



PSI-PUNK

Corps and Criminals



By
Jacob Wood

Crime Pays for Some

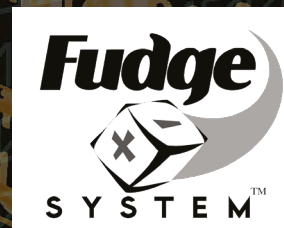
What's the difference between a megacorporation and a mafia? One of them isn't being watched by the government.

They say absolute power corrupts absolutely, but some would argue that corruption comes first. Getting to the top requires cunning, guile, and influence. *Staying* there requires wealth, prestige, and firepower. Great leaders possess all of these qualities, whether they run the corporations which control our lives or the criminal empires which keep the corps in check.

Corps and Criminals introduces you to several different types of organizations to use in your next game of Psi-punk. From street gangs who are working their way up to the brightest beacons of capitalism, you'll find plenty of organizations to align with—or against.

This book includes:

- 8 Megacorps, each with a unique corporate culture, advice for GMs on how they fit into your game and tips for players on how to include them in your background.
- 12 Cartels of 3 varieties: ghost cartels, arms cartels, and trafficking cartels. GM advice on how each of these organizations fit into your world and how to interact with them.
- 14 gangs with their own motives and methods, with sample NPCs for their leaders and goons.
- 7 Mafias from around the world, including sample NPCs for their bosses and henchmen.
- Plenty of inspiration for Game Masters and players.





Credits

Writing, Layout: Jacob Wood

Editing: ARose

Interior Art: Enmanuel Martinez

Cover Art: Melissa Gay

Graphic Design: Ruben Smith-Zempel

Special Thanks: Jon Schneier, David Lacerte,
Christopher Helton

Contest Entries

The following people contributed content via the first Psi-punk Design Contest, held in July 2013 in conjunction with the Dorkland! Blog (<http://dorkland.blogspot.com>).

RJ Stewart	Nuevo Horizonte Médico (page 16)
Andrew Y.	The Cabal (page 23)
Gwen Gray	Fantasma Biotécnica (page 25)
Merry Wilson	Espessura (page 30)
Maire Gray	Muertos Carmesí (page 33)

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About Fudge

Fudge is a roleplaying game written by Steffan O’Sullivan, with extensive input from the Usenet community of rec.games.design and other online forums. The core rules of Fudge are available free on the Internet at <http://www.fudgerpg.com> and other sites. Fudge was designed to be customized, and may be used with any gaming genre. Fudge gamemasters and game designers are encouraged to modify Fudge to suit their needs, and to share their modifications and additions with the Fudge community. The Fudge game system is copyrighted ©2000, 2005 by Grey Ghost Press, Inc., and is available for use under the Open Game License. See the fudgerpg.com website for more information.

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Megacorps

1

No entity in the world holds as much wealth and power as a mega-corporation. Even governments bend to the will and beg for the influence of these powerful organizations which run nearly every facet of our daily lives. From manufacturing and selling the clothes we wear and nano-food we eat to establishing armed militaries and peacekeeping forces, mega-corporations truly run the show.

Mega-corporations, also known as megacorps or corps, vary wildly in the types of services they offer, goods they manufacture, and people they employ. They do all hold one thing in common though: they operate worldwide. Every mega-corp has offices in multiple countries

and across multiple continents. The largest of them even have bases of operations on the moon, although that territory is still primarily an international safe-haven.

Megacorps have adopted their own corporate cultures. Employees often dress the same, behave the same, and in some cases even speak their own corporate language regardless of which country the employee is from. Though slight regional differences do exist, it's easy to tell one Macroware employee apart from a Magicorp employee no matter which continent they're on. Most employees even identify as corporate citizens first and national citizens second.

M A C R O W



1 Megacorps in Your Game

Megacorps play a prominent role in nearly every game of **Psi-punk**; after all, it's hard to ignore their power and influence. Whether used in character backgrounds or as a plot device, megacorps make a great backdrop for many stories and adventures.

These companies make great villains for epic plots. They represent everything that is wrong with the world today—their unsustainable farming practices caused the Great Famine (see the **Psi-punk** core book) and left everyone dependent on nano-food, their push for corporate governance caused the NAU to develop policies that favor the rich and powerful and weaken the lower classes, and their private militaries and police forces often do little to protect the people most in need of protection. It's easy to come up with entire campaign arcs which revolve around the shortcomings of these massive powers.

They don't always need to be painted as big bad guys, though. Most employees of mega-corporations are just normal people trying to make a living. Player characters may come from corporate backgrounds, and they may even be proud to be part of a corporation that develops a lot of helpful new technologies for the world.

Megacorps and Player Characters

It's likely that at least one of the characters in any campaign is a corporate citizen of some sort. They may be drones who constantly tow the corporate line and believe their employer is infallible, but more likely they're just a person trying to make a living. They may be corporate employees by day, street runners by night, or they may be involved with a corporation's military arm and join a team as a hired mercenary or corporate spy.

Citizens who are also street runners have to be careful not to let their secret life become known. They're somewhat like masked superheroes, only they're just as likely to shoot someone as to save them, provided the pay is right.

Like masked vigilantes from the comic books of old, street runners tend to cross the boundaries between what is legal and what is a grey area. Few corporations tolerate the illegal activities almost always embarked upon by runners, even if many of them do secretly hire these mercenaries to do their own bidding. As they say, "it's only wrong if you get caught." So don't get caught.

Being one of The Man's drones may come with perks, especially if you hold Rank within the corporation, but these come with the cost of having to live a double life. GMs may allow player characters to take a Fault such as "secret life" when the player decides to be a corporate citizen, but the character will need to take great care not to get caught doing something seedy.

Corporate Citizens and Rank

Recall from page 36 of the **Psi-punk** core book that Rank is a skill, usually linked to Status, that says a lot about a character's standing within the corporate hierarchy. Rank is required to purchase and carry what would otherwise be illegal firearms and other gear, and it also lets a character use his influence within an organization to gain some sort of benefit.

Not all corporate citizens have Rank within their corporation. The baseline, low-level employee has a Rank of Poor (-2), which is the same as an untrained skill. These characters may be employees and are entitled to wear the uniform and speak the language, but they answer to everyone and delegate to no one.

Characters with Mediocre (-1) Rank aren't much better off. They're floor supervisors in call centers or manufacturing plants, or they're some other form of low-level management. They can tell entry-level workers what to do, but they're just another cog in the system as far as the broader organization is concerned. Fair (+0) Rank is only slightly better; these characters are managers to supervisors and may oversee an entire team of employees, but they still have a lot of upper management to answer to.

Corporate citizens with Good (+1) Rank are those who've truly sold some part of their soul to the Man. They may oversee an entire call center or production department, or they may be the lead accountant for a single branch of a franchise.

Great (+2) Rank employees are regional managers. They oversee an entire geographical region and occasionally receive travel perks. They may receive bonuses for good performance in their region, but they are also subject to severe scrutiny and penalties for underperforming branches. Still, they get to call a lot of the shots.

Superb (+3) Rank is the highest that most player characters can reasonably expect to attain. They are regional Vice Presidents, ranking officials in the corporate military or highly trusted spies with high levels of clearance. They have a lot of pull with the organization, but

the company demands a lot of their time and constantly watches over their shoulder. It can be difficult to be part of a street running team without risking everything, but they may be able to join a campaign based on some other premise (such as joining a team that infiltrates a rival corp or government).

Wonderful (+4) and Phenomenal (+5) Rank characters are exceptionally rare, especially where player characters are concerned. These may be Vice Presidents or Presidents of regional or even national branches of a corporation. Simply too much of their time is in demand for the character to lead any sort of secret life, and characters with such Rank are never sent to do field ops.

Specific Megacorps

There are many corporations in the world today and it's important to know who they are. Even if you're not one of their drones, chances are the actions of these entities will have some effect on your daily life.

Die Oberbank

Helen sat at her desk, staring at the clock. It currently read 17:58:29, 30, 31... another minute and a half and her weekend would begin. She tapped idly at a few prompts on her workstation, closed out of an open account she'd been working on, and got ready to clock out.

18:00:00. *Click.* She was free for the weekend.

She grabbed her belongings and headed for the building's exit. Helen walked through the exit scanner and placed her hands in the yellow circles. A quick scan, a green light, and a cheerful beep were enough to tell the security guard she wasn't trying to make off with any of the company's equipment.

"Have a nice weekend, Stan," said Helen as she stepped out of the scanner.

Stan tipped his hat and opened the door for her. He never said anything, but a hat tip was enough for Helen to know she was still on his good side.

As she walked out the door, Helen loosened the tie around her neck. Working for the largest bank in the world had its perks, but the dress code was killer. She couldn't wait to slip into her weekend clothes: a loose shirt, comfortable pants, Kevlar vest, and a pair of pistols. Now that's comfort.

Just a few hours later she was sitting in Radcliff's Pub, one of the quieter dives on this side of Die Oberbank's district. She liked Radcliff's because the music was never turned up too loud—none of that psychopop or tech-metal those kids listened to these days—and the fluorescent lights seemed dimmer here than at most bars.

Helen ordered a nano-beer before glancing around the room at the clientele. She spotted the man she was looking for and casually headed over to him. He was plain looking, but the heavily-wired bodyguard sitting next to him was enough to tell any astute observer that he was a Dealer.

"Helen," said the man as she approached his table. "Just the woman I was hoping to see. You interested in a job?"

Die Oberbank is the world's largest financial institution. Formed from a series of Swiss and German bank mergers, DOB is known for its superior security and don't-ask-don't-tell policies. Though the bank is headquartered in Bern, it has branches in nearly every major city in the world.

During the World Financial Collapse of 2052, most major financial institutions crumbled. Much of the world was impacted by a sudden decrease in investments, offshore account closures, and property foreclosures. The demise of the world's leading firms left a hole to be filled, and Die Oberbank—one of the few stable institutions—was in the prime position to fill it.

The company promised and delivered sweeping changes to global banking practices. They successfully lobbied to end the Federal Reserve bank in the NAU, which they pointed to as the reason for the collapse. Meanwhile, Die Oberbank began the switch to a world currency, usable by any participating business or person and backed by DOB. Before long the Neumark was the de-facto standard for currency, and today nearly every government has adopted it.

Corporate Culture

As a leading financial institution, die Oberbank likes its employees to keep a high class appearance. Every employee wears a suit and tie to work, regardless of gender or regional location. They value professionalism and do not tolerate laziness or insubordination. It's a demanding, high-stress atmosphere, but those who can stand it are financially rewarded.

Not every DOB citizen is wealthy, but their average wages are higher than other corporations. This makes even entry-level jobs desirable, but fewer than five percent of all job applicants make it to the interview process. Those who are lucky enough to work for DOB are the envy of their friends.

Die Oberbank keeps a close watch on its employees to prevent theft and embezzlement. They frown upon their employees having cybernetics because Brain Banks and Cyber Eyes can make it especially easy to scan and memorize sensitive account details. Only the company's private security teams are allowed to have any sort of cybernetic enhancements. The same holds true for magic devices and psionic powers, which means nearly every DOB employee is a normal, unmodded human.

Die Oberbank in Your Game

Die Oberbank is an enticing target for many criminals, but only the most experienced cartels or street runners would consider trying to pull a job on them. Their private security teams are second-to-none, and their anti-ghost software has never been surpassed. If a team of runners were to somehow bypass their physical, cyber, *and* Astral defenses, they would certainly be able to make off with an impressive haul. Of course, they'd probably be dead within the week.

DOB employs private security to monitor all aspects of their business, but they aren't above hiring outside help. Though DOB isn't a loan shark, they do occasionally need to hire muscle to collect especially large debts. They legally hire mercenaries under the Bounty Hunter Act, which allows a corporation to seek justice for slights against them.

Though a campaign could include adventures designed to infiltrate DOB, it may be just as interesting for players to be a team of collections agents for the company. Collectors have the authority to do whatever it takes to get the job done.

Die Oberbank Characters

Though not necessarily as straight-laced as MSI employees (see page 13), DOB characters tend to follow the rules more than most. They are wealthier than other characters, but don't possess any cybernetics unless they happen to be part of a DOB security team.

Street runners aren't necessarily sanctioned by DOB, but the company does often hire bounty hunters to do their bidding. Characters may be part-time or freelance workers for Die Oberbank, in which case they may be allowed to possess magic, psionic powers, or cyberware.

Bounty hunters are never given access to the company's own data or account information—any character wishing to obtain that information must be on the company's full-time payroll, and that means being a vanilla human.

Ranking employees of DOB enjoy plenty of perks, but they're constantly under scrutiny by their employer.

Kojicorp

The chemical mixture Akamu was working on was just about right, and he knew he was getting close to a breakthrough. Just a few more drops of the red stuff and the new sonar-enhancement drug would be ready for testing.

"There," he said aloud to no one in particular. "Time to test this out."

Akamu wandered over to the cage where they kept the rats. Kojicorp was using them to test new psi-enhancing drugs, but that meant having to breed special psychic rodents. For some reason though, Akamu didn't think it was strange to have sonarkinetic rats making ultra high-frequency squeaks. In fact, he found it comforting because his own sonarkinesis powers were just strong enough to let him hear them.

The scientist was just about to administer a dose of the new drug to his favorite rat, Khanyou, when the rodent's ears perked up. It quickly scurried into the back of its cage and began shaking.

"What's wrong?" Akamu perked up his own ears and focused his power to enhance his auditory senses.

Bam. Scream. Bam. "Get down!" Tata-tat-tat.

That didn't sound good. In fact, it was downright frightening. The sounds of gunfire were drawing nearer his lab, and Akamu made a split-second decision. He opened his mouth, threw back his head, and downed the experimental concoction he was about to feed to his rats.

BAM-BAM-BAM. The sound grew exponentially louder as Akamu's sonarkinesis power jettisoned to new levels. It was painfully loud, and he had to focus all of his thoughts on controlling the ability. With effort, the explosions grew fainter but he could tell they were drawing nearer.

Ducking behind a table, Akamu held his breath and waited. He could hear voices shouting to one another as they searched nearby rooms for something. What it was, he couldn't tell. What he could tell was that they were almost to his location.

The door to his lab burst open, and Akamu heard three distinct voices shouting at one another. He concentrated his thoughts on creating a distraction in the opposite corner of the room and hoped the assailants fell for it.

"Over there!" he heard one man shout.

Bingo. Akamu poked his head up from behind the desk and watched the three men as they turned their attention toward the opposite corner of the room. They were obviously hired guns, because they weren't wearing uniforms or other identifying marks. He couldn't be sure why they were there, but he wasn't in the mood to start asking questions.

Akamu conjured a rattling noise in the corner, and sure enough one of the mercenaries took the bait. Just as he fired his weapon, Akamu caused the sound of the gunshot to amplify at least tenfold. The resulting blast was enough to shatter a nearby beaker, but more importantly it shattered the man's eardrums. He fell to the ground, red liquid seeping from his ears, screaming in agony.

The other two instinctively clapped their hands over their ears. They weren't close enough to the blast to have been severely injured by it, but it wasn't comfortable for anyone in the room. Akamu noticed the rats weren't terribly fond of it either, because they were emitting ultrasonic squeaks of terror.

One of the men turned toward the rats and pointed his gun. He squeezed the trigger and the rodents went silent, their tiny bodies turning to a fine red mist.

"NO!" Akamu shouted as he glanced over and saw what remained of Khanyou's body splattered against the floor. He gave away his own position, but he was done playing defense.

The two remaining mercenaries whirled toward Akamu, their guns instinctively pointed in his direction. It was too late for them though. Akamu had already begun channeling ultrasonic energy into a deadly blast of sonic force that shattered the bodies of the intruders along with everything else in their half of the lab.

The devastation was massive, but the threat was eliminated. And it appeared as though the new mixture worked just fine.

A technology and paranormal research company from the Asia-Pacific Union, Kojicorp formed in 2070 shortly after Magicorp opened its doors. Though it took them years before they got their hands on Magicorp's technology to reverse-engineer it, they immediately began researching ways to enhance the abilities of mentals in an effort to counter their rival company's efforts.

The company has one of the most knowledgeable Psionics and Magic divisions on the planet, and they recruit many of the world's top psychic minds. Most of their research focuses on how to enhance the potential of gifted mentals, which puts them directly at odds with Magicorp. Despite this, many of their consultants and researchers are non-mentals who possess several magic devices which they reverse-engineer and enhance—much to Magicorp's chagrin.

Because Kojicorp is headquartered in the APU, they don't consider themselves subject to many of the patents held by companies from other countries. This doesn't win them many friends, but their attitude toward patent law does afford them the ability to do what they please with the technology of others.

Unfortunately for Kojicorp, this means they must defend themselves not just in court, but from corporate espionage and sabotage. They are constantly involved in shadow wars with other corporations, which is costly in both wealth and manpower. Still, they have developed some new technologies with extreme potential and are not afraid to defend themselves against rivals in an effort to produce and market their new toys for others.

Among these technologies are psi-enhancing drugs which improve a subject's innate abilities, prototype magic devices which emulate complex combinations of powers (such as a device which combines both *photokinesis* and *sonarkinesis* into a single cloaking ability), and so forth. The company is rumored to be researching methods to create new magic devices which do not fail when used by innately psychic beings, which could have the potential to dramatically alter the state of magic and once more place mentals squarely in the lead.

Corporate Culture

Kojicorp is a research-oriented company. Most of their ranking staff are scientists, engineers, and practical philosophers. The abundance of highly skilled, incredibly intelligent workers has a dramatic impact on overall company culture; namely, competition amongst research teams is fierce and new discoveries are lavishly rewarded.

Lower-tier employees consist of standard security agents, customer service workers, and janitorial staff. Kojicorp outsources very little of this work to other companies even though they could potentially save money in doing so; they consider their trade secrets to be too sensitive to risk falling into the wrong hands (ironic, given how their company is built on the trade secrets of others).

Though the company offers ample paid vacation time, very little of it is ever actually used. Perhaps no other company breeds as many workaholics as Kojicorp, and the company does little to promote the use of these employment benefits to existing workers.

The company is unable to sell many of their magic devices within the NAU due to patent violations, but they still wind up on the black market and are circulated by means of criminal organizations such as The Cabal. Some of their other, more notable innovations are not inviolate of patents and are therefore legally distributable, such as their psi-enhancing drugs. Though technically legitimate, many powerful companies oppose their adoption due to the risks involved with granting even more power to psychics.

Kojicorp in Your Game

Kojicorp has the potential to be a powerful asset or a terrible hindrance to your players. Those who sympathize with their psi-enhancements are likely to find them a great asset while players with Magicorp backgrounds may not be as pleased by what the company is doing.

