WELCOME TO
NEURO CITY

A Cyberpunk Sourcebook For

ARCANA RISING

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1. Cold Welcome

Its been called the Hong Kong of Europe, a neon and sparkle covered island of wealth and technology, full of high-tech trendsetters, high-rise condos, supermodels, rock stars, and corporate barons that can buy most small countries. But for most of us down here on the ground, the City is one thing: cold. Cold rain, cold steel, cold snow, and cold blood, this is a place where the rich rule like kings and gods, and the rest of us struggle to survive on the scraps and odd jobs of a world forever out of reach. These are the icy streets of Neuro City, and you better know those streets, because the ice catches fastest on those that stand still, and the smart ones never stop running. You might never get rich in this city, but so long as you keep moving, at least you won't get dead.

Neuroware

You can't tell the story of Neuro City without first telling the story of Neuroware Incorporated, the biggest mega-corp on the planet, whose hardware is hardwired into half the skulls on the Earth, and whose headquarters essentially *is* Neuro City: Neuroware came first, Neuro City is what grew up around it. Even today the term 'neuro' itself is a ubiquitous buzzword to rival the 'e-' craze at the dawn of the internet, and we have Neuroware to thank.

It started with 'nPrint.' Invented by Simon Harkness, a British neuroscientist and cyberneticist, the nPrint is a neural implant that can take a digital fingerprint of a human mind, in theory creating the perfect biometric identifier, wholly unique to each person. But selling such an implant solely on the security potential was difficult: while a number of corporations snapped at the possibility of near flawless user authentication, on the whole the requirement for invasive brain surgery was a rather tough sell.

Until that is, Simon met Mikko. Mikko Hauppinen was a former mobile device engineer who'd been seeking the opportunity to move forward on mobile phones. The smartphone was on its way out, but wearable computing remained awkward at best. With Simon's nPrint they had a new platform, and after several years of painstaking testing they created the first nPhone: the smartphone that lives in your head. A complete wireless computer that lives inside a neural implant at the back of the skull, nPhone interfaces directly with the host's brain for instant full-sensory I/O between user, machine, and the

internet at large.

Getting it in production, however, would be expensive. The newly formed S&M Industries reached out to the Shenhui Corporation, a massive Taiwanese technology manufacturer, but the deal fell through after Taiwan fell to the Chinese and Shenhui was nationalized by the Chinese Hegemony. Instead, they found an angel investor: Snorri Hreidmar, the dvergar CEO of an enormous shipping empire in the Baltic and North Atlantic. Through Snorri's funds they had the capital and logistics in place to set up their own manufacturing and distribution system for the nPhone. S&M became Neuroware, and set about looking for a place to build their nest.

Åland

Hreidmar Freight already had shipping interests in the Åland Islands, and its unique autonomy and neutrality made it an appealing location to put down stakes for the new firm. They built corporate offices and a manufacturing plant in Jomala, and expanded the facilities of Hreidmar's local pier in preparation for shipping. Neuroware even built homes near the corporate office for Simon, Mikko, and the rest of the expanding executive staff as well as blocks of flats for the workers. The assemblage of buildings quickly became known colloquially as 'Neuro City,' though at this point this was still just a nickname, akin to those of a number of isolated corporate offices in America.

As Neuroware's fortunes exploded, so too did those of the tiny islands. The release of the first consumer-level nPhone was an overnight sensation, shattering sales records and driving up demand to unprecedented heights. Neuroware brought ever more workers from Finland, Sweden, the continent, and eventually beyond, expanding their factory floor to meet demand. Hreidmar's exclusive shipping contract for the nPhone as well turned Snorri Hreidmar from billionaire to the face of dwarven success in business and ushered in a transition in the Earthen Empire from seeking wealth through force, to seeking it through high-powered corporate raiding. Capitalizing on his existing stock in the company and the growth of his shipping enterprises, the angel turned demon: Snorri staged a hostile takeover, merging Hreidmar Freight with Neuroware to form Neuroware Inc. and locking out both Simon and Mikko. Snorri would remain CEO of the new company until he died under mysterious circumstances and was replaced by his son Fafnir, the current CEO of Neuroware.

Åland's native Swedish-speaking residents largely grew fantastically wealthy. The massive boom in business and trade and their status as legally-

exclusive land owners, meant they remain the power elite of Neuro City to this day. The continued status of Swedish as the official language of government and politics, and Åland's unique laws on citizenship and property ownership have served to cement their power and influence permanently. Few of the latter generation of guest workers and immigrants even speaking a word of Swedish, as Neuroware operations continue to be run largely in English. Few residents of Neuro City are full citizens of Åland, even now that the two are more or less one and the same entity.

Further, a controversial decision by the Lagting, the parliament of Åland, requires all new residents to possess at least an nPrint device to gain full right of domicile or even have right of access to banking and government services. Security concerns due to the Elven War were the official reason, and several similar laws have been passed throughout Europe and North America, but the presence of several former Neuroware executives in local ministry positions is suspected to be the real motivation. Astra has thus become a more common currency on the streets than EuroCredits, as the latter require an nPrint chip in order to function securely.

The Elven War

For most of the world the Elven War was the first great international nightmare since the Royal Petroleum War in Africa, but for Neuro City it proved to be the catalyst that transported it from corporate state to a true metropolitan center. While the power-mad Elves ran rampant across the world, pouring in force from portals in the Alps and the Ural Mountains to wage war on all of Europe, Åland's neutrality made it a vital haven from the storm. Even the Elves wouldn't dare threaten a port of call with the backing of the Earthen Empire, and civilian trade through Neuroware's ports boomed, while the flight of refugees and battle-scarred veterans from across the EU and Russia to the island created a population explosion. The War years are what transformed and grew Neuro City into consuming the entire main island, becoming the single mega-city most know today.

The Elven War also had a powerful effect on the world's perception of supernatural forces and especially on the practice of magic. The Elves used mortal wizards as proxies to open the gates for their larger forces beyond, and for the mortal armies facing the Elves, this was their first true test against a fully supernaturally aware and empowered foe. Veterans came back scarred and horrified by battles against a foe that could summon lightning and ravening demons at will, and mortal governments grew paranoid about

security and the uncontrolled practice of wizardry. Russia, the US, and even the entire EU banned the practice of magic by the civilian populace altogether, and nPrint implants became the standard form of identification across the world.

Magic remains legal in Neuro City, in part because Fafnir Hreidmarsson himself is a practicing wizard, though wizards are still subjected to rampant discrimination and distrust, and legal penalties for those caught using magic during a criminal act are far harsher than even violent crime. nPrint devices are even rumored to detect the unique brain-wave patterns of a casting wizard, making them unpopular with the magically gifted. Some still take the risk, often using hacked firmware or Shenhui knockoffs, due to the advantages neural implants can have for improving mental focus and the ease of a spellbook wired right into the brain.

The Aftermarket

With the unprecedented level of neural interfacing offered by the nPrint devices, the field of cybernetics was blown wide open. Prosthetics advancement exploded, as the level of dexterity afforded to an nPrint-equipped patient far outstripped what was available through traditional means. The neural link's access allowed for expansion units as well, that could wire directly into the user's nervous system and enhance focus, concentration, reflexes, and even memory. No longer did the field of cybernetics merely serve to fix damaged patients, it could actually improve people, rebuild them, if with some side-effects.

Shenhui also entered the implant market with their own rival device, the CyberBrain, the product of years of research. Reverse-engineering from the original draft plans from the S&M nPhone formed the backbone of the CyberBrain project, and a corporate espionage war continues to burn between the two heated rivals as Shenhui push to expand their power and influence around the world. Shenhui's implants have become a popular alternative in underground and black-market circles, as their monitoring systems are more primitive and the firmware more easily cracked to serve the goals of today's neurocasters, though they are not yet recognized as a legal substitute for the nPrint by most nations that require one, including Åland.

Neurocasters

The nPrint system is the most advanced biometric security device ever invented, and as security methods go, it lasted longer than most before the hackers managed to get through it, owing in part to the nPrint chip itself being

a patented and proprietary black box. In addition, nPrint's neural fingerprint is based on the user's own subconscious self-image, making the results of the chip's output almost impossible to spoof or even consciously control.

Or at least, so it was thought. The release of the CyberBrain software under an open code license gave the hacker world their first proper glimpse at how the nPrint's hardware functions, and while Neuroware sued to shutdown the CBprint code release, nothing stays deleted on the internet. Within a few months, Avatar 0.1 was released. The program allows a prospective 'neurocaster' with a cracked nPhone or a rooted CyberBrain to focus their thoughts through a virtual 'Avatar,' a false self-image on the net that is far more difficult to trace, and the software can even impersonate a pre-recorded neural imprint. Achieving the required mental focus is difficult, and requires constant training, but for those with the talent, the internet was once again a playground for everyone from cyberterrorists to data thieves.

Neuroware countered with NeurOS: a new kind of AI-assisted operating system that can take security into its own hands, responding to the intruding neurocaster with a wide range of possible security responses, even counter-attacking the intruder's own neural implants to cause pain directly to the nerve centers of the brain. The Avatar team have of course responded in kind, updating the software continually, using the focus of the neurocaster to enhance the performance of its programs by creating a virtual representation of the battle between neurocaster and NeurOS. The intuitive nature of this virtual world allows the battling hacker to respond at the speed of thought, with reflexes enhanced by both their own mental discipline and their neural implants.

The Panoptes

Desperate to find an edge against the rising threat the neurocasters presented to their 'unbreakable' security system, Neuroware reached for a new weapon. Rumors from the Elven Front spoke of an astral creature of terrifying vigilance that could read the very heart of a mortal being. Neuroware hired a team of summoners to research around the clock, and even tried employing operatives to infiltrate Elven lines, all with the intent of finding a working spell to summon and command the creatures. Neuroware hoped to harness the creatures, joining magic and technology towards a solution to the problem of the Avatar.

Instead, they unleashed a horror. The summoners' first great ritual summoned not one, but a dozen panoptes from the astral plane. The panoptes

shattered the summoning circle with ease, drove the summoners mad, and escaped into the streets of Neuro City. Local police were able to contain and execute several of the creatures with airlifted assistance from the Finnish Karhu Team, but several others remained unaccounted for, and some rumors suggested that at least one never actually left Neuroware's corporate offices. Neurocasters tell ghost stories on the darknet about NeurOS-controlled panoptes able to see through an Avatar and trace it back to its source.

