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Rifts®: MercTown™

By Pat Nowak and Kevin Siembieda



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Dedication

Dedicated to the soldiers of 31B - Grant, Merc, Evan, Dan, Mike, John, and Brian. You couldn't ask for seven better guys with whom to spend a six month vacation in wonderful, sunny Bosnia. Thanks for the memories.

– Patrick Nowak, Winter 2004

The cover, by *Mark Evans*, depicts a pair of mercs facing down a rival cyborg bounty hunter in the Dockside neighborhood.

PDF Edition – October 2016

First Printing – March 2005

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Rifts® MercTown™ is published by Palladium Books Inc., 39074 Webb Court, Westland, MI 48185. Printed in the USA.

Palladium Books® Presents:

Rifts® MercTown™

A Rifts® Sourcebook

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Depiction of Kentek Drago

Special Thanks to Wayne and Alex for their input and hard work, Carmen for his help organizing the material, Mark Evans for a great cover, *all* the artists for breathing life into MercTown and its cast of characters, and especially to Pat Nowak for his great concepts, characters and simmering imagination (I hope to see a lot more from him in the future). Also to Julius, Hank, Linda, Kathy, Tina, Erick and the rest of the Palladium crew.

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FREDDIE E.
WILLIAMS II

Author's Introduction

The **Rifts® RPG** is one of the most popular RPGs ever. Its setting is the unique landscape of a futuristic Earth that combines elements of magic and technology, idealism and hope, political intrigue and tyranny, wonder and conflict. With the huge number of books in this series it is hard to pick a favorite, but my personal favorite would be **Rifts® Mercenaries**.

Rifts® Mercenaries wasn't dedicated to a specific region or nation, but contained a wealth of information like terrific, new O.C.C.s, a vast equipment section that included combat aircraft, naval warships and explosives, and most importantly, mercenary companies with compelling NPCs, adventure ideas and an outline for running an entire campaign centered around mercenary player characters.

I loved that book. I've been fascinated with the real world military and mercenary trade for years. I've read dozens of books on the subject, watched countless movies (like *The Wild Geese*, *Men of War*, *The Dogs of War*, etc.), collected more than a hundred magazines on the subject, and even joined the military. Not a surprise then, I have been inspired to write a sequel to **Rifts® Mercenaries**.

My plan was to write a single sourcebook entitled "Job Opportunities" to expand beyond the parameters of the original merc book and present new campaign ideas, background information, key NPCs, specific conflicts and adventures for mercenaries set in the Rifts environment.

As I started writing I found the ideas continued to pile up, and I came to the realization that I had more ideas than the space in one sourcebook would permit. Before I'd even finished writing half of the material that I wanted to include in the book, the page count was already hovering around five hundred, too large to fit into a single 160 page World Book. Undaunted, I finished the mountain of material and sent it to Palladium anyway. The Publisher's solution was to split the material I envisioned between **Naruni Wave 2**, **MercTown** and **Merc Ops**. The centerpiece for **MercTown** would be the location itself. To present an independent city-state where mercenaries were welcome, because the place itself was run by mercs for mercs. A place where warriors and adventurers could visit and relax, trade goods, find work, establish a base of operations or use the town as a place from which to launch adventures and campaigns; each resident, mercenary group, street gang, character, and storefront a potential avenue for new adventures or an interesting plot twist. The companion book, **Rifts® Merc Ops**, follows that up with tons of weapons (S.D.C. and M.D.), military hardware, some armor and vehicles, and a few desperadoes (each the catalyst for adventure), along with a few dozen plots and ideas for mercenary adventures.

I only hope that these additions to the mercenary character and military theme are as well received as **Rifts® Mercenaries**, the book that inspired me.

Patrick Nowak, 2004

CS Threat Assessment on MercTown

**Reported by CSID Major Jameson Brock –
Autumn, 109 P.A.**

Major Brock cleared his voice and began.

"Gentlemen, I have been asked to provide this intelligence briefing on the city-state known as **MercTown**. In light of recent events, such as the Juicer Uprising of 105 P.A., the protracted Siege on Tolkeen, the involvement of agents from the Federation of Magic in the Tolkeen campaign, and the incident in Benford Town, High Command feels that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on monitoring mercenary forces in the Mississippi Basin region."

The lean, straight-backed CSID officer paused for a moment, turning to face the screen behind him, and using a laser pointer device, he indicated a dot on the map in northwest Kentucky.

"This is the area of our primary interest, the city-state of *New Paducah*, more commonly known as *MercTown*."

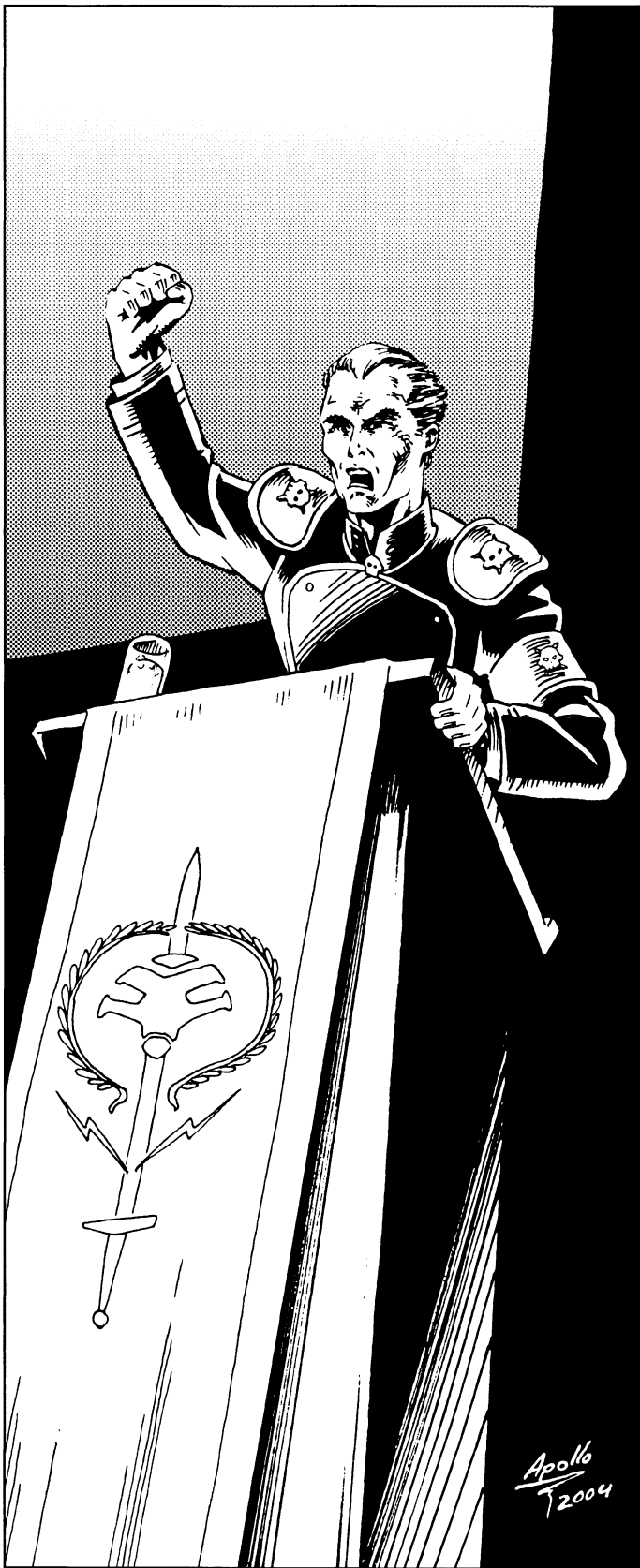
"Coalition intelligence first catalogued the kingdom of New Paducah in 73 P.A. It was discovered by a military long-range reconnaissance team dispatched from the Coalition State of Missouri to survey the borders of the *Magic Zone*; an area we all know to be infested by magical contamination and believed to be the current location for the Federation of Magic. At the time, Paducah was a small, insignificant community of approximately fifteen thousand humans and D-Bees. Except for the presence of a single, minor nexus point at the intersection of two ley lines, there was no significant presence of magic and the community could barely support itself. As such, the survey team merely recorded its coordinates and continued on its mission into the heartland of the Kentucky territory.

"Things have changed, gentlemen. We now have reason to believe New Paducah serves as the single largest concentration of mercenary soldiers, independent armies and freelance covert operatives in the Midwest."

Once again the Major paused his monologue, as much for dramatic effect as for the opportunity to sip water from the glass resting at the end of the conference table. All eyes in the room remained focused on him.

"The present situation in Paducah," he continued, "is a direct result of a de facto coup in the autumn of 95 P.A. According to reliable sources, the kingdom was invaded by an army of brigands and magic practitioners from the Ohio Valley. New Paducah had no real military of its own and thus, its former ruler, a dictator named *Alkavar Dorveen*, hired three mercenary companies to defend the kingdom. Only Dorveen promised the mercenaries more money than he could actually pay. Apparently the dictator expected one or more of the companies to be destroyed by the invaders, requiring him to pay only the one or two who survived.

"He was wrong. The mercenaries handily defeated the threatening army with nary a casualty. Rather than face the angry mercenary leaders, Alkavar Dorveen fled to Kingsdale in the Missouri territory where he still resides.



“Without a strong leader or any genuine opposition, the three mercenary commanders decided to take the kingdom of New Paducah as payment. One of the groups, the most militant, took half of the kingdom’s treasury and left for the New West. The other two commanders opted to remain in New Paducah and seized control of the kingdom. By the terms of a settlement negotiated between the two merc outfits, *Commander Kentek*

Drago assumed political authority over the city-state as Military Governor. In return, the leaders of the second merc company, the Crabtree Brothers, were granted a portion of the territory to establish a base of operations as well as a share of the city-state’s tax revenues in the form of a yearly tribute.

“In the decade or so since, *Drago* has transformed New Paducah into a thriving city-state that serves as a haven to those in the mercenary trade. Its economy is based on catering to the needs and wants of mercenaries. The city is home to dozens of arms dealers, armorers and vehicle dealerships that include outlets from all of the major arms manufacturers on the continent, including the resurfaced alien corporation known as *Naruni Enterprises*.

“As ordered by the Military High Command, my team traveled to MercTown to conduct a covert reconnaissance op. Posing as mercenaries from the state of Whykin, we infiltrated the city-state six months ago to conduct an extensive threat analysis.”

The Major cued the slide projector to advance to the next frame. Again using the laser pointer he highlighted the location of New Paducah on the map slide.

“MercTown is located here, in the northwest quadrant of Kentucky. It is not a member of the Federation of Magic and is located *outside* of the territory currently claimed by the Federation. The city is built on the banks of the Ohio River right at the fork where the Tennessee River begins its flow. The kingdom is less than thirty miles (48 km) from the Mississippi River.

“As you can clearly see, this *MercTown* is situated in a strategic location roughly in the center of the settled regions of America. The kingdom is no farther than three hundred miles (480 km) from the Coalition States of *Arkansas*, *Missouri*, *Chi-Town*, and the kingdom of *Whykin*, the *Golden Age Weaponsmiths* (GAW) controlled portions of Alabama, and the *Magic Zone*. Moreover, the city sits astride the Tennessee/Ohio River system, a major trade axis between Golden Age Weaponsmiths in the southeast, and the Missouri territory. With the Mississippi River so close at hand, *MercTown* has relatively easy access to the south, including *Arkansas* and the *Pecos Empire of Texas*, as well as *Minnesota* and what’s left of the Tolkeen rebels. All of which makes *MercTown* a natural trading center and logistics terminus. That means its current incarnation is just the beginning of what could become a formidable military and political power.

“We used the city-state’s location to our advantage, posing as hired guards on a merchant river barge from *Whykin* to enter the city without raising suspicion. Truth be told, there are so many thousands of transients that we could have arrived under the guise of any occupation from mercenary to vagabond.

“Gaining access to *MercTown* was easy. There is no one at the docks or gates checking for entry visas or identification papers of any kind. Given that the only trade prohibited in the city is slavery, merchants, soldiers, adventurers and drifters come and go freely without so much as a sideways glance by the authorities. Furthermore, the kingdom levies few tariffs on imported goods, and those which are taxed are mainly agricultural products such as lumber, fruits and grain, which is done to protect the local farmers.

“Upon entering *MercTown* we were surprised to discover that the **local police** do not confiscate weapons, as they do at

most other civilized cities. Visitors are allowed to keep their body armor, energy sidearms and melee weapons. Only heavy military hardware is *not* permitted within city limits, such as rail guns, missile launchers, power armor, and combat vehicles, including Automatons and giant robots. At first it was comforting to retain possession of our armor and sidearms, until we realized that almost everyone around us was similarly armed.

“The name, **MercTown**, is a fitting one. The streets are crowded with all manner of mercenary soldiers, cyborgs, Juicers, Crazies, Bursters, Psi-Stalkers, City Rats, adventurers, arms dealers, thieves and roughnecks. No one is turned away from the city, not even the most dangerous species of D-Bees nor practitioners of magic, or even those who pursue the darkest of mystic arts. As we walked through the **downtown core of the city**, we quickly lost count of the vast numbers of mercenary outfits present, though there must have been agents of at least two hundred different mercenary companies, as we saw dozens and dozens of insignias, a third of which are not in the CS database. Admittedly, some of these merc companies are small, and many come and go like flies, but that doesn’t make them any less dangerous. There had to be thousands of veteran *guns for hire* and other freelancers throughout the community. I can say with confidence, every freelance occupation you can imagine was represented, from obvious green recruits marveling at the offerings of the merchants, to seasoned veterans in town to reequip or get a little R & R.

“One of our first orders of business was to catalogue the principal arms dealers and economic leaders of the city-state. This was not as difficult as one might suspect. Many of the leading manufacturers and death merchants on the continent maintain corporate offices in MercTown, and most visitors and mercs based in the community proudly wear their identifying insignias out in the open. Right in the center of town is an office building called **Mercenary Plaza** which houses over a dozen organizations involved in various aspects of the mercenary trade.”

As he spoke he advanced though five slides offering several views of the office building.

“Among the occupants, there is a delegation from *Larsen’s Brigade*, a private security firm called *Comitatus Security Inc.*, *Maritime Protection Services* who specialize in maritime ops, an independent intelligence agency called *Blackman Intelligence Resources*, and an extra-dimensional organization that calls themselves *Inter-Dimensional Counterinsurgency*, as well as a few visiting members of the infamous *Megaversal Legion*, though we learned they do not have a permanent base of operation in the town or the surrounding area. However, the presence of the ML shows just how notorious MercTown is becoming if it can attract the likes of these dimension hopping scum. There is also a so-called mercenary agency by the name of *Continental Mercenary Contract Services* who represent thirteen separate outfits, including *Crow’s Commandos* and *Braddock’s Bad Boys*.

“In addition to those companies with offices in the Mercenary Plaza building, there are dozens more located throughout the community. One group, *Air Superiority Inc.*, is essentially an independent air force with a fleet of combat aircraft roughly the size of a CS fighter wing. A tavern in the *Warrens* called the *Broken Skull* serves as the temporary headquarters of a merc company calling itself *Mayhem’s Marauders*. This outfit is known to have carried out missions against CS forces in the

Chi-Town border region and is believed to operate extensively in the Magic Zone. According to the rumor mill in MercTown, Mayhem’s Marauders is in the process of negotiating a contract with ousted members of the Tolkeen government to bolster rebel resistance and make an impact against our forces in Minnesota.”

A slide of the Broken Skull Tavern was replaced by one of a three-story house painted crimson red.

“Another outfit that we believe could prove dangerous to Coalition military operations is *The Red Terror*. This group, however, is more of a cult than a professional mercenary company. Its membership is made up primarily of D-Bees. These unruly creatures are fanatics who profess to worship an alien war god, and, in the name of this god, they accept contracts at prices far below market value, seemingly simply for the joy of combat. The cultists are capable warriors that include mutants, Ogres and barbarians among their mostly inhuman ranks, all of whom engage in barbaric acts of unparalleled savagery. Nearly everyone in MercTown, even its own defense force, is terrified of the Red Terrors. I am convinced that it’s only a matter of time before our soldiers cross paths with these bloodthirsty fanatics.”

Reaching for his glass of water the major simultaneously cued the projector to the next slide.

“This sprawling camp is the headquarters of the **Tennessee Headhunters**, one of the original three companies to seize control of New Paducah. It is led by the Crabtree Brothers, who use the camp as a seasonal base of operations for its active members as well as doubling as a mercenary training school called the *Headhunter Academy*. Here Tennessee Jack Crabtree and a cadre of veteran troops train an average of five hundred to a thousand would-be mercenaries every year. The best and brightest of these recruits go on to fill the ranks of established companies like Larsen’s Brigade, Crow’s Commandos and the Tennessee Headhunters.

“My team observed the training regimen of the school for several days, and confirmed that the training program offers as comprehensive and thorough a course as any run by our own Coalition military. The graduates of this school are reasonably skilled, professional soldiers capable of performing the same kinds of missions as our own CS infantry soldiers and rangers.”

The whole time he spoke of the Academy, the Major advanced slides through a range of pictures depicting the training regimen. From the murmurs and whispered comments in the background, he knew that several of the senior military officers in the room were concerned. Ever the professional speaker, the Major gave his audience several moments to absorb the information he’d provided thus far. When he thought the assembled officers were finished with their private musings, the Major continued.

“Hand in hand with the apparent danger of mercenary forces is the proliferation of arms in MercTown. The city-state is a buyer’s market for weapons and contraband. Every leading manufacturer on the continent has a sales outlet in the city-state, in addition to a score of lesser weapons makers and independent arms merchants. To make matters worse, Techno-Wizard weaponry and weapon systems from other dimensions and alien worlds are also imported to MercTown. Thankfully, with the exception of Naruni Enterprises, alien weaponry and magic items from other worlds appear to be uncommon and expensive.

“The same Mercenary Plaza building, where the leading mercenary outfits in America have offices, is also home to several major arms manufacturers. *Northern Gun*, *Wellington Industries*, *Wilk’s Laser Industries* and *Golden Age Weaponsmiths* have corporate offices in the building and regularly coordinate large scale arms deals throughout the region. Only the *Manistique Imperium* and *Triax* seem to have refrained from dealing with these roughnecks. These same companies operate direct sales outlets in the city as well as accommodate individual customers. Likewise, there are sales outlets for *Titan Industries*, *Chipwell*, *Bandito Arms* and several Techno-Wizard outlets, including the city of Lazlo’s *Armstrong TW Armaments*, *Stormspire* from the Magic Zone, a number of local, independent operatives, and there are rumors that *Splugorth Bio-Wizard* items are sometimes made available in MercTown as well.

“Even more disturbing is the presence of several extra-dimensional arms manufacturers. *Naruni Enterprises*, which we thought we had eradicated from North America, is most definitely back in operation and entrenched in MercTown. The alien corporation has built its own office complex in the city not far from Mercenary Plaza. CS Intelligence believes that this building is their headquarters in North America, possibly the entire world. From this central location Naruni Enterprises coordinates massive deals throughout the continent with kingdoms, mercenary companies, raiders and criminal organizations of all sizes. The aliens send out so-called *Field Marketing Teams* to demonstrate their weapon systems, make sales and coordinate delivery from their warehouse in MercTown. My team’s efforts to infiltrate this building failed miserably. It is protected by a layered security system that is more technologically sophisticated than anything I have ever seen. The presence of Naruni Enterprises must be of paramount concern to the Coalition States.

“Of equal concern is the showroom and import business operated by newcomer, *Magefire Weaponry Inc.* This company is also an *alien* manufacturer with its point of origin and base of operations in another dimension. Some say the same home dimension as the Naruni. What makes this new weapons manufacturer so dangerous is that all their products are magical in nature and include new magic weapons and items never before seen. Some are completely alien, others the product of regional Techno-Wizards. The only comforting news I can offer on Magefire is that the organization does not seem to have any ulterior motive to undermine the CS. Its only interest seems to be in turning a profit, with North America as its latest market. However, their presence and the goods they sell can only support enemies of the Coalition, and therefore represent a serious threat to the security of the CS. While no massive arms deals have been made with enemy states such as Tolkeen Retributionists, Kingsdale, Lazlo or the Federation of Magic, it seems only a matter of time, and I must recommend taking covert action to undermine and eliminate Magefire before it can entrench itself in our world.

“The second priority of our mission was to evaluate the strength of MercTown’s security force. The following slides are pictures of *the Barracks*, the main base for the MercTown Defenders located in the heart of the city. Approximately fifteen hundred of the four thousand Defenders are present and battle ready at this location. This military organization serves as both the *official army* and *law enforcement* for the MercTown city-state. Most of the personnel operating from the Barracks are

the law enforcement branch, while conventional military units are stationed primarily around the city perimeter.

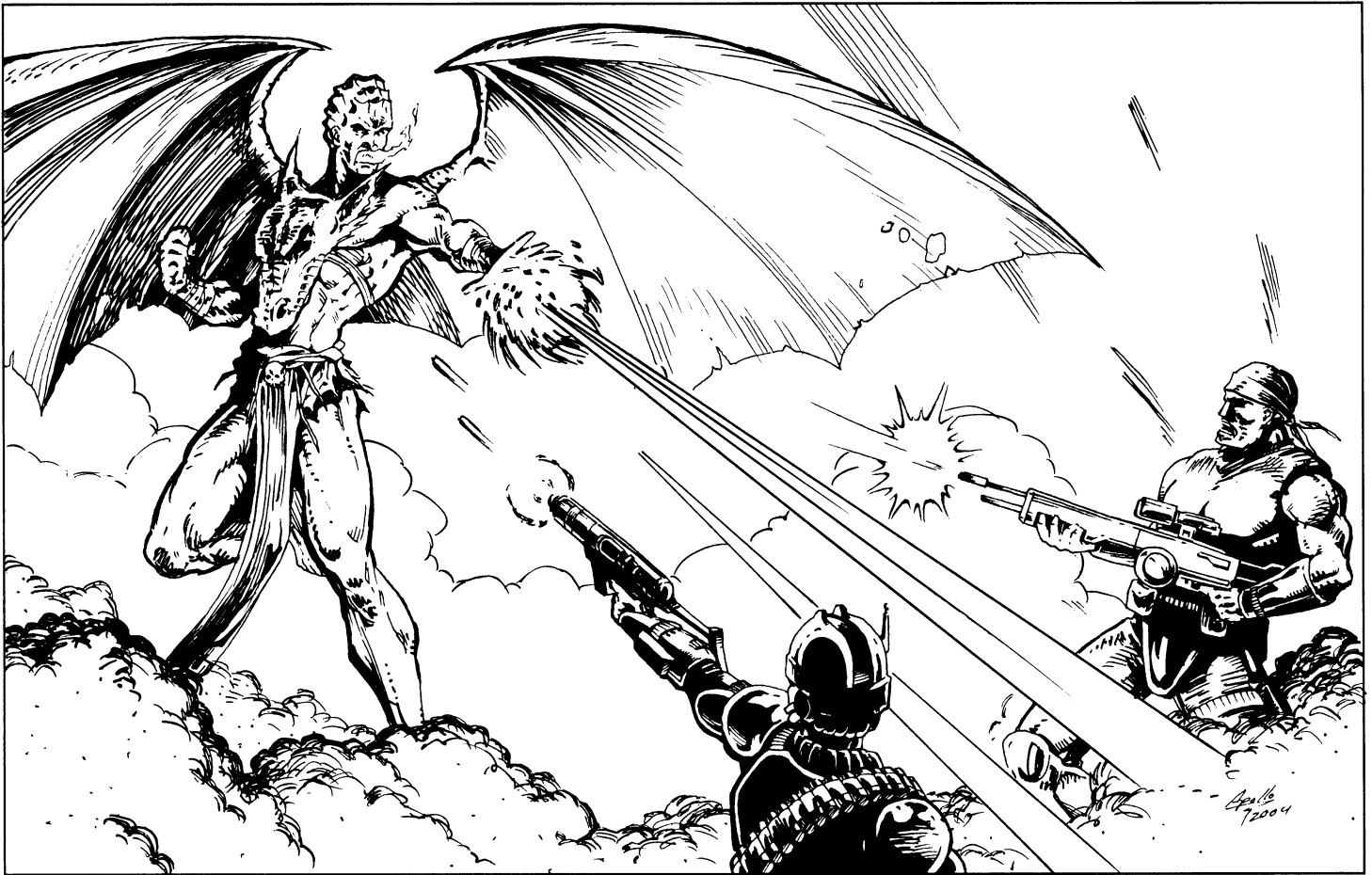
“**The MercTown Police** are every bit as efficient as our ISS and NT-SET. This branch numbers twelve hundred total personnel, most of whom are organized into two-officer patrols. These security officers are as proficient and professional as the military branch. Its patrol officers are provided with top-notch equipment and are trained to deal with any situation. Moreover, the force includes a SWAT-style unit called the *Urban Tactical Force (UTF)* to deal with the most extreme and violent crimes, including terrorists, Juicers or ‘Borgs who have gone off the deep end, armed robbery, raiders, hostage situations, riots and outright insurrection or invasion. My team witnessed one incident where the UTF was deployed to handle a gang of raiders. The team acted with a precision that brought to mind our own CS Commando teams and Special Forces.

“In an emergency situation, the security force has the secondary role of light infantry. Still, it is unlikely that they would be deployed outside of the borders of MercTown, and they lack any capability to travel long distances for a prolonged campaign. They are equipped with only lightly armored vehicles, small arms, and body armor suited for urban and police interaction, not conventional warfare. Plus there are no provisions to support the police under field conditions. These Defenders aren’t issued field gear such as tents, sleeping bags, or field rations. As a result, the only likely use for the police in a wartime situation would be to maintain internal security and to back up to conventional troops on the walls, at gates, the docks, supply depots, and similar facilities.

“**The laws** of MercTown are excessively liberal and pro-non-humans. Many activities which would be considered crimes in the Coalition States are not illegal in MercTown. For instance, they support the rights of all intelligent life forms, give D-Bees equal status, encourage the practice of magic, collect, trade and deal in pre-Cataclysm and alien artifacts – including banned books and films – and harbor criminals of the Coalition States such as Rogue Scholars, the Naruni, Tolkeen refugees, practitioners of magic, and all manner of bandits, aliens and monsters. Likewise, the MercTown Defenders and police typically respond only to the most violent of offenses such as rape, murder, assault with deadly weapons, rioting, and threats to the community as a whole.

“**As for the military**, the MercTown Defenders are a potent, if small, combat force. The majority of its personnel are highly trained soldiers with real combat experience. Most appear to be disciplined, organized, dedicated and very professional. Its military branch consists of a single, oversized combat brigade that is composed of one armor battalion, two heavy infantry battalions, an air defense artillery battery, and a composite air wing of 42 jet fighters and 48 helicopters supported by 144 combat hovercycles.

“My team observed several police actions and one military field training exercise. It was readily apparent to us that the MercTown Defenders are capable and skilled at carrying out all phases of warfare, with a capability that exceeds that of the Ishpeming Defense Force and the Golden Age Security Volunteers which, in my opinion, are two of the premier militaries on the continent besides our own and that of Free Quebec. I would even hazard to say that the MercTown Defenders are a match



for a conventional Coalition States infantry brigade, especially if engaged from entrenched positions within the city itself.

“Like any standing army, however, the **MercTown Defense Force** has its weaknesses.

“One, inferior numbers. The resources of the MercTown Defenders are limited in both manpower and equipment.

“Two, a divided defense. Each of the numerous business operators and arms dealers maintain their own private army or guns for hire. They are not assigned to defend the city as a whole, but rather each individual employer’s assets; i.e., to protect a particular building, warehouse compound, et cetera. The private armies would hold their position at a specific facility rather than join the city defenders directly to put their skills to best use. This division of power and multiple self-interested parties should only add to the chaos and confusion in a real combat situation and greatly diminish the effectiveness of all parties. Similarly, we must presume some significant portion of the transient mercenaries in town would come to the city’s defense, however, again, the self-interest of these independent mercs should prevent a good number from joining the fray as they protect their own interests and/or abandon the city to save themselves. Furthermore, it is likely that local business leaders would hire many of the quality fighting forces to help bolster their private armies already in place or to secure other interests, and further divide, scatter, and weaken the city’s overall defenses and combat effectiveness. Of course, this is entirely conjecture.

“Three, volunteer forces might triple or quadruple the number of fighters engaged in an all-out assault, however, they too would fight as independent teams rather than a unified force un-

der one military command, and there is certain to be miscommunication, confusion, disorganization and a high amount of ‘friendly-fire.’

“Four, the overall quality and firepower of the weapons and equipment of the MercTown Defenders is good to excellent, but overall inferior compared to the new line of the Coalition Army’s weapons, armor and equipment. Firepower and quality varies dramatically among the volunteer forces and private armies, ranging from slightly superior when it comes to Naruni and magic based armaments, to on par and vastly inferior.

“Five, MercTown lacks any real ability to prosecute an invasion or other aggressive campaign outside of MercTown’s territorial borders. The city-state has minimal logistical capability to support its combat elements more than a hundred or so kilometers from the city-state itself. Also, they have no combat engineer units organic to the brigade, which means that the Defenders cannot bridge rivers or obstacles, clear minefields, improve roads or repair bridges on the move. This is clearly a weakness that our forces could exploit if MercTown tried to move into southern Indiana or CS Missouri. Remember, MercTown is not so much a fledgling nation as it is an opportunistic *clearinghouse* for mercenary companies and lone wolves. It is a location to be concerned about because it harbors and supplies all manner of roughnecks, malcontents, rebels and freelance warriors, but MercTown, as a sovereign kingdom itself, has no political or military aspirations that we could find.

“Six, another shortfall is that its air defense artillery complement is a static unit. Its weapon systems are rigid, built right into the city walls, and thus unable to move with deployed

forces. This, in turn, leaves the Defenders vulnerable to air strikes, missile attacks and long-range bombardment.

"Seven, while MercTown is a hot zone and a supply source for enemies of the Coalition States, its own army is an entirely defensive force. It is not an overtly hostile force, nor a mobile army. It is not out to undermine or destroy the CS, and is a purely opportunistic collection of arms dealers and other outfits out to make a profit, not champion any one kingdom or cause. In short, the MercTown combat force is not designed to fight wars of aggression or seek military expansion, but merely to protect the kingdom of New Paducah and its surrounding communities.

"As a result, I have assessed the threat level posed by the MercTown military as low and the overall threat level of MercTown itself as moderate. Eliminate the alien elements currently represented by Naruni Enterprises and Magefire Weapons Inc., and MercTown is little more than a second-rate border town that caters to bandits, mercenaries and adventurers."

The Major paused long enough to let his audience absorb the force totals displayed on a chart at the front of the room.

"Questions?"

"What about MercTown's ruler?"

The Major pressed a few buttons on his controller to bring up the image of MercTown's self-proclaimed ruler.

"This is **Kentek Drago**, the former commander of the *MercTown Defenders*. When Alkavar Dorveen fled New Paducah it was Kentek Drago who negotiated the settlement between the mercenary commanders who seized control of the kingdom. As part of this settlement, it was Drago who assumed political authority in New Paducah. According to the official history, he won this position by default. None of the other commanders wanted to be saddled with the onerous task of ruling a city-state whose populace was, at first, openly hostile to the mercenaries. These were men of war and action, not politics.

"Kentek Drago, however, was raised as the crown prince and heir to some minor kingdom in southern Texas. After that kingdom was crushed by the *Pecos Empire* he was forced to leave the region, and eventually became the leader of the mercenary company, **Drago's Defenders**. He saw the opportunity to reclaim his birthright by taking political control of New Paducah. Calling himself the Military Governor or 'Proconsul of MercTown,' he holds supreme political authority over the city-state. The government *Proconsul Drago* has established in MercTown is best described as an autocracy or perhaps an oligarchy. In many respects it is similar to our own system in the Coalition States. Political authority rests in the hands of a single individual, in this case, Kentek Drago, who acts as military commander in chief, head of state and the primary legislator of the kingdom. A position loosely analogous to that of Emperor Prosek, though on a much smaller scale.

"In fact, the core of MercTown's military defense force is *Drago's Defenders*, one of the three mercenary battalions hired by the original despot of New Paducah. Veterans from Drago's combat force hold key positions of leadership within the army and the government. All are loyal to the Proconsul.

"Drago's political authority is shared with a subordinate body of advisors. Thus, Proconsul Drago consults an *Advisory Coun-*

cil made up of elected and appointed representatives, half of which are members of Drago's Defenders, the rest from the local population. The council serves in the capacity of a cabinet, a group made up of experts who advise the Proconsul on various matters of importance to the civilian populace. At the present time, this Advisory Council is composed of seventeen members who include the Military Chief of Staff, Police Commandant, Foreign Affairs Advisor, Chief Justice, Hospital Administrator, Minister of Education, State Bank Treasurer, three delegates from the Merchant Association, one delegate from the Magic Guild, two Labor Union delegates, the Headhunter Academy Commandant, and representatives from the Human Enclave (city founders).

"Proconsul Drago confers with this Advisory Council whenever a law is passed or an important decision that affects the entire city needs to be made. The council members offer advice, propose adjustments to legislation and apprise the Proconsul of public opinion. Nevertheless, it is Kentek Drago who makes all final decisions. He is not obliged to comply with the Council's advice nor act on their recommendations. Yet it is apparent that the Proconsul wisely heeds their suggestions in the vast majority of issues, particularly those involving the welfare of the citizenry. Of course, half of his advisors have been selected from his mercenary company and are, in effect, *yes men* who support whatever their commander desires.

"However, while Kentek Drago is a dictator, he is a benevolent one, who has kept the kingdom stable and strong under his rule. The laws he's put in place over the years have been quite fair to the civilian populace, and no one can argue that New Paducah and its citizens haven't prospered under his reign. The majority of the city-state's population is satisfied with the government and are reasonably loyal to Kentek Drago. The man is viewed as a hero rather than an occupying tyrant and many of the people have grown to love him. As a result, it is unlikely that there will be any change in government in the immediate future without outside intervention. There exist no revolutionary nor subversive groups of any significance in MercTown, making a clandestine campaign to install a client government in MercTown without removing Drago first, virtually impossible.

"In my assessment, Kentek Drago poses no direct or serious threat to the Coalition States. The man does not seem interested in foreign affairs or conquest of any sort, let alone pursuing any course of action that would pit his kingdom against the CS. My evaluation of his character is that he is a man content to administer MercTown and profit from his position in much the same way as the many other opportunists operating in this community. His interests lie along the lines of the continuing prosperity of MercTown and establishing a legacy that will last for decades, not war or political activism. There is no indication that he would like to expand the borders of MercTown, and it is my belief that even if he did, it would be to the west and south into the Federation of Magic territory of Kentucky. While adventurers and mercenaries with a beef against Coalition States may find shelter and supplies in MercTown, at least as long as their money holds out, Proconsul Drago has no issues with the CS nor any direct alliance with our enemies, nor does he encourage hostility against our nation. He and his government are neutral in that regard."

"What of the D-Bee population?" asked another.

“On to the demographics of MercTown, the total population of the city-state is thirty-six thousand residents, with another fourteen thousand people living in the surrounding area governed by the kingdom. In addition to these citizens the city-state has a large transient population that ranges from 5,000-20,000 visitors – namely merchants, mercenaries and adventurers. The exact number varies depending on the season and regional conflicts. Approximately 23% are refugees from Tolkeen who have fled to MercTown over the last couple of years.

“Most of the residents of MercTown are humans, who make up an estimated sixty percent of the total population. The remaining forty percent is composed of a wide cross section of D-Bees that includes the Larmac, Devilman, Quick Flex Aliens, Grackle Tooth, N’mbyr Gorilla Men, Psi-Stalkers, Vanguard Brawlers, Amorphs*, Demon-Dragonmages*, Yhabbayar Bubblemakers*, renegade mutant animals, and dozens of other exotic, less notorious humanoids. Even Psi-Goblins*, the occasional dragon, and other exotic creatures sometimes visit and trade at MercTown. Its close proximity to the Magic Zone and the Federation of Magic attracts its fair share of practitioners of magic and creatures of magic.” (Note: An asterisk indicates D-Bees described in **Psyscape™**. Most others are described in **Coalition War Campaign™** or **Rifts® Canada**).

“Can we exploit the D-Bee situation? Turn the humans against them?”

“I’m sorry to disappoint you gentlemen, but there is no human supremacy movement in MercTown. The various races who inhabit the city-state generally live together in harmony. Incidents of racially motivated hate crimes are rare, and Proconsul Drago is adamant about protecting the citizenry from rabble-rousers and misanthropes from outside the community. My orders required that I investigate the possibility of precipitating racial tension and clandestinely organizing a human supremacist movement in MercTown, but I do not believe this to be a realistic option. The humans in MercTown have long ago been corrupted by cohabitation with D-Bees, to the point that any who would dare to speak of racial purity are considered misguided, even insane and dangerous, or worse, Coalition agents.

“The prosperity and high quality of life in MercTown is primarily responsible for its current state of racial harmony. Citizens of New Paducah have a standard of living that exceeds the norm of many other kingdoms. A key element of Kentek Drago’s rule has been to win popular support for his *mercenary regime* by addressing the shortfalls of the previous government and bringing prosperity and safety to the citizens. This he has accomplished very well. Every citizen of MercTown has access to high-tech medical facilities, trade school or basic education and affordable housing. The government of MercTown uses the revenue from its eight percent sales tax – not applicable to residents – to fund both education and medical care at no cost to the resident population. Government funding is similarly used to subsidize the cost of housing to make sure that residents can afford to live in decent homes with running water, electricity and similar modern amenities. Furthermore, the presence of so many high-tech arms dealers means high-tech weapons, equipment and other goods at competitive prices, as well as a steady stream of exotic goods, animals and services brought to town by visiting adventurers, thieves, D-Bees and practitioners of magic. In short, life is good and luxuries are plentiful.”

“Magic. Major, how serious is the threat of magic?”

“The practice of magic is fairly prevalent. An estimated ten to fifteen percent of the populace practices some form of magic, and there is even a part of the city proper devoted to the practice and study of magic. More troubling is the number and variety of magic weapons and devices available in MercTown.

“It is interesting to note that the magic practicing segment of the city-state is largely concentrated in one section of the city. This area, called the **Mystic Quarter**, is where eighty-five percent of all practitioners congregate, live and work. There was never any official policy of segregation, instead magic practitioners seem to gravitate to this section of their own accord. The fact that the only two ley lines that run through the entire region intersect in the Mystic Quarter is the most likely explanation for this phenomenon.

“Neither of the ley lines is especially significant, nor is the nexus where they join very powerful. One runs along an east-west axis that starts in *Kingsdale*, passes through MercTown and continues along to the ruins of *Central City*, Kentucky. The other is shorter, extending from MercTown to the *Clifty Falls* on the Indiana border. Of the two ley lines, the one that connects to Kingsdale is more important by virtue of the fact that it provides a transportation link to the Missouri kingdom. This has not gone unnoticed by the authorities at MercTown, who monitor this approach to their city in order to prohibit misuse by renegade wizards, criminals and similar bad elements from Kingsdale. Yet even this vigilance is far from foolproof, which means that the occasional rogue, dragon or demon does manage to infiltrate the city by using this ley line.

“Where the ley lines cross, right atop the nexus point, is located the *Collegiate Arcane & Guild Hall*. The building appeared in the city approximately eight years ago, erected by a powerful wizard who serves as the Guild Master. Very little is known about the Guild Master, and even his name is kept a secret among the ranks of magic practitioners within MercTown. My team was unable to gather any concrete information about this individual or the collegiate itself, except that it was erected by magic and serves as a place of mystic study, exchanges of ideas, and trade in arcane objects.

“Among the shops that operate in this quarter are a half dozen stores that trade and sell magic weapons and equipment, a library, brewery, several Techno-Wizard repair shops, and a mystic weaponsmith. The most disturbing of these purveyors of magic is the Magefire weapon outlet, because it represents a new player from an alien dimension. There is also a store operated by Stormspire, a dealer of Armstrong TW Armaments and, according to rumor, those who traffic exclusively in Splugorthian items from mysterious Atlantis. Although the word on the street is that these items are stolen or stripped from the dead bodies of Atlantean enforcers by slaves and enemies of Atlantis, and there is a reputed underground railroad that rescues slaves from Atlantis, I don’t think we can rule out the possibility that this is a Splugorth clandestine operation of Atlantis. Even if it is not, it is yet another vehicle by which D-Bees and aliens are brought from monster-filled Atlantis to our soil. Whichever the case, it needs further CS investigation and probably intervention to close this channel of nonhuman entry into the Americas.

“Not being practitioners of magic, my team was unable to spend much time in the Mystic Quarter without the fear of blow-

ing our cover. It is a well known fact that various mystical enchantments can be used in a manner similar to psionics to pry information from even the best trained espionage operatives. As a result, I made the decision to merely document the various businesses and leave the area. We made no attempt to infiltrate the stores, nor the Collegiate Arcane. If the CS High Command should order a follow-up mission this will require the use of veteran psychic operatives to have the best chance of success. In the meantime, suffice it to say that there is a significant presence of magic in MercTown, though not as widespread as Tolkeen or the Federation of Magic. In fact, the majority of mercenaries and civilian residents seem to have a technological bias. I was encouraged to see that the magic community is concentrated into one small area, which also means they can be easily and quickly neutralized by a focused attack."

"Well done, Major," said General Thaddeus Thurmond, who rose from his front seat to shake the speaker's hand and turn to the rest of the military leaders gathered at Coalition Military Headquarters. He had recently been appointed Chief of External Affairs and Countermeasures, and Major Brock was one of his bright, new officers.

"Your recommendation, then Major?"

"My recommendation," said Major Brock, "is to take no direct action against this community."

The General raised his hand to stifle the wave of groans and whispers of protest and disagreement that rose from the audience as the Major continued.

"First, the community is not a direct threat to Coalition security. Second, it offers us a unique opportunity to identify, tag and observe our enemies without their knowing it."

The murmuring grew louder.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," interrupted the General. "Let the man speak."

"Thank you, Sir. I think we need to look at MercTown as an unprecedented opportunity for covert operations. Or if you'd prefer, you can think of it as a scientific field exercise: observing renegades and predators in their own habitat. An environment where they feel safe and secure, and let down their hair. An environment in which we can learn what the freelance world of mercenaries is doing. By observing the comings and goings of mercenary companies, listening to their recent exploits, current plans, likes, dislikes, and plans for the future, we will get a broader and sharper picture of what is happening around us. As powerful as the Coalition States have become, we are isolated from the hostile forces around us. MercTown gives us direct access to that world, and more importantly, to the underground network of fighters other nations and powers hire to do their dirty work. The fact that so many agents and hirelings of our enemies, arms dealers, mercenary companies, independent operatives and representatives from hostile states are concentrated in this one place makes it a ripe environment for espionage. Simply by infiltrating the city-state with CS covert operatives we can gather intelligence on dozens of kingdoms and hundreds of smaller forces and factions.

Simply watching and listening, we can identify new players in the military arena, and assess the rise or fall of another. We'll have an idea of where trouble may appear next by seeing who is hiring whom, where supplies are being shipped, where soldiers are headed and from where civilians are coming, as well as a sense of what people know, believe and fear. We can take that information and use it in any multitude of ways to the Coalition's benefit. We can avoid engagements that don't involve us, we can agitate kingdoms and opponents already unraveling, block supply routes, and topple governments about to fall, or



crush their armies while they are in a state of disarray. We can support the rivals of our enemies and use subtle persuasion to confuse, manipulate, and inflame situations to our advantage across the country.

“MercTown is not a threat, it is the gateway to the hearts and minds of our opposition and outside forces. To throw this opportunity away would be madness.”

“What about the Federation of Magic?”

“What about it? MercTown is a junction that attracts our every enemy, including the Magic Zone. The fact that the Federation of Magic is on its borders means we’ll hear pro and con opinions about Federation activity, politics, and plans as well as rivalries, disputes and operations within the organization and quite possibly, learn more about the Federation than we ever could have otherwise. It will also help us identify enemy factions who oppose the Federation. With a little luck, we’ll catch intelligence we can use against the Federation and ultimately, destroy them – our most hated of enemies.

“In the meanwhile, MercTown could become a valuable resource for monitoring our enemies and assessing real threats as they materialize in the Midwest, the Magic Zone, and the Southwest. As a result, my recommendation is to place undercover operatives throughout the community. If there is to be another Juicer Uprising or insurrection by the Pecos Empire, or retribution by Tolkeenites, or other trouble on our borders, our first-hand intelligence in MercTown should alert us to it. Even simple increases in trade goods, who is buying, where it’s being shipped, and where merc outfits are headed should alert us to conflict and enemy operations. In addition, our operatives should be able to identify wanted criminals, rebels, spies and fugitives we can then track down and neutralize away from MercTown without tipping the community off to our presence. MercTown is a gold mine and we should plumb its depths.”

“These are trained soldiers, Major Brock,” stated Major-General Como. “By your own admission, many are seasoned and skilled veterans who will sniff out any spies among them. Undoubtedly, our operations will be compromised.”

“I have to disagree,” replied the Major, “from time to time, one or more CS operatives will be uncovered, but our operations will not be compromised.”

“That’s absurd,” grunted a stern looking officer.

“Wait,” said another. “I think I see where he’s going with this.”

“As you noted, Major General Como, these are trained soldiers. Inevitably, a Coalition operative will be found out, but because they are not stupid men, a) they expect Coalition spies to be present, b) they’d be suspicious if a CS operation was not uncovered from time to time, and c) they will feel more at ease having found and eliminated a Coalition operation, again, leading them to relax and reveal things they would not in any other environment.

“Please understand, I’m suggesting the most passive and unintrusive of spy operations. To walk among them as one of them to observe, gather intelligence and make reports. Little more. Any operations to undermine or sabotage an organization like Magefire or Naruni Enterprises, or to capture or assassinate a member of the Federation of Magic, would be done by CS agents entirely outside the spy network I’m suggesting. We will

not be suspected, because we are taking no action against them. We observe and report, observe and report. What High Command does with the information we provide is not a concern of the operation.”

“It’s almost too simple,” exclaimed one officer.

“Exquisitely, beautifully simple. That’s why it will work,” said another.

“Exactly,” agreed General Thurmond. “Gentlemen, we will call this: **Operation Watch Guard**. Briefly, Major Brock, explain.”

“Point: We place Coalition espionage agents in MercTown. Men and women posing as refugees, workers, mercs, travelers and the disenfranchised to become unassuming residents of MercTown.

“Point: Since the transient population is so large, we can cycle agents in and out without anyone ever questioning who they are, where they came from, or where they went. Very few will become *permanent fixtures* in the community.

“Point: These agents are to keep their eyes and ears open. And while rumors, gossip, war stories, bragging and grouching by the mercs and residents may offer information, such hearsay can be unreliable and misleading. As a result, our agents are to focus on logistics: The coming and going of troops and supplies, in what quantities, point of origin, destination, who they serve, to what possible purpose, and so on. It is the logistics of trade and hired manpower that will provide us with the reliable clues and information we seek. Hard facts and figures that will point to conclusions that can be trusted.

“Point: Risk level for operatives is low. Value of intelligence, high.”

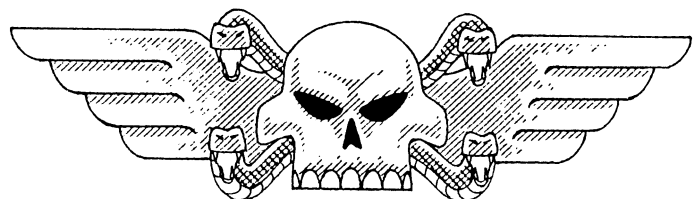
“And the day MercTown becomes a threat to CS security?” asked the General before anyone else had the chance.

“We’ll be in a position to know it and take action, Sir.”

“And that action would be?”

“Destroy it, Sir.”

“That, Gentlemen, concludes this briefing. I want you to give this matter your complete attention for the next 24 hours and reconvene here at oh-eight hundred tomorrow. Any questions and issues concerning implementation of this operation will be addressed at that time.”



Welcome to MercTown

There is one place in North America, more than any other, that is *home* to those who ply the mercenary trade, and that is the *city-state of MercTown*.

MercTown is the largest, fastest growing, free kingdom east of the Mississippi River, that is not magic based or part of the Federation of Magic, save perhaps the industrial city-states of Alabama dominated by **Golden Age Weaponsmiths**.

MercTown is run by mercenaries, for mercenaries. It has been set up to be a neutral territory where *everyone* is welcomed. MercTown's leaders and merchants have made a point not to take sides, and the city gates are open to all people regardless of species, nationality, religious beliefs, occupation or ideology. Criminals, heroic champions and D-Bees are all welcome to explore the city streets in search of entertainment, lodgings, supplies, weapons, relaxation and business opportunities. Even *Coalition Soldiers* are left unmolested by the city's residents, merchants and authorities, although they are looked upon with a good measure of fear and suspicion. However, there are many "visitors" who may have a grievance with the CS and who might attack its members out of hatred or revenge. While MercTown is a surprisingly safe and orderly kingdom, it does not promise to keep every visitor safe from rivals, enemies or bounty hunters. It can't, and doesn't even try, instead focusing on keeping the peace and protecting its citizens and merchants while keeping order as best it can.

MercTown is a new state, a kingdom that has emerged only in recent years. At the time of Erin Tarn's original release of *Traversing Our Modern World*, in 100 P.A., the place was barely a blip on the political radar screen and was known as *New Paducah*, a minor kingdom of little importance, easily overlooked. Since the change in leadership and government, however, the city-state has been transformed into a thriving, rapidly growing, high-tech center that caters to the mercenary trade, and has grown in power, size and significance. Having achieved the status of the premier mercenary haven in the east, it has captured the attention of virtually every mercenary, adventurer, freelancer, bounty hunter and independent kingdom throughout the continent. Conflicts of the last decade at Free Quebec, the Magic Zone, Tolkeen (Minnesota and Wisconsin), the Pecos Empire (Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas), Chi-Town 'Burbs (Illinois), the Juicer Uprising (Arkansas), and Xiticix territories (Minnesota, the Dakotas and northward into Canada) have made MercTown the ideal central location for restocking supplies, trading goods, R & R, finding work, collecting on bounties and establishing a base camp in a (relatively) civilized environment.

MercTown is a place of contradictions. The city is many things to many people. To those who are permanent residents, it is a kingdom that offers a comfortable standard of living, relative security, economic opportunities and excellent availability of weapons and high-tech goods. To others, it is a refuge from persecution, a place to lay low among friends and fellow mercs, and a kingdom where an intelligent being of any species can live free.

For those in the mercenary business, it is a safe haven where they can rest after a campaign and enjoy the luxuries of civiliza-

tion; an open market where they can replace supplies, purchase weapons, repair or buy vehicles, obtain medical treatment, get super-human augmentation (Juicer, Crazies and bionic augmentation), make contacts, cash in on bounties, and find freelance work. Among the elite warriors and movers and shakers of the North American military organizations, it is a city where the fates of nations may be decided. Corporate executives, monarchs, wealthy merchants, usurped tyrants, and government officials come to MercTown to network, and to hire special operatives and mercenary troops to do their bidding in the continuing power struggles of North America. As a result, MercTown is a city that is both harrowing and comforting, safe yet dangerous, depending on one's perspective, motives and contacts. A paradise to mercenaries and a bane to those rulers who've reason to fear scheming rivals and their assassins, spies and gunmen hired at MercTown. One kingdom even called MercTown "a kennel where the dogs of war and jackals gather and wait to be hired and unleashed on an unsuspecting foe for the promise of money."

MercTown Population Breakdown:

39,000 total population of the citizens.

60% Human

10% Larmac

5% Psi-Stalkers (both civilized and wild)

5% Quick Flex Aliens

4% Devilmen

3% Grackle Tooth

3% Vanguard Brawlers

2% Demon-Dragonmages

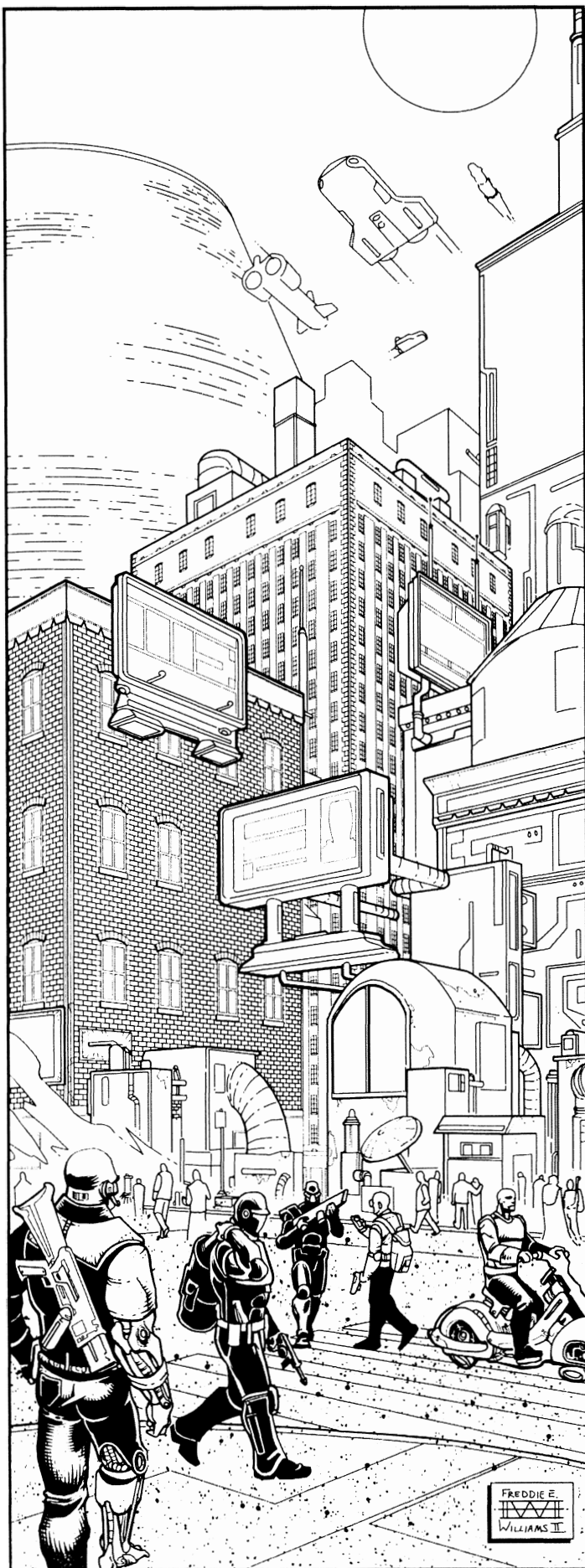
2% N'mbyr Gorilla Men

2% Rogue Dog Boys and other CS mutants

4% Other races, including Amorphs, Yhabbayar Bubble-makers, Fenodi, Ogres, Dog Boys and other mutants, and miscellaneous exotic beings like Lizard Men, Auto-Gs, dragons, Gargoyles, Brodkil, and even supernatural beings.

Note: Does not include the huge transient population of visiting adventurers, mercenaries, Juicers, drifters, traveling merchants, brigands, raiders and guns for hire present at any given time (typically 5D6x1,000) which can nearly equal the local population.

In mercenary circles, the city-state of MercTown is a legendary place, a Mecca of opportunity that beckons to soldiers of fortune all across North America. Most other communities, even those that welcome mercenaries, do not embrace them like MercTown. At MercTown, men of arms find it a place of opportunity, free trade, weapons and contraband, as well as a safe haven for mercenaries and gunmen that openly caters to their every need, want and desire. Every race and profession is welcome, and virtually every shop seems to have something that appeals to professional fighters. So long as visitors obey the law, don't harm the locals, and refrain from open warfare in the city streets, they are welcomed with open arms, be they mutant,



D-Bee, monster, gunslinger, psychic, practitioner of magic, or outlaw.

A bit of history

MercTown is a city built on the ruins of Paducah in western Kentucky, on the old Illinois border. Ten years ago the place was called New Paducah, a small, fledgling kingdom in the backwoods of Kentucky, governed by a corrupt dictator. Like so many of the other squalid, cookie-cutter, feudal kingdoms across the continent, it was hardly worth notice. Still, competition and fatalities run high in the Rifts environment, which is why so many kingdoms and communities rise and fall within a matter of a few years. Such was the case with New Paducah when it came to the attention of a petty warlord in the Ohio Valley who led a ragtag army of lawless D-Bees and bandits. With no military of its own to speak of, the dictator of New Paducah was forced to hire mercenaries to defend his kingdom from the brigands. He contracted three separate outfits – *Drago's Defenders*, the *Tennessee Headhunters*, and *Hogan's Outriders* – to defend his kingdom. The scheming dictator was a poor strategist at best, and had no military background. Consequently, he overestimated the strength of the bandit lord and hired two mercenary companies too many to handle the job. Worse, the dictator lacked the funds to pay the mercenaries and hoped at least one, if not two, would be eliminated or severely crippled in battle against the bandit army, so he would not have to pay them. He purchased their services in the first place with the promise of gold, but the gold was really lead bars magically *disguised* to appear as gold.

When the smoke cleared on the battlefield, the bandit army was routed within one hour, and the victorious mercenaries had suffered minimal casualties. Although a schemer and a cheat, the New Paducah dictator was not a complete fool, and realized his life would be forfeit as soon as the mercenaries came to collect their pay. The petty monarch grabbed what he could easily carry and fled to Missouri leaving his tiny kingdom to whatever fate that would now befall it. He assumed the angry mercs would tear it apart, take what little of value there was and leave it a smoking ruin.

Indeed, the mercenary commanders were furious. Hogan's Outriders even accused the two other mercenary outfits of being party to the conspiracy and prepared to level the city. The merc companies were on the verge of war when Colonel Drago stepped forward to negotiate a settlement. According to the terms of this agreement, **Hogan's Outriders** were paid half of the kingdom's treasury, after which they returned to the New West without further incident. The remaining two companies would set up shop in New Paducah and split the profits. The leaders of the **Tennessee Headhunters** were fighters, not bureaucrats, and had no desire to handle the day to day drudgery of running a town, so they agreed to conceding political authority to **Drago's Defenders** in return for a large annual tribute of the community's tax revenues.

Weary of the mercenary trade and born of nobility, **Colonel Drago** saw the kingdom as the opportunity of a lifetime. The aging soldier welcomed the responsibility of managing the struggling, infant kingdom. Having been raised as the crown prince of a long-forgotten kingdom in Texas crushed by the

Pecos Empire, Drago saw immense potential for the kingdom of New Paducah. He recognized the strategic and economic potential of its central location in the Midwest and close proximity to heavily traveled trade routes and zones of combat. A potential that he, backed by both his own army of Defenders and his reluctant partners, the Tennessee Headhunters, now had the muscle to exploit. For the next few years he worked endlessly to win the hearts and minds of the locals, secure investors, attract merchants and expand the economy, and spent millions of credits (more than 60% coming from his own pocket, gambling everything he had) to rebuild, strengthen and reshape the city-state. His plan, to make New Paducah the must visit destination of every merc outfit active in North America. To lure mercenary companies and independent adventurers, Colonel Drago built an environment that should appeal to those engaging in the art of war. He invited every major arms dealer and numerous small ones to set up shop in his town with significant tax incentives and free rein, and then flung open the gates of the city-state, pronouncing it as a free city-state where all people, of all races, ideologies and professions were welcome and safe. Having convinced the citizens that pandering to the mercenary trade was their key to prosperity and survival, he and his people treated visiting mercenaries like welcomed guests. In 105 P.A., Drago and the kingdom teetered on bankruptcy and ruin. Then, the Coalition States announced war on the *Kingdom of Tolkeen* and the *State of Free Quebec*, as well as the campaign to wipe out the alien weapons dealer, *Naruni Enterprises*, and the less publicized, stepped-up military actions against the *Federation of Magic*, the *Pecos Empire*, the independent forces in *Arkansas* and *Oklahoma*, and other “enemies of the Coalition States” – which was pretty much everyone. With so much conflict, suddenly, mercenaries, bounty hunters and anyone willing to wield a gun had more work than they could handle, and there was New Paducah, in the center of it all, offering supplies, weapons and hospitality to them all. In a heartbeat, New Paducah’s fortunes changed, becoming the mercenaries’ hub Colonel Drago had imagined, and more. Ironically, in a strange but very real way, Emperor Prosek gave birth to the kingdom quickly dubbed, **MercTown**.

Within five years, war paid huge dividends to MercTown. Arms manufacturers and dealers, large and small, who were once reluctant to put up shop in the backwater kingdom now flooded MercTown, begging to establish outlets in the city. Those, like Northern Gun, Golden Age Weaponsmiths, Wilk’s, Bandito Arms and the Black Market, who had climbed on board from the very beginning, expanded to dominate the landscape. And when Naruni Enterprises returned after the Coalition purge, it spared no expense to make its presence known in MercTown, a gesture meant to thumb their nose at the Coalition States, and in so doing, brought hundreds of jobs to MercTown residents and put huge amounts of cash into MercTown’s coffers.

Moreover, Colonel Drago, intimately familiar with the needs of mercenaries, carefully orchestrated developments and operations that would attract and keep mercenaries coming back. One such attraction is making MercTown known as *the* premier place for mercenaries to find contract work, and another was to establish a mechanism to broker jobs and handle the payout on bounties in which both the client and the mercs could maintain complete anonymity. All of it was nothing short of brilliant; Colonel Drago’s greatest of victories.

Geography

MercTown is situated more or less in the center of North America, roughly in the middle of the civilized lands dominated by man. It is right on the **border of Illinois** and is only 30 miles (48 km) from the border of **CS Missouri**. To the north of MercTown is the Coalition State of **Chi-Town**, northeast is the Indiana portion of the **Magic Zone**, with **Whykin** only 100 miles (160 km) to the west. The *Golden Age Weaponsmiths* industrial city of **Decatur** is 190 miles (304 km) southeast, and the cities of **Newtown** (the site of the Juicer Uprising) and **Fort El Dorado** in CS Arkansas, are each just 300 miles (480 km) away. Meanwhile, to the northwest are the war zones of the *Tolkeen conflict*, **Wisconsin** and **Minnesota**, as well as the **Xiticix Territories**. To the far northeast, **Free Quebec**, **Old Bones** and the pirate kingdom of **Montreal**. The war that raged across Free Quebec may be done, an uncertain peace struck between the CS and the independent nation, but many smaller conflicts continue in the region involving rebels, pirates, raiders, Splugorth and Shemarrians, to name a few. With the Magic Zone and the (questionably) united kingdoms of the **Federation of Magic** in the Ohio Valley, *MercTown* is central to almost every major conflict on the continent, seldom more than a week’s travel away, making it an important commercial terminus for the business of war.

MercTown is located on the banks of the Ohio River right where the Tennessee River branches off to flow south. Less than 30 miles (48 km) away is the **Mississippi River**, which provides easy access to the **Whykin** port of *Calm Waters* (formerly New Madrid). Both *Kentucky Lake* and *Lake Barkley* are within 10 miles (16 km) of the city-state as well. These waterways are heavily traveled by barges, motorboats and similar vessels, providing communications and access with **Golden Age Weaponsmiths** in the South and **Whykin** to the west. From the port of *Calm Waters* are overland trade routes that connect to the states of CS Missouri, Chi-Town, Arkansas and Lone Star.

In the immediate vicinity of MercTown the terrain is mostly forested wilderness with rolling hills. There are a dozen or more scattered communities and small kingdoms in the area who support themselves with farming, raising livestock and the lumber trade. All of these communities are friendly towards MercTown and enjoy a long and healthy trading relationship with the community. The surrounding area is free of significant magical activity, there are few supernatural monsters, and D-shifting is extremely rare. Only a handful of ley lines run through the territory, with just two crossing through MercTown itself that intersect in the exact location of the *Collegiate Arcane & Guild Hall* (one passes through **Kingsdale** while the other heads into the Magic Zone).

To the southwest of the city is a sprawling *Training Area* used by the Headhunter Academy and MercTown Defenders for routine maneuvers and field training exercises. Within the boundaries of this Training Area are numerous ranges for the firing of pistols, rifles, rail guns, auto-cannons, missiles, demolitions and even a pair of battle lanes for tanks, ‘bots and power armor. The entire area is strictly off limits to all civilians and visitors, not because there is anything secret or valuable, but for their own safety. The area is policed by the *Range Staff* made up of personnel from Drago’s Defenders and the Headhunter Academy. Patrols are usually two-man teams mounted on a jeep or hover vehicle with a radio, light armor and energy rifles.

To a new arrival, MercTown may seem more to resemble a military base or armed camp than a civilian city. Thousands of mercenaries, soldiers of fortune, bounty hunters, cyborgs and other armed men are omnipresent and found almost everywhere, especially in the heart of the city, where arms dealers and other merchants and establishments that cater to warriors are found. Closer inspection, however, will show that there is a civilian population and numerous urban structures such as office buildings, apartment complexes, shopping malls, schools, churches, parks, and neighborhoods filled with simple houses. What sets MercTown apart is that mercenaries and other warrior and adventurer types – hard-looking characters clad in armor and packing serious hardware – are everywhere.

Government

The government of MercTown is best described as a military oligarchy. Supreme political authority rests in the hands of an appointed **Military Governor** who is also referred to as the *Proconsul*. It is the Military Governor who commands the city-state's military, dictates foreign policy, rules on legal issues and approves or rejects all proposed legislation. The position has no set term of service and is passed down to a successor who is predetermined by the ruling Proconsul. At present the position of Military Governor is held by *Proconsul Kentek Drago* (human, 9th level Headhunter), the aging, sixty year old commander of the Drago's Defenders mercenary company.

Subordinate to the Proconsul/Military Governor is an **Advisory Council** composed of citizen representatives. The organization of the council is akin to a cabinet, with chairs for specific government positions or branches, key civil organizations, and for representatives of large minority groups within the populace. Members of the Advisory Council are prominent citizens who are appointed government officials, elected guild delegates, or representatives elected by the populace. There is a total of 17 seats on the current Advisory Council which include the Military Chief of Staff, Police Commandant, Foreign Affairs Advisor, Chief Justice, Hospital Administrator, Minister of Education, State Bank Treasurer, three delegates from the Merchants' Association, the Magic Guild delegate, two Labor Union delegates, Headhunter Academy Commandant, as well as elected representatives of the Human, D-Bee and Ogre populations.

It is the responsibility of the Advisory Council to keep the Proconsul/Military Governor informed of events and to advise on courses of action. The Council also serves in a legislative capacity, proposing laws for the approval of the Military Governor. In theory, the Council is a powerless, paper tiger assembly with no real authority. However, the suggestions of this group are put into effect more often than not, and several of its members wield a considerable amount of *political influence*. As a matter of fact, the Council handles most of MercTown's routine, day to day administration.

Funding for the government is provided by **taxation**. The taxes are relatively light. There is no income tax, but all goods and services are subject to a 6% surtax. To supplement the basic sales tax, the government charges modest fees for the issuance of permits and licenses, tariffs on some imported products (mainly used to protect local industries like lumber, agriculture,

etc., however there are no tariffs on weapons or military supplies unless they are "other-dimensional" like Magefire and Naruni Enterprises), and visitors are required to pay user fees for public services such as health care, education, etc. Additional revenue is provided from the sale of real estate (much of which is owned by the state) and rent for use of government owned buildings (like the Mercenary Plaza).

The law in MercTown is very loose and subjective. In many ways it is a permissive society with few bylaws and regulations. Moreover, many of the things that are restricted or outlawed in other kingdoms are totally unrestricted in MercTown. For example, there are no laws against the use or sale of magic, psionics and related services, the sale and trade of weapons, the implementation of any form of augmentation (cybernetics, bionics, Juicer or M.O.M. conversion), gambling, prostitution or the use and sale of narcotics and other contraband. Public drunkenness, bar brawls and vandalism are often overlooked by the police so long as MercTown citizens are not hurt or their property damaged (and if they are, the matter is usually dropped if reasonable recompense is made to the injured party). When enforced these misdemeanors seldom involve jail time, only fines ranging from 200-500 credits. The only crimes that the police thoroughly investigate and take measures to prevent or bring perpetrators to justice are theft, assault, rape, kidnaping and murder, all of which are tried by a military tribunal and punishable by hard labor or death.

Visitors and citizens alike are allowed to carry **weaponry** within city limits. The government recognizes that the city-state can be a dangerous place and that, in many cases, self-defense is a real concern. Mega-Damage body armor and handguns, light rifles, magic weapons, Vibro-Blades and melee weapons (swords and such), bionics, and light combat vehicles are all permitted within city limits. Heavy energy weapons, explosives, power armor, giant robots and armored vehicles are not allowed within city limits, except by special permits which are hard to come by - they are usually issued only to allow for repairs, sale, etc., and the weapon systems must be unloaded and/or taken off-line.

Even though the government is lenient when it comes to allowing weapons into the city, violence, feuding and vendettas are not tolerated. Official policy is that MercTown is neutral ground and any breach of the peace is dealt with swiftly and with lethal force by the city defenders. Those merc companies and individuals who have proven unruly in the past are simply not allowed to enter the city-state.

Life & Society

Life is pretty good for the average person living in MercTown. The economy is booming, work is readily available and the level of technology is equal to that of most CS cities, making for a comfortable lifestyle, even luxurious compared to most independent kingdoms. Sure, the place is regularly invaded by rough talking, cursing, brawling mercenaries who stink of sweat, blood and mud. Sure half of them are D-Bees of every variety, including many that are so rare or one-of-a-kind, that most folks have never seen one. Sure a third are stone-cold killers, desperados and outlaws. Sure some are users of magic, including the frightening arts of Necromancy, Shifting and others.

Some aren't mortal at all, though they might *appear* to be human for the moment. Many are loud, bawdy, crude, rude and dangerous, while others are surprisingly quiet, gentle and respectful. Most drink heavily to wash away the memories of war or anaesthetize their emotions, and all of them carry high-tech weapons in the open. However, these visitors are the same people who have pumped millions of credits into the local economy, turning the sagging, wet mop of a kingdom into a *boom town* almost overnight. For the most part, mercenaries are kept to the business district and the police vigilantly keep them out of residential areas. Besides, the actual threat of violence is fairly low, and the police are highly trained, competent and equipped to deal with roughnecks who get out of hand. Moreover, the visitors usually police themselves, with their own comrades and leaders slapping down troublemakers before things get too out of hand; the military structure and discipline of the mercs working to MercTown's favor in that regard. And there have been several times where these rough and tumble patrons voluntarily stood up to defend the city-state against those who would claim her for themselves or sought to hurt the citizens out of jealousy or misplaced resentment. Some mercs have lost their lives protecting the citizens, a sacrifice that has not gone unnoticed or unappreciated by the grateful populace.

Few citizens would claim that the situation in MercTown is perfect or ideal, but it's a heck of a lot better than before the mercs showed up, and infinitely better than 90% of other kingdoms in the post-apocalyptic world of Rifts Earth. Proconsul Drago is a fair administrator who has spent millions of his own credits and put his life and the lives of the men in his mercenary company on the line to improve living conditions and turn New Paducah into a better place. His efforts have created plenty of affordable housing, public schools, hospitals, parks, roads and streetlights all funded by the government and free to all citizens. The illiteracy rate has plummeted from 96% to 61%, and dropping. Although the average level of skill is only equal to a fifth grade education, it makes the citizens of MercTown one of the most literate and educated people in North America (and another reason for concern to the CS). With these improvements of life the majority of residents are middle class, comparatively free of worry, and able to enjoy a comparatively prosperous lifestyle.

The example set by Proconsul Drago and his men, and positive exposure to so many different mercenaries has taught most citizens not to be afraid of D-Bees and to be tolerant of other people and ideals. As a result, people of all cultures, species and dimensional origins are generally regarded as equal and welcomed members of society. Under the legal code of MercTown, all intelligent life forms have equal rights. Likewise, there are no laws against the practice of magic, except, of course, its use to deliberately harm or take advantage of others, and likewise, psychics, mutants and D-Bees are free from persecution and able to walk the streets freely. This liberal attitude has attracted refugees who were forced out of places like Tolkeen, Whykin, the Magic Zone and the Coalition States, which increases MercTown's population by 10-25% annually. Many more outcasts and refugees find their way to MercTown, but the high number of mercs and transients, and tales of wonders and adventure beyond MercTown, lure many into the mercenary trade or to seek adventure and opportunity elsewhere.

Although some fear MercTown will eventually attract more refugees and outsiders than it can handle, so far the economy, diverse people and government have all profited from it. A more genuine concern, and one that Proconsul Drago and his men are well aware of, is attracting the attention and fear of the Coalition States. The collapse of Tolkeen and growing tension between Kingsdale and Whykin is likely to send more refugees to MercTown and heighten CS paranoia about the rapidly expanding kingdom. Chi-Town, in particular, is not likely to appreciate a kingdom where D-Bees, magic and so many mercenaries co-habitate so close to their borders. For now there has been no CS intervention, but it seems inevitable. When the day comes, Colonel Drago knows that the majority of mercenary companies will not stand at their side. Mercs seldom join battles or take jobs that are losing propositions and certain death – it's bad business and suicide. And though they may regret it, and may help to evacuate the residents, they'll not challenge the CS. If nothing else, the fall of Tolkeen has shown that nobody can withstand the combined might and will of the Coalition Army.

Technology

MercTown is a high-tech society on a par with Ishpeming, the Manistique Imperium, and Kingsdale. Its overall tech level is about the same as 20th century America, with 95% of the populace enjoying running water, electricity and advanced medical care. Certain segments of the city are equipped with even higher levels up to and including alien technology (most notably the business operations of Naruni Enterprises) that is on par or superior to the Coalition States or the New German Republic.

Electricity for the city is provided by a rebuilt Barkley hydro-electric dam and nuclear power generators. The city has ready access to running water given its proximity to the Ohio and Tennessee Rivers and has installed an advanced sewage system and water treatment plant that provide clean drinking water and allow indoor plumbing. Furthermore, residents and businesses have access to local telephone communication service (i.e., available only within the borders of MercTown) thanks to a fiber optic network installed by Naruni Enterprises and maintained by the MercTown government that provides telephone and computer interface services (costs 120 credits per month for the service). There is even a multi-media agency in MercTown, called **Big Budget Productions**, that offers radio and television programming for the low cost of only 200 credits per month.

A crowning achievement of the administration is the **MercTown Hospital**. This five-story, modern building is made of Mega-Damage materials and offers some of the best medical equipment and treatment outside the Coalition States available in North America. Its doctors are also among the finest in the region with a staff that includes specialists in emergency medicine, surgery, cybernetics, treatment of combat injuries, psychology, pathology, and forensic sciences. Both conventional (tech) medicine and extraordinary healing (psychic and magical) are available. Attached to the hospital is an enhancement clinic that can provide all forms of cybernetic, Juicer, and M.O.M. (Crazies) augmentation with minimal risks to the customer. These augmentation clinics (one for each type of augmentation) generate a tremendous amount of income for the entire hospital, which is put to good use providing the citizens of MercTown with free health care.

Industry in MercTown is surprisingly limited and potentially one of the kingdom's weaknesses. MercTown's economy is almost entirely based on "sales and services" with 85% of all goods and services imported from manufacturers at other locations for sale at MercTown. Most predominant tech and weapon makers have an outlet in the city-state. Northern Gun, Wilk's, Golden Age Weaponsmiths, Wellington Industries, the Black Market, even Naruni Enterprises and numerous Techno-Wizard groups, and local, small-time outfits all operate stores in the downtown area. Only a few factories and machine shops are present within MercTown's borders and half of them are established and owned by outside business concerns. The biggest *local* corporations in MercTown consist of *Kentucky Dairy Products* (offering milk, cheese, yogurt, etc.), *Allen Foods* (distributes and sells fresh produce as well as makes various processed foods like cereal, pasta, crackers, peanut butter, etc.), the *New Paducah Slaughterhouse* (meats), the *Riverbend Lumber Mill* and the enterprising *Bailey Brothers Construction*. There are also numerous repair and mechanics shops run by locals. Like the repair shops, most local businesses are service oriented and include hotels and boarding houses, taxi services, restaurants, bakeries, tailors, storage facilities, bars and places of entertainment.

Military technology is abundant in the city. Virtually any weapon, armor, electronic device, implant and form of human augmentation is available at one store or another. The government has availed itself of this bonanza of military equipment, outfitting the MercTown Defenders with the best mix of weapon systems that money can buy.

Most homes and buildings in MercTown resemble a typical 20th Century American city. There are streetlights, a network of two-lane, asphalt roads, apartment buildings, hundreds of stores and shops, mini-malls, office buildings, parks and homes. Transportation consists mainly of hovercycles and motorcycles and cars using conventional combustion engines, as well as horses and animal drawn wagons. Trade with other cities is facilitated by the nearby waterways, including the Ohio, Tennessee and Mississippi Rivers. High-tech barges and river boats (with 200-500 M.D.C. on average) ply these waterways, usually with armed escorts that include Black Eel Torpedo Boats and flying power armor. Motor, sail and row boats owned by the locals also dot the rivers and lakes of the region. The two main axis of trade are north-south along the Tennessee River with Golden Age Weaponsmiths and east-west along the Ohio/Mississippi with Whykin and CS Missouri.

Foreign Affairs

The official foreign policy of MercTown is to maintain strict neutrality in all of its dealings. It never sides with another political or military power, never takes a stand on anything that doesn't directly impact the city-state and its people, and it treats all clients, even the Coalition States and its stooge colonies, Whykin and El Dorado, with the same courtesy and fairness as any other client or visitor. The idea is that being neutral and not involving itself in the politics of others, should assure the security of the city-state. By remaining totally above board and impartial in its dealings, the government displays no favoritism to any nation, people or cause, and in so doing, hopes to avoid

making any enemies. In fact, a popular slogan is, "MercTown, we don't judge, we welcome all."

For the most part, this neutral stance has worked well. However, there are those who regard MercTown and its people as little more than conniving profiteers, no better than the Naruni, making a profit on the strife and misery of war.

One exception to this general rule is the **Splugorth of Atlantis**. The fact that slavery is illegal in MercTown excludes the Minions of Atlantis from trading in the city-state. Splugorth slaves are usually viewed as a form of currency and used in normal business transactions. Slaves are not currency MercTown recognizes, and though the authorities will not seize a Splugorth Minion's slaves (or the slaves of any man), slavers are given the cold shoulder, overcharged and generally harassed until they leave town. As for the Minions of Splugorth, MercTown doesn't offer them anything they don't already have, so any visits by them are only to cause trouble. Splugorth and Naruni are ancient rivals and enemies, so the presence of a major Naruni operation in town may tempt some Minions of Splugorth to come to town looking to give Naruni Enterprises grief. No Minion of Splugorth who wants to live will ever purchase or use a Naruni product, nor say anything complimentary about the aliens, so a minion sniffing around a Naruni storefront is looking for trouble. (**Note:** Remember, most people don't know the Sunaj assassins are henchmen of the Splugorth, and believe them to be elite, trans-dimensional, hired killers, nothing more.) The only Splugorth group to regularly visit MercTown is the Atlantis-sponsored mercenary company **The Shadow Warriors** (see **Rifts® Mercenaries**, pages 89-94), who occasionally stop at the city to rest, locate clients and purchase supplies. There are rumors that a second group of Atlanteans are active in the city operating a clandestine base of operations in the Mystic Quarter, but there is no clear evidence to substantiate this claim.

The Federation of Magic, which rules western Kentucky, is viewed by the government of MercTown as its most immediate threat. Even with its neutral position, Lord Dunscon is likely to see MercTown as a dangerous rival state and source of revenue not under his control. No one has forgotten that it was a bandit army from the Magic Zone that threatened New Paducah in the first place, and brought Drago and the mercs to their sleepy little community. With good reason, Proconsul Drago is wary of the Federation and fears it has designs to someday add it to their nation. Nonetheless, MercTown remains neutral towards the Federation of Magic. Individuals from that organization are given the same free access to the city-state as anyone else. This is likely to remain true in the foreseeable future, so long as the warriors from the City of Brass keep to its side of Kentucky.

Golden Age Weaponsmiths (GAW) is a close trading partner of MercTown. Using the natural water route offered by the Tennessee River, GAW sends many of its products to and through the city-state. Even before the mercs took control of New Paducah, the kingdom was used as a terminus for Golden Age Weaponsmiths product headed to Missouri (Whykin, Kingsdale, Michigan, Tolkeen and the CS 'Burbs), the New West (including Fort El Dorado), and Texas (the Pecos Empire and other independents). There is a healthy trading relationship between MercTown and Golden Age Weaponsmiths, one that is unlikely to change in the future.

The Missouri territory is another major trading partner of the city-state. MercTown imports many of its raw materials (timber, metals, etc.), foodstuffs and even some processed goods from the various communities in that region, including Whykin, Kingsdale and CS Missouri. Most trade is conducted through third parties (i.e. human merchants) not associated with any of the governments involved. No attempts have been made to negotiate any form of alliances or agreements, and MercTown has no desire to make any such deals if anyone were to suggest them.

MercTown's relationship with the **Coalition States** is a tenuous one. Limited trade is conducted with several CS territories, mainly Missouri, Fort El Dorado and Newtown. The government at MercTown has been careful to avoid any sort of confrontation with the military juggernaut, but at the same time treats soldiers who may come to town to resupply or get in a little R&R (rest and relaxation) with the same respect and care that they give all visitors. For their part the Coalition States have been suspiciously quiet, at least publicly, about MercTown. Behind closed doors, Coalition military leaders have mixed feelings about MercTown, seeing it as both a valuable resource for gathering intelligence and as a potential trouble spot. However, the general consensus is that the city-state is a minor concern, with the possible exception of the Naruni presence in town. Plans are already in the works to launch a number of clandestine surgical strikes, raids, and acts of sabotage against Naruni Enterprises in MercTown to drive the aliens from the region.

Officially, the Coalition States is warily neutral towards MercTown. Neither its government nor its military have any immediate plans for the city-state. If anything, the CS would like to normalize relations with MercTown to shore up the southern border of Illinois against the Federation of Magic. Furthermore, this would allow the Coalition to exert greater political and economic pressure on MercTown to make it a client state similar to Whykin, something Proconsul Drago has managed to skillfully avoid. (Note: This plan is not as unrealistic as it seems given that most of MercTown's trading partners are either CS states or its allies, including Fort El Dorado, Whykin and Golden Age Weaponsmiths.)

Criminals and Fugitives. Freedom is a cornerstone of society in MercTown. Ever since Proconsul Drago took over, the gates have been left open to whomever wishes to visit. All are welcome, including the worst elements of other kingdoms – so long as they are willing to obey the few rules set down by the Proconsul. The city is officially neutral, unwilling to become entangled in the politics of the rest of the continent. As part of this neutrality, the government does not recognize the rights of other states to *extradite criminals* wanted for crimes outside of MercTown. So long as that individual obeys the rules in MercTown and keeps his slate clean, he is free to stay. Needless to say, this policy infuriates many of the nations and kingdoms in North America.

By the same token, it must be said that MercTown does not provide sanctuary to wanted criminals. While they are allowed to remain in the city unmolested by the MercTown authorities, they are not provided with any official protection (save in extremely rare cases where it benefits the government to do so); the fugitive is on his own. If agents of a foreign power send as-



sassins or bounty hunters, and manage to capture the criminal and leave the city with him in custody (dead or alive), MercTown authorities do not intercede on the criminal's behalf.

The general attitude is what happens on the streets stays on the streets, and so long as the government is none the wiser they are content to turn a blind eye to such intrigues. Hundreds, possibly thousands, of wanted men and women have taken full advantage of MercTown's lenient extradition policy.

MercTown's Armed Forces

The MercTown Defenders is a modern, organized, well-trained military and police force, that answers directly to the Military Governor, Proconsul Drago. In the past ten years, the nature of the Defenders has changed dramatically. Originally, this group was a mercenary company thrust into the role of city defenders, after their leader, Kentek Drago, assumed control of New Paducah. This change of roles from mobile military unit to domestic police force reaped a number of benefits for the members of Drago's Defenders, including access to greater resources, a permanent headquarters, improved training facilities, and for the married members of the outfit, a stable family environment in the city-state. Those members who still yearned for combat and mercenary operations either became long-range scouts, members of the border patrol or joined Special Ops, or left Drago to continue their life as independent mercenaries for hire.

At present, the MercTown Defenders have 4000 personnel stationed at the heart of the city in the Barracks. Veterans of the merc outfit form the command element and cadre of the force with additional recruits drawn from the civilian populace. Twice a year the force offers a top-notch training course, with graduates being signed to 5 year contracts. Officer candidates are sent to the *Ishpeming Staff College*, and if they graduate, are signed to 10 year contracts. Members are provided with standard issue equipment, room & board at the Barracks for single troops or subsidized housing in town for those with families, and receive high wages of 600 credits a week for front-line troops and police, 800-900 credits for NCOs (non-commissioned officers) and specialists, 1000-1200 credits for officers, and 3000 credits for the command staff.

The MercTown Defenders are divided into two distinct commands, the *police force* and *regular military*. Each is commanded by the equivalent of a brigadier general with a subordinate headquarters staff of 50-100 officers and specialists. The commander of the military is referred to as the *Chief of Staff*, currently the position is held by *Evan Koenig* (6th level Headhunter with a head for strategy, tactics and logistics that exceed his actual level of experience). A Dwarf named *Titus Ironfeld* (7th level Headhunter) is the acting *Police Commandant* in charge of police officers, with *Marcus Fahey* (8th level Rogue Scholar) as the *Chief Justice* (top judge).

The Police Force consists of 1260 personnel, mainly patrol officers responsible for keeping the peace and enforcing laws in town. These officers are the equivalent of CS Grunts with additional training in the legal code, Streetwise, investigation techniques, weapons handling and martial arts. As city defenders, they all have basic military training to protect the city against an armed invasion or insurrection. This frees the regular military to deal with overtly military defenses and operations.

Police officers are dispatched to patrol the city in two-man teams and are equipped with *NG-A15 "Peacekeeper" armor*,

an NG-T6 taser neural disruptor, a nightstick (1D6 S.D.C.) and an NE-2L or NE-4 plasma cartridge pistol (which of the latter guns depends on the officer's P.S. attribute). For transportation, the police have a fleet of 200 NG hover cycles and 300 lightly armored hover cars (70 M.D.C. each). The cars usually stow a riot shield, TX-16 pump rifle and WI-GL4 grenade launcher with tear gas rounds in the trunk.

Should a situation get out of control, the police have a rapid response, SWAT-style team called the **Urban Tactical Force (UTF)**. This unit consists of 160 specialist officers who are divided into eight 10-man assault teams each mounted in an *Iron Maiden APC-10*, with 2 officers dressed in two *J.A.P.E. II Defender* or *Samson power armor* and the remainder wearing *Man-Killer EBA* with an *NG-LP25 Submachine-gun* or *NE-300 "Stutterer."* To augment these assault teams the UTF also has 12 NE-040 point defense drones, a bomb squad (20 Safecrackers) to disarm explosive devices, a platoon of 40 snipers armed with Wilk's 587 sniper heavy laser or NE-75H "Shoulder Cannon" plasma rifles, and a squad of 10 UAR-1 Enforcers equipped with tear gas missiles and other non-lethal weapons.

Finally, the police force has a **Covert Investigation Squad** that is responsible for investigating serious crimes, conducting undercover "sting" operations, maintaining surveillance on key groups within the city, counter-intelligence and intelligence gathering. All 100 members of the squad are specialists in one area or another and include psychics (Psi-Stalkers, Mind Melters, Mind Bleeders, etc.), intelligence specialists (Military Specialist, NGR Intelligence Commando equivalents and others), and military operatives (Special Forces soldier, freelance spies, master assassins, etc.). Standard issue equipment for these personnel includes an N-F20A medium force field, Wilk's 300 Hideaway laser pistol and NG-SR3 "Marksman" collapsible laser sniper rifle in addition to high-tech communications and surveillance devices.

The Regular Military consists of a single, oversized combined arms brigade with a supporting air force and air defense artillery. Working beneath the Chief of Staff at the Barracks is a 100 officer headquarters unit that includes all of the necessary logistics, intelligence and communications staff. All remaining troops are divided between the *Armor Battalion*, two *Heavy Infantry Battalions*, *Air Force* and *Air Defense Artillery*. Personnel in these units are dispersed among a string of bases outside of the city as well as at the Barracks in town.

The Armor Battalion is the heavy, offensive force for the Defenders. Its vehicles include 30 Juggernaut hover tanks, 40 Iron Hammer main battle tanks, 12 Iron Bolt missile vehicles, 20 Mecha-Knight robots, 10 Titan Heavy Combat robots and 20 NG-V7 Hunter mobile guns.

Both of the **Heavy Infantry Battalions** are identical units of 640 total personnel equipped with 12 Aggressor Hover Assault IFVs, 24 Iron Maiden APC-10s, 6 GAT-2A3 Bradley scout vehicles, and 100 suits of flying power armor (a mix that includes NG-Samsons, NG-X11F "Death Angel," Bandito Arms' Wild Weasel SAMAS, NG-Red Hawk flying power armor, Icarus Flight Systems and some of Naruni Enterprises' latest offerings, donated by NE for the publicity (see **Naruni Wave 2** for details on their new robots and power armor).

Infantry soldiers are issued medium or heavy body armor, a Wilk's 457 pulse rifle or NE-10 plasma cartridge rifle (for those

who are strong enough), with one in ten being issued a heavy weapon like the NG-303 light rail gun, WI-23 missile launcher or NE-200 plasma cartridge machine-gun. Approximately one in five of all troops have undergone some form of augmentation, with 15% Crazies, 25% Juicers, 25% partial cyborg augmentation (Headhunters) and 35% full cyborg conversion, and many others have 1D4+2 cybernetic implants.

To defend against air strikes, to which the city-state is most vulnerable given the size of its ground force, the MercTown Defenders have a modest **Air Force** with four Star Dragon Superiority Fighters, 8 Boomerangs, 8 NE-A400 Interceptor Drones, 12 Grey Falcon jets, 24 GA-16C Falcons, 6 Iron Eagle gunships (helicopters), 6 GH-58D Kiowa Warriors, 12 GH-64 Apaches, 6 NG Skybunker Hover Carriers, and 36 reconditioned, old style, CS Sky Cycles. Most of the pilots are in fact Headhunters and Mercenary RPA Aces with training in the appropriate piloting skill, plus a dozen Phaeton Juicers who pilot the most advanced aircraft (mainly the Naruni model planes).

Supplementing the air force is the **Air Defense Artillery** which mans 14 positions along the walls of the city. Each position is equipped with a long-range radar (tracks 144 targets and has a 60 mile/96 km range), NG-404 heavy rail gun and medium-range missile launcher (payload of 40 total missiles per each of the 14 launchers).

Volunteers. MercTown normally hosts thousands of visiting adventurers, gunslingers, bandits, hired guns, mercenaries, psychics and magic practitioners, all of whom are capable of assisting in the defense of the city-state. Of these visitors, an estimated 40-60% would feel obligated to help defend the city-state, mainly out of their own self-interest and desire to maintain a safe haven like MercTown. The remainder would sit out the battle, on the sidelines, but if threatened, would defend themselves aggressively.

Combat residents. MercTown is home to a number of important and resourceful organizations like the Black Market, Magic Guild, Tennessee Headhunters and Naruni Enterprises who would join any fight to defend the city-state and their interests within it. In addition, there are a number of resident mercenary bands and companies, street gangs, criminal types, retired warriors, adventurers, heroes and individuals who would also join in any defense of the city as well as volunteer for any cause or action that appealed to their sense of justice or duty, or struck their fancy. In total, these volunteer troops number in the thousands, boosting the strength of the MercTown Defenders by at least another 6,000-10,000 combat veterans, mages and adventurers.

Prominent Organizations

Mercenary Companies

At least thirty different mercenary companies are either headquartered or maintain offices in MercTown. These outfits range in size and capability from private armies like *Larsen's Brigade* (see **Rifts® Mercenaries**, pages 84-89) to the smallest nickel-and-dime outfits of platoon size or less. Every one of these companies, regardless of its size, is ready to order for contracts anywhere on the North American continent. No two are alike, and each has its own set of goals, code of conduct and methodology.

Some companies work secretly for a *clandestine sponsor* like the Federation of Magic, Coalition States or Naruni Enterprises, while others are independent freelancers. A few are structured along traditional military lines (like *Larsen's Brigade*), while others more closely resemble the ragtag bandit armies of the Pecos Empire (such as *Mayhem's Marauders*, featured elsewhere in this book). Many specialize in some unique facet of military operations such as VIP protection, naval combat, air combat, anti-magic, demon slaying, espionage or intelligence gathering. Still there is one constant: *all* of these companies are willing to fight any enemy in return for monetary compensation, the amount varying based on the individual company's reputation, capability, hardware and the level of difficulty, specialization or risk required for the assignment.

Mercenaries are the lifeblood of MercTown. These soldiers of fortune are responsible for the overnight economic turnaround of New Paducah, and have pumped millions of credits into MercTown transforming it into the mercenary haven that it is today. As a result, many mercenary companies have some connections and pull with the local government. The largest, wealthiest and most supportive merc companies, such as *Larsen's Brigade*, wield a tremendous amount of influence in the city-state. In return for healthy cash infusions into the local economy, they are allowed to operate autonomously, able to bend the few laws that exist and get preferred treatment that may include special discounts, first offerings of new and limited weapons and supplies, and first look and right of refusal on new bounties and city contracts. These companies are the big guns in the city-state – the key players whose actions can decide the fate of nations, and thus are the most prominent organizations in MercTown. But even newcomers and small outfits are allowed to congregate freely within MercTown's borders to rest, recruit new troops, buy equipment and negotiate contracts with eager clients.

The Merchants' Association

One of the few prominent organizations in MercTown that is completely legitimate is the *Merchants' Association*. The Association is a consortium of entrepreneurs from the city-state whose members include store owners, small businesses, trading houses, entertainment establishments, hotels, nightclubs, taverns, shipping lines, minor corporations and merchants large and small. Its main purpose is to act as a *political lobbying group* to ensure its membership is heard and wields enough clout for collective bargaining to best represent the interests of merchants in the community with the government. Presenting a unified front, the Merchants' Association exerts pressure on the government to pass legislation favorable to local businesses, such as zoning laws, fair taxation, tariffs to protect local industry, proper city infrastructure, and reasonable customs regulations.

For its part, the government in MercTown recognizes the Merchants' Association as an important advisory body and ally. Its officials understand the benefits and advantages of dealing with a single organization rather than attempting to appease numerous distinct groups of businessmen. As a result, the government has granted the Merchants' Association three seats on its Advisory Council, a move that has strengthened the Association, prompting the vast majority of merchants in MercTown to join its ranks. (An estimated 70-80% of the city merchants are members.)

The three representatives for the Advisory Council are elected by the membership of the Merchants' Association. An election is held every year during the Association's big annual meeting where all members gather to discuss important issues and new reforms, as well as offer advice, seminars and general information. Candidates for the three Advisory posts are selected by nomination from the assembly, followed by a vote to determine the final three representatives for the year. Once elected to the Advisory Council, the delegates are expected to lobby the government on the behalf of the *entire* membership. Regular meetings are held to keep the representatives informed of the members' opinions and concerns. Typically, the Association meets once a month. Turnout at the meetings is generally low, unless there is some pressing issue or new law on the table.

