THE SPRAWL

One of things game masters often overlook is the fact that the sprawl is the biggest NPC in the game. The player characters don't exist in a vacuum. The sprawl is the thing that greets them every time they leave their squat, and it's waiting to give them a bad day if they aren't careful. It's the people characters interact with, the places they go to and the countless possible outcomes that might develop because of the choices they make. In this section, well take a look at various aspects of the sprawl and give you some tools you can use to breathe life into your game.

A FICKLE BEAST

The sprawl has a rhythm and flow all its own. It has its own mind and a wicked predilection for changing it. A crowded, bustling street can be calm, and in the blink of an eye erupt into a frenzied battle between two rival gangs. The bar or nightclub characters regularly frequent might be the hottest spot in the 'plex one week, and a blackspot a day later because some fool of a bouncer let the wrong crowd in, and they shot up the place. The point is there are random elements that often happen in the city which tend to be overlooked. If the characters aren't aware of what's happening around them—and especially how these changing situations can affect them—things can get dicey really fast.

Let's say that night club was where the characters met with a fixer to get their work, but the chica got shot before the team could get their next gig. Now, not only do the characters need to find the next hotspot to spend time at (Because being seen where the spotlight's brightest hang out helps their street cred), they also need to connect with another fixer.

In the grand scheme of things, it's a small inconvenience, but in the short-term it can hurt the team's ability to get jobs, which has an effect on their cashflow. Furthermore, it can have a knock-on effect of putting the players on edge. After all, you took the time to add this news flash to the game session, so it MUST mean something, right? They'll be spending brain power wondering why. Is this development part of a larger story? What, if anything, does this have to do with the characters. Was it random violence, or was the fixer the target? Or are you just messing with them?

Little random scenes can have a large impact on your game. They bring the city to life, and all you did was spend a few minutes telling a story. Of course, it doesn't have to be the end of the story. This little random event could possibly get the players invested enough to investigate further. Suddenly you have the beginnings of a mini campaign, or at the very least a couple of savage tales.

SAMPLE EVENTS

The following events are provided as examples you can use in your game. These could be events that take place in the surrounding area of the characters, they might be news stories that pop up on the TAPstream, or the radio, or they could be events that directly involve the characters—it's up to you as to which option makes the most sense. The table is broken up into three categories.

Card Draw: The events are listed by card suits (no single suit is worse than the other) so you can simply draw a card and consult the table whenever you wish to add a random scene into the game. You can draw as many cards as you want, either during the adventure, or even beforehand if you want to plan it all out first. Keep in mind, these are just a few of the countless possible things that might happen in a city on any given day (well, at least in Interface Zero that is). You should spend some time creating unique events that are tailored to your game.

Event: This entry gives you the basic event. It's a seed you can use in whatever way you like.

Backdrop: The backdrop is the way the characters become aware of the event. Generally, this can happen in three ways: Characters, News Feed, or Surrounding Area.

- **Characters:** The event happens to the characters. This can be a full-blown encounter, or a quick encounter depending on what is happening during the adventure. Attacks are obvious, but maybe the characters are stopped by the police, or some gang members start harassing the group. The event can even be filler (a homeless person comes up to the characters asking for cryptodollars).
- **News Feed:** The characters hear about the event via the media. This should always be a newsworthy event like a gang war, a high profile murder, corporate-related events.
- **Surrounding Area:** The event takes place in the general vicinity of the characters, usually within a five-block radius. Examples might be a raid by the police, a riot, or a similar event.

Random Events Table		
Card Draw	**Event**	**Backdrop**
Clubs		
Ace	Food Riot	News Feed or Surrounding Area
2	Traffic Jam	Characters/ News feed/Surrounding Area
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10	Homeless person	Characters
Jack		
Queen		
King		
Diamonds		
Ace	Random Traffic Stop	Characters
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
Jack		
Queen	Police Brutality	Characters/News Feed/Surrounding Area
King	Hostile Takeover	News Feed
Hearts		
Ace	Mugging	Characters/Surrounding Area
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
Jack		

Queen		
King		
Spades		
Ace	Political Protest	News Feed, Surrounding area
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
Jack		
Queen		
King		
Joker		