

EX MACHINA

Tri-Stat Cyberpunk Genre

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IT'S A CRIME ...

... that Red Bull isn't available in Canada. Or, more accurately, it has been suggested to me that it is in fact illegal to sell it here — something about regulations banning the sale of non-cola coloured, caffeinated drinks. I don't know if it's true or not (it probably has more to do with regulations of additive levels rather than colouration), but I do believe that this book would have been finished months ago if I could get it locally. Of course, I could probably say that about every book I'm in charge of, but then I imagine I'd be a burned out husk all year 'round, instead of just during con season.

That might be appropriate for further projects, mind you ... just wire my desiccated body up via neural jack and let me live ghost-like on my writer's computers, haranguing them into more and more frenzied and gonzo writing (simply feed me by Red Bull IV-drip, please). Some probably say I do that already.

Did I say the book would have been done a few months ago? Even that was running well into delays. *Ex Machina* was originally conceived in September of 2002 — bloody hell, I'm embarrassed to admit that — with a tentative street date of November 2003. 14 months sounded like enough time ... apparently I was off a bit. We were all a little too idealistic in those pre-friend-networks/pre-taste-tribes/pre-future-phone days. The iPod had just been released, both *Matrix* sequels still had potential, and blogging was going to be the new voice of the commons (awful word, blogging — how the hell can we have collectively agreed upon such an ugly term?).

And I sold this idea of a giant cyberpunk genre book not only to Mark and Jeff, but I somehow conned a quintet of warm and fuzzy writers into climbing aboard, and fleshing out their take on the genre.

This book is about these writers, and their savage, electric ideas that crackle on every page. They are a wonderful, vicious, motley crew of neo-cyberpunks (or is that post-cyberpunks? or post-post-cyberpunks, maybe?) who have struggled with me over these long months to properly showcase their visions. Their worlds each present a different image of cyberpunk, viewed through a perspective of the early 21st century. Not only do we have the advantage of having grown up with and studied the classic cyberpunk authors, but we sit on the brink of "tomorrow;" we may not have *Blade Runner's* air cars or Voight-Kampff tests, but we do have future-phones, WiFi, hybrid electric cars, and supercomputers masked as video game systems.

The challenge was to put it all into place and make it sparkle.... Future-shock, indeed.

Beneath the chrome and glitter were hideous little gems that cut to the quick; as manuscript pages came in, there were days I felt a desperate need to wash my brain.

Michelle Lyons is a sweetheart. When she proposed "Daedalus" to me, neither of us saw how close to home the metaphor would strike. She described it as the world gone wrong, about 90 minutes in the future. Skimming my RSS feeds, I wonder if we're closer to 30 minutes from "Daedalus." The oft-repeated Ben Franklin quote comes to mind, "They who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety." It's not a vision I find very comforting.

Rebecca Borgstrom is loved and respected for *Nobilis*, a game of high concept and big gods. "IOSHI" is a story of little gods — tiny people who are masters of their own abilities, in a world of complex, corporate machinations. Some days, I'm convinced Rebecca is one of these little gods herself, a shark most likely — albeit a friendly, nearly tame one. (Nice shark, pretty shark).

Bruce Baugh, like Rebecca, I knew only through reputation before this project. He's a clever guy, with a good sense of the game industry as a whole. He's also a master of references, and undoubtedly not only read every book, movie, and comic in the bibliography, but read them twice. And by "read" I mean "analysed," and taken notes. Pondering the logistics of his orbital beanstalk is daunting, but I hope he takes over Columbia one day and makes it happen.

I met Brad Kayl and Chris Gossett in Las Vegas ... where else would one meet two L.A. kids bursting with pride over their urban magic retelling of the Soviet/Afghanistan conflict? Not only are they tremendously funny, sharp guys, with a fabulous comic in *The Red Star*, but they knew gaming ... and had a long history of *Shadowrun* campaigns, among others. Some nights I lie awake thinking about the horrors they've concocted for Underworld ... vile abuses that have burned their way into my brain.

I've known and worked with David Pulver longer than anyone else here, but only recently have I truly grown to appreciate his knowledge, skill, and killer wit. This book — massive quantities of Red Bull included — would remain incomplete without his aid and assistance.

I hope to work with all of these fine people again, someday. I think they are all much smarter than me. They scare me. But I am changed for it, and that is for the best; you must always keep moving, and always have an escape plan.

As the voice over in *Blade Runner* says:

"A new life awaits you in the off-world colonies. The chance to begin again in a golden land of opportunity and adventure. New climate, recreation facilities..."

Welcome to *Ex Machina* — a new life, a new chance, a new climate. With luck it will terrify, intimidate, inspire ... and ultimately change you, if only a little bit.

— Jesse Scoble, Night, July 2004

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

He stared at the deck on his lap, not really seeing it, seeing instead the shop window on Nintsei, the chromed shuriken burning with reflected neon. He glanced up; on the wall, just above the Sony, he'd hung her gift, tacking it there with a yellow-headed drawing pin through the hole at its centre. Closed his eyes.

Found the ridged face of the power stud.

And in the bloodlit dark behind his eyes, silver phosphenes boiling in from the edge of space, hypnagogic images jerking past like film compiled from random frames. Symbols, figures, faces, a blurred, fragmented mandala of visual information.

Please, he prayed, now —

A gray disk, the colour of Chiba sky.

Now —

Disk beginning to rotate, faster, becoming a sphere of paler gray. Expanding-

And flowed, flowered for him, fluid neon origami trick, the unfolding of his distanceless home, his country, transparent 3D chessboard extending to infinity. Inner eye opening to the stepped scarlet pyramid of the Eastern Seaboard Fission Authority burning beyond the green cubes of Mitsubishi Bank of America, and high and very far away he saw the spiral arms of military systems, forever beyond his reach.

And somewhere he was laughing, in a white-painted loft, distant fingers caressing the deck, tears of release streaking his face.

— William Gibson, *Neuromancer*

CYBERPUNK 101: WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT

Cyberpunk is science fiction set in the near future, usually in the next 25-100 years. It emphasises the social changes created by cybernetics, biotechnology, nanotechnology, and other emerging technologies that can change not merely what we do but what we are. It portrays the struggle of outsiders — “punks” — to make a place for themselves in the face of future shock and oppressive political and economic powers: the “system.” The protagonists are often unwilling heroes, if they're heroes at all; many of them are criminals or operators on the fuzzy margins of legality.

There are exceptions to each of those points in stories widely recognised as cyberpunk. Above all, cyberpunk is defined by the attitude of openness to transformation, respect for the power of innovation and improvisation, and a fondness for rebels and dissidents. A story set in a cyberpunk-like future in which wise, far-seeing chief executive officers skilfully suppress dangerous lunatic outsiders isn't cyberpunk; a story set in a typical space opera, which emphasises social change wrought by new technology and the desirability of building communities and responding to new needs may well be. Most cyberpunk fiction, however, fits the greater part of this working definition if not all of it.

ROOTS AND INSPIRATIONS

Stories about the future tend to portray it in stark and extreme terms. Sometimes it's an awful prophecy of doom, such as Fritz Lang's nightmarish film *Metropolis*, or the classic dystopias like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984*. Sometimes it's a vision of the world made perfect or near-perfect, like the technocratic tales of early science fiction magazines and H.G. Wells's film *The Shape of Things to Come* (in which the world is redeemed after tremendous suffering). Very seldom does the future have the complexity and ambiguity of the present.

RECYCLED DOOMSAIVING. MARK I: 1970s

Thirty years ago, the future looked very bleak to a great many observers, both within and without the community of science fiction writers. The Cold War was in full force, and very few informed people could imagine it coming to any peaceful resolution. The history of the 20th century strongly suggested that however nice it might be to live in a democratic society, the totalitarian regimes of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China would probably outlast their rivals.

Once-liberal democracies couldn't keep down either unemployment or inflation, and state intervention couldn't resolve social problems like racism or personal yearning for meaning and order. The military-industrial complex US President Eisenhower warned about in the '50s seemed in charge just about everywhere. Mass protest could help end the Vietnam War, French opposition to Algerian independence, and the sub-Saharan struggle for post-colonial self-determination, but it couldn't create justice or happiness once the fighting stopped ... if the fighting ever did. The superpowers used guerrilla forces and puppet regimes as their pawns in the ongoing struggle for world domination. Karl Marx wrote, “Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains,” and that seemed true — whether the chains were First World corporate hegemony or Third World subjugation to external empires.

Furthermore, a growing number of economists and futurists suspected the Cold War would, in the end, be no more than a sideshow in the fading circus of the West. The Third World's leading nations were on the rise. Japan played the game of capitalism more skilfully than either Europe or America, and China and the “Seven Tiger” nations of Southeast Asia were building their own paths to wealth without the complications of Western liberalism. Demographics were on their side. The West couldn't compete against the looming combination of ever more efficient production and ever-greater numbers of labourers.

The space race ended with the 1969 triumph of Apollo over its Soviet competition, and now the US's space efforts were trickling down. Skylab would not be followed up on. The Space Shuttle fell victim to political manoeuvring and would end up more costly and less capable than originally planned. Meanwhile, back on Earth, media corporations got ever-better at co-opting the spirit of youthful rebellion as another tool for merchandising, and the rising insurgency represented by punk rock was commercialised even faster than its predecessors. The corporations could, it seemed, engulf and devour any threat to their position.

Nor were problems of the day purely social and political. The world's environment was also going to hell, and gaining speed on the way. Biologist Rachel Carson had long since sounded the first warning notes about the dangers of DDT and other pesticides in *Silent Spring*, but that was just the beginning. Toxic wastes proved responsible for more problems than anyone had imagined, and no amount of public concern seemed likely to keep pesticides out of the air, land, and water. Toxic emissions from factories and cities constantly replenished the supply of environmental poisons. Lasting climatic changes also loomed: in 1979, the World Meteorological Association warned that the world was cooling and had been for several decades, and that an ice age might well be imminent. In reaching these conclusions, the WMA drew on research in both specialised meteorological journals and prestigious cross-disciplinary journals, such as *Science*.

Science fiction of the late '70s reflected the divisions of the time. On one side, the heirs of Golden Age technophilic optimism continued to sing the praises of analytical problem solving, dismissing those who doubted progress as obstacles to an ever-brighter tomorrow. On the other, writers critical of the established order called into question the very possibility of progress as long as patriarchy, capitalism, and other established forces endured. Those uninterested in this ongoing struggle or unwilling to commit themselves to a faction took refuge in stylistic extravagance and technical formalisms.

Continued in *Ex Machina* . . .

OUT OF THE MACHINE

There is a cyclical nature to our interests and concerns. Ideas and styles come back into vogue, and stories are endlessly repeated. When handled properly, old notions can be polished into something new and striking, making a compelling engagement of basic fears and hopes. We live on the threshold of cyberspace, and the questions of science and humanity are as important as they ever were.

Cyberpunk is a genre of our generation. It was conceived of when computers were massive in size and investment, and foretold a world of tiny processors and superconductors. It reinvented the noir motifs with a new style and sophistication. It foreshadowed fears of cloning and loss of humanity ... issues that blaze across today's headlines.

For a time, "cyberpunk" became synonymous with "style over substance," showcasing fast and loose cityscapes where bad-ass cyber-mercenaries and street samurai conducted industrial networks as the order of the day. But it often lost the human element. It forgot that under the chrome and bioware, we're all just trying to figure out what it means to be human. Even the artificial intelligences.

THE dX EXPERIMENT

In 2003, *Tri-Stat dX* was released as a slim, stylish, generic game system. It stripped away the superhero trappings of *Silver Age Sentinels* and the anime features of *Big Eyes, Small Mouth*, illustrating how *Tri-Stat* can be a universal, rules-light, cinematic game.

This book, *Ex Machina*, is an experiment in form and substance. It is a genre book, fleshing out all the myriad notions of cyberpunk for your *dX* games. It is also a showcase piece for style and presentation. Finally, while it provides everything you need for cyberpunk role-playing, it also contains four distinct campaign worlds. This book is roughly divided into three parts, the first of which is an extensive coverage of the cyberpunk genre:

- Chapter 1: an essay introducing the notions of cyberpunk, and charting its history.
- A lengthy bibliography (see the appendix).

Part two gives rules for any cyberpunk game:

- Chapters 2-7: detailed character creation.
- Chapter 8-9: rules and game mechanics.
- Chapter 10: technology and equipment suitable for any cyberpunk game.
- Chapter 11: rules on cyberspace.
- Chapter 12: advice on running cyberpunk games.

Part three contains four unique campaign worlds — playgrounds for any group of players to explore, watching the cyberpunk tropes through different lenses. Although the worlds stand alone, obviously GMs are encouraged to mix and match ideas:

HEAVEN OVER MOUNTAIN

The Orbital Tower project, or as everyone calls it when not on the job, the beanstalk, draws on the traditions of biotechnology to simultaneously present the largest artefact in the solar system and an ecosystem so distinctive as to be almost an alien world unto itself.

It rises from Earth to orbit, via carbon nanotube, and is reinforced by biotechnology. The elevator is a living thing, governed and groomed by vast networks of humans and artificial intelligence. The city at its base, and those along its length, are focal points for political and economic power — yet only from the elite reaches of Heaven can one gain perspective and a sense of the world below; a huge fraction of the world's trade and manufacturing now depends on this one thing: a 25,000-kilometer-high tree with a mind of its own.

UNDERWORLD

Underworld is to Cyberpunk what the Third World is to the United States. Where most cyberpunk worlds immediately evoke a futuristic metropolis, Underworld is the hellhole where the cheap labour is found. Same world; different focus. This is not the place to find the existential angst of a hard-bitten ex-cop or the messianic fantasy of an awakened *über*-hacker. Underworld is a dusty mirror of the world "above" that has created and maintains it. The needs of the wealthy demand the existence of Underworld.

Underworld is a closed community, where drones toil endlessly for the corporate masters. Their lives in the factories an unending hell, yet life on the street is nasty, brutish, and short. Mafia, Yakuza, gangs, and strange societies divvy up the territory, each trying to survive another day.

IOSHI

Individually Organised Science and Hobby Index. The development of human knowledge is strictly limited by the sophistication of the techniques used to organise and convey that knowledge. IOSHI (a.k.a. "the well") conveys knowledge in the traditional fashion: datajacked into a two-level personal library stored on a chip in one's brain. It serves as a significant boon to anyone who can afford personal or professional access. With a solid grasp of the state of the art, those who have learned from the well are just plain better.

IOSHI is a patented technology. Getting to the state of the art isn't just a matter of money; it's a matter of legal entanglement. By the time you've dragged yourself permanently out of the ghetto, the corporate power structure owns you — usually a few hundred corporations own very small pieces of you, to be more precise.

DAEDALUS

In a sort of 90-minutes-from-reality future, things haven't gone so well. The shadow government set up to free us from the fear of total federal collapse in case of a terrorist strike has instead become the real power in the world. Their think-tank of the brightest minds of the time is Daedalus. Now free from the checks and balances that keep more available agencies from overstepping themselves, Daedalus has taken over. The new government is devoted to the protection and welfare of the political and socio-economic state, no matter the cost.

It's a happy place, where everyone is chipped and tracked; the watchers are scattered through the community, from local businesses, to church-group leaders, to the Regional Patrols ... all the way up to the Department of National Security. But sometimes the programming crashes, and you are left alone in your mind.

THE EDGE OF FOREVER

We are in liminal space, firmly on the edge of science fiction, cyberspace, and a new millennium. We have stepped past the threshold, and there is no going back. The first generation of cyberpunk authors — William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, Philip K. Dick, John Shirley, K.W. Jeter, Walter Jon Williams, Michael Swanwick, and so many more — have not been fully explored. The second generation of authors, like Neal Stephenson, Masumune Shirow, Katsuhiro Otomo, Iain Banks, Ken MacLeod, and Cory Doctorow have developed those ideas in the literary sphere, but again they have barely been touched by game designers. Finally, the newest movement (post-cyberpunk, or post-post cyberpunk?) has moved beyond the realm of prose into exciting "new" arenas — Warren Ellis and Grant Morrison's comic work, film adaptations of Philip K. Dick, and the Wachowskis' film work, just to name a few. It's time to bring these ideas back to the gaming table.

Ex Machina. "Out of the machine." What comes out of the barrel of the gun, out of the factory production line? Everything. Power, tools, toys, the means to kill and cure, the lies that bind us and the truth that sets us free, the records of the past and the instruments we use to chart to the future. We are all out of the machine.



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BLEH

"COW
ON A STICK!"
A CONVEM PRODUCT

SUONY

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CHAPTER 3: PICK TEMPLATES (STEP 4)

Templates are sets of ready-to-use archetypes and abilities. Three types of templates are presented in this chapter: occupational, species, and ware templates. All of them have a listed Character Point cost.

- Occupational Templates are archetypal roles such as “hacker” or “street punk.” They grant a set of Stat modifiers, Attributes, Skills, and Defects. Most of them cost 10 or 15 Character Points. You may choose to give your character a single occupational template.
- Species Templates are posthuman “races” such as an android or a genetically engineered human. They provide a set of Stat Modifiers, Attributes, and Defects suitable for a posthuman entity. Select a Species Template if your character will be a posthuman entity, and use some of your remaining Character Points to acquire that template.
- Ware Templates are particular cyberware or bioware modifications, such as a cybernetic arm or a neural jack. They normally incorporate Attributes and/or Defects. Select one or more Ware Templates if your character will start out with cyberware or bioware.