Regardless of the truth or fiction of the many rumors surrounding it, the incident placed a black mark on the relationship between Neuroware, the Åland government, and the public at large. The media took to calling it the 'Midnight Panopticon' and ran weeks of headlines across the net, stirring accusations of all-pervasive surveillance on the part of Neuroware. The incident was the chief motivation behind Åland's establishment of a contract with the Folkvangr Corporation. Neuroware officially abandoned the panoptes project, and eventually even came to using neurocasters themselves on the sly as useful resources for stealing data from their competitors, but the old ghost stories still persist among hacker circles.

Folkvangr

The Elven War brought calamity and strife to half the world, but it also brought new allies. The Orcs of the Obsidian Clan maintain a permanent military presence in the fractured Americas, while the Valkyries proved utterly invaluable as elite support and reinforcements in the EU Campaign, due to their incredible fighting prowess as well as their ability to create the draugar. The rites of the Valkyrie Order allow them to raise the worthy dead of battle to fight again, creating victory from defeat by turning the slain into an even more dangerous force than before.

As the war died down, the Valkyries sought a new enterprise to give them cause to maintain permanent presence in the mortal world, and the result was the founding of the Folkvangr Corporation. Kára Alvitr, the corporation's founder, foresaw potential in contracted private security and even privatized policing services across the globe, as many mortal police departments and services had seen harsh manpower loss as officers were drafted to the Elven Fronts. Using the draugar as beat police and front-line security, and the Valkyries themselves as elite tactical support, Folkvangr offers a one-stop shop for capable muscle and firepower for mortal police agencies.

In the aftermath of the Midnight Panopticon, the Åland leadership

pushed for a contract with Folkvangr in order to ensure a more rapid and effective response against any future supernatural threats, and possibly even provide an independently accountable check on any future abuses of power by Neuroware. The latter was called into question after the marriage of Kára Alvitr to Regin Hreidmarsson, but despite the familial connection the Folkvangr's weaknesses owe more to its business model than any potential nepotism. Folkvangr services operate from a 'protection plan' model: pay up, or expect little help. Folkvangr's 'draggers' are more peace-keeper than peace officer, and investigative services are available only to those who pay for the monthly plan. The 'valks' themselves are only called in for serious cases, and the bill to the city for a full Valkyrie Strike Team means that they are employed sparingly and usually only in response to threats to corporate clients, or to major civil unrest like rioting or terrorism.

The Sidhe Problem

The balance of power in the planes is a precarious one, and the loss or weakening of a major power can have devastating effects on both mortal and immortal worlds alike. The Elven War shook up the power structure of the planes in innumerable ways, of which the most apparent and relevant to the modern world of mortals was the Sidhe Civil War.

The Summer Court had grown incredibly powerful in recent times, bolstered by the influence of the warming climate of the mortal world, but Winter is cold and calculating and will always have its day in the end. The onset of the Elven War created magical backlash in the outer planes, and hastened a peak oil situation in the mortal world. Reaching out to Tabal Industries in secret, the Unseelie Queen began supplying the gnomish energy and weapons conglomerate with a source of 'dark rime' taken from the heart of Niflheim. The unhallowed chill of the dark rime allows for cooler and more efficient nuclear reactors, and created a boom industry in fusion technology for Tabal and a massive shift away from the fossil fuels that drove the warming climate.

Winter's gambit paid off, Summer's power faltered, and the judgment of the Unseelie Queen was merciless and terrible. The forces of Winter raged across the lands of the Fae, driving Seelie and wild Fae alike to flee to the mortal world, and putting those that remained to the sword. While Summer managed to put up enough of a last ditch defense to protect its own home realm from falling to the frozen onslaught, the backlash triggered a new 'little ice age' in the mortal world and created a great diaspora of thousands of sidhe

and fae creatures.

These sidhe have struggled to make their way in the mortal world. The Iron Curse prevents sidhe and fae creatures from taking the nPrint implant, and it even makes working with any number of mortal technologies painful. While a few wealthy sidhe lords managed to leverage their personal fortunes to create comfortable lives for themselves, most sidhe even among the aristocracy found themselves going from royal standing to run-down squalor. Sidhe and fae camp in squats and shanty towns in the uglier parts of the city, and their perpetual disenfranchisement from mortal society has lead to uprisings and even terrorism by sidhe radicals. Many of the rest turn to organized crime, joining international gangs like the 5th Street Devils, or getting odd jobs from the syndicates. Some attendants even make it a point to employ them on operator teams, favoring their non-citizen status and reputation for the easy deniability.

Crime Incorporated

With the streets littered with the disenfranchised, disaffected, and destitute, crime has become big business, with the major syndicates now rivaling the mega-corps themselves in power and wealth. The Brother's Circle has gone from being thought a myth to growing in power to rival the yakuza, thanks to an extensive alliance with the vodyanoy that has turned big profits in the black bazaar business. The Mittsu-gumi have grown fat from mergers of rival syndicates and considerable investments in technology stocks and foreign real estate scams, and both syndicates have active presences in Neuro City.

The rising star in the public eye, however, are the 5th Street Devils. Originally a street gang from Lemland, the Devils have become a multimedia, transnational empire. Thrust into media super-stardom by a popular reality show, the Devils have gone global in a big way, making as much money in recent years from merchandise and media appearances as actual criminal activity. An energy drink called Devil's Dew, created in concert with a flagging American soda company, has become one of the most popular beverages in the world. DevilMediaGroup is actually listed in several international stock exchanges, at least in those regions where their accounts aren't frozen due to ongoing involvement in a number of criminal enterprises.

Increasingly as well, ordinary street gangs aren't enough to survive on the streets of Neuro City, as supernatural threats start to organize their own packs. The ultra-violent, vampiric Blood Droogs, the radical insurgents of the Sidhe Liberation Army, and the bloodthirsty Varulvar have all carved out a

space of their own on the streets, often from neglected Devils turf, and the ongoing war between the lot has kept the valks and draggers very busy recently, busy enough for some parties to start hiring freelance operators for protection.

Freelancing

If you can't make your way through the crushing bureaucracy of the corporate office, or the violent and capricious life of a low-level gangster or street thug, the best way to make something like a living these days is through freelancing, working as an 'operator' in the world of contract crime and violence. Operators are those with enough skill at hacking, security, or combat to serve as third-party contractors for corporations and syndicates. Operators work for those that need a job done and don't care much how it gets done, and don't want the results easily traced back to them, whether to avoid legal confrontations or counter-attacks from rival forces. Even some governments employ independent operators, especially in the intelligence fields.

Operators work through an 'attendant.' The attendant takes job requests from clients and acts as anonymous matchmaker and jobs market. The attendant posts a job, often via invite-only internet board, and operators who've been invited can post a bid to take the job for a specific fee. The attendant then selects the bid that's the best trade-off between contract cost and odds of success, taking into account the past performance record of the operator or operator team making the bid. The operators with the successful bid get forwarded the full details under strict non-disclosure rules, and set to work, collecting payment by net, courier, or dead-drop when the job is confirmed as finished. The entire process may require no face time between any of the participants at all, and most attendants meet their operators only once, to vet a team before they get an invite to the attendant's board.

Operators are most frequently employed as agents of corporate espionage, for hostile extraction of goods or data, as bodyguards, and even as wet-work elimination teams (the term 'attendant' actually grew from a mistranslated Swedish word for assassination). Low-end operators may even be employed in transport of dangerous, stolen, or sought-after merchandise, working either as couriers or armored transport. Operators are left to their own devices on how to complete the job, but failure to deliver can leave one black-balled by the attendant, and even other attendants as they seek work elsewhere. Some operators who've turned double-agent or tried to make off with transported goods have even found themselves hunted by rival teams or

corporate security. Should the operator be captured, they cannot expect any help from their attendants, and their true client is usually completely anonymous, thus leaving no practical trace to the source of the job. This life in the dark can have its own dangers, but the pay-off can be lucrative and the freedom of operation is often preferable to the alternative.

Magic and Monsters

The practice of magic and the existence of extraplanar creatures have become more or less common knowledge in the modern age. While myth and legend about their actual nature and capabilities are rampant, it's difficult to deny the existence of things that walk the streets every day, run major corporations, and invade our plane of reality with military force. Dwarves, gnomes, halflings, sidhe, and orcs are all growing minorities in most major cities, including Neuro City, and the practice of magic is well known, though the technical details are a closely guarded secret among practitioners.

The use of magic is legal in Neuro City, though the trade in magical goods is still strictly controlled and thus often a gray market at best. Crucially however, being caught using magic during the commission of a crime is an automatic maximum sentence and may even carry additional penalties. The draggers' standard policy is to treat all wizards as 'carrying a deadly weapon,' making them an authorized target for lethal force. Many wizards avoid the nPrint out of rumors that it can log the mental patterns involved in spell-casting, providing evidence of it in court, and even those who don't face sizable discrimination due the role of mortal summoners in the Elven War, even in the supposedly neutral Neuro City. Others though, have come to prize the nPhone as a hands-free spellbook, and the use of neural focus implants to improve concentration when casting.

Magic in general is on the rise, but somewhat unstable thanks to ongoing turmoil in the outer planes. Wizards have found their spells alternately weakened and empowered based on the flow of influence in the outer planes, while others have found the influx of magic through extraplanar invasions has made possible the use of more powerful cantrip spells that thus offer a useful hold-out in a fight. Turbulence in the walls between realities has made the intrusion of planar creatures more regular, and while the Folkvangr keeps the streets safe in the corporate neighborhoods and suburban walled gardens, the slums and squats have come to see the occasional wandering beast out for human flesh as an unfortunate hazard of life. Some community groups have formed to collect public funds to hire operators for dealing with such threats to

the streets when the Folkvangr can't be bothered to intervene.

Clerics and champions alike have even found work picking up the underpaid monster hunting jobs that more mercenary operators won't bother with due to the high risk and poor reward of saving tower blocks from ravening ghouls and other such terrors. The divine will doesn't seem to mind a bit of mercenary reward, especially if it means protecting other mortal lives. Some holy folk of a more radical disposition will even take the right job raiding corporate targets so long as the cause is good, or at least there's no risk of harming the innocent in the process.

Life in the City

Neuro City is a city of the haves and have-nots. The rich live in the high-rise condos of Mariehamn, or the fortress-like gated suburbs of the outer islands, but everyone else has to make do with what they can find. Most operators manage to keep a half-decent flat so long as they keep on the level with their clients: corporations targeted by a job rarely go after operators once a job is done and the hand-off made, because an unemployed operator might just be the one you hire next time. Operators willing to work for the syndicates though, or to take on syndicate targets, tend to live a more transient life, living out of sleazy hotels and changing spaces as often as needed to avoid being an easy target for angry, jilted clients or the victims of their latest heist.

