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**Curiosity
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GDW
GAMES

By James L. Cambias

Damsel in Distress



It was a normal evening in the Razor Edge Club. Trog and Wolfboy were sucking down brewpaks and trying to outbelch each other; Alisande and Three Feathers were acting like they didn't know these two grunges; and I was scoping the crowd, hoping something interesting would happen.

Then this girl comes over, looking nervous. An Elf girl, dressed in ragged street leathers, with an elaborate makeup job streaked by tears. "I...I need some help. I don't know where to go."

"Through the door over there marked 'Ladies,'" Trog snickers. What a wit. Alisande gives him a look that could kill an unprotected human at 50 meters. Fortunately for Trog, he's too crude to notice.

"What's the matter?" Three Feathers turns on all his "noble brave" charm, radiating concern.

"My sister Meris. She's disappeared; I think they're holding her prisoner."

"Who's holding her?"

The Elf girl looks around us, suddenly afraid. "I can't talk here—they might be listening. Can we go someplace else?"

"Stop playing around, sweetears. What's the biz?" Trust Wolfboy to exhibit all the finer aspects of human nature.

"Please...I can pay you money; but you've got to help me find my sister. The DNX Corporation is hiding her somewhere, and I can't get in touch with her."

"Let's go someplace and talk this over," says Alisande. I thought a minute, then got up to follow. It's not often a fellow in my line of work gets the chance to rescue a damsel in distress....

The players are approached by Dairuna Cormac, a young Elf woman who is tearful and desperate: Her older sister, Meris, has disappeared. According to Dairuna, Meris worked for a large nanotechnology corp called DNX, which has facilities in Seattle. She was thinking about quitting DNX before she vanished, and Dairuna is afraid that her sister has been kidnapped and brainwashed by her employers to prevent her from defecting with some of their research secrets. If any mage or shaman character attempts to read Dairuna's thoughts by magic, she will resist, but her surface thoughts, at least, agree with her story: "I've got to get someone to help me get Meris away from DNX."

REFEREE

Dairuna is indeed trying to get her sister Meris away from DNX. The only problem is that Meris is quite happy as a researcher for DNX and has no desire to leave. Dairuna is planning to kidnap Meris and hand her over to Small Wonders A.G., a rival nanotech firm. She wants the players to do the dirty work of physically snatching Meris, then Dairuna and the Small Wonders security force will take Meris from the players, leaving them to deal with DNX and the law.

A LITTLE RESEARCH

If the characters investigate DNX, they may learn some interesting things. It is generally known that DNX is one of the corps on the cutting edge of nanotechnology—building microscopic machinery with a wide range of applications in medicine, microelectronics and chemicals. The company is owned by Doshinzu, a Japanese biomedical company, in partnership with a consortium of Texan petrobarons. Meris Cormac is listed as an employee of DNX, and the company will release the information that she is on temporary transfer to the company's research center in California. All communications with her must be through the DNX internal mail system. Any other direct inquiries about Meris will be answered with a chilly, "I'm sorry, that information is currently unavailable."

A check on Dairuna Cormac will confirm that she is who she says she is, but will turn up a few noteworthy facts: She has been jailed once in the CAS for credit fraud and has several times been arrested, but not convicted, in connection with thefts and assaults. Dairuna won't deny any of this, though she claims that the credit fraud charge was a frame-up by an unfriendly police chief in North Carolina. She admits that she likes to live on the edge, but don't all shadowrunners?

Meris' Apartment: Meris has an apartment near the DNX research center. Dairuna

has a key and can let the players in if they want to snoop around. It is small but well furnished; Meris is obviously doing quite well financially. There are some holos of her family, showing Meris and her sister. A very careful search will turn up a letter from Meris to Dairuna in the trash, saying that she cannot discuss her work and will not lend Dairuna any more money. Meris' clothes and personal computer are missing, the phone has been shut off, and her cat is gone.

DNX RESEARCH CENTER

The DNX research complex is located near the town of Downieville, California, in the northern Sierra Nevada mountains. The facility is in isolated mountain country and is surrounded by a large wooded area. The perimeter is patrolled by guards and is monitored by cameras along the fence. The fence itself is six meters high and is equipped with sensors to detect anyone cutting the wire. Infrared beams along the top of the fence will detect anyone climbing over. Simple Stealth will not be enough to sneak into the base; the players will need magical or cybernetic help. Within the boundary are several buildings—labs, administration, and housing.