You may have all three types of templates. Nonetheless, templates are completely optional. You can create a character without using them, simply by proceeding to Step 5 (in the next chapter) and selecting Attributes, and then going on to choose Skills and Defects.

TABLE 3-1:
OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE COST CHART

| Template | Character Point Cost | Page |
|----------------|----------------------|------|
| Hacker | 10 | 18 |
| Idol | 15 | 19 |
| Investigator | 15 | 20 |
| Medic | 15 | 20 |
| Street Punk | 10 | 21 |
| Street Samurai | 15 | 21 |
| Suit | 15 | 24 |
| Tech | 15 | 25 |
| Teleoperator | 15 | 25 |

OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATES

Occupational templates are common cyberpunk archetypes. Each template has a summary description, followed by the archetype’s typical role in a group of a cyberpunk adventurers.

Template Cost is the Character Point cost to acquire the template. It is the sum of all Stat, Attribute, and Defect Character Point costs.

LVL shows the Level of the Stat, Attribute, or Skill granted or modified. It is noted as a bonus (or penalty), since these stack with any other Levels the character may possess.

STATS lists the Stat modifiers of the template. For example, if the Template has Body +2, increase your character’s Body Stat by 2.

ATTRIBUTES list the Attributes provided. Some Attributes incorporate Restrictions or Reductions. These are special linked Defects that limit or handicap a particular Attribute in some way, but which also reduce its Character Point cost.

SKILLS are the Skills the template provides. Occupational templates include Skills worth a total of 30 Skill Points, +10 Skill Points per Level of the Highly Skilled Attribute or -10 per Level of the Unskilled Defect in the template. Note that Skill Points are different than Character Points and are tracked separately (see Skills, page 69, for a full explanation of Skill Points).

Skills have one or more Specialisations noted in parenthesis. For example, Gun Combat (Pistol) means the character’s Gun Combat Skill specialisation is shooting a pistol. “Any” means that any Specialisation appropriate to that Skill must be selected when the template is chosen — for a list of Skills and the Specialisations that may be chosen for each of them, see page 69.

DEFECTS are the Defects with which the template is burdened. GMs and players may substitute other Defects of equivalent class and value.

Customisation Notes are optional suggestions for adding additional Attributes, Defects, or Skills to the character. Use them in conjunction with Character Creation Steps 5-7.

These templates are only the most common cyberpunk archetypes. Further world-specific Occupational Templates may be found in the cyberpunk settings presented later in this book.

HACKER

Almost everyone in a cyberpunk world can use computers and networks in a rote fashion, but hackers understand how they work on a fundamental level. They are the masters of the virtual world of cyberspace.

• THE HACKER •
OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE

HACKER TEMPLATE
Template Cost: 10 Points

STATS
+1 Mind, +1 Soul

ATTRIBUTES
+1 Gadgeteer (-1 Restriction: Programs and computers),
+3 Gadgets (Select any), +2 Heightened Awareness (-1 Restriction: Cyberspace only)

SKILLS
+1 Area Knowledge (Cyberspace), +2 Computers (Pick any two), +1 Forgery (Electronic Documents), +1 Gaming (Computer Games), +1 Street Sense (Pick any), +1 Urban Tracking (Pick any)

DEFECTS
-1 Nemesis OR Owned, -1 Phobia (Loss of net access) OR Wanted

Computer hacking is the process of solving problems with available computing resources. Hacking is a wide-open field, and includes everyone from the corporate programmer coding security features for the company's network, to the 16-year-old messing with the guts of an old computer, to the wizkid system cracker trying to foil the corp programmer.

A great deal of information exists in secure online repositories. This includes valuable secrets and vital operational data for various businesses and organisations. A hacker's ability to ferret out, sabotage, or protect this data adds a significant weapon to any group's arsenal. They may even be able to interface their brain directly with a computer system, allowing them to manipulate data and programs at superhuman speeds.

Hackers typically face online threats rather than physical ones, but their action scenes should regularly interweave with the group's whenever possible. GMs should avoid cases where a hacker's adventure is essentially independent from the rest of the group. One way to do this is to impose a rule of geographic proximity: the deck mechanism the hacker uses, or perhaps the hacker's online avatar, must stay close to the group on joint missions. Hackers can provide valuable support functions if the group physically invades a secure area. Most security in information age societies relies heavily on computer-managed automation. The relevant computers often have a network connection, however circuitous, to the outside world. Hackers can deactivate or limit some of the obstacles that face the group when it seeks to penetrate such security.

CUSTOMISATION NOTES

- If the GM is using the iconic cyberspace rules (page 142), take 1-3 Levels of Alternate Form (Partial-Powered Form) to represent the hacker's cyberspace avatar. See the sample avatar (page 143) for an example.
- Ace hackers may have Wealth and the Famous (or Wanted) Defects.
- Hackers will often be hired by a powerful corporation. They may have 1-2 Levels of Organisational Ties and, sometimes, the Owned Defect.
- Every hacker should have a customised state-of-the-art wearable or notebook computer with a suite of cutting-edge (possibly illegal) programs for cyberspace operations. A unique prototype computer might even be an Item of Power.
- Some hackers have trouble relating to people. Take Less Capable Soul (Charisma or Empathy) Defect for a classic "nerd."
- Hackers often have neural jack cyberware (page 27) and com implants (page 27).
- Some hackers may have one or more autonomous or A.I. programs as Agents, Henchmen, or Servants; a hacker might even be an A.I. See A.I.s, page 128. An A.I. can also be a powerful Nemesis.

IdOL

The idol is a celebrity, or hopes to become one. He or she may be an actor, a rock star, a sensory interface star (see Sensory Interface, page 29), news announcer, sports star, or even a politician. In cyberpunk worlds, some celebrities have reached their status through natural talent, originality, or hard work ... but many others are the disposable "products" of media conglomerates, with their images and even their bodies shaped by the company that owns their contract. Becoming a star may also require more invasive modifications — not merely a sculpted body, but also camera eyes or a neural interface rigged for full-sensory recording. Some stars are not even human: an artificial intelligence might be a "virtual idol."

An idol's main advantage is his or her contacts, possible wealth, and potentially a network of fans that can provide help or useful information in an emergency. This is a double-edged sword, however, since the idol may become a valuable commodity that the competition wishes to steal or eliminate, be targeted by obsessed fans, or, if the idol takes a stand against the corporate-political complex, become a liability for powerful establishment interests. The stress of being an idol can also sometimes lead to other problems, such as overindulgences and inevitable addictions.

• THE IDOL •
OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE

IDOL TEMPLATE
Template Cost: 15 Points

STATS
+2 Soul

ATTRIBUTES
+1 Agent (Bodyguard or manager), +1 Divine Relationship, +1 Features (Appearance: cuteness or good looks), +1 Gadgets, +2 Organisational Ties (Moderate), +1 Wealth

SKILLS
+1 Disguise (Cosmetics OR Makeup), +2 Etiquette (Pick any), +3 Performing Arts (Pick any), +1 Seduction (Pick any), +1 Urban Tracking (Corporate)

DEFECTS
-1 Famous, -1 Nemesis OR Owned (Managers or Handlers), -1 Unskilled

CUSTOMISATION NOTES

- The Agent is a bodyguard or very protective manager. It can easily be omitted or scaled down to Henchmen; if omitted, the template is worth only 10 Points.
- Politicians will have extra Levels of Organisational Ties (perhaps at a higher Point Cost/Level too). They may also have Law (International or Political) or Social Sciences (Politics), though many cyberpunk politicians are simply media stars or talking heads run by behind-the-scenes managers.
- Rock stars and other idols that worked their way up from the street music scene may have Combat Skills, Area Knowledge, Street Sense, and possibly Intimidation.
- Sports stars substitute +2 Body for +2 Soul and replace some or all Levels of Performing Arts with Skills like Acrobatics, Powerlifting, Swimming, or Sports.
- Successful idols may have extra Levels of Wealth, Famous, or Owned.
- Idols with drug or other addictions will have Special Requirement.



CYBERARM

This is a single cybernetic arm and hand. A cybernetic limb is tireless, feels no pain, is incredibly strong, and has superior gripping strength. A cyborg that uses two arms could lift a full tonne, but only if the arms were properly braced and supported. Unfortunately, if a cyborg's arm is attached to an ordinary person's torso, any tremendous feat of lifting is likely to rip the arm out of its own socket.

It grants the following Attributes:

ATTRIBUTES

1 Armour (Shield), 1 Superstrength (-2 Part of Body: One arm; -1 Restriction: Strain at full strength)*, 2 Special Defence (Pain x2; -1 Part of Body: One arm; acts as 2 BP)

Note: Part of Body (One arm) limits the Superstrength to situations where the cyborg is grappling, throwing, or striking using the augmented arm. It limits the Special Defence to situations where the cyborg's arm is specifically exposed to damage, such as reaching into a vat of acid.

* If the cyborg has a reinforced skeleton this restriction is removed.

Final Cost: 3 Points, or 4 Points if the cyborg has skeletal reinforcement (page 33).

MICRO-MANIPULATOR HAND

Popular with techs, this replaces a normal hand with a retractable multi-functional tool manipulator built into the fingers (sometimes nicknamed the "Swiss Army Hand").

ATTRIBUTES

1 Elasticity (Hand; -1 Restriction: Fingers only), 1 Features (Built-in micro-tool kit)

Final Cost: 2 Points.

TELESCOPIC JOINTS

A cybernetic arm may be given this additional function: telescoping joints or extendable cables that allow the forearm and hand to extend out a few metres.

ATTRIBUTES

1 Elasticity (Arm; -1 Restriction: Increased reach only)

Final Cost: 1 Point.

CYBERLEGS

Cyberlegs are only available in pairs. (A single prosthetic leg is also possible, but is effectively no different than a normal leg.) A pair of cyberlegs grant the following Attributes:

ATTRIBUTES

1 Jumping, 1 Combat Technique (Leap Attack), 1 Superstrength (-1 Part of Body: Both legs; -1 Restriction: Strain at full strength)*, 2 Special Defence (Pain x2; -1 Part of Body: Both legs)

Note: Part of the Body (Both legs) limits the Superstrength to situations where the cyborg is kicking using the augmented legs. It limits the Special Defence to situations where the cyborg's legs are specifically exposed to damage, such as walking through corrosive waste.

* If the cyborg also has a reinforced skeleton (page 33) this Restriction is lifted.

Final Cost: Cyberlegs cost 5 Points, or 6 Points if the cyborg has skeletal reinforcement.

DERMAL MODIFICATIONS

The skin is the body's largest organ. These modifications are designed to provide it with additional capabilities. See Style: Marked (page 80).

SMARTSKIN

The user's skin is coated with a nanofilm layer that transforms his or her entire body into a liquid crystal display. The smartskin can interface with a data plug in a neural jack or data stored within a neural buffer to display data over his or her body. Thus, if the user had a music video stored in a buffer or a data plug, it could appear on part or all of his or her body as a unique fashion statement.

The user can acquire a data plug or memory slot program with an assortment of dermal colour schemes and patterns. This will grant a +1 bonus to Disguise (Makeup) and Stealth (Camouflage) Skill checks in situations where a quick change of skin hue would make a difference.

ATTRIBUTES

1 Features (Smartskin)

Final Cost: 1 Point.

CHAMELEON SMARTSKIN

This is similar to a smartskin, but incorporates an array of millions of tiny nanocameras and processors. If the smartskin is set in "chameleon mode," the cameras will scan the surrounding environment and adjust the user's skin pigmentation to match. This provides partial invisibility to sight only, but the user must be either naked, or wearing "smart clothing" equipped with similar technology in order for it to be effective.

The user is only partially invisible when moving faster than a slow walk, as his or her silhouette will flicker (observers make a Mind Stat check at -4 to spot). Once the character is spotted, combat penalties are halved.

ATTRIBUTES

1 Features (Smartskin), 2 Invisibility (Sight, two slots; Reduction -1: Partial invisibility; -1 Restriction: Naked form only)

Final Cost: 4 Points.

NANOFIBRE SKIN

The cyborg's skin is reinforced by advanced flexible synthetic armour that looks and feels like ordinary skin. The effects are cumulative with body plating. The armour is less effective than full body plating, stopping only 3 damage.

ATTRIBUTES

1 Armour (Reduction -2: Reduced armour value; Stops 3 damage)

Final Cost: 1 Point.

PARTIAL BODY PLATING

The cyborg's skin is partly covered with rigid armour plates, although the face, joints, neck, and groin remain unprotected.

ATTRIBUTES

1 Armour (-2; Unarmoured Area; Stops 10 Damage)

Final Cost: 1 Point.

FULL BODY PLATING

The cyborg's skin is entirely covered with synthetic armour. Rigid plates cover the chest, skull, forearms, thighs, and shins. Transparent lenses shield the eyes, while the face and joints are protected by lighter flexible material.

ATTRIBUTES

1 Armour (-1; Thin area; stops 10 Damage), 1 Special Defence (Flare attacks)

Final Cost: 3 Points.

FUTURE TECHNOLOGIES

Which technologies exist in a setting will have a significant impact on the nature of the campaign world. For simplicity, a particular major technology can be classed as Obsolete, Mature, New, or Experimental.

OBSOLETE TECHNOLOGY

Obsolete technology is outdated. It is no longer widely available in leading-edge economies, but may be common in poorer regions or prized by collectors. Electronics and information media tend to advance rapidly, so yesterday's breakthrough product may be today's landfill. Think of vinyl records or cassette tapes today. Some technologies (such as a knife) may never become obsolete. Cyberpunk fiction has sometimes predicted that paper books (and reading) will become obsolete, but their convenience may prevent this.

MATURE TECHNOLOGY

Mature technology is reliable and in production. Its existence is known to the public. It is usually available from multiple sources rather than a single manufacturer. Mature technology need not be cheap or legal; to give an extreme example, nuclear bombs are a mature technology in the 21st century, but are tightly controlled (only a few nations possess them) and extremely expensive.

NEW TECHNOLOGY

This is an emergent technology. It will usually be somewhat expensive, heavy, or unreliable (though not necessarily all of these) compared to mature technology. It may only be available from a single or small group of manufacturers, with others seeking to copy or steal it. Some new technologies may have limited and expensive commercial sales, while others are working prototypes, "secret weapons," or in "field use" by elite operatives or special military units.

EXPERIMENTAL TECHNOLOGY

This technology is still being invented, and not everyone believes it will succeed. R&D labs will be actively be working on it and may have even had limited success, but any prototypes are likely to be bug-ridden and unique. For example, there might only one lab in the world that has a working self-aware artificial intelligence, and it may often go insane or crash after a few minutes of being activated. Experimental technology can be a goal of adventures as rival corporations or governments try to steal each other's research in the hopes of achieving a breakthrough.



FUTURE TECHNOLOGIES CHART

The Future Technologies chart lists several technologies that are detailed in this book and offers suggestions as to their availability in various cyberpunk settings. These are only suggestions — it is up to the GM to decide whether each of these technologies is available in his or her world, and how common they actually are.

| Technology | Page | Near-Future | Classic | Far-Future |
|-------------------------|------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| A.I. (self-aware) | 128 | experimental | new | mature |
| Cyberware | 26 | new | mature | mature* |
| Hand-held | | | | |
| Energy Weapons | — | experimental | new | mature |
| Human Genetic | | | | |
| Enhancement | 107 | experimental | new | mature |
| Iconic Cyberspace | 142 | experimental | mature | mature |
| Memory Uploading | 29 | experimental | experimental | new |
| Nanomachines | 107 | experimental | experimental | new |
| Neural Buffers | 29 | experimental | new | mature |
| Neural Jack | 27 | new | mature | mature |
| Robots | 113 | new | mature | mature |
| Sensory Interface (SIN) | 29 | new | mature | mature |
| Space Colonies | — | experimental | new | mature |
| Vehicular Energy | | | | |
| Weapons | — | new | mature | mature |
| Virtuality Networks | 136 | mature | mature | mature* |
| Wetware Plugs | 27 | experimental | mature | mature |

* May be "obsolete" in some settings.
 Note: Post-Traumatic cyberpunk may fall into any one of these settings.

BACKGROUND TECHNOLOGIES

These technologies may exist in any cyberpunk world:

NANOTECHNOLOGY

"Nanotechnology" is a broad term that can involve the use of nanomachines (see below) or simply refer to the creation of engineered "smart materials," such as MEMS (microscopic electro-mechanical systems — tiny sensors, processors and gears) through more conventional methods, as well as the design of new materials using nanomaterial technologies like carbon nanotubes (tiny cylinders of carbon atoms that are efficient conductors and can also be used to create super-strong materials). The use of nanomaterials and MEMS is well underway even in 2004 and will be a feature of all cyberpunk settings — it is what makes cybereyes, tiny computers, and so on, possible.

