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PREY for DEATH

My breath steamed in the cold night air, and the stitch in my side stabbed at me, but I knew I couldn't stop running. They were back there, following me, waiting for me to weaken, to slow, then they would be on me in a flash, and I would die.

I glanced back over my shoulder, my cybereyes turning the pitch-dark alley into a gray world. There! One of them!

I turned, hand diving under the jacket, slight resistance as the pistol came loose from the holster, swinging it up, my target realizing too late what was happening and fumbling for his own weapon in panic. The pistol roared twice, turning the alley bright as day for an instant as my target staggered and fell under the impact of the high-caliber slugs.

Triumph surged through me as I pelted down the alleyway. I'd gotten one of them! I was better than them. I could take them. Then something that wasn't there slammed my legs from under me, and I went head-first into the pavement.

I hit the concrete hard, blood flooding my mouth, my vision blurring. I looked up. A man who hadn't been there a second ago was looking down at me, light flickering and flowing around his hands.

"Good run, chummer," he said in a voice as cold as ice, "but you came up short of the finish."

Then there was a flare of light and then only darkness.

Even among shadowrunners, there are grades of menace. Some are feared not so much for what they can do as for what they are. And in the shadows, few are feared more than Mantis shamans.

BENEATH THE SKIN

Mantis is not like most insect totems. Mantis does not build a hive, for Mantis is not a group creature. Mantis is the solitary killer of the insect world, the lone, unstoppable hunter. Neither does Mantis transform her host into a likeness of herself—the changes Mantis brings are much more subtle than that.

Mantis shamans are picked by their totem for their similarity in outlook. Thus, Mantis shamans are always loners,

By David Perry

Shadowrun



people who care nothing for the goodwill or company of their fellow man, and usually possessed of a callous streak. Long contact with their totem emphasizes these aspects in the shaman and eliminates all of the normal social and compassionate traits.

After a few years of following their totem, Mantis shamans are merciless killers who care nothing for life: hollow men with no emotions, not even hate or anger left in them, people who shun all contact with their fellow beings. Mantis shamans retain their original physical form, but inside they are Mantis.

Mantis shamans are the perfect hunters. They have no emotions like fear, compassion or boredom to distract them from the hunt, and as the hunt is the only thing in the world that gives them pleasure, it is impossible to bribe them into giving it up. Once a Mantis shaman is on your tail, the race won't end until you are dead or she is. Ever.

TEAMWORK

Mantis shamans are not shadowrunners' ideal choice of teammate as everyone knows that they would, quite literally, kill you as soon as look at you. And they have no hesitation in abandoning or killing a teammate if it will gain them something. As the saying goes, "The only thing more dangerous than a Mantis shaman with you is a Mantis shaman against you."

Because of this, and because of their general disdain for other people, Mantis shamans prefer not to work in groups. Naturally, they prefer assassinations above all other forms of work.

Of necessity, the Mantis shaman will generally have two other pieces of street-muscle with her on an assassination, as protection and bodyguards. Use the Merc archetype from the *Shadowrun* book, but with only 24 points of skills.

The Mantis shaman regards these people as totally expendable, of course.

SAMPLE SCENARIOS

Some possible scenarios involving the Mantis shaman might include the following:

Firebrand: The PCs are hired to bodyguard Rythmatix Inc's latest hot, new rock group, Firebrand, for a week.

In addition to fending off screaming fans, over-inquisitive journalists and the odd psycho with a gun, the PCs must deal with a Mantis shaman assassin. The shaman has been hired by a rival entertainment corp which is planning a takeover and which wants to drive down the price of Rythmatix shares by destroying its most profitable band.

The Mantis shaman will strike at the height of Firebrand's next concert, from the middle of the screaming crowd for maximum cover. Her backup mercs will try to get backstage
Shadowrun

Mantis Shaman

Gentlemen, let us dispense with the foolish pleasantries. You are here because you wish me to kill someone for you. Tell me who he is, so I can tell you my price.

Don't waste my time with negotiations. My price is not open to discussion. If you will not match it, go. And never dream of trying to cheat me if you value your life.

