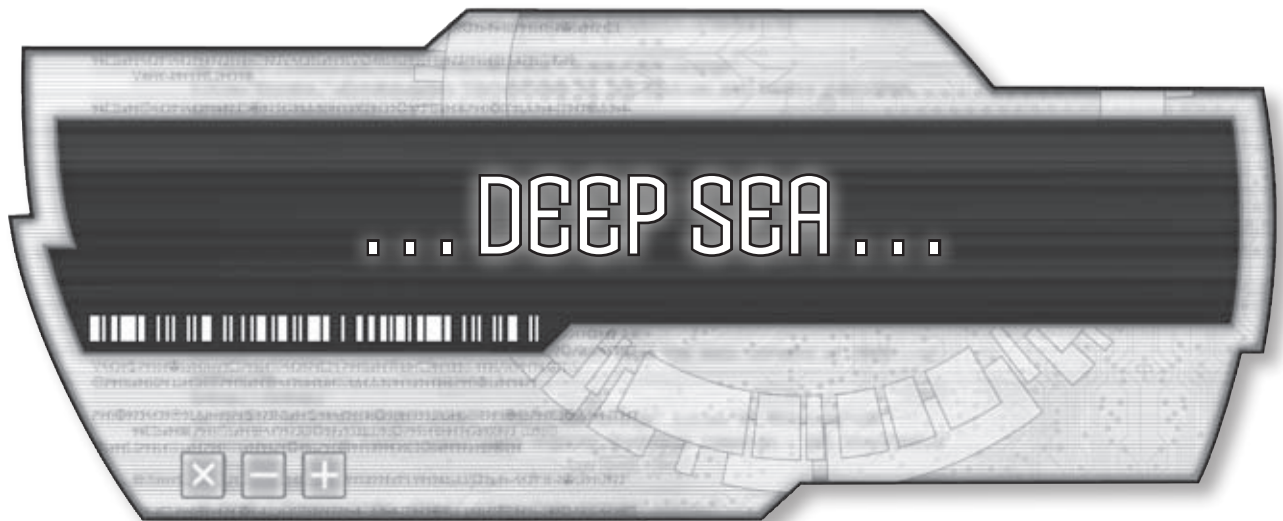
High Explosive grenades [Grenades, DV 10P, AP -2, -2/m]

Mace [Clubs, Reach 1, DV 8P, AP —]

Telescopic Staff [Clubs, Reach 2, DV 7P, AP —]

Notes: Hartfield has lost one point of magic due to his Synaptic Booster. Rabid Dog provides +2 dice for toxic guardian spirits and +2 to Detection Spells. Hartfield must make a Willpower + Strength (3) Test to leave an unfinished victim, to end a victim’s life quickly or without pain, or to break off from a predatory hunt.





"So Kane, what do you make about this little job here? A million nuyen to destroy the contents of a single cargo container? That's a little excessive, don't you think?" The guy asking the question was named Hook, and he was the type of person who couldn't help but fill downtime with talk. At the moment, Kane was in a mood to play along.

"The line that the Johnson fed me was that the cargo could not make it to its destination. Something about some Corporate Court investigation, and the stuff inside the cargo container being the sort of thing that could screw up the future of some people on the Shiwase board if they didn't handle it right. Now I can understand the need to destroy evidence. I've done it myself, plenty of times. But I've also been around enough to know when I'm being played. The Johnson, he wasn't no Shiwase hand. He didn't move right, didn't speak right. He's from some other Japanacorp—I'd bet MCT if I could find anybody who still takes my wagers. That cargo container, it originated in Seattle. Then it got dropped on a truck that came out of the Tsimshian Protectorate. Tsimshian was heavy MCT territory back in the day, and they're far from gone from there. So I put it all together, and I figure it someone's investigating something from the past, and MCT wants to make sure that this particular piece of history remains lost. And what better way to cover your tracks than having your cargo ship attacked by pirates who will be good enough to sink the goods right down to the bottom of Davy Jones' locker during the attack?"

"How can we know this isn't a trap? What if MCT is using this whole thing to test out some kind of new anti-pirate weapons system. Or something?"

Kane laughed. "So what if it is? Whatever they got, new or old, it can't stop us. They offered good money, they paid up front—the way I figure, they earned the right to try to fuck us over if they think they can. And if it's a trap, that just makes things more interesting, right? He'll lose out on a million nuyen, and he'll have to deal with me doing whatever I decide to do when I get pissed off. So this is either a job that is on the up and up, or he's the stupidest Johnson I ever met."

"Here's something," said one of the hacker's on Kane's crew, a woman named Night Shadow. "I just intercepted a communiqué heading to the cargo ship. It's an order from the Court. The cargo container in question is not to be released—it's supposed to be impounded for Court investigators. The order looks legit."

"Well, looks like they were talking for true. The job's what they said it was," said Kane. "Does the order say anything about who owns the cargo?"

"No, I'm afraid not. It looks like the Court is being all secretive on this. They've redacted most of the details."

"Don't matter. We'll still hit the cargo ship in about two hours, right on plan. We'll blow up what we're supposed to blow up, then liberate some goods for ourselves. We'll make sure we get plenty of Shiwase goods, plenty of MCT goods, all in equal measure." He grinned. "Don't want nobody to think we playing favorites."



Posed by: Sounder

Throughout my career, I have seen good runner teams walk away from lucrative job opportunities dealing with the deep seas because they were simply not equipped or experienced to deal with all the realities and potential complications that working on the open waters can present. You need to be ready to deal with everything from ship-to-ship combat and pirate attacks to hostile Awakened sea creatures. Every time I hear about a team not having at least one rigger capable of performing watercraft operations, I cringe inwardly. Good runner teams are leaving themselves unprepared for every possible contingency, and they're cutting themselves off from a potentially invaluable escape route. You best believe those Lone Star beat cops chasing after you are not going to expect you to suddenly jump into a speedboat. And they are certain as hell that they won't pursue you any further, because they don't tend to have boats standing by at all points. By the time their patrol boats arrive, you and your chummers should be long gone. This is particularly true if you live in sprawls near the ocean or other waterways, such as Seattle or Los Angeles.

Even more often, I see landlocked runner teams struggling to find work among all the competition out there for sprawl-based jobs, and at the same time I see dozens of opportunities available immediately to water-savvy runner teams—jobs that pay really well and are available immediately. Unfortunately, many of those jobs go unfilled or are taken by runner teams outside of a particular area because there are just not enough local talent capable of or willing to work outside of their comfort zones to take a job in a new type of environment: the sea. To help my fellow chummers out, I am going to post what opportunities you or your team might be missing out on if you are not capable of carrying out runs on the open seas, and explain why in the future, you might wish to adapt your strategies to work on the seven seas.

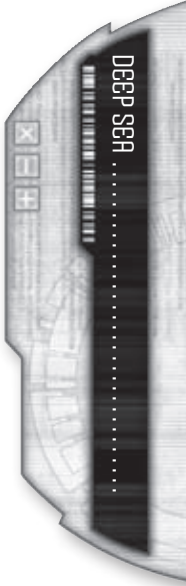
AQUAFARMING

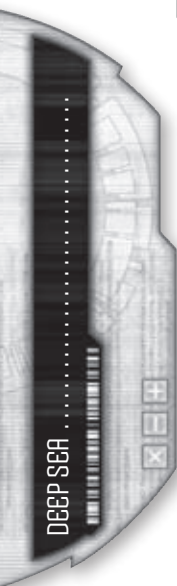
This particular field may not seem glamorous to most runners, but there's money there, and any time money is involved, we should pay attention. Aquafarming covers everything from fisheries and hatcheries to coral reef development and kelp and seaweed farming. Megacorporations invest billions in these ventures each year, and that translates into lucrative business opportunities for shadowrunners. Megacorporations like Aztechnology and Horizon that have interests in growing food often go to great lengths to go after each other's aquafarms, sabotaging each other and, as is traditional, doing significant economic damage to each another from the shadows. Aquafarms are becoming bigger business each year thanks in large part to pollution, garbage, and other toxins that are killing off indigenous fish and other oceanic life at an alarming rate. If the various pollutants do not outright kill off the fish and other sea mammals, they often lead to genetic mutations that can prevent successful breeding or negatively alter the flavor of those specimens, making large swathes of existing specimens less desirable for consumption. Those fish populations that are still viable in the wild are often overhunted by both metahumans and natural sea predators, making them even harder to find. Today, aquafarms are providing a large amount of the world's fish. In less than forty years, it is likely that the only fish you will be able to find on the market will be those bred in aquafarms. Due

to the diminishing populations of wild fish, there is a rush of sorts by the megacorporations to find the most pristine and genetically superior specimens so that they can turn their genetic profiles into templates they can use to help them breed superior-quality fish. Because of the potential financial boom these exploration vessels could provide for these megacorporations and the importance of genetic diversitsoon aquafarm fish stock, vessels collecting fish often need runner protection against would-be poachers. On the other end of the spectrum, there is a need for experienced runners to be able to successfully track and board these vessels and capture the fish specimens and research material to deliver to their Johnsons so that their megacorporation can take possession of those genetic profiles and be the first ones to patent them, turning them into their own propriety material. Because of the inherent dangers involved with this type of work and the expertise required, the pay for these jobs are usually around ten thousand nuyen, typically either the same or a little higher than what you would find doing a similar job on land.

- I have heard some say that they believe the destruction of the oceans is not an accident. Some people believe the corporations are deliberating targeting fish in the open seas for extinction, because that would force the world to come to them for salmon, tuna, swordfish, eel, etc., instead of simply going to the seas themselves. And from what I have seen and heard, I don't think that's just a wild conspiracy theory.
- Ecotope
- I don't buy it. I think it's just a by-product of an increased metahuman presence in the seas. We no longer just have shipping lanes that disrupt breeding grounds and migration routes; we have arkoblocks, aquarcologies, aquacities, permanent research facilities, and floating prisons that are all using up more of our seas. It is estimated that nearly three percent of our ocean floors are currently inhabited by metahumans, and that number is rising as the continents are becoming more overcrowded and the natural climate becomes more undesirable from events such as climate change and acid rain. To say all these metahuman-made constructs are not leaving a major and detrimental footprint on the seas and its wildlife is absurd. The more space we take up, the less space the wildlife has, period.
- Aufheben

Breeding fish is not the only business for aquafarming. Aquafarms heavily invest in developing growth hormones that do not impact the flavor of the fish while allowing them to mature at a much faster rate than natural growth. Faster growth translates into higher profits. There are certain aquafarms that work with less-than-ideal genetic specimens and experiment on them, trying to manipulate gene sequences to improve flavor and breeding potential of the fish they possess. Much of this paydata would be invaluable to the competition for use in improving their stocks of fish, and there are jobs out there right now for this type of corporate espionage. Much of this research, however, is taking place on arkoblocks that are either far out to sea and only accessible by boat or are on underwater research facilities only accessible by submarine. And this is where limited skill sets impair runner teams from being able to do the jobs at hand. Sure, they can always hire someone outside of





INCOMING FEED.....



their team to assist them, or find other ways (hacking, fast talking) for runners to get on these facilities, but they are opening themselves up to other potential pitfalls. Being cut off from an escape route and working with people they do not know are two of the biggest variables that runners who are not water-savvy could end up encountering if the run goes south. Pay for this kind of data theft can run the gamut from ten thousand nuyen all the way up to one hundred thousand nuyen—in some cases, even higher.

DEEP-SEA EXPLORATION

Deep-sea exploration is another big business for the megacorporations, and it covers both mining and oil drilling operations. The sea is one of the few areas where there are still untapped reserves of oil, natural gas, and other resources such as diamonds and precious metals. These reserves are typically found in areas difficult to reach due to the ocean depth, areas that are unstable due to proximity to fault lines or other issues, or constricted areas where standard drilling or mining tools are ineffective at best. To reach and exploit these sites, megacorporations spend hundreds of millions of nuyen each year developing new tools, new drones, and new machinery to get at the oil or the other raw natural resources that line these isolated locations. This type of research and development is always valuable and worth stealing, and the items that may be snatched include the scientists and engineers driving this innovation. Extracting the right researcher or engineer can help a corporation's R &D division advance its work by months if not years. These jobs tend to start around twenty-five thousand nuyen and go up depending on the value of the researcher or engineer, their current location, and how accessible they are to the outside world.

When a corporation settles on a location to mine or drill, they have to first stake a claim to the area. Claim jumping is a regular occurrence at sea. Typically a corporation has to lay claim to the specific GPS coordinates of the ocean where the drilling or mining is to take place. If the competition learns that there are exploitable resources at that location, you best believe others will try to find a way to gain control of the site. Whoever controls the site can file the proper documents with the proper oceanic agencies to make their claim official. The corporation needs to be able to hold off its competition from the site until the agencies inspect the site and confirm that the location is under the control of the corporation.

- Since when do the megacorps need government permission to do what they want?
- Haze
- They don't, but sometimes they like to stand on ceremony just have a way of keeping score in the various games they play each other. For the time being, using government agencies as the referee in the competition for ocean spots gives certain rules and boundaries to the game they're playing with each other, and that is working for them. The minute it stops working, they'll take spots on their own, claim extraterritoriality, and it'll move from a somewhat civilized competition for spots to the Wild West.
- Cosmo

There are lots of runner opportunities involved with this. Corporations are always looking for street samurai who are



exceptional with small arms, heavy weapons, long arms, and even those able to utilize vehicle-mounted weapons to help protect the site from would-be encroachers. Similarly, corporations seek runners to do their claim jumping for them, from the hacking and altering of records to the actual violence at sea that ends up stealing the territory for Mr. Johnson. To be successful at this type of work, runners need to know how to handle themselves against other runners and corp security forces as well as how to best handle dangerous paranormal critters. Because between you and me, once shooting starts and blood starts being spilled into the sea, it will not take long for, say, a megalodon or a torpedo shark to show up on the scene. And if you not properly prepared to deal with that kind of juggernaut, it will quickly become a bad day for you. Particularly if more than one megalodon shows up and they decide to coordinate their assault. Because of the specialized equipment needed for claim-jumping, these jumps normally start out paying fifty thousand nuyen and go up from there.

- Listen to Sounder on this one. Megalodons are unpredictable bastards and are damn dangerous when they hunt in packs. And if they are working together, do not assume that they can't sink your boat. I've seen it happen to others over the course of my illustrious career, and people I've been with that ended up in the drink with megalodons didn't live long enough to tell anyone what it feels like to have your leg ripped off. And I've had more than one boat that I've spent a few thousand nuyen on to repair the damage those beasties caused.
- Kane
- Keep in mind that even if you shoot a megalodon, don't ever assume that it has either been driven off or killed. Its got a thick hide, and it can regenerate its body from injuries. Making assumptions about a megalodon you're facing can get you killed.
- Baka Dabora
- Most claim-jumping incidents occur during storms at sea, making them even more tricky to pull off. Cloud cover obscures satellite imagery and prevents any corps trying to look down on things from capturing the entire incident on their satellites, which also keeps anyone from immediately sending in reinforcements. So for better or for worse, you're on your own. Now, if you've got clear skies. You might have to track down some of that satellite imagery and do some alterations to keep evidence of your activities from getting out. Those companies that forget to do that end up battling their rivals in protracted court battles trying to determine who really has staked a legitimate claim to that site. It's easier and cheaper to have the runners hack the records and destroy the incriminating footage than then it is to pay legal costs for months or years on end.
- Baka Dabora
- Sounder talks about megalodons and torpedo sharks because they are the most commonly encountered sea-based paracritters in the world. But you can't forget the kraken. Though the creatures are extremely rare, their activity has surged recently. In 2073 there were four confirmed attacks on seafaring vessels by krakens. This year, there have already been five confirmed attacks, and we're less than half way through the year. Many attribute the increase in

attacks to the loss of habitat and viable food sources for the giant cephalopods. I mention this because a kraken has been known to take out a fragging supercarrier. So when packing for the excursions, you may want to pack the rocket launchers and the depth charges as well. You might only have 1 in 10,000 chance of encountering a kraken when you are out to sea, but I would sure hate to be that one who encounters a kraken and is unprepared for it.

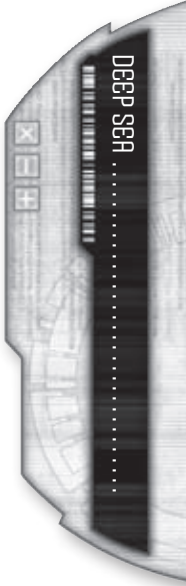
- Traveler Jones

TOURISM, TRAVEL AND TRADE

Historically, tourism, travel, and trade have been among the biggest industries that have taken place in the oceans for centuries. Even in 2074, several megacorporations are still designing and unveiling the most luxurious cruise liners to allow the wealthy and the privileged to travel and vacation on the open seas in style, far away from the pressures of their home lives and their places of business. Wuxing's *Princess Victoria* line of grand cruise vessels is a testament to the nonstop interest in this vacation choice, able to house well over two thousand passengers per ship.

From the tourist angle, there are a few possibilities for jobs for shadowrunners. Almost every cruise ship in service today has at least one casino on board. These casinos still use hard currency and corp scrip to give the customers an authentic feeling of being able to place a wad of cash down on a bet. Or to be able to exchange cold, hard nuyen for poker chips, or vice versa. That nostalgic feeling is something that simply cannot be replicated by using wireless transfers and bank account numbers. You often don't see hard currency being used any more, even in places like Vegas (which limits it to private games). Casinos onboard these ships usually carry a few million nuyen in currency per cruise. Certain Johnsons, particularly those tied in with organized crime, are able to use this currency from high-sea robberies by circulating it through feral cities like Chicago, Bogotá, and Lagos that rely on hard currency thanks to their limited (or non-existent) Matrix service. Ninety percent of the time, they have no means to track where the nuyen has come from, at least not after the currency has been in circulation for a good long time. These jobs typically pay runners anywhere from five thousand nuyen up to twenty thousand nuyen, depending on the casinos being robbed, and which feral cities are being used for the money laundering. Many runners, of course, take a little extra currency off the top, based on what they think they can get away with.

- The obvious question is: If the currency is a target for thieves, why do the cruise ships use it instead of casino chips? There's a two-part answer to that. The first part is that no matter what they're carrying for use in casinos, it's going to have some value, and if it has value it's a target for theft. The cruise lines have had a long, complicated dance with thieves and con men on this. Thieves steal chips and try to redeem them on other ships, so the cruise lines put encoded RFIDs in the chips identifying the chip's ship of origin and giving the cruise line the chance to deactivate the chip if it's stolen. Hackers crack the coding on these chips, and not only do they re-activate them, but they start manufacturing their own counterfeit chips. The cruise lines spend piles of nuyen trying to get better security, but the hackers are able to keep up at every turn. Meanwhile, governments of the world find themselves sitting on stacks of hard currency as fewer and fewer





INCOMING FEED.....



people use it, which brings us to the second part of the answer. These governments are often grateful if someone will take the currency off their hands and store it somewhere. So the cruise lines can choose between using chips and the expensive ongoing competition with hackers that comes with it, or using supplies of currency that are cheap enough that the occasional theft isn't all that painful. They made the rational choice.

- Cosmo

Another facet worth exploring are the cabin and ship safes on board these cruise liners. Often times, there are formal dinners and banquets held on board these cruise liners, where wealthy passengers like to display their ostentatious wealth by wearing family heirlooms. For the duration of the trips, these valuables are left in the confines of these safes. The safes on board these ships often contain fine jewelry, artwork, and certified credsticks. If the valuables are not in the cabin or ship safes, they are likely contained in the ship's cargo hold. Tens of millions of nuyen waiting to be fenced lie in these safes and cargo holds. The downside about relying too heavily on the valuables inside these safes is that eventually you will find yourself in conflict with pirates, who often times are after the same booty.

- Sounder makes it sound as though it's easy to rob these floating cities. Ain't the case. First, you got to know the security measures. It is standard protocol for all crew and paying passengers on all cruise liners to be injected with RFID tags (crew with permanent tags, passengers with temporary ones). The temporary ones break down in a couple of weeks, but during the duration of the cruise, they

allow the ship's computer network to track passenger movements. The reason being if one of the tags should suddenly disappear off the grid, such as someone going overboard or being extracted, alerts are sent out to ship security and the ship is brought to an immediate halt. Likewise, the sensor suites are set up in such a way that if an individual or a group of individuals suddenly appear on a ship without these RFID tags, alarms are sounded, and security is dispatched immediately to the location where those life forms suddenly appeared. These sensors track movement of the suspicious individuals through the ship, so security will constantly be on you. So if you want to make a stealth approach, you'll need a seriously good hacker to spoof RFID tags for your team or just remove them from the system so that they can move around unrestricted. As an FYI, a standard tag eraser works on a passenger's temporary RFID tag. They are typically planted inside a passenger's left palm, which should reduce the amount of time you need to hunt for them.

- Sticks

- These sensor suites are always calibrated and checked before each cruise gets under way. To test their sensors, the crew spends some time before each voyage tracking down any rats (normal or devil) that may have snuck aboard the ship. The ships, then, go to sea clean, which means that if you're counting on roving devil rats to create false alarms, think again. If you want to use devil rats to cause distractions, you'll have to bring your own.

- Riser

- One trick I've learned in dealing with these sensor suites is to duplicate the RFID tag for the mark so that at the same time you



erase it, you plant a cloned RFID tag on a maintenance drone. That thing will keep the tag moving around the ship, so you won't immediately draw suspicion from the spiders watching the cruise liner population until after someone misses the target and reports the disappearance. And even then, the roving drone will buy you some time until they track down the drone and find the cloned RFID tag.

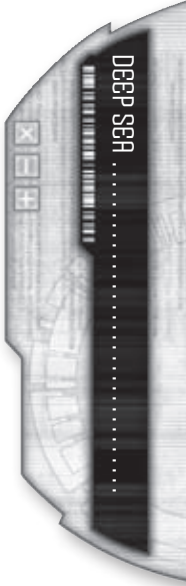
- Rigger X
- The sensor suites on these cruise liners are not the only things to be worried about when you are on a mission on one of these cruise liners, especially if you intend to cause overt violence on these ships. The security personnel are all trained former military or corpsec forces. These cruise liner security forces are meant to be able to deal with at least a "reasonable" pirate incursion/invasion of the cruise ship, giving their patrons at least some sense of security. And be ready for some of the faces look familiar. Cruise liners recruit people like us—or at least people like some of you—into their security forces if they got a desire to go legit. I'm here to tell you that they may have been out of the biz for a while, but they haven't lost their edge. They can be extremely dangerous. In those instances, neurostun and narcoject become your friends, and just hope they don't have 'ware to counter them.
- Kane
- Many of the patrons on board these luxury cruise liners have their own security details in addition to the security of the ship. If there is a major threat to the ship, you best believe those security details will be working in concert with the ship security and the other private security to repel any stowaways. I've seen Ares Executive Security forces leave corporate politics at water's edge to help Lone Star bodyguards repel an attempted pirate take over. When you're at sea, maintaining ship security is in the best interests of every major player on board. So if you have something planned for a cruise liner, make sure you have all trained personnel accounted for from both the ship security and the personal bodyguards. The last thing you need is to have someone playing hero and catching you off guard.
- Cosmo

Cruise liners and private yachts are popular targets for data theft and extractions. Cruise liners and yachts are often found in remote locations, with the likelihood of receiving support from the executive's ample security forces from his headquarters is remote. Even when they're on vacation, very few managers, executives, and other key personnel leave their work behind completely for a week or two. These individuals make large sums of nuyen precisely because they keep track of trends, are involved in ongoing negotiations, and constantly work on deals that can change from one hour to the next. They are the decision makers who cannot be away from internal data streams for any lengths of time. Breaking into a high-security corporate facility where these high rollers work may not be an option due to the number of guns involved. But snagging these people (or their commlinks) while they're at sea and liable to let their guard down might be more preferable. Many of the files that the corporation has on whatever the manger or executive is working on is likely on his or

her commlink, a device that may just be left unguarded while he or she is swimming, gaming, or otherwise preoccupied.

- Sounder has mentioned a lot of ways to make nuyen off of the tourism business. But there's one thing she's overlooked: the ships' galleys. Cruise liners have two galleys—the large one with stuff for your more everyday passengers, with the same soy-based stuff we all know and love, and a smaller one with the good stuff for the wealthy clientele. These meat lockers and refrigerators have the finest steaks, veal, fresh fruits, vegetables, and exotic delicacies such as escargot, caviar, and chocolate. If you want to steal valuable items from cruise lines without pissing off any particular passenger, these places could be targets. The passengers might be annoyed they don't get their chocolate for the duration of the cruise, but it doesn't become personal to them like it would if you broke into their stateroom. Plus, since so many people overlook the value of food stock, the galleys are generally less heavily guarded than the rest of the ship. Though you might have to worry about dealing with some very angry cooks.
- Cosmo
- Why would anyone target the food in the galleys on ships for a run?
- Aufheben
- A lot of fixers do, actually. Nothing helps us lure in new potential clientele (and new jobs for you chummers) by wining and dining new Johnsons. And should we be able to provide to them a rare vintage wine that they've always desired, or something else equally valuable like chocolate, it serves to get the message across that we're the right ones to do business with them. I'm actually surprised in this day and age that more runs aren't focused on obtaining exotic foods and liquors. Fixers can't exactly pull that stuff out of their hoops on the fly. I should know, I've tried on more than one occasion.
- Bull
- Don't forget, those delicacies also sell extraordinarily fast on the black market. Anything that sells that easily is worth doing a run for. Even if you're traveling extra far. Just be certain you have a way to get a significant load of goods off the boat, because for the most part a single bottle or chocolate bar won't be worth the trouble you took to get it.
- Turbo Bunny

I mention trade here because the oceans play a critical role in commercial trade, providing a relatively cheap means of transportation for mass quantities of goods over long distances. Most pirates tend to go after cargo ships instead of cruise liners because they are able to easily get ahold of ship manifests, giving them an idea of the most valuable commodities on those ships, and what goods would be the easiest to unload. Whereas on cruise liners, if the passengers haven't declared all their valuables with the ship's staff, it becomes a crap shoot of where the most valuable commodities are located, and what hoops you have to go through to get to those valuables. Plus, the most valuable commodities on board a cargo ship are generally confined to one place: the cargo holds. By raiding the cargo holds or hijacking the ships entirely, you are guaranteed that you will receive a high quantity



of resalable merchandise. Like everything else, though, there are downsides to taking on a cargo ship. For one thing, there are no high-profile passengers on board cargo ships. So security forces on cargo ships are able to stock up on more heavy weapons because they don't have to worry as much about collateral damage. As such, they are able to deal more effectively with boarders, and they are not afraid to hold back. Things can get pretty bloody boarding a cargo ship if it's done carelessly. On the upside, these jobs can go as high as a couple hundred thousand nuyen, and many times you're able to pillage additional profit out of the stuff that the Johnson doesn't want and that you take for yourself.

- For some pirates or runners or mercenaries, seizing control of a vessel and ransoming it back to its owners can be a lucrative operation. If you are going to try and take over a ship and ransom it back, I suggest going with the cruise liners. The presence of highly valuable passengers on board the cruise liners is more likely to discourage the corporations or governments from trying risky tactics with their special forces to retake the ship. Cargo ship crew, like most things involving the corporations, are always considered expendable. And you never know when you might pick that one cargo ship with corporate secrets on it so dark and disturbing that they might actually prefer to see the loss of the entire ship than to see those secrets exposed.
- Snopes
- Commercial shipping is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to jobs for runners on the open seas. Piracy, which is a multi-million nuyen industry, has already been mentioned. My personal favorite job is smuggling. Arms smuggling. Drug smuggling. Metahuman smuggling. Anything of value, illicit or not, can be smuggled if only to avoid government or corporate tariffs and inspection. Governments or corporations say you can't have something, people like me tell you that yes you can. Smuggling can be a very profitable venture. And each year, smugglers are coming up with new and interesting ways to smuggle contraband among all the legitimate cargos that is out there.
- 2XL

SALVAGE OPERATIONS

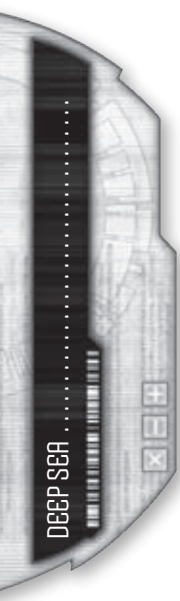
Another business opportunity for runners on the high seas comes in the form of salvage operations. Each year, roughly a hundred small vessels are lost at sea. Many of these are private boats and yachts that are caught up in powerful storms and do not make it back to land. Those not sunk by rough seas were likely put under by runners covering up their crimes by making sure the crime scenes and any forensic evidence left behind disappeared forever.

There are also a few cargo ships each year that also end up being sunk, along with all of their precious cargo. And this does not even account for all the ship wrecks throughout history that have spilled their treasures across the ocean floor, from Spanish armadas to the Vikings, from the Greeks and the Romans and their sailing ships to the English colonial ships that never made it to remote locations such as America. Salvage operations are frequently thought of as a quick and easy way to become filthy rich and famous thanks to treasures yet to be discovered. There is a certain romanticism about salvage operations that attracts a lot of treasure hunters, and for a rare few, treasure hunting does

indeed pay off. Most of them, though, don't pay off—maybe because they're too dumb, or too lazy, or too unlucky to find the right spot. Whatever the reason, failure breeds frustration, and frustration breeds desperation. These failed treasure hunters often reach a point where they decide that if they can't get their own treasure, they'll settle for taking somebody else's. Whether they're finding their own goods or taking someone else's, these salvage operations rely heavily on watercraft riggers to find and retrieve salvage, usually in areas that are hard to reach or very dangerous to operate in. These jobs can pay anywhere from twenty-five thousand to half a million nuyen to the right rigger, depending on what is at stake and who they are competing against. Chances are, any salvage operation will entail competition. If word gets out that a salvage company has a lead on where a ship wreck—like, say, the missing '50 cruise liner the Determined—is, you can bet four or five other salvage companies will also be at or near those coordinates as well, hoping to find the wreckage first. Sometimes, competition leads to violence between the scavengers who are looking for the same thing. And that's where runners, no matter their specific skills or trade, come into play.

- The Determined?
- Mika
- It was a cruise liner that belonged to an Ares subsidiary. On March 15th (Ides of March, ironically), the Determined mysteriously vanished from all satellite tracking feeds off the coast of Amazonia in the South Atlantic. Search parties were sent out when the Determined could not be reached, but a week later no signs of the ship were found. And strangely, no signs of sinking were ever found either. The ship or its remains have yet to be discovered twenty-four years later, with all eighteen hundred of its passengers. Some believe it ventured off course, traveled up north, got a little close to the Bermuda Triangle, and disappeared. Others blame it on a possible Aztlan blood ritual. Still others say that angry water spirits upset about the conditions of the seas chose to make an example out of the Determined and sent it to another metaplane, a metaplane of water. Some blame pirates for the disappearance, while others believe it to be the work of the cartels. Then there are those who believe the Determined never existed at all, and that she's simply a urban legend. Right now, finding the Determined would be tantamount to finding the Holy Grail for salvage crews, or more precisely, like finding the Titanic. With the discovery would come international recognition, fame, and nuyen. I've even looked for her myself in my spare time—my opinion is that she's never going to be found.
- Sounder
- Ooh. Ghost ship stories. How exciting!
- Slamm-O!

Most salvage operations today involve modern wrecks. A ship goes down, and in as little as six hours the area is filled with parties looking to salvage parts of the ship and its cargo. Many of these small-time operators are in a race to beat the megacorporations. If the cargo ship that sank was carrying a significant amount of cargo for a megacorporation, you best believe the megacorporation(s) will have their own salvage crews out trying to recover the lost



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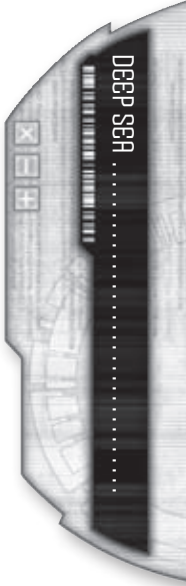


goods. When they arrive on scene, it's all but over for the small-time operators. Megacorporate forces often will simply push smaller salvagers out of an area, and they are not hesitant to use overwhelming force to do so. Small-time operators usually have a window of twelve to thirty-six hours, depending on where the vessel sank and how far away the corporate salvage crews are from the shipwreck, to get at the corporate goodies. In such a small time frame, it is helpful for salvage operators to have many eyes scouring the ocean floors, so they will hire watercraft riggers to help with search operations. It is also not unheard of for salvage operators to hire more than one runner team with underwater drones to scour a particular part of the ocean as quickly as possible. The more area they can cover, the more likely it is for them to find the profits in the wreckage before the megacorporate salvage crews take over.

- Some salvage operators will hire runners to actually sink vessels. This way, they know where and when a shipwreck will happen, so they can have the resources ready to go right away and make the most of the window they are given before the corporations show up. It's underhanded and devious, but what else is new.
- Sounder

Most of the time, salvage operations are looking for hulls to cut up and sell for scrap. Others look to acquire the cargo of sunken ships. Many of those cargo containers hold raw materials such as durasteel, iron, brass and rebar, all of which can be sold on the black market for decent amounts of nuyen. Others are looking at sunken yachts to find jewelry, precious metals, and other valuable items. There are groups out there like Aqua Arcana and Save Our Seas looking for wrecks that are leaking harmful and deadly materials such as crude oil or toxic waste into the oceans. Usually, there is not a whole lot of profit in working for these small-time eco groups, but some runners believe there is satisfaction that comes from doing something good for the environment. I've personally never signed up for those excursions, as I have far too many better-paying gigs to get involved with those groups. But if that work appeals to you, by all means, jump right in.

- In addition to hunting for treasure on the ocean floors, some salvage operations are hired by groups like the Draco Foundation and the Atlantean Foundation to find relics or artifacts from a different era. Some of these salvage operations are meant to scour the oceans for possible dragon lairs. It is suspected that in a different age, there were many more dragons than what we have today. And most people believe that each dead dragon comes with the possibility of a fantastic dragon horde waiting to be found. Others hire salvage crews to look for evidence of Avalon or Atlantis. Excursions funded by either the AF or the DF are often tailed and spied upon by groups from Aztechnology, the Apep Consortium, and smaller scavengers. If the salvage crews know they are working for the AF or DF, they often hire runners to run interference with Aztechnology and Apep Consortium so that they can carry out their jobs without interference.
- Frosty
- It is rumored that the Sea Dragon has laid claim to all the old shipwrecks on the ocean floors. Although it is highly unlikely that



you would encounter the last of the leviathans on any particular salvage operation, you should take care that you might be perceived as raiding a dragon's horde. In these troubling times, that could get you killed quick. While you may not encounter the Sea Dragon directly, she has agents in the form of seadrakons and sea serpents, along with spirits that she commands. Now, you might not think that the Sea Dragon would respond so violently or vehemently to incursions into her domain, but after Rhonabwy allegedly made off with her eggs, expect any perceived transgressions against her interests to be met with extreme violence.

- Lyran

TALISMONGERING/TALISLEGGING

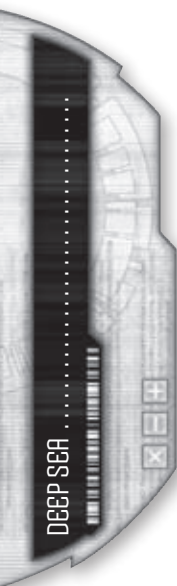
As I mentioned in the aquafarming section, fish and mammals that still live in the open sea face great challenges to their long-term survival from toxins and other metahuman-made poisons that have leached into the waters, along with the peril of being over-hunted. There is another industry that most Awakened runners know very well and that also threatens their survival: talismongering. Just like any animals that you find either on land or in the air, sea creatures, particularly Awakened sea creatures, are capable of providing reagents that can be used in enchanting. Things like megalodon's teeth, fins from storm dolphins, or mermaid scales can be very valuable. In recent years, talismongering excursions have encountered problems finding enough quality specimens to fill the cargo holds of their vessels. From what I have heard, ships that go hunting for tesmas and reagents from the sea often come back with their cargo holds only seventy-five percent full, if that. And from what I have been hearing, it's been taking longer and longer for these expeditions to get even that much. As a result of an increased scarcity of enchanting materials from sea mammals and paranormal critters, prices for these reagents are skyrocketing. This increased demand means that runs are constantly needed to locate these rare materials, and they always pay well. Expeditions to help track down these reagents can pay a runner upwards of twenty thousand nuyen. The downside to this is that you often spend months at sea, trying to capture specimens that meet your talismonger's approval.

- Before anyone asks if talismongers can use reagents from fish or mammals from aquafarms, the answer is no. Fish or sea mammals bred in captivity lack the necessary potency for enchanting. They are completely worthless. Some think it's because of all the tampering the corps are trying to do in order to make them more appetizing, breed in greater numbers, and mature faster. My take on things is that, like all animals in captivity that do not fair as well as those in the wild, sea creatures' wills gets broken when placed in an unnatural habitat. They were never intended to live in captivity. It even happens with animals born in the wild and then put into captivity. They may have initially been a prime specimen for talismongering, but months later, that potency is diminished, if not gone altogether. If you want materials to harvest, make sure you don't overhunt the population, and don't take them out of their natural habitats.
- Lyran
- That's interesting. I have heard from talismonger friends of mine that they have had no trouble taking materials from captive

animals to make enchantments. Are you telling me that my sources are incorrect?

- Frosty
- Nothing of the sort. Perhaps I should clarify. It is possible to use weaker materials if you use larger quantities of them and greater amounts of orichalcum. This, though, ultimately takes away from your profits. It also makes the enchanting process more difficult, and creates imperfections in the final result. Not to mention the fact that the enchantment is always weaker than what you intended it to be. I would never consider diluting my work with such inferior materials. But I suppose there are others that don't mind the problems it causes. No offense to your contacts, but that's how I see it.
- Lyran
- No offense taken. I know and respect your work, so that gives your opinion some weight.
- Frosty
- Not to beat the point into the ground, but if you're a shaman who follows a sea-based totem, you've got to think that the totem is going to not be happy that you're using such a poor representation of their kind. I know Wolf would be greatly displeased if I made foci out of anything less than the best wolf pelts that I could find, preferably from the alpha of the pack.
- Lyran
- It's also possible that the talismongers I know tend to be hermetic mages in nature, and they generally use the resources they have in a different manner than you do. Maybe it's their techniques that impact how useful those materials are.
- Frosty
- Point taken.
- Lyran

In an effort to combat the loss of these natural resources and to be able to save these species so they can provide these reagents in the future, groups like Save Our Seas have attempted to set up preserves for sea life to protect them and allow their numbers to rebound. A number of nations have made hunting sea life off of their coasts illegal, and the United Nations has attempted to establish rules for these designated preserves while also establishing sanctions and steep punishments for those that violate non-fishing and non-hunting territories. Unfortunately, with the current high price of reagents on the black market—as much as five hundred percent over market value in certain areas—the temptation to break into these preserves and poach these endangered specimens is all too great. In 2073 alone, nearly a thousand poachers were caught violating these preserves. Many times, these poachers had already collected several specimens prior to being caught. Worse still is the fact that this number does not account for the poachers who succeeded in getting away with their ill-gotten goods. With so much pressure to recover these reagents, it is likely only a matter of time before these preserves are completely looted and their protection efforts fail to make significant progress in rehabilitating the ocean and its wildlife.



THE ARKOBLOCKS

Now that I've mentioned the types of work available for runners in the oceans, I want to talk about Proteus' arkoblocks, which are by far the largest metahuman-made structures in the open seas today. Contained within them are some of the largest ocean-related businesses in the world. Proteus' twenty active arkoblocks support a myriad of diverse business interests, including shipyards, nanoforge factories, suborbital launch sites, scientific research laboratories, testing facilities, and deep sea mining and drilling operations. In many instances, these industries are only a small sample of what can be found on these mammoth arkoblocks, which employ millions of metahumans from all walks of life. These industries typically bring in billions of nuyen in revenue each year for a single arkoblock, making Proteus a very wealthy AA corporation. For many, a single arkoblock is seen as a convenient, one-stop shadowrun gold mine, with endless possibilities for lucrative runs.

Even if we took these highly competitive and profitable industries out of the equation, each arkoblock contains a large population of wealthy aristocrats, including retired corporate executives, current and retired simsense and trid celebrities, famous sports stars, corporate lawyers, former politicians, and Proteus senior management. The Proteus arkoblocks are often seen by those with a lot of nuyen as a viable alternative to acquiring living quarters on the remote location of Zurich Orbital, which has a long waiting list for residential requests. Hidden away in these artificial structures, residents of these arkoblocks can offer a degree of privacy and seclusion rarely found in today's world of wireless communication and overcrowded sprawls. Residents can be as connected to or isolated from the frantic world found outside of their windows as they desire. Not knowing exactly who might be in these glass and metal menageries, runners who operate on arkoblocks have as good of chance of finding someone valuable and worth extracting as they do in trying to raid the mining factories for uncut diamonds.

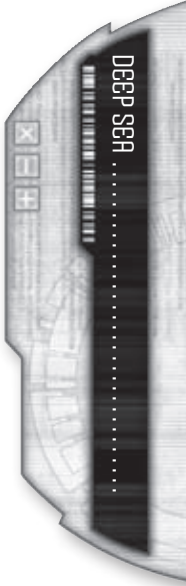
- Proteus says you must have a valid SIN to live on the arkoblock, and they claim to take great pains to turn away those who want to live on their arkoblocks under a fake SIN or assumed identity. Don't believe a world of it. With the right amount of nuyen placed in the right hands, Proteus and its employees are often convinced to give a SIN a cursory review before rubber-stamping an application. As long as you don't cause trouble on the arkoblock, Proteus will not bother you or give your fake SIN a second thought. So don't be surprised to find wanted criminals with extensive financial resources on the run from Interpol, Europol, or other law enforcement agencies hiding out in the most luxurious levels of the arkoblocks. With all the comforts of modern life at their fingertips, they usually have no desire to leave. The top levels of an arkoblock are much more preferable than a jail cell. This makes these arkoblocks prime areas for finding and collecting international bounties. In the last year, I have found twelve such bounties in two different arkoblocks. Before 2073, I found eight.
- Sticks
- With all the privacy these arkoblocks provide to their residents, I wouldn't be surprised if there weren't more than a few residents

who haven't gone to the extremes of faking their own deaths on the outside to avoid whatever problems they might have gotten themselves into. Taking a good look at those residents might turn up some interesting surprises. You might actually encounter a few people you may have thought were nothing more than ghosts.

- Plan 9
- So you're saying that if we look hard enough, we might find Dunkelzahn or Jimmy Hoffa on one of these things? Or maybe even 'Jack'? Do these arkoblocks even have retirement homes?
- Sunshine
- Heh. Real hysterical, Sunshine.
- Fastjack

Despite all of their appeal to runners, arkoblocks are not without their share of drawbacks. For example, VIPs typically use the remote launch sites as a means to make a quick change of travel plans to lose any paparazzi (or runners) that might be tailing them and disappear off the grid for a time. For runners, it can take significant preparation to get onto these arkoblocks and to be able to move around freely, and if a target suddenly lands on an arkoblock, chances are they'll be able to change flights and destinations on the spur of the moment, and the trail will be lost. Sometimes the VIPs will stay in one of the arkoblock's many luxury hotels. While the runners are spending days forging the proper paperwork, and spoofing security systems with their fake SINS, the VIP is conducting business. By the time the runners set foot on the arkoblock, the executive likely has already concluded his business and is ready to depart. At that point, the runners' job will have likely failed. Even if the runners know their mark is staying on a particular arkoblock, finding out his or her precise location in a structure that houses millions can be like trying to find a needle in a haystack. I've had runners tell me that your typical, military-grade Matrix safeguards are actually a step below what Proteus has set up for their arkoblock nodes. You have to have a talented hacker with some seriously dedicated hacking programs to be able to break through the glaciers of IC surrounding these nodes, and you have to either do so while on the arkoblock itself, or close enough to the perimeter that you are within shooting range of the automated defenses. In either case, you risk being captured or being killed while the hacking attempt is being made.

Another potential pitfall is that runners simply cannot rely on legwork in these self-contained arkoblocks. There is a very strong insider-versus-outsider mentality present in these communities. If you're pegged as an outsider who might be asking the wrong questions or looking to bring trouble down on their perceived paradise, you could face considerable suspicion and distrust among the locals. It would be wise to assume the locals in these arkoblocks will not respond well to being asked questions about other residents. They could tip off security to your presence, or worse still, let your target know that you are asking probing questions about them. On top of all the problems the culture of an enclosed society might present to outside runners, the arkoblocks generally are considered to have a Triple-A security rating for their levels that rise above the water level. This can and does provide quite the hindrance to most ambitious runner teams, especially if they are on a tight schedule and need to get things done in a hurry.





WHICH IS IT? AN ARKOBLOCK, AQUACOLOGY, OR AQUACITY?

Posted by Sounder

One thing I've taken a particular interest in has been the permanent, artificial structures that allow metahumans to live and work in the oceans. Over the years, there have been many terms used for these structures. Arkoblocks. Aquacologies. Aquacities. It can be quite confusing sometimes, especially when people use terms for one type of structure when they in fact are referring to another kind. So let's get this straightened out.

Arkoblocks are massive structures built in the oceans that can sustain enormous populations that can easily reach into the millions. They can rival many modern-day land-based sprawls in terms of population, though they tend to be denser and more vertical. Arkoblocks are often shaped like mammoth cubes or blocks that rise out of the ocean floor and stretch a hundred stories or more into the air, as well as dozens of stories down to the ocean floor. These structures are designed to support a vast array of diverse operations, creating what amounts to a self-sustaining economy. The twenty Proteus AG arkoblocks are the only ones known to be in existence at this time, and the larger ones can support up to three million metahumans apiece. Arkoblocks are never entirely submerged. They possess self-contained environments and can be completely isolated from the outside world for short periods of time, but they also have access points to provide convenient travel to the nearby coastline through a variety of methods, including maglevs, boats, submarines, helicopters, and jets. Arkoblocks are typically never more than a hundred kilometers off the coast of any given nation or continent, which in some instances allows for highways to be built directly to the arkoblock, tethering the structure to land.

- Do not plan on using these roads in your run! They end up being long, isolated stretches of plascrete, and it is far too easy set up a roadblock or just shut the road down entirely. You don't want to be stuck out there with no place to go.
- Traveler Jones

Aquacologies are quite similar in concept to arkoblocks in that they establish metahuman colonies in the ocean. Like arkoblocks, aquacologies can be designed or retrofitted to support multiple tasks, including mining, drilling, marine research, and other scientific pursuits. Unlike arkoblocks, aquacologies can either be partially submerged, or they can be entirely underwater. Evo's Saotome AquaDomes was one of the first publicly recognized examples of an aquacology that was built completely underwater. The Saotome AquaDomes was the facility that claimed the Dunkelzahn bequest for building a self-sustaining community on the ocean floor. Aquacologies are much smaller in scale than arkoblocks. The largest aquacology in current use is the Cadmus Deep Habitat Colony belonging to Saeder-Krupp. Over the last two decades, the Cadmus Deep Habitat Colony has expanded from two thousand inhabitants to roughly eight thousand full-time residents, including family members. Although there is no maximum size limit that firmly distinguishes an arkoblock from an aquacology, it is commonly accepted that the aquacology is always smaller than an arkoblock. Anything capable of housing over one hundred inhabitants is usually referred to as an aquacology. This number actually comes from Dunkelzahn's will, which specified that any underwater structure over one hundred residents could qualify for the bequest. Smaller structures, with fewer than a hundred inhabitants, are typically referred to as an aquacity.

Aquacities are commonly owned by single-A corporations. In North America, corporations such as Aqua Arcana and Calamari, Inc. make use of multiple aquacities along the coastlines. Megacorporations such as Evo, Shiawase, and Renraku have been developing aquacities as enclosed and secure residential communities for select high-ranking executives. Just like its larger brothers, an aquacity can provide a self-contained environment. As of 2074, there are close to a thousand variants of an aquacity in use, with new ones being built each month. Unlike either an arkoblock or an aquacology, aquacities typically only have one or two functions, such as fish farms, residential habitats, or scientific research.

To better understand life on the arkoblocks, I am posting two different articles. One is an advertisement from Proteus that puts a very positive spin of life on an arkoblock. This is the utopin image of arkoblock life that wageslaves imagine and that the corporations promote. The other story is an investigative journalism piece that gives an unprecedented look at the business practices of Proteus AG, and what (literally) lies beneath the shine and the shimmer of these massive sprawls. And it proves once more than Proteus AG is a master when it comes to deception and misdirection.

//Upload trip clip of Proteus Advertisement:

Username: Sounder: 05.13.74 //

Proteus AG, a world leader in innovation, brings to you the opportunity of a lifetime: the chance to own a condominium inside one of Proteus' famed arkoblocks off the coast of Okinawa, Japan. Each condominium comes with its own kitchen, bathroom unit, and one, two, or three bedrooms. Each condominium is comfortable, elegant, luxurious, and filled with state-of-the-art amenities. You may select a gorgeous ocean view, or instead choose an interior unit that provides stunning views of this city on the sea. Pets are allowed and welcomed in our condominiums, helping ensure that you have a full range of companionship available to you.



Owning a Proteus arkoblock condominium gives you access to numerous recreational facilities, gymnasiums, swimming pools, tennis courts, racquetball courts, casinos, and simsense theatres. Our marinas allow you to enjoy your favorite water-based pastimes, including sailing, speedboat racing, fishing, and scuba diving. You can soothe your soul in the beautiful surroundings of our rooftop gardens or take a leisurely stroll through one of our many arboretums.

Dining options are plentiful as well. The arkoblocks offer hundreds of restaurants that can cater to your every taste and pleasure, serving real food products that you may never have sampled before in your life. Food provided in the arkoblock includes the finest cuts of steak, beef, lamb, and the freshest fruits and vegetables on the planet, grown locally inside of the arkoblocks themselves.

Worried about being isolated from medical care? Don't be! Medical services are provided on site and are world-class in nature, keeping each of the arkoblock's nearly three million residents happy and healthy.

Proteus arkoblocks are renowned for having a completely self-contained environment. Afraid acid rain will damage the paint on your new Eurowind? Bring it to the arkoblock for safekeeping until you need it. Tired of breathing in smog and other air pollutants that cause serious respiratory problems? Come work and live inside Proteus' arkoblocks, where we take great pains to ensure our community receives the purest air in the world thanks to our state-of-the-art filters and scrubbers. Each arkoblock is designed to conform to your needs and exceed your expectations.

In this enclosed community, Proteus AG works hard to ensure your privacy needs are met. We invest millions of nuyen each year in technology to ensure our resident list remains secure and confidential.

Proteus AG's arkoblocks boast the lowest crime rates in the world, and unemployment is virtually unheard of. Median per capita income within Proteus AG's arkoblocks is 280,000 nuyen, and it continues to climb with each passing year. With one private university, at least thirty-five private elementary, and forty private secondary schools to choose from, Proteus AG's arkoblocks are ideal for raising families. The second and third generations of families are currently being born and raised on the arkoblock, and those families have no desire to ever leave the comforts and luxuries the arkoblocks offer. Need help with your household chores? Don't have the time to take out the trash or do the dishes? For a minimal rental fee, you can have a fleet of drones performing menial tasks for you, meeting whatever needs you might have.

Afraid your current position will not allow you to telecommute? Although Proteus would love to see you make Proteus your extended family, we understand that you may need to travel and work outside of the arkoblock. Most arkoblocks have been designed with highway access, allowing you to drive your vehicle to land. The distance of the drive may be as short as thirty kilometers, though often it is approximately one hundred kilometers. If that drive seems too long, then you can take advantage of the ferries that regularly carry residents and their vehicles to sprawls such as Okinawa. Maglevs have been set up on most arkoblocks, including the Okinawa arkoblock, to make commuting even faster.

Interested in living the life of the future? Proteus AG and its arkoblocks are for you! Call us today and set up an appointment to see one of our model condominiums in person, or take a virtual tour of our condominiums. Don't wait!

Urgent Message

Valid SIN is required for condominium tour and for residency. Background, income, and credit checks required as part of the application process. Financing terms available through Proteus AG Financial. Income eligibility is based on ability to pay between six thousand and ten thousand nuyen per month. Waiting lists for condominiums can be as long as two years. Approved pets are those considered standard: dogs, cats, birds, etc. Anything out of the normal is considered exotic; residents must pay additional fees to maintain exotic pets. Prior to touring the arkoblock, potential residents must sign non-disclosure agreements stating they will not to divulge any propriety data, materials, or designs to any other corporations or non-Proteus affiliated individuals. Upon purchasing a condominium, residents agree to sign a non-disclosure agreement relating to daily operations and procedures that are carried out on a daily basis and are considered proprietary materials. Violation of this agreement may result in fines, eviction, and/or imprisonment.

- With such an emphasis on privacy and secrecy, how does visiting an arkoblock work? Is it strictly residents only, or do they allow outsiders something like day passes?
- Butch
- It's like going to any a foreign country. Proteus requires visas and valid passports to travel onto one of their properties. It normally takes up to six months to request and get a visa if you're an individual. During that time, Proteus Security scours every request, performing detailed and thorough background checks. If Proteus discovers a fake SIN, they won't issue a visa. Proteus has two types of visas, one for personal use, the other for business use. The personal visa lasts seven days, and bearers are scrutinized to no end. Commercial visas can be approved in as little as a day, to encourage trade and commerce with the outside world. Certain safeguards are overlooked to facilitate economic development; as another advantage, these visas last as long as two weeks. So if you want to get onto an arkoblock with as little trouble as possible, have your hacker give you some commercial credentials. Though be warned; if you are caught with false commercial credentials, you could be looking at a jail sentence of more than ten years. Proteus takes the security of its arkoblocks very seriously, and they randomly check credentials to make sure people are who they say they are. Your credentials can very quickly show up as being forged during those random checks, and you could wind up receiving a very nasty surprise when Proteus Security shows up to haul you away.
- Sticks



- Or worse yet, you could be sentenced to life as Barnacle. Refer to my next clip to see what I mean.
- Sounder

**//Upload trid clip of *The Forgotten Barnacles*:
username: Sounder, 05.13.74//**

My name is James Hill, and I am an investigative journalist with the Independent News Service. You may remember me from metahuman-interest documentary pieces such as *Surviving El Inferno* and *Life Behind Bars in 2073*, for which I have been nominated for two Peabody awards. For my next investigative piece, I have chosen to go undercover inside one of Proteus AG's arcoblocks to find out what daily life is really like for the millions of metahumans that make these modern marvels of engineering their home. My goal for this report was to determine whether the publicity and spin coming from Proteus AG about life in these isolated, sea-based arcoblocks truly matches the reality as lived by their residents. I wanted to know if the tales of the glistening neon lights, breathtaking seascapes, climate-controlled environment, spacious, crime-free neighborhoods, pristine byways and parks, and nonexistent unemployment rates were accurate, or whether these stories of utopian, self-contained cities of wealth and luxury were nothing more than fictional accounts of would-be novelists and marketing charlatans attempting to put a beautiful façade around a rotten core.

After months of research, I discovered that Proteus AG has an ongoing agreement with various sprawls within the Scandinavian Union to help them deal with their SINless and squatter populations. SINless and homeless individuals, and the problems these populations bring with them, are the scourge of modern sprawls. For decades, cities have sought a permanent solution to problems such as gang violence, homicides, domestic violence, vandalism, and other assorted crimes. A few sprawls have started pilot programs with Proteus AG where they round up the SINless and squatters and pay Proteus AG to take them off their hands. In exchange, Proteus takes those individuals to their arcoblocks, where they claimed they would be given corporate SINS, a place to live, and a job with Proteus AG. A job that, in theory, would provide these troubled individuals with valuable skills so that should they ever choose to leave Proteus, they will have what they need to quickly find another job and be productive members of society. So far, Proteus AG and these sprawls in the Scandinavian Union have all claimed that these pilot programs have been a tremendous success. SINless and squatter populations have all declined significantly in fiset ajar sprawls in the Scandinavian Union over the last five years. There are rumors that these pilot programs will eventually expand into other parts of Europe. But because no independent sources are available to confirm the living conditions on these arcoblocks, I felt that it would be worth my time to pose as a member of the SINless community and experience life as one of these newly recruited members of Proteus. So with the support of the Independent News Service, I arranged to travel to Oslo, to one of the neighborhoods targeted by this program. I disguised myself as a homeless squatter and positioned myself to be in the next batch of SINless individuals recruited into Proteus. Contacts affiliated with Proteus AG helped me learn where the next sweep of SINless and squatters would take place. I took up residence inside an abandoned office building in the right area and waited.

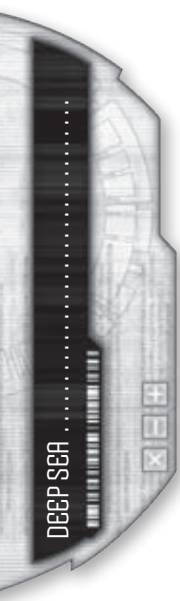
Fortunately, the contacts who provided me the information on where the sweeps were going to take place were extraordinarily accurate, and I only had to wait three hours before Oslo security forces to find me. When they did, they quickly took me into custody. I did not let on that I had a valid SIN, as I expected them to run a check to make sure I qualified for this program. To my chagrin, they never did; they simply assumed I was SINless. I watched as nearly thirty alleged SINless metahumans were rounded up with me over the course of the night. Some, like me, went quietly, while others put up a tremendous fight. Some received severe beatings as a result of their resistance, others had to be tranquilized. Toward the end of the night, we were all driven to the coast, where there was a submarine waiting to pick us up at take us to what I believed was the Rømo arkoblock.

The trip to the arcoblock took a few hours on an extraordinarily cramped and uncomfortable submarine. On top of the thirty metahumans that were loaded onto the submarine from our group, a van from another sprawl arrived and dropped off an additional fifteen metahumans to be stuffed into that submarine. I was certain that the small submarine we were on was dangerously overcrowded, and the sounds made by the overburdened engines seemed to confirm my suspicions. But despite the laboring engines, the submarine managed to arrive safely at its designation, where we all encouraged to debark for processing.

As promised, we were all issued Proteus AG SINS at the start of our processing. When my turn came, I expected them to run my fingerprints or take my retinal prints to make sure I was telling the truth about my identity and that I was not some wanted criminal looking to evade the law. However, the supervisor who was issuing the SINS took my fake identity at face value and issued a SIN to me based on my false identity of Andrew Kellogg. I was then given a job right away: working in the aquafarms. I had no experience with that type of work, but I was told I would receive on-the-job training. I would be told later by my fellow workers that I had lucked out with that assignment. Others received far more grueling and dangerous work, from laboring in the deep-sea mining and smelting factories to the back-breaking work of petroleum processing. These jobs were based in factories that hosted a high number of accidents, many of which resulted in the loss of life or limbs. In fact, on the day that I arrived, I learned there was a catastrophic accident that caused machinery in the smelting factory to release molten metal onto the plant floor, burning and killing a dozen workers.

When I asked why we were assigned to these dangerous jobs when Proteus surely had a fleet of drones capable of performing them, I was told to shut up and do my work. But some of my fellow Barnacles, which is the nickname for the metahumans living in the lower-quality units of the arcoblock that sit beneath the ocean's surface, theorized that Proteus reserved its drones for the topsiders, those who are rich enough to live above the ocean surface. Apparently, they were the ones that needed their lives improved with drones, not us. And so, without any further questions, I moved on to the next aspect of my new career: my living quarters.

I was shown to a room on the 15th sub-level beneath the ocean's surface: a room large enough to comfortably fit three metahumans, filled with nine bunk beds and eight other people. I was issued a bunk was marked with my brand-new SIN, a



INCOMING FEED.....



footlocker, a pillow, blankets, and two sets of bland-looking, generic “one-size-fits-all” work clothes. Inside my footlocker was a cheap commlink, which had been modified for hot-sim. One of the things I was told by my roommates was that the Barnacles were given the commlinks because there were BTL dealers in this part of the arkoblocks who worked for Proteus. The workers told me that Proteus encouraged the use of BTLs to help pacify the workforce, helping them forget about their current living conditions as well as the lives they may have had before they were introduced to Proteus. By some estimates, nearly eighty percent of the SINless brought into the arkoblock eventually became addicted to BTLs at some point.

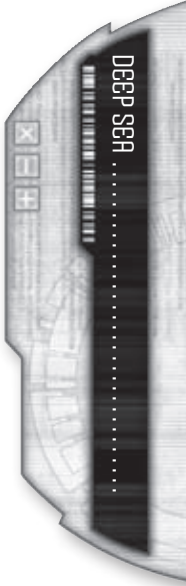
I should provide a more detailed description of my quarters. Some Barnacles were fortunate enough to have a room along the external walls of the arkoblock, meaning they had windows. Unfortunately, since we were so far down, most only saw dark waters (or somewhat murky waters if they were really lucky) and the occasional flashes of light of the arkoblock’s defense perimeter going off, attacking some random predator that had come too close. The rest of us did not have windows. Instead, we had small rooms with grey walls and grey metal furniture. We had no space of our own besides our bunk; everything else was shared. The bunks creaked every time we put weight on them, and for the first week or two I woke up constantly due to the noise that accompanied my roommates shifting in their bunks. I adapted eventually, but I always worried that my bunk was in danger of rusting through and collapsing.

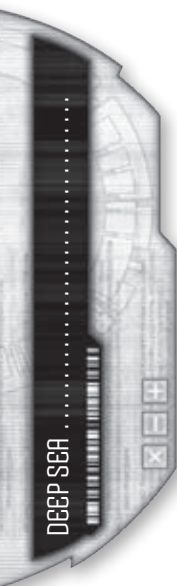
Rust was a worry because water was everywhere, tricking down walls and pooling on floors. The sound of dripping was constant, and we all lived in fear that a bigger leak would erupt, flooding the lower levels before we could climb higher, trapping us in a watery grave.

Ventilation down at our level was poor; the surrounding water kept things cold, and we lived in a state of perpetual chill. And in the lower levels of the arkoblock, it stank. The air slowly being pumped through the ventilation shafts smelled worse than a Manhattan landfill during summer time. We had fish farms, livestock, and water treatment facilities not far away, and you could tell that our air and water had passed by those levels before it came to us. Supposedly the water was filtered before we drank it, but in the six months that I lived there, I saw cases of dysentery and other illnesses caused by microbes in contaminated water. It was not pleasant, but we had no other options. I had to drink the contaminated water if I wanted to stay alive, and I became as sick as my companions. Despite this, I was made to continue working my twelve- to fourteen-hour days. There is no such thing as sick leave for Barnacles.

All the lower levels were filthy and grimy. Since most Barnacles worked the same long hours I did, proper hygiene was not always a priority. On top of that, the smells from all these sources mixed with the smelting factories, making things worse. On the seventeenth and eighteenth floors, not far below us, there was a prison for the arkoblock’s miscreants, creating even more putrid smells. Anytime I moved between floors, I was hit with nauseating odors that kept my stomach in constant turmoil. And no, respirators or gas masks were not a part of the standard dress code.

You might think that living on the arkoblock would allow you to become acclimated to the various poor conditions, and





for the most part, it does. But there are times the odors are so pungent, there is no getting used to it. Because the lower levels of the arkoblock contained the factories, noise pollution was also an issue. From my cot on the fifteenth floor, I could hear the noise of the drone assembly and repair shop that operated 24/7 on the thirteenth level. Sometimes, it was enough to make me and the other Barnacles quite resentful of the Topsiders and the luxuries they flaunted. Fortunately, because I was working long, tiring shifts in the aqua farms I had no problems passing out in spite of the noise once my head hit the lumpy pillow on my bunk bed. For much of my stay at the arkoblock, I preferred unconsciousness to the hell my life had become.

Life was pretty miserable for a Barnacle. Death rates were extraordinarily high, not only from accidents but also from suicides and prolonged BTL abuse. The lack of natural sunlight and outside communication also took a toll on the underwater population of the arkoblock. Medical services to Barnacles are particularly limited, while psychological services are non-existent. Good workers received prompt medical treatment for their wounds, while mediocre workers might wait for weeks for a doctor to properly set a broken bone. Some of them were simply left to find a place to curl up and die. Along with cases of dysentery, there were occasional outbreaks of VITAS and other diseases within the Barnacle population. Proteus had no choice but to issue proper medications to all the population deal with the breakouts lest they lose their entire work force, and risk spreading VITAS to their precious Topsiders. Nearly three hundred and fifty people died from the outbreaks while I was there.

No one misses a dead Barnacle. The bodies are flushed into the ocean to be consumed by whatever sea creature might be in the area. Since there is a seemingly limitless supply of SINless out there to recruit, Proteus AG is never hurting for cheap labor. The bunk of a dead worker is cleaned quickly, its marker changed for a new SIN, and then the next slot is perched on it within a few hours. Four humans, one troll, and three dwarfs I shared my living quarters with died during the six months I was on the arkoblock. You would think that Proteus AG would send actual people to collect and dispose of the bodies of the dead metahumans, but that wasn't the case. The duty was performed by drones. The whole process of the disposing of bodies was depressingly cold and antiseptic. No funerals, no prayers, nothing about who the person was. And when they were gone, no reference to the fact that they had existed. I had a feeling that was not how it was done for the Topsiders.

Six months into my assignment on the Proteus AG arkoblock, I couldn't take it any more. The Topsiders were living the life that Proteus AG promoted so proudly in its ads, but down on the fifteenth level, out of sight of the world, it was a hellhole. From my investigative story on prisons in 2073, I can tell you with all certainty that I would prefer being in jail to this indignity. Proteus AG was indeed accomplishing great things, but it came on the backs of the poor, downtrodden and the SINless. I cannot say with any certainty that this is systematic of all Proteus AG arkoblocks, but I will not volunteer to find out. Unfortunately, since Proteus AG has its extraterritorial rights, I see very little chance of any change in these arkoblocks any time soon.

It is also important to realize that what Proteus AG was doing would not technically be considered slavery or indentured

servitude. They paid their workers. They did everything they said they would, from providing SINs to offering room and board. Proteus just never claimed what kind of quality that room and board would have. The corporation also provided a means to leave if the employees chose to quit. To get out of the arkoblock, Barnacles have to purchase a ticket on a submarine. The entry points for the sub-levels of the arkoblock are all underwater, making them unreachable by standard boats. By design, there is no way to access the topside of the arcology from the levels beneath the surface of the ocean. There is no way for Barnacles to interact with Topsiders, and no way for the Topsiders to see what their lifestyles were costing the Barnacles. In short, there is no way for the two worlds to collide. The ticket prices to get out of the arkoblock vary from sub to sub, but typically the cost was around ten thousand nuyen per person. With the minimal wages the Barnacles are making, it would take them years to make that kind of nuyen. It is far more likely that Barnacles will die from either accidents or disease than they will live long enough to raise the nuyen it would take to get out.

Life becomes even more complicated when Barnacles have children. I found children of the Barnacles who were born on the arkoblock and knew nothing of the outside world. It is likely they will never know what the outside world is like, good or bad, because they will probably live and die in the same arkoblock where their parents died, possibly where their own children someday will die. It is a vicious cycle.