Administration: This rather small building holds the business offices for the research center and the director's suite. Because all really sensitive data is in the base's computer system, the physical security on this building is rather light—thumbprint locks on the doors and sonic motion detectors inside. The director's terminal links directly to the CPU of the base computer but requires a retina print to use.

Security: This blockhouse-like structure holds the barracks for the base guard force, the control room for all security systems, a small arsenal, and the center's computer in a hardened subbasement. Retina prints are required to enter the building, and personnel must be visually identified via vidscreen before passing the inner armored doors. Because there is only one way in and out, the security force inside can be pinned down by a few adversaries with automatic weapons covering the door.

Residential Units: These are small bungalows scattered through a pleasant wooded area. The director's unit is the largest, while the others range down in size and comfort with the importance of the residents. The low-level staff share multi-occupant units. These houses have door locks using ordinary magnetic keys, but many residents leave their doors and windows open. Each home has a terminal linked to the base computer.

Staff Center: This large building holds the dining hall, gymnasium, laundry, a small commissary shop, and a bar. The building closes at midnight, except on special occa-



sions. The commissary and the bar have computer terminals linked into the accounting system.

Labs: The three lab buildings are the heart of the facility. They have retina-print locks to keep out intruders, and individual labs have thumbprint locks keyed to their users. Each laboratory has its own computer terminal. A few dedicated researchers can be found working at any hour of the night.

DECKING INTO THE SYSTEM

The base's computer system is large and powerful, and includes many security functions and routines. If none of the players is a competent decker, Dairuna will suggest hiring one.

The computer is linked into the California Free State net, but the countermeasures preventing illegal access from that direction are fairly strong. Access from the internal terminals is enormously easier. Several datastores or nodes shown on the diagram may be of interest to shadowrunners.

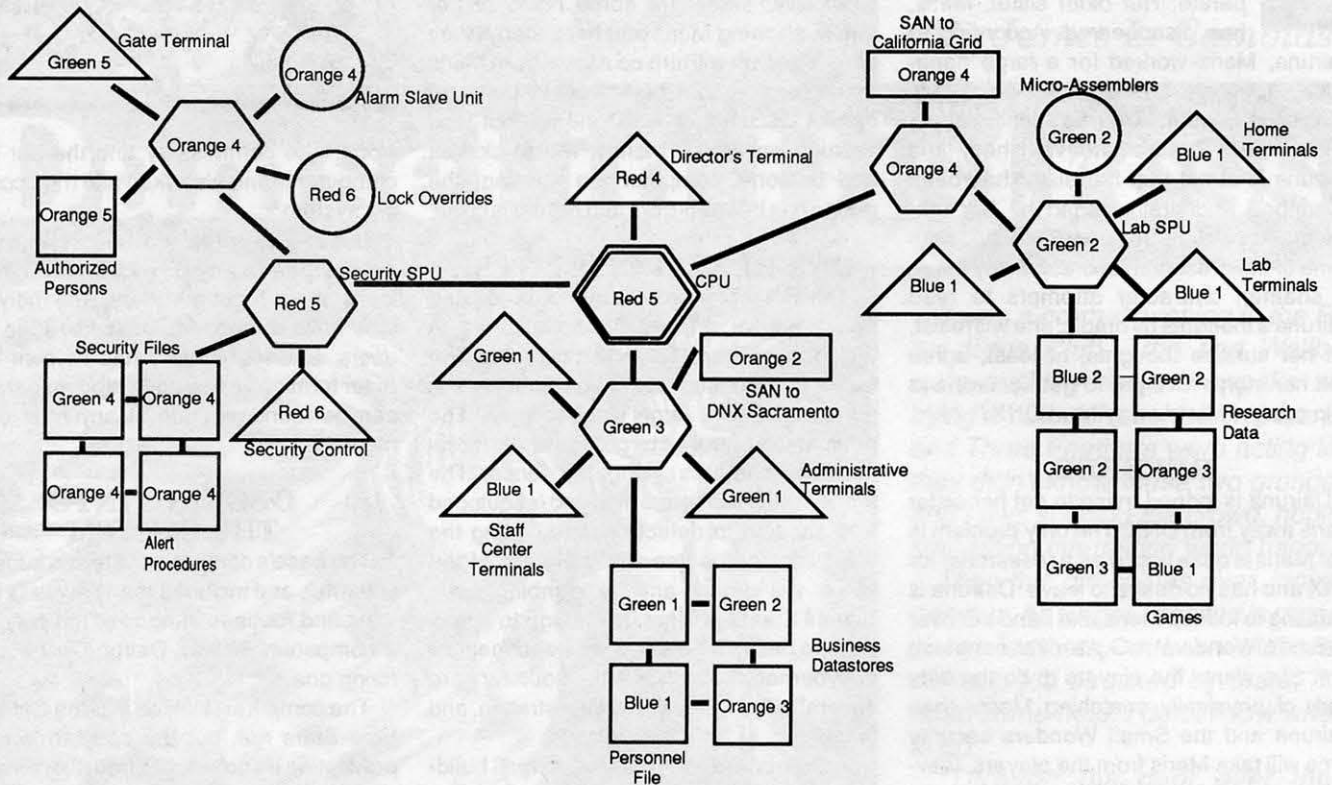
Personnel Files: The computer lists Meris Cormac as being resident in Housing Unit 26; she has level 9 clearance (this is very high). It also gives the names of all the researchers and staff at the center. There is nothing special listed about Meris.