Currently, the Merchants' Association's three delegates to the Advisory Council are **Maritus Flavarrel**, a notorious wine merchant, **Jefferson Rockford**, owner of the Ambassador Suites, and **Jacius Larkent**, a former Senator from the Manistique Imperium. Of the three Larkent is the only newcomer, the others are incumbents who've held their positions on the council for years. The membership of the Association is in good hands with these three. While the Association is not the only voice heard when it comes to mercantile affairs, its opinions and support carry a large amount of weight. Proconsul Drago respects their advice, and more often than not, heeds their suggestions, giving the Merchants' Association a genuine measure of power in MercTown.

MercTown Labor Union

The MercTown Labor Union is an organization dedicated to protecting the rights of workers in the city-state. Like the Merchants' Association, the Labor Union is, in essence, a lobbying group whose leaders bargain for the collective good of all its members. The Union's primary objective is to ensure the fair treatment of its membership, to protect their rights to fair wages, safe working conditions, and benefits. Rights which are all too often neglected by the "bottom line" culture of corporate managers and cutthroat tactics of the weapons industry. In return for this representation, the Labor Union collects dues from its members to cover its own costs.

On the surface, the MercTown Labor Union is a legitimate organization with good intentions, which is why they've been granted two seats on the Advisory Council. However, while the Union does protect its members and has improved their standard of living, there is a shady aspect to its operations. Its creation was an initiative by the local Black Market syndicate, and it has been thoroughly infiltrated by that criminal organization. Syndicate boss, *Ted Dutcher*, has used it as a means to gain leverage over industry within the city-state and to give the **Merc Ops Network** a stranglehold on the assignment of, and pay out on, bounties to mercenaries and independents. (Note: See the **Merc Ops** sourcebook for details on bounties, collection of bounties, brokerage services, finding mercenary assignments and notable desperados, as well as a ton of new merc weapons and equipment.)

Boss Dutcher also uses the Union to bully corporations such as Bailey Brothers Construction into paying kickbacks to the Black Market. This is accomplished by factoring a small per-

centage into all Union contracts which Dutcher then skims from the Union dues and pension plan. While these kickbacks are relatively low, normally 2-5%, it translates into several million credits annually for the MercTown Black Market syndicate.

No one has been able to prove any connection between the MercTown Labor Union and the Black Market (or Merc Ops and the Black Market), but many suspect it, nonetheless. Every time any hard evidence allegedly comes to light it disappears and witnesses refute their original testimony, refuse to testify, or suffer an unfortunate accident that silences them. Boss Dutcher is careful to protect his scam, laundering the tithes he collects from big business through a series of legitimate businesses secretly owned by his syndicate. Furthermore, he ensures that the Labor Union does, in fact, protect the rights of its members, thus giving him the clout of the city-state's working force. The money he embezzles comes from the corporations, not out of the pockets of the workers, which keeps the Union members blissfully ignorant of the whole arrangement.

Of the total number of businesses in MercTown, there are only a handful where the union exerts real influence. This is due to the fact that most of the businesses in the city are small, and owner-operated with too few employees to warrant them being unionized. That leaves the big business of the lumbermill, slaughterhouse, taxi service, hotels, entertainment, food services and arms dealers (mainly the warehousing, shipping and receiving end of things).

The Union is considerably more organized than the Merchants' Association and has a hierarchical structure quite similar to that of the corporate organizations it's designed to oppose. At the top is the President and Vice President, who also serve as the Union's delegates to the Advisory Council. Other positions within the union are purposely kept to a minimum, mainly to reduce the amount of dues necessary to pay for its operating costs and salaries. The current Union President is *Herman Pritchett*, a career labor manager who, before being elected as president, worked at a string of industrial plants, farms and mines throughout the region. By all accounts, Pritchett is an honest, dedicated advocate of workers' rights whose fiery temper and tenacity often win the day during negotiations with corporate executives. His right-hand man, the Vice President, and fellow Council delegate, is *Sean Clemmons*, a former construction worker. While he pays lip service to the Union cause, Clemmons is the Black Market's ranking man in the organization and Boss Dutcher's stooge. His real job is to ensure the continued success of Dutcher's venture and to keep the credits rolling in to the syndicate. He is young, bright, resourceful, careful and discreet. If things continue to go well, he may someday become a Black Market boss himself.

The MercTown Labor Union's influence with the government is limited, mainly because the MercTown government avoids legislation that would restrict or overly regulate trade. Nevertheless, the Union does exert a tremendous amount of power over the corporations whose workers are members of the union. It is often able to dictate favorable demands for its labor force and leverage the business to put pressure on the government concerning certain issues. When legal means (like strikes and production slowdowns) don't do the job, the union can turn to its Black Market backers for help (shakedowns, blackmail, arson, sabotage, assaults and even murder). Simply put, the

MercTown Labor Union is an organization that is not to be trifled with. However, in this era of prosperity and growth, everyone is happy and the union has not had to get rough with anyone.

The Black Market

For the Black Market the establishment of MercTown is a gold mine. The city-state is a buyer's market for the kinds of goods and services that this criminal organization offers. Moreover, due to the permissive attitudes of the local government, the Black Market is free to operate in the open, without having to hide its activities from the authorities. It is a safe area where the organization can fence stolen goods, sell weapons and contraband, including its own line of Bandito Arms, operate casinos, run escort services, traffic narcotics, deal in forged documentation, recruit soldiers, and run body chop-shops; so long as they obey the few local laws and provide a quality product, nobody cares. Annual profits from sales in MercTown number in the tens of millions of credits.

MercTown's Black Market syndicate is headed by Ted Dutcher (9th level Smuggler), a tough-as-nails, but shrewd career criminal in his mid-thirties. Dutcher won the job because of his ability to see the big picture, which meant he could be trusted to reap huge profits in MercTown without putting the syndicate at risk through criminal antics. One of his first moves in MercTown was to establish contacts with the official government, and he's agreed to pass along pertinent information in return for considerations (such as the police occasionally looking the other way when the syndicate has to deal with a messy situation). He's been given a free hand to run the MercTown operation but answers to the bosses in Chi-Town and owes them a 25% cut of all profits. Working for Dutcher are 14 "crews" or syndicate branches with a total membership of 120 full-time mobsters.

Dutcher and his syndicate have their fingers in every imaginable pie in MercTown. The group owns or has a share in one bank, four nightclubs, eight escort services, two dozen bars, five weapons dealers, three medical clinics, five body chop-shops, a junkyard, a rare & used book store, two music stores, three casinos, a dozen drug dens and two dozen pawnshops. One of the Black Market's most profitable enterprises is to buy weapons weapons from mercs and adventurers down on their luck for cheap, and ship them to other syndicates around the country for resale. (It is estimated that 20% the illegal weapons sold in the Chi-Town 'Burbs and CS Missouri come from MercTown.) The syndicate also has a stranglehold on the bootleg film and video business, operates the biggest alcohol distributor/supplier in town, and controls fully half of the sleazy Warrens district. Not to mention the fact that Boss Dutcher has invested heavily in many of the legitimate businesses in town like the *Grand Plaza Hotel & Casino*, *Bailey Brothers Construction* and the *Hub Battledome*. If Dutcher and the Black Market are also the power behind *Merc Ops*, one could argue that the syndicate owns or has a stake in more than one third of the town.

Virtually all of the syndicate members in MercTown were selected for their business savvy. These men and women are not the goons or thugs that people usually imagine, instead they operate like regular businessmen. With MercTown being a buyer's

market, they cut deals that are more favorable to customers (drop prices listed in the **Rifts® RPG**, **Rifts® Game Masters Guide** or other sourcebooks by 20-30%), and still make heaps of money from the sheer volume of sales, the resale of items from trade-ins and pawnshops, and other operations. Boss Dutcher is careful to keep violence to a minimum, because it's bad for business and brings down the wrath of the authorities. That means the MercTown Black Market is less likely to use intimidation, threats and physical violence in their activities. At the same time, they aren't afraid to resort to such methods if someone tries to muscle in on their turf, interferes with business or tries to cheat or steal from them. Even murder of outsiders is written off as "self-defense."



The Headhunter Academy

On the outskirts of MercTown is a private mercenary training facility owned and operated by *Tennessee Jack Crabtree*. Jack and his brother Samuel "Six Guns" Crabtree were the original leaders of the Tennessee Headhunters, one of the three mercenary companies that protected New Paducah. Rather than get involved with the dull, boring realities of running a kingdom, the brothers opted to take an annual tribute from the city and let Colonel Drago run the show. This has worked out extremely well for them and they enjoy what Drago has done with the place. Although neither ever took a direct hand in running MercTown (it was the brothers who coined the name), they consider themselves partners, and they and the members of their mercenary company were given great latitude in the community.

The Crabtree brothers have both recently retired. Samuel has left for parts unknown on some grand adventure, but Jack lives in MercTown. Jack receives the annual stipend from MercTown for himself and his brother. He banks Sam's share and lives like a king on his. A reasonably good businessman, Tennessee Jack has saved a fortune and is rumored to have bank accounts in MercTown, the Chi-Town 'Burbs, Lazlo, Old Bones and even the New German Republic. Wanting to leave his own legacy in MercTown, Tennessee Jack built the **Headhunter Academy**. At least 50 veterans from the original Tennessee Headhunters mercenary company have also retired to MercTown, where they remain loyal to Jack and 30 of them serve as a training cadre at the Academy. The goal of the Headhunter Academy is to train future generations of mercenaries and MercTown Defenders. The business is fairly successful, enough to pay the instructors, buy the necessary equipment needed by the school, and have a little cash left over (not that Jack needs it). The Academy runs

year round and graduates an average of 500 to 1,000 new, young warriors annually. See description #8 for more details.

As part of the original agreement with Proconsul Drago, Tennessee Jack has taken a seat on the Advisory Council and has begun to wield a fair amount of influence in the governance and defense of the city. Tennessee Jack would like to see stronger fortifications and defensive measures and is concerned that the Federation of Magic and the Coalition States will both become a problem in the future.

As for Six Guns Crabtree, nobody, not even brother Jack, knows where he's gone or what he may be up to. Jack is confident his brother is just away adventuring and seeing the world, but has made quiet inquiries into Samuel's whereabouts without success.

Ravenshome Thieves' Guild

More troubling to the local authorities than the Black Market is the presence of the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild. On the surface this organization is merely an association of independents, specialists and contractors who, allegedly, specialize in "covert operations." However, the truth of the matter is that this is a criminal organization whose members include City Rats, Professional Thieves, Freelance Spies, Safecrackers, Smugglers, con artists, psychics and raiders. Numerous members of the Ravenshome Guild are D-Bees who hail from primitive dimensions with a medieval level of technology and society, and humans are, in fact, the minority in the organization. Dragons, shape-changers, mutants, Ogres, Larmac, Quick-Flex Aliens, Auto-G's, and other D-Bees, and even Brodkil, Gurgoyles, and Witchlings, are all counted among Ravenshome's membership.

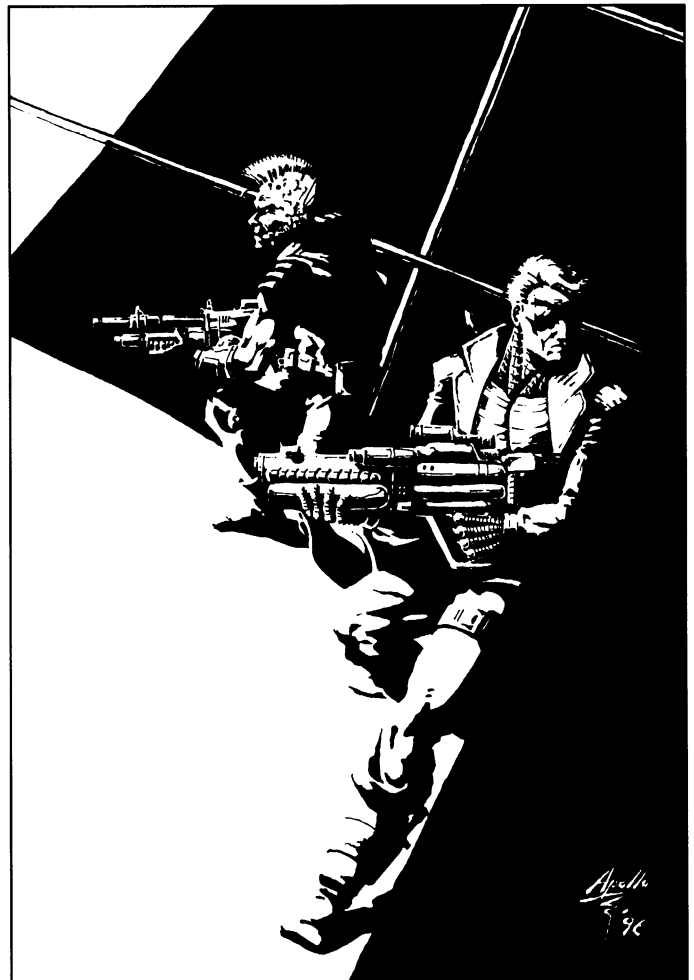
Little is known about the Ravenshome Guild except that it is led by a Master Thief. Who exactly this individual is remains unknown to all but a handful of the senior guild members. Besides the position of Master Thief, there doesn't *seem* to be any specific rank structure, although it appears that seniority is given a great deal of weight. All members of the guild are required to pay a contribution of 15-20% of profits from their criminal activities. Supposedly, the guild itself does not encourage illegal activities within MercTown, but it is apparent that some 40% of its members do regularly engage in picking pockets, muggings, robbery, car theft, breaking & entering, forgery, counterfeiting, assaults, blackmail, extortion and even some protection rackets, most targeting mercenaries and other outsiders. Several unsolved murders in MercTown have also been attributed to the guild, though there is no evidence to confirm it.

From a law enforcement perspective, it is hard to crack down on the guild's activities. For one thing, the Ravenshome Guild itself is basically just an inn & tavern that offers gambling (cards and dice games mostly), sells tools of the trade (lock picks, gear for climbing, flashlights, optics, communications and surveillance gear, precision tools, special weapons, etc.) and, according to reports, sells a variety of exotic drugs, poisons and magic items - none of which are illegal in MercTown. If the guild is involved in city crime, its members are careful to cover their tracks and seldom leave incriminating evidence that points

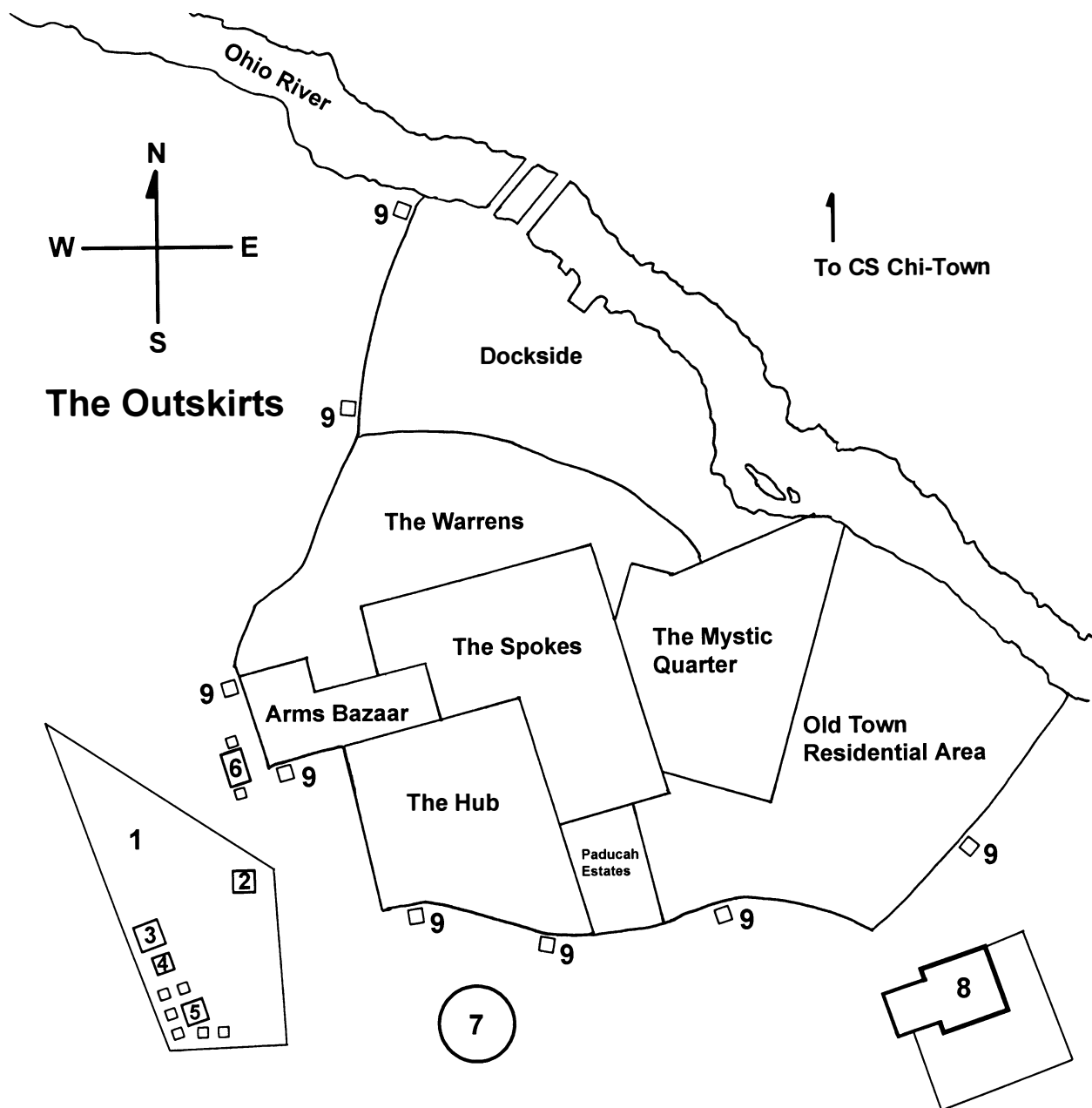
to a guild member. Even the vaunted MercTown Covert Investigation Squad has trouble identifying guild members, let alone making a case stick.

The influence of the Ravenshome Guild is most pervasive in *the Warrens*, where they sometimes clash with the Black Market. It's probable that whatever criminal operations the Black Market doesn't operate in this part of town, the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild does. Through its members, the Ravenshome controls numerous dens of iniquity, pawnbrokers, taverns, arms dealers, and a magic shop in the Warrens, many of which are used to launder money and hawk stolen goods.

It is common knowledge that the Ravenshome Guild provides members with services that include the fencing of stolen goods, an information network, negotiation of contracts with third parties (i.e. foreign governments, merc outfits, merchants, etc.), discounts on sales of vital equipment, and more importantly, a series of safe houses that are scattered throughout the city, but especially the Warrens district, where wanted fugitives can hide from the police, their victims, vengeful mercenaries and the Black Market.



MercTown City Highlights



MercTown is one of the more impressive cities in the American Midwest. Though a fraction of the size of Chi-Town, and a third the size of Kingsdale, Los Alamos or New Chillicothe, this city-state is among the most high-tech communities in North America. Conventional 20th century buildings to ultra-modern structures of Mega-Damage glass and steel rise above the heavily fortified outer wall, giving the place a look similar to that of Chi-Town's fortress mega-city, only on a much smaller scale and with a regular city inside the outer walls. MercTown is spread over a wide area with numerous office buildings and dwellings. It is far more picturesque than many kingdoms and, with the exception of the Warrens, its streets are clean, buildings are free of graffiti and roads and buildings are in good repair. Unlike the squalid Chi-Town 'Burbs and most industrial kingdoms, the lack of manufacturing helps to keep the air and water clean and pure.

In many respects MercTown is more like two or even four cities that roll from one into the other. It is divided into several distinct districts such as the *Outskirts*, *Downtown Center*, *the Warrens*, *Mystic Quarter*, and so on, but locals see it as two: *Old Town* and *New Town*.

The area known as **New Town** is, as its name suggests, the newest portion of the continually growing city-state. Most of what is New Town did not exist prior to the takeover by Proconsul Kentek Drago. This area is the direct result of his efforts to transform MercTown into a commercial center and is made up of the city's downtown core, the business district, markets and government buildings. New Town does encompass portions of the original city, most notably *the Warrens*, and not all of New Town's structures are modern skyscrapers or triumphs of technology, many are examples of classic architecture. Visitors to

the city are allowed free access to the entire New Town section, which is the thriving, entrepreneurial heart of the kingdom.

The remainder of the city is **Old Town**. This name is somewhat of a misnomer, given that many of the neighborhoods, homes and buildings are new constructions. Nevertheless, most of the area within the borders of Old Town makes up the original kingdom of New Paducah and contains the bulk of the residential areas, apartment blocks, hospitals, schools, parks and other facilities for the sole use of MercTown residents. A deliberate effort has been made to segregate the neighborhoods of Old Town from the freewheeling mercenaries and rabble that visit and abound in New Town. This keeps the homes of its citizens safe, clean, and free of undesirable elements and scary visitors. A short, Mega-Damage concrete wall surrounds most of the Old Town district to further delineate the separation and protect residents.

Outsiders generally have no reason to enter Old Town. If they wish to meet clients or visit family members, or a friend living in Old Town, they must make special arrangements with that person, who clears it with the MercTown Defenders, before a visitor's permit is drawn up and provided to the visitor. Non-residents caught in the neighborhoods without a *Visitor's Travel Permit* are picked up by the police and taken to a police station for questioning. Old Town is also a strict *weapons free zone*, so tromping through the neighborhoods packing weapons or wearing body armor makes the outsider easy to identify and pick up. Unauthorized personnel caught in Old Town are escorted out, questioned and usually released after photographs, fingerprints and DNA samples have been taken to identify (or rule out) said individuals should a crime or problem surface later. Outsiders caught in Old Town more than once without a Travel Permit can expect a long, rough interrogation session by the police, a night in jail, the usual I.D. procedures, and a 300 credit fine. Those who flee or resist arrest (fight back) are subdued by the police who will respond in kind and use deadly force if they are fired upon (better safe than sorry).

MercTown Outskirts

1. Prouse Memorial Airport: Beyond the city walls, on the outskirts of MercTown, is a full service airport. It is named after a close friend of the Proconsul, Cyber-Knight Sir Davis Prouse, who died in the battle for New Paducah. The airport is a prime example of the progress brought about by the Drago regime. The thoroughly modern airport was constructed with the best materials and equipped with the most advanced command systems and electronics on the market (i.e. computer network, communications, radar, weather radar, computer-assisted landing devices, etc.). It is a sprawling complex with dozens of buildings and scores of hangars surrounding the central runway system. Only about a third of the runways and corresponding buildings are owned or used by the MercTown government, Air Force and civilian airline, the rest are rented and leased out to select customers, including mercenary companies like *Air Superiority Inc.* However, the airfield operations remain under MercTown's jurisdiction and control, with all air traffic controlled by the main tower which is operated by officers from the MercTown Air Force.

The MercTown Air Force is concentrated in the southeast corner of the airfield, opposite from the Air Superiority compound. The Air Force's area is ringed by dual, electrified fences and patrolled by soldiers around the clock. In addition to airfields are hangars, mechanics' bays, refueling points, ordnance bunkers and command and control facilities. Unlike Air Superiority's compound across from them, the Air Force has no barracks or living quarters on the airfield; living quarters are located within the city.

The MercTown Airport. The Air Force operates, maintains and defends the main terminal to which the primary Air Traffic Control Tower is attached.

The main terminal is designed to resemble a civilian-style airport rather than a military facility. Inside are seating areas for passengers, customs counters, baggage carousels, snack shops, convenience stores, a bar & restaurant (called *Frequent Fliers*), pre-flight boarding areas, and counters for various airlines currently operating out of MercTown: *Magic Carpet Airships*, *Air Michigan*, *Golden Age Airlines* and *Fly By Night*.

Magic Carpet Airships is a Kingsdale company that uses TW airships and offers flights to Kingsdale, Lazlo and formerly Tolkeen.

Air Michigan is a joint effort by Ishpeming and the Manistique Imperium that offers flights to most cities in the Great Lakes Region, including, of course, *Ishpeming* (Northern Gun) and the *Manistique Imperium*, but also *New Lazlo* (Ann Arbor area, Southern Michigan) and *Lazlo* (Toronto area, Ontario).

Fly By Night is a local concern operated by a brother-sister team who have two small passenger jets which they charter to any destination on the continent.

Golden Age Airlines is by far the biggest carrier and provides service to the city-states of *Golden Age Weaponsmiths (GAW)* as well as to *Fort El Dorado*, *Newtown*, *Los Alamos*, *CS Lone Star* and *El Paso*.

Security at the MercTown part of the airport is tight, with armed soldiers, security check points, weapons stowage, and other elements in place to assure security. Save for members of the MercTown Defenders, those granted diplomatic immunity or specially licensed bodyguards (such as Comitatus Security), *no one* is permitted to carry weapons in the airport environs. There are no fewer than 60 security people at any given time. The men and women selected for this task are drawn from the Police Force and are rotated on a weekly basis from their normal duties. Security for private businesses and individuals is left to them.

Private Customers. Additional hangars, airline facilities and use of airstrips are rented to private parties such as businesses, mercenary companies, adventuring outfits, government officials from small kingdoms, and rich individuals – 6,000 credits per month for a standard hangar, 15,000 for a large, and 5,000 credits per *aircraft*, large or small, for airport privileges; fuel, maintenance, repairs, and security are all problems of the renter. MercTown will also rent small, non-combat aircraft, mainly helicopters and single and twin-engine vessels, for 200 credits an hour or 4,000 credits per day, plus fuel cost and a 20,000 credit security deposit on the aircraft. If a rental is destroyed or stolen, the renter or his kin or merc company is expected to cover the replacement cost. **Note:** Such aircraft are in generally good re-

pair, but small, cheap and with half the usual M.D.C. for the main body as usual. The typical replacement cost of such aircraft ranges from 75,000 to 600,000 credits. Rental costs and fees must be paid, in full, *in advance*. However, some mercenary companies will rent out their aircraft and even combat models, for around the same price or 10-20% less. Space and rental aircraft at the airport are available on a first come, first served basis, but there is almost always one or two corners of the airport available for lease (typically 2D4 areas).

2. Air North America (ANA) is an example of a private business operating out of the MercTown airport. This independent mercenary outfit uses the airport to transport troops and supplies to various locations, using MercTown as a staging ground for their many operations throughout the country. It maintains a large contingent of aircraft at the Prouse Memorial Airport, which includes a quartet of GA-130 Hercules cargo planes, a small passenger jet, two GH-47 Chinook choppers, three GH-60 Blackhawks and a GH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopter. These aircraft are all stored in a series of hangars at the north end of the airfield that the mercenary company has rented from the city for going on four years. The site is the exclusive domain of pilots, technicians, maintenance staff, aircraft and supplies of ANA. On a daily basis the hangars are a hive of activity with planes being dispatched to varied locations across the continent carrying military and civilian cargo. All of the administration and paperwork is handled from the company's offices in the city at *Mercenary Plaza* (see **The Hub #19f**).

Thanks to an aggressive advertising campaign in MercTown, everybody knows that ANA will fly mercenaries, adventurers, business people and anyone in need of "discreet service" (escape or transportation for wanted fugitives) anywhere in the *old Canadian and American Empires* for 6,000 credits *per* passenger. "Discreet service" gets the client a private cabin away from the rest of the passengers, one armed guard, his identity kept secret, first on boarding and first off the aircraft. Destinations in hostile territory like vampire infested Mexico, Xitix Territory, active war zones, etc., cost double the usual fare. An air drop (parachuting in from an aircraft at a high altitude) only costs 25% more than the fee for normal passengers, which is 700-1000 credits to most destinations. Add 1,000-6,000 credits per person for *extra discretion*, increased security (two guards) and first class accommodations all the way (free food, booze and video entertainment); 15,000 extra credits per passenger for exclusive passage on the aircraft (no outsiders, only the paying customers and crew). Hauling cargo is considerably inexpensive, and the company has an excellent track record. Costs vary depending on the amount of freight to be moved and the level of danger represented by the destination. A typical no or low danger destination costs 25,000 credits to rent a GA-130 cargo aircraft, and the ANA service is *guaranteed* to arrive at the designated location within 48 hours. A delivery to a "hot" combat zone can cost 4-10 times more, but still comes with the 48 hour guarantee.

3. Randal's Rotors Aircraft Garage is the only independent aircraft mechanics' hangar and scrapyard actually at the airport. Most of the established airlines and private businesses that operate from Prouse Memorial Airport have their own mechanics, workforce and hangars. For those who do not have a mechanics' pool at their disposal, there is Randal's Rotors. Small-time Merc

groups and adventurers with damaged aircraft and power armor find Randal's to be fair, reliable and have the lowest prices in town.

The business, owned by *Randal Windstrom* (10th level Operator), is part airplane graveyard, part scrapyard and part mechanics' shop filled with assorted parts, vehicle frames and wreckage salvaged from downed or damaged aircraft.

Randal Windstrom has been working in the aircraft business for 40 years, his entire adult life. Before moving to MercTown he worked for *Air Michigan* as a technician as well as on the assembly line for *Golden Age Weaponsmiths'* Aircraft Division, and then as a troubleshooter for Drago's Defenders. When he decided to retire from the field and go into business for himself, his years of loyal duty under Colonel Drago (now Proconsul Drago) was rewarded with this prime, exclusive location at the airport. MercTown was the obvious choice to set up shop for a number of obvious reasons. He caters to mercs because he feels most comfortable with "his own people," as Randal is known to say, and because aircraft owned by mercs are far more likely to get damaged and need repairs, modifications, and souping up than those of civilian air carriers.

After opening his garage, Randal found buying and selling scrap a natural extension of his repair business. Consequently, mercs and adventurers looking to get rid of old, outdated, troublesome and broken down aircraft, rocket bikes and flying power armor can "dump" them at Randal's for free. Damaged aircraft still in working order can be offered for sale to Randal, but he only pays 2-12% of the vehicle's original selling price; take it or leave it. Randal and his crew of Operators (including two of his sons and a daughter) fix, rebuild and sell whatever they can, keeping usable salvage for parts and materials in the junkyard, crush the rest at the wrecking yard in his metal compactor, and sell it by the ton to GAW as recycled metal.

Randal's Rotors has a reputation for doing quality work at fair prices; about 20% less than fair market, and about a third to half less than most other comparable shops in MercTown (who typically charge fair market or a little higher). As a result, he and his crew are always swamped with work and it usually takes 1D4 days longer to get repairs done than at other shops. Rush jobs cost 50% more.

4. The Flight Room is a long, rectangular, single-story building that functions as a bar and restaurant built in the style of an Air Force Officers' Club. However, it is a privately owned establishment open to the general public. It caters to the pilots and crew from the MercTown Air Force, independent airlines and merc fly boys, especially members of Air Superiority and Air North America.

The Flight Room is always busy, but it is positively hopping at night. The establishment has two faces, and which one a visitor sees depends on the time of day he arrives. During the day only half of the facility is open, offering two bars with sexy, scantily clad waitresses. This persona of the Flight Room offers soft music, and quiet, high class, tavern and restaurant dining in a "gentleman's club" atmosphere; seating for 400. The kitchen serves a full range of quality meals at reasonable prices (10-25 credits) until 8 P.M. when it shuts down for two hours.

When the Flight Room reopens at 10 P.M. it is a rocking nightclub with six bars, four stages where women dance to pounding musical numbers, and a huge open dance floor that

can accommodate 3000 patrons for a night of dancing. The music is by live bands on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and a disk jockey other nights. Drinks of every kind are served at the bars, but meals are limited to steak and potatoes, burgers and fries, pizza, chicken, and salads, as well as breakfast (any type of eggs, with or without meat); prices range from 5-15 credits depending on the meal.

Pilots and their groupies, as well as other mercenaries, adventurers, and local women (and prostitutes) descend on the Flight Room at night to party. Most nights the bar is filled to capacity with more than 4,000 people drinking, dancing and having a good time. Given that most of its patrons are adrenaline junkies, the Flight Room tends to get fairly rowdy. Bar bets, games, physical contests and brawls are all commonplace. In an attempt to prevent things from becoming too violent, the bar has numerous distractions to keep the patrons busy. In addition to drinking and dancing, there are lounge areas, a game room with two dozen flight simulator style video games, pool tables, air hockey, fooze ball and dart boards. For the more adventurous, there is also the *Carrier Deck*, *Crud Bunker*, and *Wrestling Pit*.

The Carrier Deck is a room that can hold about 300 people and has two 30 foot (9.1 m) long tables, slicked down and painted to resemble the flight deck on an aircraft carrier. Contestants take a running start then leap on the table surface with arms extended, as if landing on an aircraft carrier. The point is to “hit the deck” at full throttle (running speed), and try to avoid sliding off the table or crashing into others already on deck. This silly fun is surprisingly popular among all the patrons, but especially Crazies, Juicers and Psi-Stalkers. By the end of the night, at least half of the nightclub’s patrons will have taken a dive on the Carrier Deck.

The Crud Bunker is a legacy from the pre-Rifts Air Force. It is a game that combines elements of billiards, racket ball and soccer. A normal billiards table provides the playing surface, which is located in a sandbag-lined corner of the room. Competitors are organized into two teams of two to eight players. In relays, the teams attempt to hit a moving pool ball with the white cue ball, which is thrown by hand (basically a roll to strike with bonuses from P.P. attribute; Deadball, Archery & Targeting or similar skill bonuses apply). A miss or a break in the relay results in a score for the other team. To make the game more challenging, limited body contact is allowed. Crud is a popular game, especially amongst Turbo-Jockeys, Phaeton Juicers, Quick Flex Aliens, Gunslingers and Mercenary Pilots.

The Wrestling Pit is another room that can accommodate 200-300 people. There is no furniture, the walls and ceiling are padded, and in the center is a sand pit. Friends, rivals, brawlers and roughnecks challenge other patrons to a brawl or fight in “the Pit.” The only rule is no weapons, magic or psionics – wrestling and fisticuffs only. That’s it. The Wrestling Pit is used for friendly competitions, contests between rivals, public humiliation, and as a place where a person can settle disputes “tough man” style. Although challenges often start as one on one or small team events, they can turn into brawls involving 30-60 people.

Wheeling and dealing. In addition to the fun and games, the Flight Room is known as a place where mercenaries, adventurers, criminals and pilots meet, discuss their plans, hammer out deals, take assignments, exchange information, purchase contra-

band, and make payments for services rendered. Although shady characters and criminals frequent the establishment, crime and serious violence (e.g. murder and rape) is very low at the Flight Room. (Of course, drugs, prostitution and other vices are all legal in MercTown). This night spot has remained popular for years and is packed, wall to wall, on the weekends and about half filled weekdays.

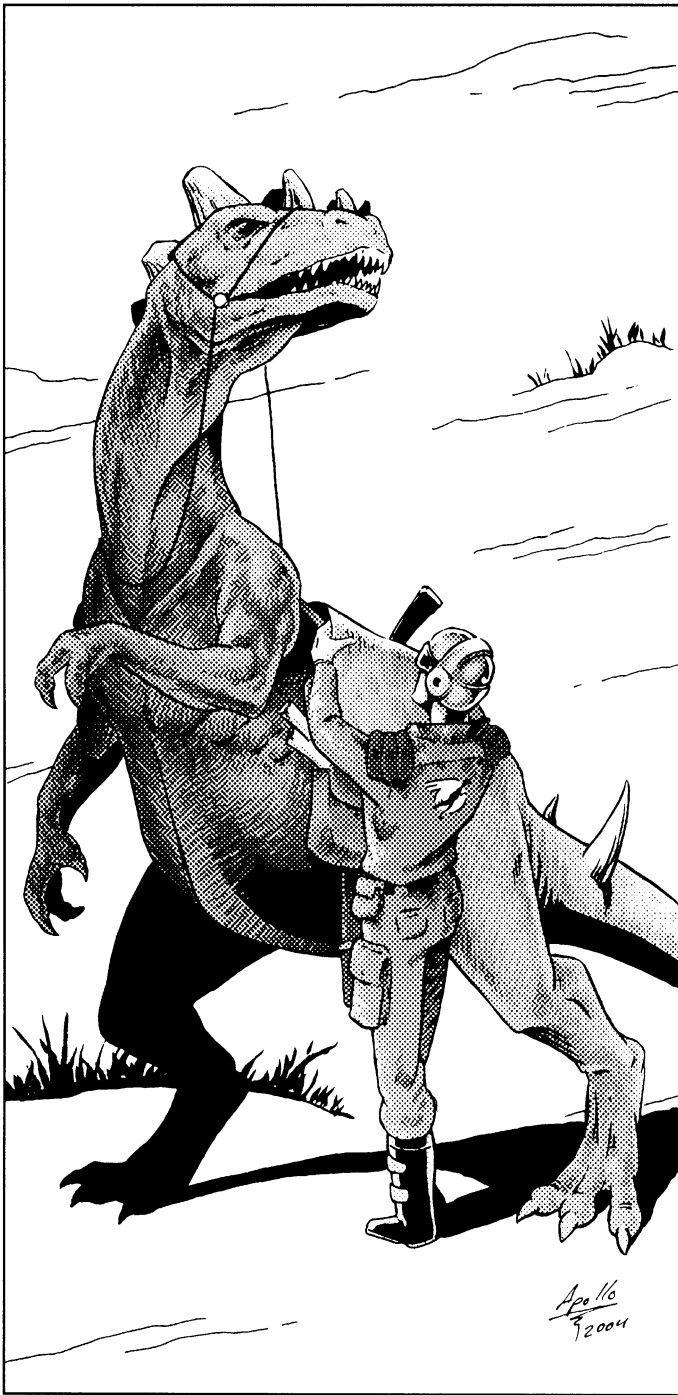
5. The Air Superiority Inc. Compound: The entire southwest corner of the airfield has been leased to the mercenary company known as *Air Superiority Inc.* Three years ago, MercTown’s government made a sweetheart deal to lease the area to *Commander Frank Conrad* as a permanent headquarters for his mercenary air force. By the terms of this deal Air Superiority holds title to the land for a period of twenty-five years, in return for an annual fee of eight million credits. Which is extremely reasonable, all things considered. For the city it, in effect, doubles the size of its air defense capabilities by having the notorious mercenary company present – attack the MercTown Air Force or the kingdom itself, and one is likely to have to deal with the angry members of Air Superiority as well.

The mercenary company has constructed an impressive compound that includes more than two dozen hangar buildings, an operations center, mechanics’ bays, mess hall and barracks. The compound is a full-fledged air base that serves as home and base of operation for the members of Air Superiority and their families.

6. Headquarters and Stables of Ostrosaurus Express. Outside the city walls is the large, fenced in compound and stables of Ostrosaurus Express. Inspired and named after the legendary *Pony Express* of the American Old West, this business serves as an independent mail and small package delivery service that mainly operates east of the Mississippi River and parts of the southwest.

The Ostrosaurus Express is not a shipping company, rather it functions as a private mail carrier for hire. In return for a reasonable shipping and delivery fee (10-1000 credits depending where the item is to be delivered, with most fees ranging from 40-200 credits) the company delivers letters and small packages no larger than two feet (0.6 m) in diameter and no more than 20 pounds (0.9 kg) to destinations throughout the east and parts of the southwest. Packages and letters are carried by a single rider on an Ostrosaurus. While the Ostrosaurus Express is virtually unknown in the central part of the country and CS held territories, it has a long history in the east. At present the company is known throughout the *Magic Zone*, *MercTown*, *Dweomer*, *Magestar*, *Stormspire*, *Lazlo*, *New Lazlo*, the *GAW city-states*, *Arzno*, *Los Alamo*, *El Paso* and numerous minor kingdoms and towns throughout the region.

The company is the brainchild of Ronald Pickett, an explorer, scholar and adventurer from Lazlo who was captured by Simvan on one of his treks. During his two years of captivity in the New West, Pickett came to admire the Ostrosaurus and learned to ride the monstrous beast. Later, he came upon the creature again in *Dinosaur Swamp* where he came up with the idea of using them as steeds to deliver mail and small packages to the tiny communities and towns scattered throughout the east. Over time, the territories covered expanded to include parts of the southwest and select northern communities like New Lazlo and Lazlo. The Ostrosaurus Express was inspired by stories he heard in the New West about the 19th century Pony Express.



Ostrosaurus Express helps to connect communities separated by wilderness and hostile territory in the form of mail carried by lone riders. A full 60% of the steeds are Ostrosaurus, with the rest made up of robot horses, normal horses, Fury Beetles, dinosaurs and other exotic animals. Animals are used instead of vehicles because the creature can navigate dense woods and rugged terrain better and quieter than a bulky vehicle. Animals are less invasive in wilderness settings; people will notice a vehicle and the noise or tracks it makes, but an animal? The tracks of an animal, even one not normally found in that region, are usually ignored and quickly forgotten. Moreover, a lone rider can easily slip through a region inhabited by hostile forces undetected on an exotic animal, where a vehicle might raise an alarm or unwanted attention. In addition, the riding animal provides the rider with companionship during long journeys.

Ostrosaurus Express is headquartered in MercTown and keeps a large stable and corral in the Outskirts northwest of the airport. However, the Express company has established a series of Ostrosaurus Express offices or depots scattered along the Mississippi River from Missouri to the Gulf of Mexico and from MercTown to the east coast. In the last three years, it has added southwest depots and delivery routes. MercTown was chosen for the HQ because of its central location to the expanding operation, and because mercenaries use the delivery service to get letters to friends and comrades on the job in backwoods towns, kingdoms and combat zones, as well as family back home.

The MercTown HQ consists of animal pens, stables, an administration and logistics building (with giant wall maps and computer screens), bunkhouses for riders, a mess hall, and a dispatch office. At any given time there are 36-60 riding beasts and 20-50 riders at the MercTown office resting between and waiting for their next assignment. Riders rotate on a regular schedule, and usually this works out to a week's worth of hard riding followed by a week of down time. Although Express Riders try to follow pre-established routes whenever they can, all are skilled Wilderness Scouts or equivalent O.C.C. or R.C.C. (i.e., Psi-Stalker, Ranger, etc.; 4-8th level average experience). All are skilled in navigating and surviving the wilderness and tracking down mercenary groups in the wild.

7. Rat-Race Derby: Before the Great Cataclysm, arguably the most famous and prestigious horse race in the world was the vaunted Kentucky Derby. Even the Coming of the Rifts has not erased that Kentucky legacy, and racing remains a fixture in this territory. Going to the track is a favorite diversion of the MercTown residents and visitors alike. Of course, the types of races have changed, so not only are horses raced, but Ostrosaurus and other exotic animals as well.

Most races are traditional horse races on the quarter mile track. However, the Rat-Race Derby also holds events featuring Ostrosaurus, Fury Beetles and special events with other exotic animals. The highlight of the year is the **Proconsul's Cup**, a horse race held on the anniversary of Kentek Drago's ascension to power in MercTown. It is a classic event that is taped and then rebroadcast in other cities throughout the continent such as Ishpeming, Manistique, Fort El Dorado, Los Alamo and even certain parts of the Coalition States. The winner receives a purse of 250,000 credits which is split between the horse's owner and the jockey (three out of the last five winners came from the *Devil Riders* Psi-Stalker tribe).

Most racing events are limited to Tuesday and Saturday all-day extravaganzas, so as not to compete with events at the *Battledome*, but the track can also be leased for private use or closed events for 25,000 credits and up, for six hours.

The Rat-Race Derby has seating for 8,000 and with ticket prices of only 10-30 credits (the higher the price the better the seats). Several luxury booths can comfortably accommodate 12-15 human-sized people and come complete with a private washroom, mini-bar, closed-circuit TVs and plush seating for the cost of 3,000 credits. There is also the concourse with concession stands, food vendors, bar stalls and a souvenir shop. However, it is the onsite gambling ticket counters that draw hopeful gamblers and visitors hoping to make a big score. Bets are placed for each individual race at counters operated by employees of the *Palace Casino*. In addition, the Rat-Race Derby

features off-track betting from remote terminals found in taverns throughout New Town. There are also dozens of bookies, City Rats and hustlers milling around the track taking side bets.

The Rat-Race Derby is big business and is owned by the same consortium of investors who operate the *Hub Battledome*. To manage their racing enterprise they've hired an elderly, one-legged, ex-jockey from the Devil Riders tribe named *Wayek Demontamer* (9th level Wild Psi-Stalker). Demontamer was once an eminent jockey, the winner of no less than four Proconsul's Cups, and an expert horse trainer. After his injury, he chose to leave his tribe rather than be treated as an invalid and the object of pity. He is an excellent manager, a mentor to younger jockeys and a master horse breeder.

8. The Headhunter Academy: *Tennessee Jack Crabtree*, one of the "founding fathers" of MercTown, opened this training camp for MercTown Defenders and wannabe adventurers. The Headhunter Academy is a mercenary training camp where the fundamentals of soldiering are instilled. Jack Crabtree and veterans from his original Tennessee Headhunters company run the school, turning out between 500 and 1,200 trained graduates each year.

The Academy is basically a military encampment. It is a vast compound that includes a parade ground, command building, comms tower, armory, ammo bunker, gym, dozens of vehicle bays, aircraft hangars, mechanic shops, shooting ranges, an obstacle course, mess hall, a half dozen barracks buildings, and a mini-subdivision of modest, cottage style houses for instructors, retired company members and officers. As well as serving as a training facility, the Headhunter Academy compound serves as the headquarters of the *Tennessee Headhunters* mercenary company, and members of the company stay at the academy between campaigns.

9. Weapons Storage Facilities: At each of the *city's gates* there is a weapons storage vault manned by MercTown Defenders. When visitors arrive they are required to turn over long-barreled weapons, heavy energy weapons, cannons, rail guns, explosives, power armor, robots and armored vehicles. The Defenders confiscate these weapons, take a complete inventory (including weapon serial numbers), and lock them away in the guarded storage facility. Owners are given a claim ticket that is actually a computer-encoded card that includes a copy of the inventory and is matched to their thumb print (to prevent theft or fraud). When leaving the city all one needs do is turn over the claim card and the guards return the person's weapons.

There is no fee or charge for storing weapons at these government-run storage facilities. However, if the owner doesn't return to claim his property after a year, the government seizes the weaponry and sells it at auction. The owner doesn't have to remove his property, and can instead simply notify the Defenders that he wishes to continue storing it (which begins the cycle anew for another year). All of the weapons storage facilities are heavily guarded, Mega-Damage vaults outfitted with high-tech security systems and can only be opened by authorized personnel (normally the watch commander who is a Sergeant or Junior Officer) who must pass a retinal and DNA scan. Eight heavily armed MercTown Defenders and one psychic or mage are part of the standard team at these depots.

10. The Outer Wall: The Outer Wall is a massive, Mega-Damage concrete defensive structure that encircles the entire

city of MercTown. It stands 75 feet (23 m) high at its tallest point and is 40 feet (12.2 m) thick. The wall is a composite structure constructed of hardened M.D.C. concrete reinforced with heavy metal alloy bracing and armor plating. It is strong enough to withstand heavy bombardment (from bombs, artillery, missiles and energy cannon). Every 5 by 5 foot (1.5 x 1.5 m) segment of the wall is more durable than a CS main battle tank, and has 1,000 M.D.C.!

Built into the wall are numerous **strong points** from which the Defenders can engage the enemy. In total there are 14 defensive positions spaced evenly along the wall. Each is a small, self-contained bunker-like fortress that can house up to a platoon of soldiers with enough provisions and ammunition for a whole month. Inside of every bunker is an air purification system (to protect the troops from NBC hazards), a sophisticated communications suite, security monitors tied to remote sensors placed on likely approaches to the city, replacement parts for all systems, living quarters and an underground escape passage that leads into the city itself.

Guards stationed at the strong points can fire their personal weapons at enemies outside the wall through firing slits. However, the primary armament for each of the bunkers is the *Air Defense Artillery* positioned atop the structure. This armament consists of an *NG-404 heavy rail gun* as well as a ten shot, autoloading, medium-range missile launcher fed from an internal magazine; total payload: 40 medium-range missiles. A secondary, close combat missile launcher holds a payload of 80 mini-missiles fired in volleys of 2, 4, or 8 mini-missiles. Targeting data for both the launcher and rail gun is fed from an advanced radar system that has a 60 mile (96 km) range and can track up to 148 targets simultaneously. While intended primarily for anti-aircraft defense, these weapons can be used to engage ground targets from troops and vehicles to power armor and dragons.

As a rule, each of the fourteen strong points is manned by a single squad of troops (10-12 total personnel). These Defenders work eight hour rotating shifts. During times of conflict or when the city is threatened or on alert, the bunkers are fully manned with an entire platoon (40-60 troops). In addition to these troops there are soldiers stationed at each of the city's gates and still more who conduct routine security patrols around the city perimeter by ground and air.

Paducah Estates

A. The Paducah Estates is an affluent suburb of the city located east of the Hub and on the border of the Old Town residential section. The area holds roughly a hundred lavish residences, some of them true mansions with sprawling grounds and neo-classic architecture. In addition to the MercTown Defenders, the Estates also has its own, private security. All residents in the area contribute funds to a committee which pays for the additional protection. The members of this crack police force respond to even minor disturbances within one minute, sometimes less. All are the equivalent of Military Specialists, with a few Juicers, Headhunters, full conversion cyborgs and psychics for good measure.

Among the more notable residents are Jacius Larkent, Bradley Edwards, Jefferson Rockford, Lenaea of Dragcona,

Maritus Flavarel, Barry Goldman, Adin Hodges, Geoff Blackman, Doctor Clark Dawson, Morty Stiller, Cliff “Fixer” Jones, the Nyborns, Matthew Allen, the Bailey Brothers, David Bakr, Zo’Wor Kulot’te, Ted Dutcher and most of his Black Market crew leaders, Boris Charovich, Franklin Merrindale, the Badgerbolds, Odem Klingmar, a few dozen prominent doctors, and a variety of affluent businessmen and professionals.

B. Naruni Heights is a walled compound within the Paducah Estates that contains twelve residences and one small apartment complex. The homes are for key Naruni Enterprises employees like *Jimmy U* and *Slick Willy*. The remaining NE employees live in a posh apartment building and include security contractors of the Field Marketing Teams. Sol Delta Two, the team of War Drones leader Francois Brasson, occupies one of these blocks that they use as both a residence and a safe house from which to stage their activities.

In keeping with company policy, security in Naruni Heights is tight, even paranoid. The first line of defense is that one must first gain entry to the Paducah Estates. Then one must pass through the single gate leading into the Naruni compound. A bulkhead-like gate (300 M.D.C.), guarded by 4-6 Repo-Bots at all times, requires the individual to pass a DNA scan before opening. Inside the walls are another eight Repo-Bots, and rumor has it that there is a hardened bunker underground that can be reached via secret passages from each residence. This bunker has its own nuclear power supply, environmental systems and 5,000 M.D.C. Should Naruni Heights be raided, sixty NE-040 Point Defense Drones and forty NE-A420 Ground Attack Combat Drones will sally forth to defend the compound, along with an additional 12 Repo-Bots and a security team manning six NE-DXZ-09 Super Combat Robots, four NE-R2000 “Reaper” Assault Robots and a dozen “Sun Chariot” power armor units. (The listed robots and drones can be found the **Naruni Wave 2** sourcebook).

The Hub

Government & Business District

The Hub is the beating heart of MercTown, the downtown core of commerce and government. The most important and prestigious businesses and government facilities are located there. When Proconsul Drago first assumed leadership of the city-state, he mapped out a plan to rebuild the Hub into a bustling center of the city. Old buildings were torn down to make room for the construction of new, large, modern structures like the Hub Battledome, Mercenary Plaza, hospital and several up-scale hotels and apartment complexes.

Visitors to the city spend the majority of their time in *the Hub* and *the Spokes*. Both areas offer numerous attractions for tourists, visitors and mercenaries looking to unwind or spend their hard earned money. That includes theaters, casinos, luxury accommodations, four star restaurants and even a resort. The area is kept spotless, the streets free of rubbish, and the buildings devoid of the graffiti that characterize the downtown regions of most other North American big cities. The Hub is also very safe, patrolled all hours of the day and night by dozens of well-armed MercTown Defenders.

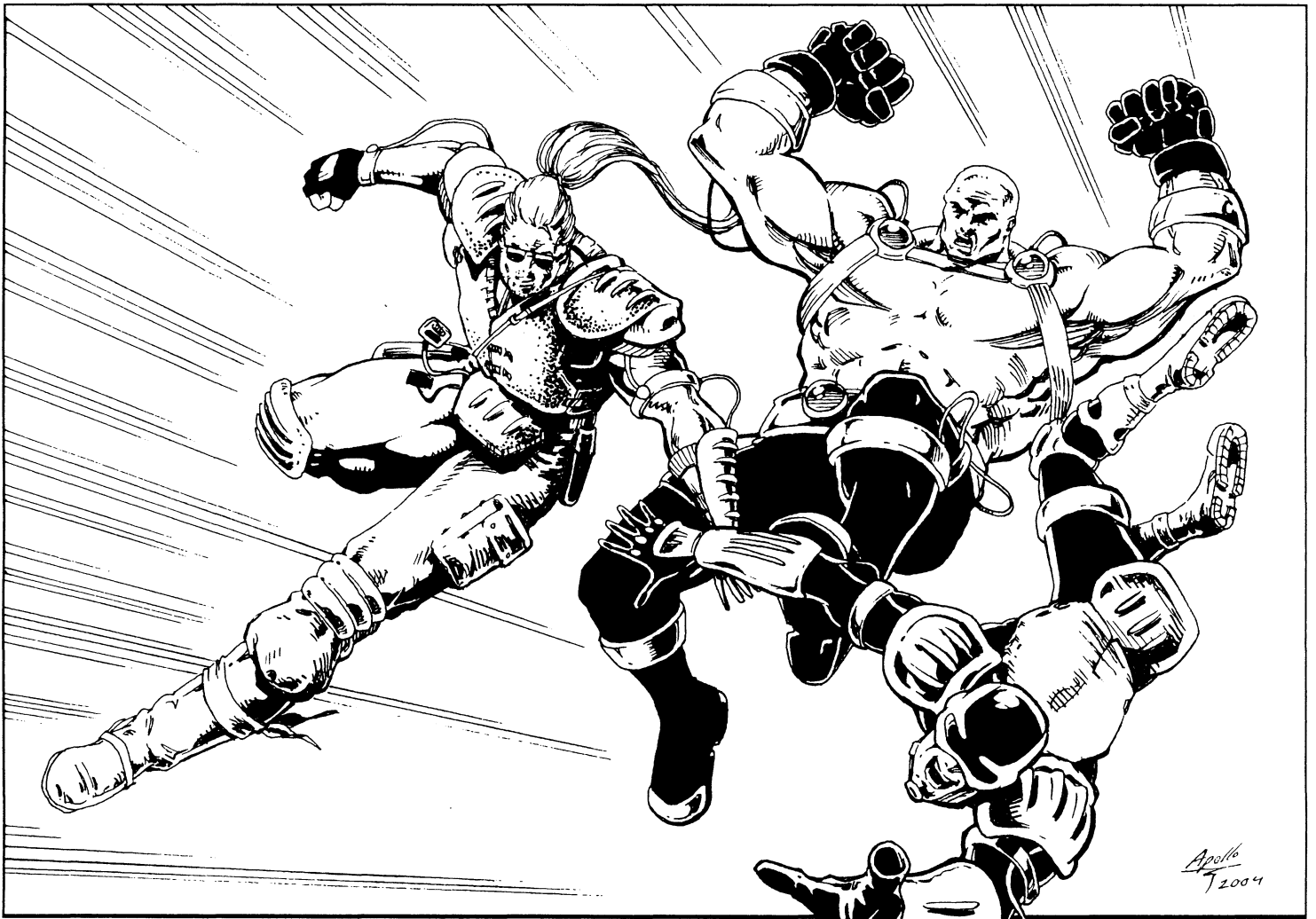
G = Parking Garage. A space with a “G” indicates a light, M.D.C. Parking Garage (300 M.D.C. per floor and outer wall; or about 1D6+6 M.D.C. per 10 foot/3 m diameter.)

11. The Hub Battledome: Rising from the center of the Hub is an immense, multi-story, domed, sports arena known as the *Hub Battledome*. With the capacity to hold 18,000 spectators it is one of the largest arenas on the continent. *Gladiatorial* style contests are among the most popular events, but all sorts of athletic and sporting competitions are regularly held, including wrestling matches, boxing, tough-man contests (mercs love participating in such contests as well as watching them), Robo-Battles (no ranged weapons allowed, but plenty of spikes, buzz saws, hammers and Vibro-Blades), Murderthon and Dead Ball (Juicer football). Concession stands, food vendors, and bars are located throughout the Battledome. A place called the Battle Shop is located near the main entrance and is one of the strangest “souvenir shops” one will ever see. In addition to standard T-shirts, jerseys, jackets, caps, key chains and trinkets, the shop offers a large selection of Vibro-Blades, and S.D.C. and M.D. swords, knives, axes, maces, blackjacks, shields, bows and arrows, and other melee weapons at only slightly inflated prices (10-20% higher than fair market) because they bear the Hub Battledome logo or insignia.

Above the stadium floor hangs a cluster of massive view screens that display all of the action in vivid, close-up detail as well as showing replays, interviews and advertisements (these being mostly of arms manufacturers).

Admission prices for the Hub are reasonable. The cheapest seats cost a mere 10 credits, 25-50 credits for good but high up seats, and 100-200 credits for lower bowl seating. A private booth complete with closed-circuit TV and seating for six is 700 credits. On average, three blockbuster or main events are held each week, with smaller events, professional matches and amateur contests (as if any of these mercs and adventurers can be considered amateurs). **Monday nights** are usually sporting events (boxing, wrestling, Deadball, etc.), **Wednesdays matinees and nights** are reserved for tough-man tryouts and small events and competitions, **Thursdays and Fridays** are reserved for gladiatorial combat, and **Sunday** for special sporting events and tough-man competitions.

Most tough-man competitions offer prizes of 5,000 credits, but top prizes in free-for-all battles and high-stakes contests range from 25,000 to 75,000 credits. Anyone can volunteer to fight in these games. All one has to do is speak to the Battledome’s director/administrator and sign a standard release form to protect the ownership from any liability in case of injury or death. To keep things fair and interesting, the matches are divided into several categories: *Mortal* (S.D.C. creatures & melee weapons only), *Juiced* (Juicers, Crazies, Cyber-Knights and other augmented contestants, including cyborgs), *inhuman* (natural M.D.C. creatures, Brodkil, Gargoyles, dragons, demons, and the toughest D-Bees), *Psychic* (Bursters vs Zappers, Mind Melters vs Psi-Slayers, etc.), *Armored* (contestants in power armor or small robots; may include full cyborgs), *magical* (only magic that will not leak into the spectators’ seats) and the *Open Death Match* (no firearms, but anything else goes). Matches last until one competitor yields or is rendered helpless (knocked out, stunned, pinned, etc.), or to the death as the case may be. Winners get a prize of 5,000 credits and bragging rights. The losers



walk away with nothing, and many “matches” or “contests” require the ultimate champion/winner to vanquish a series of opponents (5-15 depending on the competition) to win. The more brutal, challenging and deadly matches may pay 25,000 to 75,000 credits and be a one on one match, winner takes all, like professional boxing, but typically pit two well known contestants against each other, or have the contestants grind through a long series of opponents with the winner being the last man standing.

There is a championship belt for main events (major competitions) in each of the categories. The title holder of such prestigious (and highly advertised) events receives 75,000 credits and a small cut of the house’s take on gambling receipts (usually another 4,000-24,000 credits; roll 4D6x1000). Champions of the Battledome are also entitled to stay, free of charge, at the **Palace Hotel & Casino**.

To vie for any of the championship belts, an individual must first be declared the number one contender, which usually requires the person to win 6-8 matches. Competition is stiff, MercTown is filled with some hard folks after all, and becoming a champion is much harder than it sounds and even more difficult to hold the title for more than one or two contests. The reigning champ of the Open Death Match category, the most prestigious of events, is a massive Juicer who goes by the name *Shred* (12th level Titan Juicer), who fights with a WI-C8 chain-saw and wears a modified suit of Man-Killer EBA armor.

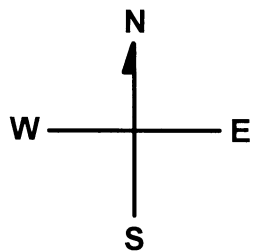
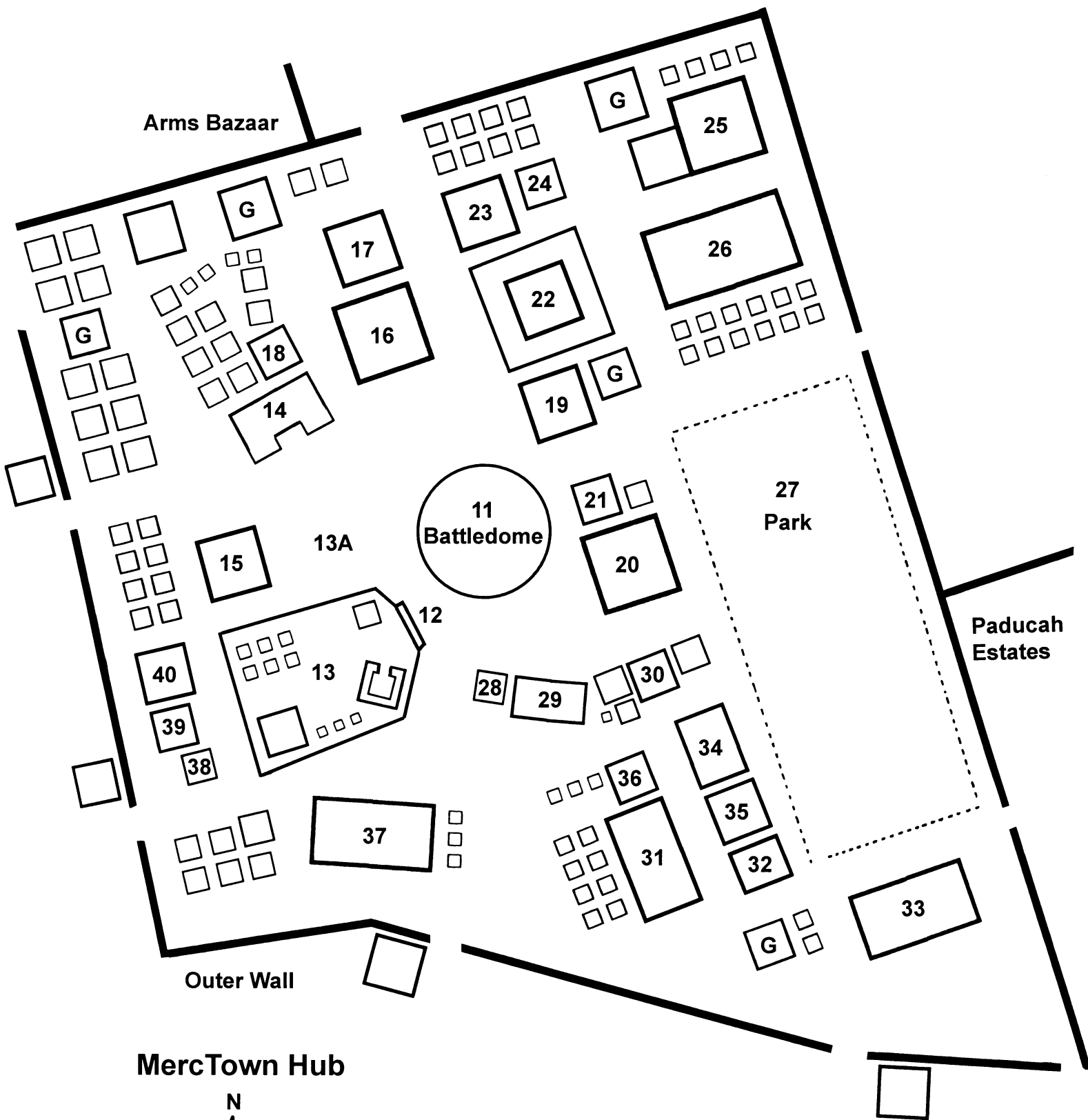
For a great many of the fans, the thrill of gambling is every bit as intoxicating as the action on the arena floor. Officially, all gambling at the Battledome is facilitated by the *Palace Hotel & Casino* using a series of remote terminals located throughout the arena. However, there are dozens of bookies, City Rats and hucksters inside always willing to make side bets. Profits from the official gambling are divided between the owners of the Battledome Arena, the Palace Hotel & Casino, Northern Gun, Big Budget Productions, and the Black Market. Administration of the Hub Battledome, including making arrangements for events and running the concession stands, is handled by a scarred, aging, tattoo-covered Ogre named *Rahz Patosh* (12th level *Tattooed Man* who was a Gladiator at the Battledome for three years, himself; a former Minion of Splugorth).

Note: According to *rumor*, Rahz is a former Champion of Atlantis as well as a legend in North American gladiator circles. Some suspect the brute is a spy for Atlantis and hides Splugorth Minions; he certainly has no love for Naruni and is known to welcome rare visitors from Atlantis and other tattooed humans and Ogres. Other rumors claim he has connections with the mysterious Sunaj assassins and can contact them at will, while some claim he is a retired master assassin himself and that he is the man (or monster) to talk to about finding assassin work in the Midwest, East and Mexican borderlands. Another set of ru-

The Warrens

The Spokes

Arms Bazaar



MercTown Hub

City Outskirts

mors suggest he may be a spy and hit man for a powerful cartel in the Federation of Magic, perhaps even Lord Dunscon himself (Rahz insists he's never met the man). Many other tales and rumors abound about this individual, including one that Lord Scard of Tolkeen has secretly hired Rahz to assassinate the entire Prosek family! Whether Rahz is to do the job himself or find *others* to do it for him is a matter of some debate – assuming the rumor is true at all. Since people are seldom what they appear or claim to be in MercTown, nobody knows if one or more of these rumors are true or complete fiction.

12. The Memorial Arch: Placed at the entryway of the Barracks is a large, elaborate stone arch that commemorates the liberation of New Paducah, now known as MercTown. It was carved from a single, massive slab of stone by a team of Dwarven craftsmen. On it are engraved depictions of the battle, images of the mercenaries, and the words of the treaty signed by the three commanders.

An honor guard is posted at the arch during daylight hours, primarily to impress tourists and visitors. The guard detail consists of six soldiers in full battle gear (M.D.C. environmental battle armor, laser rifle, ion pistol, etc.). They stand at rigid attention throughout the day, and answer any questions visitors might ask regarding directions or police assistance. At specified times of day, the guards carry out a series of drill movements to the delight of onlookers. While the displays of the honor guard are impressive, it is a duty that most MercTown Defenders go to great lengths to avoid. It is used as a disciplinary measure, and soldiers are tasked to the honor guard as a punishment for minor infractions. In addition to the guards and troops inside the military compound, the Arch can be barricaded by a Naruni Enterprises heavy force field (300 M.D.C.) that not only blocks access to the compound but simultaneously protects the Arch from damage.

13. The Barracks is the MercTown Defenders' Headquarters. Nearly everyone in town refers to the place simply as The Barracks. The base is strategically located in the center of town, right in the shadow of the Hub Battledome, which allows the Defenders to react quickly to any incidents or situations that might erupt from the Battledome or in the downtown area. It is a well-organized, military compound manned by 1,500 police and soldiers; close to half of the MercTown Defenders' entire force. Virtually all of the senior officers, command staff and headquarters elements are located at the Barracks. The intelligence corps, communications, logistics & supply department, transport, motor pool (mechanics/Operators), a few elements of the armored and heavy infantry battalions, the entire police force, urban tactical force and covert investigation squad all use the Barracks as their base of operations.

The compound is surrounded by a Mega-Damage chain link perimeter fence (has 4 M.D.C. per square foot) that is topped by Vibro-Razor Wire (does 2D6 M.D. per melee round to those touching or impaled on it). A gun tower (120 M.D.C. each) is located at each of the five corners of the compound. Two soldiers, a marksman, and a light power armor or full cyborg (all 1-3rd level) are stationed in each. *Public access* to the compound is provided by two gates: The Memorial Arch is the main, front gate with the honor guard, and second public entrance is located on the opposite end. However, there are access gates in each of the fences for quick dispersement of troops in a

crisis. Each is protected by a pair of Naruni NE-040 Point Defense Drones (described in the **Naruni Wave 2** sourcebook).

The structures within the Barracks compound are designed for military functionality rather than appearance, thus they are drab, basic designs. The main building is shaped like a blockish letter "C" or hollow square. This is the MercTown police and military headquarters building with dozens of offices, conference rooms, several classrooms, two lecture halls, an auditorium, and a thoroughly modern communications center. In addition, the building has three *basement levels* which include a cell block, weapons vaults, and a nuclear power generator that supplies power to the entire compound. Other buildings include six barracks blocks to house soldiers, an expansive hangar where power armor, robots and armored vehicles are stored, a motor pool, mess hall, officers' club, and a parade square that is normally used for daily physical training but also for the occasional formal parade.

Access to the main compound of the Barracks is restricted to members of the MercTown Defenders (police and military), and officials on state business. Residents and victims of crime who need to speak to the police are directed to the front of "C" building. Security is tight in the compound. Inside the main building there are numerous areas designated as high security zones that can only be accessed by passing through security check points with M.D.C. doors and DNA scanners. Three guards dressed in light armor and carrying ion pistols, stun guns and pulse-laser assault rifles are posted at each of these check points. Furthermore, all of the communications and computer systems in the building are protected by a state-of-the-art security program which makes hacking into the system difficult if not impossible (attempts to hack into the system suffer a penalty of -55% to the *Computer Hacking* skill).

13-A. The Barrack Parade Grounds. Memorial parades, special military demonstrations (spectacles really), fireworks, special civic events, festivals and public executions are held at the Parade Grounds.

14. Government House: Once the palatial home of King Alkavar Dorveen, the former dictator of New Paducah, this magnificent three story mansion now serves as the seat of MercTown's government. After a short stint as the headquarters of Drago's Defenders, the mansion was transformed to function as the offices for the various branches of the government. Government House contains the legislature, a meeting hall for the Advisory Council, Press Room for public statements and televised addresses to the citizenry, courtrooms for the judiciary, dozens of offices for the various bureaucrats and functionaries serving at all levels of government, and of course, the office of Proconsul Kentek Drago.

It is within the halls of Government House that the day to day administration of MercTown takes place. Officially, the hours are 10:00 A.M. till 6:00 P.M., Monday through Friday, but there are always people at work within its walls at any given time. Aside from government employees and council representatives, there is little reason for any visitors, especially those of the mercenary trade, to visit Government House, except, perhaps, to make a court appearance.

Security at Government House is tight. Access is restricted to those in the employ of the government or individuals who are on official business. A fifteen foot (4.6 m) perimeter fence that is

charged with a neural-stun field surrounds the compound; any physical contact with the fence has the same effect as being struck with a *Neural Mace*, rendering the victim incapacitated for a minute or so. There is only one entrance to the building, a reinforced gate that is guarded at all times by a half-dozen MercTown Defenders in power armor (or full cyborgs). In addition to the armored troops, there are four teams of three psychic soldiers accompanied by dogs (or Dog Boys) whose innate extra-sensory abilities allow them to detect the presence of supernatural beings, magic and other psychics. Rumor has it that several dozen Triax Dyna-Bots are concealed in strategic positions throughout the grounds of Government House, including a dozen buried beneath the manicured lawn, armed and ready to respond to any major threat.

15. Consulate Building: This is where officials and diplomats from other prominent regional governments maintain offices related to trade and services with MercTown. The four story Consulate Building has 16 suites each with two small, private meeting rooms, one large conference room (can seat 20 comfortably), five offices, a lounge with a bar, six bedrooms, two private bathrooms and a kitchen. Delegates from the *Golden Age Weaponsmiths city-states*, *Whykin*, *Kingsdale*, *Ishpeming*, *Old Bones*, *Dweomer*, *Stormspire*, *Los Alamo*, the Chi-Town 'Burb of *Firetown*, plus a contingent of *Lord Coake's Cyber-Knights* (even though they don't actually represent a nation), all make their home here. The Coalition States, El Dorado, Free Quebec, New Lazlo, Lazlo and a number of other independent kingdoms and even a couple barbarian and Psi-Stalker tribes have all been invited, but have respectfully declined or ignored the offer.

16. MercTown State Hospital: To most residents and mercenaries alike, the MercTown State Hospital is the crowning achievement of the new administration. It is a sprawling, ultra-modern, five-story building of reinforced Mega-Damage materials (8,000 M.D.C. per floor and outer wall; 50 M.D.C. per 10 foot/3 m diameter). Without a doubt it is one of the best medical facilities in all of North America. When one takes into consideration the inclusion of advanced Naruni technology combined with state of the art human medical tech, along with psychic and magical means of healing, it can be argued that the MercTown State Hospital is superior even to facilities in Chi-Town. No expense was spared in the construction of the building, staffing and equipment - Wilk's monitors, laser, optics and diagnostic tools; Northern Gun cybernetic implants and bionics, Juicer augmentation, Crazy enhancements, doctors who specialize in traditional and holistic medicine to combat surgery and medicine, cybernetics, psychic healing and magical cures, exorcism, herbs, and applications brought from all corners of the continent (and a few from England, Germany and Atlantis). There are even two Lynn-Srial, and three Herbologists on staff.

Health care for citizens of MercTown is completely free; medical costs are absorbed by the hospital and the government. Most of its funding is actually provided by mercenaries, adventurers, and other non-residents who come to the hospital for its superior treatment, technology and speciality in combat injuries and cybernetics (Bio-Systems and conventional cybernetics and combat bionics). All types of medicinal and cosmetic cybernetics are available at the clinics attached to the hospital compound, as are combat bionics, partial and full cyborg conver-

sion, M.O.M. enhancements (Crazies brain implants), and Juicer augmentation; all at fair market prices. So far, its medical services to mercenaries and adventurers have surpassed the needs of residents and rumor has it that the hospital has a one billion credit operating surplus.

Attached to the main hospital, but run separately, are the *MercTown State Clinics of Enhancement*. A thoroughly modern network of facilities with state-of-the-art medical equipment exclusively devoted to human augmentation. The cybernetics and bionics branches are the largest (install, repair, upgrade, partial augmentation, full conversion), but the augmentation procedures of JAPE/Juicer augmentation and M.O.M./Crazies brain implants are also in high demand, in part, due to the quality of the service and the, relative, safety of the operation. The clinics are strictly for-profit operations. The clinics' track record is impressive, with a 98.7% success ratio; much higher than any street side Body-Chop-Shop operation (any Black Market augmentation clinic that has a 70% or higher success rate is considered top notch). Safety does not come without a cost, however, and the services of the clinic are 10-30% higher than average - which is actually very fair and surprisingly low, all things considered. Thousands of people with dreams of becoming superhuman Juicers, Crazies, Headhunters and cyborgs parade through the clinics' doors each year willing to spend the extra few thousand credits rather than risk death at the hands of some butcher at a Chop-Shop. Furthermore, MercTown is one of the few places to offer the *Hyperion*, *Titan*, *Phaeton* and *Delphi Juicer* variant procedures, as well as the traditional Juicer (JAPE) enhancement (and they are in negotiations with Kingsdale for the *Mega-Juicer* process). Likewise, it is one of the few locations one can get competent M.O.M./Crazy enhancement with any genuine assurance of walking away without immediate brain damage.

Free medical care is a luxury afforded only to actual citizens of MercTown. Outsiders and visitors are not given medical treatment unless they pay for it. At the State Hospital nothing is cheap, someone has to foot the bill for all the shiny equipment and expert staff. Even for something as simple as a broken leg the cost of treatment can be in the thousands of credits. For major surgery it rises to the tens of thousands, but usually within the range of most successful mercenaries. **Note:** Numerous private clinics, body-fixers, Body-Chop-Shops, and healers offer the same services for a third of the cost, but the quality of care and rate of success without serious complications (i.e., survival) is much lower - buyer beware.

17. MercTown State Bank: One of Drago's reforms in MercTown was to open a nationalized bank. The MercTown State Bank does not print its own currency, instead it functions on the Universal Credit standard and is backed by a cadre of arms dealers, including Northern Gun and the Black Market. Its primary function is to give the residents of MercTown as well as mercenaries and adventurers, a safe place to keep their hard earned savings. All accounts at the bank are insured by the government, meaning that no matter what happens (barring a violent change in government or the destruction of MercTown) all banked savings are protected. The bank and its board of directors (i.e., backers) control the kingdom's interest rates, and offer loans and mortgages to residents at the low rate of 5% interest annually.

Mercenaries can also apply for loans, but at an interest rate of 10% to 20% depending on the reputation of the mercenary company. Adventurers and small or unknown mercenary groups must have a tangible item or items left in the bank's possession as full collateral in order to get a loan at a 20% to 30% interest rate. The interest rate is so high and collateral required, because "unknowns" have a nasty habit of disappearing or dying before the loan is paid off. The bank has sole discretion over what it is willing to take as collateral and may, or may not, accept obvious stolen goods, CS equipment, magic or alien technology, or alleged ancient artifacts.



18. MercTown Telephone Exchange (MTE): Located in the Hub near the Government House is the MercTown Telephone Exchange. This state-run facility provides the residents of the city-state with reliable telephone, cellular phone and computer interface services; another innovation of Proconsul Drago (who paid for it out of his own pocket). The MTE installs, maintains and operates all city-wide communication services. Service is subsidized by the government, but still requires subscribers to pay a monthly fee of 120 credits for telephone, television and computer interface services. In addition to this basic package the MTE offers cellular phone service at a rate of 30 credits per month plus air time (usually 25-50 credits for moderate usage). Cellular service can be purchased independently or in addition to the basic package but only works within city boundaries. Subscribers are not required to pay for the actual phones, these are provided by the MTE as part of "installation."

The MTE network is one of the most modern on the continent, and is only a few levels below the communications system of the Coalition States. It is a relatively secure system, making hacking difficult but not impossible (there is a penalty of 25% to *Computer Hacking* skill rolls). To discourage telephone fraud and hacking, the MTE maintains a small department of *anti-hackers* - City Rats and Psi-Techs who patrol the network in search of unauthorized users and saboteurs. (**G.M. Note:** there is a base 01-20% likelihood that one such operative will detect an intrusion; roll once every hour. However, if a hacker fails multiple skill rolls or drastically alters the system, the likelihood of discovery triples and the chance of discovery is once every 20 minutes.) The MTE has a limited service range, its network reaches only the city proper and a handful of outlying areas such as the Headhunter Academy.

19. Mercenary Plaza: This is the home to weapon and vehicle dealers, detective agencies, espionage agents, guard and protection agencies, mercenary companies, bounty hunters, recovery teams, search and rescue teams, military advisors, and others involved in the mercenary trade in some capacity or another.

The interior of Mercenary Plaza is nicely appointed with plush carpeting, solid wood doors, a thoroughly modern security system and attractive decor appealing to military men. Clients seeking to hire first-rate mercenary outfits, looking to close a large scale weapons deal, or seeking protection visit the Plaza.

Likewise, mercenaries, bounty hunters and adventurers looking for freelance work or a juicy bounty hunting opportunity can also find it at this facility. Much of the military-based business conducted in MercTown is carried out within the walls of this complex.

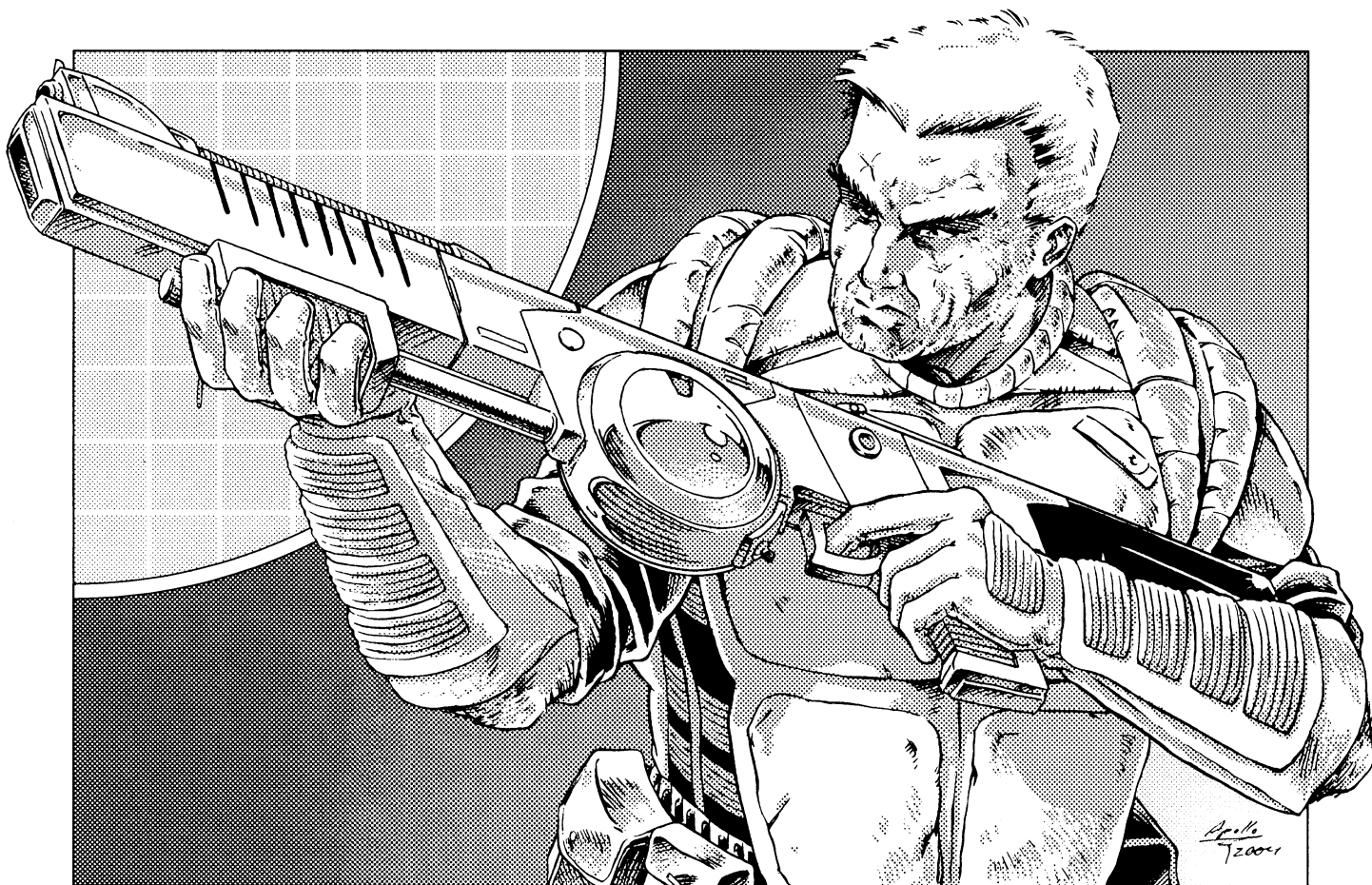
A standard office in Mercenary Plaza includes a lobby area, conference room and six individual office spaces. Renting a small office space costs 5,000 credits a month, a medium to large single office, 15,000-30,000 a month and a spacious suite of offices 100,000 to 300,000 credits a month. At any given time three quarters of the suites in Merc Plaza are occupied. The current crop of renters includes the following companies:

A. Merc Ops. Mercenary Plaza's most famous (or notorious) resident controls the top three floors and is *Merc Ops Incorporated*, a mysterious and powerful broker that specializes in finding and offering work to mercs, man-hunters and opportunists. Bounty hunting, espionage, and mercenary work is its area of specialty, and nobody does a better job repping the mercenary trade (and clients looking for mercs) than *Merc Ops*. In addition to knowing and brokering bounty hunting assignments and mercenary work (half of which are under exclusive contract by Merc Ops, meaning only Merc Ops knows about the work and is the exclusive agent through which the job can be assigned), the agency can also work as a middleman with such clients as the Coalition States and other nations, kingdoms, corporations, and individuals to maintain and ensure the mercs' anonymity. This can be a crucial service to groups and individuals who may be wanted criminals themselves, or who wouldn't normally be able to work for or collect payment from the client. For example, D-Bees or practitioners of magic who have pulled down a bounty offered by the CS could never collect the money/reward because they are, themselves, hated enemies of the Coalition States, and would be killed on sight - enter the Merc Ops middleman who collects payment as their agent, their identities, race and magical proclivities kept secret. Of course, Merc Ops charges a reasonable percentage for this invaluable service. See the **Merc Ops Sourcebook** for complete information on this service and organization.

B. Northern Gun: On the *third floor* is the regional Northern Gun corporate office with 28 staff members. Its team is composed of marketing and logistics specialists whose job is to manage the local NG store, special orders, customized orders, and negotiating large sales contracts with the bigger mercenary companies, kingdoms and states.

C. Wellington Industries: Sharing the *third floor* with Northern Gun are the offices of Wellington Industries. Working here is a management team of 40 executives and sales agents. One of their primary tasks is to lure customers away from Northern Gun by competing for the larger arms supply contracts.

D. Wilk's Technical Support Office: Wilk's maintains an office on the *4th floor* that employs 48 specialists. The team not only manages the local Wilk's store, but also provides customers with technical support for its more high-tech systems. This support staff is made up of 12 technicians (Operators) who help to install products, fix any bugs that may appear and to provide customers with the training necessary to operate its complex electronics systems.



E. Golden Age Weaponsmiths: This office takes up the entire *second floor* and is the regional management team for Golden Age Weaponsmiths. Its 198 personnel serve an area that includes the Missouri territory (Whykin and Kingsdale), Arkansas, CS Lone Star, MercTown, and the New West. With the growing popularity of GAW's inexpensive but effective weapon systems, the team is constantly busy. As a result, the team is focused on supporting its existing clients and contracts. All deals conducted in MercTown are left to its local franchise to negotiate.

F. Air North America (ANA) Offices: Air North America is the largest independent shipping company on the continent. Its large office is on the *4th floor* and employs 20 staff people. ANA operates a fleet of approximately one hundred transport aircraft that can deliver products, troops or fugitives to any location in North America that has a suitable airstrip. Most of its business comes from the mercenary community - shipping troops, vehicles and supplies to contracts in America and Canada within 48 hours. See **the Outskirts**, description #2, for details on this unique mercenary company.

G. Continental Mercenary Contract Services: Located on the *4th floor*, this business is essentially a mercenary agency. Its eight highly persuasive negotiators represent a total of 13 mercenary companies that include *Crow's Commandos* and *Braddock's Badboys*.

The company has complete authority to negotiate deals with prospective clients and receives a 5-10% commission on all contracts for its efforts. Thus far, the business is doing well, owing largely to a network of contacts that extends to all corners of North America. Working with Continental is a good way for

small merc outfits, especially those just starting out (like that of the player characters?), to find clients. All of the agents have a background in military operations, drive hard bargains and close the best possible deals for their clients (i.e., the mercs). The agents are also very good at matching the requirements of a contract with the capabilities of a specific mercenary company, group or squad, and never knowingly get their merc clients into situations they can't handle.

H. Blackman Intelligence Resources (BIR), also known as the Blackman Agency: The entire fifth floor holds the offices of *Geoff Blackman*. This private company is the equivalent of an *Infiltration Network* (**Note:** See description #6 under Intelligence Resources on page 16 of the **Rifts® Mercenaries** sourcebook for details on this type of network). It employs a force of 50 veteran intelligence operatives and 20 psychics (various types) who specialize in infiltrating all types of organizations, corporations and communities. O.C.C.s include the Freelance Spy, Super-Spy, Special Forces Soldier, Military Specialist, Wilderness Scout, Juicer, and NGR Intelligence Commando, as well as a few ex-Coalition ISS Spectres, Intel Spectres and psychics, such as the Mind Melter, Mind Bleeder, Psi-Ghost and Psi-Tech. Many of its additional 60 *field agents* are already in place as moles working under deep cover in kingdoms or companies likely to be targets of military and espionage operations. Blackman's group has managed to infiltrate a surprising number of kingdoms and organizations like Wellington Industries, Northern Gun/Ishpeming, Naruni Enterprises, Tolkeen, Lazlo, Whykin, Kingsdale, CS Missouri, CS Chi-Town, Newtown, the Pecos Empire, El Paso, the Black Market and several prominent mercenary groups.

In addition to its HUMINT (HUMAN INTelligence) operatives and agents, the company also maintains a SIGnals INTelligence (SIGINT) capability. The SIGINT cell is made up of communications technicians, City Rat hackers, psychics and D-Bees who are often able to decrypt or “crack” the electronic transmissions and computer systems of targeted organizations. Its average SIGINT member has the skills of Cryptography at 85% and Computer Hacking at 60% proficiency. BIR also has three squads of elite reconnaissance soldiers on retainer to perform scouting duties in hostile wilderness and combat zones.

Using his wide spectrum of intel-gathering resources, Blackman’s group can piece together an accurate, detailed intelligence package; a definite boon to anyone planning a raid, or military or espionage operation. The group farms out its services to clients of all sizes, from kingdoms and mercenary companies, to adventurer groups and wealthy individuals. All the client has to do is provide the group with the name and general location of the “target.” A typical fee is 10,000-50,000 credits, depending on the level of difficulty, plus expenses. An intel job may take a couple weeks to 1-4 months depending on the level of information being sought and the level of difficulty to infiltrate the target subject. When the information is gathered, the client is given a briefing by Blackman or one of his top lieutenants, and presented with a clear intel package that may include copies of official documents, photographs, video, maps, diagrams, floor plans, a summary report and other data pertinent to the assignment.

The offices of the Blackman Agency are found only in MercTown, but the Agency’s activities may take its agents anywhere on the continent, and, if the price is right, maybe even beyond North America. Blackman has an arrangement with Proconsul Drago that promises to exclude intel on the MercTown government, merchants, and residents. Any operations beyond the outskirts of town are fair game, but MercTown and its residents and business partners (merchants and mercs in town) are off limits. Failure to comply will have immediate and dire consequences for Blackman and his agency. Consequently, most of the Agency’s operatives live and work far away from MercTown and never get involved with local politics or affairs.

I. Comitatus Security Group (CSG): Rifts Earth is an environment fraught with danger, and the wilderness is not the only place where predators roam. The cities are just as full of dangers from rivals, the envious and the likes of Cyber-Snatchers, City Rats, muggers, thieves, burglars, spies and assassins who prey upon the rich and powerful. In many cases, local law enforcement just isn’t up to the task of ensuring the safety of these social elites, which is where CSG steps in. CSG offers clients personal security from specialists trained to install high-tech, automated security systems to safeguard the client’s home and business, as well as function as personal body guards willing to take a bullet for their client. Like the Presidential Secret Service of the old American Empire, CSG bodyguards are gun-toting professionals ready to eliminate threats to the client, and go so far as to leap into the path of oncoming fire!

The sprawling *sixth floor* suites of CSG are a subsidiary of the main company based in Ishpeming (Northern Gun). In MercTown its force consists of a small private army of highly skilled, urban commandos, as the company likes to call its elite bodyguards. All CSG employees hold permits from the

MercTown government allowing them to carry concealed, Mega-Damage weaponry and use lethal force in both Old Town and New Town to protect clients. To date the group has only lost one client, a fool that disregarded CSG advice and snuck off to his doom. The company really is one of the best in the business, with experienced (6-12th level) and dedicated agents. That means CSG protection does not come cheap. The going rate is 1,600 credits a day *per operative* plus expenses, with the additional cost of 1,200 credits per day for the use of an armored luxury hover car (250 M.D.C.) and 1000 credits for hazard pay if the client is known to be hunted by a deadly enemy or powerful nation or organization (i.e., the CS, Federation of Magic, an adult dragon, etc.). For simply installing a security system there is a 2,500 credit consulting fee plus the cost of the system.

J. Larsen’s Brigade Office: MercTown presents an opportunity that’s just too good for Colonel Larsen to pass up. Dozens of customers wander into the city looking for mercs to hire, and in order to catch more contracts the Colonel has three representatives in a small, modest office on the *second floor*. Besides locating customers these men also scout for new talent in town to replace any casualties that the Brigade sustains. The reputation of Larsen’s Brigade is enough to keep a steady flow of clients despite the high level of competition in town.

K. Maritime Protection Services (MPS): Located on the *second floor* is the office of MPS. Based out of Lazlo, MPS is a large company that employs a total force of 600 naval special forces soldiers. Among its members are Marine Commandos (50-60% of the total), ex-CS Nautical Specialists, ex-CSN Naval Infantry, rogue Sea Dog R.C.C.s, Privateers, ex-Pirates, Ley Line Walkers, Mystics, Water Warlocks, Ocean Wizards, and Sea Druids, as well as a few Pneuma-Biforms and aquatic D-Bees. The group specializes in providing security for merchant ships on North American waterways, including search and rescue, rescuing crews and/or vessels taken by pirates, eliminating pirate groups, guarding vessels from pirate raids, and all levels of naval combat. MPS owns a fleet of warships that includes Black Eels, speedboats, commercial hydrofoils, navy patrol boats, coast guard cutters (see **Rifts® Underseas**, pages 135-136; all vessels are M.D.C. and armed with M.D. rail guns, missile launchers and/or energy cannon), dozens of power armor (flying and marine models; mostly Northern Gun), robots and some armored vehicles. All members wear “marine”-style medium body armor (floats, adds +10% to Swimming skill) and are armed with an energy rifle or submachine-gun, energy pistol and Vibro-Knife. For vehicles the group has 2 Black Eels, 6 combat speedboats (150 M.D.C., NG-202 rail gun), 2 commercial hydrofoils (220 M.D.C., two NG-202 rail guns, mini-missile launcher), 6 NG-X10 Gladius, 12 NG-X12 “Beach-Stormer” power armor and 8 SAMAS.

There is a platoon (60) of MPS troops stationed in MercTown to provide services on the nearby waterways, especially the Mississippi. A typical security team consists of 6-10 soldiers in two speedboats with a Black Eel and 2-4 flying power armor units for back-up. The total cost to hire such a team is 1,000 to 6,000 credits a day depending on the threat level. Among its regular clients in the area are Golden Age Weaponsmiths, Whykin, Fort El Dorado, Northern Gun and Wellington Industries.

L. The VTOL Pad: Atop the Mercenary Plaza is a hardened landing pad, known as “the Crash Pad,” for Vertical Take-Off and Landing (VTOL) aircraft such as helicopters, hovercraft and vector-thrust jets, power armor and dragons. Those who would rather not take the drive from the Prouse Memorial Airport and have a VTOL-capable aircraft can land atop the Plaza. One must have clearance from the airport control tower, permission from the MercTown Defenders (or government), and legitimate business at Merc Plaza. After landing on the pad, disembarking passengers are checked and cleared by MercTown Defenders stationed on the roof. If all is in order, they are free to take the freight elevator to the ground floor where they can catch an elevator to offices in the building. (The freight elevator does not stop at any of the other floors.) When business inside the Plaza is finished, the person(s) must take his vehicle to the airport or other sanctioned area in or outside the city.

