

C O D E N A M E
RUNNER

Codename:Runner
Game Design Document
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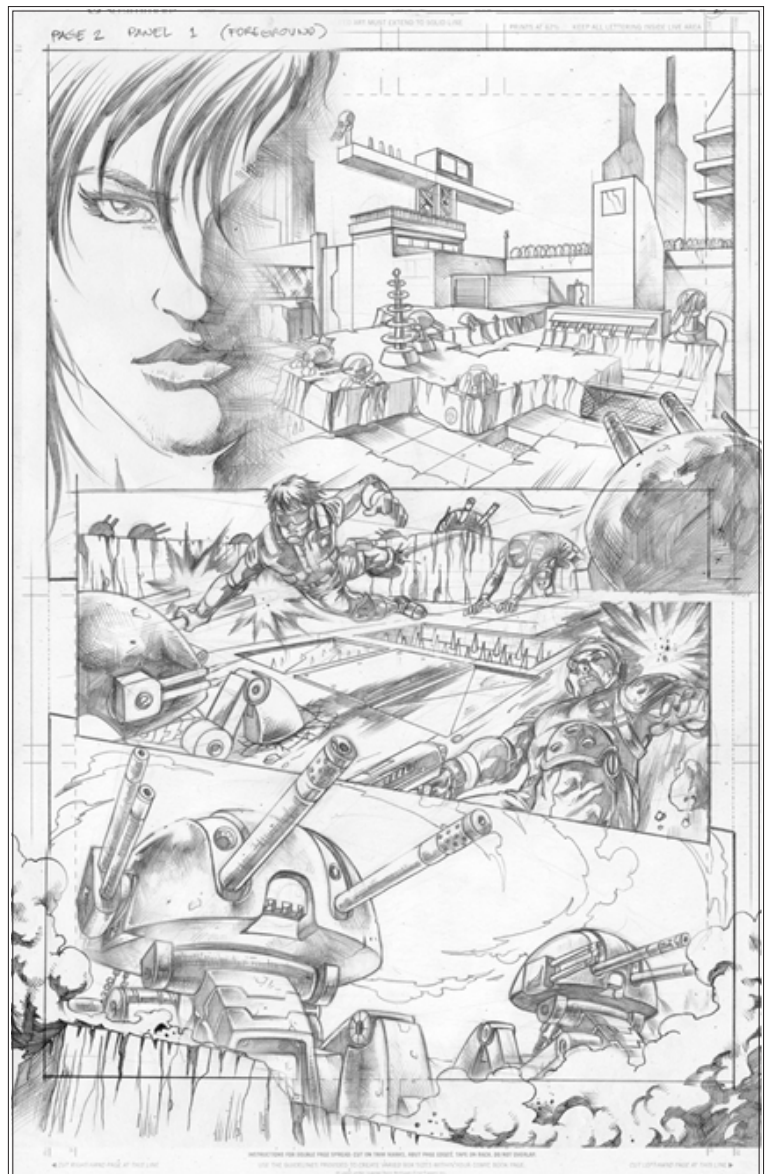
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Game Synopsis

The Runner is a multi-disciplinary game where players can engage any of three game styles based on their individual tastes. All of these game styles interact together and are tied to a central story illustrated in a separate document. (see Codename: Runner story doc) The game styles cater to three central player types: the Action gamer (“Runner”) who can play the game as an FPS-based experience, the RTS gamer (“Gamesman”) who plays the game as a strategy-based game attempting to thwart the FPS gamer, and a casual gamer (“Operator”) delivered via tablet-based hardware that is a Co-Op for the FPS gamer.

These game styles tie together within the Virtual Sports league (“The WRL”) that is based around a virtual world obstacle course where individuals (“Runners”) compete against teams of Gamesman to complete courses in the fastest and most destructive way possible. Runners get assistance from Operators who provide valuable Intel and manipulate variables in the environment to help them complete the course. Being a virtual environment the world is subject to hacking, resource issues, power outages and other things related to an environment driven by code and hardware. This will allow us to, at times, deliver story components and illuminate the full picture of the how the league is being manipulated, by whom and for what purpose. As players rank up on respective leader boards for the game style they are currently playing, new story elements will be revealed.



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Game Mechanics

A. Runner Gametype

The runner gametype is a FPS based experience for a single player with the option to have an operator (spotter) assist. The runner operates many times as a “loner” against a team of gamesman trying to complete a course start to finish as quickly as possible, along the way dealing as much damage as possible to obstacles set in his/her path. Runners use weapons, as tools of the trade, to help clear the course effectively. The runners physical and mental prowess are near superhuman due to the virtual environments they operate in. They can run higher, jump farther, dodge quicker and do things, of which the average human couldn’t dream.

Runner Classes:

Juggernaut: The juggernaut class is a heavily armored and heavily weaponized class that deals incredible damage and is well protected but incredibly slow and at times limited in the environment by their size.

The Slider: The slider is a class of runner that is known for quickness and uncanny elusiveness. They carry equipment for evasion and travel light. They have the additional special ability to “skate” a surface. This allows them to, for short burts, adhere to a surface and slide across it no matter the level of friction. It is a very high speed form of movement and can be used on vertical surfaces as well.

The Bolo: The bolo class is a “jack of all trades” class that has some of the best traits of all classes including a solid armor assortment and weapons to go with agility. They are good at many things but not particularly stand out at any. Bolos carry a unique grapple allowing them to quickly go vertical where the option exists and at range grab targets.

The Runners Objective

Runners play in “The WRL” for the same reason anyone plays a sport; money, fame and violence. Runners in The WRL are ranked on a global rankings board. The higher the rank, the more money they make and added perks they receive from the league. This obviously comes in the form of cash and luxuries. At some ranks Runners gain access to experimental “R&D” based equipment that can be used for matches.

Rankings for runners are based on speed and efficiency with a bit of destructive scoring mixed in. The ultimate goal for a runner would be to complete an arena course and destroy as many obstacles as possible as quickly as possible.



Runner Mechanics

“Run, Evade, Kill”

For most runners it happens in that order. Keep moving, stay away from the dangerous stuff when possible and when not use the firepower at your disposal.

Movement – movement would be handled via standard FPS based control scheme WASD and mapped keys for equipment loadout on PC. Mapped keys would need to be available for triggerable items, dodges, jumps, jump dodges and any special moves available to the player.

Special moves will be managed by a rechargeable meter that depletes as you execute moves and recharges naturally or boosts when you make a kill or clear a checkpoint.

Evasion- Evasion can be handled two ways, via dodge capabilities/map knowledge/speed and cunning or help from an operator. All of the movement capabilities above and skill alone may be enough to help a runner succeed. Runners who take advantage of an Operator will be true power players.

Kill- Destroying obstacles is easy, aim/shoot repeat. The more powerful the weapon, the easier it gets. With rank, runners achieve access to newer and at times R&D based (untested) weapons technology with often devastating and unpredictable effects.

All obstacles that fire back have an energy meter which when zeroed out means annihilation. This holds true for the runner as well. Health meters regenerate at a rate dictated by the runner's class. Juggernauts regenerate more slowly than sliders and bolos to balance the gameplay.

Weapons that require ammunition will have a finite supply on load and require resupply as the game progresses. Resupply will happen via “store” interface and can be triggered by a runner or operator.

Runner Startup

A Runner's career starts when the player creates a Runner based profile. At this stage they choose some basic things to flesh out their character.

