Orchestra

A Dystopian Future in a Grim World

Intro:

Okay, you're probably wondering what this is about. It's a little side project of mine to test out the rules system in a larger game I'm writing, but that said it'll probably get blown way out of proportion. What this is is a mix of conservative and new (well, not terribly original, but stuff I'd like to see more often in the tabletop game market). It's a simple game at heart, but that's not to say it's an incomplete game. The setting's more loosely defined than a "finished" product, but part of that's to make it more open to players and Game Masters. If you haven't played tabletop games and aren't familiar with the lingo, here's a brief overview.

Tabletop games incorporate humans and random chance to generate a game. Sometimes these games are not unlike video games, with relatively high amounts of numerical intervention leading players to essentially "rollplay", some are very loose and rely on the mutual consent of the players with less or limited impact from dice or cards ("roleplay"). Admittedly, Orchestra tries to create a dice heavy "rollplay" system, but that's because players can pick and choose what they want to roleplay with the help of a Game Master (a.k.a. GM), a person who typically is not a player of the game, but sets it up to follow a story he or she has imagined already (or at least the basic points of), and ignore the hard-set rules for these bits. Have fun playing.

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Background (Swordsman Foundation):

Governments ran into issues with their economies when one of the major superpowers ran so far into debt that they collapsed, and the governments, corporations, and individuals that had been depending too heavily on its debts being paid wound up peniless. It was revealed that several nations were lying about the actual extents of their natural resources and stockpiles, and the financial collapse was met with a lack of resources. The world burned. Several corporations took advantage of the chaos to become nation-state grade entities or perform previously proscribed experiments.

The world finally settled back into order, with a World League taking control from the various individual states with relatively little resistance (typically from corporate enclaves), several Corporate Private Areas, and a handful of patches of good old anarchy. The World League ruled with an iron fist, taking on many of the mistakes of the previous superpowers and lying through its teeth about the state of technological advances. People enjoyed high confidence, but life expectancy actually dropped (despite falsified studies) due to waning health coverage. The World League lost many men in conflicts against anarchic and corporate interests, and the veteran population was often plagued with poorly remedied war wounds, psychological and physical. To top it off, the World League turned some of the rural areas under its control into "hot zones", artificially irradiated zones used to hide testing. The inhabitants of these zones were proclaimed lost whenever the supposed nuclear incident occurred, but they were used by the World League for human testing or sold off to corporations for a variety of nefarious purposes.

The Swordsman Foundation is a small group of men and women dedicated to exposing the World League's lies and propaganda, as well as genuinely benefitting the inhabitants of the world. We often suffer from being attributed with various terrorist attacks (sometimes exacerbated by more radical elements), and while we have military assets, we keep them secret for fear of reprisals.

Background (World League):

Springing from the ashes of world nations, the World League has restored a standard of living and technological advances that were thought lost during the first half of the twenty-first century. From the failed individual nations, several leaders arose and built up a stronger, international coalition that has become the World League.

With equality and justice for all, the World League provides unrivaled opportunities for citizens and immigrants alike, with socialized medicine and cutting-edge technology available to the masses. Poverty is obsolete within our borders, and famines are a thing of history.

Spanning every continent, the World League is a hope for tomorrow, pushing back the anarchic free states, the corrupt Corporate Private Areas, and outsmarting and neutralizing the threats of the Swordsman Foundation.

Background (Corporations):

We are the order behind the scenes. Say what you will, despite the World League's rhetorical and military attacks upon our enclaves, everyone depends on us. From the lowest egoist to the president of the World League, we supply the majority of resources and goods to the world.

Without us, there would be nothing, we'd still be living in the Stone Age, hunting animals with

rocks. We're the light on the horizon, ignore the World League. They haven't actually come up with anything new in a long time. We're the ones who came up with the kelp and soy we all eat, and the alternative energy that won't be depleted within a few hundred years.

We are progress. We're not the backsliding of the anarchists, or the stagnation and politics of the Swordsman Foundation and World League. We are the future.

Background (Egoists):

Hey, you're in the right place. Come on over and have a seat. Outside these walls, I'd probably shoot you for that coat you have, but I don't feel like shooting in the bar. Maybe tomorrow I'll catch up with you and take your shiny things. Of course, I've got liquor for a while after a heist from the corporations, so I may not be out shooting for a while yet.

I live for myself, and you'd best too. Life's too short to care about others or what they think. I mean, maybe your friends or family, but that's not always great either. Us Egoists? The government kept us down. We've risen. Come with us, and see what you can do for yourself. Not what some guy in a fancy suit can.

Background (Neo-Anarchists):

Ignore him. He's just upset because the truck he stopped had soft drinks rather than guns. Not all of us anarchists are bad. The whole bomb-throwing stereotype is really mis-attributed. We're better than average, if you ask me. Why?

We've got our own rules, but we don't have written law or even common law. We have the laws of popularity. Believe it or not, we're actually much stricter than the World League on crime and corruption. There it's money. Here, it's your name.

We have this database with names of everyone who's registered to live in our areas, voluntary, of course, but highly recommended. We don't have currency or police or governments. We have reputation. You get reputation from how people think of you. They like you, they bump your rep. Each point adds up until you hit certain ratings. And you don't just get "I like this guy" points, you get points for your actions. Not just for performing on a hit television show, you have to actually do stuff. Points are categorized. Fraud is one of the biggest crimes.

We live in order and peace, but nobody reigns over us but God. As author and professor JRR Tolkien wrote, we are "philosophically understood" anarchists, not "whiskered men with bombs", and we are looking for the "abolition of control".

Background (Conclusion):

Now you've heard from all five political factions on what is now Earth. Sure you may find the occasional theocratic or despotic group in an otherwise anarchic zone, or old Wild West like settlements, but if you wanna join up with a group of power players, those are your options. For the most part, none of them lie. The Swordsman Foundation is focused on taking down the World League due to its numerous frauds. The World League is trying to restore order and progress to the world, despite its internal flaws. The Corporations are turning a profit and actually helping people, albeit for their own benefit. Egoists are... egoists. When the end came, they saw an opportunity to help

themselves. Neo-Anarchists are distrustful of government, but recognize the need for order and rules, so they have established a reputation network that protects them from grievous offenders.

Pick a side. Any side. If you don't, you will be left behind. You can find their representatives anywhere. Even the worst hell-hole has someone who adheres to the World League, and the shiniest city or Corporate Private Area has a few Egoists wanting to make the world their playground.

The World League's predecessors were on the verge of a new type of warfare that would change geopolitical boundaries forever by crippling nations. Part of the ability of the World League to foster was caused by the Cataclysm Weapon Test, which was an experiment with a weapon that would be able to cause seismic-scale destruction. It created great wastelands that the World League mostly ignores. These regions have been plunged into a technological dark age- even if the minds are there to restore modern society, the resources usually aren't. These are pockets where the Swordsmen, corporations, and anarchists are dominant. The borders are set in stone, and there's not much transition between the two worlds.

There's a great call for hired hands and rented guns, either in the towering World League cities, or the bleak anarchic wastes, or in the few places in the Cataclysm Zones where civilization struggles to return. The borders are rife with conflict- the World League officially welcomes and "rehabilitates" wasteland dwellers, but the truth is less friendly. Border crossings are dangerous underground affairs involving hidden tunnels under massive concrete walls or a prayer-filled plane ride. Only the richest corporations have the pull to ship people and materials between the two areas. While it is true that the majority of the world's commerce is done in the World League's territory, the Cataclysm Zones hold hordes of unfortunates looking for a better life.

Introductory Rules- the ABACUS-PH system:

ABACUS-PH is an acronym for Orchestra's statistic tracking system; Agility, Bulk, Awareness, Cleverness, Understanding, and Sympathy are the six attributes that comprise the "natural" group of human attributes. These are the generic things present in every person that allow them to function on a daily basis. Psychic and Hyperhumanity are the two "unnatural" attributes, which are not present in all humans. These have come about in the past twenty or so years as a result of modifying human genetic codes, neural structures, and physical bodies, and are found only in select individuals.

The ABACUS-PH attributes are further broken down into four color categories:

- Red (Agility, Bulk) represents physical strength and the ability to use it effectively, as well as resisting disease and injury.
- Blue (Awareness and Cleverness) represents intelligence and the ability to assess surroundings.
- Green (Understanding and Sympathy) are the "social" attributes, used to understand others' thoughts and appeal to them respectively.
- Silver (Psychic and Hyperhumanity) represents the unnatural attributes that have sprung about as a result of modifications to humanity.

In Orchestra, each player chooses 7 specializations for their character, to make them stand out in a crowd. First, the player chooses a favored attribute color category (except Silver, whose attributes must be favored separately, and work differently than the norm). Each player then chooses two individual attributes to favor. They can be from the same color category that is favored, or a different

one. Finally, players each favor four skills for their character (found in the Skills Section or an index to the right). When this is done, they should have a list on their character sheet that shows a tree of color categories, attributes, and skills. This tree tells how many dice should be rolled for each skill when it is used (as a general rule, 2 dice are rolled for no specializations in the tree, 3 for one, 4 for two, and 5 when color category, attribute, and skill are each individually favored). Characters also get 5000 CCredits for gear and lifestyle.

SKILL INDEX:

Close Combat, Ranged Combat, Evasion, Athletics, Endurance, Weight Lifting, Resistance, Investigation, Spotting, Sniping, Kinesics (Recognition), Fabrication, Science, Medicine, Electronic Systems, Kinesics (Reading), Confidence Arts, Interrogation, Performance, Persuasion, Negotiation. *Silver Skills have been omitted from this list.

Fleshing Out Characters:

Of course, it is important to have a background for a character. As fun as it may be to play an Urban Warrior with a fancy assault rifle killing anyone who gets in his way, it is important to remember that in Orchestra, the average person has at least three close family members (parents and siblings), and will have several friends and contacts, some of whom may be from wildly different backgrounds and who will probably hold a different political allegiance. A good way to come up with a background is to build from a character concept. "Burned out mercenary", for instance. Ask simple questions about the character. Why is he burned out? Who did he fight alongside? What did he do? What is he capable of? Is he a fan of martial discipline, or an avaricious rebel?

Similarly, look at the political background of a character. To use the example of the United States, both parties would have fed into each of the five major political groups with at least a portion of their followers. The World League appeals to those who are a fan of law and order, while the Swordsman Foundation is a source of justice. Corporations appeal to the best and brightest, and those who would benefit from having fewer restrictions, as do the Egoists. Neo-Anarchists are distrustful of government, but recognize the need for order in society. Some people just join whatever faction pays more, or the one they grew up in. Some people don't join so much as hover. They may feel that one side is more right than the other, but not care so much that they won't take others' money. These people lose the benefits of membership in a faction, however.

Also, almost all the player characters in Orchestra will have at least some combat or criminal ability. In fact, they may favor it over legal problem solving. This is good, when used in moderation and with a reminder that illicit skills (or the implants for them) don't come overnight. Let a character's abilities shape their background- Were they in the military? Did they join gangs during the collapse of civilization? Are they elite hackers? Have they conned dozens out of their fortunes? Were they once involved in a shadowy contract killer agency? Did they serve as mercenaries in the battles for the rich oases in the Cataclysm Zone?

Who was your character, and who will they go on to be?

Contacts:

Each character is also allowed two contacts. They may call on these contacts for a moderate sacrifice of resources or reputation, or the promise of a future favor. Contacts each favor one color

category, one attribute, and one skill, though they can advance like player characters when they are called out to help players (basically they gain the same benefits for when they are called in). Contacts are limited to 2500 CCredits worth of gear, though these may be shifted between the two starting contacts (i.e. one gets 4000 and one gets 1000). Contacts will often be from at least a similar background (the average Neo-Anarchist will have Neo-Anarchist or Egoist contacts as a general rule), due to the fact that they know the character from mutual adventures in the past. Contacts will not work against their own faction, unless they feel there is more benefit than harm from their actions. Starting contacts represent childhood friends or long-term professional acquaintances.

Action:

Of course, Orchestra would be pretty boring about rules for how the action takes place. Or, rather, pointless. The exact way specializations work was mentioned when they were first brought up for character creation, but it's nice to have a refresher and a little explanation.

All actions in Orchestra are handled roughly the same- there's 3 categories, 8 attributes, and roughly 4 skills for each attribute available for players to specialize in, and when an event happens, the appropriate specializations are used to roll for the outcome. Of course, it's not always necessary to roll. For the sake of drama or realism, it may be better just to say that the researcher knows what an object in a laboratory does, even if he doesn't come across them often. Of course, if he wanted to use it, he may have to make a Science check to figure out its operation.

The "basic roll" in Orchestra consists two six sided dice. Both of these dice will be rolled (or simulated), and then the result will be added. Specializations are handled differently. Specializations allow additional dice to be rolled, one for each applicable specialization, for up to three additional dice. The top two dice (from specializations or the basic roll) are chosen as "primary dice", and the remaining dice have their results halved (rounding down, zero is allowed) and added to the result as "secondary dice". The "final result" is the sum of primary and secondary dice, as well as any modifiers for double specializations in specific skills. When in a challenge, the highest number wins, whether the challenge is against a static target, or an opposing character. Skills are not necessarily used against the same skill. The skill "Ranged Weapons" is not rolled against "Ranged Weapons" in a normal opposed test during combat, though it may be for an opposed test at a marksmanship competition. In any case, a roll is made and then checked against a number, with the goal being to have the highest number.

