

- Whether we want to admit it or not, killing is part of a shadowrunner's job. Ask any ten posters here on Jackpoint and I'll bet nine of them have killed someone during a job, whether it was in self-defense or because they were assigned to take out the target. So it's really fuckin' annoying to see people who often take wetwork jobs, like Balladeer, getting dumped on by hypocrites here because of what they do in the shadows.

With that in mind, I present this file for your consideration. The author submitted it a couple of hours ago with a "time sensitive" tag. I read the file's title, The Assassin's Primer, and after getting Balladeer's expert opinion, I decided it was worth posting. The author claims to be a professional assassin, and Balladeer confirmed that he seems to know the ins and outs of that line of work intimately. That doesn't necessarily mean you'll agree with everything he says, but the practical advice he offers for those looking to become professional assassins is pretty solid.

Even those of you who don't want to make a career out of being an assassin should pay attention to this file. After all, if you're ever unlucky enough to have a hitman targeting you, it pays to know how he might operate, neh?

- Bull
- I've also decided to grant this document's author temporary posting privileges. Given how little time he has left to live, I figure he's at least got a right to defend and amend his last words.
- Glitch

POSTED BY: QUIETUS

I don't have much time left, so I'll cut to the chase. My name's Quietus, and I'm an assassin for hire. In forty-eight hours, maybe less, I'll be eliminated by my employer as a loose end.

I have nowhere left to run, nowhere to go that they won't find me, nor will they ever stop looking for me. I know too much for them to even consider letting me live. So as a farewell "fuck you" to them, I'm gonna make a final stand. I'll still die, but I won't make it easy for them.

- Oh look, I'm playing the world's tiniest violin. Fuckin' hired murderer! Good riddance to bad garbage, I say.
- Sticks
- That's rich, coming from a guy who aids sex traffickers for a living.
- Netcat

In the past few days I've thought a lot about what I want to leave behind, besides a body count. You guys—that is, the users of ShadowSEA—gave me the answer.

In my years of lurking on ShadowSEA, I've seen a truckload of ignorance spouted about assassins. Some of you see us as nothing more than sociopathic monsters, killing because we enjoy it, with the money being just a bonus.

Others think we're remorseless mercenaries who view our targets as our paychecks and nothing else. Even more disturbing than those misconceptions are those aspiring assassins who buy into them, either out of a misguided belief that they're "cool" or "badass," or because they believe that they *must* abandon all of their humanity to succeed as an assassin.

The most depressing things I see, however, are the shadowrunners who set out to do this job without any knowledge of how to start. I've heard way too many stories about novices getting killed because of ignorance, dead because nobody taught them the basics of survival in this line of work.

- Sink or swim. That's the only way you know who's worth a damn in the shadows. The corps and cops don't have any mercy on novice runners, so why should we?
- Clockwork
- Maybe because we're supposed to be better than the corps and cops? If more people took the time to actually teach novices, don't you think the result might be more good shadowrunners? Maybe then we could actually do some lasting damage to the megacorps.
- Artheben

So I've decided to leave this file as my legacy to the shadow community. I hope I can dispel the illusions and myths about assassins while teaching those who want to become one how to do the job well. More than anything, I want to show that being an assassin and an honorable man is not a contradiction.

WHO BECOMES AN ASSASSIN?

As far as historians can tell, the first to be called assassins were the members of Order of Assassins, a band of fanatical devotees to a man named Hassan-i Sabbah that formed in 1080 ACE. Members of the Nizari Ismaili sect of Islam, they were trained in the ways of disguise and stealth, silently slaying their targets. They carried out hits for both sides of the Crusades at the direction of their leader.

- Don't forget where the word "assassin" comes from—*hashshashin*, from their use of hashish to give them visions of the paradise that awaited them if they killed who their master told them to.
- Slamm-0!
- *Sigh* I should have guessed that long-debunked piece of folklore would come up pretty quick. The truth is that the word *hashshashin* was derived from the word *hashishi*, which meant "outcast" or "rabble" and was used as an insult against followers of the Nizari Ismaili sect of Islam in the 12th century.