Day to day life for the rest of society is all down to the chip. For those who've been chipped with at least a basic nPrint, most jobs are open and even the unemployed can collect the dole, though its thin these days and nothing worth trying to live on. Corporations like Neuroware are the major employer here, and if you're really lucky you can even get corporate housing, though its like to be in a cramped tower block unless you start climbing the totem pole. Payment is all done digitally in 'EuroCredits,' or €C, and a simple RFID check of the nPrint chip is all that's needed.

For those who won't, or can't, get the chip, things get rougher. Few corps will hire the un-chipped for anything but the most non-essential, expendable, and non-sensitive positions, and government programs only apply to chipped, full citizens. That means under-the-table work, under-the-table housing, pay in Astra, and often, a willingness to look the other way from time to time about what that work is. Street gangs like the Devils didn't get to be massive phenomenon for lack of desperate volunteers. Refugee stipends have been meted out to a few since the Elven War, but even that requires documentation likely not available to a sidhe lady-in-waiting who up until the

War didn't even have need of material goods of her own, and the funds are first-come, first-serve and very limited. Homelessness, squatting, and even makeshift shanty towns have become commonplace, though the numbers sometimes thin out around winter time, especially since the Sidhe's little war.

If you can gather enough funds you can always go into business for yourself, as the regulations and taxes alike are laxer in recent times, but finding the real estate can be tricky in such a cramped space can mean dealing instead with the shady brokers of the Mittsu-gumi, and then there's always protection money to the local street gangs and bribes to the beat draggers.

Despite the rough living, Neuro City is still a cultural center though, and if you've got the spare cash and the spare time, there's a never ending run of pleasures to seek. There are nightly shows from thrash metal bands playing in back-alley bars to rock gods playing sold-out shows at the New Wiklöf Arena, night clubs of every description and kink, and the TV and movie studios here crank out enough entertainment to rival Old Hollywood back in the USSA. Street fixers in the back alleys can get you any kind of pleasure physical, mental, or chemical, and the Mittsu-gumi have an extensive gambling network both above-board, and underground. If you want it, you can get it here, so long as you've got the cash to pay for it. The less legal it is though, the more likely they don't take your nPrint ID for payment, so you better have coin.

There's fortunes to be made here still, even with the corps and the syndicates warring to rule the world. A smart operator knows how to keep his head down between jobs, and which ones to pick to keep the lights on and the blood in the veins where it belongs instead of running on the street.

Welcome to Neuro City. Bring a coat, it gets cold.

2. The City

A great jewel floating on the Baltic Sea, Neuro City is the largest city in the Nordic Countries, and indeed, one of the largest in all of Europe. Founded in the Åland Islands as a company town around the Neuroware corporate headquarters, the success of the company lead to an explosion of growth, and today Neuro City constitutes the entirety of the main island. Officially an autonomous region of Finland, Åland enjoys a great deal of independence, and has been an officially demilitarized neutral territory for over a century and a half. This neutral status made it a safe port during the Elven Wars, and dwarven influence through Neuroware ensured that status was respected even by the elves. Today, Neuro City is one of the great cities of the world, a powerhouse of technology and culture, but also a place of substantial economic inequality and intense population density.

City Character

Metropolis/Warren

Neuro City has often been compared to Hong Kong, and it is easy to see why. The documented population is over three-quarters of a million people, most of them squeezed onto the main island, *Fasta Åland,* which has an area of just over a thousand square kilometers. Much of Åland's population are crammed into massive tower blocks and high-rises, and only the rich on the outer islands have anything resembling a suburban home.

It is a richly textured city with dozens of cultures, ethnicities, and even species living side by side, and one can find almost anything if one knows where to look. Downtown Mariehamn is a sight to rival New York's Times Square, with theaters, TV studios, high-rise condominiums and hotels, and an array of shops with all the best brands the world around. The surrounding neighborhoods range from crumbling slums and squats, to industrial mega-centers, to tightly-packed rows of tower blocks that seem to reach out of sight from the street. Everything from the expensive to the illicit can be found somewhere in Neuro City, but it's best to be careful wandering the darker places, especially at night. For such a small area, it is remarkably easy to disappear: there's a lot of poor and disenfranchised souls out there in the squats, and nobody misses one soul when so many are already lost.

Police Force

R3 – C0 – K+1

Police services in Neuro City are provided primarily through the Folkvangr Corporation, a private security corporation contracted by the city that operates something like a cross between a peace-keeper force and a protection racket. Beat cops and riot squads are largely composed of draugar, the risen fallen of prior battles, simple-minded but effective muscle distributed to keep the peace. Elite Response teams are composed of Valkyries and the best of their draugar recruits, and the day-to-day business of investigation is still mostly in the hands of mortal detectives, though such investigative services are reserved only for those who've paid their monthly dues for a Folkvangr service plan. Murder someone with a good plan, and you can expect a long, hard investigation, but as for everyone else? So long as the draggers don't show up while you're doing it they may as well have been nobody.

Because of the shortage of real-estate, long-term offenders caught by Folkvangr are rarely placed in traditional lock-up at Sottunga Prison. Instead, the majority of long-term prisoners and serious offenders can expect to be stored in the Vax. Sometimes called 'the Honeycomb,' the Vax is a stasis system designed by Neuroware to house problem offenders with a minimum amount of space and care. Prisoners are packed into a lattice-work of tiny cells, wired into a 24-hour full sensory simulation environment, and fed by intravenous solution. Prisoners are sedated prior to transport in order to ensure they remain unaware that their final destination is an illusory one: a simulation designed by a variant of the NeurOS AI system, generated from the subject's psychological and criminal history in order to ensure maximum compliance and acceptance of the virtual world. Use of the Vax is still highly controversial with human rights organizations, but the cost-effectiveness and excellent security provided by the system have borne a major increase in profit and efficiency for Folkvangr, and official reports indicate few side-effects or incidents.

Note that nearly all the major corporations have high end protection contracts with Folkvangr, and the normally poor Response of Folkvangr increases to 7 when dealing with incidents on corporate property. Draugar units are also known for a 'shoot first, interrogate the bodies' approach to police response, as their primary goal in any incident is to preserve the peace, not to deliver justice. It is not wise to expect negotiation from Folkvangr officers once violence has already transpired, and if the Valks have been called to the scene, one may even count oneself lucky to even survive the next twenty minutes.

That said, more minor and non-violent crimes are likely to get a more smooth response provided they aren't being committed against the property of a major corporate client, and draggers aren't all the noble, self-sacrificing war heroes the adverts make them out to be.

Key Locations

Neuro City is a glittering wonderland for those with the bread to make things happen, and one can find almost anything here, but the following are a few important locations for operators and the supernatural community.

The Floating Market – *Black Bazaar.* The Floating Market was the Brother's Circle's solution to avoiding Folkvangr raids and to the difficulty of finding large enough turf not owned by the Mittsu-gumi to host such a bazaar. Constructed of a lattice of barges big and small, the Floating Market drifts around the shallows near the main island in perpetual orbit. The Market provides a one-stop shop for magical artifacts, wizards' scrolls, and more mundane black-market goods from firearms, to illicit substances, to the wrong kind of neurovids. If it isn't legal, you can probably find it here, and if you can't, someone working the stalls probably knows where you can find it.

Major NPC: Mama Bass. Vodyanoy, 5d8 HD (15 hp). The Market's matron is an elderly vodyanoy with a surly disposition but a surprising sense of fairness.

Old Marsh Park – *Urban Forest.* Despite the cramped confines, there remains a bastion of nature on the main island in the form of Old Marsh Park, which rests roughly in the center of Finström, west of Markusböle Lake. This wild stretch of untameable swampland is ringed and cut through with forest and trails, as well as most traditional park amenities. The park has a somewhat unsavory reputation however, owing to smell of the marshes and the frequency with which bodies turn up within them. Local wisdom suggests that one never venture into Old Marsh Park at night.

Major NPC: Maria Lahti. Lvl 6 human forestwalker, 6d8HD (25 hp). Maria is the sometimes elusive warden of Old Marsh Park, and sometimes the subject of local urban legends which tell of ill consequences for those who threaten the natural bounty of the park.

Church of St. Olaf – *Cathedral.* Dating back to the 13th century, the ancient medieval church still stands as a bastion of stoic Lutheranism huddled amongst the industrial bustle of Jomala. Attendance is low these days, but the church has become a safe haven for champions of faith of all stripes under the

watchful eye of its unassuming pastor. Some believe the church has survived the centuries through the direct protection of angelic forces, and those of the undead would do well to avoid crossing its threshold: even draugar can't walk through its doors without discomfort.

Major NPC: Pastor Nylund. Human, 3d6 HD (13 hp). Hospitable and warm, Pastor Nylund is a welcoming arm for those who seek peace.

Planar Intelligence (PI) – *Special Investigations.* Formed by the Finnish National Bureau of Investigations decades ago, the Planar Intelligence office was an undermanned spook squad until the advent of the Elven War, when it was expanded and turned into a full division of the NBI. When the Folkvangr were given the contract to take over policing the streets of Neuro City, the local PI squad remained on-board as a liaison office. PI is still officially independent of Folkvangr and remains under the auspices of the Finnish NBI, but they work closely together, with the Valkyries providing useful intel on supernatural threats and the draggers and valks alike called in when firepower is needed.

Major NPC: Detective Inspector Astrid Sköld. Lvl 5 human gunfighter, 5d10 HD (32 HP). A hard-edged veteran of the Elven War's Nordic front, Ms. Sköld has a roc's eye and a hellhound's determination.

Daisy's Pub – *Basement Bar.* Run by a surly but silent satyr and said to be named for his lost nymph love, Daisy's Pub sits in a back alley in Old Mariehamn. This converted 'Irish pub' has become a favored hangout for the supernaturally gifted, and a meeting place for operators and attendants looking to make a first connection. If you're new in town and looking for shady work or to talk spell-craft with the local wizard set, Daisy's is your place, just don't start any fights, don't badmouth the waitresses, and be careful with the house wine if you value things like 'consciousness' and 'memory retention.'

Major NPC: Gunnar. Satyr, 4d8 HD (24 hp). The curt and stoic barman of Daisy's Bar, Gunnar is known for responding with swift anger to troublemakers.

Factions

The streets of Neuro City are host to an array of rival powers, all competing for control of its limited turf, and the profit to be had from its millions of citizens. Some even work in the interest of protecting its citizens from those same factions or from rogue supernatural threats. The politics of life in Neuro City can be complicated, and it pays to know who's who.

