

CLAWS AT YOUR THROAT

Never, ever deal with a dragon. Shadowrunners have heard that dictum so often, they frequently say those words in their sleep. But what the aphorism forgets to tell you is this—what if you don't have a choice?

The tension between dragons has been growing, and the big lizards are throwing every weapon they have at each other, including shadowrunners—especially shadowrunners. Extractions, industrial sabotage, theft, wetwork—there's plenty of jobs in all those areas, and dragons are finding ways to get reluctant runners to work for them. Maybe they'll hide their involvement in the run, or maybe they'll bribe the runners with large piles of nuyen or blackmail them with their past activities. Or maybe they'll just tell the runners they have a simple choice of working for them or being eaten.

Whatever tactics they choose, the dragons are going to be active and aggressive, and if runners want to survive, they better be on their toes. They need to know who the draconic players are, what they're up to, and what might happen to them if they fall into a dragon's grip. They need to be ready for anything, because when dragons go at each other, the world shakes, the earth beneath them burns—and far too often, shadowrunners die.

The Clutch of Dragons provides the information gamemasters and players need to involve draconic plots in their games, from profiles of individual dragons, their plots, and their lairs to information about the latest efforts to build anti-dragon weapons. This is a critical reference for any players who want to test their skills against the machinations of dragons—or who want to see just how much trouble they can survive.

The Clutch of Dragons is for use with *Shadowrun*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition.

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THE CLUTCH OF DRAGONS

Sample file

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GLEZAIK
2012



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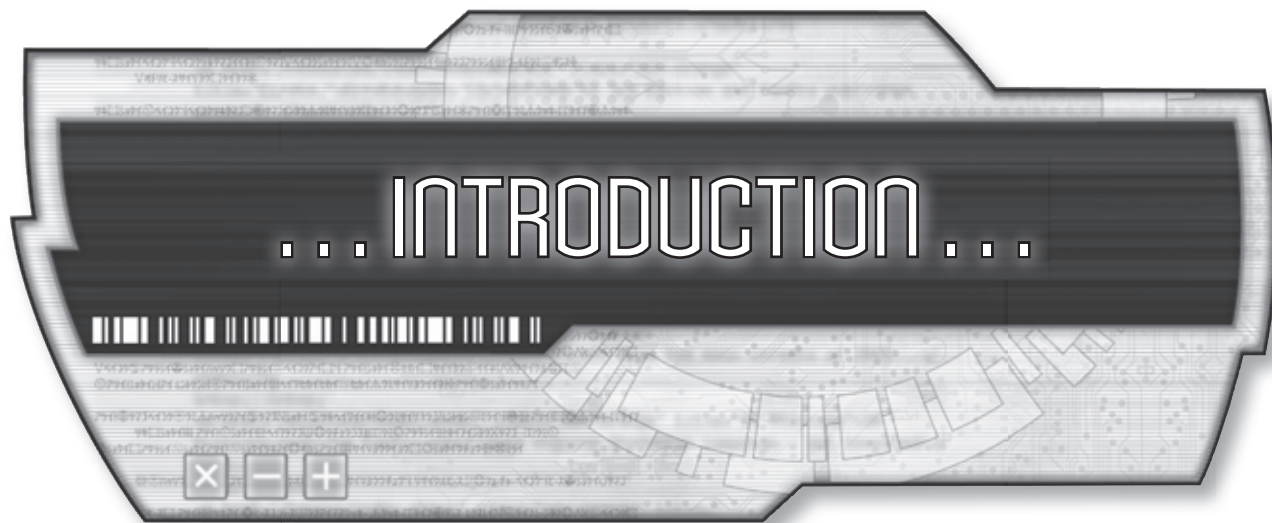
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Posted by: FastJack

Let me get this clear right out of the gate: I'm not telling anyone to deal with a dragon. What I'm telling you is that there are some things you need to know about and possibly some precautions you need to take, or before you know what's happening you'll find out that dragons are dealing with you. And that's a position you don't want to be in.

Now, having dragons pulling strings in the shadows is nothing new. Like powerful beings the world over, they have schemes that are percolating and work that needs to be done, and some of that work is going to be done by people like us. That's always been something we have to look out for. What's different now, though, is the tone they're taking, of the edge there is to the missions. Think of the difference between a boxing match and a street fight. In both contests, you've got two sides who are trying to beat the living shit out of each other. But in the first, there are certain rules of conduct that both sides agree to obey—no kicking, no kidney punches, no biting (usually). They go at each other full of fury and strength, but when their opponent goes down, they back off. Once one of them falls hard enough, the other stops entirely. The knockdown was all he wanted.

All that goes out the window in a street fight. There are no rules. There is no conduct either side is expected to follow. And when one fighter goes down, the other's not going to back away—he's going to pounce and finish him off, if that's what he's of a mind to do.