Some actions require skill specialization. These tend to be the exception rather than the rule- almost anyone can pick up a gun and pull the trigger, or look around and spot something out of the ordinary, but it takes someone with a fair amount of training to perform advanced mathematics. Some actions cannot be undertaken (with any chance of success) without the desired skill. Some skills do not use basic dice, meaning that only dice for specializations are rolled, and then only if the skill specialization for that skill is present (attribute or color category specialization alone does not suffice).

Actions can also have a "Stamina Penalty". If the action fails, [Red/Bulk/Endurance] is rolled against a certain target number to avoid losing stamina. Psi actions always have a stamana check, regardless of success. Stamina's starting amount is equal to health. When stamina is depleted, a character has to drop out of the action for the rest of a scene (he's still there, but can't make any rolls. Stamina is regained at a rate of two points per scene.

Action Examples:

Bill shoots at a target. He rolls his Red, Agility, and Ranged Combat specializations (he has all three) as well as the basic roll. His five dice come up 1, 5, 4, 6, and 4. He keeps the 5 and 6 as his primary dice, and adds 2 and 2 for the fours. He winds up with a final result of 15, which is pretty spectacular. Jim has no specialties pertaining to guns, but attempts the same shot. His dice come up as a 4 and a 3. He adds these two dice as his primary dice, and gets a final result of 7. This is probably enough to hit the target, but Bill has a much better hit. Later, Bill tries to shoot the hook on a crane to cause it to drop what it is lifting. He rolls a mediocre (for him) final result of 9, the target is 13 for the shot, and he fails. Ranged Combat has a Stamina Penalty of 1, so he marks off a tick of Stamina.

Skills:

Each skill has a "tree". This is comprised of the Category and Attribute the skill falls under, as well as the skill itself. When a skill is referred to as getting a full five dice in its tree, that means that if all three aspects of its tree are specialized, it recieves the normal dice. Trees are written as [Color/Attribute/Skill]. If it has fewer dice, these dice are subtracted from the basic roll, and if it cannot be used untrained it must be specialized in (specifically at the skill level) to be useful.

Skills can be advanced through play, and though only one specialization in each may be bought at creation, a double specialization may be taken in certain skills. Typically this represents a static bonus to all rolls for the skill, but there are times when the double specialization does something different (for instance, for Weight Lifting it reduces the Stamina Loss for using the skill by one).

Red Skills:

Red category skills are the basis for "physical actions". They can all be used untrained, though training and physical conditioning helps.

Agility Skills:

Agility is a measurement of a character's ability to think and act in a way that they have grace in their movements. It roughly measures hand-eye coordination as well as somatics and a presence of sufficient muscle to do what has to be done.

Close Combat

Close Combat is used to fight with hand to hand weapons (and thrown weapons) or with unarmed martial arts. It can be used untrained, and uses the full value of dice (up to 5 with full specialization [Red/Agility/Close Combat]). Usage of Close Combat is detailed more in the Combat section. Double specialization in Close Combat gives a +3 bonus to all appropriate rolls.

Ranged Combat

Ranged Combat is used to fight with almost anything that you pull a trigger or push a button on. It covers all ranged weapons from small to large, so long as they're not computer aimed (in which case the computer on the weapon determines the dice rolled). It can be used untrained with a 1 die penalty (which is undone by Ranged Combat skill), and rolls up to 5 dice with full specialization [Red/Agility/Ranged Combat]. A double specialization in Ranged Combat gives a +3 bonus. For full rules on Ranged Combat, consult the Combat section.

Evasion

Evasion is used for evading blows and bullets in combat. It is the combined technique of evading slow moving attacks like punches, thrown weapons, and some weapons, and erratic movement that minimizes target area against ranged weapons. Evasion determines a passive Evasion Rating, though it can be used actively to try to get more of a benefit. Evasion can be used untrained, and uses full dice (up to 5 with full specialization [Red/Agility/Close Combat]). Using Evasion is touched on in the Combat section, and double specialization in it gives a +3 bonus to all Evasion rolls and a one point bonus to Evasion Rating. Actively using Evasion costs 1 Stamina Point regardless of success.

Athletics

Athletics covers a variety of things related to speed and stealth. When in doubt, if you have to make it there before someone else and you're on foot, you're gonna use Athletics as a roll. Similarly, Athletics is used against an opponent's Spotting for remaining unseen, as covered in the Stealth section. Athletics is capable of being used untrained, and uses full dice (up to 5 with full specialization Red/Agility/Athletics). Double specialization earns a +3 bonus to Athletics rolls.

Bulk Skills:

Bulk is a measurement of physical size and toughness. While large people can lack a Bulk specialization, small people can also be sturdy enough to count as being specialized in it. Bulk measures muscle mass and toughness.

Endurance

Endurance is rolled for resisting stamina loss. Normally, using psychic actions and using certain skills drops a character's stamina. It can be used untrained, but progresses normally like most skills. It gets the full 5 dice when its tree is filled, and double specialization adds a +3 to the roll result.

Almost every time stamina would be lost, Endurance is rolled against a target of 8. A success will resist the first point of stamina loss. Every additional four points will reduce another point of stamina loss. Stamina loss can be completely resisted with Endurance. There is no stamina penalty for failing an Endurance roll, and it is rolled automatically when stamina would be lost.

Weight Lifting

Weight Lifting refers more to any act of brute strength than just lifting or carrying stuff. Door jammed? Weight Lifting. Car stuck? Weight Lifting. It can be used unskiled, or trained to a full 5 dice. Weight Lifting is the only non-psychic skill to have Stamina loss on success (two points for success, four points for failure). Double specialization reduces the Stamina loss by one point.

Resistance

Resistance is used when a character comes into contact with something nasty- the likes of fire, disease, poison, excess sun exposure, dehydration, or starvation. It doesn't resist damage from attacks (like a knife to the back or a shot in the chest) or stupidity (if someone were to fail a jump and plummet 80 feet), but it helps with stuff like a room full of poison gas or being lost in the wilderness without

food or water. It can be used untrained, and has a full 5 die tree with double specialization adding three to the result of all rolls.

The base roll to resist damage is 12, and every additional 6 points resists another point of damage. There is no stamina penalty for failure, and Resistance is rolled passively (no action need be taken) when in a hostile environment.

Blue Skills:

Skills from the Blue category are the measurement of how quickly a person thinks in "rational" methods, i.e. figuring out a situation or doing complex mathematics.

Awareness Skills:

Awareness is the measurement of a character's ability to understand their surroundings. Awareness is the characteristic used for searching and perceiving one's environment.

Spotting

Spotting is the act of looking for a specific someone or something, such as "Mei's glasses" or "anyone with a gun". It can be used untrained with no penalty and follows normal advancement to have five dice with a full [Blue/Awareness/Spotting] tree.

The target number used with Spotting is up to the GM's discretion, though there's some guidelines in the Stealth and Search sections.

Investigation

Investigation is the skill used to find clues in an environment. It may not be used untrained (if the individual knows what they're looking for, Spotting may be used to try to find an item), due to the fact that it refers more to gathering evidence and clues than just stating the obvious. This would refer more to Sherlock Holmes style "This is dirt only found in the south side of town" rather than "This is Emily's bracelet!", spotting specific items is considered a Spotting check, and both would be used when investigating an area. Investigation also covers trailing a target stealthily.

The target number for Investigation to find something of interest in an area is based on two factors- the size of the event, and the time since the event has elapsed. Investigation does not receive basic dice.

More detail on Investigation is found in the Search section.

Sniping

Sniping is used to take down an opponent from a distance by using cover wisely, and is used with any shot from outside 200 meters (this is a general rule, and can vary based on conditions) taken after a period of aiming and adjustments. It's also used to find cover that is sturdy and cocealing. Used unskilled, it can only be used to shoot, but with skill can be used to evade enemy Sniping and Spotting attempts. Sniping works specially, and has a subsection in the Combat section, and its evasive properties are discussed in the Stealth section.

Kinesics (Recognition)

In this day and age, disguises can make an infiltrator look, sound, and even smell like another person. In some cases, they can even use sneaky methods to pass DNA tests and retinal scans. One of the surest bets is to be able to recognize friends. While this skill can be used untrained, it will take a week of reasonable proximity (co-workers, for instance) to note someone's body language, and it is unlikely to succeed. With a single specialization it takes three days to note a person's body language, and gains additional dice. Double specialization lowers this time to a day. Injuries and impairments may shift body language. Days to note body language must be consecutive.

Kinesics (Recognition) has a -3 penalty to the end result of any rolls, and cannot be used except when looking at a subject the user is familiar with. A successful roll is necessary to mark a subject, with a difficulty equal to 9 minus the number of waking hours spent observing the subject (on average). As such, this skill is extremely difficult to use untrained, but not terribly difficult to use with sufficient training. A roll with no penalty must be made against 8 to recognize someone once they are known, and can be made every couple minutes.

Cleverness:

Cleverness doesn't refer to the knowledge of one's surroundings, but rather to the ability of an individual to plan and visualize scenarios. Cleverness is used in things like mathematics and planning, and where conceptualization and diagnosis is key.

Fabrication

Fabrication is the skill used to repair and build gear and vehicles. While most modern goods are mass-manufactured by highly specialized robots, there's no denying that even simple kludged together tools can work wonders. Similarly, even though fabrication doesn't necessarily mean you make something look pretty, it means you can keep it running.

Fabrication is used to patch stuff up or make something work again. It can be used to make new things, but only simple things (though with proper tools it can make more advanced items). For instance, it'd be pretty hard to assemble the equivalent of a high-end sniper rifle from pipes and random junk, but a good scavenger could make a makeshift "pistol" out of it.

Fabrication is used to create an item that costs less than 60 CCredits, or repair an item that is broken whose repairs would cost less than 60 CCredits. A double specialization brings this to 120. Fabrication takes a whole day of work, and the end result can be pretty ugly (it can't be resold). Access to junk is necessary (you can't make something in a prison cell, unless someone left a trash heap in there). Tools can double the allowed value for repairs or item creation, but it'll still be ugly and makeshift. Any item acquired through fabrication may be used for (merely being in the posession of a character doesn't count against this) five scenes, then it is removed. Fabricated items function like lifestyle items from the Downtime section. Characters can only create five items through Fabrication at any time (though they may trash one for another). Fabrication does not require rolls except for use during Events or Scenes.

Science

Science is used when talking about what can and can't be done with certain things. It's used to examine and use high-tech devices. Science cannot be used untrained, and advances to three dice at maximum (one for each specialization in the tree. Double specialization confers a +2 bonus to Science rolls. More information on Science can be found in the Downtime section.

Medicine

Medicine is used to help treat injuries. It can be used untrained with a one die penalty, and progresses to a full five-dice maximum should its tree be completed. A double specialization in medicine grants a +3 bonus to all rolls. Medicine's use is covered in the Recovery and Downtime sections.

Electronic Systems

Electronic Systems is used when hacking into secure computer systems and when dealing with operating advanced computers with simple shells. It cannot be used untrained, and progresses to a three-die maximum with a full tree. Using Electronic Systems is covered in the Hacking Section.

Green Skills:

The Green Category falls more into "social interactions", and skills and attributes within it are focused on conversing with others and figuring out what and how they think.

Understanding:

Understanding is the portion of the Green category that is used to figure out others. It involves looking for tells and observing patterns to try to influence others or at least predict their next action.

Kinesics (Reading)

Body language can say almost everything about a person's mental state and views of others. Reading them requires skill, but can be greatly rewarding in social situations. It can be used untrained without a penalty to base dice, and uses five dice with full tree specialization, and gains a +3 bonus for double specialization. Kinesics (Reading) is touched on more thoroughly in the Social section.

Confidence Arts

Confidence Arts involves, simply, lying to someone. In more detail, it involves getting to know a "mark" and figuring out how to bluff them and lie to them, typically for the user's benefit. It can be used with social engineering and is often used in conjunction with Persuasion. Confidence arts can be used unskilled and uses five dice with a full tree specialization. It gains a +3 bonus with double specialization. The usage of Confidence Arts is covered more fully in the Social and Downtime sections.

Interrogation

Interrogation is quite simply figuring out what others know that you want to know. It can be used unskilled, and has a normal five-die progression tree. It gains a +3 bonus with double specialization. Interrogation is covered more fully in the Social section.

Sympathy:

Sympathy is the art of getting others to feel for you. It involves the conscious or subconscious creation of a persona and the usage of actions and words to convince others, make arguments without violence, and smooth out sticky situations.

Performance

Performance is used for a number of purposes. It can be to entertain, make money, spread views, or as a diversion. It can be used untrained, and its tree follows the normal five-die progression. A +3 bonus is conferred with double specialization. Performance is touched on more in Downtime and Social sections.

Negotiation

Negotiation is used when getting a better deal. It can be used untrained, and follows the normal five-die progression method for its tree, with a +3 bonus for double specialization. Negotiation is covered in the Currency section.

Persuasion

Persuasion is the art of making others agree with you, and can be used untrained. Persuasion follows normal five-die progression and has a +3 bonus for double specialization. Persuasion is detailed in more depth in the Social section.

