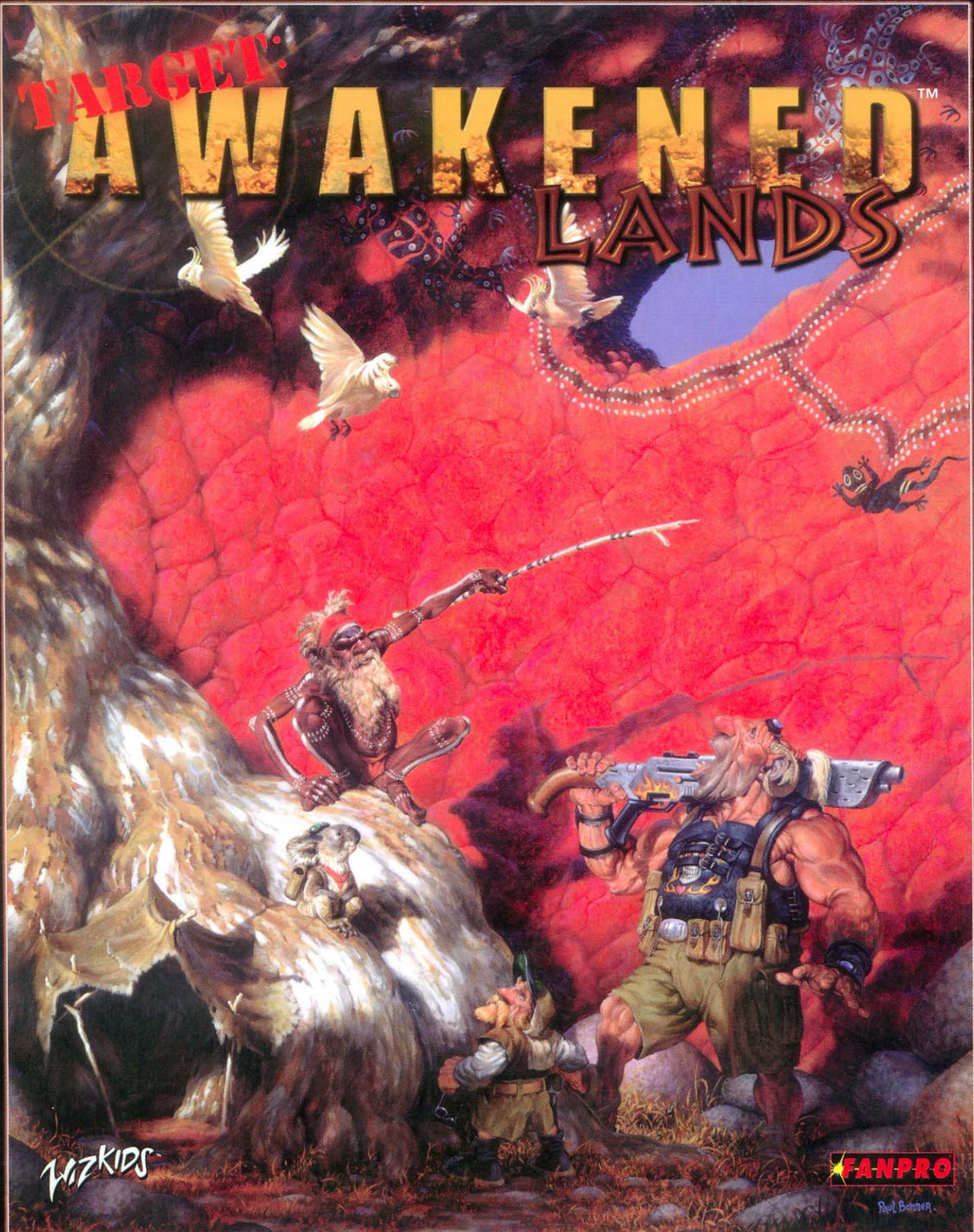




TARGET: AWAKENED LANDS™



WIZKIDS

FANPRO

Paul Bonner



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TARGET: AWAKENED LANDS CREDITS

WRITING

Rob Boyle
Martin Gotthard
Eleanor Holmes
Steve Kenson
Shane Winzar

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Rob Boyle
Michael Mulvihill

SHADOWRUN LINE DEVELOPER

Rob Boyle

EDITING

Rob Boyle
Michelle Lyons

ART

Art Direction
Rob Boyle
Fred Hooper
Cover Art
Paul Bonner
Cover Design
John Bridegroom
Layout
Jason Vargas
Illustration
Peter Bergting
Ron Boyd
Tom Fowler
Jim Nelson
Mike "Skuzzy" Nielson
Matt Plog
Steve Prescott
Marc Sasso

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Find us online:
info@shadowrunrpg.com
(address for Shadowrun questions)
http://www.shadowrunrpg.com
(official Shadowrun web page)
http://www.fanpro.com
(FanPro web page)
http://www.wizkidsgames.com
(WizKids web page)

INTRODUCTION

Target: Awakened Lands is about the places in the world of *Shadowrun* that are deeply affected by magic. Each of the locations described within are marked by magical events and Awakened beings. These areas can be used as campaign settings to give the game a backdrop of arcane forces and mystical mysteries, or they can be used as exotic, briefly-visited locales with intriguing shadowrunning options. While there are many such places in the world of *Shadowrun*—too many to detail in one book—*Target: Awakened Lands* focuses on the continent of Australia and a smattering of other Awakened sites. It also delves into the new fluctuations affecting magic and the astral plane.

Target: Awakened Lands is presented as a series of electronic documents posted by Captain Chaos, sysop of the vast Shadowland archive and data haven—the number one source for shadowrunners on what's going on in the world of *Shadowrun*. The documents are written by various characters, ranging from Outback explorers to shadowrunners to Aboriginal shamans, each with their own prejudices and points of view. Each article is marked up with a running commentary by other runners who add to, revise and contradict the original post. These inserted comments add innuendo, allegations, opinions, rumors, misconceptions, misinformation, lies and sometimes even the truth to the information presented. It is left up to the gamemaster to decide what information is correct and which is just filling, as appropriate to his or her game.

The first document, *Manic Mana*, details the changes and unpredictability of magic in the wake of Halley's Comet and the fiftieth anniversary of the Awakening (both described in the *Shadowrun* sourcebook *Year of the Comet*). Many new phenomena are covered, from astral shallows (where the

astral and physical planes come closer) to astral rifts (holes in the fabric of the universe that lead to the depths of the metaplanes and astral space).

The second and main document, *Australia: The Land of Oz*, describes the Awakened land most infamous for its primal natural power. This section first explains the background information runners need to know about Australia, including its history, way of life, and intrigues of the megacorps and organized crime. It then details each of Australia's major cities, from the independent city of Sydney to the Japanese enclave of Cairns.

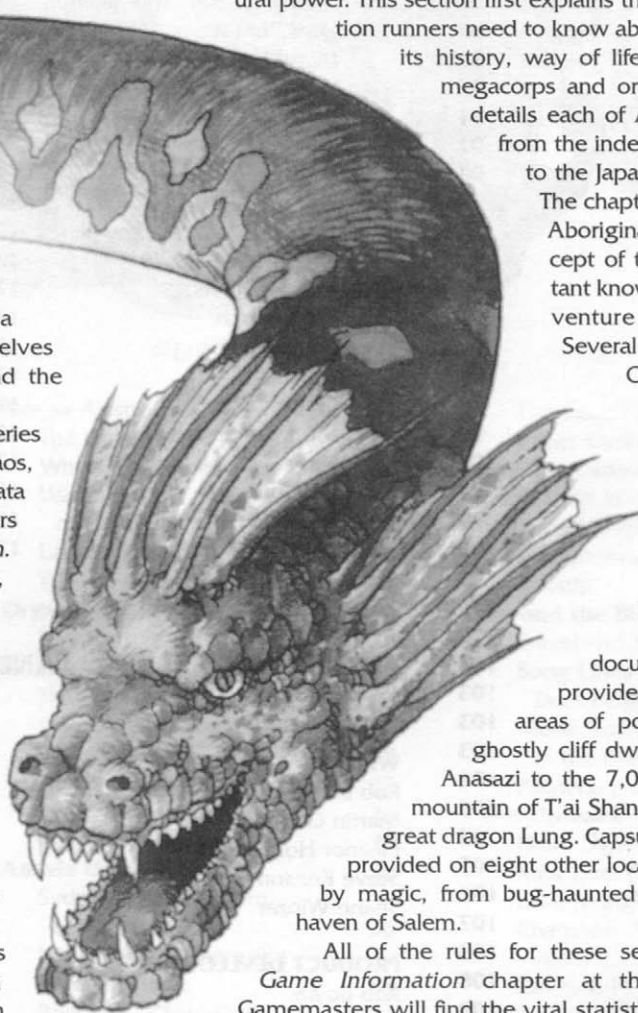
The chapter moves on to explain Aboriginal magic and the concept of the Dreamtime, important knowledge for runners who venture into the Outback.

Several key locations in the Outback are described, as well as tips for surviving in the bush.

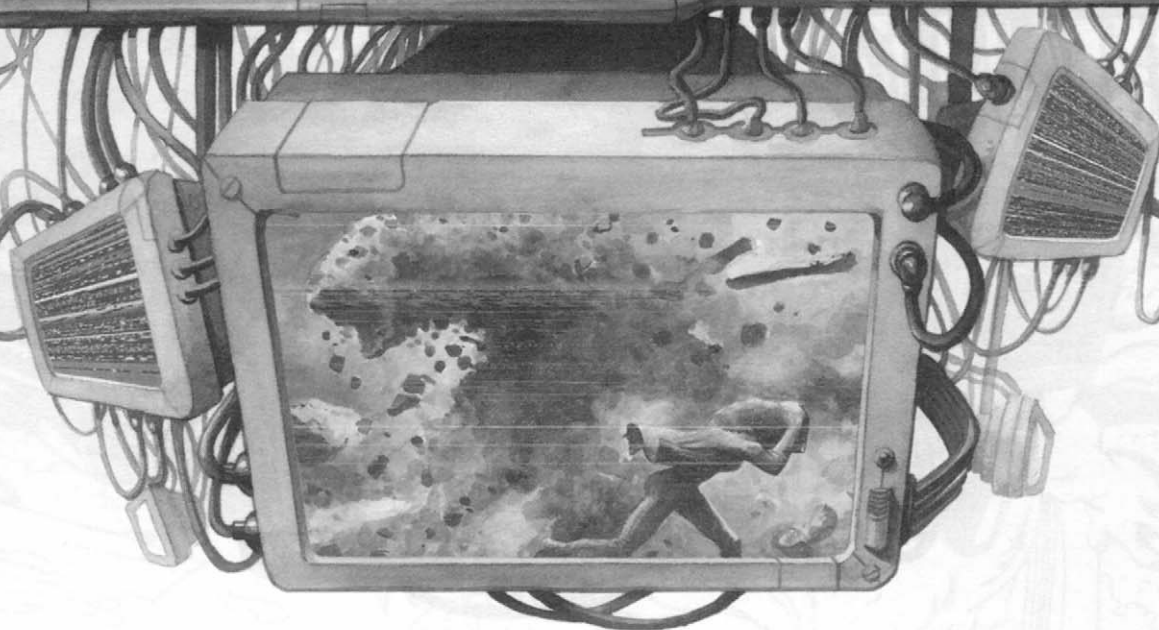
The section wraps up with an overview of Australia's paranormal critters and magical threats.

The third and final document, *Awakened Sites*, provides information on nine areas of potent magic, from the ghostly cliff dwellings of the long-lost Anasazi to the 7,000 steps of the sacred mountain of T'ai Shan, the new abode of the great dragon Lung. Capsule descriptions are also provided on eight other locations strongly affected by magic, from bug-haunted Chicago to the witch haven of Salem.

All of the rules for these sections appears in the *Game Information* chapter at the end of the book. Gamemasters will find the vital statistics of Australia, as well as rules for applying magical phenomenon like mana storms and ghostly alchera, and other behind-the-scenes data on many of the locations described.



A STIRRING PLANET



With all the curve balls that Momma Earth has been tossing our way lately, it seemed the proper time to put together a compilation of what was new in the realm of mana and mojo. While I was at it, I thought I could gather the skinny on those areas of the planet where magic has a little more to say than technology. Of course, once I got to work, I found that I had bitten off more than I could chew.

The first part was easy—I just recruited Magister and some of the other magical experts that lurk on Shadowland to give us an update on the status of magic, and they dove right in. With the recent passing of Halley's Comet and the anniversary of the Awakening, I figure they had plenty of material to work with.

For the Awakened lands, I planned to start with Australia, since that seems to be the one everyone has heard the most hype about. We've all heard of the mana storms down there, but not much else. I figured we could cover that easily and still get to Amazonia, Cambodia and possibly even a few other places like Tibet.

Spirits, was I wrong.

There turned out to be a lot more to Australia than I expected—everything from paracrifiers to power sites to Dreamtime magic. I quickly realized that I needed to allocate more storage space to the Land Down Under than I had expected. It also became evident that there was a lot more to Australia that was interesting to shadowrunners besides the magic, like crime cartels, water smuggling and corporate hostilities.

So here you have it. Australia is now the primary focus of this compilation, from sprawls to bunyips. I've also included teasers about some specific places of power from around the world, but the other major Awakened lands will have to wait for their own compilation. There are just too many secrets to go around.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 12 June 2062 at 04:15:00 (PST)

MANIC MANA



I'll admit it up front: I don't know the astral plane from a hole in the ground. I like to keep my space virtual and I know the Matrix, but the astral plane doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me. These days, it sounds like it isn't making sense to a lot of people, including people who have been going there for years. Things are changing out there and what used to be a magician's playground is starting to look a whole lot more like some of the bad parts of town. Astral drek is coming up faster than the theoreticians in their ivory towers can identify it and—let's face it—you can't afford to wait for some Th.D. to publish a paper on the subject in the *Journal of Practical Thaumaturgy* or something like that. You need info now, which is why I've tapped Magister (aided by some of Shadowland's other magic experts) to put together an overview of everything astral. From what I've heard, conditions are changing fast, so if you've got more up-to-date information, let's hear it.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 12 June 2062 at 04:38:21 (PST)

by Magister

I remember the first time I achieved an out-of-body experience as if it were yesterday. I was 13 and it was the middle of the night. I thought I was dreaming at first, floating up near the ceiling, looking down at my sleeping body. I flew through my bedroom wall and out into the air, several stories up. It was an exhilarating feeling, flying free of material constraints. It started what has become a lifelong fascination with the astral plane and all that it offers. I'm grateful for that first, carefree flight through the ether now more than ever, because the astral plane that I knew then—that uncomplicated place of freedom—may not be long for this (or any other) world.

Before you leap to post how I'm a doomsayer and I'm exaggerating, let me point out that I'm not saying the astral plane is going away, or that it's filled with horrible monsters, or any sort of nonsense like that. I'm simply saying that we're going through a transition, an evolution on the astral that makes things more complicated. You can think of it like this if you like: at first the astral plane was like a swimming pool. It was clean, safe and pretty much empty except for the people who dove in now and again to play around. There was a deep end and some warning floats, but it was easy to navigate around those if you knew what you





were doing. Then we found out it was more like a lake. We found there were fish in there, and you had to watch out for sharp rocks, weeds and the occasional discarded fishhook. There was no chlorine and no filter; the lake could get polluted with all sorts of garbage. It wasn't a controlled environment. It was an ecosphere.

Now we're finding out that the astral plane is more like an ocean than a lake. It's vast and deep, with currents and tides, storms and waves. There are fish, but some of them are sharks cruising for prey, and alien life hides in the depths beyond our understanding. We've touched only the shallow waters of this place; now it's time to explore deeper.

- To throw out an analogy for the more technically minded among you, the evolution of the astral plane may be likened to the evolution of the Matrix. Way back when, in the early Internet days, online systems were pretty exclusive. You could only get online if you were with a government organization, university, or the like. Then things started expanding and pretty soon everyone was online. Then they developed ASIST and only the elite could actually go "inside" cyberspace. Now everyone's in virtual reality. The astral plane also becomes more complex as more and more people visit it and more and more spirits from the other side come through to visit us.

- Silicon Mage

MANALINES

We'll start out with some of the better known features of the astral plane and how they've changed (for the *real* basic stuff, check out the *Manual of Practical Thaumaturgy* or one of the other files online here, then come back to this). Manalines are a well-known phenomenon from even before the Awakening. A manaline is basically a flow of mana (magical energy) from one place to another, a sort of "river" or "stream" of magical power (or a "current" if you want to go with the "astral space is like an ocean" analogy). They're known by many names in many different cultures, including ley lines, dragon lines, song or dream lines, and so forth. A magician in contact with a manaline on the physical or astral plane can tap into greater magical power than normal.

- It's important to remember that mana flows through the astral and into the physical plane, so a magician who's not astrally active can still sense and call upon the mana flowing through a mana line or power site. Most Awakened types will know when they're in the vicinity of this type of power; they'll get that tingling feeling running up their spine, the hair on their arms will raise up, or they'll get strange emotional urges. It's an electrifying moment.

- Shetani

- Manalines tend to "look" different on the astral, perhaps depending on where you are and what they're aspected toward. Some of them are only visible as a "brightening" of the astral plane, while others can clearly be seen as rivers or fuzzy

tubes of raw mana arching across the astral plane, and still others appear as rainbows, shimmering distortion waves or even as an astral construct of a beaten track. Some are more aural than visual, like directional currents of sound. I think some of them may also appear differently, depending upon the viewer.

- Psi-Op

With the passage of Halley's Comet and the anniversary of the Awakening has come a change in the behavior of many manalines around the world. One common occurrence is a fluctuation in the flow of mana, almost like a wave, causing a surge of magical energy to travel down the manaline. It's somewhat analogous to blocking up a water hose, then releasing the kink and seeing a surge of stronger pressure rush down the hose. These mana surges cause magic to become less predictable and can cause temporary strong magical effects in the area of the manaline.

Manalines may be "aspected" toward a particular type of magic or emotional resonance. For example, the energy of a manaline may be better suited for summoning spirits (or even certain types of spirits) than for sorcery. Alternately, it may be ideal for casting certain types of spells, but not others. Manalines (like all mana) are sensitive to human thoughts and emotions. Some manalines develop permanent emotional impressions, aspecting them toward certain acts, from magic aligned with a particular tradition (usually one long practiced in that area) to rituals for a particular purpose, such as worship, battle, building and so forth. Evidence suggests that more manalines are developing aspects as they are exposed to human interaction.

- A fellow at Cambridge proposed the theory that some sort of "astral flux" has put manalines and power sites in a particularly receptive "imprinting" state, where they are more easily picking up emotional and magical impressions, causing them to aspect. He suggests that things will settle down and that the "imprinting" period is only temporary.

- Miss Tick

- Sounds like wishful thinking to me, personally. It's equally possible that mana and the astral plane become more sensitive to emotional impressions over time and that what we're seeing is a permanent condition. Unfortunately, there's no way to tell either way.

- Wiz Kid

Finally, the most dramatic effect we've seen so far on manalines has been the appearance of entirely new lines and the disappearances of some known and previously stable ones. There is a certain measure of "flexibility" in manalines to begin with. Like rivulets of water, they sometimes merge or split apart, changing their course slightly over time. Maps of manalines have shown them to shift, sometimes dramatically, but not to the extent that we've seen recently. New manalines have cropped up all over the world while others have disappeared entirely.



- It was a new mana line that caused that recent dust-up between the Tsimshian and Salish-Shidhe. A potent source of raw magic is worth fighting for in some people's eyes.

- Night Owl

Many of these new manalines are aspected and often quite powerful. Some also have unusual side effects including, but not limited to, visual and auditory hallucinations, strange lights or auras, patterns of animal behavior and so forth.

- This looks like a good point for a brief mention about mana in general. For a long time scientists have treated mana (like magic) as "something else" that's "out there" but not connected in any real way to the environment. Nowadays scientists raised with the idea of the reality of magic are starting to look at mana as a component of the environment around us. It's like radiation: invisible, intangible, but with a clear impact on the environment. In fact, the analogy isn't far off since it appears that mana, like radiation, may have an effect on organisms from the genetic level on up. The prevailing theory is that the presence of particular concentrations of mana causes different genetic traits to express, leading to the development of metahumans or other paranormal species, for example. This is the current theory behind SURGE.

- Neddy

- Does this mean that an area with unusually high mana levels might trigger some of these genetic traits to express prematurely; that is to say, before they would normally develop from a worldwide increase in mana-level? If so, I can see corps building labs around power sites and pumping around lots of mojo in the hopes of setting something off.

- Igor

- It's not that easy. As far as anyone can tell, temporary exposure to high mana levels isn't enough. Only an increase in the worldwide ambient mana level can trigger the expression of genetic traits. Of course, the theory could be wrong. If something is faced with continuous long-term exposure to high mana levels, who knows what could happen?

- Silicon Mage

POWER SITES

A power site is similar to a manaline, but where a manaline is a "stream" of mana, a power site is a "pool," often with one or more streams (manalines) flowing into or out of it. Power sites are most often found in places where one or more manalines cross each other, but they're also freestanding phenomena, found with no connection to nearby manalines.

- It's an open debate whether or not power sites develop from places with a lot of accumulated emotional energy or simply attract people and inspire them to build things like temples, churches and other monuments there. Current evidence seems

to point toward power sites being naturally occurring but possibly also formed by emotional impressions over time, so both might be true.

- Sand

Like manalines, power sites have been affected by unusual surges in mana level, causing increased magical activity. This seems to attract certain things to the power sites like spirits and other astral entities, but also paranormal creatures and even magically sensitive people. "Surges" and "flares" (both described below) concentrated around a power site are also becoming more common. Since power sites have stronger flows of magical energy than the surrounding area, they seem more prone to these sorts of fluctuations than "neutral" areas of astral space.

Power sites are more prone to being aspected than manalines, and evidence shows that more and more power sites are becoming aspected, influenced by the type of beings frequently present at the site and the kind of magic they do.

- And you can bet there's a rush on to "imprint" as many power sites as possible to make sure they carry a particular "flavor." Plenty of people are interested in the new power sites that have shown up and there's a race to see who can control as many of them as possible: governments, corporations, magical initiatory groups, private organizations like the Draco and Atlantean Foundations and so forth. It's like the Resource Rush all over again, this time with magical resources at stake.

- Hallow Man

MANA SURGES

A mana surge is a sudden and random fluctuation in the mana field of a particular area, affecting both the astral and physical planes. Mana surges were first documented in Los Angeles in 2056, and thaumaturgists blamed the ongoing "magic wars" between the major Thaumaturgical Departments of the California universities in the valley for the phenomenon. Since then, mana surges have been documented in a number of other areas of the world, including Siberia, Hong Kong, Scotland, India and unconfirmed reports from South and Central America. Most of the theories developed to explain the mana surges in LA went out the window when mana surges started cropping up in other parts of the world. The best guess anyone's got so far is that the surges are some sort of natural fluctuation in the mana field, possibly in response to "ripples" set up by the use of magic in a certain area or other disturbances.

- That's one theory, folks. There are lots of others, ranging from the sublime to the absurd. Some think mana surges are indications of some kind of stress placed on the local mana field by magical operations, maybe even a kind of "immune response." Another theory suggests that surges are caused by certain astrological phenomena (with too many complex variables for us to predict them exactly, though folks are working on it). Another likens them to atmospheric movement, perhaps even



some kind of "manalogical cycle" of mana cycling from the metaplanes down through the astral into the physical world and back again. The point is that nobody really knows.

- Talon

What we do know about mana surges is their effect. A surge makes magic use in the affected area less predictable and therefore more dangerous. The traditional formulae for performing magic are "calibrated" (so to speak) for certain conditions: change those conditions and you change the outcome of the spell or ritual. A spell cast under surge conditions might fizzle out with a "pop" or go off many times more powerful than intended. A spirit summoned under the same conditions might not appear, might go out of control, be more or less powerful than desired and so forth. Sometimes the magician suffers the effects of the altered magic, just like he'd intentionally cast a spell beyond his limits, other times there's no apparent affect on the magician, just the spell or spirit itself.

- I'll say! I've done some runs up in Siberia and I can tell you there are places where using magic is like riding a tiger. It can be a real rush, but one slip and you're fragged. And it's not a matter of skill, either (for those of you who think you're up to the challenge). It's completely random. Using magic in a surge area is pure Russian roulette. Sometimes you cack the other guy, but sometimes you buy one in the brainpan.

- Gusil

MANA FLARES

A mana flare is similar in many respects to a mana surge, but with more predictable (though no less spectacular) results. Whereas a surge causes magic to become unpredictable, ebbing and rising, sometimes within the same area, a flare is an overall increase in local mana density in an area. In short, magic in an area affected by a mana flare becomes more powerful for a time.

Sounds good, doesn't it? Sometimes it is. A mana flare can turn an entire area into a temporary power site, the very air filled with magical energy for the taking. From what I've seen it can also make the Awakened just a bit giddy, like they've been sucking on pure oxygen for too long. All that available power makes it tempting to toss around spells and call up spirits just because you can. There's a certain rush that comes with using magic and a flare makes it that much stronger. Of course, there's no such thing as a free lunch, and mana flares may be resulting in mana ebbs elsewhere (we'll get to those shortly).

The other problem is there seems to be two kinds of mana flares. The first is what I talked about before, free magical energy for everyone. The second, and more dangerous, is *uncontrolled* additional magical power. That's when, no matter how hard you try, any magical effect you cast in the area goes off way more powerful than you wanted, and you get to pay the price. The magical energy is so strong that it's difficult to control, and trying to channel it can lead to serious side effects, from exhaustion to a cerebral hemorrhage (or, in at least one documented case, spontaneous human combustion).

- Fraggit! How the hell am I supposed to make mojo with all this drek going on? Seems like now every time I want to cast a spell or whistle up a spirit I risk having my head explode, or my mojo not even working. It's not fair!

- Lit

- Nobody ever said life was fair, little boy, but a little forethought and planning (foreign concepts, I know) can avoid the worst of the conditions Magister is talking about here. All these changes in mana can be detected if you know what to look for and you can plan accordingly. If there's a hurricane outside, you don't plan to go boating. Likewise, if there's a mana surge brewing, you know to be careful, and carry a couple extra grenades for when you really need a "fireball."

- Sally

MANA EBBS

The opposite of mana flares are mana ebbs, the "low tide" of the mana field. In these cases the amount of available mana drops off, making even small efforts of magic feel gargantuan, like exercising in a low-oxygen environment. There's simply not as much "free" energy to work with so the extra power to pull off a spell has to come from somewhere, namely your own body. Using magic in a mana ebb area can take a great deal out of you, and it takes a fairly strong magician to do it at all in serious mana ebb conditions.

- A good point—if such a thing can be called good—about mana ebbs is that the Awakened don't like them at all. Naturally, intelligent folk like metahumans know enough to cut down on the magic use and wait for things to blow over, just like a heavy smog-alert in LA. But Awakened critters don't know any better. They just know there's something going on they don't like, so they head on out of the area of the ebb, looking for greener pastures (with more mana in 'em). That means the devil rats often start deserting the ship before it sinks, so to speak. If you pay attention to the activity of the local paranormal wildlife, you can get some idea what's going on with the local mana, too.

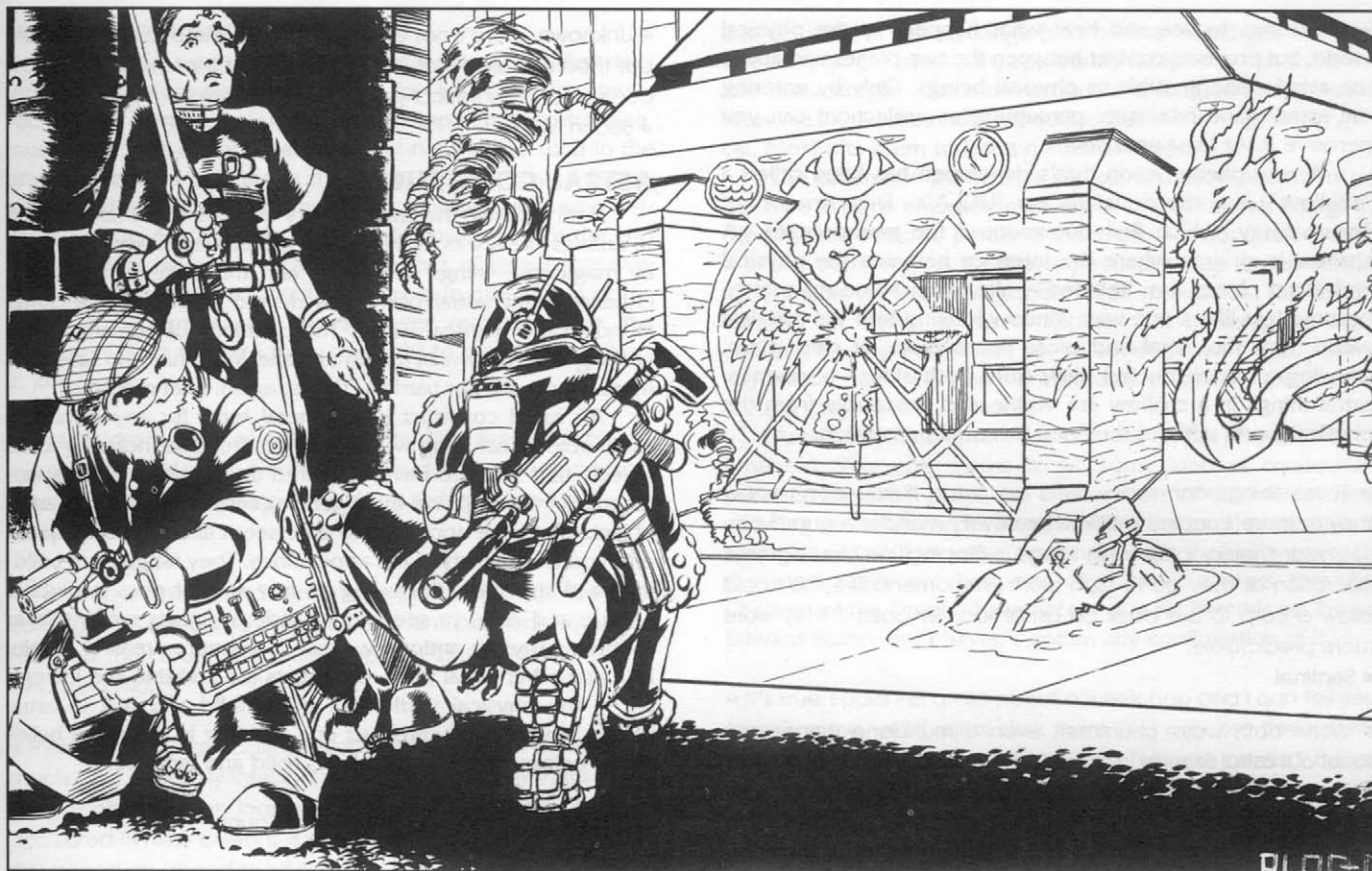
- Brendan

- All well and good, but it also causes problems when, say, all the devil rats and other things living down in the sewers suddenly decide they don't like it down there. LA had a serious devil rat problem just like that, and Houston saw a nasty mess of albino cockroaches come swarming out on the streets because of what the wizards say was a shift in the mana field.

- Texarcana

MANA STORMS

The stuff I've told you about mana surges, flares and ebbs are only splashing around in the tub compared to mana storms. A mana storm is a serious disturbance in the mana field that affects both the physical and astral planes. Thankfully they're incredibly rare and so far confined almost entirely to



Australia for some reason or another. If you ever happen to encounter one, here's what you need to know to ensure you live to tell about it.

Essentially, a mana storm is a serious and powerful disturbance in the mana field over a given area. It may be as small as 50 to 100 meters or several kilometers in radius. The disturbance is not unlike the kind of changes in the mana field caused by the use of magic, but wild and uncontrolled. In a way, you can think of a mana storm as a sudden, powerful, uncontrolled area-effect spell with a serious attitude problem. The storm is often accompanied by atmospheric disturbances like strong winds, clouds and sometimes precipitation.

- And Magister doesn't just mean rain, snow or hail. A mana storm can cause it to rain blood, colored pebbles or tiny frogs, which sometimes linger after the storm has passed and in other cases simply evaporate and disappear.

- Night Rain

Because they warp the mana field, the effect of a mana storm is entirely unpredictable and can be as wide-ranging as any spell known, along with a few unknown ones. Most mana storm effects tend to be destructive, or at least dangerous. They can unleash effects like the raw, destructive power of a combat spell, killing everything in their area or even breaking down all physical objects. They can cause hallucinations of all

sorts, induce madness, cause disease, physically transform flesh and other materials and more. One mana storm in Australia transformed the population of a small town into dingoes and jackrabbits. When it wore off, several townsfolk were traumatized by the fact that they'd hunted, killed and eaten friends, neighbors and family members.

- The most frightening thing I ever saw in my whole damn life happened when we got caught in a mana storm down in Australia. It wasn't a storm like you'd normally think, with the wind and rain and all. It appeared just like a faint shimmer in the air, hardly distinguishable from the heat rising off the desert in the Outback. There was no sound, no wind, no nothing except this faint ripple that surged across the desert and turned every living thing it touched into stone, including a friend of mine (no I'm not kidding). We were barely able to stay ahead of it in our land rover and our mage did everything she could think of to hold it off, but nothing worked. Just when we were close to running out of gas, it vanished just like it appeared. There's no amount of money that could get me to go back to Australia ever.

- Kyle

ASTRAL SHALLOWS

Normally, the astral and physical planes are separated from each other by an interface, a barrier, if you will, that allows



astral beings to see and hear what happens in the physical world, but prevents contact between the two planes and keeps the astral plane invisible to physical beings. Only by entering the astral plane (via astral perception or projection) can you perceive it. At least until now.

A new phenomenon that's developed has been called a "shallow" by theoreticians at UCLA's Department of Thaumaturgy, which first documented the phenomenon. A shallow is an area where the interface between the physical and astral planes has "thinned"—altered in some manner to become less like a one-way window looking into the physical world from the astral and more like a piece of clear glass, allowing an unobstructed view from both sides. In essence, astral things in a shallow are visible and detectable from the physical world without the need for astral perception.

- These things can really mess up a run if you don't know they're there. Imagine a site where every mundane guard can see your sneaky projecting mage whipping by, blowing your operation as they go to high alert. Phenomena like this could allow a corp to cut back on astral security costs if they were more predictable.

- Sentinel

- Works both ways, chummer: even a mundane runner can scout out astral security in an area that's shallow. Everything they have within sight—spirits, wards, watchers—will be plain as day.

- CrimethInc

Like most of the things described here, shallows appear to be temporary phenomena, lasting anywhere for a few seconds to a matter of days. So far, none have lasted more than a week, with one notable exception, though durations do appear to be growing longer. The astral shallow around the Wuxing Skytower in Hong Kong has lasted for over six months, the longest recorded duration, with no signs of it letting up.

- I've seen one of these things first-hand. It was in New Orleans, one night in the French Quarter. I thought at first that I'd slipped into assensing without being aware of it. Everything looked exactly to me like I was looking into the astral plane, until I realized that my mundane friends could perceive it too, that everyone could. It wasn't exactly the same as astral perception. I couldn't touch or affect what I saw, and it couldn't affect me, because I was still entirely physical. But otherwise it was exactly the same. A lot of people freaked out. Some thought they were hallucinating and others thought it was an excuse to throw a party. I saw a lot of spirits that night, too, more than usual for the Quarter. Maybe they were just showing off, or maybe something else about it attracted them, I don't know.

- Reynard

- How far can something like this go? I mean if the astral "barrier" or whatever thins out enough, could a mundane actually touch something astral (or vice versa)?

- Walker

- Unknown. There's not enough data to come to a conclusion, but theoretically it's at least possible. But then, where magic is concerned, theoretically anything is possible ...

- Silicon Mage

ASTRAL CONSTRUCTS

Until recently, the only "objects" in astral space (as opposed to entities like spirits), other than the Earth itself, were put there by magicians—things like wards and the astral forms of foci. Otherwise, the astral plane was devoid of the kind of clutter found in the physical world. The creations of humanity were nothing but shadows in the astral plane. Walls have no substance there. Doors are not barriers. This is, again, until recently.

An astral construct is a general term for any inanimate astral object, including wards and foci, but also including astral objects that seem to have appeared on the astral plane spontaneously, through no intelligent agency. Most of the astral objects that have appeared to date seem like physical objects, often quite old in style and appearance. They range from buildings and structures (including no few ancient ones in parts of Europe and Asia) to seemingly random objects ranging from children's toys to antique weapons, to entire areas of terrain. Like any other astral form, constructs are invisible and intangible in the physical world, but quite solid and real to astral beings. So an astral construct of a building is like a real building to beings on the astral plane, solid and tangible.

- Guns. Oh, please, tell me there are guns.

- Dr. Death

- Sorry, Doc, no such luck. So far as I know there aren't any astral construct firearms out there. And if any do show up, it's not exactly like you can go down to the astral Weapons World on the corner to pick up some ghost-ammo, now is it? Assuming you do find an astral gun that has bullets and works, where are you going to get more once you've fired them off?

- Tanner

MANIFEST CONSTRUCTS

Like spirits, some constructs can manifest a visible presence in the physical world. Since they aren't intelligent, constructs tend to do so under certain conditions, like a particular time of day, during a mana surge, during particular weather (especially storms) and so forth. This has led to a major increase in "sightings"—people spotting ghostly buildings, vehicles, terrain and such that appear for a while, then vanish back into the astral plane.

- Astral constructs have been likened to the "ghosts" of physical objects, places and things with a significant emotional "charge." Somehow that charge survives the destruction of the actual object and lingers in the astral like a "spiritual photograph." Recent events seem to have brought out these latent impressions, creating constructs on the astral. At least, that's how the theory goes.

- Prof. M



MATERIALIZED CONSTRUCTS

A particular type of astral construct is the *alchera*, first documented in Australia and named for an Aborigine term. Alchera are astral constructs that can apparently materialize, much like spirits do, and become dual natured, as solid in the physical world as they are in the astral. Alchera were originally confined to Australia and believed to be unique, and possibly related to Australia's magical problems. But since the end of 2061 there have been scattered reports of things that may be alchera, materialized astral constructs, in other parts of the world. For example, the Sears Tower reappeared in the Shattergraves in Chicago from midnight to sunrise on January 2, 2062.

- Yeah, and a number of people investigating the building were injured and killed when it vanished as suddenly as it appeared, causing several investigators to plunge to the ground below.

- Atomix

- That's an urban legend, A-man. The people that climbed the building went through a period of disorientation when it dematerialized, then found themselves back at ground level.

- Hanged Man

- There's one thing Magister overlooked. Some of these "constructs" are definitely intelligent. They're more like spirits in the form of objects than inanimate things. The "hell house" that appeared in New Orleans is one example. A group of people discovered an abandoned house in the French Quarter. Upon entering, they were locked inside and the one survivor who got out the next morning reported that things in the house moved of their own accord, tables filled with food appeared out of nowhere, and music played in some of the rooms. When he led authorities back to the site, there was no trace of a house, but city records showed that a house like the one he described had been on that site two hundred years before. It was destroyed in a fire in the 1930s and the lot's been vacant ever since.

- Lantern Jack

- Oooh, spooky. Just for the record, the cops in New Orleans have charged this guy, Tyrone Dulair, with the murders of his three friends and think he made up this whole "ghost house" story to cover up the fact that he killed them and buried their bodies in that vacant lot. Dulair's under psychiatric evaluation and it's doubtful he'll even stand trial. They'll probably just lock him up in a hospital.

- Crimson

ASTRAL RIFTS

An astral rift is related to a shallow in that it appears to be a place where the "interface" between the astral and physical planes are weaker, bringing the two planes "closer" together

and resulting in some strange phenomena. Astral rifts are very rare and, for the most part, apparently temporary like shallows and mana surges. The most famous and longest lasting astral rift is the Dunkelzahn Rift in DeeCee, but it seems pretty atypical. Most rifts seem to last a matter of hours.

The difference between a rift and a shallow seems to be the type of astral energies involved. A shallow allows beings in the physical world to perceive the astral, but not interact with it in any other way. A rift allows physical beings access to the astral plane via astral projection, even mundanes. The Chaco Canyon Rift, which seems to appear on a semi-regular basis and lingers anywhere from six to seventy-two hours, allows anyone in the area who concentrates to astrally project as though they were Awakened.

Another, less common, sort of astral rift has also been documented. This one seems to be some kind of connection between the astral plane and one or more of the metaplanes, allowing an astral traveler to move from the astral plane onto a metaplane even if they don't normally have the ability to reach the metaplanes on their own. I've heard rumors that the Children of the Dragon have access to a rift like this on Prince Edward Island, but I haven't gotten any confirmation of it.

- It's true. I paid PEI a visit about a week ago and I can tell you there's some weird astral drek there. Not only are there spirits fragging everywhere, but the CotD "retreat center" (read: compound) has some kind of astral rift that appears sporadically. I wouldn't even be surprised if the Children created it or control it somehow, though what for, I have no idea.

- Sereena

- Oh my. What if they have a rift inside each CotD crèche? That would explain what Dragonson and Morningstar are really fighting over!

- Dragonslayer

- I've heard there are rifts that can suck you into a metaplane, either from the astral or by yanking your spirit right out of your body if you come in contact with them on the physical plane. That's what happened to those poor skags that came in contact with the Dunkelzahn Rift. They're not dead, their spirits are just trapped on some distant metaplane, where they probably wish they were dead.

- Nox

- There was a point where I would have dismissed this idea as sheer imagination, but with all that's happened lately, I'm not willing to dismiss any possibility out of hand. I'll note that the two magicians who came in contact with the Rift over four years ago remain in comas in DeeCee hospitals, far longer than their physical bodies should be able to survive separation from their astral forms. What Nox says may be possible, another reason for us to be careful dealing with things like astral rifts.

- Silicon Mage

AUSTRALIA: THE LAND OF OZ



Well boys and girls, ever since the dog sat on the tuckerbox, people have been screaming out for info on running the shadows Down Under. Given all of the unexplained magical turmoil and astral phenomenon that occurred as Halley's Comet screamed past, many people have started to look for explanations and similarities. Inevitably, these investigations point to the magical weirdness that has been going on in Australia since the Awakening. Frankly, after learning what I now know about Australia, I'm surprised they've still got two walls standing together.

If you think Australia is one big sandbox, think again. Australia is a land of wonder and diversity. Vast scorching deserts share the continent with sunny beaches, treacherous bogs, eucalyptus forests, tropical wetlands and majestic mountains. Coastal cosmopolitan sprawls carry on with life as usual, walled off from the raging mana storms that traverse the wide mystical expanse of Outback. Dreamlike and dangerous, Australia is a land of variety and vitality, where modern Eurasian cultures clash with ancient Aborigine traditions.

As always, when I need to know the dirt on something outside of my sphere of knowledge, I turn to a local shadow source and pull strings, call in favors or simply bribe them to spill the beans. The first acquaintance I turned to was a fellow named Mission, who was more than happy to inform you all about the wide brown land he calls home. Mission was corp-bred and raised before he turned to the shadows, so he has the scholarly background to provide this opening little treatise on Australia's history.

• Captain Chaos

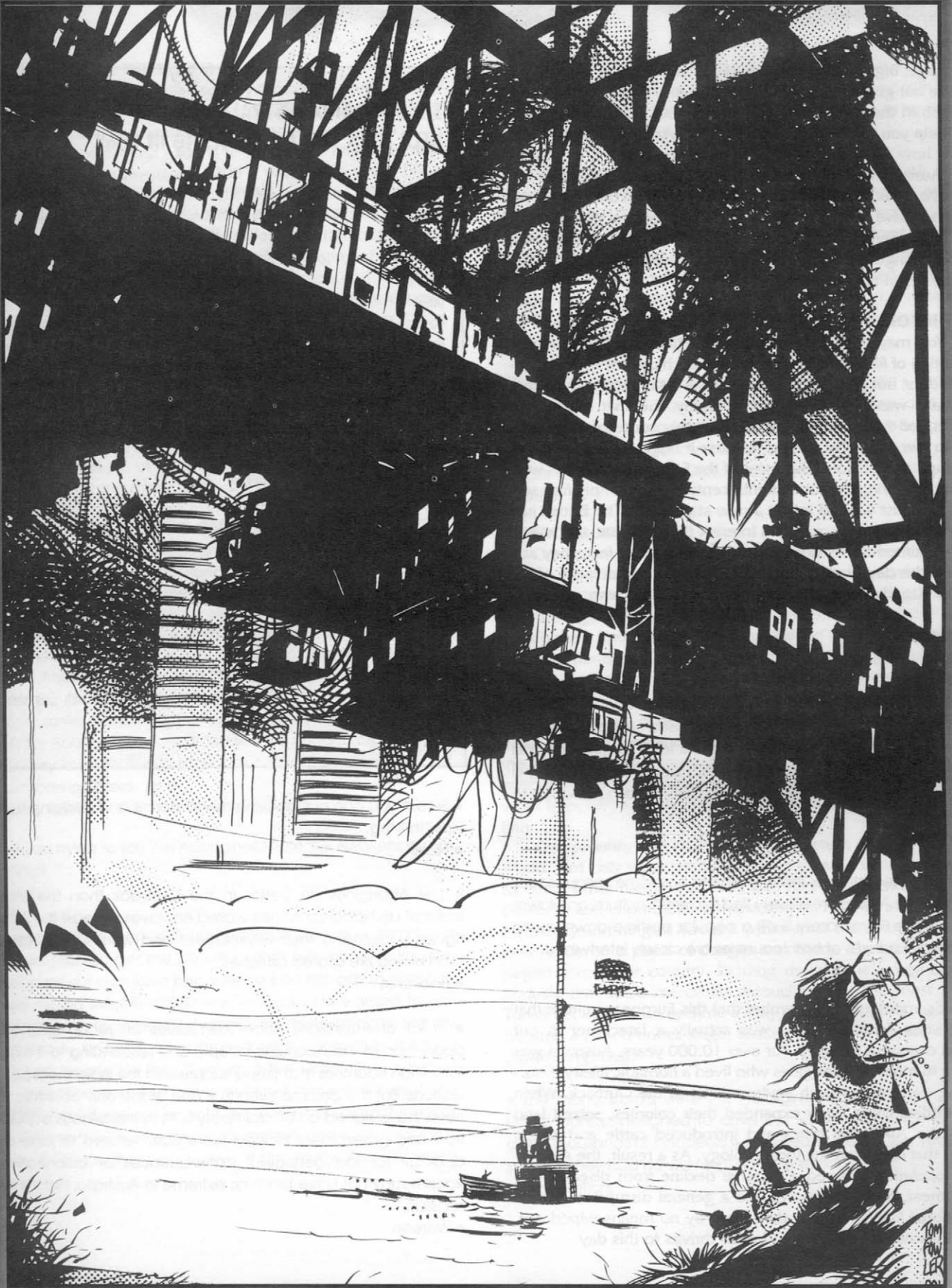
Transmitted: 12 June 2062 at 04:51:54 (PST)

A HISTORY LESSON

by Mission

How are ya, mates? If you're thinking of bailing out of your hometown and paying us a visit, you better take a gander at some of our unique background and history first.

It's hard to know where you're going without knowing where you've come from, and that rings as true for a nation as for an individual. A lot of shadowrunners from the UCAS or England think that Australia is going to be just like home simply because we speak the same



language. Big mistake. Rest assured, if you visit the Land of Oz, you're not going to be in Kansas anymore. If you want to be a big fish in the small pond that is Australia, every little insight will help you to acclimatize and survive. And the first step is to know how Australia got to be in the crazy mess it's in today.

Australia has been thrown into just as much chaos over the last five or six decades as every other nation on the planet. We may not have Balkanized like the US and Europe did; we may not have risen to economic power as Imperial Japan did; but we've changed nonetheless. So settle around the campfire and let me begin my tale ...

PRE-HISTORY

You may think that anything that happened prior to the invention of fiberoptic cable and optical chips is historical dust-bin fodder, but pay attention anyway. A lot of septs think that Australia was originally a penal colony and that all Aussies descended from criminal blood. Certainly some of us yahoos like to live up to that image, because it helps to be thought of as tough and devious. But most of the European colonists who moved in during the seventeenth century were simply free settlers who just wanted to get a new start in life. The British just happened to take more of an interest than the rest, and eventually claimed the land as theirs. As a matter of fact, they still do—to this day Australia is considered a Commonwealth of the United Kingdom, under the rule of England's Crown.

- Not for long.
- New Republican

- The King actually serves as nothing more than a sovereign figurehead. For all intents and purposes, Australia is an autonomous country. If King George VIII tried to pull rank and order Australia around, a serious conflict would ensue. It's only a matter of time before the government structure catches up to the reality.
- Heysen

- Despite the distance, this relationship has some serious social impacts. The Aussies are still very tied into British culture, and fawning over the Royal Family is still a popular pastime down under. The media cultures of both countries are closely intertwined.
- Socio Pat

It's important to remember that this European culture that dominates Australia today was actually a latecomer in our island continent's history. For over 10,000 years, Australia was home to tribes of Aborigines who lived a nomadic lifestyle, surviving even in the harsh environments of the Outback. When the settlers came, they expanded their colonies, seized land from the Aborigine tribes and introduced cattle and sheep mobs that damaged the local ecology. As a result, the Aborigine population suffered a massive decline from disease, displacement, brutal massacres and a general disruption of their traditional livelihood. But they were by no means wiped out, and their culture survives and even thrives to this day.

SHADOWLAND AUSTRALIA SIG HELP TOPICS >> AUSSIE SLANG IN 2062

Aussie Slang	Meaning
Beyond the Black Stump	The Outback (also "Big Red," "Back of Burke," or "Woop-Woop")
Bikies	Motorcyclists (go-gangs)
Boomer	Kangaroo (also "roo")
Bush	The Outback
Bushrangers	Outback outlaws (historical term back in use)
Fair go!	Give me a break!
Furphy	A misleading statement or story
Give it a burl	Try it out
Grub	Food (also "tucker")
Hoon	Idiot (specifically a maniac driver, also "revhead")
Joey	A young kangaroo
Koori	Aborigine (also Murri)
Mate	General term of familiarity (male or female)
Mobs	Large amounts, herds
On the piss	Drunk
Pissed	Drunk
Rort	A loophole, fraud or extortion; also a boisterous party
Septs	Americans (from "yank" to "tank" to "septic tank")
Squiz	Look
Walloper	Police or security (who "wallop" with their stun batons)

- Sure, if you can call ducking mana storms and dodging bun-yips "thriving."
- Hicks

- The Aborigines do better in the Outback than the "Australians" do holed up in their walled enclaves. At least the Aborigines understand their environment and work with it, rather than hiding like scared ostriches.
- Bookchin

- A lot of Australians pride themselves on recognizing the oppression of the Aborigine people and responding to it more fairly than countries that simply suppressed the indigenous populations. But the commonwealth is one of the only countries to never have signed an official treaty with its indigenous population, and government leaders have flatly refused to issue an apology for the genocidal consequences of colonization. Racism may not have been as extreme in Australia, but it's still an issue.

- Wareen

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

The changes in Australian society during the early years of this century heralded the upheaval to come. Plagued at the time with a weak government full of corporate apologists, Australia was one of the first nations to accept the implications of the U.S.'s Shiawase Decision of 2001. Within two years, high-intensity lobbying by Aurora Biofacilities, Broken Hill Proprietary, Mount Isa Mines, Shiawase and Tesseract paid off, and those five corps became the first to receive extraterritorial status in the commonwealth. The rapid hemorrhaging of our government only ceased in 2011 with the election of a left-wing government determined to clamp down on corporate excesses, but by then it was too late—corporate sovereignty had achieved a foothold it would not let go of.

Australia was fortunate to largely avoid the racial violence that marked the first decade of this century. A public movement to recognize the rights of Aborigines as traditional owners to maintain their land was legally successful, overthrowing the centuries-old assumption of *terra nullius* (the concept that the land was devoid of ownership before Europeans arrived). Despite this victory, many Aborigine activists complained that they were still being barred from their land. The advent of the Resource Rush pushed the mining corps into a frenzy, and the government accommodated them by handing out land that rightfully belonged to Aborigines. This led to a series of escalating land disputes, though the conflict was limited to sabotage, arrests and police repression. Australia was still too tolerant to allow the "re-education camps" used in response to the Sovereign American Indian Movement (SAIM) in the U.S., and the Aborigines never took the step towards armed revolt.

- While some political activists agitated in solidarity with the SAIM, the Aborigine people didn't see the need to organize militarily. They knew that a change was coming, and that the land would soon be theirs again.

- Thorny Devil

- Are you trying to say the Aborigines knew the Awakening was coming?

- Jardine

- I was a child then, but my grandfather was a koradji—a shaman. I remember the day my father was arrested for trespassing on our own land because he had the gall to enter an illegal mining site. My father was enraged. He wanted to pull the tribesmen together and attack the mine at night. But my grandfather stepped forward and told a tale that soothed their fiery hearts. He told them that the Dreamtime needed our protection, and that they should not throw their lives away for petty transgressions. He said the white men did not respect the land, so they made the spirits restless, and soon a calamity would befall them and drive them away. And his words came true.

- Thorny Devil

- We should have rounded the Murri up while we had the chance. Then they wouldn't have had the chance to call in the mana storms and lay siege to our cities. Australia would be ours!

- One Nation

VITAS threatened Australia's equilibrium, though we escaped the full brunt of the horrors experienced by other nations. In 2010 our once-great public health system still retained some measure of competence, which helped to deal with the epidemic, but our greatest strength was our low population density. Though remote settlements afflicted with the disease were condemned by virtue of their isolation, that same isolation helped shield many blokes from ever coming in contact with VITAS in the first place.

- The VITAS crisis placed such a burden on Australia's health-care industry that it was reeling afterwards. This provided the excuse needed to privatize the industry, and before long the bulk of it had been gobbled up by medical corps, paving the way for the likes of CrashCart today.

- Delliah

THE STORM BREAKS

On December 24, 2011, a dark storm rose over the Outback in New South Wales. Dark clouds, gale-force winds and savage lightning strikes were just the beginning. Freak firestorms gutted buildings, mobs of sheep were mutilated and transformed inexplicably and unexplained emotions, sensory bombardments and other phenomenon struck hundreds of people. This was the first of the mana storms, wreaking magical havoc on both the physical and astral planes. The mana storm cut a swath of devastation through the heartland of Australia, killing dozens and ruining several towns and stations. As the initial panic died away, it was ascribed to a freak phenomenon and people relaxed—until the next mana storm struck a week later, followed closely by the third, and the fourth and the fifth ...

Our serenity was shattered by the return of magic to the world. Not only were we faced with the same social upheaval as every other nation, Australia also had to contend with the powerful and unpredictable mana storms. As they increased in frequency and ranged across a wider area, the entire Outback was rendered a place of danger and chaos. The storms rampaged across our country, herding us into the safety of the sprawls that were mercifully untouched—for the most part. Travel between cities became a risky proposition, and Australia became a nation under siege, threatened by the power of the Awakening itself.

- The mana storms were the Aborigine version of the Great Ghost Dance, designed to drive the white man back to the cities. Thousands of innocents were killed in the first few years of storms—they had no warning, no declaration of war.

- One Nation



- Racist dogma. I've talked to the koradji, and they didn't undertake any ritual to summon the storms, or the alchera or any of the other weirdness for that matter. In fact, they view the storms as a symptom of a wounded land, a land striking back in anger. If anything, the Aborigines are repentant that they are powerless to stop the storms; they wish the land to be healed, which would bring an end to the storms' adverse effects.

- Cestus

- Then explain how the koradji knew the mana storms were coming.

- One Nation

- We did not call the storms. Many of our own people died during those early years. If you want a scapegoat, look in the mirror.

- Wareen

The government quickly declared all mana storm-affected regions to be "disaster areas" and engaged in wholesale evacuations. A surprising number resisted the evacuation and chose to risk the mana storms on their own land. Many of these recalcitrants became statistics as the furious storms claimed more lives. Eventually the government withdrew official services from the interior, and the Outback rapidly became ungoverned.

Very few of the Aborigine people fled the Outback. Though it went unnoticed at the time, these tribes were not affected by the devastation that Eurasian Australians were. In fact, they seemed to welcome the storms. In short order, they were able to reclaim the land denied to them for centuries. The Dreamtime had made itself visible once again.

- The Aborigines weren't the only ones to take advantage of the Outback's sudden lawlessness. Hordes of go-gangs and nomads took advantage of the freedom to break away from society, risking the harshness of daily survival. The bikies mostly keep to the roads, clashing with each other and raiding some nomad encampments—but they steer clear of the Aborigines. The nomads keep to themselves, sometimes rehabbing old settlements, though they will trade with outsiders.

- Raggedy Man

In April of 2012, the largest mana storm seen to date swept out of the bush and overran the city of Sydney. For two weeks straight the storm ravaged the sprawl. Communication lines were cut and travel to or from the city was made impossible by devastating atmospheric and magical effects. Thousands died before the storm abated, pulling back to an orbit around the sprawl. This particular storm has remained in place around Sydney ever since, an ominous wall of dark clouds and doom on the horizon, occasionally sweeping in and cutting the city off for days or weeks at a time. No one has explained yet why this mana storm remains permanently in place, besieging the city.

RECENT AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

November 6, 1999—Australia's first referendum regarding whether to become a republic. A "no" vote is returned and Australia remains a monarchy.

2003—Extraterritoriality is granted to some megacorporations.

2006—The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization succeeds in cloning live samples of the extinct Tasmanian tiger from frozen tissue samples.

December 24, 2011—The first mana storm strikes in the Outback of New South Wales.

2012–2014—Impeded by the growing severity of mana storms, the government abandons census taking in the Outback and declares the region a "disaster area."

April 2012—A huge mana storm washes over Sydney, devastating the capital city for two weeks and cutting it off from the outside world. The storm remains in place to date, circulating around the city and irregularly engulfing it for short, damaging periods.

