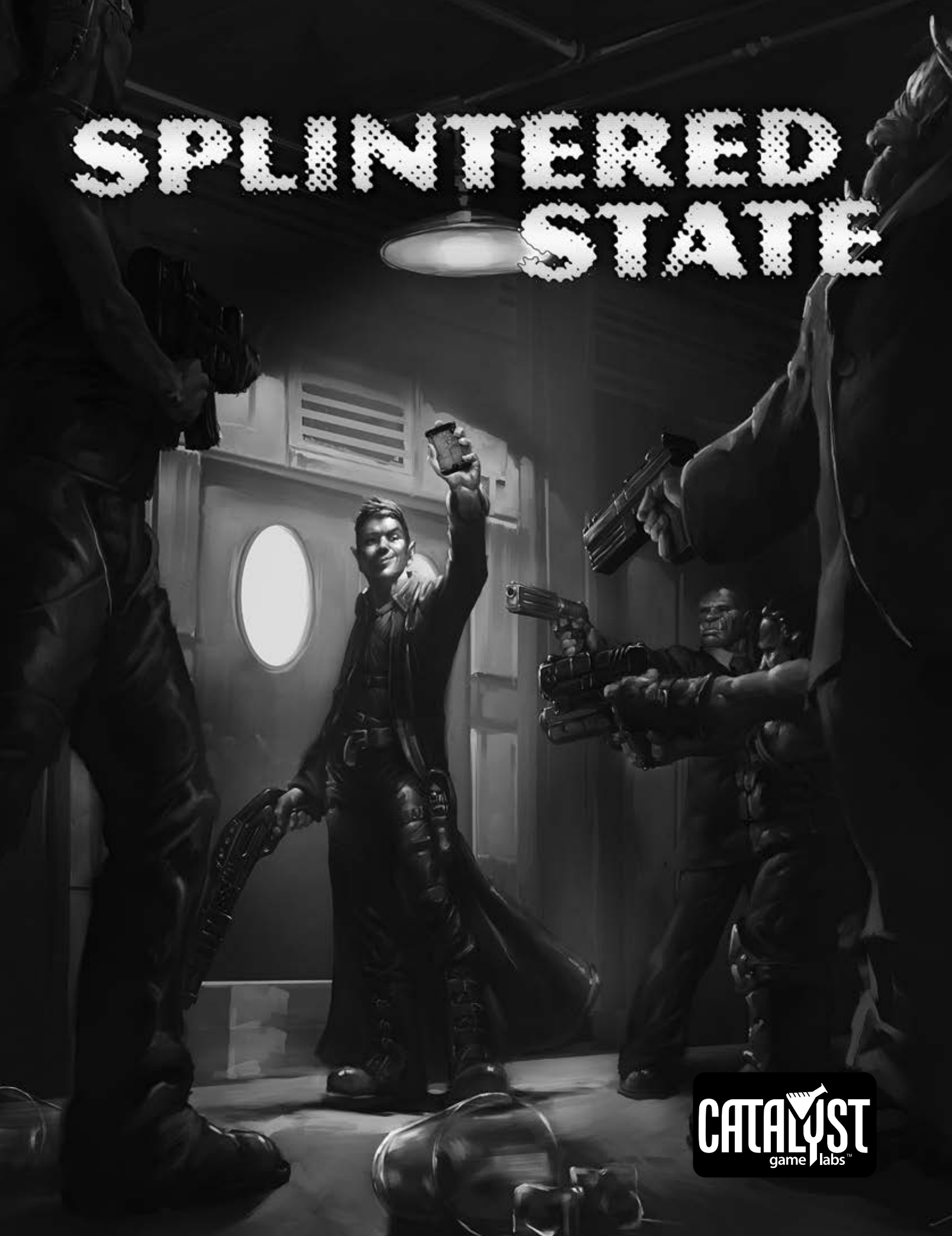


SPLINTERED STATE



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SPLINTERED STATE

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EVERYONE WANTS TO CHANGE THE WORLD

BLINK

FBI Agent Seth Dietrich had seen plenty of danger or strangeness in his days, but regaining consciousness in free-fall was a new one even for him. The first thing he registered was the stomach-lurching phenomenon of falling, body twisting around in mid-air. He saw his arms and legs stretched out and up before him, flailing. The last thing he remembered was a total non sequitur, a flatvid movie slam-cut, abrupt and jarring.

Then the floor broke the fall and his fall broke the floor. Multiple layers of flimsy and rotting wooden scaffolding broke apart beneath him. When he finally stopped falling, a wildly dancing galaxy of asbestos dust swirled above him, and his entire body throbbed from the impact. Above him, he heard gunfire and incoherent shouts. The throbbing pain in his body and the faintness in his head made him want to just lie there, but sometimes to keep living, you have to get off the ground.

He rolled to his feet with difficulty, staggering, and looked up through ten stories of smashed flooring that cored the central tower of an abandoned Barrens death trap of an apartment building. Frightened squatters scrambled for cover or stared at him in surprise, their auras striped yellow and green with swirling eddies of fear and curiosity. Wait? Auras? Since when could he see auras? That was when he realized his head was swimming with the effects of an unfamiliar drug he couldn't remember taking, that he'd never have taken. Why was he on tempo?

Add to this question a plethora of others: how had he gotten to the Barrens when he'd been lying low at a safe house in Snohomish a few hours ago? Or was it more than a few hours? Why was it night when it had been early afternoon last time he opened his eyes? Who were these men shooting at him? No answers were forthcoming, largely because of the shabbily dressed men and orks scrambling down what was left of the stairwell toward him, firing potshots with Streetline Specials and AK-97 assault rifles, their grips wrapped with duct tape.

Bullets chewed into the moldy flooring and peeling, decades-old wallpaper around him, phosphorous tracers cutting through the dim and dusty air. He thrust a hand into the pocket of his lined coat. The familiar weight of his Colt Government 2066 was missing, and there was a Steyr TMP in its place, along with the cold glass of some kind of vial. His Transys Avalon was still on him, thankfully.

