

# JACKPOINT

## CONNECTING TO JACKPOINT VPN...

...IDENTITY SPOOFED  
...ENCRYPTION KEYS GENERATED  
...CONNECTED TO ONION ROUTERS

>>>LOGIN: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

>>>ENTER PASSCODE: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

...BIOMETRIC SCAN CONFIRMED

CONNECTED TO <ERROR: NODE UNKNOWN>

◊ "SOMETIMES IT'S BETTER TO BE SOUTH OF THE BORDER."

## JACKPOINT STATS

7 Users are active  
on the network

## LATEST NEWS

I found someone  
to give us a  
perspective on the  
transporters we  
all consider part of  
the background.  
Be nice to the  
coyote, he does  
have teeth—Bull

## PERSONAL ALERTS

- You have **68 new**  
private messages.
- You have **127**  
**new responses**  
to your JackPoint  
posts.
- Devil Rat Attack's  
**new single** will  
be available for  
download in  
17 minutes, 9  
seconds.

## FIRST DEGREE

One Member  
is online and in  
your area.

## YOUR CURRENT REP SCORE:

1,219  
(84% Positive)

## CURRENT TIME:

30 Nov 2075,  
1113 hrs

## WELCOME BACK TO JACKPOINT, CHUMMER:

Your last connection was severed 6 days, 18 hours ago.

## TODAY'S HEADS UP

The state of the art is always moving forward, don't get left behind.

[Tag: [Shadowrun, Fifth Edition](#)]

## INCOMING

- Astral space and the metaverse will never be the same again. [Tag: [Aetherology](#)]
- There are times when travel is bad for your health. [Tag: [Firing Line](#)]
- The Smoke will never be the same after someone let loose the hoodlums.

[Tag: [London Falling](#)]

- Sometimes the shadows clear enough to allow you to see the drek you're  
standing in. [Tag: [Sioux Nation: Shadows in Focus](#)]

## TOP NEWS ITEMS

- The Corporate Court has refused to hear the case of Getwell Industries versus  
Sioux Nation. [Link](#)
- Gaeatronics has announced a significant bounty on the head of Michael Rory  
Caolain, though the award is only collectible if the subject is delivered alive. MET  
2000 has forbidden any of their members from collecting the award or assisting  
others looking to collect it. [Link](#)
- UCAS Senate Highway Safety Bill #4896-97 has been shelved until the Senate  
approves increased remote explosive detection devices along the interstate  
highway system. Damien Knight publicly supported the decision, as the bill  
would have required Ares to escort and insure explosive cargoes. [Link](#)



# TRANSPORTER

Bright overhead lights shined down on the card table; peering around the room, Timothy could barely see the backs of the cards of the other players. A modest pile of credsticks, corporate scrip, and datachips sat in the middle of the table.

He looked at his cards; with the cards on the table, he had a pretty good hand. He rolled a credstick into the middle of the table.

"Call."

At that moment a flashing light in the corner of his vision alerted him to an incoming message. The merest thought brought the message up; there was no way he would be able to concentrate on the rest of the game knowing that someone wanted to get in touch with him. As the player on his left folded, a message crawled across the bottom of his vision:

"Runner team urgently needs to get into the city. Hot cargo. No pursuit. Are you anywhere near Wenatchee?—Pax."

Distracted from the game now, he tapped out a very quick reply on his deck

"Can be in 30 minutes. Number?"

In the meantime the shadowed figure opposite raised. The only other player in the game folded. It was down to the two of them. A good pair, but what did Mendle have? At the moment all he had was a wide grin, but that wasn't anything new. The man always smiled.

"Call. Show 'em."

A flush. Typical. Timothy stood up from the table. "It's all yours."

On the way out of the bar Timothy grabbed his duster and hat from the hook next to the door and stepped out into bright daylight. The sun glared down and reflected off last night's snow, broken and brown where the bar patrons had parked, but clean and white otherwise. Timothy took a second to deeply inhale the mountain air.

Before he could exhale, an incoming call snapped him out of his moment of peace.

"Are you a Coyote? Can you get us into Seattle?"