The company offers a lot of potential plot devices for your campaign. Players may be asked to steal trade secrets from other organizations and deliver them to Kojicorp, or they may be asked to defend against their espionage practices. GMs can use the company to introduce new experimental magic devices into the game or devise potent psychic enemies with powers far beyond what the players may have encountered so far.

The shadow wars alluded to by the company's introduction are perfect staging grounds for many missions; after all, street runners are at the very heart of many such conflicts. Companies don't like to use the people on their payroll to initiate attacks on rivals, so they often hire disposable street runners to do their bidding.

Kojicorp Characters

For PCs, Kojicorp is a powerful organization to be affiliated with. Ranking officials often have powerful contacts within the organization and are given access to potent new magic devices. Psychics who are employed by Kojicorp are likely to have undergone some experi-

mental test treatment to enhance their powers (possibly with a few unwelcome side-effects). Whatever the case may be, if a player comes from Kojicorp he's bound to have a powerful ally.

On the other hand, Kojicorp also inherently has its drawbacks. Players who are Kojicorp employees (or even ex-employees) probably do not get along well with Magicorp employees, and the former company is far more economically powerful. Players with Kojicorp backgrounds may also have issues understanding foreign customs, and they're also likely to be highly competitive by nature.

Macroware

For a corporate drone, Kathy Ohms was pretty street-savvy. She may be one of Macroware's low-ranking headset jockies at the local call center, but she's not an unskilled worker. In fact, she turned down an offer to join the company's Ghost Security division just so she could have more time to freelance outside of work.

Now she was regretting that decision. Being on the team may have eaten up more of her free time, but it would have given her valuable insight into the company's spectral firewalls and anti-ghost measures. That knowledge would be really handy right about now, given that she was about to launch an attack on one of the company's systems.

Kathy steeled her mind and focused. She may not have that insight, but she's no novice ghost. She concentrated on the electromagnetic field surrounding her, the one that let her merge with the 'Net. If she could just mask her body's own signal to make it look like a normal application attempting to access the server, she'd be able to bypass that firewall in no time. Bingo.

"I'm in, boys," Kathy sent a text message out to her companions who were standing guard over her. She could have brought them along for the ride, but the distraction may have made it more difficult to do her job. She was good, but not that good.

Even though the system regarded her as a native application, Kathy knew she wasn't in the clear. If one of those ghost busters happened to wander by while she was poking around, she'd have to avoid them at all costs—even if that meant abandoning the mission.

As she searched the database for the client's records, she wondered if she should reconsider the job offer.

"Found it, boys!" she messaged to her crew as she located a record marked *Belmont, Geoffery*.

“Drop it, thief!” Kathy didn’t so much hear the command as interpret the binary string being flung at her.

With little choice, she abandoned the file and severed her connection to the ‘Net before she could be tethered by security. She then made a mental note to inquire about that position on Monday.

Macroware is the result of over 50 years of technology company acquisitions and mergers. What started as two major computer hardware and software companies joining forces eventually became the world’s leading computer company, a one-stop monopoly shop for all of the world’s computer needs. Though their industry dominance is profound, Macroware keeps their prices low to ensure that the public, governments, and other corporations don’t try to form any start-ups that might challenge their position of power.

This is the company responsible for the tablet computers that nearly everyone in the world carries, in addition to the global network that links them all together. Macro-ware also writes the software for nearly every functional piece of technology from automobiles to complex security algorithms. It’s no wonder that this is the world’s wealthiest and largest company, employing more citizens worldwide than any other corporation on Earth.

Though enormously influential, Macroware sees little benefit in attempting to take any sort of governmental power. It is more prudent for a company which supplies security software and hardware to every country on earth to remain neutral; taking some political stance would certainly cause them to fall out of favor with many of the countries in which they operate.

Many rogues have attempted to infiltrate Macroware for a variety of reasons but few of them ever succeed. In most circumstances the infiltrators are after valuable information that Macroware might have on a rival company, person, or nation; indeed, the world’s largest software giant may know a little something about everyone, but that information is almost impossible to steal thanks to the company’s high-tech security.

Macroware employs a large number of highly skilled Ghosts to secure their computer systems, meaning that anyone who steps into the ‘Net and attempts to infiltrate their network is sure to meet with fierce, and sometimes deadly, competition. It is also rumored that a number of their top security experts are Wraiths who patrol the Astral Plane and watch for invaders from all angles.

Corporate Culture

Macroware employees the world over enjoy a high-tech lifestyle; not surprising considering who they work for. They enjoy small discounts on the company’s tech, from personal computing devices to high-end vehicle gadgets, and for many it’s a point of prestige to show off their new toys before everyone else can get them.

Nearly every citizen, from entry-level workers to top executives, is decked out in streetware and the company even hosts an annual “Mod Your Bod” contest to showcase the most unusual or extreme chromejobs. Last year’s winner was an accountant who programmed her case lights to flash green every time her department earned some amount of revenue; it was a simple mod, but the judges loved watching their company make money.

Macroware employees are encouraged to work closely together to improve products across all lines. The result is a culture of openness, and they pride themselves in being one of the most widely accepting corporations. That’s not to say there isn’t occasional in-fighting and rivalry, but as big business is concerned Macroware is perhaps the friendliest place to work.

Macroware in Your Game

As one of the only computer manufacturers in the world, Macroware is sure to touch the lives of every character. It would be rare to find anyone not living with the Amazonia Luddites who didn’t own at least a few Macroware devices.

The company is dominant in the tech industry, but they aren’t completely ruthless—at least not outwardly. They keep their prices low to keep people complacent; nobody likes a monopoly which uses its power to suck people dry, but a monopoly which seems to act fairly and in the best interest of the people is more tolerable.

Behind the scenes, Macroware likes to pull the strings. They supply tech to every country in the world, but that means they can cut off anyone who doesn’t play by their rules. It’s a quiet game of dominance, but one that doesn’t go wholly unnoticed. Many other corporations and nations hire street runners to infiltrate Macroware and uncover secrets that may be used to put an end to their power.

Macroware Characters

Characters with backgrounds as Macroware employees are probably technology-minded individuals. They may be hackers, psi-jackers, or even ghosts. Characters with a Rank of Good or better enjoy access to some of the company's unique hardware and software, but the company's biggest secrets and most tightly-secured systems are still off limits to them.

Not every Macroware employee is a tech-head, though. The company still needs accountants, customer service reps, marketers, security guards, and so forth. While even these employees enjoy some amount of technical knowledge, it isn't necessarily their focus.

Magicorp

Salamander's team was getting close. In another minute or two, they'd be inside Magicorp's Factory 21, the place where they manufacture about half of their *antipsi* tech. If they can shut down operations, even for a short while, it would mean a huge blow to the organization.

"Phreak, you still with me?" asked Salamander through their Brainwave.

"Still here, Sal. I'm working on bringing down the building's security cameras, but they're guarded by *antipsi*. Naturally," Phreak responded.

Phreak was one of the best psi-jackers Sal knew. He hadn't expected Factory 21's cyber security to pose such a challenge, even though he knew their defenses were sure to be tough.

"What about you, Slade?" Sal didn't like that Slade had been silent for several minutes, but he knew the thief worked best when he wasn't distracted by conversation.

"Just waiting for those cameras to go down so I can hack this lock," Slade responded. "What's taking so long, Phreak?"

"Like I said, it's *antipsi*. And something else, I think. Something I've never seen before. But I think I've got it... there! Now you should be free to do your part."

Slade quietly crept up toward the factory's side door and started running diagnostics on the lock when an unfamiliar voice yelled at him to stop.

"Not today, scum!" was the last thing Sal heard coming through Slade's communicator before shots rang out in the night.

Magicorp is one of the world's largest and most prominent corporations. Founded in 2069 by former members of the Anti-Psi League, Magicorp's mission is to put psi-like technology into the hands of every normal citizen, thus evening the playing field between normals and mentals. This technology, which they have dubbed "magic", emulates psionic abilities in nearly every way but doesn't always come cheap.

Demand for Magicorp's technology is on the rise, and nearly every normal citizen with a moderate income has at least some piece of magic equipment in their home. Most of the magic is reserved for higher-paying clients though, such as wealthy citizens, governments, and even other corporations.

Magicorp also uses its psi-like equipment to dabble in healthcare (providing equipment to nearly every hospital on the globe) and security (providing magic security systems to consumers, governments, and other corporations). They have also begun to experiment in the fields of bio-tech, cybernetics, and robotics, attempting to find new ways to embed magic directly within the human body and to employ it in autonomous robots.

Magicorp holds the patents for literally every piece of magic equipment on the planet. Though the vast majority of their tech comes from their own research, other companies have tried to get on board, only to either be promptly bought out or curiously shut down within months of their initial launch. The patents from these companies are either folded into Magicorp's own or rendered obsolete when the company that applies for them suddenly shuts its doors.

The company's relatively brief history has been tumultuous. It first met stiff opposition from the NAU government when the mentals in office felt threatened by the rise of psi-like technology that sought to challenge their power. In the end, though, the public's demand for a free and fair job market and economy defeated every attempt the government made at shutting the company down, and to this day it stands as a testament to the power that the non-mental majority still has in this world.

There have been many attempts by rogue psychics to infiltrate the corporation, either to undermine its power or attempt to strike a blow from within. These sorts of attacks continue to this day, but so far the company's high level of security has put down every one of them, earning it a reputation as a force to be reckoned with.

Though headquartered within the NAU, Magicorp operates globally and funds its own private military. Few nations have the capacity to stand up to it, and those which try often swiftly back down. Conspiracy theorists rumor

that Magicorp is poised to try to overthrow the NAU – or at least part of it – and create its own corporate nation, which would be the first of its kind. Though the company vehemently denies these accusations publically, they may not be far from the truth – indeed, the company already owns several cities within the North American Union, including the Bay Area Arcology where it makes its home.

Corporate Culture

Having been founded by members of the Anti-Psi League, it's no wonder that Magicorp doesn't employ mentals. Their culture encourages mistrust and mistreatment of people with innate mental powers, and the company fosters an "anything you can do, I can do better" mentality. It's worked well for them so far.

Every Magicorp employee is trained in the use of the company's magic devices. Their use in everyday life is encouraged, in an effort by the company to showcase just how useful their devices are to everyday citizens. To that end, every employee is also a marketer of Magicorp tech, whether they're truly aware of that fact or not.

It is common for Magicorp employees to get into arguments and fights with mentals. Though the company doesn't outwardly condone such behavior, they often employ their top-notch legal team to go to bat for employees who are accused of hate crimes against psifreaks, even if the employee in question is just a low-level worker.

Not every Magicorp employee is rude and ill-mannered, but the company's culture certainly rewards such behavior. Top executives are some of the most outwardly vocal people around.

Magicorp in Your Game

As one of the largest and richest companies in the world, Magicorp has the potential to be a major player in your game. They are constantly developing new experimental technologies, and sometimes these experiments go horribly wrong. The company doesn't like to admit guilt, so they often employ disposable street runners to clean up their messes.

Nearly every magic device in the world was, at some point, designed and manufactured by Magicorp. That means characters will constantly face Magicorp's technologies as threats; they may encounter antipsi technology, magical locks, and other defensive devices, or they may find themselves staring down the business end of a pyro gun. Even if the characters don't interact with Magicorp directly, their presence will still certainly be felt.

Many smaller companies often employ street runners to infiltrate Magicorp for one reason or another, as do governments and other organizations seeking the secrets to their power. The company makes a highly challenging threat to contend with, but the rewards for taking on Magicorp and coming out alive are sure to be great.

Magicorp Characters

Employees of Magicorp likely own several magic devices. Because the company refuses to employ anyone with innate psychic powers (it's not a prejudice against them, it's because magic equipment fails when used by mentals – honest!), such characters may not possess psionic powers of their own.

Ranking employees of Magicorp have access to devices with PR3 and higher Power Ratings and may be allowed to purchase advanced psi-like weapons and armor.

Though Magicorp employees are not prohibited from interacting with mentals, their corporate culture generally discourages it. This could cause tension between characters employed by Magicorp and characters who possess innate psychic gifts. It could be fun to encourage this sort of rivalry amongst multiple player characters, but remember such interactions are not always violent.

MarkeTech

"1... 2..." a fuzzy, disembodied voice began counting.

Carlos looked up at Ryudo through blurry eyes. His entire body felt like it'd been crushed by a truck, and it had all happened in an instant.

He wasn't quite sure what hit him. Carlos had been certain he would beat Ryudo in today's match for cyber-weight division champion. How could he, from Sports and Rec, lose to someone from Marketing?

"3... 4..." the voice continued.

Carlos willed his new arms to move. They were only a week old, and he clocked a punch with them at 45 MPH. Somehow that hadn't been fast enough today.

It must have been that kick to the head. Ryudo's legs were powerful, probably made from titanium. Even with his carbon headgear, Carlos went down like a sack of potatoes.

"5... 6..." the voice continued to count, this time it sounded just a little more clear.

Once more Carlos willed his limbs to move. He slowly managed to roll over, then push himself into an almost-kneeling position.

“7... 8...”

With the last of his willpower, Carlos forced himself to his feet. A bell sounded in the back of his mind. He barely had time to get his bearings when the bell rung again.

From nowhere, Ryudo launched himself at his opponent. Carlos only had time for one final thought before completely losing consciousness:

“I guess Marketing is going to the Olympics this year.”

The formation of MarkeTech was inevitable. For years, media companies merged, acquired, took over, and vertically integrated with one another to form megacorporations that controlled nearly all of the world’s news, information, and entertainment. There were but a scant few major players at the top, each of which owned hundreds of brands that operated under their own name but whose bottom lines were directly associated with that of the parent company.

Eventually, with competition fierce and corporate acquisitions deregulated, only two such companies remained. Each controlled an overwhelming stake in the information, entertainment, and marketing sectors. A fierce corporate battle for dominance of the industry ensued and MarkeTech, with its cut-throat business practices, crack shot legal team, and bottomless coffers won the war and emerged as the sole proprietor of the world’s multimedia operations.

Despite its monopoly, MarkeTech has a hierarchy and corporate culture that encourages competition and innovation. Each major sector in which the company operates – games, marketing, movies, music, news, publishing, and sports – functions independent from one another. These segments compete for consumer attention and, though they all add to the bottom line of MarkeTech as a whole, compete fiercely for the dollars that are spent on their own products and services.

Competition between its divisions is so fierce that each arm of the company employs corporate espionage tactics against one another. Street runners have been known to find employment handed down from one of MarkeTech’s officers, even if that work isn’t officially sanctioned or recognized by the company as a whole.

Corporate Culture

MarkeTech employs some of the most ambitious, goal-oriented, and competitive people in the world. Their environment can be highly stressful, but good work is handsomely rewarded with monetary bonuses, extra vacation time, and other such perks.

Because each division of MarkeTech operates separately, the company has several different sub-cultures. Uniformed employees wear outfits with their division’s logo large and easily recognizable, with the MarkeTech logo slightly smaller and less pronounced. Two employees of MarkeTech who each come from a different division are as likely to snub one another as they are to shake hands.

Each year, the company hosts a major sporting event to both rally everyone together (a reminder they do, in fact, work for the same company) and bolster competitive behavior. The winning team is selected to represent the company at the Olympics, making the top spot highly coveted.

MarkeTech in Your Game

As the world’s dominant media conglomerate, signs of MarkeTech’s existence are everywhere. Characters are inundated with advertising messages, but more importantly they may be affected by the company’s constant back-stabbing.

Many street runners are approached by some division of MarkeTech to infiltrate another and come back with trade secrets. This may create plenty of black market jobs for runners, and it may serve as an “in” for getting MarkeTech PCs into your campaign.

MarkeTech isn’t above invasive advertising. They often work with cyberware manufacturers to embed ads into their products; citizens might get pop-ups in their cybervision HUDs when walking past a store, or they may hear the occasional ad through their in-ear radios. It’s the price some pay for subsidized gear. Game Masters may come up with creative ways to make this a problem or plot device for their players.

MarkeTech Characters

Employees of MarkeTech come from all walks of life and may be from any one of their half-dozen or so different operating units. MarkeTech’s corporate culture encourages fierce competition, and player characters with backgrounds as employees of this corporation are likely to be highly competitive individuals.

As a marketing company, MarkeTech's higher-ranking officials are often expert sales-people. That means they are skilled in social interaction, manipulation, math, and economics. The company offers financial bonuses as incentives for jobs well done and may assign two employees to the same task to compete for bonuses.

Because of the company's culture of competition, characters may indeed be spies for one of MarkeTech's operating arms. They may be asked to infiltrate another division within the company even as they are likely to be asked to infiltrate another corporation.

MarkeTech employees may receive Wealth bonuses equal to their Rank for performing a job sanctioned by the company, but they don't receive any of the company's resources as aids before their mission begins. They don't have early access to any flashy new equipment, but if they can do their job then they're handsomely rewarded.

Medical Services International

"He's losing blood fast!" shouted a young medical technician to the other. "Get him on the table!"

"Multiple gunshot wounds. A stab wound. Burn wounds. Get me the stem kit!" shouted another tech with peppered hair.

"Scan his I.D." a woman's cool, collected voice somehow projected over the din of the emergency room.

"What? But this guy's toast if we don't operate now!" argued the younger technician.

"Scan. His. I.D." repeated the woman. "Or it's your job."

Sighing, the technician relented. "Richard, grab the scanner."

The pepper-haired technician grabbed a scanning unit from a nearby collection of gadgets and handed it to his younger colleague. "Here you go, Tom."

Tom slid his thumb over the fingerprint scanner on the device to unlock it, then pointed it at the man on the operating table.

Bzzt. Either it didn't find an I.D. or the device couldn't read it through all the blood.

"Try again," remarked Richard. "Here, it's usually behind the left ear." He tilted the man's head to assist and nearly dropped it at the sight of yet another injury. The man's hair was burnt and his skin was blackened.

Bzzt.

"This one's a criminal," stated the woman matter-of-factly. "Take him to the morgue."

"What? But he's not even dead yet, we can still save him!" protested Tom.

"We don't save criminals," repeated the woman, her voice as cold as a corpse. She picked up her tablet and began filing the necessary records.

"But..!" Tom huffed in frustration. "Whatever happened to the Hippocratic Oath?"

The woman slammed her palm on a counter and shot Tom a sharp glare. "Hippocrates and his oath are dead." Going back to her tablet, she added a dismissive waive, "And so is this man."

When a street runner needs to be patched up after a job, the last place he wants to wind up is at a hospital operated by MSI. Known for their strict adherence to the law, MSI runs extensive background checks on every individual before treating them for illness or injury.

The law-abiding nature of MSI is due to their crack shot legal team, the same infamous group of lawyers that found the loopholes required to put MSI into the Governor's chair in over 20 states at once. This sweeping victory – for both the company and megacorporations in general, lead to the eventual secession of what are now known as the Separatist States of America.