Security Files: There are several security files of note. The Authorized Persons file lists everyone allowed into the complex; this includes the current staff and a number of high-level DNX executives. The Alert Procedures datastore describes how the guards are deployed in the event of a security breach. The Lock Override slave node can override the retina locks on all buildings and the main gate. The Alarm slave node can activate or shut down all the alarm systems.

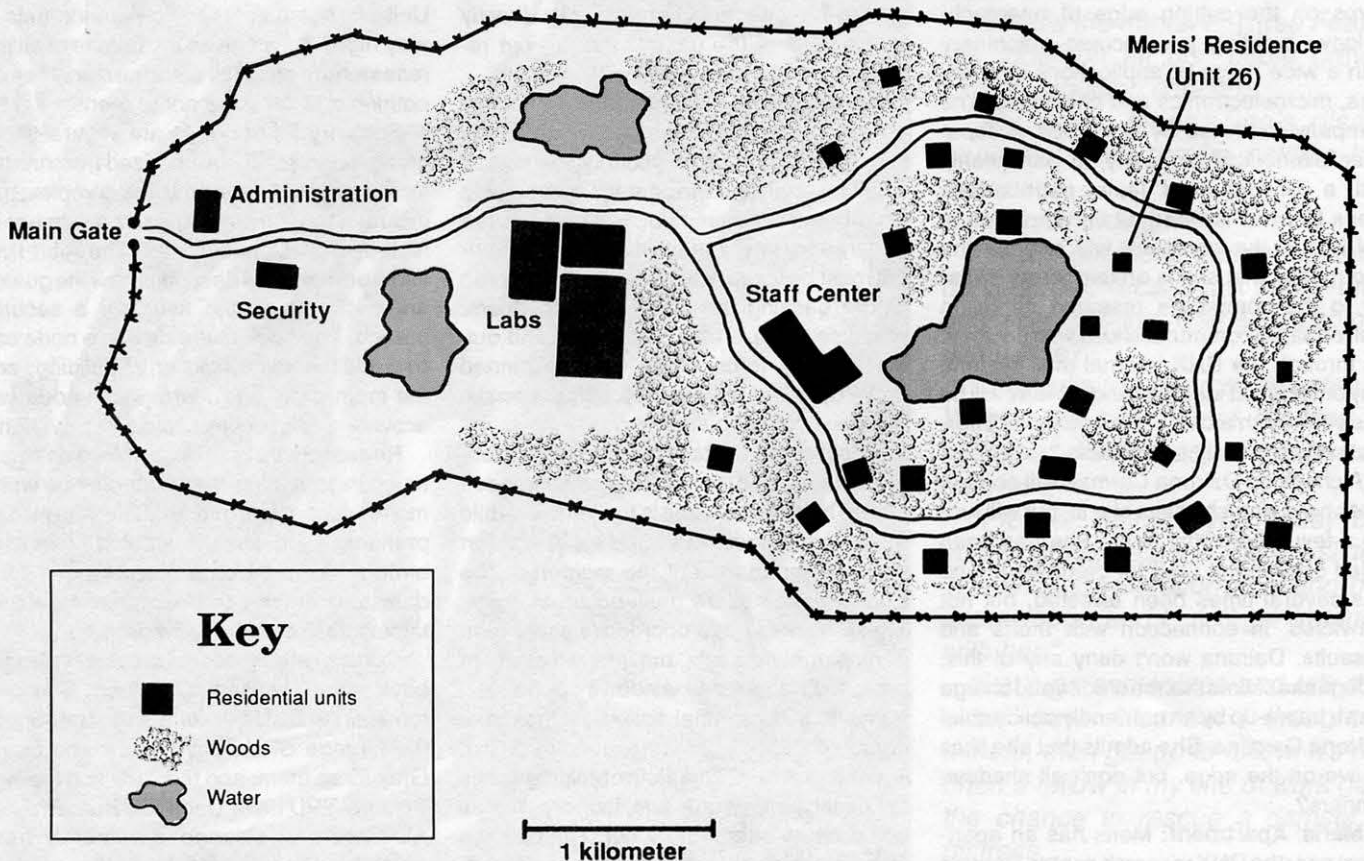
Research Data: These files won't help much in snatching Meris but may be worth money on the open market. They are incomprehensible to anyone without chemistry, biology and biotech knowledge. One datastore among the research data contains some really hot new games.