1. Runner Name (First/Last)
2. Sex
3. Age
4. Appearance Customization (tool in game for customizing look)
5. Upload of Profile Photo/Logo (ties to social media channels)
6. Class of Runner (Directly sets initial funds available, weapons/equipment available)
Runners on startup can use their initial cash to buy/upgrade weapons and equipment. Runners who provide their Facebook wall access on profile creation gain an additional “Sponsorship” allotment of cash. Providing Twitter handles for their WRL Runner unlocks a unique weapon or item.

Wishlist:

Facebook handshake for achievement unlock and ability to market matches pre- and post-match. Trash talk etc.

Twitter handle creation for WRL Runners. WRL runners will append WRL_Name possibly and will provide game engine the ability to tweet directly to players for special unlocks, match info/requests etc. Thus not filling up their personal twitter accounts with game related content.

Rookie Status

Runners enter the WRL with “Rookie” status. The Rookie league is a proving ground for new players to learn how to be a Runner. It is basically a 3 level league that is designed to give Runner players a good feel for all game types. All matches in the Rookie League are matched up on a Rookie server and carry with them no WRL rankings. Money can be gained in the Rookie League matches but may only be used until all three levels are completed and graduation to full league status occurs. The rookie league ties into the story as a basic filter for what runners would make entertaining matches and which wouldn’t be worth televising. Rookie league matches are played with other Rookie league based players (Gamesman and Operators) and scheduled via lobby system only.

Wishlist:

Players have the ability to pay their way out of the Rookie League via micro transaction or social media posts/follows. Tie this buyout to in game cinematics of bribing a league official and potentially different story elements for these players.

Full League Status

When rookies attain full league status they unlock the league rankings boards as well as additional environments they can play, weapons, equipment and new story elements. Players graduating to full league status will also have an assigned level for playable maps and new equipment options. It’s important to differentiate between level and rank here. Level is basically how the game dictates what new content a player will unlock and is based on criteria (matches completed, efficiency). Rank is how they are doing against fellow Runners globally. Rank carries with it some perks as well in that different rank sets (ex. Top 50, top 100) will also unlock content.

Full league status opens up the WRL website access and match making system. Matches can be scheduled in the game client or via website.

Wishlist:

Daily use of website provides bonus money “paychecks” at the end of the month. This can be tied to purchasing in-game items (virtual cash or micro-transactions), message board usage, and match scheduling as possibilities.

Runner Match Making

Runners can use the in-game “lobby” matchmaking system to choose gamesman or gamesman teams they would like to challenge immediately. They can also issue a challenge and schedule a date/time for the match via the website. Within the lobby we will also provide an “instant action” capability that randomly chooses a gamesman or a team of gamesman who are waiting to play and drops both sides into a match within a predefined rankings range. The rankings range prevents Runners from playing against gamesman who are too high a level and would be impossible to defeat. The lobby is filterable by Map and Rank of Opponent.

Wishlist:

Matches that are scheduled via WRL website can be marketed to players Facebook and twitter followers via posts to those media with a link to watch the match telecast online. Telecast match’s viewership will affect match proceeds for the players bumping the payout for the match based on pre-defined criteria (ex. 200+ viewers adds 400 credits to gate, 500+ viewers adds 900 credits to gate).

Runner Match

Initially for a one-on-one, runner vs. gamesman match both parties join the match at the same time, neither with a distinct advantage. If a runner participates against a team of Gamesman, the team gets a timed pre-load of the level to start the environment load out. In the event that a Runner has an Operator co-op player, the operator drops into the level at the same time as the gamesman team and can survey the level as they add items. The game after all connections are made is FPS (first person shooter) for the Runner. Runners have a condensed map display on their HUD (radar view) and the following other HUD based items:

1. Ammo/energy
2. Armor meter
3. Health Meter
4. Cash Bank
5. Elapsed Time/Best Time for the Level/Global Best Time
6. Current Equiped Item/Weapons

The Runner can trigger the store interface mid-match for purchasing items. Items purchased mid-match are lost upon completion of the current match (not counting ammo/health packs). Items purchased during lobby use are retained. We want to incentivize pre-planning in this way rather than ad-hoc purchasing. Runners should be spending their time moving, not spending cash during a match. Every match will have a predefined spending limit for all gamers so that wins cannot be achieved by attrition alone. Limits will be defined by the map being played.



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B. Operator Gametype

The Operator Gametype acts as the ops manager and intelligence officer for the Runner. He feeds the runner valuable intel about the environment around them in a wide radius. The Operator has the ability to access and purchase equipment, weapons and powerups for the Runner, in some cases triggering equipment.

Key Operator Tasks:

1. The operators wide overall view of the map allows them the ability to “mark” obstacles placed on the map via gamesman and communicate positions and recommendations via in-game messaging. They can set waypoints on the map for directions to travel which the Runners HUD will indicate on the map as well as markers for types of obstacles (ie. Turrets, security bots, etc.).
2. Operators have the ability to purchase/equip/trigger items for the runner. Operators have access to unique items from their store view that can be purchased and used during a match, in addition to standard items. The operator in this regard takes some of the burden off the Runner to allow them to concentrate on the action etc.
3. Operators can “Hack” items in the environment. Operators have the ability to access the security grid of the environment allowing them to “Hack” items like:
 - a. Locked Doors
 - b. Auto Turrets
 - c. Automated Security Measures
 - d. Light Systems
 - e. Elevators, transportation.
 - f. Etc.

Hacks are achieved via initiating the Hack and remaining connected to the item as a meter drains to completion. The speed at which the meter drains is directly related to the level of the operator vs. the level of the item being hacked.

Wishlist:

Hacks are achieved via mini-games that are puzzle based and can be completed fairly rapidly.

Quick Gameplay Example:

An operator can inform his runner of an area ahead and to his right with two auto turrets. He can then access the security grid and “hack” one of the turrets (provided his level is sufficient). Once control of the turret is achieved he can either trigger it to fire on its friendlies or self-destruct it.



Operator At Start-Up

The operator gametype is only available via Tablet based devices on the iOS and Droid platforms. When the app is purchased users can create an operator profile and associate it to their Game Client profile account. This can be handled with the game key or the game client and email account it was registered to. Players owning both the app and game client are rewarded with XP modifier bonus for a short period of time.

Operators create a profile similar to a runner minus visual cues (see wishlist).

Profile Data:

Operator Name

Age

Sex

Profile photo

Height:

Weight:

Last Runner:

Completion Percentage:

Gamesman Disconnects:

Hacks:

Hack Success Ratio:

Level:

Cash:

Rank:

Equipment:

Powerups:

An operator is provided an initial amount of cash and then their career begins in the rookie league.



Wishlist:

Character profile customizer to pick look attributes of the operator. (clothing options, etc. Pimp out your Operator)

Operator Rookie Status

Operators start out, like Runners, in the Rookie League. To graduate from Rookie League to pro they must successfully navigate 3-5 Runners to completion of a course. (number not finalized) On graduation they receive their certification as an operator and access to WRL based clients for jobs.



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Certified Operators

Certified Operators have their own ranking boards based on success rates and speed/efficiency of their runners to complete courses. It's very similar to a Runners ranking engine. Operators also unlock new content, items in the store, level access as they level up similar to a Runner.

Ranking Stats:

Map Success/Failure Rate

Avg. Map Speed

Avg. Map Spend

Participation/Success Ratio

Low Level Participation (in this case we want to encourage operators to work with runners who are just starting out pro by incentivizing a modifier on their rankings for "pro-bono work")

Operator Gameplay

Operators play the game on a tablet based device from a "top down" view. Map view is 2D. The operators view shows a wide radius of the map. In the view they can see gamesman placeables, portals (locked/unlocked), transportation options, auto security measures etc. The operator view also shows hacks needed for an item and the level of possibility is color coded (ie. Red color is not hackable, yellow moderately difficult, green easy). Objects on the map that move like sentry security, will show their location on the map currently and their movement.