Medieval Western historians a few centuries later painted the Ismailis as fanatical killers, and centuries after that some over-imaginative Western historians connected the word *hashishi* with the drug hashish. Thus, the “drug-addled contract killers” story was born. Hassan-i Sabbah was an Ismaili, true, but other than that it’s just fanciful storytelling.

- Glitch

Flash forward about a thousand years, and things haven’t changed much. The job, at its heart, is the same that it’s always been: killing a target without attracting attention, alerting guards, being identified, or leaving any clues that could trace the hit back to you or your employer. This means that deception and stealth are still the cornerstones of the profession. You’re not going to make it as an assassin by yelling a war cry and spraying the room your target’s in with machine gun fire.

- Not that some bone-headed sprawl gangers don’t try this method. They call themselves “assassins” despite the fact that the only planning they’ve done for the hit is bringing ten times the bullets they’ll really need. Some of these morons even manage to make a name for themselves in the Barrens, but the second they try to hit a target outside of a Z-zone, they get geeked by the target or killed by the cop responding to the disturbance they caused. When it comes right down to it, being an assassin isn’t just a matter of being able to kill; it’s knowing *how to kill without being noticed* and how to reach the target in order to make the hit possible.
- Balladeer

Of course, not everything is the same as it was back in the Crusades Era. Some assassins still work for large organizations such as Aztechnology’s *otonir* warriors, the ninja employed by the yakuza, and SEAL Team Six (surprised to see that last one on the list? What do you think they do—bust in and explain to the bad guys the error of their ways?). However, many other assassins are independents working toward their own goals or simply trying to make a living.

Every assassin has their own reasons for taking up the profession, but from what I’ve seen over the years, they can be divided into a few broad categories:

THE DESPERATE

These are the assassins who go into the job because they have no other marketable skills and need to make a living any way they can. This isn’t a criticism of their ability or professionalism. I’ve worked with quite a few highly skilled, professional assassins who started doing the job because they had the bad luck to be born in the Redmond Barrens and knew nothing else besides killing.

Unfortunately, while these assassins *can* become professional and experienced, far too many become the “war cry and wild gunfire” types I mentioned above. There isn’t exactly an official mentorship program they can sign up

for at the local community center, but that sort of instruction is usually what’s needed for aspiring assassins to become professionals. The lucky ones find a mentor on the streets who can actually teach them something and move on up as a result. The unlucky ones usually end up dead pretty quick.

- What about the self-taught experts? You know, the ones that worked their way up from the streets all the way to the big time with nothing but a gun and their wits? Shadowrunners do that all the time—just look at me. Why not assassins?
- /dev/grrl
- Ignoring for the moment that it’s arguable whether you’ve proven yourself as a shadowrunner, kid ... I’d say the big difference is that the learning curve is much steeper as an assassin than it is for a shadowrunner. Sure, professionals come up from the streets in both professions, but I’d say a lot more people die making the climb to becoming a professional assassin than a professional shadowrunner. With shadowrunning the job can be a lot of things; stealing something, extracting someone, sabotage—jobs that corporate guards might not immediately react to with deadly force when guarding against. As an assassin, the job is always going to involve killing someone. This means the target and those guarding him will almost always react with deadly force.

As for running away and living to fight another day, you can do that if an assassination job goes wrong, but it might be a while before you live that down. Assassination jobs outside of places like the Barrens require a certain level of skill, and a failure of that magnitude doesn’t reflect well on one’s aptitude. Shadowrunners can come back from a botched run easier because they usually work in teams. If a runner with a bad job on his record runs with a more experienced team that can cover for his weaknesses, he can usually recover his rep as long as he doesn’t majorly screw up. Assassins usually don’t have that option, since they typically work alone.

- Balladeer

THE PSYCHOS

Okay, let’s address the elephant in the room. There *are* psycho assassins who get into the job because they love to kill. Everything else they get out of it, whether it’s the money or the street cred, is secondary to the power trip they get from ending another person’s life. I’m sure as hell not going to provide an in-depth psychoanalysis of these guys—I don’t want that particular Abyss staring back into me in my final hours. However, I will share what I know of them in case you find one of them on your ass.

