

# RUN FASTER



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**INTRODUCTION**

**WHO YOU ARE AND HOW YOU GOT HERE**

**WHERE YOU CAME FROM**

- The Corps: Outward Mobility
- The Streets: Out of the Frying Pan
- The Talented: When the Going Gets Weird
- Hooders and Activists: Building Communities (One Bomb at a Time)
- Academics: Things Metahumanity Really Needs to Know
- Military and Law Enforcement: The Other Side of the Wall
- The Unclassifiable

**I'M A REAL BOY NOW**

**LOVE THE ONE YOU'RE WITH**

- I'll Work With You, But I Don't Like You
- Who Can You Trust?

**GAME INFORMATION**

- Backgrounds and Motivations: What Makes Johnny Run?
- Making 'Real' Runners: Beyond the AK-97

**ETHICS, CODES AND OTHER JOKES**

**A CODE AND A CALLING**

- The Path of the Samurai
- Omerta, the Code of Silence
- Thug Life, the Code of the Streets
- Harmony with Nature, the Shaman's Code
- White Hats, the Code of the Hacker
- The Code of Wuxia
- The Paladin's Code (a.k.a. Elven Chivalry)
- The Hippocratic Oath
- The Soldier's Code
- The Akichita Code

**THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN**

- Bushido 2.0
- The Code of the White Hat
- The Code of the Good Cop
- The Hermetic Code

**THE SPICE OF RUNNER'S LIVES**

**ODD JOBS**

- Hunting
  - Reagents
  - Paranimals
  - Spirits
  - Head Cases
  - Infected

**STRANGE LOCALES**

- Oceanic Operations
- Space Runs
- Fovea Runs
- Astral Journeys

**THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS**

- Mom & Pops
- Arcane Organizations
  - Governments
  - Organized Crime
  - Secret Societies
  - Head Cases

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- Doc Wagon
- Knight Errant/Lone Star
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# DECADE

With his hands shaking uncontrollably, Victor Edwards tried desperately to close the last few clasps on his ill-fitting tactical vest. The vest, like the rest of his equipment, was a hand-me-down that once belonged to one of the four individuals crammed into the back of the little delivery van with him. At least they cared enough to give him some semblance of protection.

Only a few days ago Edwards was an insignificant executive with a no-name subsidiary of a giant megacorporation. But thanks to another group of men, not dissimilar from his companions in the van, Edwards had become nothing more than a discarded bit of refuse. He'd been played like a fiddle by a beautiful woman. And as that tale usually goes, he took the fall for her deception in the form of unauthorized use of his access card. No one ever mentioned the missing R&D files, only the breach in security thanks to his uncontrollable urges.

Despite a lifetime of faithful service to Aggregate Consumables, and in turn Ares Macrotechnology, the powers that be decided he was no longer of any value. And when you're no longer valuable to the megacorporations you are simply discarded, erased, removed from existence, and left to fade away; or, if you can pull it off, to slip into the shadows.