Major Corporations

       This is the era of unrestrained corporate power, and Neuro City flows with the activity of a number of major transnational corporations. The following are some of the most powerful and well known among them, though plenty of others exist.

Neuroware: *Wealth, +2.* The largest corporation in the world, Neuroware Incorporated is the manufacturer of the nPrint, nPhone, and NeurOS systems, giving it the lion's share of the market for data security, mobile devices, neural implants, and computer operating systems. Its subsidiaries include Hreidmar Freight and Lakeland Wireless. Neuroware guards its monopoly fiercely, and is a vicious opponent in business with an extensive history of hostile takeover and corporate espionage.

Major NPC: President/CEO Fafnir Hreidmarsson. Lvl 5 dwarf wizard, 5d6 HD (22 hp). Callous and ambitious, Fafnir's greed is legend, and rumors persist that he was responsible for his father's death.

Shenhui: *Power, +0.* Shenhui Corporation is a fully nationalized technology manufacturer of the United Chinese Hegemony, and a former contractor with S&M Industries, the precursor of Neuroware. Shenhui's business strategy is influenced by the imperialistic aims of its government, and they have sought to spread their operations as widely as possible, with interests in every kind of technology product from computers to cybernetics to farming equipment. Their rivalry with their former partner eventually led to the creation of the CyberBrain, a rival neural implant device that has proved especially popular with neurocasters.

Major NPC: Director Bi Jian-hui. Human, 4d6 HD (15 hp.) The patient and calculating director of operations for the Shenhui group, Bi Jian-hui is no mere puppet, and his ruthless efficiency has brought him sizable personal wealth.

Tabal Industries: *Knowledge, +1.* The secretive and ever curious Tabal Industries is the modern face of a clan of gnomes thought to be synonymous with an ancient kingdom famed for its metal-working in the Atlantean Era. Today's Tabal Industries is a powerhouse of technology with a specialty in energy and weapons technologies, and it operates one of the most advanced R&D labs in the world. Tabal's 'dark rime'-cooled fusion reactor has revolutionized the energy industry, facilitating a new move away fossil-based fuels for electrical power generation, though it has made them an enemy of Royal Petroleum.

Major NPC: CEO Tuppi Hassu. Gnome, 4d6 HD (14 hp). The inquisitive and sharp-minded leader of the Tabal clan, Tuppi's eye for the future is rivaled by none.

Royal Petroleum: *Wealth, -1.* The beleaguered former king of the energy market, Royal Petroleum was created by the merger/treaty between two rival energy conglomerates, after their competition over newly discovered fossil fuel deposits in Africa turned into a shooting war that waged for almost a decade. The resulting merger created the largest energy concern in the world, and for a time they dominated the market, making massive profits off the dwindling oil reserves. They were set back significantly by the launch of Tabal's fusion generators, resulting in a plummeting stock price and a power grab for the company. RP's branching into hydrogen fuels has managed to stabilize the company's fortunes, but their relationship with Tabal remains an icy one, despite Tabal-made generators providing the backbone of RP's fuel production system.

Major NPC: CEO Reginald Ainsley. Human, 4d6 HD (16 hp). The living embodiment of the *nouveau-riche,* Mr. Ainsley made his original fortune importing cut-price energy drinks, and is known for his bar-brawler's temper and sly tongue.

100-Group: *Wealth, +0.* A Swedish retail empire founded on a simple idea, 100-Group began with the 'Hundra' franchise founded by Karl Skogstad. Hundra stores' unique concept was to stock precisely 100 items, creating a deliberately limited amount of shelf-space that both reduced inventory costs for Skogstad, and increased competition for space in his stores. The result was a resounding success, and since then the 100-Group has expanded into a wide range of retail outlets, operating a range of different retail brand franchises. Besides their HundraFood and HundraMart stores, they operate the Hundra24 convenience chain, HundraBank, the AutoMark chain of dealerships, and even serve as the co-partner for the nPhone Store. They are one of the two main retail giants in Neuro City, and constantly war over who takes the bigger half of their collective oligopoly.

Major NPC: President/CEO Harald Skogstad. Human, 5d6 HD (14 hp). The scion of 100-Group's vast empire, Harald has upheld his father's legacy with savage determination and bloodthirsty market tactics.

KalaCorp: *Power, +0.* Originally founded as a fish market co-op, KalaCorp is a Finnish powerhouse of the retail world, the rival of 100-Group in every respect and in every market. Through the guidance of its eccentric and infamously

paranoid CEO, KalaCorp has expanded aggressively and viciously. The competition between KalaCorp and 100-Group has at times escalated into an outright violent brawl, largely instigated by CEO Heikki Kaalinen's desire to make KalaCorp into the imperial arm of Finland itself. Operator teams disguised as street gangs have been harassing Hundra stores into closure, with KalaCorp quickly snatching up the resulting vacancies to open Kal-Mart stores in their place. KalaKafe, KalaCorp's restaurant chain originally founded to drive out a growing American coffeehouse concern, has also become a fierce rival to Manburger's higher end eateries, but is also famous for offering an open-mic to Finnish musicians as part of Kaalinen's mission to spread Finnish culture.

Major NPC: President/CEO Heikki Kaalinen. Human, 5d6 HD (17 hp). A self-described 'patriot of Finland,' the highly erratic but ruthlessly successful CEO sees the expansion of KalaCorp as his personal East India Company, seeking to create a Finnish Empire through commerce whether the actual nation desires it or not.

Manburger: *Wealth, +1.* Founded by a native Ålander before Neuroware was but a blip on the map, the Manburger chain arose from a simple local eatery to a fast-food giant thanks to shrewd business skills and the booming economy of Åland. Åland's biggest local success story, Manburger International franchises are now found throughout Europe, and the company has expanded by snatching up a number of other eatery chains at all levels of the market, from greasy kebab to faux-haute cuisine. Manburger is famous for its macho-oriented marketing, capitalizing on its name for a series of catchy and vaguely sexist commercials implying its burgers will 'make a man out of you even if you're a woman.'

Major NPC: CEO Albert Karlsson. Human, 4d6 HD (13 hp). Despite the macho face of Manburger's name and advertising, current CEO Albert Karlsson is a shrewd but humble businessman who has carefully maintained the chain's image largely due to its demographic success.

NCTV: *Wealth, +1.* The biggest of many media companies that have thrived in Neuro City thanks to the nPhone's ability to stream 'neurovids' directly to the user's sensory system, NCTV Media Group is a giant of the 'inner screen.' Originally an independent local news outfit, NCTV now produces full length movies, serials, documentaries, music videos, and more. NCTV owns interest in a wide range of content delivery networks, including a wireless service subsidiary that was originally the only one available to nPhone users in Åland. NC Wireless is still seen as 'the' service to go through for nPhone devices,

thanks to an ongoing partnership with Neuroware and a considerable marketing effort. NCTV also owns a number of the larger music venues in Neuro City, including the famous New Wiklöf Arena.

Major NPC: President Emelia Johansson. Human, 4d6 HD (14 hp). Once the lead anchor of NCTV News, Emelia's razor-sharp intellect and image savvy proved incredibly valuable to the company as a producer, raising her up the corporate ladder in just a few short years to running the entire media group.

Organized Crime

Any city with such a pronounced gap between rich and poor, and such widespread disenfranchisement of the lower classes is bound to have a sizable criminal element, and Neuro City is no exception. Here are a few of the major players.

Brother's Circle: *Wealth, +1.* Once thought to be a myth invented by paranoid American authorities, the Brother's Circle is a major Russian transnational crime syndicate with a specialty in all manner of illicit trafficking. Their alliance with the Bolotnik vodyanoy and the bloody rise of current boss Alexandria Zemonova has lead to some significant changes in the outfit, however, and the Brother's Circle has abandoned its interests in human trafficking to focus on gray market tech and magical goods. Bolotnik matriarchs act as bosses for most of the Circle black bazaars, and Semonova's personal guard are dispatched when necessary to keep the outfit in line. It is not wise to cross the Circle, as their tradition for gruesome retribution remains strong: even the Blood Droogs aren't crazy enough to cross the Circle.

Major NPC: Alexandria 'Nozh' Zemonova. Lvl 7 human gladiator, 6d10+3 HD (32 hp). Utterly remorseless and infamous for her vicious reprisals upon enemies, 'Nozh' nevertheless commands fierce loyalty from her lieutenants, many of them rescued personally from the Circle's former human slavery rings.

Mittsu-gumi: *Power, +1.* Created from a merger of the three biggest yakuza groups in Japan, the Mittsu-gumi are one of the world's most powerful crime syndicates, with criminal interests ranging from drug trafficking to high-level stock fraud. The Mittsu-gumi have been known to extort entire corporations, and the outfit itself is run as much like a zaibatsu as a yakuza gang. Their legitimate corporate and real estate holdings rival the profits of their more overtly criminal operations, and they even possess a considerably advanced R&D division. They have in recent years grown particularly active in the gambling business, both legitimate and illegal forms, and their R&D

developments along those lines have also branched into digital gaming as well, owning a number of interests in social networking games.

Major NPC: Oyabun Ichiro Yamaguchi. Human, 6d6 HD (28 hp). Yamaguchi is an old soldier, practically raised in the yakuza, but he has a prescience and a talent with technology surprising for his reputation as one of the old guard.

5th Street Devils: *Chaos, +2.* There is no 5th Street anywhere in Åland, and in fact, numbered street names are rare throughout the Nordic Countries. Such an anachronism is a clue to the odd and chaotic nature of the ever troublesome but unquenchable force that is the 5th Street Devils. Founded on the streets of Lemland as nothing more than a bunch of petty hoodlums with a fetish for American gang culture, the Devils nonetheless rose to prominence through an unpredictable temperament and a home field advantage. Their starring role in a NCTV reality series about gang life catapulted them to super-stardom worldwide, leading to merchandising deals and the creation of the DevilMediaGroup empire. Despite their stardom the Devils nevertheless maintain sharp control of their home turf, but their chief interests remain anarchy and hedonism: crime and media empire alike are just means to fuel another night's endless party.

Major NPC: Puck. Lvl 8 human rogue, 6d8+4 HD (45 hp). 'Puck' is the charismatic and sarcastic leader of the Devils, known for his anarchic and occasionally violent temperament but also a strong, if warped, sense of justice.