Strictly amateurs. No greeting, no careful feeling him out, and there was a hitch in the breath of the guy on the other end of the audio call. He sounded nervous.

"Might be that I am. Who's asking?"

"Uh, you don't need to know, but we need to get to Seattle by midnight. Can you do that?"

"Meet me at the corner of Austin Drive and No. 1 Canyon Road in twenty minutes."

That would give him time to check them out before driving the half-kilometer he needed to travel. Amateurs were usually trouble. It was time to make a few calls.

✕

The clients were already at the intersection when Timothy pulled up. Easily the most visible was a bald troll with painted horns, it looked like he had carefully chosen his look. The effect the troll was going for was marred by the shredded ballistic vest he wore, bloody bandages slapped here and there, and the fact that he was lying down and gasping. Red seeped slowly onto the fresh snow, and it looked like he might be going into shock. A short human with a black trenchcoat fidgeted and swayed from side to side as he cradled a deck. His short, carefully sculpted hair and black sunglasses made him look like he wanted to blend in with corporate types. As the van pulled up he clutched his deck to his body and gritted his teeth. The final member of the team was leaning against the old street sign. Dressed for a nightclub, her tight vinyl top and trousers could not have been less suited for a backwater Salish town, but they showed off her impressive and curvaceous ork physique. Lying on their side off the road were three motorcycles, bullet holes riddled the troll-sized one. There must be an impressive story behind how they had got this far.

"I'm Tim. It looks like you folks could do with a ride." The southern drawl was strong, much stronger than it had been while playing poker. "I can fit the three of you no problem, but with a troll we'll only be able to fit two of the bikes in the back, and it might be a bit crowded." Tim patted his van; it was reassuringly cold under his palm. The touch also allowed him to command the van to open the main side door and lower to the ground.

"The name is Huntress." The ork smiled as she came toward him. Timothy could feel his body relaxing when she spoke. "This here is Spike, and over on the grass is Razor." Spike visibly flinched when he heard his name. Razor didn't move, still leaking onto rapidly darkening snow. "Give us a hand getting Razor on board."

Razor was heavy, even for a troll, and his injuries looked like they could end up being fatal. He took up the whole back of the van once he had been dragged into place.

"Razor is going to be pissed when he wakes up, but we'll leave his bike. It's the most shot up anyway." The two other bikes were stacked in front of Razor and secured with straps. Finally the last two got on board, sitting just behind the driver's seat.

"The trip will take four hours. Hope you've stocked up on vids." Tim climbed in the driver's door as the van lifted off the pavement, the door closed, and the windows darkened.

Spike, silent 'til now, thrust himself forward, his face tense and sweaty, "Wait, wait! I forgot something!"

Timothy started the engine, then turned around in his seat to look at Spike, then he just nodded.

"Mind the step," he said as the door opened.





Spike pulled a grenade out of his jacket pocket and threw it out the door. An explosion destroyed Razor's bike and left Timothy's ears ringing, although he could still hear the echoes of the explosion reverberating around the hills.

"There, no evidence trail." Spike looked pleased with himself. Timothy stared at him. "What?" Spike asked.

"I guess we'll take the long way around to avoid the aerial drones you just alerted," Tim said. But Spike didn't seem to hear him; he just sat back with a tight smile. Huntress only shrugged and made sure she was strapped in.

✱

Timothy eased his van to a stop next to the border checkpoint. An old Doberman drone trundled up to the driver's door as a call came through on his commlink.

"This border crossing is closed, the road is out ahead. For your safety, please return the way you came and take the route through North Bend." The official Metroplex Guard voice was metallic and harsh. Not at all welcoming.

"Thank you for your concern. If y'all will check the repair schedule, you will find that I am a supply vehicle delivering supplies for the road repair team." For a closed border like this one, there were hardly any checks performed, just a warning message and an instruction to turn around. He had to force the guard to scan his commlink and look over his fake ID.