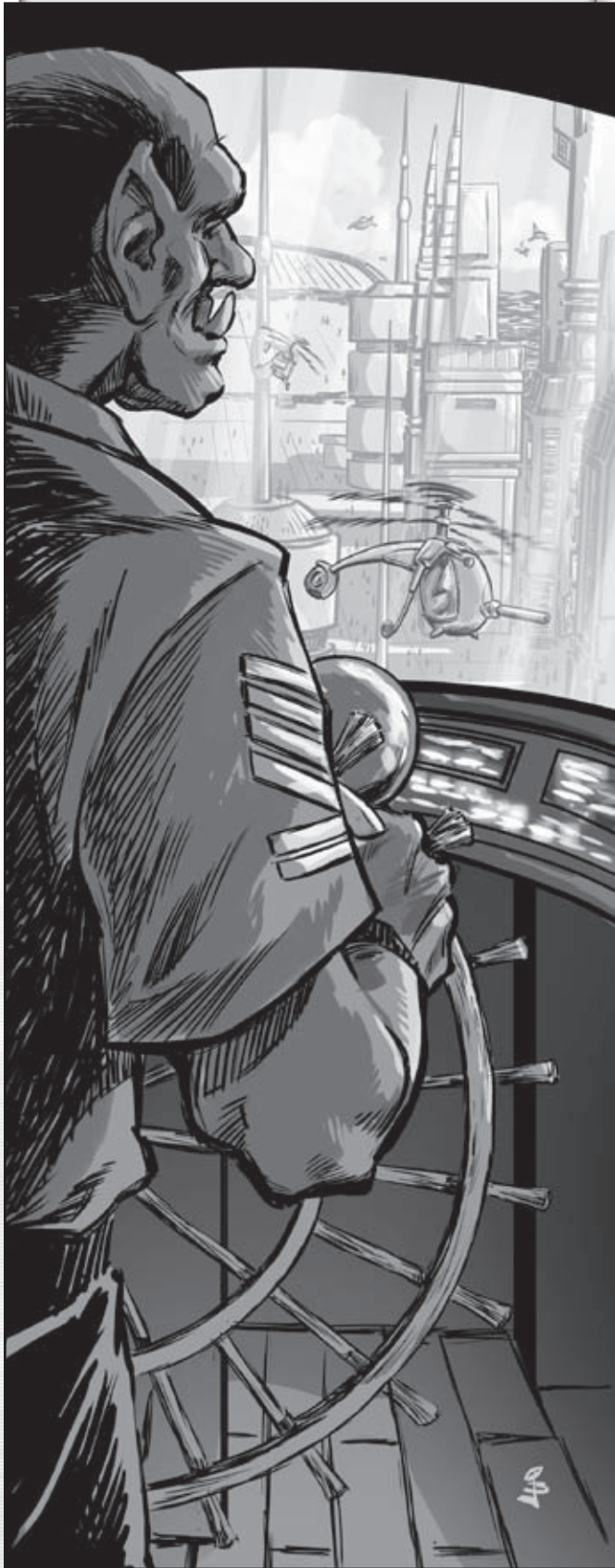
I consider myself among the lucky ones who had the nuyen to buy my way out of that hellhole so that I could bring you this story of the abused. It saddens me to know that so many of my brethren, my fellow Barnacles, will never make it out of that cycle to see the light of a new day, and that for all intents and purposes, nothing that Proteus AG seems to be doing goes against any type of corporate or international law. We truly live in a cruel world.

This is James Hill, and this has been *The Forgotten Barnacles*.

- I wish I was more enraged. What Proteus is doing is horrible, of course, and I will work to avoid Proteus products, but in a world where corporations sell their employees' organs or kidnap technomancers in order to slice their brains open, this sort of abuse seems almost quaint. It's tragic that that's the world we live in.
- Aufheben
- Neither story actually addresses the issue of security. I understand sensor suites, cameras, and the like, but what about the security personnel? It seems as though since the arkoblock has two distinct populations; you would almost expect to have two distinct security setups.
- Hard Exit
- On the lower levels, where the so-called Barnacles reside, I have heard that there is a very strong, uniformed presence among the employee population. They want their workers to know that if something goes down, such as riots or work stoppages, Proteus can and will put it down quickly, using however much force it takes. But for the levels above the surface of the ocean, Proteus banks on its near-utopian facade. And making the top levels look like a police state would be counter-productive. That means if you



INCOMING FEED.....

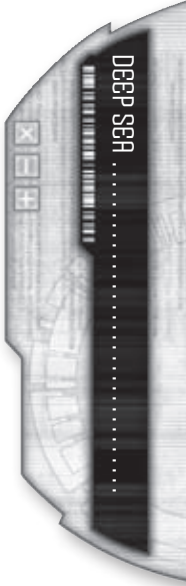


are lucky enough to visit the top levels of the arkoblock, you'll only find a very small uniformed police force; maybe a force of one thousand for a metahuman population closer to two million.

But they are not the ones that you have to be worried about. Proteus is not stupid enough to allow a metahuman population to be unpoliced. For those higher levels, Proteus uses a massive undercover security force. They never wear identification or reveal themselves to the general public; if you're thinking of them as a secret police, you wouldn't be far from the mark. Their numbers are believed to be somewhere in the range of ten to fifty thousand. Without uniforms to identify them, you'll never know if that person that you had a cup of coffee with in the morning and who you shared your gripes about Proteus won't come back later with friends and arrest you for sedition. I've heard that it's happened, often subtly so as not to upset the general population. Troublesome individuals weren't arrested, according to the official storyline; they were merely reassigned to a different part of the arkoblock. The story never goes on to mention that the part of the arkoblock to which they were assigned was the inside of a prison cell.

- Picador

For years, Proteus AG has been working with Maersk Incorporated Assets to develop its next generation arkoblock. This arkoblock was designated for the waters off Shanghai. This arkoblock was in the design phases for years until Proteus AG and Maersk called off their joint project for a variety of reasons, including allegations from both sides of corporate espionage, embezzlement, fraud, and spying. This project lay abandoned until after Crash 2.0, when Maersk and Proteus AG miraculously mended fences and restarted work on building the arkoblock. What would make this arkoblock unique and a first for the world would be its ability to move and relocate to wherever Proteus and Maersk needed it to be, even to sites not immediately off the coast. It could even be set up for deep-sea operations. A mobile arkoblock is unprecedented, and offers a lot of advantages to whoever owns it. An arkoblock, with a huge population, formidable defenses, and a potentially massive security force, would make claim jumping all but impossible against spots where it settled. In addition, such a large structure would all but make the problems associated with pirate attacks a thing of the past for Proteus. Finally, having such a versatile arkoblock means you don't waste time building a permanent structure at that site. Whereas most conventional methods take three months or longer to establish their facilities, the mobile arkoblock could be ready to get to work almost as soon as it arrived on site. Needless to say, if Proteus AG and Maersk succeed in this venture and create a fully mobile arkoblock, capable to transverse the open seas, you will see the megacorporations rushing to catch up to this accomplishment. You will see runs targeting Proteus AG for their classified engine design specs and the designs for the arkoblock. You will also likely see a rush from the megacorporations to build their own arkoblocks, despite the massive costs associated with their construction, which means you'll see construction businesses vying for this flood of money. As of this moment, the scuttlebutt that I have received says that the Shanghai arkoblock has been completed, but it is not ready for residents or business.



- Impervious to piracy, you say? Sounds vaguely familiar to the poorly chosen boast about being able to build an unsinkable ship. I love a challenge.
- Kane
- Hmm. I wonder if the arkoblock is capable of being rigger adapted. I've never piloted an entire sprawl before. Could be fun ...
- Rigger X

Although there is tremendous secrecy surrounding the Shanghai arkoblock, I've heard quite a bit about the project from riggers in that part of the Pacific Ocean who have kept close eyes on Proteus' latest endeavor. For the last six months, Proteus AG and Maersk have been running shakedown tests on the arkoblock. From what my fellow riggers tell me, the Shanghai arkoblock has experienced numerous setbacks, adapt has not been living up to its expectations. Five months ago, five of the lowest levels completely flooded, and caused the arkoblock's engines to stall. During the next test following those repairs, three of the arkoblock's engines burned out when they attempted to get the craft to travel as fast as ten knots. Although Proteus and Maersk wanted the outside world to believe the arkoblock was running tests on their mining equipment, the truth of the matter was the arkoblock was stranded, six hundred kilometers off of the closest shoreline. With an arkoblock being so massive, towing the structure was out of the question. Repairs to the monstrous structure took six weeks, and right at the end of that period, the arkoblock was subjected to its first major Pacific storm. As a result, dozens of levels above the ocean's surface become compromised by the outside winds and rain, and many of the upper levels became flooded. My fellow riggers intercepted communications between Proteus' headquarters and the arkoblock revealing that on at least three occasions, the arkoblock was lurching to one side and in jeopardy of capsizing. Despite these setbacks, neither Proteus nor Maersk are ready to abandon the Shanghai arkoblock just yet, and they are acquiring leading experts in mechanical and civil engineering to resolve the many problems their arkoblock has been experiencing. My contacts have informed me that it could take up to two full years to fully eliminate the design flaws found in the arkoblock structure.

- Are these genuine design flaws, or are they the result of runs against Proteus?
- Hard Exit
- I would say ninety percent of the problems encountered by this arkoblock are design flaws. To allow for this arkoblock to have any chance of being mobile, it had to be scaled down considerably, thereby creating weak points that likely did not exist before. From what my sources tell me, this particular arkoblock has only ninety-eight total levels, and it is only capable of supporting one million metahumans, instead of the three million that its older siblings are able to sustain. Combined with its different proportions and the rigid demands that it has to meet in order to successfully endure a major hurricane, tsunami, or typhoon at sea, it's understandable that Proteus was going to experience numerous problems during the shakedown process. I'm just not sure they were expecting to see these many problems. But I'm certain any data that Proteus collects from its failures would be worth nuyen

to the other corporations as they look to explore building their own arkoblocks in the future.

- Beaker

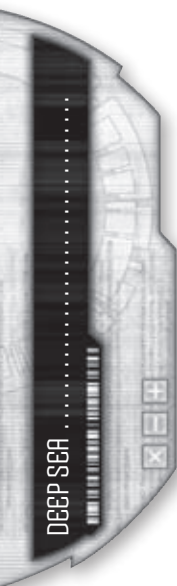
OTHER SEA-BASED AQUACOLOGIES (CURRENT AND FUTURE)

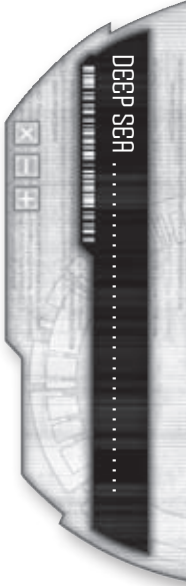
Although the arkoblocks are what most fascinates me about life at sea, there are a lot of smaller aquacologies that may be of interest to the rest of you. Some locations you may have already heard about (such the Ares Trident aquacology or Evo's Saotome AquaDomes), others have only recently been built (Red Wheel Engineering's floating prison island) or others, like Aztechnology's and Aztlan's aquacology, are still in the concept and development stages. Each of these sites present valuable opportunities for runs, and if you know about them, you may be able to watch for these opportunities to come your way.

ARES TRIDENT

The Ares Trident underwater compound in the Guiana Basin consists of three large, pyramid-shaped arcologies that house up to three thousand Knight Errant and Ares Arms troops and researchers. Even after years of operation, it is still among the largest of the known aquacologies. From an overhead view, the three interconnected pyramids resemble the prongs of a trident (hence its name). The Trident facility is often used in the training of Knight Errant special forces, particularly those tasked with amphibious missions. But what makes the Ares Trident underwater facility far more valuable to runners is its militech research, particular in the field of sea operations. Word of tests involving new types of depth charges, improved sonar capabilities, improved stealth technologies, and sea drones that are faster and more maneuverable are believed to be ongoing in this underwater facility. The UCAS, CAS, and Saeder-Krupp have all expressed great interest in the research taking place inside this highly controlled military research and training facility. At one point, it was leaked that the director of this facility was Fortuna Dey. Since that time of that leak, the Ares Trident facility has switched out its entire staff, and now no one knows who the current protect director is, or who that person's staff is. Given the classified nature of what goes on within the Ares Trident facility, many believe that the Trident is also used to run black ops in the region. This could very well include arms running to Amazonia, Bogota and other hot spots around South America.

- I've heard from friends of mine inside of Ares that the Trident is slowly wearing out its usefulness. It is one of the oldest aquacologies out there, even older than Evo's Saotome AquaDomes. And from what I'm told, the Trident is becoming more accident-prone. On top of that, if Ares is running black ops out of the Trident, the very fact that people know about the facility makes it a liability. I'm told that Ares is currently looking for a new, undisclosed location to build a new and less-well-known SOTA facility. I also heard that within three years, it is likely that either the Trident will be rehabilitated and re-tasked for more commercial, scientific research or it will be scuttled altogether.
- Sticks





INCOMING FEED.....



- Ares seems overly interested in the South Atlantic coast off of Amazonia, approximately three hundred kilometers from Metropole. According to Ares' public affairs office, that corporation is looking to scuttle some of its older ships that were once used for deep sea drilling. Their goal is to rehabilitate the oceans by creating new artificial reefs with the hulls of these scuttled ships. But with all the activity and interest in those waters, my guess is that there's going to be something more there, such as a brand new underwater base.
- Glasswalker

AZTECHNOLOGY MILITARY INSTALLATION (AQUACOLOGY)

The Aztechnology Military Aquacology is an example of an aquacology that is still in the planning stages. During the fiasco with Horizon, besides just materials from Amazonia being leaked to the public, there were classified reports leaked of Aztechnology and Aztlan, which included them wanting to establish an aquacology within Aztlan's coastal waters near Barranquilla. Aztlan and Aztechnology have both since claimed that the still unnamed aquacology is being designed to service its fleet of patrol boats, to aid its efforts to reduce piracy in the Caribbean, to provide security and support services for ships traveling through the Gulf of Aztlan from the Nicaragua and Panama Canals, as well as to help international law enforcement agencies to quell the ongoing problem of drug running through the gulf. They have both denied that the aquacology would have any active role in the war once it is built.

Unfortunately, no one seems to be buying this story. Most Aztlan and Aztechnology experts believe the two groups intend to build a militarized aquacology. But instead of it conducting only black ops and research missions as the Ares Trident facility seems to have done in the past, experts fear this one will be equipped with cruise missiles, giving it the capability to launch aerial drones and carry other offensive weapons that could easily hit targets within Amazonia. This aquacology is also believed to be able to design and build modern naval ships for Aztlan and Aztechnology, augmenting their ship building capabilities found in San Diego, including the construction of nuclear powered submarines. Although the original plans for the aquacology seem to indicate this project won't be implemented for another year, there are signs that the current Aztlan and Aztechnology naval fleet operating in the Gulf of Aztlan may in fact be delivering supplies to the designated site to start construction of this facility early. Construction could last nearly three months. The aquacology, if it is allowed to be completed, is large enough to support a crew of nearly six thousand. It is also believed that if completed, this Aztechnology Military Installation will be able to service up to ten different naval vessels at time, while at the same time building four new ones.

- Oh hell no. If I have anything to say about it, this project will be about as operable as their Nicaraguan Canal. Which just went down again from sabotage this week. I do believe the Nicaraguan Canal had been open all of three weeks since the war began.
- Hard Exit

- I'm sure if you or other runners like you can't put a stop to this, the CAS will. I'm sure that base would have weapons that could also strike the coastal regions of the CAS, and the CAS would not be happy that the Azzies are trying to acquire another weapon to potentially use against them, particularly now with all the tensions that are continuing to rise in part to Sirurg's activities near the Aztlan/CAS border.
- Kay St. Irregular

EVO

Evo has perhaps one of the most diverse collections of facilities in the oceans, spanning from the coasts of Japan to the waters off South America. These interests include offshore power plants and mobile mining platforms. Two of its most notable offshore power plants are the Kuorshio Offshore Power Plant in Japan and the Drake Passage power plant. Both of these projects continue to produce major profits for Evo, particularly the one from South America. Due to the fact that it supplies electricity for Amazonia, the Drake Passage project is a constant target for sabotage by Aztlan and Aztechnology. The last time this power plant was sabotaged was two months ago, which resulted in rolling brownouts throughout Amazonia. The Drake Passage power plant has yet to return to one hundred percent capacity, putting a continued strain on Amazonia's electrical grid. Evo officials are promising Amazonia that the Drake Passage power plant will be back to normal in a few weeks.

Among Evo's many sea-based facilities is the Saotome AquaDomes, one of the original aquacologies. Saotome started out with a population of two hundred. Today, the AquaDomes in the Sea of Japan have expanded to a population of six thousand, with additional expansions planned. Many of the tools that the AquaDomes developed for life under the sea had been modified for use in space for Evo's first manned Mars base. The AquaDomes are world famous for their green biotech research and development. Despite their age, the Saotome AquaDomes still possess the most advanced forms air purification and filtration systems of any aquacology. Evo also continues to have the greatest success in growing and maintaining crops in an artificial environment. And as always, Proteus AG continues to be interested in its design, and they regularly send runners after that paydata.

Unlike other facilities that carefully control how much knowledge of their staffers is made public, the AquaDomes is more public with information on who works there. The director for the Saotome AquaDomes is a female elf by the name of Doctor Pauline McNeil.

- Even when Evo was still Yamatetsu, it made a clear demonstration that it was ahead of its competition in the design of these aquacologies. While Ares' Trident facility appears doomed to be scuttled, Evo's Saotome AquaDomes still have at least another two decades of life within them. When designing this facility, Yamatetsu made sure that replacing the module components could be done quickly, easily, and cheaply. Almost all the modules within the aquacology have been replaced since it went online, and another major upgrade is scheduled for 2076.
- Kia

SAEDER-KRUPP

Like Evo, Saeder-Krupp has interests in almost all aspects of the seas. Deep-sea mining, drilling, and developing new materials and tools for space exploration and space colonization are among their primary concerns. Although Saeder-Krupp has many secret underwater facilities that cover the globe and would be perfect to talk about here, the one that stands is the Cadmus Deep-Habitat Colony.

The Cadmus Deep-Habitat Colony was established in 2058 off of Portugal's coast as a SOTA research facility and experimental mining colony. Saeder-Krupp took the best and the brightest within its ranks (many of whom Lofwyr wanted protected from possible extractions) and placed them on this station for ten-year rotations. In this isolated facility, researchers and engineers designed ways to make deep-sea mining and oil drilling much more dependent on automation and less dependent on metahuman labor. At least fifteen drones with separate and unique functions and tools have been developed using Cadmus' pool of talent and the nearly limitless resources afforded to it by S-K. These drones have replaced metahumans in these industries' most dangerous jobs. Saeder-Krupp has also credited the Cadmus testing facilities as leading the way in improving nanite function and longevity while providing better radiation shielding for nanites that operate in outer space. This nanotech is then used to augment its line of specialized drones and make them less susceptible to breaking down in extreme environments. As such, Saeder-Krupp's space interests have been advanced greatly by Cadmus' work. Most of Saeder-Krupp's competition, particularly space-faring corporations such as Ares and Evo, would love to get their hands on any of the research being carried out at this facility.

- Since this facility is 3,200 meters under water, the isolated population of Cadmus also faces the same mental health problems that the Barnacles of the Proteus arkoblocks are confronting. The lack of both natural sunlight and outside communication have been contributing to much higher suicide rates within its population. But unlike Proteus, Saeder-Krupp actually gives a damn about the loss of people, and they have been doing what it could to reduce this statistic, from allowing its most troubled employees the opportunity to travel to the surface for brief periods of time each month, to offering counseling services to treat these disorders. For the past five years since Saeder-Krupp began addressing this problem, the suicide rate has dropped significantly.
- Traveler Jones
- This program of allowing their employees time to surface for fresh air and daylight makes these researchers much more vulnerable to extraction. No matter how much security is put around them, it's still much easier to deal with than having to penetrate this underwater fortress and then figure a way out once you've gotten your target.
- Nephrine

I am confident that we know very little of what transpires inside Cadmus. We know that it originally started as a colony of two thousand employees, and now, thanks to the success it has had for Saeder-Krupp, the colony expanded to include eight thousand



personnel. Because of the explosion of its personnel, many feel that the number of research projects being carried out on Cadmus has also ballooned in recent years. Although data is very difficult to come by from the Cadmus aquacology, it is believed that Uther Blue-Tongue still functions as the project director for this facility.

One interesting story that keeps being told about Cadmus is that Lofwyr reportedly paid the facility a visit in late 2073. While Lofwyr was on the station, another visitor came. Few people spoke to this visitor, and her visit came and went without most of the facility's staff noticing. There were whispers, though that this visitor was the leviathan known as the Sea Dragon. Assuming a human female visage, the dragon came onboard the colony and met with Lofwyr for at least six hours, then left. To this day, there are theories about what the purpose of the meeting was, though most of them are based on evidence-freeze speculation. The topic of dragon eggs is the most popular theory, since Hestaby is believed to be holding some of the Sea Dragon's eggs, possibly with the intent of raising the hatched young as her own. Some speculate that Lofwyr gave a few eggs to the Sea Dragon for her cooperation. Since Lofwyr's meeting with the Sea Dragon, it would seem as though high-level S-K personnel have been buzzing about new underwater expeditions in parts of the seas that Lofwyr had previously made off limits. What this might mean for S-K as well as the rest of world is anyone's guess. More artifacts, perhaps?

RED WHEEL ENGINEERING MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON

In 2073, Wuxing's subsidiary, Red Wheel Engineering, was commissioned to build a floating prison island off the coast of Kenya. Red Wheel Engineering not only did so, but in the process they created a state-of-the-art, maximum-security prison on the sea that can be considered the envy of the other megacorps. Although the paydata on this floating prison is heavily classified and hard to come by, riggers who have tried to get onto this island have told me that this floating prison is capable of traveling at speeds of up to fifteen knots and is capable to staying out to sea for significant lengths of time. I am also told the prison island consists of interchangeable and interlocking modules that contain the cellblocks for the prisoners. All the cells lie beneath the surface of the water. The top of the prison surface resembles a heavily armored tortoise shell, with only a couple access points to the jail cells below. The modules that make up the island can be rearranged within the course of thirty minutes and completely changing the layout of the prison. All the surfaces have a ruthenium coating, which camouflages the top of the prison island to match the color of ocean water, making it extremely difficult to spot the facility by air or from a distance. The roof of the prison itself is protected by retractable razor and monowire traps. It is commonly believed that the prison can easily maintain a population of five thousand metahumans, and perhaps even more due to its modular design. What makes this prison island so dangerous is that beneath the surface of the water, the prison can deploy depth charges, torpedoes or rigger-controlled mines, directing them toward at any boat that may threaten it.

Currently, most of the riggers I know say that the only way to get onto this prison island is to infiltrate a ship that is meant to rendezvous with it, to deliver either supplies or prisoners. Any method that results in a direct confrontation with the prison is just too dangerous. WiFi access to the nodes on board this prison

is restricted to the interior of the modules themselves. That means that the only way you're going to hack into the prison's nodes is to be inside the prison.

Since its first unveiling, this floating prison has become popular and in demand by various nations around the world. Twelve floating prison islands are currently on order with Red Wheel Engineering and are in the process of being built, while twenty others are in line to be constructed in 2075. This floating prison island has become so successful that Red Wheel Engineering is already planning second, third, and fourth generations of this floating prison. It is rumored that Red Wheel Engineering is developing the next version of the floating prison island, one that can be submerged for as long as twelve hours, making it all but impenetrable to everything except submarines. The third and fourth generation floating prisons are likely to be specialized facilities to deal with the Awakened, Infected and technomancer populations. Due to the difficulties of incarcerating these populations, many corporations are looking to the innovation of Red Wheel Engineering and how they might be able to procure these designs for themselves.

- I can vouch for how tough these fucking floating prisons are. Three months ago, during an op gone bad, one of the street sams in my crew got pinched by Lone Star. He was assigned as part of a pilot program to this prison. I thought getting him back was going to be easy. It took me the better part of a month to track down that son of a bitch (the prison, not my chummer). When I found her, my crew and I started to climb onto the island, and those fucking razorwire meshes popped up from the surface of the island. They cut us up real bad. But we kept going. When we got closer to a hatch to go below the surface, the segmented roofing started blowing up as if we were in a minefield. Or more accurately, it was as if we were on top of smart armor, and it was exploding in our faces. I lost two of my crew just trying to rescue our chummer, and we had to flee before it got too bad. And I have yet to find a better way into this new type of Alcatraz to get my ornae. At this rate, he'll be released from old age before I can figure out how to spring him.
- Black Mamba
- Obviously, these prisons are perfect for prisoners that you want to make disappear but you can't (or don't want to) kill. Governments have found these prisons to be ideal for political prisoners. Both Tír Tairngire and Tír na nÓg are toying with the idea of acquiring these prisons for themselves. Another use is holding prisoners who have intelligence value or political prisoners. These could be spies that infiltrated your government or traitors that began selling secrets. For whatever reason, these are individuals whose location you want to hide from the outside world so that whoever they were working for won't try to free them.
- Thorn
- So just who out there fits into the category of someone you can't kill?
- /dev/grrl
- Those who have no physical body, for starters. Not spirits—walls and waters do little to hold them. E-ghosts and artificial intelligences, on the other hand ...
- Thorn



THE YONAGUNI MONUMENT

Posted by: Mihoshi Oni

Yonaguni Island is the westernmost inhabited island of Japan and part of the Yaeyama island chain. It is one of the few places the Yonaguni and Yaeyama languages are spoken. Want to know a quick way to check to see the quality of your linguasoft? If your linguasoft lists Yonaguni and Yaeyama as dialects, stop buying cheap software. They are separate languages. If you want to get in with the locals during any runs here, know the difference.

The allure of the island for our purposes isn't what's on the island but what's near it. The Yonaguni Monument was discovered by hammerhead shark divers in 1987. The divers were looking for a place to observe the sharks. They found a decent sanctuary, but it didn't take them long to realize that the rocks they were near looked as if they were man-made. The size of the outcropping suggested that if it was indeed part of a structure, it was huge. A professor named Masaaki Kimura led scientists from the University of the Ryukyus to study the discovery, and he confirmed the suspicions of the divers. There was a huge man-made structure located just off shore—a structure older than any civilization known to man.

- Kimura was an ... interesting guy. Even before the Awakening, he was a proponent of Yamataikoku theory. It seemed like scholars were jumping out of the woodwork to denounce him as fringe. Rumor has it that Ryumyu himself visited Kimura-san before the old man died; when he left, the professor's serene smile of enlightenment could not be mistaken.
- FastJack
- Yamataikoku desu ka?
- /dev/grrl
- The Yamatai Kingdom was written about in various ancient histories. Theories say it was not connected to Yamato, which would one day become Japan. Scholars to this day debate where it was located or if it, in fact, was real.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- Short version: Japanese Atlantis. But with more historical plausibility.
- Snopes

The Shiawase Decision turned Shiawase into one of the first megacorporations and in its wake Shiawase looked to other areas to apply their newfound heft. They sought permission to build several facilities throughout the country, and one such facility was on Yonaguni Island. What they called a weather-monitoring station is now widely believed to have been a black-bag research station. The researchers learned the legends of the monument from the locals and called in some high-level executives to discuss expanding operations.

The Yonaguni Monument came to the attention of Awakened researchers in 2023. A mage by the name of Kenjiro Masahime spent some time diving near the site, and he noticed an unusual aura surrounding much of the monument. His discussions on

the subject caught the ear of Shiawase employees in the area. Masahime was brought on by Shiawase to assist in their research on the site.

- Masahime was a wagemage for Mitsuhama, so being brought in actually meant a neon-hot extraction before they were commonplace. Wagemages were rarer, and thus more coveted, back then.
- FastJack

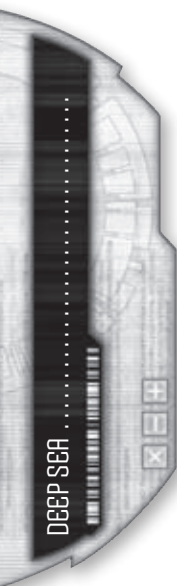
After Imperial forces seized San Francisco, the Emperor was in a bind. Maintaining forces an ocean away was a severe strain on the military budget. As government personnel looked around for untapped sources of revenue, they thought they struck gold when they decided to auction off the rights to research the Yonaguni Monument. Almost all the Japanacorp got into the mix, and the competition for the site quickly moved beyond mere money. After a decent amount of bloodshed, Shiawase came out on top in 2038. They have been a presence on the island and near the monument ever since—in fact, at present Shiawase is synonymous with the island in the minds of locals. Most people in the area have probably drawn a paycheck from the company.

The next decade was quiet around Yonaguni Island. Shiawase solidified its hold on the island and built the first undersea facilities to study the monument. It also engaged in frequent clashes with those who came looking to the monument for their own enlightenment. What was once a public curiosity to divers was now treated corporate property, though the monument was never officially ceded to the company. Security forces were very careful to not be overly aggressive. They'd leave interlopers bruised and equipment broken, but they avoided any serious casualties.

The Atlantean Foundation entered the picture toward the end of the 2050s, and they were the first research organization that stood up to Shiawase's heavy-handed tactics. For a few years, their ships packed with heavily armed guards would pull right up next to Shiawase ships similarly stocked, and crews would dive into the water, staying under for a time until the opposition decided to send a crew of their own the chase them out. After playing that game for a time, Shiawase changed tactics and began to operate more through legal channels. It started actively pressuring the government into stricter monitoring of diving at the monument. As a result, research efforts declined.

The passing of Halley's comet changed the monument's profile within the scientific community. Seismic activity below the monument brought researchers flooding back to the area. Those familiar with the site astrally say the aura of the place changed. Some believe something Awakened under the rocks. Others believe the signature change is related to increases in geothermal activity, and they believe that means something is approaching (though they are often not specific on what that "something" is). One geomancer believes that Ghostwalker was asleep in the monument before he came tearing out through the Watergate Rift.

- Mainly because people like to believe that every single damn thing is connected. And people like dragons. There's no evidence for this theory. At all.
- Snopes





INCOMING FEED.....



Recent years have seen an upswing of independent dives on the monument. Shiawase's hold on the site remains strong, but demand for information and artifacts grows. The recent artifact rush is driving the price of anything connected to the ancient world into record-breaking figures. The risks are starting to outweigh the fears of being caught by Imperial forces or Shiawase patrols. Shiawase is backing a law making the penalties for unauthorized dives more severe, but the wheels of government grind slowly. In the meantime, the bottom of the sea is heating up.

Multiple theories exist to explain the monument's existence. Though there are no public expeditions on record, a few private entities are rumored to have drilled through the rock and discovered what's inside though they haven't been forthcoming with what they have learned. The Imperial Government has been slow to grant requests to officially study the monument. What follows are the best collection of rumors, hearsay and tall tales about the monument. There is no proof any of these stories are true, nor that only one of them is. The only people who have been inside the monument aren't talking.

The most popular theory among those who study the Yonaguni Monument is that the building is an ancient temple dedicated to gods long since forgotten. If this is true, the door to the temple remains hidden. A door may still be found, perhaps buried in thousands of years of silt on the ocean floor. The outside of the monument has no markings—any such markings may have washed away by the tides. If it is a temple, it may be filled with untold riches—or it may have been looted by thieves from a previous age.

The leading expert on the temple theory is Marcus Weissmann. Weissmann first came across the monument while

performing research for the Draco Foundation, and he is considered one of the foremost experts on the monument. This reputation came at a price, though. Weissmann abandoned several other more mainstream Draco Foundation projects to dive into this branch of his research. As a result, he is an academic outcast. He lives off the generosity of eccentric rich backers. Weissmann is an enemy of Shiawase as well as the Imperial government due to several unauthorized attempts to get inside the monument. He is often found in Hong Kong, trying to pull together funding for his next unauthorized expedition.

- Believing that a large, ancient structure is a treasure trove of riches is a common theory, but there's reason for that. The thinking is that if ancient people had put that much work into a structure, they believed it was important, and what do you do with important structures? You put important stuff in them. And that thinking has been encouraged by the fact that it occasionally turns out to be true. More often than that, though, ancient peoples knew full well what was stored in these places, and they looted them before anyone else could get around to it. Shorter version—most of the time there's nothing left.
- Am-Mut

Related to the temple theory is the idea that the monument is a storehouse for ancient weaponry. Everything from magic swords to wondrous artifacts are rumored to be inside, waiting for a few adventurous souls to find their way a pile of loot. These stories also tell of the traps laid to dissuade such tomb robbers. Some are traps of stone, levers, and other ingenious elements. Some draw

on ambient mana levels to protect the treasures. It sounds like something out of *Ancient Raiders Unleashed*, but it explains why nobody claims to have ever gotten inside the monument.

A man named Boris Reiff claims to deal in artifacts recovered from the monument. He's often found in Moscow, making t-bird runs into the Asian states. Boris talks big and spends big. He has claimed that many of the artifacts that have recently flooded the market come from a source that got into the monument. Boris has claimed to have contact with this connection, though he says he has never been to the monument himself.

Whatever the source of the artifacts, Boris has benefitted from them. He's been moving up the ranks of the *Vory* thanks to the money he's been bringing in. Is his story about where he's been getting the artifacts the real deal, or is it just a cover for something else? Only he knows for sure.

- Boris talks big, but there's no way he's even sniffed out any artifacts on his own. He's a small-timer trying to talk his way up to a higher position.
- Hard Exit

Another theory is based on the structure of the monument. A building with no doors and no windows makes the monument an excellent candidate for a prison. There's no way in, it's deep under the water—what could get out? The lack of visible cracks means that if it is a prison, whatever it holds has not yet escaped. This might be for the best, since our world seems to be ill-equipped to handle large-scale magical threats. If whatever the monument was built to contain is still alive, it's certainly magical. If it's dead, the research on whatever remains are left could be quite lucrative.

- Let me guess—people think maybe a dragon is trapped inside?
- Kia
- Perhaps not. There are things out there that even dragons fear and would wish locked away for good.
- Man-of-Many-Names

Nelson Murray is an executive connected to some of the larger private prison firms in the world. He's been enquiring about expeditions to the monument to study containment, which seems to indicate that he believes this theory. Keeping astrally active prisoners is a time- and money-consuming process. If the monument can provide any insight on how to lock down such prisoners, it will be worth whatever Murray asks. He's been behind a lot of the runs dealing with the monument, gathering whatever info he can get and selling it for whatever he can get. Murray is based in Seattle, though he flies to Japan on a regular basis.

The most outlandish theory involves the monument as kind of a snowglobe. This theory maintains that the interior of the monument contains a piece of the previous world. The piece of the world is supposedly perfectly preserved due to an ancient spell cast on the monument. This is why the Imperial government keeps people away—they are afraid that any disturbance will destroy the secret world inside—secrets they believe could change the Sixth World forever. The advanced magical containment alone could revolutionize how magic is currently understood.

Karen Prosperi claims to have been an intern under Dr. Maasaki Kimura, and she says she possesses the only copy of a manuscript recovered near the monument. The manuscript was allegedly bequeathed to the university by an unknown benefactor. According to Prosperi, the manuscript is written in a language that is not as yet completely understood, though there are similarities to both Sperethiel and Orz'et. Prosperi claims the Imperial government tried to destroy the manuscript, and that she has it locked away in a secure location. She was last seen in the California Free State, seeking corporate funding to assist her in her attempts to translate the manuscript.

- Well, isn't that convenient? She has the only copy she's willing to share for a small fee. All these "experts" sound like frauds, charlatans, or worse.
- Bull
- There are no records of a Karen Prosperi being employed by any university during any recent time frame
- /dev/grrl
- Of course not. Because they were erased. Was nobody paying attention during the Conspiracy Theories discussion?
- Plan 9

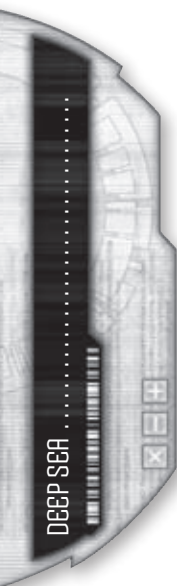
If you have any thoughts of checking out the monument for yourself, you need to know a little more about the major players involved, so let's take a little deeper look at them.

SHIAWASE

The organization with the longest direct connection to the Yonaguni Monument is the Shiawase corporation. It was the winner of the small war fought between the Japanacorp in 2038. There are other people that have gotten glimpses of the monument and made off with a few artifacts here and there, but Shiawase remains the big gorilla. If the run connects to the Yonaguni Monument in anyway, you are going to come up against this company for whatever you need to get, or you're going to need to find a way past them. Most of the people connected to the monument worked for Shiawase in the past, even if it was just a way to get some inside information.

The importance of the Yonaguni Monument to the corporation stems from the fact that they won the fight in the first place. Shiawase is not known for its bold moves or mercurial rock star personalities like rival corporations, so winning the control of the monument gave them a certain distinction they found they liked. The corporation takes pride in the fact that it has held the monument for so long, while other pieces of land and property have been traded in between other companies like *DojoMojo Fighting Force* chips. The monument has also has Shiawase stretched into areas that are not the corp's traditional strengths. The facilities near the monument house some of the rare Awakened researchers working for Shiawase, and they are building Shiawase's skills in this area.

The connection between Shiawase and the Chrysanthemum Throne is strongly displayed in the company's influence over the monument. Most of the officials that were connected to the 2038 conflict made careers for themselves overseeing the bureaucracy surrounding access to the monument. Shiawase is generally quite



restrictive in the access it grants, even more so when a request involves any parties that it has reason to dislike. The company is unable to completely restrict rivals from getting permission, since such permission is handled through the Imperial Government. Instead, Shiawase pares down non-corporate access to very small numbers. Of course, this also means that someone with money to grease the wheels should look to the corporation rather than the state.

The official name for Shiawase's on-site facility is Geothermal Research Emplacement Sadato, often called GRES for short. It is the only permanent facility allowed on the ocean floor within five kilometers of the monument site. It is also the only base that allows unrestricted access to the monument. The monument is not Shiawase property but is often defended as such, since security personnel at the bases can respond rapidly to trespassers or unauthorized divers. Complaints and lawsuits filed by parties injured in conflicts with Shiawase security find that their cases tend to move very slowly through the Japanese courts.

- That's pronounced "gr-eh-ss," which many linguasofts misidentify as the word "grace."
- Kia
- That makes a conversation I overheard between two Shiawase executives make a lot more sense ...
- Mihoshi Oni

Much of the information processed by the GRES facility is sent back to the company's headquarters in Osaka, Japan. Most of what gets sent back to the home office are rock samples, fauna, and trashed equipment. The Osaka office processes what it receives, then destroys it, at least for the most part. Even the broken equipment is trashed instead of being refurbished. It's usually brand new or even in prototype stages. At least one prototype deep sea recovery vehicle was sent to the GRES site, worked there for a year, brought back to Osaka, destroyed, and then an exact replica of the prototype was built for further testing.

The public face of the company's efforts to study the Yonaguni Monument is the Masaaki Kimura Museum on Yonaguni Island. It's a bit of light tourist fluff that summarizes the history of the island, the monument, and offers a simsense dive of the monument for those who want to get up close but stay dry. The museum feels lightweight, but don't be fooled. The exhibits are heavily monitored, and the surveillance coverage is excellent. It's a great place to visit for more information than what's covered here, but those paranoid of being caught on film should take major precautions.

- If I was involved with a run on this place, I'd do a quick Matrix search for updates on the current happenings, then drop in here to do a quick survey of what the museum's latest stuff is. Emphasis on the word "quick" in both cases—you don't want to draw any attention, as Shiawase is only too anxious to keep tabs on anyone planning to dig in their backyard.
- Kane

Shiawase's rivals are quick to point out that their control over the monument for the past forty years has not produced much in the way of results. The company has poured millions of nuyen into

the project. Tracing results back to a specific project is never easy, but ask anyone about the GRES project and you will probably not get a clear answer. If there was anything worth discovering by now, they should have found it. Most of the personnel involved at GRES also seem to hit a wall when it comes to advancement within the company. The last three project directors retired out of the position. Accepting a GRES position seems like the rare ticket to job security, though some might see it as career suicide. You're not likely to lose your job, but you're also not going anywhere.

The only reported death connected to the GRES facility was Brianna Leigh, a hermetic mage out of Seattle. She was brought into attempt one of the first astral breaches of the monument's walls. Despite having top medical staff taking care of her body while she attempted to pass through the walls, Leigh never returned. Her body was declared brain dead after not reporting back for two weeks, and she was buried at sea. Additional attempts at astral projection have been suggested since her death, but the company seems hesitant to risk any more Awakened employees on such an endeavor.

One of the more interesting events tied to the monument involves a container ship bound for San Francisco from Osaka that disappeared in 2061. It may have been the victim of pirates, weather, or one of the many other causes that sends ships to the bottom of the sea. The interesting thing is that some pirates operating out of Hong Kong swear the ship isn't sunk and that it's still wandering the trade routes of the Pacific Ocean. The ship was supposedly carrying some artifacts from GRES to a research facility when something caused the crew to break open the container with the artifacts. Rumors spread by the pirates say that the artifacts worked together to open some strange gateway on the ship, which is now piloted by the astral forms of the crew.

ATLANTEAN FOUNDATION

The Atlantean Foundation is devoted to discovering evidence of previous civilizations. Legends such as Shangri-La, Mu, and Atlantis offer hope that some evidence of the last cycle of magic exist somewhere in the world. The Foundation is very interested in Yamatai Kingdom stories, and they are working to link them to several other mythologies that may connect back to the downcycle of magical energy. The Foundation's interest in the Yonaguni Monument became strongest shortly after the reading of Dunkelzahn's Will. It has ebbed a bit since then due to slow progress, but there is still a strong faction in the Foundation eager to uncover the monument's secrets.

Highly placed Foundation people believe that even if the monument is a natural construct, as most in the scientific community claim, the astral signatures around the monument are worth studying. They also haven't ruled out the idea that it may be a storehouse of magical artifacts. Within these broad strokes are several specific individual theories developed by individual members that are limited only by the members' own eccentricities. If you know anything about Atlantean Foundation personnel, you know that these theories can get quite far out—far enough to make Plan 9 blanche.

- Try me.
- Plan 9



- Okay, here's one: The Monument is home to a race of immortal sea people who can only breed with humans to stay alive. Their bloodline is connected to the Imperial Throne, which is desperate to cover up the connection because it is the basis for the belief that the Emperor is connected to the divine.
- Kia
- Well played.
- Plan 9

The Foundation's relations with the Japanese government are strained but still open. The Foundation recognizes Shiawase as its chief rival for monument information. The Foundation and Shiawase get along for the most part, though Foundation researchers make a point of dealing directly with the government whenever bureaucratic squabbles erupt. The monument has rarely been closed off to the Foundation, but there have been squabbles in the past over discoveries that ultimately ended up in corporate hands. The Imperial government and Shiawase have been willing to compensate the Foundation financially for taking these discoveries, but to the researchers, dive teams, and crewmembers of sunken ships, cash is cold comfort for years of work being gobbled up by a corporate raid at 2 a.m.

The Foundation doesn't have a permanent facility like Shiawase; instead, it has a research vessel dedicated to the project. The *Jasmine Celeste* operates out of Hong Kong but spends most of its time anchored near the monument site. It is often used as a training vessel for new employees of the Foundation looking for field training. Most of the new employees start out doing grunt work like swabbing decks and transmitting daily research logs.

The *Jasmine Celeste* is surrounded by a half-dozen support vessels. These vessels run supplies from the mainland, deliver personnel to and from the ship, and help protect the *Jasmine Celeste* during times of danger. These vessels change regularly, both to keep the crews fresh and to prevent one crew from gathering too much info about the monument and the *Jasmine Celeste's* operations. The Foundation prefers ships that have solid, above-board reputations, but they have occasionally brought in ships and crews with a more shadowy tinge. Before you think about trying to sign on to one of the guardian vessels, remember that these ships tend to be targeted by Shiawase officials for frequent inspections. Even squeaky-clean crews get tired of being boarded and inspected, which is another reason why these support vessels have a high turnover rate.

- Sometimes this turnover is just a surface—a vessel may simply change its name and registry. It wouldn't surprise me if the Foundation did that for boats it found useful. It's a lot cheaper than tracking down a new boat and crew just because the old one got Shiawase's knickers in a twist.
- Hard Exit

The Foundation owns the largest public collection of information on the Yonaguni Monument, and much of it is housed at a facility in Kona in the Kingdom of Hawai'i. The collection is detailed, but due to the sheer amount of information collected over decades, finding specific info is very challenging. The Foundation's facility is a large warehouse near the docks, and security there is shockingly poor, which could make it the source of artifacts connected to the monument that have leaked to the

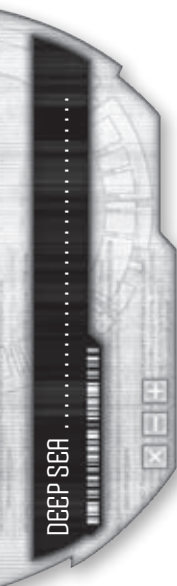
black market. There hasn't been an audit of the Kona facility in a very long time. Between the thefts and the crackpots, finding solid leads here can be like sifting through sand in the desert.

Until very recently, the Foundation's efforts related to the monument were led by a scientist named Michael Deacon. Deacon is everyone's dream image of a scientist—brilliant enough to make headway on the projects under his care, and charming enough to get donors, sponsors, and other moneymen to regularly send money in his direction. It came as a shock, then, when he recently announced he was leaving the Foundation. He has yet to announce his new position but most in the know believe that it will be connected to Shiawase's efforts to research the monument. A select few believe Deacon was the victim of a botched extraction and that he hasn't resurfaced because he took a bullet to the head on his way out from the Foundation.

- Obviously, this can't be a simple he-left-to-take-a-better-job-type thing. The Foundation certainly has non-compete clauses in its employment contracts, and they would not be inclined to let someone like Deacon just walk away. Something's up—the question is what.
- Cosmo
- Part of the issue here is that Deacon was much happier in the Atlantean Foundation than he would be in a corporate environment like Shiawase. I'm hearing rumblings that Shiawase indeed extracted him, but Deacon made his escape and is now on the run. Plenty of people would like to get their hands on him.
- Dr. Spin

One of the interesting stories about the Foundation's experiences at the site has to do with the ship called the *Aaron Lyle*. Before the arrival of the *Jasmine Celeste*, the *Aaron Lyle* was the Foundation's main vessel at the site. One night about a year ago, the *Aaron Lyle* sounded a distress signal. Every vessel in the area sped to aid the ship. But when those ships arrived, nothing was wrong. The crew claimed no alarms had been triggered. Any transmissions were claimed to be malfunctions on the receiving ships' equipment. After the ships left, the *Aaron Lyle* sailed for Hong Kong, docked, and it has been there ever since. No outsider has been allowed on the ship, and no member of the crew has reported for duty on any other legitimate vessel.

- The consensus seems to be that this was a ritual gone awry. From what I understand, they were trying to do a sort of magical version of sonar to get a map of the interior of the monument, but the monument rejected their approach, with prejudice. That rejection sent out a field that messed with electronics of all nearby ships.
- Lyran
- That's bullshit. If it was some random, wide-ranging field, why did it only effect communications equipment? And why did it come in the same way, as a distress signal? No, the real story is that they actually sent the distress signal, but then were instructed to lie about it. The crew members are still aboard because the Foundation doesn't want them wandering in public with what they know—or what they have become.
- Plan 9



The Foundation has suffered a downswing in funding and donations this past year. The lack of funding has led to speculation on which projects will lose funding. The Yonaguni Monument is definitely a potential target of cuts due to the apparent lack of results. The project backers may find themselves making some hard decisions on how to keep the money flowing. They may put pressure on donors by digging up blackmail material. They may fake a big discovery, in which case they would need people to help them fool the experts and authorities. They may even decide a desperation raid on Shiawase holdings would be a final retaliation before the plug gets pulled. If you've got connections in the area, be ready for a call. If you don't, make some.

PRIVATE COLLECTORS

One of the things helping fuel the efforts of Shiawase and the Atlantean Foundation is that, while they may not have uncovered the deepest secrets of the monument, they can still make money by selling what they have recovered to private collectors.

- Yeah, the market for these things is good enough that I've lifted items from more than one private collection so that they can be sent to another.
- Ma'Fan

Many private collectors hire small independent crews to dive the monument looking for things to bring back. The line between small crews of fortune hunters and shadowrunners is very thin. The crews typically are not very welcome at the site, and many of them have been blacklisted by Shiawase, the Atlantean Foundation, or both. The one thing those two large organizations agree on is that they do not want unauthorized small crews anywhere near the monument. If a small crew cracks the mystery of the monument before the big boys do, Shiawase and the Atlantean Foundation will not be happy, as all their years of research and billions of nuyen will be spent for nothing.

Relations with the Imperial government vary from crew to crew and collector to collector. Official access is very hard to come by without tacit approval of Shiawase, which means that most dives take place without the proper sanction of the Emperor. People still dive, but the downside to dives without the proper permits is that any items taken are considered to be stolen. Legitimate private collectors are sometimes (but not always) not interested in buying things that can be seized by the government or by a disgruntled megacorporation. Why spend thousands to put something on display when it might get tied up in a court case for years?

- Plenty of people will take that risk. There's a lot of competition for rare objects among the rich—having something no one else has gives a lot of status. I think we've all lifted items that the client was happy to sit on for the rest of their lives, keeping it private because it was illegally owned.
- Mika
- Some people learn to play keep away on the playground, and then they keep playing it for the rest of their lives.
- Bull

Independent ships rarely remain near the monument for very long. These ships hit their coordinates, dive, and then get out before anyone else knows what's happening. They're able to go in so quickly because they usually know what they're after. Diving the site without a target in mind and spending a lot of time underwater is a good way to get caught. Shiawase and the Atlantean Foundation—along with the better-capitalized treasure hunters—have the best sites under security. The smaller ships survive, and occasionally thrive, thanks to their mobility and their adaptability. It takes weeks for a sanctioned vessel to set up and execute a dive, but ships running on their own can do so within forty-eight hours.

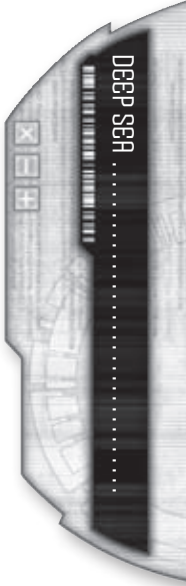
Ships from all over Asia enter the waters off Yonaguni Island. Many of these ships are content to let others do the hard work of interpreting sonar readings and diving to retrieve objects. They then board the ships, take the items, and head for a port where they can be sold. Monument artifacts are excellent targets for these crews, since the items tend to be small and easy to move while valuable enough to be worth the risk.

Say the name *Black Betty* around anyone familiar with the area and a smile is likely to creep over their face. Everyone likes a good pirate tale, and the *Black Betty* is the most famous pirate ship of Yonaguni Island. Her captain targeted a dozen Shiawase vessels in 2072. The crew was never caught, and the items they took have not yet surfaced. Shiawase has a rather sizeable reward for information leading to the capture and prosecution of the crew. So far, nobody has stepped forward to claim it. The longer that reward lays unclaimed and the pirates remain uncaptured, the more legendary the *Black Betty* becomes.

- The Black Betty was especially active during Yasuhito-dono's ascension to the throne. It was a rare period when Shiawase was on the outs with the Imperial government. Some people believe the pirates were acting as a privateer for the new Emperor. It was an object lesson to Shiawase: in times of transition, don't simply assume things will be the same under a new ruler. Shiawase learned its lesson, and its offerings to the new Emperor were quite lavish.
- Kia

Monument artifacts are big business, which means forgeries and fakes who've hit the market. Pulling up some sea rocks and selling them to a gullible buyer seems like a pretty easy thing to do, but *caveat venditor*. Buyers willing to employ illegal methods to acquire artifacts are also usually willing to punish forgers without in their own way, without involving the authorities in any way. Lana Carver made millions selling forgeries across the art world, including four pieces connected to the Yonaguni Monuments. Unfortunately, Oni Adegoke, the Nigerian warlord and artifact dealer, was one of her clients. When parts of her body were discovered in Cairo, Morocco, and Dubai, it was commonly assumed that Adegoke had become upset when he discovered that the Yonaguni piece he purchased was a fake.

- Adegoke has been cleaning house as of late. Something connected back to him went down in Cairo not too long ago. He looks like he is going to continue being an international player.
- Black Mamba





Valliant scanned the dark compound again with his thermographic vision. Even after two weeks it still felt odd being in the dark for the whole morning. He hoped Nighthawk would hurry up—twilight was only twenty minutes away, and he wanted to get some distance behind them before light broke. The wind blew snow across the compound, and he shivered despite his armored coldsuit. Perhaps Iceman was right and he should have gone for the less armored Polar Survival suit. As overwatch, he wouldn't come under fire unless things went really badly.

He saw Nighthawk moving through the buildings. Then he saw more movement. He squinted—it really didn't have an effect on thermographic vision, but it was a habit. The other movement turned out to be a pack of four dogs that was going to catch his partner well before he made the fence line. "Got some dogs coming up on Nighthawk," he said.

"I have them," replied Puma. She materialized, her cat-like features appearing more pronounced than usual. Lightning arced from her hand and raced toward the dogs. One jumped just as the lightning hit them; the other three went down while the jumping one landed on Nighthawk. He twisted as it latched onto his arm and punched it in the stomach. The momentum sent the dog tumbling away.

Valliant took the shot and killed the dog. He could see the heat billowing out of the ruined arm on Nighthawk's suit. "We need transport. Secrecy is gone," Iceman said as he moved back to the fence line. Valliant hoped that the ride would get here before Nighthawk was overcome by the cold. He saw guards coming around the building, and he shot one before the grunt knew what was happening. The second turned quickly and fired a burst at Nighthawk, missing as the target dove out of the way. Puma was now totally engulfed in cat imagery, and the second guard fell to the ground as her magic overwhelmed him.

Valliant heard the truck approaching, and he heard Iceman say, "Don't stay on the road. It's not worth the risk of sinking in the snow."

Valliant moved toward the pickup spot, and his heart sunk as he saw the truck sinking into the snow pack. The wheels spun, and Valliant knew that they wouldn't get it out any time soon. Even all-terrain vehicles didn't know how to handle this ground.

"Leave it," Iceman said. "We'll have to move out on foot."

Nighthawk walked up, barely able to stand. Puma laid a paw-like hand on him and cast a spell. Her knees buckled a bit. When she spoke, her voice had a slight rasp. "That should keep you going as long as I'm able to keep concentrating."

Skids jumped out of the truck as Iceman pulled everyone's skis from the back. Iceman looked around warily. "We had better get going before more of them come looking for us."

Everyone started off across the tundra. They had gotten barely over the first small hill when the explosion from the truck lit up the sky. Valliant looked over his shoulder as they skied off. It was going to be a long, cold day. He hoped they would make the rendezvous location in time, or else it was going to be a really dark, heartless winter.



Posted by: Traveler Jones

- Traveler Jones has a pretty good handle on this stuff, but to make sure we've got all bases covered, I've invited two runners with extensive cold-weather experience to share their thoughts in this posting. They'll be using the handles Coldnaught and Winter Warlock here.
- FastJack

The poles at the top and bottom of the world are often lumped together as arctic wastelands, but each is unique in its own way. The most obvious of these common traits is the pervasive extreme cold, which governs everything you do (assuming you want to survive). Nothing kills you quicker in arctic conditions than forgetting where you are. You have to dress correctly, constantly be aware of your surroundings, and know your limits. Don't be cheap—if you think you'll get away with using off-the-shelf gear to survive, think again. Everything from your clothes to your weapons to your vehicle has to be modified so it will operate in the cold, harsh climate of the coldest places on Earth.

ENVIRONMENT

TERRAIN

Antarctica is a frozen desert with very little to no annual precipitation. The continent is covered by two ice sheets separated by the Transantarctic Mountains. The ice is an average of over two kilometers thick across the continent. What most people don't realize is that underneath all that ice is the fifth-largest continent, a landmass twice the size of Australia. It also has the highest average elevation of all the continents. The continent is entirely encompassed by water and is almost entirely below the Antarctic Circle. There are twelve ice shelves around the continent; the two biggest being the ones that cover the Ross Sea and Weddell Sea. Each of these large ice shelves is roughly the size of Spain. These huge blocks of ice over the sea stay frozen year round. The limited melting from the ice, along with frozen chunks breaking off into the ocean and becoming icebergs, helps offset the contributions of snow and freezing temperature, so that the sheets remain approximately the same size from year to year. Wind-driven snow often forms ridges and troughs running parallel to the wind direction. Some of these ridges then have more ice buildup on top of them, making much of the terrain difficult to traverse.

Arctic terrain, on the other hand, is much more diverse. Much of the Arctic Circle is covered by the northern oceans; the land masses that fall within it contain mountainous areas, as well as other types of terrain spread over several countries. The terrain ranges from the varied fjords of northern Scandinavia to the mountains of Trans-Polar Aleut. There is also Thule, which is mainly one open plain covered with tundra. Additionally, the ice sheet covering the pole grows over the winter and melts off in the summer, resulting in what is known as the Northwest Passage, a route long sought as a maritime passage by sailors. In addition to the ever-present cold, the Arctic Circle receives a fair amount of snow in the course of a year. Sometimes this is no more than light flurries, but it can be full-blown storms.

Antarctica

In Antarctica the exact weather you experience depends on whether you are looking at the coastal regions, the Antarctic Peninsula, or the interior plateau. On the plateau, temperatures vary with the season. During the winter months, when there is no direct sunlight for as long as almost half a year, the average temperature is -50 degrees Celsius. This is often accompanied by a light snowfall. The "blizzards" of Antarctica are often not tied to new snowfall—instead, they come from wind blowing previously deposited snow. During the summer months the temperature rises all the way up to -30 degrees Celsius. This is still cold enough to freeze you to death in a matter of minutes if you don't take the proper precautions. Why are Antarctica and the South Pole on average so much colder than the Arctic? Well there are a few reasons for this. First the North Pole is surrounded by sea which when not frozen will not get any colder than -2 degrees Celsius. Also there is the thickness of the ice on Antarctica. Not only does this radiate cold, but it raises the average elevation. This in turn lowers the temperature since temperature drops one degree Celsius for every hundred-meter rise in elevation. Third, the isolation of Antarctica from surrounding continents contributes to the colder temperatures since warmer air from a nearby land mass is less likely to occur.

In the coastal regions there is up to a meter of annual precipitation mainly in the form of snow. The summertime temperatures can get as high as 9 degrees Celsius. During the winter, without the sun to warm the water, it falls to -40 degrees Celsius as the sea ice increases.

The Antarctic Peninsula extends farther north than the rest of the continent and is characterized by warmer and wetter weather than the rest of the coastal region, with temperatures getting above freezing at times during the summer. The peninsula also experiences some of the strongest winds and fiercest storms.

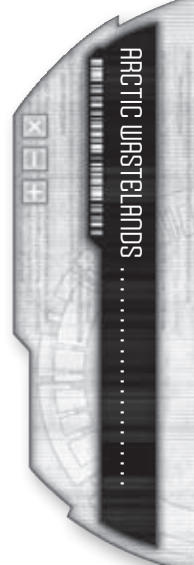
Arctic Region

Some parts of the Arctic are covered by ice year-round, like Antarctica. However, much of the Arctic region is a sea that is surrounded by land. Because of this, the climate is moderated by the ocean, which means it won't fall below -2 degrees Celsius. During the winter, temperatures on land can drop below -40 degrees Celsius. During the summer months, temperatures can rise to 10 degrees Celsius, with some land areas reaching 30 degrees. While the warmer temperatures mean there's some melting in the oceans, it also means there's more space for icebergs to swim around in.

SURVIVAL TIPS

Keeping Warm

When you say "Arctic," the first thing everyone thinks about is the cold, and they should—cold has to be your number one concern when you're out there. It's not the only problem you're going to encounter, though, as there are many other hazards that are almost as deadly. But let's focus on the cold first. The Arctic air, with its average temperature of -14 degrees Celsius, is often getting itself ready to kill you where you stand if you're not ready for it. Any part of the body that comes into contact with the air even briefly is subject to frostbite.



- Exposure of even a minute can do it. With these extremes, don't overestimate your ability to tough it out.
- Coldnaught
- He's not kidding. A street sam I used to run with forgot his gloves once while he went out to check on why a satellite signal went down. It ended up costing him three fingers—one finger for each minute he was out and exposed.
- Mika
- That's why you bring along a mage to keep you warm.
- Winter Warlock

Keeping covered isn't enough to keep the cold at bay. Prolonged exposure without proper clothing puts you at risk for hypothermia. And before you ask, no, insulation coating on your armored jacket isn't going to cut it. You need layers to keep your body heat in and the cold out. This is why the cold weather gear is so bulky, even with the latest technology. All sorts of layers are built into it, and there are simply no substitutes for layers. It's vital to keep all of those layers undamaged. Even the smallest hole will leak body heat, causing the eventual onset of hypothermia.

Since hypothermia can sneak up on you, you need to know the symptoms so you can always be looking out for it. It comes on slowly, which makes it that much more dangerous since the victim often doesn't know she is in trouble until it is too late. The signs of hypothermia include weakness and loss of coordination, confusion, uncontrolled shivering, drowsiness (especially in more severe stages), pale and cold skin, and slowed breathing or heart rate.

- Bullet holes from a firefight are terrible for cold weather gear. Don't feel relieved because the round only hit your coat and didn't catch any flesh. You still were hit, which means you're still in danger. You're just bleeding heat, not blood.
- Coldnaught
- This is why you invest in the resealer technology for your gear.
- Clockwork
- Even with that, prolonged exposure in a damaged suit is a bad idea. Hypothermia sets in when your body's core temperature drops below 35 degrees Celsius. The severe cold of the Arctic will slowly suck away your body temperature until hypothermia sets in.
- Coldnaught

Hypothermia isn't the only ailment from the cold to worry about. Cold diuresis can be a problem without proper precautions. This is when the body reduces blood flow to its outer layers in an effort to keep core temperatures up and protect vital organs. This increases the volume and pressure of the liquids in the core, which the brain interprets as excessive. It responds to this by telling the kidneys to convert the excess liquid to urine. As this is dispelled, the body becomes dehydrated. Dehydration can be a serious problem—when you're in one of the most hostile spots on Earth, you don't want to be dealing with sleepiness or dizziness. The snow and ice of the Arctic and Antarctica can be eaten

to replace needed fluids, but it is best to melt it first so the body doesn't have to spend energy to raise the temperature of the fluids you're bringing in.

Other Ailments and Problems

Trench foot is another ailment that can be a problem if precautions aren't taken. While extreme cold doesn't cause the problem, it doesn't prevent or help it either. Trench foot is caused by prolonged exposure to damp, cold, and unsanitary conditions. This can be the result of not being able to bathe or change socks on a regular basis, which is plenty common in cold wildernesses where there is no place to take shelter. Affected feet become numb and then necrosis sets in. If left untreated, it will cause gangrene that could result in amputation.

When you're thinking about these issues, be sure to remember that these problems are going to be magnified for trolls and elves. They both have longer and leaner bodies with less fat, so not only do they typically have more surface area, but they also have less insulation. Dwarves and orks, on the other hand, have a denser body mass and for this reason fare better in the freezing climate. Something else to keep in mind is that if you get hurt and are losing blood, staying warm becomes that much more difficult.

When it gets cold enough, even simple acts like breathing can be deadly if you don't have the proper gear. The cold air flowing directly into the lungs can cause damage and pneumonia. This is why at the very least you want to breathe through some sort of cloth to help warm the air before it hits your lungs. Again, orks and dwarves have an advantage here, as their longer-than-average nasal passages give the air more time to warm up.

Now, let's say you're ultra-prepared. You have enough to clothe an entire Inuit tribe. You're so bundled up that any infant that sees you gets jealous. Everything's fine, right? No! Now you have to worry about overheating! If you start to sweat, it won't be long until you are dead. This water on your skin causes you to lose body heat at a rate about twenty percent faster than if you stay dry. Because of this you have to be careful about exertion and adrenaline spikes. Those of you who have adrenaline pumps want to be very careful about triggering it when out in the cold.

- A mage I worked with in Antarctica had a great spell that took care of this problem by evaporating sweat away before it could become a problem.
- Coldnaught

Environmental Problems

Even when the sun comes out it won't relieve the cold, and this causes its own problems. The snow and ice are huge reflectors that bounce the sun back up at you so you get hit twice. So cover up if you don't want one of the worst sunburns of your life. Don't overlook protecting your eyes from the sun, either. Additionally, flare compensation is a must if you want to be able to see when the sun is out.

The sun can cause problems even if you take precautions. In those months where it bothers to come up at all, it can soften and melt the snow and ice. This can cause unseen sinkholes in the snow when it isn't packed down, which can be annoying at best, dangerous at worst. Even packed snow can be weakened.



- There is nothing as scary as your truck suddenly sliding sideways and beginning to tip as the melting snow gives way.
- Winter Warlock

In mountainous areas, the sun can cause the additional danger of melting overhanging snow, which can serve up prime conditions for avalanches. I saw an avalanche from a few miles away once, and the force of the snow coming down was enough to make me even more cautious as I made my way.

Storms provide another challenge. While the form the storms take depends on if you are in the Arctic or Antarctica, this much remains constant—you don't want to get caught on a mountain while they're raging.

- Assuming you have the choice of going inside.
- Rigger X
- Yeah, when you're going to raid a corporate facility you can't just go inside to stay warm until the storm blows over.
- Mika
- If you are prepared, you can use the storm to your advantage since no one else wants to be outside, and storms play havoc with sensors.
- Coldnaught

It is important to always have supplies to survive in case of an emergency even if you only plan on being out a couple of days, because you never know when the weather may change or someone gets hurt slowing you down.

On Antarctica the biggest problem is the "blizzard" in the form of windblown snow. This often happens even when there isn't a cloud in the sky and no snow is falling. Winds can reach up to 160 kilometers per hour, which whips all loose snow into the air and reduces visibility to under a meter. It also buries things in the drifts it creates. This can drop temperatures to under -60 degrees Celsius once you factor in the wind chill. Even the best cold weather gear won't keep you warm by itself at this point. By moving snow, you can make a shelter to protect yourself from the wind. Better yet is to dig out shelter and use your body heat to keep warm. Just be sure to keep the entrance open so you don't get buried alive.

- Again, a prepared mage can help out tremendously here. The one I worked with in Antarctica had a spell to tunnel into and stabilize the snow for such occasions. The tunnels were shallow, though—you don't want a heavy weight of snow looming over you, primed for collapse.
- Snowman

The Arctic has polar lows, which are wide-ranging storms that start out in the sea and blow ashore. These small cyclones can span several hundred kilometers and have strong winds and snowfall. They can reach their peak power in twelve to twenty-four hours and have stronger winds than tropical hurricanes. The polar tents that are used for portable Arctic protection and sleeping quarters aren't made to stand up to these extreme conditions, which means that finding natural shelter in a cave or using your vehicle for shelter is your best bet for survival.

- Better be a sturdy vehicle, though, because it stands a chance of being hurled into the air along with everything else in the area.
- Rigger X

Even regular travel presents issues to deal with in the Arctic wastelands. Traveling any significant distance on foot is difficult and dangerous. The need to keep from sweating limits the speed you can travel, and even with the proper gear traveling for days by foot should be avoided if at all possible. Small things like carrying enough drinking water and food are difficult. Additionally, the longer that you are exposed to the extremely low temperatures, the more likely hypothermia becomes.

The cold weather wreaks just as much havoc with gear as it does with our bodies. The lubricants that protect the moving parts of guns need to be made for the extreme cold or they will freeze, which makes the gun a jam waiting to happen. In vehicles the coolant system needs special additives to reduce the risk of freezing in the extreme temperatures. If your ground vehicle isn't already tracked, then you need to make it so. Otherwise the vehicle will sink to the doors the first time you hit any fresh unpacked snow.

- It will only be to the doors if you're lucky. I once saw an ATV that slid into the snow and almost ended up buried all the way. The driver panicked and floored it as it started to sink, which of course only dug himself in deeper and deeper.
- Coldnaught
- That must have been hilarious.
- Slamm-0!
- It probably would have been a lot funnier if it hadn't been my ride home. Luckily we didn't have anyone on our tail, so we made it out clean.
- Coldnaught

Ice is another factor to keep in mind when you're in a vehicle. Stopping distances are much greater, and turning becomes an adventure. Crashes on the ice are just as brutal as on the streets of your local sprawl—only after you climb out of the broken shell of a vehicle, you have to worry about freezing to death.

Flying vehicles and drones don't have it much better. Falling snow severely hampers visibility, and at times can affect remote operation depending on the type of system you are running. If the vehicle has any weight to it, its choice of landing site is an important consideration. You need to remember that you'll need more stopping distance on the ice.

- For this reason many facilities have a dedicated landing zone a short distance from the actual facility in case of a mishap.
- Coldnaught
- A fact that a well-organized group will take advantage of.
- Mika
- While watercraft require less in the way of modifications for operation in Arctic wastelands, good sonar is a must. The earlier underwater chunks of ice can be detected and avoided, the better.
- Sounder



- Remember the *Titanic*.
- Axis Mundi

When in the Arctic Circle, it is important to know if the ice flow is freezing or thawing. If you don't, you could find your ship frozen in the middle of the ice sheet, and you'll be unable to get out when you need to make your escape.

- And don't be complacent if you get stuck and don't have anyone on your tail. The big boys could spot you and hit you from a great distance.
- Turbo Bunny

It is just as important to realize that even when the sea or bay is iced over there are often polynya, which are areas of open water surrounded by sea ice. They can be caused by an area of warm water, or they may occur at the beginning of the winter where the new ice hasn't completely closed the gap between water that is in the process of re-freezing and ice that stayed frozen all season long.

- Polynya can leave weak spots in the ice even after the surface has frozen over. Nothing is quite as scary as watching your team's van starting to fall through the ice when it finds one of these weak spots.
- Winter Warlock
- Being in that sinking van would be scarier, I think
- Slamm-0!