Usually dragons go at each other like boxers, landing hard blows and looking to gain an advantage, but holding themselves back at a certain point, wounding without going for the kill. Now, though, it's a street fight. That's not to say they're dropping all the rules. Lofwyr remains Loremaster, and there are traditions he fully intends to uphold, no matter what else is going on. And on top of that, these are dragons, not gutter punks. They don't just pull a switchblade every time they feel slighted. Their revenge is slower, more elaborate, and less violent on the surface (though inevitably, the guns come out from time to time). In other words, they fight their war with the weapons we use regularly.

That's why it's tempting to get involved. The jobs are there, the money's certainly there, so why not make a play for it? If that's what you want to do, do it. I'm not here to talk you out of anything. Just remember, though, that dragons are completely unmatched by anything on this world in terms of memory and capacity for revenge. So if, in the course of your efforts, you make an enemy, it could well be one that follows you until your dying day. Which may not be far off, because while dragons show some restraint in violence against each other, they don't worry about boundaries when it comes to us. There may be a side in this conflict that is more sympathetic to metahumanity than the other, but there's not a great dragon on the planet that sees us as their equals.

This is a tricky conflict to look at, so I tried to get us a look at three different levels. **The War at 10,000 Meters** is the high-level look, seeing how the battle lines have been drawn between the dragons and what they're up to (including the latest news on Ghostwalker). **Echoing the War** looks at how the fight has spilled over to draw in other powers of the world, while **Trickle-Down Effects** talks about how all these activities among the powers of the world spills down to the street level. After that, I've compiled information on some dragons around the world and their lairs. These can be as varied as Celedyr's Albuquerque cave, Urubia's burgeoning complex in Seattle, and the Sea Dragon's underwater kingdom. I didn't cover everyone—since when can we cover everything?—but instead put in what I think is the most urgent and/or overlooked news. Finally, there's the **Tools of the Opposition** file, where Fatima looks at some the latest technology being worked on in an effort to get metahumanity on more equal footing with the dragons.

- Um, actually, FastJack, I wrote that. Fatima's dead, remember?
- Beaker

As always, I hope this information either makes you money, keeps you alive, or both.



Connecting JackPoint VPN ...
... Matrix Access ID Spoofed.
... Encryption Keys Generated.
... Connected to Onion Routers.
> Login

> Enter Passcode

... Biometric Scan Confirmed.
Connected to <ERROR: NODE UNKNOWN>

"Inspire us with the spleen of fiery dragons." —Richard III, V.iii.

JackPoint Stats

133 users currently active
in the network

Latest News

* <072074> I've asked Glitch to make some upgrades and perform some general maintenance. Show him the same patience as you would me. Or hell, show him more. —FastJack

Personal Alerts

* You have 3 new [private messages](#).
* You have 2 [messages](#) queued for anonymous re-routing.
* You have received 5 new Metalink Friends [add requests](#).
* 8 individuals have dropped you as Metalink Friends
* You have 11 new [responses](#) to your JackPoint posts.
* PDA: You'll be breathing fire if you don't take an antacid before going to Tommy Troll's Chili Palace tonight.

First Degree

You are hidden from all contacts.

Your Current Rep Score: 89
(87% positive)

Current Time: July 20, 2074, 15:43

PREFERENCES

FEEDS

TASKS

LINKS

HISTORY

Welcome back to JackPoint, omae; your
last connection was severed: 17 hours,
45 minutes, 33 seconds ago.

Today's Heads Up

- * I miss my cyberdeck. Do you miss yours too? [Tag: [Shadowrun 2050](#)]
- * Because sometimes you want to fire shots from a car that's plunging out of a plane. [Tag: [Runners' Black Book 2074](#)]

Incoming

- * They've pulled back the veil, only to reveal more veils. [Tag: [Land of Promise](#)]
- * Sammies need love too! [Tag: [The Way of the Samurai](#)]

Top News Items

- * Johnny Spinrad invites Wu Quintuplets to Jewish party; the five are said to be "anxious to attend." [Link](#)
- * Kenneth Brackhaven vows peace and order will be maintained in Seattle, regardless of Proposition 23 outcome. [Link](#)
- * Nicholas Whitebird has refused all interview requests, saying there is "nothing related to Ghostwalker and his situation that needs to be discussed publicly." [Link](#)



CHAT

MESSAGES

FILES

POSTS

NEXUS

SEARCH

Active



TomStar
Firewall

Active



Jack-in-the-Box
Antivirus

Active



SpamWitch
Filter

On/Receiving



Commcode

Excellent



Signal

Active



Hidden
Mode



Local
Map

THE CLUTCH OF DRAGONS

Posts/Files tagged with
"The Clutch of Dragons"
The War at 10,000 Meters
Echoing the Roar
Trickle-Down Effects
Nests and Hoards

[More]

CONTINUE

ADVANCED
SEARCH

SAVE

... ENTER THE DRAGON ...

Percivale scanned the cavernous room from the safety of a shadowy corner. He cycled through vision systems trying to get the best lay of the land for the team. Thermo gave him nothing but the cold blue of the distant walls. Low-light was useless in the pitch black. He had no desire to use ultrasound after the incident with the bats near the cave entrance. Radar turned out to be the best option; it revealed the next security obstacle in this strange cave-crawling shadow-op.