He spun out from under and behind the gnarled wooden support he'd taken cover behind and fired a burst of flechette rounds upwards, his sights riding the recoil from one silhouette to the next. A cry of pain and a loud crash told him he'd gotten a piece of someone, but a volley of answering fire sent him sprinting down the corridor, looking for a way out.

"You think you can cut-and-run on the 88s, you stupid motherfucker!" a voice called out after him, screaming harshly above the chattering guns. "You're a dead man!"

Those weren't Brackhaven's men, coming to kill him for knowing too much. So who were they?

Triads? Why had he been meeting with Triads, let alone stealing from them? Dietrich felt hot blood soaking his sleeve from a hole in his shoulder as he shoved aside a catatonic looking BTL-head and made for the boarded-up window at the end of the hallway. Not looking back as his legs pumped under him, he sprayed bullets into either side of the boards, sending some of them scattering across the floor. In the faint streetlight leaking through the newly made gaps, he could make out the spidery metal silhouette of a rusting fire escape, exactly what he was looking for.

The only thing that made sense to him was the impossible. Someone had hijacked his body and taken it for a joy ride, ditching it at the worst possible moment. Whoever it was had a hell of a lot of explaining to do, but first he had to get out of the Barrens alive. Hearing the goons rounding the corner behind him, at a dead run, he threw himself at the window, flying toward the fire escape beyond.

BLINK



POLITICS & PAYDATA

Splintered State is an introductory adventure for *Shadowrun, Fifth Edition*, which means that if you're looking for a first adventure to run so that players and the gamemaster can learn the system and earn that first precious bit of Karma, this is where to look.

Splintered State is an adaptable adventure, one gamemasters can easily adjust to suit the skills of their team, from novice to seasoned pro. It centers on a commlink with some very valuable information and the various factions interested in getting their hands on it. The players' action will determine how the factions react to them, how much cash they might be able to get in exchange for the information they have, and, most importantly, whether they are able to get out of this whole situation alive.

Players should stop reading now. The rest of *Splintered State* is for gamemasters only. It lays out the plots, characters, and secrets the gamemaster will use in creating the group's adventure. Reading beyond this point could spoil a player's experience and diminish enjoyment of the adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Brackhaven family, financially backed by Brackhaven Investments and intricately linked to the Humanis ~~hate~~ group policlub, has controlled Seattle politically through its scion Kenneth Brackhaven for the past five years. A jingoist, archconservative metaracist, Seattle metroplex governor Kenneth Brackhaven has made more than his fair share of enemies in those five years, a list that includes political opponents, metahuman rights activists, Ork Underground community organizers, human beings with morals, and so on. Events brewing around the controversial governor finally came to a head in the fall of last year, 2074, when Proposition 23, a proposal to legalize and legitimize Seattle's (in)famous Ork Underground, finally went to a vote and passed, legitimizing a formerly crime-ridden and fringe area.

Brackhaven rebounded from a failed presidential race in 2057 to lie, cheat, steal, and intimidate his way to election as Seattle's governor. In spite of his unpopularity with many of Seattle's more progressive voters, he remained a savvy political operator invaluable to the corporate sponsors who wield

the city's real power. In 2074, with Prop 23 passing, that invulnerability was finally challenged. Brackhaven's failure to quash Prop 23 landed him in hot water with his conservative base and his corporate patrons. Worse still, Brackhaven was publicly implicated in a humiliating scandal over the alleged solution he had planned to crush Prop 23: Operation Daybreak.

Daybreak was a never-executed plan aimed at preventing the passing of Proposition 23 by highly illegal means. It was designed to "highlight the dangers of the Ork Underground" by hiring shadow operatives to frame Underground community leaders for various crimes. According to the plan, this would publicly justify later occupying the Underground with armed forces, eliminating those leaders and increasing the public level of fear and hatred of the Ork Underground in the process. This was intended to bolster public admiration of the Seattle government and their success in dealing with the "criminal ork element." The Project Daybreak allegations were never proven, nor was Brackhaven ever formally charged, because the evidence, and the man who had been gathering it (FBI Special Agent Seth Dietrich) disappeared.

While Brackhaven retained the governorship in the 2074 election, handily defeating his opponents, his approval numbers are below fifty percent for the first time since his election in 2070, and many perceive him as being on the ropes. Things got even more serious for Brackhaven and his people when shortly after the election, the governor was subpoenaed by the FBI for major financial misconduct.

Perhaps the one person most directly responsible for Brackhaven's current woes, from unearthing the plans for Operation Daybreak to linking Brackhaven to alleged corporate fraud, is Special Agent Seth Dietrich. An honorable agent and FBI golden boy, Dietrich is known to be beyond corruption and to serve no corporate masters. Dietrich's diligence in investigating Brackhaven resulted in the governor's press secretary, Edmund Jeffries, being arraigned before a grand jury on charges of murder and prosecuted by Seattle District Attorney Dana Oaks for multiple counts of fraud, conspiracy, and murder. And it was his close cooperation with Seattle's shadow community that dug up the secret plans for Operation Daybreak, plans that could be connected back to Brackhaven.

There is, as there always seems to be, a hitch. Unfortunately for those who would like to see Brackhaven fall, and





unbeknownst to everyone, Dietrich is not in his right mind. Heavily augmented with high-grade nanotechnology to better perform his duties as a federal investigator, Dietrich is suffering from a cybernetic malady that goes far beyond buggy ware or a garden-variety computer virus. Overwhelmed by a direct neural interface with AI ghosts in the machinery of his body, Dietrich's mind has fragmented, and he passes in and out of periods of lucidity, sometimes advancing his own interests, sometimes acting randomly (and violently) to front an agenda he is totally unaware of. Dietrich's two (or perhaps more) distinct personalities have no knowledge or memory of each other's actions, but the gaps in Dietrich's memory are enough that he knows he is losing his mind.