2014—The pullout of Japanese corps from the tourism industry causes a mini-recession in Australia, prompting outbreaks of anti-Japanese and anti-Asian violence.

July 24, 2018—The spaceplane *America* disintegrates in orbit and much of the wreckage lands on Longreach, Queensland, killing 300 residents.

2022—The Commonwealth of Australia enters into a mutual support pact with New Zealand, forming the Australia and New Zealand Allied Confederation (ANZAC).

2030—Angered by lack of support, the city of Sydney declares its independence. The New South Wales state capital is moved to Canberra, and the Sydney Metropolitan Council governs Sydney.

2031—The Australian Secret Intelligence Organization and the Federal Police are merged to form AISE (Australian Intelligence and Security Enforcement).

2031—BHP and Mount Isa Mines amalgamate to form Australia's largest homegrown corporation, Tanamyre Resources.

ROUGH AWAKENING

As a whole, the Awakening had a peculiar effect upon Australians. The mana storms sparked a healthy dose of fear towards the Awakening, but they also provided a face for the Awakening that the populace could hang its bad feelings on. As a result, the other effects—UGE, magic, Goblinization—were accepted more readily, since they didn't threaten the entire nation with destruction (despite the claims of fearmongers). In fact, Australia followed New Zealand's lead and became the second nation to grant metahumans full citizenship and human rights. Encouraged by this sympathetic policy, metahuman refugees escaping persecution from Asian countries fled to Australia as a safe haven, significantly swelling our nation's metahuman population.

Feeling threatened by both the widespread acceptance of metahumans and the mana storms that were tearing the land



apart, cautious Japanese corporations withdrew from Australia's tourism industry in droves. A mini-recession followed, increasing the anti-Japanese resentment and animosity that was already prevalent thanks to aggressive Japanese business practices. The Japanese interests that remained launched an ambitious plan to create a protected corporate enclave. Similar plans had been debated for several decades, and through intensive lobbying the city of Cairns was designated as the corporate-city-to-be. Each Japanese megacorp quickly established and began developing their own zone within the city.

INTERNAL STRIFE, EXTERNAL WAR

The 2020s were a rocky period for Southeast Asia, Australia and Oceania. The collapse of China and the Imperial Japanese military occupation of the Philippines put everyone on edge. West Australia had the roughest time, battered by mana storms on one side and frequent piracy raids (mostly staged by Indonesian militia groups) on the other. Many West Australians began to grumble about independence, claiming that they weren't receiving the support and protection they should.

- Western Australians tend to view Southeastern Australians as self-centered. From their view, the other side hogs all of the power, money and influence, and leaves the rest of Australia to rot.

- Outback Insider

- Indonesia and Australia have been on pretty bad terms since the whole East Timor crisis blew up a few decades back. The tension's inevitable when you stick a low-density population with high technology next door to a less developed nation with a much larger population that also happens to be continually wracked by separatist, religious and political strife. Australian ships and cities make tempting targets for Indonesian pirate crews or even rogue military units needing basic supplies.

- Noam

- It was also during this period that the extraterritorial Japana-corps in Cairns began to build up their "security" forces. Japan wasn't crazy enough to move in Imperial Marines (yet), but the corps made sure to protect their interests in this era of Japana-phobia.

- Skerrick

After a decade of being battered by its own private mana storm, the city government of Sydney became increasingly hostile over the lack of support it was receiving from the commonwealth. Unable to understand or develop a solution to the crisis, many government leaders simply pretended the problem didn't exist. Sydney's desperate demands for aid and magical support quickly escalated from belligerent to threatening. Disgusted by the treatment, Sydney's citizens overwhelmingly supported a referendum to declare independence from the commonwealth.

On the sly, a few megacorps had offered support to Sydney in return for a hand in controlling city affairs. They were taken up on their offer and invited into the Sydney Metro Council to help manage and govern the city and the mana storm siege. Meanwhile, Canberra became the New South Wales state capital.

- The New South Wales governor had been hiding out in Canberra since the first mana storm hit, so the move was a symbolic acknowledgement of past reality.

- Bespectacle

Worried about the growing Japanese militarism and conflict with Indonesia, the Commonwealth of Australia entered into a pact with New Zealand and several smaller neighbors to form ANZAC (the Australia and New Zealand Allied Confederation). ANZAC was formed for military protection but rapidly expanded to serve as an economic, social and military alliance between the member nations. Relations between ANZAC and Indonesia remained exceedingly fragile for several years with frequent clashes, until the Crash of '29 gave most nations something else to worry about.

THE CRASH AND RECOVERY

Unlike the other global crises that merely washed over Australia, the Crash of 2029 nearly sent us back to the Stone Age. Traditionally one of the leading nations in the uptake of new communications technology, Australia's corporations saw their state-of-the-art systems fall like mown wheat before the onslaught of the Crash virus.

- Some government offices, like the Taxation Office and the Department of Social Security, were hit especially hard because they were operating on low-security outdated systems. Tens of thousands of personal records were lost, and a thriving industry to exploit this hole in the records and construct artificial identities immediately blossomed.

- Metropolis

As Australia's economy reeled, the Japanese corps that had been hovering on the fringe took the opportunity to play knight in shining armor. Australian cities were offered tremendous deals as these corps sought to reintegrate themselves and gain a foothold, undercutting the Australian corps who were still recovering. Telstra, the nation's primary telecommunications carrier, was bought out by Renraku and amalgamated with several other service providers to form Baird Communications Corporation. Baird became instrumental in making the Australian Matrix what it is today.

AUSTRALIAN RAGE

The rest of the 2030s went slowly as we picked up the pieces from the previous two decades. Watching the Euro-Wars sated our taste for violence as we watched various countries rip themselves apart on the trid. Mostly it was a time of settling down and re-adjusting to the changed world.



• This was also a period for various syndicates to pull their acts together and establish a base of operations. The old South African, Greek and Yakuza crime rings suddenly had a lot of competition from new foreign interests: Vory V Zakone, Vietnamese gangs and later the Seoulpa Rings

• Carver

While in the rest of the world racial tension between humans and metahumans simmered and then boiled into the Night of Rage, Down Under we just had some minor bubbling. The prejudice of Australians tends to be more cultural than race-based—a human foreigner is more likely to take heat than a local ork. We're by no means a nation of sweetness and light, of course; we just choose to express our unpleasantness in other ways. In many areas of Australia, for example, it is still a disadvantage to be of Asian descent.

Now, don't get me wrong—we had our riots and our terrorist attacks and our share of trouble from Humanis and racist goons. But we avoided the anti-metahuman pogroms, and the large metahuman population was largely able to defend and take care of itself.

• Prejudice towards Aborigines from the Outback increased during this period. There were a lot of wild rumors flying around about how the Aborigine tribes knew how to survive the mana storms and could even control them, and that they were using them against other Australians. Most of this was nonsense, but it did lead to some attacks and the tension continues to this day.

• Anne

• When the first Humanis polyclub chapterhouse opened in Sydney, over a thousand metahumans turned out for the event, dominating the proceedings. A small riot ensued, the chapterhouse was smashed up, and the Humanis members were all arrested. But they kept crawling back like the vermin they are ...

• Osprey

• A lot of racist violence was instigated by Asian immigrants, particularly Japanese, who weren't used to so many metahumans. Quite a few of these instigators ended up being victimized by indignant Australians.

• Horn Islander

CREEPIE CRAWLIES

In the mid-2040s, as Australia reclaimed its reputation as a technological pioneer (particularly in telecommunications), the first Universal Brotherhood chapter opened shop in Brisbane. The Brotherhood spread like a bad joke, and before long it had locations in every major Australian metroplex. The Universal Brotherhood was a media darling, constantly getting airtime and endorsement from celebrities.

In the mid-2050s, the government suddenly cracked down on the Universal Brotherhood on charges of racketeering, corruption, fraud and more. Just like the rest of the world, the true nature of the Universal Brotherhood was being passed

among government and corporate elites. But the UB continued to operate in a quasi-legal fashion here, and by the time the troops moved in to wipe out the hives they found that many of them had already cleared themselves out. One hive on the outskirts of Brisbane broke loose and a multitude of insect spirits escaped capture or destruction, scattering into the city. There have been few confirmed reports of insect spirit activity since then, though only the most naive could believe that they are no longer a threat. You better believe all those bugs went *somewhere*—we just don't know where yet.

• I bet a lot of the bugs just dispersed into the Outback. I suppose the mana storms took care of them.

• Sand Bat

• You may be half right.

• Seton

• I've seen some things in the scummier parts of Brisbane that make me wonder ... anyone checked the missing person figures lately?

• Zapper

WATER WOES

Australia suffered through its worst period of drought ever in 2057, severely draining the country's water reservoirs. Though we finally did get some rain, the level of rainfall has remained far below average ever since, turning an already bad situation into a crisis. Even the Australian sprawls, which are normally well supplied, faced severe shortages. The government finally broke down and instituted water utility rationing laws in all major cities, limiting the amount each household could use. The water smuggling biz, previously restricted to less civilized areas, boomed overnight. Fresh drinking water is now a hot commodity, worth killing over.

THE CORP WAR AND YEAR OF THE COMET

Like the rest of the world, Australia saw some interesting activity during the corp war period in the late 2050s. Cairns was a hotbed of shadowruns; each morning the screamsheets carried the latest body count and damage estimates. Renraku's presence in Australia took a serious dive during this period, though it still has its claws sunk firmly into place. Newly born Novatech claimed the Woomera launch pad reconstructed by Fuchi Orbital and has doubled the site's launch schedule. Wuxing and Yamatetsu, united with their Pacific Prosperity Group allies, have achieved a firm lock on Australian shipping concerns—very little gets in or out of the country without their paw prints on it. Other empires rose and fell, and still do—though at a slower, polite pace.

As Halley's Comet passed overhead, Australia suffered a barrage of intensified mana storms and other magical phenomenon. The expression of SURGE changelings was handled well by Aussie society for the most part—there were a few isolated incidents of violence, but most changelings slipped right into the strong meta culture.



The orichalcum rush sparked a flurry of activity. Prospectors flung themselves into the bush, heedless of the rising mana storms and dying by the dozens. Wuxing and DeBeers scored some of the nicer orichalcum veins, but Tanamyre and Saeder-Krupp managed to pull in their share from the Pilbara region. Expeditions are still being organized to this day, though no orichalcum has been mined since the comet passed out of view.

TODAY

Australia is currently in the grip of political maneuverings on a scale not seen for years. For the third time in six decades, the nation is preparing for a referendum on our form of government. If the consensus is a "Yes" vote, Australia will finally cut our last tie to the United Kingdom and become a Republic. Powerbrokers are shifting allegiances and conducting behind-the-scenes deals at a maddening pace, all trying to figure out how to use the controversy to their advantage.

This means it's a good time to be a runner in Australia, though truth be told, it always is. From criminal schemings in the protected sprawls to risky treks in the Outback, there's many ways to earn your pay. Now that you have a grip on our land and lifestyle, you'll be more prepared to survive down here. Just don't let the bunyips get ya.

LIFE IN AUSTRALIA

• Australian city society is much the same as the rest of the Western world. Still, it's worth knowing about the variations that do exist, because it's usually the little surprises that trip you up—in an industry like ours, that's generally a bad thing. With that in mind, I've asked a Melbourne runner for a brief rundown on Australia's idiosyncrasies.

A word of warning. Though some of this info may apply to Australia at large, all bets are off when you're in the Outback. The rules are simply different out there, chummer.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 12 June 2062 at 04:53:08 (PST)

by Zenith

Okay, folks, this is what you need to know to do biz in Australia. If you really care, you can look up gigapulses of sociological treatises on SocieNet about the subtle and not-so-subtle differences between Australia and any other Western nation you'd care to name. (Surprisingly, a lot of that info is relevant even in this era of corporatization—especially when you're talking about countries like Australia that have retained a little more of their national independence than most.) I won't waste pulses on that, though; this is just a brief primer on life in Australia, from the point of view of John Q. Criminal.

Let's begin with the tourist-guidebook rundown. Australia is an island nation—in fact, an entire continent—in the Southern Hemisphere. That means that our seasons are reversed, and our water spirals the other way when you pull out the bath plug (don't ask me, blame science). The climate is generally warm, rarely hitting the freezing mark in the south, except in the mountains. The center deserts are hot and dry and bitterly

cold at night, while the northern areas have two seasons: hot and wet during monsoon season and hot and dry in the winter.

Like the Brits and Japanese, we also drive on the left-hand side of the road. Australia's main time zone, Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST) is ten hours ahead of GMT, though we have two other time zones across the nation as well. Emergency services are all accessible by telephoning 000 or using a standard PANICBUTTON system.

• Since Zenith doesn't mention it, a word of warning: the electric supply in Australia is 230-250 volts, AC 50 cycles. That's enough to thoroughly melt any North American appliance. If your electronics aren't locally made, you'll need a plug adapter and a voltage converter. Without the adapter, you'll achieve nothing more than turning your lovely expensive gear into so much slag.

• Glaive

Despite all the simple facts, the biggest difference about Australia is also the hardest thing to put your finger on—the underlying, indistinguishable cultural variances. Australia has always been a very "laid-back," relaxed nation; the competitive, drive-to-achieve, succeed-at-all-costs mentality that seems so prevalent elsewhere never really got a foothold in Australia. You'll still find it here and there, especially in the corporate citizen crowd, but most Australians simply aren't that gung-ho. Foreigners can trip themselves up if they're trying to fit in by trying *too hard*—less is more, in Australia.

• If you're working in Australia, never forget: sport. Sport, sport, sport. The nation is sports-mad. Football (soccer, rugby and home-grown codes; none of this silly grid-iron stuff) and cricket are the most popular, though we also follow a range of other sports—just about anything on the trid, in fact. Motor racing is popular in Australia, as is combat biking. Frag, the entire nation stops dead one day a year for the Melbourne Cup horse race, which is nearly two centuries old now.

• The Fiend

• It's ridiculous. Aussies will do anything for their sport, and the day after a big sporting event there's massive absenteeism across the country as people recover from celebrating. I remember one run I totally fragged after busting in to extract a corp suit, only to discover he was off sick from work recovering from the post-game party the night before.

• Mace

• Sport also means gambling—the Italian and Greek Mafia families rake in the cred with their bookie and loan shark operations. They also have their hands deep in the pockets of team ownership, sponsors and other aspects of the biz. And they've been known to fix a game or two, or maybe hire some runners to arrange for a star player's "accident."

• Carver



- If you need a quick rent-a-mob, no one will raise more ruckus than a pissed gang of football hooligans. Just be sure to wear their team colors when you're hiring to get them on your side.
- Barn Burner

THE GOVERNMENT

The nation of Australia began its existence as a constitutional monarchy, headed by the sovereign of the United Kingdom and governed by a Parliament of elected representatives. This situation has lasted far longer than one would expect, given Australia's total lack of loyalty to the "mother country." The current Prime Minister, Sheila Powell, successfully ousted the Green Party and led the New Century Party to victory in the polls by platforming on a campaign to tackle the water crisis, deal with the mana storms and to hold a referendum on removing the King from head of state. The referendum vote is to be held within a year, and if successful will convert Australia into a republic.

- Like elsewhere in the world, the New Century Party is all about "Our Magical Future." A lot of their support comes from heavy-weight magical unions like the Illuminates of the New Dawn and futurist techno-geeks like the Open Source Foundation. Powell is chummy with mage-o-crat Dr. Rozilyn Hernandez, who lost out first to Dunkelzahn, then Haeffner in the last UCAS elections.

- Southern Cross

- The New Century Party is pushing the referendum hard—they're eager to cut the links to Britain. Part of the reason is professional rivalry with the New Druidic Movement, which is an English Old Boy mages club that effectively runs the Green Party and English government. The NDM has been pushing forth a lot of research into the mana storms lately, but many New Century supporters consider that field to be "home turf."

- Bespectacle

- Interesting factoid: holders of corporate SINS aren't allowed to vote, since they're not Australian citizens (and Australia doesn't allow dual citizenship). This disenfranchises a lot of people who are citizens in spirit if not in law, and it's ticked off a few of the corps to boot. Apparently the ID falsifications have been running fast and furious, supplying those who wish to vote regardless.

- Riley

Australia's federal government is seated in Canberra, though it also has a significant enclave in Darwin, where many of the federal military forces are centered. With the exception of Sydney, the government's influence extends to the Australian metropolises and the civilized areas along the southern coastlines. Its influence ends where the bush begins—the government long ago surrendered the Outback to the Aborigines, nomads and mana storms.

Australians traditionally favor the underdog, and so they often view the power wielded by the megacorps with con-

tempt. Australia still caved to the megacorp demands for extraterritoriality just like every other nation, but the government has made a successful stand against the corps on more than one occasion. This goes to prove that the Australian people haven't been trampled entirely, despite the powerlessness that plagues other governments worldwide.

- Well, pro-Aussie ideology aside, things really aren't that much different from anywhere else—Australia is bound by the Accords of 2042. The "strength" of the government can just as well be explained by suggesting that the megacorporations aren't as interested in a minuscule market like Australia.

- Tall Poppy

- Every year, the corps pull Australia's government leaders a little more deeply into their pockets. Corruption and graft are certainly widespread, though they're covered up quite carefully. The New Century Party has been particularly weak in this area. Some of its connections to corps like Shiawase, Saeder-Krupp and Transys Neuronet are a little too close.

- Manticore

WHO LIVES HERE?

Australia is home to twenty or twenty-five million people. If that seems like a vague figure, you're right; we haven't had an accurate (or even complete) census since some time in the late 2020s. The mana storms make it impossible to figure out exactly how many people live out in the Big Red—though it's certainly only a tiny fraction of Australia's total population.

Australia has a bigger immigrant community than many other Western nations. Historically one of the first ports of call for refugees fleeing turmoil or persecution in their homelands, our numbers swelled dramatically after the Awakening and the Euro-Wars. This is particularly true for Asian orks and trolls, who were shunned in their home countries and found Australia to be more welcoming. As a result, we have a much higher percentage of metahumans in Australia.

- Many immigrants easily integrate themselves into Australian culture. You can still find the occasional insular communities and clearly ethnically-identified neighborhoods, but they're much smaller than you would expect given immigration figures.

- Wik

Australians tend to discriminate less against metahumans than against "non-Australians"—most prejudice is directed towards those who choose to cling to foreign cultures, customs or languages. It's easier to be accepted if you're an Aussie ork than if you're a foreign human who won't try to culturally acclimatize.

- Though Australia's as cosmopolitan as anywhere, foreign accents are still pretty noticeable these days. If you want to get biz done with the minimum of attention, try and minimize any overseas accent you may possess. It's fairly easy to blend into Australian society, no matter your ethnicity or metatype. But if



you act like a foreigner, you'll be easy to spot and people will remember you.

• Glaive

• The shadow community is more insular than any other sector of Australia, and aliens get noticed. Getting noticed is, natch, a bad thing in our line of work.

• Dellah

The Aborigine Population

Australia's Aborigines have the longest continuous cultural history in the world, dating all the way back to the Ice Age. Aborigine tribes thrived across the continent, living a semi-nomadic lifestyle in the desert or a sedentary one along the coast. Their society included over a dozen distinctive cultural sub-divisions and hundreds of different languages and dialects.

Though the Aborigines were devastated by European colonization and two hundred years of turbulent integration attempts, they managed to preserve their cultural heritage until this century, when the raw power of the Awakening allowed them to claim much of their ancestral territory back.

Australia is home to around 300,000 Aborigines (including those of mixed race). It's estimated that perhaps 80,000 remain in the Outback, living a lifestyle in accordance with traditional tribal values. Outback Aborigine culture is semi-

nomadic, to avoid straining any particular ecosystem, and is organized tribally into large family groups. At least thirty Aborigine dialects are still spoken in the Sixth World, and vary from tribe to tribe.

• Some of the Outback tribes lived in areas so remote that they didn't make contact with whites until halfway through the twentieth century. They still pass on a lot of hard-earned survival skills, botany and ecology knowledge from generation to generation. They can teach modern scientists a thing or two about the Outback, and sometimes do.

• Wareen

• Interesting factoid: Aborigines don't display anything like standard metahuman expression patterns. You'll find no trolls, and very few dwarfs. No one's been able to explain it adequately. The only possibility I see is environmental selection. As in, it takes a lot more of the scarce Outback tucker (that's food, for you foreign-types) to feed a troll than it takes to feed a human.

• Encino

• Why no dwarfs, then?

• Cherub

- Perhaps in a very mobile tribal environment, constantly on the move, dwarfs just can't keep up?
- Morbid

WATER AND THE STANDARD OF LIVING

You'll find the same basic amenities and variances in Australian cities as you will in most Western nations. We have the same kind of Matrix access, the same fast food joints, the same omnipresent advertisements, the same privatized police forces, the same level of crime, the same stretches of slums and the same gated corporate enclaves.

The major difference to Australian living is water. I've been to the California Free State, once. You think water's scarce there? Welcome to Australia, where water is more precious than blood. In urban areas, the supply is adequate—but not plentiful, by any means. The water utilities are required by law to strictly ration the water allotted to each household. If you've reached your limit for the month, your tap goes dry. The rationed amount is enough for basic drinking and sanitary necessities, but in times of drought (which come up all too often these days) rations are cut.

Of course, you need a SIN to get water service hooked up in the first place, which means that illegal water hook-ups are good business for syndicates and independent criminals with plumbing skills. Water utility workers travel in packs and carry sidearms—they've been forced to open valves with guns at their heads a few too many times. Even fire hydrants are securely locked and alarmed.

- They'll never admit it publicly, but the water utilities scale the amount of water rationed to each household in different neighborhoods. In other words, if you're living in Bougie-ville upper-class gated community, you'll find that your water ration nearly doubles that of the Aborigine families living in the ghetto a few blocks over. Heck, some rich communities receive additional rations for the privilege of filling their swimming pools or watering their lawns. That green grass costs lives, mate.
- Mission

As a result, water smuggling and water raids are commonplace. Reservoirs have better security than some corporate labs, as do wells and natural springs. Draining water from rivers and lakes has been made a crime, though some of the rivers are polluted enough to keep even the smugglers away. On the positive side, everyone enjoys it when it rains. Most homes have set up collection systems to contain rainwater, and you'll see many folks taking advantage of the free shower.

- There's a big push by megacorps like Tanamyre to convince the government to privatize the water utilities. Some of these corps already make a killer business by selling fresh water commercially, and they'd love to get an iron grip monopoly on such a valuable commodity. Since their initial offers were refused, they've been getting more ... insistent ... with their pushing. I believe blackmail and other methods of arm-twisting are now

considered acceptable tactics.

- Skerrick

Outside of the sprawls, water is a luxury. Don't expect any locals to share their water with you, though they'll happily take yours in barter. Water is generally considered too important to waste on bathing—in the more arid areas of Australia, you generally scrub yourself clean with sand.

- Body odor is an accepted fact of life in the Outback. If you're foreign, the quickest way to make an enemy is to wrinkle your nose at the ripeness of the locals. Just remember that you over-scrubbed sprawl dwellers reek of wet sheep and chemicals to those of us who live here, but we're polite enough not to mention it.

- Lightning Brother

- As you can imagine, clean metabolism and scent gland bioware are popular in the bush.

- Russian Jack

LAW & ORDER

Most of Australia's day-to-day law enforcement has been subcontracted out or privatized just as in foreign cities. Over time, Australia's federal police forces turned their focus more towards national security and paramilitary matters—partly to keep an eye on corporate security units, and partly to handle the side effects of increasingly hostile relations with Indonesia and Japan. In 2031, the Feds amalgamated with the Australian Secret Intelligence Organization to form AISE (pronounced "ace")—Australian Intelligence & Security Enforcement. This agency has broad jurisdiction over all issues concerning Australia's national security—and as you can imagine, they stretch that discretion until it squeaks.

- Most AISE personnel are ex-corps or ex-military and are respectably tough fraggers. They have the ordnance, the skills and the mindset to get almost any job done. Naturally, they're all Australian citizens—not that nationality matters much any more—and it's rare for an AISE jock to be tapped from one of the Big Ten megas, or their subsidiaries.
- Keithy

- For those who care, ASIO was Australia's domestic intelligence service; roughly the equivalent of the old American NSA except a lot less professional. ASIO used to be the laughing stock of the intelligence community—there was very little "secret" about them.

- Atropine

- Some say that was just to distract attention from ASIS, the really professional guys. The Australian Secret Intelligence Service was the Australian approximation of the CIA, and was impressively competent. Oddly, the ASIS was officially disbanded at the same time as the AISE amalgamation, but there's never

been an official agency re-established to fill the gap.

- Metanoid
- Fair go! The ASIS may be gone in name, but if you check the personnel records, you'll find that most of them transferred to AISE. Strangely, you'll be hard-pressed to figure out what division they work in or what exactly they're doing. It's my guess that AISE has a top-secret wing that handles all foreign intelligence matters—including the megacorps. It's kept under wraps both for deniability and to avoid a smackdown from the Corporate Court for interfering with foreign business concerns.
- Metropolis
- The AISE likes to use runners when it's dealing with the megacorps—helps them to keep their distance.
- Middle-Man

Technically, the AISE has jurisdiction over all city and state police agencies, meaning that they can pull rank on Lone Star and Knight Errant types if they have to. The relationship between AISE and private security contractors has been a cold one at best—they've been known to withhold information and interfere in investigations just to slot each other off.

Getting What You Need

You'll find most of the usual shadowrunner toys are available in Australia, though in some cases you're going to have to jump through a lot of hoops to get them. The biggest hoops come when you're trying to get weaponry. Australia has a history of attempts at gun control, and while not totally successful there has been some effect on our society. Handguns are significantly more illegal than long arms (which can be justified from a farming, sporting or self-defense-in-the-Outback point of view); you can pick up a shotgun far more easily than just a simple pistol.

- Of course, when you're talking black market, all bets are off.
- Jag
- Anything with autofire capability, even just burst-fire, is insanely illegal and attracts attention like flies on honey. Law-enforcement types respond to the possibility that a perp is packing autofire with maximum threat, and they'll apologize to the bodies later. Be warned.
- Rain Dog
- It should tell you something that Australian police—government or corp-run—generally carry revolvers or semi-automatic pistols, instead of the hand cannons like Lone Star's Ruger Thunderbolt that you North American types would be used to.
- Malcy

The other big one is cyberware, specifically combat-related ware. "Self-defense" carries little weight as an excuse for such items in Australia, and almost all combat gear is classed

as security-grade at the very least. The comparative rarity of such body mods here does mean, however, that Australian authorities are less adept at recognizing some of the less common 'ware (especially in the case of spot checks).

- Translation: If you get stopped on the street by an Aussie beat cop, he's less likely to recognize your latest-greatest chrome than his UCAS counterpart. But you'd better have a damn good reason for having such gear, and permits capable of surviving rigorous inspection, or you'll never get past Customs in the first place.
- Rolinox
- Everything about cyberware goes for bioware and nanoware, too.
- Hacksaw

It's not all bad, though; some of the shadowrunner favorites are readily available here. Computer tech, for starters, is cheap and plentiful thanks to our proximity to the sweatshops of Southeast Asia. Legitimate Matrix access is a little more expensive than in the UCAS, but the bandwidth is just as good.

Most communications gear is also cheap and plentiful in Australia. The country has historically been a world leader in the adoption of new technology, especially when it comes to communication—our low population density makes it almost inevitable. As a pleasant consequence, comm gear (both cybernetic and regular) is inexpensive and readily available. In fact, corporate interests heavily promote it—the communications industry is one of Australia's strongest markets.

- Australia never had draconian encryption laws like in the old U.S. of A., and got something of a headstart on the big boom early in the century. Encryption algorithms and equipment, particularly communications encryption, are a little cheaper and easier to find than in many other places.
- X-Kaliber

Another market of note is that of narcotics. Australia abandoned the "war on drugs" attitude several decades ago and opted instead for control of the situation. Many chemical drugs have been decriminalized and are available under limited prescription from government supply (taxed heavily, of course). There are legal consumption facilities in some areas. However, electronic addictives such as BTLs are still strictly proscribed.

- Especially Kong Chips. Australia was flooded with these bug-gers a few years back, and despite a recent crackdown they're still flowing in thanks to Triad tricks.
- Carver

THE AUSSIE MATRIX

The Crash of '29 struck Australia hard and forced the privatization of Telstra, the government-controlled telecom company. Renraku took the deal and created Baird Communications, which still provides Australia's public RTG and LTG ser-



vices today. Baird has also been contracted by many local corporations for PLTG service, though it is receiving stiff competition from Tesseract Communications, a major new telco brought over by Cross. Tesseract offers cheaper and better newsfeeds and public archives, especially when it comes to Aborigine culture and affairs.

- Tesseract's got a slew of talented deckers, most of whom seem to enjoy poking holes in the Renraku/Baird-maintained public systems in a bit of friendly corporate sabotage.
- Silicon White Male

• Both Baird and Tesseract provide quality service in their area of coverage. Like most grids, security is light, but efficient. The area where they really stand apart, however, is system sculpting. Baird goes for a "natural beauty" look, lining each grid with landscapes that realistically echo the breathtaking Australian environment, including nice details like the warmth of the sun and koalas chewing away on leaves above your head. Tesseract's programming artists do something similar, but they've incorporated elements of Aborigine mythology, depicting the Dreamtime. The difference is that the each fixture of the landscape is alive—representing some spirit creature or totem. The landscape interacts with you much more, sometimes transforming into wandjinas or quinkens or even the Rainbow Serpent to perform whatever operation you've called up.

- Metropolis

While Australia's sprawls and coastal areas have good coverage, the interior of the continent is spotty at best. Before the Awakening, Telstra had a quality high-frequency radio-phone service in place, but the mana storms made short work of most of these facilities. Baird hasn't put much effort into patching up the coverage, except in the few areas where Renraku has interests or clients have paid big nuyen. You can still get wireless through a satellite phone system, until a mana storm whips up nearby and cuts you off with interference.

- The Outback is one of the few places in the world where you can regularly find a "wireless-free zone." The mana storms even kick up enough dust, debris and magnetic interfere to mess with surveillance sats, providing you with the ultimate zone of privacy in our wired world. If I had a cranial bomb that was waiting for a radio signal to set it off, or a top-notch trace decker I couldn't get off my back, I'd lose myself in the Outback.
- Sterling
- Yeah, but even if the bomb doesn't get you, the bloody mana storms probably will.
- Twister

For shadowrunners, I have good news and bad news. The good news is that we have our own Shadowland node Down

Under. The bad news is that it's located out of Sydney. Most of the time it's not a problem, but occasionally the Sydney mana storms interfere with Matrix traffic. As a result, a lot of runners favor the Morgue instead, based out of nearby Singapore.

- Matrix tech is cheap enough in Australia that there are dozens of small-time shadow boards, each serving a particular locale. Deckers from each area tend to linger on these boards, consistently tweaking with the architecture, the system sculpting and even the access nodes. This means you need to keep up with your local hackers if you want to be able to access local payday without too much of a hassle.
- Switchback

ORGANIZED CRIME

• When I asked around for someone who could provide inside info on the Aussie underworld, everyone I asked said, "Talk to Carver." It didn't take much digging to find the Perth fixer who goes by that name. According to his street cred rap sheet, he's been working as a middle-man between syndicates and runners for over a decade. He's taken commissions from most of the active mobs, and the fact that he's still alive shows that he stays neutral, keeps silent when asked and doesn't play favorites. The info he provided below is all "in the open" he claims, at least to those with the right connections.

- Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 12 June 2062 at 04:58:19 (PST)

by Carver

Australia is a melange of cultures, and each one brings its own ethnic crime syndicate with it. Hence, Australia has a wide variety of organized crime groups fighting for "market share," though some localities are dominated by just a few syndicates.

THE MAFIA

The Mafia has had a strong presence in Australia since large waves of Italian immigrants wandered in back during the 1950s. They generally focus on prostitution, financial scams and illegal gambling. They've been hampered for years by a traditionalist mindset that their competitors don't share—not allowing metahumans or women in positions of authority has hurt them. But their power is consolidating after several senior Mafia dons recently met unfortunate ends in supposedly unrelated incidents. Coincidentally, these dons happened to be the most traditional and hidebound, and have largely been replaced with more enlightened, modern leaders.

- Coincidental, my butt. It was a purge initiated by a couple of the more ruthless consiglieri who could see Mafia business going down the gurgler right quick unless something was done.
- Sable

• I doubt it. The consiglieri, and the rest of the "new guard" may have taken advantage of the putsch—but that's exactly what it was, a putsch. Scuttlebutt says the Russians have been chafing at the bit, trying to get a larger piece of the pie in quite a

few cities, and since their markets generally coincide with the Mafia's ... well, some bright Vory boy got the idea of offing a few of the senior Mafia dons. Impressive that they managed to pull it off without starting a protracted mob war though.

• Belladonna

• Vory, schmory. I heard that a couple of the Families were trying to make a push into Canberra, and the Canberran crime lords—otherwise known as the police—arranged for a practical demonstration of why the Mafia should leave Canberra alone.

• Rollinox

Australia doesn't have a Mafia Commissione like North America—each family sticks to its area of sprawl and avoids stepping on the toes of the other. However, Don Hawkes from Melbourne is generally considered to be the capo for the various families—he's on good relations with each of them, and has done much to command respect from his peers.

THE YAKUZA

The Japanese syndicates have been active since the 1980s, corresponding to the influx of Japanese investment in Australia. They control most of northeastern Australia and are strong in the BTL and smuggling industries, as well as perpetrating a lot of white-collar fraud. The Yakuza in Australia are a brutally efficient, profitable group with little value for sentiment.

All of the Yakuza gumi in Australia are under the control of the Saiki-rengo. The Saiki-rengo is one of the few rengo in the world that doesn't trace its power structure back to Japan. Ol' Kazuma Saiki left the homeland to his rivals and moved to Cairns twenty years back, and since then has consolidated his Australian operations and fought hard to keep other rengo out. Saiki also happens to be the CEO of Saiki Corporation, an A-rated agricorp that operates almost exclusively in Southeast Asia.

• Saiki meets all of the qualifications for extraterritoriality, but their efforts to obtain it keep getting stomped by Mitsuhamma. It seems the Yaks who have their hands up MCT's back don't like the thought of letting a rival rengo rise to power.

• Delilah

• The Yaks have a lot of other "true-blue" Aussie companies eating out of their hands, though—you'd be surprised at who pulls whose strings these days.

• Eclipse

• The Kawaru-gumi—that would be the ork and troll Yakuza clan—also has a presence in Queensland. They came together as a result of the influx of Japanese orks and trolls with Yakuza experience who were driven from Japan. Both the traditional Yakuza and the Kawaru-gumi like to pretend that the other doesn't exist, but they when they butt heads things really get ugly.

• Big Pinky

• I hear Saiki has considered bringing the Kawaru-gumi into his rengo—he may need the help if MCT's Yak friends decide to try and expand their operations.

• Wujal

THE TRIADS

The Triads are the longest-established underworld group in Australia, having arrived in the gold rush days of the nineteenth century. They have widespread markets in BTLs, prostitution, firearms, smuggling, talislegging and gambling; though the Triads don't control any particular area, they seem to have a substantial presence in every major city.

• Unlike the Yaks, Australia's Triads are almost a pleasure to deal with. They are generally courteous, dignified people who will respect the bargains they make. I find them the least intimidating of all the syndicates to deal with.

• Senescence

• Guess you speak Cantonese, then? For the rest of us, they're just the same as any other crime group—risky, shifty, and owing allegiance to none but their own.

• Keithy

• At least they do stand by their own, unlike some of the more brutal modern syndicates who have no hesitation about divesting themselves of exhausted "assets."

• Rosario

There are three primary triads in Australia. The smallest, the Golden Triangle Society, is rumored to be connected to the Red Dragon Triad in Hong Kong. In fact, some think the Golden Triangles are simply a front-group for the Dragons—and their suspected master, the great dragon Lung—to edge in on Australia's markets. The Grass Sandals are the largest Australian Triad, owing their success to leader Li Mi. Li only recently took control of this Triad, after leaving some sort of ugly mess he was involved with in mainland China. The Green Gang is the second largest, though it has a lock on the smuggling and talislegging operations.

• Li Mi allegedly possesses a pair of magic sandals. According to Chinese mythology, these sandals can turn into a boat and allow the wearer to travel long distances quickly. I'd love to take a squiz at these little items.

• Glasswalker

• The Green Gang is tied into Wuxing. I'm not sure what the relationship is exactly, but a lot of Green Gang shipments come in and out on Wuxing ships.

• Snow Tiger

VIETNAMESE GANGS

These hoons are as crazy as a stepped-on snake. They're the Australian equivalent of the Seoulpa Rings, (dis)organized crime at its most brutal. They prey upon civilians more than any



other group, and so have been identified as a serious problem by Australia's various law enforcement agencies. Unfortunately, the walllopers haven't made any progress toward a solution, as the gangs operate in areas where no one is prepared to make a statement against them.

The Vietnamese are centered around Darwin and are in particular conflict with the Yakuza there; they also have significant populations all up and down the eastern seaboard, and in Adelaide. They deal in firearms, illicit betting, organlegging and chips and also conduct armed robberies, hacking attacks and blood sports. The organized Vietnamese gangs also have close ties to a lot of other street gangs, and have a ready source of supply and an eager market. They have little to do with corporate interests, preferring instead to prey off the truly helpless.

- You don't want to meet these fraggers in a dark alley—they'll snag your credstick, scoop out your cybereyes and leave you bleeding to death on the doorstep of the nearest chopperdoc.

• Mission

VORY V ZAKONE

The Russian Mafia is a minor presence concentrated in Sydney and Melbourne. Comparatively new players, they have a reputation for a no-frills, innovative approach and concentrate on prostitution, illegal fights and smuggling. They've currently developed a lean, professional organization that has eluded the justice system thanks to its small numbers and efficient operation.

- It's a bit out of their usual milieu, but the Russians are behind a very popular, new, illegal casino in Sydney. Nothing has come of it yet, but word has it that just about everyone else wants a piece of the profits. If the Russians can keep the peace, they'll have themselves a nice little earner; otherwise, they're likely to get themselves wiped out of Sydney in a bloody territory war.

• Ms. Caline

The Vory are rumored to have a new high-tech chemlab up and running in Melbourne, churning out copies of the latest synthetic combat drugs and designer pills. They're already making a brisk business in the shadows and with certain corps on the side.

- Be careful about what you get when you buy from an underground lab like this. "Quality control by Ivan" doesn't exactly cut it in my book.

• Zenith

THE GREEK MAFIA

The Greeks are some of the biggest, most influential players in Australia, occupying the niche that La Cosa

Nostra does in many overseas markets. They're centered in Melbourne, which has a massive Greek population, and have a strong presence in other cities. They have tendrils in most markets, especially gunrunning, pornography, protection, extortion and money laundering.

Anton Stefanopolis leads the largest Greek crime family. Anton is the unofficial mayor of Melbourne—anyone with power there shakes his hand at least once a year, and he makes enough deals each hour to give Lofwyr a run for his cred. The Greeks have better police ties than you can imagine, especially in Melbourne, and it's all due to Anton. It just so happens that Anton's second cousin is the head of Archon Enforcement, Melbourne's city cops. Naturally, the Greeks use these connections to their advantage all the time. More than once, rival syndicates have suffered damaging law enforcement crack-downs at inopportune times.

- The real power behind the Stefanopolis family is Anton's mother, Caroline. This scary old crone can often be found lurking in the background of Anton's business dealings, ostensibly playing good hostess but most likely eavesdropping. The weird thing about her is that she never shows her face—she's always wearing a veil, or some big monstrous hat that hides her whole head.

- The Fat Man

- Some say the whole Marna Caroline thing is just a way for Anton to keep an unobtrusive and unexpected bodyguard close at hand at all times. But I know a street mage who viewed her aura during one meet that's convinced she's not even human.

- Rain Dog

THE SOUTH AFRICANS

When Apartheid died late last century, a whole slew of South Africans fled to Australia. Some of these were mixed-race mulattos fleeing discrimination or people who were simply avoiding the sectarian violence that plagued the country for years. But after Apartheid cracked, a lot of racist Afrikaaners who didn't relish the thought of being an out-of-power minority sought a new home base. Many of them set up shop in Perth, and for lack of other alternatives they quickly became the crime syndicate top dogs there. They're big on smuggling, prostitution, illegal fights, money laundering and rorting the construction industry. They also have a reputation for being icicle-hearted negotiators.

- Hah. You want construction rorting, just look at the labor unions. I won't go into too much detail (sorry mate, I favor my kneecaps too much), but they're crooked as hell. You'll still find a lot of prejudice against Aborigines there, not to mention foreign (Asian) immigrants. Metahumans are cut more slack, especially orks and trolls, but only because they tend to outweigh the mobsters.

- Steward

GANGS AND BIKIES

Australia's cities spawn the same kind of go-gangs and thrill gangs as Europe and the Americas, though none of them are particularly large. The biker gangs are worth a mention, though—more than just go-gangs, the bikers of Australia run a very tight ship. Similar to first-tier UCAS gangs like the Ancients, they have linked clubs all over Australia and a large total membership. Unlike go-gangs, Australia's bikers tend to be very old-school, traditional "bikie" families.

There are hundreds of regional biker clubs and five national-level gangs in Australia: the Cowboys, Thor's Hammers, the Apaches, the Scales and the Hell's Angels. The Crows are another biker gang, unusual because most of their members are Aborigines. The Cowboys and Thor's Hammers are both first-tier gangs, and all are involved with dealing water, drugs and arms—politics aren't really an issue, and they don't tend to get involved in manipulating corps, governments or anyone else.

- Don't be fooled by this street level focus—they tend to be very well connected. The average bikie knows a lot of useful people; they just don't do "networking" on a larger scale.

- Driscoll

The bikies are some of the only Australians crazy enough to risk traveling through the Outback. They're willing to take the risks for the freedom it ensures them—in the bush, there is no law. Not only have they become skilled in wilderness survival, but many of the gangs have established their own way stations, oases and hideouts. While some of them will ride up and raid any settlements they find or attack other travelers they encounter, others have all sorts of connections with smugglers, nomads and even Aborigine tribes and are careful not to create friction through random violence. The Crows, Scales and similar bikies have been known to patrol certain roadways for communities and otherwise act as freelance security—for a price of course.

- Some corps have been known to hire bike gangs for security or escort duty. I know the Atlantean Foundation has hired the Crows on for at least two archaeological expeditions.

- Shetani

- Yeah, and neither of those groups returned. Would you still trust the Crows?

- Glaive

- Who said it was the Crows' fault they didn't come back?

- Heyzen

- Most of the gangs are at peace—for now. While hostilities occasionally break out, an all-out gang war would be costly in lives and most clubs work out ways to settle their differences more amicably. These days, their main competition is from organized crime. The Apaches and Scales have even been discussing a tentative alliance against the depredations of the Triads and Vietnamese gangs into their markets.

- Mace

AUSSIE URBAN LIFE

• If you visit Australia, odds are you'll visit one of the country's sprawls first before diving into the Outback. I've brought Mission back to give us an inside scoop on Australia's more interesting sprawls. The towers of glass and lanes of plascrete may look just like the sprawl back home, but remember that this is a different land with different rules.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 12 June 2062 at 05:08:21 (PST)

by Mission

Australia's cities are primarily centered along the east coast, flourishing wherever the land is good and the mana storms don't (usually) churn. The larger ones have absorbed the suburbs around them into languid sprawls, though the density remains less than the metroplexes in other countries. Around and within each sprawl you'll find a ring of agrizones, taking advantage of the coastal climate to grow sugar, wheat and other staples, including biotech goods that have been genetically altered to fit our climate and needs. These rural areas tend to be sheltered and hostile to outsiders—most Australians prefer to live as far away from the storms as they can get.

Due to the mana storms, there aren't many safe ways to travel between the sprawls other than by air or boat. A high-speed rail link connects Adelaide, Melbourne and Canberra, but the other cities are effectively on their own. You can risk the road remains, but you'd best get your affairs in order first.

• Unless you want to travel undetected, in which case overland is the way to go.

• Jock

SYDNEY—SHELTER FROM THE STORM

Sydney is a city under siege. Once it was the thriving, bustling nerve center of Australia—or so every Sydneysider would have you believe. But the mana storm that took up residence around the city in 2012 changed that. Though Sydney is not completely cut off from the outside world, travel to or from the city is always a risky proposition, and the Sydney mana storm periodically acts up and blocks all access completely. In some cases, radio, satellite and even hardline Matrix connections have been cut.

No one has figured out why this particular mana storm never goes away, or why it likes to hover in the vicinity. There's certainly no meteorological reason for the storm to linger—in fact, such a thing shouldn't be possible, especially for several decades. The storm has played havoc with weather patterns around the area, so Sydney sees a lot of unusual atmospheric effects: sudden hailstorms, electrical storms that batter the city with thunder and lightning, and even a twister or two.

• Something must be drawing the storm to this area, some sort of "focal point" for its energies. Something that keeps it in place and possibly even feeds it power.

• Silicon Mage

• The storm could be the residue of some major event in the past. Some sort of cataclysm or big disturbance, perhaps. The trauma connected to such a tragedy could conceivably attract odd mana disturbances and fuel them further.

• Harrower

• The storm does seem to be fiercest in the area around Botany Bay. Could it have something to do with the penal colony the British established here?

• Khan

• Botany Bay does have an above average amount of static in the ether, but it doesn't have the traumatic punch that other sites of mass carnage or emotional energy have. Oddly, the storm wraiths don't show up around there much, they mostly steer clear and haunt the other areas the storm washes over.

In my opinion, the mana storms are symptoms of something drastic that happened to all of Australia, far back in the past, before recorded history. I would guess the area around Sydney was key to whatever events took place. Maybe we should ask the great dragons if they have any "memories" to help out here ... though I doubt they would tell us if they did.

• Red Heeler

• I heard that early on, some of the researchers discovered an interlocking network of "song lines" in the area. At first it was hoped that the song lines could be traced back to some sort of artifact buried in the region, something that might be causing the storms. But they quickly realized that the song lines are in constant flux, continuously altering their flow and the path they take through the city. Some experts suggest that there's a pattern here, and that whoever cracks the pattern will find the source of the power. Most researchers have surrendered that line of inquiry, though, claiming that there's no discernable code to be unlocked.

• Djjeridu

• Hmph. I'm sure that has nothing to do with the research groups that the DIMR, Wuxing, the Atlantean Foundation, the Illuminates of the New Dawn, Tir Tairngire and a half dozen other corps and magical groups have in place here.

• Snowball

The ominous black clouds that hung on the horizon cast a pall over the city during the first few years. The population dropped by tens of thousands, and more than a few corps picked up and headed off to safer grounds. The governing leadership of New South Wales effectively relocated to Canberra, though they kept pretending Sydney was the capital. The city spent millions on high-priced magical experts to analyze the storm and make it go away. Millions more were spent giving all sorts of hare-brained ideas a burl: dispelling rituals, weather magic rituals, summoning storm spirits, etc. All sorts of other loony ideas, from warding the entire city to erecting a



permanent dome, never made it off the drawing board, though these projects sucked away money the citizens could've used. As a result, city services dwindled and many neighborhoods started to slide downhill towards slumdom.

The city kept asking the Commonwealth government for financial assistance or even disaster relief, but the state had a lot of other business on its plate and refused to give any hand-outs to what they saw as a bustling city with an annoying severe weather problem. The Sydneysiders were right slotted and began to demand assistance. When they didn't get it, they took the advice of certain corporate "counselors" and declared independence. If they were going to be cut off physically and financially, they may as well lose the political baggage too, or so the thought process went. Naturally, a few corps took a risk and made some heavy investments into rebuilding the city—in return for a position to "advise" the city on "affairs of state."

It only took about a decade for these corp advisors to become the de facto leadership of the city. The Sydney Metropolitan Council is still the official body, but the corporate officers carry far more authority than the skags who were elected into office. You'll recognize many of the names involved: Knight Errant (Ares), Aztechnology, Baird Communications (Renraku), Tanamyre and Wuxing (a newcomer).

Knight Errant is contracted to handle the city's policing services, and they have their hands full—Sydney has more violent crime than any other Australian city and is the shadowrun capital of our nation. Sydney's shadow community is as busy as that of any UCAS city.

- The corps involved in the Metro Council are constantly jockeying for power and control over various city services. At the moment, Aztechnology and Tanamyre are blasting away at each other over the city's water services, and Wuxing is trying to buy out the privatized Fire Brigade.
- Rortician
- These contract disputes have also led to rising numbers of private fire contracts. Companies like Nomad Services started out by providing detection and alarm systems and expanded to virtually replace the public Fire Brigade. They now provide alarm-response systems and boast a range of appliances that most fire departments would drool over.
- Pirate

'Round Sydneyside

Sydney never had the opportunity to sprawl like other metroplexes since it's contained on all sides by geography (mountains to the west, ocean to the east, and bays and wilderness north and south). Instead, Sydney was forced to condense its population and grew upwards, becoming a city of towering skyscrapers and high-density living to rival any metropolis in the world. As a result, air transport is popular in Sydney. Every building holds up at least one skypad, and the wealthier neighborhoods have air-cab stands every few blocks.

- Between a plethora of air-taxi services and the multitudes of private choppers and VTOL vehicles, Sydney's skies are crowded indeed. Knight Errant has a well-funded air patrol division, and the city has had to implement rigid air traffic laws to match those on the ground.

• Sky Skrapper

- Though ground traffic is light, Sydney's roads are administered by the government and are somewhat the worse for wear. The ground-level GridGuide is almost always malfunctioning, creating standstills for two or three hours in peak traffic. In some 'hoods, the potholes are big enough to live in, and can be lethal to cars, not to mention bikies.

• Ped X

- The city center is closed to road traffic (and has been since 2010) and is serviced instead by a surprisingly functional light rail and tram network. It's expensive, but safe, and extends into other areas of the city as well. Armed guards on all trains; CCV surveillance; decent technical security. Better odds than driving.

• Rygess

- The trains outside of the city center run infrequently between 11pm and 5am, and "protected service" is also discontinued then. No guards, and the train is remote rigger-driven, so it's a criminal paradise after hours. Don't get on without heavy weaponry and a willingness to use it.

• Glaive

- If you want to get around, buy a bike and drive fast enough to lose the traffic cops. It's that simple.

• Kirra

Sydney is home to around eleven million people, the usual mix of SINners and SINless, corporate wageslaves and gutterpunks. The city remains very compartmentalized—east does not mix with west, north with south, meta with non-meta, Asian with Caucasian. So if you're a troll in runner garb, you're going to feel the heat when you stroll down the avenues lined with condos and yuppie bars. If you need to venture out, dress accordingly and play the part, or you'll stick out and will be messed with or remembered.

The Bridge

There are a few places around Sydney that may be of particular interest to the shadowrunner crowd. First among them is the Sydney Harbor Bridge. This unique symbol of Australiana suffered severe structural damage when the mana storm first strolled through the 'plex, forcing the city to close it off and route traffic through the well-maintained tunnel that passes under the river nearby. A lot of people had been displaced from their homes due to the storm's damage, and one night a large crew of them broke through the barricades and squatted the bridge. The city ignored them at first—it had other problems at the time—which simply gave the squatter community



time to grow and entrench itself. By the time the city was looking to repair the bridge, it was completely under squatter control. A half-hearted attempt to clear it out turned into a major riot that spread out through downtown until the pavement was littered with shattered glass and burning cars. After that, the city decided it was better to improve on the tunnel and leave the bridge to its own devices.

The bridge superstructure (both above and below) has been covered with all manner of jury-rigged shelters, shacks and other living contraptions. A flotilla of boats, rafts and just about anything that floats has been lashed together to the pylons below and to each other, creating a patchwork village on the water itself. Some nutcases have assembled living quarters and more all the way to the top of the bridge, attached with rivets, glue, rope, you name it. You can get a spectacular view of the city from the lookout points on the bridge's peaks, but it's a regular occurrence for some of the squatter's handiwork to come undone and simply fall off, sometimes creating a nice hole in the floating city below. The whole bridge community holds on for dear life when storms sweep over, rebuilding the areas that get swept away or collapse from the accumulated weight of debris and drainage flashfloods.

- The sanitation systems are ad-hoc as well, so the bridge can sometimes be a rather unpleasant place. It's especially true for

the floaters below, who get dumped on quite regularly.

- TMI

The bridge community is a no-go zone for Knight Errant, meaning that it's a great place to pick up black market gear. You'll also find all kinds of useful haunts: dingy bars, chop docs, gambling parlors, beetle dens, you name it. If you don't know your way around, I highly recommend hiring on a local. The bridge people can smell outsiders, and it's easy to get lost in the maze of unmarked and constantly changing shelters. If you go in and get lost, you're not likely to come out again.

- I hear the Metro Council has been getting a bit sick of the bridge lately, and that a few of the councilors have wondered out loud, in the vicinity of some rather shady types, what a shame it would be if the dilapidated eyesore "accidentally" completely collapsed. I'd keep an eye on those support pylons ...

- Rydell

World Square

This arcology was originally constructed around the turn of the century. A massive building in the center of the city, World Square was originally full of shopping malls, offices, apartments, hotels, bars and pubs—but it was also a money sink. In 2045, Tanamyre bought the entire structure at dirt cheap rates, then spent the next ten years renovating it, expanding over the



surrounding few blocks, and turning the whole thing into an actual self-sufficient arcology.

Oddly, Tanamyre does not use World Square as its headquarters, and in fact confines its business operations to a small, sealed-off section of the arc. The rest of the arc is rented out to individuals and other companies, many of whom buy into the arc's billing as the safest shelter from the mana storm.

The oddest part about World Square, however, is not the arcology itself but the structure's old underground car park. Designed to hold over 10,000 cars, the car park became useless when the inner city was closed to traffic. The space simply didn't fit into Tanamyre's plans for the arcology, so they sealed the structure off and ignored it. In the meantime, enterprising souls broke in and slowly turned the massive, tomb-like empty space to other uses.

Known as the Emporium, this unnatural cave complex has now become a 24-hour market, with thousands of stalls operating day and night. The place has developed its own weird subculture. The lighting isn't great, and the facilities suck (big surprise, it's a car park) but some call it home, and they tend to stick together. The residents and merchants fight tooth and nail to get the spaces on the upper levels, because the further down you go the weirder and scarier it gets.

- You can buy anything here, and I mean anything, if you know the right stalls.

- Mall Rat

- Rumor has it there's a group of albino vampires living down on the bottom levels, where some of the disused subway tunnels terminate. They also have access to some nearby buildings and the arcology itself through some subterranean connections.

- Enki

- I don't know about vampires, but the bloodsucking syndicates have little influence here, which makes it a great place to hide if you've annoyed the wrong people. Most of the residents will hide you and keep their mouths shut, if only to stick it to the mob.

- Jay

- A lot of the youngsters in the Emporium have been recruited into go-gangs. They like to ride out at night, particularly through the tree lined promenades and elegant fountains of central Hyde Park. They play cat and mouse with the Knight Errant cops, and occasionally with other go-gangers, leaving bullet holes and blood spatters to be cleaned up before the suits hit the streets in the morning.

- Tetsuo

MELBOURNE—WHERE THE NUYEN FLOWS

If Sydney is the heart of Australia, then Melbourne is the brain, or possibly the wallet. Home to the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX), Melbourne is a glossy, cosmopolitan city that oversees most of Australia's daily financial transactions. Easily

the richest city in Australia (or most expensive, depending on your point of view), Melbourne also features the biggest divide between the rich and the poor.

The ASX used to be based out of Sydney, but in the rumblings of Sydney's mana storms and independence fever the Stock Exchange administration sought to distance themselves from the danger of the time. In the aftermath of the Crash of 2029, the ASX took the opportunity to rebuild in Melbourne, seeing the city as a more stable alternative. The corps followed, of course, and now the city center is densely packed with high-rise development, corporate installations and high-flying young execs.

- The ASX's presence has had a large effect on the city. You can't walk around downtown without being bombarded by stock quotes, overrun by hordes of stockbrokers or overhearing some lucrative insider gossip while lounging in a trendy sidewalk coffee shop.

- Speck

- Shadowrunning in Melbourne is all about the ASX. You won't find anything as direct as trying to hack into the exchange's potent Matrix systems, but you will find all sorts of work leaning on investors, conducting insider trading, datasteals, jacking with share prices by spreading rumors and similar games to get an edge in the market.

- Zenith

Like other financial centers around the PacRim, Melbourne is a battleground between the Japanacorns (represented here by the PacRim Bank and Mitsuhamu) and the Pacific Prosperity Group (Wuxing, Yamatetsu and the Malaysian Independent Bank). The PPG currently has the upper hand, as Wuxing's local subsidiary Anataeus Offshore Investment Corporation underwrites several of Australia's major financial institutions (including the government), and Wuxing Financial Services is Australia's largest corporate bank. Yamatetsu's MetaBank lures in the private accounts of Australia's meta community, and the MIB secures support with generous financing and vetting local corporations for prospective entry into the PPG.

In response, the PacRim Bank has been getting extremely desperate over its rapidly decreasing pool of potential customers. Aside from contracting numerous sabotage runs to ruin the MIB's public image, it has expanded quickly to block Wuxing's efforts to increase their market share. These efforts only served to overextend and destabilize the banking group, which took a severe shock when the Ring of Fire exploded in late 2061 and investors fled in droves. Some analysts fear the PacRim Bank may be nearing financial collapse, especially if it suffers any more unexpected setbacks.

While the city center sits at the top of Port Philip Bay in Victoria, the rest of Melbourne sprawls all the way down both sides of the bay to reach the coastline, covering well over three thousand square kilometers. The average Australian treasures their quarter-acre block of suburban-like land, and Melbourne residents have resisted high-density even more than the rest of



Australia. While you will find many neighborhoods with quiet one- or two-story single-family residences and stretches of green and leafy streets, these are the 'hoods where the average salary is astronomical and armed guards patrol the boundary fencing. These gated communities stand in stark contrast to the rest of the squalid sprawl, rampant with poverty and violence.