M. Megaversal Legion Special Services: Located on the first floor, among the many shops and services is a modest 900 square foot (83.6 sq. m) divided office. A pair of beautiful alien females sit at desks in the reception area, and three human males and two D-Bee soldiers wait in offices behind a partition. Believe it or not, this is the office of the infamous Megaversal Legion. Anyone looking for superhuman and alien muscle power for small, specialized military strikes, raids, rescue operations, jail breaks and similar black ops can find operatives of the Megaversal Legion to do the job. Well, at least they advertise as much, and it is true, sort of. Truth of the matter is, ML-Special Services is an outlet to let promising young and inexperienced (1-4th level) warriors being considered or recruited by the Megaversal Legion cut their teeth on real field operations at the expense of others. Most of these ML-Special Operatives are truly unique, inhuman, superhuman and alien or even supernatural beings (Godlings, Demigods, dragons, superbeings, etc.) from throughout the Megaverse. Prices are no higher than CSG, because the idea is to get these green recruits experience and enhance the reputation of the Legion.

Note: The first floor of the Mercenary Plaza has a large open plaza with a water fountain and place to sit and relax, a few offices and several shops and businesses. Notable businesses including a diner called the *Bunker*, a tobacco shop called the *Smoking Gun*, a coffee shop, a gift shop, a hair saloon called *Golden Locks*, an internet café called *Links* with 60 computer terminals (10 credits per 30 minutes of use), a public bank of telephones with private soundproof booths, a large photocopy place called *Winko's*, a branch of the *MercTown State Bank*, an office for *Ostrosaurus Express*, *The Cutting Edge* knife shop, candy store, two banks of elevators on both sides of the building and public restrooms.

20. The Palace Hotel & Casino: The Palace is without a doubt the fanciest building in MercTown, and is among the five best hotels in a thousand miles. The Palace is a ten story, five star luxury hotel with 120 luxurious suites, eight large conference rooms, a massive ballroom, and the world class Majestic Suite (an entire penthouse floor). Funding for the Palace comes from a consortium of investors that include weapon dealers, Northern Gun, the Black Market and Naruni Enterprises.

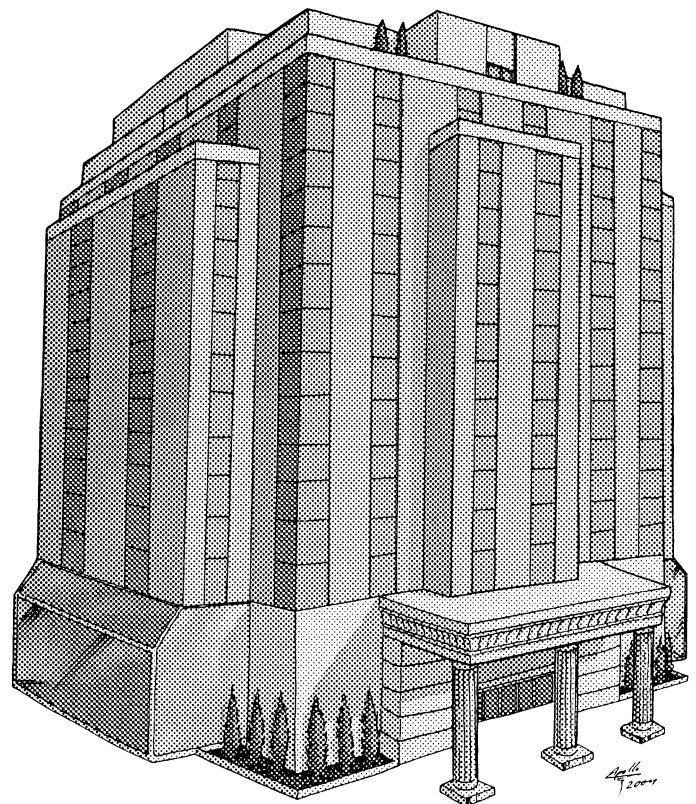
The first and second floors are dominated by the casino, a large flashy affair not unlike those of 21st Century America's

Las Vegas. Millions of credits change hands at the casino every week, and the profits raked in by the Palace are enormous. The Palace Casino also handles all official betting at the *Hub Battledome*, which also generates huge revenues for the hotel. For the Black Market, this alone was sufficient reason to invest in the Palace Casino & Hotel. Ted Dutcher's syndicate pulls in 10-15% of the casino's take, which represents half of the group's annual revenue.

Also on these first two floors are numerous gift shops, three restaurants that serve excellent cuisine, and several stores.

Floors three through eight have luxury rooms, each of which contains two beds, a sitting area, entertainment suite (music, television, and pay-per-view of Hub events and movies), mini-bar, walk-in closet, and a full-size bathroom. The cost to rent one of these rooms is 200 credits per night. The ninth floor has eight suites, each about the size of a small house with a large living room, dining room, two bedrooms, study/sitting room, kitchenette, plenty of closet space, and a spacious bathroom with Jacuzzi, and costs 1000 credits per night to rent. The top-most floor is the Majestic Suite, a lavish series of rooms that are every bit as extravagant as the richest mansion in Chi-Town or Ishpeming. Only the most affluent members of society can afford to rent this suite with its price tag of 15,000 credits a night. The hotel reserves the right to rent the Majestic only to its best (i.e. richest and most powerful) clients.

Overseeing the operation of the Palace is an Uteni merchant who goes by the name *Jimmy-U* (9th level merchant). Jimmy-U is a savvy businessman and charismatic host (M.A. of 20) who, with a short exchange of pleasantries and small talk, can put any client at ease. Like all Uteni on Rifts Earth, Jimmy-U works for Naruni Enterprises but part of his job as the Palace's manager is to keep all of its investors satisfied with the state of affairs at the



hotel. A job at which Jimmy-U excels. In addition to his more routine duties, Jimmy-U also keeps his ear to the ground gathering useful tidbits of information to pass on to his corporate masters at Naruni Enterprises.

Jimmy-U manages a work staff of five hundred, which includes maids, waiters and waitresses, bartenders, chefs, hospitality staff, doormen, bellhops, and casino workers (each of whom has the *Palming*, *Gambling* and *Gambling: Dirty Tricks* skills at 65% or higher).

Security at the Palace includes Vegas-style high-tech, concealed security cameras in the ceilings and other strategic locations to monitor all areas of the casino and public areas of the hotel, including hallways and stairwells. There is also a team of 80 professional security guards (3rd-7th level) equipped with NE-F20A personal force fields, plasma cartridge pistols and state-of-the-art personal communications. Guards are stationed at key spots and security areas throughout the building, and are trained to respond en masse to any situation with a response time of under three minutes. All of the hotel rooms are outfitted with high-tech electronic locks that are next to impossible to open without a key card. These cards actually read the thumbprint of the owner and will not function if handled by anyone else (the cards can be quickly programmed and are linked to the customer when issued at the front desk).

Business is booming at the Palace. The casino is always busy, filled to capacity, day and night, and the hotel has 75-90% occupancy year round. Mercs, bounty hunters and adventurers like to live large when they come in from the field or just made a big score, and the Palace is the place to do it. Other clientele include heads of state, business executives, corporate leaders, mercenary commanders, wealthy merchants, mages, and D-Bees – especially *D-Bees* who are often shunned in other communities and seldom get a chance to live in the lap of luxury even when they have the money. Champions of the Hub Battledome arena are also entitled to stay at the hotel, free of charge, as part of the profit sharing deal between the two companies. The reigning champ of the open category, the *Titan Juicer*, *Shred*, currently stays in one of the hotel's suites and puts in an appearance at the casino each night to the delight of his fans.

The Palace is more than a luxury hotel, it is also a hotbed of intrigue. Beneath the opulent surface of the hotel and the bells and lights of the casino, there is an undercurrent of tension, vice and skullduggery. Mercenaries and underworld figures are predators always on the prowl, and the casino is their hunting ground. Thus, in addition to pickpockets, con artists, thieves, cardsharps and high-class call girls who prey on the patrons, there are countless intelligence officers, bounty hunters, hit men, spies and mercenaries with their eyes open for fugitives with a price on their head, enemies, rivals, information, chance meetings and opportunities to cash in on a spur of the moment situation away from the slot machines and gaming tables. In addition, the Palace is a place where people come to meet potential clients, hand off information, money or contraband, spin deals, negotiate, make or take bribes, buy sexual favors, seal weapons purchases, trade services and information, unwind or play where their actions may attract unwanted attention, and where the fates of nations are sometimes decided.

21. Naruni Enterprises Building: Directly opposite Mercenary Plaza sits the ultra-modern, eight story Naruni Enterprises

Building. A few years ago, after the company was expelled from North America by the Coalition States and a conspiracy of independent weapons dealers, a team of Uteni representatives arrived in MercTown. The alien arms merchants purchased the plot of land and built a monument of their capitalistic efforts as if to dare the CS, Northern Gun, Ishpeming and others to try it again. It is very much a symbol of the company's determination not to be denied a presence in the arms market of Rifts Earth. From this base in MercTown, Naruni Enterprises has closed dozens of high priced arms deals with kingdoms across the continent, including the MercTown government. NE offered millions of credits, great deals on equipment and free product to the government and its defense force to let the Naruni build their headquarters in the heart of the city-state. Although Proconsul Drago had his reservations and feared the aliens' presence might fuel CS retaliation, the Naruni made him and his kingdom an offer too good to decline.

To accomplish the corporation's goals in North America, the senior sales representative in MercTown, an Uteni trader known as *Shulkh* (see page 18 of the **Naruni Wave 2** sourcebook), has decided on a two-pronged strategy. The first, is to simply showcase Naruni products to everyone who visits MercTown. Hence, the first two floors of the building are giant showrooms that span half a city block. Visitors to the "Showroom" (all glass outer walls so people on the street can see the marvels inside) can see, touch and sit inside actual vehicles and view holographic footage of every product in the place. A dozen Uteni salesmen, including Shulkh himself, along with human and D-Bee agents, scour the showroom floor offering customers advice, information and special incentives on products. Those who express an interest in NE weaponry are taken to a soundproof, indoor shooting range in the basement where they can test fire the products before they order them. One of Shulkh's favorite ploys is to take an *NE-10 Plasma Rifle* to the range and blast apart a suit of Plastic Man body armor with a single shot.

The second prong of Shulkh's strategy is to take NE's products to the customer in the field. To this end he has organized four, so-called *Field Marketing Teams (FMTs)* who travel to locations and war zones across America to display Naruni's products to potential clients such as mercenary units, tribes of warring D-Bees or bandits (Simvan, Psi-Stalkers, the Pecos Empire, etc.), fledgling kingdoms, and both sides of military conflicts. These teams consist of one Uteni sales representative, two human sales people, 2-4 Repo-Bots, two Molocks, a psychic and 4-6 security contractors (i.e. mercenaries) who travel aboard an **NE-3000 Stealth Hover Transport**. (A medium cargo aircraft with an advanced stealth package; -65% to *Read Sensory Equipment* skill checks to detect the transport and it has 600 M.D.C. plus a 130 M.D.C. force field, a three man crew, seats as many as 20 passengers, and has a cargo capacity of 80,000 pounds/36,000 kg/40 tons. These craft have been nicknamed the "Shush" by contract personnel.)

Standard procedure for these FMTs is to arrive on location and establish a security perimeter. Members of the team offload a selection of NE products which they then demonstrate to the potential customer. Afterwards the Uteni sales representative attempts to hammer out a deal with the customer. If required, the team remains on location to train the client's troops to use the equipment properly and effectively, in return for a consulting fee, of course.

Shulkh, the senior Uteni sales representative in MercTown, is both an excellent trader and a cunning businessman. He often takes a personal role in conducting deals, especially those that are large scale or considered to be strategically important in the corporation's crusade against the Coalition States and its allies. The sales strategies Shulkh has conceived are wildly successful and he is a rising star in Naruni Enterprises. Those who have gotten the short end of the stick in one of Shulkh's sales deals or who deal with him often, have begun to call him "Slick Shulky," a less-than-affectionate nickname.

The Naruni Enterprises Building is an ultra-modern structure built by the company's own contractors using advanced Naruni technology. No one really knows exactly what's on the floors above the showrooms, and the Uteni and other authorized employees are very secretive about it and overall NE operations.

Security at the NE Building is airtight and borders on the paranoid. All systems are entirely Naruni high-tech, utilizing advance sensors, force fields, Repo-Bots (40) and combat drones (40 each type), as well as Molock Enforcers (exact number unknown, but there are at least 20 of them and maybe double that many). The NE Building has a multi-layered defense system with Mega-Damage walls with 200 M.D.C. per square foot (0.09 m), reinforced structural beams, M.D.C. security doors (200 M.D.C. each), and as an added measure, the entire building can be enveloped by a force field that is powered by its own independent generator that provides 1000 M.D.C. per 20 foot (6.1 m) section. Inside, compartmentalization is the key to the security of the building; every room and corridor can be sealed, and the entire complex has its own self-contained environment. Power is provided by a private nuclear power plant in one of the sub-basements and supplemented by an advanced solar energy system utilizing nano-technology miracle fibers not allowed to be sold on Rifts Earth. Another sub-basement houses the life support systems for the complex, including an automated waste recycling plant, air purification system, and water supply. Communication systems are also exclusively Naruni and part of the building's design. There are no outside lines connecting to the building, which means it cannot be accessed or hacked by the MercTown internet network. On a similar note, the building's communications systems are among the most sophisticated in the Megaverse. This equipment is the most advanced of its type in the Three Galaxies, several cuts above anything available on Rifts Earth even on the military market (a system Naruni Enterprises reserves solely for its own use). As a result, any attempt to decrypt transmissions from the building suffers a penalty of -75%, and NE can receive and broadcast up to 2000 miles (3200 km) away! All of this makes the building a self-contained environment and something of an independent kingdom or fort, within MercTown.

No matter what outsiders might think, Naruni Enterprises has reason to be paranoid. Agents of the Coalition States are suspected of seven acts of terrorism leveled at the building in just the last two years. Meanwhile, *Northern Gun* and the *Manistique Imperium* have recently been joined by *Titan Industries* to undermine its operations in the field; swindling, stealing, raiding, attacking and trying to destroy transports and kill sales reps at every opportunity. Meanwhile, the three arms dealers and other rivals constantly engage in spreading false rumors and damaging innuendo about Naruni Enterprises in a concerted effort to steal NE customers and ruin the alien merchant's reputation.



22. Hub Swap Meet and Flea Market: A place where mercenaries, adventurers, Wilderness Scouts, Psi-Stalkers, and people of all kinds can come to buy, sell, and swap goods.

The area is a sprawling open space that takes up an entire city block. The outer rim is parking, and the inner square is open space where 800-1000 vendors set up tables every weekend, flea market style, to sell used goods of every kind. Only one quarter are small-time or part-time professional merchant dealers. The rest of the space is reserved for *mercenaries*, *adventurers*, *wilderness folk*, and *local residents* looking to sell used goods. For residents, that might include handmade crafts and artwork, nicknacks, antiques, furniture, and old clothes or household items. For mercs, adventurers and wilderness people, goods include weapons, armor, vehicles, ammunition, military gear, camping gear, uniforms, medals, salvaged parts and components, souvenirs and booty taken from their opponents (or victims), animal furs and horns, even animal heads and teeth, magic items, gemstones, books, and exotic items from far away lands or alien weapons and gizmos, or otherworldly paperweights, nicknacks, artwork and junk that looks cool or weird, as well as (alleged) pre-Rifts relics.

This is a *great place for deals* – but *buyer beware*, because all items are sold “as is,” “all sales final” (no refunds), may be authentic or a forgery, and prices vary from seller to seller. The same item may be offered by twenty different dealers at twenty different prices. Ultimately, the price depends on how badly the seller needs money. If the seller is a merc or adventurer down on his luck, the prices could be as low as 20-40% of the going market price. Most common items, including guns, E-Clips, armor and military gear, sell at a 25-50% discount below the standard market price of the item *new*. Only popular, hard to find items, magic items and “hot” items (for whatever reason) sell for their full value or higher (2-5 times higher than the normal market price).

In some cases, a seller may not know what he or she has, or its true value, and may sell a weapon or magic item worth tens of thousands of credits for a couple thousand or even a few hundred. Likewise, a friend or relative who inherits their merc or adventuring buddy's equipment might not know or care what the items are worth and may sell them at blow-out prices of 10-30% of their true value just to get rid of the junk, or because they hold sad or bad memories for the person (i.e., the loss of a loved one, a terrible war, persecution, etc.). These sellers are uncommon and lucky finds, but inevitably, a half dozen such deals are there to be found 1D6 times a weekend; typically early in the swap meet.

Dealers may also buy, trade and swap goods with customers and fellow dealers.

A 10 foot long, 6 foot deep (3 x 1.8 m) space costs 100 credits for a three day sales period, Friday, Saturday and Sunday; ten table maximum space allowed for any one vendor. The dealer can bring his own tables and booth display or rent sturdy but shabby eight foot (2.4 m) long by three foot (0.9 m) deep tables from the Hub Swap Meet organizers at a cost of 30 credits per each table for all three days. Prices are all *half* for residents (proof of citizenship required). Swap Meets/Flea Markets run every week from Friday through Sunday, from 9:00 A.M. till 9:00 P.M., set up starts Thursday and Friday morning (starting at 6:00 A.M.), but additional goods/new stock can be brought in throughout the show.

Note: The Flea Market is always a popular and busy attraction for visitors, and also a good place for player characters to make discount purchases, trade surplus and booty, meet fellow adventurers, swap stories and rumors, meet with a client, or just spend a pleasant afternoon.

23. NGMI Bank: Years ago the states of Upper Michigan combined their efforts to launch their own currency. Until that point, like many others in North America, they were forced to rely on the CS credit system known as *Universal Credits*. Many in governments of the two Michigan nations felt that by relying on the CS credit system they were being held hostage by the Coalition States. To assert their sovereignty and strengthen their own economies, Northern Gun and the Manistique Imperium began to issue the NGMI Dollar. In order to control the value, production and issue of this dollar, as well as to reduce speculation and regulate interest rates, they founded the Northern Gun/Manistique Imperium Bank.

The NGMI Bank functions in a capacity identical to that of the Coalition States. Its basic function is to ensure the face value of NGMI dollars, administer a credit/debit system that works just like Universal Credit cards, issue hard currency printed by the combined governments of Northern Gun and the Manistique Imperium, manage savings accounts, provide loans and mortgages, and handle investments. The NGMI Bank and its dollar are the strongest independent currency in North America, second only to the Coalition's Universal Credit. Due to the continued and projected stability of the Upper Michigan nations, most people and businesses outside the CS are confident in its value. Even Titan Industries, Wilk's, Wellington Industries, Golden Age Weaponsmiths and the Black Market accept and back NGMI dollars. That means the NGMI dollar is accepted just about everywhere in North America, wherever Northern Gun or Manistique Imperium products are sold; in most 'Burbs, as well as by most independent merchants, traders, traveling shows, mercenaries, freelance operatives, and most businesses and non-Coalition kingdoms from Lazlo to the New West, Pecos Empire and Ciudad Juarez, in Mexico.

As a result, the NGMI Bank has spread to parts of North America outside of Upper Michigan and recently opened a bank in *MercTown*. To many, the NGMI dollar is preferable to the Universal Credit because it cannot be traced by the Coalition States (a definite plus for those in shadier businesses like mercs ops, assassination, theft, the Black Market, etc.), and because it does not help to support the CS. NGMI currency comes in the form of *stock certificates* worth 100 dollars each, *bearer bonds*

worth 5000 or 10,000 dollars each, *plastic credit notes* that come in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 500 and 1000 NGMI dollars, as well as the traditional credit/debit card. **Note:** One NGMI "dollar" is roughly equal to one Universal Credit.

The MercTown NGMI Bank is a single story, bunker-like structure of M.D. concrete and glass. Inside there are four automated tellers, a dozen service booths with humanoid tellers, several offices (to arrange loans, mortgages, or to buy investments) and a vault. Security in the building is very tight, so much so that a robbery attempt would be tantamount to suicide. First of all, the bank does not allow entry to anyone who is armed or wearing body armor with the exception of MercTown Defenders or those issued special government carrying permits. For additional protection the bank is guarded at all times by eight security guards, all ex-mercenary troops wearing NG-X10 Gladius armor and armed with laser pulse pistols, rifles and a stun weapon, plus two Triax DV-12 Dyna-Bots stand guard in the main foyer and the bank manager is always a Mind Melter, Psi-Tech or similarly powerful and versatile psychic. The vault itself is a hardened structure with 10,000 M.D.C. walls and a massive steel door that has 2,500 M.D.C. and can only be opened by the bank manager and assistant manager (full DNA scan I.D. system plus requires a security code that changes every month; trying to hack the door electronically is far from easy, there is a penalty of -50% to *Computer Hacking* and similar skills to break in).

24. Insider Traders: Insider Traders is a highly successful company that employs a staff of several dozen financial commodity brokers and traders. To maintain a steady supply of capital, the company buys and sells commodities (raw materials and finished goods) for resale in MercTown, Kingsdale, Whykin, Lazlo, El Dorado, and the Coalition States, among other places, including war zones and mercenary companies rather than actual communities. Consumers buy shares in the investments and receive payoffs and dividends when a profit is made from the sale of the goods. The owner and his handpicked and personally trained brokers are amazingly good at turning a profit so investments made by the firm are considered to be as good as gold, better even than Coalition States government bonds. An impressive 74% of all investments turn a profit, each share typically paying a return of 10-25%, twenty-two percent of the investments break even, and only 4% are bust, but even failed ventures seldom lose more than 20% of their initial investment (which can usually be made up in 1-3 reinvestments). In MercTown shares in an Insider Traders deal are often used in lieu of a straight credit payment for mercenary contracts and similar ventures. Several of North America's best known mercs like Marcus Larsen, Frank Carson and Geoff Blackman are all regular investors.

What makes this all the more impressive is that the financial wizard behind the company is the infamous, former senator and would-be usurper *Jacius Larkent* from the Manistique Imperium. Larkent is both brilliant and demented. He is a fugitive from Manistique because he tried to assassinate the ruling family and seize military control in a failed coup back in 101 P.A. He is outspoken about his intention to invade the Manistique Imperium and become that nation's emperor, and is generally considered to be obsessed and insane on that issue. On the other hand, he is an absolute genius when it comes to business and buying, trading and selling commodities; a good half of which

involve weapons and military goods sold to mercenaries and warring factions. Jacius Larkent has insinuated himself in MercTown's high society and is a representative of the Merchants' Association, as well as hold a seat on the MercTown Advisory Council. He is fabulously wealthy, but clearly obsessed with the Manistique Imperium and becoming its Emperor. **Note:** Jacius Larkent is profiled in detail in the section *MercTown's Most Notable Personalities*, and is an excellent source of campaign and adventure ideas as he regularly funds a wide variety of operations.

25. Taste of the Town: For high class, fine dining, there are few spots better than Taste of the Town. The food is varied, with dishes from a myriad of cultures, including a handful of *alien delicacies*. Quality is superb and the average meal costs 50-100 credits. Taste of the Town was the first restaurant opened by *Boris Charovich* (8th level Chef/Merchant), MercTown's premier restaurateur. Charovich is a well known, highly regarded and successful businessman who owns or co-owns a dozen of the finest restaurants, bars and clubs in town. What few realize is that he is also a front man for the *Black Market*. To open Taste of the Town he was forced to borrow credits from the syndicate, and now Ted Dutcher is a silent partner in *all* of Charovich's businesses and skims a quarter of the profits. Fortunately, Boss Dutcher is only interested in the profits, and Charovich has a free hand in how his businesses are run, so long as he pays the Black Market its due. Although frustrated and annoyed by the arrangement, Charovich isn't hurting from it. He's made several million credits and the mobsters who frequent some of his restaurants are always polite, respectful, and big tippers. They also help to squash troublemakers and problems before they get out of hand – Boss Dutcher protects his investments.

26. Klingmar Spa & Resort: A luxury resort complex located right in the Hub overlooking the National Park & Botanical Gardens. In essence, this spa is a pleasure dome for the rich, sophisticated and social elite. The resort's offerings include saunas, mud baths, artificial hot springs, massage parlors, a full gym, an Olympic-size pool filled with mineral-laden water (has limited rejuvenating properties), health food restaurant, juice bar, beauty salon, cosmetics counter, and a half dozen cabins for those who wish to stay the night. The Klingmar Spa and Resort also offers "exotic" herbal remedies, healing potions and hallucinogens imported from *England*, as well as psychic healing. The Spa is the brainchild of *Odem Klingmar* (8th level Rogue Scholar of noble descent; Anarchist) who fled to Rifts Earth to escape a purge of the nobility on his home world. The D-Bee looks completely human except for his small pointed teeth and the fact that his skin is bronze colored. A sophisticate himself, Klingmar enjoys the finer pleasures in life and thus opened a resort to extend those pleasures for others. He employs a staff of 60 discreet and professional workers highly skilled in their particular area of expertise (1D6+4 level). Klingmar also loves fine wines, high stakes gambling, and intrigue and adventure in small doses.

27. National Park & Botanical Gardens: Covering eighty acres of prime downtown real estate, the National Park was a key part of Kentek Drago's initiative to clean up New Paducah. Funded entirely by the government, it is a small parcel of paradise with crushed gravel pathways that weave through a well

manicured lawn, a couple of crystal ponds, forested glades, flower gardens, and groves of cherry trees, apple trees, pear trees, oaks, maples and pines. Within its confines is an abundance of small woodland creatures (rabbits, squirrels, etc.), songbirds and butterflies. Some residents and visitors have even claimed to have seen a few Faeries, Pixies and Bogies, although it is doubtful that any Faerie Folk would actually make their home in a park within a human city, even one as lovely as this one.

At the center of the park is the Botanical Gardens, a greenhouse-style public atrium filled with rare and exotic plant life from around the Megaverse. Most of the flora within are quite beautiful, but also fragile, incapable of surviving outside of this closed environment. Both the park and gardens are managed by a staff of Druids, botanists and horticulturists, all of whom are on government salaries. The chief administrator is a Druid named *Arrym Silverleaf* (11th level Elven Millennium Druid). There is no cost for admission to the park or the botanical gardens.

Note: Although every expert insists it is impossible, there really is a tiny clan of 11 Common Faeries, a trio of Pixies, a quartet of Bogies, and a Tree Nymph living in the park. For the most part, they avoid contact with Big Folk, but are sighted from time to time and occasionally chase cats and squirrels, play with children and stray dogs, and play pranks and tricks on mean people and vandals (i.e., they secretly help to protect the park).

Note: The affluent suburbs of **Paducah Estates** and **Naruni Heights** are just east of the National Park and Botanical Gardens (see the Outskirts for descriptions).

28. Precinct One Jail Facility. This is a combination police precinct and jail house. Twelve MercTown Defenders are on duty at all times, but answer to only the most serious emergencies, otherwise, they are on duty to maintain the jail house and assist visitors (offer directions, fill out theft reports, and similar duty).

The jail house portion has two large holding cells usually reserved for drunks and minor offenders, thirty 10x10 foot (3 x3 m) jail cells with two bunk beds (designed to accommodate two prisoners, but can handle four or five in a pinch; cramped conditions with two sleeping on the floor), and four isolation cells (one prisoner in a padded cell well a solid M.D.C. metal door and a small, plexiglass slit with a metal, sliding cover to see into the cell; no bars). The jail house is typically where drunks, brawlers and suspected criminals are kept until they sleep it off, cool down or are interrogated and charged a fine and released. Ninety percent of the jail's clientele are temporary visitors brought in from the Battledome.

29. The MercTown Gymnasium. Men of arms and adventurers need to keep in shape, especially when between jobs, and for that there is the MercTown Gymnasium. The large, three story facility offers a large variety of exercise equipment, weight training facilities, aerobic exercise, walking track, three handball courts, a ping-pong room, boxing training, a regulation boxing ring for sparring matches, fencing room, an Olympic sized swimming pool and showers. There is also a shop inside the gym where one can purchase weights, workout clothing, running shoes, water bottles, vitamins, Juicer chemical cartridges, and exercise gear.

Not only is the gym a place to get a workout, but it is also a place where mercenaries and men at arms can meet, chat, exercise, engage in friendly (sober) competitions and test each other's skills. As a gathering place, one can pick up on the latest rumors, get leads on jobs, hear about special offers on weapons, vehicles and equipment, as well as word on bounty hunters in town, new bounties, happening nightspots and parties.

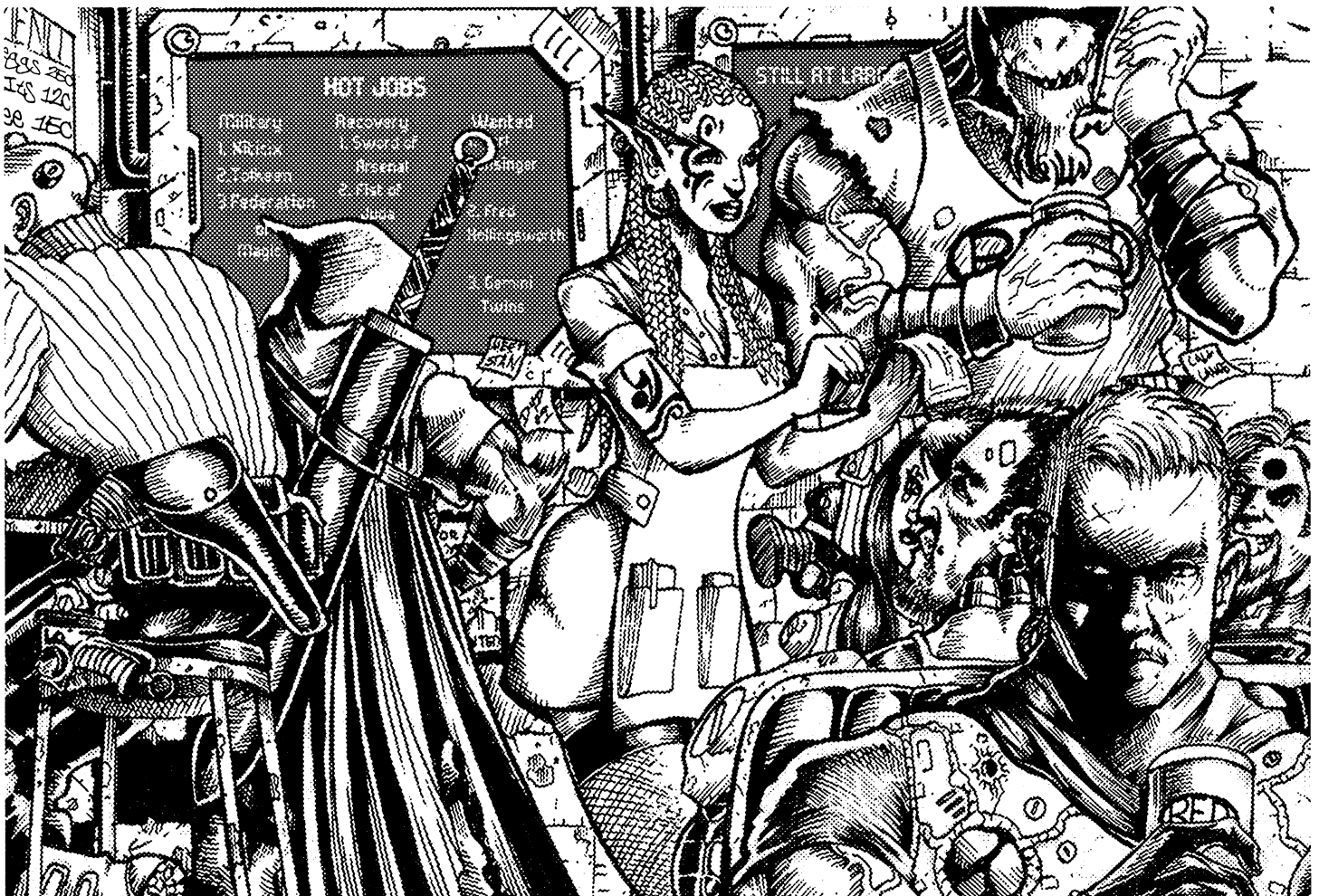
30. Job Market Café: Open daily from five in the morning until midnight, the Job Market Café is a combination internet café, coffee shop, diner and meeting place. It seats about two hundred people, serves your standard fare of luncheon food, soup, salads and sandwiches, has some of the best varieties of coffee in town, as well as a nice selection of 20 micro-brewery beers, all at reasonable prices. The main draw, however, is finding work in the mercenary trade. The café's owner, *Cliff "Fixer" Jones*, is well-connected and has his finger on the pulse of the mercenary community – meaning where the latest conflicts are brewing, who's hiring mercs, muscle and mages, what the job pays, and who to contact.

Fixer Jones is a retired merc himself, though one would never know it by looking at him, a paunchy, middle-aged fellow who looks more like a dentist or shopkeeper than a key player in the mercenary scene. Indeed, he is an information broker, middleman, contractor and organizer with more contacts in the mercenary world than one could believe possible for one man. Word on the street is that he knows everyone worth knowing, and half of those he knows owe him a favor or look to him to find people to fill their needs.

In return for a modest fee (5%), Fixer helps mercenaries, bounty hunters and adventuring groups to find work, providing them with introductions, arranging for meetings and transportation, and presenting valuable intelligence. Fixer Jones is a legend in the business for his ability to hook up the right people for the right job and get things done. As a free service, he keeps electronic bulletin boards on one wall of the Café where job postings, bounties, want ads and recruiting pitches are displayed on a rolling video loop. Outside of Merc Ops and the offices in Merc Plaza, the *Job Market Café* is the place to find work, especially small jobs for one man, a duo or small group. More often than not, these are not the biggest, best paying or most glamorous jobs, but they are genuine offers of work at fair wages. Adventurers, Gunslingers, Headhunters, Crazies, mages, and newbies to the mercenary profession flock to this place. Even at midnight and the crack of dawn the Café is at least two thirds full, and jam-packed at peak lunch and dinner hours.

Note: Cliff "Fixer" Jones is profiled in the section on *MercTown's Most Notable Personalities*, and is an excellent source of adventures, clues and assistance for the player characters, especially if he takes a personal liking to one or more of them. However, Fixer does not involve himself in politics nor does he take a direct hand in adventuring or mercenary work.

31. All the World Theater: For those with more sophisticated tastes in entertainment, MercTown's Hub has a wonderful theater. The All the World Theater is a medium-sized playhouse and amphitheater that has a seating capacity of 2500. Original new plays and pre-Rifts plays (including the works of William



Shakespeare), musicals, comedies, operas and symphony performances are held at the theater to the delight of residents, visitors and mercenaries alike. Frequented by the elite members of the city-state, it gives the theater a touch of importance and culture. Funding for the theater comes largely from the admission price of 50 credits per seat, and is supplemented by government grants. The manager and chief performer of the theater is a playwright, actor and chanteuse named *Illandra Torrulae* (10th level Vagabond actor) rumored to come from an Earth-like but alien world. The performing actors are usually excellent, some of the best on the continent outside of places like Lazlo and the fallen Kingdom of Tolkeen, and the 30 member orchestra is wonderful. Shows at the theater run five days a week, Wednesday through Sunday, with two shows on Saturday. All the World Theater is a great place to “bump into” the town’s leaders, merchants and people of influence, including a surprising number of Black Market leaders and mercs.

32. Sully’s Surf & Turf: Arguably the best steakhouse east of the Mississippi river, Sully’s is an upscale, high class restaurant. Dinner at Sully’s is definitely a suit-and-tie affair, no exceptions. The cuisine is various cuts of steak and seafood. According to rumor, the owner, *Ryan Sullivan*, has a special arrangement with fishermen and pirates in the Gulf of Mexico to provide him fresh fish and seafood. Although some shipments arrive by traveling up the Mississippi River, workers have confessed in hushed whispers that most of the fresh seafood *magically* appears in the freezer and meat locker. This has led to speculation that Mrs. Theresa Sullivan is actually an Ocean Wizard and she or her husband possess some sort of teleportation power or device; nobody knows for sure.

Ryan is known to be a (supposedly) retired pirate who, up until three years ago, raided ships in the Gulf of Mexico and along the Mississippi, and specialized in victimizing Coalition vessels in the early years of the Tolkeen-Coalition War. Ryan denies ever having worked for the Kingdom of Tolkeen, but there’s no denying he once preyed upon commercial ships and military vessels of the Coalition States. Rumor also has it that he left Tolkeen’s service in good standing and personally knew *Warlord Corin Scard*, *Anya Svetska* (a Mystic Kuznya, maker of magic items), *Glorissa Trenshire*, and *Maxim Current* (Water Warlock), among other notables of Tolkeen’s ruling body and military. He also has lasting connections with various freebooters and pirate crews still operating in the Gulf, along the Mississippi and Great Lakes. Some believe the Sullivans supplement their income by fencing pirate booty and smuggling wanted fugitives, including Tolkeenites fleeing CS justice and Retribution Squads. The husband and wife refuse to dignify such allegations with an answer, citing that Ryan is retired, the missus was never a rogue or a criminal, and that business at the restaurant is booming, so they have no need to involve themselves in underworld activity. (See the **Final Siege** sourcebook in the *Coalition Wars: Siege on Tolkeen series* for details on the people and events mentioned above.)

33. Ambassador Suites: The Palace Hotel & Casino may be the most renowned hotel in MercTown, but it is far from the only one. When compared to the Palace the *Ambassador Suites* might be considered second rate, but it is a four star hotel that offers luxury accommodations to affluent visitors. Though it is not so large, extravagant or flashy, this hotel is quiet and pleas-

ant, offering 96 standard hotel rooms at 100 credits a night, thirty-six spacious suites at 230 credits a night and twelve luxury suites (1200 square feet/111.5 sq. m with a full-size bathroom, a living room, dining area and kitchenette, sitting room, a large bedroom with a king-sized bed and entertainment center (for music, television and movies) for 600 credits a night.

The Ambassador is strictly a hotel, but there is also a gift shop, barbershop and a restaurant called *the Embassy Gourmet*. The lavish and tasty all-you-can-eat breakfast buffet is a bargain at 15 credits and the other meals are also excellent. Security is good, though not as tight as the Palace and the hotel is popular among mercs and mages looking for something nice, quiet and fancy, but not too lavish or pricey.

The Ambassador Suites is owned and run by *Jefferson Rockford* (6th level Merchant/Vagabond), a self-made millionaire from Fort El Dorado. He left prior to the Coalition takeover out of fear of what the CS would do to his D-Bee wife (an attractive humanoid). The Ambassador offers a calm, relaxed atmosphere compared to the constant bustle and intrigue of The Palace. That’s not to say that it is free of shady deals and trouble, but it is more dignified and peaceful.

34. The Wine Garden: Fine dining in a pleasant atmosphere, the inside is dotted with potted plants and there is a patio for the summer months. The food is Mediterranean in nature, mainly Greek and Italian dishes, and the place has a superb selection of fine wines, some of which are made on the premises. The average meal ranges from 12-40 credits and so does a glass of superior wine or champagne. Owned by culinary master Boris Charovich. **Note:** The Wine Garden is a favorite dining place for members of the Black Market.

35. Isadore’s: A posh Italian bistro also owned by Boris Charovich. The cuisine is exclusively Italian dishes, with the best pasta in town. Prices range from 10-30 credits.

36. The Cease Fire Tavern: This pub was part of Paducah, but was called the Sword & Crown back then. In fact, it was in the Sword & Crown that the three mercenaries met and hashed out their plans for the town, leaving Kentek Drago in charge. In keeping with that historic event, the name of the tavern was changed to the *Cease Fire*, and has become a neutral and safe meeting place for mercenaries, including those from opposing units and long-standing rivals. Violence is not tolerated on the premises; the majority of patrons respect this firm edict as a rule that can’t be broken. Those who do defy this edict find themselves in the cross hairs of the staff, security and fellow patrons.

Other than its history and its tradition of being a safe haven where rival parties can meet and speak without violence, the Cease Fire is an ordinary looking pub that serves beer, ale and mixed drinks. Its walls are decorated with photos and war memorabilia donated by more than twenty separate merc outfits, making it attractive to professionals in the merc trade. Visiting warriors often make a pilgrimage to the tavern, stopping for a drink and to swap war stories with old buddies and comrades in other units, before moving on.

37. Big Budget Productions: This private company is the primary provider of electronic media and entertainment in town. A multimedia agency, Big Budget covers the entire spectrum of modern entertainment. The company offers three radio channels, two television channels, a news program, a movie theater and video disk duplication. All operations are housed in the same

building along with its own production company that develops new television shows and movies. It's a fairly impressive operation given the overall small size of MercTown, and it is all made possible by owner, Morty Stiller.

From the time he was a boy, Morty loved movies. Over the years he assembled a collection of pre-Rifts movies as well as a small library of independent films made since the Cataclysm. It is no wonder then, that Morty would start his own multimedia company.

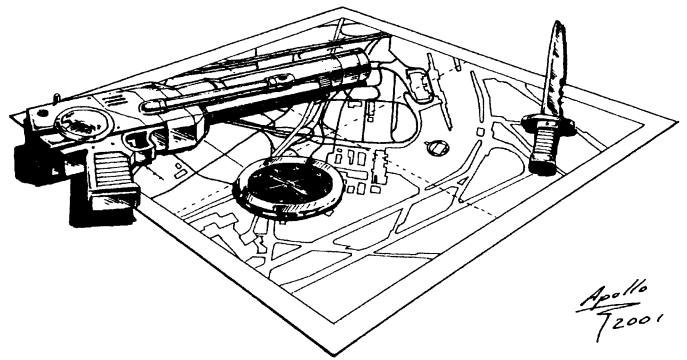
Big Budget Productions is located in the Hub where visitors and mercenaries fill the streets. The building is a modern, four-story complex that houses all facets of Big Budget Productions, including a radio transmitter on the roof, offices, music recording studios, sound stages, editing booths, etc.

Attached to the central building is a giant movie theater complex that has two separate theaters each capable of seating three hundred customers and playing old and new movies on state-of-the-art equipment (modern digital movie projectors, surround sound, etc.). Movies are shown every night at the theater, with additional matinees on the weekends. Tickets cost 20 credits for the evening shows and 10 credits for the weekend matinees. The theater has diverse offerings that include pre-Rifts classics as well as modern films produced by Big Budget, Perez Productions (Canada) and other independent film companies in the north, and even some bootlegged films from the Coalition States. Many of the new films lack the same punch and production values of old Hollywood, but many, especially those by Big Budget Productions, are quite good and gaining in popularity.

Television programming is piped to residents and businesses throughout the city by underground fiber optic cables. The service includes just two entertainment channels and a news and public information channel at a cost of 120 credits a month, but it is a luxury not available except in the largest cities in North America. An average programming day is twelve hours, starting at ten in the morning then repeated in its entirety at ten in the evening. Its most popular show is a geography style program that highlights changes in the biosphere, flora and fauna since the Great Cataclysm.

Big Budget's radio service is free, paid for by advertising just as it was in the 21st Century. A transmitter on the roof broadcasts programs out to a 100 mile (160 km) radius. There are five stations, one that plays only pre-Rifts classics, another that plays a mixture of country and folk, one that plays rock 'n roll, one that plays modern music, and one that is devoted to local and national news and sports – the national reporting being based as much on rumor and hearsay as fact. As with all of Big Budget's offerings, at least one third of the programming is pre-Rifts in origin and is extremely popular.

Note: Morty and his news team are always looking for juicy news bits and will pay people with reliable news 20-100 credits to tape a news report or interview, up 1000 credits for an exclusive or a genuine scoop. Other tips, minor news bits, and confirmation of a breaking story may earn the character a pair of free movie tickets to the theater or a free month of television programming for himself or a friend living in town. Nothing for "old news" revealed more than 12 hours ago. Morty would rather give out movie tickets and TV packages than actual cash, which is fine by most people. There aren't a lot of places willing to pay a lick for news, so this is a unique opportunity that mercs and adventurers try to enjoy.



38. Warhawk Magazine Co.: At a glance, few would suspect this simple, slightly ramshackle two story house serves as the headquarters for the most popular independent periodical in North America, *Warhawk Magazine*, a journal dedicated to military affairs, political overviews, warfare technology and adventure opportunities in the Americas and beyond. To the Average Joe striking off on his first adventure, and squads, raiders and small mercenary outfits, the magazine is a valuable source of information and intelligence concerning potential conflicts, hot spots and jobs on the continent. This includes a section called "On the Street" dedicated to rumors and unconfirmed reports. It also offers articles and reviews on new weapons and field equipment, Coalition activity, piracy, and classified ads. All of which contribute to the magazine's popularity – a half million printed paper editions and 130,000 computer disk editions every month, plus an online magazine site available at MercTown for 20 credits a month, complete with weekly updates on the printed stories (as applicable).

This, in itself, is a major accomplishment given the overall lack of transportation routes, distribution networks and literacy in post-apocalyptic North America. Even more impressive is the list of subscribers of Warhawk which reads like a who's who of the mercenary business. Larsen, Crowe, Max Current, Braddock, Blackman, Bakr, Brother Lance, Crabtree, Drago, Boss Dutcher, Doc Reid, Fixer Jones, Larkent, Sir Lazarious, Julian the First, Col. Miller, Demonbusters Inc., Robot Control, Armageddon Unlimited, Hackers' Consortium, Tundra Rangers, Golden Age Weaponsmiths, Bandito Arms, and various groups of the Megaversal Legion, Pecos Empire and Cyber-Knights are all subscribers. Rumor has it that even the CS intelligence service reviews each copy for useful pieces of information and to keep tabs on "outside rabble." However, the magazine is officially banned for sale in Chi-Town and the 'Burbs because it is considered *subversive*.

The success of **Warhawk Magazine** is a tribute to its editor-in-chief, *Fritz Habicht* (12th level War Correspondent), an accomplished combat photographer and journalist. Habicht, whose name means "hawk" in German, is a former soldier and war reporter from the *New German Republic (NGR)*. Prior to his coming to America, Fritz cut his journalistic teeth on the wars against the Brodkil and Gargoyle Empires in Europe and was the first to reveal the existence of the fiend calling herself the *Angel of Death*. When the NGR began to make political inroads with the Coalition States of America, he came west to conduct an in-depth study on this new, potential ally at the behest of a major German news organization. In the course of researching this story, Fritz Habicht was intrigued by the diversity in the Americas and the sheer number of organized states as compared

to his native Europe. The opportunity for combat journalism in the Americas was too much for the war correspondent to pass up and he decided to stay. Ten years ago, he settled in MercTown as his base of operation and started his own publication dedicated to military affairs in the Americas. Thus Warhawk Magazine was born.

Over the last decade, Habicht's magazine has expanded at an exponential rate, both in terms of readership (an estimated five times the actual number of copies sold, placing readership in the two million plus range) and the scope of its articles. As more and more profits rolled in, he was able to build a crack staff of investigative reporters, war correspondents, and photographers, as well as a network of reliable contacts within the mercenary trade, freedom fighters and independent nations. Today, Habicht's publication has earned a reputation for its accuracy, integrity, balance and ability to gain access to the hottest combat zones, the most elusive statesmen and the finest soldiers on the continent.

Warhawk Magazine employs more than three dozen full-time reporters, photographers and editors. Nonetheless, the company does accept submissions from freelance war correspondents and journalists on a case by case basis. Only the best articles are considered for publication, but only if they pertain to subjects that are of interest or are informative to Warhawk's readership. In most cases this means that a would-be reporter must brave some hot zone in a remote area of the continent (like the Magic Zone, Tolkeen Front, Mexico or the New West). Even so, the rewards outweigh the potential risks. Warhawk pays an average of 1000 credits per page of text and 1000-10,000 credits per photo that gets published; the more graphic, shocking, revealing or exclusive, the better. Furthermore, journalists whose material gets printed in the magazine have no problem finding future assignments either with Warhawk or competing media corporations.

G.M. Note: A budding young journalist or War Correspondent character in the player group can make a nice amount of extra money submitting to Warhawk Magazine. This, in turn, provides the G.M. with a means of steering the player group towards planned adventures without forcing their hand. Likewise, as a War Correspondent, the character is likely to have access to information not commonly available, and/or receive tips, warnings and information from people in the field who recognize his name and want to get their story out, or help him see the truth. This could also earn the War Correspondent character greater respect from the other player characters who may have previously seen him as a "spare wheel," a "nosy reporter," or "civilian who needs to be baby-sat."

39. The Golden Dragon Dojo: The Golden Dragon is a school for the martial arts. Even in the high-tech arena of North America there are a great many mercenaries with a keen interest in hand to hand combat. Granted, most armies, military academies and the various Headhunter training camps teach new recruits the *basics* of hand to hand fighting, but very few can match the quality of instruction at the Golden Dragon. Here a cadre of five Masters collectively know nine different and advanced styles of martial arts. Among these styles are *Aikido*, *Hwarang-Do Karate*, *Judo*, *Jujitsu*, *Karate* (the basic version in *Rifts® Japan*), *Tai-Chi*, *Tae Kwon Do* and two other forms brought from other dimensions. (Note that all of the above styles are found in either **Rifts® Japan** or **Rifts® China 2**.)

For eight years now the Dojo has been in operation. At the present time it has more than a hundred students. Only a third of these are full-time students, residents of MercTown who attend classes regularly. The other two thirds are transient, visitors to the city such as mercenaries who attend classes when they are able. That, or martial artists seeking to merely brush up on old skills. The Golden Dragon is always willing to take on new students. Classes run three days a week and cost an average of 50 credits a session, depending on the style and the instructor (the more rarefied forms cost more to learn, some as much as 200 credits per session). The Dojo is becoming increasingly popular, especially amongst visiting mercs in search of sparring partners, serious and challenging practice sessions and finding an edge in hand to hand combat.

The owner and chief instructor of the Golden Dragon is *David Huan* (10th level Dedicated Martial Artist), a master of both *Hwarang-Do* and *Jujitsu*. Other instructors at the Golden Dragon come from diverse backgrounds, some hail from the Far East of Rifts Earth while others are D-Bees from faraway dimensions. Among them are *Miko Tangara*, a female Japanese warrior (7th level Bishamon Fighting Monk; Aikido expert), *Michael Wong* an ex-CS military unarmed combat instructor (8th level CS Special Forces; expert in Judo and Karate), *Xiang Hung*, an adventurer from China (8th level Martial Artist; expert in Tae Kwon Do and Tai-Chi), and *Drang Zecham*, a reptilian D-Bee from another dimension (equal to a 5th level Samurai; expert in two alien forms roughly similar to the Earth styles of Zanj Shinjinken-Ryo and Snake Style Kung Fu).

40. Iverson Auto Repairs: The Iverson brothers, *Trike* and *Tonka* (both are 8th level Operators), rebuild and sell the occasional used vehicle, but the brothers' main focus is on repairs, service and auto parts. They do excellent work and can fix anything with a motor whether it be a civilian automobile, suit of power armor, robot or armored vehicle.

The Spokes

Market & Business District

The Hub may be considered MercTown's downtown core, but the majority of its businesses are found in the part of town known as **the Spokes**. This area is the city's marketplace, its commercial center filled with shops, stores, restaurants, boutiques, taverns, merchant outlets, traders, inns and financial institutions. Its name comes from the fact that under the old dictator, Alkavar Dorveen, the kingdom of New Paducah was supposed to be vaguely wheel-shaped. Today, residents claim that like the spokes of a wheel, they are the community that supports the weight of their nation.

Like the rest of the *New Town* area, this sector is a major draw for visitors to the city-state. To keep the peace it is heavily patrolled by MercTown Defenders, especially in the neighboring *Arms Bazaar*. In addition to the police, a number of business owners employ their own security forces. Roughly one in five stores (or about 20%) has one or more armed guards on the premises. Venders also reserve the right to disarm customers and boot troublemakers and suspicious characters out onto the street.

41. Merchants Association Hall: An estimated 70-80% of all businesses in MercTown belong to the Merchant's Association. This lobby group does its best to pressure the government into passing legislation favorable to commerce in MercTown. When the membership of the Association convene to discuss issues, this is the where they do it. The building is little more than a gathering place, a large auditorium with a handful of smaller boardrooms and offices on the upper floor. When the hall is not in use, the Association lends it out (at little or no charge) to various business groups for meetings, guest speakers, special exhibitions, and public services like school plays and musicals, support group meetings, charity drives, fund-raisers, etc., in order to demonstrate their good will and commitment to the city.

42. Gulf East Trading House: This is a branch of a larger, regional company that deals in commodities, logistics and import/export all along the East Coast, the Gulf of Mexico and Mississippi River. Owned by a consortium of investors in Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama, the company has chosen MercTown as a logistics and trade terminus. Gulf East is a company of minimal importance on the grand scale of post-Rifts corporate North America. It is much larger than a simple "mom & pop" store yet far from being a major player like Northern Gun, Wilk's or even Golden Age Weaponsmiths. Still, the business rakes in profits in the tens of millions and has extensive dealings in the MercTown area and with mercenary companies and regional communities.

Gulf East has four main areas of interest: oil, agricultural products, technology and transportation. Ten years ago, the company helped fund the *Tampico Military Protectorate* and has invested in several independent oil drilling companies in the free territories of Old Texas. In terms of agriculture, the company buys most of the crop surpluses in the southeast (mainly grain, tobacco and cotton) for export inland. However, the biggest part of its business is transportation via waterways. Food, raw materials and goods of all kinds are carried along the Gulf Coast, up and down the Mississippi and along its tributaries. Gulf East owns a number of small and medium-sized water craft, as well as a fleet of hover trucks and other cargo haulers at key locations such as MercTown and Kingsdale. They even tried to establish a Techno-Wizard railroad line several years back, but the costs and dangers were too high.

The company does a healthy business in MercTown, and its location at the junction of key trade routes makes it an ideal spot for Gulf East to transship, buy and sell goods. Unlike other similar companies, such as *Insider Traders*, this is a privately held firm that does not offer shares or stock to outside investors. However, the company does hire temps from the local area for warehouse, loading and driving, as well as mercenaries, adventurers and practitioners of magic to escort and guard its shipments, warehouses, transport vessels and land convoys. Gulf East pays its guards reasonably well, though not as much as some of the larger corporations, still it is good, honest work at a fair wage, and a good way for newcomers to the merc game to make a start and earn a reputation for themselves.

43. A Second Chance Insurance: Accidents will happen, things get stolen and people die. This is why even in Rifts Earth the business of selling insurance still exists. *A Second Chance* is a unique firm that offers the entire range of policies. In MercTown the company offers two tiers of service, the first re-

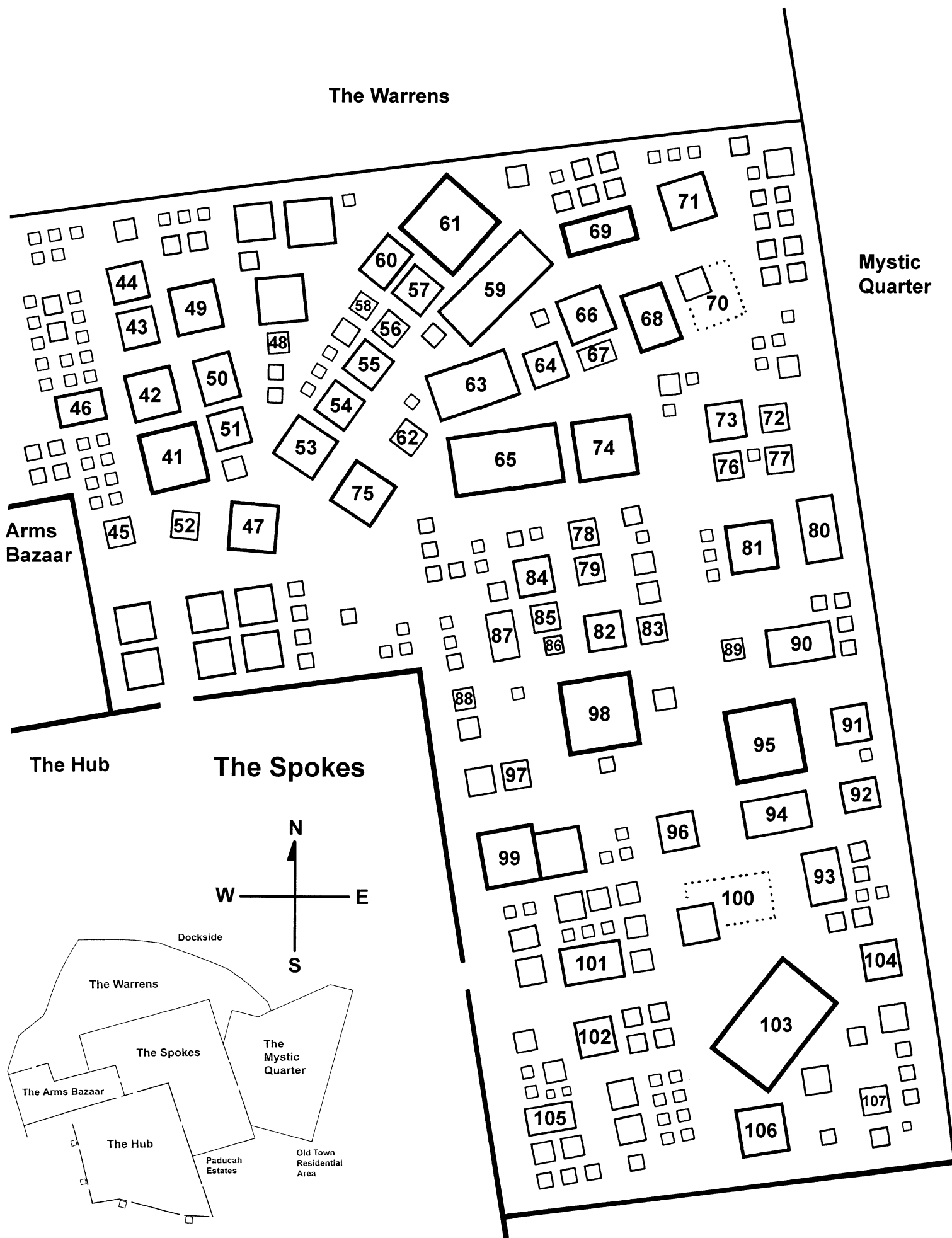
served for regular citizens, and including vehicular, homeowner's and life insurance. As the overall level of risk is relatively low, so too are the premiums, about 50-200 credits a month for any one policy depending on the individual, his age, residence and type of work. Approximately 8,000 residents in the city-state have one or more such policies.

The second tier is for *mercenaries* and *freelancers*. Obviously, the risk is much higher for these occupations, and the premiums reflect it. The company offers only medical and life insurance policies to these individuals; *medical coverage* cost 2000 credits a month, with a maximum pay-out of 100,000 credits, and *life insurance* costs 5,000-10,000 credits a month and has a maximum benefit of 250,000 credits. Individuals with a price/bounty on their head are not eligible and those who die within the borders of the Coalition States (don't mess with the CS) or outside the continental U.S. or Canada are also deemed ineligible for pay-out of benefits. However, being slain by Coalition soldiers in free zones will pay out in full. Obviously these conditions and steep rates are beyond the budget of most small-time mercs, which means that most of the Insurance Company's clients are either merc officers, commanders, or members of large, successful mercenary companies, or who have a private financier/employer who is offering insurance as a perk of employment. Whenever possible, merc contracts in town do force the client to buy insurance for all of the members of the team or company, or provide some death benefit (at least 10,000 credits) in case a member dies on the job.

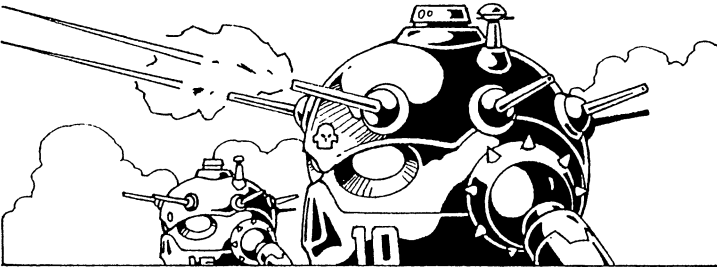
44. Edwards Savings & Loan (also known as the Mercenaries' Bank): This small financial institution was an initiative by a local businessman named *Bradley Edwards* (6th level Merchant). His goal, to establish a modest investment firm as an alternative to the larger trading houses. Edwards planned to attract clients mainly from the civilian sector, but quickly found himself dealing with large numbers of small-time mercenaries, raiders, adventurers, Wilderness Scouts and Operators. The Savings & Loan offers higher interest rates on saving accounts, meaning greater profits for account holders, and low interest loans (seldom more than 5-7%); about half the rate NGMI Bank and other lenders charge mercs.

Edwards exploits loopholes in the policies of the *MercTown State Bank* to make even bigger profits. Half the money from savings accounts he receives are placed into the government insured accounts of the MercTown State Bank. Then he takes out loans from the MercTown State Bank to make investments or to loan out to third parties at a higher interest rate. Parties that are desperate for credits to fund expeditions, but cannot get a loan from the MercTown Bank and have been turned down by the NGMI Bank, can usually get one from ES&L. It is a win-win situation because even should he personally go bankrupt, all of the savings accounts of his customers are protected by the city-state's government, and he gets a superior borrower's interest rate because he is a "resident" and citizen of MercTown. By massaging the system and clever accounting he's kept the authorities from discovering his little scheme and is turning quite a profit. However, it is probably just a matter of time before Edwards winds up outsmarting himself and the business goes under.

45. Café on the Corner: Little more than a second-rate coffeehouse on the corner across from Edwards Savings &



Loan, it is a favorite haunt of mercs and adventurers who are regulars in the area. The café is a cover to give its owner, *Dalton Piven*, the freedom to eavesdrop on customers and arrange to have them jumped and robbed or their camp raided or hotel room broken into. He has also been casing the nearby financial institutions and trying to figure out a way to rob one or more without getting implicated. Piven is a freelance burglar with dreams of bigger things. He set up shop in MercTown only a year ago after he won the Café on the Corner in a high stakes poker game. For the most part, he runs a clean establishment, but those with connections to the criminal underworld (or Fixer Jones) may be sent Piven's way to fence stolen gems, CS weapons, and high-tech gizmos. Piven is wanted for a string of break-ins three years ago in Lazlo, and is reputed to have made off with a small fortune in magic items for a client in the Federation of Magic (unfortunately for the thief, he was paid a mere one million credits). His easy familiarity with local practitioners of magic and knowledge of magic items suggests he has more than a few contacts in the Federation. However, he never openly displays any mystical powers or magic items of his own, and pretends to be a "regular guy." (Note: In reality, **Dalton Piven** is a 9th level Professional Thief, Miscreant alignment, and major psychic with 61 I.S.P. and the abilities of Intuitive Combat, Machine Ghost, Object Read, See the Invisible, Sense Magic and Mind Block.)



46. Babcock & Sons: A modest import/export business, Babcock & Sons deals almost entirely in vehicles, high-grade electronics, energy weapons, fuel and other material with military applications. Not the high end, manufactured products marketed by the big arms companies like Northern Gun, but low-end items such as spare parts, components, tool kits, batteries, ammunition, E-Clips, food rations and any of a hundred other odds and ends that tend to go unnoticed to all but quartermasters. In the city of MercTown where many combat outfits choose to organize, refit and gather supplies, Babcock and Sons enjoys a fair amount of success. Last year, Babcock & Sons managed to pull in about 600,000 credits in profit. Not bad, especially considering that this business is nothing more than an elaborate cover.

The owner, **James Babcock**, is an undercover espionage agent for the Coalition States, as are his two, supposed sons, Daniel (Sergeant Daniel Smith) and Junior (Lieutenant James Samal). Babcock and "the Boys," are part of the passive surveillance operation suggested by *Major Jameson Brock*. All the men have to do is cozy up to mercs and adventurers and keep their eyes and ears open. Posing as importers of military materials and being known to purchase used Coalition Army gear, gives the agents access to many of the merc companies, adventurers and bandits who come to town looking to buy, trade or sell military goods. As a buyer of CS gear, the trio can identify

groups who may specialize in hitting Coalition forces as well as active Retribution Squads from Tolkeen and other terrorist bands with an axe to grind against the CS. Even the Black Market and Fixer Jones have not caught on to these Coalition agents, and believe they are legitimate business people and Coalition-haters.

47. The Spokes Credit Exchange: At this kiosk, different forms of currency are changed, usually into NGMI dollars or Universal Credits. Not everyone who comes to MercTown has credits, and most of the businesses in town won't take anything but NGMI dollars or Universal Credits. The Spokes Credit Exchange accepts a number of valuable commodities to turn into credits, including foreign currency or debit cards from Lazlo, New Lazlo, Tolkeen, NGR, Atlantis, and other kingdoms, stock certificates, savings bonds, gems, jewelry and precious metals (gold, platinum, silver, etc.). Nothing in this world is free, however, and the owner, *Barry Golden* (8th level Merchant), levies a flat surcharge of 15% with almost no exceptions (will cut it to 10% if the total works out to a half million credits or more).

Note: Barry can be persuaded to accept rare or exotic foreign currency if the amount is high enough, a million credits or more, however, the surcharge rises to 40% as a result of the difficulty involved in redeeming the money at a later date (i.e. the government of issue might collapse, be located on another continent, in another dimension, etc.). Examples of such currency include the Republic of Columbia, Lagarto, El Dorado, Silver River Republics, Tarnow Kingdom, Wormwood and the Three Galaxies.

48. The News Rack: A corner store that has a well-stocked magazine rack, video and audio disk versions of the news, rumors, recent events, educational or instructional material, Warhawk magazine, Big Budget Productions movies and documentaries, and a selection of tobacco products, snack food, and basic convenience store items (comb, hairbrush, scissors, toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, etc.).

49. Stogies Men's Club: A fancy, urbane social club for the city's refined and elite. Membership is exclusive, gun-toting mercs need not apply, and costs 5,000 credits annually to join. The main lobby where members hobnob, smoke and drink expensive cocktails is lavishly decorated. Hardwood paneling, thick carpeting, plush leather armchairs and a functional wood fireplace are all part of the atmosphere of opulence. Though it is called a "Men's Club," membership is not restricted to the male gender; more than a decade ago Stogies opened its doors to women, and now about 20% of the members are female.

Notable members of the club include the political, business and mercenary elite, such as Proconsul Kentek Drago, Boss Dutcher, Jacius Larkent, Fixer Jones, Jimmy U, Maritus Flavarel, Geoff Blackman, David Bakr, Colonel Marcus Larsen, Tiberius and Janet Braddock, all of the Time Walkers, a few Cyber-Knights, and many others.

50. Celestial Dragon: A quaint restaurant that serves authentic and Americanized Chinese food. Finely decorated in traditional styles with an artificial miniature waterfall that empties into a goldfish pond. The food is excellent, the service is even better and the prices are affordable, 9-20 credits a meal. **Note:** Rumor has it that the restaurant, or some secret place nearby, and known only to the owners, is a *dimensional portal* to demon haunted China! (Actually, it's a device that teleports as many as three travelers to the *Yin Caverns* underneath China, and from

there, one should be able to find his way to the surface or his doom.)

51. MercTown Attorneys at Law: Employing a team of 14 lawyers and 35 assistants, this firm handles most business legal matters in town. They represent clients in criminal disputes, handle real estate transactions, negotiate settlements, draft contracts, and arbitrate contract negotiations and breaches of contracts, and other matters. Fees are fairly steep, but hey, they are the only game in town. The firm charges 300-500 credits an hour plus reasonable expenses.

52. Paducah Dry Cleaners: Quick and reliable, this store offers dry cleaning for three credits a garment with a 24 hour turnaround. Additionally, they do pressing, some mending and stain removal.

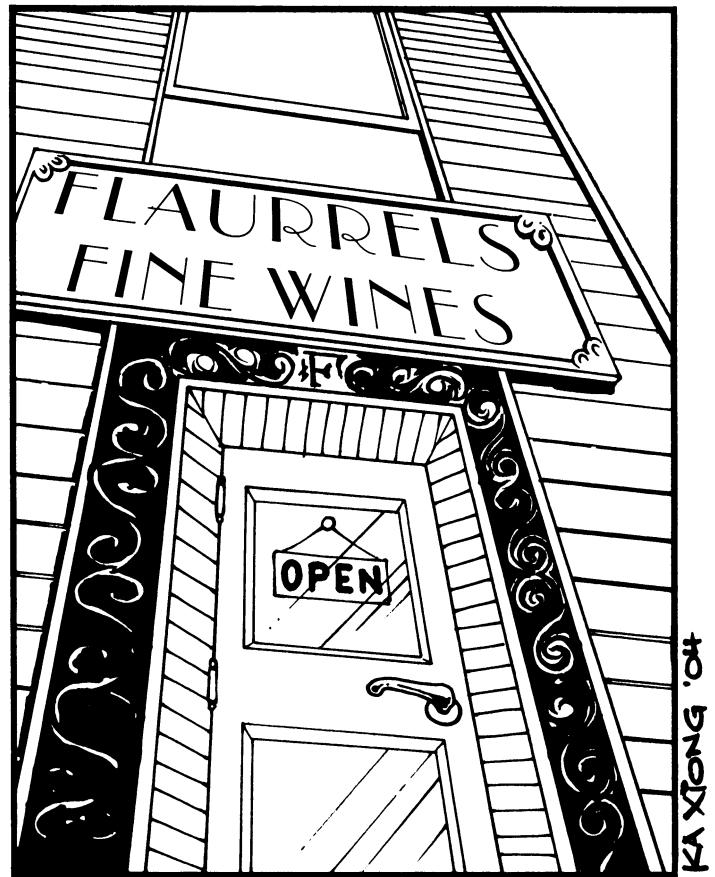
53. Hellespont Galleria: An upscale art gallery operated by *Lenaea of Dragcona* (8th level Temporal Wizard) in an attempt to bring an enlightened touch of class to MercTown. The gallery is relatively large, located in a thoroughly renovated three story mansion. Offices, storage, and shipping departments are also located in the building. Its twelve gallery rooms hold a variety of paintings, photographs, pottery, sculptures and objects d'art. Half the items are ancient pre-Rifts artifacts and works of art, others are replicas of ancient works of art (limited editions, of course), and the rest are new creations by contemporary artists, most of whom are from Tolkeen, Kingsdale, Lazlo, England, and the NGR. Among her personal favorites are the holographic works of Lazlo's noted computer-artist Temolios, German sculptor Maria Hess, and Silent Wind, a Native American from the New West.

The owner, *Lenaea*, is a True Atlantean, an accomplished Temporal Wizard, and a collector of art. She is a noted socialite who moves and shakes in the upper echelons of MercTown and is a patron of the arts. **Note:** According to rumor, she has some connection in the distant past (possibly the 20th century) and is sent art objects, "fast-forwarded" to her in the future, in order to save them from destruction.

54. The Elfin Tea Room: A sophisticated café and restaurant that, supposedly, serves authentic, traditional Elven fare as well as herbal teas and fine wines. The atmosphere is elegant, the furniture is hand-carved, vines grow on the walls and potted plants are scattered throughout. Unknown to most, save the owners and staff, the place is home to a family of Brownies (Faerie Folk) who help to tidy up and do odd chores on the sly. Just another interesting and exotic establishment in MercTown.

55. Flavarrel's Fine Wines: The name says it all, this shop deals exclusively in the finest wines available in North America. Those looking for common swill must search elsewhere, *Flavarrel's Fine Wines* sells only the best vintages available. Chances are whatever style of wine one is looking for, it can be found here, whether it be a red, white, dry, sweet, a Chardonnay, champagne or ice wine. Most of the wines sold here come from the owner's vineyards found to the south of MercTown. In addition to these, the store imports selections primarily from Lazlo and Free Quebec but also Kingsdale, the New West, Los Alamo (made from the local purple fruit), Atlantis and even a few from other dimensions. Prices are steep but worth it for the quality of the wine. Costs range from 200 to 10,000 credits per bottle.

Flavarrel's does a tidy business in MercTown. The shop supplies virtually all of the finer restaurants in the city-state and has a



widespread clientele from among its upper classes. In addition, the vineyard exports its products to various communities around the continent that include Kingsdale, Lazlo, New Lazlo, Old Bones, the Colorado Baronies, Pecos Empire, Arzno, the Golden Age Weaponsmiths city-states and until recently, Tolkeen, Free Quebec, and the Coalition States. Total profits are rumored in the neighborhood of 10-20 million credits a year, which is enough to make the owner, *Maritus Flavarrel*, a wealthy man (without the addition of his earnings as the secret Guild Master of the *Ravenshome Thieves' Guild*). See more on this character in the section on MercTown's *Most Notable Personalities*.

56. Erdano's High Fashion: High priced men's fashion store and tailor, clothes range from suits to casual wear. The cost is high and a typical suit is from 1,000 to 10,000 credits, 18,000-25,000 if made from light Mega-Damage fabrics (18-26 M.D.C.).

57. Madeleine's Aroma of Spring: A florist shop owned by a female Dog Boy named *Madeleine* (5th level Vagabond/Gardener; Scrupulous). The store has potted plants, seedlings, flowers, flower arrangements, baskets and gardening supplies. For a small surcharge, *Madeleine's* teenage son makes deliveries in his battered hover-van. Her Dog Boy husband, *Big Rex*, was a mercenary who died a few years ago in the conflict between the CS and Free Quebec. *Madeleine's* husband was well known and well liked by numerous mercenary companies, and so are *Madeleine* and her boy, *Race* (3rd level City Rat Runner; Unprincipled).

Hundreds of mercs who fought beside *Big Rex* frequently choose to shop at *Madeleine's* over the bigger, nicer florists out of sentimentality and respect for their fallen comrade and his family. In fact, because so many mercs recommend *Madeleine's*, at least 15% of all mercenary funerals get their flowers

supplied by Madeleine's. In addition to a 20% discount to mercenaries, Madeleine and Race always have a merc's best interests at heart. Quick to sniff out trouble in the air, the mother and son frequently warn their many merc friends of brewing tensions and intrigue as well as tip them off to rumors and job opportunities. Madeleine has even been known to give refuge to a wanted fugitive or two from bounty hunters and suspected CS spies. The fact that the boy, Race, is a *Maze Rat* and belongs to a gang of young City Rats who run the streets and have their ears to the ground, makes Madeleine's an all the more valuable and reliable resource to the mercs who befriend them.



58. Golden Age Relics: An antique store that deals mainly in refinished furniture, old books, archaic jewelry, curios and pre-Rifts relics. The age of the items is reflected in the price, the older it is, the more it costs. The shop is always interested in buying pre-Rifts artifacts and pays 10-50 credits for things like bottle caps, soda bottles, tin cans and common household articles in good to excellent condition; half that price for items in poor condition. Old books, manuals, newspapers and magazines get 40-160 credits, computer and video disks 100-800 credits, jewelry and old furniture 200-1200 credits, and rare working weapons and electronics 400-2400 credits per item, sometimes more. Of course, the shop owner cleans up the items and sells them for 4-10 times what they paid.

59. Dexter Limousines: A limousine rental agency for those who wish to ride in style. Dexter's has a small fleet of two dozen limos for rent at a cost of 200 credits per day. A bodyguard can be added for the extra cost of 75 credits a day (typically a 1-3rd level Merc, Grunt, Headhunter or City Rat). Destinations are limited to locales within the borders of MercTown and the Outskirts, such as the airport, Ostrosaurus Express, the Headhunter's Academy and the Rat Race Derby. A one-way trip to the airport costs 50 credits and must take less than one hour. All limos are light M.D.C. vehicles (3D6+50 M.D.C.) and a third are hover vehicles.

60. Starbright Jewelers: A store that deals in just about everything that sparkles, glitters or shines. The place sells silver, gold, and platinum rings, bracelets, watches, necklaces, earrings and even fancy eyeglass frames. Its inventory is a treasure trove of gold, silver, diamonds and other precious stones. The resident jeweler, *Franklin Merrindale* (7th level Merchant/Jeweler), also repairs, resizes and cleans jewelry and damaged watches. Prices are high, but the merchandise is all excellent quality; no fakes, forgeries or artificial stones. Getting a piece of jewelry ap-

praised costs 10 credits per item, unless the individual is looking to trade or sell the item(s) to the shop. With literally several million credits' worth of jewelry on display, the Starbright is an obvious target for robbery and thus, security is high. The store has infrared cameras, motion sensors and a high-tech vault (500 M.D.C. and imposes a -20% penalty to *Safe Cracking* skill). And there is always a squad of six armed security guards on duty at all times – two retired merc soldiers (8-10th level), a full conversion, heavy cyborg (5-7th level), a psychic Zapper (5-8th level), a Dog Boy (3-5th level), and a Mind Melter (3-4th level), plus a pair of Triax Dyna-Bots hidden in reserve. Customers are forced to undergo a sensor scan in the store's foyer and must disarm before entering the store, no exceptions.

61. The Shuffle: Chef Charovich's entry to the MercTown nightclub scene. Open only on weekends (Friday-Sunday), the Shuffle is a ritzy club that is popular among the local citizens out for a night of live musical acts, singing, drinks and fine dining (limited to 10 items). Visitors are allowed to enter, but the place has a strict "no weapons" policy and twenty armed bouncers to enforce it. The place can only accommodate 200 people at a time, so there is always a long line of people waiting to be allowed in. Cover is a hefty 100 credits, the average drink runs 6-12 credits and most meals 20-40 credits. The acts, however, are top notch and ambience at the club is wealth, high class and refinement.

62. Miranda's Fashion Boutique: A women's fashion boutique run by *Miranda Sorano* (4th level Merchant), a former seamstress with a keen eye for ladies wear. Her store sells everything from bridal gowns and elegant dresses to expensive casual clothes and business wear.

63. The Paducah Health Club: A complete gymnasium that includes a large weight room, full-sized gym, squash and racquetball courts, sauna, and health food store. The latter sells food products, vitamins, body-building supplements and even some performance enhancing drugs. To assist members, there are a dozen professional trainers working at the club who help to plan fitness routines, provide a spot where necessary and heap on the motivation. A membership costs 50 credits a month or 500 credits for the full year. Non-members are not permitted on the premises.

64. Grapevine: A trendy, popular after work cocktail bar opened by a competitor of Boris Charovich, one of his prize students, Malcolm Stern. It serves a wide variety of mixed drinks, imported beers and wine. The kitchen offers a limited selection of appetizers and salads. Most of the crowd consists of professionals or business types, and the prices reflect that with drinks and appetizers costing 5-15 credits each.

65. Spokes Motel: Clean and nice without being too fancy or expensive the Spokes Motel has eight stories of 140 rooms. Each has its own private bathroom, a television and telephone. The cost is 90 credits a night.

66. The Oasis: A middle-class, affordable restaurant. The menu is fairly inexpensive with dozens of selections that range from good old spaghetti & meatballs to Cajun chicken strips. Most meals cost 8-12 credits, and *Dragon's Head* beer is on tap for three credits a glass. The staff is courteous and hard working; a favorite haunt of adventurers and families alike.

67. Sunrise Bakery & Café: A working bakery with an attached coffee room. Sunrise makes bread, rolls, and pastries, all

under two credits per item, layer cakes and pies for 5-10 credits, and damn good coffee for only one credit a cup. It is a favorite of business people heading to work in the morning and mercs who rise early.

68. Kentucky Parcel Company: A city based delivery service that will deliver packages, small and large (up to 200 lbs/90 kg), as well as pick up and deliver furniture and machinery anywhere in MercTown and the Outskirts. Prices are one credit for packages up to five pounds (2.25 kg), 10 credits for packages up to 100 lbs (45 kg), 30 credits for packages up to 200 lbs (90 kg), and 100 credits per 1000 lbs (450 kg) up to three tons (6000 lbs/2700 kg); double for same day delivery, quadruple to get the package/item to its location within one hour; 50% refund if the delivery doesn't arrive on schedule. Normal deliveries take 24-72 hours. **Note:** Although it shouldn't, most order takers at the KPC can be bribed (20-100 credits) to assign packages for delivery with no records or documentation identifying the sender. Anonymous deliveries are frequently used by mercs and bounty hunters who want to make an anonymous threat or warning, or send information they'd rather not have attached to them. It can also be used to send drugs, contraband, and just about anything, no questions asked. However, packages are screened for explosives and bio-hazards.

69. Silverworks Jewelry: Run by a jeweler and smith named *Fadik Mercury* (6th level Tradesman/Smith) who works only in silver. The store sells silverware, dishes, candlesticks, jewelry, and nicknacks, but also specializes in weapons for **vampire hunters**, offering a full selection of silver crosses, silver bullets, silver-tipped arrows, and silver-plated weapons, all at reasonable prices. The shop will also custom make silver jewelry and plated weapons, but at double the usual cost. Half its business comes from mercs looking for silver weapons and protection.

70. MercTown Taxi Service: A cabstand and taxi service with a fleet of a 72 owner-operated taxis, mostly newer model hover cars, but also a dozen two-seater hovercycles. MercTown Taxi is reputable, its drivers friendly, and they know the streets like the back of their hands (half are or were Runner City Rats). Cost is either a flat fee of 10 credits to any location in town for a one way trip, or one credit per minute for multiple stops or driving service over a period of time.

71. MercTown Union Local: Unassuming and plain, this simple brick structure is home to one of MercTown's most powerful groups. It is the offices of the MercTown Labor Union, from which its delegates work tirelessly to protect the rights of workers in the city-state. It holds a dozen small offices with computers, a conference room and a meeting hall. During business hours, two dozen people work here, including the Union's top man, Herman Pritchett, and the Vice President, Sean Clemmons.

72. Spirit Sales: A vital middleman in the service industry, this is the biggest alcohol supplier in MercTown, supplying most of the taverns, bars, nightclubs and restaurants in town (a remarkable 70%). The reason for its success is that Spirit Sales is owned by *John DeMarco* (8th level Smuggler), a highly placed leader in MercTown's Black Market. All ten of the company's salesmen and all of the delivery people are part of his Black Market crew. Over the years they've intimidated most restaurant and bar owners into buying exclusively from them. Moreover, going directly to the source, they have scared the

breweries into selling their products to Spirit Sales and no other within MercTown. DeMarco personally owns shares in a number of restaurants, bars and taverns in town, and is part owner in the brewery that makes the ever popular Dragon's Head Beer (10% alcohol and a hearty taste that mercenaries and Psi-Stalkers love).

73. The War Galley Restaurant: Another restaurant owned by Boris Charovich, decorated to resemble the interior of a sailing vessel. The food includes an assortment of fish, soups, stews, and meat and potato type dishes that would appeal to mercenaries, adventurers and sailors. The Galley is a nice place but is not black tie like most of Charovich's other restaurants, and prices are fair, ranging from 8-18 credits for most meals. Drinks include Dragon's Head Beer, whiskey, brandy and rum, straight up or mixed; prices range from 2-6 credits a drink.

74. The Electronics Warehouse: An electronics super-store that sells appliances, televisions, PDD players, stereos, tape recorders, digital cameras, cellular phones, video games and players, movie and music discs, laser distancers, gun sights, binoculars and other optic systems, computer products, batteries and other electronics. Prices are fair and the selection is excellent, with items from all over the continent.

75. Allen's Markets: Owned by the same Matthew Allen of Allen Food fame, this is a small local chain of grocery stores scattered throughout MercTown. Each location has a butcher shop, bakery, fresh produce section, deli counter, canned goods and other packaged foods. Excellent selection and the prices are reasonable.

76. Prescription Meds: A pharmacy that sells modern prescription and over-the-counter medications as well as first-aid supplies. The owner is a trained pharmacist who knows nothing about magical healing, holistic medicine or psychic healing. The store sells first-aid kits, bandages, painkillers, cold remedies, prescription medicines, hypo-spray injectors, blood expander agent, universal anti-toxin auto-injectors, bio-comp systems and similar products.

77. MercTown Real Estate Office: Granted a monopoly by the government, this semi-private real estate company auctions and sells land in the greater MercTown region. They also serve as notaries, barristers and realty agents for private citizens wishing to buy or sell houses, businesses and industrial property.

78. Old Granddad's Pizza: This is MercTown's leading pizzeria, with twenty locations scattered throughout the Spokes and the Warrens. It is a favorite of mercenaries, adventurers, City Rats and Dog Boys. Old Granddad's pizzas are not the best in town, but the price can't be beat, 2 credits for a small, 5 for a medium and 8 credits for a large. The "Dog Boy Special" is a large pizza with extra thick, hard and crunchy crust and extra meat for only 11 credits. All of this franchise's business is *take-out*, there is no dining room, but there is a delivery service for an extra two credits. **Note:** Crime lord, Ted Dutcher, secretly owns the business. Although it does very well as a legitimate pizzeria, he uses the shops as a clandestine way of making deliveries of narcotics, weapons, money drops and similar small package deliveries to "special" clients. All of the delivery boys are young hustlers, City Rats (Pack Rats), and Black Marketeer wannabees, on the syndicate's payroll.

79. Man's Best Friends: This is a combination of pet store and veterinary office. *Doctor Hanark Banrom* (5th level Body

Fixer, Scrupulous alignment) is the resident vet with his daughter *Cassy* (2nd level Vagabond, holistic healer). Both resemble Dog Boys, but they are D-Bees from another dimension and have canine-like legs rather than the human-like legs of the Dog Boys. There are also four human assistants at the store. A typical pet shop, it sells pet food, supplies, collars, leashes, cages, and a selection of common and exotic animals such as mice, rats, hamsters, puppies, kittens, birds and a few species of harmless or domesticated alien animals, including the occasional *Dragonsaurus* common to Atlantis. **Note:** Rumor has it that the Doctor arrived on Rifts Earth via Atlantis and may have once been a slave of the Splugorth. He never talks about it, and if his daughter knows anything, she never says. In addition to treating pets and livestock, Doctor Banrom also treats Dog Boys and other animal-like mutants and D-Bees. The cost is a modest fee that barely covers his expenses. If the good doctor or his daughter ever fell into trouble there are dozens of grateful Dog Boys and mutants who would come to their aid.

80. The Quiet Warrior Inn: Frequented by a more refined and older crowd of mercs and Cyber-Knights, this is not a rough-and-tumble roadhouse, but a quiet, peaceful bed-and-breakfast. The inn has limited facilities, just 30 bedrooms, a cozy, common sitting area/lounge and a roomy dining room decked out with wood paneling, a huge fireplace and paintings of farms and wildlife. A night's stay, with breakfast, is 60 cred-

its. Dinner is an extra 10 credits for a delicious, hearty, home cooked meal. The Galton family (including a few friends and cousins) own and work the place, and enjoy being regaled by stories of adventure, monsters and magic between chores and at the end of the day. However, they are respectful of their guests' privacy and never pry into affairs best left unspoken.

The inn also offers some unusual services. In addition to being a wonderful hostess and cook, the Missus also knows Holistic Medicine (70%), knows a number of cures and remedies and can perform first aid as needed. Mister Galton is a keen storyteller himself and fine musician with a guitar. A permanent "guest" at the inn, Randolph "Randy" Zimmer earns his keep as a *psychic healer* (and subtle protector of the family; 7th level Master psychic, 89 I.S.P.). He is glad to heal wounded guests for a modest gratuity of 30-70 credits per healing power used; half of which goes to the Galton family. There is also one room always held in reserve even when its guest is out on an assignment, that's the room of Sir Kevin Marshall (7th level Cyber-Knight; Scrupulous alignment).

81. Lone Star Saloon: A Texas-style bar, grill, gambling hall and brothel done up in New West style that is open around the clock and always packed from dusk till dawn. Swinging doors open to a barroom that could easily pass for a set in a Clint Eastwood Western. There is sawdust on the wooden floor, a player-piano, gambling tables and saloon girls in the latest



Western wear. It is a popular gathering place for expatriots, rogue Dog Boys, Gunfighters, Gunslingers, and Saddle Tramps from the New West, as well as raiders from the Pecos Empire, Juicers, Crazies and Headhunters. The saloon tends to attract a rough and tumble crowd who like to drink and hang out, play cards, and eat decent Tex-Mex meals to the twangy background sound of pre-Rifts country tunes. Upstairs is the brothel with a dozen girls, half human, two Canine mutants, two Zenith Moon Warpers who can assume any form to please their clients, and a pair of D-Bees (a Quick Flex Alien and a Larmac).

The joint is the venture of ex-Coalition mutant soldier *Wichita Bear* (6th level CS mutant soldier; Brown Bear spawned in the labs at the Coalition's Lone Star complex; I.Q. 9, Unprincipled) and *Ezekeal Thresher* (5th level Gunslinger/raider turned legit; Anarchist), both from Lone Star. **Note:** Stories abound as to how these two affable rogues got the seed money to start their saloon, from gold mines to robbing the CS, to blackmail and plain dumb luck at gambling, but the true story will probably never be known. Rumor also has it that both once rode with the bandits of the Pecos Empire and still have ties with bandits and bounty hunters in the southwest.



82. First Edition Bookstore: A combination of bookstore and coffee shop. Armchairs and end tables mingle amongst the shelves where customers can skim through books in comfort. The majority of its books are of post-Rifts production, imported from various publishers in Lazlo, New Lazlo, Michigan, Tolkeen and even the Coalition, including the works of Erin Tarn. There is a section of ancient, recovered tomes from before the Great Cataclysm as well, but selections are limited. In addition to buying pre-Rifts books, patrons can *read* the books and magazines for a cost of 10 credits an hour, but the book cannot be taken out of the store and the reader must relinquish the book if a bonafide buyer requests it. First Edition's coffee shop is

pretty good and serves coffee, tea, cappuccino, juice, cookies and pastries, all in the 1-2 credits price range. **Note:** Unknown to the owner, one of the store clerks, Jessica Winslow (19 and a 3rd level CS Special Forces operative), is a Coalition spy pretending to be a Tolkeen refugee. The bookstore seemed like a great place to ferret out anti-CS rebels and freethinkers who could represent a problem for the Coalition.

83. Goldleaf & Silk: This store deals in fabric, needles and thread, paint, brushes and supplies for arts and crafts. Not frequented by visitors to the city as much as residents.

84. Gornons' Shoe & Repair: The Gornons are a family of *Vanguard Brawlers* who are more than traditional cobblers. In the front of the store they sell all kinds of footwear – running shoes, dress shoes, loafers, sandals, work boots, hiking boots, combat boots, etc. – and in the back of the store they repair damaged shoes. The work is excellent, although the help tends to be rude and service leaves much to be desired (many of the Gornons are lacking in social graces). That's not all, however, a trap door in the back leads to a "blind pig" saloon and gambling establishment that caters to inhuman looking D-Bees, aliens and supernatural beings. As many as 60 beings can be squeezed into this gambling establishment and the joint often has card games that last 3-4 days at a stretch.

85. Shears Barbershop: An old-fashioned barber's that charges about 8 credits a haircut whether it is a regular trim or an army-style crew cut. There is also a shoeshine boy (3rd level City Rat) who will polish shoes for 3 credits, 5 credits for full length boots. Shears is also a hangout for local seniors, and there's a core of old men who congregate here daily to chat, complain, and play cards, chess or checkers.

86. Lock & Key: Operated by MercTown's only "certified" locksmith, this store sells, installs and repairs locks of all kinds. This ranges from old-fashioned deadbolts to modern keypad electronic locks. The owner himself is not a criminal, but to knock down his gambling debt with the Ravenshome Guild, sometimes takes on less-than-honest apprentices (1-4th level thieves) who case clients' homes and businesses for the thieves' guild.

87. Pixel Panorama: An arcade that has mostly high-tech simulators that utilize the latest advances in holographic and digital technology for fun and games. One of the most popular games is virtual golf, which includes both driving ranges and an 18 hole course. Another is a combat game in which the player is a Glitter Boy pilot battling monsters and Coalition troops, including SAMAS, Skelebots and the UAR-1. Simulator games tend to be expensive, costing, on average, 2-4 credits per game, 10 credits per six holes of golf.

88. Single Credit Store: Everything in the store costs just one, or two credits. Sure, most of it is made cheaply, but still there are many useful, household items, cleaners, wrapping paper, canned food, candy, snack food and stuff that makes sense to buy. Why pay more?

89. Percussion, Brass & Strings: A musical instrument store that deals in everything from electric guitars and drums to violins and French horns. Aside from instruments, the shop carries a wide selection of sheet music, musical aids and accessories.

90. Hit List Discs: A music disc store that sells the latest releases, old favorites and re-mastered pre-Rifts classics. The se-

lection is incredibly vast, catering to every taste. Each disc costs anywhere from 10-30 credits. Though the shop is not owned by the Black Market directly, most of its stock is bootleg copies bought from the syndicate.

91. McArthur's Video: Mainly a video rental store, but one that also buys and sells used discs. The store has a broad selection with nearly two thousand movies in total, a mix of classics and modern productions. Roughly a third of these are re-mastered pre-Rifts movies while the rest are titles from modern studios like Big Budget Productions, Perez Productions, and other studios, even a hundred poorly dubbed movies from the New German Republic. It costs 5 credits to rent a movie overnight, 50-100 credits to buy a used movie disc and the store buys videos for 20-30 credits, double for authentic pre-Rifts discs (sometimes much, much more for rare or previously unknown movies).

92. Kentucky Rotisserie: A small chain of family restaurants with three locations in MercTown and one in Kingsdale that makes the best rotisserie chicken in the region. The restaurants offer sandwiches, chicken strips & nuggets, whole roasted chicken, and a host of side dishes (baked potatoes, fries, corn on the cob, salads, biscuits, etc.). In addition to the sit-down restaurant, the full range of products are available for take-out.

93. Computer World. A store that deals in computer components and software. In MercTown, it is the best source for programs, games, word processors, spreadsheets, animation, security, accounting, etc., desktop PCs, laptops, component parts, network hubs, and various other computer-related accessories. Everything sold here is non-magical and of Earth origin (Coalition, Wilk's, Newtown or Triax), there is nothing of alien manufacture (i.e. no Naruni or Phase World technology). There is also a service department that provides customers with troubleshooting, upgrades and repairs. Prices are fair but a bit on the high side.

94. MercTown Kitchen & Bath: A hardware wholesaler that retails supplies for kitchens and bathrooms. It has sinks, toilets, bathtubs, mirrors, cabinets, cupboards, countertops, fixtures, plumbing, electrical and lighting supplies, all at reasonable prices.

95. Wilderness Equipment Outlet: This is the place to buy camping, fishing, hunting and wilderness survival gear. Prices at the outlet are reasonable and the selection is unmatched, with items imported from all over North America as well as those produced locally. It is often the first stop for hunters, trappers, Wilderness Scouts, Psi-Stalkers, Bounty Hunters, Rangers and many soldiers.

The Wilderness Equipment Outlet carries a wide range of items that includes just about everything short of Mega-Damage weapons, but does sell hunting knives, bows and arrows, fishing gear, and other S.D.C. hunting items. Its inventory includes tents, sleeping bags, cook stoves, cookware & eating utensils, heaters, lanterns, flashlights, waterproof bags, packs, rucksacks, kit bags, utility belts, web gear, tac vests, protective gear (helmets, Kevlar gloves, goggles, etc.), climbing gear, rope, diving equipment, parkas, rain suits, clothing suited for all environments, military-style BDUs, gloves, toques, skis, snowshoes, fishing rods, fishing line & tackle, inflatable boats, kayaks, canoes, paddles, life preservers, outboard motors, jerry cans, flares, compasses, survival gear, snare wire, animal traps, first-aid kits, assorted tools, rations, and just about anything else you can think of for camping or hunting.



96. Badgerbold Cartographers: The Badgerbolds are a family of D-Bee map-makers from another dimension. Each of the 23 members of this family clan resembles a beautiful porcelain doll with perfect features (P.B. 1D6+20). They stand approximately two feet (0.6 m) tall and it is quite a sight to see these attractive Ken- and Barbie-like miniature humans running and hopping around the shop like pixies from a fairy tale.