Operators can initiate and hack an obstacle once it is within range of the runner. They can attempt to hack any item at or below their level and within a range (x) above their level. Once a hack is initiated they can disconnect at any time. Radius from the runner does not apply once a hack is initiated. This provides some unique opportunities for strategy on the part of the Runner/operator team to get in range and then redirect the runner for a period of time. Operators can also at any time trigger the store interface and purchase powerups and equipment for the Runner's benefit. When bought the option to immediately place/equip the item is given or the item can be stored for later use. Items like ammo and health packs are immediately added to storage. Health packs having finite supply for purchasing in match. (prevent winning by attrition)



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Operator Probe Launch

This is a special ability operators unlock at (x) level. It allows the operator to trigger an avatar (think lightsaber ball in starwars) into the level to traverse and scout the level. Providing a wider range and radius of viewing. This also gives the operator greater distance from the runner for hacking opportunities.

Operators can launch the probe and scout ahead, placing items within range of the probe.

Limitations

While in probe mode, operators can not trigger the store interface. Should the probe be destroyed operators lose their signal to the game and are disconnected. The probe can be targeted by enemy AI and has a limited armor rating until destroyed. When the operator achieves (x) level they unlock a cloaking device to prevent AI targeting for brief periods of time.



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C. Gamesman Gametype

The sole purpose of the Gamesman is to toy with, manipulate and eventually eliminate a Runner from the field of play. They use resources at their disposal to purchase and load a level that are both destructive in nature and intelligent. The Gamesman gametype is a strategy based game style (tower defense). This gametype can be played as an individual or a team of up to 5. When played as a team gamesman are awarded the added benefit of a shared resource pool for purchasing and an initial “load out” period at match starts of (x) seconds/minutes. Gamesmen spend game credits/cash for assets to place in the Runners path to slow or prevent them from completing the course. The ultimate goal of a gamesman is to kill the runner, thereby disconnecting them from the virtual environment. This is done by reducing them to zero health.

Gamesmen see the environment real-time in its entirety and have the ability to place objects anywhere possible and reasonable for the type of object. (ex. You can't place a security officer on the side of a wall) The gamesman view can be panned and zoomed and is by default an isometric view with fog of war to allow clipping through objects to place items inside. (ex. A multi story building will clip so that the gamesman can place something in a specific room on floor 2) The view can be rotated to top down should a gamesman desire as well. Gamesman teams place objects in a rotation one at a time to prevent one player spending down all team assets and monopolizing environment build out.

Gamesman Gameplay

Gamesman work as an individual, or in a team, manipulating the environment of the match at an often frantic pace. Individual gamesmen don't get the benefit of the “pre-load” for a map and so immediately have to assess the environmental situation and quickly decide where to allocate resources. Placeables have a very short transitional period (x seconds) into the real time environment, they do not appear immediately. Gamesman can spend cash up to the level's cap on items, they cannot spend their entire fortune on a level. (Prevents win by attrition) As they purchase an item from the Gamesman store they immediately place it within the environment. Gamesman are ranked like any other game type. There are two ranking boards for gamesman, solo and team. As gamesman level up they unlock new placeables and environments in which they can participate. Gamesman start out with access to (x) items to place on a map and (y) maps they can connect to and play on at first level.



Factors in Leveling

Success/Failure ratio of runners competed against.

Average Speed of Killing a Runner

Total Kills

Average length of time for runner to complete a match vs. level of the map played as a multiplier.

WE NEED TO DEVISE THE MATH FOR THIS RANKINGS MODEL YET, THINK IT THROUGH FURTHER.

New items and environment access happens in tiers based on the level of the gamesman.

Tier 1 – levels 1-10 - X Items, Y Maps, Z Mods

Tier 2 – Levels 10-30 X Items, Y Maps, Z Mods

Tier 3 – Levels 30-50 X Items , Y Map, Z Mods

Gamesman, like Runners, can purchase powerups/mods for items they have access to. Configurations for placeables with mods can be stored in a “locker” portion of the gamesman store for repeated purchase.

Leveling Modifiers

Gamesman have a few leveling modifiers, of which they can take advantage. Gamesman gain an additional level boost for joining a team/clan. They can also get a boost from referring a friend who either purchases the game or downloads the demo. To promote team based play, all XP generated for leveling, while in a team, receives a (1.3x) multiplier after each match. (Very important to promote teams on the gamesman side)

Wishlist

Gamesman who register their Facebook handles and a fan page for a team get a boost to XP as well. The boost grows based on number of “fans” the fanpage gets.

Gamesman who register a twitter handle and post #WRL based tweets for matches gain bonus to match proceeds when the match is complete based on number of users who connect and view the match online. Basically this works pretty simply, if a Gamesman tweets a match based tweet from the website, when the final number of viewers gets tallied match gate adjusts and the proper percentage of that gate bumps for the gamesman.



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Gamesman Profile Data

Name:
Age:
Height:
Weight:
Sex:
Level:
Cash:
Individual Rank:
Team Rank:
Team Name:

Kills:
Avg. Runner Completion Time:
Surrenders:

Placable Object Access:
Mods/Powerup Access:
Level Access:

Gamesman Jump

This is a special ability Gamesman have to unlock when they reach (x) level. It allows the gamesman to “jump” into a placeable item and control it directly in a first person view.

Ex. The gamesman jumps into a laser security turret that is auto guided normally. He is then able to manipulate the turret, target it and do the firing.

Limitations:

For a team of gamesman, no more than two can be jumped into objects at any given time. Jump capability is only available if there is a team of gamesman, not individuals. (this is subject to change)

Dangers:

Gamesman who are jumped into a device are exposed to the dangers of the virtual environment. Should the item they are controlling be destroyed or hacked they are removed from the match along with their contribution to the resource pool. Any gamesman dropped from a match will also receive no share from the match proceeds should the team receive any. Disconnection from a match also has negative effect on leader board rankings.



Playing All 3 Game Styles

In an effort to promote playing all three game types, a dynamic will be in place to reward users who level/rank in all three game experiences. This will either be a reward based on XP modifier, exclusive loot, or cash modifier. We want to make sure there is an availability of players of all styles for a good mix on game servers.

The Game Economy

The game economy is based on game cash. Credits are used by all gametypes to advance their capabilities. Credits can be spent during a match or post match. Items purchased during a match are temporary and lost upon completion of the current match. Items purchased between matches are permanent and usually a bit less expensive.

Every match has a total “Gate” which is defined by the map being played, modified by Runner popularity, viewership and gamesman level. Runner popularity is dictated by whether they have an “Agent”, the level of that agent and how well the agent markets their matches. (facebook app, not yet in this document) Total Gate is split between the Runner and Gamesman. Operators are paid pre-match and thus do not get revenue share. Operators are the only game type that can define their fees and are paid when the match begins, regardless of the outcome.

Gate split is defined by the success/failure of the match. As time ticks down past a pre-defined point (x) which is considered the optimal completion point for the runner by the map they are playing. After time period (x) is passed Gamesman revenue share on the map incrementally increases. Kills by Gamesman result in a “Kill Split” of the revenue. Kill Split is basically a 90/10 split of the gate which in many cases may not cover the costs the Runner incurred in suiting up for the match.

The gate of a match is also modified by the match’s online viewership. The more users who connect to the game and watch via game interface or website, the higher the gate. Much like a real world MMA or boxing match PPV more people watching equals more cash. This could be a game changer for our application as it will spur match marketing via social channels and more interactions from the community.