Melbourne's law enforcement contract is served by Archon Enforcement, Australia's largest local security corporation. Archon is acutely aware that they stand right on the class divide, to the point where each walloper seems to have two modes of consciousness. An Archon cop will bow and scrape and be the epitome of sharp but polite security whenever a suit is present, but when dealing with gutter-trash they're violent, brutal and extremely authoritarian.

- As a result, most Melbourne runners tend to be more high-class and aloof than elsewhere. Most Js and corporate contacts expect a very high degree of politeness and professionalism from the runners they deal with, and if you can't play in that league you'll quickly be out of work. On the positive side, the high average income and intense corporate rivalry means that jobs in Melbourne are plentiful and well paying.
- Zenith

- Their shadow community remains fairly small, though, since the rarified corporate atmosphere is rather off-putting to the average local criminal with the typical Australian laid-back approach. That makes it easy for out-of-towners to get work.
- Southern Cross

Outside of shadow ops, the Melbourne underworld is thoroughly dominated by the Italian and Greek Mafias. These syndicates have become the de facto authorities in the slums that Archon Enforcement avoids, and most of the dozens of street gangs are tied in to one or the other. The Greeks are the dominant influence, with scads of links to various corps and a convenient "understanding" with Archon that keeps the cops off their backs. But Don Hawkes' Italian mob runs a nice little "shadow exchange" that gets a lot of business from those who prefer to trade their stocks less publicly.

- The Mafia's shadow exchange is perfect for conducting hostile takeovers, as the targeted corp will take a bit longer to realize they're being gobbled up.
- E-Trader

Melbourne's Royal Botanical Gardens are worthy of individual mention; traditionally recognized as amongst the best in the world, the Gardens received a new lease of life following the Awakening. Many of the Gardens' plants Awakened, as did the ever-present native animals, and the Gardens are now a notable public exhibit of Australian parafau-na and parafloa.

- One thing locals don't think to mention because they're used to it—the weather. While not actually as rainy as Sydney, Mel-

bourne is famous for its changeable weather. A day that begins with rain and storm clouds can easily wind up as a balmy subtropical sunny day. If you're planning work that is in any way reliant on environmental conditions, it pays to have contingency plans.

- Finn

BRISBANE—CLOSE QUARTERS

Unlike Melbourne, Brisbane certainly does not suffer from an oversupply of formality. Traditionally perceived by the rest of Australia (and by locals as well) as an oversized country town masquerading as a city, Brisbane has never completely shaken this image. Though several decades of heavy immigration have swelled the city's population to around three and a half million residents, there is a certain unsophisticated charm to Brisbane's relaxed atmosphere.

- Everyone knows everyone else in Brisbane, I kid you not. I'd bet fifty bucks that you could meet a random stranger on the street, strike up conversation, and discover that you had at least one mutual acquaintance.
- Pict

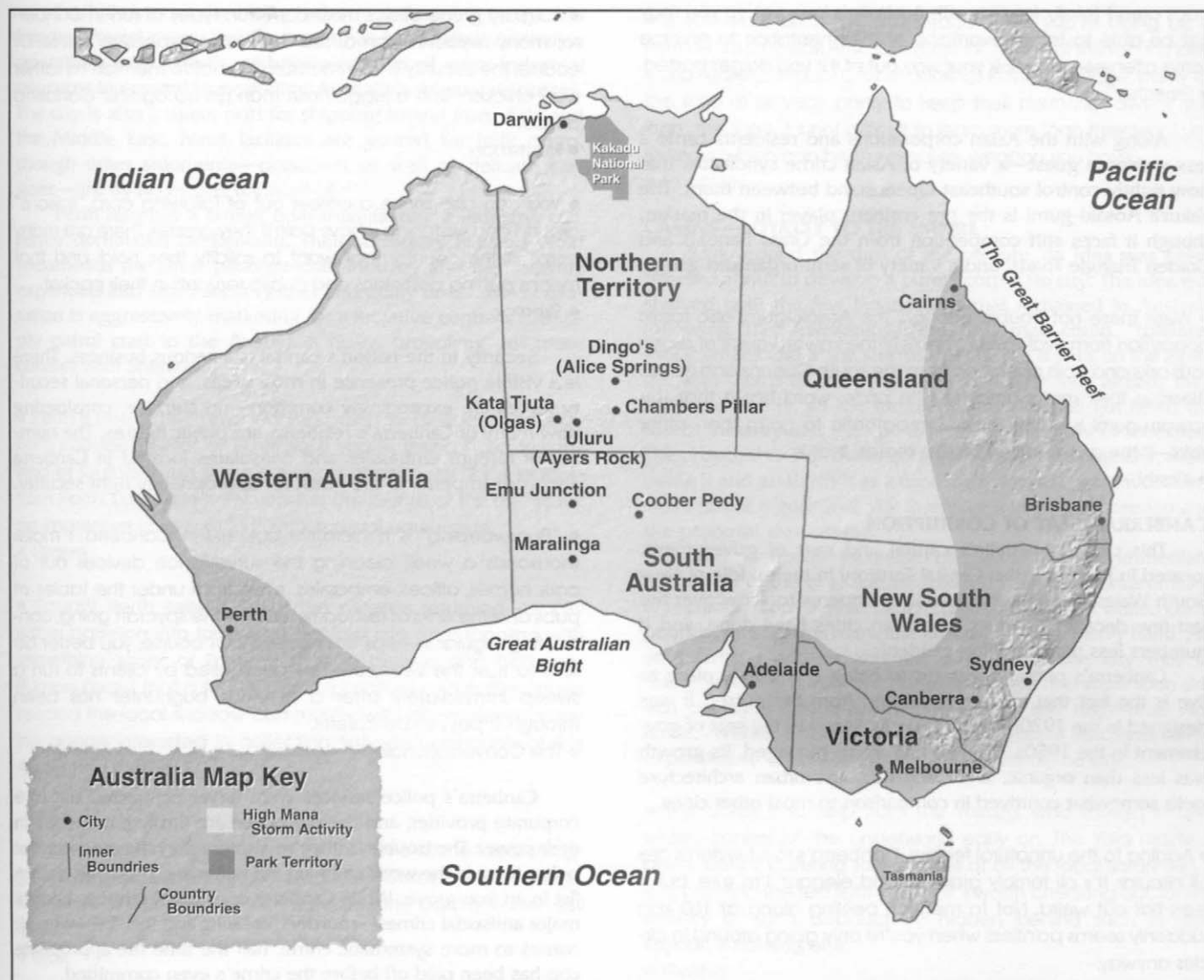
• Pict exaggerates somewhat, but he's not far off the mark. I remember sitting in a pub once, chatting to a colleague, and we discovered that we had four or five different friends in common—all of them from different social circles. Brisbane is a community founded on mutual acquaintanceship; deals are made on the strength of being a "friend of a friend." Your little black book is your single greatest asset if you're operating there. Know just one person in the right place, and doors will cascade open for you all over the city.

- JB

- It makes life in the shadows very interesting. Brisbane's runner community is close-knit, making legwork very easy. On the flipside, everyone knows you and your business, which upsets some of the more paranoid foreign runners no end.
- The Fiend

- It's even worse when you consider that you regularly come up against people you've been drinking with two nights before. The local runners are pretty good at separating business and pleasure, but it can get a bit stressful sometimes.
- Cestus

Brisbane's boomtown sprawl is the result of being the port of call for Asian metahuman refugees. The city quickly expanded to accommodate its new residents, drawing in former "satellite towns" like Logan City, Redcliff and Ipswich, as well as the tourist meccas of the Gold and Sunshine Coasts. The percentage of metahumans in the population remains high (even for Australia), and Brisbane features several distinctive "meta-ethnic" neighborhoods and cultural events.



- Ever seen trolls play rugby? Or orks play polo? And these are the tame side of things. Brisbane's meta wujen community takes feng shui very seriously, and many neighborhoods are also dotted with Shinto and other animistic/shamanic shrines.
- Rain Dog

Laid-back though it may be, Brisbane still has a deadly serious business community. Capitalizing on large numbers of Asian residents, many Asian corporations have established operations and installations in Brisbane, including luminaries such as Yamatetsu, Eastern Tiger and Tan Tien.

- A lot of vacationing Australian corpsters end up on the coasts near Brisbane. This makes the area a good hunting ground for extractions, as security is usually more lax than back at the lab.
- Skerrick

Brisbane's law enforcement is contracted by Lone Star, so many overseas visitors will feel right at home when they jack you up. It is worth noting, however, that Australian law differs greatly from UCAS law, so Star enforcement practices and standard procedures may vary significantly.

- Echo that. I've been tripped up a couple of times by relying on my knowledge of the Star back home in the UCAS. They work differently here.
- Boom-Boom
- You can actually take advantage of that, if you're lucky. The Star's just scored a few extra municipal contracts lately, and it's spread pretty thin when it comes to personnel. They've recruited quite a few locals, but they had to ship in a bunch of surplus officers from the UCAS to make up the numbers. The imported



cops aren't totally familiar with Australia's laws yet, so you may just be able to take advantage of their hesitation to enforce some offenses—or to talk your way out of it if you do get busted.

- Emeritus

Along with the Asian corporations and residents came a less welcome guest—a variety of Asian crime syndicates that now tightly control southeast Queensland between them. The Yakuza Aosaki-gumi is the pre-eminent player in the market, though it faces stiff competition from the Grass Sandals and Golden Triangle Triads, and a variety of semi-organized gangs.

- Were these not trouble enough, the Aosaki-gumi also faces opposition from rival Yakuza, namely the kawaru-gumi of rebellious orks and trolls operating from the south Queensland coast. Wearing their metahumanity with pride, word has it that the kawaru-gumi is a little more sympathetic to gaijin than other Yaks—if the gaijin happen to be metas, that is.

- Kiroshi

CANBERRA—SEAT OF CORRUPTION

This city is Australia's capital and seat of government, located in the Australian Capital Territory in the middle of New South Wales. Canberra has had little impetus to grow over the last few decades as other Australian cities have done, and it numbers less than a million residents.

Canberra's primary obstacle to being a desirable place to live is the fact that it was engineered from the outset. It was designed in the 1920s and finally established as the seat of government in the 1950s. Planned and micro-managed, its growth was less than organic, and even now the urban architecture looks somewhat contrived in comparison to most other cities.

- Adding to the unnatural feeling, Canberra's road systems are all circular. It's all terribly graceful and elegant, I'm sure, but it feels flat out weird. Not to mention peeling along at 150 kph suddenly seems pointless when you're only going around in circles anyway.

- Overdrive

Canberra has little in the way of any industry or sales markets other than government; the population is made up almost entirely of public servants and politicians, and staff for all the service industries they require. Since the average weekly wage is higher than almost anywhere else in the nation, retail prices are inflated and there's a significant trade in luxury items (especially black market ones).

- Your average Canberran has quite a lot of money and no concept of "real" prices for anything as simple as a cappuccino, let alone the going rate for hiring professional criminals. You can make quite a lucrative career out of living elsewhere and working in Canberra, milking clueless public servants dry.

- Rolinox

- Burglary is one of the most common types of run in Canberra; many residents can afford to indulge expensive tastes. Of course, the security is commensurate—not to mention I'd rather play chicken with a juggernaut than go up against Canberra police.

- Huntsman

- You can also make a career out of following corp "liaisons" around and watching whose palms they grease. There are many corps in this country that want to solidify their hold, and that means getting politicians and public servants in their pocket.

- Skerrick

Security in the nation's capital is a serious business. There is a visible police presence in most areas, and personal security forces are exceedingly common—no surprise, considering how many of Canberra's residents are public figures. The number of foreign embassies and consulates located in Canberra also adds impetus to the quest for appropriately tight security.

- "Bugsweeping" is a lucrative business in Canberra. I make thousands a week cleaning the surveillance devices out of cars, homes, offices, embassies, even from under the tables of pubs and the sinks of restrooms. With all the spycraft going, conducting regular sweeps is a necessity. Of course, you better be sure to trust the sweeper—I've been hired by clients to run a sweep immediately after a previous bughunter has been through. It pays to be careful.

- The Conversationalist

Canberra's police services were never contracted out to a corporate provider, and the old police are firmly entrenched in their power. The trouble is, they're also possibly the most corrupt police force in the world, running the national capital with an iron fist in an iron glove. While Canberra cops do attempt to control major antisocial crimes—murders, assaults and the like—when it comes to more systematic crime, half the time the appropriate cop has been paid off before the crime's even committed.

- The crime syndicates have little foothold in Canberra because the police squish them every time they try to expand. Not out of civic duty, but because the syndicates would impinge on the cops' nice profitable rackets. It's impressive to see the results that the Organized Crime Task Force regularly achieves—perhaps if all the other cities had cops working "on commission" they'd see the same sort of results.

- Stryfe

PERTH—GATEWAY TO THE OUTBACK

This city of around three million inhabitants is closer to Singapore than to Sydney. Separated from the rest of Australia first by distance, then by the intervention of the mana storms, Perth has developed a unique culture and thriving industry independent of the rest of the nation. Perth is the state capital of West Australia, which is in a time zone two hours behind the eastern seaboard of Australia.



Perth thrives on the heavy industry and mining operations headquartered there. Saeder-Krupp has based their Australian operations out of Perth, as have a number of other industrial concerns interested in exploiting Australia's mineral resources. The city is also a major port for shipping to and from Asia and the Middle East. Most facilities are geared for bulk cargo, though other shipments—personnel as well as delicate cargoes—are by no means unheard of.

Perth also has a strong boat-manufacturing industry, currently dominated by Renraku. Their subsidiary Harland-Wolff spearheads the small pleasure-craft industry and has recently expanded into small security craft and utility boats. The corporation is aggressively marketing for a lucrative contract to supply patrol craft to the Australian Navy, provoking yet more conflict with Shiawase.

- Perth is one of the major staging points for all kinds of expeditions into the interior of Australia. If you're being hired for any kind of Outback run, there's a good chance you'll be leaving from Perth. Local specialty vendors are aware of this and stock an impressive variety of Outback survival equipment.

- Glaive

- Equally, Perth sees a lot of the missions returning—usually either barreling into town at a panicky clip after tangling with something scary, or limping back in bruised and battered. Rumors persist that a few of the corporations and nations have seeded the local shadow community with information-gathering agents interested in collecting first-hand accounts of the Awakened Outback.

- Skerrick

- Talislegging is a big industry in Perth. Some of the local smugglers have established relationships with Outback biker gangs. The bikers collect tesmas as they cruise the Outback, then sell their haul at top rates.

- Max

Perth is quite an affluent city. It received a large influx of residents at the end of the twentieth century, when white South Africans fled before the fall of Apartheid. Many settled in West Australia, and brought their significant financial assets with them. The trend continued when many retirees chose to move to Perth to enjoy the pleasant climate and atmosphere. As a result, Perth now has a thriving social scene full of moneyed socialites.

- Perth's underworld is dominated by the South Africans, and they work hard to keep the traditional crime syndicates from gaining a foothold. As a result, syndicates in the eastern cities of Australia are looking for blokes crazy enough to move in and establish a power base for them or skilled enough to acquire leverage they can use to turn some of the South Africans to their side.

- Belladonna

- If you want an unfair advantage when you're doing biz in Perth, learn to speak Afrikaans (or slot it). Many of the local underworld figures conduct a lot of dealings in the language; partly for the sake of secrecy, partly to keep their memories alive. If you learn the lingo, it's not difficult to learn more than they want you to know, which can be the greatest weapon you have.

- Chuckles

CAIRNS—LOYALTY TO THE EMPIRE

Back around the turn of the century, an idea was being bandied about to develop a purely corporate city. The idea was shelved until the few Japanacops that remained in Australia following the Awakening (the few that could "tolerate" metahumans and mana storms, that is) put it back on the agenda, with Cairns as the proposed city. Cairns was already on a downward slide, as the turbulent times had all but killed the tourist industry and the country was in the grips of recession. The proposal to sink major corporate money into the city, redevelop it and establish it as a focal point for Japanese investment was seen as a godsend. The intensive lobbying succeeded and the proposal was passed.

Over a dozen Japanese corporations took immediate advantage of the deal and established their own extraterritorial enclaves. From behind their mini-arcologies and walled compounds, these corps manipulated Cairns with a heavy hand. An unadvertised anti-metahuman policy kept the city free of "taint," and any metas that dared to set up shop were soon driven out by institutionalized harassment and night-time violence. Within a decade, the extraterritorial enclaves were expanded to encompass over 90 percent of the city.

- The corps had help from the Yakuza, who moved in and seized control of the underworld early on. The Yaks made a pretty penny catering to the vices of all the local sararimen. If you can find the red light district, it's worth checking out, for the novelty of such debauchery hidden behind such a stoic façade if nothing else.

- Geisha

The corps also took advantage of extraterritoriality to attach "advisors" to their security forces; in reality, these consultants were loaned from the Imperial Marines, looking out for Japanese interests. More Marines were brought in to actually police the city, concealed under the guise of a joint corporate security task force. These troops were built up gradually over the decades, until the Japanese had established an occupying force without Australia ever catching on. In the early 2050s, a mana storm left a swath of destruction through the city, and the Marines dropped the pretense and openly supplied "disaster aid." It quickly became obvious that Cairns was fully in the hands of the Japanese as Imperial Marines openly patrolled the streets.

- What this meant was that Cairns was a near-total police state. The Marines would conduct random street stops to check IDs and search people, especially anyone who looked the slightest bit shady (read: non-Japanese sarariman). If you didn't have



corporate citizenship, the appropriate visas, and/or a good reason to be there, you were in deep drek.

• Skerrick

This mini-stronghold came crashing down late last year, when the new child Emperor recalled Imperial Marines from around the world to help rebuild a devastated Japan. The troops in Cairns were the first to receive the recall order, and the megacorps suddenly found themselves without their security blanket. They acted quickly, however, bringing in Wolverine Security to police the city (luckily, total anarchy did not break out in the week interim, go figure).

With the protection of Imperial Japan no longer offered, several of Cairns' corps have already moved out and a dozen others are making the motions. In a desperate bid to shore up its local economy before a total crash, the Cairns Corporate Board instituted a huge campaign promoting Cairns as a tourist destination once again.

• From a runner's perspective, this is most interesting, as Cairns has effectively thrown open its doors to get strangers from other places in (ostensibly tourists, but shadowrunners need vacations too). What was once a tightly restricted area is now much easier to squeeze into.

• Heysen

DARWIN—NORTHERN OUTPOST

Situated on Australia's northernmost tip, Darwin is a small, cosmopolitan, high-tech city, holding just over a million people. Most of the refugees from the Outback fled to Darwin when the mana storms started, swelling the city's size. Because of the influx of meta and Asian immigrants, Darwin is probably the most diverse city in Australia. You'll find screaming Mongolian kids on one block, Malaysian dwarfs on the next, and each street corner is essentially one big melting pot. Darwin is the one Australian city where outsiders won't stick out ... much.

• You see lots of ethnic groups in Darwin, but the only ones well organized in the underworld are the Vietnamese toughs and the Yaks. The Vietnamese kids have the upper hand, thanks partly to sheer ferocity and brutality. The two factions go at each other every chance they get, and it's not an uncommon sight to see a soldier or two from one side or the other bleeding to death in a gutter.

• Skizzo

Darwin's importance grew as the national government expanded the military forces stationed in Australia's north in the face of increasing hostility from Indonesia. The city became the center of military operations in the north, with a secondary base at Broome housing the serious hardware. You'll often see Australian soldiers carousing at night, getting pissed, trying to pick up one-night-stands and starting bar fights whenever they get the chance. These guys regularly get fleeced by Vietnamese pickpockets, con men and hold-up artists, but they're always back next week for more.

• If you make the right connections, some of the military quartermasters are easily convinced to fudge inventory and misplace a few items. They consider being stationed at Darwin as being stationed in the middle of nowhere, and so are willing to buck the system without remorse. The Yaks have discovered this too, and you'll find automatic weaponry easier to obtain in Darwin than anywhere else in Australia.

• Converter

Like Perth, Darwin is a major shipping center, meaning it is also a major center for smuggling operations. Plenty of black market traffic occurs under the noses of Archon Enforcement and the military, including everything from illegal Asian paracritters to telesma to cyberdecks.

• This is the place to go if you want to smuggle people in or out of Australia, yourself included. The Triads run refugee boat scams from all over Southeast Asia, charging poor folks a fortune to be crammed into a cargo hold with hundreds of other refugees and get shipped here. Sometimes the crews abandon the ships halfway, other times a good percentage of the cargo arrives dead.

• Scourge

• If you're smuggling by water, or going near the water for any other purpose, be warned. Darwin has an unusually high population of afancs around the river and coastal areas. Archon periodically sweeps the area clean of them, but they come back in droves and they're really nasty. They like to wait just under the surface, then they latch on with those wicked jaws and don't let go.

• Stumpy

• Frag the crocs, what you really need to watch for are the "stingers" (box jellyfish). They swarm the waters around Darwin between October and May. I've heard some scientists claim that there's an Awakened version of these beasts floating around, protected by some sort of natural invisibility, zapping victims with a paralyzing toxin and then consuming them with enzymes. They haven't managed to catch one alive yet.

• Rabid

Darwin's other draw is that it boasts an impressive array of research facilities devoted to studying the changes to Australia's environment since the Awakening. All of the big names have installations here: the DIMR, Mitsuhamu Thaumaturgical Research, the Atlantean Foundation, Awakened World Research (Saeder-Krupp), and more. The most interesting of the bunch is the Maui Institute, which has made the most breakthroughs into classifying Dreamtime magic. The Maui offers top-level classes at a steep fee, and it scored a coup by drawing an Aborigine elder named Argulu from the deep Outback to consult on the song lines and the ways of the koradji. You have to prove your dedication to protecting the Outback to even get an audience with the geezer, but



word is that he's worth it. The few attempted extractions seem to back this up.

- Some Aborigines feel that Argulu is spilling the secrets of the Dreamtime to uncaring outsiders, and wish to see him stopped or eliminated. Others whisper that he's not really a koradji at all, but that he's a trickster spirit, enjoying the pampered treatment he receives while leading unfortunate outsiders astray.
- Bespectacle

Each of these learning institutions regularly makes expeditions into the Outback, studying the effects of the mana storms, the occurrence of alchera, tracking spirits and otherwise sticking their noses in places they don't belong. "Free-lance security specialists" are regularly hired and outfitted for these missions, especially if they anticipate any trouble with Aborigine tribes, bikies or paranormals. These expeditions are conducted under top secrecy, as more than one has been intercepted just outside of town, losing hard-earned research to crafty rivals.

- All of the "official" expeditions are launched out of Darwin, but the "unofficial" ones that are delving into sketchy territory or heading out with shady goals tend to leave from Perth.
- Ranger

- Darwin is also the home of Australis Entertainment, a major trid network and specialist in "on location" shooting in the Outback. Owned by Ares, they operate a large simsense studio complex in Darwin and employ runners as shepherds for studio teams recording in remote locations. They've had to shelve a couple of promising adventure-sim projects because the Outback is still considered too dangerous to risk big-name stars on location.
- Skerrick

- Yeah, ever since Sara Sinclair got smushed recording an action sim about mana storms (a real one blew up in their faces, and no one ever found the bodies), they're running scared. If you can demonstrate enough mojo to keep a location team safe from the perils of nature, you can probably write your own check.
- The Kat

MAKING MONEY FROM ROCKS AND WATER

- With all of the opportunities this collection has exposed so far, I'm sure some of you are considering a working holiday in Australia. Someone has to pick up the tab for your services, of course, and shadowrunners don't come cheap. A brief overview of your likely employers seems in order, and accordingly a Perth fixer named Olwen has provided us with a synopsis of Australia's major corporate players.
- Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 12 June 2062 at 05:15:06 (PST)

by Olwen

G'day, blokes. I reckon that each of you is familiar with the vast power and influence of today's megacorporations, running rampant across the world and treating nations like their own personal playgrounds. Australia is no different—though our government pretends to retain some of its power, it's too weak to stand up to the combined might of the Corporate Court. The only thing keeping the corps in check is the one power even they can't defeat: the Awakened Outback. Try as they might, the suits are just as susceptible to the whims of the Dreamtime as the rest of us. So they keep most of their ops confined to the cities, and they tread lightly whenever they cross the boundary into the bush or when they're forced to deal with the Aborigines.

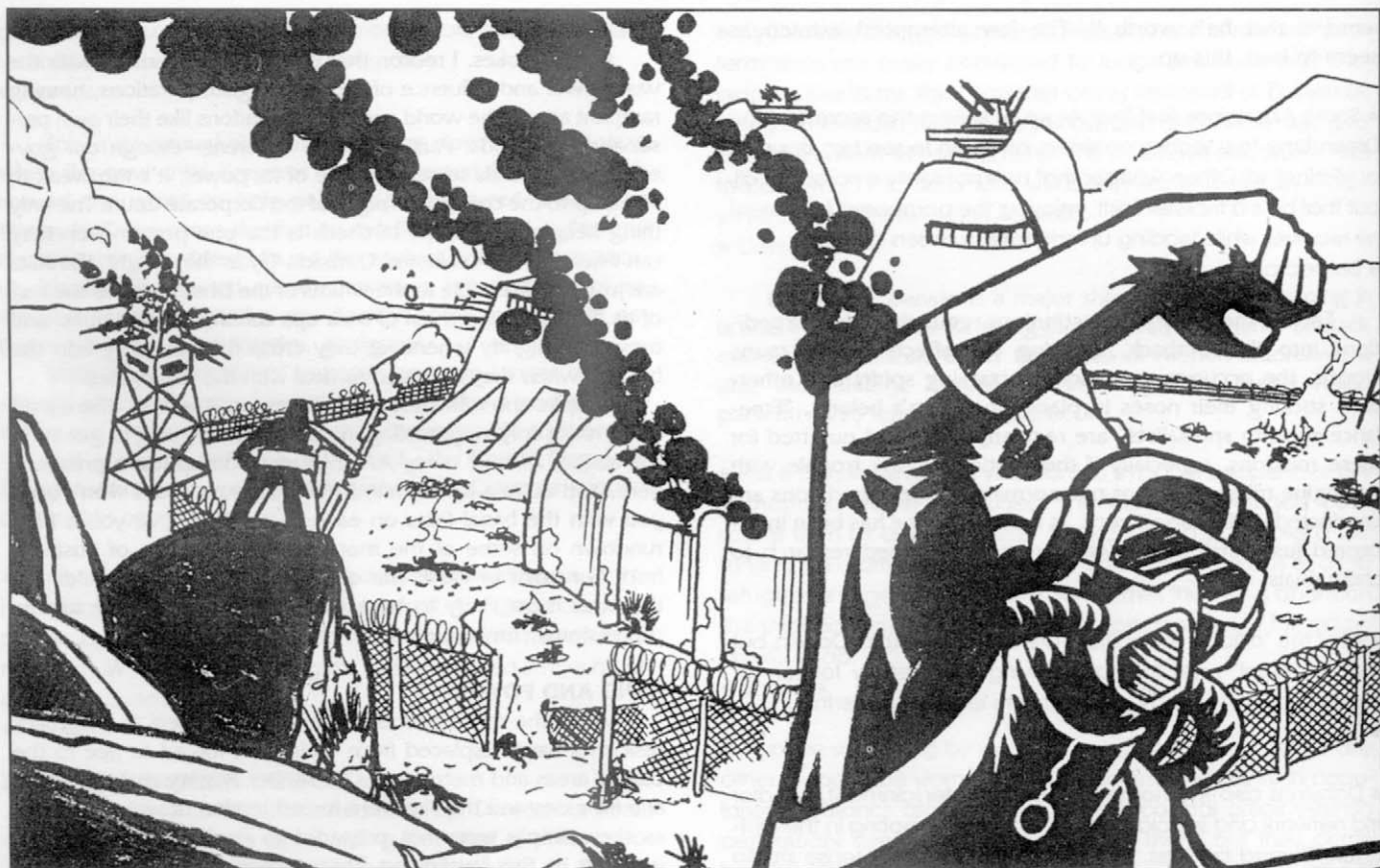
Despite the difficulties of business in Australia, there's an awful lot of corps squabbling in the sandbox, trying to get in on the action. Almost every AA-megacorp on up has a presence here, and quite a few A-rated multinationals too. I won't bore you with the banal facts on each; instead I'll give you a brief rundown on some of the more interesting areas of business from our point of view. The corps involved in these fields are the ones most likely to be a useful source of income for the professional criminal, either as employer or target.

LAND AND POWER

When the mana storms began, many farmers and Outback residents were displaced from their land, forced to flee to the coastal areas and metroplexes for shelter. Mining and agricultural businesses and the like were forced to shut down operations, as they simply were not prepared to deal with the changes wrought by the Awakening. These events brought widespread financial ruin, but worse was the slow realization that the mana storms were not simply a freak occurrence—they were a long-term problem with no easy solution. This disillusionment resulted in many farmers and landowners selling their property—often at bargain rates. The Aborigines took this opportunity to reclaim many of their traditional lands without the need for protracted legal battles, but the vast majority of land was bought up by corporations that saw the possible long-term windfall they could reap if the mana storms were to be controlled.

Right after the Crash, five corporations began quietly gobbling up massive amounts of land, often via hostile takeover. This amalgamation went largely unrecognized by the market at the time because it was carried out slowly via subsidiaries. By the 2050s, these corps owned just over 50 percent of Australia's rural land. Who are they? Simple, mate: Austrafarm, Kinesys Heavy Industries, DIBAL Holdings, Tanamyre Resources and Shiawase. What? Outside of Shiawase, you've never heard of them? No worries, just take a squiz at who owns the first three: Aztechnology, Saeder-Krupp and Yang Su Enterprises respectively. Tanamyre's simply our homegrown megacorp.

- The Crash was a real boon to these land thieves. All sorts of records were mixed up or lost, and the careful seeding of a few other "glitches" helped ensure that these monopolies developed quite nicely. In fact, the same tactics are still used today.
- Metropolis



Of course, none of these bushrangers is going to make a major investment like this on a whim. They're each hoping to get their nuyen's worth out of this land, mana storms be damned. There are plenty of money-making opportunities: mining for iron, lead, coal or even uranium; oil drilling; agribusiness; water services; opal mining; and even providing electrical power through solar, hydro and wind generation. Each of these corps braves the dangers of the Outback to reap profits, sometimes even risking the lives of their citizens, though drone-automated facilities are more and more common.

- Even the robotic facilities break down under the mana storms—and someone has to get sent out to repair them.
- Twonk

There's no end to the problems these installations suffer. Mana storms are just the beginning, though each facility is typically dug in, sheltered and warded to the extreme. Mischievous spirits and nagging paracritters plague lone outposts, disrupting operations and stealing livestock. Aborigine tribes are often quite hostile to corp types—in their view, the Awakening returned the Outback to their care and the corp intrusions are a threat to the land itself. Bandits and bikies are also a problem, as even corp law has little meaning in the bush.

- Underground facilities are quite popular, as the Earth itself provides a barrier to protect the corp assets from the ravages of the storms. But each of these sites needs at least one exit, and they're only as strong as their weakest points. More than one site has been penetrated as tendrils of a storm lashed through its tunnels, and several have simply been buried under crushing sand or rock.

- Russian Jack

- Extraterritoriality is a big source of friction with many Aborigines. They simply refuse to acknowledge that they can't roam where they wish—the concept of owning land is ludicrous to them. The corps have actually learned tolerance out of fear for their own safety—the first few times that trespassing Aborigines were shot down, the sites in question remained around less than a week. Still, they'll only "tolerate" so much, and eventually push comes to shove.

- Mission

- Case in point: the Australia Development Corp was Renraku's attempt to edge in on the Outback land grab. In line with standard Renraku policy, the ADC had terrible relations with Aborigines, refusing to even acknowledge them during land and water disputes. This made the ADC target number one for the Children of the Rainbow Serpent. Several smoldering ruins and



dead execs later, the ADC abandoned all Outback operations altogether.

• Renraku Fox

• This Outback land ownership can be a real pain in the hoop. You might find yourself crawling through the desert, in the middle of nowhere, with no signs and GPS scrambled by the Serpent knows what, dodging storms and bikies, only to have a corp response squad drop in on you to attempt an "arrest" for trespassing.

• Takometer

Some observers have wondered why these companies have so much interest in the land under the mana storms—is the effort truly worth it? While each of them has been researching methods by which they may control or at least dampen the mana storms, one has to wonder if there isn't something else at stake. A lot of folks I know thought orichalcum was the answer—they thought these corps somehow knew that Halley's Comet was going to indicate the appearance of orichalcum in the Outback. It certainly sent each of these corps scrambling, and even brought in a new contender: the alliance of Wuxing and DeBeers-Omnitech. But the corp interests remain even though the orichalcum by all accounts has "dried up." So what's the real scoop? Your guess is as good as mine, mate.

• Why's everyone so quiet?

• Hicks

Here's a breakdown on the major players:

Aztechnology Australasia

Australia Subdivision HQ: Sydney

Subdivision VP: Omar King

The officially branded Aztechnology presence is limited to their single Sydney office, but the corporation's influence pervades Australia in a network of anonymous subsidiaries. Austrafarm and Nature-Taste are the biggest, both major agricorps and apparent competitors in the eyes of the buying public (Aztechnology carefully coordinates their activities for maximum profit, but you'll be hard-pressed to find a shadowrun ever launched between the two "opponents").

Austrafarm is Australia's last remaining large agricultural exporter, primarily selling water, wool, sugar and meat. The corp also plays around with biotechnology, and they clone some of the meanest, furriest and hardest sheep you'll have the pleasure to meet. They engineer crops capable of flourishing almost anywhere, and corporate rumor names them as one of the contestants for the Dunkelzahn bequest for cultivating wheat in space. Austrafarm also spent the past few years launching a series of unsuccessful takeover attempts on DIBAL Holdings (though it does now hold 10 percent interest).

• I recently came across some rather cryptic paydata that implies that Austrafarm's researching magic-resistant crops,

presumably intended for mana storm territory. God knows if it's feasible, of course.

• Kwartz

Nature-Taste does much of the same, though they also operate aquafarms all along the West Australian coast plus at least two aquatic research facilities. Their research focus is unknown, and the facilities are heavily guarded ever since a third facility was destroyed five years ago.

• That facility allegedly bought it in a shootout between smugglers and a Coast Guard patrol. The Guard claims it was "collateral damage"—the smugglers mis-aimed a few volleys of rockets. Ever since, local Azzie subsids have been noticeably unfond of suspicious boats and planes.

• Skerrick

Shiawase

Overall, Shiawase flourishes in Australia, though its operations are weakened due to a lack of central regional administration. Shiawase Atomics and the various local subsidiaries are all headquartered in the Cairns Corporate Enclave, though several are examining new accommodation elsewhere in light of Cairns' waning glory.

Shiawase Atomics has dominated the power-generation market for several decades, supplying electricity derived from several sophisticated fusion reactors. More recently Shiawase has begun drawing on a range of alternative, environmentally friendly energy sources. Despite this, Shiawase Atomics has angered green advocates with exhaustive uranium mining for the rich profits it provides.

• Atomics started out trying to mine the uranium deposits in Kakadu, until the Awakening took a hand. Between the Aborigine activists, the eco-terrorists and the mana storms, Atomics lost a lot of expensive facilities and valuable personnel until they cut their losses and shifted operations. They now have exclusive rights to the Olympic Dam uranium reserve, right near Novatech's Woomera facilities. They've turned that area into a fortress—security is a major slitch for even the best teams to get through.

• Rain Dog

Arboritech is Shiawase's most lucrative local operation. Apart from profitable logging and aquaculture sidelines in Tasmania and South Australia, Arboritech has vast agricultural holdings across Australia. The bulk of Arboritech agriculture is focused towards bulk crops, though some areas are devoted to producing fresh luxury food items. Bulk crops such as soy are grown in temperate areas that are less affected by the mana storms. Consequently, they have avoided many of the problems other cultivators have faced, but their opportunities for expansion are limited.

• The luxury natural foods get shipped out at high speed to preserve their freshness. Arboritech took note of all the piracy prob-



lems getting cargo out of Australia, and arm their convoys appropriately. It's still funny to see boxes of strawberries with an armed guard, though.

• Black Lung

Saeder-Krupp Australia

Division HQ: Perth

Division Head: Edwin Hauser

This division sprouted from whole cloth a few years ago, coalescing assets and staff from a slew of minor divisions and S-K Azania. Like many S-K operations, it's difficult to tell exactly what they're up to on a day-to-day basis (aside from slowly taking over the world). They have several dozen subsidiaries hard at work in various areas, however, some of which are worth mentioning.

Under the aegis of Kinesys Heavy Industries, S-K conducts extensive mining operations in western and central Australia. In order to continue business as usual, most Kinesys facilities are heavily automated, employing drones and telepresence mining equipment, with operational buildings and crew quarters located underground wherever possible. A small team usually staffs the facilities: security, magical protection, maintenance techs, mining engineers and geologists. Some of the sites are shared with scientists from Awakened World Research, who take advantage of the facilities' protective measures to do on-site research.

Vulcan Systems, another S-K property, has actually attempted to take on Shiawase Atomics, with marginal success in shopping Australia-generated power out to various areas in Southeast Asia. Vulcan also attracted attention two years ago when it acquired AN Meridian, a Victorian industrial company operating a profitable drilling concern in the Bass Strait oilfields. Vulcan rapidly expanded AN Meridian's empire, amalgamating three small industrial service companies and successfully contracting to supply power-generation for Melbourne and regional Victoria.

• This rather startled Shiawase, who had gotten complacent about their power-industry monopoly. AN Meridian has, unsurprisingly, suffered a rash of unexplained disappearances, production delays and two key executives have resigned in shame after embarrassing public scandals. No prizes for guessing the likely instigator—and I doubt the black-ops campaign will dry up any time soon.

• Senescence

Tanamyre Resources

HQ: Brisbane

CEO: Peter Lawler

Tanamyre Resources is Australia's premier home-grown megacorp, spawned from the 2031 amalgamation of two Australian companies, Broken Hill Proprietary and Mount Isa Mines, both heavily involved in resource and mining operations. Born in the wake of the '29 Crash's chaos, the newly minted multinational rapidly subsumed a range of smaller companies in a rapid diversification program, and now operates in heavy industry, exploration and resource assessment, military technology, service delivery and manufacturing.

Tanamyre receives a range of tax concessions and tariff breaks from the Australian government, primarily for having its corporate headquarters and administrative infrastructure located on-shore, as part of a government program to bolster the local economy. The corporation also receives a financial subsidy for industries that are considered essential for national survival—namely its fuel supply operations and armaments manufacture.

• Tanamyre owns Commonwealth Aerospace Systems, producer of world-famous combat drones and military vehicles, as well as Commonwealth Armament Solutions, which manufactures munitions and military technology. The primary client for these two corps is the ANZAC military.

• Arctic Fox

• CAS/Tanamyre has been known to borrow the occasional vehicle eventually destined for another customer in order to conduct "spot performance evaluations"—a nice catch-all euphemism for any kind of black op you care to name.

• Glaive

Tanamyre Resources operates several major subdivisions. Tanamyre Exploration and Mining conducts expert geological surveys, and the corporation has acquired some specialized magic expertise to assist in compensating for the mana storms. This division conducts a range of mining operations across the nation for uranium, silver, iron and aluminum, and also operates various processing and production facilities.

Tanamyre Environmental Services is a subdivision offering environmental planning and management consultancy to other corporations. It also manages Tanamyre's own environmental impact; the corporation makes a genuine effort to be environmentally responsible where possible.

• A cynical exercise in public manipulation. While TES are very knowledgeable advisors for other corporations, Tanamyre itself merely pays lip service to environmental awareness, to keep the public on its side.

• Snog

Yang Su Enterprises

This quiet Korean agri-corp has blossomed rapidly in Australia over the last few decades, with offices and subsidiaries across the country, and a presence in many industries. It markets a range of food products and consumer goods, catering particularly to the large Asian communities in Sydney and Brisbane. Through DIBAL Holdings, its primary subsidiary, it forges the lead in agricultural research and has a strong presence in the Bass Strait and West Australian gas fields, in direct competition with Saeder-Krupp and Shiawase.

• DIBAL got smacked down a while back, actually. They used to contract a lot of runs to sabotage Saeder-Krupp resource exploration teams in the Outback, until the German monolith eventually tired of it and retaliated. Things have been quieter

lately, though I doubt it will last.

• Enki

DIBAL Holdings is managed by Melissa Kwan, a talented manager poached two years ago from Baird Communications.

• Kwan is the best thing that could have happened to Yang Su. She's a canny business manager who has so many contacts across Australia that she can get almost anything done. Government restrictions and bureaucratic red tape dissipate like mist whenever she is involved.

• The Kat

Once bitter rivals with Eastern Tiger Corp back in the homeland, Yang Su and ETC now seem to be working closely together. Word is that Yang Su is helping ETC get established in Australia in return for ETC sponsoring Yang Su to become part of the Pacific Prosperity Group. Yang Su's local rivals would prefer that the corp didn't acquire the PPG's clout to back it up, and are working overtime to sabotage the agreement.

OTHER BUSINESS OPERATIONS

There are other business dealings that aren't as major as the ones mentioned above, but that still deserve mention.

Reaching for the Stars

Both Shiawase and Novatech maintain launch facilities in Australia. The Shiawase facility at Normanton (in Cape York) is a revenue-raiser, launching satellites for smaller corporations. It's also where they were going to launch their *Brahe* comet probe until a group of cultists hijacked it. Security has been upgraded to beyond-paranoid levels ever since, making everyone in the vicinity extra twitchy.

• Shiawase Armaments operates the launch pad, so it's a good bet that they do a lot of military-applications research and launch their kill- and spy-sats from here. That means top nuyen, if you get away with the goods.

• Spectre

The secure Novatech compound at Woomera serves as a deep space tracking station (for asteroid monitoring), a launching site for polar satellites (used for meteorology and geological mapping) and as a space plane launch facility. Uncharacteristically, this facility seems to be Novatech's principal business in Australia, and so it draws a lot of attention from the competition.

• From the brief look I got around the Woomera facility a while ago, it looks like they're developing military applications of space planes—extra-atmospheric military vehicles. Oddly, I spotted some personnel around the site wearing uniforms that weren't Novatech issue, which makes me wonder who Novatech's collaborating with, and why.

• Skerrick

Life and Limb

One thing that can't be argued about Australia is that we have great medical care—if you can afford it. Yamatetsu is the primary provider, operating around fifty large hospitals and innumerable smaller clinics and treatment centers across Australia through their local subsidiary, Lifestar Health Services. Likewise, their CrashCart subsidiary has won contracts to supply public ambulance services in every large city except Cairns. Yamatetsu also supplies its usual range of high-quality cyberware and bioware through its medical clinics. Little of the cyberware is manufactured locally; most is imported and merely sold here. Of late, Yamatetsu has resisted increased competition from an attempt by Shiawase to pervade the market, but Yamatetsu is well entrenched in Australia's medical infrastructure and is unlikely to be unseated soon.

• Ironically, the top line gear that makes CrashCart so competitive and scores it such contracts is made by Shiawase Biotech.

• Morbid

• If I were CrashCart, I'd be checking that gear real thoroughly before I paid COD.

• Skerrick

• Foreign runners may be happy to learn that their CrashCart contracts will be honored here, and the service is better than average; DocWagon users are simply out of luck, except in Cairns.

• EMT

The only real alternative to Yamatetsu is Aurora Biofacilities, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Universal Omnitech based in southern Queensland. Aurora has tendrils in almost every field related to biotechnology, medicine and biology. They operate the most popular chain of cybernetics clinics in Australia, engage in a wide variety of biotechnological research and own a prestigious medical school attached to the University of Queensland that specializes in training cybernetics surgeons.

• Aurora Biofacilities, and Universal Omnitech by extension, is one of the most targeted corporations in Australia for shadowruns and black ops. Not a week goes by without another Aurora facility getting done over, and buzz has it that UniOmni is losing patience. Expect to see security increase dramatically over the next month or so.

• Ace

• A lot of those runs are coming from Aztechnology, despite the fact that UniOmni and the Azzies are theoretically working closely these days. Apparently the Azzies feel that Aurora hasn't been forthcoming enough with their major innovations, and have taken to "expediting" the "info-sharing."

• Pyramid Watcher



- Aurora has made some major breakthroughs with paramedicine, thanks to some Awakened plant life in the Outback. None of it has been released publicly yet, but I hear it's available to UniOmni corp citizens.

- Pill Popper

Travel and Shipping

If you're flying into Australia, odds are you'll be riding aboard Qantas, the national airline that was bought out by AresSpace back in 2040. The faltering airline was given a major boost, and now provides excellent suborbital and semiballistic service to and from Australia. With Ares behind the controls, you can bet security's good as well.

- That's for sure. They know all the tricks when it comes to weapons smuggling—don't expect to get anything more lethal than a pocket knife past them.

- Mule Trainer

- The fact that AresSpace still owns Qantas is a real bugger to Ares Australis wunderkind VP Maryanne Randall. She's been fighting to assimilate it into her division without any luck, and the internecine wars have soured internal relations. More business for us, of course.

- Havoc

Most Australians recognize Wuxing as the manufacturer of a wide range of consumer goods, but the corp's biggest business in Australia is actually shipping. Several major shipping subsidiaries have Australian facilities, most notably Wuxing Worldwide Shipping and Minh-Pao Exports. They're centered in Townsville, Port Botany, Melbourne and Fremantle, with specialized facilities in other ports.

- WWS has an exclusive contract with Yamatetsu to ship their agricultural produce out of Geraldton's port. There have enough "incidents" in the last year to suspect that someone is trying to drive a wedge between PPG allies: accidents at the port, shipments going missing, pirate interceptions, etc.

- V3OL

Wuxing has come under scrutiny from governmental agencies for some of their shipping practices; Minh-Pao in particular has an unsavory reputation for colluding with Triad pirates in return for protection and raids against competitors. AISE never unearthed any concrete evidence against Minh-Pao, and the extraterritoriality of the Wuxing name saved Wuxing Worldwide Shipping from having to cooperate with the investigation.

- Maybe so, but the government still has a serious mad-on for Wuxing. I've heard whispers that a few of the government's more deniable officials have been called on to deliver an informal reprimand. Keep your eyes peeled.

- Keithy

- Wuxing's shipping subsidiaries are dodgy to the core. Four years back the dock workers tried striking for better conditions (too many pollutants, they claimed). Instead of negotiators, Wuxing sent Triad enforcers. Unsurprisingly, the dockers—scary enough themselves, I assure you—went meekly back to work.

- Scorpius

- It's important to mention that piracy is a serious threat to watercraft all around Australia. Shipping vessels, tourist cruises, personal pleasurecraft and even Coast Guard patrols are frequently hit. Most of the pirates range from the Philippines or Indonesia, snatching goods for the Huk or the militias. But pirates of all sorts are common, particularly in the south near Tasmania and the Bight or along the Great Barrier Reef.

- Redfoot

THE DREAMTIME: AUSTRALIAN MAGIC

- When it came time to gather information on Australian magic, I hate to admit it but I came up empty. The Aborigine shamans guard their secrets carefully. While magicians in general have a reputation as technophobes, the Aborigines live up to it. They don't trust much of anything about the modern world, since most of them blame it for the sorry state of Australia today. Therefore, we don't have any Shadowland users with inside knowledge of Australian magic and a willingness to share that information with us. So I've gone to a secondary source—a text put out by Pentacle Press called *Into the Dreamtime* by Dr. Richard Cowan, a noted researcher in comparative shamanic traditions. It's written for an audience reasonably familiar with magic theory, but we've excerpted only the most important info on Aborigine magic and traditions. If you want the whole thing, you can download it off the Pentacle Press host. Their security is pretty lame, but watch out for the trace IC. If you have anything to add to Dr. Cowan's information, go right ahead. The file is wide open.

- Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 12 June 2062 at 05:22:46 (PST)

from *Into the Dreamtime: A Guide to Aborigine Magical Traditions*, by Dr. Richard Cowan, Pentacle Press, 2059

"Your Dreaming is all that you really own."

—Aborigine saying

THE ABORIGINE PEOPLE

The term "Aborigine" means "here from the beginning" or "original people." It is a term well suited to the tribal people of Australia, whose culture dates back over 40,000 years, perhaps the longest unbroken cultural tradition known in the modern world. Of course, Aborigine culture doesn't seem very modern to most people, remaining virtually unchanged by the passage of millennia until it came into contact with European explorers and settlers. It is a culture of great spiritual depth and understanding that flourished in one of the harshest environments on Earth.





Though this text talks about the Aborigines in broad terms, it is important to note that their culture is actually far more diverse and complex than any single work can encompass. The native people of Australia once included hundreds of tribes, all of them speaking different languages and dialects, spread across the continent. Estimates suggest that the Aborigine population of Australia may have been as high as 300,000 or more prior to European colonization, though their numbers have dwindled since then. Keep in mind that Aborigine myths, language, and traditions vary from place to place and tribe to tribe. Discussing the "Aborigine tradition" as a whole is much like discussing the "Native American" tradition as a whole: we can see many common characteristics, but local elements can vary a great deal.

Aborigine Society

Aborigine society is tribal, based around collections of extended families living and working together. An Aborigine tribe or camp may number as few as a dozen people (usually a single family) to as many as a few hundred, usually depending on the availability of food. A portion of the tribe goes out each day to hunt while the remainder gathers locally available food and maintains the home, cares for children, and so forth. The hunters share their catch with the whole tribe.

Aborigine tribes are semi-nomadic, traveling from place to place in search of food and often following the migrations of food animals. Tribes in the Outback tend to travel more widely than tribes in the coastal areas, where food is more abundant. Tribal migrations often follow a pattern and cross over familiar territory again and again.

Aborigines are considered children until they undergo adulthood initiations, usually conducted at adolescence. This includes rituals to recognize and honor the new adult's totem spirit and rites that recognize the sexual maturity of the individual, now ready to enter into marriage and become a fully adult member of the tribe. Aborigines honor age as a sign of wisdom, and tribal elders have the greatest influence along with the koradji, or shamans, of the tribe.

- Before anyone gets the idea that the Aborigines lived in a perfect, idyllic society, keep in mind that their traditional culture is still basically Stone Age. They used those weapons for more than just hunting game, and tribes did war on each other. Disease and famine were all too common, and many of the treatments for illnesses were worse than the diseases themselves.

- Foster

- Oh yes, thank God we were able to save the Aborigines from their extremely stable cultural tradition, which sustained them for tens of thousands of years. Now they have all the opportunities offered by flush toilets, McHugh's double cheeseburgers and homeless shelters. Now they can live like the rest of us and not be trapped in their terribly backward and alien culture. Another great triumph for cultural homogeneity, surely.

- Holly

THE DREAMING

Aborigines make a distinction between "the Dreamtime" and "the Dreaming" that is often difficult for foreign people to understand. The Dreamtime is the primordial, but ever present, mythical past. It is the time when the great totems and Sky Heroes of the Aborigine people created the world and all life within it. Though the Dreamtime is in the distant past, it also has a timeless quality to it. Aborigines often speak of events in the Dreamtime as if they were happening in the present, still going on all around us. Many modern magical theorists believe the Dreamtime is an Aborigine experience of a primordial metaplane and that, in fact, the cycles of Aborigine myth are still being played out on that metaplane, where linear time as we know it has no meaning.

The Dreaming, on the other hand, is an individual's understanding and expression of the mythic elements present in the Dreamtime. Each person has his or her unique Dreaming. It is a combination of concepts like destiny, true will, higher self, muse and more—but not the same as any of those things. Your Dreaming is what makes you who you are, an expression of your relationship to the universe and, more importantly, to the Dreamtime.

- And this is relevant how?

- Gordie

- Because it has everything to do with how the Aborigines think and especially how their shamans think. It's important to know whom you're dealing with, and how someone thinks makes all the difference when it comes to magic.

- Sun-Tzu II

The People and the Land

One of the first and most important things to understand about Aborigine culture is the close connection Aborigines share with their land. As with many tribal cultures, their life is dependent on an intimate understanding of the land and its cycles, particularly in the harsh environment of the Outback. The Aborigines are tied to their land as the source of food and shelter, but they are also connected to it through cycles of myths and stories that make them a part of the land, rather than simply living upon it.

- This is a concept a lot of modern people can't quite grasp. We don't "own" land. When Aborigines (or most tribal people) talk about land being "theirs," they don't mean in terms of having a deed of ownership. They mean that they have a relationship with that land, usually built up over generations of their people living there. The people care for the land and the land, in return, cares for the people. It's as impossible to sell land as it is to sell the air you breathe (though I'm sure some of the megacorporations are working a deal for that, too). It's one of the reasons why tribal cultures fight so strongly to hold on to "their" land. It's more than property to them; it's their heritage and their proper place in the world.

- Anne

The Aborigines believe that as their supernatural ancestors walked their path through the Dreamtime, their activities left physical evidence, transformed into features of the landscape such as trees, mounds, water holes or towers of rock. These same heroes and totems are also still present within the land, sleeping away in ageless slumber. As these beings sank into the ground, some of them also transformed into physical features that still remain. The spirits of these beings reside in elements of the landscape where they continue to influence events. These places are all sacred sites to the Aborigines.

- Let me clarify a distinction here. Where a traditional shaman may view a nature spirit inhabiting a hill, to an Aborigine koradji the spirit *is* the hill—they are not separate things. More to the point, that spirit/hill is an ancient ancestor and may feature prominently in stories from Aborigine myth.
- Shetani
- Perhaps this is an interpretation of the high amount of spontaneous spirit manifestations and free spirit activity in the Outback.
- Silicon Mage
- You hermetics have to have an answer for everything, don't you?
- Bandi

Ancestors and Totems

The Aborigine people have an ongoing relationship with their ancestral spirits and totems, who are considered the primordial spirits that created the world and gave rise to life. Each person is "born into" a totem spirit in the Aborigine tradition, and that spirit influences all aspects of the person's life from birth onward. A person's totem is usually revealed upon reaching maturity, though some people (particularly those destined to become shamans) know their totems earlier in life.

- It's much like how many western people believe astrological signs dictate elements of personality, interests, talents and so forth. Aborigines believe people of certain totems are better suited to certain things in life. For example, totems dictate marriage customs in many Aborigine tribes. Certain totems are considered compatible and likely to produce healthy children, while other totems are incompatible and will only result in an unhappy marriage.
- Tesseract
- Coincidentally, this practice also tends to prevent inbreeding among the often-small tribes of Aborigines and is probably one of the things that's contributed to the longevity of their culture. One wonders if it was simple good luck or if the totems know more about things like genetics than people think?
- Doc

Australian totems are typically animals, though they may be other natural features of the environment. It is considered bad luck to hunt or eat animals of the same type as one's totem. Thus an Aborigine who has Kangaroo as his totem won't hunt or eat kangaroo meat, except in the direst circumstances (and even then will perform many rituals of apology to his totem). The Aborigines consider these totems more than just spirits. They are literally the ancestors of the modern members of the tribes, the creators of life in Australia and part of the ongoing process of sustaining life in that land.

- Like so many things about magic and the Awakening, you have to wonder how much of this is literal truth and how much is metaphor and myth. I mean, sure, we all know how life evolved and all that, but are the totem spirits of Australia literal "ancestors" of the Aborigines? Did they once walk the world in the physical forms of the Sky Heroes and other figures of Aborigine myth and interbreed with the early Aborigines? Is such a thing even possible?
- Dianno
- There are scattered anecdotal reports of children supposedly fathered by spirits (or even dragons) in human form. It's nearly always a young woman who claims the father of her baby was someone "magical," often a spirit or the like. In the few cases where genetic tests have been done, there are no signs of abnormalities in the infants involved, nothing to indicate such an unusual parentage. It's more likely than not that 99 percent plus of these cases are simply unwed young mothers trying to protect a deadbeat father or unwilling to admit they simply don't know who the father is. I can't tell you how many "I HAD DUNKELZAHN'S LOVE CHILD!" stories there were circulating around a few years ago. There's no confirmed scientific evidence that spirits (or anything other than Homo sapiens) can interbreed with Homo sapiens. Is it possible? Well, as the old song goes, where magic is concerned, almost anything is possible.
- Magister

• I've seen an Aborigine elf bloke that looked ... different. He was taller, thin as a scarecrow, with skin so dark it was like you could see through it into the depths of space. There was something different about his eyes too, but I can't put my finger on it. Maybe it was just how he looked at things around them ... like he knew the secret names of the spirits that reside inside everyone and everything.

The first time I saw him we were taking shelter from a mana storm in the Gibson Desert. At the height of the storm, this bloke walks by, gives us a look and walks on, without even saying "G'day." We chalked it up to the inexplicable, until we were rooting for opals in a cave a week later. I was digging around in the depths of the cave, and all of a sudden the bloke is right behind me, like he crawled out of the rock or something. He

didn't say a word. He didn't have to. I left.

• Dervish

• It's good to see that the AmerInd shamans aren't the only ones to partake of natural hallucinogenics.

• Bung

The totem spiritually binds the individual to the sacred sites of his or her ancestors, making it the person's duty to protect the land and care for sacred sites. This guardianship is performed by singing songs about the ancestor's deeds and carefully conducting the proper rituals. If the land is not cared for, the spirits become restless and hostile and terrible calamities can result.

• Thus the damage done to Aborigine culture by European colonization, where many Aborigines died leaving many sites unprotected. The subsequent abuse of the land for profits has resulted in the state of the Australian Outback today. Calamities = mana storms.

• Magister

KORADJI

• Well, what do you know? Seems that our initial (brief) posting about Aborigine magic managed to shake things up enough that someone talked to a friend of a friend and, about a week later, this ended up in my mailbox. The author, who goes by the handle Wareen, claims to be an Aborigine koradji, or shaman. Seems that he (and some other young koradji) don't entirely agree with their elders about the future of their tradition or their association with the outside world. Wareen's got some interesting things to say. If you've got comments, post 'em.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 20 June 2062 at 15:02:51 (PST)

by Wareen

G'day, all. A friend of mine pointed out the lack of information about our magic on Shadowland. Cowan's not a bad source (compared to most of them, anyway) but he still understands our ways as an outsider. Unfortunately, our people chose to keep many of our ways secrets for a very long time. Even while the land suffered and the spirits of the Dreaming cried out, we chose to follow the old ways, stubborn and proud, in hopes that we could heal the land and restore things to the way they should be. I'm not the only one who thinks that the old ways have failed us. Not because they don't work, but because there are too few of us who know them, who hear the call of the Dreaming and learn the song-lines and rites. If there is going to be healing in this land, we can't keep our knowledge secret forever. We need the help of everyone who hears the song of the Dreaming, no matter what tribe they are from.

