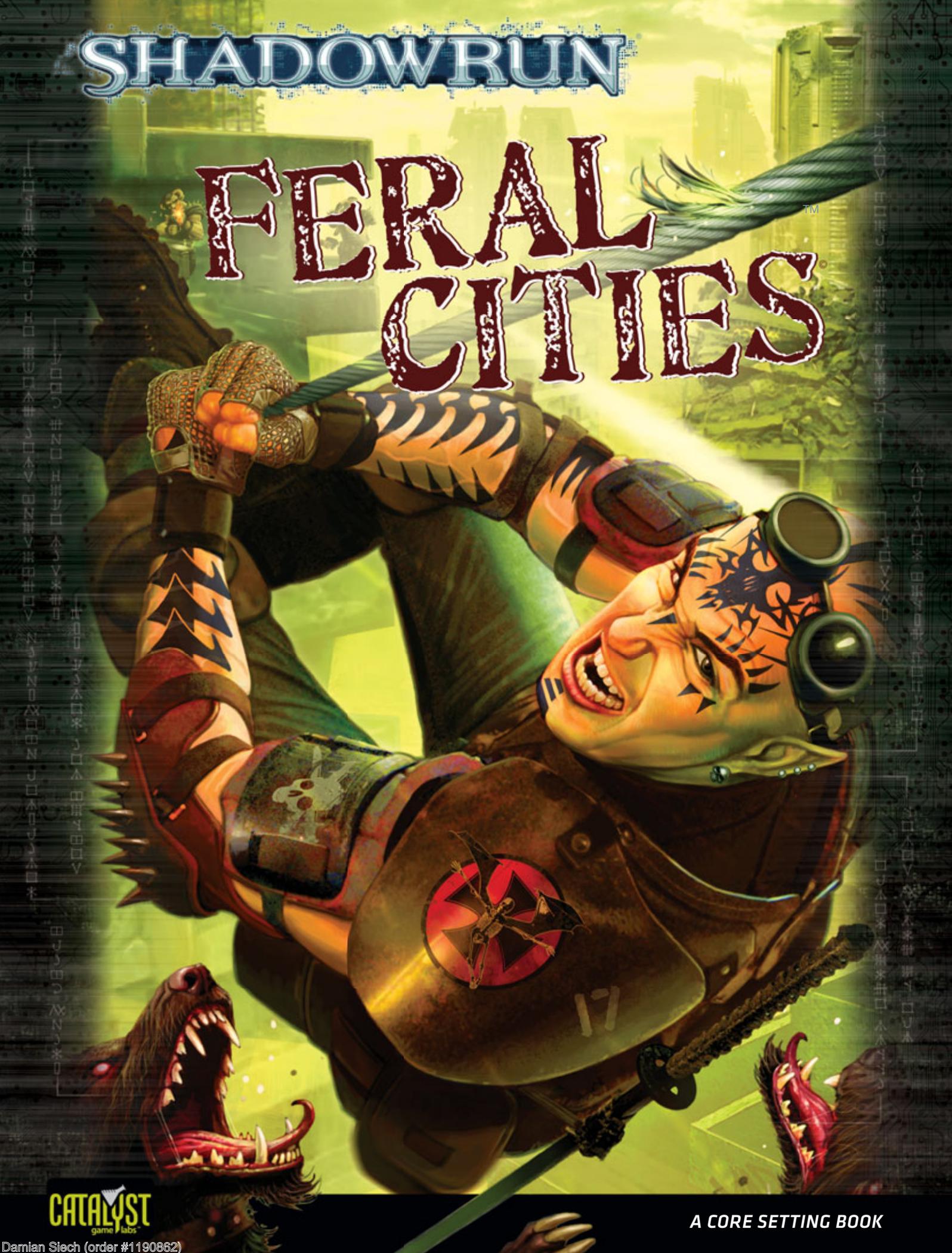


SHADOWRUN

FERAL CITIES



CATALYST
game labs

A CORE SETTING BOOK

WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

FERAL CITIES

- ★ Sprawls where the usual rules and constants of civilized society don't apply, where everyday survival is a challenge, and where the hazards and pay-offs are unique.
- ★ Runners cast out of their comfort zones and dared to challenge the ravaged urban wilderness of Chicago and the darkest heart of Africa, Lagos.
- ★ Ruled by lawlessness and survival of the fittest; Bogotá, GeMiTo, Geneva, Karavan, and Sarajevo are also profiled.

In the decaying urban wilds, war-torn cityscapes, and cancerous megabarrens of these **Feral Cities** only one thing is certain—they all harbor singular opportunities for those brave and foolhardy enough to explore their dangerous domains, factions and secrets.

SHADOWRUN

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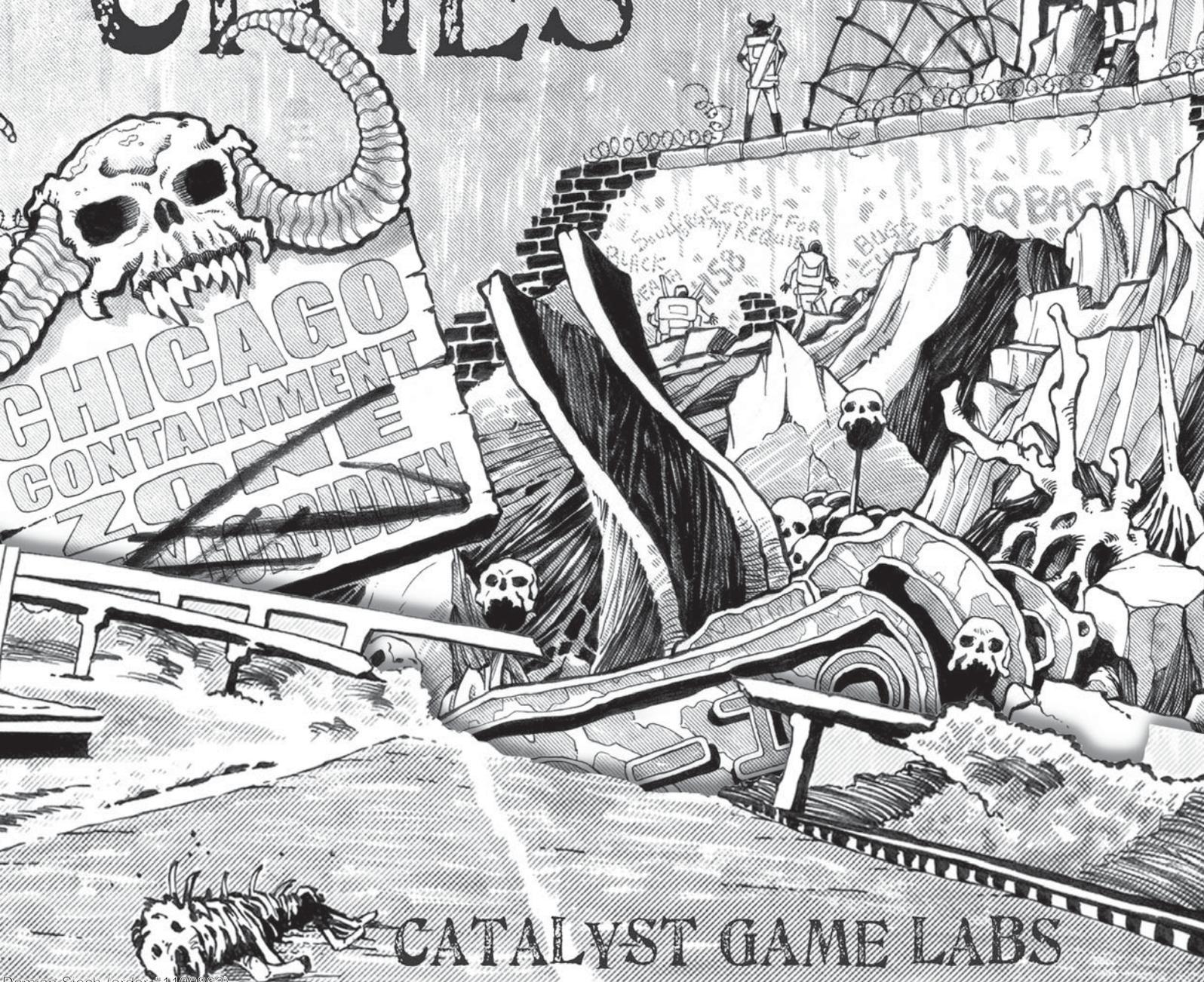
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FERAL CITIES



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... TABLE OF CONTENTS ...

JACKPOINT LOGIN	4	LAGOS	58
CHICAGO	5	The Dark Heart of Africa	60
No Place Like Home	6	History	60
A First Taste of The Future	6	The Faces of Darkness	63
Armageddon Come Early	8	Religion in Lagos	64
No Rest for the Wicked	9	Languages	65
Ground Zero Today	10	The Geology and Ecology of a Swamp	65
Econocalypse	11	Pollution	66
Means of Exchange	11	Not so friendly neighbors	67
The Commodities	12	The Kingdoms of Nigeria	68
The Markets	16	African Politics	71
Mutants, Madmen and More	17	Surrounding Nations	72
The Zone Lords	17	Lagos	76
The Corridor Communes	20	Surviving the Sprawl	76
Chicagoland Players	23	The Informal Economy	78
Fallout Zones	26	Factions	81
The Corridor	27	Pirate Groups	86
The Zone (CZ, CeeZee)	30	Corporate Interests	88
Chicagoland	33	Divided we fall	93
Locusts And Honey	35	Lagos Island	93
Climate and Conditions	35	Apapa	95
Flora	36	Surulere	96
Parafloa	36	Badagry	97
Fauna	37	Ikeja Division	100
Parafauna	39	Ikorodu and Epe	104
The River	41	A Walk on the Dark Side	104
The NooseNet	42	Bars, Clubs, and other places to lose your mind	
The Infected	42	(and money)	105
Insect Spirits	43	Places to Stay and Shop	107
Hot Spots	45	Dark Magic	110
Where to Meet	45	URBAN WILDS	113
Where to Work	47	Bogotá	114
Where to DIY	51	Bogotá Today	114
Where to Beware	53	Zona Norte	116
Let Sleeping Bugs Lie	56	Zona Oeste	116
The Hidden Hives	56	Zona Centrico	116
		GeMiTo	117
		Genoa	117
		Milan	118



Turin	118
The Fiere	118
Corporate Hideaways	118
Geneva	119
The Technomancer Issue	119
Spreading the disease	119
Living under siege	120
Quo vadis Geneva	121
Karavan	121
The Evolution of a City	121
Silk Road 2.0	122
City of Nomads	122
The Kurultai and the Yassa	122
Road Trip	122
The Shadows of Karavan	123
Sarajevo	123
Life on the Hellmouth	124
Sarajevo Roses	125
Concrete Opportunities	125

GAME INFORMATION

Truly Off the Grid

Doing Without	128
Alternative Powers	128
Feral Economies	128
Why Go?	129
A Word of Caution	129

Chicago Adventures

Ares Dragon Down	129
Rien ne vas Plus	130
Adventure Seeds	131

Lagos Adventures

Tropical vacation	132
A shot in the dark	133
Adventure seeds	134

SIDEBARS (CHICAGO)

The Universal Brotherhood	8
Downtown Do's & Don'ts	10
Getting Lost	27
The Elevated and The Underground	31
Adverse Possession	32
Lake Michigan-Huron	39
The Calumet Swamp	41

SIDEBARS (LAGOS)

Duante's Guide Getting by in Lagos	61
Lagos Timeline:	62
Fast Facts	65
African Nations Update	72
Hawala Networks	79
Prices in Lagos	80
Lagos Council Members	82
Oil Today	91
Victoria Island Tourist Guide	96
Eyewitness Matrix Hot Spots: Festac Town	101
Awakened Flora and Fauna of Lagos	111

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

 > Enter Passcode

 ... Biometric Scan Confirmed.
 Connected to <ERROR: NODE UNKNOWN>
 "Civilization is hideously fragile and there's not much between us
 and the horrors underneath, just about a coat of varnish."

JackPoint Stats
 23 users currently active in the network

Latest News
 * <sticky> This private p2p MoSoSo network is now gamma. There isn't software anywhere that doesn't have a fault, though, so report any glitches to me. - FastJack
 * <101171> I've finally updated the JackPoint Filofax and JobBank subsystems so you shouldn't get the 4011 error.[Download 1.8b patch].-FastJack

Personal Alerts
 * Your "xploit3r" agent has 3 new messages for you
 * You have 2 new private messages
 * You have 23 messages queued for anonymous re-routing
 * You have 16 new responses to your Jackpoint posts
 * Michelle has pinged you, she is only 4 blocks away [map]
 * Your Ganesh virtual pet has been eaten by an opponent's LOLcat.
 * Reminder: Concrete Dreams Revival tickets on sale in 3 days

Your Current Rep Score: 65
 (85% Positive)

Current Time: October 13, 2071, 2115

- PREFERENCES
- FEEDS
- TASKS
- LINKS
- HISTORY

Welcome back to JackPoint, omae;
your last connection was severed:
48 hours, 23 minutes, 51 seconds ago



Today's Heads Up

* Ready for a walk on the wild side? Business sent you into the decaying urban wilds, flashpoint no-man's lands, and lawless sprawls? Well, post your thoughts and warnings to our latest location guide. [Tag: [Feral Cities](#)]

Incoming

- * Finally getting a breather from dodging bullets and dopeheads? Wondering why the hell the syndicates have been at each other's throats. Then it's time to catch up with tempo? Sunshine is compiling a report. [Tag: [Ghost Cartels](#)]
- * Unless you've been living under a rock, you know the underworld landscape is changing fast out there. The Good Old Boys are struggling, and upstarts are carving out pieces of the pie. Get the lowdown on who's the top dog before the dust settles with our overview of the criminal underworld. [Tag: [Vice](#)]

Top News Items

- * New York authorities announced that investigations continue into the destruction of the Brooklyn bridge though no further evidence has been made public at this point. Following the arrest of Mr Karl Gahley and the seizure of KG Construction Inc assets by the Manhattan Development Consortium, MDC spokesperson Jaclyn Perez has issued a joint statement with NYPD, Inc confirming that the attack has led to multiple arrests but is not believed to be linked to any immediate terror threat to the city, though security levels around sensitive areas will remain heightened for the time being. [Link](#).
- * Tensions continue to rise on the border between Amazonia and Aztlan with occasional exchanges of fire between both sides reported by independent sources; this despite disclaimers from both governments that the situation has not degenerated further. Tensions have flared following Aztlan's announced crackdown on the drug cartels active in the disputed border area of former Colombia. Amazonian authorities have accused Aztlan of unauthorized paramilitary strikes at targets on its sovereign soil. [Link](#).
- * An internal probe by Shiawase into the cascading reactor failure that shut down power distribution to large areas and paralyzed major cities in Indonesia last week, has revealed that the situation was the result of yet-unexplained sabotage by four Shiawase staff members with previous spotless records. Official apologies have been issued and investigations are ongoing into possible criminal involvement in the affair; all four suspects were found to have traces of drugs in their bloodstream. [Link](#).

- CHAT
- MESSAGES
- FILES
- POSTS
- NEHUS
- SEARCH

Active

ComStar Firewall

Active

Jack-in-the-Box Antivirus

Active

SpamWitch Filter

On/Receiving

Commcode

Excellent

Signal

Active

Hidden Mode

Local Map

FERAL CITIES

Invited Guests

Cosmo	Change Agent	DefCon5
Zoned	Honesty	Duante
Chiemeka		

Posts/Files tagged with "Feral Cities":

* Bogotá	* GeMiTo	* Geneva (** new **)
* Karavan	* Sarajevo	

[\[More\]](#)

CONTINUE

ADVANCED SEARCH

SAVE



The dogs stopped chasing me when we hit the CZ. It wasn't like they ran into an invisible wall or anything, but I knew the hellhound wouldn't budge an inch past the gap in the wall. The rest of the pack followed her and turned around. I slowed down and checked that the vial in my pocket hadn't cracked. There was the buzzing of bees and far away the noise of bikes, but I didn't see a soul. The asphalt on Stevenson crumbled with every step, and tall, dry grasses poked up. The signs had been torn down a long time ago, so I started counting exits.

Graffiti announced Cermak in faded orange paint on a slab of ferroconcrete; I took a sec to fetch the dosimeter out of my pocket and clip it to my shirt. I walked down a shadowed street hidden with dirt and dead leaves. Gang tags covered every building as high as a troll could reach.

The ring of dry corpses told me I was getting close. Zoned said some sniper had gone up to the highest building near the blast zone and picked off anybody that came close until she starved or ran out of ammo.

Illinois hemp rose tall as an elf; radiation gigantism. I was getting a couple greys but nothing too serious. The shadows seared on the remaining walls were nothing metahuman...but they might have been, once.

I almost fell into the crater. They never tell you that the bomb went off below street level - some sort of basement or something. Half-slid down toward the hole in the center of the blast zone. There were flies there, and spotty black mold that made the broken concrete slippery. On the edge of the pit, fear or something like it clenched at my guts. The flies were practically swarming now.

I braced myself to look over the edge. It was black, and what felt like a warm breeze hit my face. There was water down there, just like they said. I thumbed the vial in my hand. All I needed was a sample and I get paid. The edges were fused and glassy, and the water's surface moved where the flies touched it. I pulled out my flimsy telescoping pole and attached the vial, and then I leaned down into the pit. It wasn't quite long enough. I had to lay down on the edge, one cheek in the slime and one arm dangling over the edge. I glanced at the docimeter, and the film was black, solid black. That was bad.

Something landed on my cheek; I slapped at it without thinking, and my hand came away with something that had four wings and the wrong number of legs. Then I looked up at the sky, where the sun should have been...and something looked at me. A million compound eyes carried on black wings saw me and spoke to me in a buzzing voice like the beating of ten thousand wings, a voice that wasn't metahuman, but might have been once.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Posted By: Sticks

A common mistake these days is assuming a sprawl's Downtown core is synonymous with the entire metroplex. That might apply to L.A. or Istanbul, but things are different in Chicago. When you mention Chi-Town to Jane Shadowrunner, you can almost see the trideo images playing in her head, the half-informed questions they want ask, and the look you get when you tell them 'it's actually not that bad, once you get the hang of it.'

The last part's a lie, of course. People overlook the fact that Chicago proper is actually only part of the vast region that is the Greater Chicago Metroplex Area. After a decade of insect spirits, magic-eating bacteria, and warlords terrorizing the Downtown core, those images stick with people.

Now, before you get your hopes up, most of Chicago is *still* a dangerous, feral shit hole. You *still* walk twenty miles through Westside to avoid the Downtown core, and you should *still* think twice before conjuring a spirit at the lake front for fear of calling up something toxic. That said, Chicago is also *still* the perfect place to ditch the Star or the corpsec you just screwed over, end a smuggling run up from the Gulf, or get your paws on some near-untraceable hardware.

Underneath the depressing sight that is Chicago proper and its grim reminders of a bad history, an undeniable undercurrent of

restoration and encouragement is emerging from the Corridor—the buffer zone between the lawless CeeZee and the civilized but corp-controlled Chicagoland. Described as 'a collective spirit of new beginnings' by the optimistic pirate broadcasters, the eclectic and colorful collectives and communities in Chicago boast a rough but vivid frontier city atmosphere. Life, and business, still goes on. Chicago may be wild through the core, but it ain't dead yet.

To fully understand where the greater Chicago metroplex area came from and where it's heading, we need to take a short detour down memory lane and revisit the cataclysmic milestones of the city's recent history. To share their local knowledge with us along the trip, I've asked ol' Jack to grant temporary access to Zoned, Change Agent, and DefCon5—natives all.

A FIRST TASTE OF THE FUTURE

The first event that put a major dent in the city's post-Awakened landscape was the destruction of the Downtown area known as the Noose in the aftermath of the Night of Rage in 2039. Disguised as an act of metahuman retaliation, the terrorist organization Alamos 20,000 blew up the Sears Tower, killing thousands and damaging the surrounding buildings. The ruptured gas lines ignited, and the entire area disintegrated in a ball of flame and rubble, claiming the lives of 26,000 citizens. The area became an urban wasteland known as the Shattergraves, its ruins haunted by

CHICAGO TIMELINE

2018—Chicago-based ESP Systems Inc. announces the first generation simsense technology. Local media conglomerate Truman Technologies immediately buys them out.

2025—The Southside revitalization project begins, including construction of a monorail. Large pieces of land change ownership to create a new business district primarily serving the growing simsense industry. The current inhabitants must relocate elsewhere, replaced by the mostly metahuman workforce slaving away in the chip factories and warehouses.

2029—The first global computer crash is a major setback for Chicago's simsense and electronic entertainment industry, forcing many factories to close down.

2039—The destruction of the Sears Tower devastates large parts of Downtown Chicago, creating the Shattergraves.

2053—The Cabrini Refuge Act creates the nation's first official enclave for Ghouls and other HMVV victims.

2055—Following the mass breakout of insect spirits in Downtown Chicago, the UCAS government establishes the Chicago Containment Zone. Over 100,000 citizens remain trapped inside the sealed off area, officially explained as a VITAS breakout. In the Fall, a Knight Errant Firewatch team detonates a subtactical thermonuclear warhead inside the core hive. The Cermak Blast, as it becomes known, knocks virtually all the insect spirits in the immediate area into torpor. Thankfully, the blast and radiation effects are much lower than expected.

2056—A collection of files and reports from inside the zone reaches the shadownets, and from there, the public, revealing the truth about the Chicago situation.

2058—After releasing its dual-natured FAB III astral bacteria into the Zone, Ares Macrotechnology declares the Containment Zone free of bugs. The UCAS government opens the Containment Zone, revealing an urban warzone ruled by ruthless gangs and self-appointed warlords.

2059—Reports confirm that the FAB III strain remains active despite the official life span predictions. It feeds on magical auras and the omnipresent background count.

2063—The Calumet harbor, abandoned since the Containment Zone days, is partially reopened, relieving cargo volume from the accident-ridden makeshift docks in Gary.

2064—The second global computer crash abruptly halts the Calumet and O'Hare logistics operations, but overall, it only has a minor impact on Chicago.

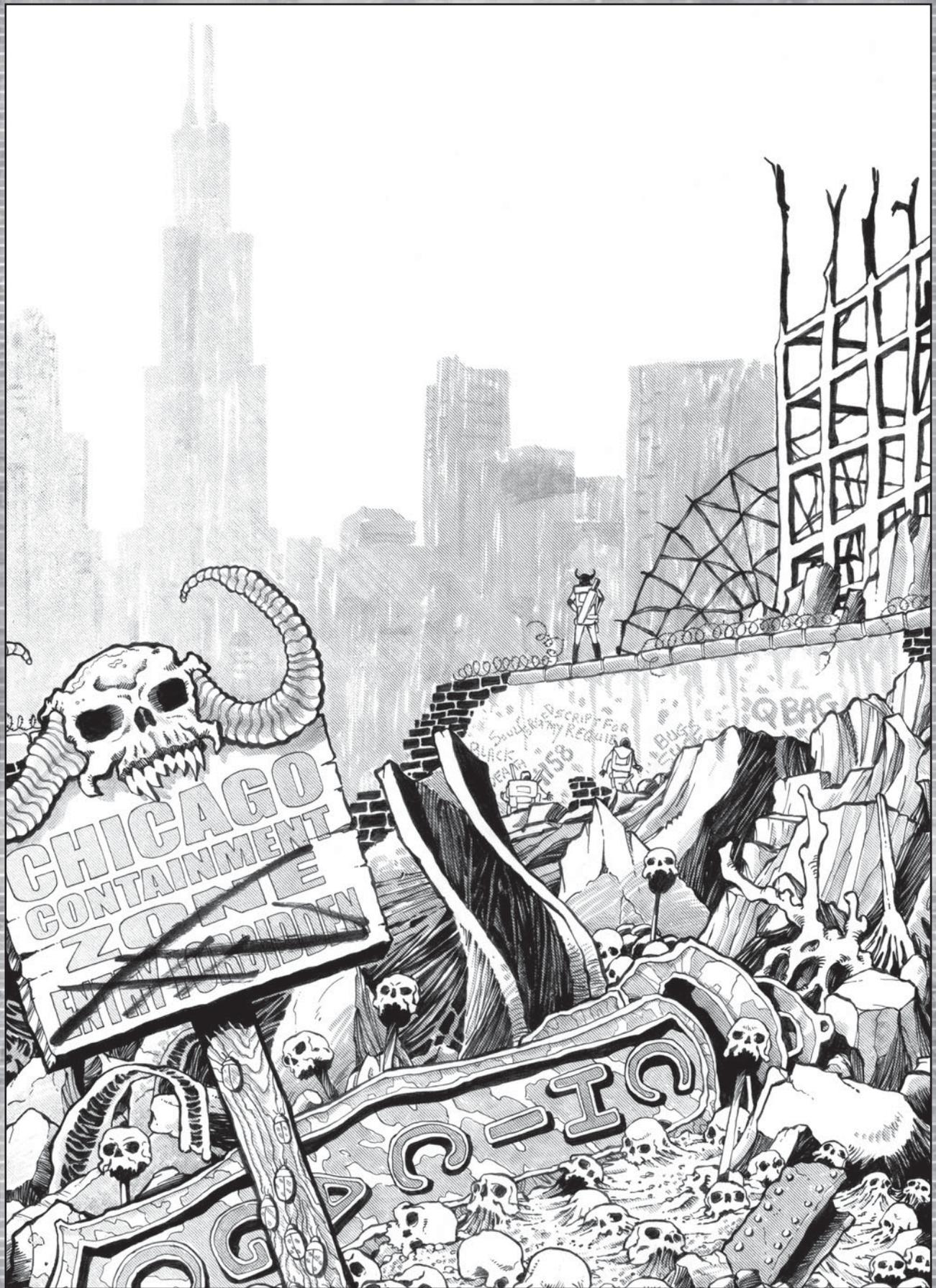
2069—The first reports of gradually lessened FAB III activity are recorded, but it leaves behind a desolate mana ebb in Chicago's astral space.

2070—Mafia hopeful and local underboss Marcus Quinn is found dead. Rivalries between the different families lead to an internal schism and prevent a joint expansion of Mafia-run operations and influence.

2071—Chicago's population increases for the first time since 2055. The newcomers form independent enclaves in the Corridor.

Urgent Message...





the ghosts of the deceased and other unnatural beings drawn to the astral echo of the cataclysm. Even today, the persistent spectres and background count dissuade any attempt to simply bulldoze and rebuild the neighborhood.

Chicago's ruling powers immediately responded to the threat by 'relocating' metahumans, together with squatters and other SINless folk, to enclosed ghettos euphemistically dubbed 'protected enclaves'—a strategy that had been applied already during the simsense boom (2018—2030), when local simsense power house Truman Technologies launched his Southside revitalization project.

- FYI Daniel Truman somehow 'acquired' the simsense technology directly from the blueprints. In his heyday, he had a hand in every pie, from real estate and the next (metahuman) neighborhood relocation initiative to simsense chips and trideo broadcasting. After 2055, Truman Distribution Networks was absorbed into Ares Macrotechnology and relocated to L.A., but rumors say Danny-boy is looking for ways to go solo again in his old age—viva Léonization.
- Cosmo

The corps and small businesses whose offices were destroyed in the Shattergraves, bought the vacant prime real estate. The corporations erected their phallic status symbols in the Southside Core, while factories and blue-collar industries were set up throughout the Northside, conveniently close to the metahuman neighborhoods.

- A note on Chicago's geography: Traditionally, the Downtown area was the heart of the city, its extensions known as North-, West-, and Southside. Today, Downtown is synonymous with the Zone, and most of the 'sides were either absorbed by the Chicagoland sub-sprawls or are considered part of the Corridor, the buffer zone between CeeZee and the sub-sprawls.
- Change Agent

Fast-forward to 2053. The passing of Special Order 162 by the Illinois legislature marked the climax of the ongoing nationwide debate over metahuman rights. Under the 'Cabrini Refuge Act,' ownership of the (officially) abandoned Cabrini Green housing development transferred to a coalition of ghouls, to establish a safe haven for their kind and other victims of metahuman hate and prejudice. Establishing the refuge did not go by without the usual protests, riots, and casualties on all sides, and before long, the area became known as Ghoultown.

ARMAGEDDON COME EARLY

Chicago had seen its share of curveballs, but nothing could prepare the thriving metroplex for what was unleashed onto the world in the summer of 2055.

On August 23, an Ares Firewatch team breached the Universal Brotherhood chapterhouse in the Downtown area, releasing a plague of biblical proportions into the streets. What began as random emergency calls reporting sightings of insectoid critters quickly turned into mass panic when the first swarms of insect spirits attacked—the first and worst of a series of global outbreaks. The UCAS government, as impotent as usual, reacted by the book and focused on containing the threat at all costs. By leveling entire building complexes around the Downtown core, the

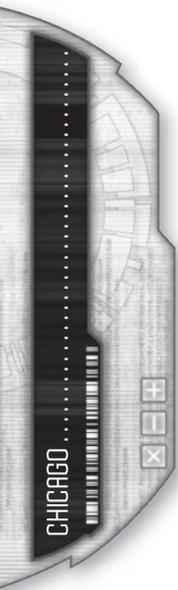
// uploaded Uniformat text file :: posted by Sunshine THE UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

The Crash 2.0 destroyed a lot of information on the cult, but even before then, the details were patchy at best. I was lucky to have known a journalist who tried to uncover the truth behind the cult. Zebediah 'Zeb' Wanderly paid for his research with his life. Officially, he died in a freak explosion in a Seattle pub in 2051, but I have proof the explosion was ordered by the Brotherhood, trying to protect its terrible secrets even as Zeb was uploading his expose to Shadowland.

Founded in 2043 and nominally based on the theories of sociologist/psychologist Dr. Caitlin O'Connal, the UB's official teachings offered 'a deeper sense of belonging' to its members, rooted in the proclaimed connection of an individual to metahumanity's metaphysical subconscious. They performed charitable works in their local communities, running soup kitchens, support groups, and free clinics for the SINless and the destitute. By 2050, the non-profit organization maintained over 500 chapterhouses across the globe, 300 in North America alone, with its members coming from all ranks of society, from every background and all levels of education. In truth, the UB was a front for a coalition of different insect hives, using a combination of brainwashing and mind control techniques to prepare its members to become abulic vessels to host insect spirits. They made use of the "good merges," those spirits who kept the physical appearance and memories of their metahuman hosts, as part of their public face—in many cases, members of the UB had no idea of the cult's sinister agenda or the changes that their colleagues underwent. The UB's influence quickly extended into the corporations' executive boardrooms and the upper echelons of political power.

Despite several leaks and accidental discoveries, it was not until mid-2055 that UCAS authorities realized the threat the UB posed to metahumanity. Officially accusing the UB of tax fraud and kidnapping of supposed members, FBI and Ares Firewatch SWAT teams raided and shut down UB operations throughout the nation in joint operations, stirring up the proverbial hornet's nest and taking out several insect hives. From what little can be pieced together after all these years, the UB's emergency plan called for many of its members to secretly travel to the Chicago chapterhouse, although whether to regroup or attack in full force is unknown. The extinguishing of the Brotherhood, however, did not mark the end of the danger, as we all know by the events that took place in Chicago.

- This article has been tagged by someone in your network.
- Accessing tag...
- I once told Zebediah Wanderly he represented the light in the darkness. I am glad you carry his torch with pride, but let his actions and fate be both advice and warning to you, Sunshine.
- Man-Of-Many-Names



Urgent Message...



military created an impassable wall of rubble and debris, effectively trapping about 100,000 citizens inside the perimeter—with the insect spirits. At the same time, a media ban went into effect, stonewalling any reports on, or even originating from within, Chicago. The official cover story claimed a VITAS outbreak was the reason for the establishment of the ‘Chicago Containment Zone.’ Within twenty-four hours after the break out, the threat was contained for the time being, but the government and military knew this was anything but a permanent solution.

- For once, you can’t really blame the military; they were as unprepared as anyone else (Ares probably being the only exception). Suddenly the Sixth World faced a new kind of threat in the form of an invisible enemy, metahumans possessed by alien spirits and indistinguishable from a citizen trapped in the Zone and struggling to survive.
- Pistons

While the government stuck to their story, and military troops patrolled the wall, the situation worsened for the people trapped inside the zone. The early supply drops resulted in hundreds of casualties when frightened citizens attempted to cross the wall and either fell or were shot down, but also, the insect spirits now openly attacked the masses at will. In the early morning hours of October 1, 2055, outside civilians and the security personnel guarding the wall witnessed a huge explosion in the Containment Zone. Though official sources refused to comment on the incident, it was widely suspected that the cause was the detonation of a nuclear bomb near the Cermak power plant in the zone’s center.

- Meanwhile, an unidentified group penetrated a massive insect hive on Cermak Ave that was investing roughly a thousand insect spirits into vessels, and they detonated a sub-tactical nuclear weapon just as the queen spirits finished erecting a powerful magical barrier. The effects of the Cermak Blast were...weird. The blast radius was a lot smaller than it should have been, but the radiation at ground zero is a lot more intense than it should be, even fifteen years later. Presumably, the blast destroyed all of the flesh forms present, and it knocked insect spirits throughout Chicago into a form of astral hibernation known as torpor. For a long time after the blast, using any magical activity in the Zone threatened to wake up one or more of these dormant insect spirits.
- Winterhawk
- Even more disturbing is the possibility that the original queens, or the spirits that were being invested at the time of the Blast, might still be in torpor under the Cermak Crater. After all, the mana warp from the blast destroyed any FAB that wandered near.
- Sticks

It took four months for the truth to leak, in the form of a collection of files uploaded to the shadownets and forwarded to the media in late December 2055. Put together by residents within the Containment Zone, the reports and notes described a ravaged Chicago, a hell-on-Earth, where frightened citizens fell prey to swarms of insect spirits and ruthless warlords controlled the few safe havens, demanding high prices for the illusion of safety. Chicago became known by a new name: Bug City.

• Like a few of you, I recall reading the compilation for the first time. I couldn’t believe what was happening right under our noses, a feeling shared by many. Media coverage led to an enormous public outcry and sympathy for the people trapped in the CZ, but it also led to witch hunts and lynch mobs attacking Chicago refugees sheltered in camps in Detroit or Milwaukee. People think the kneejerk Matrix-craze last year was a freak occurrence, it wasn’t.

- FastJack
- After the cover story broke, reports on breakouts in other cities around the globe made the rounds. Rio, Ankara, Calcutta, Hong Kong, Brisbane and a half-dozen others we heard about. Chicago was no isolated incident, but it was by far the biggest hive in North America, if not the world.
- DefCon5

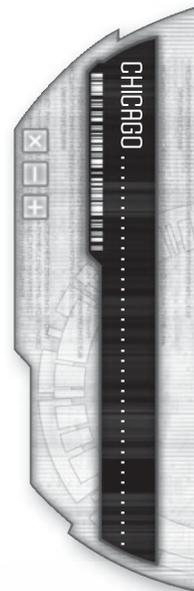
Despite public outcry and protests, the government ignored the plight of the Zoners and stuck to its wait-and-see strategy. ‘Bug City’ remained a hot topic over the next years—playing in the 2056/57 presidential campaigns—but government spin doctors worked overtime to play down the deteriorating living conditions. In the meantime, the corps and the government led secret recon or research missions into the Zone, focusing their research on the state of the astral and the nature of the insect torpor.

NO REST FOR THE WICKED

In late February 2058, Ares unilaterally launched Operation: Extermination, sending troops armed with heavy weaponry, drone support, and the newest strain of the Fluorescing Astral Bacteria—FAB III—into the Zone. This latest variant fed on magical energy, sucking the life out of dual-natured beings such as the bugs. A few days later, the UCAS government sanctioned the op and confirmed its all-out success, ordering its troops to pull out and relocate to the nearby O’Hare sub-sprawl. After two and a half years, the Containment Zone was lifted, giving the world a first-hand glimpse at the lawless feral zone Chicago had become. Despite facing a common enemy, ruthless gang lords controlled parts of the Zone, fighting each other relentlessly over food scraps and territory. Self-appointed enforcers roamed the streets, resorting to extortion or slavery as payment from the desperate citizens under their ‘protection.’

- FAB III, of course, did not kill *all* the bugs in the Zone. Many spirits had become free when the Cermak Blast threw their queens and hive mothers into torpor, or when the shamans that summoned them were killed. These spirits evolved and eventually adapted to the environment, and they may remain in Chicago today along with a well-concealed hive or two.
- Winterhawk
- Too true. Just a couple of weeks ago a gang of Horde scavengers clashed with a roach hive that had a nest in the old fallout shelter of one of the big hotels.
- Change Agent

Federal emergency agencies moved in to help (and screen) survivors. But they were unable to control the flow of refugees. Overnight, the survivors poured into the districts beyond the



wall. Malnourished and traumatized, the masses of refugees met heavy resistance from fellow Chicagoans protecting their homes from what they feared were disguised insect spirits and savage gang enforcers. Over time, though, they could not keep out the Zoners, and a mass exodus began into wider Chicagoland and beyond.

Contrary to the predicted life span of Strain III, the bacteria did not die out. The clouds certainly killed most of the insect spirits in the Zone, along with the ghouls, the devil rats, and many luckless spirits and magicians, but then they began feeding on the astral background count, roaming astral space and searching for food. Within a year, most of the area's Awakened population—metahuman magicians, dual-natured critters and spirits—burnt out and died, their powers and auras drained by the bacteria.

- While magicians can easily get rid of a cloud by simply returning to the physical plane or turning off a focus (though they may still act as carriers), dual-natured beings are shit out of luck. Ghoul town turned into a mass grave, their innate dual nature rendering them helpless against the bacteria.
- Ethernaut

In the following years, the gangs and collectives expanded their operations beyond the wall. By 2062, most of Chicago had become a dangerous urban hell, populated by criminals at large, smugglers, the SINless, and other outcasts of society. The total absence of law and order, ongoing turf wars, and rumors of a new generation of insect spirits evading the FAB clouds destroyed any hope for the city's reconstruction. Despite repeated promises to rebuild the Windy City on a grand scale, the UCAS government only showcased a handful of small scale operations that tore down segments of the Wall. They conveniently handed off larger projects to 'independent investors,' the megacorporations, who primarily ensured O'Hare—heavily fortified and under military control—stayed operational and secure or focused on the partial reclamation of the Calumet port in early 2063. Both initiatives came to a sudden halt when the Crash 2.0 hit the globe and flatlined the few areas maintaining a stable communication grid in Chicago.

- In comparison to what the city went through over the last decade, the virus attack was but a small nuisance to most of the area's residents. Ironically, Chicago turned out to be one of the safer areas in the midst of the chaos and aftershocks of the worldwide system failure.
- Fastjack

The Crash 2.0 was the final nail in the coffin for Chicago's city government, which declared the city bankrupt and resigned en masse—the mayor used a nickel-plated Ares Predator to blow his brains all over his e-mail of resignation. Smelling blood, the corporations assisted the Chicagoland sub-sprawls of Gary, Naperville-Bolingbrook, Joliet, O'Hare, and South Milwaukee to assimilate juicy chunks of Chicago's former outskirts and begin rebuilding the disparate and vital transport routes around the forsaken city. The O'Hare sub-sprawl became a heavily fortified logistics hub at the heart of the megacorps' reintegrated international shipping network.

Passed-by by the wondrous promises of wifi technology and an interconnected society, the Corridor developed into a patchwork of settlements, neo-tribal collectives, and eclectic communes around the Zone, Chicago's feral heart. Whether by word of mouth, subliminal social currents, or anarchist propaganda, Chicago became a center of attraction for society's dropouts and other malcontents.

- Of course, the media reports didn't mention the braincases that had more than one screw loose after surviving the bugs and more for ten consecutive years. The first newcomers had their share of lethal encounters with the more psychotic survivors, and even today, you should ask around—the block you plan to set up shop in may belong to some nutjob who might take you for a bug and smash in your head.
- Zoned

GROUND ZERO TODAY

Feral Chicago is a city abandoned but not forgotten, disparate but unified by its common identity. It doesn't matter if the government pissed on us and left us to rot, it doesn't matter that the corporations bought Chicagoland and gobbled up the outer neighborhood, and it doesn't matter that the Mafia and the other vultures of the underworld are fighting over who gets to feast on the corpse or that the lingering threat of the bugs hangs over us all. The idea of Chicago is what remains. This is our city, Ghost damn it, and we're not leaving. We've survived the worst the Sixth World has to throw at us, and we still stand tall and call ourselves Chicagoans.

- Never mind all the poor bastards that don't care where they are, because they're too damn far down the shithole to ever climb out of your beloved, diseased, bug-ridden, anarchistic hellhole.
- Haze

DOWNTOWN DO'S & DON'TS

- Travel in groups. If you need to see someone alone, have your escort wait outside.
- Pay a local to watch your ride while you're busy, or leave someone outside to guard it.
- Pack meds. Raw metahuman waste is the least toxic of the things you might touch, and it'll still kill you.
- Always keep an eye on the sky. Many dangers come from above, such as Wasp spirits or a sniper's bullet.
- Be wary of strangers. Nobody in the Zone is what she seems.
- Avoid obvious and inviting routes through buildings or streets. They might be booby-trapped.
- Forget treasure hunting in abandoned buildings. Anything valuable was looted a long time ago.
- Be careful working magic in the Zone. Check for Awakened plants that might indicate a normal mana area.
- Never climb the Wall. It is impossible to predict stable paths. Pay the toll at the cleared passages instead.
- Never drink water from the Chicago River. Seriously, don't. Swimming is highly discouraged, too.

Urgent Message...



More importantly for runners, Chicago is still in the game. There's nuyen to be made here—maybe now more than in the last twenty years. The corps are hiring, the gangs are hiring, the Mob is hiring, the politicians in Chicagoland are hiring, and the smugglers are open for business 24/7/52. Gear up, pop in a fresh clip, and don't forget the bug spray. I'll stand you a pint at Pog's when you get here.

ECONOPOCALYPSE

Posted By: **Change Agent**

Corporations may have erased most of Chi-Town from their point-of-sale expansion plans, but that doesn't imply the total absence of basic commerce. In the sub-sprawls, business has returned to normal, or as close as possible given the logistic considerations and infrastructural challenges. Greater Chicago is split up into a whole bunch of pocket economies throughout the 'sides. There are stores, street sellers, and communal marketplaces. Don't expect much of a shopping experience, though. No flashy AR pop-ups and ads, no virtual information desk or directory.

On the illegal side of things, the absence of law enforcement, and virtually unwatched entry routes via land or water, make Chicago a veritable smuggler's haven. Add in its prime location, an unused and unmonitored major port (even if dilapidated and in need of repair), rows and rows of abandoned warehouses, and the countless gray markets, and it's no wonder Chicago is one of the prime smuggling hubs on the continent, rivaled only by Miami in the Carib League and New Orleans in the CAS.

MEANS OF EXCHANGE

Out of necessity, barter has become the most widespread form of doing business in Chicago. The endless supply of goods, the steady replenishment and replacement of the passé with the latest and greatest, all of the conveniences of the modern world came to a grinding halt when the city government fell—or even as far back as 2055, if you lived inside the Zone. When the Crash 2.0 took out Chicago's rebuilding Matrix, nearly all nuyen transactions ceased. In an instant, Chicagoans were forced to—gosh!—re-use disposable trinkets or trade seemingly unimportant items for something that might save their life in that particular moment. Trivial gadgets such as batteries or a simple aspirin suddenly became worth killing for.

- Simply put, the capitalist system broke down. This was before the Matrix 2.0, so people really needed the Matrix infrastructure to conduct electronic transactions. When the system failure hit, people were stuck with whatever nuyen or dollars their credsticks had left—and that kind of money doesn't usually go very far.
- Mr. Bonds

With few people able to access their accounts, barter replaced money. A few people made exorbitant amounts of cred in the first weeks, only to discover cans of soup, a six-pack of beer, or an electric blanket were the new nuyen as commlink batteries died. Many a gang lord's sudden rise to power was based on having access to hidden stashes of supplies in a forgotten warehouse, unassuming condo, or railyard. In the initial flurry, neighborhood militias and gangs put their 'might is right' mentality to action and raided the abandoned suburbs beyond Chicago's borders, taking what



wasn't nailed down with them. When the desperation and fear of the coming winter sunk in, people started trading everything for anything in hope of making it through the winter.

- Agent's not exaggerating either. Once it dawned on people they would have to stay through the winter months, tensions boiled even higher than before. People were killing each other over a pair of gloves or a bottle of antibiotics scored from the supply drops. Thinking about it, it's the same *every* winter.
- Zoned

Credsticks, and even cash, gradually returned over the next years when dealing with external traders, smugglers passing through, or purchases from the military patrols, but some people still live and die without ever holding a credstick. Most of the ordinary folks and collectives rely on barter only. Even if they had commlinks to transfer funds, where would they get nuyen in Chicago?

- It's a fair point: modern commlinks can talk to each other, so no matter where you are in Chicago, if there is another commlink within range, you should be able to conduct transactions in nuyen or other cred—provided it's on your commlink or connected to the wider Matrix (read: only in the Corridor). The real problem is that most Chicagoans do not *have* commlinks, and even if they have credsticks (you ever wonder why commlinks have those little ports? Credstick port.), most

of them don't have any nuyen left on them and no way to put nuyen on them.

- Mr. Bonds
- The Mafia pays in whatever is cheapest for them: goods, nuyen, or services, as appropriate.
- 2XL
- Unless you're planning to stay in the sub-sprawls, forget about virtual funds and transfers from your commlink. Instead, stock up on anything from painkillers to booze, from rechargeable batteries to outdated hardware. Hell, a simple blood donation with the Anarchist Black Crescent is worth more than the funds in your illegal bank account to most Chicagoans.
- Lyran

Bartering

The first rule of bartering is that there isn't always someone offering what you need, and vice versa. That means to get what you really want, you'll probably have to make a couple more trades to get what the other guy wants. Second, bartering is entirely supply driven, meaning the *seller* determines the price. Which leads us to the third and most important rule: Know your market. Finding out in advance what your trading pal needs—whether for himself, his family, or to pay off the gang boss he owes—limits the seller's opportunity to charge an arm and a leg (depending on who you deal with, literally), or it finds you a buyer who's willing to meet your demands.

Knowing who needs what and selling that information has become a trade on its own. To get the best deal locally, people scout out the Corridor's markets. On the streets, many shops are marked with signs like, "Need carpenter" and "antibac 4 food." In the few areas with a sufficient commlink density to support a grid, citizens often display their buy/sell list via their commlinks or on the occasional AR feed.

- Don't trust the signs blindly. Besides specific code words for fenced goods or illegal services, people try to make some fast bucks on the newcomers. Don't pay in advance either. You never know if the owner won't change overnight or the entire shop-in-a-box might have moved by the next morning.
- Zoned
- And don't forget, not everyone can read or write, either. Most *can* count though, so just because the guy you're dealing with is uneducated, that doesn't make him stupid.
- Sticks

Private Message...

To: Marcos
Subject: Chicago
Oi Cabrón,

You still seeing that customs chica from the port? I need to get in touch with someone running the 'Bug Zapper'—apparently, that's what they call the Chicago run. You think she could drop a few names? Thanks, drinks are on me next time.

- 2XL

Pawnshops and fixers run 'exchange bureaus,' converting almost anything into hard cash or credsticks, the main currency of the black markets. After all, the Mob doesn't measure its BTL trafficking profits in cans of soup. Only the desperate and down-and-out addicts offer to pay in services or information, as that usually comes with a hefty markup or gets treated as a 'first installment' only.

The economy that has emerged is pretty random and doesn't follow any real pattern. Anyone in the area prepared to follow Rule #2 and meet the seller's price can find a wide variety of services. Getting a feel for the flow of the trade and goods in a neighborhood and throughout the Corridor is a prerequisite to staying out of trouble and avoiding being ripped off. While trade between the communes is common practice, some of the collectives isolate themselves from the rest of their area because of racial, social, or philosophical tensions with their neighbors. In such cases, it can pay to be the middleman with whom both groups are willing to deal.

Chicago Hours

Used exclusively in the service sector and only in some areas, Chicago hours are an old-fashioned physical currency to pay for services rendered. The "service" can be anything from carpentry to guard duty, from computer programming to weeding a garden. Chicago hours are counted in plastic chits or noted down on formalized receipts that can then be traded for other services, or some goods, by participating vendors. No vendors offer to convert the chits into cash, and very few trade them for goods, but former mayor (not the one who blew his brains out, an older one) and current resident Jerome Standish heavily supports this currency and encourages vendors trading on the Market Square—Standish's turf in Northside—to promote the system throughout the Corridor.

- Some luck he has with it. Pranksters in the Corridor use the system to get free work out of unaware noobs by applying their own conversion rates. You have to watch out for counterfeiters, too.
- Sticks

THE COMMODITIES

People use some fairly diverse trade goods in the sprawl. Ranging from basic supplies such as (clean) water and electricity to livestock, pharmaceuticals, construction materials, groceries, and clothing, there are as many commodities in Chicago as in any other sprawl. The difference lies in the supply available and the effort to meet the demand.

The Basics—Water and Power

Naturally, basic supplies such as (relatively clean and potable) water or electricity are high-priced commodities, often available only in very limited quantities or certain areas at a time. Depending on the neighborhood, water is siphoned off from still-functioning or restored water mains, caught in rain barrels and basins, or sterilized river or lake water. Surprisingly, the cleanest water comes out of the Zone, bottled and barreled at the Navy Pier water treatment plant. The plant has become the main cash cow for an outfit called Union, who hold their turf against all comers. However, the need for spare parts and maintenance means it is only a matter of time until the plant breaks down for good.

Power usually comes in the form of rechargeable batteries, suncells, or small gas or bio-diesel generators—no power points in Chicago. Some of the Corridor's collectives have makeshift workups, including combustion ovens and small windmills set up on the more stable rooftops to recharge batteries and fuel cells. The only continuous power comes from tapping into the Chicagoland power grids, which is a common practice for communes right on the border with the sub-sprawls, but this often results in black outs when the system overloads.

- These "black outs" aren't due to the sudden load on the system, they're the result of whatever jury-rigged tap that the whole neighborhood is using burning out. Usually happens when the idiot next door tries to tap into the power grid by plugging in his battered multi-socket outlet right next to the myriad of other cheap cables patched with duct tape or little insulation at all. The lucky ones wake up with a few burn marks, the unlucky ones are electrocuted or asphyxiate on fumes from the resulting fire.
- Zoned
- On rare occasions, the powers of spirits or spells are used by some of the Awakened to sterilize water or get a generator going, but the mana ebb puts a serious damper on that Downtown. Not to mention that prolonged spirit activity tends to raise the background count and draw the few remaining FAB III clouds.
- Sticks
- The lack of available water is a major concern for many Chicagoans. Fire can, and has, devastated entire neighborhoods. The better-organized areas maintain voluntary firefighters, but few have any professional training, and even fewer have the necessary equipment or protective gear.
- Zoned

Gasoline and Biodiesel

With the GridLink shut down along with all the other city services, and no power points to refuel your battery anyway, petroleum- and alcohol-based fuels have made something of a comeback in Chicago. While some cars parked on a forgotten side street or in an undiscovered underground garage might still hold a charge, most of the Corridor relies on alternative fuel for their vehicles, generators, radiators, or other improvised appliances.

- Of course, you can only drive in the Corridor anyway, since practically every street in the Zone is blocked off, full of crap, or has more potholes than pavement. Hell, even the streets in the 'sides aren't much to write home about. There are ruts in the highway!
- Rigger X

Mostly, fossil fuel can only be obtained through smugglers or certain specialty dealers in the sub-sprawls, a challenge in several aspects for the average Chicagoan. Biomass bought from Long Pig Farms, vegetable oil and alcohol from the Humanis Brigade's gardens, methane and hybrid fuels from the Freetown distillery, and mixed ethanol fuel from the Maker collective have all but replaced good ol' unleaded premium gas.

Food

In pre-Containment Zone days, Chicago was the heart of the country's meat and canned food industry. Nowadays, food comes from primarily two sources: the sub-sprawls and inner-city farms, vegetable patches, and livestock. The former is your typical pre-packaged stuff boasting a shelf life of more than a decade. The latter is homegrown and rarely good for more than a day when fresh, unless preserved somehow. Few communities in Chicago are truly self-sufficient as far as food goes, so you see daily or weekly food markets where communities can broaden their diet and monthly or bi-monthly trips to the sub-sprawls when things get desperate. Of course, many of the gangs survive just by raiding the communes and stealing their supplies.

The excessive use of insecticides when combating the bugs, especially in the Zone itself, contaminated a lot of the soil in Chicagoland for the next century or so. These poisons work their way into the food chain and are the cause of birth defects, infant deaths, malnutrition, and generally poor health for long-time Chicagoans. Imported or magically purified earth is prized, and many rooftops contain an improvised greenhouse or chicken stable, the height protecting produce and soil against critters, thieves, and other vermin, while also offering a higher exposure to natural light and air.

- The ghouls in Northside started running a pig farm nearly a decade back. Metahuman flesh represents only a small (if necessary, and often preferred) portion of a ghoul's diet, and they can't digest fruits and vegetables, so meat's how they make up the rest of their calories.
- Sticks
- It's no coincidence that pigs are so close to metahumans in anatomy and taste, natch.
- Hannibelle

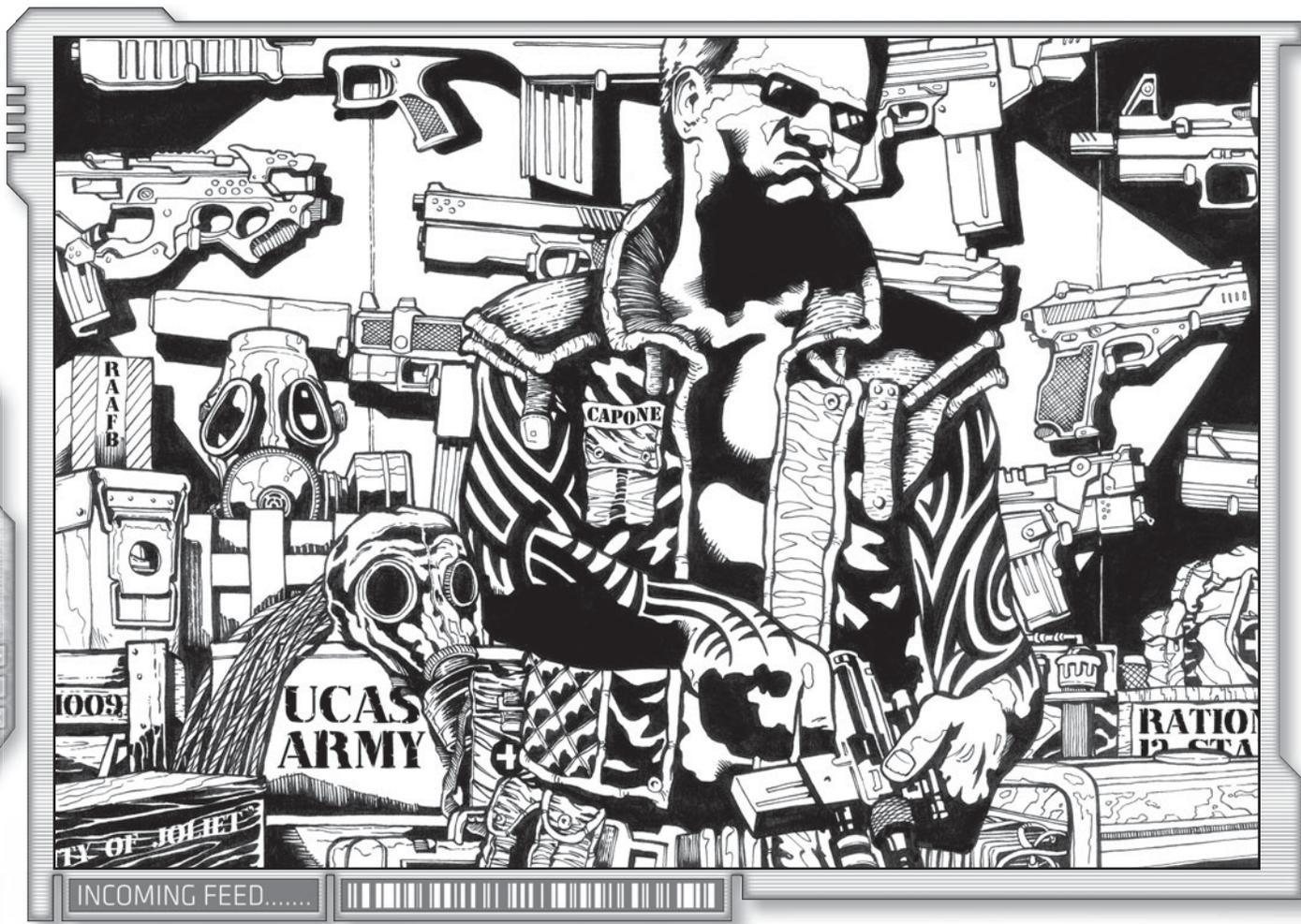
Menus and selection at local restaurants and groceries are rather limited and depend on general availability—the term 'catch of the day' isn't exclusive to seafood. Since many Chicagoans don't have the option to grow their own food, seeds and even small livestock fetch high prices at the various markets and neighborhood bazaars.

- In case business brings you to Gurnee on the Northside, stop by the 'Double-R' diner. Located in the garage of a run-down semidetached, their tofu flapjacks should make up for any unpleasantities you might encounter throughout the rest of your trip.
- Traveler Jones

Weapons

Chicago has more firearm dealers than the Athens Arms Fair. The lack of authorities regulating the arms trade and steady local demand has pushed Chicago to the top of the illegal firearms trade. Throughout the Corridor, you can openly trade handguns, melee weapons, and light protective gear. For anything heavier—submachine guns, rifles, shotguns, and the like—it's back to the old 'who you know' and 'where to look.' Smuggler crews that set up their home bases close to the waterfront supply both of these markets. For the local demand, they trade small shipments to merchants traveling the Corridor or vendors running a booth at Standish's Market Square.





- I once accompanied a guerilla leader from 'down south' to Chicago and showed him to the right places. One place we went to was in the middle of an auction on a complete shipment of Uzis and HK 227's. He thought he had made a bargain until he learned the shipping costs. Once your goods leave Chicago, gun runners go back to their regular fees.
- Marcos

The majority of the merchandise comes used and in varying condition, but the more expensive dealers have their stock refurbished locally by one of the neighborhood militias' armorers or the local gun nut. The goods' origins are as diverse as the selection, and they range from outdated product incompatible with today's accessories and software to stock officially written off the manufacturer's books and milspec gear 'gone missing' on its way to the nanoshredder. The usual suspects of makers and manufacturers include H&K, Mitsuhamma, Evo, Ruhrmetall, with UCAS powerhouse Ares surprisingly being the least represented maker.

- You don't shit in your own backyard, or the lot next to it. Ares dumps its overstock on markets not even remotely connected with the corp in any way. Even better if it hurts the competition's sales in those regions.
- Picador

Medtech

Access to any form of professional medical care or sterilized medtech equipment is a luxury outside the reach of most Chicagoans. Insurance and DocWagon are right out. Neighborhood walk-in clinics and community medical centers have mostly deteriorated to chop shops and gutter docs. Failed dentists try themselves as surgeons, and many piercing, traditional ink & needle tattoo artists, and barbers also stitch wounds, set minor fractures, and offer other simple medical services. No one asks questions or would care what the answer was if they did.

It's best if you bring your own bandages and supplies, too. If it's simple and non-invasive work (getting a tooth extracted, say, or changing out cyberhands) you might be asked to pay in your own blood, if you can spare a pint or two, as blood supplies are extremely rare, and artificial substitutes are far beyond the reach or capability of anyone local.

- The closest form of local emergency medical service are the bloodrunners, couriers that literally sprint from street doc to chop shop to anarchist medical camp carrying bags of blood, bone marrow, fresh organs, and other time-sensitive medical supplies. They usually mark themselves by wearing Black Crescents on their face and clothing, in the vain hope it'll give them another second before someone shoots them.
- Butch

- Even the bloodrunners have their enemies. The ones that work for Tamanous are subject to a lot of abuse from the ones that don't.
- DefCon5

Chicago boasts a thriving organ and body parts trade. With no authority investigating missing persons or the odd corpse dumped into an alley, organ smugglers like Tamanous maintain several butcher shops close to the Zone—they write people off as soon as they cross the Wall, anyway. The butchers mostly rely on gangs for supplies of fresh corpses, but sometimes they deal directly with the more ruthless doctors or undertakers from the Corridor. Of course, given the lack of legitimate sources, most (if not all) of the docs in Chicago end up dealing with them for medical supplies, cred, and drugs; payment is usually in the same or sometimes in BTLs or even the trinkets found in the stiff's pockets.

For any augmentations beyond basic eyeware or skin treatments, you're pretty much screwed. Even if you bring your own implant, finding a doc that knows how to install it and has the facilities to perform the operation is rare. On the other hand, this means most of the Chicagoans you'll face won't be augmented.

- Compared to more civilized sprawls, organs are rather affordable in Chicagoland, and dealers circumvent the 'transplant waiting list' for the right price. From time to time, you find the odd wageslave straying through the Corridor, looking for a spare kidney or lung. The downside is that you won't know the quality of the organ until it's too late. Still, many are willing to take that chance if it means their kid or partner will live.
- Butch
- Beware what drugs you get in Chi-town. After praying to the porcelain goddess one night, I did some research on the patches I'd picked up at the Loyola clinic in Westside. Here's what I found:
- Nephrine

// upload email :: user Nephrine :: 10/30/71 //
Classified: Omega level access required
From: Dr. Annalina Cortez <Pharma Div / Medihelp Inc>
To: Dr. Mark Cauldron <Cauldron / Loyola.Univ.Cntr>
Subject: new shipments

Mark,

Management gave the green light to the product's delivery to Loyola. We had some heated discussions with the Medihelp CFO and his bean counters, but there aren't really any options left, since the FDA's decision on the Dermapharm approval seems final. I will proceed through the usual channels and will let you know how big a delivery you should prepare for and when to expect it. As of now, we're looking at the remaining inventory of the Dermapharm 500 and the latest test batches for the Neurolin X-P. I'll send you the instructions and questionnaires for the Neurolin treatment ASAP.

Anna

// end attachment //

- Always look at the expiry dates of the stuff! Corps use Chicago as the dumping ground for their expired products. Some smuggler crews sell whole boxes of pills, capsules, and salves past their shelf life.
- Lyran

Some independent organizations such as the Anarchist Black Crescent (ABC) offer a little medical support, diagnosis, or at least, educated advice. Payment usually comes in the form of public or organizational duties, but they'll also barter for security or other services. With the residents and neighborhoods becoming increasingly eclectic, alternative medicine and services are on the rise. These range from out-of-the-box homeopathic treatments, phyto- and herbal therapy, to traditional Native American rituals and other traditions' healing magic. Note that magic—like everywhere else—is pretty expensive, even more so in Chi-Town because of the dangers still roaming the damaged astral.

- You never know if any given spell, potion, or ritual might be the one to apply, or if the wrinkled old hag really is improvising more than you think. People chased a few suspected charlatans out of Downers Grove, after some rather unsuccessful treatments.
- Sticks
- Bloody noobs. The Humanis State practically runs that area of the Westside, with tight connections to the Human Brigade in the Zone. They're anti-everything, but mostly they're against anything even remotely smelling Awakened. It was the quacksalvers' mystic trapings that got them run out.
- Change Agent

Skills and Skillssofts

Formal schooling does not exist in Chicago, which puts skilled labor and skillssofts in high demand. Independent teachers from the Orphanage (more on that later) offer their services to children and adults alike, and they host well-attended night classes in literacy, basic math, self-defense, water purification techniques, and agriculture. Knowsofts and encyclopedias rank high on the markets, as do combat instructors, handymen, technicians, and medics.

- Despite the lack of real Matrix coverage in Chi-town, the promise of near unlimited access to virtual libraries and other resources appeals to some. Horizon recently started making all kinds of software products available free to selected communities, which is always good PR.
- Dr. Spin
- Teach a street kid a thing or two, and you have a friend for life. Piss 'em off once, and the whole neighborhood will make you feel it. Same deal as everywhere.
- Glasswalker

Survival Gear

Living amidst free-roaming gangs, dangerous spirits, crime syndicates, and other crazies sure increases the need for individuals to be self-reliant in almost every situation. The basics of life include water purification tablets, mosquito netting, GPS units, respirators, light sticks, survival kits, urban camouflage, tents, sleeping bags, solar stills, radiation film badges, concertina wire... most of the general survival goods you can imagine, and a few you can't. It pays to remember that Chicago is a *feral* city, and the urban wilderness, like any other, is one you should plan and stock up for appropriately.



- Not to mention, Chicago does have plenty of forested and wetlands parks that really have gone wild and back to nature. Not quite as dangerous as, say, the Amazon, but still...
- Change Agent

Because of the Awakened dangers still lurking in Chicago's shadows, the magical arsenal deserves special mention. FAB cloud sightings have reduced to rare sightings, but the fear of a new mass outbreak remains. The Awakened communities, especially, pay primo goods for anything from Sterilize spell formulae and powerful aerosol antibacterials to exotic and expensive items like guardian vines or glomoss. The recent discovery of royal jelly has interested the Awakened communities that are still vulnerable to the bacteria; the jelly might open a way to drop their near-hermetic isolation.

Vice

Given the number of cataclysms Chicago has suffered from, it's no wonder many survivors actively practice some serious escapism and use every brainbender possible. Consumption of chicago grey is on par with synthanol, but for many, it numbs the emotions and silences the voices for only so long. Other prominent drugs include dopadrine, push, and betameth, most of them made locally, from the purer stuff brought into the sprawl by the syndicates. In Chicagoland, tempo has become the new drug of choice, but the sub-sprawls' tight security draw the wage slave addicts to the more 'liberal' Corridor to enjoy their highs.

- Most tempo addicts coming from the sub-sprawls go to the Enclaves between O'Hare and Naperville-Bolingbrook for their fix, if they're afraid to venture deeper into the Corridor.
- Sticks

Bloodsports range from bum fights to no-holds-barred private cage matches. Though technically not a commodity, they have become extremely popular among both the locals and outside visitors, with the best performances recorded for posterity. Even some of the more bloodthirsty sub-sprawl residents attend these fights. Devil rat fights are also common.

They usually hold the events in old gyms or any theatres big and stable enough to hold a few hundred raving maniacs. On rare occasions, a fight is hosted in a major gang camp or right in the open street. The racist Human Brigade thugs regularly set up their own matches, beating metahumans, changelings, or suspected Awakened folk to a pulp as practice.

- The anarchist gang in Midway rents out a hangar for the fights, and the MacAvoy syndicate uses the abandoned Wrigley dome for its top matches. Pirate vids sell for a bundle down in Tenochtitlan, I hear.
- Zoned
- Rumors say the MacAvoy mob records the most violent fights, turning them into BTLs using the former Truman-owned chip factories and warehouses in Southside's Dreamtown.
- 2XL

Most of the Zone's flesh trade is fairly free of control, consisting of street walkers who pack together on street corners in the Noose for protection. The rest is run out of the less-dilapidated warehouses and caters to any demand, from cheap pleasures to the more *exotic* (read: abhorrent), even the slave trade.

- You really come to appreciate bunraku brothels after seeing these sorry-looking shells of metahuman beings. Little more than slaves, many of them are hopelessly addicted to eX and long haul (keeps the rapes down). The spent ones become possessions of the street gangs; the broken ones are sold to the organ traders.
- Mihoshi Oni

THE MARKETS

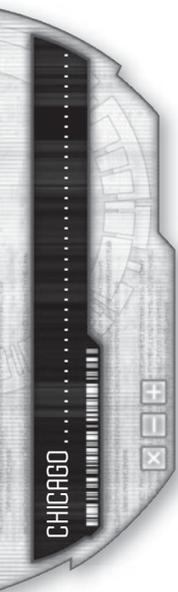
Granted, the zoning of the markets is fairly volatile, but as a rule of thumb, the gray markets get darker the closer you get to the Core. The worst metahumanity has to offer can be found dealt in the open in parts of the Zone. With an overabundance of semi-legal and illegal bazaars only a few kilometers towards the lake, why risk setting up an operation in the civilized Chicagoland 'hoods?

Shades of Gray

From a legal standpoint, most of the Corridor's street vendors, shops-in-a-box, and garage sales are considered gray markets. The sub-sprawls are aware of the dangers these markets pose, and even more so of the import and sales taxes slipping through their fingers, but they haven't made any real effort to monitor the flow of goods in and out of the Corridor. Contrary to other semi-legal markets, goods are more or less on open display and sold over the counter throughout many areas of the Corridor. Many markets have settled in specific areas and times, such as the Northside Market Square or the Southside corner Mob fairs. In some neighborhoods, the militias keep an eye on the vendors and their merchandise, mostly to protect their kids from becoming violent gangers or hopeless addicts at a young age.

- Unfortunately, they can't control the street gangs a few blocks down made up entirely from kids the same age, trading melee weapons and entry-level drugs at the odd basketball court or streetball game. The drug trafficking scum in the Zone use youth gangs to specifically target minors in the Corridor and even the Chicagoland sub-sprawls.
- Change Agent

Gray markets range from abandoned strip malls, self-storage garages, or small clusters of sales booths in subway stations to abandoned indoor malls and office buildings. Bazaars located on side streets or parking lots set-up only temporarily and then move to the next neighborhood or back to their supply stashes after finishing business. A common practice and side effect of the absence of virtual trade are storage services for later pick up. Storage lockers or prearranged mailboxes and drop off points for rent are a thriving semi-legal business on the edge of the sub-sprawls. Getting anyone to deliver into Chicago itself is almost impossible, but some local entrepreneurs have set up contract delivery for certain items, especially bulk goods. Usually street kids, low-level gang members affiliated with the vendor, or mobile independent couriers make deliveries inside the Corridor.



Black Markets

Gang lords, specialized fixers, and made men from McCaskill's Chicago outfit mostly run the black markets. They offer everything the Corridor vendors shy away from, and almost all of them have tight ties to one or more smuggler outfits. For example, the downtown chapter of the Cutters exclusively sells Spire Inc.'s contraband, keeping a fair share of the profit in a pseudo-business relationship. Independent dealers maintain small offices in the less-ramshackle buildings and specialize in niche markets, buying and selling Awakened drugs, artwork, oddities found near the Cermak Crater, or information.

- The Southside Combine, an urban tribe running the L-train tracks in Southside, is one of the best sources to convert valuables into cash before going on a shopping spree. Usually well-informed about the latest changes on the black market, they know who you should see to get what you want, and what you'll need to trade to get it.
- Zoned

Scrap Yards

Makeshift waste management organized in a few collectives spawned a niche market that many neighborhoods have since copied. Separating recyclable materials or useful goods from a community's collective waste, garbage collectors clean these goods and resell them to other residents. Their expanding operations and weekly markets have earned them the name 'junk lords.' The brave ones even search the toxic Calumet dump or abandoned underground parking lots for anything of value. Selling refurbished construction materials or furniture to the Corridor's residents, but also scrap metal or vehicle parts to the professional junkyards in Chicagoland, they are a good source of information on what's going on throughout the region.

- Hey, you guys keep talking about there being no corps in Chicago, but I just ran into a huge itemized budget for Renraku's Chicago cost center. What gives?
- Slamm-0!
- A lot of corps actually keep Chicago branches and subsidiaries "on the books" to cover up mismanagement, as slush funds, or to provide budgets for black operations.
- DefCon5

Aetherpedia Search: Chicago Cost Center

Coined by the economic side effects of the tragedies that destroyed the Chicago metroplex, financial managers refer to sudden and unforeseen business losses as a *Chicago cost center*. In recent years, companies started to refer to funds diverted from a company's books or maneuvered into illegal channels as being booked on the *Chicago account*.

MUTANTS, MADMEN AND MORE

Posted By: Sticks

To the outside, the illustrious political landscape of Chicago might seem like a bad post-apocalyptic simflick, but some of their agendas are more sinister than even Hollywood's script artists could imagine.

THE ZONE LORDS

The gang lords in the Zone have proven themselves the toughest, meanest bad asses on their blocks, and their brutal reputations spill over into the districts beyond the Wall. The neighboring districts—now without military or law enforcement protection—have no choice but to organize their own protection to defend themselves against raids and general harassment.

- I received the following file from an inside source working for an Ares deep-penetration scout squad running a recon exercise in the Zone. It should come to no one's surprise that Ares practices war-game simulations of 'pacifying' Chicago and other major sprawls, 'just in case.'
- Sticks

// Upload text file :: user Sticks :: 11/03/71 //

Faction name: The Human Brigade

Faction size (armed / civilian): 250 active members / 7,000 (excluding the affiliated Humanis State settlement)

Location (District / Borders): Downtown / 63rd St. to 95th St., Cicero to Illinois & Michigan Canal

Leader: Dean 'The Duke' Rijkard

The Human Brigade is a strictly human supremacist group that controls large parts of the Downtown core. Two defunct groups originating from the Containment Zone—the 'Volk' and the 'Blue Boyz'—are considered the Brigade's ideological parents. The group patrols a twenty-four square kilometer area south of the former Midway airport, including the townships of Bedford Park, Burbank, Bridge View, and Justice.

The group's leader, Dean 'The Duke' Rijkard, is a former Eagle Security officer and former high-ranking member of the Blue Boyz. Eagle Security records list his repeated displays of racist tendencies and contain several charges of excessive violence during the arrest of metahuman offenders and undesirables.

- And this separates him from the rest of the bunch how?
- Red Anya

The Brigade and the civilians under its protection are mostly self-sufficient, operating farms and fields in the converted recreational areas between Bedford Park and Justice and trading exclusively with the 'Humanis State,' an ideologically fraternizing enclave located in Downer's Grove in the Westside. The regular transfer of soldiers trained in the Brigade's camp near Bridgeview to the Humanis State mark the Brigade as the radical arm of the settlement. A steady influx of outside recruits imply either Rijkard or State 'Governor' Cameron Roth maintain close ties to the Humanis Policlub and like-minded global organizations, which use the Brigade's facilities for wide-scale training. Despite





INCOMING FEED.....

its ideology, other locals in need of protection regularly approach the Brigade, and they offer basic training to like-minded gangs or neighborhood militias, in exchange for services, goods, or other forms of payment.

- The training facility consists of more than a shooting range and an improvised gym. Add military tactics, document forgery, and good ol' home-made explosives to the curriculum, all served with some serious ideological brainwashing.
- Change Agent

The black market merchants rely on the Brigade's expertise in weapon maintenance and repair and regularly hand over shipments to them for refurbishing and quality checks.

Their strong anti-magic and anti-metahuman stance puts them at odds with Alexejj—the ork warlord and second of the three major Downtown factions—as well as with other mostly metahuman or Awakened collectives and organizations in the greater Chicago area. Brigade soldiers also have repeatedly carried out hit and run attacks on the Aleph Society's HQ and other small enclaves with a high number of metahuman or Awakened civilians.

Another declared enemy of the Brigade is the Chicago Anarchist Collective, in particular an affiliated cell that took over the abandoned Midway Airport. Despite the advantage in numbers and firepower, Midway's fortifications—improved while under military control during the siege—keep the Brigade from launching an all-out attack to take over the airport.

Faction name: The Horde and the 'Ork Protectorate'

Faction size (armed / civilian): 400 active members / 4,000

Location (District / Borders): Downtown & Northen Corridor / Devon Ave. to Belmont Rd., Kedzie to Harlem Ave.

Leader: 'Egrand' (Or'zet: Protector / gang boss) Alexejj

After their previous leader, self-proclaimed King Vlad, died in June of 2068 in a violent dispute with the True Chicagoans over highway tolls for stretches of the interstates running through Horde-controlled territory, the ork gang boss Alexejj took over command of the Horde and its primarily metahuman population. Alexejj emerged undefeated in the fights for succession and immediately relocated his headquarters to the Govinda Enterprises Golf Course, between Jefferson Park and Lincolnwood.

- He lives in a fucking exclusive golf club? Other people struggle for survival while he's hitting some balls. Talk about priorities!
- Baka Dabora
- Actually, it *was* a smart move. The area's Woods Preserve is a valuable asset these days. Since the relocation, Alexejj had quite a few acres chopped down to guarantee the survival of his enclave during Chicago's winter storms.
- Change Agent

The Horde consists of numerous small- and mid-sized gangs sworn to Alexejj. Each outfit controls its own turf and sources of income. Every month or two, there's a big to-do where the gang

bosses bring gifts to the Egrand, who divvies them up—insuring that every gang has what it needs to survive.

Heavily involved in the Or'zet movement and ork subculture, Alexeij remodeled his mob's structure and war council hierarchy according to ork urban legends. While he handles trade negotiations with outside enclaves, his lieutenants carry out raids or run the regular bloodsport events and rutra matches (Or'zet: ork martial art).

The most prominent gangs under Alexeij's direct control are the Nko-Ga (Or'zet: Metal fists), the Fleshmongers, and the Scorchers. Our internal investigations pinpoint the Fleshmongers as the responsible party for the organized grave robbery throughout the Montrose and Bohemian National Cemeteries this summer.

- The Fleshmongers was an independent gang assimilated into the Horde under Vlad's rule. These guys have no scruples whatsoever and even sell corpses to the ghouls in exchange for food and pig fat.
- Zoned

While outnumbered by other factions, the Egrand and his gangs have access to a large pool of vehicles put together and maintained with parts acquired during raids or from trading. The Horde collects a toll from anyone traveling on the highways or through Alexeij's turf. Primarily trading mechanical parts or surplus vehicles with the Northside collectives, any contraband or black market merchandise is sold to Alexeij's smuggler contacts near Calumet. Alexeij maintains tight relationships with outside smuggler outfits, exclusively delivering their contraband to Horde-controlled markets, while his mechanics provide maintenance work for the smugglers' T-Birds and VTOL's.

Faction name: Union

Faction size (armed / civilian): 350 active members / 9,000

Location (District / Borders): Downtown / Division Ave to River, Navy Pier to River

Leader: Marvin Chekov

Union is the third major faction in the Zone. When Catherine 'the Terrible' Cunningham's warband fell apart after Operation: Extermination, her second-in-command, Marvin Chekov, took control of the forces, aptly renaming them 'Union.' Union is a loose collaboration of independent gangs loyal to Chekov, who is a skilled diplomat and well respected by most gang leaders. Unlike the other factions, Union is working towards establishing some degree of order throughout Chicago—at least their part of it. Affiliated gangs and militias patrol the Zone and into the Corridor to re-pacify, one hundred at a time.

- Bullshit. Chekov is not well respected, he is feared. He is a ruthless, radical, son-of-a-bitch with delusions of grandeur. Unfortunately, he also controls the Navy Pier water treatment plant and thus has the surrounding communities by their collective short and curls. His vision of law & order might lack the racist tendencies of the Brigade, but it is strictly black-and-white.
- Zoned

- Catherine Cunningham was a mage and the Zone's biggest warlord during the first couple of years. She got hosed with FAB by an Ares squad during Operation: Extermination and burned out in a few minutes. Rumor has it, she killed what remained of her gang and joined the Aleph Society.
- Change Agent

Most of Union's profits come from trading water and providing protection to other collectives and neighborhoods. The plant's aging, though, and Chekov spends a significant amount of profit on keeping the plant operational, dealing with the Horde's mechanics, or buying parts from the garbage collectors. Our sources suspect sabotage as the cause for at least three of the recent system failures. The connected gangs and civilians live in scattered camps throughout the area, and his gangs patrol the territory's borders, including the sublevels of Wacker Drive along the riverbank.