MSI is the leading, though not the only, legitimate reseller of cybernetics in the world. Their hospitals are equipped to handle everything from simple ocular augmentation surgeries to full-body cybernetic replacements in addition to the typical medical services one might expect.

MSI operates a franchise of cyberware installment clinics known as Chip Stop. These clinics are usually found in strip malls and promise to have customers in and out in an hour "...or the next one's half-off!" Chip Stop clinics specialize in minor implants and are not equipped to handle full limb or skeletal replacements, but they are clean and offer legitimate hardware at a fair price.

As a medical institution, MSI was built to help improve the lives of others. Like any other hospital, their focus was on treating the sick and injured, and like any medical institution they discovered there is a lucrative business model in treating symptoms rather than causes. Much of their research into cyberware was founded on this premise—replace the parts of a person's body that break down over time, and you won't need to find a cure for aging.

MSI treats its patients like clients, and they like to create repeat customers. Their Chip Stop cyberware is sufficient for most regular people, but it does need to be serviced regularly and isn't built to last. Their disregard for the general well-being of others leads many people to seek out street docs for their medical needs, but most people find that the clean and sterile rooms at MSI hospitals are preferable to the questionable back alley offices of unsanctioned surgeons.

Corporate Culture

MSI runs an extensive background check on every patient that enters one of their hospitals—now imagine how they treat their employees. Corporate citizens of MSI are some of the most straight-laced, law-abiding citizens you'll ever meet. Step out of line, and your job is forfeit.

MSI doesn't openly encourage its employees to tattle on each other, but they do reward people for it. This leads to people constantly looking over their shoulders, or constantly looking over the shoulders of others. On the positive side, most employees really do follow the rules and try to keep their noses clean.

Because MSI is a leader in cyberware development and manufacturing, their employees often sport the most bleeding edge wares. Their mid-to-high grade implants don't come with the drawbacks of being supplemented by MarkeTech advertisements and they need less maintenance than the average Chip Stop implant.

MSI in Your Game

As the leader in both cyberware and medical technology, MSI is hard to overlook in any campaign. If the players are street runners they may not have the benefit of being taken to an MSI hospital for treatment, lest their identities and shady practices be discovered, so they may have to settle with visiting a grungy street doc instead.

Though MSI prides itself in being a law-abiding corporation, they're often the ones who make the laws. MSI's lobbying budget is larger than the gross domestic product of some small nations, so it's no surprise that most new laws favor their business practices.

Not surprisingly, MSI's corporate police division is one of the most well-funded police forces in the world. Their mission is to serve and protect the company's best interests and to uphold the laws which, by and large, MSI was responsible for passing in the first place.

In addition to their top-notch police force, MSI employs an inordinately large number of bounty hunters. Because street running is illegal, MSI is one of the few

corporations that doesn't employ runners. They do, however, have a completely legal team of private mercenaries who may perform similar jobs, provided they file the appropriate paperwork and acquire the appropriate search warrants or bounty hunter licenses, of course.

MSI Characters

MSI employees have access to state-of-the-art cyberware not available through the local Chip Stop. Characters with Rank Fair (+0) or better within the company may be allowed to receive special discounts on their implants. For each Rank of Fair or above, subtract 2 from the Wealth Value of any cyberware purchased using Wealth. Check with your GM before applying this discount; it may come with its own costs.

It may be tempting to simply choose MSI as your employer and pick a level of Rank for your character, but consider the drawbacks carefully. Ranking members of MSI are highly scrutinized, so it may be difficult to lead a secret life. MSI doesn't give corporate discounts to contracted bounty hunters, so characters must be employed by the company to receive the benefit.

It can be difficult to justify playing a character who is an employee of MSI if the campaign focuses on street running. Such a practice is not only highly frowned upon by the company, but those who are caught are both fired and prosecuted as criminals. Player characters may be former MSI citizens, in which case they likely acquired superior cyberware and medical tools before leaving the job.

An entire campaign could be built around characters being a team of MSI mercenaries, in which case the characters may have access to state-of-the-art medical treatment and cybernetics. Since MSI is accepting of both mentals and non-mentals, the team could easily be comprised of all types of characters.

NFC Global

Abasi held his breath and forced every muscle in his body to stop moving. If he was caught with a pack full of food, he'd be in serious trouble. His only hope now was to remain as still as possible and hope the guard didn't notice him.

Several long moments passed before he felt comfortable letting out his breath. The guard wandered past him and didn't seem to spot him. Whether it was skill or luck, he couldn't tell. What he did know is that he needed to make a break for it. Now.

As quickly and quietly as he could manage, Abasi made his way for the exit. He kept a close eye on the roving security drones and made sure not to cross their paths.

Abasi heard his heart pounding in his head. He was so close now, maybe if he just made a run for it he could escape detection. No, that would be the move of a foolhardy man. He'd stay calm and move with precision, not indecision.

He reached the outer door and pressed his ear against it, listening for sounds of movement beyond. He could easily see his current surroundings, but had no idea what was on the other side. He didn't have x-ray vision like some of the great thieves he'd heard of before. Heck, he wasn't a great thief. He was just trying to make a few quick bucks so he could send his kid to college. Would he risk something like this again? Probably not. It's too tense.

Convinced nothing else was on the other side of the door, Abasi slowly turned the handle and peeked outside. It was dark and eerily quiet. He slipped through the door, took care to close it behind him, and hurriedly made his way to the edge of the greenhouse property. He wouldn't feel safe until he'd fenced this food, but for now it appeared he was home free.

NFC Global controls the world's food supply in the same manner that Macroware controls the world's technology; almost no one can compare to their influence in the market, and those who try are immediately either bought up or put down.

Short for Nano-Food Corporation, NFC Global was formed from a research facility which developed the first nano-food production units during the Great Famine. They have jealously safeguarded the patents to this tech ever since and now hold the world's nutritional needs in their hands.

Though most consider it dangerous to allow a single company to control the world's food sources – after all, that's what led to the Great Famine in the first place – few people have the resources to challenge their dominance in the industry.

Small farms and co-ops still exist, but only in remote regions of the world that serve a limited number of people and they never export their goods. This is, in part, because they can only produce enough food for those who thrive off of them, but also because NFC applies pressure against nations which attempt to import food.

Other small farms exist within the confines of highly secure, fiercely-guarded corporate compounds, but the product of this food is reserved solely for rich corporate citizens. These farms are most commonly owned by NFC Global and are simply licensed to the corporations for business use.

The mere existence of these farms has created a new type of criminal: the food smuggler. With natural food so rare and expensive, it's no wonder that many have turned to the lucrative business of stealing real food and delivering it to the highest bidder (after taking a cut of the crop for themselves, of course).

Governments cave to NFC's demands for fear of having their food supplies terminated overnight, thus leaving millions – if not billions – of their citizens to starve. Some say that NFC is the worst of all evils, while others praise them for bringing an end to the Great Famine and allowing the population of the planet to thrive.

Corporate Culture

NFC Global's culture is a strange mix. The company outwardly tries to put on its best show for the public to let people know that they care. Most of the company's employees are led to truly believe this, and they are quick to refute any accusations to the contrary.

Behind closed doors, top executives at NFC Global aren't quite as nice. They relish the power they have over the world, and while they know the secrets to growing actual food crops they've found that their continued production of nano-food improves their bottom line (and does, to their credit, allow impoverished peoples to eat). NFC executives are content to allow only the wealthy to eat real food; let the rest of the masses eat nano-cake.

The company gives little back to its own corporate citizens. Most of them believe what the company stands for is wholesome and good. They're inundated with company propaganda that makes them feel like they're working for the betterment of mankind, and that's worth more than any monetary bonus or extra vacation time.

NFC Global in Your Game

NFC Global has a huge reach and much of the world is dependent upon what they offer, so it is very likely you can find some use for them in your campaign. Players may be hired to stop a saboteur from crippling the company (and the world's food supply) or they may be food smugglers attempting to break into one of NFC's greenhouses and make off with a lucrative haul.

The company isn't truly as altruistic as they make themselves out to be, so a campaign could be built around unveiling the secrets behind the company's operations. Perhaps a rival corporation is trying to gain some inside information to launch a competing startup, or perhaps a government has secretly hired a team of street runners to deliver the company a message they won't forget.

Regardless of the case, any action brought against NFC Global is met with stiff resistance. For starters, the company's basic employees are, for the most part, genuinely good-hearted people and the public won't approve of an assault against NFC without some sort of scandal being brought to light. Perhaps the players are simply hired to gather the intel needed to launch such a smear campaign.

NFC Global Characters

Players who are employees of NFC Global are likely to come from one of two camps: the good-hearted individual naïve to the company's wrongdoings, or the two-faced, greedy jerk who just wants to improve his own bottom line. His attitude may in fact be a factor of his Rank.

Characters with Good (+1) Rank or lower aren't important enough to the company to know its real secrets and are subjected to loads of company propaganda. Characters with Great (+2) or higher Rank probably know a bit more about the company's goals and inner workings and, if they didn't immediately quit the company in disgust, are probably comfortable with what they know.

There is a third, less common camp: the food smuggling insider. Though most food smugglers are thieves not associated with the company, a few lower-tier NFC employees have learned they can make some part-time income by using their connections to participate in the smuggling trade.

Nuevo Horizonte Médico

(New Horizons Medical)

"Where did you get that pineal gland?" asked Cesar as he made an incision in his patient.

"Does it matter? Just swap them out." Replied Lola as she handed Cesar the tiny cone-shaped piece of brain matter.

"I just wanted to make sure it didn't come from a monkey or something, you know?" If Cesar did have any compunctions about where the brain matter came from, he certainly wasn't letting them get in the way of the operation.

"Not a monkey. A telepathic baboon," said Lola matter-of-factly.

"A *what?*" Cesar's hand slipped and his scalpel made a tiny cut on the patient's frontal lobe. "Uh-oh."

"Good job, you just gave that guy a personality disorder to go with his new telepathic powers."

"I've created a monster!" Cesar said in his best mad scientist voice. He couldn't help but chuckle at the idea.

"Quit fooling around and just finish this guy up. The boss needs him to be functional in a week," Lola snapped.

Cesar continued his work. "Fine, I'm on it."

After a few minutes, Cesar had finished the pineal transplant. He grabbed a psychometabolism device and used it to close up the man's head, removing any signs of cuts or scarring. In a few days he'd be awake and better than new. Well, almost better.

A week later, a man with newly violent tendencies and the power to read other peoples' minds left the NHM building on a mission to extract top secret intel from MSI employees.

"Affordable medical care for everyday people."

Nuevo Horizonte Médico provides medical services primarily in the South and Central America markets and the Caribbean Nations, though they also have contracts in some cities in the regions of Southern California, Florida, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. The company operates street-level medical facilities in most of the markets they serve. They operate a few major hospitals as well, but they have found it much more lucrative to target lower end medical facilities instead of larger and more costly to maintain markets.

To say many find them shady would be an understatement, but because they've cornered the market in areas for low cost health care for the common person they are seen as a necessary evil. They only have about 10 major metropolitan hospitals to their name but operate hundreds of smaller clinics.

A few fellow megacorps have allowed Nuevo Horizonte Médico to open up clinics and ambulatory care facilities even in their own buildings and arcologies due to their specialties. Of course, the smarter partnerships keep them on a tight leash when in such an arrangement.

To many they fly under the radar, seeming like nothing but a ‘cheap alternative competitor’ to Medical Services International. However, they generate a great deal of revenue from a very large, variable test bed for new technologies. They pay handsomely to volunteers who test anything that needs testing (regardless of government standards). Some of the company’s subsidiaries design and patent new methods of gene therapy, genetic engineering, pharmaceuticals, transplant methods and technology.

They are known for being aggressive against competitors in their home regions. It has not been proven, but they are said to use shadow operations to facilitate corporate takeovers and espionage, and they’re rumored to even support ‘wetwork’ jobs against executives of rivals that refuse their influence.

Corporate Culture

As a culture, NHM employees seem to be very aloof and overbearing. It’s safe to assume that any normal worker fears for their family and job if they are in the know on anything that goes on behind the scenes. They pay their people well, and the medical benefits are some of the best outside of MSI’s, but some former employees have gone on record as saying that they fear their families and friends would end up in some test laboratory as a new guinea pig for a genetic therapy—or worse.

The normal visage though is that of doctors and medical clinic technicians who are happy, paid well, and not at the whim of MSI’s over-watch culture. They openly recruit at universities in impoverished countries, mostly at schools that have medical training facilities they helped fund and support. On the other side are research personnel who are often hidden from public eyes. Word has it, it’s this side of the coin that is paid the best and kept under the most control as well.

NHM in Your Game

It’s mostly rumor, but some have suggested that Nuevo Horizonte Médico are linked to several cartels in the countries in which they operate, many of them specializing in finding lab test subjects for use in new procedures and products. Or worse, cartels that would find them body parts for some of their transplants they’ve been working on.

Some have speculated that they have a very secret wing that is working on how to transplant the parts of the human brain responsible for psionic powers. While some corporations have worked on how to mimic psion-

ics with cybernetic enhancements, some out there see this as being 2nd rate to having the powers yourself.

NHM may be a street-level medical facility for your team—one that doesn’t ask questions about identity, but one that may also stitch you up and let you walk away with a few of your spare parts missing. GMs may use NHM as a corporation bent on creating new psychic freaks or as a company who needs to be taught not to take the players’ kidneys during a routine patch job.

NHM characters

Characters who are NHM employees may be common staff at one of the company’s hundreds of street clinics, a doctor with more than a little blood on his hands, or a researcher in charge of finding “new recruits” for medical testing. The higher the character’s Rank in the organization, the more likely they are to be both well-paid and highly scrutinized.

Alternatively, characters may be former test subjects of NHM and possess any manner of strange abilities. They may have psionic powers that don’t seem to function properly or function differently than expected, cybernetic implants with strange technologies built in, or even a few odd biotech implants that dramatically alter their metabolism. If you want to play a character with bizarre superhuman abilities, consider a background with NHM.

World History: Sarbanes-Oxly

After immense pressure from corporations such as Macroware, MarkeTech, and the now-defunct Food Corp., the North American Union repealed the Sarbanes-Oxley Act in 2034. The law was originally designed as a way to improve financial reporting, separate auditors from consultants, and hold chief officers accountable for the corporations they run.

Several corporations lobbied to end the SOX Act due to the “unfair burden” they say it caused them; the cost to comply with the law was simply too high.

Several years after the law was repealed, a series of financial scandals wracked the corporate sector.

Cartels

Strictly speaking a cartel is not a criminal organization. The term refers to any formal agreement between competitors to control a market in such a way as to benefit all of the members. These agreements usually include such activities as price fixing, bid rigging, and rigorously controlling the supply of goods in the market.

Any cartel that is not government sanctioned is illegal, as are the practices they employ to control a given market. The fundamentally secretive nature of cartels, coupled with the greed of members who seek to cheat on the agreement and improve matters for themselves, makes them highly unstable and prone to in-fighting.

In common use, the term refers to any number of alliances that controls one specific area of crime. Drug cartels, ghost cartels, arms cartels, and human trafficking cartels are some of the most prominent criminal organizations in public awareness, and for good reason. These organizations control much of the world's illicit activities and much of what appears on the news can be attributed to one of these groups.

In this chapter we'll discuss cartels that may have a big impact on your game. Cartels are responsible for supporting gang activity, resisting corporations, toppling governments, and employing street runners to handle some of their heavy lifting.



Ghost Cartels

Information is power, and there is no better place to gather information than on the ‘Net. With literally every piece of technology connected in some way, having the ability to enter the ‘Net and snoop around where most people can’t go is a significant boon. Ghost cartels are comprised of people who wish to exploit that ability.

As highly skilled computer hackers, ghosts are capable of projecting their consciousness into the ‘Net and becoming one with the wireless spectrum. They are skilled at pinpointing the location of specific computers, subverting security programs, and making off with loads of information they aren’t supposed to have—information wealthy people and corporations will pay handsomely to get their hands on.

Not everyone with the power to join with the ‘Net is a member of one of these criminal organizations. It takes a lot of determination and criminal intent to steal data for a living, and that means the people who do join ghost cartels are both highly skilled and morally grey.

There are only a handful of major ghost cartels, but they are some of the most powerful criminal organizations on the planet. It’s no wonder businesses, governments, mega-corporations, and paranoid individuals spend so much time and money protecting their systems from infiltration by one of these organizations. Everyone has something to hide, and these folks make it tough to keep secrets.

Though ghost cartels are considered criminal organizations, few governments and corporations are above hiring them to spy on their enemies. The temptation to use these cartels for profit is simply too strong for many to ignore. The fact that they can easily be disavowed if anything goes wrong makes the arrangement that much more appealing.

Ghost Cartels in Your Game

Ghost cartels serve as excellent villains and can plague player characters with constant data interruptions, or they can be used to spy on players and report back to their enemies. Conversely, ghost cartels may hire characters with specific skill sets to do jobs for them, and they may even be willing to hire the rest of a team to play bodyguard.

Many governments, corporations, gangs, businesses, and important people would prefer not to have their own secrets sold to the highest bidder, and they may be willing to hire a team of runners to stop a cartel from making their lives miserable. It isn’t easy to go up against an organization built on the ability to go places unnoticed or take control of the tech in your body, though. Ghost cartels make difficult challenges for even the most experienced teams.

When employing a ghost cartel as a major player in one of your campaigns, consider a few of the following points:

As an enemy, ghost cartels make high-level threats; they’re not easily defeated by new characters. They make excellent enemies after your players have earned some BP and acquired some new skills, especially skills relating to computer hacking.

As an employer, ghost cartels prefer to hire experienced characters. The types of organizations they infiltrate and the data they steal are well-protected.

Just because ghost cartels are recommended for experienced characters doesn’t mean you can’t begin introducing them early. New characters may be given a job by a friend of the cartel, an individual member of the cartel, etc. Characters may also find themselves playing patsy in a bigger scheme that was devised by the cartel, only to slowly uncover the truth behind what is happening to them.

Ghost Cartels and Player Characters

Ghost cartels tend to employ highly-capable hackers, psi-jackers, and ghosts to do their dirty work. As a player character, joining a ghost cartel may be one of your lofty goals for when you’ve reached a certain level of power and prestige in your game.

You don’t need to wait to be a Wonderful hacker to get started, though. Even characters using the suggested number of starting Build Points can include these organizations in their backgrounds. You may have performed a low-paying job for LOD (see page 20) or begun talking with a member of Neurotech (see page 20) about how to join.