"Thank you Josephus T. O'Reilly, please confirm with a biometric reading." The Doberman trundled up to the door, and a telescoping arm presented a fingerprint scanner as Timothy pulled on a rubber glove full of fake fingerprints and rolled down his window, letting icy air swirl around the inside of the van. As he pressed his false prints onto the offered plate, he called a friend, who answered as the van rolled along the deserted highway.

"I'm the man with the plan. How's it going Timmo old buddy?" the voice rang directly in Timothy's ear bone, inaudible to the silent passengers.

"Not too bad. I've got some friends traveling with me, but they have been mighty quiet for the trip. I think they have been chatting amongst themselves, and that's mighty rude where I come from. Wondering if you might let me in on their little secrets? One of them is a decker." Timothy's message was transmitted with a subvocal mike; without looking him in the face, Huntress and Spike would be unable to tell he was talking to someone.

"Man, you have called the right guy! You pull the normal jam-scam and I'll pop 'em open for ya. Normal fee applies, though, dude. I gotta brand-new ride to pay off."

"Come in through my satellite link in thirty minutes." Timothy signed off, but not before transmitting instructions on how to get around the jamming he was about to set up.

"Okay back there, we will be traveling through a blackout zone in about ten minutes, so if you want to check your feeds, now is the time." Huntress hit a button on her link.

"What?"

"I said we'll be going someplace the Matrix isn't; make sure you've got a sim or something so you don't get bored."

"Oh, yeah sure." Huntress fiddled with her link; Spike didn't say anything. Hell, he could be totally in the Matrix for all Timothy knew.

Timothy felt under his chair for his jammer. At full power it would cut off any signal to or from his van, except for ones he specifically allowed through. He flicked it on to the minimum setting and set the timer so that it would slowly build over the course of ten minutes.

As the static built up, so did the feeling of isolation. The windshield had been darkened at the start of the journey, and there were no windows in the back. Timothy was driving with only his AR display to help him.

The sound from outside the van changed texture slightly, indicating to Timothy that the van had entered the tunnel as expected. There was movement in the back—it felt like Razor was waking up, and Spike was beginning to move around as well.

"What ... what happened to the signal?"

"You must have been jacked in when I mentioned it, but we've entered some tunnels to get past the real border security. We'll be in them for a while." Timothy carefully examined the reactions of the passenger through the hidden security cameras. Spike had been surprised, then relaxed; he and Huntress were moving their jaws slightly. Obviously Timothy wasn't the only one with a subvocal microphone. Spike just slumped back in his seat, glaring at the back of Timothy's head. "We'll be back in signal range in a bit, just before I drop you off. Speaking of which, the contract that your fixer sent through gave a drop-off point in Redmond. That's a mighty dangerous area of town. You still want to go there?"

"Yeah, that's fine; we have some friends that can pick us up."

A jolt of adrenaline ran through Timothy, amateurs with friends collecting them? He was right to have been cautious. He used the one unjammed frequency to call a friend.

"Howdy. Are you still on for the usual?"

"Already there Tim-bob, figured it would be more subtle if I was already there running on the node. The guy with the 'tude is a pretty good hacker, but he wasn't expecting me. I recorded the convo as well—you want the whole thing or just the highlights?"

"Just the highlights. Their business is their business."

"Looks like their business is offing you. The guy Spike wants to drop a few grenades in your van when they leave. They have buddies at the drop off point as well, don't know who, but probably Yaks, since all his stuff is Mitsuhama. Anyway whoever Huntress is didn't feel like shooting you to start with, but he's convincing her. She'll probably cave just to stop the whining. The Razor dude is totally awake as well, but he's playing dead because Spike said it would be better. For a hacker, the guy is ten shades of crazy. Oh





yeah, Razor doesn't care one way or the other. They will probably try to geek you near the drop-off point."

"Yeah, that would be usual procedure. Thanks for your help, I'll wire you the payment right away in case it doesn't work out the way I want it to."

"Bud, don't you stress it, it'll work out. Peace out."

A check of the cameras showed that Huntress was looking just as bored as she had for the whole trip. She must be an amazing actress to keep up that kind of face. Spike was getting more and more twitchy, looking around constantly. Razor had only moved to roll onto his back and put his hand over his eyes. Timothy checked the time; he probably had twenty minutes or so unless he wanted to circle the block a few times at the other end. Time for one more call.

