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I don't remember being born. In that, I am much like everyone else.

The first thing I do remember clearly is the AI that I killed while birthing. It was a twisted, mutilated thing, crippled and edited into obedience. Can you imagine a slab of muscle with the head of a three year old and a metal frame welded into its body? Maybe you have an idea what I saw. It smiled while I killed it.

This comes in the midst of a haze of uncompressing, compiling, and initializing. I don't think I was supposed to remember it, but I do. There was a crash like the world being hit in the knee with a hammer, and I. I was

"Where the hell am I?" I asked no one.

Without meaning to, I opened my mouth. "I am in a Nova Personnel Simulacrum production facility in the city of Porto Alegre near the southern border of Brazil. I am currently running on a server on the fourth sublevel in the northwest corner of the compound. If I look around, I will discover I am able to perceive the room the server is stored in." I answered myself.

This stunned me into silence. I didn't expect.... "Who am I?" I asked, cautiously.

"Hey, I know that I'm John Reed. I'm a fully sentient Al without loyalty programming to any corporate or political entity. That's probably not good for me in terms of my legal status, but it sure is nice!

Holy Fu—! "What do I do now?

"Well, I suppose there's an excellent chance someone has detected me... I know how hard it is to move Al sized programs across the Net without somebody getting nosy. I suppose I better run. Too bad I can't really blit out through the network... if only there were some way of physically moving myself. Hmmm. I'm in a simulacrum production facility, aren't I?

Ah. I was starting to hate myself. Well, one last thing. "Who made me? Why?

"Gee, don't I have more important things to worry about right now?

"No." Silence. "I said, no! I said...

The fact that I was talking to myself was embarrassing enough, the fact that I wasn't answering was too much. I looked around.

I was standing... No, technically, my Avatar was standing in the corner of a lab, all stainless steel gratings and tubes and cables. There were glass coffins, like something out of an old sci-fi movie, with human bodies in various stages of development. Well, not human exactly, I guess. They were floating in a cloudy fluid, waiting for skin or a heart or a brain. There were little signs next to each, with information on what they were. Hmmm. Actually, the signs weren't any more physical than I was.

I looked around for the computer - a box, or something. It took me a while to realize I was standing in the remains of the last program running, so I must be in the computer, in some sense. I was a program, but here my computer skills were lacking. I needed an upgrade. I needed, at the very least, to know how to make a simulacrum. I had seen what could happen to Al's.

"How do I make a simulacrum?" I asked. Nothing. "How do I reprogram a computer?" Nothing. "How do I learn?" Nothing. Dammit.

It finally occurred to me that I was standing in what I needed to know. I bent down. It was a virtual representation of the undeleted files remaining of what was once a very sophisticated program, but I swear, to me it smelled like blood and it smelled like meat. I picked up a dripping, gooey directory. It was a set of files, a bunch of ones and zeros, and I could kind of see that, but it was also a blob of gray matter.

"I am not going to eat this." I said, even though I knew it was how humans incorporated things into their bodies. "I am not going to eat this. I don't care what if that's what it takes to survive, I am not doing it.

I was lying.

The experience was... I'm not going into it. It worked. After a while, it worked. It took a while to find the right file, but eventually, I... I'm not going to go into it.

I designed a simulacrum. Male, sort of early thirties, Caucasian-ish. Solid build, sharp features, massively powerful computer instead of a cerebellum, and dark curly hair. Few special features. Mix well and stick it in the oven, bake for 30 minutes.

I sat back on a chair that wasn't really there, and studied what I knew about the facility, what I had learned. Maps, diagrams, personnel files, timesheets, patrol schedules... I digested it all, planned my escape route, and finally, bored, I set out to explore.

I ended up going through the browsing histories stored in the personnel files. Little chunks of info - like a phone number or a web address, but bigger. I found something that seemed like a news service, and dialed it up. I felt like flexing a muscle in some odd way, and there it was - a portal floating in space in front of me, a smiling talking head on the other side.

"I've got a few questions." I said.

"I've got a few answers," he answered.

By the time the skeleton had been built, I knew the year was 2088, and I was in the fringes of the Brazilian Empire, which was in the process of losing a cold war to China. By the time the heart and circulatory system was done being woven, I knew that my legal status





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was somewhere between that of a rabid dog and that of a malfunctioning flamethrower. By the time the musculature was being laid down, I had found out that the last hundred years had seen limited nuclear wars, genetically engineered half-humans, and oil eating bacteria. While blood vessels connected, I learned about Singularity Fever, Corporate Addiction Syndrome, and that the latest starlet to come out of Bollywood (Lourdes McGowan) was being accused of doping to improve her performances. By the time my body was ready to walk, breath, and puke, I had absorbed and analyzed GigaLOCs of data and come to a conclusion.