I was fortunate to live between worlds in more ways than one. My father understood that our old way of life would never be the way it was before settlers came. I was raised to revere the ways of our people. I fell ill with fever and shaking as a boy and an old koradji said that the spirits had chosen me. When I

became a man I went out into the Outback with him and my father and they told me stories. I went on walkabout and met my totem and talked with him, learning from him. Afterward, I went to university in Sydney and earned a degree in history, with a minor in information systems. Seems like an odd thing for a koradji to do, eh? But we're nothing if not keepers of history and lore, and so are the people who run Shadowland, in many ways. They're like the lore-keepers of a much larger tribe, all over the world. They know knowledge should be shared, so I'll tell you a bit about what it means to be koradji.

The Totem's Call

Not every Aborigine who knows magic songs and follows a totem is koradji. There are many, many tribes in Australia, though not nearly as many as there used to be, and we've all got names for what most people call shamans. Some call us *koradji*; others go by *mekigar*, *wirringan*, or *bug:nja*, which means spirit of the whirlwind. Sometimes we're called *talmai*, "one to whom cleverness has been passed on." Koradji is the name used by my tribe and by many others, so I'll use that, but remember that not every koradji calls himself koradji.

A koradji is a clever-man, not necessarily clever-smart, but clever in the ways of the Dreaming. He (or she; koradji can be women too, especially these days) hears the call of a totem, usually fairly young. The totem's call happens when we're close to the Dreaming, sometimes in dreams, more often because of a sickness or fever that leaves you weak in body but lets your spirit roam the Dreamtime where the totem finds you. I know many koradji who don't remember what happened to them that first time dreaming; I know that I don't. I only recall being very sick and attended by the old koradji of my tribe. He recognized the call within me and took me as his student.

• This kind of experience is common with shamans worldwide. Many shamans awaken to their abilities through some sort of trauma that creates an altered state of consciousness, allowing the neophyte shaman to fully access his magical potential. In the days before the Awakening it was considered the only way to become a shaman in many cultures. These days, of course, a lot of potential shamans are identified using magic when they're adolescents or even children, taken and trained by experienced shamans or even learning magic at universities.

• Kiro

• Of course, that's how mages tend to see things. There's the implication that the trauma of a "shaman's sickness" or related kind of awakening creates the "delusion" of a totem experience in the young shaman's mind. The whole thing kind of implies that shamanic magical awareness is more "primitive" and "crude" than the elegance of Hermetic models of reality. I mean, how do we know that the spirits aren't causing the events that make people shamans?

• Greer

A koradji's relationship with his totem is very important. Though we learn from our elders, once we are initiated we learn mostly from our totem and our own Dreaming. A teacher's job is to show us the path, but we all walk it alone except for the totem that chooses to walk beside us. You might hear about "councils" of koradji, both within tribes and even between tribes. But a council doesn't have any power over koradji except what we choose to give it. We each have to follow our own Dreaming. There aren't many outsiders who know their own Dreaming, but if they do, and if a totem calls to them, who are we to say they're not koradji?

- Wareen's skirting around the so-called "white shamans," a phenomenon similar to the "pinkskin" tribes in the Native American Nations. Basically they're non-natives particularly drawn to native culture and ritual, who choose to leave the culture they were born into and adopt a native culture wholeheartedly. More often than not, they can become "more Native than thou," trying just a little too hard to be "authentic" (and living without any modern conveniences whatsoever). It's mostly a curious social phenomenon until you get to the shamans. There are cases of people who have never had any contact with the Native culture in their area awakening as shamans and being called by a foreign totem. For example, Dr. Eric Looking-Eagle was born into a Presbyterian family in Baltimore and studied Classics at Georgetown University before he had a near-death experience his sophomore year. He described in his book *Eagle Eyes* how he met his totem while in a three-day coma that matched elements of Apache legend almost exactly, things he'd never heard before. He gradually accepted his calling as a shaman, despite conflicts with his upbringing, and now lives in the NAN. A lot of times these "outsider" shamans face discrimination and disdain from "real" native shamans.

- Starfall

- Thing that strikes me funny is a lot of shamanic cultures believe in some form of reincarnation (the Aborigines do, for example), but there's this obsession about a person's birth and culture they were raised in. If spirit is spirit and moves from one generation to another, do things like outward appearance and background really matter? As a shaman I know once said, "the totems choose, and they are never wrong." Why can't people just accept that?

- Bit Blazer

Koradji Initiation

We go through initiations all our lives, whether we know it or not. My people have rituals for every important step in a person's life, from birth to coming into adulthood to death and leaving this world behind. This way we acknowledge things that happen rather than ignoring them or trying to pretend they aren't happening. You don't have to wonder if you're an adult in my tribe. You *know* because you've been through the ritual, borne the pain expected of an adult, and the rest of the tribe treats you accordingly. I think much of the confusion of

the modern world comes from the lack of rituals to tell you what's going on in your lives.

One of the most important rituals to me was my initiation as a koradji. It wasn't a ritual that happened in just a day or even a week. It took years, one step at a time, for me to find the path for myself. There were times, looking back on it, that I wonder that my teacher didn't give up on me, or that I didn't give up on my training. There was a great deal of work, helping my teacher clean hides, work stones, mix paints, carry water, and things like that. There were trips out into the Outback—long, hard walks with no rest—for hunting and dreaming. I had to memorize the stories and songs I was taught so I would remember the ones my totem would teach me. I learned the names of all the spirits of the land, the water and the sky so they would know when I called to them. I learned which stones and plants were good for healing and for other things.

But I didn't become a koradji until I shed blood.

The Power of Blood

Life in the Outback is hard, and one of the lessons we learn from when we're very young is that you have to go through pain to get through life. Every important step along the way, every important ritual, involves the shedding of blood: from the blood an animal gives when the hunt is over to the blood a girl gives when she first becomes a woman to the blood a boy gives when he truly becomes a koradji.

I still have the scar from the day I opened a vein to allow my blood to fill a bowl. So I could paint lines on my body, covering them with down and feather that stuck to the blood. So I could paint the rocks and wake them, and offer the rest to the dry dirt while my teacher chanted and called to the spirits with his bullroarer. I remember feeling the world spin around me and falling up into the sky, the place of the Rainbow Serpent. I met my totem there, in the Sky Realm, and he feasted on my flesh and blood for nourishment. Then he put a magic stone in my heart and another in my head before molding clay over my bones. He breathed over me to return me to life and taught me songs before my shade left the Sky Realm behind.

- Blood loss can sure induce some interesting hallucinations, all right.

- Skeptic

- Oh, please, even you should know a vision quest to the metaplanes when you hear one. It's a proven magical fact that the metaplanes exist.

- Talcaire

- Yes, but not that you need such a visceral method of reaching them. Meditation, yoga, and breathing exercises, along with an understanding of the structure of the astral plane, are sufficient.

- Frater Lux

- Maybe for you, chummer, but everyone has their own way of getting there. Don't knock it until you try it.

- Bright-Cloud



• What I'm worried about is how close is this to the kind of blood magic the Azzies use? I mean, I always heard that blood magic of any kind was bad juju and that I should stay as far away from it as possible.

• Tanner

• It's a gray area, Tanner. I mean, magic is power and power is morally neutral. It doesn't have a sense of right and wrong; it's all in how it's used. While blood magic can be pretty visceral and scary it isn't necessarily "black magic" (to use an old scare term). Note that Wareen used his own blood in the ritual. It's not like he bent some poor skag over an altar and cut his heart out. I've seen Voodoo houngans sacrifice chickens and black goats in rituals. That's not my thing, but who am I to say they're doing wrong? They treat the animal with a lot more reverence than they see on most of the agricorp farms these days. So whether blood magic is "bad juju" or not is largely a matter of opinion.

• Talon

Spirits of the Dreaming

Australia is a land of spirits, and many of them are not happy. Once there was harmony between the land, the spirits and the people, but that balance has been disrupted and many spirits are angry and afraid. Unfortunately it is only the spirits' anger that most people see, convincing them that the spirits of the Outback are dangerous or mad.

• They are bloody mad, mate! Every single one of them! Nobody I know in his right mind would go and whistle up a spirit in the Outback. They're just as likely to tear your head off as look at you. I've known a few shamans who made that their last mistake.

• Rupert

• Then your shaman friends made the mistake of not respecting the spirits properly and not understanding the reasons for their anger, my friend. I have called spirits in Australia before and Wareen is right. The spirits there are angry, but also afraid. If they understand that you respect them and mean them and their land no harm, then you have nothing to fear from them.

• Silverwolf

The spirits here are not insane ... yet. They haven't all become twisted and poisoned like the spirits of some places where the land has been raped or mutilated. But they are afraid that they will share their fate of their fellow spirits soon enough, as the cancer eating away at the land slowly spreads, without the koradji of the past to keep the land in balance and tame the forces raging out of control in the Outback. They cannot help but be reflections of the land, sky and waters they embody, and those things are all threatened. I fear for the spirits as I would for my own family, since they are my ancestors, my children, my brothers and sisters, in the Dreamtime.

The spirits want to repair the damage that has been done but they cannot do so without the aid of the koradji, because we are their hands and eyes in this world. There are too few of

us left to do the work that needs to be done. That is why we need allies to help us.

• Not all of the spirits are looking for allies. Some are taking matters into their own hands (or whatever).

• Metanoid

Enchanting

The Awakened across the world have come to realize what we have long known: our land is rich in magic. Australia is a popular destination for talismongers on a working holiday; the magical nature of the land expresses itself in the potency of materials you can gather. Popular places for enchanters to visit include the Daintree rainforest, the Blue Mountains, Kakadu and Arnhem Land, and even the Great Barrier Reef. The surrounds of Uluru and the Olgas are also a particularly fruitful source for raw materials, but dangerous places for outsiders to come.

Many foreign talismongers are dismayed by the scarcity of metals in Australia; what reserves are available aren't easy to get at or use. Stones and crystals are somewhat easier to come by, with many small raw gems and semi-precious minerals easily fossicked from the earth by hand or using simple tools. Plants are by far the most plentiful resource, though in much of Australia even they are not available in nearly the quantity found elsewhere.

• No kidding, Australia's Outback is a dry, dry place and plants have to adjust to live in such dehydration. Native Outback plants aren't very succulent, and so don't weigh much at all. I've found that you can get a decent amount of radical material out of a smaller amount of raw materials than from European plants. It might take you just as long to find the little sods, but at least you don't stretch your arms as much lugging 'em around.

• Theo

• Which also makes them easier to smuggle.

• Cricket

• The reason metal radicals aren't very common in Australia is a lot of them need fairly extensive refining processes—you don't find iron ore in useable form just lying around the landscape in Australia, despite the huge quantities of it out there. The Aborigines don't use metals in their enchanting because they don't have the tech to refine or smelt metals, even by hand.

• Kzeentch

Despite the misery implicit in trudging for half a day across burning sands for the sake of collecting a few small plants by hand, Australian materials are prized on the wider talismongering and enchanting market. Enchanters have told me that Australian raw materials are quicker to refine and easier to enchant. Whether it's true or not, Australia certainly attracts a great deal of attention from talismongers and

smugglers. Wholesale raiding and looting aren't possible in the Outback, but many enchanters brave the Australian wilderness every year.

- And those enchanters usually need local guides like Wareen to show them what's what. Plenty of them bring along bodyguards, too, either hired back home or in Oz when they get here.
- Droog

The Gifts of the Animals

There is also a source of magical materials that most European and American magicians do not exploit—the gifts of the animals like bone, sinew, feathers, scales and blood. We have always used such things as part of our enchantments, as have other tribes. Now that talismongers have seen how we hunt and bought samples of our work, they have learned of the gifts of the animals as well. The knowledge is slowly spreading to wider magical circles, especially in Australia.

- An increasing number of soft, pale Euro-mages are coming here to observe this approach in its birthplace, and hopefully get some useful tips. Easy pickings once they're in the Outback.
- Pilgrim

Those of us who choose to educate outsiders in the practice of using animal materials in magic stress the importance of reverence for nature in our teachings. The land gives of itself to nurture its people. When we use the gifts of the animals in our magic, we do so with respect and gratitude for the animal giving of itself to support us. Those who take without reverence and gratitude in their hearts will find no magic in their prize.

- Which, among other things, means no gunning down critters in the Outback and expecting to use the carcass for anything even vaguely magical. According to the koradji I've talked to, killing with anything more advanced than maybe a steel blade or a bow and failing to treat the carcass with the proper reverence lets all the magic go out of it. It's hard work, which is why a lot of talismongers prefer to buy their animal parts from Aborigine hunters.
- Crichton
- So when does this stuff cross the line and become animal sacrifice and blood magic? An interesting ethical question, that.
- Calliban

Magical Compounds

Many of you are doubtless already familiar with the magical compounds becoming known in the shadows. Their existence was first noted on Shadowland in files about the Mojave Anasazi and other isolated tribes in North America, and there's now a growing market in preparing and supplying such compounds to urban-dwellers.

Such magic is well known to us. Our people have made use of the Awakened plants of the Outback since before I was born. The preparations range from simple herbal medicines—an infusion of eucalyptus sap as disinfectant, for example—to complex magical mixtures known only to koradji. Some of the better known include:

Wudu'aku, a closely guarded secret of the northern and eastern tribes. It is a viscous, milky liquid that is used by applying several drops to the base and sides of the tongue. Wudu'aku places us more in touch with the spirits of the ancestors and allows them to hear our songs across the Dreamtime and to come to us.

Kuman-nhepa is prepared as a powder, including dried bark and resin from swamp oak and she oak. It is mixed into meals or drinking water, and provides great endurance and stamina. Hunters often take this before beginning their hunt to allow them to track their prey as long as they need to. You may have heard about the recent scandal at the 2059 Australasian Athletics Championships when two marathon runners were caught using kuman-nhepa to enhance their performance.

Altyerre is the most jealously guarded of magical compounds since it opens the gates of the Dreamtime, allowing anyone using it—koradji or not—to wander the paths of the spirit world. It is a gritty, ochre-red paste, potent in very small quantities.

Though the making of these and other potions are secrets of the koradji, some of us understand there is money to be had for them in the cities and even other countries. Though some consider it a violation of our sacred trust, the money we earn from selling our preparations goes toward helping our people. Why shouldn't we use what we have to help our cause?

- These kind of magical preparations are of uncertain legality in Australia. The government is, as usual, about a decade behind the pace with legislation. They currently don't fit into any of the established classifications, either for foodstuffs or for pharmaceuticals. If you get busted with some of them (and someone figures out what they really are), you might end up in court for anything from a "Class A" Pharmaceuticals to "Class E" Magical, or even "Class C" Biological Weapon. Be warned.
- Shalako
- Yeah, and worse. Don't forget that many of the tribes are not really happy about these secrets becoming public knowledge, and their justice is rather more simplistic. I'd much rather go to jail than get speared and left to die in the Outback by a vindictive Wulranju.
- Rollnox

• That's nothing, mate, worry about the syndicates! Most of the money Wareen talks about making off this stuff comes straight from organized crime. They've got the network already in place to move illegal drugs, so this is just a new wrinkle on an old tune for them. The black market in potions and talismans and drek like that belongs to the Triads, though I guess the Yaks and the Mafia



PRESCOTT



are both trying to horn in on it. All three of them would love to get their hands on data on how to make this drek themselves.

• Chuckles

BEYOND THE BLACK STUMP

• Shadowrunners are always going places that they're not supposed to go, places where death is a definite possibility. In Australia, that place is the Outback. To increase your chances of survival, I've recruited an Outback wilderness expert by the name of Russian Jack. According to stories I've heard, nobody is more dependable as an Outback guide—he once carried one of his charges over 300 kilometers out of the desert, through mana storms and dangers of all sorts, on his back. Sounds like a guy we can trust for data and who knows what he's talking about.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 12 June 2062 at 05:23:04 (PST)

by Russian Jack

"Beyond the black stump" is Australia's Outback. This is the land of Australian mythology that begins just outside of the cities and coastal areas—you'll know it when you squiz it: towering rocks, endless vistas, red dust, odd paracritters, deceptive solitude, unquenchable thirsts and trails stretching to infinity. It's some of the harshest and most remote land on the planet, jealously guarded by mana storms. It's a land that's alive, a land that's likely to kill you dead while you're admiring its beauty.

TRAVEL AND SURVIVAL

If you're going to travel into the Outback, you need to prepare. You're not taking a jaunt into the woods. Even with the best preparations and gear, survival is not guaranteed; without it, you'll be feeding the ants.

First, it's important to point out that the Outback isn't all arid desert—it's far more diverse than that. While vast swathes are nothing more than heated grit and sand, you'll also find dynamic ecosystems such as pleasant scrub-brush plains, swamps, rocky peaks, salt-water lakes and tropical wetlands and rainforests.

If you're traveling by land, take a vehicle with four-wheel drive. There are many old roads and tracks crisscrossing the Outback, but they rarely see traffic and even the sealed roads are showing signs of wear and tear. Make sure to get a tune-up and to bring gear for repairs; a breakdown in the middle of summer can punch your ticket. Also pack all of the fuel you'll need—you won't find any stations with working pumps anymore, though you may be able to bargain with nomads or siphon some from a wreck.

• If you do break down, you can try calling for help. The government doesn't stage rescue missions anymore, but you may be able to reach a nomad crew or a nearby corp facility. Rescue will come at a price of course, and may land you in trouble of a different sort. To many Outback travelers, the prevailing philosophy is every man for himself; sentimentality just gets in

the way of survival and profits.

• Bronze Bikie

• Some nomads have been known to use road trains to get around in the Outback. They're certainly defensible, but limited by fuel and rough terrain.

• Conductor

It's possible to travel on foot, and in rough terrain this may be preferable. I'd recommend traveling by night to avoid the heat of the day, though you need to watch for unseen hazards. You can bring along pack animals like camels, though this may make it more difficult for you to conceal your trail.

Flying may seem like a good option, given the lack of flying beasties, but it's often the most dangerous. Mana storms are particularly nasty to aircraft, and the spirits in the Outback seem to relish causing accidents to flying bits of technology. Finding a suitable landing site may be difficult, though some long stretches of paved road remain. The reduced travel time may be worth the risk, but don't blame me when your engine sucks in an osprey or your rotor-blades get transformed to stone.

• Mana storms don't just stick close to the ground, they've been known to scour the skies as well. You may be able to fly over one without a problem (I even walked under a mana storm once—that was truly weird), or that next cloud you pass through may be a mana warzone.

• Glider

There are all sorts of abandoned settlements out back o' Burke, left behind when the mana storms forced people out. A few tough lads and lasses have stayed behind, and some of them even offer their services as rest stops and waystations. Hermits, nomads, bikies and the occasional critter use the remaining ghost towns as temporary shelters. They'll be good for a few hours rest, but be sure to scout for surprises and set guards.

• The most famous roadhouse has to be Dingo's, run out of the derelict Lasseter Casino in what used to be Alice Springs, smack in the middle of Australia and surrounded by remote desert. Once a touristy resort town, the only signs of life that remain are from those living inside the walled compound. Dingo's is just off the Track, or what used to be Stuart Highway, a sealed north-south road that runs straight through the heartland (except for the areas that have been barricaded, covered up, broken up or transformed by the storms).

Big surprise, the place is run by a bloke named Dingo, or Mad Dingo if you want his full name. Dingo's an ork, and he's run the place since he ran the Hell's Angels out of town, earning himself lifelong support from the rival Scales. He calls the shots for about thirty low-lives who guard the place and keep it running, including a pair of Chinese snake shamans who do their best to ward off the storms (not always successfully). You can get food, water and rest at Dingo's (for a price, always a price), and you may even be able to barter for other gear like ammo and maps.



Several guides offer their services to outsiders, though they aren't all trustworthy and sometimes fail to return themselves. All in all, the place is rough and not for the squeamish, but it's a welcome retreat from the harsh environment.

- Giles

- There's also Coober Pedy (I hear the name is Aborigine for "white fellow's hole in the ground"), which is a small frontier town mostly composed of dugout homes. The underground dwellings help protect from the heat as well as the storms, though cave-ins have taken their toll. A group of about twenty Luddites (anti-tech types) lives here, eking out an existence without machines. They offer shelter to travelers, but no electronics, cyberware or high-tech products of industrial society are allowed (and believe me, mate, you don't want to get caught smuggling something).

- Wills

Water is the accepted commodity in the Outback, and often the first bargaining item when negotiating with strangers. I've known bandits to kill for a few ice cubes. Good drinking water is rare and difficult to find; the wells and waterholes that exist are usually jealously guarded, or simply too polluted to drink from thanks to years of nearby mining. Nobody uses good water for bathing or cleaning, and those that do may get shot for their wasteful habits. If you're lucky enough to experience a rainfall, collect what you can. It's not uncommon for most of a region's rainfall to occur in a few short days, which has the effect of turning trails into muddy bogs. I recommend waiting a few days for the land to dry rather than getting stuck miles from help.

- Watch out for flash floods during rain season. One minute you'll be standing in an ash-dry gully, and the next you'll be up to your waist in water, while the sliding mud sucks you down and prevents you from climbing to safety.

- Slop

- Waterholes tend to attract wildlife from kilometers around, so they're often good hunting grounds. Just remember that they draw predators as well, including the metahuman kind.

- Rabid

- On the opposite end, the long dry spells and droughts make the dangers of a brushfire quite real. I've seen fires that ranged for kilometers, choking the land with smoke and leaving devastation in their wake. Not something you want to be trapped by.

- Giles

On a special note, watch your conduct when interacting with Aborigines. These folk consider themselves to be the ancestral protectors of the Outback, which makes you a trespasser. Most of them will be friendly towards outsiders, as long as you don't pollute the land, spoil the watering holes or vio-

late their sacred sites. But a few of them are more fanatical about their views, and may attack you on sight.

English is a second language to many Aborigines, and some don't speak it at all, so bring a translator or the right linguasoft. It pays to watch your body language as well; eye contact and firm handshakes are traditionally signs of aggression in Aborigine culture. For the most part Aborigine blokes are good-natured and willing to overlook the ignorance of outsiders who trample their customs, so be polite and don't push your luck. Quite often they'll be willing to trade, for goods or information, but they'll also want to know what you're up to, so have a cover story prepared.

- Despite their adherence to traditional ways, don't expect all Aborigines to carry primitive gear. They're just as likely to perforate you with an Uzi as they are to stab you with a spear or whack you in the head with a boomerang.

- Wareen

These recommendations are just the tip of my lessons. There's a lot to know about Australian wildlife, mundane and Awakened, not to mention the mana storms. These can be summed up with: don't mess with critters, and dig a hole and hide from the storms. If at all possible, bring a spellslinger with you, or even two or three. That's the only way you can count on defeating the storms' wild magic and the antics of angry spirits. And hire a guide who knows the land, preferably an Aborigine, to ease your contacts with the locals.

- Don't forget bugs. There are some areas where mosquitoes are the dominant life form, ready to descend on soft, fleshy types in thick, disease-carrying black swarms. Plenty of other creepies can be a nuisance as well, like worms that you can catch from eating raw food or simply walking barefoot.

- Ross

So why bother, you ask? Why put yourself at such risk to go someplace so deadly? Assuming you're not going on behalf of a Mr. Johnson to raid some remote compound, I can think of several reasons to brave the Outback. The first is prospecting—I know more than one bloke who's armored up a 4WD, stocked it full of supplies and struck out to find gold, opals, orichalcum or whatever fancy geological formation currently obsesses him. Some plan on mining the goods themselves, others plan on selling the info to corps or other prospectors. Likewise, talislegging is a good way to pay the bills, and some areas of the Outback are littered with the raw material, if you have the skill to harvest it. The strange magic and stranger critters draw researchers and magicians seeking answers to strange mysteries.

The Outback is also a good place to hide, if you have the skills—it takes a world-class bounty hunter to track someone into the bush. If you're crazy like me, though, the nature of the Outback is reason enough to go there: amazing wild beauty, the joy of traveling a long, open trail and the thrill of surviving in a land that's constantly out to get you.



SONG LINES AND DREAMING TRACKS

You might have heard about things in the Outback called "song lines" or "dreaming tracks" before. Several magician associates of mine say they're similar in most respects to what are called "manalines" elsewhere, or "dragon lines" in the Far East. According to Aborigine beliefs, they're sources of magical power that koradji can draw upon, but there's a bit more to them than that.

The dreaming tracks are also trails the Aborigines have used for thousands of years, crisscrossing the Outback. Over time they described these different paths across the land in the form of songs and chants (thus the name "song line"). The songs are kind of the mythic equivalent of a road map in the form of verse. They identify geographical features of the landscape and sources of food and water. The songs (like everything else in Aborigine culture) supposedly originated from the ancestors in the distant Dreamtime.

Koradji are the oral mapmakers and navigators of the tribes. Once, when I was crossing a dry part of the northwestern desert, my truck broke down. I had some water, but not enough to keep my native passengers and me alive if our engine fault proved serious. It was over 100 kilometers to the nearest water, but an old Aborigine told us not to worry. Though he had never been there before, he knew the mapchant of the area. So, while I worked on the engine, he sang his chant. A long while he chanted, till he came to the landmarks that stood around us, and in the cool of the evening, he asked us to walk with him as he chanted.

His song now was about a low hill before us. From it, the story went, we would come upon markers of stone that pointed to water. We climbed the hill and saw the cairn of stone built by an early Aborigine explorer, and beside it was a line of rocks pointing to a low depression of limestone. There, under a covering of logs and grasses, was a limestone crevice that led into a small pool of crystal clear water. As I bent down to drink at that native well, I understood the value of the song lines to the Aborigines.

- To expand a bit on the magical side of things, song lines are basically the same as manalines found elsewhere in the world. Their navigational properties are more a function of Aborigine culture than the lines themselves, though I'm told that the mana of the lines does help enhance the recollection of the stories and helps orient the koradji. A large percentage of the manalines in the Outback appear aspected toward Aborigine magic; non-koradji won't find a whit of power there and might even have more difficulty doing magic on or near a song line. Some of the lines aren't aspected at all, though. They're power available for anyone who knows how to use it.

- Dancer

- It's worth noting that song lines can be dangerous paths to follow, too. Weird magical drek like the mana storms and local paranimals seem drawn to the song lines, or at least show up near them more often. Stuff like that makes getting lost look

really good by comparison.

- Foster

MANA STORMS: NIGHTMARES IN THE DREAMTIME

Mana storms are wild, uncontrolled magical disturbances, from small upheavals to vast tempests. They are capable of manifesting almost any magical effect you can imagine (which is to say, almost anything). Physical weather effects often accompany the storm: howling winds, driving rain, sleet, or even hail or snow. But some of the eeriest mana storms have no physical effects at all. They sweep across the Outback, silent and deadly, seen only by the effect they have on living creatures in their path.

- The weather effects can be pretty severe. I've seen cyclones and hurricane-force winds that could carry a car away, and the winds often whip up sandstorms that can shred your clothes and flay you alive. Then there's the weird weather effects: raining fire, sudden extreme drops in temperature, thick icy fog that sucks moisture from your eyes and burns your lungs, rolling ball-lightning and thunder that knocks you flat and leaves you deaf for days. You never know to what to expect, so expect the worse.

- Strato

History

The first mana storms in Australia began shortly after the Awakening. They destroyed ranches and isolated communities and drove nearly everyone but the Aborigines out of the interior and into the urban areas along the coast. A few storms struck the larger settled areas, but the cities remained mostly free of the kind of storms raking across the Outback (except for poor Sydney). The Australian interior became virtually uninhabitable and more than a few people left the country altogether because of the storms and fear that they would continue to spread. Early efforts to study the mana storms largely failed due to a lack of understanding about magic and its effects.

- A lack of understanding in the cities, not in the Outback, mate. My people knew what the storms were soon after they appeared. We knew that the Dreamtime was crying out in pain and we did what we could, but it was too little, too late.

- Wairen

The mana storms stayed largely confined to the Outback and wilderness areas of Australia, but they still made travel across the interior extremely hazardous and limited settlement to the coastal areas. Efforts have been made in recent years to study the storms and they have given us a great deal more information about what the mana storms are and what they can do, though they haven't yet revealed a reliable means of predicting them, much less what's causing them.

- I've told you what's causing them: the damage to the Dreamtime. We were the caretakers of this land for thousands of years and we helped balance the natural forces. Now they are out of balance, and no amount of scientific study is going



to make a difference when our culture continues to fade away.

• Wareen

• I won't deny that there may be a connection between the cultural annihilation of the Aborigines, along with the damage dealt to Australia's environment by modern society, and the mana storms. Many magical experts have theorized that such connections between the cultural psyche and traditions of a people and the mana that flows through the land may exist.

I've been studying this phenomenon lately, however, and I'm becoming convinced that the storms are a symptom of a much deeper damage, some cataclysm that shook this land ages ago. The psychic and ecological devastation in the past few centuries simply shouldn't have caused the sort of backlash manifested by the mana storms. Sure, they had an impact and didn't help the situation any, but ultimately they were a drop in the bucket. The real harm was done long ago.

• Warlock

• That's a very hermetic way of looking at it. It's impossible to judge the strength of the magical bond between an aware culture and the land they saw themselves as guarding. Who's to say that the systematic destruction of numerous sacred sites and the spirits that lived there—sites that had existed unchanged for centuries—couldn't have created an immeasurable yet potent disturbance into the surrounding mana, causing uncontrolled fluctuations that manifest as the mana storms? Your "scientific" methods of measurement may simply not apply here.

• Scales-That-Glitter

• Does it matter? The damage is done, now it is time to speed the healing process.

• Wareen

Overall the mana storms have diminished somewhat from their initial appearance fifty years ago, but most aren't willing to claim that it's a hopeful sign that the storms will eventually go away. The Outback is still hazardous to travel through and few people are willing to make the trek. Those that are often need guides to help them along. It's good sense to bring a magician on a trip into the Outback to help guard against (or at least lessen) some of the magical nastiness that's out there.

Mana Storm Effects

The storms seem to spring up without rhyme or reason, though they're far more frequent in the wild lands of the Outback than in settled areas, and seem to be most common in places with a strong background count, probably because there's more magic concentrated there. They spring up with terrifying suddenness, swelling quickly to full strength and lasting anywhere from a few minutes to more than half an hour before dissipating. They tend to be localized, rarely more than a few kilometers in radius, but sometimes there will be

one mana storm over one area and another storm (with an entirely different effect) close by, close enough that they seem like one big storm.

• Some storms linger in an area, and may be averted by going around them. Others sweep along at a clip that you can't hope to outrun or outdrive, though their courses are often erratic. Some of the bigger ones may have an "eye" of calm in the middle, just like a hurricane.

• Doppler

The effects of mana storms vary widely. Some are pure, elemental fury, raining fire, ice, and lightning down upon the land, destroying everything in their path (or "raining" baleful magical energy that simply kills every living thing but leaves everything else completely untouched). Other storms do things like freeze everything solid, turn people into animals, transform living things into stone, or pick things up and toss them about. Then there are mental effects like storms causing sudden despair, homicidal rage or irrational terror. People report seeing strange apparitions in the driving rain and clouds. Victims suffer seizures or sensory dysfunction. The list goes on and on.

• Jack's not kidding, mates. Mana storms can do damn near anything. Sometimes they're nothing more than a nuisance, but then one comes along that strips flesh from bone or melts people into puddles or turns everyone into bloody jackrabbits so the dingoes can come in and have a bite. It's their unpredictability that makes them so dangerous.

• Hammersmith

• Current theories say that the mana storms are essentially uncontrolled collections of magical energy, like spells writ large with no caster to shape or control them. Their effects are essentially ones that sorcery can duplicate, but on a scale beyond nearly anything we've seen before. That means various forms of magical protection are effective against mana storms, provided they last long enough.

• Silicon Mage

• I heard the mana storms are like an Aborigine version of the Ghost Dance, designed to push all the settlers off Australia so they can take their land back. They're not bothered by the storms at all and can walk through them like they're not even there. I mean, if they're not protected from the mana storms, how can they still live in the Outback?

• Cutter

• You've heard wrong. We are responsible for the mana storms, but only because too many of us have left the old ways behind and too few of us are left to perform the rituals to keep the land and the forces within it in balance. We live in the Outback because it is our home and because we're not willing to let the Dreamtime die. Our knowledge and our Dreaming help protect us, but we're not immune. I've lost more than a few friends to



mana storms before.

• Wareen

• I was working as hired help on an agrifarm that was just a little too far outside of Perth for comfort. Sure enough, one day we get word of a mana storm heading right for us. It was a big one too, likely to rip right through the farm and pave the area with fine sand in its wake. Our only transport out of the area had just suffered a mechanical failure, and it looked like we were good and fragged. Then, out of the desert, this bloody Aborigine bloke walks up, says his name is Ma'a, and asks us if we need a hand. I didn't trust the fragger and was about to knock him upside the head with a weedwhacker when Joey, the boss, says he's heard of the guy and we'll gladly take his help. Turns out the shaman was as good as his word—he pulled some major mojo to protect us from the storm. When it was over, he takes a slug of water, waves, and disappears into the bush again. Weird.

My point is, if a fellow named Ma'a offers to help you out, take him up on it.

• Twigs

Storm Wraiths

In addition to the hazards posed by mana storms themselves, there is also the danger posed by the occasional appearance of storm wraiths. Storm wraiths are clearly spirits

of some kind, but precious little else is known about them. To date they have always appeared in or near mana storms, and they're hostile toward living creatures and other spirits. They look like smoky, vaguely humanoid shapes with "eyes" of burning electric blue. Sometimes flickers of lightning can be seen across their surface. Even in material form they're indistinct and only partly solid, though their clawed hands still leave impressive wounds and their strength is almost superhuman.

Storm wraiths are apparently unaffected by mana storms. They appear along with the storm, materializing to attack living creatures with savage fury. When the storm ends, they disappear, too. Nobody knows where they come from or why they attack, only that they are one of the greatest dangers of encountering a mana storm.

• My personal theory is storm wraiths are some kind of toxic storm spirit, akin to the other toxic spirits that have appeared, twisted by whatever is creating the mana storms. Maybe there are toxic shamans able to summon and control them.

• Why-Man

• Ye Gods, I hope not! I notice a resemblance between storm wraiths and other spirits called "wraiths" that have appeared in different parts of the world. Storm wraiths seem to have a more "hands on" approach when it comes to violence while wraiths



prefer to instigate violence with their powers but stay on the sidelines, soaking it all in.

• Mitchell

• What about similarities between storm wraiths and the Wild Hunt spirits of the British Isles? Dark, humanoid forms with glowing eyes and a predilection for violence sound similar to me.

• Sinead H

• Who bloody cares where they come from? Can you kill or banish them?

• Jaxon

• Yes to both questions. Storm wraiths are spirits like any other. They're vulnerable to magic and astral combat and somewhat to physical weapons when they've materialized. A magician can banish one, but they never appear alone. I've noticed that their power seems proportional to that of the mana storm they appear with. Small mana storms tend to have weak storm wraiths, while powerful mana storms have very powerful wraiths as well.

• Shetani

ALCHERA: ASTRAL POCKETS

One of the more unusual things I've seen in the Outback are what the Aborigines call *alchera*, meaning "something from the distant past" in their language (or as near as it translates into English, anyway). Alchera are basically places, actual locales that seem to appear and disappear in the Outback like mirages. Some of them really are like places from the distant past or at least from the Aborigine mythic past, and they appear without apparent rhyme or reason.

When alchera appear they can change the physical landscape. I know of more than one alchera oasis that has appeared in the desert. I actually saw one appear once and thought I was losing my mind. Where there was previously just hot sand, suddenly there were trees, grass and a placid pool of water. There were even small animals scurrying about. Alchera caves and tunnels can appear in solid rock and disappear again leaving no signs the rock was ever disturbed. I don't know how they do it, but they're real.

• That's impossible.

• Skeptic

• Sure, so is turning people into frogs and creating energy out of nothing ... oops! Magicians can already do that, can't they? Chummer, with magic around, nothing is truly "impossible."

• Tanner

• Though alchera were first discovered in Australia, they (or something very like them) have appeared elsewhere in the world. They seem to relate to spirits like ordinary physical objects relate to physical beings. Alchera are sometimes ascribed a

measure of intelligence or purpose, but there is no indication of any intelligence behind them.

• Prof. M

• What happens if you're in an alchera when it disappears, or if you're standing in a spot where one materializes?

• Duppy

• Nothing except some disorientation when the landscape seems to shift around you. If the shift would leave you stuck inside a material object, you're displaced a short distance away. I was inside an alchera cave when it faded out. I appeared just outside none the worse for wear rather than being entombed in solid rock (thank God).

• Riley

• Speak for yourself, chummer. Some friends and I were standing in an alchera when it dematerialized and the land—or rather, the lake—returned to normal. We suddenly found ourselves confused to bloody hell, 5 meters under water. Luckily I was traveling light, but my pals were weighed down by their armor and never made it to the surface.

• Guppie

While an alchera can be a lifesaver sometimes (like the aforementioned oasis) there are some things to watch out for. First off, the Aborigines consider alchera sacred and they are especially protective of them. I know some tribes who will kill people for intruding in an alchera without permission. Second, spirits in the form of people or animals live in some alchera and some of them don't like visitors, either, though they usually won't follow you outside the alchera. Finally, everything in an alchera isn't always what it appears to be. Though they seem like real places, they can up and disappear in a hurry. Things inside them may look harmless, but sometimes they're not. I've heard of people who ate or drank something in an alchera and ended up dead shortly thereafter.

In short, be careful exploring them and steer clear of them if you can.

THE OUTBACK

Now that you have a faint notion of how to survive long enough to get somewhere, let me tell you about a few of the more interesting places to go.

ULURU (AYERS ROCK)

Uluru is a monolithic tower of red rock, 3 kilometers across at its widest point and rising 350 meters above the surrounding flat plain of sand. The sight is remarkable and visible from a great distance. It's no wonder that Aborigines consider the site sacred and bar the climbing of it. According to Aborigine mythology, Uluru and its features were created by the struggles between two rainbow serpents, Kuniya and Liru. Other features were created by separate battles fought by ancestral spirits such as Mala (hare-wallaby) and the Python People, many of whom are thought to remain, transformed into the rock itself.



• You'll do well to stay away from here. Uluru is one of the most sacred sites the Aborigines have and they don't like the uninvited messing around. Seems like the spirits agree with them, because nearly every expedition to Uluru I know of has met with some kind of fatal "accident," from running into local wildlife or mana storms to failures of their climbing equipment. Besides, there's nothing out there except kilometers of sandstone and a lot of cave paintings anyway.

• Nielsen

• The alchera that appear around Uluru are quite potent, with many weird properties. I've heard tales of people meeting entities straight from the Dream-time. This is not an area safe for mere mortals to tread.

• Giles

• The rock is barren of plant life, but the area is abundant with material ripe for telesma. The pools digging deep into some of the crevices are especially rich, though I've heard rumors of things that live in those pools who enjoy pulling the unwary into the depths.

• Trevor

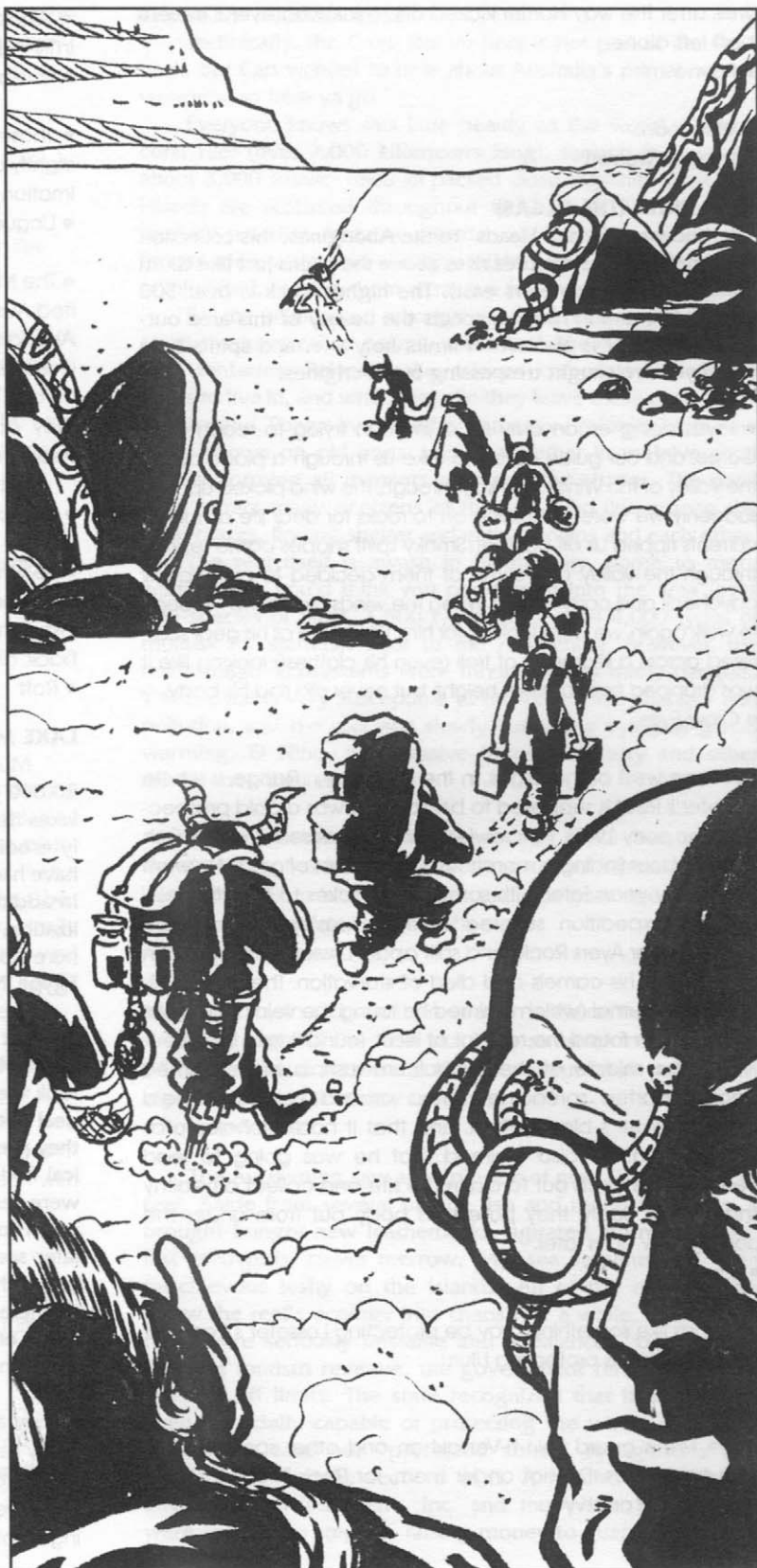
• I knew a fellow who said he'd been out to Uluru years ago. Harrier was his name. I say "was" because he turned up dead not long after he got back from his trip into the Outback. I heard he was mauled, some sort of wild animal killed him in the middle of bloody Perth. Harrier said he went out with some Yanks, including a shaman, and found a cave into the rock that was blocked off by some kind of magical barrier. The shaman was able to get them inside, where they were attacked by a bunyip. The shaman killed it with a spell and led them to a cave with deep seams of opal—gems as big as your fist. Harrier said the shaman took one and then led them back out again. He kept cursing the fellow because he wouldn't let Harrier collect any of the stones, though he showed me a couple small ones he managed to grab.

• Payne

• And how many drinks did Harrier have before he told you this story, Payne?

• Neopolitan

• Yes, he had quite a few. I know it sounds fantastic, but I think he was telling the truth. I was quite tempted to try to find the place myself, but I'm no mage, so I don't know how I'd even get in and ...



well, after the way Harrier kicked off, I think whatever's there is best left alone.

- Payne
- Wise man.
- Liyagalawumirri

KATA TJUTA (THE OLGAS)

Known as "Many Heads" to the Aborigines, this collection of dome-shaped structures rises above the plains just like Uluru (which lies 30 kilometers east). The highest rock is over 500 meters tall, and in many respects the beauty of this area outshines Uluru. It is also an off-limits holy site, and spirits help you if you are caught trespassing by Aborigines.

• I was doing escort duty for a shaman trying to reach Olga Gorge, and our guide opted to take us through a place called the Valley of the Winds. Halfway through, the wind picked up, and suddenly we were all holding on to rocks for dear life as the air currents ripped us off our feet. Smoky spirit shapes came tearing through the valley, and some of them decided to pick up my paycheck and carry him off. When the winds died down enough to walk again, we went looking for him. We found all his gear scattered across a kilometer of trail (even his clothes!) looking like it was dropped from a great height, but never did find his body.

- Crow Eyes

• A ways west of the Olgas, in the Petermann Range, is where Lasseter's Reef is supposed to be. Lasseter was a gold prospector in the early 1900s. He crawled out of the desert one day with a story about finding a monstrously huge "reef of gold." He went back thirty years later with some other blokes to find the vein, but the expedition suffered several disasters (their plane crashed near Ayers Rock) and split apart. Lasseter struck out on his own, lost his camels and died of starvation. They found his body and journal (which claimed he found the vein again), but nobody ever found the reef (or at least, found it and lived).

In the middle of the orichalcum rush, a bloke named Cooper started spreading rumors around Perth that he'd found Lasseter's bloody Reef, and that it had orichalcum as well as gold. He also claimed that he was going to lead DeBeers-Omnitech out to claim the site and collect a healthy finder's fee. Sadly, they pulled his body out from under the docks a few days later.

- Laura
- Sounds like something may be protecting Lasseter's Reef, just like something is protecting Uluru.
- Heyzen
- The Mimis guard Imiri ti-Versakhan and other sacred areas from trespassers. Do not anger them, for Rock listens to them and they will crush you.
- Mirra Mitta

• Whoa! What's that about? What language is Imiri-whatever in? And what the bloody heck is a Mimi?

- Screamer

• Those words have some similarities to Sperethiel, but they're slightly off—like it may be a regional dialect. The closest approximation I can make is "Citadel of Memories."

- Lingua Arcana

• The Mimis were a mythological race of creatures that inhabited Australia before the Aborigines. They allegedly taught the Aborigines how to hunt and were renowned for their spirit-stalking prowess. According to the cave drawings, they're skinny and gangly, almost like stick figures. According to legend they can fly through the air like a fish in water and walk through solid rock.

But if I were you, I wouldn't ask any more.

- Cymotec

• So what if the Aborigines made up some stories about these Mimis and drew pictures of them on rocks? Sounds like they're just some sort of spirit or paracritter that hangs out in the Outback, guarding its turf.

- Rott

LAKE MUNGO

Mungo isn't really a lake, or at least it hasn't been for some 20,000 years. Y'see, Mungo is actually a large system of inland lakes that have been dry for centuries. Wind and rain are slowly eroding the area away, exposing signs of civilization that have had archaeologists dancing for over a hundred years now. In addition to skeletons and fossilized tools and signs of civilization, the excavations prove that ritual burials took place here some 15 centuries before the pyramids were built in Egypt. Now that's *old*.

The mana storms chased the archaeologists out of the area and put an end to the research for over three decades. In the late 2040s, the Atlantean Foundation suddenly moved in and took the area over. The story is they worked a special, private deal with the government to buy the land, on condition that they preserve it as well as possible and share their archaeological finds. Some of the best archaeological minds of the time were sent to start the digs.

They must've found something, because just a few months later something big happened. It's been kept hush-hush and out of the media, but the fact is that the site's been declared a restricted area, guarded both by the military and AF security. None of the famous archaeologists have been seen or heard from since, and that was over ten years ago.

• They found something all right. I was paid by an interested party several years back to find out what was going on inside the cordon. It was tough, but we got in, only to find that the lakes were back—or at least, it looked like they were. According to our mage, the whole area was encompassed by some



kind of semi-permanent alchera. We weren't able to get too close, but after the other stuff we saw and heard, we didn't want to.

- Crypto
- And that was?
- Len
- Worth a lot of cred. If you're interested, make me an offer.
- Crypto
- I'll spill the beans. What Crypto's not telling is that the alchera did more than bring the lakes back—it brought a structure, a group of buildings sitting right on the shore. The interesting thing is that some kind of magic dome walls the structure in. The original archaeologists are all trapped inside, and the AF has been trying to figure out for years how to get them out.
- Counterpane
- Right. Let me guess, this is the secret winter home of Jet Black?
- Skeptic
- Counterpane's being coy. It's not a simple structure—it's a whole damn city.
- Longfang

CHAMBERS PILLAR AND CASTLE ROCK

What happens when you take a huge chunk of sandstone and erode it for 350 million years? You get a towering jab of sandstone, sticking 60 meters up from the surrounding plain. Called Chambers Pillar by European explorers who used it as a landmark, this chunk of rock is known as Itirkawara to the Aborigines. Itirkawara was a powerful gecko ancestor, tragically banished to the desert for loving a girl from a rival group and killing to be with her. The girl is also here, in the form of Castle Rock, half a kilometer away.

- Of course, Itirkawara's a clever little gecko, and he's found a loophole to his banishment. According to legend, the right sacrificial rituals performed at the right times will temporarily free him and his lady friend from imprisonment, so they can be with each other for a short while instead of just staring at each with longing across the sand.
- Wareen
- The ritual is costly, but Itirkawara rewards those who do him service. Many wishes have been granted, and dreams fulfilled.
- Anangu
- Yeah, and more than one sucker has been gacked and robbed by bushrangers who lured him out with tales of wish-granting spirits. I'll stick with the spirits I conjure on my own, thank you very much.
- Pittman

THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

Technically, the Great Barrier Reef is not part of the Outback, but Cap wanted to hear about Australia's primal natural wonders, so here ya go.

Everyone knows this little beauty as the world's largest coral reef (over 2,000 kilometers long), though in truth it's about 3,000 smaller reefs all packed close together. Over 600 islands are scattered throughout these reefs. The reef is a tourist's paradise: fantastic weather, white beaches, lush rainforests, clear water and vibrant wildlife. Most of the islands are uninhabited, making them attractive to pirates and smugglers.

For the uninformed amongst us, coral reefs are created by small creatures called polyps, which look like micro jelly blobs with tentacles. Polyps make calcium carbonate (limestone) shells to live in, and when they die they leave these coral skeletons behind. Polyps live together in massive colonies, with new shells grown on old ones, joining together in massive coral forests, forming all manners of interesting shapes. The coral reefs attract many denizens of the sea, who live among the coral mazes, finding shelter and eating polyps and each other.

The reef itself is awash in biodiversity, home to more wildlife than you'd think you could cram into the area (over 200 species of birds, 1,500 types of fish and 4,000 types of mollusk for starters). Prior to the Awakening, however, the reef's fragile ecosystems were threatened by many dangers. Y'see, coral is very susceptible to environmental changes and pollution, and the reef was slowly but surely dying as global warming, El Niño, the invasive tourism industry and other effects took their toll.

- Coral and boats are natural enemies. Coral reefs can be damaged by the turbulence of a motorboat's passing, much less a direct hit. In return, a hidden reef can gash open a boat's hull, sending it quickly to the bottom.
- Maritimer
- You can say that again. There are some interesting shipwrecks strewn throughout the reef, including some of modern origin with interesting cargo loads. Just be careful when you go diving—the coral hides many creatures.
- Bottom Feeder

The Awakening saw an explosion of new life forms in the reef. Aside from several unique fish and mollusk species, it brought hungry new leatherbacks, agitated storm dolphins, fast mermaids, clever merrow, wily sea serpents and even mischievous leshy on the islands. All of the new species threw the reef's ecology into chaos. For a while, the ecosystems were seriously unstable and unbalanced. Unwilling to lose the tourism revenue, the government refused to make the reef off limits. The state recognized that it also wasn't even financially capable of protecting the whole reef, so it started to lease out "protected zones" to agencies that pledged to caretake sections of it. A number of big-name enviro-groups like Sierra, Inc. and the World Seafund were the first to step up, raising money to guard their chunk



of the reef's ecosystems. They were followed closely by corps and others with less principled interests.

- The Awakening also turned the reef into a talismonger's wet dream. It's alive with material prime for enchanting—all utterly illegal to harvest. The Coast Guard is quite harsh on talismongers when it catches them, but it simply has too much area to cover. Unfortunately, too many of the talismongers don't care enough about preserving the sanctity of the reef, and as a result they cause irreparable harm as they commence their looting.

- Sprig

- A lot of those enviro-groups don't really care too much either. Their official "protected zone" is just another bullet point on the grant proposal. Most of these groups engage in precious little protective measures; the fundraising money goes to line their coffers and pockets. Never trust a foundation that sees its own survival as more important than the survival of the planet.

- Deep Green

- They're not all bad. Some of them actually funnel cred to their direct action eco-activist allies, funding armed patrols to catch polluters, smugglers and others who harm the reef.

- Green Piece

- Yeah, but others take cred (in the form of charitable donations of course) to look the other way while tour operations, corp research crews, pirates and others do what they want.

- Skerrick

- The United Talismongers Association swung a sweet deal when they leased their zone. The UTA watches over the area (and to its credit, it actually does use patrolling spirits and makes efforts to eliminate pollution), and in return it is allowed to harvest telesma "at a sustainable level with minimal impact" on the reef's ecosystems.

- Coral Walker

- Corporate interests like Parashield and Awakened World Research have similar deals. They offset their stewardship costs



with lucrative "non-invasive" research into the numerous paranormal life forms in the area. Even the Draco Foundation is in on the action, watching over Dunk Island (no relation, though the name obviously got the wyrm's attention).

• Harrower

In many cases, these protection zones did little to defend the reef. The ecosystem continued to near collapse until the mid-2040s. Suddenly, the situation stabilized and even started to reverse itself. Initial investigations pointed to several new forms of Awakened coral polyp that are hardier and grow much more quickly. This reinvigoration of its ecosystem has put the reef on a comeback trail.

• The reef also seems to be the source of a prolific new type of parasitic barnacle. This crustacean spreads rapidly and has begun to cause serious damage to docks and watercraft in the area. They accumulate and secrete chemicals that can eat through both wood and metal. More than one craft has suddenly found themselves taking water from the secretions of a massive barnacle infestation on their hull.

• Scrapper

• I don't know about barnacles, but you can't throw a rock into the water without hitting a merrow. What's up with their population boom? Don't they have any natural predators?

• Bottom Feeder

• There are many things that eat merrow, but the merrow thrive because they're more than just smart critters. Maybe it's just the merrow around the reef, but these blokes are clearly sentient. They have an entire tool-using, eco-balanced micro-civilization going on underneath the waves, up and down the reef.

• Credelki

• Bulldrek. They may have some aptitude for hitting prey with sharp rocks, possibly even pointed sticks, but merrow are not intelligent enough to use tools.

• Uneven Keel

• Oh yeah? The merrow in the reef use more than that. They use rope and nets. They use knives, fishing line, flashlights and other tools dropped or abandoned by surface dwellers. They farm fish and aquaplants. They even coerce the coral into growing in specified shapes, sculpting living dwellings for entire communities of merrow to live in.

Still not convinced? How about this: they use tactics when hunting. They intentionally sabotage boats, power and comm lines, docks, fishing operations and other artifacts of surface society. And they summon spirits to use against their enemies.

Despite hundreds of disappeared divers and countless acts of sabotage, many of us still aren't prepared to accept the fact that the Great Barrier Reef is home to a thriving underwater civilization—an aqua-society that wants nothing to do with

our polluting ways and destructive habits. The more we interfere with their domain, the more we will pay the price.

• Credelki

THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN BIGHT

The Bight is a long stretch of southern coastline dominated by cliffs dozens of meters high. Above it stretches the Nullarbor Plain, 3,000 kilometers of the most boring stretch of land in existence. The Bight's jagged coast is one of the few areas of coast you could conceivably hide a ship, as most of the rest of Australia's coast is fairly straight. Be warned that the currents and winds are tricky and nasty, and more than one boat has met its end upon the rocks.

This region's main attraction is that it has loads of caves and sinkholes, including some of the deepest caves in the world. The Aborigines left their marks in many of them, using some as dwellings and treating others with the reverence reserved for holy sites. Some of these caverns are quite expansive, with high cathedral ceilings and connections to entire cave complexes.

• The Koonalda Cave is a prime example. You need a rope or ladder to get in, and after traveling deep inside you come to the opening chamber, which is 45 meters tall. Narrow tunnels and steep declines lead to other chambers, some flooded by dark, cold lakes. Far back, many of the chambers are covered with odd markings, parallel scratchings lining the walls. Visible before the Awakening, these markings hold some new significance, as each now bears the aura of magic.

• Spelunker

• A koradji I know told me that the marks have a distasteful aura, that they bear the imprint of some dark magic from ages past. According to him, the marks get more pervasive deeper down, covering every surface and tainting the place with lingering dread. He said the caves stretch on into unknown depths, but that no one has had the willpower to work their way past the kilometers of tight, evil corridors to whatever unknown horror lies beyond.

• Torch

• Sounds to me like a myth contrived to keep trespassers from sticking their noses where they don't belong.

• Toto

KAKADU RAINFOREST

The Kakadu is simply an amazing place. Waterfalls from the Arnhem Escarpment to the west join with the flow of four major rivers and their tributaries as they cross a swampy floodplain flushed with biodiversity. The Kakadu is home to hundreds of aquatic birds, as well as crocodiles, lizards, snakes, bats and over 5,000 types of insects—and that's not counting the paracritters. Land that is dry during the winter months may be three meters underwater in the wet season. The wet season lasts from October through March, and is marked with high humidity, rainfall and nightmarish swarms of mosquitoes. The month of April brings massive storms to the area, though mana storms sweep the Kakadu regularly throughout the year.