On the other hand, you may be on the bad side of a cartel's wrath. One great character Fault would be "Caught hacking a GhostSec-protected system." Your character might be on the run and in need of a place to lay low; perhaps that's even how you got caught up with your current team.

If you do manage to get on the good side of a ghost cartel, you've earned yourself a powerful ally (and probably several more powerful enemies). Ghost cartels are known for having access to the best computer equipment and hacking-related magic devices. They're no slouches when it comes to cyberware either and may be able to get you a special deal on the cost of those new cyber eyes you've, well, had your eye on.

Remember to exercise caution when dealing with a ghost cartel. Chances are they won't have any problems uncovering your identity, your criminal history, and other character flaws. They're not above exploiting them to serve their own purposes, and you can bet on them using that information against you if you ever cross them. But hey, that's the price for ultimate power, right?

Specific Ghost Cartels

There are only a handful of major ghost cartels in the world. Though there have been many upstarts throughout the years, most smaller cartels are either scooped up by larger ones or swiftly eliminated, depending on how large a threat the others view them. Since ghost cartels come and go, we'll only focus on those which have come and stayed.

GhostSec

GhostSec poses as a ghost security firm. They hold legitimate security contracts with many of the world's smaller corporations and governments, primarily those without the wealth necessary to fund their own private security teams.

Unfortunately for those who subscribe to their services, GhostSec doesn't use their power for good. They build backdoors into corporate systems and siphon important data from the very networks they are hired to protect.

Fortunately for these companies, they are great at protecting networks from other outside influences. There aren't many successful attempts by other ghost cartels to infiltrate these systems, which means the data they protect is gathered and sold by only one entity.

As a rule, GhostSec only employs older, more experienced hackers and ghosts. They don't like to take risks on young adults with hotshot attitudes. Indeed, any member

of the organization who displays the first sign of being a maverick is likely to have his membership in the organization terminated with extreme prejudice.

It is no wonder that the cartel doesn't hire mercenary hackers. They aren't quick to let anyone into their circle and there is only one way to exit; once you're a member of GhostSec, you're in for life... however long or short that may be.

Legion of Death Legion of Death is an old cartel comprised of several traditionally-trained hackers and new-school ghosts. Their name is modeled after one of the original hacking groups from the late 1900s, the time the first computer hackers were born. The name is more than just a tribute to the past though. It symbolizes the group's culture in many ways. They are comprised of history buffs, analog hackers, and modern-era ghosts, and they aren't afraid to take down opponents who cross them.

Like other ghost cartels, LOD has no centralized location. Most of the time they don't even know the real names of other members, preferring to communicate with each other by their handles, or pseudonyms. Names such as Jesterboy, Smartbomb, and Tokyo [G]rift are common among the group's members.

When dealing with the outside world, LOD prefers to communicate solely via masked com devices. They hire help, purchase information, and disseminate data in a completely secretive manner. Their decentralized nature makes it difficult to raid or capture more than a single individual at any given time, and when news of such an occurrence spreads the rest of the group is quick to go into hiding until things blow over.

LOD isn't necessarily comprised of full-time ghosts. Many of the groups members have innocuous day jobs. They may be teachers, entertainers, service workers, or even corporate citizens with a need for a little bit of excitement in their otherwise dull lives.

Neurotech

Neurotech is a hive mind. Every member of the organization is outfitted with a Brainwave Communicator, a cybernetic implant which allows them to communicate with one another over vast distances with a mere thought. With every member connected to every other member at all times, it is possible for the cartel to keep constant tabs on what is happening within the organization.

It takes several weeks of rigorous mental conditioning for members to be able to operate effectively within the hive mind. Each learns how to tune out the exceptional amount of noise caused by the constant barrage of mental pings. Nobody from outside the organization is quite sure how they've managed the ability to have collective thought and individual intelligence simultaneously, but some believe it has to do with the Brain Bank each member also possesses.

In addition to being able to instantly communicate with every member of the organization, Neurotech members are also capable of superior crowdsourced computing and ghosting techniques the likes of which the world has never encountered. Members literally lend their own brains to the collective to form a supercomputer with all the computational power of thousands of human minds. This computing power allows the organization to launch successful brute force attacks against some of the most secure systems in the world.

Nobody is sure who pulls the strings at Neurotech. It's assumed there is a "queen bee" of sorts who delivers orders to her drones, but this theory has never been proven. Others suggest that Neurotech's hive mentality allows all members to be equal stakeholders in the cartel, meaning everyone has a say in what happens within the organization.

Arms Cartels

Arms cartels deal in firearms, destructive magic, and military-grade equipment. They buy, sell, trade, and illicitly acquire just about anything the police wouldn't want you to get your hands on, from *pyrokinesis* magic to personal mini-tanks.

Some such cartels, like The Cabal, deal exclusively with one type of technology while others deal in a wide assortment of goods. These cartels are the most likely to be sought by street runners and other shady characters who wish to get their hands on high-powered weapons and armor without going through the standard channels.

Most arms cartels have networks of Dealers who interact directly with clients on the cartel's behalf. Sometimes these Dealers are self-employed middlemen who have proven themselves trustworthy but aren't directly tied to any organization (meaning they can easily be cut loose if necessary). Others are highly trusted cartel members whose job is to weed out potential problem customers before granting access to the cartel's stockpiles.

When a Dealer is a third-party agent, it may take time to acquire goods for a client. They need to receive the order, check availability, haggle a price, purchase, and finally

deliver the goods. It's a multi-step process that ensures the cartel's identity isn't given away. Most of the larger cartels deal with the public through middlemen exclusively, because being uncovered is usually bad for business.

Upstart cartels may not have the presence to use third-party Dealers and have to handle trades directly. They can offer reduced prices and faster turnarounds—something most clients appreciate—but at the cost of risked exposure. These cartels also tend to lack the resources necessary to acquire the really big guns and may only deal in second-hand parts.

Arms Cartels in Your Game

Arms cartels do more than just buy and sell illegal firearms. In order to get their hands on that gear, they need people to go out and get it. Sometimes that means infiltrating the ranks of legitimate organizations and smuggling assault rifles out the door or off the back of a truck, other times it means breaking into military storehouses and driving off with their mini-tanks. That last one's pretty tricky.

Arms cartels may be fronts for legitimate corporations or they may be a group of criminal upstarts. Either way, they make weapons and armor their business, and that means they have a lot of firepower at their disposal. Going against an arms cartel is suicide.

When players need new gear, they're likely to need to deal with one of these groups. If they're lucky they may find a Dealer to act as middleman. The prices will be higher, but there's a layer of safety—middlemen don't just protect the cartel's identity from their clients, they protect the clients' identity from the cartel, too.

If a team needs to interact with one of these cartels directly (usually when purchasing from a smaller cartel, but occasionally the story may call for them meeting some of the big players) they need to step carefully. Anyone with as many connections and as much firepower as an arms cartel is sure to be a dangerous contact. Certainly the team wouldn't want to accidentally offend the wrong person, would they?

Contacting Arms Cartels to Acquire Gear

Arms cartels provide weapons, armor, grenades, magic devices, vehicles, and cybernetics that aren't available on the open market. In game terms, this is where characters need to go if they don't possess the appropriate Rank skill to legitimately own and carry an item.

When a character wishes to buy a piece of Gear they don't have the Rank for, GMs may ask them to contact their connections to get it. Ask the player to make an Urban check with a Difficulty equal to the item's Rank. Success means the character is capable of finding someplace to acquire the gear they're looking for. Using one's connections to acquire new gear takes 24 hours, minus 3 hours for every degree of success by which the check is made. If the GM decides the cartel being contacted isn't using a middleman, the time is instead 12 hours minus 3 hours per degree of success.

For example: Roy has no Rank skill but wishes to purchase a Superb (+3) Rank sniper rifle. He rolls his Great (+2) Urban and asks the GM if he can use his Shady Contacts Specialization on this roll. Since he's contacting underground agents to get the equipment, the GM agrees to allow this.

Roy rolls **+**, **-**, **■**, **■**, +2, for a result of Great—not quite enough. Because he has a lot of connections with shady characters he re-rolls his **-** dice and gets a **+**. His total result is now Wonderful (+4). Not only does Roy find a place to buy the sniper rifle, he does so in 21 hours instead of 24.

The GM may decide the size of the cartel the players are dealing with. If the cartel is Small, they can acquire the gear at its normal Cost. If the cartel is Medium or Large, they must additionally spend Wealth equal to the gear's Rank trait to represent its increased purchase price.

To randomly determine the size of the cartel, roll 1dF. On a roll of **-** the cartel is Small size, on a roll of **■** it is Medium, and on a roll of **+** it is Large.

If you prefer to choose the cartel's size yourself, ask yourself how much influence the cartel has within the world. Are they new to the criminal underworld? If so, they're probably still a Small cartel. Do they operate in a single city (Small again), a single country (Medium) or the entire world (Large)?

As a good rule of thumb, Small cartels can grant access to illicit goods with a Rank requirement of Good (+1) or lower. Medium cartels may be able to secure items with a Rank requirement of Superb (+3). Large cartels have all of the power and influence necessary to access the best toys and may grant access to gear with a Rank requirement of Wonderful (+4) or better.

Smaller cartels are easier to topple than larger ones. The leader of a Small cartel is likely a Wonderful NPC, while Medium cartel leaders are typically Phenomenal. Large cartel heads may be Extraordinary and, rarely, Astonishing NPCs.

Arms Cartels and Player Characters

Player characters often find themselves involved with arms cartels for one reason or another. Either they took a job to steal some high-tech equipment for a Dealer or they're looking to purchase something illegal and the arms cartels are the best place to find it.

When everything goes according to plan, life is good. Everyone gets what they want and no one's feelings get hurt or reputations get burned. Of course, when does anything ever go according to plan?

Players may have a history with one or more arms cartels. Maybe they were hired guns for the organization or maybe they were Dealers themselves. Some players may still be members of an arms cartel who take odd jobs on the side, but others may have severed their ties for some reason.

Cartels are paranoid by nature, so having former members loose in the wild makes them nervous. These characters could be privy to sensitive information which could be used to out the cartel, and that's a risk most just aren't willing to take.

Chances are good that if a character is a former member of a cartel, there's a price on their head. No matter how loyal they were to the organization while they were part of it, the character is just too much of a liability to leave alive. The character probably left on uncertain or unhappy terms (since almost no one ever leaves a cartel under any other circumstance) and so they may need to constantly watch their back.

Specific Arms Cartels

Below are a few specific arms cartels you may wish to use in your game. Some specialize in the type of arms they deal with while others offer a broad range of goods. Small cartels don't have middlemen to deal with clients while Medium and Large cartels do.

Balken Motor Company

Size: Large

Though the majority of the European countries belong to the Greater European Union, many of the Balkan States have either refused to join or have left the GEU altogether. Collectively they have formed their own union, known as the New Balkan League (NBL).

The NBL is known worldwide for its superior automobile manufacturing. The League has overtaken Japan in terms of auto exports, and that is due in no small part to the fact that the entire region specializes in auto manufacturing and is housed under one umbrella: the Balkan Motor Company.

Though nearly half the world's consumer automobiles originate in the Balkans, such vehicles aren't the company's only exports. They also design, manufacture, and export custom military and paramilitary vehicles such as personal tanks, military transport vehicles, covert helicopters, and bomber drones. These products are sold to anyone willing to pay for them, regardless of their intended use.

Balkan Motor Company denies any guilt over the illegal or harmful use of their machines. They don't screen buyers and don't ask questions, nor do they accept any criticism that their controls aren't stringent enough. The company continues to sell to governments and mega-corporations as well as militant rebel groups in nearly every country in the world.

Because most illicit sales are channeled through middlemen, they can't be directly linked to the rebel forces which eventually purchase BMC's equipment. Few governments or organizations launch investigations into these go-between Dealers because it wouldn't pay to apprehend an individual broker. Instead, the UN and its member nations prefer to combat these rebel groups directly—a fact which BMC banks on to continue its lucrative operations.

The Cabal

Size: Medium

The Cabal is a criminal cartel which traffics in black market magic. For the most part, the Cabal simply sells stolen magic at prices just under the standard retail (it's 100% profit to them, after all). The Cabal controls hundreds of small-time, back-alley vendors, dozens of retail franchises, and even has stakes in other cartels (especially ghost cartels).

Selling stolen magic is only part of the Cabal's business. They also employ (or kidnap) psi-researchers and imagineers to study the psi-tech they sell and make dangerous modifications. This so-called "black magic" is highly effective (often rivaling even the abilities of powerful psychics) but it is also extremely dangerous.

The use of black magic is often addicting and can drive even the most sane user to fits of rage and hallucination after extended use. The Cabal keeps close tabs on

all pieces of black magic that they sell, and they employ their own rotating force of black-magic-using ghosts and assassins dubbed "warlocks".

The leader of the Cabal, referred to only as Arch even by the highest ranking members, is very thoroughly veiled by magic and black magic, but in the criminal underworld, rumors fly thick and fast. The latest round of whispers claims that Arch has found a new and powerful backer or partner and that the Cabal is preparing for something big. These rumors can never be trusted, but even the lowest rung street runners have noticed the recent influx of high-level magic and black magic from the Cabal.

Game Hunters, Inc.

Size: Large

Posing as a legitimate hunting club, Game Hunters, Inc. (GHI) are not above selling their wares to people without an appropriate license. They are a legitimate source of standard hunting equipment such as rifles and shotguns, but beneath the surface they also peddle assault rifles, sniper rifles, and military-grade combat armor.

When a typical customer walks into one of GHI's worldwide sporting goods stores, they're treated to an array of outdoor sports equipment. Though they specialize in camping equipment, camouflage, scopes, firearms, and other survival gear, they also sell off-road vehicles, fishing supplies (never mind that you can only catch fish in one of their pre-stocked, man-made lakes), barbecue grills, and other such gear.

GHI owns large patches of land dedicated to the almost-lost sport of hunting. After The Great Famine their core business practically dried up. Nearly every government of the world outlawed hunting wild animals due to their increased rarity, and poaching became a serious offense.

To combat their dwindling livelihood, GHI snatched up large patches of land at many of their most popular locations. They stock the land with cloned bears, deer, and other common game and they sell hunting tags to customers at steep rates. Still, those who thrill in hunting game now have a place to go to enjoy their hobby.

Despite this new business model, GHI's margins on their legitimate practices are slim. They make up for this by selling illegal wares to anyone shady enough to come looking for them. They demand high prices from their third-party Dealers, but one can find just about anything available short of magic devices or high-end cybernetics when they contact GHI.

Sihir Teknik Size: Medium

Located in the Cheras district of Kuala Lumpur, Sihir Teknik—or Magic Technical Institute—is a prestigious university where thousands of students go to learn how to engineer and build magic devices. The goal of many students is to be recognized and hired by Kojicorp upon graduation, but a few go on to accept general engineering jobs with other firms who legitimately license Magiccorp tech.

Though it seems an unlikely place for a cartel, Sihir Teknik makes the perfect cover for magic traffickers. The college receives deeply discounted hardware for its students and it often sells surplus goods on the black market—through third-party Dealers—at a healthy mark-up. With so many staff and faculty it's hard to pin the blame on any one person, which makes it all the more difficult to bust the cartel for their activities.

Though they both deal in black market magic, Sihir Teknik and The Cabal are not necessarily at odds. It is rumored that many of the college's alumni enjoy positions of great prestige among the ranks of The Cabal, and the two entities almost certainly have mutual connections. Some believe Sihir Teknik is behind The Cabal's recent influx in power, but nobody knows who exactly may be supplying the organization with new magic.

If Kojicorp knows about the school's underground trade, they don't let on. The corporation continues to hire top-ranking students and supplies the college with a great deal of equipment.

Every new student is given a Kojicorp-issued *telekinisis* device of Great power upon arrival during their first day of classes, but the device has been tweaked to not be able to function out of the box. It's a challenge of sorts to the student: fix the equipment yourself and you can hold vast power in the palm of your hand. Or, of course, you can sell it as scrap for a quick buck.

Voortreflik Freight**Size:** Small

Voortreflik Freight is a small shipping company headquartered in Cape Town, South Africa, a Sub-Saharan member state. The company takes advantage of its geographical position to ship goods worldwide and is a hub for international trade. Even though most shipments take place via air rather than by sea, its position on the southern cape of South Africa means it has fast access to many of the world's major ports.

The company's name stands for excellence, and it does

a great job handling large shipments of goods. Like so many companies though, not all of its practices are strictly legal. Most of its revenue comes from undocumented sales of weapons, armor, magic devices, and explosives.

Voortreflik Freight is adept at smuggling illegal arms alongside legitimate weapons shipments or hiding them amongst clothing and other mundane items. They're not above paying off the occasional port authorities to turn a blind eye to their practices either.

Because the company is relatively small, they don't have an intricate network of middlemen helping to protect their identity. Prospective clients contact the company directly and ask for special services that go "under and beyond" the normal flow of business. If the client plays her cards right, the company will attempt to acquire and deliver anything under the Sun.

Trafficking Cartels

Some people are insidious and vile enough to buy and sell other people. To them, the almighty Neumark is more important than any human life. These people are human traffickers, and they partake in a practice that is immoral, illegal, unethical, and just plain mean.

Despite its cruel nature, trafficking is highly lucrative to the people and the cartels calling the shots. Slavery is alive and well, but it isn't condoned by any nation. Sometimes people are kidnapped and auctioned off to the highest bidder while others are forced to work off their debts as indentured servants. Regardless of how a person winds up in the slave trade, it's almost impossible to get out.

Not all trafficking cartels buy and sell human slaves. Sometimes a person's parts are worth more than their body as a whole. Many trafficking cartels kidnap victims and remove organs, borrow limbs, and even steal memories for sale or trade.

Regardless of the specifics, trafficking cartels are some of the most vile entities known to man. Those who run the show have little compassion and care not for the rights of others. Unfortunately, these rich and powerful organizations are hard to oppose. Corporate police forces do occasionally raid the hideouts of traffickers, but that usually only happens when the cartel encroaches on the corp's territory and reduces their workforce.

Trafficking Cartels in Your Game

Trafficking cartels make great villains because their practices are almost universally seen as vile and wretched. They are wealthy, powerful, and have tons of sinister connections. They're easy to hate, but hard to oppose—these cartels make great high-level threats.

GMs may wish to use one of these cartels as a long-term threat to their players. One mission may start simply enough—investigate the disappearance of a friend, for example—but eventually snowball into a much larger conflict as the team discovers their friend was abducted by traffickers and sold into slavery to repay debts both real and imagined.

After the players have uncovered the wider scheme, they may attempt to rescue their friend and find out her memories have been wiped clean by a soul jacker. Do the players give up, or do they take revenge for the heinous actions brought against their pal? Do they stop at the persons directly responsible for what happened, or do they shoot their way through the ranks of the entire organization until it's brought to its knees?