Chekov openly opposes the drug and flesh trade conducted in Southside and the Zone and openly contests Mafia dealers and Tamanous affiliates in neighborhoods under Union protection. While similarities exist between how Chekov understands law and order and the modus operandi of the Human Brigade, their ideological differences regularly escalate into armed conflicts.

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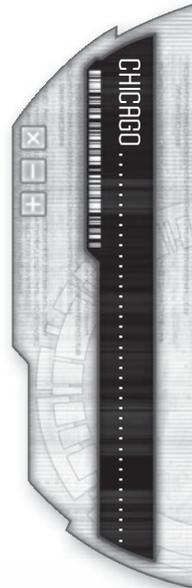
The Astral Space Preservation Society (ASPS)

While Chicago was famous for its universities' Awakened studies long before the bug breakout, the fallout of the Cermak Blast, Bug City, and Operation: Extermination really turned the city into a magical hot spot. Even today, pseudo-arcane think tanks and Awakened organizations continue their research on the Zone. Foremost among them is the Astral Space Preservation Society.

The ASPS is based out of Elemental Hall, a four-story complex that used to be part of the University of Chicago's magical studies program, half a kilometer off the shore of Lake Michigan. Theory has it that Elemental Hall is the only place in Downtown unaffected by the FAB III outbreak, but of course, that can't be confirmed, because nobody can get close to the place in the astral.

Nominally dedicated to the restoration of the damaged astral fabric in Chicago, they don't do a lot that's visible on the mundane plane. The head researcher is Prof Dr. Eric Kersh—former dean of the University of Chicago—and he's supported by a live-in cadre of ASPS thaumaturgists. About a month ago, I saw Kersh meet with Jason Two-Spirits, who was accompanied by a powerful free spirit by the name of Seeks-the-Moon—neither of whom had been seen since the walls came down after Operation: Extermination. At a guess, I'd say the ASPS is remotely monitoring Chicago's astral from a safe distance.

- Two-Spirits is an owl shaman with divinatory abilities and a funny hat. He somehow escaped the Containment Zone right before Ares launched their FAB offensive in '58 and has remained MIA ever since. He and his followers were in lock-down mode in the former Field museum, the 'Sanctum.' Because of his wards and some artifacts he found there, the Sanctum survived throughout Bug City without developing a significant background count.
- Winterhawk



- Yeah, but nobody knows where Two-Spirits (or the people he was protecting) *went*. Ares just showed up during Operation: Extermination and the museum was empty.

- Zoned

- Mundanes can't see it, but in the astral, Elemental Hall has a really weird astral construct around it, like a huge blind spot to astral perception. You can only really get a look at it through (if you'll excuse an incredibly inaccurate visual metaphor) your peripheral vision, and even then, it gives you a headache. I've never seen a ward or spell like it. I don't think I could really attack it or even target it with a spell; it's like it's not really there.

- Ethernaut

- It doesn't sound like a ward. Y'know, this reminds me that one of the main goals of the ASPS is to set up a sanctuary for free spirits. I wonder...

- Lyran

- Update: I just saw Kersh and Two-Spirit make a trip to the Cermak Crater. Think they're getting the measure of the mana warp?

- Sticks

Spire Enterprises

Spire Enterprises started out as one of the more successful smuggler crews running the 'Bug Zapper,' the smuggling route from Seattle to Chicago. Over time, the demand for legal goods increased, and the crew's pilot—an ork going by the handle 'Wingman'—gradually shifted his business over to the gray and white markets, after noticing certain legal goods fetched higher prices than black market contraband. That, in turn meant less trouble with law enforcement or customs agencies.

They converted an abandoned wasp hive in the Chicago Spire into their corporate headquarters. Officially registered as a Disaster Aid Business, Spire Enterprises successfully dodged claims from the building property's owner and worked out deals with the Union gangs to ensure the Spire remains neutral territory. Spire Enterprises mostly relies on the local courier services for the distribution of the goods to their buyers.

- These guys *made* it. Turning a second-grade smuggler outfit into a legal business and actually listing Downtown Chicago as their company address is one hell of a success story. They haven't forgotten their roots though and work together with smaller crews, allowing them to drop off their own goods at the Spire for a cut of the profit.

- Lyran

- Regardless of the legality of the merchandise, it still bypasses local import and sales tax the sub-sprawls would sure like to collect. Hell, O'Hare Security is more likely to lob a few mortar grenades or missiles at the Spire themselves.

- Change Agent

The Hive Consciousness

The Hive Consciousness sect is an insect spirit cult, only without the insect spirits. Mostly regarded as the delusional and hopelessly brainwashed remnants of the Universal Brotherhood,

the cult is active mostly in the Zone, but it may also hold secret gatherings in isolated settlements of the Corridor. No one is sure of the leader's identity nor the size of the cult, but the leader is not believed to be an insect shaman or free insect spirit. Their existence was discovered only after they had infiltrated and almost entirely converted a small commune in the Northside. Traders picked up a group of kids that barely escaped from the commune. When several neighborhood militias joined forces and entered the settlement, they only found the bloody remains of an unsuccessful merging ritual. Rumors say the cult receives support from similar sects outside the Chicago area, but it is unclear whether these outside supporters are former UB members or a new kind of cult.

- It doesn't matter. For as long as metahumanity exists, there will always be those that succumb to the false promises offered by a queen or hive mother. And, they will continue to find ways into our world. All we can do is prevent them from getting a foothold and increasing their influence.

- Man-of-Many-Names

The cult's main interests seem to lay in the Cermak Crater and former Brotherhood properties. Though cleansed and then shut down by Ares or the military, these former chapterhouses, conference halls, and other fronts seem to attract the few surviving UB members that went undercover when the whole scam was exposed—and their kids that were raised in the cult. Despite this behavior, HC cells frequently shift their hideout, moving undetected throughout the zone and relying on the underground pathways and maintenance tunnels of the various Downtown districts.

- Last week, the Thangs clashed with what turned out to be HC members. From what is known about the Brotherhood, they managed to have different hives work together. Either the HC and the Thangs don't see eyeball-to-multifaceted ocular unit, or the Thangs are something else altogether.

- Sticks

THE CORRIDOR COMMUNES

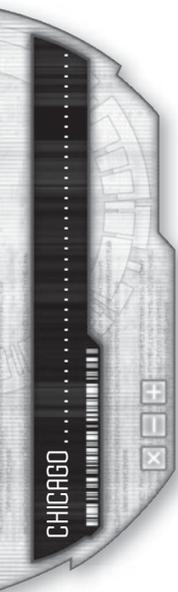
Posted By: Hannibelle

Over time, fragile alliances between gangs or tribes have turned into long-standing coalitions. These growing collectives are increasingly influential and part of the patchwork collage that is the Greater Chicago metroplex region. The random formation of new settlements and subsequent proliferation of social undercurrents and subcultures spawn new gangs and groups every week, adding a bunch of new players to the cast, while pushing others to the front lines.

The Demolishers

One of the main tribes in the Corridor, the Demolishers, merged from several independent outfits. They consist of approximately 350 members, a fair share of metahumans among them, and a growing number of civilian followers and families. Their caravans make them easy to identify from far away and have earned them the nickname 'Carnies.'

Scouting out and setting up camp in undefended neighborhoods every week or so, their numbers and mobility give them an





Aetherpedia Search: Tamir Grey

Tamir Grey was a human relief worker in Chicago who dedicated his life to improving the living conditions and public acceptance of humans infected with the HMMVV Krieger Strain. Grey is seen as the initiator behind Special Order 162 (crosslink: Cabrini Refuge Act), which approved the erection of Ghoultown. Grey contracted HMMVV himself during the preparation of the refuge and remained with the enclave. After his recovery from the mutation, he became the ghouls' ideological leader and public spokesperson, fighting for the reclassification of HMMVV as a disease, and subsequently, granting ghouls metahuman rights. Grey disappeared from the enclave under unknown circumstances in 2057 and was presumed dead. His body was finally discovered in 2069 and buried on-site at the Ghoultown Memorial. A small museum in the otherwise-abandoned Cabrini refuge, sponsored by the Timmons Memorial Fund, pays tribute to his life and work.

- Bullshit. They sell everything they can get their hands on. They just don't fry their own brains with drugs...much. A few of the trailers running in their caravan are mobile illinois hemp grow-ops.
- Lyran

The Ghoul Liberation League

The days of Ghoultown and Metahuman Rights Coalition's hope for a peaceful co-existence between metahumans and ghouls are long since gone. The enclave became a safe haven for many civilians during Bug City, but the release of FAB III was as lethal to Chicago's ghoul population as it was to any dual-natured critter in the Zone. The genocide's few survivors turned away from the peaceful but subservient path proclaimed by Ghoultown's former leader, Tamir Grey. Instead, they joined the Ghoul Liberation League, a growing activist movement under the leadership of Blaine Hammond, embracing at its very core the daily hostility shown towards the infected by civilians, governments, and corporations.

- Wow, 'belle, your loyalties are showing. The GLL is a radical ghoul-only movement, working towards independent settlements for their kind by any means possible. This includes working with or for the Tamanous and other organ traffickers. Flesh is cheap in Chicago, and the ghouls certainly profit from that.
- Butch
- It's true we have chosen a different path, but that doesn't mean we have rejected everything Tamir taught us. The true challenge is to walk the fine line between passive subservience and radicalism. Hammond approves alliances that seem questionable to outsiders, but he never loses sight of our overall goal.
- Hannibelle

The Chicago chapter of the League maintains strong ties to its brethren in other metroplexes, and it uses its internal network

advantage over most of the dangers lurking in the deserted office towers, apartment buildings, subways, and underground parking lots. Rolling in with all guns blazing, they either scare off or kill any resisting residents.

The gang's leader is a dwarf called Cyrus, who has a pair of huge pet gomatias on gem-studded leashes. The reptiles' ability to sniff out flesh form spirits and good merges is a major advantage in the areas close to the Zone.

- The gang ransacked an apartment complex on the Westside last month. Unfortunately for Cyrus, his gomatias stirred up a six-foot preying mantis that killed two of his crew before it got away—I hope it was just a wyrd mantis instead of a Mantis spirit, but you never know.
- Change Agent

Cyrus's lieutenants each lead one of three main chapters of the gang. Together, they plan their raids and negotiate over who gets to loot the most promising target locations. Usually, the two bigger chapters—led by a human male called Crapper and a dwarf female called Thorina—overrule the smaller one, led by a human woman called 'Highborn' Melissa. Apparently, she doesn't like going into the Zone or Southside.

Aside from being frequent customers at the various black markets, the gang doesn't deal in any illegal goods and sometimes even destroys stashes of drugs or BTLs they find on their raids.



to organize pilgrimages, protest marches, and other coordinated events. Pilgrimage to the Grey memorial is the prime reason any ghoul actually comes to Chicago these days, but more than a few decide to stay and join the GLL's ranks. Under Hammond's leadership, the GLL has become a well-respected community throughout the Corridor and regularly trades with many other parties, collectives, and merchants.

- That "trade" includes the infamous body carts and, of course, Long Pig Farms. The carts travel the streets of Chicago collecting the bodies of metahumans and critters alike, keeping the streets clean of roadkill, and disposing of unsanitary corpses, no questions asked.

- Change Agent

- Aside from the GLL or the Ghoultown memorial, a chapter of the 162s ghoul street gang popped their ugly heads out of the sewers. Primarily associating themselves with the Tamananous, they seem to be receiving at least some support from Hammond's camp.

- Riser

Chicago Anarchist Collective

Born out of the 'Haymarket Nation' anarchist collective formed during the Containment Zone, the CAC has evolved into an umbrella organization for many of the area's different anarchist movements. Many communes and townships are loosely affiliated with the CAC, consulting the Collective before important decisions or asking them to assist in heated debates.

Among the various groups under the CAC umbrella is the **Anarchist Black Crescent**—a strictly anarchist medical aid organization that offers a limited range of medical services to affiliated members and communes. Services include basic check-ups in small, makeshift, walk-in clinics and over-the-counter drugs. On occasion, the ABC holds blood drives as well as so-called blood runs, delivering plasma packs to street clinics and affiliated local docs.

The **Black Star**—a secretive network of anarchist and overall anti-authority shadowrunner cells—maintains various bases and safe houses throughout the Corridor and CeeZee. The group primarily targets corporate assets or otherwise undermines their authority in the sub-sprawls. The Black Star's raids usually either have a political motive or are so-called 'hoodings,' runs that directly benefit the outcasts of society, the poor or underprivileged.

- The Black Star is the global anarchist movement's shadow ops arm. While the CAC offers political and cultural education throughout the Corridor, the Black Star holds secret workshops and classes on demolitions, infiltration, or sabotage.

- Aufheben

- So, basically, they are the anarchist equivalent to the Human Brigade?

- Clockwork

- Someone's hero is another one's terrorist. Chicago is one of the places that the neo-anarchists like to go to ground after they've pissed off someone important. They see the whole sprawl as an anarchist experiment.

- Snopes

Other associated groups are the techno-anarchist group operating **NooseNet** and the anarchist smuggling cell in the Midway airport.

As per their philosophy, the CAC does not have a single leader or even a distinct chain of command. Instead, groups of individuals called the *cadre* execute its decisions. These cadre members acquire their positions through skill, competence, and force of personality. Chicago's cadre tends to take a strategic approach on all aspects of the anarchist movement, including awareness of and participation in the coordination of nationwide or even global anarchist events. Depending on the cadre's current line-up, the focus might shift between local and global aspects, regularly leading to emotional clashes between members of the cadre and other vocal anarchist members.

- Not all cadre-approved actions are directed against the sub-sprawls or for the benefit of native Chicagoans. Anarchist philosophy apparently views the insects' hive structure as the most corrupted and perverted form of enslavement, exploiting its members in body and mind. On two occasions, members of the Black Star agreed to act as scouts for an Ares Firewatch team taking out a Butterfly hive in Lincoln Park.

- Sticks

The Swamp Thangs

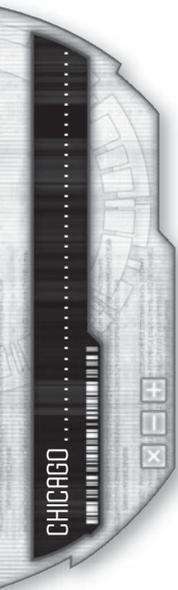
Long thought disbanded, and primarily used as the bogeyman in nursery rhymes and campfire stories, the Swamp Thangs have a serious reputation. Recent graffiti tags of the gang's logo—the word *Thangs* sprayed in black over a fluorescent green splash of paint—appeared near the still-toxic dump. Unconfirmed reports of will-o'-the-wisps, the remains of small campfires, and smaller critters decoratively nailed along the walls surrounding the dump's entrance indicate the Thangs have returned. For what purpose remains as much a mystery as their true nature.

- The Thangs are maggots—metahumans willingly allying themselves with the bugs. They go on 'flesh raids' for them, attacking small communities nearby and kidnapping citizens as host bodies for their insect masters.

- Zoned

True Chicagoans

As if Chicago hadn't enough power players already, former mayor Jerome Standish entered the scene again as the 'political advisor' of Tom Nishio, a former sumo-wrestler turned pseudo-Yakuza gang boss. Nishio leads the True Chicagoans, a mid-sized gang in the Northside notorious for butting heads with the local communes and rival gangs. After Standish's arrival, he somehow managed to negotiate with the surrounding neighbors to set up camp permanently in an abandoned shopping mall. Even Nishio's famous rivalry with the mafia vanished into the background after reaching some sort of agreement with McCaskill's crew. Standish and Nishio set up one of the prime new bazaars in the entire Corridor—the Market Square—focusing on services and craftsmanship, as opposed to grey or black market goods. Standish invented the Chicago hours system of payment.



- I've heard Standish had a shady background and followed a path of dark magic, and his ailing physical appearance in former times fully supported both. Nowadays, he's as healthy as one can be in Chicago, and his agenda seems to have taken a U-turn toward sheer altruism.

- Zoned

- When he's ripped off his tits on homemade alcohol, Standish talks about re-incorporating Chicago. I think he just wants to be mayor again.

- Change Agent

The Southside Combine

The Southside Combine is an urban tribe that lives in and operates the monorail "L" train (L stands for Elevated) across the southwest leaf of the clover shaped grid that once covered downtown Chicago. The Combine takes on passengers for a fee, making frequent stops at some of the less dilapidated and safer stations along the southern grid. Since they haggled over passage fees with their passengers anyway, the tribe started offering surplus items for trade and has now converted one of the train cars into a small shop. Well connected with the ground merchants and dealers throughout the Downtown and the Southside, the tribe is a reliable source of information on black market locations and upcoming auctions.

- Don't show off every single gadget you carry when trading with the tribe. Despite their rough but friendly attitude, they've been known to strip passengers of their possessions and have them 'walk the plank' between two stops.

- Zoned

- There are other track-tribes that live on the "L", but none of them have working trains.

- Change Agent

The Humanis State

The Humanis State, The civilian version of the militant Human Brigade, is no less racist or violent. Run by self-proclaimed "Governor" Cameron Roth, the State is a miniature dictatorship, a picture postcard idyll of human supremacy and anti-Awakened hate. Located in Downer's Grove in the western part of the Corridor and guarded by members of the Downtown Brigade, the organization looks like your average friendly but conservative neighborhood watch and social club.

To recruit citizens from the neighboring subsprawls' outskirts and Enclaves, the State advertises public events and get-togethers, offers classes in self-defense, and has even started a Humanis Youth program. Behind the scenes, the Humanis Policlub—of which Roth is a high-ranking member—funds the State.

- Roth's connections go beyond Humanis. Supposedly, he is part of a shadow cabinet that had a hand in the coup d'etat that helped Prez Colloton into office. Eagle—and therefore, Ares—is aware of these connections. I just can't figure out why they haven't intervened yet.

- Axis Mundi

- The state isn't as picture-perfect as you'd expect from an H-WASP community. More than a few of the good ol' boys go outside to get themselves a little strange, and you hear stories about wife-swapping and the very *personal* attention Roth gives to the young boys in his Humanis Youth.

- Sticks

Orphanage

Teenagers and young adults mostly make up this Southside collective. During the siege, a group of social workers trapped inside the Zone took kids from a Downtown foster home into their care; they relocated to the Corridor after the Wall came down. The group finally settled on Archer Ave and began offering daycare and basic educational services to surrounding neighborhoods and communities. After news of the settlement's background reached other enclaves, Orphanage became the main drop off location for unwanted newborn children. It is in constant need of medical care, hygiene items, formula, and baby food for the steady influx of unwanted newborns and toddlers dropped at the enclave's street corners.

- Feral ghouls, fleshmongers, and other sociopaths cruise the area at night, hoping to find a package before the street workers.

- Zoned

The Maker Collective

Formed by like-minded scientists and students of the former Northwestern University in Evanston (Northside), the Maker Collective has become the Corridor's own gadget center—though some say it's more like a whole district of mad science labs. Industrial noise, funny-colored acidic clouds, and the odd explosion commonly occur throughout the collective, as many techno-geeks make do with improvised appliances and equipment or makeshift ventilation. Nevertheless, the collective's reputation for creating all kinds of useful appliances and gadgets from scrap and recycled materials has spread throughout the Corridor and draws people to the Maker's weekly bazaars.

- While the Makers work for anyone (often following their own idiosyncrasies), they seem to get in the middle of the rivalries between the Zone Lords, who have started calling dibs on the enclave's brightest eggheads. MacAvoy's mob kidnapped two chemists right out of their garage labs last week.

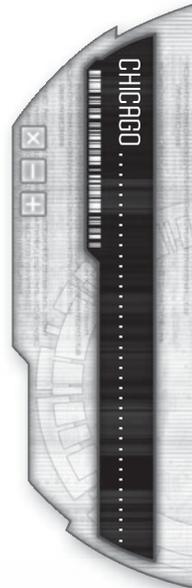
- Change Agent

CHICAGOLAND PLAYERS

Despite advertising them as safe havens compared to Chicago, the Chicagoland sub-sprawls house a variety of different factions and influential organizations—the Mafia being only one among many. Conflicting interests, political perspectives, and hidden agendas form a volatile hotbed of activism that escalates into violent clashes on a regular basis.

The Chicago Outfit

Don Jim 'Tools' O'Toole went missing in the early days after the bug breakout, and Mafia operations within CeeZee all but fell apart. Milwaukee Don Leo 'The Lion' McCaskill received interim control of the greater Chicago area. After Operation:



Extermination and the Zone opened, McCaskill discovered a skeleton crew of made men running small-scale operations throughout the Zone, led by Marcus Quinn, a former low-level enforcer under O'Toole.

McCaskill and Quinn hated each other's guts from the get-go, and for the next few years, internal backstabbing and sabotage kept Quinn's organization from returning to its former glory. Quinn was killed during the worldwide witch hunts in the summer of 2070, after being outed as a technomancer. Several Mafia families saw an opening and sent their soldiers to Chicago.

- Apparently, McCaskill framed Quinn as a technomancer in the first place but didn't foresee Quinn's own crew killing him. Leo had to send in his crews in a hurry after Quinn's corpse was dangling from a street light.
- Dr. Spin

Currently, the Chicago mob is split, disorganized, and feuding. McCaskill's Milwaukee organization has their hands full dealing with rival soldati coming in from Detroit, who are loyal to Don Roland 'The Greek' Stephanopoulos. With the two Dons distracted, a number of small crews of made men see the opportunity to start up their own small operations in Chicago. The most powerful and influential of these is Capo Jules MacAvoy, Quinn's former second-in-command and a native Chicagoan. After a series of drive-by shootings and example killings, the fronts hardened, and the families are now competing over the various markets and districts.

- While the three major players target each other's operations, they overlook the profit coming from smaller crews and markets, allowing the street-level handlers to pocket a percent or two more than they normally would.
- Zoned

MacAvoy's crews organize the bloodsport matches and control prostitution throughout Southside, using the Dreamtown warehouses as BTL sweatshops and brothels. He's also sent a few trusted operatives to establish contact with dissident capos in the sub-sprawls, a potentially dangerous move but one that could pay off, if he can get them to switch their loyalty to him instead of McCaskill. MacAvoy's greatest advantages are his local connections and market knowledge, and his crews have adopted a cell structure, giving their street bosses more flexibility and freedom when dealing with the many diverse communities and collectives throughout the sprawl. Though the smallest of the three mob players, they know the sprawl's unwritten rules and the people to talk to, while their out of town relatives have to learn about them the hard way.

- MacAvoy experienced the 'arrogant badass' attitude of McCaskill's goons first hand and plays that card with the Zoners. Better they deal with someone local than with the outsiders' fees and margins.
- Zoned
- The Chi-town Capo is also a fairly devout Roman Catholic. The Queen of All Saints wouldn't have survived without his patronage.
- Change Agent

The Milwaukee mob primarily focuses on cementing their presence right under the authorities' noses in the sub-sprawls. They control the brainbender and gun trade between Joliet, Naperville-Bolingbrook, and Southside, and McCaskill gets a piece of everything in South Milwaukee. Waste management (i.e. no-questions-asked toxic waste disposal) is another profit driver for McCaskill's crews—they just dump it in an abandoned warehouse near the waterfront. Recently, the McCaskill crews have begun pressing extortion fees from small business owners and merchants in MacAvoy's territory, no doubt the beginning of a new directive from Milwaukee to reduce MacAvoy's influence with the locals.

- A lot of ex-cons from the Joliet prison work for McCaskill. He's got enough for a small army, so he seems to be gearing up for some serious bloodshed.
- DefCon5

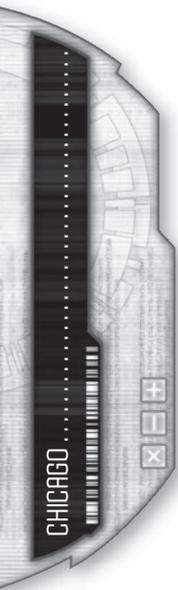
The Greek's family has its fingers in the Calumet port operations and a solid grip on the Gary docks. Right now, they're working to extend their grip into MacAvoy and McCaskill's Southside territories. Stephanopoulos' crews arrange forged customs documentation and control a large part of the contraband moved through these two points of entry into the Chicago region. After surviving the Detroit underworld under constant scrutiny from Knight Errant, the Greek's lieutenants are fully capable of establishing stable operations in Chicago's feral neighborhoods. Stephanopoulos's men also lean more towards 'traditional' mob businesses such as gambling and racketeering, though the lack of ready nuyen in Chicago keeps these operations from really growing.

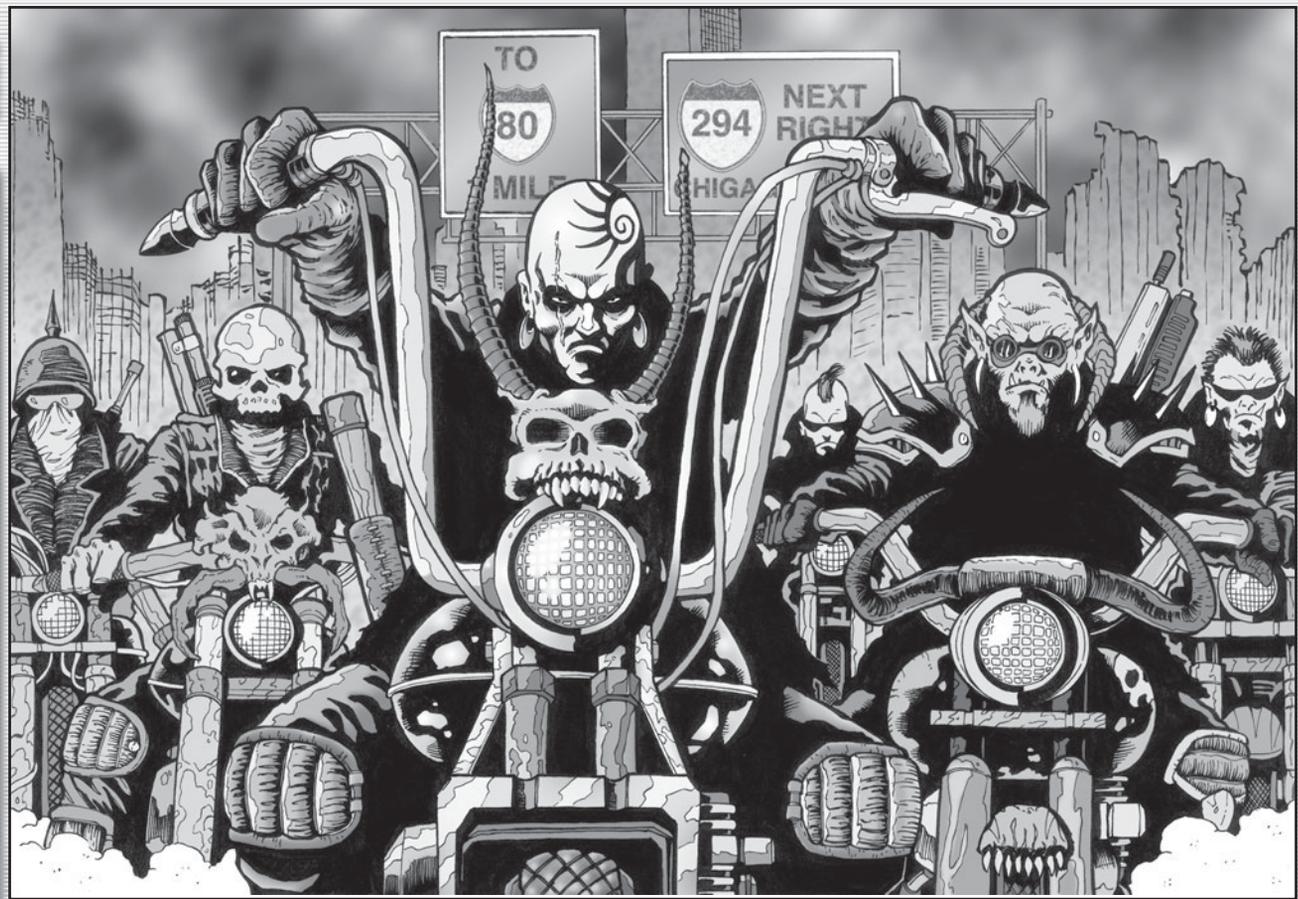
- Motor City's boys are downright appalled by some of the operations MacAvoy gets into. Life may be cheap in Detroit, but in Chi-town, life gets an itemized estimate and cost-benefit analysis. Some people are cut out for it; others aren't.
- Mr. Bonds

Independent gangs like the Undying Trogs, 400 Boys, and Lincoln Park Rangers are profiting from trading black market goods supplied by the Mafia, although they fear they might soon get their acts together and decide to bypass the middle man. For the time being, however, the Detroit and Milwaukee crews, especially, need the locals' market knowledge.

The Ramblers

The Ramblers are a motorcycle and ATV go-gang claiming ownership of a stretch of Interstates 294 and 80 in and around Southside. They make a living from the tolls extorted from people traveling on the highways and surprise attacks and ambushes on the armored trucks on their delivery runs between the sub-sprawls. The gang consists of roughly sixty bikers and twice as many grunts on foot or cramped in rundown vans and station wagons. A relatively young gang, age-wise, their initial success in robbing unprotected trucks and couriers allowed them to significantly upgrade their vehicles. The gang seems to accept any metahuman as new recruits, despite their mostly human membership.





INCOMING FEED.....

- The Ramblers sometimes challenge trespassers who can't afford the tolls to death races against their more suicidal gang members. The horrid road conditions are as dangerous to the gangers as they are to everyone else, but sometimes, that's the best chance you will get.
- Zoned

The gang is involved in the blood fights held in the Downtown gyms and can call a few of the best fighters their own. The location of the gang's camp is unknown, but it is suspected to lie somewhere between Oak Forest and Lansing. Despite joint efforts from Gary Port Authority and Knight Errant patrols sent out from Gary, they could not locate the Ramblers. Knight Errant reports mention Illusion magic as one possible explanation for the untraceable hideout of the gang.

Technospace

With the exception of mobster Marcus Quinn, last year's technomancer scare and witch-hunts pretty much bypassed Chicago. After all, Chicago doesn't have a lot to offer technomancers as far as a cohesive wireless Matrix goes—lone TMs have been known to go batty being in the city and out of range of proper communications for too long. The exception is Technospace, a

group of technomancers that have settled in Northside, just above the Noose. The thirteen members of Technospace provide each other with enough "presence" to keep themselves sane despite the lack of a grid. Whatever link they have almost doubles as tactical software—if one Technospacer sees you, then *all* of them have seen you.

Three months ago, the tribe cut off any communication with NooseNet. People say the technos have become distant, as if stressed or otherwise mentally occupied. The Anarchist Black Crescent offered help, suspecting some form of infectious AIPS spreading over their network, but the technos refused any support whatsoever.

- Here's where it gets weird, even by technomancer standards. I talked to some guys over at NooseNet, and they said the technos claimed 'update issues.' Their living personas seemed slow, overloaded, and only halfway there, which again points towards AIPS. I just can't shake the feeling it's something else.
- Plan 9
- Horizon, as well as NeoNET, is looking to establish contact with the tribe via the Matrix, but due to the patchy grid and unstable connections, they might have to send someone in the flesh soon.
- Change Agent

O'Hare Security Council

The O'Hare sub-sprawl's Security Council is both its ruling body and a joint corporate police force. The Security Council itself is comprised of UCAS military personnel and the heads of various megacorporate security detachments operating in O'Hare. Similar to the model applied at the Dutch Europort, each major corporation provides personnel to fill the ranks and funds to equip the **Joint O'Hare Police Forces** (JOPF).

- The only reason the Council still exists is that the corporations need a figurehead. It's even better if the Council members have some pull with the long-term civilian residents because of their achievements during the Bug City years—makes it look like they're in charge.
- Kay St. Irregular

The council's current chairman is Colonel Keith Vathoss, a Zone veteran. After the Zone reopened, he played a significant role in protecting the neighborhoods around O'Hare and resisting raiding parties after the city government collapsed. Unfortunately, a fraternization incident with a young non-com effectively ended his career, and the top brass appointed him onto the Council in 2068 to wait out his time until retirement.

- Vathoss was an observer on an Ares Firewatch team stationed in the Zone when the Wall went up, and he still has many connections throughout the Corridor and the Zone. On the Council, he has been isolated and left with practically no decision-making power. Many of his supporters have retired to take corporate positions with Ares in Joliet or Gary.
- Sticks
- He isolated himself by blocking more than a few initiatives that would have significantly increased Ares' influence throughout O'Hare.
- Kay St. Irregular

Nowadays, the corporations use the council as their extended arm to debate over tax breaks and reallocation of the sub-sprawl's budget to further their causes, rather than improving the citizens' working and living conditions. Much to Vathoss's frustration, many council members seem content in their position, seeing it as their easy and well-paid path to retirement.

- Vathoss keeps an eye on the runner scene and regularly hires expendable freelancers for under-the-radar excursions into the anarchist camps in the Zone.
- Change Agent

UnlimiTech Inc

Based out of O'Hare, this Ares-owned R&D think-tank is worth a mention. Their focus is magical security, especially the long-term effects of applied manatech and security paracritters. O'Hare's Council also consults UnlimiTech in matters of arcane security. Rumors suggest the outfit maintains a secret underground research facility somewhere in the Zone, though its exact location or purpose is unknown. UnlimiTech has recently scored a profitable deal to equip O'Hare's security forces with new armor containing embedded manafilm badges.

- UT pays top cred for additional security on their convoys in the Zone, but you have to keep a safe distance from the vehicles and make sure nobody breaches that perimeter. The convoys also frequently change their routes and final destination in the Zone.
- Change Agent

The Aleph Society

Basing their beliefs on an ancient, allegedly Atlantean, tome called the Book of Gaf, the Aleph Society's official credo is to discover and unlock the magic potential lying dormant in every metahuman. Mostly popular with desperate wannabes and burnouts, Ares successfully infiltrated a couple of the society's circles and confirmed their claims to have rituals that can restore magical ability to burnouts. As many Awakened Chicagoans lost their magic to FAB III, the society's promises to regain even a fraction of their power might be the sole reason the cult still exists in Chicago.

The society's holistic approach to magic invites followers of all kinds of traditions and encourages the mundane members to reach their true potential by becoming theoretical thaumaturgists, living vessels for spirits summoned by magicians, and subjecting themselves to Awakened medicine practices and blood magic.

- Not exactly true. They deny membership to members of the Atlantean Foundation or similar organizations, as well as to many exorcists and demon hunters, supposedly.
- Ethernaut
- You'd think they'd be worried about attracting ex-insect shamans.
- DefCon5

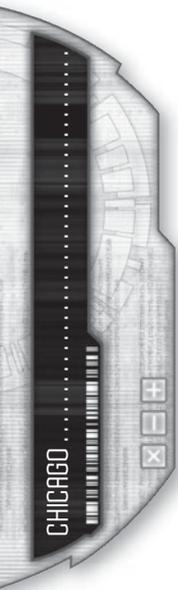
The cult's members work from out of a restored wing of the DePaul University campus in Rolling Meadows (Westside). They host seminars and self-enlightenment classes in the classrooms and lecture halls, although the group's followers take regular field trips into the Corridor to promote their organization and offer therapeutic community services or magic potential tests.

FALLOUT ZONES

Posted By: Zoned

A word to the bloody-handed and dark-side runners: don't think that just because the text scans you know all there is about our feral Chicago. Chi-town proper is the gutted heart of an urban landscape that stretches hundreds of miles along Lake Michigan-Huron, and you could walk the same streets and highways from Indiana to Wisconsin without leaving the Greater Chicago Metropolitan Area—what we locals like to call Chicagoland. Our once-fair city itself is like a star collapsed in on itself.

At the center of all things is the dead Zone, picked over by maggots and madmen. Ringing that is the ragged scar tissue of the Corridor, mostly abandoned when the citygov fell (if they didn't have the good sense to get out before), where the majority of the population eats, shits, buys, sells, kills, works, and procreates. Beyond the 'sides are the Chicagoland sub-sprawls, gateways to the world beyond our city, and the means for people like you to come to us with all your shiny tech and healthy skin and teeth. Rest assured, Chicago will take its toll from you, too.



- Zoned isn't kidding about the urban sprawl; Chicago and Chicagoland might not have the skyline of Seattle or Neo-Tokyo, but they make up for that by building out instead of up or down. It's at least five days on foot to get from Gary (where Southside begins) to South Milwaukee (where Northside ends). Of course, you might be able to save a bit of time if you're willing (and able) to cut through the CZ.

- DefCon5

- Every May Day, there's an annual parkour event called the Bug City Sprint, where groups of traceurs attempt to make it through the feral part of the city. Following through with the non-rivalry aspect of the sport, the idea is for everybody in the group to make it through—you won't see anybody leaving a wounded teammate behind to get eaten by ghouls.

- Sticks

Only the insane or truly desperate venture into the Zone now, but that might change. Recent, reliable reports talk about some goo or jelly that insect spirits in the Zone cover themselves with to protect them from the effects of the mana ebb. Dubbed 'royal jelly,' the ooze supposedly also protects against the draining effect of FAB and other magical threats. Of course, only the insect spirits themselves might know the source of this material, but the megacorporations and university research teams are already offering impressive sums for a sample.

- The discovery of that grayish phlegm caused quite a stir. Apparently, royal jelly is available from different sources, because many disparate insect spirits have been spotted using it. Reportedly, the composition is slightly different for each, too, but it's hard to tell because of the many fakes sold on the black markets.

- Ethernaut

THE CORRIDOR

When the government collapsed, they did not completely abandon three more-or-less definable geographic areas around the former Containment Zone, so they suffered less than the CZ itself. Collectively these are known as the Corridor. They have plenty of relatively intact buildings and border on actual working cities from which they can leech. Also referred to as the 'sides, these rough districts together comprise the Corridor, the population and traffic hub of Chicago.

Northside

The Northside district extends from the Zone up along the shore of Lake Michigan-Huron, just past North Chicago, until you hit the border for South Milwaukee. Interstate 94/294 forms a natural border with the O'Hare sub-sprawl and makes Northside one of the easiest parts of the Corridor to penetrate—just take any east-bound exit. The streets coming from the highway are pretty clear, but the rule of the road in Northside is that the biggest vehicle has the right of way.

- Not that you won't see an entire family on a motorbike, or a group of people walking across the highway to get from Northside to O'Hare and back again. There's a fleet of metahuman-powered "taxis"

GETTING LOST

Mostly, Chicago is laid out on a grid system, with address numbers based on the distance from the baselines of State Street (which runs North-South) and Madison Ave (East-West). Blocks are exactly eight to a mile (except for some of the North-South blocks in the Zone, which are a little peculiar) and are usually counted out in hundreds (800 block, 400 block, etc.). Locals usually give directions in thousands (ten-block chunks). So, if you find yourself at 2900 S Pershing Road, you're 29 blocks (a little over three miles) south of State Street. South of Madison, most of the East-West streets are numbered, with the numbers corresponding to the block—94th St is also 9400 South, and so on. Knowing the grid system is no excuse for not grabbing a map chip or a local guide, natch—the farther you get out from Downtown, the less exact the grid system becomes. Parts of it extend as far as Naperville-Bolingbrook and O'Hare.

Diagonals can be numbered North-South or East-West. There's no uniform standard, but you can still get an idea of how far out you are from State and Madison.

- Even with a mapsoft, it pays to do a reality check with a satellite recon of wherever you're going; things have changed a lot in the last few years, with gangs and enclaves blocking off streets, buildings collapsing, and people stealing or defacing signs. And, you have to do it in advance, because the wireless Matrix doesn't extend to all of Chicago.

- Pistons

All North-South streets are named instead of numbered, and groups of minor streets are all named with the same letter. K, for example, is the 11th letter of the alphabet, so 11 miles from the old border with Indiana, all of the North-South streets begin with the letter K for one mile. Then, the streets begin starting with the letter L. The one-mile strip is called "K-town," and so on. Of course, the older parts of the city already had established names before the alphabet system came up, so again, this isn't a hard and fast rule, but it can help.

(bicycle or foot-powered rickshaws) at work along the two main roads, Skokie Highway and Green Bay Road, that run the length of the district (and which would be clear enough to drive on, if not for all the frickin' rickshaws hogging the road).

- Sticks

Urgent Message...





INCOMING FEED.....

Increased traffic means more street business, especially ones catering to day-trippers in from the sub-sprawls, which means Northside has more places that take nuyen than practically anywhere else in Chi-town. A lot of the businesses (I use the term loosely; it's usually one guy or gal selling some shit out of a converted bungalow) and enclaves (either a neighborhood with blocked-off streets and guards or, if you go deeper in, small apartment complexes) are set up near the border or along the main streets. People that operate out of the back streets are the ones you have to watch out for; either they can't afford to buy protection, or they're selling something that even the other Northtowners won't abide, like child-porn BTLs or slaves. Of course, one of the highlights of Northside is the ghoul-run pig farms set up on what used to be the golf courses.

- Northside is where a lot of the business of the sprawl gets done. There's less mob influence and more money and trade goods flowing through this 'side. It's no wonder Standish set up his little tourist main street for the daytrippers and his Chicago hours scam here. It also has the least number of "native Chicagoans." Most of the people that stayed here when the city government collapsed were actually old-school Skokites.
- Sticks

Southside

Everything from the Chicago River and the CeeZee down to Joliet on the south-west and Gary, Indiana on the south-east is Southside territory, and it's a very different economy from the rest of Chicago. The principal battleground between McCaskill's crew, the Detroit Mob, and MacAvoy's bunch, Southside is a battlefield of suburban brothels and garage betameth labs run by ex-cons that can't get a job with their criminal SINS and staffed by teenage run-aways. The local news is word of mouth at the local bar (you *don't* want to trust the water south of the river), and it always centers on who blew up who-else's lab, shot his dog, and cut up the girl he was pimping.

The outermost residential neighborhoods in Southside run right up against the blue-collar worker-villages that serve Gary's docks and Joliet's industrial parks and factories, and they share space with the impromptu bars and strip joints that cater to the off-shifts. Weekends in Southside feature bars packed elbow-to-asshole, and flesh shows that are basically unorganized grope fests. Farther in, closer to Downtown, are the abandoned factories and office buildings claimed by survivalist communities and the kind of people you normally see in the other 'sides. Lake Calumet, by contrast, is effectively a smuggler haven.

- The markets around Calumet see black market goods from all over NorthAM and have a general pirate-haven feel to them. Lots of t-bird

crews stop here to refuel and/or offload cargo, which means there's often an auction going on for illegal merchandise in bulk and on the cheap.

- DefCon5

- Yeah, so if you want five hundred Quebec-made knock-offs of an AK-98, or the latest model off the lot from Ares' Detroit dronefacs, this is the place to go. The whole buying-in-bulk thing can be a pain, but if you have enough capital, you can pick up a lot of something, skim off what you need, and then sell or trade it for a bulk lot of the next thing you need.

- Sticks

- Where the hell are McCaskill and MacAvoy in all this? I thought they were all over Southside.

- 2XL

- They are—fighting each other. None of 'em really has the manpower to muscle out the smuggler crews just yet.

- Sticks

- Hell, more than half the crews in Calumet *are* Mafia, Sticks, or Mafia-funded. Nobody flies or floats out of Milwaukee without Don Stephanopoulos getting a piece of the action, and MacAvoy employs a lot of the "independents," providing schedules, warehouse space, and fuel. McCaskill just plays the smuggler's market, buying up weapons and drugs from farther afield to sell at a markup in Chicagoland. Of course, they're all gunning for each other, but no one has the upper hand just yet.

- Zoned

Westside

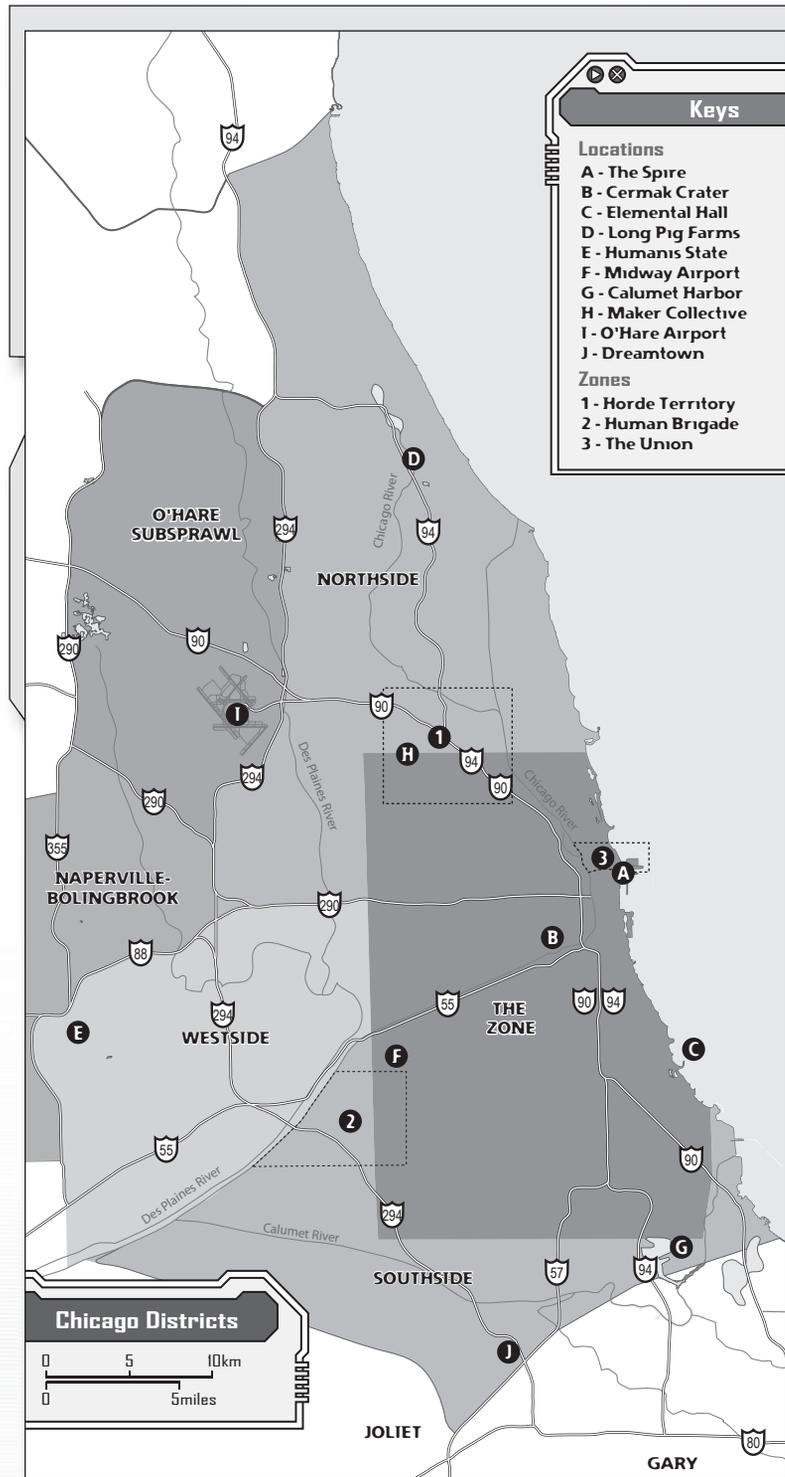
Smallest of the 'sides, a lot of what was Westside was gobbled up by Naperville-Bolingbrook when Chicago's government fell. The rest is squeezed in by the Chicago River to the south, the monowire-topped wall that marks the O'Hare Sub-Sprawl's boundary, and, of course, the western walls of the Zone. As cramped as it might be, Westside is critical to Chicago's geography—it's the most safe and direct route to *avoid* the former CZ.

- Back when the wall first went up, it cut straight through the highways and walled off the cloverleaf completely. The citygov built connections around the wall, and since they didn't want to cut straight across the water, they went through Westside instead. It's a straight shot from Northside to Southside, from Gary and points beyond to South Milwaukee. A bunch of little toll keeper gangs dot the highway—or, more often, specific exits—and charge travelers. That usually lasts until they piss off the wrong people.

- Sticks

- One of 'em has gotten wise. The Windy City Tollkeepers (they claim to be former government employees, and they *do* have uniforms...) migrate up and down 294 and 55, blocking off an exit with temporary toll booths for a day or two (cars blocking across the off ramp), then packing up and leaving. Of course, you can tell they're a Chi-town gang, because they're more likely to take bartered goods than nuyen for your toll.

- DefCon5



Urgent Message...



- 294 is popular with a lot of out-of-towners and is relatively safe in stretches along Northside—Knight Errant has a special highway patrol unit under contract to O'Hare to keep it that way—but it runs right smack dab through Westside and Southside. You can tell you're there just by the feel of the road under your tires when you're driving; it's a bumpy ride until you hit Gary.

- Turbo Bunny

Near the N-P border are entrenched apartment enclaves and fortified neighborhoods. They started out when the walls first went up around the CZ, with upper-middle class and lower-upper class folks beefing up the security around their gated communities to feel "safe." They were so safe that they stayed behind their walls when most of the other people left. When the CZ opened up, they just ramped security up another couple of notches and hunkered down, telecommuting to work and checking their investments with secured satellite links. Ironically, these "secure communities" became hot commodities once the citygov fell. Turns out all the other rich people want to avoid paying city property taxes.

- Speaking from experience, a lot of prostitutes and street dealers work that end of Westside. The people behind the walls and gun emplacements tend to get bored or weird after a while and develop a taste for a little strange. Of course, security takes a dim view on too many "guests" of that type, but it might be a way to get in, if you take my meaning.

- DefCon5

THE ZONE (CZ, CEEZEE)

In every urban jungle, there's a part of town that even the streetwise and the predators avoid. The Zone has been ground zero for the worst of the horror and pain in living memory, from the fall of the Sears Tower to the massive infestation of insect spirits that necessitated the detonation of a tactical nuclear weapon, the quarantine of a hundred thousand souls to a living hell, and a harrowing Operation: Extermination that was also essentially an act of genocide against Chicago's ghoulish population.

But that's all in the past. This is today. You can see the scars of these events on the cityscape and on the people—and other things—that live here. Most of the walls that enclosed the Zone remain, overgrown with weeds, with the rusty gates standing open and the guard towers (the ones that weren't overrun or destroyed over the last twelve years) mostly abandoned, now home to squatters and bat colonies.

- It's worth reminding everybody that almost the whole of the Zone is a mana ebb, and this has a significantly detrimental impact on any magician of any stripe. It's not *quite* enough to knacker a ghoul, unless their system is already compromised with implants, partially drained by a vampire, or damaged by FAB III, but it comes damn close. Adepts won't be able to access their full powers, and magicians won't be able to cast their most powerful spells or summon their spirits as easily.

- Sticks

- Certain university and corporate research institutes, notably MIT&T and Aztechnology, have sponsored teams to penetrate the Zone and study the situation. Some literature I "liberated" sug-



gests they're attempting to create a Focusing metamagic, based on Filtering techniques, to allow magicians to operate normally in the mana ebb by crafting a weave that gathers and concentrates the mana nearby.

- Winterhawk

- Wouldn't you be in danger of further depleting a scarce resource and weakening astral space more, causing the mana ebb to intensify?

- Ethernaut

- I want to know if it'll work in "normal" astral space—think of the spells you could cast with that extra mana!

- Haze

- Enhance your calm, children, nobody's published any theses yet. It could be years before we see the result of this research, if ever.

- Winterhawk

The Core

More than any other part of the Zone, the former Downtown Core is a ghost town. Decrepit skyscrapers still stand tall, even with floors gutted by fire and winds howling through broken windows. The streets are effectively closed to vehicle traffic; there's just too much trash in the streets to move.



At least forty thousand vehicles were in the Zone when the walls went up, and I think every one of them is still there, stuck in a perpetual traffic jam. Some people do still live and work in the Core—Spire Enterprises, there's a commune of drop outs that's taken over an old high-school, and a magophobic splinter of the Human Nation lives in what used to be a police station. Squatters who don't know better camp here for a while, but most everything worth looting is long gone. Scrappers from Northside and Southside do come in to scavenge for pipes and hardware, but most of them know better than to go alone, unarmed, or after dark.

Then, there are the bugs and the maggots.

- I hate maggots worse than bugs.
- Sticks
- They choose to serve, selling others to their buzzing masters to buy time for themselves—or worse, to buy the change they crave yet fear. What a waste of blood and souls.
- Man-Of-Many-Names
- Okay, enough with the pseudo-mystical boo-spooky bullshit from you, too. There were people that were willing to do what they had to in order to survive, including making deals with the bugs. And you know what? They're *dead*. They died with Bug City. All this "maggot" bullshit is after-the-fact witch-hunting.

Chicago is full of metahumans that had to deal with shit that makes the tribal genocides in Africa and the city sieges during the EuroWars look pale by comparison, and they did shit that no sane person should have to do to survive. But, they did survive. The few people that lived through Bug City—which official estimates put down as less than thirty thousand out of a speculated initial population of over a hundred—are quite naturally fucked-up. They're suffering from Ghost only knows how many post-traumatic stress disorders, malnutrition, whatever drugs they had to slam to deal with the Hell they called a life—and they are dealing with it, in their own way. When a sane mind confronts an insane situation, something has to bend or you're going to snap.

Now it's over, and people like you two want to carry it on, perpetuate the myth, find someone to blame and project it on them. Hasn't it occurred to you that the people you label as maggots are the victims here? You can't just throw around a label like that. There's a cycle of violence at work in Chicago, and it just needs a little seed to start. A rumor. Some guy that keeps to himself and maybe finds enough to eat, and suddenly somebody with an empty belly calls him a maggot and it sticks to him. He can't dodge it, he can't get away from it, and one day, somebody will kill him for it. I've seen the mobs at work in Chicago. Where the hell were you, Sticks, when the Blue Boyz held their "Technomancers Are Maggots" rally on Chicago Ave? Where were you, Many-Names, when the Universal Brotherhood was running soup kitchens and handing out bread to the homeless?

You two can play at being the big bug-busting heroes, but I know the truth.

- Haze
- I hate to give him any credit for his rant, but he has a point. We've read the files, Many-Names. We know you fought the insect spir-

THE ELEVATED AND THE UNDERGROUND

The "L," Chicago's infamous elevated train network, is a shadow of itself. Except for the L tribes that keep a couple of the lines running, most of the network is in disrepair, and the towers, tracks, and substations are a haven for squatters and makeshift shelters. It's still a good way to get around—safer to go *over* gang territory than through it, in most cases—if you don't mind that one slip will see you fall a story or two.

Besides the elevated train network, Chicago also once boasted a subway system—note the past tense. The ghouls used to nest there until the bug spirits kicked them out. Ares didn't even try to send its men into those deathtraps; they just flooded the tunnels with FAB III and shot anything that crawled or fluttered out. Nowadays, the subways are no better than an artificial cave system, complete with glomoss, bats, lost dwarfs, and stalactites where water drips through the cracks in the ceiling.

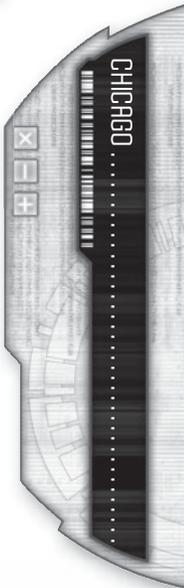
- I know a girl that did a little spelunking in the subways, and she says they're a mess. The ghouls and bugs dug side tunnels into basements, the local sewer lines, maybe even some crypts at the cemetery. She says the whole thing is unstable as hell, but I guess there are worse places to hide out for a few days.

• Hannibelle

its before, and you knew about the UB even before you talked to Wanderly (May his pieces rest in peace). Why didn't you do more?

- FastJack
- Like the rest of you, there are many of my affairs that I prefer to keep private, and many things that I cannot directly oppose. The Universal Brotherhood was too large for any one man to destroy; even if I could have taken out a few of their shamans or queens, it would not have been long before I was struck down...or invested. I could not even speak in the halls of power without being shouted down as a madman or a fool. It took me a long time, working among the unseen, to finally bring the matter to the attention of those with the power to act against it. Even then, I was almost too late. Whatever blame you hold on me for not fighting against them directly, I want all of you to know that without me, Chicago would have been far, far worse than you can ever imagine.
- Man-Of-Many-Names
- Wait...are you saying that *you're* the one who told Ares about the Universal Brotherhood?
- Sticks
- I was one voice of many that warned them of the combined hives masquerading behind the Universal Brotherhood, but it was I that directed them to Chicago.
- Man-Of-Many-Names

Urgent Message...



No matter what you may have heard from Ares, or the UCAS federal government, or the governor of Illinois, there are still bug spirits in Chicago. Some bugs die almost as easy as people; some bugs look like people. You can't tell them apart, you can't *trust* anyone. There are still old-timers in the Zone that think everyone they meet is a bug. There's a video on NooseNet where Chicago's last mayor rants about how *he* is a bug and shoots himself (he was wrong, but we applaud the effort—asshole). It's not like it was during the bad old days, not exactly. You don't see Wasp spirits buzzing back and forth from their hives in the penthouses of the highest skyscrapers or beetles the size of small Volkswagens snagging kids off the street. No, now they keep to their secret hives and rarely venture out, and even then, only when smeared with that grey goop. Anything else they need to do, they have their maggots do it for them.

- The “royal jelly” or whatever it is that the bugs use to protect themselves when traveling in the Zone is of serious interest to Ares, the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research, and a bunch of other places. If you can score a couple samples of it—which practically means hunting the bugs in their own lair—you can make a mint.

- Mika

- More than that, Ares didn't confiscate or destroy all of the reagent stockpiles, foci, and mana lodge paraphernalia the insect shamans and bug spirits collected during their tenure. Several talismongers would pay a fortune for one of those stashes. Just remember that a lot of that stuff is only magically useful to bug magicians themselves, is hideously illegal, and rarely comes onto the open market—cover your ass and know who's paying for it before you hand it over.

- Lyran

The Noose

Chicago's longest-remaining disaster area. That about sums it up. Before Bug City ever happened, the Noose was already here and populated by streetwalkers, would-be criminals, and lots and lots of ghosts. It still is. The long-term residents are almost ghosts themselves, dichards one and all. As the part of the city that's been feral the longest, the Noose residents have had a very long time to get used to hard living. Most of the historic buildings and ancient skyscrapers—some of the first in the city—are still standing, if decrepit and probably fit to be condemned, and inhabited by dangerous, desperate people.

- There are hundreds of ghosts in the Noose, almost all of them concentrated around the Shattergraves. FAB did initially clear the area, but when the bacteria died off, the apparitions came back, just like nothing had happened. It's even spookier now, because the astral is so empty and clear, so they stand out a lot more.

- Hannibelle

- There's an unorganized tourist industry around the Shattergraves, milking nuyen out of the spectators who want to see a real live ghost. Not bad work if you can get it. The trick is to keep the marks away from the really dangerous spirits (and everything else) or else bring an astral adept or ghost hunter with you to deal with them when they get riled.

- DefCon5

ADVERSE POSSESSION

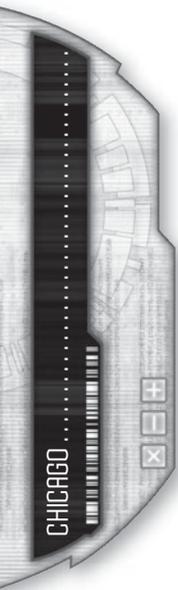
Being more-or-less completely abandoned, the city of Chicago has fallen into weird legal territory. Specifically, the Supreme Court of Illinois has upheld the common law of *adverse possession* in the case of *Milton vs. the State of Illinois*, a decision with wide ramifications—especially for the people living in feral Chicago. It boils down to squatter's rights; if you openly live on a piece of land (or in some cases, an apartment in a building) for a continuous period of time (15 years) without the permission of the owner and without being ejected, you receive legal title to that land (or apartment, etc.) Most of the area outside the Zone hasn't been derelict (or re-occupied) long enough for the ruling to take effect, even if anyone living there knows about it, but practically the entire CZ is fair game. At least a few people have already received titles to buildings from the state government (of course, the government now expects them to pay taxes on their new property...). Naturally, the corporations are going apeshit over this. There are plenty of runs into Chicago lately just to squat somewhere until the corp can move in, or to evict the current tenants before they hit the magic number.

A weird side effect is that many of the surrounding cities in Chicagoland—including those in other states—have bid to make parts of the outlying neighborhoods of Chicago theirs by adverse possession. That's how Gary managed to swallow up Little Chicago, which started that horrific legal battle between Illinois and Indiana that went straight to the UCAS Supreme Court. The SC ruled, citing a precedent involving Georgia and South Carolina from back in the days of the US of A, that because Illinois had not challenged Indiana's claim to the territory, even though it was well aware of it, the area belonged to Indiana. Naturally, Illinois is keeping a much closer watch on Gary and South Milwaukee now.

Besides the departed, the most famous Noose residents are the old-school hackers, techies, and the like, who've patched together a rough network out of the remains of Chicago's old telecommunications hub and whatever equipment they can scrounge, buy, or manufacture. It's a real piece of bricolage—you're as likely to see twenty-year old Fuchi addresses as Universal Matrix Specification architecture (ha! Remember when all the datanodes were blue cubes?). The old Magnificent Mile is the nerve center of the hacker community, packed with hacker clubs, little tech shops, a book store full of yellowed, mildewed, hardcopy tech manuals, and probably the only working set of street lights left in the Zone. A group of civic-minded hackers eek a dribble of power from the old underground power lines, and in times of emergency, the whole Mile can be blocked off with electrified gates twenty feet high.

- There are other, more subtle defenses, like the sniper drones installed on the underside of the elevated train tracks that surround the Noose.
- Hannibelle

Urgent Message...



CHICAGOLAND

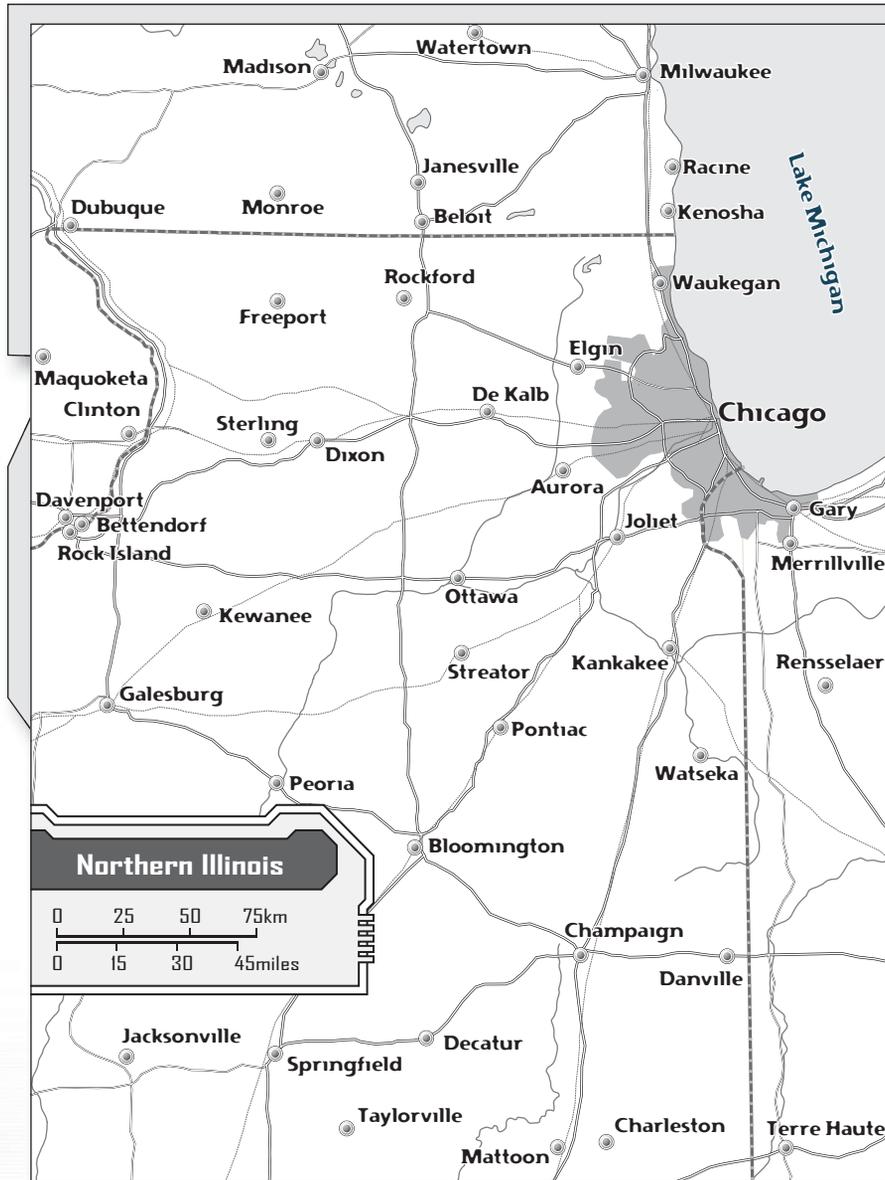
Chicago's metropolitan area in 2070 is actually a continuous urban sprawl through three states. After the Chicago government fell, the surrounding municipalities in Chicagoland made a grab for the outlying districts, and for the most part, they succeeded because of corporate lobbying. Before it fell, Chicago was a major transportation hub—there's not only O'Hare, but also the docks on Lake Michigan-Huron, traffic down into the Mississippi River, highways, trains, even a fair amount of zeppelin traffic from the eco-conscious Algonquian-Manitou Council. By snapping up the outlying neighborhoods, the Chicagoland sub-sprawls saved at least a dozen A-rated corporations (and the facilities and outlets for AAs and AAAs), and corporate donations re-directed traffic through Chicagoland instead of Chicago—not to mention essentially buying the Chicagoland governments.

- Yeah, corporate subsidies effectively tolled the economic death knell for Chicago. When the Chicagoland government signed the deals with the corps, most of the corps pulled out of Chicago, taking their employees with them.
- DefCon5

Gary, Indiana

This is an Aztechnology town, though you'd hardly know it. They invested heavily in the local light industry sector and the new docks through the local subsidiaries of Illinois Precision Tool Works, Azteca Food Processing, and the Great Lakes Shipping Company. There's a strong Latino-American community in Gary, and not a few street gangs, but the majority of the population are blue-collar workers like those that you'd find anywhere else in the country. Aztechnology corporate culture (and religion) really hasn't taken hold except among the upper-management, despite repeated attempts by AZT's propagandists. It's an open secret (and a matter of resentment) that you need to be a visible and active member of the cult to really get ahead, something that the local Christian churches vocally oppose.

Gary's Mayor, Arleen Daley of the famous Daley dynasty of Chicago politicians, has worked to aggressively expand her city's borders into Illinois, having annexed (by popular vote and a favorable court ruling) East Chicago, Calumet City, and Chicago Heights. It's an open secret that Daley is double dipping, taking bribes from both AZT and the Detroit Mob to turn a blind eye to union-busting activities, smuggling on the docks, and the BTL dens right over the border in Southside.

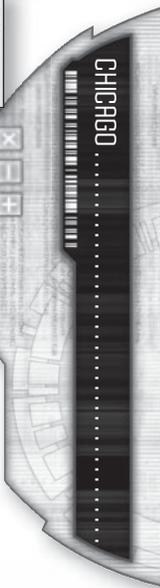


- If Daley plays her cards right, she's a shoe-in for governor in six years.
- Kay St. Irregular

Joliet

A real Ares-town, the Joliet Arsenal Industrial Park was actually the main staging point for Knight Errant while manning the walls of the Containment Zone, and it houses some of Damien Knight's best experimental munitions research—not to mention long-term research on the effects of ammunition on soil and water (a leftover from the old military testing days on-site). The other major attraction is the Stateville Correctional Center and the New Joliet Correctional Center, both maximum-security prisons. Stateville is a run-down and overpopulated male-only prison run by Knight Errant under contract to the state of Illinois, but New Joliet is a modern coed facility that Ares maintains strictly for corporate prisoners—other corporations literally pay them to keep inmates for a given duration for breaking corporate law.

Urgent Message...



The prisons and the industrial park, through contracts with local businesses, are two of the biggest employers in Joliet. The City Council voted to annex Mokena and parts of Orland and Tinley Parks, which are mainly residential neighborhoods largely settled by former inmates and their families. A lot of ex-cons get out of their nickel-and-dimes and move out to the 'burbs near Southside, taking jobs at the call centers or the warehouse and distribution centers that service the long-haul trucks and trains.

- It should come as no surprise that the McCaskill mob is deeply entrenched in Joliet, especially in the prisons and the ex-cons working in trucking. Ironically, it's usually the real low-lives and addicts that the Mafia won't touch who migrate into Southside and set up betameth labs or go in for violent robbery.

- 2XL

- There's a lot of deep-seated racism in Joliet and a heavy skinhead and neo-nazi tradition that can make being Jewish or metahuman dangerous in most of the predominantly human neighborhoods around Homer Glen and Romeoville. Lots of young, angry men and women with bad home lives, barely literate and just smart enough to know their lives are over after high school. Prime Humanis recruiting territory; prime UCAS and corporate military recruiting territory.

- Hannibelle

Naperville-Bolingbrook

I'll probably never understand exactly how these two sub-sprawls merged, but N-B (the hyphen is the source of its power) handles most of the rail that Chicago used to handle, as well as a large part of the data processing and management that goes into keeping the goods of all of North America flowing through Chicagoland with a minimum of fuss. Renraku and NeoNET are surprisingly strong competitors in N-B, employing the teeming white-collar middle management and skilled technical labor that populate the sub-sprawl. There is some gang activity, but it's all corporate bratpacks and kids with more damn nuyen than sense. The latest flash-fad is obvious cyberlimbs—proves you're hardcore to get your arm hacked off or something like that.

- Naperbrook, as the locals call it, is squeaky-clean. That's because everybody goes to Westside when they want to get their freak on, or something to snort, or whatever. Oh, there's a few clubs that cater to rebellious kids, but the dealers are all from Westside, or at least their sources are. Besides, all the Naperbrook kids know that the *really good* drugs are in Chicago...and it'll piss off their parents more.

- Hannibelle

- Which is why McCaskill and MacAvoy's crews prowl the streets looking for fresh "talent" for their latest BTL productions. Kids don't just come to Westside (or even across the river!) just to score or for thrills. More than a few girls come looking for the street docs the prostitutes use when they get in trouble...and you'd be amazed at how open-minded a girl can be when she's alone, in desperate need of cash, and already pregnant.

- 2XL

- Pig.

- /dev/grrl

- Hey sweet cheeks, everybody makes their own decisions in this life. Besides, the ones that you really have to look out for are MacAvoy's crews; they're the ones with the Tamanous connection. More often than not, they slip the girls and boys a little something to loosen them up for the shoot, and they get addicted and come back for more. That's a nasty, slippery little slope that can easily end in prostitution, brief stardom in a snuff BTL, and having your junkie organs put up for sale.

- Butch

O'Hare Sub-Sprawl

Built around the expanded O'Hare International Aerospaceport, the O'Hare sub-sprawl is a direct possession of the federal UCAS government, who recognize the need to protect a vital link in their intercontinental transportation and shipping. In reality, however, the sub-sprawl is almost completely run by the megacorporations who fund its continued existence, and the head of the governing Security Council, Colonel Vathoss, is little more than a figurehead. The majority of the workers and aerospaceport personnel are corporate citizens, and O'Hare enjoys a vibrant multicorporate culture.

- Translation: There are different corporate holidays, corporate bratpack gangs are common, and there is a *thriving* underground economy in corporate scrip and goods. You can bribe a Renraku baggage handler with a couple boxes of Ares' Black Label cigarettes.

- Change Agent

The dense population is organized into corporate clusters. The cooperative model only really applies to the Joint O'Hare Police Forces, and even then, you see a lot of intercorporate rivalry, except when under immanent threat from some ganger making a play at blowing past the border security. McCaskill is the strongest underworld player in O'Hare; his freshly-laundered nuyen pads the secret accounts of middle managers who don't want to put all of their retirement plan into corporate scrip, in exchange for a few items tucked into odd nooks and crannies, or that "fell off the back of a suborbital."

South Milwaukee

Around about the time Gary took a bite out of Illinois, Wisconsin wised up and tried to do the same thing. Unfortunately, by the time they got their act together, the Illinois state government had had enough and blocked them from moving the state line. So, what remains of this particular attempt at manifest destiny is South Milwaukee, an incorporation of townships and small cities that's torn between being Illinoisans or Wisconsinites. Think East St. Louis, but South Milwaukee.

- Read: Milwaukee mostly dictates to the (nominally independent) South Milwaukee government, and the mayor and his cronies just nod their heads. But legally, South Milwaukee is sovereign Illinois territory, and most of the population identify themselves as citizens of Illinois.

- Sticks

- Man, didn't this states crap go out the window years ago? I thought we were all Canadian-Americans, dammit.

- Slamm-O!



- Speak for yourself, gwailo. Seriously, though, Indiana taking a bite out of Illinois has brought the whole state-citizenship thing to the front of everybody's mind, no matter how archaic it seems in this glorious age of corporate republics. It's a hot-ticket item for the upcoming elections, and that means more political runs for us.
- Jimmy No

The South Milwaukee sub-sprawl lacks a truly unified economy; it's still trying to integrate its tax bylaws, statutes, and the bureaucratic debt and detritus of hundreds of years and a half-dozen small sprawls. Helping them in this endeavor are Ares, who is working to build and connect new docks along the sub-sprawl's large lake coastline, and NeoNET, which basically underwrote the upgrade of South Milwaukee's Matrix 2.0 infrastructure in the certain knowledge that commlink sales and MSP accounts would pay for it in ten years. The two megacorps, through their respective regional vice presidents, are vying for the integrated city utility contracts as they come up.

LOCUSTS AND HONEY EXCERPTS FROM DR. PATERSON'S CHICAGO JOURNAL

- Doc. Paterson's back, and this time he's in Chicago. Apparently, someone that wants to remain anonymous gave him a "grant" to do a field-study of the unique urban ecosystem in "Feral Chicago." Of course, living in the field in Chicago means Doc can still get his morning soykaf with a shot of something in it. All told, Doc's happier than a devil rat with a terrier covered in cheese.
- Sticks

Chicago represents an unusually diverse urban ecosystem, due to the long state during which it has been allowed to transition to a new ecological balance and the relative abundance of fresh water from Lake Michigan and the Chicago River, as well as its many brooks. Indeed, the river is central to connecting the diverse ecological habitats that exist throughout the greater urban area.

Like many paranatural habitats, Chicago is not a closed system. It requires a continual influx of new species and energy to sustain itself, though parts of the system appear to be approaching a self-sustaining model. Metahuman influence is a major factor in bringing energy into the system (notably by introducing foodstuffs), but the river is much more critical to the overall development of the region.

- Just because it's not brine doesn't mean you should drink it, especially the farther downstream you get. Even where it comes in from Lake Michigan, the Chicago River has things living in it, and a lot of people in the Zone seem to treat it as their personal toilet.
- Ecotope
- Hey, I drank the water, and I'm just fine! Besides, that's where the local microbrews get their flavor.
- Traveler Jones
- Jones, you have digestive expansion and a toxin extractor. The Adamant Liver model from Shiawase, in fact. You could drink dragon piss and savor the flavor.
- Butch

While historical evidence is scarce, the transition from an urban to a post-urban ecology in Chicago began with the dramatic exit of the majority of metahuman inhabitants (along with their pets) from the area, a process that, in terms of the existing fauna, is comparable to a localized extinction event. The imbalance in the area led some of the remaining species to dominate, while also leaving the urban sprawl subject to colonization from invader species that lacked natural predators or that filled a particular niche.

CLIMATE AND CONDITIONS

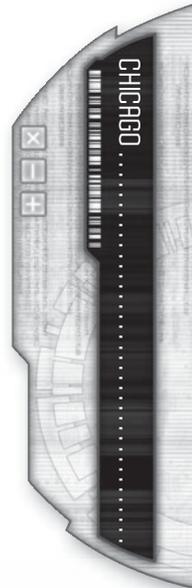
Chicago has a humid continental climate with hot, wet summers and cold winters that typically see a great deal of precipitation in the form of snow and sleet. Weather conditions have generally become more extreme in the last few decades, with heat waves in the summer, and snowfall during winter regularly exceeding 120 centimeters. The Windy City is known for the breeze off nearby Lake Michigan; this wind can intensify and become bitterly cold in the winter, according to long-time residents.

- What about tornadoes, acid rain, tsunamis, all that crap?
- Kia
- Tsunamis and hurricanes require an ocean; the thunderstorms and blizzards off Lake Michigan are bad enough. Acid rain (and snow, and sleet...) require particular environmental pollutants that Chicago ironically doesn't produce because its industry is almost non-existent; Chi-towners only feel it when it blows in from somewhere else, like Gary or Detroit. Tornadoes: the last one to touch down in the city was in 2066, and that was a freak.
- Ecotope
- Since I'm not going to Chicago again in this lifetime, I thought you might find this useful.
- Winterhawk

//upload attachment :: user Winterhawk :: 07/13/21
SUBJECT: Astral Survey of Chicago
FROM: aaitch@are...
TO: MUS4931.06S08;;
PRIORITY: Normal
ENCRYPTION: On

Sir,
 We have completed our initial survey of the Chicago manascape and have a list of thirty-one points of possible significant interest. Except for the Cermak Crater itself, the astral space of the Containment Zone is almost uniformly a mana ebb, broken only by some sporadic areas of normal mana and a few odd domains. The latter are ritual sites that were protected after the FAB-III outbreak, or the Shattergraves, which appear to have recovered much more quickly.

Outside the CZ, astral space is normal for a city with its metahuman population and higher than average number of Awakened: a sprinkling of domains, natural, artificial, and managed. Of greatest interest is the large number of domains that appear to be aspected toward insect shamanism. Analysis by field researchers that could get close enough suggests these are natural areas that are, or have been, managed to increase their size and potency (possibly to link up as manalines), or possibly, and more



frighteningly, these are very old (pre-Awakening) artificial sites. In either case, this could be at least a partial explanation for the multispecies hives we observed in Chicago. Some geometries indicate the Cermak Crater lies on a nexus with these sites—in which case, the Cermak Blast might have disrupted the network throughout Chicago.

One area of interest we could not approach was Elemental Hall. There is some sort of construct there that defies astral perception. I respectfully request one of the Unseen be transferred to my team to take a look at it, as I believe the techniques involved might be similar.

Respectfully yours,
<signature block>

//end attachment

FLORA

The various plant and fungus species were some of the first to take advantage of the metahuman exodus, and many of Chicago's parks, particularly Lincoln Park, are now completely overgrown and are second- or third-growth temperate woodlands. Some of these have been subject to moderate logging, especially before the winter months. Most of the individual trees planted along street avenues have already succumbed to such depredation, though there are exceptions.

- Chicago's still pretty green, especially if you compare it to most of the European sprawls I could name, but it's a green that's gone back to nature, if you get my drift. Fullerton Parkway, for example, is pretty much a corridor walled and roofed with trees, and it's a damn bumpy ride, because the roots have grown under the street and ripped it all up.

