Mr. Johnson's

LITTLE BLACK BOOK
WEB PREVIEW

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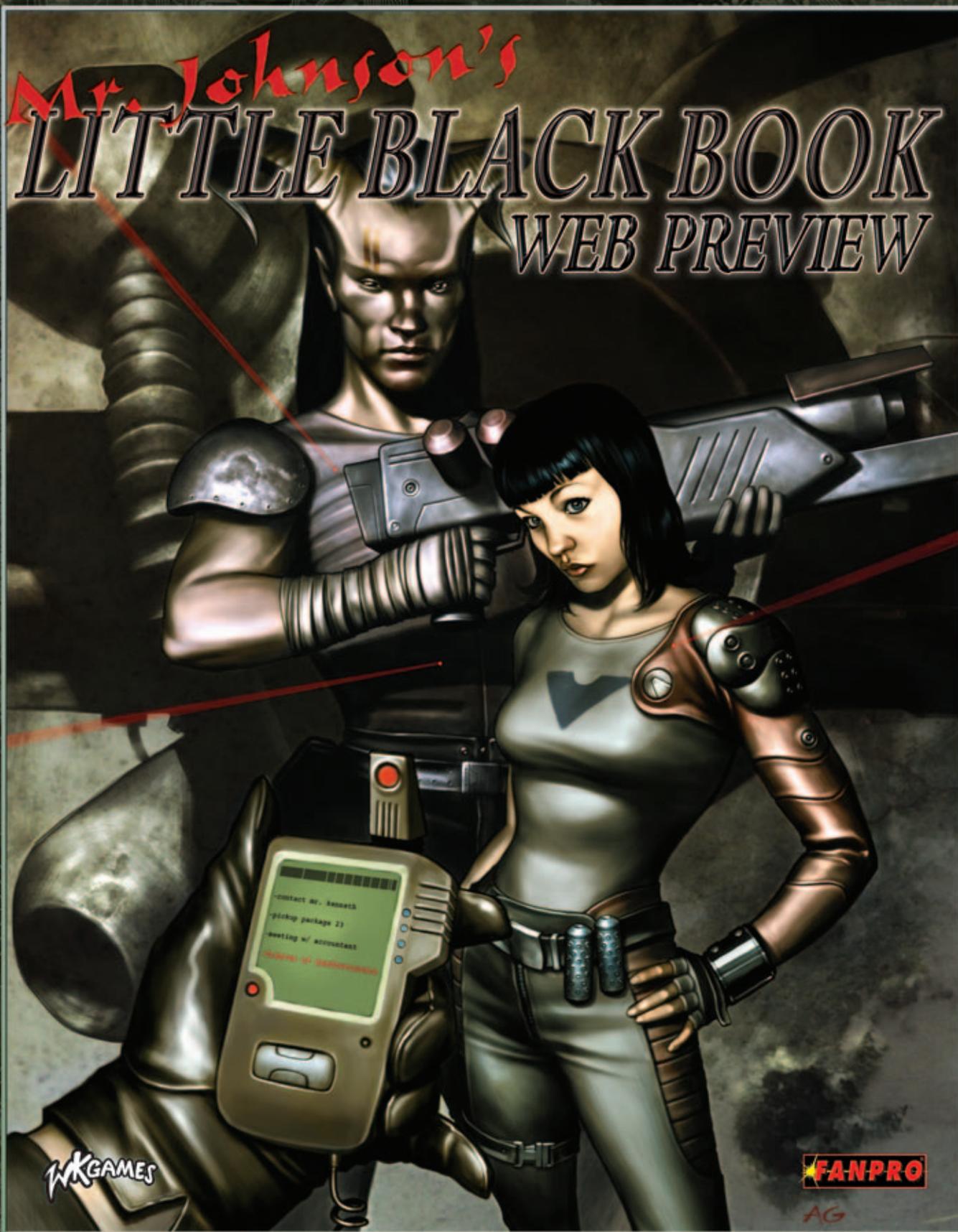
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INTRODUCTION

Mr. Johnson's Little Black Book is a gamemaster companion for *Shadowrun, Third Edition.* Though many parts of it will be on interest to players, the primary purpose of this book is to provide gamemasters with suggestions and tools for making their own *Shadowrun* games and campaigns more interesting. The only section of this book that players should not read is the *On the Run* chapter—you wouldn't want to spoil the excitement by reading an adventure's plot in advance now, would you?