In November of 2074, Dietrich and his crew of hired shadowrunners, in possession of the Project Daybreak files, were en route to a meeting with Edmund Jeffries, who had agreed to testify against Brackhaven in exchange for his own immunity. He never made the meeting; all of Dietrich's associates turned up dead, and Dietrich never turned up at all. The FBI declared him missing, and he has yet to be found. With Dietrich completely off the grid, most of Seattle's power players assumed that he had gone to ground. The truth is somewhat more complicated. While sometimes Dietrich is aware of who he is, what he has his hands on, and the fact that Kenneth Brackhaven would gladly pay millions of nuyen to see him out of the picture for good, the rest of the time Dietrich is not in control of his own body: another personality pilots him, pursuing its own random and inscrutable agenda. During one of those fugues, Dietrich managed to lose track of the commlink that can be used to connect Brackhaven to major criminal wrongdoing.

When Dietrich regains consciousness, he wants the commlink back, but he's not the only one. Brackhaven's people have had shadow operatives scouring the city with a fine-toothed comb for Dietrich and his evidence for months. Distract Attorney Dana Oaks, her pet attack troll KE Detective Tosh Athack, and all the survivors of Project Freedom interested in seeing Brackhaven burn want to get their hands on the proof that could be used to sink him too. But even larger powers are about to become involved. Japanacorp interests in Seattle want to see Brackhaven replaced with a puppet governor who can represent their interests more efficiently, while Ares will continue to back Brackhaven as

long as they think he can govern in a way that's beneficial to them. They want the evidence so they can erase it and maintain the status quo (and perhaps squeeze a concession or two out of Brackhaven while they're at it).

Shortly after the adventure begins, the commlink that everyone wants finds its way into the hands of a very lucky runner team, who are about to find that they live in interesting times indeed.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

FBI Agent Seth Dietrich, the man who finally acquired proof that could take down Kenneth Brackhaven for good, has not been himself for the past several months. Some of the time he has been himself, and in that time he has struggled to come to terms with longer and longer periods of lost time while staying off the grid and hiding from Brackhaven's operatives. The rest of his time his body has been controlled by another personality, which has used it to take odious and mysterious actions of which Dietrich is totally unaware when he regains consciousness. After the most recent episode, Dietrich found himself lying on the bathroom floor of a decrepit motel in the Redmond Barrens, next to the dead body of a scumbag drug pusher, with blood on his hands. This is the worst awakening following a fugue of missing time that Dietrich has experienced to this point, and he flees the scene in panic.

The action begins less than twenty-four hours later, in mid-March of 2075, when a motley crew of rookie shadowrunners (the PCs) are woken up early in the morning and arrested by Knight Errant detectives on trumped-up charges. For a change, the runners really are innocent (of those charges, at least), having had nothing to do with last night's hijacking of a truckload of commlinks in Tacoma. They don't have to sweat long in KE detention before a "public defender," the notorious (and famously but unprovably corrupt) criminal attorney and fixer "Imaginary" Annie Goldsmith, comes to bail them out. Having a bunch of hardened crooks in one place, Annie offers them a job.

The runners meet with a Kim Shin-jo (going by the name Mr. Johnson) at a no-frills bar called Banshee in the Redmond Barrens. They are hired for a B&E job that must be completed that night. They're supposed to retrieve a commlink belonging



to a drug dealer named Oxycode from his room (312) at the Novelty Hills Sleep and Eat. The pay is not amazing, but the job should be easy and without complications. When the runners penetrate the almost nonexistent security at the no-tell motel, they find Oxycode dead, and not one but two commlinks. One belongs to Oxycode, while the other belongs to Dietrich. Both have been scrubbed of identifying data and appear to contain nothing more than a list of (largely nameless) contacts, meaning there is no obvious way of distinguishing one from the other.

When the runners return to Mr. Johnson with the commlinks, he is able to determine which is his, and while he is intrigued by the other, some of the names on their list worry him. He doesn't want to deal with something too hot. He leaves it to the runners to dispose of as they see fit, hinting that it might be valuable for them. Then he pays them for their work. He advises him they may want to find a buyer for it, but he himself is not interested.

The events of *Splintered State* are highly open ended, and for the most part, the events of the plot will depend on what the PCs choose to do with the unexpected (and dangerous) windfall that comes their way. Specifically, the order and structure of the plot will be determined by who the PCs ultimately choose to sell the commlink to. Other events, however, include multiple options for the gamemaster to determine how a given scene plays out.

With the mission done, the runners may show some initiative and perform legwork in seeking out a buyer for the unidentified commlink. On closer inspection, the runners discover the commlink contains a single file that at first appears to be encrypted but is actually fragmented. It can only be opened and accessed with the second half, presumably held elsewhere. Of course, not all of the runners' contacts are completely airtight and trustworthy, so doing so will cause word to leak that they're looking to move the commlink. Doing nothing is not a viable option, though, because if the runners merely sit on the commlink, eventually the same data will bubble down to the street from other sources. Operators for multiple factions are hitting the streets looking for Dietrich, and several of them managed to trace him to the motel where the runners acquired the commlink. With or without the runners being proactive, word will get out that they have the exceedingly precious commlink.

Depending on who the runners' contacts are, and who the runners' contacts know, it might be Brackhaven's people who first find out the runners have the commlink, or it might be Ares, Mitsuhama, or District Attorney Dana Oaks. Seth Dietrich himself is the interested party that finds out second, and he contacts the runners with an offer. He will buy his commlink back from them for the astonishingly high price of 100,000 nuyen. He arranges a meet for the next day at the Fort Lewis Zoological Gardens. Moments after that happens, a strike team sent by one of the above factions kicks in the doors of the runners' safe house in an effort to snatch the commlink, or beat its location out of the runners if the item is hidden. Ares operates through local Mafia elements, while Mitsuhama operates through their associates in the Seattle

Yakuza. Brackhaven's black ops people have stooped to working with the Night Hunters, a devolved gang of twisted, predatory transhuman racists, while Dana Oaks, working together with ork fixer MacCallister and Ork Underground community organizer Eliza Bloom, sends Tosh Athack, a brutal and loyal KE detective and his strike team. Whoever winds up attacking the runners at home, it should send a clear message that what they have is a big deal, even if they don't fully understand why.