With these guys, it’s all about the thrill of being a death dealer. Holding the power of life and death in their hands is an addiction stronger than any BTL can offer, and who doesn’t want to make a living doing what they love? Depending on what specifically is going wrong in their brain case, it might be the quick kill that gives them the most



pleasure, or they might get a kick out of toying with their prey before moving in. On the other hand, they might whet their sick appetites by killing the target's family, friends, business associates, casual acquaintances, and former roommates before moving on to the actual mark.

Really, there are a lot of forms that these guys' damage might take, but it's extremely important not to discount these assassins' habits. Knowing what gives these wackjobs an adrenaline rush can give you an advantage. For example, knowing that the person trying to kill you picks off his targets' friends and family first can give you the forewarning you need to get your loved ones out of harm's way, or it might help you predict where he'll strike next. And if you get the chance to take the psycho out, show no mercy. Because he sure won't.

- If you have one of these guys on your tail, it really pays to know somebody who works with human behavior. I don't just mean a psychologist either; the UCAS FBI and other law-enforcement agencies and corps have entire departments of analysts that do nothing but analyze criminals' behavior based on the clues they leave behind and the actions they take. Having an in with them and their knowledge of psychology can give you the edge you need to save your life or those of your friends.
- The Smiling Bandit

THE IDEALIST

Finally, we come to the idealists—those who truly believe in a cause, and believe that killing is the only way to bring about that cause's success. Of course, that description covers just about everything from religious fanatics killing unbelievers to legitimate soldiers killing the nation's enemies.

With these assassins, the biggest thing to keep in mind is that the cause is all that matters to them, and they will often stop at nothing to complete the job. Trying to bribe them won't work, nor will using other team members as human shields. *Especially* using teammates as human shields. Do that, and you'll have both an assassin targeting you *and* pissed off teammates ready to throw you under the bus.

Don't go thinking that all idealist assassins are fighters for justice like some comic book superhero. Yeah, there are some of those, but there are others who have no limits to the lengths they'll go for their cause. Ever looked into the eyes of a man who thinks killing you is a sacred mission from God? I have, and it's not an experience I care to repeat. Nor is it an experience you want to have.

- Okay hitman, cards on the table here. Which of these categories do you fall into?
- Kane
- I had a feeling someone was going to ask that question. I would call myself an idealist of the non-psychotic variety. To understand why, you need to understand my life.

I was born to a poor family in Greece, living the sort of life that most of the SINless people are probably familiar with; unemployed parents, stealing food to feed my family, piss-poor education at best, everything. Life got even worse in my teenage years when the Alliance for Allah swept into the country in 2034. My entire family was among the quarter of Greece's population killed by the invading fanatics.

Alone, poor, and pissed off at the world for making my life suck even worse than it had before, I survived by doing the same thieving I'd done all my life. A few years later, however, I saw a news story about Mullah Sayid Jazrir's assassination. Jazrir was the head of the Alliance for Allah, and with his death that coalition of religious wackjobs flew apart at the seams. The bastards that killed my family had been completely undone by the death of a single man.

That was when I realized the power of individuals to change the world. By killing one man, whoever assassinated Mullah Jazrir saved many lives that could have been lost had the Second Ottoman Jihad continued. It was the first bit of hope I'd had since my family died, and I seized it with both hands. I was determined to make a difference in the world by doing what that man did; eliminating the sort of people who started senseless wars like the Second Ottoman Jihad, and ensuring that there would be fewer people who suffered like I did as a result.

Since then, I've made a career out of hunting those who lead others to kill their fellow man, like religious fanatics and corporate war profiteers, or people who otherwise simply need to die because of the heinous natures of their crimes.

- Quietus
- Geez, lay it on a bit thicker, Melodrama Man. And talk about delusions of grandeur!
- /dev/grrl
- Give the guy a break, kid. The superhero-esque "saving the world" crap and the bleeding-heart viewpoint annoy the shit out of me too, but he's got the right idea at the core: get out there and make the world, or at least a little part of it, into something more to your liking through sheer force of will. How do you think I got to where I am today?
- Kane
- By pillaging, thieving, and murdering?
- Aufheben
- Exactly. That's my method of exercising my will on the world, just as Quietus' was becoming an assassin. We have different methods and different outcomes we're working towards, but the same goal at the core.
- Kane
- So how did you get your start in the assassin business, Quietus? School of hard knocks or formal mentorship?
- Hard Exit