The family's patriarch, *Taen the Elder*, is an 10th level Shifter, and his wife, *Thaleen*, a 12th level Merchant and Artist, and they were the ones who started the cartography shop. The

rest of the family ranges from 3rd to 9th level (roll 2D4+1); 30% are Shifters, 30% Rogue Scholars, 20% Wilderness Scouts, 10% some other magic O.C.C., and 10% are Professional Thieves. Typical alignments are Unprincipled, Anarchist and Aberrant. Most possess some range of artistic skills, including Art, Photography and Forgery.

The family migrated to Rifts Earth to avoid the consequences for selling forbidden knowledge in their native world. Part of that forbidden knowledge being how to traverse the Megaverse via dimensional Rifts. They settled in MercTown where they continue to gather forbidden and arcane knowledge. This includes street maps of the fallen Kingdom of Tolkeen, and floor plans and schematics of all public buildings in the city of Tolkeen and Freehold, including basements, sub-basements and allegedly secret tunnels, vaults and sewer systems under the toppled city. Notable places in Tolkeen include the *Institute of Techno-Wizardry*, *College of Engineering*, *College of Learning*, *University of Trans-Dimensional Studies*, the *Institute of Necrology*, all the *transit stations*, *King's Tower*, and *Camp North Point*, a Tolkeen military base).

The Badgerbolds do a brisk business in what is a very rare commodity on Rifts Earth, the manufacture and sale of accurate maps. Using recovered scraps of pre-Rifts maps and atlases, along with aerial photographs, pirated Coalition military maps, firsthand experience, and data compiled by fellow scholars, the Badgerbolds create maps suitable for travel and military campaigns. They have maps for all known civilized areas of North America and the territories adjacent to them. Labeled on the maps are prominent geographic features, roads, rail lines, waterways, towns and villages, contour lines and places of repute. Special maps that cost double the usual price also include ley lines and known magic communities, known practitioners of magic, dragons and other creatures of repute. The cost for a typical single map sheet for a particular region is 50 credits. The store also sells compasses, magnifying glasses, binoculars, telescopes, and star charts.

While their main business is selling maps of North and Central America, they also engage in the discreet buying and selling of information of all kinds, including certain secrets of magic; namely contact names, secret places, etc., of people who sell magical components, herbs, charms, fetishes, talismans, potions, Techno-Wizard devices, and/or who offer magical services (i.e., magical healing, fortune telling, tracing/finding people, helping people to vanish or travel using ley lines and other magic, and practitioners willing to share arcane knowledge about demons and gods, as well as sorcerer assassins, mage thieves, Necromancers, Shifters, Witches, Demon-Dragonmages, Loup-garou, and other outcasts and supernatural beings willing to sell their services for the right price).

97. Jackson's Chow Hall: This is a cafeteria-style diner that serves up good, inexpensive meals. Selection is limited but the portions are large and the food tasty. Costs range from 5-8 credits. The Chow Hall also sells ration cartons as a side business, and Mitch Jackson, who owns the place, moonlights as a field cook for various merc companies.

98. The Patterson Clinic: A full-range medical clinic operated by *Doctor Eric Patterson* of Combat Medical Services, Co. The clinic has some of the best medical equipment available and the quality of treatment is equal to that of the State Hospital.

However, the fees are fairly steep and the staff complies with government regulations (i.e. reporting gunshot wounds, calling the MercTown Defenders to report suspected criminals, etc.). The clinic does not stay in operation year round. When the CMS company is contracted by another merc unit, the staff leaves town and it temporarily shuts its doors.

99. Old Town Tannery: The Old Town is a tannery and leather goods store that sells leather jackets, coats, clothing, chaps, saddlebags, attaché cases, purses, bags, pouches, S.D.C. horse barding, and ancient-style leather armor. While the store doesn't carry items made from the hides of Mega-Damage creatures (like dragons, dinosaurs, etc.), they will make special orders if *provided* with the proper materials by the customer.

100. Floating Chariots (main office): This is a taxi service with 15 hover cars. A typical fare is 4-20 credits, the service charges 2-3 credits per mile (1.6 km). Floating Chariots has been linked to some shady business in the past. Drivers know all the places of ill repute (drug dens, brothels, etc.) and are glad to take passengers to them for no additional charge (though a nice tip is expected). The company also has fallen victim to a suspiciously high number of armed robberies in which the car is blocked by another vehicle and masked gunmen hold up the driver and his passengers before riding off into the night. The frequency of these attacks, 800% higher than any other taxi service, has led some to believe the drivers are in on the heist.

The service is owned by *Sammy "Macaroni" Marconi* who captains a crew in the local Black Market syndicate. Marconi is involved in a few gambling rackets, number games, a strip club and prostitution in the Warrens. While he rarely visits Floating Chariots in person, he keeps his safe at the company's main office. A fact known only by his nine most trusted soldiers in his crew.

101. Snapshot Camera: A store that caters to shutterbugs, Snapshot Camera sells all manner of cameras, conventional, digital, micro-film, disposable, etc., as well as camera lenses (telescopic, infrared, passive nightvision, etc.), and film and video discs. They also develop film, do photo-finishing, take passport photos and family portraits. The owner, *Coral Winters* (6th level Forger), has ties with the Black Market and forges passports, entry visas, military identification cards, birth certificates and similar falsified documentation for the mob, as well as for discreet individuals on the side (500 credits for fake identity papers).

102. Ham's Radios: *Percy "Ham" Hamilton* is a radio enthusiast who's turned his passion into a lucrative business. He sells anything and everything, including radio alarm clocks, crystal diode transmitters, rebuilt ancient U.S. Army SINGCARS radios, walkie-talkies, manpack field radios, field telephones, cellular phones, ear mike radios, expedient antennas, PDD players, PDD-V audio & video players, and portable language translators. Most of Ham's stock is of modern, post-Rifts manufacture, and is of good quality, but he doesn't have the latest in cutting edge technology from manufacturers like Wilk's or Triax.

103. Hak's Hardware Store: A hardware store that has everything you could need for home repair and minor construction. Sells tools, lumber, plumbing supplies, light fixtures, drywall, nails, screws, wiring, outlets, brick, patio stones, paint and painting supplies. The owner, Hak, or *Hakovar Staamot*

(6th level Vagabond/Carpenter), is exceedingly handy and will provide his customers with the benefit of his experience. He also works as a contractor on the side, leaving the store in the hands of his three teenage sons and employees.

104. 20/20 Visions: Part optometrist's and part optics retailer, this store deals in everything that has a lens. *Doctor Emily Rolston* (6th level Operator) is the business owner. Emily can fix optical devices, grind lenses for eyeglasses, and even perform eye exams, she's a real jack of all trades as far as optics are concerned. She also sells items like IR distancing binoculars, nightvision goggles, optics bands and a few selected cybernetic eye implants. The prices are about the same as market cost, with eyeglasses costing 100-500 credits.



105. Flirts: This nightclub is a blue collar singles bar popular amongst the late twenty- to early thirty-something crowd. It is clean, in a good state of repair, fairly secure and the music is a pretty good mix. Flirts is open on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights, the cover charge is 5 credits and drinks go for 4-6 credits each. Security is provided by a team of 6-8 bouncers, most of whom are ex-mercenaries (or those in-between gigs), who frisk guests at the door to keep weapons out and prevent violence in the club.

106. Spy Gear Electronics: MercTown's main source for security, surveillance and detection systems, Spy Gear is "the store" for professional security experts and wannabe James Bonds. An ex-CS Technical Officer named *Clayton Meanie* (6th level, Engineering MOS) runs the store, and he sells, fixes and installs a myriad of mostly electronic surveillance and security

products. Among the more common stock items are PDD players, portable language translators, hand-held computers, micro-printers, pocket laser distancers, secure cell phones, voice scramblers, cryptography software, bio-scans, assorted sensors (motion, heat, dosimeter, mini-radar, radar detector, etc.), electro-adhesive pads, micro-film cameras, keyhole microphones, tracer bugs, wireless & contact microphones, ultraviolet signalers, optic glasses, disguised laser rods (look like a pen, phone or similar innocuous object), amplified sound detectors, laser eavesdropping devices, white noise generators, weapon scanners and a hodgepodge of other miniaturized, high-tech goodies.

107. Words of Wisdom: A modest, dusty shop that deals in used, rare and antique books. In spite of its lofty name, this store's inventory tends more towards pulp than the truly scholastic. The shelves are filled with crates of old magazines, junk novels and paperbacks on a myriad of topics (from fantasy to westerns). However, there are also books that do contain real wisdom, things like atlases, encyclopedia sets, biographies, textbooks, philosophy, psychology, how-to-manuals, and other non-fiction volumes. Prices are fairly good, fiction and magazines go for 5-10% below the market rate, but the cost increases dramatically for non-fiction books, which are sold at market rate, and sometimes 2-5% more.

The Arms Bazaar

Technically, this region of the city is also part of the *Spokes* market and business district. That being said, the **Arms Bazaar** stands apart from the rest of the Spokes and is quite possibly the busiest place in the entire city. A heavy traffic of mercs, adventurers, soldiers, criminals and covert operatives come here on a daily basis. On the average day, several thousand men at arms visit the bazaar to procure, barter or sell the lethal tools of their trade.

It is no coincidence that the overwhelming majority of MercTown's arms dealers are found in one spot. A good number of the fiercely competitive merchants would definitely have preferred to disburse themselves among the Spokes. However, there was concern amongst the local citizens owing to the sheer volume of military firepower. To put their fears at ease, the government forced weapons dealers into this one area (with a few exceptions, namely, Naruni Enterprises, sellers of TW weapons and several vehicle dealerships). The rationale is that with all of the destructive eggs in one basket, it would be easier for the MercTown Defenders to patrol, contain and secure the weapons district. The police keep a very close watch on the Arms Bazaar, and at least twice as many patrols are present in this area compared to other parts of the city. Likewise, the MercTown Defenders keep a police precinct with a special SWAT and Urban Tactical Force, complete with two "riot control" UAR-1 Enforcers, six Triax Predators and two Ulti-Max on hand at all times.

As if the added presence of MercTown Defenders wasn't enough, many of the individual merchants have their own security details in place. Just about every shop in the bazaar has armed and armored guards to deal with troublemakers and robbers. Some go a step further and require that customers be disarmed before entering the store, stowing weapons in a secure,



locked-down M.D.C. foyer area where customers must surrender their weapons. The more paranoid stores have metal detectors, psychics, or mages and frisk customers to ensure that no weapons get missed.

The rules for carrying weapons are no different in the Arms Bazaar than in any other part of the city. Anything heavier than body armor or energy sidearms and melee weapons is strictly prohibited. Thus, if someone purchases heavy weapons, explosives, power armor or robot weapons in the Arms Bazaar, the dealer will arrange to transport the item(s) to one of the Weapon Storage Facilities outside the walls of the city proper.

108. Northern Gun Store: An official retailer of the Ishpeming manufacturer, this store sells *all* of the weapons, armor, vehicles and equipment made by Northern Gun. Prices are identical to the market cost, and only those who buy in bulk (a hundred or more units, or with a total in excess of 20 million credits) receive any kind of discount and even then it's only 5-10%.

109. Wellington Industries Outlet: In the spirit of cutthroat corporate rivalry, Wellington Industries opened its store right across the street from Northern Gun's. To increase sales and generate popularity the outlet sells all its products at 10-20% below the market cost.

110. Bakr Enterprises: This is an independent armaments wholesaler and distributor who only deals in bulk orders, weapons by the hundreds and thousands, not just a few at a time. Owner, *David Bakr*, buys weapons in mass quantities from the manufacturer at a wholesaler's discount, then turns around and sells them, in bulk quantities, at a 50-55% discount below the manufacturer's normal retail price. Even most manufacturers will not offer a better discount than 30-40% on bulk orders. The disadvantage for Bakr is two-fold: One, he only deals in mass quantities (720 pieces minimum), and two, because he buys manufacturers' overruns and surplus stock at bargain basement prices, his stock is limited to what's on hand, and typically to older models and common brands, *not* the latest innovations or hottest items on the market available (exclusively) from manufacturers (at a 25-35% discount). Thus, his selections are limited.

The only exception is when he buys surplus stock or used and reconditioned stock from mercenary companies and kingdoms that overspent or have gone bust, and stolen goods from bandits, pirates and raiders who have highjacked a manufacturer's shipment or successfully robbed a military cache, base or supply line transport. Bakr buys goods on a cash and carry basis, and has a strict don't ask don't tell policy, so he can plead ignorance if questioned by the authorities or a perturbed manufacturer. ("Honest, I don't know where these weapons originated from. One of my buyers bought them in good faith from a mercenary company out west. Regrettably, the company has dissolved [or met with a terrible fate], so I can't tell you any more." Or simply, "Look, you know we pay cash and don't ask questions. They're mine now, but I'll sell them back to you if you'd like, seeing as how we do business all the time, for what I paid for them." Bakr adding an extra 10% despite what he may claim).

It's no surprise then, that Bakr Enterprises is often the first place a mercenary company or community in need of armaments looks to for a good deal. The manufacturers don't mind

because he's taking surplus off their hands, and they even turn a blind eye to his fencing of stolen goods, because he's such a steady customer. By the way, selling surplus to a third party wholesaler enables the manufacturer to preserve its normal discount structure and dump surplus without offending its regular network of vendors.

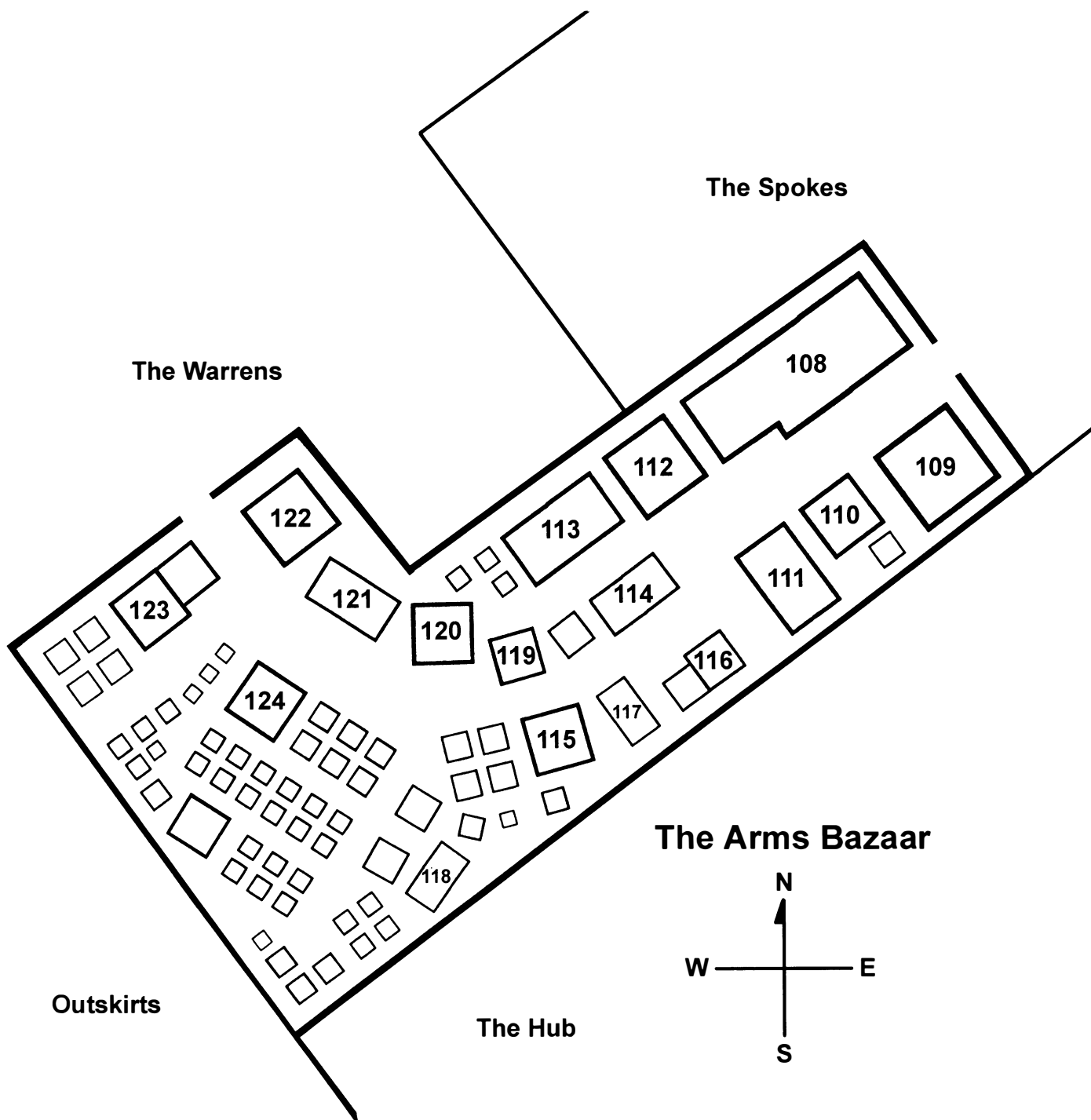
Since the company started five years ago it has outfitted dozens of large merc outfits, armies, pirate bands, raiders, humanoid tribes and communities, including the fallen Kingdom of Tolkeen. Thanks to Bakr, destructive firepower is within the financial means of most two-bit dictators, tyrants and raiders. It's hard to find a battle in which Bakr Enterprises hasn't armed at least one of the sides, if not both. More than a few people joke that more sentient beings have been killed by Bakr merchandise than by anything else short of the Coalition military! For that reason Bakr is known as "The Death Merchant." **Note:** Bakr also buys and resells Coalition weapons and armor. Coalition Army Intelligence is well aware of this and has traced his activities back to Tolkeen and other enemies of the Coalition States. Although not yet on the CS most wanted list for crimes against the State, Bakr's operation is targeted for infiltration by CS undercover agents.

111. The Wilk's Store: A retail outlet for fine Wilk's products, including the Wilk's-Remi line of firearms. For its more high-tech weapons, computing and electronics products, they offer free technical assistance at its offices in the Mercenary Plaza.

112. Bionic Weapons Masters. A Black Market outlet that specializes in bionic weapons and armor; the heavy stuff, not cybernetics and implants. Price are average on the high side, with a 15-20% discount for "used" bionics. That means BWM is also willing to trade, upgrade and buy bionics, making it a place that not only attracts *Headhunters* and *full conversion cyborgs*, but *Cyber-Snatchers* and the most brutal mercs willing to carve out bionic parts and limbs from their victims for resale. BWM buys "used" bionics for 10-20% of their true market value, take it or leave it, no questions asked. The facility also offers discounts on repairs, upgrades and *installation* at the time of purchase. All of this makes the store little more than a giant, glorified Body-Chop-Shop.

113. Titan Industries Showroom: Rare for this mysterious robot manufacturer to be found outside of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, is a company-run, direct sales outlet. All of its products are available here at standard cost, no discounts. Except for the manager, *Argent Smith*, all of the staff was hired locally and has never been to the company's headquarters. Unknown to the employees, their boss is himself a Titan product, an *Argent Model Class II series robot!* **Note:** Titan Industries is actually run by the demented pre-Rifts supercomputer, ARCHIE-3 and his human accomplice, Hagen Lonovich. The two use the company to fund operations in other parts of the country, to purchase raw materials for their personal robot creations and to spy on humans.

114. Shooter's: One of many gun stores in town, Shooter's deals mostly in non-magical small arms. It is not an authorized dealer of any particular manufacturer and thus sells most brands as well as pre-Rifts S.D.C. weapons. Firearms from *Wellington Industries*, *Northern Gun*, *Wilk's*, *Golden Age Weaponsmiths* (which are mainly S.D.C. guns), some *Triax* products, *Bandito Arms* and handmade guns from regional, small, independent



gunsmiths are all sold here at market prices. The store deals mainly in pistols, revolvers, rifles, submachine-guns and shot-guns, leaving the heavier artillery to the manufacturer's outlets. A third of the stock is second hand, at discount prices (about 25% less than new).

In the back of the store is a licensed small arms range for both S.D.C. and Mega-Damage weapons. The owner, *Oslo* "Pug" *Purtok*, an Orcish former mercenary (7th level Headhunter), is himself a shooting enthusiast and for that reason he keeps costs down, charging just five credits per half hour for range fees, plus the cost of ammunition. In the case of those wishing to test-fire weapons before purchasing them, he waives the range fee and sometimes throws in a free magazine of ammo. **Note:** Rumor has it that Pug works for the Black Market, which would explain his rather large selection of Bandito Arms

weaponry. This is true, at least indirectly, since Pug is forced to turn over 25% of his profits to the Black Market for "protection" and he often fences weapons hijacked by the syndicate's various crews, again more or less against his will. Pug is Anarchist with leanings toward Unprincipled alignment.

115. Kraus Imported Arms: This store, owned by *Wilhelm Kraus* (4th level ex-Power Armor Commando), is the only authorized Triax retailer in MercTown. He sells the entire range of pistols and rifles, including pump guns and their ammo, as well as the entire series of WR small arms, T-10 Cyclops armor, T-11 Enhanced armor, and T-40 Urban Plain Clothes armor. (See the **Rifts® World Book 5: Triax and the NGR**, for details on these items.)

116. Max's Munitions: Technically not an arms dealer, this store specializes in the sale of ammunition and explosives. The

owner, *Maxwell Dobson* (8th level Safecracker), a self-proclaimed “ammo technician,” is capable of manufacturing or improving just about any type of ammunition. Max produces and sells everything from specialty conventional rounds (hollow point, glaser, etc.) up to and including improvised land mines. (A number of types can be found on pages 6-11 of **The Compendium of Contemporary Weapons**, for those of you with that handy reference.) Among his standard fare are depleted uranium, ramjet and explosive rounds (for WI caseless weapons), dynamite, NG plastique explosive, fusion blocks, cutting charges, detcord, blasting caps, time pencils, assorted fuses, hand grenades, claymores, other basic mines, and missiles (of all types and sizes). He buys all of these in bulk and thus can pass on savings of 5-10%.

The majority of the goods sold at Max's are factory produced in places like the Coalition States, Ishpeming and the Manistique Imperium. However, he offers a number of specialty items that he makes himself and which are hard to find elsewhere. By far the best-selling example are his unique *'Bot-Stopper* mini-missiles which inflict 25% more damage than normal for their type (e.g. plasma mini-missiles inflict 2D4x10 M.D. rather than the usual 1D6x10 M.D.), but the mini-missiles have half their usual range. For the right price, Max will also build improvised explosive devices for clients, and can construct any of the examples found in **Rifts® Coalition War Campaign** on pages 74-75 or found in the **Rifts® G.M. Guide**.

Note: Prior to opening this store, Dobson worked for the Black Market in Chi-Town as part of a band of bold robbers. Consequently, he is well connected with the underworld of both MercTown and the Chi-Town 'Burbs. He pays Ted Dutcher's syndicate 20% of his earnings and supplies them with ammunition and explosives under the table for slightly above cost. From time to time, Max is also asked to get involved with the odd caper for the Black Market, mainly bank and vault jobs.

117. Arms of Yore: An old-fashioned group of blacksmiths who handcrafts traditional S.D.C. melee weapons. The operation is run by Dwarves from another dimension and whose ancient techniques of forging metal create superior quality swords, axes, spears, pole arms and other bladed weapons (+3 or +4 to S.D.C. damage, +2 to strike and parry, +2 to strike when thrown). They also make silver and silver-plated weapons.

118. Nine Lives Armory: A repair shop where even the most damaged suit of body or power armor or M.D. weapon can be fixed good as new, giving it as many as nine lives. For the owner, *Sporix Reggatz* (9th level Trimadore Mechanic R.C.C.), this store is a hobby that pays. Sporix loves taking apart and re-assembling the technology of Rifts Earth and has a knack for building armor. Fixing other people's armor was a logical way of paying for his various technological experiments and studies. The Trimadore does excellent work restoring damaged armor and, even better, the D-Bee mechanic works cheap (25-35% the original cost of the item to refurbish it, and takes pity on people down and out on their luck, charging them only 20% of the original price).

119. Ashwood & Pullies: For those who prefer ancient missile weapons, this store specializes in bows of all kinds and archery supplies and gear. On the racks are hand-crafted short and longbows, recurve bows, modern compound bows, crossbows, NA-SW4 Mega-Damage bows, NG-MC1 Mega-Crossbows and

specialty arrows from silver-tipped to M.D. explosives, stun arrows and flares.

120. Outrider Armaments: Though it is not advertised as such, Outrider is an authorized dealer of the Black Market's line of Bandito Arms, and also sells an assortment of miscellaneous arms and equipment that includes forearm grenade-launchers, combat vambraces, rocket boots, deadballs, ballistic Vibro-Knives, neural dusters, Olterak maces, and vibro-garrotes. Outrider is a shell company owned by none other than Ted Dutcher, boss of the MercTown syndicate.

121. Devilman Exotic Arms: Appropriately enough, this weapons shop is owned by a D'norr Devilman who goes by the name *Zo'Wor Kulot'te* (8th level Techno-Wizard). Zo'Wor stocks his shop with a variety of rare, unique and exotic armaments from all over the Earth and the Megaverse as well. His inventory includes weapons from across the tech board, including orthodox energy firearms, Techno-Wizard firearms and the medieval. Odds are whatever you're looking for, it can be found here. Zo'Wor has some stuff from the New West/Colorado Baronies, Stormspire, Triax, a couple of alien blasters, Kittani arms, a few Bio-Wizard devices, Xitixix resin blades, firearms from Japan's ArmaTech and H-Brand, Elemental Shuriken, and a Spirit Daisho, as well as a few pieces from both Malkovitch and Bushido Industries. Then too, as a Techno-Wizard himself, Zo'Wor patches together a few weapons of his own design.

How does one arms merchant accumulate weapons from so many varied spots? Mainly because he has a good connection. Zo'Wor has a cousin who lives in the city of *Splynn on Atlantis*, and who is also an explorer, Shifter and merchant. Several times a year, Zo'Wor boards his TW Sky-Flyer and visits his cousin to purchase inventory, both from his cousin and various transient merchants in Splynn. He returns to MercTown with the goods and sells them at a modest markup of 10-20%. Devilman Exotic Arms might not be in the same league as Northern Gun, but Zo'Wor earns a few million credits a year selling his wares to mercs, mages, collectors and adventurers searching for something a little different than the usual fare.

122. Vannor's Weapons Repair: The best place to get a damaged weapon fixed in MercTown is Vannor's. Sure, most of the larger arms manufacturers will make repairs or replace faulty products, but *Vannor Howlrunner* (11th level Operator) will do just as good a job at half the price. He also buys damaged weapons outright, fixing them up at his own expense and selling them at his store. An ex-mercenary, Vannor picked up his craft by working as a field armorer for *Robot Control*. Unlike the other members of that unit, he saw the writing on the wall and retired, beating the Coalition backlash by about six months. Now he is content to merely run his shop, repairing all kinds of small firearms, robot weapons systems and power armor. When he was approached by the War Drones he turned them down out of hand, not wanting any part of their or anyone else's foolish vendetta. However, rumor has it that the CS may still consider him an enemy, though they have yet to place a bounty on his head.

123. Old Time Gunstore: There are times when the best weapon for the job is a conventional S.D.C. firearm. In MercTown the best place to look for such firearms is the Old Time Gunstore. Most of the firearms sold here are of post-Rifts manufacture from Golden Age Weaponsmiths, the Coalition Ar-

mories, or the Manistique Imperium, as well restored antique firearms dug up from ruins and a selection of ancient-style revolvers from the New West. *Alan Bell* (3rd level Headhunter), who owns the store, is also a passable gunsmith and does some repairs on the side. Bell himself is not part of the Black Market, but he borrowed money from them to open the store and continues to pay 25% of his earnings to Dutcher's syndicate.

124. V'laan Invisible Friends: This shop is run by an ancient looking Elf from an alien world. He can cast an enchantment on any blade weapon, including Vibro-Blades and pistols,

that will turn the item invisible until it is drawn to be used in combat. The enchantment lasts for 10 uses and then needs to be recharged. The initial enchantment costs 50,000 credits, and a recharge for 10 additional uses (the weapon turning invisible again the moment it is holstered or tucked away) is 25,000 credits. He sometimes offers other magic items for sale, but only to discriminating buyers he takes a liking to. They are reputed to be the creations of dark magic, however, akin to Bio-Wizard and Rune weapons.

The Mystic Quarter

Once part of the Warrens, the area known as the Mystic Quarter has since become the province of the arcane in MercTown. The primary reason is the presence of two intersecting ley lines and a minor nexus point where the Collegiate Arcane & Magic Guild is now built. The two component ley lines which make the nexus are the only ones found in the vicinity of Paducah. That is why even before the construction of the Collegiate Arcane, this area was the location of New Paducah's small handful of magic-related businesses and residents. In the time since the Drago regime, with its tolerance for all peoples and acceptance of magic, the Mystic Quarter has grown extensively.

It was the arrival of the *Archmagus Annias Cearcy* that sparked the formation of the Mystic Quarter, a unified community for magic practitioners. Within a few days of Cearcy's appearance, the criminal elements in the quarter fled, enabling the sorcerers, under the Archmagus' supervision, to clean up its streets and rebuild. Today, the area is populated mainly by those who practice the mystical arts, their familiars, servants, students and families. Which is not to say ordinary citizens and visitors are unwelcome, quite the contrary, all law-abiding folk are welcomed in the Quarter. Mercs and adventurers come and go as they please. After all, despite its unique character, the Mystic Quarter is part of MercTown, it's just a suburb that caters to a different culture – a culture of magic and mysticism.

The Mystic Quarter is one of the public New Town areas of the city open to both residents and visitors. The Quarter has a great deal to offer mercenaries and adventurers in the way of mystical treasures, weapons and arcane lore. While the massive Collegiate Arcane, sitting atop the city's only nexus point, may attract other practitioners of magic, it is the scores of shops and businesses that deal in magic, Techno-Wizard devices, herbs, poisons, rare books, and many forms of magic and exotic items that attract mercenaries and other visitors. Outside of the Magic Zone – where even some mercenaries and adventurers would rather not tread – Lazlo, New Lazlo and the Kingdom of Tolkeen, recently razed to the ground by the Coalition Army, the Mystic Quarter of MercTown offers one of the greatest selections of magic in North America. And because of the mercenary trade, many of the shops are designed to cater to the uninitiated.

The Mystic Quarter is well maintained, relatively quiet, clean and pleasant. Mercs and roughnecks come here to see the sight and buy merchandise, but they seldom linger, and mystical forces keep it safe and largely free of troubles (i.e. gang mem-

bers, petty crooks, villains, belligerent mercenaries, etc.). Spells are used to keep buildings in good repair, Elemental Fusionists/Warlocks and Druids care for the parks and plant life, and the fear of swift magical retribution usually keeps even rowdy visitors in line. Even the most brazen merc or criminal thinks twice about causing trouble in the Mystic Quarter, for one never knows if or when a pack of gibbering demons will appear or a lightning bolt will cascade from the sky to punish any misdeeds. There are countless rumors in circulation as to the terrible fate of those who cross Guild Master Cearcy or cause trouble in the Quarter. Most of the stories are pure fiction, but nobody wants to push their luck. The result is a quiet, pleasant community where visitors can buy magic and the practicing residents can live in peace.

125. The MercTown Nexus: MercTown has two ley lines which intersect at the exact location of the *Collegiate Arcane*. These are the only such ley lines and nexus point in the immediate area. The next closest are in the environs of Kingsdale or deeper in the Kentucky territory at the border of the Magic Zone. The effects and properties of these ley lines and the nexus are the same as is common to all ley lines, there is nothing significant about them. The longer of the two runs on an east-west axis that begins in *Kingsdale*, passes through MercTown and continues on to the ruins of *Central City*, Kentucky. Its companion is very short, running from MercTown to the *Clifty Falls* on Indiana's border.

There has always been some concern among the leaders and defenders of MercTown that the ley lines could be used to invade MercTown or spew forth demons and monsters from a Rift. Consequently, they were rather relieved when Archmagus Annias Cearcy proposed building a school of magic at the nexus. The way Proconsul Drago sees it, Cearcy and his fellow practitioners of magic should be able to prevent the nexus from being used for nefarious purposes, prevent the opening of random Rifts, and in the event that a dimensional portal does open, the mages at the college would act as the city-state's first line of defense. Archmagus Cearcy, alone, has an impressive array of ley line affecting spells that enable him to exert a significant measure of control over the nexus, including the ability to temporarily shut it off, create Ley Line Storms and close Rift pPortals.

126. Collegiate Arcane & Magic Guild: MercTown is home to a sizeable community of Ley Line Walkers, Mystics, Necromancers, Warlocks (who have come to call themselves *El-*



emental Fusionists) and other practitioners of magic. As a whole, the members of the magic community tend to be somewhat isolationist, and secretive in their practices. Whether by chance or purposeful design, the bulk of these mystical practitioners are concentrated in one area of the city, a neighborhood that has come to be called the Mystic Quarter.

At the center of the Mystic Quarter is the Collegiate Arcane & Magic Guild. Built atop the city's sole nexus point, it is a sprawling compound with a half dozen buildings built in the style of a medieval keep or manner house. The Collegiate serves the dual purposes of a training academy for neophytes in a variety of mystic arts, as well as a magic guild. At present, it has a membership of 458 true magic practitioners (includes Ley Line Walkers, Mystics, Shifters, Techno-Wizards, Magus, Conjurers, Grey Seers, Shifters, and Elemental Fusionists – masters of the elements – as well as a few exotic classes such as the Lynn-Srial, Demon Dragon-mage and Temporal Wizards), plus another two hundred trainees trying to learn one magic discipline or another.

The Collegiate Arcane & Guild Hall campus is designed to resemble a medieval manor house. A 12 foot (3.6 m) high stone wall almost completely encircles the compound, the sole opening an iron-wrought front gate in the south wall. Beyond the wall is a vast courtyard paved in cobblestone, save for around the bases of trees planted in twin rows leading to a massive fountain carved in the shape of a Great Horned Dragon. Looming behind the fountain, dwarfing the almost life-sized statue, is the Guild Hall. The Hall is one of the largest buildings in MercTown, a gigantic gray stone structure constructed to resemble a medieval fortress with a pair of circular stone towers 200 feet (61 m) tall. Scattered around this central keep are a half dozen smaller buildings, most of which are two story dormitories used as quarters for visiting sorcerers and acolytes studying to be wizards at the magic college.

The Collegiate Arcane & Magic Guild is an impressive structure that seems a bit out of place in a modern city of concrete and steel like MercTown. Still, it is not so strange or marvelous as to inspire awe or fear.

Concealed defenses. What looks like ordinary stone of the outer walls and buildings is mystically transformed Mega-Damage rock (average 500 M.D.C. per 10 foot/3 m area), and the outer walls on the lower levels of the castle keep are covered by an alien, thorn-covered vine to prevent ordinary people from scaling them. The vines are magical, perhaps even some minor Elemental being or imbued with magical energy, and radiate as such to those who can see or sense magic energy. When a climber tries to scale them, not only does he tear his clothes, get hooked on the thorns, and frequently jab and stab himself (one or 1D4 S.D.C. depending on the severity of the injury), but the vines seem to move when he's not looking, so where there was a foothold or handhold just a moment ago, it is gone the next! (-20% to Climbing skill), the vines are tough and require 100 S.D.C. or one M.D. to cut a single vine. When a supernatural being or creature of magic tries to climb the vines, they come to life-lashing out and entangling the climber in an iron grip of thorns and plant sinew (equal to a Supernatural P.S. of 20, inflicts 4D6 S.D.C. damage per melee the character tries to struggle and break free). Fighting the initial volley of tangling vines and/or leaping off the vine covered wall within 1D4 melee

rounds will prevent the character from getting trapped, but lingering on the wall for more than one minute (four melee rounds) will result in all of the climber's limbs becoming ensnared and held fast by the vines (no physical attacks). At this point, only a combined Supernatural P.S. of 30 or more can pull the victim free, but anyone who goes to help their snared comrade is also likely to befall the same fate.

Golemgoyles. Twenty-eight gargoyle-like statues are also perched at intervals upon the walls of the castle. These heavy stone constructs are infused with the essence of demonic minions from deep in the pits of the Netherworld. They are called *Golemgoyles*, small versions of the magical Golem, created to defend the outer walls and windows from unwanted invaders. Whenever a human, demon or being that is not a member of the school tries to climb the walls or fly up to a window, the nearest Golemgoyles springs to life and attacks the intruder. The animated statue is satisfied with chasing an intruder away, and when the person flees, the Golemgoyles goes back to his roost as unflinching stone. If the battle goes on for more than a minute, other Golemgoyles will sense the commotion and as many as six others will join the battle, fighting to chase away or knock down the invader. They will also squawk like ravens, raising a great commotion and attracting attention. The stone protectors fight until the intruder flees, is knocked to the ground and leaves, is knocked out, or killed, or until the statue, itself, is destroyed.

(Golemgoyles: Alignment: Not really applicable; used as defensive, robot-like guards by good and evil beings. **Size:** 3-4 feet (0.9 to 1.2 m). **Attacks per melee round:** Three. **Mega-Damage:** 1D6 M.D. per punch or kick, 2D6 M.D. per bite, and 4D4 M.D. per clawing attack. **M.D.C.:** Each Golemgoyles has 2D6x10+30 M.D.C. +10 points per level of its creator, and regenerates 1D8 M.D.C. every melee round. If the Golemgoyles is reduced to -10 below zero M.D.C., it is destroyed and the spirit inside is free, otherwise it will reform and resume its post with the appearance of the next new moon. **Abilities:** The magic effectively pre-programs them to be gargoyle-like sentinels, making them useless for anything else (only functions as noted above). **Nightvision** 500 feet (152 m), see the invisible, sense the presence of the supernatural, impervious to Horror Factor, disease, cold or fire, **Climb** 95/85%, **Acrobatics** 80%, **Speed** climbing on stone, steel, wood/trees or other natural surface, even when a sheer wall, is 22. +1 on initiative, +2 to strike and parry, +3 to dodge. **Notes:** Rare, found primarily in the Magic Zone of North America, and typically the creation of a *High Magus*, a *Lord Magus*, *Stone Master*, or *Earth Elemental Fusionist/Warlock*. On rare occasions, a worldly Shifter or Ley Line Walker may also learn the craft, but it appeals only to characters who don't mind imprisoning the life essence of a minor demon or entity inside the statue. **Material requirements:** A pair of small blue sapphires or emeralds are needed for the eyes and a ruby for its heart. The body is sculpted or formed out of clay and magically transformed into M.D.C. stone when the magic ritual is finished. **P.P.E.:** 375.)

Entrance to the College & Guild Hall campus is permitted only through the front gate. All magic practitioners are welcome to enter, even those who are not members of the guild. Non-mages are *not* allowed inside unless they are in the company of a mage or are official representatives of MercTown's government. Two Major Elementals (one Earth and one Air) stand guard at the gate to ensure that no one else can pass

through the iron-wrought barricade. If there is any doubt as to whether or not an individual is permitted on the premises, one of the Elementals leaves to confer with the Guild Master or one of the members of its ruling Council.

To magic practitioners this compound is more than a mere clubhouse, it is a home away from home, a place of safety, a refuge from the persecution of the world. The Collegiate is a true community where those who practice the mystic arts can congregate freely to pursue their craft, enjoy the fraternity of their fellow mages and seek arcane treasures.

The Collegiate Arcane provides its membership with a safe haven from a hostile the world, but it also offers a wide variety of services pertaining to the magic profession and the pursuit of magic. Within the confines of the castle-like Guild Hall there is a vast library with volumes on topics ranging from the study of magic to demons and monsters, to history books and the mundane. There are also vaults wherein diverse magical objects, artifacts, weapons, spell scrolls, potions, components, TW devices and magic items are kept for sale at prices below the going market rates. Less tangible treasures exist in the form of older, experienced practitioners willing to share information and advise eager young mages. Moreover, the Guild Hall functions as a magic college where neophytes can enroll to learn the mysteries of magic and master the craft. Of course, this requires fierce determination, focus, dedication and several years to master.

Quarters at the Collegiate are divided between temporary and permanent. The outer dormitories are the temporary quarters which cost 20 credits a day to rent. Permanent quarters are found within the main hall, but are typically reserved for senior members as well as those on the Guild Council. Permanent residents are not required to pay rent, but are encouraged to make donations of 75-120 credits a month to assist in the upkeep of the facility. Also in the Hall are six spacious, comfortably furnished *lecture rooms* that can be utilized by members to hold discussions, seminars and other gatherings free of charge. There is also a *Grand Audience Chamber* with a seating capacity of 700 to allow the entire membership to convene for special events.

Two entire floors of the central keep are set aside for the Collegiate's **Grand Library**. This storehouse of knowledge is the real treasure of the Guild. It holds thousands of volumes and texts on a multitude of topics from the purely magical to the mundane. The Grand Library is one of the few remaining of its kind in North America. It is on a par with that in Kingsdale and although not the equal of the entire library buildings found in Lazlo, Dweomer, the City of Brass and Tolkeen before its fall, it is an impressive storehouse of mystic knowledge. Among its volumes are books on the philosophies of magic, lore, history, religion, science, biology, physiology, herbology, monsters, animals, Atlantis, famous cities and kingdoms throughout the Megaverse, as well as copies of and treatises on mythic legends (Beowulf, Homer's Iliad & Odyssey, the epic of Gilgamesh, etc.), gods, supernatural beings, creatures of magic, other races and their histories, the Federation of Magic, little known religious organizations and cults, other magic organizations, the guild itself, myths, legends, individual histories/adventures, some maps, trade routes, atlases, encyclopedia collections, and other reference books.

Access to the Grand Library is free of charge to all members of the guild. The sole restriction being that no book can be removed from the library without the permission of the Guild Master or the Chief Librarian, and none can ever be taken off the guild premises. A hive of constant, albeit mute, activity, the library is open all hours of the day and night. It is kept in order by the Chief Librarian, an 8th level Rulian Translator and close friend of Guild Master Annias Cearcy, named *Lexitros*. He is assisted in this task by a host of acolytes who are required to work in the Great Library as part of their program of studies.

Nonmembers are not allowed within the confines of the Great Library. However, official requests can be made by such individuals to gain access to specific books or documents. At the discretion of the Guild Master or Chief Librarian, the request may be granted, but the individual is either given a *copy* of the requested information, or allowed to read the specific book in one of the *Study Halls* adjoining the library, but only under the supervision of a guild member, assistant librarian or Lexitros himself. The only exception to this rule is Rogue Scholars or Scientists of renown, such as the legendary Erin Tarn. The Guild Master will occasionally give such illustrious individuals a waiver to access the library just as if they were a full-fledged guild member.



The Collegiate is also a marketplace for spell magic, TW devices and magical items. Individual members are not only allowed, but encouraged, to buy and trade in magic items amongst themselves; just as older, experienced wizards share or trade information and advice with each other. In addition, the Collegiate Arcane maintains several *vaults* wherein a diverse treasure of magic, including spell scrolls, magic potions, TW devices, magical components, artifacts and magic items are kept for sale at prices 15-20% below the going market rates. The inventory maintained by the guild is not especially impressive, and is far less than anything found in Tolkeen or Lazlo, mostly common fare, i.e., typical examples of magical items, magic potions, herbs and balms from England, Native American charms/fe-

tishes, masks and weapons, Techno-Wizard devices, common magic components and similar lesser items. There are, of course, a few rarities and items of great value, such as a Millennium Staff and a suit of Millennium Tree Leaf armor, but the most impressive items that come to the guild are usually grabbed up quickly by the *Guild Council and senior members* for their personal use and collections. One of the guild's most notable assets, however, is a collection of a few hundred *spell scrolls* (many 1-6th level spells at 5th-6th level of potency). Spell scrolls are fairly uncommon on Rifts Earth, making this collection an impressive one.

The permanent inventory of magical treasures and what is available for sale from the Collegiate depends on the item and the needs of the guild, the college and MercTown. Most items are donations from the guild members and alumni. However, the Collegiate also purchases magic items and components from mercenaries and adventurers for 20-30% of market value in credits (30-40% from guild members), but will offer the equivalent of 5-10% more in trade, if the individual is willing to accept services like magical healing, exorcism, teleportation, and similar non-violent magic in exchange for the item.

Known mercenaries can even establish a running tab to be called upon as needed, but all services are performed on campus, not in the field, and cannot be made to harm a third party.

Membership in the Collegiate is a privilege although it is not difficult to earn. To be a member one must be a practitioner of an accepted path of magic: Ley Line Walker, Mystic, Shifter, Elemental Fusionist (also known as a Warlock), Druid, Necromancer, Stone Master, Temporal Wizard, Lynn-Srial Cloud Weaver (rare), Native Indian Shamanism (see **Rifts® Spirit West**), Conjurer, and a few others. (Although a few True Atlanteans with Magic Tattoos visit the Mystic Quarter, the secrets of Tattoo Magic and the Splugorthian disciplines of Bio-Wizardry/Runes are NOT taught.) The individual must also have a respectable record of conduct at least within the city-state of MercTown, which means, depending on one's history, those with criminal records in other lands *may* be accepted, provided they are not known to be a malignant force or troublemaker. If a candidate meets those requirements, he is accepted as a member so long as he agrees to abide by the codes of conduct and the directives set down by the Guild Master and his Council. That includes, respect the authority of the Collegiate, defer to all judgements of the Council, and uphold its good name through one's personal and public conduct. All members are *required* to pay annual dues of 1,000 credits per level of experience (meaning a fourth level Shifter pays 4,000 credits a year, an 8th level Mystic pays 8,000 credits, and so on). However, to remain in good standing with the guild, regular and substantive donations of credits, gems, books, scrolls, and magic items are required and expected. In this the Collegiate Arcane is more strict than the average magic guild.

If there is any question as to whether a candidate is acceptable, the issue is put to the Guild Council for debate. The council then makes their recommendation to the Guild Master, who has the final say. Such cases are fairly rare. Usually the granting of membership is only an issue when the candidate is known to be a blackguard, criminal, renegade, or one who wields his power negligently without regard for his fellow sentients. Thus the Collegiate might refuse membership to certain elements of

the Federation of Magic, members of the Grim Reapers Cult, the Vanguard (for preying upon their brothers), or even the Society of Sages. Merely belonging to one of the above groups is not immediate grounds for refusal, and every candidate is evaluated on a case by case basis according to his past deeds.

Guild Master Cearcy also expects all members to serve and protect the people and government of MercTown. This is a promise to which all guild members must adhere, no questions asked and no exceptions. To do otherwise is to risk expulsion from the group and could potentially jeopardize the Collegiate's future in the city-state and sully its good name. Thus all infractions, however slight, are punished swiftly and severely, with harsh penalties that include steep fines, increased donations, expulsion from the guild and sometimes, in the most extreme cases, execution of the offending member! Though he is personally something of a recluse outside of the Collegiate, Annias Cearcy does his best to maintain good relations with the city's government. On several occasions, he and other prominent members of the Collegiate have used their magic to assist in protecting MercTown, as well as to eliminate renegade mages, monsters and super-powered criminals.

Leadership of the guild is the sole province of its founder and creator, Guild Master Cearcy. In the Collegiate Arcane he is the ultimate authority and his word is law. Cearcy alone has the power to set forth policy, codes and legislation for the guild, and he need not ask approval or permission from anyone. The man is not a tyrant, nor arrogant or cruel, and he reserves the final say in guild matters not for power's sake but as a precaution to prevent infighting, political intrigue, plots and conspiracies from tearing the Collegiate Arcane apart. To maintain fairness, give opposing views a chance to be heard and to assist him in making policy, Cearcy shares a measure of his authority with an oligarchy of senior members, the Guild Council.

The Guild Council is a body of eight members, all of whom are in high standing. As well as advising Guild Master Cearcy, they assist in the administration of the Collegiate Arcane, handle its finances, set prices for goods and services, resolve disputes, enforce the institution's laws, and sit in judgement of those members brought up on charges. To have a chair on the Guild Council the member must be of at least sixth level experience, be a practitioner of one of the true paths of magic, be in good standing, exhibit good judgement and an even temper, and be willing to stay in MercTown for the duration of their tenure, a five year term of service. Candidates for the council are nominated by the guild's membership, but the final say rests with Guild Master Cearcy, though he rarely goes against the wishes of the membership whether he agrees with their decision or not.

At present the Guild Council includes, in order of seniority, Daemor Kraskut (12th level Shifter), Figorro Noussaurin (12th Elven Shifter), Menelaus Clotho (12th level True Atlantean Ley Line Walker), Wanda Koloski (10th level Mystic), Garzom the Grim (10th level Titan Battle Magus), Piotr the Prestidigitious (9th level Conjurer), Eloros the Scribe (8th level Earth and Air Elemental Fusionist) and Ison the Limbless (7th level Pythonan Ley Line Walker).

The most controversial member of the Guild Council is the reclusive **Daemor Kraskut**. This long standing resident of MercTown is a complete mystery. He hasn't been seen in a decade, and has not attended a single meeting of the Guild Coun-

cil. This has led many to call for his replacement, but Guild Master Cearcy refuses to replace the man, suggesting to some that he knows more than he's letting on, that he may, somehow, remain in communication with Kraskut. However, if the Guild Council and membership should start to push hard for his replacement, then Kraskut's chair will likely be given to the Fire Dragon, *Ignatos* (see #140), in the next Guild Council election, unless, of course, Daemor Kraskut makes an appearance before that time.

Menelaus Clotho has the unique distinction of having chairs on the Guild Councils in Kingsdale (see **Rifts® Juicer Uprising**, pages 108-109) and the Collegiate Arcane in MercTown simultaneously. The Atlantean is an old friend of Guild Master Cearcy, and for that reason was recruited to serve on the Council of the Collegiate Arcane. Menelaus accomplishes this feat by traveling back and forth between the two city-states using the ley line which connects the two. While he remains a close friend of Cearcy's, the Atlantean is not of sound mind. Something he experienced on one of his dimensional travels has left him a changed man. He is given to outbursts of crazed laughter and it is hard to hold a coherent conversation with the Line Walker. Even so, Cearcy seems to be one of the few people who can still reach Menelaus, and is working towards restoring the mind of his old friend.

Garzom the Grim, formerly of Dweomer, is a legendary Titan and the chief strategist and military mind of the Collegiate Arcane. Trained as a Battle Magus, he wields the forces of magic as easily as a blade. Garzom left the Magic Zone out of a distaste for its politics. He feels that the Federation of Magic is a force of evil that needs to be removed, and Dweomer's tacit alliance with those renegades was enough to make him leave. Like all Titans, he is a champion at heart, however, unlike the rest of his people, Garzom is a dour, forbidding and aloof giant more likely to inspire fear than trust amongst those he seeks to protect.

Piotr the Prestidigitious is a human of Russian descent who practices the uncommon magic art of Conjuring. Dazzling to behold, he combines his uncanny skill at the craft with the charm and blarney of a carnival barker or con artist. Piotr is a good natured, glib and colorful character with a keen wit and calm sense of humor. Though his manner is casual and silly, he is nonetheless deadly serious about the practice of magic and the Collegiate Arcane, and is very well liked among the membership.

Eloros the Scribe is a scholar at heart and loves any intellectual pursuit. Eloros is an academic, an intellectual and a writer with a brilliant mind. Aside from Elemental Fusionism, the mastery of contrary Elemental forces, his passions include Mathematics, History, Archeology, Biology, Anthropology and Astronomy. The rugged looking fellow is the Collegiate Arcane's primary bookkeeper and accountant, but spends most of his time outdoors studying nature, the elements and human nature.

Ison the Limbless is the newest member of the Guild Council but one of the most important. Though only in his fifties, just reaching the second quarter of his life, the serpentine D-Bee is wise beyond his years. Ison is highly intelligent, compassionate and diplomatic. The Pythonan has great respect for ideas, different cultures, and opposing viewpoints. At council meetings he always maintains his composure, calmly listening to the discus-

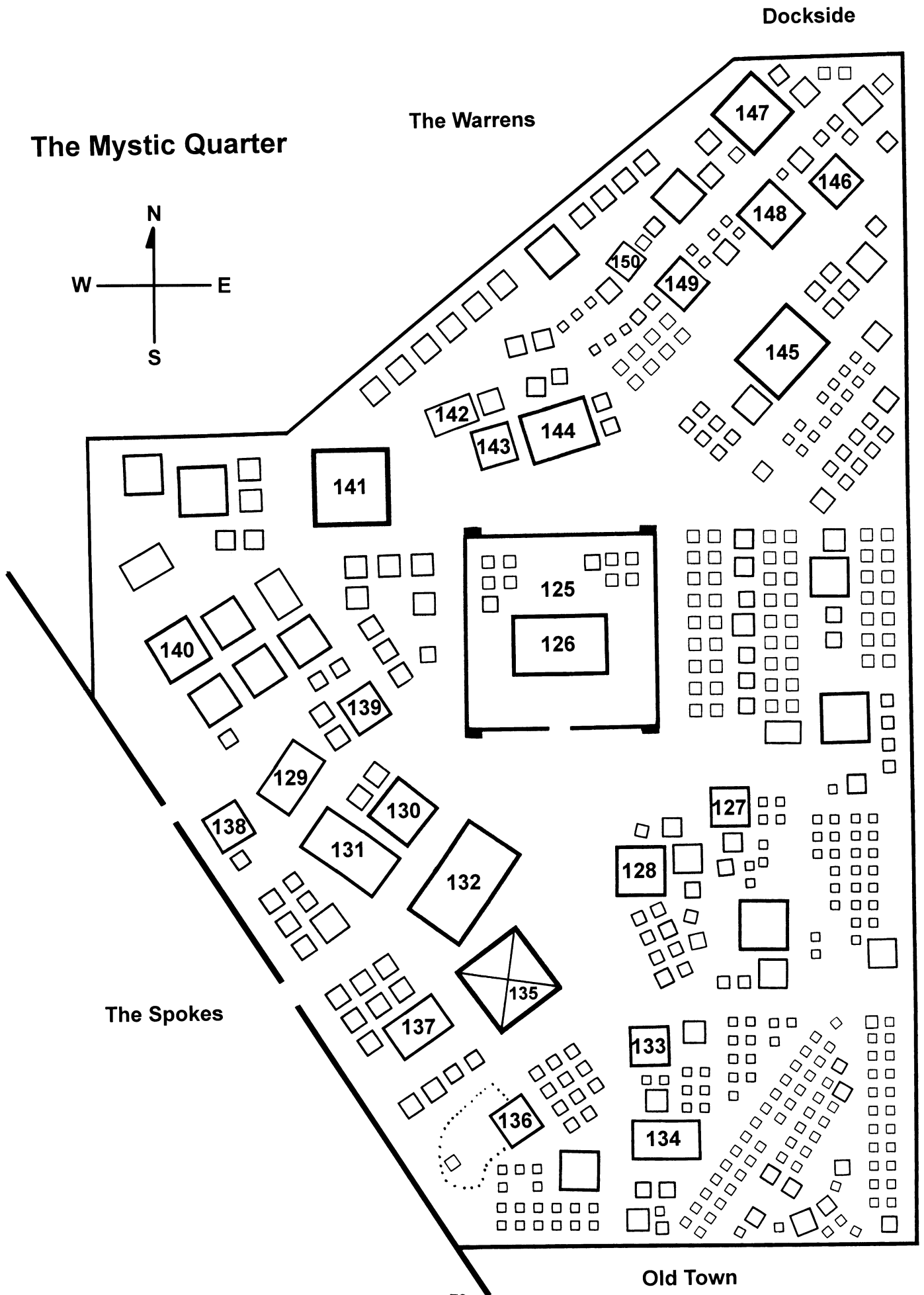
sion then diplomatically offering his feelings, suggestions or a compromise. Ison has a noble spirit that has earned him the respect of his peers and the friendship of Annias Cearcy. Over the past few years he's become Cearcy's most trusted confidant. The two are often locked in intense but amicable discussions. Aside from his magical pursuits, Ison is an artist and philosopher.

G.M. Note: The Collegiate Arcane does, indeed, operate a stone pyramid, concealed in an underground chamber accessible only to the Archmagus Cearcy. It serves as a mystical focus from which he can exert influence over the nexus and the two connecting ley lines. The effects of this chamber are as follows: It allows Guild Master Cearcy to monitor the ley lines like an advanced form of the Read Ley Lines ability, at no P.P.E. cost, enabling him to scan the entire Mystic Quarter. A scan that makes him aware of all living creatures (whether they are physically present, phased or in some limbo dimension) as well as magical spell effects (Ley Line Storms, time shifts and similar events) on the ley lines, nexus or within the general vicinity of the lines. All Ley Line Magic spells cast in the pyramid chamber have double their normal duration and cost only half of the normal P.P.E.! Access to the chamber is only by magic, and it is apparent that Cearcy is the sole person who knows the closely guarded secret of how to enter it.

The Guild and Politics. Although it is not a goal of the Collegiate Arcane, the guild is a strong political force in the city and a powerful magical organization in its own right. This gives it considerable weight in MercTown's political process, at least when it comes to affairs involving magic. Truth be told, the powers that be in the city-state are a little unnerved and frightened by the seemingly limitless powers demonstrated by its senior members and Guild Master, *Archmagus Annias Cearcy*, who some claim is the spawn of some ancient god from an unknown dimension. Over the span of just a few months, the entire campus was built by the combined labors of minions summoned from the Elemental planes and demonic dimensions, all of whom worked tirelessly to erect the Guild Hall and surrounding campus. All under the direction of Annias Cearcy, who stood calmly amidst the chaos, his features hidden beneath a shadowy cowl. When it was finished he dismissed the minions and issued a statement to the people of MercTown:

"I am Guild Master Cearcy; Archmagus, Philosopher and Teacher of the Mystic Arts. I have no desire to cause you any harm or disruption of your lives. I hope to demonstrate the wonders of magic and how it can work to the benefit of all people. I have come to your good kingdom because of your reputation for fairness and tolerance. My only desire is to live here in peace, to pursue my craft, instruct future generations in the secrets of the mystic arts, and to enjoy the fellowship of others who practice the vocation of magic. For as long as I shall live, I promise to never bring harm to this city or your families. Never shall I use my magic in violence except to defend my fellow man against tyranny and injustice. I promise all under my jurisdiction shall abide by your laws and live in harmony with those around them."

In the intervening years the Guild Master has proven to be a man true to his word. Cearcy has been a model citizen, if a bit of a recluse who has little contact with the city outside his beloved Collegiate. On those occasions when his magical expertise was



sought by the government, he's obliged, sometimes offering his services without being asked. Cearcy and other members of the guild have forged strong ties with the Proconsul and the MercTown Defenders, using their abilities to protect MercTown as well as to subdue renegade sorcerers, monsters and super-powered criminals. Now they are recognized and counted amongst the city-state's most powerful and loyal allies. Yet Guild Master Cearcy remains something of an enigma, a loner, a recluse who does not feel especially comfortable in the public eye or dealing with the mundane. It is rare that he leaves the Mystic Quarter, and when he does, he often does so clandestinely, using magic to disguise his identity or to walk invisibly among the masses. Cearcy has made it clear that he is not interested in politics, and despite holding a seat on the Advisory Council, his attendance is infrequent, attending only when his presence is specifically requested by the Proconsul. Nevertheless, the man wields a great deal of influence in the Mystic Quarter and serves as the de facto supreme leader of that community. If something happened to him, it would be interesting to see how the magic community would respond.

It is no surprise that the **Coalition States** has all kinds of concerns and fears about the Mystic Quarter, and if the CS and MercTown ever come to blows, it will be over the presence of magic and its practitioners. The CS authorities fear Cearcy is an agent of the Federation of Magic and that the Mystic Quarter may even be a branch of this hated enemy. With the exception of Naruni Enterprises, no organization or place in town is more scrutinized than the Mystic Quarter. However, the CS is wrong. Though members of the Federation are counted among the residents, guild membership and visitors to MercTown and the Mystic Quarter, the college and guild are completely separate and independent of the Federation. The very private Guild Master Cearcy does not speak of it in public, but all who know him recognize that he dislikes the Federation, despises Lord Dunscon and disapproves of what the Federation has come to represent. According to rumors, Cearcy has some sort of unpleasant connection to Lord Dunscon that he never discusses. A history of rivalry or betrayal by Dunscon perhaps, or some shared secret or shame. No one knows, but speculation runs high.

127. Magic Missives: This shop offers a novel delivery service, similar to Ostrosaurus Express, only it uses magic and supernatural beings to make the deliveries. Messages, letters, objects and packages weighing up to 500 lbs (225 kg) can be delivered to various locations throughout North America, Atlantis, England, the New German Republic and select places in the Megaverse! The proprietor is an Elf Shifter named *Figorro Noussaurin* (12th level, Diabolic evil alignment, I.Q. 20, M.E. 27, M.A. 23, P.S. 11, P.P. 12, P.E. 12, P.B. 21, Spd 10). Once a customer gives Noussaurin the item to be delivered and pays the fee, the Shifter summons a supernatural minion (demon, Deevil, Elemental, etc.) and compels the creature to transport the item to the appropriate destination.

Magic Missives are expensive and not for everyone, but delivery is guaranteed, very fast, and can get a message or item to parts of the world conventional delivery services cannot. Certainly it is one of the few that can provide delivery to other dimensions and places like Germany, China and vampire dominated Mexico. Among the extraterrestrial destinations that

Figorro's minions can reach are Phase World (mainly Center and the U.W.W.), Wormwood, the Palladium World, Hades, Asgard, Olympus and scattered Splugorth kingdoms throughout the Megaverse. The basic cost of a magic missile is 10,000 credits for a delivery to anywhere in North America. Deliveries to overseas destinations (*other continents*) have a base cost of 50,000 credits and to destinations in other dimensions, 250,000-500,000 credits! The base price is for a message or package of 100 lbs (45 kg) or less and increases by 10% for each additional 100 lbs (45 kg). If the destination has closed borders, magical protections or is hard to reach for whatever the reason, the cost increases by 25%. And if there is a serious threat that could lead to the injury or death of the delivery minion, the price is tripled or even quadrupled (depending on the exact circumstances). However, the expense is often worthwhile, especially for wizardly folk with their dimension-spanning networks of associates.

Secretly, and to a select group of customers, Figorro offers a wider array of services. The Shifter is willing to hire out his minions to commit various nefarious deeds on their behalf. This includes spying, espionage, theft, assault, blackmail, and murder. There is no base price for these services, it varies with the job and the target, but the minimum is *one million credits* and can cost as much as 50 million credits depending on the target and level of danger. Only a handful of folks know about Figorro's extracurricular activities, and they are scattered across the planet and the Megaverse. Most of his "special clients" are fellow magic users of selfish or evil alignment and hail from such locations as the Pecos Empire, Tolkeen, Lazlo, Kingsdale, the City of Brass, Dweomer, Stormspire, and the Federation of Magic in general, as well as the Chi-Town 'Burbs, Atlantis, England, the Horune Pirates, and other people and locales. In MercTown, there are only a few people who know about this service, one of whom is the Master Thief of the Ravenshome Guild.

Figorro Noussaurin's story. The man is an Elf from an Earth-like planet similar to our ancient Middle Ages. When he was implicated in a plot to usurp control of a Royal House, he came under fire and had to flee. During one of his Rift jumps, he was caught in a storm and ended up on Rifts Earth. He liked this planet, with its increased magic energies and vast opportunities, and has thrived here. He settled in MercTown because of its location, and has made contact with numerous people of power and influence in the Magic Zone and throughout the Midwest, Michigan and Southern Canada. Aside from hiring out his minions to carry out the misdeeds of certain clients, which cannot easily be traced back to him, Figorro has kept his hands clean in MercTown. He is a respected member of the Collegiate Arcane, a member of its Guild Council, and a legend in summoning circles. It is said that the Elf knows the true names of more than 50 greater supernatural beings and creatures of magic as well as a similar number of lesser beings. His ability to dominate such creatures is remarkable, and on more than one occasion he has spent days in contests of will (has an M.E. of 27) to master supernatural beings that he's summoned.

Few would suspect Figorro to be an evil, cold-blooded genius given his pleasant, charming demeanor (M.A. 23). However, his soul is darker than the pits of Hades (Diabolic alignment) and his personal goals can only be something bold



and grand, like usurping the throne of the Federation of Magic. At present, Figorro is willing to bide his time as he gathers more information, and ingratiates himself with people he can trick, use or blackmail later (or will need to destroy), but he has definite designs on the Collegiate Arcane. When the moment arrives he intends to take the position of Guild Master from Annias Cearcy. For now, he is simply trying to establish a base of power by winning over fellow members of the Guild Council and powerful outsiders. In addition to his own formidable powers, knowledge and demonic minions, Figorro is a Major psychic (81 I.S.P., and has the powers of Telepathy, Remote Viewing, Object Read, Sense Dimensional Anomaly, Death Trance, and Telekinesis), has a number of Techno-Wizard weapons, armor and devices, and a Naruni personal force field, a half a dozen magic items at his disposal, including a Splugorth Staff of Pacification (see **Rifts® World Book Two: Atlantis** or the **Rifts® Book of Magic** for details). His personal fortune is anyone's guess, and though he pretends as if it were less than it is, he always has 50-60 million credits on hand. Counted among his principal vassals are his Imp assistant *Baarl* and a very mysterious D-Bee henchman, spy and assassin who is a *Thin One* (for statistics and abilities see **Rifts® Dark Conversions** or substitute for some other lethal being, a Sunaj Assassin perhaps). The latter is Figorro's primary enforcer and agent in MercTown who gathers information for its master as well as eliminating or possessing key targets.

128. Armstrong-Bennett TW Armaments: This store is a specialty shop that deals strictly in TW weapons. The owners won't even look at conventional weapons or even other types of TW devices, directing such inquiries elsewhere, mainly *Magic-Tech Inc.* However, when it comes to Techno-Wizard guns and other weaponry, Armstrong-Bennett has a complete selection as well as being willing and able to make custom TW weapons, and modify and repair TW weapons. As the name suggests, their area of specialty is Techno-Wizard *guns* and all things related to guns (i.e., magical gun sights, enhanced range, special ammo/damage, etc.).

Armstrong-Bennett is actually a sales outlet for Armstrong TW Armaments based in New Lazlo, but after one visit to MercTown, the owner knew she had to establish a second facility in town. It was a good move, because visiting mercs, adventurers and practitioners of magic from the east already familiar with Armstrong TW Armaments automatically gravitate to the familiar name.

The store is owned and operated by the married couple of *Randle Bennet* (5th level Techno-Wizard from MercTown; Unprincipled) and *Debbie Armstrong* (6th level Operator; Scrupulous). Debbie is the first cousin of *Martha Armstrong*, the matriarch of the New Lazlo Armstrong TW Armaments company, which is the reason they've been permitted to sell their products as an authorized dealer. Prices are at fair market cost

and the quality is as good as the main outlet in Michigan. Custom jobs building a TW weapon from scratch take 4-6 weeks, but if the customer is willing to pay double for a rush job, it can be done in 3-12 days; custom repairs and minor modifications in 1D6 days.

129. Weapons of Wonder: If it's magical and designed to kill, maim or incapacitate, then odds are you'll find it at Weapons of Wonder. The owner is an alien dimensional traveler named *Ankros Palix* (8th level Temporal Raider) who's developed a deep, abiding interest in magical weapons. Where most of his kind focus on amassing power, Ankros has always been fascinated with weaponry. An avid collector, he's scoured the Megaverse in search of his passion, that being mystically-charged armaments. Eventually, when his collection expanded beyond his ability to create dimensional pockets to hold it all, it seemed only natural to open a weapons shop.

Ankros set up shop in MercTown about four years ago, stocking the shelves with various duplicates and pieces from his collection he no longer cared to keep. The business is profitable enough to support his assorted ventures and dimensional trips, which is why the shop is only open about 6-9 months a year, the rest of the time Ankros is off exploring the Megaverse. While out adventuring, Ankros always has his eyes open for new deals, good prices and items he knows he can sell in the store.

The prices he resells items for are reasonable for rare and exotic weapons, ranging from 30-50% above their usual market cost. Customers who express a real interest in arcane weapons, not just for their value as tools but for their own sake, and spend a few minutes chit-chatting nicely with Ankros, are often surprised to see him knock 5-10% off the regular price. Note that Ankros will also buy and trade Techno-Wizard and other magical weapons and artifacts, but is really only interested in popular, common fare (i.e., items he knows he can sell quick and easy) and unique, strange and exotic weapons. He pays 10-20% of the standard price for relatively common but popular weapons, and 30-40% for of the typical market price for the rare and unusual, sometimes as much as 50% or 60%, but only if it is something truly rare or which he might want for his own collection. If the seller is willing to "trade" goods for goods, Ankros may offer an extra 5-10%, but never in credits.

The exact contents of the shop vary all the time, but whatever is in stock, several hundred assorted weapons will be displayed on the shelves and in M.D.C. glass cases. However, he always keeps the really rare and expensive items behind the counter, mentioning them only to those who seem like they can appreciate (and afford) such things, or who learn of it through word of mouth and specifically ask for the item(s). Among the current finds at the shop are a pair of Greater Rune Swords (one Anarchist, one Principled alignment), a Lesser Rune Dagger (Scrupulous alignment), 1D4+2 Scathach Druid weapons from England, a suit of Warlock Combat Armor, a Storm Breather symbiote and a few other symbiotic organisms from Atlantis. **Note:** Game Masters, feel free to stock the store with whatever you believe is appropriate, or which you'd like to tempt the player characters with, but don't go hog wild and put everything under the Megaverse in here. Use your discretion on what items become available and the price.

130. Stormspire Store: The city-state of Stormspire is legendary for its Techno-Wizard creations throughout North Amer-

ica. Its weaponry, vehicles and other products are highly sought after items among practitioners of magic everywhere. Not everyone has the time or nerve to make the dangerous journey into the heart of the Magic Zone for these coveted creations of magic and technology, so having a store in MercTown means big business, at least among mages and psychics. The store is officially authorized by *K'zaa*, a greedy and ambitious founder of Stormspire, and 90% of its profits line his pockets. The management of this store has been entrusted to one of K'zaa's closest friends, a Dragon Hatchling named *Tempestro* (7th level Mystic, Anarchist, and who likes to assume the form of a Dog Boy or Dog Boy with small dragon wings).

The store offers hundreds of Techno-Wizard armor suits, melee weapons, guns, devices and vehicles. (See **Rifts Federation of Magic** for a nice selection of TW weapons, as well as pages of 51-79 of **Rifts® Siege on Tolkeen: Chapter One**, or the big 352 page **Rifts® Book of Magic** for TW gear, rune weapons, vehicles, spells and, well, just about everything.) The selection is fantastic and prices are usually at standard market level or 10% higher. Moreover, Stormspire offers a 50 year warranty on all products; if any Stormspire product breaks, fails or otherwise malfunctions, *Tempestro* will immediately replace it from in-stock merchandise and return the faulty item to Stormspire to be repaired (and resold later).

131. MageFire Weapons: As part of its plan to expand into new and burgeoning markets, MageFire Inc. has opened a handful of stores in Rifts North America. MercTown is one such example and thus far, has proved to be the most successful of its new operations (others have been crushed by the CS or rivals, or just failed to catch on). Only sales in Tolkeen were better, but that venture was ultimately doomed as a result of the Coalition invasion. It is also more profitable than its counterpart in Lazlo given the general inclination of visitors in MercTown. The products of MageFire are really starting to catch on, although there has been some resistance because of the company's mysterious origins and rumors that the manufacturer comes from an alien dimension or world. **Note:** Notable MageFire products are described in **Rifts® Merc Ops**.

In charge of the MercTown project is a female humanoid who appears rather human, but is rumored to be a D-Bee or alien. Her name is *Thermea Davaesh* (9th level Techno-Wizard, Anarchist, P.B. 23). She is an excellent administrator and gifted salesperson who, together with her staff of twelve, has made tremendous strides in MercTown. From their base of operations in MercTown the company has recently begun to export weapons to Kingsdale, the Magic Zone and scattered communities throughout the southeast.

132. Bestiary of the Bizarre: Ever wanted a Dragonsaurus guard beast? How about a pet dinosaur or carnivorous plant? If the answer is yes, then the Bestiary of the Bizarre is definitely the place for you. This is a genuine *exotic pet store* with an emphasis on "exotic." The Bestiary deals primarily in unique and strange animals from North America, including dinosaurs and other critters from the New West, Dinosaur Swamp, Mexico and South America, but also from other places around the world, and even some extra-dimensional beasts. Most of his stock are relatively harmless animals, with a focus on exotic animals that can be domesticated and trained to function as guard animals, riding animals, beasts of burden or pets. Since slavery is illegal

in MercTown, only true, *non-intelligent* animals are sold. Prices are steep, because capturing and importing rare, exotic animals is far from cheap. Average small animals cost 2,000-4,000 credits, medium and large exotic creatures cost 5,000-25,000 credits, but large Mega-Damage animals are the most expensive, ranging from 20,000 credits to as much as a million! Trained Pegasus, Gryphon, and similar flying mounts, for example, cost 100,000-250,000 credits, as do Psi-Ponies (see **Rifts® New West**) and Demonrunners (see **Rifts World Book: Splynn Dimensional Market**). Such beasts are rare, available only from time to time as good fortune allows, and often sell out in an afternoon. Dinosaurs and more common, and popular animals, including several breeds of dogs, may remain in stock for weeks.

The owner of the Bestiary is a magic wielding humanoid reptilian (a Sowki; see **Rifts® Conversion Book One**) named *Kavos the Hunter* (9th level of experience, Anarchist). Where most of his kind seek to control and manipulate humanoids, Kavos has developed a fascination for exotic animals and the thrill of the hunt (or capture as the case may be). In fact, Kavos personally captures 30-50% of the exotic creatures he stocks, and often has delightful tales of adventure to share with the purchaser. His expeditions have taken him throughout North America, including the west coast wilderness, South America, the British Isles, Europe, Africa and Australia. Kavos has an entire crew of hunters who accompany him on expeditions. A crew that includes a half dozen Simvan, three Psi-Stalkers, a Brodkil, two Kydians, a Staphra Warrior, a Were-Dragon, and a Hawrk-Ka. **Note:** As personable and charming as Kavos may be, rumor has it that he was once a Slaver for the Splugorth known as *Kavos the Cobra*, and still works as their agent in MercTown. Certainly many of the exotic beasts he sells are also sold on Atlantis, and members of his hunting party are also traditional minions or slaves of the Splugorth (see **Splynn Dimensional Market** for most). Which raises the question, is Kavos just an entrepreneur with ties to Atlantis, or is he something more? And if a spy, who or what is he spying on and to what end? A Splugorth invasion? An attack on long time rival Naruni Enterprises, what? Proconsul Drago is well aware of the rumors and has the MercTown Defenders keep a watchful on this character – so far, with nothing dangerous or subversive to report. Then again, like Ankros and others in MercTown, Kavos disappears on “travels” 3-4 months of the year where he could be anywhere and consorting with anybody.

133. Simon’s Shop of Uncommon Wonders: The Shop of Uncommon Wonders is owned by *Simon Argus* (7th level Techno-Wizard, Scrupulous, age 26) and offers magic and Techno-Wizard devices not commonly known or found on Rifts Earth, including party favors, magic potions, magic candles and fumes, and other oddities from other dimensions. **Note:** Game Masters with the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** can easily adapt any potions, fumes and the likes from it. Also see **Rifts® Adventure Sourcebook 3: The Black Vault** for a random table of potions and other magic items.

Simon is something of a black sheep among MercTown’s magic society. The young Techno-Wizard is widely criticized by his peers for not upholding the proper image or attitude befitting a person of his station. This is because Simon bucks convention and follows the beat of a different drummer. He likes using magic to entertain and bring joy into people’s lives, consequently, he does not act serious and enjoys clowning around,

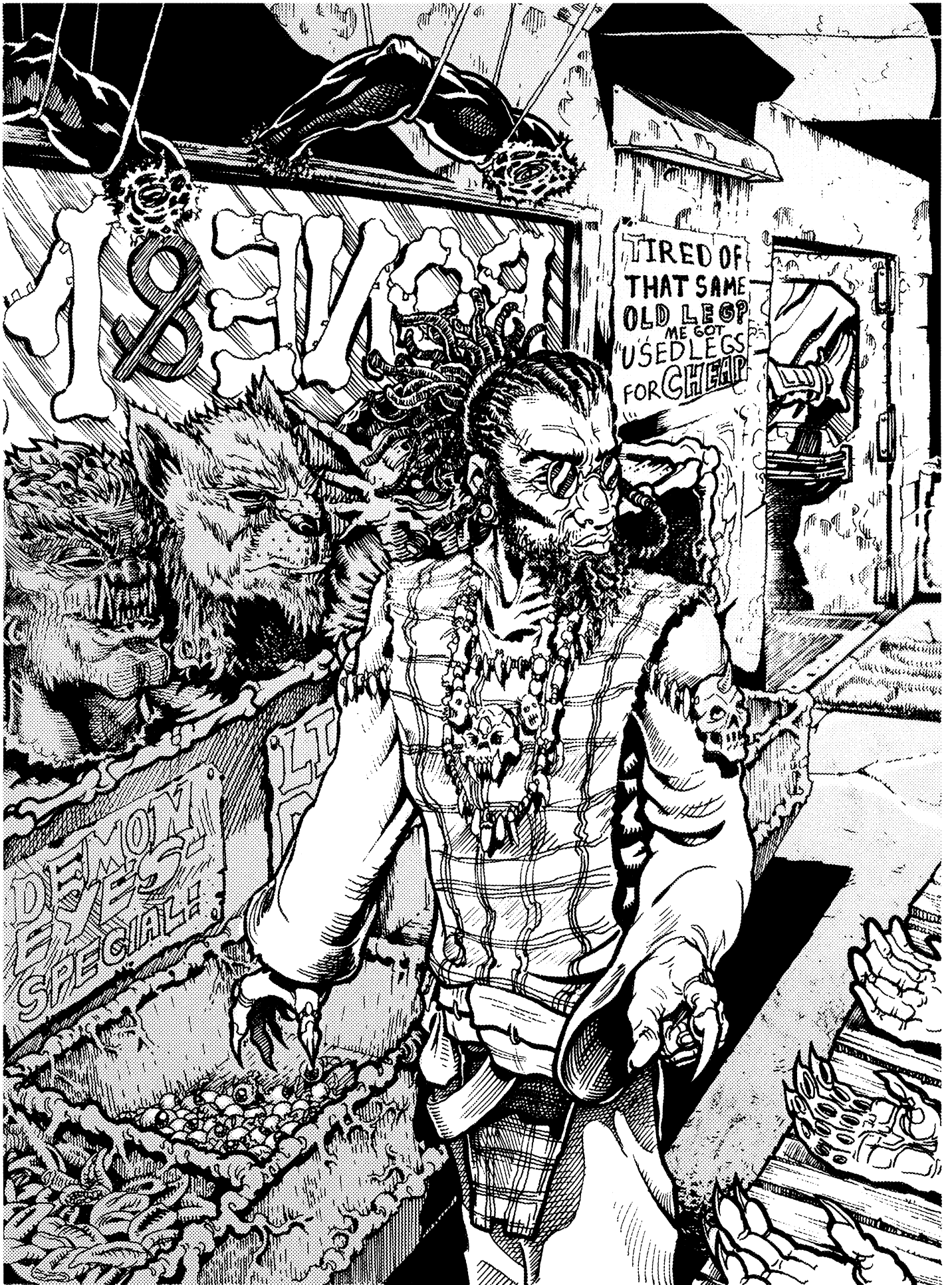
juggling and being silly. He has a casual attitude towards politics, enjoys what he does, and is rather impudent and outspoken when it comes to practitioners of magic who take themselves too seriously. Nor does he dress in traditional garb. Simon believes many sorcerers become arrogant and detached from ordinary people, and that too many of his fellow practitioners forget how to have a little fun with magic and fail to make their magic accessible to everyday people without a lot of pomp, fanfare or high cost. As a result, Simon tries to make his magic items affordable and available to anyone, as well as having fun with it. Twice a day, Simon puts on a twenty minute long show of prestidigitation and magic which draws hundreds of spectators from the street and into his store, especially children and non-magical folk. His act includes Simon seemingly pulling rabbits out from children’s ears, floating people off their feet, creating illusionary monsters and apparitions, juggling TW flaming swords, animating marionettes and objects, card tricks, tickling children 20 feet (6 m) away, stealing hats (both of the latter via Fingers of the Wind) and a number of other fun and silly tricks. Simon enjoys putting on these performances and has gained a small army of admirers, among them several gangs of local City Rats who watch his back.

All of this fun and frivolity offends a vocal minority (about 30% of the mages in MercTown, including Figorro Noussaurin, #127) who consider him a buffoon and a disgrace to the magic community. They are further annoyed by the fact that Simon’s irreverent shenanigans have made the Uncommon Wonders shop one of the most popular destinations in the Mystic Quarter.

For his part, Simon doesn’t care that he has earned the contempt of his peers by being true to himself, and tries to ignore his detractors. He sees them as being far too dour, serious and concerned with their showy appearances and the “mysteries” of magic, for their own good. Why not use magic to bring smiles to the faces of local kids, make life better for everyone and bring a little joy into everybody’s life? (**Note:** Neither Guild Master Cearcy nor Proconsul Drago see Simon as a fool or buffoon, but as a talented, imaginative and generous young man.)

Uncommon Wonders is filled with what his critics call all sorts of “frivolous and foolish” magic items like chattering teeth, laughing skulls, numerous joke items, bubble making machines, glowing crystals, magic door chimes, TW fireworks, singing statuettes, pens with invisible ink, clothes that adjust to the temperature (provides insulation in the winter and cooling in the summer), household items like TW alarm clocks (run on P.P.E.) and self-heating and drip free tea kettles, and similar “fun” or “useful” items at reasonable prices. The shop also sells a variety of other TW devices, including body armor, adventuring gear, and a small selection of basic weapons; the fun stuff along one wall, the serious items filling the rest of the place. Ironically, the fun and mundane applications of Techno-Wizard items represent 53% percent of his sales and it is the only place, anywhere for 500 miles (800 km) that offers such items. Prices are all reasonable and fair, and Simon Argus is loved by the non-magic residents of MercTown, his shop is a favorite stop for visitors, and a good number of fellow practitioners respect him just fine.

134. Bone & Marrow Shop: A fitting name for this grisly store of bones, teeth, claws, skins and body parts. As one might guess, the Bone & Marrow caters to Necromancers and other



mystic arts that require animal parts and strange components. Everything in the front of the store is herbs and roots, bones and hides of animals, gems and crystals, and other (perhaps disturbing but) acceptable components taken from animals and nature. However, it is rumored that in a private showroom in the back, the store owner keeps all the sort of items that regular folk, and even magic practitioners, find repulsive and disturbing. Items such as tongues, and eyes, and limbs and organs of beautiful animals and sentient beings like dragons, angels, demons, Faerie Folk, D-Bees and, yes, even humans. While the practice of harvesting, selling and using the body parts of humans and other sentient life forms is abhorrent to most people, it is common practice for Necromancers. Even the morally ambiguous government and authorities of MercTown have trouble with the art of Necromancy and have asked the Bone & Marrow to keep a low profile and stay out of trouble and controversy. So far, it has.

The owner, *Bakili Yoweri* (8th level Necromancer, Anarchist), has complied with the city government's concern and avoided trouble, but considers them to be petty and ignorant. Yoweri is unique to North America, because he was born and raised in Africa, where he learned and mastered the dark art of Necromancy. He was enslaved by the Phoenix Empire (Egypt), eventually sold to a Slaver in Atlantis and then to Horune Pirates who had need of his special talents. During a Horune raid on a village in Dinosaur Swamp, he managed to escape and made his way west toward *civilization*. The political fragmentation of the Federation of Magic was not to his liking, and for a time, he lived and fought in Tolkeen. Nobody's fool, he realized Tolkeen was doomed and moved a year before its fall to settle in MercTown.

Yoweri has never understood why Necromancers, Witches and practitioners of other dark magicks are so reviled in this part of the world (they are respected and feared back home), and resolved to make a place where Necromancers could come, feel safe and find the components they need for their magic. Consequently, the Bone & Marrow is as much a meeting place for dark mages as it is a shop. The front of the facility is the store, adjoining it is a large sitting area that resembles a coffee shop or restaurant decorated in bones and skulls. Indeed, drinks, brews, meat and soups are served at low prices (2-5 credits for drinks or a large bowl of soup, 6-10 credits for a typical meal). Behind the sitting room, through a secret panel in the wall, is the specialty shop filled with the preserved and petrified remains of sentient beings. Only people he knows or can identify as being a true Necromancer are allowed in this area. Despite his uncommon service, the shop is never busy and there is seldom more than a dozen patrons in the sitting room at any given time, and the shop is open around the clock, 24/7.

Within certain circles (select mercenaries, bandits, Cyber-Snatchers, Simvan, Brodkil and practitioners of the dark arts), it is common knowledge that Yoweri buys corpses, skin, bone and parts. Humans and most D-Bees get a meager 50-100 credits for an entire, fresh body, but Faerie wings, other select parts from Faerie Folk, dragon and demon components (mainly teeth, tongues, eyes, jaw, skulls, claws, horns, wings, tails, blood, and internal organs) get big bucks – 1000 to 12,000 credits depending on what it is. He sells components at market prices (typically 2-4 times what he paid for it), but charges exorbitant prices

for rare and magical components such as a Unicorn's horn, angel feathers, and parts from deities, Godlings, and Demon Lords.

Yoweri is currently suspected of having something to do with a string of disappearances in the Warrens, and of being a covert supporter (and benefactor) of the *Cyber Street Gang* who have grown bolder and more aggressive since his arrival a couple years ago. However, there is no evidence to link him to the disappearances or the gang.

135. The Pyramid Emporium: This building is shaped like a pyramid and contains several different businesses.

1) The Tattoo Shop employs an ancient looking Chinese man and his three lovely daughters, all skilled in the art of tattooing. These are ordinary tattoos, not magical ones, but they are superior in their artistic quality and vivid colors. Small tattoos cost 30-50 credits, medium (about the size of a man's fist) 75-150 credits, and large (about the size of a dinner plate) or elaborate design/illustration 250-700 credits. This place is very popular among mercs, Juicers, Crazies and Psi-Stalkers.

2) The Eyes of Fortune offers the services of three psychics (all second level) gifted in the art of fortune telling. They will do psychic readings, read tarot cards, and offer glimpses of the patron's fate and future for 50 credits.

3) Karla's Herb Shop sells common herbs, vitamins, and tobacco at reasonable prices.

4) Psychic Healer is a no questions asked clinic where first aid and psychic healing is performed; 100 credits for a Psychic Diagnosis, 300 credits for Healing Touch or Increased Healing, 100 for Induced Healing, 1000 credits for Psychic Purification, 10,000 for Exorcism, 500 credits per point of P.P.E. restored via Restore P.P.E., 6,000-24,000 credits for Psychic Surgery. Price varies depending on the severity of the operation, i.e., removing a bullet from an arm or leg is 6,000-8,000, so is setting a broken bone, but removing a bullet that is close to the heart or lodged in the brain, repairing a collapsed lung or severe internal bleeding, and similar life saving operations, are 18,000-24,000 credits.

5) Metal Man Body Chop Shop is a Black Market facility that sells and installs "used" cybernetics and bionics at 30% below standard market price. Like most Body Chop Shops, it is best if one doesn't get any major work done (01-78% survival rate), but minor implants, upgrades and partial bionic augmentation are reasonably safe.

6) Food Court features seven different vendors offering a variety of fast food for 1-5 credits per food item.

7) Mystic Tailor & Garment Shop takes up most of the second floor and is the largest business in the Emporium. It specializes in robes, cloaks, capes, head gear, outfits, clothing and belts for Ley Line Walkers and other practitioners of magic. Each class of mage has its own particular look, and this shop has a little something for every one. Prices are fair, quality is good.

The top floor residence – the peak of the pyramid is the personal home of a Shifter and his Ley Line Walker wife (specializing in Ley Line Magic; both are 7th level and have a deal with the Black Market who actually owns the Emporium). They use the power of the pyramid for their own purposes and both are frequently away on adventures.

136. Kraskut's Manor: Practitioners of magic lived in the surrounding area long before Kentek Drago transformed New Paducah into MercTown. The mysterious sorcerer, *Daemor Kraskut* (12th level Shifter) is the last of a family that has lived in the area for generations. Information about Daemor Kraskut is sketchy at best. He's every bit as enigmatic and reclusive as Archmagus Cearcy, which has led a few people to speculate that Kraskut and Cearcy are one in the same. Of course, that seems ridiculous, but all that people know about Kraskut is that he was once a good man, a friend of Cearcy (though no one knows when or how the two met), and is reputed to be fabulously wealthy, eccentric and powerful. Almost everyone will claim the man hasn't been seen in a decade, but that's not true. Though he started to keep to himself around that time, he did help form the Magic Guild and College, and did attend advisory meetings and the occasional social event up to about seven years ago. He has, reportedly, locked himself inside the mansion where he grew up and no longer ventures into the world. If he does venture forth from his secluded mansion, it must be in disguise or under a veil of magic (Metamorphosis, Invisibility, etc.) because nobody has seen him. Then again, most residents and visitors don't know what he looks like – there are no public or known photographic records of the fellow – so they wouldn't know if they just had drinks with him or not. Still, the rumors have taken on a life of their own and Daemor Kraskut is quickly turning into an urban legend.

Some of the most persistent rumors about the man are as follows: That his dabbling in the art of Shifting unleashed a curse or monster that has systematically killed all the family members over the last 50 years, save one – Daemor Kraskut – and that he's locked himself inside the mansion insane with shame and guilt. (In fact, that rumor has several variations to it.)

Another is that he was a founding member of the Federation of Magic who left when it became corrupted, or that he challenged and lost to Lord Dunscon and holes up inside the family home, where magical protection prevents Lord Dunscon's assassins and demonic minions from killing him.

Some claim he's inside the mansion alright, driven insane by something from a Rift, or that he's obsessed with completing the creation of some great, new magical device (not likely for a Shifter).

Others claim the mansion is empty and that Daemor Kraskut is off adventuring in other dimensions, or searching for an ancient and powerful magic artifact.

Perhaps Kraskut is building an army of undead or summoning a legion of demons to take control of MercTown or the Federation of Magic for himself.

Or maybe the Shifter did die a decade ago while in the midst of some arcane experiment, leaving his house empty save for the summoned monsters trapped within. Those who believe he's dead claim his spirit still haunts the mansion, which is why it has never been sold and why people passing by and mischievous children sometimes report hearing strange noises, shouting, howling and light coming from inside the mansion or on the grounds around it.

A popular spin-off of the "he's dead, sort of" theme is that he was turned into a vampire during a visit to Mexico (he is known to have done a lot of traveling in years past), and shutters himself inside to protect the people of MercTown. When his hunger

for blood becomes too great, he prowls the street, preying upon mercenaries and strangers. A variation nearly as popular is that he was a Loup Garou from the Canadian north, and dares not show his face any more, because his human form was slain by a monster from a Rift, leaving only the werewolf free to roam at night.

At any rate, the windows are shuttered, the doors barred from within and there is seldom any sign of habitation, making the place the subject of much speculation, ghost stories and innuendo. Indeed, it is a creepy, unnerving place that radiates powerful magic and a frightful aura. City Rats throughout the city insist someone or something does, however, live inside, and that shadowy things prowl the grounds at night. Furthermore, there have been at least two dozen disappearances over the last ten years (probably many more) in which the missing person was last seen near the Kraskut Mansion.

G.M. Note: The rest we purposely leave vague to provide a sense of mystery and to let *you* run in whatever direction you may choose. What exactly goes on at the Kraskut Mansion and the motives of this enigmatic Shifter are left to the individual G.M. to develop. Perhaps one or two of the rumors are correct, but any of them would make for an interesting plot line and adventure.



137. The Sphinx & Unicorn Tavern: For visitors to the Mystic Quarter looking for a place to meet with friends, relax and enjoy a few beverages, the Sphinx & Unicorn is often their destination of choice. Sure, one of the services of the Collegiate Arcane is to provide a meeting place for fellow practitioners of magic, but for some, it is far too stuffy, high brow or academic to truly relax, and for those not versed in magic, it seems like an intrusion. A popular alternative, is the Sphinx & Unicorn, a rather roomy, old fashioned, English-style public house. It is decorated in carved wood, paintings and a long, hardwood bar with brass fixtures. The wooden floor is great for dancing, the stone fireplace cozy, the padded armchairs inviting, and hand-carved furniture artistic without being pretentious. Placed around the common room for decoration are assorted nicknacks like crossed swords, gnarled oaken staves, the scale from a great horned dragon, a plaque carved from the bark of a Millennium Tree, and paintings or statues of mythical creatures.

The Sphinx & Unicorn is owned by *Gramos Weeman* (4th level Ley Line Walker, Principled) and his family. The work

staff is recruited from students at the college. In addition to being a Line Walker, Gramos is an accomplished brew master who concocts many of the beverages served at his tavern. In addition to a variety of fine beers, ales and wines, the pub also serves *Psi-Cola*, a selection of Faerie drinks (Bubbly Wine, Burgundy Wine, Cordial, Red Wine, and Sloe Wine), and for supernatural guests, there is a drug-laced, concentrated alcohol cocktail similar to the one served at *the Slaughter House Saloon* in Dragcona. (It gives a dragon and most M.D. beings a buzz the same as booze, but to any mortal, S.D.C. being with a P.E. less than 26, it's poison; 6D6+20 damage and must roll to save vs poison or fall into a coma for 1D4 days. See **Rifts® Atlantis**, page 31, for more details.) Prices are reasonable, with most drinks costing an average of 2-4 credits a glass or pint, 8-12 credits a pitcher, and meals prepared by Gramos's wife *Tcassa* (6th level Vagabond with professional level Cooking and Brewing skills) ranging from 10-22 credits. In addition to Gramos and Tcassa there are five other Weemans who work at the tavern at the bar or in the kitchen, as well as a pair of Brownies and a Pixie who help out behind the scenes and 12 waiters on interchanging schedules.

138. Third Eye Private Investigators: The world of Rifts Earth is a hostile and mysterious place, with the paranormal and the unexplained at work in addition to magic, psionics, alien and superhuman forces. People go missing, objects get stolen, and strange events occur without warning or any reasonable explanation. Even in fairly secure communities like MercTown, things happen. Things the authorities may be unable or unwilling to pursue and investigate thoroughly. When that happens, people can turn to *Third Eye Private Investigators*, an agency that employs *Ray*, *Rob* and *Tom*, three conventional style detectives/police officers (patterned after the CS ISS; all Unprincipled, all 5th or 6th level), *Greg* and *Jessie*, the forensics team (Scrupulous, both 5th level Rogue Scientists), *Randy Randal*, a Professional Spy (Anarchist, 5th level), *Jonny Zacks*, a Professional Thief (Aberrant, 6th level), *Roger Maxall*, a Bounty Hunter (Anarchist, 4th level), *Jenny Nowak* and *Mary Gowan*, a pair of Psi-Ghosts (Scrupulous, both 3rd level and constantly trying to outdo each other), *Jeff Rusling*, a Psi-Tech (Unprincipled, 4th level), *Craig*, *Marty* and *Sandra*, three Mind Bleeders (Anarchist, 3rd, 4th and 6th level), *Gabe Goldsmith*, the Mystic (3rd level Mystic), *Norton*, a Dog Boy (Scrupulous, 3rd level) and *Lisa "the eye" Sanders* (Unprincipled, 4th level Line Walker). *Rena Fox*, a 7th level Mind Melter (Scrupulous), is the owner and leader of this crew. Rena and some of the other psychics used to adventure together, before she came up with the idea of starting a detective agency.