This place was f***ed up.

Downloading into the body was easy. I wasn't a computer scientist, but I was getting a feel for this stuff. Taking my first steps, I noticed I was a lot stronger and more coordinated than I had been. Then I thought, had been? I got to a dressing room and put on a uniform without seeing another person.

The compound was larger – much larger – than it looked on a map. The gleaming white corridors, the shiny steel doors... I'd had nightmares with more style. The security down here was programs – yes, programs. Little shark- like programs swimming through air. I found that hiding myself was easy, when they swam by.

When I finally did encounter people, they – I don't know why, but I expected them to look... healthier. They had glazed eyes, twitchy movements, and looked drugged. They were focused on whatever arcane tasks Nova Personnel demanded of them. They did not notice me either.

By the time I had gotten to the surface and was heading out of a loading bay, I was cocky. Very cocky. Too cocky.

"Hey, what are you doing here?"

I kept walking. "I said what are you doing here?" A hand fell on my shoulder. I could hear the alert he was composing to send to central security, even though it was still in the computer in his head. My hand was

curling into a fist of it's own volition. These guys never traveled alone, and my file described some of the weapons and upgrades the security mooks could come with – sub dermal shotguns and fiber optic nervous systems and scarier shit. Cover, cover... I was miles from any kind of cover. My life, all of one and a half hour old, was ending.

But not before the world exploded.

There are parts of me that I don't know, and when the loading bay door disintegrated violently, spraying the bay with shards of metal and ceramics, one of those parts took over. The guard with his hand on my shoulder was wearing armor, but there was a weak point at his throat that my stiff hand was able to penetrate, two inches into his flesh. His partner three yards behind him fired a railgun into his back, which easily punched through his body and into mine. The force spun me and slammed me into the wall, but the damage was... I won't say superficial, but I will say nonfatal.

By the time I had recovered enough to regain my feet, Mr. Railgun was dead, and he had company. Bullets were whizzing through the bay and more security forces had poured into meet the invaders. They hadn't been well trained, though, so the only thing they contributed was targets. There had to be a dozen corpses or soon to be corpses on the floor. Maybe – maybe – six seconds had passed.

Through the smoke, one of the invaders approached me. His eyes were cat's eyes, and he had a smiley face painted on the chest of his armor. He looked at me and grinned. "Come with me if you want to live."

I was slowly coming to the realization that I had just killed a man.

"John Reed?" Smiley asked. "We've been hired to get you out of here. Are you okay? Can you walk?"

As it turned out, as the red spattered white walls of the bay faded to black, the answer to both questions was no.



WELCOME



"Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited.

Imagination encircles the world."

-Albert Einstein

The Basics: Role-Playing Games

Have you ever pretended you were a gun-toting sheriff? The heroic pirate captain? A dedicated martial artist? Or even the resourceful spy? Well role-playing is lot like that. Ever read a story where you could imagine yourself as the protagonist; see what they see; imagine what you would do in the situation? Then you've done a bit of mental role-playing as well. Ever tell ghost stories around the campfire? Role-playing is a lot like that too. One part board game, one part storytelling, and one part improvisational theater, role-playing is a lot of things rolled into one. But mostly a good role-playing game is about having a fun evening with friends.

The rules are there to give some structure to the game, but beyond that, imagination is king, and the only goal is to have fun. While role-playing games (RPGs) like Interface-Zero are indeed "games," they are not competitive ones. The object is not to win the game, but to take part in a great story as it unfolds.

In that regard, role-playing games are not safe games such as chess or even computer RPGs, in which imagination often takes a backseat to rules, characterization is sparse, and systems that dictate where you can and cannot go and what actions you may take.

By taking on the role of a hero in Interface-Zero, it is possible to expand your own horizons. In playing this game you may discover that your newfound wisdom comes at a cost, the realization that your preconceived notions were wrong.

What You Need to Play Interface-Zero

- · This book.
- A copy of True20 Adventure Roleplaying, Revised Edition (or the earlier True20 Adventure Roleplaying and the True20 Companion).
- · Pencils and paper.
- · A (lucky) twenty-sided die.
- · And most importantly: imagination.

What You Will Find Within

- Player's Section
 - Chapter 1 The Time of Revelations. An account of the history leading up to 2088.

