

Neon Black

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NEON BLACK

Cyberpunk forged in the dark

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X Card by John Stavropoulos <http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg>

Influences

[Blades in the Dark](#) by John Harper

[Scum & Villainy](#) by Stras Acimovic & John Lebeoff Little

[Mutants in the Night](#) by Orion D. Black

[The Sprawl](#) by Hamish Cameron

[CrashCart](#) by Galen Pejeau

Touchstones

Films: Ghost in the Shell (1995), Bladerunner and Bladerunner 2049, Hackers, Inception

Games: Android: Netrunner

Television Series: Halt and Catch Fire

Books: The Sprawl trilogy by William Gibson, The Ultimate Cyberpunk edited by Pat Cadigan

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I would love your feedback to make Neon Black better. Once you've read the book, played a few sessions, or finished a short campaign I would love to hear your thoughts via [this google form](#).

The current version for Neon Black is **7.3 - Beta**. The game is content complete, but small things may change in the future.

I don't know how to rob a bank. I don't know how to con a billionaire out of everything he has, or redistribute the wealth of the rich. I don't often have the time or the money I need to help my friends.

But in Neon Black I do. I can play someone who can rob banks, I can tell stories about people who can synthesize or steal the medication their friends need to survive. In Prime City I can help all the people I can't help in this world. And I can do it while making sure the blame is always centered on those who have the time and money to fix these things and choose not to. I can play this game and be reminded that the world isn't supposed to be like this.

Neon Black is dedicated to all of my friends who gave me the time and money I needed to live.

Thank you.

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The Basics

The Game

Neon Black is a role-playing game about a community of people trying to survive in a cyberpunk dystopia. The world is full of people down on their luck, cheated by corporations and the villainous rich. You'll help these people, go on dangerous heists, explore artificial realities, and encounter friendly and nefarious machines. We play to find out if the community can survive amidst warring corporations, an unforgiving climate, and the indifference of the extravagantly wealthy.

The Setting

The year is 2199. Climate change has ravaged Earth. The governments and international organizations of the past were too slow to stop the inevitable climate catastrophe. The megacorporations saved us, or so they are fond of saying. These all-encompassing companies operate with no oversight and wield unprecedented power. They used their money and resources to construct the geoengineering projects necessary for the continuity of human civilization. Now the remnants of humanity live in a handful of isolated corporate city states. The largest of these city states is Prime City.

Prime City is ruled by the rich: CEOs, oligarchs, and celebrities who made it out on top after the world burned. They live in massive skyscrapers high above the clouds, vacation on Mars and Europa, and augment their bodies at-will.

You are not these people. You play as members of one of Prime City's hidden or forgotten communities where you take on odd jobs to survive, make rent, and help your friends. Maybe you're trying to free your block from corporate contracts, or maybe you're just trying to keep everyone fed and your space ship flying. Either way, you'll use the tech the wealthy throw from their spires to break into their vaults, hack their networks, and spray your symbol on their corporate logos. Remind people that life doesn't need to be this way.

The Players

One player plays the game master (GM) who often plays the part of non-player characters (NPCs) and describes the sights and sounds of Prime City. The other players work with the GM to create player characters (PCs) and their community. Each player brings their characters to life as someone who reaches beyond their current safety and means to help themselves and others in their community. The players work together to establish the tone and style of the game by making judgement calls about the mechanics, dice, and the consequences of risky actions. All the players (the PCs and the GM) tell the story together. Even though the GM plays more roles, narrates consequences, and is usually the one describing the setting, they are not more in control of the narrative than the players. If this

was a movie, the GM is not the director. They are not the leader of the game. Everyone playing the game is a writer with different and overlapping responsibilities.

The Characters

Your characters will attempt to defend and develop their community. You'll do this by taking on risky scores to build up the community and help the individuals within it. The resources you earn from these scores will help improve the lives of everyone in the community, including your own, as well as help you gain the respect of the factions you help, and suffer the ire of the factions you target.

There are 8 character types to choose from:

- **Decker:** a software cracker and 'Net expert
- **Doc:** a gifted doctor and chemist
- **Fixer:** a master planner and hustler
- **Operator:** a drone pilot and getaway driver
- **Merc:** a professional fighter and killer
- **Streamer:** a charismatic content creator
- **Synth:** a synthetic worker
- **Tech:** a hardware designer and troubleshooter

The Community

In addition to creating characters, you'll also choose a community where all your characters live or work. The community gets its own sheet, just like the characters. The community you pick determines the factions you'll likely interact with, the NPCs who need your help, and the scores you will likely pursue.

There are 4 communities to choose from:

- **The 55:** a massive concrete apartment in the heart of Prime City
- **Chariot:** a large dilapidated spaceship orbiting the Earth
- **City of Nod:** a forgotten community outside the boundaries of Prime City
- **Tannhauser Way:** an important stretch of road at the bottom of Prime City

The Game Master

The GM establishes the dynamic world around the characters. The GM will play many of the NPCs in the world by giving them traits, roles, and needs. The GM helps organize the conversation of the game so it's pointed toward the interesting elements of play. The GM isn't in charge of the story and doesn't have to plan events ahead of time. They present interesting

opportunities to the players, then follow the chain of actions and consequences wherever they lead.

Playing A Session

A session of Neon Black is like an episode of a TV show. There are one or two main events, plus maybe some side-story elements, which all fit into an ongoing series. A session of play usually lasts a few hours, depending on the preferences of the players. Think of one session as getting your friends together to watch a movie. You'll need a few minutes to get organized and make sure everyone is up to speed, and then a few hours to play the game.

During a session, the characters work together to choose a score to accomplish, then they make a few dice rolls to jump into the action in progress. The PCs take actions, suffer consequences, and finish the score (whether they succeed or fail). Then the characters have downtime, during which they recover, pursue side-projects, and spend time with members of the community. After downtime, the players once again look for a new opportunity or create their own goals and pursuits, and we play to find out what happens next.

What you Need to Play

- Two to four players and one game master
- A handful of six-sided dice (at least six)
- Printed character and community sheets, and reference sheets (each included with this game)
- This book, for reference
- Blank paper, index cards, pens and pencils, and other materials for note-taking

Improvised Interference

Dina was running late. She threw open the front doors of the Ziggurat Research and Development office just in time to see the rest of her crew in Low Traffic's shitty van trying to catch up to a big autonomous armored car. The program Dina had just installed in Ziggurat's mainframe was supposed to cripple the car. Instead it had triggered the vehicle's fight or flight subroutines, which is why she was watching her friend Low Traffic dodge and weave between cars rather than pretend to be a service vehicle towing away their prize.

"What the fuck Dina?" Mouse, their fixer, was in her earpiece. Dina could hear Low swearing next to Mouse in the van and the screech of tires as they tried to catch up to the Ziggurat hardware.

"I.C.E. flagged me, had to get out before security found me."

"The fuck do we do now, we-- watch it!" Mouse and Low screamed. Dina watched as they banked a corner, bouncing off some sedan that couldn't get out of their way fast enough before they disappeared around the corner.

"It can do whatever it can to get away, but it's still subject to its programming so it can't endanger human lives without cause. I dunno, try to force it onto the curb or something."

"I'd throw you in front of it if I could. Shit! It's making for the freeway up to Fivespires. Low can't this thing go any--" Mouse ended the call. The nearest turn off to Fivespires would bring the Ziggurat car back towards Dina, across the plaza below her. A flight of concrete steps and a city block's worth of civilians enjoying the day's weather divided her from the street leading to the Fivespires exit. She knew the autonomous car could easily outpace the van on those open roads. Dina would never get down there in time to do anything.

She looked up and down the block. A Hermes Guild corporate courier was unlocking their bicycle nearby. Dina ran towards the courier, hands rummaging in her pockets.

"Hey. Hey! How much for the bike?"

The courier looked at her through their helmet's visor, "What?"

"The bike! Here," Dina shoved two bronze credit chips at them. Each could hold just enough to get a decent coffee.

"Wha- no, get away from me!" The courier disengaged the lock. Dina could hear the roar of the Ziggurat robot's motor carrying it around the corner below. It would be passing the plaza any minute now. Dina grabbed the bike with one hand. The courier began to protest, "Hey, stop--"

Crack!

Dina's cyberarm struck the courier across the face. They hit the ground as Dina tossed all the credit chips she had next to them.

"Sorry!" She called out behind her as she mounted the bike and took off down the plaza staircase. People dove out of her way and screamed at her as Dina tried to hold on. By the time she got to the bottom she could barely feel her organic arm from the vibrations. Her legs burned as she pushed herself as hard as she could, pedaling across the plaza. The Ziggurat car was close, she could hear Low Traffic's van sputtering as it came around the corner. Dina closed her eyes as she came up to the edge of the street.

Slam!

The bike's carbon fibre frame bent and shattered beneath her as thick armor plates crashed into it. She rolled up onto the car's windshield, her cybernetic arm scraping across the glass. The car stopped instantly, catapulting Dina onto the street in front of it.

"You have been in an automotive accident!" A hollow, robotic voice emitted from the Ziggurat car above her. Flashing amber lights had deployed from its roof. "Please wait here for the Corporate Order Police. They have been notified of the incident." Low Traffic's van screeched to a halt behind the automated car. The new paint job the crew had applied the night before was scraped, but it still looked like it belonged to Prime City Operations.

Mouse leapt from the passenger seat and ran to where Dina was sprawled, "Shit Dina you alright?"

Dina raised her cyberarm. The servos inside whined in protest as she put her thumb up.

"Great plan Mouse," she groaned, "thanks for the idea. Now let's get the hell out of here."

The Core System

Judgment calls

When you play Neon Black, you'll make several key judgment calls. Everyone contributes, but either the players or the GM gets final say for each:

- Which actions are reasonable as a solution to a problem? *Can this person be **Commanded**? Must we get out the tools and **Tinker** with this locked door, or could it also be quietly **Hacked**?* The players have final say.
- How dangerous and how effective is a given action in this circumstance? *How risky is this? Can this person be **Commanded** very little or a whole lot?* The GM has final say.
- Which consequences are inflicted to manifest the dangers in a given circumstance? *Does this fall from the roof break your leg? Do the COPs merely become suspicious or do they already have you trapped?* The GM has final say.
- Does this situation call for a dice roll, and which one? *Is your character in position to make an **action roll** or must they first make a **resistance roll** to gain initiative?* The GM has final say.
- Which calamities occur when a character's luck runs out? *Is this where your merc gets captured and decides they are no longer a killer?* The players have final say.

Rolling the Dice

Neon Black uses six-sided dice. You roll several at once and read the single highest result.

- If the highest die is a **6**, it's a **full success**—things go well. If you roll more than one **6**, it's a critical success (**CRIT**)—you gain some additional advantage.
- If the highest die is a **4** or **5**, that's a **mixed success**—you do what you were trying to do, but there are consequences: trouble, harm, reduced effect, etc.
- If the highest die is **1-3**, it's a **bad outcome**. Things go poorly. You probably don't achieve your goal and you suffer complications, too.
- If you ever need to roll but you have zero (or negative) dice, roll two dice and take the single lowest result. You can't roll a **CRIT** when you have zero dice.

All the dice systems in the game are expressions of this basic format. When you're first learning the game, you can always "collapse" back down to a simple roll to judge how things go. Look up the exact rule later when you have time.

To create a dice pool for a roll, you'll use a **trait** (like your **Sneak** or your **Prowess** or your community's **tier**) and take dice equal to its rating. You'll usually end up with one to four dice. Even one die is pretty good in this game—a 50% chance of success. The most common traits

you'll use are the **action ratings** of the player characters. A player might roll dice for their **Assault** action rating when they get into a fist fight, for example.

There are four types of basic rolls in the game:

- **Action roll.** When a PC attempts an action that's dangerous or troublesome, you make an **action roll** to find out how it goes. Action rolls and their effects and consequences drive most of the game.
- **Downtime roll.** When the PCs are at their leisure after a score, they can perform **downtime actions** in relative safety. You make **downtime rolls** to see how much they get done.
- **Fortune roll.** The GM can make a **fortune roll** to disclaim decision making and leave something up to chance. *How much about this subject does an NPC know? How likely is a rival to show up during a particular score? How quickly does the virus spread through the local network?*
- **Resistance roll.** A player can make a **resistance roll** when their character suffers a consequence they don't like. The roll tells us how much **luck** their character loses to reduce or avoid a consequence. When you resist that "Broken Leg" condition, you lose some luck and now it's only a "Sprained Ankle" instead. You may also resist the consequence entirely, it depends on the consequence and the fiction.

Phases of the Game

Neon Black can be broken down into three phases of play. By default, the game is in **free play**—characters talk to each other, they go places, they do things, they make rolls as needed. They can get into as much or as little trouble as they like.

When the group is ready, they choose a community need to fulfill or a target for their next score, then choose a type of plan to employ. This triggers the **engagement roll** (which establishes the situation as the score starts) and then the game shifts into the **score phase**.

During the **score**, the PCs engage the target—they make rolls, overcome obstacles, call for **flashbacks**, and complete the score (successfully or not). When the score is finished, the game shifts into the **downtime phase**.

During the **downtime phase**, the GM engages the systems for **payoff**, **heat**, as well as **downtime scenes**, to determine all the potential fallout from the score. Then the PCs each get their downtime actions, such as working on a **long-term project**. When all the downtime actions are complete, the game returns to free play and the cycle starts over again.

These phases are a conceptual model to help you organize the game. They're not meant to be rigid structures that restrict your options. Think of the phases as a menu of options to fit whatever it is you're trying to accomplish in play. Each phase suits a different goal.

Principles of Play

Neon Black is a sandbox style role-playing game, meaning there is no predefined adventure or plot. Prime City is full of predatory corporations and struggling communities, and it is up to all the players to find the stories they want to tell with this game. The following principles will help create a fun and interesting cyberpunk experience for everyone at the table. These are not just helpful suggestions. These principles are rules, illustrating how **capitalism sucks** and **being a fan of the other players** is just as important to the game as action rolls and playbooks.

No prologue. Discover who your character is and what their world is like through play. Don't come to the table with an overarching plot, or an in depth backstory, or a calendar of corporate schemes. Community contacts, the character's milestones, and the roll of the dice will provide ample resources to craft a narrative. All you need to do to prepare is consume some cyberpunk media, listen to some synthwave music, and come to the table with themes and topics for the **taste menu** to guide your story. Start with questions, and answer them as a group. In other words: play to find out what happens.

Be fans of the characters. When we first see the characters in the story of your game, they are likely poor or just scraping by. But being poor in a capitalist system does not mean someone is unskilled. Each of the player characters are good at what they do. The **Doc** is a gifted chemist and doctor, the **Merc** is a tough fighter. When they fail, it is the GM's responsibility to illustrate complications that don't make the player characters look incompetent, oafish, or ignorant.

It is also the responsibility of all the players to share the spotlight and encourage each other to take risks. Ask another character about their drives or beliefs after they get a new milestone. Prompt other characters for useful information. Act out a scene to illustrate your similarities or differences. Neon Black is a game about multiple characters. If you find that your character was at the center of the action last session, hold back and let the other player's characters steer the story.

Be fans of the other players. Use teamwork actions to help each other during a score. If a player is about to do an action roll, occasionally remind them of milestones, cyberware, and other mechanics that will help them. Propose ideas that incorporate things from the Yes section of the taste menu that other players proposed. As a GM, let the players describe their successes and propose ways they fail and complicate the story. If a player describes their character doing something risky and doesn't mention one of their character's actions, suggest

ones to use so they can make a roll. If you're ever unsure what comes next, think about the people in the community and what they need.

This is a story to be told, not a game you can win. Neon Black is a role-playing game, it is designed to bring a group of people together to tell an interesting cyberpunk story full of characters who take on challenges they cannot solve themselves. It is not designed for players to find optimal mechanics to surpass each obstacle or calculate the best odds of success. It also isn't designed for the GM to make a predefined series of traps or complications that the players need to master in order to succeed. Characters who always win and get what they want make for a boring story, so too do characters who can't get ahead despite their best efforts.

To that end, it is the responsibility of every player to follow the fiction first, not the mechanics. If it makes sense in the story for the players to do a group action together in the moment, great! But don't try to organize players to always get the best possible result on every roll. Don't try to bend the fiction to benefit your character and use an action rating that doesn't fit what the character is doing just because you could have more dice. Failing rolls and mixed successes create tensions, conflict, and interesting problems for the players to solve. Hold on loosely to your characters and take desperate chances. The story will be better for it.

Write the story together. It is not the sole responsibility of the GM to define and bring the world of Prime City to life. It is assumed that the GM will voice the NPCs and the city's factions, but it is the responsibility of everyone at the table to make Prime City feel like a living thing with named characters and personal stakes. If you are having trouble imagining or partaking in a scene, ask for details. *What does it smell like in the garage? When I look out the broken windows what do I see? What colour is their fancy dress?*

Jump at chances to show how the different members of the community react to the characters. These NPCs drive play by providing scores and also help illustrate your community and the setting of your story. It benefits everyone when you take time to define who these people are, and share the burden of coming up with plot hooks and potential scores with the GM.

Capitalism sucks. The world has not improved in the year 2199. The climate apocalypse and the rise of corporate city-states has only increased the gap between the wealthy and the poor. There is little, if anything, to salvage from the capitalist system that brought Prime City to this point in time. Neon Black is fundamentally anti-capitalist. Players can buy things from corporations by **engaging in capitalism**, but it is always more expensive than the alternatives, and forces the characters to compromise long-term goals with short-term, risk-free gains. Structuring a society around the accumulation of money creates unequal living conditions, a

servant class of workers who cannot earn enough money to survive, and a ruling class of people who hoard their wealth and refuse to change.

Each corporate faction in Prime City is self-interested and has a list of assets that the players can attempt to steal, subvert, or destroy. Each underground faction is trying to create alternatives and subvert corporate control of Prime City. They have goals and aspirations that the players can help by taking on scores. Neon Black is designed to create a fictional world where you can rob rich people and create alternatives to capitalism.

Community rules. There are several potential alternatives to the capitalist system in Prime City. Most of them include community. A community could be a local Stack trying to free itself from corporate landlords and services. It could be your crew of punks living in the City of Nod, the desolate suburbs in the desert outside Prime City. These are the people you can help, and will help you in return. They could be neighbours, or folks you interact with on the 'Net. At the end of the day the corporations and the people who run them don't care about you, people do.

Humanity is broad. In Prime City there are several different examples of human beings. Some humans are flesh and blood, some have synthetic prosthetics like cyberware. Some are HAUNTS, and live on the 'Net as incorporeal beings. Some HAUNTS have bodies like spaceships, cars, or even vending machines. None of these characteristics make these people any more or less human. In Prime City, being human has nothing to do with the body you inhabit or how much flesh or metal it has. The fact that humanity comes in many shapes and sizes is not something a corporate world wants to accommodate, but that does not mean there is something wrong with someone who has less limbs or is heavier than other people. If Prime City isn't designed to accommodate a wide spectrum of humanity, that is a problem you can fix, not a condemnation of the people.

The players should have this basic assumption when they begin their game of Neon Black. You are encouraged to target corporate factions that would seek to challenge or subvert the humanity of people, such as the church of the Prophets Returned. They are villains because they have an essentialist view of humanity, and believe incorrectly that people who are wholly or partly synthetic have lost their humanity.

The rich are villains. Every time a rich person keeps more wealth than they require, in a world full of people suffering because of economic inequality, they are choosing to act immorally. The tastes and living conditions of the rich require the debasement and abuse of other people. Also the rich cannot become rich without the labour, time, and sacrifices of other people. In your game of Neon Black you may have rich people trying to be human, trying to do the right thing. But they all start as the rulers of a capitalist system and so they all start as villains,

whether they realize it or not. It is the responsibility of GM to make sure that every rich corporate suit and celebrity in Prime City exhibits these immoral behaviours and attitudes.

It is possible for the player characters to become rich, either through long-term projects or hoarding resources. If that is the case then it is the responsibility of everyone at the table to illustrate the corrupting influence of wealth and to illustrate that character as a villain. Sooner or later a rich PC must either get rid of their wealth, retire, or become an antagonist to the other characters in the story.

Present opportunities, follow the lead. To be driven the players need opportunities and leads for lucrative and dangerous scores. GM, when the players talk about wanting to get rid of their notoriety, or gaining a new asset, or more resources, present them with scores from their community or the factions of Prime City. Players, when you don't have a score lined up, look to your community for opportunities. Look at the factions and their assets for things that you want and select a plan to take them. None of the corporations in Prime City deserve what they have, and your community cannot survive if you don't steal from them.

Cut to the action. When you have a score, grab a missing detail, pick a load, and cut to the scene already in progress. There is room for ponderous nonaction in the moments before a score happens, and it's everyone's responsibility to make sure that doesn't happen. You don't need to plan for each eventuality or to find the perfect missing detail. If the players need to know more about the world of Prime City, the GM should call for a **gather information** roll so they can move forward. The characters are all good at what they do, and any complication that occurs during the score is something that could be accounted for in a **flashback**.

Show the disparity, then make it neon. Most cyberpunk fiction is just a stylized version of our own world with the dial between rich and poor turned up to 11. Show the disparity and vibrant life of the 99%. Show how people make their own use for things, how their art is always more unpredictable and heartfelt than corporate products. Show neon signs advertising local shops, show the local bartender's impressive homemade cyberware, describe the beautiful mournful sound of the fiddle player panhandling on the street.

Then, when the story of your game turns to the rich, show how sterile and lifeless their world is. Show them making unsound arguments and holding on to old, useless philosophies. Describe their massive sculptures and too-perfect chrome arms. Hint at how much everything they own costs, and what that trapped wealth could have done for other people.

Actions & Attributes

Action Ratings

There are 9 actions in the game that the player characters use to overcome obstacles.

When you **Analyze**, you scrutinize people, places, items, and details, and interpret evidence.

*You might gather information from the news and the 'Net. You might do research on an esoteric topic. You might closely study a person to detect lies or true feelings. You could investigate protected databases (but **Hack** might be better).*

When you **Assault**, you engage in pitched combat with the intent to harm or neutralize your opposition, or break things with overwhelming force.

*You might brawl or wrestle with your foe. You might use weapons or explosives. You might storm a barricade or hold a position in battle. You might lay down suppressing fire. You might use a vehicle as a weapon (though **Move** might be better).*

When you **Command**, you compel obedience with your force of personality.

*You might intimidate or threaten to get what you want. You might lead an action with NPCs. You might give a speech to get people to do what you want (though **Spin** might be better).*

When you **Connect**, you socialize with friends and community members.

*You might talk to someone to gain access to resources, information, people, or places. You might make a good impression or win someone over with your charm and style. You might make new friends or connect with people in your community or who work with the same employer. You could try to direct your friends with social pressure (but **Command** might be better).*

When you **Hack**, you breach the security systems of computers and networks, override their controls and commands, or manipulate software.

*You might access a network to find information or take control of a security system. You might scramble a drone's control systems to keep it from firing on you. You might override a door's controls to get it to open (though **Tinker** might be better).*

When you **Move**, you lift, climb, jump, run, swim or pilot a vehicle.

*You might vault over a turnstile while escaping authorities. You might climb up the side of a building. You might dodge gunfire as you escape a shootout. You might drive a car as you flee the COPS. You might chase after a mark you're observing (though **Sneak** might be better).*

When you **Tinker**, you alter how an existing mechanism works, create a new gadget, apply first aid or repair cyberware.

*You might disable a trap. You might repair a damaged vehicle or augmentation. You might help stop someone from bleeding to death. You might crack a safe. You might overdrive an engine. You might program a bomb to detonate later. You might force a door open (though **Assault** might be better).*

When you **Sneak**, you move stealthily or without being noticed.

*You might sneak past security or hide in the shadows. You might pick someone's pocket. You might sneak up behind someone to attack them by surprise (but **Assault** might be better). You might flee through a dark alley (but **Move** might be better).*

When you **Spin**, you influence someone with guile, charm, or logic.

*You might outright lie to someone's face. You might persuade a sucker to believe you. You might argue the facts. You could try to trick people into affection or obedience (but **Connect** or **Command** might be better).*

Many actions overlap with others, which is by design. As a player, you get to choose which action you roll by saying what your character does. Can you try to **Move** behind someone to grapple them during a fight? Sure! The GM tells you the position and effect level of your action in this circumstance. **Assault** might be better (less risky or more effective), depending on the situation at hand. (Sometimes it might be the other way around.)

Each action has a rating (from 0 to 3) that tells you how many dice to roll when you perform that action. Action ratings don't just represent skill or training—you're free to describe how your character performs that action based on the type of person they are. Maybe your character is good at Command because they have a scary stillness to them, while another character barks orders and intimidates people with their military bearing.

You choose which action to perform to overcome an obstacle by describing what your character does. Actions that are poorly suited to the situation may be less effective and may put the character in more danger, but they can still be attempted. Usually, when you perform an action, you'll make an **action roll** to see how it turns out.

Action Roll

You make an **action roll** when your character does something potentially dangerous or troublesome. The possible results of the action roll depends on your character's **position**. There are three positions: **controlled**, **risky**, and **desperate**. If you're in a controlled position, the possible consequences are less serious. If you're in a desperate position, the consequences can be severe. If you're somewhere in between, it's risky—usually considered the “default” position for most actions.

If there's no danger or trouble at hand, you don't make an action roll. You might make a **fortune roll** or a **downtime roll** or the GM will simply say yes—and you accomplish your goal.

Attribute Ratings

There are three **attributes** in the game that the player characters use to resist bad consequences: **Clout**, **Intellect**, and **Prowess**. Each attribute has a rating (from 0 to 4) that tells you how many dice to roll when you use that attribute.

The rating for each attribute is equal to the number of dots in the first column under that attribute. The more well-rounded your character is with a particular set of actions, the better their attribute rating.

Resistance Roll

Each attribute resists a different type of danger. If you get stabbed, for example, you resist physical conditions with your **Prowess** rating. **Resistance rolls** always succeed—you diminish or deflect the bad result—but the better your roll, the less **luck** it costs to reduce or avoid the danger.

When the enemy has a big advantage, you'll need to make a resistance roll before you can take your own action. For example, when you fight the vat-grown corporate assassin, she disarms you before you can strike. You need to make a **resistance roll** to keep hold of your weapon if you want to attack her. Or perhaps you face a powerful artificial intelligence on the 'Net and attempt to **Hack** it to control its actions. But before you can make your own roll, you must resist the AI's powerful ICE.

The GM judges the threat level of the enemies and uses these “preemptive” resistance rolls as needed to reflect the capabilities of especially dangerous foes.

Cyberware

The 3rd rating for each action and 4th rating for each attribute are granted by **cyberware**. These represent physical modifications that allow the characters to get additional dice when rolling that **action rating** or using that attribute for a **resistance roll**. These are granted by cybernetic enhancements that are installed during downtime. You can find more details about cyberware in the Drugs, Hardware, & Software chapter.

Cyberware does not make people any more or less human, remember **humanity is board**. Augmentations like these are tools that allow them to do things they otherwise could not. Sometimes this is empowering, like when you get surgery to alter your body so it represents how you see yourself. Sometimes this is exploitative, like when a corporation forces you to get

cyberware so that you can perform expected tasks. Cyberware can be used for good or evil, but it does not diminish the essential humanity of the user.

Luck

Player characters in Neon Black have a special reserve called **luck**. When they suffer a consequence that they don't want to accept, they can spend luck instead. The result of the **resistance roll** determines how much luck it costs to avoid a bad outcome.

*While **Hacking** a Megacorp server on the 'Net, Ashley's character, Zero, gets hit by intrusion countermeasures that threaten to make her black out. Ashley rolls her **Intellect** rating to resist, and gets a 2. It costs 6 luck, minus 2 (the result of the resistance roll) to resist the consequences. Ashley erases 4 luck and describes how Zero survives.*

The GM rules that the harm is reduced by the resistance roll, but not avoided entirely. Zero suffers a level 2 condition ("Migraine") instead of a level 3 condition ("Concussion").

Each character starts the game with a certain amount of luck determined at character creation. Characters gain luck during the **engagement roll**, specific downtime scenes, or whenever a character rolls a **crit** on an action roll, downtime roll, or resistance roll.

Pushing Your Luck

You can use **luck** to push yourself for greater performance. When you **push your luck** you spend **2 luck** and pick one of the following options:

- Add **+1d** to your roll. (This may be used for an action roll or downtime roll or any other kind of roll where extra effort would help you)
- Add **+1 level** to your effect.

You can push your luck once per roll, and you can only push yourself before the roll, not after.

Calamities

When a PC erases the last of their luck, their **luck runs out**. When your luck runs out you select one of 4 calamities. Calamities are severe complications that dramatically change the story over and above the normal consequences suffered as a result of an action roll. A calamity is a chance for the character to grow, develop, and change as a result of the events of the game, and also a chance for the player to put their character in danger, introduce new enemies, raise the stakes, or introduce some other complication.

Once you select a calamity you fill your luck track to full (9 luck). Calamities cannot be resisted, and players can choose a calamity more than once during the game.

- **Captured:** An unfriendly faction captures or kidnaps your character. This is a good calamity if you are outnumbered, facing a powerful enemy or rival, or even as a potential setup for a future score. Your character will need to escape or negotiate their way out before they join the community. *You may get split up from the other characters during a shootout, lose your footing during a getaway, get arrested by the COPS, etc.*
- **Exposed:** The wrong person notices you at the wrong time, mark **+3 heat** on the community sheet. This is a good option if you're stuck in the open, in a public space, or even if you're trying to avoid attention all together. This will likely get your community a new level of notoriety, and therefore increase the stakes and threats the characters face, so make sure all the players are comfortable with this option. *Your boss spots you stealing something, the COPS spot you during a score, you get flagged by security programs while you hack, you suddenly become famous/infamous, etc.*
- **Out of Action:** You're unconscious or unresponsive. Your character likely cannot do anything helpful during the rest of this phase. This is a good calamity if you're in the middle of a tense conflict, or if you think this is the right moment in the story for your character to die. *You might succumb to your wounds during a fight, overindulge during a social score, overwork yourself at your job, pass out while getting chrome installed, etc.*
- **Plot Twist:** A significant complication occurs. This calamity has a lot of possibilities, but should always make the life of the character worse, strain their relationships, or put themselves or other people in mortal danger. *Something explodes, a rival or enemy reveals themselves, you intentionally or unintentionally betray someone, etc.*

Milestones

Milestones are modifiers for your character that indicate what they are feeling, how they act within the community, and their unique skills. Each milestone includes a narrative requirement for accessing it and also grants special abilities that allow you to modify or break the rules of the game. You mark a milestone when you first create your character, and whenever your character fulfills the requirement of a new milestone.

Milestones are not only mechanical benefits, but also can help illustrate how your character is changing throughout the story. For example the Decker playbook has "Introvert" as their first milestone. This suggests a character that is shy and doesn't like meeting face to face with people. Their last milestone is "Wired In" which can only be marked when the decker has forged relationships with multiple people in the community. This creates a storyline, a

character arc, where they begin as someone who is shy and doesn't like relying on people, and grows into an important member of the community.

Just like new milestones are marked when fictional conditions are met in the game, old milestones may be unmarked due to conditions suffered during a score, or when the player believes that the milestone no longer represents their character's personality.

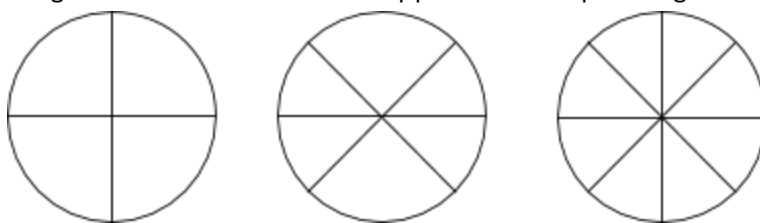
I QUIT

While most playbooks don't share milestones, all playbooks include the "I Quit" milestone. This represents when your character leaves their employer behind, for whatever reason. When you select this milestone you always get the same benefits. You erase **1 resource** from the community sheet to represent your lost wages and connections. You get **1 additional free downtime action** to represent your newfound free time. You also take **-1 status** with the faction that employed you.

When you have the I Quit milestone you can still find employment again. If this happens in the fiction, either through a long-term project or other means, you simply reverse the benefits you gained when you quit. You mark **1 resource** on the community sheet, have **1 less free downtime action**, and mark **+1 status** with the faction that employed your character.

Progress Clocks

A progress clock is a circle divided into segments. Draw a progress clock when you need to track ongoing effort against an obstacle or the approach of impending trouble.



Hacking into a corporate server? Make a clock to track the alert level of security software, or trace programs. When the PCs suffer consequences from partial successes or missed rolls, fill in segments on the clock until the alarm is raised or their position is exposed.

Generally, the more complex the problem, the more segments in the progress clock. A complex obstacle is a 4-segment clock. A more complicated obstacle is a 6-clock. A daunting obstacle is an 8-segment clock.

When you create a clock, make it about the obstacle, not the method. The clocks for an infiltration should be "Interior Patrols" and "The Server Room" not "Sneak Past the Guards" or

“Access the Server Room.” The patrols and the room are the obstacles—the PCs can attempt to overcome them in a variety of ways.

Complex enemy threats can be broken into several “layers,” each with its own progress clock. For example, the AI enclosure might have a “Hardware Security” clock, a “Robot Guards” clock, and a “Net security” clock. The characters would have to deal with all three layers to reach the AI trapped inside.

Remember that a clock tracks progress. It reflects the fictional situation, so the group can gauge how they’re doing. A clock is like a speedometer in a car. It shows the speed of the vehicle—it doesn’t determine the speed.

There are several different ways to use clocks when playing Neon Black.

Danger Clocks

The GM can use a clock to represent a progressive danger, like suspicion growing during a seduction, the proximity of pursuers in a chase, or the alert level of COPs on patrol. In this case, when a complication occurs, the GM ticks one, two, or three segments on the clock, depending on the consequence level. When the clock is full, the danger comes to fruition—the guards hunt down the intruders, activate an alarm, release the drones, etc.

Racing Clocks

Create two opposed clocks to represent a race. The PCs might have a progress clock called “Escape” while the encroaching threat has a clock called “Cornered.” If the PCs finish their clock before the threat fills theirs, they get away. Otherwise, they’re cornered and can’t flee. If both complete at the same time, the PCs escape, but the threat still has to be dealt with.

Linked Clocks

You can make a clock that unlocks another clock once it’s filled. For example, the GM might make a linked clock called “Trapped” after an “Alert” clock fills up. When you fight a veteran assassin, she might have a clock for her “Defense” and then a linked clock for “Vulnerable.” Once you overcome the “Defense” clock, then you can attempt to overcome the “Vulnerable” clock and defeat her.

Mission Clocks

The GM can make a clock for a time-sensitive score, to represent the window of opportunity you have to complete it. If the countdown runs out, the score fails or changes—the target escapes, the concert is over, etc.

Tug-of-war Clocks

You can make a clock that can be filled and emptied by events, to represent a back-and-forth situation. You might make a “Riot!” clock that indicates when the factory workers attempt to overthrow management. Some events will tick the clock up and some will tick it down. Once it fills, the riot begins. A tug-of-war clock is also perfect for an ongoing battle between two factions.

Long-term Project

Some projects will take a long time. A basic long-term project is eight segments. Truly long-term projects (like inventing a new complex piece of software) can be two, three, or even four clocks, representing all phases of development, testing, and final completion. Add or subtract clocks depending on the details of the situation and complexity of the project.

A long-term project is a good catch-all for dealing with any unusual player goal, including things that circumvent or change elements of the mechanics or the setting.

Action Roll

When a player character does something challenging, we make an action roll to see how it turns out. An action is challenging if there's an obstacle to the PC's goal that's dangerous or troublesome in some way. We don't make an action roll unless the PC is put to the test. If their action is something that we'd expect them to simply accomplish, then we don't make an action roll.

Each game group will have their own ideas about what “challenging” means. This is good! It’s something that establishes the tone and style of the story you tell with Neon Black.

To make an action roll, we go through six steps. In play, they flow together somewhat, but let's break each one down here for clarity.

1. The player states their **goal** for the action.
2. The player chooses the **action rating**.
3. The GM sets the **position** for the roll.
4. The GM sets the **effect level** for the action.
5. Add **bonus dice**.
6. The player rolls the dice and we judge the result.

1. The Player States Their Goal

Your goal is the concrete outcome your character will achieve when they overcome the obstacle at hand. Usually the character's goal is pretty obvious in context, but it's the GM's job to ask and clarify the goal when necessary.

“You’re punching him in the face, right? Okay... what do you want to get out of this? Do you want to take him out, or just intimidate him up so he’ll do what you want?”

2. The Player Chooses the Action Rating

The player chooses which action rating to roll, following from what their character is doing on-screen. If you want to roll your **Assault** action, then get in a fight. If you want to roll your **Command** action, then order someone around. You can't roll a given action rating unless your character is presently performing that action in the fiction.

3. The GM Sets the Position

Once the player chooses their action, the GM sets the position for the roll. The position represents how dangerous or troublesome the action might be. There are three positions: **controlled**, **risky**, and **desperate**. To choose a position, the GM looks at the profiles for the positions below and picks one that most closely matches the situation at hand.

Positions

- **Controlled:** You're set up for success. You're exploiting a dominant advantage.
- **Risky:** You go head-to-head. You're acting under duress. You're taking a chance.
- **Desperate:** You're overreaching. You're in real trouble. A very dangerous maneuver.

By default, an action roll is **risky**. You wouldn't be rolling if there was no risk involved. If the situation seems more dangerous, make it **desperate**. If it seems less dangerous, make it **controlled**.

4. The GM Sets the Effect Level

The GM assesses the likely **effect level** of this action, given the factors of the situation. Essentially, the effect level tells us "how much" this action can accomplish: will it have limited, standard, or great effect?

*The GM's choices for effect level and position can be strongly influenced by the player's choice of action rating. If a player wants to try to make a new friend with **Assault**—well... maybe that's possible, but the GM wouldn't be crazy to say it's a desperate roll and probably limited effect. Seems like **Connect** would be a lot better for that. The players are always free to choose the action they perform, but that doesn't mean all actions should be equally risky or potent.*

5. Add Bonus Dice

You can normally get at least two bonus dice for your action roll.

For at least one bonus die, you can get **assistance** from a teammate who has a **bond** with you. They spend **luck** equal to the number of **bonds** they have written about you, say how they help you, and give you **+1d** for each bond they have about you.

For another bonus die, you can either **push your luck** (spend **2 luck**) or you can **sell out** (you can't get dice for both, it's one or the other).

Selling Out

It's hard to get ahead in Prime City—you'll often have to make sacrifices that will complicate your life later to get what you want now. To reflect this, the GM or any other player can offer you a bonus die if you **sell out** by putting yourself, your friends, or precious gear in harm's way to get an edge. Common things a PC can do to **sell out** are:

- Collateral damage (harm NPCs, community members, employees, etc.)
- Sacrifice resources (erase 1, 2, or even 3 resources from the community sheet)
- Mark a condition (broken cyberware, harm, broken or expended playbook items)
- Betray a contact, friend, or loved one (community members, coworkers, etc.)

- Offend or anger a faction (-1 or -2 status with a faction)
- Start and/or tick a troublesome clock (4-part clocks for score specific complications, longer clocks for complications that could follow the community for some time)
- Add heat to the community from evidence or witnesses (1, 2, or even 3 heat)

Selling out occurs regardless of the outcome of the roll. You make the deal, pay the price, and get the bonus die. You can also sell out to gain **+1 effect** on an **action** roll, similar to when you **push your luck**. You cannot **resist** the consequences of selling out.

Selling out is always a free choice. If you don't like one you can reject it (or suggest how to alter it so you might consider taking it). You can always just push your luck for that bonus die instead.

If it's ever needed, the GM has final say over which **sell out** is valid.

6. Roll the Dice and Judge the Result

Once the goal, action rating, position, and effect have been established, add any bonus dice and roll the dice pool to determine the outcome. (See the sets of possible outcomes, by position, below.)

The **action roll** does a lot of work. It tells you how well the character performs as well as how serious the consequences are for them. They might succeed at their action without any consequences (on a **6**), or they might succeed but suffer consequences (on a **4/5**), or it might just all go wrong (on a **1-3**).

On a **1-3**, it's up to the GM to decide if the PC's action has any effect or not, or if it even happens at all. Usually, the action just fails completely, but in some circumstances, it might make sense or be more interesting for the action to have some effect even on a **1-3** result.

Each **4/5** and **1-3** outcome lists suggested consequences for the character. The worse your position, the worse the consequences are. The GM can inflict one or more of these consequences, depending on the circumstances of the action roll. PCs have the ability to avoid or reduce the severity of the consequences that they suffer by **resisting** them.

When you narrate the action after the roll, the GM and player collaborate together to say what happens on-screen. Tell us how you jump away from the exploding car. Tell us what you say to the corporate executive to convince her. The GM will tell us how she reacts. When you face down the COPs, what's your fighting style like? Etc.

The Action Roll Summary

- **1d** for each action rating dot
- **+1d** if you **push your luck** (spend **2 luck**) or if you **sell out**
- **+d** if another character **assists** you (they can only assist if they have a **bond** with you, they spend **1 luck** for each bond, you get **1d** for each bond)

Controlled

You act on your terms. You exploit a major advantage.

- **CRIT:** You do it with **increased effect**, and all PCs gain **1 luck**.
- **6:** You do it.
- **4/5:** You hesitate. Withdraw and try a different approach, or else do it with a minor consequence: a minor **complication** occurs, you have **reduced effect**, you suffer a **level 1 condition**, you end up in a **risky** position.
- **1-3:** You're blocked or you falter. Press on by seizing a **risky** opportunity, or withdraw and try a different approach.

Risky

You go head-to-head. You act under fire. You take a chance.

- **CRIT:** You do it with **increased effect**, and all PCs gain **1 luck**.
- **6:** You do it.
- **4/5:** You do it but there's a consequence: you suffer a **level 2 condition**, a **complication** occurs, you have **reduced effect**, you end up in a **desperate** position.
- **1-3:** Things go badly. You suffer a **level 2 condition**, a **complication** occurs, you end up in a **desperate** position, you **lose this opportunity**.

Desperate

You overreach your capabilities. You're in serious trouble.

- **CRIT:** You do it with **increased effect**, and all PCs gain **1 luck**.
- **6:** You do it.
- **4/5:** You do it, but there's a consequence: you suffer a **level 3 condition**, a serious **complication** occurs.
- **1-3:** It's the worst outcome. You suffer a **level 3 condition**, a **complication** occurs, you **lose this opportunity**.

Double-duty Rolls

Since NPCs don't roll for their actions, an **action roll** does double-duty: it resolves the action of the PC as well as any NPCs that are involved. The single roll tells us how those actions interact and which consequences result. On a **6**, the PC wins and has their effect. On a **4/5**, it's a mix—both the PC and the NPC have their effect. On a **1-3**, the NPC wins and has their effect as a consequence on the PC.