When he meets their runners at the zoo, Dietrich has lapsed into the alternate personality brought about by his cybernetic mental disorder. He does not know who the runners are, that they have his commlink, or why he has a pouch full of certified credsticks to exchange for it. Just as the confusion of the situation reaches its peak, Dietrich is killed right before the runners' faces by elite cyborg assassins from Chimera. A peaceful day at the zoo erupts into a firefight with dangerous paranormal critters caught in the middle, as the Chimera hit squad sets their sights on the PCs, looking to mop up essential witnesses. During the chaos, there are three important pieces of the puzzle up for grabs. The commlink the runners brought with them, the pouch with 100,000 nuyen in certified cred, and a second commlink that Dietrich has on him, with the second half of the fragmented file. The runners might manage to grab two or even all three of these and get out alive, but they only need to hang onto the commlink they came to the meet with to keep the adventure (and the chaos) on track.

After the massacre at the zoo, it should be very clear to the runners how urgent it is that they offload the commlink (which they may already have been paid for once). They could just throw it in the garbage, of course, but if they did that, how would they be able to get all of the factions gunning for it off their backs? Through their contacts, the runners can reach (or be reached by) four factions looking for the commlink now that Dietrich is out of the picture. One of them is District Attorney Oaks, representing the people who want to see Brackhaven take a long fall from grace to splatter on the pavement below. Two more are Ares (who want to determine if Brackhaven is still an efficient governor to serve their needs) and Mitsuhama (who, along with the other AAA Japanacops, want Brackhaven out). Finally, Brackhaven's people, having failed to kill the runners once or twice by now, are willing to deal. Brackhaven's people make the best cash offer, while Oaks, in spite of being affiliated with law enforcement, has the moral high ground. The corps fall somewhere in the middle. The runners will have to choose who to deal with and arrange a meeting—hopefully one where they have home-field advantage.

If the runners have elected to sell the file to Brackhaven's representative, this scene is the climax of the adventure. The meeting is crashed by a high-level Mitsuhama shadow team. They want access to the evidence that can oust Brackhaven, and they're going all out to get it. (Alternatively, or in addition to this strike, Brackhaven's people may attempt to double-cross and eliminate the PCs. They're not overly concerned with getting their money back—they have plenty of it—but eliminating all witnesses is important to them.)



If the runners have chosen to go with any other buyer, the meeting with that buyer may be assaulted by an opposing team. The adventure, though, does not end there. By now, if the runners got the second commlink from the zoo meeting and have applied some time and technical skill, they will have been able to reconstruct the damaged file. If they didn't, then the buyer they chose has acquired it. Either way, the reconstructed file reveals the location where the evidence of Operation Daybreak has been hidden. As an insurance policy, one of Brackhaven's "dirty work" specialists concealed all of the Operation Daybreak data on a hidden server at Brackhaven Investments' downtown headquarters. Those operatives have since been culled or gone into hiding because they knew too much, and not even Brackhaven himself knows the incriminating information is so close.

Sponsored by the buyer they have chosen, the runners will be bankrolled and handsomely compensated if they can manage to extract the data from Brackhaven Investments and get out alive. Their employers will even provide some assistance with equipment and planning. Things are less likely to go smoothly than they are to result in a helicopter chase over the skies of downtown Seattle, but either way it will be a night to remember. If the runners survive, they will have acquired proof of Brackhaven's involvement in a criminal conspiracy. What happens to Brackhaven after this adventure remains to be seen, but the PCs' actions have made the governor's position even more unstable. Brackhaven has sleazed and schemed his way out of dire situations before, but this might be the one that finally pins him to the wall. As for the PCs, they've gotten paid twice for their work, once or twice for the commlink, and—perhaps more importantly than amassing a pile of nuyen—they have rid themselves of a commlink that many powerful people were willing to kill to get.

SCENE 0: ROUNDED UP

SCAN THIS

This scene is specifically for runners who haven't worked with each other before, useful if you're using this adventure for a convention game or to kick off a campaign. It provides a hook to get the runners together, and introduces a common NPC to front them some work. For any group, even established ones, it serves the purpose of setting the mood of the average shadowrunner's typical relationship with law enforcement, which gets played with later in the adventure when the runners are approached for help by District Attorney Dana Oaks. If your runners are already a regular crew or you're looking to save time, this scene can easily be skipped.

In this scene, the runners are hauled in by Knight Errant detectives for a Tacoma heist they legitimately had nothing to do with. They are interrogated individually (and roughly) by detectives, before being thrown in a holding cell with each other. After they have time to get acquainted, they are bailed out by runner-friendly attorney "Imaginary" Annie Goldsmith.

Having helped them out of a tough spot, she offers them a piece of work that catalyzes the following scene, and in turn the rest of the adventure.

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Bad morning doesn't begin to cut it when you're woken by a loud knock on your door at 7 a.m. on a Monday by two hard-nosed KE dicks and a half dozen patrolmen, all smiling like they won the lottery. They read you your rights on an armed robbery beef that doesn't sound familiar, throw the cuffs on, and rudely stuff you into the back of a Patrol-1. Twenty minutes later, you're in the dark and hostile interrogation room of the old Lone Star precinct downtown, which is now a Knight Errant franchise, getting enthusiastically interrogated by an Anglo dwarf named Detective Quinn and an Amerind ork named Detective Redoak.

The irony dawns on you before you're halfway through the hour-long interrogation, being asked the same questions over and over (and for that matter, harder and harder). You had *nothing to do with* the truck of commlinks that got hijacked in Tacoma at 8:00 p.m. last night. Wrongfully accused isn't how you'd usually describe yourself, but even a broken clock is innocent twice a year, or something. It's almost enough to bring a smile to your face, as there's no way they're going to make this stick.