- Sticks

The absence of regular street and building maintenance or landscaping has left the man-made structures to undergo decay and allowed the build-up of debris. This has resulted in a humus build-up in various nooks and crannies, which are now well-exploited by a variety of prairie grasses, mosses, and other hardy specimens.

- He isn't kidding. The grasses are so high when you walk down some streets they'll tickle your ass through the holes in your jeans, and the dirt practically covers some of the streets. In others, of course, people have run the plants right over.

- Ecotope

Molds appear to be especially prevalent, probably due to the high humidity and abandoned plant-products. Many hardcopy books and paintings have suffered greatly at the cost of mold damage, and seasonal allergies due to spores are very common in long-term Chicago residents. A wide variety of gilled fungi are also present and serve an essential part of the energy-reclamation cycle in the nascent urban woodland areas.

One of the most prolific plants in modern Chicago is illinois hemp, a low-THC variety that has seen widespread cultivation throughout the urban sprawl, principally for manufacture of hemp cloth and hemp oil. Other species that see regular cultivation are root vegetables (especially groundnuts, onions, and quamash) and berries (particularly blueberries and blackberries).

These species also typically grow wild in abandoned gardens or small farms. The lack of large plots of land tends to discourage the cultivation of grains, though some of the enclaves have imported soil to cover a large patch of street or empty parking lot, using manure as a fertilizer.

The large bee population tends to encourage flowering plants in Chicago, both inside and outside the Zone, which adds to the seasonal allergy problems mentioned before. Fungal infections and unbalanced insect populations often prove detrimental to plants in the Containment Zone, however, as the long-lasting insecticides in the developing soil tend to kill nitrogen-fixing species, while leaving the more rapacious leaf-eating varieties untouched.

PARAFLORA

I have collected samples of a few paranormal plant species in Chicago, though anecdotal evidence suggests there are more. The most prevalent of these species is **chicago grey**, an Awakened breed of illinois hemp that features heavier THC levels (responsible for the plant's characteristic grey or off-white leaves) and dual-natured flowers. Two local drug alchemists have allowed me to observe as they harvested the plants and processed them with other materials to make a local version of deepweed. Chicago grey is most prominent outside the Containment Zone, as it fails to properly flower in the mana ebb; however the sight of its grey leaves and bright flowers inside the Zone is typical of an area of normal mana.

Ghoul caps are the subject of several local urban legends, particularly among the ghoul community in Northside. Most often found near sources of carrion, these fleshy mushrooms have vivid, liver-colored caps that exude cadaverine, one of the characteristic chemicals formed by the breakdown of amino acids and a primary olfactory marker for decomposition.

- In American English: these things smell like rotting bodies. I wonder if they produce cadaverine naturally, or if they harvest it from the carrion somehow?

- Nephrine

The particular smell of ghouls tends to dissuade most metahumans, but it attracts scavengers, including ghouls. Unfortunately for the latter, a ghoul cannot digest ghouls, and they provide no nutritional substance whatsoever. Anecdotal tales from several of the ghouls themselves suggest starving ghouls, particularly those suffering mental trauma or brain damage from the transformation, have consumed these mushrooms to stave off hunger pains.

Private Message...

From: Mr. Johnson

Re: Mushrooming

My client is interested in obtaining samples of the so-called "ghoul cap" mushroom in Chicago, to further their project in synthesizing a flesh substitute for ghouls. If you are interested in socially-motivated work, we would need at least fifty specimens, preferably fresh, and can pay up to 50 nuyen each, depending on quality.



However, none of them knew of any member who had literally starved to death on a full stomach. Having no astral component, ghouls have unrestricted range throughout Chicago.

- This is about where someone would pipe in and add their wundertale of some rare version of ghouls that actually satisfy the ghouls' requirement for metahuman flesh, found in some deep, dark corner of the CeeZee or carefully tended by some secret sect of ghouls who water it with metahuman blood. Well, none of that bullshit here, by Ghost. In Chicago, false hope will get you dead almost as fast as the real thing.
- Zoned

A water-dwelling cousin to the haven lily is present in the waterways that wind through many of the former parks, particularly the Alfred Caldwell Lily Pool Gardens in Lincoln Park, which has become home to a number of beavers. It is my belief that the presence of these lilies may be contributing to a false report on the actual astral nature of the Containment Zone, at least in some of the forest areas. This variant was introduced into the Alfred Caldwell garden before the creation of the Containment Zone and before their unique properties were recognized.

- Okay, that might explain the ones in Lincoln Park. What about the ones in Bubbly Creek and the sloughs down on the Calumet River? I mean, the bulbs can do downstream, but upstream?
- Zoned
- I think I'd like some haven water lilies for my koi pond. Maybe I should go bulb-hunting. It'll be better cover for going into Chicago than anything else I can think of.
- Kia

The only other Awakened flora of note in Chicago is a wild version of the Awakened ivy (actually a kudzu hybrid) that was sold by Knight Errant after the formation of the Containment Zone and gained widespread popularity in some areas. The vines were generally abandoned with the property when the city government collapsed, and without proper nutrients and care, most of the remaining vines outside the CZ died. Some few specimens, however, particularly on the Westside bank of the Chicago River, have actually gone wild and survived. At least one enclave in Westside appears to cultivate their ivy so that it completely covers the former apartment complex, but the guards would not let me get close enough to inspect the plants. Still, the bright purple panicles are undoubtedly a copious nectar source for beehives near Westside.

- Awakened ivy is a weird one, robust enough to survive in many climates but dependent on particular care instructions and a tailored diet to remain healthy and efficient. Naturally, the companies that sell it make damn sure their clients have to keep coming back to them for plant food. By all accounts, the ivy shouldn't be able to survive without this care.
- Ecotope
- Patterson's comments that the Chicago variety is a kudzu hybrid suggest to me that this might not be your typical "Awakened ivy,"

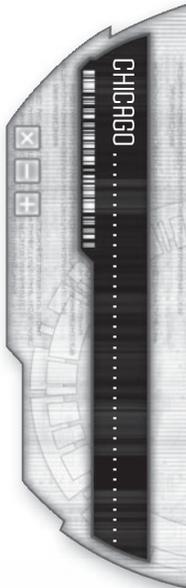
but a local substitute billed as the same thing. It is possible the surviving plants don't even retain the same astral barrier properties.

- Winterhawk
- Some of them appear mundane, but others are weak astral barriers to my Sight. Is it possible the FAB clouds damaged the mundane ones?
- Mika
- No, the FAB would have destroyed the plants.
- Ecotope
- A little digging shows that the city cancelled Eagle Security's law enforcement contract not long after the Containment Zone went into effect, and the corp quickly turned to offering private security for the neighborhoods in and around the Zone as a way to make up its income. Part of the packages they offered included "Awakened barrier vines," but there's no record of ES being licensed to sell Awakened ivy from anybody. At a guess, I'd say they bought knock-off plants from somebody down in the CAS (or even Japan), and the same environmental controls weren't bred into them.
- Pistons
- <sniff> America, I'm proud of you. When we make a knock-off, it's better than the original.
- Kane
- Turn off the networks, Patriot Joe-Bob; there's no indication of the source corp for these bad boys. Kudzu is native to Japan and China; it didn't emigrate to NorthAM until waaaay later. For all you know, this could be a spin-off of Mangadyne's disastrous astral soft drink sweetener research. I bet there'll be a few people that want to find out, though.
- Ecotope
- What? That's it? No giant dwarf-eating Venusian flytraps or Ares-bioengineered chimeric bioweapons that exude insecticides? Man, Chicago sucks.
- Slamm-0!

FAUNA

The principle macrofauna in the feral city of Chicago is, of course, metahumans. The sub-species ratio appears different from the accepted norm, with dwarfs and orks appearing to be approximately as numerous as humans, with fewer elves and trolls per capita. Unfortunately, these statements cannot be confirmed without a proper census, which is unlikely to occur in the foreseeable future. A high number of changelings live in Chicago, particularly the area designated as "Freaktown" in and around Bubbly Creek. Large numbers of retroviral postmetahumans, particularly ghouls, are also present throughout the Chicago metroplex.

By mass, insects are the most prominent fauna in Chicago by a wide margin. The metahuman exodus and subsequent squalor has provided shelter for every common North American insect, and they are nearly omnipresent in the urban sprawl. Despite local and academic belief to the contrary, there is no evidence that Chicago's insect population is in any way the result of the massive insect spirit infestation that was formerly entrenched here. While



some insect spirits are known to be able to control or influence mundane (and some Awakened) species holding their morphology, the significant presence and diversity of insects in Chicago is in line with any major North American metroplex that suddenly stopped making regular use of pest controls. Mother Nature has begun to adjust to the sudden surplus population of insects with the increased presence of insectivorous species. I suspect a new balance will be reached in a few years, if metahumans don't take a hand to tip it one way or another sooner.

The exception to this is the large number of bees, particularly honeybees, within the Zone and the surrounding area. During the last century, the continental population of bees declined, but the colonies in Chicago are literally thriving. I strongly suspect that the reasons behind this include the wide number of flowering plants growing in Chicago and the lack of wireless communications, whose broadcasts have been shown to disrupt bee activity in the past. For whatever reason, many parts of the Containment Zone literally buzz with activity on warm summer days.

- Great. Chicago is a hive city again, but this time it's OK, because it's ecologically sound.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Don't knock it. Bees are an important part of the ecosystem and are primary pollen distributors. The massive implementation of wifi in the past five years has seen a significant worldwide depreciation in their numbers and a corresponding drop in flowering plants that depend on the bugs for their reproduction.
- Ecotope
- Not to mention the CZ is probably the one place it won't cost you the equivalent of a pair of clonal limbs to get fresh honeycomb for your pancakes.
- Traveller Jones

Because of the large insect population, Chicago's most thriving animal species tend to be insectivores, or at least not picky about eating bugs. Bird species of many types find the many high perches and ample six-legged food supply quite appealing, and many empty second- or third-story buildings with busted-out windows host colonies of microbats.

- Bat biosonar is in the same audio spectrum as most ultrasound implants. In most of the Zone and Southside, you can walk around at night with just an ultrasound sensor. This is a bonus, since all of the streetlamps are dead, and there aren't enough fires to really make your way from street-to-street Downtown. An active ultrasound ping will usually drive off the bats right around you, though, and is a dead give-away if anyone else is making their way along by the background ultrasound noise.
- Sticks
- Bats are one of the reasons I like camping in Chicago. You can just lie down on your back in a sleeping bag on cloudy nights and watch with your thermovision as the little orange and red blurs fly around like big ol' fireflies.
- Mihoshi Oni

Spiders, likewise, are common in Chicago and help to control the insect population. The most notorious Chicago spider is the venomous brown recluse, whose bite can sometimes lead to necrosis. Brown recluse bites are extremely rare, but it should be emphasized that Chicago is something of a wild area, and appropriate precautions should be taken before coming here.

- It's been said before, but I'll say it again: bring a well-stocked med-kit. No one wants to see a limb necrotize because a brown recluse crawled into your bedroll at night for warmth and you got bit but didn't have anyone nearby to treat it properly.
- Sticks

Other small species native to the area, including lizards, snakes, mice, rats, chipmunks, and squirrels are present, though less abundant than might be expected because of depredation from the local devil rat population (outside the Zone), owl population (in the Zone), and metahuman population (everywhere in Chicago). The latter, in particular, looks on hunting the larger rodents as a popular activity for children and a welcome source of protein, despite the risks of disease. The squirrel and chipmunk population outside the Containment Zone particularly appears doomed, now that the local devil rats have learned to climb trees. At least one family of beavers exists in the former Lincoln Park and has built a dam in the former Alfred Caldwell Lily Gardens in Lincoln Park, providing them some protection against predation.

Larger mammals include large canines, felines, and white-tailed deer. Most of the canines and felines are former pets or street animals left behind and allowed to turn (or remain) feral, with some exceptions. Coyotes were a recurring nuisance in the outer suburban areas of Chicago before the fall of the city government, and with the greater abandonment of the city, they moved further inward to scavenge, where presumably they met and mingled with the domestic animals left behind. Observation suggests that of the fifteen to twenty "feral dog" packs roaming Chicago, most are actually "coydogs"—hybrids that combine coyote aggressiveness with a dog's lack of fear toward metahumans and unrestricted breeding cycle. Coydogs can and do hunt solitary metahumans in their territory, making them a threat to metahuman life. In turn, some metahumans hunt the dog packs, picking off strays or using rifles and automatic weapons to bring them down to use for food.

Feral cats in Chicago are a different story. Most are solitary hunters subsisting on small prey (principally lizards, rodents, and small birds) and scavenged metahuman food, and they often fall victim to metahumans and canines. The average life of a feral cat is probably less than two years. Two large clowders of feral cats have formed in Northside and Southside, both with as many as 250 members (not counting kittens) and arranged around a common food source. In Southside, this is the large number of small fish and game in the East and South Lagoons of Jackson Park, while in Northside, this is the entrail dumping-ground of the pig-raising ghoul—the cats help keep rodent populations down near the pig feed farms, apparently.

- I advise anyone with an enhanced sense of smell against using it in or around the clowders' (very) well-marked territory. Nothing, and I mean nothing, not even the odd flurry of acid rain when the



wind blows in from Detroit, can wash away 10+ years of cat piss territory markers.

- Zoned

According to anecdotal reports, the white-tailed deer population of Chicago's parks flourished when the most prevalent means of violent death (vehicular collisions) disappeared. Unfortunately, hungry metahumans armed with modern firearms and fully automatic weapons almost hunted them to local extinction during the winters that followed. A few deer do appear to have survived on Northerly Island, and I wouldn't bet money on them surviving the winter except that eco-terrorists blew up the bridge connecting it to the mainland not long ago, letting conservationists and a Deer shaman begin looking after the much-depleted population.

- Wonderful. Who are these guys?
- Sticks
- Heavily-armed ROTC cadets and veterinarian students from the University of Illinois at Springfield. Apparently, it was this semester's non-thesis option for graduates. Their "Deer shaman" is actually a doctoral student doing field research for Awakened veterinary medicine. I have her pegged as an enchanter-aspected type.
- Zoned
- Should be fun to watch, when winter sets in and the mainlanders get hungry.
- DefCon5
- Are you kidding? They'll hit the food drops that are supposed to go to the island. What'll be funny is when the grad students' stomachs start growling, and they eyeball the walking venison burgers they've been taking care of.
- Sticks

Despite some anecdotal evidence, I've found no scat or signs of larger non-paranormal animals or predators in Chicago. The zoo populations were all relocated or stolen. The reports of bobcats are likely to be sightings of blackberry cats in their masked forms.

PARAFAUNA

The majority of the paranormal animals in Chicago suffered a minor extinction event when FAB strain III was released during Operation: Extermination. Hundreds of paranormal critters adapted to urban life had no protection against the magic-draining bacteria and died; one Ares after-action report estimated the numbers of devil rat corpses to be in the millions. Reportedly, some guard paranormals deliberately and repeatedly rammed into astral barriers in an attempt to remove attached FAB clouds, but such devices rarely saved the animal. Ghouls, spirits, and metahuman magicians likewise suffered greatly, though the latter had more options available to them to resolve the issue. When the paranormal population was consumed, the FAB clouds persisted for months by consuming the background magic in the Containment Zone, moving on or dying when the mana ran out or they encountered a more tempting target. The continual cycle eventually exhausted or somehow weakened the astral space in the Containment Zone,

LAKE MICHIGAN-HURON

From the voice log of Doctor Paterson

06/16/71 1342: Going fishing today. Water samples show far fewer toxins than I would have thought; apparently, Knight really *is* cutting back on what Ares is dumping in the water. Technically, Lake Michigan and Lake Huron are the same body of water, so I should find some bacteria and invertebrates from far afield.

06/16/71 1651: Attacked by spitting pike. Had to shoot it in self defense, and for supper. I think it'll go nicely with some sage after I test its liver for toxin build-up.

06/16/71 2111: Experimental night-dive had to be aborted early due to idiot fishing with homemade explosive, who was chased off by a Coast Guard patrol boat, which was attacked by what I think were pirates or smugglers. A vaguely humanoid wave of toxic water attacked both ships. A sample from its wake shows a high concentration of insecticides and higher-than-normal radiation—fallout from Operation: Extermination, the Cermak Blast, or both? Judging by the piscine populations, the locals are not overfishing.

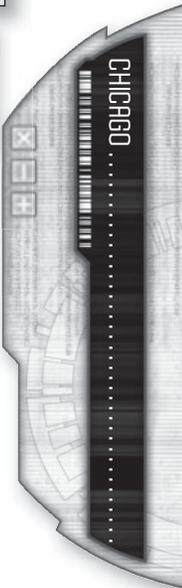
and when it was reduced to permanent mana ebbs throughout, the FAB clouds were finally eradicated.

- "Eradicated" is a pretty strong term. Outbreaks still occur, but there isn't enough background count outside the CZ to sustain them. Worked a treat that there was a major outbreak when the shedim tried to claim some of Chicago's cemeteries back in '61, though.
- Zoned
- Yeah, that was the reason. It had nothing to do with the fact that nearly all the bodies were embalmed and/or in a state of advanced decay. The last regular funeral was held back in '63, right before the cremation ordinance went through statewide.
- Sticks

Chicago's single most successful paranormal animal species is the devil rat and its close cousin, the demon rat. These two paracritters exist throughout the Chicago sprawl, with the exception of the Zone; indeed, all of the parafauna in Chicago avoid the Containment Zone and its accompanied mana ebb, with a few notable exceptions. The population of devil rats, being voracious omnivores, nearly immune to pestilence and toxins, and astounding breeders are very difficult to control by modern, working metroplex governments. Without such concerted effort, the little bastards have outbred themselves.

- Literally. A devil rat swarm will eat anything that walks, flaps, crawls, swims, or stands still too long. No loving mother in Chi-town will leave a baby alone in case a devil rat comes along.
- DefCon5

Urgent Message...



- Yeah, and devil rat fights always end with some clever dick bringing a demon rat, and somebody else shooting the stupid bastard.
- Zoned
- Ghost, demon rats are the worst. I went rat-trapping once (you have to use big mechanical traps; poison is just a spice to a devil rat) and caught a demon rat. Damned thing had half its head cut off and still made a go at me. I nearly lost two inches of <deleted by sysop>
- Sticks
- Enough devil rat stories. They give me the heebie-jeebies.
- FastJack

Outside the Containment Zone, the only other paracritters of note are Awakened canines, the blackberry cat, and the gomatia. Blackberry cats are Awakened felines that can transform into a larger creature the size of a jaguar or lynx; this form is actually an illusion, but the cat has enhanced physical attributes commensurate with its illusionary size. Besides this attribute and an attraction to catnip, only a trained parabiologist or a skilled assenser can discern the difference between a blackberry cat and a normal feral cat.

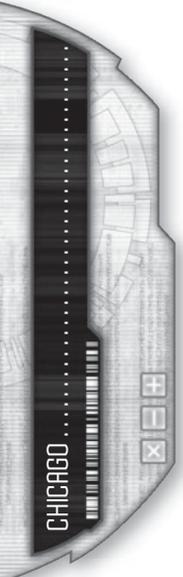
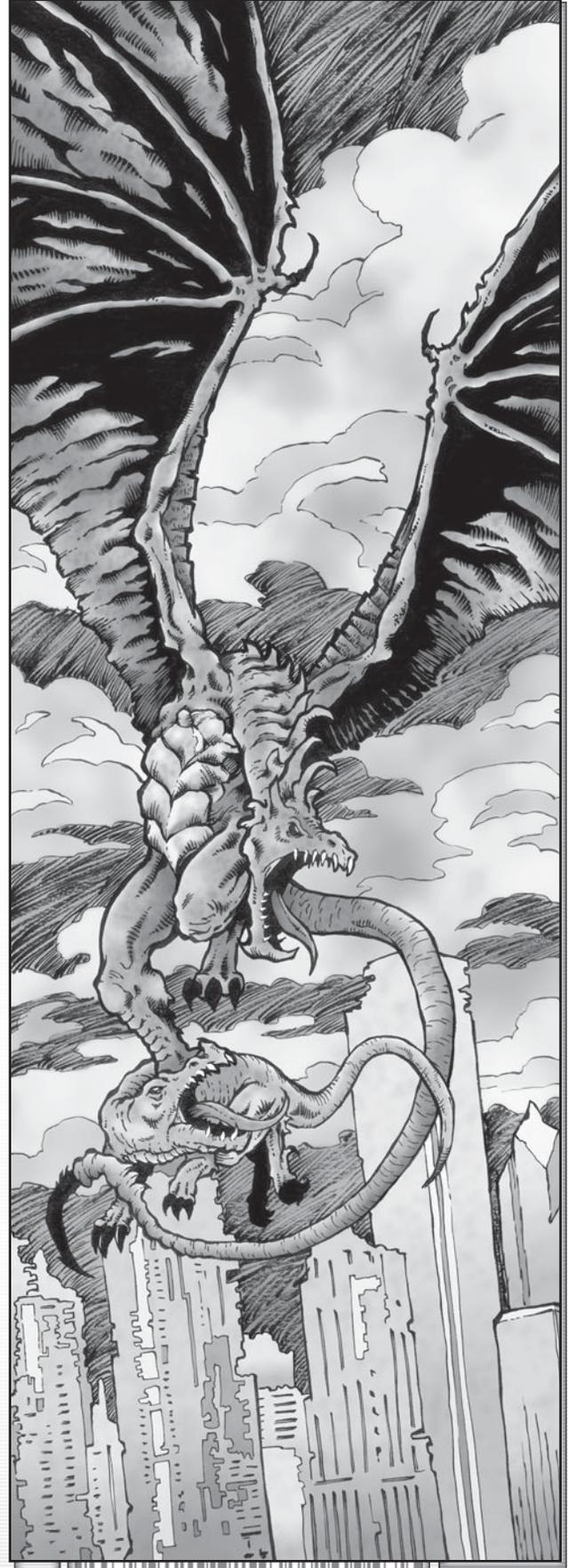
- Does this mean I shouldn't pet the kitty?
- Slamm-0!
- In Chicago, you shouldn't pet *any* of the kitties; they have diseases, and they aren't friendly. However, you shouldn't really worry unless a cat starts stalking you—the feral cats are afraid of metahumans; the blackberry cats are *not*.
- Sticks

Paranormal canines have an unusual role in the Chicago ecology, in that several are leaders of feral dog/coydog packs that roam the city. So far, I have personally spotted three different packs led by a hellhound, one pack led by a barghest, and one very odd pack whose favored tactic is to use the gabriel hound leader as the bait in an ambush. If anecdotes by the locals are to be believed, at least half of the feral dog packs in Chicago are led by a paranormal canine.

- A gabriel hound has a limited shapeshifting ability, allowing it to draw up on two legs and appear—from a distance or in the dark—like a slightly hunched human, elf, or ork. It can't really walk like that, but if it has a shopping cart to rest its forelimbs on, it can sort of shuffle along. Add a couple of rags or clothes and the damned thing looks a lot like a bag lady or homeless guy (which in Chicago is your basic resident, more or less).
- Ecotope
- I've seen gabriel hound bitches wrap their puppies in newspaper, blankets, or old clothes to sort of reinforce the illusion. Hell of a surprise when you get too close and junior and mama go for you.
- Sticks

Gomatia are large Awakened lizards from Africa. Their enhanced senses allow them to pick out Awakened insects, including flesh form and hybrid bug spirits, which they attack using their long tongues. The lizards don't thrive in Chicago's climate, but they are popular pets and hosts for magician familiars in the Zone.

INCOMING FEED.....



The only paranormal animal known to operate within the Containment Zone is a solitary wyvern that the locals have taken to calling Scarsnout. This creature has demonstrated a singular level of cunning, evading many traps and destroying a number of hunting parties that have entered the Zone looking to bag it. It is much commented-on by the locals for its resemblance, on its unscarred profile, to the late President Dunkelzahn. Generally speaking, the wyvern keeps to the skies above the Containment Zone, which have apparently normal mana for the most part, only diving down into the mana ebb to snatch prey. Given its size, the wyvern is fairly predacious, and it often makes trips outside the Zone to steal livestock, attacking (and consuming) flesh from insect spirits, lone metahumans, fish from the lake, or anything else that takes its fancy.

THE RIVER

The Chicago River is one of the best parabiological barriers I have ever encountered. It passes directly through the mana ebb in the Zone for some miles, thus discouraging paraspecies from the Great Lakes from entering the Mississippi River Basin, and vice versa. While not a sufficiently strong deterrent to immotile material like seeds or leaves, it still serves as an important barrier that prevents dangerous piscine species from both waterways from invading, to an extent.

For strictly mundane species, the Chicago River also poses several unique challenges. Unlike most waterways, the Chicago River is paved along both banks for its entire length in Chicago, which eliminates most of the marshy habitats. It also serves as a primary toilet and garbage bin for a number of individuals within the Containment Zone and Southside. While not quite as bad as the industrial runoff of past decades, any metahuman drinking directly from the river, especially once it emerges from the Zone, is almost guaranteed a case of diphtheria or dysentery. Crayfish, crappies, black bass, catfish, carp, and goldfish make up the majority of the larger aquatic fauna within the city limits, though the lower reaches outside the Containment Zone sometimes play host to paraspecies, including the devil jack diamond and spitting pike.

- I'm surprised he hasn't mentioned it, but the fish species that do best in Chicago are insectivores. The water teems with bugs in the Zone or the bend in the river under Archer Ave, where a glistening turd-brown-tide washes up on the wall.
- Zoned

Where metahuman occupation isn't present the various small creeks and tributaries that flow into the Chicago River tend to remain clean (if you ignore the residual pesticides). These are where animals are likely to come for water and where small wetland ecologies (particularly the sloughs in Skokie and along the Calumet River) have formed in the last twenty years, hosting birds, snakes, and amphibians. Notable exceptions include Bubbly Creek, where the metahuman population is attempting to live in harmony with the surrounding wetlands, and the Calumet River (technically the Calumet River and the Cal-Sag Channel), which has a very small current and runs through most of Southside. The Calumet sees a large amount of toxic chemical and industrial waste, usually from small industries and drug labs in the area.

THE CALUMET SWAMP

From the voice log of Doctor Paterson

06/11/71 0837: The ecosystem in and around Lake Calumet is unhealthy. All of the surviving plants and trees show signs of infection, and unlike other wetland areas in Chicago, there is no sign of birds or other animals. If not for the constant buzzing of the mosquitoes—which according to the locals are active much too early every year and continue to thrive much later in the season than they should—there would be nothing to hear except for the odd tree giving in to gravity and falling to ruin.

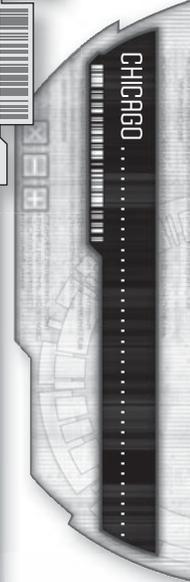
06/12/71 1344: I'm beginning to suspect a paranatural agency at work here. The trees literally crumble to the touch, the plants can be uprooted easily, and the "dirt" beneath my feet is mulch—not even compost—of decayed plants and animal remains that should have at least begun the transition to humus. Soil samples indicate a general lack of bacterial life, probably the reason why decomposition is so slow—but where are the other insects? Ants, beetles, something to consume the dead matter and turn it into something fertile? There's nothing here beyond the damned mosquitoes. Parascience aside, I'd say this place feels blighted.

06/13/71 1403: First sign of animal life: a Canadian goose, *Branta Canadensis*. It's been dead for an indeterminate amount of time...seems to have shed most of its feathers, probably from illness. No maggots in the flesh; it appears to be necrotizing on its own. Damn odd. Possibly a viral infection?

06/14/71 1012: Discussion with a gang of betameth dealers emptying some jugs in the river may have shed some light on the situation. It seems an insect shaman known as the Foul One once claimed the northern reaches of Lake Calumet. The effects are reminiscent of the leeching metamagic. A toxic insect shaman? Mosquito as harbinger of plague and decay? Unlikely. Possibly Ares testing a biowarfare weapon?

- Not to mention, the bodies pile up and block the flow. You'd think the mafiosos would learn to dispose of things better.
- Hannibelle
- You'd think that since the Calumet and Chicago Rivers meet, there'd be some river traffic between the two, but there isn't much. That's because the Saganashkee Slough has turned into this huge swamp that's swallowed everything this side of Argonne National Laboratory and Archer Ave. I don't even want to think about what paracritters are living in there.
- Sounder
- That's why most the most popular smuggling route is up the Mississippi to the Chicago River, straight through the CZ, and then back around to Lake Calumet. 'Course, with so little traffic, evading the Illinois National Guardsmen patrols that are supposed to keep

Urgent Message...



traffic in and out of Chicago is pointless; thankfully, they're notoriously easy (and cheap) to bribe.

- 2XL

THE NOOSENET

While the hardware and architecture is typically old, even antiquated, Chicago appears to support a robust, or at least resilient, low-tech Matrix culture in the Noose area, which connects to the grid in several unexpected places, connecting through back-areas of the Joliet, Gary, and South Milwaukee Local Telecommunications Grids. There is an area reserved for Chicago in the Illinois Regional Telecommunications Grid, but it sees very little traffic and is not connected geographically to the NooseNet.

Local matrix lore suggests that a synthetic intelligence exists in the NooseNet, and my data traffic analysis software appears to confirm that this is the case—either that or the main body of the NooseNet architecture *is* a synthetic intelligence. In any event, all instances of contact with the SI would suggest a non-communicative icon of palpable “gravity” when observed in detail. The icon (no two users describe the same one) never engages in conversation if prompted and typically leaves quickly and without a trace or datatrail. Given such scant evidence, I would be extremely hesitant before categorizing the SI as xenosapient or metasapient, but it does not appear to be a “feral” SI as such.

- In Chicago, the only matrix service providers are black MSPs—Anarkh is popular, but good ol' Fuchi Telecomm is a favorite among a lot of the old-timers.
- FastJack

The lack of local wireless has a detrimental effect on the technomancer community, with many of the unwired displaying symptoms of unease, mental agitation, and even panic attacks or withdrawal symptoms when they are in Chicago (and away from wifi access) for too long. Intriguingly, I have encountered a small urban tribe (an unappealing and misleading term, but I wouldn't call them a family group in the traditional sense) of technomancers that appear to commune with each other and thus maintain a degree of composure and comfort, a technique they describe as “technospace.” While not able to virtually project themselves into each other's living nodes, the group can communicate by thought projection—virtual telepathy or radiotelepathy.

- Chicago isn't completely without wireless Matrix access, since commlinks and other devices can act as routers, but the density of commlinks in Chicago is pretty low. The farther away you get from the sub-sprawls, the more likely your signal is going to drop out entirely as a key router connecting you to the worldwide Matrix shuts off or moves out of range. The Zone is even worse—hidden mode is the norm, because the Mafia and smuggler crews prefer to keep their networks closed to others, especially when they're doing business.
- Pistons

THE INFECTED

Posted By: Hannibelle

Aside from ghouls, a lot of the HMHVV-positive crowd shies away from Chicago. Most of the vampires, wendigos, dzoo-noo-qua, and other powerful critters fled FAB III or were eaten by insect spirits, killed by vigilante gangs, or liquidated by Ares Firewatch teams during Operation: Extermination and the clean up. The intelligent ones figured out that they could easily hide in the city and feed on whomever they pleased—but hey, if you're smart enough to figure that out, you're also smart enough to realize that Chicago is the cloaca of the world, and you can live much nicer in one of the sub-sprawls and come into Chicago for meals. Given that the Infected aren't exactly pack predators to begin with, it should come as no surprise that no vampire gangs really took off either, and “mass infection” nightmare scenarios just didn't happen.

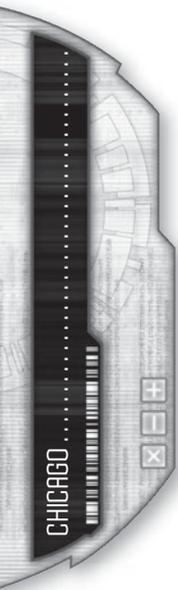
- Heh. Vampires vs. Bug Spirits. I'd like to be a fly on the wall during that fight.
- Sticks

That isn't to say there aren't any Infected in the Zone. Some people did take the devil's bargain and agree to become Infected; others were attacked by ravenous monsters and became Infected against their choice. These metahumans are almost always loners, and except for the ghouls, they are nearly universally maligned, hated, and feared. Vampires and wendigo, especially, aren't pack hunters, so “covens” of Infected are practically non-existent.

- Common sense rules here: it's a lot harder to hide your feeding activities when the entire population is aware of immediate Awakened threats. People already leery of the UB aren't likely to join a wendigo cult or offer a vein up in exchange for the protection a vampire might offer. Goblins and banshees are generally brain damaged and can't disguise their feeding anyway, which means it's torch and pickfork time when somebody finds a mangled corpse half-stuffed in a storm drain.
- DefCon5

Rarer forms of Infected like loup-garou and nosferatu probably didn't exist in Chi-town before the wall went up. If there were any in the sprawl, they're either dead or fled at this point.

Chicago's ghouls, by contrast, have worked to form actual communities and social networks. The more intelligent ghouls work to look after the ones that suffered brain damage during their transition, though every now and then a feral member slips through the cracks. Finding enough to eat in Chicago can be a serious challenge—a population of 5,000 average-sized ghouls needs the equivalent of 50 to 60 metahumans per week just to scrape by with minimum nutritional requirements; most of us prefer more if we can get it. A lot of ghouls in Chicago are split down socio-philosophical lines. The ideological followers of Tamir Grey refrain from unethical means of obtaining metahuman flesh and are typically a meal or two away from starvation. The philosophic descendents of Blaine Hammond are more active in pursuing what they need to thrive and often end up working with Tamanous. Consequently, they are better fed.



INSECT SPIRITS

Posted By Sticks

Something about Chicago attracts insect shamans. Maybe it's the history, or maybe there's something here that lets the insect totems touch a magicker's mind more easily. I don't know about that. What I do know is Chicago has probably the largest concentration of insect magicians in North America, and it has since at least the UB days. They don't work together anymore—far from it, some of the hives are actively competing—but they're all dangerous. I've sifted through the rumors to identify what I think are the majority of the insect shamans and hive groupings in Chicago, but I'm missing more than a few. A lot of insect spirits were set free when their queens or summoners died, and every insect magician alive practices their work in secret.

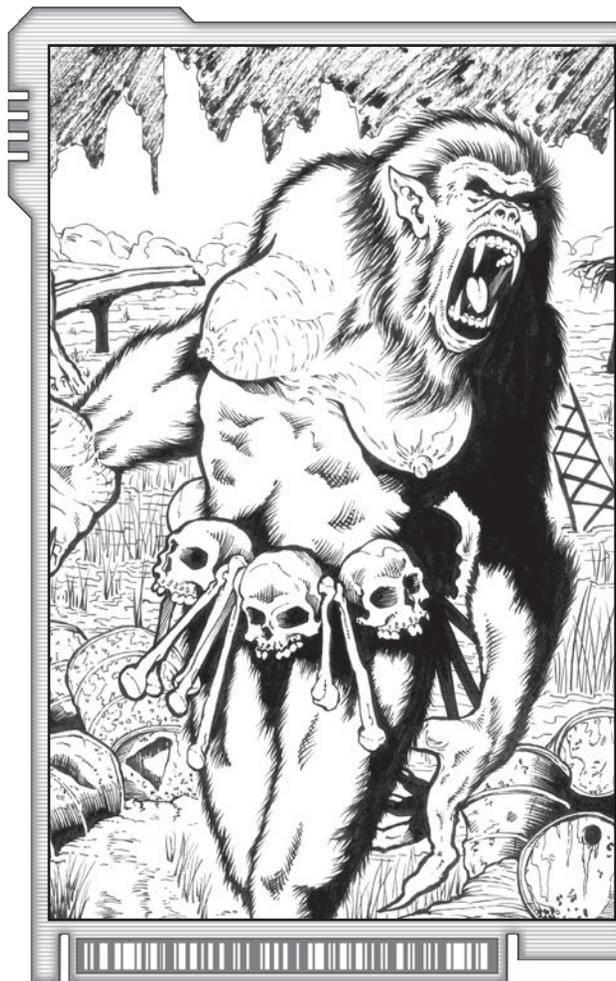
Also...I don't know what it is about Chicago, but many of the long-time magicians here, the ones that lived through Bug City and fought the insects as hard as any...turn. I really couldn't say what the slippery slope is here; it might just be stress and mental illness that forces them to become what they fight, or maybe they're slowly corrupted by what they do. But I know that not all of the insect shamans in Chicago come from outside, and few of them start out as bug-lovers.

- If that report Winterhawk posted up above is to be believed, it might be that the energies of astral space in Chicago are somehow "tainted" with energy from the insect planes. It would take some time for that to really affect a magician, but if this happens over a period of years...
- Ethernaut
- I prefer to think of totems and mentor spirits as abstract concepts around which to channel mana; in the case of insect spirits, these are extremely alien thought processes to the metahuman mind. It could be that the *idea* of insect spirit conjuration and the subsequent mental breakdown is passed along as a meme or psychomantic echo of some sort. Did any of these magicians learn a spell from an insect shaman's grimoire, or bind one of their foci, or use any of their reagents?
- Winterhawk
- I bet money UnlimiTech knows.
- Sticks

Desolation Angels

On the surface, the Angels are an all-female go-gang. They're the type of super-feminist, matriarchal gang society that appeals to Wiccans gone post-apocalyptic. They operate shelters for abused women and rape victims (and sometimes hunt down the men that are responsible) and openly accept (and defend) lesbians and bisexual women. By their own code, men are only fit for breeding, and they treat the few men they do have as little more than slaves or property. There are three groups that operate in Chicago, one in each of the 'sides, and their colors are blue and black—leather, if they can get it.

The truth is, the core cadre of the Desolation Angels are mantis spirits. Free mantis spirits, I think; I haven't pegged any magicians yet. Each of the groups is independent of the others,

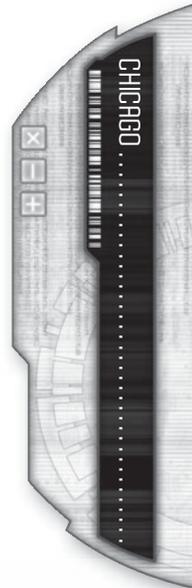


with authority resting in the most powerful nymph. Some of the male slaves are, in fact, "male" mantid spirits that the lead mantids use to reproduce. I still don't know how many of the metahuman Desolation Angels know the real nature of the core cadre.

- Every couple of weeks, the Angels zip into the Zone; it's about the only time the groups from different 'sides cooperate. I guess they must be bug hunting.
- DefCon5
- The angels have chapters in sprawls outside Chicago, too. Makes you wonder if mantids infest them all.
- Hannibelle
- I wouldn't put it past them. Anne Penchyk, the chica that ran with Gen. Yates for President against Dunkelzahn, and current head of the Timmons Memorial Fund (y'know, the ones funding the Ghoultown memorial), used to run with the Angels, and the conspiracy theorists say Yates was a bug and he was killed by mantid spirits...
- Clockwork

The Foul One

I don't even know if this fucker still exists, but I think so. The Foul One is a female wendigo that lives out in Calumet Swamp with a group of maggots called the Swamp Thangs. She's probably



the longest operating insect shaman in Chicago; I don't know if she was even associated with the UB. The Foul One follows Mosquito, and the couple times I've encountered her (before the walls came down), she had a traveling mana lodge within a massive tent. Tricky bitch, and not much of a grand planner, but cunning and a real survivor.

- I thought the Foul One was male.
- DefCon5
- Who can tell, under all that fur?
- Mihoshi Oni
- You hear weird rumors about the Foul One. She appears less sane, if possible, than practically any of the other insect magicians I've ever heard of. Survivors of her rituals (like, three in the last thirty years) say she likes to recount a story about being trapped in the jungles of Amazonia, where she found a valley of small pyramids, each marked by a symbol for a different insect. Others swear she knows blood magic, but that might just be because of the mosquito/blood thing or her particularly cannibalistic tastes. The Swamp Thangs participate in her cannibalistic feasts, though most of them suffer from malaria.
- Change Agent
- What I hear is that Ares is offering two million nuyen for whoever brings her in alive—plus the latest toys off the assembly line!
- Kane

Harrow's Hive

The most "traditional" of the hives, Harrow's Hive is a Bee hive with a queen but not a shaman. It operates out of the skyscrapers in Downtown. I'm pretty sure that they move between nests, though that can't be good for protecting their incubating members. Harrow's Hive is the source of most of the rumors about royal jelly in Chicago, because it sends its flesh form, hybrid forms, and even some of its maggots out on the streets of the Zone covered with it.

- What *is* royal jelly?
- Mika
- Hybrid forms are spirits, but with an actual biology of sorts somewhere between mammalian and insectoid. Most of the organs and whatnot are not completely functional (at least so far as Ares' doctors can determine), but they can still consume, process, and apparently derive some nourishment from organic materials. That isn't to say that bugs need to eat, but they can eat...and some of them can produce substances analogous to their insect types. I think this "royal jelly" is actually the product of Bee spirits that have consumed large amounts of dual-natured pollen from Awakened flowers.
- Ethernaut
- That might be part of it, but I don't think it's the whole story. I think what these spirits might actually be doing is brewing a kind of "natural" magical compound. Either it's a free spirit using a variation on the ability to produce reagents, or they're harvesting reagents

from these Awakened flowers and feeding it to them. Dunno, just a thought.

- Lyran
- That might explain why there are said to be different "types" of royal jelly...different sources, different recipes.
- Winterhawk

The maggots of Harrow's Hive are mostly degenerate metamorphs that are pretty far gone—they basically worship the queen, and they help the hive move on a regular basis. There's nothing quite as disturbing as watching a bag lady pushing a metamorph cocooned in honeycomb down the street in an old shopping cart. A few of the "drones"—managerial types that retain a bit more of their personality, or maybe just flesh forms, I can't tell—have a little magical ability but don't seem to be insect magicians themselves. The true Bee spirits keep a close eye on them.

- I spied a council of some sort on the top floors of Spire. It was two huge spirits, they must have been queens, sort of dancing and waving their antennae at each other. One looked like a giant honeybee; the other was thin, like a yellowjacket wasp. I didn't dare stay long, but later on, I saw the two bugs fly off. Do you think an alliance is in the works?
- DefCon5
- That, or worse: a nymph was sent out to form a new hive.
- Sticks

Myrmidons and Aphid Twins

The word for these guys is weird. Full magicians aren't the only ones that hear the call of the insect totems, as the Myrmidons make perfectly clear. This trio of mystic adepts that follow Ant used to be known as the Brothers Grimm and were well-known in the Chicago shadows before the walls went up. They're one of the few groups of insect magicians I've ever known and one of the rare insect hives that operate in the Zone.

- You can tell that you're dealing with the Myrmidons because they wear armor made from the chitinous hides of fallen hybrid forms—I think they might summon them just to slaughter them for their bits and pieces—and the incredibly strong shamanic masks they exhibit when using their adept abilities. It's rare to see them cast spells or summon spirits; I think the mana ebb in the Zone inhibits those powers.
- Zoned

I heard a rumor—only a rumor—that the Myrmidons are protecting a pair of Aphid spirit nymphs that secrete royal jelly. I can't vouch for that myself, but I've fought the Myrmidons; they were covered with a film of grey goop, and in nature, ants do sometimes "farm" aphids in return for protection...

- It seems unlikely; there's no account of insect spirits ever displaying this kind of behavior anywhere else. I'm surprised they're not gathering the material to conjure a queen.
- Ethernaut



- They might be. Appropriate materials are rare in the Zone, and appropriate facilities to process them rarer. If they do have these Aphid spirits though, it might be they have the means...
- Man-Of-Many-Names

The Lonely Roach

There's at least one free Roach spirit in Chicago, mostly spotted hanging around Southside materialized as a huge troll in a massive trench coat. Other known forms include a barely pubescent, androgynous elven prostitute, a hunch-backed dwarf with a dirty beard, a tall human male with an AmerInd or Latino cast to his features, and a skinny ork girl in faded combat fatigues. The Roach is known for offering a spirit pact to the lonely and desperate, making his victims nearly indestructible in exchange for...well, whatever spirits feed off of from metahumans. Most of the stories about the Lonely Roach and the person compacted with it end badly, with the victim left a drained husk or biting off more than they can chew and taking more damage than even the Roach's gift can heal.

- Of course, destroying or binding the damn thing would require a trip to the insect planes, which no sane magician would—or could—accomplish.
- Winterhawk
- Frag me. I think this thing hired me for a run once. This huge troll in a trench coat wanted me to steal one of those astral camera things from an ASPS camp.
- Zoned
- Uh...a hunchbacked dwarf gave me an astral camera and hired me to photograph the Cermak crater. You don't think...?
- DefCon5
- The Roach is alien to metahumanity, though it has learned much of us in its time here. Still, there is no compassion within its shell, only a certain hunger fuelled by...sentimentality, you might call it. Even solitary creatures can be too long on their own and feel the call of...home.
- Man-Of-Many-Names

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I started following these two after intercepting a memo from the Apep Consortium a couple of days ago. Kheper is an Egyptian *heka* magician dedicated to Khepri, the Scarab God, and he is a Scarab magician. According to my research, he came to Chicago just a few weeks ago with a couple of members from his cult, whom I believe are flesh forms. As soon as he got here, he sought out a boy from the Orphanage called Samsa and took him on as his apprentice. Since then, they've been crawling all over the Zone, recovering artifacts of past insect magicians and conducting rituals in the empty nests. I believe Kheper has the divining metamagic and uses an arrangement of beetle shells for his sortilege—it would certainly explain how he is able to discover all these lost and hidden caches. I also believe they have discovered the secret of manufacturing royal jelly on their own.

// end attachment //

- Interesting...is there any particular area that seems to hold their interest? A pattern to the sites they visit?
- Am-mut
- Fishing, Am-mut? You used to be more subtle. Tell the Consortium to look in the Egyptian wing of the Field Museum of Natural History and see what they find.
- Elijah

HOT SPOTS

Posted By: Traveler Jones

Besides all the historic landmarks—well, the ones not demolished to build the Wall, or in the name of progress, whatever—there are plenty of great places in Chicago to go and do business. These are the hot spots that most likely interest shadow-tourists like you and I.

WHERE TO MEET

Chances are you aren't a Chi-town native, and you don't even know where to look for the action. Meeting places aren't ten-a-yen in Chicago; you need clear entrances and exits, a measure of security, and above all, something to attract people to meet with you there. If you do need to set up a meet with a fixer or Mr. Johnson, I would recommend these places.

Chicago's Own Pizzeria (Northside)

This is the last place on Earth to taste Chicago-style pizza in Chicago. Chicago's Own looks like your standard restaurant, with bars on the bulletproof windows, an upstairs apartment with armored shutters, and razorwire on the roof. The greenhouse out back is a trap; the actual business of growing things happens with sun lamps in the basement. There's no AR ads, but you can smell it all the way down the block in South Milwaukee.

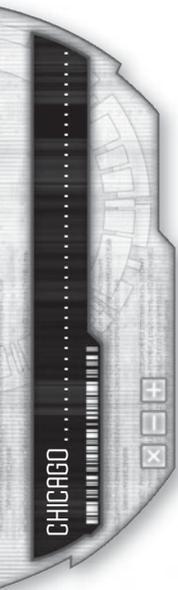
The owner, Ames, grows her own vegetables and herbs, and makes her own sausages. That's probably the biggest problem with the local residents: Ames buys pigs from the ghouls. She won't take raw meat from them, so she has to do all the slaughtering herself. The end product is a pizza-lover's dream: a light, buttery crust (beer batter is a favorite alternate), real crushed tomatoes, fresh garlic, bell peppers, onions, and that sausage...mmm. Chicago's Own is also one of the few places in the city that accepts nuyen (that reminds me: you pay first and then eat), mainly because it gets the tourist crowd from South Milwaukee. Of course, barter is acceptable for locals.

- Trust Jones to start off thinking with his stomach.
- Butch
- He has the right of it, though. Chicago's Own might be no-frills compared to McHugh's in Seattle, but it's clean and up-scale for Chicago. A lot of Ares Mr. Johnsons reserve tables there when hiring locals or meeting out-of-towners.
- Sticks

Fort Chicago (Northside)

Fort Sheridan was a Reserve Army base set over a toxic landfill and housing the usual spoil from the old American military-industrial complex. Briefly busy during the whole Bug City





nightmare, Colloton's federal government decided to cut its losses and pull everything back to O'Hare when the city government pulled out, officially decommissioning the Fort. So, naturally, it became a locus point for paramilitaries that like to play at being an army and AWOL military personnel without anywhere else to turn.

Most of the base could best be described as Spartan; the sandbag and plascrete fortifications erected by the boys-in-green (I'm sorry—the Illinois State Militia) are weathered and mostly untested. I honestly couldn't tell you if that's because of the mini-gun emplacements or the fact that there's toxic land to spare in the rest of Chicago. Still, it's one of the best little communities for buying or selling military or ex-military gear—they have something like a six-year supply of MREs, even if they are past their expiration date, and they still get water and power from nearby South Milwaukee.

A fair number of "militia reservists" from across the state support this little operation; it makes people feel proud to actually fire a gun and go on a recon patrol or participate in one of the regular five-week boot camp training scenarios. The soldiers are idealistic and relatively friendly (as long as you sound American), but they *do* charge "taxes" to visitors, even visiting merchants.

- If the Green Boys ever get their act together and decide to expand, they have the firepower to severely reduce the local gangs' influence—plus a nice, secure fall-back area if it all goes pear-shaped.

As it is, they're just a good place to arm-up or rest-up. Soldier boys playing with soldiers' toys.

- Red Anya

- Politics and ideology are everything in Fort Chicago; every trooper is a volunteer that believes in their "mission." They're beyond bribery but susceptible to rhetoric, particularly anything involving official approval or recognition. When Vathoss needs dirty work done in Chicago, he likes to use the Fort as a staging base for the teams he hires—they don't ask questions ("black op" or "top secret" usually suffice), and they'll provide all the back-up and support you need.

- Picador

The Ghoultown Memorial (The Zone)

A small museum on the spot of the Cabrini Green refuge, the Ghoultown Memorial is a haunting look at Operation: Extermination from the point of view of the Ghoultown residents: genocide in the ghetto. In addition to holograms and trideo of Ghoultown during its height and the horrible hours after Operation: Extermination, Tamir Grey is buried on-site, and his diary and other effects are on display. The Timmons Memorial Fund pays the bills for the on-site caretakers and a small group of security personnel, in cooperation with the Ghoul Liberation League. As a partial apology for the marginalization of ghouls in Chicago, the Ghoultown Memorial has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places and is being considered as a National Historic Landmark.

Entering the Zone isn't comfortable for any ghoul—and dangerous for everyone—but the importance of Chicago's Ghoultown and the words of Tamir Grey to the cause of ghoul rights ensure regular ghoul visitors to the memorial. While FAB clouds cannot subsist long in the Zone's mana ebb, the Ghoultown Memorial maintains a very careful airlock and filtration system to prevent clouds from entering the Memorial. The GLL and Anne Penchyk (the chica-ork who heads up the Timmons Memorial Fund and hangs with the Desolation Angels) both use the Memorial to meet up with runners in the Zone; a couple of independents have gotten wind of this and started doing the same thing.

The Hangman (The Zone)

If NooseNet is something of a community project, then the Hangman is the community watering hole. It's a fairly bare bar—wood paneling spray-painted brown and black, every stool at the bar held together with silver and black tape, a half dozen rude cyberterms ripped out of some call center, a smudged and scarred plastic bar with a service drone as bartender, one lonely pool table in a corner gathering dust on the felt—and it's mapped pixel-for-pixel on the virtual, every second. Basically, that makes it the only spot of AR in the Zone and the only virtual bar I know of in Chicago proper. Newbs who don't bring their own commlinks can buy one from the patrons or servers, or rent one of the terminals. Trade goods are almost always hardware and software, though you can sometimes score low-end cybertech if you're lucky and flush with cred or goods. By Zone standards, the Hangmen (as the patrons call themselves) are pretty affluent, as they can pick up a little real cred or scrip outside the Zone, using their Matrix skills.



- The Hangmen have a sort of informal apprenticeship relationship, where kids that want to escape the Zone steal or cobble together their own commlinks and the Hangmen give the kids shitwork to do for rock-bottom prices, upgrades, programs, or even “lessons.” Our old friend the Grid Reaper is there raising the next generation of ghoul hackers.

- Zoned

- Next generation is right; all those kids are his! I swear, he’d stick it in anything...

- Hannibelle

The Landing Strip (Northside)

A former strip parlor turned after hours bar, the Landing Strip is the prime address for enjoying a pint or two and some finger food in a quiet atmosphere. Over time, the Strip has become the favorite drinking hole of some of the more easy-going JOPF recruits. It’s a good place to catch up on the latest gossip and make friends with the local authorities. Avoid packing heat, and be careful of openly criticizing O’Hare security; despite being rather down to earth, the cops still take pride in what they do. The bar staff have good contacts to the locals around O’Hare and the corridor and will provide a few names if you tip’em generously.

- In case you’re trying to get friendly with the recruits, make sure you know your stuff. They don’t mind passing some internal information to you or giving you free passage into the Corridor and back, but they won’t put their jobs on the line for a stranger.

- Change Agent

- Vathoss used to hang out here a lot, and his JOPF commander, Grimes, still sticks his head in on occasion, though nowadays, this leads to the recruits packing up in a hurry. Puts a damper on making friends among the JOPF, too.

- Sticks

WHERE TO WORK

Why else would you come to Chicago, for vacation? There’s work to be done and nuyen to be earned, shadow brothers and sisters, and these are the places where you’re likely to be hired or asked to work. Keep in mind that for many of the little folks in Chicago, life is a zero sum game—nobody wins unless somebody else loses. You’ll be facing competition and resentment from the locals if they think you’re taking jobs that should have gone to them.

Archangel’s Bounty Redemption Center (Southside)

Despite the name, this isn’t a church group, or even Christian-affiliated. Rather, it is a former subsidiary of CrossCorp that deals in bounty hunting, recovering and repossessing property, and rescuing kidnap victims in Chicago. Archangel’s has a contract with the UCAS government that pays for the recovery of escaped felonies, known terrorists, and the pelts of certain paracritters. Further, it is affiliated with numerous bail bondsmen and property repo companies in the UCAS who will pay bounties on certain targets, on delivery.

- The bail bond thing is a racket! Ares has its own bail bondsmen that work hand-in-glove with Knight Errant to squeeze more money from criminals they incarcerate. If you have enough cred, KE will pick you up, and the Black Pawn Bail Bondsmen will have you out thirty minutes later. And, if you try to skip out, they hunt you down together.

- Sticks

For many Chi-towners, bounty redemption is one of the few honest ways left to earn some nuyen. For shadowrunners, this is like an automated Mr. Johnson, with an endless supply of runs ready to go: just log in to the node and browse the files until you hit a likely quarry. I know shadowrunners that download the database and scroll through it every time they see someone in the Zone. You can also score some serious cred repossessing vehicles and other gear, but that can get messy—especially if the item in question is an implant.

The most dangerous work, natch, is collecting paracritter bounties. Ghouls are off the menu for the moment, but devil rats are 50 nuyen each, hellhounds are 2,500 nuyen apiece, wendigos are 8,000 nuyen, hybrid bug spirits are 4,000 nuyen, and anyone with a confirmed queen kill gets a nice, fat 25,000 nuyen! The trick is confirming the kill: for devil rats, that means bringing in the corpse; for hellhounds and wendigos, the pelt will do. For bug spirits, you have to bring in a head and wait a day for them to call a magician in to confirm it.

- You also need a SIN. There are some SINners that make a living turning in bounties for SINless Zoners and runners, splitting the pot with them.

- Zoned

- Really good bounty hunters—the ones with multiple payouts for successful bounties and quarries that came in live instead of in pieces—are sometimes offered special, under-the-table offers to locate escaped corporate citizens, the type that fly the coop with one or two of the eggs. Renraku and MCT both contract out certain skip-trace work like that to Archangel, if they think their boy or girl went to ground in Chi-town.

- DefCon5

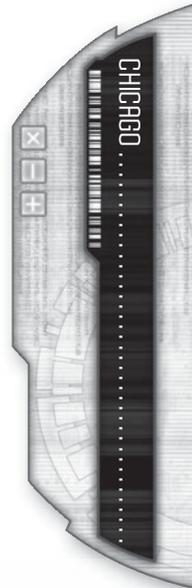
Freaktown (The Zone)

When changelings appeared during the Year of the Comet, there was a resurgence in racism all across the world. In Chicago, that meant that a lot of the SURGE victims sought strength in unity and numbers under the leadership of “Muppet” Daley, second cousin to Gary’s mayor, Arleen Daley.

- Muppet’s the white sheep of the family. He was your regular elf traffic reporter on Channel 8 until 2061, when he suddenly transformed into a Night One metavariant, growing a coat of reddish fur over his entire body and developing an aversion to sunlight within a matter of hours. He got caught up in a flash mob that chased most of Gary’s changelings into Chicago, and the rest is history.

- Dr. Spin

Freaktown (the changelings just call it home) is built on pylons over the infamous Bubbly Creek, a formerly toxic waterway



that feeds into the Chicago River. Their primary industry is the production of biodiesel and alcohol from a trio of distilleries and boilers; the fuel Freaktown makes provides power for vehicles and homes throughout Chicago. Their secondary business interest is the production of pure tempo from raw materials smuggled in from New Orleans via a mini-sub. Tempo profits give Muppet enough resources to hire shadowrunners to do things he can't do himself, like collect blackmail material on politicians in the Chicagoland sub-sprawls. Muppet might not have access to his family's pull and connections, but he knows enough about the structure of local politics to figure out who he has to lean on if a situation warrants his involvement.

- Generally, that means arranging for federal aid packages to mysteriously land near Freaktown, or for hate crimes against changelings to be prosecuted to the full extent of the law and gleeful support from all around. Other times, it's just a bit of influence to make sure a bill requiring public hospitals in Naperbrook are metahuman-friendly. Muppet's also been known to pull a few strings for shadowrunners he likes or considers "family"—in other words, changelings themselves.
- Mihoshi Oni

Long Pig Farms (Northside)

Three of the former golf courses and country clubs of Skokie echo with the grunts and squeals of thousands and thousands of prime pork on the hoof, tended by dutiful ghoulish pig farmers. Others produce clover, barley, and prairie grains that the ghouls feed the pigs; the protein generally comes from bone meal. This isn't your megacorporate factory farm or any sort of intensive piggery in a warehouse, oh no. These are free range piggies that wallow on what used to be the fifth green and sun themselves in big piggy mud holes that used to be water hazards. The ghouls take a great deal of pride in the health and well being of their pigs, keeping them trim instead of fat and treating diseases as best they can, given their limited capabilities.

- They often train brain-damaged ghouls to do simple tasks like feeding the pigs, mucking out the sties, and carting the pigshit over to the feed farms.
- Hannibelle

LPFarms' stock comes from both re-domesticated feral pigs and a "seed stock" of transgenic pigs provided by Yakashima Corporation. The alteration to the transgenic pigs added some metahuman DNA, originally for xenotransplants, but now they hope that within a few generations, the pigs will be sufficient to satisfy the ghoulish requirement for metahuman flesh. Naturally, these pigs don't go into any of LPFarms' "outside" products; while the main purpose of pig production is to feed the ghoulish communities in Chicago, there is a sideline in pork and pig leather products.

- Provided my *entire* arse. The Ghoul Liberation League stole them from a piggery in Snohomish last year.
- Winterhawk

Shadowrunners can get involved with LPFarms by working either for them or against them. The ghouls need muscle to deal

with Humanis raids and pig rustlers, and more often, to provide security for their semi-annual trips to drive the pigs to market. On the other hand, the Human Brigade is often willing to hire mercenaries (human mercenaries) to kill a few ghouls and bring home the bacon, while more than one corporation wants information about how ghouls take to transgenic pork and are more than willing to pay for samples.

The Spire (The Zone)

A striking, super-tall skyscraper, the corkscrew-shaped 150-story Spire was once the tallest building in North America. Originally a residential structure, it later became the headquarters for Truman Technologies, the first commercial purveyor of simsense. During Bug City, the abandoned building hosted at least one, and possibly several, wasp nests in the upper stories; Ares cleaned those out with a fleet of Yellowjacket copters and a high-flying firefighter zeppelin that drenched the tower with FAB III.

- Bullshit. Ares had a hell of a time with the Spire. It's just too damn tall; they couldn't stop the queens from running downstairs and hiding while the rest of the wasps provided a distraction by fighting the 'copters. When the queens didn't come out on the ground floor like expected, Ares had to send Firewatch teams into the building itself to smoke them out.
- Sticks

The Spire has recently come into greater prominence as the headquarters of Chicago's own Spire Enterprises. SE can't afford to repair the worst of the damage done to the building over the last twenty years, but they've installed solar cells, essentially making the building self-sufficient and providing enough juice to run the building's intelligent management systems and the automated defenses installed to supplement the protection they buy from McCaskill and the local gangs.

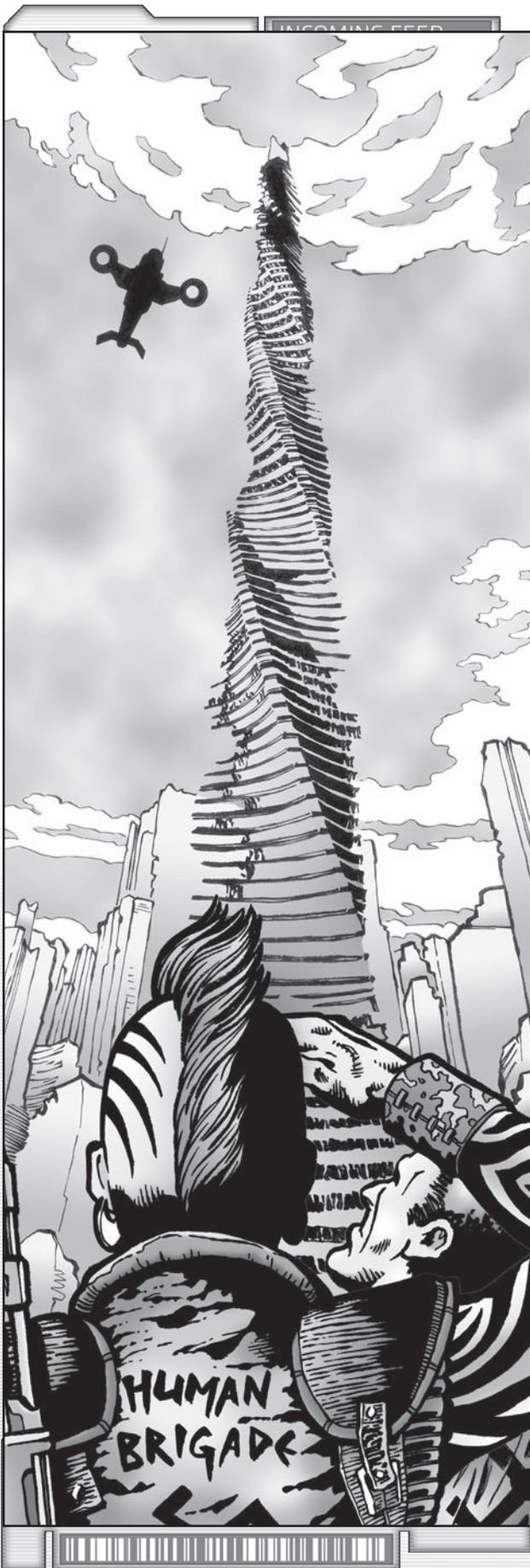
Spire Enterprises provides steady work, whether you want to help clean out and repair the upper floors (most of which SE has sealed off for fear of what might be lurking there) or deliver goods from the terminal to the underground parking structure. For all that they're legit these days, the Spire still has a mind for the shady: most of the runs you make, even with legitimate goods, will hold something hidden behind a panel or in a dead space.

- Last I heard, SE was trying to put in a zeppelin dock around the hundredth floor. That's right where the lowest of the wasp nests was supposed to be.
- Rigger X
- Truman Technologies left a lot of technology and proprietary data when they abandoned the Spire; most of it has been looted by now, but you never know what kind of recordings old man Truman kept in his personal vault...or what he'd pay to get them back.
- Turbo Bunny

The Terminal (Gary)

Officially called the Greater Chicago Area Transport Terminal, the trucking and railway hub in Gary has become the main trans-shipment hub and reloading point for all kinds of goods transported via railway or truck. The hub itself is heavily se-





cured, and access is only granted to employed personnel. However, freelancers can apply for jobs at the front gate office. Usually, there are vacancies, whether to protect truck convoys, monitor outside trans-shipping operations or pick ups, or simply work as a loader or packer in one of the many warehouses. Depending on your work tasks, they issue a simple passkey or scanner, granting access to different areas of the terminal. Security does not screen applicants for ID or SIN, but they do subject them to detailed baggage inspections and pat downs several times per day. Pay is by the hour and usually paid out in credsticks at the end of a shift or successful arrival of a convoy at its destination—usually one of the other communities, Naperbrook, or O’Hare.

- The passkeys and scanners are relatively easy to tamper with. Watch out for regular terminal security patrolling the hub and additional corp security guarding the warehouse.
- Zoned
- Quite a few of the terminal’s regular workers are in one way or the other affiliated with the Mob. Better make sure the warez you’re trying to scoop up don’t belong to the syndicates.
- DefCon5

If you sign up for convoy security, you have to provide your own gear and transport. A passkey and code will identify you as a friendly when handing the convoy over to escorts from the receiving enclave or party, but the code and passkey expire at the end of a day, sometimes sooner.

- Avoid lengthy detours when you’re protecting a convoy; showing an expired code and passkey and having O’Hare’s security open fire on you ruins your day. On the other hand, manipulating a passkey is a sure way to mess with a rival escort.
- Change Agent

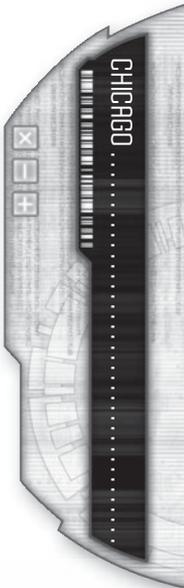
WHERE TO DEAL

More than any other sprawl in North America, getting what you want in Chicago means knowing how to wheel and deal, and where to do it. With barter the trade of choice, you’re going to have to dust off your haggling skills and figure out what you need and how you need to get it. I can’t cover everything in the space provided, but these are some of the places that really stand out to me.

Ammo Jims (Northside)

Big Jim, Little Jim, and sister Jamie believe in a fair trade. Of course, that means that if you want heavy pistol rounds, you’ll have to bring in some shotgun shells and take your change in hold-out ammo. They buy used ammo to make their own, but don’t be looking for anything fancy—Little Jim is the armorer, and he had to crack a textbook to build the lathe. Generally speaking, hollowpoints are the height of the tech curve for local ammo, but a lot of Ares’ exotic gunmetal finds its way into Ammo Jims’ bins too. All ammo is caseless as a matter of course.

AJs looks like it’s made out of sheet metal and scavenged vehicle armor, which is probably pretty close to the truth. Once you pass the first checkpoint (a metal door with a gun slot), you enter the first of three cages to talk business.



- One nice thing is that the Jims will make you custom ammo if you provide the material yourself. I always like to stock up on electrum hollowpoints and whatever Ares APDS I can lay my hands on.

- Sticks

- Electrum?

- Kane

- Natural alloy of silver and gold. Works a treat on critters allergic to gold or silver.

- Sticks

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (Southside)

- I love this store. They don't have a sign, they just have the Battle Flag of the Confederacy, the CAS national flag, and the state flag of Texas flying high. And, they lower 'em all to half-mast on Lee's birthday. <sniff>

- Kane

This used to be a drive-thru MegaMcHugh's, complete with a two-story playground for the tots, a second-floor middle-class sit-down restaurant, and a basement working-class bar and Matrix arcade for the teens and tweens. Now, the building's pretty much been gutted. The tables and booths were pried loose and replaced with row on row of automat-style cubbyholes chock full of guns, ammunition, add-ons and accessories, imported cigarettes, pipe tobacco, Aztec chew, snuff, hip flasks, frosty-cold bottled beer, Tennessee whiskey, Orkstaff's XXX, and some rarer stuff like condoms, water purification kits, tempo derms, safety razors... whatever the owners, Chuck and Macy, get in from their contacts down south.

- For y'all that don't grok the talk, that means that each individual goody is in its own little section in the wall, with a window so you can see what it is, and a lock on it. You insert your credstick (or if you're really fancy, you upload the nuyen from your commlink), and the door unlocks so you can reach in and get it.

- Kane

- ATF accepts nuyen, CAS and UCAS dollars, most corp scrip (except Azzie pesos), and, of course, barter. Exchange what you have at the drive-thru for a credstick so you can shop around in the store. Chuck's been known to be fairly generous for old-timey pre-UCAS/CAS American currency, particularly coins.

- Sticks

ATF is open twenty-four seven for foot and drive-thru traffic. Security around the drive-through is double that in the store. I've seen people try to slip grenades in the slot for the second it was open, only to get their hands shot off while the autogun emplacements rip their vehicle to shreds. And, I've seen people get impaled when they crossed the tire shredders as they tried to run through the crash barriers that keep people from ramming vehicles into the place and hauling away all they can carry.

Inside the store, of course, you only have to worry about trying to bust out an item without paying for it or damaging Macy and Chuck's trophies. If you try to break into a cubbyhole, a mini-grenade will drop down—sometimes from the ceiling, sometimes



from the wall—and blow you to bits. Keep in mind that you're standing in a cramped tunnel of floor-to-ceiling armored glass when that goes off, so even if the initial blast doesn't get you, the shrapnel will.

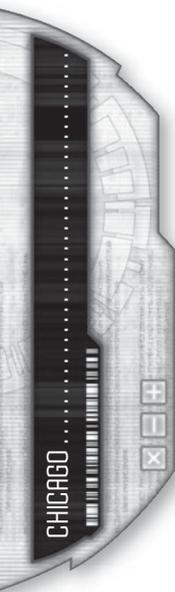
- Those are maglocks, right? So theoretically, a particularly smooth hacker or technomancer could walk in and open those without paying.

- Netcat

Little Earth (The Zone)

The University of Chicago had one of the finest magical studies programs in the country when the Wall went up, and the Awakened on its Little Earth campus along the shore of the lake helped protect some of Chicago's citizens from the insect spirits and other threats. Operation: Extermination and opening up the Zone pretty much put the kibosh on Little Earth. Most of the Awakened fled, and the mundies under their protection went with them. When they moved out, some other people moved in: the Illinois Tribe.

This isn't the actual Native American tribe, but rather about thirty young folk from the Sioux Nation looking to reclaim some of their ancestral lands under the adverse possession ruling. Most of them live in former UoC dorms and buildings, though they enjoy getting "back to their roots" by learning woodlore and par-



icipating in traditional ceremonies. The tribe has two real assets as far as shadowrunners are concerned: a wiry old ex-Wildcat martial arts instructor and a certified magical healer—you can be sure to pay a lot for a spell, but it's worth it.

- The group's mixed orks and humans; I think some of them have cousins in the Cascades, if you catch my drift. They'd probably pay well for you to drop off a "care package" or two.
- Mihoshi Oni

The Headshop on East 79th Street (Southside)

At first look, this place reveals a bungalow not quite as shit-eaten as the others, with a nice healthy crop of Chicago grey gone dry and brown for the lawn and a path worn in the lawn to the front door. Your second look takes in the faded hand-painted signs and the cheap '67 AR projector buzzing from the garage: local headshop. Inside are brainbenders, BTL players and peripherals, emotoys to enhance recreational drug use, and little programs that make patterns of light and sound to tune in to whatever trip you're having. There's also a selection of vintage hardcopy literature in the back, sealed in plastic baggies.

- Because no mage-addict is without their precious copy of *Cannabis Alchemy*.
- Haze

Junkies come and go, picking up out-of-town BTLs and homegrown deepweed. It's no secret McCaskill's outfit runs the place, which keeps most of the fresh-from-Joliet crowd from trying to knock it over the week after they get out. What most people don't know is that this is the place for people from out of town to get in touch and let Don McCaskill know they're looking for work. Given the uneasy mob situation in Chicago, his capos got the go-ahead to hire promising talent. Do things right, and you can get yourself steady work—or even get made. Think of it as getting in on the ground floor of a new business venture.

- One of the nice things about Chicago: no need to beat around the bush. The police aren't listening, so you can discuss your illegal goings-on in medical detail without bugging about metaphors, street slang, criminal cant, or any of the other sidereal bollocks we normally have to put up with.
- Winterhawk
- If you want to hit McCaskill instead of work for him, you could trace back deliveries made to the headshop. It's the local distribution point for the street dealers he has working Auburn Park.
- 2XL

Merle's Grocery (The Zone)

Merle's grocery is a converted lakeside warehouse near the little-used Port of Chicago (well, little-used except for the smugglers). All old red brick and corrugated steel, augmented with improvised barricades over all the entrances, exits, and windows except an old lunch counter in the back of the building, Merle's is a kind of community grocery exchange. People bring him bottled beer, and he'll swap it out for bottled water; they bring him an

emergency ration, and he'll give 'em a box of elbow macaroni and two cans from the mystery box (a dumpster full of canned food without labels; even Merle doesn't know whether it's tuna or cat food). In his own way, Merle provides a generous community service, helping to diversify the local diet.

- Of course, he can't take cash, and he isn't a charity. More than one poor bastard has almost starved banging on his door.
- Zoned
- If you want to pass for a local, the first thing you need to do is ditch as much of your outside gear as possible; Merle is ideal for that. Of course, the outsiders that come here and get rolled usually have food on 'em (even a Powerbar is worth a mystery can), and Merle has a pretty good memory for faces. Somebody goes missing in the Zone, you could do worse than ask Merle if he's gotten anything in lately.
- DefCon5

Merle's the human behind the counter. The dwarf with the shotgun and the dreads watching your every move is J-Pop; Merle picked him up off the street and lets him sleep behind the counter at night.

- Word is Merle might be a maggot. He deals with everybody, and that's damn suspicious in a town of divided loyalties like Chicago.
- Sticks

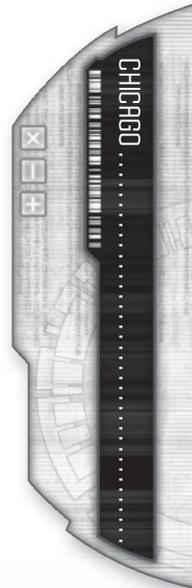
Open Enclave (Westside)

Unlike the other enclaves, the Brynwood Apartment building is open to new residents, and it rents by the day. The management charges for amenities like power and water (both rationed) by the hour, and they require a security deposit upfront. They do take barter, but only gems, precious metals, vehicles, and fresh organs (in a cooler or bring your own victim and they'll harvest on the spot). It's probably the cleanest, most secure place in Chi-town, but it gives me the creeps.

- You can also trade your skills. The Open Enclave is always looking for handymen, surgeons, security guards, and other skilled staff. It's not easy work, but if you're low on cred, it's an option.
- Change Agent
- I'm more concerned with who might be backing them. I bet somebody would pay some good cred to find out.
- Baka Dabora

WHERE TO DIY

The four cardinal virtues of feral Chicago are Self-Reliance, Self-Sufficiency, Self-Sacrifice, and Self-Teaching. Without a government-and-megacorporate sponsored infrastructure and social support network, you're on your own, and you better start thinking that way. Chicago runners can't afford to wait for a fixer to call them with a run; they have to go out and work up jobs themselves. These are some prime targets and opportunities for Do It Yourself crime in Chicago; keep 'em in mind when things go pear-shaped and you need to score.



Anarchist Black Crescent: Trinity (Northside)

A permanent anarchist camp, the ABCs really show disaster-readiness-and-relief at its best. Within twelve hours of Chicago's government collapsing, they had prefabricated structures set up on the grounds of Trinity International University, plugged into the university's private grid, back-up generators, and water system, and were offering medical services and basic survival techniques. Sixteen hours after that, they fended off their first raid from the Demolishers, using concealed snipers. With support from volunteers beyond Chicago, ABC: Trinity is the single best-equipped medical facility in Chicago right now.

Beyond offering immediate healthcare to the survivors in Chicago, ABC: Trinity reaches out to the local community, teaching them self reliance, free expression, critical thinking, and basic survival strategies. The local cadre is made up of the most knowledgeable, dedicated, and charismatic members, though they tend to coordinate strategy with anarchist cells beyond Chicago.

- There's been talk in Trinity about turning Chicago into a true Anarchist Nation; others say it's already there.
- Aufheben

Trinity has a lot to offer the self-motivated shadowrunner with a penchant for professional anarchy. Do a good job and show some initiative, and soon you might be counted part of the cadre and in a position to have some serious influence in Chi-town. All is not sweetness and light, however. The local Black Star cells use Trinity as a staging point for anti-authority raids against the repressive corporate-military complexes of the O'Hare sub-sprawl.

Chicago Ave Market (The Zone)

This place is a rough triangle of flat road where Chicago Ave, Humbolt Avenue, and Grand Avenue meet. The corner lots are all empty buildings with busted windows, leaving a big open area far enough away to be a long shot with a hold-out or heavy pistol. This is pretty much the only neutral ground in the Zone; the locals use the Chicago Ave Market as a kind of Bedouin auction. People put their goods in the middle of the road, and then back off into the buildings around the street.

- I just want to make perfectly clear that the assumption by all interested parties is that everyone else has guns, spells, or whatever drawn, and anybody attempting to steal or walk off with anything before the deal's been finalized or called off will be killed. Of course, sometimes that's a bluff...but you really don't want to eat a rifle round if you call a bluff and you're wrong.
- Sticks

Other guy comes, inspects, puts his own goods down, and withdraws. You go inspect his goods and add or remove stuff from your pile until its equal. When one or both of you are happy, you take the other guy's pile and walk away. Of course, you've got guns on each other the whole time. The real fun, natch, is when you have more than one "bidder" for a given lot.

If, in the course of business in Chicago, you need to negotiate a deal or sell a particular item of value, the Chicago Ave



Market is a better meeting place than most. Clear lines of sight, plenty of good sniping spots, and the locals all know the score, so you won't attract any notice or innocent bystanders.

Last Man Standing (Westside)

Despite being a fortified corp-controlled enclave, many wage slaves think of the O'Hare sup-sprawl as a dangerous and wild frontier town on the edge of civilization. For some, it has replaced New Orleans Mardi Gras or spring break; others make a point of proving themselves in the 'feral jungle' for a few months. The Last Man Standing caters to that crowd. At six p.m. sharp, sararimen and mid-level execs pour in by the dozen and start getting shit faced in a fake and toned down copy of 'authentic post-Containment Zone Chicago' lifestyle, trading in basic consumer goods and O'Hare-issued equipment for the local brews. The waitresses are highschool girls from N-B wearing artfully torn rags and fake bruises; a steady diet of bad corporate rock tunes from five years ago completes the pseudo-feral atmosphere. Still, it's a perfect place to spend a few rounds watching the corpers letting off steam, whining about their jobs and spilling some inside scoop after a few shooters.