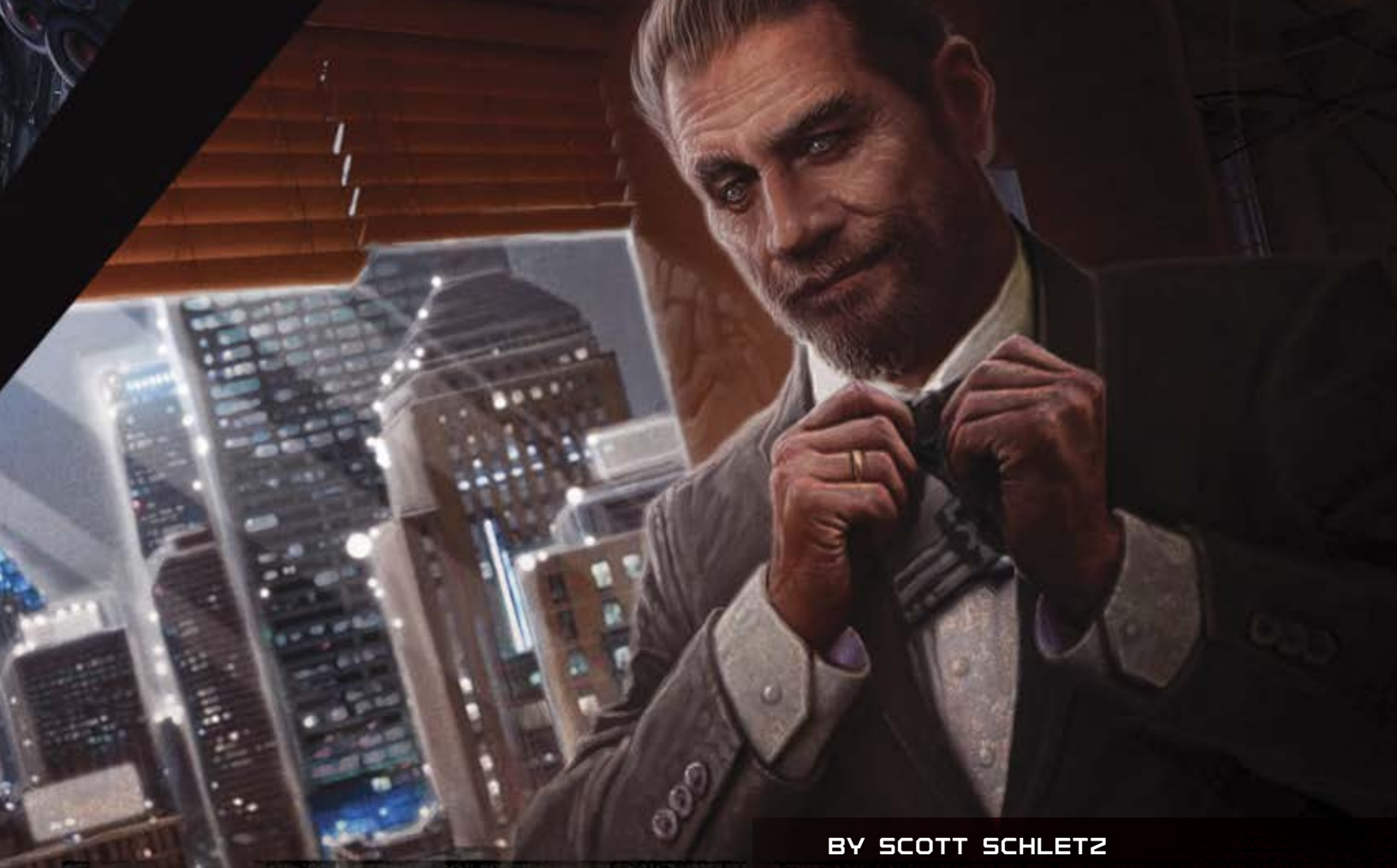
Edwards wasn't sure he was making a good choice, or even a choice. He was doing the only thing that seemed to have a chance of keeping him alive. Less than a day before, Edwards had been on the verge of using the only piece of gear he actually owned on himself. He had picked up the Ares Predator V for a steal when the company first started advertising them. He'd never had a desire to own a firearm before and had virtually no training on it, but there was something about that matte-black finish and wicked V that called to him.

But apparently it wasn't his time to die. The universe decided that it was the right time for the four men he was now sharing a vehicle with to burst into his life.

He remembered the door flying inward, twisting on the one hinge that held against the augmented jackhammer that Turk called a leg. He didn't know the big ork's name at that moment, but he knew he'd made him angry somehow as the ork bellowed a single word—"Gun!"—and leveled his massive shotgun at Edwards' terror-filled gaze. The massive barrel looked like a train tunnel.

In the back of his mind he spotted the lithe elf slipping past the ork but truly didn't notice him until he had blocked the barrel. By then Quill's hands were deftly removing the





BY SCOTT SCHLETZ

Predator from Edwards' suddenly numb fingers. As the elf spun away, Edwards met the rest of the team. Tare, a velvety-voiced human who looked like he stepped right out of a trid flick, and Mo, another human, with a voice like gravel and a mohawk that looked like it was made of stone, were standing in the room next to Turk. The shotgun lowered, and Edwards' new life began.

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Sitting in the dank little room on the upper floor of an abandoned library in Puyallup less than a day later, Edwards still hadn't managed to get his bearings with the four men. He had no issue when they ordered him to go with them; it even seemed a little exciting. When Quill offered him a little something to help him sleep, he took it because the adrenaline and hard floor of Turk's place had teamed up to make sleep impossible. When he woke up, head throbbing, Turk rushed him down to the van, which drove to the library much faster than his headache would have liked, and again he was prodded along.

The three present, Turk, Quill, and Mo, were arguing rather loudly about something called "blood magic," which

apparently was fueled by the life force of sacrifice victims. Edwards could tell they were talking for his benefit, making up one tale after another, each more outrageous than the one before. He felt embarrassed that these men chose such an obvious children's bogeyman story in an attempt to frighten him. He knew they thought he was a complete corporate chump.