This book aims to fill the gap left by two out-of-print rulebooks created during the first and second editions of the game. The first was *Sprawl Sites,* which provided an array of location archetypes with maps, random sprawl encounter charts and contact/archetype listings (for *Shadowrun, First Edition*). The second was the *Contacts* book included with the gamemaster's screen for *Shadowrun, Second Edition.* Though there is some overlap, the material in *Mr. Johnson's Little Black Book* is entirely new. Gamemasters may also find the gamemaster section of the *Shadowrun Companion* and the descriptions of daily life in the 2060s given in *Sprawl Survival Guide* useful for bringing their game worlds to life.

Mr. Johnson's Little Black Book starts off with *Anatomy of a Shadowrun,* which guides the gamemaster through the standard process of hiring the runners to commit a crime, step-by-step. It also provides a ton of gamemaster advice for handling other elements of a *Shadowrun* campaign, including character creation, incorporating deckers and creating a dynamic and fluid setting. This is the where you'll find the bulk of practical advice in the book; we suggest that all *Shadowrun* gamemasters read through it carefully.

The second chapter, *It's Who You Know,* delves into contacts. Over sixty different contacts are detailed, from all walks of life. The contacts are grouped together by type (corporate security, media, underworld, magical, etc.), with attributes, skills, gear and plot hooks listed for each. The first three contacts in each category are expansions of a single contact archetype—rather than include a generic Mr. Johnson, for example, we have a corporate headhunter, Mr. Fix-It and a mixed-up middle manager. Each contact includes a short write-up explaining who the contact is and how they might interact with player characters. This same chapter also includes suggestions for giving each of your NPCs a "gimmick" to make them notable.

Where It's At is devoted to locations. Over forty distinct places are described, broken down by category (bars, city streets, laboratories, etc.). Rather than generic archetypes, each location is given specific details, but they can easily be placed in just about any locale or even modified slightly to be a separate and distinct place. A quick neighborhood generation system is also provided, allowing a gamemaster to roll up a quick location on the fly, as well as a list of location gimmicks for giving each locale that unique feel.

The next chapter, *On the Run,* features a dozen short adventure plots for gamemasters who need to put together a quick run with no preparation time. A section of short random encounters follows, for gamemasters who need a short and quick scenario to throw at some characters in the midst of a run, or between runs. A system for randomly generating shadowruns on the fly is also included.

Wrapping up the book, *Game Information,* starts off with rules and guidelines for running low-level or high-powered Shadowrun campaigns, including alternate character creation systems. This is followed by sections on using reputation (both street cred and notoriety) and prejudice (expanding from racism based on metatype to include numerous other factors). The book wraps up with rules and advice for quickly resolving decking runs and vehicle combat so that they are faster and less complicated.

GAMEMASTER CONCERNS

Now that we've walked through the process, there are a few leftover concerns to keep in mind.

INCORPORATING RIGGERS AND DECKERS

Suggestions for incorporating deckers into the game are given on p. 107–108, *SRComp,* but here are some additional options, as well as ways to handle riggers. You should also consider the quick resolution systems found on p. 122.

If one of your players wants to play a decker, suggest that they create a combat decker character, someone who can shoot or fight as well as they slide through Matrix hosts. This will allow the character to be useful outside of the Matrix and will cut down on the amount of decking in the game as a whole. Conversely, try to set entire scenes involving all of the characters in the Matrix. This will reduce the amount of time the non-deckers have to wait. It will help to establish a few regular Matrix haunts that the characters (and their Matrix-oriented contacts) frequent, such as a virtual bar, an online game or even Shadowland.