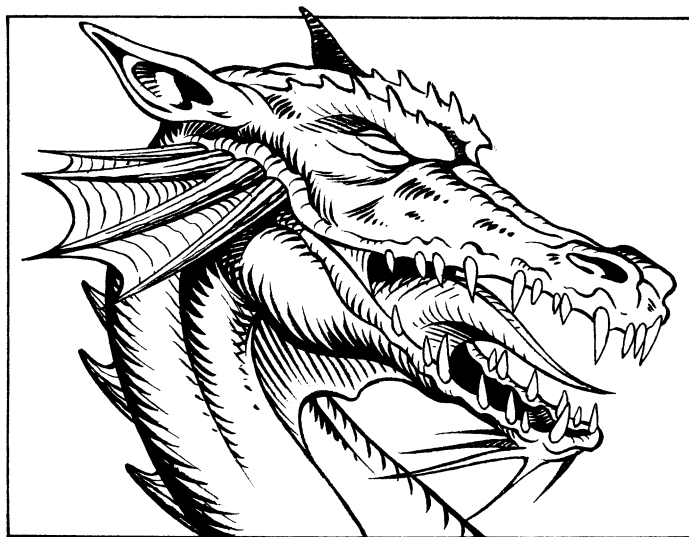
The price of an investigation is 70 credits a day, per person on the job, plus reasonable expenses. These folks will take any case, but most of their work is tracking people gone missing, investigating a crime the police have ignored or written off, surveillance on a cheating spouse or business partner, tailing a suspect and finding evidence, and sometimes, guard work.

What motivates the crew of the Third Eye is they all love solving puzzles, police work and unraveling mysteries. Most are also fascinated with paranormal phenomena and know a little about vampires, demons, and magic. They all have some experience under their belts, but are just starting out in the detective business (been at it only 7 months). Consequently, their prices

are low (should probably be double), their enthusiasm high and their ability pretty good.

139. Uncommon Knowledge: Hand in hand with the quest for spell magic, the majority of magic practitioners have a desire to expand their knowledge in general. The term "mage" is almost synonymous with scholar, though the orientation of a sorcerer's study is magic and the supernatural. Uncommon Knowledge is a rare bookstore that caters to both scholars and practitioners of magic.

A D'norr Devilman scholar named *Otax "Oxford" Ngr'Tus* (9th level Rogue Scholar) is the proprietor of this shop. Oxford has been a resident of Rifts Earth for 30 years and is a learned man when it comes to the history of Earth, his adopted home, its peoples and customs. The Devilman is also a collector of some note, having written numerous articles as well as a few books for various publishers in Lazlo, Kingsdale and Tolkeen. His collection of rare books for sale at the store includes several hundred volumes on philosophy, the sciences, lore of all kinds, monsters, the Xiticix, the Federation of Magic, history of the Coalition States, mythology, magic, herbology, holistic medicine, brewing, astronomy, ley lines and ley line storms, navigating Rifts, demons, and similar topics, as well as pre-Rifts books, magazines and info disks of all kinds. Books are priced reasonably, about 10-25% less than the market price and Oxford can sometimes do 5% more. He can also be persuaded to lend books to fellow scholars and mages, provided they leave a deposit equal to the full price of the book. Pays 30-40% of the going market for rare books and books in demand, 10-20% for less popular material.



140. The Crimson Dragon: After the Collegiate Arcane itself, this store is the primary source for magic in MercTown. The Crimson Dragon carries potions, poisons, scrolls, rings, magic items, TW weapons and devices from every manufacturer in North America, and a selection of exotic magic items from around the world (mostly items brought in by mages and mercs). About the only things that aren't sold here are magical components that come from living creatures, and items that can control or slay dragons.

What makes the store unique is its owner, a young *adult* Fire Dragon by the name of *Ignatos* (equal to an 11th level Mystic and 4th level Techno-Wizard; Anarchist). Where so many of his kind prefer a life of seclusion or adventuring followed by long

periods of rest, Ignatos enjoys the hustle and bustle of city life, and being around people – humans in particular. According to Ignatos, he lived deep in the Magic Zone in isolated hermitage for centuries (dating back to the Dark Age), collecting magic, sleeping atop a pile of treasure and defending his home from one wave of adventurers after another come to loot him. After a couple hundred years, this got monotonous and he decided to go out into the world and learn what humans were all about. He liked what he saw, and after a century of adventuring with humans (usually metamorphosed to look like one), he decided to settle in MercTown and open a magic shop.

MercTown was selected because it was a free city where people of any species, ethnicity, creed and occupation were welcome, plus it was not far from the Magic Zone where he had lived a century earlier. Buying and selling magic seemed like a great way to acquire new magic items, make money, hear rumors about other treasure perhaps worth going after, learn more about humanoids and enjoy one's self. Indeed, life in MercTown offers plenty of opportunities for adventure when he wants it, and leads on magic items. In fact, Ignatos has sponsored five expeditions into the ruins of Tolkeen (and elsewhere) in the pursuit of some of the magic treasures that disappeared when the kingdom fell to the CS. He even made two trips after rare treasures himself, but only one of the seven ventures turned up anything of real value and not an object of his desire.

Ignatos provides many of the traditional services of an alchemist. The dragon will sell information (all kinds, not just mystic knowledge), translate mystical symbols, identify magic items, sell magic weapons, armor, potions, herbs, crystals, rings, Techno-Wizard creations, Bio-Wizard and Rune weapons (when he can get them without having to travel to Atlantis), make and sell spell scrolls (up to 6th level invocations at a cost of 10,000 credits per level of the spell), and teach (for a steep price of 40,000-240,000 credits) spell invocations to spell casters.

Likewise, Ignatos is usually willing to purchase magic items for resale in the store or to expand his own collection, but only pays 10-20% of the market value. Getting more out of the greedy beast is like pulling teeth (dragon teeth), but the dragon has been known to pay as much as 50% of an item's market value (usually lying and claiming that's all it's worth) for rare magic he truly covets.

Ignatos has only been in MercTown for nine years (roughly the equivalent of about nine weeks for a dragon), but so far, he loves it here and truly enjoys life in the Mystic Quarter surrounded by fellow practitioners of magic and creatures of magic, even if they are lesser beings than he. His greatest passion is magic and the acquisition of its secrets and magic devices. He is a member of great standing in the Collegiate Arcane, and rumor has it that he is next in line for a position on its Guild Council. Ignatos is building an ever expanding circle of friends, colleagues and associates that includes Guild Master Cearcy, Figorro Noussaurin, Ankros Palix, Tempestro, and numerous mercs, merc companies, adventurers and practitioners of magic who are not residents of the city-state. Money is not a real concern for Ignatos, since over the long centuries of his life he's amassed a fortune of one billion credits in precious metals and gems alone. Not even he knows how much his personal collection of magic items is worth (at least a billion, probably many times more), all tucked away in a couple of pocket dimensions and a few other safe havens.

141. Bubble, Bubble Theater of Enlightenment: A Trio of Yhabbayar have opened a theater that specializes in comedy, musical comedies and, well, bubbles. Every afternoon, at 4:00 pm, there is a bubble story hour: an amusing tale or two told by a narrator and depicted with animated bubbles in the air created by two of the Yhabbayar. A thousand children throng to every show because they get in absolutely free and always get to sit up front by the stage. Each performance has lots of laughs, wonders and a positive theme like being true to yourself, making the right choices, standing up for what's right, helping others, sharing, accepting those who are different, being truthful, seeing and enjoying the beauty in life, and similar themes that entertain and teach a moral. The Bubble, Bubble Theater also puts on comedy shows, musicals, talent shows, and plays suitable for families and which inevitably make people laugh, think, and dream.

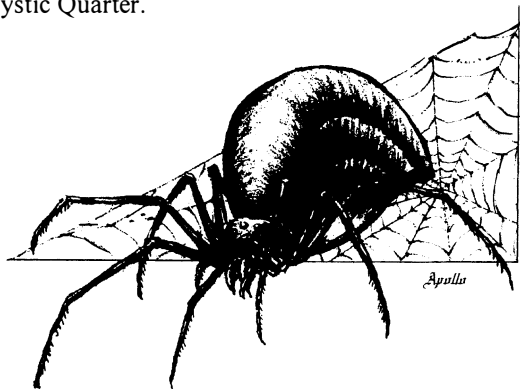
In addition to the Yhabbayar Bubblemakers, there are a dozen stage hands, a company of actors (humans and D-Bees), and freelance entertainers who get to ply their trade under the watchful direction of the strange little wise men, but every show involves bubbles at one or more junction (and always to the thrill of the audience).

Full productions run every evening from seven till nine, five days a week, Wednesday through Sunday, plus matinees on Saturdays and Sundays. Admission for children is only two credits, adults 8-15 credits depending on how elaborate the sets are or extensive the cast of actors. The daily (7 days a week) Story Hour is always at four, is free to kids (and Faerie Folk, who often watch from the rafters) and two credits for adults. Additional gratuities (tips) are welcomed (and typically spent by the Yhabbayar on food and clothes for orphans and the homeless). The theater seats 2600 and is usually 70-100% full for evening shows, and half full for story hour. And story hour is so fun, and the bubbles so amazing, that even hardened mercenaries come to enjoy the show! **Note:** It should be no surprise that the Yhabbayar and most of the theater cast and workers are good friends of *Simon Argus* and they endorse his *Shop of Uncommon Wonders* (#133). Simon never misses a new show and participates in Story Hour about 25% of the time. Some believe the Bubblemakers to be agents of *Psyscape* with a secret agenda, though no one can imagine exactly what that might be or how it might hurt MercTown. Coalition spies find this open display of D-Bee arrogance disgusting, and the theater will be toward the top of their list of dangerous and subversive places.

142. The Wizard's Chest: *Dorian Segali's* career as a magic merchant began in a roundabout fashion. A resident of MercTown for many years, he worked as a clerk for the Merchants' Association prior to the disappearance of his sister Tamara. A traveling Ley Line Walker and adventurer, Tamara wandered the Magic Zone using New Paducah as her staging ground. When she failed to return from a trip, Dorian inherited her possessions, several chests full of spell scrolls, magic items and various components and trinkets. Recognizing the chance to earn some extra credits on the side, Dorian began selling Tamara's possessions in the Mystic Quarter. Business proved to be so brisk and so profitable that he quit his clerical job and opened his own magic shop. He has since begun dabbling in the study of the magical arts himself (first level Ley Line Walker, Anarchist).

The Wizard's Chest is a small magic shop, with a limited and rather disjointed selection of goods – mostly items he can buy cheap from mercenaries and adventurers, or which he finds and snaps up at the Flea Market. A good number of mercenaries and adventurers know Dorian is in the market for magic and come to him with magical booty because he pays the best prices in town, 25-45% of the item's real value.

The Wizard's Chest may be popular among visitors, but most experienced practitioners of magic steer clear of it, mainly because the owner doesn't really know what he's doing. It's not that Dorian tries to defraud customers or pawn off faulty merchandise, it's just that he doesn't know that much about magic himself and often makes mistakes. From time to time he mislabels items (i.e. a flask containing a different potion, a scroll of greater or lesser spell strength than advertised, etc.). However, his prices are 10-25% below market, and it is a good place for neophytes, students and adventurers to equip themselves with common items at an inexpensive price. Other merchants who sell magic consider Dorian and his shop to be a joke, and fear that one day he'll accidentally unleash something terrible upon the Mystic Quarter.



143. The Spider's Bite: A shop popular with mages, spies, bandits and assassins. It sells a variety of herbs, teas, and wine, but specializes in *poisons* all named after the spider or other insects. Most have to enter the bloodstream via a cut, ingestion (eaten) or injection into the victim to be effective. Some of the most notable and their cost are as follows. **Note:** Unless stated otherwise, a successful save vs poison means the poison has no effect; no damage, no symptoms, no penalties.

Wasp Fever causes a fever that lasts for 2D6x10 minutes from a single one ounce dose (a larger dose only extends the fever for 2D6 minutes). The victim burns with fever, feels weak, sweats profusely, is very thirsty, and finds it difficult to concentrate; -6 on initiative, -2 on all combat bonuses, -2 attacks per melee round, reduce Spd by half and skills are performed at -30%. **Note:** A successful save vs nonlethal poison means the penalties and effects are half and last for only 1D4 melee rounds. The poison has no flavor and is available as a fine powder for solid food or liquid for drinks or injection. Cost: 1200 credits per dose.

Scorpion's Blood does 2D6 S.D.C. damage, causes dizziness, a throbbing headache and some nausea. The victim loses initiative, speed is reduced by 30%, -15% on skill performance, and -2 on all combat moves/bonuses. Duration is 1D6+4 melee rounds per dose. Moving faster than 30 mph (48 km) will cause the person to vomit every other melee round (loses two melee attacks for that round when that happens). Cost: 600 credits per dose.

Scorpion's Sting Poison does 4D6 S.D.C. damage per one ounce dose. Has a strong, bitter taste, so it is hard to disguise in food or drink, but can be applied to weapons that cut or stab, or may be injected. Cost: 500 credits per dose.

Black Widow's Embrace is a poison that renders its victim paralyzed for 1D4+4 minutes per dose, but leaves him conscious and aware, just unable to speak or move. Cost: 3500 credits per dose.

Tarantula's Bite does 1D6 S.D.C. damage and causes the victim to feel itchy for 2D4x10 minutes. The itchiness is annoying and distracting; no initiative, -1 on all combat bonuses, -5% on skill performance, and looks bad: red marks on the skin and the person seems to be afflicted by lice or something else that causes itching and scratching, effectively reducing the character's M.A. and P.B. by half for the duration. Available as a crystalline powder contact poison (blow, sprinkle or cast on skin). Cost: 800 credits per two ounce dose of crystals or one ounce liquid dose that can be placed in drinks; has a sour taste.

Spider's Tongue is a truth serum that must be injected into the bloodstream as a one ounce dose, three for mortal Mega-Damage beings and six for dragons and supernatural beings (both of which are +3 to save). Within 1D4 minutes the victim feels groggy and has trouble performing even simple skills (-50%, reduce attacks per melee and combat bonuses by half, and Spd by 90%), similar to someone who has had way too much to drink and is on the verge of passing out. While under the influence of the Spider's Tongue, the victim must answer any question put to him truthfully, but the question must be clearly stated and to the point. Duration: 1D6+2 melee rounds, two questions may be asked per round. An additional dose may be administered to prolong the duration, but any more than that will inflict 2D6 S.D.C. damage and make the individual unresponsive as if in a drunken stupor; just giggles and gurgles. Cost: 1800 credits per single one ounce dose.

Spider's Kiss Poison causes weakness of limb to the point that the victim can barely stand, walk or even crawl. Speed is reduced by 90%, attacks per melee round to two, no combat bonuses and skills are -80%. Duration is 1D4+1 minutes per one ounce dose, additional dosage increases the duration accordingly, but nothing else. Cost: 2000 credits per dose.

Spider's Dream Poison renders its victim unconscious and unwakeable without a counteractive medicine. Duration is 1D4+3 minutes per dose. The poison has a slight chalky taste and is available as a fine powder for solid food or liquid for drinks or injection. Cost: 1000 credits.

Spider's Blood Poison does 5D6 S.D.C. damage per one ounce dose, but also inflicts symptoms and penalties that last for 1D6+1 minutes (8-28 melee rounds); causes stomach cramps, nausea and shooting pain. Victims are -2 on initiative, -1 to all combat bonuses/moves, reduce Spd 10%, and -5% to skill performance. Cost: 1000 credits.

Spider's Bite Poison does 6D6+8 damage direct to Hit Points per one ounce dose, and is a lethal poison. It has a slight taste and may be slipped into most drinks, other than water or milk, without being noticed. Half the potency when mixed with soup or solid food. Comes as a light brown powder for food or a liquid for drink or injection. Cost: 1600 credits per dose.

Spider's Serpent Venom is a poison that is potent enough to affect dragons! Does 1D6x10 M.D. to dragons, 1D4x10 to lesser

demons, and 3D6+18 to mortal Mega-Damage beings per one ounce dose (no damage to Hit Point creatures). Furthermore, damage inflicted by the poison cannot be healed via bio-regeneration for 10 minutes, until the poison has worked itself out of the creature's system. The poison has a sweet taste and comes in a reddish brown powder or a dark liquid for food or injection. Cost: 25,000 credits per dose. Note: Successful save vs lethal poison means the creature takes only 3D6 M.D.

144. Magic-Tech Inc.: This small company markets itself as experts in Techno-Wizardry and mystic-mechanical solutions. Unlike the other TW businesses in MercTown, the focus of Magic-Tech Inc. is not on the production side, but rather the repair and recharging of Techno-Wizard devices and batteries. Given that most TW businesses in MercTown are strictly retailers of pre-fabricated devices, their only competition is Armstrong-Bennett and private Techno-Wizards. The field of Techno-Wizardry is not strictly limited to weaponry, there are hundreds of other applications, including vehicles, common tools, assorted survival equipment (i.e. SCUBA gear or similar breathing apparatus) and mystically-altered computing products. That leaves the people at Magic-Tech Inc. with a lot of work and a fair share of the Techno-Wizard profits to be had in MercTown. The company is highly reputable, does quality work and has very reasonable prices (fluctuates within 5-10%, up and down, of the market cost).

Note: *Maestro Wilson* (7th level Techno-Wizard, Scrupulous) is reputed to be a former member of the fabled *Republicans and the Tech Republic*, whom many believe are nothing more than myth. However, there have been some recent rumblings about, and alleged sightings of, the Republicans in the east, giving people cause to wonder if this group is real and whether or not they are making a reappearance. Maestro Wilson does, indeed, herald from the East Coast and he is a technophile of the highest order. A man fascinated by technology, but also Techno-Wizardry. The Republicans are supposed to be throwbacks to the Golden Age of man, not users of magic, but then nobody really knows much about them except for sketchy myths of their heroic exploits during the Dark Age. Wilson is a classic nerd, a man more comfortable in the company of mechanical devices than polite society. He thinks in terms of mathematical equations and mechanical processes, and seems somewhat absent-minded when dealing with mundane issues. The man is apolitical, non-religious and has no agenda save to tinker with machines and combine magic with modern technology. Even managing his company is a secondary concern. Without the constant assistance of his wife, *Freda "Dee" Wilson* (5th level Operator), who runs the day to day administration of the company, it probably would have gone under long ago. In addition to the Wilsons, there are a dozen technicians (half Operators, half Techno-Wizards; all 4th to 8th level) and another dozen salespeople at Magic-Tech Inc.

145. Mystic Medicine Clinic: It is a well known fact that bionics and cybernetics interfere with the practice of magic and the use of psionic powers. Moreover, even in the high-tech world of Rifts Earth there remain maladies and injuries that are beyond the ability of modern medicine to cure or repair. Mystic Medicine is a clinic that borders on the level of being a small hospital with four operating rooms, two 12 bed wards and 12 private rooms, and a handful of administrative offices and storage. *Wanda Koloski* (10th level Mystic, Principled, knows all

healing and restorative magic spells, including Exorcism) is the founder of the clinic. She employs three other mages who specialize in healing magic, two psychic healers, two Holistic Doctors, one Cyber-Doc (with major psionics; healing and Ectoplasm) and six nurses (whose skills include Paramedic and Brewing) to handle patients.

Prices are roughly the same as psionic healing, although residents of MercTown get a steep 35% discount; 100 credits for a Psychic Diagnosis, 50 for a standard physical examination, 250 credits for Healing Touch (magical or psionic), 300 for Increased Healing, 900 credits for Psychic Purification, 10,000 for Exorcism, 500 credits per point of P.P.E. restored via Restore P.P.E., 6,000-24,000 credits for Psychic Surgery.

Magic healing prices: 150 credits for Light Healing, 300 credits for Heal Wounds or Life Source, 1000 credits for Greater Healing, 300 credits for Breathe Without Air (typically a temporary life saving measure for patients who can't breathe on their own), 200 credits to Negate Poison, 300 credits to Cure Minor Disorder, 800 credits to Cure Illness or Fortify Against Disease, 500 credits to Purify Food/Water, 10,000 Credits for Exorcism or Expel Demons, 10,000 for Stone to Flesh, 10,000 credits for Super Healing (M.D.C.), 6,000 credits to Cure Phobia, 50,000 credits to Remove Curse, 50,000 credits for Lifeward, and 60,000 credits to Restore Limb; Restore Life, Restoration and Resurrection are *not* known/available at the clinic (but mages who know them typically charge millions or demand some kind of service or deed in exchange, buyer beware).

146. Mystic Draughts: This shop looks similar to a winery, its interior lined with racks of bottles, vials and flasks that contain all manner of mystical healing potions (instantly stops bleeding and restores 4D6 Hit Points or S.D.C.; costs 25,000 credits), cure poison (instantly negates all but M.D. poisons, and restores 2D6 points of damage cause by poison; costs 20,000 credits), potion of Strength (adds 1D4+6 points to P.S. attribute for 10 minutes; costs 10,000 credits), potion of Super-Strength (turns ordinary P.S. into Supernatural Strength for three minutes; costs 500,000 credits), drought of Superhuman Endurance (same as spell for ten minutes; costs 15,000 credits), drought of Superhuman Speed (same as spell for ten minutes; costs 100,000 credits), drought of Compulsion or Charm (to be used against someone, functions the same as the spells; must be drunken; costs 100,000 credits) and other magic elixirs and brews, as well as tea, coffee, moonshine and quality wines. They also sell Holistic herbs and S.D.C. poison (same as Scorpion's Blood and Scorpion's Sting described under #143).

Among locals and regulars around the Mystic Quarter the owners of this shop are known as "The Weird Sisters," a name taken from the ancient, pre-Rifts play *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare. They have cultivated this name by hanging a silver plaque above the shop's door on which has been etched a passage from the play in flowing script (Act 4, Scene 1, Lines 4-38) which concerns the making of a mystical potion. The three women are not sisters, but the passage and the appellation are quite fitting to the trio of brew masters. The Weird Sisters include *Titania of the Greenwood* (9th level Druid), *Persephone LeDuc* (7th level Mystic) and *Kateira Mandrake* (6th level Herbalist). All three are members of the Guild Arcana, highly regarded members of the magic community, and the closest of friends. Unlike some merchants in the Quarter, they do their best to keep potent magic out of the hands of those who would

pose a danger to innocents or the truly evil (all are Unprincipled alignment).

Temple Street

There is an area within the Mystic Quarter known as Temple Street. It is a section that includes a few churches, temples and many shrines devoted to gods and spirits of Rifts Earth, some ancient, some alien. While these temples are not technically part of the arcane, they are found within the Quarter. Given the blanket edict of toleration issued by Proconsul Drago, all people and faiths are welcomed in MercTown. However, some locals view the temples with considerable suspicion and, in some cases, fear. Some faiths represent potential evil cults and demon worshipers, and even temples and shrines of light and goodness can inspire religious zealotry, rivalry and strife.

So far, the temples and shrines have proved benign and include a shrine to nature spirits, dragon gods, an ancient pantheon from Earth's past, several shrines and totem poles to Native American spirits, a temple of the Druids (actually a garden with a small house where its three Druids reside), a temple of Darkness, a temple of Light, a temple of the Olympians (Greek Gods), and a number of shrines dedicated to obscure gods, spirits and forces of nature.

147. Temple of Light & Darkness: The largest of the temples in the Mystic Quarter is the one devoted to the Pantheons of Taut (Ra, Set and other Egyptian gods of Light & Dark), otherwise known as the Church of Light & Darkness. The building is an impressive structure with classic columns supporting a pyramidal roof, all carved from mottled black and white marble. Inside are effigies of the ancient gods of Egypt, the gods of light (Osiris, Ra, Thoth, Isis, Horus, Bennu and Apis) on the left opposed on the right by the gods of darkness (Set, Anubis, Apepi, Amon, Anhur, Ammit and Bes). On many parts of Rifts Earth, especially in Africa, these gods continue to be worshiped. The Pantheons of Ra, Isis and Osiris are prominent among dimensional travelers as well and are known in other parts of the Megaverse. The Temple in MercTown has a relatively large following of humans and non-humans alike.

This temple was founded by a man of African descent named *Malachi Bobadi* (8th level Rifts Priest of Ra). Once a slave in the Phoenix Empire, the young Malachi escaped into the Sahara where he was taken in by nomads and trained as a Priest of Ra. Later in life, Malachi was given a quest that required him to venture to North America (it has been suggested that this quest might have been to recover one of the parts of Osiris that had found its way to the Magic Zone, but whether that is true or not remains a mystery). Discovering that religion of any kind was all but absent in much of the continent, Malachi decided to build this temple. He dedicated it to both pantheons out of respect for the necessity of balance in the Megaverse. Since that time others have joined the church and there are now 13 priests who serve at the temple with six serving the gods of darkness and seven who serve the gods of light, including the High Priest Malachi Bobadi; all live in harmony.

The Temple of Light & Darkness provides all of the standard services of a church: It holds regular services for worship, presides over religious festivals and ceremonies, performs various rites, exorcisms, and healing. To the faithful, these are totally

free, though donations are appreciated. Outsiders can also make use of these services, but must pay modest fees of 200-800 credits for healing, 4,000 credits for exorcisms, and 80,000 credits or more for the attempted removal of curses. For protection, the Temple is guarded by a quartet of minions who include a Phoenixi, a Ramen and two Tautons. (Note: For information regarding the Pantheon of Light & Darkness, see *Rifts® Africa*, pages 36-70.)

148. Temple of the Four Elements: To call the Temple of the Four Elements a church or religion is a misnomer. Those who congregate at this temple do not worship any deity or pantheon, but rather they "worship" the forces of nature. It is an organization that is akin to the Collegiate Arcane, a guild of sorts for Warlocks/Elemental Fusionists, Druids and Shamans who pursue the mysteries of nature and the four elements: fire, water, earth and air. Currently the official membership of the temple is only around 200 Elemental Fusionists of all types, but visitors also come and worship at this, and other temples and shrines down Temple Street. In fact, an increasing number of farmers, woodsmen, scouts and sailors frequent this temple with prayers for fair weather, good crops, good hunting and safe voyage.

149. The Shrine of the Warrior: A church dedicated to soldiers and warriors seems inevitable for a place called MercTown. A total of 38 different gods of war, hunting, stealth and cunning are represented in this large building. There is no actual priest, but a cadre of caretakers who use donations left in the church to maintain the upkeep of the facility.

150. The Winds of Fate: Although not a temple or church per se, the Seer people come to see in this modest building claims she is divinely inspired and draws information from the spirit world and gods of light. In an age and place where the existence of magic is unquestioned and psychic phenomena are clearly evident, the art of fortune telling is no longer a ridiculed profession. That certain individuals possess the ability to see beyond the boundaries of the physical world is well known and thus, there are many who wish to see a glimpse into the future, to have a question answered, help in selecting a course of action or to consult with the spirit world. For those in MercTown who seek one of these services, their destination is this meager shop operated by a D-Dee woman known only as *the Fortune Teller* (an Unprincipled, but used to be Anarchist, 8th level Mystic with psionic abilities and magic abilities, notably the spells: See Aura, See the Invisible, Sense Evil, Sense Magic, Detect Concealment, Commune with Spirits, Locate, Second Sight, and Oracle, among others). Like many others in the Mystic Quarter, the history of this woman is a mystery; all that is known is that she possesses great magical power, especially in the realm of clairvoyance, seeing the future, summoning spirits, and consulting with the supernatural.

As a young woman, the Fortune Teller, known as Khorrax among her own people, attempted to capture a number of ally spirits in a magical item in a misguided attempt to expand her power. For that sin she was cast out, banished through a portal that led her to the Magic Zone. Over the years, Khorrax has come to terms with her dark past, learned the errors of her ways and reformed. Now forced to build a new life, she has begun to use her magic to help other people using spells and psionic powers.

The Warrens District

A sad truth of human civilization is that every society has its dark side. Every city in the history of mankind, no matter how glorious, has had its impoverished sections of slums and the wrong side of the tracks. MercTown is no exception, and has its “bad part of town” – the Warrens.

Stretching from the Spokes Commercial District to the Waterfront, the Warrens makes up nearly a third of the New Town. It is a seedy, rundown urban jungle populated by the impoverished, the disenfranchised and the undesirable elements of society. A large percentage, roughly half, of its inhabitants are migrant D-Bees, many of whom are refugees from Coalition purges of their own ‘Burbs, and refugees from the war in Tolkeen. The rest are new immigrants from alien dimensions, unfamiliar with Earth and struggling to adapt to an inhospitable alien environment. The poor search for better employment opportunities for themselves and their families, but without much recourse, many turn to crime. Still others are the widows and orphans of mercenary soldiers and adventurers who died hundreds of miles away. They struggle to make their own way, but often end up working like slaves to barely survive. Some become victims of the streets and perish, some become mercenaries who seek fortune as fighters, others seek adventure in distant lands, some turn to crime and others fall victim to disease, starvation, violence, and man’s inhumanity to man.

As is often the case in a desperate and depressed region like the Warrens, it is a hotbed of shady, illicit and criminal activity. Within its boundaries are scores of bars, taverns, dens of iniquity, pawnbrokers, Body Chop Shops, fences, illegal augmentation clinics, gambling halls, drug dens, sweat shops, underground fight clubs, flop houses, brothels, roving gangs, Cyber-Snatchers, crooks, con artists, thieves, arms dealers, bullies and bosses. Frightening but true, the Warrens aren’t any worse than most Coalition ‘Burbs, wilderness towns and start-up kingdoms. In fact, it is several cuts above several squalid towns and kingdoms in the region. Some of the buildings in the Warrens are shabby, and the worst of them in various stages of dilapidation, but the majority are sound, and half are made of M.D.C. materials. Likewise, the general level of lawlessness, while pervasive, is not wild or out of control. A handful of bosses control their turf and keep the bloodletting to a minimum. While many of the honest people and low level crooks living in the Warrens are regularly victimized by their neighbors, roving gangs and bold or hopped up criminals, most survive to tell the tale (and to be victimized again). The Warrens have *never* seen the levels of violence found in the Coalition ‘Burbs, where gang wars sometimes wipe out entire neighborhoods and CS authorities “purge” (a euphemism for razing a community to the ground and killing all in their path) entire sections of the ‘Burbs, sometimes the ‘Burbs in its entirety. Nor is it close to the gang-ridden mean streets of El Paso or places in the Pecos Empire. The people don’t have to fear raids from barbarians or pirates, or would-be conquerors that many wilderness towns suffer, and even most (90%) of the buildings and homes of this poorest section of town have amenities like hot and cold running water, television, radio broadcasts, local internet access, paved or gravel streets,

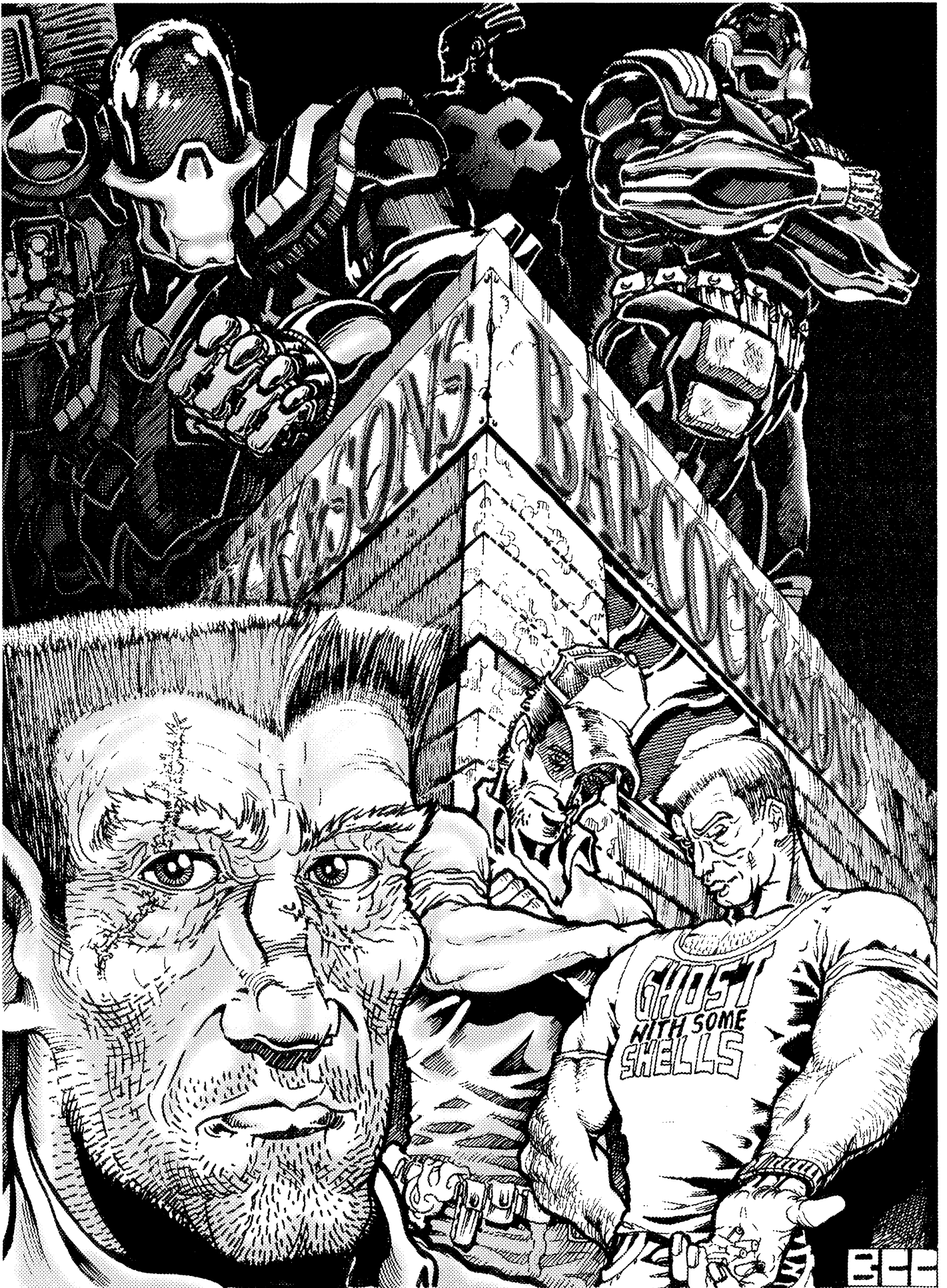
and a government that cares about and defends its citizens. Compared to most other communities in North America, living in the Warrens is like living in paradise.

The Warrens has a burgeoning economy fueled by large infusions of cold, hard credits brought in by mercs and other visitors. Far from scaring outsiders away, the rough and rowdy men of arms who visit the city-state are attracted to the seedy drug dens, the brothels, pawnbrokers, gambling dens, bars and vice the community has to offer. The work may be degrading, but it’s there to be had. Moreover, the constant ebb and flow of visiting outsiders means a fresh crop of green recruits, fools, drunks and careless visitors to con, trick, cheat and rob. Taverns are prime attractions for a large percentage of those in the mercenary trade, and even the greatest warrior can be rolled with minimal trouble if he’s drunk enough. Hard men leading hard lives, want nothing more than to unwind after a tough military campaign, and find rough pleasures and cheap thrills to spend their money on and make themselves feel alive. For these men and women, the normal pleasures found in the Commercial District are too tame and mundane for their tastes. Thus, they turn to the seedy part of town and its illicit offerings, bringing with them their war booty and fat paychecks to spend. Unfortunately, little of this cash filters down to the common people, but nevertheless, propels a prosperous criminal underground economy and makes the bosses and others near the top of the food chain wealthy. The rest make do with what scraps fall their way and count their blessings.

The large profits to be made by the few makes lethal violence undesirable. Violence would only drive away customers, which would be bad for business. As a result, the organized criminal element carefully polices its own to keep things under control. This is not as difficult a task as one might suspect. While criminals abound in the Warrens, the vast majority (75%) belong to, or have ties to, one of two principal organizations: the *Black Market* under Boss Dutcher, and the *Ravenshome Thieves’ Guild* under Maritus Flavarel, the secret head of the Guild (see #55 in the Spokes). The two organizations own or have controlling interest in approximately 75% of all the businesses and operations in the Warrens, with that total divided more or less equally between the two syndicates. Only small gangs and resourceful or lucky individuals have been able to establish any kind of real foothold in the area, and many of those eventually get absorbed into one of the two syndicates. Those who try to “break into” the Warrens are harassed to the point that they leave, relent and join the bullying organization or are quietly eliminated. Even in a rare, all-out gang war, it is in everyone’s best interest to keep collateral damage to a minimum.

The influence of the Black Market and the Ravenshome Guild is pervasive in the Warrens. While no formal treaty has been arranged between the two groups, there is, nonetheless, a tacit peace agreement in place. The leadership of both groups realize that the Warrens are large enough for them both to flourish. Thus, so long as neither organization steps too hard on the toes of the other, there is peace.

Make no mistake, in the Warrens these criminal groups are the law. The MercTown Defenders rarely bother to patrol its streets, and only get involved to quell riots or gang wars, or investigate murder, and even then, they go in and get out as quickly as possible, leaving clean up and real justice (or lack



thereof) to the local powers that be. So long as relative order is maintained and visitors are not seriously injured or frightened away from the city-state, the crime bosses and street punks are left to their own devices.

Notorious Gangs

Aside from bands of teenage City Rats (mostly petty crooks, lone wolves and punks working for the two big syndicates), the Black Market and Ravenshome Guild, there are a handful of other gangs worth noting. Compared to the former organizations, these other groups are nickel and dime outfits, ones too insignificant to pose a threat to the ruling syndicates but dangerous in their own rights. These small groups may have ties to the Black Market or Ravenshome Guild, working for one or both from time to time as extra muscle, freelancers or surrogate operatives, but are, for the most part, independent operators. Most take the form of street gangs and criminal groups with little organization, no real agenda and memberships composed mainly of teenagers and young adults. In the past, those gangs that have attempted to expand or muscle in on the rackets of the Black Market or Ravenshome Guild have been handily destroyed or recruited, with their top members becoming lieutenants and captains of importance and power in the larger organization.

A second threat to the smaller organizations is a cult of fanatic vigilante warriors who call themselves Red Terror. These fanatics kill hundreds of criminals and gang bangers every year, even completely wiping out several whole gangs whenever they go on a vendetta. While some survivors of a Red Terror vendetta desperately crave vengeance, most notably the Greenskins, none of them are willing to cross the deadly cultists because nobody knows who they all are. Even the Black Market and Ravenshome Guild try to steer clear of direct conflicts with the Red Terror. Such is justice on the streets of the Warrens.

G.M. Adventure and Story Notes: The groups described in the pages that follow can pose a threat to the Player Characters or become a source of conflict, rivalry or even employment to our heroes (in some instances, they may not realize they are working for a group of criminals). Jobs may include guard work, protection, intelligence gathering, tailing, and collections (of money or items owed to the gang), to robbery, blackmail, frame jobs, arson, assault and murder. These gangs may also be in the market to hire mercenaries, mages, crooks and adventurers for “out of town” assignments such as bushwhacking and robbing a CS, merchant or syndicate convoy, wacking an enemy or rival outside the borders of MercTown, finding someone or something they want, or to take on a Black Market or Guild without evidence of the gang’s direct involvement (i.e., the gang dupes the player group into doing their dirty work without actually hiring them or has a front man, probably using a false identity, to hire them). Each gang can be a *recurring* enemy, rival, employer or source of trouble and adventure or encounters in the Warrens.

Lastly, it is important to note that while these gangs and to a lesser degree, even the Ravenshome Thieves’ Guild and the Dutcher Syndicate, rule their turf like tin-plated gods and tyrants, often without fear, they feel out of their element, weak

and vulnerable outside their turf and seldom, if ever, leave the borders of MercTown. Thus, they are sharks trapped in a fish bowl of their own making, which is why they hire “outside muscle” for jobs in the world beyond MercTown.

The Booster Boys

The gang that seems to have the most promising future is the Booster Boys. They are not your average group of hoods, but skilled professionals who don’t engage in violent crimes, nor do they have a specified turf. They operate on smarts rather than on brawn, and their crime of choice is vehicle theft. Composed of some three dozen City Rats and thieves, most of whom are in their early to mid-twenties, the Booster Boys account for approximately half of the vehicle thefts in the Warrens and a third of MercTown as a whole. While maintaining their independence, the Boys are careful to remain on friendly terms with both the Black Market and the Ravenshome Thieves’ Guild, selling their misbegotten wares equally between the various fences of the two organizations. In the past few years, the Boys have compiled a small fortune, some fifteen million credits, which allows its members to live high on the hog, buy the latest technology and gear, and be counted among the elite of the gangs.

Racial Breakdown: 38 total members: 21 humans, 4 Vanguard Brawlers, 4 D’norr Devilmen, 5 Quick-Flex Aliens, one Kremin Cyborg, two Power Leeches, and one Demon-Dragonmage (second in command; see *Rifts® Psyscape* for the last two races).

O.C.C. Breakdown: 12 City Rats, 9 Professional Thieves, 10 Operators, 2 Headhunters, 2 Smugglers, and the two Power Leeches and one Demon-Dragonmage R.C.C.s.

Common Gang Member Alignments: Anarchist (60%), Miscreant (15%) and Aberrant (25%).

Colors: None. The Booster Boys have no standard uniform or colors, instead they tend to dress according to their own tastes. Since the organization is small enough that each member knows all the others, there is no need for patches or insignia for identification purposes. Most of the Booster Boys tend to dress in flashy or stylish clothing, even casual business wear, like the color black, and nearly all of them sport a pair of sunglasses and like high-tech toys.

Mega-Damage Weapons: Only about half of the membership carries weapons of any kind. Those who do arm themselves do so with light, easy to conceal S.D.C. or M.D.C. pistols, stun weapons and/or a Vibro-Knife.

Body Armor: Only a third of the Booster Boys wear any kind of obvious body armor, another third wear Naruni personal force fields or Bandito Arms or Triax “plain clothes” armor (M.D.C. clothing with 18-28 M.D.C.), and the remaining third don’t wear armor at all.

Bionics and Cybernetics: Very popular amongst the Booster Boys, roughly half have 1D4+3 cybernetic implants and/or Black Market cybernetics, and two are partial cyborgs (Headhunters).

The Gang Leaders: David “Davey Boy” Bradley (7th level Operator/Car Thief; Age 26, I.Q. 15, M.A. 23, M.E. 13, P.S. 15, P.P. 20, P.E. 11, P.B. 12, Spd. 14) is the founder and ultimate leader of the Booster Boys. A human in his mid-twenties, Davey



Boy has been stealing cars then chopping them for parts since he was fourteen. For eight years he worked for Gabriel Marsden at *Still Ticking Motors* as a part-time mechanic and car thief. He never made any real money as a street level booster, so he went into business for himself. He recruited his own crew of young, up-and-coming car thieves and has established, arguably, the best car theft ring in all of MercTown. Davey Boy loves plotting jobs and running the show, but also likes to get his hands dirty, so he still boosts cars and chops them up for resale whenever the urge strikes him, which is quite often. He's a whiz when it comes to breaking locks and knows the schematics of most car electric and security systems by heart. While willing to take risks, Dave does not believe in using violence or "car-jacking" (stealing a vehicle at gunpoint while the driver is still inside), preferring to boost parked cars, sometimes within seconds after the driver exits the vehicle and is still in sight. He relies on his cunning, charm and honed mechanical skills to get by.

The second in command of the gang is a Demon-Dragonmage who goes by the nickname of Wheeler (5th level Demon-Dragonmage R.C.C., age 20, Aberrant; see **World Book 12: Psyscape** for details on this race). Like all members of his race, he possesses limited magic abilities and demonic powers. He finds humans interesting, and MercTown, particularly the Warrens, a fun place to adventure and flex his muscles. He considers Davey Boy to be an excellent leader, tactician and playmate. Wheeler also likes fast cars, hovercycles, rocket bikes and the thrill of stealing vehicles, the chase and close combat, where his inhuman nature gives him a decided advantage over most opponents.

Quick Hands McGee (not his real name) is fast even for a Quick-Flex Alien. (I.Q. 13, M.A. 21, M.E. 11, P.S. 10, P.P. 28, P.E. 12, P.B. 8, Spd 44; age 24; ambidextrous, and has the skills Paired Weapons, Targeting and Quick Draw, W.P. Knife, W.P. Pistol, W.P. Energy Pistol, Palming, Pick Pockets, Computer Operation, and Literacy: American, among others). Quick Hands is the team's unofficial third in command, and Davey Boy's best friend, protector and most trusted member of the crew. Prior to signing on with the Booster Boys the D-Bee was a small-time hustler working the streets. A gifted salesman with natural charisma (M.A. 21) and amazing dexterity, Quick Hands managed to keep his head above water running con games, picking pockets (and jewelry plucked right off a person's body), and hawking various goods that "fell into his hands" or "fell off the back of a truck." In those years he also managed to make solid connections with all of the major players in the criminal underworld of MercTown, including the Black Market, Ravenshome Guild, junk dealers and vehicle chop shops. Quick Hands McGee is no car thief himself, instead he manages the finances of the group, locates prospective clients, negotiates deals and acquires the supplies that the actual "boosters" need and troubleshoots. The latter includes watching Davey Boy's back.

Some notes about the Booster Boy Crew: With only a few exceptions, the crew love Davey Boy and are completely loyal to their daring leader. This is, in part, because he is often on the street with them, because he has never left one of "his Boys" to hang in the wind, and because the Boys get a fair cut of the profits (bigger than anyone in MercTown offers), making them all successful and wealthy. On the down side, success has made

many of the Booster Boys arrogant, cocky and a little reckless, working under the belief that they'll never get caught and if they do, Davey Boy and the rest of the crew will get them out of a jam. Although each of the Booster Boys have made enough money to go straight or even retire wealthy men, most spend their money as fast as they make it, and love the thrill of the boost.

Gang & Criminal Activity: The extent of the Booster Boys' criminal activity is vehicular theft. If it has an engine and some means of propulsion, these thieves can steal it. Generally speaking, the gang takes custom orders from clients throughout the city, as well as boosting anything that looks fun to drive and worth their while. They are consummate pros and have a long client list, including the Black Market and Thieves' Guild. They never engage in armed robbery or violent crimes, and likewise stay clear of turf wars and other gangs in town. While this makes them appear weak to some, they can take care of themselves and have connections in high places (i.e., the Black Market and the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild). Every member of the gang is a skilled driver with the skills of Pilot Automobile, Hover Car/Vehicle and Hovercycle, all at 74% or higher.

Note: The group has three vehicle chop shops scattered across the Warrens and a warehouse near the Waterfront, all property bought and paid for by Davey Boy. Each operates under the cover of a mechanic and vehicle restoration shop, with the warehouse as their main staging area for jobs. The building is filled with all the tools necessary for their trade, including high-tech diagnostic computers and laptops.

Cyber Street Gang

The most violent and reckless of the gangs in MercTown is the Cyber Street Gang. Relative newcomers to the criminal scene in the Warrens, this gang was founded only a year ago. Its members are mostly teenagers from the neighborhood known as Cyber Street, an area that has a high concentration of cybernetic Body Chop Shops, Body Snatchers, Body Fixers and low budget Cyber-Doc clinics. Growing up, these teens watched as high-rolling mercs, Headhunters and 'Borgs paraded into these clinics for expensive augmentation. Sick of being have-nots, they armed themselves and set out as Cyber-Snatchers, so they could get bionic augmentation for themselves and really "be somebody." Their youth and lack of discipline makes these vicious criminals wild and reckless, attacking augmented individuals without fear of consequences or much concern for the welfare of their fellow gang members. To avoid bringing the Black Market or MercTown Defenders down on their heads, they usually leave their victims beaten and maimed, but alive. However, their violent behavior has not gone unnoticed. Ted Dutcher, the head of the Black Market syndicate in MercTown, has already warned them to stay away from customers of his chop shops. While they have toed the line thus far, it's only a matter of time before they cross the wrong people or target the wrong victim, and wind up dead, most likely at the hands of some vengeful mercenary group.

Racial Breakdown: 26 total members: 12 humans, 4 Humanoid Rat Mutants (escapees from Lone Star), 3 rogue Monkey Boys (escapees from Lone Star), 4 Vanguard Brawlers, two Larmac, and one Troll.



O.C.C. Breakdown: 10 City Rats, one Juicer, two Juicer wannabes, 6 Cyber Snatchers, 3 Headhunters, one full conversion cyborg, a Master Assassin, a Burster and a Mystic.

Common Gang Member Alignments: Miscreant and Diabolic.

Colors: The symbol for the gang is a stylized cybernetic eye lying in a pool of blood with the letters “CSG” underneath. Most of the members wear colorful “hovercycle racer” style jackets with this patch sewn on the sleeve or back. Attire varies depending on the tastes of each individual but the traditional City Rat style prevails.

Mega-Damage Weapons: All members carry M.D. weapons, from Vibro-Blades and M.D.C. chainsaws, to medium and heavy energy pistols, with half also carrying heavy energy rifles and grenades.

Body Armor: Half of the gang members have cybernetic armor or wear medium or heavy body armor, from Juicer Plate to Huntsman and others; they like the slick, tech look to their armor, not the retro gladiator styles.

Bionics and Cybernetics: Aside from making easy money through violence and chopping and cutting bionics and cybernetics out of their victims, the main goal of these criminals is to become augmented themselves (mainly bionics) to make themselves powerful, fearsome and respected. Rather than sell all of their stolen cybernetics, they are constantly trading their stolen wares for upgrades to their existing cybernetics, and new implants, weapons and bionics. Two thirds are effectively partial cyborgs, even the mutant animals, and all others have at least one bionic limb and 1D6+4 implanted or minor cybernetic augmentations. The only holdouts are the Juicer and his two wannabes who are saving up loot and credits to become just like him.

The Gang Leaders: The leader of the Cyber Street Gang is a massive troll named Savage Razortooth (6th level Headhunter Assassin with reinforced spine and shoulders, bionic arms, weapons, lungs, and internal organs; age 22, Diabolic). The mean-spirited Troll ruled the corner of Cyber Street for years (over the other locals at least if not the visiting mercs). Becoming a gang leader was just the logical next step in his career as a Cyber-Snatcher. Unable to see beyond the scope of his immediate surroundings, the unimaginative and none-too-bright (I.Q. 8) brute settled on the easy route of Cyber-Snatching. With so many mercs visiting “his turf” every day with pockets full of credits, it seemed to him the easiest and most direct path toward money and power. Savage is mean, aggressive and short-sighted. He leads the group by sheer force of will and brute strength, forcing the others (also not very intelligent) to abide by his dictates. What he fails to realize is that he’s his own worst enemy, and that through his actions he is bound to get the entire gang massacred. Savage has a handful of cybernetic implants and optics in addition to his bionic arms, weapons and cyber-armor (taken from a full conversion cyborg). Even his own jaw and fangs have been replaced with bionic equivalents, hydraulic-powered steel jaws and teeth (inflicts 1D6 M.D. with a bite) covered in synthetic skin. His bionic claws do 4D4 M.D. and he is fond of wielding a giant M.D. chainsaw (4D6 M.D.).

Second in the pecking order of the gang is the feral, free born killer Mutant Rat, Rotten Rotty (3rd level City Rat Assassin, Age 6, equal to a teenager, Diabolic). Rotty is the son of an escaped experiment from CS Lone Star. Without the benefit of discipline and conditioning by CS trainers, this young mutant animal grew up to be a vicious, aggressive, psychopathic bully. Full of hate, but with nowhere to direct his rage, he joined the Cyber Street Gang. He is absolutely loyal to Savage, his only true friend, and backs his every play. Usually this means that he assists Savage in intimidating and bullying the others into following their wishes. Rotty has a suit of Juicer Assassin Plate and fights with a pair of Vibro-Swords (2D6 M.D.) and a Neural Mace.

Jace Everson (2nd level Juicer, age 17, Miscreant) is the next in the pecking order and the primary lieutenant of Savage Razortooth. Of all the gang members he is the one with the most potential. He is clever and a quick learner (I.Q. 12) and could probably take over the gang if he wanted to, only he doesn’t care. He just wants to live high before he burns out and dies in the next three or four years.

The Iron Monkey (5th level CS Monkey Boy mutant) is the real brains of the outfit (I.Q. 24, M.A. 19, M.E. 21, P.S. 20 [bionic], P.P. 20 [bionic], P.E. 13, PB. 7, and Spd. 66 [bionic]; Diabolic; age is 8, equal to a human in his early twenties). The Iron Monkey has managed to replace three quarters of his body with bionics and is as savage, ruthless and brutal as his Troll leader. Brilliant and cunning, the mutant has figured out how to manipulate and influence Savage without the Troll or anyone else realizing it. In many ways, Iron Monkey is quickly becoming the power behind the throne and the real leader of the gang.

Gang & Criminal Activity: The members of the Cyber Street Gang are essentially all-purpose knuckle-breakers. Hardened by growing up on the mean streets of the Warrens and searching for easy money and a way to become powerful themselves, they are little more than a group of bionic-powered thugs and cutthroats. Killing comes easy for most of these sociopaths, so they brutalize, maim and kill anyone who gets in their way or challenges them in any way. The entire gang functions as Cyber-Snatchers, tearing bionics out of living victims (targeting drunks and otherwise distracted or impaired individuals), and as bushwhackers who jump unsuspecting mercs and visitors who look like they have a lot of credits or valuables (weapons, magic items, jewelry, etc.). Headhunters and cyborgs are their primary targets, but nobody is safe. Loudmouths bragging about a big win at the casino or making big on a mission, beware. The Cyber-Rats, mutant rats and Monkey Boys in the gang are always lurking in the shadows, searching for marks to rob. When they find one, they tail him and contact the rest of the gang. When an opportunity appears, they attack. Savage and his crew also hire themselves out as muscle to the Thieves’ Guild, rich merchants and other underworld figures.

Note: Time is quickly running out for this violent group of antisocial misanthropes. In their first year of operation the gang has made a long list of enemies that includes several Cyber-Docs, the Black Market and several mercenary groups. There is little doubt that their days are numbered, the only question is how many people will suffer before someone takes them down.



The Greenskin Gang

Once the third most powerful criminal group in the Warrens, the Greenskins have fallen on some very hard times of late. Today the gang ranks somewhere nearer to the bottom of the heap. The engine of their destruction was the Red Terror, a fanatical cult of vigilantes, mercs, mages, and superhumans, who have begun to wage a private war on crime in an effort to protect the innocent residents of the Warrens. When the Red Terror first arrived on the scene a few years ago, the Greenskins made the mistake of initiating a turf war with another gang that put the Red Terror and a lot of innocent people in the middle of it. When the dust cleared, the rival gang was destroyed, three dozen innocent people were killed, a hundred others were injured, and the Greenskins had suffered heavy casualties themselves. The Red Terror then turned the tables on the Greenskins and hunted them while they were distracted and crippled. Today, with less than a third of their original membership intact, the Greenskins are barely able to hold on to what little of their turf remains. Furthermore, their reduced status makes it impossible for them to recruit the best talent, and the Red Terror continues to pick them off one by one.

The Greenskins is a gang that is reminiscent of El Paso's Troggs. Its members are mainly non-humans, embittered youths (ages 14-21) with no education and few opportunities. To these unfortunates, the Greenskins represent a way out, a chance to gain some respect, power and street cred. Most are street toughs who make a living with their fists and expect to die on the

streets before the age of thirty. They have fallen to performing muggings, robbery, selling drugs and a little Cyber-Snatching.

Racial Breakdown: 162 total members (used to be almost 600): 30% Psi-Goblins, 15% Ogres, 10% N'mbyr Gorilla Men, 15% Larmac, 10% Vanguard Brawlers, 10% humans, and 10% others (including Simvan, Quick-Flex Aliens, Grackle Tooth, Zenith Moon Warpers, and other D-Bee and monster races).

O.C.C. Breakdown: 25% City Rats, 25% Vagabond thieves, 10% Bandits, 18% Headhunters (various types), 2% full conversion cyborgs, 10% Juicer Wannabes, 5% Psychics and 5% other criminal and thuggish occupations.

Common Gang Member Alignments: Anarchist, Miscreant and Diabolic.

Colors: Stolen from the Troggs of El Paso who inspired the gang, the Greenskins wear dark green leather jackets decorated with spikes and chains, and/or green partial armor; the Headhunters and 'Borgs wear heavy, green body armor. The gang insignia: a spiked ball and chain against a light green field.

Mega-Damage Weapons: Can be anything but most carry Vibro-Blades, ion blasters, grenades, small magic weapons, and similar easy to conceal devices. They are also known to use poison and are opportunists who will use and do anything to win a fight.

Body Armor: Only about 50% of the gang has access to full Mega-Damage body armor; Plastic Man, Urban Warrior, Crusader, Bushman and recycled Coalition Dead Boy armor are the most common. They'd love to get some Naruni gear to even the odds against their enemies.

Bionics and Cybernetics: About 30% of the Greenskins have 1D4+1 cybernetic or bionic weapons and/or implants.

The Gang Leaders: Beef Shorzat (6th level Vagabond thief, Anarchist, age 27; I.Q. 10, M.A. 9, M.E. 12, P.S. 30, P.P. 18, P.E. 17, P.B. 7, Spd 22) leads the remnants of the Greenskins. He is a muscular, intimidating Ogre with an overly developed upper body (P.S. 30), but is short for his race, six feet, six inches (1.9 m) tall. As the senior-most surviving lieutenant of the war with the Red Terror cult, he found leadership of the gang thrust upon him. Beef was formerly a member of the Troggs and one of the original founders of the Greenskins. As a veteran of the gang wars in El Paso, he is well versed in the tactics of urban gang warfare. While not particularly bright, he is nonetheless quick on his feet and a survivor, with animal-like cunning and amazing luck. Beef is also a sharp opportunist with an eye for recognizing weakness in others and a good sense of when to strike and retreat. He uses the wolf pack approach of sending in a wave of attackers who strike and drop back to let the next Greenskin strike, and on and on, recycling his troops until the victim is worn down and falls to weight of numbers and attrition. Probably the only reason that the gang still exists is Beef's iron will and keen survival instincts. Although he is a capable leader, Beef truly despises the position, and is constantly second guessing himself. He is also at a loss as to how to track down and hurt the Red Terror enough to get them to back down. He will pay big for information on the leaders (and the families) of this hero-cult so he might get some leverage on them, or at least extract a bloody revenge. Unwilling to return to the Troggs a failure, he has resolved to stay in the Warrens and try to rebuild the gang.

The Greenskins' second in command is a wily Psi-Goblin by the name of Brath Stealthfoot (8th level Assassin and Major Psionic; age 31; I.Q. 14, M.E. 17, M.A. 2, P.S. 18, P.P. 19, P.E. 21, P.B. 6, Spd 28; Diabolic; see **Rifts® World Book 12: Pyscape** for details). The "old man" of the group at 31, Brath is a stone-cold killer, a cannibal, and the group's enforcer. He maintains the appearance of loyalty, but aspires to be the leader. To this end, he is shoring up support among the other Psi-Goblins and at the same time has secretly joined the Ravenshome Thieves Guild in hopes of gaining their support in his plans to take over the Greenskins.

Blackshell Brunswick (5th level High-Tech Bandit) is a Grackle Tooth former Highwayman from the New West. His face and chest were severely injured and disfigured in a blast that nearly killed him. Today he seldom shows his face and is almost constantly clad in a suit of green environmental body armor that is so dark it looks black except in the brightest light. He is a rising star in the gang and is loyal to Beef, even though he is constantly griping about him behind the Ogre's back. This has made the scheming Brath mistake Blackshell as a potential ally, but the Grackle Tooth really despises all Psi-Goblins. If it were left to him, he'd slaughter every last one, pack up the gang and move them to the New West or Pecos Empire, transforming them into a band of raiders. However, it's not up to him and Blackshell continues to follow Beef's commands.

Gang & Criminal Activity: The gang members spend most of their time hanging around their turf, squeezing money from the local businesses (20% of their income), robbing visitors, engaging in robbery and fencing, and harassing those weaker than

they. Extortion of locals not under the protection of either the Ravenshome Guild or Black Market accounts for most of their income. To supplement this, the Greenskins try to hire out their services to the more powerful organizations.

Notes: A collection of bullies preying upon the weak, and targeted by the Red Terror, the gang's days in the sun are over and its end seems inevitable. Unable to successfully compete against the heavy hitters, the power base of the Greenskins is rapidly eroding, and even newly formed gangs are challenging their turf. Nevertheless, the gang will probably continue to exist for years to come, and who knows, maybe a comeback is in their future.

Mephisto's Horsemen

The newest threat to appear in the Warrens is the hover bike gang known as *Mephisto's Horsemen*. This gang is said to have originated in Tolkeen about ten years ago, before the Coalition War, around the same time that New Paducah was being transformed into *MercTown*. There is a great deal of speculation as to the true nature and motives of Mephisto's Horsemen, because they are clearly no ordinary street gang. The Horsemen are too well organized and have been establishing gangs across the country, mainly in big population centers and places with high technology or advanced magic, or both. Over the last eight years, Mephisto's Horsemen have established gangs in Old Bones (near Free Quebec), the Island Kingdom of Montreal, New Chillicothe, the 'Burbs of both Chi-Town and Iron Heart, the Manistique Imperium, Ishpeming (Northern Gun), Kingsdale, Lazlo, the City of Brass, Stormspire and now, MercTown. Who knows where they may appear next?

This is very unusual, because most gangs are born on the streets of their local community and, except for raiders, they establish "turf" – areas within the city or town – that they claim as theirs and seldom travel far from it. While it is true there are roving gangs, such thugs and raiders typically travel from place to place robbing and looting, and leave when things get too hot to handle; they don't establish satellite gangs that remain in the community. This suggests the many gangs calling themselves Mephisto's Horsemen are part of a much larger organization with some sort of secret agenda and plan in place, not that outsiders know what that may be. No agency has been able to successfully infiltrate the Horsemen's ranks, not even agents from the CS, Free Quebec or the Federation of Magic.

One disturbing fact is known about the group: a large number of its members (at least half) possess magical or supernatural powers. This has spurred speculation that the Horsemen are the servants of some extra-dimensional force. Many suspect that this is the demonic Lord Mephisto, whose name they have taken. Some believe they are agents of some other chaotic god, while others point to the number of tattooed Ogres in their ranks which suggests of *Splugorth* or *Atlantean* involvement. Groups who have targeted the bikers for destruction have met with failure. The Coalition States has gone so far as to purge entire 'Burbs where the Horsemen are known to ride, but to no avail. Mephisto's Horsemen are resilient and lucky, so no matter what measures are taken, the gang always seems to survive.



Not much is known about Mephisto's Horsemen. The gang is very secretive about its activities, purpose and goals, revealing little of their overall objectives to the outside world. Only those who are recruited into the fold are privy to the group's mysterious agenda. All that the authorities in MercTown know about the Horsemen is that it is a very exclusive gang whose members are drawn from a select group of races, with humans and Ogres being the majority, plus a handful of Elves and other *human-looking* D-Bees. All of its members are hovercycle bikers and the vast majority (90%) are covered in tattoos (some magic tattoos, others not). In MercTown, the gang engages in extortion, narcotics trafficking, arms dealing and hiring themselves out as muscle; on occasion, they have worked for the Black Market in a security capacity. Since they arrived in the Warrens four years ago, anyone who's dared to tangle with them has suddenly disappeared and is believed to have been murdered or sold into slavery. Criminals willing to drop their macho act admit to being scared of the Horsemen, and a big part of that is fear of the unknown. So far, the Red Terror is the only organization that has directly attacked the MercTown chapter of Mephisto's Horsemen, but it is the cultists who have come out on the bad side of each conflict.

Racial Breakdown: 50 total members: 22 Ogres, 13 humans, 5 Elves, and the rest are other D-Bees.

O.C.C. Breakdown: 7 Headhunters, 7 Bounty Hunters, 9 Master Assassins, 6 Tattooed Men, 12 Maxi-Men (see **Rifts® World Book 2: Atlantis**), 2 Sunaj Assassins, 2 Mystics, 1 Ley Line Walker, 2 Freelance Spies and 2 City Rats.

Common Gang Member Alignments: Anarchist, Miscreant and Aberrant, only a few are Diabolic.

Colors: Like throwbacks to the biker gangs of the 20th Century, the Horsemen dress in jeans or leather clothing, and black (M.D.C.) leather jackets or black M.D.C. body armor. The garb is decorated with the gang insignia of a horned devil skull surrounded by flames. Most Horsemen sport a host of tattoos all over their bodies (most have some 40-70% of their bodies covered) and many have the insignia tattooed on them somewhere. Many wear garments that are designed to expose their tattoos or which can be easily removed to display the tattoos.

Mega-Damage Weapons: Approximately half the Horsemen carry modern Mega-Damage weapons from pistols and rifles to heavy military weapons, and most have at least one Vibro-Blade. A quarter carry Techno-Wizard and other magic weapons (1D4 of them), and the rest rely entirely on their natural powers or *Tattoo Magic*.

Body Armor: Black, silver and red are the favorite, most common colors and color combinations for armor, clothing and bikes. About a third (namely those with Magic Tattoos) wear little or no armor, the rest wear whatever suits them, from light to heavy to magical (TW and others).

Bionics and Cybernetics: Virtually none. Only 5% have cybernetic implants and even then only out of medical necessity.

Magic Tattoos (special): Somewhere in the neighborhood of half to two thirds of all of the Mephisto's Horsemen have Magic Tattoos (see **Rifts® Atlantis** and **Rifts® Splynn Dimensional Market** for details on Tattoo Magic). *T-Men/Tattooed* and *Maxi-Men* receive the normal amount of tattoos according to their O.C.C. Other members chosen for this gift are given 1D4+2 Magic Tattoos plus an additional tattoo for roughly ev-

ery three levels of experience. Ten to thirty percent, however, have ordinary, non-magical tattoos, though it is hard to tell the difference. This suggests they are somehow linked to the Splugorth of Atlantis or True Atlanteans or some new faction possessing the rare knowledge of Magic Tattoos that no one yet knows about.

The Gang Leaders: In charge of the MercTown chapter of Mephisto's Horsemen is *Archenon "Arch" Helikos* (9th level Sunaj Assassin; Miscreant). As a member of the Aerihman clan of True Atlanteans, Arch has long been a willing servant to the Splugorth trans-dimensional empire. Trained as one of the elite Sunaj Assassins, he is a lethal combatant and cunning intelligence operative. Over the past three hundred years, he's conducted missions at the behest of the Splugorth in the *Three Galaxies* (see the *Phase World®* series of Dimension Books) as well as on Earth in Africa, Europe and South America. Like most of the Horsemen his body is nearly covered by tattoos including the facial mask or *moko* of New Zealand's native Maori, which he had done during his travels on Earth.

Ackbar al-Shafar (6th level Maxi-Man; Aberrant) serves as the second-in-command. An Ogre from the same African community as *Dawud al-Jahiz* of Braddock's Bad Boys (see **Rifts® Mercenaries**, page 65) he was sold to the Splugorth by the Phoenix Empire. Immediately upon arriving on Atlantis he was purchased by a Gargoyle and thrown into the gladiatorial arena. Ackbar survived the first harrowing weeks, showing great promise, intelligence and resourcefulness and was purchased by a High Lord, provided with magical tattoos, and trained as a Maxi-Man. That High Lord treated the Ogre as a trusted vassal rather than as a slave, and taught al-Shafar to read and showed him the better side of Atlantean culture. It was that same High Lord who created Mephisto's Horsemen and decided to send his trusted Ogre minion to MercTown. Ackbar remains loyal to his former master, mainly out of gratitude for his superior treatment, and is totally devoted to the success of the organization. The Ogre feels that his loyalty extends to Arch since the Sunaj was selected as his superior, and thus throws his full support behind the man. Quiet and remarkably soft-spoken for an Ogre, Ackbar is a very bright, dangerous man.

Gang & Criminal Activity: On the surface, Mephisto's Horsemen appear to be a rough and tumble biker gang that engages in racketeering, extortion, narcotics trafficking, weapons running, robbery and murder. Murder for hire, murder in self-defense, murder to protect the gang's honor (and secrets), murder in cold-blooded anger. However, there is clearly much more to this gang than meets the eye. They are more like a commando team than a gang, with a strong military-like structure and command in place. Exactly what their secret and purpose might be remains a mystery. For now, the gang members go through the paces of being thugs, keeping their skills honed as they wait for . . . what? A signal? A sign? The right moment? A command? An invasion? An arrival? What?! Most seem inordinately interested in technology, magic and politics, and seem to take note of such things for their future reference. They never speak of Atlantis nor admit to having ever been there. A few seem to wrinkle at the mention of the Splugorth, the arenas and slave markets of Atlantis, and appear to have no love for the Splugorth, but that could mean almost anything or be an act to throw off suspicion. Meanwhile, fools who dare to challenge,

question, threaten or disrespect the group are flirting with death, and are dealt with swiftly, without mercy and usually with lethal force. Likewise, spies and infiltrators are killed on the spot, and even being suspected of such duplicity is grounds for murder.

The Truth Behind the Mystery is yet to unfold. The few who have hired or worked with the Mephisto's Horsemen gangs claim they fight with the precision of a well oiled machine and seem ready to pounce into action in an instant. Vipers keeping busy until they are called to do what, for whom? While most assume they answer to an evil master, probably the Splugorth, others are not so sure and wonder if they do not hate the Splugorth more than any being in existence. If so, could they be preparing and positioning themselves to thwart a Splugorth plot? Time will tell.

The Mega-Monkeys

A byproduct of the availability of bio-comp augmentation in North America is the existence of Juicer Wannabe gangs. Wherever a Juicer clinic is found, a gang of young toughs seeking the process themselves goes hand in hand. MercTown is no exception to the general rule. The Mega-Monkeys are a group of wannabes and misfits, mostly teenagers and young adults, who've banded together in the effort to make enough credits to get "Juiced." Members of the gang are almost always young, athletic toughs seeking to make a name for themselves. They are generally good with their fists and avid weight-lifters who congregate at *the Weight Pile*. To earn money the gang engages in theft, muggings, and robbery, but they also enjoy tangling with mercs and hiring themselves out as muscle and gunmen.

The Mega-Monkeys are finding life in the Warrens difficult. More often than they would like, they are the prey rather than the predators. They bring this upon themselves with their arrogance and insulting behavior. Acting like a Juicer without having the muscle or juice to back up one's mouth or actions usually has severe consequences. Several violent clashes against the Greenskins, the Red Terror and Mephisto's Horsemen, as well as various adventure groups and bands of mercenaries, have left the Mega-Monkeys in a weakened state. To increase their odds of survival, the gang has begun actively recruiting other hotheads, loudmouths and Juicer Wannabes. These punks just don't seem to learn, so the rate of attrition from death or crippling injury is a frightening 60% by age 20! Then again, as a band of Juicer Wannabes, the Mega-Monkeys don't fear death and expect to, as the gang members are found of saying, "die young, bold, and good-looking, with a gun in their hand and smile on their lips." Despite the high death rate among these rebels without a cause, there always seems to be some young turk willing to take their place. Although the Mega-Monkeys will hire themselves out to the Thieves' Guild, the Black Market and anyone willing to pay their price and put up with their obnoxious antics and irreverence, the gang always makes it clear that they are independent freelance operatives who answer to nobody. This inevitably means making a point of mouthing off, mocking, dissing and/or defying their employer in some (often trivial) way just to make the point that they don't really need anyone. Boss Dutcher dislikes these disrespectful, muscle-brained brats, but recognizes their value as fodder and hires

them to stir up trouble among his rivals and enemies, using them as pawns in his bigger games.

Racial Breakdown: 56 total members: 42 humans, 4 Devilman D-Bees, 3 Dog Boys, 2 other Mutant Animals, and 5 other D-Bees.

O.C.C. Breakdown: 58% Juicer Wannabes, 10% Juicers, 22% City Rats, 10% other various men at arms O.C.C.s.

Common Gang Member Alignments: Anarchist (50%), Miscreant (25%), Diabolic (15%) and Aberrant (10%).

Colors: The gang insignia is a stylized gorilla with the letters “M-M” stenciled underneath (M—M actually stands for “modified men”). Fashion ranges from the typical City Rat leather garments, bandanas and chains to the iconic armor of their Juicer idols. Most of the gangbangers have mohawk hairdos or have shaved their heads completely bald.

Mega-Damage Weapons: A must. The bigger the gun, the badder the dude, eh? That’s the Mega-Monkeys’ attitude. Heavy energy pistols and rifles (i.e., particle beams, ion blasters, plasma, pulse and even light rail guns) are favored. Expensive hardware taken from unsuspecting merc and adventurer victims.

Body Armor: Juicer and Juicer Assassin Plate is the most common, with some Plastic Man, Crusader and Huntsman; 10% don’t wear armor.

Bionics, Cybernetics & Augmentation: A handful of senior gang members have undergone the process of *Juicer augmentation*, but most can’t afford the expensive enhancements and use street drugs and magic potions when to emulate their Juicer idols. Since the goal of most is to one day become a Juicer or

die trying, they tend to avoid other forms of augmentation. Still, 10% have cybernetic or bionic implants and/or weapons.

The Gang Leaders: Tank Robertson (4th level Juicer, Aberrant; I.Q. 14, M.E. 12, M.A. 19, P.S. 25, P.P. 23, P.E. 21, P.B. 14, Spd. 47) is a two year old Juicer and the revered leader of the gang. At 23 years of age, he is the oldest and most experienced member of the Mega-Monkeys. A sad truth of most wannabe gangs is that as soon as members get augmented they leave to pursue life in the mercenary world. Tank has always hated that practice because it robs the gang of its toughest members, leaving them with nothing in return for their investment. He’s been a Mega-Monkey for eight years now, and is dedicated to the gang. While times have been tough of late, he fully intends to guide the gang to better days, at least as long as he lives. Tank is an excellent leader with finely honed street skills and more smarts than people give him credit for.

Tricky Ricky (3rd level Crazy, Anarchist) is Tank’s lieutenant, friend and confidant. At 20 years old, he’s been a gang member for seven years. Like Tank Robertson, he is loyal to the gang which provided him with the only family he’s ever known and the means to buy M.O.M. conversion two years ago. Unpredictable, tough as nails and always ready with a hidden ace up his sleeve, he is a valuable member of the gang. Tricky’s been very lucky so far and has not yet developed any insanities, although others have noticed his behavior becoming more erratic over the past six months. Thus far, however, this has merely added to his unpredictability in combat and made him a better fighter.



Gang & Criminal Activity: The gang acts crazy, erratic and wild, but a lot of that is a facade. They are surprisingly organized and work very well as a team. All their shouting, odd behavior and wildness is deliberate, because they've learned it throws their opponents off their game, scares them, or gets them to underestimate the gang's real capabilities. The Mega-Monkeys' greatest strength is their loyalty to each other and their leader. Thanks to the vision of Tank, the gang is focused on the bigger picture of becoming a merc force to be reckoned with. The primary targets of their crimes are obvious bandits, raiders, cutthroats, Pecos Empire thugs, Coalition Soldiers, Minions of Splugorth, D-Bees and members of the Red Terror vigilantes. They also try to stay out of turf wars and rivalries with the other gangs unless they are getting paid to do otherwise. Recently the gang has ceased its petty criminal activities (theft, extortion, etc.) to concentrate on more lucrative enterprises like the trafficking of Juicer designer drugs and working as hired muscle for the Black Market.

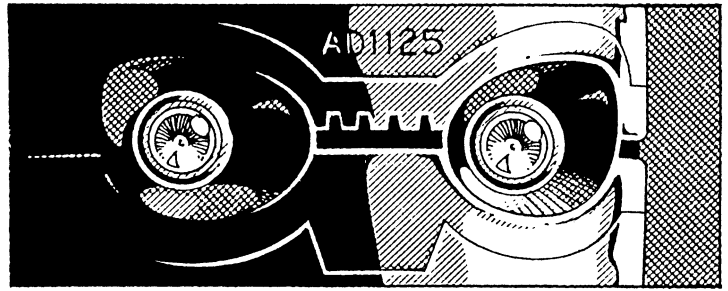
Notable Places in the Warrens

151. Cyber Street Clinic: Operated by *Clair Bennington* (9th level Combat Medic/Field Surgeon, Aberrant), this small clinic is for folks who'd rather that the authorities not know about their gunshot and knife wounds, or other injuries sustained under "dubious" circumstances or because the character is wanted by the law. Years ago, Clair worked for Doc Patterson, both at his MercTown clinic and Combat Medical Services Co. She was interning as a surgeon until she was caught treating a pair of gangbangers off the books and was fired. (Note: Clair has the skills of Biology, Brewing, Field Surgery and Medical Doctor).

Within short order, Doctor Clair Bennington (known on the street as "the Benns") opened her own clinic on Cyber Street, an "asks no questions, gives no lectures," clinic that treats anyone with enough credits to pay their bill – up-front in credits or trade goods before she'll start treatment. Doctor Bennington has extensive connections with the gangs and City Rats of the Warrens and is highly regarded by the lower echelon of MercTown's criminal underworld. At one time or another she has treated members of every gang in the Warrens, and has fairly strong ties with both the Thieves' Guild and the Black Market. However, the higher ups in both organizations consider her to be a bottom feeder who preys on those in need. While they can understand and accept this business practice, they don't reward it with their business. The only thing everyone appreciates is her strict adherence to the doctor-patient privilege – she's no rat and has never sold out a client, even when threatened with death or torture.

152. Uberman's Augmentation: An enhancement clinic operated by a German doctor, *Karl Uberman* (8th level Body Fixer with Medical Doctor, Medical Cybernetics, Juicer Technology, Biology, and Pathology skills; Miscreant). He was thrown out of the New German Republic (NGR) as a result of allegations of his involvement with organized crime. Uberman offers the full range of cybernetic and bionic augmentation and can perform basic Juicer enhancement as well. The doctor apparently still has contacts at Triax and can occasionally get his hands on

Triax bionics, enough that he turns out 2-6 *VX-370 Stopper* and *VX-500 Man-Hunter* 'borgs each year. He is also known to deal with Cyber-Snatchers and notorious underground figures. In addition to traditional bionics, he is known to be able to give fugitives a completely *new face* using cyber implants.



153. Men of Metal: A typical Body-Chop-Shop operated by one of Boss Dutcher's Black Market cronies. Supplies are good, the prices aren't too steep, and the conditions are fairly sanitary. The clinic keeps most cybernetic and bionic implants in stock (90% likelihood of having any specified part), and there are three operating rooms and a team of five veteran Cyber-Docs (7th to 10th level).

154. Feathered Serpent Pharmacy: This little shop, named for the age old medical symbol of the coiled and winged serpent, is a modern pharmacy that also sells herbs, magical components and even a small selection of magic potions. Conventional medicine includes first-aid kits, bandages, painkillers, cold remedies, prescription medicines, hypo-spray injectors, blood expander agent, universal anti-toxin auto-injectors, assorted Performance Enhancing Drugs (PEDs) and even a few Juicer designer drugs.

155. Super-Juice Augmentation: Its resident doc can perform standard *Juicer*, *Hyperion*, *Titan* and *Phaeton* augmentation, all at 10% less than the State Hospital charges (but with a greater risk of complications). He is currently in negotiations with the Kingsdale Enhancement Clinic to acquire the technology for Mega-Juicer augmentation, but they are resistant to share this rare knowledge and want a 33% share of the clinic's entire gross sales as well as millions paid up-front for the technology.

156. Discount Enhancement: This is a squalid, back alley Body-Chop-Shop similar to the ones found in the Chi-Town 'Burbs. It has only a single operating room, one that is none too clean, and equipment that looks like it was salvaged from a slaughterhouse. However, the prices can't be beat; 25-35% below the going market rate. The truism that "you get what you pay for," however, certainly applies here. The resident Cyber-Doc is far from skilled (only 3rd level) and the chance for rejection is a horrific 01-25%! Nevertheless, the doctor doesn't ask any questions and he offers all cybernetic, bionic, and M.O.M. (Crazies) augmentation.

Doctor Morgan Brooks (3rd level Cyber-Doc; Miscreant, I.Q. 12, M.E. 10, M.A. 8, P.S. 9, P.P. 13, P.E. 8, P.B. 11, Spd. 7) works for the Black Market. The local syndicate takes a 25% cut off the shop's profit margin. In an effort to keep more credits for himself, Brooks has started buying "second hand" implants from less than respectable sources, namely the Cyber Street Gang. Dutcher knows nothing about this secret arrangement and if he were to find out, Brooks would need to replace his own knee-caps with cybernetic implants.

157. Marvels Mechanica: Outside of the State Hospital, this enhancement clinic does some of the best augmentation work in MercTown. The place is clean, the equipment up-to-date and sterile, and the head Cyber-Doc is a veteran surgeon (only a 2-3% chance of complications). It's more expensive than the competition (about 10-20% above standard market prices), and the cost varies depending on the procedure. The quality of surgery and the selection of bionics and cybernetics is excellent, plus the shop offers M.O.M. conversions.

A Quick-Flex Alien physician named *Doc Bizzaro* (9th level Cyber-Doc, Anarchist; I.Q. 14, M.E. 12, M.A. 10, P.S. 10, P.P. 23, P.E. 12, P.B. 11, Spd 20) directs a staff of six Cyber-Docs and five Techno-Wizards (all 4th to 6th level), plus nurses and administrative staff. Intrigued by Techno-Wizardry as a science, Doc Bizzaro has been secretly experimenting for years with the concept of *TW bionics*. Over the past few years Doc Bizzaro has been working towards this goal, coming up with some unique TW implants based on his concepts and built by his resourceful staff. He is just weeks away from being ready to build his first, full conversion TW cyborg and the test subject will get a 70% discount. He is currently putting out feelers for a suitable candidate; someone expendable so that if things go horribly wrong no one will miss him or her (a player character, perhaps). Routine procedures just pay the bills and he is growing bored with conventional bionics and cybernetics, and is eager to step up to "the next level." This has become something of an obsession, and some of the staff is beginning to worry that the good doctor is hovering on the edge of insanity. To keep the Black Market from interfering with his work, Doc Bizzaro allied himself with the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild, who leave him alone provided he gives their people a 30% discount on conventional and experimental TW bionics.

158. Cyber Street Tenement: Covering an entire block, this rundown and shabby, low rent tenement is home to nearly 1100 people. Its most prominent residents, and undisputed lords of their domain, are the notorious *Cyber Street Gang* led by Savage Razortooth. The gang controls the entire building and has claimed the top floor for themselves, having forced the original occupants out, and use it as their clubhouse and headquarters.

159. The Gunman's Tavern: A flashing red, neon light crosshair marks the front window of this mercenary hangout. It is a seedy dive that caters to Headhunters, cyborgs, Bounty Hunters, Gunfighters, Gunslingers, and assassins, but any mercenary who can handle himself is welcome. The bartender, Bart Longfellow (7th level Smuggler, Aberrant; I.Q. 13, M.E. 21, M.A. 20, P.S. 14, P.P. 12, P.E. 11, P.B. 9, Spd 17), buys and sells weapons on the sly, including items prohibited within city limits (long-barreled weapons/rifles, plasma ejectors, particle beam weapons, cannons, grenades and explosives). Prices are high, at least 20-30% higher than at the Arms Bazaar, but the weapons are clean, their serial numbers removed, no gun registration or permit is needed, and no questions asked. Two minutes after a sale, Longfellow doesn't remember a name or face. The Gunman's Tavern is owned by Richard "Cadillac" Cordera, a rogue in the Black Market who is unhappy with his position in the organization and a rival of Boss Dutcher. **Note:** This is also a good place to get info on wanted fugitives, new bounties and who's hiring, as well as the latest gossip and making connections (and enemies) with other mercs and man-hunters.

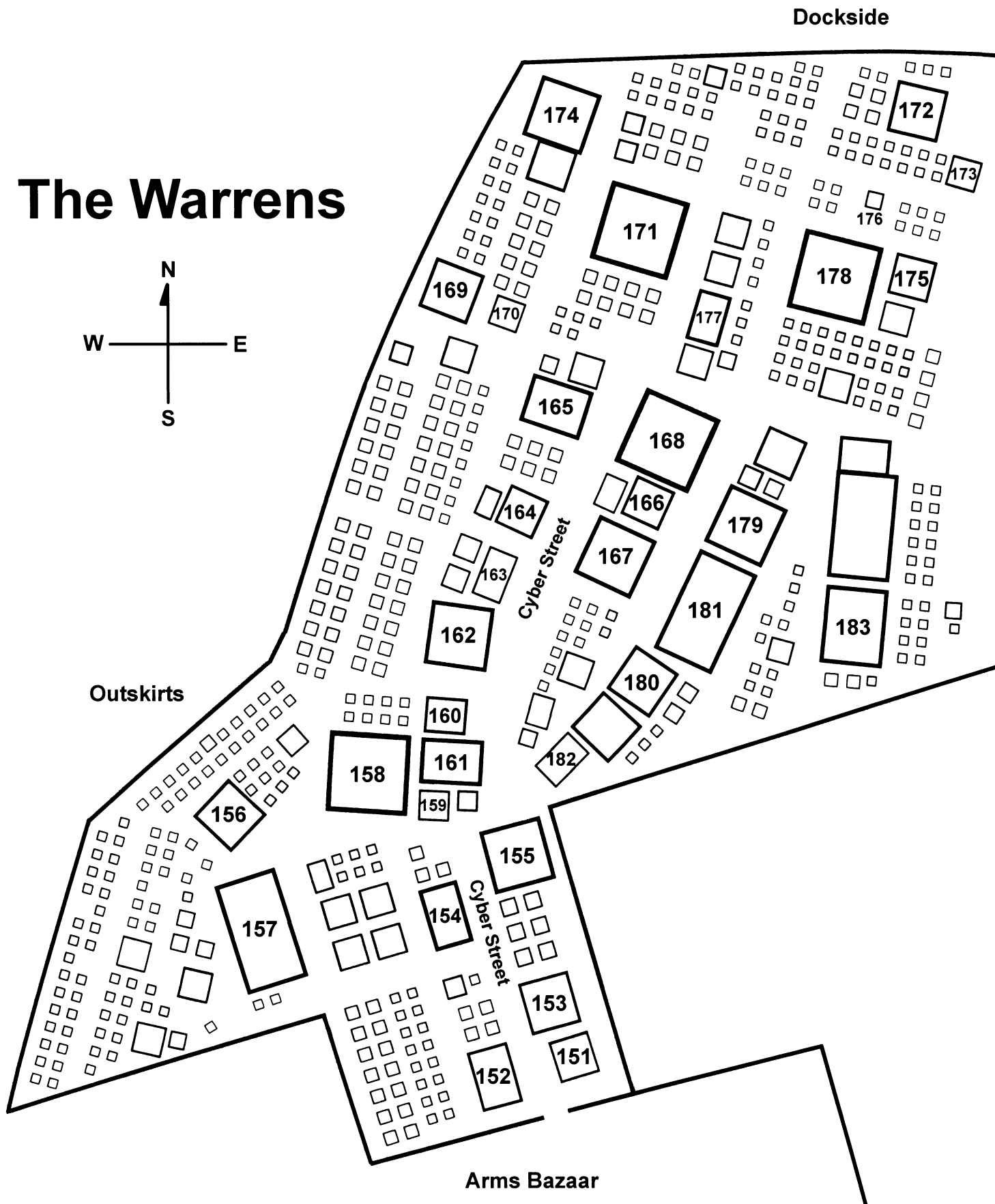
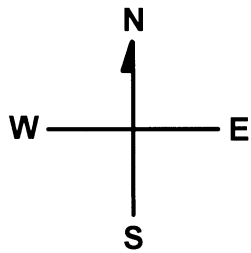
160. West Warrens Diner: Although it is run out of a decrepit shell of a building - an old tenement that barely stands - this pizzeria and restaurant is a diamond in the rough. It serves the best pizza and pasta in MercTown, has a good sized dining area, delivers, sells individual slices from a separate, street-side storefront in the same building, and is a favorite of City Rats, mercs and locals. A cash-strapped young local couple and aging uncle (the man with the recipes) run the business, and employ a dozen of the locals. The owners are all Scrupulous and so are most of their hardworking employees. They are struggling only because they've been robbed several times by the Mega-Monkeys gang, and their place was trashed by a battle between the gang and the Red Terror vigilantes. Things have been quiet for a couple of months now, and as their profits increase they hope to move out of the Warrens into the more respectable Spokes neighborhood. Their neighbors don't want these good people to leave and have secretly established a neighborhood watch to help protect the place. Unknown to any of them, members of the Red Terror, who feel badly about the damage they helped cause from their clash with the Mega-Monkeys, are part of the watch group and a good dozen Red Terror members are regular patrons at the diner.

The restaurant serves a wide range of dishes, from pizza and pasta to soup and sandwiches, to a variety of ethnic platters; goulash, pierogi and kielbasa, city chicken or stuffed cabbage and potatoes, a variety of fish, barbecued ribs, and stir-fried chicken to name a few. Prices range from 6-11 credits a meal; small pizza: 6 credits, medium: 8 credits, large: 12 credits, plus one credit per extra topping (comes with one of choice).

161. Emma's Boarding House: An economical, safe, homey alternative to the flea-bitten motels of the Warrens. It has three floors with a total of 48 rooms that come with a comfortable bed, bedside table and lamp, chair and chest of drawers. Bathrooms are communal, with one on each level of the house. There are public pay phones and a television in the common room and the lobby, all on the ground level. The cost to rent a room is 50 credits a night or 300 credits for the week. *Auntie Emma Resnik* (6th level Vagabond Merchant; Scrupulous) is a friendly, motherly woman in her late sixties who owns the house and operates it with the help of her three daughters and staff of 10. Surprisingly, the gangs and roughnecks leave this place alone.

162. The Weight Pile: Staying in good physical shape is vital for soldiers. The Weight Pile gives visiting mercs the opportunity to maintain their fitness while in town. For five credits anyone can use the facility. It is located in an old warehouse and isn't much more than a collection of exercise machines, weight-lifting benches and piles and piles of weights, including some seriously heavy plates (up to 1000 lbs/450 kg) for those with exceptional or supernatural strength; popular with Juicers, Crazies and other powerhouse characters. This gym is also a regular hangout for the *Mega-Monkeys gang*, who are Juicer wannabes that congregate there to lift weights, gab, collect rumors, do a little gambling and sell designer drugs as well as check out potential targets for robbery. **Note:** Mercs and adventurers can come to the gym to find the Mega-Monkeys or Juicers and other augmented characters and superhumans to hire them, offer their own services, seek wanted fugitives who may be hanging at the gym, or to pick up the gossip that travels in those circles, but do so at their own risk.

The Warrens







163. Buyer's Market Pawnshop: A cluttered, poorly organized pawnshop that deals in every imaginable commodity. Garden variety items are kept on display in the showroom (old furniture, clothing, music discs, videos, household items, some basic weapons, etc.), but the big ticket items (guns, electronics, body armor, jewelry, rare books, artifacts, new and used cybernetics, etc.) are kept in a showroom behind the M.D. plexi-glass-enclosed counter. The Buyer's Market pays 20% to 40% of market value for goods, holds them for 15 days and resells them for 25% below the market cost. If the individual beats the deadline they must pay a 10% premium to buy back their former property.

This pawnshop is owned by a shady, sharp-nosed Rat mutant or D-Bee named *Fenrick the Fence* (6th level Smuggler). Unlike some of the city's other pawnbrokers, Fenrick is willing to deal in anything, including blatantly illegal and hot merchandise. He sells guns (including CS and prohibited ones), new (stolen) and used (don't ask) cybernetics and bionics, drugs, bootleg music and videodiscs, booze and even information. The Fence is an independent, he is not associated with any of the criminal cartels in the Warrens and will fence goods for anyone. He fears no one, mainly due to the constant presence of his three Dyna-Bots and a reprogrammed Skelebot that serves as his bodyguard. Word on the street is that Fenrick has something on somebody or knows someone powerful to remain independent without being muscled by the mob. He sometimes hires people to pick up, transport/deliver or acquire "special merchandise" for him.

164. Robyn's Rib Rack and Beer Shack: Run by a young blonde by the name of Robyn DuBois, this joint specializes

in baby back ribs (15 credits per plate) and a dozen different beers, including *Dragon's Head* and *Slam*. *Slam* is a potent brew that will inebriate Juicers, dragons and most Mega-Damage beings after 1D4 drinks, but a single glass kills most humans (does 1D6x10 damage direct to Hit Points); tastes like battery acid and has a powerful acrid smell. Despite the fact that it appeals to Juicers and other roughnecks, it is a nice, clean, place for the family and seems to attract supermen who are looking to forget the battlefield and fighting for a while and be around families, children and ordinary people. As a result, when some tough starts to cause trouble, 2D8 Juicers or other mercs step up to quiet him down or toss his butt out.

165. Tony's Place: In reality, this is two businesses housed in the same building and under the same name. On the right is a butcher shop that sells steaks, roasts, hamburger, chicken, lunch meats, sausages, and all kinds of cut meats. Next door is a hole-in-the-wall eatery that serves extra large, meat and potato dishes for 10-20 credits. He, too, serves *Dragon's Head* beer and *Slam* (see #164 for the description of the latter), and welcomes rowdy patrons. Tony's Place is the home of the Black Market's meanest, most violent crew, *Murder for Hire, Ltd.*, headed by none other than *Tony Aronne* who owns these two businesses. The crew works out of the back room, which is Aronne's office, but various members are often found milling about in and outside the restaurant drinking coffee, playing cards or engaged in idle chatter.

166. The Ogre's Den Tavern & Flop House: This tavern has the reputation of being one of the toughest in the Warrens. Fights break out here every night, sometimes escalating to the

point where knives and guns are drawn. Which is just the way the owner, *Stonefist Qidar*, likes it (9th level Ogre Gladiator, Miscreant; I.Q. 11, M.E. 10, M.A. 11, P.S. 28, P.P. 22, P.E. 19, P.B. 8, Spd 9). Stonefist is a former bare-knuckles champ from Kingsdale who won the bar in a match against a champion repped by its former owner. Although he is retired, the gladiator remains a fight enthusiast and holds bare-knuckle boxing matches in the alley behind the tavern and in a makeshift ring in a large, spare room. The fights are what draws most of the customers to the Ogre's Den and not the watered-down drinks (cost 3-6 credits); the 8 credits cover charge is well worth the show as drunken fools or hotheads go at it, one after another. Stonefist himself is not a member of the Greenskins gang, but he pays them 10% of his take for protection to keep the Black Market, Ravenshome Guild and other gangs away from his place. Consequently, members of the Greenskins gang are regular patrons and sometimes participants in the fights. **Note:** Every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday night, Stonefist runs fight night, a tough-man competition that pays 800 credits and a 200 credit drinking tab for the last man (or monster) standing; this really packs the crowd in. By the way, the crowd is typically 30% Ogres, 50% D-Bees and 20% humans.

The two floors above the Ogre's Den is a flop house; mainly large open rooms lined with cots on the floor. Those too drunk to go home or too broke to afford anything better can "flop" on a cot for 10 credits a night.