Blood Droogs: *Chaos, -1.* A psychotic vampire cult that worships ultra-violence, the Blood Droogs pattern their lives after the psychopathic protagonists of Kubrick and Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange.* The Blood Droogs operate on a strict heirarchy despite their chaotic nature: all initiated members are *droogs*, but only some are worthy enough to be given a taste of vampire blood and become *krovvies*, and an even smaller number of those undergo the full transformation to *uppers,* full vampires (after Russian *upyr).* Those who fail the transition are left as mindless *dooks,* zombie servitors sent on suicide runs against particularly hated enemies. Droogs rise in rank by committing as much atrocity as they can to please their vampire masters and prove worthy of further induction into the undead life, while their masters use those who fail to pass muster as food.

Major NPC: Ivan Bolshik. Vampire, 6d12 HD (32 hp). Ivan is the head of the uppers, the vampire lord at the center of the Blood Droog's web of sociopaths and cannibals, a soulless creature of bloodlust and rage.

Sidhe Liberation Army: *Chaos, -1.* A disorganized cell of self-described 'freedom fighters,' the SLA are a terrorist group composed almost entirely of sidhe refugees, and are responsible for a range of terrorist activities of widely variable success rate. The SLA primarily focuses on corporate targets, especially Neuroware and Shenhui, but also has engaged in a number of attacks both small and large against various governments, especially those with mandatory nPrint laws. Most recently, the SLA staged a bombing against a private vacation house in Brändö, killing an upper-level Neuroware executive and his entire family in the blast. The official statements of the SLA claim these acts to be a form of protest against the unfair treatment of sidhe refugees, but some have begun to question their motives, and a trail of seemingly unrelated crimes timed with SLA attacks may indeed hint at a less noble mission.

Major NPC: The Morrígan. Sidhe, 5d8 HD (27 hp). Named for an ancient goddess of battle, the mysterious Morrígan is the elusive and vengeful leader of the SLA, rarely seen and largely known only through rumor for even most SLA members.

Varulvar: *Power, +0.* Originally a disjointed faction of ecoterrorists and squatters formed to protect the Nåtö nature preserve south of Mariehamn, the Varulvar founders sold their souls to a demon lord to become werewolves, and since then have operated as a powerful family of criminals who rule the streets of the southern islands through threat and act of violence. The Varulvar curse is hereditary, but the family leaders may perform the rite needed to induct a new member into the Varulvar, and mortal members who prove worthy enough can be inducted as true werewolves of the Varulvar family. Primarily the gang operates through protection rackets: few are willing to challenge the authority of a gang with actual werewolves it can call in as enforcers.

Major NPC: Sten Varulvar. Werewolf, 5d10 HD (30 hp). The current patriarch of the Varulvar, Sten is young, prone to rash behaviors, and responds exceptionally poorly to challenges against his authority.

Other Factions

UNA: *Peace, +0.* The Union of Neighborhood Associations is an alliance of the many such organizations that have cropped up in poorer neighborhoods in Neuro City. Many such neighborhoods have few residents with the funds for a Folkvangr protection plan, and despite the corp's contract to provide civil protection, they tend to be slow to respond to threats that are localized to such unprofitable neighborhoods. Instead, the UNA takes donations from the community, and uses the funds to hire operator teams to take care of such

problems through extralegal means.

Major NPC: Chairman Katti Lindberg. Human, 2d6 HD (11 hp). A conservative and hospitable mother of two, Katti is a civic-minded native Ålander with a strong sense of justice and family.

The ____ Society: *Knowledge, +0.* The ____ Society (sometimes called simply 'the Society' on account of its lack of an actual official name), is a loose order of wizards founded to work together towards the furtherance of arcane knowledge and the protection of it from those who would abuse it. The name was the clever notion of its founder: the actual full name was never decided or specified, and as an unpronounceable blank meant that no spell could target the group collectively due to its lack of a 'true name.' The Society is mostly insular these days, and does not intervene as often as it once did, out of a fear that their attempts to intervene for the better might instead be seen as hostile and result in even more prejudice and violent retribution against wizards.

Major NPC: Archmage Elias Velhonen. Lvl 9 human wizard, 6d6+6 HD (30 hp). Morose and pensive, Elias takes a light hand on Society affairs, preferring to focus on research rather than intervention.

Good Tidings Inc.: *Power, +1.* Ostensibly a public charity organization, Good Tidings Inc. operates a chain of retail thrift stores throughout Neuro City, though the true nature of GTI's operations is found in their 'Career Rehabilitation Centers.' The CRCs claim to offer the downtrodden a chance to retrain in new careers or find new jobs, but the truth is that they act as the recruiting centers for the larger cult. Desperate souls join, are inducted into the organization as 'life trainees,' and take up residence in the CRC dormitories where they undergo extensive 'rehabilitation classes' meant to make them more pliant employees of the Good Tidings stores and operations. Since all members are volunteers, and GTI is officially a non-profit organization, this keeps costs low and profits high, and most of the public are unaware of its true nature as few who go in ever escape. Some groups like UNA have even independently sponsored donation drives, essentially providing free merchandise for GTI unaware.

Major NPC: High Director Ellie Strömberg. Human, 3d6 HD (11 hp). Ellie is warm and affectionate to most, but protects the GTI organization with zealous efficiency and brutality behind the scenes.

The Sanguine Cross: *Peace, -1.* A non-denominational order of champions and clerics, the Sanguine Cross aims to unite the champions of the divine will

into a single unified holy order to stand against all magical and extraplanar threats to mankind. In practice however, the order spends as much time in-fighting and bickering as it does fighting evil, and a perpetual lack of resources on the part of the order has largely rendered them impotent in a world with such pervasive supernatural influence. Nonetheless, to the last man and woman, the group's members do have their hearts in the right place, even if they often fail to agree on anything in particular. The Sanguine Cross has proved to be a relatively minor force in Neuro City but maintains strong ties with the UNA and have at times assisted with its needs.

Major NPC: Brother Michael Strindberg. Lvl 5 human cleric, 5d8 HD (29 hp). Kind and self-effacing, Michael feels more suited to caring for the sick than to fighting evil monsters, and this may account for the weak leadership of the order in recent days.

Geography

Åland is divided into 16 municipalities. The main island is composed of Mariehamn, Jomala, Lemland, Hammarland, Finström, Geta, Saltvik, and Sund, and the islands of Lumparland, Vårdö and Eckerö are directly connected to the mainland by bridges. These regions constitute the main metropolis of Neuro City, while the greater Åland Islands region also includes the many outer islands within Föglö, Sottunga, Kumlinge, Brändö, and Kökar.

Mariehamn is still officially the capital of Åland, and was originally the largest city in the islands by far, holding the majority of its residents. These days it has become the main downtown area for Neuro City. The region is often divided unofficially into Old Mariehamn and New Mariehamn. Old Town contains the original town buildings that still stand, the Åland government building, and the main courthouse. New Mariehamn contains most of the newer developments and high-rises as well as the main NCTV studios. Daisy's Pub lies in a back-alley basement in Old Mariehamn, and the home turf of the Varulvar is the small islands to the south of Mariehamn's main peninsula. The Eastern and Western Harbors of Mariehamn are home to some of the largest docks and marinas in all of Scandinavia.

Jomala is home to Neuroware's headquarters, and thus technically the founding site of Neuro City itself. It is a thriving industrial district, containing a wide range of factories including the plants which make the nPhone itself. Tabal Industries also operates a sizable fusion plant here, providing power to Neuroware's factories and Neuro City at large, and the Mariehamn International Airport is actually located here. The Church of St. Olaf is still here, and it is

rumored that the Sanguine Cross holds its meetings there.

Lemland is a working class neighborhood, that came to be heavily populated by Neuroware factory workers who couldn't afford houses in the increasingly crowded and polluted confines of Jomala. It is also the founding turf of the 5th Street Devils.

Finström is home to Old Marsh Park, the largest park in Neuro City and indeed, one of the only truly 'wild' places left on the main island. The packed brownstones and row houses here are much in demand for those corporate family men and women looking to keep a home close to work.

Hammarland has become a major commercial and shopping district and contains the local headquarters for both 100Group and KalaCorp. The northern end of Hammarland is home to a large number of Asian immigrants, and serves is the main home turf of the Mittsu-gumi in Neuro City. Shenhui's local headquarters are also here.

Eckerö was once a fairly exclusive neighborhood that has since fallen out of fashion. Though the southern end still maintains some high-end gated communities, the region developed a poor reputation as the prime real estate for gangsters like the Devils looking to build tacky mansions with their newfound riches, and the bulk of the island's more urban neighborhoods are now Brother's Circle territory as a result of a major turf war between the Circle, the Devils, and the Mittsu-gumi. The impressive Eckerö post and customs house, built during Tsarist Russian occupation, is still standing behind iron gates as the private estate of the Karlsson dynasty.

Geta was the least populated area of the main island even before the Neuroware boom, owing to a landscape consisting largely of rocks and swamps. As Neuro City grew, a massive waste processing center was installed here to meet the demands of the expanding metropolis, and the property values naturally plummetted. Today it is largely home to the poorest of the poor, a warren of squats and even shantytowns, and it is rumored that the Morrígan holds court for the SLA leadership here.

Saltvik and Sund comprise the largest residential areas on the main island, packed to the brim with tower blocks and high-rises and housing projects.

Sund plays host to a number of corporate headquarters, most situated near the New Kornas Bridge, including the local headquarters for Manburger

and the NCTV film studios. Sund is also home to the famous castle of Kastelholm, these days mostly recognized as a popular location for NCTV Films shoots set in fantasy or medieval times.

By and large, **Saltvik** is the poorer of the two, owing to its proximity to Geta, and it has become a regular stomping grounds for the Blood Droogs (though they have no true home turf). UNA's meeting hall is here in Saltvik, as is the famous Orkish Chips Factory.

Lumparland is home to the third major seaport (besides those in Mariehamn and Jomala) and the main ferry line to the rest of the outer islands, and Royal Petroleum operates a major hydrogen reserve and processing plant here, as well as its headquarters.

Vårdö is largely rock and difficult country on which to build but has become home to a number of exclusive gated communities. Good Tidings' main headquarters is also located here in order to more easily keep new recruits from escaping, and The _____ Society have a tower upon one of Vårdö's rocky outcrops.

The rest of the outer island municipalities are the domain of the truly wealthy, old money Åland natives and corporate executives, all gated communities and even private islands. Because these remain solely under Åland law as opposed to Neuro City municipal law, only full citizens may own property here.

The one exception is **Sottunga**, the formerly sleepy island which is now home to Sottunga Prison and the Honeycomb facility, both operated by the Folkvangr Corporation, which also keeps a sizeable investigative services office here owing to the amount of intelligence that can be gleaned from inmates in both live holding and the Vax.