Game Monetization

Game client purchase either by physical media or digital download will be the primary source of revenue. In addition to client purchase the game has several opportunities for micro-transaction implementation to augment revenue stream. Not all of these may be relevant in the final build of the game but they are considerations.

Micro Transaction Options

There are several opportunities for Micro-transactions within the game that make sense:

1. Purchase Credits. Credit purchase is a base option and many social based games grow from these. In our case there will be players who initially may not do as well as they would like. We can allow them the ability to purchase credits for use in game to get the equipment they feel they really need to be successful. We should present some kind of hard cap on this type of thing but maybe not? (undecided)

2. Unlocks. Purchasing unlocks for games is common practice now. In our situation we'll be releasing DLC based content bi-monthly that will be nominal fee based. Some unlocks will be included in those releases. Additional unlocks could be made available tied to seasonal items, timed story delivery components or special events we are promoting in the game world. Ex. Unlock the opportunity to face Aurora in a dual run that only top tier runners can participate in.

4.Sponsorship would be the final micro transaction possibility. In this scenario real world "Corporate" teams can purchase a sponsorship package which gets them several key things:

The ability to sponsor both a Runner and a Gamesman team and the rankings boards for Corporate league members. These boards only rank corporate based players. They are tied into the game world and it's persistent story in the same ways that non corp players are, but in addition, show rank against other companies. On the standard ranking boards they receive a icon to denote corporate league membership.

Corporate Perks

Corporate players receive corporate perks based on industry chosen when the corporate player profile is created. What this means is that if you choose as your "industry of specialization" something like "Weapon Design" your entire team and all registered players will receive a discount on game items in that industry. Corporate league players/teams Profile data includes team players list, website address, and brief description of the company, real world industry and "industry of specialization".



Visual Style of the Game

In its appearance Codename is very modern. We want the game to be somewhat futuristic but still with real world roots. Weapon design will be pretty open but with few “beam” style weapons. Levels will range from urban jungles to ultra-clean near future settings. Level design will be large in size, focusing on the idea that we want matches to be longer experiences and not just 10 minute bursts. The HUD, Overhead Map and store elements will be very clean and simple. The level of detail in the environments, game characters, weapons and placables will be high.

Cut scenes and story components will be Game Engine rendered with post production and delivered via paneled style comic book interface in most cases. There are events where gamers will interact directly with the story characters that will not be cut scene based and where decisions made influence game story path for that user. Again this story and its game are very much based in and targeted towards a comic book style world and their readers. Everything about this has a heavy comic book influence, it’s geared to the FPR and strategy gaming crowd with social game accents.



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Real World (iOS Based) “Run” App – Marketing Tool (consider this wish list)

This was originally conceived as a marketing tool for the game to allow users to play a very limited version of the experience in the real world. It was designed to provide us the ability to market to players and work with partners to drive users to specific locations for content and partner deals while achieving goals as a Runner on predefined courses throughout the US.

Basics

This is a GPS enabled application that provides predefined or randomized “Runs” for users to complete. User who start the application will be given the option to play as a Runner or Gamesman for that session. These runs are checkpoint based and require “Foursquare” checkins for goal completion. Each run will have partner checkpoints where those checkins will unlock a partner deal. As a user works on completing a run they will see a HUD display with some basic details like, current best time global, best personal time, global run ranking, compass pointer for directions and triggerable overhead view of map for wider range. The overhead view will also show any players in your area. (privacy possible)

The game can be played as a runner obviously or in a more passive mode as a gamesman. Gamesman operate as individuals with the app (no teams) and can place obstacles in your path. Gamesman see the route they are closest to and any runners that are currently competing. They can place objects on the run path to hinder progress. Runners will get a push notification warning of an obstacle and can either choose to re-route to avoid or attempt to hack/destroy it themselves. Using the video camera of the device a user can view the area they are in when a push is triggered and the obstacle in their path in a quasi AR style view. Display will show the obstacles level to hack and health meter. Runners can either choose to initiate a hack or tap the interface repeatedly (button mashing style) to try and destroy the obstacle. Hacks/Destroy attempts immediately stop progress on the run until the item is destroyed or removed. A re-route will basically choose another route to the next checkpoint and force that direction to turn off the obstacle.

Completed runs can be tied to bonus offers from partners or content delivery of items related to our game and its marketing efforts.

Depending on how involved we want this app to be, we can provide a leveling based system for both runners and gamesman and access to new items based on level for both. More powerful weapons to destroy obstacles for runners and more powerful placeables for players playing as a gamesman.



Story Overview

Codename:Runner

The story of Codename:Runner centers around two main characters put into the crosshairs by the world and forced to exact some measure of satisfaction from it in revenge.

Story Background

When a man has been wronged, how far is he willing to go to have his revenge? Is there any line that he won't cross in order to see that justice has been done, and if not, at what point does he become as much of a villain as the men who betrayed him? These questions, and how a man by the name of Wesley Granger answers them, are at the heart of the Runner storyline.

Our story begins today, in a time when economic turmoil has become the new normal. After years of solid, steady growth, the economies of the world's major nations are undergoing a transition. During this time of transition, markets become unstable. Periods of runaway prosperity are followed by years of recession and depression. It is these times of great economic uncertainty that lead a small group of nations to secretly come together to create The Hack.

As large banks and corporations gained more and more power, world governments came to view them as a threat to national sovereignty and security. An ever more global economy was becoming beholden to these behemoths. As these companies rose and fell, so too was the economy pushed and pulled, drastically shifting between runaway growth and crushing collapse. Political leaders needed a way to manipulate the economy from behind the scenes, to keep it in balance, and to limit the power of giant corporations.

What they came up with is the single most brilliant piece of programming and engineering the world has ever seen...The Hack. It can move undetected throughout the global financial system. It can adjust stock prices and change currency exchange rates. It can get into bank accounts, giving money to some, taking it from others. Anything, anything at all that is related to the world of finance is within the reach of The Hack.

Of course, something as powerful as The Hack needed to be protected at all times. It is at this point that Wesley Granger enters our story. Wesley Granger is an engineering savant. Wesley was hired to create the most complex, most secure, most impenetrable security system that the world had ever known. He devoted years of his life to the project, and when he was done, he'd created a masterpiece. The vault into which The Hack was placed for safekeeping, Wesley's vault, was perfection. The government leaders who commissioned the project were thrilled with Wesley's work...so naturally they tried to kill him.

And not just Wesley. The government knew that the security of The Hack and the success of their efforts demanded absolute secrecy. All loose ends, everyone they'd hired to create The Hack, had to be eliminated. Every programmer and every member of Wesley's security team was gathered together in the vault, ostensibly for a congratulatory party on a job well done, and executed...except for Wesley.

Wesley was running late the day of his execution. To his great fortune, the executioners started without him. Wesley arrived just as the first programmer was gunned down. Acting quickly, Wesley activated the vault's security system, his security system. Using his intimate knowledge of the vault's defensive mechanisms, Wesley was able to evade the pursuing government agents, many of whom fell victim to the vault's security measures.

From that day forward, Wesley Granger has had one goal and one goal only, to steal The Hack, thereby becoming the most powerful man in the world, and then using that power to take his revenge. But it hasn't been easy. Although almost no one knows that he exists, he's the most wanted fugitive in the world. Entire government agencies have been created to find him and kill him. He's constantly on the run, moving from place to place, trying to stay hidden, all the while formulating his plans.