Silver Skills:

Skills from the Silver color category attributes differ from those in other categories because they all require "training", and typically are not rolled independently. Choosing a Silver attribute specialization allows a character to choose a "ghost skill", which does not count towards their health, and must be purchased as a full skill under that attribute specialization in order to further specialize in that attribute's skills during play (more skills may be bought during creation without purchasing the ghost skill).

Psychic Skills:

Psychic skills are unique in that they are blocked off by the use of another attribute category. The usage of Hyperhumanity implants will disable psi abilities, until the implants are disabled (not removed) for a full eight hours, at which point they are regained until a Hyperhumanity implant is used again. Anyone can gain Psychic skills, and by extension psi abilities, if they have taken the Psychic attribute specialization. Use of psi abilities causes stamina loss.

Exokinesis

Exokinesis allows the storage of one roll for one Red color category skill. Double specialization allows another roll to be stored for the same skill or another skill within the Red category. Usage of Exokinesis causes a loss of one point of stamina (for each roll) that cannot be resisted with Endurance.

Exopathy

Exopathy allows the storage of one roll for one Green color category skill. Double specialization allows another roll to be stored for the same skill or another skill within the Green category. Usage of Exopathy causes a loss of one point of stamina (for each roll) that cannot be resisted with Endurance.

Exoconscious

Exoconscious allows the storage of one roll for one Blue color category skill. Double specialization allows another roll to be stored for the same skill or another skill within the Blue category. Usage of Exokinesis causes a loss of one point of stamina (for each roll) that cannot be resisted with Endurance.

Hyperhumanity Compatibility

Hyperhuman implants usually alter the body's state so that the user winds up without any psi abilities. Hyperhuman Compatibility allows characters to use both psychic abilities and hyperhuman implants. One specialization enables use of Hyperhuman implants that only require one specialization, and a double specialization will enable use of all hyperhuman implants with psychic abilities.

Hyperhumanity:

Hyperhumanity skills reflect conditioning to an individual's body. Anyone can gain new Hyperhumanity skills as normal skills, so long as they have gained the Hyperhumanity attribute specialization. Both attribute and skill specializations reflects a gradual physiological shift brought on by Hyperhumanity therapy, which is a one-time process. This shift allows the usage of Hyperhuman implants. Double specialization in Hyperhumanity skills allows the use of a second Hyperhuman implant from each category, or higher tier implants. Some implants require a certain amount of specialization, but do not consume the points to be used. These are referred to as "passive" implants. Even more rarely, some implants require multiple specializations.

Neural Implants

Neural Implants reflect implants that have a heavy effect on the body's neural structure. A lack of this skill will result in a implant causing insanity in its user, causing them to be effectively incapacitated unless the implant is shut off, disabled, or removed. Double specialization enables higher-grade implants.

Structural Implants

Structural Implents reflect implants that have a heavy effect on the body's physical structure. A lack of skill required for these implants results in "The Twitch", which causes augmentees to suffer from incapacitating quivering and shaking. Double specialization allows more traumatic upgrades.

Nano Implants

Nano Implants reflect implants with decentralized components. Insufficient skill for handling these implants leads to potentially lethal immune rejection that requires hospitalization as the subject's

body attempts to destroy the nanites. Double specialization allows the body to tolerate a higher concentration of nanites.

Active Implants

Active Implants require a neural input and output system to allow their handling. Unlike other implants, active implants installed in an individual without the appropriate adaptations have no ill effects, but fail to operate entirely. Double specialization improves the input and output system further to allow more active implants, or more complex implants.

Maneuvers and Masteries:

Characters need to specialize somehow! Each character is allowed to choose from up to three Masteries or Maneuvers at a time, and can change them out whenever they gain specializations (or when they spend an Advancement Point).

Maneuvers are things that allow a character to be very effective for a short while, but burn through Stamina at a rapid rate, meaning that while they help a character succeed, they also can cripple them in the long run.

Masteries are passive effects. They do not burn stamina and they are always active, but they tend to be subtle or highly specialized.

Maneuvers:

"The Beauty and the Beast": This maneuver requires two people, each of whom must have it for it to be used. One character is "the Beauty", who distracts the target, and the other is "the Beast", who takes advantage of a distracted target to deal more damage. "The Beauty" makes any social roll (except intimidation or negotiation), and the target loses a quarter of their result from their Evasion Rating or next defensive roll (which can go down to 2) or from thresholds for resisting interrogation. "The Beast" may then intimidate the opponent or negotiate with them on a better position, or attack them while they're vulnerable. There is no stamina cost to initiate "The Beauty and the Beast", though a failed attack from "the Beast" loses stamina as normal.

"Two of You!": This maneuver allows a pair of characters to surprise foes. When two characters who have this maneuver attempt to use it together, only one needs to make Athletics rolls for stealth or maneuvers. Should the characters be spotted, only the one who was rolling Athletics is spotted, and the other can continue sneaking onward, or attack from the shadows with the advantage of surprise (a free combat turn). Activating "Two of You!" requires 3 stamina, and it does not negate stamina loss by botched athletics rolls.

"Pwned!": This maneuver requires two or more friendly hackers on a system at once. Once a friendly hacker gains access to the system, the other hackers can activate the "Pwned!" maneuver to gain 25% of the newly hacked computer's Power Rating to his own for the duration of the time he's connected to it. This does not remove Power Rating points allocated to other users. "Pwned!" requires 4 stamina to activate.

Masteries:

"Hitman": You automatically counter-attack when discovered before guards can make a sound. This is primarily useful if you have a silent weapon (like a Stunner or knives). You get the advantage of surprise (a free combat turn) whenever you are discovered, and if you incapacitate the guard with anything but a firearm (Stunner Guns are silent, so they can be used) you may continue using Athletics to sneak. Hitman does not reduce stamina loss from failing athletics rolls.

"Tough as Nails": You get two free points of Health and Stamina, not to exceed the limit of 24. Otherwise, there's no strings attached.

"Can't Keep Me Down!": Once per High-Energy Scene you can attempt a Red action even if you have no stamina (which is normally impossible), or ignore the stamina loss from one skill failure (but not weapon hits).

"Tank": Tanks treat one point of Conversion damage on their armor as being totally blocked.

"Make Your Mother Sigh": This character is a renegade- not only do they get a +1 bonus to one roll per session (maybe more at the GM's discretion) that counteracts their basic tenets, they are less likely to get in trouble with their peers (a World League affiliated character may have a Class 3 Infraction overlooked, or a Neo-Anarchist could take the law into his own hands and not be ostracized).

Scenes:

Gameplay in Orchestra is broken down into scenes. The majority of scenes have a specific focus, and this is delineated by a scene being Low Energy or High Energy. Success in a scene grants material benefits to a character or allows progression in the GM's story. Groups of Scenes are called a Scenario, and after each Scenario character advancement is permitted for each player that participated in the Scenario.

Scenes determine how much stamina a player's character gets on completion- High Energy scenes grant four stamina points (for combat and the like) while Low Energy scenes grant two.

Events:

Events are "miniature scenes", with a very specific purpose (say, apprehend a robber) that the GM may use to make the game more interesting and reward players for quick decision making. Events typically involve just one roll from one or two characters, and involves something that would normally be a single action from a scene expanded into a self-standing point of interest. Stamina is not lost in Events, unless failure of the Event mandates such.

Combat:

Combat consists of several skills that each work in similar manners, but with slight twists.

Order

Combat order is handled by looking at the health of each combatant, and the character with the highest Health (with Red specializations being a tie breaker) goes first. When in doubt, players move first.

Evasion

Evasion is used to avoid attacks. One of the reasons Evasion is favored is because if it is used to defend in a turn, it applies to all attacks, though doing so limits the user's ability to use Ranged Combat and Sniping. Evasion Rating is equal to the sum of all specializations in the Evasion skill tree plus 5, and is used passively to evade attacks (double specialization adds an additional point). Evasion rolls under the Evasion Rating are ignored, though they still limit Ranged Combat and Sniping for the turn they are used.

One note for combat is that a character can only take one defensive action each turn, regardless of how many times he's attacked, even if he would use different skills for defense.

Hand-to-Hand Combat

Hand-to-hand combat is handled simply- a Close Combat roll is made by the attacker, and the defender may opt to defend with either Close Combat or Evasion roll (or use his static Evasion Rating). The attacker will do damage if they win, and if the defender uses Close Combat and wins, he gets to do damage based on either the weapon he is using (no margin required) or the attacker's weapon (if the defender is successful by four or more points on his roll). Damage is increased for every two points in addition to the points needed to score a blow. Thrown weapons are handled like Ranged Combat, but use the Close Combat skill to determine accuracy. They also get a damage bonus like hand-to-hand combat. Attacking without a weapon deals one damage for every Close Combat tree specialization.

Example: Alex attacks Jack with a knife. Alex is using a handful of dice, and rolls 8. Jack defends with Closed Combat, and rolls a 13. He has no weapon, but he can turn the knife Alex is using back, so he does so and deals the damage of the knife, plus no damage (he used four of the five points he exceeded by to return the stab). Had he opted to just whack Alex with his bare hands, he'd deal his punching damage plus two points.

Alex, undeterred, attacks again. His friend Bob aims at Jack from a dark alleyway, but is spotted. Jack decides to opt to just dodge the blow this turn, since he can apply Evasion to multiple attacks this turn, but if he defends with Close Comat he won't be able to evade Bob's shot. Alex rolls 10, but Jack rolls 13, so Alex misses and Jack is waiting for Bob's shot.

Ranged Combat and Throwing Weapons

Ranged Combat is somewhat different, because there is not allowance for immediate retaliation, and there are more penalties for it. A moving character (or one who used Evasion the last round) will suffer a two point penalty when taking a shot. Attacks are made based on the oppponent's Evasion Rating unless they choose to use Evasion to avoid the shot. Ranged attacks with a self-powered weapon do not gain additional damage (they often don't need it, though), but man-powered weapons like bows may gain damage like a hand-to-hand attack.

Example: Bob fires his gun at Jack from a stationary position. He rolls a 10, and Jack already rolled a 13 for his evasion, so Jack dodges the bullet. Bob's pretty exasperated, so he charges at Jack and throws a combat knife at Jack the next round. Bob rolls a 12, and Jack fumbles with a 7 (his Evasion Rating). Bob subtracts two from his score for moving (even though he was closing to throwing ranges), so he winds up with a result of 10, still enough to hit and deal an extra point of damage.

Sniping

Sniping is unique in that it does not normally warrant a defense roll from its victim (unless they are aware of the sniper, or they are evading other shots, in which case Evasion may be used, or a movement may be taken to reach safe cover), instead using the target's Evasion Rating (even if they're trying to evade a non-sniper in a stationary manner), plus bonuses or penalties based on the weapon being used, the distance, and the conditions of the shot. On the occasion a target has the sniping skill and is actively using it to evade, they may roll dice equal to their specializations (up to two) in Sniping (users only get one die for an attack roll, but may add the +3 for a double specialization).

Mechanically speaking, Sniping is used to attack like any other weapon. It is also used to defend against others' sniping attempts while trying to return fire, and is used to resist Spotting tests for setting up within sight of an opponent.

Sniping is unique because there are distance and opponent movement modifiers on it. The standard target number is listed for each appropriate weapon. Movement raises this target number, as well as opposed Sniping tests. Movement's raise is equal to roughly meters/second (walking normally is just over 1 meter per second, with running speed being around seven times this). As such it is extremely hard to hit a fast moving target, meaning that sniping is off-limits in some situations. Even a relatively static rate of movement will fuddle a sniper because the act of moving the rifle will impede aim.

Example: Fred is taking a shot at Bill, who is unaware of his presence. He's firing 2500 meters using Grade II optics, meaning he's got the equivalent of 500 meters for the distance. Using his rifle's statistics, the accuracy rating at 500 meters is 13, and Bill's standing still, meaning Fred rolls his two standard dice, and checks his specializations. He's got Awareness and Sniping specializations, so he winds up rolling 4 dice. Fortunately for Bill, Fred flubs his shot, as the dice come up with two ones, a two, and a three (for a result of 5 total). Bill's pretty shaken, but he survives. He runs into a nearby building to countersnipe. Fred knows he's there, and he's looking for Bill, so he rolls a Spotting check to see if he notices Bill's rifle sticking out a window. He rolls his dice against Bill's dice. Bill, however, is a master sniper, with specializations in Blue and Awareness, and a double specialization in Sniping. Bill gets to roll 5 dice and add three to the result, while Fred rolls his Awareness specialization. Bill wins the roll, so he is undetected, but Fred still uses Sniping to find cover he can shoot from should he see Bill. Bill rolls for his shot, but he's using Grade III optics, bringing the distance to 250 meters for his shot. Consulting his rifle's range statistics, he needs a 8 to hit. He has a minimum of 5 on his roll, so he'd probably hit, but Fred rolls his die from his Sniping skill for his cover, gets a 6, and brings the required shot to 12. Bill rolls his dice, and gets a final total of 15, meaning he gets a very solid shot at Fred.

Multiple Attackers

There may come a time when many people are in a fight and the sides aren't any semblance of equal, or one side is trying to pick off a specific individual. For every attack past the second, a character loses one point of Evasion Rating or from their Evasion skill check (to a minimum of four) for the purposes of evading that attack (the third attack brings the Evasion Rating down one, the fourth lowers it by two, and so forth).