3. Characters

For the most part, characters for Neuro City can be created using the standard rules from the *Arcana Rising* corebook. Those gearing for a more operator-centric campaign composed of seasoned professionals may wish to use the High-Powered options for stats and HP, but the default settings should provide the level of grit and danger expected from a cyberpunk dystopian future. The following sections detail some additional options, however, such as alternate rules for playing planar beings, a neurocaster class, guidelines for an operator career, and cybernetics.

Non-Humans

Neuro City plays host to a sizable minority population of planar beings, from orcs to halflings to even a few rogue elves. The standard *Arcana Rising* rules for monsters as PCs can be a bit limiting, in accordance to their rareness in that era, but these days such creatures are more common.

Instead, non-human PCs in Neuro City begin as normal humans do, starting at level 1 of a chosen class with that class' Hit Die, taking the usual bonuses and penalties to stats and any special abilities from that species. In exchange, the character requires more XP to level based on the species' base number of HD, in accordance with the table to the right.

Level	Base	1HD	2HD
1	0	0	0
2	10	40	90
3	40	90	160
4	90	160	250
5	160	250	360
6	250	360	490
7	360	490	640
8	490	640	810
9	640	810	1000
10	810	1000	1210
11	1000	1210	1440
12	1210	1440	1690

The standard list of non-human races for Neuro City campaigns is as follows: Dwarf, Elf, Gnome, Halfling, Orc, and Sidhe. Other species of no more than 2HD may be created with these rules, but only with express permission of the DM. As well, Elven characters may find themselves the subject of significant discrimination within the game world, being subject to CHA penalties when dealing with those who begrudge them the Elven War, and sidhe characters may not take any form of cybernetics.

Neurocasters

'Neurocasters' are computer hackers who have developed the talent and mental focus necessary to employ the Avatar program, allowing them to

spoof their own identity on computer networks and thus gain access to those systems by illegitimate means. Neurocasters hone their powers of concentration with the dedication of a monk, as only by precise mental control can they cast the false self-image needed for the Avatar to work. A forged nPrint is only as good as the signals from the host's brain, and while the Avatar software and the firmware modification assists this process, it is the focus that is the true key. Most neurocasters thus also dabble a bit in the occult arts, as the practice of spell-casting requires similar amounts of concentration and can be a handy hold-out for a skill-set that otherwise doesn't often entail much combat prowess.

Many neurocasters go into business as operators, or as black-market information brokers, as there is good money to be had in 'black-hat' work these days. Others work as corporate data security or industrial espionage experts. Some even swear off the 'suit life' and make ends meet by other means, employing their hacking talents to 'fight the man' as cyber-terrorists and digital freedom fighters. A good neurocaster needs a high WIS to focus their mind for the process of Avatar creation, and a good INT to do the dirty work of hacking once an open connection is established.

Level	Melee To-hit	Ranged To-hit	Hit Dice	Saving Throws	Will	Spells
1	+0	+0	1d6	+1 WIS	1	Level 1
2	+0	+1	2d6		2	
3	+1	+1	3d6	+1 DEX	3	
4	+1	+2	4d6		5	Level 2
5	+1	+2	5d6		7	
6	+2	+3	6d6	+2 WIS	9	
7	+2	+3	6d6+2		12	Level 3
8	+2	+4	6d6+4		15	
9	+3	+4	6d6+6	+2 DEX	18	
10	+3	+5	6d6+8		22	Level 4
11	+3	+5	6d6+10		26	
12	+4	+6	6d6+12	+3 WIS	30	

Stat Requirement: INT 7+, WIS 9+

Weapons: Short Blades, Handguns

Armor: Light

Special Abilities

Focus: The neurocaster trains their mind to laser-like focus, gaining a level of control over their own thoughts that amazes even wizards. Neurocasters have access to an exclusive skill: Focus, which they gain at +1 automatically, and may improve with level. Focus is used when establishing connection with a server, attempting certain hacking actions, and attempting 'neurohacks' on enemies with nPhone implants.

Computer Whiz: Neurocasters are masters at computer use and hacking, the best in the business. All neurocasters begin with Computer and Security skills at +1, and this +1 is in addition to any other ranks taken, meaning that a neurocaster can exceed the normal limit of +3, to a new maximum skill of +4.

Spell-casting: Neurocasters' concentration abilities are a natural fit for arcane spell-casting, and this can prove a handy talent for defending themselves if an on-site job turns ugly. Neurocasters begin the game with 1d3 level 1 arcane spells. They may learn additional spells in much the same way a wizard does, however, neurocasters do not have spell memory, and instead rely on their neural implant to serve as a spellbook. Any effect that disables their nPhone or CyberBrain device will also thus render them unable to cast any spells.

Neurohacking: One of the other perks of the neurocaster's talent and toolset is the ability to disrupt an enemy's neural implants remotely, essentially temporarily taking control of the implant by faking the neural authentication between user and implant. This can be used to cause effects as simple as forcing a reboot of the device, to applying actual physical pain to the target. These tricks can only be used on a single target, and only on those with a full nPhone or CyberBrain device, not an nPrint-only implant. Each of the following hacks has a difficulty, which acts as a penalty to the Focus check needed to pull off the hack.

- Shutdown (0): The hack sends a shutdown signal to the target's implant, essentially rendering it useless for 1d6 rounds as it reboots.

- White-Out (-1): This hack overloads the visual output of the device, blinding the user for 1d6 rounds.

- Noise (-1): The hack sends a painful screech directly into the audio processors, essentially bombarding the target with a piercing sound they cannot escape. The target is disoriented and at -2 to-hit for 1d8 rounds. A WIS save halves the duration.

- Reverse (-2): The hack targets the sub-processor of a target's neural enhancement, causing the implant to temporarily induce the opposite effect. This essentially turns any positive bonus from the implant into a negative for 2d4 rounds.

- Brain-burn (-3): This hack is the most difficult but also most devastating. The neurocaster attacks the neural implant's safeguards and sends a signal of agonizing pain directly into the victim's nervous system. This deals 1d8 damage and 1 temporary WIS damage unless a WIS save is made, and regardless the victim is momentarily paralyzed with pain for 1d4 rounds.

Operators

Operators live a freelance existence, rather than one relying on a steady career and paycheck, and further, the execution of their task is generally the focus of the game-play rather than a side-story or mortal tether. As such, groups playing solely as an operator team may find the default *Arcana Rising* career system somewhat awkward, even with the option of freelancers. This section, and the Lifestyle section to follow, provide an alternative approach for groups focusing purely on the operator life.

Creating an operator can be done in two ways. The first is to assume the operator had some prior career before going into contract work. As such, the character may select their skills as normal from that day job, and fund their new life as an operator with the usual amount of Astra from that day job's Income.

The second option is for seasoned operators, those who largely went straight into a career as a street-runner, often through a combination of grunt-work, self-education, and finding a patient pro to shadow in the field. Such characters can instead take the Operator day job described to the right.

Pure Operators do not have a Demand or Income value, however. Instead, they begin play with ₳1d4×200 with which to purchase equipment. Income past this point comes solely through performing jobs for attendants, covering their cost of living purely with contract fees.

Operator

Uneducated

Requirements: DEX 7+, WIS 7+

Skills: One Weapon Skill of choice, +1 to three of the following: Athletics, Computer, Demolitions, Driving, Investigation, Language, Martial Arts, Persuasion, Security, Stealth, Streetwise, Smuggling

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Cost of Living

Instead of dealing with the difficulty of their job Demand, operators of all types must instead keep up their basic living costs directly, earning enough from their contract work to keep a roof over their head and at least something edible in their bellies. Each of the following living arrangements costs a set amount of Astra which must be paid as often as indicated to keep it, and in return provides a certain quality of life and security. So long as the character keeps paying, they can keep living expenses covered, and they may change their arrangement at any time.

Homeless (₳0): This is where you wind up if you can't pay your rent somewhere with a roof. You sleep in the streets, or if you're lucky and pay the ₳10 a week in protection money, maybe you manage a safe shanty in the Geta slums. Food comes as you can get it, and you're probably malnourished unless you've got the cash to eat out. Security through anonymity is the goal, but you spend enough time fighting for safe turf it's kind of a wash.

Squatter (₳100/month): You've staked a claim out in a squat somewhere, paying the protection money to whatever local ganglord or yakuza owns the place. You live on Manburger and street food because the only 'kitchen' on your floor is a burn barrel with a shopping cart grate over it. You have little security, save that the gangers who run this block don't like threats to their territory.

Hotel-**Hopper** (₳50/week): You'd rather not be nailed down to any particular spot, keeping yourself anonymous by hopping from one dive hotel to another. The beds are mostly clean though, and the rooms have heat and a shower, and if you spring for a nicer room (₳100/wk) you can even order room-service food.

Crashbox (₳250/month): You've found a little hole-in-the-wall all to yourself, renting out a tiny little one-room coffin of an apartment in one of the big tower blocks in Saltvik or Lemland. You even eat your own home-cooked food in the kitchenette when you have the time, and when you don't you can at least spring for the Manly Meal at the local Manburger. Security is still a warm gun under your pillow.

Estate Flat (₳500/month): You are officially part of the closest thing that Neuro City gets to a 'middle class,' with a decent two- or three-room flat somewhere in Finström near the park or the nicer parts of Sund. You eat real food on a regular basis, price is no object at Manburger, and you can afford a basic Folkvangr plan for security.

Condo (₳1,000/month): You're living it up in the city, with a real high-rise condo somewhere in Mariehamn. You've got a brownie who cleans the place when you're away, and more importantly, a building full of security that anyone who comes looking for you will have to get through to get to you and your stuff. You can eat at the good chains now, and stay up late drinking top-shelf at the clubs downtown.

Gated (₳5,000/month): You're out in the burbs, now. A real high-class type (or at least an Eckerö poser), paying mortgage and everything. You've got a gate out-front and a real mean orc who you pay good money to keep the bad men out. You eat real steak and drink real champagne, and your car gets replaced once a year.

4. Cybernetics

The advent of the neural implant opened the way for a boom in the field of cybernetics, and these days just about everyone with the cash has been modified in some way or another, at least to install the latest nPhone. The following chapter will detail stats and costs for the wide range of cybernetic modifications currently available on the commercial market.

Installation

A given cybernetic implant must be installed. A licensed professional cyberdoc will charge 20% on top of the total cost of the devices to be installed, with no chance of complications. An unlicensed skull-hacker will only charge 10%, but there is a chance of complications (make a CON save). Cybernetics indicated as illegal must be installed through a skull-hacker unless the character is employed in a career that allows them to obtain such items legitimately (such as a soldier).