Our game tells the story of The World Runner's League (WRL), Wesley's most recent attempt to acquire The Hack. Wesley knows that although the basic premise of his security design is likely still being used to protect The Hack (it's simply too good, and expensive, to discard) that the details of it will have been changed. It would be impossible for him to use his knowledge to break in and steal The Hack.

But not impossible, Wesley hopes, for the ultimate athlete, especially one who has the benefit of Wesley's knowledge of the vault's security.

Wesley's goal is to find someone with the skills to navigate the vault's security and steal the Hack. It is for this purpose that he became involved with the WRL. The obstacles that he introduces that Runners most circumvent in the course of league play mimic the security that Wesley designed for the vault. Wesley's plan is to recruit the league's greatest champions to his cause...and to kill them if they refuse to help.

Those who are searching for Wesley are naturally suspicious of the WRL. They can plainly see the connection between it's newest obstacle courses and the security system that guards The Hack. They've got their own agents in place, infiltrating the league as both Runners and Gamesmen, hoping to find a definitive link to Wesley Granger.

The game of cat and mouse has begun. But in a world where everyone has secrets, it's not always easy to tell the hunter from the hunted.

It is into this world that our players will be dropped. At first, they'll see the league as nothing more than what it appears to be, the most successful sports league that has ever been created. As time goes on, details will be revealed using a variety of methods that will begin to hint at the greater story. Eventually, players will even begin to realize that their actions, their successes and failures in the league will impact the ongoing story. Our story will interact with the players, and our players with it. In the end, our most highly ranked players will participate in an end of story tournament, the outcome of which will dictate the success or failure of Wesley's efforts to obtain the Hack, and will directly impact the storyline line of our next game.

Our Characters & How they Relate

Wesley Grainger

Wesley Grainger is a security & engineering savant. Widely considered the world's foremost expert in security system implementation and design, Wesley's government has him on speed dial for world hotspots. Wesley is the contractor of choice for a world government organization with a lofty goal of stabilizing the world economy, Typhon. Wesley is brought in to design and deliver a facility to house their ultimate effort. When complete he becomes a target.

Wesley is approximately 34 years old, he grew up in a standard middle class home going to a good public school and then college at MIT for structural engineering and computer science. On completion of college he took a job with the US Navy developing the internal security systems that would eventually become the gold standard for aircraft carriers. On completion of his stint with the US Military he started his own consultant business working in the private sector for privatized para-military organizations and orgs that need to secure large amount of cash, weapons or research. All the while he is developing a reputation for being the best.

Appearance

Build: Tall and Skinny (5'10" 145 give or take) Hair Color: Black Hair Style: Short possibly crew cut. Posture: He slouches a bit, always tries to blend in. Clothing Style: Dark colors, never anything that will stand out. Wears an old worn beaten duster or trench style coat when out in the weather that looks like it has moth holes eaten into it. (See also bullet holes). Dark worn khakis. Open to suggestions on shirt style, possibly nerdy old school video game t's (see also Mrs. Pacman). Shoes are old school sneakers similar to Chuck Taylors, the only thing of real value he owns as they have become difficult to find and he won't give them up, years of building his reputation and assets he clings to them as a source of his past success.

Noticeable scars/tats/piercings: Has two noticeable scars, one on his neck that's a bit of an elongated cut down to his right trap, can be hidden with a shirt collar and he fidgets with it constantly, feeling like everyone stare are it, tries to hide it constantly. Has a fresh tattoo on his right hand (gun hand) that is tribal in appearance, a clawed looking tribal with the word "hate" designed in it. It wraps across from under his write to around the top of his thumb. Got it when he escaped to never let go of his anger and to try and eradicate the old Wesley who was straight laced and never had any markings, in the event he was ever to get picked up by police etc.

Eyes: Brown Facial Features: Thin, angular features. Wears glasses and or sunglasses all the time, usually wireframes. They project a HUD display into hit eyes that is connected to his personal network for information documenting and intelligence. No visible cues to their true capabilities and of his own design and development, originally application for the military. Often has a 5 o'clock shadow as he is too lazy to shave.



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Known Associates:

Rory “Pick” McKendren (American Special Forces Engineer)

Wesley’s history with Pick is illustrious and long, they have worked together on several projects including the US Navy project. Wesley designs/Pick builds and deploys. They’re relationship dates back at least 10 years and is full of mutual respect and jealousy at times.

Walden Sykes (American Special Forces/ Miami Swat)

Wesley’s relationship to Sykes is through Pick and is one of convenience. Wesley has contracted Sykes and his gift of violence to help procure items needed for systems he designs that are not “available” for purchase.

Wesley Personified in His Own Words

Hi, my name is Wesley Granger. Don’t feel bad if you don’t know my name. No one does. You should though. Everyone should. I should be famous. Rich too. In fact, I should be the richest, most famous man in the world.

How’s this you ask? What have I ever done to deserve such recognition? Well, I don’t like to brag, but I created the World Runners’ League. Yes, that World Runners’ League. The most successful sports league the world has ever known. The one that shatters attendance records with every tournament it holds. The one whose television ratings are off the charts. The one whose yearly income exceeds that of most countries.

But you don’t believe me, do you? Of course you don’t, and why would you? Everyone knows that the WRL was created by The Commish. Everyone knows the story of how he created it in his backyard. Everyone knows how one of his kids even gave the league its name. And everyone is wrong. I created the league, and I can prove it to you.

First though, I’ll need to let you in on a little secret. I’ve just lied to you. No, not about creating the league. That part’s true. No, I’d never lie about that. But I did mislead you earlier, when I said that no one knows who I am. That’s not entirely true. Some people do know who I am; some very important, powerful people know who I am. And unfortunately for me, those people want me dead.

I know something, something that certain people don’t want me to know, something that they don’t want anyone to know about. The thing I know about? It’s called The Hack. It was designed by our government. It gives them access to anything and everything having to do with our economy. Want lower mortgage rates? They can lower them. Raise the price of oil? They can raise it. Alter currency exchanges? Change interest rates? Give everyone in the world a raise? Cut everyone’s pay? Wipe out your retirement savings? They can do it. They can do anything. And I’m the only one who knows about it.

And how do I know all of this? No, I didn’t create The Hack. I created the security systems that guard The Hack. It sits in the most impenetrable vault ever designed. No one can get to it. No one. But I have to get it. I have to find someone who can get it for me. I have to make them all pay.

That's why I created the WRL. To find the perfect athlete, the perfect runner, the one who can get past my security and steal The Hack. That's what the league's going to do for me. It's going to...but you think I'm crazy, don't you? I can see it in your eyes. You haven't been paying attention to anything I've said. All you want, all you care about, is getting paid for that pizza you've just delivered. You probably want a tip, too. Fine. Come on in. Have a seat. I'll be but a moment. I just need to go get...your payment. *

Aurora Fenris

Real Name: Stephanie Wagner

Aurora Fenris is a beautiful and talented 19 year old girl who finds herself embroiled in a world of covert action and sport. Aurora starts out our story as a typical teenager living in suburbia whose most important concern is where to meet her girlfriends for lunch that day. Her parents work high pressure jobs, father a police officer, mother a computer engineer for the federal trade commission. Her younger brother drives her crazy, hogging the TV to play Xbox and drinking her protein shakes from the fridge. Aurora's life however changes drastically when her mother doesn't come home from work one nite. Weeks pass and no word from her mother with the police investigation wrapping up as a missing person presumed dead, Aurora finds herself at a crossroads. Her father has given up on life, having made no progress to find her mother, he's retreated into a world of drug/alcohol use and wild goose chances that drain the families bank account and leave them nearly on the street. Aurora is now tasked with trying to find a way to take care of her brother.