Example: Bob, Alex, and Mark all team up on Jack. Each has a handgun, and fires at Jack. Suspending disbelief for a moment, they all roll 7. That happens to be Jack's Evasion Rating. Jack can't

attempt Evasion as a defense because he's out of stamina.

Environmental Factors

As a general rule, environments in Orchestra will be dirty- whether in the broad dusty plains of the Cataclysm Zones or in claustrophobic, dark, and smoky World League cities, players are usually in environments where the environment will hurt their fighting. Most things don't matter much for hand-to-hand fighting, since combatants are close enough that they can see through everything but tear gas undeterred, but rain and dust can block ranged combat and make sniping impossible. The following are lists of common conditions and what they do to fights (simplified due to time constraints)

Night/poorly lit city- +1 to all target numbers (even Close Combat) due to the darkness
Dust- +2 to Ranged Combat target numbers, no Sniping
Rain- +2 to Ranged Combat and Sniping target numbers
Earthquake- +3 to all target numbers
Tear Gas- +5 to all target numbers for those in the gas, counts as Dust for blocking vision outside.

Social:

Anything social is unique in that player characters have an advantage- while it's encouraged that players roleplay and listen to NPCs and adjust accordingly, quite frankly non player characters have little impact. Social stuff is all worked out in scenario design or on the fly- each NPC has a set of different interactions that players may aim for- whether it's "Secret- Knows the Murderer" or "Service- Open the Maintenance Entrance", anyone in a social scene has a threshold to do certain things. Security may become hostile if a minimum threshold is not met. Social stuff is touched on more in the GM section, since a lot of it focuses on using exact numbers that aren't set in stone (and probably shouldn't be known to players).

Searching:

Searching plays a critical part in most Scenarios. Unlike some tabletop games, it is encouraged for Orchestra to have the players search for their own evidence (and sometimes find false leads). Most of Searching is handled in the GM section, since it involves information not meant for mortal. Searching also covers Tracking, which uses both Spotting and Investigation rolls for different purposes, and is used to follow another character in urban or wilderness environments.

Stealth:

Stealth is one of the things that is unfortunately lacking in this version of Orchestra, but there will be a larger segment in a more final draft. Stealth involves Athletics or Sniper checks made against an opponent's Spotting modified by a number of factors. For one, any of the environmental factors from the Combat section helps with stealth by hindering the Spotting check of the opponent.

As a general rule, the Stamina Penalty of an action provides an equal bonus to an opponent's Spotting checks (trying to bash a door and fail makes a lot of noise), though this may be waived at GM discretion (using psychic abilities does not make noise, for example).

Currency:

In Orchestra, present-day currency is for the most part a thing of the past. There are a handful of different currencies, but all are cryptographically based. These are referred to as CCredits. They are the successors of early movements in digital currency, and no method is known to duplicate or counterfeit them. While there are currencies out on the frontier or in the World League's territory, most corporations use CCredits, and it is not considered unreasonable to ask for payment in CCredits. To add icing on the cake, CCredit transactions are done digitally, anyone with the ability to send a simple electronic message can transfer their CCredits to anyone in the world.

There's about 25 different series of CCredits (and a couple "equivalent" CCredits that are older currencies that retained their old name but are stable and follow the same principles). Each series is slightly different- some may be tracked by a central body (the World League has their own CCredit line, though it's not considered a true CCredit by some experts), but the exchange rates and value relative to goods are stable as a general rule. The term "CCredit" has come to mean a specific series (CCredit 7, which was deemed the most stable due to its medium maximum size and finished growth), and all payments are oriented around equivalent amounts regardless of the actual series of CCredit issued.

A CCredit is roughly equal to 25 cents USD (or a quarter of a candy bar, if you wanna use a more universal marker). While CCredits can usually be broken down infinitesimally small portions, they are usually only used for transactions in amounts of .01 CCredit or more.

Downtime:

One of the important parts of Orchestra is to remember that characters live and breathe. They eat and sleep, and prefer certain places to do so. When not working in a Scenario, they may hold a day job or try to cruise off their funds. They may be in trouble with the law.

Characters typically will pay a cost of living- if they don't know when their next job is, they may live more moderately than they like. Paying more for lifestyle eases some of the burdens of life, making healthcare and vehicles and maintenance easier. The minimal cost of living (below which a character will be homeless and/or scrounging) is about 400 CCredits a week. More money paid into a cost of living means that a character can have up to three "lifestyle" items for each scenario. Each lifestyle item is equal to 20% of the cost of living paid, but can be chosen for each scenario (at any time, it need not be chosen at the very beginning). This means that someone who lives a high lifestyle will be able to get a tool they need without purchasing or stealing it on the fly. Up to ten lifestyle items may be retained between scenarios, but must be earned in succession. Lifestyle items may be traded for other items, but only at a rate of three per scenario.

Jobs can alleviate some of the impact of a lifestyle. A character in good standing with the law should be able to find a job, though even resolved legal issues can bar them from legitimate work. The cost of living is calculated and controlled in most areas, and employers are usually willing to pay more or less 500 CCredits a week to a dilligent but unskilled worker. Science or Performance can be used for a living, with each specialization in Science or Medicine adding 500 CCredits to the income (a scientific expert and master doctor will make 2500 CCredits). Performance assumes a full time musician lifestyle, and pays 5 times a Performance roll every day (but doesn't leave a paper trail, making it ideal for those hounded by law or organized crime). Confidence Arts can allow a comfy living, but is likely to get a character in trouble. As a general rule, a Confidence Artist can maintain 1000 CCredits per specialization without getting in trouble, though he can extract a large number of

CCredits (about five times his static number) at the cost of blowing his credibility and getting in major trouble with the law or organized crime.

If a character is in legal trouble (or trouble with criminal elements), their cost of living doubles (lifestyle items ignore the extra 400 CCredits) to avoid detection while living normally. Characters also are assumed to be unable to get a legitimate job (it leaves an awful paper trail), and crime doesn't pay nearly as well as a real job (crime lords can recruit from the desperate masses and pay almost nothing).

It's possible to go into debt to pay off up to two weeks of lifestyle, but beyond that all lifestyle items are forfeited (a stage downward to a more affordable lifestyle has no such penalty) and a debt remains towards a character's lifestyle (they are effectively forced out onto a street). Some landlords will be more sympathetic than others.

Health and Stamina:

Health and Stamina are irrevocably linked. The two share a lot of similarities and a lot of differences.

Starting with the similarities, each is derived in the same way. Each skill that a character has specialized (but not double specializations) leads to a one point gain of health, each attribute adds two, and categories add a whopping four. This means that player characters start with 12 health (contacts have 7 off the bat). Running out of either can ruin your day. Neither can exceed 24 by any amount of advancement.

And that's where the similarities end. Health is the essence of life for a character. It's a measure of their physical well being. It's not as mercurial as Stamina. Losing health is a big deal. It doesn't necessarily come with penalties, but it comes with visible, nasty wounds and a threat of potential demise. Even a light loss of health can be visible to a passerby and cause trouble (sharks will come for blood, and the authorities look oddly at people with gaping wounds). When Health hits zero, ambulances are called from all over the place, and negative health is a sure sign of being a dead man. Actual death occurs 6 minutes after zero Health is reached, with each additional point of damage removing one minute. Medical care can restore health and prevent death, though field medicine will usually only prolong death (potentially for more serious care to arrive).

Stamina is the opposite of Health to some degree. It's mercurial, there are few outward signs, and it comes back with a little rest and relaxation (or chemical willpower, but moderation is key). As a general rule, only people who are totally out of Stamina show any effects, and then it's just huffing and puffing and moving with a lethargic undertone. When Stamina hits zero, active use of skills with a potential stamina loss becomes impossible, meaning it'll end a fight. If Stamina goes negative, people get knocked unconscious (Health damage only occurs due to Stamina loss when things like brutal beatings are involved).

Ultimately, all Health and Stamina loss is at the GM's discretion- falling from a building could just wind a person, cause a traumatic leg injury, or cause critical physical trauma. Combat health loss is relatively static, as is the stamina loss from actions, but the GM may decide that certain things are unwise and come up with his consequences.

Recovery:

Fortunately, Health and Stamina are not just measurements of a distance to death and exhaustion, but also a measurement of a character's well-being and energy. Both can be recovered relatively simply.

Injuries to Health are slow to heal without expensive hospitalization. The Medicine skill can be used to prevent death and help prepare for recovery, but the human body's healing capacity is still the most complex and effective method of getting a patient back on their feet.

Medicine can restore a number of Health points equal to one fifth of the result (half without an appropriate kit), but these are "temporary health" (noted on a character sheet as such by using a partial mark, special counters, or parenthetical delineation). It can be spent like a normal health point to stave off death (normal health is subtracted first, then temporary health), but it does not count towards eventual healing. This means that a character is mechanically better, but still takes a while to heal from whatever trauma was originally inflicted. Only the best result counts towards a character's temporary health count, and he cannot have temporary health applied outside of the scenario he took injuries in (except with the GM's approval).

Health is restored at a rate of one point per week, plus one for every 500 CCredits spent explicitly on medical care (the maximum restoration rate is four points a week). As a general rule, Health will not be restored (except for temporary health) during a Scenario sans cutting-edge tech or a time lapse.

Stamina is restored at a arbitrary rate of two points per Scene (at the GM's discretion), reflecting the time that characters have to steel themselves. Should players need more stamina, there are items and implants available (some of which are more potent, illegal, or expensive than others) to grant more, with or without strings attached. Any downtime will grant a full stamina recovery, unless the GM explicitly states otherwise.

One point of Stamina is lost for every failed Red skill action except for Endurance and Resistance, though Weight Lifting follows special rules.

Hacking:

No self-respecting cyberpunk game could have a complete lack of hacking. Hacking is works very much on a case-by-case basis, in that each terminal in a scenario has a different purpose, and will be interacted with differently, though with similar ground rules.

Hacking in Orchestra more often than not requires a landline physical connection, or a wireless Local Area Network connection. Either provides enough speed for the actions taking place to work about the same, but it's more difficult to plug into a computer than to beam a signal to it. It is, however, important to remember that almost everything is controlled by a computer, from cars to bank terminals, and security is not always top priority when designing a system. Wireless connections to computers are a convenience, and are near ubiquitous except in military or top-secret facilities, though it often still requires a physical presence on site for security reasons (or due to poor signal quality). That said, many "secure facilities" have been compromised by having a hacker open their back door from an alleyway.

Everyone involved in Hacking has a Electronic Systems skill, a Power Rating and a Security Rating. Power comes from a computer, while Security comes from a user's client or imbedded in software (as well as the computer's operating system). Each entity (computer or user) has their own

objective. Power Rating determines the number of rolls the user or computer makes with their Electronic skill. Each roll is added until a certain threshold determined by the target's Security Rating is reached.

Hacking is a lot like a normal combat- there can be a lot of combatants. Typically, the combatants will only be on two sides- the intruder's and the defender's, but in specific scenarios it can be more complicated, typically as a result of multiple intruders with different agendas. In all cases, however, each side has a "primary" entity, typically the one with the highest Security Rating. Hackers can even bring in programs to do specific tasks that will eat at least a portion their own hardware's Power Rating, but effectively add a second (highly-specialized) hacker to their side.

It is important to remember during hacking that there are multiple computers involved- those of intruders and that of the defender. Each has its own Power Rating (typically higher for the defender). Also, not every intruder has to be against the defender. It's possible for a do-gooder to try to defend a system that's under attack by a malicious entity, or for a company's system security head to add his own computer into the fray to gain an advantage over an attacker. Each user has a "host computer" (the primary computer he uses), which he can use resources from equally with other users using the same host computer. Should his host computer be dominated, a user loses half his Power Rating.

Hacking has one goal: Domination. A hacker who achieves Domination is capable of undertaking a variety of actions, usually determined individually based on the system they're attempting to enter. Domination requires a threshold equal to 5 times the system's primary defender's Security Rating. Domination doesn't have to be maintained, but it's used to do a number of actions that are otherwise forbidden, and controls access to file management. Domination grants 50% of a computer's Power Rating to whomever controls it for use in their own purposes (the remainder is reserved for legitimate users using traditional interfaces), so it can be a powerful boon. Domination can even be attempted on a remote computer, but it is lost when the hacker disconnects (allowing return of control to the original owner, but this takes a turn to physically accomplish).

Other than Domination, there's a handful of actions to take when hacking. A user with Domination of a system can Crash a user on their own host computer. A crash typically takes three turns to recover from, though some high-end systems restore a user quicker. Domination is also required to use the File commands, such as Delete, Move, Execute, Copy, and Implant, which may be necessary for a mission. Domination also allows usage of Identify, which looks at I/O ports to determine what's hooked up to the system and how to use it, or whether a unknown file is something of value. Once Identify is used, I/O ports may be controlled with a Control task, often allowing control of things like lighting or doors, which can be a major boon to an infiltrator.

Crashing a user is an annoyance, but requires a little work even on a dominated system. To Crash a user, the product of their Security Rating (the system's security rating plus the user client's security rating) and the computer's Power Rating (after adjustments for other users or programs) is required. When the user is crashed, the power allotted to them is reserved for their use, but they are incapable of taking action.

File commands usually take about 3 times the Security Rating of the system to complete, Identify takes about 2 times the Security Rating, and Control takes a different amount based on how important the object being controlled is- turning on and off lights would take about a full Security Rating, while breaching containment at a nuclear reactor would potentially require a chain of complex actions that have no less than ten times the Security Rating of their host system. The average for

something that should be done only by an authorized user (like, for instance, triggering a full security alert) is five times the system's Security Rating (ignoring that of software or users).