Magical Phenomena

In addition to weather problems, Antarctica has issues of mana surges in areas around the continent. Since the passing of Halley's Comet and the disappearance of most of the continent's orichalcum, these surges have become less frequent and severe, though they still have a tendency to occur at the worst possible time. These fluctuations seem to be the most severe near the geographic south pole and the Vinson Massif.

There have been reports of occasional mana storms inside both the Arctic and Antarctic Circles. These storms come on suddenly and hit hard, then just as quickly disappear, leaving destruction in their wake. A particularly strong storm hit Antarctica last year and ran along the Transantarctic Mountains before it blew out to sea.

Both the Aurora Borealis and Aurora Australis have caused background counts on some occasions, though their effect is not consistent. Why the effect is intermittent is still being studied.

PUTTING THE RIGHT TEAM TOGETHER

Any time you run the shadows, you need to know what the rest of your team can do and how far you can trust them. The proper mix of talents and abilities is needed for any mission to be successful, and this only becomes more important in Arctic wastelands. Some skills and roles become even more important, while others aren't as useful when everything around is frozen tundra instead of the plascrete of the sprawl. Because of this I've put together a few pointers on what to look for and what you might want to avoid when assembling the right team.

INCOMING FEED.....



First, a few general guidelines before we get into more specific roles. A basic understanding of survival techniques is a good starting place. Everyone should know some basic first aid, as that ability only becomes more crucial when you are out in such a harsh climate. A group that works well together and gets along well is helpful also. It is one thing to leave a team member behind in the sprawl, but it is often a death sentence to leave someone behind on the ice.

I'll take on the major roles of your basic team one at a time, giving you some hints about personality quirks and other oddities to look out for.

Face

Someone who can talk their way out of trouble or into a location is always useful, but much of the frozen wastes don't have anyone to talk to, so these skills are of limited use. There are still times when you will need them, though, so the best approach is to look for a face that has other useful skills to use when no one is around to talk to. Another thing to keep in mind is that with the big bulky Arctic suits and face masks you'll have to wear, faces who rely on their looks or pheromones won't be as effective as they are in the sprawl.

Hacker

The vast majority of the Arctic and Antarctic has no Matrix coverage. Because of this, a hacker who only works in the Matrix will be of limited use. If the hacker is frail and out of shape, they could be a liability. Rigging skills, on the other hand, can be incredibly valuable in the frozen territories, so look for a hacker who works with drones and has a good supply of machines he can bring along with him (see below for more thoughts on riggers).

Mage

A properly prepared mage can be a great asset in the cold. One who is skilled at conjuring and can keep a couple of spirits around to help is a definite plus. There are several spells that can make Arctic survival much easier; if your mage doesn't know them, give her time to learn them before you leave. Make sure you get a mage with some strength and endurance—a frail or out-of-shape mage is a liability when you are moving between locations.

Street Sam, Gun Bunny, Weapons Specialist, etc.

Anyone who relies on tech and weapons to make their living on the streets can be useful in the Arctic and Antarctic, especially if you reach a point where you have to hunt your own food. Shooters need to understand, though, how the extreme weather conditions affect their tech, and they should be vigilant in maintenance to make sure they work properly. If you can find one who is an expert at survival techniques, this is a definite plus. You also want to avoid lone-wolf-style shooters. Teamwork will be essential to your survival, so having someone along who doesn't work and play well with others is a problem.

Rigger

A good rigger is almost as valuable as a good mage in the extreme cold. The use of drones to remotely gather information while the team stays warm is nice. Confidence that your ride out

of the cold will show up on time and get you where you want to go without any problems is even better. Finding a rigger with at least basic mechanics skills is a bonus, since any repairs will need to be made on the spot without a garage.

- This is very true. Our rigger has had to patch together the van more than once in the middle of Antarctica. Having a heater next to him when he works, or having a mage who can keep the work area warm, is invaluable.
- Snowman

Infiltration Specialist

Sneaking in instead of fighting is always preferable, but if all they can do is sneak, their value in the Arctic and Antarctic is limited. Survival skills are a good complementary area, and tech skills to assist in other roles make them even more valuable. It is also important that they understand how the extreme cold affects their ability to infiltrate, both positively and negatively. They need to know how Arctic glare can expose them as well as how they can use it as a shield, and they need to understand that the long nights don't offer automatic cover, since most residents of these areas have already adapted to those conditions.

Mercenary

Most mercenaries are well versed in survival skills, which is a definite positive. You have to be wary of the stereotypical gun-for-hire who is just in it for the nuyen and doesn't care about anyone else. There are times when this will far outweigh the potential gains from their skills. Mercenaries are also good at many different types of weapons (including heavy weapons), so if you need to go in with heavy firepower they make good support.

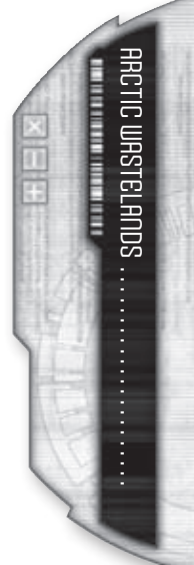
- I resent the categorization here. Mercenaries know that we will only continue to get jobs as long as we show we're good at what we do, and part of being good at what we do involves keeping an entire team alive, not just watching out for our own butts.
- Hard Exit
- Yeah, but there are some bonds that are stronger than the duties of professionalism.
- Riser

NATURAL PHENOMENA

POLAR NIGHT AND MIDNIGHT SUN

One of the other things to realize is that when you are near either of the two poles, there are several months a year where the sun either never rises or never sets. Both of these situations can cause some problems when you aren't prepared.

The Polar Night is the name for the time when the sun never rises. The misconception is that this means continual night and that you'll have the advantage of the cover of darkness no matter what time it is. Right at the poles this is true, but as you get closer to the edges of the Arctic and Antarctic Circles, there are actually several hours of twilight even though the sun never breaks the horizon. It is worth thinking about the advantages this can give you on a run, though you have to be careful. Most facilities that have been in existence for more than a few months are well



aware of how the light functions and are prepared to deal with it. They're anticipating the darkness and are ready for that; if you're not, they're a step ahead of you.

- It can be useful to get information on how long guards have been deployed at a certain facility. If it's only been a few months, they may not be adjusted to the light conditions. If it's been a long stretch of years, they may be weary of the darkness. Most facilities opt for guards who have at least a year of experience in Arctic conditions, then opt to rotate them elsewhere around the five-year mark.
- Ma'Fan
- Just remember that guards have to get that first year of experience somewhere, which means that rookies are out there.
- 2XL

The lack of sunlight can also cause people to sink into bouts of depression. This is often shown by an increased need for sleep or moodiness or shortness of temper.

The Midnight Sun is the opposite extreme, and for a shadowrunner it presents even more problems. When it is bright and sunny at midnight, stealth and sneaking become that much harder. Additionally, the number of people on the street of whatever towns you might encounter still goes down at night, which means you stand out even more because there is no crowd to blend into.

- This is why you modify your tactics and go in the middle of the day when the most people are around.
- Coldnaught

Another problem of the Midnight Sun is that it messes with everyone's sleep schedule. Unless you can sleep in any condition or are used to working the night shift, having the sun streaming in all night long can really disrupt your sleep.

- What shadowrunner worth their salt isn't on a night-shift schedule? This is another thing that newcomers to the region aren't good at, so it's another good reason to check on how long people have been on site.
- Mika

Even if you're used to sleeping in light conditions, it often takes a few days to get fully accustomed to the bright days. Most people can get adjusted eventually, though it's tiresome to get to that point. Then there are the few people who just can't adjust, even those who are used to working the night shift.

AURORA POLARIS

The Auroras Polaris are nature's laser light show. They come in all kinds of colors and shapes, varying from oranges to pinks and purples to greens, from curtains and arches to coronas and bands. Known as *Aurora Borealis* or *Aurora Australis*, depending on which hemisphere you're in, these lights have long been thought to be caused by magnetic particles in the upper atmosphere. Since the Awakening there has been a growing amount of data that shows they have a magical element, and what you are seeing is the fluctuation of astral energies and mana.

- One theory is that what you are seeing is the leaking of mana into space at the poles where the atmosphere is the thinnest.
- Ethernaut

A theory that is beginning to gain some momentum is that some of these manifestations are actually astral rifts. The two auroras show different patterns and astral readings, so it is suspected that they are actually two different though similar occurrences. They may even be the opposite sides of the same initial event.

OTHER SOLAR PHENOMENA

Another interesting phenomenon is the solar pillars. This is the sun that reflects off the ice on the ground, acting like a prism and causing a pillar of light above and below the sun. Most of the time only the one above the sun is visible, and this phenomenon is most spectacular right after sunset, when the sun has vanished and all you can see is the pillar. There are times when the moon can cause the same effect, which is (quite naturally) called a lunar pillar. It tends to be more silvery than the solar pillars, which have multiple colors.

- I once knew an Aleut shaman who claimed that the lunar pillars had a magical healing effect that would turn back the hands of time.
- Winter Warlock
- Sure he did. Did he then try to sell you a bottle of the moon's essence?
- Clockwork
- I understand being skeptical—I know I was, at first. He was said to have been born around 2020 and he looked not a day over 25, even though he was definitely not an elf. He had some stunningly detailed firsthand accounts of the first Crash.
- Winter Warlock

A similar effect is the sundog, but instead of being above or below the sun, this one is seen on either side of it. When a sundog is especially large and circular, it's called a halo. This has long been thought to be caused by fine ice crystals in the air, but since the Year of the Comet they have started to show magic fluctuations in areas where they are seen. Couple this with the fact that they have increased in frequency at the South Pole while not becoming any more common anywhere else, and you get plenty of people wondering if there isn't something more to them. This has led to several expeditions across Antarctica to try and find the cause of what's happening in the sky. The biggest problem being that sundogs don't have a set location or pattern to their appearance, so new information is slow in coming.

- There's also the slight problem that the manifestations are appearing way up in the sky, which makes them difficult to track from the ground.
- Orbital DK
- Then those who seek should look for those who have power over the air.
- Man-of-Many-Names



Optical Illusions

Now that we've talked about the things that appear in the sky, let's take a look at some optical phenomena on the ground. There are plenty of visual issues to deal with—the sun reflecting off of the ice can be blinding, while blowing snow can make it difficult to see more than a few meters if the wind is really up. Thermographic vision can be a great aide, revealing many types of wildlife or an active vehicle, but it doesn't help much in showing the actual terrain since the air and ground are the same temperature. Laser sights are pretty much useless; with all the ice around they get reflected like in a fun house hall of mirrors. Radar vision is effective as long as the snow and ice don't start coming down too hard.

One common illusion is called ice blink. Ice blink appears as a white light on the horizon. It is light that has reflected off the ice, illuminating the underside of low-level clouds. This may sound much like sundogs and solar pillars, but the big difference is that this light can show where there is a pass through the mountains. The Inuit use this light to help them successfully navigate Arctic mountains.

- Now you can lead them astray with a clever mage. I worked with one who directed an Inuit strike team that had been harassing us right into an ambush by imitating ice blink.
- Coldnaught

Unlike many of the other phenomena that have been mentioned, it does not appear that ice blink has any magical component to it.

- Or is it just better hidden?
- Man-of-Many-Names

Polar fog is not so much an illusion as a visual hindrance. It is fog with ice particles suspended in it. This makes it that much harder to see through, as it is more reflective than normal fog. This plays complete havoc with thermographic vision, limiting its usefulness to a handful of meters. Direct light and lasers also bounce off the suspended particles, blinding everyone in the immediate area.

- Which means that the effect of a flash-pak in polar fog is staggering.
- Stone

Mirages are also a common occurrence on the ice sheets. In the desert you see mirages of an oasis because of the heat diffracting the air, while on the ice the illusion often takes the form of a place to take shelter. Unless it pulls you off course, these usually aren't very dangerous. A superior mirage can be a completely different matter. They can actually make mountains appear. One example of this is the Croker Mountains (also known as Croker Land) that were recorded back in the 1900s.

- Those are two examples of astral constructs.
- Winter Warlock

- In the 1900s? Right.
- Slamm-O!
- Doubt is easy. I have perceived these "mountains," and they are definitely magical in source. Really powerful magic. I would like to know how they did it, whoever they were.
- Winter Warlock
- Powerful enough to have lasted through the down cycle of magic?
- /dev/grrl
- Yes. That is what is so amazing.
- Winter Warlock

These superior mirages are so realistic that expeditions have turned around thinking the way ahead of them was impassable. There are more recent examples of mountains appearing when GPS says there shouldn't have been any. In 2062, an expedition to the North Pole was lost for weeks when they kept turning around thinking there was a mountain range ahead and they had wandered off course.

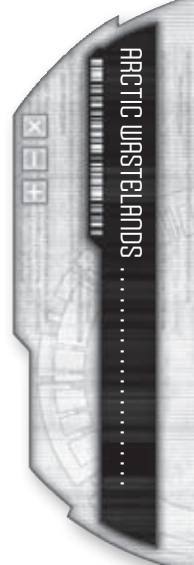
- I remember reading about that. The expedition's mage said that the mountains were real, and the electronics kept going haywire so they didn't know what to believe.
- Dr. Spin
- So the mage couldn't tell it wasn't real?
- /dev/grrl

Antarctica is so flat and open that the whole continent is deceiving in distance. Because there is nothing to use as a reference point, mountains that may be hundreds of kilometers away seem to be much closer. This leads many people to walk themselves to death because they think shelter is only a little bit away, so they keep trying to reach it but never get there.

- This is another form of mirage. Refraction of sunlight off the ice and snow makes distant objects like mountains appear to be much closer than they actually are.
- 2XL

ACOUSTIC PHENOMENA

Need another source of sensory confusion? Sound travels much farther in the Arctic and Antarctica than normal. This is due to the unusual characteristics of the areas and their climates. For one, the air is so cold that sound is actually refracted back toward the earth instead of up into the air. How far it travels depends on what is covering the ground. If it is a fluffy snow, this absorbs sound and usually offsets the refraction due to the cold. When you get a hard, crusted snow, however, this absorbs less sound, allowing it to travel farther. Ice covering the ground absorbs very little of the sound, allowing it to travel even farther than that. With the right conditions, conversations can be heard up to three kilometers away.



- This is important to remember when trying to sneak around in the Arctic Wastelands. If you aren't careful, you could be telling the guard that you are trying to sneak up on exactly what your plan is. Remember that three kilometers is the unaided hearing distance; aural amplifications can give them even greater range.
- Ma'Fan

WILDLIFE

Despite popular belief, the wildlife of the Arctic and Antarctica vary quite a bit. Some of the animals and species are the same, but there are species that are indigenous to one region or the other. Additionally, the Awakening has had different effects in the two regions, creating more variances between the two. The final item that has played into the wildlife puzzle is man. Either by altering existing species or introducing new ones to the area for use as guards, metahumanity has, as always, shaped nature to its own ends. Here's a rundown of what you'll find.

Arctic Region

Polar Bear

Habitat: Arctic north region mainly along the coast

Range: The Arctic Circle and slightly further south

Frequency: Very rare

When you talk about the Arctic wildlife, the first thing that comes to mind is the polar bear. Polar bears, however, are not a common sight; they have only recently been reintroduced into the wild since their brush with extinction. If you are able to find any, you'll see them in coastal regions, as they rarely go inland. This is a good thing for the inland inhabitants, since the bears are large, strong, fast, and deadly to their prey. And of course their white coat gives them natural camouflage, often hiding them from view until it's too late. Polar bears typically hunt for seals and fish, but if humans venture too close and aren't careful, the bears have no problem eating them also. The good news is that polar bears typically hibernate, with the females staying in their dens from November until the spring. Males don't hibernate as long, but their activity is still reduced during winter months.

- There are a few Awakened polar bears wandering around; most of their magic seems concentrated on enhancing their camouflage and stalking abilities.
- Coldnaught
- I saw what was left of a scientist that wandered too close to a polar bear in the course of his research. If it weren't for the fact that the group saw him get attacked, no one would have been able to identify the remains without a DNA test.
- Stone

Game Info

POLAR BEAR

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
7	4	3	6	2	3	1	3	3	6	6	2

Movement: 15/40

Skills: Intimidation 3, Perception 3, Swimming 2, Tracking 1, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Natural Weapon (Claw/Bite: DV 5P, AP -)

Arctic Fox

Habitat: Arctic north region

Range: Arctic Circle

Frequency: Uncommon

The arctic fox is a predator that preys on small mammals and carrion. Typically they aren't a threat to humans, though if cornered or forced to fight they will defend themselves with their sharp claws and teeth. They will get into the food stores if they are left unattended or accessible overnight. Their coat is grey or brown in the summer and turns white in winter months. The arctic fox is very sly like its cousins to the south and will often follow polar bears so they can eat their leftovers in lean times. The foxes also bury food in tundra during the summer months to help them survive through the cold winters. Though not the most appetizing meals, in a pinch these stores can be raided to help you survive.

Game Info

ARCTIC FOX

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
2	5	4	2	3	4	1	3	4	6	8	1

Movement: 10/30

Skills: Infiltration 2, Perception 4, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Enhanced Sense (Smell, Hearing), Natural Weapon (Claw/Bite: DV 2P, AP -)

Lemmings

Habitat: Arctic north region

Range: On land masses in the Arctic region

Frequency: Common (large infestations rare)

Lemmings are small rodents that inhabit the northern tundra. One of the ways they keep warm is burrowing in the tundra to hide. They often build significant networks of tunnels underground. The problem is these burrows weaken the ground, and if you're not careful you can collapse them, which may lead to you sinking deep into the snow covering the ground. The other problem with lemmings is when they have exhausted the food supply in an area they will move en masse to find a new home.

- "En masse" is an understatement. I once saw a group of them invade a town. They made a devil rat infestation seem meager in comparison. In a couple of days they had almost completely stripped the town of disposable food, and they moved on just as quickly as they came. With all their white coats moving over the snow, it looked like the ground was moving when they left.
- Coldnaught

Game Info

LEMMINGS

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
2	3	2	1	2	2	1	3	1	6	4	1

Movement: 10/30

Skills: Infiltration 3, Perception 4, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Enhanced Sense (Smell), Natural Weapon (Claw/Bite: DV 1P, AP -)

Hazard Pay

Snowy Owl

Habitat: Arctic north region

Range: Fairly close to land in the Arctic region

Frequency: Uncommon

One of the lemmings' main predators is the snowy owl. It is only found inside the Arctic Circle and is approximately the same size as the great horned owl. These owls do not fly south for the winter, but they migrate in order to stay near sources of food. There are a couple of Awakened species of this owl that have manifested with some interesting mutations to help it survive.

- One Awakened mutation has grown to three times in size. I saw one carry off a small dog with no problem.
- Winter Warlock

Game Info

SNOWY OWL

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
2	3	4	3	2	3	1	3	2	6	7	1

Movement: 5/20 (10/50 flying)

Skills: Flight 3, Perception 4, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Sight), Natural Weapon (Claw/Bite: DV 3P, AP -)

Reindeer

Habitat: Arctic north region

Range: Northern Europe and Thule

Frequency: Uncommon

These once-domesticated cousins of the caribou are a bit smaller in size. Seen throughout Northern Europe and Thule, these creatures are hunted for food and their pelts, which can be used for making clothing or shelters. There are rumors of some tribes that keep them as pets.

Game Info

REINDEER

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
5	5	5	6	3	3	1	2	2	6	8	1

Movement: 20/80

Skills: Running 3

Arctic Wolverine

Habitat: Arctic north region

Range: Any landmass

Frequency: Uncommon

Arctic wolverines are not related to wolves, despite the similarity in name; instead, they are related to weasels. They are shy and cunning for the most part, but they are fierce when cornered or forced to fight. Much stockier and more muscular than most of the weasel family, including its non-Arctic relative,

the Arctic wolverine is a carnivore that feeds on lemmings, rabbits, deer, caribou, moose, and foxes. They are also scavengers and will raid any supplies that unaware or careless travelers leave out.

Game Info

ARCTIC WOLVERINE

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
2	4	4	5	1	4	1	3	2	6	8	1

Movement: 10/40

Skills: Perception 4, Running 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Smell), Natural Weapon (Claw/Bite DV 3P, AP -1)

Sleeper Shark

Habitat: North Atlantic and Arctic Oceans

Range: Throughout the ocean, especially around Thule and Thule Protectorate

Frequency: Rare

The sleeper shark is the only shark species that can survive in the cold Arctic waters—it actually prefers colder waters. For this reason it is seen in deep waters as well as in the cold of the North Atlantic and Arctic Oceans. It typically grows to five meters in length, but specimens exceeding seven meters have been recorded. Sleeper sharks mainly feed on fish, but they also attack seals and other marine mammals. Their biggest threat to metahumans is if they mistake you for one of their food sources, which probably explains the Inuit legends of these sharks attacking kayaks. These slow-moving sharks are some of the largest in existence. Their flesh is toxic; the effects of consuming it are similar to extreme drunkenness.

Game Info

SLEEPER SHARK

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
4	5	5	3	1	4	1	2	3	6	9	1

Movement: 20/60 (swimming)

Skills: Perception 2, Swimming 4, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Natural Weapon (Bite, DV 5P, AP -)

Musk Ox

Habitat: Arctic north region

Range: Arctic North America and Thule

Frequency: Uncommon

Musk oxen are large Arctic mammals of the Bovid family. Their name comes from their strong smell that males emit to attract females. Their thick coat is actually two coats in one, and it's the reason that they can survive the extreme cold of the Arctic region. The outer coat is coarse to keep the wind out, and the inner coat is soft to keep them warm. They are pack animals, with a herd usually numbering between fifteen and thirty oxen.



Game Info

MUSK OX

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
5	3	4	3	1	3	1	3	2	6	7	1

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Perception 4, Running 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Hearing)

Antarctic Region

Penguin

Habitat: Antarctic continent

Range: Mainly along the coast and surrounding ice flows

Frequency: Common

The penguin is the most well-known animal of Antarctica. There are seventeen different species, so you can get penguins in all sorts of shapes and sizes. They are strong swimmers; some can reach speeds of up to forty kilometers per hour. At the same time they are awkward on the land, which is why they spend up to seventy-five percent of their lives in the water.

Game Info

PENGUIN

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
2	4	4	3	3	3	1	3	2	6	7	1

Movement: 5/15 (on ground) 10/50 (swimming)

Skills: Dodge 1, Perception 4, Swimming 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (smell)

Seals

Habitat: Antarctic continent

Range: Mainly along the coast and surrounding ice floes

Frequency: Uncommon

There are many different species of seals, including the dangerous leopard seal, which eats other seals. Being a carnivore, it will eat a metahuman too if you're not paying attention, but they will usually only attack a wounded target (and only if they are hungry). They don't have great speed on land, so if you pay attention to your surroundings you should be fine. If you find yourself under attack, then showing that you are willing and able to put up a fight is usually enough to drive them off.

Game Info

SEALS

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
4	2	3	3	2	3	1	3	3	6	6	1

Movement: 5/20 (on ground) 10/40 (swimming)

Skills: Perception 4, Swimming 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (smell)

Whales

Habitat: Antarctic Sea

Range: In the oceans and seas surrounding the Antarctic continent

Frequency: Uncommon

The narwhal is one of the larger whale species, and one of the many species that are just beginning to recover from the over-hunting that occurred back in the mid 1900s. The Awakening hasn't seemed to have any effect on any whale species or has just manifested in a manner that isn't obvious to outside observers. On rare occasions they will ram ships, which is only a problem unless you are in one that is small enough to be capsized by the attack.

Game Info

WHALES

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
9	3	3	5	2	3	1	3	3	6	6	1

Movement: 15/30 (swimming)

Skills: Perception 2, Swimming 3

Powers: Sonar

Human Adaptations

The most common additions to the ecosystem have been huskies and wolves. They have been modified by many corporations to be used as guard dogs with both genetic modifications and cyberware enhancements. With the inevitable strays getting into the wild for one reason or another, there are now some packs roaming the Arctic wastes. Most of these are dangerous when in a pack, especially if they are hungry. There have been some especially aggressive breeds that have been engineered to be even larger, and some of them can take on a man single-handed. These usually attack from the shadows or otherwise ambush their target. Even if they don't kill their prey, they can damage the cold-weather gear badly enough that if there isn't available shelter nearby, you're still as good as dead.

- There is a wild pack of barghests on the Antarctic continent that escaped during a run against a corporate facility that was using them as guard dogs. With their white fur, they blend into the surrounding landscape until it is almost too late. Our mage spotted them just in time to save us from the ambush.
- Ma'Fan

Antarctic Hound

Habitat: Antarctic continent

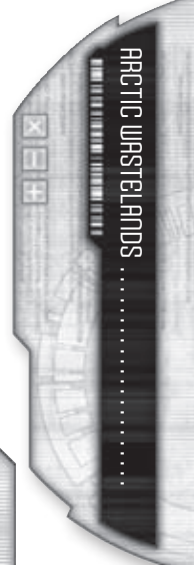
Range: All across the continent, but usually not near permanent bases or facilities

Frequency: Rare

The Antarctic hound is a genetically enhanced and modified husky, wolf, and hound mix. The designers tried to take the strengths of each breed to create the perfect guard animal. What resulted, though, was a fierce animal that was uncontrollable. They were going to exterminate them when they somehow broke out and escaped onto the Antarctic continent. It isn't known



INCOMING FEED.....



what megacorporation created them or if it was some sort of joint project, but certainly no one wants to claim responsibility for them.

- Geneticists have a way of leaving their fingerprints on their work. If you can get a genetic sample from one of these things into the hands of the right scientist, you may be able to identify just which corporate scientist was responsible.
- Nephrine

Since the Awakening, the Ross seal's siren call has become even more hypnotizing. These seals will lull predators into leaving them alone, so the only methumans that are at risk are the ones hunting them for their coats or for meat.

- You could just be unlucky enough to be caught in the crossfire, as it were. For example, one of these things might lull your rigger to sleep as he is driving your transport. It took three of us yelling at him for a full minute to snap him out of it. He barely got us turned before we plunged off the cliff into the ocean.
- Coldnaught
- That would have been a cold swim.
- Winter Warlock
- It would have been the death of us all. We were in the middle of nowhere and wouldn't have been able to get warm.
- Coldnaught

Game Info



ANTARCTIC HOUND

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	Init	IP
3	4	3	4	3	3	1	3	3	6	6	1

Movement: 15/45

Skills: Intimidation 3, Perception 2, Running 2, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Enhanced sense (Smell), Natural Weapon (Claw/Bite: DV 3P, AP 0)

Awakened Critters

Ross Seal

Habitat: Antarctic continent

Range: Mainly along the coast and surrounding ice floes

Frequency: Rare

Game Info



ROSS SEAL

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	M	Init	IP
9	3	3	5	2	3	1	3	2	6	4	6	1

Movement: 5/20 (10/40 swimming)

Skills: Perception 2, Swimming 3

Powers: Paralyzing Howl (siren call)



Spirit Bear

Habitat: Arctic north region mainly along the coast

Range: The Arctic Circle and slightly further south

Frequency: Very rare

Spirit bears are a recently discovered Awakened version of the polar bear. The main difference is that they are slightly larger and harder to spot, as they gained the ability to make their white coats blend into the background even more than it usually does. For some reason, they also tend to be more aggressive toward humans.

Game Info

SPIRIT BEAR

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	M	Init	IP
8	4	3	6	2	3	1	4	3	6	3	6	2

Movement: 15/40

Skills: Intimidation 3, Perception 3, Swimming 2, Tracking 1, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Concealment, Confusion, Natural Weapon (Claw/Bite: DV 5P, AP -)

North Pole Reindeer

Habitat: Arctic north region.

Range: Northern Europe and Thule

Frequency: Uncommon

Some people think Awakened reindeer from one of the earlier ages of the world were the original source of the legend of Santa's reindeer. Whatever the case may be, the world currently hosts reindeer that fly. They're slightly larger than normal reindeer, and while their flying abilities are not of the around-the-world variety, they still can take to the skies in a way that is impressive, especially for a creature of their size. The flight mainly seems to be an adaptation to help them quickly escape predators; no hostile applications of their abilities seem to have come to their minds yet.

Game Info

NORTH POLE REINDEER

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	M	Init	IP
5	5	5	6	3	3	1	2	1	6	3	8	1

Movement: 20/75 (10/75 flying)

Skills: Flight 2, Running 3

Ice Snake

Habitat: Arctic north region

Range: The Arctic Circle and slightly further south

Frequency: Very rare

Ice snakes are an Awakened constrictor snake. They have adapted to cold weather and prey on any animals that happen to get too close. The snakes' skin is white-grey in color, the better to blend in with the ice, snow, and tundra of the frozen north. The only thing that limits how large they get is the availability of food.

Game Info

ICE SNAKE

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	M	Init	IP
4	6	6	7	1	3	1	3	2	6	4	9	1

Movement: 15/30

Skills: Infiltration 4, Perception 4, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Concealment, Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Smell, Thermographic Vision), Immunity (Cold)

White Lemming

Habitat: Arctic north region

Range: On land masses in the arctic region

Frequency: Rare

The white lemming is an Awakened lemming that has evolved to operate more efficiently in a pack. Awakened lemmings live in packs with regular lemmings, and they use their abilities to bend the pack to their will. This typically involves self-defense, as they center themselves in the pack and make the others circulate around them. Occasionally, though, they may spur their pack to action, such as moving to a more promising location for food. Lemmings, in general, are happy to have someone giving them directions, so they follow commands they are given with little difficulty.

Game Info

WHITE LEMMING

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	M	Init	IP
2	3	2	1	2	2	1	3	0	6	2	4	1

Movement: 10/30

Skills: Infiltration 3, Perception 4, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Animal Control (Lemmings), Enhanced Sense (Smell), Natural Weapon (Claw/Bite: DV 1P, AP -)

Giant Snowy Owl

Habitat: Arctic north region

Range: Fairly close to land in the Arctic region

Frequency: Rare

This Awakened mutation of the snowy owl has not only increased in size, but also radiates cold—since that's just what the Arctic needs. It will grab its prey in its claws and then take off with the prey in tow. Its energy aura then sucks the will to resist from its prey as it flies away.

- That doesn't sound like an evolutionary advance—it sounds like laziness. Who wants to hunt something that won't even bother resisting?
- Kane
- There are people at work training these owls. Sending one of them into a guard post before you go in can make the guards a lot easier to deal with.
- Coldnaught

Game Info

GIANT SNOWY OWL

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	M	Init	IP
5	4	3	4	2	4	2	3	1	6	2	7	1

Movement: 5/20 (10/50 flying)
Skills: Flight 3, Perception 4, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 2
Powers: Energy Aura (Cold), Enhanced Senses (Sight), Natural Weapon (Claw/Bite: DV 3P, AP 0)

Giant Wolverine

Habitat: Arctic north region
Range: Any land mass
Frequency: Rare

The giant wolverine is the size of a small polar bear, and isn't nearly as shy as its smaller cousins. It hasn't lost any of its cunning as it grew. It usually hunts by hiding and ambushing its prey, but it will fight toe to toe with any animal if it feels it has no choice or if there is a big enough prize to win. Its claws are razor sharp and have even sliced through vehicle armor on occasion, so they definitely have a chance to puncture your cold suit, whether it is armored or not.

Game Info

GIANT WOLVERINE

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	M	Init	IP
7	4	4	7	1	4	1	3	2	6	3	7	1

Movement: 10/25
Skills: Perception 4, Running 3, Unarmed Combat 3
Powers: Enhanced Senses (hearing, smell), Natural Weapon (claw/bite, DV 5, AP -1)

Pole Shark

Habitat: Arctic Ocean
Range: The Arctic Ocean around the North Pole
Frequency: Very rare

This Awakened cousin of the sleeper shark actually prefers colder waters than its non-Awakened equivalent, so if you are looking for one you might try looking under ice. As is the case with the sleeper shark, the pole shark is generally five to seven meters long, with some specimens hitting nine meters. They feed on seals and other marine mammals, but have been seen to take down polar bears on occasion (and it's apparently a spectacular sight). They have no fear of man as long as they are in the water. They tend to stay clear of ships, and loud noises will scare them off. Their bite is poisonous with a fast-acting toxin that incapacitates its prey.

Game Info

POLE SHARK

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	M	Init	IP
4	5	5	3	1	4	1	2	3	6	3	9	1

Movement: 15/30 (swimming)
Skills: Perception 2, Swimming 3
Powers: Enhanced Senses (Sonar), Natural weapon (Bite, DV 5P, AP -), Venom

Pale Musk Ox

Habitat: Arctic north region
Range: Arctic North America and Thule
Frequency: Rare

The pale musk ox is an Awakened form of the musk ox. They have improved their adaptations to the cold, and the glands that provide the musk that gives the musk ox its name have developed in a way that allows them to emit a noxious breath to help defend themselves against predators.

Game Info

PALE MUSK OX

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	M	Init	IP
8	3	4	9	1	3	1	3	2	6	5	7	1

Movement: 10/40
Skills: Running 3
Powers: Enhanced Senses (Hearing), Immunity (Cold), Noxious Breath
Weakness: Allergy (Pollutants, Mild)

Volt Hound

Habitat: Antarctica
Range: Anywhere on the continent
Frequency: Rare

This Awakened hound is related to the Antarctic hound. Some think that it was part of the same experiment that created the Antarctic hound; others think that a wandering pack of hounds ran into some sort of magical phenomenon on Antarctica. Whatever the case may be, the end result was a hound that's a veritable walking electrical storm. The way sound carries in the Antarctic, you can sometimes hear the snap and crackle of electricity around the coats of a pack of these beasts from dozens of kilometers away, and the predatory nature of the hounds means that the sound strikes fear into the heart of any creature who knows what they're hearing (and a few who don't).

Game Info

VOLT HOUND

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	Edg	Ess	M	Init	IP
3	4	3	4	3	4	1	3	3	6	5	7	1

Movement: 15/45
Skills: Intimidation 3, Perception 2, Running 2, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 3
Powers: Elemental Attack (Electricity), Enhanced Sense (Smell), Natural Weapon (Claw/Bite: DV 3P, AP 0)



GEAR

You are only as good as your gear—that may be a truism, but it's quite accurate, and even more so in the unforgiving cold of the Arctic Wastelands. Even the most common piece of gear needs to be slightly modified to help it work better—or at all—in the cold that the wasteland brings. I have broken down the gear by types in an attempt to make it more manageable.

CLOTHING

As was mentioned in the **Keeping Warm** section, cold-weather gear is a must if you want to survive for more than a few minutes in the cold. Both the cold suit and polar survival suit provide adequate protection against the cold, but little in the way of other protection. Ares has come up with a modified line of suits that provide some additional protection, along with some other enhancements for those of us who aren't there just to see the sights. One good thing is that the padding that insulates you from the cold also dampens your IR signature. This won't make you invisible to thermographic vision, but it will make it harder to see you. If you use full-suit armor, you will need to treat it for use in the extreme cold to prevent the outer shell from becoming brittle. Additionally, the extra weight of full-suit armor can cause you to go plunging through the snow bank that your pal just went over with no problem, so traveling lighter is often better.

Ares Armored Survivalist

This is the armored version of a survival suit. While it gives up a bit in creature comforts when compared to the polar survival suit, it gives additional protection against both impact and ballistic attacks that can be invaluable when the lead starts flying or a wild animal attacks. It is made with the security professional in mind. The bulky suit has several layers, starting with a wicking undergarment to move any moisture away from the skin. The middle insulating layer acts as a thermal dampener to help hold in the body heat and minimize heat loss to the outside. This is covered with a flexible outer shell, a waterproof and windproof parka woven with Kevlar and strategically placed plates to protect vital areas. It also includes a full polarized face shield (eliminating glare issues) with a warmer to heat up the air being breathed. It can be further outfitted to accept any armor modification. On top of all that, the suit is compatible with the Ares Resealer technology.

- It isn't major protection like some use on the streets, but it is helpful. The little bit of extra armor saved me a couple of times when I ran into problems during a rescue mission.
- 2XL

Ares Polar Sneak Suit

This is the Arctic suit to use during times when you need to be sure you aren't seen. This suit takes the polar survival suit and adds chameleon coating, allowing the wearer to completely blend into their surroundings. The trade-off, of course, is that the suit does not offer as much protection as bulkier clothing, and the thermal damping takes a hit. It is compatible with the Ares Resealer technology, but resealer repairs lessen the effectiveness of the chameleon coating until it is properly repaired. Because

INCOMING FEED.....



of the coating on the suit, it isn't possible to make any more modifications to it, but you still can make modifications to armor suits themselves as long as they don't affect the coating. With the chameleon coating, you do end up with slightly less thermal protection.

- This is good for when sneaking is absolutely necessary, but the loss of protection against the cold doesn't make it my first choice for most missions.
- Coldnaught
- It depends on the mission parameters. If you won't be exposed to the elements for long, I always take the stealth over protection.
- Rigger X

Ares Armored Coldsuit

In a very simple approach to arctic gear, Ares took the basic coldsuit design and added armoring to it. The use of plating and Kevlar weave to protect vital areas increases the suit's durability and allows the wearer to stay in the field for longer periods of time. An integrated smartlink system allows for easy interfacing with your weapon of choice, and the suit is compatible with the Ares Resealer technology.

- For a quick armed assault of a complex, this is the best option. For prolonged operations in the weather, the reduced protection to exposure can sometimes be more of a hindrance than the extra armor is worth.
- The Smiling Bandit
- I like the additional armor in any situation. Lead has killed many more runners than exposure ever will.
- Red Anya
- That's only because not too many runners have ventured out into those insane conditions.
- Haze

Ares Arctic Forces Suit

The Ares Arctic Forces Suit is modified SWAT armor with helmet for arctic operations. The under layer is a waterproof smock that functions like a diving drysuit and covers the torso, head, arms, and legs. The outer layer is a heated, windproof parka that uses kevflex™ technology with polymer composite plates to protect vital areas. The composite plates are also made to help hold in body heat, though this somewhat increases the heat signature of the user. The boots and gloves both have retractable climbing spurs. The helmet incorporates a high-visibility, polarized, full-face mask that comes with a full AR suite with tactical overlay. It also incorporates a gas mask equipped with an air warming system to reduce the exposure to cold air and allow the use of gases if necessary. Additionally, there are several pouches and pockets sewn into it to allow use without having to remove the gloves.

- A very good mix of protection from the elements and enemy firepower. It is very distinctive in appearance—not that any of the arctic survival suits exactly allow you to blend in.
- Coldnaught

Game Info



ARCTIC GEAR

Ares Armored Survivalist: Armor Rating (B/I): 4/4, w/ built-in flare compensation; Capacity 6, Availability 10, Cost: 1,500 nuyen [Note: Cannot be combined with any other armor.]

Ares Polar Sneak Suit: Armor Rating (B/I): 1/3, w/ Insulation (Rating 5), Thermal Dampening (Rating 3); Capacity 6, Availability 10R, Cost: 9,000 nuyen

Ares Armored Coldsuit: Armor Rating (B/I): 6/4, w/ Insulation (Rating 4); Availability 6, Cost: 1,000 nuyen

Ares Arctic Forces Suit: Armor Rating (B/I): 12/10, w/ Insulation (Rating 5), Thermal Dampening (Rating 3); provides +1 dice pool modifier for climbing tests made while wearing the suit; Capacity 6, Availability 18R, Cost: 10,000 nuyen

Arctic Diver Suit: Armor Rating (B/I): 0/1, w/ Insulation (Rating 5; only effective in water); Availability 8, Cost: 3,000 nuyen

Ares Resealer: Availability 4; Cost: 200 nuyen; instead of the normal penalty of -1/2 of the Insulation Rating when damaged, a resealer-repaired suit operates at Rating -1 until it can be repaired completely

Horizon Canteen System: Availability 6, Cost: 500 nuyen



Arctic Diver Suit

In the freezing waters of the Arctic and Antarctic, a dry suit isn't enough to keep a diver from dying of exposure. The arctic diver suit starts with a dry suit and then adds nanotech heater technology to keep the skin warm. The suit will keep the diver warm for a forty-five-minute dive on average. It has to be recharged in between dives; charging takes two hours.

Ares Resealer

Resealer technology allows on-the-spot quick repairs to Ares coldsuits and polar survival suits. It works by injecting a polymer into the hole, sealing it and re-separating the different layers to help maintain the suit's integrity. While it doesn't provide a perfect repair, the damaged area no longer leaks hot air while letting cold air in. Exertion has caused failure in some cases, so extra care should be taken, especially when the damage was in highly flexible areas like legs and arms.

- This is a major breakthrough in Arctic survival technology. It allows for field repairs to a damaged suit, which will extend operational ability. While not perfect, it does save lives.
- Clockwork
- It saved the life of one of my team after a polar bear attack. We were able repair his suit enough to keep him from freezing to death before we got him back to our transport.
- Coldnaught

Horizon Canteen System

Horizon has recently developed a major contribution to the issue of staying hydrated while in the Arctic wastelands. Even though you're surrounded by frozen water, there is no effective way to hydrate the body without exposure to the extreme cold. Even if you could get to the snow and ice without exposing yourself to the elements, ingesting significant quantities of snow and ice could cause a drop in body temperature. The canteen system hooks a small cylinder to the suit in the small of the back where it uses warmth from the body to keep from freezing, but staying cool to provide optimal refreshment.

- This is an often-overlooked problem in the Arctic. The system works well, though in severe storms I have heard of problems with it freezing up.
- Mika
- I have also heard issues with it becoming an ice cube in the middle of the back, robbing heat from the body when jostled around due to heavy exertion.
- Coldnaught

WEAPONS

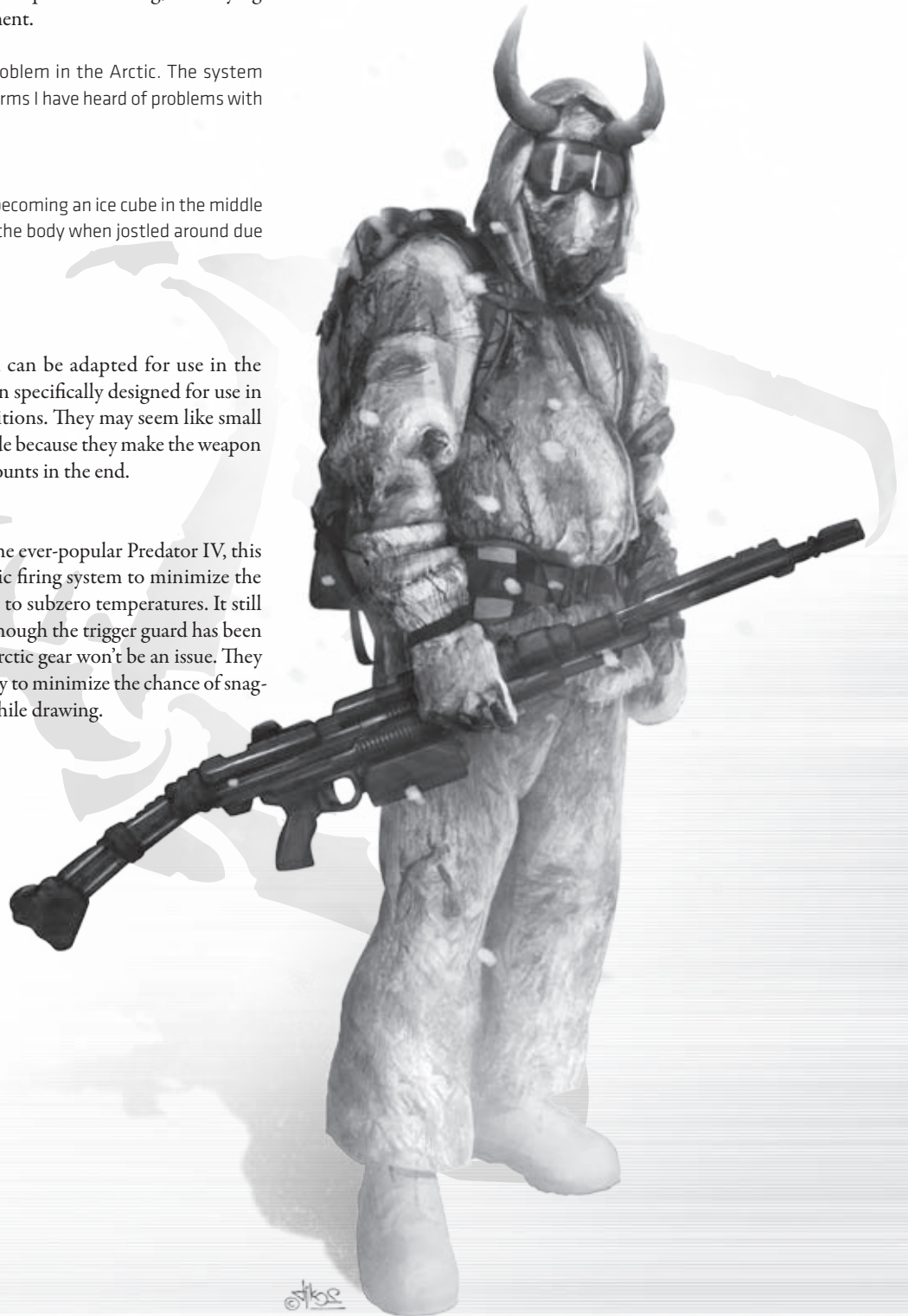
It is true that any weapon can be adapted for use in the cold weather, but a few have been specifically designed for use in extreme temperatures and conditions. They may seem like small modifications, but they were made because they make the weapon more reliable, and that is what counts in the end.

Ares Predator CW

A cold-weather version of the ever-popular Predator IV, this weapon has gone to an electronic firing system to minimize the moving parts that could fail due to subzero temperatures. It still has the internal smartgun link, though the trigger guard has been removed so the bulky gloves of arctic gear won't be an issue. They also streamlined the shape slightly to minimize the chance of snagging it on the bulkier clothing while drawing.

Ares Arctic Rifle

This is a modified version of the popular Ares Alpha, adapted for use in the cold-weather climates. It uses the special firing chamber and adds an electronic firing system to minimize the number of moving parts that could fail under the extreme conditions. The trigger guard is also modified to accommodate the bulkiness of arctic survival gear. The gun is designed to work very well with the Ares Arctic Forces Suit; it almost feels like it has space in the armor designed specifically for the gun.



FN CWAR

This is a modified version of the FN HAR for use in arctic conditions. The internal laser sight is replaced with an internal smartgun system, since most cold-weather suits have smartlink capability even if the user doesn't possess one of their own. The gas-vent system was also upgraded.

HK 247-Arctic

Heckler & Koch took what corporate and security forces liked about the successful HK 227-X and modified it for use in the extreme environment of the Arctic Wastelands. They kept the integral sound suppressor and smartgun link while getting rid of the retractable stock because of the bulkiness of arctic clothing, replacing it with a shock pad. An integral gas-vent system was also added, and the manufacturers installed an extended clip to decrease the number of times reloading is necessary.

HK Icethrower

A revolutionary concept for arctic weaponry is the HK Icethrower. It uses some of the extremes of the environment to create a truly unique weapon. Snow is loaded into a cylinder that is worn at the hip, and compressed air and the surrounding cold condenses this into ice pellets the size of super balls that are fired in short bursts. The effect is like being pummeled by several small, hard fists, so impact armor works better to protect you than the ballistic variety.

- The idea of using the elements instead of fighting them is intriguing, but I'm not sure this has been field-tested enough to demonstrate its effectiveness in the long term.
- Stone

Arctic Suppressor

A heavy machine gun adapted for the Arctic, this weapon is equipped with an electronic firing system, a shockpad, and a rock-solid gas-vent system. It is also equipped with dual clips, along with an extended clip system so it can sustain fire for longer before needing to reload.

VEHICLES

Transportation is even more important in the Arctic Wastelands than it is in the sprawl, since there isn't public transportation to fall back on and going on foot isn't always an option. You can always ski or snowshoe, but the large distances that often need to be covered between drop zone and target don't always make this feasible. The last thing you want is to have your vehicle break down halfway to your destination or as you get ready to make your getaway. The heat signature of vehicles is even worse in the cold environment, and for this reason investing in signature masking is a must. Ground vehicles need to be tracked, preferably with studded tracks for additional traction on the ice.

The fastest way to travel is by air, but it is also the most easily seen, and there's also the potential problem of finding a landing zone. Helicopters and rotor craft work well for short hops or when you don't know what you will have for a landing zone, but you don't want to get caught in a storm in one because keeping them flying while snow, ice, and wind pelt them is almost impossible. You still find a fair number of prop-driven

Game Info

WEAPON STATISTICS

Note: For any weapon that does not have the appropriate trigger modification, inflict a -1 dice pool penalty to attempts to fire them when wearing cold-weather gear due to the difficulty of squeezing bulky gloves into the space for the trigger.

Ares Predator CW: Same game stats as Ares Predator IV, except add electronic firing. Availability: 10R, Cost: 1,500 nuyen

Ares Arctic Rifle: Use same stats as the Ares Alpha, except when used with the Ares Arctic Forces Suit it receives 1 additional point of recoil compensation due to the molding of the suit for use with the gun. Cost: 1,800 nuyen

FN CWAR: Same stats as FN HAR, except remove laser sight, replace with smartgun system. Upgrade the recoil compensation for gas-vent 3. Cost: 2,500 nuyen

HK 247-Arctic: Use stats for HK 227-X, except replace detachable stock with shock pad and add extended clip modification, making the ammunition capacity 35(c). Cost: 1,500 nuyen

HK Icethrower: Exotic Ranged Weapon, DV 6S, AP -, BF, RC -, Availability 10R, Cost: 800 nuyen. Note: Snow is required to use as ammo for the weapon; for every half-kilo of snow (approximately what a human would get in a single two-handed scoop), the weapon can fire up to three bursts. Scooping snow into the weapon's cylinder requires a Simple Action; the cylinder can hold up to three kilograms of snow (enough for nine bursts). The weapon does not operate in temperatures above 3 degrees Celsius.

Arctic Suppressor: Heavy Machine Gun, DV 7P, AP -3, FA, RC 5, 50(c), Availability: 16F, Cost: 9,000 nuyen, w/ electronic firing, gas-vent 3, dual clip, extended clip



planes in the Arctic Wastelands because of their relatively low heat signatures and reliability. Because of the heat generated by vectored-thrust vehicles like thunderbirds, they aren't a good choice for the Arctic. This heat makes them easier to spot and more difficult to land.

Drones are often the best option for recon and information gathering. Ground drones really need to be tracked (like any other vehicle in the Arctic) though tiny crawler drones do fine as long as they don't have to go over longer distances. Smaller flying drones often do the best because they are harder to spot and easier to land. No matter what type of drone you use, make sure you invest in the best remote controls you can buy with good strong signals, because if you lose signal your drone will crash before you get a chance to reestablish control.

Here are some of the vehicles you should be looking at if you're planning a journey to icy extremes.

Chrysler-Nissan Patrol CW

Chrysler-Nissan took its successful Patrol-1 vehicle, updated it, and modified it for use in cold-weather climates. To spread out its weight distribution it was moved to a tread instead of wheeled base. The designers then added heavy-duty heaters to the cab and removed the detainee compartment to add more seating for security personnel. The engine coolant system got a cold-weather overhaul to ensure it would operate even in the most extreme weather. Then the sensor suite was upgraded so when weather hits the Patrol CW won't be blind.

Patrol Snowski

The Patrol Snowski is a modified snowmobile made for the extreme conditions of the Arctic. It has been armored and designed so the rider can slide into protective sleeves to shield himself from the weather. These sleeves use warmth from the engine to keep the rider warm. The vehicle's coolant system is upgraded to the cold-weather system to help guard against freezing. Because of its limited size, sensors are sacrificed in order to maximize the ability to protect against the cold.

MCT Fox

The MCT Fox is a pickup truck for use in the harsh environment of the Arctic. Its open bed can be easily converted to a covered storage area, which is common. Unlike typical pickup trucks, the Fox is tracked for additional traction and spreading of the weight of its cargo. Since even everyday conditions are harsh in the Arctic, it has a factory-installed mid-grade pilot program and cold-weather coolant system from the factory.

Renraku Polar Bear

The Renraku Polar Bear is a step van made for the extreme temperatures of the Arctic. It comes with a tracked drive train, cold-weather coolant system, and top-end sensor and pilot system. It can carry several passengers, or the seats can be removed to allow it to carry cargo. The van is sloped on top to reduce the wind drag when the Arctic winds pick up, which lets the snow blow over the van instead of drifting in front of it and slowing it down.

Ares Icebreaker

The Ares Icebreaker is slightly larger than your typical yacht and has been modified for operations in the frigid waters around the north and south poles. The hull is reinforced to allow it crush the ice beneath its weight without much fear of damage. The hull is shaped such that it pushes the ice out and away from the hull. The propulsion system has been strengthened to give the extra torque needed to help clear the ice. The enclosed propeller system also helps minimize damage from ice hitting the props.

Aztechnology Ballena

Aztechnology has modified its successful Tiburon design and updated it for use in Arctic and Antarctic waters in the 2070s. It has the ability to act as an interceptor of slower ships while also being capable of serving as an icebreaker. It has several different models and sub-versions for more specialized missions.

Aztechnology Icerunner

Aztechnology took the Nightrunner frame and modified it for use in the Arctic. They reinforced the hull and improved the sonar to help it avoid hidden ice formations.

Colorado Craft "Icicle" Hydrocraft

You may not think the cigarette boat is the right choice for the Arctic, but Colorado Craft wants you to think again. They took the basic cigarette design, enclosed the cabin to keep out the cold air (especially when going to hydrofoil operation), and reinforced and armored the hydroplanes. This makes the boat handle a bit sluggishly, but it also allows it to run over small bits of ice without too many problems. They also improved the sonar so you can tell a small piece of ice from something large underneath the surface of the water.

- You don't want to hit submerged ice. It will rip off the hydroplane faster you can say *Titanic*.
- Sounder

- Speaking from personal experience?
- Slamm-O!

- No, I was chasing the poor bastard who did it. The crash was spectacular. Not much left of the boat or its cargo afterwards.
- Sounder

Ares Snowstar 2070

I mentioned the obstacles that helicopters face when flying in arctic conditions, but some people think they can be overcome. The Snowstar is Ares' attempt to make it work. They took a cargo helicopter and modified it to help it during takeoff and landing in poor conditions. I still wouldn't want to be in one during a major storm, but it is great for shuttling cargo to and from the more remote facilities.

SPELLS

The more time people spend in the Arctic, the more ways they're going to come up with to deal with the conditions. Sometimes, the adaptations are about simple survival, but mages have spent enough time dealing with the cold that they can move beyond that and look for ways that magic can give them an edge when they're working in cold weather. Here's a quick rundown of some new spells that people who have spent too much time in cold weather have developed.

Evaporate

One of the critical elements in staying warm while going on a long march or engaging in combat is keeping yourself from sweating. This simple spell can keep an individual or group from breaking out in a sweat and losing all-important body heat.

Snow Tunnel

Vast parts of the Arctic and Antarctic are uninhabited and completely structure-free, so travelers are often left to find their own shelters. This is especially true if you're looking for someplace to hide on the ice, as the lack of trees or vegetation greatly limits the possible hiding places. It's tempting to tunnel down into the



VEHICLE STATISTICS

Chrysler-Nissan Patrol CW: Handling +2, Acceleration 10/40, Speed 90, Pilot 3, Body 10, Armor 10, Sensor 2, Availability 12R, Cost 27,600 nuyen; Standard Upgrades: Extreme Environment Mod, Tracked Vehicle

Patrol Snowski: Handling +2, Acceleration 15/25, Speed 180, Pilot 3, Body 5, Armor 5, Sensor 1, Availability –, cost 12,000 nuyen; Standard Upgrades: Extreme Environment Mod, Tracked Vehicle

MCT Fox: Handling 0, Acceleration 5/15, Speed 100, Pilot 3, Body 14, Armor 7, Sensor 2, Availability –, Cost 40,000 nuyen; Standard Upgrades: Extreme Environment Mod, Tracked Vehicle

Renraku Polar Bear: Handling –1, Acceleration 5/10, Speed 80, Pilot 3, Body 16, Armor 7, Sensor 2, Availability –, Cost 40,000 nuyen; Standard Upgrades: Extreme Environment Mod, Tracked Vehicle

Ares Icebreaker: Handling –2, Acceleration 10/15, Speed 60, Pilot 3, Body 26, Armor 10, Sensor 3, Availability 12, Cost 4,500,000 nuyen; Standard Upgrades: Drone Rack (mini), Extreme Environment Mod, Satellite Communications

Aztechnology Ballena: Handling –3, Acceleration 10/25, Speed 85, Pilot 1, Body 34, Armor 20, Sensor 3, Availability 30F, Cost 2,650,000 nuyen; Standard Upgrades: Extreme Environment Mod, Satellite Communications, Signature Masking (Rating 2), 3 Weapon Mounts (external, flexible, armored, manned)

Aztechnology Icerunner: Handling +1, Acceleration 10/20, Speed 75, Pilot 3, Body 12, Armor 5, Sensor 3, Availability 7, Cost 35,000 nuyen; Standard Upgrades: Ducted Waterjet, Extreme Environment Mod

Colorado Craft "Icicle" Hydrocraft: Handling +1, Acceleration 10/45, Speed 100, Pilot 2, Body 8, Armor 4, Sensor 2, Availability 4, Cost 60,000 nuyen; Standard Upgrades: Extreme Environment Mod, Hydrofoil Capability

Ares Snowstar 2070: Handling +1, Acceleration 15/30, Speed 250, Pilot 3, Body 15, Armor 12, Sensor 3, Availability 14, 450,000 nuyen; Standard Upgrades: ECM 3, Extreme Environment Mod, Improved Takeoff and Landing 2, Lock-on Countermeasures, Rigger Adaptation

snow, but any structure you dig out is going to be inherently unstable, and the last thing you want is to wake up with a ton of snow collapsed on you. Snow Tunnel not only helps you dig through the snow in short order, but it produces a tunnel that will hold up to more stress than usual.

Shape Ice

Whether you're making a fabulous ice sculpture for your friend's wedding or shaping a trap that will ensnare the next vehicle that drives over it, the ability to make ice into whatever shape you want it is a valuable one in all sorts of situations. This spell makes ice putty in your hands without melting it.

Personal Warmth

This was probably the first spell mages who visited in the Arctic came up with. It does what the name says—it keeps you warm. That sounds simple, but many mages I've met who have returned from the Arctic say it's the best thing in the world.

- I won't lie, I've used it, but I don't like to overdo it. Some of my opposition is philosophical—you're in the Arctic, you're supposed to be cold! Don't close yourself off from the experience! But there's a practical side, too. If you wave your hands and keep yourself warm all the time, it's too easy to forget where you are. And in the Arctic or Antarctic, you never want to do that.
- Winter Warlock

Detect Air Pocket

This spell was originally designed by explorers who wanted to avoid the deadly air pockets under the snow that could cause the ground to collapse under their feet, abruptly burying them in snow and ice. It's still useful in that respect, but the innovation of the Snow Tunnel spell has given this formula a new use—looking for people hidden in the snow.

Pack Snow

Driving across the snow can be treacherous, and landing an airplane on packed snow is even dicier still. This spell helps you make a nice, firm snowpack that will reliably hold up a vehicle, though if you want a single mage to pack enough space for a runway, you're going to have to make sure you schedule some downtime for that spellcaster.

Polar Fog

As I mentioned when talking about the Snow Tunnel spell, cold wastelands offer precious few places to hide, and sometimes you can't take the time to disappear into the snow. Polar Fog calls up a quick fogbank to hide your movements, or to cause complete and utter confusion in the middle of a firefight.

- More than one Arctic facility has a team of mages sustaining this spell around their structures 24/7. If you see a permanent fog bank, be suspicious.
- Winter Warlock



Hydrate

There's plenty of water in cold environments, but the problem is that it's cold, and imbibing it takes away critical body heat. Want to stay hydrated without sucking ice? This spell will do the trick.

Dehydrate

The other side of the hydrate coin is that any adversaries out there might be on the edge of dehydration, and a simple spell can push them right over, making your foes dizzy and nauseated. Even better, they might think this is just a natural effect and not realize they've been targeted by a mage.

Maintain Warmth

The range of adept powers developed for cold conditions is not as extensive as the new spells, but the main one is quite useful. Adepts with this power can keep warm, period. Sometimes, simple choices are the best.

ARCTIC AREAS

The Arctic comprises several landmasses as well as the North Atlantic and Arctic Oceans. The landmasses are in several different countries, each with their own economic and political agenda. Add to this the megacorporations and their desire to profit from whatever resources they can find in the frozen north, and you have a complex mixture of locations and opportunities for shadowrunners willing to brave the elements. An Arctic run requires proper planning and preparation, even more than your normal shadowrun, but there are also advantages smart runners can seize if they're clued in. We'll talk about each area in terms of what matters—that is, the work we can find there.

TRANS-POLAR ALEUT

The Trans-Polar Aleut lands cover the North Pole and most of the harshest parts of the Arctic. It also covers the Arctic and North Atlantic Oceans as well as the bays and seas around areas including Thule and the northern parts of North America. The Trans-Polar Aleut is a coalition of several Native American tribes including the Inuit, Aleut, and Dene, and they operate out of a deep respect for the land. They have very strict rules about mining, fishing, and the cultivation of natural resources. The government has struggled since its inception with the Treaty of Denver, but

Game Info

Evaporate (Physical)

Type: P Range: LOS Duration: P DV: (F/2)+2

This spell negates the heat loss from sweat. It can affect a single individual for each point of Force. Individuals must be within the caster's line of sight when the spell is cast, but they do not need to stay in line of sight while the spell is being sustained.

Snow Tunnel (Manipulation, Physical)

Type: P Range: LOS Duration: P DV: (F/2)+3

Tunnels made with the Snow Tunnel spell have 1 point of both Armor and Structure Rating per hit. (Normal snow tunnels have Armor Rating 1, Structure Rating 3.)

Shape Ice (Manipulation, Physical)

Type: P Range: LOS Duration: P DV: (F/2)

This spell can shape one square meter of ice per point of Force.

Personal Warmth (Health)

Type: P Range: LOS Duration: S DV: (F/2)

Personal warmth maintains the proper body temperature of one or more metahumans. The number of people protected serves as the threshold for the Spellcasting Test. Individuals must be within the caster's line of sight when the spell is cast, but they do not need to stay in line of sight while the spell is being sustained.

Detect Air Pocket (Detection, Active, Area)

Type: M Range: T Duration: S DV: (F/2)+1

Detect Air Pocket, Extended (Active, Extended Area)

Type: M Range: T Duration: S DV: (F/2)+3

Pack Snow (Manipulation, Physical)

Type: P Range: Area Duration: P DV: (F/2)+4

This spell increases the Structure Rating of snow pack by the number of hits.

Polar Fog (Illusion, Realistic, Single-Sense, Area)

Type: M Range: Area Duration: S DV: (F/2)-1

For each net hit on the Spellcasting Test, this fog provides a -1 modifier to visual Perception Tests attempted within its area.

Polar Fog, Improved

Type: P Range: Area Duration: S DV: (F/2)+1

Hydrate (Health)

Type: P Range: T Duration: P DV: (F/2)

Each hit on the Spellcasting Test reduces fatigue damage due to dehydration by 1.

Dehydrate (Health, Negative)

Type: P Range: T Duration: S DV: (F/2) + 2

If the target of the spell is unable to resist, he experiences disorientation and nausea (p. 254, SR4A).

Maintain Warmth (0.25 PP)

Adepts with this ability can resist the onset of hypothermia or other cold-related conditions.



INCOMING FEED.....



ARCTIC WASTELANDS

so far it has managed to keep from falling apart despite the differences in tribal beliefs. Much of this has to do with how sparsely populated most of the T-P Aleut lands are. If you don't agree with the others in the area, you can just move somewhere else, since one piece of tundra is much like the next. The megacorporations use the sparse population to their advantage, setting up remote research facilities (often without government permission) where they know they won't be seen by prying eyes.

The one hotbed of political conflict is the Thule Protectorate. When it became part of the Trans-Polar Aleut after Crash 2.0, it was a powder keg waiting to be ignited, and things haven't calmed down any since then. The Inuit and Nordic influences go back generations, which means that the Trans-Polar Aleut contains populations who see the world very differently. Factions of both groups have come close to forming a unified island government as part of a bid for independence, only to have something unravel things at the end.

- That "something" is usually an assassination. One Inuit official even joked about how he was seeing laser dots in his sleep, which was funny right up until the point where he was killed by a sniper.
- Kay St. Irregular
- I remember that the Trans-Polar Aleut government looked into the assassination, but they weren't ever able to get anywhere. Of course, when you're the one behind the assassination, it isn't in your interest to find the person who pulled the trigger.
- Plan 9

- Just because you don't find the person responsible doesn't mean you didn't try. With the history of assassinations, where almost every faction has killed someone from another faction at one time or another, investigations become quite challenging. It's not like a bunch of eyewitnesses are stepping forward to help out law enforcement authorities.
- Kay St. Irregular

The more radical Inuits want more than independence. They want all of the Europeans off the island so they can return to the traditional ways of their ancestors. Then there are those who trace their heritage back to Iceland and the Norse culture and want to go back to the Scandinavian Union. The Trans-Polar Aleut government doesn't want to lose the income from the revitalized fishing industry that would result from those groups leaving the nation.

- Add to this the recent rise of eco-terrorists and evangelists who believe that the Trans-Polar Aleut government is letting too much fishing occur in order to maximize their income. These radicals have started to sabotage the fishing industry, and in the last couple years their attacks have become more frequent and vicious. The Thule Protectorate is becoming a battleground, and since no compromise seems imminent, things are not likely to get better in the near future.
- Ecotope

Pisces Mining Company

If you want to look at the center of activity in the Trans-Polar Aleut's mining operations, you need to look at the Pisces Mining Company. It's a profitable operation, which means there are a lot of players who want a piece of them. After Barthotech was bought out by Horizon in 2065, Pisces has been under increasing pressure from the Big Ten to sell out. Pisces' underwater mining platforms throughout the Trans-Polar Aleut territories include some of the few locations that are still producing crude oil, and these locations have been the targets of significant attacks. In the last year, Pisces has lost two of their transport subs to "accidents."

- As the quotes above imply, they weren't accidents. Both were lost to sabotage. Pisces is well aware of this, but the corporation hasn't been able to get enough proof to go to the Corporate Court.
- Sunshine
- They have been diving on at least one of the wreck sites to try and get that proof.
- Rigger X

Knowing that the minerals and crude are going to run out even in their offshore facilities, Pisces has begun thinking about the next steps in their corporate development, looking for more resources to exploit. That effort has included exploration of some sort up near the North Pole itself, though observers have yet to determine just what it is that Pisces personnel are looking for.

- These North Pole expeditions have been loaded with people experienced with talismongering and magical lore. They're after more than oil.
- Lyran
- Have they found anything yet?
- /dev/grrl
- Well, they're (quite naturally) not talking about it if they had. I heard about a drake pulling a group together fast to look into what they were doing. He seemed really bothered about something, and he and his group made their way north in a big hurry. No one has heard from them in two months.
- Lyran

Investigation of the Aurora Borealis

I mentioned that various megacorporations were taking an interest in the polar regions. Ares in particular is looking to use the area to boost their magical production. The Magical Research and Development division of Ares North America has recently started funding expeditions to monitor, evaluate, and research the Aurora Borealis. The study seems to be entirely focused on the Northern Lights, and for the moment they are not demonstrating any interest in the Aurora Australis. They've brought up a good supply of mages and have stashed them in a facility north of the Arctic Circle in the Yukon.

- Could their Northern-Lights-only focus be tied to the fact that the work is being funded by Ares North America?
- Kia

Game Info



PISCES MINING COMPANY PLOT HOOKS

- Mr. Johnson wants Pisces Mining Company to realize that merging with the megacorporation he represents is in their best interest. They are getting ready to put two newly purchased transport subs into service. Mr. Johnson wants you to make sure they don't ever get to work delivering product for Pisces. He doesn't care how the runners do it or what happens to the subs, but he doesn't want them to go into service for Pisces.
- Pisces Mining Company hired Mr. Johnson to help them recruit a group of runners. In their exploration efforts, they discovered an ancient tunnel complex in the Brooks Mountain Range in the Trans-Polar Aleut. They want the group to investigate the complex, retrieve any artifacts found, and deliver them to Pisces' headquarters. Pisces isn't informing the Trans-Polar Aleut government of the find and they want the runners to help them keep things hush-hush.
- Recent polar bear activity around the Pisces camp city just east of Inuvik has increased. The team is hired to investigate why, and drive off the bears. If the bears won't leave, then Pisces wants them exterminated. What they don't know is that a spirit bear (p. 76) has settled in the area and is exercising control of the polar bears.
- A local shaman has convinced Pisces Mining Company that he has found an orichalcum deposit in the mountains. Pisces wants to hire the runners to help protect the expedition team they are sending to investigate the claims. As it turns out, the shaman is running a scam—there is no deposit. To keep from being exposed, the shaman will either try to eliminate the runners or recruit them to help him, depending on how he thinks they will react.