SMART MATTER AND REACTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Many objects built using MEMS and nanomaterials can be "reactive" — they contain tiny molecular switches, gears, computers, motors, and sensors that can interact with their environment. For example, reactive clothes or armour could adjust their fit, while an aircraft might alter its shape for optimum aerodynamic performance at various speeds and altitudes.

COMPUTERS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Computer technology in cyberpunk worlds is more advanced than those of present day systems. It may use holographic memories, biocomputers (using protein-based DNA systems) or nanocomputers (using trillions of tiny nanomachines packed into a compact space that function as a single superfast parallel computer).

COMPUTER HARDWARE

Tiny dedicated computers can be built into just about everything from home appliances to handguns, performing various invisible tasks. There are also multi-purpose programmable computer systems, which come in four basic classes:

COM

A combination cellular phone, radio/video communicator (2 km range but can relay over cell phone networks), pocket computer, and digital camera. A com is perfectly usable for casual computer activities (like text messaging, video conferencing or routine work), but due its small size and limited processing power, any important tasks (such as those that would require a Skill check) are made at a -1 penalty. The system's memory is sufficient to store a day's worth of motion picture imagery (including audio), or many thousands of graphics.

Various types of com interface exist. All coms except implants have a plug that can jack into a normal phone jack to access higher speed cable lines. An implant will require the user use a neural jack for that purpose.

POCKET COM

Pocket coms have a tiny keyboard and screen, but also possess voice-interface capability. The basic com is the size of a slim pocket calculator and slips into a pocket. A mundane Gadget.

WEARABLE COM

Wearable coms are integrated into an item of clothing. The most common design has a small belt module that communicates with a display monocle or sunglasses and an ear piece. They work just like pocket coms, except they allow hands-free operation. The monocle or glasses are a video display and the frame incorporates a digital camera, computer, cell phone and 2 km range radio. The wearer can use voice commands to control it, or for more precision, cause a "virtual" keyboard to appear in front of his or her eyes and type on it; the camera tracks the user's finger movements. These and other graphics and text appear as holograms overlaid on his or her field of vision. Multiple visual windows can also be opened up, although too many can be distracting. A minor Gadget.

IMPLANT COM

Implant coms are surgically implanted in the skull (or built into a robot brain). The user must already have a neural jack. An implant com counts as Features (Implant Com). These are a standard Feature of many robots and A.I. computers.

DECK

A deck is notebook- or laptop-sized portable computer with more computing power than a com. The deck incorporates a processor, video camera, hard drive, media plug, wireless modem (1 km range), and cable input/output jack. It will usually have keyboard and monitor, although some hardcore decks fitted with neural interface adapter (page 109) are built without them.

Decks are the standard computers used to do any serious work — there is no penalty or bonus when using them to make Computers Skill checks. Access to a deck may be required for many tasks in a cyberpunk world, from business

management to scientific research. A deck is a minor Gadget — it is more useful than a com, but not concealable.

FRAME

Frames are big mainframe computers, at a minimum taking up an entire desk. They are not portable. They are most commonly used as major network servers or as the central computer of a lab or important office complex.

For any Skill check where a deck is required but a more powerful, faster system would be of benefit, such as computer hacking, use of a full-sized frame will give a +1 bonus to Skill checks. The GM may rule that a frame is absolutely mandatory for a high-powered scientific or engineering task, such as genetic engineering; if so, no bonus is granted. A frame counts as two minor Gadgets.

SUPERCOMPUTER

Supercomputers are parallel networks of frames or big room-sized computers. They are used for scientific research or controlling complex systems. Some are powerful enough to run A.I. software.

A supercomputer is twice as effective as a frame: that is, it provides a +2 bonus on any task that a deck would suffice for, or a +1 bonus if a frame would be needed. The GM may rule that certain tasks (such as breaking encryption or nanotechnology research) are so complicated that only a supercomputer will suffice; if so, no bonus is granted. A supercomputer counts as a major Gadget.

TERMINALS

An alternative to an actual computer is a dumb terminal. Terminals are simply video display monitors and keyboards — or sometimes just neural jack sockets — that are connected by a cable or wireless network to other computer servers. They can access the Net and perform basic searches for information, or function as video phones.

Terminals may be found in offices and public places like malls or libraries; there may be public terminals instead of phone booths (although personal coms may replace them). Terminals are mundane equipment.

COMPUTER CUSTOMISATION

Computers can be customised with one or more of these options. Each counts as an additional minor Gadget.

NEURAL INTERFACE ADAPTER

The computer is fitted with an input device that allows a neural jack or headset to be connected to it. This is the key upgrade that turns ordinary systems into "cyberspace decks." Interfaces built into decks or larger systems sometimes let the user bring one or more "riders" as passive observers, especially when travelling into iconic cyberspace (page 140) or the virtuality net (page 136). These individuals are jacked into the computer, but cannot actually do anything (or have anything done to them). A Piggyback Interface counts as an extra minor Gadget.

HIGH SPEED

This is a state-of-the art system with a high-speed processor. It gives a +1 bonus to Computer Skill checks, but only to cancel any penalties for rapid execution of tasks.

OPTIMISED

The system's hardware is optimised for a particular use, such as data security and intrusion, network service, graphic design, or video production. (This usually equates with a particular Skill Specialisation) It gives a +1 bonus when performing that specific task, but the user will suffer a -1 penalty when used to perform any other task.

TABLE 10-6:
ARMOUR AND PROTECTIVE DEVICES

| Armour Type | Armour Value | Penalties |
|----------------------|--------------|--|
| Leather Jacket | 2 | None |
| Soft Body Armour | 8 | -2 on Body-related checks* |
| Tactical Armour | 16 | -4 on Body-related checks* |
| Biohazard Suit | 1 | -4 on Body-related checks* |
| Skinsuit | 6 | None |
| Flex Armour | 16 | -1 on Body-related checks* |
| Sealed Combat Armour | 20 | -3 on Body-related checks* |
| Space Suit | 4 | -4 on Body-related checks* |
| Shields | | |
| Tactical Shield | 20 | Requires one free hand to use, -2 on Body-related checks* |

* The penalties for armour and shield only extend to Body-related checks requiring agility, endurance and running speed.

BODY ARMOUR AND PROTECTIVE DEVICES

Body armour is commonly worn in cyberpunk worlds by people expecting trouble, although it is usually considered rude to wear it in social situations. The most sophisticated armour makes use of nanomaterials and advanced alloys and incorporates woven-in electronics and smart materials that make it cool and comfortable to wear. Most armour only covers some of the body, leaving the face and often other extremities unprotected. An attacker can aim for an unprotected spot in exchange for suffering a penalty on his or her attack check (see Called Shot to Partial Armour, page 93). The Armour values listed in this section represent average-quality construction and materials. Shoddy workmanship, poor construction techniques, or weak materials can penalise the given Armour values by -1 to -4. Exceptional workmanship, advanced construction techniques, or resilient materials can increase the given Armour values by +1 to +4.

LEATHER JACKET OR RIDING SUIT

This mundane item stops 2 damage from melee attacks or concussion damage.

SOFT BODY ARMOUR

This armour is a light-weight ballistic-fibre “flak jacket” or “bullet proof vest.” The armour works by catching the bullet in fibres and rapidly distributing the impact energy, often turning a potentially lethal penetration into a bruising blow. Armour is usually made of poly-aramid plastic fibres (Kevlar or Twaron) or extended-chain polyethylene (Spectra). A typical vest subtracts 8 from the damage inflicted on the character, but can be worn concealed under a jacket or coat. It is cumbersome, however, and penalises the wearer with a -2 penalty on Body-related checks relating to agility and running speed. Spotting the armour requires a Mind Stat check; it will be obvious if anyone does a pat-down search. Minor Gadget.

• POWERED SUIT •

This is a sealed suit of articulated powered armour that amplifies the wearer’s own muscles, making him or her the equivalent of a combat cyborg or battle robot. The suit clamshells open, allowing the wearer to step into it; it also has a quick-release explosive bolt system if he or she needs to remove it in a hurry. It is armed with a short-barrel railgun that plugs into its own power supply and has a heads-up targeting display; its arm muscles possess extra hydraulic or myo-electric augmentation to deliver a powerful blow in hand-to-hand combat. In some cyberpunk settings (especially anime-influenced ones), urban SWAT teams, special ops troops, or mercenaries may be assigned such equipment.

ATTRIBUTES

Item of Power 7

ITEM OF POWER (POWERED SUIT VEHICLE) ATTRIBUTES

Adaptation 2 (Noxious gases, Vacuum), Armour 3 (-1; Thin area), Features 1 (Minor Gadget: Pocket com), Heightened Senses 2 (Infravision, Radar), Jumping 1, Special Attack “Rail Gun” 3 (40 Damage, Accurate, Penetrating: Armour, Hand-Held), Special Attack “Armoured Fist” 1 (40 Damage, Melee, Muscle-Powered), Special Defence 3 (Air x2, Flare attacks), Superstrength 1, Tough 2

DEFECTS

Awkward Size -1, Physical Impairment (Cannot heal naturally) -1, Weak Point -1

Final Cost: 35 Points or Item of Power Level 7 or seven major Gadgets.

TACTICAL ARMOUR

This armour is a heavy armoured outfit (with a helmet) of the sort worn by SWAT teams and soldiers. It consists of a rigid ballistic jacket, usually made of composite material such as Spectra Shield (Spectra fibres held in a special Kraton resin), sometimes with ceramic or metal plate inserts. The armour is resistant to nearly all pistol fire and some less powerful rifle rounds. Tactical armour cannot be concealed — everyone seeing the character will know he or she is wearing body armour. Tactical armour is uncomfortable to wear all the time, and characters will not be able to rest and relax while wearing it. Someone who wears the armour for several hours on a hot day may have to make an unmodified Body Stat checks to avoid passing out from heat stroke. Tactical armour subtracts 16 from the damage inflicted to the wearer. The armour requires at least three rounds to strap on or take off, and is sufficiently heavy that Body checks requiring agility, endurance and running speed suffer a -4 penalty. Major Gadget.

CHAPTER 13: HEAVEN OVER MOUNTAIN

From the edge of the city, it looks like a pencil mark on the sky. All of the sky, from horizon and ground level straight up. The human mind has no reflexes for dealing with this kind of thing; nothing in our pre-human ancestors' experience encompasses structures that are literally thousands of miles tall. It rises up forever, or so it seems, disappearing into the daytime glare of the sky. It does actually stop; it's just that our eyes are too weak to follow the rest of it, through vacuum to a tethered asteroid six times further away from us than we are from the centre of the Earth.

The structures around that impossible tower make more sense. Here are corporate mini-arcologies and mega-buildings, tourist hotels, hybrid recreation centres, airports, factories ... all the features of a large and wealthy city. The giant trees between the buildings are less familiar. Their tops blossom more than a hundred metres above street level, and the nearly microscopic fibres wrapped around the massive multiple trunks extend across intervening space into nearby buildings. The multi-story windows aren't just the filtering composites used around the world, either: they're breathing, slightly but noticeably, and their exhalations circulate the air inside. Where construction workers have removed surface panels to adjust some faulty wiring, you can see that the apparently smooth tiles making up walls and floors are actually bark, growing on top of something that looks like a tree flattened out and spread across several city blocks.

This is Anchor. The city is rich, a rival to old New York, the London Extension, Hong Kong, and other centres for finance and trade. One way or another, though,

WHAT THIS SETTING IS ABOUT

The cyberpunk genre has included biotechnology in various forms from the very beginning, with everything from custom-built diseases to genetic engineering to entire artificial ecologies. Similarly, the colonisation of space — or at least Earth orbit — has also been a significant element, where the orbital corporate headquarters can symbolise the ultimate form of the high-rise office building, overshadowing the teeming masses in the dirt below. "Heaven Over Mountain" draws on these traditions to present a setting that is simultaneously the largest artefact in the solar system, a transnational power player, and an ecosystem so distinctive as to almost be an alien world unto itself.

Cyberpunk is also about the transformation of humanity, and the pace of evolution has always been accelerated by the need to adapt to new environments. The elevator and the society of people who live in and work around the artefact is just such a place. Like a wild ecosystem, the most interesting place to be isn't outside it looking in but immersed in it, taking part in the constantly shifting array of transactions and relationships, playing a part in other people's plans and (trying to) carry out your own. The communities described in this chapter invert cyberpunk's traditional outsider roles. Here, subversion and alienation begin at home.

all that wealth comes from the tower at the city's heart. It's an elevator, capable of carrying thousands of people and thousands of tonnes of cargo between Anchor and the cities in space, up above. There's the satellite-managing factory town of Earthrise, the resort and university town Halfway, the espionage-ridden meeting grounds of Summit, and the secretive, exclusive dwellings collectively known as Heaven. Before the elevator, people couldn't afford to gather in space in crowds of more than a few dozen at a time. Now there are literally millions of them, living and working, and paying little more for their necessities and luxuries than people working in any high-priced community down on the ground.

As you make your way through the city, the tower is always present. After all, it can never be entirely hidden by anything on the ground. If you can see the sky around it, you can see the tower. Some first-timers panic as they think about the massive weight of it all, mountains of material strung together and held in place by forces that can be hard to trust. Even those of us who don't succumb to "elevator panic" have moments of disorientation, when it all becomes too much to cope with and we must go recuperate in someplace with familiar, terrestrial, synthetic furnishings and no views of the sky. Then the moment passes and we go on about our lives. There are profits to be made, after all, and if we don't get to them, someone else will.

And for a little while, we don't think too much about that pencil mark across the sky that makes it all possible.

THE BEANSTALK IDEA

The basic idea of an orbital elevator is simple enough, yet it requires some explanation. New employees and people coming for extended stays get thorough briefings so that they understand their environments; tourists get an orientation lecture similar to the following, with entertaining animation to make basic points clear.

ORIENTATION

In very high orbit, about a tenth of the way to the Moon, there's a region of space where an object circling the Earth will complete its orbit in 24 hours. This is geosynchronous orbit. If this orbit is perfectly circular around the Earth's equator, it is also geostationary: an object will seem to hover over a particular point on the ground. Communications satellites have used geosynchronous orbits since the mid-20th century. Closer to the Earth, satellites orbit the planet more than once a day, and farther out they "lag behind" in orbits that take more than a day to complete — a full month, out by the Moon. Geostationary orbit is about 35,785 km above sea level.

An object in orbit is falling freely, requiring no energy to maintain orbit once it's established. Space around Earth isn't a perfect vacuum, however; even at 36,000 km, there's stellar gas and dust drifting in from the asteroid belt and other astronomical craft to knock a spacecraft a bit out of orbit. These orbit adjustments are almost always minor affairs, though. It takes a lot more energy to change orbits, or to move faster or slower than free-falling speed in a particular orbit. The rocket has to fight gravity and inertia, the tendency of things to keep moving at the speed they are going and in the direction they are moving. While it's possible to maintain a line-up with some point on Earth directly below a spacecraft without being in geostationary orbit, it would require constant effort, which requires constant fuel. A satellite much closer to the Earth than 36,000 km would have to constantly brake itself and risk falling out of orbit altogether, while one farther away would have to constantly speed up and risk zooming away from the planet and never coming back.

Even after decades of space travel, an intuitive grasp of orbital mechanics doesn't come easy. Consider a terrestrial example: six people marching side by side. As long as they go in the same direction at the same speed, they stay side by side. If they start turning to the right while all maintaining the same speed, the marcher

farthest to the right finishes his turn first and moves on, while the one farthest on the left lags more and more behind, because he has more territory to cover. Marching bands and other drill units teach their members how to make turns in co-ordination, to avoid just this problem; the marchers on the inside edge take small steps and do some marching in place, while those on the outside edge pace faster. When it works, everyone ends up smoothly in line again as soon as the turn is complete.

The orbital elevator provides just such a way to keep all its pieces moving at the same speed. The lower reaches of the elevator, closer to Earth, naturally experience some pull forward, but the elevator's cables and supports are strong enough to keep them in line. Likewise, the upper reaches would lag behind, except that the elevator's strength pulls them ahead. Overall, the forces acting on the various parts of the tower cancel out and leave it moving at the speed of its centre of mass, which engineers put at 35,785 km. So it rises up from its terrestrial anchor straight up into the sky.

MATH AND SCIENCE

It takes very strong materials to resist all these forces, of course. The first idea for an orbital tower was proposed all the way back in the 19th century, and engineers and science fiction writers refined the concept throughout the 20th century and into the 21st. The mathematics of it aren't all that hard, it's just that the tower has to be made of something far stronger than steel to resist being pulled apart. The ability to make synthetic materials that tough in enough quantity to form thousands of miles of cable was achieved in the 21st century. The cables are made of carbon nanotubes, atoms of carbon arranged in long columns like microscopic pipes. The atoms arranged this way form wires several times stronger than diamond, and in turn those wires are woven into cables that can be as much as 50 metres thick.

As the tower extends into space, gravity must be considered (see page 194).

BUILDING THE ELEVATOR

The cabling required to connect Earth and space weighs countless millions of tonnes, even with super-advanced materials. If it were built from the ground up, workers couldn't raise it far into space before it snapped and fell over. Instead, the elevator is actually built from geostationary orbit down to the surface. The elevator's centre of mass is in geostationary orbit. Tethered asteroids provide the raw materials; as the first cables stretched down, matching ones were stretched up as well, with an asteroid as a cap at the top of the whole thing, waiting to be mined. In that way, the elevator always holds itself up.

