

# ... A HISTORY LESSON FOR THE REALITY IMPAIRED ...

*I remember when I was a kid, my mom would sometimes drag me to the museum. I spent so much time playing with computers, you see, that she was worried that I wasn't keeping a firm grip on reality or seeing enough of the world outside my room. The museum had some pretty good displays, but my favorite was always the giant dinosaur skeletons. It was a morbid fascination—they were dead, and yet eternal at the same time. I made a game out of finding new ways to sneak up and touch the bones without alerting security.*

*These days you can still go to the museum, but most folks don't bother. They can have it brought to them and experience it virtually. The people who do bother usually get to see the augmented reality display because the bones are so fragile now they might crumble to dust. I'm still trying to decide whether that's good or bad. You can't touch the bones, but they won't disappear, either.*

*So what is a legend supposed to do when the world changes around him? Most of my colleagues are dead—hell, Captain Chaos should've been writing this, but he went down with his ship during the second Crash. Someone's got to look out for the next generation, and it might as well be me because I'm the last dinosaur of my kind, and I'm better than some AR display.*

*The following is a history lesson for the reality impaired, because as I've learned over the years, my mom was right: there's more to life and the world than what you filter through your computer or commlink. Call this a last shout-out to Cap, the neo-@s, and everyone else who is willing to learn something for the sake of knowledge, not just survival.*

*—FastJack*

## THE RISE OF THE MEGACORPS

So how did we get in this mess, anyway? While many people experience life as an augmented-reality-enhanced shopping spree or as a neverending stream of hypnotizing entertainment experiences, the rest of us see things quite a bit differently—and they're not a cheery shade of rose. When your daily concern is scoring enough nuyen to eat and watching your back against your fellow shadow denizens, you know there's significant room for improvement with the world.

## SERETECH & SHIAWASE

Imagine this: it's the late 1990's, and corporate entities are growing more powerful with each passing year. Increasingly unwilling to entrust the safety and security of their assets and personnel to public law-enforcement organizations, these entities gradually began supplementing them with their own private security forces—forces that, far from stereotypical doughnut-eating “rent-a-cops,” grew more and more to resemble paramilitary groups armed with the best equipment available.

1999 was the worst year ever. (It was also the year I was born. Mom joked for a few years that I was the herald of the End of Days. After that, better candidates came along.) Thanks to a three-month-long truckers' strike, no fresh food was coming into New York City. Food riots broke