- I suppose it's possible, but there isn't any evidence of a corresponding program looking at the Southern Lights.
- Winterhawk

The research is being led by Dr. Vance Williams. They regularly send teams of five mages or so to wander around for a week or two, then return to the research facility to rest, warm up, and review the data they gathered while they were out.

- The plan each time has been to stay out a couple of weeks, or even a month, but something has gone wrong each time and they have had to cut it short.
- Sunshine

The facility also houses several "security consultants" to protect the mages from the natural wildlife and other potential problems. Ares outfits them with basic cold-weather gear and



transportation, but they don't care what else the hirees bring, as long as it helps with security. The surroundings suck, but you can chisel some extra money out of Mr. Johnson in return.

- One of the team I sometimes run with was on a recent expedition with these folks. He says the reason their travels were cut short is that one of the scientists who was with them freaked out while astrally perceiving the Aurora Borealis. They subdued him, but now all he does is babble.
- Jimmy No
- At least one of those expeditions had help in things going wrong. Interesting things happen to people when polar bear pheromones are spread without their knowledge.
- Coldnaught

The agreement that Ares made with the Trans-Polar Aleut has them sharing the data they collect with the government. Even though the expeditions have been cut short, they have gathered some good data, and the Trans-Polar government is anxious to get their copy of it.

- I'd like to see that data.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- There have been a couple of different attempts to grab the data, but so far the base camp security has held up.
- Kia

Both Wuxing and Evo are outfitting research groups to go in and gather data on the Aurora Borealis without the Trans-Polar Aleut blessing. They are going to stay to the more remote and sparsely populated areas for obvious reasons. There are also groups looking to make sure neither them nor the government-funded expedition succeeds. They are hiring people to help make sure no one discovers the Aurora Borealis' secrets.

Trans-Polar Aleut Mapping Project

The Trans-Polar Aleut is funding an expedition that is mapping the mountainous coastal regions of Thule. The official story is that they are looking for transportation routes onto and off the island, but the reality is they are trying to flush out all of the smugglers, poachers, and warlords that are using the coasts as their base of operations.

- There is money to be made by forgetting routes on the maps or leaving off a cave complex. First, though, you've got to convince someone to trust you enough to make you part of their mapping project.
- Coldnaught
- Just be careful that the group that is operating in the area you stroll into doesn't just decide to ambush you on sight.
- Kane

They are also looking at how to best set up an integrated Matrix throughout Thule. NeoNET is helping them set up this

Game Info

INVESTIGATION OF THE AURORA BOREALIS PLOT HOOKS

- Mr. Johnson wants to know what Ares has found out so far. He hires the team to raid their Arctic facility right after the latest expedition returns so that they can get a copy of the latest data. He can get them to within about ten kilometers of the base camp, but they will have to go in on foot from there to keep from being detected by the security. Physical security includes an outer and inner fence with dogs patrolling between the two fences. No wireless signals extend outside the camp's inner fence.
- Mr. Johnson wants the group to act as a security detail for a covert mission that is going into the wilds of the Arctic to observe and monitor the Aurora Borealis. The plan is to stay out for a week, then rendezvous with a resupply transport so that the team has what it needs to stay out for a second week. At the end of this time, the group will be picked up and brought back. Right before they leave, they are approached by a mysterious woman who says she will pay them for a copy of all the information gathered by the scientists during the expedition.
- Ms. Johnson wants an Ares expedition observing the Aurora Borealis to be cut short. She would prefer that no one be killed, but if that is the only way to make them turn back, so be it. The leader of Ares' polar work, Dr. Vance Williams, is part of the expedition, and Ms. Johnson leaves clear instructions that he is not to be harmed.

network, and in return the corp has been allowed to set up a base in the Thule Protectorate to observe local flora and fauna.

- That may be the official line, but NeoNET isn't just going to study nature for fun. They've got all sorts of experiments with Awakened plants and animals happening at their base of operations.
- Sunshine

The Trans-Polar Aleut government is beginning to suspect that NeoNET doesn't have their best interests in mind, but their hands are tied—they need the megacorp's help in setting up the Matrix relays. They are waiting until the current phase is done, and then they will be looking for ways that NeoNET may have gone beyond their current agreement, thereby giving the nation an excuse to kick them out.

- It is kind of convenient for NeoNET that someone keeps sabotaging their Matrix efforts so that the completion of that first phase seems to be getting further and further away.
- Sunshine
- An acquaintance of mine helped with some sabotage of the new Matrix infrastructure, and he commented that the intelligence





INCOMING FEED.....

was spot on in every respect, right down to a change in routine made only days before the run went down.

- Slamm-0!
- Wait a minute. Why do they want to map routes into and out of Thule? And what do they need Matrix coverage for? Thule is a giant sheet of ice, so what is it they think they have that will use this infrastructure they are building?
- Butch

North Atlantic Pirates

The Trans-Polar Aleut government is working to address the concerns of the United Kingdom and Scandinavian Union that there are pirates based out of Thule who are operating in the Greenland Sea and Norwegian Sea. The Peace Force is spread too thin to investigate all the claims, and they aren't particularly suited for operations at sea to hunt the pirates down. Because of this, the government has started using outside resources in some cases. The most common use of outside assets is hiring them to perform naval operations targeted at heavily armed or well-entrenched opponents

- They pay well for these jobs, but they are high risk. The group we went after had what were either big guns or small missile launchers. They also had plenty of guns sitting on a hydrofoil that moved faster than anything else up there and was great at hijacking opponents. I loved it. So I stole it. But they probably have another one by now.
- Kane

Game Info

TRANS-POLAR ALEUT MAPPING PROJECT PLOT HOOKS

- Mr. Johnson is a mid-level government official with the Department of the Interior of the Trans-Polar Aleut government. He is looking to hire the runners to help with the mapping project. He wants them to map all of the caves and underground passageways along the eastern coastline of Thule. One set of caves is being used by a local warlord to store supplies and merchandise he is smuggling into the country.
- Mr. Johnson approaches the runners and wants to hire them to break into a secure Trans-Polar Aleut office building to access the database in order to find out why they are building up so much Matrix infrastructure on Thule. The building is located in downtown Nuuk. While physical and astral security on the building aren't that serious, the Matrix security is top of the line.
- The team is approached by a Mr. Johnson who isn't happy about the fact that NeoNET is building the Matrix presence on Thule. He wants the team to destroy three or four of the relay towers in order to slow down the project and hopefully convince them that the pay isn't worth the cost in resources to continue building them. He will pay extra if they find a way to make it look like an accident instead of sabotage.





NORTH ATLANTIC PIRATES PLOT HOOKS

- Mr. Johnson has especially valuable cargo that needs to be transported across the Norwegian Sea. He knows that the Peace Force isn't properly equipped to protect his ship, though they are doing everything they can to protect the sea lanes in general—or at least this is what the Trans-Polar Aleut government is telling him. He wants the runners to travel on the ship along with the cargo to protect it. When they are halfway to their destination, it becomes apparent why the government is having so much trouble tracking the pirates when a sub surfaces and disembarks a boarding party in the middle of the night.
- Mr. Johnson believes that the recent pirate activity presents a unique opportunity for him and his company. He wants the team to help frame Evo as sponsoring and assisting the pirates. He gives the runners some items that he wants put into wreckage at the site of one of the attacks. He also has some additional information that he wants downloaded into official Peace Force investigation files looking into the attacks.
- The team is approached by an ork Mr. Johnson. He wants the group to hijack a transport ship as it crosses the North Atlantic and get him the weapons shipment that is in cargo hold number three. The ship is then to be sunk so it never makes port, so that no one will ever discover that the weapons were stolen. He will provide two small ships that they can use to intercept the ship if the team needs the extra watercraft.

Bathotech Geothermal Plant

The latest spate of corporate attempts to exploit the Arctic is not the first such effort. Bathotech used to have an undersea geothermal power plant under the ice cap, but it was destroyed when a supply submarine exploded there in 2059. The ruins are still highly radioactive, but levels have decreased and become somewhat more manageable. Rumors that Bathotech left several prototypes for advanced technologies at the site, coupled with the fact that power is still on in parts of the facility, has made several of the megas as well as some other parties to look into funding an expedition to see what can be recovered.

- Wait—power's still on after a nuclear sub blew? Really?
- Sounder
- It's a testament to the engineering Bathotech put into the place. It's not exporting power anywhere, of course, but the plant still seems to be capable of providing its own juice. No one's there to enjoy it, of course, since the whole plant was evacuated decades ago, but whatever was stored there might be in decent shape.
- Cosmo

- Everyone left the plant who was supposed to leave. That does not mean everyone left.
- Icarus

- Why would anyone use an undersea research lab in the Arctic for working on new tech? I understand that it's nice to be away from prying eyes, but it seems like there are so many things that could go wrong (like, say, a submarine explosion) that it wouldn't be worth the risk.
- Mika
- It only makes sense if your research directly involves what is nearby.
- Arete

Other Work Possibilities

While the governments and megacorporations of the world are always great for getting runs, they're not the only game in town. If you really want to work in the Arctic, there are some other people you can contact who might be able to supply you with a decent quantity of cold air and nuyen.

If you like political jobs but don't want to deal directly with the Trans-Polar Aleut government, look up a guy named Bjorn Gunnarsson in Nuuk. He's been building influence in the city, and is known for his blunt speaking, no-compromise approach to politics. Many people are agitating for him to run for mayor of the city, and he is popular enough to make the governmental powers-that-be nervous. Whispers are being spread about Gunnarsson's background—or, to be specific, the lack of information about it. No one seems to know what he was up to beyond five years ago, and there are a number of people who'd like to find out where he was and what he was doing before he dove into Nuuk politics. For his part, Gunnarsson might be convinced that he should pay to keep some things about his past concealed, but it will take some doing, as Gunnarsson is not the type who likes doing things in any sort of underhanded way.

You also can find work out of cities. As I mentioned, there is plenty of wide-open space up there, and that means there are things and individuals that people will hire you to find. It can be a long, cold search, but that's why people are willing to pay you.

- Two words for you if you decide to look for needles in this particular haystack: material link.
- Jimmy No
- Alternately, go astral (and use spirit help). A lot of the time, the people you're going to be sent after are shamans who like isolation or other Awakened people on an initiation ordeal. Finding someone's aura is a lot easier than finding their meat body.
- Haze

ATHABASKAN COUNCIL

The Athabaskan Council lands are not nearly as inhospitable as the Trans-Polar Aleut to the north, but with average temperatures that have continued to drop ever since the Awakening, the climate is becoming harsher and storms are getting worse. They are far enough south that they don't get the extended periods of continuous darkness or daylight, but you still need to take the climate seriously if you want to run up there and survive.





BATHOTECH GEOTHERMAL PLANT PLOT HOOKS

- The runners are approached by a Johnson who wants them to perform a dive on the old Bathotech facility. He says he has found a route that will lead to only minimal radiation exposure. With their arctic dry suits and some precautions, he tells them, they won't get any more radiation exposure than they would during a day at the beach.

They will need to transport their equipment across the Arctic ice to the designated location, where they will have to breach the ice and dive. The Trans-Polar Aleut government has not sanctioned the expedition, so they will need to avoid any patrols and slip in unseen. Breaching the ice takes time and is noisy. It attracts the attention of nearby patrols as well as the local wildlife. The breaching also weakens the ice, and if the team isn't careful one of them could take an accidental swim in the freezing water.

Once the ice is cut and the team is ready to dive, the runners need to make sure that they stay on the course laid out for them by Mr. Johnson. If they stray too far off course, they will see a spike in background radiation levels. They will also encounter aquatic wildlife that has been affected by the radiation.

Upon entering what remains of the facility, the runners find that the power is indeed still on in one

section. The other sections have been flooded or destroyed. They will have to come up with a plan of how to enter the area without letting in the ocean. They will discover that the facility doesn't have much of interest, but there is one prototype that they can get. Its purpose isn't readily obvious, but it looks important. They will then need to figure out a way to protect it while they get it to the surface. They also need to fight off guards modified to live in these conditions who were tasked with living at the facility and guarding it, no matter what. The guards have been alone and isolated for a long time, though, so their sanity is tenuous.

Once the runners are back on the surface, they need to smuggle the prototype back out of the Trans-Polar Aleut, past roaming bands of Arctic creatures and the prying eyes of Trans-Polar Aleut security.

- The Trans-Polar Aleut Council wants to hire the runners. They are afraid a toxic shaman has taken up residence on the ice above where the Bathotech geothermal plant exploded. There has been some minor leakage for years, but recently it seems to be getting much worse and the last two Peace Force members who went to investigate never returned. As it turns out, the toxic shaman has been working in coordination with the deranged, genetically modified security guards who still reside in the undersea facility.



OTHER WORK POSSIBILITIES PLOT HOOKS

- A group of Aztechnology mages want to interview an Aleut shaman who goes by the name of Howling Sun. He claims that the reason for his seeming perpetual youth has to do with the healing powers of the solar pillars in a particular region. No one knows exactly where he is at the moment or where his magical location is. He was recently seen north of Nunavut.
- The polar fog in northern Thule has been particularly dense and has isolated several of the towns. They need supplies brought in to them by overland routes. As the runners start to make the trek north, they discover that the fog isn't natural and someone or something is trying to isolate the towns. They have to figure out who is doing it—and why.

- Bjorn Gunnarsson is rising in political circles in the Thule Protectorate, but not much is known about him. The runners are hired to look into his history and find out more about him. The search leads to an isolated town in the north part of the island where Gunnarsson grew up and worked as a tempo trafficker.

- A corporation known as Farms the Sea is looking to expand its fishing and food production around the Thule Protectorate. They aren't happy with the Trans-Polar Aleut restrictions on fishing, so they have been covertly funding the Thule independence movement. Someone has begun spreading rumors about this on the Matrix, and lately they've been getting too close to the truth. The runners are hired to track down the person and find out what they really know and who their source is.



Fairbanks

Fairbanks is a small city by modern sprawl standards, but it is larger than most cities at that latitude. It also has a strong megacorporation presence, with all of the Big Ten having at least one scientific research facility of some sort in the surrounding area. Add to this the slope oil fields to the north, and Fairbanks remains an important city to the region. The extreme winters cause the city and surrounding area to shut down at least a few times a year, with snowfall from storms regularly topping thirty centimeters in a twenty-four hour period. Despite this, it has become a hub for experienced Arctic runners with a thriving black market, where you can get everything you need for the right price. It also is a good staging ground for outside runners to get gear they couldn't bring with them or didn't know they were going to need before heading out into the cold.

- The interesting thing about Fairbanks is that it's the northern location where the Big Ten can always find each other. So when they screw each other over in the northern wilds, Fairbanks is where the grudges started up there play out. With all of the corporate exploration and slugging that's been going on, tensions in Fairbanks have been growing.
- Cosmo

Baker Lake

The small town of Baker Lake is pretty unremarkable, and no one would give it a second thought if it weren't in the middle

of the Arctic. As it is, though, it's one of the few communities inland in the Arctic, and it serves as home to many Inuit groups. Being only a stone's throw from the Trans-Polar Aleut border means that it has become the home of some Inuit groups who felt betrayed by the Trans-Polar Aleut government over the years. While the town is too small to be the source of any rebellion against the nation to the north, it serves as a valuable source of dissidents and possible spies. If you want someone who can help you sneak across the border and would be a willing guide for any mischief you plan in Trans-Polar lands, Baker Lake is the place to look.

- There's one woman, name of Arrluk, who you should talk to if you can find her. She's got irons in lots of fires, so she's in high demand, and she spends a lot of time away from Baker Lake. If you manage to find her, be willing to put up with the occasional political harangue, but also be ready to enjoy the benefits of working with someone who can disappear into the snow at a moment's notice.
- Mika

Political dissidence is not the only thing going on in Baker Lake. The locals' primary means of support are the numerous nearby mines, with gold and uranium being the two most significant products. Pisces Corporation has been trying to gain inroads here with no real success so far.

Game Info



FAIRBANKS PLOT HOOKS

- The runners are approached by Ms. Johnson, who wants them to infiltrate the slope oil fields and find out how much oil they are still producing. She works for a local politician and thinks that the megacorps are falsifying the amounts produced to minimize the amount of taxes they have to pay to Fairbanks and the Athabaskan Council.
- Ms. Johnson has a simple request, or at least that is how she presents it to the runners. She thinks a Wuxing research facility in Fairbanks is doing genetic modification and testing on the native paracritters. She wants them to go in and shut them down if possible, or at the very least bring back proof of what they are doing so she can make it public.
- Mr. Johnson needs the runners to resupply some associates of his. They are operating in Trans-Polar Aleut territory on an extended mission and need supplies that cannot be airdropped to them as was originally planned. He needs the runners to smuggle these supplies across the border and travel to a rendezvous location, which is about one hundred kilometers past the border.

The runners are given five trunks of various cold weather gear, and supplies including some ammunition and weaponry to take to Mr. Johnson's associates. They are loaned a Renraku Polar Bear to make the run in unless they have a vehicle of their own they'd like to

use. Unfortunately for them, Trans-Polar Aleut security has been looking to crackdown on smugglers lately, and border patrols have increased. If the runners do their legwork, they hear that the border has become harder to cross.

Once the runners are able to cross the border, most of the journey to the meet goes smoothly. As the team gets within five kilometers from the rendezvous location, however, they become aware that someone is shadowing them. The weather starts turning severe when they are three kilometers from the meet. Once they arrive, they are given an encrypted message to take back to Mr. Johnson.

When the team is around thirty kilometers from the border on their return trip, a lone figure on a Patrol Snowski hails them and asks them to stop. He identifies himself as a member of the Trans-Polar Aleut Peace Force and demands they answer some questions. If they fire on him, he drops back and radios for help. If they stop and talk to him he tells them he is tracking a group of eco-terrorists. He knows the runners just came from a meetup, and he suspects the other parties involved were eco-terrorists. He asks for their help in identifying them and any other information they can give him. If they help the Peace Force officer out, the runners will gain easy passage out of the nation, at the cost of betraying their mission.



- Pisces wouldn't mind having a line on the gold and uranium in the area, but what they're really interested in is parageology. It's a young science, and people are still learning how magic and minerals interact. Pisces would like to make Baker Lake the center of their burgeoning parageology efforts.
- Nephrine

Game Info

BAKER LAKE PLOT HOOKS

- Mr. Johnson works for Pisces, and his company wants to get into the lucrative mines around Baker Lake. They have tasked him with finding a way to make inroads, and he is hiring runners to go to Baker Lake and get the lay of the land. He wants them to see what factions exist in town and who is in charge of what. He wants to know the rumors, conflicts, and indiscretions of people in positions of power. He is interested in anything that he can use to his advantage at the bargaining table. Of course, there are those who don't want him to succeed and will go to any means to ensure he doesn't.
- Ms. Johnson works for one of the Inuit groups in Baker Lake. She wants the runners to go across the border into the Trans-Polar Aleut and spread propaganda around Inuit in the area. The goal is to sow enough dissidence to lead to a localized uprising.

Rankin Inlet

At the time of the Treaty of Denver, Rankin Inlet was little more than a hamlet. While it's still far from a thriving sprawl, it has grown significantly. A lot of this has to do with the fact that the Athabaskan Council didn't evict all non-Native Americans from the town, and it helps that Rankin Inlet is the only port on the Hudson Bay in the country. While normally this is a plus, it has become a problematic feature lately, as the increasingly colder and harsher winters are causing the Hudson Bay to freeze earlier and stay frozen longer. This loss of time for the port has hurt Rankin Inlet, but with difficulty comes innovation. There has been an increase of travel across the frozen ice by land vehicle to keep the trade routes flowing even during the harshest times of year. Goods are then transported further inland to Baker Lake, Fairbanks, and the smaller communities that dot the landscape. Along with shipping, Rankin Inlet boasts jobs in mines scattered across the area, and it also hosts a supply base for an archaeological dig happening to the northwest.

- That dig is an interesting scene. Anyone can walk up to it, take a look around, and talk to the workers. Hell, they may even invite you to grab a shovel or something. They'll slide you some soykaf, they'll show you some bones they recently dug up, and generally speaking they'll act like friendly, engaged people. Then you'll walk away, and you'll realize a few things, if you were observant. First, you saw all sorts of logos on vehicles and uniforms in the area. Aztechnology, Ares, Saeder-Krupp, Mitsuhamana, and more—people

from all these corps are working side by side, and there is no sign of rivalry. The other thing you notice is that while people were talking about their work to you all day, and they even showed you some of the things they had come up with, you don't really have any idea what they're looking for or what the basic goal of the dig is. People may have been speaking a lot, you realize, but they didn't say anything. And you realize that you visited an operation that seems to be successfully hiding in plain sight.

- Mika

Game Info

RANKIN INLET PLOT HOOKS

- Ms. Johnson needs the runners to go to Rankin Inlet, where she has transportation and gear waiting for them. She has a group that was making the crossing of the iced-over Hudson Bay when a particularly severe storm blew in, and they haven't been heard from since. She gives them a transponder coordinate and tells them that it is still active, but isn't moving at this point. The transport was smuggling goods into the country, so she can't go to the authorities for help.
- Mr. Johnson wants the team to retrieve an artifact that was just discovered at the archaeological dig and smuggle it out of the country. It is a tablet that is quite fragile and must be handled with great care. The security at the site is fairly minimal, but after they take the tablet, the team is hotly pursued, including through the use of astral tracking.

Denali

Denali, which means "Great One," is the highest mountain in North America and the third most prominent peak in the world behind Mt. Everest and Aconcagua. Denali actually has two peaks—the north summit is slightly lower than the southern summit. It was renamed Denali soon after the Athabaskan Council was formed as part of the Treaty of Denver in 2018. It is regarded as the place where the veil between our world and the world of spirits is the thinnest. Since the Winternight strike in 2064, security around the mountain has been very tight, with free spirits, shamans, and even eco-activists patrolling it.

- Wait, what's this about the veil being thin? What does that mean for us mundane folks?
- OrkCEO
- Two things. First, non-Awakened people have a chance to see auras and other astral phenomena, similar to what people can experience in the Harding Icefield. Second, they can interact with spirits without having to summon them. Technically, of course, that's possible anywhere, but you don't see spirits walking around that often; Denali is a place where you can encounter them and learn from whatever they have to say. It's a long, hard journey just for a meet-and-greet, though.
- Mika





DENALI PLOT HOOKS

- Mr. Johnson wants the runners to climb Denali and bring him soil and rocks from the summit. This should be done without the Athabaskan government noticing what they're up to. This means that the team needs to sneak into Athabaskan Council and then climb the mountain without being seen. They will then get enough soil and rocks to fill a small backpack, which they will have to take back down the mountain. Then, of course, they need to get safely out of the country.
- The runners are hired to track down an eco-terrorist shaman and his group. The trail leads to Denali, where the shaman and his followers appear to be preparing for some type of assault on permanent facilities constructed at the base of the mountain. Shortly after the runners arrive, an avalanche occurs on the mountain, hitting two different parties who were climbing toward the peak. Security from the base facilities mount a rescue operation, leaving the facility undermanned and ripe for attack by the shaman's group. The runners have to decide if they are going to engage in the rescue effort, protect the base facility, or attempt to do both.

Harding Ice Field

The Harding Icefield is known as “Tears of the Mother” by the locals and is a revered location. It is over seven hundred fifty square kilometers and spawns up to forty glaciers of all different types. Typically the ice field receives more than one thousand centimeters of snow a year. While local shamans long viewed the icefield as holy land, the area spiked in international attention after the passing of Halley's comet. The ambient mana of the area spiked, making the astral plane visible to even non-Awakened. While that same high level of visibility has not continued, auras and other astral phenomena can still be seen by mundane eyes, making it a popular tourist attraction. Much of it, however, remains off limits to most visitors, as local shamans and environmental lobbyists have worked together to keep the icefield as pristine as possible. Shamans often travel to the icefield for initiation, and receiving permission to enter the most private parts of the icefield is considered a mark of distinction among mages.

- The shamans have become extra watchful lately after a group of runners snuck onto the icefield looking for some Aztlan summoner who was initiating there. From what I hear, it's unclear what the tribal leaders are most upset about—that there were intruders on their sacred lands, or that someone had given permission to an Aztlan mage to initiate there.
- Frosty



HARDING ICE FIELD PLOT HOOKS

- Mr. Johnson wants to do a book of interviews and firsthand accounts of people who have initiated on the Harding Icefield where they describe just what happens there. He tells the runners that the best place to look for initiates is near the icefield, so he sends them to the Athabaskan Council. The local shamans get wind of the project, and they are not eager for their sacred rituals to be discussed openly. They actively work to hinder any interviews the runners set up, and if the runners are able to gather information despite the efforts of the shamans, they might have to take more drastic measures to keep information about the icefields from going public.
- Ms. Johnson wants to take a look at one of the off-limits areas of the Harding Icefield. She wants the team to help her gain access and then protect her while she investigates. They will have to either overpower or sneak by the guards that are posted at the perimeter of the area. It will then be about a five kilometer hike across the ice sheet to the area she wants to investigate. They will then need to protect her and keep her hidden while she astrally projects. Afterwards they will then need to sneak back out.
- Mr. Johnson tells the runners that the Athabaskan Council has decided to try to map the flow of the glaciers being spawned by the Harding Icefield. The runners need to move across the icefield and plant an RFID tag with a transmitting beacon in a dozen locations. Once the runners have five or six of the transmitters planted, they are approached by a group of locals who ask what they are doing. When the runners tell them about the transmitters, the locals reply that they have heard nothing about this mapping plan. The runners may decide to examine just what it is they have been spreading across the Icefield. As it turns out, each transmitter has a small explosive charge in it. Someone with geological knowledge (either one of the runners or one of the locals) may observe, if they see where the transmitters have been planted, that explosions at the selected locations will shear off large amounts of the icefield. The runners must decide if they want to complete their mission (which will be resisted by the locals) or try to retrieve the transmitters they have planted. In the latter case, they have to deal with a second team of runners who was hired to make sure the transmitters stay in place.



Kodiak Island

The Kodiak Island, which sits south of the Athabaskan Council in the Gulf of Alaska, is owned and operated by Ares. It is the home of their Joint Venture Command Center, including the Kodiak Spaceport. They also have an Arctic operations center on the island, along with the naval base that is continuing work on Arthur Vogel's deep sea projects. The island is in a sub-arctic zone, which means that while it has a relatively balmy annual average temperature of just over four degrees, it still dips well below freezing for a good portion of the year. The island is isolated and only accessible by sea or air. Ares controls all of the air around the island to ensure that traffic does not interfere with space launches—or at least that is the reason it officially gives to anyone who asks. The sea is patrolled by the Athabaskan Coast Guard, but many of the ships, and sometimes even the crew, are on loan from Ares. Kodiak Island is quite large, with a small forest and some mountains, which has led some to speculate that Ares has additional assets on the island that it is keeping hidden. Obviously, none of these assets would be as showy or easy-to-spot as a spaceport.

- There's no need to speculate. There is, in fact, another facility on the island. I've seen it. It's like a bunker—much of it is underground, and there are no windows. If it has electronic equipment, it's wired, or the building is shielded. I got within ten meters of the building and didn't pick up a hint of a signal. I did, however, hear a scream that was either metal ripping apart or some living being having its soul sucked out through its nose.
- Clockwork

Game Info

KODIAK ISLAND PLOT HOOKS

- Mr. Johnson tells the group that Ares is going to be launching a new sub out of the Kodiak naval base, and he wants to be able to track where it goes. He wants the runners to sneak into the naval yard and put a tracking device on it—or even better, inside it—before it launches in a week.
- Mr. Johnson wants to find out what projects are being run through the JVCC. He hires the runners to infiltrate the base and copy the data files for ongoing projects. He knows that they run all of their Arctic projects through the JVCC, and he wants to know what they are planning up north.

Other Athabaskan Work Possibilities

Most of the Athabaskan Council lands are cold, inhospitable, and difficult to get around. Because of this, luxury items are rare, and even what we consider to be everyday items can be hard to find. This isn't an issue in major cities like Anchorage and Fairbanks, but there's plenty of open wilderness out there, with people who are hard up for stuff. Add to this the fact that many raw tesmas, Awakened flora and fauna, and paracritters can be found and you have a land full of bartering opportunities. You don't have to find Awakened goods yourself. All you need to find are some consumer goods and some Athabaskan residents with a nose for valuable resources.

- Especially valuable, of course, are the goods you're not supposed to have. Smuggling is rampant. Bring in the shiny, new tech and leave with the raw materials, be it tesmas, Awakened drugs, or paracritters.
- 2XL
- You don't have to smuggle if you don't want to. If you have a good fake SIN, you could bring some luxury items across the border legally, pay the appropriate taxes, and still make a good profit in trade.
- Cosmo
- If you're near Siqnazuq (formerly known as Nome), look for a guy named Tuwawi. He regularly makes the rounds of the small villages and settlements in the area, so he's always looking for new goods to bring to them. Be careful with him, though—he knows a few spells, and he's quite willing to try to influence the emotions of people he's bargaining with.
- Mika

Much of the land still hasn't been explored, and the Big Ten are looking for new places to get the raw materials that they need to make various goods. This means there is money to be made in helping or hindering the exploratory efforts.

- The eco-extremists can pay just as well as the Big Ten. Sometimes you'll get help from locals who see the extremists as the lesser evil when compared to the megacorporations.
- Aufheben

Game Info

OTHER ATHABASKAN WORK POSSIBILITIES PLOT HOOKS

- Mr. Johnson approaches the runners about a simple courier mission. He has some flora that his associates have found in the wilderness of Athabaska. He has all of the legal documents allowing him to export them and bring them to Seattle for analysis. Because of the delicate nature of the flora, they cannot be flown, but must be driven back.
- A Horizon survey team has gone missing in the wilderness near the Trans-Polar Aleut border east of Port Radium. A severe storm hit the area, and the survey team was caught out in it. Their supplies are running low at this point. Mr. Johnson wants the runners to find the team and bring them back. They have tracking RFID tags with a five-kilometer range to help the team find them. To expedite matters the team will be airdropped into the area. Once they are on the ground and have the trackers activated, they learn that the survey team is just over the border in Trans-Polar Aleut territory. To make matters worse, it seems there is some sort of military force between them and the survey team.



ALGONKIAN-MANITOU COUNCIL

The northern parts of the Algonkian-Manitou Council lands aren't quite as cold as the rest of the Arctic in the winter, but precautions and preparation are still required if you want to survive. Though the Manitou elves mainly operate out of the southern Cypress Hill area, there are some that are starting to use the northern lands to hide out and conduct whatever business they're involved in, taking advantage of the isolation that the climate provides. There are also sympathetic natives in the north who aren't happy about how much control Aztechnology has over the council. Ever since the Hudson Bay Incident of 2061, Aztechnology Corporate Security has been working hand in hand with the Algonkian military, and the Big A has been active in providing financial and other supports to the government. Their presence does not sit well with a lot of the nation's population.

- Is there anything to Aztechnology's involvement besides the desire to gain influence simply because they can?
- Hard Exit
- Probably. Being able to put pressure on the UCAS from the north is nice, though the Algonkian-Manitou military is not on the level that will make it a serious threat to the UCAS, even with Aztechnology help. But at this point, a lot of it is a grudge against the Manitou elves. Aztechnology blames them for the collapse of the Aztechnology Tower back in '61, and they don't plan to ever let that grudge die off.
- Marcos

Game Info

ALGONKIAN-MANITOU COUNCIL PLOT HOOKS

- An Aztechnology Mr. Johnson approaches the team. He is sure that the natives in northern Algonkian-Manitou are plotting to discredit Aztechnology or attack Aztechnology assets in the country. He wants the runners to infiltrate the area, find out what they are planning, and bring back proof of their plotting. He makes it clear that if they can't find anything incriminating, then he's quite happy to accept fabricated evidence.
- Mr. Johnson needs runners to infiltrate the Cypress Hills section of the Algonkian-Manitou Council. A recent cold front brought unseasonable cold and snowfall to the area, cutting off an exploration team. Mr. Johnson wants the team found. Though the snow has stopped falling, temperatures are still around -15 degrees Celsius. Mr. Johnson works for Aztechnology, and what he isn't telling the team is that the missing group is an Aztechnology scouting unit that may have been intercepted by Manitou elves. They cannot officially ask or go to the authorities for help, since the team wasn't supposed to be operating in the area.
- An elven Mr. Johnson contacts the runners. He needs some information couriered to a faction in northern Algonkian-Manitou Council lands. He gives the team an encoded data chip. The government is aware of the chip's existence and is on the lookout for it, so the runners will need to be adept at avoiding Matrix-based detection.

QUEBEC

Climate-wise, the northern parts of Quebec are much like the Algonkian-Manitou Council lands, since they sit on the other side of Hudson Bay. The big difference is that the Labrador Sea and Atlantic Ocean are west of Quebec, while land sits to the west of Algonkian-Manitou lands. This lets cold winds travel uninterrupted over the chilly lake waters, meaning that when it gets cold in Quebec, it gets very cold indeed. The winters are very harsh; the cities of Sept-Îles and Quebec have average high temperatures of -5 degrees Celsius, with the lows getting down to -15 degrees. The record low of -38 degrees Celsius was recorded just last year.

- In case you're wondering, at that temperature frostbite on exposed skin sets in within half an hour, and that's if there's no wind. Put in a decent breeze, and you're talking about frostbite within ten minutes.
- Butch

Quebec has large deposits of minerals including copper, gold, and silver. Its coastal waters are also great for fishing, crabbing, and lobster trapping. The rivers of the wilderness are harnessed by Shiawase hydroelectric plants to provide Quebec with power. The wilderness areas have large amounts of paranormal critters, and the Harmful Paranormal Critters Act legalized the hunting of them. Many of the less-dangerous paracritters are now becoming scarce, their numbers depleted by hunting and natural predators. This has led to the formation of hunting lodges and resorts, including the famous Sylvan Lodge. There are a couple smaller ones in the north that specialize in Arctic survival and critter hunting.

Game Info

QUEBEC PLOT HOOKS

- Mr. Johnson is a wealthy investor whose son disappeared in Quebec while part of a paranormal critter hunting expedition. He was told that his son died of a tragic accident, but Mr. Johnson doesn't believe this is the case. He suspects foul play. He wants the runners to investigate the incident and tell him what really happened.
- A talismonger needs some raw animal reagents harvested for her. She has a list of five different ones that she needs. All of the animals are found in the Quebec wilderness. Since she doesn't want to pay the tariffs and taxes associated with them, the runners need to smuggle them out of Quebec.
- Someone has been sabotaging the Shiawase hydroelectric plants that provide Quebec's electricity. Mr. Johnson hires the runners to investigate, find out who is responsible for the sabotage, and stop them.



OTHER ARCTIC AREAS OF INTEREST

Saeder-Krupp Arctic Vault

The Saeder-Krupp Arctic Vault was formerly known as the Global Seed Vault on the island of Svalbard off the coast of Norway until Saeder-Krupp bought the whole island from Norway in 2060. Since then, Saeder-Krupp has expanded the vault and added more facilities to the island. As part of the purchase agreement, the seed vault continues to store a copy of each known seed on earth, including all of the Awakened plants that have been documented to date.

- Tir Tairngire isn't happy that Norway turned over seeds of the laesal tree to Saeder-Krupp. They have been debating a run to try and get these seeds out of Lofwyr's claws.
- Frosty
- They're not just debating—they've already given it a shot. They tried and failed on at least two different occasions. Once with runners, and another time with a team of Tir Ghosts. The government, of course, denies that either attempt had any sort of official sanction.
- Pistons
- Of course they do. Not even the elves are bold enough to just thumb their nose at Lofwyr and openly admit they were behind it.
- Frosty

Saeder-Krupp has put a full research and development lab on the island, though what they are researching is a closely guarded secret. The facilities are so remote that the scientists working there have no choice but to live right on the island. The buildings are all rather small, and they don't exude much heat, meaning either that Saeder-Krupp is keeping their people cold or they've got some strong insulation.

- What you see is only a small part of the facility—most of it has been built under the ground and in the ice. They used the cover of expanding the seed vault to dig out more space for their secretive purposes.
- DangerSensei
- A team I worked with recently extracted a scientist who had spent some time at the vault but had rotated out to a different facility. As we started to make our getaway, S-K forces were quite willing to kill him—to kill us all—rather than let us get away with him. Not sure what was so important about a botanist.
- Coldnaught

Kara Sea

The Kara Sea is north of Russia and the Yakut. It is covered by ice for all but two months of the year, and the harsh weather of the Arctic holds sway year round. The sea is valued for its population of several different types of fish, and it also has deposits of natural resources. The Soviet Union had used areas of the sea as a dumping ground for old nuclear reactors and waste materials. There is rising concern that some of these reactors may have started leaking and are contaminating the surrounding sea. It is also the home of what used to be the Great Arctic State Nature Reserve, which is still home of large numbers of the natural arctic wildlife. There are several island chains in the Kara Sea, the most prominent being the Kirov Islands.

Game Info

S-K ARCTIC VAULT PLOT HOOKS

- The runners are hired by a Mr. Johnson who wants them to steal some seeds from the Saeder-Krupp Arctic Vault. He gives them the box numbers of the seeds that he wants stolen. He tells them that he doesn't want the vault damaged or any other seeds taken—only the ones he indicates.
- Since Saeder-Krupp took over the Global Seed Vault there have been rumors of a secret base under the ice. Mr. Johnson says he has found proof that the base exists and is dedicated to research on advanced cloning techniques. He hires the team to infiltrate the research facility, map it out, and make a copy of any research that has been done there.

Game Info

KARA SEA PLOT HOOKS

- The fishing corporation Arctic Fishery has a sanctioned fishing rig on the ice in the Kara Sea, but not all of the locals are happy about it. A group of ecoradicals believe that they are overfishing and lying about how much they are harvesting under the ice. They hire the runners to shut down Arctic Fishery's ice fishing rigs in the Kara Sea in any way possible.
- MCT has taken over the old Soviet experiment facility on Isachenko Island, the largest of the Kirov Island chain, and are conducting some sort of research on the local wildlife. Mr. Johnson hires the runners to find out exactly what type of experiments they are performing.



ANTARCTIC AREAS OF INTEREST

- Antarctica is about as exotic as you can get for runs. The same players that pay our bills in civilization have their eyes on resources out in the middle of nowhere. Secret bases, black bag research, and all the things the powerful want kept out of the public eye often end up there. A few of our colleagues have ended up playing penguin. Their bits and pieces of geography are noted below.
- FastJack

WUXING GEOMANCY RESEARCH STATION #12

Most of the AAA corporations have their fingers in the magical research pie. Wuxing is one of the top in the field. Part of their dominance stems from seeking out magical traditions beyond the hermetic and the shamanic. Wuxing has cornered the market on geomancy. It pursues a traditional art in new ways, doing so all around the world. Hong Kong is the jewel of the crown in their pursuit of new esoteric knowledge. But the company has facilities located around the world pouring that energy back home to make sure the jewel shines bright.

The facility in place shares many similarities with the second generation of research stations built by Wuxing. They are hexagonal in shape. Each wall is the same length and each building is meant to mirror itself internally. There are four buildings in the compound, each one corresponding to a cardinal direction. At the center point, a stone transported from the corporate headquarters rock garden has been buried. The compound has no physical fence. Trespassers are warned by AROs on the perimeter. Crossing the perimeter brings a visit by the six-man security force.

- Whenever Wuxing builds these stations, they are built in sets of 8. Each set is brought on-line at exactly the same time, even if the other stations aren't complete yet. Superstition or ritual?
- Winterhawk

Geomancy Research Stations feature dedicated satellites beaming back data to Wuxing corporate headquarters in Hong Kong. The true study and research takes place at the home office, though a few small experiments take place on the ice. Most of the geomancy study is automated, so Wuxing will ship out prototypes to test under severe conditions. The construction of the third generation of geomancy stations is phasing this process out. Most items are shipped to Wuxing Geomancy Research Station #21 in Oslo for these purposes. But items that require arctic testing, or ones that catch Dr. McHenry's eye, are still sent to the station for testing.

Dr. Vincent McHenry is Wuxing's chief researcher on site. McHenry studied under famed geomancer Chip Ching-Hwa. Though not Awakened, McHenry is considered to be a master of the traditional art of geomancy second only to his master. McHenry is also a doctor of geology with an emphasis on the discovery of orichalcum deposits as well as the long-term effect of mana on geological sites. McHenry is on his way to becoming one of the world's best mundane sources of Awakened knowledge.

- McHenry has either hit or is close to hitting the "Mana Ceiling" in professional circles. He may know a lot about theory and how

things are supposed to work, but he'll never get the respect of academics who can also sling spells.

- Winterhawk
- So this is a facility full of eggheads. What's the point of hitting this place for anything?
- Haze
- Opportunities present themselves to those willing to look.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- For those not grasping the living fortune cookie—think of whom you could take instead of what.
- OrkCEO

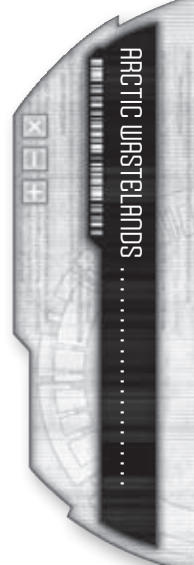
Anyone wishing to study geomancy in Wuxing's famous program must come through this station. A stay is not an official part of the training program, but a quick review of geomancers who signed on with the company finds a stint at this station the most common element in their résumés. Most geomancers spend six months to a year at the facility. Those who stay longer tend to end up as directors of the project itself before moving on to bigger and brighter things. Dr. McHenry is the first non-Awakened director since the facility was built eight years ago.

Dr. McHenry's tenure began under a cloud cast by the previous director. Liao Dong-Zhu was one of Wuxing's rising stars. She was headed for the board of directors once her time on the station was completed. But when she returned to Hong Kong, she started falling apart. She was seen talking to the air, speaking in unrecognizable tongues, and breaking out in fits of laughter during business meetings. Liao was quietly sent to a psychiatric program within three months of her arrival back in civilization. The last project she was connected to was known as Sleeper Tulip, all references to which no longer exist anywhere on Wuxing servers.

It used to be that persons assigned to these stations would go months without contact with civilization. It was a lot of hard men growing their beards out for six months until the relief crew took over. Now, with datajacks, simsense, and satellite Matrix connections, leaving the shivering confined of a dimly lit research station is as easy as the flick of a switch. Wuxing policy for the use of the simsense rig in the station is strictly monitored. Between staff members, however, simsense use is traded like currency, since real currency doesn't really matter during the tour.

Some evidence points to the facility not serving its alleged purpose. Rumors connect the facility to Wuxing mining operations off the coast of South America. A few geomancers have commented that the placement of the facility is incorrect for proper readings of the continental energies. Dr. McHenry could be heading up a facility studying the long-term effect of orichalcum on living tissues. Little is known about the newest precious metal. What better place to study it than someplace far from prying eyes and human interference.

The most unusual disappearance of Wuxing personnel involves one of the geomancy students. Meredith Nguyen took one of the personal snow transports to a set of coordinates noted by a few cryptic notes in her personal journal. She left all of her personal belongings, her research, and one unfinished letter to her mother, who had been dead for two years. She was declared



overdue after 48 hours. The tracks of the vehicle and the locator RFID tag led to a flat, wide plain on the tundra. Neither Nguyen nor the vehicle were ever recovered.

THE HEXAGON RESONANCE

Extreme conditions are often a tool of enlightenment. Even before the Awakening, mystics of the world sought to expand their consciousness in burning heat, freezing cold, and more. The men and women who came back from these deadly pilgrimages often brought back wisdom and secrets held by few other people. Whether or not they possessed magic as it is known today is still up for debate. But in a world with real magic, perhaps there is something to be said for the technique.

The Hexagon Resonance is a retreat for those Awakened willing to push their body to push their mind. Pilgrims to the Resonance often turn up at other facilities for supplies, directions and even rescue. Not everyone who attempts to find initiation here even gets a chance to start. Washouts also make it to nearby stations. Sometimes, one of those research vessels comes across a body in the ice, a look of serenity on the face. Those who achieve their goals somehow make it back to the mainland with minimal contact with other individuals nearby.

- Don't forget mind-altering substances and natural hallucinogens. The line between soothsayer and chiphead was a lot thinner back then.
- Haze
- If they are calling it a Resonance, does this have anything to do with technomancers?
- Netcat
- Me, me, me. Where did you learn to be so selfish?
- Slamm-0!

Most of the places on the ice offer modern amenities and survival technology. The Resonance offers no such comforts. It takes its name from the shape of a building. The Hexagon itself is shaped from glacial ice. The ice seems to have risen out of the ground itself. It has an unnatural cast to it. It melts and has a slick surface in direct sunlight, but never seems to change. The roof is opaque though the walls are clearer. They are covered in strange writings and symbols. These are gifts of those who have joined the resonance. They leave their markings on the walls. These markings offer additional protection, warding the inside of the Hexagon from astral travellers.

The first Awakened person to survive the Hexagon is a shaman named Mary Winsall. Little is known about her background, other than a brief mention of her marriage to Jason Reitmann, a Truman Technologies executive. She then appeared at a NAN conference and spoke of the Hexagon Resonance. Hers was the first lodge to appear on the continent. Mary offered initiation to anyone, mage or shaman, willing to come to the Hexagon and spend a lunar cycle inside its walls. Few from that initial delegation accepted the offer, but those seeking more power without the strictures of other organizations begged, borrowed, and stole their way to Antarctica. If you believe the stories, of the dozens who arrived with Mary at the first sighting of the Hexagon, only six made it through the process.

The ordeal lasts a full lunar month. The ordeals alternate months. Initiates are sequestered inside the Hexagon for the full

period. Most potential initiates try to arrive as close as possible to the first day. The Hexagon is closed on all days but the first and last day. Often, tent cities rise up around the building made up of potentials who misjudged their travel time. Those who leave the Hexagon raid the tent cities for supplies or a way back home. Those who achieve initiation rarely leave the same way they arrived.

Winsall charges no fee for initiating into the group. The only rule in place seems to be that if you try and fail, you can never join the Resonance. Those who tried and failed often have trouble recalling the process, almost as if they were trying to remember a rapidly fading dream. The failures rarely return to try again if they make it back to civilization. Initiates also seem to be able to recognize those who failed on sight. They are regarded with a slight sadness, as if an old dear friend who made a terrible mistake in their past.

The logistics of the Hexagon are an even bigger mystery. There are no shipments of supplies into or out of the building. No sewage tanks can be seen. No major construction has been recorded in the area. The building seems to have sprung up out of the ice one day. The strange creation of the building leads to speculation that the site is over a powerful mystic site. Or perhaps something very powerful is buried below the building and is part of the initiation process. Whatever it is, the building stands unchanging even in foul weather without the infrastructure other bases have.

- I'm tempted to get some folks together and roll in a few bug bombs to fumigate the place. Anyone interested?
- Kane
- No way. Bugs hate the cold worse than the heat.
- Bull

Other initiate groups are respected. Winsall enjoys meeting with representatives. She prefers to do so away from the Hexagon. Initiates who visit the Hexagon find it closed to them. So far, no other groups have declared hostilities, thanks in large part to the Hexagon's remote location. Though Winsall keeps relations open between groups, initiates do not speak to other mages directly. If they need to communicate something to someone who's Awakened, they do so through intermediaries. This even occurs if the other magician is in the same room.

Those initiates who return to the rest of the world identify each other with a small hexagon pendant. The pendant is ice cold to the touch even in high temperatures. Initiates don't try to convert anyone they come across. People interested in the initiation can ask. Initiates reveal few details of what they go through in the process. Fasting, meditation, and chanting seem to be part of the rituals. Some believe that the building extends downward into the ice to house all of the Initiates. Others believe it is a direct astral portal where the ordeal truly takes place. No matter what, those who join the Resonance aren't talking, but the power they've unlocked is unmistakable.

- This isn't the first time there have been rumors of an ancient temple devoted to the study of magic set in the middle of a barren. They called it Shamballa, or as it more commonly came to be known, Shangri-La.
- Winterhawk



DRACO FOUNDATION RESEARCH VESSEL LINDSAY MARIE

Posted by: OrkCEO

It's easy to think that after a shadowrun the site that got hit just disappears. The company that got hit doesn't want to talk about it. The company that paid someone to hit it did so to keep them from talking about it. The team that did it is usually knee deep in joygirls and chips within an hour after the job is complete. But there's always a clean-up crew. Someone has to identify what went wrong, how the runners got in, and how they got away clean. Contracting out to escort execs surveying the damage is usually not as exciting as running, but it also has a much lower amount of being shot at, blown up or possible death.

The aircraft came in low over the ice. I can't talk about the suit or his company, but he was young, bright-eyed, and didn't seem like he was angry to be over Antarctica at a strange time of day. That meant he was either a shark swimming against the current or too stupid to care that he was given an asset in the middle of nowhere. He was the only suit. The rest of the aircraft were filled with my people. Always leave the escape vehicle running in these missions. And then charge for the fuel spent while the bird is on the ground.

The ship was decently sized. It looked as if it was stuck in the ice. It was an older design retrofitted with new equipment. The ship was old, but the submersible and lift arm were new. The paintjob was rusted and chipping but the deckplates were brand new. My advance team hit the deck and began their sweep. They gave the all clear and the suit and I touched down. I was armed with a pistol but kept it holstered. The advance team was ready to deal with a tactical situation. If there was anyone on the boat still able to talk, the last thing that would put them at ease was a suit, an ork, and a pistol.

From what I could tell, this vessel had been out in the wild a very long time. The halls felt lived in. Laundry was strewn about personal quarters. Recent photos featured long hair and shaggy beards. A few of the signs speaking to rules and regulations were amended with colorful language and suggestions for what the executives could do with themselves. It was hard to tell if this was some kind of cabin fever or if everyone was still content but thinking about getting home to wives, girlfriends, and life off the boat.

There was at least one sign of possible trouble—a gun sitting on a table on an upper deck. Then again, it could have been nothing, just an item left behind. People carry guns, after all, and sometimes they have to put them down, and they're not always careful about where they drop them. I picked up the gun, mainly to keep it from causing trouble in anyone else's hands. A quick check revealed the gun had no bullets in it.

That's when I noticed the first strange thing. No bullet holes. The slide on the pistol was racked. I checked the magazine to be sure. The pistol held twelve rounds. None of them missed. No signs of exit wounds or passing through a body. If something was carrying a dozen slugs, where was the blood?

- No people on a vessel of 25 or so and the first weird thing you notice is an empty gun?
- Hard Exit
- No people could just have easily been a clean extraction. A very clean one, to be sure, or one where everyone aboard decided to leave. But things got very weird very fast.
- OrkCEO

It looked like there was a recent dive. The ship was surrounded by ice. There was a carefully cut hole 20 meters out from the ship. It looked big enough to fit the submersible. One of my advance team lent me his scope. The edges of the hole had bullet holes. I climbed up to get a better vantage point on the submersible. It seemed like the sub hadn't been hit, though one of the windows was cracked. Whatever they were shooting at was either in the sub or coming up after it? I set a guard on the sub to make sure nothing came out after us.

Often, in situations like this, the VIP wants to know more. That's why you get hired. The suit wants to wander around a dangerous situation and you are there to make sure they don't walk into an open manhole and die. I could tell he wanted to get back on the chopper, fly home, and push a button to erase the ship with a tactical strike. He was nice enough to ask if I wanted to go look at the bridge. He knew I would go either way but sometimes manners sooth nerves.

The bridge was empty but the equipment was still working. The VIP put in a call to the mainland. I knew by the fuzzy connection it wasn't the same facility we departed earlier that morning. They spoke in code but reading intent is one of the things I get paid to do. He was concerned with what happened on the boat but was reluctant to give the scrub order. The Foundation had spent a lot of time, money, and effort to find whatever it was they were looking for, but it was clear to both of us that nobody here was alive or worth recovering.

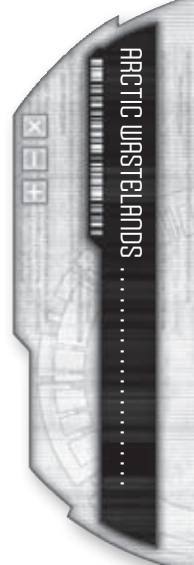
The man watching the sub screamed suddenly. My radio crackled with a full auto burst. I spun to the side of the ship where the submersible was. Bravo One was nowhere to be seen. Bravo Two was firing upwards at the sub, which was shaking violently. I ordered Bravo Two to cease fire. I asked the VIP where the controls were. He hesitated and then told me. I dropped the sub back into the hole in the ice. The remaining members of the fire team opened fire and made sure the sub, along with whoever was inside it, suck back into the ocean as quickly as possible.

- Wait, they still make manned submersible vehicles?
- Rigger X

The ride home was silent. Occasionally I would see the VIP nod to communications he was receiving on his dedicated Matrix link. The two warbirds streaking back past us were no coincidence. They had to show that whatever that poor crew had found, it wasn't going to be around for long. No need for us to talk about it, either. It was all going up in a big fireball soon enough. Everyone would be all right once the bad guys were blown up.

Bravo Two never told me what happened to Bravo One. I never asked him. We both knew he was gone. Someone or something inside the submersible took him. I cut Bravo One's family a check for his insurance payout directly. I never filed the claim for him. I cut Bravo Two a check for double his mission rate. That was his last job for me and, as far as I can tell, his last job period. He's gone back to school to become a music teacher.

- What made you break your silence?
- Hard Exit
- You wouldn't believe me if I told you.
- OrkCEO



- You saw Bravo One again, didn't you?
- Hannibelle

THE YORICK SOCIETY

Posted by: Snopes

Most scholars believe that mana flows in cycles. The magical energies of the world were at an ebb throughout modern history. The energies raced upward with the Awakening and continue to do so every year. Those familiar with these theories usually give little thought to the time before this upswing, when magic flowed freely. Interest in this topic does exist, however, as seen by the recent upswing in artifact acquisition. Most of the people here have felt the impact on the shadows with swelled bank accounts and amusing stories to impress members of the opposite sex.

One of the newest players in the arcanoarchaeology game goes by the name of the Yorick Society. This organization has been on the ice for less than six months. They operate out of pre-fab buildings. They sport bleeding-edge tech and a satellite uplink that reports daily. The Yorick Society is interested in discovering something below the surface that could only happen in the Sixth World. They believe there are dragon bones here and that they will be the first to find them.

- Ah, the whacko section. I feel better already.
- Plan 9

A visit to the Yorick Society's public Matrix site [[Link](#)] offers more background. The society is made up of several individuals with an interest in metaphysical studies, none of whom seem to possess the Talent. They seem to think that discovering these bones might be the key to unlocking their potential. The expedition is looking for dragon bones buried deep beneath the ice. Though the Matrix site is impressive, physical offices are nondescript, with no hard information on membership or their activities.

The face of the society is Dr. Leon Workman. The site offers many of his books and videos for sale. Dr. Workman boasts a wide clientele and lectures at several reputable universities as well as more dubious gatherings. He claims several celebrity donors to the cause, though they wish to maintain their anonymity. And while he is a doctor, his doctorate is from the Gender Studies program at Sarah Lawrence University. He is a layman when it concerns matters of history, geology, parazoology, or parapsychology.

- At least he has an actual doctorate. I've seen quite a few people use the title and the only thing I can find on them are prison records.
- Butch

The society facility, compared to others on the ice, seems like 6 a.m. in a Neo-Tokyo subway hub. Vehicles are constantly in motion, heading out on the ice, coming back from the ice. The majority are land vehicles, though there are a few air vehicles buzzing around as well. Many of the facilities use drone vehicles for treacherous work in these conditions. The amount that the society uses brings to mind a question. Where are the operators? Are they inside the base? Are they transmitting from somewhere?

The biggest challenge to the society may not be from anything on the ice. A lawsuit was filed in Seattle against the Yorick Society by a donor claiming to have evidence of fraudulent practices. The

INCOMING FEED.....



ARCTIC WASTELANDS

100

suit was filed by Helen Cantrati, who claims that she was once a partner in the society but was frozen out by Dr. Workman after his ideas took off. She claims that for every ten nuyen donated to the society, only one makes it to the search for bones. Workman hasn't commented on the suit, but the law firm he's hired is high-priced, morally grey, and looking for dirt on Ms. Cantrati.

Despite their legal woes, the Yorick Society has scored a big win recently. Dr. Workman was recently spotted leaving Sicily with an ancient map case. The size and shape of the case suggest it may be the Piri Reis map that was highly sought after just a few months ago. It may be a copy. It may be legit. The map has connections to Antarctica's non-ice coastline. If the stories are to be believed, it also has connections to other artifacts. Even a copy might prove useful in helping the society figure out a good place to start digging.

One of the ways Dr. Workman is looking to legitimize his society is to have an actual dragon back his work. He's sent letters of inquiry to multiple dragons ranging from Hestaby to Lofwyr. So far, nobody has taken him up on the offer, but Workman is nothing if not persistent. He's spent a lot of time in Europe attending the same events the dragons do. This extravagant lifestyle must be costing him a decent chunk of change. Workman might get impatient and start looking for more direct ways to get a message to a dragon.

- Did they think that's what the dragon was named? Yorick?
- dev/grrl
- Shakespeare, dear dev/grrl. Yorick was the jester's skull found by Hamlet in the graveyard. "Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio, he was a man of infinite jest."
- Winterhawk
- Nothing? Children, these days ...
- OrkCEO
- Don't get me started.
- Bull

FORT MCABEE LAUNCH FACILITY

Posted by: Thorn

People are surprised by one thing when they make it to Antarctica. There is trash everywhere. The vids and the simsense make it seem like it's still a cold, flat tundra. Humans have been coming here for a couple hundred years now. You can find everything from old ships to dead satellites if you know where to look. This isn't a tale about saving the ecology. This is a tale about a facility that doesn't exist launching satellites that aren't supposed to exist. Black ops extend even to a place known for the whitest of snows.

Fort McAbee is not actually a fort. The name comes from the ancient camp underneath which the facility is built. The legitimacy of the camp is something that even the men at the site discuss. On the one hand, the buildings look legitimately old and it seems like a waste to spend time and effort dressing the site to hide it from civilians. On the other hand, who the hell is dumb enough to try and put together a mining camp in Antarctica? The technology to pull out anything of value was still in its infancy.

The one piece of modern equipment is unmistakable. A large satellite dish exists on the edge of the camp. It is a state-of-the-art

dish that looks custom-built for the facility. The locals call it the Sleeper, because for many days it lies dormant and unmoving. Just before a launch, the dish heats itself up to clear away any snow and then rotates to receive information for its next payload. A day or so after, ten-meter-wide doors in the ice open up, and a rocket heads up into the atmosphere bearing a new spy satellite or orbital weapons platform.

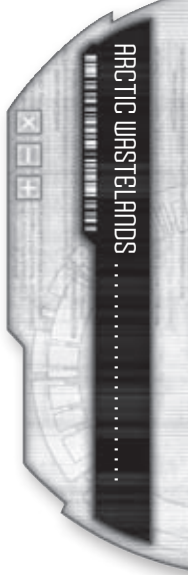
- How do they get the satellites down there to launch? Or the launch vessels? Wouldn't a base like that need a huge footprint of support personnel?
- Hard Exit
- Your best bet logistically would be to let the facility lie dormant and then ship everything down there at the same time. Assemble the rocket and payload at the same time, make sure it gets into orbit, and then head for home until next time. Even that way seems like a big noisy trek over the ice.
- OrkCEO
- What about under it?
- Rigger X

No director or personnel files exist for Fort McAbee. A few surveillance photos surfaced to identify Rolf Nusbaum as someone on site on a few separate occasions. Nusbaum has a long history with Saeder-Krupp and space-related projects. He was director of logistics for SK Orbital for nearly two decades. Running a program like this seems like a good fit for him, but no datatrail exists to link him to the site. The closest anyone has come to producing evidence of a connection was that he bought a house in Brazil five years ago, shortly after retiring from Saeder-Krupp.

Fort McAbee has stayed shrouded in secrecy even though it's been part of at least two-dozen launches in the past few years. Ties to Saeder-Krupp personnel and equipment are evidence that's circumstantial at best. Even if S-K owns the thing, there's nothing that says it can't sell its use to other companies or governments. It becomes less of a secret that way, but there are plenty of zeros on the end of a number that might convince management otherwise. Corporate pride almost always takes a backseat to corporate profit. Besides, if the satellite spends time in the owner's hands, it might make sense to poke around inside and see what the other guys are up to.

Of course, if nobody knows who owns the facility, then someone might be willing to risk a raid to find out this information. A common maxim in a situation like this is, "If nobody knows who the toy belongs to, break it and see who starts crying." Secret facilities are secret for a reason. It's not cheap to send a team to a remote location to just snoop around. If someone is going to take that expense, they will probably want Fort McAbee shut down or put under their control. It wouldn't be surprising if one day, one of the orbital weapons that Fort McAbee put into space dropped its ordnance back home to wipe the map clean.

Anyone looking to get answers about Fort McAbee should look at a visit with Rolf Nusbaum in Brazil. He's enough of a hard case to keep his mouth shut, but his son, Leonid Nusbaum, might be an easier target. Leonid tours the continent in a chip-fueled haze. He has a girl or boy in every city, a love of fast cars and



expensive suits, and quite a few criminal organizations unhappy with his manners in their houses of vice. Leonid tends to work his way west in the summer and east in the fall.

- Oh, I know Lenny.
- SEATAC Sweetie
- Did you ever ask him about any of this stuff?
- Netcat
- He told me a few interesting things. If you want to pay me the 5,000 nuyen he owes me, I might be willing to share.
- SEATAC Sweetie
- Any good shadowrunner knows—half up front, half on delivery.
- Bull
- That IS half, chummer.
- SEATAC Sweetie

WORKING IN ANTARCTICA

Posted by: Traveler Jones

As activity expands in Antarctica, so do the shadows. Here are some spots where you stand a good chance of finding work.

Ares Research Facility Delta-6

This research facility is on the Western Ice Shelf in Antarctica. The facility has a stand-alone Matrix system that interacts with the main Ares Matrix system via satellite twice daily on a rotating schedule. What they are testing and researching at the base is one of the most tightly guarded secrets. One theory is that when a scientist isn't working up to his potential Ares threatens them with transfer to Delta-6.

- I've heard that they are doing genetic testing and research, but I don't know about the specifics.
- Nephrine
- Rumors say they're trying to develop methods to help parents select the metatype of a child.
- Butch
- Eugenics, anyone?
- Sunshine

The facility is on a tight rotation—workers spend six months on site, then a month away, then six months back again. Most of the security personnel only work two rotations then get transferred to another assignment. Duty in Antarctica isn't easy, and corporations don't want people getting burned out or ill.

The facility employs the best technological defenses, along with cyber-enhanced and Awakened dogs that patrol inside the two-kilometer-perimeter fence. They also have a group of on-site mages who handle all of the magical security for the complex. Local network access is limited to the main buildings, and every significant piece of electronic equipment is wired. There are no wireless signals outside the facility.

- The security on the complex is some of the tightest I have ever seen. Whatever it is they are doing there, Ares is taking major precautions to make sure none of their data is stolen.
- DangerSensei

Game Info



ARES RESEARCH FACILITY DELTA-6 PLOT HOOKS

- Shiawase recently tried to extract Dr. John Flint, a geneticist, from a facility in Albuquerque, but Ares security was able to thwart the attempt at the last minute. The next day Ares put Dr. Flint on a transport to Delta-6. Shiawase has decided that they still want the doctor, and they are putting together a team to extract him from the Antarctic facility. They are looking for a fast turnaround since Dr. Flint's research is very time-sensitive. They will provide a shuttle that will land a few kilometers away from Delta-6 and wait there for the runners to return with the doctor.
- What is going on at facility Delta-6? That's what Mr. Johnson wants to know. He is hiring the team to break into Delta-6 and copy all of the files. It is as easy as that. Assuming the runners can deal with Awakened timber wolves with jaws of steel and the ability to sense auras.
- Knowing what happened last month or last week or even yesterday at facility Delta-6 is great, but Mr. Johnson wants to know what is happening right now. He gives the team a virus to insert into the Delta-6 computer system so when it beams out its reports via satcom uplink, it will send him a copy too.

Vostok Station

After the fall of the old Soviet Union, this base was forgotten for a time, but a decade ago Evo acquired it, went in and did some rehab, and re-opened the facility. Its Soviet roots are still showing, most noticeably in the statue of Lenin that stands outside the original building. A new building has been built next to it, and the two now sit on opposite sides of a small, icy square. Unlike some of the other facilities in Antarctica, there is no surrounding fence, but three pairs of guards patrol in a circuit about a kilometer in radius using Patrol Snowskies. They employ an intricate crossing pattern to patrol that isn't completely random, but isn't easily predictable either. Evo has been very secretive about what they are doing at the facility, though it appears to be a manufacturing plant of some sort.

- It isn't so much a manufacturing plant as a research and development facility. They are working on new cyberware and nanoware that is less invasive.
- Sunshine
- Why in Antarctica of all places?
- Stone

- They are using the ice for some sort of cooling in the manufacturing process, from what I have been able to find out. If you need a lot of cooling, it's nice to have it all around and freely available.
- Sunshine
- But aren't any savings wiped out by the money they spend on transportation? Secrecy has to be at least part of the reason they're down there. And in my experience, when you're doing ultra-secret nanoware testing, it's because you don't want anyone to see what your failures look like.
- Rigger X

Game Info

VOSTOK STATION PLOT HOOKS

- Mr. Johnson approaches the team and wants to hire them for a simple snatch-and-grab. Well, maybe not so simple, but he is willing to pay well. He is a collector of old Soviet and communist items, and he wants a unique relic from that era—the statue of Lenin that has been at Vostok Station since the 1950s. The logistics of this one are entirely in the runners' hands.
- Mr. Johnson hires the runners to go to Vostok station and rescue his sister. She was down on her luck, and an Evo recruiter tried to convince her to volunteer for a new test program. When she said “no,” he left, but later that night she felt like she was being followed. She saw the recruiter, turned around to tell him to go away, and at that moment a van pulled alongside her, four men jumped out and grabbed her, and she was gone. Through some contacts, Mr. Johnson discovered she was taken to Vostok station for testing. He wants the group to rescue her and bring her home.

The Piri Reis Map

This isn't exactly a location, but it's an important object to know about, since its emergence kicked off the artifact mania that has been infecting certain corners of the globe (and seems to have resulted in the cataclysm that closed the Watergate Rift in DeeCee). The map and Antarctica are inextricably connected, since one of the map's notable features is a reasonably accurate display of ice-free coastlines of Antarctica drawn at a time when no one alive should have known what such coastlines looked like. When the map surfaced, it spurred a lot of thinking about what it could do, as well as how it may be linked to other artifacts.

The following is an excerpt from a lecture of Dr. Paul van Ommen, a magical theorist and ancient civilizations professor at Temple University. I have skipped the beginning of the lecture and started it where things get interesting.

“If all of the ice in Antarctica thawed, scientists generally believe that ocean levels would rise by at least fifty-five meters

worldwide. The Piri Reis map showed the Antarctica without any ice in an earlier age. However, there is no evidence that ocean levels were at these higher levels for any period of time. I don't believe that the atmosphere could have suspended the additional water, so it had to be somewhere, possibly at the northern ice cap. This means that at some point, there was a shift in the Earth's climate and/or axis of the earth that caused the rapid melt-off of the northern ice. This water flooded much of the Antarctic continent, and with the temperature shift this water then froze into the Antarctica of today.

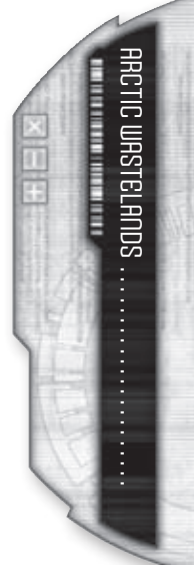
“I theorize that Antarctica, or at least part of it, was what has now become known as Atlantis. The rapid ice melt flooded it, causing it to seemingly sink into the sea and the subsequent freeze trapped the remnants of the civilization below the ice, where they are yet to be discovered.”

As you can imagine, van Ommen's lecture was greeted with confusion and derision, but he's also got a lot of people listening to him.