Traffickers and Player Characters

Though these organizations are evil, that doesn't mean a player character can't be part of one. Players may wish to explore the darkest side of life and become a member of one of these groups. We suggest using caution when choosing to join a trafficking cartel voluntarily, but perhaps your character didn't volunteer. Were they sold into servitude, only to one day become part of the very system that took their life away?

Players may also be *former* members of a trafficking cartel. As usual with any major criminal organization, leaving the ranks usually means escaping and being hunted for life. Trafficking cartels in particular are not fond of having their secrets let loose upon the world, so they don't take kindly to having members abandon them.

Perhaps your character wasn't an employee, but a victim. Though few people ever make it out of the slave trade alive, it is possible that your character was a rare exception. Of course you may not have made it out with all your memories intact, but that's a small price to pay for your freedom isn't it?

Specific Trafficking Cartels

The following list of trafficking cartels is made up of some of the vilest people on Earth in 2096. Humanity has evolved a great deal over the last century, and so has humanity's penchant for committing heinous crimes against one another.

Fantasma Biotécnica

Headquartered in Rio de Janeiro, Fantasma Biotécnica deals in illegally-modified cybernetic implants, limbs and subsystems. They purchase everything from stolen brain matter to machinery and refine these things into concrete, usable merchandise.

Fantasma Biotécnica actively funds small-time mercenary gangs and grey slavers, turning their raw materials into illicit goods. They play the role of middleman, but occasionally provide direct implant services for their own members.

The cartel also takes legal cybernetics and modifies them: stripping materials for reinforcement, overclocking internal CPU's, and even crafting brain matter implants, most notably psionic implants that function the way they had for their less-than-fortunate first owners. The latter in particular brings them infamy in the region, as it's reasonably well-known that these neural implants are the result of grey slavery (not that anyone has been able to prove this).

While the cartel's operations are generally white collar work, they outsource their security to gangs—often the same ones who bring them their raw materials. This gives them a distinctly threatening presence, as they can quite capably organize street level violence.

Lunatica Casino Group

Lunatica Casino Group owns and operates several high-end casinos on the moon where only the rich and famous go to play. These high-stakes gambling parlors offer the very finest entertainment and gambling services, and these services come at a high price—sometimes a much higher price than one might think.

When a gambler spends or loses too much money and can't pay his debts, LCG is quick to offer financial assistance. All one needs to do is sign away the rights to his kidneys, eyes, and other spare parts and the casino will gladly forgive any debt the patron owes. They're then transferred to a medical wing where the company can collect its payment.

The casino's practice of extorting debtors is not well-documented. Despite the contracts signed by every person who is involved in the transaction, the paper trail is small and hard to follow. Perhaps the company locks away its information in an impossibly secure safe, or perhaps the donor program's participants are relieved of the knowledge that they ever signed a dotted line. Either way, no one has ever challenged the casino in court or talked about it in the media.

Occasionally an indebted gambler refuses to sign away his body to Lunatica. Though the casino does make a compelling case as to why they should do so, some people just aren't comfortable paying their debts in such a way. Those people seem to disappear without a trace and with no record they were ever on the moon.

Seoul Survivors

After the Second Korean War ended in 2077, the freshly-formed New Korea was a place of devastation and loss. Both sides suffered millions of casualties and millions more injuries, and the lives of every Korean citizen were affected in some way.

Nearly every survivor suffered some amount of post-traumatic stress, and a philanthropic organization known as Seoul Survivors formed to help counsel citizens and reintegrate former North Koreans into the dominant South Korean society.

Seoul Survivors is comprised of talented telepaths capable of reaching into someone's mind and resurfacing suppressed memories so they can be dealt with. Though such counseling methods were at the time highly controversial (nobody really wanted someone prying around in their mind and peering into their secrets) the process was voluntary and highly effective. The organization treated hundreds of thousands of survivors in the first five years and they continue to treat people to this day.

With the organization providing such a great service to the people of New Korea, it's hard to imagine there being any wrongdoing. Unfortunately, Seoul Survivors is now a very large organization and such groups are often infiltrated by people looking to abuse their power for personal gain. Many of the volunteer psychiatrists use their powers of *mind reading*, *mind control*, and *alter memories* for unwholesome purposes.

Nowadays, many of the patients who come to Seoul Survivors looking for help are soul jacked by their psychiatrist. It's especially easy to take control of the target's mind when they willingly let you in, and the patients have little to no hope of resisting once their shrink has gotten inside their head.

Victims often wind up having crucial memories wiped clear and are then forced to sign themselves over to the hands of slavers. What happens next is anyone's guess; some victims are sold into various trades and shipped across the world, others are found later with some of their internal organs missing. Even after the mental dominance wears off, their memories are often altered such that they aren't even aware they had a previous life.

If the heads of the organization know what's going on, they certainly don't acknowledge it. They may be afraid of retaliation from the victims' families or the media, or they may be in cahoots with the psychiatrists who are directly involved with the slave trade. Either way, they refuse to admit that any such illegal activity is happening on their watch.

Spiritual Successors

Posing as a faith-based organization, Spiritual Successors specialize in the fine art of exorcism. They expel unwanted demons from afflicted persons whose souls are overwhelmed by evil spirits.

In truth, the group is comprised of dozens of wraith butchers—individuals who travel to the Astral plane and destroy the souls of others. What makes Spiritual Successors unique is that they actually replace the souls of their victims with the souls of people who have been on a long waitlist for a full-body replacement.

When someone comes to the Spiritual Successors looking for help, an exorcist leads their soul to the Astral plane and either destroys or imprisons it. Ordinarily their body would be left in a comatose state, but a wait-listed client fills the vessel and uses it for their own. Upon entering the new host body, the client is free to live again.

Spiritual Successors target two types of people: wealthy individuals who aren't ready to give up on life (their primary clients) and destitute, friendless castaways who are led to believe that demons are to blame for their plight (their victims). Clients pay an inordinate sum of money to the group with the promise they will receive a new body shortly after their old one gives up on life.

Most people view the Spiritual Successors as a group of radical religious nuts, and it would be hard to prove otherwise. The group's victims are generally unwanted by anyone in society, and their clients certainly aren't willing to discuss the deal they made with the organization. It would be hard to prove any wrongdoing even if someone did care—after all, how does one prove their soul has gone missing?

Gangs

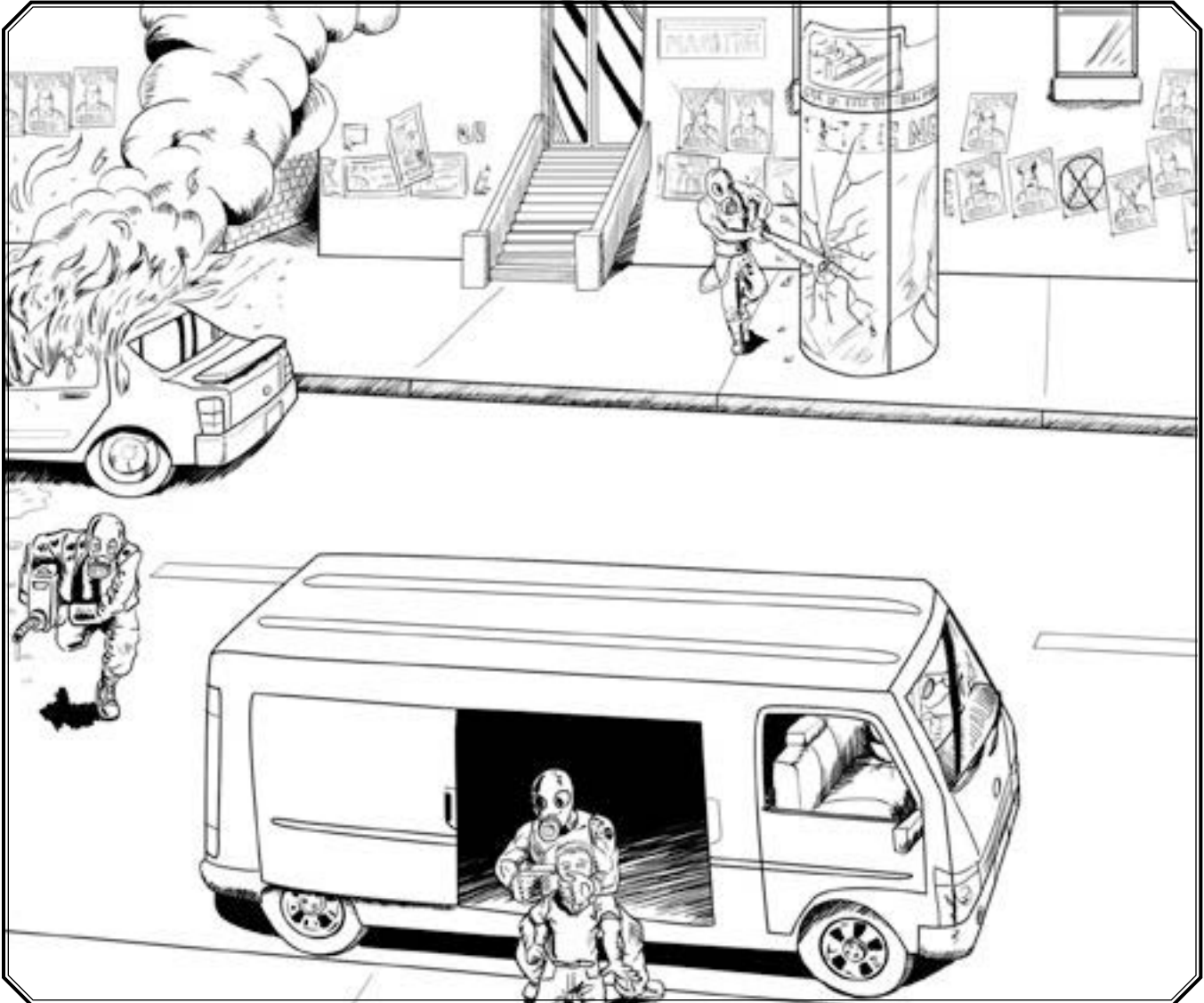
Gangs battle it out in the slums and ghettos of the world's cities and constantly war over turf, resources, and whatever scraps of respect they can attain. Police often ignore the petty crimes that gangs commit as long as they're carried out against each other, but when a gang oversteps its boundaries and starts mugging citizens or robbing local convenience stores the police are forced to intervene. Occasionally the police send squads of gang-busters into the sprawl to take down particularly powerful groups of ruffians, but for the most part their stance has been to let them kill each other... for the good of mankind.

Street Runners often get caught up in gang activity for a variety of reasons. Most commonly Runners will

wind up having it out with gangers who get in the way of their current mission, but occasionally a crime boss will hire a group to secretly carry out a hit without starting a feud. Runners may even be hired to guard a company's client when their gang protection has lapsed.

Gang Turf

Most gangs are street-level criminals who don't make it out of the little league. It takes truly organized criminals to go pro and break into the national circuit. Gangs usually have a territory ranging from a few city blocks to a few neighborhoods in width, but a truly powerful gang may even rule over most of a city or small county.



When a gang oversteps its boundaries and wanders onto another's turf, bad things happen. The best case scenario is that the gang in charge of that area runs the other off its land by showing its strength and authority – usually with violence. If both gangs are equally matched a gang war may ensue and bloody battles are waged in the streets for days or even weeks on end. When this happens, it's usually up to the police and their gangbusting squads to come in and put an end to the in-fighting before too many innocent lives are lost in the cross-fire.

In a bid for dominance, some gangs may intentionally challenge others. Many of the more organized gang leaders have aspirations of one day making it big and taking over the town, and they'll do whatever they can to prove themselves worthy of fear and respect. In most cases this behavior results in a lot of dead gang leaders, but in a few instances groups will consolidate and become a stronger force.

Gangs in Your Game

Gangs make great antagonists. Since they're often up to no-good, it's easy to pin them as the villain in your story and even the most noble of players has a hard time feeling bad for busting a ganger. They can be used as an easy out for when you just need a reason to get your story off the ground, but they don't have to be so one-dimensional.

The gangs outlined later in this chapter have a lot of different goals and methods. Think of each one as a potential plot device to add some conflict to your game. One gang may be a simple group of neighborhood thugs and ruffians while another may have dreams of taking on the cartels and hitting it big.

While local street-level activity may not affect the daily lives of most characters, a gang leader with an inferiority complex might drag a lot of other people into his twisted world. One of the player's loved ones may be injured during a routine convenience store robbery, or perhaps the Wheel Jockey's favorite ride got smashed up during a turf war. Consider the different ways you can bring your players into the fray by making things personal.

Gangs and Player Characters

Some characters may choose to be from a gang or they may be a former gang member turned straight. In either case, take advantage of a good backstory and bring it into the present.

Perhaps the character left the gang on uneasy terms and now the boss has a bounty on his head. Conversely, the character may have left on good terms (hey, it could happen) and now one of his old buddies is in trouble and needs some help.

If a character is still a ganger, ask the character to which gang he belongs. The character may be given contacts within the gang and might be able to ask for a favor if he's ever in a bind. Most gangs have some kind of policy (written or otherwise, but usually otherwise) about how many favors a member can call in before needing to pay them back. GMs should try to keep track of these and cash them in when it's least convenient.

Specific Gangs

If your game takes place primarily in one city, it's easy to mix and match the following gangs as necessary. If your game spans multiple major cities you may wish to keep track of which gangs you've put where since they rarely cross between locations.

Clean Sweep

Turf: City-wide

Leader: Unknown

Some violent gangs hide behind an altruistic purpose. Even though their methods may be harsh, they claim to fight for the greater good. Not that anyone could define what "good" means these days.

Clean Sweep gangers are self-styled vigilantes who seek out illegal street docs and put an end to their business. Ask any of the gang's members and they'll tell you just how bad these back-alley operating rooms are for society; not only do they patch up street runners and other criminals, they deal in black market body parts and cyberware. Someone needs to stop these menaces to society, and that someone sure as hell hasn't been the police.

Unlike your typical street gang, Clean Sweep doesn't gather in any one specific location and they don't flash gang symbols or dress identically. Their only unifying factor is that they all enjoy the thrill of trouncing a dirty street doc and putting an end to their operations—permanently.

Estimates put the gang's numbers between 50 and 70 members, but the fact that they never gather in groups of more than 5 or 6 and they don't dress alike makes it difficult to pin down that number. The only thing that's for sure is that they've only just recently begun their clean-up efforts and that they've closed a lot of underground clinics in their relatively short time.

Rumor has it that Medical Services International is actually pulling the strings and that Clean Sweep is nothing more than a front for waging warfare against MSI's biggest competitors. The fact that nobody yet knows who is leading the gang makes it difficult to track down the truth.

Common Clean Sweep Member

ODFs: +3; **DDFs:** +3

Combat (Ranged): Great;

Specialization: Shotguns

Weapons: "Room Broom" double-barrel shotgun (**Range:** Great; **RoF:** S or 2 in one round; **Reload:** 2; **Gifts:** Increased Ammo Capacity; **Cost:** 48). **Note:** ODFs when using shotgun increase by +1 at Fair range and +2 at Mediocre range.

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Cyberwave

Turf: Neighborhood

Leader: D.J. Flash

Cyberwave is a group of older teenagers and 20-somethings who gather in abandoned warehouses to have fun, party, and rave to their heart's content. They follow a musician known as D.J. Flash who plays a special blend of ultra-modern techno and post-industrial rock at all their club parties.

The trend in the group is to don ever bigger, brighter, and flashier streetware to really make a scene. Initiates usually show up sporting case lights (flashing lights affixed to one's skull) while long-term members have gone so far as to mod their entire torsos with colored tattoos that shift in time with the music's beat.

Cyberwave seems to be mostly harmless at first glance, but the amount of drugs pumping through their systems has a tendency to cause a lot of bad trips and violent outbursts. D.J. Flash insists it's not his place to tell people how to act at a party and refuses to take responsibility, but some claim he puts subliminal, psychological, and possibly psychically-charged hidden messages in his music that causes listeners to become unnecessarily agitated.

Parties usually occur at night in abandoned warehouses where breaking and entering is common but largely unpunished. During the day, the group is encouraged to spread word of their gatherings and recruit even more members. Their numbers have been steadily increasing and Cyberwave regularly moves to larger warehouses. It isn't certain, but hushed whispers speak of how

D.J. Flash must be gathering recruits for some larger and more sinister purpose.

Common Cyberwave Member

ODFs: +1; **DDFs:** +1 (normally +1/+1, but they use Aggressive posture when drugged up and agitated)

Weapons: Knives, clubs, or Sm. Handguns (**Range:** Good; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 3)

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

D.J. Flash

ODFs: +4; **DDFs:** +4

Manipulation: Superb;

Specialization: Bluff

Artistic: Great;

Specialization: Music

Social (Informal): Great

Gifts: *Telepathy* (Great); *mind control* (Great)

Faults: Hidden motives could be discovered

Weapons: Sm. Handgun (**Damage:** Fair; **Range:** Good; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 3)

Luck Points: 1

Wound Levels: Normal wound track

Daughters of Liberty

Turf: State-wide

Leader: Lady Liberty

Though the NAU's famous Statue of Liberty was destroyed in 2033 during a home-grown terrorist attack, the Daughters of Liberty have taken up her mantle and see it as their place to restore the country to its rightful order—with liberty and justice for everyone but the Corps.

Upon initiation into the group, DOL members undergo an intense transformation that leaves them looking like the Statue of Liberty of old. They color their skin green and install streetware that gives them large spikes on the tops of their heads. When they gather in groups, they wear robes reminiscent of those worn by the venerable statue, but they don't dress in that fashion individually or when in small gatherings.

Though not technically a gang, they are an extremist political group who aren't afraid to impose their beliefs on others. DOL's violence against corporate citizens, especially lower-management, has been well-documented. Many criticize them as cowards for not going after the higher-

ups of any given company directly, but any Daughter of Liberty would tell you it would be a fool's errand; getting close to upper-management of a megacorp would require far more resources and firepower than even their growing numbers could muster.

The group's leader, who calls herself Lady Liberty, is a brilliant and charismatic woman with a strong background in politics. Critics believe her to be a psychic with mind control powers, but she maintains that all of her followers join the Daughters of Liberty of their own free will—just as the nation's founders had intended.