Complications from cybernetic installation are many and varied, from psychological rejection to physical scarring, but in mechanical terms this takes the form of a loss of 1 point to a random stat (roll 1d6).

Financing

The installation of cybernetics can be an expensive process, and the hardware itself is not necessarily cheap either. However, both licensed docs and skull-hackers are generally quite happy to offer financing packages for those a little too strapped to pay for a lump sum, just expect to pay considerable interest.

Divide the total cost of installation and parts by 12, and add an additional 10% in interest costs if a cyberdoc, or 20% if a skull-hacker. This is the amount per month that must be paid towards the cost of the cybernetic implants.

Failure to make a payment for more than a month will result in dire consequences. Licensed docs will be willing to accept half-payment (in exchange for double the loan period) and repossession if this isn't possible, but skull-hackers are prone to leaping straight to simply reclaiming their parts from your corpse. It is thus advisable to keep up on one's payments.

Neural Implants

Note*:* One of the following neural implants is *required* in order to install any further cybernetic implants.

nPrint: The basic neural implant. Provides a core processor for further cybernetics, and RFID-based authentication of user identity. ₳100.

nPhone: The cybernetic answer to the smartphone of old, the nPhone is a portable computer wired directly into the user's brain, with all the features one would expect. Also includes an nPrint authenticator. ₳300, plus ₳30/month for always-on wireless internet.

CyberBrain: Essentially the open-source Chinese knockoff of the nPhone, the CyberBrain nevertheless provides a complete computing package with easy customization options that make it popular with power users. Contains a CBprint authenticator, but this device is not considered compliant with ID laws. ₳200, plus ₳30/month for always-on wireless internet.

Cracking Firmware

Out of the box, none of the neural implant devices are suitable for use with the Avatar software, and contain the standard logging features typical of any nPrint or similar device. To allow for direct access to the authentication hardware, and modification of core functions, the firmware of the device must be "rooted" or "cracked."

There are two ways to do this, essentially: download a crack and do it yourself, or buy one that's already been cracked. Doing it yourself requires a Computer check, the failure of which bricks the firmware instead and leaves you with a dead implant that must be repaired (₳100 at most nPhone stores). Alternately, you can buy a pre-cracked device from a skull-hacker, but the implant will cost an extra 10%.

Neural Enhancers

Focusynth: Electrodes connected to the brain increase focus. +1 to Focus checks and spell-casting checks, but spells do not gain CHA bonus to damage. ₳750.

Reflex Booster: Signal processors in the brain allow for even faster reflexes, boosting DEX by 1. ₳2,000.

Skill Chips: An additional processor is linked to the memory and reflex neurons

allowing for seamless addition of knowledge, albeit at a price. Central processor unit costs ₳1,000, and each chip adds a single skill at +1 for ₳200.

Combat Brain: Set of predictive software and ocular enhancements tracks enemy movement even once out of line-of-sight, and boosts to-hit. +1 to-hit with ranged weapons, even against targets in full cover. ₳2,000. Requires cyber-eye.

Pain Switch: Electrodes at the base of the skull essentially just "edit out" pain signals from the rest of the body. The user automatically passes CON saves against pain effects, and may continue to act at negative HP up to their CON score, at which point they will simply collapse and die from blood loss and exhaustion. ₳3,000.

Sensory Implants

Cyber-eye: Ocular implant replaces one or both eyes with advanced digital optics, allowing for real-time recording, low-light vision, target tracking, and more. Provides darkvision, telescopic sight up to 300m, and can even see by thermals in full-darkness with a ₳200 upgrade. ₳1,000 each.

Aural Implant: Electronic sensor network replaces biological ears, and is capable of clear distance hearing at up to 100m, adjustable to very low or very high decibel levels, as well as picking up radio wave transmissions on all bands. ₳500 for the pair.

Skin-Sense: Nano-sensors in the fingertips allow for a sense of touch so fine it can read newsprint by feel. Adds +1 to DEX for skill checks involving fine manual dexterity, such as Security checks to disable locks. ₳750. Requires cyber-hand or cyber-arm.

Smoke Sniffer: Developed originally to detect otherwise odorless toxins like carbon monoxide concentration, the Smoke Snigger is an advanced chemical analyzer that allows the immediate detection of a wide range of airborne pathogens and toxins. ₳500

AstraView: The first shaky step towards genuine "magitech," the AstraView is a device intended to allow the wearer to see into the nearby astral plane. Use is unreliable and buggy however, and requires a WIS check to operate at all. The results for a non-wizard can be traumatic, requiring a further WIS save to avoid being dazed and unable to act for 2d6 rounds. ₳3,000. Requires cyber-eye.

Artificial Organs

Aqualung: Artificial lung system replaces both lungs and acts like internal gills to extract oxygen from water, allowing breathing underwater. ₳2,000.

Breath Filter: Filter system in the throat acts as a built-in gas mask, protecting from most airborne toxins and pathogens. Once activated, filter will hold out for 24 hours, after which a new one can be slotted in through an access panel in the neck. ₳1,000, plus ₳50 for each filter cartridge.

Tank Lung: Add-on system for the Aqualung provides an actual tank of reserve oxygen, allowing for continued normal function of up to an hour even in total vacuum. Recharges automatically after 24 hours of normal breathing. ₳3,000. Requires aqualung.

VoxBox: Replacement laryngeal implant allows the user to play back recorded audio as if coming from their own mouths, and can even disguise the user's voice completely, giving a +3 bonus to CHA checks to impersonate others. ₳2,200. Incompatible with breath filter due to space constraints.

Mr. Liver: The Mr. Liver implant is not a replacement, but an assisted-function system that enhances the filtration function of the liver by pre-filtering toxins from blood and waste through its own system. The wearer is thus rendered immune to most common poisons and blood-borne toxic substances, though it can be set to allow certain recreational toxins. ₳750.

Dura-Heart: Enhanced artificial heart increases endurance and longevity, effectively giving a +1 to CON. ₳2,000.

Nano-Heal: The Nano-Heal system is an advanced assisted-healing system powered by nano-robots that work to patch-heal internal and external injuries and allow for better long-term healing. The system effectively allows the user to regain 1 HP per round even in combat. ₳10,000. Requires Dura-Heart.

Artificial Limbs

Cyber-leg: Replacement artificial leg. Increases unarmed damage from kicks by +3, and with a pair of them, increases DEX by 2 for the purposes of movement and AC Bonus. ₳1,000 each.

Cyber-arm: Basic replacement artificial arm. Increases unarmed damage with punches by +2, and increases STR by 2 for tasks involving grip or lifting. ₳1,000 each.

Cyber-hand: Partial cybernetic replacement for hand and wrist. Increases unarmed damage from punches by +1, and increases STR by 1 for tasks involving grip. ₳750 each.

The Grappler: Linked shoulder braces and modified muscle fibers make for an almost unshakeable grasp in close quarters grappling. STR is effectively a 16 for the purpose of grapple checks. ₳1,500. Requires two cyber-arms.

Fin Kit: This modification adds retractable fins to cyber limbs, enabling faster and easier swimming. Separate kits for paired arms and legs are available, and provide a cumulative +1 bonus to rolls involving swimming. ₳750 each. Requires two cyber-arms and/or two cyber-legs.

Thumper: Elbow-mounted impact piston system further boosts damage from punches. Unarmed damage from punches deals 2d6 damage. ₳1,200. Illegal. Requires cyber-arm.

Lifters: Pneumatic piston rods are installed in the legs, allowing for faster kicks, higher jumps, and can even be extended to add an extra half-meter to height. Unarmed damage from kicks increases to 2d8, and DEX is increased by 2 for the purpose of jumping. ₳1,500. Illegal. Requires two cyber-legs.

Weapons

Claws: Razor-sharp retractable blades are added to the fingers, dealing 1d8 damage on a swipe. ₳800. Illegal. Requires cyber-arm or cyber-hand.

Retractable Blade: Extendable blade made of an advanced alloy, deals 1d12 damage. ₳1,500. Illegal. Requires cyber-arm. Incompatible with Gun-arm.

Gun-Arm: Center rod of cyber arm is replaced with a rifled barrel and attached magazine. Holds 8 rounds, and deals 2d8 damage. ₳2,000. Illegal. Requires Cyber-arm. Incompatible with retractable blade.

Holdout Pocket: Concealed and sensor-shielded pocket in the abdomen can conceal a single handgun. ₳1,300. Illegal.

The Hornet: Injector concealed within hand allows injection of powerful neurotoxin (INT, blood, 0) on a successful unarmed strike. In addition to the standard toxic effect, victim must make a CON save to resist unconsciousness. 5 doses. ₳1,500, plus ₳100 per reload. Illegal. Requires cyber-arm or cyber-hand.

Trigger Link: Direct link between hand actuators and neural implant allows the

user to draw and fire on a target faster than any normal human. +1 to-hit with firearms. ₳3,000. Illegal. Requires cyber-arm or cyber-hand, and combat brain.

Armor

Note: Armor implants are not intercompatible. Only one of the following can be installed in a single host. More advanced armor modification requires a full "hardcase" mod.

Skindip: Carbon nano-particles bonded with the skin afford a -1 AC bonus. ₳2,500. Illegal.

Synthfiber: Synthetic fibers woven directly into skin and muscle tissue afford a -1 AC bonus and a permanent boost of 3 HP. ₳4,000. Illegal.

Sub-Dermal Plating: Advanced armor plates are installed under the skin in vital areas, while remaining invisible to the naked eye. -2 AC bonus. ₳7,000. Illegal.

Hardcases

A "hardcase" is a full cybernetic conversion, replacing almost all limbs and external appearance with cybernetic components. In addition to being incredibly expensive, the process is also dangerous: there is a -2 penalty to the CON save against complications, and all hardcase conversions are illegal for civilian ownership. However, a hardcase is considered to have all cyber limbs for the purposes of installation requirements, and includes its own nPrint processor as a standard feature.

Alpha ("Skin-Doll"): The most human-looking of the full hardcase modifications, the exterior of the Alpha case is given a full synth-skin appearance, but underneath is pure hardware. AC6, +10HP, +2 STR and DEX. ₳20,000.

Beta ("Guardian"): This armored shell is fully equipped for combat, with extensive dermal plating, but with a relatively subtle appearance that retains a human face. AC4, +20 HP, +3 STR and DEX, -1 CHA. ₳50,000.

Gamma ("Tank"): The purest of killing machines, sacrificing all but a basic humanoid shape in favor of considerable armoring and physical enhancement. AC2, +30HP, +4 STR and DEX, -3 CHA. ₳100,000.