The trio went quiet when they heard someone approaching, and they were all seated around the remains of a conference table when Tare stepped in. He was dressed more casually than the others but still perfectly put together, and though the trio was obviously where they belonged when he came in, he still gave them all a disapproving stare.

"Hey Cobain, come join us," Mo said to no one in particular. Victor was pretty sure he meant him, but they could have been talking to a spirit, some hidden companion, or virtually anything. He'd seen the shows about runners and the tricks they had up their sleeves.

"He's talking to you, Vic," Quill said while looking at Edwards. "I guess you've got a street name now. Beats me what it means. Maybe Mo will tell you someday."

Edwards stood up and joined them but stayed quiet other than a quick thank you and polite excuse me when his



stress-addled bowels unleashed a low force toxic cloud. Turk and Mo chuckled a little, while Tare and Quill said nothing. Tare then motioned to the empty seat at the table.

“Now for the real business,” Tare said. “Mr. Johnson wants the R&D files and a face-to-face with Betty to discuss the ramifications of her excess of independence. Ed—err, Cobain—is our lure. I’ll make him look dandy. Quill, you move up to the rear balcony and get ready to slip in quietly.” Tare paused and gave Turk a quick narrow-eyed glare. Edwards guessed there was something he was missing, but within a few seconds Tare continued.

“Turk, you’ll need the ruthenium. I’ll put a shroud over you, but I’ll be sustaining a lot. Best be safe. You’ll be right on Cobain. When Betty buzzes him in, you need to be right behind him. Once you’re both in, my arcane assistance will fizzle. Wedge the door and I’ll be fifteen seconds behind.”

Edwards listened in growing confusion. He understood they’d given him a street name, pretty cool, though he didn’t understand it. He knew they were after R&D files and a person named Betty, and he knew he was somehow part of the plan; maybe even an important part. But none of that seemed to match up with being kidnapped.

“Quill, you watch Betty. If she makes us, give us the warning and keep eyes on her,” Tare wrapped it up with a look at each person in the room, saving Edwards for last and holding on him.

Edwards looked around at the others who were all looking at him. He really wanted to try and play it cool, pretend he had a clue, but he had a feeling he was sitting through some kind of test. The kind of test you don’t dare to guess on. After what seemed an infinite silence, Edwards finally asked, “Why am I here?”

Tare’s reply and a piece of electropaper with a picture on it that he slid across the table said it all, “Revenge, dear Victor. Does Betty look familiar?”

She did. And he understood.

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### *10 Years Later*

Cobain stared out through the rain-speckled glass at the skyline of Boston. The soft hum and lilt of classical music played through the ship’s sound system. It was louder in the ballroom, but continued everywhere, a link between all the guests, no matter where they were, and a reminder of what they were here for. Well, what most of the guests were here for; Cobain was not on board the XS10SHL for dancing, and neither were at least two other guests on board the 110-meter luxury yacht. Despite his professional purpose on the boat, he couldn’t help but think of how beautiful the city was at night.

“A beautiful view,” a voice behind him spoke, putting

words to Cobain’s thoughts. He saw Quill’s pale features reflected in the glass as the elf stepped closer.

“Aztechnology ruined it,” Cobain replied to Quill’s coded phrase, telling him everyone was in place with his own affirmative. The team was a go to acquire the package that Aztechnology had brought on board.

As jobs go, this one had been smooth. Not because there hadn’t been opposition or unforeseen hiccups, but because Cobain had planned it well. Turk’s protégé Gas Crank was doing well. He had a good combination of Turk’s brute-force militaristic style and his own touch of anarchistic finesse. Six clean runs with the team was not a full season, but enough to shatter the rookie’s false sense of what “running” really meant. Earlier he had cleanly dealt with a half-dozen gangsters playing muscle on the docks and a pair of genuine mob toughs who wouldn’t let their greed override their pride. Now he was wearing a slick new suit with a very bright green kerchief sticking out of the pocket, and mingling with the other guests.

Quill had been his usual smooth and fast self. The decade since they’d met had not slowed him, though the cost of the upgrades he’d acquired always kept him looking for the next job. His quick fingers had lifted the half-dozen genuine paper invites they’d needed to get on board, and left behind copies with a few creative adjustments earlier in the week. The original invitees would be one hour behind and ten kilometers north, looking to sail out of Marblehead by the time they discovered the switch.

That little trick had cost the team some nuyen and Turk. He was willing to take a back seat and sit on the forger to make sure she didn’t decide to look for a better deal. It was probably a much-needed break. Cobain respected his long-time teammate, but thirty-six was old, on the back nine of an ork’s eighteen holes of life. A few days of much-needed R&R holed up at the Revere Beach MegaResort with a not-unattractive forger would be good for him.