Common DOL Member

ODFs: +0; **DDFs:** +2 (normally +1/+1, but they use Cautious posture when confronted)

Knowledge: Good;

Specialization: Politics

Weapons: Sm. Handgun (**Range:** Good; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 3)

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Lady Liberty

ODFs: +4; **DDFs:** +4

Knowledge: Superb;

Specialization: Politics

Manipulation: Great;

Specialization: Bluff

Social (Formal): Great

Gifts: *Mind control* (Great)

Faults: Fanatic patriot

Weapons: Sm. Handgun (**Range:** Good; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 3)

Luck Points: 1

Wound Levels: Normal wound track

Espessura (a.k.a Thick)

Turf: City of Rio de Janeiro

Leader: Alma Escura (Dark Soul)

Alma Escura (Dark Soul) is a well-organized leader, especially for a gang leader. He rose to the position after confronting and taking down his predecessor, Bicho Feio, during a rival gang raid that lasted three weeks. Many members were lost in the first two weeks due to the poor leadership skills of Bicho Feio, so Alma Escura killed him, claimed his role as leader, then organized the remaining members and regained control of their territory.

Alma demands respect from his members and is quick to remind any that get out of line who is in control. His ability to organize his members to keep the gang out of trouble with local and government authorities eventually caught the eye of a local cartel known as Fantasma Biotécnica. He has positioned himself and his gang to work with the cartel in hopes of being promoted into the big leagues.

Superficially, it appears the gang's turf covers only a few neighborhoods. In reality, Escura has seized leadership of several once-rival gangs and has brought them all together as a united group. His territory now covers two-thirds of the city of Rio.

Alma organized the gang into six units, each maintaining their original turf and unique symbolism. Each are well aware of their brother gangs and do not cross the other unless directed to do so, but sometimes it is necessary to keep up a façade of rivalries between them to confound authorities.

Though each unit maintains its original identifying symbols and colors, all members are marked with a tattoo of three thick lines across the back of their neck with a small knick on either side of the center stripe. Each unit has a color combination of blue/black, red/black, green/black, orange/black, etc., which are shown in the colors in their hats or on a ribbon worn around their left bicep.

As a whole, the gang is focused on controlling their turf and protecting the streets near the operations of Fantasma Biotécnica. They assist the cartel by regularly supplying them with fresh test subjects.

Each unit is responsible for certain tasks and within each unit members are organized by level of ability. Some members are used as petty thugs who steal valuables, vandalize, or get in fights with rival gangs, while other members collect test subjects for the cartel's operations. Those at the bottom or new recruits that do not show any promise in Alma's eyes are quickly set-up and used as scapegoats with the authorities and rival gangs, or they become test subjects themselves.

Fantasma Biotécnica, in return, helps fund Espessura by buying test subjects as well as any other useful material the gang collects. Some successful test subjects are returned to the gang as more useful members and stationed as such by Escura.

Common Espessura Thug

ODFs: +3; **DDFs:** +2

Combat (Ranged): Good;

Specialization: Lg. Handguns

Weapons: Lg. Handgun (**Range:** Great; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 3)

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Dark Soul

ODFs: +5; **DDFs:** +4

Combat (Ranged): Superb;

Specialization: Lg. Handguns (note this stacks with his weapon's Ocular Integration Gift to give a +2dF reroll)

Combat (Non-physical): Great;

Specialization: Tactics

Urban: Great

Manipulation; Merchant: Good

Social (Informal): Good

Gifts: Cyber eyes (HUD, Thermal Vision)

Faults: Ambitious

Weapons: Lg. Handgun (**Range:** Great; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 3; **Gifts:** Ocular Integration; **Cost:** 32)

Luck Points: 1

Wound Levels: Normal wound track

Evolution Next

Turf: Regional

Leader: Darwin

Mentals have long faced discrimination and have fought hard over the past several decades to earn the right to live side-by-side with normals. Some psychics aren't happy just being equals, though; some see themselves as the next step in human evolution and believe their time to rule the world is at hand.

Evolution Next is one such group of radical psychic supremacists. Led by a man who is both precognizant and pyrokinetic, the group is strong both tactically and offensively. Though it isn't prudent for them to attack every normal they meet, they do scheme to pull off grand scale anti-human attacks and were responsible for the deaths of hundreds at a recent local sporting event.

Evolution Next have been operating for only a few short years, but their numbers have swelled thanks to recent media exposure. Magicorp points at them and their kind as being the whole reason use of psionics should be banned, and groups like the Anti-Psi League of old have begun to re-emerge as a direct response.

Some believe Evolution Next is secretly sponsored by Kojicorp, but the corporation's direct involvement is unproven. Though the gang likely does use some of Koji-

corp's psi-enhancing drugs to bolster their own abilities, it's unclear where they may be obtaining these drugs. It also isn't reasonable to assume a megacorporation would sponsor such a relatively small-time gang of racist thugs; after all, the gang hasn't even gone national yet, let alone global.

Common Evolution Next Member

ODFs: +2; **DDFs:** +2

Gifts: One psionic power at a level of Fair

Weapons: Md. Handgun (**Range:** Good; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 3)

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Darwin

ODFs: +4; **DDFs:** +4

Knowledge: Superb;

Specialization: Psionics

Reputation; Urban: Great

Gifts: *Precognition* (Great); *pyrokinesis* (Great)

Faults: Megalomaniac

Weapons: Usually uses *pyrokinesis* as a projectile attack

Luck Points: 1

Wound Levels: Normal wound track

Fire and Ice

Turf: City-wide

Leader: Antipode

Some gangs deal in firearms, Fire and Ice deals in destructive magic. The gang's leader, known as Antipode, possesses prototype *pyro-* and *cryokinesis* devices which were stolen from Magicorp in the early days of magic – before all of the devices were chipped with recovery systems.

Many dealers have a contact or two within this gang, giving them the connections they need to acquire illicit magic devices. Though Fire and Ice usually deal with magic of a destructive nature, they have been known to occasionally sell other forms of magic such as *ESP* and *telepathy* magic.

Antipode is a merchant first and a fighter second, which is good news for anyone who crosses him; he's more likely to strike a bargain than to strike a match. Some of his underlings aren't happy with his perceived lack of power and there are whispers in the underworld that he may soon be usurped.

Some believe Fire and Ice is an arm of The Cabal, a criminal cartel known for their influence over black market magic. Though Fire and Ice do occasionally strike special deals and bargains with the cartel, the gang isn't officially sanctioned by the Arch or any of his hands.

Common Fire and Ice Member

ODFs: +1; **DDFs:** +1

Combat (Ranged): Great

Weapons: One magic device capable of making a projectile attack (*pyrokinesis*, *cryokinesis*, *sonar-kinesis*, etc.) at **PR:** Good

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Antipode

ODFs: +4; **DDFs:** +4

Merchant: Superb;

Specialization: Haggle

Manipulation; Urban: Great

Combat (Ranged): Good

Gifts: Could sell ice to an Inuit

Faults: His men may mutiny

Weapons: *Pyrokinesis* device at **PR:** Great; *cryokinesis* device at **PR:** Great

Luck Points: 1

Wound Levels: Normal wound track

Halflings

Turf: Neighborhood or city-wide

Leader: Known as the Chief, usually the oldest or most experienced member

This gang of young hooligans is more of a local nuisance than a serious threat. Still, they've made a name for themselves by staying persistent and maintaining a constant presence throughout their neighborhood.

The gang is unique in that it is comprised entirely of children, all of them with the ability to change their form at will. By using the *psychometablism* power they alter themselves to appear like goblins, kobolds, gnomes, brownies, and a variety of other diminutive fantasy creatures.

They're not just a gang of ren faire rejects, though. These children, most of them orphans, runaways, or cast-offs, use their abilities and numbers to sew chaos throughout the neighborhood. Popular activities include bashing windows, stealing the latest popular electronics, and torturing small animals. It's uncertain how a group

of such small children have grown to be so delinquent and malicious, but it's clear they have criminal intent.

Behind the scenes, the gang is run by whoever is the oldest or most experienced of the bunch. Referred to as the Chief, this position fluctuates frequently as it is both possible and common for a Chief to age out of the gang entirely; once a member turns 18, he's given a special birthday celebration and then sent on his way to make a name for himself in another gang.

Ties to the gang rarely remain strong after a member leaves. The chaotic nature of the group ensures that their "home base" never remains in one place for long, so it's difficult to get in touch with former buddies even if one wanted to.

In 2085, the gang made national news when the Chief and several of his closest followers raided an animal shelter and shapechanged most of its dogs into ferocious-looking dire wolves and set them loose on the city. Thankfully for the surrounding neighborhood, the dogs were no more ill-tempered or feral than normal even in their new form, but those few dogs who were already rabid or vicious became a severe menace to society. The Chief was captured and sentenced to 10 years by a Kojicorp-sponsored police force, but he was recently released and rumor has it he is now employed by the same company which captured him.

Common Halfling Member

ODFs: +1; **DDFs:** +1

Covert: Great

Gifts: *Psychometabolism* (Fair)

Weapons: Clubs, brass knuckles, chains, etc.

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

The Chief

ODFs: +4; **DDFs:** +4

Covert: Superb;

Specialization: Stealth

Athletics; Manipulation; Urban: Great

Gifts: *Psychometabolism* (Great)

Weapons: Club, brass knuckles, knife, etc.

Luck Points: 1

Wound Levels: Normal wound track

Muertos Carmesí

(the Crimson Dead)

Turf: state of Bolívar, Venezuela

Leader: El Hueso Blanco (the White Bone)

Muertos Carmesí is a platform for ‘gray slavery.’ As the name implies, the practice originated with stealing the brains of the psychically gifted, but the process gradually became more refined—now only parts of brains are needed, though no great care is taken to make sure that the owners survive the extraction process.

No better example can be given than that of Kylee Pace, visitor to neighboring Colombia for the 14th World Psi-Games. A talented spirit-talker, Kylee was favored to take top honors. Just before the preliminary round began, the entire arena was deafened and blinded by an impressive display of concussive grenades, all exploding at once. Many blamed the sheer amount of psionic power in attendance for the phenomenon.

The nature of the attack and Kylee’s disappearance were not discovered until the next day. Seventeen days later, she was found wandering the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, identifiable only by the serial number of the eye implant she clutched in her hand. Kylee had been expertly lobotomized, her memory erased by purposeful, careful trauma to the brain tissue. She would require care for the rest of her life, and she could no more identify her own parents than her attackers. Muertos Carmesí were never apprehended for the crime.

Running the show is the sociopath known as El Hueso Blanco (the White Bone). The thin veneer of sanity he wears is calm, collected, and magnetic. You don’t have to understand to want to follow—you don’t even have to see his face. And you won’t—it’s hidden under a dual-port gas mask backlit with bloodred LED’s.

A large scar runs down the midline of his right eyebrow, all the way over his eyelid and down his cheek. In whispers, they say that El Hueso Blanco plucked out his own eye to replace it with his red psionic implant.

The symbol of his power is always strapped openly to his left thigh: a long knife made of razor-sharp bone, carved with grotesquerie befitting of the gang’s gruesome purpose. It is no silent blade; El Hueso Blanco rarely skips out on joining the fray. He commands through fear, and his followers are fanatic. Rumors abound that El Hueso Blanco possesses dark, barely comprehensible psionic powers of influence.

Many choose to mimic their founder in wearing only black. Some gang members also wear a red optical implant this is not symbolic of gang membership, but is a punishment; when a gang member commits an act contrary to the gang’s code of secrecy, he is forced to wear this implant simply because it makes him more noticeable. The real marker of membership is a self-chosen pattern of scarification on the left shoulderblade—these vary, but imagery of death and its trappings are common. Active cell members on missions always wear respirator-style gas masks to conceal their identity. High-ranking members carry a bone knife personally carved by El Hueso Blanco.

The entire state of Bolívar, Venezuela falls under the purview of Muertos. Ciudad Bolívar is a convenient urban base, but the gang is not limited by territories. They move into the surrounding wilderness with ease and are rumored to store caches of contraband in the thick jungle surrounding Angel Falls, a place even Venezuelan natives call dangerous.

Their numbers are difficult to gauge—some guess hundreds—because they often move in small, organized cells. Muertos Carmesí know their territory; if a plan goes awry, they fade into the night like ghosts, into rumored under—town bunkers in the Ciudad itself, or into the lawless wildlands.

Every kidnapping perpetrated by Los Muertos is surrounded by utter chaos, such that the kidnapping seems like the least noticeable issue—but it is in fact the focal point. They are well aware of the talents of potential victims before they strike, and kill anyone who attempts to keep them from reaching their mark because of the money interest of the cartels who pay them for parts. Their primary partner is Fantasma Biotécnica ([page 25](#)) in Brazil, which pays excellent money for harvested parts and sometimes even puts in special orders.

Common Muertos Carmesí Thug

ODFs: +2; **DDFs:** +3

Combat (Ranged): Good;

Specialization: Lg. Handguns

Weapons: Lg. Handgun (**Range:** Great; **RoF:** S;

Reload: 3); 2 Tear Gas Grenades (**Damage:**

Mediocre; **Range:** Good; **Blast Area:** Fair; **Gifts:**

Tear Gas—all creatures in the area who are not immune to gas attacks must make an opposed Body check or suffer -3 to all actions while in the gas and for 10 rounds thereafter.)

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

El Hueso Blanco

ODFs: +4; **DDFs:** +5

Combat (Melee): Superb;

Specialization: Large Knives

Manipulation; Urban: Great

Merchant; Social (Informal): Good

Gifts: Cyber eyes (Thermal Vision); Gas Mask (immune to gas and scent-based attacks; mask has built-in HUD); *mind control* (Superb)

Faults: Cold-blooded killer

Weapons: Bone knife (**Damage:** Good; **Range:** Poor; **Gift:** *Meat Carver*+1 ODFs vs. organic material; **Cost:** 9)

Luck Points: 1

Wound Levels: Normal wound track

Nihilismus

Turf: Neighborhood

Leader: Fleischbrenner

Some people just want to watch the world burn. In the case of Nihilismus, that saying is true in the most literal sense. Each gang member is a Brenner, a master of *pyrokinesis*, and each member is interested in little more than setting things ablaze and watching the ensuing destruction.

As a young child, Fleischbrenner lost a pet cat to an apartment fire. He was devastated by the loss, but his father told him “Suck it up son; everything dies eventually.” Later the family discovered the apartment fire was his fault, the result of uncontrolled manifestation of his pyrokinetic powers. He never grew attached to any living thing again. Now in his early twenties he feels that if the only thing certain in life is death, he might as well help everyone else along.

Originally gang membership was very exclusive—members were required to be inherently pyrokinetic—but because the gang was losing members faster than it was adding them Fleischbrenner decided to open its ranks to anyone with a *pyrokinesis* device. The gang is now slowly expanding, and new initiates are often given a hand-me-down magic device from older members who’ve since moved on to bigger and more powerful tech.

Fleischbrenner remains the most prominent member of the group, leading by example and setting fire to just about anything that catches his fancy. Because the gang is so destructive they are on several police watch lists, which is unusual considering most police units just let gang violence sort itself out. It seems even the police know that if the gang grows much more powerful and

expands beyond its home neighborhood, it could spell trouble for the city at large.

Common Nihilismus Ganger

ODFs: +1; **DDFs:** +1

Combat (Melee): Good

Gifts: *Pyrokinesis* (Fair) or *pyrokinesis* magic device (**PR:** Fair)

Weapons: Knives, clubs, chains, brass knuckles, etc.

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Notes: Gangers usually use their *pyrokinesis* powers as projectile attacks and engage in melee only when pressed.

Fleischbrenner

ODFs: +4; **DDFs:** +4

Knowledge: Great; **Specialization:** Philosophy

Combat (Ranged): Great

Urban: Good

Reputation: Fair

Gifts: *Pyrokinesis* (Great)

Faults: Doesn’t worry about his own safety, watched by the cops

Weapons: Md. Handgun (**Range:** Good; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 3)

Luck Points: 1

Wound Levels: Normal wound track

Notes: Fleischbrenner prefers to use his *pyrokinesis* powers instead of his handgun, but will fire his weapon in a pinch.

Phantoms

Turf: City-wide, nomadic

Leader: Grey Ghost

This gang is hard to pin down because the Phantoms are masters of invisibility. Some of the gang’s most prominent members, including Grey Ghost, have innate *photokinesis* and *sonarkinesis* abilities which, when combined, can make them imperceptible to the most prominent human senses of sight and sound. Other members use magic devices to obtain the same effect.

Though a fully cloaked individual is still susceptible to being spotted by infrared sensors, such items aren’t common in everyday surveillance systems. This means the Phantoms are free to go most places undetected.

The Phantoms don't use their powers just to sneak into movie theaters or steal merchandise from the local Stuff Shack, though. They're often hired out as hit-men and are known to make deals with any organization, be it a corporation or even another gang as long as the pay is good.

To stay off the radar, the Phantoms have no centralized base of operations. Grey Ghost doesn't keep the gang in any one place for more than a week at a time, but this nomadic lifestyle has led to several turf wars as they inevitably cross paths with other gangs. In 2089 a rival gang, known as the Black Spades, was completely wiped out when they attempted to oust the Phantoms from their neighborhood.

Grey Ghost is a strong and determined leader who rules his gang with a stiff hand. He is distinguishable by the grey mantle he wears and the strange way in which light seems to pass through him while wearing it. Rumor has it that the mantle has been passed down to several different leaders over the years, but nobody is sure how many people have held the title of Grey Ghost.

Common Phantom

ODFs: +1; **DDFs:** +1

Covert: Great;

Specialization: Stealth

Weapon: Sm. Handgun (**Range:** Good; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 3; **Gifts:** Sound Suppressor—Notice checks made to hear this weapon fire are made at -2; **Cost:** 8)

Magic: Invisibility Belt (**PR:** Superb; see page 57 of the **Psi-punk** core book)

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Grey Ghost

ODFs: +4; **DDFs:** +4

Covert: Superb;

Specialization: Stealth

Manipulation; Urban: Great

Combat (Ranged); Social (Informal): Good

Gifts: *Photokinesis* (Great); *sonarkinesis* (Great); Grey Ghost's Mantle (+2 bonus on Covert checks made while attempting to hide or blend in)

Faults: Never leave a man behind

Weapon: Sniper Rifle (**Range:** Wonderful; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 3)

Notes: Grey Ghost prefers to use his psionic powers to form projectile weapons such as lasers and sound bursts, but will lead with a sniper rifle shot if he gets the time and advantage.

Luck Points: 1

Wound Levels: Normal wound track

Prima Machina

Turf: Neighborhood

Leader: Prima Donna

Originally from Milan, Italy in the Greater European Union, Prima Machina is a glammer gang sporting the latest in cyber fashion. They're mostly viewed by others as a group of rich 20-somethings with too much credit to their names, but they're more than just young fashionistas.

Playing up to the bored rich kid stereotype, Prima Machina often get themselves into trouble just because they have little else to do. They ride the streets on expensive motorcycles, break into businesses for the thrill of it, and pick fights with other local gangs who aren't as heavily augmented as they are. They may not be trained criminals, but what they lack in skill they make up for in augmentations—and a skill chip reader goes a long way.

