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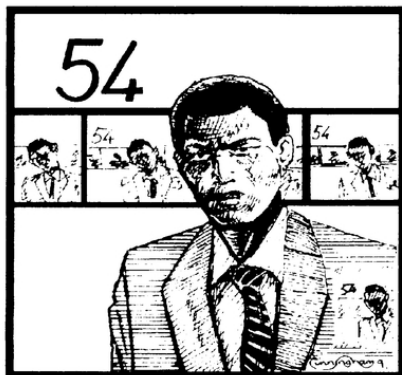
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NEWS SCAN 54 UPDATE:



A hunter is loose in the city. And, of course, the 'scans are making it front screen news. The killings started about 4 weeks ago with the slaying of Nathan Nigochi, a high ranking Arasaka executive, in his fortified apartments in Charter Hill. There followed a seemingly random series of murders, one about every 4 days. Two of the victims were corporates (although none of Nigochi's standing) and the other three were "merely" street people, their mangled bodies found in alleys in the Combat Zone. All the murders have occurred without a clear idea of how the killer got to its victims or how it got away.

Only once did anybody see the killer directly. The next corporate killed was Harold Poindexter of EBM. His mistress came home to find him sprawled across his bed, his throat and stomach torn out. While throwing up, she briefly glimpsed a lean, animalistic figure, full of teeth and hair, which sprang past her out of the shadows and into the hallway. Building security arrived seconds later but

Another body was found today in the Richmond District. Preliminary police reports indicate it may be another one of the "Werewolf Murders." This time the victim was Willard Achen, executive assistant at Sintech Ent. His body was discovered next to his car in the security parking garage of his 15th St. con-apl. The condition of the corpse indicated vicious wounds to the neck, abdomen, and thighs and a 52% loss of blood. Night City Police are continuing their search for the individual who chooses to use these sadistic techniques in his murders.

Although the circumstances of this killing are as bizarre as the others, the City Attorney's Office wishes to make it clear that they feel this is only another psycho-killer, not some rampaging supernatural creature come to haunt the city as some sources claim. Well, this reporter smells a cover-up. The police don't want to admit that something is slipping past their best screens and EATING people. I'm buying some silver-tipped, 10mm rounds, myself. This is Ronald Black, reporting from the Richmond. Good Night.

couldn't find anyone leaving via any regular exits, although a robo-butler access tube was breached. And the killer was long gone.

This imagery, along with the constant competition for ratings, has led the screamsheets to coin the term "Werewolf Murders" when reporting this series of crimes. And each tries to make the killings seem more and more horrific.

THE SET UP

Naturally, the team is the one to run across the seventh victim. One quiet evening, while walking through an area of the South City District near the Zone, they hear a series of grunts and heavy breathing coming from down an alley way. If they bother to look (and they'd better; throw in a small scream if you have to), they will see a dark, hairy form bent over the supine form of an elderly street woman. The instant they round the corner, it sees them, and springs out of view. Only if they have their guns ready will they

even get a chance to fire (with a Target Number of 30. This thing is FAST!). The racing silhouette just seems to absorb any hits and it disappears down a connecting alley. An infrared trace shows that it went up the alley wall and onto a rooftop. Unless you can fly, pursuit is pretty pointless.

The woman's body remains on the litter strewn asphalt. Assuming they check her, they find her throat bitten open and a great deal of blood pooling out. She is very dead. A search turns up a standard Social Security card and various collected trash objects piled in a shopping cart that she obviously considered valuable, even if no one else did. The card lists her name as Margaret Dobbles, and indicates that she has been unemployed for 4 years. That's all they know. The cops split the body bounty of 50eb with the party after the autopsy. Not much of a legacy. Sleep well, Margaret...

As they leave the scene, the group probably does not notice the quick figure that follows them along the rooftops.

WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON

Biotechnica wanted to get into the assassination business. They figured it was better to build an assassin from scratch rather than to patch one together with training and cyberware. So they started with genetically engineered embryos and surgically altered them through the course of their accelerated maturation. They then instituted rigorous conditioning on the surviving specimens. Several international laws were trashed in the process, but Biotechnica came up with some interesting products.

LYCANTHE

Among them is a beautiful woman with some terrifying talents. Her codename is Lycanthe. She was designed to hunt and terminate specific individuals without any cybernetic enhancement; sort of an organic guided missile.

They gave her lots of toys to help her. Her metabolism has been hyped up to the point where she's faster than most jacked-up solos, with a wiry and tough musculature to match. Her vision can range into the infrared (with some loss of clarity) and her hearing is as acute as a dog's. Normally she appears as an extremely attractive young woman, but when she is about to kill, her body undergoes several "unique" changes.

First, upper and lower canines slip out of hidden sheaths in her jaw and lock into place. The jaw then readjusts into a second socket to allow the lower set of teeth better penetration. (My, Grandma, what big teeth you have.) Talons on the first two fingers and thumb of either hand bear from recesses in the phalanges. Her hair plays out in an intense, wiry mass which blurs her silhouette and entangles



close opponents. (Grandma, what big claws you have...)

For years, Biotechnica had designed biohounds that could trace specific pheromone trails, but they had never applied this to a human-based genotype. Lycanthe was the first. Thus, once keyed to the target's pheromone track, she can follow and eliminate with programmed ferocity and cunning.

But that wasn't enough for Biotechnica. No, they wanted a "motivation" to insure Lycanthe's pursuit of her prey. The drive to track and kill is therefore reinforced by a psychological inability to eat anything but the flesh of the target, again programmed into her instincts with conditioning. This gives her that additional impetus to single-mindedly seek the victim, employing her many talents to the fullest.

Another little bonus the techs gave her: her female pheromone glands can kick into overdrive at will, exuding a scent designed to make males forget little things like caution (Make a COOL roll at -2, or else you want this woman NOW! Women can be affected, but only with a -1 to the roll). That's how she gets her various targets to take her in. Biotechnica will probably be bottling the stuff any day

now. (Grandma, what big... oh, never mind.)

She was used only once: the target was Mr. Nigochi of Arasaka. It was intended as both a test run and a demonstration to prove her capabilities to those who matter in this all-too-competitive market. She was given some technological tricks to fool the Arasaka scanners, but the killing itself was done the old-fashioned way: with teeth and claws. Then something went wrong. Lycanthe's conditioning short-circuited, she disconnected her homing beacon, and then slipped her reins. She ignored her recall programming and headed off into Night City, to parts unknown.

SHE'S NOT BAD. SHE'S JUST BUILT THAT WAY...

In fact, Lycanthe isn't the vicious she-demon you might expect. Even though she was grown and conditioned for instinctive assassination, something in her has found what she does horrifying. Now this remnant of conscience has caused her to go into multiple personalities. As a subconscious defense mechanism, she has developed a sort of dual persona; one fairly normal, the "Human" and quite afraid of the situation she is



Lycanthe
(Unique
Construct
Assassin)

INT: 10 REF: 13
TECH: 5 CL: 10
ATTR: 9 EM: 8/1
LUCK: 6 MA: 15
BODY: 9

Cyberware

None, however her talons do 1d6 each in Martial Arts combat (plus any skill and strength bonuses) and her bite does 1d6 damage as well. Her eyes have naturally built-in IR (at -1), LI, and her hearing allows +1 on auditory Awareness rolls. She also has the Pheromone Tracking and Lust Gland (see text).

Skills

Combat Sense +9, Shadow/Track (victim) +12, Strength Feat +5, Streetwise +4, Seduction +7, Fast Talk +5, Awareness/Notice +10, Hide/Evade +7, Athletics +10, Martial Arts (Tiger style Kung Fu) +9, Bite +6, Handgun +5, Melee (claws) +9

Possessions

Light armor jacket, Surprising Stranger™ 10mm polymer pistol, 8 Musk vial (-8 to Shadow/Track to follow by scent).