- Mentorship. I was lucky enough to make contact with a professional assassin in Athens that was serious about teaching an apprentice how to make a living in this line of work. He was also quite the idealist himself. He was a little wacky, claiming to be descended from the Spartan King Leonidas and saying that fighting for justice as an assassin was his “blood destiny” as a result, but the advice he gave has kept me alive for several decades now, and I never would have made it this far without the knowledge he gave me.
- Quietus
- Don’t we have enough people in the world making judgment calls of who lives and dies based on their personal morality? As a matter of fact, aren’t those exactly the sort of people that killed Quietus’ parents and led him to where he is today?
- Kay St. Irregular
- Believe me, Irregular, the irony of that is not lost on me.
- Quietus

THE HONORABLE KILLER

Among the ranks of the idealist archetype that I mentioned above, there are assassins who dedicate themselves to their causes and beliefs to even greater degrees. They are driven by the same motivations as other idealists, but they also adopt a strict code that governs how they live their lives and conduct themselves on the job. For lack of a more neutral term, I refer to them as “honorable killers.”

I proudly count myself among these assassins. In my opinion, it’s only these codes of honor that separate assassins from the cold-blooded murderers who prey on the weak and defenseless every day in sprawls across the world. In a job that involves dealing death on a regular basis, it’s far too easy to cross the line from “professional assassin” to “soulless monster,” and that’s not a transition I ever want to make.

- Oh, gag me with a fucking vibroblade.
- Clockwork
- Here’s where I have to part opinions with our author. I’m not saying that you have to make a habit of shooting children in order to be a successful assassin, but thinking you can adhere to a strict “code of honor” while being an effective assassin is hopelessly naïve. When you’re in this line of work, you have to do whatever it takes to survive and get the job done, and “whatever it takes” is not always going to be pleasant. Sooner or later, strictly adhering to a code of honor is going to get you stuck in a position where you’ll have to make a choice between violating that code or

dying. While you’re busy agonizing over which way to go, you’ll catch a bullet through the head that makes the choice for you.

- Balladeer
- Speak for yourself. I’m not an assassin, but I am a soldier, a profession that also involves taking the lives of others. When you’re in a line of work like that, you need something to hold onto so that you don’t cross that invisible line Quietus mentioned. I was fortunate enough to be mentored by Matador, God rest his soul, who taught me the value of honor in a soldier’s life. Adhering to the code he taught me has saved me from doing things in the heat of the moment that, once my anger subsided, would have either tortured me with guilt for the rest of my life or driven me to suicide.
 - I’ve seen soldiers who don’t have a code of honor to restrain them. They become little more than monsters, the sort of people that use civilians for target practice or worse. Personally, I cut out the middleman and use my sidearm to handle such soldiers on the rare occasions they show up in my unit.
- Picador

I’d like to be able to give aspiring assassins a step-by-step guide on how to develop your own code of honor, but I can’t really give much advice on this because it’s such a personal decision. Everybody has different lines they won’t cross and different things they value, and it’s things like that which usually shape an assassin’s code.

Since I can’t give any general advice, I’ll share my own code here to give an example of what I’m talking about.

NEVER KILL AN INNOCENT

The first and most important tenet of my code is never to kill an innocent. In this case, “innocent” means anyone who is not my target or directly defending the target.

There are many reasons I have this tenet as part of my code. For one thing, it’s the innocents that I’m doing this job to help. I’m fighting for those who can’t fight for themselves, and killing them is a betrayal of that goal. Plus, it’s just plain wrong. I believe these people have a right to live a full life and to take that opportunity from them is unforgivable. I’ve never killed an innocent in the course of my job, and that’s a record I’m very proud of.

I have, on occasion, been required to use some sort of force on people I consider innocents, either for their own safety (like getting them out of the way of a firefight) or because they were guarding a target but didn’t meet my definition of “directly defending my target” as described above. Whenever I’m forced to do this, I use non-lethal means like gel rounds or shock ammunition to render them unconscious until I eliminate the target. After that business is concluded, I quickly make sure that the unconscious innocents are alive and not suffering any adverse effects before making my escape.