It's not long before the detectives get tired of your stonewalling and realize they're not getting anywhere with their good cop, bad cop routine. They pull you out of the cramped interrogation room, and march you down the hall to a holding cell full of other malcontents like yourself, a bunch of unusual suspects.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The runners really do have nothing to do with the truck carrying a load of commlinks that got hijacked on its delivery route through Tacoma last night. Whether that hijacking has anything to do with anything is entirely up to the gamemaster. It could be a plot hook for a later adventure, or an irrelevant coincidence. Either way, the runners have enough of a rap sheet attached to their (fake) SINS and/or enough of a rep on the street to have been brought in: it's a case of mistaken identities. The PCs should have a fun time coming up with their characters' alibis for last night, true or bullshit, airtight or otherwise. Perhaps they were busy doing other crimes.

How much of the interrogation by Quinn and Redoak is roleplayed out and how much is glossed over depends entirely on how much your group enjoys roleplaying (specifically, on taking turns roleplaying individually with NPCs), and how much time you have. If you're pressed for time, or your PCs would prefer to get to the action, you can easily skip it.

If you choose to play through the interrogation scenes, both Quinn and Redoak are veteran detectives and will use classic film noir detective tricks to put plenty of leverage on the PCs to try and get them to break. This includes things like: a good cop, bad cop routine (they enjoy taking turns, rather than having one consistent persona), the constant threat



(but never the actual fact) of nasty physical violence, abrupt switching of interrogation tactics and lines of questioning to trip the PCs up, leaving the PCs to stew without food or water for long stretches of time before offering them to it, and false claims that their associates have flipped on them, or about to flip on them, if they don't flip first. Quinn and Redoak have the dice pools to back up their interrogation skills, but this scene is best handled through roleplaying, if you want to go into it at all. Being in police interrogation is downright unpleasant, especially if you haven't done the crime in question, and there are good reasons for criminals to hate cops. If the runners are particularly smart (or the players street-savvy), they will refuse comment until their attorney is present.

No matter what happens, no matter what persuasive arguments or evidence they're presented with, Quinn and Redoak will refuse to even seriously consider the fact of the PCs' innocence until Annie shows up, short of something like magical persuasion (an extraordinarily bad idea; see below).

The runners should probably not have met each other before if you're running this scene, but all winding up in the same holding cell (a ten-by-ten meter cage, with a concrete floor, walls and ceilings of sturdy iron bars, a drain in the floor and a nasty looking chemical toilet in one corner, with a row of hard plastic bunks along one wall) gives them a chance to get acquainted. And they may well know each other by reputation, even assuming they're all street-level newbs or rank amateurs.

The downtown Knight Errant precinct is a fortress, far better designed for keeping unfortunates in than keeping those same unfortunates out. The officers there are legion, they are well equipped, and their procedure is airtight. Cameras and maglocks are everywhere, and the system is monitored in real time by multiple security spiders and strong IC. They take appropriate special precautions when dealing with mages and hackers, but the PCs are suspects, not convicts, and there is a limit to how rough the KE officers can treat them. Still, the runners are isolated, unequipped, and outnumbered, watched at all times by a hornet's test of armed, trained law enforcement officers. Trying to use force or any overtly hostile actions—including magic—would be suicidally, catastrophically stupid, and that fact should be repeated until the players internalize it, lest they get tempted.

Once the runners have had time to get acquainted with each other, Imaginary Annie shows up to bail them out:

You've been sweating in lockup for a while without access to a phone call or your lawyer; in other words, the world is still turning. Just as you're starting to seriously worry that, in the ultimate irony, you might actually go down for a crime you didn't even commit, you hear the clang of one of the security doors in the hallway, and the sound of the KE detectives bickering with a hotheaded female attorney. You hear the phrases "warrant," "wrongful arrest," "probable cause," "putative identification," and "unlawful questioning without legal counsel."

Then a begrudging and bewildered-looking uniformed officer unlocks the cage door, and a short, smiling woman

in a grey, pinstriped business suit strides past him. The cops almost seem scared of the tiny little norm chica. She's cute and slight, with short, neon-orange hair and a dusting of freckles. She looks all of fourteen, but starts talking like a high-speed robot built for dispensing rapid-fire legal jargon: "Hey, just so you guys know, I just told them they have to put you before a lineup, get the prosecutor to formally press charges, or let you go, or I'm gonna have their gonads for wrongful arrest and violation of your rights as UCAS citizens. You may be far from the forty-eight-hour deadline, but they really screwed the pooch on this one, and privatized rent-a-cops don't get blanket protection under Qualified Immunity statutes."

You're not sure you followed all of that, or any of it, when she presents you with her card (an ARO, naturally). It reads "Imaginary" Annie Goldsmith, Invisible Esquire.

Annie doesn't want any payment for her services, claiming that any public defender fresh out of law school could have seen through this obvious "fishing trip." Taking the runners to coffee at the local Soybucks after she gets them out of lock-up (and any of their gear back), she mentions that she's looking for a few good metas for a piece of work she's contracting for a third party, with the promise of more to come if they do well. She gives them a matchbook emblazoned with the logo of a bar called Banshee in the Barrens, with a commlink number scrawled on it in ballpoint ink, along with a time, underlined: 7 p.m. This will get the runners to the next plot point, while they gain Imaginary Annie as a contact, although if they want to use her legal services again, they'll of course need to pay her full retainer: she's not ordinarily in the business of giving out freebies.

It might be a clever twist to subtly insinuate that it was Annie herself that arranged for the runners to be picked up by Knight Errant, but she won't even come close to outright saying it. Only very astute players with *very* paranoid characters should be able to come to this conclusion, and even then it should be anything but a surety.