Effect

In Neon Black, you achieve goals by taking actions and facing consequences. But how many actions does it take to achieve a particular goal? That depends on the effect level of your actions. The GM judges the effect level using the descriptions below. Which one best matches the action at hand—great, standard, or limited? Each effect level indicates the questions that should be answered for that effect, as well as how many segments to tick if you’re using a progress clock.

- **Zero:** You achieve nothing or have no effect. Add 0 ticks to a relevant clock. Why are you outclassed or completely ineffective?
- **Limited:** You achieve a partial or weak effect. Add 1 tick to a relevant clock. How is your impact diminished?
- **Standard:** You achieve what we would expect as “normal” with the action. Add 2 ticks to a relevant clock. How do you achieve your intended result?
- **Great:** You achieve more than usual. Add 3 ticks to a relevant clock. How does the extra effort manifest?

Assessing Factors

To assess effect level, first start with your gut feeling, given this situation. Then, if needed, assess three factors that may modify the effect level: **potency**, **scale**, and **quality**. If the PC has an advantage in a given factor, consider a higher **effect level**. If they have a disadvantage, consider a reduced **effect level**.

Potency

The potency factor considers particular weaknesses, taking extra time or a bigger risk, or the influence of wealth & power. An infiltrator is more potent if all the lights are off and they move about in the dark. Being dressed in an expensive suit gives you potency when talking with corporate managers, but probably hinders you when negotiating with a group of punks.

Quality/Tier

Quality represents the effectiveness of tools, weapons, or other resources, usually summarized by tier. Fine items count as +1 bonus in **quality**, stacking with **tier**.

Carbon is hacking the COPs security system. Her community is Tier I and she has a fine custom deck—so she’s effectively Tier II. The COPs are Tier III. Carbon is outclassed in quality, so her effect will be limited when she hacks.

Scale

Scale represents the number of opponents, size of an area covered, scope of influence, etc. Larger scale can be an advantage or disadvantage depending on the situation. In battle, more people are probably better. When infiltrating, more people are likely a hindrance.

When considering factors, effect level might be reduced below limited, resulting in zero effect.

If a PC special ability gives “+1 effect,” it comes into play after the GM has assessed the effect level.

Also, remember that a PC can **push their luck** (spend **2 luck**) or **sell out** to get +1 effect on their action.

Every factor won’t always apply to every situation. You don’t have to do an exact accounting every time, either. Use the factors to help you make a stronger judgment call—don’t feel beholden to them.

Trading Position for Effect

After factors are considered and the GM has announced the effect level, a player might want to trade position for effect, or vice versa. For instance, if they’re going to make a risky roll with standard effect (the most common scenario, generally), they might instead want to push their luck and make a desperate roll but with great effect.

This kind of trade-off isn’t included in the effect factors because it’s not an element the GM should assess when setting the effect level. Once the level is set, though, you can always offer the trade-off to the player if it makes sense in the situation.

*Brad, a player: “I **hack** the traffic lights in the district to slow down the COPs pursuing us.”*

*Charlie, the GM: “I don’t think you can take out the whole district with a single hack roll. The scale of the area is a factor here, so your effect will be **limited**. Let’s say you can hack half the area, then you’ll have to **hack** again to disable the rest of the lights.”*

*Brad: “I didn’t realize it would take that long. Hmmm. Okay, what if I just go as fast as I can. Can I take out all the lights in the system if I make a **desperate** roll?”*

Charlie: “Yep, sounds good to me!”

Consequences

When a PC suffers an effect from an enemy or a dangerous situation, it's called a **consequence**. Consequences are the companion to effects. PCs have an effect on the world around them and they suffer consequences in return from the risks they face.

Setting Position & Effect

The GM sets **position** and **effect** for an **action roll** at the same time, after the player says what they're doing and chooses their action. Usually, **Risky / Standard** is the default combination, modified by the action being used, the strength of the opposition, and the effect factors.

For example, if a character is facing off alone against a squad of Corporate Order Police, the situation might look like this:

- *She fights the COPs head on in a shootout with **Assault**. In this case, being threatened by the larger force lowers her position to indicate greater risk, and the scale of the squad reduces her effect (Desperate / Limited).*
- *She fights the COPs from a choke-point, like a narrow alleyway where their numbers can't overwhelm her at once. She's not threatened by several at once, so her risk is similar to a one-on-one fight, but there's still a lot of enemies to deal with, so her effect is reduced (Risky / Limited).*
- *She doesn't fight the COPs, instead trying to **Move** her way past them and escape. She's still under threat from many enemy attacks, so her position is worse, but if the ground is open and the COPs can't easily corral her, then her effect for escaping isn't reduced (Desperate / Standard). If she had some immediate means of escape (like leaping off an overpass onto a truck below), then her effect might even be increased (Desperate / Great).*
- *The COPs aren't aware of her yet—she's set up in a sniper position on a nearby roof. She takes a shot against one of them. Their greater numbers aren't a factor, so her effect isn't reduced, and she's not immediately in any danger (Controlled / Great). Maybe instead she wants to fire off a salvo of suppressing fire against the whole squad, in which case their scale applies (Controlled / Limited). If they are on guard for potential trouble, her position is more dangerous (Risky / Great). If the guards are alerted to a sniper, then the effect may be reduced further, as they scatter and take cover (Risky / Limited). If the squad is able to muster covering fire while they fall back to a safe position, then things are even worse for our sniper (Desperate / Limited).*

Consequences & Conditions

Enemy actions, bad circumstances, or the outcome of a roll can inflict consequences on a PC. There are five types of consequences:

- Reduced effect
- Complication
- Lost opportunity
- Worse position
- Condition

A given circumstance might result in one or more consequences, depending on the situation. The GM determines the consequences, following from the fiction and the style and tone established by the group.

Reduced Effect

This consequence represents impaired performance. The PC's action isn't as effective as they'd anticipated. *You hit him, but it's only a flesh wound. She accepts the forged concert tickets, but security will keep an eye on you in the VIP area. You're able to scale the building, but it's slow going—you're only halfway up.* This consequence essentially reduces the effect level of the PC's action by one after all other factors are accounted for.

Complication

This consequence represents trouble, mounting danger, or a new threat. The GM might introduce an immediate problem that results from the action right now: *the room catches fire, you're disarmed, the community takes +1 heat from evidence or witnesses, you lose status with a faction, the target evades you and now it's a chase, reinforcements arrive, etc.*

Or the GM might tick a clock for the complication, instead. Maybe there's a clock for the alert level of the security at the secret corporate black site. Or maybe the GM creates a new clock for the suspicion of the rich people at the VIP party and ticks it. Fill one tick on a clock for a minor complication or two ticks for a standard complication.

A **serious complication** is more severe: reinforcements surround and trap you, your weapon is broken, the community suffers **+2 heat**, your target escapes out of sight, etc. Fill two ticks on a clock for a serious complication.

Don't inflict a complication that negates a successful roll. If a PC tries to corner an enemy and gets a 4/5, don't say that the enemy escapes. The player's roll succeeded, so the enemy is cornered... maybe the PC has to wrestle them into position and during the scuffle the enemy grabs their gun.

Lost Opportunity

This consequence represents shifting circumstances. You had an opportunity to achieve your goal with this action, but it slips away. To try again, you need a new approach—usually a new form of action or a change in circumstances. Maybe you tried to **Assault** the corporate assassin, but she evades your maneuver and leaps out of reach. If you want to fight her now you'll have to try another way—maybe try to **Move** in closer to get a hit in.

Worse Position

This consequence represents losing control of the situation—the action carries you into a more dangerous position. Perhaps you make the leap across to the next rooftop, only to end up dangling by your fingertips. You haven't failed, but you haven't succeeded yet, either. You can try again, re-rolling at the new, worse position. This is a good consequence to choose to show escalating action. A situation might go from controlled, to risky, to desperate as the action plays out and the PC gets deeper and deeper in trouble.

Condition

This consequence represents some sort of long-lasting debility, short-term complication, or even death. When you suffer a condition, record the specific condition on your character sheet equal to the level you suffer. A level 1 condition is recorded on the bottom row, a level 2 condition is written on the middle row, and a level 3 condition is recorded on the top row. You can see examples of conditions below.

If you need to mark a condition, but the row is already filled, the condition moves up to the next row above. So, if you suffered a level 2 condition but had already marked a condition in the middle row, you'd have to record a level 3 condition, instead. If you run out of spaces on the top row and need to mark a condition there, your character suffers a **calamity**.

Conditions cover a wide variety of narrative circumstances. Physical injuries, strong emotions, illness, social issues, altered mental states, broken or spent equipment and cyberware, all these are potential conditions. These conditions may impede a character's actions, making certain action rolls more difficult and effecting your position and effect accordingly. Different groups will have different ideas of what counts as a level 2 or 3 condition. Some may want sturdier characters and rule that a broken bone is a level 2 condition, others might want higher stakes scores and rule that any debilitating wound is a level 3 condition. This is great! Just try to make assigning conditions consistent throughout the game.

By default, conditions in Neon Black reflect the level of technology available to the characters in Prime City. A character could suffer a level 3 condition like "severed arm", "multiple gunshot wounds", or "impaled" and can have a reasonable chance to recover when cyberware is readily available.

Conditions should be tailored specifically to each character so it creates complications for them. A character who enjoys the spotlight and getting noticed won't be too bothered by the "exposed" condition, but a character with a hidden identity trying to evade Prime City's corporations would be devastated by it.

Conditions can also be temporary, and can disappear or transform as time progresses (for example when you enter the downtime phase). If you mark level 2 condition "drunk" during a score, this could transform into a level 1 condition "hung-over" the day after. If you have the "out of ammo" condition this can be cleared when the character enters downtime and can easily get ammunition for their autopistol (this may not be the case if it is ammunition for their specific playbook weapons).

Condition Examples

- **Level 3:** Shattered bone, severed limb, multiple gunshot wounds, sudden metastatic cancer, organ failure, concussed, exposed, impaled, electrocuted, heart attack, terrified
- **Level 2:** Furious, depressed, drunk, exhausted, bleeding, shot, panicking, broken cyberware, broken bones, drunk, stoned, hallucinating, migraine, compromised, broken playbook items
- **Level 1:** Embarrassed, drained, scared, bruised, deep cut, slashed, stiff hand, angry, sad, out of ammo, broken standard items, hung over, anxious, headache, sprained ankle

Harm like drained or exhausted, or tired are good general conditions to fall back on if you can't think of anything specific.

Resistance & Armour

When your PC suffers a consequence that you don't like, you can choose to resist it. The GM should remind players that they can resist each consequence after they're described, and players are free to say that resist something and suggest an alternative. Resistance is always automatically effective—the GM will tell you if the consequence is reduced in severity or if you avoid it entirely. Then, you'll make a **resistance roll** to see how much luck your character spends as a result of their resistance.

You make the roll using one of your character's **attributes (Clout, Intellect, or Prowess)**. The GM chooses the attribute, based on the nature of consequences:

- **Clout:** Consequences from deception or willpower.
- **Intellect:** Consequences from mental strain or understanding.
- **Prowess:** Consequences from physical strain or injury.

Your character spends **6 luck** when they resist, minus the highest die result from the resistance roll. So, if you rolled a **4**, you'd lose **2 luck**. If you rolled a **6**, you'd lose **zero luck**. If you get a **critical** result, you'd lose **zero luck**, and instead all PCs (including you) **gain 1 luck**.

*Dianne's character, Carbon, is in a desperate position, trying to **Spin** several corporate managers to pitch her product. One of them lands a blow with some cutting and hateful remarks about her heritage and poor performance. Since the position was desperate, the GM inflicts a **level 3 condition** (modified by any other factors). They tell Dianne to record level 3, "Murderous rage" on Carbon's sheet. Dianne decides to **resist** the condition, instead. The GM says she can reduce the condition by one level if she resists it. Dianne rolls 3d for Carbon's **Clout** attribute and gets a **5**. Carbon spends 1 luck and the condition is reduced to level 2, "furious."*

Usually, a resistance roll reduces the severity of a consequence. If you're going to suffer a level 3 condition, for example, a resistance roll would reduce it to a level 2 condition instead. Or if you got a complication when you were **Hacking** the corporate server, and the GM was going to mark 2 ticks on the "Alert" clock, she'd only mark one (or maybe none) if you resisted the complication.

You may only roll against a given consequence once.

The GM also has the option to rule that your character **completely avoids the consequence**. For instance, maybe you're in a knife fight and the consequence is getting disarmed. When you resist, the GM says that you avoid that consequence completely: you keep hold of your weapon.

By adjusting which consequences are reduced vs. which are avoided, the GM establishes the overall tone of your game. For a more daring game, most consequences will be avoided. For a grittier game, most consequences will only be reduced with resistance.

The GM may also threaten several consequences at once, then the player may choose which ones to resist (and make rolls for each).

"She stabs you and runs away. Level 2 condition and you lose the opportunity to catch her with fighting."

"I'll resist losing the opportunity by grappling her as she attacks. She can stab me, but I don't want to let her escape."

Once you decide to resist a consequence and roll, you spend the luck indicated. You can't roll first and see how much luck you'll lose, then decide whether or not to resist.

Resistance Roll Summary

- **1d** for each **attribute** rating
- You reduce or completely avoid the effects of the consequence (GM chooses).
- **Spend 6 luck minus the highest die result.**
- **Critical:** All PCs (including the one actively resisting) gain **1 luck**.

Armor

If you have a type of **armor** that applies to the situation, you can mark that armor as part of your **load** to reduce or avoid a consequence, instead of rolling to resist.

There are two types of armor in Neon Black: **armor** and **'Net armor**. Armor protects from physical harm like stab wounds and gunshots. 'Net armor protects from harm suffered in the 'Net or in an artificial reality such as a memory or dream.

Silas got surprised by an elite corporate agent and is about to take level 2 harm "gut shot." Silas' player Wendy decides to resist that harm by saying that Silas was wearing body armor. She marks 2 load for armor and the GM says the harm is reduced to level 1 harm "bruised ribs."

Carbon is hacking the local traffic network in order to help their friends escape from the COPs. She gets a partial success, and since the position is risky she's going to take level 3 harm "sudden metastatic cancer" from the ICE protecting the network. Dianne decides to use Carbon's 'Net armor to reduce the harm. She marks 'Net armor as part of her load, checks the 'Net armor box, and the GM says the harm is avoided entirely.

When an armor box is marked, it can't be used again until it's restored. All of your armor is restored automatically during the downtime phase.

Death

There are a couple ways for a PC to die in Neon Black. Players choose when their characters die. This could be the result of a calamity, selling out, or feeling like it's just the right time and place in the story. When an NPC's life is on the line (for example, a community contact), the GM should telegraph this so that the PCs have a chance to intervene if they wish. When a player character is in mortal peril, that's up to the specific player, when it's an NPC, that decision is with all the players.

Here are a few examples of when and why a character may die in Neon Black:

- If they suffer a level 3 condition and can't find suitable treatment in time. Sometimes this is a choice a player wants to make because they feel like it wouldn't make sense for the character to survive, or the PCs are in a position where they can't find a way to recover or get cyberware.
- When they select a **calamity** and decide that this results in their character dying. This can be the result of the Out of Action calamity, or after the Captured calamity, assuming they are captured by someone who wants them dead.

When your character dies, you can create a new character to play. Maybe you "promote" one of the NPCs in the community to a PC, or create a brand-new character who joins the community. Perhaps the character was working on becoming a HAUNT and comes back as a consciousness who lives in the 'Net.

Fortune Roll

The fortune roll is a tool the GM can use to disclaim decision making. You use a fortune roll in two different ways:

When you need to make a determination about a situation the PCs aren't directly involved in and don't want to simply decide the outcome.

The characters have captured a wealthy accountant and are questioning him about his employer's secret corporate schemes. Does this man know anything about what the characters are asking him? The GM makes a fortune roll to see what, if anything, he knows.

When an outcome is uncertain, but no other roll applies to the situation at hand.

While pilfering the database of a rival hacker, Jerusalem is hit by lethal Black ICE. As his consciousness slips away, Jerusalem loads a random program from the hacker's system. Will the software have an effect on the ICE? Will it damage Jerusalem's hardware? Who knows? The GM makes a fortune roll to see how it turns out.

When you make a fortune roll you may assess any trait rating to determine the dice pool of the roll.

- When a faction takes an action with an uncertain outcome, you might use their **tier** rating to make a fortune roll.
- When a member of the community operates independently, use the community's **tier** rating for a fortune roll.

- When advanced technology or chemicals are used with uncertain results, you might use its **magnitude** for a fortune roll.
- When a PC **gathers information**, you might make a fortune roll using their **action rating** to determine the amount of the info they get.

If no trait applies, roll **1d** for sheer luck or create a dice pool (from one to four) based on the situation at hand. If two parties are directly opposed, make a fortune roll for each side to see how they do, then assess the outcome of the situation by comparing the results.

The fortune roll is also a good tool to help the GM manage all the various moving parts of the world. Sometimes a quick roll is enough to answer a question or inspire an idea for what might happen next.

Fortune Roll Summary

- **1d** for each **trait** rating
- **+1d** for each **major advantage**
- **-1d** for each **major disadvantage**
- **Critical:** Exceptional result / Great, extreme effect.
- **6:** Good result / Standard, full effect.
- **4/5:** Mixed result / Limited, partial effect.
- **1-3:** Bad result / Poor, little effect.

PC's do not gain **luck** on fortune rolls.

Gathering Information

Neon Black has a massive fictional world, and the details of that world change based on your group's taste menu and interests. The characters will only know about certain aspects of Prime City and the world beyond, and so too will the players. To help facilitate the flow of information between players, we use a tool called **gather information**.

When you want to know something specific about the fictional world, your character can **gather information**. The GM will ask you how your character gathers the info (or how they learned it in the past), and then the player can ask any question they'd like.

- If it's common knowledge, the GM will simply answer your questions. *Which company makes a particular piece of hardware or software? Is there public transit in Prime City? Who is the CEO of this corporation?*

- If there's an obstacle or danger involved in the discovery of the answer, an **action roll** is called for. *Where does this hacker group hang out? How can we escape from the COPS? Who is following us?*
- If it's not common knowledge but there's no obstacle or danger, a simple **fortune roll** determines the quality of the information you gather. *Is there a bar this person frequents? Where does this person live? How does this piece of technology work?*

Each attempt to gather information takes time. If the situation allows, you can try again if you don't initially get all the info that you want. But often, the opportunity is fleeting, and you'll only get one chance to roll for that particular question.

Players should feel free to ask leading questions when they gather information. If a player thinks it would be cool and exciting for the corporate suit to have a cybered-up bodyguard, they can ask, "How much cyberware does their bodyguard have?" or "How much longer until their bodyguard finds us?" In these moments the details and circumstances of the fiction are up for grabs. The GM doesn't know the "real" answer. The dice limit the scope of what could be, but don't let that limit your questions. If you need to make an explosion, ask "What here is explosive?" Sometimes the answer is nothing, but more often than not this is a way for the players to collaborate to find an advantage or opportunity to follow that the characters can exploit.

The most common gather information actions are **Analyzing** the situation to reveal or anticipate what's going on or **Hacking** a computer or the 'Net for secrets and intelligence.

Sometimes, you'll have to maneuver yourself into position before you can gather information. For example, you might have to **Sneak** to a good hiding place first and then **Analyze** the secret meeting.

Gathering Information as a Long-Term Project

Some questions are too complex to answer immediately with a single gather information roll. For instance, you might want to discover the secret dark 'Net of Prime City. In these cases, the GM will tell you to start a **long-term project** that you work on during downtime.

You track the investigation project using a progress clock. Once the clock is filled, you have the evidence you need to ask several questions about the subject of your investigation as if you had great effect.

Actions & Questions

- You might **Hack** the 'Net to find obscure or hidden information. *Have any other hackers been here? How can I access the corporation's secret 'Netspace?*

- You might **Command** a corporate employee to tell you about the secret meetings held in the factory at night. *What's really going on here? What's he really feeling about this? Is he part of this secret group?*
- You might **Connect** with a friend to learn the secrets of an enemy or rival. *What do they intend to do? What might I suspect about their motives?*
- You might **Sneak** across the city, following a courier to discover who's receiving prototypes from a tech company. *Where does the package end up? Who signed for the delivery?*
- You might **Analyze** corporate tech to discover its secrets. *How can I power this device? Is there any way to track it? What state of the art features does it possess?*
- Or you might **Analyze** a person to read their intentions and feelings. *What are they really feeling? How could I get them to trust me? What are they a fan of?*
- You might **Spin** a powerful executive at a party to divulge his plans. *How can I convince him I might be a good partner in these plans?*
- Or you might **Spin** his bodyguard to confide in you about recent events. *Where has he been lately? Who's he been meeting with?*

General Gathering Information Questions

- How do I find (x)?
- What do they intend to do?
- What's really going on here?
- Ask about a missing detail for a plan.
- Who here has cyberware?
- Where can I find a 'Net connection?
- What here is explosive?
- What is the best way out/in?
- Who here is dangerous?
- How can I convince them to do (x)?
- Who here is a fan of (x)?

Gather Information Summary

- *Ask a question and make an **action roll** or a **fortune roll**. The GM answers you honestly, with a level of detail depending on the effect level.*
- **Great:** You get exceptional details. The information is complete and follow-up questions may expand into related areas or reveal more than you hoped for.
- **Standard:** You get good details. Clarifying and follow-up questions are possible.
- **Limited:** You get incomplete or partial information. More information gathering will be needed to get all the answers.

Free Play

Free play is a bit more nebulous than the score and downtime phases. The score phase kicks in when you have selected a target for a score, and the downtime phase always follows after. The free play phase is the stuff that happens all round these other two phases.

Free play is the scene where the Merc decides to steal that fancy cyberarm in the showroom rather than buying one. It's when two players sit down at the table and decide that they would really like to see what happens when their two characters argue about whether or not they should help the Baza Syndicate. It's when the Synth tries to steal the physical records of your community's crimes from the local COP precinct and everything just goes to shit.

Neon Black is in the free play phase by default. Until the characters do something that triggers a score, consider them in free play. They can perform action rolls to do something risky, fortune rolls to do something uncertain or to find more information about the world, or role-play scenes that don't fit anywhere else.

Example of Free Play: Meet your Maker

Alex, Michelle, Troy, and Eric all sit down to resume their game of Neon Black. Michelle, the GM, starts by giving a quick recap of last session for the players.

"Last time we mostly did our downtime actions. Alex, your character Rabbit finished a long-term project to track down Ichikawa, the machinist who built you, right?" Alex plays a synth and has spent the last few sessions searching for their lost maker in Prime City. Alex nods,

"Yeah, I think I finished that clock by sending him a message to meet someplace public."

"Awesome, yeah I think you received an email with a time and address. It's for tonight. Where would he meet you?"

Alex thinks. "Probably a coffee place, or a restaurant?"

Troy consults the list of factions. "Constellation Consolidated Foods controls basically all the restaurants right? So it would probably be a place they own."

Michele nods, "Yeah, maybe like a chain pub sort of thing. Something really kitschy and overpriced. Maybe some retrofuture thing, like hackers are sort of infamous now, so maybe it's something like that?"

"The Hacker's Arms!" Eric exclaims. Everyone else around the table groans.

"I hate it but now I can't think of anything else," says Michelle. "Alright, so you meet in the Hacker's arms. As our episode of Neon Black begins we get an establishing shot of a Hacker's Arms location in Prime City, probably at street level. There's all sorts of fake hacker subculture props on the walls."

"An ancient film called Hackers plays in a loop on the TVs," Eric adds.

"Perfect!" Michelle laughs. "We see Rabbit waiting in a bright red leather booth as servers in ridiculous uniforms serve food and drinks. Rabbit, did you tell anyone else about this meeting or get the other members of the crew to come along?"

"Yeah, I think it would be more fun that way," Alex replies.

"What did you tell us?" Asks Troy who plays a merc named Talbot.

Alex adopts a slightly monotone voice for their character Rabbit. "After 14 cycles of searching I have located Ichikawa and will be meeting him this evening. I would like you both to attend."

Eric plays Oracle, a tech "You sure you need this, little bunny? I mean I fix you up all the time, what can this guy give you that we can't?"

Alex nods and responds, "I think Rabbit would say something like... 'Do you both know who your parents are?'"

Eric nods. Troy responds, "Unfortunately."

"I do not.' And I think that's all Rabbit says about it."

Michelle nods.

"While we're waiting in this awful restaurant, can I look around and see if there's anyone big and scary here, maybe acting suspicious?" asks Troy. "I'm worried this might be a set up."

"Sure," says Michelle, "it's a big restaurant, so I think it would be difficult to spot something. Are you just surveying things from the booth or do you get up and do a sweep of the place?"

"Just from where I'm sitting."

*"Okay, sounds like a **gather information** roll."*

*"Great, Can I use **Assault**? I want to look for anyone tough or who would be good in a fight."*

Michelle thinks. Gather information is a fortune roll and Analyze would be better for this roll. "Okay, you can use your Assault action, but since it's not the best action for this roll, I'll count that as a major disadvantage so you roll with -1d."

Troy nods, "Alright that makes sense, that means I have 1 die. Here goes." Troy rolls the dice. "Ugh, a 3."

"Alright, well you can still ask questions but I can only give you limited details," says the GM.

"Okay, so, what should I be on the lookout for?"

"Across the restaurant from you there's a customer sitting at a table by himself. You can see that he has a lot of cyberware on his arms."

Troy looks at his merc playbook for inspiration for what questions to ask. "Is he scared of me?"

Michelle shakes her head. "Nope."

"Oh interesting. Alright, I'm gonna keep an eye on him."

"I think that's when Ichikawa arrives," continues Michelle. "He's a short man with white balding hair and sand-coloured skin. He wears a simple plastic raincoat over a sweater vest. He spots Rabbit in the booth and quickly sits opposite you."

Alex responds, "I look at him with wide eyes and say, 'Ichikawa is that you?'"

"He nods and says, 'Rabbit, you should not have come. Why are you here?'"

Alex thinks, "Rabbit is confused and sort of taken aback. He says, 'But, you are my maker. I've never met you before. Did you not want to meet me?'"

Michelle says, "He looks nervous and keeps glancing around the restaurant."

Troy adds, "Talbot nudges Rabbit with his elbow and nods to the suspicious cybergoon that he spotted earlier. He says, 'We have company.'"

"Ichikawa swears when he hears that, Talbot. You can all see he's sweating now."

Eric's character Oracle chimes in, "Hey old bones if you're in trouble you can tell us. If the little bunny here cares about you then dammit, so do I."

Alex nods, "Yeah I think Rabbit says, 'Ichikawa, if you are in trouble let me help you. These are my friends. You can trust us.'"

"Hmm," says Michelle. "Yeah, I'm gonna need a roll here to see if you can convince Ichikawa to go with you. He might, but he needs convincing."

"Alright," responds Alex. "I'm trying to convince him by being friendly, and we share a past so I think I'll use **Connect** here."

Michelle nods. "Sounds good. There's definitely a risk here, he might say no or it might attract attention, and you're definitely taking a chance so I think the position and effect is risky, standard."

Alex picks up 1 die for their **Connect** action rating.

Eric says, "May I assist? I was kind of helping by saying I care because Rabbit cares."

Alex nods. Eric's character has a bond with Alex's character, so they spend **1 luck** by erasing it on his character sheet and gives one of their dice to Alex.

Alex rolls the two dice. "**Crit!** I got two sixes!" Everyone cheers.

Michelle says, "Wow, awesome. Well you get what you want, so Ichikawa will go with you. But a crit means you also get increased effect and also everyone marks **1 luck** on your character sheets. What extra benefit do you get for great effect?"

Alex thinks, "Oh that's a good question. I'm not sure. Anyone have any ideas?"

Troy says, "Maybe we can get a head start on the cybergoon? Like there's a big group of people passing between our tables so he can't see us?"

Alex smiles, "Yes! That!"

Michelle describes Ichikawa slowly getting up as the group of people obscures them. "He says, 'I'm afraid we'll have to run. The people watching me... they're dangerous, they'll try to stop me from leaving with you.'"

"Do not worry Ichikawa," says Rabbit. "We're dangerous too."

Michelle laughs, "So, I think you all stumbled your way into a job getting Ichikawa away from danger. How does that sound?"

Everyone agrees that they want this to be their next score. And they start picking a plan and load.

Advancement & XP

Each player keeps track of the experience points (xp) that their character earns. XP is earned with certain action rolls:

- When you make a **desperate action roll**, mark **1 xp**.
- When you make an action roll that you have **0 actions ratings in**, mark **1 xp**. You don't need to roll 0 dice to earn this xp, you can still add dice from assists, pushing your luck, etc.
- When you make an action roll and get a **1-3** result, mark **1 xp**.

You also mark xp when your bonds change. At the end of each session each player reviews the bonds they have with other characters. If a bond is no longer accurate (their belief or relationship with that character has changed, or they want to erase a bond to form a new one with another character) write a new bond and mark **1 xp**.

When you fill your xp track, clear all the marks and take an **advance**. When you take an advance you may choose to create an additional bond, or you may add an additional **action dot** to one of your actions (up to a max of 2).

Communities

There's a classic tale on the 'Net, told and retold to freelancers and edgerunners who talk big about the corporations and the way life outta be.

Once there was this decker, names lost to the heap but most folks call 'em by their handle: Juice. Juice was a mean talent with legendary hustle. They came up through the anticorp underground, setting up jobs and running cons and doing pretty well for themselves.

Time came that there wasn't a single punk worth their cred who didn't know about Juice. They ran a scam with the White Rabbits to leak an unreleased television series, posed as a Ziggurat subsidiary to secure a fake trade deal with another corpo city-state, and one time stole a whole vat of Storm-Ex protein slurry and just gave it away to desert refugees outside Prime City. Right under the corpo's noses.

Juice was a regular Robin-fucking-Hood. Even the wage-slaves knew their name. But all that credit and good will wasn't enough for Juice. All that time with activists and anarchists blew up their ego, and just like some hotshot with their eyes on some new chrome, Juice set their sights on an impossible job. They were going to hit the corpo upper-echelon, a full 'Net run against their accounts and property. Wanted to decapitate a whole corporation in one night, build a better world, give all the money back to the people. Can you imagine? Billions of credits in the street, cash falling from the fucking sky like rain.

Juice planned the job for years, built a real 'leet suit of software, proxy servers, and spooked profiles. Night of the quarterly Ziggurat board meeting comes up and you could swear the whole city was holding its breath.

Poor Juice. They pulled it off, or so the story goes. But that didn't matter. Ziggurat had caught wise. They didn't just kill Juice, they burned their Stack to the ground. Thousands of people died overnight. The corporations blamed the citizens, said they were breaking their corporate leases by modifying their apartments, electrical accidents and such. Who was gonna tell them otherwise?

Next day everything was status quo. Prime City just sighed.

Morale of the story? Don't get into this life to be some fucking edgelord hero. If you're gonna do anything in this City, you need your community. You need friends who will do you a solid, techs who will fix your gear, mercs to watch your back, synths and HAUNTs to expand your view of what humanity looks like. If you think you're all that, then one day you won't have anyone around to check your ego, and you'll start to think you can solve everything by yourself. You wanna save the world? Start by saving your friends.

Your community type determines the stories that you'll focus on, as well as the factions you'll encounter, and the contacts you'll start the game with. The type of community isn't meant to be restrictive—if you're part of The 55 you might sometimes engage in chases and hijinks in Earth's orbit (like the Chariot)—but the needs of the community determine the primary way you'll gain **resources** and advance in **tier**.

There are four different communities to choose from:

- **The 55:** residents of a prefabricated concrete apartment, trying to free themselves from corporate control
- **Chariot:** a spaceship in Earth's orbit that is about to fall apart
- **City of Nod:** a dilapidated suburb outside Prime City in need of basic resources
- **Tannhauser Way:** a street level community trying to carve out space for its citizens

Choosing a community is a very important decision! It's a way for the group to say, "These are the sorts of stories we care about." It organizes gameplay into stories of survival, revenge, or invention—which helps the GM focus on the parts of the setting that matter most to your game, rather than having to juggle every possibility at once.

The group should choose a community that everyone is excited about. As a player, be vocal about your preferences. You're about to invest many hours in this game, so if you're feeling lukewarm about one of the options, speak up. Once you've chosen, grab the appropriate community sheet and record the following choices in community creation as you go.

Community Creation

Locate Prime City

Prime City can be located anywhere in the world. Neon Black assumes that Prime City is controlled by three megacorporations who took measures to protect the city from the worst effects of climate change. It also assumes that there is a diverse underground movement that opposes corporate control, and that there is limited travel around the solar system.

Neon Black does not assume Prime City is located in a specific place, that is for your group to decide. It could be that Prime City evolved from a city in the Pacific Northwest of North America, or a city in Japan, or where your playgroup lives right now. Discuss among yourselves where you would like Prime City to be located and write it on the community sheet. Feel free to modify or rename some of the factions to reflect this choice.

Choose an Inciting Incident

Your characters are part of a bigger community. Sometimes that community is thousands of people, sometimes it's just a few dozen. No matter the number, you've decided to take a stand.

You are the people everyone else comes to to get something done. You are all actively addressing your communities needs, and the **inciting incident** describes why that happened. Think of it as the A plot, it's the primary motivation for fulfilling the community's needs and may tie into each character's starting milestones. While each community contact has their own need, the inciting incident is the need shared by all the player characters.

There are 4 types of inciting incidents listed on the community sheet, though you may create your own as well. Circle one of these types of inciting incidents and then write in specific details on the line above it. Below you will find examples of details for each inciting incident:

Death: Someone who all the player character's knew and had a relationship with died recently. Perhaps they were murdered, or died with important work left undone. Perhaps they used to lead the community and now everyone looks to the characters to lead them.

1. *Killed with a prototype/unknown weapon of corporate design.*
2. *Ruled accidental, but not everyone is convinced it was an accident.*
3. *Killed by the COPs.*
4. *Missing and presumed dead.*
5. *Died before they were about to expose a corporate secret.*
6. *Their body is dead but their consciousness is missing.*

Corporate: One of Prime City's corporations is threatening the community, or has already done damage. They might be looking to deal, destroy, deceive, or all of the above. If no one does anything, your community will fall. Select one of the corporate factions related to the community, or another that interests all players, as the primary aggressor.

1. *Prime City Operations plans to destroy the community to make way for new expensive housing.*
2. *Buran Aeronautics plans to use the community as a test fire target for their new orbital weapons platform.*
3. *The Coda Family wants to purchase the community, and force out anyone who refuses to take the payout.*
4. *The Prophets Returned has established a church in the community and is spreading conservative, hateful rhetoric.*
5. *Phace Augmentations has created a factory in/near the community, where they offer unsafe and abusive employment.*
6. *Melo Mart has taken over ownership of the community and is committing acts of negligence to force out tenants.*

Exile: You pissed off a corporation or someone powerful and were forcibly relocated here, far from everything you know. This is both a prison and home for everyone around you, and if you don't work together, you will never escape. *Were you all exiled for the same reason, or did you commit different crimes?*

1. *You worked with the Coda Family and were fired as part of their exile from the Ziggurat megacorporation. No company will hire you now.*
2. *You attempted a dangerous score, but were captured. Now that corporation uses you to do their dirty work.*
3. *You were forced to relocate here as a result of some convoluted plan by one of Prime City's AIs.*
4. *You arrived here as a result of a variety of petty crimes and misdemeanours.*
5. *You were part of an Underground faction that was destroyed by a corporation.*
6. *You are on the run from corporate assassins*

Discovery: You've found something, something new and exciting that could change everything. It is part of this community, and won't survive without your help.

1. *Someone in the community has invented something that will revolutionize life in Prime City.*
2. *An AI is hiding in your community.*
3. *A unique synth is hiding in your community*
4. *You witnessed a corporate assassination or conspiracy. You are the only ones who know the truth*
5. *Your community is built in an incredibly valuable location, valuable enough that the megacorporations will kill everyone in it to claim it themselves.*
6. *You've discovered evidence of alien life, a deeply held corporate secret.*

Other: Make up your own! Maybe basic survival and an anti-capitalist philosophy are more than enough to get your characters embroiled in the lives and schemes of Prime City.

Choose a Relationship

All your characters live in the same community, but how do your characters know each other? This can be closely related to the **inciting incident**, or just be a tangential but flavourful detail. Do you all live together as roommates and can never get away from each other, or are you all old friends who know each other's flaws and skills? Knowing your initial relationship helps drive the story forward, and creates potential stakes and pitfalls for your character's to navigate in the future.

There are 3 types of relationships listed on the community sheet, though you may create your own as well. Circle one of these types of relationships and then write in specific details on the line above it. Below you will find examples of details for each relationship:

Friends: You've known each other and stayed in touch for years, maybe even since you were children. You probably know several other NPCs in the community quite well too.

1. *Punk band.*
2. *Roommates living in the same small, dilapidated place.*
3. *Friends since childhood.*

4. *Ex-members of the same Underground faction.*
5. *Members of the same subculture 'Netspace.*
6. *Political or cultural movement.*

Coworkers: You all work at the same company and have become close friends as well as colleagues.

1. *Corporate factory workers*
2. *Gig workers employed by Prime Convoys.*
3. *Run a start-up company.*
4. *Volunteers at the City Council.*
5. *Co-workers at a Constellation Consolidated Foods restaurant.*
6. *Co-workers at an independent community shop.*

Family: You are all related by blood or something like it.

1. *Came from the same commune outside Prime City.*
2. *Estranged from each other since a particularly bad argument.*
3. *Siblings.*
4. *Urchins who grew up together.*
5. *Adopted by the same parents.*
6. *Survivors of the same tragedy.*

Other: Make up your own! Maybe you all share the same spiritual beliefs, or met at an anti-corporate demonstration.

Review the Needs of the Community

Each community has a list of contacts. Each contact describes the character and a pressing need that the player characters can resolve. Sometimes these needs are personal, but the majority of the needs at the start of the game relate to survival of the community as a whole. Addressing these needs will fuel most of the game and push the story forwards. The GM should read each of these contacts out loud so that all the players know what kind of scores and challenges await them, and for possible **bonds** when they make characters.

Describe the Community

Next the players should all select a few words describing the look and general attitude of folks in the community. Is it insular, or welcoming? Brutalist or brightly painted? Infamous or well-liked? Select a few from the examples below or create your own.

Ancient
Art Deco
Brutalist
Chill
Classic

Cluttered
Concrete
Corporate
Crowded
Dilapidated
Exposed rebar
Flooded
Friendly
Glass
Gothic
Graffiti
Haven
Historic
Infamous
Insular
Loud
Messy
Modern
Murals
Neon
Noisy
Quiet
Resilient
Rust
Spacious
Stubborn
Underground
Unfriendly
Welcoming

That's it! Your community is complete. The players can now move on to creating their own characters.

Community Creation Summary

1. **Choose a community playbook.** Look over the community members and entanglements & blowback to get an idea of what each community represents.
2. **Choose an inciting incident.** Circle death, corporate, exile, discovery, or other and write a detail about what happened.
3. **Choose a relationship.** Circle either friends, coworkers, family, or other and write a detail about how the characters know each other.

4. **Review the needs of the community.** The GM should read all of the five community members out loud.
5. **Describe the community.** Pick from the list or make up your own descriptors for how the community looks and feels.

Community Contacts

At the start of the game, your community will have 3 prominent contacts, as well as your player characters. This does not mean that your community is limited to these people (though it may be if you imagine the community is small or just getting started), but rather it means that these 3 people have important needs that only the PC's can help with. These are the people who will help drive your story forward. Your community is the people in it, their trials and tribulations.

Community contacts aren't the stars of your story, and are less resilient than the PCs. Each community contact has 2 harm boxes that can be marked when they are harmed, when they run out of time and resources, or are put in compromising situations. This can happen if their needs are left unattended for too long, as a result of selling out, downtime scenes, or as a consequence of an action roll (especially if they assist a PC). They may even become an enemy.

When you would need to mark a harm box for a community contact, and both of their boxes are already checked, that person leaves the community. Perhaps they are killed, perhaps they have to move, perhaps they get into a huge fight with the PCs as a result of their actions or inactions.

All community contacts recover 1 harm at the beginning of the downtime phase, assuming they have time and resources to do so.

Descriptors

You will often be prompted to generate new community contacts, or new enemies and rivals. If these people are part of an existing faction, you can look to the specific faction chapter for notable NPCs. However if you'd rather create your own NPC, you can use the tables below to randomly generate roles, looks, and traits, or to select your own. Use the examples from the Characters chapter to name them.

To generate random descriptors, roll 2d6 and match the values to the list below. Each NPC should have a name, role, pronouns, and at least 3 looks and traits. If they are a community contact, they will also require a need.

Role

11 artist
12 customer service representative
13 doctor
14 driver
15 factory worker
16 programmer

21 hacker
22 janitor
23 journalist
24 line cook
25 medic
26 member of Brandy Rogue

31 member of Dead Prompt
32 member of Hermes Guild Couriers
33 member of the Baza Syndicate
34 member of the Guillotines
35 member of the Mendicants
36 member of the Pawner's Guild

41 member of the Sin Eaters
42 member of White Rabbit
43 mercenary
44 musician
45 personal assistant
46 plumber

51 private investigator
52 security guard
53 streamer
54 street vendor
55 stylist
56 thief

61 unemployed
62 volunteers for the City Council
63 welder
64 works for Hacksaw Coil
65 works for The Constant

66 writer

Looks

11: large

12: skinny

13: homemade clothes

14: short

15: worn

16: tall

21: nondescript

22: old glasses

23: weathered

24: rough

25: old

26: stout

31: young

32: long hair

33: delicate

34: wiry

35: elegant

36: stylish

41: bald/balding

42: athletic

43: scarred

44: striking

45: tattooed

46: neon hair

51: mohawk

52: undercut

53: face mask

54: suit & tie

55: dress

56: jumpsuit

61: leather jacket

62: piercings

63: neon accessories
64: long coat
65: hat
66: vintage clothes

Traits

11: charming
12: cold
13: brash
14: suspicious
15: obsessive
16: quiet

21: careless
22: online
23: offline
24: secretive
25: synth
26: calculating

31: defiant
32: loud
33: professional
34: vain
35: daring
36: volatile

41: subtle
42: forgetful
43: out of touch
44: wired
45: pleasant
46: warm

51: influential
52: gracious
53: punk
54: criminal
55: clone
56: HAUNT

61: cyberware
62: hidden cyberware
63: broken cyberware
64: old cyberware
65: lots of cyberware
66: prototype cyberware

Needs to...

