Urgent Message...

INTERACTING WITH THE AUGMENTED WORLD *(Cont.)*

Doc Sloth, one of his teammates. Doc has positioned himself on the other side of the bar in a booth so he can astrally scan Mr. Johnson as he enters, and his message says that the Johnson has an unusual magical aura. Vlad immediately triggers his wired reflexes on, just in case there's trouble—maybe the night will be fun after all.

Example #3

Bitsy is walking down the street on the way to meet her 'warez dealer in one of the nicer areas of town. She's in hidden mode since she doesn't want to have to deal with the obnoxious new viral marketing campaign Horizon has been spamming along the public thoroughfares. She's lost in thought as she walks, so she fails to notice the Lone Star drone overhead that scans her. The drone drops a spotlight on her and announces via loudspeaker that she's "hiding" in public—a violation in this high-security sector. Bitsy instantly sets to work finding the drone's signal so she can hack in and deal with the pigs. As she homes in on it and brute-force hacks past its firewall, the drone attempts to get a read on her access ID and also runs a sensor scan on her face to feed to a facial recognition program. Bitsy's access ID is forged—for exactly this sort of situation—but after she nukes the drone's OS she decides to get out of the area fast. Not only will the drone reboot itself soon, but a squad car may show up quick with her mugshot in hand, transmitted by the drone back to Lone Star's dispatch before she could take it out.

mon in feral areas—urban zones abandoned to decay, crime, and poverty—though some wireless infrastructure is maintained by crime syndicates, tech gangs, and anarchist/tribal groups. These areas are known as *static zones* (where access is intermittent or unreliable) and *dead zones* (where none is available).

For static zones, the gamemaster can choose to apply dice pool modifiers (between –1 and –3) to all Matrix actions to represent the poor tech quality and/or the extra lag required to route around holes in the network. In dead zones, wireless access simply isn't possible without powerful signal-boosting equipment or a satellite link (unless you happen to find an isolated wireless hotspot somewhere).

Note that technomancers (p. 232) find static and dead zones to be unnerving and uncomfortable—the absence of the constant background hum of data traffic makes them itchy. Characters should handle this with appropriate roleplaying—their technomancers may get depressed, irritated, or otherwise upset. At the gamemaster's discretion, prolonged exposure to static and dead zones may inflict a minor dice pool modifier of –1 on technomancers for non-Matrix actions.

To get around the lack of a network in some areas, people will sometimes set up temporary networks.

On the flipside are *spam zones,* areas where manipulative advertising tricks are legal (or at least tolerated), including filter-bypassing, sensory-blasting AR pop-ups, emotive-charged sim feeds (porn stims being common), viral memes, spyware, and more. Common in tourist areas and red-light districts, spam zones can be highly distracting (dice pool modifier of –1 to –3).

COMMLINKS AND NETWORKING

Commlinks are the ultimate personal networking tool, used by almost everyone. They are a combination wireless router, cellphone, vidcam, PDA, GPS unit, chip reader, wallet/credstick, and mobile gaming device—all in one easy-to-carry package that fits inside a pocket, belt-clip, or wrist-clip. Commlinks come in a dizzying area of shapes, sizes, and colors, from stylized head-sets or faux jewelry to cranial implants and commlinks woven into the fabric of your jacket.

Commlinks serve as the primary hub for your PAN, allowing you to access and manipulate all of your PAN-connected electronics through your commlink. Need to make a call? Review a video file you took yesterday? Scan the diagnostics on your cyberlimb? Check the fuel on your drone? Program your alarm clock? You can do all of this and more through your commlink.

Commlinks also provide you with instant wireless access to the world around you. Not only can you send messages, make calls, transfer files, or access data via the Matrix, but you can access the wireless devices and networks all around, from the store's sales catalog to your friend's PAN to the lamppost tourist-info RFID tag to the social networking profile of anyone else looking to play a game of chess in the park.

Commlinks typically carry all of your personal data, replacing the registered credsticks of old. Your ID, SIN, licenses, passport, medical history, insurance data, educational diplomas, credit balance, and far more can be securely stored on your commlink and instantly beamed over for transaction purposes—with proper authorization, of course.

Many people openly broadcast certain portions of their personal data via their PAN for others to access. This is often done for convenience and consumer purposes—for example, your favorite stores can access your purchasing history and wishlists as soon as you walk in, and offer specials tailored specifically to you. Some data is broadcast for social networking and gaming services, notifying you if someone single with your same hobbies and interests is in the same bar, or allowing you to engage random opponents in virtual battles in public spaces.

Of course, most users carefully control how much information they make publicly available, but the law often requires certain core pieces of data to be accessible in certain areas (SIN and ID must be broadcast on UCAS federal property, for ex-