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

Since this is an introductory scene for new players and characters, we wholeheartedly recommend that the gamemaster *not* push the envelope here. However, if you wish to make this scene more challenging for the PCs, the way to do so isn't by adding more and better cops: there should already be enough LEOs on site to make escape a clear impossibility, particularly with the PCs completely unarmed and unarmored (adepts, mages, and technomancers may have no need of guns, but *everyone* needs armor). Instead, draw out the interrogation scenes longer.

Keep in mind that the cops here are, as Annie says, just "going fishing." They don't have any real evidence linking the PCs to the scene, and they can't hold them long. Therefore their attempts to get confessions or clues out of the PCs are based largely on bluffing and manipulation, assertions that their "teammates" have flipped on them, and so forth. While the PCs should not get nailed for the truck hijacking they had



nothing to do with, it's entirely possible that they'll crack under the pressure and self-incriminate with a confession of something they *did* do, giving KE an excuse to hold them. This is especially true if they need to roll things out and successfully oppose Quinn and/or Redoak's Interrogation Tests. Since this scene assumes the runners don't know each other, there's not much chance of them flipping on each other for real, but if they do, that should be a tactic the cops take to sow betrayals within the team.

Again, we stress you should *not* push the envelope here. Let the PCs get to the real action of the run, and then throw their asses in the fire if you're so inclined.

DEBUGGING

There are three major things that can go wrong with this scene. The first two are related: the runners may attempt to break out of KE holding, rather than waiting the cops out for Annie to arrive, and, similarly, the players may actually interrupt the prepared text at the beginning to attempt to resist arrest, fighting the cops at their own home. The best thing you can do is to tell them, without being coy, and without getting annoyed, that such a course of action is immensely stupid.

Even if the PCs somehow fight the cops and win, they'll be slowing down the game and wrenching the adventure off track. However, if your players insist on fighting Knight Errant's finest while severely outnumbered and outgunned, you're going to have to give them what they want. Play it out. Chances are the PCs will wind up in the precinct holding cell anyway ... with some more legitimate charges stuck to them. They've made Imaginary Annie's work harder, but you can have her at least help the runners post bail, with the threat hanging over their heads that if they don't do the job for her, she'll take her money back and they'll be right back in the slammer.

The last problem is the PCs self-incriminating or flipping on each other. Unless you run a particularly sadistic game, you probably want to avoid this, and fortunately, that's easily done. The scene structure glosses over the interrogation with prepared text by default, so if you don't want to run into this problem, just don't push the envelope. If you choose to, know what you're getting into, and be prepared.

GRUNTS AND MOVING TARGETS

The uniformed Knight Errant patrolmen use the stats for the Police Patrols on p. 383 of *SR5*, with some Lieutenants thrown in to the mix for good measure. If things get really hairy, they have access to more or less whatever additional equipment they need from their armory, including heavier weapons and armor. They have on-site mages (use the CorpSec Lieutenant on p. 382, *SR5*, scaled up if necessary). If the drek *really* hits the rotating blades, a SWAT rapid response team will be called in: use the stats for Elite CorpSec on p. 384, *SR5*.

Additionally, stats are provided for the two named Knight Errant detectives. Additional detectives in the building should use the stats for the Police Patrol Lieutenant (p. 383, *SR5*).

DET. JARED QUINN

MALE DWARF										
B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	
5 (6)	4	4 (5)	5	6	5	5	3	2	4.3	
Initiative		9 (10) + 2D6								
Condition Monitor		11 / 11								
Limits		Physical 7, Mental 7, Social 6								
Armor		12								
Skills		Athletics 3, Clubs (Bats) 4 (+2), Gymnastics 2, Electronics 3, First Aid 2, Influence skill group 3, Intimidation (Interrogation) 4 (+2), Mechanic 2, Perception 4, Pilot Ground Craft 4, Pistols (Revolvers) 5 (+2), Stealth skill group 4, Unarmed Combat (Block) 4 (+2)								
Qualities		Guts, Toughness								
Augmentations		Control rig 1, datajack, sleep regulator, synaptic booster 1								
Gear		Armor jacket [w/ Nonconductivity (Rating 4), shock frills], commlink (Device Rating 4), contacts [Rating 1, w/ image link]								
Weapons		Extendable baton [Club, Acc 5, Reach 1, DV 7P, AP —] Ruger Super Warhawk [Heavy Pistol, Acc 5, DV 9P, AP -2, SS, RC —, 6(cy), w/ laser sight, concealable holster]								

DET. LARRY REDOAK

MALE ORK										
B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	
6 (7)	4 (6)	4	6 (9)	4	3	5	4	2	2.6	
Initiative		11 + 2D6								
Condition Monitor		11 / 10								
Limits		Physical 8 (10), Mental 5, Social 5								
Armor		11								
Skills		Archery (Bows) 4 (+2), Athletics 3, Close Combat 5, Gymnastics 2, Influence skill group 3, Intimidation (Interrogation) 4 (+2), Outdoors 4, Perception 4, Pilot Ground Craft 1, Pistols (Semi-Automatics) 4 (+2), Stealth skill group 3								
Qualities		Gremlins 1, High Pain Tolerance 2, Magic Resistance 2								
Augmentations		Cyberarm (left, obvious, advanced, Rating 3 w/ Agility 6, Strength 6, Strength Enhancement 3, and Heavy Pistol cybergun), dermal plating 1 (alphaware), plastic bone lacing (alphaware), wired reflexes 1 (alphaware)								
Gear		Actioneer Business Suit, contacts (Rating 3 w/ image link, flare compensation, and smartlink)								
Weapons		Colt America L36 [Light Pistol, Acc 7, DV 5S(e), AP -5, SA, RC —, 11(c), w/ external smartgun system, stick-n-shock ammo] Sap [Club, Acc 5, Reach —, DV 8(11)P, AP —]								



SCENE 1: YOU KNOW THE DRILL

SCAN THIS

In this scene, the runners are hired by Mr. Johnson at a bar called Banshee in the Redmond Barrens. The run is simple: retrieve a commlink from a rundown motel in the Barrens. The B&E and robbery must be completed the same night as the job. The pay is modest, but the job isn't exactly breaking into Zurich Orbital, or Fort Knox for that matter. Unbeknownst to Mr. Johnson or the PCs, however, this simple assignment will lead to a cascade of major events that will shake the criminal, political, and corporate landscape of Seattle.