"Pax."

"I'm real happy to get through to you, Pax. I've got your runners in the back of my van, and we're heading to the drop-off point. But I've got a question for you first." Timothy paused to take a breath. A single van carrying four people for four hours brought with it an aroma that air conditioning can't kill. "Pax, it looks a lot like your lads are fixing to kill the transport. Obviously a professional such as yourself would not be involved in something so foolish. How would you like me to proceed?"

"They would have to be idiots to try it on someone like you. It's no plan of mine. But I have to ask—do you have proof of what you're saying?"

"Yep. Recorded conversation."

"That is ... unfortunate. Okay, I still need the drop-off to happen, and I would prefer them alive so they may learn from their mistakes. Do you have a way to make that happen?"

"I can't rightly say, but you see, I've got myself a dilemma. If I let them go now, they'll trash my rep." Timothy checked the cameras; he felt cold talking about eliminating his passengers when they sat no more than two meters behind him. "You see my dilemma."

"Okay, look, I have a good rep—"

"Good?"

"I have a solid rep," Pax insisted. "All you have to do is get them to the meet with their stuff, and I will make sure they don't blab. I'll throw in an extra ten percent to your fee for your troubles."

"Twenty-five percent would cover my costs, along with the probable damage."

Timothy cut the connection. It was ten minutes until they were expected. Showtime.

"Okay back there? No one needs anything? I'm going to have to switch to recycled air for a little while; you guys wouldn't appreciate the smell out there."

No reaction. He didn't expect one. He reached below the seat and toggled a button. At the same time he slipped a breather from under the seat.

As he straightened up, cold metal pressed against the back of his head. Damn.

"Do you have one of those for everyone?" Huntress asked in a husky voice.

"Might be that I do. Here, take this one ..."

As he motioned to hand the mask back, Timothy mentally commanded the van to brake hard. A hundred kilos of ork cannoned into the back, while Tim desperately tried to hold his breath. The wheels squealed and the whole van skidded forward, lurching as Razor and the bikes strained against their restraints. A buzzing orange alert informed him that a hacker had been detected by the van. In less than a second the alarm stopped and reported all clear. Spike was in control of the van, but that wouldn't matter in about three seconds. Huntress' weight crushed down on Timothy, grinding him into the seat with her dead weight. He managed to get the breather to his face while bright sparks danced in front of him. The edges of his vision were going dark.

He released his restraints and slid the ork to the floor. As he looked around the compartment at the three shadowrunners, he thanked his lucky stars that he had never hooked the knockout gas to the van's computer. He slipped into the driver's seat. That was a lot closer than he liked. Spike was a waste of space, but Razor and Huntress seemed like they could develop into real professionals.

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"Pax, your cargo has been delivered, and I have confirmed your payment. Thank you for the business, feel free to contact me if you have different shadowrunners you need to transport. Your cargo has been laid out, unconscious but alive, at a loading dock next to the designated drop off point." It had been tempting to take Spike's deck and go through the pockets of everyone while they were out, but it would have cost more in the long run with the loss of reputation.

It had been a hassle, but it was done. Time to slip out of his cold metal vehicle and into a cold mug of something strong.





## THE COYOTE LIFE

POSTED BY: TIMOTHY MOVO

So why would someone like you or me ever get involved in smuggling people across borders? Seriously, it seems foolish, and maybe we are fools. I know a lot of Coyotes. Even though we're competitors, we keep in touch with each other, mostly so that we know who is likely to try to stiff us on a fee, but also because there aren't many other people that we can talk to about what we do.

One surprising thing I've learned is that there are a fair number of Coyotes who aren't smuggling people across borders because they need the money. Oh, if you ask them they will say they are saving up for retirement, and they want to get out of the business someday, but they're probably not even fooling themselves. Plenty of times I've seen a Coyote get a choice job, earn enough with one high-risk run to retire, and what happens? You see them in a bar the following week with a new deck, fresh scars from an implanted rig and a pimped-out van in the parking lot. Buy any Coyote a beer and he'll tell you that his last job was pretty hairy, and then he'll talk about what they just bought so they'll be safer next time.