After all of that, Cobain, Quill, and Gas Crank were left to do the actual steal. They should be enough. The team didn’t have anyone else right now anyway. Cobain had taken over for Tare almost five years ago when their former face got a break with Horizon and stepped from the shadows into the light. At the time, he’d felt a little twinge of jealousy, but since his own fall from the light, Cobain had only a few regrets. A woman he’d wished he was able to hold on to, a few runs he’d wished he’d done better legwork on, and a good friend he would have preferred was still breathing. But all told, his decade of running had been a far better life than his score of years under the thumb of the megacorporations. He looked at others still in that life with sadness.

That sadness was Mo’s influence on him. The neo-anarchist chided him for being one of the “sheeple” on a daily basis for months after they’d met, especially when Cobain





asked about the origins of his street name. Mo never gave him a straight answer, but Cobain found out the truth after Mo had lost his fight with lung cancer two months ago. At the man's remembrance, Mo's sister pulled out an old compact disc player from the end of the last century. She slipped in one of those old flat discs and told everyone that this had been Mo's favorite music. She talked briefly about the band, Nirvana, and the start of their counter-cultural revolution that was crushed by the rising power of the megacorporations. When Cobain introduced himself to Mo's sister to ask about the band and the songs, she stopped him cold and asked him his street name. When he told her Mo gave it to him she hugged Cobain tight and told him how much Mo must have loved him to have given him such an honor. When she explained that Cobain was the last name of the lead singer, who had killed himself when Nirvana's music had been bowdlerized and popularized, he understood.

Mo would have loved their current job. It was right up his alley. The target was a silver case, currently attached to the wrist of a very burly Aztlaner in the company of Juan Gualara, Director of International Infrastructure Analysis Programs for Aztechnology. The case holder was a member of his security detail, who also happened to be a former member of the Leopard Guard with Aztechnology Corporate Security. Gualara had been invited to the yacht in order to get ACS's man in place to make a quiet deal with a member of TerraFirst! concerning the contents of the case. All information Mr. Johnson had left out at the initial meet, but Cobain had made sure was dug up, because working blind was no way to run.

When Quill silently slipped away, a shadow fading from the glass, Cobain turned his attention away from the lights of the Boston skyline. He calmly slipped the mother-of-pearl buttons back through the nearly invisible buttonhole slots in his Armanté suit coat, his movements smooth and confident. With the coat open, he pulled the concealed Fichetti pistol from its custom-fit holster and dropped it into the narrow vent below the window that kept them from icing over or fogging up. The pistol was no longer part of the plan for him; best be rid of it.

He made a few more cosmetic alterations to his dress, loosening his bowtie and twisting it askew, untucking the left side of his shirt, and running his fingers through the side of his hair to disrupt the gelled perfection. The illusion he was creating needed only one final touch.

Drawing a small flask from his inner pocket, Cobain opened it and poured the contents into his mouth. His entire body shuddered when the rotgut synthwhiskey hit his tongue. He gave the liquid a good swish around his mouth before spraying the foul substance in a fine mist into the air before him. He briskly stepped through the spray, spinning

to cover as much of himself as he could before slipping into character and stumbling toward the outer deck.

Feigning drunk, he staggered through a course that gave him a chance to spot all six of the people he needed eyes on. Juan, the Azzie exec, was inside seated at a table visible through the rear deck glass. Burly Azzie with the case was walking away from the table and headed toward the rear deck. TerraFirst! was standing near the fore, seemingly engaged in a pleasant conversation with Gas Crank. Lastly, Quill was leaning over the railing above, looking out into the night. Everyone was where they needed to be.

Cobain set the plan in motion by staggering along down the side of the boat. With one hand on the rail and the other holding his glass, he stumbled and sloshed champagne, worth more per ounce than gold, all over the deck and his clothes. He intentionally lost his grip on the rail as Burly Azzie stepped out onto the rear deck and toppled into the bulky Aztlaner.

"What the ... watch it," the Azzie blurted.

"Oh, my god, I am so sorry," Cobain slurred while clumsily groping at the Azzie and splashing champagne down the man's sleeve.

"I think you've had enough," Burly Azzie said. He pulled Cobain back.

Cobain moved back with the pull. He'd managed to do what he needed to, and now needed to give the big guy a little space.

"Enough or not, my glass is empty again. Excuse me," Cobain slurred and stumbled toward the server.

Burly Azzie grunted something in Neo-Nahuatl but did just as expected, heading around the corner and along the walkway at the side of the ship, moving toward TerraFirst!.