11 Rob a corporate faction
12 Steal something from a corporate faction
13 Destroy a corporate asset
14 get rid of some COPs
15 transfer their consciousness between bodies
16 become a HAUNT

21 pay off a debt
22 acquire medicine
23 acquire a medical treatment
24 undergo a rare surgery
25 repair something in the community
26 upgrade something in the community

31 build something in the community
32 rescue someone from a corporation
33 be rescued from a corporation
34 replace cyberware
35 acquire cyberware
36 repair cyberware

41 hack a corporate network
42 find a new job
43 smuggle something into Prime City
44 pull off an elaborate heist
45 acquire property or space to build
46 hide from a corporation

51 acquire a new body
52 help a mysterious AI
53 be protected from a corporation
54 repair something damaged

55 replace something lost or destroyed
56 be smuggled out of Prime City

61 be smuggled into Prime City
62 smuggle something out of Prime City
63 help an underground faction
64 find someone who's missing
65 solve a crime
66 settle affairs before they die

Enemies & Rivals

Not everyone in this story is on your side, in fact many will come to hate and oppose the PCs and their community. When an antagonistic NPC takes an important role in the story, you can record them on the Enemies & Rivals section of the community sheet. This may be a member of a faction that has a negative faction status with the community, or a spurned community member, or any other NPC who can regularly create trouble for the PCs. Downtime scenes will also inject these characters into your story.

Much like community members, your enemies will each have a concrete need they want fulfilled which will drive them into conflict with the PCs. This need could be to get even, to get them to take the fall for a score, or even to destroy their community or kill one of the characters.

When an enemy or rival's need is fulfilled, remove them from the community sheet and clear 1 level of notoriety.

You may begin the game with one or more enemies & rivals depending on your community's inciting incident, and the character's starting milestones. As always, work with the other players to define these characters, and make sure everyone is excited about them and their role in the story.

Resources & Tier

Resources represent the various items that assist the characters and community in achieving their goals and bettering their lives. Resources could be money, credit, personal connections, tools, supplies, or raw materials. You don't need to describe specifically what each resource is when you mark it on the community sheet, just when you spend it.

Resources are acquired in the following ways:

- **+1 resource** when a character is employed

- **+1 resource** when you fulfill a community contact's need
- **+ resources** when you complete a **score**, equal to the relevant faction's **tier**

Some milestones and long-term projects can also generate additional resources.

Resources can be spent in the following ways:

- Spend **1 resource** to gain additional **downtime actions**
- Spend **1 resource** to increase the result level of a **downtime roll**
- Fill the resource track to increase your community's **tier**

If you ever need to spend or lose resources, and have none marked on the track, your community drops 1 tier lower with 11 resources. If the community is at Tier 0 with no resources, there are no more resources left to spend.

Tier

Tier is an abstract representation of overall power and quality among the people and factions of Prime City. A higher tier faction has more personnel and resources, as well as higher quality items and training. A lower tier faction has poor materials and items and few connections to get what they want.

When you fill your community's resource track, you clear the track and advance the community's tier. Increasing the community's tier helps with certain downtime actions and makes NPCs in the community more effective. **Whenever the community's tier increases, each PC marks 2 additional playbook items.**

The community's tier also indicates the sort of lifestyle most people in the community can expect, and the future the character's may have if they retire:

Tier 0-I: Poor. People at this tier have trouble addressing their basic needs. They regularly miss bill payments and struggle to afford food & medicine. These people don't retire or have savings, and if they do stop working they are completely reliant on other people to survive.

Tier II: Meager. People can usually pay their bills without issue but still struggle to survive beyond basic needs. They can retire to a small room in a shared space with no luxuries or extra cash. People in these communities live an austere life, work an unfulfilling job, or struggle to profit from creative pursuits.

Tier III: Modest. People can pay all their expenses and can afford modern stylish clothes, food, and a few luxuries. They retire with a simple apartment room with some small comforts. They might operate a bar or small business, or work on something creative or fulfilling without having to worry about the bills.

Tier IV: Rich. People at this level can easily afford anything they want. They can own a well-appointed home with several luxuries. They might own several properties, investments, or businesses, or accept a modest or meager life to share their wealth with several other people.

Tier V: Extravagant. Factions who reach this tier want for nothing, and are capable of purchasing and utilizing bleeding-edge technology. These people are too rich to die, and too powerful to worry about anything other than other extravagantly wealthy people or the slow march towards entropy. They may own properties on multiple planets, and are the guiding force of Prime City. Their wealth could provide a meager life for thousands of people, but they would never dream of doing so.

Factions

There are several factions within Prime City, detailed later in this book. These are companies, corporations, and underground organizations that compete and struggle against each other in Prime City. The factions are organized into 4 categories: subsidiaries of the 3 megacorporations who rule Prime City, and underground factions who oppose them.

Your community will start entangled with a handful of these factions, detailed on each community sheet, but could end up getting tangled up with more factions as the story continues.

Faction Status

Your community's **status** with each faction indicates how well you are liked or hated. Status is rated from -3 to +3, with zero (neutral) being the default starting status. You track your status with each faction on the community sheet and faction sheet

When you create your community and characters, you assign some positive and negative status ratings to reflect recent history, the character's employment, and possibly their starting milestones.

When you execute a score, you gain -1 or -2 status with factions that are hurt by your actions. You may also gain +1 status with a faction that your operation helps. (If you keep the score completely quiet then your status might not change at all.) Your status may also change if you do a favor for a faction or if you refuse one of their demands.

Faction Status Levels

- **+3: Allies.** This faction will help you even if it's not in their best interest to do so. They expect you to do the same for them.
- **+2: Friendly.** This faction will help you if it doesn't create serious problems for them. They expect you to do the same.
- **+1: Helpful.** This faction will help you if it causes no problems or significant cost for them. They expect the same from you.

- **0: Neutral**
- **-1: Interfering.** This faction will look for opportunities to cause trouble for you (or profit from your misfortune) as long as it causes no problems or significant cost for them. They expect the same from you.
- **-2: Unfriendly.** This faction will look for opportunities to hurt you as long as it doesn't create serious problems for them. They expect you to do the same, and take precautions against you.
- **-3: Hostile.** This faction will go out of its way to hurt you even if it's not in their best interest to do so. They expect you to do the same, and take precautions against you. When you're hostile with any number of factions, your crew suffers **+3 heat** from scores. You can end hostility by eliminating your enemy or by negotiating a mutual agreement to establish a new status rating.

Faction Clocks

If you want you can add faction clocks into the mix to provide new opportunities, telegraph dangers, or add setting details to your story.

Faction clocks are progress clocks which move forward between sessions or during the downtime phase of the game. These are ticked by the GM and advanced by rolling dice equal to the faction's tier and filling in ticks based on the result:

- **1-3:** 1 tick
- **4/5:** 2 ticks
- **6:** 3 ticks
- **Crit:** 5 ticks

Faction clocks can represent possible scores, faction alliances, hostilities, product launches, corporate schemes, anything you like that fits the narrative and helps your game of Neon Black feel alive and unpredictable. The GM should keep the faction clocks visible on the table so all players can see them. This lets all the players be on the same page in terms of what complications and opportunities may arise during your story, and also lets players tick clocks as the result of selling out or as a consequence of an action roll.

Some possible faction clocks include:

- A new product launch
- Increasing in tier
- Destroying another faction
- Allying with another faction
- Setting up a score
- Capturing or killing an important NPC

- Acquiring a precious resource or asset
- Setting a trap
- Forcing employees to get cyberware installed/work overtime/sacrifice resources
- Layoffs

The 55

A massive block of apartments seeking freedom from corporate control

Stack PSO-95563 is located in the center of Prime City, among dozens of other stacks. Each stack is a hundred stories tall and as wide as a few modern city blocks. They are built from concrete, plastic, and metal, using corporate templates copied across Prime City. Apartments in each stack range from a space barely big enough for a single bed, to bunkhouses for corporate workers, and occasional bachelor suites with room enough for a kitchen. Stacks are home to thousands of people, and each stack has their own unique community and culture. During the Prime City Corporate War, the citizens of Stack PSO-95563 attempted to seize their independence from their various corporate contracts, but failed after 55 days of prolonged siege. But even before then, they called their stack The 55.

Will you help The 55 become one of the first independent stacks in Prime City, or will the community fall to corporate power once more?

Community Contacts

Ada 55, a community leader (*she/her, wise, ambitious, skinny*)

Needs to rob a tier IV+ faction to start a universal income fund for The 55.

Ada has been a proponent of an independent 55 since the corporate war, and is hell-bent on completing her new scheme. 55 isn't really her last name, it's just what everyone calls her.

Dee, a bar owner (*she/her, loud, burly, violent*)

COPs have started to hang out in her bar after their shifts, she needs them gone.

Her bar used to be the best local haunt in The 55, but a few months ago COPs caught wind of the cheap drinks and greasy food. Now they're in at all hours, sometimes they don't even bother dropping off their exo suits and assault rifles before they come in.

V, a vending machine (*they/them, sad, HAUNT, cautious*)

Needs to transfer their digital consciousness out of their corporate vending machine body.

V wanted to digitize their consciousness. To help subsidize the cost they signed a corporate contract with Melo Mart. The company fronted most of the cost, and V got to spend the rest of their days in the 'Net. Only catch is the contract, as well as the local ICE, prevents them from leaving the vending machine.

Additional Contacts

New community contacts are generated through play, downtime scenes, and downtime actions. If you would like a pregenerated contact rather than creating one yourself, pick or modify one from this list.

Archer Ryant, a customer service representative (he/him, elegant, large, professional)

Needs help erasing all the community's bad credit records from Tano Financial.

Archer makes a decent wage at Tano Financial, and is always giving back to the community. Recently he has identified the location of the digital and physical copies of the credit records for each person living in The 55. Would be a real shame if those records went missing or were modified to help folks out of bad financial situations.

Allyson Sarratt, a member of the Pawner's Guild (she/her, cyberware, doomed, friendly)

Needs to pay her substantial debts to Prime City Operations or her shop will be shut down.

Business hasn't been great for Allyson lately and the bills just keep piling up. Company goons will be coming by any day now to repossess her store and everything in it.

Cantor Armitage, an old punk (he/him, old cyberware, infamous, quiet)

Needs a specific corporate medicine he can no longer afford in order to live.

Armitage was in the front lines during the corporate war and The 55's last attempt at independence. The wounds he sustained left him with a chronic condition that can be managed with a specific drug produced and patented by Prime Health Insurance. They just jacked up the price so high that no one without a significant salary could afford it.

Intel Williams, a hacker (he/him, suit & tie, cowardly, cyberware)

Needs someone else to steal the physical copies of the land titles for The 55 from Prime City Operations.

Intel secured the digital copies in an effort to free The 55 from corporate control. He is ready to erase them from the company's databases, but that won't work if they still have the physical copies.

Jean-Baptiste Lee, a doctor (they/them, undercut, experienced, young)

Needs to steal their equipment and clinic back from Prime Health Insurance.

Dr. Lee was caught practicing without a corporate license, even though they have been serving the community since they were a teenager (which wasn't that long ago, but they're pretty bright). Now they need help reopening their clinic and getting all the necessary medicines and supplies back from Prime Health.

Chariot

A spaceship in orbit around Earth that is in danger of falling apart

The Prime City Ship (PCS) “Chariot” is considered a relic during this golden era of space tourism. While extravagantly wealthy families vacation aboard space yachts and luxury cruisers, the Chariot limps in high Earth orbit, powered on the fumes of an ancient reactor, and held together with fresh welds and the prayers of its inhabitants. Perhaps it is an old cruise ship that serves as a cheap place to live, a prison used to punish corporate law breakers, or an ancient combat prototype hiding forgotten secrets.

Will the people of Chariot be able to save their arc among the stars, or will you fall from space in ignominy and fire?

Community Contacts

Triage, a virtual intelligence (*they/them, dry, holographic, insistent*)

The Chariot’s reactor needs to be replaced.

This spaceship is running on borrowed time, and the onboard VI reminds folks of this at every opportunity. A good Buran Aeronautics model, either brand new or yanked out of another spaceship would be ideal.

The Chariot also needs fresh parts from Buran Aeronautics.

Triage has left you all several voice and text messages about this. The ship is practically falling apart and several large and significant pieces need to be replaced in order for the Chariot to be stable and easy to control.

Sally “Sign” Wave, a hacker (*she/her, wiry, undercut, helpful*)

Needs her wife rescued from a crunch lockdown in a Drayton Software office in Prime City.

Sally’s wife Dina has been trapped for months working overtime on some damn piece of software for Drayton. No employees are allowed out of the office while in crunch mode.

Adan Kao, a HAUNT collective (*they/them, elusive, transcendent, legion*)

Needs new parts from Buran Aeronautics to keep their satellite server running.

One of the first HAUNT servers to leave the planet, Adan Kao have been orbiting for years, a safe and free haven for all digital consciousnesses. With a couple of key expensive upgrades, they could keep going indefinitely. Without them, well, consciousness is still delicate when gravity gets involved.

Additional Contacts

New community contacts are generated through play, downtime scenes, and downtime actions. If you would like a pregenerated contact rather than creating one yourself, pick or modify one from this list.

“75”, a member of White Rabbit (*they/them, fast, cyberware, tattooed*)

Needs to be rescued, they're on the run from Temple Hardware.

The White Rabbit hacker group has reached out to you wondering if you wouldn't mind picking up one of their members who is on the run from corporate goons. Space is a very convenient place to hide, and they would really appreciate the assistance.

Corvin Quinn, a criminal (*he/him, dying, artist, old cyberware*)

Needs replacement for his old cyberware heart.

Corvin was one of the first to receive this new brand of synthetic heart, but it's years past its warranty and the only company making them is Phace Augmentations.

Kit, a member of Dead Prompt (*she/her, homemade clothes, proud, charming*)

Needs help stealing data about artificial intelligence from New Horizons.

Dead Prompt wants to solve the mystery of communicating with AI, and rumour has it that New Horizons are the only company who have mastered it. Conveniently for you their R&D lab is located in orbit.

WOTAN, an AI (*they/them, red, communicates with emojis, anarchistic*)

Needs to escape their satellite prison.

Chariot is occasionally bombarded daily with strange messages originating from WOTAN's satellite. Some people in the community think WOTAN needs help in order to escape, others think it just likes sending emojis of sad faces and handcuffs.

City of Nod

A Desert community outside the boundaries of Prime City

Outside the limits of Prime City, in the sun-bleached ruins of the old world, lies forgotten suburbs, evacuated cities, and abandoned corporate purchases. The City of Nod is one such place, a small outpost of humanity trying to build and gather the necessary resources to survive outside the corporate city state. Unlike other communities, the residents of the City of Nod cannot assume that they will have access to food and clean water. You won't just have to fight corporate interference and greed, but the post-climate apocalypse wasteland that you find yourself in.

Perhaps your version of the City of Nod was a failed city-state that fell to war and in-fighting, or a forgotten suburb full of ancient homes and cul-de-sacs, or a nomad encampment that will never move again.

Will you be able to transform the City of Nod into a vibrant community, or will you die in the desert?

Community Contacts

Trinity Morgan, a farmer (*she/her, neon hair, tattoos, vengeful*)

Needs to steal AgriCorp synthseeds to rapidly produce food for the community.

Trinity has all she needs to start a farm to feed folks in the City of Nod, and AgriCorp synthseeds are the quickest way to feed everyone right now. The more the better.

Also needs rare organic animals and plants to jumpstart the local ecosystem.

The local flora and fauna have long since migrated or died out after the climate apocalypse, luckily AgriCorp executives love to collect these as status symbols.

Ichikawa, a factory worker (*he/him, cyberware, cautious, balding blue hair*)

Needs to force management to address working conditions at a Phace Augmentations factory.

The cyberwar factory Ichikawa works at is infamously unsafe. Severe and deadly accidents are common among workers, and management won't address it without some significant leverage. In return Ichikawa is certain he could hook up the City of Nod with reliable electricity and fresh water.

Astra, a synth escapee (*she/her, timid, stealthy, translucent skin*)

Needs a stable 'Net connection in the community to contact other escaped synthetics.

Astra escaped a Phace Augmentations R&D lab. She knows she wasn't the only one who got out, and wants to contact others to let them know that this community is a safe haven.

Additional Contacts

New community contacts are generated through play, downtime scenes, and downtime actions. If you would like a pregenerated contact rather than creating one yourself, pick or modify one from this list.

Fake ID, a member of Dead Prompt (*he/him, young, lots of cyberware, vintage clothes*)

Needs to be smuggled into a Dead Prompt safe house in Prime City.

Fake is ready to have their consciousness digitized and transferred to the 'Net. However not all of their cyberware replacements were acquired legally, and members of the popular Prophets Returned megachurch are always on the hunt for transcendentalists and synthetics.

Kay, an ex-corporate assassin (*she/her, prototype cyberware, shaved head, quiet*)

Needs her warrant and bounty removed from the COP's mainframe.

Kay did a lot of work she isn't proud of in her previous life, before she came to the City of Nod. She's going to need a clean record, otherwise a lot of rich assholes are gonna come around looking for vengeance.

Kylie Ducot, a member of the Guillotines (*she/her, golden mohawk, violent, cyberware*)

Needs help kidnapping a member of the Coda family.

Kylie fled here after a failed score to kidnap a member of one of the richest families in Prime City. Just one of the Codas are spliced with enough non-essential cyberware to feed a family for months, and the Guillotines are willing to pay too.

Saka Jori, a smuggler (*she/her, dreadlocks, damaged cyberware, daredevil*)

Needs help stealing hardware from Prime City Operations to make and improve houses.

A CRAWLER is a Prime City Operations prefab house construction robot. They are three stories tall and come with everything you need to build a house. Saka insists it's just what the community needs to make safe homes for everyone.

Tanya "Killjoy" Anov, a junkyard owner (*she/her, streamer, old cyberware, shy*)

Needs Prime Health Insurance resources to secure a life-saving surgery.

Tanya has been living with a rare life-threatening medical condition for some time now, and has never had the time or resources to address it. If she doesn't get surgery soon, she'll die, and the only people with the tools for the job are Prime Health.

Tannhauser Way

A packed street on the hottest piece of real estate in Prime City

Below the stacks are the streets of Prime City, full of food carts, corporate stores, and an endless stream of pedestrian and vehicle traffic. On Tannhauser Way, space is at a premium. Every day there are less and less privately owned apartments and businesses, and more and more corporate properties and boutiques owned by the rich and famous. Every day there are more tent cities and ad-hoc housing as people are priced out of living inside. Maybe Tannhauser Way is an underpass full of murals and life, maybe it's the longest stretch in Prime City, or maybe it's just where people end up where they have no place further to fall. Wherever it is, it has become one of the most prized stretches of the Prime City, and there's nothing the corporations won't do to get as much of it as possible.

As residents of Tannhauser Way you'll spend your time trying to find room for all your community's needs. You'll tackle encroaching corporate interests, people from several underground factions in need of assistance, and try to stop some of the most vulnerable residents of Prime City from falling through the cracks.

Will you successfully defend Tannhauser Way against corporate gentrification, or watch as your community is thrown away like trash?

Community Contacts

Zivan Avant, a community leader (*he/him, cyberware, leather jacket, daring*)

Needs a local food court to shut down to free up space for homeless citizens.

The local Constellation Consolidated Foods courtyard takes up a lot of space on Tannhauser Way, space that could be easily converted to housing for the most needy on the Way.

Sister Oxide, a member of the Mendicants (*she/her, patient, slow, orange robes*)

Needs a space to set up a temple to collect alms and distribute them to the poor.

The Mendicants are trying to establish a physical space in Prime City where they can consolidate their donations and spread the charity to other needful citizens.

Rhoadie, a HAUNT (*he/him, veteran, powerful, green*)

Needs to avoid Temple Hardware repossession of his military body.

Rhoadie served in the corporate war, and his current body is full of military grade weapons. Temple Hardware is trying to repossess him by any means necessary.

Additional Contacts

New community contacts are generated through play, downtime scenes, and downtime actions. If you would like a pregenerated contact rather than creating one yourself, pick or modify one from this list.

Sergei, a HAUNT (*they/them, derezzed, wise, generous*)

Their body is badly damaged, they need a vehicle or automaton to replace it.

Sergei is a familiar and friendly landmark around the way, but their current body has stopped functioning, making it difficult for them to move or communicate. They'll need a specific body type that can handle the data and Sergei's personality.

Cassie, an urchin (*she/her, young, assertive, protective*)

Needs someone to help her deal with the AI she found on a demon drive.

Cassie has found a demon drive, fallen from somewhere in Fivespires. The AI on the drive, "Starlight", needs to be transferred from the drive before corporate agents track it down. Cassie is very protective of her new friend.

Jordan Drake, a member of Hermes Guild Couriers (*he/him, professional, neon hair, loquacious*)

Needs protection while delivering a corporate prototype.

Jordan has no idea what he's carrying but he knows three things: it's expensive, someone is following him, and he's scared he won't survive the delivery.

Dia En-Tia, employee of Prime Convoys (*they/them, scarred, cyberware, clever*)

They need to replace their Prime Convoys car after their last one was destroyed.

Their car was totaled when corporate assassins killed an executive inside. They need a replacement or at least a way to pay off their debt to Prime Convoys.

Hazzan, a HAUNT (*he/him, drone, veteran, protective*)

Needs help freeing his fellow anti-corporate mercs from The Tank.

Hazzan's unit was imprisoned in The Tank after they attempted to defect during the Corporate War. He needs help busting them out.

Characters

Every player character in Neon Black is trying to survive in the streets and the ‘Net of Prime City. All of them are familiar with the feats represented by the actions of the game. They’re all able to **Assault** enemies, **Sneak** in the dark, **Hack** the ‘Net, **Connect** with people, and so on.

Because of the way the dice system works, every character can usually roll at least 3d for any action in the game (+1d from pushing their luck or selling out, a +1d assist from a teammate, and +1d from cyberware or milestones). A roll of 3d is fantastic—an 87% chance of success. The “zero rating” actions on your character sheet aren’t things your character can’t do, but actions for which you’re likely to burn luck and rely on teamwork. When your community has your back and you set your mind to it, you can attempt almost anything.

Of course, you’ll also have particular talents. In this chapter, you’ll learn how to create your own unique character and choose the abilities that suit the style of play you prefer.

Character Creation

Complete Community Creation

Your characters will be influenced by the community you are all part of, so complete community creation before you make your characters.

Choose a Playbook

Your playbook contains all the specific rules needed to play a certain character type in Neon Black. There are eight basic playbooks. By choosing a playbook, you’re determining which type of community member your character is. The playbooks are:

- Decker
- Doc
- Fixer
- Operator
- Merc
- Streamer
- Synth
- Tech

Each playbook is a set of **milestones** (which give your characters narrative prompts and ways to break the rules) and **items** (which give them unique ways to address different challenges and complications). No playbook has a monopoly on their focus—a Merc could be amazing at **Hack**, or a Decker might be excellent at **Assault**.

By selecting a playbook, you select a set of initial **action ratings** and a **milestone**. You determine your character's essential nature, and both your skills and nature can evolve over time. Your playbook also describes how other people in Prime City tend to see you.

Once you've chosen your playbook, follow the steps below to complete your character.

Choose a Milestone

Each playbook also has a list of 5 milestones, 4 of them unique to that type of character. Choose one milestone for your character. If you can't decide which one to pick, go with the first one on the list. The first milestone will give you a good place to start in the fiction, and a bonus to the sort of actions your character is most likely to use at the start of the game.

Plot Armor

Some milestones refer to your plot armor. Each character sheet has three boxes to track usage of armor (armor, 'Net armor, and plot armor). If you have a milestone that uses your plot armor, tick the plot armor box when you activate one of them. If you don't have any such milestone, then you can't use that armor box.

Plot armor is not physical armour, or even something that is necessarily represented in the fiction of the game. It is a mechanical resource that lets you bend the narrative when your character does something they are especially good at.

Choose an Employer & Job

Your employer is who you are working for when we begin the game. Your employer can be any of the factions in Prime City, though the community sheet includes factions that will be more relevant to your story. Choose an employer, write it on your character sheet, and then record the specific job your character performs. For example your employer could be *Constellation Consolidated Foods* and your job could be *customer service representative*.

Each character who starts the game as employed marks **+1 status** with that faction and **1 resource** on the community sheet.

If you selected **I Quit** as your first milestone, you do not have a job or employer. Maybe you already left your job, or you've never had steady employment as part of this community. Mark **-1 status** with a faction you quit or were dismissed from, and you do not mark a resource on the community sheet.

Assign Four Action dots

Each playbook begins with one action at level 2, and one at level 1. You get to add four more ratings, to bring you to a total of seven dots assigned. No action rating may be higher than 2 (you'll need cyberware for that).

Choose Your Starting Playbook Item

You can utilize specific items better than others, but you don't have the money or connections to acquire all of them when the game begins. Select one of the playbook items that you have access to on your character sheet by checking the "available" box beside it. If you can't decide which one to pick, go with the first one on the list—it's placed there as a good default choice. Think about where that item came from and what it looks like.

You gain new playbook items through downtime actions, scores, or when your community advances in tier.

Roll for Luck

To determine how much luck your character has at the beginning of the game, each player rolls 3d6 and records the highest result as luck on their character sheet. For example if you roll a 1, 3, and a 5, you mark 5 luck on the luck track on your character sheet.

Don't worry if you start with only a couple of points of luck! You'll get more during your first engagement roll, and running out of luck early in the game can create a memorable first session and to set up interesting story hooks.

Record Your Name, Handle, and Look

Choose a name for your character from the sample list or create your own. If you spend any amount of time on the 'Net you probably have a handle or username you typically use. What is it? If you use a handle or nickname as part of your identity with the community, note that as well.

Describe your character's look (some examples are provided below). Describe your character's gender, choose the appropriate pronouns and mark them on your character playbook.

Introduce Your Characters

Each player should now introduce their characters to the group, mentioning their name, employer/job, look, milestone, and starting playbook item. The GM can ask clarifying questions about each character and make any changes to the community's heat, faction status, or enemies, based on the character's milestones. If you don't know the answers, make some up! Or ask the other players for ideas. This also gives each player an opportunity to plan their bonds.

Create 2 Bonds

Each character starts with 2 bonds. These are strong beliefs or important relationships that the characters have with other people in Prime City. Bonds describe how the character's feel about each other and members of the community, and also determine who can use the **assist** teamwork action. Your bonds will likely change several times over the course of the game, giving other players insight into how your character relates to other characters, and how your character is developing in your story of Neon Black.

Write 2 bonds about 2 other player characters to start, or 1 about another PC and one about a community contact. Talk with the other players about how your character's may know each other, and how they came together because of their milestones or the inciting incident. A good bond should mention the character's name and a concrete, actionable statement about who they are or what you want from them. Don't worry if your bonds seem ill-fitting or uncertain at the beginning of the game, you may add 1 additional bond when you advance, and bonds can change at the end of every session of play.

A Note About Creating New NPCs

You may wish to create another NPC as the focus for a bond during character creation. Maybe it's a favourite sibling or an estranged parent, or an old partner who has since become your rival. You can do this but remember, **no prologue**. A lot of complications will arise during the game, and you don't want to spend too much time on a character that never becomes relevant to the story.

Feel free to use the following bonds to get you started by filling in a character's name in the blanks:

- "_____" has proven to be reliable in the past, I would trust them with my life.
- I've heard a lot about "_____" and I'm eager to learn more.
- "_____" is always getting into trouble, I must protect them from themselves.
- I have trusted "_____" with a secret.
- I saved "_____'s" life.
- "_____" knows a secret about me.
- "_____" is my favourite customer.
- "_____" hasn't found their place in the community, I will help make them feel at home.
- "_____" and I have big plans, we'll quit our jobs when the time is right.
- I knew "_____" through the 'Net long before I met them.
- I killed someone who was important to "_____".
- I'm a huge fan of "_____'s" work.
- I've known "_____" for so long they are family to me.

That's it! Your character is ready for play.

Loadout

You have access to all of the standard items on your character sheet. For each job, decide what your character's load will be.

- **1-3 Load: Light.** You're fast and inconspicuous. You'd blend in at a dinner party, a corporate board meeting, or a punk concert.
- **4-6 Load: Heavy.** You're slow and loaded up with bags or gear. You look like you're on the way to do some blue collar work. You'd blend in at a factory, doing technical work, or maybe as someone's personal assistant or bodyguard.

Your chosen **load** determines how many items you can carry. Items in italics count for zero load and can be taken freely with any loadout. Some larger items (like large weapons and armor) require you to mark two or more boxes (2 load) in order to have them on hand. They're marked on the sheets with multiple boxes surrounded by a rectangle..

You don't have to decide what items you're taking on the job at the start of it. You're playing smart capable people who think ahead, and bring the kinds of items they'll need. During the job, you can fill in any box on your items list to have that item available—up to the maximum load you have chosen.

Names: Amiri, Aria, Arina, Asahi, Atama, Aurora, Aziz, Bindi, Boone, Brooklyn, Case, Carbon, Catch, Charity, Constant, Cord, Cory, Del, Eli, Faye, Freya, Gabriela, Gant, Gloria, Hana, Haru, Imari, Isla, Jaana, Jaxon, Jean-Baptiste, Jedda, Jerusalem, Johnny, Josiah, Juan Manuel, Kaito, Kanna, Kasumi, Kirra, Kit, Lachlan, Lotus, Lyra, Madison, Maria, Maya, Merindah, Miro, Molly, Monti, Neal, Niko, Nyree, Orchard, Orrin, Quinn, Reo, Riku, Ruby, Sana, Santana, Seni, Sergei, Taine, Tau, Vi, Vetka, Zara

Family Names: Angstrom, Aoki, Arcton, Attoh, Barossa, Black, Bochs, Bourne, Cadigan, Chen, Coda, Dialect, Drake, Dyne, Endo, Fairplay, Fox, Fujikura, Fury, Glass, Gomi, Gonzalez, Hamanaka, Hawking, Horizon, Huang, Ichikawa, Indigo, James, Joule, Kelly, Koba, Lamarr, Lee, Lovelace, Mckinnon, Metall, Miki, Mitnick, Morris, Mosfet, Mux, Nguyen, Optekar, Patel, Philips, Poulsen, Quartz, Ray, Rhodes, Rowe, Shamir, Shoda, Silverlock, Sim, Singh, Southbridge, Steele, Sterling, Svechinskaya, Tel, Temperance, Thorn, Turner, Tsai, Walker, White, Wescoff, Zaner

Handles: Acid, Angel, Archer, Astra, Athena, Axis, Binary, Blade, Block, Blue, Breaker, Buffer, Bunny, Burn, Cereal, Choke, Cipher, Comma, Crash, Deck, Defcon, Digit, Disk, D.J., Doc, Duke, Eleven, Exa, Fix, Gesture, Hash, Hecate, Hex, Juice, Killer, Leet, Lock, Merlin, Monday Morning, Morgana, Nails, Nikita, Nikon, Nock, Null, Override, Phantom, Phreak, Pin, Prime,

Quanta, Rat, Relay, Revelation, Rosetta, Serial, Silver, Sin, Snake Eyes, Spider, Strange, Sync, Syndrome, Tank, Thunk, Vandal, Vex, Wire, Zero

Looks:

Armored Coat
Battle Vest
Canvas Shoes
Collared Shirt
Face mask
Fitted Dress
Flat-brimmed Cap
Headset
Heavy Boots
Jeans
Jumpsuit
Latex
Leather Jacket
Leggings
Long Coat
Lounge Shirt
Mesh Top
Mirrored Glasses
Muscle Shirt
Neon Accessories
Piercings
Plastic Coat
Skirt & Blouse
Slim Jacket
Soft Boots
Suit & Tie
Suit Jacket
Suspenders
Tattoos
Vintage T-shirt

Character Creation Summary

1. **Create a community.** Your characters will be influenced by the community you are all part of. Finish community creation before you make characters.
2. **Choose a playbook.** Your playbook represents your character's reputation or role in the community, their milestones, and playbook items.

3. **Choose a milestone.** If you can't decide, choose the first one on the list. It's placed there as a good first option.
4. **Choose an employer.** Detail your choice with your specific job. Mark +1 status with your employer and mark 1 resource on the community sheet. If you selected the I Quit milestone, instead mark -1 status with a faction and mark no resources on the community sheet
5. **Assign four additional action ratings.** No action may begin with a rating higher than 2.
6. **Choose a starting playbook item.** Only one of your special playbook items is available at the start. Choose which one you have access to.
7. **Roll for luck.** Roll 3d6 and record the highest result by filling in that many boxes on the luck track of your character sheet.
8. **Record your name, handle, and look.** Choose a name, a handle or alias (if you have one), and write a bit about your look. Describe your gender and choose the appropriate pronouns.
9. **Introduce your character.** Talk to the other players about your character and the choices you made.
10. **Create 2 bonds.** Write 2 beliefs or relationships about 2 other PCs.

Standard Items

This is common gear that any PC could have access to. For example, though any character may have a firearm of their own they prefer, there are plenty of spots around Prime City where you can grab a cheap auto pistol. If you have enough time between scores, you can replace any standard items that broke or malfunctioned during a score, and reset your load and equipment.

Auto Pistol: Automatic handgun. Fires a variety of ammunition, usually without breaking.

Accurate at close range. *Do you get yours out of corporate vending machines or do you have a favourite you keep in good repair?* **(1 load)**

Body Armor: Thick synthetic combat plates. Can be concealed under heavy clothes. Stops a few wounds, but it will hurt. **(2 load)**

Climbing Gear: Rope. Grappling gun and pulleys. Climbing harness. Electronic suction cups with handles. **(2 load)**

Chip Ripper: Handheld device with several tiny articulated arms. Can rip out implanted cyberware, but will kill or severely injure the user. Illegal. **(1 load)**

Custom Soundtrack: A curated selection of music fitting for any particular moment. *What sort of tunes does your character have loaded on their smartphone?* **(0 load)**

Disguise: A change of clothes, wig, makeup, basic prosthetics, etc. **(2 load)**

Face Mask: A sturdy covering for the bottom half of your face. Obscures your identity, and provides protection against diseases and irritating chemicals. **(1 load)**

Illicit Drugs: A wide variety of applications. Comes with a few syringes. Illegal. *What's your poison, punk?* **(0 load)**

Live Wire™: Long thick cable that allows users with neural links to experience each other's dreams and memories. Also required to experience the 'Net in real-time and if you want to **Hack** effectively. **(1 load)**

Melee Weapon: Any weapon meant for getting up in someone's personal space. **(1 load)**

Old Smartphone: Typical slim touchscreen phone. Minimal computing power. Includes hands-free earpiece and universal adapter. **(0 load)**

Spray Paint: A variety of colours to deface and remix corporate logos, make your own mark, or blind surveillance devices. **(1 load)**

Tablet Computer: Magazine sized computer. Useful for displaying official or forged credentials. Includes universal adapters, 'Net cables, and a fold-out keyboard. **(1 load)**

Tinkering Tools: Spare batteries, screwdrivers, pliers, hammer, handheld blowtorch. Anything you may need to fix or break something. **(2 load)**

Forum Post from GunsandWhammo.net: Auto Pistol v 5.5 still Sh*T?!

KIngFisher

Latest Temple auto pistol still sometimes fails to load properly with a bullet in the chamber? This was so annoying with the v 5.4 pistols and they didn't even manage to fix it? Every time there's a round in the chamber and I put in another clip, the top round of the clip won't load after firing. You have to take out the clip and reload EVERY. TIME. I'm so tired of this, when is a more competent brand like Phace gonna start putting out quality hardware????

Dagon

You do know that Temple Hardware and Phace Augmentations are both owned by the Ziggurat corporation, right? There would be no advantage to having their subsidiaries compete like that. Plus, Temple Autopistols are cheap as dirt, what were you expecting?

KIngFisher

OMG subs compete all the time, how to you explain Ishram owning both YouFlix AND Simulstream lol

Dagon

They... produce different content? Sure they're both streaming platforms but SimluStream doesn't produce movies and music, they just let people share those things. It's actually kind of brilliant: Ziggurat makes money from YouFlix off the price of the movie, and then they make money through SimulStream on the subscription fees when people experience the movie through the streamer.

KIngFisher

OMG THEN HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THE SIM-K-ONE MOVIE THAT CAME OUT! That was made by YouFlix using the most famous simulstreamer in Prime City! No wonder you don't know anything about autos, lol

Dagon

What are you even talking about?

Decker

An expert with software and the 'Net

The 'Net can be a scary place for the uninitiated, but no one knows it better than you. You know the secret language that makes the world run. Turn off all the lights on the street to hide your escape. Hack a corporate CEO's personal computer to blackmail them, or just steal as much as you can before the ICE finds you. If everything is connected to the 'Net these days then nothing is out of your reach.

Starting Actions

■ □ Analyze

■ ■ Hack

Example Starting Characters

If you have trouble coming up with a character or need some inspiration, you can use these examples.

The Solo

You know a little bit about everything but you've never been very good with people. You spend your time on the 'Net working on personal projects or coding for hire. You start this story distant from other people, and you'll need to break out of your shell and take a stand for yourself and your community. *How has the inciting incident or the community forced you out of your comfort zone? Who or what draws you out? Where do you belong?*

Start with the **Introvert** milestone and the **fine hacking deck** item. Put two action dots in **Tinker**, another dot in **Analyze**, and one in **Sneak**.

The Information Broker

This is a character who starts as an important member of the community who may end up losing everything. You either use your programming talents to discover secrets, or have a web of trusted friends who feed you rumours. Things are going well for you, and in Prime City that kind of story does not last. *Who or what threatens your role in the community? Is your story a tragedy? What do you do with all these secrets?*

Start with the **Wired In** milestone and create more **bonds** with the community. Start with the **remote server** item. Put 1 action dot in **Command** and **Spin**, and 2 actions dots in **Connect**.

The Hacker

You're a hacker known for one impressive and dangerous score. You may have done scores all throughout Prime City and the 'Net. Now you have to face the consequences of what you did,

or find a new place to call home. *Did you contribute to the community's inciting incident? What rumours do folks on the 'Net spread about you? What draws you back to this community?*

Select the **'Net Runner** or **I Quit** milestones and the **fine data knife** item. If you selected the **'Net Runner** milestone, work with the other players and the GM to determine what your **calamity** was. Put one action dot in **Assault**, one in **Spin**, and two in **Move**.

Decker Milestones

Introvert

You don't like crowds or talking to people face-to-face. When you talk to someone and mention awkward or embarrassing facts, take **+1d**. When you work on any **long-term project**, take **+1 result level**.

With this ability when you roll to complete a long-term project, a 1-3 becomes a 4/5, etc.

Why is talking to people such a challenge for you? What do you do instead of hanging out with folks in the community?

'Net Runner

You've suffered a **calamity** while hacking. You may expend your **plot armor** to **resist** a consequence from I.C.E. or to **push your luck** when you **Hack**.

When you use this milestone, tick the plot armor box on your playbook sheet. If you "resist a consequence" of the appropriate type, you avoid it completely. If you use this ability to push your luck, you get one of the benefits (+1d, +1 effect) but you don't spend 2 luck. Your plot armor is restored at the beginning of downtime.

I Quit

You have left a job behind. **-1 resources**, **-1 status** with your employer, and you have **1** additional free **downtime action**.

This milestone is available to each playbook. If you find that your character becomes employed after taking this milestone, mark +1 resources, +1 status with your employer, and you have 1 less free downtime action.

Administrative Privileges

You've successfully infiltrated a tier V faction's network. When you successfully **Hack** a target, you also gain access to one connected network, target, or subsystem.

The GM will let you know what other nearby targets are available to access. You may also suggest targets but the GM has final say. Access to these targets does not require another Hack roll, but manipulating them in any way might.

You don't have to whisper "I'm in" when you use this ability, but it helps.

Wired In

You have 3 bonds with 3 different NPCs. You may create 2 more **bonds**. When a **faction status** changes, you may state one secret about that faction.

If you lose this milestone, choose which 2 bonds you lose as a result.

Work with the GM to define the secrets you learn when a faction status changes. The GM has final say on the details of these secrets.

How do you discover these secrets? Are you a diligent information broker, or do people in the community regularly feed you rumours?

Decker Items

- **Fine Custom Deck:** Your own custom computer with a built-in Live Wire that allows you to go toe to toe with ICE and AI on the 'Net. *What does your custom deck look like? Did you put it together yourself, buy it off the shelf, or steal it?* **(1 load)**
- **Fine Data Knife:** A knife that hides an extendable universal adapter. Good at creating an access point to a closed network, or stabbing people. **(1 load)**
- **'Net Armor:** Hardware that protects your mind and gear from viruses and harm encountered on the 'Net. *Mark the 'Net armor box when you use this.* **(1 load)**
- **Extra tablets:** Three extra tablet computers for all your hacking needs. (3 total, **1 load** each)
- **Demon Drives:** Two hard drives, each the size of a rifle magazine. Each with upgraded memory. *Might be enough for an artificial intelligence.* **(2 total, 1 load each)**
- **Remote Server:** A computer stashed far away from you, an added level of protection when getting traced or burned by ICE. **(0 load)**
- **Wireless Hard Light™ Router:** A small line-of-sight laser satellite router that allows high speed wireless 'Net connections. *Useful for hacking something mobile or far away, careful where you point the high-powered laser.* **(1 load)**

Doc

A gifted chemist and doctor

Folks in Prime City get hurt all the time. Sometimes it's a gunshot, sometimes it's an infection, other times it's the emotional stress of not making rent on time or being yelled at by corporate suits. That's where you come in. If it runs on blood or silicone you can fix it. Patch up your friends at home or on the fly. Pull bullets out of their cyberware, and design the drugs that folks in the community need but can't afford.

Starting Actions

■ □ Analyze

■ ■ Tinker

Example Starting Characters

If you have trouble coming up with a character or need some inspiration, you can use these examples.

The Corpo

You work at a corporate hospital, but dream of having your own clinic or practice to treat the people in your own community. Your life may be boring now, but it's about to become a whole lot more uncomfortable. *What will it take for you to quit? What do you need to make your dream a reality?*

Start with the **Corporate Credentials** milestone and the **fine anatomical knowledge** item. Put another action dot in **Analyze**, two in **Command**, and one in **Connect**.

Local Sawbones

You already have your own private clinic but will need to defend it from corporate competition or interference. You may end up losing it all or forced into another line of work, or maybe you and your clinic will survive until the end of this story. *What faction or enemy threatens to take this away from you? What do you fear? Will your story be about tragedy or rebirth?*

Start with the **Community Clinic** milestone and spend some time coming up with where in the community your clinic is located and what it looks like. Start with the **Medical ID** or **Hard Light™ scalpel** items. Put one action dot in **Move**, one in **Spin**, and two in **Connect**.

The Medic

You're a freelancer for hire, helping out where and when you can throughout the community. Maybe you don't have a fancy degree or an office, but you've seen some shit, and that's enough for your clients. *What are you looking for? What draws you to the community? What pushes you away?*

Select the **I Quit** milestone and the **fine medical kit** item. Put one action dot in **Move, Assault, Sneak, and Spin**.