- Young execs take their business partners here for a 'last round' after a closed deal or finished project. In a way, it's similar to Hong Kong's Lan Kwai Fong area—minus the hookers on every corner. You



find them a few streets down in 'Rose's Garden.' At Rose's, I'd recommend Layla. And Sydney, too.

- Traveler Jones

You really couldn't pray for better marks than these guys. The Last Man Standing is perfect for any number of scams, cons, good old violent robberies, kidnappings, you name it. Just the fact that these guys have to carry their capital in the bar to buy drinks means you can just knock them over the head and take their shit. Of course, you should always concern yourself with what the locals think of that—including Capo MacAvoy, who owns the place.

The Makers Bazaar

The Makers (or Shapers, as they sometimes are called) are a collective of inventors, amateur scientists, and other creative folk. Using and re-using all kinds of materials that the scrap traders or enclaves' citizens sell them, most of their inventions are crazy imitations of varieties of household appliances, such as a washing machine water filtration apparatus or a solar powered battery charger. However, some of the makers have begun experimenting with alternate data transmission, such as sound beams or masers. Their bazaar is more an exhibition and showcase than an actual market. To purchase any of their inventions, you'd have to supply most of the components first. Some of the products are pretty advanced despite their fourth grade components, and many wonder what these folks would be capable of with the right funding.

- The Makers are a crazy bunch and live in their own world. They barely make enough money to get by, but they enjoy the freedom from corporate pressure and project deadlines. Quite a few of the makers have corporate backgrounds, and some of them still maintain their connections to old colleagues still slaving away in the corporate labs and think tanks.
- Clockwork
- Don't underestimate them scatterbrains. They have a lawyer in O'Hare working for them on registering and protecting patents related to the Maker commune's inventions and discoveries. It's only a matter of time before the corporations notice them and send their recruiting agents to Chicago.
- Plan 9

If you ever need a weird widget to get a scheme in motion, this is the place to look for it. Odds are that even if it isn't available right now, you can commission the techies to build you one in exchange for the parts. Bring them in on the caper, and they'll turn their boundless creativity and technical know-how to your advantage, provided you can keep them from blabbing about it to their friends.

Market Square (Northside)

This stretch of Martin Luther King Jr. Drive in North Chicago looks like an idyllic Main Street in any small American city. For tourists from South Milwaukee, this little slice of civility-on-the-surface is the brainchild of former mayor Jerome Standish and the heart of his little Chicago hours scam. Here, community service literally pays off: Standish pays hours for people to clean

the streets and paint the buildings, and the rubes from South Milwaukee gape and gander and leave a trail of nuyen in their wake—Standish footed the bill to install Matrix terminals in all of the stores on Market Square to handle basic cred transactions. For their part, the local residents enjoy the benefits of a tourist industry and something that vaguely resembles an actual Sixth World economy.

Standish travels all over the Zone to get "local goods" for his Market Square stores. Handmade tesmas, Long Pig Chitlins, stuffed insect spirit heads mounted on plaswood plaques, jumbo Chicago grey blunts, armed expeditions into the Zone, you name it. Basically, you can get most of the local, legal goods you'd look to obtain in Chicago without actually going into Chicago. That's reason enough for runners to come here; Standish is always looking for new hires to go get his goods. It's also a nice, safe place for a public meet surrounded by friendly civilians, as long as you're dealing with people that don't believe in slaughtering them indiscriminately.

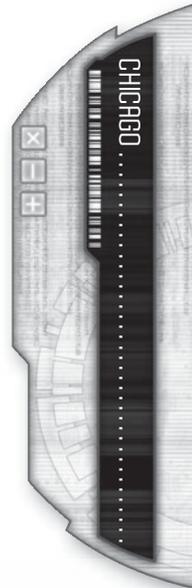
Póg mo Thóin (Southside)

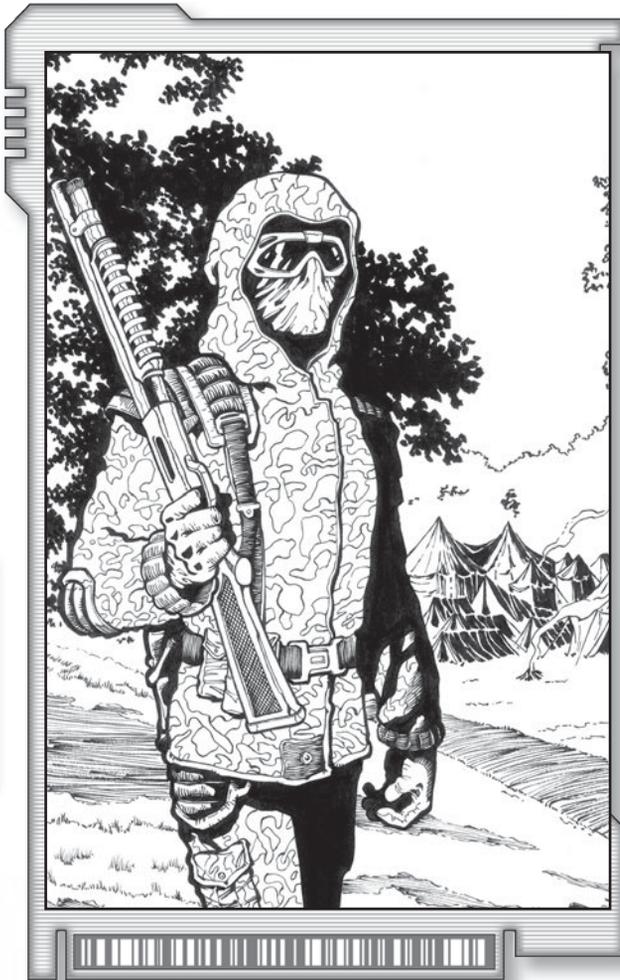
Detroit Irish Postindustrialist NeuPunkers and Classic Punks should like this place: it looks like the Irish invaded some North American hellhole, got drunk, and never left. There's no power and no running water, so you go below ground to a dank, dark, place full of people you can't really see and that smells like piss, shit, mold, sweat, and beer. Well, not actual beer: the chemists that run this joint have been known to serve everything from biodiesel to brake fluid. Naturally, the place appeals to the large local Irish-descended population, particularly the dwarfs and humans. Local skiffle-type bands give it a go every couple of nights, which can lead to frenzied dancing and the inevitable bar fight.

- You need low-light to really make out the décor, but there are Irish (not Tír) flags on the walls and old punk posters six deep. A fire gutted the bathroom a couple years back, so a few bravos worked off their tab digging it out into a pit that the owners made into a huge chemical toilet—keeps out the worst of the smell and bugs.
- Sticks

Ammo's the coin of choice in this bar, and the man behind it (just call him Sean, you can't pronounce his real name) is the tall skinny feller wearing six pistols. Regulars can build up a tab and work it off by going on beer runs (literally going out and stealing a certain number of alcoholic drinks of any type) or collecting empties for Sean and his brothers' bathtub distillery products. I think this is the only place where I actually drank a Molotov cocktail, but if you're in a hurry and need cheap muscle or a place to meet a few people, this is the place.

- The music, surprisingly, can be pretty good for people with no training, no real instruments, and no light to play them by. Well, good as in energetic, screaming themselves hoarse with amusing and insulting lyrics, and a beat that, when they find it, you can't dance to but seems to work anyway. Nice place to lay low, at any rate.
- Kat o'Nine Tales





WHERE TO BEWARE

There's no place in Chicago that's truly off-limits, but there are some areas that I'd say a caveat or two about before you go in there, just to satisfy the dry, desiccated thing that used to be my conscience (I'm getting it removed during my next augmentation surgery). Most of these places are in the Zone. That's not coincidence. The Zone is a very dangerous place, and even if the wasp and fly spirits aren't swarming outside your window this second, that doesn't mean everything is ok—ever. Now, you're all grown-up shadowrunners (well, except for /dev/grrl), so I know you've been in tight places where every second might mean discovery and death, and I know you know the only way to survive in those situations is to have all the information about the place before you even darken the door. So read on, and exercise due caution.

Camp Lincoln (The Zone)

Camp Lincoln is a tent village set up in a clearing in Lincoln Park and operating on communist principles. Visitors are welcome but have to share any food they might have and help with the watch (run 24 hours) for gangs and other threats. They strongly deny rumors of cannibalism, but a few too many people are "last seen in Camp Lincoln," if you catch my drift. I'm including this place as a warning: with all the dangers from FAB III, the bugs, the ghouls, and all that crap, it's easy enough to forget that the most dangerous critters in Chicago are your fellow metahumans.

- The Lincoln Park Rangers run around the woods in their camo parkas and stealth gear. Every week or two they pop in on Camp Lincoln to share a meal and a tent with their girlfriends, boyfriends, fuckbuddies, and whatnot. If you ever need to talk with somebody woodwise, catching the Rangers in camp is the best time—they can even hook you up with McCaskill's smuggling master, Capo Hakim Jamal Sufar.

- DefCon5

- That cannibalism rumor started because the Camp Lincolners and the Rangers are part of a Spider cult operating in Lincoln Park. The shaman, Nancy Boy, has a shrine or mana lodge or something dedicated to him deep in the trees. He hates bug spirits and might be willing to help you out if you're going to clear a nest...but he's also said to use a spell to transform into a giant spider and drink the blood of metahuman sacrifices, hence the missing people.

- Change Agent

- You're all whacked. The Lincoln Campers' resident medic is Paul Nansi-Boi; I've run into him on the NooseNet a few times. He's a cut-rate plastic surgeon that offers the only real cosmetic alterations in the Zone, for people that *want* to disappear. It's not beautiful work, but it gets the job done, and the Rangers take his patients away under cover of darkness to complete their escape.

- Butch

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The last righteous man in Chicago was strung up in Wicker Park, on the corner where Damen, North, and Milwaukee meet. He was a preacher, and he was a troll. Before the Zone went up, they say he trawled the Shattergraves looking to put the lost souls to rest. That's what he was doing when the Cermak Blast hit and Downtown was sealed off.

That's what he was doing when he came across a band of Volk being torn apart by a Brocken bow, the shadow of a witch—a young enchantress, really—whom they had burned in the street the week before. Now, the preacher knew who the Volk were and what they'd done, but he went into the ruined building and confronted the spirit, preaching for the forgiveness of their sins. And the Brocken bow listened and faded away. The Volk, for their part, didn't know or understand what had happened—they just knew that here was a troll that needed hanging.

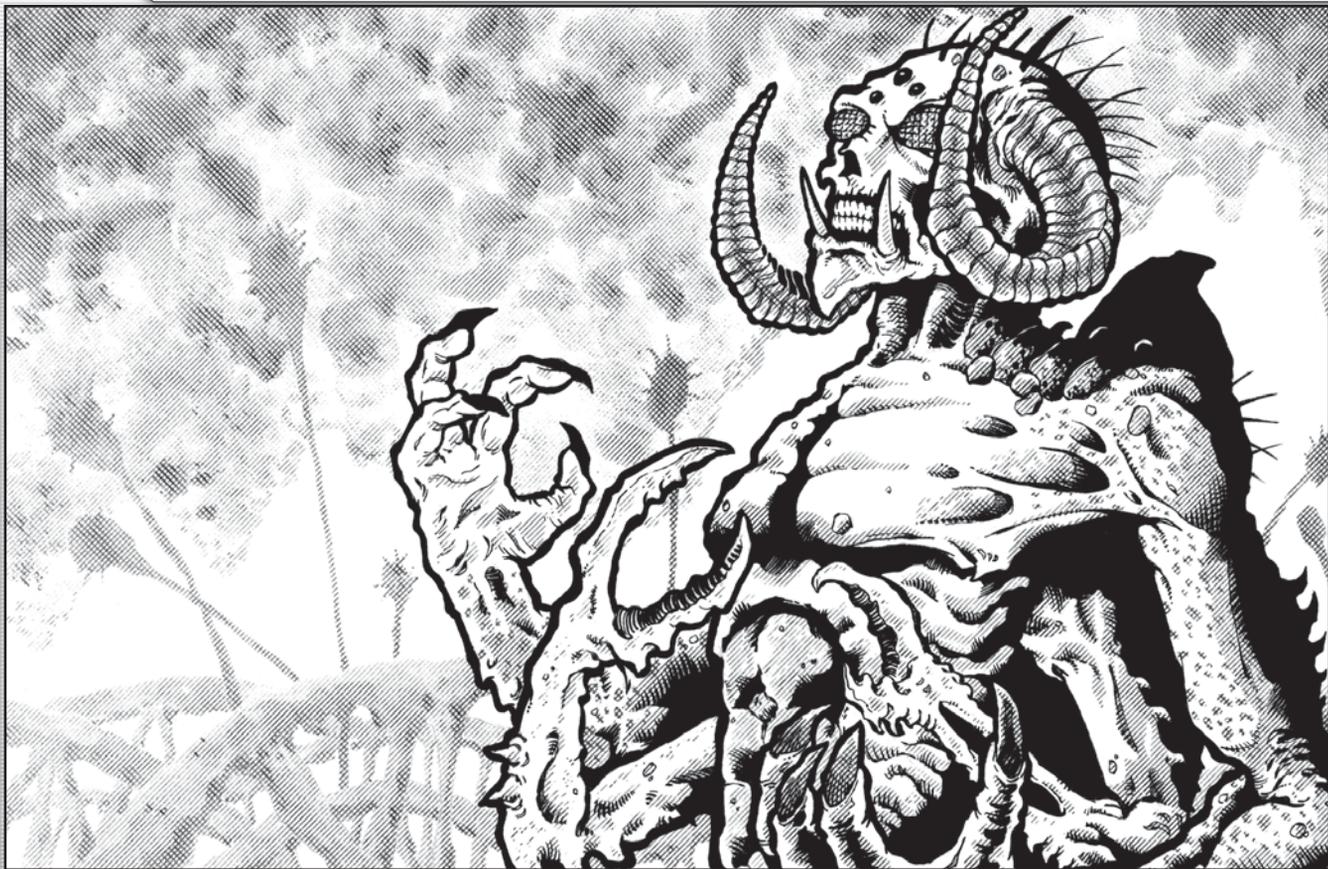
The preacher was too tired to fight back, and he died there, hanging from a second-story window. I'd like to say that someone found vengeance for the preacher, that the Brocken bow came back to complete its vengeance, or that all the folk he'd helped hunted those Volk down one by one and treated them the same. I'd like to say that, but it isn't true. Word got out about what they'd done, and no one did a damn thing. Later on, the building caught fire, leaving nothing but a burned-out shell and an open doorway. You can still see the rope over the mantle and some bones that might be his.

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- Cenotaph attracts odd folks. It's supposed to have a queer aspect to its domain, and no Humanis-anything member will come near the place if they can help it.

- Zoned





INCOMING FEED.....



- This site is aspected to wraiths; the defilement that permeates the place appeals to them. Better to suffer the mana ebb than stay here long, for fear of attracting their attention.
- Man-Of-Many-Names

Cermak Crater (The Zone)

There are plenty of places in Chicago that are deadly, but none is as certifiably lethal as the Cermak Crater is. This concave depression is all that's left of the Cermak Blast: ten thousand years (at least estimate) of atomic waste. The crater is still "hot." It's much more radioactive than it should be, and you can get a lethal dose of radiation if you get too close or stay too long. There were plans to cap it with a warded lead seal, but the federal government was afraid any metahumans getting too close might wake the thousand or so bug spirits said to rest in torpor there.

On the astral, the Crater is like an inverted hurricane, with the absolute stillness and sterility of the mana ebb surrounding a terrible, malefic eye. Astral space is horrifically warped here, and nothing comes through in one piece—not FAB, not an insect spirit, not the crazy Radiation magicians that astrally project into it and are torn apart.

- Looking on the *gailleann* in the astral—even from a safe distance—is like staring at the sun during an eclipse or a nuclear explosion; it kind of sears your third eye and leaves you seeing afterimages for a while. As for the sleeping bugs, the *invae* in their ranks and

honeycombs...imagine if Bosch and Goya had the vision of H.R. Giger and what hellscapes they might have painted.

- Frosty

The Dancer on Archer (Southside)

Most everyone knows of the ghosts in the Shattergraves, but not many people beside the locals know about the spectral dancer on Archer Avenue. Reports of a female apparition on the street go back to before the Awakening, but the Sixth World version is much—if you'll excuse the term—livelier. She mostly shows up at night, especially cold or foggy nights, and tries to hitch a ride with any vehicles that go by (not that many these days, aside from a couple rickshaw cabs). Sometimes, though, she'll be seen dancing along the street, and she'll invite others to dance with her. It's supposed to be quite the trip.

- Yeah, an astral trip. The ghost or spirit or whatever can generate an astral gateway with her dance and drag your astral self onto the astral or even the metaplanes—though I'm not sure if that's her power or if there's some sort of astral rift along Archer Ave. Some people have literally danced to death.

- Mika

- I don't think this spirit is connected to the pre-Awakening legend. For one thing, she looks more AmerInd than anything else.

- Ethernaut

Hole-Patcher (Southside)

Back in the day, Hole-Patcher ran with the O'Malley family's crew in Chicago. He was outside the CZ when it went up and saw it as a sign that it was time to retire. I can't tell you much about what he did between then and now, except that he kept his hand in the local scene a bit—patching holes or making them, usually in the same night—and he kept out of Mob business.

- They say the Hole-Patcher worked with James O'Malley (the father of Dona Rowena O'Malley, head of Seattle's Finnigan family) back when he was don of Milwaukee, but nobody I know can back it up with any evidence. This guy is really too-cool-for-old-school. He must be pushing sixty, but he's built like a weightlifter; no cybermods but damn quick on the draw and knows his way around a gun. If it wasn't for the fact that he's a little superstitious (I caught a peek at his mojo bag once), I'd have to say he's the toughest unaugmented human I ever met.

- Sticks

- If this is the guy I think he is, he isn't unaugmented, but his chrome's gotta be a little rusty by now. I mean, boosted reflexes and aluminum bone lacing were top of the line twenty, twenty-five years ago. I'd be more concerned with any old friends he might be able to call up in Seattle and Milwaukee.

- 2XL

- Hey, that tech's still solid today. Maybe not the cutting edge, but they're real workhorse implants. And, you can't hack it like most of the stuff you get nowadays.

- Butch

Most of the time, the Hole-Patcher stays in his "office," which used to be a suite of doctors' offices, the kind where there's a half-dozen of them straight out of their residency and eager to pay back their loans through private practice, so they get together and share the equipment and refer each other. Don't expect anything fancy as far as treatment goes—the Hole-Patcher got his name fishing out bullets, plugging stab wounds, relocating shoulders, and sewing up slashes with fishing line—but his hands are steady and nothing rattles him. I've seen the Hole-Patcher dig shrapnel out of an ork that was screaming like a dying horse, while his mates were handling a drive-by outside.

Payment wise, the Hole-Patcher normally deals in luxury goods—particularly leather ties, silk shirts, that kind of thing. I hear he has a couple of paintings rescued from Downtown in his living room, including an original Andy Warhol print, plus an entire red cedar closet full of leather jackets. Be warned he detests dealing with elves and the Awakened. You can still get them treated, but his handling is rougher, and the stitches are probably going to be bigger—not to mention you have to put up with a litany of racist and magophobic crappola.

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At the center of the Shattergraves is the foundation of the Sears Tower, once the tallest structure in the Fifth World. For mundanes, that's about all there is to see, but on the astral rises an

alchera of the tower as it was the day it fell. Every year on February 10th, the anniversary of the destruction, the towers manifest in the physical world for one day.

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- Lots of people crowd the tower when it manifests. It's mostly researchers and tourists, checking out the ghosts moving through the motions of their last day. But, there's also a lot of magicians looking for the astral rifts said to manifest in the upper stories and the windows on the top floor that look out on Chicago's astral plane instead of the physical world.

- Ethernaut

- Every year, a couple people are supposed to go missing in the tower, but I don't know how. When the tower fades at daybreak on the 11th, everybody shows up in one piece on the ground, no matter how high they were in the tower. Still, you always hear stories of somebody tricked into taking a ghost's place in the tower or being eaten by whatever critter lives in the shadows of the basement.

- DefCon5

LET SLEEPING BUGS LIE

Posted By: Sticks

Part of the fallout of the Cermak Blast was to knock every insect spirit in astral space at the time the bomb went off into a form of astral torpor. Mostly, either their colleagues awoke these sleeping bugs, or passing metahumans or magicians using magic nearby unintentionally disturbed them. FAB III gobbled up a lot of the rest. Still, in the places where FAB III couldn't reach and metahuman magicians don't normally travel, some bugs still lie hibernating, waiting to wake up. Practically anything can do the trick—a passing metahuman or spirit, an active spell or focus, and especially spellcasting or summoning. It's rare, but it's something of which everyone should be aware.

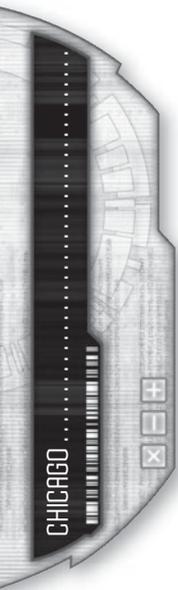
The greatest known concentration of spirits in torpor, natch, is below the Cermak Crater. Thankfully, the high levels of radiation and background count are enough to keep most entities far, far away. There's more than a couple nests' worth of queens and other spirits down there—if released, it would be Bug City all over again.

THE HIDDEN HIVES

Chicago may still crawl, but the bugs are a lot less open about it these days. If any of them were stupid enough to build a nest or hive out in the open, they'd be the field test for Ares' latest napalm delivery system. So while I can't tell you exactly where every bug in Chicago is, I can put you on the right track.

The Blue Line (Northside)

This subway track ran from O'Hare through Northside; it was blocked off after the city gov collapsed. The least scrupulous fixers, almost-toxic talismongers, and bug fetishists gather here on the O'Hare side to trade at a little survivor's market. Bits of actual insect spirit hybrids, flatvid and trideo of bug spirit attacks, insect shaman diaries and grimoires, snuff BTLs of people getting eaten by bugs, Chicago street signs... it's nasty shit, but if you talk to the



people, you can find out where they got some of the stuff. Two things to look out for: fakes—if they say it's royal jelly, it probably isn't—and Conn "Six Fingers" Hand, Capo MacAvoy's enforcer at the market. One word from him and everybody packs up and leaves for the day.

Bryn Mawr Apartment Hotel (Northside)

The Myrmidons and Harrow's Hive both used this building for a while. The Ant adepts held the basement, and the Bees and their maggots held the top floors. I don't know exactly what went down, but eventually there was a falling-out—maybe their respective maggots started mingling in the middle—and the hive and the nest went at it. The activity attracted the Desolation Angels, and it turned into a nasty three-way battle that ended with the Bees flying off, the Ants scurrying off, and the Mantis spirits caught in a burning building.

I think both Harrow's Hive and the Myrmidons use Bryn Mawr from time to time, and I know the DAs check the place out every month or so. There just might be a store of royal jelly in there somewhere, but you'd have to work your way through a fire-damaged building to find it.

Chicago Pedway (The Zone)

The Pedway is a system of short underground tunnels and covered bridges connecting buildings Downtown; Ant spirits feel right at home here. The Lonely Roach comes here sometimes, too, though I don't know why. Still, if you are looking for a copy of its spirit formula, this is where I'd start looking.

Museum of Science and Industry (The Zone)

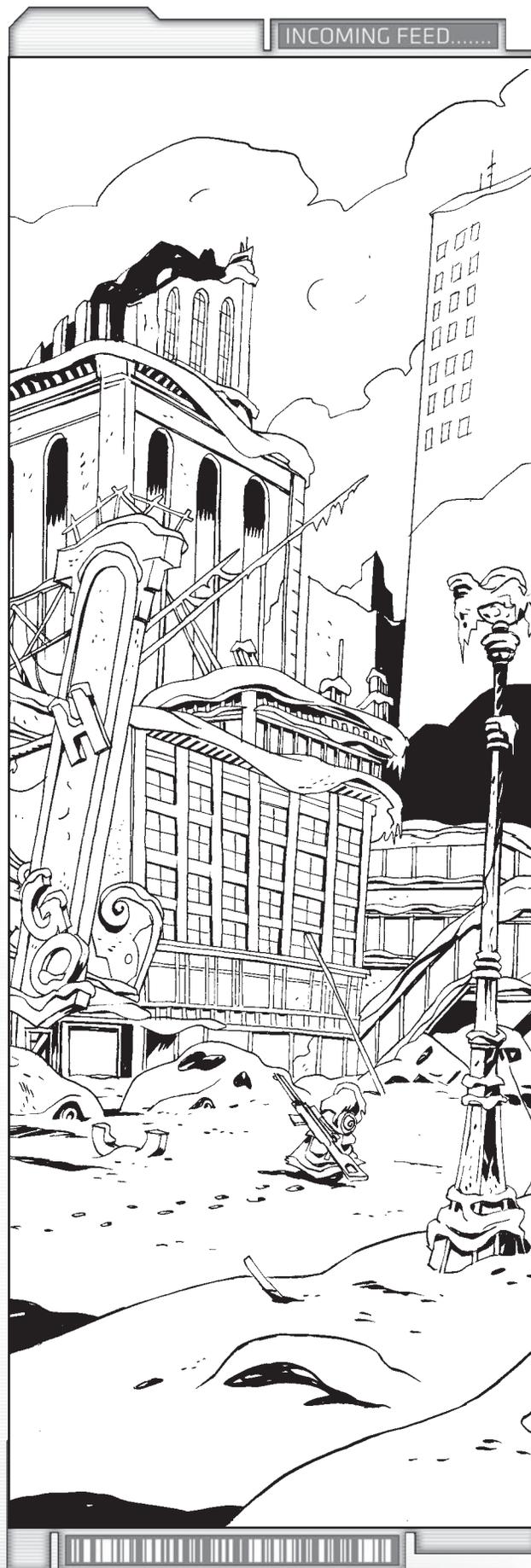
The Hive Consciousness has taken this place over. The inside is like a bargain-basement shrine to everything Universal Brotherhood; they even use the satlink to keep in touch with other survivors across the Sixth World. I know it might seem like a mercy just to bust their skulls, but they will talk to you, and sometimes if you play along, they have information that can help. I know they've pointed out more than a few maggots to me.

Quinn Chapel (The Zone)

I don't know what it is about this place, but it has hosted at last three different bug nests over the last fifteen years. If the Chicago grey growing over the roof is any indication, this might be one of the few places in the Zone with a normal background count. Nobody's bothered to clean the place out or burn it down yet, so odds are another hive will move in at some point. I should just burn the place down next time I'm there.

Union Station (Southside)

When the Desolation Angels get together, two times out of three it's in Union Station. You can tell when they're in residence, because all the bikes and trikes will be parked in a circle around a collection of tents. This is where the metahuman members stay while the mantis spirits convene inside the station itself, away from prying eyes.





Black Mamba was sure she couldn't get any more wet, even if the flesh-traders threw her into the stinking river behind them. She and twenty other people sat in a line at the side of a muddy stretch of road, rain pouring steadily down. The thick greenery of the swamps rustled ominously, the falling dusk making the shadows dark and deep. A few feet away, three men stood and shared a single cigarette, AK-97s slung carelessly over their shoulders. At the other end of the line, two more of the flesh-traders stood, equally relaxed. Mamba was careful to keep her gaze blank and unfocused, just like the other captives sitting on the muddy roadside. *Drugged, tied, and helpless, just like the human cattle next to me.*

She'd already worked the ropes around her wrists loose. And she'd taken an antidote for the dope before she'd taken the first sip of the drugged wine. As for helpless ... *not entirely, dammit.*

Another ten minutes, she thought, watching the growing darkness. Twenty tops. The three men smoking next to her were joking in an Igbo dialect that labeled them as Lagosians. *Five against one, and they've got the guns. Could be worse.* Two of the men headed toward her, and Mamba recognized the cruel intent in their laughter.

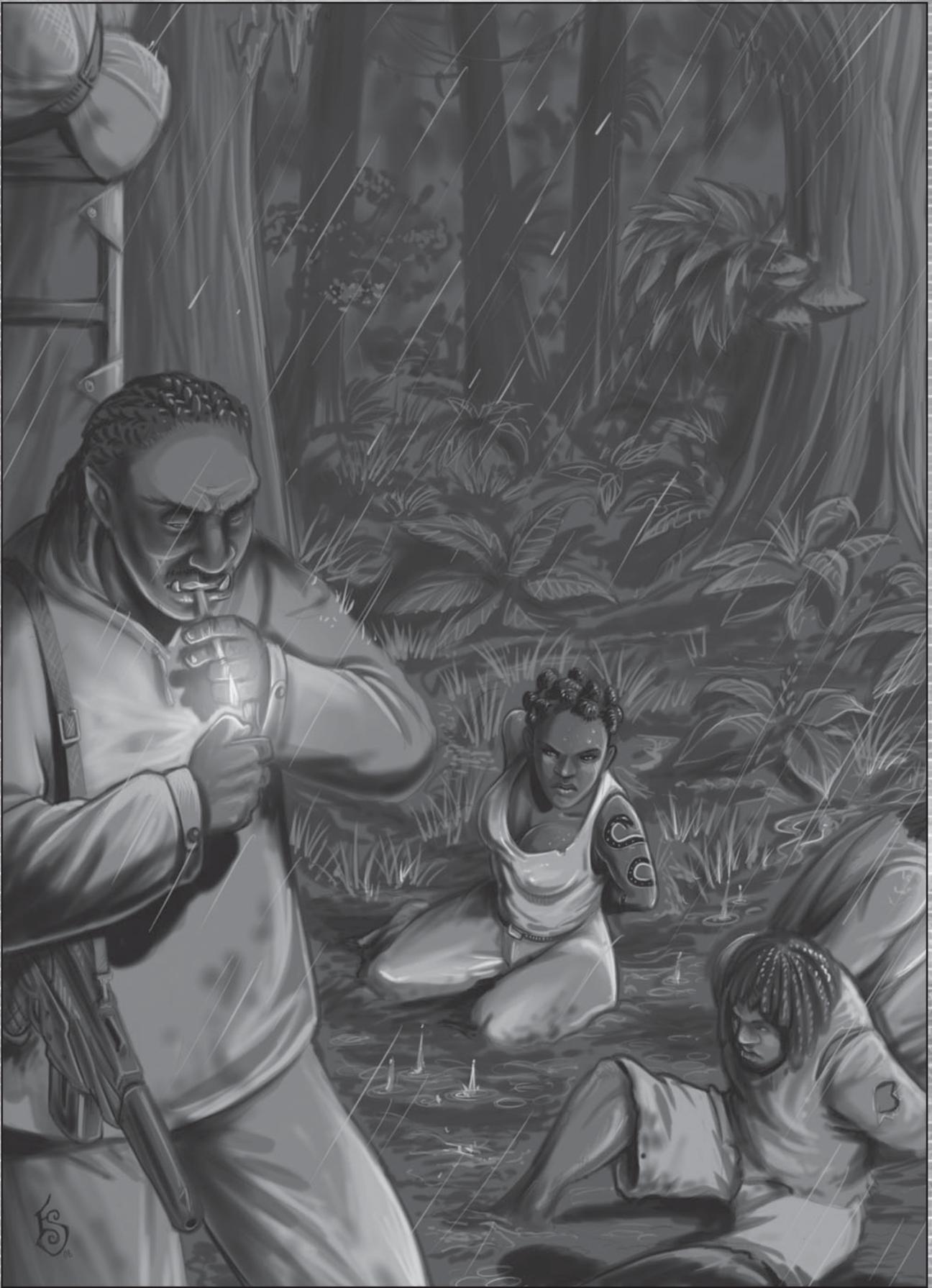
"Don't get to taste Ga very often," one said, while the other jerked Mamba to her feet. She stumbled drunkenly as they led her off into the rainforest. Once they were out of sight of the other men, she jerked to a stop. Mamba savored the flicker of shock in the first man's eyes when she crushed his throat, then, as lightning quick as her namesake, she slid out his hunting knife and buried it in the throat of the other would-be rapist. She grabbed their guns, slid the knife through her belt, then shrugged into the rain poncho that wasn't bloody. *Three against one. Night's looking up,* she thought, creeping her way through the rainforest. It took a fraction of a minute. Before the echoes of gunfire had faded away, Black Mamba had the other three bodies off into the underbrush.

Less than fifteen minutes later, she heard the sound of the truck. It was big, with oversized tires to fight through the thick mud. An ork, his ebony face decorated with Igbo ritual scars, stepped out of the cab and made his way through the rain to where she stood, the rain poncho hiding her face and figure.

"Looks like a good catch," the man said, tossing her a small bag. Mamba caught it, shook it open, took a second to admire the uncut diamonds from Asamando. Deftly, she slipped the bag into her pocket.

"Yeah," she replied, stepping up to him and pressing the muzzle of the AK under his chin. His eyes flashed white in the falling dark, and she smiled. "Good catch. Welcome to Lagos, Mr. Ebele."





THE DARK HEART OF AFRICA

• When I told Am-mut I wanted to gather together some info on feral cities around the globe, she immediately informed me that Lagos had to be one of them. I'll admit, I had to look on a map to figure out where the hell Lagos is, but Am-mut enlightened me. Turns out, Lagos is *the* African center for business (of the shady sort) and commercialism (of the even shadier sort), a veritable free-for-all marketplace and commercial crossroads to fence, sell, buy, steal, or trade pirate-loot, arms, munitions, illegal and quasi-legal goods, blood diamonds and gold, information, controlled materials (from uranium to organs) ... well, you name it, you can find it. At one point or another, everything illegal or quasi-legal goes through this sprawl. Am-mut's spent some time there, as has Black Mamba, and the ladies wrote up a pretty thorough guide to the sprawl. Black Mamba got in touch with a couple of her local contacts who agreed to give us a local's POV. As far as I know, this is the first shadowtalk discussion of the city of Lagos, and in the interest of community service, cooperation, and blah blah blah, I'll be forwarding it to ShadowSea after we've closed comments.

• Fastjack

• A quick introduction for my Lagosian associates: Honesty knows the Awakened scene in Lagos better than anyone and keeps a close watch on the local politics; Chiemeka is a local fixer and "business" man with a variety of business interests and investments; and Duante is a UCAS expat who has worked the Lagosian shadows for the last few years.

• Black Mamba

In the poverty-stricken countryside of the Kingdoms of Nigeria, in the pirate-havens of West Africa, in the war-ravaged regions of the Mahgreb, or in the deadly Awakened jungles and savannahs of sub-Saharan Africa, people speak of Lagos as a city of opportunity with streets paved in gold, where every man drives a shiny new Rover and women are draped with necklaces of gold and diamonds. God knows where the tall tales come from, but every day, thousands immigrate to Lagos—fleeing armed pirates, mercenaries, and guerillas, running away from villages decimated by never-ending wars, driven from their homes by the Awakened jungle and its denizens, hoping to escape slow starvation and crushing poverty. They flood Lagos, arriving with empty hands and hearts full of dreams.

They find that the streets aren't lined with gold, but with garbage. That no one has a new car, not even the few rich crime-lords, and that women wear chains of slavery and death, not diamonds and pearls. In one of the largest cities of the world, there is no government, no order, and little to dream about. In the underground economy, a man's life is worth less than a bag of rice. It's a city where the localized politics change as quickly as the tide, where the flow of metahumanity runs into the city faster than the foul rivers, where neighborhoods and slums of thousands appear overnight. It's also a place with more wealth than anywhere else in the Kingdoms of Nigeria or the surrounding nations. The Lagos free-for-all marketplace makes the city the perfect commercial crossroads where anyone—drug lords, corporate megaliths, government agents, pirates, runners—can fence, sell, buy, or trade any imaginable service, information, or goods, from blood diamonds

to milspec equipment. Vibrant and filthy, full of dreams and despair, swarming with metahumanity's worst vices and sins, the pipeline to Africa's black gold and blood-stained diamonds, and all the riches and sins they draw—

Welcome to Lagos.

HISTORY

Lagos is an ancient city with roots in the thirteenth century, when it began as a settlement of Awori refugees fleeing a war in their homelands (a trend that continues to this day). After that, successive waves of refugees or conquerors claimed the land, including the Yoruba and the Benin, whose kings ruled there from the 1500s to the 1800s. They named the city Eko, a name that the Benin still use. In fact, a Benin king still controls one of the Kingdoms of Nigeria. He's well respected, and many of the tribal alliances would prefer him to take a more active role in the political arena. For whatever reasons, however, he's resisted so far.

In the sixteenth century, the Portuguese began calling the city Lagos, a name that most of the world uses today (in Portuguese, "Lagos" means "lakes," and I can only assume those first traders were poking fun at the endless swamps and shallow lagoons). The Benin used Lagos as their primary port in the slave trade, which enriched the Benin kingdom and provided a profitable way for them to disperse their enemies.

• The Benin kingdom traces back to 1180 AD, or earlier. In fact, the Ga tribe of Ghana trace their history back to this ancient kingdom, don't they, Mamba?

• Elijah

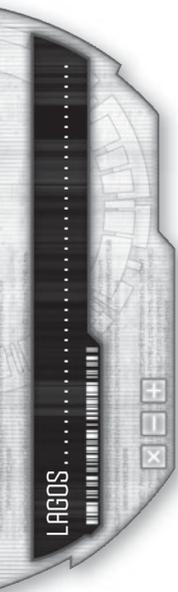
• A fancy pedigree doesn't keep you from starving. Pride is a luxury the Ga can't afford. I left and never looked back. And for the record, I still think all this history bullshit is useless. Am-mut insisted, so if you have any more questions, ask her.

• Black Mamba

In 1800s, the British seized control of Nigeria and the port city of Lagos, effectively ending the profitable slave trade with the Americas that ran through the city. Nigeria became its own nation again in the 1900s, with Lagos as the capital.

The current sprawl began to form just over a hundred years ago. Lagos became an economic, social, and business center for Nigeria and for the surrounding nations. Drawn by the promise of wealth, jobs, or opportunity, massive amounts of people—some refugees, some just hoping for a better life—began pouring into the city. By the turn of the century, there were almost 30,000 people per month coming to Lagos, while a sky-high birthrate helped swell the population and huge infant mortality did nothing to abate. Lagos had grown from a small, island-based core of less than a million souls to ... well, estimates vary—there hasn't been a census in almost a hundred years. Some say the sprawl held around ten million, others put the number at twenty or even thirty million. New residents flowed into the sprawl so fast, there was little point in counting them.

The government couldn't keep up with the massive influx of people, and most of the newcomers ended up settling in vast



DUANTE'S GUIDE TO GETTING BY IN LAGOS

A quick and dirty guide for any mates visiting Lagos.

Important Terms and Local Insults

Buka—A neighborhood bar/restaurant, occasionally open air or with only three walls, where the locals gather to drink palm wine and conduct business. Great place to pick up the Three W's: work, wine, or women.

Cherubium—Local slang for a child brothel.

Danfo—A bus. Kind of. Look like hell but remarkably safe to use.

Hawala: An African banking system, absolutely wonderful for out-of-towners.

Okada: Lagosian motorbike, modified to squeeze through traffic, often used as taxis by the daring or foolhardy.

Olorisha, Dibia: Priests and priestesses, sometimes Awakened, always powerful and well respected.

Oyibos: foreigner (a.k.a., "rich and gullible" or "easy target")

Sasabonsam: African ghouls with long skinny arms and legs that remind me of those daddy-long-leg spiders back home.

Top Ten Tips

1. Get an introduction to a local hawala as soon as you arrive. Trustworthy bankers, good contacts, and honest fixers.
2. Get a lot of the local currency—you'll need it to pay off the gangs.
3. You *will* get scammed. Try not to lose all your money the first time out.
4. Don't take payment in Nigerian currency or "electronic cred" from locals. Ask for hawala credit vouchers, uncut diamonds, or even gold.
5. Be careful drinking the local water. Bring your own pocket filtration system or buy the bagged "sterile" water at the markets.
6. Try the local food; it's very tasty, with lots of spices and hot peppers. There's very little soy in existence; instead, most locals survive on cassava roots, yams, or rice. Just watch out for food washed in the local water.
7. Don't depend on the wireless grid. It can go from strong to non-existent with the evening commute. If you need to do some wireless biz, best bet is to head to a local "Hot Spot" where there's 24 hr grid coverage.
8. Don't go into the slums.
9. If you have to go into the slums, carry big guns. Lots of big guns.
10. Never accept a dinner invitation from a sasabonsam.

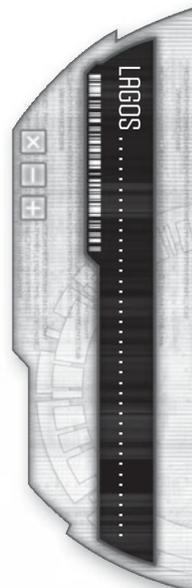
slums. Overwhelmed, the government built a new capital, Abuja, and relocated its ministries and offices there around the turn of the century. With that move, the government washed its hands of the burgeoning city, leaving it to be overwhelmed by the sprawling slums and rampant corruption.

Lagos had plenty of things still going for it, including the largest port for the country, the majority of its industrial strength, and a safe (relatively speaking) outlet for the oil that formed the basis of the country's wealth. But with the capital relocating, Lagos was left in the hand of local politicians who ensured that the money the federal government sent to the city—designated for infrastructure, medical care, repair or upgrades of industrial facilities, public education, housing, even basics such as water sanitation systems—served only to keep the port open and their own pockets lined. The city grew derelict, and the masses of slum dwellers saw their lives go from appalling to unimaginable.

That was the state of affairs when VITAS I swept through the city. In 2011, population counts ranged from around fifteen million to thirty million people. Although VITAS I swept over Africa later than in Asia, Europe, or the Americas, it was even more deadly. In fact, it could be said that VITAS I was the single most influential event in recent African history, overshadowing even the Awakening. The face of the continent was permanently changed as the mortality toll reached close to 75 percent in most areas.

By the time the disease reached Lagos, it was pretty well known that tetracycline could be used to treat the deadly secondary infections that claimed most victims. The rich corporate enclaves on Victoria Island were able to procure enough of the treatment to help their citizens. The Nigerian government begged a few thousand doses for their people, trading on their strategic importance in the global oil economy. Those doses made it to a few powerful politicians, who were corrupt enough to sell the remaining doses for tens of thousands of dollars to those who could afford it. Like many events in the country's history, the tragedy made a few unbelievably wealthy. The rest of Nigeria saw unimaginable death rates, and Lagos itself lost over three quarters of its population. Imagine, if you can, about ten or even twenty million people dying in a few short months. I've seen photos from the time, rare as they are, showing bodies stacked like cordwood, higher than some buildings. In places, you could walk across lagoons and rivers because the bodies had formed a solid dam. Traditional burial ceremonies were forsaken, mass graves were filled, and the dead continued to pile up. Eventually, portions of the city became funeral pyres, bonfires that burned for over a year without ever going out with corpses as their fuel. I don't know if anyone from that time is still alive, at least in Lagos, but their descendants tell their tales, passed down as stories and warnings.

• Since the rest of the world was so busy dealing with their own problems, no one was around to tally the dead in Africa. Three out of every four people died, a death toll higher than anywhere else in the world. It was an apocalypse, the most influential event of the past several centuries. If you learn nothing else from this history, learn that. Diseases, especially epidemics, are so feared in Africa that you might find yourself shot and burned just for sneezing in the wrong company. The tribal healers are often the most powerful and respected people in their community, obeyed without hesitation. *Oyibos*—foreigners—are often at risk for random attacks, since many believe the disease was sent by rich whites to kill all Africans. It didn't help at the time that many



LAGOS TIMELINE:

1958—First oil shipped from Nigeria.

1991—Nigerian government finishes building Abuja. The country's capital is moved to the new city, abandoning Lagos to the sprawling slums. Government and corporate investment in the city slows to a trickle.

2007—The nationalistic group known as MEANS begins attacking corporate oil investors and facilities, causing a widespread withdrawal from the area by foreign corporations.

2011—VITAS 1 sweeps through Africa. The death toll is between 50 and 75 percent of the continent's population. In Lagos, it's believed that over 75 percent of the population, approximately ten to twenty million people, dies.

2011—The city is still under siege from VITAS when the Awakening occurs. The first signs of the Awakening are when the tribal shamans suddenly become able to cure victims of VITAS through their traditional medicine and prayers.

2015—Radical climate, environmental, and geological changes across Africa are attributed to the Awakening. Entire cities disappear as jungles and the savannah spread across sub-Saharan Africa.

2022—Riots rock the city as VITAS II sweeps through, killing a quarter of the residents. Several sections of the city burn.

2030—Ghoul nation of Asamando is founded by Thema Laula. Lagos becomes a major hub in the underground trade route across Africa to Asamando.

2039—Global race riots burn through Africa. In Lagos, priests of Obatala provide shelter to thousands of me-tahumans and summon spirits to quell riots.

2040—The Azanian alliance forms, composed of Cape Republic, Oranje-Vrystaat, Trans-Swazi Federation, and Zulu Nation. The Azanians grow to be one of the most powerful countries in Africa and soon dominate South Africa.

2043—Multiple branches of the Universal Brotherhood open across Africa. In Lagos, rampant corruption, thefts, and armed robberies against the charity and its brotherhood force most of the branches to close.

2061—As SURGE spreads through the city, the people of Lagos attribute it to another outbreak of VITAS. Thousands of changelings are attacked and killed.

2061, November 1st—Ancestor spirits appear all over the city, warning of the "Return of the Dead." Shedim outbreaks across the city cause widespread destruction. Even more people flow into the city as they attempt to escape shedim infestations in Interior Africa.

2063—A pipeline connecting Lagos to the Niger Delta oil fields is completed with cooperation of several of the Kingdoms of Nigera. War breaks out almost immediately.

2068—The Seven King War ends when Oni Adegoke makes a deal with Global Sandstorm for military support.

white foreigners were able to get a hold of the lifesaving tetracycline in their well-protected corporate enclaves.

- Honesty
- I'm told that the death toll really did a job on the local astral background count. The pyre sites are still so "hot" today that most magicians won't go near them.
- Ethernaut
- That's true in my experience. The magic is volatile and twisted there.
- Honesty

In the middle of the chaos and death, a miracle happened: a handful of *marabouts* (Islamic healers and diviners), priests and witch doctors suddenly discovered their traditional medicines and prayers performed the impossible.

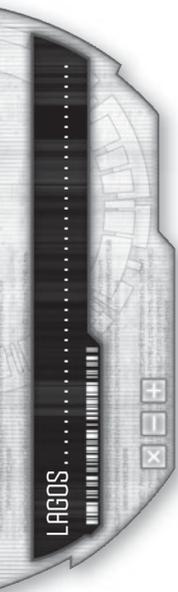
For a people who had always believed in magic, the Awakening wasn't a shock. Although those who followed the native religions—Yoruba being by far the most common of the tribal beliefs in Lagos—were welcoming and accepting of the sudden effectiveness of magic, other religions present in the city quickly followed suit when they saw that the *olorishas* and *dibias* were able to heal their followers. Even the local version of Islam has a more liberal view on magic.

While the rest of the world struggled with the birth of elves and dwarves, the people in Lagos simply rejoiced in the birth of any child. Creatures of legend returned to the jungles and savannahs, and plants long believed to have mystical properties suddenly did. In Africa's darkest days, the Awakening was a bright light of hope.

In 2015, that hope too turned dark as the face of Africa shifted. Jungles grew overnight, consuming entire villages and cities. The Saharan sands shifted, changing the lay of the land and burying roads, making land travel to the north almost impossible. The savannahs changed too, eaten by the growing jungles and deserts. By the end of the year, most maps of the African hinterlands were unusable. The interior of the continent was swallowed by impenetrable jungles, filled with Awakened plants and beasts. Except for the coastal areas, Africa was all but cut off from the rest of the world.

After that, history in Africa is a jigsaw missing too many pieces. In Lagos, VITAS II and III wrought more devastation, killing hundreds of thousands. Despite that, the population of the city continued to grow, as wars ravaged the neighboring kingdoms and countries. In an area torn by violence, Lagos remained a peaceful city.

- Oh, please. It remained a *free* city. Warring kings, gangs, pirates, and mercs have attempted to take the city, and each attempt fails to contain the sheer mass of chaos that is Lagos. But there are gunfights and bloody battles between rival gangs and kingpins in the city every day. Starving slum dwellers sell their own children as corp-indentured labor or ghoulish food, so they can live another day. Shedim and paracritters prowl the backstreets, preying on the unwary. Entire swaths of shacks go up in flames, trapping everyone inside, so a gang or corp





INCOMING FEED.....

or pirate-king can claim new territory. Just because it's never been conquered does *not* make it peaceful.

- Black Mamba

Events that devastated the rest of the world, like the comet and the Crash, had little effect on Lagos. A few hundred died in SURGE riots, when the locals believed that SURGE was a new VITAS come to maim and kill. The Crash of '64 had little effect, although the resulting surge of wireless technology has brought the city in touch with the world, as a local mesh network has sprung up. The local hacker gangs, with typical Lagosian resourcefulness, adapted their equipment so they could continue to run their schemes.

It is important to remember that Lagos has essentially been a feral city for almost one hundred years. In the last century, despite a lack of government and cooperating corporate interests and with constant upheaval, the city somehow thrives. Lagos is a place where money is the only constant, a place where a few have learned to use the chaos and disorder to create their own wealth. It is the gate to the resource-rich West Africa, a place where everything and anything can be bought or sold.

THE FACES OF DARKNESS

Lagos is an experiment in chaos, and nowhere is that more evident than the radical stew of people and languages in the city. Over a hundred different languages are spoken across the city by just as many tribes. Almost none of those languages have ever been recorded, much less loaded onto a linguasoft. *Oyibos* (for-

eigners) in the city are frequently bewildered by the cacophony of languages in the markets and on the streets. With tribal tensions flaring, speaking the wrong language in the wrong area is a quick ticket to a painful death.

It would be impractical for me to discuss each tribal group in the city at any length. I'll highlight a few, however, and if you plan on traveling there, I'd suggest downloading Ndumbila's Guide to the Major and Minor Tribes of Western Africa.

Yoruba

The most populous group in the city is the Yoruba, an amalgam of different tribes such as the Oyo, Ife, and Ekiti. The Yoruba religion is the largest tribal religion in the city, and the Yoruba language is the second most common language in the city. The Yoruba people are united by their common language and their religion, led by the Oni of Ife, their spiritual leader and claiming one of the most powerful Nigerian Kingdoms. The city Yoruba have several long-lasting enmities with other tribes present in Lagos, namely the Edo and Igbo.

Awori

Another populous tribe in the city is the Awori, the original settlers of Lagos Island. They tend to be a bit more clannish and hold themselves more apart than other tribes in the city. They also tend to be very suspicious of outsiders, an attitude fostered by the attacks they've suffered from other tribes in the city. The Awori are also primarily Muslim, and the kingdoms they control follow Sharia

Lagos



(religious law). In the areas of Lagos the Awori control, the strict adherence to Sharia actually makes their neighborhoods among the safest in the city—at least, for those who follow the law.

Igbo

The Igbo are probably the second most powerful tribal group in the city. Their *dibias* (Awakened priests) are renowned for their healing magic and potions. They need to be, since the Igbo are known throughout the city as fierce and unyielding fighters. Their young men tend to run with the Area Boys and other gangs; the ones that survive their youth grow into pirates, mercs, and armed thugs for many of the power brokers in the city.

- The Igbo place a great deal of value on the honor of their family names. Insulting a man's father or ancestors is a surefire way to start a fight. Igbo boys are brought up with harsh discipline and privation, and they frequently learn to handle a gun when many children in other countries are just learning to read.
- Duante
- Women and girls in the Igbo tribes are second- or perhaps even third-class citizens. They are expected to work hard as adults, supporting their husbands, brothers, and sons, who often do not work at traditional jobs. Young Igbo girls are pimped out to support the family. Their lives only get worse after that. You'll almost never find an Igbo son sold into slavery or to the flesh-traders, but the girls aren't so lucky. Even those girls who are born Awakened are often sold—to the corps or to the gangs—since most Igbo fathers believe it unlucky to have such a powerful girl in the family.
- Goat-foot

Hausa

The Hausa tribe is spread throughout the Kingdoms of Nigeria, with a large population living within the city of Lagos. They have strong ties of kinship, and when a Hausa comes to the city to make his fortune, he expects to find a place to stay with his kin. His kin will also help him find work, and in exchange, he'll return part of his earnings to the family patriarch. They have a high percentage of orks and trolls in their tribe, which has helped make them one of the more populous tribes in the Kingdoms.

- And the constant flow of money up the ranks ensures that the Hausa king is one of the wealthy few in the Kingdoms of Nigeria. He and his fourteen wives live in the Hausa Kingdom in a palatial estate, surrounded by fanatically loyal armed bodyguards. If you're looking for work outside Lagos, King Kangwe is willing to pay well for exotic paracritters to add to his private zoo or for exceptionally pretty girls and boys to add to his seraglio.
- Chiemeka

Egun

The Egun tribe is made primarily of dwarves, most of whom live in the city. Many of their members actually come from a variety of tribes but were welcomed into the Egun tribe when their own tribes cast them out. Because the dwarves in Lagos tend to be more resistant to the myriad of diseases that plague the general population, the Egun are often sought-after healers and doctors. If there's a Lagosian dwarf in a medical clinic, chances are they're an Egun.

RELIGION IN LAGOS

Until the early years of the century Islam was on the rise in Nigeria, and many areas in the north of the country had become Islamic strongholds. Then came the Awakening empowering traditional healers, witch doctors, and shamans, and revitalizing Old Faiths and ancestor worship. Religion has always played a major role in tribal life, and suddenly people turned back to the old ways.

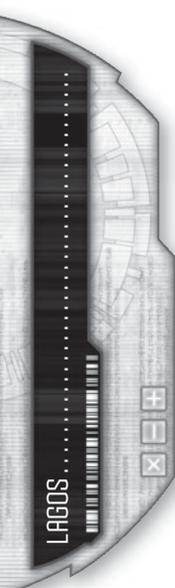
Religion is a major part of daily life in Lagos. Islam and the Orishas faith (tribal religions), such as Yoruba, are dominant in the city, and together with Christianity cover about 85 percent of the population. The remainder follow other animistic religions, and there's also a small but thriving Hindu population. The thing to realize in Lagos is that the religions are fairly tolerant of each other. People may fight over tribal affiliation, gang affiliation, race, gender, or economic status. But religion rarely, if ever, spurs disagreements. The Yoruba religion is very accepting of other beliefs and has no hostility to the piety of other people. Lagosian Christians often incorporate many Yoruba elements into their religion (with much in common with Voodoo and Santeria).

Islam in sub-Saharan Africa is very different from its northern counterparts, coexisting with other religions, and boasting a more accepting stance on magic, and in general being a force for stability in Lagos. It is not uncommon to find people of all faiths celebrating a particular holiday together or using the same shrine for their worship. Too bad Lagosians limit their peaceful co-existence to religion—if they tried to live their religious principals in other areas of their lives, the city might be a haven instead of a hellhole.

The Awakened revival has proved a major setback for Islam, but the local brand of Islam has always been quite resilient and open. Among the most common expression of this syncretic openness are the *marabouts*, Islamic spiritualists. These range from conventional Islamic clerics (*Imams*) who are versed in the Koran and preside over services at local mosques, to local healers and diviners who combine Islam with indigenous beliefs and practices. Some marabouts practices resemble those of *getba*, with Islamic verses replacing cowries. While these practices are disapproved by Islamic orthodoxy, they are common through-out Islamic Africa.

Among the most powerful revived faiths is the Yoruba religion. Their priests, or Olorishas, serve one of their many gods. Although the Yoruba believe in a higher god, they look to one of their many lesser gods, or Orishas, for their daily rituals and magic. The Egunguns, for example, are the priests of the dead. Ifa is the god of divination, and his priests are a major power in Lagos and throughout the kingdoms of Nigeria. Obatala is the god who protects the disabled (including dwarves, trolls, and changelings). Most of the gangers and mercenaries in the city pray to Ogun, the god of iron and weapons, while the women and the farmers who live on the edges of the swamps often pray to Orishakò, the goddess of agriculture and fertility.

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- Obatala's priesthood are a good resource if you're a meta in the city, since they frequently offer sanctuary and support. Their spirits roam the streets at will, protecting changelings and people with disabilities.
- Honesty



JACKPOINT JOBBANK**Type:** DDatasteal**Salary Range:** ¥¥, Negotiable**Location:** Lagos**Job Desc:** Willing to travel? I'll pay all expenses plus prime rates for you and your team if you can locate and acquire a prototype of Singularity's linguistic software being developed in Lagos. Bonus for the extraction of any lead personnel associated with the project.**Reqs/Timeframe:** One month. Local contacts preferred. Contact me for more details.**Contact:** Matsuo Kime

<Yes>/<Ignore>

- Shaluga is the most popular deity in Lagos. He's the god of luck and money, and most people offer him prayers throughout the day. His priests are capricious but powerful, and they live a much more luxurious lifestyle than any other priests in the city. I often make an offer to him before a run.

- Duante

LANGUAGES

You can't navigate Lagos without running afoul of the tangled web of languages and dialects that crisscross the sprawl. With over a hundred languages, communication can be challenging even between sprawl residents, and it can be a nightmare for travelers and *oyibos*—particularly when there are practically no linguasofts on the market.

Most Lagosians speak a pidgin language woven from English, Yoruba, Igbo, Awori, Hausa, and French. It forms a city-speak of sorts, although unlike any you'll find anywhere else in the world. Newcomers to the city often manage to communicate through gestures and expression, and most *oyibos* can do the same. Unfortunately, this pidgin has never been translated to linguasoft. Many of the guides who roam the city speak some English or French, so chances are you'll be able to communicate with your guide. After the mixed cityspeak of the sprawl, Yoruba is the second most common language, followed by Igbo and Awori.

- Of course, if you don't want your guide to cheat you mercilessly, I'd suggest learning some basic Yoruba right away.

- Honesty

- Horizon is supposedly working on intelligent language software that can analyze a language in real-time and provide a translation after a short wait. It's fairly experimental. I've heard that Singularity has a few off-the-books labs in Lagos to test it out. Apparently, Tam Reyes considers the environment there to be the perfect testing ground. More than a few other software corps would like a peek at their research.

- Dr. Spin

- I speak Yoruba and Igbo fairly well, and know enough Awori to get by. Most mercs who work Africa learn Yoruba, since it is pretty common across the West Coast and interior.

- Black Mamba

- Wow, Mamba, you're quite the intellectual. Tell me, do you actually ever use those languages, or do you still prefer to do your negotiating with your gun?

- Ma'fan

- Agwo sutukwa gi onu.

- Black Mamba

- Ahem. Don't mean to get in the middle of you two ladies, but Mamba, do you speak Lingala? Or know anyone who does?

- Elijah

- Yeah. Took a job escorting a shaman from Cairo back to Kinshasa-Brazzaville. He taught me a bit. You want to learn some, I can help. For a price.

- Black Mamba

THE GEOLOGY AND ECOLOGY OF A SWAMP

Lagos is a city built on a swamp, surrounded by rivers, creeks, and lagoons. The city itself is very flat—there is no natural place where the elevation is higher than a meter above sea level. The jungles and rainforests press the city on one side, while the ocean steals away valuable dry land on the other. Dry land exists, but the city long ago outgrew its supply. The slums sprawl out over the shallow swamps and lagoons, wobbly shacks of plastic and rusted metal perched on stilts above the swampy sludge below. Boards link huddles of shacks together, providing dangerous pathways through the slums. In areas where land has been reclaimed from the swamps, the streets are often little more than black mud mixed with foul garbage, churned up into a froth by cars and *okadas* (modified motorcycles). Mold grows on everything during the rainy season, painting the shanties, buildings, cars, and even clothing, with spreading green, red, and yellow patterns. A ubiq-

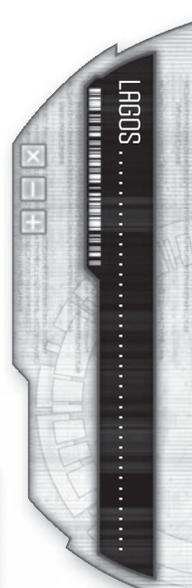
FAST FACTS

Take these figures with a barrel of salt, 'kay?

- Honesty

Population of Lagos: 20 million, maybe more, maybe less**Area:** 3,500 square kilometers, give or take a few hundred more (lagoons cover about 25 percent of the total area)**Predominate Tribes:** Yoruba (35%), Igbo (15%), Awori (5%), Egun (5%)**Metatypes:****Human:** 60%**Ork:** 20%**Dwarf:** 8%**Elf:** 5%**Troll:** 2%**Other:** 5%**Currency Exchange Rate:** 20 Naira (coinage) to 1 nuyen

Urgent Message...



uitous green slime covers buildings and makes the narrow wooden pathways dangerously slick.

When Africa's ecology shifted so drastically in 2015, the climate shifted too. Lagos has two rainy seasons. The heavy rains fall from April to July, often dumping thirty inches a month on the city. The lighter rains fall between August and November, with rainfalls of about nine inches per month. The dry season comes in December, when the Harmattan wind blows from the Saharan desert, bringing cool air and drying out the city for a few brief months. During these months dust storms whip through the town, and instead of the green slime, everything is covered with a fine layer of red dust. By mid-February, the rains start up again.

Lagosians live with the weather. In fact, they take advantage of the rains, setting out collection barrels and bags and even plastic cans and sacks to catch the rainwater. Most of the city has no access to clean water, despite being built on and around so much of it. The slum dwellers depend on the rainwater for drinking, cooking, and washing.

- The rainwater is often acidic, tainted by wide stretches of factories belching out pollutants and smoke. The roofs and pipes catching the rain are generally rusted and covered with slime and molds, and the collection barrels are even worse. Several local corps have sprung up, selling dirt cheap distillation equipment and filters, which are notoriously unreliable. But when the alternative is drinking water from the swamps, which are full of human waste, garbage, pollutants dumped from the factories, and of course the frequent appearance of bodies of metahumans and other creatures, not to mention the parasites and bacteria normally there ... A bit of acid rainwater doesn't seem so bad now, does it?

- Black Mamba

- An olorisha or dibia with the right spell to sterilize water is worth their weight in gold in Lagos. They also are frequently controlled by the various gangs, who've been known to go to war simply to steal one from a rival gang. Your water purification systems are in high demand.

- Honesty

POLLUTION

Pollution is an ever-present problem in Lagos. Garbage piles form mountains along roadsides, coat the streets, and clog the water drainage systems. Creeks, dammed by heaps of trash, overflow their banks and flood streets and houses. The piles are made of everything imaginable: threadbare tires, plastic sacks, junked metal, furniture that even the slum dwellers cannot salvage, leaking batteries, broken glass, even the bodies of metahumans and critters. Even the dozens of recycling mills—Lagosian's home-grown industry that feeds off the sprawl's own waste, selling recycled materials to corps (and providing employment to thousands)—barely makes a dent.

Because the garbage is such a problem, the various gangs and controlling factions have enforced an "Environmental Day" once a month for over a century. On the last Saturday of the month, between 1 pm and 4 pm, the city grinds to a halt. Cars are not allowed on the streets, the markets are closed, and even the gang wars are paused for three hours. Every man, woman, and child takes to the streets to pick up garbage. Armed thugs and Area Boys (more on them later) walk the streets, thrashing anyone who is not

participating. The drainage ditches are scraped clean with rusted shovels or even by hand, the piles and bags of garbage are loaded into wobbly wheelbarrows or carried by the sackfull to central burn piles. That Saturday, the air is clogged with thick, poisonous black smoke as all the garbage is burned. It may be the only thing that keeps the garbage from overrunning the city completely.

- Rich corp citizens stay in their homes during these hours, since they'd never consider actually contributing to the effort. But the factories, warehouses, and labs tend to be abandoned by their Lagosian employees, and it can be a pretty good time to do some runs.

- Cheimeka

- As long as you remember you can't drive to or from your target. But I've known clever thieves who put their loot in black plastic bags, toss them into a wheelbarrow, and walk, bold as you please, through the streets alongside all the other people pushing garbage to the burn piles. No one steals their goods, no one hassles them, and there certainly aren't any police or security guards who care about some poor slummer pushing garbage through the streets.

- Duante

Anywhere you go in Lagos, you're forcibly reminded that you are in a city balanced precariously over a swamp. Giant mangrove trees crowd the shores of the creeks, roots as big around as a troll's waist reach down to the water like thick tentacles. Verdant green foliage competes with the trees for a foothold. The waterways aren't habitable—they're prone to flooding and haunted by creatures that view metahumans as tasty snacks. While the shantytowns stretch over the outskirts of the swamp, the deeper creeks and waterways trace paths of greenery through the city. Unsurprisingly, many of the locals use canoes or small flat-bottomed boats to travel through the city on these waterways. It is often more dangerous than traveling by road, since the critters that hunt the waterways don't take bribes.

- More dangerous, true, but much, much faster.

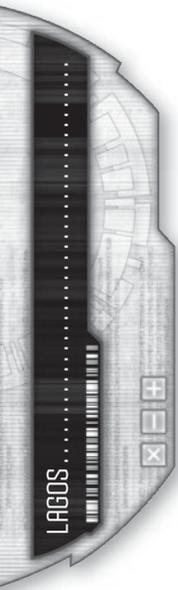
- Duante

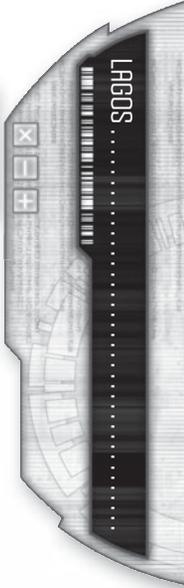
- The creeks and waterways have an ominous feeling to them, like something is watching you from the thick greenery. Something that considers you prey. Many Awakened residents refuse to travel on flowing water.

- Honesty

Elsewhere, the swamp ranges from soggy, smelly ground to standing water up to a meter deep. The water is often hard to see, coated with green slime or water plants that can stand the polluted water. The shanties rise up from the swamp on uneven poles and stilts, haphazardly crowded together, barely hovering over the stinking waters below. Wooden boards or plastic planks form rough floors, often with treacherous gaps between them. Roofs are cobbled together from metal sheeting, wooden planks, plastic sheets, even palm fronds.

The shantytown residents use the swamp as a latrine, as a garbage dump, and as a burial round. They also use it for fishing, to gather plants and herbs, and to provide water during the dry season.





INCOMING FEED.....

- If you eat at a Buka (a café/bar that operates out of a shack), be wary of having any dish with fish or cassava. Both probably have come from the nearby swamp.
- Traveler Jones

- Good advice—if you can afford to be picky.
- Black Mamba

- When you can watch a man shitting into the water on one side of a shanty while his son dangles a fishing line into the water on the other side, and his wife wades through the water below pulling up cassava roots between the bloated bodies of devil rats, you may find it in yourself to work hard enough to be able to afford to be picky.
- Chiemeka

- The local chain of Ben's Burgers caters to those Lagosians hungry for Western living. The Devil Rat Special is actually pretty tasty and Gomatia on the spit with a side of fried plantains ... mmmm ...
- Duante

Drier areas of the slums have uniformly square houses built of cinderblocks and scavenged plasticrete, materials that mold but don't rot. The houses are often two stories, since during the heavy rains even the dry areas of the city can flood, forcing families to the higher floor for a few days or weeks. Apartment buildings look like larger versions of the cinderblock houses—square, blocky architecture that rises above the smaller homes like a giant box. Rooftops

everywhere are used to collect water and grow food—vegetables that can stand the pollution, along with a wide variety of edible fungi. In the better neighborhoods, drainage ditches are cleaned more frequently, keeping the flooding down and the streets and alleys dry.

NOT SO FRIENDLY NEIGHBORS

The Kingdoms of Nigeria use Lagos as their primary port and trade center, and the Benin Kingdom uses Lagos as a trade center as well. The pirate nations of the Ivory and Gold coasts try to plunder Lagos' riches, while the corporate controlled city of Sekondi watches the untamed chaos of Lagos with disdain. Flesh-traders prowl secret overland routes to take their wares to Asamando, returning with gold and diamonds. There are as many neighbors to Lagos as there are kings and princes in the interior and along the coast.

Resource Rich

There's a reason why Lagos is still on the maps of the corps (and therefore the shadows) today. Despite the widespread poverty that most people experience, the Kingdoms of Nigeria are some of the most resource-rich areas in Africa right now. All those resources funnel through Lagos, making the sprawl a hotspot for corporate competition, pirates, and freelancers like us.

It's not just minerals, oil and guns, either (although those are big). The Kingdoms' vast natural gas reserves are as big as oil these days and the telesma from the Awakened rainforests,

both flora and fauna, is a major commodity. In South Africa, the Zulu Nation is fanatical about guarding their territory, and limits on telesma collecting deter even the most determined corporation, while Mujaji protects the other coast from despoilers. In the Congo, the Kobikela do the same, although they are aided by the impassible Congo territory itself. Angola's exports are self-limited. That leaves Lagos as the only outlet in the area for the telesma trade. Awakened critters from the swamps and rainforests are also profitable, since there is a constant market for the pretty Awakened parrots (both the normal and the miniature sizes are found in West Africa). Paranormal critters are in high demand by zoos and for use as guard animals or subjects of corporate experiment. There's also a great market for animal parts, such as the skin of leopard shapechangers. It can be a dangerous occupation, of course, since many of the creatures being hunted are, themselves, predators.

The diamond and gold fields in Asamando and West Africa are harvested by a variety of corporations, with DeBeers-Omnitech leading the field. When DeBeers-Omnitech or any other corporation or government wants to move some diamonds into the market without going through their more regulated channels, they funnel them into Lagos. They can then be shipped out and sold on the black market or used to trade for items the corporation wants.

- Ah, the shadowy side of economics. Here's a nutshell explanation for those of you who missed Economics 101. Let's say DeBeers has 100,000 nuyen worth of diamonds they've mined from Asamando. Now let's say DeBeers wants to arm a portion of a military force but doesn't want to let anyone know they're doing so. They can give the diamonds to a "broker" to take to Lagos, where he will trade the diamonds to Ares Arms for guns. The guns have been manufactured off the record in Lagos, so Ares Arms doesn't have to account for selling them. DeBeers now has its guns, Ares Arms has a pocket full of diamonds it can use (or sell for cash), and no shareholders needed to be bothered with trivial details. Corporations frequently use places like Lagos to conduct big business dealings they don't want their own shareholders (much less their competition) to know about.
- Mr. Bonds

Drugs are also funneled through Lagos. Although the chips and BTLs aren't a particularly big business in Lagos itself, smugglers often use the port to swap them for other cargos, then ship them to more profitable markets, such as Cape Town in the Azania nation. The drugs that flow through Lagos tend to be the BADs and designer drugs on their way to other markets. More than one corporation (and criminal organization, if you prefer

to differentiate between the two) has a drug-tech lab in Lagos, where they can cook up established drugs, experiment with new ones, and ship their products outside the watchful eyes of law enforcement and competitors.

Other trade goods tend to be less profitable for those of us in the shadows, such as the output of Nigerian stripmines, and the massive textile, plastics, and low-tech manufacturing and recycling plants. Other profitable industries include soap, which is shipped and sold worldwide, and cosmetics (marketed through Aztechnology's Tres Chic Cosmetics line among others). Food stuffs, such as palm oil and rice, are also a large part of the trade industry. While most of the manufacturing industry and factories are in Lagos, the resources come from the Kingdoms of Nigeria and the rest of West Africa. Other primary exports that ship out of Lagos include the valuable rainforest hardwoods, mined minerals such as coal and tin, and a variety of agricultural produce (which is often processed in Lagos prior to shipping) such as sugar cane, rubber, and biofuels.

JACKPOINT JOBBANK

Type: D&D (Datasteal and Demo)

Salary Range: ¥¥¥, Negotiable

Location: Lagos

Job Desc: Team wanted to obtain research data and viable sample of a new biotech drug believed to be manufactured in Lagos. More details available when contract is accepted. Bonus offered if lab and all personnel are destroyed after sample and research data is acquired.

Reqs/Timeframe: One week for completion. Non-locals preferred.

Contact: <Yes>/<Ignore>

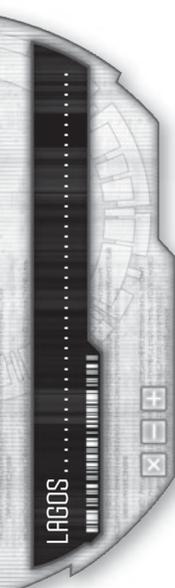
THE KINGDOMS OF NIGERIA

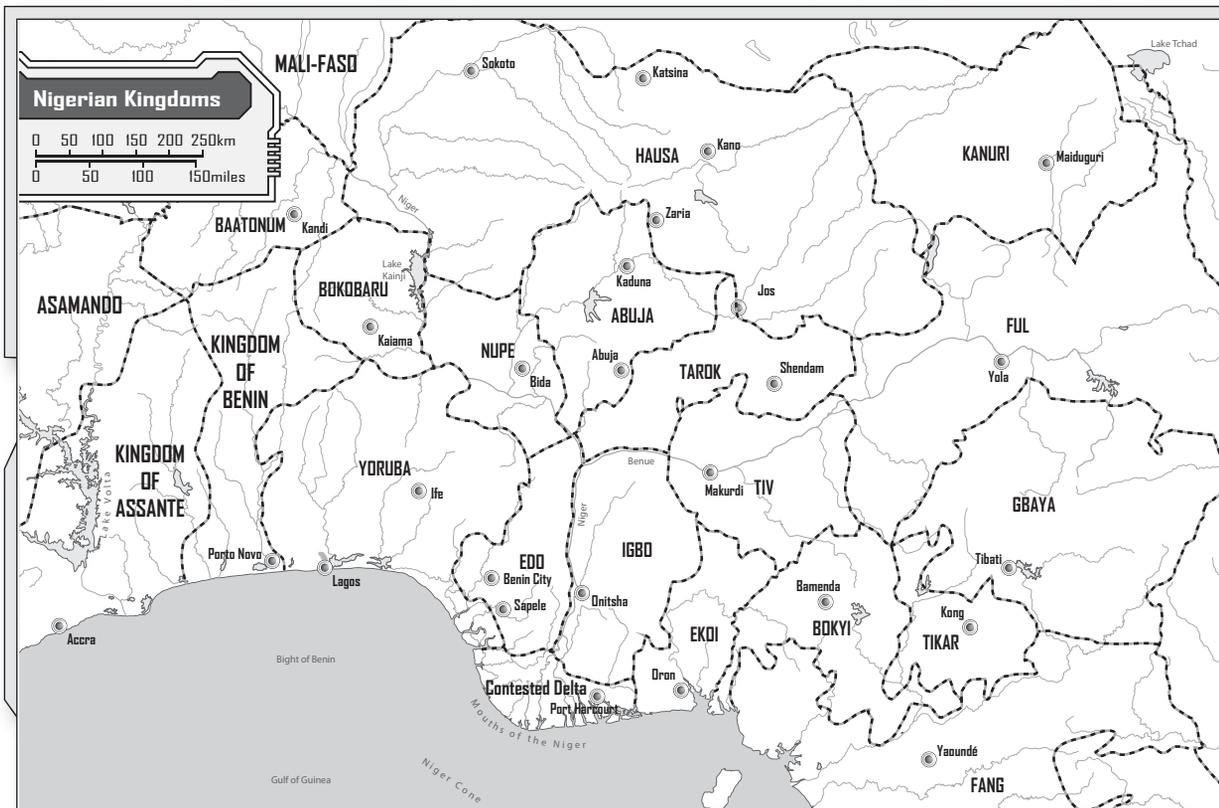
Nigeria has had a long history of dissidence. Indeed, the only time it was united as a nation was under colonial rule, which lumped the individual tribal kingdoms together for ease of administration and bureaucracy, reflecting resources, not people. Cultural, language, and clan lines were ignored. Once the colonial rule was removed, the country of Nigeria was swept into war as different tribes tried to assert their dominance or independence.

The government finally established a shaky rule, just in time for VITAS I's arrival. Wealthy politicians fled the country, and the government crumbled. When people realized there would be no aid or support from their leaders or their government, they turned to anyone who could promise help. After VITAS, many villages and smaller towns were completely wiped out, all occupants dead or gone. The few people left in Nigeria and the surrounding countries banded together along tribal and family lines. In many cases, survivors formed new tribes based on shared languages, religions, or simply having survived the past few years together.

- Before VITAS, there were estimates of over 300 distinct tribes in Nigeria. No one really knows how many were lost completely, but based on what I've heard, there's around a hundred tribes left.
- Elijah

As survivors banded together, they began to stake claim to territory. Leaders emerged, occasionally newly Awakened priests and witch doctors of a tribe or, more frequently, tribe members who had managed to hold onto their guns during the crisis. Violent warlords ravaged the surrounding countryside, using their arms and might to steal the meager food and supplies of villagers. There were no laws, only survival and cruelty. Cities became





Urgent Message...



battlefields, and smaller towns were burned to the ground in the constant fighting. People survived the virus only to be raped and slaughtered, or conscripted into fighting for the men who'd murdered their families.

After a decade of this horrifying fighting, Mother Earth intervened. Much of inland Nigeria was open woodlands and savannahs, broad stretches of cultivated farmland and crowded, polluted cities. Over the course of a few years, the swamps and mangrove groves spread inland, while the jungles pressed in from the south. The highly populated portions of the savannah disappeared, cities and villages vanishing under the jungle growth. New rivers and lakes formed as the weather shifted. The steamy jungles and verdant swamps were filled with dangerous critters, who clearly viewed metahumanity as intruding on their territory. Suddenly, the warring tribes had a new enemy.

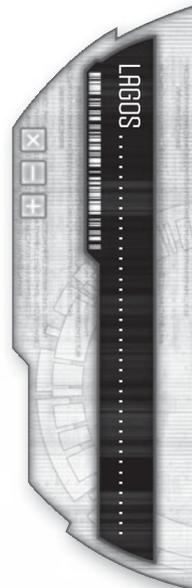
• I have a granny who was living in a village out near Jos, a couple of hundred clicks from the rainforest. She said that one day, a group of refugees came to her village, said they were from a neighboring village a few kilometers away, and that their village had been overrun by the rain forest. The village headman told the refugees to keep on going, and a couple of the men ran 'em out of town with their AK-47s. A week later, my granny was getting the morning water and saw a dark cloud across the savannah. Over the next two weeks, the villagers watched the rainforest eat up the grasslands. They had already lost all their crops to the rains that summer. They tried burning the trees back and spent every daylight hour slashing back the creeping vines from their fields. In the end, they gave up.

• Chiemeka

- Those years, Lagos' population swelled back up, as people abandoned their homes to the rainforest and savannah sought refuge in Lagos. The slums began to grow again as millions flowed into the city.
- Honesty
- Yeah, and the influx of refugees, the fact that most of them were starving—thanks to a summer of unprecedented rain destroying most crops—and crowded together helped VITAS II hit the city so hard. Those who stayed isolated out in the countryside and learned to live with the rainforest weren't hit nearly so hard the second time round.
- Black Mamba

It took some time, of course, but eventually those who remained in the inland jungles carved out their own kingdoms. Outsiders began calling it the Kingdoms of Nigeria, although those who lived there didn't recognize themselves as belonging to a nation at all. The various kings were—and are—constantly at each others' throats.