Cobain gave him a small lead before turning back and doing his best stagger-walk straight at the big ruddy-skinned Azzie. He started his verbal tirade a good ten meters out to give the Azzie time to turn. When he got close he bellowed out, "Who are you to tell me when I've had enough?!" and gave Burly a shove. It wasn't much, but it got the desired response: a return shove.

Cobain flailed and stumbled back toward the rail. Burly Azzie had some boosted reflexes that made him quick enough to step forward and grab Cobain, catching him before he went overboard. The only problem was Cobain had a nicer system, along with some enhanced muscle fibers, and no desire to be caught. Instead he wanted the Azzie's momentum. He used it to hurl the man overboard as he fell to the ground. As far as anyone watching was concerned it looked like an accident.

Above, Quill yelled, "Man overboard!" and leaped from the upper deck towards the water. His flailing impact ensured he didn't sink too deep. He was able to almost immediately adjust his direction to head toward the Azzie.



Down the way, Gas Crank and TerraFirst! turned to watch the drunken altercation. When Burly Azzie went overboard, TerraFirst! turned to Gas Crank and raised a hand palm up. "Please back away. I must demand the aid of the spirits for that man." Gas Crank gave his best look of shock and took a step back.

When TerraFirst! closed his eyes and started to mumble, Gas Crank rescinded his backward step while engaging the muscle twitch that made a long blade slide from his forearm sheath. The mumbles turned to gurgles as Gas Crank drove the blade through the shaman's neck, then ceased completely when he pulled the blade hard to the side and half-decapitated the man. He hefted the body over the side with one arm while driving the spur through the abdomen a few more times to puncture the lungs and organs. The shaman's body hit the water only a moment after Quill.

Cobain stood and ran inside to call for help. The boat's staff immediately leaped into action. The guests reacted as one might expect and quickly ran to the side of the banquet hall to peer out the windows at the scene. In moments, commlink cameras and recorders were taking in the entire scene and posting it to MeFeeds and P2.0 accounts.

In the water, Quill quickly reached Burly Azzie, who was barely able to stay afloat due to the case, and helped pull him toward the side of the boat. As they reached the hull, Quill deftly plunged a small pin into the keyhole of the cuff attached to the case on Burly Azzie's wrist and pricked the small packet Cobain had pressed into the hole when he bumped the big Azzie earlier. Still struggling just to stay above water, Burly Azzie had no chance to notice what was happening. Quill clipped a D-ring over the handle of the case and slipped another cuff onto the Azzie's wrist. He

pulled the original cuff open thanks to the now acid-eaten lock and let the case fall away. The target case sank about three meters before the line attached to the D-ring went taut, then started rising. Before that case was even on the rise, Quill had already released the dummy case hidden below the waterline of the boat and inserted its chain into the cuff on Burly Azzie's wrist.

When the crew pulled them both back up onto the boat, Burly Azzie was none the wiser. He spent the remainder of the cruise surrounded by medical personnel and never noticed his contact was missing. Quill spent the trip alternating between telling passengers he wasn't a hero, it was just instinct, and telling the crew how sorry he was for making it two men overboard and that he should leave the rescuing to the professionals.

Cobain found a quiet place to open the case and switch the contents to a concealed container. He found a data chip, four pieces of parchment he was uncomfortably certain were skin, eight small leather—or so he hoped—bags, and an obsidian dagger that was meticulously decorated and remarkably unmarred, despite its frailty. Everything in the case screamed blood magic. He took some images and video, including unrolling the parchment to reveal some rather unpleasant images that made him thankful he couldn't read the writing. He then copied the chip and sent all the data off to a friend.

Cobain's years in the shadows had taught him that when it comes to Azzies and blood magic, you needed three things: contingency plans, knowledge, and an understanding that the job wasn't likely to be over just because Mr. Johnson had the goods. ✖





# INTRODUCTION

Maybe you had a mother who told you that you were special. Who said there was no one like you, you were wonderful in your uniqueness, blah blah blah. Or maybe you had a mother you regularly reminded you that you were nothing more than a mouthy drain on her finances, an inconvenience at best and a pain in the ass at worst, and if you somehow managed to wind up as nothing in this life it's because you managed to take a step up from whatever nightmare destiny your horrid, wilted personality was suited for.

The thing is, no matter what your mama told you, she ain't with you on the streets. (At least I hope not. Dragging your moms around on runs with you is embarrassing.) Good or bad, whatever she told you about yourself doesn't matter. In the shadows, you're going to make yourself whatever you want to be. You hope to hell you've got some basic skills to carry you forward—but to take advantage of those skills, you need a full set of tools to make yourself into the street legend you were destined to be.