A massive tower stretches up 25 km from the surface of the Earth, holding the bottom end of the cables in place until they are high enough up that the atmosphere thins out and strong winds can't shake the elevator's lower reaches. The tower has to be big to hold itself up and accommodate all the cargo and people passing through it, but the part of the cables it surrounds adds almost nothing to its effective weight. The elevator's countless millions of tonnes up above pull the bottom up; if the cables were ever cut loose from their anchors, they'd snap up and away from the Earth.

CABLE TRAFFIC

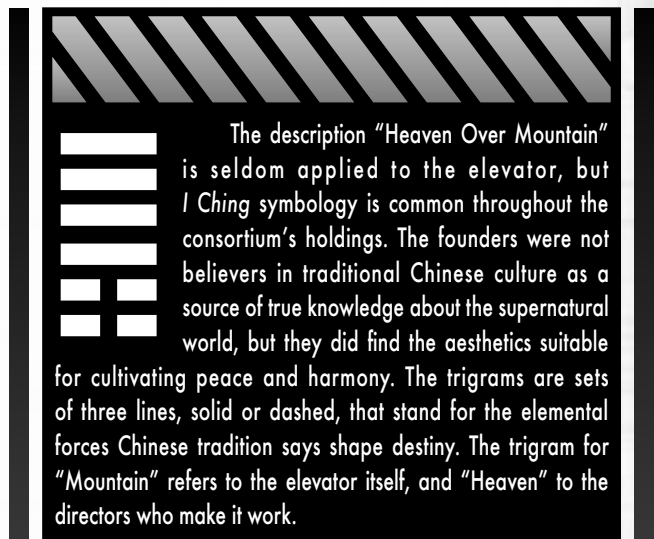
The space elevator doesn't consist of just one cable. It has dozens of them, designed to support different sizes and configurations of vehicles. The overall diameter of the elevator tapers as it approaches Earth: it's eight kilometres across at the top of the ground tower, widening to more than 20 kilometres across at geostationary orbit. It tapers down again as it approaches the asteroid at its cap. Co-ordinating the movement of the vehicles attached to the various cables through the tapered areas calls for some of the most sophisticated traffic control on the planet; A.I.-directed routines accelerate and decelerate vehicles so smoothly that passengers seldom notice. The only practical limit on the speed of attached vehicles is the sensitivity of the cargo to high-G accelerations.

CARGO

Unmanned cargo units can hurtle up and down, pulled by superconducting magnets of enormous power, almost as fast as a rocket would travel: the big padded cargo haulers move 30-metre cubes filled with goods from surface to geostationary orbit at a top speed of just under 20,000 kph. These launch out of the atmosphere, propelled by electromagnetic cannon, accelerating much faster than any human being could stand and decelerating almost as rapidly as if they simply ran into a wall. Passenger-carrying units, on the other hand, carry a hundred people at a time and make the trip in five and a half hours, if they don't stop anywhere along the way. 40 cables carry cargo and 25 carry passengers; and since vehicles move with just a few minutes' separation, the elevator carries as much daily traffic as a major harbour and a major airport combined.

THE ORBITAL DEVELOPMENT CONSORTIUM

The orbital elevator exists because an extraordinarily dedicated group of industrialists, engineers, and business leaders made it happen. This section presents the history of their work and a description of the elevator as it exists now.



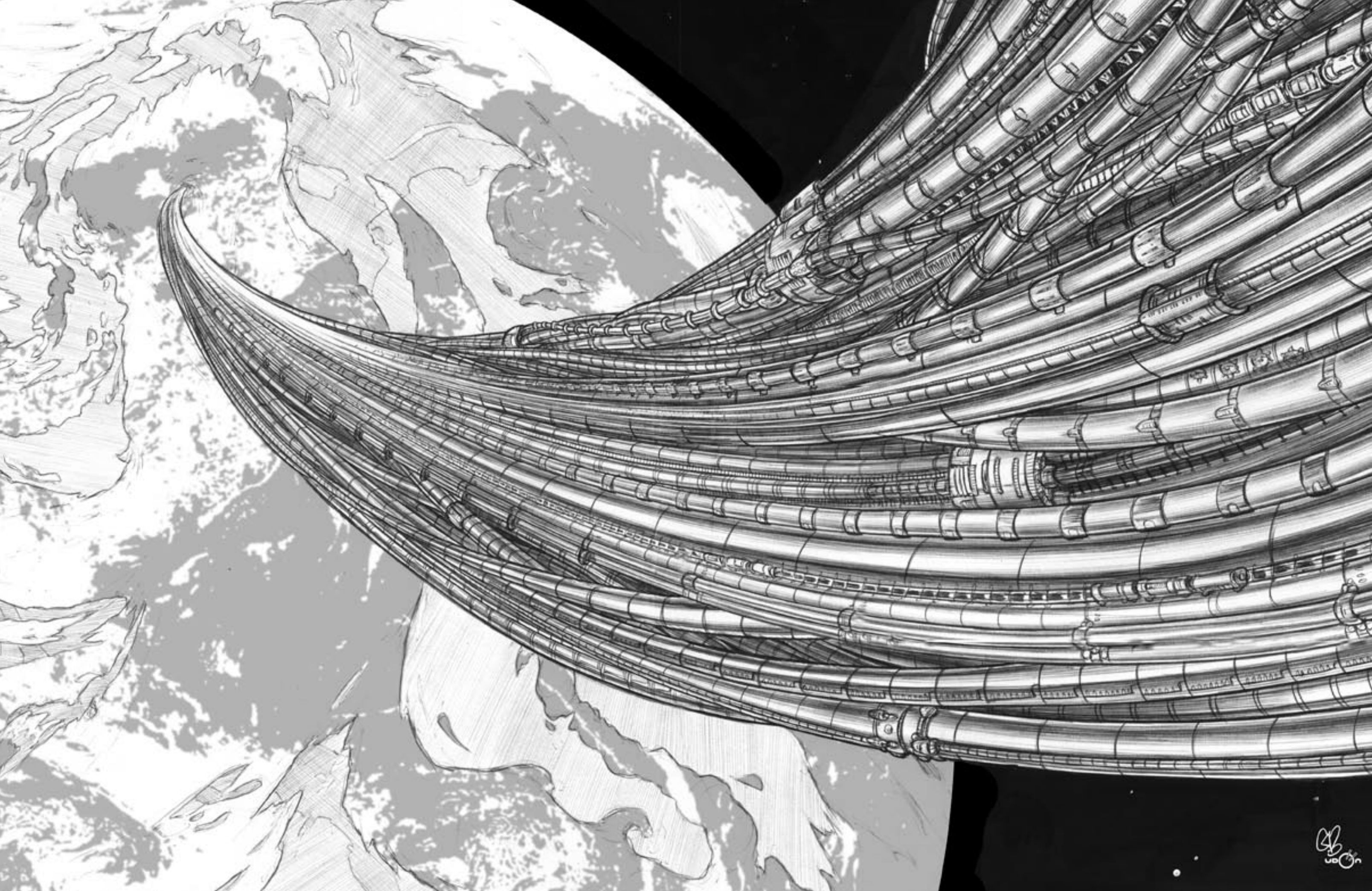
The description "Heaven Over Mountain" is seldom applied to the elevator, but I Ching symbology is common throughout the consortium's holdings. The founders were not believers in traditional Chinese culture as a source of true knowledge about the supernatural world, but they did find the aesthetics suitable for cultivating peace and harmony. The trigrams are sets of three lines, solid or dashed, that stand for the elemental forces Chinese tradition says shape destiny. The trigram for "Mountain" refers to the elevator itself, and "Heaven" to the directors who make it work.

THE BUILDERS

The visionaries who pushed their various governments into rocketry programs all believed that they were taking the first steps to a permanent human presence in space. First there'd be flights to orbit, then large manned space stations, a moon base, and landings on other planets, and finally self-sustaining colonies throughout the solar system. It didn't happen that way.

By the end of the 20th century, it was clear that national space programs (and ones run by consortiums of governments) were never going to fulfil these grand visions. The space agencies of the time would continue to mount infrequent and extremely expensive launches, lacking the institutional ability to pursue any real alternative. In the early 21st century, individual and groups interested in space activities that required more frequent, cheaper launches started talking more seriously to each other, working out what they actually could do with existing technology, what it might take to invent the rest of what they'd need, and how they could present it all to the world at large. It was during this period that the initial "elevator" concept was outlined, though it would be decades more before it was brought to fruition.

The Orbital Development Consortium formed in secret. For its first several years, it could have been broken up with treason charges against its founders. The heads of several US-based aerospace firms struck agreements with factions within



LIVING CYBERSPACE

Heaven Over Mountain uses the rules for iconic cyberspace (page 142). The cyberspace environment attached to the elevator's networks could be considered a "cybernetic jungle" (or virtual wilderness). It is built on biological images derived from the organisms contributing genetic material to consortium biotech. As with the elevator's physical structures, the directors decided on a course of decentralised design for cyberspace as well. Their master plan lays out very general "climatic" and other constraints, and lets increasingly localised competition handle the details. The consortium's central design bureau intervenes only when crucial data and tasks go neglected.

CONSORTIUM CYBERSPACE

Consortium cyberspace resembles a hyper-dimensional string of oases through a vast desert. Unlike terrestrial iconic systems, however, distances expand and contract depending on a unit's location within the elevator system.

Anchor and each of the settlements presents itself as an oasis, twice as wide in latitude and longitude as the corresponding physical space to allow for more details. (Biotech controls are innately more complicated than purely inorganic ones, and monitoring and adjustment of these controls is a primary purpose for the iconic style.) Climatic differences are also exaggerated by a factor of two, so that the northern side of a settlement is temperate in cyberspace or even arctic, while the southern side is fully tropical.

A meandering river valley, with multiple streams that divide and converge constantly, flows between the oases. This is the icon for the elevator itself, each stream representing one or more cables. The river twists up over the rim of the oases through a direction that's not precisely north, east, west, or south, and out into a great dry desert that represents surrounding space. Smaller isolated oases represent satellites with accessible cyberspace areas. Between settlements, the distances compress by a factor of 10, with closer detail available upon deliberate focus. Then the river curves up and over an embankment and down into the next settlement's oasis representation. Here there's the same range of climates as in Anchor, and the river flowing on away from Anchor and Earth.

Heaven, the river's destination, appears as a pure black volcanic mountain with caves at its foot to receive the river. Lava flows represent the security systems that get in the way of unauthorised traffic.

Human beings usually appear in human avatars, as a matter of efficiency: it wastes time to have to adjust to too many co-workers' strange ideas of suitable avatars without some general policy. But this isn't law or universal custom. Independent businesses, offices within larger units, residential neighbourhoods, and other groups may establish conventions of their own and work just as smoothly among themselves. Individuals who prove adept at operating efficiently among very diverse avatars often find employment as negotiators, representatives, and couriers.

Authorised programs almost always appear as known terrestrial species, current or extinct, and most data takes on plant forms. Aquatic and avian species carry seeds, branches, and fruit of data across long distance, and in local environments, ground-dwelling and arboreal species carry it with them as they walk, crawl, tunnel, and brachiate. Software icons indicate their place of origin in terms of climate, and experienced observers can tell not only which general part of which settlement an item came from but often its specific creator. Out of some obscure sense of whimsy, the master A.I.s choose to represent upgrades and replacement in terms of evolutionary succession and predation: new programs and data hunt the units they subsume. The level of gore and carnage associated with this process is, fortunately for the faint-hearted, customisable at the group and individual level.

DIGITAL EVOLUTION

By design, the consortium cyberspace is constantly developing new features with very little central direction. New icons compete with existing ones, and the ones that prove more efficient win the resources for which they compete. In some cases, the overseeing A.I.s deliberately introduce climatic changes in hopes of triggering useful developments; in others, they simply watch and harvest the results.

The inhabited parts of the elevator system do not experience natural disasters, but there is geological and climatic change in which the physical processes of thousands or millions of years are compressed into hours and days. Hills rise and fall, rivers change their channels, cooling and warming waves pass over the landscape, and so on. Each individual part of the system retains its integrity, but connections may change. Independent mapmakers try to keep track of all of this, and reliable, regularly updated navigational charts sell for good prices.

Furthermore, whole new territory appears every few days to weeks. This often but not always correlates with new physical construction. Sometimes the A.I.s create new cyberspace resources to handle increased computational demand

• SUPERVISORY A.I. AVATAR •

This is a settlement-level supervisory A.I., built on 70 Points, represented as a whale swimming in channels branching out from the river that is the elevator. Potentially dangerous icons are swallowed up for secluded examination. Other forms of A.I. can be built as variations of the standard A.I. template on page 37. The Supervisory A.I.'s remaining 32 Skill Points can be assigned as appropriate for that A.I.'s specific function.

| | |
|--------|------------------------|
| Body 6 | Attack Combat Value 6 |
| Mind 7 | Defence Combat Value 4 |
| Soul 5 | Health Points 55 |
| | Shock Value 11 |

ATTRIBUTES

Armour 1, Features 4 (Major Gadget: supercomputer), Flight 1, Highly Skilled 2, Mind Shield 2, Organisational Ties 2 (Great), Special Attack "Data Swallow" 2 (60 Damage, Tangle, No Damage, Melee), Special Defence 12 (Air x2, Ageing, Disease x2, Hunger x2, Pain, Poison x2, Sleep x2), Telepathy 8 [Computer programs; Area 2; Targets 1, Reduction -1, Only for initiating mind combat]

SKILLS

Computers (Intrusion/Security) 3

DEFECTS

Awkward Size -3, Less Capable (Empathy) -1, Marked (Distinctive avatar) -2, Physical Impairment (Cannot heal naturally) -1, Physical Impairment (No sense of smell or taste) -2, Physical Impairment (No limbs) -3, Special Requirement (Plugged into power supply) -3

in existing physical units, and sometimes they do it just to see what appears there. The security services know that there are whole informal clans of squatters in such territories, their bodies in cryogenic suspension and their minds connected around the clock to cyberspace. As long as the squatters don't interfere with the productive work of paying residents and guests, security finds, it's not cost-effective to mount serious efforts at rooting them all out. Several times a year ODC does offer bounties for the data and equipment of these squatters, and would-be cyberspace acers jump at the chance to show off their prowess.

There are also "squatter" A.I.s and un-self-aware software enclaves in the undeveloped wilds. Studying these entities has much of the flavour of mythological monster-slaying. Not subject to the consortium's general regimen of personality monitoring, some of these are thoroughly alien, and the human side of the consortium would like to know more about them than the A.I.s choose to share.

• ELEVATOR GUARD •

Street Samurai: 65 points

Stats: Body 8, Mind 6, Soul 5, ACV 8, DCV 4, Health Points 65, Shock 13, Stress 3

Attributes: Attack Combat Mastery 2, Combat Technique (Accuracy, Judge Opponent) 2, Features (Generalised Appearance) 1, Gadgets (Includes soft body armour, laser stunner, and PDW; possibly dog or bicycle) 4, Heightened Awareness 3, Massive Damage (Guns) 1, Highly Skilled 3, Organisational Ties 2 (Significant)

Skills: Acrobatics (Balance) 1, Intimidation (Street) 1, Military Sciences (Teamwork) 1, Stealth (Camouflage) 1, Urban Tracking (Any) 1, Gun Combat (Auto-fire) 2, Ranged Defence (Personal) 2, Unarmed Attack (Grappling) 1, Unarmed Defence (Strikes) 1

Defects: Marked 2 BP, Owned 2 BP

• FLAT PACK •

One of the most successful roaming gangs is the Flat Pack. A year ago, they stumbled across the body of an elevator biotech maintenance worker who'd committed suicide just minutes before; among her possessions, they found her biometric data and passwords. With these, they could and did break into the support systems for both passenger and cargo elevators. Their favourite undertaking now is to sneak away in elevator cars' maintenance areas, come out in mid-trip to rob their targets, and then escape before the car docks with the help of stolen pressure suits. Their continued freedom fuels the perennial debate about the effectiveness of consortium security.

SILICATE MADNESS

Silicate Madness is one of the oldest A.I.-run firms in the elevator, established by three early security and scientific analysis programs that merged their personalities into the new hybrid entity that simply calls itself Silicate Madness Operator (see page 194). SMO explores states of consciousness that human beings can't achieve without organic brain damage or other complications, or that may not be possible at all within the constraints of human neurology. Some of the resulting A.I.s are relatively easy for humans to understand, like idiot savants. Others are fundamentally incomprehensible except to specialists, like the units that work on multi-valued logic or different definitions of sensory data. Many, perhaps most, of the SMO creations are either erased or voluntarily choose extinction in short order, being too removed from their contexts to function happily. The stable few more than pay for it all, however, generating unique insights into pressing problems facing Silicate Madness' clientele.

ELEVATOR GANGS

Small-scale gangs flourish throughout the elevator, the larger ones operating much like old-fashioned local political machines. In exchange for bribes and support, they provide protection and patronage for their constituents. Most of these gangs are attached to some particular neighbourhood or physical spot, but not all of them.