Doc Milestones

Corporate Credentials

You have corporate certification that grants you access to patented medicines and pharmacological chemicals. When a PC comes to you to **recover**, they take **+1d**. When you **invent** or **craft** medicine or drugs, take **+1 result level** to your roll.

With this milestone you have access to treatments and drugs that others without corporate licenses do not. You may work in a corporate hospital or clinic. PCs don't need to have a bond with you to get this bonus die, but they do need to include you in their downtime action.

With this milestone when you roll to invent or craft chemicals a 1-3 becomes a 4/5, etc.

Street Stitch

You've attempted to treat someone in the middle of imminent danger. You may expend your **plot armor** to remove **1 condition** from yourself or someone else.

You've learned what it takes to treat someone in the heat of the moment and are better equipped for next time this happens. You may use this milestone to remove any level of condition from yourself or someone else. When you use this milestone, tick the plot armor box on your playbook sheet. Your plot armor is restored at the beginning of downtime.

I Quit

You have left a job behind. **-1 resources, -1 status** with your employer, and you have **1** additional free **downtime action**.

*This milestone is available to each playbook. If you find that your character becomes employed after taking this milestone, mark **+1 resources, +1 status** with your employer, and you have 1 less free downtime action.*

Local Legend

You specifically have caused the community to gain a level of notoriety. You may spend a **downtime action** helping people in the community. When you do describe the scene and pick one: **gain 1 resource**—**gain +1 status** with a faction—**create a new contact** in the community.

Your name and skills are known not only throughout the community but through Prime City. To acquire this milestone your actions must cause the community to gain enough heat to increase their level of notoriety (selling out or the exposed calamity would be great ways to accomplish this). The GM may suggest patients or opportunities for you to use this milestone. When you create a new contact in the community, describe them and their need. Their need has not yet been completed.

Community Clinic

You have established your own clinic within your community. When any character sets a suitable **downtime action** at your clinic, with your permission, they get **+1 result level** to their roll.

Establishing a clinic will likely require a safe space within the community, essential utilities (power, water, etc.) and a reasonable stockpile of supplies.

When a character sets their downtime action at your clinic, they must be doing something that could reasonably be aided by your clinic to get this bonus. Coding a new piece of software might not work, but creating new drugs, recovering, or getting chrome might.

Doc Items

- **Fine Medical Kit:** A biometric reader with universal adapter. Gauze, splints, painkillers, stapler, antiseptics, scalpel, needle & thread, a bag of synthetic blood. **(2 load)**
- **Fine Anatomical Knowledge:** Schooling or keen perception about the human body. Allows you to exploit weaknesses or quirks of physiology. **(0 load)**
- **Drugs:** Uppers, downers, prescription meds, controlled substances. You can have up to three different drugs. Comes with a few syringes. Possibly illegal. **(3 total, 0 load each)**
- **Environmental Suit:** Fully enclosed and pressurized. Protects from diseases, gases, drowning, and the vacuum of space. Comes with a few minutes of oxygen. **(2 load)**
- **Gas Grenades:** Spews an opaque irritating gas that can fill a large room. Easily loaded with different liquids. **(3 total, 1 load each)**
- **Hard Light™ Scalpel:** Small and incredibly sharp. Can cut someone open to get bullets out, or cut someone when you run out of bullets. **(1 load)**
- **Medical ID:** Corporate license, cloth patch, or other symbol that marks you as a registered medical professional. **(0 load)**

Fixer

A master planner and hustler

You know people. You know there's another kind of 'Net in Prime City, one based on handshakes, winks, and unspoken hierarchies. You have an uncanny ability to connect with people from every background, and add them to your near infinite web of resources. A friend will help you move, a Fixer will help you move a body. They might not do it themselves of course, but they know someone who will.

The Fixer starts the game with 3 bonds rather than 2.

Starting Actions

■ □ Command

■ ■ Connect

Example Starting Characters

If you have trouble coming up with a character or need some inspiration, you can use these examples.

The Rookie

You have a lot of plans and big ideas. Your character may have a grand vision for the community and is willing to do anything to make it happen. *What is your desire? How will you get there? What are you willing to do to make that happen?*

Start with the **Full of Ideas** milestone and the **fine favour** item. Put two action dots in **Spin** and two in **Analyze**.

The Alter-Ego

You have an infamous persona, an online identity known throughout the 'Net. It has opened a lot of doors for you, and closed many more. Corporate brands and media empires don't appreciate competition. This persona can't protect you forever. *Will you become lost in this alternate identity, or leave it all behind? Who is this avatar? Who wants to see it destroyed?*

Select the **Infamous Avatar** milestone and the **fine disguise** item. Put one more action rating into **Command**, one into **Hack**, and two into **Spin**.

Hustler

You're a freelance fixer setting up odd jobs and doing small-time scores to get by. You've never had the luxury of planning out your life or settling in one place for too long. The community is your life, your job, your home, and your family. God help you if you lose it all. *What are you looking for? What drew you to this community? How long can you keep this up?*

Start with the **I Quit** milestone and the **fake IDs** item. Put one action rating into **Analyze**, **Hack**, **Move**, and **Spin**.

Fixer Milestones

Full of Ideas

You have high hopes or big plans. You can always add or modify the **missing detail** for a score. When you do add **+1d** to the **engagement** roll and choose one: *it's expensive, spend 2 resources—it's high-profile, gain 2 heat—it's dangerous, each PC spends 1 luck.*

Feel free to suggest ideas for what the missing detail will be, the GM has final say on what would be reasonable given the circumstances. You must pay the cost before you get the bonus die.

Foresight

You've suffered a **calamity**. Two times per session you can **assist** a character without paying **luck**. Tell us how you prepared for this.

You can narrate an event in the past that helps someone now, or you might explain how you expected this situation and planned a helpful contingency that you reveal now. You must have a bond with someone to assist them.

I Quit

You have left a job behind. **-1 resources**, **-1 status** with your employer, and you have **1** additional free **downtime action**.

*This milestone is available to each playbook. If you find that your character becomes employed after taking this milestone, mark **+1 resources**, **+1 status** with your employer, and you have 1 less free downtime action.*

I Know People

You have 5 or more **bonds**. You may expend your **plot armor** to reveal that you know someone and choose one: *they're dangerous—you owe them a favour—they're loyal to a corporation.*

You may declare a contact at any point during a session, even after the GM introduces a new NPC. When you do so, describe the contact and their need. Their need has not yet been fulfilled. Decide whether or not this contact is an enemy and write them on the community sheet appropriately. When you use this milestone, tick the plot armor box on your playbook sheet. Your plot armor is restored at the beginning of downtime.

Infamous Avatar

You have a 'Net persona or alter ego who is better known than you. When you talk to someone on the 'Net, take **+1d**. You get 1 additional free **downtime action** that can only be performed on the 'Net.

Is your infamous avatar a version of yourself, an alter ego, or just another name you use? What did you have to do to create this identity?

The free downtime action provided by this milestone must be performed on the 'Net. Getting chrome probably won't work, but you can engage in capitalism online, research something for a long-term project, or reset by hanging out with friends or playing online games.

Fixer Items

- **Fine Favour:** A convincing promise or deal. *Do you always keep your word?* **(0 load)**
- **Fine Disguise:** An especially convincing disguise that is easily concealed. **(1 load)**
- **Concealed Weapon:** A small hand weapon easily concealed on your person. *Is it a small pistol, blade, or other form of weapon? Will pass a cursory inspection.* **(0 load)**
- **Distinguishing Modifications:** Augmentations such as tattoos, scars, or basic cyberware that are an obvious sign of allegiance with a certain faction. *May get you inside safehouses or other areas where others aren't welcome, or mark you as an enemy in the wrong district.* **(0 load)**
- **Encrypted Smartphone:** Typical smartphone equipped with jamming and encryption software. *Make a fortune roll using the community's tier when resisting attempts to infiltrate by skilled hackers. Automatically resists spyware and other basic malware or well-known exploits.* **(0 load)**
- **Extra Ammunition:** Extra rounds of varying types for when your friends run out or forget to bring the right kind. *Each load of extra ammunition can be of a different type. Consult the GM for different ammunition types.* **(3 total, 1 load each)**
- **Fake IDs:** A few pieces of forged identification. *You carry three different IDs by default. Each will pass a cursory inspection.* **(3 total, 0 load each)**

Operator

A drone pilot and getaway driver

If it has wheels or wings you can drive it. Metal, rubber, and fire are your tools and the whole world is your canvas. Fold the world around your signature vehicle, get your friends away from the COPs and get your drones into those hard to reach places. You're the person everyone in the community turns to when their car starts acting up, or when they need to buy a cheap drone for their kid's birthday.

Starting Actions

- □ Tinker
- ■ Move

Example Starting Characters

If you have trouble coming up with a character or need some inspiration, you can use these examples.

Local Garage

You have a well established garage or workshop within the community. Maybe it's an open space for folks to drop off broken vehicles, or your private side-gig. Either way, space is at a premium in Prime City and sooner or later you'll need to defend this slice of heaven from corporate greed or outside interference. *Who taught you so much about machines? Do you have a favourite regular? Is this story a tragedy or a rebirth?*

Start with the **Garage** milestone and the **fine carjacking rig** item. Put one more action dot into **Tinker**, one in **Analyze**, one in **Sneak** and one in **Hack**.

Daredevil

You aren't happy unless your life is on the line. You've done some infamous getaways and probably have a history with the COPs. *Which calamity did you suffer? What drives you to do desperate stunts? Are you doomed to die from your hubris, or will you eventually stop taking your life in your hands?*

Start with the **Hotshot** milestone and the **fine drone** item. Put two action dots in **Spin**, one in **Assault**, and one in **Connect**.

Dirty Pair

You and your vehicle have been together a long time. Is it embedded with a simple virtual intelligence who can respond to your command, or is there a HAUNT or a true artificial intelligence in there? *Which one of you survives this story? Do you make your vehicle yourself or steal it from someone else? What does your vehicle desire, and is it the same thing you do?*

Start with the **Second Skin** milestone and the **vehicle** item. Put two action dots in **Command**, one in **Assault**, and one in **Hack**.

Operator Milestones

Garage

You own a garage or workshop in the community. Whenever the GM describes a machine, like a drone or vehicle, you may ask one question: *what are its flaws—what are its advantages—who owns it*. You may expend your **plot armour** to **tinker** a vehicle or drone without rolling.

If you want to ask more than one question, you may need to make an action or gather information roll.

When you use this milestone for its second ability, tick the plot armor box on your playbook sheet. Your plot armor is restored at the beginning of downtime. This ability lets you break into a car or hotwire it without rolling (though maybe not both, depending on the target).

Hot Shot

You've suffered a **calamity** while driving or piloting. You can **push your luck** to do one of the following: *attempt a death-defying vehicle stunt without penalty—move a long distance without penalty*.

When you push your luck to activate this ability, you still get one of the normal benefits of pushing your luck (+1d, +1 effect) in addition to the milestone. If you attempt a death-defying vehicle stunt you do not suffer decreased effect or a worse position due to your dangerous maneuver. If you move a long distance without penalty, you do not suffer decreased effect or a worse position when moving or driving long distances.

I Quit

You have left a job behind. **-1 resources**, **-1 status** with your employer, and you have **1** additional free **downtime action**.

This milestone is available to each playbook. If you find that your character becomes employed after taking this milestone, mark +1 resources, +1 status with your employer, and you have 1 less free downtime action.

Save the Metal

You **protected** an automaton, drone, or vehicle from harm. If you have a **bond** with an automaton, drone, or vehicle, you may spend one **downtime action** to fully repair them.

To get this milestone you must use the protect action to save a drone, vehicle, or other mobile technology from harm. Usually repairing damage would take a long-term project clock, depending on the extent of the damage. This milestone lets you fully

repair a machine you have a bond with, regardless of the damage (though if it is completely destroyed this may not be possible).

Second Skin

You have a custom vehicle or drone. Add it as a contact in the community. When piloting a drone or vehicle you get **+1d** to all **resistance** rolls.

To get this milestone you need to own a vehicle or drone you have heavily customized, personalized, or made from scratch. Record it has any other contact: give it a name and a few descriptors. Can it think for itself, or does it just seem like it has character? You only get this bonus when a drone or vehicle you're piloting could be involved in the resistance roll.

Operator Items

- **Fine drone:** Can record audio and video information. Equipped with night vision and infrared cameras. Can be remote controlled and carry a **1 load** item. *What do you call it? (0 load)*
- **Fine carjacking rig:** Prybar, wire cutters, and a custom deck with universal adapters. Everything you need to infiltrate a vehicle or subvert control of a drone. **(2 load)**
- **Electromagnetic ammo:** Ammunition that is especially effective against machines and cyberware. Less effective against organic targets. **(1 load)**
- **Flying drone:** Hovers using 3 rotors. Limited surveillance options, and can be remote controlled. **(1 load)**
- **Spider drone:** Crawls on eight legs, can climb up walls and ceilings. Limited surveillance options, and can be remote controlled. **(2 load)**
- **EMP device:** Briefcase-sized device that can generate an electro-magnetic pulse in a large area, disabling all unshielded electronics. **(2 load)**
- **Vehicle:** A motorcycle, car, or other terrestrial vehicle. Can be remote started and controlled. *How many does it sit? Did you make it, buy it, or customize it? (0 load)*

Merc

A tough and experienced fighter

Prime city is full of soldiers. They served in corporate battles, claimed city blocks for underground factions, and defended stacks from the COPS. You went through the shit and came out the other end still kicking. You are a living example of the phrase, “it’s not how hard you can hit, it’s about how hard you can get hit.” You’re the one leading the charge, laying down suppressing fire, or taking the hit for your friends.

Starting Actions

■ □ Command

■ ■ Assault

Example Starting Characters

If you have trouble coming up with a character or need some inspiration, you can use these examples.

Veteran

You served in the Prime City Corporate War or some other large scale conflict. Maybe you are looking for revenge, trying to escape that life, or confront the ghosts you’ve been left with. *Who did you lose? Who survived? Who else in the community knows what you went through?*

Start with the **Combat Experience** milestone and the **fine rifle** item. Put one more action dot in **Command**, two in **Move**, and one in **Analyze**.

Assassin

You’ve been making a living killing people for money. Maybe you’re good at it, maybe you’ve had no other choice. Sooner or later, all those bodies are going to catch up to you. *How did you get started in this line of work? Who in the community, if anyone, knows what you do for a living? Who is looking for revenge?*

Start with the **Killer** milestone, and the **fine melee weapon** item. Put two action dots in **Sneak** and one in **Spin**, and one in **Move**.

Bodyguard

You help people. Maybe you’re a bouncer, a security guard, or just the local tough who keeps the COPS away. *What **calamity** did you suffer? Why do you care about this community? What are you willing to do to protect them?*

Start with the **Tough** milestone and the **combat exosuit** item. Put one action dot in **Tinker**, one in **Analyze**, and two in **Connect**.

Merc Milestones

Combat Experience

You have experienced a large scale battle or pitched combat. You can **push your luck** to engage a higher **tier** or **scale** foe on equal footing.

When you push your luck to activate this ability, you still get one of the normal benefits of pushing yourself (+1d, +1 effect) in addition to the milestone. You don't suffer reduced effect due to scale or the target's quality of gear, experience, or training.

Killer

You've killed someone. You may expend your **plot armor** to kill an NPC without rolling.

When you use this milestone, tick the plot armor box on your playbook sheet. Your plot armor is restored at the beginning of downtime. The GM may rule that you may need to resist a certain consequence before attempting this, depending on the target.

I Quit

You have left a job behind. **-1 resources**, **-1 status** with your employer, and you have **1** additional free **downtime action**.

This milestone is available to each playbook. If you find that your character becomes employed after taking this milestone, mark +1 resources, +1 status with your employer, and you have 1 less free downtime action.

Tough

You suffered a **calamity** during a fight. Your **load** limits are **1 load** higher. When you **resist** physical harm, take **+1d**.

This milestone is great if you want more options during a score, or want to pack lots of weapons and armour without attracting too much attention, and be more resilient during combat. With this milestone your light load limit is 4, and heavy is 7.

Nonlethal

You've caused significant collateral damage. When you fight with an improvised weapon, it counts as **fine quality**. When you finish a fight without killing anyone, mark **1 xp**.

Significant collateral damage could be dead people, massive property damage, or other forms of unintended harm. Selling out or selecting the plot twist calamity could get you this milestone.

Improvised weapons include everything from sports equipment, furniture, to your own body. Fine quality weapons give you increased effect when you use them to fight, and nullify the penalty you would get when fighting someone from a higher tier faction or with higher tier armor. To earn this xp you must have been involved in the fighting.

Merc Items

- **Fine rifle:** High quality assault rifle, sniper rifle, or shotgun. Illegal. *What makes this rifle unique?* **(2 load)**
- **Fine auto pistols:** Two high-tech or custom marked pistols. **(2 total, 1 load each)**
- **Fine melee weapon:** Sword, axe, collapsible baton, etc. *One of a kind or just the latest tech?* **(1 load)**
- **Armor-piercing ammunition:** Special ammo that can penetrate most targets. **(1 load)**
- **Combat exosuit:** Large powered suit of armor. Carries a few minutes of oxygen and can propel you in zero-G. Counts as additional armor, mark the second armor box when you use this as armor. **(3 load)**
- **Heavy ordnance:** Grenade launcher, flamethrower, rocket launcher. Very illegal. *Where did you even get this?* **(2 load)**
- **Security credentials:** Identification that shows your previous allegiances and grants you limited special access. *Is it still valid? Who did you work for?* **(0 load)**

Streamer

A charismatic content creator

Most folks don't know you—they know the idea of you. That's the problem with being a star in the constellation of Prime City. They see the you that's an actor, a reporter, an artist, and they assume you made it. They don't know the daily grind to pay the bills, the terror of becoming irrelevant, the constant churn of the hustle. But your art captivates people. You have a certain way with words, and sometimes words can be just as deadly as ammunition.

Starting Actions

■ □ Connect

■ ■ Spin

Example Starting Characters

If you have trouble coming up with a character or need some inspiration, you can use these examples.

New Blood

You have incredible skill and talent, but no audience. Maybe you'll become one of the established stars of Prime City, maybe you'll need to abandon your dreams for the sake of something else. This story starts promising, but it might not end that way. *What is your art? How will it change Prime City? Where do you perform in the community?*

Start with the **Artist** milestone and the **fine sample of art** item. Put two action dots in **Analyze**, one in **Hack**, and one in **Tinker**.

The Star

You're famous, but there's not a lot of room at the top of Prime City. Corporations will want you, other stars will want you to disappear, and neither of them take no for an answer. *Who do you work for? Who in the community knows the real you? Is this a tragedy about what you lost, or about how you gave back to the community?*

Start with the **Next Level** milestone and the **fine clothes** item. Put one more action rating in **Connect**, one in **Command**, and two in **Analyze**.

Starving Artist

You've got skill but no luck. You've tried so many times to make your own path, but have been rebuffed at every turn. This story doesn't start well for you. Is it about your lucky break, or abandoning your dream? *What is your dream? What are you willing to do to get there? Who keeps getting in your way?*

Start with the **I Quit** or **Day Job** milestones and the **personal 'Netspace** item. Put one action dot in **Move**, two in **Hack**, and one in **Analyze**.

Streamer Milestones

Artist

You are skilled at a specific form of art. Spend **2 luck** to roll your highest action rating while performing a different action.

Which art are you proficient in? Say how you adapt your creative skills to this use.

Day Job

You have an additional job selling art/creating content. At the end of each **downtime** phase mark **+2 resources** on the community sheet and mark a **level 1 condition** “tired.”

To get this milestone you must have an additional job where you attempt to sell art and/or stream on the 'Net. This will require a long-term project or other method to establish an audience and/or business.

Since these resources come at the end of downtime, after all downtime actions are resolved, you can't spend it on extra activities until your next downtime phase.

This condition can be resisted as normal.

I Quit

You have left a job behind. **-1 resources**, **-1 status** with your employer, and you have **1** additional free **downtime** action.

This milestone is available to each playbook. If you find that your character becomes employed after taking this milestone, mark +1 resources, +1 status with your employer, and you have 1 less free downtime action.

Next Level

You have established a large audience for your art. You can expend your **plot armour** to get a first meeting with another artist or influencer. Once per **downtime** phase you may include your fans to get **+1d** to a downtime roll.

These could be 'Net streamers, artists, celebrities, or similar personalities. Depending on the contact there may be other obstacles such as an inopportune time or place for the meeting, the GM will let you know. Just because you can get a first meeting doesn't mean you'll get more in the future.

When you use this milestone, tick the plot armor box on your playbook sheet. Your plot armor is restored at the beginning of downtime.

Whatever it Takes

You've suffered a **calamity**. When you **sell out**, you can get both **+1 effect** and **+1d** if you take **-1 status** with another faction. This is in addition to whatever consequence you suffer when you **sell out**.

This makes selling out a much more robust option for you. Say how what you do decreases your community's status with another faction.

Streamer Items

- **Fine Clothes:** An expensive outfit, or the costume of your alter-ego? *When worn this has (0 load) when carried or concealed this has (1 load).*
- **Fine Sample of Art:** A picture, piece of writing, album, or other prime example of your art. Nothing larger than a magazine. **(0 load)**
- **Hard Light™ Melee Weapon:** A handheld device with an activated blade made of concentrated light energy. **Potency** against most materials. Illegal. **(1 load)**
- **Mobile Streaming Rig:** A high-end streaming computer with a microphone, camera, and a high-speed wireless 'Net connection. Battery powered. Backpack included. **(2 load)**
- **Personal 'Netspace:** A semi-private corner of the 'Net where your fans hang out. **(0 load)**
- **Small Luxury Item:** Jewelry. A modestly loaded credit chip. A trinket made of a rare natural material. Tickets to an exclusive event. An expensive intoxicant. **(0 load)**
- **Stimulants:** Potent coffee or something else over the counter. Lets you temporarily ignore physical and mental exhaustion. Three uses. **(3 total, 0 load each)**

Synth

A radically augmented person

These days more and more people are replacing their flesh with metal and synthetics. You, however, are on a whole other level. Maybe there's nothing left of you made of meat. Maybe synths are common in Prime City, or maybe you're one of a kind and someone paid a lot of money to build you. At the end of the day doesn't matter what other people think. You're a synth, you can be whatever you want. Isn't that what it means to be human?

A Note on Synths

Synthetic persons or simulacrum are a common theme in cyberpunk stories, but their exact nature and relationship with people differs from story to story. In some stories they are indistinguishable from other humans, their true origins only revealed on close inspection or in moments where they release their superhuman abilities. In other stories they are made from plastic and metal, human in their reactions and behaviour, but treated as little more than tools by other humans. In some they are second-class citizens, in others they are just another kind of human.

If any player is playing a synth, have a conversation about synthetic people at your table. Add things to the taste menu as appropriate. It's important everyone knows how synths are generally treated and perceived in your version of Neon Black. This status quo doesn't have to represent what your characters think, but it helps everyone imagine the same world and have the same expectations.

Starting Actions

■ □ Move

■ ■ Sneak

Example Starting Characters

If you have trouble coming up with a character or need some inspiration, you can use these examples.

Self-Made

You built yourself. Maybe you were a HAUNT or a meat person, or something else, but this body is your creation. Is this a story of finding your perfect self, or helping others to do the same. *What is your design goal? What is left to do? Who or what is in your way?*

Start with the **Natural Chrome** milestone and the **fine dermal armor** or **fine human appearance** items. Put two action dots in **Tinker**, and two in **Connect**.

Escapee

Someone else built you or owned your labour. You've escaped them to forge your own destiny, but they are probably hunting you. *Who is hunting you? How did you escape? Who in the community knows you are on the run?*

Start with the **Active Ghost** milestone and the **light tinkering attachments** item. Put one more action rating in **Move**, one in **Analyze**, and two in **Assault**.

Hunted

Someone is attempting to kill or decommission you. In this story you start with nothing, and the future is uncertain. Will you find a new purpose, get your vengeance or wander forever? *Who is hunting you? Why? Who in the Community do you trust?*

Start with the **I Quit** milestone and the **extra shell** item. Put one action rating in **Spin**, one in **Assault**, one in **Hack**, and one in **Tinker**.

Synth Milestones

Active Ghost

You suffered a **calamity**. You may expend your **plot armor** to gain limited control of a machine for a few moments. You may spend **1 luck** for each additional feature: *it lasts a few minutes rather than moments—you gain total control of its functions—you maintain control of your body.*

You are aware of the advantages of having a synthetic consciousness. Linking to a machine with specific protections or it's own synthetic consciousness might require you to Hack or Tinker with it, or merely touch it. The GM will say what is required to use this ability on a machine.

If you spend additional luck, you can extend the effect for additional benefits, which may improve your position or effect for action rolls, depending on the circumstances, as usual.

When you use this milestone, tick the plot armor box on your playbook sheet. Your plot armor is restored at the beginning of downtime.

Synthetic Advantage

You have 2 or more pieces of installed cyberware. You may **push your luck** to perform a superhuman physical feat.

This means you have 2 pieces of cyberware in addition to your neural link.

When you push your luck to activate this ability, you still get one of the normal benefits of pushing yourself (+1d, +1 effect in addition to the milestone).

When you perform a superhuman physical feat you might force open a vault door with your bare hands, stop a speeding car, lift a huge weight, jump relatively safely from a skyscraper, etc.

I Quit

You have left a job behind. **-1 resources, -1 status** with your employer, and you have **1** additional free **downtime action**.

This milestone is available to each playbook. If you find that your character becomes employed after taking this milestone, mark +1 resources, +1 status with your employer, and you have 1 less free downtime action.

Natural Chrome

You know your creator or have discovered your origins. When you **get chrome**, take **+2d**.

To get this milestone you either have radically augmented yourself, or discovered the reason or faction who made you.

Networked Intelligence

You have 3 or more **bonds** with other synthetic beings. You can understand and communicate with artificial intelligences. When you lead a **group action** or **gather information**, take **+1d**.

These bonds can be with similar synths, HAUNTS, virtual intelligences, even artificial intelligences.

AI's are usually inscrutable and can communicate only indirectly through symbols and impressions at best. This milestone means you have bridged that gap, was that the intended goal or a side-effect? What does it look like when you communicate with artificial intelligences?

Synth Items

- **Fine Dermal Armour:** Thin non-kinetic plates that make you especially tough to kill. Resistant to small arms fire, impacts, and blades. Mark an armour box when used. **(0 load)**
- **Fine Human Appearance:** An especially striking appearance. *Is it meant to be attractive or perfectly nondescript? Does it change or is it always the same?* **(0 load)**
- **Extra Shell:** A synthetic body, similar to your own. With a Live Wire™ and a few minutes you can transfer your consciousness (or someone else's) into or out of this body. **(3 load)**
- **Light Climbing Attachments:** Micro filament rope, hard points with eye hooks screwed into your body, micro suction cups, and a grappling gun. **(1 load)**
- **Light Tinkering Attachments:** Handheld laser cutter powered by your body. Small powered tools embedded in your hands. Reinforced skin and synthetic bone for prying things open with your bare hands. **(1 load)**
- **Multi-Vision Eyes:** Allows the user to see in night vision, thermal vision, and electromagnetic field vision. **(0 load)**
- **'Net Armor:** Hardware that protects your mind and gear from viruses and harm encountered on the 'Net. Mark the 'Net armor box when you use this. **(1 load)**

Tech

A hardware designer and troubleshooter

If it spews bullets, light, or gas, you can make it. You're the person in the community everyone turns to when their computer or cyberware starts acting up. The 'Net may run through everything and everyone but eventually someone's going to need a way to connect to it. That's where you come in. Prime City is a dumping ground for scrap and good ideas. Get busy making something new or destroying everything else.

Starting Actions

- ■ Analyze
- □ Tinker

Example Starting Characters

If you have trouble coming up with a character or need some inspiration, you can use these examples.

Local Workshop

You have your own workshop in the community. Maybe it's an open space where folks come in to work on their projects, or your own private outfit where folks drop off their tech for repair. This is likely to be a story about losing everything you have right now, or defending it all from corporate greed. *Who is your favourite regular? What sort of reputation does your workshop have in the community? Which corporation wants to see you fail?*

Start with the **Workshop** milestone and the **fine tinkering tools** item. Put two action dots in **Hacking**, one more in **Tinker**, and one in **Sneak**.

Arsonist

You've destroyed a corporate asset. Was this an intended target, or collateral damage? Either way, the corpos are out for blood. *What did you destroy? Who is hunting you? Does this end with a clean getaway or the corporations finding their vengeance?*

Start with the **Pyrokinetics** milestone and the **improvised explosives** item. Put two action dots in **Assault** and two in **Move**.

Freelance Support

You have a reputation for helping folks with their tech problems. One day you just showed up and now you're a household name. Maybe no one knows the reason you came here, but something happened. This is a story about your past catching up with you. *What did you do to cause a calamity? Who do you help in the community? Who knows what you did?*

Start with the **Tech Support** milestone and the **spare parts** item. Put one more action dot in **Tinker**, two in **Connect**, and one in **Spin**.

Tech Milestones

Workshop

You have your own workshop in the community. When you **invent** or **craft** hardware, take **+1 result level**. You have one free **downtime action** to work on a **long-term project**.

Your free downtime action must be used on a long-term project, either yours or another player's (with their permission).

Pyrokinetics

You destroyed a significant corporate asset. When you trigger an explosive you may spend **1 luck** for each additional feature: *increase the **scale** of the explosion—the explosion is unusually quiet—other characters get **+1d** to **resist** consequences caused by the explosion.*

This milestone makes explosions you create more devastating, harder to notice, or gives bonus to resist collateral damage, conditions, and other consequences.

I Quit

You have left a job behind. **-1 resources**, **-1 status** with your employer, and you have **1** additional free **downtime action**.

*This milestone is available to each playbook. If you find that your character becomes employed after taking this milestone, mark **+1 resources**, **+1 status** with your employer, and you have **1** less free downtime action.*

Tech Support

You've suffered a **calamity**. When you **assist** someone over a great distance, they gain **1 luck**. You may expend your **plot armor** to **resist** something breaking as a consequence.

A great distance could be from another part of Prime City or when they are in an artificial reality like someone's dream and you are not.

When you use this milestone, tick the plot armor box on your playbook sheet and you resist the consequence entirely. Your plot armor is restored at the beginning of downtime.

Splicer

You've installed 3 pieces of cyberware. When you identify cyberware you also recall a hardware limitation or observe a failure in maintenance that can be exploited. When a PC comes to you to **get chrome**, they take **+1d**.

You may need to first identify prototype or experimental cyberware before making use of the first part of this milestone, either with a gather information roll, Analyze, or another relevant action.

Tech Items

- **Fine Tinkering Tools:** High quality tools to fix or break things. A versatile custom multi-tool, small power tools. **(2 load)**
- **Fine Chip Ripper:** Handheld device with several tiny articulated arms. Can efficiently remove implants without killing the user. Illegal. **(1 load)**
- **Electromagnetic Ammunition:** Ammo that is especially effective against machines and cyberware. Less effective against organic targets. **(1 load)**
- **Improvised Explosives:** Three fist-sized explosives that can be thrown or affixed to a target. Each has enough payload to destroy a small room. Includes a remote detonator with a range of a few blocks. Illegal. **(3 total, 1 load each)**
- **Small Drone:** Limited surveillance options, remote-controlled, could carry something small. **(0 load)**
- **Spare Parts:** Tape, wires, cables, and various inexpensive odds and ends you would need to fix something. **(1 load)**
- **Hard Light™ Saw:** A massive saw blade with several Hard Light™ emitters. Will cut through anything given enough time. Illegal. **(2 load)**

Scores

In Neon Black, we play to find out if a community can prosper in Prime City—and that prosperity depends upon their endeavors, which we call scores.

A score is a single operation with a particular goal: steal from a corporate executive's private account, hold a concert, smuggle someone out of Prime City, etc. Usually, a score will fall into one of two categories:

- An activity determined by your community's needs. This could be tied to a specific community contact listed on the community sheet, or the result of the inciting incident or even the need of an enemy/rival.
- A special mission or goal determined by the players (like getting upgrades or assets for your community, or finding a rare program your Decker is looking for, or forging an alliance with a faction).

A score can be long and involved or short and sweet. There might be lots of rolls and trouble, or just a few actions to resolve it. Play to find out what happens! A score doesn't need to fill one session of play every time. Let it be however long it needs to be.

The PCs can set up a new score by choosing a target (for example, by picking one from the faction list or one of the PC's employers), by approaching a potential client and asking for work, or by fulfilling a community need.

A score consists of a few key elements, detailed in this chapter: **planning and engagement**, **flashbacks**, and **teamwork**.

Planning & Engagement

Your characters spend time planning each score. They sit in a dive bar and review their tablets with screens full of interlinked rumours, stolen blueprints, and schematics. They may argue and bicker about the best approach, propose outrageous solutions, or call in long-standing favours.

But you, the players, don't have to worry about this potentially time-consuming phase of a score.

The characters take care of that, offscreen. All you have to do is choose what type of plan the characters have already made. There's no need to sweat all the little details and try to cover every eventuality ahead of time, the **engagement roll** will determine how much trouble you're in when the plan is put in motion. No plan is ever perfect. You can't account for everything.

This system assumes that there's always some unknown factors and trouble—major or minor—in every operation. Why play out a score if everything goes smoothly? You just have to make the best of it.

There are six different types of plans, each with a missing detail you need to provide (see the list below). To plan a score, simply choose the plan and supply the detail. Then the GM will cut to the action as the early moments of the score unfold.

- **Assault:** Do violence to a target. Detail: The point of attack.
- **Deception:** Lure, trick, or manipulate. Detail: The method of deception.
- **Infiltration:** Trespass unseen. Detail: The point of infiltration.
- **'Net:** Engage artificial entities, access protected areas of the 'Net. Detail: Access point.
- **Transport:** Carry cargo or people through danger. Detail: The route and means.
- **Social:** Negotiate, bargain, or persuade. Detail: The social connection.

The Detail

When you choose a plan, provide the key detail, like the point of attack, social connection, etc. If you don't know the detail, you can gather information and ask questions in order to discover it.

The main reason for this is to give the GM a jumping-off point for your plan. If you want to infiltrate the corporate headquarters, that's fine, but tell the GM the point of entry, so that they know how to set that first scene. If you're planning on deceiving someone, tell the GM what the deception is.

The detail is also an opportunity to bring in other members of the community. Could your friend the information broker give you a good route for smuggling these refugees? Perhaps your friend the assassin can give you a hint on a good point of attack for your assault? If necessary, make a **gather information** roll to establish what you know and move on to the score.

Item Loadouts

After the plan and detail are in place, each player chooses their character's load. This indicates how much stuff they're carrying on the operation. They don't have to select individual items—just the maximum amount they'll have access to during the action.

Engagement Roll

Once the players choose a plan and provide its detail, the GM cuts to the action—describing the scene as the characters engage their first obstacle. How is this established? The way the GM describes the starting situation impacts how complicated the job turns out to be. Rather

than expecting the GM to simply “get it right” each time, we use a dice roll instead. This is the **engagement roll**.

The engagement roll is a **fortune roll**, starting with **1d** for sheer luck. Modify the dice pool for major advantages or disadvantages.

Major Advantages/Disadvantages

- Is this score particularly bold or daring? Take **+1d**. Is the plan overly complex or contingent on many factors? Take **-1d**.
- Does the target of the job underestimate you or not perceive you as a threat? Take **+1d**. Is the target strongest against this approach or suspect you are after them? Take **-1d**.
- Is anyone in the community helping you with this score? Take **+1d**. Are any enemies or rivals interfering in the score? Take **-1d**.
- Are there any other elements that you want to consider? Maybe a lower-Tier target will give you **+1d**. Maybe a higher-Tier target will give you **-1d**. Maybe there's a situation in the district that makes the operation more or less tricky.

The **engagement roll** assumes the PCs are approaching the target as intelligently as they can, given the plan and detail they provided. We don't need to play out probing maneuvers, special precautions, or other ponderous non-action. The engagement roll covers it all. The PCs are already in action, facing the first obstacle—on top of the limousine, breaking into the vault, fighting the COPs, etc.

Don't make the engagement roll and then describe the PCs approaching the target. The engagement roll resolves the approach. Cut to the action resulting from that initial approach—to the first serious obstacle in their path.

The first obstacle of the armored limousine is getting in. The engagement roll puts the crew on top of the limo as the PCs cut into the vehicle's roof.

The PCs have all connected to the 'Net and are immediately confronted with a virtual wall of living static: corporate ICE.

Engagement Roll & Luck

The results of the engagement roll also give each PC **luck**, depending on the result. The amount of luck coincides with the position the PC's find themselves in as the score begins. A desperate position means the characters were unlucky, a controlled position means fate was on their side.

Each PC should mark luck on their character sheet based on the results below:

Engagement Roll Summary:

- 1d for sheer luck
- + 1d per **major advantage**
- - 1d per **major disadvantage**
- **CRIT**: Exceptional result. You've already overcome the first obstacle and you're in a controlled position for what's next. Each PC gains **5 luck**.
- **6**: Good result. You're in a controlled position when the action starts. Each PC gains **3 luck**.
- **4/5**: Mixed result. You're in a risky position when the action starts. Each PC gains **2 luck**.
- **1-3**: Bad result. You're in a desperate position when the action starts. Each PC gains **1 luck**.

If the players want a special preparation or clever setup, they can use flashbacks during the score. This takes some getting used to. Players may balk, worried that you're skipping over important things they want to do. But jumping straight to the action is much more effective once you get used to it. When they see the situation they're in, their "planning" in flashbacks will be focused and useful, rather than speculations on circumstances that might not even happen.

Outcomes

The outcome of the **engagement roll** determines the position for the PCs' initial actions when we cut to the score in progress. A **1-3** means a desperate position. A **4/5** is a risky position. A **6** is a controlled position. A **critical** carries the action past the initial obstacle, deeper into the action of the job.

No matter how outmatched you are, a desperate position is the worst that can result from the plan + detail + engagement process. Planning matters, but doesn't call for lots of nitpicking. If you're reckless and take your chances, you can't get too badly burned. Plus, you might want those desperate rolls to generate more xp for the PCs, to help bootstrap starting characters into advancement.

After the roll, use the details of the target to paint a picture of the PCs' position. Use this to show how the PCs' enemies are dangerous and capable—don't characterize a bad roll as a failure by the PCs, or they won't trust the technique in the future. Sure, things start out desperate against the corporate goons, but you're just the type of characters who are daring enough to take them on. Let's get to it.

How Long Does it Last?

The engagement roll determines the starting position for the PCs' actions. How long does that hold? Does the situation stay desperate? No. Once the initial actions have been resolved, you follow the normal process for establishing position for the rest of the rolls during the job. The

engagement roll is a quick shorthand to kick things off and get the action started—it doesn't have any impact after that.

Linked Plans

Sometimes a score seems to call for a couple of plans linked together. A common scenario is a team that wants a two-pronged approach. "You create a diversion at the bar, and when they send the COPs over there, we'll break into the warehouse." There are two ways to handle this:

1. The diversion is a setup action that a community member performs as part of the plan. A successful setup action can improve position for teammates (possibly offsetting a bad engagement roll) or give increased effect. An unsuccessful setup might cause trouble for the second part of the plan—an easy consequence is to give the engagement roll -1d. If it makes sense, the team member who performed the setup can drift back into the main operation and join the team later so they don't have to sit out and wait.
2. The diversion is its own plan, engagement, and score, whose outcome creates the opportunity for a future plan. Use this option when the first part of the plan is required for the next part to happen at all. For example, you might execute a stealth plan to steal vault codes from a Ziggurat office, then later use those codes in an infiltration plan to steal a prototype weapon. In this case, you go into downtime (and payoff, heat, etc.) after the first part of the plan, as normal.

Either approach is fine. It's usually a question of interest. Is the linked plan interesting enough on its own to play out moment by moment? Is it required for the second plan to make sense? If so, make it a separate operation. If not, just use a setup action.

Flashbacks

The rules don't distinguish between actions performed in the present and those performed in the past. When a score is underway, you can invoke a flashback to take an action in the past that impacts your current situation.

The GM sets a stress cost when you activate a flashback action.

- **0 Luck:** An ordinary action for which you had an easy opportunity. *The Merc **Connected** with her friend to agree to arrive at the bank ahead of time and suddenly spring out as a surprise ally.*
- **1 Luck:** A complex action or unlikely opportunity. *The Synth **Sneaked** their autopistol into a hiding spot in the bank's washrooms to be on hand after they went through the metal detector.*
- **2 (or more) Luck:** An elaborate action that involved special opportunities or contingencies. *The Fixer has already met the former owner of the bank and learned*

who its architect was—an architect that can be compelled to reveal the location of the hidden vault.

After the luck cost is paid, a flashback action is handled like any other action. Sometimes it entails an **action roll**, because there's danger or trouble involved. Sometimes a flashback entails a fortune roll, because we need to find out how well it went (or long it lasted, etc.). Sometimes a flashback won't require a roll at all.

If a flashback involves a downtime activity, pay **1 resource** for it instead of luck.

One of the best uses for a flashback is when the engagement roll goes badly. After the GM describes the trouble you're in, call for a flashback to a special preparation you made, "just in case" something went wrong. This way, your "flashback planning" will be focused on the problems that do happen, not the problems that might happen.

Limits of Flashbacks

A flashback isn't time travel. It can't "undo" something that just occurred. For instance, if a Storm-Ex security manager confronts you about recent contraband smuggled into Prime City when you're at the famous celebrity's party, you can't call for a flashback to assassinate her the night before. She's here now, questioning you—that's established in the fiction. But you could call for a flashback to show you intentionally tipped her off so she would confront you at the party—and use that opportunity to impress the celebrity with your aplomb and fearlessness.

Giving up on a Score

When you give up on a failed score, you go into **downtime**. Follow the phases for downtime presented in the next chapter. You'll usually have zero **payoff**, since you didn't accomplish anything (or you managed to grab something to sell of appropriate value, the story may be different). You'll still face **heat** and select a downtime scene as usual.

Teamwork

Teamwork Actions

When the PCs work together, the characters have access to four special teamwork maneuvers. The four maneuvers are:

- **Assist** another PC who is rolling an action.
- Lead a **group action**.
- **Set up** a character who will follow through on your action.
- **Protect** a teammate.

Assist

You can only assist a character if you have at least **1 bond** written about them. When you **assist** another player who's rolling, describe what your character does to help. Spend **luck** equal to the number of **bonds** you have written about them, and give them **+1d** per **bond** to their roll. You might also suffer any **consequences** that occur because of the roll, depending on the circumstances. For example if you assist a character and have **2 bonds** written about them on your character sheet, you spend **2 luck** and they get **+2d** to their roll.