What we have here are the tools. It starts with *Who You Are and How You Got Here*, looking at the various ways people slide into the shadows and how that shapes them. You're going to meet each type of runner in your career, and the sooner you understand how they work, the better. This is also the kind of info that helps you understand yourself better—where you been, and where you gotta go.

*Ethics, Codes, and Other Jokes* strolls through the wacky world of runners who think there may be something to the job besides collecting the next paycheck. Maybe their dedication to outdated ideals is pathetic, maybe it's noble, but there's a good chance that one way or another, one of these codes will affect your life, so you better know what's up.

Then we take a deeper look at the Sixth World around us. *The Spice of Runners' Lives* scans the wide variety of jobs we can take to keep ourselves amused, while *More than Skin Deep* looks at the cultures and countercultures of many of the world's metatypes, the better to anticipate some tendencies you're going to encounter.

*Construction Kits* offers different approaches to making you, well, you. Use them to build yourself to be the shadowrunner you were born to be. Then *The Mess of Metahumanity* talks about the full range of metahumans you may encounter on the mean streets and gives you what you need in case you happen to be one of these freaks. No offense.

A few archetypes give a hint about the wide variety of professionals you can find in the shadows, and then things take a turn to the dark side with *Into the Night*, a look at the ghouls, vampires, and other Infected that make those really dark Barrens alleys so interesting. As *You as You Can Be* outlines the qualities that help make us all such a bunch of special snowflakes, and *Who You Know* details the people who grease the wheels of the shadows, helping you get gear, information, and other necessities. There's a whole barter economy with these guys, and the better you understand it, the more you can take advantage of it. And while we're on the subject of people to know, *Bosses and Betrayers* talks about the Mr. Johnsons that make our work possible, profitable, and dangerous, while offering tips on how to deal with them and survive to tell the tale.

But life isn't all work. *A Dump of One's Own* focuses on the glories of home, that special place where the likelihood of you being shot drops by sometimes as much as fifty percent. Take a look at the customization options it gives you to get the domicile you need without instantly hoovering up your next payday.

Then we've got *Pack Your Kit*. The megacorps of the world have filled up the shops and bazaars we frequent—or the ones we walk by, wishing we had scratch to spend—with lots of pretty, shiny things, and it's not always easy to figure out what you need. We've arranged a lot of gear into nice thematic packs, allowing you to easily make selections that will let you take care of business in the best way possible.

That's what's out there. So get moving, jump in, get stronger, tougher, and faster, and maybe you can prove that your mama was right all along.

Or wrong.



# WHO YOU ARE & HOW YOU GOT HERE

## POSTED BY: BULL

Ask a hundred shadowrunners how they got into the biz, and I guarantee you'll get a hundred answers. Maybe even more, since sometimes there's no easy response (and some people are just smartasses). If you ask a kid what she wants to be when she grows up, she might say "shadowrunner" in the same way she'd say "test pilot" or "trid star," but she doesn't really mean it. When you get down to it, not too many people start out wanting to be shadowrunners. Despite how the profession is glamorized in the media, it's a dirty, dangerous job, full of risks and backstabs and almost guaranteed to get you a nice cozy little hole in the ground before you're old enough to have grandkids.

- Present admins excepted. One of them, anyway.
- Slamm-0!
- Hush, you.
- Bull

But there are a lot of us out there, and we all had to come from somewhere. How did that bright-eyed kid end up dodging bullets, slinging spells, or breaking into places where the best you can hope for if they catch you is that they'll just kill you?

And while we're on the subject: You know those hundred runners with a hundred different stories? They've also got a hundred different personalities. A hundred quirks, annoying habits, prejudices, and traits that their teams are going to have to put up with if they want to get anything done. Who hasn't been on a run with That Guy—you know, the one who likes to eat limburg-er-and-onion sandwiches an hour before a run, or the one who obsessively pops his cyberspur every five seconds? Or the chica who won't shut up about her pet whackdoodle cause? Face it: You're going to be spending a lot of time in close proximity to these people while you're doing biz, so it's in your best interest to figure out how to overlook some things and learn to play nice together. Because killing them is unprofessional. Usually.

- Usually's right. I did a run one time with an ork who could clear a room with his ... uh ... emissions. He

thought it was a riot. The rest of the team were ready to cack him by the time we got done. I don't think any court would have convicted us.

- Turbo Bunny

## WHERE YOU CAME FROM

There are a thousand ways to fall into the shadows. Sometimes that fall involves a lot of screaming and smashing into things on the way to the bottom, and sometimes it's more like (as the author of one of my favorite old dead-tree books once said) "sauntering vaguely downward." But whatever way somebody does it, it almost always means some pretty significant life changes. Let's take a look at a few of the ways you might join the Lifestyles of the (not-so) Rich and Shadowy.