- I have a lot of problems with this theory, the main one being that Antarctica is hell and gone from the parts of the world that originally became obsessed over this whole Atlantis crap. Think of it this way—the first people to talk about Atlantis were the ancient Greeks. Antarctica is about 15,000 kilometers, give or take, from Greece. By contrast, the New World, which none of the ancient Greeks knew dick about, was sitting there less than 7,500 kilometers away. So van Ommen is trying to say that the Greeks somehow knew about—and trafficked with—some place that was more than twice as far away as the Americas? Sure.
- Clockwork
- Is it that impossible? Read the whole speech, then think it over. He has some very interesting points. Now the lines connecting the dots are a bit stretched, but a lot of it is plausible. I don't know if it's likely, but stranger things have been proven true.
- Elijah
- I agree that it is possible, but is it really plausible let alone likely? I believe that Atlantis existed in a previous age, but I don't think it is Antarctica.
- Lyran

Whether you believe that Antarctica was the fabled Atlantis or not, there still is the possibility that artifacts sit under the ice, waiting for the right explorer. There is no debating that the Piri Reis map shows Antarctica free of ice. The big question is how to get down to the ground and look for them. The other possibility would be to try to look from the surface to find the item and then drill down to it. This still comes with the problem of how to get down through a kilometer or two of ice.

One possible way around this is to look for caves and tunnels in the Transantarctic Mountains that may allow you to make your way down to ground level without having to dig through the ice. The trick, though, is making sure it's worth it, which many people suspect is the secret purpose of some of the facilities down there.



PIRI REIS MAP PLOT HOOKS

- Dr. Paul van Ommen is putting together an expedition to Antarctica to prove his theory is correct. He believes that the best place to start the search is the area just east of the Ross Ice Shelf. He is looking to hire security personnel to help deal with the natural wildlife while also keeping his findings from being stolen once his theory is proven correct.
- A Horizon upper-middle-level manager based in Denver wants to hire the runners. His twenty-year-old daughter was part of an Antarctic exploration team that was looking for artifacts under the ice. The whole group dropped contact two days ago. The manager wants the group to find out what happened. If possible, he wants them to save his daughter; if not, he would like them to bring her body back so he can bury her. The team was last heard from when they were on the eastern side of the continent just south of the Amery Ice Shelf.
- Mr. Johnson wants to hire the runners to grab an artifact that has recently been uncovered in Antarctica before it gets back to civilization. His mole in the expedition team contacted him three hours ago and told him that they had made a significant discovery and would be heading back to their base camp to turn over the artifact. They have about one thousand kilometers to cover to get back to a small settlement called Shackleton and their ride off Antarctica.

The weather has decided to help the runners, at least initially. As they prepare to leave for Antarctica, they learn that a severe storm has whipped up the snow and basically shut the continent down. It should be cleared by the time they reach the continent, but it

means that the artifact should remain safely on the continent until they get there. They are dropped off about five hundred kilometers north of Shackleton and directly in the path of the expedition team. They can either move to intercept or set up an ambush.

After taking care of the expedition team, the runners learn that the artifact in question is quite large and being towed behind a large truck. The truck was damaged (either in the fight to subdue the expedition team or in some other recent mishap), and it must be repaired, or the runners must find another means of transportation. The team also needs transportation off Antarctica that can handle an item larger than a van. The landing strip they used to get in won't accommodate a larger plane. They can't go to Shackleton without people noticing what they're hauling, but if they do their legwork they can learn that there is an old abandoned airfield to the west. It needs to be cleared, but once it is, it could handle a plane large enough to lift the runners with their artifact. Things don't go easy, though, as they are attacked on their way to the airstrip by another group who wants the artifact.

Once the runners reach the airfield, the snowstorm picks up and causes another whiteout. It rages for five hours; anyone who isn't inside a shelter must make hourly Survival + Willpower (4) Tests to keep from taking 8S damage from the cold. After the storm passes, it takes six hours to clear the field and get a plane there to pick them up. There's one more obstacle, though—the group that the runners stole the artifacts from is back, and they attack their airstrip in an attempt to keep the runners from taking off.

Orichalcum on the Ice

Since the Year of the Comet, finding orichalcum deposits in the wild has become more difficult. When orichalcum veins are discovered, they tend to be small enough that they are easily overlooked and just as easily exhausted. This is what happened in Antarctica—while orichalcum once seemed to be abundant there, it is now almost nonexistent. Many of the small settlements that sprang up around orichalcum mines are now abandoned, the remains of any structures quickly being buried under snowdrifts. A few dedicated prospectors are still out there, believing that the next big strike is under the ice and it's just a matter of time until they find it. If you spend enough time in Antarctica, you'll eventually run across the corpse of one of these guys who ran out of supplies or got caught out too far from any shelter. Their commitment to their dream is more powerful than their common sense, but they're surprisingly durable in the cold air, which is only reason there are still a few of them walking around.

- These guys know the continent way better than the scientists who spend all their time on the ice huddled in some shelter. If you need help getting around, find one of these guys. They'll teach you how to deal with the shifting snows, how to recognize rising storms, and other tricks learned from a lean, desperate life. As a bonus, any money or resources you give them might keep them from dying in the next year.
- Frosty

ORICHALCUM ON THE ICE PLOT HOOKS

- Ms. Johnson tells the team that she recently found out that her father has been an orichalcum prospector in Antarctica for the past few decades. The last time her mother heard from him, he was at Camp Velad in Antarctica. That was seven years ago. Since then, the town has disappeared from the map, but the buildings are still there (although rather buried). She wants the runners to go and see what they can find out about her father. If he is still alive, she wants to know where he is so she can meet him.
- A Renraku Johnson approaches the team with information about an orichalcum vein in the Antarctic ice. The problem is that it is over a kilometer down under the Western Antarctic Ice Sheet, northwest of the Transantarctic Mountains. He has found a way to get down to the site so that he can try to excavate the orichalcum, but he needs security to keep the location secure and protect him from local wildlife. Unfortunately, when he drills down to the orichalcum, he finds out that it is only a couple units' worth, and he decides to abandon the runners on the ice so he can avoid paying them their full share for the mission.

Aztechnology Getz Shelf Facility

Aztechnology has a facility on the Getz Ice Shelf. The ice shelf is a major iceberg generator, constantly moving outward until it finally calves off large chunks into the Southern Ocean. The ice shelf encompasses a couple of large islands, and on one of these islands Aztechnology has set up its facility. This would seem to be a poor place for a structure, since the ice beneath it is making a slow march to the sea, but for whatever reason Aztechnology finds value in the site. According to official records, the mission of the facility is to observe the ice shelf, but it's not clear what value that observation has to the Azzies. They've also been guarding the site far more closely than a simple scientific observation site would seem to warrant. Security attacks anyone who comes anywhere on the ice shelf, even though technically it is international territory. The island the facility sits on has been acknowledged as Aztechnology sovereign territory.

- Whatever they're doing there is producing some nasty waste—some samples of water from under nearby ice have held some horrible, radioactive contaminants.
- Ecotope
- They have a nuclear generator built on shifting land? That's not going to be good for anyone.
- Pistons
- The waste doesn't have to be coming from a power plant at the facility. Leaky nuclear submarines may be docking with an under-the-ice portion of the facility.
- Sounder
- Why do you need nuclear submarines to watch ice move?
- Nephrine

Game Info

AZTECHNOLOGY GETZ SHELF FACILITY PLOT HOOKS

- The team is hired by Mr. Johnson, who says he is a concerned environmentalist. He claims that Aztechnology is dumping toxic waste under the ice at the base. He shows them documents that show radioactive waste appearing in the water near the facility. He wants to expose the dumping by making it clear where it's coming from, and to do that he needs to remove some ice so that it is easy to access water near the facility. He wants the team to plant explosives where the ice shelf meets the coastline. He has calculated the perfect locations to calve the ice shelf off if they are all detonated simultaneously.
- Mr. Johnson works for a company that recently had a scientist snatched from them by Aztechnology. Through an implanted stealth RFID chip, they have tracked the scientist to the Aztechnology facility on the Getz Ice Shelf. Mr. Johnson gives the team the frequency the chip is operating on as well as an AR picture of the scientist. The team is to break into the facility, rescue the scientist, and return him to Mr. Johnson. When the team reaches the scientist, though, he informs them that he left Evo willingly and wants to stay at the facility.

Renraku Antarctic Facility

The Renraku Antarctic Facility sits in the middle of the landmass between the George VI and Ronne-Filchner ice shelves. Renraku personnel regularly venture out on expeditions to all the nearby ice shelves. During the warmer summer months they are flying in heavy equipment, though the purpose of the facility and the equipment they are bringing in is unclear.

- From what I hear, Renraku is just playing catch-up. They weren't too active in the big artifacts events of the previous year, and they also haven't been on the leading edge of arctic critter research. The expeditions and equipment are all espionage-related.
- DangerSensei
- That may be part of it, but given their previous experiences with Als and the like, you can understand how they might want to be far away from any direct access to the Matrix when they do their research. And Antarctica is pretty far away.
- Glitch

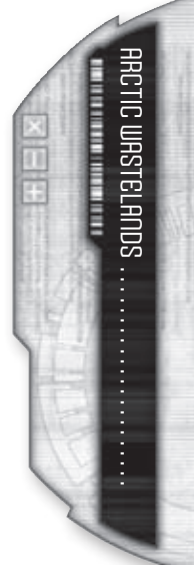
Game Info

RENRAKU ANTARCTIC FACILITY PLOT HOOKS

- Renraku has noticed that some of the equipment that they have brought to the facility is missing. The equipment has RFID tracking devices in it to aid in its recovery. The runners are hired to track down the equipment, bring it back to the facility, and find out who is behind the thefts. Once they track down the equipment, a severe storm blows in and they have to survive the brunt of it before they can move out with the goods. During the storm, the thieves make their move to ambush the runners and prevent them from completing the recovery of the goods.
- Mr. Johnson needs a couple of packages smuggled into the Renraku facility. He can get them to the outer edge of Antarctica, and the runners must make their way to the facility from there. The packages they are carrying are each about twenty centimeters square. The group is instructed to not open them. Each package contains vials of psyche for the lead scientist at the facility; he has found that he cannot concentrate without the drug. Mr. Johnson is his superior; he is aware of the scientist's addictions and he wants him to be able to function, but he knows that directly sending the drugs to him could lead to trouble. He figured that by doing it this way, he could get the scientist what he needs while also testing security at the facility.

MCT Facility Frozen Tundra

MCT has a moderate-sized facility to the west of the Ross Ice Shelf. It has only a half dozen buildings visible above the ice, but it is rumored to have a complex of additional buildings built into the ice, completely shielded from prying eyes on the surface.



The surface buildings are built on stilts to ensure they aren't buried under the ever-increasing icepack.

- This has been a concern since the original stations were set up in Antarctica. The ice builds up each year, and it never gets warm enough to melt off, so it gets deeper and deeper every year. Any building under the ice gets subjected to more and more pressure as the ice builds up, until it eventually collapses.
- Coldnaught
- So how are they getting around this with their under-ice facility?
- Clockwork
- It takes decades to get deep enough for this to be an issue, and they might not be planning on keeping it active that long.
- Winter Warlock

Their main focus seems to be of some sort of biological or gene-craft technology, as many of their brightest scientists in these fields have gone through the facility at some time during their careers. Whatever they are working on requires the highest clearance.

- They are doing some sort of cloning experiments or genetic modification and enhancement work in the labs under the ice. The details are scarce, but they have also brought several samples of genetic material to the facility in the last few years. Not all of it having been given by willing subjects.
- Nephrine
- It's not genetic testing they are doing. MCT is holding preserved "material link" samples under the ice, freezing them and preserving them indefinitely.
- Sunshine
- I've heard they are working on a cure for HMMVV, or at least some way to prevent the need of feeding on metahumans.
- Hannibelle
- Keep dreaming.
- Clockwork

Game Info

MCT FACILITY FROZEN TUNDRA PLOT HOOKS

- The runners are hired to break into the facility, find room 17B5, and rescue whoever is inside. Once they get into the ice tunnels and access the facility's node, they find that 17B5 isn't so much a room as a cryogenic coffin. When they open it they find an unanimated clone of an upper management member of MCT. After a minute he wakes up and is ready to go. They need to escape with him to get paid.
- Mr. Johnson asks the runners to find their way to storage room 502 in Renraku's facility and destroy all of the contents. After accessing the facility's node, they find that the room is on the fifth floor below the ice. Accessing it requires an ID, retina, and palm scan along with a key code. Once they get onto the floor, they find the room quickly as there are only four rooms on the floor. Opening the room, they find that it has probably around five hundred tissue samples, all coded and in stasis dishes.

City on the Ice

Antarctica is a cold, inhospitable, and unforgiving place, but there is money to be made there. Each of the Big Ten has an interest in what goes on there, if only to keep an eye on their competitors. None of them want to miss the next big score that gives one of their rivals an advantage. Getting gear, materials, and people to Antarctica isn't quick or easy, though. One of the orichalcum rush towns, Shackleton, came up with a solution to help solve this problem. They established the town as an independent settlement, without direct affiliation to any of the megacorps. The town consists of a few dozen buildings all attached via enclosed walkways and under-ice tunnels. It has an airstrip, several warehouses, and a garage that rents repair space by the hour. An unexpected occurrence was that it has also grown a small community of shadowrunners who work inside the Antarctic Circle almost exclusively. Shackleton is located just west of the Transantarctic Mountains on the ice sheet.

- Calling this a "city" is quite an exaggeration, but it's impressive that it's lasted as long as it has. That's a danger, though, as some of the under-ice structures are becoming unstable. If anyone gets too pissed off at the runners there, they'll just send someone in with a sonic bomb that might collapse the whole damn place.
- Stone

South Pole Point

The Amundsen/Scott station at the geographic South Pole is still active, though it is showing its years. A relic from before the Awakening, it can't do much as it is, and it needs to be repaired, replaced, or abandoned. The UCAS isn't willing to give up its presence on the Antarctic mainland, but funds are tight, so they won't be rehabbing it anytime soon. They don't want to just give it up, though, as it is one of the last government-owned stations on the continent and a point of pride to the nation. Rumor has it that the station is used to keep an eye on what the megacorporations and other groups are doing in Antarctica.

- The only way they're going to hold onto it is if they end up carrying someone else's water. The most likely scenario is that Ares helps them come up with cash to renovate the system, and they send a team down to do "research," which mainly will involve spying on the other megacorporations.
- Kay St. Irregular

Horizon's Deception Island Retreat

Horizon has opened a tourist resort and retreat on Deception Island at the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula. It uses geothermal energy from the volcano beneath the island to power the resort. The primary means of transportation to and from the retreat is a large landing strip on the eastern side of the island. There is also substantial ship traffic, including ships traveling the mainland of Antarctica and Horizon's Antarctic Collective Cruise, which is an ocean tour around the area. Highlights of the cruise include views of local wildlife and, depending on the time of year, the Aurora Australis or other solar phenomena.

- Even at the edges of the continent, in the warmest times of the year, temperatures aren't going to make it to ten degrees. What kind of tourists are going to travel all the way down for that?
- /dev/grrl



CITY ON THE ICE PLOT HOOKS

- Mr. Johnson wants to bring in some outside help, but doesn't want anyone to know they are affiliated to him, so he is going to fly them into Shackleton, where he wants them to set up shop. He will be in contact via a blind drop to let them know what he wants them to do. He pays them a retainer to stay in Shackleton on standby for a couple of months.

After a week, the team checks the blind drop and finds a chip there. Mr. Johnson knows that there is an information broker in town who is playing too many sides. So far, the person has been pretty good at covering their tracks. Mr. Johnson has enclosed an information packet that the team is to try to sell. The broker goes by the handle of Info Wizard, and he uses a Matrix icon of a wizard's hat. After a couple of days of asking around, they get contacted via the Matrix with an offer for the data.

An hour after they make the drop, the runners get a message from Mr. Johnson telling them that Info Wizard has been traced to a small shop at the edge of town. The data packet put a signal on Info Wizard's commlink, and Mr. Johnson tells the runners to go get him. If they can hold him for two days, a security team will arrive to take Info Wizard away. While waiting, Info Wizard tries to play on the team's sympathies, telling them that once he is turned over to Mr. Johnson, he's as good as dead. As it turns out, his death might come sooner than that; word gets around Shackleton that Info Wizard has been nabbed, and a few residents who had been double-crossed by him are looking for whoever has him, hoping to exact some revenge. If the runners can hold out for two days and keep Info Wizard alive, the security team arrives and they can transfer the prisoner.

An hour after the security team leaves with Info Wizard, another team shows up for him. A call to Mr. Johnson reveals that the first team was composed of imposters. The runners have to get Info Wizard again. They can track them heading west out of Shackleton. Once they have re-captured Info Wizard, he offers a large bribe if they will help him get to his own transport instead of turning him over to Mr. Johnson.

- Mr. Johnson is hiring the team to pose as a new group of runners that a Shackleton fixer has hired as new talent (his people have intercepted and captured the real team). No one in Shackleton has met them, so the runners can assume the other team's identities. Mr. Johnson wants the team to pass along the jobs they are assigned, as well as any information they gather. He will pay them a stipend for the time they are there as well as an additional fee each time they pass along useful information.

The fixer tells them that he has secured a data-theft

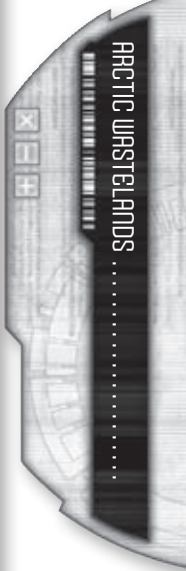
job. They are going to travel to the Renraku facility just west of the Shackleton Ice Shelf. It is a low one-story building on the surface, but is actually dug down into the ice for several stories. The ice, while cold, is warmer than the air outside and keeps the facility fairly constant in temperature (with help, of course, from internal heating mechanisms). Physical security mainly consists of a fenced perimeter around the building and guards at the entrance to the underground part of the facility. Matrix access comes through a satellite dish that is mounted beside the building and operates on a tight wavelength. Inside the facility there is normal Matrix coverage. There is a Force 4 astral ward around the building.

As the runners are extracting the data, they are approached by a scientist who says he is being held against his will. He identifies himself as Dr. Johan Deval, and he offers to pay the team an additional fee if they break him out. A Matrix search shows that he is who he says he is. If the runners contact their Mr. Johnson, he offers to supply a transport to pick up the doctor at a rendezvous location in between the Renraku facility and Shackleton.

For the runners' next mission, the fixer gives the team a couple of optical data chips. They are to travel two days north and meet another group to turn over the chips. Mr. Johnson wants the team to make him copies of the optical chips. He then arranges for a blind drop a day's ride north of Shackleton where they can leave the copied chips.

About a week later, the runners hear that someone is asking around about who was out of town at the time they went to the Renraku facility. Soon after, the fixer calls them and says he thinks he is being tailed. The next day, he calls them and says they need to meet. He tells them that he received a threat; someone thinks he is leaking the information he gathers, and they said that if any more information from him gets out, he's a dead man. The fixer wants the team to look into it and find out why someone thinks he is leaking information.

In truth, the fixer has figured out that the runners are the source of the leak. The chip they copied was a setup, and the runners took the bait incriminating themselves. The fixer sends them on a data grab from a Horizon facility northwest of Shackleton, and he provides coordinates of where it can be found. As the team approaches the location, they are ambushed. If they survive and make it to the designated location, they find out there isn't a facility. At this point, they should understand that they've been burned. Their original Mr. Johnson provides transportation if they ask for it. If they go back to Shackleton, the fixer dispenses with subtlety and sends a hit team after them.





INCOMING FEED.....

Game Info

SOUTH POLE POINT PLOT HOOKS

- One of the UCAS “scientists” from the Amundsen/Scott station was doing observation duty when he disappeared. The runners are hired to track him down and rescue him. It is suspected that one of the megacorporations had operatives in the area who didn’t want him reporting what he had learned. If he has died, they are to bring back his body so he can get a proper burial.
- Mr. Phillip Wolf approaches the group. He is an Apache shaman who wants to take readings and make astral observations at the geographic and magnetic south poles for a paper he is working on. His actions have been misunderstood by the UCAS government, which has him on an eco-terrorist watch list. He wants the runners to help him make it to the two poles and protect him from any perils they may encounter.

- That’s what Horizon is trying to sell. You don’t want to go outside, there are no reasons to go outside for a hike or a swim or anything; you just go down there, enjoy the luxury surroundings they have established, and relax. Matrix access is minimal—they’re trying to remove as many distractions as possible.
- Fianchetto

Game Info

HORIZON’S DECEPTION ISLAND RETREAT PLOT HOOKS

- Ms. Johnson tells the runners that her husband is going to Deception Island for a business conference, or at least that’s what he told her. She thinks he is making up the trip in order to have an affair or cover up some other activity. She wants the team to follow him, keep him under surveillance, and find out what he is really up to. He spends the first few days relaxing in the hotel, but then he gets mobile. He spends a day aboard the Collective Cruise ship, then he gets more adventurous, joining a team of snowmobilers and heading into the continent. The runners need to find out what he’s up to.
- Mr. Johnson hires the team to go to Deception Island and track down one Paul Parkinson. Once they find him, Mr. Johnson would like him killed (or if the team isn’t willing to do wetwork, then abducted). Mr. Johnson tells the team that he is an executive who defected from Renraku a few months back, and they are making an example of him. The truth is that Mr. Parkinson is Mr. Johnson’s boss, and he threatened to give him a bad performance review, which would have ended any hope Mr. Johnson had of moving up in the company.

Saeder-Krupp Livingston Island Facility

Saeder-Krupp bought the St. Kilment Ohridski base on Livingston Island in the Southern Ocean and is rumored to have continued the biological research that had been started there. They have added a helipad to allow access by air as well as the more traditional sea access.

- The biological research is just a cover for the real projects that they don't want everyone to know about.
- Nephrine
- What projects might those be?
- Kia
- It looks like it is a pet project ordered from on high, maybe even by Lofwyr himself. It is code named Deep Freeze, but I haven't been able to dig up any details so far.
- Nephrine

Game Info

S-K LIVINGSTON ISLAND FACILITY PLOT HOOKS

- Saeder-Krupp has learned that someone is looking to try to attack the Livingston Island Facility. They hire the runners to make a preemptive strike against the group, which is planning to launch their assault from nearby Snow Island.
- A group of eco-activists believes that either the Livingston Island base or else the Deception Island resort are polluting the Southern Ocean in the area. They hire the runners to investigate both locations and find out what is responsible for the deaths in marine wildlife in the area.

Mendel Polar Station

Ares has recently acquired the Mendel Polar Station on Ross Island, giving it a second facility in the Antarctic region. This has made some of the other megacorporations a bit antsy. No one wants the balance of power on the continent to tilt in a direction that is not their own. Officially the base is conducting geological and climate observations and research, but some people believe the base is beginning to take a role in Antarctica similar to the Joint Ventures Command Center on Kodiak Island up north.

- If they are setting up a command center at the base, that means they have plans for more than the two bases for Antarctica.
- Kia
- Planning to have? No, they already have more bases. They simply are keeping them small and hidden at this point. I'm not certain about their over-arching purposes, because at the moment they are just transporting basic supplies and essentials to the continent.
- Icarus

- It could be they are setting up staging areas for an assault of some sort in Antarctica. They would want a command center to coordinate their efforts.
- Axis Mundi

Game Info

MENDEL POLAR STATION PLOT HOOKS

- Mr. Johnson has coordinates in the middle of the eastern Antarctic ice shelf; he wants runners to travel there and tell him what they find. He has information that this is one of the "unknown" locations that Ares has been shipping supplies to, and he wants to know what they are stockpiling.
- Mr. Johnson wants the runners to infiltrate Mendel Polar Station and find out what the purpose of the facility really is. He would rather they remain unseen and doesn't want them to do anything to hinder the operation or feasibility of the base, but just find out what its purpose is.

Vinson Massif

Vinson Massif is the highest mountain in Antarctica at just under 4,900 kilometers above sea level. It is part of the Ellsworth Mountains at the base of the Antarctic Peninsula and is situated between several different glaciers that are fed by the summer snow-melt on the mountain. During the summer, it isn't the temperature that melts the ice (it stays cold at an average temperature of -30 degrees), but rather the twenty-four-hours-a-day sunshine. This melts the snow on any dark surface, which then is turned into the ice of the glaciers on either side of the summit. Throughout the year the wind usually is fairly calm on the mountain range, but at times heavily blowing snow can reduce visibility to nothing while dropping the temperatures even further.

- Summary: This place sucks, and if people are going there, you know they have a damn good reason.
- Mika

Game Info

VINSON MASSIF PLOT HOOKS

- A recent expedition to scale Vinson Massif was caught in a freak storm, and all but one person perished. She found shelter in a cave near the summit, and in the course of her ordeal she says she saw what looked like some sort of craft. The whole experience has left her slightly unbalanced, so her words might just be the rantings of a crazy woman. Mr. Johnson wants the runners to scale the mountain and try to find the cave to see if there is anything to be found.



Other Antarctic Possibilities

Make no mistake: Antarctica still remains a vast, empty plain of white. It could have ten times the number of people there that it does now, and you could still travel for days and days without encountering another metahuman soul. That said, there are far more people there and things going on than there were a century ago, and you might be surprised at the scope of the activities down there. Tourism used to be non-existent down there, but now Horizon has a resort while several other spots are attracting extreme sports enthusiasts. This, along with the expanding activities of the megacorporations, has drawn the attention of environmentalists, who view Antarctica as the last pristine place left on the planet. So don't expect to find bustling cities, but if you know where to go you'll find a wider variety of activities than you might expect.

Game Info

OTHER PLOT HOOKS

- An eco-terrorist has decided to plant explosives on the slopes of Mount Melbourne in hopes of causing the volcano to erupt and spill lava onto the Ross Ice Shelf, causing it to calve free of land. This would increase the speed at which the feeding glacier moves and would change the climate of all of Antarctica to some extent. The runners can either be hired by him under false reasons or to help track down and stop him.
- Evo's Extreme Sports channel is sponsoring a bid by Tyler Cantrell to break the speed record for skiing across Antarctica. They know it wouldn't do for the man trying to break the record to die trying. Cantrell will be recording the whole trek via his cybereye, but they would like the runners to provide additional camera angles and footage along with protecting him from any threats. Under no circumstances, however, are they to help him directly in his crossing.
- The Antarctic Continental shelf has been found to be rich in minerals and heavy metals. The problem is that with the cold water and climate, it is just about impossible to mine, bring to the surface, and transport the ore to where it can be processed. Shiawase has come up with a possible way around this. They are setting up a smelting plant to make bars of metal on the ocean floor. Mr. Johnson represents a rival corporation; he wants to make sure the plant never opens and is hiring the team to shut down the operation.
- Mr. Johnson hires the runners to track down a pack of Volt Hounds that have been sighted to the north of the Amery Ice Shelf. He has a buyer who wishes to purchase a live specimen. He wants the team to subdue one, cage it, and bring it to Icetown where he will have it transported to his buyer.

OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST

While the Arctic and Antarctica are very unique locations, the skills necessary to survive there are needed in other locations as well. These locations prove to have their own unique opportunities for runners who can survive the harsh cold.

Mount Everest

Mount Everest is the tallest mountain and at the summit is the highest point on Earth. It has an average temperature of -20 degrees Celsius in the summer and -35 degrees Celsius in the winter. Add to this the winds that average hurricane force one of every four days, and you regularly get winter wind chills of -100 degrees. In addition to these severe temperatures is the problem of altitude sickness, which is caused by not being able to get enough oxygen from the air you are breathing. Symptoms include headaches, loss of appetite, dizziness, upset stomach, and trouble sleeping. It will usually go away after twelve hours to four days, depending on the person and their various implants and gear. It is recommended that you minimize your activity until the symptoms go away. The good news is that the climb itself to the summit isn't considered hard by climbing standards, though it's not exactly an easy walk.

The Tibetan Monks have always held sway in the Himalayan Mountains, and since the Awakening their influence has increased in both Tibet and Nepal. It has been said that a shrine to Buddha sits near the summit of Mt. Everest, and that mages following the Buddhist tradition often initiate there.

- The shrine there has become a popular gathering spot for spirits, including one that claims to be the spirit of Siddhartha Gautama himself.
- Jimmy No
- Of course, that doesn't exactly square with Buddhist conceptions of the afterlife.
- Goat Foot

K2

K2, located near the border of Pakistan and Turkestan, is the second-highest mountain in the world, and many feel it is a more difficult climb than Mount Everest. Its elevation presents the problems of high altitude as well as the extreme cold. There is a movement that believes K2 has a tunnel system near the summit that goes back to ancient times. What the purpose of these tunnels was or if they are still accessible is unknown at this time.

- Please tell me there are legends of gnomes or trolls or something hoarding gold and gems in these tunnels. Because that would be cool.
- Slamm-0!
- Would you accept rumors of a good-sized yeti colony? There are some stories about that told by the locals.
- Baka Dabora

MT. EVEREST PLOT HOOKS

- Mr. Johnson hires runners to find the Tibetan Buddhist Shrine that is near the summit of Mt. Everest. He is sending a man to accompany the runners who will be looking for something once the shrine is found, though he does not share what that is. Mr. Johnson will be waiting at the base of the mountain.

The runners aren't the only ones looking for this shrine. At the first way station, they receive a data chip from one of the guides. On it is a voice-only message warning them to turn back or else risk the wrath of Buddha (runners with knowledge of religions or Buddhism should note that this does not sound like a very Buddhist message). As they start up the mountain, they are ambushed by a group who attacks then fades back into the mountains. It takes three more days of hiking to get near the summit, then searching is required to locate the shrine. When they find it, Mr. Johnson's man takes some sort of written text from the shrine.

When they get back to the last way station, Mr. Johnson's man retires to his tent. An hour later he is found dead in his tent, and an examination by the station's medic shows that he died of altitude sickness. Mr. Johnson contacts the group and tells them to take the text and figure out the ceremony that needs to be performed at the summit of Mt. Everest to provide immortality. It is an Arcana + Logic (5, 1 hour) Extended Test to figure out what needs to be done.

Once the runners have figured out the text, Mr. Johnson tells them he will come up so that the group can escort him to the summit where he will perform the ritual. It will take him five days to get to the way station where the team is already. On the second day they are approached by a hiker who offers them twice the original fee to give the text to her and help her perform the ritual.

The hike to the summit takes another day, and the weather is extremely bad. As they are nearing the summit, the wind threatens to blow them off a ledge. It should seem like there is some unseen force fighting to keep them from reaching the summit. When they arrive at the summit and perform the ritual there is an unusual calm and then nothing as the wind picks back up. While something seems to have happened, it is not clear what, and the runners don't immediately know if the ritual worked.

K2 PLOT HOOKS

- A group of climbers found what could be a cave entrance near the summit. Mr. Johnson wants the runners to make the climb to the point and investigate whether it is just a cave or if it connects to the rumored tunnel system.

The Magical Survivalist Guild

The Magical Survivalist Guild is a group of magically active metahumans that all enjoy the extreme outdoors and the challenges it provides. There are rumors that these challenges have more nefarious goals than just having challenging fun in the wilderness. In order to prove they have achieved one of the parts of the challenges, they must cast a specialized spell, perform a ritual, or perform a magical feat at each of the locations. The details of these tests are closely guarded secrets. While not all challenges take place in Arctic wastelands, some of the challenges have elements that do, which means there's a decent chance that if you run into a mage while you're wandering around in the cold areas listed below, they're part of this group. The relevant challenges are listed below.

The Seven Summits

In this challenge, the mage must scale the tallest peak on each of the seven continents. They are Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa, Vinson Massif in Antarctica, Mount Kosciuszko in Australia, Mount Everest in Asia, Mount Elbrus in Europe, Denali in North America, and Mount Aconcagua in South America. At the summit they cast a spell that onlookers have described as sending a burst of red sparks in the air. Two mages and a shaman have finished four of the summits, and several others have already climbed three. With all the security at Denali and the harsh environment at Vinson Massif, those two will probably be the most difficult to complete.

Three Poles Challenge

In this challenge, the person travels to the geographical North and South Poles, and then scales Mount Everest. While not as difficult in terms of climbing (Mount Everest is the only ascent), it requires much more in terms of survival training to complete as both the North and South Poles are quite challenging. At each location, the person then performs a ritual that, according to reliable witnesses, takes about a half an hour. So far no one is on record as completing all three. George McElroy was ascending Mount Everest to complete the quest when he was killed in a climbing accident. Mr. McElroy wasn't very accomplished as a mountaineer so it is quite possible that it was just an accident, but there are rumblings that a competitor took him out.

True Adventurer's Grand Slam

This is the ultimate challenge to prove climbing ability as well as the ability to survive in extreme conditions. The true adventurer's grand slam involves completing both of the above challenges and also climbing all fourteen of the world's peaks that are over eight thousand meters. There is a certain minimum initiate level mages need to meet in order to take on this challenge, but no one is talking about just what this challenge is.

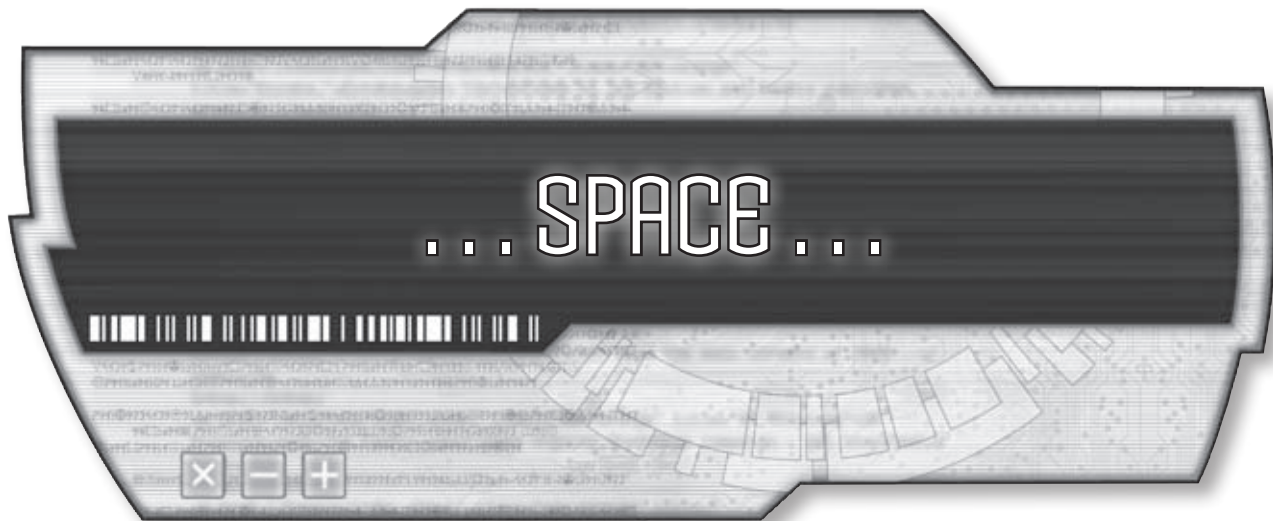
- So what is this fetish these guys have with high altitudes?
- Hard Exit
- Remember that part about how it seems like the veil between this plane and the astral world is thin at the top of Denali? These guys believe it's easier to access the astral plane at all these peaks, and that doing so helps you learn to channel power more easily.
- Haze
- People have long travelled to mountaintops to access other-worldly wisdom. This is just an extension of that tendency.
- Goat Foot

Game Info



THE MAGICAL SURVIVALIST GUILD PLOT HOOKS

- Mr. Johnson is one of the adventurers who is attempting the three poles challenge, and he is afraid that one of his competitors is going to finish it before he does. He wants the runners to intercept his rival as he attempts to make it to the South Pole in a week and convince him that it is time to give up on the challenge.
- Mr. Johnson believes that the Magical Survivalists Guild, or at least some of its members, have a darker purpose. He believes that the spell they cast at the summit of each mountain does more than just cause sparks in the air. If he is able to astrally observe the spell being cast, he will know for sure. He has found out that one of the adventurers is planning to scale Vinson Massif in about a week. He wants the runners to get him there and help him get into position to observe the spell.



As soon as Orbital DK heard the proximity alarm, she knew this was going to be nothing but trouble. For a couple of nano-seconds, she wondered what had caused the alarm. The run had gone off without a hitch—Mr. Johnson now had a nice shiny new backdoor into one of the CAS' main spy satellites over Aztlan. It had been a simple in and out with no complications; she had gotten away clean. So why in the hell was one of her agents alerting her that someone was trying to run a trace?

A cold lump of fear started to grow in her meat body. Had she finally slipped up and made the mistake she had been dreading for years? Had they finally found her and were now coming to collect? No way. This run had been textbook, no way in the seven hells had she screwed up. She had been running silent ever since she had received payment from Johnson. So how in the flying fuck did she suddenly have a half-dozen unknown programs on her tail? Too many questions, too many distractions. She quickly banished them as her mind went into combat mode, and she focused on the threat in front of her. Whoever had designed these programs' iconography had to be a little on the sick side, a fellow fan of classic science fiction, or both. They looked like some kind of pale mutant spider with long legs and a segmented tail that whipped around rapidly. The scene would have been vaguely amusing, watching long legs skitter across the nothingneamusing distance between nodes, had DK's analyze programs confirmed that these were some kind of hybrid program that could both track and attack her persona. They were not something she wanted to tangle with, not now, not when she had mostly sleazing and spoofing programs loaded in her 'link.

Well, there's only one thing to do, she decided. With a raise of her orange-gloved left hand, she extended her middle finger in the direction of the incoming programs. "Later!" she said to the things through the bubble canopy of her flying saucer as it made a full 180-degree turn and shot off away from the small

swarm of alien spider-things, leaving small star-trails in her wake. DK leaned forward and held on to the control yoke of her saucer with a death-grip as she weaved through the orbital landscape of nodes around her. Satellites, space stations, and icons resembling various spaceships whizzed past in a blur of color and motion. Had this been real, her current speed would be liquefying her body. But in the Matrix, things like gravity simply did not matter if one did not wish them to. For a few moments, she thought she had lost the little buggers, but the proximity alarm went off again. Not only was the previous group catching up, but they brought friends.

"Frag me sideways ... Artie, tactical sit-rep now!" she said as one of her agents, a small cylindrical robot with two legs and a dome-shaped head, materialized into view. From the top of its dome, it projected a small display that summarized DK's situation. The first group was coming up fast directly behind her with another two groups on intercept courses from her twelve o' clock high and her three o' clock low. With a curse, DK gritted her teeth and banked her saucer at ninety degrees to her immediate left in a motion that left the laws of physics whimpering in a corner. Then she realized her mistake.

Her abrupt course change put her directly into the path of something big and ugly. She knew where she had seen this creature before, in one of her old 2-D films, but the actual name of the thing escaped her for the moment because she had bigger problems to contend with. Its black glossy exoskeleton gleamed in simulated starlight as a large jaw at the end of a crested head opened to reveal sharp rows of teeth and a second mouth. Yeah, this was another hacker and he had some juice. Smaller versions of the creature congregated around it, their own mouths dripping with fluid as their teeth worked. Artie flashed another sit-rep to DK, confirming that this was another hacker and that he was packing some very nasty attack programs. DK brought her craft to a screeching (vacuum of space be damned)



halt and popped the canopy. Small thruster-wings formed at her back as the saucer dissipated. DK closed the program, leaving her and Artie floating in space with the creatures closing in. There was no doubt about it, she was going to have to try to fight her way out of this. Whoever this was, they had boxed her in good and caught her weakened but not totally helpless. No matter what her program load-out was, she always kept one in particular piece of code with her for just such emergencies. A laser pistol that looked like it belonged in old pulp-science fiction comics from the mid-twentieth century appeared in her hands.

"I don't suppose you'll want to surrender now?" DK asked the small horde.

With a hiss, the largest creature gestured toward DK, and its minions surged forward, trying to envelop her. Crimson lances from her pistol lashed out, burning every creature they touched. Limbs sheared off the larger monsters while the smaller spider-things went up in small bursts of smoke, their code scattering like embers in the wind. DK twisted as she fired, dodging attacks when she could, but several made it through. Claws bounced off of DK's personal shields as they flickered from the impacts. The defense programs she had would only last so long; she was doing damage, but her attackers had numbers on their side. Artie was holding his own against the attackers as he covered DK's back. DK fought with all she had, but she could already feel the strain on her meat body. Again and again crimson lances from her pistol shot out, and each time one of the attacking programs burst into nothingness. But for every one that went down, two more took its place. It would only be a matter of time before she and Artie faltered. A heartbeat after that thought formed, DK heard a loud-pitched wail from Artie. Two of the black creatures had finally gotten past his defenses and had ripped his domed head from the rest of his body. "Artie!" she called out as she put her pistol into the wiggling nozzle-mouth of one of the spiders and pulled the trigger. Now she was alone and low on options.

She could attempt to log off, but there was a good chance that one of the tracing programs could track her location, and that was unacceptable. If that happened, she was as good as dead. No, better to go down fighting and end it here rather than suffer at the hands of those she knew were looking for her. It was just like in one of her old films, the hero surrounded by impossible odds, facing certain death at the hands of a monstrous horde. Too bad there would be no cavalry to save her.

"Alright, you fuckers, let's get this over with."

The large creature moved forward, mouth working hungrily. It seemed to almost smile as its minions formed up alongside of it. And promptly exploded.

Multiple streaks of light danced among the creatures, burning off body parts or destroying them entirely just like DK's pistol had. The large creature screamed in fury and looked up toward the new arrival. DK did the same and smiled. Hovering

above them was a small humanoid figure that appeared to be made of pure energy, her limbs like tendrils of light, her hair flickering like solar flares. Small orbs that resembled comets orbited around her slender frame for a few moments before launching themselves. Each comet split again and again, replicating itself into the hundreds as they enveloped and attacked the creatures with lethal efficiency.

"While I have his minions distracted, you should use this," said a light, ethereal voice that seemed to drift into DK's ears. It seemed a lot calmer than what the situation required.

Another orb formed over the newcomer's head and surged toward Orbital DK's hand. She quickly recognized the file-sharing program and uploaded the content code. Her laser pistol grew to six times its size and morphed into a shoulder-firing weapon. DK flashed a feral smile to the hacker's persona as the bazooka-laser charged up with an ominous hum.

"Bye-bye," she said, and pulled the trigger. A wave of light, brighter than an atomic explosion, enveloped the other hacker as he tried to flee. Then he was no more.

DK holstered her pistol as it returned to its normal size and looked to her savior. The small figure floated down next to her as the last of her comets finished off the remnants of the horde.

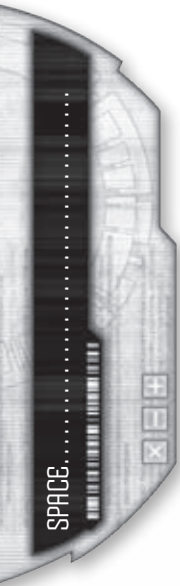
"Polaris, if I didn't know any better I would say you were following me. Thank you." DK flashed a very sincere smile.

Polaris' persona was unmoving and unblinking. "No thanks are required, but I accept them. And per your statement, I have not been following you, at least not for the last few days. I was looking for you. When I did not find you at any of your normal locations. I had a feeling something was wrong, so I used a trace program to find you. I hope you did not mind."

Orbital DK laughed. She remembered when she met Polaris a few months ago while node-cruising. DK could tell the code-slinger was young no more than fourteen or fifteen despite Polaris' best efforts to persuade her otherwise. Some things you just can't fake. Polaris was very talented and experienced in the game, but somehow she didn't know any of the players. What she was doing in this part of the Matrix, DK didn't have a clue, but she respected Polaris' privacy just as Polaris had hers. Although hesitant at first, DK eventually took Polaris under her wing and at this moment she was very glad she had.

"Under the circumstances, no. Just be more careful in the future. I don't know how this guy found me, so switch to the secondary methods of contact for now." DK's flying saucer re-materialized around her. Polaris simply nodded once in acknowledgement as DK throttled the saucer's engines up and took off. Polaris manifested no vehicle, but she kept pace anyway, rocketing through space without assistance and without motion on her part.

"So why exactly were you looking for me in the first place?" DK asked.



"Mr. Johnson was most pleased with my performance last week and has recommended me for more work. I have another potential job, but it is turning into more than I expected. It might be too much for me. I was wondering if you could be persuaded to help."

Orbital DK couldn't help but grin. Who would have thought that Polaris would be putting together a team so soon? "Maybe. Depends on the pay," DK said in a playful tone

Polaris told her what her cut would be whereas DK suddenly became serious. "OK, you need to tell me everything, right now," she said as the two of them sailed among simulated stars.

The geology lab was quiet at this hour, and that's exactly the way Dr. Juliette Sanderson liked it. She looked at the antique clock hanging on the wall for the hundredth time in the last ten minutes. Where was he? Even though the rest of the staff knew Dr. Sanderson liked to work odd hours, there was only so much more work she could pretend to do before someone became suspicious. Some people already were, judging by the glances she got as she walked down the halls. They had done their best to keep this quiet, but somehow, word had gotten out. No one said anything of course, but every day she could almost hear them whispering about her. She desperately wanted to get it over and done with. Still, the anticipation was the most exciting thing she had ever done in her life. Just the mere thought of getting away with it made her tingle in ways she never had in her life. But secrecy was the key, and if she blew it now, it would be over. She would never get another chance like this.

"Oh God, please hurry," she said to herself, yet again, her heart skipping every other beat. Why had he picked her, of all people for this? She was generally well known in geology fields, but other than that, Dr. Sanderson was unimportant, someone easily forgotten unless you needed something silly like rocks identified. Maybe that was the point, that she was ultimately expendable and perfect for his needs. He could get what he wanted from her and toss her away with the rest of the refuse. She should be insulted, but she wasn't. At least for one moment, she would be important, and in that one moment she would be truly alive. Nothing that happened after that would matter because she would always have that one moment.

The door to the lab opened with a soft click of the lock and there he stood, Dr. Simon St. John. He glided into the lab like a ghost riding on the winds, his long dark hair trailing in his wake and his lab coat moving like it was a cape of royalty. Long pointed ears protruded underneath the raven locks that framed his perfect elven face. He strode towards Dr. Sanderson, his hazel eyes piercing any resistance she might try to construct. She knew, the first time he had looked at her, that she would do whatever he wanted. He stopped just centimeters from her, so close she could smell his rich, earthy scent.

"Are you ready for this?" he said to her in velvet-rich tones. "What we are about to do is risky, and if we are discovered ..." His voice trailed off as his fingers ran through Julie's short, tight red curls. She closed her eyes and sighed at his touch. Yes. She was ready. Dr. St. John leaned in, eyes closing and lips parting, moving ever so closer to hers. She felt warm, from his presence, from his scent, from everything ...

There was a rush of noise in the lab. "Hello Doctor! Are you busy?" came a heavily accented question.

Julie almost leaped out of her skin at the Pete's intrusion. She quickly shut down her commlink, even though she knew there was no way for him to see what she had been composing. She had already taken enough abuse from station staff because of her hobby, and she didn't want any more of it. Peter Stankov was the head Matrix tech at the base and was one of Julie's best friends—one of her only friends, really—on Gagarin Base. He found her writings amusing and never once made fun of her, which was why the two of them were friends. She had even asked Pete out once, but company rules were quite strict on fraternization and Pete already had a wife back home in Moscow. That had been extremely embarrassing for her. So now, between her duties of testing ore and minerals for the base's mining operations, Julie found herself mostly a questions he lab, in her quarters, or in the base's south lounge. She used her writing as a way to pass the time and deal with her other frustrations.

Swallowing hard, she found her voice to answer Pete. "Ah, not at the, ah, moment, no ... I'm not. What can I do for you, Pete?" Dr. St. John gave Pete a smile that was almost a sneer, nodded politely at Julie, and left. Left! Damn Pete's timing!

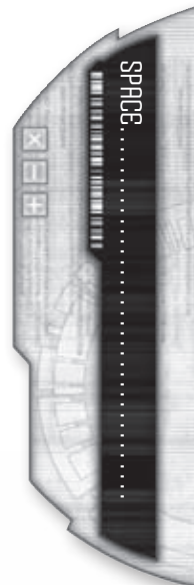
Fortunately, Pete mistook the flush in her face for embarrassment, and he smiled. "Writing naughty-naughty again, eh? I keep telling you, don't be embarrassed. You have talent. Embrace it! But, that's not why I am here. I fixed the communications node in your quarter. Sorry my techs didn't get to it sooner."

Julie got up and gave Pete a big hug. For the past three weeks, her room node would not allow her to access her station accounts, and the maintenance staff was ignoring her repair requests. Pete shouldn't have had to do it personally, but Julie knew Pete had come to see her as a sister ... dammit. Still, it would be nice to finally get some messages from home, even though she knew they would be screened and censored as needed. Nothing like the perks of being a corporate citizen.

"Thanks, Pete, I owe you one. I'm afraid to see what kind of a backlog I've got. Mom's probably sent a thousand messages for me, most of them asking why I haven't written."

Pete told her to let him know if there was more he could do, then left.

That was it, then. She'd waited for Dr. St. John, he'd showed up, and now he was gone. There was nothing for her to wait for now. So she went home.



In her quarters, Julie sat down and turned her commlink back on, accessing her personal messages. As expected, most of them were from her mother. With a sigh she scrolled down through the messages and found one from her brother. That was odd—she hadn't spoken to him in years. She called up his message and spent the next two hours looking at the single paragraph. When she was done, she got up, left her quarters, and went back to her workstation in the geology lab. She didn't know if anyone looked at her suspiciously or with amusement. She didn't care. She accessed several hidden programs on her commlink, then downloaded them into the base's mainframe. She then walked over to the storage vault and removed a sample marked K445-G20-Echo. Placing it in another container, she re-programmed the AR tag and placed the container with the samples scheduled to depart on the next outbound drone convoy.

Six hours later, the convoy was safely on its way to Earth. Six hours, twenty-three minutes, and seventeen seconds, Dr. Julie Sands walked out of airlock number six onto the Martian surface without a suit.

At exactly six hours, thirty minutes, and zero seconds, the program Dr. Sands entered into the Gagarin Base systems activated.

Benny—properly known as satellite BN-85-Y—was lonely. Sitting several thousand kilometers outside of Earth orbit, he had a simple job—receive signals from another communications satellite a few thousand miles closer to Earth. In turn, he would re-transmit those exact signals to another satellite in the link, one that was about two thousand kilometers away from him. It was a thankless job, and he was sure that those people didn't have a clue about him or his existence in cold, remote space. Not that he knew exactly what "cold" felt like, but he was aware of it as a concept, and he knew it was all around him.

Not only was he lonely, but he was rather strapped for entertainment. There wasn't much for him to do but read the transmissions with their various information packets. He wasn't exactly sure why or even how he started doing it. It generally took him about 0.000013 seconds to re-transmit the necessary information. Over time, he slowed that down, giving him time to read the information and open up the packets. It was garbled noise, but it was still fascinating. Then he figured out how he could copy that data as he re-transmitted it, and that gave him more time to think about it, to study the code and try to extract meaning from it. It took months, but eventually he began to understand the messages he regularly shot into space.

He started to look forward to the transmissions, since they were a welcome distraction from his dull existence. Over time, he wanted more and more. They didn't come fast enough. He almost went crazy with boredom we're airing sometimes. Benny

knew that he wanted to leave, to travel, to see the things he had learned to read about, but he didn't know how.

That's when he met his friend. He didn't know where she lived, or even what kind of being she was, but she talked to him, and that's all he cared about. She was the one who gave him his name, Benny. Benny—he liked that name. It made him feel like more than a thing—he was someone, because he had a name. His friend even promised to help him leave someday; she just needed time to make the arrangements.

Until then, Benny would wait in his spot, waiting until the next transmission or until his friend called. He hoped it would be soon. He wondered what he would do once he found a new home. Maybe he would find a way to visit some of the people he knew about. Maybe Mrs. Corlacov? She was so proud of her daughter after she became a cosmonaut with Evo. She always sent the nicest letters to her daughter on Mars. Maybe he could visit there as well. This Evo Corporation seems like they're doing a lot of interesting things. Maybe he could help? So many things he could do.

Benny was pondering his options when he finally got a call from his friend. He was so excited. "Friend! It has been so long, I am very glad you finally called to talk to me. Have you found a way for me to find a new home?" Benny asked.

"Yes, Benny. I have. In two days, a convoy of drones will be coming from Mars and going to Earth. You are going to get on one of those drones. I also have some instructions for you, to make sure that you are able to get to Earth safely."

Benny listened to his friend's plan. He was suddenly worried. "Are you sure I have to do this? I do not wish for the people on board to be in any danger."

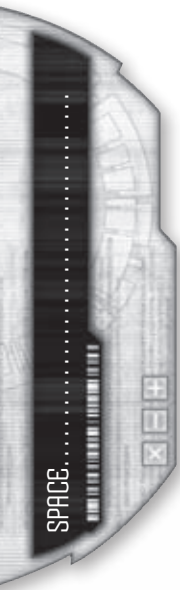
"Don't worry, Benny, they will not be in any danger," his friend said soothingly. "The ship that will come for them will be more than able to protect them. Just make sure you are in the correct drone when the time comes. I do not wish to lose you."

"I do not want to lose you as well, friend. I will do as you ask. I hope to see my new home soon," Benny felt something in his core, and he decided it must be warmth, or happiness, or both.

"So do I, Benny"

"... and as pursuant to Space Operations Charter, specific section already logged, suspect crew was taken into custody and suspect vessel secured. Navigational markers have been placed on the suspect vessel for recovery crews to retrieve at later date and time. Current ETA with Apollo Station for transfer of suspects is approximately three point six hours. No further details or comments at this time, Captain Thomas J. Hawkins, commanding officer *RSS Vigilance*, reporting. End dictation and send file."

Captain Hawkins rubbed his eyes and adjusted the straps of his chair, glad that all of his paperwork was finally complete.



When he had been offered command of the *Vigilance*, Hawkins hadn't understood how much time he'd have to spend composing reports. Half of the time, he sat in his cabin working on the damn things rather than prowling around the bridge where he belonged. Rubbing the scar that ran along his right jawline, he briefly wished he was back in the CAS Army, flying F-B Eagles with John, Cyndy, and the rest of the squadron. Still, that was a lifetime ago. He had made his choices. He wondered what they would think of him now.

Before he dive down that particular rabbit hole, the real world intruded as his commlink came to lofe. "Captain, Bridge." "Go ahead," he said.

"Captain, we are receiving emergency flash traffic in our patrol zone. A supply convoy bound for Earth has become disabled and is in need of immediate assistance."

Hawkins detached his harness and traveled toward the lift as he gave orders, "Change course to intercept, best speed, and notify all other SRS vessels in the area. And notify C-3 to get us a list of any other ships in the area in case we need to call for assistance."

"Aye, sir!"

The trip to the bridge was quick, only about thirty seconds on the lift. Hawkins' XO, Lieutenant Commander Emma Ricardo, announcour the situation over the shipwide comm system in her booming voice. "ATTENTON, ALL DECKS, ATTENTION ALL DECKS! We have a Black Alert. Stand by for full burn in two minutes. Secure all items and workstations, MARK!"

"Report!" Hawkins shouted as he floated onto the bridge and toward his command station.

"Sir, drone supply convoy from Gagarin Base entered our patrol zone approximately forty-five minutes ago. Sixteen minutes later they started broadcasting an SOS," Commander Ricardo replied, her voice crisp and precise despite her slightly longer-than-average tusks. "Nature of the SOS is unknown. We've been unable to establish communications." Ricardo strapped herself into her station below and to the right of Captain Hawkins. Once her straps were in place, the seat rotated back into the "underway" position.

"Very good. All stations report in when secure. Has Chief Irons managed to get the new software upgrades completed on all CRASH units?"

"Negative, sir," said the operations officer, Lieutenant Sam Butcher. "Last report approximately a half hour ago indicated that only three of the four units had been completed."

"Tell Chief Irons to get it *done*." Hawkins knew that the CRASH rescue systems his space-swimmers used were decent enough, once you managed to get all of the bugs out of the operating systems. They had continued to be a pain in the ass, and Hawkins knew his number-one swimmer, Senior Chief Petty Officer Greta Irons, was kicking ass in her usual way to get things done. He just hoped they had the time—there was

no telling what the situation was, and he didn't want to deploy short a swimmer because some piece of junk wasn't working the way it should be.

"Sir, all sections reporting in. Ready for burn," Butcher reported as he finished with his harness.

"Very good," Hawkins replied. The ship's status flashed on AR screens in front of him, but he insisted on traditional procedures where each crew would verbally report. It made sure that all orders were carried out and no one got things mixed up because of "equipment error." "Helm, ETA to target location?"

"One hour, ten minutes at maximum burn, but recommend we discontinue burn at four-five minutes to preserve fuel reserves. Estimated time based on recommended course and speed will be just under two hours," said Ensign William Hagerty, the ship's helmsman/navigator.

Hawkins considered for a few moments. "We'll split the difference. Discontinue burn at five-zero minutes. Bring the engines on line and standby for burn."

"Aye, sir!"

Hawkins activated the ship's comm. Normally, the XO would handle this, but Hawkins has always been a lead-from-the-front kind of guy. "All hands, this is the captain. All stations have reported clear for burn. Initiate burn in five, four, three, two, one, MARK!"

Vigilance's massive engines came on line, and the ship surged forward. The engines burned for fifty minutes, then it hit the target area. The massive convoy of drones was spread out over a quarter-kilometer. All of them were adrift; several had passengers, and thankfully those still had life support.

"Sir, we have a fix on the passenger drones, one thousand meters to port. Looks like they're experiencing a power outage. There's no sign of other hazards or hostiles," Butcher reported.

Hawkins watched his displays intently. During the second Matrix crash, several defense satellites and drones went crazy and started to designate everything as a target. Several rescue vessels were lost as a result, and Hawkins was not about to let that happen here.

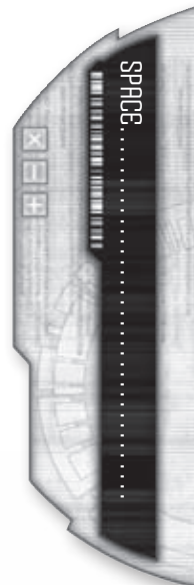
"Ops, launch recon drones. Helm, bring us into standard rescue position and tell Chief Irons to stand by. Guns, even though we don't have any hostiles tracking, keep an eye out, I don't want to ..."

He was abruptly cut off by Ensign Travis Smythe, his weapons officer.

"LOCK LOCK LOCK!! Port side! Six-five by six-seven! Laser's firing, "

"All hands, brace for impact!" Ricardo called out.

"Fuck." Hawkins said under his breath, grateful that the weapons alarm drowned his comment out. "Weapons, fire at will!" he shouted out to Smythe. He watched his display as *Vigilance* returned fire. It wasn't much of a duel—the drone's



smaller lasers did some damage to the outer hull, but not enough to cause a problem. Smythe's fire however, gutted the drone as a slug from the ship's gauss rifle blew right through.

Two more drones tried to take shots at *Vigilance*, but both met the same fate under Smythe's guns. When the battle was over, the rescue ship was no worse for wear with minor hull damage only. Once the drones were neutralized, Hawkins ordered a quick retrieval of the personnel drones and ordered an escape route in case there were more hostile drones in the area. As far as Hawkins was concerned, salvage of equipment could wait; lives were more important, regulations be damned. Though, he would have to come up with one hell of a report to justify that sentiment.

Twelve hours later, an automated probe entered the battle area, powered down, and waited for approximately seventeen minutes. Once it reactivated, it searched through the cargo containers and found its objective: container K445-G20-Echo. Recovery arms gently placed the container into its own cargo hold. When the drone started moving again, another section on its body opened up again, firing multiple micro-missiles into the rest of the containers. Its job done, it left to find its new home.

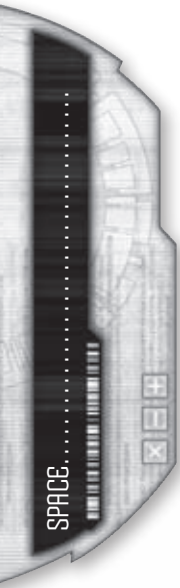
Polaris sat in her special chair floating in her quarters. She was off duty for the next sixteen hours and was glad for it. Today had been especially taxing. Numerous requests on her time and talents had left her drained. Still, it was a small price to pay for what she truly needed. The automated systems of her chair activated, sending the required nutrients into her body. She closed her eyes as she felt the paste-like substance enter her stomach through her feeding tube. She wondered what it would be like to eat food like a normal person. It didn't matter. She had access to what mattered most: the resonance and the means to find her father. It had taken a few years to get into this position, to obtain access to the necessary systems without anyone knowing. Her network of backdoors and catalogue of access codes was staggering. And the best part was, she was given most of those codes willingly!

But it was not enough. She needed more. The Matrix was the vehicle for her father's eventual salvation, but it could only do so much. She had learned that she needed allies, people in the so-called real world beyond the resonance to help her get the things she could not obtain via the Matrix.

Orbital DK was one of those people. Polaris had first learned of her existence when she gained access to Grid Overwatch's dossiers on known shadowrunners. At first, Polaris had seen DK as nothing more than a means to an end, one of the people who simply did not matter. But things changed. Polaris knew she was starting to care about DK, not simply as a friend, but maybe as something more. She had never known her mother and never had a sister, and DK treated her as a person, a fellow hacker, even though she was a techno. DK was her friend, her mentor, her partner.

Once her meal was complete, Polaris checked with some of her sprites. Halley told her that Benny had completed his mission and that the package had made it to its destination. The package was now in the hands of Ares Macrotechnology as per their deal. The money had been transferred as well. Most of it went to Orbital DK so she could pay for the help to get the package to Mr. Johnson. Polaris had no need for the money at the moment; she had a fixed income of sorts, and an unusual amount of funds deposited in her accounts would arouse suspicion. Perhaps she would also speak to DK about setting up dummy accounts. It helped that DK still thought of Polaris as a novice trying to find her way in the deep, dark world of shadowrunning. Perhaps someday she would tell DK the truth, but not now.

With a thought, the information packet Mr. Johnson had promised came into being in front of her. She scanned it quickly, making mental notes as her sprites catalogued several entries for later examination. Good, it was all there. Everything Ares had on a former operative of theirs known as Monkeywrench and his activities after leaving Ares from Evo. The man who was her father.



SWIMMING IN THE VOID

- Let's face it, ever sense we started walking upright, man hasn't been able to stay in one spot for very long. First, we crossed the land bridge looking for food, then we sailed the oceans looking for riches. Then in the mid-twentieth century some of us got this crazy notion of sitting on top of rockets and launching ourselves into orbit. Why? For some it was scientific curiosity, others saw the potential for power and or profit. Then there was fear—the worry that an enemy was going to beat you to space and do something bad to you from there before you could get there. Space exploitation—sorry, exploration—is nothing new. We all know that when most of the world's governments fell in the early twenty-first century, the rising megacorps sucked up and privatized all of the world's space programs to fill their coffers with space-riches. Their greasy fingers have been there ever since. Now that the world has settled down (mostly), the great march to the stars continues. Despite the damage Crash 1.0 and 2.0, did, the corps are finally back in a position to start turning a steady profit in the great black. And as we all know, where the corps go, shadowrunners follow. Space may not be the final frontier it once was, but space activity has been on the rise. Since what's going up there will have a profound impact earthside, I think we need to know about what's going on up there. So I contacted our resident space-case, Orbital DK, to write up a primer for us and update some of the work she did a while back before the Second Crash.

- FastJack

- Thanks, 'Jack. I need to start by saying that I can't take all the credit for this. I got some help from a new friend, another 'trix jockey who goes by the handle of Polaris. She and I have a lot in common besides our neighborhood and she helped me out with a rather big problem a while ago. We've had a rather profitable working relationship since then, almost getting brain-fried several times. She's proven herself to be an ace hacker and rock solid in the dependability department. And since I hate rehashing my old work, I decided to let my new pal do the heavy lifting.

- Orbital DK

- Wait a minute. One, I've never heard of this Polaris; two, why should I trust them?

- Clockwork

- One, feel free not to read it. Two, I don't care what you think. But I'll vouch for her, and that should be good enough. And if it isn't, see comment one.

- Orbital DK

- I appreciate the vote of confidence and support, DK. But do not worry; I can take care of myself. Thank you for the guest status, FastJack.

- Polaris



INCOMING FEED.....

SPACE.....



HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Posted by: Polaris

EARLY SPACE HISTORY

The foundation for modern space exploration and colonization started over a century ago in the early 1950s when the United States of America and the Soviet Union launched satellites into Earth orbit. The Soviets scored first with their Sputnik satellite, and they also put the first man into space, Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin. Eventually, the United States responded with their Mercury space program. From there, the United States took the initiative with their Gemini and Apollo programs. With Apollo, the United States took the lead in the space race when *Apollo 11* landed on the moon's Sea of Tranquility in 1969. The United States also became the first to operate a reusable spacecraft in 1980 when the Space Shuttle *Columbia* lifted from Cape Canaveral.

While manned space programs remained the providence of the United States and the Russians, the development of unmanned space exploration vessels and satellites also continued with several other nations such as the European Space Agency.

TURN OF THE CENTURY

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, the major space powers—the United States and the Soviet Union (the forerunner of the Russian Federation)—and the rest of the world were dealing with several problems. Severe economic depressions, global crisis, natural disasters, plagues, wars, the return of magic, and goblinization forced several countries to sell off their space assets to private interests. The first major country to do so was the United States in 2016, when they sold NASA to a small business conglomerate that became Ares Macrotechnology. One by one, the rest of the world's governments privatized their space programs. Saeder-Krupp bought the ESA in 2029. While the Russians held out the longest, the Russian space agency, or Roskosmos, went private and is now a part of the Evo. Other corporations both big and small were able to get into the space business by purchasing various satellites, launch facilities, or aerospace firms.

As the world settled down, space-capable corporations took advantage of their assets. 2016 to 2029 saw a surge in orbital expansion as corporations mobilized their resources above Earth and beyond. With the development of ASIST, communications technology became even more important than it had been, and satellites played an important role in spreading these advances.

Some corporations were not content to send satellites into space, and they had plans that would take them past Earth orbit and beyond. Ares Macrotechnology spent billions in their space programs, repairing and upgrading the original NASA equipment. One of their biggest projects, the space station Freedom, was completely refurbished and sold to the Inter-Corporate Counsel in 2027. The station was renamed Zurich-Orbital, and it is still in service today as the seat of the Corporate Court. Ares also continued its extraterrestrial real estate ventures with the completion of the Apollo space station in 2019. With these successes, Ares began construction of the Daedalus station at the L4 Lagrange point outside of Earth's orbit. Because of a series of bureaucratic blunders and other various setbacks within Ares,

Daedalus was not fully completed until the late 2030s. Some would later say that the delay was a blessing in disguise.

For all Ares' efforts, they were still number two in the expansion race. While Ares was fixing old messes, the corporate conglomerate Harris-3M was making strides forward. They managed to complete the first corporate space station, Halo, in 2017, a full two years ahead of Ares. By the time Ares began construction of Daedalus, Harris-3M already had two superstations operational; the Nerva station at the L3 Lagrange point and Angel Station at L5. By the late 2020s, Harris-3M also had plans for a permanent colony on Angel Station and on the Lunar-surface.

Other corporations became involved in space expansion. Saeder-Krupp got a deal similar to Ares' NASA purchase when the ESA was privatized in 2025. Smaller companies like Shibata (a Mitsuhamma subsidiary) also began operating research stations, satellites, launch facilities, and other space-related business. Next to developments in computer and cyber-medical technology, space was the most profitable technology-related business venture. But like the old saying says, what goes up; must eventually come down. And that's exactly what happened in 2029.

THE CRASH OF 2029

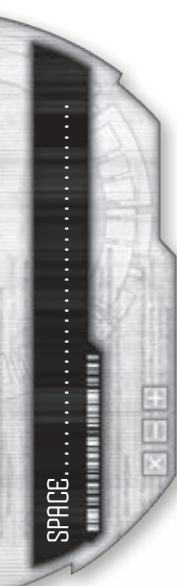
The computer crash of 2029 devastated the space industry. Piggybacking on satellite transmissions, the Crash virus found its way into the computers and systems of most orbital and outer space installations, communication arrays, and many space vehicles. Ninety-one percent of all satellites were destroyed because of power failures, collisions with other orbital objects, or loss of orbital integrity. Several known space stations including Halo, Nerva, and Angel Station were also lost, but recoverable. With the chaos continuing planet side, Harris-3M couldn't mount rescue operations and was forced to abandon the stations. All hands were lost.

However, Zurich-Orbital, Apollo, and Daedalus fared better. Technicians on Apollo discovered they could restart their emergency systems and restore main power by re-connecting all of the main systems to older onbosrd computers, many dating back to the beginning of the century. Once this was discovered, the information was transmitted via radio transmitters to Zurich-Orbital. Because Z-O had been restored and still serviced by Ares, it had similar equipment and was able to replicate Apollo's success because the crash virus simply did not the right coding to affect the older operating systems. Crews were later able to isolate and purge infected systems once the stations were fully reactivated. Daedalus was left untouched because her main systems were not yet complete.