Notes: She needs to consume at least 4 pounds of selected flesh every 4 days or so. She automatically goes into Feeder mode (EM 1) at this time. If denied an opportunity to eat, her REF goes down by 1 (minimum 1) for every 24 hours until fed. Her mood does not improve during this period. If denied food for 8 days, she goes into a coma and will die 7 days later.

Due to her extremely rugged body structure, her BTM is -5.

in, and the other, something which she calls the "Feeder", which is her subconscious programming for hunting.

The Feeder becomes dominant every 4 days or so as her hunger grows uncontrollable. Because of the dynamics of a split personality, Lycanthe has no specific knowledge of the Feeder's activities in her "Human" state; they only reveal themselves in vague feelings of guilt and stark nightmares that scar her sleep. Like a person who knows she carries the curse of the werewolf, but cannot recall what she did in the light of the full moon, so Lycanthe lives in two separate worlds. She also has a pathological fear of Biotechnica (they weren't exactly gentle in their training), and knows too much about her past to turn herself in. You see, as a construct, she has no legal rights (Gen-Eng vs. Lowell, 2017) and can be disposed of without a trial.

Now, don't get the impression that Lycanthe is simply a scared little girl: she has a cunning that runs through her no matter which person she is. In Feeder mode, she is anything but bestial. She often approaches her male victims as an attractive and sophisticated prostitute, uses whatever line she needs to get them into a secluded area, and then pops the claws and fangs to feed. She also carries a polymer pistol similar to the X-22, although she has yet to use it.

When "Human", she is a skilled and adept scavenger. In fact, she has found a place for herself with a travelling show, the Cirque del Unique, as a junior acrobat and animal handler for the trained constructs. Here, the Feeder can "scent" future targets, catalog them subconsciously, and move on them later. She has adopted the name Monica Annis and attached

herself to Tobias, the head ringmaster. She's hoping that when they move north, out of Night City, things will get better, but she isn't quite sure how.

She is, quite frankly, going insane. If she doesn't get help soon, she will completely lose touch with her conscience and become a total dual being: one a ruthless killer, the other a quiet recluse. She is not yet beyond hope, and a conditioning specialist could break her training and reconcile her twin selves. But that would take time, and she doesn't have it.

THE HOUNDS

Because she isn't the only hunter out there, Biotechnica isn't exactly thrilled at the idea of its premier construct wandering around the Combat Zone, so they've sent out a "retrieval" unit. This squad of heavily armed security people have orders to capture Lycanthe if possible, destroy her if necessary, and "clean up" any witnesses. So far, they haven't been able to get a clear trail, but they have scanned each of the crime scenes and are now using tracking hounds to get trails on both Lycanthe and possible victims with the right pheromone scent.

Arasaka wasn't amused by the "demonstration" which used one of their own as a target. Now they want the assassin and whoever sent it to pay, and pay BIG! They've mobilized an elite hit team to scour the city and bring the killer in, preferably alive so they can find out how the deed was done. They have the nominal cooperation of the police and have pursued their investigations with "enthusiasm", usually over several Combat Zoner corpses. If the team reports their street encounter with the killer, they can expect one of these people to drop by for a "fol-

low-up" interview. And they don't recognize Miranda.

WELCOME TO THE SHOW

Given the notoriety by the story of the seventh victim, the team will probably find themselves a little too popular for their own good. After giving their statements to the police, they will find themselves confronting a mass of reporters yapping at them like rabid dogs, each asking for a story. That same evening, their faces will be on every news channel, wedged in between reports on the Nicaraguan invasion and the Smog Register ("The reading was .085 parts per million today with light acid rains. Clearing somewhat tomorrow. Air filters and umbrellas recommended. And keep those expensive leathers covered...") Their 15 minutes of fame seem to flash by pretty quickly, or so they hope.