• SILICATE MADNESS OPERATOR •

AI: 150 points

Stats: Body 4, Mind 12, Soul 6, ACV 12, DCV 5, Health Points 50, Shock 10, Stress N/A

Attributes: Agents (A.I.s +16 Character Points; Restriction, some A.I.s are akin to idiot savants, 5 BP) 7, Attack Combat Mastery 4, Extra Attacks 1, Extra Defences 1, Features (Major Gadget: supercomputer) 4, Flight 1, Highly Skilled 4, Mind Shield 3, Organisational Ties 6 (Significant), Reincarnation 3, Special Attack "Data Crash" (40 Damage, Spreading, Short Range) 2, Special Defence (Air x2, Ageing, Disease x2, Hunger x2, Pain, Poison x2, Sleep x2) 12, Special Movement (Dataflow) 1, Telepathy 10 (Computers or jacked-in users; Area 3; Targets 3; Reduction -1, Only for initiating mind combat)

Skills: Computers (Networks) 4, Area Knowledge (Cyberspace) 3, Biological Sciences (Genetics) 3, Electronics (Computers) 2, Military Sciences (Hardware Recognition, Intelligence Analysis) 3

Defects: Famous 1 BP, Ism (A.I.) 2 BP, Less Capable (Charisma) 1 BP, Less Capable (Intuition) 1 BP, Physical Impairment (Cannot heal naturally) 1 BP, Physical Impairment (No limbs) 3 BP, Sensory Impairment (No sense of smell or taste) 2 BP, Special Requirement (Plugged into power supply) 3 BP, Unique: Merged Personality (Suffers sporadically from Blind Fury, Recurring Nightmares, Phobia, or Sensory Impairment) 2 BP

CHAPTER 14: UNDERWORLD

INTRODUCTION: 2120

Underworld takes place in the year 2120. The term “Underworld” is a catch-all phrase, which refers to both the campaign world and the vast, walled prison-sprawls that dot the landscape. Each major continental territory has an Underworld, all numbered to tell them apart from one another. This chapter focuses on Underworld 9, the major Southeast Asian Hub.

Underworld 9 is a vast place, and the GM can run an entire campaign without leaving its confines. If the GM wants to further expand the world, however, it would be easy to flesh out other Underworld hubs or locations outside their walls, such as major cities or corporate headquarters.

• GRINNING JIM INTERVIEW •

“You know that old saying, ‘Curiosity killed the cat?’ Well, in Underworld, curiosity grabbed the cat by the scruff, poked its eyes out with a wire, and sold it to the gang lords as a genetic sex doll template – and they ended up skinning it, grinding its guts into soup, and using its fur for a towel.”

The old man stretched against the bar’s tacky wall and chuckled to himself, amused. “Damned ether-journalists, when the hell are any of you gonna learn? Laws? Well that’s just about the funniest damned question I’ve ever heard.” The man paused and leaned forward on his stool, his obviously bootlegged auto-eye squeaking as it focused in the dim light. “Don’t you know? Everything’s legal in Underworld.

“It’s pretty simple, really; the strong are on top and the weak whimper beneath them, hoping they can get through another day alive” He reached over and swigged his Nano from a discoloured can. “There are several levels in Underworld,” he began. “You got your outside-the-walls types like your corporations and governments which run everything on top, then beneath the corplords you have your transients – your middle management type suits, your up-and-coming government officials, and people like you – who may work here, but they don’t live here, if you take my meaning. Then there are those who live within the walls: your drones, street enforcers, gang members, chip-dolls, l-chip addicts, and drifters such as myself. Within each ‘level’ there is a hierarchy, too; the mob-bosses trump your enforcers, who trump the gang members, who push around your penal-labourers, and so on. I wouldn’t go up against a street enforcer if you paid me. Which reminds me, how much are you paying for this little chat? I only accept world dollars – no U-dollars and no credit. Credit is worth about as much as dirt to an Underworlder.”

Underworld is an intricate web spun by the corporate elite to ensnare the destitute masses. Any movement along its strands reverberates throughout, alerting all who live within that fresh prey is up and about. It is where the world’s poor and disenfranchised toil tirelessly for their rich taskmasters until they wither and finally expire, only to be replaced by other, more able bodied drones who continue the cycle.

To those fortunate enough to live above the filth and degradation, Underworld is more of an idea than a sprawling hell. Their world is comfortable and peaceful. The truth of Underworld does not touch them; the stories of squalid horror are nothing more than abject phantasmagoria and troubled dreams.

The poor souls that dwell in the spilled muck of the giant hubs, however, disagree. To them, the nightmares and horror of what they’ve seen — the surgical brutality that can be brought to bear on another human being — is all quite real.

It is a place where nothing can be taken for granted, where every bit of fuel necessary for life is scarce. Only those ruthless enough, smart enough, or fast enough can hope to survive. It is also a place where anything one can imagine — food, drugs, tech, slaves, babies — can be bought and sold for the right price. Murder, rape, extortion, torture, kidnapping are daily happenings, far easier to find than drinkable water or simple acts of kindness. Everyone on the streets of Underworld is potential prey, since there is always a stronger predator. The nature of that potential is often best left undiscovered — get safely back to your hole and call it a good day, and try to dream that tomorrow will be a shade brighter.

BIRTH OF THE UNDERWORLDS: IMPERIAL AMERICA

At the end of the 21st century, the unfettered growth of the United States of America allowed it to achieve near economic and political domination of the planet. In the process, many governmental agencies changed or withered away as they were no longer needed in the new world order ... as did democracy.

The current US government is a plutocracy dominated by the major megacorporations. American global hegemony was secured through technological supremacy. As the 21st century wore on, the greatest symbol of this power was the establishment of an orbiting space arsenal.

High above the other nations of the world, the United States deployed mass drivers, rail guns, and strike lasers. They were originally established as a means to protect vital satellite surveillance, as well as navigation and communication systems like Navstar and Milstar, but these space weapon systems soon morphed into platforms for power projection in their own right.

The threat of global terrorism provided the necessary justification for a century of expansion that saw America seize control of numerous “unstable territories” beyond its continental borders. This march began in the Middle East, but continued through Central and Southeast Asia and Africa. These actions were justified in the name of regional stabilisation and national security, but they also had the long-term effect of placing a growing percentage of the world’s resources (both natural and human) under US control. The few countries that actively opposed America witnessed the skies above their capital cities set ablaze, as Space Command ruthlessly demonstrated its ability to impose America’s will.

In the process of making the world safe for America, the United States military came to invade and occupy many of the poorer and less-stable nations of the world, as its military forces rooted out terrorists and guerrillas under the guise of stabilising world order. Many “unstable” nations, such as Iran, Syria, North Korea, Thailand, Cambodia, and much of Africa and Central Asia, became de-facto American territories. Each invasion was followed by the slow process of nation building to bring the “benefits” of the First World to developing countries that had been torn asunder by ethnic and religious strife.

While they ostensibly cited a desire to create a high-order political system in these regions, some suspected the American leaders were more interested in establishing a strong economic base — which in turn would open the country to the economics of America, and thus its corporate base. The corporations stood behind this world building policy, and openly encouraged a model such as China's transition into a market economy, unlike the failures of similar transitions in the former Soviet Union. The United States government decided that capitalist values were of utmost importance, especially in nations with a long tradition of warlords, tribal politics, and fundamentalist institutions; to simply turn the regions into “democracies” and withdraw would leave the region in chaos and turmoil.

Once the US Army had stabilised a region, its borders would be opened for an influx of American companies. The process of rebuilding and reshaping an occupied nation was systemised, privatised, and sold to the highest bidder ... and run for a profit.

A new group was formed and put in charge of managing this fresh approach: the Privatised Reconstruction and Infrastructure Development Executors, or PRIDE. It was described as a “global partnership between military, industry, and politics for the salvation of the developing world.”

Under the direction of PRIDE, foreign populations that were used to the corruption and inefficiency of dictatorial regimes were given jobs in new, cutting-edge factories administered by a select group of American corporations. A number of major hub cities in newly-liberated occupied nations were chosen to serve as incubators for the transformation of the population of outlaw regimes into good global citizens. The latest cybernetic technology and educational techniques would be employed to train and prepare the inhabitants — especially the children — to join the modern post-industrial workforce. In order to protect them from guerrillas and terrorists (many of whom were still active in the countryside), these model cities were carefully sealed off and guarded by the latest in active defence systems.

America called them Secure Economic Zones. The inhabitants called them Underworlds, because to them, they were hell on Earth.

THE ROAD TO HELL

The corporations who ran the Underworlds as off-shore fiefdoms were given the mission of turning them into profitable economic islands in the global economy. Instead, foreign puppet regimes under American control herded their dissidents into the Underworlds, giving the corporations that ruled there free reign in exchange for the American weapons and aid that served to prop up their own domestic power. In order to deal with the often restive populations, the corporations were given full control over internal matters. Most civil rights were suspended in the interests of security ... and after a series of brutal uprisings — demonstrating that the populace couldn't handle even the most rudimentary of freedoms — “most” quickly turned to “all.”

As corporate power increased, global megacorporations like Augustus and Imperial successfully lobbied a series of compliant American administrations to create the notorious FLC (Freedom of Liability Charter) legislation, which gave companies participating in the PRIDE program nearly unlimited legal powers within their domains, as well as complete freedom from the constraints of any foreign or domestic labour laws — in effect, granting them extraterritorial status and the same rights and privileges as a foreign nation.

The right of the people to rule themselves was revoked in short order, ostensibly in response to public uprisings and violence. Democracy was to be restored when the populations were ready for it — and it was up to PRIDE to judge when the time was right.

It has now been over six decades since the very first Secure Economic Zone, “Underworld 1,” was founded. Profits are up, but it seems democracy is still just over the horizon ... a line that is receding day by day.

Today, the Underworlds are little more than enormous self-sustaining labour camps. The megacorporations that run them under PRIDE's FLC charter find them very useful. It isn't the cheap labour so much as the lack of restrictions on what these drones can do, and what can be done to them: 16-hour neural-jacked teleoperation shifts; human testing of new drugs, bioaware, and cyberware; serving as jacked-in neural-net processors for the Andromeda Data Nebula (the world's global computer network) — in short, a whole range of jobs in the post industrial economy for which a shortage of applicants exist beyond the Underworlds.

The Underworlds have also proven excellent places to rehabilitate or disappear troublemakers of all stripes. As conventional prisons in the United States, Europe, Japan, China, and elsewhere became overcrowded, it became common for the operators of the various Underworlds to earn extra income by finding places for foreign inmates in their secure environments.

Under the principle that (for example) American Mafia inmates would be less likely to run their networks from prison if they were shipped to Africa or Thailand than if they stayed in upstate New York, the US government arranged for many inmates serving life sentences to be moved to Underworlds around the world. This was made legally possible because the Underworlds — run by multinational corporate entities — were, by treaty, extensions of American or another allied nation's sovereignty on foreign soil, much like embassies. In essence, a free trade in goods was transformed into a trade in human flesh. Similar deals were made with other governments, including the hosts of the Underworlds, who were eager to see local dissidents scattered to the far reaches of the Earth and willing to accept a few foreigners, provided they were kept safe behind the walls of the US-run Secure Economic Zones.

That should have been the end of those hardened criminals and their crime networks. It was a good theory, but it did not reckon with the resourcefulness of the criminals themselves. The transplanted Mafiosa or Yakuza or Tongs did indeed lose touch with their old networks, but they soon established new ones. Indeed, the relative freedom of trading a 30-square-metre cell for an entire city was welcomed by some prisoners, once they got over the shock of exile. Better to reign in hell than do time in America.

UNDERWORLD 9: AN OVERVIEW

Blinding white light shines from the tops of the gleaming steel walls that surround it, radiating in all directions. Smaller work lights swing their beams back and forth over the great, cluttered bowl of the city. Aside from the probing beams of the search lights, the city is cloaked by a perpetual haze of low smog, regardless of the weather beyond the walls. The sun's face is always veiled and the night sky is entirely invisible, a dark grey haze lit by a reflected dull orange glow; stars have become jokes uneasily laughed at in bars. This is partly the result of the pollution belched out from the factories within U9, and partly due to the dome of protective nano-mist that surrounds the city. The mist itself is a thick cloud of floating micro-machines, erected — so the authorities say — to devour the toxic chemicals emitted before they fall to Earth again. Many believe this a lie: the dome may eat pollution, but only to keep it from spreading beyond U9 ... and it eats other things as well.

Every few minutes, the muffled stutter of distant auto-fire cuts through the thick air. A long convoy of armoured vehicles rumbles down the road laden with parts and raw material for the manufacturing plants. Their spotlights swing in the darkness, revealing dying, huddled forms in the crevices of the city's grey buildings; trash and chunks of detritus swirl in the gutters and on the sidewalks. A gang patrol quickly ducks into an alley. The trucks don't stop. In the distance another car hums past — probably a Mafia don or Yakuza *oyabun* going about his business; few others own private vehicles.



Stevens '04
UD 

• GRINNING JIM •

Investigator; 110 Character Points

Stats: Body 6, Mind 11, Soul 10, ACV 11, DCV 12, Health Points 100, Shock 30

Attributes: Attack Combat Mastery 2, Combat Technique (Accuracy, Concealment, Hardboiled, Judge Opponent, One Shot Left) 5, Defence Combat Mastery 5, Divine Relationship 6, Extra Defences 1, Gadgets (Various tools, 9mm Krait) 3, Heightened Awareness 8, Highly Skilled 14, Tough 1

Enhancements: CC-chip (Features 3: Neural Jack, Socket Interface, Implant Com; Bane, Neural Feedback, 1 BP) 2 Points*, Cybernetic Eye (Heightened Senses 3: Sight, Infrared, Ultravision, Special Defence: Flare, Combat Technique: Accuracy) 5 Points

Skills: Area Knowledge (Underworld 9) 4, Area Knowledge (Other Underworlds) 3, Computers (Intrusion/Security) 2, Driving (Car) 3, Etiquette (Upper Class) 2, Gaming (Gambling) 3, Interrogation (Psychological) 2, Languages (English, Cantonese, Italian, Japanese, Thai) 3, Law (Customs) 1, Performing Arts (Fast Talking) 3, Sleight of Hand (Card Sharking) 3, Stealth (Concealment) 4, Street Sense (Influential Individuals) 4, Urban Tracking (Corporate, Residential) 3, Gun Combat (Pistol) 2, Ranged Defence (Personal) 1, Melee Attack (Improvised Weapons) 1, Unarmed Defence (Strikes) 1

Defects: Confined Movement 1 BP, Famous 2 BP, Marked (Squeaky eye, scarred arm) 1 BP, Physical Impairment (Right arm is weak, from old factory accident) 1 BP, Recurring Nightmares 2 BP, Special Requirement (Nan-O Soda) 1 BP, Wanted (Various agencies) 3 BP

Notes: * Grinning Jim had his CC-chip "fixed" long ago, so that it no longer accepts unwanted broadcasts. He is still classified as a PR, and thus unable to leave Underworld 9. See page 203 for more details on Grinning Jim.

Grinning Jim

Grinning Jim is a well-known figure within the realms of Underworld. Everyone who ventures even a short distance from their coffins knows of Jim and his outrageous exploits. Throughout the Underworld Hubs, stories of Jim's accomplishments and near-death experiences circulate over and over — and a few of them are actually true.

Contrary to what most people know, Jim started as a corporate man, set on the high road. To become a corplord, one must become adept in the ways of misinformation, misdirection, and subterfuge; Jim was deftly skilled in all of these, perhaps too much so. When his bosses realised the threat he posed to their cushy jobs, they set up a coup against him and had him ousted to Underworld.

Here he became a drone for Augustus, where he worked for several years before shattering his arm in a broken machine and finding himself tossed out as street grist. As cunning as Jim was, however, he was able to fend for himself and make a moderate living on the streets. Eventually, after working for several gangs and mob families, Jim became a drifter, happy to wander the highways of the Underworlds rather than be bound by them.

Jim is an amazing source of information, since he has done and seen a staggering amount of things in his life. He is quite intelligent, although he rarely shows it, and will share slivers of knowledge — for a price. Jim has currently settled in U9, having made it "nice and cosy," relatively speaking.

Jim is a man who, while worn down by the Underworlds, is still quite alive. His face beams with a jaded light; true to his name, he's always smiling. Whether this is a ploy to lower his audience's guard while scoping them out or whether he is just a jolly soul varies depending on who's describing him.

Jim's eye was poorly replaced by a scalpel shop with a second generation optical system whose parts are hard to come by; consequently, his eye squeaks gratingly whenever it focuses. He never had the luxury to replace the thing, but finds the discomfort it causes those around him quite amusing. He will look around a room just to make the thing whine incessantly. Other than this, Jim resembles other drifters — worn, dirty clothes, unshaven wrinkled face, and outdated cyberware are all trademarks of people of his station.

• GRINNING JIM INTERVIEW •

"Well, that's just about everything I know of Underworld 9 — or at least all I'm willing to tell you. The place is huge, that's for sure. You can never really ever see all of it because it's like quicksilver, always shiftin' and changin' on ya'. But if you really, really, wanna get to know her, you're going to have to explore her yourself."