There are stable areas, though. Several of the kingdoms are Islamic and impose Sharia law, keeping peace through strict adherence and stricter punishment. The stable kingdoms have economies based on agricultural products, such as biofuel, rubber, sugar, and food supplies, though a few are involved in mining. Much of the agricultural supplies that keep Lagos fed is grown in these kingdoms and shipped into the city, either by the kings who control the lifeline or by the smaller farmers, who smuggle in crops to sell in the myriad markets. The kingdoms are also rich in natural gas, valuable timber, and a few mining resources (like coal and tin).



Many kings keep their realms moving and relatively stable with the support of corporate patrons, whom they allow free access to their natural resources in exchange for large cash payments. Unfortunately, little, if any, of the wealth is seen by the poor residents, who survive on subsistence farming and slaving away in the fields or mines of the wealthy elite.

- To be a king in one of these kingdoms, you simply need to have enough guns and guts to declare yourself one. If you can hold a territory, even if it's only a single square kilometer of land, you can call yourself a king. Many of the tribes have a strong connection to their ancestral land, believing it holds their ancestor spirits and their tribe's totems, and those who control that land become de facto leaders of their tribes. That land-association is one reason why so many fight over what may seem to outsiders to be useless, unprofitable land. There are a few kings, of course, who are lucky enough to rule over ancestral lands that also happen to be resource-rich.

- Honesty

- At a rough estimate, I'd say there are around fifty kingdoms of any significant size. Throw in the petty dictatorships or the minor warlords (many of whom are little more than pirates with a home base), and you can easily triple that number. If you plan to travel outside Lagos, find a good guide. Ajao is one I'd recommend. He worked the flesh-trade routes for years and knows the political currents like an old sailor knows the tides.

- Black Mamba

Since there are so many kingdoms, and they change so frequently, I'll try to highlight a few that are large or stable enough to warrant attention.

Yoruba Kingdom

The Yoruba kingdom surrounds Lagos. The capital and source of power for the kingdom is Ife, where the Oni, Adegoke, presides with an iron hand. The Oni is the spiritual leader for the Yoruba religion as well as king and is without a doubt one of the most powerful men in all the kingdoms. Adegoke is a powerful priest of Ifa, the god of divination, and uses his considerable divination talents to ensure his power remains unchallenged. Most of Adegoke's wealth (I could say Yoruba's wealth, but the fact is that most of Yoruba barely survives their subsistence lifestyle, while Adegoke lives in one of the largest palace complexes to be found in Africa, eats from plates of gold, and has almost as many jets as wives) comes from the recent oil pipeline. Telesma and hardwood harvesting also bring a bit of wealth to the country, although it pales in comparison to the nuyen pouring in from corps such as Global Sandstorm.

The Yoruba maintain roads through their kingdom, although most are little more than muddy trails through the rainforest. During the rainy season, the mud thickens and makes travel impossible, so most turn to the rivers and creeks. Checkpoints and tolls are common along the main riverways and the maintained roads. Armed militia guard the roads coming out from Lagos, although they are mainly there to prevent pirates from striking inland and to collect "tolls" from travelers.

- The Yoruba militia, like many others, gets little or no monetary support from their king. Instead, the king hands out weapons to anyone who'd like to sign up and then lets the armed militia support themselves. Groups of guys with guns find it surprisingly easy to make a living—between the goods they confiscate from the villages they wander through and the tolls they charge any travelers they encounter, they usually do just fine. Since militia groups usually travel with one or more olorishas, most Yorubas hand over money, food, and even women with no complaints. They know they're choosing between starvation and rape or being sold to the flesh-traders for the sasabonsam. Neither choice is good, but one sucks slightly less than the other.

- Honesty

- Adegokes's got more than guns, corps, and even Ifa propping him up—he has a special understanding with Thema Laula, queen of the ghoulish nation of Asamando. Flesh-traders have to cross his territory to get their goods to the ghouls, so as long as they don't take people from his villages, he lets them travel through Yoruba without hassle (except for the requisite tolls). Every few months, Adegoke makes a token effort to catch a minor flesh-trader and free a few people. It wins him public support and keeps people from realizing just how much flesh-trade he lets pass through Yoruba.

- Black Mamba

Edo Kingdom

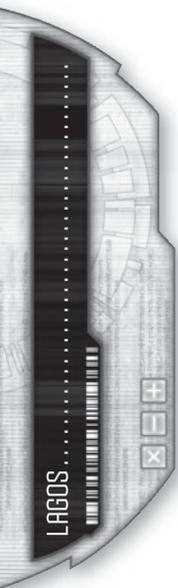
To the east of Lagos is the Edo Kingdom, where King Efofa rules from Sapele. Edo fought fiercely with the Yoruba, Igbo, and Izon Kingdoms in the war to control the oil and gas pipeline that runs from the Niger Delta to Lagos. In the end, Efofa and Adegoke struck an agreement. It's been a good decision, apparently, since Efofa is by all counts one of the richest men in West Africa.

Sapele is an armed camp full of hired mercenaries and Efofa's personal militia, and pretty much the only difference between the two groups is the uniform they wear. The mercenaries are primarily paid with corporate money "loaned" to Efofa to ensure the safety of the pipeline, and his militia is paid under pretty much the same deal. Efofa is usually content to sit back and enjoy his wealth while the corporations fight to keep the pipeline safe. There's plenty of threats to stave off—desperate Edo citizens frequently attempt to siphon off the precious oil, pirates attempt to divert larger amounts to sell on the black market, and angry guerillas and eco-terrorists target the pipeline to make statements. The militia has used some pretty nasty chemical warfare against both the rainforest and the guerillas, leading to a two-kilometer-wide deforested "cordoned" area that the militia now patrols.

- The warfare against the jungles and people there have turned the entire pipeline and surrounding areas into a toxic zone. The local shamans have been organizing a resistance movement, and I've heard rumors that King Efofa has survived several assassination attempts. Apparently, the last one left him with some pretty extensive burns. He's being treated somewhere in Europe and no one seems sure when, or if, he'll be returning.

- Honesty

The Edo Kingdom stretches all the way to the Niger River. On the other side of the river lies the Igbo Kingdom. Although



open war between Edo and Igbo has been over for several years, not a month goes by where one of them doesn't violate the cease-fire agreements. The hotly contested oil fields lie between the two kingdoms, which makes for frequent battles as each attempt to control larger portions of the fields. In truth, the oil delta isn't within either kingdom—it's a truly lawless area lying outside the heavily fortified pumping facilities owned and controlled by the corps, warlords, and kings. With the tension between the chaotic fields and the more controlled pumping stations, there's work aplenty for any merc company willing to do a stint in the area.

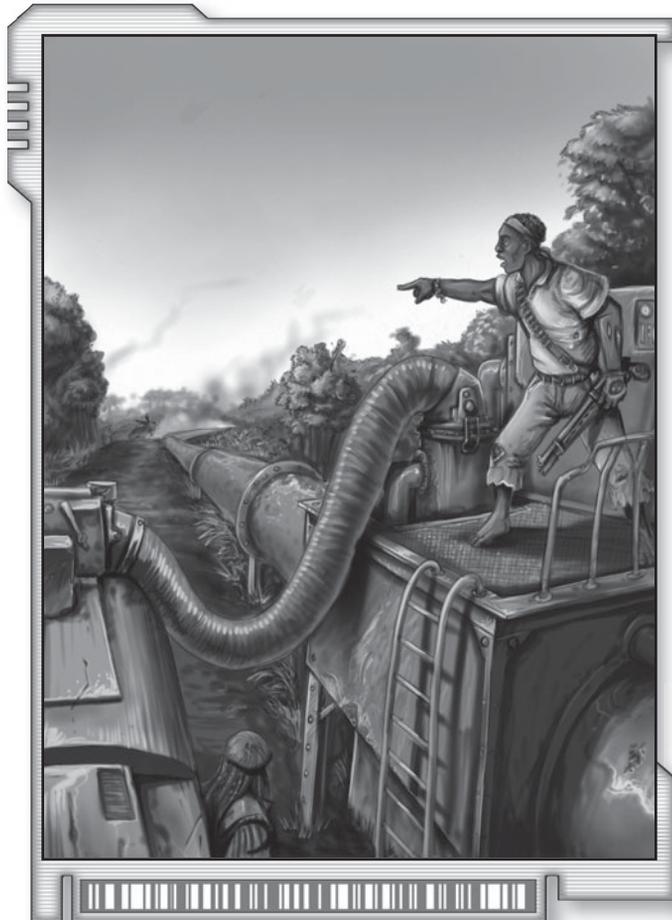
- I don't think I need to tell anyone that rampaging mercs plus near-anarchy makes for bad travel. Still, the Niger River is a primary path into interior Africa. People hoping to exploit the resources of the Dark Continent are often willing to brave the oil fields, and they often need mercs and runners to help keep them alive.
- Black Mamba

Igbo Kingdom

The Igbo Kingdom is ruled by Nnamdi, an ork who supposedly traces his lineage back to the ancient Igbo kingdoms. He rules from the capital city of Onitsha on the banks of the Niger River. The current shape of the kingdom was drastically affected by VITAS, which almost completely wiped out the Igbos. In the aftermath of that disaster, a handful of surviving dibias made a decision to open their tribe to any men who would be willing to undergo their ceremonies. With so many survivors in the kingdoms left without a tribe or a home, the Igbos had a deep pool of people to draw into the ranks of their tribe. It helped that when other tribes shunned the goblinized orks and trolls, the Igbo welcomed them. As a result, the Igbo are a tribe with a high percentage of meta-types, heavily skewed towards orks. Their numbers have swelled to make them one of the most populous tribes in the area.

- The Igbo made a fast recovery after VITAS, but it cost them most of their ancient culture and tribal practices. Where once they were a tribe legendary for their democracy, their art, and their language, they are now mostly warriors who value only strength of arms. To be born an Igbo man means you'll practically be born holding a gun. If you have the misfortune to be born an Igbo girl, you'll be faced with a hard, short life of endless labor, and you'll only gain respect through the birth of your own sons—if you're lucky enough to avoid being sold into sexual slavery or to the flesh-traders before you are old enough to marry. In the cities, an Igbo girl whose birth divination shows her to be Awakened is often sold to the corps. In the Igbo countryside, those girls often are killed at birth.
- Honesty

Most of the Igbo villages are controlled by a head dibia who owes his allegiance to Nnamdi. The villages are centered around subsistence farming, with the men often sailing as pirates or raiding other villages to supplement their meager resources. There's little to no infrastructure, and the roads that do exist demand a rugged vehicle. Most Igbos ignore the roads, traveling exclusively by river or creeks. They control a hundred-kilometer stretch of the Niger, north of the contested delta area, meaning they effectively control much of the flow of supplies and trade to the inland kingdoms. They also frequently raid neighboring kingdoms, blatantly



sailing the rivers as pirates. As you can imagine, none of that has endeared them to the other kingdoms.

- Tribal tensions play out in lots of ways all across Lagos, so it pays to know what kingdoms are at war with the Igbo this week.
- Black Mamba

AFRICAN POLITICS

If you think politics is daunting in the patchwork quilt of the North American nations, or dangerous in the bloody South American nations, or even bewildering among the blue-blooded anarchy of Europe, then you've never experienced politics in Africa. The second-largest continent on Earth has more political states, ethno-nations, tribes, and countries than anywhere else on the planet. Many are so small and insular that you'd never know they existed until you stumbled into their territory. Others figure significantly into the global dance for power. There are many of the first and only a few of the latter.

One thing to keep in mind is that few African nations participate in the Global SIN Registry. To participate in the GSR, more than 90 percent of your citizens must be issued SINs, which have to contain at least name, birthdate, birthplace, gender, and metatype. (You may be surprised to find out that the GSR does not require a biometric sample attached to a nation's SIN.)

At this time, only Egypt, Azania, Asante, and Kenya have met all the requirements of the GSR. In Africa, having a SIN is the exception rather than the rule. And since full participation in the GSR is



AFRICAN NATIONS UPDATE

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Kenya

This corporate-controlled nation is home to the Kilimanjaro Mass Driver. The conflict between spirits and corps over the mountain has provided steady work for mercs over the last few years, and shows no sign of stopping. Recently spirits and tribal shamans have gathered a coalition of disaffected tribesmen and have spread the conflict to the capital, Nairobi, creating even greater work opportunities. Kenya is a member of the UN, although the government is known to be merely a Corporate Council puppet. While Nairobi is policed by Corporate Council joint-security forces, outside the city corporations rely heavily on merc forces for supplemental security.

Kenya has strict regulations on weapons and requires all magicians and technomancers to register their status upon entry.

Angola

Politically and economically stable, the People's Republic of Angola continues to belie the political talking heads that have foretold its collapse for a decade now—though the pundits are correct about the amount of pressure Luanda is under given the cross-border black ops the region has seen as corporations try to destabilize the resource rich country and support the fledgling (aptly misnamed) Angolan Democratic Liberation Front (or FDLA).

The communist nation stirred up a hornets' nest when it occupied several contested diamond fields on the borders of former Namibia last year. With a significant army of its own, most of the merc work has been for opposing sides, such as Universal Omnitech or Azania. Angola's capital is located perilously close to the Congo tribal confederation. With Angola's historic over-harvesting of the tropical rainforest, there have been some flare-ups on the northern border. Locals are wondering if Angola will have to abandon the contested Namibia diamond fields to better secure their northern border. Opportunities for merc contracts could be forthcoming, if Angola finds its army stretched too thin.

Egypt

Home to the Desert Wars, the country of Egypt is many mercs' favorite home-away-from-home. Cairo's merc district hosts a variety of markets where merc companies can pick up anything from cutting-edge weapons to medical supplies. The government was shaken by the New Islamic Jihad's aggressive attacks and subsequent spectacular failure. With its own forces unable to cope with shifting desert tribal politics (such as the nomadic Bedouin tribes) and pressure from Western forces clashing with Middle Eastern interests, mercs will always have plenty of employment opportunities in Egypt. In addition, the powerful Coptic Pope welcomed technomancers into the fold officially in Dec '70, and as a result, Cairo's hacker and technomancer populations have soared. Additionally, continuing violence in the Middle East against technomancers (and hackers who are often mistaken for technos) forced them from their homes, effectively pushing them into (relatively moderate) Egypt. Merc crews looking to pick up talented hackers or technomancers might find them in the online marketplaces in the Cairo net.

Continued on page 73

a prerequisite of admittance and recognition into the UN, those are the only nations in Africa recognized by the UN.

- Many countries—not just in Africa—get around the 90 percent registration requirement by labeling anyone without a SIN as a non-citizen (or, in the UCAS, a probationary citizen). The difference in Africa is that most Africans live in conditions that make the Barrens look like a five-star luxury resort. When your only water source is full of human shit and deadly parasites, when you've watched half your village taken by pirates so they can become ghoulish food, when you've had to sell your oldest child into indentured servitude just so the younger ones can eat for another week—with all that, having a SIN means nothing. A SIN doesn't build a well or plant a field or keep pirates and slavers from raping you.

- Black Mamba

- It does make it difficult for anyone to leave Africa, though, since most modern countries won't allow anyone into their borders unless they can document who they are—which requires a SIN.

- Traveler Jones

- Well, maybe they won't let you in legally. But legal immigration is for wusses.

- Kane

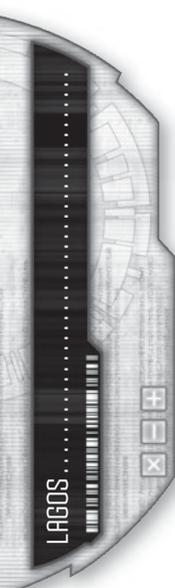
SURROUNDING NATIONS

Africa is riddled with nations, city-states, and kingdoms. Most people only know Africa as the home to the Desert Wars, the popular merc battles in the irradiated northern deserts. World Cup fans no doubt know Azania and Kenya, both of which consistently have teams that qualify (and frequently kick ass, as when Kenya took home the Pan-African Cup). Most people have heard of the Mt. Kilimanjaro mass driver but would be hard pressed to place it in Kenya—or even Africa, for that matter. School kids study Egypt and the pyramids (although, again, I'd be surprised if many of them associate Egypt with Africa).

I don't plan on detailing every micro ethno-state that claims to be a country. I doubt if anyone really knows all of them. Here's a list of a few of the major African nations near Lagos, the ones that are likely to still exist this time next month, if not next year.

Asante

When the UN finally checked in on Africa in 2025, it wanted to see if there were any nations still left. Turns out there was only one that was able to meet its requirements to be recognized as a nation: the Asante nation, which was admitted into the UN in 2026. Due to their savvy, Asante has managed to keep corporate influence to a minimum within its borders. The Asante are ruled by the Asantehene, a hereditary king. Riga Agyemang has been the Asantehene since



2067, when his father, Osei Agyemang was assassinated. Riga blamed the Fanti for the assassination, which has made their ongoing conflict flare even hotter.

The Asante are a fairly prosperous nation, with government-controlled factories, a stable Matrix infrastructure, national health care, and a low rate of unemployment. They have a major port in Accra that used to receive frequent trade with corporate ships. Unfortunately for the Asante, the Fanti pirates have control of the ocean waters along the Asante coast. When the Asante retaliated against the Fanti for the assassination of Asantehene Osei, the Fanti united to form a blockade around Accra, and no corporate ships have made it into port for the last six months. Word is that things are getting desperate in the city, and that public opinion is blaming Riga for not having the guts to wipe the Fanti off the face of the planet. Both sides are arming themselves, and the conflict may soon escalate into outright war. So far, the corps have been content to let the “ethnic difficulties” play out without their intervention, especially since the Asantehene have been notorious for forbidding corporate interests within Asante borders.

- I wouldn't be surprised at all to see that certain corps were fueling the conflict, hoping to score by being able to make some deals with Riga for rights to the Asante resources. If Riga gives in, I'd expect he'd become little more than a puppet for the corps—which may be one reason Asante has refused all offers of corporate help so far. I hear the Fanti, on the other hand, are sporting some nice new toys with Ares and S-K markings on them ...

- Cosmo

Fanti

The Fanti territories border Asante to the west. The Fanti have no king or overall ruler; instead, they live in family groups centered around a patriarch, his wives and young children, and his adult sons and their families. Most of the Fanti towns and villages are on the coast, with a few poor families eking out a living with subsistence farming in the interior. Other than those farmers, most Fanti pay their way through smuggling, raiding, and piracy. Indeed, many of the pirates along West Africa are Fanti families—they often sail with their wives and children, who stay on the boats during the land-based raids. The Fanti smugglers have established routes around Africa and even to Mediterranean Europe. They've gotten bolder in the last few years, with families willing to band together to attack larger ships.

- Corps want the African goods, but with the Fanti attacking even the large cargo ships, it's gotten pretty dicey. Runners willing to hire on as protection for some of the independents and smaller corps can find good work. Just don't let the Fanti catch you—they've a clear policy of executing any Asante or foreign merc they find on “their” seas.

- Rigger X

AFRICAN NATIONS UPDATE (CONT.)

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Ethiomanian Territories (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia)

Opposing factions have been fighting in the territories, as a few prominent mystic factions have been attempting to raise a new Awakened Sheba. Local warlords have turned to merc forces to supplement their own in the fight, though recent reports make it seem like the Sheba's forces have gained the upper hand. This territory could turn into the newest African hot spot, as corps have begun jockeying for access to the unexplored magical phenomena that have arisen in the country.

Morocco

Morocco is the leading state of the Maghreb Confederation, a moderate Islamic group based primarily in Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, although it has influence all across Northern Africa. It follows a strict Sharia law in the interior, but the law is much more relaxed in the tourism-reliant coastal cities. With its heavy dependence on tourism for its economy, Morocco does not employ a significant amount of merc forces. Weapons, magic, and military technology are banned in the country or heavily regulated. Morocco does, however, maintain a standing army to protect its strategic location on the Strait of Gibraltar, as well as to protect its southern border. Morocco also has a significant coast guard presence, which primarily patrols its waters to protect tourists and citizens from pirates.

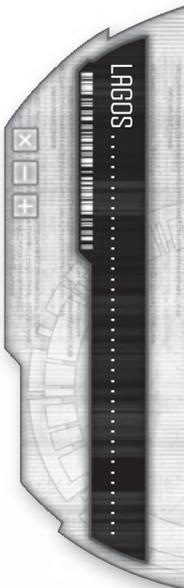
Algeria

This moderate Islamic country, part of the Maghreb Confederation, has had fairly stable borders for the last decade or so (perhaps because they lack the resources to wage border wars). The economy is still weak, and word is that the government is actively courting corporate investment. With the depletion of their oil reserves several decades ago and the past heavy exploitation of the mineral resources, there is little Algeria can offer in natural resources. The primary underground economy of human smuggling from sub-Saharan Africa into Europe or abroad has been severely restricted by the growing Saharan Desert. Opportunities for merc work are limited to corporate contracts since the government has earned an official ban by the Merc Association for repeated violations of merc contracts (primarily through defaults on payments owed).

Tunisia

Tunisia's proximity to the Libyan wastelands and its strategic coastline along the Mediterranean make it an ideal neutral staging point for operations in the Maghreb region. Agriculture and manufacturing are the core of its economy, and the nation has relied heavily on merc strength to fight off Berber insurgents and protect its borders and coastline. With its convenient location next to the irradiated deserts of former Libya, Tunisia also supports a thriving merc community and related support services and suppliers during the Desert Wars “off season.”

Continued on page 74



AFRICAN NATIONS UPDATE (CONT.)

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Azania Confederation

Comprising the four allied states of Cape Republic, Oranje-Vrystaat, the Trans-Swazi Federation, and the Zulu Nation, Azania is by all accounts the largest industrial power on the African continent. Azania has relied on merc strength to supplement their own forces for several years now, ever since the government realized it was quickly losing control of Cape Town and other sprawls. Constant border disagreements with Angola over the disputed areas of former Namibia keeps demand high for mercs. Outside of Cape Town, there are strict rules and regulations over magic and magical items, so the Merc Association has issued a general warning for any merc companies that travel in Azania.

Liberia

The West African nation of Liberia is a prime hotspot at this time. Open war between armed rebels and two factions claiming to be the rightful government has engulfed the major cities, including the capital of Monrovia. As of this report, disputed President Richard Greentree has sought refuge in Morocco while he seeks assistance from corporate patrons. Open contracts for mercs are available to assist in restoring the government of the NLUP.

Kinshasa-Brazzaville

While little is known about the Congo tribal groups, it appears that Kinshasa-Brazzaville is their capital. So far, no associated merc companies have reported official contracts in the area, but multiple corporations have expressed interest in the city and the surrounding region. Four extended recon op contracts were recently posted to the Outpost Lists. Expect to see more action in the future.

- Wuxing has done well with shipping in the area. Although they don't have significant assets inland, they've somehow struck deals with the Fanti and several other pirate groups to allow Wuxing ships to travel (mostly) unmolested. I don't know what the deal is, but I bet the other megas would love to know.
- Jimmy No

Sekondi

While Sekondi isn't a nation, it is a stable city-state where the corps keep the streets clean, the pirates on payroll, and the aggression that plagues the rest of Africa firmly on the other side of the city's walls. Sekondi calls itself an independent city ruled by the Ga, but in reality, the corps control the city. Most notable are Ares, S-K, and DeBeers-Omnitech, who all have outwardly polite agreements to keep the city a neutral zone. The city is patrolled by shared corporate forces, the laws favor corporate interests, and citizens have little to no rights. What they do have is a haven from the endless wars and ethnic violence elsewhere. They appear to be quite happy with the trade.

- Sekondi is where the corps have their nice public faces in West Africa. They don't play their games in the city, preferring to keep it a stable base in an otherwise unstable area. Most of the corps keep their real dirty dealings to Lagos, where no one really cares what

they're doing or who they're screwing. You can get hired in Sekondi, but the work isn't going to happen within those heavily guarded, ten-meter-tall walls.

- Black Mamba

Asamando

No mention of West Africa would be complete without discussing one of the oldest nations in post-Awakened Africa: Asamando. Some might consider it ironic that the most stable African nation is made entirely of "creatures" that the UN refuses to recognize as sentient, much less as part of metahumanity. In 2030, the *sasabonsam* (a local ghoulish variant) in Africa came together to claim a territory around the Black Volta River. Led by their charismatic queen, Thema Laua, the ghouls filled villages and consumed their inhabitants (or infected them, depending on who's telling the story). They then turned their attention to building their nation. Under Queen Laua's direction, towns were built, schools constructed, and an army formed. The queen also enforced a strict reproduction policy, sterilizing those of her followers who had lost their intellect with their infection. It's been forty years now, and the second generation of Thema Laua's "superior race" is just reaching adulthood. Unlike most Africans, they've been given access to world-class schools, excellent medical care, and superior nutrition (at least, when compared to the rate of starvation among other African nations).

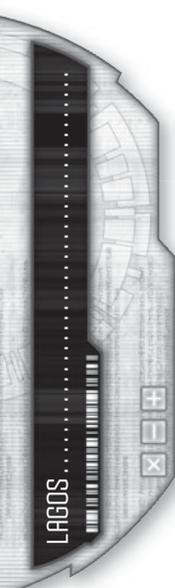
Thema Laua is the longest-tenured leader in Africa—she's ruled Asamando with an iron fist for over forty years now. She may be nearing seventy, but her mind is as sharp as ever. She's entered into deals with several megacorps, trading Asamando's rich resources of diamonds, gold, and minerals for corporate influence and favors. Horizon is leading the pack at the moment, being one of few corporations—and the only AAA—to

recognize the ghouls as sentient and Asamando as a nation. They updated Asamando with a full wireless infrastructure last year, making that nation one of the first to go completely wireless.

Asamando owes part of its nation's stability to its army. All citizens are required to join the military when they turn eighteen (or graduate from secondary school) and serve two years. Asamando has a population of between 200,000 and 500,000—Thema Laua refuses to give an accurate population count, so those numbers are very rough estimates. They've got one of the highest literacy rates in Africa, and potentially in the world, and over 60 percent of adults have a college degree. The citizens are undeniably proud of their homeland and give all credit to their queen.

- Yes, that means that every able-bodied adult in the country has had military training. Any invading army is going to find the entire population turned out against them. The Asante found that out the hard way in '64 and '65.
- Hannibelle

- The other thing Am-mut doesn't mention is that the Asamando military is trained in non-lethal combat. It is incredibly difficult to motivate mercs, pirates, or military forces to attack Asamando. Most soldiers and mercs are okay with the fact that they might die



in battle, but knowing you might be knocked out, captured, and kept for ghoulish chow is a hell of a lot harder to accept. This fear has forced most nations and corps to deal with the ghouls politically rather than just attacking them and driving them out, since mercs won't go to battle against the ghouls and pirates avoid them like the plague.

• Picador

• Sixty percent of them have college degrees?!? I thought ghouls went crazy when they were infected, no better than mindless animals. How the hell do they control an entire country?

• Kia

• Actually, only *some* people lose their mind when they're infected; it really seems to depend on the strain of HMMVV. The sasabonsam strain—unique to Africa—is one that leaves most with their sanity intact. And the infected breed true, so a sane ghoul infected with sasabonsam strain will have sane sasabonsam children. Ghouls aren't mindless animals, they're people, no different than you.

• Hannibelle

• Last time I checked, I didn't need to eat rotten human flesh, like those monsters.

• Kia

• Okay, one difference.

• Hannibelle

• I've heard that Thema Laula, with backing from several corps, has won an agreement from the UN to recognize Asamando as a nation and its ghouls as citizens—but only when the ghouls can prove they can subsist on a diet that does not include metahuman flesh. Word is that Thema Laula has offered some very sweet incentives to the first corp that comes up with a synthetic food source for them. Her award would be on top of Dunkelzahn's existing prize offer.

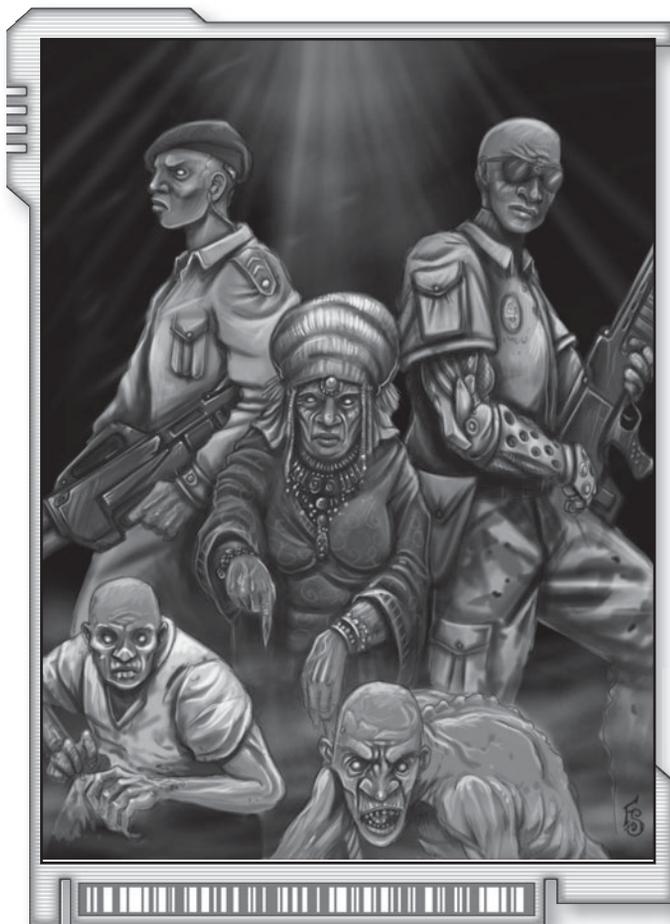
• Frosty

• Although they don't really advertise, Asamando has some of the best medical facilities in Africa. They specialize in treating the Awakened and dual-natured. If you can afford their fees and aren't too afraid of getting a few bits gnawed off during surgery, I've heard it's the place to go. They're very strict about keeping things sterile and I've never heard of an accidental infection happening for a non-HMMVV positive patient. Of course, if Thema decides you'd make a nice addition to her country's braintrust, you might end up with a non-accidental infection ...

• Butch

The Kobikela

There's been rumors for years about a tribal confederation in the interior, reaching from the upper Congo to Lake Victoria. Rumors that appear to be true. The Kobikela, as they are calling themselves, are whispered of in most nations in Africa now, although their members and purpose remain only rumors and speculation. Apparently operating out of the Kinshasa-Brazzaville sprawl, the Kobikela appear to be made of tribes from the interior jungles, many of whom are all but unknown to outsiders. Corporations are quickly establishing communication in Kinshasa-Brazzaville, hoping to be among the first to tap into the rich



resources of the Awakened jungles. The city is difficult to get to; the Congo is impassible just west of Kinshasa-Brazzaville, so ships can't travel into the city from the ocean, and the unpredictable weather makes flying uncertain at best (and outright dangerous much of the time). The word is that the Kobikela like it that way, and I've heard rumors that they're responsible for making their capital city so difficult for foreigners to access.

• Am-mut's got most of this right, but I spent a couple of months escorting one of the Kobikela shaman from Cairo to Kinshasa-Brazzaville, so I picked up a bit more. The Kobikela are a group of shamans, each representing their individual tribe or clan. If a tribe wishes to join the federation, they send a shaman to Kinshasa-Brazzaville. The federation is primarily metahuman, but it has dealings with groups of shapeshifters, naga, and other Awakened sentients that call the jungles home. In fact, the guy I was escorting told me that he had to get back to K-B before the summer rains ended, because the Kobikela were calling a vote to decide if they wished to open their ranks to any creature that wished to join.

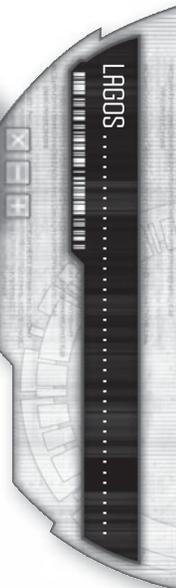
• Black Mamba

• Amazing. How is it that the Kobikela haven't come up on anything I've seen before this?

• Axis Mundi

• How'd the vote go, Mamba? Is the Congo (re)uniting?

• Ecotope



- I didn't bother to ask. I wasn't paid to be curious, just to get the guy there alive. I only know what I do because the man wouldn't shut up. Talked night and day about everything under the sun. I know more about Awakened flora and fauna than I ever wanted to. Good thing he paid well, 'cause I was seriously tempted to shut him up permanently.
- Black Mamba
- But what was a Kobikela shaman doing in Cairo?
- Goat Foot

LAGOS

While the surrounding areas might be rich in resources, all that wealth ends up flowing into Lagos. The sprawl is the industrial, economic, and cultural center of not just the Kingdoms of Nigeria, but all of West Africa. Here, the corporations can play with their gloves off, buying, selling, and trading every illicit or illegal goods, information, or resource they desire. There's a lot that could bring a runner to the sprawl, so here's a rundown on the people, places, and things you need to know.

SURVIVING THE SPRAWL

Surviving in Lagos takes a lot of work, especially if you're an *ayibo*. Like anywhere, your best bet is to look like you know what you're doing and you're supposed to be where you are. It takes a while to learn the place like a native, of course, but if you know a few of these things you've got less of a chance of being made as an *ayibo* right off the bat.

Travel

Just getting to Lagos is an adventure. The Mohammed International Airport is maintained just enough to allow air traffic, although the runways, frequent inclement weather, and substandard air-traffic control systems rule out landings by sub-orbitals or very large jets. For the most part, if you want to fly into Lagos, I'd recommend landing in Asante first and then taking a short commuter flight over to Lagos. You can get direct connections to Lagos from Nairobi, Cairo, and several of the South African airports, although the flights are not consistent, and depending on weather conditions may be canceled or delayed by days or weeks. The airport is controlled by the Lagos Island Council (more on them below), and each council member is responsible for providing a portion of the security for the airport. They each must cover a portion of the costs to maintain the working runways, although they are content to allow a third party to actually control the air-space and provide traffic controllers.

- Mohammed International Airport—MIA, which is how most of the pilots who try to land there end up. Flying into Lagos is like playing Russian roulette. Last time I went in, I tried getting an air traffic controller—*any* controller—on the horn to talk me in. Turns out there was only one on duty at the moment, and he was on a coffee break. So I was on my own. I broke the cloud cover—which is thick and low-lying most of the time—and aimed for a runway, and as I was coming in I saw a Mitsuhamma HD23i just to my right, heading for the same tarmac strip. My life flashed before my eyes and I moved left, hoping that side of me was clear. All I can say is that it's a good thing the air traffic there is so light. If you fly into MIA, take a clean pair of underpants.
- Rigger X

The security at the airport is primarily stationed around the perimeter to keep out the gangs and scavengers who live nearby. Inside the airport, banker stalls, the vendors, and the Hawala's stalls provide their own security. To no one's surprise, the various security branches don't coordinate with each other and often don't get along. Depending on what group is guarding the airport that week, armed guards may be patrolling inside the airport proper, keeping one eye on potential hostiles, the other on the mishmash of security mercs working inside the perimeter. The Igbo are well known for using their security patrols to shake down travelers, but they're far from the only ones who do it. If you plan to travel to Lagos, you may want to try to time your visit to when Cintra's Ahigbe are patrolling—I've found them to be the most professional (and least expensive to bribe) of all the council member's troops.

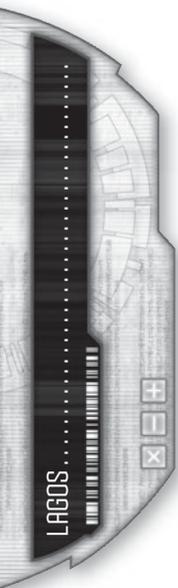
Wherever you choose to fly from, you can fly into Lagos without worry over IDs, cyberware, dangerous cargo—as long as you can find an inbound flight, which, as I mentioned above, isn't always easy. Of all the countries that fly into Lagos, Asante is the most lax about travelers who are only passing through their airport long enough to catch a flight to Lagos, meaning you won't have any customs or ID hassles as long as you don't leave the "inter-continental transfer" waiting area. (If you plan to stay in Asante, though, you'd better have all your ducks in a row.)

Since most of the goods that come or leave Lagos travel by sea, the airport doesn't get much use. Tourists don't come to Lagos, and few native Lagosians can afford to leave the place. Kings from surrounding kingdoms often use their personal planes to fly into Lagos, allowing them to bypass both the deteriorated roads and the inter-kingdom conflicts. Corporations use the airport to fly in employees; low-level employees are generally driven to their destination by armed caravan, while the VIPs skip the roads and take a chopper or VTOL to their corporate compound.

Leaving Lagos by air is much more difficult. Few countries allow flights out of Lagos to land in their borders. The only reliable ways to fly out of Lagos are to route through Asante, take a corporate-controlled plane (which can then land on a corporate-controlled airfield elsewhere), or use an independent flight agent (also known as a smuggler). If you have a deal with a megacorp to get out of Lagos, you'll be fine. If you fly into Asante, expect to get searched before being able to connect to any other countries—Asante follows the UN protocols for air-travel security (with the notable exception of people flying into Lagos). You can get a sub-orbital in Asante.

If you don't want to fly in, you can reach Lagos by sea or over land. The Fanti pirates have good connections to the South Atlantic, Mediterranean, and into Europe. There are some reputable long-haul pirate and smuggling crews that travel from Africa to the Americas or to Hong Kong, but those trips take a long time. Traveling over land is probably the most dangerous, since if you manage to survive the quickly shifting politics of the Kingdoms of Nigeria, you still have to make it through the Awakened rainforests that surround Lagos. There aren't any paved roads that travel from any major African cities to Lagos; what human neglect and outright violence haven't destroyed, the rainforest has swallowed up.

- Of course, it's like that for much of Coastal Africa, which is why so few people travel into the interior.
- Traveler Jones

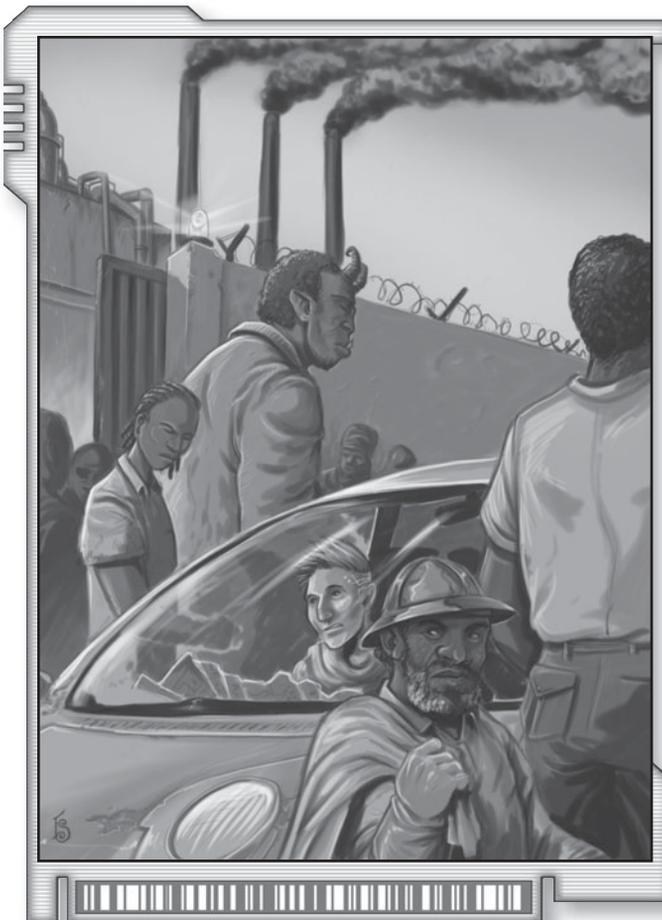


Getting Around Town

Traveling around the sprawl of Lagos is difficult as well. There is precious little air traffic outside the enclaves of Lagos Island district. Most travel is confined to the roadways and to foot traffic in the narrow alleys and shantytowns. The freeways in Lagos are called the *go-slow* for a reason. It's a local nickname for the amazing phenomenon that is part commuter rush-hour (24/7), part unbelievable traffic jam, and part mobile market place. The quickest way to get around is on an *okada*, a motorcycle that's been modified to drive at breakneck speeds through the stop-and-go traffic on the roadways. Extremely fuel-efficient, they can run for hours on a single liter of biofuel. They're built narrow and can fit through tight gaps between cars—just watch your knees and legs to make sure you'll fit through the same spaces. You'll frequently see three or four people—light, skinny people if they want to stay on board—riding on an *okada* as they weave through the traffic.

You can also use a *danfo*, a cross between a van and a bus, frequently cobbled together from various spare parts as if Dr. Frankenstein had been playing build-a-bus. Most *danfo* are individually owned, but there's a loosely affiliated group of drivers who provide commuters with transport between the districts (most of their routes run to or from Ikeja). Their *danfos* are painted bright yellow, making them easy to spot, and a lack of concern about emissions and basic maintenance means that you can generally hear and smell them coming, with black smoke belching up to mark their route. *Danfo* travel is rather precarious, and you shouldn't expect to see actual bus stops or schedules. Lagos buses look like they'd seat about fifteen people comfortably, but you'll often see triple that number riding, packed in tight (making them the perfect hunting ground for pickpockets). Ask a local when the next *danfo* will be coming by if you want to experience what a sardine must feel like on its way to the processing plant.

- The only bright side about riding a *danfo* is that they only cost a few naira to ride, and most of the riders are so poor that even the Area Boys don't bother them. You can get through all the road blocks and in and out of different gang territories with minimal hassle. Assuming, of course, you don't ride through a territory on a day when the flesh-traders are looking for a good catch ...
- Chiemeka
- The transportation problems in the city mean that messengers, either "runners" who go by foot or *okada* drivers, carry packages and messages across the city. The service is very expensive and the actual runners get paid very high wages. Could be because they have to be tougher than all the people who might like to take their packages.
- Black Mamba
- Corporations and governments dump the spare parts from decommissioned vehicle fleets in Lagos, so many of the vehicles are a weird combination of bits and parts, almost unrecognizable (such as a Renraku i90 wheel frame carrying a Hermes Van cab and a Ford-Canada Buffalo engine).
- Duante

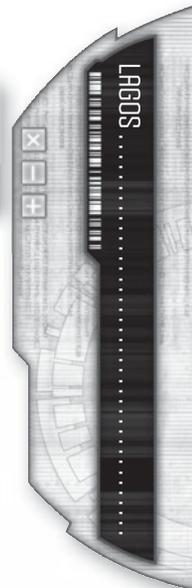


Unlike most sprawls, you won't find handy car rental agencies or taxi cabs companies. If you're in the Lagos Island district, there are a few owner-operator cabs available that have been heavily screened by the district security and are generally trustworthy—they might overcharge you, but they're not going to rob or kidnap you. There's always a few *okada* waiting by the airport, around the more upper-class hotels, or in the busy factory district. If you need a ride somewhere else, you can always ask around; chances are someone will have a nephew or cousin who owns an *okada* and would like to make a little naira by giving an *oyibos* a ride.

The VIPs on Lagos Island tend to visit their territories by air transport, which, since there's no comprehensive air traffic control system in Lagos, means they need good pilots. On Lagos Island, there are a few companies that provide air-taxi services, either for "tours" or for transportation. Innocent Dobiri runs one company, and he's fairly fanatical about maintenance on his equipment. He's also less than interested in asking questions; as long as you have the nuyen, he (or one of his pilots) will take you pretty much anywhere in the sprawl. For a significant fee, he'll also come back to pick you up, which can be pretty handy if you're visiting some of the rougher areas of Lagos.

Where to Stay

Land is at a premium in Lagos and so is housing. Hotel costs are at least triple the cost of other sprawls, simply because there are so few hotels in the city. Rental homes are also rare and high priced, especially considering what you get. Most corporate travelers stay



in the protected Lagos Island district in corporate-owned housing enclaves. For those of us without a corporate meal-ticket, finding a safe place to stay can be challenging. Make sure you ask (before paying) just what services come with your room. Running water is rare outside the Island district. Bathrooms may simply be an outdoor latrine shared by all residents. Electricity may mean the hotel has its own generator, or that it gets power from a neighborhood gang (in which case, the power may only last a few hours each day). Clean water could be collected in a rooftop cistern, bought by the barrel at the market, or even sterilized by a local rent-a-shaman (which is a fairly standard procedure in the nicer hotels and a lot more reliable than the first two methods). Wireless coverage is iffy at best outside of a few hotspots, and you should expect to pay a fee to use it, either to the hotel owner or to the gang running the system—probably to both. “Insect Free” generally means you’ll get a couple of mini *mokele-mbembe* lizards sharing your room, not that the hotel is actually insect free.

- Another Lagos quirk: “Room service” does not refer to food delivery, but rather hospitality of a totally different sort.
- Duante

Check your Immunizations

Disease is a major problem in Lagos, and medical care is scarce. So, as my mother always said, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Before traveling there, you’ll want to make sure you’ve taken preventative measures, including immunizations, for the most common transmittable diseases. Unfortunately, many of the nastier diseases in Lagos have no preventative option, so traveling with some powerful antibiotics and a high-rating medkit is crucial. At a minimum, you’ll want to get an immunization against malaria, yellow and typhoid fevers, cholera, rabies, and the Hep series. There’s a slew of other diseases, such as Trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness), that are transmitted by bugs, so pack some good bug repellent, wear long sleeves, and make sure you sleep in a treated bug-net. VITAS III is also a major problem, and there are several anti-viral treatments available, but expect to pay significantly higher rates in Lagos than elsewhere. You’ll want to make sure your medkit is stocked with antiviral, antibiotics, and antiparasitics tailored to what you’ll encounter in Lagos, since most medkits sold in UCAS and Europe do not come with those specific treatments. Unfortunately, outside genotech, there’s little you can do about exposure to environmental poisons, such as lead or mercury, which are found in high concentrations in the Lagoon and elsewhere around the sprawl.

- If you want to make some money, smuggling Binder 8 and Zeta-Interferon into Lagos is well worth your time. Actually pretty much any high-end med is good. Of course, finding it and getting it there can be problematic, but there’s plenty of crime lords who’ll pay in gold, diamonds, or oil to get their hands on those cutting-edge treatments.
- Kane
- It’s a good idea when traveling to Lagos (or any barrens area, for that matter) to be careful what you eat and drink. Bring or buy sterile water, pack water purification tablets, or make friends with a

Private Message...

From: All JackPoint users

RE: <autosend tags>

Hey, if you’re interested in going to Lagos or elsewhere on the Dark Continent, you should consider some Transgenic Immunization treatments. Check out the some of the tech in the Augmentation catalog and let me know if you want anything. 25 percent discount to JackPoint posters! - Butch

shaman who can sterilize water. And don’t forget to watch what you eat—food prepared with or washed in water scooped from the swamp is just as likely to have the parasites that cause E. coli, amoebiasis, giardiasis, or other nasties as if you drunk the water directly. If you don’t want to spend your time there in crippling agony, puking up your guts, and begging your street sam to end your misery, you need to be careful.

- Traveler Jones

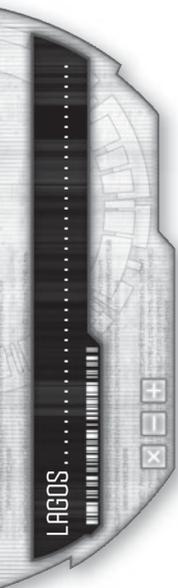
THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

Lagos is a city of great wealth and staggering poverty. Corps, gang-lords, and tribal kings make nuyen hand over fist, trading in the abundant gold, blood diamonds, oil, telesma, mined minerals, precious hardwoods, and valuable agricultural commodities, or exploiting the abundant cheap labor and lack of worker protection laws. Meanwhile, the Lagosians work as indentured slaves in textile, processed food, pharmaceutical, cheap electronics, cosmetics, or even soap factories. Others work as scavengers for the recycling plants, factory-line drones, minor cogs in small, gang-operated sweatshops, lumberjacks, hunters, biofuel harvesters, or jungle burners. Then there’s the tens of thousands of Lagosians who go it alone, entrepreneurs attempting to provide a variety of services and goods to the sprawl citizens.

Lagos runs on money, and by money I mean cash. Unlike most sprawls, where you can pay for anything and everything electronically and never see or hold a single physical nuyen note, even the most basic daily functions in Lagos require physical money of some sort. When you arrive at the airport, you’ll be met by officers with their hands outstretched. Pay ‘em and you’ll be fine. Don’t pay them and suddenly your baggage is over the weight limit (never mind that the airline had no problem flying it in) or your papers are out of order (again, never mind that there’s no government around that requires a passport or papers). It’s simply your first introduction to the “Informal Economy.”

You’re in luck, though. Chances are, the officers who meet you on the tarmac are able to accept an electronic transfer. The airport has a fairly stable wireless network, and most of the officials there carry commlinks and have earned enough to allow them to establish a nice off-shore bank account.

- “Officials.” Heh.
- Duante
- Sounds better than, “Armed and dangerous thugs of whichever kingpin is controlling the airport this week.”
- Honesty



- True. Easier to write, too.
- Duante

Since it's very doubtful that you'll have been able to acquire any of the local currency—naira—before arriving in Lagos, you'll want to stop before you leave the airport proper at a Hawala booth or at one of the banking stalls. They're easy to find—just look for the swarms of armed guards surrounding them. You'll have to pay a guard to enter the booth or stall.

- About twenty nuyen will get you a polite introduction.
- Duante

Once inside, you'll meet with the Hawala or the banker. What happens depends on which method you use. A Hawala will only provide you with credit chips or tokens if someone in his network vouches for you.

If you have an introduction or a voucher for a Lagosian Hawala, you can withdraw your funds in naira (the local paper and coin currency) or take it in credit chips. Most Hawala have actual, physical, chips—plastic chips with their clan symbol on it, small shells or stones etched with their symbol, even small carved bones. Each Hawala has his own credit chip type and symbol, which is universally recognized across the sprawl. Chip values are always displayed upfront (and broadcast, in those areas with wireless capabilities). Again, the system is based on honesty and trust, so it is accepted as a matter of course that any who deal with the Hawala will receive the same rates, hence the open display of values.

Once you present your credit voucher to the Hawala or transfer certified funds to his account (I'm going to assume you've arrived with a voucher or electronic funds, rather than a bag of gold dust or a few barrels of oil in your luggage), the Hawala will give you some—or all, if you prefer—of your funds in the currency of your choice. If you're redeeming a voucher from another Hawala, there's no additional fee; if you're making an initial deposit, you'll pay his percentage—again, it will be posted. There's no discrimination based on your meta-type, gender, religion, making it the first, last, and only place in Lagos you'll encounter such equitable treatment.

- As a side, if you choose credit chips, anyone inside or out of the sprawl will accept them. They circulate like real currency, and someone with a credit chip (or shell or bone or what have you) can take it to the issuing Hawala at any time to redeem it or deposit it for a transfer elsewhere.

- Duante

- I've heard of Hawala systems, but haven't had a chance to use one yet. Tell me, if they're dealing with such, ah, primitive currency, how do they ensure their etched shells or stones aren't copied, forcing them into bankruptcy or dropping the value?

- Mr. Bonds

- No one copies a Hawala's symbol.
- Black Mamba

- I find that hard to believe.
- Mr. Bonds

// uploading Uniformat text file :: user Am-mut //
HAWALA NETWORKS

A Hawala network is an informal system of monetary transfers that relies upon a strict honor system. A person can make a deposit (certified electronic funds, hard currency, precious metals or gems, or occasionally other highly valuable commodities) with a Hawala in their area. For a percentage, usually around 10-20 percent, the Hawala gives the client a voucher. Then, generally, the Hawala contacts another Hawala in another city, transferring the funds to that Hawala. Anyone with the correct voucher (written, electronic, or even a verbal phrase or key) can then access the funds, which will be provided in the requested form (typically certified cred or hard currency). Used for centuries across Africa and Asia by migrant workers unable to access the more established banking system and by underworld figures who wished to launder money or transfer funds without leaving a data trail, the practice fell out of favor early in the century. When Africa crumbled after VITAS and most public and private banks crumbled with it, the Hawala system became the only reliable method of transferring money between families scattered across the continent. The system depends completely on the honor and honesty of the Hawalas involved and the trust that their clients place upon them. As such, the men are often held in high esteem within their societies and often act as trustworthy and reputable fixers.

- I know a Hawala in Cairo. I'd be happy to introduce you, if you wish to call upon the favor I still owe you.
- Am-mut

- Believe it. There's two reasons. One, it's generally held that the Hawala's clan's symbol has mystical power; that, for example, the etched leopard on the shell will materialize and attack any thief, or that it might haunt the thief's dreams, driving him to madness until he confesses his crime. Bad luck will haunt the thief, his family will sicken, his skin will erupt in boils, his home will flood—you get the point.

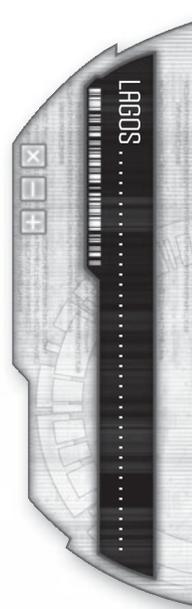
- Am-mut

- Curse of the pharaoh's gold. Got it.
- Elijah

- The second reason is more practical. There are very powerful people who entrust their earnings to the Hawala system. They don't like it when their money suddenly loses its value. People who try to cheat the system die. Painfully.
- Black Mamba

Banking stalls also make you pay a small fee to enter. Inside, you can exchange your funds for naira. The banker will take a cut, of course, and how much they take depends on your negotiation skills and their perception of how much they can soak you. They don't require anyone to vouch for you. They'll accept a certified

Urgent Message...



PRICES IN LAGOS**Posted by: Honesty**

- To keep you from getting fleeced too badly, here's a rough guideline of prices and exchange rates in Lagos. Last week, one nuyen was worth about twenty naira. Naira coins are more valuable than paper currency, so they're what I used for these prices. Expect to pay a good bit more with paper currency. Hawala tokens are close to nuyen prices.
- Honesty

Cab ride across the city, 2-3 hours: 200 naira**Okado ride:** 20 naira per person**Danfo ride:** 2 naira**Room at the Eko Palace Hotel** (upper class): 1,000 nuyen/night (no naira accepted)**Room at mid-class hotel** (shared bathroom, wash water extra): 1,000 naira**Room in the slums** (shared room, no water, no indoor plumbing, no furniture, no charge for the rats, either): 50 naira/night, 250 naira/week**Meal at nice restaurant:** 200+ naira**Meal at buka:** 10-20 naira**Bottled beer:** 5 naira**Jug of palm wine:** 20 naira**Bag of water (1 liter):** 20 naira**Yam or bag of rice at market:** 5 naira**Doctor fee at hospital:** 3000 naira**Dibias or witch healer:** 200 naira**Prostitute:** 10 naira and up**Typical Area Boy bribe** (made by resident): 5 naira**Typical Area Boy bribe** (made by *oyibos*): 100 naira**Average wage per day of Lagosian:** 20 naira

credit transfer, registered credsticks, corporate scrip—pretty much any widely accepted currency. In exchange, you'll get paper or coin naira, which you can use across Lagos and in many of the Kingdoms of Nigeria.

In a banker's stall, I'd encourage you to check the coins you receive. They should be solid metal, not wood. Also, to warn you, while you can change nuyen into naira, you generally cannot change it back at a similar rate of exchange. Most bankers will tell you that naira is too easy to counterfeit and too unstable to change back into nuyen (of course, they only tell you that *after* your initial exchange).

- You can weigh the coins, if you like, to check if they're solid metal, but I prefer the bite test. The cheaper metal plated coins will dent if you chomp down on 'em, but the solid coins won't.
- Chiemeka
- And you should never, ever do that in front of a Hawala. Never.
- Honesty

Because each Nigerian kingdom issues its own naira, it can get confusing to track the values. Especially since the ruling kings change more frequently than the weather and new kings often at-

tempt to solidify their power by producing tons of new currency for their supporters. For practical purposes, the citizens of the sprawl will accept naira from any kingdom. The paper naira is easy to forge, and periodic flooding of the market by forging groups, gangs, or even the kingdoms themselves makes it a very unstable currency. For small transactions, coins are more trusted and accepted than paper currency, since they contain actual metal. They come in denominations up to one hundred naira. Most people prefer a Hawala's chip, though. This means that naira often has a practical value much less than its equivalency in nuyen or on a Hawala chip. The whole system can be tricky to follow so I'd suggest hiring a reliable guide who can help you with the intricacies. Of course, that means you have to find an honest guide—good luck with that.

Ok, so you've arrived in Lagos, paid at least two bribes—er, fees—and gotten some hard currency. Now you'll see what I mean when I say Lagos runs on money. You go outside the airport complex (you'll have to pay someone to carry your luggage, no doubt, or pay every empty-handed "porter" you come across to leave you alone. It's cheaper just to pay one). A young child or teen will offer to get you a cab or an okada (a motorcycle cab). You'll have to pay him or her a naira for the help, of course. You'll pay the cab or okada driver. You'll most likely have to pay multiple tolls along the road—at roadblocks or checkpoints between rival gang territories—and chances are, you'll get pulled over by a traffic-control officer or an Area Boy and have to pay a fee (for reckless driving, making a wrong turn, driving on the sidewalk, whatever they can come up with). Most drivers will pay the fee for you, but only because your transportation costs have those fees built in. You'll hand over more money to enter a market, you'll have to pay a fee for electricity, a fee for sanitation, a fee for garbage disposal, a fee for water. Each fee will be collected by someone different.

- Mind you, most of these services you pay for don't actually exist. Your sanitation fee is simply paid to the man who's sitting outside the latrines (toilet paper is not included). You can always go shit in the street for free, of course, and many do. Your electricity is similar. You may only get one or two hours a day of power, but someone comes by to collect anyway. If you don't pay, the lines are cut to your home. Then you have to pay someone to come fix them. Everyone in Lagos has their hand held out, not to beg, but to demand their share of your wealth. They don't consider it stealing. They simply are charging you for the privilege to live in one of the filthiest, most decayed, and utterly corrupted sprawls on earth.

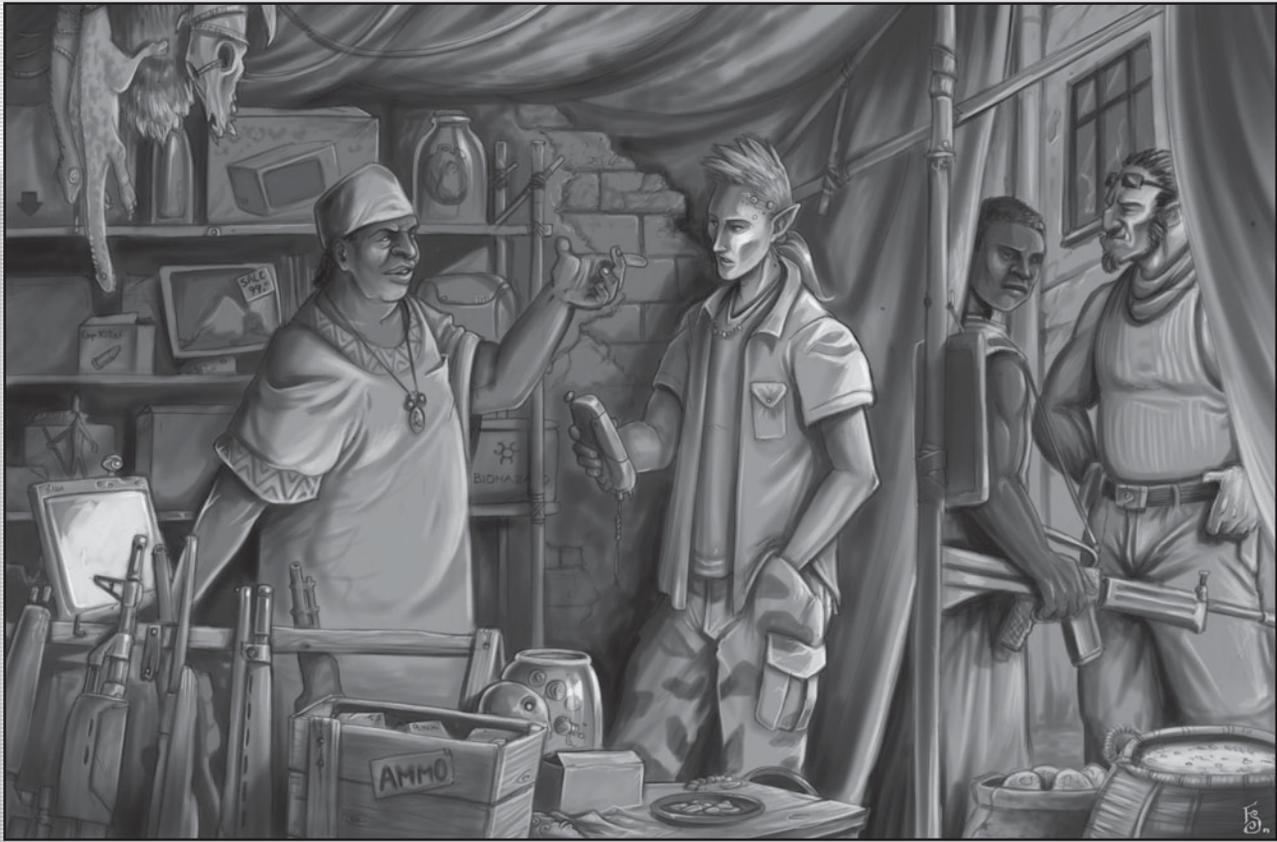
- Black Mamba

- There's a fine line between stealing your money and demanding it as part of life in Lagos. For most *oyibos*, that line is hard to find. Locals have learned to live with it. If there's ever a place where you want to keep your eyes and ears open, then Lagos is it. Even in the safer areas and markets, you'll find thugs demanding their toll. Ancestors help you if you are unable to pay.

- Honesty

- That's in most areas, markets or public streets, during the daylight hours, places where there's a crowd and, for lack of better word, enforcers around. In the empty back alleys or at night, when most Lagosians are huddling in their molding, decrepit homes, the real





INCOMING FEED.....



predators come out. But they generally won't mug you. They'll take your money, take your clothes, and take you to sell as sasabonsam food or slave labor. Waste not, want not.

- Black Mamba

Most of the local gangs or power-holders utilize the ever-present Area Boys to collect their fees. In turn, the Area Boys turn over a percentage (often 90 percent or more) of their earnings to their lieutenants, who turn over a percentage to their captains, who turn over a percentage to their boss-man, who ... well, you get the point. Everyone pays, and all that naira flows upstream to the few powerful and wealthy people who suck the city dry. The entire economy is based on this system and has been for over a century. There are frequent shakeups in the upper echelons, which occasionally fall to the street level, but for the most part, the average Lagosian doesn't mind the system. After all, they are too busy trying to figure out a way to get a cut of the profit themselves to complain. And if the system changed, they'd lose their dreams of someday making it rich themselves.

- There are a few ways to get around the leeches. When my unit has to operate in Lagos, none of my mercs are allowed out of our compound except as a full unit. The locals tend to avoid groups of very heavily armed mercs who travel together. For the ones that don't avoid you, you have a decision—what costs more, bribes or bullet? If they've already talked to you, they're not going to be intimidated no matter what, so you need to either pay up or put

them down. Personally, I hate traveling there, since invariably you end up faced with kids armed with heavy weapons. If I don't think a merc in my unit can handle shooting an eight-year old, I don't let him come to Lagos.

- Picador

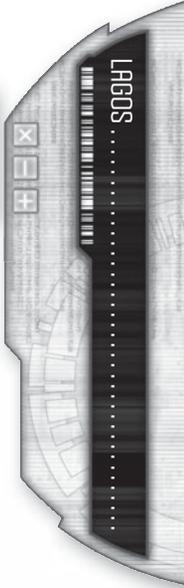
FACTIONS

One way to define a feral sprawl is a city “without a cohesive controlling force, a central government, ruler, corporate entity, or even military regime to provide laws and enforcement of those laws.”

Lagos certainly fits that definition, but that comes with a caveat. While there's no cohesive government, there most certainly are laws, and those laws are enforced. The controlling factions may be scattered across the city like a shabby patchwork quilt, but they still exist. If you decide to work in Lagos, you'd better know the major players, because the only way to work in Lagos is to follow their rules. And they don't believe in second chances.

- You'd think that a shit poor hell hole like this wouldn't have much interest for runner types, but Lagos is a hotbed for shadow action. Not only does its lack of law enforcement make it the premiere black and gray market on the continent, but pretty much all transnational criminal and smuggling networks in Africa touch base in Lagos. Its internal strife is also a major source of business, and corporations like Zeta-ImpChem, Singularity, Ares Arms, United Oil, and UniOmni are constantly at odds. Not to mention that all those impoverished

Lagos



81

LAGOS COUNCIL MEMBERS

Chidi Ené (Igbo Tribal Elder)

The Igbo are one of the most populous and powerful tribes in the city. At the head of the Lagos tribe is Chidi Ené, an older ork male with impressive tribal scarring across his face. He's the right-hand man for King Nnamdi, overseeing all Igbo interests in Lagos. He's an ambitious man—some say *too* ambitious, which is why he's in Lagos, far away from the king. Chidi doesn't seem to mind, as Lagos has made him a very, very rich man.

Chidi oversees Igbo interests from his compound on Victoria Island, an elegant white mansion surrounded by vibrant grounds, hidden behind double-thick walls kept gleaming white by an army of groundskeepers. Chidi won himself a position on the Lagos Council over ten years ago and has held it with a heavy-handed grip. Most of Chidi's power comes from his indirect control of the Area Boys, who are easily influenced by the vast amounts of cash at his disposal. Rumors say that both Delek Dragon and Fatima Petrochemicals are courting Chidi, and through him, King Nnamdi, in a push to acquire control of the Lagos pipeline.

Olabode Lekan (Yoruba Council Representative)

Olabode was placed on the council by the Yoruba Oni, Adegoke. Olabode is an older male human, his hair gone pure white, lending him a dignified appearance. He is a powerful Olorisha who serves Eshu, the orisha of knowledge and divination. The Yoruba often seem to be one step ahead of their rivals, which they attribute to their Oni's powers of divination. It doesn't hurt that any mystical powers Olabode possesses are complemented by his extensive network of spies and paid informants, but Olabode works to keep knowledge of this network limited so that people focus on his powers of divination.

Olabode is a canny man. He frequently uses his knowledge to blackmail other council members into agreeing with his plans, ensuring the Yoruba maintain their powerful position. He is uniformly hated and feared by the other council members, but he's foiled every assassination attempt they've tried in the last fifteen years, which has both the council members and the native Lagosians believing he has a touch of the divine. Olabode's often responsible for making decisions for the Oni, who is seen as a spiritual leader, not a political one (though Oni Adegoke is most definitely a powerful ruler, he supports the illusion for his own reasons).

Akin Chukumah (Apapa Port Master)

Akin controls the major ports in Lagos, and that power won him a seat on the council. Akin is an obese human in his late thirties, a man with a sharp brain and absolutely no morals. The other council members dislike him due to his lowborn beginnings—Akin was born in Ajegunle, the son of an Igbo street whore and an unknown *oyibos* father, and he fought his way out through sheer strength of will (and a heavy dose of viciousness, according to stories told on Lagos streets). Akin began his life running with a small Ajegunle gang, street kids of mixed race and tribes that banded together to protect themselves from the pure tribal gangs such as the Igbo Area Boys. Akin particularly hates the Igbo, who tortured him as a child due to his mixed heritage. Akin is fond of hiring runners and pirates to mess with the Igbo interests in Lagos, just to watch Chidi Ené fume. Since any corporation or pirate that wishes to dock in Lagos must deal with Akin, he's one of the most powerful—and wealthiest—men in the city. He's made a point to show the various corporations that having a stable port is to their benefit, and in turn, they've helped him keep his power, despite the fact that the port is a tempting target to any powerful faction in the city.

Continued on page 83

guinea pigs lining up to volunteering to test run for the next big corporate biotech in exchange for a meal.

- Duante

The Lagos Council

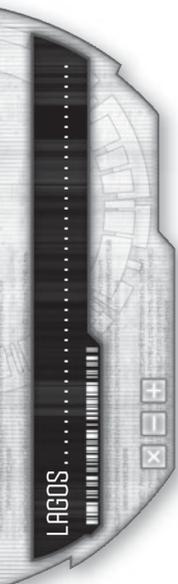
One of the most powerful groups in the city is the Lagos Council. While most of the buildings and land in the business district of Lagos Island are owned and secured by various corporations, the district itself is held by a group of individuals who represent various powerful factions within the city.

The Lagos Council is not an elected body. Rather, once a group or individual is powerful enough to force the other members to recognize them, they can take a seat. There is no set number of board members, no term limits, and no recognized protocol. But together, they manage to hold the central business district under their thumbs. Because they represent many of the most powerful factions in the city, and those factions, in turn, hold most of the resources of the city, they've successfully forced the corporations to deal with them.

The Lagos Council consists of people who are primarily in it for the many opportunities the council offers for them to line their pockets. Each of them is concerned first and foremost with their own interests, with the interests of their tribe or association taking a distant second place, and the interests of the city itself not even a consideration (except where it might affect their own profitability). They'll backstab each other, betray their tribes, and screw anyone over if it means they'll get more nuyen. Fortunately for the corporations who work with them, having a city that's in complete chaos isn't profitable for the council members, so they extend the minimum effort needed to keep portions of the city running.

Tamanous

It's no surprise that a city the size of Lagos that's so close to Asamando has a strong Tamanous presence. What *is* surprising is the good reputation the organleggers have in the city. While they might be feared and loathed in other sprawls, in Lagos they're considered fair and honest (particularly



compared to some of the other people running around the sprawl). After all, in Lagos, they don't need to kidnap people—instead, they sponsor small clinics where anyone can voluntarily walk in and sell their organs for some quick cash. Many clinics even provide a “blood credit”—sell a kidney, and you get a credit line towards future medical treatments. They also provide midwife services and abortion clinics for many of the brothels.

The organleggers are one of the most powerful organizations in the sprawl. While they conduct their operations throughout the sprawl, it is widely assumed that they're based out of Ajegunle. No one knows who leads the organization—either in Lagos or worldwide—but Tamanous-related contacts are easily identified. Osayi Immaculate is an Egun dwarf and Tamanous doctor who runs a clinic in Mushin.

It's commonly known that Tamanous supplies some of the flesh-trade for the local ghouls, and it's also believed that they supply a large portion of the needs for Asamando. Lagos provides a perfect haven for many of their other business endeavors, as well as access to a port and airport, to carry their wares around the globe. Tamanous also imports secondhand cyberware, which it sells to local clinics for installation or installs through its own network of clinics (which have a fair reputation, all things considered).

◆ This is probably the spot to explain the flesh-trade in general and Tamanous specifically. Ever since the Shedim began infesting Africa, Asamando has had some real problems. The ghouls didn't like it much when their dinner decided to get up off the table and start swinging. On top of that, the flesh-traders, who used to kill people and transport their bodies (the ghouls apparently preferred their meat with a bit of ripening to it), didn't much like their wares attacking them. When those bodies started coming back to life and killing the flesh-traders, the trade almost died off completely. Now, the flesh-traders transport their goods two ways: either piecemeal (so to speak) or live. Taking pieces of bodies is easier, but messy, and loses some of the choice bits—or so I've been told. Taking live victims means they have to make sure the people can survive the trip.

Tamanous generally uses the first method, supplying the ghouls with leftover parts from their other operations, which makes them less frightening and dangerous than the independent flesh traders, who deal in the higher-profit-margin market of living people. There's

LAGOS COUNCIL MEMBERS (CONT.)

Cintra Ime (Ahigbe Gang Leader)

Cintra Ime is a human of mixed tribal heritage and no tribal affiliation. Her origins are mysterious; her gang, the Ahigbe, appeared in Lagos just over five years ago. At first, they were primarily hired assassins and high-end thieves. Cintra decided to branch out, however, and now the Ahigbe control much of the white-collar slave trade in Lagos and a significant portion of the flesh-trade as well. The local corporations and tribes need educated wageslaves with special skills not readily available in the Kingdoms of Nigeria. Have a plastics factory that needs an industrial engineer? Cintra can get you one. She's got contacts all over the world, and she runs a global white-collar slavery ring from her base in Lagos. She is also a premier fixer in Lagos, giving promising locals a chance when many other fixers prefer to hire foreign runners. She's infamous in Lagos for how she got her seat on the council: When she decided she wanted a seat, she asked the other members politely. They turned her down. She supposedly just smiled and gave them her business card, politely asking them to call her if they changed their minds. Then, a week later, a council member was assassinated. Exactly a week after that, same thing, different council member. By the end of the third week, Cintra had her seat on the council. She's content to allow them to bicker, for now, and has made few decisions. When she's not just sitting on the sidelines, Cintra is the most fair and honest of council members, operating with a sort of “runners' code of honor.”

Faith Dubaku (Owner, Lagos Daily Times)

Faith Dubaku, a dwarf woman, is the owner of the major newspaper in Lagos, which actually still prints primarily on paper. Nominally, she's on the council due to her family connections and political importance in the city. In reality, she's the corporate interests spokesperson, placed on the council through the power of a group of corps including the Xenel-Oman and the Islamic Development Cooperative Bank. Although the corps that support her are often at odds with each other, they understand the value of having someone representing corporate interests and helping keep the atmosphere of Lagos conducive to doing business. Faith is an expert at juggling the competing interests of the corporations she serves, which is probably why she's lasted as long as she has. She's also adept at keeping the peace on the council long enough to get business done, an often Herculean task.

some crossover, and I'm pretty sure that a few of the flesh-trader bands are Tamanous affiliates.

◆ Chiemeka

Tamanous is also known to have some very extensive organ harvesting and fetus farming operations in Lagos. Most of what they harvest is shipped elsewhere in the world. Tamanous also imports people of certain ethnic types or rare genetic conditions to use in their farms. The organization often combs the streets of the slums looking for healthy street kids. They also purchase girls from the local brothels to use in their fetus farming operations. The lack of gene databanks or widespread health services (and the resulting health records) means that Tamanous is unable to find specific blood and/or gene types in the general population of Lagos. As a result, rather than targeted kidnappings like you see in the more

Urgent Message...



advanced sprawls, the victims in Lagos tend to be simply targets of opportunity, or they are just purchased outright.

- Organ harvesting is big business for Tamanous, but Am-mut's right that Tamanous gets the big bucks by hunting down specific "donors" to match their clients, and that's pretty much impossible in a feral city like Lagos.

- Butch

- I've heard of organ legging, but could someone explain "fetus farming?"

- Mika

- A fetus farm is a place where Tamanous keeps teenage girls locked up. They artificially inseminate the girls to impregnate them, then abort the fetus partway through the pregnancy. Fetal tissue is prized around the world for research, transplants, and biotech applications. Problem is, the demand outpaces the legal supply. Tamanous is the major supplier worldwide, although there are several other smaller outfits that get into the picture.

- Butch

- Butch, you left out the part where Tamanous pumps the girls full of growth hormones to advance the pregnancies quickly while keeping them drugged into docility. Or the part where the girls often die after a few years; the constant drug use, repeated pregnancies, and abortions cause health issues, and dying from blood loss or infection from a botched abortion is common. Doesn't bother Tamanous, though; they use the bodies in other ways, and there's always more girls to replace the ones that die.

- Goat Foot

Private Message...

//upload email intercept :: user Black Mamba

From: <still decrypting>

To: <still decrypting>

Wanted: Type "O" metahumans, willing or otherwise, for relocation to Lagos. Highest prices offered for females of reproductive age. Bulk purchases preferred ... <decrypting> ... escorts to accompany said metahumans given premium rates.

- With all that, overall opinion in the sprawl is still fairly positive toward the fetus farms. With the medical care the girls receive, they actually tend to survive longer than at the brothels or on the streets. They're well fed, given a clean home, and kept safe from the dangers of the rape-gangs that roam the streets or degradations of the brothels. After a few years, when they're unable to conceive anymore (generally due to uterine scarring), the girls are given a large cash payment for their service. Many use the money to start up shops or small businesses. Seems like a fair trade to me.

- Duante



- Tamanous aren't the only ones with black clinics and research labs in Lagos. Half a dozen major corps have R&D facilities hidden through-out the sprawl running human tests of biotech prototypes and unregulated vaccines. You'll know when there's one around cause half the people in the neighboring slums will be voluntary test subjects. They don't advertise but you'll make them out easy enough. Hell, I even know a dirt poor beggar in Agege who's got a prototype of one of those Ferrari sprinter legs!

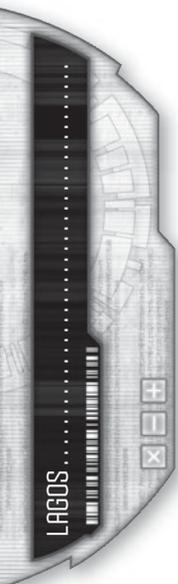
- Black Mamba

Area Boys

The Area Boys are almost everywhere in Lagos, a loosely constructed organization that's a combination street gang, tribe, and protection/extortion racket. While they are called the Area Boys, many of them are young men in their early twenties, although the street kids join up as young as eight or nine years old. The true Area Boys are primarily Igbo, but Lagosians tend to call any gang of street kids by the name, which can be more than a little confusing.

The Area Boys work as a pyramid organization, where the bulk of the members sit on the lowest tier and must earn a certain amount each day to pass up to their superiors. At the top of the pyramid is Chidi Ené. Living in his gorgeous white mansion in the heart of Victoria Island, he's about as far removed from the street kids as he can be. Still, that mansion was paid for with the earnings of the Area Boys.

The Area Boys earn their money a variety of ways—extracting "fees" from residents, selling drugs, pimping out younger street



kids, providing protection (or charging for protection) to vendors, marketplaces, and shops, running messages across the city, and outright thievery. Anywhere you go in Lagos, you're likely to see the boys loitering on street corners and watching the crowds for opportunities. *Oyibos* are a particular target of the gang—they're more likely to just rob an *oyibo* outright, assuming that they'll have cash or valuable goods on them. The only way to avoid them is to travel well armed and look more dangerous than they are. Just beware—what appears to be a small group of Area Boys can quickly multiply, since they have thousands of fellow gangers across the city. If one group gets into trouble, a quick call for help can result in literally hundreds of other Area Boys running to back up their brothers.

- No shit. I refused to pay up one time, figuring my team and I could handle the three punk kids who were demanding a toll to cross a certain road. They drew their guns, we drew ours. We got off the first shots, of course, killed all three of the punks where they stood. Didn't make it more than a city block before we were surrounded by about fifty more kids, and those kids had AK-97s. It got real ugly, real fast.

- Hard Exit

- The ever-present Area Boys also function as an informal city police. They watch everyone, everything, looking for their opportunity to take your money. On the bright side, however, most Area Boys will not tolerate thieves operating in their territory. If a local is robbed, they'll start shouting "thief," and the local Area Boys or gang will jump and run to catch the thief. If caught, he or she will most likely be burned alive (the old "necklace of fire"—placing a tire around their neck and igniting it) or stoned. There are no trials, no prisons, and no second chances. If you've paid the gang's fees, their special brand of protection will work for you.

- Honesty

- Yeah, and those Boys have a better response time than Lone Star in most sprawls. The cops could stand to learn some lessons from them.

- Duante

- Area Boys all pack guns. The guns are typically knock-offs and production surplus sold on the side by the megas and not particularly reliable... but there's a lot of them and Area Boys are never alone.