- And there's the lesson: Never underestimate reliable and proven technology. Just because it's newer doesn't mean it's better.
- Bull

After Crash 1.0, only those corporations with diversified assets were able to weather the destruction and losses in orbit. Harris-3M went under as the result of several class-action lawsuits by the families of late crews of Halo, Nerva, and Angel Station. The former frontrunners in space were forced to liquidate their assets, which were purchased by Fuchi.

Recovery after Crash 1.0 was slow because no company wanted to become the next Harris-3M. As a result, most



companies that had space projects favored short-term investments with quick returns, such as re-establishing satellite networks and launching low-Earth-orbit stations and habitats. The cyberdeck development took priority with major corporations, and an unofficial “corp war” over consumer tech began. For a time people lost interest in space expansion and operations dwindled, except for satellite technology. Into the late 2050s, Daedalus was the only operational station outside of Earth orbit. It wasn’t until the death of UCAS President Dunkelzahn that space expansion renewed.

- And that’s the way Ares liked it. They were the big dog in space for over thirty years, and they did a lot to keep it that way. Next to their arms sales, AresSpace was the biggest moneymaker for the corp. For a long time, if you wanted into space, you had to talk to Ares. But, like all profit centers, competitors eventually come up with ways to horn in on your action. And of course, nothing lasts forever.
- Sticks

NEW SPACE RACE

In his will, Dunkelzahn offered twenty million nuyen to the first company or individual that could successfully grow one acre of wheat in low-earth orbit.

- And many have tried. The Dyson-3 platform was specifically launched to receive that particular payoff. They’ve come close, but just haven’t been able to get it. Something about not meeting the exact terms laid out in the will.
- Orbital DK
- The devil is in the details, and when it comes to corporate lawyers, there are none more sinister than the executors of that will.
- Mr. Bonds

While most of the beneficiaries had little impact on space expansion, two in particular did. The first was Miles Lanier, chief of Fuchi Security. He was bequeathed several shares in Renraku Corporation stock that put him on the board of directors and also forced him to sell all of his Fuchi stock. This allowed his former boss, Richard Villiers to finally split Fuchi and create a domino effect that nearly killed FuchiSpace while almost taking the number two space player out of the game.

The second and most influential beneficiary in regards to space was Arthur Vogel. Following his unsuccessful bid for the UCAS presidency in 2057, this former eco-lawyer also received significant shares in a corporation (this time Ares), and he also got a seat on its board of directors. Despite various internal struggles for dominance within Ares, Vogel has pushed forward several initiatives to promote a new space race. With the full support of AresSpace behind him, Vogel continues to be a cheerleader for space expansion, much like US President John F. Kennedy in the 1960s.

Other corporations have also enhanced their own space programs. Saeder-Krupp in particular ramped up its search for possible resources in the solar system. Yamatesu, with its cadre of cosmonauts from Russia, put long-term plans for space expansion in motion. Fuchi America, and its successor, Novatech, got into the space business, leaning heavily on its communication and

computer systems as a springboard. Aztechnology put an orbital resort into orbit in 2048 has also looked to expand.

When Halley’s comet returned to Earth in 2060, it sparked the public imagination and began a new space race. Interest in exploration and expansion reached an all-time high as several corporations launched probes to explore the approaching comet in what the media dubbed the “Probe Race.” While a series of failures caused all but one of the probes to fail in its mission and no one was able to claim a true victory in the race, the effort served as a catalyst to encourage the major corporations to continue their efforts.

- Even though they failed in their original mission, the probes found evidence of some petty valuable materials out here in the void, especially in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter. Ever wonder why everyone with a rocket wants to get their asses out there so damn quickly? Some of those floating rocks out there are worth billions.
- Orbital DK.
- And here I thought it was to expand their knowledge and understanding of the universe.
- The Smiling Bandit

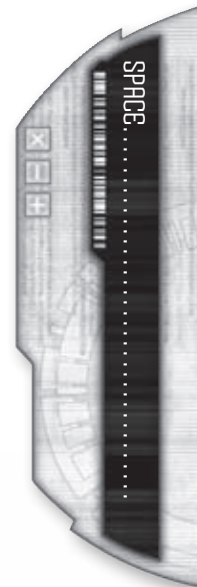
After the probe race of 2060, interest in space expansion was again on the ascension. Several new satellites and small research stations were launched into low-Earth orbit, and Earth-bound launch sites became coveted properties as governments and private interests rushed to secure them. Space tourism also increased as reservations at Aztechnology’s Spindle and Yamatesu’s new Shibanojuji went up by forty percent in 2061.

- And of course the shadows benefitted. Runs for or against space assets were at an all-time high as various competitors wanted to learn about or stop what the other guy was doing. Independent operators were also making money hand over fist, especially with salvage operations. It was also what many spacers consider a golden age of independent space operations.
- Orbital DK

Older stations, like Apollo and Zurich-Orbital were also upgraded as new facilities were completed in various orbits and at vacant Lagrange points. Lunar colonies were also completed with more scheduled for construction. By 2063, orbital assets were almost at their previous pre-Crash 1.0 levels. History then repeated itself again in 2064 when the Matrix crashed again. Once again, orbital assets suffered greatly. This time, though, corporations and governments were prepared.

CRASH 2.0

Space assets represent a significant investment to any company or government. After the losses from the first Crash, steps were taken to prevent or at least mitigate a possible future disaster. Redundant and standalone backup systems were made standard on all space stations, and new protocols were created to ensure rapid and efficient rescue operations. And while the material damage caused by both Winternight and the AI Deus was considerable, overall losses in space, especially in terms of metahuman lives, were drastically lower.



While it is generally known that Crash 2.0 was the result of terrorist attacks and a rogue AI, few details have been released about the various operations undertaken by government and corporate forces to prevent the attacks. Even fewer details have come out about the role space played in those operations. When the hunt began, Winternight specifically targeted key communication systems, including the orbital networks, to disrupt operations. While agents worked to root out terrorist cells on the ground, hackers and Matrix operators kept the lines of communication open while the Corporate Court coordinated the overall operation.

- Officially, the order was given to stand down on November 1, but Matrix operations continued. Those still working were among the first to fall when the Jormungand virus was released. They were also the first to raise the alarm, which allowed orbital assets to hunker down. A lot of people were saved as a result—it could have been a lot worse up there.
- FastJack

When it was all over, eighty-nine percent of the communications network was gone, and most of the low-Earth orbital facilities were lost. Thanks to the advanced warning, all of the geosynchronous orbit stations survived, or were at least salvageable. Various corporate and independent assets also pulled together during the crisis, and thousands were saved because of the new protocols put into place

- It's not a widely known fact, but those protocols had a name: Black Hole. In a nutshell, they assigned priority to various people and assets that determined who would be rescued and what equipment would be recovered first. Scores of people who could have been rescued were bypassed because they didn't have a high enough rating. A lot of good people were simply left to die, including a lot of my friends.
- Orbital DK
- So the corps put the well-being of their people over others. I am shocked. Shocked!
- Aufheben
- There were still those who did the right thing during Crash 2.0. Some of them even managed to reach positions of power. There will be more on this later.
- Polaris

POST-CRASH 2.0 AND SPACE OPERATIONS TODAY

Compared to the first Crash, the recovery after Crash 2.0 was rapid. Smaller corporations and independent businesses/operators with space and or orbital assets all but disappeared, however, because they were unable to bounce back from their losses. Most were forced into bankruptcy to pay off debts, much like Harris-3M after the first Crash. Several companies, especially the independent operators, decided that space was too risky, and they sold their businesses at premium prices or merged by one of the AAA megacorporations, who bought up any space assets they could.

Within a few short years, satellite communication networks were replaced and upgraded with new wireless Matrix technology. Three years after Crash 2.0, the satellite network had been replaced and expanded, with thirty percent of all satellites now retransmission units. These units allow greater range and flexibility when communicating with facilities and stations beyond low-Earth orbit. Additionally, smaller and more efficient low-Earth orbital facilities that could take advantage of new Matrix technologies were also constructed. Now, low-Earth orbit is filled with scientific research stations, communication-relay stations, small orbital factories, supply hubs, and observation platforms along with the aforementioned satellites.

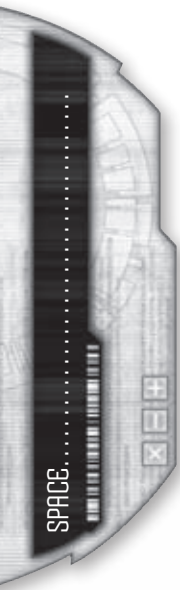
Other expansions followed. One of the biggest problems with space expansion is the cost and capability of getting large amounts of materials into orbit. Traditional methods such as semi-ballistics and sub/trans-orbitals were capable, but not really cost effective. In the late 2060s, two major projects began that would help offset those costs. The first was the Kilimanjaro mass driver, which began construction in the late 2060s in Nairobi. The mass driver is a space vehicle launch assist system that uses magnetic accelerators to help propel craft into orbit. Overall costs are lowered by reduction in fuel usage and the ability to perform multiple launches in a short amount of time. Despite several setbacks including a small war with the local spirit population, the project became operational in the early 2070s, though work continues to bring it up to full capacity. But this was only the first step in a larger plan.

The second project, which would rely heavily on Kilimanjaro, was the Skyhook orbital space elevator. While the mass driver represented a significant leap forward in space launch technology, getting material into space was still very expensive. Various corporations researched the idea of creating more mass drivers and spaceports, but the estimated costs of these mechanisms would outweigh the benefits for at least thirty years. A possible answer came in 2067, when plans were submitted to the Corporate Court for review for a space elevator that would move materials from Earth's surface to orbit. For the next few years, researchers studied the idea but the project became stuck in bureaucratic limbo as various corporations vied to be the one to build the new project, which would bring in trillions in revenue.

To eliminate infighting and ensure that the in would go forward, the Corporate Court decided (by a narrow margin) that the elevator project, designated "Skyhook," would be a multi-corporation effort. Each corporation submitted bids for various parts of the project, and the Court would award contracts to the winners. The court kept this project and the bidding process secret for many years, not wanting any competition from any non-AAA-rated corporations. This was meant to control the bidding process and keep potential troublemakers out of the process.

- Read: we don't want anyone else playing with us or taking our money.
- Snopes

In 2069, the bidding process was complete and contracts were awarded by the Court. Saeder-Krupp won the bid for the actual construction of Skyhook, beating out number-one space corporation Ares, and they began plans to bring raw materials



from the asteroid belt rather than try and lift them from orbit. The newly formed NeoNET eventually won the contract for electronics and communications after a fierce competition with MCT and Renraku.

- A contact of mine said a shadow battle between S-K and Ares was shaping up, but it never happened. Overstretched, Ares knew they couldn't put in a significant bid, but they had to save face. Apparently, S-K also understood and both corps had secret meetings about it. In a rare showing of cooperation, they entered into a sort of gentleman's agreement. S-K would take the main contract and would build about ninety percent of the Skyhook, while Ares would take the upcoming ship contract for the new Space Rescue Service and sell S-K several completed space bio-domes for mining operations on the ballast asteroid so construction operations could start as soon as possible.
- Sticks
- SRS? Do we have any intel on those guys in this file? I know what the press releases say, but we all know how much those are worth.
- Hard Exit
- Yes, but no spoilers. Wait for it with everyone else.
- Orbital DK
- MCT may have gotten skunked on the Skyhook project, but like Ares they made up for it by getting the rights to make gear for the SRS. Most of the drones, software, interfaces, communications gear and so on comes from MCT in some form. Unlike some of the things going into the Skyhook, which will never be released to the general public, MCT can use the valuable data and feedback from SRS crews to open up new product lines and improve existing ones.
- Rigger X

Aztechnology was offered an appeasement contract to build a small observational platform at low-Earth orbit altitude for tourism purposes. Aztechnology agreed, with a provision in the contract saying it would retain certain rights for any revenue gained through marketing and merchandising of the platform.

- There was a lot of horse-trading going on here. Several corporations traded contract votes for undisclosed favors. Despite what they want us to think, not every corp has the infrastructure to operate successfully in space, but do have other projects they want to go forward. I know that Evo gave S-K their vote for an unspecified favor and Aztechnology promised to back S-K for its bid in exchange for some rather juicy bits of intelligence on the Az-Am War.
- Sunshine
- Why am I very worried now?
- Marcos
- Because you're smart.
- Black Mamba

One megacorporation that caused a shock during the bidding process was Evo. Insiders speculated that because they had a

substantial space presence, they would be one of the frontrunners. Insiders and shareholders were shocked when Evo did not bid.

- Evo was just busy putting a base on Mars, no big deal.
- Rigger-X

Aside from the mass driver and Skyhook, other space efforts continue. New advances in technology push the boundaries of research and exploration, and several new facilities are on the virtual drawing boards of the major space players including Ares, Saeder-Krupp, NeoNET, and Evo. Other corporations with a smaller space presence have plans to expand once Skyhook becomes operational. What is now different is that this expansion continues for the Big Ten only. Since 2068, space has been under tight control of the Corporate Court thanks to the Space Operations Charter. Put forth by the court and backed by the United Nations, this new set of laws outlines all mandates and requirements for space travel.

OPERATING IN SPACE

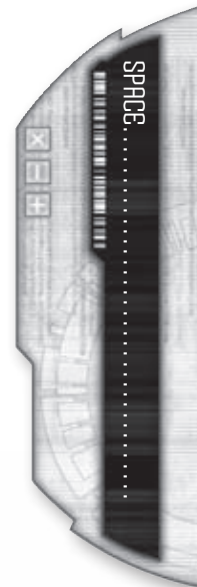
Posted by: Orbital DK

- Chances are, most of you won't ever have to use any of this information. But at one point, I never thought I would. So, for all of you ground-pounders down there, Polaris and I have created a primer in case you ever decide to take your biz up here.
- Orbital DK

SPACE BASICS: TOPOGRAPHY

Before anyone even thinks about going into space there are some crucial things they need to know. Current space operations happen in one of five "regions." Because a station is now operational on Mars, scientists are considering that to be another one of those regions.

The first is low-Earth orbit, abbreviated as LEO. This region consists of the area between one hundred fifty to two thousand kilometers above Earth. Because of the relatively lower cost of getting objects and materials into LEO, this is the region where most small research stations, communication relay platforms, and deep space observational posts are located. With their specialized uses and limited supplies, most of these LEO stations are small, multi-modular structures that have between one and twelve crew members. They range in size from an RV to a small apartment with various levels of automation assisting the crew. Automated LEO stations vary as well but are often only the size of an average small car and are simply oversized satellites. Manned LEO stations must be constantly re-supplied from either supply boosts from Earth or from drones/orbital craft from orbital supply HUBs. Before Crash 2.0, most of these stations were operated by small corporations that paid for their re-supply from larger corporations, but this changed with the Space Operations Charter. Now, most of these stations are owned and operated by subsidiaries of one of the AAA-rated corporations and they receive their re-supply directly from their owner. Currently, there are approximately sixty-five LEO stations and facilities in orbit. Not all LEO stations are small; several larger stations also reside in LEO, including the Apollo and Camelot research stations, the Nimbus orbital shipyard, and the Zurich-Orbital space habitat.



The second region in space is geosynchronous orbit, or GEO. At 37,000 kilometers above sea level, objects or stations in this region match the rotational speed of the Earth, thereby synchronizing with it. Because of the matched velocity, any object in GEO appears to be in the same location relative to Earth. Getting material into GEO is significantly more expensive than sending it into LEO. Most GEO objects are simple communication or retransmission satellites. Manned stations in GEO are the largest and most complex, and they are often used as refueling points for craft heading to outer-space regions such as Lagrange points, the moon, or the Mars outpost. Most GEO stations also handle the maintenance of the expanding satellite communications network. Currently, there are only four manned stations in GEO, but two more are planned within the next ten years.

The next region in space is divided up into five parts. Known as Lagrange points, these are gravimetrically neutral points around the Earth, moon, and sun. Because they are stable locations where gravity has no effect, they make ideal locations for large space habitats or stations. As far as space real estate goes, these are prime locations. The downside to Lagrange points is that there is only so much room at each of these locations, and they are considerable distances from Earth. All five Lagrange points currently have stations, but until 2070, only three were operational. The other two have been recently purchased and are undergoing refit and refurbishing.

The moon, or Luna as she is becoming more popularly known (particularly among the space and scientific communities), represents the next region in space. Humanity first set foot on the Luna in 1969, but it took almost a century to return. When Evo announced that they had established a presence on Mars, it shocked the world. What made this feat all the more remarkable was that they did it without using the moon as a waypoint. Other corporations are now looking to extend their reach to Mars as well. Both Ares and Saeder-Krupp have facilities in the lunar region and have begun efforts to use them as launching points for their Martian efforts. Both corporations plan to use materials from Luna to finance these projects and produce materials on site, rather than having them shipped from Earth. Other corporations are also looking to Luna for needed raw materials back on Earth. Lunar mining may soon become the next boom industry.

The final classified region is deep space. Until the Gagarin Base on Mars began operations, the only manned location beyond lunar orbit was Ares' top-secret Helios station. After Gagarin became operational, scientists started debating on changing the classification of the deep space region to the extra-terrestrial region, or extraterrestrial orbit. The International and Corporate Astrological Society are deadlocked on this issue.

- I suppose I can forgive them of this delay since the name doesn't really affect how anyone does anything.
- Bull

SPACE BASICS: SURVIVAL

When I talk about space survival, I'm not talking about having to choke down liquefied, over-processed, or dehydrated food every day, or even how to deal with motion sickness. I'm talking about what to do if things go wrong, or if you have to

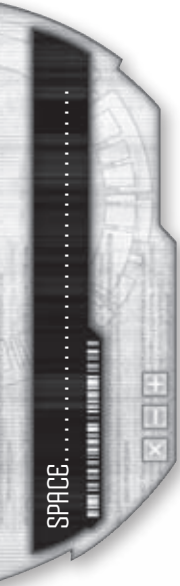
perform EVA (extra-vehicular action) maneuvers outside the safety of a vessel or station. Even though most of the runs up here today are done via the Matrix or don't require anyone to actually go EVA, we all know that plans tend to go out the window and we are forced to improvise. I've also seen some crazy plans in my day, so who knows—maybe you will have to walk across some space station or hitch a ride on a satellite to accomplish a run. Regardless of the reason, you may find yourself in the hard vacuum of space, and it's my job to tell you how to survive.

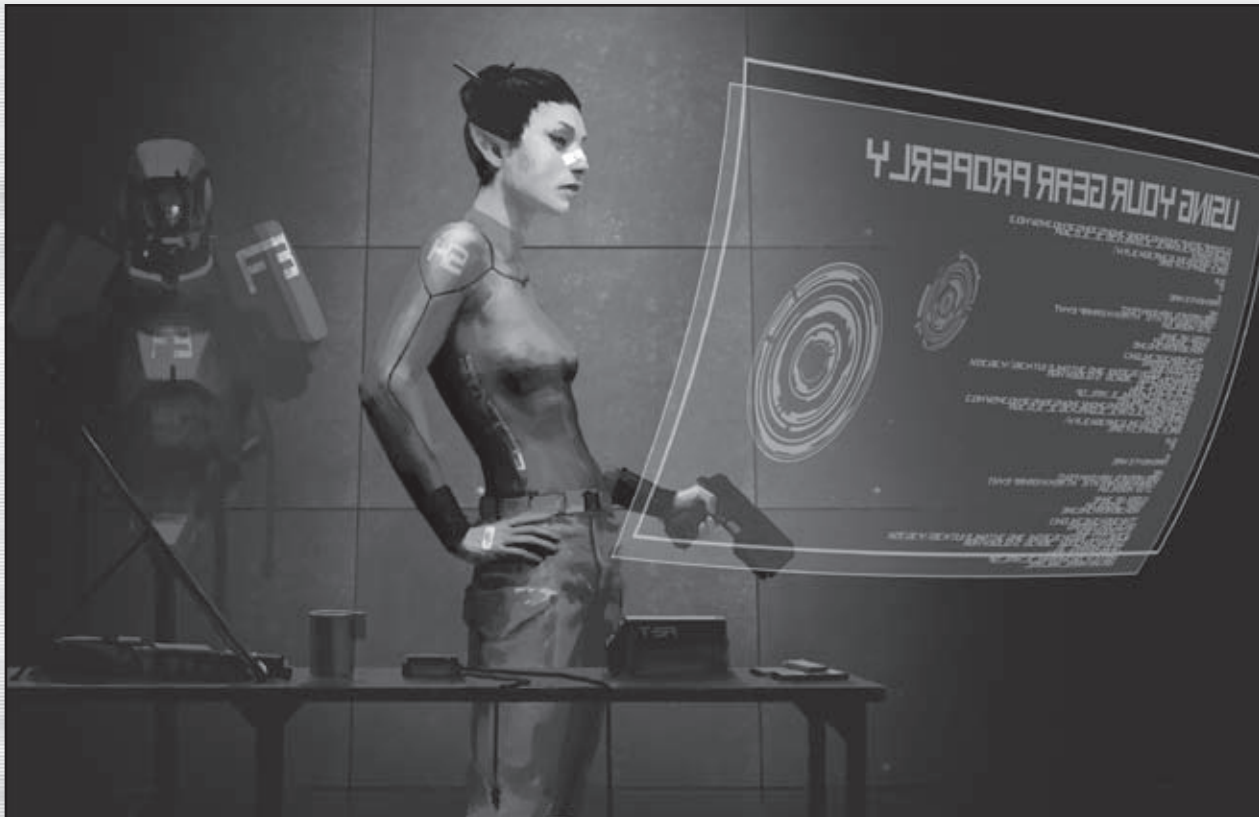
Most of the time when people think about survival, they think of ways to live off the land, to scavenge or build what they need to get by. I want to get that out of everyone's head right now. There is no surviving in space in the traditional sense. Space is the most inhospitable environment known to man. If you're exposed to hard vacuum, you are dead. Plain and simple. In other extreme environments, such as the Arctic or desert, you may be able to survive for at least a few minutes, but in space death is nearly instantaneous. Metahumans die within seconds from lack of oxygen, instant freezing, explosive decompression, or all of the above. None of which are good ways to die. The only way to truly survive in space is to plan ahead and have the right gear and equipment ready, because once you are EVA, that's it. Sometimes going back inside is not an option and you may end up having to wait for rescue. Most of the time it's a come-as-you-are party up here with no way to obtain more power or oxygen. The best way to survive in space is to simply stay inside a vessel or station. But that's not always possible, and if you have to go out, here are some items I recommend.

The first piece of equipment you need is a space suit. The most basic suit allows the user to breathe normally, and it contains its own limited oxygen supply and power supply. They also provide varying levels of protection against radiation, because in space there is no atmosphere to act as a shield against the dangerously high levels of radiation you are exposed to in space. The emergency suits offered to passengers or visitors on most space facilities have on average about six hours of oxygen and are rated to keep the user safe from radiation for the same amount of time. All suits also come with a standard RFID transponder beacon, an LED visual beacon, and an integrated emergency commlink with signal boosters. But like any piece of equipment, a suit can be modified and configured for specific users' needs. Many space suits have magnetic tethers, grappling lines, secured tool belts, work lights, and increased armor to protect against random space debris or to help prevent damage when working EVA.

Before the advent of nano-technology, breaches in space suits were a major problem. Nanotechnology is helping rectify that issue as modern suits are beginning to incorporate limited self-repair capabilities. Nano-repair patches for older suits are also becoming available. Always have one or the other, or even both if you can.

But having the right gear won't do you any good if you don't know what you're doing or you don't respect your environment. So here are some rules I've put together over the years. Hopefully, most of you will never need to use any of the advice I've just given. But like Jack said, space is starting to boom again, and it's getting crowded up here again. Think of my list as part survival tips, part space manners.





INCOMING FEED.....



Urgent Message



ORBITAL DK'S GUIDE FOR NOT BECOMING DEAD IN SPACE

- 1. Check your gear regularly.** People get lazy, especially when they don't use something often. They assume because it hasn't been used, it's still good. Even stored, though, gear gets moved and tussled, seals degrade, etc. Everything ultimately fails. Find the problems before they become problems. Space isn't as clean as people think, meaning that gear still gets dirty, clogged, and will fail if not checked.
- 2. Know where your emergency gear is at all times.** Again, this is a no-brainer, but even the best gear is no use if you can't get to it in time.
- 3. Know where to find the emergency survival sections/areas or the escape pods.**
- 4. Know how to work your gear.** Not knowing this is worse than not having it. Don't be like some wannabe who loads themselves up with shit they know nothing about, but wants to look like they do. If you're going to carry something, know how to use it!
- 5. Listen to and follow directions.** If you're new to space, listen to the people who've been here and know what they're doing. We do things in specific ways for specific reasons, usually because some idiot didn't listen and become dead.
- 6. Watch what you touch.** Stations or vessels are cramped, and space is at a premium. Things are crammed into as many places as possible, so pay attention to what you touch and where you put things. Doing something as simple as placing your magnetic coffee cup in the wrong place can mess with a system that could cause a cascading effect and harm some vital piece of equipment.
- 7. Police your personal items.** In zero-gravity, even the smallest thing can become a lethal projectile at the wrong moment or distract someone at the worst possible time.
- 8. Know your limits.** Too many get excited in zero-gravity and they overdo things. Either they try and move too fast, or they attempt something they see on the 'trid. It's very easy to lose your orientation in zero-g, so until you become acclimated, take it easy. It's easy to break something, get a concussion, or tear muscles and tendons if you move too quickly or slam into a bulkhead.
- 9. Spatial awareness is your friend.** Again, it's very easy to become disoriented up here. If you're inside a vessel or station, likely the worst you'll suffer is embarrassment at getting lost. If you're going extra-vehicular, not knowing where you are and where you are going can get you dead, especially if you don't have enough oxygen to get back.
- 10. Report any injuries and see to them immediately.** Even if it's a bruise, check it out. In zero-g, liquids behave differently and blood is no exception. Clots or embolisms can occur easily in space.
- 11. Make sure you have enough power and oxygen.** On Earth, people take breathing for granted. In space, not so much. Up here we tend to avoid excessive talking, overexertion, and we watch our oxygen and power levels like hawks. If we run out of power or oxygen, or if we fail to detect a leak or an outage, it's all over.
- 12. LEAVE GUNS AT HOME!** Guns do bad things to equipment here, including breaching the hull. You ever run with me and try to bring a normal gun in space, I'll vent you myself.

GETTING INTO SPACE

Posted by: Polaris

So far, the most basic question about space has not been addressed: how do I actually get up there? The answer is both simple and complex. For the average person, getting into space is relatively easy. Simply go to one of the many aerospace ports around the world, pay the cost of a ticket, provide the proper documentation, submit and pass the various security procedures, and then, provided there are no problems with the previous conditions, board the spacecraft and travel to your destination. Simple, correct? If you are an average person (or at least, an average person who can afford space travel) and you have nothing to hide, the answer is yes. But I highly doubt that anyone here is an average person with nothing to hide.

- If you're going to use a fake SIN to get on a spacecraft, it had better be a good one; spaceport security has proven to be very adept at detecting forgeries. Use any forged information with great care, and keep it updated
- Hard Exit

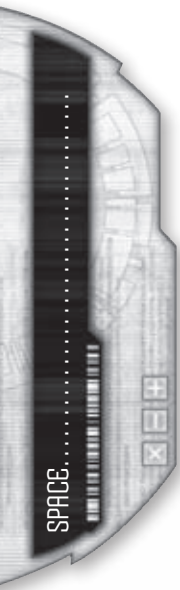
A direct result of the new Space Operations Charter (SOC) is the increased level of security at all dedicated space and aerospace ports. The current trend of thinking is that most problems or threats can be curtailed at spaceports through strict security screening before any threat enters orbit. As a result, and because of the SOC mandate, every port has the strictest security procedures and the most advanced scanning equipment available. Try to bring a restricted item, and at best you'll be temporarily detained. Worst case, you get labeled as a terrorist and it's off to prison.

- Sometimes I forget just how stupid people can be. Everyone knows you don't try and sneak the birthday cake in through the front door during the party; you get your buddy to open up the back door or pay him to do it for you.
- Kane
- Kane makes a good point, I've heard a lot about the new regulations, but what is the average security at the cargo area really like?
- Rigger X
- That's the second time you've asked about this. You got something going on, Rigger?
- Slamm-0!
- Nothing anyone here needs to know about.
- Rigger X

Security is equally formidable, if not more so, at cargo hubs. Every piece of cargo and equipment is screened by powerful scanning units that can detect the minutest chemical traces or a small cluster of viral microbes. Likewise, all craft and crew heading into earth orbit are screened and searched just minutes before departure. SOC regulations also state that any freight scheduled to go into orbit must arrive at least eight hours before

departure so it can be scanned, searched, and observed. Any freight failing to meet that deadline is held in a secure area while the reason for its delay can be determined and verified, often at great cost to the shipper.

- There is an independent outfit, one of the few remaining, that operates mainly out of Juan Azcapotzaco International but with smaller satellite locations all over North and South America called Golden Condor Ltd. They specialize in getting detained cargo to their locations with only a minimal delay. The delivery fees border on criminal, but when you absolutely have to get it there on time or only slightly late, they're your people. They're also still one of the few groups willing to risk taking "unscheduled cargo" (i.e., runners and their gear) into space. Expect four to five times the normal rate, though.
- Marcos
- Golden Condor is also suspected in taking out enemy satellites for Aztlan, though naturally both sides deny this.
- Picador
- If you're having trouble moving any kind of cargo, anywhere, not just in space, the old methods are best: Fake the manifests and bribe the customs officials.
- Mika
- Sometimes, but be careful. Provisions in the SOC with regards to such activities come with steep penalties for companies blatantly allowing such activities to occur, and if they're hit with a severe penalty, they'll generally come down hard on the individual committing the violation. Many are not willing to risk it, but if you are, make sure their reward is well worth the risk. Or make sure you have sufficient blackmail material. Also remember that most of these regulations will not go into full effect until 2075.
- Polaris
- So, if you're gonna bribe a customs official and get something into orbit, do it soon. Got it!
- Slamm-0!
- OK, I have to ask. We're hearing all of this talk about new security procedures, corp cooperation, and monopolizing space. But I just can't believe that every corp is lockstep with all of this, no matter what these penalties may be. So what's the real deal?
- Jimmy No
- Publicly, all Big Ten corps are behind this one-hundred percent, but some are obviously lying through their teeth. There is a difference between perceived compliance and actual compliance. Cooking the books is an old corporate tradition.
- Sunshine
- Some corps are fighting the new regs. Renraku for one is famous for looking the other way when it can. It's even gone so far as to sanction captains to willfully stonewall SRS inspections and absorb the cost of the fines.
- Orbital DK



- Several CEOs and board members were against the charter from the beginning. Especially the ones who didn't make out so well during the horse-trading that took place during the Skyhook bidding process and are looking for payback. Anything they can do to undermine it without getting caught, they'll do. Expect a lot of revenge-runs in the near future.
- Stone
- I'm honestly shocked that there hasn't been more of a fallout from the Skyhook bidding process. I thought for sure Ares was going to go batshit crazy at S-K or even Aztechnology. Guess I'll have to get some more money somewhere else.
- Mika

SPACE OPERATIONS TODAY

Posted by: **Orbital DK**

This is where we get to the good stuff, the info you need to know on what's happening now. Before Crash 2.0, there was a small but thriving shadow-community up here. Now, space-runners are an endangered species. The second Crash killed most of us, and the corps did their best to finish the job with their new rules and laws. Before, it was difficult but possible to stow away on a semi-ballistic, pay a hard-up rocket-jock, or charter hot-rodged suborbital and make your way into space, do their job, and get back. All you needed was the right gear, a little bit of knowledge, some good contacts, and a lot of nuyen to make it happen. Not anymore.

With the passing of the Space Operations Charter, the corps have a stranglehold on space. After two crashes, they aren't taking any chances up here with their precious moneymakers. With free rein to do whatever they want, the corps have made sure space is their own private playground to exploit. Security for those coming up the gravity well is now beyond paranoid, even on the most basic trips. After the charter went into effect, a lot of runs went bust before the teams even got off the ground because of the upgraded security and procedures. At all spaceports, no expense has been spared on security with top-of-the-line scanners of all kinds becoming the norm.

The SOC has also killed most of the small companies or independent operators in space. Before Crash 2.0, an indie ship captain could operate out of any aerospace port, paying usage/docking fees and fuel costs as part of doing business. Not anymore. Using a combination of price fixing, insane safety regulations, surprise inspections, ever-changing mandates, fines, and aggressive buyouts or hostile takeovers, the Corporate Court has ensured that only the Big Ten can afford to operate in space.

This doesn't mean that shadowruns don't take place up here. On the contrary, they happen every day. We've just had to adapt like we always do. It's true that some types of runs just don't happen up here like they do down there, or at least they don't without a lot of planning or help from people with good supplies of clout, money, or both. For example, getting even the most basic weapon or explosives up here is next to impossible, even with all composite materials and hermetically sealed ammo systems available. Think I'm wrong? Go try and get even a plastic knife through a spaceport checkpoint and let me know how that turns out after you get back from prison.

- An associate of mine who's very military-oriented forgot about a ceramic combat knife in his suitcase during a trip to the Spindle that he'd been planning for years. Long story short, the screeners got him as he went through the front door and were quite unhappy with him, not buying his story about forgetting. Six hours in an interrogation room and a complete body-cavity search later, he was eventually released, but sans knife and thousands of nuyen for a missed non-refundable trip. This kind of security level makes crossing the Tír border look easy.
- Sticks

So for all you heavy-combat, shock-and-awe types: sorry. Unless you get a privately chartered ride with completely forged manifests, bribed customs officials, a flight crew that can dodge a maze of defensive drone/satellites, someone to cover it all up when it's all over, and hundreds of thousands of nuyen to accomplish it all, you're out of luck. The name of the game in space today is subtlety. With all of those wonderful satellites and retrans units up here, talking to each other over vast distances, bouncing signal after signal off each other, it's a hacker's paradise up here. But, I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's talk about the basics for a bit.

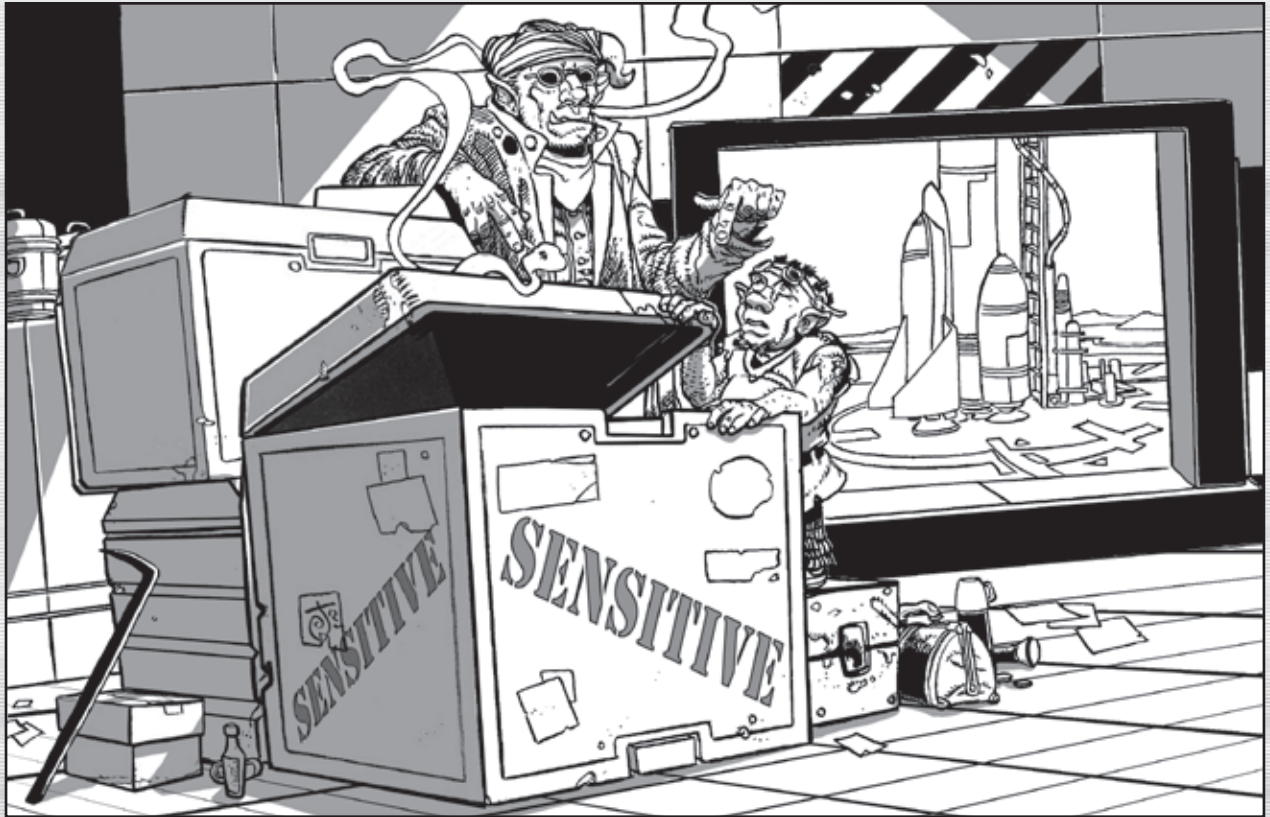
OPERATING IN SPACE: LAWS AND REGULATIONS

In 2067, as the world was recovering after Crash 2.0, the Corporate Court discussed ways to prevent another orbital catastrophe. They decided that a new plan and regulations were needed. After years of feasibility studies, the Court went to the United Nations in 2070 with a proposal for future space development. Called the Space Operations Charter, the proposed plan called for an overhaul of all existing black-maritime (or space) laws and merged them into a standard system of operations. The Court argued that this would not only create a comprehensive plan for dealing with any future disasters and ensure safety, but also punish those who do not meet the required standards. In addition, the charter authorized the creation of a new organization specifically tasked to respond to emergency incidents and enforce the new regulations.

After a year of closed-session debates, the charter was ratified by the United Nations and the Corporate Court in 2071. In order to allow time for full compliance with the new laws, all corporations and governments with space assets have until 2075 to bring their space operations up to standards.

- The charter itself is rather extensive, with provisions for just about everything including—and I'm not kidding—dehydrated food-storage standards. If anyone wants to actually read the entire mammoth document, I'll give you a link. But in a nutshell, the SOC grants the Corporate Court the authority to regulate space travel, safety standards, operational standards, security procedures, enforcement, fines, and so forth. It also gave the Court the authority to create and administer the Space Rescue Service
- Orbital DK
- So let me get this straight—the Court has the right to pretty much enforce its will on anyone who wants to work in space at any time? Why in the fuck would anyone, even the UN, buy into this?
- Slamm-0!





INCOMING FEED.....

- Don't forget who's the dog and who's the tail. This is just business as usual.
- Bull
- I did a search on my own to look up specific regulations. With all that a company has to comply with, no wonder many smaller outfits said "to hell with this!" The cost of doing business is more than most can bring in. And surprise, only the largest companies (usually the Big Ten and their subsidiaries) are the only ones who can afford to operate, let alone make any profit.
- Mr. Bonds
- Just like you do down here—figure out their weaknesses and exploit them.
- Ma'Fan
- The SRS may consider themselves the saviors of space, but they are nothing more than yet another glorified tool for the corporations; a modern day brute-squad.
- Aufheben

SPACE RESCUE SERVICE

The Space Rescue Service (SRS) is both a curse and blessing for spacers. If you need help, they're one of the few options for timely rescue. But if you're caught doing something you're not supposed to be doing, they're your worst enemy. They're staffed with some of the best spacers known, and their service record, while short, is impressive especially when combating illegal operations and smuggling. I've said it before—independent spacers are becoming an endangered species, and the SRS is a big reason for that.

- Most of SRS troops are also honest straight-shooters. How the hell is someone supposed to make a good dishonest living up there?
- Kane

History

The Space Rescue Service was created as part of the Space Operations Charter of 2070 in response to orbital catastrophes caused by Crash 1.0 and 2.0. The charter's signers felt that if extraterrestrial expansion were to continue, a dedicated organization was needed to handle crisis response, recovery/salvage operations, and law enforcement.

A cooperative effort of all ten AAA-rated corporations and the UN, the SRS is loosely modeled after the old United States Coast Guard. When the UCAS/CAS split in 2033 the original USCG was disbanded and absorbed into the regular navies of their respective nations. As part of their operational mandate, each corporation is required to contribute a percentage of the SRS' personnel, material, equipment, and supplies. The SOC also allows the SRS to answer only to the Corporate Court. To avoid conflicts of interest, all members of the SRS are required to temporarily give up their specific corporate affiliation/citizenship while serving.

- This is one of the times that the Big Ten have no problems cooperating. Not only do they get someone else to help foot the bill when their space toys are in danger, they also get a chance to engage in some juicy intel gathering. Just because they give up their citizenship while serving, don't think for a minute corporate loyalty and favoritism goes away.
- Cosmo
- True, but it goes both ways. Those serving with the SRS talk to each other and get to hear about how things work in another corp. Wonder how many end up thinking the grass is greener on the other side of the airlock?
- Sunshine
- Since there are so few operational ships, most ship captains have their pick of crew from available rosters. This often leads to crews where all members are from the same corporation or government. But as the number of workable ships increases, that will not be an option.
- Polaris
- Not every corporation is happy with the SRS. I know of several executives who don't like the any kind of interference or oversight. The SRS is one of the few organizations that individual corps can't push around, at least not directly. They were willing to let go of some control if it meant they would have someone who could help them out when problems occurred in space.
- Mr. Bonds

Since becoming fully organized and operational in 2071, the SRS has made significant progress. Fatalities from space emergencies have been reduced by thirty-seven percent, and approximately 1.3 billion nuyen worth of equipment has been salvaged or recovered. In addition, the SRS has arrested and successfully prosecuted over thirty individuals with serious violations of the Space Operations Charter and obtained over thirty million nuyen in confiscated equipment and or fines.

- Organized crime also hates them with a passion. Various outfits have been trying for decades to obtain or keep a slice of the space pie. The SRS has been able to root out many of the underworld influences they've been able to discover.
- Hard Exit
- They did what these kind of criminals always do—cut their losses, shifted, and moved in where people weren't looking for them.
- Orbital DK

Mission and Objectives

The SRS has three primary missions: black-maritime safety, security, and stewardship. The first mission—responding to any space-born emergency, crisis, or disaster—is the SRS' primary reason for existence, and their primary training, operational procedures, and doctrine are all geared toward that mission. Provisions in the SOC also state that the SRS has the authority to “deputize” any and all assets in the area necessary to deal with a particular crisis as long as doing so does not jeopardize the lives or assets of those they enlist.

- Anyone that refuses to respond to a legal SOS does so at the risk of having their vessel confiscated and being charged with negligent homicide.
- Polaris
- But how many of those will actually be prosecuted? Most of them would have a convenient reason for not responding, and the authorities would then let them slide.
- Mika

The SRS' secondary mission is to act as law enforcement officers. The SRS has the authority to stop, board, arrest, and or fine the crewmembers of spacecraft should they have cause to believe said craft is in violation of law. The SRS also has the authority to disable or destroy any remotely operated/controlled or pre-programmed craft that is found to be in violation of law.

- So, if these guys are also the space cops, do they have their own version of a SWAT/HTR or marines?
- Hard Exit
- Surprisingly, no. The logic is that current planet-based security procedures are sufficient to eliminate the need for such a force. That being said, each member of the SRS is extensively trained in and issued weapons specifically designed for zero-g combat. Their weapons don't include anything that shoots metal bullets, as a hull breach runs counter to the idea of rescue. But don't think that because the SRS doesn't have dedicated heavy hitters that they are pushovers. Ninety percent of them are former military, had military-level training, and are veteran spacers.
- Orbital DK

The third primary mission of the SRS is to act as stewards of space. This entails the regulation/monitoring of all equipment necessary for the safe travel and utilization of space. Such duties include but are not limited to: the monitoring of space navigational markers, watching for potential/new space hazards, monitoring the status of known hazardous areas, eliminating hazards, and ensuring the general well-being of space.

- When it comes to salvage, corps will go after their own junk or get one of the subsidiary companies to do the heavy lifting before they let someone else do it. Of course, the SRS will monitor the situation the entire time and will only get their hands dirty in order to secure “dangerous” materials.
- Clockwork
- Space is huge. How can they possibly be everywhere they need to be, let alone respond to everything?
- Slamm-0!
- A combination of patrol drones and manned vessels. Orbital space is heavily monitored to prevent any collisions; the SRS has their network of remotely operated crafts and drones. In addition, they can tap into any corporate satellite and use it for their own ends.
- Polaris



- Wait ... they can tap into any corp satellite? Anyone else thinking of how much payday data you could get with a liberated SRS access code?
- Pistons

Operational Organization

The SRS is led by a fleet admiral whose office oversees the four operational commands: fleet operations command (FleetOps), communications and coordination command (CCCom, or simply C3), base and logistical operations command (BLOCom), and reserve and training command (ReTCom). Each command is led by a command CO who reports directly to the fleet admiral's office, which is currently headquartered on the Zurich-Orbital Habitat until the permanent SRS HQ on Skyhook is completed.

FleetOps is responsible for patrolling and responding to emergencies. The command has thirty-one modified suborbital craft for operations and over a thousand drones at their disposal. These craft are divided into six squadrons that operate within specific sectors that include the five Lagrange points and Earth orbit. Each ship is assigned a flight crew, engineering crew, and a squad of extravehicular rescue specialists (known as Space Swimmers) with accompanying drone support. Currently there are plans for a completely new type of spacecraft, the *Vigilance*-class rescue cutter, to replace all current vessels within the next twenty years. The first ship of the line, the *Vigilance*, has just completed its shakedown cruise and was cleared for duty two months ago.

- The *Vigilance*'s skipper is Captain Thomas Hawkins, a former CAS fighter jock recruited by Ares as a suborbital pilot in the early '60s. You may remember him from news stories after Crash 2.0. He and his crew successfully rescued fifty-three crewmembers from a damaged suborbital that was on a collision course with a dead habitat. Not only was then-Commander Hawkins able to dock with the out-of-control craft, but he was able to navigate through a hellish field of disabled satellites, space debris, and other fleeing craft to make it to safety.
- Sunshine
- I've crossed paths with this sumbitch a couple of times. Hawk's a do-gooder, but he's a nova-hot stick. Too bad he turned down my offer after leaving the CAS. But, *Vigilance* is one honey of a ship. I'm almost jealous. Almost.
- Kane
- Captain Hawkins was one of the names on a very short list for the SRS fleet admiral position. But an S-K, Horizon, and Evo-lead voting bloc within the Court gave the job to Boris Ivanovich-Rolenko, citing his administrative experience. Rolenko is a thirty-year veteran cosmonaut with Evo and former logistics manager for the Gagarin Mars Base. Ares, NeoNET, and surprisingly Aztechnology all protested but were appeased when Hawkins was made a captain and given the *Vigilance*. Anyone care to bet on what favors S-K got from Evo?
- Sunshine

- Sucker bet. But, then again Hawk would have wanted a ship rather than a desk anyway.
- Kane

- Especially sense Rolenko and Evo CEO Anatoly Kirilenko have been friends since cosmonaut training. I bet you did not know that.
- Red Anya

- It is also worth noting that Rolenko was in charge of the rescue operations sector that contained Zurich-Orbital during Crash 2.0, while Hawkins, if rumors are true, ignored protocol to bypass the craft he eventually rescued for other priority assets. Hawkins was almost dismissed, but it would be hard to dismiss a hero, especially when one of the people he saved was a CAS Senator's daughter. It does not hurt that he looks the way a PR person would want someone like him to look.
- Polaris
- He does cut a nice figure in those recruiting ads. Never thought a space suit could look that damn sexy.
- Kat O' Nine Tails

Like the rest of the service, FleetOps does not yet have a centralized base of operations. It relies on a substation approach, where they take on supplies and berth at the largest facility located in their respective patrol sectors. Crews often embark on two-week patrols before either rotating planetside or landing at their berthing port. FleetOps will also be headquartered at the Skyhook elevator with the fleet admiral's office and CCCom once it is completed.

CCCom, or C3, is responsible for coordinating all SRS commands and operations, maintaining Matrix security, and mobilizing reserve units in the case of a massive emergency. In the case of Matrix attacks against any SRS units or any actions that may cause or contribute to any emergency situations, C3 often works with the Grid Overwatch Division. C3 spiders are relatively new to the security scene, but they are quickly earning a reputation for being fast and skilled.

- And working together, they are nasty. They forcefully booted me out of a re-trans sat node. Thank ghost for good biofeedback filters.
- Pistons
- They are formidable, but they are not infallible, if one knows the right codes and has the right allies.
- Polaris
- Do you?
- Pistons
- Perhaps. If I am approached correctly.
- Polaris

BLOCom handles all of the service's administrative duties and logistical concerns. They also manage all planetside bases and facilities, and they coordinate with the corporate sponsors to maintain a steady stream of supplies to the other commands. They also handle all base security both on planet and at space facilities.



Everything from advanced avionics to spacesuits to strawberry flavored freeze-dried ice cream is funneled through the global Locom supply network.

Corporate liaisons and subcontractors are a common sight in BLOCom. Likewise, BLOCom officers and personnel have offices at and work with customs agents and security screeners at all of the major aerospace ports, acting as ombudsmen with all local, corporate, and government law enforcement/security agencies.

- BLOCom is your best chance to make a contact in the SRS. Logistics are the most un-glamorous job in any organization and the most underappreciated. Sometimes, a little nuyen can go a long way to showing some appreciation, especially if you want to get a look at some truly good stuff.
- Picador
- Most of us will never make it into space; we're more likely to run against a BLOCom base or supply hub. With the variety of items flowing through them, it's like one-stop shopping. Oh, and in SRS jargon, BLOCom is pronounced "Block-com," although I've heard the grunts are starting to call it "Blow-com" when their COs aren't listening.
- Mika
- Any data on how the security is at one of these bases? I have a need to know and will compensate.
- Rigger X
- Check your mailbox, X.
- Mika

ReTCom is responsible for maintaining a ready-reserve force in case of a massive Matrix crash or other space disaster. It is also responsible for all SRS training. It maintains its own small fleet of twelve specially modified suborbital craft spread out among bases in Nairobi, Kodiak Station, and the Mojave Spaceport. New recruits are also sent to one of these bases where they learn SRS procedures and receive specialized training. Dedicated training facilities are planned for completion by 2076 and will include state-of-the-art simulators as well as space-simulating aquatic training facilities.

- While Ares, EVO, and SK have pretty much been dominating the space construction business lately, some of the other earthbound corps have been bidding hard for the SRS training facilities. MCT, Renraku, and NeoNET have been bidding hard to build the space simulators.
- Picador

Based on current projections, the SRS is expecting a thirty percent increase in funding over the next ten years. Three more permanent bases are scheduled to be completed. The first is on the Skyhook space elevator, the second is on the lunar surface, and the third will be in the Nimbus Orbital Shipyards. Also, the keels for next two ships in the *Vigilance*-class, the *Reliance* and the *Dauntless*, have been laid, and the ships are scheduled for completion in 2078 and 2080 respectively.

- Remember all of those smaller companies or independent operators who ended up jobless after Crash 2.0? Well, a lot of them joined the SRS, quickly filling their ranks with experienced spacers. Not very many of them found command posts, and most took admin jobs, but a lot of the crews out there in the modified vessels, especially the engineers and techs, are composed of these people.
- Orbital DK
- Not all of them, though. A lot of ex rocket-jocks tried their hand in my line of work. Only a few could hack it, and most met endings that involved freezing temperatures and exploding lungs. The best medic I know spent plenty of time sucking vacuum before 2.0 hit. A fair number of them wound up working for the corps in their undersea projects. I ran into a guy who told me over a few beers in Miami that he still has nightmares about space in '64. Says he can't even look up at night without shaking.
- Kane
- NeoNET has been hiring independent spacers left and right, especially if they still have their own vessels or equipment. Seems they want to make their own little space force as quickly as possible.
- Cosmo
- Follow my logic here. If the SRS are the cops, and at this point only the biggest corps can afford to do business in space, that means that the only ones the SRS end up busting are corp assets, but the corps are the ones funding the SRS. Does this sound hinky to anyone else?
- Hard Exit

KNOWN LAUNCH FACILITIES

PROMINENT LAUNCH SITES AND AEROSPACE PORTS

While more modern facilities such as the mass driver in Nairobi and the upcoming Skyhook space elevator became the focus of the public's attention, traditional launch facilities continue to be the workhorse of the space industry. Some estimate that when Skyhook becomes fully operational, traditional launch facilities will not be able to compete and will only be needed for emergency purposes. Despite this estimate, every corporation with a launch or aerospace port has been investing heavily in them to bolster their respective space programs. Ironically, the facilities that are the key to the completion of Skyhook will be phased out by the very thing they are helping create.

- I'm going to have to disagree here. There is only so much that the mass driver and Skyhook can send up at one time, and not everything can be the top priority. Trans-orbitals can do some of the work, but they're still limited in their lifting capacity. Semi-ballistics just can't be beat in terms of lifting power.
- Cosmo

Currently, there are several launch facilities of varying size and capability all over the world. The ones listed here are the most



prominent based on the volume of operations performed or some other distinguishing characteristic.

Ariane Spaceport

Owned by Saeder-Krupp and located in French Guiana, this spaceport is S-K's primary launch facility. Two months ago, S-K announced that all future operations attached to the Skyhook project would launch from Ariane, while secondary projects will operate from unspecified sites. Since then, the spaceport has become a non-stop hub of activity, launching craft on an almost weekly basis. The public is also welcome at the spaceport, as launch-viewing facilities and a small space museum have been built. The facility consists of eight launch platforms and two sub/transorbital-rated runways with appropriate support and administration buildings. Recently, representatives from several corporations such as Evo, Horizon, and Proteus have been seen touring Ariane

Cape Canaveral

Called "The Cape" by those who work there, Cape Canaveral is one of the oldest launch facilities in the world. Originally constructed and used by NASA in the mid-twentieth century, it was sold to Ares Macrotechnology as part of a package deal in 2016. After a series of upgrades over the years, it continues to serve as the corporation's primary launch facility, main planet-to-orbit communications center, and operational headquarters for AresSpace. An enormous facility, Cape Canaveral boasts fourteen launch pads of various sizes that handle everything from heavy-payload semi-ballistic craft to small communications satellites, and three runways that service every type of craft known, from personal craft to lighter-than-air vehicles.

Cosmodome

When Yamaetsu became Evo after Crash 2.0, it acquired a space program in a roundabout way. By subcontracting with Roskosmos, the Russian space agency, Evo secured an arrangement that was not quite a merger, but more than a client-supplier relationship. Since then, Roskosmos has served all of Evo's space needs. Its primary facility, the Cosmodome, is a massive structure that is equal parts launch facility, training ground, and space technology center. The main components for the Gagarin Mars base were secretly constructed and launched from the Cosmodome. The accomplishment was not only a scientific achievement but a bit of an intelligence coup for both companies, as none of their competitors knew about the project until the convoy of spacecraft bypassed Luna and proceeded to Mars.

- Actually, that was grandstanding. The real stuff was launched from Svobodny and was already in place before the famous dodge past Luna. The convoy from the Cosmodome was just Evo giving the other corps, especially Ares, the middle finger.
- Clockwork
- Bit of a news flash: About three months ago the Cosmodome took on the role as Evo's main launch facility after a series of "accidents" rendered the Svobodny Launch Station useless for at least the next few years.
- Rigger X

Devil's Island and Isla Punu

Known as the twin bases, Devil's Island and Isla Punu have two distinctions. The first is they are owned and operated by Proteus AG, the only non-AAA-rated corporation with a permanent facility in space. The second is their construction and layout is ninety-nine percent identical. Constructed from two of the company's famed arkoblocks, both facilities feature state-of-the-art systems, but only the Isla Punu facility is used exclusively by Proteus. The second facility is leased out to other companies with assets in space. The majority of the space traffic from Devil's Island is in direct support for Proteus' L-1 research station, Treffpunkt Raumhafen.

Horizon Mojave Spaceport

Two facilities formerly known as Andrews Air Base and Groom Lake were purchased by Horizon subsidiary Transglobal three years ago after the Cal-Free government decided to abandon them. Since the purchase, the bases have been merged and transformed into Horizon's primary launch facility and satellite communications hub, similar to Ares' Cape Canaveral. With only one launching platform; the Mojave Spaceport sees few launches, but it boasts one of the most extensive satellite communication hubs of any similar facility. Despite its limited operations, Mojave has one of the most complex security networks of any facility. Unconfirmed reports suggest that at least one hundred security personnel, at least two dozen drones for support, and Matrix security rivaling Zurich-Orbital. Because of these security measures and the history surrounding the former Groom Lake facility, rumors continue to this day about Mojave's true purpose.

- What, nothing to say, Plan 9? Nothing about aliens or something?
- Slamm-0!
- Please, everyone knows the aliens left decades ago. Get with the times.
- Plan 9

Kodiak Station

Located in Alaska, Kodiak Station was the primary base of the United States Coast Guard in the Bering Sea until it was decommissioned in 2019. Having already purchased several former United States assets, Ares Macrotechnology bought the facility in 2020. Unsure of what to do with it at first, Ares turned it into the backup space control center for AresSpace. Eventually, Kodiak Station evolved into a multi-purpose facility that serviced not only Ares' space endeavors, but also its arctic and deep ocean exploration projects. In 2072, Ares officially created and headquartered its Joint Venture Operations Command Center (JVOC) there. This multi-environment exploration center is the only known station of its kind in the world and services aircraft, surface, and subsurface vessels.

- With the variety of equipment and data available, it's also a prime target for runs. There are several ways to penetrate the base and Ares knows this. Expect anything from standard sensors to biodrones in use here. Anyone considering a run there had better do their homework first.
- Hard Exit



- They should also be alert for a hidden facility on the island. Check out the Arctic Wasteland section for more info.
- Traveler Jones

SPACE-CAPABLE AEROSPACE PORTS

While these facilities are not considered full-fledged spaceports because they are unable to launch or recover semi-ballistic craft, some international airports service and support suborbital flights. As part of the Space Operations Charter, some airports have been given special status as emergency responders and can be called into service as staging grounds for space rescue and recovery operations. The Space Rescue Service's reserve and training command maintains small substations at these aerospace ports for just such purposes.

Incoming Message

02/02/69. By order of the Corporate Court, in Compliance with Section VII of the Space Operations Charter, the following ports have been granted special and preferred status by meeting the criteria set forth by this charter to qualify as a First Responder Station.

- Denver International
- Dulles International
- Juan Azcapotzaco International
- Moscow International
- Neo-Tokyo International

Kilimanjaro Mass Driver

Not a traditional aerospace port or launch facility, the Kilimanjaro Mass Driver is a location that requires its own classification. Construction began on the mass driver in early 2062, and it became operational in late 2069. Located atop and within the mountain from which it gets its name, the mass driver was built to make space travel more economical than traditional methods such as suborbital and semi-ballistic craft. The mass driver is basically a large-scale launch-assist system that uses a rail-mounted magnetic-accelerator to launch (or drive) craft into the atmosphere at high altitude on a semi-ballistic course. This system dramatically cuts down on the costs of launching spacecraft because less energy, and therefore fuel, is required for the target craft to achieve escape velocity.

The facility consists of the mass driver itself, the control/communications building, several support buildings, and a small landing pad for V/STOL aircraft on the mountain's top. There are two additional sublevels that take up approximately one-fifth of the mountain. These sublevels house storage and supply areas, and a power-generating area that takes up the entire lower sublevel.

Like Skyhook, the mass driver is operated under the auspices of the Corporate Court. Originally administered and maintained by Ares Macrotechnology, that contract is scheduled to be terminated on January 1, 2075, with units of the communication-coordination command, base and logistical command, and reserve and training command of the Special Rescue Service scheduled to take over operation of the facility. The SRS plans to use the

mass driver as its primary earthside emergency response base, since rescue craft can be rapidly deployed. Transitional crews have already arrived and are currently being trained by Ares personnel for the switchover.

The nearby city of Nairobi has benefitted greatly from the instillation of the mass-driver. In the past decade, it has grown by one and a half times and became a fully modern city as both corporate and other private interests have moved in to take advantage of the mass driver. Housing, hotels, entertainment businesses, distribution centers, and other related businesses have come to Nairobi as thanks to the mass driver. What impact, if any, the Skyhook elevator will have on Nairobi and the mass driver remains to be seen. Many insiders speculate that the mass driver will see only light to moderate decreases in operation levels and will continue to serve as an overflow facility and backup should Skyhook be rendered inoperable.

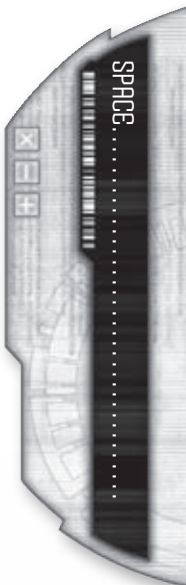
- As long as the surrounding violence is kept under control. The local tribes and spirits have been suppressed, for now. For every person or group who wants to keep the mass driver operational, there's another who wants it scrapped. The situation is under control for the moment, since more security has been deployed to the area, but eventually those forces will move on. And the tensions in the area will remain in place.
- Black Mamba
- The mountain spirits may have been repelled, but nothing is permanent. There will be a reckoning in Nairobi soon enough.
- Man-of-Many-Names

Skyhook Space Elevator

Commissioned under the auspices of the Corporate Court, the Skyhook Space Elevator is the largest and most technically complex undertaking of the last two centuries. The purpose of the Skyhook is to create a location from which materials and equipment can be transported into orbit at a fraction of the cost by normal methods.

The overall design was approved in 2062 after a series of feasibility studies declared the concept sound. A series of delays, including the second Matrix Crash, pushed the initial construction phases back several years. In 2071, construction finally began. The first element completed was the base facility just outside of Panama City; after that, the main station's superstructure was built and put into orbit. With the early arrival of the material and ballast asteroids in early 2073, construction on Skyhook moved ahead of schedule for the first time in the project's existence. Later that year, with the help of current nano-forge technology, the first two elevator cables were completed and attached to the ballast asteroid. A few months later, the framework for Skyhook's main station was attached to the cables, and a prefabricated temporary operations center was installed. By 2074, Skyhook became partially operational after a series of field tests confirmed both elevator cables were functional. The next two elevator cables are scheduled for completion within the next fifteen months, and the main station section will be done in the next five to six years. Based on current projections, Skyhook will be completed and fully operational by late 2085 or early 2086.

When completed, Skyhook will have a total of six functioning elevator cables arranged in a hexagonal formation. These cables



will be anchored and kept taut by the centrifugal force created by the large ballast asteroid at the cable's end approximately forty thousand kilometers above the planet's surface. Besides being used as ballast, the anchor asteroid is being mined for raw materials, and it will later be used for temporary waste storage.

The station's main section, located at an elevation of thirty-six thousand kilometers, will house eighty percent of all station operations and facilities. Current design specifications indicate a large umbrella-like structure with several docking ports and airlocks underneath to handle ship and drone traffic. Sections at the rim of the station are also planned as satellite deployment sites. The exact internal configuration is subject to change because of new developments in technology, changes in the construction schedule, or other unspecified events. Several corporations have started bidding for space on the Skyhook with the initial bidding starting at thousands of nuyen per square meter.

The final section of Skyhook will be the Waypoint observation center. A last-second addition to Skyhook's plans, Waypoint was conceived to be not only a checkpoint, but also a lower-cost space attraction where patrons can view Earth from LEO. The idea was proposed by Aztechnology, and they were given the contract for it after they successfully lobbied the Corporate Court for the project. At only two hundred kilometers above the earth, Waypoint will have a standard one-g gravity.

- And now we know what the Azzies got from their deal with S-K.
- Lyran

LOW-EARTH ORBIT STATIONS

Apollo Station

Built in 2019, Apollo was the first orbital station constructed by a corporation, and it served Ares as their primary base of space operations until the Daedalus and Icarus stations were built. Apollo was later renovated into a large-scale storage facility and transportation hub, and it continues in those functions today. Apollo was also the first station to start leasing space to other corporations, but with advances such as the mass driver and the upcoming Skyhook, demand for rental space has dropped. Currently, MCT is the only other corporation operating on Apollo, though the SRS is planning on attaching several service modules to aid in its patrol operations.

Apollo's design is atypical for stations its size. Three main arms protrude from a long central column with habitat modules at each end. The station rotates along this column to provide gravity for the inhabitants. Multiple docking points are also located at various locations along the main column. The majority of these points are used as airlocks for docking ships, but various specialty modules can also be attached for various use as research labs, extra cargo containers, or emergency shelters. As per the SOC, Apollo now features two such modules at all times, located at the opposite ends of the central column.

During Crash 2.0, Apollo was one of the few stations to survive intact. Having already survived one Crash, the same systems that saved it the first time stepped in and saved it again. During the crisis, Apollo became an oasis that allowed several vessels low on power or fuel to dock by jettisoning several external modules.

The station also has a reputation as a frontier town in space. Apollo opened up several shops catering to spacers after converting itself into a transportation hub. Entertainment centers, shopping centers, and various other special-needs locations made Apollo a place where space crews could congregate, relax, and get what they need without having to travel back to Earth. Hotels in the habitat areas still run a steady business despite dwindling visitors.

Camelot Research Station

Formerly a materials-research station owned by Fuchi-Space and later Novatech, Camelot has been on hard times for the past several years. The station itself barely survived Crash 2.0 when all primary systems were shut down and the crew abandoned the station. Unfortunately, the rescue craft that was supposed to rescue the twenty-six crewmembers was destroyed by a malfunctioning defense satellite. Ownership of Camelot came into question after several records were also lost in the Crash. Novatech's new parent company, NeoNET, finally was able to settle disputes and gain rights to the station.

A recovery operation was launched in 2069, but crews found the station stripped of most of the valuable equipment, research materials, and data. To date, NeoNET has yet to find the perpetrators. The debate within NeoNET's board of directors continues as to the station's final fate. Some wonder if it is worth repairing, and they feel it should be sold, and any revenue from it should go to fund other ventures. Others think that it should be repaired to take advantage of Skyhook; still others are on the fence. Today, Camelot has been restored to partial power, mainly to keep it from sustaining any more damage. Automated systems control the station and the defenses left in place to discourage future poaching.

Dyson 3 Research Station

A newcomer to space, Dyson 3 was launched by the Starfield Botanical Engineering to grow wheat in orbit and obtain the twenty million nuyen from Dunkelzahn's will. By all accounts, Dyson 3 succeeded when it grew approximately 1.25 acres of wheat in orbit. However, the Draco Foundation declared that Dyson 3 failed because the station is not technically in low-Earth orbit and did not meet the criteria set forth in the will. Starfield board members appealed the decision several times but have failed to get it overturned. Starfield has been approached by other corporations interested in contracts for the production and distribution of "space wheat" in both orbital and terrestrial markets. Current bidders include Aztechnology, Ares, Evo, Proteus and Saeder-Krupp.

The station itself is rather unremarkable and puts function over form. Basically a large dodecahedron that is similar to, but much smaller than, the rotunda of Zurich-Orbital with a hollowed-out center to allow space for the "fields." A crew of four operates the station and acts as maintenance for the station's automated systems.

Eagle-Eye II Deep-Space Observation Platform

During the second Matrix crash, the crew of the first Eagle-Eye sacrificed themselves to help trapped vessels by guiding rescue vessels to disabled craft. As a tribute, the platform was one of the first objects recovered post-Crash 2.0, and crew was given





INCOMING FEED.....



SPACE.....

hero's burials. The station became a memorial on Earth. Horizon secured salvage rights to the station's scanning equipment and built an all-new platform that became operational in 2072. Christening it Eagle-Eye II, this small station is nothing more than a large advanced multi-spectrum scanning telescope with a small habitat module and docking station attached to it. To further its PR ambitions, Horizon has also said that any galactic images obtained are public domain and available for free.

- One of the few true heroes during Crash 2.0, both operators of Eagle-Eye I stayed at their posts right up to the point when their oxygen ran out. They refused any rescue. That's guts for you.
- Bull
- Eagle-Eye II is a useful thing. It may be taking nice pictures of the galaxy, but it also takes nice pictures in Bogotá.
- Picador

Himmelsschimedde Orbital Factory

The largest and most advanced of Saeder-Krupp's orbital factories, Himmelsschimedde (or Sky-forged in English) produces high-quality materials, components, and materials for S-K goods. The entire fleet of Sternensucher automated space vehicles that were responsible for capturing and recovering the ballast asteroid for the Skyhook were produced and launched from Himmelsschimedde. The factory continues to produce various other vehicles to support Skyhook's construction.