Countermeasures: The system's nodes have various kinds of IC on them. The California RTG SAN has White IC (Barrier); all the Orange SPUs have Trace and Dump Gray IC on them; and the CPU and the Red Security SPU have Trace and Burn Gray IC. All Green or Orange datastores have Scramble White IC on them, and all other

DNX Computer System



DNX Research Center



Orange or Green nodes have Trace and Dump Gray IC. If an external alert is triggered, the security system operator will come on; she is an Elven decker (as described in the Archetypes section of the *Shadowrun* basic rules), using a Fuchi-5 cyberdeck.

STRIKE

The characters should make whatever plans they feel are appropriate, and the referee can play the operation through, using the information given about the complex. Unless their espionage has been notably clumsy, the characters will have the advantage of surprise. If for some reason the plan fails (bad die rolls, etc.), Dairuna will call in her snatch team to finish the job, leaving the players to deal with DNX security and the local police.

Meris is in Housing Unit 26, but she will not act very happy to see her rescuers. She is unarmed, but will scream loudly for help and struggle as best she can.

Security Response: Eighteen security guards are at the base, working eight-hour shifts. Consequently, at any time, six guards will be on-duty, six off-duty, and six asleep. The on-duty guards are deployed as follows: two on the main gate, one in control in the security building, and three patrolling the perimeter. Once an alert is triggered, the six off-duty guards come into action: Two remain to guard security control while the rest go to the scene of the breach. The six sleeping guards will be available five minutes after the alert and can be deployed at the discretion of the control officer.

Security control will also alert the county sheriff's office and the California Free State Police. The sheriff's men can be on the scene in 15 minutes to a half hour, and then the state police can have a helicopter on-site in 30 minutes. In addition, the DNX regional headquarters is notified if any breach occurs. If the situation is serious, a helicopter full of DNX security troops will be sent from Sacramento.

Magical Defenses: The DNX center is rather weakly protected against magic. The one wage mage sorcerer in the security center will try to deal with magical attacks. He has the Fighter spell package. He also patrols the area astrally from time to time, and any astral scouts will encounter him on a roll of 1-2 on 1D6.

SNATCH

At a prearranged spot on the way back to Seattle, the party will be ambushed by a formidable group of street samurai and mercenaries. Dairuna will try to take out the most powerful player characters with spells. The referee should take advantage of the fact that Dairuna knows much about their strengths and weaknesses.

The snatch team will disable the party's

vehicles and escape aboard a Hughes Airstar helicopter piloted by an experienced Rigger; this can cause problems if DNX security or the California State Police are still after the party. The team should be slightly larger than the players' party, and consists of equal numbers of street samurai, mercenaries, and Ork mercenaries.

If for some reason the players had to divert from their planned getaway route, then the snatch team will hit them as they enter Seattle.

TRACING DAIRUNA

Dairuna doesn't leave much of a trail; she has moved without a forwarding address and canceled all her credit cards and ID. But the players do have her real name. Though she is building a new identity, she still has one of her old bank accounts in her real name. The last transaction was a deposit from a company called Small Wonders A.G., a cutting-edge nanotech research company.