JUST A FEW QUESTIONS...

Within an hour of leaving the copshop, the team will be approached by two very efficient looking men in bulky (read: armored) business suits who identify themselves as Arasaka investigators and wish to ask some questions. They'll want to find a quiet place to talk and then will cross-examine the players as to the events in the alley. These guys are cold, professional, intense, and thorough, like samurai in shades. If the team refuses to cooperate, they quietly threaten "strong measures of encouragement" which Arasaka can and will bring down, and then offer 50cb each for the player's time. Any attack on these men will draw the other two Arasaka people out and lead to a very messy firefight. Not a good choice. The Arasaka team will put a loose tail on the team after this.

TAKE CARE OF THIS FOR US, WILL YOU?

The next visitor is Vladimir Bostock, an owner of a neighborhood market in the Zone. He represents a group of Zoner merchants who want to hire the team to hunt down the "Werewolf Killer" and put an end to the bad business these deaths have brought. They are willing to pay 100cb per day per person, but the team will have to cover most of their own expenses. This really is about all the merchants can afford (you don't get rich in the Zone) and they really are pretty desperate. Play them like the villagers in the Magnificent Seven and you can't lose.

YOU'RE MY ONLY HOPE...

Whether they take the job or not, a second guest should come a'callin'. Since the team has interrupted Lycanthe's dinnertime, she's still in Feeder mode. Fortunately for her, she has scented another target. Unfortunately for the team, it's one of them (how unexpected!).

Sometime in the next 8 hours, the chosen victim (preferably male) will be approached by a beautiful young woman, exhausted and harried, claiming that she is being tracked by something...evil. It's Lycanthe, of course, and she's still hungry. She says that she's Doris Estes and that she thinks that a weird animal has been following her with the intention of killing her, that sort of thing. She has good instincts and will tailor her story to elicit the best reaction from the mark... er, target. She will naturally avoid going to the police, saying that she has already and been rebuked. The player is her only hope.

She will try to get the victim alone and vulnerable, using her

Biotechnica Team (number equal to team).

These are basically well trained thugs given carte blanche to do whatever is necessary to end this problem quickly and quietly. Well, one out of two ain't bad...



Biohounds (3)
Biotechnica constructs used as living tracking devices. They will obey any command from the Biotechnica team.

Team Members

INT: 6 REF: 10 CL: 5 MA: 6 BODY: 8

Cyberware

One cyberoptic w/IR, Targeting, Plugs and smart links, Radio Splice. One cyberarm w/ kevlar armor and Buzz-Hand™, Olfactory Boost, Reflex Boost (Kerenzikov +2).

Skills

Combat Sense +7, Handgun +6, Auto-weapons +7, Martial Arts +5, Athletics +6, Shadow/Track +7

Possessions

Medium armor jackets, Ingram Smart MAC-14s, ArmaLite 44s, One has a Barrett Light 20 w/ Heavy Weapon skill +6

Notes: These guys are incognito and bear no corporate colors. Add as many team members as is appropriate for the final shoot out.

Biohounds

INT: 1 REF: 9 CL: 10 MA: 10 BODY: 7

Cyberware

Optic w/ video link.

Skills

Shadow/Track +15, Bite +6 (Teeth do 1d6), Athletics +7

considerable charms (and a good burst of lust pheromone) to win his trust, then do the slash and knash routine. Any good 'punker will put up a fight, and may even start to win given the general firepower capabilities of the average player. Even if she can't get the target alone, things are still going to start smokin'. Just when it's about to be decided one way or the other, the door (wall, window, etc...) blows open and a biohound pounces through at Lycanthe, jaws slaverling! The Biotechnica team comes charging in directly after, ready to do violence to any and all. Lycanthe will escape in the confusion after killing the biohound and leaving a musk splash that masks her trail. The Biotechnica team will lay a vicious fire pattern about the area but move to follow her at the soonest opportunity, leaving the players behind in a smoking ruin, and probably truly pissed off.