Progress towards a hacking action accumulates only for that action, and only one action may be attempted each turn (that is, a hacker could put all his rolls towards Domination, but could not split off to do Identification on a system he already dominated). Attempting multiple of the same action (multiple Delete or Identify actions, for example) can be put in the same pool, with the downside of all the actions completing at once (though with slightly more efficiency).

Should a system be accessed which serves as a host for many users, each user consumes at least one point of Power Rating, regardless if they're attempting to hack (or counter-hack) or if they're just looking up pictures of kittens off the internet. Computers meant for only one user (portable computers, for example) don't lose power for their first user.

Similarly, networks are important: many devices can be hooked together. A common tactic for hackers is to grab a ton of phones and route them to a central computer, providing a cluster of low power devices. This doesn't help him defend his main computer (it can be crashed).

Hacking example:

Mark needs to get a door open in a corporate enclave. He plugs into the door terminal with his own computer. His Power Rating is 4, while the door terminal's is 2. The door terminal is effectively a passive audience, without any active security programs or users monitoring it, so it takes no actions (but if a legitimate user were to use it he could utilize its power). Mark checks the terminal's Security Rating to find that it has a laughable six. He rolls his Electronic Systems test four times to try to dominate the terminal. Since he has two specializations (one in Electronic Systems and one in Blue), he rolls two dice for each. He gets 7, 8, 2, and 3 as the final roll results, bringing him to a total of 20. If combat were running, a round of that would elapse before he could hack again. He rolls the next turn, getting 8, 7, 7, and 10, so he has Dominated the door terminal. He gains one point of Power Rating from the door terminal, and can attempt sensitive actions, namely Identification of the I/O ports. He now rolls 5 tests, and since the door has 3 I/O ports, he decides to try them all. He rolls a 4, a 8, a 5, a 10, and a 7. Each of the ports requires 18 points to identify, and he came up with a total of 34 points, meaning he's still short, and since he's treating them as a pool, he hasn't identified anything yet. He rolls again to get to the 54, getting 7, 10, and 11 (he stops rolling for expediency). He's identified the ports, and finds out that one is an alarm, one controls the external light, and one handles the actual opening of the door. The door's opened with a simple Control action against the Security Rating, so Mark can't fail, though he does have to wait for the next turn. When he enters, he loses connection to the door terminal, and is back to his original 4 Power Rating, since it's no longer feeding him its power.

Mark encounters a mainframe, and plugs his computer into one of the ports. As he connects, he sees that there's about 20 users on. While the Mainframe has a Power Rating of about 30, the users on the system (presumably making spreadsheets) each consume 1 power rating, leaving it with 10 power for counter-hackers to utilize. Mark's heavily outgunned, so he disconnects before he's noticed. He grabs his phone, and slaves it to his computer (which takes a turn). He now has a joint Power Rating of 5. He plugs back in, hoping his additional power will be sufficient to let him do at least something on the mainframe.

Jane, the security manager for the mainframe, noticed him the first time, but shrugged it off as a legitimate user connecting his own device. This time she knows Mark's up to something fishy, because

he goes to try to Dominate the mainframe, despite its Security Rating of 20. Jane tries to Dominate his computer in turn. Mark's computer is advertised to hackers, but it's still a portable computer. Its security rating is an impressive 8, so Jane needs 40 to Dominate the rig, and another 32 (4x8) to Crash him. Jane's a fully trained expert, and she rolls 3 dice 10 times because of her full specialization in the Electronic Systems tree. She is able to dominate Mark's computer easily.

Mark discovers that his computer's been dominated when his combined Power Rating drops to 3 and his computer starts popping up warnings and errors. He keeps pushing, though, because he's compromised and if he doesn't shut down the mainframe Jane can raise an alarm.

Jane crashes Mark the next round, and activates a building-wide alert (as a legitimate user, she knows what the I/O functions are, and she can use them without having to take special actions). Mark wishes he'd brought along some hired guns.

Gear:

Of course, while characters in Orchestra are somewhat complex, there comes times when certain skills or actions require gear. Gear also is a shiny status symbol. Even if it's not terribly effective, it serves a social role (a master martial artist needs no weapons, but having brass knuckles is a outward way of saying you can hurt people with your fists). There's only a few types of gear that have major game impacts, namely armor, weapons, implants, computers, consumables, and tool kits.

Armor is useful for a combatant in Orchestra, but can be a double edged sword. Each armor has two ratings- a Block rating and a Conversion rating. When a character is attacked in combat, the Block rating directly reduces Health or Stamina damage. Block is favored because it turns damage into nothing. Conversion is also helpful, but less so. When Health damage would be taken, conversion turns it into the much more easily restored Stamina. The only downside of this is that it makes running out of Stamina more common, which removes a character from combat anyway (but is cheaper than a hospital).

Low-grade body armor costs around 1000 CCredits, depending on where it's purchased and whether or not it's light enough to be worn over other armor. Various items of clothing can be found that constitute low-grade body armor, including the ubiquitous Urban Warrior line of clothing (and the many knock-offs). Low grade body armor has a Conversion rating of one. Low grade body armor is often worn over other body armor, and adds its Conversion rating to that of the other armor.

Medium-grade body armor costs about 3500 CCredits. It's favored by law enforcement because although it cannot be concealed it does confer significant protection against low-grade weapons. Medium-grade body armor has a Block rating of two, and a Conversion rating of five. Wearing medium-grade armor without good reason to will get attention from law enforcement, and technically requires a permit in World League areas.

High-grade body armor costs a prohibitive 20,000 CCredits. It is used only by military elements and occasionally well-equipped corporation security. High-grade armor offers ultimate protection, with built in NBC sealing and a Block and Conversion ratings of five and nine respectively. While it won't stop the impact of super-heavy weapons, many veterans swear by their armor as the only reason they've survived horrendous attacks.

Weapons are tools in the hand of a savvy warrior. While not necessarily required for combat,

weapons make things go a lot easier (and in your favor). It is important to note that most weapons are considered illegal or at the very least a warning sign. Except in some lawless parts of Cataclysm Zones, carrying a gun openly is begging for a fight with the law or local organized crime. Even less lethal weapons are still viewed as threatening by the average person.

Every weapon has a few statistics: Damage, Accuracy, and Level. Damage simply refers to how many points of damage a weapon does. Accuracy is a modifier to the Evasion Rating of an opponent for ranged weapons (refer to the Combat section), and Level determines the lethality of a weapon. A Lethal weapon does entirely Health damage, a Less Lethal weapon does half Stamina and half Health damage (extra damage for a spectacular shot goes to Health), and Nonlethal weapons do only Stamina damage, regardless of extra damage. Nonlethal weapons used on a target with no Stamina count as a Less Lethal weapon. Stamina damage to an opponent with no Stamina remaining is ignored. Stamina damage to a character who runs out of Stamina from the same attack will never turn into Health damage.

There are a variety of Close Combat weapons, but a sample selection will be used.

Stunners are favored by law enforcement and corporations trying to keep a low body count. They're entirely Nonlethal, and deal a good 8 points of Stamina damage. They are, however, foiled by even low-grade body armor or heavy clothing. Stunners can be acquired for about 50 CCredits and are good for five uses without a recharge (easily done during downtime or during transit between locations), though "military grade" stunners that have high-grade batteries but are bulkier are available for 500 CCredits and don't have (effective) usage restrictions.

Clubs and batons represent the other half of law enforcement's favored hand-to-hand weaponry. These deal 2 damage plus an additional point for each specialization from the Close Combat tree or in Bulk and are Nonlethal weapons. They cost about 25 CCredits, though they can also be improvised from the environment as need dictates.

Knives and daggers take up a favored slot in the criminal's arsenal. They deal 2 damage for each point of specialization in the Close Combat tree (minimum 2), and are Lethal weapons. They cost about 10 to 50 CCredits, though cheaper knives are usually focused on utility use and not fighting with.

Powered blades are a fearsome addition to weapon technology. Usually used as a backup weapon for elite corporate guards or military soldiers, they can cut through body armor without any penalty and deal lethal wounds. Powered blades ignore armor's Conversion rating, and deal 4 damage plus two for each point of Close Combat tree specialization. They are highly illegal for civilians, and cost 2500 CCredits for licensed users and around 7500 on the black market. Possession of a powered blade (non-implant) is a Class 4 infraction in World League areas.

Guns are said to be the reason crime is lower in some Cataclysm Zones than in World League cities. This may or may not be true, but ranged weapons certainly have a major impact in combat.

Police often utilize Stunner Guns, which use electrolasers to deliver a Stunner like shock without requiring an officer to approach a suspect. Similarly, they are used by almost any organization when the body count has to stay low but the opposition does too. Stunner Guns are capable of delivering the effects of a Stunner for up to 100 meters, with a 1 point Accuracy increase for advanced pulse models. A normal Stunner Gun runs for 750 CCredits and a pulse Stunner Gun costs about double that. They require recharging like a low-grade stunner (more advanced models are not available). While

not illegal, carrying one of these tends to attract odd looks and questions from law enforcement. It's almost impossible to find a Stunner Gun in the Cataclysm Zone.

Citizens of Cataclysm Zones often look to derringers and small handguns as a means of self-defense against bandits. While illegal in World League areas and inefficient against armored opponents, light pistols are capable of dealing a good 4 points of Lethal damage. They're accurate within 25 meters without a penalty, but take a -1 Accuracy penalty for every 10 meters beyond that. Most people are capable of concealing a light pistol on their person well enough to avoid casual scrutiny, so they don't attract odd looks, but pulling one out results in a panic in most places. Light pistols cost as little as 200 CCredits in Cataclysm Zones and for purposes of Fabrication, but cost 1000 CCredits to get from the black market in World League areas (price varies in corporate enclaves depending on the strictness, but runs around 500 CCredits). That said, there's not much enforcement of laws against possession of light pistols. Posession of a Light Pistol is a Class 2 Infraction in the World League.

Heavier revolvers and handguns are favored by people who know they'll be in trouble. Carried by lawmen in Cataclysm Zones and serious trouble anywhere else, heavy pistols represent the great equalizer of weapons. Small enough to be carried easily but powerful enough to be a threat to even armored opponents, these lethal weapons deal 8 points of damage. They're too bulky to conceal except under heavy clothing (and a Urban Warrior greatcoat screams trouble), and they cause a lot of trouble for everyone when they're used, but they're cheap and easy to smuggle relative to "military" weapons. They have about a 40 meter range, and take a -1 Accuracy penalty for every 10 meters beyond that. That said, a heavy pistol will run anyone 500 CCredits in a lawless area, and both corporations and World League law enforcement agencies control them well enough that they run a 2500 CCredit premium on the black market. Posession of a Heavy Pistol is a Class 3 Infraction in the World League.

Submachine Guns are a marriage of a light pistol with an assault rifle. These Lethal weapons fire automatically, but shoot smaller bullets and have a shorter range. They have the same range as light pistols but gain a +2 bonus to hit for the extra shots, and deal 8 damage with every attack. They are almost impossible to conceal under clothing, and they run about 750 CCredits in the Cataclysm Zones and about 7500 in World League and corporation controlled areas. Possession of a Submachine Gun is a Class 5 Infraction in the World League.

Shotguns are useful for dealing a lot of damage in a simple weapon. They come in two major variants, shortened and long. Shortened (sawn-off) shotguns are about the size of a heavy pistol, though they suffer a major penalty on range (shorten the range by a factor of 5). Long shotguns are rifle sized, and pretty hard to conceal, but are powerful and have good range without being too risky to use in an area where shooting through a wall means killing an innocent. Shotguns deal the most damage at point blank, where they do 12 damage. This damage decreases by 1 point every twenty five meters (five meters for shortened shotguns), and have great accuracy in poor conditions (they ignore any negative modifiers if the shooter can see the target). Armor is handled differently for shotguns- double its Conversion rating then add its Block rating to its Conversion rating (for example, light-grade armor Converts two points and medium-grade armor Blocks two points and Converts twelve), but its stopping power is universally impressive. Shotguns can be loaded with less-lethal rounds and slug rounds that ignore its penalties versus armor, and are normally Lethal weapons. A shotgun runs about 300 CCredits for a breach action model (requires reloading after use, treat like the Evasion penalty for attack rolls) to 1800 CCredits for a semiautomatic or pump action model, and there's not a real price difference between shortened or long (though high-end shortened shotguns will be semiautomatic and resemble large barreled pistols). Shotguns in a city send people into hiding, and law enforcement will come running if they hear a crook's been causing trouble with a shortened shotgun. Possession of a full-

length shotgun is a Class 3 Infraction in the World League, while a shortened shotgun is a Class 5 Infraction. Shotguns can only be shortened by a gunsmith, a novice attempting to shorten the weapon will ruin it (Fabrication double-specialization required).