Every member of Prima Machina is decked out in streetware and cybernetics. They sport the latest tech from fashionable MSI subsidiaries such as Bella Machina and Lorenzo Alberti. The group doesn't accept anyone with off-brand or generic body parts, and they are as discriminating as they are discerning. Would-be initiates who fail to measure up to Prima Donna's standards are thoroughly humiliated before being beaten and left on the street.

Prima Donna leads the gang as if all the other members were her personal assistants and yes-men. Her diamond-studded hands mark her as a person of great wealth, but they also make a potent weapon when she back-hands someone for standing up to her. She also possesses a voice synthesizer which always ensures her singing voice is in top shape, but it has been modified with *sonarkinesis* magic to allow her to launch stunning vocal assaults against unsuspecting opponents.

Overall the gang isn't taken very seriously by major corporations, law enforcement, or other organizations. They're stuck-up and spoiled rich kids with a habit of getting into trouble, but they're not harmful enough to warrant much care. What everyone overlooks though is their ties to wealthy families—after all, that money had to come from somewhere. Most of the members of Prima Machina are the children of wealthy executives, investors, and cartel leaders, so they may be of more importance than one might think.

Common Prima Machina Member

ODFs: +2; **DDFs:** +2

Pick One Skill: Great (granted by a skill chip)

Artistic; Urban: Good

Gifts: Brain Bank; Skill Chip Reader

Weapons: Cybernetically-enhanced fists or legs (titanium knuckles, cyber legs, etc.)

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Prima Donna

ODFs: +5; **DDFs:** +5

Artistic: Superb;

Specialization: Singing

Manipulation; Social (Formal): Great

Pick One Skill: Great (from a skill chip)

Urban: Good

Reputation: Fair

Gifts: Filthy Rich

Faults: Spoiled brat, must have the last word

Weapons: Diamond knuckles (as Titanium Knuckles on page 62 of the **Psi-punk** core book); *sonarkinesis* device (**PR:** 3)

Gear: Brain bank, skill chip reader, two Great skill chips, voice synthesizer with *sonarkinesis* (**PR:** 3)

Wound Levels: Normal wound track

Rhino Skin

Turf: Neighborhood

Leader: Tusk

Rhino Skin is a gang of simple street thugs who all have one thing in common: a really tough hide. New members undergo a serious beating during initiation to show them just how weak the human body naturally is. They are then treated to a rhino skin bioware upgrade, which toughens their natural hide.

Higher-up members of the gang—including Tusk, the gang's leader—are allowed to add a horn-shaped spike to their forehead that resembles a rhino horn. The longer the horn, the more powerful and influential that particular gang member is.

Aside from their unique appearance, the gang seems to be little more than a bunch of ruffians. They destroy property, get in fights with other gangs, terrorize locals, and generally act as a menace to society. Tusk has goals of one day ruling the criminal element in town, but he lacks the leadership skills and tactical foresight to truly pose much of a threat.

When not directly in conflict with rival gangs or law enforcement, Rhino Skin hang out at small clubs and arcades where most of the members waste their stolen money on nano-beer and the latest fighting simulation, Street Bruisers XI.

Common Rhino Skin Ganger

ODFs: +2; **DDFs:** +0 (normally +1/+1, but uses Assertive posture)

Combat (Melee): Good

Gifts: Rhino Skin (+1 DDFs vs. piercing and tearing weapons, +1 to resist fire and cold attacks)

Weapons: Knives, clubs, chains, brass knuckles, etc.

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Tusk

ODFs: +3 ranged, +4 melee; **DDFs:** +4

Combat (Melee): Superb;

Specialization: Gore (horn attack)

Combat (Ranged); Urban: Great

Reputation: Good

Gifts: Rhino Skin (+1 DDFs vs. piercing and tearing weapons, +1 to resist fire and cold attacks)

Faults: Delusions of Grandeur

Weapons: Horn, club, or Md. Handgun (**Range:** Good; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 3)

Luck Points: 1

Wound Levels: Normal wound track

Running Wild

Turf: Mediterranean Sea

Leader: Black Brigand

Named after an old pirate-themed heavy metal band from the late 1900s, Running Wild are modern-day pirates. They terrorize Mediterranean coast towns, fishing vessels, and cargo ships and steal valuable goods, food, and slaves.

Though not ethnically Greek, the group has settled on the former Greek island of Milos, which was abandoned in 2059 when a long-dormant volcano erupted and decimated the island region. Trade has since resumed in the area but Milos was all but destroyed, leaving it unsuitable for its former inhabitants to return and making it ripe for a band of vulturous pirates to commandeer.

Most of the slaves the group acquires are shipped off to Turkey or Syria where they are purchased by regional trafficking cartels. The pirates take what food and goods they want for themselves and fence the rest in Sicily.

Running Wild use a combination of automatic weapons and high-power magic devices to threaten and slaughter opponents. Their tactics are straightforward: approach a ship, demand their cargo, and destroy them if they refuse. So far, the tactic has worked well for them and they are enjoying rapid expansion, but not everyone believes the technique is sustainable and there are rumblings of a mutiny.

Until such a time as his crew revolts, Black Brigand runs his ship with similar displays of force. His crew respect and fear him for both his sheer physical strength and his willingness to kill anyone who gets in his way. To keep up appearances, he wears a patch over his left cybernetic eye, but the eye's x-ray capabilities allow him to see perfectly regardless. His cybernetic arms are lined with immensely sharp hooks, and he's been known to use them against his enemies in close combat.

Common Pirate

ODFs: +2; **DDFs:** +2

Combat (Ranged); Vehicles: Good

Weapons: Large submachine Gun (**Range:** Great;

RoF: S, B, FA; **Reload:** 4, 3, 2)

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Black Brigand

ODFs: +4; **DDFs:** +4

Combat (Ranged): Superb;

Specialization: Large submachine guns

Merchant; Reputation; Vehicles: Great

Gifts: Cyber eyes (x-ray vision); cybernetic arms; arm hooks

Faults: Cruel and unusual, unhappy crew

Weapons: Large submachine Gun (**Range:** Great;

RoF: S, B, FA; **Reload:** 4, 3, 2)

Luck Points: 1

Wound Levels: Normal wound track

The Arrogant Pigs

Turf: Neighborhood

Leader: Fat Cat

The Arrogant Pigs is a group of politically charged activists who seek to demean and undermine the capitalist way of life that has become so prevalent in the world. Through use of street art such as graffiti, billboard hacking, and statue shaping, they push their anti-consumer agenda. Most of the time people view their vandalism as harmless pranks, but occasionally their bold statements

push the buttons of the wrong people.

In recent memory, Fat Cat used a *control inanimate* device to shape a statue of Jesus at a local church to appear more like Macroware's CEO. On a nearby plaque he wrote "Why pray when you can buy your way into Heaven?" The resulting uproar was loud and divisive; some feigned outrage at the sacrilegious nature of the defacement while others began to question why we spend so much money on objects you can't take with you.

The church paid a prominent shaper to change the statue back to its original form, but the damage had already been done. They teamed up with Macroware to find out who Fat Cat is and to bring him to justice for what he's done. Rumor has it that Fat Cat is hiding out in a former parishioner's basement until the heat is off or until they nab someone in his stead.

The Arrogant Pigs do most of their defacing under cover of night, when they sneak into public places and convert existing art to make a statement. They're not a violent gang, but they're a huge nuisance to businesses and they're on the watch list of many a corporate police force.

Common Arrogant Pigs Member

ODFs: +0; **DDFs:** +2 (normally +1/+1, but they often use the Cautious stance)

Artistic; Covert; Urban: Good

Weapon: Pepper spray (**Damage:** None; **Range:**

Poor; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 1; **Gift:** Pepper spray—target must make a Great Body check or take a -2 penalty to all actions for 10 rounds; **Cost:** 1)

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Fat Cat

ODFs: +2; **DDFs:** +6 (normally +4/+4, but Fat Cat usually takes the Defensive stance)

Knowledge: Superb;

Specialization: Politics

Artistic: Superb

Covert: Great

Manipulation; Urban: Good

Reputation: Fair

Gifts: Friends in low places

Faults: Wanted by the corps; political zealot

Weapons: Pepper Spray (see above); *control inanimate* device (**PR:** 2)

Wound Levels: Normal wound track

Mafias

Organized crime is as old as time, but it's the Italians who made it fashionable. Featured prominently in 20th century cinema, the Mafia, or "Mob," has become not only infamous, but legendary. There are perhaps more mythological figures from early Mob history than there are in Homer's *Odyssey*.

The term Mafia no longer applies exclusively to the Sicilian Mob, though. It was never the Mob's official moniker (in fact, they never had one to begin with), but it's now used simply to describe organized crime syndicates, especially those with strong ethnic ties. The Italian Mafia, Russian Mafia, Jewish Mafia, Mexican Mafia, and

Psychic Mafia are just a few of the major mob units now recognized by most police watch lists.

Mafias combine the business-savvy of a mega-corporation with the ruthless tactics of gangs and cartels to create crime syndicates that are truly to be feared. While pissing off a cartel is likely to get you killed, pissing off a mob is dangerous to you, your immediate family, your Aunty Jenny, and her little dog too. In fact, most crime lords will attack your family and friends before attacking you—they prefer to break your spirits, crush your soul, and ultimately force you to grovel at their feet before they put two in your chest.



Mafias in Your Game

Mafias are some of the largest and most feared criminal organizations on Earth. Some of them may rival smaller megacorps in terms of power and wealth, and certainly they rival them in terms of firepower. They have their hands in every possible criminal activity and even some legitimate business ventures.

A campaign centered around a mafia may involve several different facets of its business. Players may be a special police or government task force assigned to bring down a specific crime family, or they may be pawns in the Sicilian Mafia's schemes.

Unless the campaign is designed to stretch several dozens of sessions with PCs increasing greatly in power over time, the likelihood of the players ever taking down an entire mafia, or even an entire branch of one family, are pretty slim. The fact is, mafias are networks of organized crime families and syndicates, and even discovering who's involved in a single mob activity may be enough work to keep the players occupied for several sessions.

The top dogs in any given mafia are probably Phenomenal or even Extraordinary NPCs (see [page 160](#) in the **Psi-punk core book** for more about Powerful NPCs). They have dozens of lower-ranking cohorts and hundreds or even thousands of goons at their disposal, so it can be a challenge for a group of street runners to work their way up through the ranks.

Players don't necessarily need to be opposed to a mafia. They may be members of a powerful crime family or they may be Made Men (trusted associates of a crime family). Such players may receive their jobs from the leaders of their family, or they may still be working hard to get on the mob's good side. PCs may even be tasked with carrying out hits or other contracts, or they may actively opposed members of another mafia.

Warring Mafias

Like gangs, mafias have their own turf and they don't like others to impede upon it. The difference is that turf to a mafia isn't usually physical; more likely, one mafia claims control of an arms smuggling ring, an underground gambling group, a protection racket, and so forth.

When another organization, especially another mafia, oversteps their boundaries and tries to get involved in the same criminal activities where the mafia has already established influence, bloody mob wars tend to ensue. These wars have the potential to devastate the local area and leave a lot of civilian casualties in their wake, so

when law enforcement catches wind of them they crack down pretty hard.

A mob war can be a perfect backdrop for a campaign. Players may belong to one mafia and be tasked with eliminating the competition, or they may be street runners who are simply caught in the crossfire.

Imagine a team taking a job from their normal Dealer, and that job just so happens to have been handed down by the Russian Mafia who want to avoid getting their hands dirty by using disposable help. Unfortunately the job puts them at odds with the Three Harmonies Society, who somehow manage to find out that the Russian Mafia was involved. The two mafias begin a war for dominance, and the team of players are the first group of pawns who need to be put in their place.

Mafias and Player Characters

If you wish to include organized crime in your character's background, you have a lot of options. There are several different mafias to choose from, and each has the potential to earn you access to powerful equipment and magic.

Most members of an organized crime syndicate are low-ranking thugs, but PCs may wish to strive for bigger and better things. Make sure you check with your GM before starting play with Rank above Fair (+0) in any given mafia, because being a ranking member may have a lot of implications in your campaign.

Specific Mafias

Marco Family

Leader: Don Marco

The Marco Family embodies everything one would expect from an organized crime family, as if they had intentionally tried to emulate every movie ever made about the Sicilian Mob. Don Marco himself is pure-blooded Italian, despite having been born and raised in Brooklyn, NAU. He wears nice suits, drives classic cars, and hates getting his victims' blood on his clothing.

Marco and his men run every racket and scheme imaginable: underground gambling dens, drug smuggling, shipping fraud, embezzlement, protection rackets, and any other scam or scheme they can think of. They have ties to several cartels, notably Voortriflik Freight ([page 24](#)) and Lunatica Casino Group ([page 25](#)).

Don Marco has been priming his son to take over the family when the inevitable occurs. His kid goes by the street name of “Badger,” because he’s particularly fond of using his implanted claws as weapons when he needs to fight. Usually though, he prefers to hack peoples’ minds and force them to cow to his every whim. Marco couldn’t be more proud.

Don Marco

ODFs: +6; **DDFs:** +6

Manipulation: Superb;

Specialization: Exhort

Urban: Superb;

Specialization: Gang Tactics

Reputation: Superb

Combat (Ranged); Combat (Non-Physical); Merchant; Knowledge: Great

Artistic; Covert; Social (Informal, Formal): Good

Gifts: Friends in low places; Always keeps his cool; Many people owe him favors; Never forgets a face

Faults: Old-fashioned; easily offended

Weapons: Marco’s Tommy Gun (**Damage:** Great; **Range:** Great; **RoF:** S, B, FA; **Reload:** 4, 3, 2; **Gift:** Sound Suppressor; **Cost:** 36), Cryo Canon (puts his enemies “on ice;” *cryokinesis* device with no limitations; **PR:** 4)

Armor: Nanoweave Pin-striped Suit (Impenetrable Armor; **Protection:** Phenomenal; **Gift:** Nanoweave, negates penalties of impenetrable armor; **Cost:** 80)

Luck Points: 1

Wound Levels: Normal wound track, +1 Hurt wound

Marco Family Made Man

ODFs: +3 ranged, +2 melee; **DDFs:** +3

Combat (Ranged): Good;

Specialization: Large Submachine Guns (Tommy Gun)

Combat (Melee); Covert; Urban: Good

Weapon: Tommy Gun (**Damage:** Great; **Range:** Great; **RoF:** S, B, FA; **Reload:** 4, 3, 2), and melee weapons such as clubs, knives, brass knuckles, etc.

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Acerbi Family

Leader: Don Acerbi

The Acerbi Family is often directly at odds with the Marcos. Though both crime families are of Italian descent, they’ve been feuding for decades and don’t get along with one another. Whenever the Marco Family makes a power play, the Acerbi Family is there to try to stop them.

Most members of the family, including Don Acerbi himself, don’t really remember why the two have been fighting for so long. It could have been something as simple as one boss insulting another, or it could have started when each family went after the same mark and stepped on each others’ toes. Regardless of what happened in the past, the fact is they’re still fighting in the present.

Like any good mob boss, Don Acerbi is heartless. In his case though, that’s literally true—he was one of the first people to have a fully operational cybernetic heart installed in his chest. He still has a nasty scar from the surgery, which he wears with pride.

The Acerbi Family isn’t afraid to deal in any criminal matter, but they specialize in arms smuggling and human trafficking. Unlike many other crime rings though, they don’t simply pull the strings of other cartels; they prefer to do all of the dirty work themselves. That means putting themselves on the front line, directly opposite law enforcement and several cartels, but the family isn’t afraid of making enemies.

Rumor has it that Don Acerbi’s underboss is a soul jacker, which may explain why many of the family’s enemies act with less enmity than one would expect. Any time the family has a problem with another organization, they send Vincenzo in to personally deal with it.

Don Acerbi

ODFs: +6; **DDFs:** +6

Manipulation: Superb;

Specialization: Intimidate

Reputation: Superb;

Specialization: Infamy

Combat (Ranged): Superb;

Specialization: Md. Handguns (note that this stacks with the Ocular Integration on his weapons, so he may reroll 2dF on every attack made with his Pair of Aces)

Combat (Non-Physical); Merchant; Knowledge;

Urban: Great

Athletic; Covert; Social (Informal, Formal): Good

Gifts: Cybernetic Heart (doesn't tire easily, gains +2 to any check requiring endurance), Guns Akimbo (can fire two guns in a round with no penalty), Cyber Eyes (infravision, x-ray vision)

Faults: Heartless (lacks the ability to sympathize/empathize), Brazen

Weapons: Pair of Aces (two Md. Handguns, each with **Damage:** Good; **Range:** Good; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 4; **Gifts:** Ocular Integration, Increased Ammo Capacity; **Cost:** 40)

Armor: Nanoweeve Business Suit (Impenetrable Armor; **Protection:** Phenomenal; **Gift:** Nanoweeve, negates penalties of impenetrable armor; **Cost:** 80)

Luck Points: 1

Wound Levels: Normal wound track, +1 Hurt wound

Vincenzo

ODFs: +5; **DDFs:** +5

Manipulation: Superb;

Specialization: Lying

Social (Informal, Formal); Knowledge: Great

Medical; Urban: Good

Gifts: *Mind control* (Great)

Faults: Callous, Must obey orders

Weapons: Md. Handgun (**Damage:** Good; **Range:** Good; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 3)

Luck Points: 1

Wound Track: Normal wound track

Acerbi Family Made Man

ODFs: +3 ranged, +2 melee; **DDFs:** +3

Combat (Ranged): Good;

Specialization: Large Submachine Guns

Combat (Melee), Covert, Urban: Good

Weapon: Large Machine Gun (**Damage:** Great; **Range:** Great; **RoF:** S, B, FA; **Reload:** 4, 3, 2), and melee weapons such as clubs, knives, brass knuckles, etc.

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Rakhimov Gang

Leader: Maxim Rakhimov

What was once a simple gang of misfits is now one of the largest Russian mafias in the world. The group originated in Stalingrad in the 2060s, but now has members in

most major cities across the globe. Each city has its own faction and regional hierarchy, but Maxim Rakhimov himself still earns a cut of every transaction made by any member, regardless of location.

The Rakhimov Gang have a nihilistic approach to everything they do. As they see it, nothing in life is permanent, and they'll teach that lesson to others by taking away everything anyone holds dear. They're deeply entrenched in the weapons trade, but they take part in their share of human trafficking and data theft as well.

Though classified by several police watch lists as a Russian mafia, the Rakhimov Gang are not exclusively Russian—they just happen to have originated in a Russian city. Their culture is as diverse as the regions in which they operate, and they're willing to take in just about any member who holds their own philosophy to be true. It's that openness to new members which is responsible for the mob's continued growth.