5. The State of Magic

The Elven War and the Sidhe Civil War have caused great upheavals in the flow of magic and elemental forces within the planes, even here on the mortal world. As well, magic has gone from a forgotten secret, to an accepted if misunderstood part of existence. As a result, some new changes to reflect this altered state are in order.

Elemental Turmoil

The wars both at home and in the planes have caused an upset in the flow of elemental energies, as shifting powers affect the flow of the elements even on the mortal plane. The war between the Sidhe Courts has had a ripple effect that weakened the flow of Fire while bolstering Water's icier side, while the failed Elven invasion and the ever-rising power of the Dwarven-Gnomish Empire has left Air to take a back seat to Earth in the scale of cosmic powers.

Element	Cantrip	Spell
Fire	D3	D6
Water	D4	D10
Air	D3	D6
Earth	D4	D10
Magic	D4	D8

As a result, the standard die-type of elemental damage from spells has changed, in accordance with the table on the right. Holy and Unholy magic and prayer deal damage as normal.

Attack Cantrips

Because of the increased flow of magic on the Earth, it is now possible to create damage-dealing cantrip-level spells. These spells deal one die of damage +1 damage per level of the caster, according to the die type indicated on the table above. As normal, a wizard must have remaining Will to cast the cantrip as always, but a failure on an attack cantrip costs them 1 point of Will.

Wizardry, nPrint, and the Law

Committing a violent offense by magical means results in a doubled sentence for the wizard, which means that it can be very important to avoid leaving evidence of such. By default, nPrint devices routinely log biometric data on the mental states of their users that can be used to track the mental states induced by magic. As a result, unless a wizard has a cracked nPrint device, this log can be used as evidence against them in court. It is thus advisable that operator wizards avoid stock implant usage.

6. Hacking NeurOS

Whether they're working as operators for hire, corporate spies, or just plain cyberpunks, neurocasters spend the bulk of their time looking to crack into corporate systems. This is still the age of information: data is power, automation is king, and networks are a corporation's lifeblood. The following guide details the processes involved in performing network intrusions into NeurOS AI systems.

Access Points

The first step in hacking any system is getting access to it. The vast majority of NeurOS systems allow guest access to the system, but this is a useless data point if you can't connect to the system in the first place. There are several possible methods of access, depending on how secure the system has been set up to be.

- *Internet:* The system has a publicly accessible face, often in the form of a freely accessible virtual environment. This can be accessed from anywhere with internet access, which on Neuro City means everywhere thanks to ubiquitous wireless internet access.

- *WAN:* The system is not accessible to the public nets, but the site broadcasts an internal wireless network that can be accessed by anyone within 100m of the system. This may require knowledge or cracking of the access password to the WAN, either by social engineering or brute force crack (the latter of which can take days, and requires a Computer check).

- *LAN:* The system is accessible by local hard-wire or near-field RFID only. The neurocaster will need to be able to enter the building physically and jack into a local network port or through a user system inside the building, though this will otherwise give them at least guest access.

- *Vault:* The system is completely closed to outside networks. There is an access port at the system itself, which is likely contained behind significant physical security as well that will have to be bypassed. Operator teams are most frequently employed for these types of jobs, as armed back-up will almost certainly be needed to ensure a smooth run.

Authentication

Once you've connected to the system, it will initiate neural authentication with the nPrint device in the connecting party's implant. Due to the nature of this imprint, this means that the identity of every connecting user is logged immediately. For obvious reasons, this is not a particularly welcome state of affairs for anyone planning to engage in illicit intrusions, and that is what the Avatar software is for.

On connecting to a system, a user with a cracked or rooted device and the Avatar software can make a WIS + Focus check to project a false user image and signature to the receiving system. This effectively gives them the usual access as a guest user, but means only a false identity is logged to the system.

As an alternative means in, it is also possible to simply send another signal entirely that has been stolen from another user already registered with the system. This means hacking directly into the nPhone or CyberBrain of the desired user, and will still require a WIS + Focus check on sending the stolen imprint. However, once authenticated the neurocaster will thus have the same access rights as the original user, potentially saving them some time.

Access Level

Once connected, unless using a stolen identity, the neurocaster will be at guest access. Guest access is the first of four standard 'access levels' within the NeurOS system, and is largely useless except in so far as it means the neurocaster is now within the system. A successful INT + Computer check can be used to raise the neurocaster's access level within the system, and this must be done in order. Each access level offers new access privileges, detailed as follows.

1. *Guest:* This is the initial access level for any unknown user accessing the system. The user can access only publicly accessible material or virtual environments, most often essentially advertising or entertainment materials.

2. *User:* This level is the basic level given to most employees registered with the system. Access to low-level sub-systems and non-confidential data is now possible, but generally nothing that requires significant internal security will be found here.

3. *Power User:* This access level is reserved for more secure activities and

thus only given to personnel within management or with need to access specific confidential project files. Mission-critical or on-site security sub-systems and most confidential data will be limited to no less than this access level.

4. *Super-User:* This access level provides complete access to all sub-systems and data within the NeurOS systems, as well as command override of the AI security. This effectively means that all countermeasures are disabled, and an intruder can move about freely within the system unless an outside observer spots something unusual. No registered user will actually possess this access level in full: even network administrators will generally by 'Power Users,' only elevating their access to Super-user for certain necessary tasks. This means that even theft of an admin's identity will not be sufficient to gain super-user access without knowledge of an additional authentication method (such as a password or biometric imprint).

At any access level, the intruder can of course attempt further INT + Computer checks to access corporate data or sub-systems like door controls, machinery, or physical security measures, provided those functions are available at their current access level.

Countermeasures

Failure of any roll while connected to the NeurOS system means that the user has triggered some form of security failsafe, inducing the NeurOS AI to execute countermeasures. Countermeasures escalate over time with successive failures by the intruder, as their threat level is raised by the system. Each time they fail, the threat level increases, and the next countermeasure takes effect, each of which are detailed as follows.

1. *Yellow Alert*: the system immediately red-flags the user's imprint for future review, and attempts to trace the source of the signal. It will succeed in 3 rounds unless the user disconnects beforehand or a super-user cancels the trace program. Further Computer checks against the system are at -1.

2. *Orange Alert:* the system has recognized the user as hostile. Computer checks are at -2, and the system triggers attack countermeasures. A WIS save must be made each round, or the user suffers 2d6 damage and is disconnected from the system.

3. *Red Alert:* the system initiates a shutdown process, with an added nasty surprise. Computer checks are at -3, and the system will shut down the following round unless a super-user cancels it. Should the intruder still be connected when the shutdown occurs, they must make a WIS save or suffer 4d6 damage, plus 1d3 temporary damage to INT.

Hacking During Combat

The response times involved in the neural interface are incredibly quick, essentially meaning that the process can continue even while combat is ongoing. Each check made takes the neurocaster's action for the round, and if they are connected wirelessly they may even move about freely to avoid attacks.

However, the act of hacking still requires significant concentration even just to maintain the Avatar program's effect. Computer checks on a round in which the character has avoided an attack are at -1, and if they are struck they must make a WIS + Focus check to maintain their concentration on the Avatar. Failure of this check means that the false-image has been broken, and the user's threat level is raised and their identity no longer anonymous.

7. The Job

The work of an operator is performing jobs for their attendant. These jobs range in variety and difficulty, with compensation generally commensurate to that difficulty. To a one, however, they are likely to be dangerous and even illegal. The following set of tables is designed to generate quickly the key details for the jobs on an attendant's job board. Roll Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, and Table 5 for all jobs, and the respective other tables for relevant job information. Difficulty provides standard modifier for job-related skill checks. For hostiles, roll Threat Level on Table 37 in *Arcana Rising,* p.115*.*

Table 1: Job Type

D4	Type
1	Extraction (Table 6 for target item)
2	Transport (Table 7 for cargo type)
3	Escort (Table 4 for subject)
4	Wetwork (Table 4 for subject)

Table 2: Job Difficulty, Threat Level, Fee

D6	Difficulty	Fee (A)
1	0	1d6 x50
2	-1	1d8 x50
3	-1	2d6 x50
4	-2	3d6 x50
5	-2	2d10 x50
6	-3	3d10 x50

Table 4: Wetworks/Escort

D6	Target
1	Executive
2	Scientist
3	Official
4	Enforcer
5	Operator
6	Rogue

Table 3: Target Faction

D100	Target
01-05	Neuroware
06-11	Shenhui
12-16	Tabal Industries
17-22	Royal Petroleum
23-27	100-Group
28-33	KalaCorp
34-38	Manburger
39-44	NCTV
45-50	Brother's Circle
51-55	Mittsu-gumi
56-61	5th Street Devils
62-66	Blood Droogs
67-72	Sidhe Liberation Army
73-77	Varulvar
78-83	Good Tidings Inc.
84-88	Minor Corporation
89-94	Minor Criminal Gang
95-00	Åland Government

Table 5: Job/Drop Location

D100	Location
01-07	Mariehamn
08-15	Jomala
16-23	Lemland
24-30	Finström
31-38	Hammarland
39-46	Eckerö
47-53	Geta
54-61	Sund
62-69	Saltvik
70-76	Lumparland
77-84	Vårdö
85-92	Sottunga
93-00	Outer Islands

Table 6: Extraction Target

D100	Target
01-05	Biological Sample
06-10	Captive A.I.
11-15	Counter-Intelligence
16-20	Cybernetic Implant
21-25	Data-Dog
26-30	Defecting Employee
31-35	Embedded Operator
36-40	Experimental Drug
41-45	Financial Data
46-50	Human Test Subject
51-55	Key Executive
56-60	Personnel Files
61-65	Project Schematics
66-70	Proprietary Software
71-75	Research Data
76-80	Rogue Researcher
81-85	Secret Weapon
86-90	Security Detainee
91-95	Security Files
96-00	Tech Prototype

Table 7: Transport Cargo

D6	Cargo
1	Weapons
2	Consumer Goods
3	Drugs
4	Cybernetic Parts
5	Industrial Equipment
6	Roll Table 4

Usage Example

Rolling a 1 on the first table means that our job at hand is an Extraction. We now roll on Table 2 and get a 4, meaning this is a Difficulty -2 job, worth 3d6×50 Astra. A 41 on Table 3 tells us the target of the job is NCTV. Given the difficulty of the job we could then just assume the job is at the main NCTV headquarters in Mariehamn, or roll on Table 5 for an alternate location. Finally, since it's an extraction, we roll on Table 6 and get a 67, which means our target once inside the site is some proprietary software (probably on the local NeurOS system). Written out in shorthand, we get:

Extraction. ₳550. -2 Diff. Location: Mariehamn. Target: Proprietary software.