DNX SECURITY

DNX is, of course, trying to trace the people who kidnapped one of their top researchers. Martin Javert, DNX's Troll head of security for the West Coast, will handle the investigation personally. If any of the players have fallen into DNX hands, they will be thoroughly interrogated with all the latest truth drugs. Otherwise, Javert will try to trace the players from whatever evidence they leave at the complex. It is simply amazing what a modern forensics lab can learn from a few strands of hair, a fuzzy video image, and credit records.

If the players decide to give up and let the Cormac sisters go, Javert will show up along with a nearly endless supply of company men and street samurai, demanding that the players return Meris. It will be very hard to convince them that the shadowrunners don't know where she is, and Javert will insist that they help him—or else. "Or else" can mean anything from handing the player characters over to the authorities to dumping their bullet-ridden bodies in the ocean.

But Javert's primary concern is recovering Meris, not wasting ammunition on street scum. If the players can help him, he will use them.

SMALL WONDERS

Small Wonders A.G. is a subsidiary of the European combine Strasser-Pharmadyne. Small Wonders does research and development on nanotechnology for medical applications. It has a small facility in Seattle. Naturally, nobody at the company has ever heard of Dairuna Cormac, and persistent inquiries will be dealt with firmly by company security guards.

Computer System: Small Wonders has a fairly powerful system with very good



security. All Red nodes are equipped with Blaster Gray IC except the CPU—which is armed with Killer Black IC! The Orange nodes are armed with Trace and Burn Gray IC, and the Green nodes have Access White IC. The computer contains no listings relevant to the operation except one. One datafile under miscellaneous procurements lists incidental expenses and includes recent expenditures authorized by Dairuna Cormac for security hardening of a safe house in the Barrens. The address of the house is given.

Magical Searching: Small Wonders keeps a wage mage on retainer to prevent magical espionage. (Use the standard Archetype with the Fighter spell option.) But such espionage will be fruitless as Dairuna and Meris are not in the Small Wonders building. If the players can somehow get the local Small Wonders director alone and read his mind magically, he knows the location, but the director is a very well-guarded man.

SAFE HOUSE

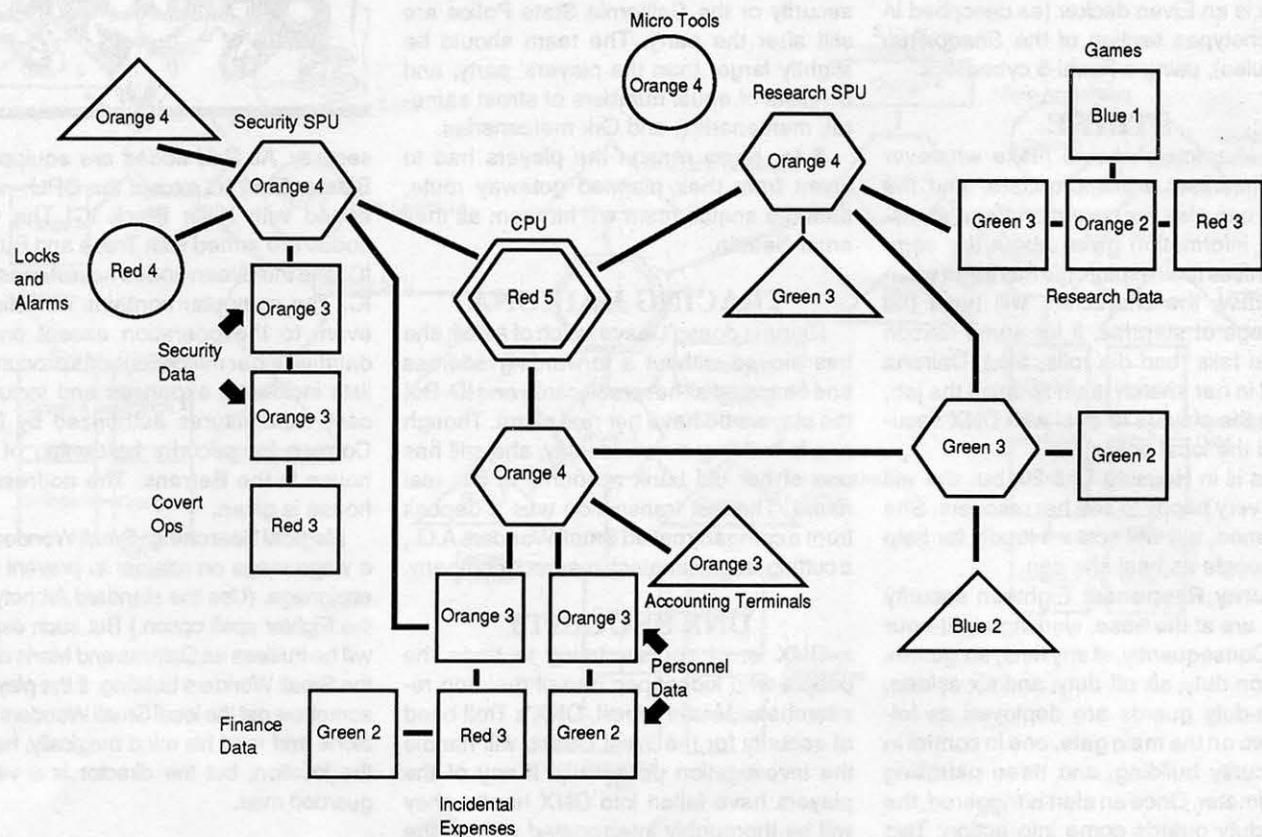
With or without the help of DNX, the players must get Meris out of Small Wonders' hands—the safe house will have to be assaulted. It is guarded by Dairuna and her snatch team. Any killed or disabled members of the team have been replaced by Gang Member archetypes. The players will probably want to hire some extra muscle for this job.