When possible with these Matrix scenes, skip the dice rolling entirely and just allow the characters to be imaginative with how they interact with the virtual world. Don't make things entirely easy, of course, or the decker may feel cheated. Any or all of these options could also be combined with those given in the *Shadowrun Companion,* making for a flexible and more enjoyable game.

Riggers are also sometimes shuffled off to the side just like deckers, either because the rules are perceived as too complex or because the rigger is just considered the getaway driver. A rigger should never just be a chauffeur for the other characters, as they can be extremely useful for surveillance, providing armed backup and defeating security riggers. Encourage players who want to play a rigger to focus in at least one of these specialty areas, so the team can realize his usefulness. When it comes to vehicle combat, use the rules for integrating vehicles in standard combat (see p. 80, *Rigger 3*) to simplify matters.

CREATING STORY ARCS

If your players are looking for a full-fledged campaign, it can be a daunting task to create a campaign-length storyline. Crafting individual scenarios may be easy, but how do you link them together into an interesting overarching plot?

The first suggestion is: don't. If the setting you create for the players is dynamic enough, quite often it will come to life on its own, and drawn-out storylines will develop without any need for you to plan in advance. Just be careful to take note of the consequences and loose ends after the first run or two, and consider how you can add to these and flesh them out into larger plotlines.

Runs are rarely wrapped up perfectly, and sometimes the players will simply overlook or forget about things. Pick up some of these options left lying around, mix them together with some elements from the characters' various backgrounds, and stir up something interesting. Your players will hand you an entire game through character carelessness, unsolved mysteries, dramas and more. All you need to do is weave them together.

If you do have an overarching campaign plot in mind, keep it flexible. Odds are that not everything will play out as you planned, and you'll need to patch up your ideas as the campaign progresses in accordance with the characters' actions. Also, you should be careful to not steer every run and scenario towards that ultimate plotline—otherwise the characters will see it coming from a mile away and/or feel railroaded. Throw in a few unrelated jobs and perhaps even some red herrings. Depending upon how they go, you may even be able to tie them into the larger plot later on.

One of the most frequent questions a writer is asked is, "Where do you get your inspiration?" It's not something bought at the store—everyone has access to it. Inspiration comes from every day life. The lives of your friends, family and acquaintances often feature some unusual event one could borrow and tweak. People-watching and speculating on their lives can unearth some interesting ideas. News reports, books and movies have so many plot seeds to be found in them that it's easy to blur the line between fact and fiction. Take liberally from these, rearrange them and add a new twist to make them your own.

DYNAMIC WORLD & CONSEQUENCES

Sometimes in trying to make a game "cool," realism goes completely out the window; soon characters are holding up banks with Citymasters and Yellowjackets. It can be fun in a rare moment to blow off steam, but when trying to portray a grim place with real consequences, the two just don't go together. Like the real world, every action has an equal or opposite reaction. Changes result, which may engender more reactions.

As it has been said before, to really make a game world alive, it must be dynamic. Things are never static, nor do they happen in a vacuum. If a ganger holds up the corner store and shoots someone, the wounded person doesn't get up after the ganger's gone. Either medical personnel see to their condition or they die unattended. If the runners were present at the shooting, their involvement (or lack thereof) could result in the wounded person dying or living. They may end up with a friend for life—or an enemy, as the dead person's spouse, sibling or best friend seeks vengeance.

Big, metaplot events may, on the surface, never apply to the player characters. Big events never stay big, however. They ripple out or roll downhill. The Johnson that hires the runners this week may be the CEO of a small corporation that was swallowed up by a megacorp because the small corp produced a necessary component needed for the newest generation of cyberware. This cyberware could be the result of a few projects that the AI Deus abandoned during his mad imprisonment of the Renraku Arcology. Other examples of this phenomenon can be found in the supplements regarding Dunkelzahn's presidential campaign, as well as his death.