167. Flesh Peddler's: This is the sleaziest men's club in all of MercTown. A dark, squalid club open every night from eight until three in the morning. It serves cheap drinks (only 2-4 credits) and has two dozen exotic dancers and another dozen cocktail waitresses, both from a multitude of humanoid species (only 25% are human). Rumor has it that the dancers provide more than private dances in the back rooms for the right price. The owner is an odd-looking D-Bee Dwarf named *Vannick Annox* (8th level Spy, Diabolic). Vannick pays the *Greenskins* 12% in credits plus favors from the female staff for protection and for providing an onsite security team: 6-8 big, tough-looking brutes as bouncers. **Note:** A reasonably good place to pick up on rumors and leads, but not much else. Some merc outfits come here to close deals, but most patrons are only interested in girls and drinks.

168. Roach's Hotel: A filthy, dilapidated low-rent motel with 160 rooms that cost only 30 credits a night; the dozen luxury suites cost 120 a night. Only characters down on their luck put up with the roaches, filth and riffraff of this facility. *Ralph "Roach" Moldinar* (9th level City Rat, age 29, Miscreant), another member of the Greenskins, owns the place and lets fellow members of the gang stay in three of the suites for half price. Consequently, it's common to see 10-20 Greenskins milling around in the lobby and out front, with another 10-40 crashed upstairs. Street walkers, drug dealers, con artists, craps players and thugs who shake down customers for extra credits work the street around the hotel in a three block radius. **Note:** Anyone looking to hire or hook up with the Greenskins can do so at the Roach Hotel.

169. The Mausoleum: Once a funeral home, this drab building has been transformed into a macabre tavern. The interior is dark, the walls painted black, candles flicker from atop their metal skull-shaped holders, and cobwebs hang from every cor-



ner, nook and cranny. More disturbing is the fact that the security is apparently quite dead, a quartet of mute *zombies* guard the premises. The owner doesn't look much livelier, he is a pale-skinned, unnaturally gaunt Devilman D-Bee with lifeless eyes. He calls himself Creed Nightshade (11th level Necromancer, Diabolic; I.Q. 14, M.E. 21, M.A. 7, P.S. 12, P.P. 11, P.E. 18, P.B. 5, Spd 12), and he caters to fellow Necromancers, Shifters, practitioners of dark magic, Juicers (most of whom are obsessed with, or defying, death) and even supernatural visitors (mainly Brodkil, Gargoyles, Gurgoyles, Witchlings, and the occasional lesser demons). The wait staff are animated dead controlled by the head bartender, Rex Craven (5th level Necromancer, Miscreant), and a pair of first level initiates. This tavern is located on the edge of Greenskins turf and thus nominally "belongs" to them. However, the Mausoleum's owner pays them a pittance (3%) mainly just to rid himself of their annoying attempts at extortion. **Note:** Word on the street is that those looking to hire Necromancers, Witches, demonic assassins or an army of animated dead should speak to Creed or Rex. There is also a rumor that there is some sort of death cult operating from or which hangs out at the Mausoleum.

170. Strongbox Resale Shop: Years ago, Richard "Cadillac" Cordera bought out this pawnshop. The syndicate crew boss uses the place to liquidate the stolen goods from his crew's hijacking operations as well as to retail armaments (including prohibited guns that sell for 25% above market cost) acquired by various other means (gambling debt, pawned items, loot from murder victims, etc.). The Strongbox pays 25% to 40% of market value for pawned goods, holds items for 30 days, charges a premium of 20% to recover the items, and sells common goods for 20-25% below market rates.

171. Midnight Transport: This compound is the headquarters of MercTown's biggest trucking company. Within its fenced interior is a warehouse, offices and a fleet of 24 tractor-trailers. Midnight Transport is the main short-haul trucking company in the region, with routes that run from MercTown to Missouri, Arkansas and Illinois/CS Chi-Town 'Burbs. The company also hauls freight from the nearby docks to various locations within town, as well as delivering cargo to major corporations in town (such as Kentucky Dairy Products, Merc Plaza, the airport, etc.) and mercenary companies camped outside of town.

Midnight Transport is one of the strictly legitimate businesses owned by the Black Market. *Ted "Boss" Dutcher* is the official CEO and has his office in the compound. While the syndicate boss leaves the operation of the business to subordinates, he usually keeps regular business hours at his office there. It's from here that he orchestrates the various enterprises of the Black Market in MercTown. Boss Dutcher started the company to transport weapons shipments to the syndicate in Chi-Town. Realizing the potential to make a considerable profit from the trucking company itself, his goons muscled the competitors in

town out of business, making Midnight Transport the primary truck company in MercTown. It is used by virtually all of the weapons dealers and all Black Market product transportation. **Note:** The company *sometimes* hires mercs, mages, psychics and adventurers to escort convoys and for special shipments and keep the trucks, cargo and crew safe from raiders, bandits and the Coalition Army. Pay is very good at 200-600 credits, per person, per day; hired guns are expected to bring their own gear.

172. The Haze: A music theater and dance hall known for its nightly pyrotechnic displays; ringing the stage are smoke pots, flares and sparklers. The place is a popular spot amongst youthful residents of the Warrens, because it is cheap fun. Drinks are just 2-4 credits each and the cover charge is only 2 credits. Drug dealers work the crowd selling their poison for 10-15% below the already low market rate. Security is provided by moonlighting bikers from the *Mephisto's Horsemen* gang. On paper, the club is owned by a young man named *Tyler Hirsch* (3rd level City Rat, 23 years old), but in reality it is owned by John DeMarco of the Black Market.

173. Hydra's Breath: A rathole of a pleasure den where the foolhardy indulge in dark pleasures – euphoric drugs, hallucinogens, mind altering drugs and all kinds of narcotics and vice. Costs range from 50-200 credits. The owner, *Dirok the Gardner* (6th level Thief), grows some of these “herbs” and imports the rest via the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild. The Hydra's Breath is frequented by Juicers, mercs, and warriors who want to feel numb and/or forget the battlefield; all races are welcomed. The establishment is “protected” by the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild, though some of its less disciplined members will occasionally pick pockets and rob patrons too high to remember or defend themselves.

174. Monte's Feltway: A run-of-the-mill gambling hall run by *Montark “Monte” Axelrate* (9th level Quick-Flex Alien Thief and Cardsharp, Anarchist). It offers games of billiards, cards, and dice, with blackjack, poker, gin, and even rummy. Every game involves wagers with the house as well as side bets between players and by spectators. The house handles third party bets (say between spectators) for a 15% cut, and a guaranteed pay-off to the winner. Most of the dealers are Quick-Flex Aliens and others with natural (or artificially augmented) manual dexterity with the skills of *Gambling*, *Gambling Dirty Tricks*, *Concealment*, *Cardsharp* and *Palming* at 50% or higher making them all Thief or Professional Gambler O.C.C.s; Anarchist or Miscreant alignments). For real chumps and green adventurers, games of three card monte (supposedly not affiliated with the gambling hall) are played on the street outside the Feltway.

Patrons just looking to have a good time and risk a few hundred credits have nothing to fear, because the dealers play fair (and the house still wins 70%+ of the time). On the other hand, the ownership loves to target high rollers, arrogant loudmouths, pro gamblers, grifters and sharks looking to score big at the casino's expense. When faced with such individuals, the dealers up the ante and play for keeps (in other words, they cheat big time). All in all the house does well, pulling in 80,000-240,000 credits a night. Twenty percent of that goes to the *Black Market*, who provides protection and sends visitors their way. For security, the Feltway has a detail of 25 large and intimidating D-Bees like Ogres, Larmac, N'mbyr Gorilla Men and Vanguard

Brawlers (all are 2-6th level Men at Arms or violent City Rats). Most of the dealers can also handle themselves in a pinch, and carry a concealed stun pistol or light M.D. energy pistol.

175. MercTown Escort Service: Base of operations for a high class brothel. Clients can go there and use one of their two dozen luxurious, silk and scented rooms on the premises, or the lady(s) will come to the client, provided the meeting place is a residence in town or one of the nice hotels, no flea traps or street corners for these beautiful women. MercTown Escort Service is a combined effort by Sammy Marconi and Richard “Cadillac” Cordera of the *Black Market*. Prices are steep at 300-1200 an hour; no exceptions. **Note:** These ladies of the night are sweet and discreet, and do not steal from or hurt their clients in any way. However, they keep their eyes and ears open and provide their employers with information that might be of benefit to Black Market operations.

176. The Sound Box: More of a street-side vendor than a true shop, this operation sells music discs and videos from a semi-permanent merchant stall. All of the merchandise comes directly from the Black Market and the store is one small part of its massive bootleg industry. Most discs sell for 15-45 credits.

177. Visions of Delight: A classy, high-priced exotic dance club where the girls really do only dance for a living. The club is safe and secure, for its patrons and its girls. Shenanigans and buffoonery are not tolerated, and standing by are two dozen suit-wearing mercs that include a Mind Melter, a Burster, a Mystic, three full conversion cyborgs, two Headhunters, a hot-headed Cyber-Slinger calling himself “Danny Valentine” (he loves the ladies and will do anything to protect them, so god help anyone who hurts or frightens one), two Juicers, a trio of Larmac, and other bruisers; all 4th to 8th level (Danny is 6th level, Unprincipled and sees himself as some kind of hero), and all of them are armed. Fourteen girls dance on a typical night, with as many as 30 on weekends or special occasions (such as when several prominent merc companies are in town). The price of admission is 20 credits and drinks cost 7-10 credits each. In spite of the fact that the club is owned by Sammy Marconi of the Black Market, it is totally above board, there is absolutely no hanky-panky nor criminal transactions.

178. One-Eyed Jacks: An oasis of style amidst a sea of trash, this casino is much too elegant to be in the Warrens. The exterior is well maintained, the interior is brightly lit, thickly carpeted and luxuriously furnished. One-Eyed Jacks is second only to the Palace Hotel & Casino. It offers the usual games of chance with tables for poker, blackjack, gin, pinochle, and other card games, roulette and craps, as well as hundreds of slot machines. The casino caters to all kinds of gamblers, from the penny-ante tourist to thousand credit chip high rollers. As always though, the house is strongly favored and wins the majority of the games. On an average night it pulls in 100,000 to 600,000 credits. Aside from the gambling, One-Eyed Jacks has a full service theater-bar with live bands on weekends (play jazz, blues and/or soft rock).

Note: One-Eyed Jacks is a Black Market stronghold, owned and managed by Capo Philip Ernhardt, who is known on the premises as “The Man with the Axe.” All employees work for the Black Market, most of them indirectly, but all the senior staff are full-fledged “made” soldiers for the mob. The dealers are all pros, seasoned cardsharps able to fleece even high rollers



(each has the skills of Cardsharp, Gambling, Gambling Dirty Tricks and Palming at 70% or higher). Security is tight, high-tech security cameras scan every square inch of the casino, and money is kept in an M.D.C. hardened, underground vault (has 1250 M.D.C.). There is a crew of thirty armed security guards stationed throughout the casino. These men and women wear Naruni personal force fields and carry M.D. energy pistols and stun weapons, but otherwise look like any other patron or ordinary worker. All are 4th to 9th level and the team has someone to handle every contingency (magic, psionics, combat, etc.). Head of security is Jason Handler, a 12th level Professional Spy with greater psionics; his right hand is Sara Tarlotov, 9th level Master Assassin. In addition to keeping peace within the casino, they will walk guests to their cars (to prevent robberies). While Ernhardt technically manages the place, it is the Floor Boss, a D-Bee named *Scabface Veerst* (6th level Psi-Tech) who handles the day to day operations.

179. Gold Nugget Hotel: A five-story hotel with 96 rooms. The rooms are clean, fairly secure and include a private bath, telephone and television at a cost of 50 credits a night plus 12 credits per additional person. On the bottom floor is a lounge, a diner, and a tavern that also has card tables, video betting terminals and a pool table.

180. Firewaters: One of the better establishments in the Warrens, this tavern is clean, well kept and largely free of gang or criminal activity. The music is good, the cost of most drinks is 2-4 credits, they aren't watered down, and the bar food is okay. Firewaters is managed by a Burster psychic (6th level, Scrupulous) who often puts on displays of his flame powers by lighting drinks and cigarettes with his finger, setting the M.D.C. bar aflame (without it actually burning) and similar pyrotechnic

stunts. It is a popular spot, especially with psychics and the younger crowd, who are oblivious to the fact that it is a Black Market tavern owned by John DeMarco. **Note:** A good place to connect with psychics and City Rats of good or Anarchist alignments.

181. Blood Court: Deadball and Juicer Football are growing in popularity as two of North America's favorite sporting events and they are positively HUGE in MercTown, where soldiers, Juicers and mercs often outnumber the residents. To cash in on this popularity, the *Black Market* opened this 9,200 seat Deadball arena. Matches are held every night with a door prize of 50 credits in food or drink to one lucky winner, and there are betting and concession booths that serve beer, hard liquor, soda and snack food in the range of 4-8 credits a dish or drink. Competitors in the games run from amateur volunteers off the street and from visiting mercenary companies to pros who travel the Deadball and Juicer Football circuit. Admission is only 20 credits for most seating and 100 credits for court side, so the place is at least half full even on slow nights, and filled to capacity on most nights. People come from surrounding communities up to 150 miles (240 km) away to see pro games or renowned merc teams.

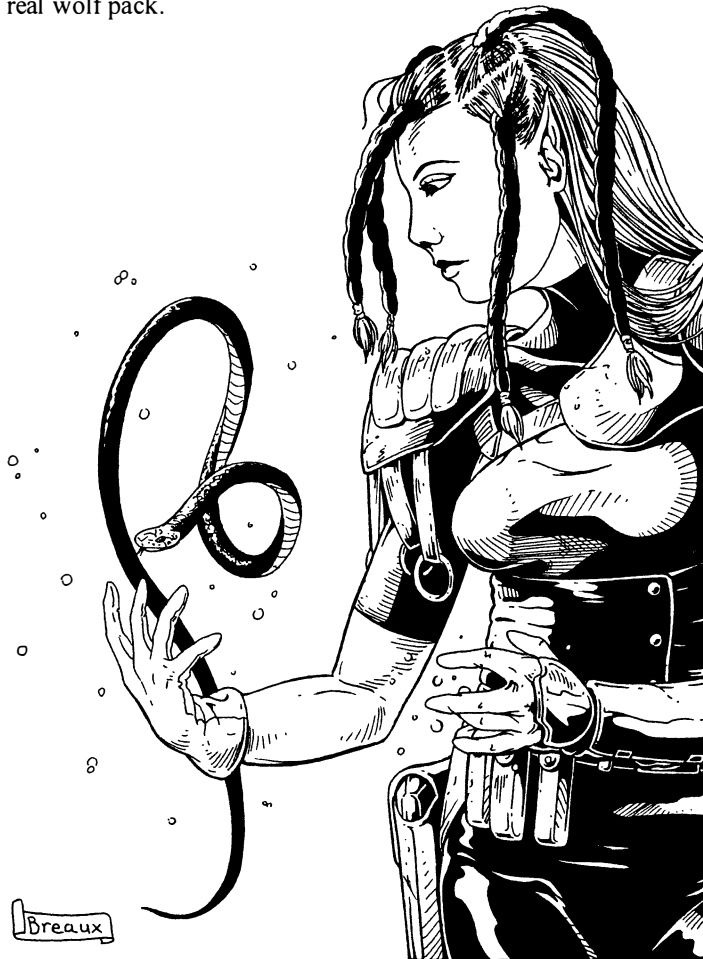
Philip "Philly Aces" Ernhardt (10th level Professional Gambler) runs the Blood Court. He is the Black Market's resident gambling expert in MercTown, the man whom Ted Dutcher relies upon to manage all of the gambling-related rackets in town. Philly Aces oversees betting at the Hub arena, the Palace Hotel Casino, all of the syndicate's other casinos in the Warrens, the track, numbers, and sports betting. He also owns two Deadball Teams: the *Deadly Aces*, which includes two Titan Juicers, a Hyperion Juicer, a Mega-Juicer and two traditional Juicers, and the MercTown Rebels which includes two Hyperion Juicers, one full conversion cyborg built for speed, two Crazies and a Brodkiel. Ernhardt also has dozens of freelance bookies, dealers and bet-takers on his payroll. Other than Boss Dutcher, the Ernhardt crew rakes in the most profits out of all the crews in MercTown.

182. Nirvana, the Juicer's Retreat: A drug den where Juicers can plug into potent drugs that send them into la la land for hours, days or weeks at a time. Set adrift in a warm sea of foggy bliss and fuzzy feelings, the warriors can forget their past, their problems, and their regrets and just zone out. Best of all, the Juicers feel safe, protected by sorcerers and full conversion cyborgs who keep non-Juicers out and the patrons safe from thieves, psychics and trouble. Costs vary, but average about 1400 credits a day – Juicers need a steady flow of rare and potent drugs to put them under. The facility is owned and operated by a female shape-shifter believed to be a D-Bee, but who is really a Dragon Hatchling (5th level, Anarchist) who goes by the name *Aphrodite*. She has steered clear of organized crime, but is being pressured by the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild to pay protection (15%) to avoid any "unfortunate accidents." **Note:** A few members of Mephisto's Horsemen also frequent the drug den and will respond harshly to any "accidents" as will some of the Juicer patrons, which is the only thing stopping the thieves from going through with their threat, at least so far.

183. Sharky's: A pool hall and games room that has 14 billiards tables, three foosball tables, three air hockey tables, a half dozen dartboards, a jukebox and a dozen video arcade games.

Most games cost 1-2 credits and Sharky's serves draft beer for three credits a glass. The majority of customers are young toughs, gang wannabes, hustlers and City Rats under the age of 17, as well as members of both the *Booster Boys* and *Mega-Monkeys*.

Sharky's is also known as the "Black Market Bank" run by Leanne "The Wolf" Sharky (6th level, Miscreant, Vagabond Merchant). Leanne is a loan shark, lending out sums of up to 250,000 credits to those unwilling or unable to get loans or mortgages from a commercial bank. However, Leanne charges exorbitant interest rates that are in the neighborhood of 20-30%, and she demands weekly payments on the "vig" (the interest). Those who can't pay are threatened, harassed, and ultimately, will see Leanne seize part (if not all) of their business, home or assets; half the clients end up losing 20-50% of their business or property to the Wolf. She is also heavily involved in the narcotics rackets, selling drugs through surrogates like the Mega-Monkeys. Her crew, called "The Pack" by the syndicate, consists of Military Grunts, Headhunters, psychics, City Rats and rogue Dog Boys, all of them as vicious and ravenous as a real wolf pack.



184. Nightcrawlers: At the edge of the Warrens, near Bar Street, is an after-hours club called Nightcrawlers. The club doesn't even open its doors until 11:00 PM, and stays open till about a half hour before dawn. It was once a movie theater so the building has high ceilings, a massive dance floor and a smaller VIP area upstairs. There is a slightly gothic feel to the place, with its black-painted walls and crimson red curtains. Drinks cost 5-8 credits, plus there is a 5 credit cover charge to get in. The music is a mix of ancient pre-Rifts tunes as well as

modern ones with dance, techno and alternative being the most common styles. Nightcrawlers has only been in operation for a year and a half, but is rapidly growing in popularity, especially among the younger generation of mercenaries, City Rats, Juicer, and Crazies (both of whom usually have trouble sleeping) as well as the local MercTown youth.

The tight security at the club – weapons are not allowed – makes it a place where the patrons (and even some parents) feel safe. The facility is well-guarded, every patron is scanned and searched for weapons before being allowed entry, and a pair of Mind Melter scan for thoughts about violence and concealed weapons. Those caught with a weapon, and even cyborgs and Headhunters with weapons built-in, are turned away. The safety of the club has made it a popular meeting spot for various underworld figures, mercenaries and similar individuals as well.

A **sinister secret** is that the nightclub is operated by a group of Secondary Vampires who left Lone Star to avoid CS persecution. A total of nine Secondary Vampires (4th to 6th level) work (and live) at the club serving in various capacities as waitresses, bartenders, management and security. The bar is the perfect cover for their activities, allowing them to sleep during the day without it appearing too suspicious and work at night. Compared to the Wild Vampires of Mexico, these undead are very prudent, sophisticated and cautious to maintain their secret. They know if they are discovered they'll be hunted down and destroyed. As a result, they never attack innocents on the street or display their superhuman abilities in public. Instead the vampires lure unsuspecting and intoxicated guests into the VIP lounge where they can feed in private, or they prey upon troublemakers thrown out into the back alley. Even then, however, the vampires rarely drain victims completely, leaving them alive, disoriented, and unable to remember what happened – sometimes even disguising the bite wound by cutting it and then apologizing for the (unremembered) "unfortunate incident" and giving the person a 50-100 bar tab credit that always makes the person happy to accept the explanation and forget about it. Thus, these very clever vampires have avoided detection by the authorities in MercTown and even savvy adventurers who have gone clubbing at the establishment.

Recently, the vampires have begun to wonder if some of Mephisto's Horsemen have figured out their secret. Meanwhile, Boss Dutcher is envious of their growing enterprise and has begun to drop hints that they should sell part of their interest to him and let him spruce up the place and put in some mirrors, a disco ball and chrome. (There are NO reflective surfaces now, so none of the patrons have noticed or complained.) So far they've politely refused his offers, saying being sole owner is their dream, but it may not be long before he starts to pressure them. Then again, maybe not, as Dutcher seems to have a soft spot for the Nightcrawlers Club. As long as the vampires remain careful and the Horsemen don't blow their cover, they should be fine. **Note:** All the late night shops and entertainment places in MercTown make it vampire heaven and easy to hide.

185. Body Canvas: A tattoo parlor operated by a human couple who are both skilled tattoo artists. The parlor is kept clean, the equipment is sterile and their work is good. Rather than a fixed cost, they charge three credits per minute, so the average-sized tattoo costs roughly a hundred credits. To keep their place free of gang problems the owners are associated with the

Ravenshome Guild, and give them and most City Rat gangs a 30% discount on tattoo work.

186. Arcadia: A shady video arcade that has slot machines, video poker and video lottery terminals (VLTs). Some of the games have been “fixed” in favor of the house, but most of the regulars know which ones and avoid them. The Arcadia is managed by a young swindler from the Ravenshome Guild.

187. Black Witch Casino: A gambling house that offers standard card games, roulette, craps and similar games of chance. Though far from being sleazy, this casino is definitely crooked. Its rich trappings are merely window dressings meant to disguise the serpentine practices of the house. The dealers use every trick in the book to fleece gamblers, and half of them are (2nd to 5th level) psychics and the other half thieves who use sleight of hand and psionic manipulation (and even magical spells) to rig the games in favor of the house. It’s all very clandestine and the dealers don’t bother to cheat in “nickel and dime” games, only when 20 or more credits are involved.

The Black Witch is an independent casino, not beholden to the Black Market nor the Ravenshome Guild. Instead it is the province of a cult that worships Deevils – known as seducers and tempters. In addition to the usual manipulation and exploitation of the guests, high rollers and powerful people who get in too deep are offered and coercing into making dark pacts with the demonic ownership to forgive their financial debt. Of course, those who accept usually pay for it later, and some embrace their new relationship with demonic forces.

In charge of the operation is a mysterious, shadowy and seductive human woman known only as *the Dark Queen* (she is, in truth, a metamorphed Pandemonium Devil with an M.A. of 21, P.B. of 26, 360 M.D.C., Diabolic alignment; see **Rifts® Dark Conversions** for complete statistics). Many of the other employees are likewise metamorphosed Deevils, mixed amongst the mortal dealers and work staff.

188. King’s Ransom Pawnbroker: Deals exclusively in jewelry. Its owner is a beady-eyed, greedy Goblin named *Morgath Underbridge* (5th level City Rat) who speaks in a low, accented tone and often mutters to himself. Morgath sells necklaces, rings, bracelets, watches, money clips, flasks, lighters, coins and similar items made of gold or silver, or studded with precious stones. He is far from honest, but will not try to pawn off fake merchandise; everything at the store is authentic.

The Goblin pays 30-40% of the average market value for jewelry and promises to hold them for 60 days before putting them up for sale. He sells the wares for about 25% below the market value. Morgath is also a known fence who trades in stolen goods, but pays only 15-25% of their value (due to the added risk). The Goblin is a high standing member in the Ravenshome Thieves’ Guild, and when it comes to gems and jewelry, is the go-to-guy for members seeking to unload their ill-gotten gains. Few would dare to rob the store, but just in case, Morgath has two pet Dragonsaurus in back, a concealed surveillance system and rapid fire pulse laser hidden behind the counter, not to mention a magic ring that can turn him invisible and a Naruni personal force field. As a loyal supporter of the Ravenshome, Morgath refuses to do business with any thief or smuggler who is not a guild member.

189. Cadger’s Pawn Brokers: How the Larmac owner of this pawnshop, *Cadger “Fat Caddy” Dunnister* (2nd level City

Rat), stays afloat is a mystery. The D-Bee pays only 10% to 25% for pawned merchandise which he then sells after 120 days for around market price, usually only 5-10% below. Reclaimed items are charged a 20% premium. Like most of his kind, this Larmac is lazy, unassuming and a mediocre entrepreneur, he just sits back at the store figuring that things will work out in the end, and they always do! Cadger is one lucky dude, and part of that luck comes from the nominal protection of the Ravenshome Guild, which he pays 10% of his take to keep them out of his face and others out of his business.

190. Three Aces Motel: A run-down dump with no security but no questions asked, and nobody sees or remembers anything. Rooms are 30 credits a night and there is always a noisy party going on in one of the 32 rooms. Only the desperate, the poor, and characters looking for a party or to make a shady deal stay at this dive.

191. Bardun’s Basement: Anything goes in this seedy tavern. It is a rough-and-tumble spot that is part den of iniquity, part blind pig (gambling) and part underground fight club. Patrons literally take their lives in their hands at the Basement. Murder and assaults are common, and big winners had better be able to protect their loot and their lives. The current fight champion at the tavern is a hideously mutated, ten foot (3 m) tower of muscle known as *Tumor* (7rd level Grunt) who looks to be part bear and part . . . who knows what. Rumored to be an escaped experiment from the Lone Star Complex, although he claims to be a D-Bee. The owner, a Vanguard Brawler named *Tut Boarhide* (7th level Thief, Miscreant), owns the Basement and is a long-standing member of the Ravenshome Guild.

192. The Ravenshome Inn & Tavern: Taken at face value, the Ravenshome is, indeed, an inn & tavern, but is really the headquarters and staging ground for the Ravenshome Thieves’ Guild. The five story building has 120 rooms and 10 suites. The Guild Hall is a large convention hall on the main floor. The rooms are cosy with basic amenities, television and computer access, but no telephones. Rooms are reserved for members and business guests only. Cost is 50 credits per night and the inn is usually at 75% occupancy. There is also a restaurant and tavern near the guild hall as well as a kitchen for serving banquets in the hall. Food and drinks are cheap: pints of beer are 3-5 credits each and meals cost around 8-12 credits.

The Ravenshome Thieves’ Guild is an association of freelance contractors who include thieves, bounty hunters, computer hackers, spies, assassins, safecrackers, smugglers, assassins and other criminal types. A crime syndicate structured along the lines of a medieval thieves’ guild. None of the activities that go on at the guild hall are illegal, so there is nothing the authorities can do about the place. It is simply somewhere its members can relax, play cards, chat, have parties, visit friends from out of town, and so on. Although criminal schemes, plots and actual crimes may be discussed, information and ideas exchanged, and meetings (elsewhere) arranged, nothing untoward goes on at the inn itself.

The Thieves’ Guild as an organization serves as an information and employment broker, letting its members meet and learn about (criminal) opportunities, and brewing trouble with the authorities and rival gangs, putting operatives in touch with bosses and bands looking for people with their expertise, and fencing stolen goods. The latter is huge, because stealing something of

value is only step one, selling it for a fair price without getting caught is the real trick. That's where the guild, with all of its connections in town, with mercenary companies and outside MercTown, plays a critical role in product liquidation. The guild buys hot, valuable items for 25% to 50% of the market value, with the higher percentage being for extremely rare, arcane or valuable goods. When selling items they generally go for market value, but sometimes up to 300% more and other times at 40% below. Items sold or traded by the guild to fellow members are always sold at a 20-30% discount, only outsiders must pay full price.

Nobody knows the identity of the Guild Master. People who are contacted by him, hear his voice in their head, but he is never seen. Some believe it is the innkeeper, *Gandafar of Peakstone*, who seems to be a primary spokesperson for the man (or woman). Gandafar (11th level Smuggler/Fence and something of a criminal mastermind, Miscreant; I.Q. 21, M.E. 14, M.A. 20, P.S. 15, P.P. 13, P.E. 9, P.B. 10, Spd 12) also works as a middle-man or contact who puts people in contact with each other, unique "services," special gear, informants, spies, and other special contractors (usually guild members). Always careful, of course, not to be infiltrated by the authorities, rivals and enemies. Whoever the true Guild Master is, he (or she) is calmly calling all the shots from the shadows, getting a piece of the action and masterminding new endeavors away from prying eyes.

193. Crown & Sabers Tavern: A seedy combination of tavern and gambling den that is fairly typical of the Warrens. It has a main sitting lounge next to the bar where food and drinks are served. Off to the side are the gambling tables with games that include poker, blackjack, craps, roulette and several card games. The Crown & Sabers advertises that its games aren't fixed like

some casinos, and that's true. However, it does use several ploys to stack the deck in the house's favor. For one, the drinks are cheap, just 1-3 credits each, so as to dull the wits of those gambling. Another tactic is to have a lot of flashing lights, bells and whistles to create confusion and a sense of excitement and winning. ("That's right, that could be you!") A third is no clocks and windows – the fewer the distractions the more likely the gambler is to stay lost in the game. Fourth, all the dealers and staff are trained to encourage and egg on customers to "try their luck" and "don't quit now, you're on a roll." In addition, there are shills who walk the floor working the crowd to spend more, try again, don't take that, and even use sexual innuendo ("Oh baby, I love a winner.") to keep the people gambling and pressing their luck. Overall business at the Crown & Sabers is mediocre. Most gamblers prefer the larger, flashier casinos like the Palace, Monte's or One-Eyed Jacks, and the campaign about running clean games hasn't been the draw one might expect. An average night's take is 10,000-40,000 credits, which isn't bad, but it's not great and barely covers expenses. Still, there are dozens of regulars and everyone is welcomed.

194. Three Blind Mice: Not far from the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild, on the corner, is a newsstand. It opens daily from six in the morning till eight at night and sells a variety of local periodicals, Warhawk magazine, books, including those by Erin Tam, tobacco products, gum, snacks, cold beverages, coffee and similar small ticket items. Prices are reasonable. The stand is operated by a harmless looking, blind Rat Mutant who escaped from the Coalition's labs at Lone Star. He's known only as Harry (his true name is Harfel and he is a 5th level City Rat; no pun intended). Harry is friendly, personable and well versed in the general gossip and goings-on in the Warrens and the Mys-



tic Quarter. With good reason; as he has a brother who lives and works in the Mystic Quarter and another brother who is a member of the Greenskins. He even has some suspicions on who might be members of the Red Terror.

Harry also secretly serves the Ravenshome Guild Master and is his voice. Years ago, Harry was approached by a stranger and given a *Ring of Tandem Telepathy*, enabling him to communicate secretly with the real (unknown) Guild Master. In return for a considerable financial reward, the blind mutant rat delivers messages outlining the wishes of the faceless Ravenshome mastermind to the members of the guild. While Harry has never met the Master Thief in person, and cannot identify the man, it is known to key members of the guild that he speaks for the Guild Master, so when the rat delivers a message, people listen and obey. This has led some to wonder if Harry is a great actor and is the genuine boss, however, a brief conversation and/or mind probe reveals that such a notion is pure nonsense.

195. Catacombs: This nightclub is three floors of a dug out pre-Rifts underground parking structure located 42 feet (12.8 m) underneath a meat cutting slaughterhouse, and is positively huge. Only a comparatively small portion of the first level is a bar and dance club. The entire place is very dimly lit, it is more than a little dank, and, except for the polished wood dance floor, it is all bare stone floors and walls in a cavernous setting. And it's made of Mega-Damage concrete to boot.

Among the regulars are members of subterranean races and those who like the dark for one reason or another. For City Rats and young street punks, the Catacombs just seem "cool" – only those "in the know" have any idea that it even exists, where it is, or how to find it. That alone creates a sense of mystery and elitism that appeals to City Rats and gangsters who wish they were more important than they really are. The drinks are cheap, costing just 2-5 credits, with Rotgut, Dragon's Head beer, and for augmented patrons, moonshine and Slam, being the most popular. A surly Dwarf named *Rascus Tiborran* (5th level Thief) owns the joint, with Leanne "the Wolf" Sharky, a 25% silent partner (acquired when Rascus fell short on his loan after a series of unfortunate accidents), and the Ravenshome Guild gets 10% for protection.

In addition to being a popular local nightclub for members of the criminal underworld and certain mercenary companies, drinking and partying, the Catacombs is a common meeting grounds for gangs, thieves, mercs and practitioners of magic, particularly the dark arts, but the Catacombs is absolutely crawling with Crazies! The two lower, second and third floors, are unfinished, giant open spaces often used by gangs, merc outfits and Crazies as a secret place to hold massive, noisy, out of control parties, and for wizard spell battles, duels, rumbles and gun-fights to settle disputes. Being completely underground, beneath packed earth before even hitting the first level, the sounds of gunfire, screams and battle cries are completely smothered and impossible to hear on the street above. That means two small armies could kill each other and nobody would be the wiser. Crazies love it for the same reason, they can go completely nuts, act like wild men, shoot weapons and not create a ruckus that can be heard or bring the authorities down on them. There are usually 1-4 such wild private parties, duels or rumbles going on any given night. Renting half of a floor costs 1200 credits, 3000 for the entire floor; 25-50% discounts for known patrons and gang-

land friends. **Note:** For a change of pace, some of the vampires from the Nightcrawlers club sometimes come to the Catacombs. A few have even risked cutting lose and revealing their superhuman strength, speed and physical toughness in physical contests with drunken Crazies. The vampires pretend to be Juicers or metamorphed dragons, sorcerers using their magic or soldiers wearing Naruni force fields, all explanations swallowed without question by drunk Crazies looking for roughhouse fun. Besides, nobody expects to find vampires in this part of the country.

196. Army Cot Flop House: A rundown, filthy, bug infested six story motel with 120 rooms. The facilities are terrible, with little more than a cot-like bed and sink with hot and cold water in each room. No phones, internet or televisions. A moldy communal washroom and showers are located at the two ends of each floor. Security is nonexistent, most of the locks are broken or missing. However, the cost is a mere 20 credits a night.

197. Hangman's Hotel and Tavern: One of the seediest taverns in the Warrens, which is saying quite a lot. Hangman's was once a residence, an ancient, creepy-looking house that probably dates back to before the Great Cataclysm. Next to the walkway that leads to the front door is a blackened, dying tree from which hangs a noose (to add character), and there is a small orchard of similar looking live trees behind the tavern. The interior of the main street lobby matches the outside, run-down and dingy with worn furniture, poor lighting and grim-looking patrons.

Hangman's is owned by the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild and is managed by *Bromar Scourge* (4th level Rifts Druid and amateur hit man). All members of the guild are not welcome, however, as this is a gathering place for assassins, contract killers, murderers and bounty hunters (including those who use magic and psionics). On the surface Hangman's Hotel and Tavern seems like an unfriendly dive, but the rooms are all nice, richly decorated and spacious, with a sitting area, bedroom, private bathroom, television, local internet access and telephone; typical room is 120 credits a night, a suite 500. Only 24 rooms and four suites are available.

There is also a nice lounge with cushy couches and easy chairs that face the orchard. It is attached to the tavern and both are dimly lit, but the tavern is practically a cave it is so dark. Hit men looking for work let the various employment brokers and gang bosses know they are available and are usually willing to meet with a prospective client in the hotel's lounge, tavern, outdoors in the orchard or in their room.

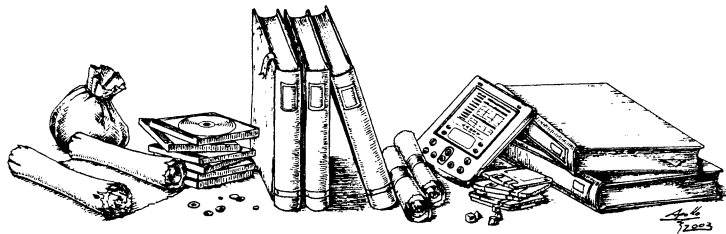
Even within the ranks of the Hangman's regulars there is a secret sub-group that gathers in a secluded, hidden chamber in the tavern's basement. They are members of a snake cult that worships some ancient or alien god who smiles upon killers and encourages success through violence. One of the cult members is the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild's prime enforcer, Bellaron the Blade, a frequent patron of the Hangman's Tavern.

Vendettas and rivalries at Hangman's can quickly turn bloody, so most guests try to avoid contact with each other and they rarely talk "business."

198. Raven's Roost Burlesque House: A nightclub and theater where risqué shows are performed to the delight of the patrons. The price of admission is just 10 credits, drinks cost around 5 credits and there are twenty or so dancers from diverse species, although 50% are human. The Raven's Roost doubles

as a meeting place and secret escape route for the members of the Thieves' Guild. Most of the "showgirls" are 1st to 4th level thieves or fighters themselves, as are most of the waiters and workers, who play the role of bumbling employee that physically gets in the way of authorities, mercs or rival gangs to block their pursuit of known guild members. The girls and workers only need to stall for 20-30 seconds in order for the guild member to seem to have vanished, presumably out the back door or a window. There are a dozen secret hiding places where one or two people can hide, as well as two hidden rooms, a large crawl space under the stage and three secret tunnels; one leads to the back alley, one to the building next door and one to the rooftop. Thus, the Roost is not so much a safe house as a safe exit where Ravenshome members can slip pursuers.

Bella Ravenswing (5th level Mystic of Native American descent) runs the theater and is both charming and manipulative. When not hiding or running interference for the guild, she uses her powers and her girls to spy on customers, gathering information, and gathering evidence of their misdeeds, and either sells the info or uses it to blackmail them to expand her income. The girls are all beautiful (P.B. 19-23), streetwise and dangerous (typical alignment is Anarchist or Miscreant).



199. Tomes of Yore: Tucked away at the end of an ally is this small and shabby bookstore. Tomes of Yore deals almost exclusively in rare, archaic books from before the Great Cataclysm. The quality of the volumes in this store varies from barely legible and tattered scraps to those in near mint condition. Prices are steep, in line with what the Black Market charges for recovered books, which is to be expected considering the stooped, bespectacled owner works for that syndicate. **Nathan "The Egghead" Egbert** (9th level Forger, Miscreant) is an older, bookish man whom most would not suspect to be a career criminal. Nonetheless, Egbert has served the Black Market for five decades now (and continues to do so). One of his current scams is to forge or copy books and pass them off as original relics and charging customers exorbitant prices as if it were authentic. **Note:** Although he doesn't do it much these days, Egghead can also forge identity papers, photographs and even holographic images.

200. Benito's Bodago: A well lit, orderly pawn brokers run by a Mexican ex-patriot named **Benito Sanchez** (6th level City Rat; Scrupulous). For the most part, Benito is an honest broker, he rarely trades in merchandise that he knows is stolen. He buys items for 35% to 50% of MercTown market value, but will only hold it for three weeks. Benito charges a 10% premium to customers who re-purchase their items and sells goods for 20-30% below market cost. The Bodago is an independent shop, and Benito doesn't trust the Ravenshome Guild and fears reprisals from the Black Market, thus he's chosen to buy protection from the local chapter of the *Mephisto's Horsemen* gang. Several years ago the man relocated to MercTown after he was run out

of Ciudad Juarez after crossing the Black Market syndicate there, the Skivers and the Subs. That is the main reason he keeps his hands clean in MercTown, to stay on the authorities' good side in hopes of gaining their help if he needs it. He also knows a good deal about vampires, ran with some of Reid's Rangers for six months, and wears a silver cross around his neck. His vampire hunting weapons are tucked away in the back room and easy to get at.

201. The Pit: A bar that caters to inhuman practitioners of magic, creatures of magic and lesser demons, and a known hangout of *Mephisto's Horsemen*. In fact, it is the gang's headquarters, contact point and favorite party spot. On any given day, at any given time, the Pit is crawling with a dozen or more of the tattooed bikers. Flanking the door are a pair of over-muscled, tattoo-covered Ogres who actively discourage visitors (both are 5th level T-Men). Not that their presence is necessary, only the fantastically stupid or those with prior arrangements dare visit the Pit when the Horsemen are holding court. Even the Black Market, the Ravenshome Guild and Red Terror give the place a respectable berth. Arch Helikos lives on the floor above the bar and can be found here unless he's away on business, but again, good luck getting inside to see him.

202. Shadow Magic: The presence of this store in the Warrens is akin to a fish out of water. One would expect to find this shop alongside others of its kind in the Mystic Quarter. It was established there years ago after its owner was kicked out of the Collegiate Arcane and exiled from the Quarter. **Kaelipses Endago** (7th level Shifter who specializes in Shadow Beasts and similar creatures and magic; Diabolic) was expelled and banned for violating the magic college's laws and ethics, theft, blackmail and endangering the lives of the innocent. Known as "the Nightmare" and "the Dark Lady," Endago has always been a thief, assassin and spy, using her natural magic abilities and Shadow Beast minions. In fact, she has a rare, otherworldly Shadow Beast amulet that holds five of the beasts and can release them at will, enhancing her own considerable skills and legion of loyal beasts. When she was exiled by the Collegiate Arcane, the woman merely joined the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild (a more natural fit) and opened this store.

Shadow Magic is a rather sparse magic shop that offers only a handful of magic items, Techno-Wizard devices, some herbs, a full line of poisons (same as #143, *the Spider's Bite*) and a selection of jumpsuits, clothes and armor suitable for "night work." The shop is a thinly veiled front for her real business: Extermination. Extermination of one's nagging wife, hated sibling, rival, business partner, and enemies by sending one or more of her Shadow Beasts to put an end to the "vermin." Everyone in the MercTown underworld, the network of City Rats and leaders at the Collegiate Arcane knows what she offers, as do select mercenary groups and adventurers. Cost depends on the target, the level of danger and how much she thinks she can bilk out of the client, but ranges from 15,000 to 500,000 credits, millions for heads of state and crime lords. It is only out of self-preservation that she has a hands-off policy on the leaders of MercTown and the heads of the MercTown criminal underworld. She won't touch *Mephisto's Horsemen*, either, although she does not seem afraid of them and giggles when others express their concerns or fears about the gang.

203. The Broken Skull: Located in one of the seediest neighborhoods of the Warrens is the Broken Skull Tavern. It is a four story building constructed to resemble the hotels of the late 19th century, with a peaked shingle roof, shuttered windows and a front patio supported by square timber pillars. Mounted above the double door entryway is the tavern's namesake, a bleached giant skull with a massive crack stretching diagonally from its brow.

The Broken Skull is somewhat run-down, clearly showing years of hard wear and in dire need of repainting. Even so, the tavern is in better condition than most of the surrounding buildings. Its ground floor is the tavern itself. There is a long wooden bar at the back of the room, several areas of haphazardly arranged tables and chairs, and off to the right side, a handful of felt-covered tables set aside for gambling. Tucked behind the bar is the kitchen.

Stairs lead up to the second, third and fourth floors, which serve as a boarding house. There are 20 rooms on each of the upper floors available for rent at a cost of 45 credits a night, or 250 credits for the week. Each room contains three single beds, a small table and chairs, a privy and several lamps. There are no televisions or phones, but there is running water in the bathrooms.

The owner and proprietor is a grizzled, old, partial cyborg by the name of Randal "Ray" Raabus (8th level Headhunter). Raabus inherited the tavern in a single roll of the dice in a high stakes craps game, followed by a gunfight initiated by the loser and previous owner. The retired merc has taken part in numerous campaigns, including a short war against creatures no one has ever seemed to have heard of, things he calls the Mechanoids. A deep scar along his furrowed brow and deep wrinkles are visible evidence of the years he spent fighting other people's wars in pursuit of riches. As he approaches his 65th birthday Raabus is content to run his tavern.

The old fellow is a charmer (M.A. of 18) and has a thousand entertaining stories he's only too glad to tell, the giant's skull hanging above his door being just one excellent tale. He's adapted well to the life of a barkeep, often tending bar himself in order to trade war stories with the customers. He hates Coalition soldiers, vampires and Xitixix and has no use for "fancy pants sissies," his term for both scholars and the wealthy. He refuses to allow CS soldiers and sissies in his place, and enlists like-minded patrons to "help an ol' man show these gents out the door." The Broken Skull is reserved for real "fighting men" and that includes D-Bees in the mercenary trade.

A shrewd, calculating scoundrel with a sly gleam in his eyes, Ray is always up for a good wager or an opportunity to make a quick or easy credit. He keeps his ear to the ground and knows a great deal about current gossip, the latest conflicts, notable bounties, who hiring in town, who can and can't be trusted and where the best deals on weapons and combat gear can be found. He even has a notion on a few people he suspects to be Coalition spies. ("Son, after all the years I spent tangling with Dead Boys, I kin smell when they walk by me.") And it's information he'll discreetly share with a wink and a nod, to fellows he takes a liking toward.

Ray has nothing to do with the Black Market, and he personally put a beating on a pair of Ravenshome snots who tried to intimidate him into paying protection. Boss Dutcher knows to

leave well enough alone, but the Thieves' Guild feels like it owes Mr. Raabus a lesson in respect. Considering how many mercs and adventurers enjoy hanging out at the Broken Skull and love the old man, the guild and any gang who puts the hurt on Ray could find themselves in a "gang war" of sorts they never saw coming. His buddies will retaliate with a vengeance. **Note:** The cagey Headhunter is also a member of the Red Terror, although he mainly offers advice, strategies and tactics rather than going out on vigilante runs.

Prices are fair: a glass of beer costs 2 credits, a pint costs 5 credits, and whiskey sells for 2 credits a shot (when Ray pours that's two ounces, from the other bartenders it's one). Meals of stew and big, meaty sandwiches are 6-10 credits and are delicious compared to military rations, but definitely not the best cuisine in town.

The Broken Skull is hugely popular with military grunts, infantry men and Headhunters, as well as some local residents. It is also the unofficial headquarters of a merc company calling itself *Mayhem's Marauders*. Whenever this mercenary company is not occupied or under contract, they set up shop in the tavern, renting out the top two floors above the tavern, where the majority of the troops stay until it is time once more to leave (i.e. when they find more work). General "Mayhem" Mayfield has worked out a deal with the ownership whereby his troops get priority at the tavern, meaning that other guests are sometimes forced to relocate or are asked to leave altogether. For Ray, it is a reasonable arrangement considering the amount of money he reaps whenever the Marauders are in town. If anything suspicious happens to the old man, the Marauders will join the legion of people who will be out for blood.

204. The Redemption Hall: A combination church and civic center funded by donations from residents and businesses in the Warrens. Sunday services are held in part of the large, gymnasium-like building, and neighborhood dances, festivals, charity drives, social events and civic meetings are held at the main hall. A half dozen offices, a large kitchen and a huge, divided basement finish off the building. The chief organizers are Preacher Robert Alexander and his wife, Winifred, who live in a home across the street.

In addition to all their charitable work, they secretly support the **Red Terror**. They let the group of vigilantes use the basement of the Redemption Hall and their own home for meetings, strategy sessions and even as a field hospital when one of the vigilantes gets hurt. The Red Terror came on the scene six years ago when a trio of superhumans appeared after an explosion at the Collegiate Arcane during an unexpected and powerful Ley Line Storm. The three called themselves "superheroes" from an alternate Earth and after a short time in the Warrens, resolved to do something to help the good people against the predators of the Warrens. The original three heroes were soon joined by other local heroes and do-gooders fed up with the corruption, cruelty and injustice delivered by gangs and the criminal underworld.

The original three super-beings are:

Red Mask, Anarchist (was Scrupulous when he arrived), 29 year old male, human mutant with limited invulnerability (impervious to S.D.C. weapons, has 688 M.D.C., bio-regenerates 2D6 M.D.C. per melee round), the ability to hover and fly up to 150 mph (240 km), and fires energy bolts from his hands (inflict

4D6 M.D. per bolt, and have a range of 1600 feet/487 m), team leader, I.Q. 13, M.E. 12, M.A. 19, P.S. 34, P.P. 15, P.E. 29, P.B. 14, Spd 22.

Scarlet Shadow, Unprincipled, 23 year old female, human mutant, with the limited power to meld into shadows (same as the Shadow Meld spell), turn invisible and intangible at will and who is also a skilled martial arts fighter and handy with energy pistols and swords (wears modified Bushman body armor and has adopted Vibro-Blades – uses a pair of knives and swords, as well as a Neural Mace), I.Q. 14, M.E. 11, M.A. 20, P.S. 21, P.P. 27, P.E. 18, P.B. 20, Spd 29.

Burnout, Anarchist, 24 year old human given powers via an experiment. He can turn into an Elemental creature of fire and in his fire form he can fly (200 mph/320 km), hover, discharge fire bolts (5D6 M.D. per blast, 2000 foot/610 m range), radiate heat, see the infrared spectrum of light (at all times), is impervious to M.D. heat, fire and plasma blasts (magic fire does only 10% of its normal damage), and he has 220 M.D.C. and recovers 1D6 M.D.C. per melee round in flame form. Has 75 M.D.C. in human form. **Note:** All discovered they are even more powerful on Rifts Earth. They have also become more ruthless and deadly, themselves in this hardened, life and death environment, using

lethal force to deal with the criminal underworld, creatures and cretins of Rifts Earth.

The trio has been joined by a 3rd level Cyber-Knight who has renamed himself the **Crimson Knight** (Scrupulous), a muscular, bronze human calling himself **Street** (is really a 6th level Great Horned Dragon Hatchling; Anarchist), a pair of 6th level Juicers known as **Vengeance** and **Retribution** (brother and sister, Anarchists, with a hate for gangs and criminals because their parents and sister were killed in a gang war in the Warrens), an 8th level Psi-Slayer calling himself **Bloodstrike** (Unprincipled), a 9th Level Burster calling herself **Torchie** (Scrupulous), a 6th level, rail gun wielding, full conversion 'Borg calling himself **Red Iron** (Unprincipled), a 10th level Necromancer calling herself **The Terror** (Anarchist, rumor has it she fought in the Coalition-Tolkeen War to the very end), a 2nd level Ley Line Walker, four Headhunters, a Body Doc, two Psi-Stalkers (in it for the action), a dozen City Rats and a handful of other citizens and retired folk like Ray Raabus and the Alexanders, who help in whatever ways they can. The Red Terror numbers continue to grow as they wage a private war against crime, injustice and tyranny.

Dockside

Waterfront & Industrial Sector

The Dockside sector is located along the Ohio River. Connected as it is to the Mississippi and Tennessee Rivers, the Ohio River is a trade route of considerable importance. This waterway system provides easy access, shipping and communications with the territories of Missouri, Arkansas, Texas and the city-states of Golden Age Weaponsmiths in Tennessee and Alabama. Hundreds of barges, motorboats and other vessels ply these waterways loaded down with goods for other parts of the continent. MercTown serves as a terminus for these vessels, an important link in the chain of kingdoms that regularly use the Mississippi, Ohio and Tennessee Rivers for the purpose of trade.

Along the city's waterfront is a series of docks, piers and jetties to berth trade vessels. Every day a few dozen such boats arrive in MercTown to rest, resupply, make repairs, refuel, load goods for transport or offload goods for sale. This makes Dockside a lazy place some days and a hive of activity on others. Busy days see vessels arrive and depart, longshoreman and robot lifters wrestle crates, trucks haul goods in and out of the city proper, and mariners working on ships or coming to town for a few hours or a few days. Industry is also located in Dockside because it's cheaper and easier to ship and receive product. Consequently, the waterfront is dotted with warehouses, storage lots, vehicle yards, factories, and similar businesses.

Dockside, though a busy place when the ships come in, offers a degree of privacy and quiet not found in other parts of MercTown. Nobody lives in the Dockside industrial sector and workers, lost visitors and sailors coming or going are the only people around. When the whistle blows for the last shift of the day, Dockside turns into a ghost town. This makes it an ideal spot to conduct activities that one wishes to go unnoticed. The criminal underworld (including gangs) regularly uses Dockside

after-hours to conduct illicit dealings, meetings, exchanges of cash, stripping and dumping stolen cars, shipping or offloading contraband, and even rumbles and duels. There are also numerous places to dump a body. Likewise, several mercenary groups take advantage of the quiet and seclusion to make preparations for upcoming missions, store supplies and engage in practice sessions; Marcus Larsen regularly turns a rented warehouse into a practice ground where his people can rehearse a particular job and hone their fighting techniques prior to an operation.

205. Poseidon Shipwrights: MercTown's busiest and only shipyard. Poseidon Shipwrights is a high-tech ship builder that makes barges, speedboats, hydrofoils, fishing boats, motorboats and some custom yachts. The yard employs a hundred people and turns out about 20-30 large vessels and 200 small vessels each year, as well as performing regular repairs and maintenance work. The shipyard is known for the quality of its work, which is equal to that of larger shipyards on the Great Lakes and the Gulf.

206. GAW Dealership: This is where Golden Age Weaponsmiths' offices in Mercenary Plaza send customers to pick up their vehicles. The dealership focuses exclusively on the mercenary trade, which means it has rows of military vehicles, hangars, storage buildings and a main office building enclosed within an M.D. chain link fence. The place looks more like an armory or military base than a vehicle dealership. At any given time there are 100+ vehicles parked in the yard, from retrofitted tanks to new production Apache gunships and everything in between. Ammunition, conventional firearms, Blast Armor, assault rifles, LAWs, rocket launchers, TOW missiles, mortars and howitzers are also stored here.

Business at the dealership is booming. GAW products are in high demand among merc outfits that can't afford or don't need

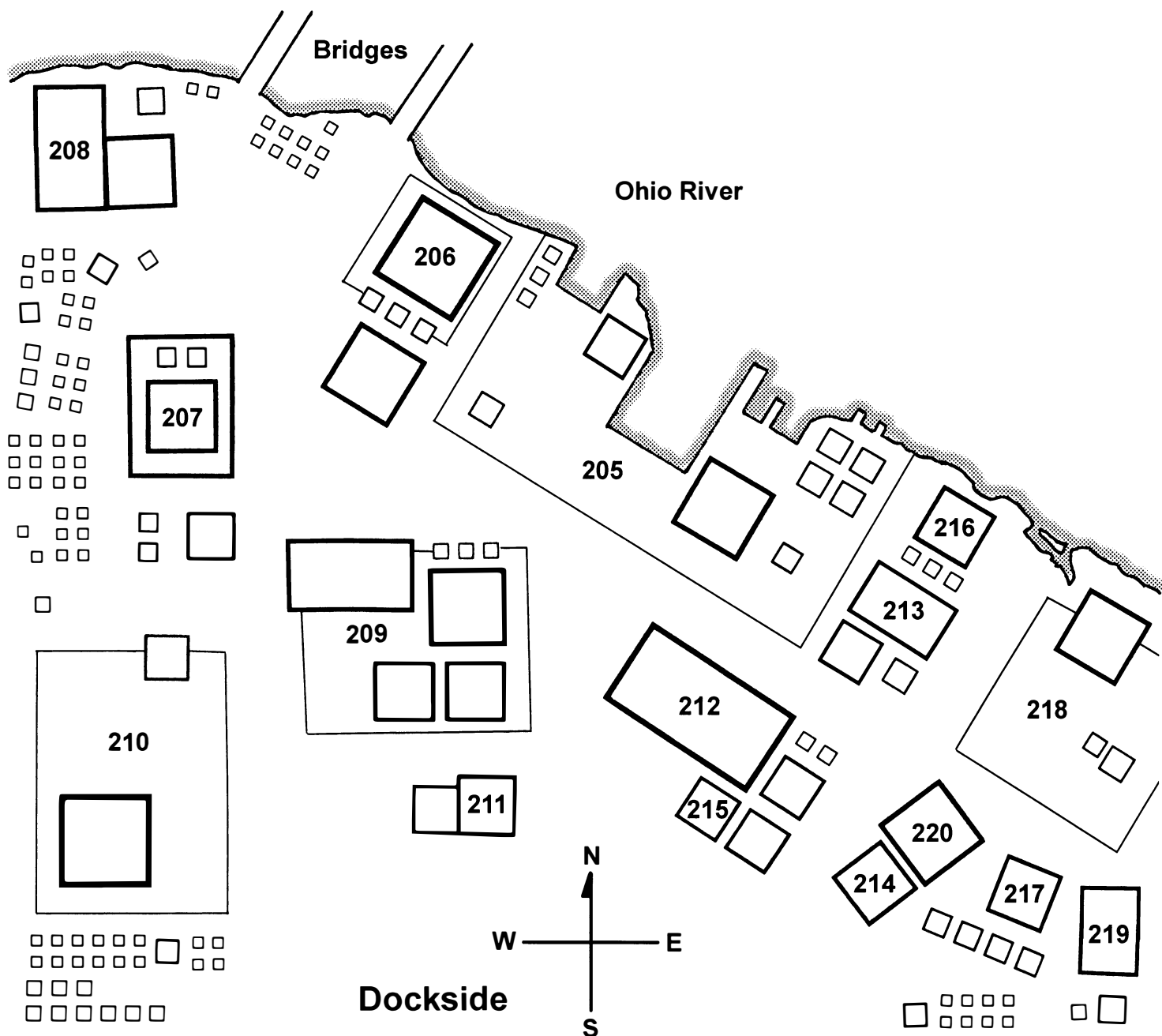


the newest technology. For example, a customer can buy four brand new GAT-2A3 Bradley tanks for the same price as a single Iron Hammer MBT! A real blessing for merc outfits with a tight budget. The sales people at the dealership are usually swamped and it's all that they can do just to keep bringing in stock at the rate of sales via barges from the neighboring GAW city-states. Even competition from *Braffo Bok's Used Tanks* (#218) have failed to make a dent in GAW sales, despite the fact that he sells many Golden Age products, albeit *used ones* sometimes of dubious quality.

207. The MercTown Power Plant: This small but profitable industry was resurrected from the wreckage of pre-Rifts MercTown. In the time before the Great Cataclysm the city of Paducah was home to a uranium enrichment industry. When the survivors began picking over the ruined city in the Dark Ages, the ruins of the enrichment plant were discovered and its technology reverse-engineered. It took decades, but the plant was rebuilt and it has been producing the fuel for nuclear power generators for generations now. The widespread usage of miniature nuclear power plants throughout North America to power cities, factories, robots and exoskeleton armor puts this facility in high demand, and today, that business remains a lucrative and viable concern. It has remained in the hands of the Nyborn family, who made the discovery and initiated its reconstruction, and is now managed by the brother and sister team of Edward and Daniella.

Far from being the largest factory of its type in North America, the MercTown Power Plant still does healthy business manufacturing miniaturized nuclear power plants and generators for robots, vehicles and high-tech devices. Among its customers are local branches of Northern Gun, Wilk's and Golden Age Weaponsmiths, as well as a handful of local businesses, earning the company revenues in excess of 250 million credits each year. Nevertheless, the Power Plant remains more of a family business than a real corporation. There is no board of directors and the only shareholders are Edward and Daniella Nyborn. Its work force is fairly small, with just over a hundred total employees. The Mega-Damage facility is heavily guarded by a private army of soldiers and robots, as well as by the MercTown Defenders.

208. Retrofit Robots: Braffo Bok's main competition, Retrofit Robots sells previously-owned, rebuilt or repaired robot drones, power armor and combat vehicles. For mercs on a shoe-string budget it is the place to go for power armor suits and vehicles. Retrofit Robots may not have the latest, high speed, shiny new toys, but you can't argue with prices usually 25-40% below the going market rate. Most of the vehicles at the lot have seen heavy combat and while serviceable, are far from being in perfect condition. Most are missing 1D4x10% of the main body M.D.C., and there is a 01-50% chance that one of the secondary weapon systems is missing, malfunctioning or simply doesn't work. Selection at the lot is limited to what's available at the time (G.M.'s discretion), so buyers should jump at the purchase of items they know they want; everything is sold on a first come, first served, cash and carry basis. No loans, no lay-away, no leases. The older models from Northern Gun, Titan Industries, Chipwell Armaments, and Coalition States rebuilds (mainly SAMAS and UAR-1 Enforcers), are the most common items to be had.



Retrofit's owner is a former mercenary named *Hacker Felton* (8th level Headhunter Anti-Robot Specialist). His dealings are mostly above-board, but he's been known to purchase merchandise from dubious sources and some pretty disreputable merc companies.

209. Bailey Brothers Construction: The Bailey family has lived in Paducah for generations, even before the Coming of the Rifts. The Baileys helped to rebuild the ruins of Paducah in the Dark Ages and are considered elder-Statesmen and honored citizens of MercTown. Peter, Clark and Jefferson – the Bailey Brothers – are a major political and economic force responsible for building and rebuilding three-quarters of MercTown, including the Hub Battledome, State Hospital, the Palace Hotel, portions of the Outer Wall, Mercenary Plaza, the Naruni Enterprises Building and countless others.

Their success, however, comes with a price, a defacto alliance with Ted Dutcher's Black Market syndicate, making the

crime boss a silent partner who gets 20% of the profits plus union money. When the brothers sought to expand their contractor business they foolishly borrowed money from the Black Market. That was all the leverage Boss Dutcher needed to get his foot in the door. Not long after, the crime boss forced the company to accept the union. Now the union forces the Baileys to accept contracts in which a tax is levied by the Black Market. This tax is a small percentage, usually 2-5% of the total, that Dutcher then skims from the union dues to earn several million credits a year for his syndicate. While the brothers find this arrangement distasteful, they are helpless to redress it. Dutcher's syndicate is just too powerful to confront. If the Baileys were to challenge Boss Dutcher on anything he does, he can shut them down overnight with a union sponsored strike of the work force. Thus they've been forced to quietly accept the situation in which they find themselves and try to make the best of it. At least Dutcher is smart enough to let the brothers make strong buildings without shortcuts that might impugn the structural integrity.

210. O'Grady's Vehicle Parts & Scrap Yard: On the surface, this business is nothing more than a wrecking yard. It is a sprawling, fenced-in lot that is littered with a shambles of mismatched vehicle scraps and parts. With all of the damaged vehicles that come in and out of MercTown there is a healthy business in salvage, parts, and recycling. The owner, *Heller O'Grady* (8th level High-Tech Bandit; Miscreant), and his cronies buy scrap vehicles then strip them for salvageable components, and recycle the remaining metal. Thousands of assorted parts are ripped from a cavalcade of different vehicles, robots and power armor and stored for resale at the yard. O'Grady sells component parts at 20% below the going market rate, and sells scrap metal to the various manufacturers in MercTown. The unbeatable selection brings most of the vehicle dealers, repair shops and even visiting mercs to buy at O'Grady's; an additional 20-30% discount is given to local businesses and bulk industrial purchases.

To supplement his routine business, Heller has organized a unit of high-tech bandits known as **the Vulture Gang**. Just as crows and ravens peck at corpses on the battlefield, the modern battlefield has bred its own brand of scavenger - the high-tech bandit. When armies clash it is inevitable that valuable equipment gets lost, dropped, hastily discarded, damaged or destroyed. Even the most twisted, burnt-out wreck of a vehicle may yet yield valuable components, ammunition, energy, fuel or information. Likewise, the fallen soldiers may offer a wealth of equipment, supplies, weapons, ammunition and, sometimes, bionic parts or cybernetic implants. Those who can stomach the grisly task of collecting such goods, and have no compunction about looting the dead, stand to make easy money from their blood stained loot. Such is the Vultures' specialty.

When word of a promising conflict filters down, the Vultures pack their gear, mount up in their vehicles and head for the action. Their usual routine is to establish a hideout and an observation point, and wait for the carnage to start. Once the armies start to take casualties the Vultures emerge, always being careful to avoid the front-line troops, and descend upon fallen soldiers to scoop up any useful weapons, armor and equipment that isn't too heavily damaged or under guard. The Headhunters among the Vultures guard the vehicles and booty that has already been collected while the rest of the crew go over and over the battlefield to strip wreckage and fallen soldiers clean of anything worthwhile. They stow it inside cargo vehicles and then mount up and continue to follow the battle. Whenever things start to get too dangerous, the fighting stops, or their transport vehicles are full of salvage, the Vultures head home to MercTown, clean up the components and put them up for sale at O'Grady's.

In essence, the Vultures are a small-time mercenary outfit that recovers battlefield salvage, only they are all cutthroats (Anarchist, Miscreant and Diabolic alignments) who also strip the dead and dying. If there happens to be survivors next to the wreckage, well, a few spent rounds of ammunition doesn't add much to the expedition's overhead. These efforts, while hardly moral, triple the scrap yard's annual income. It hasn't happened yet, but someday the misdeeds of Heller's cutthroats will no doubt come home to roost when some mercs recognize the belongings of a dead buddy, or a survivor recognizes some members of the Vultures and all hell breaks loose. Surprisingly, this

hasn't happened yet, and nobody realizes what O'Grady is up to, not the dozens of local businesses or the scores of mercenaries who have been buying from the yard for years. Most people just don't stop to wonder where a part for a vehicle or robot may have originated, and O'Grady is smart enough to quietly wholesale out "previously owned" bionics to any number of Body-Chop-Shops. In short, the buyer doesn't know and doesn't care where the scrap yard gets its stock.

Note: There are three military style companies of Vultures; 50-60 men in each unit; a few City Rats, Headhunters, Operators, mercs, and Grunts led by High-Tech Bandits. When not out in the field, they can be found hanging at **O'Grady's Vehicle Parts & Scrap Yard**, where the Vultures are also put to work cleaning and sorting salvage for resale.

Members of the Vultures are rotten S.O.B.s who may be encountered in almost any circumstances in town where thugs and bullies might hang out or be roaming for trouble. Or they may be encountered on the battlefield, showing up in the heat of a conflict to loot and rob the characters' fallen comrades or vehicles stashed aside. Or our heroes might hear rumors about bandits looting the dead (or even ambushing small groups of soldiers in distress) and follow some leads that point to O'Grady's. The Vultures aren't dumb, they haven't made a living doing this for more than a decade by making stupid mistakes or taking on heavy odds. That means they have a number of convenient cover stories ("Sorry son, bought that item from a merc just two days ago, can't say how he might have come across it." And so on.). Snoops and troublemakers who these ruthless scavengers think they can handle without raising suspicion will have an accident, disappear or get killed by bushwhackers who must have been out-of-towners, gang members or mercs with a grudge (no witnesses, of course, except maybe a few of O'Grady's Vultures). If things get too hot, the Vultures are likely to retreat/back off, and if any member of the crew gets into a position where he is about to snitch on the organization, he'll be the one to have an accident or be outright assassinated even if in custody. Anything to preserve the rest of the crew and operations.

211. Custom Auto-Body: This warehouse serves as the garage for one of the city's mechanic shops. Aside from routine repairs, Custom Auto-Body also does vehicle restoration, paint jobs, and builds custom "hot rods" and muscle cars (both hover and wheeled versions) for enthusiasts as well as custom-modified hovercycles, rocket bikes, Juicer Jump Bikes and Icarus Flight Systems. The building is filled top to bottom with all the tools of the trade, most of which are the best available. Custom Auto-Body, as a rule, barely manages to stay afloat, at least through its legitimate business. The warehouse doubles as the headquarters for the *Booster Boys*, a notorious gang of car thieves. It is owned by the gang leader, David "Davey Boy" Bradley, but is strictly legit - a warehouse down the street is one of the gang's auto-chop shops. City Rats who know who owns Custom Auto-Body refer to it as "Stealer's Wheels."

212. Allen Foods: Matthew Allen started out as a mere grocery store owner in Paducah. Starting small, using a little run-down shop, he started sold a handful of common brands *plus* his own, a line of homemade cereals, pastas, preserves and sauces. His creations became an instant hit, enabling Allen to quit the direct-sales side of things and concentrate on food processing

and manufacturing. He sunk every penny of profit he made back into the company and within six years he had built the largest, homespun food processing company in the Midwest (not including the Coalition States). Allen Foods has since become a household name in all the free kingdoms, and Matthew is a hometown celebrity in MercTown/Paducah, where he's been in business for 17 years. His company produces everything from cereal and crackers to pasta, ketchup, tomato sauces, soups, dressings, preserves and peanut butter. Allen Foods is a successful business that earns profits in the area of 10-15 million credits annually. It is also one of the primary employers in MercTown with 1200+ workers. The only major obstacle that Allen Foods has faced was the somewhat hostile invasion of the MercTown Labor Union (under the leadership of the Black Market), which forced the company to unionize. While this did cause several weeks of unrest, and even a few violent strikes, it has since calmed down with business back to normal.

213. Still Ticking Motors: Home of the best deals in town for used automobiles, trucks, motorbikes and basic hover vehicles. Still Ticking Motors trades exclusively in civilian vehicles and offers its products at 15-30% below market value. Its owner, *Gabriel Marsden* (10th level Vagabond), is a scalawag known to deal in repainted stolen vehicles, though he takes no accountability for it. He has his own team of a dozen car thieves, but "acquires" stolen vehicles from chop-shops all over town. Marsden used to run the biggest car theft ring in the city until the *Booster Boys* hit the scene. Now he's considered second-rate. Marsden has no ties to organized crime beyond paying monthly protection to the Black Market and buying the occasional hot vehicle for them. He says he hates the Booster Boys and Davey Boy, but he's never tried to take them out of business, and he talks about Davey Boy (his protege) with grudging admiration. ("Taught the boy everything he knows.")

214. Bits of 'Bots: This business is another of MercTown's wrecking yards and resale lots. Bits of 'Bots deals in salvaged components from robot vehicles, power armor and unmanned robots. Parts are sold here at a discount of 10-15% below market price. The yard is also a front for one of the top bosses in the local Black Market syndicate, *Richard "Cadillac" Cordera*. He and his crew stick mainly to the Waterfront with rackets that include vehicle theft, weapons smuggling (mainly to Chi-Town and Iron Heart 'Burbs), bootleg videos, extortion, and to a limited degree, hijacking.

215. The Goblin's Hole: With their stock in the Warrens continuing to drop rapidly, the *Greenskins* have wisely moved their headquarters to the Dockside. Known derisively as the "Goblin's Hole," this aging warehouse serves as headquarters, clubhouse and primary hangout for the beleaguered gang. While undoubtedly a smart choice to prevent further decline at the hands of the gang's enemies, the move to Dockside hurt many of its membership. To a large segment of the gang it is viewed as an admission of weakness and a definite drop in social status that the Greenskins have ceded their rightful turf in the Warrens. However, the gang's leader, Beef Shorzat, who is more interested in the gang's survival than its reputation, insisted on the move. From the relative safety of Dockside he intends to rebuild their strength before making any plays to grab (or more appropriately, to retake) territory in the fiercely contested Warrens. Besides, the Greenskins have not abandoned their old turf com-

pletely, individual members and segments of the group continue to congregate in what little remains of their territory in the Warrens. All that has really changed is the location of their headquarters. Yeah, right.

216. Dragon's Head Brewery: Maker of the most popular beer in MercTown, this brewery is owned by a second generation D-Bee who calls himself *Brewmaster Grasso* (6th level Vagabond). The company is basically a micro-brewery that's exploded onto the scene with a tasty, potent, high alcohol content beer that appeals to ordinary people who want a quick buzz and good taste, as well as beings like Juicers, Crazies, D-Bees and even dragons with powerful constitutions and who want something strong to get the same kind of reaction as regular folk. *Dragon's Head Beer* delivers for augmented beings (basically they get the same kind of buzz ordinary beer gives to ordinary humans), yet it also appeals to ordinary people who think of themselves as tough and/or hard drinkers (i.e., mercs, soldiers, sailors, bandits, young tough guys, etc.) as well as those looking to get drunk quick. Even Brewmaster Grasso didn't realize Dragon's Head Beer would catch on like it has. He can barely keep up with demand in MercTown and is being asked to sell it to places like Whykin, Kingsdale, El Dorado, Ishpeming and the Manistique Imperium, among others. Grasso's latest experiment – *Slam* – designed specifically for Mega-Damage beings like Mega-Juicers and dragons, seems to be catching on almost as quickly (despite its terrible taste and smell). A Great Horned Dragon's head logo is for the beer itself, and an unconscious dragon for Slam.

Grasso is afraid to turn to the Black Market for a loan, but fears someone will figure out and steal his recipe if he doesn't act soon. (Actually, several people already have tried, but nobody can match the same smooth taste and keep the potency of the drink.) He's thinking of getting private investors, but doesn't know exactly how to go about it.

217. Kentucky Moonshine Co.: For close to a century now, the Kentucky Moonshine Company has been distilling fine liquors and potent moonshine. The McLeod family makes their own line of bourbon, scotch, whiskey and moonshine which are well known in the region. Aside from business in MercTown, the company exports its products in all directions including Missouri, Texas, the GAW southern kingdoms, CS 'Burbs and scattered communities in the east. Attached to the main distillery is a direct sales outlet where members of the general public can buy liquor right from the source. The McLeods don't see Grasso as a threat, and are glad to see people like him and them making MercTown the distillery capital of the Midwest.

218. Braffo Bok's Used Tanks: In the market for an affordable, previously-owned AFV? Look no further than Braffo Bok's! At least that's what it says on the barrage of billboards, radio spots and television ads in MercTown. *Braffo Bok's Used Tanks* lot is found in the Dockside area and is the largest independent, AFV (Armored Fighting Vehicle) retailer in MercTown. It is a sprawling compound where literally hundreds of AFVs in varying states of repair are lined up in rows. None of these vehicles are in like-new condition. The vast majority are "reconditioned" vehicles salvaged from battlefields, dug up from pre-Rifts ruins or simply sold for cheap by previous owners (looking to upgrade, retiring from the business, or stolen). Consequently, only his best units have close to their full M.D.C., the

rest are missing 1D6x10% of their armor, drive 1D4x10% slower than normal and are missing 1D4 secondary weapon systems or the communications system or sensor cluster. There is a vast assortment of retrofitted pre-Rifts hulks, Golden Age Weaponsmiths (GAW) products, Iron Heart Industries tanks, some old CS Mark Vs, and a number of other unique designs, all at 50-60% below market prices for new.

A word to the wise, shoppers at Braffo Bok's Used Tanks must stay constantly on their guard, because *Braffo Bok* (9th level Larmac Vagabond Merchant/Con Artist; Miscreant) exemplifies the worst stereotypes of used car salesmen and is a master of the swindle who would steal the credits from his mother if he thought she wouldn't notice. Among his favorite ploys are the old "bait-and-switch" (shows the customer a perfectly fine vehicle, but switches it for a run-down AFV of the same model), the "buyer beware" ("What's that? Hey, it's not my fault the engine doesn't work. You examined it and made the purchase. How do I know what you did to the engine? Oh, well, of course you'd claim you didn't do anything. Sorry Pal, I wasn't born yesterday."); and the "one bad apple spoils the bunch" (slips one or more lemons into orders of several vehicles). If the buyer is careful, however, and gives the dealer as little opportunity to cheat him as possible, he will make a straight-up, fair deal. And heck, given that the prices are less than anywhere else, Braffo Bok's still has the best deals in town.

Braffo is a stickler for the phrase that "a deal is a deal," whether it works to his advantage or not. If someone out-haggles the clever con man, he abides by the terms of the arrangement. On the other hand, those who have been swindled and come looking for satisfaction will find Braffo unwilling to budge. He will not return their credits for any reason. Trying to intimidate the guy will not work either; after all, he's been threatened by worse and has always been able to talk his way out of trouble. Heck, worse case scenario, he actually gives the angry buyer a vehicle(s) worth what he paid and maybe, just maybe, a little extra something to make him happy. Good advertising, you know . . . having a happy customer. Braffo also pays the Black Market to ensure his safety, and among the two dozen friends and employees working at the used tank lot are several ex-mercs and tough guys, including his best buddy, *Mongar Monkeywrench* (6th level Vanguard Brawler, Operator, Anarchist), and *Duplex Drukkis* (4th level ex-Headhunter turned mechanic and test driver), not to mention a dozen Larmac, all of whom will protect their boss.

In Stock Vehicle Notes: The present selection at the lot includes 13 GAW M48A3 tanks, 8 GAT-3A2 Bradleys, 19 rebuilt M113 APCs, 28 GA-H998 Hummer armored jeeps, 9 GAW FAV SpecOps dune buggies, 18 Mountaineer ATVs, 32 Big Boss ATVs, 6 Iron Hammer tanks, 11 Iron Fist tanks, an Iron Bolt MLRS, 14 Iron Maiden APCs, 12 Coalition Mark V APCs, a heavily overhauled CS Grinning Skull MBT, 3 Titan "True Spider" Walker IFVs, and a pair of Chimera IFVs from Lazlo (roughly equal to an NE Carnivore tank but with a TW lightning cannon, armor of Ithan force field with 200 M.D.C., and a Shadow Meld "stealth system" that can be used up to four times daily). The condition of all vehicles ranges from practically brand new (sold for 20% below market), to barely able to run junk heaps (sold for 50-60% below market for an equivalent new tank).

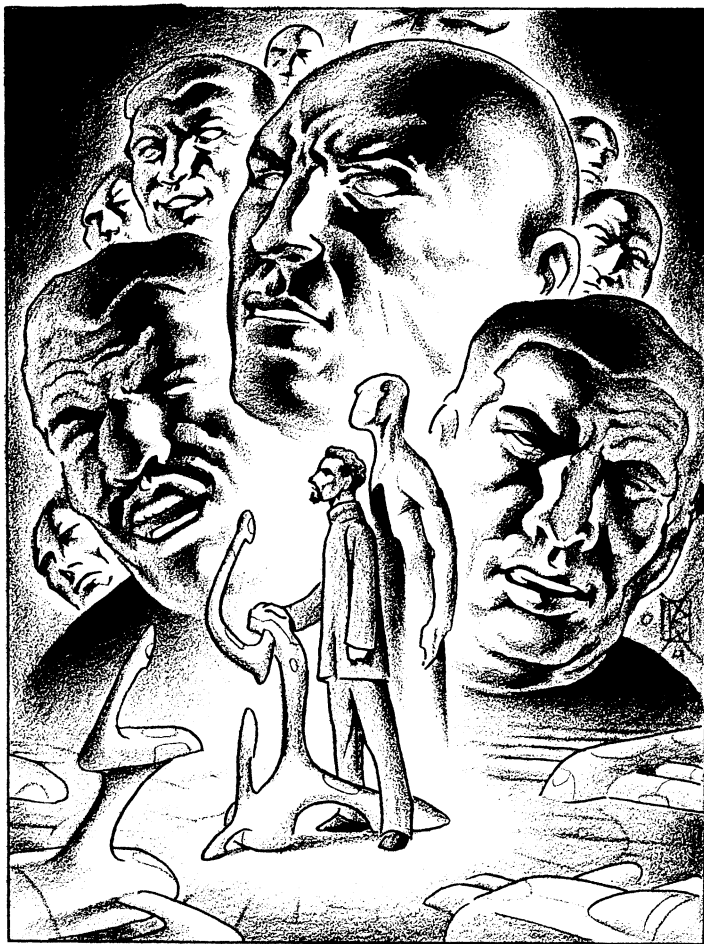
219. Otto's Automotive: This dealership sells both new and used vehicles. Most are civilian vehicles like hover cars, hovercycles, motorbikes and automobiles, but he also has a limited supply of military vehicles and items common to exploration and adventuring, like a few military grade NG hovercycles, Big Boss A.T.V.s, Mountaineer A.T.V.s and even a couple of APCs. Prices are reasonable, within 5% plus or minus of market value, and the quality of the vehicles is good. Otto also has a service garage that sells parts and does repairs, and regular customers get a 10-15% discount on repairs and purchases. *Ottovar Havrik* (6th level City Rat, Unprincipled) is a long-standing member of the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild and gets many of his vehicles from its membership at 20-30% of the normal street price, no questions asked.

220. Kentucky Dairy Products: There are dozens of dairy farms scattered throughout Kentucky and clustered around MercTown. While many of these remain independent, more than half sell their wares to Kentucky Dairy Products. Located on the outskirts of the city-state, the Kentucky Dairy is the biggest milk products industry in the region. The company pasteurizes milk, makes yogurt, cheese and cottage cheese. Its products are sold not only in the city-state, but also to Kingsdale, Whykin, Fort El Dorado, the Golden Age Weaponsmiths city-states and as far away as CS Arkansas. Kentucky Dairy is owned by Dane Haversome (Scrupulous), who serves as its CEO. He employs about 630 workers, all of whom are members of the MercTown Labor Union, and helps to keep a lot of dairy farms in business.



MercTown's Most Notable Personalities

A note about equipment: Ninety percent of all equipment is collected and described in the 352 page **Rifts® Game Master Guide** and for that matter, most magic spells and popular magic items are found in the 352 page **Rifts® Book of Magic**. Both are designed as easy to use guides for the Game Master. New Naruni items are found in **Naruni Wave 2** and new weapons, armor, vehicles and gear are presented in **Rifts® Merc Ops**, the companion to this book.



Geoff Blackman

As the founder and chief executive of his own private intelligence agency, *Geoffrey Tyler Blackman* is one of the best informed people in MercTown, and even North America. Only "Fixer" Jones may know more about what's going on in the city-state itself or with the mercenary companies that use MercTown for staging operations. Blackman Intelligence Resources has a continent-spanning network with moles in most of the prominent governments, corporations and organizations in North America. The collection capabilities of this agency are impressive and may be second only to the Coalition States and Free Quebec. That makes Geoff Blackman one of the key players in the intelligence and espionage circles on the continent, for not only does he have information at his fingertips, but can be hired for special investigations and intelligence as per the client's wishes.

The capabilities of his group are well known, indeed the intel briefings they provide are a sought after commodity, but little is known about Geoff Blackman personally. He simply surfaced in MercTown about eight years ago with a lot of his network already in place. Everyone assumes he is or was a merc himself, but nobody knows the name or his face. Blackman's only credentials are the reputation of his company, a solid one based on its performance to date, but that leaves him an enigma. What is clear is that Geoff Blackman is a highly organized, skilled and veteran master spy of similar caliber as Fixer Jones, possibly even Thaddius Lyboc of the CS. That suggests that he's had some formal training, which, combined with his apparent ability to cast spells and use of technological eavesdropping devices makes, it likely that he is from Tolkeen, Lazlo or Kingsdale. In spite of his mysterious origins his skills and company are known factors, and Blackman's become a fixture in both MercTown and the larger mercenary world.

There is a very good reason that no one knows Geoff Blackman's background: His identity is a carefully constructed alias. Geoff Blackman doesn't exist, never has. The Blackman persona was fabricated by a shape-changing, alien super-spy named *Zunar Blakarran*. He arrived on Rifts Earth through a Rift toward the end of the Dark Age. An alien from another dimension, Zunar had already learned the skills of stealth, observation, infiltration, espionage, magic and murder, and simply applied them to his new environment. For two hundred years, the shape changing alien traveled the lands of North America, preying on survivors, stealing what he needed and killing those who got in his way. For a while, he sought a way to return home, but eventually he came to consider Earth his home. Blakarran/Blackman enjoys the unique opportunities Rifts Earth has to offer and likes the no-holds barred mentality of most people, including the Coalition States, when it comes to power struggles among its civilizations.

Posing as an Elf wizard and assassin named Zakur Muarran, he gained the ear of New Paducah's dictator Alkavar Dorveen. For two decades he served as Dorveen's advisor, confidant and security chief. Unfortunately, the one time Dorveen should have heeded Zunar's advice he chose to ignore it, and hired the three mercenary companies with fool's gold. Although Dorveen was forced to flee his city-state, the shape-shifting Blakarran had no desire to marry his fate to the failed dictator, left the man by the wayside, and returned to New Paducah with a different face and body. He spent six months observing and evaluating the situation before resurfacing as Geoff Blackman. He re-established contact with his old network of informants throughout the region and formed **Blackman Intelligence Resources (BIR)**. After five years of hard work assuming many identities and establishing many new contacts and connections, BIR was up and running. Over the last five years, the company has become a greater resource and moneymaker than even Blackman had imagined.

During his time in North America the past several decades, the alien had taken part in historical events that have since become legendary. He was a member of the original Federation of Magic, a captain in Lazlo's militia, a representative on Kings-

dale's ruling council and a member of countless guilds, groups and organizations, all under different personas, of course. This experience, age and insight has helped him to build his current intelligence empire. And as a long-lived shape-changer, he is the ultimate mole. For example, he is currently a member of the Ravenshome Guild as well as the Collegiate Arcane (under different identities), and is known by various other names and identities among City Rats, mercenaries, adventurers and D-Bees, all of whom consider him one of their own. Furthermore, he is the only person in MercTown who knows something about Annias Cearcy. How? Because Annias Cearcy was also there during the foundation of the Federation of Magic and other places and events a century or more in the past. He was a young man then and remains a young man today. In addition, he has seen the Archmagus in battle and knows what he can do. They even traveled together once, and rubbed shoulders on more than a few occasions, but unlike Annias, who is locked in a single form, the shape changer always wore a different face, so the mage has no idea some of his secrets are known. Of course, the alien wouldn't be much of a spy if he wasn't digging for more on this mysterious figure. He has his theories about the man, but is working on proving them. Unlike anyone else, he has some good ideas where to dig.

Geoff Blackman, the shape changing alien, is smart, disciplined, resourceful, meticulous, a consummate professional and a true master spy and extortionist. And he has *never* revealed his own true identity or special abilities to a living soul.

Full Name: Zunar Blakarran – primary identity: Geoff Blackman, but has scores of other faces and personas.

Alignment: Miscreant evil.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 20, M.A. 17, P.S. 14, P.P. 11, P.E. 8, P.B. 10, Spd 10.

Mega-Damage Being: 47 M.D.C. Blackman's alien nature and the energies on Rifts Earth make him a minor Mega-Damage creature, but he hides that fact well, and always wears appropriate armor or a Naruni personal force field.

Size: As Geoff Blackman he stands 5 feet, 11 inches (1.8 m) tall and weighs 205 lbs (92 kg). In his natural form the shape shifter is 7 feet (2.1 m) tall and weighs 235 lbs (106 kg), but he has many faces, sizes and shapes.

Age: 162; middle-aged for his species, but can assume the appearance of any age from teen to ancient elder; always male.

Natural Abilities: Limited shape-changing into the appearance of any *male* human or humanoid creature, including D-Bees. The shape changer cannot turn into a four-legged animal, insect or object, neither can he grow additional limbs or appendages, like a tail or wings, nor omit a limb such as a leg or arm. However, the alien can instantly grow hair or fur of any type and color, and make himself appear like the young or old of any race. In addition, there are size limits. The absolute smallest size that can be assumed is three feet (0.9 m) and the tallest is 10 feet (3 m). Weight and mass varies only by thirty pounds or so, consequently, when small, the alien must appear fat, and when tall, he is thin. Furthermore, regardless of his appearance, the physical and mental attributes are always the same. **Note:** It takes one full melee (15 seconds) to complete a physical transformation.

P.P.E.: 129

Description: In the guise of Geoff Blackman the shape changer is a moderately tall, well built human in his mid-thirties with black, curly hair, a goatee and blue eyes. (In his natural form, the shape shifter is tall, lanky and totally hairless with grey eyes. However, the alien never assumes his natural appearance unless comatose. If knocked unconscious, he retains his current appearance.)

Disposition: The crafted persona of Geoff Blackman is very similar to Zunar Blakarran, himself, with only a few affectations or deviations from his true character. Blackman is a strict, businesslike and reserved professional with a tremendous degree of skill in his chosen trade. He is self-disciplined, resourceful and industrious, with a keen eye for details and a memory like a steel trap. The spy makes an effort to maintain his professional decorum without seeming distant or indifferent. Blackman has excellent personal skills, he is a smooth talker with a subtle charm, an individual who is easy to like. However, the spy master is cautious to avoid establishing personal attachments of any sort; he is the kind of guy with hundreds of associates but no real friends. The reason being that Blackman/Blakarran has fallen prey to the characteristic paranoia of his race – that everyone hates and fears shape changers and is out to destroy them all. Blackman has never personally suffered such persecution, but then he has never let anyone know what he really is, and his race has a long legacy of suffering until they seized control of their planet and dominated all other people. The xenophobia of the Coalition States is all he needs to see to know the same would hold true on Rifts Earth. Actually, the shape changer could never be happy with just one form, and enjoys being effectively invisible while in plain sight.

Experience Level: 12th level Spy and blackmailer, 3rd level Ley Line Walker.

Magic Knowledge: Roughly equivalent to a Ley Line Walker, without the Line Walker's O.C.C. abilities such as sense and read ley lines. Blakarran/Blackman knows the following spell invocations: Armor of Ithan, Befuddle, Blind, Blinding Flash, Breathe Without Air, Calling, Chameleon, Charismatic Aura, Charm, Cloud of Smoke, Death Trance, Dispel Magic Barriers, Escape, Fingers of Wind, Float in Air, Fly, Frequency Jamming, Mask of Deceit, Invisibility: Superior, Mask P.P.E., Metamorphosis: Animal, Mystic Alarm, Negate Mechanics, Negate Magic, Negate Poison/Toxins, Nightvision, Reduce Self, See Aura, See the Invisible, Shadow Meld, Superhuman Speed, Teleport: Lesser, Time Slip, Tongues, and Watchguard. **Note:** Blackman/Blakarran has a more extensive repertoire of spell knowledge than your average Super-Spy as a result of his age. He has spent more than a century spying and pursuing magic, and has accumulated a collection of spells that would be the envy of many a Line Walker or Mystic.

Psionic Powers: None.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

Attacks per Melee: Seven physical or two by magic.

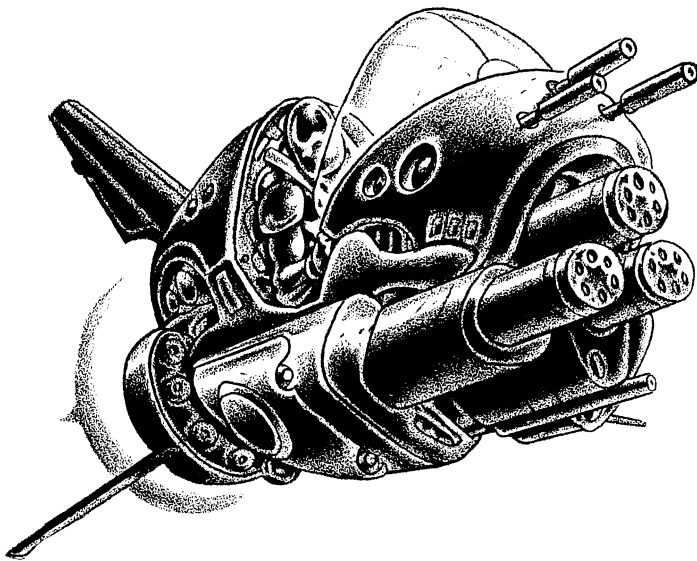
Bonuses: +5 to strike, +6 to parry and dodge, +3 to roll with impact, +4 to damage, +3 to pull punch, kick inflicts 1D6 S.D.C., entangle, knockout/stun on a Natural 18-20, +2 to save vs psionics & insanity, +2 to save vs telepathic probes and mind control, +2 to save vs Horror Factor, 45% chance to invoke trust/intimidate.

Skills of Note: Speaks Dragonese/Elf, American and French, all at 98%, literate in Dragonese and American at 90%, Basic Math 98%, Computer Operation 98%, Computer Hacking 65%, Cryptography 75%, Radio: Basic 98%, Radio: Scramblers 98%, Surveillance Systems 75%, Disguise 95%, Forgery 85%, Imitate Voices & Impersonation 90%, Intelligence 90%, Interrogation Techniques 55%, Pick Locks 85%, Pick Pockets 75%, Seduction 55%, Climbing 90/80%, Prowl 75%, Pilot Hover Craft 98%, and Streetwise 62%.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Knife, W.P. Energy Pistol.

Weapons of Note: A pair of Plasma Cartridge Pistols, Vibro-Knife (2D6 M.D.), four silver plated throwing knives (1D6 S.D.C.), a Techno-Wizard Flaming Dagger (2D6 M.D.), a Splugorth Psi-Interrogator, a variety of poisons (1D6 of everything described in the *Spider's Bite* shop), and a half dozen magic scrolls.

Armor: NE-C20 camouflage variable armor for missions where combat is probable, but also has an NG Stalker suit for more stealthy operations.



CS Major Jameson Brock

From its inception, the Coalition States has shown little interest in independent communities that embrace magic or non-humans, except to exterminate them. Likewise, the eastern region of North America has been largely ignored. The general lack of CS interest in the East is not a product of short-sightedness, but pragmatism: There is nothing in the East the CS really needs or wants. It is predominantly hostile wilderness. Civilization in the East is represented by barbarian and Psi-Stalker tribes, bands of Shemarrians, rural communities that barely count as towns, and tiny kingdoms that seldom survive for more than 15 years. The powers that be in the heartland of the Coalition States have, however, always had their eyes set on the Midwest. Emperor Karl Prosek shares the same vision as his father: that of expanding the so-called Domain of Man from its traditional centers in Middle America on a north-south axis from James Bay to the Gulf of Mexico. Which is why the military efforts of the Coalition have been concentrated on the former

States of Minnesota (Tolkeen), Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas, as well as rebellious Free Quebec. Furthermore, the CS doesn't want to spread itself too thin (which it did without repercussion when it was at war with both Tolkeen and Free Quebec at the same time). Facing the number of rivals and opposition that it does in the central region of the continent from forces such as Tolkeen, the Federation of Magic, the Xiticix, the nations of Michigan, Kingsdale and Lazlo, among others, it is foolhardy and dangerous to attempt any expansion to the east. Besides, the *Magic Zone* forms a "natural" barrier to the east, preventing easy access or communication to forces east of the Mississippi.

However, the CS is not blind. Since the Tolkeen and Free Quebec conflicts, its Military Intelligence Division is more conscious and aware of people and developments on its expanding borders than ever. As a result, boomtowns like New Paducah/MercTown and communities they believe represent a danger, are noted and watched closely. Tens of thousands of mercenaries, sorcerers and adventurers took part in the Tolkeen War against the Coalition States' Army, and though Tolkeen has fallen, many of the mercs and freelancers who fought on her behalf have survived and scattered across the country. The Coalition leadership would never admit this, but they were surprised by how many independent kingdoms, mercenaries and freelancers rallied to Tolkeen's side. Many of those self-same individuals now visit and rendezvous at MercTown in what the old American Empire once called the State of Kentucky.

Frankly, the presence of a city-state run by mercenaries worried the Coalition. This fear was reinforced by the events of the Juicer Uprising in Newtown, the small war over Benford Town, Free Quebec and the Tolkeen War. Coalition Military High Command has reassessed the threat level of mercenaries and has initiated a long-term, undercover intelligence operation to keep tabs on mercenary companies and adventuring outfits, and there is no better place to do so than *MercTown*. Veteran Special Operative Major Jameson Brock has been given the MercTown assignment and since his initial report (presented at the beginning of this book), has dispatched 11 teams of specialists for deep undercover insertion in MercTown. Each team consists of 2-5 individuals and poses as one of the following: mercs, adventurers, vagabond wanderers, fugitives (Rogue Scholar, Rogue Scientist, Tolkeenite, etc.), business people, small time criminals and ordinary people.

Who better to head this operation than the man already familiar with the city-state and already known to a few locals as a freelance mercenary (along with four others in his crew)? The mission of all the Coalition spies is to collect intelligence on the government, key people and major organizations operating in MercTown, but more importantly, the *mercenary outfits* who come to town. Major Brock is more than ready for this assignment. Having spent his entire adult life in the service of the Coalition States, he is highly trained, motivated and prepared for the task.