The building is an old warehouse, now fitted with retina-scan locks and bulletproof windows. A mobile medical module is inside, within which Meris is being interrogated by two medics (use the Street Doc NPC archetype) using truth drugs. Dairuna and her team are outside the module, living in sleeping bags on the floor and eating takeout pizza. At any time, one-third of the team members are asleep. One team member is always positioned on the roof with a radio link to the group inside.

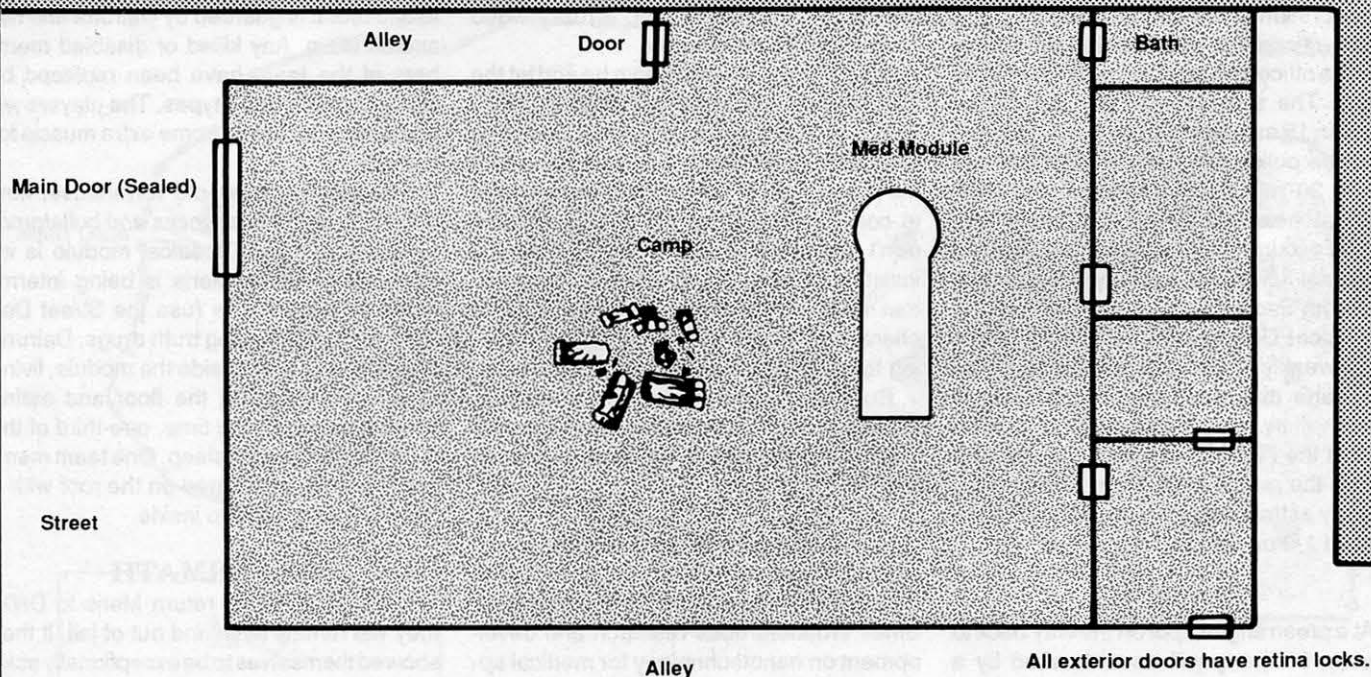
AFTERMATH

If the players can return Meris to DNX, they will remain alive and out of jail. If they showed themselves to be exceptionally able, DNX might hire them for some dirty work in the future—but don't count on it, chummers. Small Wonders will swiftly remove all evidence that can link the company to Dairuna Cormac. If she lives through the battle with the players, the company will send hitmen after her. A few weeks later, the shadow-

Small Wonders Computer System



Safe House



runners may hear that her body has been found in the bay. Small Wonders will remember the PCs, as well, and not fondly.

Since Dairuna will promise much but pay as little as possible, the shadowrunners will lose money on this caper. They can scavenge weapons and equipment from dead adversaries, and may be able to fence some of DNX or Small Wonders' data (the security departments won't like this at all). The PCs will probably get a lot of experience—including some wisdom about trusting people.

Adventures: If DNX and Small Wonders decide to wage all-out war, there might be good employment opportunities for shadowrunners. Dairuna might survive and seek revenge on the players. Meris might actually decide to leave DNX after all and would need some firepower to ensure the success of her career move. And it is possible that Dairuna was working for a third company interested in causing a war between DNX and Small Wonders.

DAIRUNA CORMAC

Dairuna is a tough Elven mage who long ago decided that nothing was as important as herself. Consequently, she is perfectly willing to sell her sister to Small Wonders and to double-cross the players. She is small and delicate-looking, and uses her appearance to seem harmless and pathetic.

