

# **Blackjack's Guide To Bitter Gamemastering #7**

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I've finally gotten tired of hearing everybody whine about how there hasn't been a new Blackjack's Guide in a year, so perhaps the following will quiet everybody down so I can get back to diligently not updating my page.

Remember, since this is Blackjack's Guide to Bitter Gamemastering and not Blackjack's Corner, I tend to be a bit more vicious in my suggestions on how to deal with pathetic little weenie PCs who sit through entire gaming sessions with their thumbs up their asses, coming up with ideas so uncreative that they make the concept of slaughtering Street Samurai seem novel by comparison. Odds are I'll contradict a Corner article at least once and I encourage you GMs out there to choose the method that best suits the patheticity (noun: the degree to which one is pathetic) of your players.

## **Bricks On Wheels**

Since the Rigger Blackbook is becoming increasingly difficult to find (it may even be out of print), the number of complaints I've received from GMs in regards to their players building Massive Armor-Clad Vehicles From Hell has been decreasing. Still, I occasionally receive a bit of rage laden E-Mail from frustrated GMs who are seeking creative ways to deal with Armor: 21 vehicles. Here's a few suggestions:

#1: If a vehicle is known to be 'indestructible', people will try to destroy it. Taking on a pointless challenge is second nature to humans, exhibit A being the Guinness Book Of World Records (which I am currently seeking entry into under the 'Most Failed Stop Smoking Attempts' category). Once word gets out that somebody's rolling around in a Ford Americar shaped tank, it's just a matter of time before a few folks down at the Heavy Weapons Bar drink one two many and decide to spend the night blowing armor plates off of the PC's vehicle.

#3: You can use a modified set of vehicle damage rules. Since armor is essentially treated as a barrier, if somebody hits it with a weapon which has a power more than 1/2 half of the Armor rating, it will reduce the armor by one point. Using this system (or one similar to it) you can eventually chip away enough armor that you'll be able to exceed the rating and actually damage the vehicle.

#2: The GM can pull a variety of mean and nasty tricks involving exceeded weight limits ("What a lovely view from this briiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiieeeeeee!!!!!!), weigh stations, breakdowns ("You want us to PUSH it?"), and off road experiences ("Man, this mud is pretty dee..(glug) (glug) (glug).")

## **A Threat To The Profession**

If you find that your Shadowrunners are operating in an exceedingly unprofessional way (killing babies, blowing up malls for no reason, etc.) you may want to create a Threat to the Profession NPC group. These clandestine groups, dedicated to keeping the art of Shadowrunning from falling completely to the barbarians, keep out of sight until they hear of a Shadowrunner, or group of shadowrunners, behaving in a way that may make the Corps, the Cops, and everybody else who gives runners business, think twice before calling up their Johnson. They then hunt down the individual, and 'teach him (or her) a lesson'.

Their methods primarily involve torture, the installation of cortex bombs, disfigurement, 'genital reconfiguration', and other things so nasty you don't even want to think about them. Threat groups are usually comprised of retired and/or veteran runners, so they tend to be significantly more powerful than

the aggravating PC. They only target the maladjusted PCs in question, and will leave any other members of the group alone, although they may have 'a little talk' with them if they are condoning the PC's action.

Since Threat to the Profession teams fall into the Hand of God category or GMing (i.e. things the GM does that the PCs can't do anything about), you have to be really careful when you implement them. Sometimes just letting the PCs know that such a unit exists is enough to set them straight.

## **Had You Turned On The TV.....**

It appears that a lot of PCs seem 'out of touch' with anything that doesn't involve going on a shadowrun. They never turn on the trid, they never listen to the radio (yes, it still exists), they never buy any music chips, they never go to any sporting events, and they never even go shopping for food anywhere but at Bud's Ration Depot. Sometimes this is the GM's fault (PC: I turn on the Trideo. GM: Nothing's on.), but a many PCs just don't spend time simply finding out what's going on in the 'real world'. This can cause problems when a Shadowrun involves something tied to world events, as well as leading to an outdated wardrobe.

A way to motivate the runners to do more than simply pull a trigger is to occasionally insert a bit of information that may help them in a run (or keep them from screwing up) into the general media or environment. If a runner watches TV, the GM may state that he sees a news article talking about a weapons bust on the corner of 12th and Park - the same location the runners were supposed to hook up with a fence. Had the runners not tuned in, they would have walked into the back room at Big Al's House O' Chicken and immediately been surrounded by the 15 cops staked out there.

Using real world resources allows the GM to create a more complex tapestry of information. The runners might have been hired for a run by Alice Cobb, during which they were supposed to steal a prototype weapon from a Global Tech lab. The runners have a few days before then, so one decides to watch some trid and two others go to the Seahawks game. The singer of the anthem at the game turns out to be Day Summers who is sponsored by Digiweap Industries. The runner at home sees a news story about a controversy involving the CEO of Global Tech, Erving Gray, who has been running a spawn corporation, Robinson Publishing, off the books. The group meets up later and decides to go to a bar. On the way there they hear over the radio that Day Summers will be representing Robinson Publishing at a fancy dinner that evening. Then, after the inebriated runners file into their dwelling later that evening, one of them sits drunkenly in front of the trid and decides to watch Seattle People because they're too drunk to change the channel to something decent. Then, what appears on the screen: Day Summers, Alice Cobb, and Erving Gray performing a toast at the dinner earlier that evening.

Hmmmmmm.....