## THE CORPS: OUTWARD MOBILITY

News flash: Not everybody who works for the corps is happy with their lot in life. Sure, there's something to be said for having a cushy job (or at least a job—the life of a wageslave isn't always cushy), not having to worry about where your next meal is coming from, and having a doss that doesn't regularly get ventilated by crossfire. I'm not sure what that something *is*, exactly, but that's what they tell me. A lot of people like that lifestyle and even aspire to it, hard as it is for us to comprehend. But there's always going to be those people who poke their heads up and twig to the fact that corp life has a price—namely, your freedom. Corps, especially the big ones, keep close tabs on their assets. That's all you are to them: an asset. You live on company property, shop at the company store, eat the company food, and toe the company line. And if you don't—let's just say that the megas didn't get rich by being forgiving.

The shadows get some of their best talent from these corporate misfits. They come in several flavors: the ex-company man who either had enough of the party line and decided to go it alone or who made some spectacular frag-up and got out one step ahead of liquidation with





extreme prejudice; the bodyguard who let her charge get cacked (either due to negligence or on purpose); the chica who finally got a good look at what her precious corp was doing and had an attack of conscience; the hotshot mage or decker who got sick of dancing on a corporate string and realized their talents would command more nuyen on the open market; and plenty others.

- One of the best faces I ever worked with used to be a high-level administrative assistant. Anybody who knows anything about corp life knows that if you're an executive, you do not want to piss off your admin—those girls and boys know everything about everybody, and they can frag you over six ways from Sunday if you don't treat them right. She finally had enough of the life and jumped ship for the shadows—while managing to bring her pig of a boss down when she ratted out his creative accounting to the higher-ups. Last I heard she was working as a freelance fixer.
- Kia
- Corps get particularly nervous when high-value assets like mages, executives, and researchers fly the coop, because they know things that can hurt the bottom line if it gets out. Naturally they won't spend the kind of effort going after Joe Sarariman that they would trying to get their hands on the lead scientist of a secret project, but don't ever think you're completely safe.
- Mr. Bonds

## THE STREETS: OUT OF THE FRYING PAN

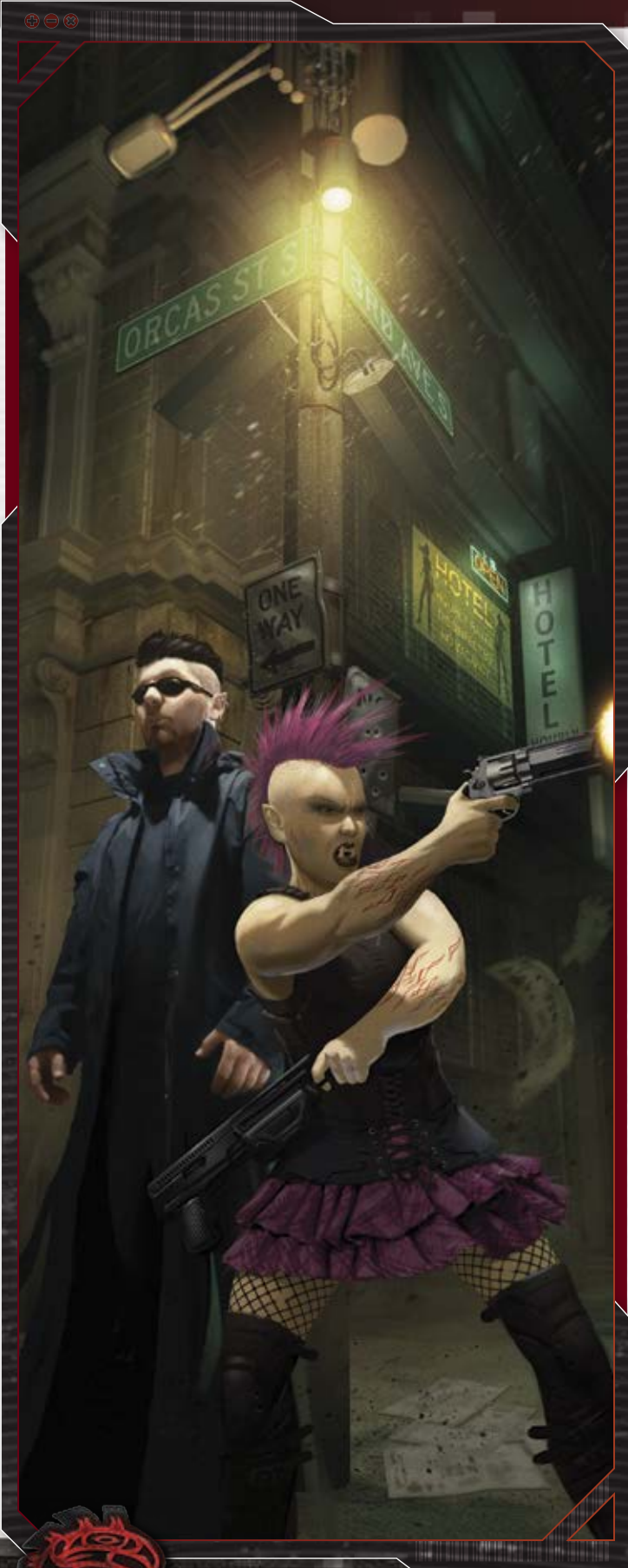
Unlike corp life, street life doesn't usually have much going for it. Life in the trenches of the Sixth World's sprawls is often quite medieval—meaning nasty, brutish, and short.