Hunting Rifles are favored because they can be used to snipe. They can come with a variety of optics, each of which reduces the effective distance to target when using Sniping (Grade 1 halves distance, Grade 2 makes the distance count for one fifth of its normal, Grade 3 brings distance to a tenth of its normal amount), or they can just be used for Ranged Combat (maximum range is about 250 meters and they're accurate to that distance when the shooter's stationary, with a -1 penalty for every 50 meters thereafter). Hunting Rifles are considered a Lethal weapon in the truest sense of the word, dealing a good 12 damage for a hit. They're too bulky to conceal with or without optics, and cost around 500 CCredits for a low-end model. In a World League area, owning one is the equivalent of confessing to murder (or intent to murder). Getting one off the black market runs up to 25,000 CCredits, and that's for a no-frills model. Fortunately, optics are less expensive, with Grade 1 costing 100 CCredits, Grade 2 costing 1000 CCredits, and Grade 3 costing 5000 CCredits. Since optics systems have non-combat uses (binoculars and cameras, namely), they can be reverse-engineered or kludged together from civilian systems. Possession of a Hunting Rifle is a Class 3+Optics Rating Infraction. (Use the highest Optics Rating the character has on his person, regardless of whether or not it's mounted when calculating the class of the Infraction)

Military Rifles are the fear of almost anyone. Able to kill efficiently from a long distance, a Military Rifle isn't necessarily more complex than a Hunting Rifle, but it's made to counteract body armor and bring down soldiers. They use the same optics as Hunting Rifles, but have a +1 Accuracy bonus due to their quality crafting and deal 20 damage. They cannot be concealed, are very loud when used, and run 1500 CCredits for a lawless area. In World League areas, these Lethal weapons are only found in the possession of elite soldiers or specialized law enforcement officers in standoff situations. Getting one inside World League borders runs a 75,000 CCredit premium on the black market. If a Hunting Rifle is a confession to murder, a Military Rifle is the equivalent to a tape recording showing one in the act. Possession of a Military Rifle is a Class 5+Optics Rating Infraction.

Assault Rifles are a descendant of hunting and military rifles, but are based on a different principle. Rather than relying on massive distance and bullets, an Assault Rifle is typically used as a semiautomatic or burst-firing weapon that fires multiple shots at foes. In game terms, an attack with an Assault Rifle deals 18 Lethal damage. Assault rifles get a +2 modifier on their shots, courtesy of firing multiple bullets. It's accurate to 75 meters, after which point it gets a one point penalty for every additional meter. Assault Rifles can mount optics, but are not used with the Sniping skill under any conditions. Assault Rifles cost about 5000 CCredits in uncontrolled areas, and cost about 60,000 CCredits on the black market (courtesy of being heavily used by military forces). Carrying an Assault Rifle is a Class 6+Optics Rating Infraction.

Implants have become a fact of life for the average person in Orchestra. While not everyone has implants, they're widely accepted and becoming more affordable. It's not uncommon for someone to have a prosthetic or synthetic replacement for a limb or organ, though these aren't the focus of hyperhuman grade implants. Hyperhuman implants cause stress on the body because of their complexity, size, power requirements, and nervous system interactions, and are not capable of just being plopped into an average person.

Therapy to become able to use implants costs only a couple hundred CCredits, but is a gradual process as the body adapts to the genetic and physical alterations undergone in the therapy. There are a

number of methods, but most involve a one-off five or six hour outpatient process, and cause a neural regeneration along with a number of changes to immune and digestive systems. Doctors are able to verify if the therapy's effects are complete, which can follow erratic timetables. Therapy is included free when a character elects for Hyperhuman attribute and skill specializations as a part of their character advancement or during character creation (the average person already has therapy, so it could be said that the advancement is just when it kicks in).

Implants come in four varieties, Neural, Structural, Nano, and Active, classified by the adaptations required to use them. Neural and Active implants may be disabled at will to make room for another slot (they may be enabled at the beginning of a scene) and Nano implants may be disabled for a scenario to open up slots, but Structural implants require removal surgery and physical therapy.

A popular Neural implant is the Cybercomputer. It cannot be hacked, since any access is approved by the brain of the user (essentially the user wills the system to connect to another), and can be slaved to another computer instantaneously to grant a 2 point boost to the Power Rating (unfortunately, not for the purposes of resisting Crashing). A Cybercomputer consumes a Neural Implant slot, but multiple can be installed. A Cybercomputer costs about 1250 CCredits.

The Smartfinder is another Neural implant. It is a passive implant that consumes no slots, but requires a double-specialization in the Neural Implants skill. It allows the user to ignore environmental penalties when Spotting or using Ranged Combat by expanding the user's vision beyond the normal visual spectrum and "illuminating" lightly in the appropriate wavelengths. Smartfinders do have an eye component, and they cause the user's eyes to glow when they are exploring dark areas. They run around 5000 CCredits for a complete system, and 1000 CCredits for replacement eye components should the user's eye be damaged irreparably. Smartfinder systems are viewed with suspicion in the World League, but are not illegal.

Knowings are neural implants that replace allow skills to be implanted in the user. Knowings allow the user to implant up to three skill compilations. Each Knowing takes up a Neural Implant slot, and two can be implanted. Knowings cost 1500 CCredits, and each skill compilation costs 1500 CCredits. Compilations must be custom-tailored for a specific Knowing, but can grant one specific skill from any non-Silver category.

Structural implants were pioneered with the Reskel. A Reskel is an augmented skeleton that has been rebuilt with composite materials and pioneered in such a way that any incoming Stamina damage is reduced by two. Typically the process is done via nanite based construction, since the original process of replacing bones was deemed too psychologically and physically taxing. The nanites are stored in skeletal structure and can emerge to do repairs as needed. The Reskel process uses up one Structural Implant slot, and can be done only once. Getting a Reskel operation performed costs 9500 CCredits.

Hyperstrength is a leading provider of muscle replacement services. They mesh well with the body, and are capable of repairing themselves, but do require a metabolism adaptation. They require at least one specialization in Structural Implants, but don't consume a slot. Hyperstrength grants a +6 bonus to Weight Lifting and reduces the stamina loss by one point. The muscle implantation and muscle material itself costs 5000 CCredits.

Impartment specializes in "personal storage solutions", namely the reconfiguration of the body to allow smuggling of contraband. A simple implant allows the character to conceal anything smaller

than a rifle in a "pouch" in the user's abdomen. Impartment provides electromagnetic shielding, organ adaptation, and more to allow the user to pass even high security checks. An undetectable (except under microscope) seam along the user's abdomen allows them to withdraw the contents of the pouch. Alternative locations are available but offer severely diminished storage space. Impartment's complete implantation package involves therapy, replacement organs with increased output, and the components for the hidden compartment, all for "just 25,000 CCredits" and a Structural Implant slot. Impartment operates primarily in corporate enclaves and Cataclysm Zones, with no surgical centers in World League areas. World League authorities consider the Impartment pouch to be the equivalent of possession of controlled substances. Being discovered to have an Impartment (only possible by using it at the wrong time and place) is a Class 6 Infraction, and it will be removed (painfully, but harmlessly).

FeelWell sells custom nanites that aid natural human healing abilities. Anyone with a FeelWell nanite colony implanted will heal at the maximum normal rate regardless of hospitalization as well as benefit from double stamina regeneration. That said, FeelWell charges a premium fee for its services, demanding 75,000 CCredits, and the nanites do require a Nano Implant specialization and an open skill slot. Only one FeelWell nanite colony can have effect at once.

Outfeel provides a nanite pheromone package that allows the user to understand others' feelings better and influence them subtly. Outfeel provides a +2 bonus to all Sympathy related skills, for the small fee of 5000 CCredits and a Nano Implant slot (and specialization, of course). Outfeel can be doubled for a +3 bonus instead of a +2 one.

UnBleed sells a "lifesaver nanite" that prevents blood loss and brain damage as a result of traumatic injury. A subsidiary of FeelWell, the UnBleed nanite prevents people from dying due to all but the most serious trauma. A user of UnBleed nanites will never die due to time, and will only die when he has taken ten Health points worth of damage below zero. UnBleed can work passively, but requires a double specialization in Nano Implants. Unbleed costs 10,000 CCredits.

Armblades are by no means a new concept, and are available from a variety of retailers, but are becoming favored by bodyguards who need a powerful weapon that they can use easily without carrying it obviously. Armblades function like close combat weapons, and pop out of either the wrist or elbow (depending on user preference, but determined at the time of surgery) either away from or towards the forearm. Armblades deal 4 damage +2 for each level of the Close Combat tree of the user. Armblades are actually not illegal in the World League, though any fighting with them counts as armed fighting.

ZoomIn is a subsidiary of FeelWell, though the two companies are rumored to be going through the steps to separate from each other. ZoomIn advertises itself to the artistic person who wants to make the most of his environment, but actually sells primarily to soldiers and investigators, providing the equivalent of Grade 2 or 3 optics for a low price. Like all optics, ZoomIn models are adaptive, but can only adapt to a given point. Grade 2 implants run around 5000 CCredits with all things included, while Grade 3 will cost a buyer close to 12,500 CCredits. That said, they give a boost to Investigation rolls equal to their Grade, and also are useful because they allow the user to double the effective range of all guns but shotguns (double distance at Grade 2 and triple distance at Grade 3). They can be combined with Smartfinders without an issue, since they operate in different parts of the eye. ZoomIn implants eat up one Active Implant slot regardless of grade. ZoomIn implants affect the illegality of weapons like normal Optics.

Recently, black market surgeons have been marketing a new "Burner" technology, which allows

the user to send a massive amount of electricity into a target over a short distance (about 2 meters). While this drains the user, it can deal lethal damage without requiring the use of a ranged weapon, and the implant only requires a close combat roll. On use, a Burner removes a number of points of Stamina from the user equal to the number of points of Health damage the user wants to deal. Damage from a Burner is subject to Resistance rolls, unlike normal attacks. Burners cost 15,000 CCredits, and use up an Active Implant slot, though they require a double-specialization in the Active Implant skill. Use of a Burner in the World League is a Class 5 Infraction (but they can actually be licensed as weapons).

Computers are used with Electronic Systems skill rolls. They have three ratings: Power Rating, Security Rating, and Class. Each has a major impact on the cost of the computer, though computers are typically custom-built for specific features. There are five Classes, and each determines how much power a computer can have relative to its cost.

Typically, the base cost of a computer is equal to 100 times its Power Rating multiplied by its Security rating, multiplied by its Class Modifier. That said, there are effects of the Class of the computer. A super powerful mainframe is a lot less expensive than a super powerful laptop or phone. The five classes are Giant, Mainframe, Desktop, Laptop, and Phone. Giant computers cost only a tenth of the normal cost, but require a 1000 CCredit facility to keep running (for room, power, cooling, and occasional cooling). Mainframes are much more practical, but they can't be moved since they are integrated into a structure. They cost half of the normal cost. Desktops are what the "normal" cost is. They can be moved (they're a mite smaller than their modern equivalents, and much more sturdy), but require three turns to set up (wireless display devices similar to a phone help with portability), though they require a large pack and are a burden (and a target for thieves). Laptops are favored by hackers for their portability. You pay twice as much for the same stuff, but they're easily portable, and you can actually get to where you're going with one. Phones are preferred by those for whom money is no object. They cost five times the normal cost, but are concealable and ubiquitous. Some hackers buy extra phones to serve as a power bank for a laptop instead of splurging for a new, more fancy computer.

Consumables are everywhere in Orchestra. Food and drinks and medicine, consumables are capable of wondrous effects and horrific outcomes. For the sake of convenience, some of the more dangerous and interesting things are listed here. Naturally, consumables can only be used once.

Everyone has tried to stay awake some time or another, and now it's easy! Soystim offers a comprehensive awareness solution! This cheerily advertised product consists of a blend of stimulants and nutrition to keep a person running with minimal side effects. Using Soystim allows a character to forfeit their stamina gain from the next scene in order to gain a quick point of stamina now. It costs about 10 CCredits for a "energy bar", and even has branded coffee, tea, and beverage products.

On the darker side of the spectrum is Edge. This "combat drug" is popular for the seemingly endless energy it grants. Edge lasts for a scene and allows a character to keep going without stamina. However, Edge eats away at the well being of a character- every time it's used, a Resistance roll must be taken against a target of 12 to avoid a Health point loss. Also, more dangerously, if used in a combat situation Edge causes the user to be able to keep fighting up until the point where their Health falls to zero, and the rule for Nonlethal weapons counting as Less Lethal still applies to someone on Edge. Edge is available in a variety of packages, but it is often taken as a tablet or pill. It is illegal in most jurisdictions, and you won't find it for less than 50 CCredits as an "introductory offer". A dose for a junkie would cost about 250 CCredits, and addiction is common and easily diagnosed. Possession of Edge is a Class 2 Infraction, while Intent to Sell is a Class 5 Infraction.

A more benign drug is Patchitropamine (brand name), a drug which has been shown in tests to speed up healing and rejuvenate the user. While it has addictive qualities and it is very expensive, it tends to be useful for those who live a risky lifestyle. It costs 500 CCredits a week, but if the regimen is maintained for at least three weeks the user heals as if they were in an expensive hospital, with the downside that it lowers the user's maximum amount of Stamina by two points. Patchitropamine is often prescribed, but having it illegally or selling it to someone without a prescription is a Class 2 Infraction.

Tool kits are used with certain skills, and allow them to be used to their full extent. The two types of kits currently in Orchestra are the Fabrication tool kit and the Medicine kit. Both of these have their uses covered more by their respective skills. Tool Kits cost 1000 CCredits, unless otherwise stated.