Aurora's answer for becoming the parent and acquiring the income needed lies in a underground sport called The Runner League. She starts participating in events at first as a piece of eye candy for winner pictures, then as a Runner herself, eventually becoming the one of the best Runners in the fledgling sport. As the sport gains popularity she becomes the face of it and it leads a clear path to security for both her and her brother.

As The Runner League grows in prominence and she becomes a Rock Star at it, advertisers lineup to utilize her god given beauty and skills to push their products. The league undergoes a brief rebranding where it becomes "The World Runner League" and starts attracting some of the best athletes on the planet. Aurora gets her own team to help her train and grow in the sport. Her team includes a new sponsor named Wesley and his two very unique friends Pick & Sykes. Together with her team Aurora becomes the number one ranked runner in the league. Her and her brother enjoy a almost normal family life in spending time with her trainer Pick and his best friend Sykes. They have money, popularity and a future. When something is too good to be true....



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Aurora is coming home from an event one evening and find the her house empty. Robbie is gone, there's no sign of anything being packed, all in the house is how she left it. It brings to mind her mother's chilling disappearance. As she frantically searches the house she comes upon an individual sitting in the kitchen at the table, the woman is somewhat dangerous looking and unnervingly calm. She fills Aurora in on the fact that her brother has been taken into "protective custody" until she has the time to tender her resignation for The WRL and walk away from the very things in life that have brought her some happiness. The woman leaves her to make the most difficult decision and easiest of her life.

The kidnapping of Robbie is yet another example of Wesley's ability to manipulate events to his benefit. The kidnapping is orchestrated by Wesley, although he does it in such a way that Pick and Sykes believe that they're the ones calling the shots.

Wesley wants Aurora to completely commit herself to destroying Typhon and avenging her Mother, but she's been showing some hesitation. She's clearly enjoying the life that the WRL has made possible, and might not want to risk giving that up going after the Hack. At the same time, Pick has been actively encouraging Aurora to "let it go," to protect the life that she has, and to walk away from her mission of revenge.

Wesley encourages Pick and Sykes to kidnap Robbie for Aurora's own good. They'd take Robbie, and pretend that Typhon had the boy. They'd send a fake agent of Typhon to threaten Aurora, telling her to back off of Typhon.

Wesley, of course, hopes that the kidnapping will have the opposite effect. He wants this to be the last straw, the event that pushes Aurora completely over the edge. He wants this kidnapping to convince Aurora that she's got to do whatever it takes to destroy Typhon, and avenge her mother and Robbie.

Unfortunately for Wesley's plans, Sykes turns Robbie over to Typhon for real. Sykes had been working for Typhon for quite some time. When he relayed to his contacts at Typhon that Robbie is going to be kidnapped, Typhon orders Sykes to follow through with the plan, but then to turn the boy over to Typhon agents.

Aurora visits Pick's machine shop to deliver the bad news and all hell breaks loose. Wesley, Pick & Sykes are all there and are having a heated argument. Guns have been drawn. Wesley and Pick have discovered that Sykes has betrayed them and turned Robbie over to Typhon, and they aren't happy. Sykes quickly spills the beans to Aurora, informing her that the three of them were responsible for Robbie's kidnapping. Aurora draws her guns as well, and pretty soon we've got a four way Mexican standoff, which only ends when the group realizes that only by working together to confront Typhon can any of them hope to survive.



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Aurora's Appearance

Aurora is a 19 year old bombshell. Athletic with curves she is downright striking. Soft complected with just a hint of tan, she has a unique look that belies her age. Aurora stands about 5'8" and about 125 lbs, with a bob style haircut usually red with a white stripe, most of the time to keep her hair out of her eyes. She wears form fitting clothing as it's part of the job of being a sex symbol for an extreme sport. These outfits usually include accessories that help bring out her "assets". Her eyes are brown and penetrating at times. Facial features are angular and like they were carved by an artisan. Aurora when competing wears a fairly heavy armour system devised by Pick that can at times make it difficult to detect if she's man or woman underneath it.

Aurora Personified In Her Own Words

Great, just great. Like I've got time for this. But hey, why not, let's just add one more thing onto my To Do List? It's not like I don't already have two days worth of chores and maybe ten minutes to do them. So now, on top of check Robbie's home work, get his lunch ready for tomorrow, make sure he's got clean clothes, put the dog out, do MY homework, finished getting dressed, pay the bills with money I don't have, and now I've got this stupid interview. And my lipstick. Now where did THAT go? I so DO NOT HAVE TIME TO HUNT FOR MY STUPID RED LIPSTICK!

I'm sorry, I don't mean to yell, but if I leave for work right now I'll still be late, and I'm not even close to being ready to get out the door, and I can't afford to be late, but I can't leave because I can't find this stupid lipstick.

So, okay, look, just ask whatever stupid questions you've got but ask them fast. You've got until I'm dressed...and if you don't turn around when I tell you to turn around, so help me god I'll beat you senseless, got it? And no using my name or Robbie's name in whatever you're writing.

Because I HAVE to, that's why. You think I like dressing like this for the ogling pleasure of a bunch of leering old men? Half of them don't even come to gamble on the Runners, they just come to stare at me. But I don't have a choice, now do I? We need the money. Robbie and I have to eat, I have to keep a roof over our heads, I have to take care of everything, fix everything, figure out how to solve every problem, and there's never enough time for any of it. Like I've got time for THAT. And no, you can't volunteer for the position. Robbie's the only man I've got or need in my life, thank you very much.

Don't even jinx me by talking about that. I've had a couple of close calls. Gawd, I don't even know what we'd do then. You'd think they'd have better things to do than worrying about our stupid Running.

Okay, lipstick on, mirror check, everything's in place. Gotta run. I'm outta here Robbie, keep the door locked, see ya in the morning, love you.



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Rory “Pick” McKendron

Pick is a well known Operator in the WRL. Describing him as a “Grizzled” veteran would be an understatement. At an estimate age of 48, Pick is a disabled veteran who is wheel chair bound and has filled the action junky void in his life with being a hired gun for Runners hoping to achieve the next level. His experience as a Spec Op’s operator in forward positions in conflicts overseas has primed him for the role. Turning in his AR-15 and Glock for a ComStation and keyboard Pick has achieved near superstar status having been the operator of Aurora Fenris for nearly 2 years as she rose from obscurity to become the face of the WRL. Experienced in tactics Pick brings a incredible level of network, code and surveillance knowledge to bear on the playing field. His partner and would be successor Walden Sykes provides the muscle and Pick provides the gift.

Pick grew up in your standard middle class home with access to a better than average way of life but a thirst to do more than go to college and become a tech entrepreneur. His parents built the foundation for his life with whiskey, competitive sports, distrust and a unflinching need to spit in the eye of the upper class. Growing up playing team sports with a father who hated to lose and a mother who hated everything else, Pick learned to rely only on himself and what he could accomplish without his parents knowing. From simple tech hacks for cash for friends to circumventing security for local thugs at the mall, Pick learned the tricks of the trade. At the age of 18 Pick decided to enroll in the military and mix in some weapons and ammunition with his angst. This was however short lived when he lost his legs in a terrorist ambush. Burying himself in a bottle like his father he found no happiness until delivered his future in a silver platter by courier. A new sport that not only required physical prowess but a working knowledge of computer systems, machinery and engineering for a small two person team to succeed. A sport where you take on the upper crust and get to “shove it in and break it off”. Enter the opportunity to team with a young lady named Aurora who was considered a prodigy and you have the future of the WRL.