- Rather like Chainmaker.
- Winterhawk
- Say that to my face—I dare you.
- Chainmaker

The point is, most people on the streets are looking for a way *off* the streets, and shadowrunning can be one of the best ways to get there. Our ranks are full of former street kids who got their start running errands for the local syndicate, ex-gangers who seized an opportunity when it showed up on their doorstep, and criminal types (both organized and freelance) who got a chance to break out of one dangerous world and jump right into another.

- This is why you don't usually see a lot of higher-up members of the criminal syndicates running the shadows. For one thing, they pull in a lot more cred doing what they're doing, and for another, once you get to a certain level, you don't tend to survive long if you go freelance.
- Lei Kung
- You left out one of the most reliable sources of runners from the streets: metahumans, especially orks and trolls. If you're an elf or a dwarf, you've got a decent shot at the nice things in life, but try getting a cushy corp job if you're three meters tall and look like a walking crime scene. Funny, but every job that isn't on the "expendable cannon fodder" career track miraculously seems to be filled when one of us puts in an application. In the shadows, sometimes we actually get to show that there's more to us than being big and tough.
- 2XL
- When most people think of runners who got their start on the streets, their minds go first to the expected stuff like the street kids, gangers, and low-level criminal scum. Dig a little deeper and you find all kinds of others who are a lot more interesting. In just the last year I've run with an ex-prostitute, a former bunraku puppet, a ghoulish street surgeon (yeah, I wouldn't do it again, but I didn't have a lot of choice at the time), and a small-time gambler who got on the wrong side of the Triads. Shadowrunning makes for some really strange bedfellows sometimes.
- Rigger X





## THE TALENTED: WHEN THE GOING GETS WEIRD

The shadows are a magnet for the odder end of society's spectrum, and by that I mean people like magicians, technomancers, and deckers. Sure, good Matrix jockeys and most spellslingers (good or not) can write their own tickets with the corps, stepping straight off the streets or out of the corp schools and into plush jobs where they're set for life.

They can, but a lot of them don't. Here's another news flash, kids: A lot of these people are fraggin' *strange*. Let's just say that for whatever reason, most of them don't fit nicely into the prefab holes. You can fit a square peg into a round hole if you file off the corners, but try doing that with a three-dimensional construct that doesn't even have a name. Then you'll begin to see the problem with integrating some of these guys into your happy little corporate conformity-fest. And strangeness aside, both magic and the Matrix tend to elevate the type of people who are—let's just say—*individuals*. When you'd rather claw out your own eyes than take orders from some mouth-breathing desk-hugger, giving up some security for the freedom to do what you want can get attractive in a hurry.

- Not everyone who runs the shadows does it because they have no other choice. I made a conscious decision many years ago to step away from the constraints of corporate and academic life for a while in order to have more freedom to pursue my own path. Trust me—corporate magical programs don't look kindly on maverick experimentation, regardless of how interesting its results might be. I've learned more about real-world magical phenomena in the shadows than I ever did at University.
- Winterhawk
- If you're a decker and you're good enough, it doesn't necessarily even have to be a choice. I knew a guy once who was bringing in high six figures in a corp gig, while simultaneously maintaining three separate personas as shadowrunning deckers. Yeah, you heard me right. Nobody in the shadows ever saw him in person. The only reason he's not still running is he got sloppy and accidentally took a job against his own corp.
- Glitch
- And of course, if you're like me the corps don't want you anyway, except as experimental subjects. So we don't exactly get a choice even if we wanted it.
- Netcat