• This place is unreal. You can't move a foot without stepping on some slithering beastie or splashing through a billabong and scaring a flock of birds. The afanc that hang out in the rivers are downright mean, but the thought of walking through two-meter high grass and not knowing what you were going to run into didn't sit much better with me. There's also all sorts of ferns, ivy and fungus, and I'd bet my datajack that some of them have hungry intentions, if you catch my drift.

• Sprawl Rat

• The Kakadu is a riot on the astral. Everything's alive, nearly overwhelming your senses with aural colors. Some of the flora is Awakened and dual natured, and there's a nasty thing similar to guardian vines that you need to watch out for.

• Blaze

• Mitsuhamma maintains a facility deep within the Kakadu. I guess the costs of protecting and repairing it are offset by the lucrative talismaning operation they have going. The site's main purpose is allegedly to research and capture paracritters for the security market, and it's rumored that they specifically study cyber-modified Australian paracritters. The thought of meeting a drop bear with wired reflexes makes me think about retirement.

• Manticore

• The Aborigines in the Kakadu are well organized and very defensive of the local wildlife. They don't take kindly to poaching intruders. I wouldn't expect Mitsuhamma's site to last long.

• Giles

The Kakadu region also is home to thousands of Aborigine rock paintings, many of which are sacred sites. Some of these sites were kept secret from non-Aborigines even before the Awakening, as they are potent sites of power. Others were kept secret because they are home to dangerous entities that will harm outsiders and cause great problems if released.

• The entrances to some power sites are only visible during the Dry; in the Wet, you have to dive and swim underwater to gain access. These cleverly concealed entrances lead to caves or hidden grottoes, often protected by guardians.

• Gracey

• Legends speak of a sorcerous race of tricksters that live in Arnhem Land called Namorodo. They are tall creatures with long claws and thin bodies made only of bone and sinew. They fly through the night, capturing the spirits of the dead.

• Liyagalawumirri

• Hmph. This description sounds similar to the Mimis mentioned earlier. It also reminds me of mythological creatures called Quinkens in Cape York. Like the others, Quinkens are guardians of sacred caves. Anyone detecting a pattern here?

• Wiz Kid

TASMANIA

Tasmania is not part of the Outback (far from it), but I'll include it anyway because it fits. Tasmania is Australia's feral cousin, a wild island south of Melbourne. At the turn of the century, the population remained less than half a million, concentrated on the north and east coasts with much of the interior remained untouched.

The changes that have consumed Tasmania didn't occur as drastically as they hit Australia, but they were just as severe. The slow slide towards barbarism began with VITAS, which claimed more than a quarter of the island's inhabitants despite modern medical conveniences. The Awakening did not send mana storms coursing through its mountains or forests, nor did it flatten the island with natural disasters. The island transformed, however, in a number of subtle and obscure ways that didn't become obvious until much later. As one resident I knew put it, "Tasmania became alive."

Over the next two decades, Tasmania slowly and surely was reclaimed by wild nature. It started with quickened growth rates for the fauna and an explosion in animal populations. Forests began encroaching on towns, draping buildings and growing through floorboards. In rural areas, stretches of highway were broken apart by new fauna, pushing up from underneath. Bandicoots and other small pests became a major nuisance as they infested dwellings. The island's cats, dogs and farm animals slowly but surely fell victim to packs of Tasmanian devils and new, as-yet-undiscovered predators. New creatures stalked the night and missing person reports became a regular occurrence. Many residents also reported incidents of haunting or what we now recognize as spirit behavior, especially in rural areas.

• Sounds like Tasmania went through a magically enhanced growth spurt, just like Tir Tairngire and Amazonia. Any idea who was behind it? There aren't any Aborigines left there, so it must've been someone else.

• Barramundi

• Why does there have to be a plot behind everything? Maybe Tasmania was just adjusting to its new Awakened state.

• Evergreen

• My father had a farm in Tasmania, and he became convinced that something was out to get him. He refused to talk about it, but when he died I inherited his journal. In it, he talked about being stalked by the Ghost Tribe, the spirits of the Aborigines who once inhabited Tasmania but were driven to extinction by white colonists. Truth or not, it scared him out of his wits. He was lucky enough to flee the island before they got him.

• Glave

When the residents finally realized that something was amiss, they tried to reclaim their island but it was too little, too late. The transformation accelerated, accompanied now by more obvious attempts to push the residents out. Sinkholes opened up, swallowing whole buildings. Something simultaneously



destroyed four separate dams around Lake Pedder and Lake Gordon, causing massive flooding. A visiting Aborigine elder made a candid and direct warning on public tvid, telling the island folk that Tasmania no longer wanted them, and they had best leave while they could. The population dropped to mere thousands. Many villages were abandoned and quickly reclaimed by nature. The remaining residents, brave and foolhardy alike, clustered together in the remains of Hobart for protection.

- Renraku tried to establish a private prison facility in Tasmania during this time. I guess they figured even if inmates escaped, the island would get them. The whole structure was built and activated by 2046, and then abandoned after just three months of operation. Word is, Renraku simply lost communication with the prison staff, and when they went to investigate, they found the entire place empty. Every single person, inmate or guard, was gone. Even the drones were disabled. No one knows where they went, and the prison still stands vacant in Launceston to this day. No one dares to go near it.

- Claustrophobe

Today, most of Tasmania exists in a state of overgrown wilderness and uncivilized mystery. The island teems with life—birds, reptiles, carnivorous marsupials—and scientists estimate that at least thirty Awakened species thrive on the island that haven't yet been identified. For this reason, Parashield and similar outfits have established research and containment facilities on Tasmania to investigate, observe and breed new paracritters (especially ones useful as guard animals). These corp sites have been plagued with setbacks and difficulties, from problematic animals to sabotage by rivals, hampering their research.

- Tasmania's latest corp venture comes from none other than Brilliant Genesis. They have a new sim program called "The Wild Hunt," where they wire a crew of hunters with simrigs and drop them in the middle of Tasmania to survive on their own and hunt amazing paracritters. Right now they use three different formats, though they may invent more. In one, they drop in an experienced team of hunters that are specifically stalking a new paracritter. In another, they mix together random well-paid "volunteers" who don't know each other and who usually have zero survival skills. In the third, they use convicts who are willing to gamble their lives on an early release. Each show has rules, like what they have to catch or how long they have to stay in the wilderness. Brilliant Genesis just started recording late last year, so the first sims should be hitting the market soon.

- Sir Real

- I hear one condition of the contract is that at least one team member doesn't come back, or the whole team loses their pay.
- Swordfish

Tasmania's most infamous draw is the Roving Market. On the last day of each month, pirate crews from around the

region meet at a secret location to trade goods, get drunk and brag loudly. The location changes each month, announced only a week in advance through secure Matrix channels. Many of these pirates take advantage of Tasmania's numerous coves, river inlets, small islands and abandoned settlements (they rarely venture far inland if they want to leave again). It's one of these that's chosen for the Market. You can buy and sell anything here, without the troublesome restraints of pesky laws: drugs, pornography, electronics, weaponry, slaves, telesma, captured critters, you name it. Just watch your back, as the crowd is as ruthless and cutthroat as they come.

MARALINGA AND EMU JUNCTION

Very little remains in these two remote areas, both sites of atomic bomb testing a century ago. I visited each once, merely to satisfy my morbid curiosity, but I found nothing but scrap metal and old concrete structures half-buried in the sand, and got a good dose of rads for my trouble. And trouble it was—as soon as I got near both places, I had no end of malfunctions, breakdowns and other minor accidents. There wasn't a sign of life for kilometers in the blasted landscape, and I ended up leaving dead vehicles behind and walking out each time (and even then I nearly broke my leg in a fall and twisted both ankles good).

- Even the Aborigines stay away from these places. The Dreamtime was wounded severely here, and it is simply not a safe place to go.

- Anangu

I'm willing to accept some things as coincidence, but there was no doubt in my mind that something was trying to put an end to me out there. Both areas are bleak and leave your gut feeling heavy with despair. It felt like the land simply didn't want me there, and since I insisted on staying, the spirits there taught me a lesson.

- These areas aren't as dead Jack paints them to be. The bombings left their mark on the wildlife, and even before the Awakening there were reports of mutated kangaroos and cancer-plagued wildlife. Who knows what happened to these critters after the Awakening.

- Rabid

Personally, I think I was lucky. I've heard other stories of blokes running into swirling dust devils that choked them with hot ash and burning wind. Many more simply haven't come back.

OTHER AREAS

The places I've mentioned above are just a sampling of the wonders that the Outback has to offer. There's many more of interest, such as Lake Eyre, the salty and inhospitable lake that collects precious water at the bottom of a huge natural basin. It is the world's largest (and possibly driest) internal drainage system. Or the Litchfield rainforest, with deep watering holes, magnetic termite mounds and the spooky sandstone pillars of the Lost City. Or the Devil's Marbles, spherical rocks that are



said to be eggs laid by the Rainbow Serpent, fiercely guarded by Aborigines. And there's many more that I've never seen, or wish so badly that I'd never seen 'em in the first place that I won't repeat them here.

- If you want to be spooked, check out the small town in the Kimberley region that's called the Frozen Town. A mana storm swept through this small outpost early on, petrifying all of the residents into permanent stone statues. Most of them still stand in place, frozen in the act, though some have shattered or had limbs hacked off for souvenirs.

- Perseus

- I can think of one place worth checking out, but not because of the landscape: the Tanami Desert. Why? Remember a month or so back, when Renraku Australasia divisional manager Lucy Don went missing for several weeks? It just so happens that she was on her private Plutocrat jet when it went down in the Tanami. Lucy Don was the only one to survive and leave the desert alive. Not what you'd expect from a pampered suit type, eh? Makes you wonder what really happened out there.

- Cullyn

- What? Why would a corporate honcho like Lucy Don risk taking a plane across mana storm territory? Don't they take better care of their execs than that?

- LoRent

- Well, Don was in Broome to attend the dragon boat festival (there's a story there, I'm sure), and was supposed to fly down to Perth for some business meetings. Her security got word of an alleged assassination planned for her flight, so they bundled her into a private jet to avoid the killer and "secretly" sent her directly back towards Sydney. Her jet went down not long after take off, allegedly after running into a storm.

Renraku had all but written her off when one of her underlings hired a shadowrunner team to hike into the Outback and find her. According to the story, while many of the passenger and crew were injured in the crash, most of them survived long enough to die of hunger and thirst. Somehow, Lucy Don survived two weeks longer than everyone else, when the runners found her and brought her back.

- Cullyn

PARAZOOLOGY

- Few runners I know have run into more critters than Smokin' Jo. She's been around and seen a lot of the magical weirdness the Sixth World has to offer, so I asked her to give us the low-down on what kind of creatures to look out for Down Under. Turns out that Australia isn't nearly as desolate and lifeless as a lot of people tend to think.

- Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 12 June 2062 at 05:30:57 (PST)

by Smokin' Jo

Australia is famous for its unusual wildlife—many species of animals are found only here. "Australian animal" has always been globally synonymous with "vicious, poisonous thing that takes great offense to being trodden on by a clumsy human," and that hasn't changed now that the critters have magic on their side. I'll hit on some of the nastier paranormal beasts that can spoil your day.

> There's a thriving black market in poaching and smuggling Australian paranormals, whether for magical research, as guard animals or as really bizarre pets. Someone out there is always prepared to pay good cred for weird critters, alive or dead.

> Cricket

> True. Some of the more vulnerable creatures have been almost wiped out by zealous smugglers, causing desperation and frustration for conservationists. Australia has had the worst record of mammalian extinctions of any country on Earth, with nearly 50 percent of its native mammals becoming extinct in the past 250 years—and that needs to stop. I've heard that one of the government environment departments has been sliding money under the table to a runner team or two to protect a couple threatened paranormal populations.

> The Kat

> Why not just funnel money directly to the eco-action groups like Terra First? Oh, that's right. That'd be illegal.

> Deep Green

THE SEA

The first place you're likely to run into Australian critters (unless you come in by air) is off the coast. Australian waters are known for a diversity of sea-life, particularly different breeds of colorful fish living in and around the Great Barrier Reef. Since the Awakening, some of the little fishies have gotten a bit more aggressive, and small boats sometimes look like tempting targets.

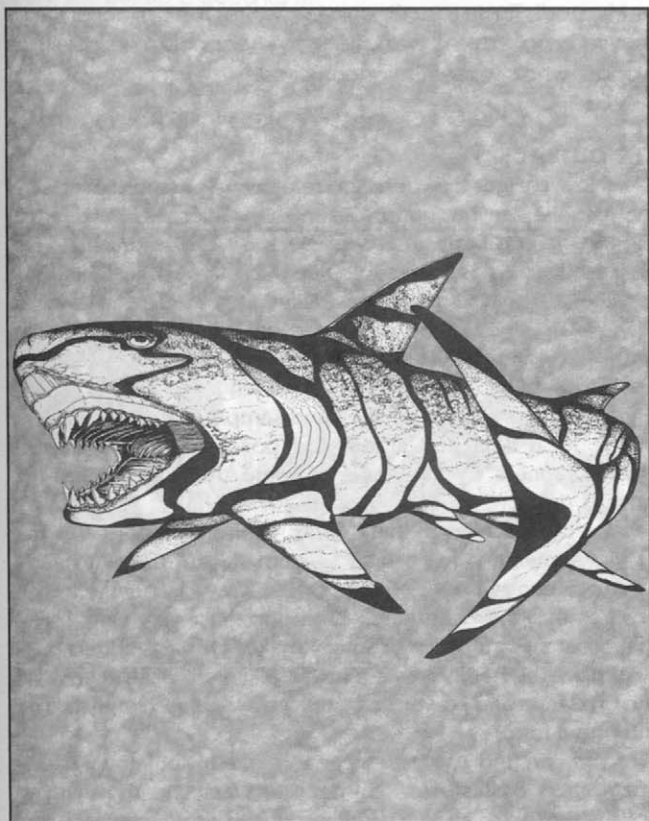
There are also groups of mermaids and merrow living in the coastal waters. The mermaids are pretty harmless overall, but some of the merrow tribes aren't very friendly toward outsiders. They keep to themselves and aren't likely to bother you unless you spend what they consider a suspicious amount of time in their territory (transferring cargo between boats, for example), in which case they may attack and try to drive you off.

- And before anyone scoffs about merrow armed with coral-tipped spears, don't forget that they sometimes have shamans among them, capable of calling up sea spirits or commanding some of the other local paranormals like the ones Jo describes here.
- McKinley

- Speaking of hostile critters, I've also spotted pods of storm dolphins in the coastal waters near Australia and New Zealand. These things are Awakened dolphins with the power to control the weather (I drek you not). They're none too fond of people

of any kind and they've got a vicious temperament. Storm dolphins have been known to create storms at sea to wreck ships or toss crews overboard to be at the mercy of the local sea-life (which doesn't really have any).

• Old Salt



Megalodon

For those of you who have seen any of the umpteen killer shark vids released lately, I don't even have to describe this little beauty. Megalodons are giant sharks, growing up to 16 meters in length from head to tail. They are large enough to swallow a troll whole in one bloody bite, though they prefer to tear their food into dwarf-sized pieces when they eat it. They're dumber than a dump truck full of bricks, but they're amazingly efficient killing and eating machines that roam the coastal waters near Australia (and many other parts of the world).

Like other sharks, megalodons are drawn to the scent of blood in the water (which they can detect for kilometers) and movement. Their eyesight isn't great, and they're likely to assume the bottom of a boat is actually a nice, juicy whale or some other fish. Megalodons have been known to smash and overturn boats, then pick off the passengers once they're in the water. As if their size and strength weren't nasty enough, the fraggers also magically regenerate from almost any injury. It takes a direct hit to sever the spinal cord or destroy the brain

in order to kill one. Otherwise they come back from anything short of being blown apart.

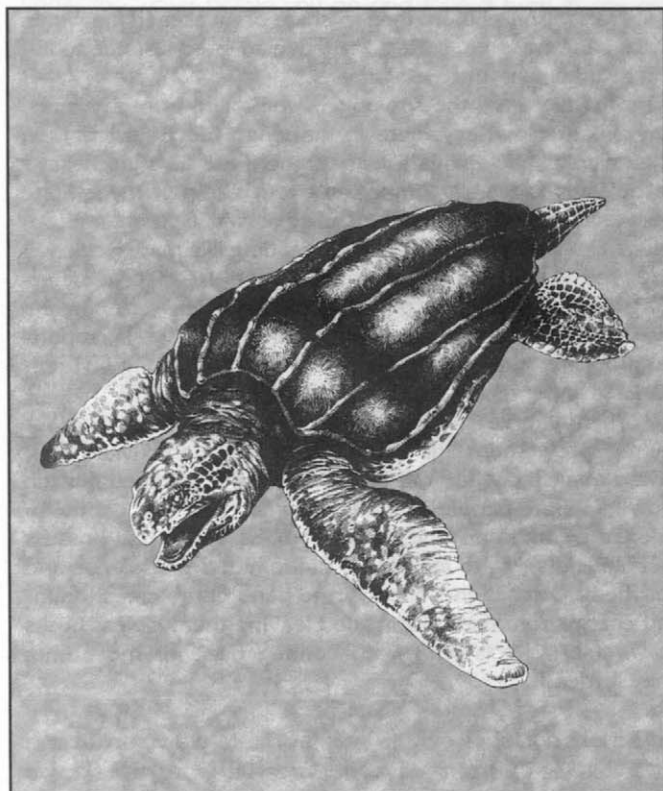
- Jo has (indirectly) pointed out the best way to deal with one of these fraggers: ram a grenade or some other high explosive down its throat and blow its head off.
- Rabid

- Or use magic. Megalodons aren't especially resistant to spells and a manabolt can make short work of one, assuming you get the chance to cast it.

• Niklos

- The really scary thing is that sometimes these things hunt in packs. A small group of megalodons can bring down just about anything, including a leviathan.

• Nero



New Leatherback

While not nearly as dangerous as the megalodon, the new leatherback shouldn't be underestimated. It's an Awakened sea turtle around 3 meters in length (the largest of its kind in the world). Leatherbacks are strong swimmers and hunt small sea creatures for their food. They've been known to attack lone swimmers, particularly people in diving suits that look like seals (a favorite food of theirs).

Like other turtles, new leatherbacks lay their eggs on land in sandy nests. Unlike other turtles, one of a mated pair of leatherbacks stays behind to guard the nest and make sure the hatching turtles make their way out into the sea. They're extremely territorial and attack anything that approaches the nest or the hatchlings. They also have a unique means of dealing with intruders. New leatherbacks can create a kind of magical compulsion, forcing victims to immerse themselves in the nearest body of water and causing them to drown (or fall victim to whatever other sea life is lurking around).

- Don't laugh. There are a few drowning deaths every year from people who get too close to leatherback nesting sites. It makes it damn difficult for parazoologists to study the things. They have to make sure to wear breathing gear, just in case, and that doesn't always do the trick.
- Wade

THE URBAN JUNGLE

Though Australia is much better known for its Outback wildlife, it also has more than its share of Awakened life within the urban landscape, critters that have adapted just fine to living near humans and metahumans.

First there are the scavengers you'll find in pretty much any urban sprawl anywhere in the world: devil rats, demon rats, harpies and things like that. There are also jauchekafer (probably accidentally "imported" from Europe), those huge beetles that feed on garbage and toxic waste. There's also a mutant strain of cockroach that's spreading like mad in cities all over the world. The fraggers are a good 10-15 centimeters long and they'll infest buildings or anywhere else there's enough food for them. A few Australian cities have also reported problems with rockworms tunneling and chewing up foundations, undermining structures until they collapse.

Then you've got the urban predators that hunt for human prey. There are incubi in most of the coastal cities. These things crawl up out of the water and use their illusion powers to lure people in so they can kill them and eat them. There are common stories about nomads, spirits that possess people and seem to feed off of random acts of violence and mayhem. Corpselights haunt some parts of the cities, draining energy from their victims and leaving them lifeless husks (or worse, addicts who keep coming back for more until they're dead).

- And let's not leave out the Infected. There are vampires and goblins in the Australian cities that keep out of sight but come out a night to hunt. Wendigo and dzoo-no-qua show up from time to time in the wilderness, but not usually the urban areas. Banshees are likewise rare, but they have been known.
- Werner
- Don't forget about ghouls. There are ghoul populations in nearly every remaining Australian city, living off corpses from morgues and graveyards, and occasionally "fresh meat." A lot of homeless people disappear and the government's record-

keeping system hardly even notices (the civil servants probably appreciate the reduction in datawork). There's a bounty on ghouls, like in many countries, and some runners make a little extra cred on the side by going on ghoul-hunts and bringing back some heads.

- Drifter

• My god! These aren't animals we're talking about here, they're living, thinking beings! When I hear about drek like this I wonder who's worse: the ghouls or us?

- Rose

THE OUTBACK

Now we get to where the real heavy paranormal activity in Australia can be found, out in the wilderness beyond the urban and corporate enclaves. Because of the mana storms and other hazards, parazoologists have barely scratched the surface of what's in the Australian Outback. Many species haven't been identified or named by anyone other than the local Aborigines, or the occasional poacher who was lucky enough to see something and live to tell about it. Lots of people are interested in hard data and samples (preferably living) of the local flora and fauna, and poachers, smugglers and shadowrunners try and accommodate them so long as the price is right.

Pretty much everything living in the Outback has some way of knowing when danger like a mana storm threatens and is smart enough to get out of the way. Natural selection ensures that the critters that can't don't last very long. Living in a constant struggle for survival makes Outback critters pretty jumpy. The herbivores are always on alert for danger, while the predators and scavengers are almost always hungry and on the prowl for prey.

You can find Australian variants of a lot of known paranimals, like basilisks or chimera (in fact, nearly anything scaly). There are also Australian nova scorpions every bit as nasty as the ones you'll find in the Mojave, and I've even seen a wyrd mantis in the Outback (from a great distance, thankfully), so there are sure to be others out there somewhere. There are also plenty of unique critters stalking about. It'd take a lot of megapulses to cover them all, so here are just some of the highlights.

Artnwerre

The artnwerre is an Awakened dingo, slightly taller than the regular critter with a lighter coloration. They tend to hunt in packs. Recent studies of the artnwerre show that they have an ability to communicate empathically with each other, making them very efficient pack hunters. Fortunately, they don't usually bother people unless they're really hungry. Artnwerre are only a worry if you're on foot or horseback in a small group.

- Artnwerre are found throughout the Outback, and aren't a serious concern unless you're already in trouble anyway. They don't bother people—at least not adult, well-armed people.

though there are stories of them snatching unattended children from the outskirts of civilization. They can be a danger if pickings are lean and the pack turns to hunting down humans to eat. Their numbers and group tactics make them a formidable threat if you face more than a couple of them, but generally they won't go out of their way to give you grief and they'll scamper if you put up a good fight.

• Xulu

• Artwre especially like to follow in the wake of mana storms, where they find plenty of fresh kill or weakened prey.

• Purina



Bunyip

While most Australian parazoologists concede that the bunyip exists, no concrete facts about it have been established—probably due to the low survival rate of bunyip-watchers. No buniyps have even been recovered intact, much less alive, and observations are unreliable at best. It's believed the creature is a large carnivorous marsupial but, hypotheses aside, it's widely understood that "bunyip" means "trouble" for all but the most well-prepared travelers.

• There's a huge bounty on these things (50,000¥ and up), if they really do exist. Every corp and parazoological research

organization in existence wants to get their mitts on one—whether as research subjects or to supplement their security paracritters.

• Deadpool

• People have been bringing "bunyip bits" back for years. Problem is that DNA analyses don't show up any conclusive matches. Seems that the bunyip may not even be a definitive species.

• Cricket

• Their very mystery makes the bounty a problem. While a genuine bunyip would earn you good cred, you're going to have a very hard time proving that what you've just dragged in really is a genuine bunyip. Where's your proof?

• Cage

• Buniyps tend to like waterholes and placid streams, away from major pollution. It's a good idea to have an astral scout under the water before you go and take a swim in any billabong. Also, if there's no large wildlife around, it's a pretty good sign that a bunyip lives nearby.

• Glaive

• Yeah, but I've heard rumors these critters might be semi-nomadic, so they don't exhaust their local environment.

• Sidereal

Drop Bears

The best parazoologists guess that the rare "drop bear" is an Awakened relative of the common koala. Current research indicates that these nasty little critters have some form of virus with similarities to HMHV. Drop Bears are nocturnal predators with long claws, fangs and reddened eyes. Their coloration is naturally black, and they have the ability to blend into their surroundings, similar to the North American bandersnatch. Their normal feeding time is around dawn and dusk. They hunt by waiting in a tree until something tasty-looking walks underneath, then fall on it claws-downwards and attempt to bite its head off.

• Vampire koala bears? You have got to be fragging kidding me.

• Klatuu

• These things are lazy and stupid. Despite their tendency to drop on you out of random trees, they're easy meat for anyone with a half-decent gun and some thermo sights.

• Glaive

• Yeah, but then Mr. Samurai spends all his time watching the trees—and gets eaten by a bunyip.

• Sidereal

• And of course, taking potshots at anything small and furry you see hugging a tree really annoys the locals. Koalas are still



on the endangered list, so be prepared to prove that the thing you blew into itty-bitty pieces was actually a drop bear and not Kenny Koala.

• Mace

Metaroo

The generic red kangaroo native to the plains of Australia has a common Awakened variant, the metaroo. Metaroos favor the same habitats as their non-awakened cousins, and often intermix with mobs of mundane 'roos. They have a limited sensitivity for mana fields and flee from things like spells or active foci with blinding speed. Metaroos can move fast enough to escape most dangers, and thus forage near relatively dangerous areas. Their presence in an area despite a general lack of other animals is generally a good sign that caution is indicated.

• Metaroo? What's the point of different names? A 'roo is a 'roo, they all look the same at the end of a double barrel shotgun and they all taste the same. Some just move faster than others.

• Sid

• These things have a nasty kick to them, and can easily break bones. Still, that's much the same as their normal predecessors—the metaroo just kicks you faster.

• Cricket

• If you see these guys going somewhere in a hurry, watch out for whatever spooked them. It's likely to be a mana storm, or worse.

• Blazer



Pakaltu Worms

Pakaltu worms are not Awakened creatures in their own right, but the voracious larval form of the Australian glass wasp. After mating, the wasp lays hundreds of small pinhead-sized waxy eggs in a piece of fruit. It leaves the eggs to be eaten by unsuspecting wildlife and passers-by. The eggs are inert until they pass through the host's digestive tract, where gastrointestinal enzymes allow the eggs to incubate in the warm protection of the body.

The eggs mature within 2–3 days of lodging in a body. When the pakaltu worms hatch, they're already chewing. They keep on eating until they reach their full size in approximately 3 hours. After this time, they begin crawling from their unfortunate host's corpse. Retreating into an out-of-the-way place they exude silk from glands below their mandibles. They remain in their cocoons for up to a month as they pupate into their final wasp form.

• These little babies give you second thoughts about eating bush grub. You might be starving now, but think about how you'll be feeling in a few days when a hundred pakaltu worms burst from your stomach after spending the last few hours eating you alive from the inside out.

• Conrad

• If you're lucky and near a medical center when you're infected, the eggs can be detected easily enough. They'll dose



you up with some vile tasting cough syrup. Apparently the egg membranes are permeable to a certain chemical that kills the developing pakaltu on contact.

• Dr. Doolittle

• A little magic will do the trick, too. The Aborigine shamans know how to cure pakaltu infestations.

• Walker

• Well, great, but pakaltu infestations are only "curable" while in their egg stage. If they actually hatch in your body, I'm afraid it's several hours of screaming in pain while they eat you alive before death arrives as they burst from your body.

• Conrad

Shadow Crawlers

Lawul Derreh-ma is an Awakened offshoot of the common redback spider. Their name means "shadow crawlers" in the Wagiman dialect, and that's what most people call them. They're about the size of a human fist when they're full-grown and they're dual-natured, allowing them to hunt their prey from the astral as well as the physical plane. They glow with a darkling light whenever they attack or feed on a victim.

Crawlers can be found infesting anything from abandoned farmhouses to copses of trees. They sustain themselves by snagging unsuspecting creatures in their webs and draining the life force from the trapped victims. The interesting thing is that their webs are also dual-natured, allowing them to capture astral beings as well as physical ones, and they're just as capable of feeding on them, too.

• My mates and I had a run in with some Aborigines once. They seemed to take offence to us rummaging around in one of their alchera—it was rumored to contain chunks of orichalcum lying around for grabs. I managed to escape and watch while the Aborigines knocked my mates out. They dragged them off to a copse of trees that was giving me bad vibes. Then I noticed the trees were crawling with hundred of these spiders. Glowing like all damnation, they crawled all over my mates who were tied to the trees. Talk about nightmare inducing—they sucked the life right out of them.

• Night Rain

• And the sad thing is that your run was probably pointless. More often than not, you can't take things from an alchera. Not physical things like orichalcum, anyway.

• Drifter

• These little bastards swarm, sometimes even into the hundreds. The bite of one may be just annoying, but try having fifty at once all have a go at snacking on you. Your day starts going downhill very fast.

• Theo

• What about the Sydney Funnelweb Spider? Everything else

seems to have Awakened, what about these horrors?

• Puyo

• The mundane funnelweb is supposedly the result of a curse laid upon the first white settlers by the Aborigines for stealing their land. I could believe that; their venom is highly specific to large mammals, especially humans. A hundred years ago they were only found around Sydney. Now they seem to be spreading. You can find them almost anywhere up the eastern seaboard of Australia, especially in cities. Thankfully, if they've Awakened, they've done it quietly. They don't pose much of a threat to metahumanity, even though they're still the most venomous spiders in the world by a large margin.

• Doc

• What the tourist info won't tell you is that funnelweb antivenin stopped working quite so well right about the time of the Awakening. About half of the bites seem to be untreatable, and nobody has been able to come up with a decent reason why.

• Hacksaw

• Before anyone starts clamoring; no, you don't get funnelwebs the size of large dogs, tipping over your bins and chasing your cat. That singular honor is reserved for the Awakened Tully Bird Spider. A rather inadequate name, if you ask me.

• Xulu

Snakes

Even before the Awakening, Australia had an uncommonly wide range of poisonous snakes; something like over half of the "Top Ten Most Deadly" list. Things have gotten a little hazy since then, with reptiles like the death rattle showing up in North America. Australian parazoologists have higher priorities than classifying countless snake variants, but it seems that the variety of poisonous snakes has at least tripled.

• Just how poisonous are these things? Do they match the deathrattle or the cobra?

• Crazy Eddie

• Damn straight, mate. If there's one thing we're proud of, it's just how bloody poisonous our critters are. For example, before the Awakening, the inland taipan was considered to be 500 times more venomous than the North American rattlesnake and 50 times more than a cobra. That means death in five minutes from blood clotting from a mundane taipan. I don't even want to hazard a guess about an Awakened variant.

• Chuckles

• So, on the subject of serpents, does Australia have any dragons? Everywhere else in the world seems to.

• Ms. Caline

• Maybe. If so, nobody has ever met one.

• Kid Billy

• I've seen one, and it's not something I want to repeat. I was on a run out in the Simpson Desert once. We were hunting exotic wildlife for an overseas buyer, and we must have wandered into its hunting territory. When we flew over, the dragon was slaughtering and eating a mob of 'roos. It must've heard us; it looked up, and then simply disappeared right into thin air, fading into the background like a mirage. Freaky enough, but in the Outback you see weird stuff all the time. We didn't think all that much of it.

After that though, people at our base camp started disappearing without a trace. Daytime or nighttime, it didn't matter. If we were lucky, we'd find some blood or clothes half a click or more from camp, but never any tracks and no sign of any movement on the ultrasound drones. Nothing. After the third guy disappeared, our Aborigine guide took his spear and walked off into the Outback. He told us to go home, because the spirits were angry with us.

The money was good and we were pretty stupid, so we amped up the security and stayed. The next morning, a dust storm blew up and made it impossible to work or even really see anything. When it cleared, another four people were dead. The damned thing shredded their tents, their gear, and even one of our choppers. We didn't hear anything at all, from a mere fifty meters away. This wasn't so clean and tidy as the other killings, though. The bodies were still mostly there, torn with huge claw marks, and I found an iridescent scale about the size of my hand in the dirt.

Needless to say, we left. With haste.

- Glaive
- That's some pretty powerful BTL you must have been chipping, Glaive.
- Cage
- Actually, there are too many rumors about dragons in the Outback for there not to be some kind of truth in them. Nobody's ever managed to talk to one, but some of the tribes talk about them. They say that they're capable of death magic and won't go anywhere near their territory. Apparently they don't much like company. I figure there may be as many as five or six dragons in the whole of the Outback. There's not much wildlife to support a dragon out there. As for whether they're a new species of dragon or a variant, I'll leave that discovery up to the people who manage to bring back the intact corpse of one.
- Doc
- So Glaive, what'd this thing look like?
- Cherub
- About 15 meters long and sinuous like a snake, with long limbs and no wings. It kind of "swam" through the air. It was dull ochre in color, like the desert. I've still got the scale, though it's faded now.
- Glaive

• Could be an eastern dragon, or maybe a sirrush, normally found in Asia Minor. Actually, for all we know, it could have been a bunyip.

• Doc

• Whatever their motives are, they appear to have no interest in civilization. Perhaps we should respect that—or get eaten, your choice.

• Tjurjunga

Tasmanian Tiger

The thylacine, or Tasmanian tiger, shouldn't even exist. They were hunted to extinction around the middle of the twentieth century. However the wonders of modern genetics being what they are, in 2006 the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) managed to clone them from cryogenically stored tissue samples. At the time it was something of a modern miracle, and they were placed on display in zoos all around Australia.

Then the Awakening turned up. One day there were five hundred or so "nouveau" Tasmanian tigers in zoos and the next they were all gone. For a long time it was thought they'd somehow simply died out again, but it's now clear they're still around and thriving in many areas. In recent years, rumors have strongly linked the tigers to at least four deaths or disappearances.

• Every single Tasmanian tiger Awakened? What are the odds on that?

• Blazer

• It's happened before with other species, in other parts of the world.

• Doc

• A lot of people go missing in the Tassie hinterland. Maybe these things have something to do with it. Are we sure they aren't man-eaters?

• Cherub

• Man, I saw one of these things once. It yawned at me, and I swear it had a flip-top head. Its mouth was big enough to swallow my head whole. And then I looked away for a second, and it was gone. Freaky.

• Mace

• You must have been near its lair. Yawning like that is their threat display. They can unhinge their jaws to get a better grip on their prey and crunch up the bones. Once they get a hold on you, you've got to basically cut their jaw off to get loose.

• Doc

• They also have an ability similar to that of the American mist lynx. It's why they all disappeared, like mist, when they Awakened. For obvious reasons, the more idiotic collectors will pay

good money for a live tiger.

- Eclipse
- Will they pay you more good money to retrieve it when they fail to hang on to their prize specimen just like the zoos?
- Kid Billy

Wombricks

The wombat has amazed observers for years with its ability to shrug off all but the most severe damage, and the Awakened diprotodon variant takes this ability to new heights. Significantly larger than a mundane wombat, an adult diprotodon typically reaches a length of two meters and may mass up to 400 kilos. Known as "wombricks," they're slow, sluggish herbivores that are dangerous primarily because of their effect on fast-moving vehicles that don't slow down in time. But don't underestimate them. If you torque one off enough to make it hostile, make sure you have an escape route handy. They're slow, but they're inexorable—sort of a marsupial steamroller.

- The lady speaketh truly. I had an unfortunate meeting with one of these on a lovely flat stretch of forever out beyond Burke. I was rocketing down one of the semi-finished roads in the area when I espied a wombrick on the road a klick or so ahead. I sounded every horn I had, even fired off a few shots in the hope that the report would scare it away. No dice. My alternative was taking to the gullies beside the road, and at that speed I'd have crashed and rolled for sure. I thought my trusty truck could deal with the wombrick. I was wrong. Rapid truck + immovable obstacle = broken truck.

It was a fragging long walk back to Burke, I can tell you.

- Overdrive
- Let me guess: the wombrick just shook itself all over and ambled away?
- Ladybird
- That's a depressingly accurate guess.
- Overdrive

MAGICAL THREATS

- Wareen provided us with the "inside" look at Australian magic, the things the koradji are capable of. Now another runner Down Under, who goes by Flich, fills us in on the not-so-nice side of things magical in Oz. If you're planning a trip to Australia, keep this stuff in mind, chummers. It may just save your life (or, if you believe some of the magicians, your soul).

- Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 21 June 2062 at 08:10:09 (PST)

by Flich

Talking about "magical threats" in Australia seems almost redundant. After all, the whole bloody Outback is a "magical threat" of immense proportions! But here I'm talking about Awakened threats with intellect and purpose behind them, not random engines of magical destruction. These are the Awak-

ened forces that lurk in the dark corners and behind the scenes in Oz, using magic toward their own ends.

BUGS

While Australia's got nothing to compare to Chicago (thank God) we do have bugs down here. When the business about the Universal Brotherhood broke a few years ago, the government (assisted by several megacorporations, including Ares) quietly shut down UB chapterhouses and took care of the insect spirit nests they discovered along the way. I know because they hired shadowrunners to help with the dirty work. Most of the bugs were taken out, but some of them managed to get away. These days rumors of a new insect hive in one of the major urban areas spring up every three or four months or so, though most of them are pure drek. I've also heard stories of solitary survivors of insect hives operating on their own without any involvement from a shaman or the support of a hive, though I've never actually seen one.

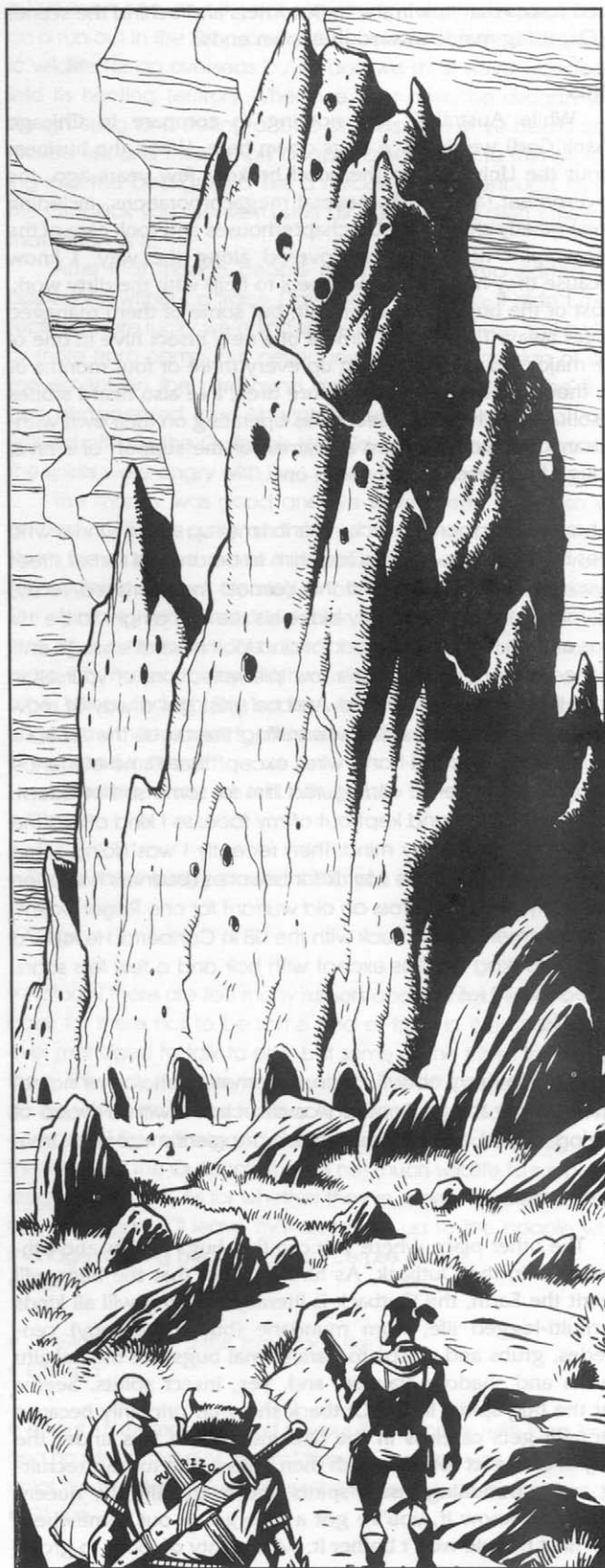
- I have. A few months back in Perth I met up with a runner who goes by the name Achilles. Took him to be an odd sort of street muscle at first. He's tall and thin (almost malnourished, really) but much stronger than any bloke his size has a right to be. His eyes are this reddish brown color and look normal enough until you realize that you can see multiple reflections of yourself in them, like they were faceted. And he's just got a way of moving, kind of twitchy, like he was sniffing the air all the time. I'd chalk it up to second-hand wires except there's no evidence he's got any cyber at all. I figured him for some sort of adept. Still, he did his job and kept out of my face, so I kind of put the whole thing out of my mind. Then recently I was doing some routine checking of the Matrix for bounties (business has been slow lately). I came across an old warrant for one Roger Dorchester, a former mucky-muck with the UB in Canberra. He looks a lot like this skag Achilles except with hair and a few less scars. Chilled me, I'll tell you.

- Dot Slash

- Interesting thing about your runner mate's choice of name. Among other things, Achilles was associated with a group of warriors called Myrmidons, warriors magically created from ants.

- Herr Doktor

The other place where you can find bugs (spirits and otherwise) is in the Outback. As further proof that the bugs will inherit the Earth, the Outback is literally crawling with all kinds of multi-legged life, from mundane (but still creepy) centipedes, grubs and wasps to paranormal bugs like the pakaltu worms and shadow crawlers and, yes, insect spirits. Seems that the bug spirits in the Outback show up primarily because a koradji gets careless in the Dreamtime and falls under the sway of an insect totem, which then guides him to start recruiting and summoning insect spirits and eventually the queen. Before you know it, you've got a hive going out somewhere that most people won't bother it, with plenty of room to grow.



- But not necessarily people, a vital ingredient in the development of an insect spirit hive.
- Tiger Faux

- There aren't many people in the Outback compared to the sprawl, mate, but there's still more than a few. And it's not considered abnormal for someone in the Outback to go missing.
- Entomo

The most common bugs in the Outback seem to be termites, which build these mind-blowing complexes and tunnels, both above and below ground. They make the mundane termite mounds look like mud huts as compared to the Sydney Opera House. I actually saw a termite nest on a trip into the Outback and it was *huge*. There must have been hundreds of the bleeders in there. Naturally, I didn't stick around for a head-count.

- Odds are good that what Flich is talking about is the exception rather than the norm. There can't be more than a couple hives of that size in the entire Outback. Still, such prosperous hives are a reason for concern.
- Doc

- Understatement of the year, Doc. Time to drop some big pesticide bombs into the Outback, if you ask me.
- System 05

- You don't understand. The Termite People are not our enemies. They are part of the Dreamtime. Our people understand this, which is why some are born into the tribe of the Termite People while others are born into Kangaroo or Snake. We know which of us are destined to join their tribe and the Termite People do not accept others. That is why we live in peace with them and they sometimes aid us against the fury of the storm.
- Wareen

- You have got to be farcing me. You mean you simply turn people over to the bugs!?! That's disgusting!
- Etnies

CHILDREN OF THE RAINBOW SERPENT

In every society where cultures and ideologies clash, there arise groups of uncompromising extremists ready to use violence to advance their cause. The Children of the Rainbow Serpent are one such group. They are traditional tribal-Aborigine in origin and motivation, and their causes range from ecological salvation to reclaiming the continent under Aborigine stewardship.

The group consists of several hundred members—perhaps as many as a thousand total across Australia—with sympathizers numbering many more. While loyalty and ardor obviously vary from one member to the next, most enthusiastically espouse the group's philosophy.



• Unlike your average polyclub, the Children don't tend to have members in positions of power. Most of their active members devote their waking hours to the group, which makes it difficult to hold down a nine-to-five job as well. Of course, there are exceptions to every rule. Don't take this as gospel, folks.

• Deke

• Early on, the group had a lot of support from liberal whites. They were mostly back-to-the-land wannabes with a heavy dose of "white guilt" or pagans who thought the oh-so-spiritual Aborigines were better than everyone else. Most of these supporters left when the group started making increasingly militant actions—they didn't want to put their own privilege at risk, I guess. A network of hard-core, radical, non-native supporters still work with the group, but the core of the group is pure Aborigine (or half-breeds in some cases). Not too different from SAIM during the Ghost Dance War in America.

• Nogger

The Children are best described as an inter-tribal activist group. They have links to eco-terrorist groups like GreenWar and Terra First!, but their agenda is much broader than simple environmental activism. In particular, they have long been claiming governing rights over the Outback and they favor the creation of a separate Aborigine state similar to the Native American Nations of North America. They also regularly engage in sabotage and "punitive" attacks against a wide variety of industrial operations, particularly mining sites.

• The Aborigine state cause is an issue that divides the group. A few of the Aborigines are hyper-nationalistic and want to push all of the whites out of the entire continent, to the point where they refuse to work with non-Aborigines in the group. But the majority merely want to see the Outback officially recognized as being in the hands of the people that live there and care for it, so that it no longer suffers from exploitation.

• Namatjira

The Children have claimed responsibility for numerous violent incidents against corporations they view as hostile to the land, as well as the politicians that support them. The group has also been blamed for several terrorist attacks, though they haven't claimed responsibility for them. In particular, the group favors ambushing supply convoys in the Outback, prompting many corps to hire on extra "freelance" security. Though many of their members reside in rural and Outback areas, they do not shy away from attacks in urban areas.

• Some of the attacks attributed to the Children were the result of inter-corp rivalries. The Children make good scapegoats thanks to their politics.

• Kittson

• You can usually tell what attacks were actually committed by Serpentes (as I like to call 'em) because they tend to have a creative signature. Blowing up installations in the Outback isn't

really their style, especially if it's in an area they consider sacred—explosions tend to leave an area polluted with dross and may even have repercussions in the Dreamtime. Instead, they'll find a way to "convince" the corp to pack up and leave: crippling sabotage raids, gas attacks, spirit harassment, or just besieging them and starving them out.

The story's a bit different in the sprawl. Targets there are fair game for almost any tactics.

• Clausewitz

• I heard the group was responsible for that rail disaster back in 2043, when a road train drove straight onto a track crossing and parked there. Unfortunately it was about fifteen seconds before the inaugural train was due to come through on the new Melbourne to Canberra high-speed rail link. The train was full of politicians, corporate figures, media types—all celebrating this wonderful new transport link, and most of them didn't stand a chance when the thing derailed at two hundred miles an hour. The Children of the Rainbow Serpent never officially claimed responsibility, and the investigation ascribed the incident to amphetamine use on the part of the road-train driver. But the people in power knew who'd really done the deed.

• Quantum

• You know what I call offing a train full of politicians and corporate suits? A good start. <display_grin>

• Jackknife

Rumors persist of an "inner circle" within the group, perhaps twenty to so traditional tribal koradji. Though little is known about the inner circle, the limited evidence available suggests that it functions as a policy center for the Children as a whole, dictating the group's directions and activities from behind the scenes.

• There are rumors that this core group, known as the Dreamers, exhibits a degree of control over the mana storms of the Outback. I have no idea how much "control" this is, whether they're talking about simple predictive ability or something more ominous—governing the path or intensity of the storm, for instance.

• RCA Victor

• I want to dismiss this out of hand, but the stories I've heard ... I've heard about mana storms "homing in" on people, or a mild little disturbance suddenly blowing up into a tempest. Normally that's the kind of drek you ignore, but I've heard it from too many people I trust for me to assume they're all slotting something funny. Maybe the Children are behind some of it?

• Oscar Bravo

• Who's to say that anyone was controlling those mana storms? They could have been totally random events the Children took credit for. We can't even predict the fraggin' normal weather with complete accuracy yet; throw magic into an already chaotic system and it's anyone's guess.

• Woppler the Weatherman



Pama'awu

Pama'awu is the public face of the Children of the Rainbow Serpent, and little is known about him. He has appeared in a few pirate broadcasts and gridcasts, claiming responsibility on behalf of the group for whatever incident they'd just perpetrated. His name means "Man-Ghost" in Pakanh.

Pama'awu appears to be a tribal elder with a passionate (many would say fanatical) fire burning in his eyes, though there have been few public sightings of him. He may well be magical himself, from the way he has phrased many of the groups' statements regarding their magical activities. On the other hand, his inclusiveness when making statements may just indicate the group's solidarity and unity of purpose.

It goes without saying that many of Australia's law enforcement bodies would like to get their hands on Pama'awu; he has so far proved exceedingly elusive. Given how easy it is to vanish from official scrutiny in the Outback, coupled with the group's low media profile, it is unsurprising that Pama'awu continues to effortlessly evade capture.

- Given his name, any chance this bloke could be a spirit of some kind, or is that just too obvious?
- Jackknife
- Koradji, spirit, shapeshifter, bloody Dunkelzahn in disguise, he could be anything, I've heard it suggested that "Pama'awu" doesn't even really exist as a person, just an image different members of the inner circle of the Children use for public appearances and gridcasts using a combination of illusion magic and digital trickery. It's anyone's guess at this point.
- Bitter Lemon
- Whether he exists or not, Pama'awu is a popular media figure well on his way to becoming a cultural icon, especially to Aborigine kids. He's smart and good-looking, he's got style, and he's the wily, wanted spokesperson for an illegal group. Naturally, the public adores him.
- Clyde

CITY

Stories have circulated for a while about the existence of a shadowy coalition of Awakened forces that go by the name "City." There's a lot of hearsay about them, but very little concrete information.

What I do know is that the major members of City appear to be free spirits of some kind. There are four known spirits, with rumors of up to ten more, of varying power. Some of the reports I've heard are not entirely credible, however, and City remains a mystery to those few who've even heard of it.

The group's agenda is similarly unknown, though they reputedly take quite an interest in metahuman affairs. They

seem to work individually, but are affiliated without a doubt. There have been a few reports of infrequent meetings, but given the astral nature of the entities involved they could be regularly collaborating in astral space or the metaplanes and no metahuman would be any the wiser.

I assume City's members can call on significant magical resources to further their agenda, but in spite of this they have been known to employ shadowrunners and other useful mortals. Quite a few mages I know report being approached by a spirit—later identified as a member of City—to hire them and their team. The contracted work tends to vary, though urban jobs are less common than runs into the Outback or rural areas outside the big sprawls.

- I've been investigating City for a while now, on and off. I'm no closer to working out how many members there are—though I think I can confirm one more for the "definites" list. There's one thing I do know. They're all spirits of man, all the confirmed members. I'm still working on classifying the other rumored participants; at least a few are also spirits of man. If there's a criterion for membership, it's a good bet that's one of them.
- Snoopski
- Oh, great, so we've got five to fifteen free spirits confabulating behind our backs, and no one knows what they're up to? Well, that's just wonderful, that is.
- Metanoid
- Well, I've had a little contact with one of the spirits in City—Mist, she calls herself—and she seems pretty nice. She actually hired my team to do a couple of jobs for her, surprisingly pleasant work. Mostly protective jobs; bodyguarding, defense and security, stuff like that.
- Haig
- Haig's not the only one who's had dealings with Mist. I don't presume to understand spirit motivations, but she's always treated us with dignity and hasn't asked anything too distasteful of us.

The most recent run we did for her—well, I can't give details, but it involved escorting a bunch of construction workers and engineers out to a project in western Queensland. Beating off the paracritters, trying to ward our charges from stray mana storms, and the like—a straight-up bodyguarding job, with a cross-country twist. Lord knows what interest Mist had in the construction project, but she wanted to make sure these guys got there safely.

- Wriggley



• Mist might be all warm and fuzzy, but that doesn't necessarily go for all the members of City. I've worked for one spirit who goes by any number of human aliases, and I'm pretty sure he's with City. He's had us do all kinds of stuff—from stealing magical artifacts to straight-out wetwork, offing some high-profile environmental activist.

• Alisdair Mor

• What is City's agenda? Does anyone know what they're trying to achieve?

• Metanoid

• I can make some wild guesses based on their name and make-up, but it's all just shots in the dark. In reality, I don't have a clue, mate.

• Wriggley

TROUBLE WITH TOXICS

Then there's everybody's favorite, toxic zones and the spirits and crazed shamans that come with them. With little or nothing regulating corporate mining and ore refining in the Outback and similar activities elsewhere in the country, Australia's got more than its share of places contaminated with things like mercury, industrial chemicals, waste run-off, and similar things. The prevailing attitude seems to be that if the whole place is going to hell anyway, what does a little industrial pollution matter if it keeps the megacorps (and their money) from packing up and going somewhere else? The so-called government kowtows to whatever the megacorps want, so regulations on pollution are nearly non-existent.

That creates places where toxic shamans can set up shop, from some of the nastier coastal areas to the poisoned run-offs of old strip mines. One of the many hazards corporate security has to deal with in Australia is the threat of toxic shamans and their spirits, along with the dangers of the mana storms and assorted critters.

The toxics seem to come in two types. The first are the ones that revel in the muck and poison, drawing power from it. They're really sick fraggers willing to do whatever it takes to extend the reach of their poisonous domain if it will increase their own power. They try to cause spills and industrial "accidents," encourage resource exploitation, and prevent efforts to clean up any of the drek that's been dumped into the soil or water (not that too many people are trying to clean it up, mind you). The Aborigines I know consider these shamans some of the worst things on two legs, a serious threat to the land and its creatures.

The other sort of toxic shaman is trickier. They're the ones who hate the pollution of the land but believe in a philosophy of "fight fire with fire." Somehow they've learned to control the twisted toxic spirits of the poisoned domains, but they go around the twist doing it, if you ask me. They try and use the toxic powers against the ones that poison the land in their own form of radical eco-terrorism. In the process, however, they become as bad, if not worse, than what they're fighting against. Like Nietzsche said, "Battle not with monsters lest ye become a monster," and all that drek. The koradji that go toxic seem to fit more into this category. Unable to stand what's happening to their home any more, they just snap and go over the edge. Of course, sometimes it can be hard to tell a dedicated revolutionary or eco-terrorist from a frothing toxic shaman until he shows his true colors. But toxics don't really give a flying frag about anyone any more, all they care about is their cause.

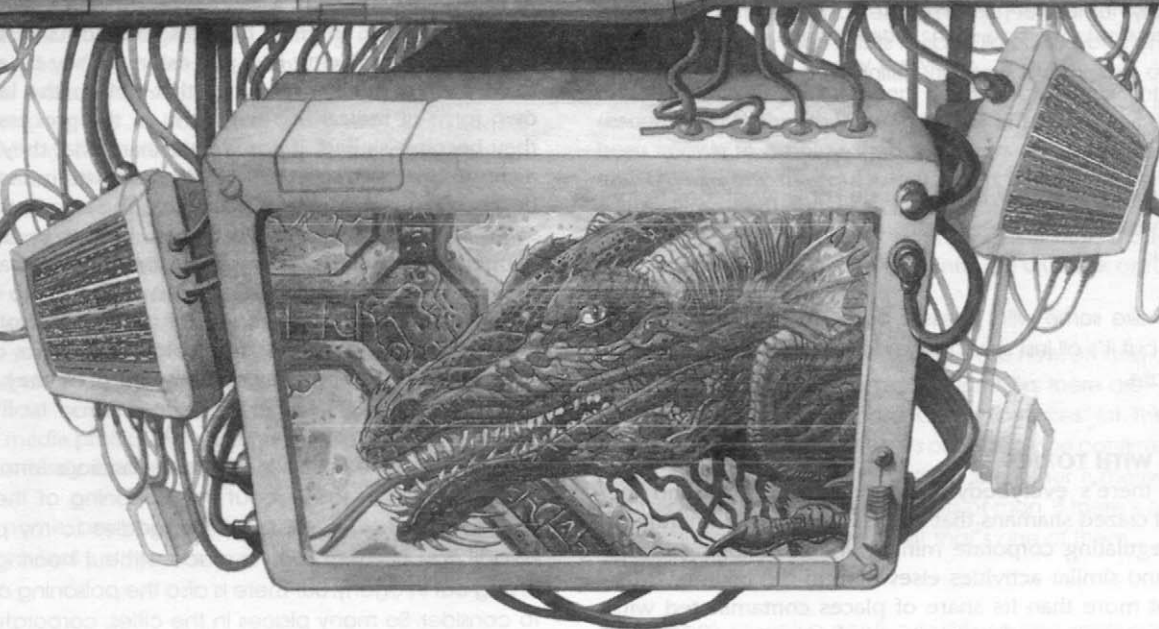
• There is another deeper and more insidious form of poisoning as well. Flich talks about the poisoning of the land, the waters, and the sky, all terrible tragedies to my people. No koradji can go near such a place without hearing the spirits crying out in agony. But there is also the poisoning of the heart to consider. So many places in the cities, corporate enclaves and even among the tribes have become places of despair and hopelessness. People harden their hearts against each other and turn to greed, selfishness and ambition for comfort. It is no less of a poison than the chemicals poured into the waters, and all the more dangerous because most do not recognize it as a poison at all. But it makes places and people cold and heartless and affects the spirits that dwell there the same way. I know clever-men and -women who live in the cities (both koradji and others) who fall victim to this poison, until the only songs they can hear are those of the spirits of sadness, greed, mistrust and anger.

• Wareen

• It is true. The toxic spirits of the land, waters and sky are angry, seeking to lash out at their tormenters for their painful and twisted existence, but the toxic spirits of man are far, far more dangerous, because they embody all that is the worst within us. Their capacity for cruelty knows no bounds; suffering and despair is like food and drink to them. Beware of them and the shamans that claim them as allies.

• Man-of-Many-Names

AWAKENED SITES



Awakened sites can and do appear anywhere, including places you may not expect. My mage chums all assure me that there's a rhyme and reason to why these magical localities have the magical aspects that they do, but when I ask why they start speaking another language. The shamans I ask simply tell me that each place is unique and that to truly understand such places one has to go there. Neither of those options really serves the purpose of this file collection, so I settled for getting dirt the old-fashioned way—from people in the know.