Advancement:

While a lot of character advancement is dependent on the GM, there's still some ground rules a player should know, since they directly pertain to how they will choose their character's growth.

During the course of a character's adventures, they will gain "Advancement Points", as awarded by the GM. Each advancement point can be used to specialize in a skill, while it takes two advancement points to double-specialize in a skill, four to specialize in an attribute, and eight to specialize in a category (except Silver, which cannot be specialized in as a category). Each skill specialization raises a character's maximum Health and Stamina by one point (double-specializations do nothing), each attribute specialization raises it by two, and each category specialization raises it by four. Contacts gain Advancement Points like player characters if they play a role in the adventure, even if just for one scene. Advancement points are awarded by the GM as they choose.

Law and Reprisal:

Players in Orchestra are typically employed by shadowy agents or faction officers, so odds are that during their adventures they will step on a few toes, whether it's the people with legal jurisdiction in the area or a group of organized criminals.

The general rule is that once you get into trouble with a more traditional faction, you don't get out. The World League's prisons for violent criminals or subversive elements are incredibly bad, the Swordsman Foundation can't risk someone being a bad apple. Similarly, if you get in trouble in an independent town in the Cataclysm Zone, you probably won't be invited back. Organized crime actually functions a lot like one of these traditional governments, they will never overlook a transgression without a fair amount of repayment (which is where they differ, since they never look at jail time or expulsion).

The World League has an "Infraction" system they use to grade crimes on a scale of 1 to 12. A Class 1 or 2 Infraction typically only carries a hefty fine, though frequent offenders may look at imprisonment. Police will not typically stop someone for a Class 1 or 2 Infraction unless they're a persona non grata, but they will tack them on to higher class Infractions. Class 3 or 4 Infractions committed in plain sight of a police officer will cause them to stop the individual, and can occasionally include prison time. Suspicion of a Class 5 or 6 Infraction will lead to a stop, while even rumors of having committed a Class 7 or 8 Infraction are sufficient to bring someone in for questioning. A Class 9 or 10 Infraction is enough to start a manhunt, and Class 11 and 12 Infractions lead to roadblocks and lockdowns, as the police go into overdrive looking for the criminal.

Of course, World League law enforcement is anything but uniform- bribed officials may sell weapon permits (up to Class 9) (or "licenses to kill", though savvy law enforcement officers not that the maximum crime waiver is Class 6, and will see through any license above that).

Corporations and anarchists, however, are more forgiving as a rule. Since corporations care about their bottom line, if they think you're willing to help them or hurt their enemies, they'll let a certain amount of misdeeds slide (though they'll still confiscate your guns). Anarchists don't necessarily forgive the transgressions of others, but it is possible to win back their favor (most anarchic communities have a reputation system that keeps track of who benefits the community, who's a deadbeat, and who's a marauding bandit). Similarly, some anarchists don't care what you've done to other anarchists, so long as you're not hostile to them as a whole.

If you're in World League territory and you step on someone's toes, you have an advantage and a disadvantage. You're one of probably at least a thousand people that someone would see in a day if they were strolling around, so you have a lesser chance of being found by an individual hunter (all bets are off if you're on a wanted poster). The downside is that there's a lot of paper trails, and even organized crime's got people who can track them down. You'll end up paying more for your lifestyle, and it may have a negative impact in some Scenes.

In the Cataclysm Zone people are typically more forgiving, since it's a struggle to live day to day most minor things will be ignored. So long as you don't kill or injure anyone (or steal anything that someone needs, including food), you'll only get expelled from an area at worst. Of course, should you come back from exile or commit a heinous crime, you're likely to get a good old fashioned electric chair.

Text on further pages belongs to the GM's section, continue at your own peril.

GM Section:

This is the GM section. If you are a mere mortal player, please avert your gaze to prevent the chance of contracting mental illness, horrific sores and boils, boredom, and enlightenment.

Of course, if you are a GM, feel free to read this section. You'll probably need it to write your own scenarios in the same way I did, as well as to handle certain bits of game play smoothly and effectively.

Rule Zero:

This book is a guide. To top it off, it's more or less a first attempt (I lost my first game, Steeltech, to the ravages of computer failure several years ago, and it wasn't that good either) by an amateur writer. Stuff will probably be poorly written, or written in ways that seem outlandish or unrealistic to an outside observer. While some of the more outlandish bits may be intentional since Orchestra tries to be a gritty cyberpunk with a twinge of the unrealistic via the hyperhuman implants and psychic abilities, feel free to drop them or alter them for your campaigns. In particular, this edition of Orchestra has heavily neglected psychic and hyperhuman abilities, glossing over them for the sake of time constraints (getting this out before my college picks up). It's very much a "rough draft"

Anyway, rambling aside, disregard anything in this book. Make your own rule adjustments (and if you want a shot for them to appear in future versions, or if you just want to improve Orchestra, e-mail them to kylesgames@live.com). Write your own scenarios (and e-mail them to me!). Have fun, don't just follow the rules. Orchestra is released under Creative Commons license that lets you do anything you want (except sell it or its derivatives or claim it or its derivatives as your own [without crediting me, that is]). There's no moral imperative here, no ethical right or wrong in terms of how you play. Be free!

GM Index:

Balancing Difficulty:

Orchestra uses a unique system that generates kinda odd results in terms of probability and calculation, so here's a quick little bit about it.

A typical rule is that 6 or 7 are average final results for a person with no specialties. This means that a total novice could do it about half the time. Incredibly low targets should only be considered should there be many tertiary dice, or a dramatic penalty for failure. As a general rule, any roll below 4 can be skipped (unless there's a legitimate chance of dire failure), as the chance for it to fail is negligible, especially for characters with specializations in the action's requirements.

Obviously the goal as GM is to maximize the fun of the group. If you know your group, it's not difficult to figure out their preferences for difficulty and play style. Certain groups enjoy "fighting" the GM, which means that they enjoy a challenge, while others feel like telling a story and would rather not worry about being beaten to a pulp by every security guard. Don't coddle players, there should be some difficulty (if you just say they win and live happily ever after, it's not a very cyberpunk game), but at the same time unless they go into a session expecting to have their hopes and dreams smashed to bits by the cruel unflinching nature of society, don't beat them mercilessly. I guess the best sentiment is to say that a GM should "use common sense" when determining the difficulty of the scenarios they put their characters into.

Also remember that nothing is set in stone- players may create characters with major deficiencies, so if they don't like being crushed, they may expect certain areas to be easier. While Orchestra tries to include rules for a more cerebral game style, players may be "Combat Junkies", and it may be more fun to just go along with the psychotic explosion celebration than try to get them to investigate a crime scene.

If you want combat to be common, half the weapons' effects. Really. A shotgun will kill an unarmored player. A hunting rifle will too. A military grade rifle sends them straight to their grave. A sturdy revolver kicks the bucket for a starting contact. Armor does almost nothing until you get to medium-grade. Of course, that's how it's supposed to be in cyberpunk, but players will probably object to this.

More to the point, Orchestra's system has a odd bit to its mechanics- even for the unskilled, everything below 6 or 7 has a pretty slow descending rate of success, and everything above the 6 or 7 mark loses success rate rapidly, even for relatively skilled characters. Also, some skills ignore the base dice even with training, meaning that the target numbers for those skills must be adjusted to compensate.

I'd recommend a chart somewhat like the following to gauge the difficulty of tests:

Cakewalk: 2 (should only fail if inebriated)
Easy: 4 (should only fail if unlucky
Normal: 6 (shouldn't fail often even without training)
Hard: 9 (will fail more often that not without training)
Very Hard: 12 (near impossible without training)
Expert Only: 15 (Difficult even with substantial training)
Newsworthy: 18 (Really, really hard to pull off, even with a perfect throw for most characters, this sort of thing should attract news vans if done in public)

Impossible: 21 (Epic and groundbreaking, only the best and second best outcomes of a fully specialized person will pull this off [6+6+3+3+3+3] or [6+6+3+3+3+2], and statistically the odds are pretty unfair)

Scenarios and Scenes:

One of the major points of Orchestra is that the players don't necessarily know what's going on, and their employers may not either. A Scenario should consist of five or more scenes, and it's about equivalent to an episode of a TV show or an act of a play. Scenarios don't answer questions, they raise them, and even though the players get answers there should always be a mystery to be "solved" next Scenario.

The scene section in the player's guide is a little ambiguous, so here's how scenes work. Scenes determine what actions NPCs are capable of doing- a combat scene only has NPCs that can fight if threatened; they'll never try to sell the players something. Scenes shouldn't restrict the player's behavior, though. If they want to try to talk to the guard, they can, they'll just have a hard time getting him to agree with their position on life and the universe when they're trespassing, though they could maybe try to bluff their way on by.

Each scene should be an area, and this is useful because it allows you to make an area with a handful of words. For instance, "Smoky, poor lit bar" or "Sterile, bright hospital room". These are just for cosmetic purposes, so to speak, but they help you get players into a feel. Orchestra's cyberpunk, which means that players will probably have an expectation of rainy, dark, cramped cities, but it also has a Wild West like feel for Cataclysm Zones. Tech is available in the Cataclysm Zones, but it doesn't get near the stuff in World League areas. Cataclysm Zone areas are sunny and dusty, with few plants and water sources, but they're a relief from the World League monotony. Corporate enclaves try to be shiny and new, but most are old enough that there's a growing pile of filth at the bottom of the towers. Be imaginative, and use your imagination to spark your player's imagination.

Scenes come in two types- High Energy and Low Energy. Low energy scenes are meant to be non-combat scenes, where subtlety and guile rule over breaking and entry. The players can only recover the loss of a handful of stamina, while in a High Energy scene players are encouraged to do whatever they feel like, even if it includes property damage.

Events:

Events are like random encounters in a video game- they're not necessarily critical to the story, though they may help advance it, and they are mostly optional (there's not a major penalty for failure, except in a handful of cases). Each Event contains a handful of options, which should be given to the players "Jim's character thinks he has a chance of tackling the robber" roughly in the order of how they're likely to succeed. Multiple options are recommended, and a succeeded event should not give more than an Advancement Point, if even.

Search:

Searching is one of those things that is fun when players find all the clues and put the picture together, but can also detract from the game. Make searching optional if need be, but remember that searching for evidence and following a trail make things easier for players- they can find whatever they're looking for and get a big picture. Searching with investigation has a base target number of 4,

which increases up to 8 (or beyond) for really hard things. This is used when a player has no clue what they're looking for in the first place and finally figures out what they're looking for, or finds evidence that allows them to have a major advantage in a Scene or Event. For Spotting the target numbers range from 5 or 6 to about 10, and this is used when looking for a specific object (say if the players look for a item that they think should be in the scene). For example, looking for evidence is an Investigation check, while looking for a footprint is a Spotting check, if players have reason to suspect it.

Trailing in a crowd uses the same rules, but Investigation is used to find a mark, while Spotting is used to pick him out from a crowd or recognize him in a street and follow him. Investigation can be used to examine what a suspect is doing, should he be attempting to be stealthy (Athletics roll on his behalf), though from a distance it can be hard. Trailing characters can usually tell the gist of what a mark is trying to do, however, but only generally- they can tell he's entering a building, but they don't know if he's fumbling with his keys or picking the lock.

Contacts:

It's entirely possible that a player will call upon his character's contacts until they die. Should they not receive the necessary medical care and they move on to a different life (or don't), it's important to note what happens. Nothing happens. Characters don't regain contacts by an automatic method. It's up to you as a GM to create a new contact for them. Use a NPC they like, but that isn't too powerful. Don't force them into getting the contact, allow the player to like the NPC before putting their stats on his sheet. Allow contacts gained by this way to have parts in scenarios (you can use their starter contacts, but I recommend against it because they're characters that the players, not you, have created).

Contacts are a player's NPC. They give them more responsibility and more power. Treat them somewhat well. Make sure that contacts never outshine another player's character, though. Limit their use to once every ten scenes if it's necessary. Just forbid the contact's use arbitrarily until the character who's less flashy has caught up or gained more of the spotlight.

That said, use the contacts. Have them be a tug on the players. Villains can threaten them, as can law enforcement (crooked or not), random gangs, and shadowy corporations. Allow players to share contacts (the once every five scenes guideline can be waived or applied to each player separately), should the opportunity come up. Contacts can be a great way to give the player a motivation to do stuff.

Deadly Drugs:

This is a starter Scenario meant to be played with a handful (fewer than four) player characters. There should be at least a couple players. Remind players that they can use their contacts (if you wanna be nice, tell them they can use them each once in this scenario, since that's how long it is).

Personae:

League Officer Vlad Dystov is an imposing man, despite his graying hair. He's wearing a Urban Warrior longcoat over what appears to be at least medium-grade body armor, and he's got Hyperhuman implants showing, and more hidden. Despite his World League employment, he's fairly well known and well liked to everyone, since he's more focused on solving crime than furthering World League agendas. His renegade nature makes it imperative for him to have results to show for his actions, though he could probably leave the World League to work for anyone, and talent scouts from corporate security forces often approach him offering astronomical sums of money. He "accepts" offers on

occasion, but stays with World League and just uses the transferred funds to hire "contractors" to do work he can't get done. He speaks with a Russian accent, though it's very slight, and his voice is well-known to the characters (he has appeared on public service announcements and is a popular "action hero").