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

Even by your standards, Banshee is not a nice place. If it wasn't evident enough from the rundown facade of the building (consisting of crumbling twentieth-century wood and brick) and the blinking red neon sign slowly dying away to the last phosphor, the state of things would be made clear by the guy who comes crashing out the batwing doors as you're attempting to wander in. Not running, but thrown, he crashes to the ground and rolls. He's a brown-haired Anglo norm in a synthleather jacket, with snot and puke crusting his chin, whiskey staining his shirt collar, and a hell of a shiner.

"And this time remember to stay out," shouts the pissed-off ork bouncer, dusting off his hands (one of which is cybernetic). Then his yellow-eyed gaze turns to you. He points to a peeling paper sign on the brick wall just inside the door that reads NO WEAPONS in jagged capitals (the Defiance T-250 leaning on the wall below it is apparently an exception), and then extends a metal mesh basket where you can deposit yours. From inside you can hear the wailing of orxploitation-influenced nu-metal from a sound system that sounds suspiciously like a busted jukebox, rising above the tumult of clinking glasses, raucous conversation, and at least one bar fight about to break out. Your nose detects a unique mélange of stale whiskey, spilled beer, sawdust, and sour sweat. Handing over your most obvious weapons to the bouncer, you scan the place for Mr. Johnson, hoping you can find him before someone puts him—or you—in a body bag.

All in all, it's just a typical night in the Redmond Barrens.

HOOKS

The runners are there to get a job, and that should be enough to get most teams interested in the scene. To set the scene, play up the filth and squalor of Banshee, the unfriendliness of everyone there, and the seething rage of the disenfranchised underclasses ready to explode into violence at the slightest provocation. Another hook is the guy who got thrown out, although the runners shouldn't have a chance to interact with him here in anything more than a cursory way: when they meet Seth Dietrich later, though, they'll have a chance to realize he was the Anglo norm they saw getting

bounced from Banshee. Dietrich could not remember being thrown out the last time because it didn't happen to *him*, not really. It happened to one of his other personalities.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Security at Banshee is fairly lax, and most of the patrons are armed. The bouncer ("Gorgeous George" is his handle, although he is hideous and his given name is Andrew) lets anything smaller than a heavy pistol by without a question. Anything larger than a heavy pistol, he confiscates, or he refuses the runners entry if the runners stupidly fail to hand it in. He doesn't exactly have access to a state of the art MAD detector, but then again, anything bigger than a heavy pistol ain't exactly subtle. If the runners check their Predators at the door, good for them; they can pick them up on the way out.

If they try to conceal their heavy pistols and slip them past George, have each PC who does so roll *Palming + Agility [Physical]* versus George's *Perception + Intuition [Mental]*; George has a *Perception* dice pool of 4 [*Mental Limit* of 4] for the purpose of this test. If the runners make no effort to conceal heavy pistol-sized weapons, the bouncer spots them and demands they hand them over. Runners are given plastic chits for their stashed weapons and can hand them over to grab their gear on the way out. Only if the runners are bringing in something really nasty (both dangerous to multiple patrons and concealable, like grenades) will George become really upset and possibly deny the runners entry. Certainly, he will deny their *grenades* entry.

Nearly everyone in Banshee is scum looking for a tussle: street survivors, muscle, enforcers, wannabe runners, and plenty of gangers. Both the Blood Mountain Boys and the 162s are there in numbers, not currently at war with each other, but keeping well to their own corners (see *Pushing the Envelope*, below). If the runners are looking for trouble, if they even look at anyone wrong, they'll find it. If they stick to their business and pay for their drinks with certified credsticks, they can conduct the deal unmolested.

Mr. Johnson is a thin, somewhat greasy looking male Korean human, with a pencil-thin mustache and a comb over. He's wearing a lined coat in a dull crimson color over a black business-casual dress shirt and white tie, and has a gleaming datajack on his temple, but no other obvious augmentations or weapons. He recognizes the runners and waves them over. He introduces himself as Mr. Johnson when they sit, and then a strung-out ork barmaid, half comatose from the derms of bliss on her arm, comes over to slurringly take their drink orders (Mr. Johnson is halfheartedly nursing a 7 and 7). Once the drinks are brought over to them, Mr. Johnson suggests (sarcastically) that having sampled enough of the place's delectable ambiance, they get down to business.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Mr. Johnson leans forward and lowers his voice.

"This is a very simple piece of work that I'm sure is well within your capabilities. The only catch is that it has to be done in a very short timeframe. I need an item retrieved from a nearby business and brought back here. Security



should be minimal, with no need for overt violence, although I'll be honest," he smiles less than charmingly, "I really don't care at all what you do to get it. The pay is (1,000 nuyen times the number of runners) for your group to split up as you see fit. If you agree, I'll tell you where you're going and what you're looking for."

At this point, the runners can negotiate. Have them roll their Negotiation + Charisma [Social] versus Mr. Johnson's Negotiation dice pool, which is 9 (he has a Social limit of 5). Each net hit the runners achieve raises the payment to the entire group by 500 nuyen. No matter what, Mr. Johnson won't pay more than twice his initial offer (although it's spectacularly unlikely that the PCs will achieve that many net hits). Initially, Mr. Johnson offers no upfront payment, but he is willing to offer any bonus nuyen the runners earn with a successful Negotiation Test upfront. Mr. Johnson is less flexible with information than he is with cash: he won't divulge *any* more details about the job until the runners firmly agree, look him in the eye, and shake his hand.