The station itself is also unusual in design. Instead of a traditional column design or a collection of modules,

Himmelsschimedde resembles an archology in space with several smaller modules protruding from it.

For several years, the station focused on fabrication and construction. This is scheduled to change as Himmelsschimedde is set receive several dedicated research modules by 2075. Speculation is rampant to why this upgrade has been ordered. S-K has gone on record and said the efforts on Himmelsschimedde and other Saeder-Krupp's orbital facilities have simply shifted to support their Skyhook efforts. However, rumors persist that S-K may have found something while capturing the ballast asteroid. One of the forty-one recovery vehicles did not make the return trip to Earth but was diverted back to Himmelsschimedde.

Nimbus Orbital Shipyards

The newest addition to the Ares' space assets, the Nimbus shipyards were created to construct the Vigilance-class space cutter for the SRS. Rather than one large station, Nimbus is a collection of smaller individual sub-stations called "slips" surrounding a central control center. The control center coordinates all yard projects and acts as a supply depot. Each slip is an elongated column that houses the necessary facilities with a large, cage-like structure that runs its length for actual ship construction. The main control center has the same overall design as the Apollo station, but is only a quarter its size.

Constructed from pre-fabricated parts Ares has originally intended for use if they won the bid for Skyhook, the first slip was completed in less than four months and was still under construction as the keel of the Vigilance was laid. For two months, both the shipyards and the vessel were being constructed at the

same time. Eager to get the shipyards and the Vigilance into service as quickly as possible, several shortcuts were made that almost resulted in both projects' destruction as a power-system overload threatened the entire facility. Luckily, engineers were able to restore power before the yard fell into the atmosphere.

- Ah yes, Ares quality at its finest! I hope the SRS boys check the welds on those ships!
- Turbo Bunny

This almost cost Ares the contract for the next two Vigilance cutters, but shipwrights were able to complete Vigilance ahead of schedule and under budget, which was Ares' only saving grace. With Vigilance now in service and proving to be an excellent ship, the next two in the class, the Reliance and Dauntless, are currently under construction. The shipyard also continues to expand and now has four additional slips with one more nearing completion. In addition to the two SRS cutters, Ares has also laid the keel for another unknown vessel. AresSpace officials have declined to comment, calling the project "Classified."

- Whatever it is, it's big. It's almost twice as long as the Vigilance-class and more than twice her mass. Unlike most of the slips, this one is obscured by "radiation shielding." All of the state-of-the-art tech at my disposal, and it's blocked by simple frigging walls.
- Orbital DK
- I don't have a lot of connections in this particular part of Ares, but I've heard that the name "Vanguard" has popped up in several inter-company memos, most of them within AresSpace and Ares Heavy Industry.
- Sticks

Located in a northern polar orbit, the shipyards will eventually hold a total of six slips. No additional slips are scheduled at this time, but components are being stored as new contracts become available.

Shibanajuki Freefall Resort

Many of the major space assets in LEO were lost during Crash 2.0, and Shibanajuki was almost one of them. When the Crash virus infiltrated the main systems, a series of mistakes and blunders by the crew caused catastrophic failures on all decks. All external airlocks opened at once, killing hundreds and structurally compromising the station. Those not immediately killed were entombed when all security doors locked themselves and froze when main power failed. Even the escape modules failed to properly deploy. Recovery crews were forced to cut their way into the control center and could only bring enough systems on-line to prevent atmospheric entry.

It took almost six years and several attempts to repair because of various failures. One failure occurred when a power surge in the resort's power grid killed two salvage technicians. During another incident, a suit seal failure killed another technician while he was attempting to clear cargo from a sealed compartment. And during another, a docking craft almost crashed after a guidance system failure. Only the pilot's quick reflexes saved the crew and station. The equipment failures, near death incidents, and other problems

gave Shibanajuki a reputation for being haunted. Evo finally had to hire out several subcontractors to meet their recovery deadline. It wasn't until the last body had been removed that problems stopped plaguing recovery crews.

Today, Shibanajuki has been refurbished and is the premier resort of its kind. It boasts a number of zero and microgravity activities that continue to attract thousands each year. While there hasn't been a major problem since the second Crash, guests occasionally complain of odd glitches in the resort's systems, and unexplained "ghost" sightings are common.

- Which Evo PR likes to play up as much as it can. Nothing attracts tourists like the opportunity to see one of the "Spaaaaace Ghooooosts!"
- Traveler Jones
- Okay, back up a second. What's with these supposed ghosts?
- DangerSensei
- Well, they're not actual spirits, not that far away from the manosphere. My money's on it being an AI of some sort. Projecting AR ghosts would be a piece of cake for any such entity.
- Glitch

Spindle Space Platform

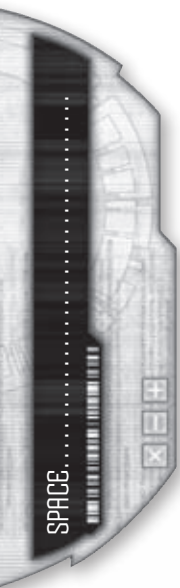
Currently Aztechnology's sole space asset, the Spindle space platform had problems from inception including construction delays and massive power failures. In 2050, one power failure was made famous when Aztechnology chartered several sub-orbitals from Federated Boeing for an impromptu, yet successful, rescue operation. As visitor numbers declined, the Spindle struggled to find a use for many years, and insiders say that it stayed in operation only because the corporation didn't want to lose its only presence in space. Costs were eventually controlled as crew and operations were cut back. Aztechnology also partnered with Shibata Corporation, who administered and supplied the station until Crash 2.0. After the Crash, Aztechnology renegotiated contract terms with Shibata and came away with the entire facility. Aztechnology also evicted its sole tenant at the time, Universal Omnitech, when they were unable to pay their lease in 2068.

Today, the Spindle still does a moderate tourism business but mainly conducts hydroponics research. It is in competition with the Dyson 3 station for the twenty million nuyen left in Dunkelzahn's will for the first acre of wheat grown in low earth orbit. Aztechnology has converted a large part of Spindle to this task and has taken over the research pioneered by UO when they were able to seize all of their data and equipment.

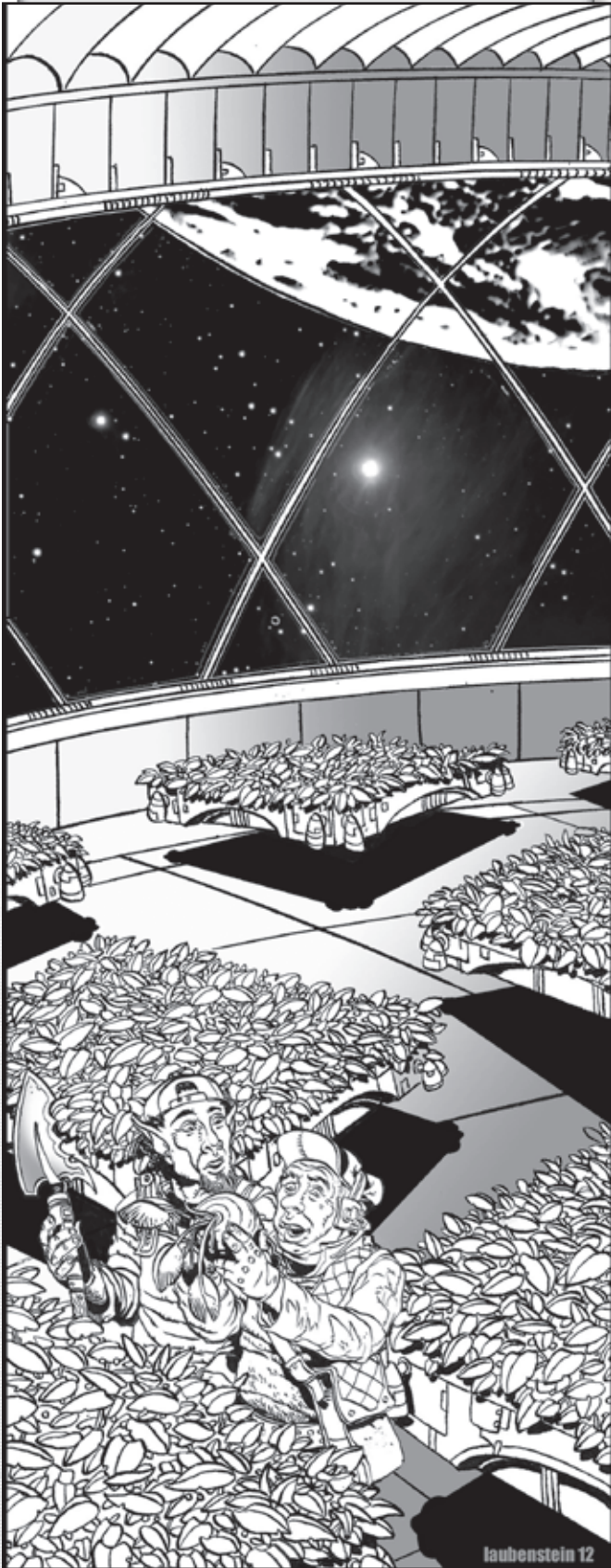
- Horizon may be using Eagle Eye II for Amazonia, but Spindle has taken on a critical role for Aztlan, acting as the main CnC for Aztechnologies' military sat-network. So far, it's proven invaluable in the war effort by giving Aztlan/Aztechnology forces real-time battlefield intelligence.
- Picador

Zurich-Orbital Space Habitat

The most famous and influential station in existence, the Zurich-Orbital Space Habitat is best known as the seat of the



INCOMING FEED.....



Corporate Court. Christened Freedom when it was constructed at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it was purchased by Ares in 2016. After being restored, it was sold to the Inter-Corporation Court in 2023 and re-named Zurich-Orbital. Besides being the seat of corporate authority, Zurich-Orbital is also the primary office of the Zurich-Orbital Gemeinschaft Bank and the Corporate Court Matrix Authority. The Matrix Authority's enforcement arm, the Grid Overwatch Division, also operates from the habitat.

Over the years, the station has been expanded and constantly upgraded with the latest defense and communications technologies. The habitat's central operations node and the Grid Overwatch Division's operational node uses only the most advanced intrusion countermeasures and encryption algorithms, and they are staffed by the best security specialists known. To date, no one has successfully penetrated the Matrix security of Zurich-Orbital and lived to tell about it. The habitat's physical security is also some of the best ever known. The habitat is surrounded by several hunter-killer drone/satellites, each with state-of-the-art weapons and targeting software. Any vessel that attempts to get close to Zurich-Orbital without clearance or that deviates from its pre-determined flight path is instantly targeted by the drones. Only one warning is given, and if compliance does not follow, drones destroy the target.

The station's greatest security is its pre-flight screening. Security procedures to board a shuttle bound for Zurich-Orbital are especially thorough, with each visitor subjected to a battery of scans and searches. Each passenger is also subject to a pre-flight background screening and/or interview. Should any potential visitor fail or set off any red flags at any time during these procedures, they are denied access.

- That is not entirely true. If one has the right connections, one can get on board Zurich-Orbital without the usual hassles. But these connections have to be extremely high placed and powerful. And as for no one penetrating Z-O's Matrix security, that is also not entirely true.
- Polaris
- Care to elaborate?
- Pistons
- No, I do not.
- Polaris

The habitat also serves as a retirement home for several high-ranking corporate and government retirees and is in demand for its rehabilitation facilities by those who can afford them.

Despite its unwieldy look, Z-O's modular composition allows it to be quickly adapted or repaired. Currently the station consists of sixty-three specialized service modules, twelve solar energy arrays, three dedicated housing modules, and the famous rotunda at the center. With the creation of the SRS, the provisional headquarters and the fleet admiral's office are located at the habitat until permanent facilities are completed on the Skyhook Space Elevator.



GEOSYNCHRONOUS ORBIT STATIONS

Mostly the providence of communication satellite networks, there are few stations in this region of space because the costs to boost materials to this region are very high. Most of the stations in this region serve as maintenance for the communications networks or as way-stations for outbound craft to the Lagrange points, Luna, or Mars.

Because of the distance from Earth there is a significant lag in communication, even with retransmission units. This delay saved the stations during Crash 2.0, giving them time to enact emergency procedures before the virus reached them. Still, most stations suffered severe damage from satellite collisions or weapons fire from malfunctioning units. Within hours, satellites, probes, and stations collided with each other, causing a chain reaction that turned the GEO region into a demolition derby. Devices in the region experienced millions of nuyen of damage; one was completely lost.

Icarus Station

Completed in 2064, the wheel-shaped Icarus station is Ares' primary presence in the GEO region. Originally intended to be a traditional way-point station for craft heading to Daedalus station or Luna, Ares converted portions of Icarus for resort use in early 2064. Crash 2.0 ended those plans as the station was nearly destroyed. Hit the hardest by out-of-control satellites and other GEO objects, Icarus lost almost forty percent of its outward superstructure because of multiple impacts. On top of that, an out-of-control shuttle slammed into the resort section. Sixty-six people lost their lives, and the rest of the station's crew and visitors were forced to take shelter in the emergency areas in the station's center. The survivors waited almost two weeks for rescue as the station was continuously pelted with floating debris. Seventeen more died from wounds received in the initial emergency before help arrived.

After the Crash, Ares abandoned plans for an orbital resort on Icarus and repaired the damage. While repairs of Icarus were not fully complete until 2071, Ares upgraded its capabilities by adding a small research station and a small but efficient nano-forge and factory similar to Saeder-Krupp's Himmelsschmiede. While the factory is complete, it has yet to come on line, delayed while the research station conducts recently initiated metallurgical experiments.

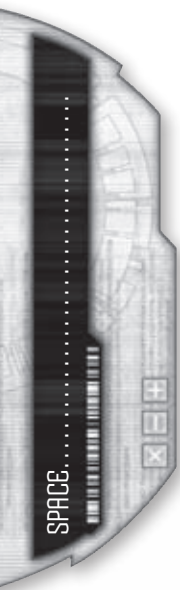
Halo/Echo Station

Originally called Halo when it was owned by Harris-3M before the Crash of '29, the station was abandoned afterwards, leaving any surviving crew to die. Ownership of the station went to FuchiSpace when it bought all of Harris-3M's space assets; no one at Fuchi felt the space hulk was worth the effort of recovering. After the Fuchi schism was complete, Novatech claimed ownership, and in turn the station became NeoNET property. With the loss of the Obelisk station in Crash 2.0, the NeoNET board of directors decided that it would be cheaper to replace it by recovering and converting Halo. The only problem that NeoNET had was that Halo had already been claimed.

In 2054, a number of independent operators re-activated Halo and renamed it Echo Station. Echo Station became a free port, a place where independent space operators could

congregate and do business without worrying about corporate or governmental interference. It also represented an obstacle to NeoNET, who did not have the assets to force the entrenched squatters off of the station. For many years, NeoNET could only sit on their hands, until the recent creation of the Space Operations Charter. No sooner had the virtual ink had dried than NeoNET petitioned the court and asked that the Special Rescue Service move to evict the trespassers. Currently the Court is still deliberating on the petition.

- NeoNET also discovered S-K had an unofficial supply contract with the squatters. I'm not sure about the details, but S-K recently stopped shipments to Echo, and shortly thereafter NeoNET voted for S-K's Skyhook bid. Classic logrolling.
- Snopes
- Meanwhile, NeoNET has been hiring mercenaries, ex-military, or anyone with useful skills like ship/platform boarding, dynamic entry, piloting, electronic warfare, etc. and training them in zero-gravity ops. If I didn't know better, I'd say that if the SRS fails to get the current residents of Echo out, NeoNET's going to take it back by force.
- Picador
- So what happened to the Obelisk anyway? Didn't it used to belong to Hisato-Turner Broadcasting back in the day? Ancient Wisdom used to be a guilty pleasure back in the day.
- Winterhawk
- An explosion ripped the station to pieces. No one knows exactly what caused the station to go boom, but current theories say the virus got into their systems; others say that HTB's rivals, namely Ares and S-K, took advantage of the Crash and attacked the station to make sure it went down and stayed down. Even I have a hard time believing that one, though.
- Plan 9
- Novatech, sans NeoNET, wants to gobble up all the space real estate it can in a bad way to compete with the likes of Ares, Evo, and Saeder-Krupp. Now, Villiers is apparently hell-bent on capitalizing on NeoNET's successful bid to build the computer systems for Skyhook. With the Obelisk gone, they only have one option: Halo/Echo station. It took them years to get to this point, but now Villiers has the SRS to back his play—or do his dirty work for him.
- Sunshine
- Hey, I just put something together. Remember a few posts back about Icarus gearing up to become an orbital factory and the one about a probe/vehicle thingy going back to Himmelsschmiede? And what about that "mega-ship" being built at Nimbus? I hear that the big four in space—Ares, Evo, NeoNet, and S-K—have found evidence of some kind of "super ore" in various parts of the solar system that's worth billions or maybe trillions. You think that maybe all this prep and positioning is for some kind of new resource rush? Anyone know anything about it?
- Plan-9



- No. We generally don't have any wild speculation before you.
- Snopes
- I recently did an extraction. Won't say for who, but our target was a metallurgist. My team did such a good job that Mr. Johnson asked us to do another right on the spot. That one's a geologist. I've also gotten word from a lot of my contacts about other similar extractions.
- Mika

Silver Pinnacle

Commonly known as the "Station House" by spacers, this facility is currently owned by the New York-based aerospace corporation Trans-Orbital. The Station House is unusual among orbital stations in that it is not owned by a AAA- or AA-rated corporation. For many years, the Station House served as a refueling and resupply station for outbound craft; it also handled satellite maintenance for several telecommunications companies and grid-service providers. It even had contracts with several AAA-rated corporations such as Renraku and Novatech at various points. It also had secret contracts with various governments such as the UK, CAS, and Israel to maintain several of their spy satellites. It continued to profit from its diverse client base for many years until it became another victim of Crash 2.0.

The loss of the satellite networks hit Trans-Orbital hard. While the station itself suffered only moderate damage and minimal loss of life, most of their revenue dried up almost instantly, and the company has yet to fully recover. Unable to compete with larger corporations and find reliable clients when the networks were replaced, Trans-Orbital has been near bankruptcy several times in the last decade. So far it has avoided that fate by slashing its rates and prices for resupply and docking for its dwindling number of independent operators. Trans-Orbital execs expect that it is just a matter of time until another corporation comes in and buys them out completely, and they have put out feelers in an effort to maintain some control of its future.

- It's a bit of a delayed reaction, but Trans-Orbital is another example of the SOC in action. TO has barely been able to modernize its equipment let alone keep up with the various new safety and mandated performance standards. Lately, the company can barely pay the constant fines it's been accumulating.
- Mr. Bonds

LAGRANGE POINT STATIONS

Other than the facilities on Luna and Mars, Lagrange points are the farthest stations from Earth. Taking advantage of the stable gravity wells offered by the Lagrange points as well as their sheer distance from civilization, they are often used for the most secret of projects of their owners. Little is known about them, and their extreme distance and the effort it takes to get there keeps it that way. During Crash 2.0, all of the active Lagrange stations were spared from the virus thanks to early warning procedures and protocols. At least, that's the official reason.

L-1, Treffpunkt Raumhafen

Built in secret by Proteus using their efforts to grow underwater cacti as a cover, Treffpunkt Raumhafen, or simply "TR"

to insiders, was revealed during the fervor over Halley's Comet in 2061. After the probe race ended in failure for all parties involved, including Proteus, TR simply went back to its normal research projects. Like most stations at the Lagrange points, there is little to no information about the exact nature of the research Proteus is conducting. Insiders speculate that Proteus' efforts at TR are focused on furthering projects concerning their trans-genetic and biotechnology research, possibly to study the effects of low to zero gravity. Over the years, TR has played host to several smaller corporations that have leased space aboard the station. In recent months, several representatives from Saeder-Krupp have taken tours of TR, and Proteus reps have been spotted at various S-K facilities.

L-2, Darkside Junction

Fully completed just over a decade ago, Darkside Junction provides most of the support for NeoNET's Olympia lunar colony in addition to acting as the corporation's largest space outpost. As such, it handles the usual duties of probe launching, surveying the lunar surface, and acting as a refueling point. Fairly atypical for a station of its type, Darkside Junction derives its name from the fact that it is constantly in Luna's dark side. Darkside Junction is also one of the key components in NeoNET's plans to expand its reach into space. Numerous upgrades to the station are planned, including a dedicated deep-probe launching facility and observation platform, similar to Horizon's Eagle Eye II.

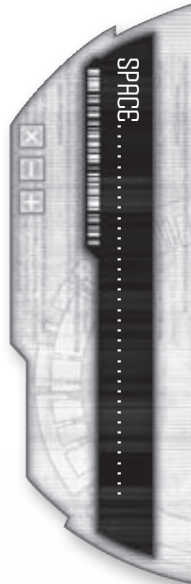
- The observation module has already been delivered and became operational less than two months ago. Judging on the orientation of the telescope's orientation, Darkside is more interested in looking at Ares and Saeder-Krupp facilities than anything else.
- Polaris

L-3 Nerva

Before Crash 1.0, Nerva was one of Harris-3M's most important space assets. As with most stations at the Lagrange points, Nerva was used as a secret research facility. But when the first Crash came, Harris-3M was unable to mount a rescue operation. When that company folded and its assets were purchased by FuchiSpace, the company decided that the Nerva would be too much effort to recover at the time. For over forty years, Nerva has been silent. Rumors of hideous experiments and accidents kept most scavengers away from the station, and today it remains just as it was in 2029.

As part of NeoNET's current efforts to become one of the big players in space, an automated probe was sent to Nerva in late 2072 in order to evaluate her overall condition. The probe reported that the station was in good condition for a derelict station. There were no indications of severe damage and it was determined that power loss was the ultimate cause of the station's demise. A recovery mission has been scheduled for mid-2077

- Despite the rumors of monsters at Nerva, several groups of spacers who refuse to bow down to the mandates under the Space Operations Charter are traveling to Nerva to prep it as a fall-back position and possible space fortress if things go badly at Echo Station.
- Cosmo



- So wait, if the independents don't have a supplier anymore, how are they operating?
- Glitch
- Remember when I mentioned how the underworld people involved in space had shifted their roles? This is one place they shifted to.
- Orbital DK
- So that's why snatch-and-grab runs for "surplus" space gear have increased. Cool.
- Stone

L-4 Daedalus

Daedalus was the first permanent station completed in the Lagrange point region, and it continues to serve as Ares' primary space operations and orbital factory. One visitor described it as "several stations linked together to form one massive structure." Like most of Ares' space assets, Daedalus has been the recipient of several upgrades over the years to take advantage of the latest technologies. Because of these upgrades, Daedalus is still on the cutting edge of technology. The station used to have a significant research facility, but recent orders have transferred all significant research projects transferred to Helios.

Though the station has been in service for several decades, there is still very little information available about its activities, and like other stations several rumors continue about the work on Daedalus. So far, though, Ares has been able to keep the station's activities a secret. Recently an Ares press release announced that as part of their effort to support the Space Rescue Service, a small substation will be placed on Daedalus so that SRS vessels on long-range patrols will have a refuel and resupply location.

- While Ares has been eating up as many SRS contracts as it can get, they still don't want the SRS anywhere near sensitive research projects. That's why I would guess most of them have been transferred to Helios.
- Sticks

L-5 Angel Station "The Junkyard"

Officially called Angel Station, this is called "The Junkyard" by spacers. Gravimetric forces in the area cause most junk in orbit around Earth to collect around the station. Another former Harris-3M property that was abandoned after crash '29, Angel Station used to be that corporation's primary microtronics and material factory. Also like the Nerva station, Angel Station was obtained by FuchiSpace and sat derelict for several decades. In the early '60s Yamatetsu attempted to claim Angel Station as salvage through public domain laws, but it was blocked by Novatech. They claimed that all former FuchiSpace assets were theirs despite their failure to do anything with them since the Crash. For a year, attorneys on both sides argued before the Corporate Court. In 2063, Novatech withdrew its claim, ceding the station to Yamatetsu. When a Yamatetsu survey team arrived, they found nothing more than a stripped hulk of a station; scavengers had long since stripped the station of anything valuable.

- Novatech secretly sent a probe ahead to see what they were getting, and they realized how much of a money sink Angel Station would be. They thought that they were putting a good one over on Yamatetsu.
- Rigger X
- Yamatetsu stole the results of the probe before Novatech bowed out. They knew what they were getting, and they wanted it anyway.
- Orbital DK

Undaunted, Yamatetsu sent repair crews to begin work refurbishing and upgrading the station. After Yamatetsu became Evo and turned all space programs over to Roskosmos, the go-ahead was given to construct a new factory at Angel Station. Recycling the original junk field into usable materials, Angel Station now churns out materials at a steady pace, and it is now a key component in Evo's expansion efforts on Mars. Junk still floats to Angel Station, but it rarely lasts long before it's put into the nano-forges or used for target practice.

- This is another reason why NeoNET is so hell-bent on re-claiming Nerva. Watching Evo build it up and make it profitable in such a short time has to sting. Keep an eye on the news feeds too; I have a feeling a showdown is going to be forced between the SRS and the independent spacers congregating on Nerva. It won't be pretty.
- Sunshine

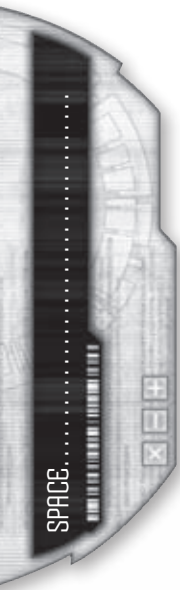
EXTRATERRESTRIAL SPACE STATIONS AND FACILITIES

Humanity continues to explore the depths of known space, and its mark is left farther and farther out. Stations in the extraterrestrial space region represent this extreme reach. Technology is slowly making progress out there, and it's become more cost effective to establish colonies and facilities. Within the next few decades there may be several more colonies, and within the next century, cities on both Luna and perhaps Mars could be possible. For now, humanity's presence is limited in this region.

Before Crash 2.0, several corporations had plans for expansion into this region. Ares had planned missions to Mars and a manned mission to Europa; both were scuttled because of data lost during the Crash. Delayed probe missions from Saeder-Krupp missions to the asteroid belt were decades behind schedule. Projects for a base near Mars have finally been greenlit, though Evo is currently the only corporation with a successful Mars mission.

Artemis Lunar Archology

A research and mining facility owned by Ares, the Artemis Archology was partially shut down in 2072 while it underwent a planned refit program. Most of the research projects, with the exception of mining operations, have been relocated, leaving a third of the original staff, with an additional fifty there for the refurbishment. Completion is scheduled for 2075.



- Ares has been re-tooling a lot of their space assets of late, all leaning towards orbital manufacturing and mineral refinement. Like the other stations, it has moved almost of its orbital research projects to Helios. Hard to know what exactly is going on at Artemis—the engineers constructed domes over the whole damn thing.
- Glitch

Charon Space Station

Little is known about Ares' newest space station. Launched in 2069 and completed in 2072, Charon is located in a Lagrange point around Demos, one of Mars' moons. Consisting of nothing more than six linked, pre-fabricated modules, the beginning of a frame, and a crew of four, Charon is heavily automated and rumored to have been constructed with experimental nanotechnological methods not yet known to the general public. Once complete, Charon will have a design similar to the Apollo station, but with six sets of arms, three at each end of the central column. While Charon is small and fully operational, it is estimated that it will be at least another decade before construction is completed.

- That's if all goes well. Ares is already spreading itself pretty thin. With problems back on Earth because of the continual struggles between Damian Knight and Arthur Vogel and several failed contracts and disasters for the corporation, it'll be interesting to see if the same "Ares quality" affects Charon as well.
- Cosmo
- That, and I wonder how Evo will like having neighbors on Mars?
- Rigger X

Fernselt Lunar Station

Established in 2050, Fernselt was the first long-term presence on Luna. Operated by a Saeder-Krupp mining subsidiary, Lunar Mining, Fernselt station is a control center, storage, and shipping location that coordinates the efforts of several substations spread across the lunar surface. Operating from the northern lunar pole area, it sends out several drone convoys a day to retrieve ore extracted by crews at the substations.

- About ten years ago, right after that comet, rumors started to pick up about special moon rocks with alchemical and or magical properties. Ares was rumored to have found a ton of the stuff, but S-K was supposed to have found a much larger vein. After the second Crash, I haven't heard much about it.
- Orbital DK
- I had few customers over the years come to me asking about items made from those materials, and they offered damn good prices. Every time I tried to secure some, though, the contacts disappeared. Decided not to press my luck any further.
- Lyran
- Communications traffic from Fernselt to earth has increased, and the encryption of those transmissions is much more difficult to decode. From what little I have been able to learn, something new has been found on the moon and at other locations. It has

taken on a high priority with Saeder-Krupp, and several project managers at Fernselt have been recalled to Earth for debriefing.

- Polaris
- The corps found super-orichalcum and want to use against some threat they detected coming from outer space. You think it's a coincidence they're moving to control all space activity AND create a space navy? It's already started, just look at what happened to the Gagarin Base!
- Plan 9
- Wow. Super-orichalcum and aliens in a single sentence. That's a hard core commitment to bringing the crazy.
- Snopes
- Crap, I've been so busy with this I missed a few newsflashes passed my way. Let me do some checking before I say anything more. Be right back.
- Orbital DK

Olympia Lunar Base

Owned by NeoNET, this is the base that almost was. Started in 2061 but plagued by several construction problems, it was almost completed in 2064. But then the second Crash happened before it could come on line. In the years since then, NeoNET has tried to finish the base, but delays continue because of accidents and acts of sabotage. Currently, a skeleton crew watches over the site, trying to fix the damage. NeoNET has also sent several groups of independent security contractors to Olympia to curtail any more delays in construction.

- Those mercs and specialists I mentioned earlier? Take a wild guess where they're being sent to train. A few of my people decided to take NeoNET up on their offer after their contracts with me expired. They said this may be their only chance of getting into space. I hope they survive the experience. Godspeed, muchachos.
- Picador
- Why didn't you go?
- Marcos
- I hate flying in regular aircraft to begin with. What makes you think I'd want to go in space?
- Picador

Helios Solar Space Station

Located at a solar Lagrange point exactly opposite of Earth, Helios was once the only station that existed outside of Earth or Lunar orbit. Helios finished its scheduled refurbishment last year and now boasts several new scanning and optical observation arrays and a dedicated probe launching section. Its overall mass has increased by twenty percent to accommodate the upgrades and the increase of crew. A new structure has also been added, which resembles one of the slips in use at the Nimbus shipyards. AresSpace has not commented to the nature of the upgrades or the new equipment.

Helios's mission has always been deep-space observation, scientific research, and acting as a staging area for Ares' deep-space





INCOMING FEED.....



SPACE.....

expeditions. Despite aborting several missions after the second Crash, Ares is now in a position to make good on some of those missions. While a manned mission to Europa has been modified to a simple probe mission, Helios was instrumental in establishing the Charon space station in orbit around Demos, one of Mars' moons, by setting it up as a staging area for that project

A massive re-allocation project began within the research departments of AresSpace earlier this year. By executive order, all research projects above a specific security level have been transferred to Helios. With that order, traffic to Helios has reached an all-time high; completion of the transfer should take place by mid-2075.

- If anyone is considering a run against Helios, now would be the best time as convoys continue to move personnel and material to the station. Be warned—security has increased dramatically, and Ares has deployed the latest generation of hunter-killer defense satellite/drones and at least one armed shuttle to protect Helios. Take that for what you will.
- Clockwork

Gagarin Mars Base

The first permanent station established on Mars, the announcement of the Gagarin base to the world sent a shock through the megacorporations, especially Ares, Saeder-Krupp, and Novatech. When Evo Corporation was still Yamatatsu, plans were already in the works for a manned mission to Mars as early as 2063. Despite the chaos caused by Crash 2.0, the manned Mars mission never lost momentum, as most data and projects specs

had been protected in special standalone systems. Yamatatsu, now renamed Evo, moved forward with its plans when all of the others corporations and the world were still reeling from Crash 2.0. In 2065, cosmonauts from Roskosmos became the first metahumans on the Martian surface. During their stay, they surveyed the area and found the future site of the Gagarin Mars Base, conducted several other surveys, and collected several soil samples. Unfortunately, this crew would never return to Earth. A severe storm developed before the crew could react, killing two instantly. The rest perished when both their ship and their suits were compromised. Despite this, the mission was considered a success thanks to the data it transmitted before its tragic end.

- Again, this is something that Roskosmos and Evo do not like to advertise. It is not a big secret, nor were the results covered up. Rather, many simply do not care to look for the full story of that mission for themselves.
- Red Anya

Unmanned missions continued for the next two years, dropping equipment and materials for the base's construction. Automated construction drones began construction of the main facility from which the rest would be constructed. In 2068, metahumans once again set foot on Mars, and the Gagarin Base was declared operational. Over the next few years, the base would expand not only on the surface, but underground as well. Six above-ground buildings hide the entrances to an immense underground complex. While the exact layout is unknown, it is estimated that the underground complex is heavily fortified based

on the amount of defensive equipment and armaments shipped to Gagarin Base. Because of its underground nature, it is difficult to observe the base from orbit or with long-range surveillance arrays.

- Not that Ares and S-K haven't tried. Charon in particular has been trying to sneak drones into the facility ever since it went on line. Every time, BOOM! Doesn't matter much anymore, Ares is prepping to send some of their own down and become Evo's neighbors. S-K seems to be too busy with the Skyhook to care.
- Clockwork

What has been confirmed is that the station boasts three fusion reactors and is constantly resupplied by a convoy of drones, some of which ferry replacement crew to the base. Currently, several shipments of mining equipment has been routed to Gagarin. Evo will not comment on the exact nature of these shipments, but mining operations are estimated to increase by twenty percent in the next year, with another twenty percent increase over the subsequent three years.

- I found confirmation. Something has happened on Mars. Check this out—it was sent to me by a contact of mine.
- Orbital DK

Incoming Message

**/open file :G616-883Tago, Codeword:
Blackout, translation: Russian-English engaged/**

TO: Anatoly Kirilenko, CEO
FROM: Mikkial Metdev,
Chief of Space Operations, Roskosmos

Sir,

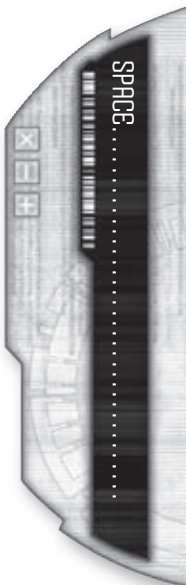
I am now confirming that at approximately 0453-ZULU, we have lost all contact with Gagarin Base. All efforts to reach them thus far have failed. Diagnostics on our end indicate that all communications equipment is working properly. The problem is on Mars. I have already begun Phase One of our emergency response plan and tasked all unmanned assets in the area to investigate, but it will be some time before we have a reply. I am also recommending that we delay the launch of our latest supply convoy until we have more information, or at least re-tasking their load-out for a possible rescue mission.

I will have a full report for you within two standard hours and update you on the situation as information becomes available. I would also remind you sir that we also have the new Space Operations Charter protocols to consider. While we are not legally obligated to abide by them yet, in the interest of preserving our assets on Mars, we must at least consider the possibility of asking for assistance from the Space Rescue Service or AresSpace personnel already in the area. I know the risks of allowing non-Roskosmos/Evo personnel access to Gagarin base and the thought does not sit well with me, but we must consider all options at this point.

I await your reply,

—MM

- Damn. Sucks to be them.
- Clockwork
- You do not know the half of it.
- Polaris
- Do we know if Kirilenko's responded yet and what the response from Z-O is?
- FastJack
- Not yet. My contact said that Kirilenko has been in contact with Zurich-Orbital, in particular to new Evo Justice Ryan Watanabe and Admiral Rolenko of the SRS. My guess is they'll inform them of the situation and get the ball rolling for whatever plan they decide on. Right now, you all know as much as I do.
- Orbital DK





Posted by: Am-mut

The biggest problem with the desert is that it does not have enough shadows.

There are several reasons why we have Desert Wars instead of Forest Wars or Arable Land Wars. Some of it, of course, has to do with the amount of usable land. In most deserts, you can have stray mortar shells missing their targets by a kilometer or more, and the only form of life you're going to put in danger is maybe a scorpion or two. There's simply not much competition for that land, and since most of it already looks like a bombed-out husk, you can shell away with impunity.

But there is also the fact that deserts offer fewer places to hide. Yes, there are caves and canyons and other rock formations, but not the overarching vegetation that has long made jungles a haven for guerilla fighters. There are so few signs of life in general that anyone who can astrally perceive can have a field day picking out targets from a considerable distance. In fact, a general rule of thumb is that if you're Awakened but don't have access to the astral, you should enter any desert with a healthy supply of deepweed so that you can astrally perceive. No sense in giving opposing mages the upper hand.

- I'd be very cautious about doing this in the Mojave. Lots of the spirits there are happy to forcibly possess anyone who makes it easier for them, like some deepweed user wandering through their territory.
- Winterhawk
- But at least with the deepweed you'd have a chance to see them coming.
- Jimmy No

So if deserts have few people, meaning there's not anyone to hire you, and few places to hide so that we can work properly, why go there? Like so many questions, that's best answered with a list.

Resources: Deserts may be a little lean when it comes to things like people, water, and food, but they still hold materials of worth. From mundane items like oil and diamonds to sought-after

chemicals such as nova scorpion venom, the desert has things people are willing to pay for, and they'll pay even more if they can get someone to go where they don't want to be. And I haven't even touched on teslas and other fun materials from Awakened plants and the like.

Reconnaissance: While people may not live in deserts in great density, armies keep finding reasons to go there. Sometimes it's because they serve as a broad highway, hundreds of kilometers of hard rock that are as easy to drive over as any highway (though deep sand can be a bitch if you have the wrong vehicle, or even if you have the right one). Sometimes reconnaissance is needed because of Desert Wars. Simply put, where there are armies, there's a need for intelligence about the enemy, and plenty of runners, especially Awakened ones, have made nice money working as advance scouts.

Sometimes it's not about looking at opposing forces—it's about looking at the land. No landscape on Earth, not even rainforests, is as changeable as deserts. Sure, the rainforest has the annoying habit of vegetation quickly clogging up empty space where a road used to be, but the ground underneath the plants tends not to change overly much. In the desert, a bad sandstorm might fill in a gully, or uncover rocks that had previously been buried. Desert winds can create hills and valleys that change from week to week or even day to day (especially if there's a sentient hand controlling the wind).

- That was one of my favorite moments from the last season of Desert Wars. An Ares Mage cast a physical barrier spell that was shaped like a dome, and then she and a bunch of her compatriots whipped up a nice wind and completely covered the thing with sand. During the next day's fighting, they had some S-K forces on the ropes, and they let them escape and take shelter behind this new dune (after carefully herding them toward it, of course). The S-K soldiers were taking a moment to regroup when, floompf, down goes the barrier. There's suddenly sand all over, and the S-K troops are totally exposed. The Ares troops moved in and made short work of them.
- Hard Exit



INCOMING FEED.....



DESERTS

- Just how big was the barrier under the sand?
- Lyran
- Plenty. The mage was barely conscious when they dragged her from the site. She must have been a decently powerful initiate to cast that spell and keep it running until the right moment. Or she had a nice focus.
- Hard Exit

Laying low: As the recent *Safehouses* posting reminded us, sometimes we all need a chance to stay out of other people's sights. Sometimes that may be as (relatively) simple as hiding out in a no-tell motel for a few weeks, but other times you may want to get far, far away from any other people. The desert is a pretty good destination in these cases. While the environment may be harsh, it's easier to survive in than outer space or the Arctic. There's air, for one thing, and the heat of the desert usually won't kill you as quickly as Arctic cold. If you can find shade and water—which is possible but not easy—you can get by.

Deserts have long been refuges for scoundrels, criminals, and deserters, which means they are also destinations for individuals hunting those people. If you haven't gone on a manhunt in the desert at least once, you should give it a try. The sweat running down the back of your neck, the harsh sunlight gleaming off your gun barrel, the sudden unexpected skittering of some unseen creature across the sand—it's a unique environment, and it makes you feel like you're in the middle of some old Sergio Leone flatscreen drama.

- It's the kind of fun that gets old real fast, especially once every piece of clothing you own has dust and sand in 'em. You also better hope your quarry doesn't know the territory better than you, because if they have access to sources of water that you don't know about, they'll wait you out, and it won't be fun.
- Hard Exit

There are others hiding in the desert besides those running away from the law. More than one corp has a secret research facility in some desert or another. They may be looking into spirit behavior (Horizon in the Mojave), collecting telesma (Aztechnology in the Chihuahuan desert), or conducting weapons research in a place where people won't much notice what you're blowing up (Ares in pretty much every desert).

If you get a job to infiltrate one of these places, be cautious. Most of them are chosen because the owners know how hard it would be for anyone to sneak up on them. Individuals that are walking or driving and planes that fly overhead are all too obvious. You can try magic concealment, but astral overwatch at these spots is usually pretty good. You either have to be an exceptional sneak, or you need to convince people that you belong there.

- If you can pull it off, the rewards are often pretty good. Corps don't build out in the desert on a lark, so if they're going to all that trouble to hide what they're doing, it's usually worth it to push by their security. I've heard some interesting stories of a mobile Ares facility in the Gobi that moves about ten kilometers a night (it's a big place, so it's impressive that it moves at all). Most of

the speculation says it's a weapons-testing place, and one guy I know that got in there said there were indeed plenty of weapons everywhere. There was also a horrible, rotting meat smell behind one door, but he wasn't able to get a look at what was on the other side.

- Stone
- Horizon's former spirit research in the Mojave is now up for grabs in the wake of what happened in Vegas. They've got a skeleton crew watching over it, but all work at the site has stopped. If you want a look inside, get there soon, because the Horizon people will be easier to deal with than the spirits that are massing to take over the place.
- Sunshine
- The spirits will not necessarily be hostile to you. They know how to recognize friends.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- They also know how to rip people limb from limb. Didn't you hear about what happened at Metahumanity Ablaze?
- Sunshine
- I was informed.
- Man-of-Many-Names

Shortcuts: It doesn't take a cartographic genius to understand that the fastest way across Australia is straight through the Outback. And that's how most people traverse the continent—at a comfortable altitude of 10,000 meters or so. Drivers only go through the Outback if they hate their cars and themselves.

Sometimes, though, the shortest point from point A to point B is through a desert. Sometimes you can find roads—the Mojave has a couple of highways cutting through it—but other times you may have to improvise. Don't try this on a whim; you should have an all-terrain vehicle and plenty of water before you even think about it—but if you can get across a desert while someone else is skirting around it, you have the chance to get wherever you're going first. And I don't think I need to explain the advantage of that.

- Asian smugglers cut across the Gobi so much that they should join forces and pave themselves a road. It helps that the desert cuts through a number of national jurisdictions, none of whom are all that interested wandering out there simply to stop a jeep full of black market tesmas. If you're looking for a good Asian smuggler, just set yourself up in the desert in the middle of the invisible line connecting Uрга to Lanzhou and wait.
- 2XL

So now that we've established that there are plenty of illegitimate reasons to wander out in the desert, we should take a look at the major deserts of the world, what makes them special, and what might take you there.

THE MOJAVE: THE SPIRITS ARE KILLING, THE FLESH IS WEAK

With all the talk about spirit activity in the Mojave lately, you expect it to be filled with roving bands of rapacious spirits who attack you the moment you set foot on its sands. So it can come as a surprise when you enter the desert and see lots and lots of nothing. The Mojave is still home to Death Valley, one of the most inhospitable places on Earth, and most of the rest of it is not much better. And while spirits are not affected by the same physical needs and constraints as the rest of us, that doesn't mean they find the Mojave to be an enjoyable place to be. Like metahumans, spirits have a variety of likes and dislikes. Some of them appreciate the open spaces and the general lack of astral signatures, while others are freaked out by it and have no desire to spend any time there.

What this means is that it's still quite possible to roam around the Mojave without encountering another living thong besides snakes and scorpions. And even they spend a lot of the daylight hours looking for shade.

The trick of the Mojave, though, is that if you *do* happen to encounter someone or something, there's a good chance it'll be hostile. Let's break down why this is.

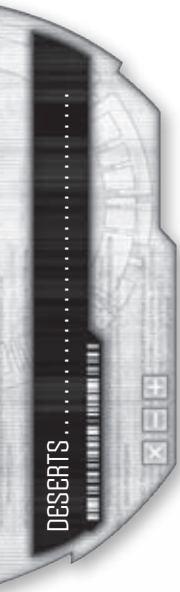
Critters: Unlike humans, most critters are not given to revenge of long-term, malevolent plans. Instead, they react to perceived threats by lashing out. The trouble is, lately the Mojave has felt like one big threat to them, and that's put them on edge.

It's well documented that animals respond to changes in their environment. Earthquakes, environmental toxins, and other factors bring about changes in their behavior. The recent spirit activity in the Mojave has put a certain taint into the manosphere—not to the point of giving it a background count (at least not in most places), but still something that the more sensitive critters, especially the Awakened ones, notice.

This has led the critters to act as if they are constantly under a threat. Many of them, like nova scorpions, have taken to attacking any living thing that crosses their path, whether it be predator, prey, or some creature in which, in normal circumstances, they have no interest. If you're crossing the Mojave, don't assume that anything you see will leave you alone if you keep your distance. Nothing there, it seems, is in much of a mood for avoiding conflict.

Metahumans: Not too many metahumans make their home in the Mojave (excepting those living in and around Vegas). The Mojave's not tiny, but it's generally close enough to more welcoming territory that most reasonable people move on rather than plunk down there. There have always been a few hermits, people attracted to the isolation and sunshine, but no real colonies or settlements have been developed for decades.

Now even the scattered hermits are moving out. The spirits of the desert are making them uncomfortable, and for the most part they've decided to leave before the simmering aggression starts to boil. The ones that are left are the ones without the firmest grip on reality, but even they can feel the tension that is seething in the air. This has made many of them feral, suspicious of anything or anyone who comes into view. It doesn't help that a few of these are Awakened folks whose minds were twisted by deepweed or some other narcotic, leaving them with their powers intact but little



intelligence left to direct it. They're fountains of uncontrolled magic, which makes them quite dangerous to be around.

- Not for long. I expect the spirits will be cleaning up this particular mess before too long.
- Jimmy No
- Not if maintaining the mess serves their interest. A few wandering, out-of-control mages adds to the mystique the spirits are cultivating, so they might let them stay—as long as they don't wander too close to the spirits' base of operations.
- Haze
- There's a former runner out there, a guy named Caison, who wears head-to-toe black leather, even in the height of summer (though the leather's starting to get pretty tattered). He says that drinking nova scorpion venom is the secret to youth. He actually looks kind of weathered and leathery, but if he really is 73, like he claims to be, he's pretty fit (and no, he's not an elf). He's been known to help travelers by calling water up from the ground or casting a cooling spell, but he typically asks a favor in return and it's usually pretty bizarre. He told one guy to continue walking due east, digging holes half a meter deep every kilometer. He told another person he'd kill them where they stood unless they rubbed his feet and then promised to return to the desert and bring him a pumice stone—in precisely ten years. And he told another person, a friend of mine named Velma, to bring him skulls from five different species of house cat.
- Pistons
- What's to keep people from promising this guy whatever he asks for and then blowing him off once they're out of the desert?
- Riser
- That's what Velma did. Worked just fine—right up until she disappeared two weeks ago. There's probably no connection, of course.
- Pistons

Spirits: The spirits of the Mojave have always been active, but lately they've taken things to a new level. There are two primary centers of spirit activity in the desert—the Ubehebe Crater in the northwest section of the desert and the Dam in the east near Vegas.

The spirits of the Dam are marginally more friendly than those currently marking time at the crater. There are three spirits who preside over the Dam. Two of them have been living in the area for who knows how long, but metahumanity first became aware of them in 2018. That introduction didn't exactly come on friendly terms. In fact, the spirits emerged to deliver an explicit threat to humanity—change the name of the Dam (at the time it was called Howling Dam) or see it destroyed. It seems the spirits were not fond of Daniel Howling Coyote, who was known to put the spirits in his service through quite the wringer.

The two spirits were Shishalshish, a spirit of water, and Conyano, a spirit of earth. When they made their ultimatum, there was a clear difference between them—Shishalshish seemed more earnest in the hope that their proclamation would lead to an agreeable compromise, while Conyano seemed ready to go

ahead and smash the Dam, regardless of whatever actions people took to try to stop him. He would end up being disappointed—the Pueblo Corporate Council acceded to the spirits' demands, which is why the Dam has its current simple name that references neither United States presidents nor Native American revolutionaries. The PCC, through its ace negotiator Nathaniel Blackeagle, managed to wring an important concession from the spirits, and that was that they would keep the company of a third spirit, one that Blackeagle summoned.

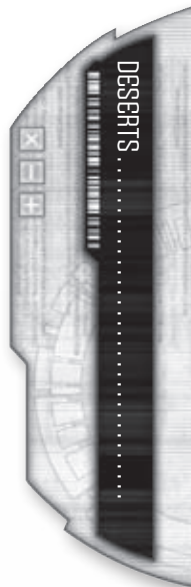
This spirit, a spirit of man that calls itself Szaazs, was an odd choice for a moderating influence between Shishalshish and Conyano. It's not the most mature or social spirit, and it spends more time poking around the Dam's internal machinery than it does talking with the other two spirits. He's a bit of a prankster, and tourism at the Dam dropped for a time when Szaazs developed the bad habit of regularly shocking visitors—it liked the flash of light, the snap of a spark, and the way people yelped when it got them. Blackeagle, who has maintained regular contact with the spirits of the Dam, was able to rein Szaazs in, and while the spirit remains fond of pranks, its jokes are more of the jump-out-and-say-boo variety, which can be annoying but most tourists seem to find it amusing.

- The important thing to know about Szaazs is it's not pulling its pranks to be mean. It's like an eight-year-old who likes a girl in school and reacts to his feelings by pulling on her pigtails. It finds metahumanity interesting and wants to interact with them, but it has trouble figuring out the right way to do it. Electric shocks and silly games are the best things it's been able to come up with.
- Haze

While Szaazs may have been an unconventional choice, it seems to be filling its role well. Whenever the spirits have to confer about any decision or development, Szaazs is a reliable pro-metahuman voice. He doesn't have to be able to convince Conyano of anything—all he has to do is counter his vote. That generally leaves decisions in Shishalshish's ethereal hands, and the PCC long ago decided they were okay with that.

- That also means that if something happens to Szaazs, things get interesting around Vegas and the Dam. Everyone from Ute nationalists to Aztechnology to the UCAS have thought about how they could benefit from Szaazs being gone for a while, so I expect an attempt to be made against him soon.
- Sunshine
- If Szaazs hadn't been there back when blood rains were falling, who knows what would have happened at the Dam.
- Elijah
- Maybe someone besides technomancers would have died in Vegas?
- Netcat

While metahumans are free to travel to the Dam and may even get the chance to interact with the spirits there, they need to be far more careful about approaching Baelosh and his group at the Ubehebe Crater. When people started arriving in the Mojave



for this year's Metahumanity Ablaze! event, the ground rules were made clear for them—stay clear of the crater if you know what's good for you. Given that Metahumanity Ablaze! attendees are not renowned for their devotion to any given set of rules or demands from authorities, it's not surprising that a few of them wandered over to Ubehebe Crater just to see what would happen. We don't know the answer to that question, as those individuals have not been heard from since.

The Crater, which currently serves as the base of operations for the spirit known as Baelosh, has long been known as a gathering place for spirits (especially those fond of chaos magic, as the area is aspected toward it), but lately the spirits there have had an angry and aggressive cast to them, and the blame for that has fallen largely on Horizon.

According to one of our own, Horizon was conducting some experiments on spirits in the Mojave, and the nature of the experiments was simple—they were trying to see just how much pain they could inflict on the spirits.

- The came up with some elegant fucking stuff, as long as you're sadistic or numb enough to study what they did without cringing. They had a technique that would pull a spirit apart, piece by piece, while preventing it from dematerializing. A "fate worse than disruption" was the goal they always talked about. It caused pain in a long, slow, excruciating fashion. Effective, but of course evil.
- Haze
- Isn't that what it says on your business card?
- Pistons

Information on the experiments Horizon was conducting got out, and that was the beginning of the end of their research activities in the desert. Spirits started regularly attacking Horizon's facility in the Mojave, and they also went after any Horizon employees that wandered out without a significant amount of magic protection. The losses Horizon experienced became too great, so they pulled out, leaving the spirits alone—but still angry. Anyone in the Mojave (especially near Ubehebe Crater) who openly identifies themselves as a Horizon employee is at risk of attack from any spirits they encounter.

The real question about the spirits of Ubehebe is their next step. Some reports from Metahumanity Ablaze! say that Baelosh was involved in the concluding show of lights and magic, and that it channeled the power that was present there to increase its strength. If that's true, the spirit clearly does not intend to just hold on to this strength—it's going to unleash it somehow, and when it does, there will be suffering.

- Already happened. Baelosh was involved with the spirit known as Kaze it casting the ritual that summoned the red rain in Vegas and the Blood Flood in Salt Lake City. He's a bit depleted now.
- Elijah
- The hell he is. Remember the magical properties of all that red rain? The whole point of the ritual was to gather mana from near and far concentrate it in a couple of select cities. Where Baelosh happened to position itself. Magic? You're soaking in it! He's got plenty of power stored up now, and he's preparing for whatever's

next. Remember that while gathering magic was the primary purpose of the Blood Flood, it had a nice (from Baelosh's point of view) side effect of bringing death and destruction to a high number of metahumans. Expect whatever it does next to have the same effect, only more so.

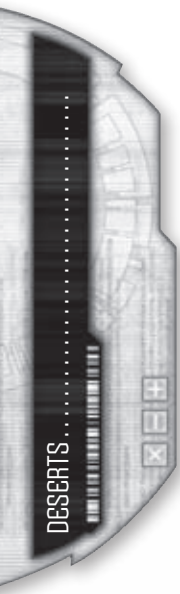
- Frosty
- This means that if you have any contacts with the Draco Foundation, the Atlantean Foundation, or any of the larger magic groups, contact them. They're going to want to interfere with whatever Baelosh is up to, and they're going to pay well to stop it.
- Winterhawk

While we're talking about Baelosh, we should take a moment to discuss another inhabitant of the area. Before anybody heard of Baelosh, there were stories about the old man of the Mojave, someone a good handful of travelers met. They describe him as having a weathered face with the same general texture and contours as a crumpled up piece of paper. Different witnesses have described him as Latino, Native American, or Caucasian with a deep tan. Most say he is human, though a few claim he is a dwarf—at very least, he's short. He wears a broad-brimmed hat, a fringed buckskin jacket, and long canvas pants, no matter the weather. He never appears uncomfortable or even sweaty, regardless of the current temperature.

The tales about him are a mixed bag. In some instances, he is helpful, appearing to lost travelers and giving them directions, water, and other things they may need. In other stories, he is mischievous, leading travelers off their path with a flashing light or a mirage, or circling around a campsite at night while making rattling noises. In a few accounts, he is threatening, warning people that they will encounter misfortune if they continue on their present path, or outright telling them to leave his realm or face his wrath. In some of these accounts, he is said to grow to two, three, even four times his regular height, looming over those he encounters and glowing with some internal red glow.

Taken together, the accounts make it clear that the old man is Awakened, and his durability in those harsh conditions have led some to speculate that he is a spirit. So when Baelosh emerged and took command over local spirits, many speculated that this was the old man of the Mojave reverting to his real form and acting on the antagonism he has shown for people in the past. Other people are not convinced, and this has led to a fairly lively conversation between proponents of each side. Here's a quick summary of each side's arguments:

Baelosh is the old man: A spirit like Baelosh doesn't just come out of nowhere. He has all the marks of someone who has been in the Mojave for a long time, who has developed contacts with other local spirits, and who has a deep and abiding interest in the area. It's difficult to believe that Baelosh could have operated under the radar for such a long time; if he operated under the guise of the old man, that helps explain his dramatic ascent to an influential position in a short time. While the old man has not always shown antipathy toward metahumans in the Mojave, mostly when he is kind to them, it is in order to get them to leave. When people are staying for longer periods of time (camping overnight, etc.) the old man becomes more mischievous or even hostile, which is consistent with Baelosh's attitude toward beings of the material



plane. It could be that he simply has grown impatient and more hostile with age, leading to his current activities at the Crater.

Baelosh is not the old man: The Mojave is a large spot, so it's quite possible that it could host two different spirits with varying degrees of antipathy for metahumans. There is no evidence that Baelosh is the old man, and the two of them make decidedly different impressions on those they encounter. Even when the old man is hostile, he's indirect—he's a trickster more than he is an aggressor. Baelosh, on the other hand, will get in the face of anyone he doesn't like and make it clear what he thinks of that person, that person's mother, that person's great aunt, and anyone else who may have contacted that person at any point in their blighted, pointless life. And people listen to whatever Baelosh has to say, because he's quite capable of overwhelming and intimidating those he encounters. The old man, for all his tricks, isn't known to do that.

- That doesn't mean anything. Spirits are capable of manifesting in different ways at different times. The old man could be one way this particular spirit manifests, while Baelosh could be another. Two sides of the same coin. Or of the same die, depending on how complex this being is.
- Elijah
- The old man of the Mojave and Baelosh are not the same, because the old man is not a spirit. He is something entirely and utterly else.
- Man-of-Many-Names

In the arena of non-spirit activities, the Mojave is not as active as it used to be. The attacks on the Horizon spirit research center sent a chill through most of the megacorporations, and since places like Vegas and LA are not that far away, the corps have contented themselves with keeping their facilities in civilized parts of the world and not venturing any more into the Mojave until it feels more secure. One exception is Horizon's Mojave Spaceport, which continues operations, but the number of launches it hosts are small.

Another exception is the massive solar furnace the PCC owns in the Mojave, the Tawa Solar Field. Located a few hundred kilometers northeast of LA, this is actually a series of solar plants located close to each other. The main reason for having multiple fields instead of one giant one is security; having endless rows of solar panels can create a large perimeter, which is difficult to watch. Additionally, having separate fields creates redundancy; if one field goes down, the others are still sending out juice to the various parts of the PCC. That's somewhat unfortunate for us, as it would be extremely enticing to have a single target to attack in order to cause mass chaos. Still, each solar field puts out a fair amount of power (generally enough to power about five percent of a good-sized sprawl), so hitting even one of them would have an effect; hitting more than one could create chaos, if that's what you were after.

- The trick is knowing where the chaos is going to hit. The PCC is not forthcoming with exactly where the juice from each plant is flowing.
- Turbo Bunny

- If you're thinking of hitting the solar field to cause chaos you can take advantage of in some sprawl or another, you're doing it wrong. Just go to the sprawl in question and take out a transformer or something rather than monkey around with the solar fields. No, if you're going to go out here, your target should be the PCC. They know how expensive law enforcement and related activities get when the power goes down. So take a plant over (or get the whole complex if you've got a small army at your disposal) and then let the PCC know how much it'll cost to get control back. If you make the amount somewhat less than what they'd pay for in law enforcement, insurance claims, and disaster cleanup, you may have a deal.
- Stone
- "Small army" is right, though. The PCC is well aware of the importance of these plants, and they've got them guarded every which way.
- Riser
- But who would want to do a frontal assault? If they've got a lot of security, that means they've got a lot of HR needs, so they're probably hiring frequently. Get yourself a job, get yourself clearance, get inside, then disappear into the shadows and cause some trouble.
- DangerSensei

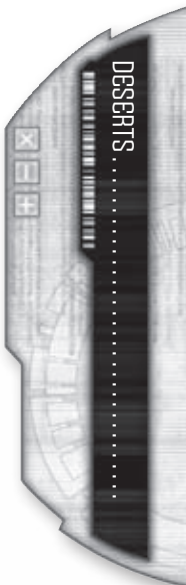
SAHARA

If you're going to talk about the Sahara, you have to start with Desert Wars. This is where it started, and it remains the original and most popular, despite all the spin-offs and knockoffs that have come in its wake. Some of that is because the producers of Desert Wars make a point of seeking out the best of the best, top notch talent behind the camera and in the various tech trucks spread out across the desert, people who anticipate what's going to happen and are on the scene in advance to capture the shots from as many angles as possible.

- The importance of these people cannot be overestimated. People often say that camera operators are not really necessary, that you could get all the footage you need from cybereyes and gun cams and the like. But the people who say that have never seen battle footage that solely consists of those things. It's jittery, hard to follow, and dizzying. More distant shots are needed to set the scene, to give perspective, and to help viewers understand the various troop movements that lead to skirmishes. So if you want to get a look at Desert Wars without getting shot at, teach yourself to use a camera. Get some experience filming local urban brawl teams, then see if you can latch on as someone's assistant or something.
- Glitch

You also need sound techs who can make the sound of bullets crack, and who can give a gel round thudding into someone's skull a visceral thud. And you need directors who can combine all the raw footage into something that tells a story and wraps the viewer up in the tales of mercenaries plodding across endless stretches of sand.

That's only part of the reason for the continued popularity of the original. Another part is the desert itself. The Sahara has a





sweep that has captured the imagination. From Saint-Exupery to Michael Ondaatje to Esme Caridad, writers have been caught up in the vast, empty beauty of the landscape. There is an historical appeal as well. From the magnificence of the kingdoms of the Egyptian pharaohs to the legendary exploits of Erwin Rommel in World War II to the lightning-paced insanity of the 10-Minute War, the Sahara has the allure of thousands of years of history to draw people to it.

Then there are the sights. The pyramids of Giza. The Eye of the Sahara. The cave of swimmers. The abandoned adobe city of Igha. Yes, the desert contains kilometer after kilometer of barren, heat-blasted sand, but buried in the wasteland are treasures worth seeking out.

All these things taken together (along with the nearly nine and a half million square kilometers it fills), make the Sahara the king of deserts, and make the Desert Wars that take place there the one that has no need of a location descriptor after the name.

This means that the megacorporations generally send their best personnel and equipment to Desert Wars. They know that it's a strong advertising opportunity for them—if one of their people gets a good kill while clearly holding one of the corporation's latest products, sales generally increase at least thirty percent immediately. If the product is not on the market, a successful appearance on Desert Wars goes a long way to generating buzz.

This, of course, was what Ares was thinking when they introduced the Ares Excalibur into Desert Wars fighting last season. To say it didn't go well was an understatement. Stories of the weapon jamming the moment it was fired, even if it was in mint condition and properly lubricated, started being told as soon as the gun hit the field. The longer it was out, the more the problems multiplied. Clips wouldn't eject. Smartgun systems couldn't identify targets properly. And sometimes, just for fun, the shoulder stock would just plain fall off.

It seemed like every step in the manufacturing process, from planning to implementation to testing, was wrong for this thing. The only way it could have ever made it to the field was because it was a desperate rush job without appropriate quality assurance. Ares weapons engineers were, for some reason, very anxious to get a new weapon out on the field, and that anxiety led to them putting an extremely subpar gun in the hands of troops who need something reliable if they want to stay alive.

- That reason is profits, of course, but the real issue is why they need such a quick infusion of profits. There are a lot of things coming to a head. The chaos in Seattle tied to artifacts hunting and the Ork Underground have made law enforcement very expensive, and there is speculation that Knight Errant is actually losing money on the deal at the moment. The fact that Ares didn't get any of the big Skyhook contracts hurt, and even though they've been boasting about all the gear they've been supplying to the Space Rescue Service, that doesn't necessarily make up for what they expected to have. Then you have the fact that the Excalibur may have been rushed at the end, but that came after an extended and expensive research process that had to come up with results to justify the expense. The fact that it failed got plenty of Ares people scrambling to save their jobs.

- Cosmo

While the failure of the Excalibur is clear, what isn't known is just how it failed. Ares went on a public relations blitz once word of the gun's poor performance leaked out, and they scrubbed the Matrix of anything that provided detailed (or even vague) descriptions of the gun's flaws. They've also been scooping up all the discarded weapons that Desert Wars troops dumped in the Sahara sands in an effort to make sure no one finds one and puts up a detailed autopsy of the thing on the Matrix. There are two things they don't want getting out—details on just how bad the gun was, and information about the new tech they tried to slip into it. Because no matter how bad the gun was, it carried the results of months or even years of expensive research, and engineers who get a hold of it may be able to learn just what it was that Ares thought would be so groundbreaking about the gun.

- Their early leaks about the gun—along with the negative reviews that they doctored to be more positive—emphasized the gun's rate of fire. Basically, they were saying that you could get seven or eight bullets into someone as fast as other guns shot six rounds. If you can do that while controlling the recoil—which was another thing the publicity claimed it would do—then you have a pretty good gun.
- Hard Exit
- Not sure what there would be to gain by finding one of these things, then. If it jammed all the time, which was supposedly the problem, then their plans for increasing the rate of fire simply didn't work. You'd be reverse engineering bad technology.
- Marcos
- There's always the chance that they were just a step or two away from the right answer, and the attempt they made could spur another engineer to the right solution.
- Nephrine
- Bottom line—if you can find a discarded Excalibur before Ares troops get to it, you'll be able to find a buyer for the thing.
- Traveler Jones

But the Sahara is about more than Desert Wars. Deserts across the world host pockets of magic and astral activity, possibly because it's a spot where spirits can gather without interference from material beings.

- That's part of the reason, but not all of it. Many of the astral phenomena that occur in deserts have nothing to do with spirit activity; they are places of power that likely existed in other epochs when magic was part of the world. Some have speculated that these areas are often found in deserts because the magic spots play a role in causing the deserts to exist in the first place. One theory is that in previous ages, spellcasters drew on these power sources in intense ways that blasted all life out of the area. That's a somewhat dubious theory, though, as it does not take into account the climatological conditions that cause a desert to exist. Another theory states that the magic spots in these deserts shape the climate, making them what they are. Research is underway onto just how that might work.
- Elijah

One of the notable spots in the Sahara is Tassili-n-Ahaggar, a spot four hundred kilometers southwest of the city of Tamanrasset that hosts some ancient red-rock formations. Nomads of the Sahara have reported seeing an ancient city appearing among the rocks. According to some reports, the city appeared continuously for two months in 2063, and some residents were seen wandering from building to building, though no one was ever able to get close enough to one of them to talk to them. Then the city vanished again, staying away for most of the second half of the Desert Wars season. In the early part of this year, the city started making more frequent appearances, and it was seen for almost the entire month of February.

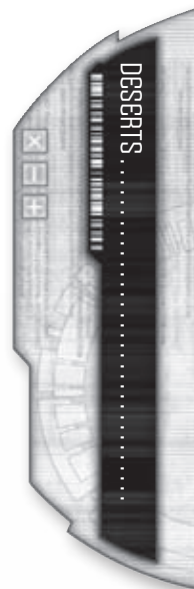
The city appears old and solidly constructed, and it sports clear Hellenistic influences. Ionic columns and pediments with ornate friezes are common sights. Marble is used, along with traditional adobe architecture; the marble has the brownish tinge characteristic of Algerian marble. This is not terribly odd, as the Carthaginians brought back plenty of Greek influences from their wars in Europe, though seeing it on the scale this city purportedly displays is unusual.

We have very little information about this city and what it looks like besides the eyewitness accounts of nomads. It does not show up on satellite photos, and nomads with commlinks or cybereyes who have tried to get an image of the city have said that nothing shows up. Some people have taken this lack of hard evidence to mean that the supposed city is either an illusion or a massive hoax, though the amount of eyewitnesses out there make the latter explanation unlikely. If it's an illusion, there is a question of who is casting it and for what purpose, and no theories about that have emerged.

- That's because there are no plausible motivations for someone to conjure up a city in the middle of the desert. This isn't an illusion, it's an alchera, but I don't think it's a manifestation from our own history. I think this is a city from another plane crossing over, though I don't have information beyond that.
- Plan 9
- Just because we can't determine the motivation for such an illusion immediately does not mean it's not an illusion. Dragons, for example, have long taken actions that we do not understand in the short term.
- Man-of-Many-Names

While the city at Tassili-n-Ahaggar comes and goes, the abandoned city of Ihda is there all the time, solid, easy to interact with, and utterly empty. Located in the north-central Sahara in present-day Egypt, Ihda is a city without record. No civilization claims to have built it, and no one claims to live there. Its name comes from Tuareg nomads, and it simply means "quiet." It looks like many other adobe desert villages, though perhaps somewhat larger than most. Oddly enough, it is immaculately kept. Every building is in perfect repair, without a crack in any wall. The streets are not paved, but they are tightly packed and they are clean. The city looks to be move-in ready. But no one ever enters the buildings.