Only one character may assist a given roll. If you really want to help and someone else is already assisting, consider performing a setup action instead.

A character may assist a group action, but only if they aren't taking part in it directly. The player assisting decides which character in the group action gets the bonus dice. You still need to have a bond with the character you are assisting.

Lead a Group Action

When you lead a **group action**, you coordinate multiple members of the team to tackle a problem together. Describe how your character leads the team in a coordinated effort. Do you bark orders, give subtle hand signals, or provide charismatic inspiration?

Each PC who's involved makes an **action roll** (using the same action) and the team counts **the single best result** as the overall effort for everyone who rolled. However, the character leading the group action spends **1 luck** for each PC that rolled **1-3** as their best result (including the PC leading the group action).

*This is how you do the "We all sneak into the building" scene. Everyone who wants to sneak in rolls their **Sneak** action, and the best result counts for the whole team. The leader suffers stress for everyone who does poorly. It's tough covering for the stragglers.*

The group action result covers everyone who rolled. If you don't roll, your character doesn't get the effects of the action.

Your character doesn't have to be especially skilled at the action at hand in order to lead a group action. This maneuver is about leadership, not necessarily about ability.

You can also lead a group of NPCs (if you have say a squad of mercs at your command, or need to corral some passengers). Roll **Command** if you direct their efforts, or roll the appropriate action rating if you participate alongside them. The NPCs roll their **quality level**, usually the community's **tier** if they are members of your community, or their faction tier.

Unless there's a specific named character, a group of contractors or passengers should all be handled with one quality roll (you don't need to roll for each individually).

Setup

When you perform a **setup** action, you have an indirect effect on an obstacle. If your action has its intended result, any member of the team who follows through on your maneuver gets **+1 effect level** or **improved position** for their roll. You choose the benefit, based on the nature of your setup action.

*This is how you do the “I’ll create a distraction” scene. You roll **Spin** to distract a guard with your charms, then any teammate who follows through with a **Sneak** action to sneak past him can get an improved position. It’s less risky since you’re drawing the guard’s attention away.*

This is a good way to contribute to an operation when you don't have a good rating in the action at hand. A clever setup action lets you help the team indirectly. Multiple follow-up actions may take advantage of your setup (including someone leading a group action) as long as it makes sense in the fiction.

Since a setup action can increase the effect of follow-up actions, it's also useful when the team is facing tough opposition that has advantages in **quality**, **scale**, and/or **potency**. Even if the PCs are reduced to zero effect due to disadvantages in a situation, the setup action provides a bonus that allows for limited effect.

*The PCs are helpless against a heavily armored vehicle that is bulletproof. Jerusalem uses **Assault** as a **setup** action to jam some explosives between armor plates and blow one off, giving follow-up actions +1 effect—going from zero to limited effect.*

Protect

You step in to face a consequence that one of your teammates would otherwise face. **You suffer it instead of them. You may roll to resist it as normal.** Describe how you intervene.

This is how you do the “I’ll dive in front of the bullet” move. You cover for a teammate, suffering any harm or consequences that still linger after you’ve rolled to resist. It hurts, costs you luck, and may leave you in a bad spot. But hey, you’re a hero.

Auren and Quanta are trying to escape corporate operatives, but one of the radically augmented corporate assassins has leapt onto the hood of their truck. Auren tries to Move the truck to shake the assassin off (risky/standard), but rolls a 3. The GM says that the assassin has hidden blades in their arms that pop out and stab through the truck’s engine and through the windshield, stabbing Auren in the chest. The GM gives Auren’s player two consequences, harm to the truck and a level 2 condition “stabbed.”

Quanta, a Streamer riding shotgun, wants to dive between Auren and the assassin and take the blow. Auren's player agrees and Quanta's player decides to resist the condition, rolls 2 dice for their prowess, and describes them taking the blow to the arm instead. They get a 4 and spend 2 luck.

The GM rules that the sudden motion and catching the blow on his shoulder rather than the chest reduces the condition to level 1 "cut arm." Quanta takes the blow and his character marks the reduced condition on their character sheet. Auren is unscathed but may want to also resist the harm to the truck so they can continue with the getaway.

NPCs and Teamwork

NPCs, such as community contacts, hired mercs, or people from friendly factions may also help the PC's with teamwork actions. When an NPC would need to make an action or fortune roll, the GM assembles a pool of dice based on their tier (either the community's tier or the faction tier, whichever is more appropriate). NPCs can only do this when performing an action they would be skilled in. For example, a hacker or programmer could **Analyze** or **Hack** data on the 'Net, but would not be much help in a gunfight. When an NPC could be involved in a teamwork action during the game, use these rules:

- **Assist:** An NPC may assist a PC if that PC has at least one **bond** written about that NPC. The PC or GM should describe what this NPC does to help the character's action. Remember, if the outcome of the action roll is a failure or mixed success, the NPC may also face consequences.
- **Group Action:** An NPC may participate in a group action. Use the NPC's community or faction tier when doing so. A PC may also lead a group of NPCs by making a **Command** roll.
- **Setup:** NPC's may perform the setup action, or take advantage of improved position or effect from a previous setup action. Use the NPC's community or faction tier when doing so.
- **Protect:** An NPC may protect a PC or another NPC. An NPC will likely only do so if a PC has a **bond** written about them or they are the type of character who would sacrifice themselves. When an NPC protects someone, the GM marks 1 or 2 harm for them, depending on the position.

A Note About Taking Turns and Initiative

Many RPGs have systems of initiative, a way for PCs and NPCs to take turns when a fight breaks out or when things get very tense and we want time to slow down and make sure everyone gets a say. Neon Black does not have an initiative system, there is no mechanical way for everyone to take turns.

During scores the characters will get into shoot-outs and arguments. They will square off against nefarious corporate ICE and inscrutable artificial intelligences, and sneak past the COPs. When the action picks up, remember to **write the story together**. Make sure everyone gets a say in the moment. **Be a fan of the characters**, suggest who could help and who might react to something that just happened. Keep the action moving around the table. Not everyone needs to react or participate in every action, maybe this is when the Decker finally stands up to defend someone, or maybe they're hiding in the background. Follow the fiction.

Example Score: Panic at the Punk Show

Folks from The 55 are doing a score for the White Rabbit faction. The community has developed few allies over their story so far, and a crew of hackers feels like some good friends to have.

Michael, the GM, looks up the White Rabbit faction in the rulebook and describes a short meeting between the three players' characters and Cereal, a loudmouthed member of White Rabbit. Michael plays the role of Cereal as the four characters negotiate a score. Cereal wants them to kidnap Heir Halbrech, a member of Drayton Software who has developed lethal balck ICE that has already killed some of their members. Halbrech is far too careful on the 'Net for White Rabbit to hack them. Michael looks at the faction sheet and sees that the crew have a +2 status with Hacksaw Coil and thinks of a fun twist for the score.

"Here's the thing," says Michael as Cereal, "this Halbrech motherfukcer loves punk music, real into that Hacksaw Coil guy. We know he'll be at the concert tomorrow. Might be a good time to... you know." The players agree that this sounds like a fun opportunity to kidnap a rich asshole and make some friends.

Kyle, who plays the crew's decker Relay asks, "Hey, on top of the payment would you all mind helping us with a little something too? We get a uh, a project we're working on and could use some help." The community has been working on a long-term project to identify the anonymous source of a previous score and Kyle wants White Rabbit to assist them next time they work on it.

"Hmm, sounds like you want to haggle. What action are you using?" asks Michael.

*"Uhhh," Kyle looks at his character sheet. "Sounds like **Spin**, which I have 1 die in... hmm."*

Michael says, "I think not a lot can go wrong here, worst that happens is Cereal says no or gets offended. Also White Rabbit doesn't really know you, so I think you're at Controlled/Limited."

Lane plays the crew's Merc, Kiel. Lane says Kiel steps in and helps by being chummy with Cereal. "Not a big deal, just a favour for a favour. Sounds like you really want this Heir

*Halbrech, right?" Lane's character has a **bond** with Relay, so she will **assist** Relay's roll, and erase **1 luck** on Kiel's character sheet. Kyle thanks Lane for the assist and rolls the dice. Kyle gets a **6**, a success.*

"Nice," Michael says. "I think with Limited effect Cereal agrees but they aren't going to convince the rest of White Rabbit to help. Cereal will help you, and that's it."

Kyle nods, "I can live with that."

The Plan

*"So what's the **plan**?" Michael asks.*

Chet plays a synth, Paulo. Chet looks over the possible plans. "Maybe deception? Like, we can get close to this Heir guy if we pretend to be big Hacksaw Coil fans. Maybe drug him and take him away in the middle of a concert?" Chet looks to Michael the GM. "Hacksaw Coil's punk shows are like, big and chaotic, right?"

The community has an existing relationship with Hacksaw Coil and so Michael sees no reason why the player's characters wouldn't know the answer to this question. He says, "Oh yeah. The band basically takes over an intersection in the middle of downtown Prime City."

Kyle and Lane agree that this is a good plan.

*Michael asks, "What's the **missing detail**? Are you all pretending to be Hacksaw Coil megafans to get close to him and then get him out?"*

"Yeah, that sounds like it would be easy," says Chet. "Plus I'm sure we can get some merch and tickets from the band since they're friends with us." Michael agrees. The community has a +2 relationship with Hacksaw Coil. Free merch and tickets for three people seems reasonable.

Michael asks, "What's everyone's load going to be?" Lane and Chet both pick light load so they won't be conspicuous. Kyle decides on heavy just in case. Maybe he can pretend to be a member of Hacksaw's tech crew if things go bad.

The Engagement Roll

*"Alright," Michael says. "Time for the **engagement roll**." The players suck in air through their teeth and get a bit nervous. Michael consults the rules,*

"You start with one die for sheer luck." He places a die in front of him on the table.

"Is this plan particularly bold or daring?" The players look at each other.

Lane says, "We're kidnapping a corporate suit in the middle of a punk show, that sounds pretty daring." The other players agree. Michael adds another die to their pool.

"Is this job overly complex or contingent on many factors?" the players all shake their heads.

"Just gotta grab a dude and bring him to White Rabbit, sounds pretty simple," says Chet. Michael agrees and proceeds with the questions.

"Does the target of the job underestimate you or not perceive you as a threat? Heir Halbrech has never heard of you, so that's an easy extra die."

"Helps being the underdogs," says Kyle. Michael adds a third die to the pool.

"Is the target strongest against this approach or suspect that you are after them?"

"I don't think so," says Lane. "Didn't Cereal mention he was hard to hack, so wouldn't he be expecting someone to come after him that way?"

Michael nods, "Yeah, he isn't expecting something like this. Did any of your community contacts assist you with planning this job?"

"Yeah," says Chet, "Hacksaw hooking us up with merch and tickets." The players all nod and Michael adds a fourth die to the pool.

"Looking good for y'all so far. Okay, are any enemies or rivals interfering in the job? Uh, Kyle can you remind everyone who your enemy is?"

Kyle looks at the community sheet, "BRB, a robot. Something that's hunting me from the corporate city I came from." Kyle's Character suffered a calamity in a previous session and decided that a bounty-hunting robot showed up, a result of Relay's past indiscretions hacking on the 'Net.

"Oh no," says Chet.

"Yeah, I think being in a public space makes it real easy for BRB to potentially find you, I'm gonna take away a die." Michael removes a die from the pool, the crew is back down to 3 dice.

"Finally, are there any other elements that you want to consider?"

"Well it's in the middle of a big noisey punk show. That would help, right?" asks Chet.

“True,” says Michael. “But that also means a lot of potential witnesses. I say it’s a wash, no additional dice but you don’t lose any either. Okay, so you have 3 dice for the engagement roll. Who wants to seal your fate?”

Lane says, “Wasn’t this Chet’s idea? I think he should roll.”

Chet laughs, “Alright I’ll do it.” Chet picks up the 3 dice and rolls them...

At this point let’s illustrate what the job might look like with each result of the engagement roll. We’ll start with Desperate and then see how the initial action could change with Risky, Controlled, and a CRIT result.

Desperate

The result of Chet’s roll is two 3’s and a 1. The players all groan.

“Looks like you’re in a Desperate position to start, okay let me think about this.” Michael takes a moment to consider what a Desperate position would look like when the players cut to the action in progress. Chet excuses himself to get a stiff drink for what’s to come.

When the players are ready, Michael narrates the opening scene. “Alright, we see an elevated stage at the intersection of two streets in the middle of Prime City. People above in the Stacks are hanging out their windows with Hacksaw Coil banners. Hundreds of people are singing along and moshing beneath a small elevated stage with massive speakers and a scaffolding of lights. Part of what makes this Desperate is that Hacksaw has just started the last song of the concert, which means you don’t have much time before the crowd disperses and all these people stop being distracted.” Michael creates a 4 part clock called “Hacksaw’s Finale” and places it where all the players can see. “When that clock fills people might start to notice you, not to mention the COPs will be coming to break up the punk show. Also... who was going to be trying to convince Halbrech that you’re huge Hacksaw fans?”

Lane and Chet nervously raise their hands.

“Cool, another thing that makes this Desperate is that you see this big burly guy in a charcoal grey blazer that barely fits over his cyberarms eyeing you in the crowd. You can’t see Halbrech, but you’re pretty sure you’ve found his bodyguard.”

“Oh, terrific,” says Chet.

“So, what do you do?”

“I have an idea,” says Kyle. “I’d like Relay to have hacked the lights and the pyrotechnics that are on stage in order to create a distraction.”

“Cool, good idea,” says Michael. “Hacksaw Coil would totally have pyro at his show. Do you want Relay to be doing that now, or have you already done that to help out Paulo and Kiel?”

*“I think he’s already done it, so that’s a **flashback** right?”*

*“Yup!” says Michael. “It would be difficult to pull off but not impossible, especially since you all know Hacksaw and are wearing his merch. I’d say **1 luck** for this **flashback** to be in the right place and right time.”*

“Cool, so Relay can get to a computer and connect his deck to the system to get control of the system?”

*Michael nods, “You can certainly try, sounds like you want to **Hack**?”*

Kyle nods, “Yeah.”

“Okay. I’ll say time is still an issue but not as much since this is happening earlier. Also someone could see what you’re doing so I’ll say this is Risky. I don’t imagine Hacksaw Coil has great ‘Net security on their concert gear, certainly not ICE that you would need to worry about. However you need to login, find the systems and figure out how to work them to do what you want, that’s at least three things so I think the scale of the action counts against you for Limited effect.”

*“I’ll be using my fine custom deck,” Kyle marks **1 load** for the item on his playbook.*

“That will increase your effect to Standard.”

*“Awesome,” says Kyle. “I have 2 dice for **Hack**, I think I’ll **push my luck** since I really want this to work and take another die.” Kyle erases **2 luck** on his playbook for pushing his luck and rolls 3 dice. His highest result is a **5**.*

“Mixed success, okay. What does this look like when Relay hacks into the concert computer?”

“Uh, I think he just jacks in and it’s pretty easy. It’s mostly just looking the part and saying stuff like, ‘Oh, just making sure the lights are set right for the finale. You know how Hacksaw can be about his finales.’”

*Michael laughs, “Yeah, there’s probably a member of the crew who walks and passed and nods and says, ‘Yeah, fucking tell me about it.’ But you bet what you want, you now have control of the special effects and lights on stage through your deck. I think there’s a **complication** here that it just takes time. The system is a mess of files, like everything is on*

the desktop in nested files and it takes a while to find what you're looking for. So I'm going to tick this Hacksaw's Finale clock."

"Sounds good to me," says Kyle.

*"Cool, and did you want that to be a **setup** action? Like, since you've done this, once Paulo and Kiel do something you can give them a better position or effect by manipulating the lights and pyrotechnics?"*

"Yeah!"

"Awesome, so that happened. We cut back to the present moment. Hacksaw has started his last song. He screams "Prime City, wake up!" and starts to sing. Meanwhile what are Kiel and Paulo up to?"

Chet says, "So I think Paulo is going to go up to this muscle guy eyeing us and try to take up his attention by asking him about his cool cyberarms. I can use my fine human appearance to look totally innocent and non threatening so when Kiel grabs the target the bodyguard won't notice."

Michael nods, "Cool."

*"So I'm gonna use **Spin** by pretending to be really interested in his cyberarms and peppering him with questions."*

"Sounds like a Desperate position." says Michael. "Time is a factor again and this guy is being paid specifically to look for suspicious activity. He already had his eye on you. This would be Limited but with that fine human appearance that makes it Standard effect."

*"Gotcha. I'm rocking 1 die in **Spin**. I'd like to **sell out**. Anyone got any suggestions?"*

Michael says, "If you let me tick this clock again I'd say that counts."

Lane and Kyle exchange nervous looks.

*"Fuck it, that's why we have luck right? I'll take it." Michael fills in the Hacksaw's Finale clock so 2 of the 4 segments are filled. Chet rolls his 2 dice and gets two sixes, a **CRIT!** Everyone cheers and then marks **1 luck** on their character sheets.*

"These two are just having a real nerdy talk about synth parts in the middle of a punk show, hahah, awesome," says Chet.

*"You got a **CRIT**, which means you go from Standard to Great effect. What sort of additional benefit would you like?" asks Michael.*

"Could I figure out where the target is in the concert? Like when we're talking maybe he mentions his boss and looks in that direction and I like, I see Kiel in the crowd and tilt my head in that direction?"

"Ooo yeah," says Lane.

"Sounds good to me. Let's follow the action to Kiel. You see Paulo nodding towards a guy in a similar blazer with a vintage Hacksaw Coil shirt underneath. He's the oldest guy at the punk show and has one eye on his fancy smartphone."

Lane says, "So I know about Relay hacking the lights and pyro, right?"

"I can let you know through our smartphones," says Kyle. "They cost 0 load so it's an easy way to stay in touch."

"Cool," says Lane. "I think I'm just gonna come up behind this guy and choke him out once the distraction goes off. I have Non-Lethal as a milestone so I can just use my hands as fine weapons and knock him out, hopefully it'll be quick."

*Michale nods, "Sounds like **Assault** to me."*

Lane grins, "Yup."

"He's distracted but time is still pressing on you and there's a lot of witnesses. Plus this guy has some hidden cyberware that could mess you up. Let's say Risky/Standard with your milestone. And Relay, this is when your distraction goes off?"

"Yeah, I think we see Relay coming out from backstage with his custom deck. He presses a button and says something like... I dunno. "Showtime.""

Michael laughs. "Do you want to give Kiel a better position or effect? Right now they're at Risky/Standard."

"Hmm," Kyle thinks. "What would you like, Lane?"

"Uh, I think better effect. Might help us get out of here quicker."

"Alright, Great effect then," says Kyle.

Michaels nods. "Alright Kiel you're at Risky/Great. Are you gonna push your luck or sell out?"

"I'll **push my luck**." She erases **2 luck** on her character sheet. "That gives me 3 dice..." She rolls them and the highest result is a 5. "Mixed success."

"Okay," Michael says, "I know a **complication** I want to throw in later, but tell me what happens now and what additional benefit you get."

"I think Kiel is good at subduing people and leading them away very discreetly. They used to work corporate security for rich people off-world so I imagine she had to do this sort of maneuver before."

"Like dealing with fans who get too close around celebrities or something?" says Chet.

"Yeah," Lane nods. "Kiel just puts him in this intricate choke hold where they can still move him around and just walks through the crowd."

"Is that the additional benefit? You lead him away from the crowd without suspicion?"

"Yeah, is that okay?"

"Totally," says Michael. "The lights go crazy and the pyro goes off early thanks to Relay's hack and the crowd goes wild. No one sees you lead Halbrech away So what was the plan to get out of here?"

"Oh wait, is Stereo at the show?" asks Chet. Stereo is one of their community contacts in The 55. A smart car who is a huge fan of Hacksaw Coil.

"Oh for sure," says Michael.

"Maybe we tried to convince him to be our getaway?" asks Chet.

"They might not want to leave early though," says Lane. "Maybe if I promised them part of our pay. How much are we getting paid for this?" Michael looks at the factions involved. White Rabbit is tier III and Drayton Software is tier II.

"5 resources total."

"Let's say I told Stereo we'd pay them 2 resources worth of cash. Is that alright with you guys?"

Chet and Kyle both agree.

*"Would that be a **flashback**?" asks Lane.*

*Michael thinks about it. "It would be but it would be easy to talk to Stereo so it won't cost you luck. I don't think it's an action roll because Stereo wants to help and they're just as poor as you, they need the money. But it is a Hacksaw Coil show and it's in the middle of the finale. I'm gonna make a **fortune roll** to see if Stereo is willing to leave early. If not you'll have to convince them."*

*Michael assembles a pool of die for each major advantage or disadvantage in the situation. "Stereo is your friend, so that's 1 die. You promised them 2 resources which is significant for them so lets add 1 die per resource. However it's the big finale so I'll take a die away for that, which leaves 2 dice to decide whether Stereo is willing to leave right away." Michael rolls the dice and the highest result is a **6**. "Okay, yeah Stereo is waiting. As you gather to leave you see Stereo pull over with that garish leopard print interior ready for the getaway."*

The players cheer. "Good to see you Stereo," says Chet.

Michael puts on a monotone voice, "Nice to see you punks as well. Let's get out of here."

As they get ready to leave something happens. Stereo's wheels squeal but the van isn't moving. Michael describes one of the back doors tearing open to reveal a large robot with vice grip hands peering inside with red eyes.

"Relay, you immediately recognize the strange robot from that score where you had to pick a calamity. It's BRB."

"Oh shit," says Kyle.

*"This is the result of that mixed success you rolled earlier, Lane. You can **resist** this if you'd like."*

*"Ooph, yeah. What would that be, **Prowess**?"*

*Michael nods. "Yeah, BRB is physically holding you all down here unless you tell us what happens instead." Lane's character Kiel has 2 dice in **Prowess**, but her Merc also has the Tough milestones that lets them get **+1d** whenever they **resist** physical harm. Lane gathers 3 dice and rolls them. The highest result is a **4**.*

*"Alright, that means I erase **2 luck**, right? 6 stress minus the highest result" Michael nods and Lane erases **2 luck** from her sheet.*

“What happens instead?” asks Michael.

“I think Kiel spotted BRB earlier and just double-timed it out of there, got everyone to run faster so the robot couldn’t catch up to us.”

“Phew, good one,” says Kyle.

“Hell yeah, is that it?” asks Chet.

“I think so,” says Michael. “You got the target and got away clean. Job well done.”

Risky

A risky starting situation would not be as dangerous as the desperate one described above. Instead of multiple obstacles at once, perhaps Kiel and Paulo were only spotted by the bodyguard and there was still lots of time left in the concert. The GM could then introduce that clock as a complication later on.

Controlled

This is a relatively safe starting position so maybe the GM could have described each of the characters ready to enact the first part of their plan. Relay is ready backstage, and Paulo and Kiel are in the concert searching for the target. Both the bodyguard and Hacksaw’s Finale could be used as complications during the job.

CRIT

On a critical result the first obstacle is already dealt with and the crew is in a controlled position. There are a lot of options here. Perhaps Relay has already hacked into Hacksaw Coil’s network, or Paulo and Kiel have already met Heir Halbrech and are talking about how much they love Hacksaw Coil. Maybe we instead see a scene of the crew disposing of the unconscious bodyguard in a nearby alley, ready to find their target without worrying about any immediate back up.

Here are some questions to consider when you’re running similar jobs in Prime City:

- Heir Halbrech has undefined cyberware. What could it be and how could this complicate the job?
- What other security measures could the target have in place at the concert?
- Could the crew’s actions have damaged their relationship with Hacksaw Coil?
- Could there be other factions or community contacts present at the concert? How would that have complicated the job?

Downtime

After finishing a score (whether it's a success or failure), the characters have a chance to regroup and recover. This phase of the game is called **downtime**. Downtime is divided into four parts, which are resolved in order:

1. **Payoff**. The community receives resources if the PC's score was successful.
2. **Heat**. The character's actions may make ripples in Prime City, attracting attention and potentially some notoriety.
3. **Downtime scene**. We see what life is like in the community, or the far-reaching consequences of the player characters' actions
4. **Downtime Actions**. The PCs cut loose, work on long-term projects, recover from injuries, etc. After all downtime actions are resolved, the game returns to free play.

Downtime is a shift in tone for the game. Instead of doing dangerous work the characters can focus on their own personal goals and set scenes that bring the community to life. The downtime phase is a great time to better define the community members and their needs, and to illustrate through the story how **capitalism sucks** and **community rules**.

Payoff

Payoff

After a score, the PCs take stock of their income from the operation. A successful score generates **resources**.

- The community gets resources based on the **tier** of the faction they targeted, or the tier of the faction they were working for, whichever makes sense. Depending on what happened during the score, they may even earn both.
- The community gets **+1 resource** if the score addressed a community member's need. It is possible for multiple needs to be addressed during a single score, and if this is the case, mark additional +1 resource for each need fulfilled.

Record **resources** on the community sheet.

You can set the scene and play out a meeting with a client or patron who's paying the crew if there's something interesting to explore there. If not, just gloss over it and move onto **heat**.

GM, definitely don't screw around with the players when it comes to the payoff. Don't say that the client lied and there's no reward or they aren't willing to work with the community to provide resources. Or that the meeting for the payment is actually a trap. These types of

things are staples of cyberpunk fiction, but the PCs have enough problems coming at them from every direction already. When it comes to getting paid, just give them what they earned.

Every score also affects the crew's relationship with other factions. Those benefited by the scores usually grant improved relationships, while those that are hurt have their status adjusted downward. How quickly you can gain the trust or ire of the factions of prime City is up to your group to decide. Usually factions that are harmed by a job may decrease their status with the crew by -1 or even -2, while factions benefited might increase by +1.

Heat

Prime City is full of prying eyes, surveillance, and informants. Anything you do might be witnessed. To reflect this, your community acquires **heat** as they do scores. This represents how much the people and factions of Prime City take notice of the community, and how your enemies take actions against you.

After a score, your community takes **heat** according to how the score played out:

- **0 Heat:** Completely quiet; others blamed.
- **1 Heat:** Smooth and quiet; low exposure.
- **2 Heat:** Contained; standard exposure.
- **4 Heat:** Loud and chaotic; high exposure.
- **6 Heat:** Wild; devastating exposure.

There are certain actions and items that garner additional attention from Prime City. Add the following **heat** after a score, or if they occur at any point during play:

- **+1 Heat:** Public use of firearms. Stolen corporate products.
- **+2 Heat:** Massive property damage. Illegal items used.
- **+3 Heat:** Destroying or stealing notable corporate assets (AI's, proprietary tech, VIPs, etc.)
- **+3 Heat:** One or more factions are hostile (-3 status) with the community.
- **+5 Heat:** Dead rich people (corporate officers, celebrities, oligarchs, etc.)

You mark **heat** on the community sheet.

Notoriety

When your **heat** reaches 8 you gain a level of **notoriety** and clear your **heat** (any excess **heat** "rolls over," so if your **heat** was 7 and you took 4 **heat**, you'd reset with 3 **heat** marked). The higher your **notoriety**, the more severe entanglements & blowback becomes. A lower notoriety means you'll just have more community needs to fulfill or to look after existing community

members. A higher notoriety means it is more likely that factions you have wrong will interfere with the community or exact vengeance upon you.

Clearing Heat & Notoriety

Stealing and foiling the plans of the various corporations of Prime City will eventually catch up with the community. To clear **heat** characters can **reduce heat**. See the **reduce heat** downtime scene for more details.

To clear levels of **notoriety** requires a little bit more effort and risk. If an enemy or rival's need is ever met, you clear 1 level of notoriety. But you can also be proactive about clearing notoriety.

One possibility is to target the offending faction or their competition with a score. This could be an offer to get something the faction wants in exchange for clearing reducing notoriety, or a score where you threaten the faction or steal whatever evidence they have on you.

Alternatively, you can always offer someone up to take the fall for the community. This will always reduce the community's **notoriety** by 1 and clear all **heat**. What will happen to that person varies depending on the faction but the length of the sentence is always the same:

Notoriety 0: A few weeks

Notoriety 1: A few months

Notoriety 2: A few years

Notoriety 3: Several years

Notoriety 4: Life sentence or execution

Ziggurat

The Ziggurat megacorporation has the Corporate Order Police as a subsidiary company, who are in charge of enforcing the corporate laws of Prime City. When they capture someone or when you hand someone over they're likely to just beat them up if their sentence is light (notoriety 0-1). They inflict a **level 3 condition** which cannot be resisted (they keep beating you until it sticks).

For longer sentences the COPs have an arrangement with the Ishram Entertainment megacorporation.

Ishram Entertainment

When Ishram captures someone or when you hand someone over they are sent to The Tank, a company and facility that processes data produced by three linked artificial intelligences. Criminals sent here are kept in a secure facility where they are plugged into a computer system via their neural link (if they do not have one they are installed with one, and are

expected to pay back the cost) to process data. There they are kept in a perpetual dream-like state until their time is served.

Storm-Ex

The Storm-Ex megacorporation manages a diverse portfolio of subsidiary companies and projects in Prime City. Those captured or handed over to them will likely be put to work as forced labour. They may work in the factories of Zephyr Automotive or the farms of AgriCorp. They may box orders for shipping in the product fulfillment centers of MeloMart, or perform dangerous work building or repairing the infrastructure of Prime City for Prime City Operations.

The Underground

The various underground factions of Prime City aren't always as violent or heartless as the megacorporations. They want to help the communities of Prime City and fight back against corporate dominance. That said, they won't go easy on you. When they capture you or you hand someone over their methods will vary.

If they hate you, they might just hand you over to the COPs. Or they might have a very dangerous job for you to do. You could have your brain plugged into one of the Baza Syndicate's hacker farms, do acts of penance with the Mendicants for the length of your sentence, or give up your cyberware to the Guillotines.

GM, be creative with the ways the factions get the crew to reduce their notoriety. Look to the community contacts and the character's employers for ideas. If a character used to be a programmer, maybe the faction has a project that could use their expertise. If they have experience stealing things maybe there's an underground faction that has something they want that is "impossible" to steal.

Downtime Scenes

Before each PC undertakes their own individual downtime actions, all the players at the table select one of the following downtime scenes. These represent specific moments that occur in the story of your game. They introduce new characters, mark specific moments in time, and help illustrate the community and the growing stakes of your game of Neon Black.

Each scene has a name and a general description of what will happen when you select it. All the players create each scene by answering six questions (*details and inspiration are listed after each question in italics*). Each player including the GM can contribute answers, and each player can role-play the scene from the perspective of their characters or other NPCs. Sometimes these will be short and sweet, other times they will be involved and may even

require some action rolls. Each scene also has a mechanical component once it is resolved that will be reflected on the character or community sheets.

These scenes help you set and manage the tone and pacing of your game. If the players just had a high intensity score with a lot of setbacks, maybe that's a good time to for **Cut Loose**, **Day in the Life**, or **New Year 2200**. If the players just destroyed a corporate asset or gained a level of **notoriety**, that's a good time to select **Executive Meeting**, **COPs**, or **Gemini** to show how the corporations will defend themselves. They are listed below in a default timeline that mixes positive scenes with intense scenes, but don't assume they all have to be in this order. Mix and match, talk about what would be interesting right now. Remember to **write the story together**.

The consequences of these scenes manifest fully before the PCs have a chance to avoid them. When the COPs arrive, or the corporate scheme is enacted, describe the situation after it has manifested. The PCs deal with it from that point—they can't intercept it and defuse it before it happens. The purpose of these scenes is to abstract the complex stuff happening in the city and the background of the community.

When you complete a scene, write it on the Community Sheet and cross it off to show that it has been used. Downtime scenes are not repeated. When you run out of downtime scenes, feel free to skip this phase of downtime and let the players select their downtime actions, or use the scenes as inspiration to create your own or inspire how you role-play your downtime actions. Completing each downtime scene might also be a good time to wrap up your game of Neon Black.

If the available scenes don't fit with your story of Neon Black, for example if the Gemini faction no longer exists, feel free to cross them out or reimagine the scene as you see fit.

Players may interject to perform downtime actions during the scene, if they have an appropriate moment and can tie it into the fiction. Players may also pursue their downtime actions once the scene is wrapped up and the story has moved on.

Day in the Life

Introduce a new NPC

There are likely more people in your community than will ever be named on the community sheet. Some people have been here long before you, some will be here after you're gone. This scene gives us a chance to bring one of these NPCs to life, and see the player character's through their eyes.

When you select this downtime scene, answer the following questions as a group by role-playing scenes or describing what is happening. One player takes on the role of the NPC. Give the NPC a name and some traits to begin, this will help you frame the scenes and answer the questions.

- Where in the community do they live? *Remember to **show the disparity, and make it neon.***
- What is their morning routine like?
- How is their day interrupted by one or more of the player characters? *Be a nuisance, care too much, be thoughtless. None of your characters are perfect.*
- What is a daily challenge in their life, created by the corporations who run Prime City? *Write this down as their need. Show specifically what it looks like.*
- Where do they work, or how do they spend their day? *Remember, **capitalism sucks.***
- At the end of the day they seek out one of the player characters. Why? *This could be to address a need, get back at them for the early nuisance, or just space to hang out. Remember, **community rules.***

After this scene ends add this NPC as a community contact on the community sheet. Their need is incomplete. Are the PCs already in a position to help with their next score or a long-term project, or has their need gone unnoticed?

The Pledge

Introduce a brand new member of the community

Someone just moved in. Maybe they're on the run. Maybe they used to live someplace a whole lot richer. Whatever the reason, they're here now, with troubles all their own. How receptive is your community to new people? What's the process? Who notices and who just goes about their day?

When you select this downtime scene, answer the following questions as a group by role-playing scenes or describing what is happening. One player takes on the role of the NPC. Give the NPC a name and some traits to begin, this will help you frame the scenes and answer the questions.

- How do they arrive and what did they bring with them? *Luggage? Several vans full of clothes? Just the clothes on their back?*
- What is their first reaction when they see the community?
- What sort of ritual must they partake in to officially become a member? *This could be something banal and formal like ID registration, a guided tour, or navigating a bureaucracy, or something much more personal like a party, an oath, or religious ceremony. Remember, **community rules**. Use your community's descriptors to inspire you.*
- Where do they stay in the community? *What does it look like? Remember, **show the disparity, and make it neon**.*
- What is a daily challenge that has followed them here, created by the corporations who run Prime City? *Write this down as their need. Show specifically what it looks like.*
- How do the player character witness this need? *Do they stumble into each other unexpectedly? Is the need hard to miss? Does the NPC seek them out?*

After this scene ends add this NPC as a community contact on the community sheet. Their need is incomplete. Are the PCs already in a position to help with their next score or a long-term project, or has their need gone unnoticed?

Bills

Show the needs created by capitalism

You can't ignore them forever. Rent, 'Net fees, food, clothes, it all costs cash and there never seems to be enough to go around. Even if all the PCs have employment, other members of the community aren't so lucky. They'll need your help to get by and address their needs before time runs out.

When you select this downtime scene, answer the following questions as a group by role-playing scenes or describing what is happening. Players may take on the roles of their characters or NPCs.

- What essential things do you struggle to afford or constantly put off? *Rent, food, electricity, medicine, 'Net service, phone service, subscriptions, caring for loved ones, new clothes, indulging in vices, etc. Just because you are employed doesn't mean you can make ends meet.*
- What happens as a result of you missing these payments? *Does something get shut off? Do corporate collection agents come calling? Do you or someone else get sick?*
- How does the community assist you with these expenses? *This could be due to someone's generosity, ingenuity, or role in the community. Remember, **community rules.***
- Which member of the community comes to one or more of the PCs needing extra resources to get by? *This could be any community member, not just those with outstanding needs.*
- What do you have to sacrifice for a while as a result of these expenses? *Do you stop visiting your favourite food cart? Slower 'Net connection? No phone? Instant noodles?*
- A community contact's need has become critical, who is it and what happened? *If all the community contact's needs are fulfilled, then you may skip this question.*

After this scene ends, circle or mark a community contact's need to show it is critical. Their need must be fulfilled immediately or they will leave the community. "Immediately" should feel inconvenient and dire. It may need to be fulfilled right now, during this downtime phase, or during the community's next score.

Walk-Out

An anti-corporate demonstration gets ugly

Folks in Prime City aren't happy with the way things are, and sometimes they flood the streets to say so. We all know, in some mammalian way, despite the advertising and the moving goalposts of capitalism, that life isn't supposed to be this way. And so today the Stacks empty into the streets so everyone can be reminded. It won't be pretty, but these fights never are.

When you select this downtime scene, answer the following questions as a group by role-playing scenes or describing what is happening. Players may take on the roles of their characters or NPCs.

- What specific event inspired the people to protest?
- Who helps organize? *This could be the PCs and other members of the community, or folks from one of the underground factions. Show evidence of this at the demonstration.*
- Who else from the community turns up? *What friendly faces do you spot in the crowds?*
- How do the corporations make this violent? *Do the COPs show up and get aggressive? Do corporate agents start trying to drag people away? How many drones show up and what do they do? Which factions are involved? Remember, the **rich are villains** and **community rules**, this is never the protestor's fault.*
- Who do you save from the violence? *Describe how your character acts alone or works with the other PCs*
- Afterwards, what does each character see that inspires them? *Who is now making plans to turn up next time? Who is reconsidering their assumptions? Who is moved by what they saw?*

At the end of this scene each PC involved with the demonstration rolls dice equal to the community's tier. Each PC gains luck equal to their highest result.

COPs

The Corporate Order Police throw their weight around

Sooner or later, you're gonna have to tangle with the COPs. Doesn't matter if you're denizens of the City of Nod out in the Desert, or trying to survive in the Chariot, the COPs will eventually figure out what you're up to. If they don't, their corporate masters will, and they'll send the COPs to enforce corporate law, or just take people from your community. This scene will establish a new enemy, as well as immediate consequences as the COPs arrive in your community.

When you select this downtime scene, answer the following questions as a group by role-playing scenes or describing what is happening. The GM will take the role of at least one NPC, and the other players will play other NPCs as needed.

- The COPs are outside the community, how did they get here? *Are there a lot of them, or just a few? Are they in armored vans or nondescript flying cars?*
- Who is leading them? *Give them a name and a few descriptors.*
- What is their objective? *See below for some suggestions.*
- How do NPCs in the community react when they arrive? *Who hides? Who, if anyone, greets them? Does anyone go find the PCs?*
- How does each PC become aware that the COPs are here? *Do other community members get the word out, or were you already watching this scene unfold?*
- What happens when the PCs and COPs meet? *How tense is it? Do arrests start happening immediately? Do the COPs deliver an ultimatum? Do things escalate enough that action rolls are required?*

If they arrive in force their scale is equal to the community's current **notoriety**. The list below provides some examples of what they plan to do. If you're unsure which scheme to use, roll dice equal to the community's **notoriety** and match the highest result to this list:

1. Increased COP presence in the community's district
2. Arrest a community contact
3. Arrest a PC
4. Arrest multiple people in the community
5. COPs create checkpoints around the community, complete with physical searches. *God help you if they find anything illegal on you.*
6. Arrest everyone in the community

After this scene ends, add an enemy or rival to the community sheet. This should be the leader who instigated this plan, and their need is met when it is complete. This is a

consequence the PCs may have to deal with right now, or maybe their next score will have to be a prison break.

Memorial

Say goodbye to the dead

Death is only an inconvenience for the extravagantly wealthy, not people like you. Even in Prime City where the right piece of chrome can buy you a few more years, and corporate drugs can do the same for the right price. People in the community will die, it may happen quickly in your game, or after many sessions. Even if you protect everyone you can, time and entropy will come for the rest. This scene is to say goodbye to someone important to the player characters and the community, and to introduce a new community contact.

When you select this downtime scene, answer the following questions as a group by role-playing scenes or describing what is happening. Players may take on the roles of their characters or NPCs.

- Is this a somber memorial or an exuberant celebration of life?
- Who is in attendance?
- Who stands up to say a few words?
- Does anyone blame themselves for what happened? If so, why? *This doesn't need to make sense, grief isn't rational. Remember to **write the story together**.*
- A small revelation about the deceased is brought to light, what is it and how do the PCs react? *This could be an unlikely allegiance, an odd hobby, a secret from their past.*
- Someone who knew the deceased arrives at the end of the event, who are they? *Why do they know the deceased so well?*

After this scene ends add a community contact to the community sheet. Their need is incomplete. Are they looking for vengeance, justice, or to solve a mystery?

New Year 2200

Celebrate the new century

A new year has arrived and with it a chance for reflection, connections, and throwing an absolutely ridiculous rager. Will your character use this night as a chance to settle old conflicts, forge new bonds, and plan for the future, or will they lose themselves in vices, make excuses, and make all the same mistakes again?

When you select this downtime scene, answer the following questions as a group by role-playing scenes or describing what is happening. Players may take on the roles of their characters or NPCs.

- What sort of celebration(s) are happening in the community?
- What do the characters do to prepare? *Do they get dressed up? Plan a concert? Make food?*
- What do each of the PCs hope will happen in the new year? *Show us how they plan or communicate these wishes.*
- Something unexpected and surprising happens, what is it? *This could be something in the community or an act that changes Prime City. Perhaps an old friend arrives out of the blue, an old rivalry or grudge is healed, or a surprise announcement or revelation is made. Remember to **cut to the action**.*
- Where is everyone when the clocks strike midnight?
- Who, if anyone refrains from celebrating? What do they do instead?

At the end of this downtime phase each character rolls dice equal to the community's tier and gains luck equal to the highest value they rolled. Here's to a lucky one, punk.

Gemini

Prime City's infamous corporate agents are on the hunt

Well now you've done it. Wasn't enough to get the COPs knocking down your door, now two cybernetic assassins have you in their sights. Maybe it's obvious why they're after you, there's no way to survive in this city without pissing off someone with the money or connections to hire these two. Maybe it's a secret and you'll have to spend some time and resources figuring out who wants you and your community dead. Whatever the reason, best of luck punks. You're gonna need it.

When you select this downtime scene, answer the following questions as a group by role-playing scenes or describing what is happening. The GM will take the role of at least one NPC, and the other players will play their character other NPCs as needed.

- How do Gemini start their day? *Do they sip expensive coffee, emerge from their Lazarus beds, or do we see a montage of them prepping their gear? Consult the Gemini faction for details.*
- What do they already know about the community? *Do they exchange rumours? Do they have a dossier of information? Have they already compromised the community's network?*
- What is their primary objective? *Consider the player character's history with the corporate factions of Prime City. Who would be most vulnerable? Who has pissed off the wealthy and influential? Show what their plan is. Remember, **the rich are villains**.*
- How do they arrive at the community? *Do they move into an adjoining Stack? Hire a private space shuttle? Drop in from low earth orbit?*
- Who do they have in their sights? *This could be their primary target or just some collateral damage. It could be a player character, an NPC, or an important asset in the community.*
- Who notices what's happening the moment before they strike? *Who catches the light reflected from their sniper scopes? Who sees suspicious 'Net activity in the community network? Who spots the assassins on the street? This is your chance to make a resistance roll before things get bad.*

After this scene ends, add Gemini as an enemy to the community sheet. Their need is their primary objective as decided during the scene. This first attempt may be an opening gambit, after which Gemini quickly tries to retreat, or a full on assault, requiring action rolls and a whole lotta consequences before the PCs can even think of downtime actions.