Once the runners do that, read or paraphrase the following:

"What I need is a commlink. It's currently held by this guy named Oxycode, a real piece of drek—small time pimp, pusher, hustler. I don't give a fuck what happens to him. He could win the lottery or get sold for parts to Tamanous for all I care. I just need his commlink. He's at room 312 at the Novelty Hills Sleep & Eat. That means the commlink's there too. You have any questions? If not you should get going. I need that commlink tonight."

The truth is, Mr. Johnson doesn't have much more information and therefore can't divulge much of what he knows. He won't explain what's on the commlink, why he needs it, or anything more about who Oxycode is. He is telling the absolute truth when he says he has no reason to expect any heightened security at the Novelty Hills Sleep & Eat. If the runners ask him for security data like maps or passcodes, he laughs in their faces: "It's not exactly an MCT Zero Zone, *omae*. Besides, what'm I paying you for if not to worry about that shit?"

The truth is, except for one small detail, the job is exactly what it appears to be. While it's not important to the adventure, in case the PCs somehow get the truth out of Mr. Johnson, here's what's really going on with the initial run. Mr. Johnson is really Kim Shin-jo, an underboss in the Choson Seoulparring. A certain local Asian businessman pays the Choson ring for protection, and now Oxycode has a compromising video of his daughter and is threatening to blackmail her. Kim first tried to buy Oxycode off, but Oxycode got greedy and spat on his offer. Now the businessman is freaking out (hence the urgency), and he's doing things a different way.

The sprawl won't miss a lone drug dealer. Mr. Johnson figures that the runners will kill him in the burglary, being what they are; if they don't, he'll have his own guys get him later. Mr. Johnson isn't about to attempt to arrange for

outright network through unknown operatives, though, since that would be a good way to land him a long prison sentence if it turns out the runners can't be trusted.

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

If your players (or you) are already itching for a fight, here's just one of several ways you could use the rough crowd of Banshee to give them one. Some of the patrons there are ghouls, belonging to the 162s, a ghoul gang with ties to the organlegging syndicate Tamanous. You could have the ghouls decide the runners look tasty, or that their implants look like they'd fetch a good price on the secondhand market, or both—maybe they want to eat some parts and sell the rest. When the runners go to leave, the 162s jump the runners, trying to pile on them with numbers and the element of surprise. They try to hit the runners before they can retrieve their heavy gear from the bouncer.

There are two 162 ghouls for every runner: nonetheless this should be a straightforward, quick, and easy fight. Even with superior numbers and the element of surprise, the ghouls should be no match for the runners. However, if the runners are over their heads, they can easily purchase help by offering the Blood Mountain Boys hanging out there anything of even moderate value in exchange for their assistance. While not at war with the 162s, the BMBs are spoiling for a fight and will jump at the chance to make a profit. There is one of them for each runner.

If the fight breaks out inside the bar, the combatants use their bare fists (or claws in the case of ghouls) until one of the runners pulls out a knife or club; they then use melee weapons until one of the runners pulls out a gun. If the runners are wise, they won't escalate things. If they do, they may gain a point of Notoriety, and Gorgeous George will certainly grab his shotgun off the wall and start opening up on anyone using firearms inside (or just outside) Banshee.

No law enforcement will show up at any point—this is the Barrens, after all. If the runners actually lose to the ghouls, they are likely to become dinner. Such is the risk of pushing the envelope.

DEBUGGING

Honestly, the runners would have to be willfully stupid to fail to gain entrance or to offend Mr. Johnson so badly he rescinds the job offer. If the players are very new or the characters very dumb, gently remind them that no one else in the bar is packing heavy ordnance, and it's probably safe to stash theirs by the door. If the runners are too unprofessional to get past the bouncer without a fight, then they are very rightfully out of a job.

If the runners balk at the low pay Mr. Johnson is offering, have him point out that it's 1,000 nuyen apiece for a single night's work, against minimal opposition and low security. In the shadows, you seldom get a job this easy and uncomplicated. Allow the PCs to succeed at Judge Intentions (Charisma + Intuition) Tests to see that Mr. Johnson is clearly telling the truth. If that's not enough to convince them, or if





they refuse to do the job for Mr. Johnson at the rates he offers, Mr. Johnson quickly loses patience. “You just missed out on a chance to get paid to walk down the street, walk back here, and go home,” he says, getting up to leave.

If the PCs seem intent on sabotaging the job opportunity, let them. Have the ghouls attack so you can at least get one combat out of the evening. If you want to continue with the rest of this adventure, Dietrich’s commlink can find its way into the runners’ hands some other way without this easy introductory step.

PLACES OF INTEREST

BANSHEE

1267 163rd Avenue NE

You’d think this place got its name from its crappy Thursday night karaoke sessions with a tinny sound system and drunken patrons who can’t carry a tune in a bucket, but truth is I have no idea. The Banshee is strictly no-frills: a bar, some strings of LEDs, a pissed-looking ork bouncer, and cheap booze. Its prime appeal is being so unremarkable and low-key enough to do business in, provided you keep an eye on the hungrier-looking patrons.

GRUNTS AND MOVING TARGETS

GORGEOUS GEORGE (PISSED OFF ORK BOUNCER)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
8 (9)	3 (5)	3	6 (8)	4	2	3	2	2	5
Initiative	6 + 1D6								
Condition Monitor	12 (13) / 10								
Limits	Physical 8 (10), Mental 4, Social 5								
Armor	13								
Skills	Clubs 3, Etiquette (Street) 3 (+2), Intimidation 4, Longarms (Shotguns) 2 (+2), Perception 1, Unarmed Combat 5								
Knowledge Skills	Redmond Barrens 3								
Qualities	Home Ground, Toughness								
Augmentations	Cyberarm (left, obvious, advanced, Rating 2, w/ Armor 1 and Strength Enhancement 3)								
Gear	Armor jacket, Meta Link commlink, 1 dose of novacoke								
Weapons	Defiance T-250 [Shotgun, Acc 4, DV 12P(f), AP +4, SS/SA, RC —, 5(m), w/ flechette ammo]								