- Black Mamba

Since the true Area Boys are part of the Igbo tribe, they are most concentrated in Igbo territory. They're also fairly well established on most of the main freeways in town, especially on Badagery Way and Ikorodu Road. Many of the slums, such as Ajegunle, are only partially controlled by the Igbo Area Boys, and other street gangs have frequent and very violent street wars with the Area Boys as they defend their turf. These street battles aren't like your normal sprawl gang-wars, where there's a few drive-by shootings and the occasional bar-brawl, killing a dozen gangers and a few innocent bystanders. In Ajegunle, the last "gang conflict" had a force of about two hundred boys and young men sweeping the streets with their AK-97s, riddling the flimsy wood and corrugated metal sheets of the shanties with bullets, killing everyone they came across. Without

police to limit them, the gangs have no compunction about limiting collateral damage, and with the easy access to guns (or any other type of arms), gang warfare gets very deadly in Lagos.

- Occasionally, when things get really bad outside the slums, the Lagos Council will step in and attempt to control their factions. If it is two independent gangs, the Council attempts to mediate the conflict, generally by sending in their own forces to wipe out one (or both) of the gangs causing the problem. But it takes a lot before the Council will step in, like, say, the factories in Ikeja being threatened. If the violence restrains itself to the slums, no one really cares.

- Black Mamba

Most of the Area Boys travel either by okada or by foot. There aren't really any go-gangs in Lagos—since there is very little "go" on the freeways. Gang members have very little cyberware—it's often only seen in the higher levels of the gang, and what they do get is often secondhand warez acquired by Tamanous. They also tend to have few street shaman, since most of the kids who have Talent spend very little time on the streets, instead going to serve the tribes in more profitable areas. Don't discount them, though: what they lack in magic and cyber, they make up in guns and sheer numbers.

Daughters of Yemaja

The Daughters of Yemaja are a group of priestesses who follow Orishakò, the goddess of agriculture and fertility. In the Yoruba religion, as practiced in post-Awakened Nigeria, the priests are a strictly male caste. While most of the Awakened men are priests, or *olorishas*, not all priests are Awakened. Women with talent in the Yoruba Kingdom are often left to develop their abilities on their own, perhaps mentored by a village healer or midwife. Frequently, Yoruba families in Lagos will sell their Awakened daughters to a corporation or criminal organization.

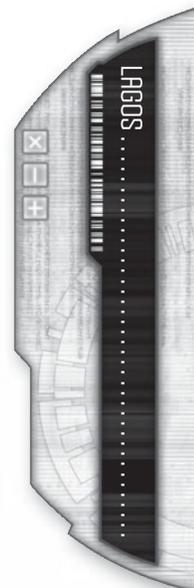
- An Awakened daughter is worth tens of thousands of naira from a corporation. That's enough to take a family out of poverty for several generations. Most of the girls who are "sold" go quite willingly.

- Honesty

- The girls who are adepts are often overlooked, but if they survive to adulthood, many merc companies welcome them. You'll find a disproportionate number of female Yoruba adepts working in African merc outfits.

- Picador

The one exception is the priestesses who follow Orishakò. They are a semi-secret group of women across the Yoruba controlled lands and in the city of Lagos. While most Yorubas (and, indeed, most in the Kingdoms of Nigeria) know of their existence, few outside the society itself know who is a member. The members are inducted as infants, often brought into the society by their mothers, aunts, or grandmothers. While the general membership of the society is not Awakened, all the Daughters of Yemaja are. The priestesses of Orishakò have certain strict rules: to keep their membership a secret, to keep their worship alive through rituals and holy day celebrations, to help in the training of younger members, to care for each other (and each other's children) as sisters would, and to never deny help to a woman or child in need. The



Daughters of Yemaja have even stricter rules, to protect both them and the other priestesses.

The Awakened priestesses of Orishakô tend to have magic that focuses on the healing arts and are drawn to nature spirits. They frequently serve their community by helping purify water, aiding in the growing of crops, and serving as healers and wise-women. The Daughters of Yemaja are their polar opposites. Their magic focuses on combat, both attack and defensive, and the spirits they call upon—well, I know many of you don't believe in a meta-plane of the afterlife, where metahuman souls go while they await rebirth. But if you ever see a spirit called by a Daughter of Yemaja, you might change your mind. They have an affinity for ancestor spirits—not just of their ancestors, but of the spirits of women who've died violent deaths by a man's hand. The one time I observed, a Daughter was summoning a spirit to protect a household from a drunken husband. The spirit looked like a young Yoruba woman, but her face was bruised, her clothes torn and muddy, and you could see the gaping wound across her throat that had once killed her. The wife of the household cried out to the spirit when it manifested, recognizing it for her cousin, who had died a decade past, murdered by an unknown assailant. I don't know one way or the other, but I do know that the woman believed completely that the spirit was that of her dead cousin. It was ... unsettling. I also was told by the Daughter I was visiting that many of the spirits they summon are downright hostile to men, and those summoned in the more twisted areas of Lagos seem to seethe with hatred and barely repressed violence. When a Daughter loses control of a spirit, the spirit frequently goes on a murderous rampage, attacking any men around and leaving the Daughter who summoned them and any women and children nearby untouched.

The Daughters of Yemaja have been known to leave their territory to address an issue elsewhere in the sprawl, often through violent means. They run an underground railroad to help free children from the *cherubiums* and to help women and girls to get out of the city and back to rural villages. There are rumors that the Daughters get some support and funding through global women's rights organizations, such as Mothers of Metahumans. The Daughters of Yemaja provide a small amount of safety and security for the sprawl's most vulnerable residents, which brings them in direct conflict with those who survive by preying on the weak.

- Those crazy bitches aren't that strong or scary. They don't have much influence outside their territory. Every now and then they'll destroy some buildings or spirit away a family, but for the most part, the rest of Lagos goes on with business as usual.
- Chiemeka
- Brave words. If the Daughters ever find you, they'll show you the same mercy you've given to all those you've preyed upon.
- Honesty
- Lagos ain't about mercy, sister. It's about survival.
- Chiemeka
- You will have precious little of either soon enough, *oloriburuku*.
- Honesty

PIRATE GROUPS

Posted by: Kane

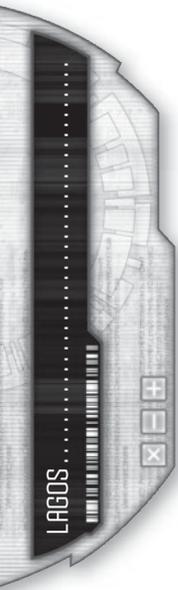
From the Fanti pirate nations to the north to the Angolian government-sanctioned privateers to the south, piracy is a way of life on the seas, rivers, and swamps of sub-Saharan Africa. Perhaps you've watched the pretty trid shows filmed in the Carib, where dashing pirates sail sleek little boats through the gleaming blue waters, spouting clever lines while they relieve rich tourists of their cred, then spend their evenings in port, drinking rum with bikini-clad women. Perhaps you've even seen or sailed with real pirates, the ones that attack the larger corp ships with military precision, killing their crews with cold-hearted pragmatism, hoping someday to make the big haul.

But probably you've never seen how the pirates sailing the Gulf of Guinea live. Faced with corporate ships escorted by corporate navies, they fight meaner, nastier, and more aggressively than pirates in any other locale. They aren't looking for the big haul, the glittery promise of riches and wealth. For pirates that sail those seas and rivers, the prize is survival—if you manage to live another day, you've won. I've sailed every sea on this small planet, relieved most every big and little corp out there of some of their fine nuyen, managed through a lot of work and judicious application of flying lead to piss off most governments. I've been called one of the top pirates of our century, one of the most dangerous men on the planet, topping a dozen police agencies' "Most Wanted" lists. And with all that, there's still one place I shudder to sail: West Africa. Sailing with a cargo there is like swimming through a pack of sharks while you're bleeding.

- Ok, who let Kane off his leash?
- Butch
- Hey, Fastjack, I've set my crap-o-filter just like you said, and now I only get gibberish when Kane's talking ...
- Kat O'Nine Tales
- Funny, ladies. Very funny.
- Kane

If you plan to visit Lagos, you'll end up having to deal with the pirates. It may be when you arrive, hooking up with a pirate crew to ship you there, or maybe when you're leaving, using a pirate crew to smuggle you and your ill-gotten gains out. If you want to travel up the Niger River to the inland, you'll have to deal with pirates. If you plan to trade in many of the tempting resources of Africa, the pirates are going to pop up sooner or later.

To understand the African pirate, you need to understand where they're coming from. Many have no option but to be pirates. I mean that literally. If they don't steal, rob, and plunder, they will starve to death. The water and food you carry on your ship may be the only chance for sustenance they have. The pirates who sail the Gulf of Guinea fight with more ferocity than you'd expect, against seemingly impossible odds, because the only other choice is death. If you sail in the Carib or the Philippines, you can feel fairly secure that if you've got the local pirates outmanned and outgunned, they'll look for easier prey. In the Gulf of Guinea, they'll attack anyway, even when it appears to be a suicide mission. You may be the only available prey. Keep that in mind when you deal with the pirates—offer no quarter, expect none in return.



The other thing to keep in mind is that piracy in Africa is often an employment-based service. Pirates often take jobs from corps and local powers. Rather than the traditional image of freelancers you'll find elsewhere, pirates in Africa often fill the role of part-runner team, part-merc for hire, part-corporate asset. Many lack the finesse of runners, the skills, training, and gear of professional mercs, and they certainly lack the loyalty of a corp asset. But in the competition for Africa's resources, arming a pirate band and telling them to go to town on your competitors is an accepted business practice.

For example: Fatima Petrochemicals wanted access to an oil field, which was going to be used by Global Sandstorm to connect to the Lagos pipeline. Global had already established relations with the local villages and had sent in their surveyors. Fatima Petrochem hired a crew of the Igbo to go upriver to the area. They paid the crew for every Global body they brought back (well, ok, for the bio-monitor RFID tags that had once been embedded in a body), along with a nice bonus for the destruction of the villages and every man, woman, and child living there. The man telling me this was one of the pirates; he bragged that his crew had actually only killed the young children (those that were too small to survive the long trek to the flesh-traders) but taken the teens and adults and sold them to the flesh-traders. With the double profits, his family ate for a year.

- Pirates in Africa often do work the corps can't get anyone else to do. Need to destroy a few villages and kill everyone in them? Most merc groups won't take on that type of work—they don't participate in wholesale civilian slaughter. So you arm some pirates, preferably pirates from an ethnic group that's got a grudge against the ethnic group inhabiting the area you'd like, and offer a nice paycheck. Have a competitor in the area with a monopoly on a gold mine? Decent shadowrunners are scarce, so instead of using finesse and strategy to sabotage their operation, you send in a pirate crew to destroy equipment, kill the guards and workers, and loot corporate goods. In West Africa, the corps don't bother to hide their rivalries behind discreet maneuverings. There is no Corporate Court to watch over things and make sure people play by the rules.

- Picador

There's a few major groups of pirates who've managed to survive long enough to bear mentioning. There's hundreds of others, of course, but Am-mut told me to keep things succinct.

The Fanti

The Fanti are more smugglers than pirates. They live and work on the sea, traveling in family groups, often with multiple boats for each family. The Fanti have good relations with coastal villages up and down the west coast, from Azania to the Côte, and have connections all the way through to Morocco and the Mediterranean. In fact, if you want to get into Europe quietly and have the time to spare, the Fanti are the crews I'd recommend. They make their profits by smuggling valuable goods—black market diamonds, tesmas, gold, precious minerals, awakened critters, furs and parts from endangered species, stolen shipments of arms from Africa to Europe. In return, they smuggle back electronics, manufactured goods, and people.

Fanti pirates generally run three to five boats per family, occasionally more. Although most families have access to some magical talent, cyberware or bioware is uncommon. The families live on their boats for most of the year, stopping into their "home" villages in the Fanti Territories only long enough to connect with more extended families for marriages and important tribal business (like coordinating the blockade against the Asante). Wives and children travel on the boats, too, and the kids start learning to handle a gun by the time they turn six. By thirteen, Fanti boys and girls are considered full adults and expected to pitch in when they do on-shore raids, while the married women and littlest kids stay to defend the boats. There's no way to join a Fanti crew outside of marriage, although they'll happily transport you or work for you. They're even fairly good about not double-crossing their employers—just make sure you pay them more than they'd get by double-crossing you.

Niròjú Ikú

The Niròjú Ikú are a pirate group based out of the burnt-out shell of Porto Novo. The city originally was burnt during the pirate wars of '57, with most of the inhabitants killed, enslaved, or simply fled to the dubious safety of Lagos or Sekondi. There wasn't much left of Porto Novo, just fields of rubble and burned-out ruins, and with nothing left to fight over, the pirate wars shifted further up the coastline. Porto Novo remained unoccupied except for rumors of shedim and even scarier things.

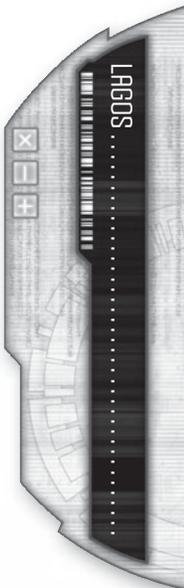
About four years ago a new band of pirates began hunting the Gulf waters, and rumors said they hailed from Porto Novo. Already the Niròjú Ikú have made a name for themselves as being particularly vicious. They seem to prefer to hit corporate ships and do so with a precision that would lead me to believe they have more professional training than the average pirate crew in the Gulf. I've also heard rumors that they utilize hackers on their crew, which is very unusual. Most of the targets—the smaller ships, the villages, and the other pirates—don't have any sort of wireless (or wired) infrastructure. Hackers are dead weight on most crews, and no one keeps dead weight around. Perhaps the hackers allow them to target some of the larger corporate freighters that sail the waters. My sources have also told me that the Niròjú Ikú have occasionally passed up easier targets specifically to attack larger ships. (It isn't uncommon for shipping companies to "seed" the sea with smaller, more tempting targets to distract pirates while their well-secured freighters make a quick dock in Lagos, Sekondi, or other coastal ports.) What they've been taking is anyone's guess, since they don't appear to be trading their goods anywhere up or down the coast.

- Europol is very interested in the Niròjú Ikú. I'm not sure why they'd care about a small group of West African pirates, but a few of their agents have been asking around. Anyone picks up data on these guys, I can put you in touch with someone who'll pay very well for it.

- Fianchetto

The Final Message

The Final Message is a small group, less than a hundred strong, but they certainly rate a mention simply because they're so damn spooky. They're lead by a human man by the name of



Jonty Geldenhuis and these guys make the rest of us look like schoolgirls. No one really knows where they've got their home port, but they've been seen all over the coast, up into the interior, even into the Congo. At one time, it appeared that they were affiliated with Winternight. However, when intelligence agencies across the world wiped out Winternight after the Crash 2.0, The Final Message kept sailing. Now, maybe they just didn't rate getting the hammer, maybe they were too hard to find, or maybe they weren't really affiliated. I don't know. What I do know is that these guys are crazy. I did a trade with them a year or so back, swapping some mil-tech grade weapons for a shitload of telesma they'd acquired. I got the impression they already had a buyer for the weapons. The mage on my crew assented Jonty and told me she'd never seen anyone with a more messed-up aura—apparently the guy was somewhere between death and bat-shit crazy—she described his aura as glittering red with rage, threaded through with black spots of corruption. Beats the hell out of me what she was talking about, but, well, she's a mage. She also said she sensed something very twisted on their boat and was convincing enough that I high-tailed it out of there.

- Kane's been smoking shit again.
- Sticks
- I wonder. Perhaps this Jonty is a shedim? I've heard the rainforests have a huge infestation of shedim, but no one seems to want to confirm it. And a mage who hadn't seen a shedim before could easily mistake it for a toxic or twisted spirit.
- Winterhawk
- I'll confirm the shedim rumor, free of charge. If you plan on traveling through the rainforests of sub-Saharan Africa, watch your back. The Kobikela have fought breakouts in the Congo, but no one's managed to do much further up north.
- Black Mamba

CORPORATE INTERESTS

Lagos may not be worth a war to win, but that doesn't mean the corps don't have a major presence there. Africa has a lot of resources, and the corporate interests of the world certainly aren't going to let a little thing like no government, rampant crime and corruption, Awakened rainforests, desperate pirates, and massive toxic pollution stop them from wringing every little bit of profit out of the continent that they can. Admittedly, all those circumstances combine to make profit mongering a bit harder. But in some ways, life in Lagos is easier for the corps. There's something to be said for no environmental controls, no interfering government, no nosy media, and—this is fairly important—no Corporate Court overwatch.

That means that the corps that operate in Lagos can have all the bloody knockdown, drag-out fights they want, as long as the bloodshed doesn't leak out to the "civilized" world—there are various intricacies and relationships to navigate. Since much of the work that brings *oyibos* to Lagos is corp related, I thought a brief rundown on some of the corporate interests in the area would be useful.

Aztechnology Africa

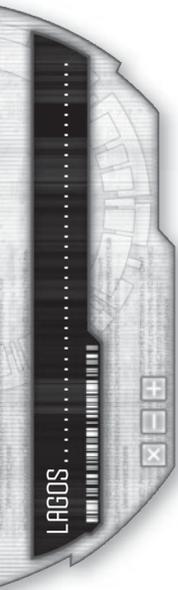
Aztechnology Africa has multiple branches and interests—"Aztechnology Africa" is actually just an umbrella term for its myriad interests, as the corp works primarily through subsidiaries rather than corp divisions. Their most profitable subsidiaries are the giant factories that produce low-tech materials—plastic, metals, cloth, that sort of thing—using the cheap labor and abundant resources in Africa. Since Africa is one of the few places in the world with cheaper labor than Aztlan, the allure of "third world wages" is irresistible to the Azzies. They also have massive workshops that process raw telesma from the Awakened rainforests and send it around the world. Since manufacturing destroys the magical properties of telesma, Aztechnology employs huge amounts of workers who hand-craft and hand-package the materials. Aztechnology is one of the major buyers of telesma from the tribes and telesma-hunters, at least in West Africa.

Aztechnology Africa has several large factory complexes in Lagos, as well as in a variety of other coastal cities. They pay living wages, from what I've seen, and provide housing for their employees within their factory complexes. They don't practice "scrip slavery," which is where a corp pays in corporate scrip, which employees can only redeem at corporate stores—then raise the costs of goods, but not wages, until employees have racked up a significant debt and end up working for free as they attempt to pay off the debt. Many of the corps in Lagos practice scrip slavery, but Aztechnology Africa appears to be one of the better corps.

- Living wages. What a joke. Let me tell you how it really works. They hire men and women and pay them well—maybe a couple nuyen a day. Plenty for a frugal single man or woman to survive on and more than most have. But what they don't tell you is that most adults in Lagos have multiple dependents: children, aged parents, unemployed spouses, siblings, etc. that they support. In the slums of Mushin and Kosofe, five to ten people often live on one income. The Azzie solution? They offer huge barracks for employees and their families to live in and *then* they pay in corporate scrip. It works great for the Azzies. Employee theft is next to nothing, since the Azzies tend to make very public examples of thieves and then sell off their kids to the brothels and the elderly parents to the flesh-brokers. That's always the threat: screw up, and we frag you and sell your kids. Employee productivity is great; if you don't put in your eighteen-hour days, they'll sell your kids to make up the difference. The factories are ill-maintained death traps, and employees injured on the job or sickened by the toxic chemicals are kicked out to the slums. Medical care is offered at fifty times the going rate you see in UCAS, and one sick kid can end up indenturing an entire family to the factory. It's a real great system, right.

- Honesty
- And yet, there are always more people lining up for a job there. The Azzie system may suck, but there's clearly worse things out there.
- Duante

Aztechnology Africa is also thought to have several black labs in Lagos. Now, most of what I've heard is just rumor. But



what I've been told is that out in the slums of Oshodi-Isolo, there are a couple of secured compounds surrounded by five-meter-tall walls, bristling with armed sentries and paranormal guard animals. The buildings inside are squat white blocks, windowless, with armed guards at the doors. Locals aren't employed there, and the only vehicles that come or go are darkened cargo trucks, well protected. I've heard it said that the Azzies are using those locations for anything from experimentation on radical new cyberware to refining biowarfare weapons. Your guess is as good as mine as to what's really going on there. Of course, if anyone does find out, I've got a half-dozen Mr. Johnsons who'll pay you pure gold for the intel.

- I heard from a friend of a friend that a certain Dr. Victoria Martin was recently extracted from a Uni-Omni lab up in Vancouver. Dr. Martin had published some very interesting papers on predicting the mutation patterns of VITAS III before she went off the grid a few months ago. From what I've heard, the doc's methods of research would make me look like a compassionate humanitarian. Don't know that the doc ended up in Lagos, but rumor on the streets is that Uni-Omni sent a runner team there shortly after the doc's disappearance.

- Butch

Aztechnology Africa's Lagos division is run by Charles Ramirez, a middle-aged human imported straight from Aztlan a decade or so ago. Although he lives on Victoria Island, he follows Aztechnology's hands-on approach to managing the corp's Lagos assets, and he is frequently seen visiting their factories. He's rumored to particularly delight in having his pet mage mind-scan employees as he visits the factories, and then watching as those who are revealed as thieves (or potential thieves) are "made an example." The factory managers are all carefully selected Aztlan expatriates who are completely devoted to both Aztlan and Ramirez. An assassination attempt a few years back netted Ramirez his own personal team of Leopard Guards to protect him and Azzie assets in Lagos.

- Well, that's interesting. Leopard Guards don't tend to bodyguard division managers, especially not ones stuck in a third-world city with just a few low-level factories. Either Ramirez is pulling in some serious nuyen for the corp, or there's something else going on.

- Mika

- The teslama trade out of Africa (and most specifically out of Lagos) accounts for about 30 percent of Aztechnology's global production. That's some very serious nuyen.

- Mr. Bonds

- Ramirez is fond of importing runners to help with business in Lagos. He has a strong dislike for the "native riffraff" as he calls the locals. Believe me, he hasn't made any friends with his attitude. But he knows the right tune to play when he deals with the various kings and princes and petty warlords: nuyen.

- Duante

Ares Arms, Africa

- Ah, the old joke ... I believe the punch line is, "yes, they do."

- Dr. Spin

Ares Arms is probably the number one producer and supplier of weapons in Africa. They've got a dozen factories in Lagos, primarily in Ikeja, where they churn out enough weapons to arm a few dozen armies ... every month. That might be a slight exaggeration, but you get the point. They also have a very profitable "military consultancy" sideline, and their services are always in high demand in war-torn Africa.

The thing to know about Ares Arms, Africa is the difference between their on-the-books production records and their real production amounts. In Lagos, with no paranoid government to watch over their shoulder, the corp is able to make significant portions of "black arms," weapons that can be sold to underworld, para-military, or even terrorist groups who don't want to leave any records of their acquisitions. For the mostly legitimate purchases (say, for example, if King Efos needs to arm some of the mercs who are guarding the valuable Lagos oil fields), Ares Arms will sell direct. But for other buyers, Ares Arms will often go through an arms-broker. For the truly black deals, Ares Arms will simply arrange for a few crates to fall off the back of a truck—once the appropriate donation has been made through corporate back channels, of course.

- Ares also uses the constant conflicts in West Africa to test experimental new weapons. They sell 'em cheap to one side (or both) in a war, then send their scientists out to record the battles and measure the new weapons performance. It's a profitable way to run a lab.

- Black Mamba

Ares also has significant mining resources in West Africa, with their gold mines among the most profitable in the world (although DeBeers remains number one in that field). Most of the gold gets shipped out of the Gold Coast, but enough of it makes its way through to Lagos, where it can be sent to other locations under the radar.

Finally, Ares Military Magic division has a large presence in Lagos. They have compounds out in the rainforest that harvest magical plants for research purposes and for sale to para-botanical corps such as Shiawase. Ares keeps a research compound in Lagos as well, although they keep the location under wraps.

- You didn't mention Ares' biggest presence in Lagos: their "urban training ground." They send advanced military units to Lagos to provide live-fire training opportunities. They also send in their Firewatch units, giving them practice in clearing out shedim infestations and bug hives in urban centers and in the thick rainforests around Lagos. The collateral damage can get quite extensive when a training-op is underway, and Ares doesn't seem to mind (although they don't market that footage to the trids for broadcasting in those popular battle-tech shows). Ares keeps a small hospital in Apapa, along with some secured corporate compounds where their support personnel are housed.

- Cosmo





Horizon Africa

Horizon Africa, or HAF, has divisions all across the continent. Although HAF is based out of Nairobi, the VP, Ben Leon, makes it a point to travel to all their main branches. Ben Leon is a human who was transferred from Horizon Transglobal less than six months ago and quickly worked his way up the ranks. As the youngest of Horizon's VPs, Ben is rather aggressively pursuing profitable interests in Africa, which before now has been the least represented of all Horizon global regions. The Lagos branch is run by Shane Dubois, a charismatic troll who recently relocated from Horizon's LA offices. His predecessor was removed in a bit of a scandal, and Dubois has done some major restructuring since his arrival.

- Tobias Montanez's HIP score tanked after his secretary put out the word that he was patronizing a *Cherubium*. One day the guy's riding high, the next he's on a one-way ticket back to LA for some R&R at The Haven.
- Dr. Spin

HAF has a large pharmaceutical presence in Africa, taking advantage of the multiple sprawls with lax (or no) regulations regarding metahuman drug trials. Small research groups regularly explore the Awakened jungles of Africa, looking for flora and fauna with untapped properties. In addition, both Leon and Dubois are fond of employing runners to scope out the other corps' research, extract lead scientists, and insert viral software into the opposition's systems. Leon insists his managers maintain a lower profile

than managers in other branches of Horizon Global, especially in regards to runners. Apparently he's sensitive enough to his new position as VP that he doesn't want to work at hushing up any scandals.

- No worries here about having to dress well for the job—you can actually do your runs the way God intended. Quietly.
- Fianchetto

A creative brainstorming group in Lagos led to one of the more interesting HAF endeavors. This group, led by Marleen Gearin, a brainy dwarf with a handful of PhDs to her name, is experimenting with flesh-substitutes for ghouls. They've contracted with Thema Laule to beta-test several promising strains of bio-engineered plant and vat-flesh concoctions. If they succeed, they have Laule's promise of priority trade agreements with the resource-rich Asamando. Horizon is one of the few megacorps to recognize ghouls as sentient metahumans, and Dubois attempts to leverage that open-mindedness into profitable relationships with Asamando every chance he gets.

- Gearin has been the subject of at least three extraction attempts and a couple of assassination attempts since she announced her newest idea. The lady's got some serious luck going, since she's still in Lagos, thinking up even more wild research subjects.
- Nephrine

• She's not in Lagos right now. She's been in Asamando for the last two months, honored guest of the Queen, overseeing her research trials. I've heard Horizon has set a full complement of the Dawkin's Group to guard her, just in case the Queen decides Gearin would look nice as a ghoul.

- Hannibelle
- So far all attempts to make synthetic flesh end up with the test subjects starving to death. Any word on how Gearin's research is progressing?
- Smiling Bandit
- Nothing I've heard. But I've met Gearin in person and I didn't understand 2/3rds of what she was talking about. She's a genius and Horizon has given her free rein on her imagination. Can she come up with a synthetic flesh with enough essence in it to sustain ghouls? I dunno. But she's the kind of researcher who'd accidentally cure the common cold while trying to make peanut butter, so even when she fails on a project, Horizon still makes money.
- Nephrine
- Yeah, well, brains don't always equal common sense. I'd hate to be in Gearin's shoes if she fails—she may end up on the menu instead of her product.
- Clockwork

Finally, Horizon is a big provider of free educational material to many of the poverty stricken areas of Africa. In the slums of Lagos, they've set up extensive virtual schools, providing commlinks and proprietary educational sims to kids. Many of the kids just turn

around and sell the commlinks, which are generally second- (or third- or fourth-) hand 'links donated by consumers back in North America and Europe. You've seen those "give the gift of learning" campaigns when you go to upgrade your 'link and Horizon asks if you want to donate your old one instead of contributing to the landfill problems? This is where your old one's going. Still, it's been a huge marketing success, and they've gained an enormous amount of goodwill from all the celebrity endorsements and human-interest trids they put out showing their good works.

- Yeah, it's great. And when you see Kit McClain surrounded by all those photogenic little kids, teaching them how to use his old 'link, you just know that you should buy Horizon brand commlinks, since they will send your old one, free of charge, to help a kid in need. Horizon's netted some huge educational contracts from the publicity. Their Singularity branch just finished rolling out the UCAS system, and rumors are there's another deal in the works with CAS.
- Dr. Spin

- Horizon's "100 nuyen commlink" program in Lagos is a large reason why the mesh network here works. The 'links are loaded with spamware and bound to Horizon matrix services, but overall, it has been a huge benefit to the sprawl.
- Duante

Global Sandstorm

The pan-Arabian petrochem and construction AA ramped up its West African presence years ago, hoping to secure the region's immense oil reserves as the Middle Eastern ones were going dry. Owned by the al-Shammar family, the corp is a major player in Lagos. Years of chaos and corporate abandonment in the area of the Niger

Delta means that those oil reserves have been largely untapped in the last fifty years. While the huge demand for fossil fuels for vehicles has been all but eliminated by biofuels and solar powered vehicles, oil remains a valuable and necessary component in manufacturing, as well as an ingredient in numerous pharmaceuticals, solvents, fertilizers, pesticides, and—most importantly—plastics.

Getting a foothold in the constant turmoil of shifting political lines has proven a costly and long-term project, but with the final completion of the Lagos pipeline, GS investments seem to be paying off. The first shipments of oil sailed out of Lagos a few months ago, and GS stock prices rocketed in response. Of course, the pressure is now on for GS to keep control of the oil being produced.

Global Sandstorm doesn't own the gas and oil pipeline; they control it thanks to agreements they've secured with the key Nigerian kings and the major power players in Lagos. They've made it profitable for the Kings to honor those agreements, and they've provided merc forces to help guard the pipeline from the local pirates, rival corps, and eco-terrorists. The Nigerian kings, however, aren't loyal to anything but their own bank accounts. Another corp offering a better deal would have the Kings switch-

ing sides in a heartbeat. GS knows this, so they've sunk a lot of nuyen into this deal and are vigilant about protecting it.

- GS is the number one merc employer in the Kingdoms right now. Problem is, the mercs are paid by Global Sandstorm, then deployed to the specific kingdoms. The local kings like to treat the mercs like their own personal troops, using them to bully and intimidate any of their people who are stepping out of line. There's a fine line between going in and rooting out pirates and raiders who've taken commissions from a rival corp (or eco-terrorists, or a neighboring king, or whoever) and simply slaughtering subsistence farmers who aren't part of the dominant tribe, and the tribal kings work hard to keep their people from knowing the difference.

- Picador

- First hand experience, Picador?

- Aufebene

- I thought about taking a contract there, but I did my research. Told the Global Sandstorm execs that I'd only go if I could have complete discretion on which orders I obey. They said no. Those GS execs know they're arming despots who're using the mercs to commit genocide and expand their own borders, but as long as the crude and natural gas keeps flowing, GS turns a blind eye.

- Picador

- Several of the current merc groups there, including MET2000, have let Global Sandstorm know they won't be renewing their contracts after their current run is up. The word is that Global Sandstorm is offering premium prices to any mercs who want to sign up to take their place.

- Black Mamba

OIL TODAY

With the depletion of major Middle East fields in the '20s and '30s, technology advanced to provide reliable and inexpensive alternative fuels for vehicles (the number one consumer of fossil fuels at the time). Now, the primary use for petroleum is in the manufacture of plastics and bio-polymers. With global demand for plastics exponentially increasing, petroleum remains a hot item, and sky-rocketing prices and scarce reserves have spurred corporate competition to secure the remaining oil reserves, such as those in West Africa's Niger Delta. [\[Link\]](#)

There's a pack of other petrochem corps that would like to get a hold of the Nigerian oil reserves. Some are working with oil pirates to get some of the black gold on the side. Others are directly (or indirectly) challenging Global Sandstorm's prime position. Work opportunities are plentiful for all of the petrochems, as long as you don't mind the working conditions.

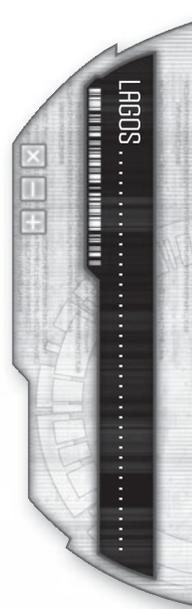
Global Sandstorm's refineries and processing facilities next to Lagos port are heavily guarded and one of the city's best employers.

- Well paid employees are less likely to take bribes to sabotage the refinery but even so the security in the refinery is almost as high as downtown LA.

- Duante

United Oil

The huge petrochem corp isn't particularly happy that Global Sandstorm got the jump on them with the Lagos pipeline. United Oil made a strategic decision that investing in the pipeline wasn't



a cost-effective strategy, most likely due to the costs of having to wage a multi-country war. But now that Global Sandstorm has pulled it off, rumors are that United Oil's African execs are under a lot of pressure to make up for their shortsightedness.

- You may remember United Oil from all the media buzz over them about six years back, when they revealed their technology to deal with oil spills—those innocuous bacteria that consume oil, transforming it into an inert matter, nicknamed “kernels,” a plastic-like matter that can be scooped up by aquatic-drones. The invention was hailed as an environmental triumph, since the plastic-like matter is unappealing to wildlife, does not biodegrade, and therefore does not enter the food chain through plants or animals. The material, which looks rather like fluffy white popcorn, is buoyant and clumps together in large spreads. That makes it particularly easy to spot and to skim from ocean and river waters, although it can be tough to remove from shorelines and other areas unfriendly to drones.
- Smiling Bandit

United Oil has three factories and processing plants in Lagos, all of them along the shore of the Lagos Lagoon. They used the Lagos Lagoon as part of their research trials when they were working on their oil-consuming bacteria. Since the Lagos Lagoon (and the surrounding creeks and ocean) holds some of the most oil-polluted water in the world, it made a perfect research site. The corp filled the waters with its bacteria, but learned quickly that using drones to scoop up the resulting captured oil was not cost effective.

- Yeah, I heard too many people walked off with hundreds of thousands of nuyen worth of drones. Flooded the black market, too—you could've picked up a reclamation drone worth ten grand for a quarter of that price. Good times.
- Rigger X

United Oil now pays a bounty on the kernels to anyone who turns the stuff in. At ten naira a bushel, it pays pretty well. There's almost always some oil being spilled—pirates dumping the stuff, pipeline leaks, and those century-old oil tankers leaking or bursting every few minutes. The bacteria have colonized the Lagoon, so any spills are instantly transformed. United Oil plays up the good press back in the UCAS on how it is saving the environment and offering a helping hand to the starving, but hardworking, masses in Lagos.

- They may play up their humanitarianism in the press back in the UCAS, but you can be damn sure they don't include any images of what the people have to do to earn their naira. In actual practice, there are fields of workers, many of them young children, who wade through the toxic waters every day, hand-scooping those precious kernels. An adult can fill about a basket an hour after a minor spill, or five times that after a bigger spill, but otherwise it could take half a day of labor just to get a full bushel. And meanwhile, the natural parasites in the water are infecting the worker, and the toxins in the water are inflicting chemical burns. With all that filth, even the smallest untreated wound can turn gangrenous after a day's exposure. And those are just the mundane dangers. There are salt-water leeches in the Lagoon that can suck a man dry in just a few minutes. Awakened water-snakes (like the spitting green mamba) that can toss a paralyzing poison several meters away, giant crocodiles like the Ammit, the carnivorous Bahari, swarms

of blood-sucking Ghede flies that spread VITAS and other diseases, and other things that are too smart to have been caught on record. Most of the Lagoon skimmers don't last a month. Still, at a hundred naira a day, surviving and working for a month can feed a family of ten for a year.

- Black Mamba

United Oil takes the recovered kernels and, through application of a chemical agent, transforms the material into recovered oil. It ships the oil around the world, marketing it as an eco-friendly product, which is often purchased by more developed nations.

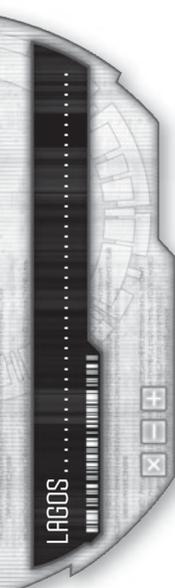
- Pueblo is one country that regulates oil imports and requires that 10 percent of all oil and related products be from recovered sources.
- Mika

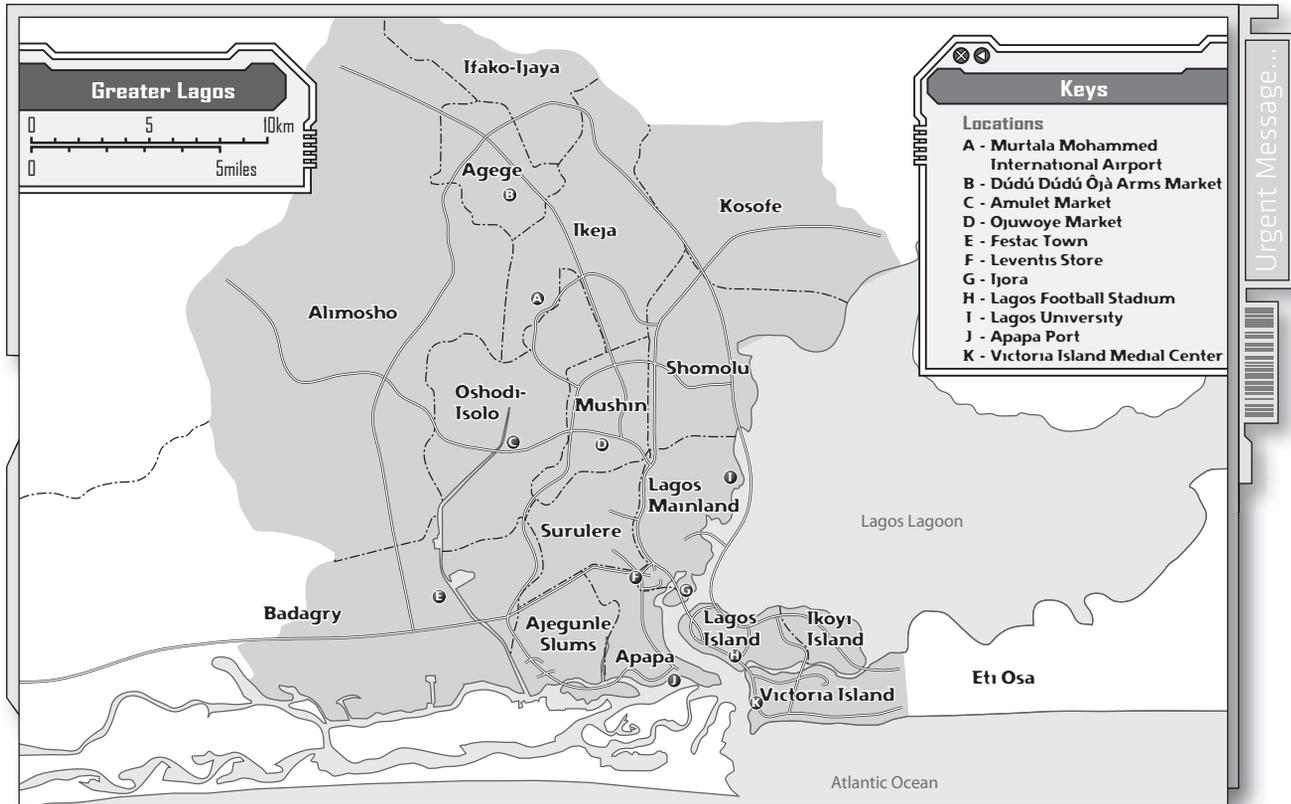
Delek Dragon

Delek Dragon is a newcomer in the global petrochemical field. It's an Israelcorp that might have backing from one of the megas. My sources say Wuxing is the most likely one, although the evidence is circumstantial. Delek has secured agreements with several of the Niger Delta pirate bands to buy any oil the pirates acquire. If the pirates are able to steal, siphon, or bribe any oil away from the Lagos pipeline, the pumping stations, or the ocean-going tankers, Delek will buy it. It's a good deal for Delek, since they get the goods with no upfront investment. The corp also subsidizes several pirate crews to harass other corporations or corporate agents who might try to strike similar deals.

Delek is very well known in the shadows for using any means to interrupt competitors' business deals with the local pirates and oil-traders, including using runners to sabotage meets and/or scope the details of sales. They use the intel to steal the oil at the transactions, which has prompted more than one shadow-war between Delek and competitors.

- How can it be that profitable for an international corp to buy a few barrels of oil from pirates?
- Hard Exit
- Ah, good question. The answer is, it isn't just a few barrels. It's tens of thousands of barrels. I've seen figures showing that somewhere around forty million nuyen worth of oil a month is siphoned off by pirates, sold on the sly by corrupt refinery managers, or flat out hijacked off tankers. That's close to half a billion nuyen a year. And those figures are probably on the low side.
- Mr. Bonds
- Yeah. Now imagine what Global Sandstorm and the Nigerian Kings are raking in (since the theft is just a small fraction of the total oil), and you'll see why things are so hot down Lagos way.
- Cosmo
- Am-mut, you didn't mention S-K's Fatima Petrochem. Aren't they a major player in the West African oil arena?
- Mr. Bonds
- S-K's Fatima Petrochem was blocked out of the area by the combined efforts of United Oil and Global Sandstorm. The shadow war between those two and S-K FP was huge. Now, FP is trying to get





back into the market, and it looks like they're targeting Global assets—specifically, Global's contracts with the various kings. Rumor is that FP is looking into re-shaping the kingdoms in a way that is more friendly to them, and that some of the latest assassination attempts against Global-allied kings have been sponsored by Fatima Petrochem.

- Am-mut
- Another rumor making the rounds is that Delek Dragon is directly sponsored by S-K. While the big guys keep all their attention on blocking Fatima Petrochem's entrance into the market, Delek has managed to siphon away millions of nuyen worth of oil. Could be Lofwyr is playing a shell game.
- Cosmo
- Delek *Dragon*. C'mon, isn't that a bit obvious for Lofwyr?
- Fianchetto
- I think it sounds just like something he'd do.
- Frosty

DIVIDED WE FALL

Lagos is divided into multiple districts, although the division between districts is very loose, as borders shift with every day's influx of new residents, every minor gang skirmish, or even market days. Hell, neighborhoods may shift simply due to heavy rain flooding a few streets that normally divide one district from another. In Lagos, adaptability is paramount to survival. So for those of you who enjoy maps, I'd suggest simply getting over it and employing a guide to help navigate this fluctuating sprawl. With that in mind, here's the main districts—at least, here's how they were when I wrote this.

LAGOS ISLAND

Lagos Island is the heart of the city's business district. It's separated from the mainland by the main canal that connects Lagos Lagoon to the Gulf of Guinea. At one time, there was an entire archipelago of islands decorating the swampy lagoon, divided from each other by creeks and waterways. Those waterways were long ago filled in with dry land for building. Now, Lagos Island is connected to Victoria Island and Ikoyi Island, forming one large district.

Lagos Island is most attractive when seen from the sea, the silver of the high-rises spearing through the hazy smog to glint in the tropical sun. Thousands of reinforced glass windows glitter with the appearance of wealth. From the sea, the beach holds a hint of lush tropical greenery. Air traffic bustles around the buildings, as VIPs avoid the traffic-congested streets below.

As you get closer, however, that pretty illusion disappears. Once home to long stretches of white sand and rich tourists, the beaches are now stained with years of oil spills and indiscriminate waste disposal. Despite regular clean-up efforts, the beaches continue to deteriorate and haven't been a tourist draw for several decades. A heavily patrolled, triple-layer fence separates the discolored beaches from the business district proper. The security relies primarily on metahumans, armed to the teeth, rather than drones or heavy magical security. After all, the one resource Lagos has in profusion is metahumanity, and the Lagos Council utilizes that very inexpensive resource effectively. It helps that in Africa, guns are a close second to human lives for the cheapest and most abundant resource.

Lagos Island is broken into three distinct districts: Lagos Island proper, Victoria Island, and Ikoyi Island. The largest

Urgent Message...



is Lagos Island. Most of the remaining high-rises are here, and this is where the corporations who wish to do business with the ever-changing powers of Lagos—or the Kingdoms of Nigeria—make their well-secured homes. Access to Lagos Island is fairly limited, since much of the wealth of the sprawl is bought and sold in the secured buildings and corporate enclaves housed on the island.

Lagos Island connects to the mainland via two bridges. The Eko Bridge connects the island to Ijora and is generally packed with traffic that moves at a slightly slower pace than standstill. Thriving markets extend from Ijora to the bridge, and entrepreneurs can be found 24-7, walking through the traffic and selling the trapped masses food, beverages, services (anything from a haircut to a back-seat quickie), or drugs favored by wage slaves. Anything and everything can be found on the bridge.

Around Ijora and extending under and out from the bridge is a floating city with many merchants making their homes on the oily water. Shipping channels are kept clear by armed “water patrolmen” who often burn the flimsy wood and plastic shacks of those who can’t pay their “residential taxes.” On the island side of the Eko Bridge is a heavily fortified gate, and some of the Council’s armed goons inspect all traffic coming to the island.

- It is customary to pay the guards to let you through. The toll starts at about five naira per passenger and goes up from there, depending on your tribal affiliations, the language you speak, or what sort of contraband you’re trying to smuggle in or out of the city. If you wear expensive clothing or look like an *oyibos*, you’ll pay ten times that amount. Natives don’t argue over the payment, so acting surprised or trying to negotiate immediately marks you as an *oyibos*.

- Black Mamba

The Third Mainland Bridge is the second bridge to connect Lagos Island to the mainland. At almost twelve kilometers long, it travels over a long stretch of the lagoon and is one of the longest bridges still standing in Africa. Following the first disastrous bridge collapse in 2015, which killed more than two hundred people, the bridge was rebuilt. Various sections have collapsed since then. In the past few decades, the collapsed sections have not been rebuilt, but enterprising water gangs provide rather shaky ferries to cross from one side to the other. The bridge is fairly low to the water, and the gangs have created rough ramps to and from their docks.

- FYI, “ferries” is an exaggeration. Generally each “port” has between five and ten makeshift rafts, with a family or two as a crew, who will vie for your naira. Some of the rafts use ropes strung together to pull you across, others paddle, and a few have motor-engines. Those crews pay off the water gangs to allow them to continue to do business. The gangs, in turn, fiercely guard their territory from other gangs who’d like a cut. This means that each time you get to a water-crossing, you’ll be faced with rafts that frequently collapse, recurrent fire-fights between armed gangs, the occasional boarding by gangers looking for a little extra bribe, and the chance that the crew will decide that they’d make more naira by slitting your throat and taking your car and gear.

- Duante

- Wait a sec. Third Mainland Bridge? There’s only two bridges? What’s up with that?

- Sounder

- The Carter Bridge was the second bridge when they built the Third Mainland Bridge. Carter Bridge was destroyed by an oil-terrorist cell back in 2031. They blew it and a few thousand people up. The government tried to rebuild it, but most of the construction money ended up lining the pockets of the politicians and their cronies. People live out on the sections that are still standing and stable, islands of concrete and sludge.

- Black Mamba

Victoria Island is the second district. At one time it was separate from the other parts of Lagos Island, but most of the creeks and waterways were filled in, leaving it an island in name only. Victoria Island houses the truly rich in heavily patrolled small estates. Sandwiched between the business district and the ocean, it is a small enclave totally isolated from the rest of Lagos. Mostly residential, with small shops, restaurants, and exclusive clubs, Victoria Island is the place to go to mix with the elite and powerful. The streets are patrolled by polite and well-behaved armed guards (though their behavior deteriorates if you don’t look like you belong). It’s one of the few places in the city where you can walk unmolested on the streets at any time, day or night. For the most part, the white-washed homes and hotels are only a few stories tall, set back amid tropical gardens and protected from sight by tall walls. It’s considered stylish to have those white walls covered with flowering vines to help keep the neighborhood attractive. Victoria Island is also home to a few upper-end malls, theatres, coffeeshops, and other amenities corporate expatriates can’t live without. Victoria Island is the only area in Lagos where you’re expected to carry a commlink and broadcast your ID and SIN.

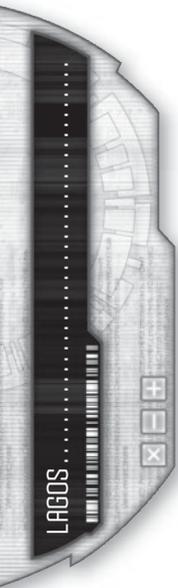
Being home to the rich and ruling elite of Lagos makes Victoria Island of great interest to runners. There’s always corporate executives to extract, profitable kidnapping schemes, espionage (since every faction and corp will pay to know what deals or business their competition is up to), or my favorite, blackmail.

- This makes it a tempting target for many of the hackers and ID thieves in the slums. The Victoria Island Matrix Security (VIMS) is armed with the hottest utilities and no restrictions on using lethal force. There’s little point in trying to trace a hacker from the slums, so they take the ‘kill ‘em while you got ‘em’ approach.

- Black Mamba

The third island district is Ikoyi Island. A residential district that’s less affluent and exclusive than Victoria Island, it is popular among the corporate expatriates who live in Lagos. Low-rise apartment buildings and crowded townhouses line the streets. Most are gated; all employ armed guards. Since many of the residents here also have domestic employees from the mainland, there is a busy flow of traffic back and forth. One of the more noticeable differences between homes in wealthier portions of Lagos and their equivalents in, say, Seattle or New York is that you’ll rarely find a home drone. Even patrol drones on the streets are rare.

Ikoyi Island also has multiple market places, indoor malls, and a plethora of bars and nightclubs. Most of them are fairly





INCOMING FEED.....



bland, catering to the families of corporate executives. Although the area is considered secure, you won't see corporate employees walking or driving anywhere without an armed guard at their side after dark.

APAPA

Apapa is on the mainland, directly across the channel from Lagos Island. As the main harbor, it is a prosperous area—for Lagos, that is. In fact, Apapa holds one of the few working ports on the coast of West Africa. The area serves as the primary port for all the Kingdoms of Nigeria, as well as many of the interior countries and tribal federations. It also serves as a port of call for many of the pirates that plague the Gulf of Guinea. Most of the corporate-owned container ships that dock there have heavy firepower on board to discourage the pirates and other local thieves, who tend to look for easier pickings. The port proper is currently run by Akin Chukumah, a man who styles himself the Port Master. Chukumah seized the position when the last Port Master died in a car accident, and he's managed to hold onto his power for over three years.

- "Car accident" in this case meaning his car blew up, turning Roger Iweke and fifty bystanders into crispy bits.
- Chiemeka

Chukumah has made a considerable fortune from the "taxes" and "fees" he charges to ships wanting to dock, almost none of which goes towards maintaining the port. He does, however, allow

fuel to be sold and repair crews to work out of some of the docks. Within a stone's throw of the docks is a bustling shantytown, a makeshift red-light district with shacks of plastic and weathered wood cobbled together. The town and its residents cater to the crews of the docked ships, providing every service your twisted little mind can imagine. The red-light district is a nice place to make connections at the port.

- You can spot the corporate ships, even those that don't have any corporate markings, by the fact that their crews are not allowed to disembark and enjoy the local flavor.
- Rigger X
- There's also a warehouse district that Chukumah controls. For a fee—about 10 percent of the cargo value—he'll let you store your cargo in a moldering, rat-infested warehouse and provide armed guards. The corps that take him up on this offer accept the fact that they'll lose another 10-20 percent of the cargo to pilfering (by the guards, naturally). Mostly, the warehouses are used by kings from the kingdoms or neighboring tribal alliances who have trade goods they'd like to unload. A lot of them provide their own security (who, like Chukumah's guards, likely line their own pockets with their employer's goods).
- Chiemeka

Outside the port, Apapa has some of the best markets in all of Lagos, due in part to the fact that most of the pilfered goods from



VICTORIA ISLAND TOURIST GUIDE

The hotels and entertainment venues take nuyen almost exclusively, via electronic transfer or registered credstick. If you plan to visit, and have nuyen to spare, here's a few of the better places to spend it.

The **Victoria Island Hotel** is a small gem, with just over forty guest suites. It looks out over the ocean, and the grounds are gorgeous, with exotic gardens filled with tame Awakened parrots, and small salt-water swimming pools, complete with white sand "beaches" to relax on. The staff is discrete, and each suite comes with full concierge service, including a personal butler.

- If you stay there, ask for Chima for your butler. He's got contacts all over the city and can get you almost anything.
- Traveler Jones

If you're looking for something more budget friendly, check into the **Federal Palace Hotel**. At 500 nuyen a night, it is a mid-class hotel with simple but charming rooms with private bathrooms, clean running water, and electricity.

- Mind you, "charming" means they were last remodeled in the 1900s. Still, unlike many other Victoria Island hotels, they don't ask for ID.
- Duante

The **Victoria Island Medical Center** is a world-class medical facility situated in the center of Victoria Island. As the only real medical center and hospital in Lagos, and certainly the best in West Africa, it provides a wide range of services. Many of the rulers and political figures from around West Africa travel there for routine treatment and medical care. It can provide care for many of the diseases common in Lagos, although prices are very high. It also has a top-notch cyberware clinic.

- Prices for cyberware there are double or even triple what you'd pay elsewhere, but secondhand ware is pretty easy to come by. Since they don't have to deal with pesky government rules or regs, though, they won't ask for licenses, corporate affiliations, run criminal background checks, or even ask for ID. Having to deal with the ever-changing regimes of warlords and shifting political factions in Africa has forged a simple policy: If you can pay, you'll get their VIP treatment. If you can't pay, you won't get thru the doors.

- Butch
- I know runners in the area who head to Victoria Med first when they've been hurt. They keep a standing pre-paid account there, 'cause the security at Victoria Med won't let the cops or the corps touch you once you've paid your fees.
- Picador

Continued on page 97

the ships and warehouses end up being hawked at the teeming open-air markets or on the crowded local streets. There's also a regular Thieves Market every third Friday of the month, when any pirate crews in town can unload loot and hold street auctions just outside the port.

- It's a nice place to find work with a pirate crew if that's your thing. It's a tough life and plenty of crews are recruiting. Also nice to catch a glimpse of some of the most dangerous men preying the routes from the Gold to the Cape.
- Duante

It is a more prosperous area, and most of the citizens have electricity if not running water. Wireless coverage is fairly reliable here, since a few of the local gangs have cobbled together rudimentary systems and ruthlessly defend them. The Ion Lions control a sizable area around the electronics market. If you're willing to pay their price, you can access the wireless network they've set up and maintain.

- The entire marketplace is swarming with boys and young men working for the Lions who stop anyone they see carrying or using a commlink (or other communication device) and invent a toll that needs to be paid. Like anywhere else in Lagos, locals just shrug and pay the fee. *Oyibos* who argue or refuse to pay will generally find themselves facing the second-line enforcers. They'll take the fee from you, either by emptying your pockets of money or by taking your electronics. And ancestors help you if your commlink is internal. You're likely to be mistaken for a technomancer, knocked unconscious, and turned into a corp for a finder's fee.
- Duante

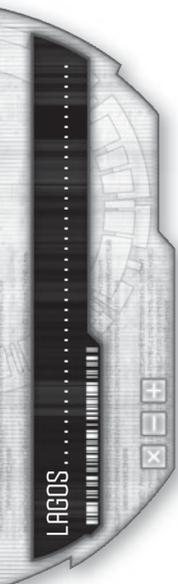
- The stories of a small band of technomancers who live on the edges of the electronics market, drawn to the area by the (fairly) stable wireless network, are probably just rumors. Since it's almost impossible to differentiate between technos and hackers, most claims of technos in Lagos (or other sprawls, for that matter) are just hackers or wannabees trying to capitalize on the reputation, fear, or mysticism that surrounds technomancers. The real technos keep a very low profile, since no Lagosian would blink at handing them over to the corps for the bounty.

- Netcat

SURULERE

North of Apapa is the burned out district of Surulere. It's a spooky place, an area surrounded by a crowded sprawl but dotted with the shells of burned-out homes, all but empty of metahuman life. There are other things that exist among the burned ruins, though, and those things are the reason that Surulere remains so empty.

In 2011, when VITAS first arrived in Lagos, the death toll was overwhelming. The virulent disease was



bad enough on its own, but coupled with the overcrowding, the lack of sanitation and basic health services, and the malnutrition of the general population, the epidemic was ten times more devastating in Lagos than in other sprawls. In most areas of the city, the death toll hovered at 75 percent. But in Surulere, VITAS claimed close to 100 percent of the population—nearly one million dead within twenty-three square kilometers of land. When the Awakening occurred and the tide finally began to turn against VITAS in late 2012, Surulere didn't have a single living soul left in its borders.

- Why was it so bad in that one area?
- Butch

- No one really knows. Many of the hardest hit areas were around hospitals and medical centers in Lagos. Surulere had its share of those, but no more or less than other areas.
- Am-mut

- My great-auntie remembers that time well. She was the maid for a doctor who practiced at Surulere General Hospital. She said she heard him gloating over how he was going to become rich and leave Lagos. Surulere General received no medication to combat the virus, but the doctors there convinced the people who came to them that they had a cure. They charged a few naira to give the ill and the frightened a single shot—which contained only saline. People flocked to the hospital from across the city, and the doctors responded to the crowds by reusing needles, transferring the virus to all who came for a cure. The crowded camps around the hospital, where the ill waited and died, became breeding grounds for death, spreading the virus with each strangled cough. In fear, the survivors set the camps aflame, and those fires stretched through Surulere, burning those the virus hadn't yet killed.

By that time, the doctors at Surulere General had long since escaped with their millions of naira. Many of the ghosts who remain in Surulere are trapped by their desire for vengeance against the doctors who took their lives and the lives of their families.

- Honesty

Though dry land is at a premium in Lagos, no one is willing to repopulate Surulere. Walls of garbage and refuse pile up at the border, as the locals are too superstitious to enter the area to dump their trash. The packs of wild gomatias (giant Awakened chameleons) won't go near the area, and many of the locals around Surulere use the giant chameleons' aversion to mark the land that it is safe (relatively speaking, of course) to travel. The chameleons are no doubt reacting to the high background count of the area, but locals see it differently.

- It's not completely true that no one lives in or enters Surulere. There are several Shokpona cult groups who are based out of the area, but locals won't talk about them. You'll see the priests in their masks leaving the district at dusk, walking through the neighboring districts and taking the offerings left out for them.
- Honesty

- And what are those offerings? Corpses. Many families believe that the priests carry the virus with them, and they leave out a dead body

VICTORIA ISLAND TOURIST GUIDE (CONT.)

The **Diamond Trader** is a nightclub and bar that attracts many of the rich and powerful in the area. On any given night, you'll see retired pirates rubbing elbows with corporate VPs, while South African investors down shots with visiting princes from tribal kingdoms. Although the AR enhancements in the club are limited, especially compared to places like LA or Hong Kong, they are still more than you'll find almost anywhere else in West Africa, and as such are considered cutting edge.

- The small community of runners who work Lagos Island tend to congregate at the Blue Monkey, a hole-in-the-wall place with ten times more African culture than the white-washed Diamond Trader. Since Lagos is a jumping-off point for much of Africa, the locals are pretty welcoming, provided you're willing to play nice. You need to pick up gear, guides, or simply info, you'll find it there. Just remember, nothing's free.
- Chiemeka

(someone from their own household or a purchased corpse) to divert the priests' attention from their household when illness strikes.

- Chiemeka

- That certainly isn't a part of Yoruba religion, or Christianity or Islam ...
- Goatfoot

- Superstition, coupled with a dark-ages understanding of disease transmission and modern medicine. They leave the corpses out to appease the priests of A-soro-pelerum.
- Black Mamba

- A-soro-pelerum?
- Elijah

- "He who should not be named." I believe our pragmatic Mamba is a bit superstitious herself. Many who live near Surulere believe the priests of Shokpona can cause VITAS, malaria, leprosy, or any other disease with a single look or gesture, and saying the god's name is enough to draw his attention. I'm not saying it's true or false, just that it's what they believe.
- Am-mut

- I've seen the priests of Shokpona. They looked remarkably like sasabonsam.
- Duante

BADAGRY

Out past Apapa is the sprawling district of Badagry. Badagry is home to the slum town of **Ajegunle**, the largest slum in Lagos and one of the most populous in Africa. The **Badagry Expressway** (nicknamed the "Fleshway" by locals) divides Surulere and

Urgent Message...



Badagry. It is the start of the flesh-traders' overland route to Asamando, and they often follow it for over a hundred kilometers before veering off to their more secret paths. The Badagry Expressway is a wide (for Lagos) freeway that is paved for most of its length, although the pavement is pothole ridden, cracked, and parts of it turn into creek beds during heavy rains. Traffic creeps along the road at a walking pace while young men run between the cars, trying to sell commuters everything from newspapers to high-tech knockoffs. Every few kilometers, enterprising marketers have set up roadblocks of dirt and concrete chunks, forcing traffic to a standstill as cars creep off the sides of the road to get around the blockage.

Most of Ajegunle is a low-lying mess of stilt-homes connected by rotting wooden planks, squatting over the reeking swamps, with densely packed shanties clinging to the dry land. Roads are little more than alleys, interwoven and crisscrossing each other, like the tangled strands of a giant spiderweb.

- If you know the alleys, you can make your way from one side of Lagos to the other traveling only through them. The alleys and gutters connect us all, providing a route for the brave, foolhardy, or desperate.
- Chiemeka

The northern part of Ajegunle is primarily Igbo territory, although miserable people from a hundred other tribes crowd there. Scavengers hunt the swamps and alleys, feeding on their preferred prey. Alufye, foot-long roaches, thrive on the piles of garbage and refuse. Dangerous jauchekafer, imported on ships coming from Europe, flourish in the filth under the stilt shanties and swarm the alleys. Devil rats haunt the edges of the swamps, while packs of wild dogs and hyenas roam the drier streets. And those are just the four-legged predators—as anyone will tell you, it's the two-legged ones that are really dangerous.

- The Igbo are particularly fond of using critters—Awakened or not—to enforce their power. The hyena handlers leash their "pets" with thick chains, then patrol the streets in groups. It's one thing to be asked for a bribe by a guy with an AK-97, and another thing altogether to get hit up by a group of thugs holding meter-long lengths of chain with hungry hyenas on the other end.

- Duante

- Some have managed to tame barghests, too, which run in wild packs all over the sprawl. You think having some gangers with tame hyenas is a problem, you should see what they can do with a couple of barghests.

- Honesty

The southern portion of Ajegunle is bordered by Badagry Creek, a shallow brown waterway used as a major transportation route through the district (and used even more as a garbage dump). The far side of Badagry creek is a long sandbar that separates the creek from the ocean. The sandbar is covered by impenetrable foliage, with towering trees and thick underbrush. Bands of *asonwu* (small carnivorous primates that hunt in packs and can take down a troll) that inhabit the sandbar keep all but the most desperate slummers away. The near side of the creek has been deforested,

and stilt homes have been built further and further out onto the water, creating a dense tangle of flimsy homes with roofs and walls of faded wood, plastic sheets, and tattered tarps.

This area of Ajegunle is controlled by dozens of smaller gangs, many of whom control only a few city-blocks worth of territory. As the Igbo try to push down into the south, fights between the gangs erupt with ferocious regularity, making Ajegunle one of the most dangerous areas in Lagos. Although most of the slums of Lagos are fairly open and have people moving in and out of them like the flowing of tides, Ajegunle is unusually insular. Many of the residents live and die within the slum's borders, never leaving the area. Those outsiders who do venture into Ajegunle are often more dangerous than any of the "natural" dangers of the slum—the flesh traders, the slavers, the sasabonsam, and twisted and corrupt magicians who are drawn to the feelings of anger and despair. Because of this, outsiders are regarded with hostile suspicion at best.

The only reason I know of to go into Ajegunle is to get through it to **Festac Town**. The Badagry Expressway is controlled by the Igbo as it passes along the north side of the slum. If you want to avoid their toll-points along the road, you may choose to venture through the slums, taking the single-lane roads and alleyways. I'd recommend just taking the Expressway and paying the fees levied by the Igbo.

- There are several reasons to go into Ajegunle, despite what Am-mut believes. The people who live there need the same things everyone else does—water, food, medical supplies, drugs. There are markets in Ajegunle—not as large as elsewhere, but they exist. If you have something to sell and the strength to prevent others from just stealing it, you can do very well in Ajegunle. Most residents don't have naira to purchase goods, but they'll trade what they do have.

- Chiemeka

- Yes, if you'd like to trade ten liters of water for a five-year-old child for your brothel.

- Honesty

- That's a bargain. I've never gotten lower than 20 liters.

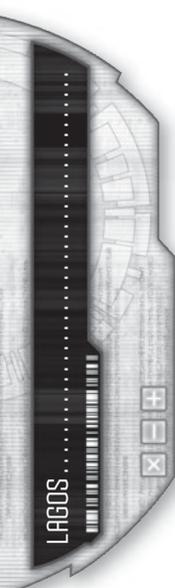
- Chiemeka

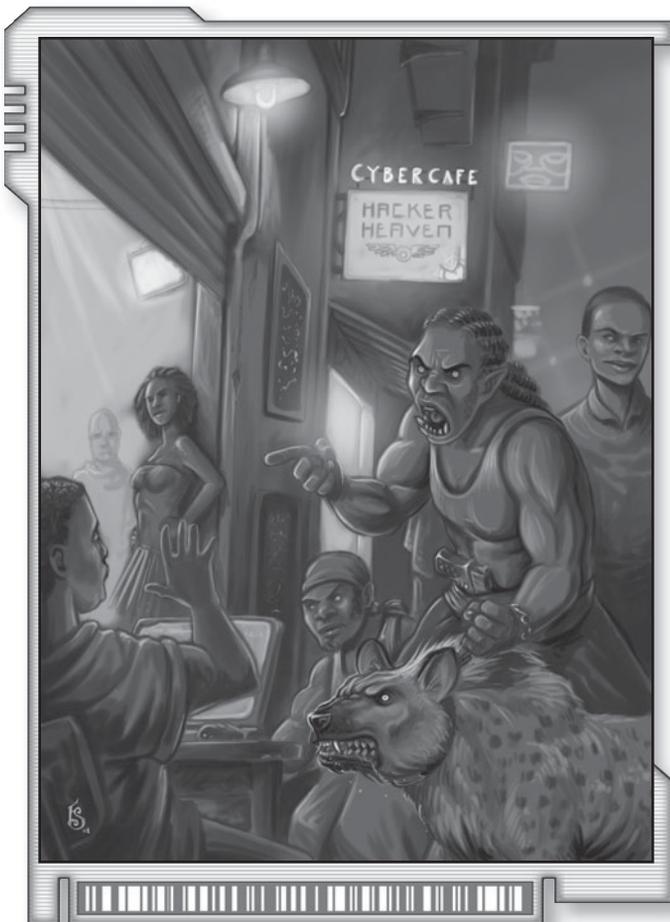
- *Banza*.

- Honesty

Festac Town

Past Ajegunle lies Festac Town, the infamous hacker haven. Festac Town is the only place outside of Lagos Island where you'll find comprehensive wireless coverage, 24/7/365. Numerous dingy cyber-cafes line the streets, where enterprising young hackers send forth viruses, execute elaborate Matrix frauds, and run Matrix ID theft rings that would put the Triads to shame. The Corporate Court Matrix Authority (CCMA) rated Festac Town number four in its recent "Top Ten" list for "Matrix Terrorism Hot Spots." Unfortunately for the CCMA, Festac Town has no local law enforcement agencies to coordinate with, no government to assist in prosecutions, and no corporate patrons to appeal to, so there is little the CCMA can do there.





● In other words, if you're a hacker, Festac Town is a great place to hack from—you can give Trace Progs the finger, 'cause the corp you're hitting sure as hell ain't gonna send a goon-squad through Ajegunle into Festac Town just to rat out your punk ass. And even if they did, there isn't a single registered jackpoint in the town, so assuming they traced you back there, they'd end up having to go door-to-door for all the cyber-cafes and hacker-hostels in the place. I believe the term is "needle in a haystack."

● Hannibelle

● Keep telling yourself that. I hear DeBeers-Omnitech put a guided missile into a Festac café that they'd pinned as the source of an intrusion on one of their Azanian R&D operations. Who's going to complain?

● Haze

● Very few corps have open wireless systems in Lagos. Most of the hackers in Festac Town tend to hack globally, targeting completely virtual storefronts or hacking low-level shops or systems, looking for profitable ID theft possibilities and skimming passcodes.

● The Smiling Bandit

There are dozens of hacker gangs and pirate crews based out of Festac Town. Unlike hacker gangs elsewhere in the world, whose members tend to be relatively well-to-do kids out to piss off their corporate daddies, the Lagos hacker gangs are generally cutthroat gangsters who've moved to the Matrix as a niche. The gangs often divide their members into "muscle" and "brains," with the brains

bringing in the naira and the muscle keeping everyone else from demanding a share.

The **Hausa Hacks** are one of the larger hacker gangs operating out of Festac Town. They focus on pulling hacks on small businesses around the world, often infecting the business's system with viruses and then selling anti-virus software to clean it up. They also are experts in using worms and Trojans to gather data, passcodes, and IDs. They post their services in most datahavens, offering to sell passcodes to mid-level systems. Since they aren't particularly subtle when gathering the passcodes, many buyers learn not to deal with them. Lucky for the Hausa Hacks, there's always a lazy newbie ready to be conned. The gang also offers access to botnets they've concealed in systems all over town.

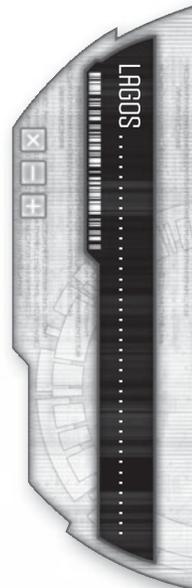
The **Onyara** are a (supposedly) technomancer clan that lives somewhere in Festac Town. They employ more muscle than other gangs there, as their existence is precarious. Lagos is relatively free from the prejudice and fear that heralded the revelation of technomancers and AI elsewhere in the world. After all, while many people have commlinks, they often are older, second-hand, or cobbled together from spare parts. Few people have data-jacks, drones are reserved for the extremely rich enclaves of Lagos Island, and most mainland businesses have little Matrix infrastructure. Technomancers, deprived of a consistent wireless network and a lack of wireless systems, are an obscure, harmless phenomenon.

Though technomancers can be tough to locate, corporations are willing to pay good nuyen as a bounty on them. The ten-thousand-nuyen-and-up bounty the corps offer is a fortune to most sprawl residents. Since there are a few million people in Lagos who would happily sell their own mothers for a handful of nuyen, life as a techno is very, very dangerous.

AETHERPEDIA QUERY: *Mesh Networks*

A mesh network is an informal, fluctuating Matrix network consisting of multiple commlinks that "mesh" together to form a wireless network. Each commlink (or other wireless device) acts as a router to other commlinks within its range. If you have two active commlinks within range of each other, they can communicate, forming a basic "local Matrix." The more commlinks in the local Matrix, the more area you can cover, and the greater the likelihood that one or more will be within range of a global Matrix connection or broadcasting tower. With a certain minimum amount of active commlinks, the local Matrix becomes quite stable.

Since commlinks are mobile wireless devices, the mesh network can change geographically based on the physical location of the commlinks—such as during evening commuting traffic patterns. Users depending on the mesh network can find themselves suddenly cut off from the local Matrix as the traffic patterns change, putting them in an unexpected dead zone.



MANDATORY MEMO**To:** All HR Division Managers**From:** Janice Logan, VP, Ares Corporate Anti-Fraud Division

It has come to our attention that a number of Ares personnel have become targets of the Festac Virtual Dating Scam [link]. While our CAF Division is working diligently to bring the criminals responsible to justice, it is imperative that all personnel seeking to engage in virtual relationships outside of approved corporate services be warned of the potential fraud. Ares has traced the majority of this fraud originating from Festac Town in the African city of Lagos. From research and debriefing of victims, we have seen common elements in this fraud, as follows. Personnel, both male and female, are approached after signing up with an online dating service or social network. The scammer poses as a person of the appropriate gender, depending on the target's profile, and initially limits contact to emails and electronic chats. After approximately one to three weeks of escalating interaction, the scammer sends photos and/or video of the person they purport to be (the photos are often stolen from other, non-Ares ID theft victims and are generally tailored to the target's preferences for age, metatype, hair/skin color, weight/height, etc.). After several more weeks or months of online communication, up to and including meeting virtually with the scammer's icon and engaging in virtual romantic relations, the scammer frequently manufactures a family or personal emergency and asks for money to be transferred to his/her account to assist with various expenses (examples: funeral costs, emergency travel expenses, or repairs to domicile). The sums are often small, below 5,000 nuyen, although sums of up to 100,000 nuyen have been fraudulently acquired.

To prevent these crimes, which often have emotional and social consequences in addition to the financial losses, it is imperative that your department instruct employees to only use Ares-sponsored virtual dating services and social networks, which ensures the people they meet will be fellow Ares employees and not criminals from Festac Town or other foreign locales.

See also [Angolan Diamond Fraud](#) memo.

As a result, the Onyara are more suspicious than most—they keep their lairs secured, and their identity as technomancers well hidden, even from their muscle. The Onyara are the top importers of commlinks and electronics in Festac Town, funding their gang by diverting shipments of electronics to legitimate ports, such as Cairo or Cape Town, where their agreements with a few Fanti pirate clans get them to Lagos. They sell them at a black-market rate in the giant open air market in Festac Town.

IKEJA DIVISION

Home to a crowded mass of dense housing, slums, factory districts, and the hidey holes of corporate labs and off-the-books production facilities, Ikeja is the sprawling division that holds the most people and industry on mainland Lagos. It has eight distinct districts, although the lines are often blurred between them.

Ikeja

The heart of Ikeja Division is the Ikeja District, a dense mixture of derelict multistory homes and apartment complexes, dilapidated factories, and crumbling warehouses crisscrossed by single-lane roads. Despite the lack of a government or cohesive leadership, Lagos remains the industrial capital of the Kingdoms of Nigeria. Much of its industrial strength lies in Ikeja. The apartments and homes are stained to a uniform grey from the soot belched out by the factories, and the water that sluggishly flows through the drainage ditches is black and oily. The people who live and work in the district are also grey and stained from a lifetime of breathing the foul air and working in the poisonous factories. S-K, Aztechnology, Zeta-ImpChem, Horizon, and Shiawase all take advantage of the impoverished labor force, forcing them to work with dangerous products and health hazards that wouldn't be allowed in first-world countries. Extensive secured warehouses hold the manufactured products, making them tempting targets for everyone from gangs to shadowrunners (nothing like getting your hands on a few crates of the newest pharmaceuticals before they ship out to the rest of the world). In addition, there's always a demand for the white-collar slave trade—technicians, engineers, and designers with first-class education and skills who are forcibly relocated and indentured in the facilities.

- You won't see breathers on anyone except an *oyibos* anywhere in Lagos, outside of Lagos Island district.
- Black Mamba
- There's a reason the life expectancy of a human in Lagos is less than forty years.
- Honesty

The factories produce a variety of goods, mostly low-tech, like textiles, processed food, beer and palm wine, and a variety of chemicals. The more up-to-date factories produce machinery or arms, or even electronics. Some factories produce cheap name-brand knock-offs, slapped together with a name-brand RFID tag and sold in third-world countries across the globe. Arms alone count for probably thirty percent of the goods produced in Lagos, and a variety of owners—from AresAfrica to shadowy South African investors—control those factories. Recycling plants are a significant industry as well, taking in scavenged garbage, sorting it, and refining it for resale to other corporations. Pharmaceuticals are another major production item and account for significant export.

- And many of those pharmaceuticals are drugs that are blatantly illegal elsewhere in the world.
- Nephrine
- True. Some of the factories produce chemicals and drugs that are considered weapons by many governments and corporations. With no oversight, the corps have free rein to produce things they can't



EYEWITNESS MATRIX HOT SPOTS:

Festac Town

The **NetExpress** is a chain of low-end cyber cafés full of archaic equipment, spotty connections, and piss-poor service. You can find them in cities all across sub-Saharan Africa. There are several in Lagos, but the one in Festac Town actually has modern equipment, including VR immersion coffins, and the best connections—AR or VR—you'll find in the city. During the day, the café is popular with foreigners and the local tech-wiz kids on gaming sprees. At 6 pm, the customers are kicked out, while Cintra Ime's Matrix slaves are locked in for the night, so you'll have to limit your Matrix access to their business hours of 10 am to 6 pm.

The **N10** is a nightclub that features live bands, with acts ranging from Christian gospel to tribal-beats. There's almost always flashing strobe lights, and a disco-ball dangles over the main dance floor. The club itself is two-story, with cinderblock walls displaying floor-to-ceiling murals of dancers in vivid colors. The club has AR enhancements, although whether it's working or not on any given night is iffy. The primary draws for the nightclub are the dancers—the club management hires pretty boys and girls to ensure that club-goers always have amiable partners. The dancers are always available for more than just dancing, although you'll have to negotiate prices (starting at ten naira—or N10, get it?).

make elsewhere in the world. And if there is a leak or spill, there's no environmental agencies to fine 'em and no humanitarian groups to whine about the loss of life.

- Butch

Many of the factories and warehouses are surrounded by double or triple razor-wire fences, patrolled by armed guards with leashed paranormal animals or trained guard dogs (or even worse, leashed hyenas). Employees are frequently searched coming and going to help reduce pilfering. Some industrial complexes only allow employees to leave once a week (or less) to help stem the constant pilfering losses.

- The guards may search the employees before and after their shifts, but those guards are just like everyone else. If they can make a few naira on the side by shaking down employees or by dealing out the stolen pharmaceuticals they're supposed to be guarding, they will. Runners who want to dip into the wealth of the industrial area can often just find a guard to bribe for access. Bribes are considered part of the income-earning potential for many security guards. Just be careful—foreign mercs aren't nearly as bribable, and occasionally a corp will import actual corp security.

- Chiemeka

- Employee theft—also called “shrink”—is a huge problem for most corporations and industrial facilities in Lagos. I know many smaller

corps that would like to utilize the benefits of Lagos—cheap labor, no government oversight, abundant oil resources—do not because the losses from shrink outweigh the potential profits.

- Mr. Bonds

- Which is why the corps that are here can get away with not paying employees for months at a time, and why their employees grow fat off of their “unpaid” labor. The corps that don't want to lose their products to theft generally keep their employees onsite, sleeping a hundred to a room, on threadbare pallets or simply the concrete floors, fed once a day on mashed yams or a cassava gruel. The guards are there not to keep people out, but to keep them in.

- Honesty

Ikeja also is home to the **Murtala Mohammed International Airport**.