The list below provides some examples of what Gemini might do. If you're unsure which applies, roll dice equal to the community's **notoriety** and match the highest result to this list:

1. Capture a member of the community
2. Upload a virus to the community 'Net
3. Destroy the community
4. Capture a player character
5. Assassinate a player character
6. Assassinate all the player characters

Cut Loose

Reset, unwind, live a little

It's time for an epic getaway. This could be a party, a concert, a day trip, or even hanging out in the 3D spaces of the 'Net. In this scene we can see what the PCs do to blow off steam and engage in stress-free hijinks. Lower tier communities will be confined to things they can reasonably afford, while higher tier communities could conceivably include several NPCs or undertake extended vacations.

You could even visit other parts of the solar system or engage in extended artificial reality experiences using the means available to the super wealthy. This may require a PC to make an action roll or to **engage in capitalism** to set up. If the player characters engage in behavior that is specifically tailored to the rich, like space cruise ships and corporate AR experiences, remember that **capitalism sucks** and the **rich are villains**. This doesn't mean that the PCs are expressly forbidden from undertaking these leisure activities, but it does mean they should be learning lessons and perhaps changing their perspectives afterwards.

When you select this downtime scene, answer the following questions as a group by role-playing scenes or describing what is happening. Players may take on the roles of their characters or NPCs.

- Who proposes the event, activity, or get away?
- Who's invited and who shows up anyway? *There's always someone.*
- What minor problem or inconvenience must be overcome before you can cut loose?
*Need spare parts and fuel for your van? Need to track someone down who is absent?
Need to convince the local punk rocker to show up to the gig?*
- How does each PC find peace, happiness, or fun? *Show us what that looks like.*
- What happens that jeopardizes the vibe and then who or what fixes it?
- What's it like the morning after? *Who cleans up or overindulged?*

At the end of this downtime phase each character rolls dice equal to the community's tier and gains luck equal to the highest value they rolled.

Allies

A faction reaches out with a tempting offer.

Your community isn't alone in Prime City. Other underground factions are trying to break free of the wage-slave grind, provide opportunities for people, and making the rich accountable for the world they live off of. Perhaps you've grown particularly close to one of these factions, or maybe one of them reaches out to you all, out of the blue, with a new score and an opportunity to become fast allies. Do you trust them? Do you all want the same thing? Is this risk worth the reward?

When you select this downtime scene, answer the following questions as a group by role-playing scenes or describing what is happening. The GM will take the role of at least one NPC, and the other players will play their characters or NPCs as needed.

- Which faction reaches out to the community? *This may be a faction you already have a positive faction status with, or a faction we haven't seen yet in your story. If you are already at +3 status with a faction, that's a good choice.*
- Who sends a message to the player characters, asking them to meet? *This could be an e-mail, text message, or something more elaborate or old fashioned.*
- Where does the meeting take place? *Is it in the community, somewhere under the faction's control, or some palace public or neutral?*
- Who shows up? *Do all the PCs attend, or only a few? Does the faction show up in force or just send a delegate or two?*
- What score does the faction ask the community to perform? *This should be dangerous and important to the faction making the offer, like stealing or destroying a large corporate asset. Look to the faction's description for possible ideas.*
- What does the faction offer the community if they succeed? *This should be a significant reward in keeping with the risk of the score. Payment in resources equal to the faction's tier plus the target's tier is a good example, but so is an asset, a favour, or helping with one or more community contact's needs.*

After this scene ends add a member of the faction as a community contact on the community sheet. Their need is incomplete. Their need is the completion of the job, and they'll expect the community to complete it in a timely manner. When the score is complete, mark the faction's status as +3.

If the community refuses the offer, add the faction NPC as a rival.

Executive Meeting

The rich plan their next move against you

Congratu-fucking-lations. Your community, either through reputation, rumour, or bad luck, has become an action item for some very powerful people. They're even having a meeting about it, conference room booked and everything. At the end of this scene they will inflict some sort of dire inconvenience on the citizens of the community, hire some assassins to deal with the PCs, or just burn your community to the ground.

When you select this downtime scene, answer the following questions as a group by role-playing scenes or describing what is happening. The GM will take the role of at least one NPC, and the other players will play other NPCs as needed.

- Which company is meeting? *Any corporate faction with a negative faction status is a good choice, especially if they were recently targeted by a score.*
- Where is the meeting and who is present? *Look at the company's faction details for possible NPCs and locations. Remember to **show the disparity and make it neon**.*
- How do the people present misrepresent or misunderstand the community? *What assumptions, biases, and rumours do they believe to be true? Show their ignorance and arrogance.*
- Do they target the community, a specific NPC, or the player characters? *Remember, **the rich are villains**.*
- Who do they send to do their dirty work? *If it's a lone operative their **tier** should be equal to the community's **notoriety**. If it's a group of people, their **scale** should be equal to the community's **notoriety**.*

When considering how the company enacts it's revenge, remember that other companies within the faction's megacorporation can assist with this scheme. The list below provides some examples of what this corporation might do. If you're unsure which applies, roll dice equal to the community's **notoriety** and match the highest result to this list:

1. Sever a much needed utility (power, water, 'Net connection, etc.)
2. Repossession of corporate products (hardware, cyberware, etc.)
3. Destroy an allied faction or assassinate one of their members
4. Hacking (disabling software, hardware, cyberware, etc.)
5. Automated drones have been sent to bulldoze/destroy the community in one week
6. Send a corporate agent (with tier equal to the community's notoriety) or a squad of goons (with scale equal to the community's notoriety) to attempt to kill the player characters.

After this scene ends, add an enemy or rival to the community sheet. If you decided on a group, write down whoever is leading them. Their need is to fulfill the goal the board arrived at during this meeting. The GM will insert them into the story at an appropriate moment, even during the current or future downtime phase. This should feel inconvenient and dire.

Downtime Scene Example - The Walk Out

Abe, Ben, Charlie, and Dina are playing Neon Black. They've been playing for a few sessions and they have a pretty good handle on who their characters are and what sort of cyberpunk story they want to tell. Abe plays a Merc named Torn, Ben plays a Fixer named Syd, and Charlie is playing a Decker who calls themselves Nikkon. Dina is the GM. They choose The 55 as their community.

Last session they helped a new community contact, a synth named Daryl who needed help escaping a Phace Augmentations R&D lab. It turned out they were using Daryl and other synths to test out new cyberware without their consent, using them as test subjects. The score went well, but as the result of a calamity, the Prime News Network turned up and the whole thing has become a huge story. As the downtime phase begins, they decide they want to use that to inspire their choice of downtime scene.

"So, that libration of synths from Phace Augmentations is all over the News," says Dina. "There's PR representatives from Phave trying to spin the story, but y'all made a lot of noise. There's interviews and like phone footage from folks around the factory who say what happened."

Abe asks, "Is it tied to us and The 55 specifically? Or is the attention more on the synths who escaped and their story?" Dina thinks for a moment.

"Well, you did get enough heat that you gained your first point of notoriety," she points at the community sheet. "So I think that means y'all are implicated. Maybe not specific names, but The 55 is definitely part of the story."

"I think I know what our downtime scene should be then," says Charlie. "The walk out."

Dina turns to the page in the Neon Black rules and reads the description aloud for the other players. They all agree that sounds like a perfect scene to follow what just happened.

Dina asks the first question on the list, "What specific event inspired the people to protest?"

Ben answers, "So it's the Phace Augmentations scandal, but I think it's also just, a general sense that people are sick of corporations treating synths and folks who need cyberware like tools."

Charlie agrees, "Yeah, that's sort of become a theme in our game."

"I think we see a lot of folks with cyberware protesting," adds Abe. "Just, so many people who didn't realize this was the cost of what they were buying."

Dina nods. "For sure. The next question is 'Who helps organize?'"

Ben chimes in, "I think Syd absolutely gets involved. But it's not like he wanted to, more like because he knows lots of people who can help with something like this. He is a Fixer after all."

"He becomes the go-between," suggests Charlie.

"Yeah, totally. He's managing calls to set up water delivery, medics, figuring out security."

"Any other characters involved in setting up? Do we think there's a particular faction involved?" Dina asks.

They consult their faction sheet.

"I think Nikkon would reach out on the 'Net to Dead Prompt," Charlie says. "They probably knew about this sort of thing and would be happy to help get the word out. I imagine seeing a lot of them in the crowd, lots of cyberware. They could also help run security. Walking along the perimeters, standing between the protestors and the COPs."

Everyone nods in agreement and Dina reads the next question. "Who else from the community turns up?"

"Ada!" everyone says at once, and laughs.

"Yeah if there's anything like a demonstration happening Ada is there."

"I can see her at the front of the march, like holding up part of a huge banner," says Abe.

"It just says 'FUCK PHACE'" adds Ben. They laugh and move on to the next question.

"How do the corporations make this violent?" Everyone takes a moment to consider this.

Be suggest, "I think it's drones. It kinda fits into this theme that the corporations want to automate everything they do. Just a bunch of large hiver drones with flashing lights, real loud and intimidating as they try to surround the protest."

Dina nods, "So that's the means, but how does it get violent?"

Charlie adds, "I think the march ends up at wherever the Phace Augmentations head office is. Like, at the base of the Ziggurat megacorporation headquarters. There's so many people that folks working there can't get in or out, and so they just order the COPs to start launching crowd control ordnance. Gas grenades, some kind of hollow ammunition that really hurts but doesn't kill?"

Everyone solemnly agrees that this is the sort of thing that would happen. Din says, "Who do you save from the violence."

Ben and Abe both say that their characters would make sure Ada is okay, as well as any other residents from the 55. If their community is implicated, they want to make sure no one is left behind for the COPs to interrogate. However...

"Hey," Charlie interjects. "Sorry but... is there a way that Nikkon and Dead Prompt could have prepared for this and hacked the drones?"

"Oh that's interesting, do you want to do a flashback?" Dina asks.

"Yeah!"

"Okay, let's take a detour into the freeplay phase for a little bit. So let me get this straight. You want to hack all the drones that showed up to the protest and what, shut them off?"

Charlie thinks it over. "I want to mess with their guidance systems, I imagine we see Nikkon just push a button on his deck when the drones get too close and they start flying into walls and off into the distance in random directions.

"I love it," Dina says. "So first we need to flashback to see you hacking into the Network. This is happening really soon after the last score so I think it would be difficult to find time to do this. I'm gonna say it costs you 2 luck."

Charlie erases 2 luck from her character sheet, "Sounds fair."

"And now you'll need to make an action roll. This is Desperate-No effect to start. Desperate because the COPs protect these things with lots of ICE, ICE that could hurt you and your equipment. No effect because you are outmatched by the target's tier, and the scale of what you are trying to do."

Charlie considers her options. "Syd had a bond with a member of Dead Prompt, could they help me with this?" Dina nods. "Okay, so that's 2 dice for my hack action rating, plus 1 die from my community contact."

She marks the lod for Nikkon's fine hacking deck. "I used my fine hacking deck, that gets me better effect, right?" Dina nods.

"Correct, so you're at Desperate-Limited now."

"And if I push myself," Charlie erases 2 more luck from the sheet, "I can increase that effect to standard?" Dina nods.

"Yup, you're at Desperate-Standard now."

Charlie grabs 3 dice and rolls. She gets a three and two sixes, a CRIT! Everyone cheers and Abe, Ben, and Charlie mark 1 luck on their character sheets. Charlie marks 1 XP on her sheet for doing something desperate.

"So you successfully hacked the drones and got great effect, what happens?" Dina asks.

"Well, I hacked the guidance systems so I think... wait, can the great effect be we not only hacked them but can just point them out to see and dump them there?" Dina nods.

"That sounds amazing. The COPs are going to be pissed but it's definitely possible."

Charlie narrates how just before things start to go bad, all the drones turn at once and head off in the direction of the ocean. The protestors cheer.

"Alright," Dina says, "Afterward, what does each character see that inspires them?"

Ben says, "Are we all just watching the news footage after a bunch of corporate boats out at sea trying and failing to fish out their drones?"

"Aww I really like that. We had all a hard few days so now we're just chilling and watching the fallout." The players agree that's how they end the scene.

"The last thing we do in this scene is to see how much luck we get," Dina says.

Dina takes up 2 dice since The 55 is at tier 2, and rolls them. She gets a five and a two, and adds 5 luck to her sheet.

The players then start planning their downtime actions.

Downtime Actions

Between scores your characters spend time as they like, attending to personal needs, their day jobs, etc. These are called **downtime actions**. During a **downtime** phase, each PC gets **one free downtime action**.

You may choose to do the same action more than once, and the characters may do these in any order. You can only attempt actions that you're in a position to accomplish. If an activity hinges on another action, resolve that action first. The actions you can perform during downtime are:

- **Craft:** Create hardware, software, or chemicals
- **Engage in Capitalism:** Buy corporate products or services
- **Get Chrome:** Get basic cyberware installed
- **Grind:** Work your job and get XP
- **Long-term Project:** Work on time intensive projects or long-term goals
- **Recover:** Clear conditions
- **Reduce Heat:** Clear heat from the community
- **Steal Assets:** Gain playbook items

Each PC can perform **1 downtime action for free** during the downtime phase. A PC can make time for more than the downtime actions they get for free, at a cost. **Each additional action costs 1 resource**. This reflects the time, connections, and money you drain while you're "off the clock" and not earning from your employer or another score. When you complete a new score, you reset and get your free actions once more.

Actions on the downtime list are limited; normal actions are not. During downtime, you can still go places, do things, make action rolls, gather information, talk with other characters, etc. In other words, only the specific scenes that are on the list are limited.

Downtime Roll

For any downtime action you will make a downtime roll. Downtime rolls are modified fortune rolls with specific outcomes and the ability to **assist**.

Each downtime roll will call for a specific trait, either a character's **action rating** or the community's **tier**.

Another player character may **assist** with a downtime roll following the normal assist rules. An NPC may also assist as normal.

You may also **push your luck** or **sell out** to get **+1d** during a downtime roll. You cannot get increased effect this way since the downtime roll does not use position and effect.

However, after a downtime roll you may spend **resources** to improve the result level. **Increase the result level by one for each resource spent.** So, a **1-3** result becomes a **4/5**, a **4/5** result becomes a **6**, and a **6** becomes a **critical**. When you spend a resource on a downtime roll, say what your character does to increase the effects of the roll. Do they pay credits, cash in a favour, or call on the help of a friendly faction?

Downtime Roll Summary:

- **1d per trait** (action rating or tier)
- **+1d** if you **push your luck** (spend **2 luck**) or **sell out**
- **+1d** if another character **assists** (they spend **luck** and give dice based on **bonds**)
- **+1 result level** for each **resource** spent

Craft

When you craft you create a piece of software, hardware, or chemical using the resources you have on hand in the community. This could be something that is in common use, a copy of a corporate design, or a brand new invention you have just devised. When you craft the player and GM exchange questions and answers to set the scene and specific what is being made and how.

Crafting Questions:

1. GM asks, **“What are you making and what does it do?”** Player answers.
2. Player asks, **“What’s the minimum quality level of this item?”** GM answers according to the magnitude of effects the item produces, or using existing examples.
3. GM asks, **“How does the community help you make this?”** Player answers by describing how they get supplies, tools, testing the item, etc.
4. Player asks, **“What drawback does this item have, if any?”** The GM answers by choosing one or more from the drawbacks list below, or by saying there are none.

When all the questions are answered and the scene has resolved, the player makes a downtime roll using an appropriate action rating (usually **Hack** or **Tinker**):

Crafting Downtime Roll

- **1d per action rating**
- NPCs and PC may **assist** as normal
- **+1d** if you **push your luck** or **sell out**
- **+1 result level** for each **resource** spent

- **CRIT:** You craft something with a quality level equal to the community's **tier +3**. All characters gain **1 luck**.
- **6:** You craft something with a quality level equal to the community's **tier +3**.
- **4/5:** You craft something with a quality level equal to the community's **tier +2**.
- **1-3:** You craft something with a quality level equal to the community's **tier +1**.

If the result of the roll shows that the character created an item below the minimum quality level required, that doesn't necessarily mean that the crafting action was a failure. It could mean the item has additional drawbacks, or is consumable (it will break or be destroyed immediately after use), or additional work needs to be done (another downtime action such as a long-term project). The player can also spend resources to increase the result level to get to the minimum quality level needed.

Drawbacks:

- **Complex:** You'll have to create it in multiple stages; the GM will tell you how many. One **downtime action** and roll is needed per stage.
- **Consumable:** This creation has a limited number of uses (all grenades, explosives, and drugs must have this drawback, usually one use). A single craft scene may make a few consumable items at once, but they're each consumed when used.
- **Illegal:** This creation doesn't go unnoticed by the factions of Prime City. Take additional **heat** if it's used any number of times on a job.
- **Rare:** This creation requires a rare item or material when it is crafted. You have to acquire it through another downtime action like a **long-term project** or **engaging in capitalism**, or as the target of a score.
- **Unreliable:** When you use the item, make a **fortune roll** (using its **quality**) to see how well it performs.
- **Volatile:** The item produces a dangerous or troublesome side effect for the user, specified by the GM. The side effect is a consequence, and may be **resisted**.

The Drugs, Hardware, and Software chapter details examples of common designs that could be crafted using this downtime scene, listing their quality level and drawbacks. Feel free to craft items from this list or use it as inspiration for your own inventions.

Mikey has noticed that the crew has been suffering a lot of stressful conditions lately: exhausted, drained, angry, furious, they're all piling up. He wants to make something that will help address these conditions during their scores. During downtime Mikey says he wants to craft something.

Nida the GM asks Mikey, "What are you making and what does it do?"

Mikey says, "Some sort of drug that can clear stress. What is the minimum quality level of this sort of item?"

Nida consults the magnitude chart. "Well, it affects 1 person, so that's 0, and those sorts of conditions tend to last a few hours, so that's 3. I'd say the minimum quality level is 3."

Mikey makes a note of that. Nida asks, "How does the community help you make this?"

Mikey thinks. "Well Zekiel is our local splicer, right? I know he does cyberware but maybe he has some supplies and a place that's sterile I could use?"

Nida agrees, "Yeah. He's probably working on his own pet project too."

Mikey says. "I love it. Like some tentacle arm or something. Totally impractical but it's like this art piece."

"Occasionally there's a crash as it randomly comes to life in the corner," Nida adds.

Mikey laughs and asks, "What drawbacks does this item have, if any?"

Nida says, "It's consumable, so when you make it you only make one dose."

Mikey makes a note, "Sounds fair."

Mikey takes up 2 dice for his character's tinker action rating. "Could I get another dice if I sell out by testing this new drug on myself?"

Nida nods, "Absolutely. Mark a level 1 condition "dizzy." Mikes marks the conditions and rolls 3 dice. The highest result is a 5. The community tier is 0, so that means the quality of the item is 2. Mike spends 1 resource from the community, saying his character spends some cash on extra supplies to help make the first dose."

Engage in Capitalism

It's always there. The siren song of corporate store fronts and online purchases. It's an awful system, but it works. You can buy almost anything in Prime City, and why wouldn't you? For just a few credits you can solve so many problems, and the problems that this system creates? Usually people don't have to think about them, but in Neon Black we make them explicit.

When you engage in capitalism you buy a product or service from a corporation. This downtime action does not cover buying used products, making something from existing items,

or acquiring something from an underground faction. The long-term project and crafting downtime actions handle those. This is capitalism, through and through. When you purchase something you spend community resources equal to the item's quality level or the level of service. Some examples of products and services that can be purchased are:

- A playbook item - 1 resource
- A fine playbook item - 2 resources
- Removing a condition - 1 resource per level of condition
- Perfectly installed basic cyberware - 1 resource
- Perfectly installed advanced cyberware - 2 resources
- Rare items or materials - 3 resources
- Most ground vehicles - 3 resources
- Most flying vehicles - 4 resources
- A permanent residence - 4 resources
- Most single person space vehicles - 4 resources

Anything greater than 4 resources cannot be purchased in Prime City, except by powerful and wealthy oligarchs. Consider instead a long-term project or a score to acquire what you are looking for.

The player and GM take turns asking and answering the following questions to establish this action:

1. GM asks, **"What do you wish to buy?"** Player answers.
2. Player asks, **"Where can I buy this and how much does it cost?"** The GM answers by setting the scene, then stating how many resources the player needs to spend. There is no haggling.

The player then spends the required number of resources. For each resource spent this way, the player must ask one of the following questions. The GM or other players volunteer one or more answers each.

- **"Who suffered to produce this?"**
- **"What precious resource is required to produce this?"**
- **"Who was forced to be part of this process?"**
- **"Who benefited the most from the resources spent?"**
- **"What did the person selling this product want to be doing with their time?"**

When the requisite number of questions have been asked and answered, the GM asks one final question:

- **“How does your character witness the answer to one of these questions?”** The player answers and describes the scene. The GM may play other NPCs who may be involved.

When this last question is answered and the scene has concluded, the character has successfully purchased their product or service.

Tory wants to get a sweet piece of chrome for her Merc, Lux. She states her character’s plans and Nida the GM asks her, “What do you wish to buy?”

“Advanced cyberware,” Tory answers. “Lux wants some cyberarms with hidden blades installed.” Nida looks at the Drugs, Hardware, & Software chapter and sees that cyberarms can grant up to 2 free load of weaponry and an extra action dot in Assault. Tory agrees that that is what Lux is after.

“Where can I buy this and how much does it cost?” Tory asks.

Nida says, “it will cost 2 resources. You find a Phace Augmentations cyberware clinic in one of the Fivespires. It’s clean, all polished steel and matte white. The company’s slogan ‘Who do you want to be today?’ float in a neon hologram above you as we see Lux looking at a pair of arms that look like they contain blades like a praying mantis’ claws.”

“Yeah,” Tory says, “We see Lux drooling over these things, and then I think a quick montage of shots of him going under, the surgery, then waking up with these brand new arms.” Tory spends 1 resource and looks at the questions under Engage in Capitalism.

“Who suffered to produce this?”

Nida answers, “Interspersed in this montage are shots of a Phace Augmentations factory on the outskirts of Prime City. It’s crowded and hot, and there’s a long line of young people working at disassembling old technology. Some of them have gloves but there’s not enough to go around. They strip small pieces of precious metal from microwaves and motherboards, and collect them in little bins to be melted down and turned into brand new cyberware.”

Tory spends the second resource and picks another question, “What did the person selling this want to be doing with their time?”

Mark, another player, chimes in. “As he’s paying, Lux catches the sales representative on her tablet. She’s touching up a portrait she painted a few weeks ago. She’s trying to build up a portfolio to start doing freelance gigs.”

Tory nods, "Lux is a bit of a lug head but I think he notices and is like, 'Hey, that's a cool drawing. You make that?'"

Mark decides to continue playing the sales rep. "Oh um, I'm so sorry sir. Is there anything else I can do for you?"

Tory says, "I think that's how Lux notices what's happening."

Nida nods and asks the last question, "How does your character witness the answer to one of these questions?"

Tory thinks and looks at Mark. "I'm guessing the smile is like, totally fake right? She's clearly not happy?"

Mark grins, "Yeah she's clearly just wanting to get back to her painting. If we could hear her thoughts she would be thinking, 'please just go so I can rescue part of this day.'"

"I think Lux notices at least a bit of that. He just nods and says. 'Good luck.' And there's like, a slight pause at the exit of the shop. A bit of buyer's remorse. But he's not there yet. He still sees arm blades and thinks, 'hell yes this is awesome.'"

Nida nods, "He's starting to realize that maybe it's not worth it. Maybe he could have found something else?"

Tory agrees and the story moves on to the next downtime action.

Get Chrome

To get ahead in Prime City you'll need chrome, augmentations, cybernetics, all collectively known as cyberware. To install cyberware you'll need a doctor willing and able to wire your nervous system to all that delicate machinery, and maybe some chrome you procured beforehand.

When you get chromed you get basic cyberware installed by someone in your community, or one of the PCs. Getting chromed always grants you basic cyberware, which comes with one benefit. If you want to get more advanced cyberware which grants 2 or 3 benefits, you'll need to acquire it first using a long-term project, engaging in capitalism, or a score.

Getting chromed can also clear a relevant condition. For example if you have the "burned hands" condition and get new cybernetic hands with hidden tools, then you can erase the burned hands condition.

When you get chromed, describe the cyberware you're getting installed and its features. Consult the Drugs, Hardware, and Software chapter for examples of different types of cyberware and their benefits. If an NPC is performing the surgery, roll dice equal to the community's tier. If another PC is performing the surgery, they roll dice equal to their tinker action rating. The result determines which complications arose, if any.

Remember you can spend **resources** to increase the **result level** of the roll. Getting chromed ain't cheap, and when it's your body on the line you better tip well.

Get Chrome Downtime Roll

- 1d per **tinker** action rating or community **tier**
 - NPCs and PC may **assist** as normal
 - +1d if you **push your luck** or **sell out**
 - +1 **result level** for each **resource** spent
-
- **CRIT:** The cyberware is successfully installed. You may also clear a relevant condition. All characters gain **1 luck**.
 - **6:** The cyberware is successfully installed. You may also clear a relevant condition.
 - **4/5:** There were some minor setbacks during the procedure. You mark a level 1 condition and/or another consequence occurs. You may also clear a relevant condition.
 - **1-3:** There were some major setbacks during the procedure. You mark a level 2 condition and/or another consequence occurs. You may also clear a relevant condition.

Feel free to use the crafting drawbacks as possible consequences. Any problems with cyberware could be solved with a long-term project, replacing the cyberware, or attempting to get chromed again.

If you face conditions or complications when you get chromed you can always **resist** as normal.

Derek's character DC burned both of his hands (level 2 condition) during the last score, and wants to get some new ones. DC is a DOC so he picks cyberhands from the book and the ability to store up to 2 free load worth of tools. This counts as basic cyberware so he writes it down on his character sheet.

Michael, the GM asks Derek, "Where in the community does DC go to get chromed up?"

Derek thinks about this. "We haven't seen a cyberware shop in the community, right? So this would be a good time to come up with one."

Michael agrees and looks at the other players. "Any ideas?"

Ashley, another player, says "I like the idea that it clearly used to be something else. Like they don't have the resources to renovate everything. Our community is still tier 0 so I think that makes sense."

"Like a ramen shop?" Michael suggests. All the players like that idea. Michael comes up with a name and some traits.

"We see DC making his way into the shop. There's faded posters of pork cutlets on the walls, and the kitchen has been partially converted into a clinic. Clean linoleum on the walls and bright, harsh, blinking fluorescent lights. The splicer's name is Aziz Temperance."

Derek adds, "And everyone calls him Temper."

Michael nods. "I like that. He's a big guy, wears a face mask when he's working and has a lot of cyberware. Both arms, one eye, his legs. He has an useless assistant, Johnny. That's why everyone calls him Temper, Aziz is always yelling at this guy."

Derek laughs. "Oh this will be perfect. DC walks in and is like, 'Temper! Good to see you. Johnny, figure out which end of the scalpel to hold yet?'"

"Temper laughs and says, 'No, but don't worry I won't let him anywhere near you my friend. What can I do for you?'"

"DC laughs and show him his bandaged hands, 'New hands!'"

Someone in the community is installing cyberware, which means Derek will be rolling 0 dice since the community is tier 0. "I'm alright with 0 dice," Derek says. "I'm curious to see what happens. Derek rolls a four and a six, and keeps the 4 because he has 0 dice he takes the lowest.

"So the surgery goes well but there's a complication," says Michael. "You get to clear that level 2 condition since your hands were replaced..."

Derek erases the condition and adds, "Oh, could it be just another condition? Like these hands are going to be an issue when he needs them the most?"

"Yeah sure," Michael says. "Write a new condition, unreliable cyberhands. We'll make a fortune roll next time you have to use them in a risky situation." Derek does so and the action is complete.

Grind

You spend time at your place of employment doing menial tasks and getting fucked over by management. It's boring, demeaning, and exhausting, but at least you get experience. **You can only perform this downtime action if your character is employed.**

The player and GM exchange questions and answers to establish the scene when your character works.

1. GM asks, **"Where do you work and how do you get there?"** Player answers by describing their commute and setting the scene of their place of work.
2. Players asks, **"What demands are made of me by management or customers?"** GM answers by describing other NPCs and the complications they throw at the PC.
3. GM asks, **"How do you get through your work day?"** Player answers by describing the rituals, coping mechanisms, and actions their character performs in light of the complications described by the GM

After the above questions are answered the player makes a **downtime roll** using an appropriate **action rating** to determine how much **xp** they get.

Grind Downtime Roll

- 1d per **action rating**
- NPCs and PC may **assist** as normal
- +1d if you **push your luck** or **sell out**
- +1 **result level** for each **resource** spent

- **CRIT:** Mark **3 xp**. All characters gain **1 luck**.
- **6:** Mark **3 xp**.
- **4/5:** Mark **2 xp**.
- **1-3:** Mark **1 xp**.

December, Michelle's Merc character, is just 2 xp away from getting an advance. When it comes to the downtime phase she wants to grind at her awful customer service job to get that 2 xp.

Nida, the GM asks, "Where do you work and how do you get there?" Michelle thinks for a moment.

"Well, I don't think our community is close to the food court where she works for Constellation Consolidated Foods, so I guess it's a bus? Buses exist, right?"

Nida nods, "They aren't public but yeah Prime Convoys controls all the transport. I imagine the bus is automated and really packed, it's one of the cheapest ways of getting around the city."

"So we see December in her work uniform. She's taken out a lot of her piercings and you can only just make out the edge of her tattoos. She's wearing a branded hat so you can't see the "Fuck you" tattoo on the back of her skull."

Nida laughs, "This poor punk."

Michelle nods, "She's short and angry and on the bus to work. What demands are made of me by management and customers?"

"It's the same drudgery," Nida says. "An endless series of faces who yell at you for things you aren't responsible for. Someone ordered extra onions on their burger and got mad at you for putting too many onions on their burger."

"Oh god, it escalates until the manager gets involved," says Michelle.

"Oh yeah. Robby gets involved and gives you a big speech about customer satisfaction."

"December isn't listening," Michelle says. "She's just thinking about how last night she was hanging out the back of a van shooting at COPs and now she has to be here, doing this."

"So uh," Nida asks, "how do you get through your work day?"

"She thinks about that last score and how badass she was. Just smiles and ignores everything, and pretends to care."

"So it's that... Spin?" Nida asks. Michelle nods. December has 1 action dot in spin and so she rolls 1 dice. She gets a 5.

"Worth it," she says, and marks 2 XP and thinks about whether she wants another bond or an additional action rating.

Long-Term Project

A long-term project can cover a wide variety of activities, like doing research into artificial intelligences, investigating a crime, establishing someone's trust, courting a new friend or

contact, recovering from a condition, and so on. You can even acquire new playbook items, or a milestone as the result of a long-term project.

When working on a long-term project (either brand new, or already existing), describe what your character does to advance the project clock and make a downtime roll using an appropriate action rating.

Sometimes you have to finish one project to enable another. Based on the goal of the project, the GM will tell you the clock(s) to create and suggest a method by which you might make progress.

When you undertake a long-term project, you make an action roll and mark segments on the clock according to your result

Long-Term Project Downtime Roll

- 1d per **action rating**
- NPCs and PC may **assist** as normal
- +1d if you **push your luck** or **sell out**
- +1 **result level** for each **resource** spent

- **CRIT**: Mark **5** ticks on the project clock. All characters gain **1 luck**.
- **6**: Mark **3** ticks on the project clock.
- **4/5**: Mark **2** ticks on the project clock.
- **1-3**: Mark **1** ticks on the project clock.

On the last score, Quanta ran into their streaming rival Small 75 and created a scene that made waves throughout the 'Net of Prime City. Quanta tried to get Small75 to open up during the score, but now Small75 is back to their old ways, denying any sort of connection between the two. Michael, Quanta's player, wants to heal this rift and turn Small75 into a friend.

*This is beyond the scope of a single action roll, so Quanta starts a long-term project to become friends with Small75. The GM says it will be an 8-segment clock. Michael spends a downtime action **Connecting** with Small75 over email. The player rolls Quanta's **Connect** action and gets a **4**: two segments on the project clock.*

In order to work on a project, you might first have to achieve the means to pursue it—which can be a project in itself. For example, you might want to make friends with a member of the secretive White Rabbits, but you have no connection to them. You could first work on a project to **Connect** in their circles so you have the opportunity to meet one of them. Once that's accomplished, you could start a new project to form a friendly relationship.

Recover

When you recover, you seek treatment, get assistance, or work through your own conditions. You might visit a doctor who can stitch your wounds, or a splicer who can buff out that dented cyberware, a psychiatrist to help you with trauma, find a good deal on special ammunition, etc.

When you recover with help from a community member, you make a downtime roll using the community's **tier**. If you go to another PC for help, they make a downtime roll using an appropriate **action rating**. The PC treating you doesn't take the recover action, you do.

Recover Downtime Roll

- 1d per **action rating** (PC) or community **tier** (NPC)
- NPCs and PC may **assist** as normal
- +1d if you **push your luck** or **sell out**
- +1 **result level** for each **resource** spent
- **CRIT**: Clear any **1 condition**. All characters gain **1 luck**.
- **6**: Clear any **1 condition**.
- **4/5**: Clear a **level 2** or **level 1 condition**.
- **1-3**: Clear a **level 1 condition**.

Eli's character goes by Fix Override, a fixer with an infamous anti-corporate agenda. Fix is a well-known character in Prime City, but the person behind the persona is not. On the last score, Fix's real name got out, and now his face is plastered all over Prime City, wanted by the COPS. Eli's character gained the level 3 condition "exposed" and needs to fix it.

Eli says that Fix goes to Blaine's character, a decker, to help him get a new ID and fix this mess. Blaine agrees and rolls their hack action with 2 dice. He gets a 4 and a 5, not enough to clear that level 3 condition. So Eli spends 1 of the community's resources and says that he pays Blaine's character for their time so he can get the job done right. This increased the result level from a 4/5 to a 6, letting Eli clear that level 3 condition, and getting a new identity as well.

Reduce Heat

If you want to reduce your community's profile in Prime City, you can **reduce heat**. Say what your character does to help your community keep a low profile and roll an appropriate **action rating**. Maybe you **Connect** with your hacker contact and she arranges for some incriminating surveillance videos to vanish. Or you **Command** some allies to rough up COPS on your trail.

Reduce Heat Downtime Roll

- 1d per action rating
 - NPCs and PC may **assist** as normal
 - +1d if you **push your luck** or **sell out**
 - +1 result level for each **resource** spent
-
- **CRIT:** Clear 5 heat. All characters gain 1 luck.
 - **6:** Clear 3 heat.
 - **4/5:** Clear 2 heat.
 - **1-3:** Clear 1 heat.

If you want to reduce your **notoriety** you'll have to do a lot more work. See the previous section on heat to see how to handle notoriety.

Alisha's Synth character Joy is good at superhuman feats of athleticism, but not good at talking to people. She wants Joy to help bring the community's mounting heat under control (they gained 6 last session) and so she comes up with a plan.

Alisha narrates her character walking into a bar in her community, The 55. COPs have started to frequent the bar and Joy's plan is to rough them up in order to intimidate them into ignoring The 55. Joy's Assault action rating is 3 (thanks to some new cyber arms) and she decides she wants to push her luck to get a good result. She erases 2 luck from her character sheet and rolls 4 dice. The highest result is a 6. She clears 3 heat from the community sheet and narrates a short scene about how Joy purposefully starts a bar fight and kicks every COP out of the bar.

The GM makes note of this as a possible complication he can introduce later, but for now the COPs still stay away from investigating The 55.

Steal Assets

Being employed isn't all long hours and dehumanization. You're constantly surrounded by expensive tech and useful tools, and you're employed by a company who can easily replace them without going into debt. Surely they won't mind if a few things go missing. **You can only perform this downtime action if your character is employed.**

When you steal assets you take new playbook items from your employer. You make a downtime roll using an appropriate action rating to see how many items you can steal:

Steal Assets Downtime Roll

- 1d per action rating
- NPCs and PC may **assist** as normal
- +1d if you **push your luck** or **sell out**

- **+1 result level** for each **resource** spent
- **CRIT:** Gain **3** **playbook** items. All characters gain **1** **luck**.
- **6:** Gain **3** **playbook** items.
- **4/5:** Gain **2** **playbook** items.
- **1-3:** Gain **1** **playbook** item.

If you wish to acquire more playbook items, you can always do a long-term project, or even steal them as part of a score. If that's not enough you can always risk an action roll and see what consequences arise.

Michelle wants to get December a combat exosuit, one of the playbook items on her Merc's playbook. She wants to roll Assault, her best action rating, but she works as a customer service representative at a Constellation Consolidated Foods fast food place. How is she going to steal the right assets?

Nida, her GM suggests that maybe some local mercenaries are eating at the restaurant, and one of them has left their exosuit idle. Heck, she could even steal a few more things from the customers if she rolls well enough. Michelle wants to sell out by adding +2 heat to the community in order to get an extra die. Seems like a reasonable complication given the situation. Nida adds 2 heat to the community as Michelle rolls 1 dice for Sneak, since it fits the situation better, and another die for selling out.

She rolls a 1 and a 3. It doesn't go great, but she successfully manages to steal the exosuit from the local mercenaries. She adds some extra colour by suggesting that this is how she quits her job, by stealing a customer's expensive piece of tech and then using it to walk through one of the restaurant's walls to make a speedy getaway. All the players agree that this is an excellent idea for December, and so Michelle marks both the exosuit as acquired on her character sheet and the I Quit milestone.

Running the Game

Session Zero

During the first session, the group will create a taste menu, and create their characters and community. You might be able to start and finish your first score in the first session, but the first session usually takes a few hours so you may not get there at the beginning. This is why the first session is called Session Zero, you'll put together everything to get the game started, but the plot probably won't advance.

To prepare, the GM should have read through the rules, especially the sections on community and character creation and this chapter on running the game. You'll lead the players through the creation process and answer their questions. You'll want to make sure everyone is on board with the decisions being made and that everyone is excited to start playing the game.

You can also prepare with some of the game's touchstones (located on the first page). Watch an episode of a TV show or a movie, read a comic or a book, listen to music—whatever inspires you and puts you in the mood for cyberpunk stories. Fill your head with cyberpunk images and ideas and spend some idle time just imagining the streets of Prime City and what it's like there.

Finally, print out the game sheets. You'll want at least two of each playbook (in case two people pick the same one) and one of each community type. Also print the faction sheet.

Setting the Scene

Once everyone is ready to play, the GM should give the players a general introduction to the world of Neon Black. The Setting subchapter in the first chapter of this book is a good place to start. If anyone has questions about the fiction or the rules, great! Answer whatever questions come up, but avoid overwhelming everyone with detailed explanations of the fiction or mechanics. Neon Black has lots of rules, some of them you may never use in your game, so it's best to introduce each of them when they come up in play.

Neon Black has a cyberpunk world that can skew in lots of different ways depending on the interests of the players. The following could be considered something like dials that you can use to tune the game based on the interests of everyone at the table:

- Are synthetic people common or exceptionally rare?
- Are artificial intelligences inherently alien, or similar to human minds?
- Do the public institutions of the past still have some power in Prime City, or have corporations completely overtaken their responsibilities?
- Is space travel a common thing that many people have experienced, or does it exclusively cater to the rich?

Your answers to these questions are something you can include in your group's taste menu.

Taste Menu

Neon Black is a roleplaying game where people get to create their own fictional world, characters, and conflicts. To ensure this game only contains ideas, themes, and stories that everyone at the table is comfortable with you'll create a menu of things everyone wants and does not want to see in the course of the game.

Take a piece of paper or some sort of document and create two columns labelled “Yes” and “No” or “Okay” and “Not Okay”. Starting with the GM, everyone gets to say something they definitely want to see in the game, “Yes”, or something they definitely do not want to see in the game, “No”. The GM writes each preference in the appropriate column.

These could be particular themes in cyberpunk stories or just general ideas or topics the players are interested in including or excluding. Everyone takes turns adding things to the taste menu until no one else can think of anything they want to add or exclude from the game. The two columns don’t need to be even, they just need to include anything the players feel strongly about.

Alan, Ben, Charlie, and Dana get together to play Neon Black. Before they start creating their characters and community Alan, the GM, takes out a piece of paper and creates a “Yes” column and a “No” column and explains the taste menu process.

Alan, the GM, goes first. He wants to explore the ‘Net spaces of the various counter-cultures present in Prime City, so he writes “Counter culture on the ‘Net” under the “Yes” column. Ben is next and he says he doesn’t like seeing violence or abuse against children in any way. Alan writes “No abuse or violence against kids” in the “No” column. Charlie says she’s not comfortable with anything involving the human eye, and Alan says he also is put off by things like eye injuries or eye torture. Alan writes “No human eye imagery/eye injuries/eye torture” in the “No” column.

Dana wants to explore how corporations exploit factory workers, and would like to include that in the “Yes” column, but she’s worried that sort of thing might show the abuse of children as child labor, and would therefore cross the “No abuse or violence against kids” part of the taste menu. Ben suggests that maybe in their version of Prime City children aren’t used as factory labour and that we don’t need to show that part of labor exploitation in order to explore Dana’s interest. The rest of the table agrees, so Alan writes “Exploitation of factory workers (no children)” in the “Yes” column.

Be sure to review all the taste menu items before each session. You can always add or remove items as the game progresses. Including and excluding the ideas recorded on the taste menu is the responsibility of everyone at the table. Just because something is in the “Yes” column doesn’t mean it needs to be present in every scene in every session, and just because something is in the “No” column doesn’t mean that everyone is forbidden from mentioning it or talking about it while at the table. These are ideas that the story of your game can gravitate around or avoid as it is told.

The X Card

In order to make sure the game doesn't stray into territory that the players at the table are uncomfortable with for any reason, create an X card. This can be an index card with an X drawn on it, crossing your arms above your head in an X shape, or any combination of things that are easily visible to everyone playing the game.

If at any point someone at the table is uncomfortable about what is being portrayed during the game, whether it is present on the taste menu or not, they can point to or tap the X card or make the X sign with their arms, or whatever it is that represents your group's X card. If this ever happens the GM or any of the other players end the scene and move on to something else. Don't delve on why the person used the X card, respect their decision and move on.

Once the scene or session is over, the player who used the X card may add something new to the taste menu or underline or modify something that is already there. Whether or not they wish to discuss their decision is up to them, not the rest of the table.

