



HACK & SLASH



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INTRODUCTION

The Matrix is the last great frontier of the Sixth World, and it's only getting weirder and larger. Beyond the hosts that everyone uses are the Foundation, the Resonance Realms, the wild Matrix, and much more. Don't know what those things are? Then this is the book for you. But it's not just about the fringes of the Matrix. It's got gear and programs for deckers, complex forms and echoes for technomancers, and protosapients and technosapients for anyone who wants an unusual Matrix encounter.

But rather than just summarize, let's look at each chapter of the book and what it contains. After a piece of short fiction that takes you to the wild Matrix, *Wild and Free* provides an overview of the state of the Matrix today and how some of these more unusual elements fit in. *The Field Guide to Hacking* provides some tips and tricks for hackers, helping them see the full range of work they can do when they're running the shadows. Then *Gadgets and Gizmos* gives them new hardware tools to accomplish this work.

Elegant Architecture moves into the realm of host design, showing how hosts are assembled and made into a flow of data. If you're using or hacking a host, this is good stuff to know. Next is *Digital Toolbox*, which has new programs, followed by *Techno Tools*, which has new complex forms and echoes. While we're dealing with technomancer-re-

lated things, *Points of Sprite* discusses new types of sprites, powers for them, and some other rules to involve them in your game, including how to build a good reputation with them. *Quality Hacking* then provides new qualities for anyone hacking the Matrix.

Union Forever talks about the different ways hackers band together, forming groups with common goals, and what they can do for their members. *Virtual Life* looks at the other obstacles hackers might encounter in the Matrix, including techno critters, protosapients, artificial intelligences, and Emergent intelligences.

Things get even weirder with *At the Base*, which discusses how to visit the Foundations of the Matrix. *Infinite Memory* goes to another vast, unexplored area of the Matrix, the Resonance Realms. *Know Your Enemy* provides details on every hacker's nemesis, the Grid Overwatch Division (GOD), with thoughts on how to survive all the things they have to throw at you. It also has game stats for some Matrix operatives and new types of intrusion countermeasures (IC). Finally, *Matrix Business* provides a few adventure structures to help you jump right in and start a Matrix-based shadowrun.

With all this, players and gamemasters should have a wealth of options at their disposal to hack the Matrix and bend it to their will—or at least make sure it doesn't conquer them.

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MOONLIGHTING

BY CZ WRIGHT

Icy wind tore in through the open door of the aircraft, whipping Rye's shaggy black hair about. She felt frozen in place and off-balance.

"In or out? We gotta know," Foxtrot said over the team's networked voicechat—without that, she'd have had to shout to be heard over the din of the VTOL.

Behind Foxtrot, two hired pilots lay in rigger cocoons, insensate to the world around their bodies as their minds drove the plane. Black sky lay beyond, stippled with pulsing grey clouds underlit by a million neon signs. Rye couldn't even see the city anymore—how high up were they?

Ghost, she needed this job. Gram's medical bills were piling up. But this was a batdrek job, and the briefing had been so short: go into the Matrix but not-the-Matrix? "The Foundation" might seem like a dream, they'd said. It might seem like a nightmare, she'd inferred.

The horizon pitched, and Rye clutched the bar above the door. As the craft righted itself, Rye caught sight of Observatory Park, a patch of natural green at the center of the city surrounded by the wholly unnatural, coruscating consumer wasteland. The green stabbed a memory of home deep in Rye's heart. At least, the memory of home when Rye was little, back before Evo moved in next door—

"In," Rye said before she could change her mind.

Foxtrot nodded and smacked the back of the seat next to her. Rye slid in and fastened her harness as Foxtrot attached trodes and a biomonitor to her.

"We might show up together and we might not," Foxtrot said over the network while she checked connections and data streams. "Don't touch anything until we find you, okay?" Foxtrot said and clicked her harness in place.

"Sure thing, but if I find the Archive node while I'm waiting, I'll grab it." Rye bounced her legs while the wind snatched at her breath. "Then we can go get dim sum."

"Absolutely not," Springlock—the Matrix guru on the team whom Rye had never met in person—cut in on their network. "Do not touch anything; do not talk to anyone, until we are together. Is that clear?"

"Oof, sorry, that was my bad attempt at a joke." Springlock was way more of a hardass now than when Rye had met her last month—they'd had a good conversation. "Don't worry," Rye said, "I'll be your right-hand. No touching without you."

Foxtrot pushed a button on her comm so her voice wouldn't come through on the network. "I know we haven't known each other long, but trust me when I say Spring is in charge on this one, okay? We're here to assist her."

Rye nodded. "Got it."

A pilot's voice came through the intercom. "Time to go, folks."

Over the network, Foxtrot said, "On our way. Hold on to your butt," then touched a pad on her chrome arm.

Rye didn't make a habit of using VR, but she was no virgin, either, so a quick jump into the Matrix was nothing. She got the impression of being somewhere in between, of tight quarters and being hurriedly and quietly herded through a nondescript door. It was like being snuck into a