If you talk to visitors, they can't say exactly why they don't enter any of the building. It's not that the doors are locked, because they don't even get to the point of testing the doors. And





INCOMING FEED.....



even if they were, the windows are unblocked by glass or anything else, and are large enough for people to crawl through. The visitors, though, don't do that. They look at the buildings, marvel at their pristine condition in the middle of all the blowing sand, and then walk by them. When they talk about their visit, they express curiosity about what may be inside, but when asked why they didn't find out, they just shrug and say that it never came up.

There clearly is some mystery surrounding the city, but so far none of the big guns in the magic field have been motivated to look into it because they don't have any indication that there's a big enough payoff waiting for them.

- They should look again. The city lights up the astral plane, only no one knows what the auras are. Their nature is completely opaque. That could mean they represent an entirely new kind of spellcasting, which could result in a good payoff indeed.
- Jimmy No
- Unless all that new technique is good for is keeping adobe in good repair and encouraging people to stay out of buildings. That's not all that remarkable—we can do that, and more, with what we already know. Still, the city's aura is worth a look, at least for those with intellectual curiosity.
- Winterhawk

If you want to visit a site in the Sahara that presents its magic on its face without fading in and out all the time, check out the Eye of the Sahara, also known as the Richat Structure. This thing is best seen from above—far above—so that you can see the blue

bull's-eye it paints in the desert sands. It's almost like a target for visiting extraterrestrials, and there has been no shortage of alien-related theories about its existence. None of which I have any interest in reviewing.

Since the Awakening, the Eye has been strongly aspected toward the Islamic tradition, and it is a frequent destination of Muslim pilgrims, especially those seeking initiation. The Eye is located in the western part of the Sahara, approximately five hundred kilometers from the coast. The small town of Atar is your gateway to the Eye, and you can find several guides more than happy to take you there for the right price.

- When the corps or anyone else has an Islamic spellcaster that they don't particularly like, they've found that having them vanish on a trip to the Eye is a convenient way to get them out of their hair. They've got guides on their payroll who help them in this, so be careful about who you hire.
- Goat Foot
- Atar is also a stop on the Dakar Rally, which is always all kinds of fun. Two weeks, nearly ten thousand kilometers (depending on the route the organizers choose), high speeds, dune buggies, teams sabotaging each other, and the occasional stray pedestrian getting run over. I'd drive it for free.
- Kane

GOBI

There are plenty of reasons to go into the Gobi, and at least one reason—one really big reason—to stay away.



INCOMING FEED.....



DESERTS

Like the Sahara, the Gobi is host to a lucrative Desert Wars franchise, one that's far more popular than the Mojave spinoff. Much of that is due to the creativity and verve of the teams involved. Last season, the fighting in the Mojave turned into a tedious slugfest, an unimaginative series of frontal assaults piled one after another. The combatants of the Gobi, on the other hand, not only understand the desert, but they know that their opponents have that same understanding, so they work overtime to befuddle their enemies, developing tactics they hope the other side will not expect. For example, in the last season Team Hercules started the season with efforts to hinder enemy reconnaissance efforts. Watcher spirits and astrally projecting mages are the most relied upon recon units, so Team Hercules set about erecting wards and barriers and summoning spirits of their own to give the recon units trouble spotting them and make them slow to report back.

They then took advantage of the slowed-down recon by keeping their mobile units constantly on the move. With three drivers per vehicle, they were able to be mobile twenty-four hours a day.

- The unsung heroes of this strategy were the supply line guys. Keeping vehicles constantly on the move makes it tricky to make connections for food and fuel, but they were regularly able to get supplies where they needed to be without hindering the vehicles' movement. If the other teams had maybe focused some shadow efforts on messing up the various meet-ups for supplies, they might have had a better result.
- Hard Exit

In the course of their maneuvering, they managed to get Ares' Team Blue within one hundred kilometers of the Yadan Rock Formations, and from that point they knew that the Ares team would be very conscious of the formations and anxious to stay away from them. They planned their actions accordingly, including a devastating infantry ambush that occurred when Team Blue made a sudden move to the east to stay clear of the walks and found the infantry dug into the sand, waiting for them. Team Blue was whittled down, their reconnaissance got slower and slower, until three lances of Team Hercules closed on them from three different directions and crushed them.

All this is to say that staying mobile in the desert is a good thing, but staying a step ahead of your competition is even better. This is even more important in the Gobi than it is in other deserts, because the Gobi is the home of the Mongolian death worm. These things were not given their names lightly. Red, sometimes as long as three meters, and filled with corrosive spit and an essential nastiness, these are creatures most sane people avoid. Unless, of course, those people have developed a taste for Mongolian death worm meat. Yes, the creatures are ugly, mean, and dangerous, but cooked properly they are tender and succulent, with a taste oddly like fresh fish. The meat is expensive, mainly because the worms are not easy to catch. If you find yourself in the Gobi short on cash, you could do worse than taking out a death worm and selling it to the locals. Just don't let it spit on you.

There are plenty of other treasures in the desert. Evo and Eastern Tiger have competed over the oil and natural gas reserves there, and Renraku and Wuxing have also shown interest in digging for copper and gold within the desert. So far the jockeying

has been relatively civil, but there are never enough resources to go around when it comes to the megacorps, so eventual tensions are inevitable.

The magic-oriented corps have also shown growing interest in the area, and MCT feels they have an advantage since they know the region somewhat better than Aztechnology. The magical jade found in the desert is a prized ingredient in fetishes and foci, and MCT sponsors several exploring teams looking for deposits.

- Jane Baderraan, an ork who is fond of pith helmets, has contacts across the globe looking for people who have a knack for navigating deserts. If she hears good things about you, she might well invite you to be part of one of these exploration teams. So make sure she hears good things about you.
- 2XL

ARABIAN

Possibly the most significant parts of the Arabian Desert are the political powers that surround it. The cities of Dubai, Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, and Medina host plenty of intrigue and wealth, to the point that it's easy to forget about what's happening in the wilderness and focus on the urban areas. This is especially true with the recent chaos in Dubai, where Hestaby destroyed Saeder-Krupp's local headquarters. In the aftermath, corporations thought they perceived weakness in S-K and moved to take some of their clients, but S-K struck back with a vengeance, showing in no uncertain terms (with the help of a few well-placed explosions) that they still were not to be trifled with. And besides these recent developments, you have the ongoing politicking between Ibn Eisa, the al-Shammar family, and the House of Saud keeping things interesting.

But overlooking the desert in favor of the cities is a mistake, if only because the desert can provide a useful place to hide out if you get in trouble in the cities. The Bedouins of the desert are more willing to take people at face value—in the cities, you often either have to be Muslim or at least pass for Muslim, but the Bedouins don't care so much. They especially don't care if you have some money you're willing to share, and they can be a good hire, as no one else can guide you across the desert as effectively as they can.

- Just be careful and do some legwork before you start throwing around money. Bedouin politics happen on a smaller scale than they do in the Caliphate, but they can still be intense. Turf wars seem like an odd concept in an area where the land is always shifting under your feet, but they happen. Get some idea of who's fighting who and what territory they consider to be their own. If you hire a group of Bedouins to help you cross the territory of one of their rivals, you could find yourself in the middle of a shooting match before you know what's happening. Some of the desert denizens seem quite capable of simply rising out of the sand.
- Goat Foot

The Arabian Desert has one advantage most of the major deserts lack, in that it is essentially contained in a single nation. In the Sahara or the Gobi, any attempts to crackdown on desert dwellers is met by the targets simply hopping across the border until things cool down. That can't happen in the Arabian Caliphate, so things aren't quite as wild and woolly as they get in other deserts.

Still, though, this is a vast plain of inhospitable sand, and it is impossible for the government to exercise control over the whole area. This is especially true of a roving band of hobgoblins that the government has sought for a number of years but been unable to find. They are infidels and proud of it, often targeting the more devout Muslims that come into their sights. They frequently operate near to the major cities of the Caliphate, if only because inciting violence in the middle of a desert is like having a tree fall when there is no one to hear it. The hobgoblins enjoy the violence they're engaging in, don't get me wrong, but they also enjoy striking fear and anger into the hearts of the nation's citizens, and they can't do that if no one knows what they're up to. They've gotten bolder in some of their recent attacks, and some rumors say they are planning a major action in one of the larger sprawls of the Caliphate, though the specific target has not been identified.

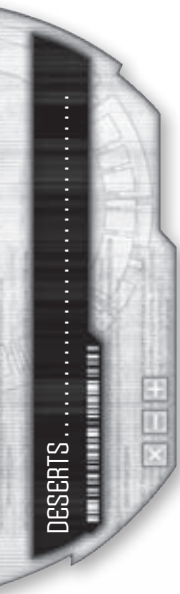
- It's not going to be Dubai. There's too much else happening there; whatever they try is going to get lost in the shuffle. I'd put my money on Medina, as that would be a nice strike at the symbolic heart of the nation. Needless to say, the government would pay nicely for any information about a planned strike. They'd pay even more for some of the hobgoblins' heads on a platter.
- Goat Foot
- These hobgoblins aren't doing anything to advance Infected rights in the Caliphate (not that the Caliphate was ever too interested in that concept to begin with). If these hobgoblins succeed in whatever they have planned, the poisonous atmosphere created by the Mealtime Killer and other events could get even worse.
- Hannibelle

AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK

There's wealth hiding in the Outback; the question is who is going to brave the area's constant mana storms to retrieve it.

It would be one thing if the wealth came in the form of basic natural resources—oil, heavy metals, that sort of thing. It's nice to have spellcasters along on industrial operations to help things go smoothly, but they're not strictly necessary, and the work could be done without them. The wealth that lies in the Outback, though, is of an Awakened nature, and that means you need Awakened people to find it. If it's going to be uncovered, mages need to be found who can endure the mana storms.

- This is not a trifling matter. Being out in a mana storm is not just like getting wet. It's disorienting and dizzying, a mental assault that can leave you helpless for hours or even days. If you try to cast a spell in the middle of a storm, you have no idea what might happen; it could work normally, it could fizzle, or it could erupt with so much power that you are left completely limp. Or worse, you could have so much power surge through you that some of your ability is permanently burned out of you.
- Winterhawk
- One quick trip for those of you foolhardy enough to venture into the Outback: Keep your eyes on the metaroos. They flee from any magical abnormalities, so if you see a group of them running in a certain direction, know that something potentially bad is behind them—possibly a brewing mana storm.
- Jimmy No



Since Awakened researchers have had trouble venturing out into the Outback, it's not certain just how much wealth it contains, or what its nature is. Australia has long had an extraordinary diversity of flora and fauna, and that seems to have extended to the Awakened creatures that now inhabit the continent. By cataloging the plants and animals that are hiding in the Outback, a researcher could gain a host of new magical reagents, and the money that comes with introducing a new product to the market.

- Explorations of the Outback aren't just about finding living plants and animals. Powdered fossils from the region have been shown to be valuable reagents, so make sure you have someone with paleontology skills with you should you go exploring.
- Elijah

There's another obstacle to exploring the Outback, and that obstacle's name is Altjira. About the only thing we know about this creature besides its name is that it is quite angry. What's irritated it is something that happened far from home—the development of the space elevator at Kilimanjaro. Most people assume that this means Altjira is some kind of spirit, and that it is angry at the way the spirits of Kilimanjaro have been treated. This is a reasonable assumption, and very well may be the case, but there other possible explanations. Some have surmised that Altjira is not so much concerned about the spirits as he is the desecration of the land, which is being used to make it easier for industrialists to desecrate other planets. According to this theory, Altjira is a manifestation of a portion of the spirit of Gaia, defending both this planet and the others that humanity may pollute.

- This theory has a small amount of poetic appeal, but its downside is that it is insane. "A portion of the spirit of Gaia?" What the hell is that? And how is it getting so passionate about planets that don't currently have ecosystems, and thus don't have a "spirit" the way we think of this planet as having one. No, Occam's Razor is the tool to use here, and that tells us that Altjira is a spirit, not a portion of Gaia.
- Snopes
- The risk of thinking of it as a spirit is you might believe it is like something you have encountered before. It is not.
- Man-of-Many-Names

SURVIVING THE DESERT

Many of the techniques of desert survival are, interestingly enough, similar to Arctic survival: Stay hydrated. Keep your skin covered. Be extremely vigilant in avoiding sunburn. Stay warm.

Stay warm? In a place where the temperatures regularly jump over 50 degrees? You better believe it, and forgetting this part of the equation has gotten a whole lot travelers in trouble. Remember, the desert that hits 50 during the day could very well drop to 10 or 5 degrees at night, or even below freezing. You'll need warmth to stay alive.

It's tempting (and often reasonable) to get that warmth by lighting a fire, but that can get you in trouble too. Lights in the desert stand out like searchlights, so before you light a fire you'd



better be certain that there is nothing around that could get you in trouble if they see you.

Since you want to stay warm in the evening hours and cool in the daytime hours, the best times to get things done are morning and evening. That's when you'll see a lot of the area wildlife awake and active. Take your cue from them—they know what they're doing.

- If you rest during the day, don't lie directly on the ground unless you're completely in shade. The ground gets awfully hot in the sun, and it can dry you out if you're not careful.
- Traveler Jones

Remember that if there's something you'll be doing for comfort, other creatures will be doing the same thing. So if you're going to be seeking out the shade in the daytime, then so will many other living things in the desert. The ones you have to watch out for are the ones that are quite adept at hiding in corners and other small spots. Spiders, scorpions, and snakes could all be lurking in that empty building or under that tree at an oasis, so carefully search any area before you make yourself comfortable on it.

If you have an option, you naturally want to have a vehicle with you in the desert, but there will often be times when you have to head out on foot. Be very careful with your choice of shoes. Yes, people wear sandals to the beach and in the desert; that doesn't mean you can slap on any old pair of flip-flops and think you'll be okay. If you're going to wear shoes that are open on top, you'd better be wearing loose robes that come down to your feet or socks. Sunburn on the top of your feet is not pleasant.

- You'd better not be wearing sandals and socks. Just because you're in the desert doesn't mean you should suddenly become gauche.
- /dev/grrl

The part of the shoe you need to pay the most attention to, though, is the sole. The ground of the desert has been weathered and hardened by years of hard winds and relentless sun. It wears away anything that touches it faster than any surface I know, unless for some reason you spend a lot of time walking around on fields of razors. Get good shoes, or be prepared to be overtaken by someone whose feet don't hurt.

ADVANCES IN MAGIC

Since many of the risks of exposure in the Arctic are similar to the risks of the deserts, some of the spells developed for Arctic use also work in arid climates. Personal Warmth, for example, is designed to keep people warm in cold conditions, but at its heart it is a temperature maintenance spell, so mages can use it to keep cool in the desert. Hydrate, of course, is valuable in any environment, and Dehydrate is perhaps even more effective as a weapon in the desert than it is in the cold.

There are a few advances, however, directly inspired by life in the desert, or more specifically by Desert Wars teams seeking for an advantage. Mages in Desert Wars have known the advantage of using grand troops to hold a position and hem in mobile troops, and those ground troops are especially effective when they're tough to find. The best place to hide, in many instances, is under the sand. Mages have plenty of tools at their disposal, including Levitate and Shape Sand, that can get troops into and out of the sand, but

there's one problem—making sure they can breathe. Putting them under a Physical Barrier dome that's covered by sand is one possible solution, but that can be cumbersome and obvious. The Air Filter spell is a simpler solution, especially for smaller groups. In essence, mana acts as a kind of gill over the subject's mouth, filtering out anything the subject should not breathe in and letting in air. This has limited applicability—sand is loosely packed enough that there is enough air in the immediate vicinity of an individual's head to let them breathe for an hour or two. Wet sand or dirt is denser, though, and a subject buried in one of those substances would survive only a short time before they ran out of air.

The Insulate spell is handy for mages stuck in the desert without the appropriate materials. The spell creates an invisible layer that protects you from the temperatures of a surface. You can still interact with the surface—rocks you lie on will feel like rocks—but the temperatures won't get to you. This spell has some uses beyond the desert. It is nice if you have to sleep in an igloo, for example, or if you're on a snatch-and-grab and have to grab something that is quite hot or cold.

Game Information.....

SPELL STATISTICS

Air Filter

Type: M **Range:** LOS **Duration:** S **DV:** (F/2)-1

This spell allows subjects to breathe if they are buried underground or in water. They can breathe for fifteen minutes per point of Spellcasting test hits. The spell only works if the subject is buried in sand, loose dirt, or underwater. In dirt and wet sand, the amount of time the subject can breathe is cut in half.

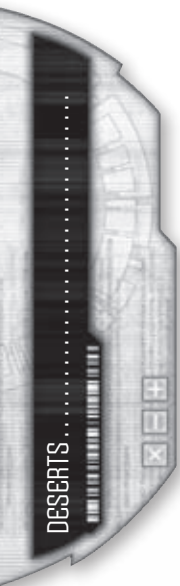
Insulate

Type: P **Range:** Area **Duration:** S **DV:** (F/2)-1

This spell creates an area of [Spellcasting test hits] square meters where the temperature is effectively metahuman body temperature. Objects can pass through the spell without being blocked or slowing down; the temperature of objects is not affected by the spell, only the mage's ability to touch and interact with those items. Once the spell is cast, the area it affects cannot be moved, and it needs to be cast on an area, not an individual. The spell has a limited range—it can only insulate things within 20 degrees Celsius of human body temperature.

DESERT GEAR

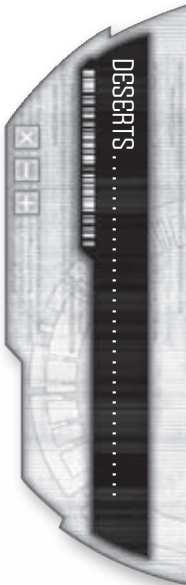
The array of gear for deserts and extreme environments is already impressive and rather extensive, but there are always new advances that can be made. One of the handiest is PermaMarker. This is a small pole with a light on top, but it holds a small camera and a bunch of data. When you plant the pole in the sand, it puts out small legs that help it stay stable in the sand. If the pole cannot find any satellites to link to, you can program it with the correct day and time and the pole will then make a note of the location

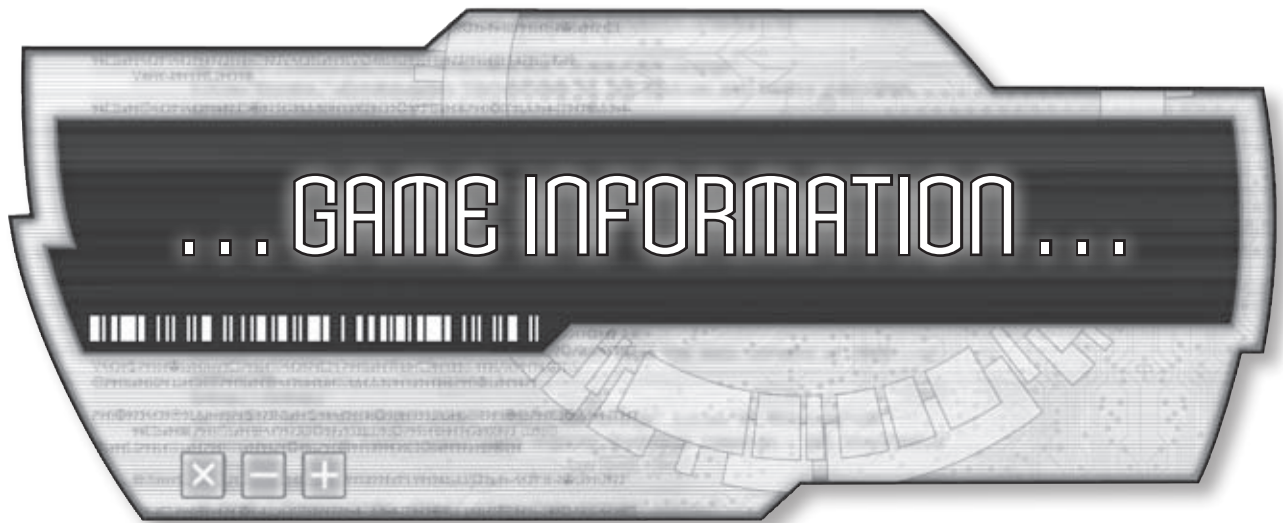


of the sun and other celestial objects and use that information to note its exact coordinates. Once it knows those coordinates, it stays there. It uses the small legs at its base to stay upright and to maneuver itself back into position if shifting sands cause it to move. It can even dig itself back into the sand and put itself back upright if it is removed, though it takes an hour to get upright, and then it travels back to its destination at a speed of one meter per minute. This can be a valuable way to mark locations in the desert and have them stay marked. The light on top can be set to flash, and at night it can be seen at distances of up to five kilometers, depending on changes in the ground elevation.

Another useful item is the cooling blanket, which is filled with a gel that carries heat away from the body. For desert use, these blankets are built with reflectors on one side, so that most of the solar energy that hits them is not absorbed (a small amount is taken in to provide enough power to circulate the gel). You can place the blanket over your whole body and have a makeshift shelter in the middle of the day. The biggest danger is that the highly reflective top can be seen from far away, so don't use it if someone is looking for you.

- Remember that some of what is needed in the desert is not new gear, but rather maintenance of what you have. Clean your gear regularly, especially your guns, to keep sand out of them. Make sure you have plenty of lubricants for everything, including yourself.
- Traveler Jones
- And don't forget a good medkit with a powerful anti-venin. There aren't a ton of critters in the desert that will overpower you, but there are a number that will sting or bite you, wait for you to die or be weak from their poison, then close in to finish you off. Don't give them the chance.
- Sticks





Perhaps the most important thing to remember when running an adventure or campaign in an extreme environment is that the players should never be able to forget where they are. The setting may fade into the background in other circumstances, but here it should be front and center, reminding the players that if they take their current surroundings for granted, they'll die. While food and water is generally not tracked in *Shadowrun*, characters in extreme environments should make occasional Survival tests to ensure that they can find the basics (mainly water) that they need to survive. The thresholds and modifiers listed on p. 137, *SR4A*, should be used; be sure to use the modifier for extended travel in the extreme environments to reflect the difficulty of being in these environments for extended periods of time. Thresholds for tests in deserts should be raised if temperatures reach certain extremes. For example, if desert temperatures reach 50 degrees Celsius, the threshold of Survival tests should be raised to 4. Conversely, when wind chills in Arctic reach -50 degrees Celsius, the threshold of Survival tests should be raised to 5.

RULES FOR EXTREME ENVIRONMENTS

WEAPONS IN EXTREME ENVIRONMENTS

Some weapons simply do not function in certain environments. As noted on p. 151, *Arsenal*, flamethrowers will not work in space or underwater, no matter how they are modified (they will, of course, work in space stations or underwater facilities, though naturally they should be used cautiously in such settings).

Note that without the Level 1 Extreme Environment modification, weapons eventually cease to function. To simulate this, gamemasters may use a rule similar to the Failure Pool rule in *Spy Games* (p. 141). For each device without an extreme environments modification, start with a Failure Pool of six dice, and roll those dice before using the device. If there is not at least one success on the roll, the device does not function properly. Then, for each half-day that the device is in these conditions, take one die away from the Failure Pool. Taking time to clean and/or lubricate the weapon can restore a single die to the Failure Pool, though this action can only be

effective once per day; restoring the weapon to normal operational temperatures for a full day rebuilds the Failure Pool to six dice.

DAMAGE TO PROTECTIVE GEAR

Protective gear, particularly gear meant to protect individuals in the cold and in outer space, depends on the gear staying whole and undamaged to function properly. A single hole in the clothing individuals wear in these environments can mean death.

To reflect this, cold-weather gear should lose some of its functionality if it is significantly damaged (to the level of a hole that pierces the entire garment), cutting its insulation rating in half. Each hour this damage goes unrepaired, the insulation rating is cut in half again; making a field repair restores the garment back to half of its original insulation rating. If the garment has a rescaler, the insulation is only reduced by 1 per hole in the garment.

SWEATING IN THE COLD

As mentioned in the *Arctic Wastelands* chapter (p. 64), sweating due to exertion in the Arctic can cause heat loss. If characters are involved in combat that lasts more than ten rounds, travel at a pace faster than their walking rate for more than five minutes, or carry weights that require a Strength test for more than five minutes, they should be considered to be sweating. They then get a -2 dice pool modifier to Survival tests unless they have a wicking under layer.

PERCEPTION IN EXTREME ENVIRONMENTS

The lack of vegetation and the hard, flat ground makes sound and images carry farther in Arctic and desert environments, though there also is glare to deal with. To reflect this, any Perception tests in these environments involving sound receive a +2 dice pool modifier. Perception tests in desert environments in the daytime receive a -1 dice pool modifier; in Arctic environments there is a -2 dice pool modifier to reflect the glare in these environments (there is no glare, of course, in the middle of an Arctic storm or sandstorm; for modifiers for those situations, see p. 136, *SR4A*). At night in these environments, visual Perception tests receive a +2 dice pool modifier to see any kind of light; exceptionally bright lights make this modifier +3.

INCOMING FEED.....



The deep sea, on the other hand, reduces all Perception modifiers by -2 , as both sound and light travel poorly in the water. For depths of more than 300 meters, raise the visual modifier to -3 .

In outer space, sound simply does not travel, so there are no Perception tests involving sound. Light, on the other hand, travels quite well, and visual Perception tests should receive a $+2$ dice pool modifier.

RUNNING IN SPACE

Shadowruns in space present particular obstacles. Other extreme environments are generally reachable by the conventional means runners have at their disposal; most runners, by contrast, don't have a space jockey they can immediately turn to who can launch them into orbit. Additionally, while the Arctic, deserts, and deep sea can kill you, none kills you as fast as outer space, and none presents conditions quite as alien as space does. This means that extra care—and extra detail—is needed if runners plan to run in space.

Getting Into Space

With the signing of the Space Operations Charter in 2070, space travel is more difficult. At most spaceports, security is extremely tight, with security and customs agents utilizing state-of-the-art technologies. Guards at these locations follow strict protocol and procedures. All passengers traveling into space must submit to preflight screening before being allowed to board their vessel. Everything from MAD scanners to face recognition software is employed; each piece of equipment has a Rating of 7 or higher. Weapons and any kind of dangerous ordnance are strictly forbidden for space travel; this includes any kind of combat-oriented augmentations. As a general rule, such persons are banned from space travel, though they may be allowed if they are able to get special permissions in advance. The penalties for violations depend on the type of weapon or ordnance discovered, but the minimum is usually a fine of twenty thousand nuyen and a prison sentence of three years.

Zero Gravity

Except for on some of the most largest or advanced stations or facilities, gravity will be a problem for most runners. While some facilities offer at least some gravity, most of them have none at all. Because of this, any kind of movement is hindered. Specific rules regarding movement and combat in reduced- and zero-gravity are covered on p. 165, *Arsenal*.

Long-term effects of zero-g environments are also a concern. Outside of normal gravity, the metahuman body degrades. To combat these effects, a regiment of exercise and supplements must be undertaken at least once every 24 hours or the character loses one point of Strength or Body (player's choice) per day. A Body $+ Strength (4)$ Test can be taken to resist the effects; remember that spells and adept abilities do not function in space and cannot be used to raise attributes for this test.

Cramped Quarters

Most space-born vessels or facilities are small and cramped by both design and necessity. Weight and mass are major factors in getting objects into space. As such, designers often have to compromise by utilizing relatively small frames where every

centimeter is used for vital systems and/or storage. Runners, especially larger metavariant species such as trolls, giants, and fomori, have a much more difficult time than dwarven runners. Any troll or variant trying to move in a space vessel unless it has been specifically modified for their larger frames receives a -1 penalty for movement.

Small Crews

An unexpected obstacle a runner may encounter while operating in space is the relatively small crew size. Because of their relative isolation and close quarters, most spacer crews tend to become very tight knit. They know each other's habits, mannerisms, quirks, and routines as well as they know their ship or station. If anything unusual happens either with each other or the equipment, they soon know something is wrong. This is especially disadvantageous for any runner attempting to alter something or someone while in space. Additionally, most crews become very protective of each other. Unless the job is long term, or they have a previous relationship, any runner trying to gain their trust will have a more difficult time if they are perceived as trying to divide the crew. This means that on Charisma-based tests, the NPCs who are part of the crew have a suspicious attitude, giving a -1 modifier to the player (see Social Modifiers Table, p. 131, *SR4A*).

Space Operations Charter and Special Space Service

When the corporations came up with the Space Operations Charter, they knew exactly what they were doing. Despite the PR about making space safe for travel and expansion, the truth is that the Corporate Court wants to protect their space investments in the only way they know how: by controlling as much of space as possible. To achieve this result, the SOC uses a combination of rules and regulations to force compliance. Many of these new regulations are safety standards that every space operator must meet. These codes and regulations change often and seem to vary depending on the inspector. Frequently, the independent operator can't afford to bring their operation up to code, or they get hit with several violations and are forced to go bankrupt or sell their operations to other parties (usually one of the megacorporations). Those that do manage to squeak by face the enforcement arm of the SOC, the Space Rescue Service. While many in the SRS cling to their mandate as space rescuers and stewards, they often understand the reality of their position: that they are a glorified brute-squad for the Corporate Court. Runners can use this to their advantage, using some of the disenchantment of some SRS personnel with their position to build trust. If the runners can convince an SRS officer that what they are attempting will bring some harm to the Corporate Court, or will build the reputation of the SRS as space rescuers instead of errand boys, then they will be seen as wanting a result that is advantageous to them, giving the players a +1 dice pool modifier on their social test (p. 131, *SR4A*).

SPACE HAZARDS

Most obstacles in space tend to be nothing more than inconveniences and can be overcome. Hazards are the things that will kill someone operating in space if they do not take proper precautions. These are some of the most common hazards runners will encounter in space.

Decompression

This is what all spacers fear the most. Decompression is direct exposure to the open vacuum of space, and it kills people who suffer it with a combination of asphyxia and extreme hypothermia; in extreme circumstances, explosive decompression (where exposure is so rapid that pressures in the body cause it to burst) may take place. The average temperature of space is -270 C, and the vacuum freezes organic matter unless countermeasures are taken. If a character is exposed to vacuum, they automatically take one box of physical damage, and they take another every round until the exposure is stopped. This damage cannot be resisted, though it does not affect individuals wearing complete and intact spacesuits.

Hull Breaches

In space, the hull is the only thing that separates the crew from the vacuum and radiation of space. Due to weight and mass restrictions, most hulls are relatively fragile. Unless stated otherwise, treat all facility hulls as having a Armor and Barrier Rating of 4. In the event of a hull breach, all characters within a meter of the breach must make a Strength (4) Test to avoid being jettisoned into space. Impose a -1 dice pool modifier for every half-meter of the breach's diameter. All those in the room at the next combat turn will take decompression damage as listed above and must again make the required Strength test.

Weapons Fire

There is a reason why projectile weapons are banned aboard space vessels and facilities. Even the lowest-powered ballistic weapon can cause a hull breach. Only weapons specifically designed for use in space can be safely deployed. Should a standard weapon be discharged on board a station and miss the intended target, the station itself must make a Damage Resistance test using its Armor rating, modified by the AP value of the weapon and ammunition. If the test fails, the station suffers a breach with an opening whose diameter equals to one-half meter per net failure (with a minimum diameter of half a meter).

Radiation/Solar Flares

In open space, there is no ozone layer to filter out the sun's radiation. To compensate for this, all vessels, stations, and spacesuits come with radiation shielding and can handle normal radiation levels without any special tests. The only exception to this is a solar flare. While they are rare, modern observation technology is able to detect a solar flare before it causes damage. Standard operating procedure is for the crew of a station to take shelter in a radiation-reinforced portion of the station. Those unlucky enough to be caught by a solar flare suffer radiation effects as described on p. 168, *Arsenal*.

Space Movement

Any person or vehicle (this includes drones) requires some type of maneuvering unit. The standard maneuvering unit for space suits is listed on p. 55, *Arsenal*. For vehicles, movement is handled with the same test and rules. While normally the mass of some larger vehicles would be more complicated, for simplicity it is assumed that the vessel's systems take this into account.



Travel Time

Due to the large distances in space, it takes a considerably longer time to travel from one region to another. When determining if a particular vehicle is capable of reaching a particular destination, a gamemaster should use the rule of thumb that they have enough fuel to make it there but will need to refuel before returning. If a gamemaster or players wish to have an idea of how long a particular trip will take, refer to the chart below. Gamemasters should note that Mars is not listed: an average trip from Earth to Mars takes approximately 214 days.

Game Information.....

LONG-DISTANCE SPACE TRAVEL

Origin	Destination	Travel Time
Earth Surface	LEO	2 hours
Earth Surface	GEO	12 hours
LEO	Earth Surface	1 hour
LEO	LEO	106 hours*
LEO	GEO	8 hours
GEO	Earth Surface	2 hours
GEO	LEO	2 hours
GEO	GEO	206 hours*
LEO/GEO	L1	12 hours
LEO/GEO	L3/L4/L5	36 hours
LEO/GEO/L4/L5	Moon or L2	72 or 84 hours
L1	L4/L5	12 hours
L1	L3	36 hours
L1	Moon or L2	60 or 72 hours
L3	L4/L5	24 hours
L3	Moon or L2	84 or 96 hours

*depends on destination or randomly determined



GAME INFORMATION
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NEW MAGIC

SPELLS

Air Filter (Manipulation)

Type: M **Range:** LOS **Duration:** S **DV:** (F/2)-1
This spell allows subjects to breathe if they are buried underground or in water. They can breathe for fifteen minutes per point of Spellcasting test hits. The spell only works if the subject is buried in sand, loose dirt, or underwater. In dirt and wet sand, the amount of time the subject can breathe is cut in half.

Convert Blood to Ichor (Health)

Type: P **Range:** Touch **Duration:** I **DV:** (F+2)+1
This spell changes a target's blood into rancid fluids, causing physical damage and pain to the target as tissues begin to putrefy and decay. Damage is (Force)P for the first Combat Turn, (Force-1) for the next Combat Turn, and so on until the damage reaches zero. Each turn, the target rolls Body + Counterspelling (if any) to resist the damage.

Dehydrate (Health, negative)

Type: P **Range:** T **Duration:** S **DV:** (F/2)+2
If the target of the spell is unable to resist, he experiences disorientation and nausea (p. 254, *SR4A*).

Detect Air Pocket (Active, Area)

Type: M **Range:** T **Duration:** S **DV:** (F/2)+1
This spell helps explorers avoid the deadly air pockets under the snow that could cause the ground to collapse under their feet, abruptly burying them in snow and ice. It also allows them to look for people who might be hiding in a snow tunnel.

Detect Air Pocket, Extended (Active, Extended Area)

Type: M **Range:** T **Duration:** S **DV:** (F/2)+3

Evaporate (Physical)

Type: P **Range:** LOS **Duration:** P **DV:** (F/2)+2
This spell negates the heat loss from sweat. It can affect a single individual for each point of Force. Individuals must be within the caster's line of sight when the spell is cast, but they do not need to stay in line of sight while the spell is being sustained.

Hydrate (Health)

Type: P **Range:** T **Duration:** P **DV:** (F/2)
Each hit on the Spellcasting test reduces fatigue damage due to dehydration by 1.

Inflict Disease (Health)

Type: P **Range:** Touch **Duration:** I **DV:** (F/2)+1
This spell is essentially the opposite of Cure Disease. It is designed to intentionally inflict an individual with a disease such as VITAS. The gamemaster can choose the specific disease that manifests through the spell. The Force of the spell is the same as the Power rating for the Disease. Net successes do not stage the power for the disease. After the resistance test, if the spell lands, the target needs to make a disease resistance test. If the character fails to resist the

power of the disease, symptoms begin manifesting in one Combat Turn. The disease then follows all the normal rules for diseases (p. 129, *Augmentation*).

Insulate (Manipulation)

Type: P **Range:** Area **Duration:** S **DV:** (F/2)-1
This spell creates an area of [Spellcasting test hits] square meters where the temperature is effectively metahuman body temperature. Objects can pass through the spell without being blocked or slowing down; the temperature of objects is not affected by the spell, only the mage's ability to touch and interact with those items. Once the spell is cast, the area it affects cannot be moved, and it needs to be cast on an area, not an individual. The spell has a limited range—it can only insulate things within 20 degrees Celsius of human body temperature.

Pack Snow (Physical)

Type: P **Range:** Area **Duration:** P **DV:** (F/2)+4
This spell increases the Structure Rating of snow pack by the number of hits.

Personal Warmth (Health)

Type: P **Range:** LOS **Duration:** S **DV:** (F/2)
Personal warmth maintains the proper body temperature of one or more metahumans. The number of people protected serves as the threshold for the Spellcasting test. Individuals must be within the caster's line of sight when the spell is cast, but they do not need to stay in line of sight while the spell is being sustained.

Polar Fog (Illusion)

Type: M **Range:** Area **Duration:** S **DV:** (F/2)-1
For each hit on the Spellcasting test, this fog provides a -1 modifier to visual Perception Tests attempted within its area.

Improved Polar Fog (Illusion)

Type: P **Range:** Area **Duration:** S **DV:** (F/2)+1
This is similar to Polar Fog, but it also affects cameras, electronic sensors, and the like.

Rot (Health)

Type: P **Range:** Touch **Duration:** I **DV:** (F/2)+3
Rot causes instantaneous death of localized tissue. If a caster gets at least two net successes on a target following the resistance test, the tissue surrounding the point of contact with the caster dies. With 2 or 3 net successes, the caster can destroy a hand or a foot. With 4 or more net successes, the caster can destroy an entire limb (arm, leg). If the torso is touched, with 2 or 3 successes, a specific organ dies (kidney, stomach, spleen, etc.). With 4 or more net successes, multiple organs can be destroyed. For each organ that fails, the character's effective Body attribute is reduced by 1. Unless the spell does enough damage to kill a character, the heart, brain and other critical, life-sustaining organs are damaged and impaired, but not destroyed. Afflicted characters require treatment at a medical facility to deal with the dead tissue. Heal spells cannot repair the dead tissue.

Snow Tunnel (Physical)

Type: P Range: LOS Duration: P DV: (F/2)+3

This spell helps mages create a stable structure dug out of snow. Tunnels made with the Snow Tunnel spell have 1 point of both Armor and Structure Rating per hit (normal snow tunnels have Armor Rating 1, Structure Rating 3).

Shape Ice (Physical)

Type: P Range: LOS Duration: P DV: (F/2)

This spell can shape one square meter of ice per point of Force.

ADEPT POWERS

Maintain Warmth (0.25 PP)

Adepts with this ability can resist the onset of hypothermia or other cold-related conditions.

NEW GEAR AND VEHICLES

NEW WEAPONS

Ares Predator CW (Heavy Pistol)

A cold-weather version of the Predator IV, this weapon has an electronic firing system to minimize the moving parts that could fail due to subzero temperatures. It still has the internal smartgun link, though the trigger guard has been removed so the bulky gloves of arctic gear won't be an issue. The shape has been streamlined to minimize the chance of snagging it on the bulkier clothing while drawing.

Use same game stats as Ares Predator IV, except add electronic firing and extreme environment modification (level 1).

Damage	AP	Mode	RC	Ammo	Avail	Cost
5P	-1	SA	—	15(c)	10R	1,500Y

Ares Arctic Rifle (Assault Rifle)

This rifle uses a special firing chamber and adds an electronic firing system to minimize the number of moving parts that could fail under the extreme conditions. The trigger guard is also modified to accommodate the bulkiness of arctic survival gear. The gun is designed to work very well with the Ares Arctic Forces Suit.

Use same stats as the Ares Alpha, except when used with the Ares Arctic Forces Suit it receives 1 additional point of recoil compensation due to the molding of the suit for use with the gun. Extreme environment modification (level 1) is also added

Damage	AP	Mode	RC	Ammo	Avail	Cost
6P	-1	SA/BF/FA	2	42(c)	12F	1,800Y

ArmTech SSG-69 (Grenade Launcher)

Based on ArmTech's original SSG-67, the SSG-69 is an upgraded model issued to SRS personnel for space operations. The 69 has the same features of the 67, but it also has an increased ammo capacity and a new multi-launch feature that allows the shooter to designate multiple targets and engage up to three targets with a single round, or to fire three rounds at one target*. The SSG-69 is also not restricted to the standard less-than-lethal rounds used by the 67, but also as the option of using

custom- magnetized flechette rounds**. The SSG-69 comes with smartlink, airburst link, and skinlink.

Standard Upgrades: Airburst link, skinlink, smartgun system

Damage	AP	Mode	RC	Ammo	Avail	Cost
Toxin/ 7P(f)	0/+2	SA/BF*	0	10	25F	4,500Y

*Treat as Burst Fire with normal rules. Firing in this mode requires a Complex Action.

**Use standard flechette rules for damage

FN CWAR (Assault Rifle)

This modified version of the FN HAR replaces the internal laser sight with an internal smartgun system and upgrades the gas-vent system.

Same stats as FN HAR, except remove laser sight, replace with smartgun system, and add extreme environment modification (level 1). Upgrade the recoil compensation for gas-vent 3.

Damage	AP	Mode	RC	Ammo	Avail	Cost
6P	-1	SA/BF/FA	3	35(c)	8R	2,500Y

HK 247-Arctic (Submachine Gun)

This weapon keeps the integral sound suppressor and smartgun system of the HK 227-X while getting rid of the retractable stock because of the bulkiness of arctic clothing, replacing it with a shock pad. An integral gas-vent system was also added, and the manufacturers installed an extended clip to decrease the number of times reloading is necessary.

Damage	AP	Mode	RC	Ammo	Avail	Cost
5P	—	SA/BF/FA	1 (2)	28(c)	8R	1,500Y

HK Icethrower (Exotic Ranged Weapon)

For this weapon, snow is loaded into a cylinder that is worn at the hip, and the surrounding cold condenses it into ice pellets the size of super balls that are fired in a short bursts. Damage from the weapon is resisted with Impact armor.

Damage	AP	Mode	RC	Ammo	Avail	Cost
6S	—	BF	—	See below	10R	800Y

Note: Snow is required to use as ammo for the weapon; for every half-kilo of snow (approximately what a human would get in a single two-handed scoop), the weapon can fire up to three bursts. Scooping snow into the weapon's cylinder requires a Simple Action; the cylinder can hold up to three kilograms of snow (enough for nine bursts). The weapon does not operate in temperatures above 3 degrees Celsius.

Arctic Suppressor (Heavy Machine Gun)

This weapon is equipped with an electronic firing system, a shockpad, and a gas-vent system. It is also equipped with dual clips and an extended clip system.

Damage	AP	Mode	RC	Ammo	Avail	Cost
7P	-3	FA	5	50(c)	16F	9,000Y

NEW VEHICLES AND DRONES

Ares Icebreaker

The Ares Icebreaker is slightly larger than your typical yacht and has been modified for operations in the frigid waters around the north and south poles. The hull is reinforced to allow it crush the ice beneath its weight without much fear of damage. The hull



is shaped such that it pushes the ice out and away from the hull. The propulsion system has been strengthened to give the extra torque needed to help clear the ice. The enclosed propeller system also helps minimize damage from ice hitting the props.

Standard Upgrades: Extreme environment mod, satellite communications

Hand	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Arm	Sens	Avail	Cost
-2	10/15	60	3	26	10	3	12	4,500,000¥

Ares Snowstar 2070

The Snowstar is Ares' attempt to overcome obstacles to helicopters operating in Arctic environments. They took a cargo helicopter and modified it to help it during takeoff and landing in poor conditions. It is useful for shuttling cargo to and from the more remote facilities.

Standard Upgrades: ECM 3, extreme environment mod, improved takeoff and landing 2, lock-on countermeasures, rigger adaptation

Hand	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Arm	Sens	Avail	Cost
+1	15/30	250	3	15	12	3	14	450,000¥

Aztechnology Ballena

This modifies the Tiburon design and updates it for use in the Arctic waters. It has the ability to act as an interceptor of slower ships while also being capable of serving as an icebreaker. It has several different models and sub-versions for more specialized missions.

Standard Upgrades: Extreme environment mod, satellite communications, signature masking (Rating 2), 3 x weapon mounts (external, flexible, armored, manned)

Hand	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Arm	Sens	Avail	Cost
-3	10/25	85	1	34	20	3	30F	2,650,000¥

Aztechnology Icerunner

Aztechnology took the Nightrunner frame and modified it for use in the Arctic. They reinforced the hull and improved the sonar to help it avoid hidden ice formations.

Standard Upgrades: Ducted waterjet, extreme environment mod

Hand	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Arm	Sens	Avail	Cost
+1	10/20	75	3	12	5	3	7	35,000¥

Chrysler-Nissan Patrol CW

Chrysler-Nissan took its successful Patrol-1 vehicle, updated it, and modified it for use in cold-weather climates. To spread out its weight distribution it was moved to a tread instead of wheeled base. The designers then added heavy-duty heaters to the cab and removed the detainee compartment to add more seating for security personnel. The engine coolant system got a cold-weather overhaul to ensure it would operate even in the most extreme weather. Then the sensor suite was upgraded so when weather hits the Patrol CW won't be blind.

Standard Upgrades: Extreme environment mod, tracked vehicle

Hand	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Arm	Sens	Avail	Cost
+2	10/40	90	3	10	10	2	12R	27,600¥

Colorado Craft "Icicle" Hydrocraft

You may not think the cigarette boat is the right choice for the Arctic, but Colorado Craft wants you to think again. They took the basic cigarette design, enclosed the cabin to keep out the cold air (especially when going to hydrofoil operation), and reinforced and armored the hydroplanes. This makes the boat handle a bit sluggishly, but it also allows it to run over small bits of ice without too many problems. They also improved the sonar so you can tell a small piece of ice from something large underneath the surface of the water.

Standard Upgrades: Extreme environment mod, hydrofoil capability

Hand	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Arm	Sens	Avail	Cost
+1	10/45	100	2	8	4	2	4	60,000¥

Cooling Blanket

The cooling blanket is filled with a gel that carries heat away from the body. For desert use, these blankets are built with reflectors on one side, so that most of the solar energy that hits them is not absorbed (a small amount is taken in to provide enough power to circulate the gel). You can place the blanket over your whole body and have a makeshift shelter in the middle of the day. The cooling blanket provides 30 degrees of cooling while it is operational; for each hour it spends in direct sunlight, it can operate for two hours; it can store a charge for as much as 10 hours.

Availability	Cost
6	800¥

GM-Nissan Catastrophic Rescue and Salvage Hardware/C.R.A.S.H.

Commonly called the "Crash-Pack" by its users, this is the primary rescue system deployed by SRS Space Swimmers. The system is actually a combination of both drone and operator working in tandem. The drone can be directly controlled by an operator and used as a personal space vehicle, controlled via remote/AR, or both. Spider-like in its design, the Crash-Pack features two thrust-maneuvering wings, four articulated arms featuring modular-tool hard points, two dedicated legs with magnetic pads for landing/anchoring purposes, and a small cargo compartment for tools and or other supplies. The Crash-Pack is fully capable of operating on its own, but it is most often deployed with an operator or remotely controlled. The Crash-Pack can also carry another small drone, usually a GM-Nissan St. Bernard recon drone on a dedicated rack, which gives an operator even more options for search-and-rescue operations. Currently only available to the SRS, GM-Nissan is in negotiations to produce a scaled-back version for sale to the general public.

Autosoftware: Clearsight-4, Defense-4, ECM-3, Maneuver (space)-4

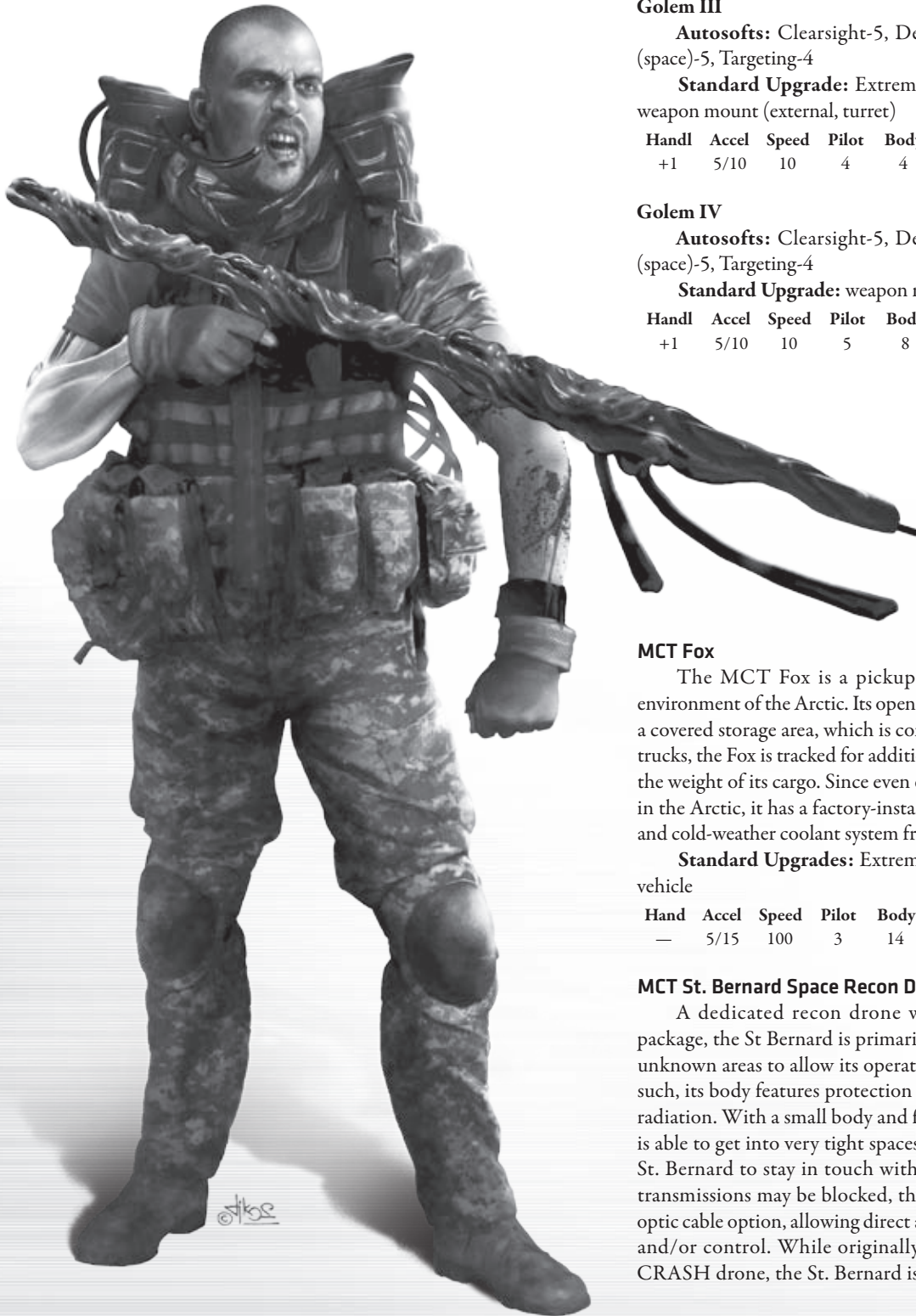
Standard Upgrades: Drone rack (small), extreme environment modification, mechanical arm x 4

Hand	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Arm	Sens	Avail	Cost
+1	5/10	20	4	4	8	4	20F	50,000¥

Hawker-Siddeley Golem III and IV Space-Combat Drone

This, the latest generation of the popular space-combat and sentry drone, is used primarily by the Corporate Court to protect all of its space assets. The Golem is most often deployed as





a fixed-position defensive emplacement, but it has the capability for maneuverability and limited movement if necessary. Both the Golem III and IV feature upgraded targeting and operation autofofts. The Golem III is designed for close-in point-defense against incoming missiles or other drones. The Golem IV features an additional weapon mount that is capable of holding vehicle-scale weaponry.

Golem III

Autofofts: Clearsight-5, Defense-3, ECM-4, Maneuver (space)-5, Targeting-4

Standard Upgrade: Extreme environment modification, weapon mount (external, turret)

Handl	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	arm	Sens	Avail	Cost
+1	5/10	10	4	4	6	5	25F	18,000Y

Golem IV

Autofofts: Clearsight-5, Defense-3, ECM-4, Maneuver (space)-5, Targeting-4

Standard Upgrade: weapon mount (external, turret) x2

Handl	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Arm	Sens	Avail	Cost
+1	5/10	10	5	8	10	5	25F	22,000Y

MCT Fox

The MCT Fox is a pickup truck for use in the harsh environment of the Arctic. Its open bed can be easily converted to a covered storage area, which is common. Unlike typical pickup trucks, the Fox is tracked for additional traction and spreading of the weight of its cargo. Since even everyday conditions are harsh in the Arctic, it has a factory-installed mid-grade pilot program and cold-weather coolant system from the factory.

Standard Upgrades: Extreme environment mod, tracked vehicle

Hand	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Arm	Sens	Avail	Cost
—	5/15	100	3	14	7	2	—	40,000Y

MCT St. Bernard Space Recon Drone

A dedicated recon drone with a very sensitive sensor package, the St Bernard is primarily used to enter hazardous or unknown areas to allow its operators to assess the situation. As such, its body features protection from extreme cold, heat, and radiation. With a small body and flexible joints, the St. Bernard is able to get into very tight spaces. A retrans system allows the St. Bernard to stay in touch with its operator. In cases where transmissions may be blocked, the St. Bernard features a fiber-optic cable option, allowing direct and shielded communications and/or control. While originally designed to work with the CRASH drone, the St. Bernard is capable of operations on its



own. The most significant flaw of the St. Bernard is that it is somewhat structurally fragile.

Autosoftware: Clearsight-5, Defense-3, ECM-3, Maneuver (space)-5

Standard Upgrades: Extreme environment modification, retrains unit,

Hand	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Arm	Sens	Avail	Cost
+1	5/10	20	4	2	4	7	20F	17,000¥

Patrol Snowski

The Patrol Snowski is a modified snowmobile made for the extreme conditions of the Arctic. It has been armored and designed so the rider can slide into protective sleeves to shield himself from the weather. These sleeves use warmth from the engine to keep the rider warm. The vehicle's coolant system is upgraded to the cold-weather system to help guard against freezing. Because of its limited size, sensors are sacrificed in order to maximize the ability to protect against the cold.

Standard Upgrades: Extreme environment mod, tracked vehicle

Hand	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Arm	Sens	Avail	Cost
+2	15/25	180	3	5	5	1	N/A	12,000¥

Renraku Polar Bear

The Renraku Polar Bear is a step van made for the extreme temperatures of the Arctic. It comes with a tracked drive train, cold-weather coolant system, and top-end sensor and pilot system. It can carry several passengers, or the seats can be removed to allow it to carry cargo. The van is sloped on top to reduce the wind drag when the Arctic winds pick up, which lets the snow blow over the van instead of drifting in front of it and slowing it down.

Standard Upgrades: Extreme environment mod, tracked vehicle

Hand	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Arm	Sens	Avail	Cost
-1	5/10	80	3	16	7	2	—	40,000¥

SRS Ship Upgrade Package

Aside from the Vigilance-class cutter, the SRS does not have a standard, purpose-built rescue or patrol craft. Instead, technicians and engineers have had to modify the rest of the patrol fleet of suborbital and semi-ballistic craft. Most of the modifications are the simple addition of specific equipment that the rescue crews need on a regular basis. On average, most of the modifications are nothing more than retro-fitting the necessary equipment into the cargo bays and adding egress doors as needed. While each type of vessel is different and each has slightly varying modifications the standard pack of modifications is as follows:

Std upgrades: Drone racks (small and large landing), improved economy, improved sensor array, mechanical arm (grapple), passenger protection-4, Valkyrie module, weapon mounts (turret, external, remote) x2

Vigilance-class Space Rescue Cutter

When the Corporate Court created the SRS, a feasibility study determined that current suborbital and semi-ballistic vessels were insufficient for the SRS' primary mission. In

response, the Corporate Court ordered the commissioning of the Vigilance-class space rescue cutter. One hundred meters in length with a design resembling an elongated cone reminiscent of NASA's Mercury space capsule, the decks of a Vigilance-class ship are laid out like a building rather than a blue-water vessel. When the ship is underway, gravity pushes the crew "down" toward the deck plate. A central corridor allows access to any part of the ship. The engine room and fuel tanks take up a full third of the vessel's aft area, and extra fuel tanks can be attached for long-duration missions and jettisoned in case of emergency. The vessel's command deck is located at the "top" and features state of the art AR and VR controls, as well as manual controls in case of catastrophic failures. The pilot, co-pilot, and captain are positioned at the center of the deck in a tri-formation station. Research showed that pilots preferred the feeling of being pushed back into their seats during flight. As such, all three seats lean back during normal flight operations.

Designed from the keel-up for rescue and patrol operations, Vigilance ships carry a crew of twenty-one, including a five-person flight crew, six dedicated medical personnel, and two five-person teams of space rescue technicians known as space swimmers. Modular compartments allow Vigilance ships to be configured for specific mission profiles in less than twelve hours.

No expense was spared building and equipping the vessel, and it boasts the greatest mix of state-of-the-art avionics and medical equipment available. It also features a pair of retractable solar energy collection sails that help recharge the vessel while on patrol. While its primary mission is rescue operations, it is also quite capable of defending itself should the need arise. The current load-out of the class is a pair of S-K Taurus light gauss cannon, a pair of Ares Fire Blossom vehicle lasers, and one Winter-Systems Mercury ship laser (fixed firing arc, only able to fire forward and has separate battery not tied into ship systems that allows six shots before recharging is needed). The Vigilance-class was designed and built by Ares Macrotechnology with assistance from Saeder-Krupp, MCT, and Aztechnology. The first ship of the line entered service in mid-2073, and several more scheduled for completion over the next decade. The ships are not available for sale to the public.

Standard Upgrades: Drone racks (small landing) x4, drone rack (large landing) x2, ECM-8, enhanced image screens, extra exit/entry points, extreme environment modification (space), improved economy, improved sensor array, life support-2, manual control override (fly-by-wire), mechanical arm: full arm, mechanical arm: grapple, missile defense system, multi-launch (10 mini-drones), passenger protection system-4, rigger adaptation, satellite communication, self-repair system, searchlight, special armor modification (radiation), Valkyrie Module, weapon mount (external, turret, remote) x3

Hand	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Arm	Sens	Avail	Cost
-1	100/1K	8,000	6	40	25	9	N/A	N/A



OTHER GEAR

Arctic Diver Suit

In the freezing waters of the Arctic and Antarctic, a dry suit isn't enough to keep a diver from dying of exposure. The arctic diver suit starts with a dry suit and then adds nanotech heater technology to keep the skin warm. The suit will keep the diver warm for a forty-five-minute dive on average. It has to be recharged in between dives; charging takes two hours.

Standard Upgrades: Insulation (Rating 5; only effective in water)

Ballistic/Impact	Availability	Cost
0/1	8	3,000¥

Ares Arctic Forces Suit

The Ares Arctic Forces Suit is modified SWAT armor with helmet for arctic operations. The under layer is a waterproof smock that functions like a diving drysuit and covers the torso, head, arms, and legs. The outer layer is a heated, windproof parka that uses kevflex™ technology with polymer composite plates to protect vital areas. The composite plates also help hold in body heat, though this somewhat increases the heat signature of the user. The boots and gloves both have retractable climbing spurs. The helmet incorporates a high visibility, polarized, full-face mask that comes with a full AR suite with tactical overlay. It also incorporates a gas mask equipped with an air-warming system to reduce the exposure to cold air and allow the use of gases if necessary. Additionally, there are several pouches and pockets sewn into it to allow use without having to remove the gloves.

Standard Upgrades: Insulation (Rating 5), thermal dampening (Rating 3)

Capacity	Ballistic/Impact	Avail	Cost
6	12/10	18R	10,000¥

Note: provides +1 dice pool modifier for climbing tests made while wearing the suit.

Ares Armored Coldsuit

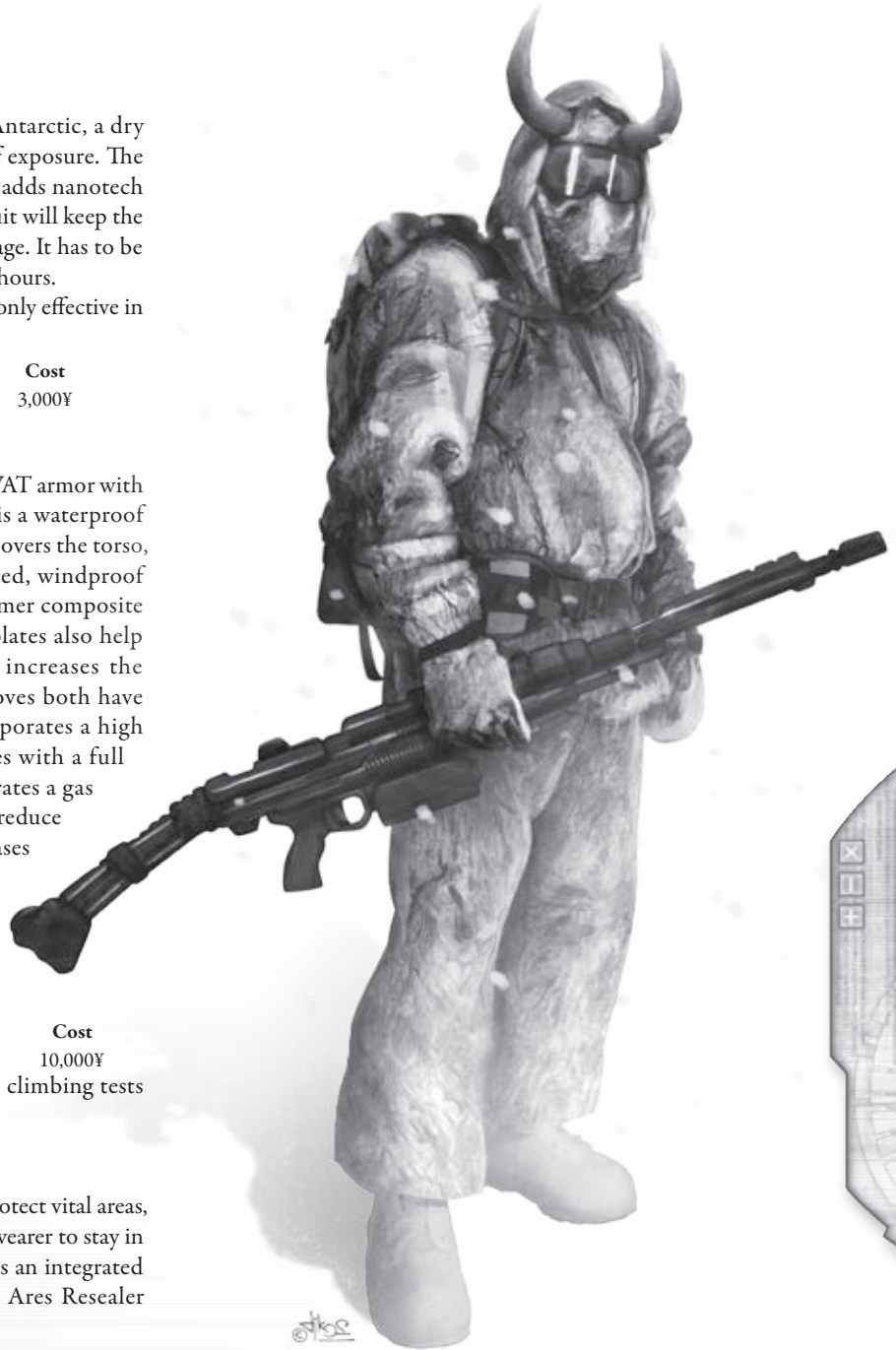
This suit uses plating and Kevlar weave to protect vital areas, increasing the suit's durability and allowing the wearer to stay in the field for longer periods of time. The suit has an integrated smartlink system and is compatible with the Ares Rescaler technology.

Standard Upgrades: Insulation (Rating 4)

Ballistic/Impact	Availability	Cost
6/4	6	1,000¥

Ares Armored Survivalist

This is the armored version of a survival suit. The bulky suit has several layers, starting with a wicking undergarment to move any moisture away from the skin. The middle insulating layer acts as a thermal dampener to help hold in the body heat and minimize heat loss to the outside. This is covered with a flexible outer shell, a waterproof and windproof parka woven with Kevlar and strategically placed plates to protect vital areas. It also includes a full polarized face shield (eliminating glare issues)



with a warmer to heat up the air being breathed. It can be further outfitted to accept any armor modification. On top of all that, the suit is compatible with the Ares Resealer technology.

Standard Upgrades: Built-in flare compensation

Capacity	Ballistic/Impact	Availability	Cost
6	4/4	10	1,500Y

Note: Cannot be combined with any other armor.

Ares Polar Sneak Suit

This suit takes the polar survival suit and adds chameleon coating, allowing the wearer to completely blend into their surroundings. It is compatible with the Ares Resealer technology, but resealer repairs lessen the effectiveness of the chameleon coating until it is properly repaired. Because of the coating on the suit, it isn't possible to make any more modifications to it, but you still can make modifications to armor suits themselves as long as they don't affect the coating.

Standard Upgrades: Insulation (Rating 5), thermal dampening (Rating 3)

Capacity	Ballistic/Impact	Availability	Cost
6	1/3	10R	9,000Y

Ares Resealer

Resealer technology is a system that allows on-the-spot quick repairs to Ares coldsuits and polar survival suits. It works by injecting a polymer into the hole sealing it and re-separating the different layers to help maintain the suit's integrity. While it doesn't provide a perfect repair, the damaged area no longer leaks hot air while letting cold air in. The resealer takes five combat rounds to fill holes. If used as part of a spacesuit, wearers must suffer decompression damage until the seal is finished.

Availability	Cost
4	200Y

Note: Instead of the normal penalty of $-1/2$ of the Insulation Rating when damaged, a resealer-repaired suit operates at Rating -1 until it can be repaired completely.

Evo Armadillo Armored Space Suit

Part of Evo's contribution to the SRS, the Armadillo armored space suit first saw use on Mars by cosmonauts exploring the dangerous Martian surface. The suit is a standard space suit with a built-in exo-frame and servo motors that enhances the user's Strength*. It is also shielded against heavy radiation and electrostatic discharges. Protection against suit breaches is accomplished by overlapping semi-repairing plastic armor plates embedded between the suits multiple layers of fire-resistant fabric. Unless the suit receives heavy damage, it is usually able to repair itself enough to allow its user to get to a safe area**. A scaled-down version for the general public is scheduled for late 2074.

Capacity	Ballistic/Impact	Availability	Cost
8	12/12	26F	35,000Y

*The suit's strength enhancement system gives the user a +1 situational bonus to Strength tests for climbing or lifting, but it provides no damage bonus to physical attacks.

**If the Armadillo takes modified damage that exceeds its armor rating, it is able to self-repair itself a single time to one-half its rating. It can be fully repaired with an Armorer (4) Test.

Freefall Balance Augmenter (cyberware)

Developed by Universal Omnitech and licensed through Evo, the Freefall Balance Augmenter is an expansion on the standard balance augmenter and is for those spending extended periods in zero gravity. This inner-ear implant acts as an internal gyroscope, helping its user maintain spatial awareness and granting a +1 to all checks affected by zero gravity and related skills.

Essence	Capacity	Availability	Cost
0.25	[4]	10R	5,500Y

Horizon Canteen System

Horizon has recently developed a major contribution to the issue of staying hydrated while in the Arctic wastelands. Even though you're surrounded by frozen water, there is no effective way to hydrate the body without exposure to the extreme cold. Even if you could get to the snow and ice without exposing yourself to the elements, ingesting significant quantities of snow and ice could cause a drop in body temperature. The canteen system hooks a small cylinder to the suit in the small of the back where it uses warmth from the body to keep from freezing, but staying cool to provide optimal refreshment.

Availability	Cost
6	500Y

PermaMarker

This is a small pole with a light on top, but it holds a small camera and a bunch of data. When you plant the pole in the sand, it puts out small legs that help it stay stable in the sand. If you program it with the correct day and time, the pole takes a note of the location of the sun and other celestial objects, and uses that to note its exact coordinates (or it accesses satellites if they are available). Once it knows those coordinates, it stays there. It uses the small legs at its base to stay upright and to maneuver itself back into position if shifting sands cause it to move. It can even dig itself back into the sand and put itself back upright if it is removed, though it takes an hour to get upright, and then it travels back to its destination at a speed of one meter per minute. This can be a valuable way to mark locations in the desert and have them stay marked. The light on top can be set to flash, and at night it can be seen at distances of up to five kilometers, depending on changes in the ground elevation.

Standard Upgrades: Satellite communications, SunCell

Hand	Accel	Speed	Pilot	Body	Arm	Sens	Avail	Cost
-3	see above	see above	4	2	1	3	8	2,000Y