Grinning Jim pushed himself up out of his chair and walked toward the bar's exit. "And always remember while you're out tryin' to get a good look, boy," he said, turning around in the doorway's bright light, "U9 has fangs, and she's not afraid to use 'em."

CHAPTER 15: IOSHI

The development of human knowledge is strictly limited by the sophistication of the techniques used to organise and convey that knowledge. Thus, oral tradition gives way to writing, private collections to libraries, digital libraries to the web, and finally the worm to IOSHI ("the well").

In the late 21st century, a short period of machine-assisted training can produce understanding far more advanced than a lifetime of natural study. With a bit of talent and a mountain of cash, anyone can aspire to genius. Mozarts, Turings, Gandhis, Machiavellis, and Earharts come off the assembly line; and the savants of the day far exceed their petty dreams. This is IOSHI: the doorway to human grandeur. It is tainted; it is the tool of the enemy; but it is the key to all your aspirations.

The first step is fear.

On his way to speak to my manager, the smiling young man stuck his head into my cubicle. He said a word. I cannot remember which one. I cannot count the syllables. I do not know for sure that he spoke at all. It was the most horrible thing I have ever heard. It froze me. I could not think. I could not move. White static and dark silence clouded my thoughts.

I heard him walk into my manager's office. I heard their voices discussing me. Bits of conversation floated in.

"-dangerously tainted-" said the smiling young man. "-risk to corporate welfare-"

"-no idea-" said my manager. "-certain?"

Words from the smiling young man.

"Go ahead," my manager answered. I heard the young man turn.

The second step is defiance.

As soon as I gathered the strength to fight him, the headache started. It was a monstrous thing. It made me want to scream. It made me want to beat my head against the wall until blood caked my forehead and its loss made me faint. A thin keening rose from my throat.

I knew how fast the young man walked. I knew the distance to my manager's office. I had twelve and three quarters seconds. I used seven just dragging myself back to sanity. On the eighth, I brought the chipset in my head back online. For a moment, I was aware of the little expert systems listening to everything my senses told them and spitting out their analysis. It was uncomfortable, like being aware of my tongue. Then the world clicked into focus and I no longer listened to the systems; I simply knew. I drew my gun. I fired through the wall of my cubicle at the only place the young man could be.

I heard the bullet hit. I smelled his blood. I could feel the subtle vibration of his footsteps on the carpet floor as he staggered back. I knew him. When he opened his mouth, I knew he would not scream. He would speak, and I could not afford to hear what he would say. I fired again.

The third step is flight.

It would take sixty seconds for security to arrive. I had time. I brought up the visual interface to my brainware and started Percy running. Percy's a sweet bit of code; earnest, dedicated, and loyal.

"Get me an escape route," I said. "I'm leaving."

"Done."

Percy showed me a map and a route. It hovered in the air, a ghostly impression on my optic nerve. I stood up. I took my coat. I left.

Some people fight. I don't know why. Maybe that's step four, or five, or six. I left; and travelled as far as I could go; and tried to live with what I'd learned.

The world runs on money. Everyone knows that. But everyone is wrong. The people who run the world are not looking for wealth. Smiling young men work for them — and their hands are not clean.



Location Reference: Wyvern Restaurant-Entertainment
Map Value ON

Bio-implant
ON
bone density suggests metal-reinforced bone.

Subject injecting pharmaceutical; shamanic?
ON

height: (162.4 cm)
weight: (63.5 kg)
Unidentified Female
Currently relocating from Harmony to Chalkidiki
SV

Program 05
Identified Program: Argolis Processor 5.1

HIGH FAMILY CULTURE

THESIS

Power justifies itself.

High family culture believes that life and happiness depend on pleasing those with power. Members understand that rights are not inalienable, but rather assigned by the power that enforces them.

MOTIVATION

A high family begins when a single family can afford to control a major Project. In so doing, they acquire property and become a source of employment. Some percentage of their employees lives either on the property or near to it. These form the seeds of a nascent community under the family's control. Each time the residents tolerate an abusive use of power in order to function in the community and at their job, they shift a little more into the mentality of serfs. High families often offer perquisites — from cheap, addictive drugs to long-term financing — that bind the residents to them.

STRUCTURE

Servants of a high family adopt the disassociative and subdued behaviour typical of those caught in abusive situations. Some the family genuinely traps, handicapping their ability to flee to broader Sparta. Most have trapped themselves — they have accepted the high family's sovereignty to make their life in the community easier, and no longer remember or understand their practical freedom to leave. Even guest workers, who plan to move into the region for a few weeks or a few months, find the universal acceptance of the high family's power is insidious. Some fail to leave and become community residents simply because the high family tells them, "Stay." The community has no physical centre or fringe — the centre consists of those serfs who can never again understand the concept of freedom. Those who do not accept the high family's divine right define the fringe.

MAENADIC CULTURE

THESIS

Surrender yourself to the rush.

Maenadic culture runs on a variable mix of adrenaline and hedonism. Its members indulge in orgies, raves, street races, dance clubs, drug dens, trips to dangerous wilderness areas, blood sports, crime, and vigilantism. Most maenadic citizens fall into hours, days, or weeks of black listlessness (the "maenad's coma") when temporarily denied the opportunity to indulge.

MOTIVATION

Maenadic cultures spring up spontaneously. The exact mechanism is unknown. One moment, a neighbourhood may contain a stuffy Spartan community and a small handful of citizens who favour maenadic activities. The next moment, social order dissolves. The residents pour out onto the street for revel, festival, or mob frenzy. The few that cling to Spartan values flee.

STRUCTURE

Maenadic communities are stable or nomadic. Spartans call them "carnivals." These are areas of anarchy and abandon, where dominance, submission, challenge, invitation, or consent need only a moment's locked gaze to establish. The fringe consists of low-rank and high-rank maenads. Low-rank maenads, unable to establish dominance, drift into Spartan society to work and bring the community needed resources. High-rank maenads have a strong will and can spend time in Sparta without suffering the maenad's coma. Within the carnival, fourth tier maenads are indistinguishable from the rest — but fourth tier maenads cannot function in Sparta. If cut off from the maenad's frenzy for more than a few hours, they fall into catatonic state, rapidly wasting away until they die.

• THE HEcate PROJECT •

Susan wanted a better body. She wanted health. She wanted beauty. She achieved them.

People sometimes criticised Susan. Her beauty was imperfect. She had flaws. She had an investment in her beauty. She wanted to justify that investment. She did not want flaws. So she made herself perfect.

Still people criticised her. Susan was perfect, but not according to their preferred mode. This made Susan sad. She felt inadequate. She had sacrificed for her perfection; yet the perfection she claimed lacked social validation. So she gave herself a changing beauty, like the sea, like the sky, like the wind.

Everybody loved Susan. They loved her like they loved the sea. They loved her like they loved the sky. They loved her like they loved the wind.

Sometimes, Susan spoke; and her voice was the sea; the sky; and the wind; and people would listen, and say, "How beautiful," but they did not hear her words.

It's a simple job and a ruthless one.

I went into maenad communities. I stood amidst the whirl of activity — the dancing, drinking, fighting, copulating, and wild revelry — and picked out my victims.

One by one, I looked them in the eye. I projected dominance. Sometimes, I lost. It didn't bother me. I wasn't a maenad. Usually, I won. The maenad became weak and malleable. I said, "There's a job. Construction. 110 East Street," or whatever the address was. Then I told them to go.

It's a cheap way to get labour. I got eight hours' pay for each 40 maenad-hours I brought in.

One day, I looked a maenad in the eye, and felt a shock; and the war for dominance was a thing of swords and stormclouds, waged within our minds; and though I won, I staggered and fell to my knees. The dance called to me, and the wine. The wild beat of the maenads' music drove the rhythm of my pulse. I fled, and never entered a maenad community again.

Someday, I will go back, and I will not be human any more, nor Spartan, nor do I think that I will mind.

JOCKEY ASPECT

I stepped out of the car, and three combat drones surrounded me. They were squat robots, low to the ground, and I didn't want to know what the spikes on them could do. They escorted me to his cabin, and inside I found him. He lay still, eyes blank and dim, but alive. Two small robots crawled along his flesh, cleaning him, occasionally moving a limb from one place to another. The screen above his bed flickered to life.

"Hey," Jordan said.

"Your body," I said.

The face on the screen looked down. "Oh, yah. It's pretty sick, I think. That's why I wanted you to check on it. Does it look okay? I haven't shown it to anyone in years."

I took a pulse. I poked at it. It felt macabre, like I was examining my friend's corpse while his ghost watched from above.

"Jordan, this isn't okay."

The face in the screen laughed. "It's not my real body," he said. One of the robots pirouetted. The blender in the back of the room whirred to life. I could hear the roaring of the car's engines, outside. "See? These are my real body. I'm not laying there dying. I'm in the net. I'm everywhere. If I had a meat body, too, I'd be like a nine-armed octopus — I mean, what would be the point?"

In Sparta, teleoperators live in a dozen places at once. In addition to their own body, they have others — chrome and circuit constructs large and small. Some are as sluggish or awkward as the teleoperator's organic form. Others have speed, power, and manoeuvrability far exceeding the it. Teleoperators who have undergone IOSHI submergence training in human-machine interfacing are known as "jockeys." The training serves to enhance their innate talent for human-machine empathy — the ability to identify with the robotic and vehicular extensions with which a teleoperator works.

Given that identification (and a neural jack), the IOSHI-trained Jockey can operate a wide variety of robotic agents, telemanipulators (waldos), and ground, sea, and air transports with superhuman skill, using the net as a nervous system and his or her machines as scattered limbs. Where many Spartans find their humanity increasingly edged out by the machines, Jockeys impose their own humanity on the artefacts around them.

Most Jockeys identify with some combination of the anthropophobic, maenadic, and street cultures. They usually maintain their body like a vehicle. Athleticism comes first, aesthetics second, and their aesthetics tend more towards what pleases them than what pleases society. Completely cutting off from all of his or her extensions makes a jockey feel something like a quadruple amputee; most keep in contact with at least one teleoperated drone at any given time. This gives them a distracted air. In cyberspace, jockey avatars tend towards the many-limbed: Hindu deities, centipedes, and mutated or mechanised versions of the human form are common.

OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE

The teleoperator template (page 25) is suggested as a basis for creating Jockey characters.

IOSHI TRAINING

Select one of the three packages:

FEATURES (JOCKEY)

Features (Jockey) acts as the Combat Technique (Portable Armoury), save for teleoperated equipment. The character has easy access to any vehicle or teleoperated robot required for a particular task, including machines not available to the public. The jockey must still acquire the actual vehicles and robots via the

Gadgets Attribute (page 49), but — if possible — the character can find them at a convenient location whenever he or she needs them, instead of having to return to where he or she normally stores them. The jockey's car or motorcycle is always in a nearby garage, his or her boat waiting at a nearby beach, and so forth. This Feature relies on a combination of foresight, pre-programmed self-driving vehicles, and dramatic appropriateness.

FEATURES (MECHA ENCYCLOPAEDIA)

Features (Mecha Encyclopaedia) acts as the Combat Technique (Weapons Encyclopaedia) Attribute, save for jockey equipment. The character can recall the vital statistics and important quirks of practically all known commercially available robot drones, vehicles, and remote extensions. The character also receives a +4 bonus on any Street Sense or Business Management Skill checks needed to locate or buy legal or illegal vehicles and teleoperator equipment.

• JOCKEY •

JOCKEY APTITUDE PACKAGE
ATTRIBUTES

Features 1 (Mecha Encyclopaedia), Combat Techniques 2 (Any two; Restriction, Only in vehicle or during teleoperation -1), Extra Defences 1 (Restriction, Only in vehicle or during teleoperation -1)

Final Cost: 4 Points

JOCKEY TALENT PACKAGE
ATTRIBUTES

Features 1 (Mecha Encyclopaedia), Combat Techniques 2 (Any two; Restriction, Only in vehicle or during teleoperation -1), Extra Attacks 1 [Restriction (Only in vehicle or during teleoperation) -2], Extra Defences 1 (Restriction, Only in vehicle or during teleoperation -1)

Final Cost: 10 Points.

JOCKEY GENIUS PACKAGE
ATTRIBUTES

Features 1 (Jockey, Mecha Encyclopaedia), Combat Techniques 3 (Any three; Restriction, Only in vehicle or during teleoperation -1), Extra Attacks 1 [Restriction (Only in vehicle or during teleoperation) -2], Extra Defences 2 (Restriction, Only in vehicle or during teleoperation -1), Special Movement 2 (Balance, Catlike; Restriction, Only in vehicle or duration teleoperation -1)

Final Cost: 16 Points.

CHAPTER 16: DAEDALUS

DAEDALUS ASCENDANT

Daedalus is a setting that's about ninety degrees from the reality we live in, where technology and paranoia combine to create a utopia for those willing to give away their independence to live there. It's a place where every need is taken care of, where every want is satisfied so long as you don't question or rebel. For those who decide they cannot live wearing the invisible leashes of their secret masters, the world is a very different — and far more hostile — place.

The setting of Daedalus is everywhere and nowhere, an undefined city in a nebulous region on an unnamed continent. It's very like our world, but somewhere along the way things took a slightly different path. GMs using "Daedalus" are encouraged to personalise the places represented as much or as little as they like.

GODS AND MACHINES

In Greek myth, Daedalus was an inventor of unsurpassed skill, possibly a manifestation of Hephaestus, the god of the forge. He was reported as being clever and politically savvy, a loving father, inventive genius, and a devoted servant — the victim of circumstances beyond his control. At the same time, he's reputed to have killed his nephew out of jealousy, created a machine to enable a mating between divine monster and man, unwittingly caused the death of his only son, and to have brought about the death of his former sovereign by manipulation and deceit. To say that the myths were of two minds about Daedalus is a bit of an understatement.

In modern times, Daedalus is primarily remembered for two things: the first is the creation of the Labyrinth, the prison of the Minotaur (in whose conception he played a major role). The second is in relation to his son, Icarus, who died when he threw aside caution and flew too high, accidentally destroying the amazing wings his father had created and plunging to death into the sea. The name of Daedalus is regularly appropriated and used wherever someone wishes to suggest a bit of creative genius, a source of wisdom and ingenuity, often leaving the darker aspects of the story behind.

This setting carries on that tradition, taking its name and inspiration from that figure of legend. More specifically, the setting focuses not only on the bright aspects of invention and progress, but also on the darker side of the equation. Daedalus — and what he represents in the modern world — is presented as a double-edged sword, reminding us of the sacrifices we have to make to get the things we want, and asking whether those things are as important as what we leave behind.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

In this 90-minutes-from-reality future, things haven't gone so well. The shadow government set up to free its citizens from the threat of total federal collapse in the event of a terrorist strike instead became the real power in the world, free from the checks and balances that keep more publicly accountable agencies from overstepping themselves. This shadow government assembled a think-tank

of the brightest minds of the time, called Daedalus, devoted to the protection and welfare of the state. This think tank came up with a simple plan: an ID chip, which would be implanted in everyone and contain a unique code. In the interests of public safety (driven by xenophobia and paranoia of further terrorist strikes), fears of a loss of civil liberty were put aside for the duration of the emergency, and the plan was implemented across the board, with incentives for those who signed on. Within two generations of active promotion by the government, nearly everyone was chipped by the age of two.

At first the chips were just another form of ID, with the added benefit of a GPS tracker installed. As time went on, however, they grew ever more complex. They were expanded to track and report the subject's vital signs to a central computer, for use with ambulance and law enforcement efforts. Corporations and other government agencies incorporated receivers into their equipment, letting nearly everything be customised — entertainment, advertisements, custom menus at restaurants, even down to your seat adjustments for your car, all without the subject lifting a finger. Then genius struck.

The chips were given the ability to receive programming as well as transmit data. A chip was implanted near the brainstem, and suddenly learning curves became a thing of the past. Signals from the chip could stimulate the body to produce chemicals it might otherwise be deficient in, nearly eradicating diseases like Alzheimer's as well as other chemical imbalance problems, such as depression. Neurological dysfunction could be recorded on a constant, non-intrusive basis for treatment. It was like a blessing. An additional implant next to the sensory cortex paved the way for sim-technology, and suddenly both entertainment and work had been transformed.

Starting at toddlerhood, chips are programmed and reprogrammed as a child grows to provide appropriate stimuli (entertainment, knowledge, etc.). They're supposed to give the subject more options, to be easily assimilated by society and the workplace, and to make life easier as well. They enable society to give people the reality they want, as opposed to the reality they have. The chips also provide Daedalus with the fine control needed to micromanage the needs of society, while stamping out as many societal problems as possible.

Unlike many cyberpunk settings, everything here is green and lovely. Recycling has become *de rigueur*. Greenhouse gases are down, and pollution is mostly just a memory. Corporations are making more money than ever before by charging higher prices and passing expenses onto the consumer for all the clean manufacturing and environmentally friendly procedures, but since it's the "right" thing to do (as defined and enforced by Daedalus), no one seems to mind. Loneliness is no longer an issue, and those who are without mates are often "set up" by the governing authorities ... and with a little biochemical boost, find themselves married or happily monogamous before they can realise they might have wanted something else entirely.