- “Adverse effects?” Like what? And how can you check *everyone* you’ve shot?
- /dev/grrl
- The big two things I look out for are trouble breathing or signs of a heart attack. The former can be caused by a gel round impacting in the wrong spot, knocking the wind out of the target, and the latter can be caused by shock ammunition. Despite being marketed as a non-lethal type of ammunition, shock ammo can cause heart attacks in unhealthy people. As for how I can check everyone, it takes five seconds per person, for someone who knows exactly what to look for. Plus, they’re unconscious from the effects of the rounds, so they’re not likely to get up and alert the authorities or shoot me.
- Quietus
- How the hell can somebody be guarding the target but not “directly defending the target?”
- Netcat
- By that, I usually mean people like rent-a-cops and similarly low-paid security guards. In my mind, they’re not necessarily trying to defend an evil person because they’re evil themselves; usually it’s just a paying job like any other, and they’re just trying to feed their families. That doesn’t warrant death in my opinion.
- Quietus

ONLY TAKE JOBS THAT SERVE A GOOD CAUSE

I will only take jobs that involve taking out targets whose demise will help people. Serial rapists, ganger scum, corrupt suits, and psychopaths of all types are just a few examples of the types of targets I’ve taken out over the years. If eliminating a man means that dozens of women around the sprawl can walk the streets feeling a little bit safer, or that the people don’t have to worry about being shot because they’re wearing the “wrong” colors in the “wrong” part of the city, I’ll take the job.

I don’t kill purely for other people’s, or corporations’, profits. I’ve turned down plenty of lucrative jobs to erase crusading environmentalists or neo-anarchists when those people were guilty of nothing more than being inconvenient to a corporation’s plans. Turning that money down has kept me on the razor’s edge of poverty at times, but frankly, I don’t give a shit. I do this job to make the world a better place, not to make it easier for fat cats to line their pockets.

- There are more than a few shadowrunners who take this approach. The most well known are the ones who take “hooding,” as in Robin Hood, jobs. Sometimes they do it for no compensation except the satisfaction of doing the right thing. Personally, I think it’s an admirable path. It’s not an easy one, by any means, but one to applaud.
- Aufheben

TAKE NO PLEASURE IN THE KILL

Being an assassin is a job, not a hobby. I hold peoples’ lives in my hands every day, and I have to treat that as the grave responsibility it is rather than as something to be enjoyed. I don’t enjoy what I do but I believe it’s a necessary evil. Believe me, I’d love to be able to retire because all the assholes in the world have disappeared and left me with no jobs. Until then the world needs people like me to tip the scales towards the good side just a little bit.

Besides all that, enjoying this job like one does a hobby is a quick way to become the “psycho” assassin I mentioned above.

- This applies to the mercenary business as well. One surefire sign of an amateur is somebody who treats their job like a game of paintball instead of like a firefight where they and their teammates stand a real chance of dying. No mercenary commander in their right mind wants someone like that in their unit. First of all, their lack of seriousness means they often don’t listen to orders, and failure to follow orders on the battlefield can get someone killed. Secondly, it’s really fucking annoying to everybody around you when someone’s treating a real brushfire war like a game while everyone else is focused on trying to survive. Extra annoyance means additional, unnecessary stress on everyone in an already-tense situation. And like Quietus said, the jokers like this who survive for long in the mercenary profession usually become psychopaths who enjoy killing way too much. Sooner or later they’ll resort to killing civilians to get their jollies. Besides being heinously evil, that sort of thing makes your unit persona non grata in the merc community. You’ll be effectively blacklisted by any halfway respectable employer. Usually the only way to restore the unit’s reputation is to shoot said psychopath, and sometimes even that doesn’t work.
- Picador

DON’T BETRAY YOUR EMPLOYER

There’s obviously a big risk in hiring an assassin; if someone is caught doing it, they can be charged with accessory to murder, which usually carries penalties just as severe as the murder itself. That means that anyone who hires an assassin is taking a major leap of faith in assuming that the assassin won’t sell him out. If you build a reputation as a reliable assassin who absolutely will not betray the person who hired you, that gives you a major advantage when hiring time comes along. If you *do* betray an employer, you can count on being blacklisted at best and targeted by an assassin yourself at worst.