Pick’s Apperance

Wheelchair Bound, pick rides in what can only be considered a rolling shitbox of a wheelchair that looks like it’s wired to an alien receiver. His chair has a retractable stowaway keyboard and LCD display that are a bit banged up but none the worse for wear. With 5 star based spokes his chair looks solid and remains functional, it has a joystick control but Pick chooses to use his hands to guide the wheels because of his inability to accept his situation. Pick has dark close cropped hair with gray interspersed and sideburns. A 5 o’clock shadow that is perennially present and scar on his chin being his main facial features. His eye are dark and at times glassy from alcohol intake, brows dark in color with a tan to his skin from age and wear. His face is angular but broad, making one wonder if at one time he was a much more imposing individual.



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Pick wears a tactical vest from his military days with multiple pockets for storing electronics and at times a sidearm or two. He still wears black cargo pants with a pair of prosthetic legs although he has no use of them and has never taken the time to learn how to walk or done any type of physical therapy. He's broad chested but broad at the waist a bit as well from his sedentary lifestyle. Spending his nights developing new tools for his trade he often looks worn and tired. His last main characteristic is his right hand where his pinky finger was blown off in combat as well and has been replaced by a makeshift cybernetic design of his own. It works part of the time and at times not. Causing him issues with working a keyboard once in a while which can be a problem for his runners.





Walden Sykes

Walden Sykes is a former Miami PD SWAT officer who found it much more lucrative to sell his unique skills to the highest bidder than continue to be a public servant. At the age of 38, Walden has operated on the fringe of law enforcement for over 10 years now as anything ranging from a body guard and corporate muscle to private industry security operator. His skills are entirely tied to violence. Trained in the military and PD he brings tactical knowledge and a serious mean streak. Sykes primary focus has always been money, it's his focus and weakness. He goes through it as fast as he earns it with excessive impulse. Having a taste for the extravagant Sykes owns a very nice condo in Miami and travels only first class to his clients. His expensive tastes make it impossible to stay on top of his debts however. Constantly needing to work to support himself. Sykes found the ideal cashflow "fix" with his now partner Rory "Pick" McKendren. Rory is a registered operator in The WRL league. As an operator he trains and works with some of the most violent individuals on the planet and as such needs protection a lot of times. Sykes operates as that protection. Applying pressure where necessary and making sure to see the dangers of a scenario for Pick.

Sykes background story is a bit in question, Sykes grew up on the lower east side of Brooklyn in a low income single parent family. His mother having disappeared soon after he was born, only his father was available to keep an eye on Sykes and keep him on a "godly" path. Sykes father could be qualified as a religious fanatic tied to a religious organization (Pandera) that believed that life if lived justly only lead to salvation if all worldly possessions were abandoned and only the barest essentials used to maintain an individual's existence. Sykes lived with only the minimum to sustain life, the cheapest food, few changes of clothes, no transportation and a small one bedroom apartment where he slept on the couch. Growing up he went to public school and dealt with the pain and ridicule of living with a "fanatic" and having no real quality of life. His father died when he was 19 and things changed, suddenly on his own he chose the military to provide for him. Quickly finding a way to harness his inner anger with brutal effectiveness he was attached to a special forces team trained for terrorist interdiction. On completion of his 5 year commitment Sykes joined the Miami PD as a SWAT operator. Quickly finding that the money wasn't as good as he would have hoped he fell into the merc lifestyle and was expelled from SWAT. He now entirely supports himself with his for hire career.

Sykes Appearance

Walden Sykes can be characterized as the military prototype when it comes to his appearance. Crew cut or shaved closely hair 99% of the time his build is bulky and athletic with broad shoulder and chest, muscular overall appearance and dresses to make everyone aware. Pick has broad facial features almost too Jarhead in his appearance with an exaggerated chin and wide set eyes. Sykes routinely wears military color wife beater type tanks, black, dark grey or olive green with desert style cargos when operating in the field. In his private life Sykes wears expensive suits that are tailored and pressed. Not to be confused with a businessman however his features include some "battle damage" including scars on both arms from shrapnel a full sleeve tattoo on his right arm covering as many as possible depicting a row of the "4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse" leading to his wrist and the words "I Will Judge Thee". Sykes routinely wears tightly fit Oakley style sunglasses that entirely obscure his eyes and actually serve a dual purpose of providing intel via direct link to a computer system developed by Pick for both video recording and identification purposes.

Sykes carries at all times, usually either a pistol grip sawed off shotgun with pump action handle sheathed in the middle of his back or a Glock 9mm shoulder holstered.



Casia Selleck

Typhon Operations Head

Little is known about Casia save the fact that she is the person entrusted with the security and monitoring of The Hack. Typhon hired Casia as the expert in intelligence gathering and focusing efforts of protection. A graduate of West Point with credentials ranging from involvement in several intelligence agencies foreign and domestic, Casia is an exceptional mind for tactics and planning. No decisions with regards to the Hacks use are made without her consultation. Casia's motivations are genuine and just, she feels that the Hack is a vital part of balancing the scales in the world and promoting a better place for everyone. A bit of a zealot for Typhon's objectives she is willing to do whatever is necessary, even at times when it may not be ethical. She knows that the bigger picture means stability for our planet. Casia grew up in Romania, the daughter of an influential family who wanted for nothing. She found early on that she had an interest in a military career. Her family was not entirely on board with her chosen career path but used their influence to get her into America's best military University. Casia majored in psychology with a focus on application to military tactics. Graduated top of her class she went home and fell off the grid for a while. In 2007 she was linked to several military operations in Asia and tied to Russian Foreign Intelligence Service. In the espionage arena you only become famous when ops fail, she never became famous for that. With close to 7 years of experience she migrated to business related espionage as a consultant for a period of time, then came back to the US to round out her resume with the CIA. It was in this time period where she peaked the interest of the member nations who formed Typhon and developed the Hack.

Casia's Appearance

Casia is tall, athletic and has the chiseled features of someone born of Balkan descent. Casia prefers clothing that is capable of concealing equipment/weapons of her trade and is rarely without a set of throwing knives that have become her trademark. Casia has no distinguishing tattoos or markings of any kind by design. Casia is at home in an evening gown as a pair of sweats and a beater t-shirt. She's made a living at concealing her purpose and identity from her enemies.





Robbie (Aurora's Brother)

Robbie is a troubled and at the same time pre-teen boy, more into video games, surfing the web and updating his facebook than girls or the rest of the world. He is in middle school and overachieves in the classes he finds interesting, muddles through or fails miserably in the ones he doesn't. In particular he is gifted with computers. Testing scores place him as a top 10 percentile student in tech IQ and make him a prime candidate for a future at MIT or Carnegie Mellon when his time comes. In the meantime he has a pre-occupation with proving to his friends that his banks debit card systems are not secure. His gift has led him to tinker with electronics, computers and software engineering.

The loss of of his mother and subsequent loss his father to bad habits has Robbie searching for a role model. He acts out in school, is disobedient and in general impossible for his sister to control at times.

He has grown obsessed with finding out what happened to his mother over the years, his obsession has driven his defacto caretaker and sister to the brink of madness. With her workload and trying to support their small family, she finds it annoying and at times counterproductive. Initially Aurora buried her mother's disappearance as abandonment. Robbie changed all of that. Robbies persistence and inability to believe that his mother had abandoned them or was murdered by some random mugger, led to a constant search for clues. In his search he breaks into her old office with the help of a family friend who works security at the company, in the office he finds a file on her computer indicating she had accepted a job with an organization named Kaddic (Typhon shell coporation), 6 months before her disappearance. Having never heard of this company Robbie jumps to the conclusion it's a conspiracy and immediately brings it to his sister's attention. With the new info they both agree that closure is needed and start poking around. The rest as they say is history.