I called on my chums in the shadow community to put together write-ups on some of the more interesting Awakened places they know of. Some of these sites are known only to scholars, the magical community or those (un)fortunate enough to have been there; others are known even to mundanes like me. Take them all with a grain of salt, for today's Awakened site could be tomorrow's mana warp.

Just a note of caution. Each of these sites is "claimed" by someone. That someone could be the local government, the friendly neighborhood corp or a secret cabal of squatters with a claim that dates back thousands of years. Some of these sites are locations of ancient and not-so-ancient rituals, holy sites to those that worship there. Other sites are claimed to be the location of mythical cities, lost civilizations or heroic deeds. Some are places that the spirits just like to hang out at.

In nearly all cases, the sites are protected by zealots, fanatics and goons that don't mind seeing interlopers get dead. These aren't run-of-the-mill corp chumps who might look the other way for a certified credstick—they believe in what they're protecting. Trust me on this one—nothing is scarier than a believer with an Uzi.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 12 June 2062 at 05:42:41 (PST)

ANASAZI RUINS

by Cibola 7

In Chaco Canyon, on the border of Pueblo and Ute territory in the NAN, are some extensive ruins belonging to the Anasazi, a tribe of Native Americans that mysteriously vanished hundreds



of years ago. The canyon lies about 160 kilometers northwest of Albuquerque. It's 19 kilometers long and 1.6 kilometers wide. Though it's completely dry desert now, it once had a river flowing through it, the ghost of which is sometimes heard at night.

- I've heard that some of the NAN shamans can actually see and touch this "ghost river" as though it was real water flowing through the astral plane.

- Tex

The sides of the canyon are lined with cliff dwellings built and used by the Anasazi people. The oldest of the dwellings were built around 750 AD along the canyon floor, followed by the construction of the "great houses" on the canyon walls between 200 and 300 years later. The largest of the nineteen great houses is a complex of 800 contiguous rooms over four stories along the canyon wall. The great houses show considerable craftsmanship in masonry and engineering.

The Chaco Canyon ruins have been abandoned since at least the 1200s, when the Anasazi living there disappeared. No one knows what became of them, though there are numerous stories and rumors. Scientific theories tend to revolve around shifting patterns of rainfall in the area and a severe drought leading to starvation or possibly an epidemic. The spiritual explanations often lean toward the Anasazi departing the physical plane for the spirit world, leaving all their physical works behind them.

- They all overlook the truth: the Anasazi were in contact with extraterrestrials that took them back to the stars as representatives of the human race. Many of the so-called "spirits" from Native American legend are really aliens! All that these beings know of humanity they learned about from the Anasazi. Is it any wonder that the Native American Nations are the first on Earth to have regular, peaceful contact with extraterrestrials?

- Roswell

- Maybe in the world in your head, Roswell, but let's try and stick to the facts, all right?

- Skeptic

- Spoilsport. When have we ever done that on Shadowland?

- Marquise

- I thought the Anasazi lived in the Mojave Desert?

- Walker

- Wrong Anasazi, Walker. You're thinking about the modern tribe that took the name of the folks who disappeared so mysteriously hundreds of years ago.

- Holly

For the most part, the Anasazi ruins in Chaco Canyon were of interest only to archeologists, anthropologists, local tribes and the tourists who passed through the area (along with a handful of conspiracy theorists, New Age crystal-wavers and

the like). The canyon and the ruins were protected land under the old United States government. Though the U.S. Supreme Court rescinded that protection during the Resource Rush, there was little or nothing of interest to the corporations in the canyon, so everyone left it alone during the Ghost Dance War and the years that followed. When the Native American Nations formed, the Pueblo Corporate Council made sure Chaco Canyon was within the borders of their territory, since the Pueblos share ancient ties to the Anasazi and consider the ruins important to them both spiritually and culturally.

- Any guesses whether or not the PCC or the Tribal Council knew what kind of resource Chaco Canyon was at the time?

- Dex

- Who knows? It's clear that at least some of the NAN shamans had greater insights into how magic really worked sooner than everyone else did. But it seems to me from the way things have been going that they didn't know the canyon was going to be valuable, or else they would have done something about it sooner.

- Miss Tick

The Pueblo Corporate Council set aside Chaco Canyon as a protected sacred site, allowing tourists and scientists to visit and taking steps to ensure the site was preserved for future generations. Otherwise, Chaco Canyon was largely ignored until recently. In late September of 2061, people at the Anasazi ruins began reporting visions, seeing images and hearing sounds with no apparent source. Shamans working at the site also reported changes in the spirit world (or astral plane, as you Anglos say). The Pueblos immediately closed off the site and sent in teams of scientists and shamans to study what was going on at Chaco Canyon.

- Note that these were not the first magical phenomena noticed at Chaco Canyon. The Pueblos have known that the Anasazi ruins are a power site since the founding of the NAN (and even before that, if you take the tribal legends into account). Pueblo shamans have performed rituals there before, though always under the veil of government secrecy. UCAS spy-satellites have photographed every square centimeter of the canyon for analysis (as if you're going to pick up native mojo on a satellite scan). There have been sporadic visions and spontaneous spirit manifestations there for years. It was the sudden concentration of so many happenings in such a short time, coupled with the unusual astral phenomena the shamans were picking up on, that led the PCC to bring the lock down on Chaco Canyon.

- Freidrich

Almost immediately after the Pueblo specialists moved in, an offer came from the Ute Nation to assist the Pueblos in their investigation (without mentioning how they knew something was up in the canyon). The Pueblos politely declined, but the Ute issued their offer again—a bit more forcefully this time,

saying they were rightfully concerned with happenings on the border of their territory. The Pueblos politely told the Ute to get stuffed and went back to their investigations.

Some friends and I made our way into the canyon on foot under the cover of darkness to get a look-see at what was going on. The satellite surveillance wasn't telling anyone drek, except that there was a bunch of people swarming around the canyon and a lot of them looked like shamans. But the Anasazi ruins have a lot of *kivas*, underground chambers used as medicine lodges, and it looked like the shamans were spending a lot of time down there. We just got a quick look around because the spirit world around the canyon was *swarming* with spirits and we didn't want to risk getting spotted by them. It looked to me like there's something unusual about the spirit world there. It felt almost like a tugging on my spirit, as if it was buoyant and trying to leave my body of its own accord. There certainly were a lot of nature spirits and astral shamans there.

We passed the intel on, and I later found out that there's some kind of effect in the canyon that lets mundanes trance and enter the spirit world like shamans do. I don't know if it's true or not, but it would explain why there were so many spirits there.

- Word has it that the Ute Nation is still petitioning the PCC for the opportunity to "assist in the study" of Chaco Canyon and that the Corporate Council is still stonewalling them. If it keeps up, odds are the Ute will follow other avenues for gathering information—like getting copies of those classified reports that the Pueblo shamans are filing.

- Nox

- Pueblo Matrix security is tight, too. That'd be a tough run. Maybe it's time for me to talk to some people I know in Vegas ... `<display_grin>`

- Tenshi

- Man, I thought the Native American Nations got along. What happened?

- JT

- Chummer, where have you been? Tribal solidarity went out the window before the ink of the Treaty of Denver was even dry. The NAN look out for themselves first and the Sovereign Tribal Council a distant second, and the PCC is the forerunner in enlightened self-interest. Plenty of Pueblos have been agitating for secession for years, and their country's recent activities may just be a first step in that direction.

- Silent Sam

ANGKOR

by Matador

My God, I hate Southeast Asia. I'd rather fight a war just about any other place on Earth, from the jungles of Central and South America to the worst hell-holes of Africa, to pick-

ing up enough rads in Libya that I glow in the fraggin' dark. Anything to get out of having to fight it out in one of the all-too-many war-torn nations of Southeast Asia. Maybe it's because the jungles there all seem like they're out of a Vietnam horror story. I don't know. But there's just something in the air down there that makes me all edgy and feeling like something nasty is going to spring out of the jungle at any moment and rip my fragging head off. So, naturally, when I got a call from a friend of mine I worked with in Africa, what does he want me to do? Lead an expedition into fragging *Cambodia*. Wonderful.

For those of you who have never had the dubious pleasure, let me tell you something about Cambodia. There's been a war of one sort or another going on there for well over a hundred years now and personally I think everybody should just give up and turn the country back over to the jungle and move somewhere else. (Apparently, I'm not the only one that thinks so, but I'm getting to that.) The so-called government is plagued on every side by rebels ranging from would-be successors to the Khmer Rouge to rival Triads operating in the Golden Triangle and allies of Chinese warlords. Why anyone wants to control the place is beyond me, but then I'm not paid to ask a lot of questions.

Now it seems the government has a new rebel group on its hands, potentially worse than all the others put together. It all started in a place in Cambodia called Angkor. Since I like to know what I'm getting myself into, even in the name of friendship, I did some reading up on Angkor. Here's the basic summary. You can get a lot more on the Matrix from most of the same sources I did.

Angkor is a city in the Cambodian jungle, built by the Khmer people over the course of several centuries starting some thousand or so years ago. Its founder was a Khmer prince who freed the Cambodians from the rule of the Japanese. He was a follower of the Hindu god Shiva, so his new city was full of temples honoring Shiva and the rest of the Hindu pantheon. It was built along a lake called Tonle Sap in the northwestern corner of Cambodia. In the early fifteenth century, forces from Thailand invaded and sacked the city. It never regained its former stature and was abandoned to the jungle until a French explorer rediscovered it in 1860. Since then it's been considered a tourist attraction and national treasure of Cambodia.

- Just as an additional historical note, it's unclear exactly why the Khmer abandoned Angkor. Certainly the Thai invasion had something to do with it, but the Khmer had a powerful empire and we don't know why they lost to the Thais. Some anthropologists suggest that the precepts of later strains of Buddhism led to a pacifist movement among the people of the city, making them easy prey for an invading army. Others blame a drought or monsoon that crippled the agricultural economy. There's also a tale of a king of Angkor who had the son of a Buddhist priest drowned in Tonle Sap. The gods were angered and caused the lake to flood the city.

- Cleo



- Something else to note: Angkor is big. It covers over 100 square kilometers and probably housed half a million people in its heyday, making it the largest city in the world at the time. There are a lot of intact buildings, particularly the larger palaces and temples, many of them several stories tall. You could hide a small army there, especially if they knew how to blend in.
- Ranger X

Apparently the Cambodian government was worried that a new rebel group was massing near Angkor. They were concerned about protecting their historical monument along with nipping a new rebel organization in the bud. Since their own forces were stretched thin, they hired mercenaries to handle the recon. My friend was one of the people who took the job, and he called me in for help. (I made sure to get paid in certified nuyen; the Cambodian economy is in the drekker and their money isn't worth the electrons it's transmitted on).

So we went out into the jungle to Angkor to see what was going on there. Our orders were to gather information first and, if the rebel forces were small enough, to just wipe the fraggers out and call it a day. Unfortunately, we found more than we bargained for, a *lot* more. There are rebels in Angkor, all right, but none of them are human.

It started with something following us upriver to Tonle Sap. Some of the crew tried to pass it off as big river fish or drek like that, but I could tell some of our local people were spooked and I got the feeling we were being watched from the moment we set out. By the time we made it to the lake, I was sure of it.

We should have checked things out more carefully. As it is, we're lucky to be alive. We were ambushed on Tonle Sap, but they didn't kill us. They took us prisoner; "they" meaning the new leaders of Angkor—the nagas. They're big snakes (I'm sure the longest was over 12 meters) with flat, almost human-looking heads. I saw at least eight of them and there may have been more. There were other paranormals there, too; merrow in the lake and river, and what looked like harpies nesting up in some of the towers. The nagas used some kind of magic on us. Our mage Minh thinks they were probing our minds for information. They never spoke (I don't even know if they can). They took all our weapons and gear, and I wasn't about to try and wrestle a 10 meter poisonous snake with my bare hands, cyberarm or no.

After a few hours, they let us go. They escorted us back to our boats (sans equipment) and sent us back, with the merrow watching us the whole way. We passed the information on to the government, collected our money (which barely covered the gear we'd lost) and I told Jonesy we were more than even. If someone on Shadowland gets some use out of this, I'm glad. Personally, I'm looking forward to taking an op well away from Southeast Asia and Angkor, thank you very much.

- Given Matador's first-hand information and some of what I've heard, it sounds like Awakened forces have seized control of Angkor and have been gathering there, possibly led by the

nagas or by another being or beings. They may just want control of the ruins. This may also be a prelude to something larger. After all, the Awakened coups in Amazonia and Siberia both began similarly.

- People Watcher

- How can a bunch of nagas be in charge? I didn't think they were that intelligent.

- Fielding

- Well, their intelligence has been a subject of some debate for years. Just because the naga don't communicate vocally doesn't mean they're not intelligent; there's been a petition pending before the U.N. for years to recognize them as sentient. Certainly their ability to use magic seems to suggest a greater degree of intelligence. But nagas haven't officially been declared a sentient species.

- Doc

- Neither have dolphins, chummer. Maybe the nagas just got tired of waiting and being pushed around. Or maybe there's something more going on. Could be that the Awakened alliances in Amazonia and Siberia have decided the time is right to spread the word of Awakened revolution to other parts of the world.

- Dancer

BERMUDA TRIANGLE

by Bahama Mama

Belief is a strange thing sometimes. A fellow will have no problem saying that elves and dwarfs exist, that people can wave their hands and strike a man dead (or turn him into a toad, for that matter), or that a great, big, fire-breathing lizard was elected president. But when you talk to him about the Devil's Triangle, he just shakes his head, throws up his hands and says (in an oh-so-serious voice) "There must be some rational explanation." When are folks gonna learn that the rational explanations went away when the magic came back? Why is it so hard to believe that there's something going on in the Triangle that science just can't explain away?

- Because the existence of magic doesn't invalidate rational, scientific thinking, lady. Sure, magic changed our view of the universe, changed it radically, but it doesn't invalidate science and it can be explained. I'm tired of people who invoke magic (pun intended) as a way of saying that science is somehow deeply flawed and we should all go back to living in huts and relying on the village shaman. Just because there's no explanation doesn't mean it's unexplainable.

- Skeptic

If you ask me (and Captain Chaos did), it's all about fear. People are afraid of things they don't understand and can't explain. It's why people feared magic and metahumans so much when they first showed up (and fear them still, in many

places). But people have gotten explanations for the stuff of the Awakening and a chance to get used to the idea of sitting next to a troll or an ork like me on the bus, or seeing a wizard whistle up a spirit out of thin air. The rest, the things we can't explain, people do their best not to think about them or else they just believe, as hard as they can, that there's a good, safe, "normal" explanation for it all. I'd love to do the same thing myself but I (and you) can't afford the luxury of ignorance.

I'll tell you right up front. I don't know what the bloody hell the Devil's Triangle really is. If you want to know that, you're welcome to come down and look around for yourself. But I can tell you what's been happening down here and what folks are doing about it that might be of interest to you. Before I get into the current events, let me tell you the Triangle's history.

They didn't start calling it "the Bermuda Triangle" until just over a hundred years ago, though I've heard that the name "the Devil's Triangle" or "the Devil's Sea" goes back further than that. Folks also don't always agree on exactly where the triangle begins and ends, though most say the three points are Bermuda, the southern tip of Florida, and Borinquen (or Puerto Rico for those that haven't kept tabs on the Caribbean League). Stories about the area go back as far as 1492, when Christopher Columbus sailed into the area of the Bermuda Triangle and encountered compass trouble and strange fogs and winds. Ever since then there have been ships and planes vanishing into the Triangle every now and again, and stories about how navigational instruments go crazy and people lose their way, seeing strange lights out there in the sky or water.

Though many people over the years have investigated the Bermuda Triangle, no one has come up with any proof of anything unusual there except for the stories of things that have happened. They've checked the water, the ocean floor and the air, run scans of all kinds and found nothing. After the Awakening, in 2030, some magicians even explored the Triangle in astral space, thinking magic might explain what happened there. They didn't find a thing, either. Nothing to explain things that happened there, anyway.

- That's not entirely true. The study (conducted by students and faculty of the University of Chicago's Magical Studies Department) did turn up a slight astral background count that made astral space "fuzzy" in the area of the Bermuda Triangle. The background count was not especially high, however, nor could they account for how it could have affected physical things like ships, planes, or navigational systems in any way. Thus their findings were "inconclusive."

- Gandalf

- It's worth pointing out that at least one of those investigating magicians died under mysterious circumstances just a year later.

- Conspir-I-See

So folks mostly stopped paying attention to the Bermuda Triangle. Some more disappearances happened (seven of them

in the years from 2011 to 2060), but they were blamed on storms, equipment failure, pirates or the like, with only the tabloids and the fringe groups picking up on the idea that the Triangle was responsible.

- In fact, I know a number of pirates tried to take advantage of the Bermuda Triangle legend, making ships in the area "disappear" without a trace (like the authorities aren't going to look for a missing ship just because it vanished in the Triangle). Of course, most ships with radios and GPS systems were able to send distress signals when they were attacked, telling the world exactly what happened, but efforts to use the legend as a smokescreen persist.

- Limbo

- I've got to say that seven disappearances in fifty years in an area like the Bermuda Triangle, known for severe weather, hurricanes, and so forth, just isn't that unusual. You're talking a plane or boat turning up missing with no explanation every, what, seven or eight years or so? That's hardly what I'd call a rash of mysterious disappearances.

- People Watcher

- Maybe so, Watcher, but it doesn't explain what's been going on lately.

- Da5id

Since the summer of 2061, there have been *nine* disappearances in the Triangle, all under the same sorts of conditions and all with no explanation. They include a cruise liner, an Aztlan ship, a flight of CAS military planes, and a search and rescue plane sent out to look for the missing liner. Some of the vanished planes and ships reported navigational trouble and encounters with "strange, luminous fog" before radio contact with them was lost. They simply vanished off radar and satellite surveillance systems, like they disappeared into thin air. The Caribbean League and Confederate American States officially chalk the disappearances up to bad weather. The Aztlaners have inferred that the CAS military had something to do with the disappearance of their ship, the *Tlaloc*.

- Both are far more reasonable explanations than some mystic mumbo-jumbo. The Caribbean has seen some of the worst hurricanes in the past century this last year or so, including some very sudden tropical storms. Those alone could explain the disappearance of various ships and planes, to say nothing of increased pirate activity and ongoing tensions between Aztlan and the CAS over nearly everything from Denver to San Antonio to the Yucatán. Aztlan maintains that the CAS had been aiding the rebels with arms shipments (which the CAS denies) and there have been threats against shipping in the area. I'm pretty sure at least some of the "pirate attacks" were actually cover-ups for Aztlan/CAS hostilities.

- Skeptic



Since the Yucatán earthquake registered in March, all kinds of new effects have been sighted in the Triangle. Mana storms may have been seen, though they are short lived and usually end up being part of a larger disturbance like a hurricane so it's tough to tell if they really are mana storms or not.

Some of the most common stories are about strange storms or banks of fog that roll in suddenly. Others claim to report seeing or hearing things out in the darkness or the fog, particularly ghostly shapes like other ships or planes, strange lights and sounds like a ship's horn or even voices. Some of them might just be products of an overactive imagination and too much rum on a cool night at watch, but there sure seem to be a lot of them these days. Astral rifts have been blamed, but that may be a knee jerk reaction to everything else going on in the world.

- Another item of note: the Atlantean Foundation has some kind of research project going on down in Bermuda, ostensibly investigating the Bimini Road, an underwater "road" of marble-like stone off the coast of Bermuda that some have associated with the Atlantis legend. I've heard that Foundation-sponsored boats and personnel make forays out into the Caribbean, sometimes overnight, before returning to the headquarters the AF has set up on the western side of Bermuda. Anyone know what they're up to?

- Casper

CALLANISH

by Oakthorn

There's an old legend among the Celto-Britannic peoples, as old as the land itself, that says when the king is weak, the land suffers. It's tied to the king's ancient role as shaman as well as leader of the people. It also has a great deal to do with the obsession that Celtic peoples had about the king being without blemish or physical defect. The legendary Tuatha king Nuada had to step down from his throne when he lost a hand in battle, even though he had it replaced with a magical silver one, sort of the first cyberware. Part of the belief is that when the land suffers, it's the duty of the king to sacrifice himself to restore the land to health. It's no surprise that modern kings aren't too fond of that particular part of the legend. But legends in the Sixth World have a way of turning out to be true, and there are plenty of people who believe in them.

What's this have to do with Callanish? Well, Callanish is one of the great standing stone circles in the British Isles, found on the wind-swept Isle of Lewis off the coast of Scotland. It's a rocky isle located about 19 kilometers away from modern Stornoway. The local druids care for the site, which is considered property of the Crown under the watchful eye of the Lord Protector and the druidic orders. That's what makes what happened there recently all the stranger.

During the day of the Winter Solstice, December 21st, 2061, the local druids performed a ritual in Callanish circle. It was a cel-

ibration of the forces of nature and the gradual return of the power of the sun as the days began to grow longer, along with an honoring of the return of magic to the world with the fiftieth anniversary of the Awakening. There wasn't anything unusual about the ritual itself and everyone was enjoying the Yuletide revels that evening while someone else was busy at Callanish.

The next morning a druid novice discovered that the stone circle had been "desecrated," as he put it. The young druid found the standing stones of the circle covered in symbols painted in blood, with additional blood poured on the ground inside the perimeter of the circle. In front of the central stone monolith were the remains of a Black Angus bull, clearly the source of all the blood. The bull had been expertly slaughtered and stripped of its hide, which was bundled up in the center of the circle, stitched together with strips of rawhide and sinew. Symbols were painted on the central monolith as well.

The Lord Protector's office immediately dispatched druids to assist the local police in investigating the crime. Thanks to some friends within Primrose Hill, I've heard some of what they uncovered in examining the site. The most interesting thing was the fact that the wards the druids set around Callanish were undisturbed, suggesting that whomever came to the site knew exactly what they were doing and implying the possibility that they had "inside" help. I understand that the police are checking on all the local druids as well as many on the nearby mainland. The ritual was ancient Celtic in style, as were the symbols and techniques used. The slaughtering of a bull is a sacrifice to the ancient gods, and oftentimes seers or shamans were sewn up inside a bull's hide to give them visions of the future. It's possible that the ritual was part of some sort of vision quest or an attempt to contact a powerful spirit of some kind.

Whoever performed the ritual (and there must have been a number of them to have sacrificed the bull, stripped it of its hide, and sewn someone into it in a fairly short time) definitely knew what they were doing. No one saw or heard anything going on up at Callanish that night, though an autopsy of the bull suggests the ritual happened sometime around midnight. Investigators found no astral signatures among the stones the following day, suggesting they'd been expertly cleansed by the perpetrators themselves since the local druids said they did nothing to attempt to clean up the site before investigators arrived. They've found no DNA evidence, no useful ritual links, no clues as to who carried out the ritual or why. But I have a theory, for whatever it's worth.

There are rumors in the Edinburgh shadows about a group calling itself the Holy Circle of Alba. It's made up of radical druids who feel that the king should be even more beholden to the priesthood than he already is. One of their key points is the revival of the old pagan rituals, including the possibility of human sacrifice to honor the gods and to appease and heal the land in times of need. They're supposed to be a secret organization, but some of us have heard a little about them, though I have no idea how many members they have or who they might be. The ritual at Callanish fits the profile of a group of druids devoted to the ancient rituals (no matter how visceral they might be) and it seems to me like they were looking for some kind of sign. Whether or not they got one, I have no idea.

• I've heard of these Holy Circle wankers, too. They supposedly had something to do with the disappearance of some nutter toxic shamans from up near Tynesprawl. If they're going around taking out toxic shamans, why are they the bad guys?

• Rooter

• It's not all cut-and-dried, term. The Holy Circle is supposed to be dedicated to the regeneration of the land. That doesn't necessarily make them toxics or crazy (though I question the sanity of anyone who's willingly sewn up inside a gore-covered bull's hide). They think they're the good guys, but that nobody understands the rightness of what they're up to. They probably took out that toxic because he was a threat to their sacred mission, but they'll just as easily justify cacking you or me as easy as you please if they think that's what they've got to do. Sounds to me like their big thing is a belief that the king has to get the shop in order for the land to really recover. If I was the Lord Protector's Office, I'd start getting worried.

• Kinder

• FYI, Callanish is located on the Scythe (or Sickle) Ley, one of the major ley lines in Scotland. From what I've heard, it sounds like the Scythe Ley has been more active than usual since the solstice. Now you could say it's just because a lot of ley lines around the world are showing unusual activity, but maybe it has something to do with that late-night ritual. Maybe the ritual was intended to "wake up" something about the ley and start some process. If so, I bet we'll see something going on around the sites down near Wales by the equinox, if not sooner.

• Darius

• I don't think so, Darius. I think a lot of folks are veering off in the wrong direction with this one because of a little too much Anglo-centrism. Sure, Scotland is part of the United Kingdom now, but what a lot of people forget is that it's been an independent country before, as well as being the conquered subject of the English more than once. When the Awakening hit, Scotland was far more affected than Britain (though not as much as Ireland). A lot of Scottish wilderness has regenerated (and continues to grow at an astounding rate). There are more paranormal animal species in Scotland than Britain, and there are more wilderness druids active in Scotland. The druids in England tend to be homebodies, more comfortable in their libraries next to a roaring fire with a glass of sherry than out mucking around in the woods, but the Scots druids get out there and get their hands dirty. One of the things I recall was that they were working to expand the network of ley lines in Scotland for some reason. Maybe the reason nobody knows what happened at Callanish is because there are enough high-placed Scottish druids in on it that they can supply a cover-up. For what? Well maybe the land the Holy Circle wants to save isn't Great Britain or England but Scotland. And maybe the king they're talking about isn't George VIII but a king who



isn't recognized by temporal authority. Sounds to me like Scotland could be the next Amazonia or Tir na nOg if these druids get their way.

• Wilder

CRATER LAKE

by Spes

That one person's misfortune is another person's good luck is perhaps the sole reason I am still alive. That, or the possibility that I overestimate my importance in the scheme of things. Either is a distinct possibility. Still, I am alive and as in charge of my own destiny as anyone can claim to be, having left my homeland behind, some would say just in time. It has been a difficult time for the people of Tir Tairngire, particularly those who rule. The Land of Promise, which once lived up to its name, is now struggling with things it also works to hide from the rest of the world. They are things you should know about if you ever deal with my homeland in the future.

Some of you may recall the information I provided Shadowland about Tir Tairngire just over seven years ago, including the unusual happenings at Crater Lake. For those who are unfamiliar, Crater Lake is the ancient caldera of an extinct volcano in Tir Tairngire in the Cascade mountain range. The lake is some 9.7 kilometers wide and 42 kilometers in circumference, with a maximum depth of 610 meters. High lava cliffs surround most of the lake. A small island called *Tesetelinestéa*

rests near the center and is believed to be the former top of the volcano (which collapsed back into the caldera). For many years after the founding of Tir Tairngire, Crater Lake was set aside as a kind of national park, where people were allowed to come and enjoy its natural beauty.

In May of 2054, the Tir government closed off Crater Lake and imposed a military cordon around the area. Not only was no one allowed into the area of the lake, but trespassers were also shot on sight. The skies above the lake were sealed off using bound air elementals to keep planes at bay (assisted by Tir ground forces equipped with surface-to-air missiles). The government even took measures to blind spy satellites passing over Crater Lake to ensure complete secrecy for their activities there.

• All essentially correct. I've heard a number of conflicting stories about what was really going on there, most of them involving a lot of elf mages, elementals, and weird mystical drek, but nothing confirmed with a single scrap of physical evidence (trust me, chummers, the cyber-cam and headware is well worth the investment!). All that we know for sure is that the Tir cordoned off Crater Lake for a good 18 months, from May of 2054 to November of the following year, and that security in the area remained higher than before even after the cordon was lifted.

• Genghis

• It certainly soured a lot of peoples' interest in visiting Crater Lake, I can tell you that. A trickle of tourism began making its way back into the area when the cordon was lifted, but it never really approached the levels it used to see before. I've heard that there was almost a sort of stigma attached to visiting Crater Lake and that the Tir government quietly put people who visited under surveillance, especially if they spent a long time there or visited more than once. There's definitely something there the Tir is trying to protect or keep secret.

• Holly

• Might have something to do with rumors that the Tir is mining orichalcum from the lava cliffs near the lake and along the upper slopes of the mountain. I'd be willing to bet that someone found a natural vein of orichalcum there and the Council of Princes figured they had to move fast to claim it for the government before some private citizen or corp decided to stake a claim and go public. They sealed off the area, paid off the people involved (or just made them disappear) and once the operation was secure (or they'd mined out all that they could) they put things back together like before.

• Bleys

By the end of 2055, the cordon on Crater Lake was relaxed and tourism eventually resumed, albeit at a lower level than before. Certain elements of the Tir government kept a watchful eye on Crater Lake. Looking for signs of what, I don't know. The military still kept Crater Lake cordoned off from the air—air traffic was rerouted around the mountain and satellites were still kept from seeing what was going on there. The island of *Tesetelinestéa* was also kept off-limits to visitors.

• Interesting trivia bit. Near as I can tell, *Tesetelinestéa* means "skull of the dragon" in Sperethiel. Anyone got any ideas why the elves named the island (formerly known as Wizard Island) that?

• Tamlin

• I'm guessing the elves found something like an old dragon lair on the island and that's why they closed it off. I mean, just think about how much drek Dunkelzahn had to give away in his will. Think about how much wealth there must be in the hoard of a dragon. If a wizworm sleeping on the island never woke up, there'd be a treasure trove there just waiting to be plundered.

• Wiley

• Yeah, only problem with that theory is the elves named the island *Tesetelinestéa* long before the cordon came down. So if they knew there was a dragon lair there, why the big military reaction?

• Hoffman

About a year later, in 2056, a strange aurora was reported above Crater Lake. That same year saw an increase in the number of unusual magical events in Tir Tairngire. The ones I know of include at least three suspicious suicides (including

one murder-suicide) where the authorities suspected some sort of magical coercion. A forensic mage in Portland was reportedly killed by a specter while investigating a murder. Three Tir youths undergoing the Rite of Passage were mauled by an unknown type of paranormal in the wilderness and their bodies partially eaten. The list goes on, though the incidents become less and less frequent after 2057.

• The hazards of living in the Awakened world, chummer.

• Reigndance

• No, more than just that. We're talking a definite statistical anomaly, higher than normal for everywhere else, high even for a magical place like the Tir.

• Numbers

Then came Dunkelzahn's assassination, and the Tir Council of Princes reinstated the cordon around Crater Lake that remains to this day. Security has remained tight around the lake and the island, as well as on the lower slopes of the mountain. Protests—few though they might be—have been ignored or met with vague statements about "hazards to public safety," that imply some sort of bio-chemical contamination in or around Crater Lake.

• I've scoped out the security here, and in my opinion the Tir isn't trying to keep people out so much as it's trying to keep something in—they're containing something, and I'm not sure I want to know what.

• Interrupt

In 2061, a number of Tir citizens requested permission from the government to hold observances of the passing of Halley's Comet from *Tesetelinestéa* and were refused. Those holding ceremonies and vigils in the Cascades near Crater Lake reported seeing a brilliant aurora of light play above the lake for nearly an hour on the autumnal equinox. The Tir government issued no statement regarding the display and pretends that it never even happened. Nothing about it was carried on the news. The military forces around Crater Lake remain, but I have heard that there has been a reassignment of some personnel recently for unknown reasons. I hope to gather more information. If anyone has knowledge of what is happening at Crater Lake, please contact me.

• I can tell you one thing for free. The personnel reassignments Spes is talking about? They're for real. Seems the Tir is shifting a lot of people off duty at Crater Lake and moving in new personnel. The interesting thing is, apart from normal rotation, nearly all the people being reassigned away from Crater Lake are Awakened—magicians and adepts of various stripes—and nearly all the personnel being assigned there are mundanes through and through, some of them with pretty heavy combat cyberware. That tells us that whatever is going on at Crater Lake, it's something the elves can't (or don't want to) expose the Awakened to, or that's dangerous to them. It's also some-

thing that's got the Council worried enough to send in some heavy firepower.

• Keep

MOUNT KILIMANJARO

by Spiderwebb

"The Sixth World is a place where modern progress meets with ancient mysticism, often with explosive results."

I read that somewhere and I can tell you, nowhere is it more true these days than Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa. Kilimanjaro lies near the equator in sub-Saharan Africa on the Serengeti Plain, almost halfway between the Indian Ocean and Lake Victoria. It's the largest freestanding mountain in the world, rising over five kilometers above the flat land of the plains with two peaks, Kibo (5,895 meters) and Mawenzi (5,149 meters). The people native to the region have revered Kilimanjaro throughout their recorded history, calling it a dwelling place of the gods and ancestral spirits—a holy land. Though there have been tourism and climbers coming to Kilimanjaro for many years as well as settlements on the lower slopes of the mountain, there has never been a significant change in the mountain itself until recently. It's here where the modern world and the ancient myths collide.

The development of space has become a primary goal for many of the megacorporations. Orbital facilities and space stations offer numerous resources and opportunities, from the manufacture of low-gravity materials to scientific research to (eventually) tourism and even wide-scale colonization. The problem with space is that it can be damned expensive getting things there. The price of lifting material into space is astronomical (no pun intended), even with modern spaceplane technology. Spaceplanes and shuttles still use heavy booster rockets similar to those used on spacecraft as long as a century ago, providing the thrust needed to carry a vehicle into orbit. The problem is that those boosters and their fuel are heavy, leaving less room for cargo. These days the cost of a space launch is somewhere in the neighborhood of a thousand nuyen per kilo. That means a ticket to orbit costs you in the tens of thousands of nuyen, to say nothing of boosting heavy materials like satellites or building materials up there. The megacorps look at the bottom line and don't like what they see.

To solve the problem, they've come up with another way of getting up and away from the muck and mud of earthbound life, one that suits everyone and slashes costs. The Corporate Court proposes building a mass-driver system on Earth that uses a laser-assisted magnetic system to fire smaller, lighter space vehicles into orbital velocity. If it meets the projected specifications, the system is capable of making a launch roughly every half hour and putting 360 tons of payload into orbit every hour, cutting cost down to around 20¥ per kilo. With the members of the Corporate Court all contributing to the building costs (and sharing in the profits and utility), the launch facility could show a huge profit inside five years (which is like a blink from the point of view of far-thinking corporations).

• I've got to say, I'm no corporate apologist, but this is a really sound plan. From what I've heard about the proposed launch facility it can really deliver the low-cost orbital launches needed to make serious expansion into space a reality. Not only that, but the corps are showing uncommon good sense in cooperating on this project, though the megacorps will naturally benefit the most since they'll control the facility. Still, it'd be good for everyone.

• Pyramid Watcher

• Well, not everyone thinks going into space is a good idea, chummer. A lot of the Awakened obviously don't agree.

• Tyler

Sounds great, doesn't it? There's only one catch. The design specifications for the system require a fairly high launch point to minimize the distance between the ground and orbit. Ideally the launch site is a high mountain, located near the equator to utilize the Earth's own spin, with open land toward the west (the direction the launches would go). As it happens, Kilimanjaro fits the profile perfectly—so much so that it was assumed as the site in the original proposal. The Corporate Court gave its enthusiastic permission to go ahead, and the cooperation of the local governments was virtually assured. What the corps didn't consider was whether or not the spirits of Kilimanjaro wanted it to be a launch facility.

The first scouting party the corp sent up to the peak of Kibo to survey the land for the launch port reported a creepy feeling, as though they were being watched the whole time. Some said they saw figures wearing nothing but lowland wraps and kilts watching them from a distance, or humanoid shapes moving out among the tumbled rocks and snow or in the clouds. The Corporate Court dismissed the reports as irrelevant. The next team sent in to do some surveying and collect rock samples reported the same thing, only this time they said some spirits, looking like African tribal-types, appeared to them and warned them not to tamper with the sacred ground of Kilimanjaro. After that the local guides and workers wouldn't even go near the mountain in the company of the corp people.

• It sounds as if the spirits are the same each time, which makes them free rather than spontaneous. Probably some of those Corporate Court mages should spend their time searching the metaplanes for some True Names instead of mountain climbing.

• Henning

• I'd rather spend my time mountain climbing, thank you. Also, the latest studies of spontaneous appearing spirits seem to indicate they have memories of the last time they were manifested. As we all know, studies are as reliable as a corporate suit, but it makes dealing with the spirit world a whole new ball game.

• Talon

Not willing to give up just on the say-so of some spirits, the Corporate Court sent in a "negotiating team" of mages and shamans, with orders to take care of the problem obstructing the launch system "one way or another." From what I heard, they tried negotiation and when that failed they tried banishing. That's when things got ugly. A corporate shadow-team recovered the bodies of the six negotiators from the peak of Kibo two days later. From then on, it's been undeclared war between the corporations and the spirits of Kilimanjaro.

- Hardly undeclared. The Corporate Court declared war when they chose to defy the will of the spirits. They were given fair warning.
- Rainbow Warrior
- Who cares, chummer? The money's good!
- Stalker
- It ought to be. In addition to the questionable nature of spirit-hunting and the difficulty of dealing with spirits in general (you'd better have at least one good magician or adept along for the ride) there's also the problems offered by the natural terrain. The peaks of Kilimanjaro (where most of the action is happening) are over five kilometers above sea level. They're perpetually capped in snow, freezing cold and low on oxygen. It's very easy to pass out from oxygen starvation (especially if you're exerting yourself a lot) and die of exposure. You need cold-weather gear and breather masks, and the spirits don't care about the cold one bit. And if the stories are true, they can make it a lot colder up there when they want to.
- Mista

Though the corps are looking into alternative launch sites, there really aren't any as well suited for their plans as Kilimanjaro. They're not about to give up their multi-trillion nuyen plan for orbital expansion just on the say-so of a bunch of uppity spirits. So naturally, the corps have decided to treat the spirits the way they handle all unruly pests—exterminate them. The Corporate Court (through a variety of intermediaries) is hiring spirit hunters to track down and eliminate as many spirits on the mountain as possible. Since it's tough to provide a bounty on spirits, the corps are paying experienced people large flat fees to skrag as many spirits as they can.

Naturally, the spirits are responding in kind, and some of the local folk have gotten stirred up over it. Though the corps have the puppet governments in their pockets, some of the local tribes don't take too kindly to the extermination of their sacred spirits, some of whom they consider their ancestors. That's led to local terrorism, sabotage and so forth, and tribal shamans lending aid to the spirits when and where they can.

- Rumors abound that Kilimanjaro may become a cause célèbre for the Awakened in other parts of the world, drawing aid from places like Amazonia. Already pro-Awakened groups are trying to organize grass-roots support to get the corpora-

tions to stop development on Kilimanjaro. But the corps stubbornly refuse to budge, labeling the spirits (and the people helping them) as "terrorists" and invoking corporate extraterritoriality to take care of the matter themselves. They claim they have a right to defend their assets against attack, particularly since they have the local governments (and therefore the law) on their side.

- DV8

NASCA

by Decker del Sol

Nasca is an area a little over 500 square kilometers between the Pacific coast of Peru and the Andes mountains that's recently become of interest to a lot of people. The area is best known for the "Nasca Lines," elaborate designs cut into the desert soil by the Nasca people somewhere between 500 BC and 500 AD. The lines weren't really rediscovered until just over a hundred years ago; they even built the trans-American highway across parts of the lines without really noticing them. That's because the Nasca lines are shallow, cut into the sandy, rocky soil to reveal the yellow-colored sand beneath, and because the lines are huge, several kilometers in length. It wasn't until people saw them from the air that they realized the lines formed pictures and patterns. Since then, a number of people have studied the Nasca Lines but they still haven't figured out exactly why the Nasca carved them or what purpose they served.

- Scientists deny it, but the Nasca lines were created as a landing field for aliens! Ancient astronauts had contact with the Nasca and the people of Peru like the Incas, as well as the Mayans. Nascan and Mayan carvings show the arrival of "visitors from the stars" and things that look like spacecraft and creatures wearing spacesuits or similar life-support gear. The lines helped the aliens navigate using the natural geomantic energies of the Earth to align with the planetary energy grid, the same energy Tesla tried to tap into with his inventions before they were suppressed.

- Roswell

- Cap, isn't it time to change the posting filter? It seems to be getting clogged with drek again.

- Skeptic

- It's free speech, chummer. You get what you pay for.

- Captain Chaos

"I am everywhere."

Hundreds of lines criss-cross the area, some more than 8 kilometers long and one as long as 65 kilometers. They form all kinds of geometric shapes. Some scholars think the geometric lines form some sort of astrological or solar calendar, keeping track of the movement of the stars and the timing of the equinoxes and solstices. Beneath the geometric lines are older lines that form images of different pictures, mostly animals. There are dozens of figures, including a spider, several birds



(including a condor and a vulture), a monkey, a whale, a snake, a llama and a lizard, as well as a flower and a man with a halo and similar designs. Some of the animal figures are over a hundred meters long.

- Post- (and even pre-) Awakening shamanic types associated the Nasca Lines with some kind of totem images created by the Nasca, maybe even sacred ritual sites (though "ritual area" is usually archeologist-speak for "we haven't a damned clue what it was used for").

- Holly

The Nasca Lines drew some scientific inquiry in the later half of the twentieth century. After the Awakening, researchers from several different universities visited Nasca to study the lines and discovered exactly nothing about them. The lines were more vivid when seen from the astral plane than most physical things, but that was about it. There was no significant magical energy or astral evidence around, so people quickly lost interest in Nasca and went back to investigating more interesting things. From time to time shamans and shaman-wannabes came to visit the lines to perform rituals under the watchful eye of the Peruvian government, but that was about it.

Then on December 21, 2061 (which is the Summer Solstice down here south of the equator), a group of people holding a ritual at Nasca to "honor the ancestors" (or some drek like that) got the special-effects ride of their lives. The Nasca lines lit up like they were filled with neolux, visible from miles away, and glowed all through the night. When dawn came up over the mountains, the glow faded, but shamans said the lines still glowed brightly in the spirit world. The magical power of the Nasca plateau had Awakened.

- Since that night, people have reported visions and shamanic experiences in Nasca—including more than a few mundanes who'd never experienced anything similar before. It sounded like a phenomenon similar to what happened at Dunkelzahn's Rift back in '57 and in a few other native sites in North and South America.

- Wiley

Nasca became important literally overnight, as tourists and shamanic-wannabes flocked to the place in droves. The Peruvian government was forced to send in the military to cordon off the area and control the flow of people, since the lines themselves are very delicate. Hundreds of people tromping through the area could wreak untold damage on them.

It wasn't long after the lines flared up that the government of Amazonia contacted Peru and offered assistance in studying the Nasca lines. Peru, like most South American governments, doesn't trust Amazonia very much, but when similar offers started coming in from Aztlan—along with universities around the world and places like the Atlantean Foundation and the Dunkelzahn Institute—the Peruvian government

found themselves with a real national treasure on their hands. They agreed to allow small groups of researchers access to Nasca for scientific purposes.

Unfortunately, the Japanacops started throwing their weight around, and the Peruvians started getting a lot more restrictive about people visiting the Nasca lines. Japan has been a longtime ally of Peru (to put it nicely), and the Japanese were rather cranky given the disaster that had recently struck their homeland. Most of the researchers were ushered out of the area and politely told they'd be informed when they could return (with the implication that they shouldn't be holding their breath). Rumor has it that personnel from several major Japanese corporations have been investigating the Nasca lines since then, though what they're looking for is anyone's guess.

- I can tell you this: Amazonia is not happy about being kicked out of Peru while the Japanacops poke around South America's latest magical treasure. There's an unspoken assumption in Amazonia that they should control all the magical resources on the continent. The idea of something like the Nasca lines being right there but out of their reach must be maddening to them.

- Brujo

- Peru is a Japanese enclave, much like San Francisco, Cairns or even the Philippines. The difference is that in Peru, the Japanese have really been running it that way since the turn of the century. They didn't need to have the military build-up the other places did. So, status quo remains in Lima, even with the nominal Japanese fleet heading home. The corps control part of the government, so they still maintain the iron grip they always had over the people in the largest cities. There is rebellion in the outskirts—either the communist Sendero Luminoso or the pro-Amazonia Tupac Amarus control various sections of the country—but it is unorganized at best. So the only "authority" from Lima would, of course, support the Japanacops.

I just fear a new civil war like the kind that has made South America proud.

- Inca Sun God

- I've heard that the Japanese have a profound new respect for the forces of the Awakened world, particularly geomancy and magic relating to the cycles of nature (go figure). The Emperor seems to concentrate more and more on the possibilities of magic over the almighty nuyen. It truly is a new sun rising in Japan.

- J-Rick

- Maybe the Japanese mages in Nasca think that the natives had some deeper understanding of those forces, and that the Nasca lines might let them communicate with (or even control) those forces on a wider scale.

- Chan

- It's a little more mundane than that, chummers. Japan is well and truly fraggled, and they're looking for new territory to call their own. With the drek going down in San Francisco, they're looking south and probably thinking that Peru would make a nice little addition to the Empire, especially if there are magical resources worth having there.

- Wave-Form

T'AI SHAN

by Lei Kung

I was going to start off this post with the old "may you live in interesting times" quote, but it's become cliché at this point. I don't think the ancient sage who thought of that particular curse ever imagined times as interesting as the ones we live in now. We're way past interesting and well into "crazy" if you ask me—and I'm a mage. I'm supposed to be used to the crazy stuff. But nature has a way of reminding us that just when we think we've got it all figured out, we don't really know anything about how it all works.

I don't consider myself particularly religious. I believe that most of the great spiritual truths are simply beyond our understanding; "the Tao that can be named is not the true Tao" and all that. Still, if I was a religious man, I'd be impressed by what's going on in the world. Along with things in Hong Kong, the biggest Awakened event in my corner of the world is happening back on the mainland, deep in the heart of ancient China at a place called T'ai Shan.

T'ai Shan is a mountain overlooking the plains of the Yellow River, the cradle of Chinese civilization, about 400 kilometers (give or take) from Peking. The ancient Han peoples worshipped the forces of nature and built temples at T'ai Shan thousands of years ago. Emperors visited there and climbed the steps of the mountain to visit the temples, pray and make sacrifices for success in their endeavors. The mountain is associated with ancient Taoism and the magic that goes along with it. It's a place of powerful *chi* where magicians and sorcerers learned their arts and communed with the forces of nature and the spirit world.

Though worship at T'ai Shan diminished greatly over the past two hundred years, the mountain is still held as sacred. Even the warlords and petty dictators running their own kingdoms in China consider it neutral ground. Nobody bombs or sends soldiers to T'ai Shan because everyone knows that such sacrilege would only mean bad luck for the people responsible. Too bad that attitude didn't prevail when it came to non-Chinese places like Tibet. But anyway ...

T'ai Shan's neutrality almost ended in a bloodbath when pilgrims began noticing an increased number of nature spirits appearing on the mountain. Several saw visions of the ancient gods. This began about a week after the news of Ghostwalker's rampage through Denver.

Word spread quickly that there was more than just spiritual power to be had at T'ai Shan, there was also magical power. The flow of *chi* through the mountain was considerable, something that a clever warlord could turn to his advantage. Factions on either side of the Yellow River began to converge



on T'ai Shan in hope of claiming it for themselves. It looked likely there would be a battle over control of the mountain shrine, but then the dragon intervened.

• I respect Lei Kung, but his information here is not up to par. T'ai Shan lies in the industrialized province of Shandong, home to many corporate interests such as Mitsuhama and Wuxing. When those corporations made motions towards T'ai Shan, the neighboring Henan communists suddenly invaded Shaanxi, seized Hua Shan, and amassed forces for an eastward invasion to take T'ai Shan. The Canton Confederation also initiated a blockade of Shandong, sending naval vessels up the coast (unimpeded by absent Japanese vessels that had withdrawn to Japan under Imperial order).

• Ming

• Sounds like a run-of-the-mill Chinese border clash. What's the big deal?

• Grunt

• The big deal is that T'ai Shan is one of the Five Sacred Mountains.

• Junk

The great dragon Lung appeared in the sky over T'ai Shan, on New Years Day (that's the Chinese New Year), and nearly everyone took it to be an omen. An omen of what depended on who you asked. If anyone had asked me, I would have told that that the sudden appearance of a dragon is a bad omen.

Lung settled near the Temple of the Daughter of the Mountain, the goddess Pi Hsia Yuan Chun, lady of the dawn. Then he sent messenger spirits to the leaders of the factions near the mountain and invited them to ascend the 7,000 steps of T'ai Shan (on foot, of course) to meet with him. From what I've heard, Lung very politely and patiently explained that T'ai Shan was under his protection. The first person to set foot on any of the 7,000 steps with a weapon, much less order soldiers to move on the mountain, would serve as his next meal. The dragon's point was clearly made; the forces of the warlords withdrew immediately and none of them have attempted to molest T'ai Shan since.

• This is true, but I believe Lung's goal was to make sure military assets from corporations were not called forth.

• Ming

The mountain itself remains as it always has, for thousands of years. A wide set of 7,000 stone steps zigzags its way up the steep slopes of T'ai Shan, a path walked by countless pilgrims over the centuries. The rocky slopes of the mountain are covered with cypress, pine and similar plants. In fact, one of the pines near the path is even said to hold official office in the Imperial Court, granted as a reward by an Emperor that rested in its shade once. It takes about six hours to climb the stairs on foot, and some pilgrims actually make the entire trip on their knees in honor of the holiness of the place.

The Temple of the Peak, dedicated to the gods of the mountain, lies at the foot of T'ai Shan. There are several temples along the path to the top, including those dedicated to the Empress of the West and the Goddess of the North Star. The South Gate of Heaven near the summit leads to the Temple of the Daughter of the Mountain. The greatest temple at the summit of the mountain is the Temple of the Jade Emperor, dedicated to Emperor Yu Huang, honored as the supreme deity by the Sung Emperor Chen Tsung and ruler of the Taoist pantheon ever since. This is the temple Lung has taken over as his lair.

Pilgrims continue to visit T'ai Shan, many of them now seeking the dragon's blessing and wisdom. If you want to visit Lung, all you have to do now is be willing to climb 7,000 steps and risk the chance that he'll be having a bad day and decide to eat you.

• I don't get it. Lung's shied away from the public spotlight ever since he first appeared. He's never had a publicly known lair, even in a place as isolated as T'ai Shan. Why change things now?

• Giles

• I can't say for sure, but I can tell you one thing; where a dragon is concerned there's always a reason, and it's usually a devious one. I'll note that Lung's presence on T'ai Shan has lent a certain stabilizing influence to that part of China. It prevented a minor war (or at least a corporate annexation), after all. Lung has also had the leaders of several Chinese nations come to visit him on two occasions since his arrival. No word on what they talked about, but I wonder if Lung isn't taking a page from Dunkelzahn's book and either looking to play kingmaker in China or maybe take control of the whole place himself with some (semi-) trustworthy human lackeys to run the show.

• Dragonslayer

• I also wonder how much Lung's activities have to do with what's happening in Japan. New leadership and chaos from the various Imperial decisions means a weakened Japan. Maybe Lung can get the billions of Chinese to finally do what he wants—rid himself of Ryumyo under the guise of taking and stabilizing Japan. Look for a counter move from Ryumyo, and my guess is it won't be pretty.

• Dare

TEOTIHUACAN

by Q

Teotihuacan is the most sacred ritual site in Aztlan. Its name is often translated as "the City of the Gods," but actually means something more like "place of those who have the road of the gods." For the longest time I was pretty sure that if there were any gods in Teotihuacan, they were some of the most bloodthirsty bastiches in the whole damn world. Nowadays I'm not so sure.

Teotihuacan is located just outside the Aztlan capitol of Tenochtitlán, to the north and west. The site itself is about 24 square kilometers, centered around the massive Pyramid of the Sun, a step-pyramid over 200 meters wide (as wide as the Great Pyramid in Egypt, but only half as tall). The ruins also include the smaller Pyramid of the Moon and several other step-pyramids and structures, including the Ciudadela ("the Citadel"), which holds the Temple of Quetzalcoatl, the "Feathered Serpent" god of Aztec myth.

• You know, I always wondered; if the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl was pictured as a feathered serpent and we've got real feathered serpents these days, was this ancient Aztec god really a dragon, or maybe some sort of racial memory of them?
• T-Rex

• Might be. Then again there are some magic experts who say that the reason so much drek in the Awakened world resembles things out of human mythology is because mana is psycho-sensitive, that is to say it responds to thoughts and (particularly) emotions. There's a Jungian magico-historian in Switzerland who thinks that the Universal Unconscious somehow directs the manifestations of the Awakening. In essence, all these critters and such exist because people believed they existed. The Awakening made mythology literally come to life. Of course, the theory doesn't explain some paranormal species that don't exist in any cultural myths, or a number of other things, but it's an interesting idea.

• Selene

• Great. Now I'm afraid to sleep. If we can dream up things like SURGE and this new third eye I have in my forehead, then we are seriously ragged.

• Six-Eyes

Interestingly enough, the Aztecs didn't build Teotihuacan, they discovered it already abandoned. Apparently the city was built by a people similar in many ways to the Aztecs and the Mayans sometime around the first century AD, with indications that the Pyramid of the Sun was built on the foundations (or ruins?) of an even older structure that stood there once. Teotihuacan was probably abandoned around 700 AD and wasn't discovered by the Aztecs until centuries later. They believed the city was built by the gods and turned it into a ritual site for their worship and sacrifices.

Later, the Aztecs fell to the guns and germs of the Conquistadors and Teotihuacan was forgotten again for quite some time. In the twentieth century, it became a tourist attraction and archeological curiosity, but no more than that, though it was rumored that local people still used it to perform shamanic Aztec rites passed down over the centuries to honor the old gods.

Teotihuacan rose to prominence again when Aztlan replaced the failing Mexican government and brought back much of the culture of the Aztecs. The ruins were declared a

national treasure and all efforts were made to preserve them while Aztlan magicians began conducting rituals there again.

• Though not as many rituals as you would think. The Azzie government went to a lot of trouble to build the Grand Temple in Tenochtitlán. They made a lot of noises about building their own new temples while reserving ancient ruins like Teotihuacan for "special" rituals that came along once in a blue moon and that, more often than not, didn't involve a lot of blood and gore. If Teotihuacan is the power site so many people think it is, why aren't the Azzies exploiting the hell out of it?

• Taylor

• Good question. Unfortunately, I don't have a good answer. The best I can tell you is that there's some kind of reverence the people of Aztlan have toward Teotihuacan, particularly the higher-ups and the spell-slingers. They treat the place with kid gloves. Maybe they're worried that it can't stand up to the more heavy-duty rituals they've got in mind. Or maybe they're practicing some kind of magical conservatism by not wasting the really good mojo on everyday things.

• Pyramid Watcher

• Or maybe, just maybe, Teotihuacan doesn't like a lot of the Azzie rituals ...

• Socio Pat

• Oh, come on! It's not a person we're talking about here, it's a heap of rock and clay bricks!

• Keating

• Sure, but mana has shown itself to have "opinions" before in the form of predisposition toward or away from certain kinds of magic, no? Perhaps that's the case here.

• Socio Pat

A shaman named Quauhtlatoa, who's fairly important but not one of the usual high priests, led the most recent ritual at Teotihuacan. It happened right after all the drek started going down in the Yucatán, with the spirits and such kicking Azzie hoop all over the place. The ritual was said to "honor the gods and ask for their guidance" in the official press release, but it was very hush-hush other than that. Since then there's been a higher than normal amount of activity at Teotihuacan, and there are Jaguar Guards at the checkpoints keeping an eye on the ruins. Maybe Aztlan is preparing some kind of counterstrike against the Yucatán rebels?

• I don't think so. I've actually heard of Quauhtlatoa (whose name means "Speaking Eagle" by the way). He's something of an outsider in the Aztlan religious hierarchy. Apparently he's got some pretty unorthodox ideas and is critical of the current religious structure. Normally, that'd be enough for him to disappear into a teocalli one night and never be seen again, but appar-

ently he's pretty popular with his flock. He's also the head of his own little initiatory group that broke away from one of the larger shamanic groups in Aztlan. I suspect the government humored him before because he was harmless and silencing him now would only make him a martyr. Now all of a sudden they've turned to him in their hour of need and Quauhtlatoc is trying to help out. The question is: what is he doing?

• Matador

• Trying to make peace with all the angry spirits around the Yucatán, from what I hear. I've also heard he isn't having much luck. Sounds to me like there are a lot of forces in the spirit world hacked off at Aztlan, though there are also a lot of spirits at the beck and call of the Aztec priests and such (including those freaky blood spirits). Sounds to me like the makings of a spirit war down in Aztlan, and Teotihuacan might end up being one of the battlefields.

• Oddjohn

• The only rumor I've been able to dig up here is that conjuring is banned. Out right banned. They actually have mage guards watching for it. I actually saw them beat down a shaman trying to call forth a sky spirit. The best I can figure is that Aztechnology polluted everything down there so much that the spirits don't come so pure and clean any more.

• Zapper

POSTS FROM THE EDGE

• This is an evolving document (like most of the others on Shadowland) and we've still got information coming in about other Awakened sites around the world. Here is a collection of short posts on some of the hot spots. We'll try and expand on them in the near future. As always, if you have something useful to add, go ahead and post it.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 21 June 2062 at 08:56:13 (PST)

CHICAGO

• What a godawful fraggin' mess Chi-town has become. The relief efforts and rebuilding are going to be going on in Chicago for years, and there are huge parts of the Noose that should just be bulldozed so they can start over again. If you ask me, another Chicago fire is just what the place needs; burn everything to the ground and start rebuilding from scratch. Chicago is still dealing with the legacy of the Universal Brotherhood, the attack of the bug spirits, the Cermak nuke and Ares' "solution" to the bug spirit problem, which happened to unleash what may be the biggest anti-magical menace the world has ever seen: Strain III. The magical environment of Chicago is a mess. There are still free-floating clouds of Strain III, which will chow down on any magical energy they encounter



like astral piranha. Despite the Ares press releases, the bugs aren't all gone. Some of them are still around in the shadows, looking for fresh meat to build new hives or, worse yet, pursuing their own agendas now that they're free of the hivemind. The area around the Cermak blast (in addition to still giving off enough rads to make you glow in the dark) has hideously twisted astral space, to the point where it's even more fatal than radiation exposure. All in all, a real vacation spot.