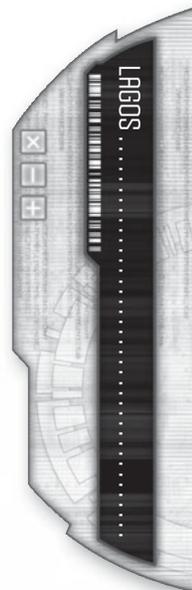
Mushin

South of Ikeja and sharing a border with Surulere is Mushin, one of the densest districts in Lagos with millions of people crowded into its borders. Housing is at a premium, and rents are correspondingly high. The buildings there are mostly five- and six-story apartment buildings, with white paint showing under the ever-present green mold that coats many of the walls. Inside, families crowd ten or more people into a one-room apartment. There's no running water, so barrels are set out everywhere, and people wash in the courtyards with their stingy allotment of wash water. Some of the buildings have generators, which run off stolen oil, but most have no electricity. Families cook in the courtyards, over fires or propane flames, and the streets are lined with merchants selling pouches of cooked rice, skewers of cooked meat, fried plantain chips, fresh yams and cassava, bags of potable water, and other necessities. The streets are packed with Danfo buses and okada carrying workers to the Ikeja factories. Since Ikorodu Road, the main thoroughfare between Lagos Island and Ikeja (and the airport), runs alongside Mushin, traffic there is quite heavy (and the wireless mesh network fairly consistent, at least within a hundred meters or so of the road).

Mixed in with the residential areas are several markets that are renowned through Lagos. The markets are open air, which means during the rainy season, vendors string up tattered tarps to cover their goods and themselves, and during the dry season everything is covered in a fine red dust blown from the Sahara by the harmattan winds. The largest of these markets is **Ojuwoye**, where you can find anything from rice and beans to barrels of oil.

The Awori control Mushin, and it's one of the few places in the city they hold firmly in their grip. Since the Awori are predominantly Muslim, Mushin is held under *sharia*, Islamic law. While the law may be strict, it protects those who belong, and the Awori are strong enough to enforce the law and its punishments. This makes Mushin one of the most stable districts, safe for anyone to walk the streets as long as they observe the laws of the *sharia*.

Blessing Ojo is the head of the local Awori tribe, a crime-lord as only Lagos can produce. He lives in a marble mansion in the center of Mushin, with several wives and a passel of young children. He's got a college degree in economics from Harvard and is fond of telling his rags-to-riches story. Blessing is considered a



Private Message...

Subject: Mushin visit

Yeah, if you're in Mushin, you should know a few of the *sharia* laws the Awori enforce. They don't tolerate any alcohol, so you'll find no bukas serving palm wine in the district, and public intoxication can earn you a public flogging, while buying or selling other drugs or BTLs can get you a death sentence (medicinal drugs excepted). Men are required to wear clothing that covers them from knee to waist, while women must cover everything except hands and face. Prostitution and child slavery is against the law, and anyone trafficking in human slavery is subject to fines and/or public flogging. And while Islam in the Middle East or Northern Africa may be heavily prejudiced against magic and magicians, in sub-Saharan Africa mages are a respected part of the community, so you don't have to worry about being Awakened in Mushin. Oh—and having pornography on your 'link can earn you a hundred lashes, so careful of what you're scanning on AR, eh? - Duante

hero in Mushin, and you'll hear people invoke his name a dozen times during a conversation: phrases like "If Blessing approves," or "With Blessing's grace" are common. The fact that Blessing is rich and owns a dozen cars is enough to erase all the negatives from the eyes of the people, like the fact that he buys and sells arms, owns several factories that manufacture toxic pharmaceuticals, and is a supporter of the flesh-traders.

- Blessing also keeps the Ojuwoye safe enough that a woman can shop there without being raped and Awori from the countryside can sell their produce without having their throats slit during a robbery. His guards, the "Soldiers of Mercy," patrol Ojuwoye day and night. A few months ago, some of the vendors from Ojuwoye approached Blessing with a complaint that one of his soldiers was abusing their wives. Blessing listened politely, and then called for the soldier. When the soldier arrived, Blessing castrated the man while the market-men watched, then politely thanked the market-men for bringing the matter to him. If you pay the Awori for protection, you get their protection. In a place like Lagos, that will get you worshipped by your people.

- Honesty

- You'll pay more for a room in Mushin than you will in other slums, but it's considered a safer neighborhood, especially for *oyibos*. Blessing has a friendly attitude towards outsiders and still has friends in UCAS from his college days. He's also fond of hiring foreign runners from time to time to help with some of his business ventures.

- Duante

Shomolu

On the other side of Ikorodu Road is Shomolu, a swampy district wedged between the Lagos Lagoon and the freeway. Mushin's poorer neighbor is a crowded slum, lacking the apartment buildings, roads, and markets that make Mushin slightly habitable. Along the edge of the lagoon, stilt shanties stretch

out over the polluted water. Narrow, flat-bottom boats transport people across the lagoon to Lagos Island or up and down the shoreline to Lagos Mainland or Kosofe. Shomolu is a Yoruba stronghold, although unlike Mushin, it is controlled by dozens of gangs. The gangs tend to be groups of young men, related by blood, who take on the names of their clan's patron, such as the 42 Tigers, a waterfront gang.

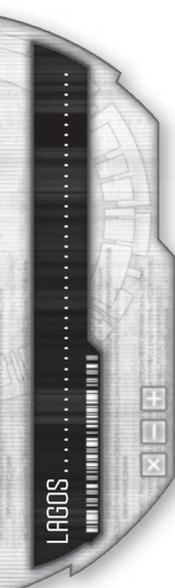
Shomolu is the worst of the slums along the lagoon. With no sanitation system, the various drainage ditches empty directly into the lagoon, carrying human waste, garbage, toxins, and the occasional (or even frequent) human body. All that filth gathers along the lagoon shore, under the stilt houses, making Shomolu a breeding ground for disease.

- I saw a World Health Org document that once labeled Shomolu, Kosofe, and Ikorodu as three of the top global locations for the creation of new pandemics. Of course, that document also labeled all of Lagos as a biohazard zone. If you plan on visiting, bring antibiotics.

- Butch

Further north along the lagoon is Kosofe, which lies between the industrial strength of Ikeja and the lagoon. Semi-navigable roads link the factory district to the lagoon. Armed caravans of trucks, bristling with guards or mercs, transport goods from the factories to boats on the lagoon. It is considered safer (and much, much faster) to truck the goods to the lagoon and then boat them to the ships waiting at the Apapa harbor than to risk the long Ikorodu Road. Most of the traffic on the Ikorodu Road is commuters going to or from their factory jobs. With the slow flow of traffic on the road, any trucks transporting goods would be sitting ducks, attractive prey to every gang in the city. The gangs that control Kosofe have struck agreements with the factory owners and allow transport trucks through their territory for significant bribes.

Kosofe is a mix of single-story slums, interspersed with the occasional giant cube of an apartment building, rising above the shanties like a blocky white mushroom. Industrial wastes from the factories in Ikeja are dumped into the various creeks and waterways that flow through Kosofe to the lagoon. Those toxic wastes have leached into the ground, causing a widespread die-off of vegetation and animal life in Kosofe (and Ikeja). You'll find nothing green in the entire district besides the ever-present mold and slime that coats the buildings. The only animals to survive are insects, like the alufye and the jauchekafer, and lizards, like the tiny mokele-mbembe or the giant gomatia. And, of course, the devil rats, which grow to extraordinary size along the lagoon. Many kids keep mokele-mbembe lizards as pets, and most homes keep one or more gomatia as well, since they eat insects. (I've heard gomatia will eat young devil rats, too, but leave the full grown ones alone.) The truly desperate eat the devil rats, although the rodents occasionally carry VITAS III. Unfortunately, most of the insects that thrive on the toxic garbage dumped there are too poisonous to consume.



• Kosofe is also home to dozens of black labs, places where the corps carry out experiments they don't want anyone to know about on people no one cares about. We don't get the underground compounds you might see elsewhere in the world—swamps aren't real conducive to basements. Instead, you'll see five-meter-tall, two-meter-thick walls topped with razor wire, and sprawling, windowless plasticrete buildings inside. Armed guards or packs of half-tame critters roam the grounds. No landscaping, no outbuildings to hide behind, no wireless systems blanketing everything and providing a handy security breach. Hitting those places is a nightmare.

• Duante

• I believe those labs are behind the recent dumping of twenty-five bodies in the lagoon. The people—all humans, all female, and all appeared to be younger than 25—showed signs of some type of severe illness. Burst boils on their skin, eyes that had bled out, tongues so swollen they had misshapen faces. I was called in to help burn the bodies, since none of the locals wanted to touch them. I've seen horrible things in Lagos, but those poor women haunt me.

• Honesty

• Huh. You always hear of rumors of black labs perfecting virus-warfare, genetic infusions and other cutting-edge treatments, biotech, symbionts, etc. Wonder if a few of those are in Lagos?

• Butch

Other districts in the Ikeja Division are Ifako-Ijaye, Agege, Oshodi-Isolo, and Alimosho. Agege and Oshodi-Isolo are both dense housing districts, with many of the residents commuting to Ikeja for work. The Hausa control **Oshodi-Isolo**, using a group of elder Hausa tribe members who form a sort of community leadership council. The Hausa there live in large family groups, each family taking up entire city blocks of homes and apartments. When a Hausa comes to Lagos from the countryside, he or she will first find his kin within the city. Each family member contributes to the upkeep of their area and pays a portion of their earnings to their family patriarch. In turn, each family patriarch gives a portion of his earnings to his clan's patriarch. There are perhaps a hundred or more clans in Oshodi-Isolo, although many are related in some way. Of these, the ten most powerful clans have a member on the council. Their word is law, and they employ a significant number of armed men and women to enforce their word.

• Many of the Hausa are Muslim, although Islam in sub-Saharan Africa has some significant differences from Islam elsewhere. Magic is welcome, and the *Marabouts* are respected spiritual leaders who provide magical healing, make magical amulets, and can even curse someone. They also practice animal sacrifice, which is strictly taboo among Northern African and Arabic Muslims.

• Goat Foot

Oshodi-Isolo is also renowned for the **Amulet Market**, a place where you can find Marabout amulets and charms, Dibias potions and herb craft, Olorisha healers and diviners, and most every sort of magical item. Telesma harvested from the Awakened rainforest is sold here in open-air stalls, while foci are sold in more secured cinderblock buildings. The market is popular with Awakened Lagosians of all sorts, and it's not uncommon to see

corporate *oyibos* strolling through, browsing for good deals. A small spirit market at the northeast corner of the Amulet Market sells spirit services to those who can afford it.

Between Mushin and Oshodi-Isolo is the small neighborhood of **Ilasa Maja**, home to Lagos' community of changelings. While the Yoruba tend to be accepting of changelings, other tribes are not. Those changelings who are unwelcome with their families have relocated to Ilasa Maja. There are many craftsmen of some note, producing goods for the Amulet Market. Others support themselves by working in one of the many brothels that cater to more exotic tastes.

The Igbo hold **Agege**, providing it with a minimal amount of security. For the most part, any *oyibos* walking the streets of Agege need be tougher than the armed Igbo Area Boys. Agege doesn't have any large markets, but there are thousands of smaller roadside vendors who pay a fee to the Area Boys to operate in Agege. Agege is also home to a group of dibias—Igbo sorcerers. The dibias form a rudimentary government in Agege, providing Igbo residents with healing potions, helping the unemployed find work, and providing justice for those who wish to seek it. They also protect the area from magical threats, such as Shedim, which are a major problem elsewhere in the city. The dibias maintain a small school in Agege, where they take in infant boys with talent and raise them to their arts.

• Here's a question. I've seen it mentioned several times that the Igbo know when someone is going to be Awakened, even when they are babies. There's a world full of corps who'd like to know that trick. Do they really know, or are they just guessing?

• Cosmo

• Traditionally, an Igbo dibias performs a divination ritual after a new baby is born—five days after for a boy, eight days after for a girl. They use a native kola nut to perform the ceremony. If the nut they use has four lobes (plus a few other signs), that's a sign that the child will grow to be a sorcerer. There's a few other superstitions, but the Igbo put a lot of weight on the divination ceremony.

• Honesty

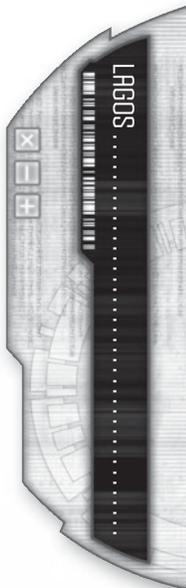
• And how accurate is the divination?

• Winterhawk

• Most of the boys they take in grow to be dibias themselves, from what I've seen. And I know corps will pay good nuyen to buy a girl child that a dibias declares will be a sorcerer.

• Honesty

North of Agege is the **Ifako-Ijaye** district. Although the southern portion of the district is urban, toward the northern edges it presses into the thick rainforest. Dirt (or mud) roads snake through fields of hardy grass and reeds, with foot and bike trails branching off into the forests. Small enclaves sit back in the forested areas, and you'll frequently see women walking alongside the roads, baskets of goods balanced gracefully on their heads, as they travel between markets and homes. You may only have traveled a short kilometer from a dense sprawling shantytown, but it feels like you've stepped back a few hundred years in time. The people in Ifako-Ijaye are friendlier, too, and open to visitors. Their



natural Yoruba hospitality has not been diluted by sprawl life, and they're a welcome relief from the hostility and violence elsewhere in Lagos.

Part of the reason the people of Ifako-Ijaye can afford to be so much more trusting is the Daughters of Yemaja, a secretive society of women who follow Orishakó, the goddess of agriculture and fertility. The Daughters of Yemaja enforce certain laws within Ifako-Ijaye (and throughout much of Yorubaland). They are known for taking revenge on people who treat women and children with disrespect or offer them violence. In Lagos, they offer safe havens to women escaping abusive husbands and for girls with nowhere to go but the streets. Ifako-Ijaye is the start of a pipeline where they smuggle girls out of the city and into the countryside, returning them to their families in the Kingdoms of Nigeria.

Because the Daughters of Yemaja and the dibias of Agege are fundamentally opposed to one another, conflicts occur regularly on the borders of their territory or when one group enters the territory of the other.

- Yeah, like last week when those wacko chicks stormed into Agege and leveled a full city block of buildings, killing over a hundred people, wounding who knows how many. You can still see the smoke from the rubble—the fire burned for three days straight, despite the rain.

- Chiemeka

- Oh, what, did we cut into your profit margin? Poor thing. I'm sure there are so many mourning the loss of a *Cherubium*. Strange how all the dead were men who were enjoying the unnatural pleasures of the *Cherubium*. I saw very few people unhappy to see that place destroyed and even fewer who will miss any of the dead men. Well, very few besides yourself, Chiemeka.

- Honesty

Alimosho is the largest district in Lagos and one with the lowest population—of metahumans, that is. Alimosho is plagued by shedim infestations, which makes it a rather terrifying and dangerous place to live. Those metahumans that remain have nowhere else to go, and they tend to be very clannish and hostile to everyone else. Small gangs live in the area, raiding the more prosperous Agege and Oshodi-Isolo to support themselves. While much of Lagos is ruled by one gang or crime lord or faction, Alimosho is truly a lawless sprawl, where the only way to survive is to be stronger than those who seek to prey on you. Most of the buildings are decayed, roofs crumbled in, green slime covering everything. Closer to the city center, there are few growing things. As you move toward the rainforest, the district becomes flat grasslands mixed with swampier areas of reeds, and the only thing that breaks up the flat landscape is the occasional tall tree or blocky multi-story building. On the edges of the district, the rainforest has pushed in, and fast-growing vines strangle abandoned homes. In the more urban areas, the alleys are crawling with devil rats, and giant insects forage in the open streets, thriving on the piles of garbage and refuse but fleeing up the sides of buildings when packs of wild gomatia come through. Lagoians venture into Alimosho when food is scarce, since hunting can be good there, and a wild boar or fat devil rat makes for a hearty meal.

- Alimosho is a spooky place, almost alien, like the most twisted parts of nature decided to reclaim land from the metahumans. I dislike Alimosho, as do most Awakened, although it is attractive to those who follow the darker paths of magic.

- Honesty

- The gomatia are drawn to Alimosho for something other than the Awakened cockroaches. There are rumors of several Insect hives there, scouring the edges of other districts to find new hosts for their hive.

- Duante

- Quick hint: Gomatia don't eat things larger than a cat or small devil-rat. If you see a pack of gomatia following a grown metahuman around, periodically flicking out their sticky tongues to "taste" their leader ... well, let's just say the locals tend to give anyone like that a wide berth.

- Sticks

IKORODU AND EPE

Ikorodu and Epe stretch around the northern side of Lagos Lagoon, hemmed in by the rainforests on one side and the lagoon on the other. They are large districts, with urban centers of blight surrounded by low swampland and linked by muddy, rutted roads. Ikorodu is a haven for terrorist training camps, where groups with a wide variety of agendas have large, sprawling compounds or even control entire villages. With the easy access of the Lagos port and a mostly reliable airport, the terrorist groups are able to send and receive materials, weapons, and people from around the globe. Although most residents of both Epe and Ikorodu are Yoruba, there are dozens of other tribal affiliations in the area. Like Alimosho, the only law here is martial, with local residents paying armed gangs for protection. Epe is an agricultural center of sorts, where families attempt to force the polluted land into producing enough crops to survive and sell. Armed bands of raiders roam through both Ikorodu and Epe, preying on the weak and leaving behind burned villages and charred corpses.

- If you're going through Ikorodu or Epe, go well armed and be ready for ambushes. The local gangs like to hide in the ditches and swamps alongside the road, waiting to pounce on unwary travelers. They'll steal your car and everything you have, and if they think they can find a buyer, they'll steal you, too. Don't bother with bribes or negotiations; they only respect force, and the only way to avoid a fight is to appear too strong for them.

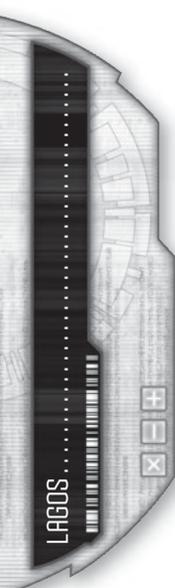
- Black Mamba

A WALK ON THE DARK SIDE

There's nothing like having a guide who can tell you the local hotspots. Since there weren't any "Rutger's Armchair Travel Guides" published for Lagos last I checked, I've worked with Black Mamba, Honesty, Duante, and Chiemeka to bring you our own travel guide.

- I rearranged the order of the following section. Am-mut started out with places to stay, but I know you SOB's really just want to know where to find a good drink.

- Fastjack





INCOMING FEED.....



BARS, CLUBS, AND OTHER PLACES TO LOSE YOUR MIND (AND MONEY)

Outside Victoria Island, there are few places that'll serve up some fancy drink with a pretty name. There's plenty of places to find palm wine, though, which is decently strong drink made out of the sap of various palm trees. The African Palmyra palm is an Awakened tree with a very potent sap, so if you want to fry a few brain cells, and have a bit of naira to spare, try some of the wine from those suckers. There is also almost no synth-alcohol or soy-based drinks available in Lagos. If you order a beer, it'll be a real beer. Try to keep that in mind when you decide to go drinking.

Die Nasty (Apapa District)

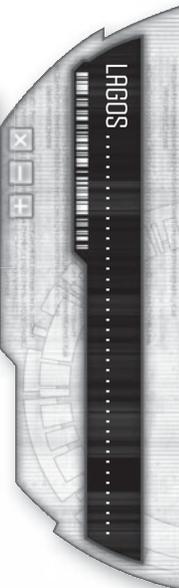
Despite the charming name, this is a very popular place for the crews that dock in the Lagos ports. Nnindi, the owner and main bartender, is a displaced Etsako tribe member, an ork man with more tattoos than blank skin and very dubious personal hygiene habits. Like most bars in Lagos, Die Nasty has a full menu available, although you should take a hint from the local clientele—you won't see many of them eating anything here. The shipping crews that hang here attract a variety of other people, so the bar is always crowded with prostitutes plying their trade, drug dealers offering a good deal, and pirates hoping to pick up a bit of intel from drunken crewmembers. The bar is a squat one-story cinderblock building with peeling whitewash on the outside and a set of heavy metal doors that could use a serious application of oil. Inside, the only decorations on the

walls are the rusty stains from the constantly leaking roof, and the tables are mostly scavenged planks of wood or slabs of plastic stolen from the wrecking yards around the port. The floor is covered with a thick layer of sticky grime, the result of years of wine spills, tracked-in mud, and blood from the frequent bar fights. Die Nasty is a good place to find a ride out of Lagos, since many of the ships are happy to take on a runner crew—provided you either pay your way with nuyen or by serving as additional ship security through the pirate-infested Gulf. If you're interested in finding out what corp has docked recently or what captain might be looking to hire, Nnindi is the man to ask. He's got great contacts at the port and keeps an open eye (and ear) on any cargos coming in or going out.

Hell on Earth (Festac Town)

Hell is a desperately popular place these days. The club is in a three-story building, although most of the second floor opens up to the first, and parts of the third floor as well. The remainder of the floor and ceilings, and all the walls, display eye-dazzling geometric patterns of red and black. When the strobe lights flash and the music echoes madly about, the decor presents a stunning simulacrum of the bottom of a deep pit of hell. Platforms of varying heights hold chained dancers, most of them naked except for AR paint, which coats their bodies in ghostly hellfire when viewed through AR. The club is unique in Lagos, one of the only to be fully meshed with an AR network that actually works most nights. The AR within the club keeps with the theme, weaving

Lagos



105

AR bonfires around dancers, and gives glimpses of tortured souls screaming as they stream through the gaps in the floor and ceiling. The bands that play at Hell on Earth are heavy into the afro-flash and tribal beats, and young stars have been found by talent scouts working the club. The cover charge is high, but the troll bouncers at the door are firm; you don't pay, you don't get in. Even with the cover charge, on most nights, the line goes around the block. The club draws plenty of the rich corporate brats from the Victoria Island enclave who want a taste of the local S&M scene. It's also popular both with expatriates and with locals who want a sophisticated experience, although compared to the opulent indulgence of Vegas or LA it barely qualifies as a club.

- The third floor also has a few private meeting rooms, which the club owner is willing to rent out by the hour. They're fully screened and warded, although you'll see as soon as you enter the sort of business that usually goes on there—the furnishings run towards manacles on the wall and red silk sheets on the bed. Still, they're private, and no one blinks an eye when a pair—or group—of *oyibos* go up the stairs together.

- Black Mamba

- Talent scouts frequently hire runners to protect them when they go to the club or go out looking for one of the musicians they heard playing there.

- Duante

The Three Friends (Lagos Mainland)

The Three Friends is a mid-class (for Lagos) restaurant and bar that serves local cuisine, beer, and palm wine. It's got a ragged awning covering a dozen outdoor tables, and a large indoor seating area. The linoleum floor is worn through in some spots, and there's just enough paint left on the walls to let you see that it was once a cheery green color. The owner actually takes the time to wash down the walls regularly, so while the paint has faded, there isn't any mold or slime decorating them. The travel posters that line the walls have curled up on the edges but still show exotic places none of the customers will ever see—like the nighttime skyline of Portland or the (now non-existent) pretty white beaches of Los Angeles. It's a popular lunchtime spot for the local university kids, but the evening crowd is completely different. Several local fixers conduct their business out of the tattered vinyl booths that line the walls, while hopefuls maneuver to attract their attention. The crowd tends to include some of the older students, especially the computer and tech savvy kids, who haven't yet joined a fraud-ring. It's a good place to meet some of the local low-level power brokers, catch up on the latest street gossip, and get a feel for the lower-end runner scene. If you want to know what gang is going to war with another, what corporate Johnson has been seen slumming in Kosofe, what street doc has been selling spare parts to Tamanous, or what crime lord's mistress has turned up pregnant, The Three Friends is the place to hear it. If you're looking to hire a guide, one of the local runners isn't a bad choice, and the ones that hang out at The Three Friends tend to be low enough on the status scale that they won't mind taking a job playing tour guide for an out-of-town runner.

Cintra Ime of the Lagos Island Council regularly frequents The Three Friends, keeping in touch with the local runner scene and scouting out likely university grads she can recruit for her operations.

- The turnover in the runner scene at that level is pretty high, so there's no point in giving any of their names. But the fixers are fairly constant. Hippo Kojoli is pretty fair—he keeps his commission reasonable and doesn't sacrifice runners too often. He gets his name from his size, calling himself the “fattest fixer in Lagos.” Which makes him easy to spot, if you want to meet up with him.

- Duante

- Wait—there's a university in Lagos?

- Plan-9

- Yes. It's pay-as-you-go, and students make arrangements directly with the professors. Once a professor has enough students to make it worth his while, he teaches the class. You can pick the subject you're interested in, but you have to take at least four classes on that subject to get a degree. Almost no one does, since money and/or interest run out before the four classes get scheduled. The rich Lagosians send their kids out of the country—often out of Africa altogether—for school. The poor can't afford the classes. The students tend to be the kids of factory foremen and small shop owners, kids who want to get out of Lagos and hope a college education will help. It doesn't, by the way—there are a lot of Area Boys who've attended the university.

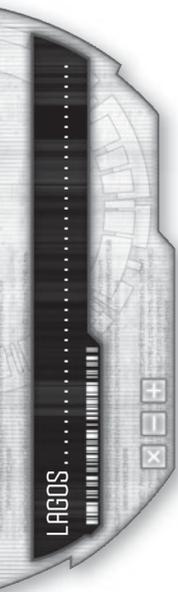
- Honesty

Why Not (Victoria Island)

When all the family style restaurants and pubs close down for the night on pretty Victoria Island, the Why Not nightclub is one of the few places still open. Well, one of the few *interesting* places still open. There are a dozen or more nightclubs and bars on Victoria Island, but most of them are so bland and generic that they could've been taken whole out of Seattle or Manhattan or any other major sprawl and transplanted onto VI. The only local flavor in those dives is the waitstaff, most of whom try very hard to be more like their customers than their families and kin back on the mainland. The Why Not breaks the corporate-approved mold and is actually worth visiting. Folami, the owner, is a Yoruba woman who at one time was a popular musician and even did some trid back in Hollywood. When she retired, she moved back to her hometown and decided to go into business, giving the “white-washed corpers a taste of Nigeria.” There's a small restaurant that serves a tasty menu of local dishes, but most of the patrons go there for the club. Folami still has contacts in the music industry, and she is known for helping gifted musicians meet talent scouts. Accordingly, she gets the best and brightest in Lagos to play her club. The music is always live, with an excellent sound system guaranteed to blow out your eardrums. The Why Not doesn't have any AR sculpting or enhancements, making it a stark contrast to all the flashy nightclubs on Victoria Island. The patrons who come there do so for the music, the food, and to get a taste of Nigerian culture—something none of the other nightclubs or bars on VI offer.

- The Why Not gets my vote for Best Place To Eat in Lagos. The cold ugba is delicious, and Folami stocks some of the most potent palm wine in Lagos. A little too potent, maybe—watch out, since *everyone* looks prettier after a jug of her palm wine.

- Black Mamba



- Blaming the wine, Sweet Mamba?
- Kane

The Seven-Fingered Hand (Ilasa Maja)

Lagos has a fairly large changeling community, and many of them make their homes in Ilasa Maja. There are dozens of brothels and strip bars here that cater to exotic tastes. The Seven-Fingered Hand is one of the better ones, or at least one of the ones that doesn't purchase its workers or engage in sex slavery. The men and women who ply their trade there tend to be healthier than their competition, and Madame Iboju is careful about screening her employees for disease. The building is a three-story cinderblock square, whitewashed and kept mostly mold and slime free. Inside, the first floor is a bar and strip club, which serves a surprising variety of drinks, along with fried plantain chips and nuts. The second floor has rooms for the staff and their customers, and the third floor provides living quarters for Madame Iboju.

- Most of the third floor is actually a small health center—Madame Iboju is a healer of some note. In addition to keeping her employees healthy, she provides medical services to the changeling community. If you need of some medical attention, Madame Iboju will help you—for a healthy fee. She even has rooms where paying customers can stay while they recuperate. If you plan on running for any length of time in Lagos, I'd highly suggest paying Madame Iboju a visit to introduce yourself. Get on her good side before you get shot, stabbed, or come down with botulism. What she can't patch up, she can heal. I'd say she's one of the best people to know in Lagos.

- Black Mamba

- And her nurses are always happy to provide a little extra care, if you know what I mean.

- Duante

- Watch yourself with Madame Iboju. She's happy to take cash, but even happier to take payment in "services." Those changelings who need healing and can't pay the price often end up working in her brothel. She may not buy sex slaves, but that's because she always has a steady supply of people who need to work off a healing—indentured sex servants, if you will.

- Honesty

Idin Bar (Ajegunle)

The Idin *buka* and bar is a partially enclosed single-story building off Old Ojo Road. They serve food, if you can stretch your imagination to call it such, with meals starting at about five naira. The owner is a heavyset ork woman that most people call Idin, although I highly doubt that's her name. She serves watered-down palm wine and weak beer—drink those at your own risk. The food and drink menu might be limited, but there is a wide variety of drugs available, which is why many of the patrons are there (and being stoned out of your mind is the only reason I can think of that anyone would actually eat what Idin cooks). There are rumors that Idin has connections to various flesh-traders, too, which should make anyone doubly cautious of patronizing the place—though if you're interested in getting to Asamando (and not as a main course), you can hook up with those who will be journeying there at Idin's. And if you have a body or some sec-

ondhand cyberware to dispose of, Idin can steer you to the sort of folk who are buying. Otherwise, do yourself a favor and avoid the place.

PLACES TO STAY AND SHOP

Have nuyen to burn and a desire to sleep somewhere that might reduce your chance of contracting a hideous disease? Here's the list of places you should visit.

Leventis Store (Open Market, Apapa District)

The Leventis Store is a combination of an indoor shopping center and outdoor market. Inside the crowded center is a variety of shops and stores, selling everything from knock-off designer clothes to secondhand electronics. At the center of the market is a small shop that sells cheap imported silks and other fabrics. If you're looking for a good source of telesma, a talismonger by the name of Aoise works out of the back of the shop. Two large spirits are on hand all the time, keeping an eye on her security, and Aoise herself is a talented leopard shaman with connections to the Edo tribe. She can also procure foci for a price, although she doesn't keep any on hand.

There's also a Hawala stall in the Leventis Store, conveniently located at the southern entrance. Kayin, the Hawala, mostly caters to the locals and the pirate crews that dock in the port there. He's also a respected fixer in Apapa. Kayin has been known to vet new runners by offering them simple jobs. He's always on the lookout for professional teams, making him an excellent contact. Kayin is an older human of the Yoruba tribe, and you can gain his respect more quickly if you make the effort to learn some Yoruba. He tends to pay in Hawala tokens (which are of great value in Lagos), and if he's pleased with your performance, he's been known to waive his normal 20 percent cut for making a deposit into the Hawala system.

- Rumor is that Kayin is linked to a variety of shadowy interests—though exactly *which* interest depends on which rumor you believe. I know he's offered good pay to teams to target some of the black bio-tech labs in the city, and I wouldn't be surprised if he was selling the data to some of the big corps. Evo and Shiawase Biotech come to mind.

- Duante

The Porto Novo Luxury Hotel (Apapa)

The Porto Novo is a five-story blocky building that overlooks the Porto Novo Creek. It's a middle class hotel built in a U-shape, with a small open-air courtyard at the center that's protected from the street by a thick wall. Armed guards stand at the gate 24/7, dressed in the hotel's signature green fatigues. There's no entrance except through the gate, and rooms on the first two floors have no windows that face outside, making it relatively secure (for Lagos). The hotel's manager is a slick operator, about as trustworthy as a barracuda and slightly uglier. I wouldn't trust anything of value to the hotel's safes, although one is provided in each room. The courtyard is mostly empty except for a few scraggly trees that hold up clotheslines and a "deluxe dining area," which is a plastic picnic table with two benches. Inside, the hotel has seventy five "luxury" rooms. The beds have mattresses, though they are stained and fairly fragrant, and the peeling linoleum floor was probably new around



the time of the first Crash. The rooms also have a “wet bar,” where bags of potable water, bottles of beer, and the occasional soft drink are stored in a cupboard beside the bed. The manager charges you ahead of time for the water and liquor, so feel free to drink it, and he can provide more for a (large) fee. There is a common indoor bathroom for each floor that has working toilets if not showers or sinks. There isn’t an elevator, but there are two staircases. Most floors also have armed attendants standing on duty at the staircases.

- For a fee, the manager will also arrange a guide or an okada for around the city. He’s got contacts with the local Area Boys and pays them a fat bribe so they’ll leave his hotel alone. The costs are high, but it is a safe place to bunk down for a night or two. If you have gear you can’t carry with you, I’d suggest paying one of the attendants a hefty fee to guarantee it’s still there when you get back. A hundred naira will ensure your things stay put, a few hundred will get you a friend for life. My philosophy is to be generous, since having a friend with an AK-97 where you sleep never hurts.
- Duante

Apapa Medical Center (Apapa)

The largest medical center in Apapa is located at the center of the district. Although it is primarily an outpatient center, it has a limited number of beds available for the most serious cases (and, needless to say, the ones who can pay). The head doctor, Sirian Smythe, is an expatriate from London. Although he claims he came to Lagos to do humanitarian work, rumors say that he actually was disbarred from medical practice in England. The prevailing attitude in Lagos (and much of Africa) is favorable toward mixing Western medical practices with local herb-craft and magical healing, unlike in UCAS, where magical healing is viewed with suspicion and strictly regulated. Correspondingly, Dr. Smythe has several Yoruba healers on staff. Antibiotics and antivirals are always in short supply, though, so expect to pay significantly more for those medicines than for the services of an Awakened healer.

Dr. Smythe will install basic cyberware for patients, although if you purchase it from the medical center, chances are it will be second- or third-hand. Rumors of patients getting infections from less-than-sterile surgery conditions or getting faulty cyberware are pretty common, but no more so than for any other medical center in Lagos (outside Victoria Island Medical Center).

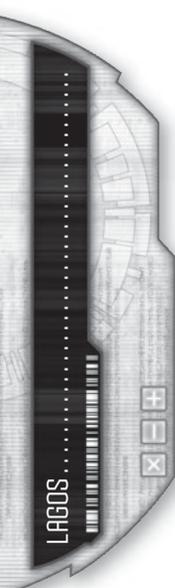
- Of course, as with any medical facility in Lagos, it is strongly recommended that you have a trusted friend to watch your back to make sure you don’t end up as sasabonsam food.
- Black Mamba
- Must make it hard for you to get any medical care there, hmmm, Mamba?
- Ma’fan
- Dr. Smythe pays very well for cyberware, and he isn’t too particular about if it’s still inside its last owner. He’s also known to make requests for specific types of cyberware if a client wants it. Good work, if you aren’t too squeamish.
- Chiemeka



Lagos Football Stadium (Lagos Island)

The number one sport in Lagos is football (soccer for those of you in the UCAS). There is a first-class, 60,000-seat stadium on Lagos Island maintained by the Lagos Council. Games are held year-round, with teams sponsored by most of the kingdoms as well as the various gangs within Lagos. Last year’s champions, the Awori Lions, went to the Pan-African Cup and took second place. The only time the general population of mainland Lagos is allowed on Lagos Island is when a game is scheduled. For particularly big games, the entire city grinds to a halt and bukas and bars across the city show broadcasts of the game on trids. The stadium also hosts a variety of other sporting events and the occasional live concert. Many of the corporations based on Lagos Island keep secure VIP boxes at the stadium, and on game nights the place does as much inter-corporate business as it does sports gambling. Managing the various teams, gambling, and making money from the games is a profitable business in Lagos, and it keeps people distracted from the miserable conditions.

- Game nights are crazy on the Island. Entire streets are barricaded, and a wall of armed security guards make sure no one attempts to use the chaos to loot the more affluent neighborhoods. Only a few roads are open for traffic, and danfos run from the mainland to the stadium non-stop. When the rival teams play, like the Edo and the Igbo, fights are common between the people watching and frequently spread into general riots across the city. Last month’s game between the Area Boys Green Mambas and the Yoruba Flying



Lions, where the Lions swept the Mambas, ended up with riots that burned several city blocks between Kosofe and Shomolu and left a hundred or more dead as gangs clashed. Great fun.

- Chiemeka
- Game night is also a good time to meet & greet some of the corporate Mr. Johnsons. Many of them use the cover of the game to set up meets and hire talent. If you aren't into soccer, you can always fork over the price of a ticket to watch the players up in the stands.
- Duante

The Lagos Island Golf Course (Lagos Island)

The Lagos Island Golf Course and Country Club is the place where the corporate VIPs go for some relaxation. The course itself is a world-class layout designed by golf legend Sunny Robinson. The country club is a sprawling three-story building, blindingly white, with lushly flowering tropical vines carefully trained over the sides. Inside is an Evo-managed spa staffed with discreet attendants. A four-star restaurant, specializing in French cuisine, is open to members and guests only. Inside the walls of the golf course and country club, you'd never know you weren't in any corporate-managed luxury resort. As you can imagine, the business opportunities are great inside those walls—as long as you can get access.

- The entire place is members only. However, the management is less-than-picky on membership, and the only real requirement is your bank balance. Several successfully retired pirate lords are members, along with most of the kings of the Kingdoms of Nigeria and various corporate VIPs. The cost for membership starts around 500,000 nuyen, plus annual dues of about 100,000 nuyen. Of course, you can always try to get in as a guest of a member.
- Duante
- Or as staff. I happen to know the management isn't always thorough in their employee background checks.
- Haze

Anthony Village Horizon Retreat Center (Kosofe)

Horizon has corporate retreats all over the globe where their employees can go to get some R&R while they brainstorm creative new ways to get our nuyen. Some are luxury resorts, like Bear Mountain outside LA. Some are back-to-nature artist enclaves, like Arrowhead near Portland. The Anthony Village Retreat Center is—well, we'll let Horizon's internal ad for the place do the talking: "The Anthony Village Retreat Center is a modest resort composed of rustic cabins that sleep up to six, a communal dining hall, an indoor and outdoor sports complex with a multi-level saltwater pool system, a small spa, complete with physical therapists and relaxation specialists, and an intimately sized entertainment center that features the latest full simsense trids. The native plants and wildlife of the freshwater lagoons and tropical rainforests highlight the beautiful grounds, where guests awaken each morning to the sounds of local songbirds. Guests at Anthony Village can spend their days enjoying the diverse onsite entertainments or taking advantage of the privacy of their secluded cabins. Guests can also choose to contribute to the surrounding community by enrolling in one of a variety of community service projects, with offerings in

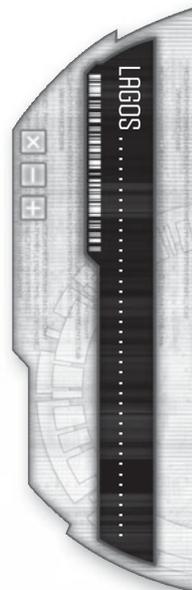
educational outreach, environmental stewardship, and Nigerian cultural arts projects."

Now, I've been to Lagos often enough that I know it's the last place any corporation would put a corporate R&R, even taking into account Horizon's rather unique business approach. My curiosity made me look into things further, but my sources have been unusually tightlipped about the place. That, in and of itself, is rather telling. The community service they're talking about involves working with the kids in the slums of Kosofe and Shomolu, teaching them, distributing commlinks, and building an AR infrastructure to support the educational material. They've helped build homes for families and have sponsored several drives to help clean up piles of garbage and refuse. The cultural arts program is supposedly helping to connect the kids in the slums with the traditional arts of their tribes—something about promoting pride in their cultural heritage. It all sounds above board and very civic minded, which makes me less likely to trust them.

- As far as I know, they do just what they say. Corporate suits come to get their hands dirty building houses in the slums so they can go home and feel good about themselves. They run several schools in the area and teach kids to read, give out toys at Christmas time, and host a monthly medical clinic that provides free immunizations for kids against malaria and a variety of other childhood diseases. I've heard nothing suspicious about the resort at all.
- Honesty
- This is just rumor, mind you, but I've heard that a dozen or so of the top scientists studying mnemonic viruses have met at the retreat multiple times this year.
- Black Mamba
- I've heard that there's a unit of the Dawkin's Group living in one of those cabins, keeping an eye on some of the terrorist groups that have branches and training camps in Lagos.
- Fianchetto
- I don't know much about Dawkin's Groups or mnemonic shit, but I do know that there hasn't been a full-on gang war around Anthony Village for over six months. Place is turning into one of the safest areas in Lagos.
- Chiemeka
- Now *that's* interesting. Sunshine, you still doing research on Horizon?
- Dr. Spin
- Sunshine?
- Dr. Spin
- *query user: Sunshine. Last Log-In, 3 weeks, 4 days, 16 hours, 3 minutes ago. User is not active on the network.*

Dúdú Dúdú Ôjà (Arms Market, Agege)

The biggest arms market in Lagos is located in Agege off Awolowa Road. There are a variety of open-air booths covered with tarps or even palm fronds. Inside the booths, or even heaped on tarps and blankets on the ground in front of them, is a sight



that would make the hardest street sam cry. Guns, ammo, blades, explosives—you name it, you can find it there. Many of the vendors in the outdoor stalls deal only in small amounts, and what you see is what they have. To get to the real goodies, you'll want to make your way to the center of the market, where a cluster of bukas and small buildings sit. Inside the buildings, you'll find even more exotic goodies, weapons that would be blatantly illegal elsewhere in the world. The biowarfare items aren't generally displayed at all; you'll have to ask one of the sellers in order to make a deal. The big-time dealers congregate in the bukas, sipping palm wine and waiting for customers. The sales are remarkably open, which can be surprising to many of us who live in cities with a law enforcement agency (or with laws, for that matter). The kings from the Kingdoms of Nigeria and rulers from a variety of other African nations send their agents to the Dúdú Dúdú Òjà to shop for their own personal armies. Terrorist organizations mingle openly at the market, with Sons of Sauron reps shopping side by side with Alamos 20K people. Fights and thefts are rare in the market, for obvious reasons, and only the boldest of pickpockets operate there. It's one area in Lagos where you don't have to be concerned about paying the Area Boys bribes or being hassled for being an *oyibos*. Once you're in the market, it's neutral territory.

- There's a small buka with a sign of an arrow-pierced heart in the northern area of the market. Mercs tend to hang out there when they're in town, and it can be a good place to meet with officers. I haven't the foggiest idea of how to say or spell the name, but just look for the sign. If you're looking to sign up, companies looking to hire often post wanted ads on the left side of the bar. If you want to leave a message for someone in a merc crew, that's as good a way as any. Not particularly private, but effective.

- Picador

- I've dealt with Osayi Ibe before. He can get almost anything you'd like, although he tends to have more quantities of heavy weapons on hand. If you need to buy in bulk, he's a good contact. I know he can get a hold of chemical agents and explosives, too. I don't think he deals in nukes, but he probably knows someone who knows someone ...

- Black Mamba

- Sunshine Ime has a small booth in the market. He deals in poisons, manufactured ones and exotic potions he imports from tribes in the rainforest. He can get you venom from a green mamba or an extract from the leaves of the Ewe Aran, which can kill a man within hours of ingestion. I've heard that he's a favorite of assassins worldwide, and that certain members of Chimera are reputed to travel to Lagos just to buy from him directly. Sunshine doesn't ship his goods, you see, and some of the poisons he sells are rumored to be so cutting edge that they don't even show up on a tox screen. Of course, that could just be advertising.

- Fianchetto

- And how is old Sunshine these days?

- Riser

- Ugly as ever.

- Fianchetto

DARK MAGIC

Posted by: Winterhawk

Lagos may not be like Kinshasa-Brazzaville, an Awakened city down to its roots, but it still has its share of magic, both light and dark. Africa has more Awakened flora and fauna than anywhere else on the globe, although many of the more pleasant varieties of critters seem to avoid the Lagos sprawl. As far as power sites, Lagos is lacking—but what it doesn't have in power sites, it certainly makes up for in magical mayhem.

The first thing any Awakened visitor will notice is the polluted astral space. There are precious few places in the sprawl where the astral space hasn't been spoiled by the metahuman emotions of misery, hunger, violence, and betrayal. The city was once a major slave-trading capital in Africa and I believe that even now, centuries later, you can feel the pain and hopelessness of those poor souls.

The second thing I noticed on my one and only visit to the sprawl was the curious expression of magic and mana by the flora and fauna of the city. In the worst polluted areas, such as the lagoon and the slums of Kosofe and Shomolu, precious little plant or animal life remains. What is there has adapted to the pollution to the point where some of the Awakened critters require toxic wastes for their diet. The giant mangrove trees that tower over the creeks and waterways are twisted, with unhealthy-looking yellow leaves and poisonous sap, but they are able to survive in the toxic waters. Many of the plants and animals are dangerous, or outright deadly, to metahumanity. Mother Earth hasn't given up on Lagos, it seems, but instead is taking a trick from metahumanity's book: poisoning the very animals and plants with whom metahumanity shares the city. So many of the creatures carry plague-like viruses, such as VITAS III, that some environmental researchers have begun to wonder if evolution in extreme toxic zones, like Lagos, isn't beginning to tip the scales away from metahumanity and its pollutants.

- Right, 'hawk. You've been watching too many of those late-late night pseudo-science sims. The beasties in Lagos aren't any worse than anywhere else. They certainly don't have some conspiracy out to rule the city.

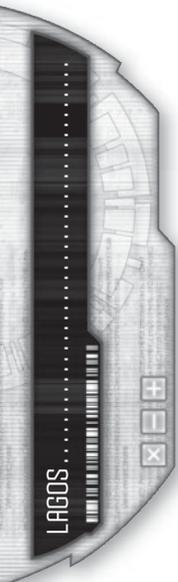
- Nephrine

- I'm not so sure. The way the critters and plants have changed as they've Awakened—mutated, if you will—certainly seems to make them inimical to mankind. So many of them thrive on the very toxins we'd normally use to eradicate them, and they carry some of the worst diseases known to mankind. Does seem ominous.

- Ecotope

- As if I don't have enough to worry about with all the Matrix shit going on, with Netcat and her kind able to hack my brain, ghosts wandering around in cyberspace, and killer AIs out to destroy humanity. Now I have to worry about the damn mosquitoes and rats plotting against us all? That's it, I'm buying myself a bunker.

- Glitch



AWAKENED FLORA AND FAUNA OF LAGOS

- A friend of mine compiled this list during a six-month research stint in coastal West Africa. She kindly enough sent me an abbreviated copy to share with you all.
- Elijah

The swamps under and around Lagos, as well as the jungles nearby teem with Awakened wildlife that sometimes prowls the city limits for prey, runs the streets in packs, or dares the filthy waterways in search of food.

Ammit

The swamps, creeks, and lagoons of Lagos and the surrounding rainforests are hunting grounds for this giant crocodile. Big enough to eat a hippo (which are also dangerous creatures, despite being mundane), ammits exhibit camouflaging properties, which make them very hard to track or spot before they strike. They also appear to be unusually intelligent, to the point that they have been known to knock over smaller boats in order to attack the metahumans inside. They prefer the more polluted lagoons and rivers.

Anwuma Bavole

One of the few benign Awakened species in Lagos, the anwuma bavole are fish-eating bats that hunt their prey in the Gulf of Guinea. They carry no diseases that can affect metahumans, which is fortunate, considering their affinity for metahumanity. Considered by many coastal tribes to be good luck, they occasionally choose to follow a person (or groups of people) for days or weeks at a time. The locals encourage this by feeding the creatures. Since the Lagoon of Lagos has no natural prey for the bats, they only survive within the city by the action of the metahuman inhabitants.

Asonwu

A carnivorous Awakened monkey, the small but vicious asonwus hunt in packs of ten to fifty and are capable of bringing down large prey, including metahumans. They attack by having a few of them hamstring their victims while the others wait in trees above to swarm the creature. They are extremely dangerous in the rainforests surrounding the city. Although they don't attack motorized vehicles, they will attack groups of metahumans traveling by foot. Their bite is toxic and causes fever, itching, shaking, madness, and eventually results in brain death if left untreated. A few of the more daring street gangs in Lagos have attempted to tame these creatures, although I've heard of none that have been completely successful.

Bahari

The West African manatee was believed extinct until two decades ago, when scientists reported seeing an Awakened form in the coastal swamps and rivers in the area. Locals had already named it a bahari, or "sea man," for its ability to disguise itself as a huminoid figure. The bahari is rumored to surface at night, luring people into the water, where it then consumes them. This may be

simply superstition, but I have observed the species attacking full-size crocodiles. It appears to be a voracious carnivore (unlike the non-Awakened manatee species). From reports, I would suggest that the creatures have some innate masking abilities as well as some type of mesmerism to lure their prey into the water. Bahari have been reportedly spotted in rivers hundreds of kilometers inland as well as along the coast.

Devil Rat

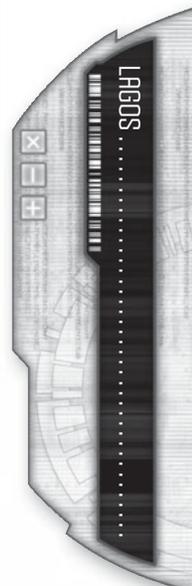
The devil rat has, as a species, been so successful in Lagos that they are most likely the primary mammal living within the city (perhaps even outnumbering the metahumans). The Lagos version grows up to 1.3 meters long, including tail. They are known to carry the VITAS III disease, which makes them universally feared across the sprawl. Certain poverty-stricken slum citizens have been known to use the devil rat as a food source, but it is a very risky gamble on their part, since VITAS III is known to be transmittable via consuming the flesh of infected creatures. There's also risks tied to the build-up of certain toxins within the devil rat, making even the non-infected creatures poisonous for long-term consumption.

Jauchekafer

An Awakened beetle from Europe, the jauchekafer first arrived in Lagos approximately ten years ago, most likely as an unintended hitchhiker on a smuggler vessel. The beetle consumes toxic wastes, including PCBs, plastic wastes, and chemical byproducts. The beetles are huge, with the males having a 1.2 meter wingspan and weighing about ten kilos (females are slightly smaller). The males are about eighty centimeters long and have enlarged antler-like jaws that add another forty centimeters to their length. They are solitary creatures, for the most part, although they can be fierce and dangerous when confronted. Some chemicals have been known to induce a frenzied swarm of the insects, which fly en-masse and attack anything in their route, including metahumans, trees, vehicles, and buildings. In Lagos, the only predator of the jauchekafer is the gomatia, although even the lizards tend to avoid the larger males and prey instead on the less dangerous females.

Ghede Fly

Another European import, the ghede fly thrives in Lagos' polluted swamps and year-round warm weather.



AWAKENED FLORA AND FAUNA OF LAGOS (CONT.)

An Awakened mosquito, the female ghede fly subsists on metahuman blood, which she needs to lay her eggs. In Europe, ghede fly population is controlled by colder winters, which kill off the adults and can limit egg hatching. In Lagos, without the controlling season, the flies are held back only by predators, such as the gomatia and several species of swamp fish that eat their eggs. The ghede flies prefer polluted swamps and marshes, making Lagos

Ghede Fly

a perfect home. Males appear to have some Awakened powers, using their abilities to lure metahumans into their territory so their mates can feed. The females carry VITAS III, along with a host of other diseases such as malaria, and are a major cause of the spread of virulent disease in Lagos. The ghede fly is about sixteen centimeters long, making them one of the largest mosquitoes in the world.

Gomatia

The gomatia is an Awakened chameleon, with magical camouflage making it even more difficult to detect than its non-Awakened relatives. It grows to the size of a large Doberman and has a long, sticky tongue that reaches three times its body length. The lizard preys on birds, rats, and large insects, although it will eat anything the size of a house cat or smaller (including metahuman infants). They appear to be immune to the toxins and poisons that make many of the Awakened insects inedible to other creatures, and the gomatia has become one of the top predators in the city of Lagos. The lizard is a popular pet in Lagos, although there is little difference between a domesticated and wild one. In the slums, many people rely on the gomatia to keep out the dangerous, pestilent insects and devil rats.

Enwontzane

The enwontzane are West Africa's version of the sasquatch. These huge carnivores are nearly three meters tall and can weight over 400 kilograms. They are voracious hunters and will attack anyone (or anything) ork sized or smaller. They live and hunt in small family groups. While they primarily confine themselves to the rainforests, they have been known to venture into the edges of the city when food is scarce. They are nocturnal hunters, leading many locals to have a (perhaps justifiable) fear of traveling the rainforests at night.

Lagosian Lizard

This West African version of the Lambton lizard is an Awakened salamander that lives in the lagoons and larger creeks and rivers of the fresh water swamps. It is a giant creature (the recent capture of one specimen measuring seven meters in length set a new record for Lagos) with thick natural armor of overlapping dermal bone plates. It moves swiftly through water, preferring to hunt its prey while submerged. The creature's "whiskers" secrete a poison that temporarily paralyzes its victims. Reports have been made, although not confirmed, that it can spray its poison several meters away, paralyzing victims on land, then dragging the bodies into the water and holding them under until they drown. (As a side note, the toxin it secretes is highly valued by certain potion-makers.)

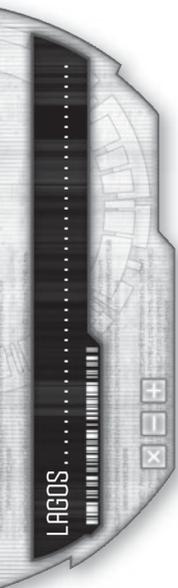
Mini Mokele-Mbembe

While rumors of a giant mokele-mbembe continue to circulate, the only evidence I've seen is the mini version of the lizard. The lizard looks like a small prehistoric dinosaur (rather like the pictures of a brontosaurus I once saw in a museum). They generally are about twenty centimeters long, although some get as large as a small cat, and come in pretty colors such as green and pale blue (the pale pink ones are quite rare and worth plenty of money). They have long sticky tongues, which they use to catch flying insects like mosquitoes. They also appear to have some levitation ability and/or gecko-like sticky feet, since they seem to climb quite handily (I've never seen one climbing, but they are frequently seen in tall trees or rooftops, which supports that theory). The creatures are quite friendly and kept as children's pets all across the city. They appear to have a very bitter and perhaps even toxic meat, and even the quite stupid gomatia don't eat them.

Swamp Swallows

These tiny birds, about eight to ten centimeters in size, are generally active during dawn and dusk. They fly in great swarms and nest in huge colonies. They eat insects, which they catch while flying, and groups of them can actually create a small glowing ball of light. Flying insects are drawn to the light, and the swamp swallows then move quickly to harvest their prey. Unfortunately, the light also appears to be slightly mesmerizing to metahumans and other mammals as well, and people have been known to follow the light into dangerous areas of the swamp, where they drown or are attacked by other creatures that were drawn to the same light.

Urgent Message...





Elijah hated the warm nights in Stari Grad, Sarajevo's old city. What had been a simple acquisition was turning into a nightmare. Elijah had half-expected the mark to haggle, but not to insist on being paid in munitions. The poor bastard was fighting last generation's war, selling an ancient Illyrian artifact for a pittance of weaponry destined for a tenth generation blood feud..

The distant chatter of automatic weapon fire echoed off surrounding hills as Elijah came to the correct hovel. With a practiced move that looked like he was adjusting his suit jacket, Elijah armed his failsafe and checked on a couple of his little "surprises" before walking through the doorway.

At least fifteen pistols were pointed at his head. No wonder they needed weapons; not an assault rifle in sight. The old man was seated on a cushion, a younger Arab standing behind him. Both wore typical European-style business suit of synthetic fabric hand-embroidered with pseudo-Moorish designs with raw silk and gold thread.

"May peace be with you, Herr Eismann." The old man greeted him.

"Esmii Kazaam." The stranger behind him said, with a terse nod.

"I am sorry," apologized the old man "But Kazaam only speaks Arabic, though he will understand everything you say."

Elijah's thermographic lenses revealed a chill black Kazaam-shaped hole, surrounded by the bright orange of warm bodies. Whatever "Kazaam" was, he was cooler than the environment around him and wasn't getting any hotter. Walking physics anomalies scream magic.

"Do you have the item?" Elijah said, putting his business face on.

"It is in the safety deposit box, as agreed," the old man replied, placing a gold plastic rod before him on the carpet.

Carefully reaching into his jacket pocket—sure at any moment the teenager with the Saturday night special in the front rank was going to piss his pants or shoot him, probably both—Elijah retrieved a square of velvet and placed it next to the passkey. Kazaam reached over and opened it, revealing a handful of emeralds.

"The deal with the arms merchant is all set up. He'll be at the Bosna warehouse where we met the first time at 2300. He'll get you what you need, in exchange for that. Are we done here?"

The old man nodded. The thugs lowered their guns a notch.

"Tas arrafnaa." said Kazaam.

Elijah picked up the passkey and left. The secret policeman was waiting around the corner, smoking a clove cigarette.

"I made sixteen, plus the old man. He's got something with him—I think it's a djinn." Elijah said.

"Not unexpected. The idolater has connections with their ilk." the mujahideen replied. "You may go now, Mr. Eismann, your part is done. The artifact for these terrorists."

"You mean militants."

"Tomorrow's news is already written. They are terrorists, and soon to be dead terrorists. Goodbye Mr. Eismann."

Elijah hated the warm nights in Sarajevo, and things were about to get hot.



- Much as we tend to forget it there are places in the world where you can't layback on your comfy EZcouch watching the '67 classic Predators vs. Screamers for the nth time, sipping a cold brewski you picked up at the local Stuffer Shack and munching on a Casa Nostra peperroni and gran padana. There are places where even running water and regular power is a luxury. And sometimes in our line of work we've got no choice but to haul our shadowy hoops into one of these urban wilds. You've read about Chicago and Lagos, but if you think those are it, you've got another think coming. Scan these posts and pay attention. The details you miss might be the ones that cost you your life.

- FastJack.

BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA

Posted by: Glasswalker

If you've scanned JackPoint recently, you may have eked out a little info about Bogotá, a city on the forefront of a cold war between two superpowers from without and pushed in all directions from within. Add Aztlaner airstrikes and a major international that has taken out most working services and the shit hit the fan real quick. Here's how it went down.

After their first pissing contest back in '49, Aztlan and Amazonia stepped back, licked their wounds, and satisfied themselves with gnawing the bones of Columbia. Leaving Bogotá and its vicinity as a buffer zone between them and a leadership void in Bogotá. Bogotans, however are nothing if not patriotic, so local government and business leaders stepped in with enough money and clout to keep at least some services going. Rumors started flying fast that the Ghost Cartels were secretly backing these leaders—most of them true. The Andes and Olaya cartels in particular.

Why would the cartels get involved? Well, they needed a foothold to strike at their old enemy Aztechnology and the David cartel, and there was no better spot than their birthplace. And there wasn't anything Aztlan could do about it, since going after the culprits meant going head to head with Amazonia again.

A wave of nationalist sentiment swept the city, and Colombian liberation movements proliferated. A lot of these new groups fit right in with the Cartels' agenda, but the movement also attracted its share of crazies, like *Bogotá Libre!* These more extreme groups advocated religious principles, hard-line leftist policies, and violent resistance of foreign agencies and governments. The Ghost Cartels fit nicely into that last group, and soon Bogotá was a hotbed for ops against foreign occupation.

During the decades of push and shove, Aztlan kept an eye for some way to clamp down on the upstarts, and they eventually found it. The cartels latest cashcow has been the new BAD, tempo. Not only were the Azzies and local law enforcement concerned about the trafficking, so was Interpol.

Long story short, with the blessing of Interpol and the Corp Court, the Azzies bombed the hell out of a number of strategic sites around Bogotá with "surgical" missile strikes—allegedly all Ghost Cartel-connected. One of the targets "accidentally" hit was the *Capitolio Nacional*, the home of Bogotá's government.

- Interpol distanced itself from the overkill, should have know better than to get into bed with a snake. But I hear it cost Majia Wright, the head of their drug enforcement arm, her job.

- Sunshine

BOGOTÁ TODAY

Currently, Bogotá's government is a shambles. Many of the civic leaders are dead or missing, and the bombings left the infrastructure in little bitty pieces. But the show goes on.

Aztlan has managed to keep a presence in town, centered at the **Aztechnology Business Complex** (ABC), which consists of El Dorado Airport and surrounding business park. A heavily guarded, 5 meter tall, reinforced plasticrete wall surrounds the complex.

The Azzies' air and missile strikes and other aggressive moves in the region have brought Amazonians back into the fray, renewing their interest in the city. The Awakened nation is using these events to galvanize the citizens and further their own agenda, while not thirty miles away forces are building up on both sides of the border.

At one point Aztlan planned to give Bogotá the "Berlin Treatment," dividing the city southwest to northeast with the "Transmilenio Line". The wide, flat street made targeting easy and drones, gun emplacements, motion sensors, and land mines completed the barrier. Problem was Aztlan couldn't hold onto it, so the project was abandoned. Looters, neglect, and recent attacks have made crossing the line somewhat easier.

Recently, Andres Prieto, leader of *Bogotá Libre!* held a press conference downtown to claim that his group executed several city leaders prior to the bombings for "collaborating with the foreign devils." Prieto was found dead hours later.

- Wasn't Prieto the mouthpiece for that "True Brazilian" group in Metropole a few years back? I heard the New Jesuits backed them.

- Fianchetto

- Think someone is looking for the Aquinine Vaults hidden in Colombia?

- Elijah

- The what?

- Sneaker

- Nevermind.

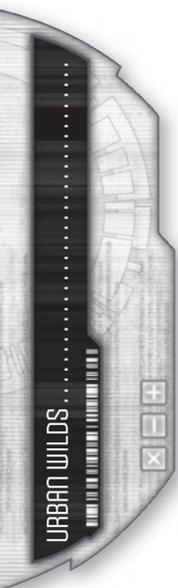
- Elijah

Getting In and Out

If you're coming by air, you better have an invitation from Aztechnology or serious cloaking technology. Without that, the itchy trigger fingers of Aztechnology will shoot first. Bogotá airspace is still interdicted.

Amazonia will turn a blind eye to your entrance as long as they think you're coming to mess with Aztlan. If you start messing around in the jungle, though, all bets are off. If you're that stupid, the Amazonian forces have a number of flying paracritters that'll show you the error of your ways.

Going overland you need a road, unless you want to trek through miles of awakened rainforest. And trust me, you don't. The jungle has reclaimed most roads, but Aztechnology managed to keep Highway 50 open until about six months ago. Then, for reasons no one's clear on, they apparently gave up.





- Trust me? Last time I'm ever using you as a guide.
- Marcos
- So all you have to do is brave a possibly impassable road, fight off paracritters, and maybe Azzie patrols, and you can waltz right in? Cakewalk.
- Johnny No

ZONA NORTE

Twenty years ago this zone had walled communities and extensive shopping, and until recently it was the nicest part of town. The Azzie bombings, however, targeted the homes of Cartel-friendly officials there. Most buildings still exist, but now they're flops for the SINless. Lots of looting in the chaos after the airstrikes. Housing communities are gang property now. A few still have power and basic necessities, and a lot are controlled by the cartels and their lackeys—many cut off from the hierarchy and taking things into their own hands. They maintain the few services still available, transport their product, and try to keep the competition to a minimum.

A wizgang called Alegrea Oculata has taken over the **Villa Hermosa** condoplex in Zona Norte and has kept the power there on. The condoplex includes a clinic and rumor has it one of the Olaya's bigshots got pretty banged up during the attacks and is holed up there. Some say it's the big boss Jaime Salazar, whose been missing since the offices of the cartel's legal façade, KondOrchid, were raided, others say it's Henry "The Diplomat" Uribe, a well-connected big time Olaya figure.

- The condoplex has one of the few working Matrix nodes outside the ABC, and its automated security is still working.
- Glitch

Whoever's dug in at Villa Hermosa, is keep a low profile, day-to-day operations are run by Celino Abarca. Abarca's was a paper pusher and beancounter for the Olaya, but he's turned out to be as cold-blooded as his masters. He oversees the drug trade, organizes ops against the competition, and continues to harass the Azzies about town. You want to do some shadow work in Bogota or develop a connection to Salazar's outfit, you go to Abarca first.

- It does help that Abarca and whoever he's babysitting are under Amazonian protection... Otherwise the Azzies would have bombed Hermosa by now.
- Marcos
- Rumor is they're cutting a deal with the Amazonians to re-open Guaymaral Airport. That'd greatly benefit the cartel and give the big one-finger-salute to AZT.
- Glasswalker

ZONA OESTE

Formerly an amalgam of businesses, low-rent housing, and the airport, Zona Oeste is marked by frequent inter-gang warfare. Gangs disappear so quickly it's tough to remember names. But while little gangs come and go, Rafa Espinosa sticks around. He's the commander of Aztlán forces inside the ABC, and he runs everything.

Espinosa was a unit commander during the Yucatan debacle. While not involved in any major offensives, his record was, nevertheless, uninspiring. This lateral move should sound his career's death knell.

JackPoint JobBank

JACKPOINT JOBBANK

Wanted: Henry Uribe
Drug Trafficking, Interstate Flight
Murder, Conspiracy
2 Million ¥ for information leading
to his capture and arrest.

Contact: Carlos Ferón,
Aztechnology Corporation

<Yes>/<Ignore>

- Did you actually look at his record? The way I scan it, Espino got out of the Yucatan with a clean record. Not many can say that.
- Hard Exit

While there are some lucrative businesses inside the complex, its main value is its location. El Dorado is big enough to handle the largest civilian and military traffic. So far, Aztlán has been careful not to accumulate too many fighters there at

once to clog things up. With this airport in their possession, most of Latin America is in range.

Meanwhile, Espinosa keeps a low profile, quietly supplying drugs, munitions, and food to several gangs. In exchange, they swear loyalty and take orders. It's no secret that the Cartels (and Amazonia) would pay well to stop this stream of supplies, either through sabotage the business complex or through interceptions of crucial shipments.

If you're looking to work on this side of the fence, look no further than the gang of the week, whoever that might be. Most are more than willing to act as go-betweens for shadowrunners. Just make sure the money's good up front, since these guys often disappear without bothering to settle any debts.

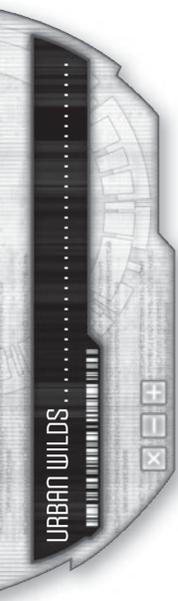
ZONA CENTRICO

Formerly downtown business and historic districts, Zona Centrico has been in ruins for twenty years. Many buildings have been destroyed, and most have been damaged—even the **Capitolio National** was destroyed in Aztlán's recent attacks. The jungle has started retaking the area, and plant growth, especially along the border, has increased dramatically. Despite the lack of functional buildings, rumors of ancient artifacts in the vaults of museums lure a steady stream of treasure hunters to the area.

- I've heard some relics in the *Museo del Oro* are telesma left over from some wayback years.
- Lyran

Small, mostly unaffiliated street gangs still make trouble here, but there's not much left for them to do besides thrill killings or other mayhem.

Some of the remaining structures are more unsafe than others. The recent bombings turned the abandoned **Pemex Arcology**



into a slagheap. The astral signature of this bone-and-steel yard has returned to normal, but visitors still report feeling like they're being watched there. So far, all astral reconnaissance hasn't turned up anything.

- Who knows what vile shit Pemex was working on before this thing hit the ground?
- Hard Exit
- They probably weren't working on anything that could survive the explosions and twenty years of isolation, since there's not much out there that can.
- Ecotope

Back in '49, the sanctuary of **Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe** was a command post for Amazonian forces. For reasons no one's explained yet, the sanctuary burned to the ground. Unfortunately, the sanctuary acted as a focus for mana lines converging there, and the destruction of the building changed the flow.

- That focus interfered with the natural flow of mana in the first place. Destroying the building just returned the lines to their natural state.
- Ecotope
- Too bad a few captured Aztlan sympathizers were inside the sanctuary when it went back to nature.
- Fianchetto

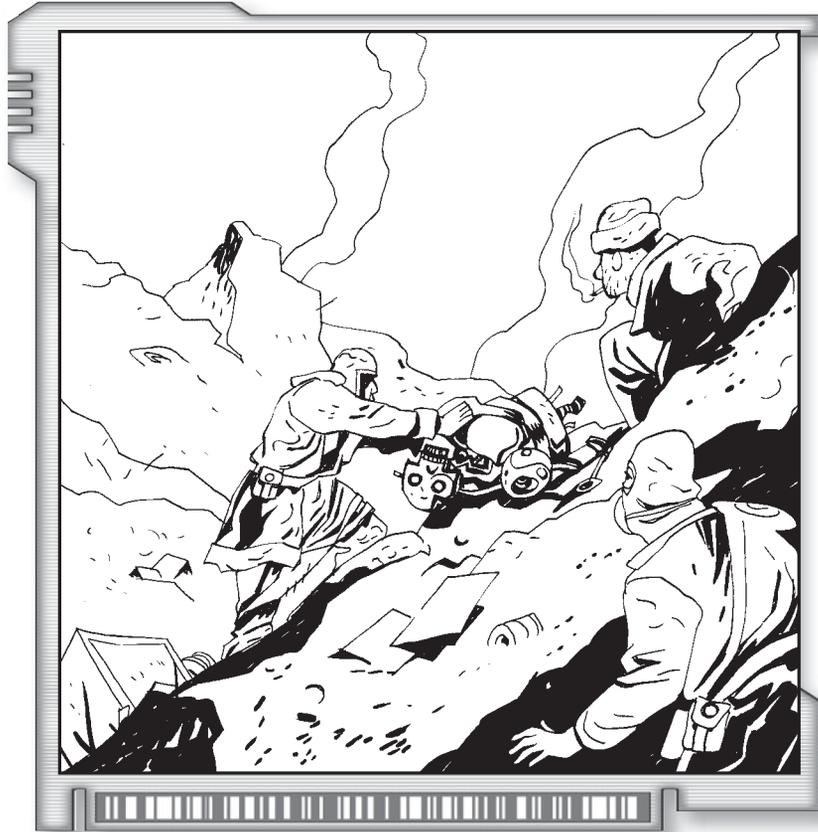
GEMITO

Posted by: **Arete**

When Italy shattered into dozens of city-states back in 2036, the huge sprawl encompassing Genoa, Milan, and Torino was thrown to the wolves. Its official name at that point was the Special Administrative Zone of Genoa-Milan-Turin, and the creation of that name was the first, and last, official act for the area. Covering hundreds of square kilometers, the sprawl is a massive region of chaos, lawlessness, and anarchy encompassing more land than some European countries. Nestled near the heart of Europe, bordered by the Alps to the north and west, walled off from the Italian city-states to the east, and with the Mediterranean to the south, GeMiTo is unique among the globe's feral sprawls. It contains one of Europe's few true free ports (the port of Genoa), prime agricultural land, industrial enclaves, a network of roads and utilities, and a population of over ten million.

So why has it remained unclaimed? Why haven't the corporate enclaves spread out, gobbling up new land, fueled by cheap labor, no regulations, and a desperate populace? Why hasn't a cohesive new government sprung up in a land of ancient civilizations? In the center of countries of wealth and order, how does such a tumorous sprawl of anarchy continue to exist?

The truth is harder to find than an honest corporation, but I believe that having a lawless sprawl, an unmonitored corporate



playground, is more beneficial to the corporations and governments of Europe than attempting to wage a war to reclaim the land. GeMiTo has become a feral blight of unbelievable proportions, with derelict urban and industrial centers surrounded by rural agricultural land controlled by bands of armed farmers. Outside the heavily secured corporate enclaves, the area is controlled by a patchwork quilt of gangs, family clans, urban tribes, anarchist social groups, and crime syndicates.

- Don't forget the other powers in the sprawl, like the N'Drangheta mafia, suspected to be heavily infested by Bugs, or the group of toxic shaman that live in the blighted toxic dumps along the coastline, sending out twisted ocean spirits to attack the ships traveling too close to their territory.
- Fianchetto

GENOA

The once-picturesque port city of Genoa on the Mediterranean marks one of the southern corners of GeMiTo, a city where the once-pretty pink, yellow, and white Renaissance-style buildings that lined the blue waters of the sea have fallen into disrepair. The shells of ancient buildings make the waterfront look like a gap-tooth smile. Winding alleys creep everywhere through the city and into the derelict neighborhoods high in the hills. Despite the kilometers of blighted coastline, the port is still active. Famed as one of the few free ports on the Mediterranean, the harbor is valued by pirates, smugglers, and "free-traders."

The port is controlled by the Camorra, who provide security with their *soldati*. The heavily armed and augmented *soldati* keep things peaceful in the port itself. Outside the

docks and the kilometer or so of land surrounding them that the Camorra control, the city degrades into open gang warfare, with a dozen or so gangs, criminal organizations, and even community groups trying to protect their turf. The lack of customs or regulations means that Genoa provides an excellent entrance into the Italian Confederation and into the rest of Europe. Corporations who wish to dock there do so through “independent shipping contractors,” or they disguise their vessels as pirates.

MILAN

The largest city in the vast GeMiTo zone, with a population of over five million living within its borders or in the surrounding territories. What was once a huge, drab industrial sprawl has degraded to massive crumbling industrial complexes, stripped of any valuables, a dangerous warren of hollowed-out warehouses and squatter camps. Corporate industrial parks, enclaves protected by razor-wire topped fences, and automated sentry-gun ports dot the ruins. At the heart of the city is the grand Castello Sforzesco, a stronghold of the family clan (or warlords) who’ve taken the powerful name of the Sforza to lend themselves some historical credentials. They rule the downtown area of Milan with bloody and absolute control, and the Sforza soldati are some of the scariest people in the sprawl.

Milan is also home to the largest of the *tendopoli* (tent cities), where almost half a million people live under the collective management of the *Leonkavallo*, a benign anarchist collective. The Milan tram and subway system are still running, controlled by various gangs and centri sociali (social community groups), who cooperate to a limited extent. There are more than eighty kilometers of subway, although parts have collapsed into rubble under gang attacks. The subways are controlled almost exclusively by the *Capotrenos*, a wiz-tech gang that includes hackers, technical adepts, and street witches. Giada, an older ork woman and technical adept, is the nominal spokesperson of the *Capotrenos*, or at least the person who does most of the group’s negotiating. They keep the old machines running and the various street witches in the gang help keep out some of the more dangerous paracritters drawn to the kilometers of tunnels.

- The *Capotrenos* are great contacts if you need tech, drones, or software. They also run several chopshops and can patch up anything from a Dodge Scoot to a VTOL. They operate on a purely barter system. They’ll trade time, too—an hour of one of their mechanics can be traded for an hour of your time, even if it’s just hunting the devil rats in the tunnels. They’ll also trade with a bounty on Shedim—one corpse (fully dead) is worth five hours of their time or equivalent gear. Great way to score some hot tech, as long as you can prove the Shedim came from one of their tunnels.

- Pistons

- The *Capotrenos* are rumored to have a few technomancers in their ranks. They’re also rumored to be part of an underground railroad to funnel techs out of Europe and on to safe havens. I won’t say where the railroad goes or who’s involved, since I’d hate to have some of the JackPoint residents here *abuse* the info.

- NetCat

TURIN

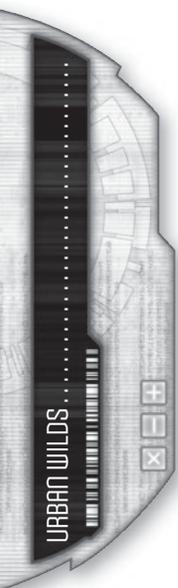
The millennial city is now full of burnt-out ruins, the once-pristine golden stucco of the baroque-style buildings darkened by acid rain and fires or destroyed altogether in the years of riots and ongoing gang warfare. The only exception is the old town center, which remains a safe haven. The ancient buildings there still stand, testament to the glorious days of Italian architecture. At the heart of old town is the Sylvestrine friars’ **Società Thaumaturgica**, a school for Gifted children and the center of old town’s civic pride. Brother Dario is the Abbot of the school, although Brother Gianni is the community liaison and the person most well known outside the school’s walls. The friars are active in the small community, and the street witches and mages that graduate from the school help out the friars and the city as best they can. Some attribute the peace of the inner city to the good works of the friars. Others whisper of powers that lie below the city in the catacombs of the **Grande Madre Church**.

THE FIERE

The *Fiere* are roving markets unique to the GeMiTo sprawl. While there are smaller markets in each of the cities and even out in the rural areas, the *fiere* are the biggest and most anticipated. The market rotates between permanent marketplaces in Genoa, Milan, and Turin, occurring every three weeks. Vendors and shoppers are protected during those days by a cease-fire agreed on by all the various factions. You can find anything at the market, from fresh organic produce brought in by farming collectives to underwater scuba gear. Arms and medical supplies are popular items, too. The only thing you won’t find is meta-human slavery or organ-legging, since the various anarchist groups tend to be (violently) opposed to those concepts and have enough clout to keep them out of the markets. If you hit the markets, be sure to bring something to barter. Few vendors have the ability to accept electronic cred transfers, and the scarcity of physical currency makes using it impractical. Telesma and handcrafted goods from the meta-human enclave of the Valle d’Aosta are highly valued around the globe, and the *Fiere* is the only place where you can buy it (outside their protected enclave, that is).

CORPORATE HIDEAWAYS

When the Italian federation wrote off GeMiTo, the corps didn’t pack up and move out. Instead, they hunkered down, building high walls and bringing in corp security armed with milspec equipment and giving them orders to shoot any trespassers. The starving and lawless masses objected to that strategy, and relations between the corporate enclaves and the surrounding gangs and populace escalated into open war. Eventually, the corporations realized the strategy was not cost-effective, and a truce was struck. Now, the local gangs leave the corporate enclaves alone, and in exchange, the corporations ignore the pilfering of electricity, running water, wireless systems, and the local infrastructure, like roads, comes from the networks the corps maintain. The corporate enclaves can get away with murder (literally), since the locals are constantly aware that the basic necessities of life are theirs only at corporate sufferance.



• A big draw in the area is the Hole, a dumping ground located between Renault-Fiat, AG Chemie, and Shiawase Industrial sites. The Hole is a scavenger's wet-dream, with perfectly useful gear dumped here regularly. Of course, the corps also dump toxic chemicals, biohazard wastes, and—my favorite—the failed results of illegal meta-human experimentation. I've suspected that some of the mutant para-nasties that haunt the dump may be corporate rejects, but they could also just be the result of generations living and breeding in the toxic stew.

• Rigger X

GENEVA

Posted by: Clockwork

You all know how I feel about technomancers so I won't repeat myself. Instead, I'll let the facts speak for themselves. Maybe they will finally open some people's eyes around here.

THE TECHNOMANCER ISSUE

It all started when the **Palais de Nations**, the UN's headquarters, were surrounded by a protesting mob of technomancers and their mundane supporters, demanding the immediate resumption of the UN debate over the applicability of metahuman rights on technomancers and to some extent AIs. Furthermore, they wanted the mandatory registration of technomancers in UN member countries to cease and the ongoing disputes on IP rights and patents of AI code dropped immediately.

• Triggered by last year's technomancer crisis, the debate went from one deadlock to the next, all while allowing unethical corporations and governments to continue their research on AIs and technomancers at will and without any legal implications at all.

• Plan 9

The protests quickly escalated when the first riot-control teams arrived, supported by UN guards. As if they were waiting for it, the mob showed its true face; several radical splinter groups attacked the police, setting cars on fire and causing a distraction while the technomancer terrorists launched their main attack on the UN. On the virtual, sprites, agents, and other constructs were released, targeting UN data traffic, engulfing the Palais' nodes and slowly cutting the organization off from the outside. Even GOD or ARM hackers could not prevent the corruption or infection of associated nodes—they couldn't even reach the UN nexus anymore.