That sort of thing isn’t conducive to a long career, and if I’m blacklisted or dead, a few more bastards might live to make normal folks’ lives hell. Hence, this is a tenet of my code.

- This advice applies just as much to shadowrunners as it does to assassins. The corporations may all know that the other corps



hire as many shadowrunners as they do, but that doesn't mean they're going to just lie back and let a run go down without retaliation if they know who the culprit is. It would make them look weak, and they know they can't afford to show weakness. So as crazy as it sounds, the fact that they're hiring you for a job means that they trust you to one degree or another. Don't take that trust lightly if you want to have a long shadowrunning career. Or a long life.

- Fianchetto

DON'T BE A GLORYHOUND

By this, I mean I won't talk about jobs on Matrix sites in a way that can be traced back to me or my employer. This is partly for my own safety, but it's also an extension of not betraying my employer. Whenever I talk about a job, I leave out the identifying details. If the job was sufficiently unique that any details could possibly tip someone off, I just don't talk about it at all.

- Ghost knows some people here on JackPoint could do well to take that advice.
- Pistons
- Eh, it's in our nature to talk about this stuff. Not only do some of us bask in the glory it brings us, but sharing stories helps out others in the shadow community. Its common sense among shadowrunners to leave out the identifying details, but to not talk about it at all almost feels like it goes against the way we're supposed to be wired.
- Kay St. Irregular
- One of the first things my mentor told me was: "If you're looking for glory and want everybody to know your name, this is the wrong line of work for you." That's true to a certain extent among shadowrunners but it's even truer for assassins. Unlike shadowrunners, we do nothing but kill people. That means a lot more discretion is needed to avoid a premature death, whether it's at the hands of cops "serving the public good" or at the hands of employers "tying up a loose end."
- Quietus

ONLY WORK WITH THOSE WHO RESPECT MY CODE

I will not break my code for any reason. That's the bottom line. It's something I make perfectly clear to both my employers and those I work with, on the rare occasions I work with anyone. To avoid any complications, I ensure that I only work with people who, if they don't share my code, will at least not ask me to break it and will not put me in a situation where I have to stand by and watch it be broken. On a couple occasions, I've been forced to work with people I haven't been able to vet properly. One of those times, I had to violently intervene to prevent an innocent from being harmed by another team member. The psycho just wouldn't listen to reason when I tried

to warn him that a heavily armed combat drone wasn't appropriate for the type of job we were doing. It wasn't something I enjoyed, but I'd do it again in a heartbeat.

- Sounds like an interesting story behind that summary. C'mon, spill some details on a job or two, man. You're gonna die anyways. What harm is it going to do?
- Kane
- I intend to die as I lived, Kane: as a professional. So no.
- Quietus

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Assassins tend to be different from shadowrunners in one very important respect: we don't work as part of teams very often. Overall, we're a rather self-reliant bunch, and we assassins with a code of honor have trouble finding a group of individuals who see eye-to-eye with us on every point of our code. This means that assassins usually don't have anyone to cover their weaknesses in terms of knowledge and skills. As a result, we have to know much more than the average shadowrunner, having at least a little bit of knowledge of nearly everything just to survive.

I can't honestly claim to meet this high standard myself. I don't know jack about magical theory, for example, and I couldn't make sense of a commlink's inner workings to save my life. I've survived several decades in this line of work despite not meeting that ideal, however, and there are a couple reasons for that. First, I have a lot of friends and contacts that can fill me in on what I need to know. Secondly, I only take jobs that play to my strengths or that I know I can accomplish with the skills I have. This has limited my job choices, but it also means I haven't found myself in over my head.

- If you're an expert in a very specialized area of knowledge, you could do worse than make friends with an assassin or another lone wolf-type shadowrunner. If they're smart, they'll pay pretty well for mission-critical information. If they're not, they'll be dead soon from their own idiocy anyway, so no skin off your nose. There's nothing quite like having a reliable repeat customer.
- Lyran
- Why not just use skillsofts to fill the gaps in your knowledge?
- /dev/grl
- For academic topics and other things like that, skillsofts might work. However, you really don't want to rely on those for any skills you intend to use in combat. On their own they're far too "linear" to be used in quickly changing situations like that. For instance, if you slot a chip with a program teaching you how to use a pistol and you don't know how to use a gun without the