He looked over at Lancelot. Even with the poor visual information he had right now, he could see that the ork was doing his best to resist the urge to step out of the cave mouth and start shooting. Percivale's feed ran to Gawain's tacnet setup, and for the first time since the team had crawled into this corporate-sponsored dungeon crawl, they had a tactical advantage. Percy's HUD created six red arrows that turned into ghostly red silhouettes as he shifted his line of sight up. The tactical software was awesome, providing indicators for directions to targets and then silhouettes for the targets themselves if you were looking their way. Portions of the silhouettes would go green when they came into view. It was an amazing system, giving anyone with an image link all the data they needed even if they didn't have any other vision systems.

As he was scanning the room he saw a yellow box form around Lancelot's icon. That was the biomonitor providing feedback. Percy wasn't convinced he needed that information, but Galahad insisted it was best for all of them to know each other's condition, and Arthur agreed. So Percy got the info, even if he wasn't always sure what it meant. All six of the other icons in his display were still highlighted lime green, the color for all good.

"Lance, able five?" Galahad whispered over the comm, just loud enough for his subvocal microtransceiver to pick up. Percy knew Galahad had seen the yellow box and wanted to know what was up. The medic didn't like to have to guess what was going on with any team members during a run.

"Bravo two-point-five," Lancelot replied in his smooth ork baritone.

In the group's code, the "two-point-five" reply meant he was good but something else was happening.

"Easy big boy. Wait for Art's call," Lionell said. Percy saw Lionell's icon move, putting a hand on Lance's shoulder to keep him calm.

"Quiet!" Arthur said, managing to make a subvocalization sound like a drill sergeant's bark. Percy couldn't remember how many times he had heard Arthur's lecture about the perils of non-essential communications, but he had no desire to hear it again.

He knew the others were growing antsy. Lancelot in particular was itching for a fight—the biomonitor showed that the sight of targets on his HUD had set the big ork's heart racing.

What are they Percy? The message came as a text, sent using Arthur's headware. The text would be scrolling over everyone's HUD even though it was only intended for Percivale.

Six, no thermo, tweaking now. Percivale's reply was also in text.

He sent mental commands to his goggles to fine-tune the thermal feed, shifting it to read heat dissipation rates instead of surface temp. Living material dissipated heat at a different rate than stone, so the

change would give him a better read on whatever it was that was dangling from the ceiling of the cavern. The system took only a moment to update, but gathering and interpreting data took extra time.

While he was waiting he sent a quick text to Gawain. *Careful with my feed of thermo to tacnet, .3768 sec delay for processing temp data.* By the time that was done he had more info for Arthur, so he shot another text out. *Biological, bone skin, 1.8m, dual-natured, no other threats present.*

With that sent, he tried to get a better handle on the room layout. They had a seven-meter ceiling over most of the chamber with steep walls. The room was nine meters wide and eighteen deep, almost a perfect rectangle with only a few small sections of rock jutting out. There were four entry points, three at floor level along with a crack near the center of the ceiling. There were six targets in the room; the team had seven men, but at least two of them had to concentrate on support roles. Percy knew they wouldn't risk exposure, but he also knew these were not the sort of targets you just sneak past. He wanted to know what to do next, but he knew there were dozens of plans running through Arthur's mind, and he just had to wait until the right one poked through.

All at once, the waiting ended in a flurry of texts from Arthur. *Percy: On mark, hush the crowd, mass stun, overwatch, seal exit Beta, defensive measures.*

Lionell and Lance, slide exit Alpha, fire for drop and draw.

Gawain and Galahad, hold rear cover, block exit Null.

Bors, drop longshot, hold Null, drop runners, cover exit Delta.

I'm on Percy cover, Delta backup, and Conductor.

Percy read quickly, then started a fifteen second countdown to "mark." In his tacnet feed, designations appeared over each exit. There were no questions, or responses of any kind, from the other team members. They had ten more seconds to breathe slowly and make what final preparations they could.

Gawain was never comfortable in places like this. The only things coming in were the signals from the team, and he had no connection to the Matrix. It was a technomancers' nightmare, but he did it so often these days it didn't bother him near as much as it used to. There was a comfort in the smothering Matrix, but he had begun to feel a distant sort of numb comfort in the void, with only the familiar signals of his teammates' links. He controlled them all, or at least his squires did. Each member of the team had a resident sprite in their commlink that answered to him. They all looked like squires—most people would assume they were agents, but in truth they were so much more. With their help, Gawain had maintained the team's comm system through some brutal assaults. It seemed like overkill right now; they hadn't touched a signal in hours, but he reminded his squires to stay alert. He read all the texts—his, one from Percy, one from Arthur, and all the others. He entered a little variance for the thermal input. He finished prepping by verifying the vitals on his HK MP5-TX. Full clip, ninety-six percent battery on the electronic firing system, all systems green. Gun at the ready, he watched the clock start to tick down through those long final seconds.