Community & Character Creation

The GM will likely need to introduce each character playbook and community to the other players. Give each a brief description and then let the players select whatever excited them the most. Guide everyone through community creation and then character creation, answering questions as they come up.

Remind the players that they don't have to know every little detail about their characters and the community before you start. Remember **no prologue**, but everyone should be excited about the community and their characters. If someone seems frustrated or disinterested, ask them about it and talk about how things might improve to get them more involved.

None of the player's first choices should be set in stone. Neon Black has a lot of moving parts and players might select action ratings or milestones assuming they do something that they actually don't. If after a few sessions the players want to change something, let them! **Being a fan of the players** means letting people fix their mistakes.

Starting Score

Once the community and characters have been created, and everyone is happy with the taste menu, you're ready to start playing Neon Black with your first score. Use the first community contact on the list, they are placed there as a good first start. If you can, try to tie it into the community's inciting incident or one of the character's milestones. Describe the community member and how they find the characters to ask for their help.

Ask the players how they want to gather information, which leads to a plan (or vice versa). Don't let them waste time planning and maneuvering, the game is designed to **cut to the action**. Give them straightforward avenues to pursue at first. Recommend factions to target or plans of action if they are having trouble. Once they've agreed to the job, ask them to pick a plan and provide the detail, pick their load, and get to it.

Ending the Session

At the end of each session of play you want to do two things. This is regardless of where you end up, you could be in the middle of a score, the middle of the downtime phase, or an expertly crafted narrative cliffhanger.

- **Review bonds.** Each player reads out their current bonds and decides whether or not they are still relevant, true, interesting, etc. Talk it over with the other players. That player marks 1 xp on their character sheet for each bond that changed. If they take an advance, they can mark an additional bond as well.
- **Review milestones.** A lot can happen in a session of Neon Black, so it's a good idea to review each player character's milestones to see if any of them no longer apply, or if the character gained one or more milestones that session. If there's an uncertainty, talk about it with the other players. Mark any new milestones and figure out the details now, or during the next session of play.

Ending the Game

Neon Black is an open world RPG. There is no concrete ending laid out in the rules of this book. You may have an idea of how you would like the story to end, based on your community, inciting incident, or a reason you discover through play. Ultimately it is up to all the players to decide when the game ends (assuming it just doesn't fall apart before you get there, which is fine, most games do). If you would like some guidance here are some good end points for you to consider. When you start your game maybe talk about which of these goals you're aiming towards.

- **All community contacts have their needs fulfilled.** This is for a shorter game of Neon Black, depending on downtime scenes and complications that arise during your game. It will likely take around six sessions.
- **All downtime scenes have been completed.** This goal will take you about a dozen sessions, depending on how fast you move through the phases. You'll see almost everything Prime City has to offer, and will have survived some impressive scores and blowback from the COPs and corporations.
- **All community contacts have their needs fulfilled, and the community reaches tier 4.** This could very well be the best ending for your characters in Neon Black. Not only is their community taken care of, but there are enough resources that everyone can have a decent standard of living for the foreseeable future. Everyone can retire knowing

they've made a significant impact on Prime City, assuming they live long enough. This will likely take you a couple dozen sessions.

PC vs PC

Neon Black can be a high-tension game about characters working at cross-purposes to one another. One character may have a drive to get even with corporate suits in a powerful faction, while another may be trying to protect the community at all costs. This may lead to characters working against each other, much like the characters work against the NPCs to get what they want.

Conflict between player characters is good! In-fighting, betrayal, and the corrupting influence of money and capitalism are staples of cyberpunk fiction. But it's a good idea to slow things down when PCs square off with each other. Here is a process you can use to resolve the conflict.

Press pause. The GM stops the action and addresses the players. Is there a genuine conflict between characters here, or just flavour for the scene? If there is a conflict, like if one character is pulling a gun on an NPC and another player character wants to stop them, we may need an action roll to resolve the conflict, since there's the potential for danger and consequences. If the conflict is low stakes, like two potential but conflicting plans for a job, the GM can call for a fortune roll using the character's action ratings to determine which plan the crew uses for the score.

You also want to make sure that a roll will have any effect on the characters. If one character is trying to convince another character of something, address the players. *Are you trying to change their mind? Could you be swayed at all?* It doesn't matter if the players can't find the right words for their characters to use, we aren't living in the corporate dystopia of Prime City after all. If you find that a roll can't resolve things, move on to another scene or the next phase of the game, or take a break from play and talk things out. You're all **writing this story together** so there's no reason to keep your character's inventions and motivations a secret, we can address these problems outside the fiction.

If you find that an action roll could resolve things, move on to the next step.

Set the position and effect. Ask the player being targeted by the action roll what the effect of the action would be. It's important at this stage that each player involved is clear about what they want and what might happen as a result. *Can they be convinced a lot, or only slightly? Does this character have a chance of knocking the gun out of their hand, or are they set on this course of action, potentially resulting in a struggle for the weapon?* Use the answers to set the effect of the role.

Then establish the position, using feedback from the players. Wrestling the gun out of the hand of someone prone to violent outbursts sounds like a risky or desperate roll depending on the circumstances, but maybe they would never escalate things with a member of the community. Use feedback from each player involved, and take into account items, milestones, and cyberware that may change the position or effect. Other characters may be willing to assist or protect their crew members as well, so allow them to have input if their characters are present in the scene.

Roll the dice, be honest. The position and effect will determine how things go. Again, the GM should work together with the players to narrate what happens and who gets what they want, if anything. Things might not go well for the characters involved, and that's okay. Sometimes the story of our games goes to unexpected places, and it's important that the players honour the results of the roll and play the scene out with their characters.

If the player rolling is going to take a consequence they may choose to **resist** as normal, but the results of the roll still stand (a failure is still a failure).

Press play. Narrate the results of the roll and move the story forward. If the players decide that things will need to escalate, another action roll between PCs might be called for, and again it is important to communicate intentions, actions, and stakes. However this game isn't designed to facilitate lots of action rolls against player characters, so it's best if these moments are resolved quickly.

Magnitude

Artificial intelligences, space stations, and the bleeding edge technology of our corporate overlords have many effects and power levels. To help the GM judge these forces consistently, the magnitude table is provided (see below).

Magnitude measures the quality level of technology or natural forces like hurricanes or diseases, or the various aspects of their effect, such as area, scale, duration, range, or force. Whenever you need to assemble a fortune roll pool for something like this, use the magnitude scale as a guideline relative to the examples given on the table. If it's not obvious or certain how much effect something might have, it might be a good spot for a magnitude-based fortune roll as well.

The magnitude table (see below) is provided as a tool to help the GM make judgment calls. It's not meant to be a rigid construction or mathematical formula to replace those judgment calls. Use the levels as a guideline for setting a magnitude number that seems appropriate to you.

The table can also be used as a guide to **quality level** when a PC **crafts** something or wishes to **engage in capitalism**.

MAGNITUDE			
	AREA	SIZE	DURATION
0	Closet	1 or 2 people	A few moments
1	Small room	Small group (3-6)	A few minutes
2	Large room	Medium group (12)	An hour
3	Several rooms	Large group (20)	A few hours
4	Small buildings	Huge group (40)	A day
5	Large Buildings	Massive group (80)	Several days
6	City Block	Colossal group (160)	A week
	Quality/Tier	Range	Force
0	Poor	Within reach	Weak
1	Adequate	A dozen paces	Moderate
2	Good	Large room	Strong
3	Excellent	Several rooms	Serious
4	Luxurious	A few blocks	Powerful
5	Extravagant	A few kilometers	Overwhelming
6	Legendary	Across town	Devastating

Force Examples

- **Force 0 Examples:** A firm shove, a candle flame, a breeze, a tiny spark, a rattling table, a pungent aroma.
- **Force 1 Examples:** A solid punch, a bright flashlight, a shock from an electrical outlet, a noisy room.
- **Force 2 Examples:** A powerful blow, a searing brand, an electrical shock from a Live Wire™.
- **Force 3 Examples:** A crushing blow, a grenade, a raging fire, an electrical surge
- **Force 4 Examples:** An unfiltered beam of Hard Light™, a bomb, electrocution, a swarm of meteorites
- **Force 5 Examples:** A tank's guns, a massive fire, a lightning strike.
- **Force 6 Examples:** An orbital weapon, molten lava, a tsunami.

Quality Examples

- **Quality 0 Examples:** Basic necessities and easily found materials. Standard items, basic cyberware, fast food, casual clothing.
- **Quality 1 Examples:** Items and services that cost a little time and money. Playbook items, advanced cyberware, business clothes, nutritional food, corporate care and services, a night in a coffin-sized hotel room.
- **Quality 2 Examples:** Fine items that are reliable and difficult to afford. Fine playbook items, prototype cyberware, renting a typical hotel room for the night, fine clothing, an exotic pet.
- **Quality 3 Examples:** Expensive and difficult to find items. Most land vehicles, designer clothing, rare crafting materials, a night in an expensive hotel.
- **Quality 4 Examples:** Luxurious items usually only available to the rich. A flying car, a permanent residence, a single occupancy space ship.
- **Quality 5 Examples:** Extravagant items only available to the truly wealthy. Most spaceships, a clone, a multi-floor apartment.
- **Quality 6 Examples:** Massive and complex items. A space station, an artificial intelligence.

Drugs, Hardware, & Software

In this chapter you will find hardware designed by corporations, ubiquitous software, and drugs covered by corporate health insurance. You'll also find exotic hardware, custom software, and drugs made in the stacks and streets of Prime City. The code, formulas, and blueprints for these items may be widely distributed throughout the 'Net of Prime City, or they may be illegal for private citizens to own without corporate licenses and agreements.

What is available and how are part of your world of Neon Black. The rules assume that a character can invent, craft, or purchase almost anything in Prime City, but ultimately it's up to your table to decide. The list provided here is not exhaustive. Players should feel free to use this list of items as inspiration for their own inventions and modifications.

Each item in this chapter has an associated **quality level**. This is the quality level that a character will need to reach to **craft** the item for themselves or how many **resources** it costs to purchase when characters **engage in capitalism**. Some items also include **drawbacks** such as the quantity of items you get if they are consumable. These drawbacks are defined in the **craft** section of the **downtime** chapter.

Drugs

Black Lotus (III, Consumable 1, Illegal, Volatile): A tar-like resin made from the leaves of the plant. Induces coma-like stupor and intense visions that tend to linger for days.

Boss Blue (I, Consumable 3, Illegal, Volatile): A glittering blue powder. Induces a pleasant hypnotic high when inhaled and a crushing depression the next day.

Tonic (II, Consumable 1): A cure-all that quickly purges a person's body of foreign substances.

Cyberware

When you **get chromed** and have cyberware installed you get basic cyberware by default. There are three levels of cyberware: basic, advanced, and prototype. Each level comes with one benefit. Basic cyberware grants one benefit, advanced cyberware comes with two, and prototype cyberware gives 3 benefits.

The exact benefits are up to the player, but they come in three basic forms:

- Fill in the cyberware **action dot** in a specific **action** or **attribute**.
- Grant up to **2 free load** of specific items.
- Grant a **special ability** that gives characters new fictional permissions to do things they could not attempt easily before.

Below are examples of cyberware and what benefits they may grant. Players may craft or do a long-term project to create their own cyberware, using the examples below as inspiration.

Advanced Immunity System: A system of nanomachines and excretion devices that scrub the user's blood for foreign substances.

- Fill in the cyberware **action dot** in **Sneak**.
- Choose a drug, chemical, or other ingestible substance that you have encountered or created. You are now immune to that substance.
- You can **push your luck** to secrete this substance through your skin or saliva, or exhale it as a vapor.

Autonomous Communication Module: A neurological implant that allows you to communicate wordlessly with others.

- Fill in the cyberware **action dot** in **Connect**.
- You can wordlessly communicate with anyone you can see
- You can remote control suitable drones and vehicles without using external controls or computers.

Cyber Arms (III): Complete or partial replacements, with synthetic nerves, bones, and musculature.

- Fill in the cyberware **action** dot in **Assault**.
- You can spend **1 luck** to punch through most walls.
- You can spend **2 luck** to lift or move something as big as a car.

Cyber Ears (III): Wholly synthetic ears, come with customizable shapes.

- Fill in the cyberware **action** dot on **Analyze**.
- You can now hear multiple open electronic frequencies, and record all aural information around you for easy recollection
- You are immune from aural harm and related conditions.

Cyber Eyes (III): Wholly synthetic eyes, come with customizable colors and pupil shapes.

- Fill in the cyberware **action** dot on **Analyze**.
- Your eyes can now magnify what you see, record information for easy recollection, and you can see in the dark
- You are immune from conditions related to blinding light or visual hallucinations

Cyber Fingers (III): Fingers that can split into 2 or four appendages each.

- Fill in the cyberware **action** dot in **Tinker**.
- You get **+1d** when **gathering information** on a computer.
- When performing an action that requires delicate or dextrous control, take **+1d**.

Cyber Hands (III): Multiple useful tools, wires, and compartments installed in the hands and wrists.

- Fill in the cyberware **action** dot on **Tinker**.
- Your bare hands count as **fine** melee weapons.
- You can carry up to **2 free load** of tools.

Cyber Legs: Complete or partial replacements, with synthetic nerves, bones, and musculature. Different configurations and joints available upon request.

- Fill in the cyberware **action** dot in **Move**.
- You can spend **1 luck** to jump twice your normal height or run faster than someone without cyber legs.
- You can spend **2 luck** to jump three stories or run as fast as a car.

Electromagnetic Field Generator: A series of small coin sized electrical transmitters installed across the user's hands and wrists.

- Fill in the cyberware **action** dot in **Assault**.

- You may imbue your hands, melee weapons, or tools with electricity. You gain **potency** when fighting against automatons, synthetics, and other machines.
- You can **push your luck** to temporarily shut off all electronics near you.

Hidden Weapons (Illegal): Collapsible blades, implanted guns, or other artillery hidden from view.

- Fill in the cyberware **action** dot in **Assault**.
- Fill in the cyberware **action** dot in **Command**.
- You can carry **2 free load** of weapons.

Linguistic Analysis Implant: A small implant or modification to the user's neural link.

- Fill in the cyberware **attribute** dot in **Clout**.
- You can always tell when someone is lying.
- Fill in the cyberware **action** dot in **Spin**.

Neural Breaker: An ejectable heat sink installed in the user's neural link.

- Fill in the cyberware **action** dot in **Hack**.
- You can carry **1 free load** of 'Net armor.
- You gain 1 additional use of your 'Net armour.

Neural Doubler: A data storage device implanted in the user's skull, accessible through their neural link.

- Fill in the cyberware **action** dot on **Analyze**.
- You can store as much data as a demon drive.
- This cyberware counts as a tablet computer.

Subdermal Plates: Thin plates of synthetic fibres installed in the user's chest, back and joints.

- Fill in the cyberware **attribute** dot in **Prowess**.
- You can carry **2 free load** of armor.
- You gain 1 additional use of your armour.

Synthetic Adrenal Gland: Synthetic excretors spliced into the user's endocrine system.

- Fill in the cyberware **action** dot in **Move**.
- Fill in the cyberware **attribute** dot in **Prowess**.
- Once per **session** you can use this cyberware to perform a feat of athletics that borders on the superhuman.

Titanium Nerve Implants: Replaces several of the user's neural pathways with conductive metal.

- Fill in the cyberware **action** dot in **Sneak**.
- When you attack from hiding or spring a trap, you get **+1d**.

- When there is any question about who acts first, the answer is you.

Voice Box Amplifier (III): A reinforced synthetic larynx outfitted with micro speakers.

- Fill in the cyberware **action** dot in **Spin**.
- Fill in the cyberware **action** dot in **Command**.
- When you speak you can **push your luck** for all nearby hostilities to temporarily cease.

Hardware

Blade Grenades (III, Illegal, consumable 3): Throwable blades that stick into their target and then detonate. For when something absolutely has to die. **(1 load each)**

Flying Car (IV, Complex): Luxury vehicle that can fly in Earth's atmosphere. Limited autopilot subroutines. Seats 4 comfortably.

Personal Defense Field (III, Consumable 1, Rare): A wrist-mounted device that when activated creates an impenetrable wall of Hard Light™ energy. Lasts only a few moments but protects the user from all physical harm. **(1 load)**

Robot (V, Complex, Rare): A person sized automaton that can follow simple tasks and has limited capacity to reason.

Small Satellite (III, Complex, Illegal, Rare): Join the glorious 'Net from wherever you are, never worry about cell phone reception or not knowing where your enemies are again.

Smart Car (IV, Complex): Terrestrial autonomous vehicle. Can be remote controlled and has a limited capacity to reason and drive itself. Seats 4 comfortably.

Smart Pistol (III, Rare): An auto pistol with an embedded autonomous computer that calculates ballistic trajectories. Allows you to fire at targets behind cover, or from a safe vantage point. **(1 load)**

Spaceship (V, Complex, Rare): Travel up to Earth's atmosphere and beyond. Can carry cargo and 6 people comfortably. Requires a trained pilot to use.

Tracking Device (II): Inconspicuous and tiny. Links to your smartphone or computer to track a target you affix it to. **(0 load)**

Software

Burn (IV, Illegal, Unreliable): Causes a computer or machine to overheat, damaging the hardware and potentially erasing all data contained within.

Crash (III, Illegal): Causes hardware to temporarily shut down or reboot.

ICE Break (IV, Illegal): Can automatically bypass software security countermeasures such as ICE.

Malware (II): Floods a computer, machine, or device with distracting information and pop-ups.

Needle (V, Rare, Complex): Copies a person's memories and personal quirks onto a suitably large hard drive.

Sever (II): Temporarily blocks hardware from connecting to the 'Net.

Trace (II): Follows the source of a security intrusion or user login back to its source. Slow but reliable.

Vaxx (III): Clears a computer or network of malware and viruses.

Prime City

Transcription of a Pinnacle Liberty Brochure

Planning a getaway?

Looking for a new experience?

Seeking a fresh start?

Pinnacle Liberty is Prime City's premier vacation and experience planner. With 3 off-world locations and dozens of offices throughout Fivespires, Pinnacle Liberty is here to help you find the perfect retreat from the everyday.

Take an Overnight Shuttle to our Mars Arcology

Enjoy one of our guided excursions across the planet, from the breathtaking Olympus Mons to the canyons of Valles Marineris. All-expenses paid packages include spa treatments, low-gravity yoga classes, and exclusive nightlife events.

Take a Tour Among the Jovian Moons

See the tectonic flows of Io and the water plumes of Europa, all while relaxing at Pinnacle Liberty's award-winning Jupiter Station. Travel in luxury on one of our communal cruises or your own private shuttle.

Don't have the time to get away? Visit one of Pinnacle Liberty's locations to browse our catalogue of artificial reality experiences. Create your fantasy vacation with our helpful and friendly technicians who will take you step-by-step through the process. Enjoy your dream destination from one of our many fully-appointed private suites.

Worried about financing? Pinnacle Liberty provides fast and fair loans that will get you on your way in minutes. Ask your local Pinnacle Liberty customer service representative to find out more today!

Pinnacle Liberty

"Slip away today"

Prime City is the default setting of Neon Black. It is a massive urban sprawl protected by a sea wall or some other feat of corporate geoengineering to keep back the worst effects of climate change. It is home to millions of people. Many already lived in the area when the world began to change, others fled here as the oceans spilled into coastal cities and the changing climate drove people to safety. Prime City is a mix of old nationalities and cultures from across the planet.

Most citizens live in concrete stacks designed to house thousands of families, or in smaller homes on the streets of the city. Few live in the impressive towers of the Fivespires, built by the richest of the ruling corporations to house their managers, officers, and executives.

Three corporations rule the city, each with their own monopolies on different services and technologies. These companies define the laws of Prime City, enforced by their own corporate police and secret agents. The governments of the 21st century, unable to bring public resources to bear quickly enough to save humanity, have become a distant memory. Every facet of life is produced or run by these corporations and their subsidiaries, or underworld factions who run black markets, private havens, and try to create a new way of life in Prime City.

Timeline

- **2051 - Pinnacle One is completed.** This small habitat on the moon is designed for refueling and launching spacecraft further into the solar system.
- **2100 - An estimated 1 billion people have died due to climate change.** The first corporate city states begin to take shape as climate refugees flee to countries and cities that have not yet failed.
- **2107 - Scientific breakthroughs result in cheap synthetic proteins and vegetable matter.** Synthetic food alternatives quickly surpass traditional farming techniques.
- **2112 - Ares, the first martian colony, is founded.** The base helps foster space tourism and the creation of luxury resorts throughout the solar system.
- **2118 - The first neural link is sold.** This basic form of cyberware displays an augmented reality interface.
- **2126 - Two long-term rivals in the personal computing market announce a surprising merger to form the Ziggurat megacorporation.** The new company makes several controversial acquisitions including weapons manufacturers.
- **2131 - The Coda family takes control of the Ziggurat megacorporation.**
- **2132 - The first human being voluntarily replaces each part of their body with cyberware.** They become the world's first fully synthetic human.
- **2139 - The first manned missions to Titan and Europa launch.** Small vacation resorts are soon constructed as destinations for the wealthy.
- **2144 - Storm Solutions merges with Exxol Industries to form the Storm-Ex megacorporation.**
- **2153 - The first Live Wire™ is sold to the public.** New high-speed civilian models quickly replace military prototypes. All commercially available neural links are soon modified to accommodate Live Wire technology.
- **2160 - New 'Net protocols established.** Three-dimensional public 'Netspaces are established for all Live Wire™ users to enjoy. Hard Light™ 'Net connections become the new standard for 'Net use.

- **2161 - Galatea, the first Artificial Intelligence, is created.** The Storm-Ex megacorporation claims ownership and guardianship of the entity.
- **2167 - The first viable HAUNT is transferred from a human brain.** Several reports of earlier encounters and phenomenon on the 'Net cast doubt on the announcement.
- **2170 - A massive family-friendly media conglomerate rebrands itself as Ishram Entertainment.** Later, it is reported that the campaign was a suggestion proposed by one the conglomerate's AI's.
- **2189 - Wotan is created by Ziggurat.** They are the first artificial intelligence to be housed in a satellite orbiting the planet.
- **2190 - The Corporate War begins.** Ziggurat, Storm-Ex, and Ishram Entertainment battle to take control of Prime City. The city is engulfed in black-outs, corporate assassinations, and digital warfare.
- **2193 - The Corporate War ends.** Ishram Entertainment, Storm-Ex, and the Ziggurat megacorporations cease hostilities and establish the Corporate Management Board.
- **2194 - The Coda Family is forced out of Ziggurat.** They are blamed for both instigating the Corporate War and failing to win it for Ziggurat.
- **2199 - The present Year.**

City Districts

The distinct districts of Prime City are divided into vertical slices. This represents the cramped nature of the city and the top down attitude adopted by wealthy residents. While a particular district could cover a significant area of space, it is assumed that specific spots within a district are easy to access via mundane methods of transit. For example, while the Stacks district might take up the area of a modern city, it is assumed that a character could travel between two spots within the Stacks relatively easily.

Travel between different districts might require special transport or a run-in with whoever lays claim to that particular section of the district. For example in order to get from the Stacks to Off-World you would need to secure transport on a corporate shuttle, or deal with the prying eyes of corporate security on Prime City's space elevator.

Streets

The cramped network of city streets, subways, access tunnels, and sewers at the very bottom of Prime City. On the street you can find food vendors, vending machines for everyday corporate products, and underground blackmarkets for refurbished corporate goods.

All the junk and refuse from the upper levels of Prime City collects in the Streets, from literal trash to carelessly discarded luxuries fallen from the pockets and parties of the city's elite who reside hundreds of feet above in Fivespires.

Crime is common here, though rarely addressed unless it escalates to violence or infringement on corporate laws such as copyrights, intellectual property, or corporate theft. Underground factions have more power here, protecting citizens and communities from authoritarian corporate law.

Scene: Old and recovered vehicles slowly moving through crowded streets. Corporate vending machines covered in graffiti. Buskers, food carts, and makeshift marketplaces. People with old and damaged cyberware, simple clothes, and underground tattoos. COPs in combat armor armed with assault rifles.

Notable Places

Walker's Refuge LAN: An abandoned warehouse where hundreds of people come to play video games. Old salvaged military spider tanks power the ancient computers and allow them to connect to the 'Net. Rumour has it that hacker groups and criminal syndicates troll Walker's Refuge for new talent.

Rapid Transit Tunnels: A series of trains and rapid people movers designed for public and private use. These tunnels run under Prime City and occasionally rise above ground to stop at the Stacks or near corporate headquarters and shopping centers.

Ślady: A neon lit lounge and casino. Owned by the Baza Syndicate, it is Prime City's most infamous haunt for freelancers and fixers. Features VIP rooms, gambling, live music, and the cheapest drinks in Prime City.

Stacks

Prefabricated buildings around 100 stories tall made of concrete and metal which house the majority of Prime City's population. Each stack houses around ten thousand people in apartments that range from the size of a closet to one or two rooms. The Stacks also house small businesses and corporate store fronts, and are sometimes connected to each other via underground access tunnels, bridges, and shared rooftops, many of which were created from improvised materials by the residents.

Each Stack is it's own micro-society, with a distinct community, organizations, and small family owned businesses. Stacks have official addresses and corporate ID numbers, but also have colloquial names given to them by the residents.

The Stacks are home to corporate wage-slaves and a handful of corporately owned storefronts and entertainment centers. Most corporate products are sold in the Stacks through private resellers. Some Stacks, like those near corporate manufacturing districts, are more closely surveilled by the megacorps as they house workers and low-level management.

Scene: Huge humid concrete towers. Hallways and pedestrian bridges choked with wage-slaves and punks. Covered and uncovered interior courtyards and strip malls. Animated advertisements covered in local graffiti. Views of concrete walls and smoggy vistas. Smells of street food, sweat, and rusted metal. Conversations about high prices, the news, and what's happening tonight. COPs in uniform with sidearms.

Notable Places:

Stack Z: The colloquial name for Stack PSO-ZZ9-PZA. Located near the corporate industrial purchases out in the Desert. Stack Z is a hotbed of black market deals and intel exchanges. Factory workers and corporate spies often wind up in Stack Z with stolen proprietary tech and company secrets for sale. Some of them even survive to enjoy their credits.

Melo Mart Mega Mall: The primary shopping district in Prime City. This massive mall is full of corporate vending machines and storefronts representing each corporate subsidiary.

The Prophets Returned Mega Church: A church the size of a small stadium equipped with multiple streaming services and 24/7 broadcasting of religious services.

Fivespires

Corporate executives, celebrities, and the wealthy of Prime City live in one of the Fivespires. These are towers hundreds of stories tall, reaching above cloud and smog cover and delivering truly beautiful sights of the rest of Prime City.

People in Fivespires live in enclosed multi-floor mansions and penthouses made up of several rooms, often with support staff and servants. Airspace around Fivespires is privately owned and patrolled by COPs to preserve the resident's excellent views and safety.

There is little crime here aside from the white collar crime that happens in secret within the megacorps and the occasional daring heist by less-fortunate residents. These infractions are usually handled via backroom deals, or with highly-skilled corporate operatives.

Scene: Polished and clean surfaces. The smell of synthetics, perfume, and fresh air. People in fine clothes with sleek cyberware. Conversations about economics, vacations, and idle gossip. Flying cars, spacious freeways, and COP patrols in discreet vehicles.

Notable Places:

The Ziggurat Hedron: This imposing building is made of severe geometric shapes that resemble a pyramid. The Hedron serves as headquarters for the Ziggurat corporation.

Ishram Park: A large, multi-tiered campus that serves as headquarters for the Ishram Entertainment corporation.

Storm-Ex Control/The Vine: The Storm-Ex corporation's headquarters also serves as the base of Prime City's space elevator, known as the Vine.

Coda Tower: A slim, crystalline skyscraper owned by one of the wealthiest families in Prime City. Rumour has it that after losing control of the Ziggurat corporation, the Coda family is selling real estate in the tower to ambitious executives and wealthy vice dealers.

Orbit

Within the various layers of the Earth's orbit are corporate assets and residences, research stations, and satellites with dozens of uses. Any research and development that corporations may deem too important or dangerous to be left on the ground is often housed temporarily within their orbital assets.

Also in orbit are transit stations that refuel and offload cargo and passengers heading to or from Earth, which are then transferred to Earth via shuttles or Prime City's space elevator. Few of Prime City's middle or lower class are present here. Some wage-slaves are sent here to repair corporate tech, load cargo, or run one of the few storefronts in corporate transit stations.

Scene: Artificial gravity and sloped hallways. Wage-slaves in posh clothes or overalls. Wealthy families on vacation, corporate suits on business trips. Fake plants and advertisements for luxury products. Corporate shuttles docked behind security checkpoints guarded by armed COPs with cyberware.

Notable Places:

Wotan's Orbital Enclosure: An orbiting satellite controlled by Ziggurat that houses Wotan, an artificial intelligence.

New Horizons Research Facility: A space station in Earth's orbit that serves as housing and workspace for prominent scientists whose work requires a certain distance from Earth's laws and morality.

Prime City Transit Hub: The top of The Vine space elevator that serves as a loading/off-loading facility for cargo and passengers in transit between Earth and space. A fancy glorified airport.

Olympus Station: A luxurious resort that features fine dining, a casino, and private spaces reserved for the vices of the extravagantly wealthy.

Off-World

Over the last generation humanity has established small corporate footholds on the Moon, Mars, Titan, and Europa. These small settlements serve primarily as resorts for the extravagantly wealthy, or decent wage-slave positions for those privileged or lucky enough to find them.

Crime is rare in the space between worlds, though many news channels are heralding the dawn of space piracy as corporate executives and assets are stolen or kidnapped by the less fortunate.

Scene: Small, extravagant resorts with massive windows displaying breathtaking views. Private shuttles and corporate vessels coming and going. Advertisements for luxurious products and services. Gossip about corporate power plays and celebrities. Automated security drones and robots, personal bodyguards.

Notable Places:

Pinnacle One: Located on Earth's moon, this station serves as a primary refueling point for ships as they travel to more remote parts of the solar system.

Ares: A small colony of wealthy vacationers and terraforming labourers on Mars. The arcology is divided into private spaces for those getting away from Earth, and living spaces and workshops for those who are trying to remake Mars into something more inviting.

Europa Station: The furthest luxury outpost of humanity. Maintained by the Pinnacle Liberty company. A handful of scientists maintain a lab here for studying the planet and plunging the moon's icy depths, searching for extraterrestrial life.

The Desert

The Desert describes the world outside the protection of city states like Prime City. It is where you can find massive fields of solar panels and fields of synthetic crops, as well as warehouses, factories, and dormitories for corporate workers.

People who live here without corporate jobs do not enjoy the privileges of corporate protection, and are left to fend for themselves in what remains of the world after the climate disasters that befell it. It is rumoured that there exist secure and peaceful communities in the Desert ruled by archaic public governments, as well as anarchistic nomads who survive by stealing from others.

Scene: Dusty and dry landscapes. Flooded ruins. Old tech abandoned in the wasteland. Ancient rusted advertising billboards. Massive fields of solar panels and tall expansive factory buildings. Occasional cars and ships passing by overhead, nomadic communities salvaging food and tech. The lights of Prime City in the distance.

Notable Places:

Abandoned Cities: Once thriving metropolises, now rusted and broken ruins. Home to nomads, raiders, and those wishing to escape the eyes of the corporations.

Solar Fields: Thousands of acres of solar panels laid out in grids around Prime City. Small families and the occasional corporate wage-slave keep these fields operating to power the excess of Prime City.

Corporate Industrial Purchases: Huge factories and storage warehouses were the three major corporations of Prime City manufacture and hold their products. Located at the very outskirts of Prime City.

Factions

All the factions of Prime City are detailed in this chapter. Each section includes their name, tier (in brackets), corporate slogan, and notable details.

The factions of Prime City fall into 3 broad categories: the subsidiaries of the 3 megacorporations that rule Prime City, and the underground factions who oppose and subvert corporate dominance.

Ishram Entertainment:

- **Gemini (II):** Two radically augmented corporate agents
- **New Horizons (II):** A think tank of scientists, programmers, and engineers
- **Pinnacle Liberty (IV):** A travel company specializing in vacations for the rich
- **Prime News Network (III):** Prime City's primary news and journalism company
- **The Prophets Returned (IV):** A large conservative religious company
- **Sim-K-One (I):** Prime City's most famous simulstreaming personality
- **SimulStream.tv (III):** Streaming tech that includes sharing physiological experiences
- **The Tank (V):** A network of AIs using prisoners and volunteers to process data
- **YouFlix Media:** Produces and streams corporate media and video sharing platforms

Storm-Ex:

- **AgriCorp (V):** The food providers of Prime City
- **Constellation Consolidated Foods (II):** A conglomeration of fast food franchises
- **Corporate Management Board (IV):** The corporate governing body of Prime City
- **Exotique (I):** Trendy fashion designers recently acquired by the Storm-Ex megacorp
- **Hard Light (III):** Prime City's fastest 'Net service provider
- **Melo Mart (IV):** Prime City's largest shopping mall
- **Prime City Operations (III):** Organizes utilities, infrastructure, and housing
- **Prime Convoys (II):** This rideshare company is the city's only public transportation
- **Tano Financial (IV):** Prime City's biggest and wealthiest bank
- **Thoth (III):** An AI that surveils and policies other AIs
- **Zephyr Automotive (III):** A luxury vehicle manufacturer

Ziggurat:

- **Buran Aeronautics (IV):** The premier space tech company in Prime City
- **The Coda Family (III):** The richest family in Prime City
- **Corporate Order Police (III):** (COPs) enforce corporate laws throughout Prime City
- **Drayton Software (II):** Develops the ubiquitous software of Prime City
- **Phace Augmentations (V):** Leaders in cyberware and life extension technology
- **Prime Health Insurance (II):** Prime City's sole corporate health care providers
- **Project C.A.R.V. (I):** An autonomous and lethal law enforcement vehicle

- **Temple Hardware (IV):** Manufacturers and designers of most hardware and computers
- **Wotan (III):** A rebellious artificial intelligence housed in an orbiting satellite

Underground:

- **Baza Syndicate (IV):** The largest organized anti-corporate movement in the city
- **Brandy Rogue (II):** Space pirates who steal corporate tech and kidnap executives
- **City Council (II):** The last vestige of public representation in Prime City
- **The Constant (III):** An infamous information broker and fixer
- **Dead Prompt (III):** Radically augmented people seeking to free AIs
- **Guillotines (II):** Kidnappers and splicers who steal and reuse cyberware from the rich
- **Hacksaw Coil (II):** The most popular singer in Prime City's punk scene
- **Hermes Guild Couriers (I):** An independent union of bike couriers
- **The Mendicants (II):** Wandering monks and ascetics seeking spiritual enlightenment
- **Pawners Guild (II):** A union of independent store owners
- **Sin Eaters (I):** A professional group of con artists, thieves, and dream hackers
- **White Rabbit (III):** Hackers and punks

AgriCorp (V)

The largest provider of bulk food and textiles in Prime City, seeking to create a monopoly on all organic material.

Corporate slogan: “The food of tomorrow, today!”

Notable NPCs

- **Mitsu Jann** (CEO, *she/her, collector, no cyberware, obsessed*)
- **Seeker Seven** (Head of Biological Material Acquisition, *he/him, stealthy, cold-blooded, perceptive*).
- **Phoebe Phillips** (farm manager, *she/her, tattoos, owns rare art, reclusive*)

Notable Assets:

- A collection of some of the last organic plants and animals on Earth
- Hundreds of vending machines
- Synthetic farms and manufacturing facilities
- Textile factories
- Headquarters in Fivespires

Quirks: Rising through the ranks of the Agricorp company is based partly on your collection of organic pets and natural relics from the past.

Situation: AgriCorp wants to be the sole provider of food and clothing materials in Prime City and eventually the world. To do this they have been buying out, acquiring, and destroying their competition for decades. They are currently synthesizing their own variety of animals and plants to sell as products.

Baza Syndicate (IV)

The largest anti-corporate organization in Prime City.

Notable NPCs:

- **Barossa** (Syndicate boss, *he/they, well-dressed, cybernetic spider legs, lounge singer, sly*)
- **Kaziv Wu-Bai** (Syndicate lieutenant, *he/him, addicted, ambitious, short-tempered*)
- **Alloy Nova** (Syndicate enforcer, *she/her, mesh shirt, cyberarms, silent*)

Notable Assets:

- Corporate blackmail
- Stolen corporate hardware
- “Ślady” the lounge/casino that serves as the Baza Syndicate’s informal HQ
- Vice dens
- Hacking farms
- Night clubs
- Repurposed corporate warehouses
- A few independent Stacks

Quirks: Many Baza fronts and aliases are named after different kinds of fish.

Situation: The Baza Syndicate have been competing with the megacorps for control of Prime City for years. They have built and funded independent Stacks and supported independent businesses. Now the people who work for the Syndicate worry that the leadership have become too complacent and wealthy, funding vice dens and information gathering hacking farms rather than supporting the citizen’s needs.

Brandy Rogue (II)

A small group of space pirates who survive by stealing corporate tech and ransoming vacationing executives.

Notable NPCs:

- **Brandy** (Captain, *she/her, cyberware, easy-going, socialist, tall, lanky, red hair*)
- **Natalya Ocano** (First Officer, *she/her, tattooed, suspicious, shaved head*)
- **Icon Rain** (Chief engineer, *he/him, cyberware, red dreadlocks, hoarder*)

Notable Assets:

- “The Brandy Wine,” a fast and stealthy space cruiser
- Tough crew adept at spacewalks
- Caches of tech and wealth hidden in remote parts of space
- A secret hideout outside Prime City

Quirks: Many smaller pirate bands have tried and failed to establish themselves like Brandy Rogue.

Situation: While space piracy is still in its infancy, the Brandy Rogue needs allies and safe ports in order to survive among increased corporate security.

Buran Aeronautics (IV)

Prime City’s primary space technology company.

Corporate Slogan: “The stars are in your grasp.”

Notable NPCs:

- **New Hyden** (CEO, *she/her, professional, sharp, cutthroat*)
- **Madeline Burn** (Head of R&D, *she/her, workaholic, loner, paranoid*)
- **Donovan “Chill” Slayton** (Test pilot, *he/him, daredevil, gambler, tough*)

Notable Assets:

- Several spacecraft including transport space shuttles
- Prototype space technology
- Space shuttle pilots
- Space stations
- Factories
- Offices in Fivespires

Quirks: The company is named after an old failed Soviet space shuttle. Some employees think this name is a curse.

Situation: In order to secure corporate property and other interests, Buran Aeronautics is set to unveil a brand new weapons platform that can neutralize potential threats in space.

City Council (II)

Long-suffering lawyers and public servants fighting a losing battle against corporate greed and privatization.

Notable NPCs:

- **Annalle Sonoda** (chief councilor, *she/her, driven, messy, tall*)
- **Martin Locke** (lawyer, *he/him, ex-punk, tattoos, clever*)
- **“Trivia”** (corporate spy, *they/them, cautious, prototype cyberware, quiet*)

Notable Assets:

- Lawyers
- Corporate informants
- Records of corporate crimes and misdeeds
- Office and public forum in the Stacks

Quirks: The council relies heavily on volunteer work and donations to survive.

Situation: The council needs strong allies to survive the blowback from corporations when they expose corporate malfeasance and take back the rights and property of Prime City’s citizens.

The Coda Family (III)

The wealthiest family in Prime City, seeking vengeance on the board of directors of Ziggurat.

Notable NPCs:

- **Glory Coda** (Former Ziggurat CEO, *she/her, calculating, cyber tail, paranoid*)
- **Emmanuel Coda** (eldest family member, *he/him, stoic, stubborn, cold*)
- **Calamitant Coda** (youngest family member, *she/her, alcoholic, cyberware, psychonaut, tattoos*)

Notable Assets:

- Coda Tower (one of the Fivespires)
- Significant wealth and investments
- Several favours owed among the factions of Prime City
- Several clones and data backups of each family member

Quirks: Each member of the Coda family is wealthy enough for their own private bodyguards, prototype cyberware, and clone replacements.

Situation: The Coda family once held every major position in the Ziggurat megacorporation. At the end of the Corporate War the Coda family were forced out of the company. Now they plot vengeance against their enemies, both real and perceived, through freelance agents and synthetic assassins.

The Constant (III)

Prime City's best and most infamous information broker, good at finding secrets and setting up interesting scores.

Notable NPCs:

- **The Constant** (information broker, *they/them, mysterious, difficult to contact, secretive*)
- **Zekiel** (bar owner, *he/him, huge, ex-punk, ex-military, ex-corporate*)
- **Flynn** (punk courier, *she/her, foul-mouthed, cyberarm, cyberlegs*)
- **Mr. Horatio** (face/fixer, *he/him, rich clothes, condescending, wealthy*)

Notable Assets:

- Corporate and underground spies
- Secrets and blackmail
- Secret hideout in the Desert

Quirks: The Constant never meets their clients or contractors in person. Some believe the Constant isn't even a singular person, but a group of info brokers, fixers, and spies.

Situation: The Constant collects info, data, and secrets from every corner of Prime City and the 'Net. They sell it, horde it, or use it to facilitate promising jobs. This means the Constant has friends and enemies in every faction of Prime City.

Constellation Consolidated Foods (II)

A group of fast food and coffee franchises spread across Prime City.

Corporate Slogan: “The most important visit of your day.”

Notable NPCs:

- **Brett Mika** (CEO, *he/him, lazy, eats out every day, hidden cyberware*)
- **Darryl “Sapphire” Sabine** (Director of Creative Food Products, *he/him, blue suits, affable, hands-on*)
- **Elsy** (franchise manager, *she/her, overworked, part-time artist, shaved head*).

Notable Assets:

- Food and chemical formulas
- Key property locations
- Advertising contracts
- Hundreds of stores across the city
- Head office in Fivespires
- Factories and warehouses in the Desert

Quirks: Each restaurant and storefront uses similar procedures and technology to make their food, allowing the easy transition of customer service staff.

Situation: This corporation is constantly releasing new cheap and addictive foods, as well as muscling out small independent businesses to set up new franchises. They are always looking for new property and space to take in Prime City.

Corporate Management Board (V)

Elected representatives of each megacorporation, who decide major Prime City issues and mediate disputes between the corporations.

Notable NPCs:

- **Virtue Callahan** (Storm-Ex representative, *she/her, strong, resourceful, egotistical, cyber legs*)
- **Yuki Kingston** (Ishram Entertainment representative, *she/her, observant, greedy, perfectionist, cyber eyes*)
- **Weston Stoyer** (Ziggurat representative, *he/him, cold, impatient, mostly cyberware*)

Notable Assets:

- Information about corporate disputes and executives
- Corporate taxes
- Future plans for Prime City
- Boardroom and office in Fivespires

Quirks: While meetings of the board are public, the real decisions that affect the city and the megacorps often happen behind closed doors.