• Tiger-Tyger

"Fearful Symmetry"

• On the other hand, if you're looking for a change of place to make some cred and not a place to plan your next vacation, Chicago's got plenty of opportunities. The black market is thriving and smugglers are paid well for damn near anything they can move into the area, from basic necessities to electronics to brain-benders and recreational items. The government still needs people to go on bug-hunts and to deal with other threats to local security. Lots of corps and research organizations are interested in Strain III, the bugs, the effects of the Cermak blast and drek like that. They want escorts for their own eggheads to keep them from getting killed or people who can collect samples and bring them back. And there's always looting and treasure hunting, though most of the good stuff is pretty picked over by now.

• Prime Runner

• At least the Strain III wiped out most of the ghouls. No more worrying about cannibals. Thankfully, the bacteria seems to keep the shedim away too.

• Bruce

• I heard something weird went down at the Sanctum last year, the night of the fiftieth anniversary of the Awakening. I guess Jason Two-Spirits showed up and waltzed through security like it was nonexistent. Two-Spirits was a weird old shaman who warned about the bugs before they came. He founded the Sanctum as a sanctuary when the wall went up. When Ares moved in, they mysteriously found the Sanctum empty, with Two-Spirits and his "tribe" all gone. A new crew of bug hunters moved in and set up shop, and even run a good data source on the Noose Net. No one knew what happened to Two-Spirits, and he didn't bother to explain when he showed back up—he just walked in and went out again. I guess he left something he needed behind.

• Raid Array

DUNKELZAHN'S RIFT

• There isn't as much to say about one of the things at the heart of recent events, simply because the UCAS government has clamped a lid down so tight on Dunkelzahn's Rift that nobody has found a way around it (yet). After all the drek that happened with the rift in the end of '61, the UCAS government actually built a complete enclosure around it. It's warded and may actually be warded by more than one magician. Traffic had long since been diverted away from the section of the road near the Watergate where the explosion occurred, and the government has apparently acquired all the property around in by eminent domain.

The facility surrounding the rift now looks to be a temporary one. There are already plans in the works, however, to build a permanent "containment facility" around the rift to conceal it from the outside world and ostensibly to study it, figure out what it is and perhaps find a way to close it permanently. The idea's got the full support of both the legislature and the local populace, since nobody's eager to see something else pop its head out of the rift into the middle of DeeCee—especially since this one might decide to stick around rather than flying off to wreck Denver.

• DeeCee Insider

• I've heard the UCAS gummint has no plans to find a way to collapse the rift just yet, because they're not through studying it and trying to figure out a way to turn it to their advantage. The UCAS has always been a step behind in the magical arms race. Though they've got competent mages serving in the military and universities like MIT&T (not to mention the Dunkelzahn Institute), the UCAS has never quite gotten a real "feel" for magic like the NAN, the Tir, Aztlan or pretty much fraggin' everybody else on the bloody continent. I think the suits in DeeCee want their own magical trump card they can hold against the mystical arsenals of the rest of the world and think that the rift might just be it.

• Connor

• A friend of mine told me that one of the reasons for keeping the rift around (in addition to the fact that nobody knows how to close the thing) is that since the end of the year, the rift has somehow stabilized and become less of a danger to anyone in astral space. Not only that, but the UCAS has started sending explorers through the rift to see what's on the other side. They're hoping to learn more about what came out of the rift by going back through and paying a visit to the other side. The problem is the reports don't match ... each one is radically different from the other. The lead researchers assume that means the rift is a direct line to the metaplanes. But if they are, they aren't ones that anyone has cataloged before.

• Fed Spook

• Correction, Fed. Something is preventing them from closing it.
• Spy On The Wall

DUNVEGAN CASTLE

• The ancestral castle of the MacLeod Clan in Scotland, Dunvegan hasn't been used as a castle for years. Since before the Awakening, it's been a museum of Scots history with displays particularly related to the MacLeod Clan. It's become of more interest since the Awakening for two reasons. First, Dunvegan lies on the Scythe Ley that runs down from the stone circle at Callanish up on Lewis, making the castle a site of magical power. Secondly, Dunvegan Castle is home of the Fairy Flag of Dunvegan, an ancient artifact of the MacLeod Clan. The flag is a banner said to have been given to the Chief of the MacLeod Clan in the clan's hour of greatest need by the Sidhe, or the faery folk. It's said that the Chieftain of the Clan, the MacLeod of MacLeod, can wave the banner in the air and invoke the aid of the Sidhe up to three times before they come reclaim their gift. Legend has it that the banner has been used twice so far to aid the MacLeods in battle. Now it sits in a gilt frame on display in the castle. Supposedly since this past Yuletide, people have claimed to hear the sound of distant trumpets—like an approaching army—in the night outside Dunvegan Castle. Some even say that the Fairy Flag glows brightly when it is viewed from the astral plane.

• Oakthorn

• Here's an interesting little tidbit: in 2035, shortly after Tir na nOg was formally recognized, the Tir government offered to buy the Fairy Flag from Clan MacLeod for a huge sum and got turned down flat. Not long after that, the Clan upped security on Dunvegan Castle and installed some modern security measures to protect the Flag itself.

• Highlander

• So are you saying that this flag thingie really has some kind of magical powers?

• Shasta McShasty



• The MacLeods certainly believe that it does. MacLeod pilots used to carry pictures of the flag with them during World War II. Supposedly every one of them made it back alive.

• Wilder

• Do you think anyone other than the elves might be interested in the flag?

• Tiny

• Why do you ask?

• Wilder

• Just curious.

• Tiny

EGYPT

• Along the banks of the Nile, people are reporting power sites and magical manifestations all over Egypt, from the Great Pyramids to the ruins at Karnak and Abydos. The most important phenomenon is the appearance of ancient structures on the astral plane, many of them looking like they probably did thousands of years ago. Archeologists and historians are going ape-drek over the idea of studying what might be actual "astral echoes" or "remnants" (as they're being called) of actual buildings from ancient Egyptian civilization. The Egyptian government is doing their best to accommodate the requests, but they want to limit the number of people tromping around the ancient ruins. There are some people concerned that there may be more to the "ghost structures" than meets the eye.

• Dr. Jones

• Good bet there, Doc. The Nile River Valley is also seeing a huge upswing in reports of other Awakened phenomena, particularly sightings of spirits in and around the ruins, but also in urban areas like Cairo and Alexandria. A lot of these spirits look like ancient Egyptians in dress and manner, while some actually look like some of the ancient Egyptian gods; people with the heads of animals. Attendance of religious ceremonies has gone up, and there's talk about all sorts of Egyptian revivalist cults springing up, which the local mullahs (Muslim holy men) are none too pleased about.

• African Queen

• It's possible that at least some mention of "animal-headed gods" may relate to Egyptian shamans, who often express their shamanic mask by taking on the appearance of an animal-headed person while working magic. Of course, it's also possible that the shamanic mask in ancient times may have explained the origin of the Egyptian myths of animal-headed gods. Anyone who's interested can drop by the Myth & Magic SIG to discuss it.

• Gwydion

• Oh, here's a goodie. Seems that over the past month or so, no less than forty people in Alexandria have turned up claiming to be reincarnations of ancient Egyptians. Nobody famous (yet), but all people who went through the full Egyptian burial rites and mummification: priests, servants, family members of the Pharaoh, and such. The best part is that Egyptologists and historians have tested these people—most of whom were lower class and minimally educated. Many of them understand ancient Egyptian writing better than the scholars do, and all of them speak it! What's more, they know details about tombs and other ancient sites that would be difficult for the average man on the street to know about, along with details about everyday life in ancient Egypt. Could this reincarnation thing be for real?

• Tyler

• Possibly, or people could be tapping into some kind of astral energies or even spirits lingering in the area and Awakened by recent activity. There was an interesting paper by a fellow from Cambridge about how reincarnation may simply be an ability to retrieve ancestral memories from a kind of "living library of memory" (what some traditions call the Akashic Records) that may exist somewhere out in the metaplanes. These people may not be literal reincarnations, just people with the ability to tap into this "memory bank" as it were.

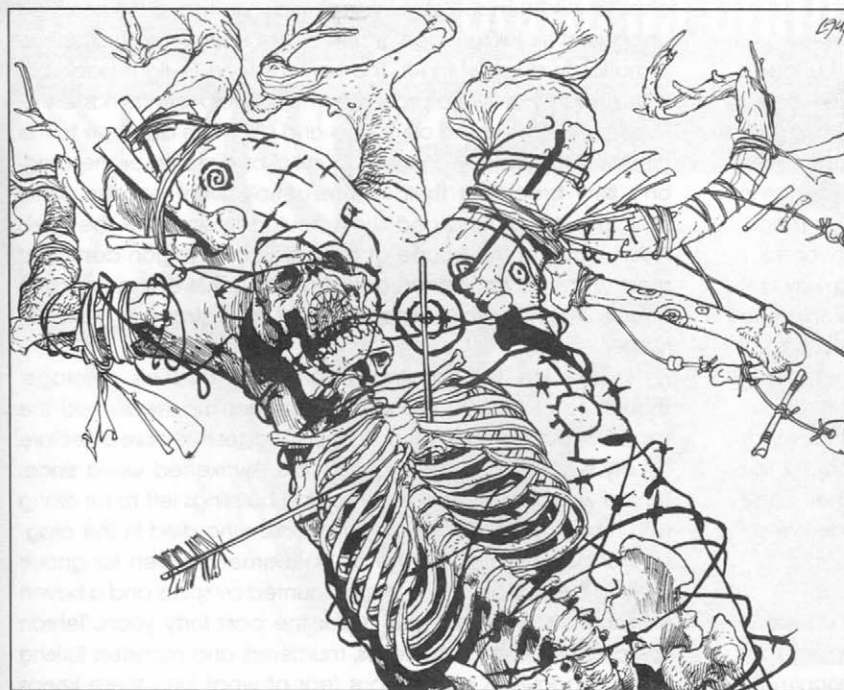
• Neddy

MOJAVE DESERT

• Oh my head. The Mojave Desert may not have many calendars, but it seems like every freaking magical thing here knew when the comet was coming by and they decided to celebrate by throwing a party. That's the only way I can describe what's been going on in the Mojave for the past four months or so. It's a total free-for-all. To start off with, some kind of astral mumbo-jumbo happened out at Ubehebe Crater, and more and more spirits have started showing up there. The crater was home to a lot of spirits before, but now it's like the crowd at a Ginny Grove concert, standing room only. The other desert critters have been a lot more active, too, and there seem to be more of them all the time. I guess one party of paranaturalists from LA came out into the desert to catalog some of the new species and disappeared. The party sent to find them found their land rover half buried in the sand with one door torn off its hinges. Some folks from the expedition were inside, but they were nothing but dry bones and tattered cloth. The weird part is there was no blood or any sign of what happened to the rest of them. If you're looking to visit the Mojave, chummers, think twice, then think again.

• Desert Rat

• On the other hand, it seems a lot of the paranatural plants the Anasazi harvest in the desert have been working overtime, too. They're growing wild all over the place, and lots of people want samples of what the Anasazi have. So corporations and univer-



sities have been hiring people for expeditions into the desert to gather samples of the local flora and fauna. In particular demand are magical experts who can handle a rogue spirit or a deathrattle that decides to cause trouble.

- Road Runner

- The Pueblo invasion forces have been having a hard time in the Mojave as well. They've lost enough soldiers that they've pulled everyone out except for "essential personnel." I heard they tried to send in a team of shamans, but they refused orders. Can you believe that? If a Native American military shaman doesn't want to mess with it, then no one should mess with it.

- Old 57

- The Pueblos are resorting to hiring "outside assets" to deal with the problem. That means work, chummer, though it could cost you your life.

- Road Runner

MT. SHASTA

- The great dragon Hestaby has been a busy lizard these past few years. After spending years in relative seclusion in her Mt. Shasta lair, the dragon has become more and more of a public figure since Dunkelzahn bought the farm. The First Wyrn passed on a little something to Hestaby, we know not what, contained in a private datastore on Zurich Orbital. Whatever it was, the dragon has been busy pursuing some new sort of agenda. I've got unconfirmed reports from reasonably solid sources that say Hestaby has been making the rounds. The dragon has met with representatives of the Draco Foundation,

the United Talismonger's Guild and, most surprisingly of all, gone to visit Royal Hill in Tir Tairngire for a top-secret meeting with the Council of Princes. Hestaby's allies haven't been idle, either. The Shasta Lodge has been recruiting even more shamans than before, and Hestaby has earned the good will of the gypsies of Northern California since she was placed in charge of distributing Dunkelzahn's largess to them.

- Wyrn-Watcher

- I really don't like the sound of that meeting between Hestaby and the Tir elves. They've been at odds since the Tir invasion of California, and everyone knows it's only Hestaby's presence on Mt. Shasta that keeps the Tir from claiming all the disputed land in Northern California. If they cut some sort of deal with the dragon, what's to stop them?

- Red Rover

- I dunno, chummer, you'd think that the elves would know better than anyone not to cut deals

with dragons ...

- Talairé

- The Mt. Shasta area has seen an influx in refugees lately, as metahumans flee the expansion of the rogue Japanese officer, General Saito, in the Bay Area and Central Valley. A lot of metahumans are being persecuted under Saito's regime, so many are now seeking sanctuary under Hestaby. Of course, elves get screwed either way, as a lot of Northern Californians don't trust them given proximity to the Tir.

- Headwaters

- Magical activity seems to have increased in the area of Mt. Shasta as well. Over the past few months there have been some pretty spectacular auroræ borealis shimmering in the night sky up over the mountain. Whether they're a natural phenomenon because of the comet (or something else) or the work of the shamans or the dragon, I don't know. I can tell you that there's some kind of magic involved, though.

- Kitt

- Maybe the Shasta Deer are doing it.
- Skeptic

- Hmmm, maybe.
- Shasta Sam

- That was sarcasm, you twit.
- Skeptic



SALEM

• I kind of wonder sometimes. The sleepy little seaside town of Salem was best known for witch trials that happened hundreds of years ago. Now Salem's best known for having more witches than you shake a fragging broomstick at, especially these days. Salem was a center for neo-pagans and modern witches even before the Awakening, and it experienced a brief resurgence in population (both Awakened and otherwise) after the magic came back. Things settled down over the past twenty or thirty years, but now they're picking up again in a really big way. Not only are more and more of the Awakened coming to Salem to learn how to use their abilities, but the Wiccan and neo-pagan religions are getting more and more converts than ever, following the magical drek that's been going on. At the Solstice celebration held on the anniversary of the Awakening, thousands of people came to Salem, swelling the town to capacity. The local real-estate market has gone through the roof. They can't build and refurbish housing fast enough to meet the demand.

• Fisherman

• The population boom isn't all roses for Salem. There's a growing resentment against the "nouveau witch" and the fact that so many Awakened people are buying up real estate and moving into the area. All the spell-slingers around are spooking the mundanes and there's a developing elitism among the Awakened of Salem. A lot of them have got it into their heads that Salem is "their" town, and it pretty much is. The only businesses worth talking about cater to the Awakened or to the tourists who come to see the "witch village." All the kids from the surrounding area like to come to Salem to hang out and look cool by wearing neo-pagan getups that look like something that came from a Renaissance Faire crossed with the latest club gear. Some pro- and anti-Awakened graffiti has started cropping up. A popular one is "the witch hunters were right!" If you ask me, it's only a matter of time before things start to get ugly up in Salem.

• Groton Witch

TEHRAN

• For those of you who don't remember 2020 (which is a disturbing number of people), the Ayatollah of Iran declared a jihad (holy war) against the Awakened that year. In response, the great dragon Aden appeared in the sky over the Iranian capitol of Tehran. The dragon is reputed to have said, "If you

choose war, then see what you would war against!" Aden then unleashed his full fury against the city of Tehran and began systematically demolishing it. The Iranians tried to fight back, but their military hardware proved no match for Aden's mastery of magic; missiles veered off course and did more damage to the city than the dragon. Planes ran afoul of air spirits or the dragon's fiery breath, or their systems simply went haywire. Tanks sank into the ground and shells couldn't penetrate the spells Aden wove. In the course of a full day, the dragon destroyed most of the city of Tehran and sent hundreds of thousands of people fleeing with thousands dead, including the Ayatollah himself.

Aden left Iran, having clearly delivered his message. Though some Islamic groups still consider the Awakened the spawn of evil, no religious or political leader has dared declare a holy war against the forces of the Awakened world since. Tehran was abandoned, its remaining buildings left to rot along with many of the bodies of the people who died in the dragon's attack. The ruins of the city became a haven for ghouls seeking a meal, as well as being haunted by spirits and a haven for criminals and smugglers. Over the past forty years, Tehran has become a den of thieves, murderers and monsters lurking in the shadows. A superstitious fear of what lurks there keeps most people well away, except for those drawn to what Tehran has to offer them.

• Dervish

• Seems like those superstitious fears are well founded, D. The latest scuttlebutt says that Tehran is becoming a city of the dead in more ways than one. There are stories about dead bodies getting up and walking along with ghosts coming out of the woodwork. Seems that some of those ghosts aren't too happy about the zombies walking about and vice versa, but both of them can agree that they don't like the living one bit. So now you've got the ruins filled with the dregs of society along with ghouls, zombies, vampires and ghosts. I can bet that the government looks at it as a problem that'll solve itself. Either the ghouls kill off the vermin or vice versa. It's a win-win situation.

• Meat Bingo

• Yeah, until one side or another wins and decides the pickings are too slim at home, so they decide to go a-wandering.

• Dominatrix

GAME INFORMATION



This section provides information and rules for incorporating magical fluctuations, the land of Australia and numerous other Awakened sites into your *Shadowrun* campaign.

In addition to the core *Shadowrun, Third Edition (SR3)* rules, gamemasters will find the magic rules presented in *Magic in the Shadows (MITS)* necessary to use this section. The rules for assigning threat levels to non-player characters (NPCs) found under *Creating Prime Runners* on p. 83 of the *Shadowrun Companion (SRComp)* will also prove useful. The events described in *Year of the Comet (YOTC)* tie in heavily to this book, and go hand in hand with much of the information provided here. Finally, the *Critters* book supplied with the *Shadowrun Gamemaster Screen* provides statistics and powers for many of the creatures described here.

MAGIC IN FLUX

Manic Mana (p. 6) presents a number of new magical phenomena (and updates on existing phenomena described in *MITS*). Rules and guidelines for these new mana wrinkles are presented here.

MANALINES

Manalines are described on pp. 84–85, *MITS*. With the passing of the comet, a number of new manalines have appeared around the world while other manalines have moved, faded or disappeared entirely. More manalines are also becoming aspected (p. 85, *MITS*), affecting magic in particular ways, which are often based on local influences on the manaline such as the type of magicians using it on a regular basis and the beliefs of the local population.

Awakened characters who are not astrally active may be able to sense that they are within the presence of a manaline or power site in the same way they could detect the presence of a background count (by achieving 1 success on a Magic Test with a target number equal to 12 minus the manaline's rating).

POWER SITES

Power sites are likewise described on pp. 84–85, *MITS*. In the wake of the comet, new power sites are cropping up all over the world—particularly in places of strong emotional, spiritual or magical significance, or where powerful magic energies have been harnessed. Some



power sites have weakened or faded, but generally there seem to be more sites than before.

Temporary power sites also seem to appear as a result of situations that create a temporary background count (p. 83, *MITS*) aligned with a certain type of magic. For example, a particularly powerful religious service may create a temporary power site for followers of that religion in a small area. It is the gamemaster's discretion as to how large, potent and long-lasting these temporary sites are, but they should only appear under unusually strong emotional conditions.

More and more power sites are becoming aspected toward the people that interact with or control the site for a prolonged period of time, "imprinting" their astral signature on it and channeling the power of the site toward their own ends. The gamemaster should feel free to make a site controlled by a particular person or group for at least a lunar month (28 days) aspected toward the "controlling" characters' magic, while hindering everyone else.

MANA SURGES

Mana surges are described on pp. 86-87, *MITS*. In general, mana surges have become more common following the passage of the comet, appearing around the world. Surges can be small (affecting a single city block) or encompassing an entire continent. They tend to be brief but can last for days, making the use of magic both unpredictable and dangerous.

Mana Flares and Ebbs

Mana flares and ebbs are serious changes in the local mana level for a period of time, making magical energy more or less available for a time, both of which have their drawbacks. Though more predictable than mana surges in that flares always increase mana level and ebbs always decrease it, the two still cause considerable problems for magicians.

Mana flares and ebbs are rated in terms of their Force, just as a spell or spirit. A normal mana flare adds its Force to the Force of any spell that is cast or spirit that is summoned within the affected area. Unfortunately, this increase in Force is involuntary. The magician must make all tests (including resisting Drain) at the increased Force. If the total Force exceeds the magician's Magic attribute, then the Drain does Physical damage. So a magician who wants to cast a Moderate-damage Fireball spell at Force 4 in a Force 3 Mana Flare would actually cast the spell at Force 7 (even if he only knows it at Force 4). The target has to resist the effect of a Force 7 spell, but the caster also has to resist the Drain of a Force 7 spell. If the caster's Magic rating is only 6 or less, he has to resist Physical Drain.

A mana ebb works in the opposite way from a flare, subtracting its Force from the Force of all spells cast and all spirits summoned in the affected area. If this reduces the subject's Force to 0 or less, nothing happens. The spell fizzles harmlessly, or the spirit doesn't appear. The good side of this is that the caster doesn't have to resist Drain, which is also reduced to 0. In effect, the magician didn't channel enough mana to make anything happen, including Drain. Magicians must use Sorcery and Conjuring at higher Force ratings in mana ebbs in order to accomplish anything at all. So if a shaman summoning a nature

spirit in a Force 2 mana ebb wants a Force 4 spirit, she must conjure the spirit as if it were Force 6. When determining whether or not Drain causes Physical or Stun damage, use the Force of the effect *before* the mana ebb rating is subtracted from it. In the previous example, the shaman would get a Force 4 spirit, but her Conjuring Test would be against a target number of 6 and she'd resist Drain as if she'd summoned a Force 6 spirit.

Mana ebbs and flares are detectable with an Astral Perception (6) Test, just like mana surges. Neither flares nor ebbs affect "fixed" magical abilities like astral projection or adept or critter powers.

MANA STORMS

Mana storms and their effects are described in detail on p. 111. The gamemaster should be very sparing in having mana storms appear anywhere outside the Australian Outback, though they can (and do) occur elsewhere (almost always in areas that have a background count).

ASTRAL SHALLOWS

An astral shallow brings the physical and astral planes into closer contact, allowing beings on the physical plane to perceive the astral plane. All beings in the affected area are able to use astral perception (p. 171, *SR3*) as if they were dual natured, but without being able to affect (or be affected by) things on the astral plane. The characters can look, but not touch. Awakened characters can use astral perception and projection normally in a shallow, except that astral perception requires only a Free Action rather than a Simple Action to activate.

Anyone in a shallow can therefore see astral forms, auras, spirits and so forth, and can make rolls on the Assensing Table (p. 172, *SR3*) to gather information about what they see. This includes the auras of living beings in the shallow, both physical and astral. Mundanes in a shallow can even try to learn the basics of the Aura Reading skill, but shallows generally don't last long enough for mundanes to pick up the skill, and it's only useful to them in a shallow or similar condition.

ASTRAL CONSTRUCTS

An astral construct is like a physical object on the astral plane. It behaves like a physical object in all ways, including having a Barrier rating (p. 124, *SR3*). Unlike magically charged things like foci and wards, constructs cannot fight in astral combat. Breaking through a construct is identical to breaking an object in the physical world (p. 125, *SR3*) except the character uses Charisma in place of Strength and can use Sorcery in place of any mundane Combat skill.

Astral constructs have all the normal properties of their physical counterparts. Astral beings can even use constructs as weapons in astral combat, though weapon-constructs are relatively rare. They do the same damage as a physical weapon, except astral characters substitute Charisma for Strength and can use Sorcery in place of the appropriate Combat skill, as mentioned above.

Note that constructs appear spontaneously, and apparently at random. There is currently no known means of creating a



FACTS AT A GLANCE

City	Sydney	Melbourne	Brisbane	Canberra	Perth	Cairns	Darwin
Population	3,790,000	5,550,000	3,425,000	640,000	2,665,000	752,000	1,060,000
Human	45%	69%	31%	66%	62%	94%	62%
Elf	14%	14%	12%	9%	7%	2%	10%
Dwarf	10%	8%	16%	8%	13%	1%	7%
Ork	19%	7%	24%	10%	9%	2%	11%
Troll	9%	1%	15%	6%	7%	0%	8%
Other	3%	1%	2%	1%	2%	0%	2%

THE AUSTRALIAN MATRIX

Australian RTGs	Security	Access	Control	Index	Files	Slave
Northern Territory (AU/NOR)	Orange-4	7	8	9	6	6
Queensland (AU/QNS)	Green-4	6	7	6	6	6
South Australia (AU/SOU)	Green-5	7	9	6	6	6
Sydney (AU/SYD)	Blue-4	5	5	4	4	4
Tasmania (AU/TAS)	Blue-3	4	5	4	5	3
Western Australia (AU/WES)	Green-3	5	7	4	5	5

construct; characters are limited to whatever is around. Many constructs are practically useless and include things like small toys, bits of string or thread, small gems or pebbles and so forth. The ability to modify constructs is also limited by the nearly complete lack of tools and other such things on the astral plane, though there are some magicians working on magical means to both create and modify constructs to suit their needs.

Constructs also present the problem of being completely immaterial with regard to physical objects. Thus, while a character using astral perception (or any other dual-natured being) can touch, pick up or even stand on an astral construct, when the character shifts back to normal physical perceptions the construct is completely intangible and cannot be carried.

Astral constructs are frequently associated with ghosts and hauntings (see p. 120, *MITS*).

Physical beings may be able to detect when they pass through an astral construct, just as with astral forms (see *Astral Detection*, p. 173, *SR3*).

Manifest Constructs

Some constructs have been known to manifest, becoming visible to living things on the physical plane (see *Manifestation*, p. 173, *SR3*). Manifest constructs have been linked to "sightings" such as ghost ships, haunted houses and the like. Most manifesting constructs only manifest according to certain conditions: the anniversary of a certain event, an astrological conjunction, solstices and so on.

Materialized Astral Constructs

Some astral constructs have been known to actually materialize in a physical form on the physical plane. A construct that

materializes in this way is dual natured, existing on both planes simultaneously. Constructs may not materialize in a place that is already physically occupied by another object or person; instead they will materialize in the closest available spot nearby. Materialized constructs have all the physical properties normally associated with their real world counterparts: wall constructs have a Barrier rating and may not be walked through, weapon constructs may be used to inflict damage and so on. Such constructs frequently have an "otherworldly" aspect: a chilling touch, a ghostly illumination, a smoky outline and so on.

Usually, astral constructs only materialize according to certain conditions (environmental, astrological or emotional factors, mana flares, etc.) and only do so on a temporary basis.

The astral constructs known as alchera are similar, though an alchera is an area of astral terrain that actually replaces the physical terrain. Alchera are described in detail on p. 113.

ASTRAL RIFTS

Astral rifts are natural phenomena that function similarly to the free spirit power Astral Gateway (p. 117, *MITS*). A given rift lasts for (2D6) x 6 hours, possibly longer at the gamemaster's discretion. Anyone in the area affected by a rift, mundane or Awakened, can use astral projection as if they were a full magician and are subject to all the normal rules given on pp. 172-177, *SR3*. A character who projects leaves his physical body behind. Once the character's astral form has entered the astral plane, it can move any distance away from the body subject to the normal rules for astral movement.

The character's body must be in the area affected by the rift (or another similar rift or astral gateway) for the astral and

AUSTRALIAN COST OF LIVING

Cost (Percentage of standard Seattle cost)

Item/Service	Sydney	Melbourne	Brisbane	Canberra	Perth	Cairns	Darwin
Cost of Living	150	125	100	120	90	110	100
Weapons & Ammo	110	125	110	150	110	120	90
Armor & Accessories	100	120	100	125	100	120	80
Security/Comm. Gear	90	70	80	60	90	100	75
Survival Gear	90	80	75	80	60	110	70
Electronics	90	70	75	75	80	80	75
Cybertech	120	110	110	110	120	100	110
Biotech	110	90	110	100	120	90	120
Magical Equipment	90	90	90	100	80	90	90
Vehicles	70	100	90	100	75	80	80

physical forms to reunite. So if someone moves the character's body away from the rift, the character is trapped on the astral plane until his Essence runs out and he dies. This also happens if the rift closes while the character's astral form is away. Characters who are normally able to astrally project can reunite with their bodies as usual.

Astral rifts also exist on the astral plane that allow astral beings to reach the metaplanes (p. 91, *MITS*) whether or not they are normally able to do so. In some cases, the two types of rifts overlap, one allowing physical beings to project onto the astral, the other allowing them to reach the metaplanes. Characters journeying on the metaplanes are subject to all the normal rules for astral quests given on pp. 92–95, *MITS*. If a metaplanar rift closes while a character is on the metaplanes, non-initiates die instantly. Initiates are unaffected.

Some astral rifts have been known to force those within them to astrally project, willing or not. In this case, the gamemaster can either rule that any character that comes into the contact with the rift is forced out of their body or require victims to succeed in a Willpower (Essence x 2) Test to avoid being sucked in. Rifts like these may also impede a projecting character from returning to his body, even if the body is in contact with the rift.

RUNNING IN AUSTRALIA

Australia covers the spectrum for running opportunities—from urban runs, corporate schemes and syndicate turf wars to wilderness adventures, spirit plots and magical mayhem.

GETTING IN/OUT

Entering and leaving Australia obviously involves air or sea travel, since the nation has no common borders with any other country. Official ports are carefully controlled by the authorities, but Australia has too much empty coastline to prevent the truly determined from getting in and out of the country.

Air arrivals and departures are handled by a range of airports across the country. Most towns of twenty thousand people or more operate at least a small public airstrip; major population centers offer the familiar bustling airport facilities.

International suborbital flights land in Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Canberra, Cairns and Adelaide, though the latter is specialized for industrial and cargo purposes. In addition, two cities boast semi-ballistic facilities—Brisbane services Asian and American routes, while Melbourne handles transit to and from Europe, Africa, the Middle East and India.

Australia's Customs and Immigration Service carefully controls the airports. Spot checks for contraband are quite common, and Customs officers are vigilant in the futile war against smuggling. Security for Qantas, the Ares-owned airline that operates most flights to, from and within Australia, is also highly rated and efficient.

Most major coastal cities operate seaport facilities, though they are primarily intended for industrial and shipping use. The Coast Guard is vigilant against smugglers, pirates and Indonesian raiders, especially in the areas of Darwin and Perth. Despite their efforts, however, piracy thrives, making sea travel a risky venture.

Visitors willing to arrive or depart illegally have a far wider range of options, though their journey will be commensurately riskier. Most crime syndicates and smuggling operations are capable of importing and exporting personnel without attracting official attention, and those with the appropriate contacts may find this a useful insertion route or escape plan. Most such smuggling occurs around the northwestern, northern and northeastern coastline, both by air and sea.

LEGALITIES

Australia has weapon laws roughly equivalent to those of the UCAS. The major exception is that the fines and punishments for pistols and rifles are exchanged, so that illicit possession and use of rifles incurs less of a penalty than illicit ownership or use of handguns.

Legal restrictions on cyber-weaponry, as well as cyberware and bioware that boosts reflexes or reaction speed, have been successful in reducing the availability of such items; apply a +1 modifier to their Availability ratings. On the positive side, security and police are less accustomed to spotting such illegal ware, so apply a +2 modifier to their Legality ratings.



LOCAL COLOR

The following sections describe elements that gamemasters can use to create a sense of place and give a unique flavor to Australia.

Culture Clash

Australia has taken on a large influx of immigrants over the past few decades, from Asians fleeing warfare and oppressive regimes in their home countries to metahumans fleeing racist pogroms and bigotry. Each wave of new arrivals has also brought along its own unique traditions, practices, entrepreneurs, criminal syndicates and so on. These changes have turned Australia into a melting pot of ethnicities and metatypes. Oddly, while many Australians welcomed these people in without prejudice, a backlash has developed against those that retain their cultural identities rather than assimilating into Australian mainstream culture. As a result, race and ethnicity are often not so much an issue as how well one "fits in."

Contested Turf

Australia's economy is being fought over by many factions. On the large-scale economic level, the traditional Eastern power block held by the Japanacops is being threatened by the rising power of the Pacific Prosperity Group, with the financial center of Melbourne becoming a contested battleground. In the shadows, dozens of syndicates and gangs struggle to control various elements of Australia's underworld, creating a situation where traditional enmities are being ignored in favor of beneficial alliances.

Dreamtime Myth

The Aborigine people remain attuned to the Dreamtime and their own personal Dreamings. Their legends, myths and spiritual beliefs are very rich, and liable to take on physical form within alchera.

Wounded Land

The mana storms scouring the Outback are a symptom of a land that has suffered grievously. The Aborigines, who consider themselves the protectors of this land, are struggling to preserve its sacred places and restore the damage done to the Dreamtime by cultural and environmental devastation. In the midst of this struggle, powerful megacorps brave the dangerous storms in stubborn attempts to exploit the land for all it is worth, battling with each other over the crumbs. In the face of stiff opposition from eco-activists, Aborigine tribes and the potent force of Awakened nature itself, these corps struggle for any advantage and profit, from mystic secrets to telesma to orichalcum.

Civilization Under Siege

Driven from the Outback, Australian civilization thrives in the coastal sprawls, pretending that a berserk Awakened world isn't banging on the gates. Every year,

however, the wilderness encroaches a little more and the occasional mana storm on the fringes keeps even the sprawl dwellers on their toes. This is nowhere more apparent than Sydney, perpetually threatened by the surrounding uncontrolled magic.

Drying Out

Water is precious in Australia, a land of drought and dry heat. Even in the sprawls, water consumption is regulated, though the privileged have water to waste while the poor go thirsty. Water smuggling is a profitable business, though finding unpolluted and unguarded sources of water can be a challenge.

AUSTRALIAN MAGIC

The magic of Australia's Aborigines has many unique elements, distinguishing it from the animistic traditions of other indigenous cultures. This section fleshes out Aborigine magic and provides rules for its use.

PATH OF THE DREAMING

Aborigine magicians, known as *koradji*, follow their own shamanic magical path. Aborigine magic is based on an understanding of the Dreamtime and its inhabitants, as well as a strong connection with the land and the magical power and knowledge it provides. Except where stated otherwise, koradji follow the same rules for shamans as given in the basic *SR3* rules and for the advanced magic rules in *MITs*.

Potential magicians are usually identified as children or young adults among the Aborigine tribes and apprenticed to elder koradji to learn to use their abilities. They also receive training from their totems in the form of dreams. Koradji training is long and arduous, and many tribes consider a magician only an apprentice until he or she becomes an initiate. Once the koradji's training is complete, further magical knowledge is usually gained from journeys to the metaplanes (p. 91, *MITs*).

Koradji have totems and totem modifiers, and use Magical skills as shamans do, though they have access to different types of spirits. Most koradji summon ancestor spirits (p. 16, *MITs*) rather than spirits of man. Only the extremely rare koradji adapted to the urban environment can summon spirits of man (instead of ancestor spirits). Some koradji are wilderness shamans (p. 16, *MITs*), giving up their ability to summon ancestor spirits or spirits of man for greater affinity with spirits of the land, waters and sky. These koradji tend to be particularly focused on the care of the land and the environment.

Nature spirits summoned by koradji tend to take on animal-like rather than humanoid forms. Spirits of the appropriate environment most often appear as the koradji's totem animal. For example, spirits of the waters summoned by a Crocodile koradji tend to appear as crocodiles.

Since their people are nomadic, koradji often create shamanic lodges that are open-air in design. The most common include elaborate sand paintings or a ring of specially placed stones. These function just like other shamanic lodges (p. 166, *SR3*).

Blood Magic

Blood is a sacred substance in Aborigine magic, representative of the life force. Koradji sometimes use a small amount of their own blood as part of making magic. Most of the time, this is no more than a few drops of blood used to seal a magical symbol or include in a talisman (see *Australian Enchanting*, p. 108). This has no game effect and doesn't even inflict as much damage as a Light Wound on the koradji. It's simply a special effect of their style of magic.

There are, however, some koradji who know the Sacrificing technique of metamagic (p. 133, *MITs*). It is nearly a lost art among them, and rarely taught (only at the gamemaster's discretion). Koradji only use Sacrificing on themselves; using it on other creatures or to summon blood spirits is considered an evil act. Koradji who abuse the power Sacrificing gives them are almost certain to attract the attention of malign spirits that attempt to corrupt them (p. 134, *MITs*). They may also lose totem bonuses or even lose the favor of their totem altogether, becoming mundanes.

Aspected Koradji

Koradji can be aspected magicians, just like magicians of other traditions (p. 160, *SR3*). Conjurers and Shamanists are more common among the Aborigines than Sorcerers. Aspected koradji have a somewhat more difficult time because they lack the ability to astrally project and make journeys to the metaplanes to speak directly with their totem. They must learn from teachers or on their own.

AUSTRALIAN TOTEMS

Aborigines believe every person has a totem spirit, though only koradji actually interact with their totems. A large number of totems are honored and followed in Australia. The following totems from the *SR3* rulebook and *MITs* appear in Australia, sometimes with slight modifications.

Dingo: The Australian version of Jackal (p. 155, *MITs*).

Crocodile: As described on p. 154, *MITs*, except that Crocodile allows his koradji to choose which type of spirit of the waters to apply his bonus to, rather than applying it only to sea spirits.

Fish: Found mainly among the rare few coastal and island Aborigines (p. 154, *MITs*).

Lizard: Same as the description given on p. 155 of *MITs*.

Scorpion: Rarely found among koradji living within a tribe, but sometimes the totem of lone koradji wandering the Outback (p. 157, *MITs*).

Shark: Found only among coastal and island Aborigines (p. 166, *SR3*).

Snake: Snake is associated with the Rainbow Serpent and considered one of the most potent totems. Snake koradji can choose to apply their totem bonus to any one spirit of the waters rather than a spirit of the land. Otherwise, Snake is the same as described on p. 166 of *SR3*.

Spider: Spider koradji are rare and tend to be loners, dwelling in caves, mud huts, or similar hidden places (p. 157, *MITs*).

Turtle: Found mostly among coastal Aborigines (p. 157, *MIT*s).

Wombat: The Australian version of Badger (p. 152, *MIT*s). Wombat koradji have a bonus with prairie spirits rather than forest spirits.

Nature Totems: Additionally, all nature totems (p. 157, *MIT*s) except Oak and Sea are found among the koradji.

Kangaroo

Kangaroo carries her children in her pouch and is ever watchful for danger. She knows the secrets of the Outback that allow her and her children to survive and prosper and she protects as only a mother can. She understands that fighting is only worthwhile when there are no other ways out. Kangaroo koradji learn to follow her example and avoid the worst dangers, while leading their tribe to food and shelter.

Environment: Prairie

Advantages: +2 dice for health spells, +2 dice for prairie spirits. Kangaroo initiates can learn the Movement critter power as a metamagic technique (self only, up to [Grade] times per day; see p. 265, *SR*3).

Disadvantages: -1 die for combat spells.

Koala

Placid and hidden among the leaves, Koala watches and understands. His wisdom is patience and calm in the face of any danger, along with knowing how to run and hide when the time comes. Koala's wisdom is great and he shares it willingly with those who show him the proper respect. Those who consider Koala foolish or harmless never truly see him. Koala shamans are patient to a fault and carefully evaluate all that they see and hear. They know how to use silence and concealment to their best advantage.

Environment: Forest

Advantages: +2 dice for detection and illusion spells, +2 dice for either forest or prairie spirits (shaman's choice).

Disadvantages: -1 die for combat spells.

TRACKING TABLE

Situation

Tracker using astral perception
Essence or Magic of target*
Active foci on target†
Inactive foci on target†
Sustained spell on target†
Use of critter power by target‡
Target has Traceless Walk adept power
Target is astral only

Time Passed

0-4 hours
4-24 hours
24-48 hours
Per 24 hours more

Environment

Rain/dust storm since passage
Visibility
Background count
Mana storm since passage

Target Number Modifier

-2
+3 - ([Essence or Magic] ÷ 2)
- (focus rating ÷ 2) (highest only)
-1
- (spell's Force ÷ 2) (highest only)
-2
+4
+4
-1
0
+1
+2
+1 or more
+ half applicable modifiers (max of +4)
+ (background count rating ÷ 2)
+ Force rating of mana storm

* The highest of Essence or Magic applies. Note that in cases of targets with Essence or Magic greater than 6, this is a *decrease* in the target number. A target using Masking (or Aura Masking) ignores this modifier.

† Use of Masking metamagic (p. 76, *MIT*s) to conceal the spell or focus eliminates this modifier.

‡ Only critter powers that affect the environment (as opposed to those affecting only the user) incur this modifier. The modifier applies only once, even if more than one power is used.

Platypus

A strange-looking creature, Platypus moves between the worlds of water and land, and knows the secrets hidden in both. She knows how to make life from the mud and how to swim to avoid danger. She dives to find the depths, but always makes her way back to the surface. Platypus koradji understand the paths of the Dreamtime well and split their time between the physical world and exploring the astral planes.

Environment: River

Advantages: +2 dice for river spirits, +2 dice for Astral Pool. (Note this gives non-initiate Platypus koradji an Astral Pool of 2 dice. See p. 58, *MIT*s, for more information.)

Disadvantages: -1 die for combat spells, -1 Initiative (Platypus koradji tend to be a bit dreamy and distracted).

ABORIGINE ADEPTS

Adepts can and do show up among the Aborigines, and their abilities help them and their tribe to survive in the wilderness. Most Aborigine adepts follow the Spirit Way or Totem

Way (p. 22, *MITS*) though magician adepts are also relatively common among the Aborigines. Magician adepts are considered koradji and accorded equal status.

Aborigine adepts follow all the normal rules from *SR3* and *MITS* and have access to all adept powers, though abilities focused on wilderness survival and hunting are by far the most common. Another common ability among Aborigine adepts is the Tracking adept power, described here:

Tracking

Cost: 1

This adept power relies on an unconscious ability to sense the minute and lingering signs of the passage of a living entity on both the physical and astral planes. The power can track a wide variety of targets, including spirits.

To use this power, the adept must begin at a location where he knows or thinks the target has been. The adept makes a Perception Test against the target's Stealth Open Test result, or a default TN of 6, whichever is highest. The tracker may add a number of dice equal to his Magic rating and may use Stealth as a complementary skill for this test (see p. 96, *SR3*). The target number is modified as shown on the *Tracking Table* (p. 106). A single success is needed to track the target.

An adept can only track on foot, not while riding or in any kind of vehicle. A Tracking Test to continue following the trail is required every four hours, or after each significant change in environment such as terrain or weather. If the test fails, the trail has been lost. If so, the tracker may make a new test to reacquire the trail, taking a base time of one hour at a +2 penalty to the target number. Divide the base time by the successes on the Tracking Test to determine how long it takes the tracker to locate the trail again. If this second test fails, the trail is lost.

Boomerangs

Boomerangs are curved, wooden throwing sticks used for hunting by Aborigines. They are effective, non-lethal throwing weapons commonly used by Aborigine adepts (they are also sometimes used by koradji and others as clapping sticks in rituals and ceremonies). A character that wishes to use a boomerang would use Throwing Weapons skill (characters can also take a Boomerang Specialization).

As a general rule, boomerangs used for hunting/combat are not designed to return to the user—they are designed to hit the target. However, a gamemaster can allow a boomerang that has missed its target to return to the thrower on his next Combat Phase. To catch a returning boomerang, the character must spend a Simple Action and succeed in an Athletics (6) Test. An adept with the Missile Parry power reduces that target number to 2. If the character misses, the boomerang scatters 3D6 meters.

An adept with the Missile Mastery power (p. 150, *MITS*) can always make a boomerang return, even when it hits the target.

Boomerangs use the same ranges as shuriken.

NEW SPELLS

Even before the Awakening, it was believed that Aborigine shamans had the ability to curse people. One of the more potent curses was known as "pointing the bone," where a koradji ritually pointed a bone at a target and informed him of his impending doom.

Slow Death (Combat Spell)

Type: M • Target: W • Duration: I • Drain: (Damage Level)

This spell is similar to manabolt (p. 191, *SR3*) in most respects, channeling destructive energy into the target to inflict physical damage. The difference is that where manabolt (and most other combat spells) inflict damage instantly, Slow Death does its work over a period of time.

The target makes a Spell Resistance Test normally. If the caster achieves more net successes, the Slow Death spell takes effect, setting a destructive process into motion. The subject suffers one box of the spell's Physical damage for every full day after the spell is cast until the full damage from the Sorcery Test is done. The target will not begin to physically heal any of this damage until all of it is applied, though magical healing may be applied at any time. This counts as a single "set" of injuries, so magical healing can only be applied to the Slow Death damage once. The ongoing process of damage is magical, and can be halted using dispelling normally (p. 184, *SR3*), though the Slow Death spell is not sustained and requires no attention from the caster once it is cast. The caster of the spell can end its effect at any time simply by taking a Free Action to do so.

An old koradji points the bone at Harrier, an Australian shadowrunner, for violating sacred ground. The koradji has Sorcery 6 and casts Slow Death at Moderate damage and Force 5. Harrier has Willpower 5 and no other magical defenses (he lost his mage to a bunyip attack). The koradji rolls 12 dice (Sorcery + Spell Pool) with a TN of 5 while Harrier rolls 5 dice (his Willpower) with a TN of 5. Not surprisingly, the old man scores more successes, enough to raise the spell's damage to Deadly. Harrier feels a chill overtake him as the koradji pronounces his doom. A day later, he takes one box of Physical damage. Harrier continues taking a box of Physical damage every day until he's dead, or until he wises up and tries to convince the old koradji to remove his curse, perhaps in exchange for some atonement on Harrier's part.

Boomerangs

Throwing Weapon	Concealability	Damage	Weight	Availability	Cost	Street Index	Legal
Boomerang	7	(STR)M Stun	.25	4/48 hrs	50¥	2	Legal

It's recommended that gamemasters make the Spell Resistance Test for a Slow Death spell in secret, since the target has no way of knowing how much total damage the spell will do, or whether or not it will inflict Deadly damage. Some magicians use this spell as a means of blackmail, particularly when casting it via ritual sorcery.

AUSTRALIAN SPIRITS

Australian spirits differ in minor ways from spirits described in *SR3* and *MITS*. The differences and their game effects are described here.

Nature Spirits

Nature spirits in Australia are disturbed by events there, making them suspicious of anyone except the koradji, who are their natural allies. While spirits in the city and hearth domains respond to foreign shamans normally, nature spirits in other domains are more difficult allies. Unlike other nature spirits, they can become uncontrolled like elementals do if their summoner is killed or knocked out (by Drain or anything else). See *Summoning Elementals*, p. 186, *SR3*, for more information on uncontrolled spirits.

Australia's toxic zones present the normal problems for magicians: background count and the inability to summon nature spirits there because of the toxic domain.

Ancestor Spirits

Koradji are strongly linked to their ancestors, all the way back into the mythic depths of the Dreamtime. This affects their dealings with ancestor spirits in two ways. First, koradji can use their churinga as a fetish to summon any ancestor spirit (requiring only two other fetishes; see p. 106, *MITS*).

Second, koradji initiates can use the Invoking technique of metamagic (p. 75, *MITS*) to reach back into the depths of the Dreamtime to summon primordial ancestor spirits, beings somewhere between totems and mortals. These are great form ancestor spirits (see p. 107, *MITS*, for information on great form spirits in general).

Great Form Ancestor Spirits

Great form ancestor spirits are primal beings, more legend than history. They bridge the gap between lesser spirits and the powerful totems and display many qualities of totems themselves. The great ancestor spirits of the Aborigines tend to mix human and animal traits, similar to a shamanic mask (p. 163, *SR3*). They can use their powers on a number of targets equal to their Force simultaneously. They also receive one additional spirit power when they are summoned. The summoner chooses the power from the following list, based on the aspect of the ancestor being called. The gamemaster has final say on whether or not a particular power is appropriate for a particular ancestor.

Great Ancestor Powers: one of Animal Control (same type of animal as the summoner's totem), Binding, Compulsion, Concealment, Desire Reflection, Dispelling, Empathy, Fear, Flame Aura, Hypnotic Song, Immunity, Movement, Paralyzing Touch, Psychokinesis, Weather Control.

AUSTRALIAN ENCHANTING

Living in the Outback, usually far from the trappings of civilization, koradji have only the resources that the land provides them for enchanting work. Fortunately they know how to make the most use out of the materials at hand to create magical items. Koradji can refine mineral materials for enchanting using only an enchanting kit, since the equipment of an enchanting shop is rarely available to them (see p. 41, *MITS*). Koradji often specialize in Talismongering, since enchanting for them is often focused on creating fetishes and ritual materials.

Plant materials found in Australia weigh only half as much as normal (2.5 kilos per unit, 1.25 kilos for a unit of refined plant material). Metal materials are rare in the Outback and therefore difficult to find. Increase the target number for Gathering Tests for metal materials to 10. Since they rarely ever have access to an enchanting shop, koradji almost never use alchemy to produce radicals.

Animal Materials

Koradji (and other tribal people) also make use of animal materials in enchanting. This includes the parts of any animal such as bones, teeth, horn, sinew, fur, hide, feathers and so forth. Usually it requires the ritual hunting and killing of the animal (though some animal materials, like shed horns or feathers, can be found by searching). Gathering animal materials requires a normal Enchanting (Talismongering) Test with a target number of 4 and a base time of 10 days for one unit of materials. Divide the base time by the number of successes to determine how long it actually takes. A unit of animal material weighs about 5 kilograms. A unit of refined animal material weighs about 2.5 kilograms.

At the gamemaster's discretion, certain animal materials (particularly from paranormal animals) may be considered exotic materials (p. 43, *MITS*) for enchanting purposes. Rare refined animal materials may also be considered alchemical radicals for the purpose of providing enchanting bonuses, if the gamemaster desires (p. 44, *MITS*). This provides good reason to send a character off hunting a particularly dangerous or elusive critter.

Churinga

A fetish commonly found among Aborigines is the *churinga*, a stone or wooden oval fitting into the palm of the hand, carved with symbols of the owner's totem and Dreaming. Aborigines receive their churinga upon reaching adulthood. For mundane Aborigines a churinga is an important personal item, carefully guarded since it is useful as a material link to them for ritual sorcery. For koradji, their churinga is often enchanted to serve as a focus, and it gains the virgin materials bonus if the koradji chooses to enchant it. Churinga are most often enchanted as power or spirit foci, though other types or even stacked foci are known.

MAGICAL COMPOUNDS

Koradji know how to create magical compounds from local Awakened plants and animals. These compounds follow the general rules found on p. 122 of *Man & Machine* (*M&M*).



Aborigine tribes also have access to compounds like animal tongue, immortal flower, rock lizard blood and spirit's strength from p. 123, *M&M*.

Altyerre

Vector: Contact

Advantages: This affects the user as with the free spirit power of Astral Gateway (p. 117, *MITS*), allowing them to astrally project. This grants all users, including mundanes, access to the metaplanes if they are in the company of a spirit guide or initiate mage.

Disadvantages: After Altyerre wears off, the user suffers Deadly Stun damage that cannot be resisted.

Kuman-Nhepa

Vector: Ingestion

Advantages: This doubles the user's dice on all Resistance Tests against non-magical Stun damage.

Disadvantages: When the drug wears off, the user suffers Serious Stun damage that cannot be resisted. The user's Quickness and Strength are also reduced by half (round down) for a period equal to the span of the drug's effect.

Wudu'aku

Vector: Ingestion

Advantages: When dealing with ancestor spirits, the user receives +2 dice on all Conjuring Tests and adds +2 to her effective Charisma.

Disadvantages: The user suffers -2 dice to Conjuring Tests and -2 effective Charisma when summoning any other type of spirit for 24 hours after using Wudu'aku.

INITIATION

Initiation is a vital part of a koradji's training; most elder koradji don't consider students fully trained until they become initiates. Initiation opens the koradji up to the wider realm of the Dreamtime, granting access to the metaplanes and allowing a koradji to commune directly with his or her totem.

Ordeals

Ordeals are common in koradji initiations, since they test the worthiness of the koradji to gain the greater power and understanding that comes with initiation and emphasize the day-to-day struggle of life in the Outback. The most common ordeals for koradji initiates are Astral Quest, Asceticism and Geas. The Asceticism ordeal often involves painful rituals including scarification and tattooing, or ordeals of survival in the wilderness. Geasa are taboos limiting the koradji's use of magic in some way.

Aborigine ordeals may involve painful elements like bloodletting and scarification. These inflict a Light wound on the character, which must be healed normally rather than through magic (doing otherwise is disrespectful of the purpose of the ritual). The gamemaster can ignore these elements if desired to simplify the game.

Thesis Ordeal: Aborigines call this ordeal "expressing the Dreaming" and believe that a piece of artwork can capture the

whole of a person's Dreaming. Koradji who choose to perform the Thesis ordeal for initiation must be careful of the work they create. Most shamans do not create written theses, as there is no cultural history of Aborigine writing. Instead, most koradji theses are artworks: cave paintings, rock carvings, sand and bark paintings and so forth. The koradji usually has to choose between making a thesis work enduring and immobile (like a cave painting) or portable and fragile (like a carved stone, bone or bark painting).

METAMAGIC

A number of the metamagical techniques described on pp. 70-79, *MITS*, have unique expressions or uses among the koradji of Australia. These variations are described here.

Centering

Koradji most commonly use Centering skills like Chanting, Musical Instruments (notably digeridoo and bullroarer), and Singing. Among other things, they use Centering to overcome penalties imposed by background count they may encounter in the Outback.

Quickening

Koradji practice tattooing to Quicken spells (p. 78, *MITS*). Their designs range from simple traditional tattoos usually made up of dots to large ink-less ritual scarification designs, depending on what the shaman feels is appropriate. Many tribal groups have taken up semi-modern tattooing techniques to enable them to convey more intricate and supposedly powerful historical designs, though the Force of the quickening is not necessarily linked to the tattoo's visual complexity.

Shielding

Shielding provides protection against some of the effects of mana storms, which can mean the difference between life and death for characters caught in one. See *Mana Storms*, p. 111, for more information.

NEW METAMAGIC

The following metamagical techniques are in use among the koradji, but they are by no means limited to them. Magicians of different traditions from around the world know their own versions of these techniques, though they remain rare at this time.

Channeling

This technique allows an initiate to channel the powers of a bound spirit through his body, effectively gaining the spirit's powers for a time. It is a difficult and exhausting technique, but grants the initiate considerable power while it lasts.

Using channeling requires an Exclusive Complex Action. The initiate must have a spirit that owes him services present in astral space and have it come into contact with his aura. The initiate makes a Conjuring Test with a target number equal to the spirit's Force x 2, minus the initiate's Grade. If successful, the magician channels the spirit for 10 minutes times the number of successes on the Conjuring Test. If the test fails, nothing happens. On a roll

of all 1s, the spirit immediately goes free, either departing to the metaplanes or becoming a free spirit (p. 113, *MITS*).

When an initiate channels a spirit, the spirit's astral form is drawn into the initiate's body, vanishing within his own astral body. The initiate's Physical attributes are increased by an amount equal to the spirit's Force, and the initiate can use any of the spirit's powers as if he were the spirit, at the spirit's Force rating. Using the spirit's powers does not cost any additional services (but see below). The only spirit powers not available to the initiate are Engulf and Materialization. If the initiate channels a great form spirit (p. 107, *MITS*) he gains Immunity (Normal Weapons) at the spirit's Force in addition to its other powers. The initiate also gains the spirit's vulnerabilities (if any). For example, an initiate channeling a fire elemental is vulnerable to water attacks. The channeled spirit may not be attacked in astral combat, nor may another magician contest control of it. It may be banished, but the channeling magician adds his Charisma dice to the spirit's Force Tests against banishing.

Confronting a group of poachers on tribal territory, Wungare calls upon a Force 4 prairie spirit and channels it, gaining the spirit's powers for a time. Wungare is a Grade 3 initiate with Conjuring 6, so he rolls 6 dice against a target number of 5 (Force 4 x 2, minus his Grade of 3). He gets two successes, allowing him to channel the spirit for up to 20 minutes. Wungare's Physical attributes are increased by 4 and he gains the prairie spirit's powers of Accident, Concealment, Guard, Movement and Search.

Unlike Possession (p. 99, *MITS*) the initiate remains in full control of his body while channeling—it is the mind of the spirit that is suppressed. The initiate can also use all of his normal abilities. The initiate must remain embodied to maintain the channeling; if the initiate astrally projects the channeling ends immediately, with the usual effects (see below). Damage affects only the initiate; if he is rendered unconscious the channeling ends immediately.

Once the time of the channeling is up, or the initiate voluntarily chooses to end it, the spirit departs back to the metaplanes, its service to the initiate concluded (regardless of how many services the initiate had left when he channeled it). The initiate must immediately resist Drain of (Spirit's Force)D Stun with Charisma. If the spirit's Force exceeds the initiate's Magic rating, the Drain is Physical damage.

Channeling is common among shamans, notably Voodoo houngans and Aborigine koradji, but mages and wujen know the technique as well.