The simplest acts can have large consequences. The trick is to use them effectively in a game, contributing toward a realistic world that still retains style.

WHO WATCHES THE WATCHMEN?

CORPORATE SECURITY

"It's disgusting the way we're portrayed in the trids and the popular media—seems like we're always painted as buffoons and cannon fodder who just keep on shooting until the shadowrunners mow us down. That's not the reality, chummer, so best get used to it.

Corp security guards aren't a bunch of hick rent-a-cops who get hired off the street to wear the armor and patrol around in golf carts. We're highly trained professionals with a job to do, and that's keeping scum from breaking into whatever corp installation we're looking out for. In a way it's like a game—they keep coming up with innovative ways to get past us, and we have to stay one step ahead of them. I like challenging myself against what they have to offer.

Don't get the wrong idea, though—when they come calling it's deadly serious, and we all know that. They're not shooting toy guns at us, and we're not automatons. Most of us have families and lives outside of our work, and we'd like to stick around to enjoy them. Security's not about toe-to-toe shootouts with intruders; if we're doing that, we've already failed. Knowledge and a reputation that inspires deterrence are key—that and the smarts that only come from experience."

The corporate security guard is one part of a system that includes technological, magical and physical components, all working for the same end: to keep corporate assets safe from anybody who wants a piece of the action. He likes his job and is dedicated to the corporation that's taken good care of him and his family. He'll even risk injury to fulfill his mission, but he wants to stay alive just like everybody else. He knows when to cut and run, and a savvy shadowrunner can sometimes gain more from talking than shooting.

Interaction: The corporate security guard is always looking for something to give him an edge against the opposition. Information about new ways runners have to get past security (somewhere else, of course!) is always welcome, as are tips about rumored upcoming break-ins at the guard's facility.

Metatype: Human

B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	R	PR
5	4	4	3	3	2	4.15	3	3

INIT: 3 + 2D6
Dice Pools: Combat 5 (3 w/security armor), Karma 3
Active Skills: Athletics 3, Clubs 3, Computer 2, Etiquette 2 (Corporate 3), Interrogation 3, Leadership 3, Pistols 4, Submachine Guns 2, Unarmed Combat 4
Knowledge Skills: [Corporation] History 3, [Installation] Layout 3, Corporate Law 2, Matrix Games 3, Psychology 2, Security Systems 3, Tactics 4
Cyberware: Boosted Reflexes 1, Headware Radio [Rating 3], Smartlink 2, Subvocal Microphone
Gear: Light security armor [7/6 with helmet, 6/4 without], Browning Max-Power, goggles with low light and thermographic vision, plastic restraints, mage mask, datajack plugs, datapad, medkit, passkey for authorized areas of corp facility

Hooks:
- A disgruntled corporate security guard who recently missed a promotion decides to make some cred on the side by selling information about the facility he's guarding.
- A guard suspects that a fellow guard is selling out their employer, and asks a runner friend to help him prove it.

RENT-A-COP

"Look, I'll be the first to admit I'm not a 'real' cop. That's okay, though—usually all I have to do is cruise around the area with my flashlight once every hour or so, making sure no squatters or kids are trying to get in where they're not supposed to. Then I go back, watch my monitors, drink some soykaf and catch up on my reading. What all this means is that I take pride in my job, but I ain't gonna get killed for it. Not for what they pay me. They don't even let me carry a gun. Turned down for Lone Star? Yeah, what's it to you? I didn't want to work for 'em anyway. Sure, this job is boring most of the time, but that's the way I like it. Excitement can get you dead. If anything more dangerous than a couple of kids climbing over the fence goes down, you can bet I'm on the comm to the Star before you can say Happy Donuts."