Robbies Appearance

Robbie is a skater. He wears typical skater gear including baggy cargos, graphic tees, DC sneakers, beanies and hoodies. He has long black hair usually at times obscuring his eyes. He has angular features and is lightly complected as befits a kid who spends most of his time in front of his computer. In every way Robbie appears the typical rebellious pre-teen boy. Robbie is about 4'10" around 120lbs and his sneakers and typical beanie or baseball cap always look too big for him. Robbie wears dark rim glasses when he's working at his computer as he is very far sighted. Without them he could be considered clinically blind. Robbies only distinguishing characteristic is larger than average ears that come to a bit of a point at the top. (not lord of the rings elf level point)



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The Relationships

Aurora and Robbie: As the story begins, Aurora's determination to take care of Robbie is the motivating factor behind pretty much every decision that she makes. With a dead mother and an absent father, it's fallen to Aurora to hold what's left of her family together, but the pressure of suddenly being forced to take care of both herself and her twelve year old brother has pushed Aurora to her breaking point. It's out of this desperation that Aurora first gets involved with the illegal, and quite dangerous, underground runner's league, and later allows herself to become the face of the legal, but only slightly less dangerous, WRL.

Aurora also does her best to shield Robbie from how bad things are getting for her and for them. She never lets on how broke they are, or what might happen to them if someone found out that they were living alone. She doesn't tell him about her involvement in the underground league. In many ways, Aurora has effectively become Robbie's mother, driven to sacrifice anything, suffer anything to keep him safe, to protect him from the ugliness of the world. She figures that he's already had to deal with more tragedy than any twelve year old should have to face. Aurora would sell her soul to the devil to make sure that Robbie never has to cry again. Of course, the irony of it all is that the risks that she's taking by getting involved with the underground league, and later with Wesley, serve to put her and then Robbie into even more danger.

For his part, Robbie has handled the loss of both of his parents remarkably well. He's protective of his big sister, and fancies himself the man of the house. He believes that he's the one who's taking care of her, an illusion that Aurora is happy to indulge. Robbie is obsessed with finding the man who murdered his mother. Initially, Aurora sees no point in Robbie's efforts to track down some random mugger, but as he uncovers evidence that their mother's death was something more than being in the wrong place at the wrong time, Robbie is able to persuade Aurora to join him in his investigation. Given Aurora's obsessive nature, it isn't long before she become even more fanatical than Robbie about tracking down their mother's killer. It is this obsession that Wesley exploits to entice Aurora into going after The Hack.

Later in the story, it's Robbie's kidnapping, and Aurora's reaction to it, that demonstrates just how broken she's become in her quest to avenge her mother's murder.

Robbie and the other men in Aurora's life: Robbie fancies himself the man of the house and Aurora's protector. He's naturally suspicious of any man who comes into Aurora's life (Sykes and Wesley, for example), both out of concern for his sister, but also out of fear that they're going to take her away from him. Picks, on the other hand, is someone who Robbie always gets along with. They spend a lot of time playing video games, watching movies, and reading comic books together during the times when Picks babysits for Robbie.



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Aurora and Wesley: Wesley and Aurora have a complicated relationship. It's also the most important relationship in the the story because it focuses on the two most dynamic characters in the story. In any story, there are what I'd call "real" characters and then there are plot devices. Plot devices are people like Sykes, the commish, Robbie, characters who don't really develop or change as a result of the story. Instead, they're around to push the story in the direction that we need it to go. Then you've got "real" characters like Aurora and Wesley. They aren't there to move the story forward. They ARE the story. Things may get better for them. Things may get worse for them. Either way, they are forever changed by what they experience.

Aurora is obsessive and self sacrificing, almost to the point of having a martyr complex. She is single minded, willing to do whatever it takes to achieve her goals. In her mind, the morally questionable decisions that she sometimes makes (involvement in illegal activities, essentially pimping herself out as eye candy in the underground league, etc.) aren't choices that she wants to make, they're the choices that she has to make. She divorces herself, both morally and emotionally, from her actions.

Wesley shares all of these characteristics with Aurora...but multiplied to the nth degree. He pushes the concept of doing anything to achieve your goals to it's extreme limits. Want pizza but don't want to pay for it? Just kill the pizza delivery boy and dispose of his body. For Wesley, killing someone in order to save money, stealing from someone to get their money, or working at a job and earning money are all morally equivalent actions. The right choice then becomes whichever one of them is most convenient or effective at a given moment in time.

The initial relationship between Wesley and Aurora is one of convenience, for both of them. They both want to use the other to achieve their goals, but it's Wesley calling the shots. He's a master manipulator with absolutely no regard at all for others. He leads Aurora in the direction that he wants her to go, using her to go after the Hack, all the while doing it in such a way that Aurora believes that it's her idea to steal the Hack and avenge her mother's death. Aurora might be using Wesley to achieve her goals, but it's Wesley who's setting Aurora's goals in the first place.

In my mind, Wesley is the dark version of Aurora. The same traits that make Aurora a somewhat heroic figure (willing to sacrifice, risking her own future to take care of Robbie, do whatever it takes to keep her brother safe) can be twisted, and when pushed to their absolute limits, turn someone into a villain. Wesley is what Aurora could be, and might still become. Her journey down the same path that produced the remorseless killer that Wesley has become, and his role in taking her down that path, is central to our story. How far can you go to protect the ones you love; how far can you go to in the pursuit of justice, before you stop being the hero and become the villain? Can you go too far? If so, how far is too far, and how would you know? The point is that there just isn't that big of a difference between where Aurora, our hero, is at, and where Wesley, our villain, is at. At the same time, Aurora shows us, and maybe even Wesley, what he could have been had life gone a bit differently for him. It's entirely possible that by the end of our story that Wesley and Aurora might end up "switching places" with each other.

Pick and Sykes: Pick and Sykes relationship starts out in the military as youngsters. Both were in special operations, one chose engineering to defeat the enemy (Pick), the other (Sykes) brute force. There is nothing particularly complicated about their relationship. They both operated in forward positions around the globe, watching each other's back's initially until Pick's accident graduated him to a higher rank and a more desk oriented job. Pick was injured in a skirmish in Pakistan, a piece of shrapnel damaged his spinal column and left him wheelchair bound. At times he resented his luck and his best friends ability to continue the career they both wanted but it was not to be. Pick moved to engineering and mechanics where he has a true innate talent for designing weapon systems and constructing them. Saying they are drinking buddies is an understatement, both with a penchant for hard liquor. Pick is definitely the "older brother" to Sykes. Since his injury he has been attached to many ops Sykes was involved in as oversight. On retiring from the military they both had brief stints working for private companies before joining the fledgling WRL sports league. Pick joined as a Operator, and has worked with some of the best Runners in the sport. Sykes initially chose the WRL as home to satisfy his action junkie side as a Runner but eventually quit to pursue other options, still however assisting Pick with problem Runners and training.



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Paul Benninghove : Lead Designer and Founder

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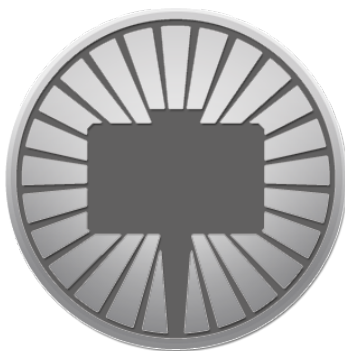
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