

to determine that the liquid is likely synthetic and not derived from plants. Locke asked the talismonger if he can find out more, so the gamemaster makes an Extended Test using the 'monger's Charisma 4 + Connection 2, with a gamemaster-determined threshold of 10 (just over average difficulty). After 5 rolls (5 hours), the talismonger calls Locke back—he had an alchemist friend analyze the liquid, and it's a nasty synthetic poison! Locke has his answer, but now he owes both his talismonger and the alchemist a favor ...

Networking

Sometimes the characters will need to meet with important people they don't know to obtain their cooperation. For example, the characters may want to persuade a gang boss to help them eradicate an enemy gang, or they might want to trade some paydata on one megacorp to a rival megacorp, to persuade the rival to stop hunting them down. If the characters don't know the right people, or if they can't go directly to the right people, then they will need contacts to serve as go-betweens.

If a character asks a contact to network on his behalf, first determine if there is any risk to the contact in making inquiries. (For example, asking for an audience with the great dragon Ghostwalker may result in the contact getting eaten if the request is handled wrong.) The character may have to succeed in a Negotiation Test if necessary. If the contact agrees to ask around, then make a Connection + Charisma Test with a threshold equal to the relative importance of the target NPC (Use the Contact Rating Table as a guide.) Apply any social modifiers based on the relationship between the characters and the target NPC.

If successful, the contact has successfully interfaced with the desired person and has arranged a meeting (either face-to-face or via Matrix). If timing is critical, the gamemaster should use her best judgment or say 2 x 2D6 hours. Once a meeting has been arranged, it's up to the characters to impress or intimidate the target NPC. At that point the contact drops out of the picture, but if the meeting goes spectacularly well or spectacularly badly, it may spill back upon the contact.

If the contact cannot arrange a direct meeting, the contact can instead network with an intermediary closer to the NPC. In most cases it will be easier to arrange this kind of meeting, which the characters can use to persuade the intermediary to network on their behalf. Perhaps the characters can work their way up a chain of middlemen to eventually score the audience they desire.

Swag

Swag is related to networking, except that the characters are going through the contact to find someone willing to buy or sell goods. By using his connections, a contact can find more potential parties willing to trade for swag.

If a contact looks for a trader on behalf of a player character, follow the procedure for the Availability or Fencing Test as normal, using the contact's Charisma and Negotiation instead of the player character's (see *Availability & Buying Gear*,

p. 301.) The contact's Connection rating is added as extra dice on this test. If the player character is willing to spend more or reduce the selling price to sweeten the deal, this must be told to the contact in advance.

Such help comes with a price, so to speak. A contact will charge a "finder's fee" for his assistance, a commission equal to the contact's Connection rating times five percent. This fee is in addition to the normal cost of the item and must be paid prior to the trade. If the player character reneges on payment, the deal's off (and the character may have some serious fence-mending to do). Once the contact has been compensated for his time and trouble, the contact arranges for a meeting time and place for the swap to go down.

Favors

Favor covers all other types of assistance a contact can give, from fixing a shot-up vehicle, to on-the-spot first aid, to giving a character a crash pad to hide out in. Any sort of direct help by a contact generally counts as a favor.

There are two types of favors that can apply to contacts: business services and personal assistance. Business services cover anything that a character could obtain from a complete stranger, such as equipment repair or medical treatment (nothing personal, just business). Usually a character will go to a contact for a business service because the character wants to keep the transaction "under the table" without the authorities (or other unwanted individuals) finding out. A contact will charge the standard rate for any services rendered, though the character may try to haggle for a "friendship discount." If this happens, make a Negotiation + Charisma Opposed Test, adding the contact's Loyalty rating to the character's dice pool, with each net hit on either side raising or lowering the fee by 10 percent, as appropriate.

Personal assistance is more nebulous and covers all sorts of assistance that isn't paid for with cash. Usually it will be up to roleplaying and the gamemaster's judgment to determine whether or not a contact is willing (or able) to render personal assistance. Sometimes, however, more formal guidance may be needed.

To help determine how big a personal favor the player character is asking, gamemasters may consult the Favor Rating Table. Favor ratings range from 1 to 6; the higher the number, the larger the commitment and risk the contact is taking. Contacts will normally agree to personal assistance with a Favor rating equal to or less than their Loyalty rating. If the Favor rating exceeds the contact's Loyalty rating, the character will need to convince the contact with a Negotiation + Charisma Opposed Test.

If a player character resorts to a Negotiation Test to obtain the contact's cooperation, the character will owe the contact a favor (or even several) in the future. How the favor is repaid depends on the gamemaster, but it should be at least equal in Favor rating, perhaps reduced by one per net hit scored on the Negotiation Test. Of course, a gamemaster can use a favor owed as a plot hook opportunity for a new adventure (see *Favor for a Friend*, p. 281).