Attributes:	Skills:
Body: 1	Bike (2-wheeler): 3
Quickness: 5	Etiquette (Street): 2
Strength: 1	Conjuring: 6
Charisma: 3	Sorcery: 6
Intelligence: 5	Stealth: 4
Willpower: 3	Pistols: 5
Essence: 6	Leadership: 1
Magic: 6	
Reaction: 5	

Spells:
Hellblast: 6
Sleep: 4

Gear:
Streetline Special pistol
Spell equipment

Notes:
Natural low-light eyes; mild allergy to iron.

MERIS CORMAC

Meris is a dedicated scientist, fascinated by the technologies of the very small. She is not accustomed to combat and violence. She feels that most Elves are foolishly antiscientific. Meris dislikes her sister for fairly obvious reasons.

Attributes:	Skills:
Body: 2	Computer: 3
Quickness: 4	Biotech: 4
Strength: 1	Etiquette (Corporate): 2
Charisma: 4	Build/Repair Biotech: 3
Intelligence: 6	Biology: 4
Willpower: 2	Physical Sciences: 6
Essence: 4	Spanish: 1
Reaction: 5	German: 2
	Japanese: 3
	Stealth: 3

Cyberware:
Datajack
100 Mp headware memory
Biotech shop
Pocket secretary

Notes:
Natural low-light eyes; mild allergy to iron.

MARTIN JAVERT

Martin is the head of DNX's proactive security division (West Coast); his job is to



prevent security breaches, and to recover stolen items and people. Javert is a Troll, but is unusually intelligent and disciplined. He exudes an air of quiet menace, which is infinitely more alarming than the usual Troll bluster. He is determined and ruthless, and never gives up. Because of his sunlight allergy, Javert works entirely at night and always wears mirrored sunglasses.

Attributes:	Skills:
Body: 5	Unarmed Combat: 3
Quickness: 5	Pistols: 6
Strength: 6	Stealth: (Urban): 5
Charisma: 1	Computer: 3
Intelligence: 5	Interrogation (Verbal): 4
Willpower: 5	Etiquette (Corporate): 2
Essence: 6	Car: 1
Reaction: 5	Leadership: 2
	Electronics: 1
	City Speak: 1

Cyberware:
Datajack

Gear:
Ares Predator
Enfield AS7 shotgun

Notes:
Natural low-light eyes and dermal armor; has moderate allergy to sunlight. Martin Javert can get any equipment he needs with DNX money, and he is always accompanied by at least two company men. Ω

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