Born in the Mega-City of Chi-Town to parents of moderate means, Jameson Brock was destined to serve in the CS military. As a teenager he came to the realization that his parents could not afford to provide him with a decent education, leaving the only way to advance his position in CS society to volunteer for military service. Brock enlisted at the age of 17, and based on his aptitude scores, psych-profile and I.Q. test, he was selected

for officer training. Brock completed the demanding four year course and at age twenty-one served under *General Ross Underhill* as a platoon commander. After distinguished service in the General's command, Brock applied to, and was accepted for, *Special Forces* training. Over the next ten years Major Brock led missions all across North America against vampires, the Pecos Empire, Federation of Magic, D-Bee tribes, pirates and other enemies of the Coalition States. His successes as a field operative got him recruited into the CS intelligence apparatus. He was retrained by the CSID to serve as a deep undercover operative, intelligence analyst and spy. In that capacity he participated in the events leading up to the Juicer Uprising in Newtown and the Coalition quest for a Navy. When the decision was made to further investigate MercTown, he was an obvious choice.

Now Major Brock is posted to MercTown and headed for another promotion. There is no title for Brock's position, and the soldier has no direct chain of command except for the four men directly under him. Each CS infiltration team works independent of the others, and while Major Brock is the one who has picked the teams and knows their undercover identities, *no one* but High Command knows who the other operatives are or what identity they have assumed. Each team is, effectively, an independent operative who passes on their findings on to higher authorities. Each team has carte blanche to operate as they see fit, but unless otherwise directed by the Coalition's highest authority, they are not to pursue any so-called active measures (sabotage, assassination, kidnaping, etc.), for to do so would jeopardize their deep cover status. That's not to say that the other branches of the CS military like the Special Forces, CSD, and Commandos won't take their information and use it to conduct raids, but such attacks are completely separated from the agents undercover.

For his part, Major Brock and his four man team pretend to be freelance mercs who come to MercTown like so many others, to get a little rest and relaxation, resupply, and find work. His is the most aggressive of the undercover efforts, because he and his men are actually taking merc jobs with other mercenary companies, adventuring groups, the Black Market, the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild and other notables operating in and around MercTown, to cozy up to the enemy and get an in-depth picture of how they think, feel, and operate as well as what they want, what they think of the CS, and what their plans are for the future. He hopes to eventually get work from Naruni Enterprises to eye-ball that organization as well as the Collegiate Arcane.

Full Name: Jameson David Brock.

Alignment: Aberrant; a devote human supremacist loyal to the CS.

Attributes: I.Q. 17, M.E. 14, M.A. 22, P.S. 19, P.P. 12, P.E. 11, P.B. 10, Spd 32.

Hit Points: 61. **S.D.C.:** 58; always has access to (non-CS) body armor (80-120 M.D.C.), and two of his men fly *Bandito Arms* version of the SAMAS.

Size: 5 feet, 9 inches (1.75 m) tall and weighs 165 lbs (74 kg).

Age: 43. **P.P.E.:** 9. **Race:** Human.

Description: Although not physically imposing, Major Brock leaves an impression and comes across as caring and capable. He is of medium height, lean build, average appearance, and

easily blends into a crowd. Over the years his dark hair has receded, leaving him with a pronounced widow's peak. There is still a hard glint to his brown eyes to identify Brock as a dangerous and capable man to those few trained to spot such things.

Disposition: Jameson is energetic, resourceful, bright and goal-oriented. Raised to believe in the value of hard work (and the CS), Jameson has busted his hump to achieve everything in his life. When he joined the Coalition military he was driven to succeed no matter what the obstacles or the personal sacrifices. He's taken the same approach to his mission in MercTown. Not only is he intelligent, but he is also blessed with common sense, a head for strategy and tactics, he can see the big picture, is a natural leader, and has the ability to read people well. The Major is also extremely observant, capable of spotting the smallest details even at a glance (a skill honed by his espionage training and years of field experience) and he is a natural people person. Easy going and charismatic, he has the ability to coax others to open up. A valuable asset in the world of spy business. This charisma is what has allowed Jameson to build a top notch informant network at MercTown in a short period of time.

Experience Level: 12th level Military Specialist.

Magic Knowledge: Virtually none; only bits of things he's heard and personally experienced.

Psionic Powers: A Major Psychic with the Sensitive psionic abilities of Intuitive Combat, Mind Block, Remote Viewing, See Aura, Sixth Sense, Speed Reading, Telepathy and Total Recall. **I.S.P.:** 74.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Assassin.

Attacks per Melee: Eight.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +4 to strike, +6 to parry and dodge, +5 to roll with impact, +3 to pull punch, +6 to S.D.C. damage, kick inflicts 1D6 S.D.C., entangle, knockout/stun on a Natural 18-20, critical strike on a Natural 19-20, death blow on a Natural 20, invoke trust/intimidate 55%.

Skills of Note: Speaks American at 98%, literate in American 95%, Basic Math 98%, Camouflage 95%, Computer Operation 98%, Disguise 90%, Escape Artist 80%, Find Contraband 65%, Imitate Voices & Impersonation 82/62%, Intelligence 86%, Interrogation Techniques 85%, Land Navigation 80%, Lore: D-Bees 85%, Military Etiquette 98%, Paramedic 95%, Photography 90%, Radio: Basic 98%, Radio: Scramblers 98%, Read Sensory Equipment 98%, Surveillance Systems 95%, Athletics: General, Boxing, Climbing 95/85%, Prowl 80%, Running, Swimming 98%, Pilot Hover Vehicle 82%, Pilot Hovercraft 98%, Robot Combat Elite: SAMAS, Weapon Systems 98%, and Streetwise 64%.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Knife, W.P. Automatic Pistol, W.P. Energy Pistol, and W.P. Energy Rifle, all at 12th level.

Weapons of Note: A couple of favorites are the Wilk's 457 laser pulse rifle and an NG-45LP sidearm, but he'll use (and has access to) whatever he needs on the job.

Armor: Bushman and other full environmental armor, the better the protection (higher the M.D.C.) the better. His favorite is a suit of Triax T-11 Enhanced body armor.

Annias Cearcy

Archmagus & Guild Master of the Collegiate Arcane

One of the most compelling and respected figures in MercTown is Annias Cearcy, Archmagus and Guild Master of the Collegiate Arcane, but few have ever met him. The mage rarely ventures beyond the magically protected confines of the Collegiate, and when he does it is usually by magical means, undetectable by any who may be watching. Little is known about the man, and even the MercTown Defenders and Blackman's intelligence company haven't been able to compile more than a few pages of intelligence for their file. Common knowledge he is a Magus from the Magic Zone – a *High Magus*, according to word on the street in the Mystic Quarter – a very powerful magician and engineer. He is middle aged, single (some say widowed), and highly intelligent. He did not like what is happening with the Federation of Magic, but rather than challenge Lord Dunscon, he left and establish the Collegiate Arcane in MercTown about 10 years ago and has made it his home ever since. He is social and civic minded, and he and Proconsul Drago seem to have more history than the two let on, but Annias Cearcy is a solitary man who keeps to himself.

The Archmagus has few close associates; those that he would consider true friends number less than a handful. His only passion in life seems to be the pursuit of magic and building things, and the Collegiate Arcane is one of those creations. He does not seek to extend his personal prestige or power, nor create a legacy, but pursues mystic knowledge for its own sake. As such, he associates only with kindred spirits, which is why Guild Master Cearcy chose to found his collegiate in MercTown.

Annias Cearcy has been given the rare title of Archmagus by the consensus of the other Magi. It is an honor given to but one or two every century, yet no one speaks of why or how he has earned such a great honor. Those who might know something speak in generalities of his impeccable character, compassion for others, love of magic and quest for knowledge. Supposedly, his vast repertoire of mystic knowledge is nearly unparalleled, ranking him amongst the greatest wizards of North America. By virtue of this expertise, Annias Cearcy has held positions in or has connections to the most highly regarded magic guilds on the continent. Organizations like *Kingsdale's Monolith*, *Ciudad Juarez's Guild of the Gifted*, *the Council of Learning in Lazlo* and even with several groups in the fallen kingdom of *Tolkeen*, and some say in distant lands like the *New German Republic*, *Poland*, *Russia*, *Mongolia*, perhaps even China and, possibly, other dimensions. Some suggest that the Archmagus has spent considerable time in Atlantis studying with the High Lords as well as their arch-rivals, the True Atlanteans. There are even rumors that Guild Master Cearcy has a working knowledge of rune magic, and/or that he has found the secrets of immortality and is really a thousand years old, but there is no way to confirm any of the wild speculation surrounding him. And the more one digs, the more wild and impossible the rumors and speculation become.

The true story of Guild Master Annias Cearcy is long and colorful, checkered by good and bad experiences, and filled with an extensive list of accomplishments and failed dreams. All of which are far too many to even try to describe in these pages.



He hails from the far northern reaches of the territory that is now the New German Republic. Annias was born not long after the Great Cataclysm and grew to adulthood in the tragic period known as the Dark Ages, indeed making him around 300 years old. If he is immortal, even he doesn't know how or why, he merely accepts what he is and tries to live as good a life as possible. Old associates have suggested that he may be the bastard child of a mortal and ancient god (or demon), for all kinds of madness and seemingly impossible events occurred during the Age of Chaos that was the Dark Ages.

Annias wandered the planet for many years, and has sowed more than his share of wild oats in the days of his youth. Although always fascinated by magic, he didn't begin to study it until well after his one hundredth birthday. He came to North America years later, around 21 P.A., because he had heard about a new magic that combined rediscovered technology with magic and because the new world was again starting to come into its own. Instead he discovered the *Brotherhood of the Magi* (see **Rifts® Federation of Magic** for details) and became a High Magus. The High Magus is a creator and builder, and the craft appealed very much to the more mature Cearcy. During this time, if rumors and legend can be believed, Annias Cearcy met and befriended the original Lord Dunscon who started the Federation of Magic. He has even lived in the infamous City of Brass, home of the Federation of Magic (and some say, he designed half of it). He left when the dream to create a kingdom of magic, knowledge and peace turned into a nightmare drenched in blood and built around revenge and more bloodshed. With time, he grew disenchanted with the divisiveness of the Federation and simply vanished. About 20 years ago he reappeared in the Magic Zone and eventually came to settle in MercTown, but not before closing a ruptured Rift in Saint Louis that threatened to spew more horrors from alien realms into the Middle Americas. Some claim his intercession (undoubtedly a good thing) created a ripple in the ley line network that has made the Calgary Rift more unpredictable and active in recent years, and, ultimately, he may be responsible for the kingdom of monsters said to be developing in that part of the country.

Exactly what his plans may be for the Collegiate Arcane or MercTown remains a mystery. Although he is the college's architect, he seems to have taken a back seat, and spends much of his time teaching and discussing ethics, morals, justice, responsibility, using magic for the betterment of humankind, and tolerance, even tolerance for the Coalition States. The one subject he avoids is the Federation of Magic and Lord Alistair Dunscon.

Guild Master Cearcy seems to be a friend of the Grey Seers and friends to enlightened people from all across the continent, not to mention members of the Megaversal Legion, but how such a reclusive man could possibly know so many important people is just another mystery (remember, most people don't know he's hundreds of years old and did lots of wandering). All of this and his good relations with Proconsul Drago would seem to point to Cearcy being a good guy and a humanitarian.

Full Name: Annias Cearcy Lokison.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 21, M.E. 19, M.A. 23, P.S. 24 (Supernatural), P.P. 19, P.E. 15, P.B. 17, Spd 22.

M.D.C.: 164. Unknown to most people, the Archmagus Cearcy is a Mega-Damage being.

Size: 7 feet tall (2.1 m) and weighs 285 pounds (128 kg.)

Age: Looks thirty-something, really 297 years old, give or take five years; he lost count a while back and isn't sure.

Horror/Awe Factor: 9, applicable only when he's angry and when wielding powerful magic.

Special (Natural) Abilities: Fire and cold resistant (does half damage), regenerates 1D6+2 M.D.C. per melee round, and has the ability to shape change into a common house cat up to 14 times daily (duration of one hour).

P.P.E.: 325

Description: A tall, muscular human male of obvious Nordic descent, with fierce, pale blue eyes and greying blonde hair pulled back in a long ponytail.

Disposition: Annias Cearcy is a quiet, solitary man who always seems in charge of his emotions and is never very demonstrative. Consequently, it is unnerving (and/or impressive) to see him angry, aggressive or highly motivated, especially if that also includes tossing magic around. He is very protective of his privacy, keeping his thoughts and emotions carefully hidden, even from his few close associates. He has dedicated the remainder of his life to atoning for mistakes of the past and making the world a better place. The Archmagus wishes nothing more than to divorce himself and magic from the legacy of evil, greed and misuse of power that is so often associated with the mystic arts. In fact, that's why he chose MercTown, because it represents chaos and war, and he wants to bring about compromise and tolerance. However, Annias is no stranger to violence, cruelty or war, and he is not afraid to use devastating force when necessary.

Aside from his personal quest to raise the reputation and ethics of magic and its use, his one true passion is mystic knowledge and building. He loves to find ways in which magic can be used to create and build. His dedication to the craft is absolute and his mastery of the craft is on par with dragons and godlings. Annias wants to ensure the continuation of the practice and the preservation of its arcane knowledge, which is the reason that he's created a school to teach future generations.

Experience Level: 14th level High Magus, 6th level Ley Line Walker (specializing in Ley Line Magic and spells that build, heal, and create, but also knows a wide range of other spells), 4th level Old Believer (Russian Nature Magic; all) and knows enough about the *Mystic Kuznya* to be a capable assistant.

Magic Knowledge: All Russian Nature Magic, all Ley Line Magic spells, and most magic invocations common to Ley Line Walkers, levels 1-9, and all the abilities, spells and powers of the High Magus, including the link to the Lords of Magic, the ability to pilot *any Automaton* and create Automata, plus the following additional high level spell invocations, some Spells of Legend among them: Amulet, Circle of Travel, Create Magic Scroll, Close Rift, Dimensional Portal, Enchant Weapon, Metropolis, Null Sphere, Restoration, Teleport: Superior, Talisman, Sanctum, Sanctuary and Steel Rain. P.P.E.: 325.

Psionic Powers: Considered to be a Minor psionic with the sensitive abilities of Mind Block and Telepathy. I.S.P.: 80.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Attacks per Melee: Seven physical or three by magic.

Bonuses (all): +2 on initiative, +5 to strike, +4 to parry and dodge, +4 to roll with impact, +5 to pull punch, +14 to damage, +7 to save vs magic, +10 to save vs illusion, +3 to save vs psionics and all forms of mind control, +7 to save vs Horror Factor and possession, +20% to save vs coma/death, +4 to Spell Strength, 75% chance to inspire trust/intimidate, critical strike on a Natural 19-20, and judo flip/throw.

Skills of Note: Speaks German, American, Dragonese and Gobblely, all at 98%, Literacy (German and American) 98%, Archeology 98%, Astronomy 98%, Basic & Advanced Mathematics 98%, Carpentry 80%, Chemistry 98%, Climbing 98%, Intelligence 64%, First Aid 98%, Horsemanship: General and Exotic Animals 98%, Identify Plants & Fruits 82%, Land Navigation 98%, Lore: Demon & Monster 98%, Lore: Magic 98%, Masonry 75%, Pilot Sail Boat 98%, Research 90%, Swimming 98%, Wilderness Survival 98%.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Blunt, W.P. Knife and W.P. Sword.

Weapons of Note: Pretty much any magic item common to North America is at his disposal, including any Automaton he might desire (most built by him, personally). But he typically has only a simple, silver plated, TW dagger (does 2D4 M.D., double damage to creatures vulnerable to silver).

Armor: On occasion he wears a suit of Huntsman armor, however this is usually only when he ventures into the wilderness. When geared for war or serious combat, he dons a suit made of gold and silver with red highlights. A little something he calls the *Armor of Lightning and Justice* (500 M.D.C., impervious to magic electricity, fire and cold, fires lightning bolts that inflict 6D6 M.D., double damage to animated dead, Zombies and Mummies, 2000 foot/610 m range; and hovers flies at a speed of 400 mph/640).

The Secret of Annias Cearcy: Even he does not know the true story and it took a century for him to believe it, but he is apparently a Demigod – the semi-immortal child of a mortal woman and a Norse God. Although he has never confirmed his parentage, he has been told that god was Loki. Nobody knows this secret. Nobody.

Note: Unknown to Geoff Blackman, Annias is aware that there is something unusual about the man, and he does not trust him and would never use his service.

Tennessee Jack Crabtree

A living legend in the mercenary business, Jack Crabtree has been a Headhunter for over forty years. Long before every hard case wannabe in America took to the wilderness in search of easy credits, Jack and his brother Samuel were fighting the dirty little wars of tyrants and monarchs across the continent. When he started there were no large companies, no private armies like Larsen's Brigade, Crow's Commandos or the First Apocalyptic Cavalry. Back in those days a merc outfit tended to be little more than a few dozen roughnecks armed with light weapons and a handful of beat-up APCs for combat vehicles. Those were the days when a single Glitter Boy often turned the course of a war. It was a time when it took skill and guts to win on the battlefield, not just a bunch of fancy, high-tech gadgets.

Growing up in the backwoods of Tennessee, life was hard. Golden Age Weaponsmiths hadn't arrived on the scene and there was nothing approaching civilization in the area. With no industry to speak of, the scattered population relied on farming or limited mining to make a living. Jack was raised on an isolated farmstead near the Ozarks with his younger brother and three sisters. From the time he could walk, Jack helped work the fields and hunted in the hills alongside his father. It was there that young Jack first learned the basics of soldiering; by the time he was seven his father had taught him to shoot, to navigate with a compass or by the stars, tracking and patrolling basics. Before he'd turned twelve, Jack saw his first firefight, helping his father to repel an incursion by one of the many supernatural monsters that prowled the Tennessee woods.

While Jack loved hunting and being in the woods, he quickly grew to hate life on the farm; too much work and heartache for too little reward. He'd long been searching for a way to escape when at age fifteen, his uncle, a career soldier, arrived for a visit. During his stay, Jack's uncle talked about life as a mercenary and of his upcoming contract. When he left, Jack went with him. Just a frightened kid with a laser rifle, he fought his first battle in the dinosaur-ridden swamps of Georgia. That was merely the beginning of a five year odyssey that took Jack the length and breadth of the south. It was an apprenticeship by fire during which the young man was transformed into a hardened veteran by age twenty.

Battle-tested, confident and wise beyond his years at twenty, Jack Crabtree wanted something more - to make his own stamp on the world and prove he was more than a hired gun. He decided that the best way to do that was to assemble his own mer-



cenary company. Using money he'd saved over the previous five years, Jack bought enough basic kits to outfit a dozen troops. Then he headed back to Tennessee to recruit soldiers, starting with his younger brother Samuel. Jack spent several months training his squad, whom he called the Tennessee Headhunters (perhaps not the most original name, but a fitting one nonetheless), then set off in search of work.

The first years were the most difficult. Few potential employers took the gang of teenagers and young men seriously. Determined to succeed no matter what, the Tennessee Headhunters doggedly kept at it, taking what jobs they could. Jack's experience led them to amass an impressive string of victories over older, larger and better equipped enemy forces. Never one to waste potential talent or resources, Crabtree offered many of his defeated opponents the chance to join the Tennessee Headhunters, a prudent policy that allowed the company to expand rapidly. As their numbers and reputation grew, the Headhunters became a force to be reckoned with, a freelance army of more than a thousand troops with dozens of 'bots, power armor and combat vehicles. One of the first of its kind in North America, the Tennessee Headhunters became a template for those to follow, like *Larsen's Brigade*, *Crow's Commandos* and *Mayhem's Marauders*.

By the year 95 P.A. the Tennessee Headhunters were one of most recognized and feared merc companies on the continent. Jack Crabtree was as notorious as his army, a wiry, craggy-faced career soldier with nearly 45 years of combat experience with many more wins than losses. Respected by friend and foe alike, Jack Crabtree's presence on that fateful day in defense of New Paducah helped turn the tide quickly and win that battle in short order. A situation which ultimately led to the Tennessee Headhunters earning a stake in the city-state after its monarch fled, unable to pay his debt.

Where Kentek Drago saw the opportunity to realize his birthright as a ruler of men, *Jack Crabtree* saw the seizure of New Paducah as his chance to retire. For some time leading up to those events, many of the old dogs within the company had been looking for one last big score. His younger brother Samuel wanted to find some peaceful spot to settle down with his family (which would later lead to his joining an effort to colonize the far reaches of the New West). Jack himself was nearly sixty, too old to keep playing at soldiering, which has forever been a young man's game. Never one to dabble in politics, Crabtree agreed to allow Kentek Drago to take over as the ruler of New Paducah in lieu of he and Samuel receiving land, an annual payment from the city-state and a position on the Advisory Council.

The land granted to Jack was a massive parcel of rolling hills and light forest on the outskirts of the city-state, where Jack built a home and a headquarters for the Tennessee Headhunters mercenary company as a permanent base of operations. Aside from serving as a staging and rest area for the mercenary company, the facility doubles as a training grounds for *new recruits*. As such, it is a full-fledged garrison complete with barracks, command center, vehicle garages, hangars, an armory, ammunition bunker, mess hall, gymnasium, parade square, firing ranges, obstacle courses and a mini-subdivision of cottage-like houses for retired members. Jack Crabtree entered semi-retirement, turning command of the Tennessee Headhunters over to his daughter Jessica, and has focused his efforts towards instructing

new soldiers. Calling the camp the **Headhunter Academy**, it has turned into a private mercenary training school for members of the MercTown Defenders, the Tennessee Headhunters, and young independent freelancers.

In the intervening decade the Headhunter Academy has enjoyed considerable success. Owing to the reputation of the still-active Tennessee Headhunters company and glowing reviews in Warhawk Magazine, the Academy is a popular choice for those looking to make the right start as a mercenary. While not nearly as successful as the IDF Staff College, the Headhunter Academy is nonetheless, one of the largest independent military schools in the country. Every year it attracts hundreds of applicants and turns out between 500 and 1,000 graduates annually. From the business side, Jack Crabtree hasn't made a fortune on the school, but it is self-sufficient and he makes enough to live comfortably, if he needed the money. As it is, he gets a hefty annual payment from MercTown, so he puts all of the Academy's earnings back into the school and to help support the activities of the active Tennessee Headhunters company.

Full Name: Jackson Tiberius Crabtree.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 18, M.E. 19, M.A. 14, P.S. 18, P.P. 15, P.E. 12 (was 19 in his younger days), P.B. 7, Spd 19 (was 26).

Hit Points: 66. **S.D.C.:** 42.

Size: 6 feet, 2 inches (1.88 m) tall and weighs 170 lbs (77 kg).

Age: 72. **P.P.E.:** 8. **Race:** Human.

Description: Tall with a wiry frame and a weathered face. Jack Crabtree may be over seventy years old but he remains energetic, active and remarkably fit, enough to put many of the young trainees to shame during physical training sessions. A hard man who has led a hard life, Jack bears countless reminders of his career as a mercenary, like his crooked nose (he broke it twice), a vicious burn scar on his left arm and back, a trio of bullet holes in his left leg and a bionic replacement right hand and arm.

Disposition: Tough as coffin nails, gung-ho and aggressive as all hell, Jack very much fits the mold of a classic infantry soldier. Having been a professional soldier for five decades, he's lived through every kind of adversity and stared death in the face countless times. Through it all he never once succumbed to hopelessness and rarely, if ever, uttered a word of complaint. He exudes strength and confidence, which has a heartening effect on those around him. Anyone who's served with "Tennessee Jack" has nothing but good things to say about the man. He is dedicated to his mission, loyal to his comrades and would give a friend the shirt off his back.

That being said, Jack Crabtree is not the most friendly person in the world. The face he presents to the world is one framed by a perpetual scowl. Laconic, he speaks only when necessary, and when he does, the language is often harsh and colorful. Recruits have described him as, "meaner than a Tyrannosaurus and half as pretty." As an instructor, he is demanding and intolerant of laziness, insubordination or stupidity. He expects those under his command to put forth their best effort and is never satisfied with anything less. Yet Jack's rock-solid exterior is often a front, in truth, he is a very understanding, compassionate, and caring individual. Those who've served with him over the years have seen the

man give his rations to war orphans, donate his pay to worthwhile causes and treat his daughter with a tenderness unmatched by many parents.

As a soldier, Jack is supremely capable. Easily one of the best in North America. He knows every trick in the book and has seen it all, firsthand, on the field of battle. If not for his lack of a formal education, Tennessee Jack would be recognized as a strategic genius on a par with the Coalition's General Cabot, or merc leaders Marcus Larsen and Damien Crowe. While he's been defeated on the field of battle, Tennessee Jack has never been bested. On those rare occasions when he's been forced to concede, it's been a matter of insurmountable odds (vastly outnumbered, outgunned or overpowered by supernatural powers), and even then his opponents were made to pay a steep price in blood before Tennessee Jack gave an inch in retreat.

Experience Level: 13th level Headhunter.

Magic Knowledge: None.

Psionic Powers: None.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Expert.

Attacks per Melee: Seven.

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with impact, +2 to pull punch, +6 to S.D.C. damage, kick inflicts 1D6 S.D.C., paired weapons, judo flip/throw, critical strike on a Natural 18-20, knockout/stun on a Natural 18-20, critical strike or knockout from behind, +3 to save vs psionics and insanity.

Skills of Note: Speaks American, Spanish, Gobblely and French, all at 98% proficiency, literate in American 90%, Camouflage 95%, Detect Ambush 98%, Detect Concealment 98%, Fishing 45%, Horsemanship: General 93%/77%, Hunting, Intelligence 80%, Land Navigation 94%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 95%, Lore: Military History 70%, Military Fortification 80%, Prowl 87%, Running, Pilot Jet Pack 98%, Pilot Tanks & APCs 94%, Pilot Hover Craft 98%, Read Sensory Equipment 98%, Radio: Basic 98%, Radio: Scramblers 98%, Skin & Prepare Animal Hides 95%, Sniper, Track Animals 85%, Tracking 95%, Trap Construction 68%, Weapon Systems 98%, and Wilderness Survival 95%.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Knife, W.P. Energy Pistol, and W.P. Energy Rifle, all at 13th level, W.P. Automatic Pistol and W.P. Heavy Energy Weapons at 9th level.

Weapons of Note: C-14 "Firebreather" rifle, NG-57 Heavy Ion Blaster, .45 Model automatic, and Vibro-Knife and hatchet.

Armor: A suit of camouflage Gladiator armor.

Bionics & Cybernetics: Universal headjack & ear implant, gyro-compass, clock calendar, multi-optics eye, oxygen storage cell, bionic hand and arm (right) with built-in garotte wrist wire and forearm mini-missile launcher.

Ted Dutcher

Boss of the MercTown Black Market

The tale of Ted Dutcher began humbly in the shanty-towns of the Chi-Town 'Burbs. His parents were well-meaning, good people who wanted nothing more than to gain entry to the



Mega-City and find solid, good paying jobs. Patiently, they waited as the waiting lists grew ever longer, the Dutchers never quite qualifying for entry. To make ends meet in the meantime, Ted's father worked as a handyman and his mother as a maid for those in the affluent neighborhoods of City Side and Hillcrest. They always managed to get by, to supply the basic necessities, but worked like dogs to do so, and could never quite get ahead.

Ted hated seeing his mom and dad come home broken and exhausted. He hated that the rich took advantage of them and snubbed their noses at the poor. It made him angry and resentful, and vengeful. From the time he was a child he wanted the better things, like the kids his parents worked for in Hillcrest and City Side. An early on young Ted Dutcher learned that being honest and doing the right thing was for chumps and losers. Crime was the viable way of getting out of poverty and getting back at the fat cats at the same time. He'd show who was better, smarter than whom. Ted's life of crime started with him beating up and shaking down the "rich kids," taking their toys or extorting them for money. By the time Dutcher was in his early teen years he was running numbers, doing errands and selling narcotics for the Black Market in his neighborhood. Sharp of wit, good with his fists, and not afraid to get bloody, Ted Dutcher gradually worked his way up through the organization. At age twenty-two he was managing three Black Market joints in the 'Burbs, by twenty-five he was a "made man" running his own crew and handling a half dozen rackets.

Ted Dutcher's career skyrocketed him through the ranks of the Black Market. He possessed an intuitive business savvy and smarts beyond that of the average rank-and-file soldier, and was not afraid to use violence, murder, extortion and other means to

get what he wanted, but he did so judiciously, never out of spite or as a show of power. In short order, he and his crew became the best earners in the Chi-Town 'Burbs. Moreover, they were involved in crimes more sophisticated than those of their competitors, and Dutcher always managed to keep himself and his subordinates out of trouble with the law.

When the time came, the upper echelon of the organization decided to give Dutcher control of the MercTown syndicate over those with more experience, believing him to be best suited for the job. The Black Market hierarchy couldn't have been more right. It took Dutcher only a few months to lay the groundwork for a rich criminal empire in MercTown. He established a base of operations in the Warrens District from which to extend the organization's influence throughout the city. Then with the dozen hastily gathered crews of Black Market good fellas, he shored up the age-old rackets of gambling, loan sharking, prostitution, gun running, trafficking narcotics and operating illegal cybernetic body-chop-shops before expanding these ventures and adding others. Profits from these fueled expansion into legitimate enterprises like the trucking industry, waste management, and his personal masterpiece: the formation of a labor union by the end of the first year.

In many ways, Ted "Boss" Dutcher is the ideal Black Marketeer: An amalgam of street hoodlum with equal parts Wall Street businessman and ruthless predator. When times call for it, he can be tough as nails, but most of the time he runs his outfit as smooth as silk using negotiation, words, intimidation tactics, extortion and innuendo to achieve what he wants and to enforce *his* rule. As the syndicate leader he avoids actively participating in violence, but Boss Dutcher will not hesitate to order it to further the organization's goals or build profits. At the same time, he is urbane, charming and a skilled negotiator at the business table. In many ways he is a dichotomy, a man of many faces and of many talents. More importantly, Dutcher has an intimate knowledge of MercTown, all the "players," and how best to get things done. He appreciates the fragile balance of power and knows exactly how far he can push and when to back off. This has made it easy for Boss Dutcher, and by extension, his syndicate, to insinuate themselves within MercTown's society.

The influence of Boss Dutcher's syndicate is pervasive, controlling all the docks, the trucking industry, and construction business, half of the entertainment, alcohol distribution, bars and taverns in the city-state and nearly half of the seedy Warrens District and many other establishments throughout MercTown.

The MercTown Labor Union was his brainchild, an unblemished tool to manipulate industry to his desired ends and give him influence over many legitimate businesses. And if that were not enough, Boss Dutcher personally owns shares in the Grand Plaza Hotel & Casino and the Hub Battledome, two ripe plums in his expanding empire of crime.

The only power to rival Boss Dutcher in the criminal underworld at MercTown is the *Ravenshome Thieves Guild*. However, from Dutcher's point of view, the Ravenshome is an organization of bottom feeders only a step or two above a street gang. Unsophisticated brutes who engage in car theft, robbery, mugging, and similar two-bit street crime, and thus, not much of anything to concern himself with. So far, there is no significant rivalry between the two. So long as the Guild steers clear of Dutcher's interests, especially outside the Warrens, he's willing

to live and let live. As for street gangs, the Black Market seldom mixes with street-level misanthropes like the Greenskins or Cyber Street Gang, and only uses gangsters for muscle and as pawns in bigger schemes. Mercs and adventurers are likewise hired as muscle, protection, guards and used as pawns in Boss Dutcher's schemes, especially in operations outside MercTown. Should a gang or group of mercs move on the syndicate's turf, step out of line, or threaten Dutcher, his people or him, the crime boss does not hesitate to sic his enforcers, *Murder for Hire, Ltd.*, on them. In fact, anyone who becomes a serious threat or annoyance will end up having to face these elite enforcers, particularly if lesser hired hands (low ranking Black Market enforcers, gang-bangers or mercs) have already failed.

Full Name: Theodore James Dutcher.

Also Known As: Boss Dutcher.

Alignment: Aberrant evil.

Attributes: I.Q. 18, M.E. 19, M.A. 17, P.S. 17, P.P. 11, P.E. 12, P.B. 14, Spd 18.

Hit Points: 49. **S.D.C.:** 38.

Size: 6 feet (1.8 m) tall and weighs 190 lbs (86 kg).

Age: 35. **P.P.E.:** 13. **Race:** Human.

Description: Ted Dutcher is a tall man with an athletic build, well groomed and well dressed, and always seems to have a predator's gleam in his dark eyes. He looks very much the corporate shark, a dangerous and powerful man.

Disposition: Intelligent, strong of will and in control of his emotions, Ted Dutcher is a born leader, a field marshal who enjoys running an army of henchmen in a network of crime. Never formally educated, he is nonetheless very smart, intuitive and calculating. Where others focus on the short-term, Boss Dutcher is a strategic thinker able to see the big picture and the long term. He is arrogant, but not to a fault, and hides it well with his roguish charm. As the "boss" he must be authoritative, and demand the loyalty of his subordinates, but does so without being heavy-handed. He is also smart enough to be open minded and willing to listen to suggestions, but once he's determined a course of action, he sticks to it with the tenacity of a bulldog. Not squeamish in the slightest, Boss Dutcher is quite willing to employ violence, but only when and where it is required. Otherwise, he prefers to handle problems, rivals and conflict like a businessman.

Experience Level: 9th level Smuggler.

Magic Knowledge: None.

Psionic Powers: None.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +3 to roll with impact, +3 to damage, +2 to pull punch, +2 to save vs psionic attacks, illusions and possession; kick inflicts 1D6 S.D.C., judo flip/throw, and critical strike on a Natural 19-20.

Skills of Note: Speaks American, French, and Gobblely, all at 98%, literate in American 98%, Athletics: General, Body Building, Basic Math 98%, Cardsharp 74%, Computer Hacking 49%, Computer Operations 98%, Concealment 66%, Dance 89%, Detect Ambush 89%, Find Contraband 62%, Gambling 89%, Gambling Dirty Tricks 70%, Law

69%, Performance 89%, Pilot Hovercycle 98%, Pilot Truck 82%, Palming 74%, Prowl 69%, Radio: Basic 98%, Radio: Scramblers 89%, Surveillance Systems 55%, T.V./Video 39%, and Streetwise 79%.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Automatic Pistol, W.P. Energy Pistol and W.P. Submachine-Gun.

Weapons of Note: Has access to *anything* he wants or needs, but is typically packing a heavy S.D.C. and a heavy M.D. energy pistol, and a TW dagger that does 1D6 M.D. as a blade and also fires a 2D6 M.D. energy bolt (100 foot/30.5 m range).

Armor: Naruni light force field, also wears a dress suit made of M.D.C. material (18 M.D.C.) and a trench coat (25 M.D.C.).

Money: At least 250 million personally, probably more.

Murder for Hire, Ltd.

Boss Dutcher's Elite Enforcers

The laissez-faire situation in MercTown is such that the old school, violent methods of the Black Market are not necessary. As a result, the majority of the MercTown syndicate crews handle their affairs in a fashion more akin to businessmen than hoodlums. While capable of violence and murder, they prefer to keep their hands clean, focusing on sophisticated crimes and business activities that are not usually legal in most communities, but are legal in MercTown; i.e., vice of all kinds, gambling, gun running, narcotics, racketeering, etc. Don't fool yourself, these are all bad people, really bad, and while they may refrain

from getting their own hands bloody, they have people to do it for them. Sometimes the mob hires mercs, adventurers or sorcerers to do their dirty work and enforce their will, but each crew has its own enforcers. There is one crew within the MercTown syndicate, however, that specializes as the mob's elite enforcers and hit squad, a crew that belongs to Boss Dutcher and is known as **Murder for Hire, Ltd.** Led by *Tony Aronne*, this crew of twelve heavies operates in traditional mobster fashion, using muscle, seduction, threats, blackmail, fists, guns, torture, killing and whatever else is necessary to get the job done. If one of the Black Market businessmen in the mob needs heavy hitters and needs or wants expedient results without complications, he calls upon *Tony Aronne* and *Murder for Hire*.

There is no better crew of knuckle-breakers and killers than this group, but to get them one must make an appeal to Ted "Boss" Dutcher, because Aronne and Murder for Hire are his junkyard dogs, and they answer only to the mob Boss, no one else. Murder for Hire is able to handle most situations from the delicate and discreet to assassinations, cold-blooded daylight hits, arson and mass murder. Tony Aronne and Ted Dutcher have been close friends since they were teenagers starting out in the criminal underworld. The two rose through the ranks of the Black Market together, and are said to be like brothers. Indeed, Tony Aronne respects and worships Boss Dutcher like a beloved "big brother" and Dutcher looks upon Tony like his little brother and someone he can *always* count on. Boss Dutcher trusts Tony one hundred percent, and Aronne's crew of misfits and killers are as loyal to him as he is to Ted Dutcher.



The Murder for Hire crew is so good, they can easily take on three times their own number and rarely need to reinforce their numbers with additional soldiers from other mob crews, and never need to be chaperoned to make sure the job is done right. For his valuable role within the organization, Tony Aronne is the under-boss of the MercTown syndicate, Dutcher's second in command. He is a loyal, proven gangster held in high regard by the Black Market as a whole, and feared and respected in MercTown.

Murder for Hire, Ltd., is a crew of twelve very tough customers, both human and D-Bee. Their usual activities include intimidation, extortion, armed robbery, assault and battery, loan sharking, hijacking, arson and, of course, mob hits and murder for hire. While they rank somewhere near the bottom of the syndicate in overall earnings, they are nonetheless one of its most powerful and vital crews within the MercTown Black Market. As a result, Aronne is only required to kick 5% of his earnings from his holdings and operations in MercTown up to Dutcher and gets paid handsomely for doing enforcement work. The crew of Murder for Hire works out of the back room at *Tony's Place* (#165 in the Warrens), a restaurant and attached butcher shop owned by Tony Aronne. When other members of the MercTown syndicate want to hire Aronne, they have to first get *permission* from Boss Dutcher and, if authorized, pay Aronne 500,000 to one million credits for jobs short of killing, and 1-8 million credits for a hit, depending on the job. Only Aronne decides on the final price, and, if it strikes his fancy, may accept a job at a discount, or take merchandise or part ownership in a business in trade. However, Tony and his boys prefer to avoid the "trappings of business" and usually take credits or merchandise that they can turn around and sell quickly, rather than the headaches that come from being a businessman.

Quick Stats for the members of Murder for Hire, Ltd.

Note: All members of Murder for Hire, Ltd., have access to a large variety of weapons, armor, vehicles and gear, including Techno-Wizard items, Naruni force fields and equipment, and Triax weapons. Each has his personal favorites, but usually selects the best items for the particular job. One can assume that if it is sold in MercTown and is not rare or incredibly expensive, the Murder for Hire crew has access to it if they want it. Remember, they are in the top echelon of the MercTown Black Market, with all the resources of the syndicate behind them.

Tony "the Trigger" Aronne is the capo or leader of Murder for Hire and the underboss of the MercTown syndicate. He is an 11th level Master Assassin, Diabolic alignment, 74 Hit Points, 67 S.D.C.; I.Q. 12, M.E. 15, M.A. 11, P.S. 19, P.P. 24, P.E. 13, P.B. 10, Spd 25, nine attacks per melee round.

He is completely loyal to Boss Dutcher and the Black Market as a whole, because they have made him important, wealthy, and given him power and their trust. As Boss Dutcher's right-hand man, Tony Aronne always sides with the Boss in any dispute or conflict and is quick to "convince" others to join their way of thinking. He follows orders to the letter and always gets the job done right the first time around. Tony is renowned for his violent temper, and can go from smiling and laughing to a murderous assault in a heartbeat. He enjoys hurting and intimidating people and the sadist is capable of unlimited brutality.

The man is quick to act, preferring to rely on violence and fear rather than words and diplomacy. (Breaking a person's first three fingers and kneeing him to the groin before saying a word, and then smiling and stating, "Tell me what I want to know, or I start shooting off body parts before you die," is Tony Aronne's idea of diplomacy.) If not for the short leash that Boss Dutcher keeps him on, Aronne would have started a wide-scale war against the other criminal organizations in MercTown, or wiped them out, long ago. He despises the *Cyber Street Gang*, *Greenskins* and *Mega-Monkeys*, holds the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild in contempt, and is dying to take on *Mephisto's Horsemen* to get to the bottom of their mystery. If it were up to him, these rival groups would cease to exist, no matter what the cost to the Black Market, and he sees their presence in MercTown as an insult to the syndicate and disrespect to Dutcher. However, Tony is the first to admit he is not the best person when it comes to "business" and he defers to Ted Dutcher's superior business sense and ability to see the big picture, even if he doesn't agree with it himself. Should anything happen to Boss Dutcher, the perpetrators can expect Tony "the Trigger" to hunt down every last one of them, their business partners, their friends, and their family and kill them *all* before he turns his anger on others who have insulted his friend or invoked his disdain.

"Teflon John" Steussie is Murder for Hire, Ltd.'s second in command. He too is a career criminal who served in Dutcher's crew back in Chi-Town and remains steadfastly loyal to Aronne and Dutcher. He is a 9th level, human, Professional Thief of Aberrant alignment; 58 Hit Points, 28 S.D.C., I.Q. 15, M.E. 9, M.A. 14, P.S. 20, P.P. 15, P.E. 14, P.B. 11, Spd 8; six attacks per melee.

Teflon John is an expert thief and computer hacker able to bypass most security systems and get in and get out without leaving a trace that he was ever there, except for the missing item(s). Back in his Chi-Town days, Teflon John was known for his ability to beat the rap of every crime he was suspected of, because there was never enough evidence to arrest him. He also had a knack for emerging from most fights without a scratch. It is Steussie who handles much of the day to day operation, scoring jobs for the crew and keeping its books.

Rocko "the Rock" is probably the physically toughest member of the crew, an alien from another dimension whose hide is made of stone (316 M.D.C., recovers/heals 1D6x10 M.D.C. every 12 hours). He is a 6th level Military Specialist of Aberrant alignment, I.Q. 14, M.E. 9, M.A. 6, P.S. 22 (Supernatural), P.P. 16, P.E. 13, P.B. 3, Spd 28, six attacks per melee, is skilled in Hand to Hand: Commando, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, W.P. Heavy, Demolitions and Demolitions Disposal.

Rocko joined the crew six years ago after a short and unrewarding career as a mercenary. The alien enjoys working for the Black Market because it is relatively low-risk, pays off big and affords him the luxury of living in a modern city (by Rifts Earth standards). When Murder for Hire needs to take care of business it is usually Rocko who leads the charge. While somewhat enigmatic as a result of his alien background, Rocko has proven to be loyal, obedient and ruthless, making him one of Aronne's favorites. He is rarely far from the capo's side.

Jimmy "Ears" Feral is a freeborn German Shepard/Doberman mixed breed Dog Boy, and an 8th level City Rat of Anarchist alignment. He is 7 feet (2.1 m) of muscle, fur and body

armor (120 M.D.C., custom-made), and has 57 Hit Points, 48 S.D.C.; I.Q. 11, M.E. 9, M.A. 11, P.S. 23, P.P. 17, P.E. 17, P.B. 7, Spd 37; five attacks per melee.

Alert, watchful and quick to react, “Ears” has great intuition, keen hearing and excellent sense of smell. (Notable combat bonuses: +4 on initiative, +2 to strike and parry, +4 to dodge; all are in addition to usual bonuses from skills, O.C.C. and attributes). He is like a coiled spring, always ready to launch into action. As a canine mutant, his senses are keener than the average human and he also has minor psionics (36 I.S.P., Presence Sense and Intuitive Combat) and the ability to sense magic and the supernatural like all Dog Boys. He serves as Aronne’s eyes and ears, the point man for the crew who keeps his ears to the street. Jimmy is something of a bully, he instinctively loves to use his size and animal presence to intimidate others, and has a pack mentality where the weak are automatically on the low end of the pecking order. The Dog Boy works with *Charnok the Butcher* and the two are jokingly known as “the Twins.”

Charnok the Butcher is an Ogre who is a butcher by trade and works at Tony’s Place. He is a 5th level Vagabond, Miscreant alignment, in his early twenties. He has 39 Hit Points, 60 S.D.C.; I.Q. 10, M.E. 5, M.A. 8, P.S. 25, P.P. 18, P.E. 17, P.B. 9, Spd 11; five attacks per melee.

Charnok started working at Tony Aronne’s butcher shop as a common laborer until two years ago when a dozen Greenskins attacked Aronne at the restaurant. Charnok rushed to his employer’s aid with a meat cleaver, mutilating a half dozen of the Greenskins in short order. Seeing that the Ogre’s *talents* were being wasted at the butcher shop, Tony invited him to join Murder for Hire, Ltd. Butcher agreed and has since proven to be a worthy member. To learn the business, he’s been paired up with Jimmy Ears the Dog Boy, and the two have become close friends. Ears and Butcher are referred to as “the Twins,” because they both have large canine teeth, like many of the same things, are both seven feet (2.1 m) tall, work in tandem amazingly well, almost as if they can read each other’s minds, and they both like raw meat and enjoy gnawing on bones.

Francine “Frankie” Carter is a 7th level *Burster* of Miscreant alignment. 44 Hit Points, 24 S.D.C.; I.Q. 11, M.E. 13, M.A. 17, P.S. 14, P.P. 13, P.E. 15, P.B. 15, Spd 19; five attacks per melee, 163 I.S.P., has all standard *Burster* R.C.C. powers (Impervious to Fire, Extinguish Fire, Flame Burst, Fire Bolt, Fire Eruption, Sense Fire, Super Fuel Flame and all the rest; plus has Mind Block, Levitation and Resist Fatigue.). Frankie also likes using select Techno-Wizard weapons and devices to enhance her fighting abilities and catch people who are expecting only fire combat off their guard.

Francine prefers being called “Frankie” – just “Frankie” – and is as tough and mean as any of “the boys.” She is an unrepentant wise guy with a smart mouth and a penchant for causing trouble even amongst the syndicate. Frankie always has a wisecrack, insult or derogatory comment ready and never hesitates to share it with those in earshot. Something of a problem child, she ran away from home at age 15, ran in Chi-Town gangs till 19, and joined the Black Market at 20 as an enforcer and assassin. Her skills make her a valuable asset, but her attitude makes her a liability. Rather than kill her after she nearly started a war in one of the ‘Burbs and took down two CS ISS officers, she was sent to MercTown to join Tony the Trigger’s crew. Tony Aronne

sees Frankie as something of a kindred spirit, and has taught the girl to control her temper and unleash her rage when it matters most, against those who need it most. He has his doubts as to whether the girl will make it to see her 27th birthday, next year, but admires her spirit, skill at arson and impressive use of her *Burster* abilities.

Lisa “Sweet Cheeks” Moon is really a Zenith Moon Warper (see **Rifts® Psyscape** for complete details and abilities), a sort of female werewolf-type creature who can assume the appearance of a normal, attractive human female. 6th level equivalent to an Assassin; Diabolic. Special Abilities: 64 M.D.C. and regenerates 3D6 M.D.C. per hour, Nightvision 1000 feet (305 m), ambidextrous, double-jointed and can leap 10 feet (3 m) high or across (increase by 50% with a running start). Psionic Abilities: 81 I.S.P., Psychic Invisibility, Deaden Pain, Induce Sleep, Empathy, Telekinetic Leap, and Alter Aura. Magic Abilities: Swap Places, Teleport: Lesser (objects), Escape, and Tongues; 98 P.P.E.; I.Q. 13, M.E. 14, M.A. 23, P.S. 18 (Supernatural), P.P. 20, P.E. 18, P.B. 21, Spd 44; seven attacks per melee. Skills of note: Climb, Concealment, Palming, Pick Locks, Pick Pockets, Seduction (+15%), Streetwise (+20%), W.P. Knife, W.P. Blunt, W.P. Energy Pistol.

Lisa Moon likes being called “Sweet Cheeks,” because it makes foolish men think of her as an airhead and an object, which when combined with her beauty and great acting job, makes them lower their guard and she can have her way with them – sweet talk information out of them, rob them blind or stick a knife in their ribs before they know what hit them. Sweet Cheeks is a natural born predator and killer who enjoys getting paid for what she’d do for fun anyway. She also likes the respect and fear she gets being a senior member of Murder for Hire, Ltd. She had a romantic fling with Tony when she first joined his crew seven years ago and has managed to remain friends after she broke the affair off a few months later (“Sorry baby, but humans are just so – human, you know.”). The two still have a great fondness for each other and flirt and tease each other on a regular basis. Lisa has taken an instinctive dislike toward Frankie; she says because of the girl’s recklessness, but most suspect it has to do with having another female in the group as competition.

Roy “Dead-Eye” Walker is a 10th level Quick-Flex Alien *Gunslinger* of Miscreant alignment. 84 Hit Points, 32 S.D.C.; I.Q. 12, M.E. 14, M.A. 10, P.S. 13, P.P. 23, P.E. 14, P.B. 10, Spd 20; eight attacks per melee, age 27.

Dead-Eye is a D-Bee of action. He likes guns, especially pistols and revolvers, loves a challenge, and is deadly fast on the draw. His opponents often go down before they even realize Dead-Eye has drawn and fired his weapons. A greedy, mean little punk who likes being feared almost as much as he enjoys women, getting drunk and gambling, he always needs money due to gambling losses and living the good life. That also means he sometimes takes “little side jobs” on his own, without Tony or Dutcher knowing it, to pay gambling markers or to get some extra cash. Of all the people in this crew, Dead-Eye is the most greedy, selfish, and reckless.

Mack “Tracks” Talltrees is a 9th level *Wild Psi-Stalker* of Anarchist alignment. 48 Hit Points, 41 S.D.C., I.Q. 14, M.E. 12, M.A. 11, P.S. 17, P.P. 20, P.E. 21, P.B. 8, Spd 29; six attacks per melee, age 31.

Tracks has taken to city life and enjoys the “action” and running the streets, especially in the Warrens, but he doesn’t ever feel truly at home except when out in the wild. He is a skilled tracker, woodsman and man-hunter who has led the team on many a trek into the wilderness where a foolish city boy or clever merc *thought* he could escape Murder for Hire, Ltd.

Lenny “Fingers” Lopez is a 6th level *Conjurer* of Aberrant alignment. 45 Hit Points, 26 S.D.C.; I.Q. 12, M.E. 14, M.A. 10, P.S. 15, P.P. 22, P.E. 15, P.B. 11, Spd 10; five attacks per melee, age 25.

Fingers is a practitioner of the uncommon magic known as *Conjuring*, in which the mage can make an object (like a knife or gun) appear out of midair. His cold heart and magic discipline has made him a highly efficient contract killer of growing renown within Murder for Hire, Ltd., a rising star in the syndicate. He never seems rattled and is always cool, calm and collected even when the odds are against him. In fact, even his friends and associates have seldom heard him laugh, though he has been known to remark, with a monotone voice and deadpan expression, “that was funny.”

Ricky “Shades” Pacerreli is a 4th level *Headhunter* of Aberrant alignment. 36 Hit Points, 35 S.D.C.; I.Q. 8, M.E. 11, M.A. 9, P.S. 21 (Bionic), P.P. 19 (bionic), P.E. 14, P.B. 11, Spd 15; four attacks per melee, age 24.

Shades has a number of concealed bionic weapons, including a wrist garrote, laser finger, forearm particle beam, a laser eye, camera and multi-optics eye, and several implants, including a jawbone radio receiver/transmitter, molecular analyzer, lung filter, clock calendar, Headjack, fingerjack and others. He is nicknamed “shades” because he *always* wears sunglasses to conceal his obvious bionic eyes. Wears environmental body armor with 80 M.D.C. He is a happy-go-lucky lug who enjoys using his muscle and bionics rather than his head.

Donnie “Easy Money” Martz is a 4th level Titan Juicer of Miscreant alignment. The equivalent of 19 M.D.C. (1900 Hit Points & S.D.C. combined); I.Q. 9, M.E. 10, M.A. 8, P.S. 40 (Supernatural), P.P. 22, P.E. 25, P.B. 12, Spd 26; five attacks per melee, age 22.

Easy Money is a hulking bruiser who got “juiced” to get revenge on a Shifter back home in Center Gears, a city recently destroyed by the Coalition Army during their invasion of the Kingdom of Tolkeen. Donnie had gotten his revenge and given up on his homeland eight months before the Coalition’s final siege and found himself in the southwest with a small squad of mercs. He eventually found his way to MercTown, where he hooked up with Murder for Hire, Ltd. “Easy Money” is the newest member of, and least loyal to, the rest of the Murder for Hire crew. He’s been a Juicer for going on five years and knows the end is coming. He’s pragmatic about it and does what he’s told to make easy money, live large and die a good-looking corpse.

Maritus Flavarrel

The Secret Guild Master of Ravenshome

The path Maritus Flavarrel took to become an adventurer was something of a backwards journey. Most who choose such a life do so in search of fortune or fame, starting with nothing but a dream, heart and the clothes on their back. This was not the case for Maritus Flavarrel. He is an Elf from another dimension, born with a gold spoon in his mouth. He was raised with all the finer things of life, enjoyed great privilege and was taught to think of humans and other beings as inferior people meant to be ruled by those like him. When he came of age, Maritus became a merchant selling the fine wines manufactured by his family’s vineyard. Born with natural charisma, intelligence and a shrewd business sense, he quickly mastered the art of wine making, and while it was fine for a few years in his youth, Maritus grew bored with the pedestrian family wine business and began to deal in drugs, then slaves, then forbidden magic and other contraband. He found dealing in illegal goods was exciting, and the challenge of not getting caught was more intoxicating than the family’s best champagne. And so it was that Maritus slipped from high society into the criminal underworld, maintaining a separate identity in both social strata and living two separate lives; at least until one of his jealous underlings squealed to the authorities. The family was outraged, its good name blackened for the first time in 3000 years. The authorities were obsessed with his capture, embarrassed and ashamed for having been duped for so long by someone they respected, trusted and allowed special privileges. Worse, Maritus found no sympathy or camaraderie among his criminal colleagues who now saw him not as a criminal mastermind, but as a spoiled rich kid playing crook in their backyard where he didn’t belong. Those who were not jealous of him felt used, and held the rich boy turned criminal kingpin in contempt. They turned on him and carved up his crime network for themselves.

Having run out of luck, Maritus sought the help of a sorcerer who promised him a surefire escape route – one that nobody would dare to follow. Armed with some articles of rare magic and a small fortune in gems in hand, Maritus let the sorcerer work her magic and he stepped into the wall of shimmering blue light as she had instructed. A moment later, he was not only someplace else, but another time and planet entirely. An alien world where all manner of man and monsters coexisted, and magic energy danced with primordial energy. A world of both magic and technology the likes of which he had never dreamed. At first, he felt cheated, believing that he had been tricked and sent to a hellish domain where he was sure to die. Soon, however, he realized the woman had spoken true, “I will send you to a place of marvels,” she said, “where one such as you will thrive and feel more alive than you have ever known for however long you should live.” Indeed, this *Rifts Earth* was just such a paradise. An environment that shook one’s senses and called upon every ounce of talent, wit and cunning one could muster to survive. But people such as Maritus Flavarrel could never be content with just surviving. He had to become the lord of his domain and rule over those inferior to him, and so he has, as the faceless Thief King of the Ravenshome Thieves’ Guild.

Flavarrel had learned much from his trouble at home and two decades of wandering North America, first in the Magic Zone



and the Federation of Magic, and then the 'Burbs of Chi-Town and the wilds of the New West and Pecos Empire, before landing at New Paducah on the cusp of its rebirth as MercTown. Like the new usurper, Proconsul Drago, Maritus could see the potential of the town, especially under its new management. "Here," he thought to himself, "I will become the power in the shadows and build my kingdom."

Maritus Flavarrel has experienced and learned much over the years, but humility and compassion are not among them, nor has he found wisdom. Instead, he's up to his old games creating multiple identities for himself, only this time, he's being even more sneaky and clever about it. One identity is a citizen and respected wine merchant of MercTown, and another is the faceless blackguard who runs the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild. There's just something he likes about the duplicity of having one or more alter-egos (he's been dabbling with fall back personas and who knows how many identities he's put into place). Part of the allure is the sense of superiority, pride and triumph that comes with fooling and influencing tens of thousands of people. Another is the challenge of leading a vast criminal network without ever showing one's face. And lastly, there is the pleasure of wealth, the level of power and the fear and respect his mysterious persona elicits as the faceless, nameless shadow who runs the Thieves' Guild. It's a game he takes great pride and pleasure in maintaining as he builds his criminal empire and reaps its rewards. This time, he is confident his true identity will remain a secret and he shall one day, should he decide to do so, rule all of MercTown, or create a syndicate that rivals the Black Market. For now, Maritus is just having fun. **Note:** The only people who know his true identity are his right and left hand enforcers and confidants: *Bellaron the Blade* and *Gandafar of Peakstone*.

Maritus has spread his reach to all levels of MercTown's society, including a post on the MercTown Advisory Council where he is, in fact, a member of its government. A successful merchant and millionaire, he is also a prominent member of its business community. Furthermore, he's made inroads with many of the other influential figures and groups in town, he is a friend of Jacius Larkent, an ally of the Collegiate of Magic, and associates with a number of prominent society families, merchants and even mercenary companies, such as General "Mayhem" Mayfield. Those who know him only as a wine merchant would be shocked at the cold-blooded ruthlessness of which he is capable. As the Master of the Ravenshome Guild he has been forced to order the execution of the guild's enemies as well as some of its own who refused to toe the line. Maritus is well suited for the mantle of master criminal. The Elf is shrewd, calculating, manipulative, brilliant and above all, patient. A master at the art of deception, he's fooled everyone in MercTown and enjoys working from the shadows and being a living enigma.

Full Name: Maritus Flavarrel.

Alignment: Miscreant evil.

Attributes: I.Q. 17, M.E. 15, M.A. 27, P.S. 11, P.P. 19, P.E. 15, P.B. 24, Spd 23.

Hit Points: 83. **S.D.C.:** 31.

Size: 6 feet, 6 inches (1.98 m) tall and weighs 160 lbs (72 kg).

Age: 134, but looks to be in his early thirties.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 100 feet (30.5 m) and a brilliant mind.

P.P.E.: 21

Description: A handsome, young Elf with alabaster skin, piercing green eyes, pointed ears and flowing chestnut-colored locks. He is tall, at least among humans, with a slight, but muscular build and moves with the refined, fluid movements of nobility.

Disposition: Charming, sophisticated, highly educated and very intelligent, Maritus was born to walk among the elite scoundrels of society. His bearing is that of an aristocrat, his manners polite and perfect, polished and gracious, his speech eloquent, and his tastes refined, but all of it is a facade that conceals the dark, cold and ruthless secret side of Maritus the crime lord. In this capacity, he is ruthless, calculating, treacherous and manipulative in the extreme, and when it is required, cruel, merciless and a killer. Of course, he has never put blood on his own hands, but he has issued orders from the shadows and in the voice of others that have condemned hundreds to their deaths. While most were rival cutthroats and criminals, collateral damage has hurt and killed innocent bystanders whom the Guild Master barely notices. His army of callous thieves and criminal underlings carry out whatever task he sets before them.

Experience Level: 12th level Thief and 6th level Merchant.

Magic Knowledge: Not a wizard or magic practitioner, but has seen and studied enough to understand the basic principles. Rather than actual spell craft, Maritus has always been more interested in magical potions, weapons and devices than mastery of the craft itself. As a result, he has a collection of magic weapons, armor, devices, potions and vehicles collected from across the planet (and sometimes beyond) to use in his games of manipulation and crime.

Psionic Powers: None.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Assassin.

Attacks per Melee: Eight.

Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +6 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge, +4 to roll with impact, +4 to damage, +3 to pull punch, critical strike on a Natural 18-20, knockout/stun on a Natural 17-20, death blow on Natural 20, disarm, karate kick 2D4 S.D.C., snap kick 1D6 S.D.C., axe kick 2D6 S.D.C., body flip/throw 1D6 S.D.C., 45% chance to invoke trust/intimidate and 70% to charm/impress.

Skills of Note: Speaks Elven/Dragonese 98%, American, Faerie Speak and Gobblely at 78%, Literacy: Elven 90%, Literacy: American 58%, Basic Math 98%, Athletics, Brewing 73/88%, Cardsharp 51%, Climb 68/58%, Cryptography 73%, Public Speaking 68%, Dance 88%, Detect Ambush 93%, Concealment 43%, Disguise 48%, Escape Artist 88%, Imitate Voices & Impersonation 75/55%, Palming 83%, Pick Locks 98%, Pick Pockets 98%, Prowl 98%, Streetwise 85%, Ventriloquism 55%, First Aid 58%, Holistic Medicine 48/38%, Horsemanship: General 63/48%, Swimming 68%, Running, Gemology 98%, History 68%, Land Navigation 53%, Lore: Faerie Folk 63%, and Lore: Magic 63%.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Archery & Targeting, W.P. Knife, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Shield, W.P. Sword, W.P. Energy Pistol, and W.P. Energy Rifle.

Weapons of Note: Maritus, like his friend Bellaron the Blade, shows a marked preference for ancient-style melee weapons

such as knives and swords. The Guild Master sees these weapons as being more elegant, sophisticated and *pure*, although he is more willing to admit that his prejudice is based more on nostalgia than actual matter of fact. A realist, Maritus knows that high-tech weapons are useful and that he cannot ignore their potential. For that reason, he's made some study of modern weapons, primarily energy pistols. Still, the only modern arms he carries are high-tech arrows and a Wilk's 337 laser pistol. Of course, that doesn't stop the Thieves' Guild from weapons trafficking.

The following are old favorite, magic weapons and items:

Barrow-Delver: A pale grey, Greater Rune Dagger that he took from an ancient mummy's crypt. The dagger inflicts 4D6 M.D. and has all of the standard powers of a Lesser Rune Weapon. Its other powers are more unique, for Barrow-Delver is a very rare rune blade enchanted with *Necromantic magic*. It knows the Necro-Magic spells of Command Ghouls, Divining: Tombs & Graves, Recognize the Undead and Stench of the Dead (see **Rifts® Africa, Mystic Russia** or **Rifts® Book of Magic** for spell descriptions) and can cast a total of four spells per day in any combination, equal to a 6th level Necromancer. The dagger can also turn 4D6 dead (01-65% chance, four times daily) and Animate & Command 2D6 Dead (01-64% chance, four times daily). Furthermore, Barrow-Delver radiates a chilling, unnatural cold that causes its victims to feel numbed, those struck by the dagger must save vs magic or lose half of their attacks, reduce speed by half, and suffer penalties of -2 on all combat rolls for 1D6 melees.

Slice: An invisible TW long sword of super-sharpness that inflicts 3D6+4 M.D. If an opponent is unable to see the sword the wielder gets bonuses of +3 on initiative, and +2 to strike and parry. Slice reduces the required roll for a critical strike by two points, meaning Maritus needs only to roll a Natural 16 to cause a critical strike.

The Great Elven Bow: This is a magical bow that functions in a manner identical to a powerful compound bow except with no P.S. requirement to draw the bowstring. It can be fired normally by anyone with a P.S. of 6 or greater. The Elven Bow has a range of 1500 feet (450 m) and arrows fired from it inflict an additional 3D6 S.D.C. (for a total of 5D6 S.D.C.) or 1D6 M.D. if Mega-Damage arrows are fired.

Magic Arrows and Quiver of Endless Arrows (holds up to 128 arrows): Maritus has a magic quiver that is effectively a mini-dimensional pocket able to hold many times more arrows that it should be able for its normal appearance. Contains 24 normal arrows (2D6 S.D.C. each), 24 M.D. arrows (do 1D6 M.D. each), 12 high explosive arrows (3D6 M.D.), 3 Neural Disruptor arrows (same effect as the Neural Mace), 5 smoke arrows, 4 flare arrows, 3 tracer bug arrows, 5 tranquilizer gas arrows, 3 anti-vampire arrows (+2 to strike, +2D6 S.D.C. against vamps), as well as the following *dragon bone arrows*, each of which inflicts 3D6 M.D. in addition to other effects: two arrows of charm (as per spell), 3 dragon slayer (inflicts 2D6x10 M.D. to dragons and other reptilian creatures of magic), 3 petrification arrows (victim must roll a 15

or higher to save vs magic or turn to stone for 1D4 hours) and 3 dragon bone arrows with angel feathers (quadruple the range, inflicts 2D6x10 M.D. to supernatural beings and creatures of magic). **Note:** The twenty visible arrows in the quiver can be drawn and fired at the normal rate, however to find a different kind or specific arrow takes Maritus two melee actions.

Ring of Tandem Telepathy (linked to the one owned by the mutant rat, Harry; see description **#194 Three Blind Mice** in the Warrens). This enables Maritus to communicate at will with Harry anywhere in MercTown to deliver edicts, orders and commands to his legions in the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild. He also has an extra pair of TT rings.

Keradrag's Spell Shield: A talisman from another dimension that absorbs the first 100 P.P.E. of spell magic cast at its wearer, effectively negating spells that are directed at him until the 100 P.P.E. limit is reached, after which it sizzles and smokes and explodes (inflicting 1D4x10 S.D.C. to a 3 foot/1 m area) and is rendered useless. If the total amount of magic is less than 100 P.P.E. in a 24 hour period, the talisman will regenerate and can absorb the full 100 points of P.P.E.

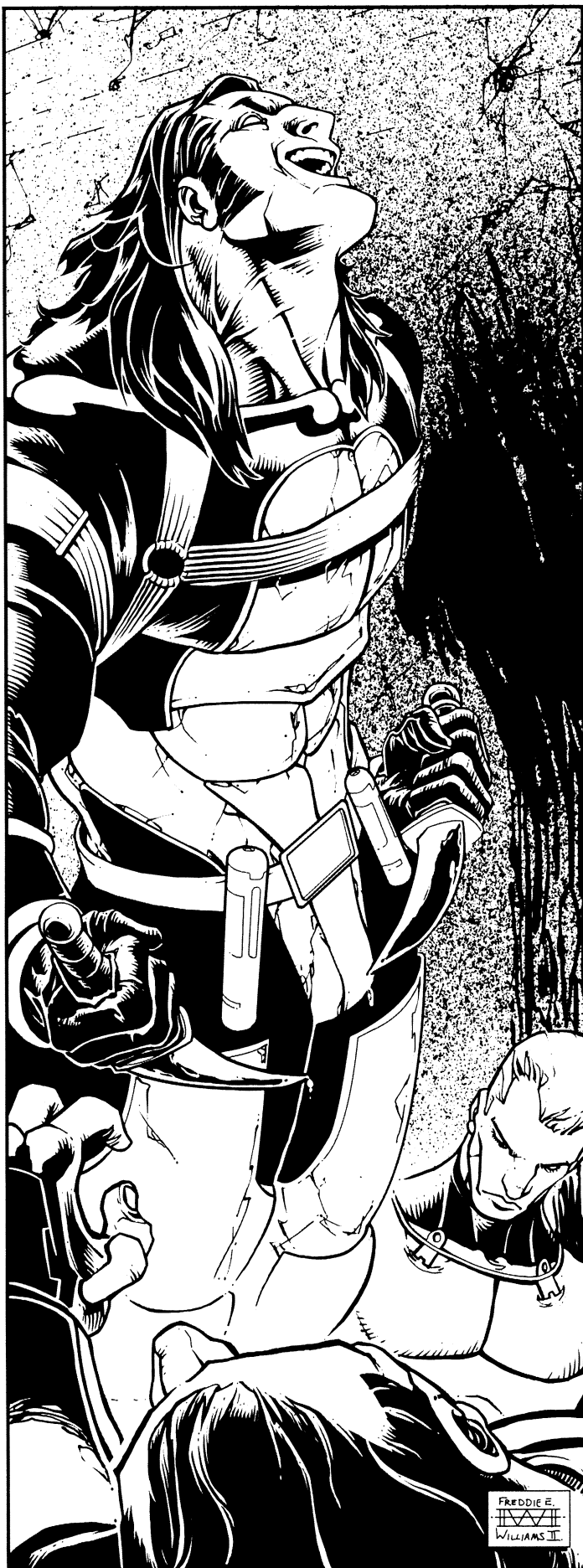
Amulet of Teleportation (basically as per the spell three times daily).

Mask of Human Metamorphosis: A simple white mask made of porcelain that seems to melt into a person's face when worn, transforming the face into the image on a video screen, photograph someone or standing there in person. If the person being copied is present, in person, the entire body is transformed. If a specific person is not being imitated/copied, then the mask will change the wearer's face and body to appear human – a human extrapolation of the being's true body; suitable for use by D-Bees and any *mortal* being. Doesn't work on Mega-Damage beings (even if mortal), creatures of magic or the supernatural. **Note:** There is an even rarer magical mask called the Mask of Superhuman Metamorphosis, but Maritus doesn't have one.

The mask can be used twice a day (24 hours) or every time 200 P.P.E. is pumped into it. The transformation lasts for 10 hours or until the mask is removed. Once an image/appearance has been chosen, it cannot be changed without removing the mask and reapplying it. Removing the mask appears as if the character is peeling the skin off his face, at least until it turns back into porcelain. The mask has 100 M.D.C. that is self repairing (2D6 M.D.C. per hour), but if all 100 M.D.C. is lost the mask shatters and is destroyed.

Armor: *Magical Leather Armor* with 175 M.D.C. Maritus will occasionally supplement this with a Naruni N-F10A light force field (45 M.D.C.) or wear light M.D.C. clothing (26 M.D.C.).

Money: Maritus has 90 million in NGMI credits and 50 million in Universal Credits just in MercTown alone. He has another 220 million credits hidden away at various banks and location. His other assets are easily worth another 200 million credits, and that doesn't even count the value and revenues he rakes in from the Ravenshome Thieves Guild. No wonder he's such a happy criminal mastermind.



Bellaron the Blade

Flavarrel Henchman: Assassin & Prime Enforcer

Bellaron was born in one of the many tiny kingdoms of North America that rise and fall in less than a generation and are soon forgotten. It was a tarnished, filth-ridden cesspool whose lords were petty, fearful men clinging to the last threads of their little kingdom as it unraveled in their hands. Heartless men who taxed the populace into poverty to support an army too timid to venture beyond the safety of the kingdom's own gates. All the while leaving those in the countryside to fend for themselves against barbarian hordes, D-Bee gangs, bandits and marauders.

Only a teenager, Bellaron watched helplessly as his mother fell to a disease that could have easily have been cured if not for the fact that psychic healing was reserved for the army, the nobility and the wealthy. Unable to gather the funds with which to pay a healer under the table, his mother died. Eight months later he watched his father and brothers slain by barbarian raiders before he was knocked unconscious and left for dead. The vaunted army gave mock chase, but did nothing, and the leaders of the land . . . unable to work the family farm on his own, they seized the farm for taxes, Bellaron was forcibly removed, and a new family was given his land as a boon for some favor to the leadership. It was then that the young man vowed to find justice. Seven years later, he found that justice at the end of a blade. With no remaining family and nothing but hate driving him, Bellaron traveled east to find the Barbarians who killed his family. Along the way he was befriended by a band of mercenaries who took him under their wing and taught him the basics of combat. Bellaron showed promise as a warrior, but the hate inside made him too reckless and bloodthirsty for their taste. The mercs hooked him up with a pirate crew that roamed the Atlantic – Horune pirates. With the pirates Bellaron visited Atlantis, Old Bones, Montreal, and other ports and places, even Dinosaur Swamp and the coasts of England and France. On board the pirate vessel he became the unofficial student (the Horune said, pet) of a Sunaj Assassin, and it was from him that Bellaron learned the art of killing quickly and silently. When he left the pirates five years later, he was skilled in black ops and was a cold blooded killer. By that time, the kingdom of his homeland was gone. Literally wiped from the map. The men who once ruled it, ruined. Two were vagabonds, one a merchant in a small town and a fourth a wandering Preacher – Bellaron found them all and slit their throats, but not before they knew the reason why.

To his surprise and dismay, the hate inside was not abated by their deaths. Somehow, he did not feel satisfied, so he began to offer his services to freedom fighters and mercs and gangs to right injustice by killing despots and tyrants and others who abused their power. That didn't bring him peace either, and soon he learned that the men who replaced the ones he had slain were often no better than those before them. That pretty much sums up Bellaron's view of life: injustice, greed, selfishness, brutality and cruel irony. Jaded, broken and empty, Bellaron has become a predator. An angry rogue lion who growls and snaps at most everyone and kills those who get in his way, threaten him, or invoke his ire. He has only disdain for "the sheep" (ordinary people) who let themselves be sheared, and at the same time hates the predators who harm the sheep. It's one thing to shear them,

they are made to be sheared, but torturing and killing them? That's another story. Bellaron dislikes all authority figures in general, but hates those who are brutal tyrants and enjoys putting an end to their reign – sometimes just for the pleasure of it, free of charge.

He hooked up with Maritus Flavarel quite by accident, and even though the two men are as different as night and day, the two have become good friends. Best friends, really. Maritus is not cruel and doesn't even rule or lord over anybody, even as his alter-ego, the mystery nameless Guild Master of the Ravenshome. In fact, Maritus is the greatest fleecer of sheep that he has ever seen and he enjoys that. Likewise, as Maritus Flavarel, with all his pomp and refinement, he is not the society person he pretends to be, another ploy that Bellaron enjoys. The only things the two men have in common, are they both hold governments and leaders in contempt, they both undermine authority and the powers that be (in their own way) and they both like and respect each other. Furthermore, Maritus and Bellaron really only let their hair down and be themselves with each other. Bellaron is the only person to whom Maritus is a whole person without masks and schemes and acts of concealment. Likewise, Bellaron has no secrets from his friend and enjoys being a willing piece in Maritus's games that mock the authorities, challenge and steal the power of the Black Market and have everybody chasing shadows – he loves it. Truth be told, without Maritus and his web of schemes and deception, Bellaron would probably have killed himself. Maritus' friendship and trust, and the Ravenshome Guild is all that brings the assassin a little fun and joy in his life.

Full Name: Bellaron Illmarneus.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 7, M.A. 10, P.S. 25, P.P. 21, P.E. 13, P.B. 17, Spd 21.

Hit Points: 70. **S.D.C.:** 28.

Size: 6 feet, 4 inches (1.93 m) tall and weighs 219 lbs (98.5 kg).

Age: 36. **Race:** Human. **P.P.E.:** 10.

Description: Bellaron is tall, with the lithe, wiry build of a dancer or gymnast, and he moves with the subtle grace of a stalking jungle cat. He is ruggedly handsome, but in a cold, forbidding way with a hawkish nose and dark hair. It is said that the eyes are the window to the soul, but if that's true, the lifeless, obsidian mirrors that are Bellaron's eyes would indicate that he has none, which is not so far from the case.

Disposition: The defining moment of Bellaron's life was the death of his parents. That tragic event was a crossroads, a turning point. Had someone intervened he might have led a normal life as a farmer, tradesman or merchant. Instead, consumed by hate and vengeance, he turned into a monster.

In many ways Bellaron is a broken man, cast adrift in a world he in which he only sees the vice, the cruelty, the selfishness and evil. Goodness is a fool's dream. Justice an illusion. Kindness and compassion, weakness. For him, the world is a dark, ugly place from which he can't escape, and to which he has succumbed, given up on, and accepts as a cesspool. In many regards, he is only going through the paces and will welcome the release death will bring when it comes. Until then, he serves the one man in the world who is his friend. For the most part, he is doomed to walk a path of mel-

ancholy, solitude and despair. Bellaron is incapable of feeling real joy or love, and the few times in his life that he's felt even remotely happy were in the company of people who died. (He tries not to think of his only friends, Gandafar and Maritus, in that light for fear they will be taken away from him too.) Yet most of the time, even when he is with them, the assassin feels a hollow, gnawing emptiness. Were he not so deadly, he would be a pitiable figure.

Experience Level: 14th level Assassin.

Magic Knowledge: Rudimentary knowledge of magic for combat and strategic purposes. Bellaron is capable of recognizing enchantments, wards, runes and magic circles, but is unable to read magic, cast spells or perform rituals of any kind.

Psionic Powers: Considered a minor psychic with the sensitive abilities of See Aura and Sixth Sense. **I.S.P.:** 67.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Assassin.

Attacks per Melee: Ten!

Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +10 to strike, +9 to parry and dodge, +6 to roll with impact, +14 to damage, +5 to pull punch, critical strike on 18-20, knockout/stun on a Natural 17-20, death blow on a Natural 20, disarm, karate kick 2D4 S.D.C., roundhouse kick 3D6 S.D.C., body flip/throw 1D6 S.D.C., tripping/leg hook, +4 to save vs Horror Factor, and 50% to charm/impress.

Skills of Note: Speaks Elf/Dragonese and Gobblely at 98%, speaks American at 98%, Basic Math 98%, Concealment 86%, Detect Ambush 78%, Intelligence 98%, Interrogation Techniques 90%, Land Navigation 70%, Law 90%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 90%, Lore: Juicers 98%, Lore: Psychics 85%, Pilot: Sail Boat 98%, Pilot Boat: Motor & Hydrofoil 95%, Radio: Basic 98%, Recognize Weapon Quality 98%, Rope Works 98%, Surveillance Systems 98%, Track Humanoids 98%, Boxing, Climb 98%/95%, General Athletics, Gymnastics (back flip 65%, adds +4 to dodge; leap 11 feet/3.3 m long or 8 feet/2.4 m high; pole vault 34 feet/10.3 m 75%; stilt walk 75%), Palming 95%, Prowl 98%, Swimming 98%, Streetwise 82%, Use & Recognize Poison 86/78% (special, the first number is the ability to use, the second to identify), and Wilderness Survival 98%.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Knife, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Sword, W.P. Rifle, and W.P. Energy Rifle.

Weapons & Magic Items of Note: As a general rule, Bellaron likes to kill up-close and personal, usually with a knife, sword or Vibro-Blade, but he also uses high-tech, modern weapons, especially rifles. The assassin feels contempt for those who rely on machines and power armor to do their killing, and doesn't like magic or its practitioners either. **Note:** As one of the top three guys in the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild, Bellaron has access to pretty much any modern weapon he might want for the job. He also always carries a pair of Vibro-Knives (1D6 M.D.), three silver-plated throwing daggers (1D6 S.D.C.), and a strangling cord. He may also have one or more of the following magic weapons on him as well:

Adderfang, the Weeping Blade: A blue-grey greater rune short sword (I.Q. 12) that inflicts 5D6 M.D. and has all of the standard rune sword abilities, as well as psionic abilities (possesses all Sensitive and Healing powers plus Psychic

Omni-Sight, Psychosomatic Disease and Radiate Horror Factor at sixth level proficiency, 120 I.S.P.) and furthermore, continually weeps a mystic venom to coat its blade which causes an additional 4D6 damage (S.D.C. against mortals M.D. for Mega-Damage creatures) per strike unless a save vs lethal poison is made (14 or higher).

Korros, the Vile: Another unique brand of rune short sword that has all the standard rune sword abilities (I.Q. 11), but has special powers. It is enchanted to inflict S.D.C. or M.D.C. damage depending on the nature of the opponent. Second, each bite of the blade that draws blood (does S.D.C./H.P. or M.D. to a living creature) makes the cut an infectious wound that cannot be healed save through magical means. The victim of infection suffers one additional point of damage per wound per 24 hours until magically healed. But there is more, *physical transferral* – each M.D. or S.D.C./Hit Point of damage inflicted by Korros on a living being is stolen and transferred to Bellaron for 12 minutes. Damage inflicted on Bellaron is taken first from this “additional” S.D.C. Thankfully, the blade inflicts only 2D6 damage per strike (S.D.C./H.P. to mortal S.D.C. beings and M.D. to Mega-Damage creatures).

Steelhawk: A magical throwing dagger enchanted to fly true (+2 to strike when thrown), that inflicts 1D4x10 M.D. when thrown, and flies back into its owner's, Bellaron's, hands. Does only 1D6 M.D. when hand-held.

Leadlimbs: A thin, short enchanted dagger said to originate from China. It is designed for throwing and easy concealment, and inflicts 1D4 damage to S.D.C. mortal beings or M.D. to Mega-Damage creatures, plus the victim must save vs magic (14 or higher). A failed roll to save vs magic means the victim's arms suddenly feel tired and heavy, and he suffers a penalty of -4 on initiative and -4 to strike, parry, disarm, and pull punch.

Lightning Discs: Magical, shuriken-like throwing stars that turn into a bolt of lightning upon impact (they also come as throwing spikes). Damage is an impressive 4D6 M.D. for such small objects, and the character's normal, effective throwing range (typically about 100 feet/30.5) is extended by an additional 200 feet (61 m or 300 feet/91.5 m total). Bellaron has nine Lightning Discs and five Lightning Throwing Spikes (identical range and damage). He says they originate from an alien dimension, but some think they are a new TW creation from a Techno-Wizard on Bellaron's or Flavarel's payroll (possibly indebted to the criminals from a loan or gambling debt the Wizard cannot pay, or forced to create exclusively for Bellaron under a veil of blackmail).

Boots of the Assassin: Given to him by Maritus from his home world; +5% to Prowl and opponents are -20% to attempt to track the wearer.

Goggles of Truesight: A pair of Techno-Wizard goggles that enable the wearer to see the invisible and see through magic illusion and drug-induced hallucinations, as well as to see in darkness, including magical darkness (1000 foot/304.8 m nightvision range).

Armor: When Bellaron needs to be in disguise or doesn't want to frighten his opponents, he'll wear medium body armor with 45-60 M.D.C., but has access to any type of armor he'd like, from Naruni personal force fields (one of his faves in or-

der to appear as if he's not wearing any armor at all, and entice enemies and fools to attack him because they mistakenly believe they have the advantage) to full environmental armor.

Money: Fifteen million in NGMI dollars and two million in Universal Credits. He's either spent the rest or given it away and has another 30 million squirreled away at Kingsdale and 10 million at Lazlo.



Gandafar of Peakstone

Flavarel Henchman: Ravenshome Guild Keeper

Gandafar's story is a simple one, he grew up in a rural community out west, at a place call Peakstone. The people were good, hardworking, god fearing folk and it got them nowhere. One day, a tribe of Simvan Monster Riders rode into the village and slaughtered everyone. Well, almost everyone. Young Gandafar and a handful of others were taken as captives. As far as he could tell, they were either going to be fed to the Monster Riders' steeds or sold into slavery. That night, a band of Indians slipped into the Simvan camp and freed him and the other captives before another band attacked. Both struck first at the monstrous steeds, for a Monster Rider is half a man when not atop his monstrous riding animal. The captives fled, except for Gandafar, who leapt to attack the nearest Simvan and slew him in a lucky shot to his throat from a machete the teen had scooped up off the ground. The Indian War Chief grabbed Gandafar by his arm and hoisted him onto his Psi-Pony before another Simvan cleaved the lad in two. The Native American war party made short work of the Simvan and Gandafar and his fearless attack was the talk of the tribe.

With nowhere else to go, Gandafar stayed with his Indian rescuers for the next five years, until his 21st birthday. The War Chief had taken the boy under his wing and turned him into a fine warrior, but as much as he liked the boy, it was times for Gandafar to leave. “You must live up your name and leave us young warrior,” he said. “Like the gander, you are meant to

travel north and south and see what there is to see. Your spirit is restless and you must search to put it quiet. Fail to do so, and you will wander empty all your life, always seeking but never finding.” “But what is it that I’m searching for?” asked Gandafar. The War Chief smiled and said, “Only you can answer that, my son.”

Gandafar thinks about those words often. After six years of wandering, he met and befriended Maritus Flavarel and Bellaron under the most unusual of circumstances, and rescued them both from certain (and unexpected) death. For reasons he still doesn’t understand, Bellaron took an instant liking to him and insists their fates are crossed. Likewise, Maritus has accepted the young man as if he were a younger brother, and together they have made a fortune. According to Bellaron, Flavarel is the brains of the operation, Bellaron the empty heart destined to a bleak and miserable end, and Gandafar the soul who will one day take flight and become better than any of them, and in so doing, redeem them both. Gandafar hasn’t a clue what that’s supposed to mean, and is growing quite weary of cryptic comments about his future. All he knows is that his spirit is still restless and that he doesn’t much care for “fleecing the sheep” as Maritus is fond of putting it. Somehow, Gandafar feels for “the sheep” and finds himself wanting to help, not fleece them – “a character flaw he’ll have to work on fixing,” according to Flavarel; “what makes you better than us,” according to Bellaron. All he knows for certain is that he feels restless again. That as much as he cares for his two companions, he belongs elsewhere. He’s recently taken to running with the Red Terror in his spare time, and that feels better but still not quite right. It frustrates him . . . when is he ever going to find the answer to quiet his restless spirit, or is he destined to wander through life empty and forever searching the emptiness. He’s seen the despair in Bellaron and does not want to share that fate. And Flavarel is too full of himself to truly see the world around him, so he doesn’t want that. For now, Gandafar remains at the side of his two friends and functions as the Guild Keeper of Ravenshome. That means handling logistics at the Guild House, keeping things in order and using his muscle to maintain the peace. His role in the Thieves’ Guild is the most visible one as the manager and keeper of its hall. He collects membership dues and percentages, calls meetings to pass on the dictates of the faceless *Guild Master* (no one knows Gandafar is privy to his real identity), keeps the peace (by whatever means necessary) and conducts the day to day administration. Tasks which Gandafar had little experience with but has discovered he’s pretty good at. Tending the bar and swapping tales with thieves and mercs is the best part of the job, and he finds himself most regaled by stories of cunning, heroism, and wise leadership. He is still young and the urge to adventure (and find his true calling) still burns inside. He’s only starting to realize that the answers he seeks to the questions he doesn’t know are probably not to be found in MercTown.

Full Name: Gandafar Henry Wise; he took the name Peakstone in remembrance of the village of his birth, destroyed by Simvan.

Alignment: Anarchist, but leaning toward Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 12, M.A. 18, P.S. 31, P.P. 15, P.E. 19, P.B. 12, Spd 10.

Hit Points: 79. S.D.C.: 51.

Size: 6 feet, 7 inches (1.95 m) tall and weighs 240 lbs (108 kg); all muscle.

Age: 32. **Race:** Human.

P.P.E.: 15 (unusually high for a human fighter).

Description: A tall drink of water with medium-brown hair, square jaw and big hands. He is muscular, yet gentle when he wants to be. Not Hollywood handsome, but has rugged good looks and kind eyes.

Disposition: Introspective, self-aware, empathetic toward others, compassionate, and caring. Steadfastly loyal to his friends, which is what’s keeping him with the Ravenshome Guild. He’s been an adopted Apache/mercenary warrior, a wanderer, a gun for hire, and something of an enforcer and guild keeper for the Ravenshome Thieves’ Guild. He tends to be quiet but friendly, though he can be stern and authoritative when he needs to be. Although he’s yet to accept it, Gandafar has the soul of a hero, and is, it would seem, destined to greatness, or so some people seem to believe. (Bellaron believes this with every fiber of his being.) The warrior has always had a soft spot for dogs, children and women, especially mothers, and can’t tolerate slavery or the degradation or torture of others.

Experience Level: 8th level Grunt/Mercenary Warrior.

Magic Knowledge: None.

Psionic Powers: A minor psychic with Mind Block and Intuitive Combat.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Expert.

Attacks per Melee: Seven.

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge, +5 to roll with impact, +16 to damage, +4 to pull punch, critical strike on a Natural 18-20, knockout/stun on a Natural 20, pin/incapacitate on a Natural 18-20, disarm, paired weapons, karate kick 2D4 S.D.C., snap kick 1D6 S.D.C., backward leg sweep, body flip/throw 1D6 S.D.C., body block/tackle does 1D4 S.D.C., crush/squeeze does 1D4 S.D.C., +3 to save vs magic, +2 to save vs possession, +2 to save vs poison, +5 to save vs Horror Factor, and +8% to save vs coma/death.

Skills of Note: Speaks American at 98%, Apache at 85%, Gobblely at 65%, Literate in American 50%, Basic Math 85%, Boxing, Body Building & Weight Lifting, Climb 85/80%, Camouflage 65%, First Aid 80%, Horsemanship: Cowboy/Apache 87%/71%, Military Etiquette 85%, Tracking (Humanoids) 70%, Recognize Weapon Quality 70%, Swimming 65%, Track & Trap Animals 45%/55%, Land Navigation 56%, Wilderness Survival 75% and Wrestling.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Archery, W.P. Blunt, and W.P. Knife, all at 8th level, and W.P. Energy Pistol and W.P. Energy Rifle at 6th level.

Weapons of Note: Precision and pulse laser rifles, especially Wilk’s weapons (has two of each and 10 clips for each), Particle Beam and Plasma guns for heavy combat, and the bow and arrow (using conventional, high-tech and magic arrows). Also has a pair of silver daggers (1D6 S.D.C.) and a Vibro-Knife (1D6 M.D.).

Weapon Fetish (Native American): A knife made of obsidian stone: Does 4D6 S.D.C./Hit Point damage to S.D.C. beings, and 1D6 M.D. to Mega-Damage opponents. It is a cherished item.

Weapon Fetish (Native American): Fetish Bow that fires magical energy. Does 4D6 S.D.C./Hit Point damage to S.D.C. beings, or 4D6 M.D. to Mega-Damage beings; double the normal damage for a long bow. It is a cherished item.

Magic of Note: (Indian fetishes are described in *Rifts® Spirit West*.)

Great Speed Fetish (Native American): When activated, Gandafar can run 60 mph/96 km), can leap 40 feet (12.2 m) and tires at one tenth the usual rate. Can run non-stop for up to five hours.

Goggles of Truesight: A pair of Techno-Wizard goggles that enable the wearer to see the invisible and see through magic illusions and drug-induced hallucinations, as well as to see in darkness, including magical darkness (1000 foot/305 m nightvision range).

Armor: Alien Armor Skin: Gandafar owns what appears to be a one-of-a-kind suit of alien or magical body armor. It was given to him by Bellaron who “acquired” the skin during a Horune Pirate raid the day he chose to leave the pirates fine company, killing four of them and severely wounding two others to make the “acquisition.” During the five years that he has known the assassin, the suit was one of his prize possessions, so it worries him a bit that Bellaron has given it away. (Gandafar fears Bellaron may have a death wish and giving him the marvelous suit puts the assassin one step closer to the fulfillment of that wish.) The suit covers the wearer from head to toe (but can be pulled off the head), and feels like a hard metal alloy, but is as light as plastic, and feels warm and comfortable to the wearer as if it were a second skin. It has 230 M.D.C. and “heals” 2D6 M.D.C. every 10 minutes. The armor automatically changes color to match the predominant colors and patterns of the surrounding environment, providing a bonus of +15% to hide and Prowl. Now that it’s his, he wears it 80% of the time, night and day, often forgetting that he even has it on.

Money: Nine million in NGMI dollars and three million in Universal Credits. Working for Ravenshome is lucrative, but money is not what’s important to Gandafar.

Cliff “Fixer” Jones

If he hadn’t been born on the wrong side of Chi-Town’s mighty walls, Cliff Jones would have been a Specter Agent or a master spy working alongside, or perhaps even in charge of, the likes of Thaddius Lybock. Except that the Coalition States does not allow squatters from the ‘Burbs to serve in the ISS, CS Intelligence Division or CS Espionage Division. Instead, Jones was all but forced to ply his talents on the other side of the law.

Heathcliff Theodore Jones was born in Whykin in the Missouri territory. At the time, the community was an independent city-state that had not yet entered into negotiations with the Coalition States. Looming nearby was the kingdom of Kingsdale with a large contingent of magic practitioners that seemed to be growing every day. Fearing that a war was brewing, Cliff’s parents decided to leave Missouri for the safer pastures of Chi-Town. There the Joneses were forced to live in the squalid, crime-ridden ‘Burbs, pinning all of their hopes for a better future upon being accepted for Coalition citizenship. Yet in spite

of the fact that they were educated, hard-working and decent people, year after year they were rejected.

That left Cliff to spend his formative years in the streets of the ‘Burbs. Despite his parents’ best efforts, they could not shelter young Cliff from gritty street-reality. His options were few; work like a slave in the wretched ‘Burbs hoping against hope for admittance to the big city, or enlist in the skull-faced legions of Emperor Prosek to be buried in an unmarked grave far away from home. There was another alternative: embrace the streets and become a grifter, working rubes, newbies and drunks on the street for easy credits. Always a smart, perceptive kid, it wasn’t long before he rose through the ranks of street punks and City Rats, and into the world of crime. Heathcliff was no ordinary criminal. He wasn’t a tough kid, he disliked violence and could barely hold his own in a fistfight. He was, however, a thinker and a scrounger. Nobody he knew could think faster on their feet than him. And he noticed things – little things – details and combinations that made all the difference in the world. Things he could put together and make a profit, or help a fella out, or hook up a freelancer with a boss looking for muscle. Cliff was the kind of guy who thought five or six chess moves ahead while calculating the weekend’s profits and figuring out new ways to make more. He was also a people person. There was just an easy, friendly manner about the kid that put people at ease, earned their confidence and won their loyalty, often in a matter of minutes. Knowing the right people enabled him to network like nobody else. By age 19, he was brokering talent, ar-



ranging the smuggling of contraband, and organizing City Rats and hired guns for the biggest outfit in town, the Black Market.

He earned the nickname “Fixer” Jones for his ability to put people and things together like a skilled mechanic and find the right components as if he were building a puzzle. When you needed something, whether it be equipment, information, a contact, an introduction to a crime lord, or simply to smooth things over with a crime boss or the authorities, “Fixer” Jones was the “go-to guy,” the “man with the plan,” the guy who knew how to get things done. Cliff “Fixer” Jones had the makings of becoming a criminal mastermind, only Fixer didn’t have the heart for it. He wasn’t a coward, he just wasn’t a bad guy either. He liked helping people and fixing things. You can only work for such a criminal syndicate for so long before having to face the reality of just how much dirt is on your hands. He felt guilty about the information he supplied crime bosses who used that data to extort, control and, in some cases, literally rip apart an honest person’s life. To his thinking, that made him just as guilty as the strong-arm enforcers. One day, he had enough and told his employers he was finished and walked away. There was some disgruntled rumblings and talk about killing Fixer, but they all knew he was smart enough to have in place the mechanism to take them down even after his death. After all, he could reveal all of their secrets to the authorities, or worse, to a rival, and ruin them. In the end, level heads prevailed, Fixer was allowed to walk away and his many connections with the Chi-Town underworld (as well as legitimate businesses and honest people) remained mostly intact. When Fixer didn’t extort, cheat or betray anyone over the years, his status within the Black Market was secured – he was a friend of theirs they could trust in all matters.

After drifting around North America for several years, Fixer found himself attracted to the underdog, lone wolves and idealists in the adventuring and mercenary trade. He liked their independence, admired their physical strength and appreciated their resourcefulness and resolve. The next thing he knew, he was “fixing” them up with the weapons, equipment and contraband they needed, and making the contacts they needed to find work or make a bounty. He liked helping these men of arms and supporting good causes. Fixer especially liked the small outfits who often got overlooked or who had trouble competing with the big, well-financed mercenary companies. He also enjoyed the company of Rogue Scholars and practitioners of magic, and Juicers and . . . well, everyone in the trade. When he visited MercTown, he knew he had found his home and he opened the *Job Market Café* (see the *Hub* #30 for its complete description). Although he is but one man, Fixer Jones has more connections, contacts and resources than most of the agencies at Merc Plaza.