Maxim doesn't have a successor lined up in case he meets an untimely demise. As he sees it, even his own legacy isn't permanent. If he's killed and the mob falls apart, that's just the way life is. Despite this, there are many prominent faction leaders throughout the world who wouldn't mind a shot at his position if they ever get the chance.

Maxim Rakhimov

ODFs: +6; **DDFs:** +6

Manipulation: Superb;

Specialization: Torture

Medical: Superb;

Specialization: Anatomy

Combat (Melee): Superb

Athletics; Combat (Ranged); Reputation; Vehicles: Great

Professional; Social (Formal, Informal); Urban: Good

Gifts: Cyber Arms

Faults: Cold-hearted, Nihilist

Weapons: Fire Knuckles (Brass Knuckles; **Damage:** Superb; **Range:** Abysmal; **Gifts:** *Pyrokinesis*, PR 3; **Cost:** 32)

Armor: Reinforced Vest (Sturdy Armor; **Protection:** Great; **Fault:** Bulky, checks made to Notice are at +2; **Cost:** 6)

Luck Points: 1

Wound Levels: Normal wound track, +1 Hurt Wound

Common Rakhimov Thug

ODFs: +3; **DDFs:** +3

Combat (Melee, Ranged): Great
Urban; Vehicles: Good

Weapons: Small SMG (**Damage:** Good; **Range:** Good; **RoF:** S, B, FA; **Reload:** 4, 3, 2); Grenades x5 (**Damage:** Good; **Range:** Good; **Blast Area:** Fair)

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Psibreed

Leader: Sabina Classen

Formed during the psionic prohibition era of the NAU, Psibreed is a new form of mafia. Though they do participate in typical underworld endeavors, they also actively oppose corporations like Magicorp which aim to undermine the role of psychics in society.

The only qualification to become a member of Psibreed is that one must be a born psychic. A willingness to participate in illegal activities, especially assault and murder, are a plus. Psibreed isn't necessarily opposed to normals, but they actively oppose magic technologies and anyone willing to wield them.

Psibreed's daily activities revolve around smuggling, embezzling, and drug trafficking. They aren't involved in human trafficking rings, but nobody has expressly forbidden it either. Most of these activities are simply a means to an end, though—they earn the mafia money which they use to fund their war on Magicorp.

Not surprisingly, Magicorp police forces are the most eager to crack down on Psibreed. Other law enforcement agencies are content to let Magicorp spend their own resources combatting Psibreed, and if the mafia happens to land a significant blow against a top competitor, they don't show much sympathy.

Sabina Classen is a cunning leader who has overseen Psibreed since its inception (which also makes her quite old). Somehow, she always seems to know the best time to lay low and the best time to strike, which leads many people to speculate she is a seer as well as a powerful telepath.

Sabina Classen

ODFs: +4; **DDFs:** +8 (normally +6/+6, but she usually takes the Defensive posture)

Knowledge: Superb;

Specialization: Psionics

Spiritual: Superb;

Specialization: Astral Projection

Manipulation: Superb

Combat (Ranged); Covert; Medical;

Technical: Great

Craft; Reputation; Social (Formal);

Urban: Good

Gifts: *Precognition* (Wonderful); *mental communication* with *telecommunicate* (Wonderful)

Faults: Old, Vendetta against Magicorp, Powerful enemies

Weapons: Large Laser Pistol (Lg. Handgun; **Damage:** Superb; **Range:** Great; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 3; **Gifts:** Energy Weapon; **Cost:** 32)

Armor: Force Armor (Impenetrable armor; **Protection:** Phenomenal; **Gifts:** Flexible, Cloaking Device; **Cost:** 128)

Luck Points: 1

Wound Levels: Normal wound track, +1 additional Mental Hurt Wound

Common Psibreed Member

ODFs: +3; **DDFs:** +3

Manipulation; Social (Formal): Great

Combat (Ranged); Technical: Good

Gifts: Pick one psionic power (Good)

Weapons: Md. Handgun (**Damage:** Good; **Range:** Good; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 3)

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Viuda Negra

Leader: Javier "Asesino" Hernandez

Viuda Negra (Black Widow) is best known for two things: drug trafficking and murder. They operate primarily in South America and the NAU, but have recently begun branching out beyond the American continents.

The mafia got their start smuggling narcotics to prisoners, and like most drug running operations it quickly turned violent. Run-ins with law enforcement, rival gangs, and vigilantes were regular occurrences, yet somehow Viuda Negra managed to come out on top every time.

The mafia controls a vast network of criminals inside and outside the prison system. They're some of the most hardened criminals around and have very little regard for human life, which is why their leader earned the nickname "Asesino." He rules with an iron fist and is not shy about executing anyone who stands against him—no matter who it might be.

In 2090, MSI-sponsored police forces struck out against Viuda Negra for crimes against their prisoners. The mafia was caught smuggling a new drug called Morph into the prison system. Morph is a psychometabolic drug which causes users' bodies to literally melt away and then recreate itself, and somehow the prisoners were using it to slip their melted bodies between bars and escape their cells.

MSI task forces successfully rounded up over two dozen Viuda Negra soldiers and placed them into maximum security cells. One week later, Asesino personally led a charge into the prison to rescue his men. Damage dealt to the facility was irreparable, and MSI was stuck paying insurance to the families of nearly 40 security guards who never saw their loved ones alive again.

Javier "Asesino" Hernandez

ODFs: +7; **DDFs:** +5 (normally +6/+6, but he usually takes the Assertive posture)

Combat (Ranged): Wonderful;

Specialization: Sm. Submachineguns (note this stacks with the Ocular Integration Gift of his weapon, giving him +2dF reroll when firing his SMG)

Combat (Non-Physical): Superb;

Specialization: Tactics

Combat (Melee); Covert; Urban;

Reputation: Great

Athletic; Social (Informal); Technical; Vehicles: Good

Gifts: Cyber Eyes (HUD, Thermal Vision, X-ray Vision), Cyber Legs

Faults: Easily enraged, Wanted by more than just the police

Weapons: Silent Killer (Sm. SMG; **Damage:** Good;

Range: Good; **RoF:** S, B, FA; **Reload:** 4, 4, 3;

Gifs: Increased Ammo Capacity, Ocular Integration, Sound Suppressor; **Cost:** 68)

Armor: Reinforced Duster (Durable Armor; **Protection:** Superb; **Cost:** 32)

Magic: Invisibility Belt (see page 57 of the **Psipunk** core book)

Luck Points: 1

Wound Levels: Normal wound track, +1 Hurt Wound

Common Viuda Negra Member

ODFs: +4; **DDFs:** +2 (usually +3/+3, but they often take the Assertive posture)

Combat (Melee, Ranged): Great

Urban; Vehicles: Good

Weapons: Sm. SMG (**Damage:** Good; **Range:**

Good; **RoF:** S, B, FA; **Reload:** 4, 3, 2); Grenades x5 (**Damage:** Good; **Range:** Good; **Blast Area:** Fair)

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Rothstein and Sons

Leader: Abraham Rothstein

It may sound like any other father and son business, but Rothstein and Sons is actually a multinational criminal empire run by Abraham Rothstein, a highly intelligent and equally devious individual. The mafia dabbles in most criminal activities, but they excel at running financial scams, rackets, gambling rings, loan sharking, and bet fixing. If it has to do with large sums of money changing hands, Rothstein and Sons are there.

What most don't know is that Abraham Rothstein doesn't actually have any sons. He's a religious zealot and treats all of his underlings as his "sons" (and daughters) in the biblical sense. Outwardly, he gives the appearance of being an upstanding family man, and as long as you don't owe him money he's as neighborly as can be.

Rothstein is infamous for one of the largest sporting event schemes the world has ever seen. His men loaned money to thousands of individuals who each had received incredible (and bogus) tips about which teams would win and lose at the 2086 Olympics. His group also paid hundreds of athletes to fix their respective sporting events, then bet against them in a black market betting ring and made a fortune.

Not only did Rothstein and Sons win big on the fixed bets, they also collected a tidy sum from the losers they loaned money to. More astonishingly is that Rothstein somehow successfully pinned the blame on a rival mob boss who was convicted and jailed for the entire event. He earned billions of Neumarks and took down another crime lord simultaneously.

That's just one example of the way Rothstein thinks. Every plan he implements has at least two, if not three or four, winning schemes tied into it. He never does anything small, and he always stays a step or two ahead of the competition (and the law).

Abraham Rothsstein

ODFs: +4; **DDFs:** +8 (normally +6/+6, but he usually takes the Defensive posture)

Knowledge: Superb;

Specialization: Politics

Manipulation: Superb;

Specialization: Bluff

Social (Formal): Superb;

Specialization: Diplomacy

Merchant: Superb

Reputation; Social (Informal); Urban; Technical: Great

Artistic; Combat (Ranged, Non-Physical): Good

Gifts: ESP (Wonderful); Beautiful speaking voice; Shady contacts in police force

Faults: Old, Only fights in self-defense

Weapons: Sm. Handgun (**Damage:** Fair; **Range:** Good; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 4)

Armor: Nanoweeve Three Piece Suit (Impenetrable Armor; **Protection:** Phenomenal; **Gift:** Nanoweeve, negates penalties of impenetrable armor; **Cost:** 80)

Luck Points: 1

Wound Levels: Normal wound track

Rothstein's Sons / Daughters

ODFs: +3; **DDFs:** +3

Covert: Great; **Specialization:** Forgery

Manipulation: Great

Combat (Ranged): Good

Pick one other skill: Good

Weapons: Lg. Submachine Gun (**Damage:** Great; **Range:** Great; **RoF:** S, B, FA; **Reload:** 4, 3, 2)

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Three Harmonies Society

Leaders: Cong Min (the Head), Kinjo Yui (the Hands), Jeon Du-hwan (the Feet)

Formed by the leaders of several Asian criminal organizations, Three Harmonies Society (often referred to as 3HS) is unique in its organizational structure. There are three branches to the Society: the Head, the Hands, and the Feet. Each has a specific role within the organization, and the separation of roles helps protect the society as a whole if any single branch is crippled.

Cong Min is a former Chinese Triad leader who worked closely with Kinjo Yui of the Japanese Yakuza for many years. The two eventually decided to go into business together, and they recruited Jeon Du-hwan who was at the forefront of a criminal empire rising out of New Korea. Altogether, they formed the largest and most intricate underworld organization in the world.

The Head is the organizational branch of 3HS. Cong Min is a master strategist and he oversees all of the activities within the society. He chooses when, where, and how the other branches operate, and his precognizant powers give him insight into the outcome of the choices he makes. In addition to organizing the society, the Head is responsible for providing relief to disaster victims, which makes the poor and needy masses view 3HS in a positive light.

If the Head is benevolent, the Hands are malevolent. The Hands are the active branch of 3HS. Kinjo Yui takes great care to not allow her association with the rest of the society become public knowledge, so this branch operates as anonymously as possible. The Hands carry out assassination orders, armed robbery, and other violent crimes.

The Feet are the movers of the society. Also operating anonymously, the Feet are responsible for drug and arms smuggling, human trafficking, racketeering, embezzlement, and other primarily non-violent crimes. Jeon Du-hwan likes to keep his operations as low-key as possible to avoid attention, and most of his soldiers carry stealth devices to improve performance.

Though relatively new as a unified criminal organization, 3HS is one of the largest in the world. It has roughly 300,000 members and operates on every continent and the moon. 3HS is on the top of most law enforcement watch lists, but it also has plenty of members within the law enforcement sector who work to keep them out of the spotlight.

Cong Min

ODFs: +6; **DDFs:** +6

Combat (Non-Physical): Wonderful;

Specialization: Tactics

Knowledge: Superb;

Specialization: Politics

Manipulation: Superb

Artistic; Merchant; Professional;

Reputation; Technical: Great

Combat (Ranged); Social (Informal, Formal): Fair

Language (Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean):

Fair

Gifts: *Precognition* (Wonderful); Brain Bank; Master Strategist**Faults:** Overconfident, Stubborn**Weapons:** Sm. Submachine Gun (**Damage:** Great; **Range:** Good; **RoF:** S, B, FA; **Reload:** 4, 3, 2; **Gifts:** Energy Weapon; **Cost:** 32)**Armor:** Nanoweeve Three Piece Suit (Impenetrable Armor; **Protection:** Phenomenal; **Gift:** Nanoweeve, negates penalties of impenetrable armor; **Cost:** 80)**Luck Points:** 1**Wound Levels:** Normal wound track, +1 Hurt Wound**Kinjo Yui****ODFs:** +8 ranged, +7 melee; **DDFs:** +5 (normally +7 ranged/+6 melee, +6 DDFs, but she often takes the Assertive posture)**Combat (Ranged):** Superb;**Specialization:** Sniper Rifle (note this stacks with her weapon's Ocular Integration Gift to give a +2dF reroll)**Athletic:** Superb;**Specialization:** Free Running**Combat (Melee):** Superb**Covert; Survival; Technical:** Great**Social (Formal):** Good**Language (Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean):**

Fair

Gifts: Cyber Eyes (HUD, Thermal Vision, X-ray Vision); Brain Bank**Faults:** Doesn't ask questions, Easily provoked**Weapons:** Widowmaker (Sniper Rifle; **Damage:** Wonderful; **Range:** Wonderful; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 4; **Gifts:** Increased Ammo Capacity, Energy Weapon, Ocular Integration, Stabilizer; **Cost:** 88); Katana (Two-handed Sword; **Damage:** Superb; **Range:** Mediocre; **Gifts:** Morphing; **Cost:** 32)**Armor:** Powered Body Armor (Durable Armor; **Protection:** Superb)**Magic:** Flight Boots, Invisibility Belt (see page 57 of the **Psi-punk** core book)**Luck Points:** 1**Wound Levels:** Normal wound track, +1 Hurt Wound**Jeon Du-hwang****ODFs:** +6; **DDFs:** +6**Athletic:** Superb;**Specialization:** Climbing**Covert:** Superb;**Specialization:** Stealth**Merchant:** Superb**Combat (Ranged); Survival; Technical; Urban; Vehicles:** Great**Medical; Social (Formal):** Good**Language (Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean):** Fair**Gifts:** *Sonarkinesis* (Wonderful); Brain Bank; Cyber Eyes (X-ray Vision)**Faults:** Intolerant Vain**Weapons:** Laser Assault Rifle (**Damage:** Superb; **Range:** Great; **RoF:** S, B, FA; **Reload:** 4, 4, 3; **Gifts:** Energy Weapon, Increased Ammo Capacity; **Cost:** 64); Shadow Grenades x5**Armor:** Nanoweeve Catsuit (Impenetrable Armor; **Protection:** Phenomenal; **Gifts:** Nanoweeve, negates penalties of impenetrable armor; **Cost:** 80)**Luck Points:** 1**Wound Levels:** Normal wound track, +1 Hurt Wound**Common Head Member****ODFs:** +2; **DDFs:** +2**Knowledge; Manipulation; Merchant:** Great**Combat (Non-Physical, Ranged):** Good**Weapons:** Md. Handgun (**Damage:** Good; **Range:** Good; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 3)**Wound Levels:** 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)**Common Hands Member****ODFs:** +4; **DDFs:** +2 (normally +3/+3, but they usually take the Assertive posture)**Combat (Melee, Ranged):** Great**Athletic; Covert:** Good**Weapons:** Rifle (**Damage:** Good; **Range:** Superb; **RoF:** S, B; **Reload:** 3, 2)**Armor:** Reinforced Vest (Sturdy Armor; **Protection:** Great)

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Common Feet Member

ODFs: +3; **DDFs:** +3

Athletic; Covert; Merchant: Great

Combat (Ranged); Survival; Technical; Vehicles: Good

Weapons: Sm. Submachine Gun (**Damage:** Good; **Range:** Good; **RoF:** S, B, FA; **Reload:** 4, 3, 2)

Magic: *Stealth belt* (*sonarkinesis* and *photokinesis*, PR1, self-only, decrease light and sound only)

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

Saharan Mafia

Leader: Muslih Qamari

Muslih Qamari was once a political activist who helped changed the face of Saharan society. In his youth, he played a key role in over-throwing the Moroccan and Tunesian governments. Though he never held a seat in the new Saharan parliament he did ensure several of his hand-picked allies became leaders.

That was sixty years ago. Now an old man, Muslih has grown jaded with the new government. Despite the dramatic changes he helped bring about, corruption still reigns. He now uses his knowledge of the political systems to his own ends.

Muslih's Saharan Mafia is one of the few great powers in Northern Africa. Though the Arab Nation rules the people of the region, the mafia rules the Arab Nation. Muslih maintains powerful allies within parliament, including Prime Minister Haziem Benjelloun. He's the shadowy underwriter of most of the nation's laws, and his men are entrenched in every aspect of the legal system, including security and criminal justice.

This mafia uses its power to smuggle weapons, magic, drugs, people, and all manner of other illicit goods throughout the region. Moreover, the mafia uses its power to maintain a lucrative food smuggling ring the likes of which are seen nowhere else in Africa.

In the dry wastes of Northern Africa, real food is even more expensive to produce than other areas of the world. NFC Global has just as tight a foothold in the region as anywhere else, but Muslih works with them behind-the-scenes to ensure food smuggling laws are both strict and severely enforced—of course, when the mafia controls the enforcers, it's easy to look the other way. That means real food commands incredible prices on the

black market, and Muslih benefits both from its sale and its prohibition.

Muslih Qamari

ODFs: +4; **DDFs:** +7

Social (Formal): Wonderful;

Specialization: Public Speaking

Manipulation: Wonderful;

Specialization: Blackmail

Knowledge: Superb

Specialization: Politics

Language (Arabic): Good

Combat (Ranged); Language (English): Fair

Gifts: Friends in high places; friends in low places; stress analyzer (detect stress levels in others)

Faults: Old; Jaded

Weapon: Sm. Handgun (**Damage:** Fair; **Range:** Good; **RoF:** S; **Reload:** 3; **Cost:** 4)

Armor: Nanoweeve Suit (Impenetrable Armor;

Protection: Phenomenal; **Gifts:** Nanoweeve,

negates penalties of impenetrable armor; **Cost:** 80)

Luck Points: 1

Wound Levels: Normal wound track

Common Saharan Mafia Henchman

ODFs: +3; **DDFs:** +3

Combat (Ranged): Great

Athletic; Covert; Manipulation; Vehicles: Good

Weapons: Sm. SMG (**Damage:** Good; **Range:** Good; **RoF:** S, B, FA; **Reload:** 4, 3, 2)

Armor: Reinforced Vest (Sturdy Armor; **Protection:** Great)

Wound Levels: 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5+ (Incapacitated)

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