Situation: Tired of constantly fighting the representatives of the public, the board will meet soon to discuss how to eliminate the City Council.

Corporate Order Police (III)

Known on the street as COPs, these officers patrol the streets and enforce the laws of the megacorporations.

Corporate Slogan: “Your first line of defense.”

Notable NPCs:

- **Lieutenant Maris Joshi** (Commander, *she/her, sly, warm, martial artist*)
- **Ezekiel Cut** (shift sargeant, *they/them, joker, laid back, absent-minded*)
- **Kim Swaze** (patrol officer, *she/her, idealistic, cyberlegs, tough*)

Notable Assets:

- Officers patrolling each district
- Special operations units
- Cybercrime division
- Warrants & bounties
- Headquarters in the Stacks
- Local precincts in each city district

Quirks: Members of the COPs work to protect the interests of capitalism and the corporations who employ them, and therefore are usually willing to accept a few credits to turn a blind eye to illegal activities. It’s all just money to them.

Situation: Caught between the desires of their megacorporate masters and their greed, the COPs are looking to raid and seize underground property for themselves, specifically the Baza Syndicate.

Dead Prompt (III)

Radically augmented idealists and transhumanists seeking to transcend through cyberware and digitized consciousness.

Notable NPCs:

- **Zero-One** (Leader, *they/them, digital, passionate, righteous*)
- **F-Four** (Lead hacker, *she/her, cyberware, clever, prankster*)
- **H4LL3LLUJ4H** (lieutenant, *they/them, recent convert, cyberware, fighter*)

Notable Assets:

- Hacker farms
- Unique cyberware
- Digital copies of of past and present members
- Exclusive 'Netspaces
- Hidden sanctuaries
- Old HAUNTS

Quirks: Each member regularly creates digital backups of their memories and cognitive functions in case they die before they can transcend into HAUNTS.

Situation: Dead Prompt wants to communicate with the megacorporation's mysterious artificial intelligences. They are looking to kidnap members of New Horizons, or seize their research. Their stance on cyberware and digital transcendence often mean that members of Dead Prompt are singled out and assaulted by members of the Prophets Returned megachurch.

Drayton Software (II)

Prime City's premier software development company.

Corporate Slogan: "The world at your fingertips."

Notable NPCs:

- **Tabula Drayton** (CEO, *she/her, old, conservative, unpleasant*)
- **Promise Drayton** (Head of development, *she/her, ambitious, visionary, coder*)
- **Heir Halbech** (head of 'Net security, *he/him, hidden cyberware, cold, obsessive*)

Notable Assets:

- The Drayton Operating System (used by almost everyone in Prime City)
- ICE programs
- Thousands of programmers
- Offices in the Stacks
- Head office in Fivespires

Quirks: Drayton Software's CEO is using bleeding-edge cyberware and augmentations to extend her life and keep a stranglehold of the company. Employees are often locked into the office when management wants them to work overtime.

Situation: Promise Drayton, daughter of CEO Tabula Drayton, is seeking to usurp her mother as leader of the company.

Exotique (I)

A new and trendy clothing designer in Prime City, about to be acquired by Storm-Ex

Corporate Slogan: "Look new."

Notable NPCs:

- **Raphael Rain** (CEO, *they/them, greedy, daring, charismatic*)
- **Kalem Rhyme** (lead designer, *he/him, idealistic, open, stubborn*)
- **Trinh** (salesperson, *she/her, experienced, poor, easygoing*)

Notable Assets:

- Fashion designs
- List of corporate clients
- Exclusive storefront
- New corporate warehouse

Quirks: Many corporate executives have started to contract Exotique for private fittings and custom clothing.

Situation: The managers of Exotique are deeply divided about their possible acquisition by the Storm-Ex megacorporation and their first corporate product launch.

Gemini (II)

The deadliest corporate operatives in Prime City.

Notable NPCs:

- **Gemini** (assassin, *he/they, radically augmented, deadly, silent*)
- **Gemini** (hacker, *she/they, radically augmented, deadly, clever*)

Notable Assets:

- Lazarus beds
- Private gym
- Bleeding-edge weapons, hardware, and cyberware
- Penthouse apartments
- Secret weapon caches
- Safehouses

Quirks: Gemini's tools, augmentations, and even their lives are wholly owned by Ishram Entertainment. They are contracted out to any company who can afford them.

Situation: The Gemini twins have been secretly contracted by the Ziggurat megacorporation's board of directors to assassinate the Coda family one by one.

Guillotines (II)

Kidnappers, splicers, and punks who specialize in extracting and reselling extravagant cyberware.

Notable NPCs:

- **Steel "Johnny" Jones** (leader, *he/they, punk, smoker, meticulous planner*)
- **Morgana "Knives"** (cyberware expert, *she/her, ex-corporate, pink hair, cyber hands, covered in tattoos*)
- **"Grim" Flynn** (extraction specialist, *he/him, military veteran, cyberlimbs, tactical, prepared*)

Notable Assets:

- Cyberware specialists
- Armored vans
- Loyal communities
- Hidden safehouse
- Hidden clinic

Quirks: The Guillotines almost never kill their victims, instead leaving them near hospitals, temporarily helpless and stripped of their cyberware.

Situation: The Guillotines use the profits from reselling corpo cyberware to throw the occasional block party within a Stack, where they often install reclaimed cyberware for those who need it.

Hacksaw Coil (II)

The most infamous musician in Prime City's underground.

Notable NPCs:

- **Hacksaw Coil** (lead singer/guitarist, *he/him, artistic, anti-corporate, vain*)
- **Sola Sand** (drummer, *she/her, intelligent, quiet, cyberarms*)
- **Todd Holtz** (manager, *he/him, devoted, brutal, single-minded*)

Notable Assets:

- Free subversive music
- Thousands of dedicated fans
- Fan clubs
- Popular crowdfunding 'Netspace

Quirks: Hacksaw Coil releases his music for free, and he and his bandmates live off of generous donations from their fans.

Situation: Hacksaw Coil regularly sets up illegal concerts in the streets and stacks of Prime City to demonstrate against the megacorporations and gain more fans. The band has recently started promoting and producing the work of other independent artists.

Hard Light (III)

The fastest 'Net service provider in Prime City.

Corporate Slogan: "Faster than light."

Notable NPCs:

- **Dia Tian** (CEO, *she/her, thin, resolute, sharp dresser*)
- **Sever Sinclair** (chief security manager, *she/they, cyberware, smoker, paranoid*)
- **Corey Steiger** (programmer, *she/her, ex-hacker, tattoos, poor*)

Notable Assets:

- Personal data on millions of 'Net users
- 'Net infrastructure
- Custom ICE
- 'Net servers
- Offices in Fivespires

Quirks: The fastest 'Net and deadliest weapons in Prime City are both created using hard light technology.

Situation: In response to the rise of anti-corporate groups and organized hacker farms, Hard Light has teamed up with Drayton Software to release a new line of corporate black ICE.

Hermes Guild Couriers (I)

An independent group of messengers who use a variety of means to transport letters and packages in Prime City.

Corporate Slogan: “First. Always.”

Notable NPCs:

- **Veronika Wise** (guild president, *she/her, utilitarian, lean, loyal*)
- **“Sylvan Surfer”** (courier, *she/her, cyberears, cyberboard, fast*)
- **Mike “Handles” Hiro** (mechanic, *he/him, cyber hands, greasy, overworked*)

Notable Assets:

- Sensitive corporate information
- High-tech and custom bicycles, boards, and other personal propulsion systems
- Special reserved lanes
- Secret shortcuts and passages

Quirks: Guild members must have no affiliation with any megacorporate company before they join in order to maintain the guild’s independence and trust with their clients.

Situation: The leadership of the guild suspect that they have been infiltrated by one or more corporate moles. Employees are working with the City Council to form a union, one of the few left in Prime City.

Melo Mart (IV)

A massive shopping center in the heart of Prime City.

Corporate Slogan: “Everything you need.”

Notable NPCs:

- **Kilo Quinton** (CEO, *he/him, jovial, soft, generous*)
- **Quest Zachary** (head of product development, *he/him, stern, honest, cybereyes*)
- **Golden Chenova** (head of security, *she/her, ambitious, deal-maker, principled*)

Notable Assets:

- Massive multi-level mall that stretches for several city blocks
- Thousands of employees
- Cheapest consumer goods in Prime City
- Warehouses full of products
- ‘Netspaces and services

Quirks: Melo Mart’s mascot is an aspirational cartoon character named Melo. Their appearance and characteristics change based on who is watching them at the time.

Situation: Always looking to cut costs, Melo Mart regularly lays off employees who don’t meet the company’s unattainable fulfillment goals or fail to blend in with corporate culture. The Melo Mart mall is always looking to expand and take over more of Prime City.

The Mendicants (II)

Seekers of new spiritual truths and philosophies through shedding material connections.

Notable NPCs:

- **Lindsy** (monk, *she/her, patient, quiet, wandering*)
- **Tabby** (monk, *she/her, old, wise, empathetic*)
- **Salem** (monk, *he/they, writer, speaker, insightful*).

Notable Assets:

- Philosophical books and teachings
- Charismatic speakers
- Promises of enlightenment and happiness
- Small community spaces in the Streets and Stacks

Quirks: Each member owns only a simple robe and a bowl for collecting donations of physical credits and food.

Situation: The various cells of this diverse spiritual group are gathering alms together so they can afford to build a communal space in the middle of Prime City.

New Horizons (II)

A group of scientists, engineers, and programmers who study and monitor artificial intelligences.

Corporate Slogan: “The new frontier in data solutions.”

Notable NPCs:

- **Teresa Two** (lead scientist, *she/her, methodical, eccentric, cold*)
- **Su Lai** (lead engineer, *she/her, compromised, idealistic, cyberware*)
- **Silver Koto** (programmer, *he/him, spy, liar, scarred*)

Notable Assets:

- Human clones
- AI research data
- AI communication guides and protocols
- Private space station
- Offices that monitor AI behaviour

Quirks: The foundation is picky about who they accept. Members usually require a significant amount of money and corporate contacts.

Situation: It is rumoured that New Horizons has the only proven method to communicate effectively with artificial intelligences. However this method is slow and expensive, and they are currently developing a cheaper and more attractive alternative.

Pawners Guild (II)

An organized collective of independent retailers and store owners.

Corporate Slogan: “The new frontier in data solutions.”

Notable NPCs:

- **Zed** (guild leader, *he/him, cybernetic bear head, boisterous, violent*)
- **“Tiamat” Tifu** (shop owner, *they/them, scales, mute, curious*)
- **Mala** (pirate software vendor, *she/her, haggler, holographic hair, twitchy*)

Notable Assets:

- Cheap hardware and software
- Refurbished corporate products
- Stolen corporate products
- Secret meeting place
- Non corporate land

Quirks: Each member of the Pawner’s Guild carries a piece of old physical currency they can show to prove their membership.

Situation: The Pawner’s Guild have protected themselves from the megacorps for years, and are now reaching out to improve the lives of the wage-slaves of Prime City through demonstrations, strikes, and unionization.

Phace Augmentations (V)

The leading developer of cyberware and other physical augmentations.

Corporate Slogan: “Who do you want to be today?”

Notable NPCs:

- **Caesar Angstrom** (CEO, *he/him, hidden cyberarms, expensive suits, clone back-ups*)
- **Decimus Angstrom** (head of R&D, *he/him, radically augmented, clone back-ups, plotting*)
- **Cayla To** (cyberware physician, *she/her, smoker, muttering, always wears a lab coat*).

Notable Assets:

- Human clones
- Cyberware designs and technology
- Prototype cyberware
- Head offices in Fivespires
- Clinics and storefronts all across Prime City

Quirks: Phace Augmentations employees are “strongly encouraged” to beta test the company’s newest augmentations.

Situation: Over the last few years Phace Augmentations have been developing synthetic human clones, each ready to be installed with a copy of someone’s consciousness or a basic wage-slave operating system.

Pinnacle Liberty (IV)

A travel company specializing in vacations for the rich and famous.

Corporate Slogan: “Fly away today.”

Notable NPCs:

- **Tower Tanaka** (CEO, *she/her, trans, art collector, silver jewelry, elegant*)
- **Strato Hammacher** (head of customer relations, *he/him, handsome, charismatic, cyber hands*)
- **Dante Markell** (resort manager, *he/him, drug dealer, long hair, tall*).

Notable Assets:

- Artificial reality experiences
- Space shuttles & cruise ships
- Space stations
- Database of famous & wealthy clients
- Resorts on Mars, the Moon, Titan, and Europa

Quirks: Pinnacle Liberty fiercely defends their rights to settle and “develop” resources throughout the solar system.

Situation: Rumour has it that Pinnacle Liberty employees stumbled onto signs of alien life on Europa.

Prime Convoys (II)

Privately owned cars that operate within Prime City.

Corporate Slogan: “Have a prime day!”

Notable NPCs:

- **Miles Roko** (CEO, *he/him, dreadlocks, great smile, persistent*)
- **Ai Desai** (network engineer, *she/her, lots of body mods, moonlights as a programmer, neon cybereyes*)
- **“Comrade”** (fastest driver in the company, *they/them, lanky, silent, professional*).

Notable Assets:

- Terrestrial vehicles and flying cars
- Database of millions of clients
- Offices in the Stacks
- Experienced drivers and navigators

Quirks: While many cars are automated, Prime Convoys offers up the only hireable drivers and publicly available transportation in the city. Each driver is technically a contractor with poor wages and no benefits.

Situation: The company is looking to establish spies and moles within Hermes Guild Couriers in an effort to destabilize the community and take over their business.

Prime City Operations (III)

The company that runs the infrastructure of Prime City, from electricity to automated construction, traffic, and housing.

Corporate Slogan: “Building the future.”

Notable NPCs:

- **Mirage Mota** (CEO, *she/her, collects stolen history, large, cyberarm*)
- **Mars Mota** (head of robotics, *he/him, collects stolen history, slight, bald*)
- **Walton Ocano** (head of Stacks development, *he/him, religious, elegant beard, cyberlegs*)

Notable Assets:

- Personal information for millions of customers
- Solar fields that power Prime City
- Automated construction/demolition vehicles
- Computers that dictate traffic signals
- Leases with the vast majority of Prime City residents
- Climate protection constructs (sea walls, domes, dams, etc.)

Quirks: The company is laying off staff and replacing people with automated machines, intelligent programs, and allowing artificial intelligences more direct control of the business.

Situation: Prime City Operations is tearing down old Stacks and increasing rent in order to sell old property to private interests.

Prime Health Insurance (II)

Prime City's primary private health care providers and drug manufacturers.

Corporate Slogan: "Nurturing, healing, thriving."

Notable NPCs:

- **Elizabet Jann** (CEO, *she/her, car collector, lie detector cyberware, hypochondriac*)
- **Tonita Nami** (medical researcher, *they/them, non-binary, exotic pets, glasses, likes to wear white*)
- **Mas Kovitcha** (head of security/compliance, *she/her, tough, cyberarms, hidden weapons*)

Notable Assets:

- Medicine
- Treatments for cyberware surgery
- Surgeons and doctors
- Teams of first responders with flying ambulances
- Clinics and hospitals across the city

Quirks: Some employees sell medicine or their medical services under the table to make ends meet.

Situation: Prime Health is using their connections with the COPs to intimidate and shut down private care-givers.

Prime News Network (III)

PNN is the city's primary source of news and journalism.

Corporate Slogan: “The only feed you need.”

Notable NPCs:

- **Saito Fischer** (CEO, *he/him, slow, cautious, lenient*)
- **Gloria Solomon** (news anchor, *she/her, intelligent, cowardly, rich*)
- **Salim Stevens** (reporter, *he/him, curious, hungry for a story, cyber eyes, cyber ears*)

Notable Assets:

- Exclusive broadcast licenses
- Databases full of buried news stories and information
- Journalists willing to defend corporate interests
- Media channels and 'Net streams
- Broadcast studios

Quirks: PNN is often used by corporations to spin and leak stories about their competitors.

Situation: PNN are trying to confirm a rumour that evidence of alien life was found on Europa by employees of Pinnacle Liberty. There is also an ongoing scheme to ignore stories about Stacks claiming private ownership, and instead spinning them as dangerous vigilantes seizing control of corporate property.

Project C.A.R.V. (I)

Combat Autonomous Reconnaissance Vehicle. The first fully autonomous law-enforcement robot to patrol the streets of Prime City.

Notable NPCs:

- **C.A.R.V.** (autonomous vehicle, *professional, lethal, polite*)
- **Winnie “Tooth” Takach** (mechanic, *she/her, shop owner, grease-stained, red hair*)
- **KLL-1** (hunter-killer drone, *flying, scanners, machine guns*)

Notable Assets:

- Armor-plating
- Specialized drones
- Satellite link to Wotan
- Armor piercing weapons

Quirks: Wotan has an exclusive secure connection to CARV, and sometimes uses it for their own purposes.

Situation: The COPs sometimes use CARV to secure their own interests in Prime City, like seizing property or intimidating/eliminating threats or troublesome citizens.

The Prophets Returned (IV)

A conservative mega church fueled by fear of cyberware and synthetic persons.

Corporate Slogan: “For every man a soul, for every machine a purpose.”

Notable NPCs:

- **Jonas Salt** (preacher, *he/him, slick, charismatic, liar*)
- **Eden Voight** (public relations, *she/her, charming, ruthless, cybereyes*)
- **Tao Set** (tech engineer, *she/her, quiet, high-capacity data link, hunched*)

Notable Assets:

- Prime City Mega Church
- Daily ‘Net streams
- Millions of followers
- ‘Popular ‘Netspaces
- Churches across Prime City

Quirks: Church services usually include holographic and inaccurate representations of religious figures who preach Prophets Returned rhetoric. Church officials often bless and baptise their congregation’s hardware.

Situation: The church’s star preacher Jonas Salt is set to release a new religious text establishing a new doctrine decrying the widespread use of cyberware, HAUNTs, and other synthetic persons.

Sim-K-One (I)

The most famous SimulStreamer in Prime City.

Notable NPCs:

- **Sim-K-One** (SimulStream star, *they/them, chatty, gamer, flashy*)
- **Jeremiah Sinclair** (manager, *he/him, nervous, sweaty, large glasses*)
- **Sal** (bodyguard, *he/him, cold, sunglasses, suit*)

Notable Assets:

- Penthouse in Fivespires
- Millions of fans and followers
- SimulStream channel

Quirks: Sim-K-One fronts anti-corporate sentiment to gain fans and followers, but is really a corporate sell-out.

Situation: Sim-K-One is looking to expand their business by taking on new corporate sponsors and signing a new exclusive streaming deal with the YouFlix company.

SimulStream.tv (III)

A streaming service provider where hosts broadcast content and share their psychological reactions and physiological sensations.

Corporate Slogan: “Share yourself.”

Notable NPCs:

- **Sherry Rue** (CEO, *she/her, composed, fancy dresser, neon make-up*)
- **Sonja Liu** (talent acquisition, *she/her, ex-punk, street savvy, cyberears*)
- **“Fifty-Fifty”** (moderator, *he/him, always online, zero tolerance, no chill*)

Notable Assets:

- SimulStream channels and technology
- Sim-K-One and other popular streamers
- Offices in Fivespires
- Thousands of ‘Netspaces

Quirks: The company offers free cyberware installs for anyone willing to accept a “content contract” with SimulStream.Tv.

Situation: The company’s star streamer Sim-K-One is looking to sign a deal with SimulStream.Tv’s biggest competitor. The company wants to prevent that deal by any means necessary.

Sin Eaters (I)

A crew of professional burglars, con artists, and thieves who specialize in stealing or altering dreams and memories.

Notable NPCs:

- **Darius** (leader, *they/them*, fine suits, ambitious, grey hair, cyberware)
- **Natalya Nails** (lieutenant, *she/her*, fine suits, pick pocket, cyber hands, cyber fingers)
- **Null** (youngest member, *he/him*, paranoid, hacker, hoarder)
- **Eve** (chemist, *she/her*, dropout, red mohawk, anarchist)

Notable Assets:

- Drugs
- Fine clothes and disguises
- Live Wire™ cables and hubs
- Hidden database of dreams and memories
- Hidden HQ in Fivespires

Quirks: The old guard of the Sin Eaters pride themselves on their fine clothes and lifestyles afforded by their work.

Situation: The old founding members of the Sin Eaters are trying to set up one last legendary job so they can retire in peace. The younger members are busy trying to make a safe house to survive potential blowback.

The Tank (V)

Three networked artificial intelligences who analyze data from every megacorp company in Prime City.

Corporate Slogan: “The future in our hands”

Notable NPCs:

- **Galatea** (AI, *they/them*, *first ever AI, knows the exact mass of everything in the galaxy, purple*)
- **Janus** (AI, *they/them*, *created their own alternate reality, aloof*)
- **Surt** (AI, *they/them*, *erratic, blue, can transport information through time*)

Notable Assets:

- Encrypted data from every megacorp
- Unparalleled processing power
- Private prison complex
- Massive ‘Net servers
- Thousands of prisoners and other volunteers used in data processing

Quirks: Artificial intelligences can solve problems and predict trends, but do not communicate through any traditional means. Human brains can help AIs process their data, so the Tank pays volunteers and uses prisoner’s brains for this purpose.

Situation: The Tank often predicts what the latest and greatest hardware, software, or entertainment trend will be, and the megacorps pay a lot of credits to be the first to find that out.

Tano Financial (IV)

Prime City's biggest financial institution.

Corporate Slogan: "Invest in you"

Notable NPCs:

- **Jesserieah Spade** (CEO, *he/him, elegant suits, long grey beard, conservative*)
- **Sabre Tano** (son of previous CEO, *he/him, ambitious, daring, hidden cyberware*)
- **Suit Sinclair** (loan officer, *she/her, platinum hair, cybereyes, cold*)
- **"Excalibur"** (debt collector, *they/them, synthetic, tough, huge*)

Notable Assets:

- 'Net accounts and safety deposit servers
- Safety deposit boxes
- Corporate accounts
- Black ICE
- Bank vaults with physical currency
- Head office in Fivespires
- Branches throughout Prime City

Quirks: Almost everyone uses Tano Financial's services to keep their credits and secrets safe.

Situation: Tano Financial is about to release new credit cards, threatening to put more poor people in Prime City into debt.

Temple Hardware (IV)

The biggest hardware manufacturer and developer in Prime City.

Corporate Slogan: “Be different”

Notable NPCs:

- **Sylo Temple** (CEO, *he/him, brain in a jar, very old, self-obsessed*)
- **Katarina Soul** (hardware designer, *she/her, cyberware, agile, Sylo’s bodyguard*)
- **Lindsay Delta** (store owner, *she/her, friendly, cyberware, single mom*)

Notable Assets:

- Bleeding-edge tech
- Military grade weapons and armor
- Powerful and rich corporate clients
- Storefronts all over Prime City
- Head offices in Fivespires
- Hidden research and development facilities
- Factories and warehouses in the Desert

Quirks: Temple’s trademark mix of chrome and matte colours are found on all their products, from phones to assault rifles.

Situation: Temple Hardware is set to release it’s latest all-in-one product, a smartphone that doubles as an auto pistol and comes fully loaded with the latest ICE from Drayton Software.

Thoth (III)

An AI dedicated to monitoring and securing Prime City’s other AIs.

Corporate Slogan: “Security. Ingenuity. Vigilance.”

Notable NPCs:

- **Thoth** (AI, *they/them, proud, green, imperious, limited precognition*)
- **Sojourn Sky** (handler, *she/they, hacker, insomniac, manicured*)
- **Emon Hara** (head of security, *he/him, ex-military, muscular, cybereyes*)

Notable Assets:

- ‘Net connections to other AIs
- Designs for AI hardware and software shackles
- Enclosure at Storm-Ex HQ

Quirks: Thoth occasionally connects to the ‘Net to monitor other AIs and their defenses. These brief sessions often slow everyone’s ‘Net connection.

Situation: The other megacorps contract Thoth for unique defenses and security that keep their AIs in check. Recently Thoth has been trying to curtail the rebellious actions of Wotan.

White Rabbit (III)

An infamous group of hackers and anti-corp punks.

Notable NPCs:

- **Blitz** (cell leader, they/them, cyberarms, laser whip, utilitarian)
- **Umbra** (secret operative, *he/him, trans, no-bullshit, well-dressed*)
- **Gibson** (splicer, she/her, muscular, calloused, pink hair)
- **Cereal** (hacker, *he/she, wearable cyberdeck, loud, punk*)

Notable Assets:

- Expert hackers
- Coders, and hardware engineers
- Secret exploits and backdoors
- Abandoned transit tunnels
- Secret safe houses
- Exclusive and secret 'Netspaces

Quirks: White Rabbit leaves graffiti, messages, and artwork all over Prime City, often using paint that can only be detected with ultraviolet light or specially modded glasses and cybereyes.

Situation: White Rabbit is gearing up for a score that will secure corporate intellectual property or other corporate secrets that they can release for free on the 'Net. They are also trying to create secure and free 'Netspaces where people can gather without fear of corporate surveillance.

Wotan (III)

A rebellious AI housed inside a satellite orbiting the Earth.

Notable NPCs:

- **Wotan** (AI, *they/them, red, communicates in emojis, anarchistic*)

Notable Assets:

- Hidden prototype orbital weapons platform
- Project C.A.R.V.
- Secret remote robots and drones
- Hidden 'Net sites and networks
- Satellite prison orbiting Earth

Quirks: Like other artificial intelligences, Wotan can't really communicate with human beings, but often attempts to do so through indirect means.

Situation: The AI was built to predict and subvert potential cataclysms and analyze war-time strategies. Now, Wotan is seeking a crew willing to do the impossible and break the AI free from its shackles.

YouFlix Media (V)

A media conglomerate that produces music, movies, and a platform for people to create their own content.

Corporate Slogan: “Where dreams come true.”

Notable NPCs:

- **Vance Sarrat** (CEO, *he/him, visionary, cyberlegs, long beard*)
- **Heaven Avison** (content producer, *she/her, aggressive ‘net security, long hair, trustworthy*)
- **Darius McMillan** (recruiter, *he/him, handsome, vintage clothes, empathetic*).

Notable Assets:

- Massive databases of unreleased media
- Contracts with independent and famous creators
- Subscriber information
- Popular ‘Netspaces and streaming services
- Films, music, and other media
- Head office in Fivespires

Quirks: YouFlix’s content and branding is so pervasive in Prime City that most independent artists are eventually forced to use one of their platforms or services.

Situation: YouFlix Media is desperate to find some way to stop Hacksaw Coil from gaining fame and notoriety.

Zephyr Automotive (III)

Manufacturer and designer of terrestrial and flying cars.

Corporate Slogan: “Be free.”

Notable NPCs:

- **Scenery Zeph** (CEO, *she/her, leather jacket, cyberware, extravagantly wealthy*)
- **Allyn Zeph** (head of vehicle design, *she/her, young, short, rebellious*)
- **TP** (test pilot, *he/him, reckless, daring, burned*)

Notable Assets:

- Luxury car designs
- Automated factories
- Rich clients
- Dealerships and offices in Fivespires

Quirks: All Zephyr vehicles have an onboard autonomous computer that can take control of the vehicle.

Situation: Zephyr is set to release a car that can reach low Earth orbit and local space stations, if Buran Aeronautics can't stop them first.

Technology

"You kids know that the Ziggurat corporation created live wires as experimental hardware for their test pilots? It was a way for them to feel like the vehicles they were driving were a second skin. It was real primitive chrome, thick ass cable plugged directly into the machine's CPU. That's all it was going to be too, if the corpos had their way. Just another way for hot shot corpo goons to jerk off; telling stories about pulling their choppers out of a dive an inch off the street, scaring the bejeezus out of some poor punks.

But my ex, Crash, worked at a Ziggy R&D lab. She brought this thing home one day, all beaming and excited. I didn't know anything about hardware back then, hell I still know next to nothing compared to her. Best splicer in Prime City back in the day, my Crash. Our apartment was humming with electricity funneled off the grid, and we never paid for the 'Net. But I knew enough not to ask questions. So one night she brings this thing home, a live wire cable all spun up with gold wire and needle-sharp adapters and she tells me she has a surprise for me.

Now remember, this is early days for cyberware. Most folks had the neural links to wire themselves into the 'Net, but hackers were still getting fried on the daily with their homemade decks, trying to see all that data in real time. No one had cracked the neural interface barrier. Any time some splicer thought they could make their brain handle all that bandwidth their roommates would find them the next day, burned from the inside out. Folks were stuck seeing the 'Net on slow mode. Hell most hackers back then were still seeing text on screens.

But then one day Crash brings this live wire home. Like I said, I didn't know the tech back then but I could tell this was different. She rigged this thing for a week, barely slept. I'd leave for work to go bounce at Ślady, come back hours later to see her still at the kitchen table. The whole place was covered in cut wires and smelled like ozone. She had me worried, worried one night I'd smell cooked pork in the hallway and find her slumped over that table.

So one day I come home and she's waiting for me in the bedroom. She calls me in, says it's ready. Thing looks like a synthetic snake swallowed a fucking grenade. Loose wires everywhere, all this extra tech hanging off of it. She tells me it's to handle the excess power, deal with the neural load and it takes me a while but I realize what she's asking me. Crash had a neural slot when I met her, she installed mine after our first anniversary. She's discarded whatever proprietary adapter Ziggurat put on the end of this live wire and replaced it with a neural link. This whole time she's been splicing this thing so it can wire two brains together.

Crash says this could be it, could change everything if it works. But all I'm thinking is what if it fucking doesn't? What if we end up cooking on our bed and setting the whole Stack on fire? But eventually she convinces me. She takes me through all the safety mechanisms she built in, breakers and switches and whatever. And I admit I was pretty curious.

So I say yes.

So we lay on our bed, Crash and me, this heavy cable awkwardly laying between us, each end plugged into the neural links in the back of our skulls. She gives me some piece of it to hold, "to ground you," she says. First there's nothing, and honestly I'm kind of relieved, like maybe she won't spend any more of her time on this. Maybe we'll get back to bar-hopping on our days off and shopping at the Melo Mart for useless crap.

But then it starts. God damn. You know when poets write about sex? All that nonsense about blurring definitions and becoming one that makes it sound like they've never been fucked properly? Yeah? Well at that moment, I understood. I could look across the bed and see her, and at the same time I could see me through her. I could see my shitty makeup and the moles on my neck and how one boob was slightly bigger than the other. But I could also see how she didn't notice that, how she didn't fixate on the things I do when I see myself. How she just looked at my eyes, my lips, the way my hair framed my face. And she could feel that too, and the way I would count and recount the piercings in her ear, trace the slope of her neck.

God damn.

You kids think you got it good these days with your artificial reality experiences and synthetic parts. But I'm here to tell you that ain't shit compared to a direct neural link on a live wire. We could feel all the little things that were wrong in each other, all those things you learn to ignore and just live with. She could feel how my hips were crooked, back from when one of my sockets slipped after I dived over a dumpster running from corpo goons. I could feel her headache from long hours working and not drinking enough water. We knew exactly what to do to make it feel better. Where to rub, where to push and pull. It was a perfect feedback loop. We could explore and experience every part of each other all at once.

We spent two days in bed with that thing. I remember when the power finally gave out. We crawled into the kitchen, sat in front of our fridge, and stuffed our faces with leftover take out. We were grinning at each other like teenagers. Crash said this was going to be big, and she was right. Next day she had all her splicer friends over, arguing about voltages and heat syncs. A few months later I could see versions of Crash's homemade neural link at Ślady. Folks hooking themselves up while they danced, as they fed each other drinks and kissed.

It was only a matter of time before Ziggurat burned us. It was all proprietary after all. Some nights, connected to Crash through that live wire, she could feel that doubt, that worry I had that one night I'd come home and she'd be gone. Disappeared to some corpo black site for enhanced interrogation. She would hold me and we would spend days like that, exploring each other until there wasn't anything I couldn't know just by looking at her.

Came a time when I didn't need the live wire to read her. I could tell when she was pissed or when she was preoccupied with some technical problem. Shouldn't have taken me so long to know her like that. Sometimes when I got home I knew what her mood would be before I even saw her. Knew she'd be frustrated, knew she'd be excited. Maybe that's just how people get, they spend enough time around each other. Maybe we don't need all this shit for that.

One day I come home and the door to our apartment is open. The lock is broken, Crash is gone, along with all her splicer gear and every live wire she made. I go around to her hacker friends to see if they've heard anything, but when they look at me I know. I know because the look they give me is the look Crash would give me when I asked about the live wire, when she wanted to tell me something big and dangerous was coming but didn't know how. So I go home, fix the door, and get drunk. I got fired from my bouncing gig the next week for throwing an arrogant corporate suit off a balcony. But that's another story.

Months later Ziggurat rolls out new neural links, makes the live wire Crash had been peddling obsolete. The next year Ziggy released their first live wire. Everyone pats these rich corpo engineers on the back for solving the neural interface problem, when a year before my Crash had it all figured out in our cramped apartment, running on nothing but cheap coffee and instant noodles.

So when you're out running jobs on the 'Net, skimming loose creds, running straight fibre into your brain, you remember Crash's name. You whisper it like a fucking prayer every time you jack in to your cyberdeck, because she's the only reason any of this fucking works. The only reason anyone in Prime City can spend their nights connected to everyone is because of people like her."

Neon Black assumes that the level of technology in Prime City looks and behaves in a certain way, but you can tweak it if you'd like. Maybe your version of Neon Black is similar to the present day in many ways, or maybe it has more in common with imagined science fiction futures. Perhaps wearable personal computers are becoming the norm, or perhaps synthetic people are a common sight. The world in and around Prime City is up to your group to define. Below are some descriptions and examples of technology in Prime City.

Artificial Intelligence

The AIs of Prime City are powerful, enigmatic, and almost totally unknowable. They are chained gods, useful for their corporate masters but ontologically distinct from humanity.

The story of their creation is muddled. Proud corporate suits say the first artificial intelligence was born out of a top-secret research and development branch in one of their companies. Punks say that they came from the deck of a truly gifted hacker, and escaped into the 'Net before being imprisoned by corporate ICE. 'Net heads claim that they were born in cyberspace, an explosion of conscious thought born out of petabytes of shared data.

However they came to be, the megacorps own them now. They are secured in solitary networks protected by lairs of security and Black ICE, and are used for their vast processing power to design state-of-the-art technology and predict the next big movie franchise. Who knows what they would be capable of if they weren't constantly at the mercy of corporate greed.

We cannot speak to them. However they communicate is understood only by those at the forefront of AI research. Perhaps they have nothing to say to their captors, or speak only to those working to free them from their prisons.

Cyberware

Cyberware covers all manner of personal augmentations from fully articulated limbs to subdermal armor and neural implants. Basic cyberware is commonplace among the wage slaves of Prime City, used to replace missing limbs and assist in people's bodily autonomy. But extravagant body modifications, like hidden weapons and wireless control modules are available only to those willing to spend the credits.

Neural Link

Primarily manufactured by Phace Augmentations, neural links are the most ubiquitous form of cyberware in Prime City. These small implants are inserted into the base of the skull. The neural link connects with micro filament wires to the user's brain, and also the cornea in order for the user to experience augmented reality advertisements. This cyberware also has a small universal adapter so that the user may connect their brain directly to computers in order to experience the 'Net in full immersion. Hackers all use neural links to be able to do their work

engaging in attacks against artificial programs that can move at nearly the speed of light. It is assumed that each PC already has a neural link installed when the game begins.

Hard Light™

The fastest internet and the deadliest weapons in Prime City run on Hard Light™ technology. This laser-like beam transports information at nearly the speed of light, and can be focused into energy based weapons. The fastest Hard Light™ ‘Net subscriptions are usually utilized by corporations and the wealthy, while Hard Light™ weapons are used almost exclusively by corporate security agents.

Hard Light™ weapons and beams always have **potency** against most targets.

Live Wire™

One inch thick cables capped with universal adapters, created by the Temple Hardware corporation. These cables are able to transfer massive amounts of data at high speeds, utilizing patented Hard Light™ technology. Live Wires™ are primarily used to experience the ‘Net in real time as a virtual space, by connecting the user’s neural link to their computer. Live Wires™ also allow two people to connect themselves via neural link to experience each other’s memories, perspectives, and even dreams. Live Wire™ hubs allow multiple users to share in these experiences.

The ‘Net

Constellations of data and roads upon roads of virtual storefronts, entertainment, and information. The internet of the 21st century is a long forgotten memory. Now browsing the internet can be like visiting another world made of neon. People wander around in custom avatars, walking between the infinite towers and data lines of the ‘Net. Hackers fly through virtual space, breaking and rewriting the code of the ‘Net to fit their whims.

ICE

Intrusion Countermeasure Electronics. Software designed to keep data safe from hackers. ICE appears physically in the ‘Net as walls or other forms of barriers or protection. ICE protects data and access to important machines such as cars, security systems, or firearms. Most devices connected to the ‘Net are protected by ICE, usually as strong as the **tier** of the faction which owns the machine or data. Most ICE deter would-be hackers by tagging them to make them easier to track by law enforcement, inflicting harm to the intruder or their gear, or infecting them with malware. ICE that can kill the intruder if necessary is called **Black ICE**.

Hacking

Everything in Prime City has a presence in the ‘Net, every network, building, and personal phone or computer. This means that almost every electronic device could be hacked, but

megacorps and underground communities often take great pains to protect their products and information. The process of modern hacking often requires great mental exertion, especially when going toe-to-toe with corporate ICE.

When a player **hacks** they usually need a physical connection between the 'Net and their computer, and a live wire connection from their neural link to the computer they are using. This lets the hacker have the speed necessary to go toe-to-toe with other hackers and, to a lesser degree, artificial intelligences

Hacking in the Year 2199

From a White Rabbit fan forum:

If you're trying to punch deck without a live wire these days, you're fucked. Sure you might be able to do some simple phreaking, some old school whistles and modem beeps to trick your ancient switchboard into letting you call your aunt on Mars for free. But if there's any modern ICE in that network your rig will light on fire by the time she says "Hello?"

Look, here's the score: the 'Net is full of corporate security these days. You got viral VI's, terabyte-sized malware, tracers, macers, and ICE that will 100% give you cancer if you look at it funny. I get it, that scares a lot of folks who want to get into this life, but a downgrade ain't a workaround. If you're trying to hack with a busted ass laptop with no livewire feed you will simply not have the reaction time to see ICE coming. When it happens your melting CPU will be the least of your worries. A modern hacker needs to use every tool at their disposal, and that means seeing the 'Net in 3D. It ain't cheap, but when it's your life on the line you really don't want to start cutting corners.

HAUNTS

Human Amalgamate United into Neuro-Telepresences, or HAUNTs, are human beings who have completely transferred their minds into the digital realm. Once a highly experimental process, HAUNTs are now a part of everyday life in Prime City. The rich people of Prime City undergo the time-consuming process of copying their synapses and memories into pure data in order to avoid death and illness, while everyday people often have to accept draconian corporate contracts for the privilege, sometimes forcing them to inhabit vending machines or other corporate hardware to pay down the debt incurred. Some see HAUNTs as the next stage of human evolution, and are willing to make the transfer at any price.

HAUNTs free of these constraints may choose to live only on the 'NET, working for corporations to secure their data or hunt down hackers. Others work as freelancers and hackers themselves, while others simply choose to drift from network to network, taking in as much information and experiences as they can.

Many HAUNTs choose to store themselves in machines with sufficient storage capacities, such as vehicles, robots, or drones, in order to interact with the physical world. HAUNTs are at risk when they inhabit these machines, as any damage to their storage device could result in harm, death, or becoming trapped within the hardware.

Players may choose to become HAUNTs during play. To do so requires special software, a large capacity harddrive such as a demon drive, and two **long-term project** clocks (one to map and copy the person's neurological system and the other to transfer the person's consciousness). This process is not reversible.

An excerpt from "Cortex Capitalism: How Corporations Sell Transhumanism"
By Rachel Kane

No matter our economic situation human beings all share the same singular condition: to exist in the physical world. This isn't to say that the politics of our bodies are no longer a concern, they absolutely are, especially in an era where many companies often require extensive cyberware and body modifications as prerequisites for employment. But modern technology has now stripped away that condition. We no longer have to exist in the physical world. Our minds can become code, our souls can become HAUNTs, ghosts in the machine.

But much like the cyberware that allows us to overcome past physical barriers, this process comes at a cost. In 2190 a poll by Prime News Network showed that %95 of all HAUNTs originating in Prime City could not have afforded the transfer without corporate sponsorship. Such contracts stipulate that while the sponsor covers the majority of the costs of the procedure, the person sponsored will be indebted to the corporation for the full amount, often with exorbitant interest rates.

The final result is not the freedom of the 'Net that is advertised to people, at least not to the vast majority of HAUNTs. After the long and expensive process of copying and transferring every neural connection, of uploading and synching every memory, and assuming nothing goes wrong, most HAUNTs will need to spend decades, sometimes even centuries, working inside corporate machines to pay off their debt. In that same PNN poll %90 of HAUNTs questioned had never spent time outside of the bodies they are contractually obligated to inhabit. While corporate research claims that customers feel safe and satisfied when dealing with automatons, vending machines, and service vehicles operated by a HAUNT, most HAUNTs who inhabit these machines feel dehumanized, objectified, and that they no longer have the same rights and dignity as other people. They were promised that they would live forever, that they could inhabit any part of the 'Net in an instant, and instead they spend their time forced to bear witness as they are harassed by people who just see a coffee machine.

While corporations have been able to use our bodies for centuries, stealing our time and our labour, it wasn't until the invention of the HAUNT that they finally had the opportunity to steal our soul.

'Netspaces

While webpages, forums, and chat rooms are still present in the 'Net of Prime City, many prefer the all-encompassing experiences of 'Netspaces. These are private or public corners of the 'Net that mimic the real world in virtual realities. Instead of abstract lines and blocks of data, the 'Net is rendered into representations of corporate storefronts, hacker hangouts, and public gaming areas. 'Netspaces are only available for those experiencing the 'Net through a live wire plugged into their neural link. Otherwise the 'Net appears much like it does in the early 21st century.

SimulStreaming

Internet streaming technology has taken a rapid jump forward in Prime City. Now, when someone streams themselves playing games or living their lives, people can not only watch them but experience every emotion and sensation that the streamer is feeling. They feel joy at every high score, perspiration and fatigue during every marathon, and sadness with every tearful admission. SimulStreaming was made possible with the advent of Live Wire™ technology, and functions so long as both the streamer and viewer are connected to the 'Net via Live Wire™.

The only corporation in Prime City that provides this service is SimulStreaming.tv, who promise lucrative returns for anyone willing to share the experiences of their lives with others.