In most cyberpunk settings, religion is glossed over or set aside as irrelevant. Here, however, the importance of religion in the life of the average citizen is celebrated — even heavily encouraged. The government has largely removed itself from the realm of morality and entrusted the churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples to set their own definitions of moral and immoral for their members — within the limits of the law, at any rate.

The resistance sees Daedalus itself as proof that the road to Hell is paved with the most worthwhile of intentions. In an effort to create a good life for its subjects, Daedalus examines nation-wide trends and forecasts what needs to be done, what fields need workers, what issues need addressing. They then structure programming to guide people into filling those needs.

Most of the time, this societal tinkering goes entirely unnoticed. The traditional political institutions are only a shell of their former selves, gutted by dissent and suspicion and rebuilt into a pleasing facade by those with power; no

Amanda,

I'm sorry.

I wasn't going to talk to you about this so soon, but I don't have a lot of choice left. I know this is really confusing but there was no other way. You already know your chip wasn't working right; I didn't plan for that. If I had, I'd have showed you how to cover it better. As it was, you kept missing cues and your mood went sour sometimes ... it was pretty clear what was happening to anyone looking for it — and they're always looking for it. So are we, for that matter.

Our sources told us you were scheduled for re-implantation next week. You probably didn't know that. They just arrange a house call, a trip to the mall, a "contest winner," and there you go. A few hours of surgery, an overnight stay, and you're back up and working again like a good little drone. Hopefully. We couldn't risk it happening to you, not with you just waking up. We need people with your skills way too much ... so we removed your chip.

I know you're pissed off about now, and you want to know why we did this to you, and if you're going crazy. You're not. Taking the chip out doesn't do that (assuming there wasn't mental illness there to begin with). It doesn't cause brain damage, though a lot of people who "wake up" like you are doing find the world a lot harder to cope with for a while. That will pass, though. You aren't crazy. You're just ... feeling things. The slick stuff over where your chip was is a liquid bandage. It'll come off in a few days, when Doc checks the wound. It's only a little more than a scratch, really, but it's a tricky procedure. Luckily, we seem to have figured out how to take the damned things out without having to carve people up in the process.

See, the chips aren't just a convenient form of ID. They are so much more than that. They allow the powers that be to set your life in the direction they see as best, to control things in a way that no previous government on Earth has ever been able to do. They influence moods by regulating serotonin and endorphin levels, they broadcast position and profile to every seeing eye on the street, so that you'll always know what you should buy, or do, or think, or see.... They use them to tell you who you should be, who you should marry, what sorts of behaviours are acceptable — the list just goes on.

Now I bet you think I'm crazy. That's okay. There's more.

When's the last time you were sad before all this? Angry? Upset? How long did it last? When's the last time someone you knew became upset? Did you suddenly start avoiding them — why did you do that? Shouldn't you try to help a friend who's in distress? Did they disappear for a day or two on "voluntary vacation," or some other nebulous excuse, only to return as though nothing were wrong afterward? Did they return at all?

When's the last time you saw a book that was written before our parents were born?

How many people you've known have suddenly "moved away" without so much as a good-bye? How many others married someone they'd known less than a month? That new guy, Charles, the one you'd seen a couple of times ... you were ready to marry him, weren't you? Got all bubbly inside when you saw him? Did you know he'd bought a ring? Last time you talked to me, you didn't even know his last name, and yet you were ready to get married — at least until the chip started going on the fritz, and you realised he was a weasely git who seemed frighteningly obsessed with getting you into bed.

What sort of sense does that make? Any of it? It doesn't make sense, of course. That's because it's all set up from behind the scenes. You were being managed, just like he was ... just like everyone is.

The authorities you know of aren't really the ones in charge. The "enemies" aren't enemies at all, except that they don't want to be controlled. The criminals are just people trying to get along, and your friends are people who've been chosen to hang out with you because it makes a good group dynamic. Milk costs \$6.00 a gallon because the Powers That Be — Daedalus — have decided it's okay, and no one complains or sells it cheaper because those same powers have decided no one should. The same ones who determined what Public Decency was, and that flouting it was a crime punishable by imprisonment and citizenship restriction, whether that was playing loud street music, not recycling, or having inappropriate relationships.

It wasn't always this way.

I know, it seems like it has been. You probably don't remember a time when it wasn't, and neither does anyone else you know. If you looked for information on it online or in the library, it wouldn't be there. They're pretty damned determined to remove all the fixed reference points, so that nobody will be able to question them. It's too late for that, though. We're already questioning them, and we're going to do a damn sight more than that before we're through.

With this letter, I've included a bunch of news and magazine clippings, starting back at the beginning of all of this. Some of it will blatantly contradict what you've been taught, but the paper alone ought to show you we didn't just fake this. It'll also teach you a little more about who we are and what we're trying to fight. Before you make a judgement, just read it all. That's all I'm asking. Read it, then make up your own mind. Doc and the rest of the people there will answer your questions as best they can until I get there. Oh, and the ones directed to Joshua Danvers? He doesn't use that name any more, and his family's changed their names too. Hardly anybody uses their old names here on the Outside.

When you get to the end, I'd like you to think about helping us. Given the way your chip was acting, I'll admit that I don't know if we could replace it and have it work. I don't even think that they could. Still, we can put one in, modify your memories a bit, and return you to your life. They never have to know about what happened, and you can pick up your life from where you left off, though I can't promise nothing will have changed. I'd like you to stay, Manda. We could use you here, as there are never enough sim-spinners to do the job properly. I know you'd be good at it. I don't want to see you go back, not as a drone. You're too good for that.

Anyway, I love you, Sis. I'll see you when I can.

Jace

PRIVACY

Citizens in "Daedalus" consider themselves to have a reasonable amount of privacy from both the government and one another. It is true, however, that most personal information is now public knowledge, and broadcast constantly by each individual for any nearby sensors to detect. Manufacturers and retailers know a citizen's credit rating, salary, and work record before they even send out an advertisement. Local cultural and religious groups keep an active eye on their members, checking up on school, work, and personal issues. Identity theft is widely considered impossible with the advent of the ID chip, so there is little to frighten citizens away from the benefits of constant information dissemination. Even vital signs and location are made available to official channels for use as necessary. This could create the impression that life as a citizen is much like being constantly held under a magnifying glass.

The reality of the situation is that few people merit focussed individual surveillance. Being physically in distress or causing a scene attracts attention and gets information reported to the authorities. Employers or educators can

• PUBLIC DECENCY •

While private life allows for a number of options, the socially approved path is straight and narrow. Public lives must conform to that expectation, or else run the risk of disturbing the carefully maintained peace enjoyed by federal citizens. The individual good is always subordinate to the public good; one of the ways the authorities ensure this is with Public Decency statutes.

Public Decency statutes vary from region to region, but their basic function remains the same everywhere: If it is unhealthy, immoral, or might make someone complain, it's illegal. Common Public Decency violations include: playing loud music or music that is deemed "offensive," public displays of affection between same-sex couples or unmarried couples, suggestive clothing, extensive visible piercings, profanity in a public place, vandalism, graffiti, loitering, littering ... the list seems endless.

Violators of Public Decency statutes can receive anything from a fine and community service, to mental health counselling, to reprogramming, to prison sentences. The degree of punishment depends on the severity of the crime and the number of previous offences. Continually violating Public Decency statutes will result in having one's records tagged, possibly causing an offender to be passed over for promotion, new housing, certain jobs, or even result in a loss of pay or demotion at work, whether the offences occurred at work or not. GMs are encouraged to use this aspect of federal life to impress the darker side of Daedalus upon players as necessary.

call attention to those under their supervision if necessary. Happy, well-adjusted individuals, however, rarely experience any overt societal or governmental intrusion into their lives. Their comings and goings are not recorded, activities in their homes are left unmonitored, and no one disturbs them, so long as they obey the laws and refrain from disturbing others.

Unchipped individuals naturally invite more overt surveillance, since they are untraceable by normal means. Authorities rarely disturb a non-chipped individual without "reason," but employers, neighbours, or co-workers may take a close interest in the person. Conventional wisdom indicates that unchipped individuals are less trustworthy, more prone to mental illness, given to violent rages, or otherwise unpleasantly unpredictable. It is only natural, then, that those who are placed in a close-contact situation with unchipped individuals would remain vigilant, if only for their own safety. There are some unchipped people who attempt to pass as chipped, but a quick sensor read easily detects them. Automated objects do not work for them and they have no physical chip port at the base of their skull. In addition, authorities ensure that key personnel in an individual's workplace or school are aware of that person's unchipped status; they may, in turn, inform others as need be to ensure public safety.

FREEDOM AND CONTROL

Many unchipped individuals complain that chipped individuals lack free will. This is patently untrue. Chipped citizens, who point to the hundreds of choices they make each day dealing with their career, family, politics and personal lives, laugh off such complaints. The knowledge that they control their daily routines gives most citizens a feeling of freedom, and a lack of concern about the "insane" claims of a few malcontents.

In many ways, the government and local authorities do exert a significant amount of control over daily life. Through the job database, the government helps decide where a person may work and what he or she should pursue as a career. Through local and cultural authorities, individuals who have remained single for longer than society deems "healthy" are matched with likely prospective mates. From procreation to taxation, the government has ways of influencing individuals so that although the final choice is theirs, the options given to them were ultimately chosen by the state. Unchipped citizens, of course, claim that the state-sanctioned choice is no choice at all.

Emotional conditioning programs can also be activated to avoid (or attract) certain behaviours or stimuli, and are used openly to "assist" people who are recovering from addictions and to rehabilitate criminals. Senior officials or key operatives in sensitive government agencies like the DNS, or the Regional Patrols, are also implanted with emotion-conditioning chips — typically without the knowledge or consent of the individual. The use of such chips is categorically denied by those agencies on the rare occasions reports become public, and few outside of the highest level administrators know this for a fact. Oftentimes, those chips are directly controlled by Daedalus agents, marking one of the few occasions when Daedalus takes matters into its own hands. Most individuals never notice any such influence on their own decisions, leading them to believe that programmed controls do not exist.

Unchipped individuals, of course, have no fears that their choices are not their own. The factors that limit their lives are obvious and easily identified, the primary one is a lack of the rights and privileges of citizenship. Choice (or the lack thereof) has little to do with it.

DEFECTS

Most of the setting-specific rules needed for Daedalus are standard for cyberpunk, see Chapter 6. In addition, the following Defects are provided for use in "Daedalus."

MEDIA PSYCHOSIS

Life with the chip can seem like an endless stream of advertisements, news, and customised content everywhere you go: in the car, on the street, in the mall, in your living room, bedroom, and even bathroom. For some, the constant flow of subtly intrusive information is simply too much to handle.

- 1 BP The character is mildly sensitive to media overload. If the character spends more than a week under constant bombardment, he or she is mildly incapacitated and must get away from all media input for at least four hours in order to recover.
- 2 BP The character is sensitive to media overload. If the character spends more than three days under constant bombardment, he or she is moderately incapacitated and must get away from all media input for at least one day in order to recover.
- 3 BP The character is extremely sensitive to media overload. If the character spends more than 24 hours under constant bombardment, he or she is mildly incapacitated and must get away from all media input for at least three days in order to recover.

SIM-SPINNERS

Sim-spinners play a key role in the underground. While most people are victims of the media messages directed at them twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, the sim-spinners are masters of redirection. They take their name from their job: essentially, they take the simulated-sense media broadcasts (sim-media) and synthesise their own versions, which they put in place of the pabulum that is ordinarily fed to the masses. They turn the deadly lullaby that keeps the people quiet into a subtle call to action, doing as much as possible to nudge people awake to the threats that surround them.

Most sim-spinners began life as a model citizen. Their fascination for words, pictures and sounds brought them to a deeper understanding of how those images and their associated messages were constructed, as well as how these transmissions could manipulate people over time. It is rare for a sim-spinner to come to the career without ever having an implant, as those without the chips are simply not privy to the breadth and depth of media exposure that chipped individuals are. Those who do come from an unchipped background are likely to specialise in the design of new media campaigns rather than the implementation, making them somewhat less useful in the field.

Sim-spinners design, create, and change targeted media advertisements and stories. They are effectively simsense propagandists, and try to subtly spread the truth about the chips and the government to individuals without attracting the attention of the authorities. They are typically used for two types of missions: interrupting a major broadcast and tweaking the feed slightly to excite the emotions of the audience and counter misinformation, or acting in a targeted campaign designed to wake up a specific individual or small group. They require the use of computers, sim-recorders, media creation programs, and portable broadcast equipment in order to use their skills.

CUSTOMISATION NOTES

Sim-spinners often have customised chips (see Inert Chips, page 340), taking them as Items of Power. They often have Organisational Ties, and tend to focus on defensive fighting.

• ZENIA •

Sim-Spinner; 110 Character Points

Stats: Body 4, Mind 11, Soul 7, ACV 7, DCV 10, Health Points 55, Shock 11

Attributes: Defence Combat Mastery 5, Extra Defences 1, Divine Relationship 2, Gadgets (Deck, sim-recorder, media creation program, portable broadcast equipment) 5, Gadgeteer 2, Highly Skilled 5, Item of Power (Inert Chip) 3, Mind Control (Only with chipped humans; Duration 3; Targets 1; Restriction, Only with proper equipment, 2 BP; Restriction, Control is not complete; guides emotions only, 2 BP; Restriction, Target must be able to view media broadcast without distraction, 2 BP) 3, Mind Shield 3, Organisational Ties (La Liberté) 6, Sixth Sense (Use of Mind Control; Area 3) 1

Enhancements: Inert Chip (Scramble 2: Identity, biometrics; Restriction: only lasts for 1 hour, 1 BP; Heightened Senses 1: Radio Reception; Sensory Block 2, audio/video detection, Area 3, Duration 4) 15 Points.

Skills: Computers (Programming) 4, Cultural Arts (Advertising) 4, Electronics (Communications) 4, Interrogation (Psychological) 1, Power Usage (Mind Control) 2, Social Sciences (Psychology) 2, Visual Arts (Sim) 2, Ranged Defence (Personal) 1

Defects: lsm (No chip; Outsider) 3 BP, Wanted 2 BP

• SIM-SPINNER •

Template Cost: 11

Mind +1, Soul +1

ATTRIBUTES

Gadgets 1, Gadgeteer 1, Mind Control 1 (Only with chipped humans; Duration 3; Targets 1; Restriction, Only with the proper equipment: see detailed list above -2; Restriction, Control is not complete: it guides emotions, not implants commands -2; Restriction, Target must be able to view the media broadcast without distraction -2) d, Mind Shield 1, Sixth Sense 1 (Use of Mind Control; Area 2)

SKILLS

Computers (Programming) 1, Cultural Arts (Any) 1, Electronics (Any) 1, Interrogation (Psychological) 1, Power Usage (Mind Control) 2, Social Sciences (Psychology) 2, Visual Arts (Sim) 2

DEFECTS

Wanted OR Media Psychosis -2

CHAPTER 16: DAEDALUS

DAEDALUS ASCENDANT

Daedalus is a setting that's about ninety degrees from the reality we live in, where technology and paranoia combine to create a utopia for those willing to give away their independence to live there. It's a place where every need is taken care of, where every want is satisfied so long as you don't question or rebel. For those who decide they cannot live wearing the invisible leashes of their secret masters, the world is a very different — and far more hostile — place.

The setting of Daedalus is everywhere and nowhere, an undefined city in a nebulous region on an unnamed continent. It's very like our world, but somewhere along the way things took a slightly different path. GMs using "Daedalus" are encouraged to personalise the places represented as much or as little as they like.

GODS AND MACHINES

In Greek myth, Daedalus was an inventor of unsurpassed skill, possibly a manifestation of Hephaestus, the god of the forge. He was reported as being clever and politically savvy, a loving father, inventive genius, and a devoted servant — the victim of circumstances beyond his control. At the same time, he's reputed to have killed his nephew out of jealousy, created a machine to enable a mating between divine monster and man, unwittingly caused the death of his only son, and to have brought about the death of his former sovereign by manipulation and deceit. To say that the myths were of two minds about Daedalus is a bit of an understatement.

In modern times, Daedalus is primarily remembered for two things: the first is the creation of the Labyrinth, the prison of the Minotaur (in whose conception he played a major role). The second is in relation to his son, Icarus, who died when he threw aside caution and flew too high, accidentally destroying the amazing wings his father had created and plunging to death into the sea. The name of Daedalus is regularly appropriated and used wherever someone wishes to suggest a bit of creative genius, a source of wisdom and ingenuity, often leaving the darker aspects of the story behind.

This setting carries on that tradition, taking its name and inspiration from that figure of legend. More specifically, the setting focuses not only on the bright aspects of invention and progress, but also on the darker side of the equation. Daedalus — and what he represents in the modern world — is presented as a double-edged sword, reminding us of the sacrifices we have to make to get the things we want, and asking whether those things are as important as what we leave behind.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

In this 90-minutes-from-reality future, things haven't gone so well. The shadow government set up to free its citizens from the threat of total federal collapse in the event of a terrorist strike instead became the real power in the world, free from the checks and balances that keep more publicly accountable agencies from overstepping themselves. This shadow government assembled a think-tank

of the brightest minds of the time, called Daedalus, devoted to the protection and welfare of the state. This think tank came up with a simple plan: an ID chip, which would be implanted in everyone and contain a unique code. In the interests of public safety (driven by xenophobia and paranoia of further terrorist strikes), fears of a loss of civil liberty were put aside for the duration of the emergency, and the plan was implemented across the board, with incentives for those who signed on. Within two generations of active promotion by the government, nearly everyone was chipped by the age of two.