• Is it corruption or infection, then? Different terminology with different means to fight them. What are we dealing with here?

• Slamm-0!

• Apparently both. Depending on who you believe, the E-terrorists either introduced a virus that randomly redirects data pack-

ages, or a couple of AIs rewrote routing protocols in several hundred key nodes around town. In the time it takes to clean a system and reboot a node, two more have been hit.

• Glitch

Relying on their superiority in the Matrix, the technos jammed the security forces' radio signals—effectively isolating police squads from their command centers—and hijacked drones to send them against their former masters. Though no faction or group has claimed responsibility for the attacks, it has become evident that the terrorists consist mainly of a number of technomancers and AI (plus a variety of non-emerged supporters) who have chosen direct action to make themselves heard. Due to their anonymous attack and the absence of a sole spokesperson, the media dubbed them *Legion*.

• Clockwork forgets to mention that the *physical* mob primarily consisted of anti-corp radicals using the opportunity for an old-fashioned Molotov-throwing contest. A connection between the rads and the pro-AI movement could not be proven.

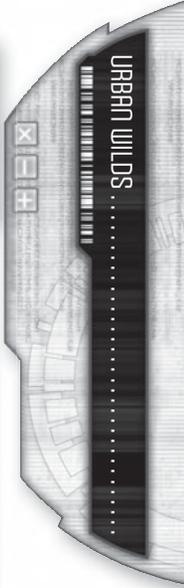
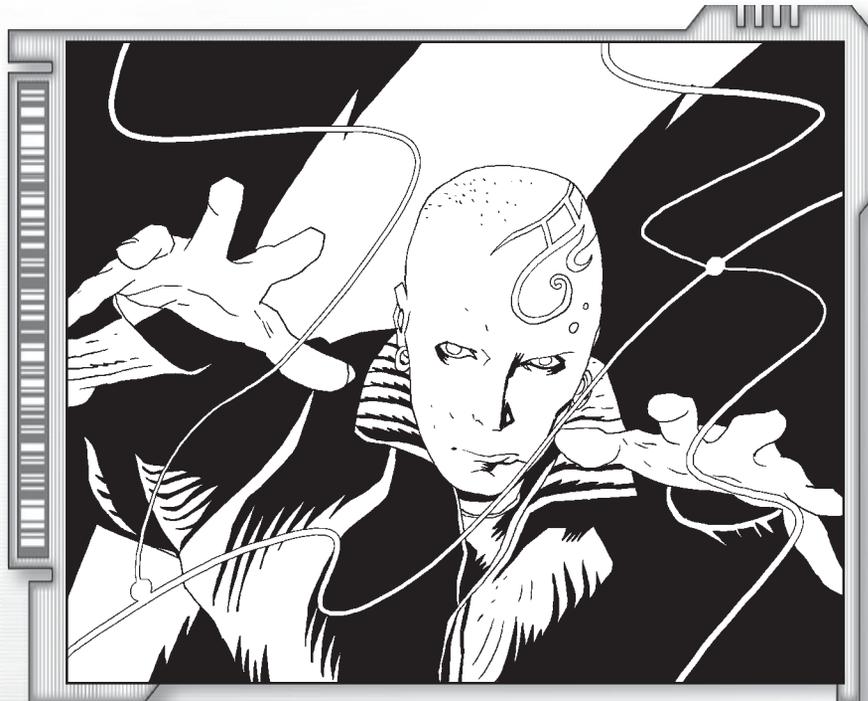
• Red Anya

• I didn't "forget to mention" it. It's a moot point, considering the outcome: the chaos on the streets benefited the AIs and technos by keeping the authorities busy. It doesn't really matter who they duped into helping.

• Clockwork

SPREADING THE DISEASE

The violent end of the protests in the flesh world left the UN isolated and the security services scrambling to regain at least some degree of coordination. In the virtual, hacker specialists brought in from the Corporate Court's Grid Overwatch Division (GOD) special task force, Artificial Resource Management (ARM), sought to cleanse the infected nodes and otherwise stop the dete-



riorating network, while the UN approved an initiative proposed by the Undernet Alliance to try and make contact with the pro-technomancer and AI faction.

- With important (and potentially devastating) projects like the European Council for Nuclear Research (CERN) also connected to the UN network and located in the Geneva outskirts, the UN wanted to avoid another Sojourner Incident at all cost.
- Plan 9

Following a hot trail, the UA sent a small group of negotiators to nearby Lausanne, a suspected hacker hangout and known political activist breeding ground. After losing contact with their emissaries—no doubt another maneuver to distract and delay the authorities—UN Blues and Corporate Court SWAT teams raided known hacker hangouts throughout Geneva, focusing primarily on the university campus, arresting prominent members of various anti-corp activist groups.

- I doubt the Alliance had something to do with the disappearance of the emissaries. Maybe the UA group made contact but offered to team up with Pulsar's followers?
- Plan 9
- Hm, maybe you're onto something here. My sources tell me NeoNET's shadow agent Sulawyo was seen in Lausanne recently.
- Pistons

With the authorities busy, the e-terrorists released the infection into the wider Geneva grid, spreading the contamination without any advance warning. Important rerouting hosts, hubs, and data junctions got infected with viruses and other unidentified malware. Suddenly, entire sub grids and regional meshworks were contaminated by viral bombs or otherwise refused to accept, process, or transfer any known regular matrix protocols.

In a matter of days, the Geneva grid became a distorted patchwork of unreliable sub-grids and routers, loaded with unidentified and potentially infectious protocols. While some wireless grids were shut down to avoid contamination, large parts of the local Matrix infrastructure such as the UN nexus, service providers for energy or water, GridGuide and medical services were compromised. Corporate, GOD, and ARM hackers were unable to prevent the service blackouts from nearly flatlining the entire Geneva financial sector, the city's lifeblood and prime source of income. Citizens even switched off their commlinks in fear of attacks on their personas or personal nodes.

LIVING UNDER SIEGE

Since the contamination, nowhere is the physical world's dependency on its interconnected virtual infrastructure more obvious than in Geneva. Suffering from this unreliable on/off connectivity, the city's infrastructure and economy have spiraled downhill in mere weeks. Although the virtual siege does not impair those networks that have sat-uplink connections like the corps in the **Geneva Exterritorial Business Zones (EBZ)**, those outside the Zones suffer. Citizens are denied access to their bank accounts, ATMs are out of order, and even the neighborhood corner store won't deal in electronic currency anymore (unthinkable

for many Swiss). GridGuide's a mess and causes crashes and chaos all over the place. Hospitals, especially the renowned bioclinics in La Medicinal, shy away from using their electronic equipment and life-support in fear of killing a patient in mid-surgery.

- Beware some of the nasties. I have heard that some of these nodes have become distorted or run addicting virtual machines. Some freaky guy even told me about a node that was contained in what he described as a "node mine."
- Slamm-0!

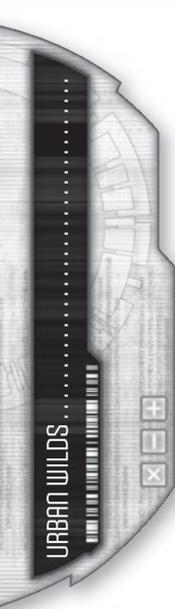
It's not quite Crash 3.0 yet, but it's maddening—the system and its functionalities are *right there*, in front of everybody's eyes, but still beyond anyone's reach. People are mistrusting technology, which is any corporation's biggest fear. With financial funds inaccessible and no hard currency available, people can't pay for even their most basic needs. Supply and replenishment of goods are dwindling since physical supply chains are inseparably tied to the flow of data and information, which is now cut in Geneva. The police's vigilant behavior and the phlegmatic nature of the majority of the population has kept things reasonably calm so far, though with the growing shortage of food, water, and amenities like communication, information and media, patience is running thinner every day—especially when food supplies delivered into the Exterritorial Business Zones (EBZ) create a further divide between normal and corporate citizens.

- I'm being a little silent about this whole thing since I don't sanction the actions of these technomancers. Still though, I've gotta point out that even though it seems my kind is actively involved in the damage this time around, they're not alone. Is it just me, or did anyone else notice that the usual suspects happily jumped on the bandwagon and pushed Geneva down the virtual spiral?
- Netcat

Apparently, a number of local corps like the Vereinte Kantonsbank, the Genfer Bank, and Lombardier & Zienz Financial Consulting have offered their support in exchange for the unlimited recognition of corporate exterritoriality throughout the entire province, and not—as currently—limited to the already overfilled EBZs. This decision however, cannot be made by the city council alone, but by the Swiss Government, which has delayed any resolution.

The few corps that remain operational have gone back to using old-fashioned data couriers for the exchange of information with outside business partners or clients. On the quickly evolving black markets, information replaces any legal tender previously dealt in Geneva. Financial statements, transaction records, and budget and expansion strategies acquired from the virtual vaults of Geneva's financial giants are traded for the transit route of the next Nestlé supply convoy or other data peanuts.

- No joke. For the past weeks, the stock market has been in turmoil. Buyouts, shareholder changes, and sudden leaps and plunges of share prices kept the brokers' heart rates at a steady one-fifty bpm. Newcomer Chalmers & Cole are among the most aggressive stock players right now, and they're a group who normally focuses on opportunities in the so-called emerging markets—political hotspots and other crisis zones.
- Mr. Bonds



The EBZ increasingly resembles fortified camps in a war zone. Corporate security performs detailed scans on anyone leaving or entering the enclaves, confiscating suspicious items or refusing access to dubious looking citizens. Strict curfews are in effect, and personal electronic communication with outside parties is strictly forbidden under the penalty of expulsion.

- These security measures just boost the wageslaves' cravings for their vice du jour, leading people to invent their own supply chains and distribution networks within the EBZs. The right goods and contacts can now get you anywhere within corporate territory.

- Lyran

QUO VADIS GENEVA

While the authorities' and corporations' specialists continue to analyze the exact nature of the corruption and reprogramming, they discovered the terrorist's true goal: to turn Geneva into a habitat for feral AIs. Long rumored to be capable of generating UV environment, protosapient—feral—AIs seem drawn to the UN's nodes, carving out their virtual territories under the hirez horizon of interrupted data streams and corrupted nodes leaking code into the swirling void. Several of these digital beasts invaded the infected nodes and began further data conversion, chasing out or flatlining any unlucky intruder attempting to cleanse the system.

- A few things don't click. Why corrupt nodes or infect them when you still need to communicate with someone three grids across the 'plex? That's true for Joe Average as much as for technomancers.

- Glitch

- I heard rumors of Legion technomancers creating a virtual gestalt, a grid beside the grid. I am seriously concerned by the description of the UN nodes and surrounding virtual space. This does not sound like anything anyone following the Resonance would do. Even more so, some of the actions described aren't anything I've ever witnessed my kind perform.

- Netcat

- Something tells me Geneva's troubles are just beginning. 'Legion' indeed.

- Icarus

The UN grid has become the dark heart of Geneva's twisted Matrix. The blockade seems to solidify and cocoon the isolated nodes as they spit out corrupted and distorted versions of their former selves. Beside the abyss that the UN nodes have become, the patchwork of sub-grids changes constantly. Nodes become available but not accessible, others go offline or reveal themselves as trapdoors the moment you cross their virtual doorstep. A growing number of hosts remain stable but inaccessible for anyone but technomancers or AIs.



KARAVAN

Posted By: /dev/grrl

I just got back from a job in this place, an awesome place that isn't really a city or even a place but is definitely feral. It's a huge collection of trucks, drones, motor homes, trailers, surplus military vehicles, cargo haulers, and other wheeled shit that wanders around Central Asia. Its "citizens" come from a lot of places and speak a lot of languages, but they all call the place Karavan.

Karavan is like the bizarre love child of a city, a convoy, and a swarm. It is a juxtaposition of old and new cultures, mutual trust and tribal conflict, luxurious objects and makeshift equipment. It is inspiring and feared, constant and chaotic, and a great place for a shadowrunner to prosper if she's a pro.

THE EVOLUTION OF A CITY

Back around 2060, Turkestan was a wreck, despite the "New Silk Road" railroad and highway system that fed its sprawls. Things were worse out in the country, where nomadic tribes were finding it harder to feed themselves and their herds, and the khan's power was slipping out of his grasp.

Then came Erika Red Crystal, a corporate-sponsored humanitarian aid organization. They brought food, portable shelter, fuel, and other devices and comforts to the nomads of Central Asia in a large zeppelin, the *Aman*, that could haul a lot of cargo and handle the expansive and broken terrain. In time, some tribes began following the zeppelin from stop to stop, helping dispense aid and sharing their own resources.

The Crash 2.0 cut off the *Aman* from its parent corporation. It and its crew were written off. Fortunately, the zeppelin and its ground-based companions were largely unaffected because Erika had been using the mission to beta-test its wireless Matrix technology. The nomads following the *Aman* were sympathetic to the plight of its crew and began to provide for them. In return, the *Aman* crew began scouting independently for resources for the tribes, leading them from location to location, creating the symbiosis of today.

SILK ROAD 2.0

Karavan has no real geographical location. It moves from locale to locale, rarely spending more than a week in any one place, so it's almost never where you last looked. It ranges across Central Asia from Transcaucasia to Mongolia and the borders of Yakut.

When moving, Karavan is a collection of two large airships and about three hundred hectares of ground vehicles of all shapes and sizes, most bristling with weaponry and armed passengers. The trucks, rigs, ATVs, and bikes throw up a dust cloud that can be seen for miles. When the city finds a place to settle, the airships land and all of the tribes pitch tents, build yurts, set up campers, or otherwise construct the temporary homes and work spaces that will shelter them until their next move. Some tribes even have entire facilities that deploy directly from trailers or large vehicles, unfolding from motor vehicle to building in under a minute.

Usually, each tribe claims space when they arrive. This means the map of the city changes with each move. Luckily, Karavan's Matrix cloud is sophisticated, so you'll always find your favorite hangout. If there is no potable surface water nearby, like a river or a lake, then each tribe drills its own well. Each tribe has its own facilities, including food storage and processing, power generation, security, waste reclamation and management, and the infrastructure for all of the above, and all of it can be packed up in a hour or two and moved.

Additionally, each tribe has a few (or occasionally several) specialty services, such as medical or technical facilities. While there is some overlap, many tribes are well known for their individual specialties. The Pjelykostos tribe, for example, is the premier magical tribe, while the Asma tribe is known as the place to find just about any piece of gear, and the Lhassos are expert armorers and weaponsmiths.

CITY OF NOMADS

The vast swaths of territory Karavan travels parallel to the **New Silk Road** are given over to subsistence farming and isolated villages with the occasional corporate strip mine, gas or oil field. The rare sprawl and industrial city provide oasis of modern civilization in a dangerous and lawless region.

Over the years Karavan has developed into a roving barter-town; home to tribes and independent traders who come and go all the time. It has developed into a travelling trading post for the isolated herders, farmers, and corporate enclaves on its route. Karavan is home to around 12,000 people which, depending on where it's camped, can bloat to twice that many. Most permanent "residents" live in tribes of between dozens and hundreds. While most of them are human, there is a greater-than-typical diversity among metatypes. They are mostly of Turkic descent, but there are plenty of Persians, Mongolians, Arabs, Europeans, Africans, and East Asians, so no one really sticks out.

- There are some thirty-five tribes in Karavan. The tally changes, what with tribes merging and splitting, coming or going. You never know if you're going to find who you're looking for at any given time.
- Red Anya

The most common spoken language is Turkish, followed by the closely related Uzbek and Kazakh. Some tribes of non-Turkic descent speak another language unique to the city, such as the Kizilkristal, who speak Finnish among themselves.

Everyone in Karavan identifies themselves as members of their tribes first and as citizens of the city second. When they have to identify themselves as such, they call themselves *Karavanli*. An outsider, or *yabanci*, can expect to be treated as an equal among the locals provided she behaves herself—after all everyone is an outsider until they join Karavan.

One thing every Karavanli has in common is that they are always armed. Everyone carries at least one firearm and any number of blades, grenades, or other weapons on them during almost every waking hour. By the time they are old enough to be unsupervised, the children of Karavan know how to safely carry and use weapons from knives to assault rifles. This level of preparation is more due to culture than necessity; actual violence within the city is quite rare. But the Karavanli have a proud tradition of standing ready against the forces and fortunes of an outside world that abandoned them.

THE KURULTAI AND THE YASSA

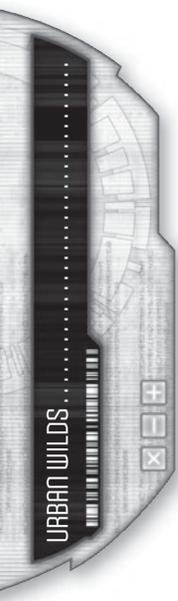
If Karavan has anything like a governing body, it is the *Kurultai*. The Kurultai is made up of all of the leaders of all of the tribes that call Karavan home. It gathers only when at least twelve tribes call for a meeting, and then only when the issues at hand affect the entire city. The Kurultai can make pronouncements on individuals, but not entire tribes. It can also make changes to the *yassa*, the set of laws that apply to everyone in Karavan.

The *yassa* is somewhat convoluted, but can be summed up as "do not harm one another." Also codified is the near-adoration of all medical practitioners and clergy members, as well as the entire Kizilkrystal tribe, which lives in and operates the two zeppelins that guide the city from place to place. The *yassa* prohibits murder, rape, assault, theft, slavery, lying, and marriage within a single tribe. Every Karavanli is expected to enforce the *yassa*. Punishment ranges from harsh to brutal beating, and tribal leaders have the authority to execute proven offenders.

- In many of the backwater areas Karavan travels the locals subscribe to one variation or another of the animistic Islam that's so common in Central Asia. It's no surprise then that the *yassa* is two parts tribal custom and one part Islamic *sharia*.
- Red Anya

ROAD TRIP

Life in Karavan is a series of journeys and stops, punctuated by resource gathering and trading (and the occasional raiding). The guiding force of the city is the *Tagnuul*, the two airships that are owned and operated by the Kizilkristal tribe. The tribe runs a fairly sophisticated intelligence operation to spot likely locations where Karavan can find, gather, or take the resources it needs. When the tribes of the city have collected all they can from an area, the *Kalabalik* and the *Aman Iki* make preparations to lift off and head to the next location. The rest of the city takes

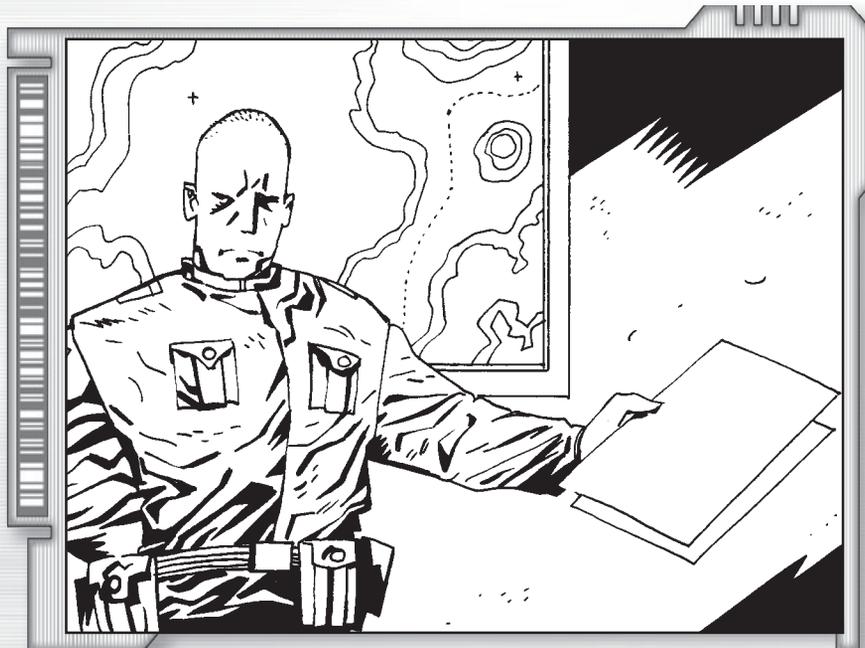


this as the cue to pack up and follow the zeppelins, which are usually in the air and moving by the time the other tribes get going; Karavan is usually on the move within three hours of the zeppelins' powering up. The journey to the next site usually takes a few days. The Tagnuul chooses routes that the ground vehicles can manage. In the event of an attack or ambush, the city keeps moving, but attacks are rare, as the Karavanli might as well be an army and have become very good at defending themselves and one another.

- If you're slow, wounded, or breaking down, you get help without hesitation; leaving stragglers to themselves violates the yassa. Karavan offers visitors a free download of the yassa on arrival.
- Ma'fan

Once the Tagnuul reaches the new site, the zeppelins land and unpack, followed closely by the rest of the city. The Karavanli then begin going about the business of the city while the Kizilkristal begin reconnoitering and exploring potential sites for future moves. Most tribes gather nearby resources, including crude oil, flora and fauna, minerals, or even reagents. Many tribes organize trading parties to acquire resources from farms, small towns, or even the fringes of a sprawl. In some places a raid is organized by one or more tribes, an act permitted by the yassa. The tribes also bring tributes to the Tagnuul and talk about their tribes' specific needs, which the Kizilkristal includes in its planning. Then, after a week or so, a new site is chosen and the cycle begins again.

- Since they are relatively small and get tributes from all of the tribes, the Kizilkristal is the richest tribe in the city. The insides of their zeppelins are almost opulent. If you want to live it large in Karavan, the Kizilkristal are the people to know.
- Traveler Jones



THE SHADOWS OF KARAVAN

Even with its yassa, the Kurultai, and "us against the world" culture, Karavan is rife with power struggles and hidden agendas. It ranges across a dozen national borders and occasionally gets caught up in local power struggles, though woe be it to a regional governor or warlord who decides to stand in its way or demand tax for passage.

Karavan's laws prevent overt hostility between tribes and encourage cooperation, but a mere text file can't prevent the struggle for resources and business opportunities between tribes, no matter how revered it is.

There's usually work a plenty for runners who visit Karavan. Tribal leaders sometimes seek runners for runs on other tribes; or strong arm local townships or reluctant corporate managers to part with their money and goods; the Kizilkristal sometimes hire runners for intel on new sites; the city makes a good clandestine meeting place, so outsiders sometimes drop by for a private chat; and, of course, Karavan is the perfect place to do some black market trading.

SARAJEVO

Posted by Goat Foot

There are beasts too ferocious to be tamed. The same is sometimes true of nations, and the Balkans is one such place. Geopolitically speaking, the Balkan peninsula has been unstable for centuries. A crossroad of cultures, the territory bottles the tensions between different groups, rooted in ethnicity, language, faith, and land, and shakes them together into a potent, often bloody brew.

The Second Ottoman Jihad (aka the EuroWars) somehow found a way to make strife in the region even worse. Thousands of Alliance for Allah jihadists were trapped in the Balkans after Euroforces liberated Greece and broke the AfA's lines in the North. European leaders were unwilling to fund a long-term and difficult campaign to pacify the region. Instead, they choose to arm and equip the locals and let them do the dirty work—unleashing the Beast. Thirsty for vengeance and fueled by the Balkans penchant for savagery, Serbs, Bulgarians, Albanians, Croats, Bosnians, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Romanians, and Slovenes as well as the gypsy clans of the Roma repaid the jihadists in kind for their "pacification" campaigns.

- We're *not* savages. We're a proud people who do what needs to be done when it needs to be done. That's something NEEC-intellectuals, who just want to cannibalize our homeland and turn us into straight-laced Europeans, will never understand.
- Clockwork
- Grain of salt and all that. Particularly coming from a foul-tempered goblin who doesn't shy from wetwork or selling out one of our own.
- Aufheben
- Bite me.
- Clockwork

The remaining Islamist troops fell apart in the face of the pan-Slavic storm, fragmenting into smaller units that withdrew to former Muslim strongholds in Albania, Bosnia, and Kosovo to carve out new powerbases. Some set themselves up as local warlords, others became nomadic marauders—so called *uskoci* (land pirates)—wandering the Dinaric and Balkan Mountains. The three decades of continuous campaigns and battles that followed in the tracks of the EuroWars have turned the Balkans into a ravaged warzone of squabbling micronations. With two generations now born to a legacy of war, ethnic hatred, and religious cleansing, the whole region is still reaping whirlwinds sown over thirty years ago.

LIFE ON THE HELLMOUTH

Within this hurricane, the Sarajevo Enclave—which includes the former capital and neighboring cities of **Ilidža** (including Mt. Igman) and **Vogošća**—can be considered a stable constant and the closest the area has to a safe haven. While Bosnia-Herzegovina fragmented into a mosaic of contested autonomous enclaves like the Dinaric Collective (an enclave of Croatian-backed paramilitaries in the Dinaric Mountains), the Republika SRPSKA (or Sebrenian Serb Republic, which borders Montenegro and is run by Serbian warlord Goran Jakšić) or the Allied Islamic Territories (formed when the Muslim Bosnian Republic fell apart following the Serbian campaigns of the mid-50s), Sarajevo survived due to its strategic and symbolic importance as a socio-political and cultural hub.

- It's insanely hard to be up-to-date on the numerous Balkan micro-states, their leaders, and allegiances. The constant border, religious, or ethnic strife means these self-proclaimed nations change every other month. Bosnia, in particular, is under constant tension. Regular Croat and Serb incursions into Muslim-held territories are answered with lightning raids, missile barrages, and suicide bombings without either side making significant gains.

- Black Mamba

- Shortly before Crash 2.0, peace talks for the de-balkanization of the region and the re-formation of a Bosnian and a Herzegovinian state with Sarajevo as a shared capital were thwarted by suicide bombers of the NIJ that killed most of the delegates in Sarajevo City Hall. Reducing the number of the few that actually *wanted* to talk set the peace process back a decade.

- Picador

A significant portion of the ethnically diverse population is made up of the thousands of refugees that escaped to Sarajevo from rural areas in fear of persecution, rape, or murder by partisans and militias, the majority being Eastern Orthodox Serbs, Roman Catholic Croats, and Bosnian Muslims. Violent flare-ups between members of these major faiths and Slavic neo-pagans have become commonplace.

- Numerous locals have converted back to the Old Ways of Slavic paganism. Though a minority compared to the major religions, their numbers continue to grow. There's even a small community in Sarajevo that trades with the centaur herds on the slopes on Mt. Igman. Nobody knows what these centaurs are really up to (or if

they are even sapient), but despite all the flare-ups nobody has ever dared challenge their territory.

- Winterhawk

Though Serbo-Croatian is the official language of the sprawl, most people speak their native Balkan dialect or the Balkan pidgin spoken in Sarajevo that owes much to both Slavic and Arabic. Islamic influence extends to more than just language, though. As befits the seat of the *Reis ul-ulema* (chief ulema) of Bosnian Muslims, many aspects of life in Sarajevo are touched by Islam, and the city boasts several Muslim schools and more than a hundred mosques.

Dzevad Vukotić, the current ulema—considered as one of the most liberal Grand Muftis in the world—has guided the city for more than fifteen years. While he's always managed to walk a tightrope between moderates and the combined Balkan and second-generation Jihadist hardliners without favoring either faction, the recent influx of former New Islamic Jihad extremists into the Balkans and Sarajevo has destabilized the situation.

- There are fears that New Islamic Jihad's big gun, Sayid Mutjaba Musawa, Ibn Eisa's former second-in-command, has taken permanent residence with his *special* friends someplace in the Balkans. Could be him instigating extremists on to the next bloody escalation.

- Elijah

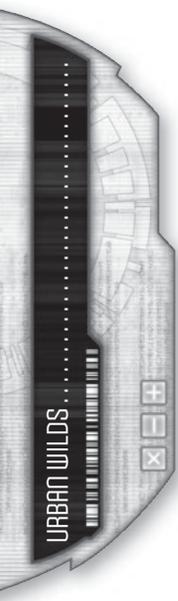
- God I hope not. It's good for biz but I've yet to meet a merc who will take Balkan contracts without flinching at the thought of another tour in this hellhole. Big outfits like MET2000 and 10,000 Daggers have seen so much conflict, they now offer automatic hazard pay for the duration of a Balkan's tour—too many green never get to collect.

- Picador

Aside from the power held by the ulema and his Bosnian Muslim supporters, who are *the* major faction in Sarajevo's domestic policy, city government is in the hands of a parliamentary committee that consists of the remnants of the former government of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Ever since the local police forces and military disbanded decades ago (the endless stretch of grave markers leading to Mt. Igman tell that story), criminal investigations and peacekeeping tasks are performed jointly by Blue Helmets from the Balkan UN Protection Force (a peacekeeping mission started in the early 1990s) and a European Crisis Group (Euroforce/MET2000 troops supported and re-commissioned by the NEEC).

The Peacekeeping taskforces are stationed in **Butmir**, where they assist in protecting **Sarajevo Airport**, maintained by Saeder-Krupp and serving as one of the few remaining aerial gateways in the Balkans.

The presence of these high-tech military forces has held neighboring predators at bay in the recent years and has kept the committee independent of corporate influence—even though occasional concessions are given to local powerhouses like Ukraine Bioenergetica (through Energopetrol), Bosnalijek (Zeta-ImpChem), Ares Arms, Krupp Manufacturing, Ruhrmetall (Balkan railways and mil-tech manufacturing), Aztechnology



(tobacco and alcohol industry), and Esprit Industries that control what remains of the enclave's long-suffering economy.

- You fail to see the bigger picture. The Corporate Court has bank-rolled peace in Sarajevo over the last decade. Blue Helmets cost money don't you know? Without the funding, the city and the remnants of the Bosnian government would have long sunk into oblivion. The situation has given the Triple-As leverage over the Bosnian Muslims, maybe enough to prod them and the recalcitrant governments of Serbia and Croatia to the table for some long-term peace negotiations.

- Cosmo

- And yet Saeder-Krupp, Z-IC, Ares, and Ruhrmetall all rake it in supplying arms and munitions of all sorts to the factions in Sarajevo itself and bordering nations—where the money comes from is anyone's guess.

- Am-mut

SARAJEVO ROSES

Peace is hard won in the city. Nationalist factions, militias, partisans, hired mercenaries, and cutthroats are always causing trouble havoc, with collateral damage being more rule than exception. Cheap or used armored vests are a common fashion *accessoire* among Sarajevo's natives. Those who can afford additional protection hire bodyguards (often outsiders to avoid conflicts of interest) or travel in armored vehicles. Although public transportation systems like the spinal tram network around the central district and busses that shuttle to the suburbs survived, they have been a target of attacks and hostage-takings in the past.

- Since every asshole has a firearm, you're always at risk of getting shot at simply because some bigoted prick doesn't like the color of your skin or metatype.

- Black Mamba

Landmarks and building facades are derelict, scarred from the years of siege and bombardments. Mortars, missile strikes, and gunfights that have taken their toll; the streets are pockmarked

with "Sarajevo Roses" (so named after the unique crater patterns left by exploding mortar shells on concrete). Though public funds are channeled into reconstruction and maintenance, most inhabited buildings—those that don't belong to a corporation or have a (religious) benefactor—are war-marked, battered, filled with debris, or on the brink of collapse. Power losses and water and food shortages, especially in refugee and non-Muslim quarters, are frequent. Death tolls in winter skyrocket due to diseases and lack of fuel.

The crumbling infrastructure extends to the Matrix. Sarajevo's laughable excuse for a grid navigated the Crash 2.0 and its aftermath with nary a glitch, and to this day it still doesn't possess a public wireless network (with no plans on the horizon either), though smaller corporate and private networks do exist. Free access to today's infosociety is still well out of the reach of the Balkan people—a pity, since education and cultural exchange might be exactly what the doctor ordered to break the cycle of violence.

- Just as the corps want it. Today's hell-holes are the corp-zones of tomorrow.

- Aufheben

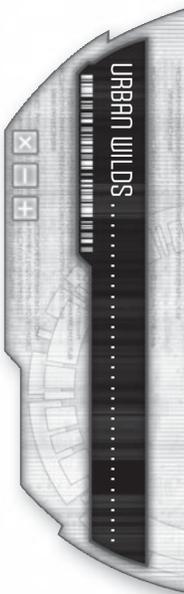
CONCRETE OPPORTUNITIES

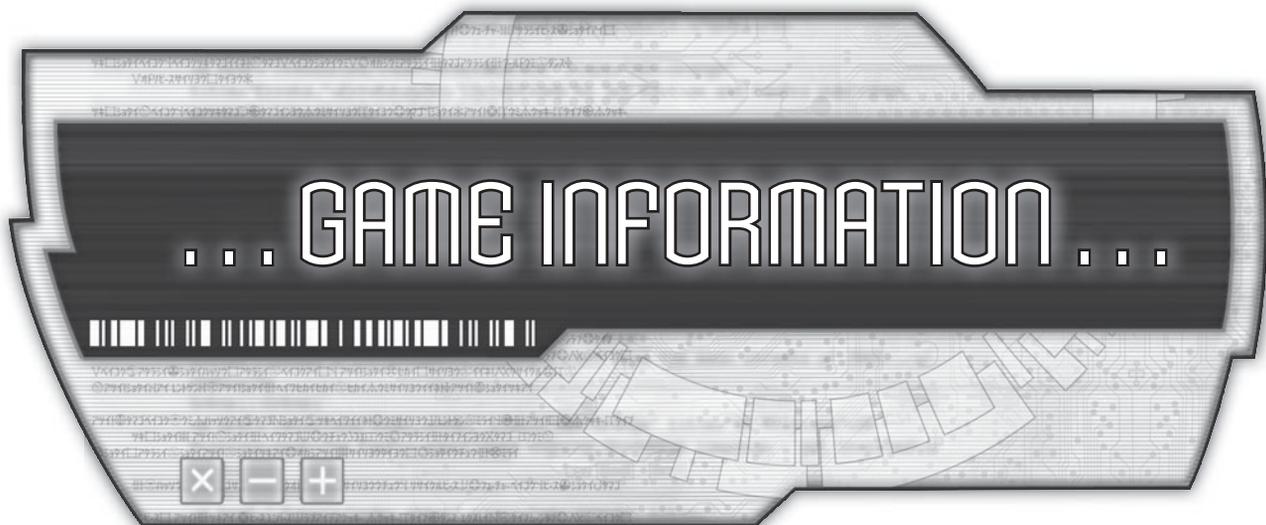
So why come to this hotbed of trouble anyhow? Like other regions in the grip of squabbling interests and factions, Sarajevo's underworld is full of opportunities for the bold or the foolhardy. Due to ethnic ties, most regional syndicates like the Albanian Fares, the Turkish Grey Wolves, the Balkan Vory, Kalderash, or Roma mobs have local outfits who stick tight to their flock. It therefore requires a certain breed of runner—possessing just the right amount of callousness, risk propensity and business acumen—to navigate the complexities of this nightmare patchwork of factions and their often-incomprehensible motives. Since neutrality isn't an option in a city governed by ethnic feuds and antagonistic religions, choosing the right temporary allegiance and knowing when to change will decide whether you succeed or end up face down on the streets.

Private Message...

RE: Sarajevo sidetrip

Yes, you can try that. Or else track down Ahmed Karabegovic at the old Zetra Olympic complex. He is a trustworthy and reliable as local fixers go and a good source for munitions and equipment. Don't expect any wonders though. —Red Anya.





"You know, when you said 'Let's go to Italy,' I was picturing something different," Pistons said, as she checked and re-checked her gun. "Red wine, beautiful beaches, gorgeous half-naked Italians."

Netcat shrugged. The alley's black cobblestones were worn smooth and slippery with decades of soot and acid rain. A block away, the buildings had collapsed, rubble filling the alley completely. Empty doorways led into the few buildings still standing, doors long since scavenged. No lights shined out of the empty windows. The sound of gunfire punctuated the otherwise quiet night, echoing through the rabbit's warren of alleys and crumbling buildings. A mile, a block—hard to tell how far, or close, the fighting was. Pistons checked her gun, again. The gunfire faded, leaving the night filled with the chirp of crickets and the skittering of rats in the empty buildings.

Pistons watched a dog-sized devil rat walk by them. "Tell me again why I'm here?"

"Because Puck was going to talk to the *Capotreni*, before he went MIA. *They* won't talk to me but in person, and his last message said this was urgent. And you owed me."

"You're lucky you're so damn cute," Pistons replied, disgusted.

Netcat lifted her head suddenly, sensing the area around them. She tensed. "Ten people," she said.

Pistons brought up her Guardian, sighting down the alley. "I don't see anyone," she said.

"They're there," Netcat replied, still reading the bio-electric fields of the approaching meta-humans. With no wireless Matrix, their tiny mesh-network practically screamed to her senses. "And heavily armed. Couple of them cybered."

"You're pretty spooky sometimes," Pistons said. "Our contact?"

Netcat shrugged. Pistons swore under her breath. The wind shifted, carrying the smell of decay. Dead buildings, dead bodies, dead cities. After a while, it all merged into one unforgettable stench. *Eau de abandonment*.

A group of people emerged from the rubble. They wore heavy armored vests over patched clothes. Their guns looked new as they swung to aim at the two women. In the distance, the gunfire began again, rhythmic. The music of urban decay.

"Netcat?" Pistons said, under her breath.

"Gimme a sec, I'm working on something," muttered Netcat through gritted teeth, brows creased in concentration.

The men approached cautiously, keeping their weapons trained on the foreigners.

Netcat finally smiled and said, "*Io cerco i Capotreni.*"

"*Perché?*" An ork man stepped forward, the muzzle of his Nitama Optimum II resting directly on Netcat's chest.

"*Io sono una tecnomante,*" she replied, still calm. As she spoke, the clip in the Nitama—in all their rifles—clattered to the ground.

The ork jumped, then gave a bark of laughter, "*Bene fatto, bella!*"

He waved to the other men, and they all bent to get their clips, lips tight, eyes flashing in the moonlight. The ork spat out a long speech to Netcat, gesturing wildly, while his men eyed Pistons. She gritted her teeth. The sounds of gunfire were closer, and the wind now carried the tang of smoke. Something was burning.

"He says they'll take us to Giada," Netcat told Pistons, as the group turned to go out of the alley. Towards the sounds of fighting. "Oh... and he wants to know if you really know how to use that little pea-shooter."



TRULY OFF THE GRID

Feral Cities provides a glimpse of the worst urban life in the Sixth World has to offer. Entire cities become a no-man's land, left to rot and scavenge a living from the detritus of the civilized world; where the dregs of the world gather under the protection of lawlessness and where surviving the day is often a run in itself. The personality of such cities is a unique mixture of disease, poverty, hopelessness and anarchy. Failing governments, unchecked capitalism, and urbanization are to blame.

The fall into chaos may have taken decades (as was the case for Lagos), or may have been quite abrupt (Chicago). The ugly truth is, these cities are the extremes. Too many cities teeter on the brink. A small push in the right (or wrong) direction could spell disaster. How long could Seattle survive if her neighbors waged a political and economic war cutting her off from the rest of the UCAS? The difference is one of degrees.

And yet, the darkness and lawlessness breeds a special kind of survivor and new models of social organization—some as harsh and unforgiving as their native environment, some utopian with no place in the Sixth World's mainstream culture.

Gamemasters seeking to develop their own feral city are encouraged to take into account some of the following considerations.

DOING WITHOUT

SINless worldwide have learned to “do without” many modern conveniences. Life in a feral sprawl, however, brings new meaning to the words. The essential commodities individuals are used to are scarce if not entirely absent. Basic services, if they can be found, are hot commodities. Shortages of food, water, medicine and other basic resources are endemic; all residents suffer to a greater or lesser extent. Those who have access will jealously guard what they have, often to the death. If services can be found, they're astronomical in price. Those services still available are overwhelmed by the vast number of people making use of them (e.g. black-outs are common, water supply irregular). Even the simplest things make a decidedly different cast when you realize you might need to hunt for your next meal and you'll have to carry it back home on your back.

In general, feral cities share several common characteristics. Gamemasters should keep the following in mind when designing a feral city.

- The city's population may continue to increase despite worsening conditions (reasons can include events outside the city which drive rural populations into urban areas, social and economic conditions which prevent a mass exodus, or a birth rate which outpaces the death rate).
- Scarcity of basic resources (including food, water, fuel, medicine, transportation, etc.).
- Lack of some or all government-provided services (i.e. law enforcement, infrastructure, waste management, social services, power or Matrix coverage).
- The proliferation of gangs, tribes, enclaves and other primitive groups for protection, companionship or other mutual benefit.
- Rampant disease spread and mutation.
- Mana anomalies (which may or may not be related to the feral city).

ALTERNATIVE POWERS

Perfect anarchies, where chaos reigns unchecked over a wide area for a long period of time, are difficult to maintain. Nature throws an extended chaos in every once in a while to shake things up. But order, or some semblance thereof, ultimately reasserts itself—for better or for worse. The same holds true among feral sprawls. The organization may not be apparent, but it is there. It's just more organic and less sophisticated than the orderly social and professional hierarchies of modern society. In fact it often bears more in common with feudal or tribal societies than industrial ones.

One characteristic of feral cities is that they are the perfect environment to host social experiments. With the collapse of government and modern society, individuals are forced to regroup in new and unique ways. Having established order within the organization, these new groups have a tendency to branch out. Since the fall of Bogotá's government, the Ghost Cartels are taking up the slack, making laws, enforcing order, and fighting off Aztech's encroaching influence. While gangs and warlords exist, they are hardly exclusive. Here are just a few examples of alternative social organizations.

- Anarcho-syndicalist unions (self-monitoring individuals working toward a collective goal).
- Tribes and tribal structures (groups with social, political and economic organization based on shared ethnicity, tropes, or traditions).
- Mid-sized criminal outfits (individuals united through criminal enterprise).
- Social niche groups (organization around unique skillsets or services, including music, art, or other social outlets).
- Neighborhood associations/enclaves (geographically organized group focused around mutual aid and protection).
- Hunter-gatherer tribes (individuals organized around acquiring basic necessities like food, water, and shelter).
- Utopist communes (groups striving for their unique brand of political, economic, or societal perfection).

FERAL ECONOMIES

Cities thrive on buying, selling, and trading goods and services. With the loss or incapacitation of typical economic entities (i.e. banks, megacorps) and a capitalist system, feral cities must find other forms of exchange and new subsistence and barter-based economics. The minimal presence of economic mainstays, the absence of distributions networks, and limited value of electronic currency, all spur a return to basic manufacture, subsistence farming, barter economies, and non-currency exchange.

The lack of government oversight and regulation allow illegal business can thrive. Gun- and drug-running, and other forms of smuggling are just a few of the illicit activities can take the place of mainstream ventures. Factories and workshops churn out illegal products, counterfeit brand wares, strip down and recycle stolen goods. But illegal activities are far from the only replacement for a capitalist system. The following is a short list of alternatives.

- Honor-based exchange systems (individuals are free to make use of available goods/services based on the understanding that failure to reciprocate in kind will result in a stain upon their honor).

- Hard currency/alternate resource systems (without electronic nuyen, individuals use whatever is available. Seashells, tulips, fist-sized chunks of orichalcum, etc.).
- Time bank/exchange systems (individuals may exchange hours of labor for goods and services).
- Communal or communist associations (individuals contribute goods and services to the collective according to ability, and they are distributed according to need).
- Barter/exchange trade (one type of goods or services is exchanged for another).

WHY GO?

So feral cities are dangerous, unexplored places where visitors cannot rely on the kindness of strangers or the usual basics of society. Why would shadowrunners risk their lives to go there?

Despite feral cities' drawbacks, for some, the benefits outweigh their dangers. Run against Saeder-Krupp go bust in a big way? Make a few too many enemies in the UCAS government? Maybe you're just sick of "the Man" looking over your shoulder. If so, a feral city may be the answer to your problems. For others, of course, these sprawls are home. They have no choice in the matter, they've been written off by society, they have no SINs, and no place to go if they leave.

Feral cities are petri dishes for unique social groupings, radical and alternative economic systems, impossible elsewhere in the Sixth World. Not to mention they make for the perfect place to disappear.

In general, runners can look forward to the following benefits.

- Lack of government oversight. No need to worry about legal entanglements, there aren't any.
- Off-the-grid. Know how much damage an unchecked hacker can do? Not around here.
- No widespread surveillance systems.
- Minimal corp presence and non-existent law enforcement.
- For those with power (particularly firepower), the law of the jungle works in their favor. Runners are well-armed and prepared to defend themselves. That carries a lot of weight in a feral city.

A WORD OF CAUTION

At the extreme, a feral city would have no services, security, government, economy, or organization at all. In other words, anarchy. While it may be tempting to create such a city, it isn't realistic. Chaos may reign for a limited time or in selected areas, but some person or group will always step in to fill the void. Further, such anarchy could severely limit playability. What runner in their right mind would go willingly where they have to deal with unrelenting chaos on a constant basis? They could never relax their guard and any relationships they built would be extremely limited. A playable feral city has a balance. If there is no organization, then there are some basic services, or the chaos is limited geographically. The organization of the city may be unknown to outsiders, but it still has one.

CHICAGO ADVENTURES

The following section features two multi-stage adventure frameworks and a handful of adventure seeds based on the material and plot hooks presented in the Chicago chapter of this book. Gamemasters can use these adventure ideas to bring out-of-towners to Chicago or develop campaigns with Chicago as the characters' home turf. The adventure frameworks can easily be integrated into existing campaigns, while the smaller adventure seeds can be used as inspiration or plot hooks to lead player characters from other sprawls to Chicago.

ARES DRAGON DOWN

An Ares Macrotech subsidiary, Unlimitech, has a secure facility in the Zone dedicated to studying the aftermath of Bug City on the environment and collecting samples and specimens from the Zone's unique habitat for R&D purposes. Mr. Johnson hires the shadowrunners to escort a leading specialist from the runners' home sprawl to the Chicago to analyze something Unlimitech has dug up in the ruins of a hive and is keeping under wraps. Should the specimen live up to Ares' expectations, they are to escort the scientist and the "package" back out. A corporate jet will ferry them to O'Hare Aerospaceport, bypassing normal airport security, and from there an armed Ares Dragon transport helicopter will carry them out to the zone (and back.)

Setup

Mr. Johnson is vouched for by one of the runners' fixers, and has a deal too good to refuse: babysitting an egghead on a trip to the old Chicago Containment Zone. Hazard pay and medical care are included *if* they run into any trouble. On the way back they might also have to ensure the safety of the samples, but Ares will provide all transportation to and from the site, and will also ensure runners do not have to deal with airport security. 25 percent up front, 75 percent on delivery. Milk run, right?

Runners have a day to collect their gear and prep themselves, before meeting the scientist—an upright Dr. Karen Quibbler, ThD—on the tarmac of a small corporate owned airstrip on the outskirts of the sprawl. They have plenty of time to become acquainted with the good doctor on the uneventful flight to Chicago. Once at O'Hare they board a waiting Ares Dragon helicopter that flies them over Chicago to the heart of the zone, dropping them in an old parking lot across from the fortified remains of a church that Unlimitech has taken over.

Event 1

Once the runners have been lured into a false sense of safety by the uneventful flight and aerial sightseeing, things start to happen. No sooner has the helicopter lifted off than movement erupts from the derelict buildings on all sides. Two massive true form roach spirits and a dozen roach spirits hybrids (all Force 6 but functioning as Force 4 due to the mana ebb) erupt from the rubble. The runners must choose whether to stand their ground or make a run for the gates of the facility. If the runners look to be overwhelmed the turret mounted

heavy machine guns will open fire from emplacements above the gates.

Once inside they will find the facility is understaffed and the Unlimitech team seem relieved to welcome Dr. Quibbler. Apparently, attacks on the facility have become a regular affair over the past couple of weeks and everyone is on edge. While the Quibbler goes off to examine the find, the characters are left to acquaint themselves with the 10-man merc unit protecting the Unlimitech facility and possibly get some intel on Chicago and the Zone from them.

Event 2

Over the two days it takes Dr. Quibbler to examine the find, the runners will learn that the item (which the mercs haven't seen, and the Unlimitech investigators won't talk about) was in fact originally found by the Hive Consciousness—a secretive group that operates from the old Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI). Word reached an Unlimitech scouting party that the Hive Consciousness had unearthed a “significant find” in the vicinity of the Cermak crater. An Ares Firewatch team out of O'Hare was deployed to retrieve the item and deliver it to the facility for further examination, but whatever it is, it has the local eggheads stumped, which is why they sent for outside help.

If the characters keep a careful lookout or scout the area around the facility, they may notice the presence of multiple hidden watchers. These observers are actually from different groups in the Zone, all with an interest in the “package.”

Eventually, Dr. Quibbler will inform the characters that their helicopter will be picking them up at first light the next day. They will be in charge of security of the doctor and the manacoffin containing the “specimen” during transport.

The next morning the Ares Dragon will put down where it dropped the characters off and it's up to the characters to get the package and their ward onboard with minimal fuss. The gamemaster should feel free to make this as complicated or as easy as he wants, though both the helicopter crew and Unlimitech's mercs will be prepared to assist this time round.

Event 3

Once the helicopter is flying through the canyons of ruined highrises, the characters can relax... or so they think. Suddenly the Ares Dragon is swarmed by true form wasp spirits that come out of nowhere, latch on to the hull, and begin tearing into the fuselage. One spirit breaks through the cockpit glass killing the pilot and making a mess of the controls, while another damages one of the rotors. In a flash, the helicopter is hurtling towards street-level and the co-pilot is calling a mayday. As passengers there's not much the characters can do but strap in and hold on tight. Just before the cabin hits, emergency systems flood the compartment with shock foam protecting the runners from the worse of the crash (which still deals a Crash Damage with a 6P DV and knocks everyone unconscious.)

When the characters wake and extricate themselves from the protective foam, they'll find everyone else but Dr. Quibbler dead and the helicopter unsalvageable. Furthermore, the manacoffin is gone—though fresh tracks lead away from the crash

and anyone with keen senses will notice a group of 5 men in the distance carrying the package.

It's up to the characters whether to pursue or not, but Dr. Quibbler will remind them their final paycheck is contingent on delivery of both her and the package.

Climax

The runners have crash landed in the Zone, and are faced with a tough choice. They can either find their way out of Chicago on their own, or they can give chase to whoever stole the manacoffin.

Should the characters decide to cut their losses and try to find their way home, Dr. Quibbler will accompany them if she fails to dissuade them. Staying in the vicinity of the crash should not be an option, who knows who or what might come to see what happened. The gamemaster should take the opportunity to make the escape from the Zone and through the Corridor as eventful and dangerous as he wants, introducing the characters to some of the peculiarities and strangeness of the feral sprawl.

Should the runners chase after the stolen manacoffin (a 2m x 1m sealed astral-proofed biohazard container weighing about 100 kg), they will find that they are not the only ones interested in recovering the package.

The package itself is in the hands of flesh form Roach spirits at the service of an Insect shaman. A former researcher for the Astral Space Preservation Society (ASPS), Carlos Gutierrez abandoned his life with the ASPS to follow a different path to power. He's built a small hive in the basement of old Quinn Chapel, and his ultimate goal is to summon a new nest mother. Recently Roach whispered in his ear that Unlimitech's find was the key he needed.

If the team attempts to recover the package, they will have to follow the thieves into the warren of collapsed sewers in the heart of the Zone that the Roach flesh forms know like the back of their hands. The Hive Consciousness, the wasp hive that attacked the helicopter, and even the Foul One's Swamp Things are all looking for the package too after word of the crash spreads and the runners may run afoul of any or all of them while tracking the stolen package.

Sequels

The contents of the sealed manacoffin are left for the gamemaster to decide; maybe it is a true form queen, an in torpor Insect-aspected Summoning focus, or a dormant Insect nymph flesh form, or maybe it is a unique metahuman baby the result of an flesh form-human match.

If the runners retrieve the package Ares will be pleased and offer them a significant bonus. If they simply deliver Dr. Quibbler, the megacorp will pay them half the agreed upon fee. If they fail to return with either the scientist or the package, Ares will blacklist the team in the future.

RIEN NE VAS PLUS

Ever since Leo McCaskill took official control over the Chicago syndicate's operations, he has seen this as his ticket onto the council of families, the Commission. Achieving this



goal, however, turned into a more difficult feat than he ever imagined, and by 2071, McCaskill has become a bitter man confronted daily with his lost dream. With the situation in Chicago stabilizing, he is willing to take one last stab at joining the Commission, even if that means making enemies among some of the most powerful North American families of the Syndicate. Seeing Jules MacAvoy's rather liberal take on Mafia traditions and code as an angle to exploit, McCaskill plans to play his rivals against each other.

Setup

McCaskill, through capo Denny "the Dumpster" Geardo, hires the runners to infiltrate and eventually undermine MacAvoy's blood sport operations in Chicago. To cover his tracks, Geardo sets the first meet to take place deep inside Don Stephanopoulos's territory on the Gary/Southside border and poses as Milo Beckovitch, one of the Greek's mob (who is now feeding the fishes at the bottom of Lake Michigan-Huron). The runners are to find weaknesses in MacAvoy's operations and are provided with the firepower to bring them down. Hard.

Event 1

The blood sports and the related BTL trade are two of MacAvoy's income sources. Lately, few new fighters have joined the league, and those that did, didn't last long, making it difficult to turn the fight recordings into BTL chips. To make up for the lack of fresh blood, MacAvoy started staging the fights, dragging in involuntary fighters kidnapped from the Corridor and throwing them into the ring with bum fight champions and made men. One of these 'amateurs' struck down his guards during an explicitly violent BTL trip following the latest fight and is now on the loose somewhere in the Zone. When the runners report this to Geardo, he will tell them to find and deliver the escaped fighter.

Event 2

Despite the rigged matches, MacAvoy's BTL trade is still going strong. The runners are hired find the location of MacAvoy's production lab and report this information back to their Johnson. McCaskill's next stage of the plan then has the runners sabotage the BTL production and tinker with the data burnt onto the chips. For that purpose, Geardo will slip the Greek's crews the location of the lab; when they attack, it will cause enough distraction for the runners to insert a virus into the BTL production software, covertly recalibrating the BTL setting parameters with randomly ultrahigh (and lethal) signal spikes. The firefight between Stephanopoulos's crew and MacAvoy's made men will be enough evidence of the Greek's hand in this to implicate him.

Event 3

With MacAvoy and Stephanopoulos at each other's throats, McCaskill can further use the runners. Geardo sends them to trail and capture one of his Detroit Mob contacts, a glorified accountant called Little Zizi, who is delivering detailed information on warehouse space allocation and shipping schedules for the smuggling operations controlled by the Greek

in Calumet City. Getting Zizi is easy, but this mission should tip off the runners that their employer is a third party in the escalating Mob war—after all, why would the Greek need to beat up one of his own men to get his own shipping schedules?

Climax

Once the runners bring Zizi to a safe hideout, Geardo sends them to interrupt a shipment of contraband and firearms inbound to Calumet Port. The team's mission will be blowing the whistle on the expected shipment, both by faking an attack on the inbound vessel and replacing the (forged) customs data with obviously faked information that won't stand up to a spot check. Stephanopoulos suspects foul play and alerts his men inside the port. The runners can expect a welcome committee. After this little play, the shadowrunner's mugs will be all over Chicago, and McCaskill will order Geardo to pay them off and get them out of town.

Sequels

If all goes well, McCaskill has dealt a blow to both his rivals, though he will need additional work to consolidate his control. Since they served his plans well, he might consider hiring the runners full time or keeping them on retainer for special missions. The Chicagoland sub-sprawls will no doubt have noticed the underworld shake up and might hire expendable assets to investigate or simply pay for the team's inside scoop. Both MacAvoy and the Detroit Don will want to find out who played them and make them pay—or double McCaskill's offer to have the runners' double cross him.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

Use the following basic plots as inspiration when outlining a new series of adventures set in Chicago, or integrate them into existing campaigns:

- Horizon was among the first media agencies promoting Chicago as a symbol of hope and resilience after the Crash 2.0, sending news teams into the Corridor to report live from within the settlements and enclaves. Now, a few years later, Miriam Barnes at Newsnet has finally received approval to run a follow-up documentary on 'Life in Strife,' a Horizon newscast. She kept in touch with a few of the Corridor citizens, so she informed them of her upcoming visit, but surprisingly, she hasn't heard back from them. In fact, the entire settlement seems to be unreachable. Barnes will hire runners to accompany her and her small team.
- Betty Jenkins was madly in love with a member of the Ramblers gang, falling for his bad boy, rough charms. Her parents weren't as happy about the relationship. When Betty disappeared from the family home in Naperville-Bolingbrook, her mother and father immediately suspected she had run away with her juvenile ganger lover. With no hope that the authorities will ever look into the matter or actually find their daughter, the Jenkins' need someone brave or stupid enough to follow Betty's trail into the Corridor. Unfortunately, the trail goes cold when the ganger tells the runners he dumped the poor girl after she confessed she was pregnant, two nights before she disappeared.

- The proclaimed qualities of the newly discovered royal jelly vary in description, but the protection against the mana ebb reported by several sources seems to be true. Such protection would allow the ASPS mago-scientists to investigate the perforated and weakened fabric of the astral space in the Zone in person, without risk. The ASPS has information on a potential source for the jelly and feeds it to a local fixer, who hires the runners to locate and obtain a sample of the grayish ooze, if not the source itself. Unfortunately for the runners, the fixer also sold the information to Ares-owned UnlimiTech, Inc.
- On the surface, the rivalry between the Horde's mechanics and the Maker Collective is just that, a half-serious competition over who can build the better engines and conversions. But for Alexej, at the end of the day, everything is about survival. After questioning a captured member of a rival gang about the unusual engine on his ride, Alexej learns about a bright young engineer specializing in engine customization and alternate fuel engines. The Egrand hires runners to extract the scientist from his garage/lab. The Union gang, however, has already picked up the engineer and rushed her to the Navy Pier plant to fix an engine failure.
- Col. Keith Vathoss, chairman of O'Hare's Security Council, has monitored the development of the Corridor's anarchist movement for a long time, using spies embedded in various cells to warn him of major actions targeting the sub-sprawl authorities or corporations. Recently, he's received fewer reports, and some spies have failed to report back at all. A sudden call for help from an agent hiding near the Zone after escaping from a Black Star cell confirm Vathoss's fears and also inform him of a major initiative planned by the Black Star. Trying to keep the rescue operation a secret, Vathoss needs guns-for-hire able to blend in with the Corridor residents to locate and retrieve his agent before the Black Star puts its plans into action.

LAGOS ADVENTURES

The following frameworks take player characters into the beating heart of Africa's most dangerous sprawl, and drops them among the intrigues and dangerous forces at play in Lagos.

TROPICAL VACATION

The son of a Horizon corporate executive has gone missing while visiting his father in Lagos. Jimmy Montblanc Jr—JJ to his friends and family—didn't return home this morning and now his father, Jim Montblanc Senior, has panicked. His son has been getting into a bad crowd, and Jim Sr. is afraid that if his co-workers find out what his son has been doing in Lagos, his HIP score will drop. Instead of risking his reputation by calling in corporate security, Jim Sr. decides to call a fixer he knows, hoping that JJ can be found without anyone at Horizon learning of his son's indiscretions.

Setup

It's mid-morning, the daily rainstorm has just begun, and the roof is leaking. Again. Lagos is looking pretty run down and depressing just then, when the runners' fixer calls with an urgent job. Seems like a corporate brat has gone missing and

daddy is desperate to find him, before the kid ends up as rat-food. Well, desperate means money, right? Their fixer is able to provide a hardcopy photo of Jimmy Jr., a tall, slightly overweight eighteen year old human, with a pale complexion and unruly brown hair. The fixer lets the runners know that JJ was supposedly going to visit some of the nightclubs on Victoria Island, but his friends swear he never showed up last night. The fixer will give the names and commlink numbers of two of JJ's friends. He will not, however, reveal JJ's last name or the name (or corp) of his father. The fixer will assure the runners that they'll get paid, 25% up front and the remainder when JJ is returned to the fixer at The Three Friends, a local restaurant.

Event 1

The first step is going to be talking to the two friends—Marcos and Rick. Both of them are teenagers living on Ikoyi Island. The runners can call them, but over the commlink, both boys stick to the same story—JJ was supposed to meet them at Cheers Pub at nine and never showed up. If they want any more information, the runners will have to spend precious hours to get onto Ikoyi Island to track the kids down. The island is very secure and runners who are blatant about carrying weapons or look out of place will be stopped and harassed by island security. If they can talk or bribe their way out of that, they'll eventually find the two boys at the Cheers Pub. When questioned further, the boys will appear evasive. The runners will have to use charm, intimidation, or simply logic (pointing out that JJ could really be in danger) before the boys will admit that JJ never planned to go to the pub, but instead hired an okada to take him across the bridge and onto the mainland. You see, JJ was hoping to score a certain date-rape drug, and he heard you could pick some up at this buka in town...

Event 2

It doesn't take long for the runners to get the name of the buka: İdin's. The two boys will admit it's in Ajegunle, but that's as much as they know. The runners will have to go into Ajegunle, the most dangerous slum in Lagos, if they want to follow the kid's trail. İdin's is off Old Ojo Road, in the heart of Ajegunle. If the runners choose to go in, the gamemaster should make sure to make the trip unforgettable, playing up the aggressive, heavily armed gangers, packs of wild paracritters, piles of garbage and refuse, and the fact that the residents watch the runners with hate-filled, hungry, envious eyes...

Getting through Ajegunle is fraught with danger and actually finding İdin's buka could take hours.

Event 3

If the runners arrive at İdin's buka in the afternoon or later, İdin is there, selling palm wine to a few hopeless patrons with nowhere else to go. İdin will be willing to sell the runners anything; drinks, drugs, whores... but she won't admit to seeing JJ last night. The runners can bribe, threaten, or cajole, but İdin remains steadfast. If they attempt to hurt her, several of the buka's patrons will get into the fight as well, and back up from the local Area Boys will be quickly follow the sound of gunfire or screaming.



Either way, İdin will refuse to speak, since she's the one who served the boy drugged wine and sold him to Tamanous. (And no matter how frightening the runners are, Tamanous is *more* terrifying.) However, outside the buka, there are street kids who would be willing to tell the runners about a certain pale-skinned *oyibos*, for a small bribe...

If the runners survive İdin's buka and learn about Tamanous snatching the kid, they'll find out, through word on the street, that the flesh-traders are making a run to Asamando tonight, and they'll be leaving Ajegunle at sunset. There are a variety of routes the flesh-traders can take and it will require some tracking skill or bribing the locals to find out which one they've taken. The runners will also have to acquire a vehicle that can handle the thick mud of the roads outside of Lagos. For a fee, they'll be able to find someone who will take them into the rainforest, but it could be very expensive.

Climax

Depending on how quickly the runners find them, the flesh-traders may already be several kilometers out of town, into the rainforests. There are six flesh-traders escorting a crop of fifteen humans, all of whom have been drugged, bound, and placed in the back of a large open-back truck. The flesh-traders are moderately cybered and well-armed, and they are on the lookout for the dangers in the rainforest and competition—the runners won't be able to take them by surprise. One of the flesh traders has 3 hyenas on chain leashes snapping at the heels of the captives.

The flesh-traders will use the truck and any trees as cover, putting the drugged humans in the back at risk of stray bullets. Once the runners' successfully capture the truck, though, the night is just starting, since depending on how far into the rainforest they've gone, there could be other things out there, more dangerous than six flesh-traders...

Sequel

If the runners are able to return JJ to The Three Friends, unharmed, their Fixer will pay them as promised. If any of them have been injured, he'll also include a visit to a medical clinic for healing, as a sign of their Johnson's gratitude. Jim Sr. will continue to use the runners in the future, and may even recommend them to other Horizon executives, providing them with some steady and well paying work.

If the runners are unable to catch up to JJ before he gets turned into ghoulish food, or if JJ is injured during the final fire-fight, the fixer will no longer work with them, and word will quickly spread that the runners are sub-par, leaving their job prospects drying up...

A SHOT IN THE DARK

Oriana Cary works for the World Health Organization in their Global Immunization Initiative program. It's a program that runs on a shoe-string budget, at the bottom of the WHO's priority list, and would be defunct if it weren't for corps like Universal Omnitech and Evo aid (though even that comes at a price). It is staffed primarily by underpaid, overworked idealists and short-term volunteers.

Cary's on assignment for one month to Lagos when one of her co-workers dies of a viral infection no one there's ever seen before. Is this a new virus? Could it be the start of a pandemic? Her co-worker's body has already been shipped off to a research lab elsewhere, but Cary sees an opportunity to get out of the GII and into the vaunted Pandemic Research Department—if she could just track down where her co-worker caught the virus, and see a few other victims ...

Setup

The runners are contacted by a Miss Johnson, who'd like to hire their services for protection when she goes into some of the more dangerous areas of Lagos. Research by the runners will quickly reveal their Johnson is Oriana Cary, a recent med-school graduate working with the GII. She'll let them know they need to provide transportation.

When the runners meet up with her, their Miss J is a pretty dwarf, carrying a large satchel, who seems more interested in typing data into her commlink than in small talk. She'll direct the runners to take her to Kosofe. Cary expects the runners to deal with any problems getting there (such as bribing the gangs blocking the roads and dealing with the ever-present roadway vendors).

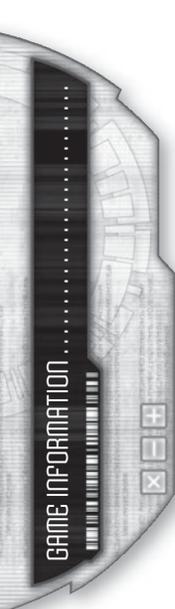
Event 1

Cary knows her coworker was at a clinic a few days before he died, giving malaria immunizations. When the runners and Cary arrive at the clinic, they'll see it's been burned out. Cary will appear shaken, but she'll start asking the locals what's happened. No one wants to talk to her, most regarding her with suspicion and a few with outright hostility. When she starts knocking on the doors of the shanties, a group of ten men gather and warn her off. She refuses to leave, and the runners are going to have to deal with the ten men, all of whom are armed with knives and clubs, and all of whom seem to blame the doctor for some tragedy.

Event 2

If the runners are able to fend off the men, they'll find that most of the locals have left the area. A lone drunk, too crippled to move from in front of the buka he's been begging at, will tell Cary (after a bribe or being intimidated by the runners) that all the families that visited the clinic died this week, and the neighborhood burned the building, saying the WHO doctors had come to poison them with their "medicines." Cary will seem especially excited at the news that several more families have been sickened since then, and will immediately set off deeper into dangerous Kosofe territory, determined to find some live victims and take blood and tissue samples. She'll be sure to let the runners know just how important this is—a new plague could spread like wildfire through Lagos, and out to the rest of the world, and the only chance of combating it is to get more information *now*, before it gets out of control. The local metahumans will avoid the runners now, but the gamemaster is encouraged to present other dangers of walking the slick, muddy streets of Kosofe—packs of devil rats or wild dogs or hyenas, giant jauchekäfer, insects, or even a swarm of ghede flies.





Event 3

When they finally arrive at the shack of a sick family, a neighborhood group has formed and they're about to burn the shack—with the ill family inside—down, to prevent further spread of this illness. The doctor will instruct the runners to talk down the angry and scared slummers, or at least stall them long enough for her to see the family inside. She'll warn the runners to stay out of the shack, then Cary will put on a protective face mask and gloves and enter the shack. The runners are going to be faced with a mob of twenty or more people, including women and kids, who have gone beyond logic in their fear of this deadly new illness.

Climax

Apparently, the doctor feels no need to hurry. While the runners wait outside, the mob continues to grow. A vocal local dibias arrives and begins urging the people on, telling them the only way to be safe is to burn out the sick, and to curse the evil *oyibos* who have brought the plague upon them. After a few minutes, the terrified people have been whipped into a frenzy. The runners have the choice to go into the shack, where a contagious family is dying, to get the doctor, or to wait outside for her to finish. Meanwhile a hundred or more people are whipped into a frenzy by the dibias. Either way, the sight of the doctor is enough to incite the mob to attack. They're armed with stones, knives, and torches, primitive weapons, sure, but there are a *lot* of them. The runners will have a real challenge to get the doctor, and her precious samples, out of Kosofe alive—or they could decide to cut their losses and run, leaving the dwarf to the anger of the mob.

Sequels

If the runners get Cary out of Kosofe alive, with her samples intact, they'll have directly helped stop the spread of a virulent new virus. The WHO will be appreciative of their help and Cary will ensure the runners get the new immunization the WHO doctors will create, once it is available. The runners may even be hired again to help with the urgent mission to get the cure out to infected Lagosians before the disease spreads out of control.

If they don't get Cary out, or if they are unable to allow her enough time to gather samples from the dying family, the disease will have several weeks, even months, to spread across Lagos. As the residents of Lagos begin dying, including the runners' friends and contacts (perhaps even the runners themselves), the runners should be confronted with the knowledge they could have helped stop the disease. Anger and attacks against *oyibos* rise, as Lagosians blame them for the disease. Lagos, always a terrifying hellhole to work in, is about to go up in flames...

ADVENTURE SEEDS

- Shiawase Biotech has had a tough time of it lately in Lagos. Pirates have hit three of their last product shipments, taking all the material on board and killing the crews. Brett Redsky, the shipping operations manager in Lagos, believes *someone* is targeting them directly. He'd like to find out who—and then teach them a lesson.
- Mr. Johnson hires the runners to investigate the source of a rash of Matrix fraud which seems to originate from Lagos. The victims have all been corporate citizens, and include one prominent (and apparently gullible) corporate executive, who wants to make sure there's no evidence tracing his indiscretion back to the scammers. Mr Johnson wants evidence of the fraud eliminated and the perpetrators punished. Easier said than done.
- A large shipment of uncut diamonds is rumored to be coming into Lagos. The runners' employer has an in on the route, and wants them to hijack the shipment... but they'll be one of many who are *very* interested in the diamonds. Alternately, the diamond smugglers may hire the runners to protect their shipment from the wide variety of would-be thieves as they navigate Lagos and hold a private auction for the goods.
- Interpol's anti-terrorism task force has identified a possible training compound in the wild Epe district. The runner's contact will provide a hard-copy photo of a human female, a white-haired Scandinavian, of whom they are particularly interested. The reward for her capture (alive) is considerable... but there's a lot more behind the story than their Interpol contact will tell them.
- A pair of twin girls have been born to an Igbo ork woman. Rumors that the girls may be Awakened have already reached the ears of a Horizon executive. She'd like to "rescue" the girls before their father kills them... but the mother has other ideas and has already contacted the Daughters of Yemaja to smuggle her and her newborn daughters out of Lagos.

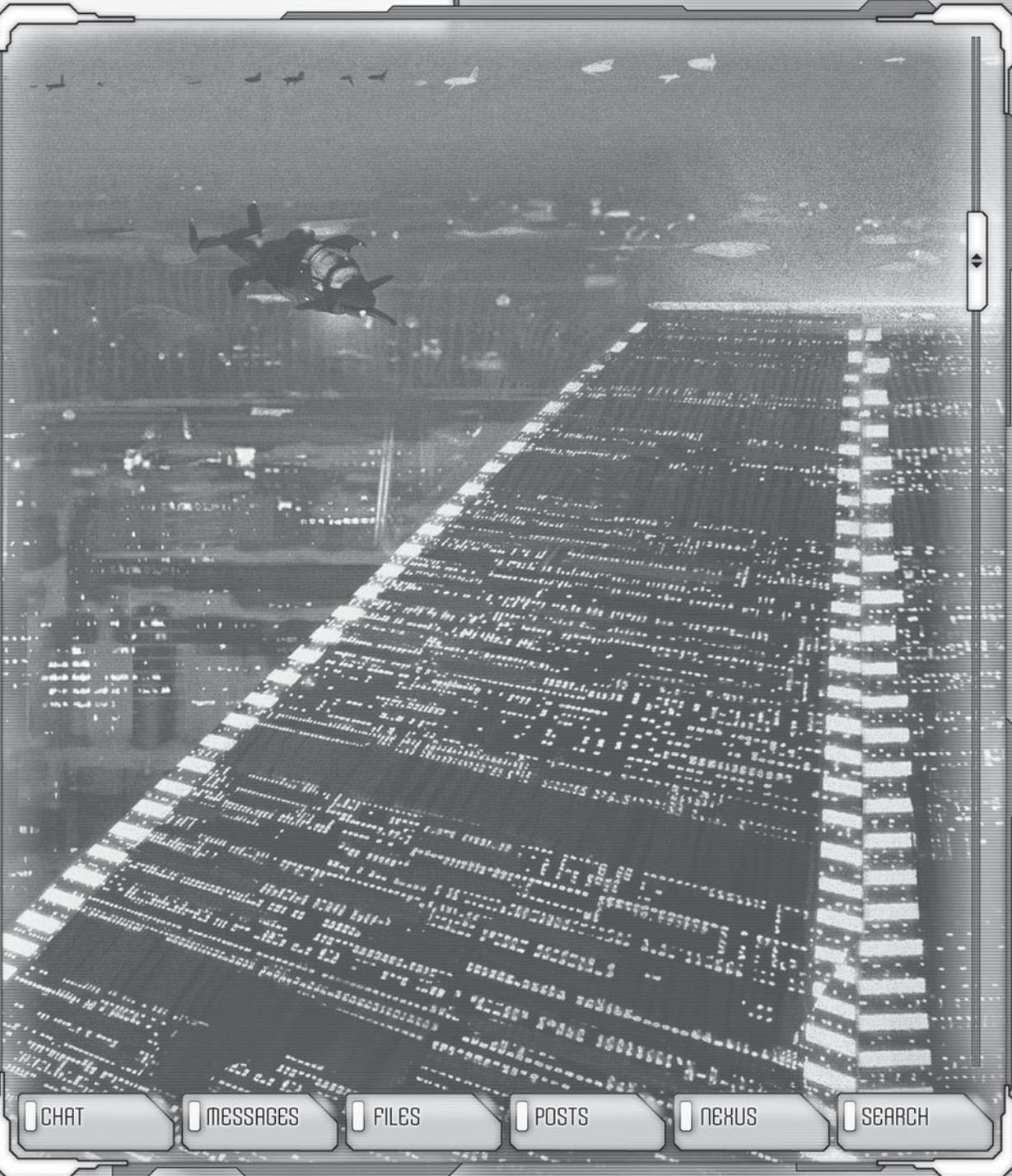




COMING SOON: RUNNERS' TOOLKIT

Beyond skills and instincts, the proper kit will see a runner through almost any situation. The difference between nuyen in your pocket and street cred to your name, and an ignominious death.

The Runner's Toolkit boxed set provides tools for both GMs and players to make running easier than ever: GM screen, player reference cards, NPCs, maps, adventures, and more!



- PREFERENCES
- FEEDS
- TASKS
- LINKS
- HISTORY

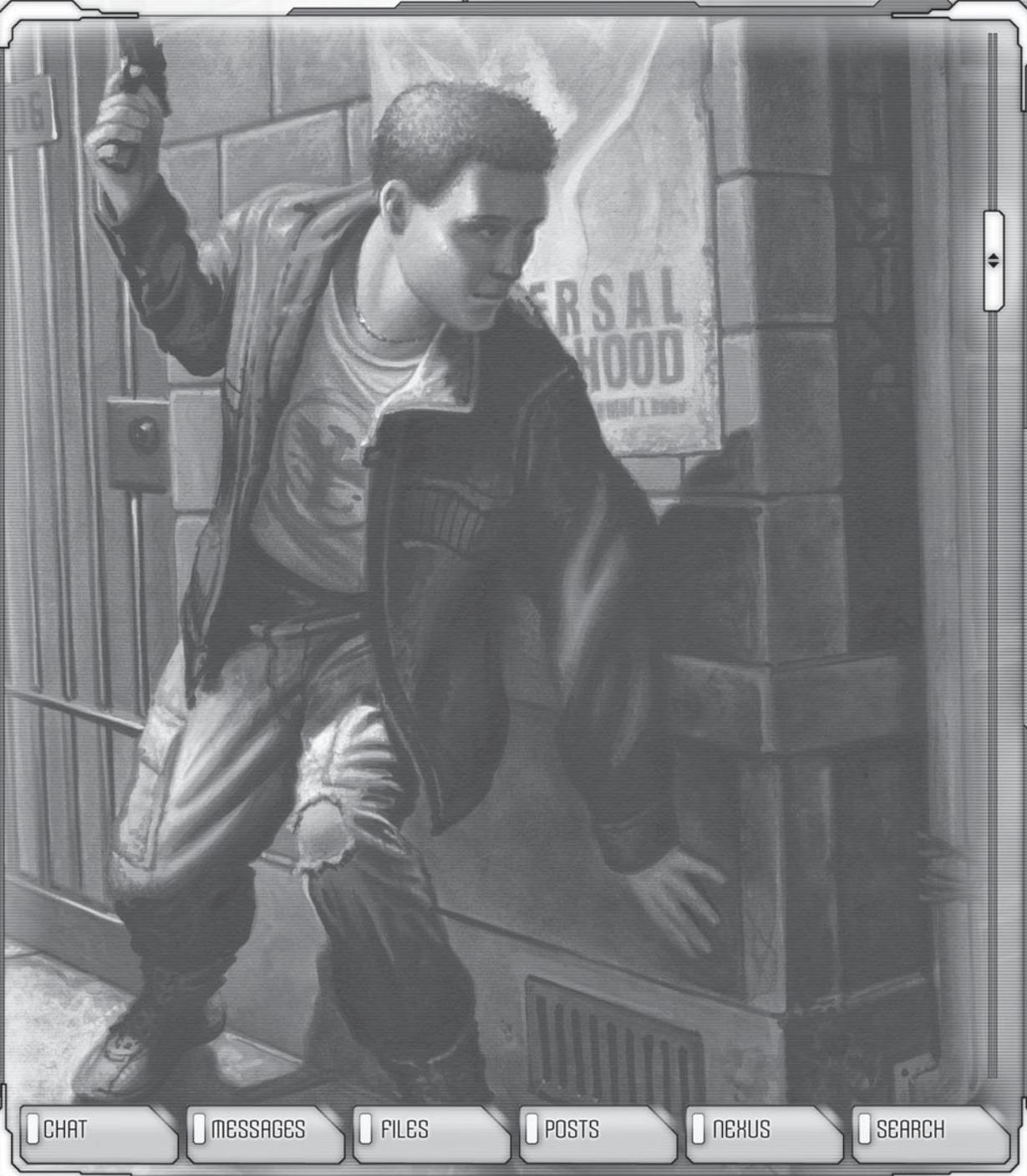
- CHAT
- MESSAGES
- FILES
- POSTS
- NEXUS
- SEARCH

- Active
ComStar Firewall
- Active
Jack-in-the-Box Antivirus
- Active
SpamWitch Filter
- On/Receiving
Commcode
- Excellent
Signal
- Active
Hidden Mode
- Local Map

- CONTINUE
- ADVANCED SEARCH
- SAVE

COMING SOON: SHADOWRUN NOVELS

Catalyst Game Labs is bringing Sixth World fiction back, starting with brand-new novels from Mel Odom (*Cut & Run*) and Phaedra Weldon (*Triptych*), an anthology of short fiction edited by John Helfers (*Spells & Chrome*), and some visiting with an old friend...



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