The rent-a-cop isn't in this to make law enforcement his career. He'd prefer that nothing exciting happens on his watch, especially since they don't give him many effective ways to deal with it if it does. The better rent-a-cops are off-duty or ex-cops or retired military with some real training; the rest have a few hours of security and self-defense classes and probably aren't in the kind of physical condition they should be. Some of them take stims just to stay awake long enough to finish their shifts. The downside is that these guys usually aren't guarding anything you want—the upside is that if they are, it's usually not hard to persuade them to be patrolling at the other end of the site from where you need to be.

Interaction: Rent-a-cops are usually amenable to bribes, as long as they aren't asked to put their jobs or safety in jeopardy. Regardless of morality, most of them wouldn't say no to some wiz gear to help them do their jobs.

Metatype: Ork

B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	R	PR
7	3	6	2	3	2	6	2	2

INIT: 2 + 1D6
Dice Pools: Combat 4, Karma 2
Active Skills: Clubs 3, Electronics 2, Stealth 2, Unarmed Combat 3
Knowledge Skills: Police Procedure 2, Security Procedures 2, Security Systems 2, Simporn Trivia 4
Gear: Armored vest [2/1], stun baton, radio, large flashlight, simsense player and chips, stim drugs
Hooks:
- A mall cop, fired in disgrace after failing to prevent several blatant thefts, asks a runner friend to help him nail the gangers he knows (but can't prove) committed the thefts.
- A rent-a-cop at a storage facility accidentally finds something *very* interesting in one of the lockers …

say, is respect—in order for the critters (and spirits) to respect you, you have to respect them. She takes a dim view of corp security bosses who treat paracritters as expendable assets.

Interaction: The parasecurity expert's first loyalty is to her critters, so anything you can send her way that makes them tougher or more effective—training techniques, cyberware or gear—is always welcome. She also values information about new paracritters or powers that runners might have encountered, and if you can actually *get* her one …

Metatype: Elf

B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	M	R	PR
3	5	3	5	5	6	6	6	5	3

INIT: 5 + 1D6
Dice Pools: Combat 7, Karma 4, Spell 5
Active Skills: Athletics 3, Biotech 4 (Paracritters 5), Conjuring 7, Etiquette 3 (Corporate 4), Instruction 4 (Animals 5), Rifles 3
Knowledge Skills: Animal Psychology 6, Parazoology 6, Security Procedures 4, Spirits 5, Veterinary Medicine 4, Wards 5
Gear: Lined coat [4/2], spirit focus 2, tranquilizer rifle
Hooks:
- One of a parasecurity expert's dangerous and unorthodox guard critters has escaped, and she needs help retrieving it before it hurts anyone or Lone Star captures it.
- A parasecurity expert wants to breed an extremely rare female critter. Problem is, males of the species are even rarer. She hires the runners to find an appropriate stud.

SUPPLY SERGEANT

Any runners who spent time in the military know this guy—he's the one who could get you whatever you needed if he liked you and make your life a living bureaucratic hell if he didn't. All the gear goes through this guy's hands, from your weapons to your underwear, and he's the one responsible for making sure that everything is tagged, tracked and in the proper place. Of course, since he keeps watch over all the shipments, it's not too hard for him to see to it that a few things fall off the back of the truck or simply don't get checked in … and if you can reciprocate by hooking him up with a few things the military doesn't supply, it'll be the beginning of a beautiful friendship. He's also useful for providing information about what his unit is up to based on what's being requisitioned.

Metatype: Dwarf

B	Q	S	I	W	C	E	R	PR
6	3	6	4	4	4	5.2	3	3

INIT: 3 + 1D6
Dice Pools: Combat 5, Karma 3
Active Skills: Assault Rifle 4, Etiquette 3 (Military 5), Leadership 3 (Military 4), Negotiation 5 (Fast Talk 6), Pistols 3, Unarmed Combat 4
Knowledge Skills: Black Markets 5, Duty Stations 3 (His Own 5), Horse Racing 3, Military History 4, Military SOP 4, Military Theory 3, Supply Chain 5
Cyberware: Datajack, display link, memory [150 Mp]
Gear: Whatever he's got in the warehouse, standard-issue weapon appropriate for his military branch