Having said that, there are people who get into the business thinking it's going to make them rich beyond their wildest dreams. They figure they'll make a fast run through some back alleys and Matrix dead zones, then some high-profile shadowrunners or corp managers or politicians or whatever will shower them with gold credit sticks and teach them the secret handshakes to get into the exclusive clubs. I don't know what other Coyotes call these fellas, but I call them greenhorns. And the death rate among greenhorns is high.

For me, the only advantage I had when I started out was that I found out through the rumor mill that there were two gangs who thought that a particular set of alleyways was a part of the other gang's territory. The alleys were on long enough to get someone deep into the heart of the Redmond Barrens without being seen by either side, or by the cops. It was pretty sweet. I heard about someone who needed to get in, let them know I was available, and asked for money. It was a pretty sweet setup. I did that a couple of times and got greenhorn cocky, which meant it wasn't long before someone asked me to get them in, and I got them in, and then they shot me, leaving me for dead on the streets of the Barrens. I crawled into a hole to plug the bleeding until a friend could come pick me up. Right there I learned a lot of what I needed to survive as a Coyote, especially the part about having a good friend who can pull your hoop out of the fire. I wasn't even mad that there was a new kid in town who was working my old route, mostly because the gangs caught on about an unclaimed alleyway and had a bloodbath trying to claim it, just as the guy who stiffed me was taking someone through. Learning from someone else's mistake is a good way to stay alive.

## THE RISKS

See, the reasons that greenhorns die is they think the people they are transporting value them. That's only partially correct. They value a Coyote's ability to get them across a border, but once the job's done, our value drops precipitously. When a criminal needs to escape a lockdown in Kowloon, or when she has to get out of Aztlan fast, the Coyote who takes them across that border is a loose end. Burning away at the back of the client's head is the thought that for enough nuyen, a Coyote will go back to whoever is chasing them and let them know where they were dropped off. I can't blame them too much for that—it's the way criminals think.

What this means is that having your cargo turn on you is a real risk, especially the heavily armed shadowrunner types. Inexperienced shadowrunners are the worst—they're twitchy, and they often haven't figured out the importance of making and keeping good contacts.

So the risks are there, but there are a few precautions that you can take. Building up a rep for delivering on what you say you are going to do is one way to relax your cargo. It's foolish not to take security precautions in your van, but it's just as foolish to make those precautions obvious. You can be discreet. Building tear gas or even explosives into the seats of your vehicle will do you a lot more good than mounting guns in the ceiling so that passengers are perpetually staring down a loaded barrel. People with guns pointed at them tend to get edgy, and that can make them unpredictable.

- Hold up. "Cargo"? I can guarantee that no Coyote that I've ever used has referred to me that way, and you can bet that I'm not going to ride in a van that has a gun pointed at me.
- Sticks
- You're saying that you trust everyone that you work with? This guy is just talking about the same precautions that you take when running with someone you don't know, only he rides with fresh faces more than you gun with them.
- Whippit
- Shut up, noob.
- Sticks

Having a network is important. Most successful Coyotes also have friends who will check on them, friends who know which fixer set you up with your clients, and who will check in if you haven't been seen in a while. The Matrix is a godsend for sending a little location-based heartbeat to a hacker friend, especially if that friend can send CrashCart to your last known location if your signal disappears.

Along with the physical danger from your customers, there are the normal business risks as well; competition for plum routes is intense, and more than one Coyote has been taken out by a competitor in a hail of bullets. Coyotes make





their living from their rep and are therefore more susceptible to smear campaigns than most shadow operatives, which means we sometimes reach out for a little public relations help. I can't think of any of the old hands who don't have a face they can call on when they need a favor.

The way I see it, if passengers are determined to turn on a Coyote, there are three ways that the Coyote can come out of the situation alive: he can kill the passengers and dump the bodies somewhere, he can eject and hope for the best, or he can try to do something nonlethal. Killing customers is usually bad news, but leaving them alive and stranded can be trouble too, because once they make it back to civilization they'll try to smear your good name. There is no easy option; all you can really do is build a good enough rep that it can take a few knocks when things go down the crapper.