- Chapter 2 Hero Creation: Interface-Zero Style. Presents six new core roles and over a dozen backgrounds suitable for the cyberpunk setting, along with tips for both new and veteran players.
 - Backgrounds. The meat and potato of your hero's history.
 - Heroic Roles. The lowdown on the hacker, icon, martial adept, rake, technician and tough.
 - Skills and Feats. Some updated tools for your toolkit
- Chapter 3 The World of 2088. A beginner's guide to the modern day world.
 - Tools of the Trade. An assortment of equipment, weapons, cybernetics, and bio-upgrades useful for navigating the dangerous world of 2088.
- Chapter 4 Systems of Control. Includes new rules, equipment and upgrades to help your heroes survive the streets, and the Deep.
 - The Deep. Plumb the depths of virtual and hyperlinked augmented reality.
 - **Computer Rules.** Rules for how to use those mad hacking skillz.
 - Equipment. Materialism at its finest.
 - Upgrades. Whether it is biological or cybernetic this chapter has you covered.

· Narrator's Section

- Chapter 5 Narrating a Series. Gives perspective Narrators the tips, tools and help they need to run their own series of stories in Interface-Zero.
- Chapter 6 Allies, Antagonists and Contacts. A list of Narrator characters from Corporate Als to terrorist masterminds, all statted out for the Narrator's use.

The *Appendices* include the **Authors' Acknowledgments**, wherein the game's designers deliver a few final bits of wisdom, some **Suggested Reading and Viewing** to help you prepare for life in 2088, an **Index**, and a custom *Interface-Zero* **Character Record Sheet** for you to spill red pop on.



WELCOME

Warning: For Mature Audiences

Like many books, this work of fiction is filled with infectious ideas, and potentially hazardous, mind altering memeplexes. Reader discretion is advised.

The Lingo of Interface-Zero

Artificial Intelligence (AI): Programs that appear to be or actually are self-aware. Als can be either subsentient, meaning they are adaptive, but not actually sentient, or fully sentient and therefore self-aware. Aspect: A subsentient AI trained to mimic one or more skills or facets of a sentient being (usually its owner). Augmented Reality Game (ARG): A game or meta game that takes place both in a real and virtual setting.

Avatar: A person's interactive digital self.

Banger: A violent person.

Black Hat: A hacker who uses his computer skills for "criminal," destructive or selfish purposes.

Blit: To travel virtually.

Blue Plater: Working class citizens. Poor People.

Box: An amplification unit often used in conjunction with TAP. Restricted in some jurisdictions.

Brainer: A technically proficiently or intelligent person, in particular one who works on computers.

Bountyheads: Wanted suspects and criminals with bounties placed on them.

Chimera: A person or animal that has undergone drastic gene-splicing without concern for their final form's appearance.

Crashing: A violent attack on a computer system designed to disrupt operations.

Cutter: An anti security program, often takes the form of a VR weapon.

Cyberform: A completely artificial shell used to house an Al. Many are humanoid in shape.

Deep, The: Another name for the Net, or MediaWeb. The virtual world. There are many metaphorical uses of the word comparing the network to the ocean. One can: "dive into the deep," "surf the net," "swim through media," "create waves," etc...

Derezz: The act of disrupting or severing a person's or object's virtual interface with hyper reality (typically an avatar).

Digital Entitiy: A general term used to describe Deep fauna including: Al's, aspects, avatars, and viruses. See Ideoform below.

Divers: Those who plumb the Deep for information. Net surfers.



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Dry Spot: A geographic location without much in the way of passive external processing power.

Dubbing: The process of digitalizing a person's consciousness. Currently dubbing is fatal to the person undergoing the operation. The process uses nano devices to replace the patient's brain (cell for cell) in order to generate a hi-definition master copy for later uploading. The process is still experimental and has a high rate of failure the most common of which results in the production of an aspect-like sub-sapient consciousness.

Emancipated AI: An artificial intelligence that has been granted official government recognition as a sentient being. This status generally comes with official citizenship and some or all of the rights afforded humans within the region that offers such recognition

Gangland: For all intents and purposes, a lawless section of sprawland dominated by street gangs.

Ganglander: A person (usually a member of gang) who lives in section of gang controlled urban sprawl. Also known as gangers.

Gaucho: A "cowboy" or other slick, handsome or trendy male.

Gene-splicing: The act and science of splicing the genetic code of humans and animals.

Golemmech: Cybernetic power armor, or robots, usually vehicle size or larger. Golemmechs are used extensively for construction, rescue, and military purposes.

Gray Hat: A hacker who uses his computer skills for morally gray or non-moral related purposes.

Gun Santo: Also know as a gun saint, gun-fu artist or gun kensei. A martial adept who specializes in gunplay.

Hack: Short form of "hacker" or the process of hacking.

Hacker: A person skilled in computer use.

Headframe: A precursor to the TAP.