Vlad Dystov is a "heroic" figure and cannot be defeated by the players. His agenda's on the table (he wants to clean up the streets), and nothing will entice him from his goal. Attacking Vlad leads to a massacre as he will use Armblades and a sawn off shotgun on any attackers, and he is practically bulletproof.

Should Vlad be approached as a character that can be fought, he will have a specialization in every attribute except Psychic, all the Agility and Bulk skills as well as Negotiation, Persuasion, and each of the Hyperhuman skills, with double specializations in Close Combat, Ranged Combat, Resistance, Endurance, and in the Hyperhuman skills. He has color specialization in Red and Blue, and the maximum 24 Health and Stamina, as well as multiple implants (at your discretion). He will try to fight nonlethal if attacked with nonlethal force, or even if he thinks he can win with just his punches (which count as a club for determining damage).

Carnifex is a punk in his thirties. He has fallen from glory after his attempts to surplant Vlad, and now runs a gang that sells Edge. Carnifex wears a t-shirt under a red jacket, with black pants, and stands out on the street. He's well known in the underworld for his ruthless nature and his ties to the government. He operates with the World League's permission (so long as he causes as little trouble as possible), and he has contacts within the World League who will detain anyone he catches snooping around (though they will not use terribly much force), as well as his own hired thugs.

Carnifex has Green and Blue category specializations (with additional specializations in Persuasion and Negotiation), being more of a bureaucrat than a fighter, and will try to bribe the players with up to 5000 CCredits to leave him alone. Should he have to fight, he'll call out four thugs with a Red specialization, a Ranged Combat specialization, and light pistols (if given the opportunity).

Michal Jadin is an investigative journalist who had gotten on the trail of Carnifex. He's an up and coming but naive man, and he looks incredibly ordinary (short brown hair, brown eyes, average height and build). When the players find him in Carnifex's warehouse, he's disheveled and a little confused, but he's not afraid of them. He'll ask them who they are (unless they look like they're from Carnifex's group, in which case he'll just tell them to go away).

Michal has a Blue specialization and specializations in Persuasion and Investigation. He's only got six health, but he'll move for cover at the first sign of trouble.

Sarai Kerensky is a young woman with a purpose. She's an investigator for the World League, but like Vlad she's on the straight and narrow. When the players encounter her at Jadin's apartment, she's berating one of her subordinates for incompetence. Sarai's got a professional look, with short-cropped hair and conservative clothing meticulously cared for.

The sad truth is that Sarai doesn't really know how to investigate either. She was chosen for the case because her boss figured she had no chance of finding anything. Her specialization is entirely in non-investigative skills. She has specializations in the Red category, Sympathy, Understanding, Kinesics (Reading), Persuasion, Negotiation, and Agility, as well as double-specializations in Ranged Combat, Close Combat, and Endurance. She's pretty tough (16 Health and Stamina), and she's wearing

medium-grade body armor. She has a heavy pistol strapped to her hip.

Introduction:

The players are called in by League Officer Vlad Dystov. Despite his title and his employment by the World League, he's politically neutral. He hires "contractors" to get results, and so long as they don't cause trouble he'll hire anyone he thinks he needs. Currently, Vlad's looking for a number of people who can take down a drug ring. He cannot personally act against the ring because the leader is a disgraced rival of his who still has ties in the World League. He needs a face that won't be recognized, and the players are a perfect choice. Should the players try to refuse, he'll indicate that there's a reward for them if they succeed. He suggests a physical meeting in a bar (the Pynchon), insinuating that the phone lines aren't entirely secure.

Scenes:

Low Energy Scene: The Pynchon

A small, mostly empty bar, the Pynchon is a haven for literary types and the occasional subversive element. The bartender has a stun gun under his counter in a locked box in case trouble should arise. The bar itself is clean, and it has tables outside under a canopy. The Pynchon is on ground floor of a larger skyscraper, below the normal street level of the city, with rain falling directly in front of the Pynchon from in between the walkways above. A neon sign tries to draw in customers.

Vlad sits at the bar, chatting casually with the bartender. He occasionally orders a drink, and he appears to have been waiting quite some time (though he doesn't seem drunk). When the players' characters arrive, he greets them coldly, urging them to take a seat. He converses about the weather (always rainy), and about the rising price of food for a while, unless he is interrupted by the players.

Vlad nods to the bartender, and he goes over to lock the door. The windows tint and Vlad activates a small device, setting it down on the counter.

"I've called you here today because I need help with a problem. Recently, a dealer named Carnifex has been selling Edge on the street. I can't take him down because he's an old bureaucrat who still has some connections in the World League, despite having been disgraced. He's been pulling on his leash, however, and the other day some of his thugs kidnapped a journalist. I don't know where Carnifex is, or if the journalist is still around, but if you find him, I'll pay you a thousand credits each, plus a bonus for if you 'take down' Carnifex, or find evidence to convict him. The journalist and his news agency may be willing to reward you as well, so you could make a pretty decent haul. The police have been ignoring evidence, so I need someone honest to help me here."

The bartender unlocks the door and the windows return to normal when Vlad finishes speaking. If the players accept Vlad's mission, he will give them the address of the journalist's apartment, and tell them that his name is Michal Jadin. If they decline, he lets them leave, though he will call them a while later to reiterate his earlier offer. If they refuse again, they hear a rumor about a missing journalist and a reward from a news agency for his return (2500 CCredits, a hefty sum).

Low Energy Scene: Jadin's Apartment

When (and if) the players investigate the scene of the crime, they find that the police are all over

the place. An exasperated woman stops them. She explains that she's the investigator on the case, and she can't let them enter. She gets a phone call that she takes (keeping a wary eye on the characters), then announces that they are allowed to enter (if they ask how, she just mentions Vlad). She says that if they need any help, they can call her, and gives out her name (Sarai Kerensky). She seems to be nervous about something, but won't say without effort on the behalf of the players to pry it out.

There's not much left in the apartment, but an astute eye (Investigation roll against 10) will find an external storage card for a phone. Sarai will be excited over this development, and try to take the card. If the players trust her, she'll use it to lock on to Michal's phone, which is at a bar (the Gibson Cafe) on the other side of town. If not, she'll show them how to use it. She'll offer to tag along to help the players in their goal. Should the players decline, she'll watch them from the shadows and track them, in order to try to help them regardless of whether or not they want help.

Sarai has a secret. She's only susceptible to Persuasion, but if Persuaded (target 10) she'll reveal that there have been mysterious men hovering around the apartment. Rolling too low (4 or less) will cause her to leave the players to their own fate, as will trying to bribe her.

Should the players absolutely fail to find anything, Sarai will eventually uncover the card and lead them to the Gibson Cafe, though if they've aggravated her she'll just send the players there to do her work for her.

Low Energy Scene: Gibson Cafe

The "Gibson Cafe" is little more than a bar. The place isn't very tidy, and the bartender's gruff and threatening. It's very much on the wrong side of town, and odds are there's a mugging going on within a city block. If the Pynchon was a dive, this place is subterranean. There's smoke in the air, and though most of it is from cigarettes, there's an odor of gunpowder. A bouncer watches the patrons, and there are plenty. A small group has a private area, they wear red jackets and converse in hushed tones, exchanging packages with various contents.

Vlad calls one of the players when they enter the bar.

"Watch yourself in there. Those guys in red jackets are in Carnifex's gang. You look at them funny and they're gonna butcher you, and nobody will come by there. My advice would be to look for a table with just one guy. They're gonna be 'brokers', selling information and offering jobs from patrons. Find one and see if you can get a trace on the bad guys."

Sure enough, there are brokers aplenty in the bar. In fact, one waves to the players and encourages them to approach. If the players hesitate, the bouncer brings them over. If players wish to start a fight, remind them that causing trouble would lead to a fight with the dealers. If they continue, feel free to stick ten goons with full Close Combat and Ranged Combat trees (8 Health/Stamina) and light pistols into the fight. While it may not sound like much, the thugs will be merciless to those who cause trouble in their bar (and Sarai won't help the players if they're asking for trouble).

Anyway, assuming the players don't start a gunfight, they're ushered into a booth with the broker. The broker turns out to be Vlad in disguise, and he has a chuckle at the player characters' expense.

"I've had these thugs followed. They've got two warehouses, one on the northern waterfront and

one in the heart of the city to the south. I don't know where they're holding Michal, but it's a sure bet that he's in one of the two warehouses."

The players are free to decide to go to a warehouse or poke around the bar, but there's nothing for them to find there, other than a few heavy drinkers and near-hostile locals. Again, if they have trouble, they're on their own against at least ten baddies.

High Energy Scene: North Warehouse

The waterfront Warehouse is Carnifex's distribution and handling center. The risks of running a manufacturing plant producing Edge within World League territory are too high to justify, but the gang owns a facility in the nearest Cataclysm Zone that allows him to ship drugs into the city, and bribing the local coastal patrolmen allows him to have a risk-free pathway for drugs. If the players enter, Sarai will meet them at the door, telling them that Vlad sent her (truthfully), unless they drove her off earlier.

The warehouse is almost empty right now- Carnifex doesn't produce much more Edge than he sells, so he's only got a small fraction of the warehouse in use, but the drugs sitting on the shelves still amount to well over 150,000 CCredits. Taking them, however, will get the players on the wrong side of Sarai and Vlad. It also means that they have no way to hide from the incoming bad guys, a group of eight trigger happy gangers with a Ranged Combat specialty and a submachine gun each. An Athletics roll attempting to get 6 or higher will get players into a safe hiding spot to avoid the patrol, letting the player characters wait out the sweep. Attacking the gangers from a hiding spot allows a one-turn lead for the attackers, and may allow them to get a couple gangers down. The weapons are confiscated, however, should Sarai be around. Similarly, if one of the players decided to dress like a ganger, the guards will hesitate to fire (though they'll decide that the players' characters are valid targets the next round, when they fail to exchange proper certifications).

Unfortunately, the warehouse is empty, though there is a chair with some ropes in the back room. When the players go to leave, a police patrol is waiting outside. They've apprehended the crooks, if the players haven't dispatched them, and Vlad is waiting with them. If the players took the drugs (which are in large bags), they'll have to ditch them to make their escape (or to prevent suspicion). Should they still be on friendly terms with Vlad and Sarai, they will be ushered on to the South Warehouse- Vlad's taken action and he can't allow any delays or else his World League employers will rein him in. If players fight to try to keep the drugs, they will be destroyed in a hail of bullets.

High Energy Scene: South Warehouse

This warehouse is obviously defended by a dozen guards (see the North Warehouse guard description) who are blocking entrance to the front door. A quick check around the back reveals that there's a vehicle loading/unloading door, but the entrance is controlled by a computer terminal (Power 2 Security 4). Sarai will refuse to attack the front door, stating that it's suicide and suggesting a look around the back. If the players charge in, she will follow suit regardless.

Opening the rear door will take the players directly into the room that Michal is held in. He;s blindfolded and tied to a chair, but he matches the description Vlad gave. He's happy to see the player characters, unless they're disguised as gangers, in which case he tries to escape (punching one of them then making a mad dash). They could just leave as soon as Michal is freed, grab the reward money from the news agency (2500 CCredits to split) and Vlad (1000 CCredits for each character), and then live happily ever after (until the next Scenario, that is), or they can go further into the warehouse.

Alternatively, they can try to shoot down the front door. Vlad can't come with them, though Sarai will, if she hasn't been driven off, so they don't have any spectacular fire support, but since each guard has only one health, they should be easy enough for a party with a combat focus. Feel free to decrease the number of guards for a smaller or less combat focused party (Athletics of 8, though failure just gets them chased off if they don't draw weapons or approach guards further). Since they're probably not wearing uniforms, they can't bluff their way in, though if someone thought to get dressed like the gangers they could walk in fine.

They'll find Carnifex waiting for them in the main section of the warehouse (whether they've gone in from Michal's makeshift prison or the front). He has four baddies guarding him, each of whom has a submachine gun, Red specialization, and a Ranged Combat specialization (as mentioned in the Personae section). He'll lecture the player characters, but he has no plans to let them live. If they try to escape or attack, the bodyguards will attack. Carnifex is unarmed (mostly, but he won't try to resist arrest unless he thinks he's just gonna be dumped off somewhere else as a corpse). If the players don't kill him, Vlad will call them up and encourage them to, stating that it's for the greater good. If the players kill Carnifex, they get an additional 500 CCredits each from Vlad. The Scenario ends here, and if players haven't found Michal yet they find him in the next room.

Aftermath:

Vlad congratulates the players, regardless of whether or not they killed Carnifex (mercy isn't bad in his opinion, though he'd have preferred a little brutality on their part). He tells them to wait for future jobs from him, and thanks them for their help. He tells them that it's been hard to keep the streets clean recently, and they've done him and the population of the whole city. He walks off into an alley, having paid the characters, and tells them to keep up the good work.

I'd suggest no more than 4 advancement points for the players if they played this scenario as is written, and that's for a stellar roleplaying performance and a high rate of advancement. It's short enough you could probably start them off on something else in a session and still award no more than four points, so just remember that the 4 is a guideline rather than a rule, and it's the upper guide. Also remember that roleplaying means factions- if players have declared a faction (say World League, for example) then acted against their interest, they should be at least close to losing their roleplaying points, unless they are a renegade.

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I'll give a quick little blurb about the license of this... thing called Orchestra.

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Credits:

Kyle Willey of Kyle's Games
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