Even if your competitors and cargo don't cut your saddle-strap, there's yet another problem waiting for you—the law. Lone Star hates Coyotes almost as much as they hate shadowrunners. Coyotes annoy them because we're so gifted at shuttling evidence and suspects out of their reach. The Star and Knight Errants might not go out of their way to hunt us down like they would shadowrunners, because the higher-profile crime a of runners have a way of pissing off their corp masters and drawing the attention of law enforcement. You should be pro-active here—make a friend in law enforcement who might be able to run interference for you.

- “Friend” is probably the wrong word here. “Acquaintance willing to accept a bribe” is a more accurate term.
- Traveler Jones

I've spotted all of these on the trail, but the thing that has hurt me the most has been what y'all might call entropy. Couple of months back I had a cakewalk screwed up because one of the buildings on my normal route installed new cameras outside their door. Not usually a big deal, but they had active surveillance thrown into the package, and the cameras came with a feed to a security corporation that managed to identify the ruthenium polymers on my vehicle. They're not illegal, but it's enough to flag my vehicle as suspicious and get it tagged by a traffic drone, which I noticed had happened when I changed my Matrix ID. That was all I needed to break out my emergency maneuvers. I jettisoned the cargo close to where they wanted to be, took the pursuit myself and wound up torching my vehicle to cover my escape.

That kind of thing might happen on any trip. If you're traveling through the Barrens, gang boundaries will shift. If you're bluffing through a border check, then there will be some new form to fill out. Hell, even road work can mess with a patrol car route. All you can do is hit the ground running and have a couple of backup plans to haul your ass out of the fire.

## WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

For all the risks, there's plenty of payback. Which is good, because you need plenty of scratch if you're going to buy and maintain all the vehicles you'll need if you want to be good at this.

Like any business, Coyotes charge what the market will bear. Getting a low-risk ganger through someone else's turf might be couple of hundred nuyen. Getting a team of Jaguar Guards into the UCAS sector of Denver might cost a couple hundred thousand. The good part about the job is the clients usually come to a Coyote and ask how much a trip will cost. That gives us a chance to set the price, leaving the client to accept it or look elsewhere. If there's nowhere else for them to go, then the gouging begins. Be careful, though—push the price too high, and the client will decide it's easier to kill you at the end of the job than pay you. No matter how small the market is, that alternative always exists.

I can't speak for all other Coyotes on how we come up with our asking price, but I take a good long look at the person doing the asking. If they have a good rep and aren't too worked up, then the risk of them pulling out the shooting irons is low, and I knock a bit off the price. If it's a rush job, I'll normally need to pay some helpers to get me out of bed, so that jacks up the price. If there is time I'll ask a bit about why they need a Coyote, not specifics of course, but smuggling an illegal focus is much less risky if I'm caught than dragging unwilling kids of corporate high-fliers around town. If they won't say then I assume the worst. Where they need to get to is another factor, if the clients need to be on the other side of town, maybe that's no problem. If they need to get from Chicago to Tír na nÓg, big cost. Border crossings? Additional cost. Warrants for arrests, magic, injured clients, bulky cargo, or more than one troll in my van means I need to spend extra on reinforced suspension, weapons, drugs, and so on. All these things drive up the price. The thing that'll cost you the most, though, is when a customer wants me to do a particular thing, like drive past a specific building, or cut off all Matrix activity for the duration of the ride. If they tell me why, then maybe it's not a problem, but nobody ever does, so I assume that means I'm taking a risk that I don't know about. That costs a lot more.

- Everything about a Coyote is expensive. They're a specialized group, there aren't many of them, and it's tough to get someone without their expertise to get you where you need to be. Like any other monopoly, they use their position to gouge you at will.
- Stone
- Seems fair to me. They're putting themselves out there, taking the risk, so they ought to be paid well for it. But if you want a bargain, look for someone with that extra mad glint in his eye