THE GAME'S AFOOT!

Well, the players should realize that they're knee-deep in it by now. They've been hired, seduced, gnawed on and shot at. Hopefully, they'll take Bostok's offer and try and track down the killer, which they've now had a good look at. If they want to just walk away, throw the Biotechnica team or the Arasaka team after them. After all, they have seen the killer and know a lot more than they should, or at least everyone thinks that they do. The team can end this manhunt themselves or let Biotechnica or Arasaka bury them as "loose ends". Time to hit the streets.

CALL THE COPS

There are a number of leads the team can follow to run Lycanthe down. One is to have the team

Netrunner pounce into the Night City Police data fortress and find out what they know about the murders. There are a few facts that have not been released to the public.

1. Security cameras show Nigochi entering the building with an attractive young woman and taking her to his apartments. The woman was scanned for cyberware when she entered the building and was found completely clean, not even a Wareman™. Security also shows her leaving 30 minutes later, which falls into the time Nigochi may have been killed, so the police have an APB out for this unidentified woman.

2. Nigochi's biomonitor link was faked so no alarms sounded when his vital signs ended. All in all, it seemed a professional hit with unorthodox techniques except for one thing: Nigochi was missing 5 pounds of flesh which was apparently removed (rather viciously) from his upper torso. Forensics found female hair strands on Nigochi, but no DNA match has been made.

3. The file will include the note that Arasaka has its own people on the case as well, and that they asked that the above information not be released.

4. The other corporate killings are a lot leaner on evidence. In the Achen killing, the garage cameras caught what may have been another occupant in Willard's car, but no details were visible. Police don't have much more on the Poindexter case than what the press reported, except that Poindexter's mistress reported that Harold had been having a lot of "guests" lately, usually young, attractive, and female. (Sound familiar?)

5. There are only cursory re-

ports on the Combat Zone killings. Each took place in an isolated area; victims were of both sexes; each were killed by lacerations to the upper torso, head and neck. They each then had 5-10 pounds of flesh taken, usually in the form of organs such as the heart and liver. One victim was found to have strands under one nail that matched those of the Nigochi killing, but still no ID had been made. There is no discernable pattern to the IDs, but a detailed examination of the victim's effects will show that 2 had ticket stubs for the Cirque del Unique.

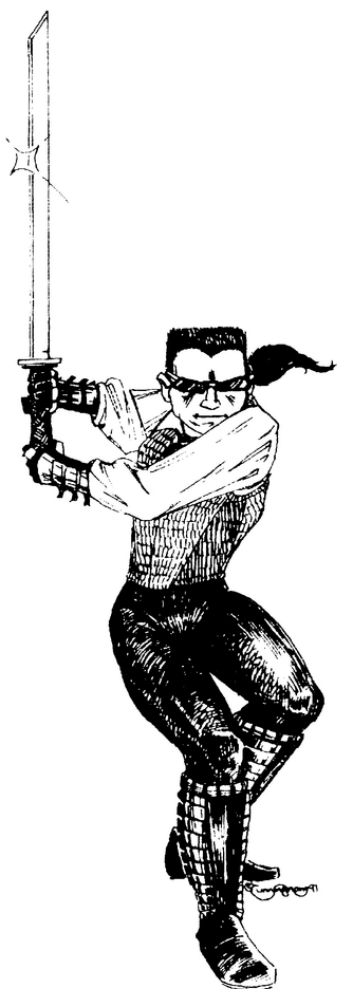
6. The police are looking for a caucasian female, brunette, 160 cm tall, 20-30 in appearance, brown eyes, 57 kg. The official line is for questioning only, but the officers are being told to take no chances: shoot to kill if she resists. But then, at least one of the players has already looked into those brown eyes...

HIT THE PAVEMENT

Trying to investigate the corporate murders will meet with cold stares from the various building security people ("What authority do you have to be asking these questions? Please remove yourselves from our premises...now!") Going to Arasaka has the same results, only with more guns. The next step should be the Zone.