PARASECURITY EXPERT

"Anybody who can afford it who doesn't have paranimals as part of their security setup is either naïve, stupid or asking for trouble. If they're trained right, paracritters are a perfect complement to what metahuman and technological security measures can do, and what's more, they're great for psych value. Ever see a pack of hellhounds bearing down on you in the dark when you're trying to break into a building? These puppies are huge and black and their eyes glow red like something straight out of … well, you know. Sure, you can shoot 'em—if you have the presence of mind to do it before they're on top of you. With the advances they're making these days in critter armor and 'ware, there's no excuse for not having a few of them in your employ. Just make sure you've got somebody like me to look after 'em and keep 'em happy. Trust me, your Uncle Bob might have taught the family poodle to roll over and play dead, but you need the right mojo to deal with these critters or it won't just be the poodle that's playing dead."

The parasecurity expert understands the critters she works with, usually better than she understands the people she works for. Like her charges, she's Awakened. As an aspected conjurer, she's got the skills and experience to deal with creatures that are unpredictable, hard to train and harder still to keep under control—and she can handle spirits and wards, too. The key, she'll

Monorail Transit Station (A/C)

After the New York earthquake, monorails began to replace subways in most cities. Monorail stations are always above ground. The rail circuit runs through the city's more densely populated areas, such as downtown. Some stations are inside buildings. In Seattle, the monorail drives through the Renraku Arcology to pick up passengers.

Monorails run continuously. During the day, the station is filled with commuters. The number of people moving through the station makes it a safe location for exchanges. The bathrooms can be an excellent place to find a BTL dealer during peak hours. At any other time, the station becomes the haunt of late-shift workers and gangers. Occasionally, club kids use the rail to get from club

to club when they're too buzzed to drive. These kids often clash with local gangers, forcing the station officers to call for backup.

With all the telecoms in the station, Matrix access is abundant. The downside is that all access is public. Others who want to use the phone may bother anyone jacked in too long during a busy period.

Layout: This particular station represents the standard outdoor monorail station. The structure sits five to six stories off the ground and measures 120 x 40 meters. It is accessible at either end by an elevator or stairs leading to the main platform. At the top of the stairs, just past the elevator doors, is a booth that houses the station's Monorail Transit Association (MTA) officer. At either side of that booth is a gate spaced with turnstiles.

In order to enter the station proper, passengers slide their credsticks or deposit their money and push through the turnstile. The inside of the station resembles a mini-mall, filled with snack food kiosks, magazine stands and shoeshine peddlers. Occasional musicians come to play during rush hour. This main level contains public restrooms as well as telecoms spaced throughout. Every 20 meters, stairwells lead to the top level. The stairwells are marked "Uptown" and "Downtown."

On the top level, the rail itself separates the uptown and downtown lines. Both sides are lined with benches. For safety, a functioning Panicbutton is located near every stairwell. There are no telecoms on this level. Trains pull into the station between the two sides. Ramps extend to the doors of each train to allow people to board.

Security: The two MTA booths are bulletproof and have cameras that monitor access to the station. The cameras are meant to catch people who jump the turnstile without paying.

MTA stations have two neighborhood ratings. The first reflects rush hour, the second evenings and off-peak hours. Two station officers staff each station, one at each end, and a pair of patrol officers monitor the station during peak hours.

Matrix Host: Blue-Average

MOVING VIOLATION

WHAT'S UP, CHUMMER?

Mr. Johnson needs to get his hands on a Telemex telecom prototype being secretly shipped across the country along with a truckload of earlier models. The runners are hired to hijack the prototype out of the 24-wheel truck. The problem is that they have to pull the job off without the truck ever stopping or anyone knowing they were on it.