At first the chips were just another form of ID, with the added benefit of a GPS tracker installed. As time went on, however, they grew ever more complex. They were expanded to track and report the subject's vital signs to a central computer, for use with ambulance and law enforcement efforts. Corporations and other government agencies incorporated receivers into their equipment, letting nearly everything be customised — entertainment, advertisements, custom menus at restaurants, even down to your seat adjustments for your car, all without the subject lifting a finger. Then genius struck.

The chips were given the ability to receive programming as well as transmit data. A chip was implanted near the brainstem, and suddenly learning curves became a thing of the past. Signals from the chip could stimulate the body to produce chemicals it might otherwise be deficient in, nearly eradicating diseases like Alzheimer's as well as other chemical imbalance problems, such as depression. Neurological dysfunction could be recorded on a constant, non-intrusive basis for treatment. It was like a blessing. An additional implant next to the sensory cortex paved the way for sim-technology, and suddenly both entertainment and work had been transformed.

Starting at toddlerhood, chips are programmed and reprogrammed as a child grows to provide appropriate stimuli (entertainment, knowledge, etc.). They're supposed to give the subject more options, to be easily assimilated by society and the workplace, and to make life easier as well. They enable society to give people the reality they want, as opposed to the reality they have. The chips also provide Daedalus with the fine control needed to micromanage the needs of society, while stamping out as many societal problems as possible.

Unlike many cyberpunk settings, everything here is green and lovely. Recycling has become *de rigueur*. Greenhouse gases are down, and pollution is mostly just a memory. Corporations are making more money than ever before by charging higher prices and passing expenses onto the consumer for all the clean manufacturing and environmentally friendly procedures, but since it's the "right" thing to do (as defined and enforced by Daedalus), no one seems to mind. Loneliness is no longer an issue, and those who are without mates are often "set up" by the governing authorities ... and with a little biochemical boost, find themselves married or happily monogamous before they can realise they might have wanted something else entirely.

In most cyberpunk settings, religion is glossed over or set aside as irrelevant. Here, however, the importance of religion in the life of the average citizen is celebrated — even heavily encouraged. The government has largely removed itself from the realm of morality and entrusted the churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples to set their own definitions of moral and immoral for their members — within the limits of the law, at any rate.

The resistance sees Daedalus itself as proof that the road to Hell is paved with the most worthwhile of intentions. In an effort to create a good life for its subjects, Daedalus examines nation-wide trends and forecasts what needs to be done, what fields need workers, what issues need addressing. They then structure programming to guide people into filling those needs.

Most of the time, this societal tinkering goes entirely unnoticed. The traditional political institutions are only a shell of their former selves, gutted by dissent and suspicion and rebuilt into a pleasing facade by those with power; no

Amanda,

I'm sorry.

I wasn't going to talk to you about this so soon, but I don't have a lot of choice left. I know this is really confusing but there was no other way. You already know your chip wasn't working right; I didn't plan for that. If I had, I'd have showed you how to cover it better. As it was, you kept missing cues and your mood went sour sometimes ... it was pretty clear what was happening to anyone looking for it — and they're always looking for it. So are we, for that matter.

Our sources told us you were scheduled for re-implantation next week. You probably didn't know that. They just arrange a house call, a trip to the mall, a "contest winner," and there you go. A few hours of surgery, an overnight stay, and you're back up and working again like a good little drone. Hopefully. We couldn't risk it happening to you, not with you just waking up. We need people with your skills way too much ... so we removed your chip.

I know you're pissed off about now, and you want to know why we did this to you, and if you're going crazy. You're not. Taking the chip out doesn't do that (assuming there wasn't mental illness there to begin with). It doesn't cause brain damage, though a lot of people who "wake up" like you are doing find the world a lot harder to cope with for a while. That will pass, though. You aren't crazy. You're just ... feeling things. The slick stuff over where your chip was is a liquid bandage. It'll come off in a few days, when Doc checks the wound. It's only a little more than a scratch, really, but it's a tricky procedure. Luckily, we seem to have figured out how to take the damned things out without having to carve people up in the process.

See, the chips aren't just a convenient form of ID. They are so much more than that. They allow the powers that be to set your life in the direction they see as best, to control things in a way that no previous government on Earth has ever been able to do. They influence moods by regulating serotonin and endorphin levels, they broadcast position and profile to every seeing eye on the street, so that you'll always know what you should buy, or do, or think, or see.... They use them to tell you who you should be, who you should marry, what sorts of behaviours are acceptable — the list just goes on.

Now I bet you think I'm crazy. That's okay. There's more.

When's the last time you were sad before all this? Angry? Upset? How long did it last? When's the last time someone you knew became upset? Did you suddenly start avoiding them — why did you do that? Shouldn't you try to help a friend who's in distress? Did they disappear for a day or two on "voluntary vacation," or some other nebulous excuse, only to return as though nothing were wrong afterward? Did they return at all?

When's the last time you saw a book that was written before our parents were born?

How many people you've known have suddenly "moved away" without so much as a good-bye? How many others married someone they'd known less than a month? That new guy, Charles, the one you'd seen a couple of times ... you were ready to marry him, weren't you? Got all bubbly inside when you saw him? Did you know he'd bought a ring? Last time you talked to me, you didn't even know his last name, and yet you were ready to get married — at least until the chip started going on the fritz, and you realised he was a weasely git who seemed frighteningly obsessed with getting you into bed.

What sort of sense does that make? Any of it? It doesn't make sense, of course. That's because it's all set up from behind the scenes. You were being managed, just like he was ... just like everyone is.

The authorities you know of aren't really the ones in charge. The "enemies" aren't enemies at all, except that they don't want to be controlled. The criminals are just people trying to get along, and your friends are people who've been chosen to hang out with you because it makes a good group dynamic. Milk costs \$6.00 a gallon because the Powers That Be — Daedalus — have decided it's okay, and no one complains or sells it cheaper because those same powers have decided no one should. The same ones who determined what Public Decency was, and that flouting it was a crime punishable by imprisonment and citizenship restriction, whether that was playing loud street music, not recycling, or having inappropriate relationships.

It wasn't always this way.

I know, it seems like it has been. You probably don't remember a time when it wasn't, and neither does anyone else you know. If you looked for information on it online or in the library, it wouldn't be there. They're pretty damned determined to remove all the fixed reference points, so that nobody will be able to question them. It's too late for that, though. We're already questioning them, and we're going to do a damn sight more than that before we're through.

With this letter, I've included a bunch of news and magazine clippings, starting back at the beginning of all of this. Some of it will blatantly contradict what you've been taught, but the paper alone ought to show you we didn't just fake this. It'll also teach you a little more about who we are and what we're trying to fight. Before you make a judgement, just read it all. That's all I'm asking. Read it, then make up your own mind. Doc and the rest of the people there will answer your questions as best they can until I get there. Oh, and the ones directed to Joshua Danvers? He doesn't use that name any more, and his family's changed their names too. Hardly anybody uses their old names here on the Outside.

When you get to the end, I'd like you to think about helping us. Given the way your chip was acting, I'll admit that I don't know if we could replace it and have it work. I don't even think that they could. Still, we can put one in, modify your memories a bit, and return you to your life. They never have to know about what happened, and you can pick up your life from where you left off, though I can't promise nothing will have changed. I'd like you to stay, Manda. We could use you here, as there are never enough sim-spinners to do the job properly. I know you'd be good at it. I don't want to see you go back, not as a drone. You're too good for that.

Anyway, I love you, Sis. I'll see you when I can.

Jace

PRIVACY

Citizens in “Daedalus” consider themselves to have a reasonable amount of privacy from both the government and one another. It is true, however, that most personal information is now public knowledge, and broadcast constantly by each individual for any nearby sensors to detect. Manufacturers and retailers know a citizen’s credit rating, salary, and work record before they even send out an advertisement. Local cultural and religious groups keep an active eye on their members, checking up on school, work, and personal issues. Identity theft is widely considered impossible with the advent of the ID chip, so there is little to frighten citizens away from the benefits of constant information dissemination. Even vital signs and location are made available to official channels for use as necessary. This could create the impression that life as a citizen is much like being constantly held under a magnifying glass.

The reality of the situation is that few people merit focussed individual surveillance. Being physically in distress or causing a scene attracts attention and gets information reported to the authorities. Employers or educators can

• PUBLIC DECENCY •

While private life allows for a number of options, the socially approved path is straight and narrow. Public lives must conform to that expectation, or else run the risk of disturbing the carefully maintained peace enjoyed by federal citizens. The individual good is always subordinate to the public good; one of the ways the authorities ensure this is with Public Decency statutes.

Public Decency statutes vary from region to region, but their basic function remains the same everywhere: If it is unhealthy, immoral, or might make someone complain, it’s illegal. Common Public Decency violations include: playing loud music or music that is deemed “offensive,” public displays of affection between same-sex couples or unmarried couples, suggestive clothing, extensive visible piercings, profanity in a public place, vandalism, graffiti, loitering, littering ... the list seems endless.

Violators of Public Decency statutes can receive anything from a fine and community service, to mental health counselling, to reprogramming, to prison sentences. The degree of punishment depends on the severity of the crime and the number of previous offences. Continually violating Public Decency statutes will result in having one’s records tagged, possibly causing an offender to be passed over for promotion, new housing, certain jobs, or even result in a loss of pay or demotion at work, whether the offences occurred at work or not. GMs are encouraged to use this aspect of federal life to impress the darker side of Daedalus upon players as necessary.

call attention to those under their supervision if necessary. Happy, well-adjusted individuals, however, rarely experience any overt societal or governmental intrusion into their lives. Their comings and goings are not recorded, activities in their homes are left unmonitored, and no one disturbs them, so long as they obey the laws and refrain from disturbing others.

Unchipped individuals naturally invite more overt surveillance, since they are untraceable by normal means. Authorities rarely disturb a non-chipped individual without “reason,” but employers, neighbours, or co-workers may take a close interest in the person. Conventional wisdom indicates that unchipped individuals are less trustworthy, more prone to mental illness, given to violent rages, or otherwise unpleasantly unpredictable. It is only natural, then, that those who are placed in a close-contact situation with unchipped individuals would remain vigilant, if only for their own safety. There are some unchipped people who attempt to pass as chipped, but a quick sensor read easily detects them. Automated objects do not work for them and they have no physical chip port at the base of their skull. In addition, authorities ensure that key personnel in an individual’s workplace or school are aware of that person’s unchipped status; they may, in turn, inform others as need be to ensure public safety.

FREEDOM AND CONTROL

Many unchipped individuals complain that chipped individuals lack free will. This is patently untrue. Chipped citizens, who point to the hundreds of choices they make each day dealing with their career, family, politics and personal lives, laugh off such complaints. The knowledge that they control their daily routines gives most citizens a feeling of freedom, and a lack of concern about the “insane” claims of a few malcontents.

In many ways, the government and local authorities do exert a significant amount of control over daily life. Through the job database, the government helps decide where a person may work and what he or she should pursue as a career. Through local and cultural authorities, individuals who have remained single for longer than society deems “healthy” are matched with likely prospective mates. From procreation to taxation, the government has ways of influencing individuals so that although the final choice is theirs, the options given to them were ultimately chosen by the state. Unchipped citizens, of course, claim that the state-sanctioned choice is no choice at all.

Emotional conditioning programs can also be activated to avoid (or attract) certain behaviours or stimuli, and are used openly to “assist” people who are recovering from addictions and to rehabilitate criminals. Senior officials or key operatives in sensitive government agencies like the DNS, or the Regional Patrols, are also implanted with emotion-conditioning chips — typically without the knowledge or consent of the individual. The use of such chips is categorically denied by those agencies on the rare occasions reports become public, and few outside of the highest level administrators know this for a fact. Oftentimes, those chips are directly controlled by Daedalus agents, marking one of the few occasions when Daedalus takes matters into its own hands. Most individuals never notice any such influence on their own decisions, leading them to believe that programmed controls do not exist.

Unchipped individuals, of course, have no fears that their choices are not their own. The factors that limit their lives are obvious and easily identified, the primary one is a lack of the rights and privileges of citizenship. Choice (or the lack thereof) has little to do with it.

DEFECTS

Most of the setting-specific rules needed for Daedalus are standard for cyberpunk, see Chapter 6. In addition, the following Defects are provided for use in "Daedalus."

MEDIA PSYCHOSIS

Life with the chip can seem like an endless stream of advertisements, news, and customised content everywhere you go: in the car, on the street, in the mall, in your living room, bedroom, and even bathroom. For some, the constant flow of subtly intrusive information is simply too much to handle.

- 1 BP** The character is mildly sensitive to media overload. If the character spends more than a week under constant bombardment, he or she is mildly incapacitated and must get away from all media input for at least four hours in order to recover.
- 2 BP** The character is sensitive to media overload. If the character spends more than three days under constant bombardment, he or she is moderately incapacitated and must get away from all media input for at least one day in order to recover.
- 3 BP** The character is extremely sensitive to media overload. If the character spends more than 24 hours under constant bombardment, he or she is mildly incapacitated and must get away from all media input for at least three days in order to recover.

SIM-SPINNERS

Sim-spinners play a key role in the underground. While most people are victims of the media messages directed at them twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, the sim-spinners are masters of redirection. They take their name from their job: essentially, they take the simulated-sense media broadcasts (sim-media) and synthesise their own versions, which they put in place of the pabulum that is ordinarily fed to the masses. They turn the deadly lullaby that keeps the people quiet into a subtle call to action, doing as much as possible to nudge people awake to the threats that surround them.

Most sim-spinners began life as a model citizen. Their fascination for words, pictures and sounds brought them to a deeper understanding of how those images and their associated messages were constructed, as well as how these transmissions could manipulate people over time. It is rare for a sim-spinner to come to the career without ever having an implant, as those without the chips are simply not privy to the breadth and depth of media exposure that chipped individuals are. Those who do come from an unchipped background are likely to specialise in the design of new media campaigns rather than the implementation, making them somewhat less useful in the field.

Sim-spinners design, create, and change targeted media advertisements and stories. They are effectively simsense propagandists, and try to subtly spread the truth about the chips and the government to individuals without attracting the attention of the authorities. They are typically used for two types of missions: interrupting a major broadcast and tweaking the feed slightly to excite the emotions of the audience and counter misinformation, or acting in a targeted campaign designed to wake up a specific individual or small group. They require the use of computers, sim-recorders, media creation programs, and portable broadcast equipment in order to use their skills.

CUSTOMISATION NOTES

Sim-spinners often have customised chips (see Inert Chips, page 340), taking them as Items of Power. They often have Organisational Ties, and tend to focus on defensive fighting.

• ZENIA •

Sim-Spinner; 110 Character Points

Stats: Body 4, Mind 11, Soul 7, ACV 7, DCV 10, Health Points 55, Shock 11

Attributes: Defence Combat Mastery 5, Extra Defences 1, Divine Relationship 2, Gadgets (Deck, sim-recorder, media creation program, portable broadcast equipment) 5, Gadgeteer 2, Highly Skilled 5, Item of Power (Inert Chip) 3, Mind Control (Only with chipped humans; Duration 3; Targets 1; Restriction, Only with proper equipment, 2 BP; Restriction, Control is not complete; guides emotions only, 2 BP; Restriction, Target must be able to view media broadcast without distraction, 2 BP) 3, Mind Shield 3, Organisational Ties (La Liberté) 6, Sixth Sense (Use of Mind Control; Area 3) 1

Enhancements: Inert Chip (Scramble 2: Identity, biometrics; Restriction: only lasts for 1 hour, 1 BP; Heightened Senses 1: Radio Reception; Sensory Block 2, audio/video detection, Area 3, Duration 4) 15 Points.

Skills: Computers (Programming) 4, Cultural Arts (Advertising) 4, Electronics (Communications) 4, Interrogation (Psychological) 1, Power Usage (Mind Control) 2, Social Sciences (Psychology) 2, Visual Arts (Sim) 2, Ranged Defence (Personal) 1

Defects: lsm (No chip; Outsider) 3 BP, Wanted 2 BP

• SIM-SPINNER •

Template Cost: 11

Mind +1, Soul +1

ATTRIBUTES

Gadgets 1, Gadgeteer 1, Mind Control 1 (Only with chipped humans; Duration 3; Targets 1; Restriction, Only with the proper equipment: see detailed list above -2; Restriction, Control is not complete: it guides emotions, not implants commands -2; Restriction, Target must be able to view the media broadcast without distraction -2) d, Mind Shield 1, Sixth Sense 1 (Use of Mind Control; Area 2)

SKILLS

Computers (Programming) 1, Cultural Arts (Any) 1, Electronics (Any) 1, Interrogation (Psychological) 1, Power Usage (Mind Control) 2, Social Sciences (Psychology) 2, Visual Arts (Sim) 2

DEFECTS

Wanted OR Media Psychosis -2