Normally a few more killings here and there are a drop in the bucket in the Combat Zone. But the way these killings happen, along with the terminology of the press, has created some real superstitious panic. Devoid of police protection and filled with people of varied religions, the Zone seems to be slipping back into the Middle Ages. Here, Santaria witches are saying secret prayers to dark spirits of protection, chicken blood is





Arasaka Team (4)

An elite, investigative team designed to find and bring in Nigochi's killer. Dead or alive, of course. These are truly tough nuts to crack.

INT: 9 REF: 10 CL: 8 MA: 7 BODY: 8

Cyberware

2 cyberoptics w/IR, LI, Targeting, and Image Mag, Reflex Boost (Sandistvan), Chipware for up to +3 for any 4 skills necessary.

Skills

Combat Sense +8, Interrogate +6, Shadow/Track +5, Handgun +7, Auto-weapons +7, Melee +6, Martial Arts +6, Athletics +6

Possessions
Medium armor jackets, Minami 10 SMGs, Kendaci® Monokatanas. They'll carry MPK - 11s in the final assault.

spread across doorways, and Gypsy nomads lay out tarot cards with frightening seriousness. Dark, male strangers are driven from neighborhoods with rocks and occasionally gunfire. Needless to say, the market for silver jacketed bullets has skyrocketed. All in all, things down there have become even less inviting than usual. You might expect the torches and pitchforks to be broken out at any minute...

So the Zone's pretty tense, and reaction rolls should be adjusted accordingly. Questioning can eventually lead the team to the Cirque, but don't be afraid to toss in all sorts of random rumors as red herrings. Like a strange woman who has just moved in down the block (she's a hit-person taking a leave), or something about a drug war starting between Arasaka and the local pushers (true, but it has nothing to do with the case). Some of the more suspicious residents think that some mutant animal from the sewers may be performing the crimes (and who knows what may actually be lurking down there.) The Shards Booster-gang may make a play for the team: watch for black-crested street-fighters stepping out from derelict alleys. They've noticed the team snoopin' around and want to see if there's a buck in it for them. After the initial showdown with guns, guns, guns pointed at everyone, they'll be happy to sit and talk, for the right price. The Shards can serve as a useful source of information, and if the team manages to impress them enough they may even help the team out in the final firefight. They know all about the drug war, the hit-gal, and the fact that every victim in the Zone has been hit between 26th Street and 31st, west of Effinger (the Cirque is on 27th). Two of those victims were true paranoid crazies

who avoided people, but loved stray animals like dogs and such... After a while small references like this along with the ticket stubs should send the team on a trip to the circus.

AND IN THIS RING...

The Cirque del Unique is sort of a circus-cum-freak show which travels the small towns of the West Coast, playing to hick audiences and generally scrambling to get by. It's almost like a small nomad pack of its own, consisting of a caravan of 7 vans, 5 motorcycles and 1 semi-trailer rig. The pack of 40-odd performers, techies, and guards have been able to keep themselves alive and together for 3 years now. They stopped in the Night City for a couple of weeks, and found an audience in the Zone, but recent events have encouraged them to move north up the coast within a few days. They are only moderately armed (a few assault rifles and pistols, no really heavy weapons) but are more than willing to defend themselves, and will band together to help each other.

Along the way, they've acquired an assortment of genetic "cast-offs": reject constructs from various labs which they promote as a sort of "specialty" zoo (they avoid the word "freaks"). These include a mutant wolf which stands 5 feet high at the shoulder (but is dying of cancerous tumors), an extraordinarily smart cheetah with three legs, a swarm of fruit flies that respond to simple verbal commands (they were supposed to carry poisons), and a chimpanzee with rudimentary vocal cords but which can only mimic speech, not really talk (still, there's a reward out in L.A. for this critter).