Sensing

This technique makes an initiate sensitive to fluctuations in the mana field, able to sense variations in the astral terrain, often at great distances, without the need to use astral perception. The initiate can detect any astral terrain or mana fluctuations like background count, astral rifts, manalines, mana storms, mana surges, mana warps, alchera, astral shallows and so forth at a base distance of Grade times 500 meters. Multiply the base distance times the phenomenon's rating (if any) to determine how

SENSING TABLE

Successes	Information Gained
0	No information
1–2	General distance and location of any detectable phenomena within range. For example, "an astral rift about 250 meters away to the north, an area of background count a kilometer away to the southeast," and so forth.
3–4	Distance and direction of detectable phenomenon within range and whether its rating is weak (less than the initiate's Magic), moderate (the same as the initiate's Magic) or strong (greater than the initiate's Magic). Note that the initiate can also tell something about the rating of a phenomenon based on how far away he can sense it (above).
5+	All of the above, plus the exact rating of the phenomenon (if any) and its general affects or aspects (if any).

far away the character can detect it. A character can get a rough idea of a phenomenon's rating based on how far away he can sense it. If you can sense a background count from more than a few kilometers away, then it's a *major* one!

Sensing requires a Simple Action. The target number of the Sensing Test is 4, modified by anything that affects normal astral perception tests (like background count) but not visual modifiers. Roll dice equal to the Initiate's Intelligence plus Grade. Successes determine how much information is gained about the surrounding astral "terrain."

An initiate can maintain sensing to track or follow a particular phenomenon. This counts as sustaining a spell, imposing a +2 TN modifier to the character's actions. At the gamemaster's discretion, an initiate with Sensing may detect sudden shifts in the astral terrain without even trying, such as a sudden mana surge or a mana storm springing up in the Outback. The gamemaster should make a Sensing Test for the character (perhaps adding a +2 modifier for the lack of focus), or simply tell the player what the character senses, making this ability a useful dramatic hook for the gamemaster.

Koradji use Sensing to help their tribes survive in the Outback, allowing them to better avoid magical hazards like mana storms. Wujen are known to use Sensing to locate dragon lines and follow the flow of chi for the purposes of feng shui. With the increase in unusual astral terrain worldwide, other magicians have picked up on the technique as well.

Note that sensing cannot be used to detect spells, wards, foci, spirits, astrally projecting magicians and so on—it only detects changes within the mana field and astral terrain itself.

THE OUTBACK

The Outback is a place of beauty and hostility, a land of wondrous creatures and untamed magic. A single mistake in the Outback means death, so it pays to be prepared.

SURVIVAL

When characters venture into the Outback, the gamemaster should carefully take note of the provisions they bring and what preparations they make for food, water and basic survival. Outback conditions can be harsh, but a well-prepared team should be able to handle it. Heat, dehydration, difficult terrain, flash floods, insects and mundane but dangerous critters can provide threats above and beyond magic, spirits and paracritters. A team that isn't prepared—or that loses essential gear—may be in desperate straits.

SONG LINES

Australian song lines are a type of manaline (p. 85, *MITS*) that crisscross the Outback, representing tracks taken by ancestors in the Dreamtime. Because of their associated background count, song lines often see the formation of mana storms (below) along them.

Song lines are often (but not always) aspected toward Aborigine or shamanic magic, providing a bonus for such magic while acting as normal background count for all other kinds of magic. Song lines provide an additional bonus to koradji. While touching a song line, a koradji gets its rating in bonus dice for all tests involving navigation and survival since koradji are trained to use the song lines as a kind of "road map" of Australia. This only applies to Australian song lines, not manalines in other lands.

MANA STORMS

Mana storms are powerful disturbances in the mana field. They are similar in many respects to uncontrolled and random area spells and have spell-like effects. Like other magical effects, mana storms have a Force rating that measures how powerful they are.

Physical or Invisible

All mana storms are signified by massive turbulence in the mana field on both the physical and astral planes. Most mana storms are also accompanied by physical atmospheric disturbances, such as high winds, dark clouds and precipitation—these types of storms are called *physical mana storms*. Some of these physical storm effects are more random, such as ball lightning, rains of crickets or rolling fog.

Other mana storms are accompanied by very few visible physical storm effects, and so are called *invisible mana storms*. Invisible storms are largely hidden to the naked eye, though they can be spotted with a successful Perception (10 – Force) Test. In most cases they are only noticeable as a shimmering or rippling in the air, much like heat off the desert, and easily mistaken for such in the Outback.

Formation

To determine if a mana storm forms, the gamemaster makes a Storm Frequency Test once per day for Outback areas and once per week for urban areas and other parts of Australia. The gamemaster rolls a number of dice based on the type of location, as noted on the Mana Storm Frequency Table (p. 112), with a Target Number 12. A single success means that a mana storm appears in that area (the gamemaster can randomly determine when the storm appears during that day or week, or choose a dramatically appropriate time during the adventure.).

To determine the type, Force, size, speed and duration of the mana storm, the gamemaster should use the guidelines given on the Mana Storm Characteristics Table (p. 112), making rolls as indicated.

Direction

The gamemaster determines the exact location where the mana storm begins, as well as in what direction it is heading. It may begin kilometers away from the characters, rapidly moving toward them, or it may start to coalesce around them, forcing them to scramble to get outside its radius before it reaches full Force.

Note that mana storms do not necessarily travel in straight lines and may veer off in a different direction at any time.

Duration

A mana storm begins at Force 1 and increases in Force by 1 point per minute until it reaches its maximum Force. It then lasts the full duration as rolled on the Mana Storm Characteristics Table. When this duration ends, the gamemaster immediately makes another Storm Frequency Test. A single success means the storm mutates and continues on—roll up a new set of characteristics and effects for the storm. The storm's Force will adjust to its new rating at a rate of 1 Force point per minute. This process will continue until the mana storm fails a Frequency Test. It will then begin to abate, losing Force at a rate of 1 point per minute until it disappears entirely.

Effects

If the storm is a physical mana storm, roll on the Physical Storm Effects table (p. 112). These effects impose visibility and other modifiers, just like ordinary weather (see p. 232, *SR3*). The area of the physical storm should be considered difficult ground when applying modifiers to actions for movement, and the Terrible Weather Conditions applies to Driving Tests (p. 134, *SR3*).

Each mana storm, physical or invisible, has at least one spell-like effect, as determined from rolling 1D6 on the Mana Storm Effects table (p. 112), and then rolling again on the appropriate effects table(s). Any valid target (character, object, critter, vehicle, etc.) within the storm's radius will be subject to this effect.

When the storm reaches its full Force, roll twice its Force as an Effect Test, similar to the Sorcery Test for a spell (see p. 182, *SR3*, for more information). One test is made against all



MANA STORM TABLES

Mana Storm Frequency Table

Locale	Dice
Outback	2D6
Urban and other areas	1D6
Background Count	+(Rating)D6

Mana Storm Characteristics

Statistic	Calculation
Type	Roll 1D6: 1-2, the storm is invisible; 3-6, the storm is physical.
Force	1D6 + background count (if any)
Size	Force x 100 x 1D6 x 1D6 meters radius
Speed	40 + (Force x 10) kph
Duration	(Force)D6 minutes

Physical Storm Effects

3D6 Roll	Precipitation
3	Eerie silence (Force as Hearing Test modifier)
4	Extreme darkness (Force as Visibility modifier)
5	Extreme cold
6	Unusual smells
7	Loud thunder
8	Hail
9	Snow
10	Light rain
11	Heavy rain
12	Sleet
13	Roll twice or make up an effect
14	Light fog or smoke
15	Heavy fog or smoke
16-17	Rains small creatures (tiny frogs, fish, crickets, ants)
18	Rains something highly unusual (blood, opals)

Mana Storm Effects

1D6 Roll	Type of Effect
1	Combat
2	Health
3	Illusion
4	Manipulation
5	Elemental
6	Roll twice

Combat Effect

1D6 Roll	Type of Effect
1	Manaball
2	Powerball
3	Slaughter (Species)*
4	Stunball
5-6	Wreck*

Health Effect

1D6 Roll	Type of Effect
1	Cause Allergy (1D6: 1-2 Nuisance, 3-4 Moderate, 5-6 Severe)
2	Cripple Limb
3	Decrease (Attribute)*
4	Decrease Reaction
5	Decrease Reflexes
6	Intoxication

Illusion Effect

1D6 Roll	Type of Effect
1	Chaotic World
2	Mass Confusion
3	Foreboding
4	Mass Agony
5	Roll 1D6: 1-3, Phantasm; 4-6, Trid Phantasm
6	Stench

Manipulation Effect

1D6 Roll	Type of Effect
1	Roll 1D6: 1-2, Alter Memory*; 3-6, Mob Mood*
2	Roll 1D6: 1-3, Animate; 4-6, Poltergeist
3	Roll 1D6: 1-3, Net; 4-6, Glue Strip
4	Shape Earth*
5	Roll 1D6: 1-2, Influence*; 3-6, Mob Mind*
6	Roll 1D6: 1-2, Petrify; 3-6, Transform*

Elemental Effect

1D6 Roll	Type of Effect
1	Roll 1D6: 1-3, Acid; 4-6 Smoke
2	Blast
3	Fire
4	Ice
5	Lightning
6	Sand

* Gamemaster chooses specific effect.



the viable targets within the storm, so the target number may vary from one target to another. Targets get to make a normal Spell Resistance Test (including the use of spell defense and shielding metamagic). Every 2D6 minutes thereafter, the storm makes another Effect Test against any viable targets. It also automatically makes an Effect Test against any new targets that enter the storm immediately as they enter and every 2D6 minutes thereafter while they remain.

If the storm's effect is a Sustained spell, it affects a given target only once but the effects last for the duration of the storm. If the storm's effect is a Permanent spell, it works like a Sustained spell until the effects become permanent. The storm's effect can be dispelled normally (p. 184, SR3) for any one target, but that target can be affected again on the storm's next Effect Test.

Storm Wraiths

If the storm is a physical mana storm, roll 2D6 and add the results. On a result of 10+, the storm is accompanied by 2D6 storm wraiths with Force ratings equal to that of the storm. See p. 116 for details on storm wraiths.

Background Count and Astral Space

Mana storms will increase the background count of an area by half their Force (round down). This background count will slowly fade after the storm's passing at a rate of 1 point per hour.

Mana storms create massive disturbances on the astral plane, reducing astral visibility to almost nothing. Impose a modifier equal to the storm's Force to all Astral Perception Tests. Astral travelers should feel as if they are underwater during a hurricane, and they will also be vulnerable to any mana-based storm effects.

Other Effects

Gamemasters are encouraged to manipulate a storm's effects as he or she sees fit and to add in new effects. For example, a mana storm may temporarily inflict Mental Flaws upon a character, or temporarily drain foci of their power, rendering them unusable for the time being. Wards and astral barriers, which normally keep the storm's effects out, may suffer under a storm's assault, eventually collapsing and allowing the storm inside. Mana storms are wild magic in its purest form, so anything goes.

ALCHERA

Alchera are a type of astral construct (see p. 100) that materializes in the physical world. Normally alchera are like other astral things: invisible and intangible to the physical world, though their presence can be felt by a physical being that passes through them (see *Astral Detection*, p. 173, SR3). Alchera have a barrier rating on the astral plane that acts like a normal astral barrier, and astral beings can interact with an alchera like normal astral terrain.

Physical Alchera

Unlike most other astral constructs, alchera frequently materialize in the physical world. Alchera do more than simply materialize, however, they "replace" an area of physical terrain with their presence. In some cases, the changes are minor, like a bit of astral terrain has been superimposed over part of the physical world, such as a ring of stones appearing in a forest clearing. In other cases, the changes are drastic, like when an area of barren sand dunes suddenly transforms into a lush oasis. What happens to the physical terrain the alchera replaces is unknown. Current theories are that it goes somewhere else in the universe, perhaps shifted onto a metaplane in some way. Living beings present in an area where an alchera manifests do not disappear. Instead the terrain springs up "around" them, displacing them slightly if need be to avoid things like a solid object materializing around or through a living being. Likewise, when an alchera dematerializes, living things may find their position adjusted to conform to the returned physical landscape.

Being inside an alchera when it materializes or dematerializes can be a very disorienting experience. Characters must succeed in a Willpower (6) Test to avoid receiving +2 to all target numbers and -2 to Initiative for three turns after the alchera materializes. Each success on the test reduces the time by one turn; three or more successes eliminate it entirely.

Alchera Contents

An alchera may contain other astral objects as part of it, anything from water and fruit trees in an alchera oasis to gemstones in an alchera cave. Normally, items in an alchera are also astral constructs, becoming physical objects when the alchera materializes. Most items in an alchera, whether astral or physical, cannot be taken from it; they dematerialize when taken outside the bounds of the alchera, reappearing back inside it where they came from. Food and drink in an alchera can be safely consumed and, once it is, it becomes a part of the creature that consumed it. It is possible to satisfy hunger and thirst from an alchera without the effects vanishing later.

In some rare cases, items within an alchera are independent astral constructs, able to exist outside the alchera. These should be treated like normal astral constructs. Still, these constructs can only materialize inside the alchera. If taken outside of it they revert to their astral form and remain that way.

Alchera Inhabitants

Some of the astral forms within an alchera may be spirits rather than constructs. Nature spirits are the most common, but spirit versions of other critters might exist within an alchera as well. They may be hostile to intruders or not, at the gamemaster's discretion. Spirits in an alchera tend to look like animals, paranormal critters or Aborigine people. They have normal game statistics for their type.

Sample Alchera

Here are a couple of examples of alchera and how they work.

Opal Cave: This alchera appears as a cave in an otherwise featureless cliffside. Astral characters can enter the cave, passing through the area occupied by the physical rock. When the alchera materializes, a cave appears in the rock face where none was before. Inside are a number of rough opals, guarded by a Force 6 gnome spirit (p. 105, *MITS*). He's willing to speak to visitors, asking them about themselves and their travels (and he always speaks a visitor's native language fluently). If he approves of a character, he may give them one of the opals. The opal vanishes outside the alchera, but the character gains an additional point of Karma Pool until the next new moon.

Crocodile Oasis: This alchera looks like a cluster of green plants and grasses around a deep pond, including some flowering fruit trees. When the oasis materializes, it appears in the midst of the desert and the fruit and water are perfectly safe to consume. However, the pond is home to a Force 5 lake spirit that takes the form of a large crocodile and doesn't take kindly to people taking from "his" oasis without asking. He insists that any character who takes something from the oasis repay in kind by telling him a story. Though he claims to eat people whose stories he doesn't like, the old crocodile is a fairly easy audience to please.

AUSTRALIAN CRITTERS

A number of the paranormal animals described in the *Critters* sourcebook (or close variants thereof) can be found in Australia, along with various unique creatures.

Afanc: Found in some swampy and river areas of Australia.

Basilisk: These petrifying reptiles are found in parts of the Outback.

Chimera: Found in desert regions.

Corpselight: Corpselights appear in various parts of the Outback, often near other hazards into which they attempt to lead victims. They've also been known to appear in conjunctions with mana storms looking for easy prey.

Devil Rats: Found in most urban areas.

Dragons: As the text on p. 72 indicates, there are rumors of dragons living in the Australian Outback but no confirmation that any dragon makes its home there. So far, there are no known great dragons living in Australia.

Dzoo-noo-qua: HMMVV-infected trolls are relatively rare in Australia but have been known.

Fideal: A paranormal version of the box jellyfish can be found along Australia's northern coasts, especially in the waters near Darwin. These para-stingers are similar to fideal, except they also possess the Paralyzing Touch critter power.

Ghoul: Ghouls are known in some of the isolated urban areas of Australia. As in many parts of the world, ghouls are considered diseased and hunted by the authorities.

Goblin: HMMVV-infected dwarfs tend to be rare, but there have been goblin sightings in Australia.

Greater Unicorn: Found in scattered numbers in the Outback, often in the company of standard unicorns. Greater unicorns apparently use their Magical Guard power to allow



them to survive the magical hazards of the Outback. They're a protected species and hunting them is illegal, though there's a brisk business in unicorn poaching for their valuable horns.

Harpy: Found in small flocks in Australia. They tend to congregate near human habitation and feed on garbage and carrion.

Incubus: An urban predator of some of Australia's cities.

Jauchkafer: Found feeding on carrion and toxic waste in some cities and toxic zones along the coast.

Loup Garou: Outbreaks of HMMV-2 have spread these creatures to Australia.

Man of the Woods: These forest spirits are rare but they (or others similar to them) have been seen in Australia.

Mermald and Merrow: Found in the coastal waters of Australia, particularly near the Great Barrier Reef.

Nomad: These malevolent entities have been encountered in Australia, meaning that their presence is only likely to spread. Nomads prefer urban areas both for the availability of victims and the opportunities to commit violence and mayhem.

Nova Scorpion: An Australia variant of the nova scorpion can be found in the Outback.

Rockworm: These creatures inhabit rocky parts of the Outback and some have infested urban areas.

Saber-Toothed Cat: These cats appear in some areas of the Outback, particularly in or near alchera (see p. 113).

Sea Serpent: Saltwater serpents live off the coast of Australia.

Shapeshifter: There are rumors of dingo and snake shapeshifters living in Australia, though no specimens have been captured or otherwise confirmed.

Siren: These predators can be found in caves and mountainous or rocky areas.

Specter: Australia is just as prone to specters and ghosts as the rest of the world.

Storm Dolphins: Spotted in small pods off the coast of Australia. Storm Dolphins have been known to interfere with shipping by causing storms.

Stormcrow: Found in flocks in Australia, often congregating around the edges of mana storms or mundane storms of their own creation.

Talis Cat: Encountered wild in wilderness areas of Australia.

Unicorn: Found in small numbers in Australia. Unicorns are a protected species but there remains a lively black market in poaching and smuggling them.

Vampire: HMMV spread to Australia some time ago and vampires are occasionally found in urban areas.

Wendigo: Likewise, HMMV-infected orks sometimes appear in Australia. Wendigos are among the best suited for life in the Australian wilderness, so they are among the most common of the Infected in Australia.

Wyrd Mantis: These terrifying predators are found in some isolated parts of the Outback.

Artnwerre

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
4	5 x 4	3	—	2/4	3	6	4

INIT: 4 + 1D6

Combat Pool: 6

Attacks: 6M (bite)

Powers: Empathy (Artnwerre), Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Smell), Immunity (Fire), Tracking (see p. 107)

Bunyip

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
8/5	5 x 4	5	—	3/5	5	6Z	6

INIT: 6 + 3D6

Combat Pool: 7

Attacks: 8S, +1 Reach

Powers: Adaptive Coloration, Enhanced Physical Attributes (3/day), Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Smell, Taste), Fear, Innate Spell (Shapechange, 3/day), Regeneration, Venom

Weaknesses: Allergy (Pollutants, Severe)

Drop Bears

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
3	3 x 2	5	—	2/4	5	6	3

INIT: 3 + 1D6

Combat Pool: 6

Attacks: 5S

Powers: Adaptive Coloration, Immunity (Pathogens and Poisons)

Weaknesses: Dietary Requirement (Eucalyptus)

Megalodon

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
15/3	5 x 4	13	—	1/3	3	6	5

INIT: 5 + 2D6

Combat Pool: 5

Attacks: 10D (bite)

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell), Regeneration

Metaroo

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
4	6 x 5	4	—	1/3	5	6Z	5

INIT: 5 + 2D6

Combat Pool: 7

Attacks: 6M (kick) or 4M Stun (tail)

Powers: Enhanced Reaction (3/day), Magic Sense, Movement (self, 3/day)

New Leatherback

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
8/4	3 x 2	5	—	2/4	3	6Z	3

INIT: 3 + 1D6

Combat Pool: 5

Attacks: 5M (bite)

Powers: Engulf, Magic Resistance, Movement (self)

Weaknesses: Allergy (pollutants, Severe)

Note: Swimming multiplier is 5.

Pakaltu Worms

Treat an infestation of pakaltu worms as a disease (p. 249, *SR3*) with a Damage of 6D and a Speed of 52 to 72 hours (48 + [1D6 x 4] hours). A Cure Disease spell that reduces the infestation's Power to 0 eliminates it entirely. Proper medical treatment before the eggs hatch can do the same.

Shadow Crawlers

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
2	4 x 4	2	—	1/3	4	(2D6)Z	4

INIT: 4 + 2D6

Combat Pool: 5

Powers: Astral Armor, Binding (mana version, astral only), Essence Drain

Weaknesses: Essence Loss

Storm Wraith

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
F-2	(F+3) x 4	F	F	F	F	(F)A	F + 2

INIT: F + 12 + 1D6

Attacks: (F)M

Powers: Accident, Concealment, Confusion, Fear, Innate Spell (Lightning Bolt), Materialization

Tasmanian Tiger

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
3	4 x 4	5	—	2/4	4	6	4

INIT: 4 + 2D6

Combat Pool: 6

Attacks: 5M

Powers: Accident, Concealment (Self), Mist Form

Wombrick

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R
6/5	2 x 3	5	—	1/3	5	6	3

INIT: 3 + 1D6

Combat Pool: 5

Attacks: 4M

Powers: Enhanced Physical Attributes (Body, 3/day), Hardened Armor

OUTBACK LOCATIONS

The Outback is home to an uncounted number of Awakened sites, most of which are fiercely guarded. The hundreds of power sites (p. 99) and song lines (p. 111) are usually aspected towards Aborigine and shamanic magic, though exceptions do exist. Many of these sites are tied into the myths and tales of the Dreamtime, represented by alchera and the manifestation of living legends in spirit form. Characters who visit the Outback may encounter any of the magical phenomena described in this book and MITS, and others that are yet undocumented.

The Outback is alive with spirit activity, though as a rule these spirits tend to be hostile towards outsiders (see p. 108) and protective of sacred areas.

ULURU

Uluru is a Rating 5 Power Site (p. 84, *MITS*) aspected toward Aborigine magic, but also aspected against all other forms of Conjuring (though not Sorcery). The rock is a sacred place to the Aborigines, but a dangerous place for outsiders. Part of the danger comes from the presence of the mana storms and other magical hazards of the Outback, part from the nature of Uluru itself and part from what is hidden deep inside the rock.

The spirits of the Dreamtime and the land around Uluru are hostile toward non-Aborigines. Intruders can expect to be plagued by various spirit powers at Force 6, particularly Accident (p. 262, *SR3*); equipment suffers inconvenient, even fatal, failures; vehicles break down or suffer minor damage; climbers slip at inopportune moments, and so forth. Magicians capable of summoning a desert or mountain spirit with the Guard power can call upon its aid to protect them (provided they overcome the penalties to summon such a spirit near Uluru).

The Spirit Caves of Uluru

Certain caves in Uluru's rock face (requiring a difficult climb or flight to access) lead to a cavern complex deep within Uluru. These entrances are protected by permanent (quickened) Force 8 physical and astral barrier spells. These barriers serve to protect the caves as sacred places to the Aborigines, but also to prevent trespassers from accessing the deeper chambers where powerful, dangerous spirits are imprisoned within magical wards. Any attack or penetration of these barriers will provoke a quick response from the Mimi (see *Guardians of the Spirit Caves*, p. 118).

The caves each lead to a central cavern containing a deep pool and a narrow stone bridge leading across it. The pool conceals a bunyip (p. 115) set to guard the place against intruders. It attacks as soon as anyone tries to cross the bridge and fights to the death. The chamber across the bridge contains dozens of "wells"—deep holes within the rock, strongly warded and topped with opal capstones, some the size of a human fist. A mother lode of other opals decorates the chamber. The opal capstones are the equivalent of power foci in the hands of a magician, ranging from Force 1 for smaller stones to Force 6 or higher for the largest (the foci must be bonded to be used).

Unfortunately, the opals are also part of the enchantment that keeps the spirits imprisoned here. Removing a stone allows one or more of the trapped spirits to escape. Luckily, most of these spirits have been trapped for centuries, lying in a dazed torpor, and may take some time to come to their senses and realize the path to escape lies open. Some are restrained by additional enchantments, though they may have the means of bypassing these without outside help.

Imprisoned Spirits

The spirits imprisoned within the Spirit Caves are left to the gamemaster's imagination, but they all share the qualities of being free spirits and magical threats of varying power. They may be insect spirits, toxics, corrupters, blood spirits, shedim, powerful nomads, or anything else the gamemaster

cares to come up with. The imprisoned spirits aren't likely to attack anyone who releases them, instead doing their best to flee the area. Still they might take an interest in their "rescuers" and use them as a means of escape (especially if they plan on leaving Australia).

The Mimi do not take kindly to those who free these threats, and will take excessive measures to hunt the responsible parties down. They may be willing to cut intruders some leniency if they help to re-imprison any escaped spirits.

KATA TJUTA

These rocky hills are a Rating 4 power site, aspected towards Aborigine magic and acting as background count against all other forms of magic. The entire area is sacred to the Aborigines, revered as a place where they can access the power of the Dreamtime. Many of the gorges inbetween the rocks are home to irregularly occurring astral rifts (see p. 102), allowing non-magician Aborigines to access the metaplanes and communicate with their totems and ancestors. Nature spirits who are hostile to intruders guard these rifts, plaguing interlopers with accidents.

The Valley of Winds

This valley is home to a flock of free wind spirits who like nothing more than to whip through the valley at top speeds, screaming with delight and buzzing ground travelers. Non-Aborigines are likely to be harassed by these spirits, perhaps even carried off on a joyride. Some victims are deposited as "gifts" to the Sky Gods and dropped in one of the nearby rifts, receiving a quick ride to the metaplanes—getting back may be quite difficult.

Lasseter's Reef

Lasseter's Reef most certainly does exist—as a large, occasionally appearing alchera (p. 113) west of Kata Tjuta. Prospectors may be frustrated to learn that their "greatest find" has a habit of disappearing and reappearing, and not always in the exact same location. The reef itself is monstrous and contains massive quantities of both gold and orichalcum, but any mined materials will disappear as soon as they leave the bounds of the alchera. In order to exploit the alchera's riches, prospectors must earn the favor of the free great ancestor spirit that claims the reef as part of its personal domain. This spirit has the power to allow gold and orichalcum to leave the alchera, through its free spirit powers of Wealth and Personal Domain. This task should be difficult at best, as the spirit has no desire to see its domain despoiled by damaging mining practices and greed. On the other hand, it may reward benefactors with small outcroppings to claim as theirs.

The reef is hotly sought after by both independent prospectors and orichalcum-hunting corps like Wuxing, though so far none have been able to locate the reef and report it to others.

LAKE MUNGO

The area around Lake Mungo is laden with a Rating 1 background count that rises to 2 in the vicinity of the alchera.

A string of alchera lakes marks the area, each alive with spirits, sea serpents and water creatures unseen in this land for centuries. The Atlantean Foundation has cordoned off the area for study, aided by a squadron of Australian military troops. In addition to archaeological digs, Mystic Crusaders regularly plumb the depths of the lakes for reasons they aren't sharing.

The focus of the Foundation's efforts is aimed at gaining entrance to an alchera featuring a small, domed city. The city is in fact guarded with a mystic barrier of great power, and the Foundation has so far had no luck breaching it to rescue the crew of scientists trapped within a decade ago. Though they have put together a few plans that could create an opening, they fear to risk damaging the city itself by using them. Instead, the Crusaders are engaged in a series of metaplanar quests in the hopes of finding a way to access the city.

Aside from a few minor similarities, the architecture of the city bears no likeness to any known ancient civilizations. The city also seems lifeless, though this is unsubstantiated. Some Foundation members believe the city to be an astral construct mimicking the achievements of a long-dead culture, while others theorize the city is the domain of a powerful spirit or other entity.

CHAMBERS PILLAR AND CASTLE ROCK

These two rocky outcroppings are indeed inhabited by powerful free ancestor spirits, trapped within. The area is a Rating 1 power site aspected towards Gecko shamans. It is also a mana flare, raising up to a Rating of 3 during certain nights of the year.

The koradji of the Aborigine tribes in this area know of a ritual that will temporarily free these two spirits from their earthly prison. The ritual is the equivalent of casting a Force 8 spell through ritual sorcery (p. 34, *MITS*), with a target number of 8 for the Sending and Linking Tests, and a Drain Code of 8D. The ritual requires that all participants spill their blood, so the leader of the ritual team must be a koradji trained in Sacrificing metamagic (see p. 105).

The koradji who know this ritual are loathe to undertake it without good reason—the spirits were trapped by the other Sky Gods for a reason, after all. Convincing them to undertake the ritual should be an adventure unto itself, as the player characters earn an immense favor through some heroic deed.

The reward granted by the spirits for their temporary freedom is up to the gamemaster, but it will likely involve the use of their potent free spirit powers, such as Wealth or Astral Gateway.

THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

As described, the reef is home to an underwater civilization of merrow in addition to an abundance of other life forms. Though the merrow are mostly concerned with hunting and gathering, farming and other aspects of basic survival and even commerce, they are quite protective of the reef and its untainted qualities. Divers, talisleggers and other intruders into their underwater domain may run afoul of nets, water spirits and even direct attacks by the merrow. Likewise, boats may be subject to sabotage, especially those that damage the reef itself.

Several sections of the reef are under the "protection" of a corp or well-wishing preservation society. These groups have paid for the privilege of claiming a section of the reef as theirs. While some have honest intentions to preserve the reef's ecosystems, others use their position to harvest teslas, capture and conduct research on paracritters or even support illicit activities like piracy and smuggling. Many islands in the reef are also home to pirate and smuggler bases, well concealed from the prying eyes of Coast Guard boats.

THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN BIGHT

This long expanse of cliffs and nothingness may be useful to smugglers or others who need to hide a boat from watchful authorities. The rocky cliffs, however, are a serious hazard to boats and nighttime travelers.

Some of the cave systems that dot the Nullarbor Plain are quite vast, leading into unknown depths. Some Aborigine tribes have carved small villages and sanctuaries from cavern walls, though other caves are revered as sacred (power) sites. A few caves are avoided entirely due to the aura of dread that pervades them. These may be spirit prisons maintained by the Mimis (p. 116), similar to the Spirit Caves of Uluru, or they may be home to untrapped magical threats.

KAKADU RAINFOREST

The Kakadu is a realm of biodiversity, home to all sorts of wild and paranatural creatures. It is also home to dozens of Aborigine power sites, ranging in Rating from 1 to 4, as well as a few Spirit Cave prisons maintained by the Mimi (p. 116). The Kakadu is also a place of wild magic—at sunset of each day, roll 2D6 and add the results. On a 10 or more, roll on the Kakadu Wild Magic Table to determine the unusual effect that occurs sometime in the next 24 hours.

TASMANIA

Tasmania has truly gone wild. Only the faint vestiges of civilization remain in a few isolated coastal towns, populated mainly by smugglers, pirates and those willing to brave the Awakened wild. The interior of the island is awash with paracritters and wild magic (gamemasters are encouraged to develop their own wild magic tables to simulate the changing magical environment).

Tasmania is haunted by the Ghost Tribes, the ghosts of the Aborigine population that once populated the island but was driven to extinction by colonization. These ghosts appear as both apparitions and specters (see *Ghosts*, p. 120, *MITS*), and are particularly hostile towards non-Aborigines. The haunts frequented by the Ghost Tribes have a background count of 2, and no nature spirits may be summoned there.

KAKADU WILD MAGIC TABLE

2D6 Roll

2

Result

An astral rift opens, depositing a free solitary insect spirit Mother with 1D6 Force and 1D6 ÷ 2 Spirit Energy. The spirit has 2D6 days to find a host and summon another Mother spirit (see *Building the Nest*, p. 132, *MITS*) before the astral rift closes and the Mother is forcibly returned to the metaplanes.

3

An alchera (p. 112) appears.

4

A thick, magical mist covers an area with a radius of 1D6 kilometers. Any creatures or characters within this mist are affected by the critter power of Confusion (as if by a critter with 1D6 Essence).

5

The Aborigine paintings in a nearby sacred site come to life, stepping off the wall as materialized spirits.

6

Paranormal creatures (afanc, arntwerre, basilisks, bunyip, talis cats, etc.) are driven to make random attacks.

7-8

The area is subject to a mana surge (see p. 86, *MITS*).

9

Any use of spells, metamagic or Magical skills draws the attention of a spontaneously appearing spirit (p. 98, *MITS*).

10

All spirits that are summoned or asked to perform a service/favor receive one free Opposed Test, pitting their Force against the summoner's Charisma. If the spirit wins, it goes free. Spirits that succeed may return home, attack their summoner or move on according to their whims.

11

A great spirit of the waters uses its storm power to divert a river, overflow a pool or otherwise flash-flood an area.

12

An astral shallow (p. 100) appears with a radius of 1D6 kilometers.

MARALINGA AND EMU JUNCTION

Both of these sites where atomic bomb testing was done are Rating 6 mana warps (see p. 85, *MITS*) for a 100-meter radius. The background count decreases by 1 per 100 meters out, to a minimum background count of 1 for this region. This area is considered a toxic domain and is home to a number of toxic nature spirits, including toxic spirits of man, that will harass trespassers.

MAGICAL THREATS

This section provides rules and game information for the threats described on pp. 73-76, and more.

MIMIS: GUARDIANS OF THE SPIRIT CAVES

A secret order of koradji guards the Spirits Caves of Uluru as well as other spirit prisons scattered throughout the Outback. For the most part these koradji are known as Mimis, though in



some areas they are compared to other Aborigine legends, and referred to as *namorodo*, *quinkens* and other names. Whether they are the source of these legends, whether the stories stem from the shamanic mask that appears when they use their potent metamagic channeling, or whether they simply use the legends as a convenient cover is unknown.

The order tends to the magical defenses of the Spirit Caves and makes sure the spirits remain imprisoned. They also track down intruders and ensure anything taken from the caves is returned there. The guardians are fanatically devoted to their duty and under oaths not to reveal what it is they guard to any other living soul. They tend to be somewhat arrogant and heavy-handed in the performance of their duties, but they are also all initiates of considerable power and experience who take their duties seriously.

Assume the average guardian is a Superior magician (see p. 84, *SRComp*). This order is rumored to have access to metamagical abilities unknown elsewhere in the world, such as the ability to travel through physical rock. It is also rumored that some of the elves and orks in this order belong to rare metavariant species. These metavariants may be the link to Aborigine legends, identifying the *Mimis* as the descendants of the Dreamtime Sky Heroes.

BUGS

Australia is home to many insect spirits, both in the urban areas and in the Outback. Insect spirits are described in detail starting on p. 127 of *MITS*.

Urban insect spirits tend to fall into two categories: small hives led by an insect shaman or free insect spirits created when government or corporate agents rooted out the larger hives. Insect shamans in urban areas are more often Australians of European extraction or other foreign shamans who came into contact with an insect totem in the Outback and were driven insane by the experience. They operate covertly and cautiously, careful to avoid detection while they try to increase the number of insect spirits under their command and eventually summon the queen spirit. The most common insect totems in urban areas are Ant and Wasp, which adapt well to living in buildings and underground areas.

Free insect spirits have their own agendas, with their own survival foremost in their minds. They may be players fascinated with mortal society and enjoying their newfound freedom to the utmost, tricksters or shadows that enjoy deceiving and tormenting mortals, or deadly hunters that seek mortal or spirit prey to sustain themselves or for their own amusement. Ironically, they often work against insect shamans and their hives, simply because an insect shaman is the only kind of magician capable of learning a free insect spirit's true name and enslaving it again. The presence of a hive can also trigger a bug hunt that may threaten the free insect spirit's new lifestyle.

All insect totems except for Cockroach are active in the Outback, though the hive insects predominate. The main limitation on these hives is the number of hosts available to them for investing flesh-form spirits. The insect shaman associated with the hive is most often Aborigine, but may be of different

origin. In an ironic twist, insect spirit hives are effective shelters from the mana storms, leading some to inadvertently take shelter, only to find themselves considered potential hosts.

Koradji and Aborigine tribes in the Outback have also occasionally established communication with insect spirit hives. The insect spirits have proven willing to cooperate in matters that further their own survival and they understand their dependence on metahuman hosts. This makes the hives and the Aborigines allies on occasion.

CHILDREN OF THE RAINBOW SERPENT

Most of the members of the Children of the Rainbow Serpent are mundane Aborigines and sympathizers. The Dreamers make up a magical group with the following statistics:

The Dreamers

Type: Conspiratorial

Members: 20

Strictures: Attendance, Belief (in the cause of Aborigine revolution and independence), Limited Membership (Aborigines only, koradji only), Exclusive Ritual, Fraternity, Oath, Obedience, Sacrifice

Resources/Dues: High. Members are expected to devote all income above a Low Lifestyle cost to the group. The group has the materials for a Rating 8 shamanic lodge, though it is only set up about half the time because the group is forced to move from place to place. They maintain a number of small safe-houses across Australia.

Customs: As described on p. 74, the Dreamers support the goals of the Children of the Rainbow Serpent: the creation of an independent Aborigine state in the Outback, ecological reform and protection, and retribution for crimes committed against the Aborigine people of Australia and the environment. They use whatever means are necessary to achieve their goals. The Dreamers also work to recover and preserve as much Aborigine lore as possible and study the nature of the Dreamtime and the magical activity in the Outback, particularly the mana storms.

CITY

City is a group of free spirits of man numbering nine members, most of them Animus/Anima spirits. In addition, a number of other free spirits of man cooperate with the group for reasons of their own.

City's members work together out of enlightened self-interest. Their primary agenda is to help metahumans and metahuman civilization resist the onslaught of the land's Awakening. Encroaching mana storms and alchera have threatened settlements across Australia, and the members of City have realized that without human civilization, there is no place for spirits of man. They also understand that mortals play a role in maintaining the cycles of the land. If metahumanity abandons Australia, there will be no hope of restoring the balance.

Accordingly, City's members work to mitigate the effects of the mana storms and alchera on metahuman settlements. They tend to employ shadowrunners and other mortal allies



towards these ends and hire runners for any number of reasons. Common causes include protecting threatened settlements from mana storms, critters or smugglers. Several members of City also have mundane power bases, emulating Buttercup's corporate empire on a (much) smaller scale.

City has clashed several times with the Children of the Rainbow Serpent. City's spirits find the Children's goals misguided. Though the spirits of City have no quarrel with the Aborigines, or even with Aborigine sovereignty and smart environmental practices, they often have allies and minions that end up in conflict with the Children. City has indirectly foiled a number of the Children's schemes, and the tribal activist group is currently attempting to establish the identities of various City members to take action directly.

Four members of City are publicly known, mostly to shadowrunners. They are described below. The identity and actions of the remaining five spirits are left up to the gamemaster.

Keilor

Keilor hails from Sydney and maintains an identity as a human artificer there. Though an Animus spirit, he is not particularly sociable. Those who've had contact with him report him as bitter and sullen. He focuses his attention on furthering City's cause in urban environments, and often arranges assassinations or sabotage runs against those who oppose City's goals.

Lincoln Edwards

Lincoln is a prominent Melbourne businessman with a respectable corporate holding. A free city spirit, Lincoln is a Player caught up in the day-to-day machinations of the corporate world. Those who work for Lincoln are often unsure as to whether they were hired to further City's goals or his own.

Ma'a

Ma'a is a powerful, solitary free field spirit who joined City for the sake of having allies. He works through metahumans less than any other member of City, preferring to take action directly. Ma'a lends his protection to threatened settlements and enclaves when disaster is about to strike. More than one compound or farm has been saved from the worst of a mana storm thanks to shielding and warding from Ma'a. Stories abound of a mysterious Aborigine "mage" who appears from nowhere to rescue groups of travelers stranded in the Outback.

It is also rumored that Ma'a acts as a spirit guide, or avatar, for an initiatory group of like-minded magicians who aid him in his work.

Mist

Mist, an Anima, is the most sociable of City's members. She is a free hearth spirit and appears as an attractive woman in her mid-30s. Active in the Perth business community, Mist has more social contact with metahumans than any other City member and is well liked by her mortal acquaintances.

TOXICS

Toxic shamans and spirits, described on p. 125, *MITS*, are found in areas of Australia poisoned by corporate strip mining, industrial chemicals, discarded trash and other pollution. Poisoners gleefully work to extend the pollution as far as they can, thereby increasing the reach and power of their toxic domains. Avengers try to turn the twisted and toxic forces against their source, attacking corporate and government targets responsible for the damage. Avengers sometimes work with eco-activist and eco-terrorist organizations, though the fanaticism of a toxic shaman tends to make such alliances short-lived.

Toxic shamans are also found in places where the human spirit suffers from despair, hopelessness, rage and other such emotions. These shamans are nearly always poisoners, working with toxic spirits of man to crush hope and cooperation and foster mistrust, fear and conflict.

Koradji can and do turn toxic sometimes, most commonly becoming avengers and taking up the crusade against all foreigners and their poisons. Toxic koradji lose the ability to conjure ancestor spirits, but have the ability to summon toxic spirits of all kinds (including toxic spirits of man). Their other abilities remain largely the same except that they embody the toxic aspects of their totem. The gamemaster may wish to adjust a toxic koradji's totem modifiers accordingly.

AWAKENED SITE RULES

This section provides rules for the Awakened locations described on pp. 78-98.

ANASAZI RUINS

The Anasazi Ruins in Chaco Canyon are a power site (Rating 3) aspected toward Native American magic. For all other forms of magic, the power site rating acts as a normal background count. An astral construct of a river flows down the middle of the canyon, appearing at the start of the canyon and vanishing again when it leaves the canyon; the water appearing out of nowhere and disappearing again the same way. The river is shallow, slow and cool, and seems real to astral beings.

Chaco Canyon is also subject to the effects of an astral rift that appears temporarily on an irregular basis, sometimes lasting minutes and other times lasting weeks. The rift obeys the normal rules for astral rifts (see p. 102) and permits mundane characters to project onto the astral plane and even the metaplanes.

Pueblo shamans are studying the rift and the rest of the canyon to learn whatever they can about them. Most of these shamans should be at least Equal in ability to the player characters, with those in charge Superior.

All the neighboring governments (including the Ute Nation, the CAS, Aztlan and the UCAS) are interested in gathering more information about Chaco Canyon, either directly or by acquiring it from the Pueblo Matrix. Other corporations are also interested in the new magical resource the Pueblo Corporate Council has acquired, particularly given its increased activity in the political arena of late.



ANGKOR

The ancient city of Angkor has become the focus for an alliance of Awakened creatures seeking a homeland of their own in Southeast Asia, free from the control of metahumanity, much like Amazonia in South America. In particular, these creatures have banded together for protection, since humans fail to recognize them as sentient and honor their rights.

The leaders of the Angkor Awakened are an extended family of nagas (see p. 36, *Critters*) that have lived in the Southeast Asian jungle since the Awakening. They are exceptionally intelligent for their kind (Intelligence 4+) and all capable of using Sorcery, some of them with great skill. The eldest nagas of the clan are also initiates of varying grades, with the highest being Grade 6. They cast their spells by hissing and swaying in hypnotic dances, which apparently also serves many of them as a means of centering (see *MITS* for details on initiation and centering metamagic).

Other Awakened forces in Angkor include a tribe of freshwater merrow that live in Tonle Sap and keep a close eye on all approaches to Angkor by water. A flock of harpies nest in the upper floors of the tall temples of the city and keep watch over the air above Angkor, along with a number of wind spirits. Free nature spirits of all types can be found in and around the city, along with other Awakened creatures, notably shapeshifters. (All these creatures are detailed in the *Critters* sourcebook, available with the *SR3 GM Screen*).

The Angkor Awakened want to claim the jungles of Southeast Asia. They are considering the possibility of forming alliances with Awakened forces in Amazonia and Yakut (Siberia), but their ability to communicate with such potential allies is limited without outside (read: shadowrunner) assistance. The governments of Cambodia and nearby nations like Thailand and Vietnam are also concerned about the possible threat posed by Angkor, though no nation has suggested bombing the ancient city. Cambodians do not want their heritage destroyed, and no one is willing to risk the magical power the creatures may have at their command.

BERMUDA TRIANGLE

The Bermuda Triangle has been a mystery for many years, and it's going to remain one for a while longer. The events of the Year of the Comet have apparently caused an increase in the number of mysterious disappearances of ships and planes in the area between Bermuda, Florida and Puerto Rico. These disappearances have led to and antagonized international tensions between the CAS and Aztlan in the area.

The Bermuda Triangle is an area of strong background count, with an average background count of 2, usually rising to 3 during bad weather like a tropical storm or hurricane. This background count interferes with magical operations (see p. 83, *MITS*). There may also be other astral phenomena in the Triangle, appearing at different times and in different places as the gamemaster wishes. The Triangle is a good opportunity for you to introduce pretty much any spooky astral or magical effect you want.

Along with the background count, the Devil's Triangle sees more than its share of spirits, particularly shedim (see p.

149, *YOTC* for more information about the shedim and their abilities). The killings brought about by pirates and smugglers have resulted in a number of "sea zombies" in the Caribbean, and the Triangle is also rumored to be home to more than a few ghosts and specters (see pp. 120-121, *MITS*). Pirates tell tales of ghost ships manned by spectral crews that may or may not be true (see the rules for *Astral Constructs*, p. 100).

Finally, as if the magical stuff wasn't bad enough, the Triangle also sees a great deal of piracy and smuggling as detailed in the *Cyberpirates* sourcebook. Smugglers run arms down to the rebels in the Yucatán, smuggle goods in and out of New Orleans to and from the various islands, and make stops in Miami along the way. Pirates prey on shipping in the area, often trying to use local legends and mystical goings-on to cover up their activities (and then sometimes falling prey to the real thing after they've looted their victims).

CALLANISH

The Callanish stone circle is only the beginning, as they say. The Holy Circle of Alba is a magical group (see pp. 61-66, *MITS*, for details on magical groups) who's purpose is to complete the process the Awakening began, healing and restoring the land of Scotland to its original natural beauty and its people to harmony with the cycles of the land. Part of the process is extending the network of ley lines in Scotland to give the druids more magical power to draw upon, along with ancient rituals designed to help aspect the lines and sites to their needs. The Circle includes a number of high-ranking druids in Scotland who see themselves as heads of a new Celtic revivalist culture that honors druids as they once were, as judges and teachers.

The Callanish circle itself is a powerful druidic ritual site (Rating 4) aspected toward Celtic and druidic magic. The Scythe Ley, which runs through Callanish, is a Rating 3 man-aline that extends most of the length of Scotland (though for much of its length runs underwater).

CRATER LAKE

Following the passage of Halley's Comet and the events described on pp. 86-88, Crater Lake in Tir Tairngire began exhibiting all the signs of a mana ebb (see p. 100). Magic has become increasingly difficult in the area of the lake and the island *Tesetelinestéa*. The mana ebb is currently Rating 3. What is of great concern to the Tir Council of Princes is that fact that not only has the mana ebb lasted longer than any other known, it appears to be increasing in intensity. It's as if Crater Lake was draining away the surrounding mana field, leaving little for the Awakened to use for their powers. Most paranatural wildlife has already abandoned the area, except for reports of hostile spirits appearing from time to time. The Tir government has reduced the magical personnel on site to the bare minimum, given how the mana ebb makes magic use difficult at best. Most of the remaining Awakened personnel at Crater Lake are studying the mana ebb to better understand it, its possible effects and hopefully a means of reversing it.

In addition to finding out what the Tir government is up to, shadowrunners might be hired to go to Crater Lake to



recover samples of orichalcum believed to be mined from there. Or they might be sent to gather other materials from *Tesetelinestéa*, believed to be useful for telesma (actually at this point they're worthless, but the characters' employer may not know that).

MOUNT KILIMANJARO

The Corporate Court is going to have a lot of trouble getting their new launch platform built (see p. 88). Mount Kilimanjaro has long been considered a sacred place of the spirits in local African tribal myth, and the spirits are proving those stories true. The mountain is home to a large number of nature spirits and a surprising number of spontaneous manifestations of ancestor spirits (see *MITS* for details on these types of spirits). The spirits of Kilimanjaro are agreed on the fact that they don't want a corporate railgun system shooting space shuttles through the air at several times the speed of sound. They warned the outsiders away and, when that failed, they began taking hostile action. Now there's a war going on between the corporations and the spirits of the mountain.

The conflict is a difficult one. The spirits of Kilimanjaro are unable to leave their domain, but they are quite powerful within it. The harsh conditions of the mountain and the powers of the spirits make it difficult for corporate agents to make much headway, though there are hired teams of "spirit hunters" scouring the mountain. They have destroyed a number of unwary spirits. Most are proving to be elusive and dangerous prey, however, and they are gaining support from local tribes and shamans as well as Awakened beings elsewhere in the world. Shadowrunners might be hired to act as spirit hunters or to carry aid to the spirits from elsewhere. They might also be employed as expendable negotiators to try and peacefully settle the conflict.

NASCA

The Nasca plateau is an area of powerful magical forces. Each shape and figure appears to be formed from an individual manaline. The conjunction of so many lines close together makes Nasca a Rating 5 power site, aspected toward shamanic and nature magic. Additionally, magic performed in contact with any of the animal images in Nasca gain both the benefits and drawbacks of that figure's Totem Modifiers (see p. 163, SR3). For example, performing a ritual in contact with the Lizard diagram grants +2 dice for Health spells and +2 dice for conjuring Desert spirits. These modifiers are in addition to the bonuses for the power site.

Nasca is also an astral rift where anyone (mundane or Awakened) can astrally project (see *Astral Rifts*, p. 102). The animal figures are themselves gateways into the shamanic metaplanes, with each figure opening into the appropriate metaplane for the animal it represents (the bird to the Metaplane of the Skies, for example, the whale into the Metaplane of the Waters and human figures to the Metaplane of Man). Those who journey to the metaplanes often meet the totem figure of the gate they passed through, which may offer advice or a challenge of some sort. Otherwise the gates can be used for astral quests normally (see p. 92, *MITS*).

The Nasca plateau is currently controlled by the Peruvian government and its allied Japanese megacorps, though several other factions (notably Amazonia) would like to wrest control of the area for themselves or at least be allowed to study the Nasca Lines and their effects more closely.

T'AI SHAN

The mountain of T'ai Shan is home to one of the strongest power sites in the world, making it eminently suitable as the lair of a great dragon like Lung. The power site begins at the Temple of the Peak at the base of the mountain, where the first steps are a Rating 1 power site. Every thousand steps higher the rating of the power site increases by 1, reaching a Rating of 7 at the summit and the Temple of the Jade Emperor. The tremendous mana (or chi, as the Chinese call it) of the mountain is not aspected, though some believe that Lung's presence prevents any intruders from drawing upon the mana without his permission in some way.

The mountain is home to numerous nature spirits, which will repel intruders at Lung's bidding and protect the mountain from harm but otherwise do not molest travelers and pilgrims visiting T'ai Shan.

TEOTIHUACAN

The ruins of Teotihuacan are a Rating 4 power site aspected towards shamanic magic. For hermetic and other styles of magic, the power site rating acts as a normal background count. The power site rating (and the background count) increases to 5 on certain Aztec holy days, calculated from their calendar, which occur roughly once every 28 days. Roughly every lunar cycle, the site's rating also temporarily drops down to 3.

Astral quests taken to the shamanic metaplanes from Teotihuacan have their quest rating reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 1). It is impossible to project onto the hermetic metaplanes (or any other metaplane except the shamanic metaplanes) while in Teotihuacan. Any attempt to reach a metaplane always reaches a shamanic metaplane, and the images encountered there conform to ancient Aztec and Mayan mythology, regardless of the intentions of the traveler. This makes Teotihuacan well suited for vision quests, particularly for initiation, but the Aztlan government frowns on conducting initiations here, preferring them to take place within the more controlled confines of a modern temple.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

The following adventure ideas represent just a few of the possibilities for adventures based around Australia, magical turbulence or the other Awakened sites described in this book.

WHICH WAY DID HE GO?

The runners are traveling through a remote section of the Outback in the wake of a mana storm. Suddenly a ghostly form manifests in front of them, pleading for help. The form is the astrally projecting spirit of Leon Walker, an Outback prospector.

Walker had run afoul of a nomad biker gang, and fled in desperation into a mana storm to elude them. Though he man-



aged to survive the storm, Walker ran headlong into an astral rift that sucked his spirit from his body. Before he could re-enter his body, the mana storm carried him away in a wave of astral turbulence. Now he's lost, attempting to find his body before his Essence run out and he dies.

Walker remembers some landmarks, which the runners may use to help him find the way back to the astral rift. Along the way, they are beset by a pack of arntwerre, hoping to score an easy meal in the wake of the storm. Eventually, the runners may find the rift, but Walker's body is no longer there. Tire tracks indicate the bikers may have beat them to it. The runners themselves may also need to avoid being sucked into the rift during their investigation.

With time rapidly running out, the runners will need to track the bikers down and retrieve Walker's body in a hurry. Alternately, Walker may die, but his ghost may linger, thirsting for revenge.

DEAD OR ALIVE

The runners are hired by Aztechnology to find a man named Nigel Blair in Sydney, and to escort him out of the city into their custody. Blair was formerly a Mr. Johnson for Tanamyre Resources. Several months ago, he turned informant and started selling Tanamyre secrets to Aztechnology, giving that corp an edge in the struggle to control the city's water resources. Blair's treason was discovered, however, and he is now in hiding, unable to leave the city due to resurgent mana storms cutting off access. Tanamyre has placed a large bounty on Blair's head that

Vory V Zakone hitmen are trying to claim. Aztechnology wants the rest of the data he has about their competitor.

The runners will need to track down Blair and beat the Vory to him. Blair is currently hiding in the Emporium, figuring that the Vory will have difficulty finding him there. Emporium residents are likely to assume the runners are also mob hitmen if they ask around there, leading to trouble.

Blair will actively fight against the runners, believing them to be Azzie agents taking him to his doom. If captured, Blair will demand that his daughter be freed. If pressed, the runners will learn that Aztechnology kidnapped Blair's daughter to ensure his cooperation and turn him against Tanamyre. If they check into it, they can track the girl down, the trail leading to a gang of thugs who are holding her on the Bridge. The runners will need to choose between helping Blair or completing the job for Aztechnology. Either way, getting out of Sydney with the mana storm in full swing will be a challenge.

MAGIC ADVENTURE HOOKS

- A new power site or manaline appears just outside of a nearby urban sprawl. A tribe of Native Americans (or other Indigenous group) hires the runners to protect the sacred area from the corporations and entities that seek to control it.
- A group of shapechangers who have successfully infiltrated metahuman society are threatened when an astral shallows appears near their home and reveals their true identity. The runners may be hired to hunt them down, or to help them against bounty hunters and paranormal animal control teams.



- The runners are hired to investigate sightings of a ghost ship floating in a harbor. The ship turns out to be an astral construct of a yacht, teeming with ghosts. The real ship lies at the bottom of the harbor, sunk after murderous pirates robbed the yacht's riders.

AUSTRALIAN ADVENTURE HOOKS

- Royal members of England's New Druidic Movement may hire runners to ruin the credibility of Australia's New Century Party by staging a series of public scandals, ensuring that the referendum to sever ties to the Crown fails once again.
- A severe water drought forces a cutback in water rations, leaving the residents of Melbourne's slums high and dry. A community organization pulls together the funds to hire shadowrunners to steal water from the rich and give it to the poor.
- Increased Vory activity in Melbourne is cutting into Greek Mafia profits. The runners are hired to infiltrate or surveil the Vory and identify their main leaders and hideouts, so that the Greeks can sic Archon Enforcement on them and shut them down.
- A Canberran politician is being blackmailed. He hires the runners to track down the person responsible and make them stop. When the runners investigate, they find the blackmailers are a squad of Canberran cops.
- In an attempt to cause division among PPG members, Shiawase hires the runners to steal a shipment of cutting-edge Yamatetsu cybernetics from a Wuxing freighter and to plant evidence framing the Green Gang Triad (implying that elements within Wuxing are responsible).
- The Children of the Rainbow Serpent plan to sabotage Baird Communications, in protest of Renraku's continual anti-environmental practices. The runners are hired by a free spirit member of City to foil the plan.

OUTBACK ADVENTURE HOOKS

- A Saeder-Krupp mining facility in the Outback has disappeared from satellite surveillance, and the runners are hired to investigate its disappearance. The runners find an alchera has replaced the mining site, and will need to appease the angry spirits who live there before they will be willing to return the site to normal.
- DeBeers-Omnitech is organizing an expedition to find fabled Lasseter's Reef near the Olgas, claiming to have a guide. The runners are hired for escort duty. In reality, the trip is a scam set up by a biker gang to lure fools into the Outback.

- TransSea Shipping hires the characters to discretely locate a lost ship and retrieve its cargo. They don't admit it, but the ship was illegally smuggling telesma and orichalcum through the Great Barrier Reef. A tribe of merrow were angered by the ship's presence and sank it.
- An expensive, high-society scenic aerial tour flight crashes in the heart of Tasmania. The runners are hired by a rich dynasty to retrieve their snotty, spoiled heir who was onboard the plane. The runners must find him and escort him out on foot, though by the end of the trip they may wish to leave the brat behind.
- Parashield hires the characters to escort a research team into the Outback. The team is investigating reports of mutant critters near Emu Junction, and hopes to bring specimens back. The expedition will be faced with mana storms, toxic spirits, angry Aborigines and wild critters.
- A worried urban Aboriginal family asks the runners to find a missing sibling. The trail leads through the sprawl to the deep Outback, where the relative has willingly joined a termite insect spirit hive—and doesn't wish to return.

AWAKENED SITES ADVENTURE HOOKS

- Ute intelligence personnel pay the runners to penetrate Chaco Canyon, find out what is going on and extract a leading Pueblo shaman. Assuming the runners get by the spirits and top security, they will find the shaman's body but his spirit is exploring the astral rift. The runners will need to wait or access the rift themselves to retrieve him.
- The runners are asked to smuggle a shipment of military electronics and weapons to Angkor. Once they get by the Cambodian military and natural dangers of the jungle, they may be surprised to find that their clients are naga and merrow.
- An aged African shaman seeks shadowrunners who can track down the home of a major corporate executive, break in, and take him inside. The shaman is an ally of the Kilimanjaro spirits, and he plans on delivering a message about the Corporate Court violating the spirits' home.
- An Islamic mullah believes that an important religious relic may be buried in the ruins of Tehran. He asks the runners to accompany him and retrieve it. The smugglers who get them inside the city are working with a group of shedim, leading the runners into a trap.

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