As Mantis shamans are insect shamans, they cannot be played by PCs. However, they make great NPC villains to put on the tail of your PCs when they anger somebody really powerful.

Attributes

Body: 3
Quickness: 5
Strength: 1
Charisma: 5
Intelligence: 5
Willpower: 5
Magic: 6
Reaction: 5 (+3D6)
Essence: 6

Skills

Conjuring: 5
Firearms: 3
Magic Theory: 4
Sorcery: 6
Stealth: 6
Bike: 2

Gear

Armor jacket (5/30), H & K variant (with laser sight, shock pad and AP ammo), Yamaha rapier, low-light goggles, Reaction +2 spell lock, two disposable grunts (see Teamwork, at left).

Spells

Increase Reflex +2: 5
Invisibility (Improved): 6
Manadart: 4
Powerdart: 5
Powerball: 4
Mask: 4
Treat: 5

Totem

Character: Mantis is the lone hunter who strikes from ambush to kill with lightning speed. Mantis prefers to wait in concealment and let his prey run to him, when he strikes and kills.

Environment: Jungle.

Advantages: +2 for combat and illusion spells, +1 dice for any reaction increasing spells +1 die for summoning jungle spirits

Disadvantages: Mantis is a killer, not a healer. Subtract 1 die for all healing spells. Also, Mantis has lost all connection with human emotions. Subtract 1 die from all social skills.

Because of Mantis' reputation, people will automatically distrust a Mantis shaman if they learn of his totem.



to kill the band if he fails and generally supply supporting fire.

If the Mantis shaman is killed, the rival corp will keep sending assassins every few days until they succeed. If the shaman can be captured alive and interrogated, he can reveal his employers, who can then be blackmailed into laying off.

(Or the PCs could just stick out the week and then buy shares in the rival corp and let the hit take place.)

As the assignment is for a week, the GM should test the PCs with a few minor encounters (psycho fan killer, go-gang riot at a concert, protection demands, etc.) before hitting them with the Mantis shaman.

Double-Cross: The PCs are hired by a corporate to assassinate the head of a local Yakuza clan which has been stealing data from the corporate mainframe.

The Yakuza Oyabun (see the Contacts section of the *Shadowrun* rules, page 213) is constantly guarded by two bodyguards and a Street Mage (use standard archetypes).

Unfortunately for the PCs, the corporation has no intention of news of this job getting out. When the PCs turn up for payment, they will be ambushed by the corporation's special assassination team—a Mantis shaman, two company men and a rigger (standard archetypes and equipment). Ω

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PHYSICAL

Adept

ARCHETYPE

You're worried 'cause you can't see any cyberware on me and I don't look like a magician. Well, let me tell you, chummer—there are other ways to rewire your body than cyberware, and you won't see me collapsing after I cast one spell too many. My magic is in my body, and it is permanent.

*I learned all my sensei could teach me, then moved to the streets and learned more. Sure, I cost, but that's because I'm the best. A fusion of magic and technology, and better than either of them on their own.
So you gonna pay or walk away?*

The Physical Adept has learned from his teachers and shadowrunners, and combined the knowledge of both. Magically jacked up, he is ready for anything, provided his vanity and lack of street-smarts don't bring him down.

Attributes

Body: 4
Quickness: 6
Strength: 4
Charisma: 2
Intelligence: 4
Willpower: 5
Essence: 5
Reaction: 5(7)
Magic: 5

Skills

Unarmed Combat: 6
Throwing: 5
Stealth: 4
Firearms: 5
Magical Theory: 3
Etiquette (Street): 1

Cyberware: Datajack, smartgun link, retractable spur.

Magic: Wired reflexes (level 2), low-light eyes, enhanced hearing (low frequency), automatic success (1): Stealth, automatic success (1): Unarmed Combat, killing hands (medium wound).

Equipment: Lined coat, H&K 227 S variant, flash goggles, garrote, throwing knives (3), blade poison, two explosive grenades, two flash grenades, Fichetti Security 500.

Contacts: Sensei, Fixer, Street-Gang Member.

Description: Bruce Lee in biker leathers and jeans. Ω

Bk.M.93

By David Perry