Lycanthe has taken up with these animals, feeling a natural at-

traction to them, especially Maria, the wolf, whose death pangs pain her deeply. She cares for them and keeps them calm during the performances, which are lead by Tobias. Despite her instincts, Lycanthe has become quite attached to Tobias and the feeling is mutual, although he has no idea of her dual nature. Still, he will defend her with his life if necessary (Yup, people still do that sort of thing for LOVE).

What happens here largely depends on the team. If they come in tossing around accusations and waving guns, they're liable to trigger a serious firefight, with the whole Combat Zone joining in for fun (see THE GANG'S ALL HERE! below). If they do some quiet scouting around, they may get a chance to spot Lycanthe before she sees them, and then the ball's in their court. Any ambush may be

met with 20 circus nomads pointing weapons at the team and demanding to know where they are taking their newest member.

Cirque Nomads

These folk are basically gypsies who perform for a living. They have a tight family structure and will work together to ensure their safety.

INT: 6 REF: 8 CL: 5 EM: 7 MA: 6 BODY: 7
Cyberware

Varies. Not everyone has it and then usually not more than one or two mods per person, only a few are combat oriented.

Skills

Family +6, Perform +6, Handgun +5, Rifle +5, Brawling +5, Melee +5, Athletics +7

Possessions

Some light and medium armor jackets, an assortment of medium pistols, shotguns, and light rifles including a Ronin and an AKR-20.

Tobias has basically the same profile, but INT: 8, REF: 8, and EM: 10.

Encourage their curiosity. Lycanthe seems like an intelligent, sensitive woman, and she is. Ideally they may get a chance to talk to her in her Human mode and even get to like her (and she is pretty likeable in this persona). She's fed since their last encounter with her and is finally making the connections between her subconscious Feeder dreams and all the killings. This has put her right at the breaking point. She may go totally feral or turn herself in for disposal. If you can make things complicated by getting them to empathize with her, go for it. If they actually take the time to win her trust, a long shot at best, she will tell them what she knows about her past (keeping in mind that she has blanked the murders themselves).

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They may even come to the quite accurate conclusion that she isn't evil, just conditioned. If they really pursue it, they could discover that she can be helped. There are ways to deprogram her conditioning and modify her diet, at least to accept cloned tissue. The decision about her own responsibility for the murders is a tricky one. While it may be argued that she has diminished capacity because of her programming, modern justice will probably just dispose of her as a construct and be done with it. And she's pretty racked by guilt herself. How deep are they willing to bite?

THE GANG'S ALL HERE!

Well, pretty soon (come on, you knew it was going to happen), both the Biotechnica and the Arasaka teams will show up to start things moving and give us the cli-

matic firefight. They've both been tracking the team and are now determined to wipe out the circus, the team, the other company's team, and capture or kill Lycanthe. Talk about a full agenda. The fight will be furious, too, with the circus people tenaciously defending themselves and the assault teams methodically taking them down.

What side the players join is up to them, but the wholesale destruction of the circus will be hard to watch. During the firefight, you may have Lycanthe realize that this is all her fault and try to sacrifice herself to end the bloodshed (these people are her family). Indulge in grand and noble gestures as you wish. If things begin to look grim for our heros, have the Shards show up to cover their retreat, and the retreat of whoever wants to go with them. After 20 rounds of combat, the firefight will have become large enough to

require police reaction and 2 AV-4s will come in, declaring a Free-Fire Zone, spraying tear gas, and depositing a strike team on site. The mayhem will diminish quickly after the police arrive, with both corporate teams withdrawing rather than greasing the cops.

The resolution is up to the players... assuming they survive. If Lycanthe's still alive, they can turn her over, kill her themselves for a bounty, or befriend her and help her and Tobias get out of the city and rendezvous with the circus later. No matter what they do, they will probably be on the hit list of one or both of the corporations involved and a whole set of scenarios can revolve around clearing themselves with either. The police may have to be dealt with too, and they aren't quite as flexible as the corps. The choices are theirs; so are the consequences.