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

The runners are given tickets to a baseball game at a local sports arena. When they arrive, they are escorted to a luxury skybox where Mr. Johnson explains what is required of them. He tells them that they need to retrieve one specific telecom unit from inside the truck. He knows the serial number of the box it is in, but does not know where inside the truck that box is. To make matters more complicated, Mr. Johnson wants to throw suspicion on the shippers themselves. Therefore, the runners must enter and leave the truck without ever being detected. For their trouble, he is willing to pay them 5,000¥.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Our Mr. Johnson is new to the world of corporate espionage. The runners' fixer is the fourth fixer that he contacted to contract the work. Unfortunately, he is dreadfully unaware of word of mouth, a problem that comes back to bite him later on. What the Johnson doesn't know is that his fumbling around has alerted the telecom company of the job. They do not find out in time to stop the run from going down, but arrive on the scene just as the runners are dropping off the goods.

The runners' target is a 24-wheeler drone. There is no driver on board the rig. This truck, like others in the company's fleet, uses a self-driving autonav system. The system is very responsive, and if it senses any intrusion or deviation from its program, control of the vehicle is immediately transferred to a company rigger via satellite remote. Once this occurs, the runners will likely be immediately discovered, so this must be avoided at all costs. The truck follows the main highways all the way to its destination. The runners are provided with the truck's description and license plate number, but not its exact route.

Once the runners have the telecom unit, they must meet with Mr. Johnson at another baseball game. A Telemex security response team that has been tracking the Johnson arrives on the scene just as the runners do. They must successfully complete the exchange, then either escape or fight the Telemex team.

HOOKS

In this run, physical confrontation is minimal. The conflict comes from the challenge of maintaining stealth on a public highway, therefore a good portion of this shadowrun should be spent planning it. The runners will want to know everything they can about the vehicle. In addition to the problem of breaching the truck, there is the problem of getting on and off of a vehicle traveling in excess of 112 kph—and doing it without being noticed. If you want to turn up the pressure more, have the runners discover that Mr. Johnson's information was faulty—not only does the truck have a driver, but there is a security officer waiting inside of the trailer.

CAST OF SHADOWS

The most important cast member in the adventure is the truck itself. It is a 24-wheel Conestoga Trailblazer (see p. 169, *Rigger 3*) with an extended trailer. The trailer has four points of entry. There is a man-sized door on either side of the trailer and full double doors in the rear. All three entry doors are maglocked with a keypad entry. The runners must defeat the code to use one of these entry points. The fourth point of entry is the roof of the truck. This truck is occasionally used to transport frozen goods and has a powerful air-conditioning unit that vents through the top. The device has an alarm that requires a successful Electronics B/R (8) Test to overcome.

Drone riggers on the team will find defeating the truck's security difficult. The runners should realize that hacking the drone is a last resort, as doing so will almost certainly compromise secrecy. While the truck is functioning under autonav, it should be treated as being in captain's chair mode, but with no one monitoring it unless an alarm goes off or drone hacking is attempted. If the corporate rigger becomes involved, she has a Rating 2 vehicle control rig and a Rating 8 remote control deck with Rating 6 encryption. She will assume direct control of the truck as soon as an attack is detected.

Mr. Johnson
NPC/Professional Rating: Inferior/2

Jon Mastriani still believes that the world can turn without shadowrunners. He is loath to involve himself with the runners at all, but unfortunately he can find no other way to get this work done. If the runners save his life, he may start to believe in the value of shadowrunners after all.

Telemex Security
NPC/Professional Rating: Inferior/3

The Telemex team is more interested in re-acquiring their product than dealing with whoever stole it. Once the runners hand off the product to Mr. Johnson, they will ignore the runners.

PICKING UP THE PIECES

There is no guarantee that Mr. Johnson plans to hand the prototype over to his company. He can decide to go rogue, in which case the runners may be hired to help him sell the prototype to an interested third party. Mr. Johnson may even try to sell the prototype back to the company it was stolen from.

A different approach could involve the prototype being much more than a telecom. The prototype could be a high-level military communication device. It's useless unless you know how to use it, and only a handful of scientists would be able to figure it out. The runners could be hired to grab one of the scientists and protect him while he figures out how the device works.