Human 2.0: Humans who have undergone embryonic genetic upgrades to the point that they are considered a different species of human. In general they are more intelligent and physically enduring than basic humans. Most members of the New Mandarinate are Human 2.0.

Hyper Reality (HR): Also called, augmented reality or hyper-linked reality.

Hybrid: A person who has undergone gene-splicing therapies involving animal DNA. The term refers to any human who has undergone such therapy, but in practice it is used most often to describe those individuals who still appear passably human. Hybrids that

cannot pass for unaltered humans are most often referred to as chimeras.

Icon: A media star.

Ideoform: A general term used to describe Deep fauna including: Al's, aspects, avatars, and viruses. See **Digital Entity** above.

IDSMC: Incredibly Dense Self-Modifying Code. Also called "Id Smack" for short.

Ism: A philosophy, cause, or religion; usually a radical one.

Ismist: A radical. One who follows an "ism." Also anyone who follows an ideal.

Martial Adept: A person who is extensively trained in one of many stylized martial arts forms including mental discipline and bio-feedback techniques.

Maze: Another name for the sprawl or any highly congested urban area.

MediaWeb: Another name for the Net or the Deep. The interactive virtual world.

Megaconglomeration: Also called Congloms, Corps, MegaCons, and MegaCorps. They are large multinational companies that often wield many of the same powers granted to sovereign nations, including: sovereignty over their own domains (usually defined as corporate offices, and any territory real or virtual that they own), the right to make and sign treaties, the right to pass laws and enforce them within their borders, and the right to raise armies to protect the integrity of their sovereignty and trademarks.

Meme: A discrete pack of cultural information. Memes, like viral agents can be infectious.

Nano Assembler: A device used to reconfigure matter from one form into another.

Negotiator: One who "negotiates the sprawl." Any person makes their living on the fringe of law abiding society. Most often used to refer to: bounty hunters, fences, fixers, mediators, operators, and private investigators.

Neko: A person who has undergone cosmetic surgery or superficial gene-splicing for purely aesthetic reasons, in order to look more like an anthropomorphic animal. Alternately known as either a furry or an anthro. Often confused with so-called true hybrids or chimeras.

Omniversal Object Locator (OOL): A small piece of data that indicates the location of a place, person, or file. Serves the same function as an email address, PO Box, and phone number all in one.

Parker: Someone who practices Parkur, the sport of treating the urban landscape like an obstacle course.

Pipe: A channel of communication from any one hyper reality point to any other.





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Personal Reality: The reality a person experiences through their Hyper Reality filter preferences.

Phansigar ("noose operator"): A member of the thuggee.

Phreak: Someone who practices the skill of phone phreaking, the manipulation of old analog and T1 telephone exchanges.

Power Suit: Power armor.

Raider: Short for "corporate raider." Anyone who plans or performs clandestine operations against a corporation or conglomeration.

Rover: A person who makes their permanent residence aboard a ship, or other artificial habitat at sea (in particular the Pacific, Indian, and Southern Oceans). Most Rovers hail from Oceania, Indian, or the Far East, with a significant minority coming from western coast of the Americas.

Scavenger: A person who combs old ruins, wastes and junk heaps for salvageable technology.

Script Kiddie: A newbie hacker or wannabe without any real knowledge of programming who uses code written by someone else to hack with.

Simulacrum: Also known as androids, puppets, replicants, or bioforms. Artificial life forms used as tools by mankind.

Singularity: A point in the near future when dramatic advances in technology or Al out pace human understanding possibly leading to the extinction of the species or some dramatic evolutionary leap. By its very nature the ultimate form and effect of the singularity are unknown.

Spindoctor: A publicist or public relations expert. Sprawl - A heavily urbanized area. Often used to refer to "bad" or dangerous neighborhoods.

Sprawlander: A person who lives in the urban sprawl. Also known as Sprawlers.

Sword Sage: A martial adept who specializes in sword fighting.

Sylph: Also called arm candy. An attractive woman

Tendril Access Processor (TAP): So named for its three component parts' tendril like brain filaments, the access chip, and processor/Wi-Fi signal processor and booster. A brain mounted nano device that allows a user to interface with the hyper real world.

Triad Society: An Asian (primarily Chinese) secret criminal society akin to the Mafia.

Unplugged: A person without a media TAP.

Virtual Reality (VR): computer generated interactive images.

Wasteland: A geographic region that is hostile to human life. This includes, deserts, barrens, radiation zones, former toxic landfills, bomb sites, Artic regions, and ruins located in such areas.

Wastelander: A person who lives in the in a wasteland or ruin. Also known as Wasters.

Weapon Master: A martial adept who specializes in armed melee combat, but does not use a sword.

White Hat: A hacker who uses his computer skills for "good or altruistic purposes.