Since Jones came to town five years ago, he has become a fixture in MercTown, a major player and “the” resource for small time merc outfits, bounty hunters and adventurers. Aside from running his café, Fixer Jones also serves as an information broker, middleman, contract negotiator and organizer for mercs. He provides introductions, helps cut through all the red tape and supplies vital information in return for a small fee (usually 5% of what the job pays, sometimes less, sometimes as a “favor” – Fixer likes people owing him favors). Fixer Jones helps mercs find contracts, gives them the inside skinny on the job and arranges for them to meet with clients, face to face. He’ll also help

to smooth out problems in terms of planning for a mission. Let’s say you have to move a thousand troops to Texas on a shoe-string budget, Fixer is the middleman who can find the people and/or supplies to get it done within the budget. Fixer is a one man miracle worker whose efforts can transform a no-name mercenary group into the next Larsen’s Brigade.

Note: See #30 in the Hub, for more info and details about Fixer’s job finding services for mercenaries and adventurers.

Full Name: Heathcliff Theodore Jones.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 17, M.E. 19, M.A. 22, P.S. 12, P.P. 10, P.E. 9, P.B. 11, Spd 14.

Hit Points: 41. **S.D.C.:** 17.

Mega-Damage: By armor only; uses Naruni force field technology.

Size: Six feet (1.8 m) tall and weighs 245 lbs (110 kg.)

Age: 52. **Race:** Human.

P.P.E.: 14

Description: Very much an average looking, middle-aged human male with dark grey, wavy hair and a warm smile. Fixer is not the kind of person who stands out in a crowd, which is perfect for his line of work. He is of medium height, has a bulging waistline, thinning hair and wears prescription spectacles.

Disposition: Fixer Jones is a talented, intelligent, funny and likeable fellow blessed with an honest face and excellent people skills. His warm disposition puts most folks at ease in an instant, and he is the kind of guy with whom everyone enjoys talking. He is an excellent listener, empathic, and a master of the anecdote as well as the telling of a good joke or amusing pun. Simply put, Fixer just gets along with people, and he seems to always know the right thing to say. This makes Fixer Jones a skilled negotiator, able to squeeze every last credit out of a deal or detail out of a conversation. He gets most people to open up with little effort, worming his way past their defenses to learn their secrets, fears, and desires; a talent that has allowed him to organize a web of contacts and informants that numbers well into the thousands.

Behind Fixer’s likeable nature lurks a carefully honed intellect. Perhaps not quite a genius, Fixer has always been able to think quickly on his feet, make people like him and appear less dangerous than he really is. The man is keenly observant, plans his every move, adapts in a heartbeat and is a workaholic with connections in powerful, if not high places (i.e., two thirds of the mercenary companies in North America, the Black Market and the merchants, defenders and Proconsul of MercTown).

Experience Level: 10th level Information Broker; essentially a City Rat O.C.C. permitted to take Espionage skills.

Magic Knowledge: None.

Psionic Powers: Considered a minor psychic with the sensitive abilities of Empathy, Mind Block and Total Recall. **I.S.P.:** 51.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Combat Bonuses: +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with impact, +2 to damage, +2 to pull punch, critical strike

on a Natural 19-20, kick inflicts 1D6 S.D.C., body flip/throw, 75% chance to invoke trust/intimidate, +3% on all skills.

Skills of Note: Speaks American and Spanish at 98%, Literate in American and Techno-Can at 78%, Art 90%, Basic Math 96%, Computer Operation 98%, Computer Programming 91%, Computer Hacking 73%, Cryptography 63%, Find Contraband 69%, Forgery 68%, History 78%, Law 83%, Intelligence 85%, Interrogation Techniques 90%, Pick Pockets 88%, Pilot Automobile 98%, Pilot Hovercraft 91%, Pilot Motorcycle 98%, Read Sensory Equipment 63%, Research 83%, Palming 75%, Performance 90%, Radio: Basic 93%, Radio: Scramblers 58%, Running, Surveillance Systems 95%, Streetwise 73%, Swimming 93%, and Research 83%.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Energy Pistol.

Weapons of Note: Fixer owns a Wilk's 337 laser pistol that hasn't been fired in nearly a decade. Most of the time it sits in a locked safe at his house, he almost never has it on his person.

Armor: None, but could acquire whatever he needs.

Money: Eleven million in NGMI dollars and 23 million in Universal Credits. His café is easily worth another couple of million, although it is doubtful that anyone else could run it as well.

Jacius Larkent

Jacius Larkent, a former Senator of the Manistique Imperium, is one of MercTown's most notorious fugitives. Not so many years ago, Larkent was a powerful voice in the Senate and the governor of one of the Imperium's constituent city-states. Rather than use this position to serve the needs of his people, the Senator worked only to advance his own cause: To become Emperor of the Manistique Imperium. Larkent spent a decade preparing for his takeover bid, skimming money from the Imperium Treasury to fund a mercenary army with which to stage a coup. When he felt the time was right, the Senator hired a group of high-priced assassins to murder the Royal Family and throw Manistique into a state of chaos. While the nation was reeling, his co-conspirator, General Murrat Doanza, would march on the capitol and Larkent would step forward to bring a new order to the nation.

Larkent and Doanza made their power grab in the fall of 101 P.A. It failed, the plot was uncovered by loyal officers of the Manistique Imperial Army, the assassins intercepted, the mercenary army ambushed en route to the capital, and a special forces team dispatched to capture Larkent. Somehow, Jacius Larkent and Murrat Doanza managed to escape. Their scheme completely foiled, the two conspirators fled. Although a fugitive on the run, Larkent still had a substantial chunk of his embezzled funds (reportedly in the neighborhood of 100 million credits) and, less than a year later, he resurfaced in MercTown.

The former Senator has taken advantage of the city-state's absence of extradition laws to set up a secure base of new operations. Using some of the hundred million credits he had stolen, Larkent started his own company, an import-export company called *Insider Traders* (see description #24 of *the Hub*). Given Larkent's business savvy and expertise at negotiations, the com-

pany has been a huge success. Over the intervening years, he has multiplied his initial investment many times over, earning a reported half billion credits. Furthermore, Larkent has made a successful bid to gain a position as one of the *MercTown Merchants' Association's* representatives on the MercTown Advisory Council.

By all indications, Larkent is delighted with his growing commercial empire in MercTown. The man holds a position of considerable power and influence, and has more than enough wealth to keep him in the lap of luxury for the rest of his life. For other men this would be a huge triumph, but for Jacius Larkent it is not enough. His greatest desire is to return to the Manistique Imperium as a conquering hero and become its Emperor. This dream has become an obsession and he boasts openly that someday Manistique will be his.

This has prompted no fewer than nine attempts on his life in the last decade, three in the last year alone, and has earned the placement of a one million credit bounty on his head, "dead or alive." The bounty and attacks on his life have only hardened his resolve to become the Emperor of Manistique. To that end, Larkent has been funneling the profits from his business dealings at *Insider Traders* to build a large army capable of humbling the Manistique Imperium. A force he has taken to calling *Larkent's Legion*. Among his legion are other traitors and outcasts from Manistique, as well as a motley army of mercs and cutthroats. At present, that force supposedly includes 2000 veteran mercenaries (levels 2-5), a company of sorcerers recruited in the aftermath of the fall of Tolkeen and led by a Shadow Dragon, along with a half dozen Fallen Cyber-Knights, a com-



pany of Juicers, and two companies of Brodkil. According to *rumor*, he has recruited 5000 additional mercenaries (the real number is a third that size and they are mostly disreputable companies) and a company of bloodthirsty Daemonix, all of whom are said to be ready to join his Legion and embark on an invasion of Manistique whenever he decides to call upon them. That could be any time now.

G.M./Story Note: Jacius Larkent could be the catalyst for an ongoing campaign of adventures as he prepares to invade the Manistique Imperium. He wields a great deal of influence and power in and around MercTown, has many connections with mercenaries, raiders and bandits, as well as high society, and has a massive bankroll to back up his dreams. However, the man is also quite *insane* and obsessed with conquering the Manistique Imperium at any cost. Delusional when it comes to the Imperium, he will say and do anything to convince people to join him – offering huge rewards, promises of high positions within his government or army, make claims his invasion force numbers well over 20,000 (when it's really around 5000 strong) and that it includes two companies of Daemonix, and that his officers possess powerful weapons and legendary magic artifacts (which they do *not* really have). He also claims to have in his possession a secret weapon that guarantees he will win.

Tragically, Larkent honestly believes the *lies* he spins and, should he launch his invasion on Manistique, he'll send thousands of men to their doom. Just the build up to his mad scheme has the promise of countless adventures, sponsoring the player group to embark on any number of assignments.

Given his long term plans to take over Manistique, the man always has his eyes open for prospective talent and the acquisition of magic items, alien technology/weapons and powerful allies. To evaluate and recruit potential warriors, he uses his company as a front, hiring men to escort and guard commodity investments, track down thieves and raiders, do reconnaissance, protect company personnel, ensure the safety of trade routes, find new passageways through the wilderness, and so on. Jobs may be 100% above the board, or downright criminal. If the people he hires work out, then Larkent goes for the hard sell, offering them full-time employment for a “special pet project” of his that he has going on the back burner.

Should the player characters sign on with **Larkent's Legion**, it opens the doors to a variety of role-playing opportunities. Extensive reconnaissance and intelligence gathering is paramount to success, to which end the characters might be sent to infiltrate Manistique to gather such information. At the same time, Larkent needs to protect the secrecy of his own Legion, meaning that the characters might be charged with rooting out and eliminating spies and enemies sent from Manistique. The characters might be called upon to guard a secret meeting, conduct political assassinations of Larkent's opponents, rivals and enemies in the Manistique Imperium, MercTown and other locations, or deliver messages to his allies, recruit other mercenaries, acquire weapons, magic, money for the cause, or perform any other innumerable tasks. The adventures could include assassinating key Manistique political and military leaders, acts of sabotage and/or infiltration, spying, capturing a magic item or alien weapon of great power, intelligence work, raiding Manistique weapon convoys to other parts of the country, and so on.

On the other hand, the player characters might find themselves being courted by the *Manistique Imperium*. The Imperium is well aware of Larkent's presence in MercTown and suspects that their prodigal son is up to no good. Still, they have yet to gather any sound intelligence as to Larkent's motives or specific plans. They believe he is quite mad and don't know if his bluster is all talk and crazy dreams, or a serious threat. Independent mercenaries might be hired to find out, or get proof of Larkent's plan to invade, and/or locate Larkent's secret base camp, steal financial records from the offices of Insider Traders, assassinate or capture key figures in his organization (like his bodyguard or General Doanza), or become double agents by infiltrating Larkent's Legion to spy on it from within. Or our heroes could find themselves caught in the middle between Larkent's Legion and the Manistique Imperium or protecting some little nobody community from getting trampled by Larkent's mad dream of conquest.

And should the player characters turn against him, stand in his way, or dare to call him crazy, he will personally turn their lives into living Hell (and he does have the power to do that). This makes Jacius Larkent, his company Insider Traders, the members of his Legion and hired henchmen a wonderful source of trouble and adventure, not to mention a cast of excellent, recurring NPC villains, sponsor or employer.

The possibilities are limited only by the imagination of the individual G.M., and the adventure opportunities that are afforded by this N.P.C. could be the wellspring for an entire mercenary campaign.

Real Name: Jacius Maltin Larkent.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 18, M.E. 8, M.A. 24, P.S. 11, P.P. 7, P.E. 9, P.B. 15, Spd 12.

Hit Points: 36. **S.D.C.:** 12.

Size: 5 feet, 11 inches (1.8 m) tall and weighs 210 lbs (95 kg).

Age: 57

P.P.E.: 10

Description: As a man accustomed to a life of comfort, Larkent has the soft look of a career politician. Once athletic in his younger days, he has a large build and round stomach that once was muscle, evidence of his love for fine foods and disdain for exercise or menial labor. Larkent's greying brown hair is cut short, his eyes the color of emeralds and he carries himself with a regal bearing befitting his former position as a Senator of the Manistique Imperium.

Disposition: Jacius Larkent is very typical of a Manistique aristocrat. The man is haughty, self-assured and overconfident in his own intelligence. As a byproduct of his pampered existence, the former Senator is very much a spoiled child. Pompous, cruel and consumed by self-interest, he views the rest of humanity as mere playthings for his own personal enjoyment. He cares nothing for anyone else, not even his own family who languish under house arrest as a result of Larkent's failed coup attempt. Nonetheless, the man is very shrewd, cunning and skilled at manipulating events to suit his own designs. He is a master at manipulating people, is able to convince others to act to serve his goals and he does so with callous disregard for the consequences they may suffer.

When a person has served his purpose and is no longer useful to him, they are pushed aside and ignored.

Jacius can be a real charmer when he has reason to, and he can project an aura of generosity, altruism and sincerity that disarms the toughest cynic. Larkent's manner is very civilized, proper and polite, making him popular among polite society. In just a few short years he's ingrained himself in the power structure of MercTown and is a fixture among the upper crust of its society. While not a soldier, he is nonetheless a master strategist when it comes to politics and dealing with people, and he is unsurpassed as a negotiator. He is rational, calculating and above all else, patient. That, combined with his twisted desire to be Emperor of Manistique, is what makes Larkent one of the most dangerous men in North America.

Experience Level: 8th level Scholar/Merchant – and delusional schemer, and master manipulator of people.

Magic Knowledge: None.

Psionic Powers: None.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Bonuses: +1 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with impact, +2 to pull punch, kick inflicts 1D6 S.D.C., critical strike on a Natural 19-20, 80% chance to invoke trust/intimidate.

Skills of Note: Speaks American, French and Dragonese at 98%, literate in American at 98%, Anthropology 69%, Art 74%, Basic Math 98%, Computer Operation 98%, Dance 69%, Fishing 79%, History 98%, Horsemanship: General 77%, Interrogation Techniques 59%, Law 84%, Lore: D-Bees 74%, Lore: Military History 84%, Military Etiquette 74%, Performance 74%, Pilot Hover Vehicle 88%, Pilot Sail Boat 98%, Seduction 45%, Swimming 89%, Streetwise 52%, Research 69%, and Writing 59%.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Energy Pistol (for protection) and W.P. Bolt-Action Rifle (for hunting).

Weapons of Note: He has a collection of Wilk's pistols and a Northern Gun ion pistol.

Armor: Naruni N-F20A Personal Force Field (75 M.D.C.).

Story Note: The likelihood of a successful invasion by Larkent's Legion is slim to none. Larkent isn't even taking into consideration that neighboring industrial giant, Northern Gun, is likely to help defend its long-time ally from invasion, especially from the likes of him. Although Northern Gun and Manistique are rivals, they are friendly rivals, and together, create the powerful nations of the Michigan Upper Peninsula. Likewise, Titan Industries (the front operation for ARCHIE-3) and even the Coalition States might step forward to protect the Imperium – Northern Gun and the Manistique Imperium are both CS allies and trade partners, after all – not to mention other small kingdoms and groups who have long, favorable relationships with the Imperium. Meanwhile, reputable mercenary companies like *Larsen's Brigade* and countless other professionals will have nothing to do with this mad scheme, and are likely to offer their services to Manistique when they realize Larkent's Legion is ready to make its move to invade.

Special Resources & Henchmen

Larkent's Legion. To back his planned takeover of Manistique, Jacius Larkent has been building a secret army. Sparing no expense on the enterprise, he's invested tens of millions of credits to hire, train and equip a force he believes capable of besting the Manistique Imperial Army. Called Larkent's Legion, this army is made up mostly of mercenary troops with a handful of deserters from the MI Army loyal to Jacius thrown into the mix. The latter form the leadership of the legion, its officers and headquarters staff with overall command falling to General Murrat Doanza.

Thus far, the legion comprises approximately 2000 troops, most have some experience (levels 2-5) and are reasonably seasoned and reliable. He has another 1500-2500 mercenaries lined up and ready to jump on board, but most are members of small, disreputable companies with little experience (levels 1-3) and half are bandits, bushwhackers and raiders, not true mercenary soldiers trained in the art of war. Though he claims to have a company of sorcerers, it is really a small platoon of about 30-35, there are only three Daemonix at his disposal, and no dragons or secret super-powerful magic weapons, but he does have two companies of Brodkil hungry for bloodshed.

Jacius and his many agents are, however, always looking for new soldiers and offer full-time employment with a salary of 400-700 credits a week, plus Larkent purchases all of their equipment; double for truly unique and powerful characters. Those who accept are transported to a secret base camp in the forest southwest of Whykin. At the military encampment the mercs train under the watchful eye of General Doanza, drilled to become a cohesive fighting force ready for battle.

Larkent's Legion is far from battle-ready. The troops already present at the camp have finished their training but they require greater numbers. Jacius has decided he has three or four times the number of troops he really has and believes, with a little fine tuning, they could be ready to invade the Manistique Imperium within 4-8 months. He tells his troops that there are a half dozen other secret camps just like this one, with 20,000+ troops augmented by magic and supernatural beings, and all ready to converge on the Imperium. Consequently, the smaller fighting force will invade the Manistique Imperium under the false pretext that several other armies will join the fight from other strategic locations. Ultimately, these few thousand are pawns in a madman's dream of conquest, fame and power.

General Murrat Doanza (Quick stats): 10th level Headhunter Officer. Anarchist alignment. I.Q. 14, M.E. 11, M.A. 8, P.S. 15, P.P. 13, P.E. 13, P.B. 12, Spd 19; 56 S.D.C., 48 Hit Points, 16 P.P.E.; five attacks per melee, +2 on initiative, +2 to strike, +7 to parry and dodge, +2 to pull punch, +4 to roll with punch, +3 to S.D.C. damage, +4 to save vs Horror Factor, judo flip/throw, paired weapons, kick inflicts 1D6 S.D.C., critical on a Natural 18-20, 15% chance to invoke trust/intimidate. Wears a suit of modified Bushman body armor (88 M.D.C.) and usually arms himself with heavy weapons (plasma, particle beams, etc.), a laser pistol and a Vibro-Sword.

General Murrat Doanza is the military commander of Larkent's Legion. He has his doubts about Larkent, but has fallen for his lies and delusions, believing there is an army of at

least 30,000 at the ready. In fact, the madman Larkent has had the General spin an elaborate battle plan for an army just that size. The General was not so much selected for the position as given it by default for his participation in Larkent's earlier coup attempt. As an officer, General Doanza is a capable leader and good tactician, having been trained by the best at the IDF Staff College. Even so, he is completely unimaginative, unable to think outside of the box and responds to the actions of his enemy with the textbook answer. Murrat Doanza would never have made General if not for his family's political connections (he is the son of a Manistique Senator). Before throwing his lot in with Jacius Larkent, the General was the commanding officer of Manistique's 4th Division where he served as the protector of the city-state over which Larkent presided. That is how he fell under the silver-tongued Larkent's spell. Larkent promised the General greatness, respect and total authority over Manistique's army.

The General was so enthralled with the romance of the idea that he never stopped to consider that they never really had a chance of succeeding. By the time he realized just what he'd become involved in, it was too late. Now, General Doanza is a fugitive despised by his own family and hated by the people and defenders of the Imperium. Although he battles melancholy and despair, he has decided the only way he can reclaim respect and honor is by conquering the people who despise him and crush

them under his heel. Thus, he has remained loyal to Larkent and believes his fate is irrevocably intertwined with that of the madman's. The battle plans are drawn, the stage set, and *his* troops are ready for combat. Too bad the General doesn't realize his troops and the second-rate mercenary companies, also deceived by Larkent's silver tongue, are all there is; maybe 5000-6000 all totaled. Maybe.

Steven "The Lion" Copaniuk – Bodyguard (Quick Stats): 8th level Werejaguar/Martial Artist. Aberrant alignment. I.Q. 12, M.E. 14, M.A. 14, P.S. 15, P.P. 19, P.E. 20, P.B. 18, Spd 16. Hit Points/M.D.C.: 67, Horror Factor of 12, P.P.E. 80; has the psionic abilities of Mind Block, See the Invisible and Sixth Sense; 29 I.S.P. He is harmed only by silver weapons, magic and psionics. Hand to Hand: Aikido – two attacks per melee, +4 to strike, +7 to parry and dodge, +4 to body flip/throw, +4 to pull punch, +6 to roll with impact, +5 to break fall, +2 to disarm, automatic body flip/throw does 2D6 S.D.C., critical flip/throw, knife hand knock-out, automatic finger, wrist and elbow lock. Hand to Hand: Jujitsu - four attacks per melee, +3 to strike, +4 to parry and dodge, +7 to roll with impact, +4 to pull punch, +3 to disarm, +2 to body flip/throw, +3 to maintain balance, critical strike from behind, critical strike on a Natural 18-20, knock-out/stun on a Natural 20, death blow on a Natural 20, kick, leg hooks, snap kick, backward kick, reverse turning kick, drop kick, jump kick, paralysis attack, choke, holds & locks.



Other bonuses: +1 on initiative, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to save vs psionics, +5 to save vs magic, +3 to save vs poison, and +10% to save vs coma/death.

The Lion wears a suit of Gladiator armor (70 M.D.C.), if any armor at all, and carries a Naruni NE-10 plasma cartridge rifle (1D4x10 per blast, 20 shot magazine), an NG-57 ion pistol (2D6 M.D., 12 shot long clip), and a Samurai rune katana (inflicts 6D6 S.D.C. or M.D. to Mega-Damage creatures).

Steven Copaniuk serves as Jacius Larkent's bodyguard, primary enforcer, special operative and best friend. The son of an upper class diplomat himself, Copaniuk and Larkent grew up together. From the time they could walk the two have been the closest of friends. They went to school together, played on the same teams in sports, sailed the Great Lakes and worked alongside each other all their lives. As a young man, Copaniuk had an

overriding interest in the martial arts, not for its discipline or cultural values, but for the power it conferred. Born with an impulsive, adventurous spirit, Copaniuk had no desire to enter politics like his best friend. Instead, he decided to become an adventurer using his background in archeology as a springboard. On an expedition to some ancient Mayan ruins in Mexico, he disturbed a sacred idol of great magical power. By so doing, he was cursed with *lycanthropy*, becoming a *Werejaguar*. Upon returning to the Manistique Imperium he was abandoned by friends and family, except for Jacius Larkent. It is out of gratitude, loyalty and deep friendship that Copaniuk now serves as his best friend's protector, counsel and assassin. Copaniuk doesn't care that Jacius is probably insane; he doesn't question his only friend, he's just there to serve and protect him from himself as well as outside forces.

Mercenary Organizations of MercTown

This section details a few of the mercenary companies, covert operations units, combat support outfits and some of the notable key people that regularly visit MercTown, use it as their base of operation, and/or regularly camp outside of town. They are professional mercenaries, meaning they make their living as guns for hire, but not as individuals, like an assassin or gunfighter, but as a group – a team - hired to perform military and combat operations. While many merc outfits can handle most combat situations, many are composed of *specialists* in some aspect of war and the mercenary trade whether that be intelligence gathering, criminal activity, espionage, air combat, infiltration, rescue, smuggling, robot fighting, anti-magic, demon slaying and so forth. Consequently, while most fit the standard format for (creating) a mercenary company, some are so unique and different that they do not conform to the norm (and vary from the mercenary company creation rules found on pages 9-19 of **Rifts® Mercenaries**).

Camping on the edge of MercTown. Mercenary outfits often set up camp just beyond the MercTown Outskirts, pitching tents and setting up supply depots in the neighboring forests and fields. Mercenary companies, by their very nature, are *mobile combat forces* always on the move. A mercenary company must go where the action is, and any base camp is, at best, semi-permanent. MercTown has its share of exceptions, but even the most permanent looking merc office or base can be packed up and abandoned in a matter of hours. Part of this is due to the mobile nature of these combat forces, the other is to avoid getting rooted down to any one place where one's enemies (and most merc companies have plenty of those) can track them down and attack. Furthermore, any permanent base requires defenses, and defenses cost money. Consequently, the vast majority of mercenary companies do NOT establish permanent base sites where they are vulnerable to attack, and even those who do seldom have more than one third of their forces at base at any given time.

MercTown being what it is, it has a handful of such base camps as well as dozens of offices where interested parties can speak to a *representative* about hiring the merc company, or

squads and platoons, for small jobs, surgical strikes, special ops, and so on, but while the rep is sitting in a cozy office, the soldiers are somewhere in the field (unless they happen to be in town getting a little R&R or re-supplying).

The territory around MercTown is largely open and unclaimed wilderness where anyone can pitch camp. Most mercenary companies visiting MercTown have come to resupply, upgrade, seek medical attention for the wounded and/or to get some much needed R&R (rest and relaxation). Consequently, the average merc company blows into town for a week or two and blows out. Few stay in one area for more than a month, maybe two, and then only if there is no work to be had, and there is always conflict and war in the volatile setting of Rifts North America (and all of Rifts Earth).

Remember too, that the vast majority of mercenary outfits are not full armies, but small squads ranging from 6-24 troops to platoon (30-60 troops) and company size (120-160 troops). It is uncommon to have a merc outfit as large as a full battalion (640 troops), and outright rare to find any the size of a brigade (1920 troops) or larger. It is the small size of the mercenary company that makes them so flexible and mobile. They can get away with being small because they are specialists usually hired to help train and/or command a larger regional force, or to supplement the standing army, or brought in as "special teams" to conduct black ops or assist in other areas of speciality. Besides, most conflicts on Rifts Earth are small, regional problems where only a small team or platoon or company of combat veterans is necessary to handle it. The large forces, company-sized and bigger, may come into town or camp on the outskirts, it really depends on the commander and circumstance.

Game Master's Note: The mercenary outfits and groups featured in this section are presented as guidelines to players and Game Masters, as well as potential villains or rivals the player characters may encounter, or as a potential group that might *hire* the player group for a particular merc assignment, heck, if the G.M. allows it, the player characters could even be active members of these organizations. However, it is more likely the player characters are sub-contractors hired to temporarily fill a void in



the company's staff or outsourced to do a job the company was contracted to do, but doesn't really want to or has bigger fish to fry, but doesn't want to lose the job so they hire an outside group with a good rep to do it for them. If the player characters desire to become members of an existing merc company, their trying to gain membership (probably by proving themselves in some way) could be a central plot line of one or many adventures.

Air Superiority, Inc.

"Charlie Security, laser now, over."

"Headquarters, roger: laser now, out," responded one of the comms specialists at the other end of the transmission.

Corporal Stevens set his secure walkie-talkie on the dusty ground next to his left hand, within easy reach. Headquarters confirmed that they knew he was in the designated Observation Post, which meant that all he had to do now was watch for the approaching enemy forces. Stevens reached down and carefully removed a pair of IR binoculars from the utility pouch on his web gear. He raised the optics to his eyes and looked down at the gravel road winding through the valley below.

Three kilometers in the distance he saw dust clouds rising in the wake of the armored column pushing up the road. At the point of the column, a Naruni Carnivore light hover tank pushed its way cautiously through the valley, its turret sweeping left-right, right-left searching for targets. Spread out behind it were another twenty or so armored vehicles - a mix of old CS APCs, Iron Heart tanks and Golden Age retrofitted combat vehicles. Flying overhead, providing air cover for the column, three Iron Eagle gunships and a half dozen Naruni combat pods buzzed back and forth above the vehicles. "Oh crap," said Stevens bitterly. "We're in for a bigger fight than we signed on for."

Stevens pushed an olive green button on the binocs, triggering its laser distancing module. At the bottom of the lens, "2,985 m" flashed in bright red digital numerals. He quickly grabbed up the walkie-talkie.

"Headquarters, this is Charlie Security. Twenty MBTs and combat vehicles approaching on Axis Dragon, plus three helo gun ships and five combat pods. Range three clicks, over," he said quietly into the radio.

"Acknowledged, Charlie Security. Maintain your position and prepare to correct ordnance from TacAir, over."

"Say again Headquarters, over?" Stevens asked louder than he'd intended. What was HQ talking about?! Their forces didn't have any tactical aircraft beyond a couple of rocket bikes, and they were used mostly for scouting and flank security. He shook his head. They should be pulling out and withdrawing to a defensive position closer to the city. They weren't being paid enough to get smashed to pieces out in the open like this.

Suddenly, from the eastern sky a squadron of Grey Falcon jets soared into view out of the sun, using its blazing light to conceal their approach. In a precise formation they streaked towards the trio of helicopters leading the invasion force and let loose a volley of missiles and blasting light beams. As the enemy aircraft exploded in huge fireballs, a flight of bombers soared into view trailing the jets. A moment later they dropped dozens

of bombs on the convoy of tanks. Explosions rippled along the valley floor, turning most of the vehicles into wreckage and sending billows of dirt and black smoke into the sky. Looking through the binoculars Stevens could only see the Carnivore returning fire with its particle beam cannon.

He grabbed the walkie-talkie. "Unknown aircraft have attacked the enemy, one hostile MBT returning fire from Ogre plus two hundred meters, twenty-five mils left of your initial strike, over," he said.

"Unknown aircraft?" an unfamiliar voice with a heavy Texan accent broke over the radio. The Grey Falcons turned and dived straight for the Carnivore on an attack run. "Unknown aircraft? This is the Black King and you are talking to Air Superiority, Inc., son. We're known from Iron Heart to the Lone Star state and everywhere in between!"

Air Superiority, Inc.!, marveled Stevens, pumping his fist in the air. The Captain must have done quite a negotiating job to get them on this short notice. Stevens grinned broadly and watched as the last few surviving armored vehicles blew apart. Maybe this wouldn't be such a bad contract after all.

Air Superiority Inc., Mercenary Company

- A. Sponsorship: None.
- B. Outfits: Specialty Clothing. 20 points.
- C. Equipment: Electronic Supplies & Good Gear, Medical Equipment. 10 points.
- D. Vehicles: Specialty Vehicles. 30 points.
- E. Weapons: Basic Equipment. 10 points.
- F. Communications: Full Range System. 15 points.
- G. Internal Security: Iron-Clad. 20 points.
- H. Permanent Bases: Headquarters. 10 points.
- I. Intelligence Resources: Special Military Operatives. 10 points.
- J. Special Budget: None. 0 points.
- K. General Alignment of Personnel: Unprincipled & Scrupulous. 7 points.
- L. Criminal Activity: None. 0 points.
- M. Reputation/Credentials: Excellent Reputation. 25 points.
- N. Salary: Excellent Salary. 10 points.
- Total Points Spent: 167 points.
- Size & Orientation: Free Company.

Air Superiority Incorporated is a mercenary company that is made up almost entirely of combat *aircraft*. The company, unlike most mercenary groups, has almost no ground forces or combat robots. Instead it is an independent air force that rivals those of most kingdoms in North America (only the CS, the late Tolkeen, Lazlo and Ishpeming are known to have larger air forces at their disposal). In total, the company has one Composite Wing of aircraft, six squadrons of various fighter jets, interceptors, bombers, helicopters and other flying vehicles. What Air Superiority provides its clients is the *full range of tactical aerial combat operations*, including close air support (i.e. air to ground attacks), bombing, interdiction, aerial reconnaissance/patrolling, air defense, security and, of course, air to air combat.

As an independent air force, Air Superiority is a totally self-sufficient organization. The company includes all of the sup-

porting assets that are necessary to keep its aircraft operational. Chief among these supporting assets is a pool of Operators, technicians and mechanics lead by *Eyestalk*, a Men-Rall Tech Master, who performs routine maintenance on the aircraft as well as repairing damaged craft. There is also a platoon of engineers who construct airstrips, runways, hangars and any other facilities the company requires. For security, the company includes a platoon of highly trained Headhunters and mercenaries to guard its air bases against infiltration, sabotage and enemy attack.

Frank Carson, also known as the **Black King**, formed the company in the early 90s P.A.; before that time, he served as a pilot in a number of different mercenary companies, usually flying stolen CS Sky Cycles, helicopters and small jets. It didn't take long until Carson realized that the majority of mercenary groups in North America failed to harness the potential of *air power* in combat operations. Most of the outfits he worked for maintained token forces with a handful of aircraft, and relied on masses of ground troops, combat robots and armored vehicles. Understandable, since ground vehicles were much easier to acquire, use by green troops, and service; aircraft cost more, required more hours of training, needed more service and maintenance and required airfields and storage facilities – more than what most kingdoms, let alone merc companies, could afford. Still, it seemed foolish to him. Disillusioned with the general attitude of merc outfits towards aircraft, Carson decided to build his own company to specialize in air combat operations. The rest, as they say, is history.

Times have been good for Air Superiority in recent years. As several large kingdoms and the Coalition States have started building large, modern air forces, the threat of aerial attack has become very real for many nations and mercenary groups. For those who cannot afford to build their own air force, the obvious solution is to hire one, and right now, *Air Superiority* is pretty much all there is. The only competition is a handful of tiny, start-up companies with little combat experience. As a result, Air Superiority is so busy it has to turn down work. Contracts are plentiful and have carried the outfit the length and breadth of the continent. More often than not, the company is sub-contracted by other mercenary groups to provide air cover and ground support when faced by larger or more heavily equipped enemies. Over the last two years, Air Superiority has worked with dozens of other companies, including Larsen's Brigade and Crow's Commandos. At the present, Free Quebec is *secretly* negotiating with the company to augment its air defense capabilities against the Coalition States. Frank Carson is interested, mainly due to the massive paycheck that is being offered, but hasn't decided whether or not to take the contract.

Company Strategy & Tactics

Air Superiority is dedicated to missions of aerial combat. All fighting is conducted by its cadre of elite pilots and well maintained aircraft. The only ground-based contingent of the company is its team of special forces operatives who perform reconnaissance missions, serve as forward observers for bombing strikes and conduct bomb damage assessments (to ascertain the effectiveness of an air strike by inspecting the impact area). With the composite wing structure, Air Superiority can conduct a number of different missions at the same time by splitting up

its six squadrons. For example, one fighter squadron could be given the task of defending a client's main city while the second attacks the enemy's aircraft and, simultaneously, the helicopter squadron engages armored vehicles.

For the right price, Air Superiority has occasionally mounted special forces-style missions. These usually take the form of an airmobile assault using the company's helicopters to move small teams cobbled together from the engineer and security platoons. Examples of such specialty missions include the rescue of downed aviators, hostage rescue and strategic strikes. Air Superiority tries to avoid these contracts whenever possible, because they are extremely risky. Generally, they will only be considered against small objectives with no more than a platoon of the enemy.

Standard operating procedure for the company, when executing a contract, is to establish an airfield as a base of operations. An airstrip and other facilities are constructed by the engineer platoon under the protection of the security platoon and one or more squadrons flying overhead cover. When the base is finished it is occupied by the entire company, which moves overland using a fleet of transport vehicles (guarded, of course, by combat aircraft). As soon as the contract is completed the company moves back to its primary base of operations, which is located at the *Prouse Memorial Airport* in *MercTown* (see Outskirts).

Company's Colors and Banners. For its colors, Air Superiority has adopted a square black-and-white checkered patch, almost identical to that of a chess or checkers board. This symbol adorns all of its aircraft and vehicles, and is worn on the left shoulder of issued body armor and uniforms. In addition to the standard patch, all of the pilots wear a black-and-white checkered scarf. In keeping with the chessboard motif, the leaders of the six squadrons take the names of chess pieces as call-signs (e.g. Black Knight, White Queen, Black Bishop, White Rook, etc.). Uniforms and vehicles are typically painted blue, a medium blue with dark accents for body armor and ground vehicles, aircraft are painted sky blue or grey. The only exception is the body armor of the special forces squad, which is painted in a camouflage pattern or black.

Personnel

Commander Frank Carson (Black King, 9th level RPA Fly Boy Ace/Elite Merc Pilot; Scrupulous) is the commanding officer, CEO, chief negotiator and the driving force behind Air Superiority Inc. The company is the only thing that Frank loves more than flying itself. He feels closer to the pilots and crew members than his own family. As a result, the Black King never takes any unnecessary risks with the company, and the protection of the soldiers under his command is his primary concern, the client always comes second in any conflict. Frank is dedicated to building the most reputable and effective mercenary force on the continent. That is his only goal, and the focus for all of his efforts.

Commander Gwen Grelowr (White Rook, 7th level RPA Fly Boy Ace/Merc Pilot; Scrupulous) is second in overall command and the leader of the bomber squadron. She is a silver-haired, rogue Dog Boy who has a natural aptitude for flying.

Captain Masterson (Black Knight, 7th level RPA Fly Boy Ace/Merc Pilot; Anarchist), ace pilot.

Chief Technician Lieutenant Breeze, but commonly called “Eyestalks” by the men (real name Fexla Brezzikx, equivalent to a 12th level Operator with all skills necessary for aircraft mechanics, repairs, modifications, weaponry, and building; Scrupulous. Major Psionics: 121 I.S.P., Telemechanics, Telemechanics Possession, Telekinesis, Object Read, Machine Ghost and Mind Block). He is an alien from another dimension and says his people are known as “Tech Masters,” and has proven it with his amazing mechanical abilities.

Major Pixley “Picks” Ironshod, Chief Engineer (8th level Operator specializing in the engineering and building of land structures/airfields, bridges, construction; Anarchist).

Other important characters include: Captain Preacher Jameson - the White Bishop, commander of the helicopter squadron (7th level RPA Fly Boy Ace), Lightspeed - the Black Queen, commander of the second fighter squadron (6th level Headhunter), Lt. Santos Garcia - the White Knight, commander of the power armor squadron (8th level Headhunter), Snake Evans, commander of the security platoon (7th level Psi-Stalker), and Karl Grueber, special forces squad leader (9th level NGR Intelligence Commando). The company also has the following combat personnel:

49 Mercenary Pilots equivalent to CS RPA Fly Boy Ace, levels 4-12.

18 Power Armor Pilots, CS Elite RPA O.C.C. equivalent, levels 2-8, with the skills Pilot Robots & Power Armor and Robot Combat Elite.

16 Headhunters, levels 4-5, all with the skills Pilot Robots & Power Armor, Hovercycle and one aircraft of choice.

32 Operators, levels 3-7, specializing in ground and air vehicular repair.

20 Assistant Mechanics, Vagabond O.C.C., levels 2-3.

12 Engineering Technical Officers, CS equivalent, levels 4-6, with Engineering MOS.

14 Communications Technical Officers, CS equivalent, levels 3-5, with radio/communications MOS.

3 Psi-Stalkers, levels 3-8.

5 Dog Boys, levels 2-6.

12 Headhunters, levels 2-5.

4 Full Conversion ‘Borgs, levels 3-6.

7 Juicers, levels 2-4; all with Jump Bike combat skill.

5 Phaeton Juicers, levels 2-6.

2 Crazies, levels 2 and 4.

8 Wilderness Scouts, levels 3-5.

1 Freelance Spy, level 5.

3 Military Specialists, CS equivalent, levels 4-7.

3 Special Forces Soldiers, levels 3-6.

Non-Combatants: There are another 100 to 250 non-combatants, including family members, medics, kitchen staff, communications specialists, sensor operators and drivers. Adults belong to non-men-at-arms O.C.C.s, levels 1-6; about 1/3 have some combat training (Hand to Hand: Basic and 2 W.P.s), but they are not mercenaries and will not fight except in the most desperate circumstances.

Standard Issue Weapons

Wilk’s 347 laser pistol.

NG-LG6 Laser Rifle & Grenade Launcher.

Body Armor: Huntsman for pilots and support personnel; Bushman for engineers, security and special operatives.

Utility belt, web gear, rucksack, flashlight, hand-held radio, compass, pocket multi-tool, sleeping bag, rations and other basic equipment. Pilots instead are issued an NG-S2 basic survival pack stowed in their aircraft.

Ground Vehicles

4 Aggressor Mark II IFVs

2 Iron Maiden APCs

4 GA-3 Bradleys

12 G998 Hummers

5 Big Boss A.T.V.s (Main Body: 80 M.D.C.; tires: 8 M.D.C.), armed with rail guns.

23 Tractor-Trailers (15 M.D.C.)

14-16 S.D.C. trucks and buses.

Aircraft Vehicles

Fighter Squadron Sword: 12 Grey Falcon jets.

Fighter Squadron Lance: 3 Grey Falcons, 7 GA-16C Falcons, 2 NE Boomerang fighters.

Bomber Squadron: 5 Air Castle bombers, and 3 NE Crescent Moon Delta-Wings (see **Rifts® Mercenaries**).

Helicopter Squadron: 6 Iron Heart Eagles, 6 GA-64 Apaches.

Cycle Squadron: 2 CS AFC-023 Sky Cycles, 5 WI AHB-2000 assault hover bikes, 3 NG-480 Turbos equipped with heavy lasers and mini-missile launchers, 2 NE HC-160 Bullets, and two NE-X4-LH Sun Chariots (see **Naruni Wave 2** or substitute with a trio of stolen CS rocket bikes).

Power Armor Squadron: 8 Coalition SAMAS (three stolen CS SAMAS and five Bandito Arms equivalents), 5 Flying Titans, 2 Triax Predators, 1 Mecha-Knight, 4 Flying Knights (see **Rifts® Mercenaries**), 6 Icarus Flight Systems.

Mayhem’s Marauders

“Hey, Sarge,” shouted one of the troops from the back of the Mark V APC. “Why the hell are we here again? This ain’t even CS territory.” A chorus of chuckles and grumbling echoed from the troop compartment.

“Pipe down back there,” yelled Sergeant First Class Yves, even though he privately agreed with his troops. “You all heard the CO’s brief, our government wants to protect the human population of this village. They’re CS supporters who’ve helped us in the past, and the big muckey-mucks want ‘em safe. You know your jobs, you know your orders, now just do as you’re told.”

Choosing to ignore the continued grumbling from the troop compartment the sergeant turned his attention to the sensor display. “Lieutenant Keenan, we’re in position. The designated tree-line is three hundred meters to our front,” said Yves, checking the navigation readout. “Releasing Skelebot Squad to sweep the tree-line.”



A somewhat nasal voice responded over the intercom. "Proceed Sergeant Yves. I'm sending the C-200 gunner team to occupy the high ground and dispatching Dog Pack scouts to search for supernatural presences."

Snearing at the inside of his skull-face mask, Yves instantly thought of a dozen nasty comments to describe the new platoon commander. Leaning over, he tapped the APC's gunner on the shoulder. "Bobby, get a visual on the woods to our front. Scan in infrared: report all targets," he said. Changing the frequency to that used by the scouts, he spoke into the comm's headset. "Corporal Tanner, get moving towards the front where you can actually sense something in the trees." The German Shepherd scout team leader growled an affirmative.

"I'm going topside for a closer look," said Yves, popping the hatch and standing to watch the squad of Skelebots advance on the forest. No sooner had he cleared the hatch when an explosion shattered the quiet of the clearing. Yves brought his right hand up to shadow his eyes from the brightness of the blast. Four Skelebots laid on the ground, two engulfed in bright white flames, the other two already getting back on their feet to return the attack. Unable to see past the purplish spots blurring his vision, Yves yelled to the gunner inside the turret. "Start firing at anything on the scope, Bobby! Sergeant Fisk, dismount Second Squad and move up into a support position. Let's move, people!" In the background he could hear the rumble of a C-200 rail gun firing.

"Scope's burned out by the flash, switching to visual," screamed the gunner. Sergeant Yves saw two bright flashes lance out from the trees, dropping the Dog Pack scouts. Screams echoed over the radio from the Lieutenant's Mark V APC. Yves swivelled his periscope only to see the officer's carrier being bombarded with multiple impacts of fireballs and lightning bolts. Within seconds, the vehicle was a smoking ruin. Turning to once again scan to the front he saw a platoon of enemy troops streaming from the wooded area. At the forefront, a twenty foot (6.1 m) tall green giant cleaved through the few remaining Skelebots.

Second Squad laid down a scattered base of fire from either side of the APC before a magical darkness descended upon the vehicle. Yves dropped through the hatch, locking it behind him and said, "Bobby, just fire in their general direction. Driver, radio Second Squad to mount up, we're getting out of here, now!" Leaping down from his seat, the Sergeant raced to the back of the APC, just in time to see the darkness lift as fifty enemy troops appeared from out of nowhere to overwhelm Second Squad.

Without warning, a misty white, ghost-like figure stepped right through the side of the APC. Materializing, the female figure lashed out with a pair of swords, hacking the Mark V crew to pieces. Yves drew his own Vibro-Sword and leapt at the figure, screaming an incoherent war cry. Before he closed half the distance to the woman, the grizzled CS sergeant dropped to the floor, his body racked by incredible pain. No longer in control of his own body, the sergeant could only writhe like a fish out of water. Moments later, he watched as a man dressed in Explorer body armor stepped through the APC's rear door. The man knelt beside Yves.

"Well, well, well," whispered the man with a smile. "Looks like things didn't quite go your way, Coalition soldier. You and

all of your men have fallen to my Marauders." The man stood, turned and walked to the door. General Mayhem Mayfield threw a final glance over his shoulder, saying, "Finish him, Hectate, then gather the troops. It's long past time we burned that pathetic village to the ground."

Mayhem's Marauders

- A. Sponsorship: None.
- B. Outfits: Specialty Clothing. 20 points.
- C. Equipment: Electronic Supplies, Magic Technologies. 45 points.
- D. Vehicles: Fleet Vehicles. 10 points.
- E. Weapons: Basic Weaponry. 10 points.
- F. Communications: Secured Service. 10 points.
- G. Internal Security: Tight. 10 points.
- H. Permanent Bases: Fortified & Partial Headquarters. 22 points.
- I. Intelligence Resources: Scout Detachment, Psionic & Magic Operatives. 25 points.
- J. Special Budget: Large Loans. 25 points.
- K. General Alignment of Personnel: Evil. 0 points.
- L. Criminal Activity: Robbers, Expert Assassin. 25 points.
- M. Reputation/Credentials: Excellent (within the Magic Zone), Scoundrels (everywhere else). 26 points.
- N. Salary: Excellent. 20 points.

Total Points Spent: 248

Size & Orientation: Large Company.

Mayhem's Marauders is the foremost independent military unit in the *Magic Zone* region. While not as large as the standing armies of the regional powers in the Zone, the company is a force to be reckoned with. The Marauders are a diverse combination of high-tech mercs, practitioners of magic, D-Bees and supernatural beings. Under the command of notorious General Jonathon "Mayhem" Mayfield, these varied soldiers have been integrated into a cohesive fighting force. Mayhem's Marauders are capable of defeating enemy units anywhere up to three times their size. Moreover, the company is able to conduct a broad spectrum of missions, from conventional operations to counter-insurgency as well as simple reconnaissance, sabotage, infiltration, assassination, guerrilla warfare, espionage and security.

The general structure of Mayhem's Marauders is similar to that of a CS light infantry battalion. Mechanization is limited, with only the bare minimum in high-tech war machines. Instead, the troops of Mayhem's Marauders usually maneuver and fight on foot, or wing, or by magic, depending on their own innate abilities. Vehicles are typically used only for transporting troops to deploy at distances of more than 50 miles (80 km). Once in position, the Marauders revert to foot soldiers moving by platoons or in small patrols of 4-10 troops. While war machines are in short supply, Mayhem's Marauders remain a credible threat to even the high-tech mechanized units of the Coalition, thanks to the diverse magic, psionic and natural powers of the individual Marauders. A fact that General Mayfield has proved on many occasions by humiliating the best that the CS has dared to send into the border regions of the Magic Zone.

The Marauders are a powerful military organization. Perhaps not as large or well known as *Larsen's Brigade* or *Demon-Busters, Inc.* on the continent at large, but commanding nonetheless. Their influence is especially felt within the Magic Zone, where the company wields considerable political might as well as military force. General Mayfield is a mainstay in the politics of the region and is often consulted by the regional powers, including Dweomer, the Federation of Magic and Stormspire. In the past two decades, his Marauders have either fought for or against every significant kingdom and organization in the entire region. This has made General Mayfield the "go-to guy" for leaders in the Magic Zone when dealing with unique problems or situations.

Listed among their accomplishments, the Marauders quelled the Demon Uprising of 101 P.A., near Dweomer, crushed the Broken Wand Psi-Stalker tribe, subjugated numerous rebellious Fadetowns, hunted renegade bands of demons and monsters, and exterminated a cell of the Grim Reapers in Magestar, as well as dealt with a multitude of Coalition incursions. In addition, the Marauders often provide additional security for merchant convoys, and shipments to and from the TW industrial city of Stormspire. However, the most highly regarded exploits of the Marauders are its many battles against the army of the *Coalition States*. Whether acting alone (they all despise the CS for their own reasons) or as a surrogate for one of the governments in the Magic Zone, they've fought the CS on dozens of occasions. Essentially, this has become the company's trademark. Whenever a Coalition force patrols too close to the boundaries of the Magic Zone, one kingdom or another will hire the group to deal with the predicament. For the leaders of the Magic Zone, this is a win-win situation. Not only do they get to strike out at the Coalition, but at the same time by employing a surrogate, they cannot be identified as being the one behind the attack. General Mayfield is well aware of this fact, and doesn't care. Fighting the CS is part of his own personal agenda, mainly as payback for when the human supremacists wiped out his family and most of his village, and nearly killed him, but also because his favorite prey is sentient life, including fellow humans.

The name of this outfit says it all: they bring mayhem and destruction to the field of battle. This is no disciplined military unit, but a motley band of brigands, killers, miscreants and fiends. Thanks to the leadership of General Mayfield, they have learned to fight as a team, and to act in a cohesive manner to produce better results, but this should not be mistaken for military professionalism. To a man, Mayhem's Marauders are the dregs of the mercenary trade or outright *monsters*. When the company goes to war, its members actively seek to cause the maximum collateral damage, killing civilian and enemy alike and enjoying the carnage they unleash. As long as they follow his battle plans, however, Mayfield rarely keeps his troops in check, only when their activities could result in a loss or other negative repercussions for the organization. Thus, he keeps them away from civilized areas like Dweomer, Stormspire or the City of Brass, but out in the wilderness, free zones or near CS territory, the General lets loose his dogs of war and lets them bring hell.

Surprisingly, the Marauders have been able to maintain a good reputation among the leaders of the Magic Zone who, ultimately, want results and don't care about how things are done, only that their enemies are crushed. Mayhem's Marauders are

known for producing results and furthermore, most of the rulers in the area are like-minded cads who overlook the company's misdeeds, and enjoy them when leveled against the Coalition Army and other enemies. General Mayfield has been careful to never break a contract and has always kept his word to an employer. Some of the more naive and downtrodden elements of the Magic Zone, mainly the common people living in the Fadetowns along the border, consider the Marauders to be heroes and liberators against Coalition persecution.

Mayhem's Marauders are quartered in the Magic Zone. Fifteen years ago the General conquered a medium-sized Fadetown in the center of the Zone, has taken it for his own, and has built a fortified compound there. This is where its supporting assets and non-combatants are based, where vehicles and armor are repaired, weapons are charged and preparations made for upcoming campaigns. In addition to the Fadetown, the Marauders have established a secondary base of operations in the city-state of *MercTown*. A tavern called the **Broken Skull** serves as the unofficial barracks of the Marauders in MercTown. General Mayfield views the city as a golden opportunity to drum up business outside of the Magic Zone, and to expand the horizons of the carnage his men can inflict. To showcase his company, the General sets up shop at the Broken Skull whenever he's not under contract, and takes about a hundred troops with him to display their talents and drum up business. Being something of brigands themselves, they have no qualms working for the Black Market, Thieves' Guild, or disreputable or evil clients. Business in MercTown has been fairly slow because the Marauders' frightening reputation precedes them, but the General has managed to secure a few contracts and has been talking with Jacius Larkent about a possible big job up north. He kept his nose out of the war at Tolkeen, but has recently taken a few jobs from Tolkeen freedom fighters and retribution groups.

Company Strategy & Tactics

As a trained Headhunter officer, General Mayfield is well versed in all aspects of modern warfare and the effective use of bionics. While knowledgeable about conventional mechanized war, the General finds its tactics too doctrinal, linear and constricting. That's what makes the Coalition so predictable and its small units so easy to defeat. Instead he prefers the flexibility afforded by light infantry tactics and the use of magic and monsters. Mayfield has his own distinct tactical style based on what he calls the "chaos factor." What this system boils down to is the strategic use of surprise as a force overmatch in conjunction with regular tactics. Surprise, he believes, is of the utmost importance, and the element of fear the second most important component. That's why he lets his troops go on rampages, mass murder and campaigns of torture and destruction. He wants his enemy to quake in their boots at the mere mention of their name, because it makes the enemy distracted, less accurate in their gunplay, prone to mistakes and more likely to cut and run the minute the momentum in the battle *seems* to turn in the Marauders' favor.

One of the ways General Mayfield implements his "chaos factor" as a tactic, is to take advantage of the magic and innate abilities of his troops. Illusion, invisibility and teleportation are used to the maximum effect to create havoc, confusion and friendly fire. He disguises his troops as surrounding vegetation or debris, as well as lay in wait masked by invisibility, and

sends in hit and run teams using magical flight and teleportation, enabling his troops to “pop” into the middle of an ongoing battle or behind the enemy front lines in an effort to break the lines, create panic, or create friendly fire (shooting one’s own troops). Likewise, the use of magic illusions can have the same effect. Often these methods are enough to completely shatter a defensive line and demoralize enemy soldiers. Surgical strikes at the enemy leaders can also cripple or rout an army. While these are all standard ploys of magic practitioners and supernatural creatures, the real key to these tactics is timing. And General Mayfield’s timing and tactics are down to a science. The officer is a master innovator in the integration of magic spells and effects in regular combat operations, custom tailoring his tactics to match the weaknesses and strengths of his enemy. For example, when fighting Psi-Stalker bands or similar magic-sensitive beings, he uses this detriment to his advantage, using magic and powerful supernatural Marauders to lure the Psi-Stalkers out in the open or into positions for ambush by conventional troops who cannot be detected by the Psi-Stalkers.

Overall, Mayhem’s Marauders rely on small unit tactics and guerilla warfare: hit and run tactics, ambushes, abductions, sniping, surprise attacks, sabotage, harassing fire, misdirection, tricks, traps, dividing tactics, and psychological warfare are all weapons he uses to their maximum potential. All of which can be used in assault or defense.

As a rule, the General doesn’t like to travel far from the borders of the Magic Zone. Many of this team members are at their most powerful in places of magic where they can tap into ley lines and use the lines to devastating effect. Also because he and his minions know the forests of the Magic Zone like the back of their hands, it makes them deadly guerilla fighters with the home turf advantage, and sometimes the slightest advantage can make the difference between winning and losing.

In spite of the company’s brutal and excessive methods it has gained a solid reputation, especially amongst magic-using communities like the City of Brass, Dweomer, Stormspire, New Lazlo, and the late Tolkeen, but Kingsdale and the Pecos Empire as well, for getting the job done, albeit at a terrible cost. Part of the reason for their success is that the Marauders are one of the few companies willing to pit themselves against the Coalition. The General is fond of laying low the mighty Coalition war machine, handing them embarrassing defeats as often as he can. These actions have made General Mayfield a folk hero in the eyes of those who have watched his handiwork from afar or only heard the positive reports and triumphs.

Company’s Colors and Banners: The Marauders tend to avoid regimentation. The company has no uniforms, colors or any real identifying symbols. Each member of the outfit is free to adopt whatever garb, symbolism, and paint job he or she desires. Some Marauders stick to the old standard of appropriate camouflage patterns to blend in to the countryside. Others go with what is fashionable among City Rats like leathers, chains and basic black. Then again, the majority of the company’s magic practitioners tend to wear garish or brightly colored cloaks, capes or robes decorated with mystical symbols.

Personnel

General Jonathon “Mayhem” Mayfield is the founder and Commander of *Mayhem’s Marauders*. He is a tall man in his

late thirties and claims to hail from Kingsdale, but there are rumors to the contrary. The most disturbing is that Jonathon Mayfield was once an officer (Military Specialist) in the *Coalition Army*! A more likely variation of this rumor is that he actually hails from Kingsdale and became a mercenary hired by the Coalition States for wetwork operations that were orchestrated or sponsored by the CS without its obvious involvement. Something happened between Mayfield and his CS handlers (he was denied citizenship to Chi-Town, cheated out of money, or something) that made him hate them. Another rumor says he married a sorceress and while he was on a CS mission she was captured, tortured and executed by Coalition Soldiers conducting a raid into the Magic Zone. The latter is the most romantic story, but all the rumors try to find a reason for Mayfield’s hatred for the CS and his lust to create “mayhem.” The truth may be simpler, he’s a psychotic, evil genius who likes to hurt, kill and destroy and he is controlled by violent emotions. End of story. Note that the rank of “General” is a self-appointed one.

10th level Headhunter. Attributes: I.Q. 20, M.E. 15, M.A. 21, P.S. 21 (bionic), P.P. 14, P.E. 12, P.B. 10, Spd. 12; Diabolic. Special weapons: NG-IP7 Ion Rifle, NE-2L plasma pistol, and *Emboreal* a charcoal black, greater rune sword (I.Q. of 11, Diabolic alignment, inflicts 5D6 M.D. per strike, has all the standard features of a rune weapon plus healing abilities and the Fire Elemental magic spells of Darkness, Fire Whip, Wall of Ice and Blinding Flash) and it is a soul drinker (see **Rifts® Atlantis** or the **Rifts® Book of Magic** for full details about Rune Weapons).

Captain Hectate, The Blade Witch (Battle Magus from the City of Brass, 7th level; Diabolic). One of the General’s top leaders. *Bonuses:* +3 on initiative, +8 to strike, +10 to parry and dodge, +7 to roll with impact, +9 to pull punch, +3 to S.D.C. damage, +2 to disarm, +1 to all aimed and *called* shots (modern weapons), +2 to save vs magic, +4 to save vs poison, +2 to save vs disease, +1 to save vs mind control, +4 to save vs possession, +5 to save vs Horror Factor, +26% to save vs coma/death, kick does 1D8 S.D.C., body block/tackle does 1D4 S.D.C., crush/squeeze 1D4 S.D.C., critical strike on 18-20, knockout/stun on a Natural 20, pin incapacitate on a Natural 18-20, Paired Weapons, jump kick, and entangle.

Big Green (real name Hergank Rexalus, 6th level, 300 M.D.C., 22 feet/6.7 m tall, Supernatural P.S. of 37; Miscreant) is a Potgalian, one of the infamous D-Bee Dragon Slayers. Born to a tribe of dragon hunters in the Magic Zone, where he was raised in the traditional style of his people. Time honored skills that include the ability to live off the land, track animals, and most importantly of all, how to fight and how to hunt and slay dragons. (See **Rifts® World Book One: Vampire Kingdoms** for complete details on this R.C.C.)

Night Fly is a diminutive, insect-like Faerie Folk known as a Bogie (33 M.D.C.; Diabolic). It is a minuscule (8 inches/203 mm) creature that has become especially wicked and cruel under General Mayfield. It loves to inflict pain and suffering, delights in torturing and interrogating prisoners, and enjoys hurting and killing on every level. It has befriended (and really only obeys) General Mayfield, who is a kindred spirit. Night Fly has become the General’s protector as well as acting as the company’s interrogator/torturer and assassin.

Bonuses: +5 on initiative, +6 to strike, +5 to parry, +7 to automatic dodge (+8 when flying), +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact or fall, +10 to save vs Horror Factor, +4 to save vs magic and poison, +2 to all other saving throws.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 90 feet (27.4 m; can see in total darkness), see the invisible, keen normal vision, sense the location of water 40%, sense the location of ley lines 55%, and metamorphosis into a large, tarantula size spider, scorpion or centipede.

Magic Knowledge: Wind Rush, Fear, Wisps of Confusion, Purple Mist, Befuddle, Repel Animals, Ventriloquism, Globe of Daylight, Animate Objects and the Faerie's Dance. These spell abilities have all of the limitations of Faerie Magic found in **Rifts® Conversion Book One**. P.P.E.: 400.

Conventional Troops:

- 40 Grunts, CS equivalents, levels 2-6.
- 12 Headhunters, levels 2-8
- 12 Wilderness Scouts, levels 4-8.
- 10 Special Forces Soldiers, CS equivalents, levels 1-6.
- 20 Bandits, levels 1-6.
- 8 Snipers, Military Specialists with Sniping, and W.P. Rifle and W.P. Energy Rifle skills, levels 1-6.

Magic Troops:

- 14 Ley Line Walkers (well rounded), levels 1-10.
- 6 Ley Line Walkers specializing in Ley Line and transportation magic; levels 2-8.
- 6 Ley Line Walkers, levels 2-8 specializing in "illusion" magic; levels 1-6.
- 6 Mystics, levels 2-8.
- 11 Shifters, levels 3-6.
- 8 Necromancers, levels 1-6 (animate dead, skeletons, etc.).
- 10 Conjurers, level 2-8.
- 6 Battle Magi, levels 2-5.
- 3 Battle Magus & Controllers, levels 2-6.
- 2 Mystic Knights, levels 3 and 5.
- 3 Fire and Water Elemental Fusionists/Warlocks, levels 1, 3, and 5.
- 4 Earth and Air Elemental Fusionists/Warlocks, levels 1-6.

Psychic & Inhuman Troops:

- 2 Mind Melters, levels 4 and 7
- 2 Psi-Slayers, levels 3 and 6 (see **Rifts® World Book 12: Psyscape**).
- 1 Zapper, level 3 (see **Rifts® World Book 12: Psyscape**).
- 20 Brodkil (tech and bionics wielding sub-demons; see **Rifts® World Book 5: Triax & NGR, Rifts® Conversion Book One**, or **Coalition Wars® Chapter One: Sedition**), levels 1-6.
- 12 Darkhounds (see **Rifts® World Book 12: Psyscape**).
- 5 Dark Behemoths (see **Rifts® World Book 12: Psyscape**).
- 2 Demon-Dragonmages (see **Rifts® World Book 12: Psyscape**), levels 2 and 4.
- 15 Psi-Goblins (see **Rifts® World Book 12: Psyscape**), level 1-4.

10 Gargoyles and 10 wingless Gurgoyles (see **Rifts® World Book 5: Triax & NGR, Rifts® Dark Conversions**, or **Coalition Wars® Chapter One: Sedition**).

5 Witchlings (see **Coalition Wars® Chapter One: Sedition**).

10-18 various *demons* summoned and commanded by the Shifters (mostly lesser demons, but a few greater ones as well).

Standard Issue Weapons

Like everything else about Mayhem's Marauders, there is nothing standardized and each character uses whatever he desires. Three quarters of the magic users have 1D4 TW weapons or devices, as do half the psychics. The rest use conventional weapons and armor, predominantly Northern Gun, Wilk's and Golden Age Weaponsmiths.

Transport Vehicles

Again, whatever the members may have personally, plus the following: 8 TW Zone Ranger ATVs, 12 Big Boss ATVs, 12 lightly armored trucks, jeeps and buses (main body has 30-80 M.D.C., wheels 5 M.D.C.), and one GH-47 Chinook.

In addition, numerous individuals within the company have their own method of transportation whether that be by dimensional teleportation, natural flight, ley line phasing, TW Wing Boards or riding animals.

The Tennessee Headhunters

The people of the village held their collective breath as they waited to see if the mercs they had hired survived that raiders' last barrage. Their hired guns had been hunting down and picking off the raiders one and two at a time before the villains figured out what was going on and who was responsible, and decided to launch an offensive of their own against the village. The mercs had won three previous battles, and everyone thought the raiders would run with their tails between their legs, but they didn't. They wanted blood. This fourth battle was a no-holds-barred shootout. Everything happened so fast, the terrified villagers could hardly follow the action, then bam! Everything seemed to go up in smoke. Now they waited to see who won, their mercenary defenders or the bad guys.

As the smoke began to clear they saw the banner of the Tennessee Headhunters waving – the mercs had won.

"Man, that Tennessee Jack really lives up to his reputation," said one old man.

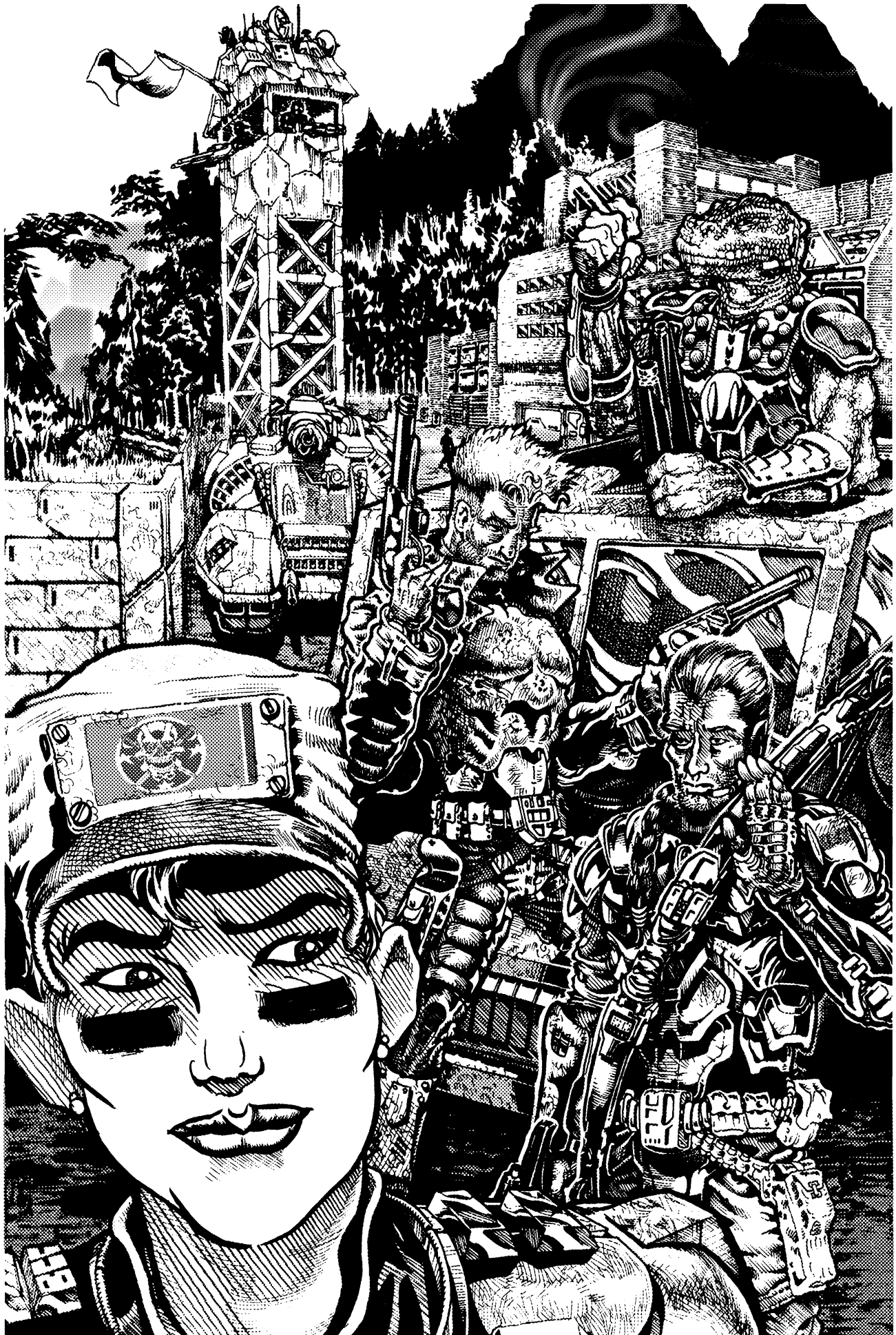
"Where have you been? That ain't Tennessee Jack leading the Headhunters, that's his girl."

"Huh, a woman done all that?"

"Yep."

"What's she called, Lady Jack?"

"As far as I'm concerned, its Commander Crabtree, or whatever it is she asks to be called. Don't be causin' any trouble insultin' that lady. She's a dang hero."



The Tennessee Headhunters

- A. Sponsorship: Government (MercTown; unofficial).
- B. Outfits: Gimmick Clothing. 30 points.
- C. Equipment: Electronic Supplies, Good Gear, Medical Equipment. 15 points.
- D. Vehicles: Fleet Vehicles. 10 points.
- E. Weapons: Advanced Weaponry. 20 points.
- F. Communications: Full Range System. 15 points.
- G. Internal Security: Iron-Clad. 20 points.
- H. Permanent Bases: Fortified Headquarters. 20 points.
- I. Intelligence Resources: Scout Detachment, Special Military Operatives. 15 points.
- J. Special Budget: Large Loans. 25 points.
- K. General Alignment: Anarchist & Unprincipled. 4 points.
- L. Criminal Activity: Special Forces. 20 points.
- M. Reputation/Credentials: Excellent. 25 points.
- N. Salary: Excellent Salary. 20 points.
- Total Points Spent: 239
- Size & Orientation: Free Company.

To most of America, the Tennessee Headhunters is the poor monarch's *Larsen's Brigade*. It is a straightforward, no frills organization whose members are generally a little rough around the edges. Throwbacks to the old days, they are soldiers – tenacious, no nonsense Grunts, Headhunters and hard cases – who never say die, fight to win the war, bash in the enemy's teeth and push the war right down their throat. In mercenary circles, they are well known, highly respected and even a little feared.

Though the Tennessee Headhunters tend to live in the shadows of headline stealing, famous merc units like Larsen's Brigade, Crow's Commandoes, and Mayhem's Marauders, it is one of the oldest merc companies in the world. For nearly fifty years now, this company has been active and it is an established, proven outfit with a stellar reputation for getting the job done. It was one of the very first independent mercenary armies in the Midwest and has served as the model for those which followed, including Larsen's Brigade, Braddock's Bad Boys and other infamous groups. Heck, Tennessee Jack Crabtree, the Headhunters' original commander, was fighting battles while Marcus Larsen was still in diapers.

The story of the Tennessee Headhunters begins way back in the late fifties P.A. At the time, Jack Crabtree was an up-and-comer, a young but seasoned soldier of fortune with five years of campaigning under his belt. Eager to command a unit of his own, Jack returned to his home state of Tennessee and hired a dozen firebrands who, like himself, were tough as nails backwoods tough guys with a knack for fighting and winning. Only twenty years old, Jack was smart, energetic, highly motivated, a brilliant tactician and a gifted leader. He named his team the Tennessee Headhunters since the group ranged all across the southern lands, and went on to fight in countless hard-bitten campaigns, always growing in numbers and building a solid reputation.

By 95 P.A. "Tennessee Jack" was ready to retire and that's when fate plopped the Paducah affair in his lap, making his dream of retirement possible. Not wanting to disband the unit, he instead turned control over to his daughter Jessica, allowing

the legacy of the Tennessee Headhunters to endure. Under Jessica the company continues to build on its credentials, taking contracts and winning them the old fashioned way, through superior use of tactics, cunning, guts and the high caliber of its soldiers. The younger generation under Jessica Crabtree is more than equal to the challenge of bearing the torch passed on to them. Granted, the "new" Tennessee Headhunters have several key advantages over their competitors. One is that they have a very secure base of operations at MercTown, two being a hard won reputation, three, a fully equipped army and veterans to help the new recruits, and lastly, a great legacy to continue.

Strategy & Tactics

It is in the area of tactics that the Tennessee Headhunters excel, relying on old-fashioned methods like tried-and-true combat doctrine to win on the battlefield. That, in combination with the tenacious, indomitable fighting spirit of its members, is usually enough to win the day. "Fight smart" is what her daddy always said, and Jessica and her team do just that. The Tennessee Headhunters are not dazzling or showy, they are gritty, hard-nosed veterans who get "stuck in" at bayonet-close range and hold on tight to the bitter end like a rabid Pit Bull.

Generally speaking, the Tennessee Headhunters employ the same basic tactics as the Coalition States. A doctrine modeled largely after that of the old American Empire, with modifications based on what works. The company is organized as a reinforced combat team, a combined-arms formation based on an expanded *infantry* company. One that is supported by an armor troop, mortar battery and combat engineers. As well as some extras made necessary by the realities of Rifts Earth, like a magic squad, psychic operatives and a power armor platoon. The company is proficient at all phases of war, including both the offense and defense. Moreover, it has incorporated riverine/nautical operations into its portfolio (mainly to allow them to compete for escort duty on the Tennessee river system). The company is capable of fighting any conflict, from low intensity guerrilla ops or counter-insurgency to full scale mechanized operations. It is designed to be modular, and its equipment can be tailored to the needs of the customer. For missions against D-Bee marauders in the deep woods, the tanks and other heavy machines can be left behind in MercTown in favor of fast, light vehicles; for a mission against a better equipped enemy or one entrenched in a fortified position, the Tennessee Headhunters bring all their troops and will sub-contract other companies like Air Superiority or "no-name" start-up merc companies, adventurers, and grunts as ground muscle outfits, support and special ops.

Its commanders are all experienced and capable, able to adapt to changing conditions on the field and using the terrain to full advantage. Another advantage of the company is that it has never strayed from its backwoods roots. Every single member is trained to fight as a basic rifleman as well as to handle themselves in the wilderness.

Commander Jessica Crabtree was groomed to assume command of the operation, loves combat, and is well prepared for the task. Like her father, she is a capable leader and strategist. One of her first lessons was to never be a slave to convention – think outside the box, adapt to the situation, and use your resources. Thus, Jessica will use whatever tactics are best suited to a situation, whether that means digging in for a long siege or

conducting hit-and-run raids, patrols and ambushes. Often she will amalgamate both standard mechanized tactics with unconventional ones, a mix that enemy commanders find unpredictable and hard to counter. For this reason her command style has oft been described as a blending of Marcus Larsen and Damian Crow with the wisdom of Tennessee Jack.

Company's Colors and Banners. The symbol of the Tennessee Headhunters is recognized throughout the American South and Midwest: The backdrop is the old Tennessee state flag, over which is an insignia of a robotic/bionic skull with one burning red eye above crossed bayonets. For members of the unit this insignia is a badge of pride, worn at all times on the left arm of fatigues, body armor and robot exoskeletons. It is stenciled on the forward left side of the unit's vehicles, or as a tiny, rectangular flag attached to radio antennas.

Aside from the unit badge, there are no uniform colors or dress for the group. The company has no regulations for haircuts or grooming, and uniforms and body armor are likewise left to personal taste. However, at least half opt for standard issue body armor and classic military fatigues. Soldiers are allowed to paint their armor whatever pattern they wish, however the vast majority tend to favor colors that blend in with natural vegetation or terrain, like black, tan, green, and brown, or in a camouflage pattern (with standard woodland or desert being the most predominant).

Jessica "Little Boots" Crabtree

The oldest daughter of famed mercenary commander, Tennessee Jack Crabtree, Jessica is living proof that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Apart from inheriting command of the Tennessee Headhunters, she also has her father's iron will, her mother's looks and a strength of character drawn from both parents. In spite of her father's wishes to the contrary, Jessica is a soldier. Much to his relief, she is a natural warrior capable of scrapping it out in a tavern brawl with any soldier, as well as being versed in the finer arts of warfare. Tennessee Jack has been known to fondly describe "Little Boots" as the *son* he never had.

Being a young, attractive woman has offered its share of trials and tribulations in a male dominated career, but she has won over the hearts, minds and loyalty of all under her command. Jessica was raised in a string of combat zones and hell holes worse than the Chi-Town 'Burbs, so the discomfort and horrors of war are an accepted part of life.

There were really only two logical options for young Jessica's life to take. To escape from the madness and violence of mercenary life, or to become part of it. A tomboy, she knocked around with the boys, played war, hung out with "the guys" (she was practically the troop mascot) and continually pestered her father to teach her how to shoot, hunt, camp and fight. She read his military books and personal journals, loved chess and enjoyed strategy games. By the age of 17 she was the female mirror image of her father. Jessica demanded to be allowed to join the Tennessee Headhunters and naturally, Tennessee Jack refused. Like any good father, he didn't want to see his beloved daughter put in harm's way. Stubborn like her old man, Little Boots (a nickname from her childhood that still haunts her) stole a suit of environmental armor and a laser rifle and joined the troops in armed combat, where she distinguished herself by leading a charge after the last officer of her platoon took

a hit. She could see the enemy line was about to collapse and took the initiative. When her father came to commend the soldier he discovered it was his Little Boots. The men cheered, and there was no turning back. Truth be told, Jessica was pretty much leading the Tennessee Headhunters for the last three years before Jack stepped down, so there was virtually no transition and she had already won the men over, and there was no challenge to her taking command. She had earned her place in the company, first as a lowly grunt and later as a squad commander, platoon sergeant, platoon leader and finally commander. New recruits who question her ability to lead based on her gender are quietly but roughly put in their place by the other soldiers, but they are usually won over in short order as soon as they see Commander Jessica in action.

Full Name: Jessica Leticia Crabtree.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 19, M.A. 21, P.S. 17, P.P. 10, P.E. 14, P.B. 15, Spd. 17.

Hit Points: 35. **S.D.C.:** 40.

Size: 5 feet, 10 inches (1.8 m) tall and weighs 150 lbs (68 kg).

Age: 25

P.P.E.: 10

Description: Jessica Crabtree does not match most people's image of a mercenary commander. She is no scarred, hard-faced, old warhorse riddled with cybernetic replacement parts. Instead she looks more like the girl next door, an Auburn-haired, green-eyed cutie with a trim, athletic build. Appearances, however, can be deceiving.

Disposition: Jessica is the female version of her father, a combat hardened veteran who takes no guff and cares about the soldiers under her command. She is a soldier to the very core and enjoys combat. If anything, she is more spirited and aggressive than Tennessee Jack. She is smart, resourceful, inventive, and capable in the extreme. She is well versed in military tactics, having been taught the trade of soldiering and the tricks that go with it by two of the best in the business, her father, Tennessee Jack, and her Uncle Sam.

Generally, her style of command is more personable and friendly than was her father's. The Tennessee Headhunters are literally her family, and Jessica treats them accordingly. She remembers more than just the names of those under her command, she makes it her business to at least try to know every individual Headhunter under her command. Jessica is always the first to offer a kind word or joke, a pat on the back or to inquire about their family, fears, dreams and goals. "Little Boots" is no invisible general either, she truly enjoys spending time with her troops and is not above sharing a few rounds with them at the tavern after a mission is accomplished. And during a mission, she is right there, in the middle of the fighting.

Experience Level: 6th level Headhunter (Techno-Warrior).

Magic Knowledge: None.

Psionic Powers: None.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +3 to roll with impact, +2 to S.D.C. damage, +6 to pull

punch, +1 to disarm with a “called” shot, kick inflicts 1D8 S.D.C., jump kick, entangle, critical strike on a Natural 18-20, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to save vs psionics & insanity, +10% to save vs coma/death.

Skills of Note: Speaks American and Spanish at 85%, Basic Math 65%, Camouflage 45%, Computer Operation 75%, Detect Ambush 65%, Detect Concealment 65%, Detect Traps & Mines 60%, Find Contraband 68%, Fishing 65%, History (Military) 60%, Intelligence 57%, Land Navigation 66%, Military Fortification 60%, Military Etiquette 50%, Pilot Hovercycle 95%, Pilot Robots & Power Armor 81%, Robot Combat Basic, Read Sensory Equipment 65%, Radio: Basic 85%, Radio: Laser 55%, Radio Scramblers 70%, Tracking 60%, Recognize Weapon Quality 65%, Climbing 65/55%, Swimming 50%, Weapon Systems 75%, and Wilderness Survival 65%.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Knife, W.P. Automatic Pistol, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, W.P. Heavy Energy Weapons, W.P. Paired Weapons (Firearms).

Weapons of Note: She has access to anything the merc group has available to it, and can afford to buy pretty much anything she (or they) need. That having been said, she typically carries the following: NG-E12 Heavy Plasma Ejector, two CP-30 Laser Pulse Pistols, .45 automatic pistol (inflicts 4D6 S.D.C., 12 shot payload, range of 164 ft/50 m), Vibro-Knife, survival knife, 4 silver-plated throwing daggers, 6 fragmentation grenades.

Armor: Bushman environmental armor (60 M.D.C.) with built in Vibro-Blades (inflict 3D6 M.D.) on the right forearm and a grenade launcher (range of 600 feet/183 m) on the left.

Bionics & Cybernetics: Gyro-compass, clock calendar, universal headjack & ear implant, and amplified hearing. Jessica prefers to keep her natural body intact and will only consider bionics as a medical prosthetic if she should happen to lose a limb in combat.

Other Tennessee Headhunter Personnel:

Other important characters include: Paige “The Iron Maiden” McCaffery (5th level Techno-Hound), Gilroy the Great (7th level Ley Line Walker), Grit Darost (6th level Wild Psi-Stalker), Graetul Ermaz (8th level Dwarf Headhunter), Brickhouse (6th level Micean Sapper/EOD Specialist), Memphis Walker Jr. (4th level Glitter Boy), William “Wild Bill” Simms (9th level RPA Fly Boy Ace), Leland Turner (5th level Operator).

The group also has the following combat troops:

30-60 Grunts, CS equivalents, levels 1-4.

60-80 Headhunters, levels 1-6.

20-30 Headhunter Techno-Hounds, levels 2-4.

15-25 Headhunter Anti-Robot Specialists, levels 1-5.

4-6 Headhunter Assassins, levels 3-5.

10-20 Full Conversion Cyborgs, levels 2-8.

30-40 Wilderness Scouts, levels 1-6.

12-18 Psi-Stalkers (mostly Devil Riders), levels 3-6.

10-15 Feral and “Free Born” CS Mutant Animals, levels 2-4.

10-15 Special Forces Soldiers, levels 2-6.

20-25 Operators, levels 2-6.

6-10 Juicers & Crazies, levels 2-6.

8-10 Marine Commandos, levels 2-5.

10-15 Power Armor Pilots, CS Equivalents to RPA Elite Pilots, levels 3-6.

4-6 Glitter Boys, levels 2-6.

2-4 Snipers, levels 4-6.

10 Combat Medics, levels 2-8.

6 Grunts with Major Psionics and powers of healing, levels 1-6.

6 Ley Line Walkers, levels 2-6.

2 Mystics, levels 3 & 4.

3 Battle Magi, levels 3-5.

2 Techno-Wizards, levels 3 and 7.

Approximately 300-350 total combat effectives organized into a combat team that is half the size of a regular battalion. The unit is based on a reinforced infantry company, one that consists of five platoons and includes three rifle platoons (can fight as light or mechanized depending on the contract), a Power Armor platoon (led by Memphis Walker Jr.), and a heavy weapons & headquarters platoon. Attached to this company is an armor troop of 10 MBTs led by Paige McCaffery, a recon platoon with 2 GAT-3A2 Bradleys and 6 NG hovercycles (Grit Darost is the second in command), a mortar battery of eight 81mm tubes led by Graetul Ermaz, two squads of combat engineers led by the alien Brickhouse, Gilroy the Great and his magic specialist squad, and an aviation platoon captained by William “Wild Bill” Simms.

Non-Combatants: There are another 150 to 200 non-combatants, including family members (in keeping with the longstanding tradition of the Tennessee Headhunters, one that is responsible for turning out the modern generation of leadership; although these days a larger portion remain behind at the headquarters in MercTown than in the past), kitchen staff, mechanics, medics, clerks, drivers, logistics personnel, maintenance, communication specialists, etc. Most of the adults belong to non-men-at-arms O.C.C.s, levels 1-5; roughly 50% have some military training, albeit limited, enough to assist in the defense of the camp (Hand to Hand: Basic, and 1D4 W.P.s). The children are more or less evenly divided between non-combatants and mercs-in-training (a 40/60 split), all are 1st-2nd level, and most have combat training (80% of the total have training equal to non-combatant adults).

Standard Issue Weapons: Every combat soldier has an energy rifle (light, medium or heavy) and eight E-Clips, a sidearm (typically an energy pistol and four E-Clips), 1D4+4 hand grenades, a Vibro-Bayonet (1D8+1 M.D.), Vibro-Knife, a survival knife, plus basic field gear. The following, however, are among the troop’s favorites: WI-R12 caseless or Wilk’s 447 laser rifle, MP-10 caseless pistol with Depleted Uranium rounds or ramjet ammo and heavy ion pistols are also popular. One in five line troops is issued a heavy weapon, usually an NG-303 mini-rail gun, NG-E12 plasma ejector, WI-GL4 revolving grenade launcher or WI-GL8 grenade launcher (which is normally attached to the soldier’s assault rifle).

The weapons platoon holds most of the company’s heavy, crew-served weaponry which includes four NG-202 rail guns, two improved TOW III missile launchers, two WI-GL20 auto grenade launchers, four WI-23 missile launchers, three GA Commando 60mm mortars, two WI-FT1 plasma flamethrowers, and four Wilk’s 587 Sniper laser rifles.

Body Armor: Gladiator, CA-1 Dead Boy armor, Bushman Armor and Triax Explorer armor are favorites.

Basic Equipment includes a rucksack, sleeping bag, web gear or tactical vest, short-range radio, first-aid kit, 1D4 doses of Universal Anti-Toxin, canteen, air filter & gas mask, compass, 1D6 signal flares, survival knife, rations and other basic equipment.

Note: The exact type and numbers of vehicles constantly changes, but the following is pretty common for this company.

Transport Vehicles

15-20 S.D.C. Trucks, Tractor-Trailers, Buses & Motor Homes. These are used to transport non-combatants and supplies.

8-10 S.D.C. Jeeps and Light Utility Trucks.

4-6 GA-H998 Hummer Combat Utility Vehicles.

6-8 Mountaineer A.T.V.s armed with NG-202 rail guns or Wilk's 1000 pulse laser cannons.

10-12 Big Boss A.T.V.s (Main Body: 80 M.D.C.; tires: 8 M.D.C.) armed with WI-MG15 "Viper" 15mm light auto-cannons.

Combat Vehicles

2 Iron Hammer MBTs

4 Iron Fist MBTs

4 retrofitted M48A3 MBTs

3 GAT-3A2 Bradley Tanks

16 NG-230 Prowler Hoverbikes (with added mini-missile pods)

2 GAW FAV SpecOps Dune Buggys

10 M113 APCs

10 Big Boss ATVs

9 Glitter Boys

8 Bandito Arms SAMAS

6 Flying Titan

10 NG-X9 Samson

6 NG EX-10 Gladius exoskeletons

4 NG NX-12 Beach Stormer

6 Chipwell Assault Suits

One GH-58D Kiowa Warrior

2 GH-1W Super Cobras

3 GH-47 Chinooks

4 Sky King aircraft

2 WI Assault Hover Bikes

6-8 Black Eel Torpedo Boats

Combat Medical Services

"Sorry about the leg, soldier."

"Yeah, it sucks losing it, but you saved my life, Doc. Thanks."

"I'm glad I could do it."

"God, I swear I can feel it tingling down there."

"That's just . . ."

"Yeah, I know Doc, you explained it clear, I'm just saying is all. Anyway, the bionic one will make me as good as new. Well, almost. I'm just glad I have enough credits put aside for something like this."

"As soon as you're ready, you tell us and the cybernetics surgical team will take care of everything."

A MercTown-based group, **Combat Medical Services, Co.** is a *contract medical provider*. The company is an industry leader, offering customers a full range of medical services, equivalent to a Coalition military field hospital. CMS provides the entire spectrum of medical services from basic first aid to surgery, which includes emergency cybernetic replacement. The company is equipped with modern, state-of-the-art equipment and can provide sterile conditions even in a combat environment. Its staff are all fully qualified medical professionals led by *Doctor Eric Patterson*, one of the foremost combat surgeons in this part of the country. Simply put, Combat Medical Services, Co. is the premier military hospital unit in North America, providing first-rate, affordable medical coverage. Accept no alternatives.

Combat Medical Services, Co. is not a mercenary company in the conventional sense, it is a sub-contractor that offers clients, such as mercenary companies, medical services equal to those listed in #5 Medical Clinic under the heading "C. Equipment" of the rules for *Designing Mercenary Companies* (see **Rifts® Mercenaries** for details). For many outfits that are either too small or too underfunded to afford their own medical staff, CMS is a godsend.

Doctor Eric Patterson is the owner and founder of Combat Medical Services, Co. A former combat surgeon with the Ishpeming Defense Force, Doc Patterson retired to go into private business. Life as a general practitioner was not what the good doctor expected, however. He discovered he missed the adrenaline rush of combat and the feeling he got when he saved lives under combat conditions. It wasn't long before he left Ishpeming and found work with various mercenary companies.

Several years later, Doc Patterson found himself in MercTown operating a small clinic. A large number of the patients at the clinic were mercenaries and casualties evacuated from wars in the region. The doctor was dismayed by the fact that many of these troops died from their wounds, a result of inadequate treatment on the battlefield. With most mercenary outfits unable to afford sufficient medical units of their own, it dawned upon Doctor Peterson to go into business for himself, offering his services on a contract basis, thus becoming a mercenary doctor for hire.

Combat Medical Services, Co. (CMS) is Doctor Peterson's brainchild, a mobile field hospital unit capable of following mercenaries into a war zone to provide lifesaving treatment. Six converted APCs are used to transport the unit and its equipment to a secure location behind friendly lines. Once in position, the field hospital is established, with four of the APCs and a series of connecting tents serving as mobile operating rooms, critical care facilities, and bed spaces. The stripped-down crew compartments of the APCs hold all the necessary equipment and double as operating rooms. These vehicles also supply power to the medical equipment inside them and within hospital tents, running off their internal nuclear power plants.

While these facilities may be crude compared to a civilian hospital, the mobile field hospital is nonetheless equipped with all the modern tools required to save lives. Its standard gear includes six life support units, E.K.G. and E.E.G. machines, compact x-ray unit, portable lab, numerous bio-scanners, oxygen, robot medical supplies (RMK, IRMSS, Compu-drug dispenser, etc.), computer diagnostic machine, cardiogram, defibrillators, all the equipment for six complete operating rooms, dozens of IVs, hundreds of bandages and dressings, and a fully stocked pharmacy to allow them to treat most injuries, ailments and conditions. Additionally, CMS normally brings an extensive supply of emergency prosthetics and cybernetic replacements.

The remaining two of the company's six APCs are employed as field ambulances. When casualties are sustained, the ambulances drive to the front lines, load the wounded aboard then transport them back to the hospital itself. Each is crewed by a driver, a co-driver who mans the weapons turret and radio, and two trained paramedics who stabilize patients during the trip.

In addition to the ambulances and mobile hospital, CMS has another ten experienced combat medics and 20 nurses on the payroll. These medics and nurses are stationed with the front-line troops, normally one per platoon. Trained to function as soldiers as well as healers, they can accompany actual fighting troops without getting in the way. Like any other "line doggie," these medics are armed for self-defense, and if push comes to shove, they can hold their own in a firefight. Nevertheless, their primary role is to provide immediate medical service to the wounded, stabilizing them long enough for evacuation to the field hospital in the rear.

While the hospital is in operation it is completely self-sufficient. The medical staff handles all related duties, even the more mundane tasks like acting as stretcher bearers (20-40 orderlies). CMS also provides its own immediate protection. All of the APC drivers and gunners are in fact regular mercenaries (usually Grunts, Headhunters, and Bounty Hunters), combat troops up to the task of defending the hospital from attack. As such, these soldiers act as sentries and mount roving patrols for as long as the field hospital is operational. When it is time to pack up and move on, they resume their roles as crewmen of the APCs.

This level of medical service does not come without cost. To get the best requires a significant investment. Thus, CMS charges fees that are consistent with their level of expertise. Yet the final cost is far less than that of having to maintain a similar unit as an integral part of a mercenary company. To hire the entire organization costs a basic fee of 750,000 credits per month plus expenses (includes medical supplies, medicine, water, rations, ammunition, fuel for vehicles, cybernetic parts, etc.), and the equivalent of excellent pay for all members. This basic fee can be scaled down by eliminating elements of the service. For example, a customer may choose to omit the front-line medics to reduce the monthly cost by 150,000 credits (plus wages), similarly, by eliminating the field ambulances the client saves another 150,000 credits per month. Alternately, although rarely, the client can choose not to hire the field hospital element, but just the combat medics (which still costs 150,000 credits monthly plus equipment and basic medical supply costs).

Notable Personnel

Doc Patterson (Age 39, Scrupulous, 10th level Body Fixer). Originally from the state of Ishpeming, his incredible aptitude for medicine, surgery and healing prompted him to become a combat surgeon. Now as the CEO of CMS, the Doc has complete control over his destiny. Clients are charged a flat fee which is enough to cover the cost of all the necessary equipment for the hospital. Never again will he be told to simply let a sentient being die because to treat his wounds would be too costly. Those who are unwilling to pay the fee are simply turned down; Patterson reserves the right to refuse his services to anyone, even the larger companies like Larsen's Brigade. Still, work is plentiful, many outfits have no comparable medical units of their own and even the larger companies that do will hire CMS for the big contracts for added insurance. Plus the Doc always has his clinic to fall back on when contracts are scarce.

Psionic Powers: Considered a Major Psychic with the psionic healing powers of Deaden Pain, Healing Touch, Increased Healing, Induce Sleep, Psychic Diagnosis, Psychic Purification, Psychic Surgery, and Resist Fatigue. I.S.P.: 76.

Other important characters include: Dr. Trevor Currie (7th level Cyber-Doc), Mira Guteman (8th level Rogue Scientist; works as the pharmacist), and Sgt. Jake Mondell (6th level Special Forces Soldier; commander of the security element). The group also has the following personnel.

10 Body Fixers/Surgical Specialists; levels 5-8.

6 Cyber-Docs; levels 3-8.

20 Body Fixers/Combat Medics; levels 3-5.

4 Psychic Healers; levels 1-6.

20-40 orderlies; general assistants (Vagabond/Civilian by O.C.C., but with First Aid skill); levels 1-4.

24 Field Nurses (Vagabond/Civilian by O.C.C. but with the *Paramedic* skill); levels 2-6.

32 Grunts and other military personnel as drivers, gunners and protectors; levels 3-6.

Equipment: Primarily medical gear. Body Armor: Huntsman or Urban Warrior for medical personnel worn only if hostilities are expected; security personnel and front-line combat medics are issued Crusader or Explorer armor and may carry an energy pistol as a sidearm for protection.

All medical personnel have a Field Medic Kit, Robot Medical Kit (RMK/IRMSS), eight doses of blood expander agent, 1D4+2 Universal Anti-Toxins, hypo-spray injector, and 24 extra field dressings.

Combat/Transport Vehicles: As a field hospital CMS mobility is vital. The company is only successful if it can keep up to the front line combat units. Thus CMS maintains a small fleet of converted APCs that are used not just to transport personnel but double as medical facilities when the field hospital is in operation.

2 Converted Iron Maiden ambulance APCs (full weaponry kept, but modified to hold six litters for transport of wounded).

4 Converted CS Mark V APCs (retains the rail gun turret, mini-missile launchers, and auto-cannons; the crew compartments are stripped down to provide storage for medical equipment or to serve as operating rooms).

Note: An additional set of vehicles are held in reserve and swapped out with damaged vehicles as necessary.

Explore the Palladium Megaverse®

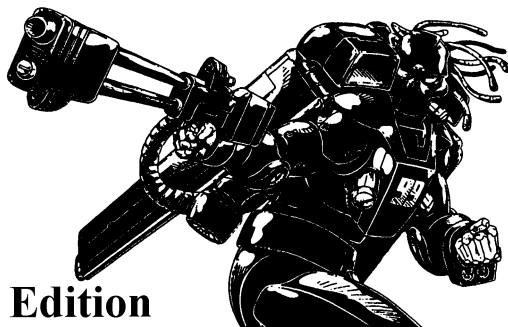
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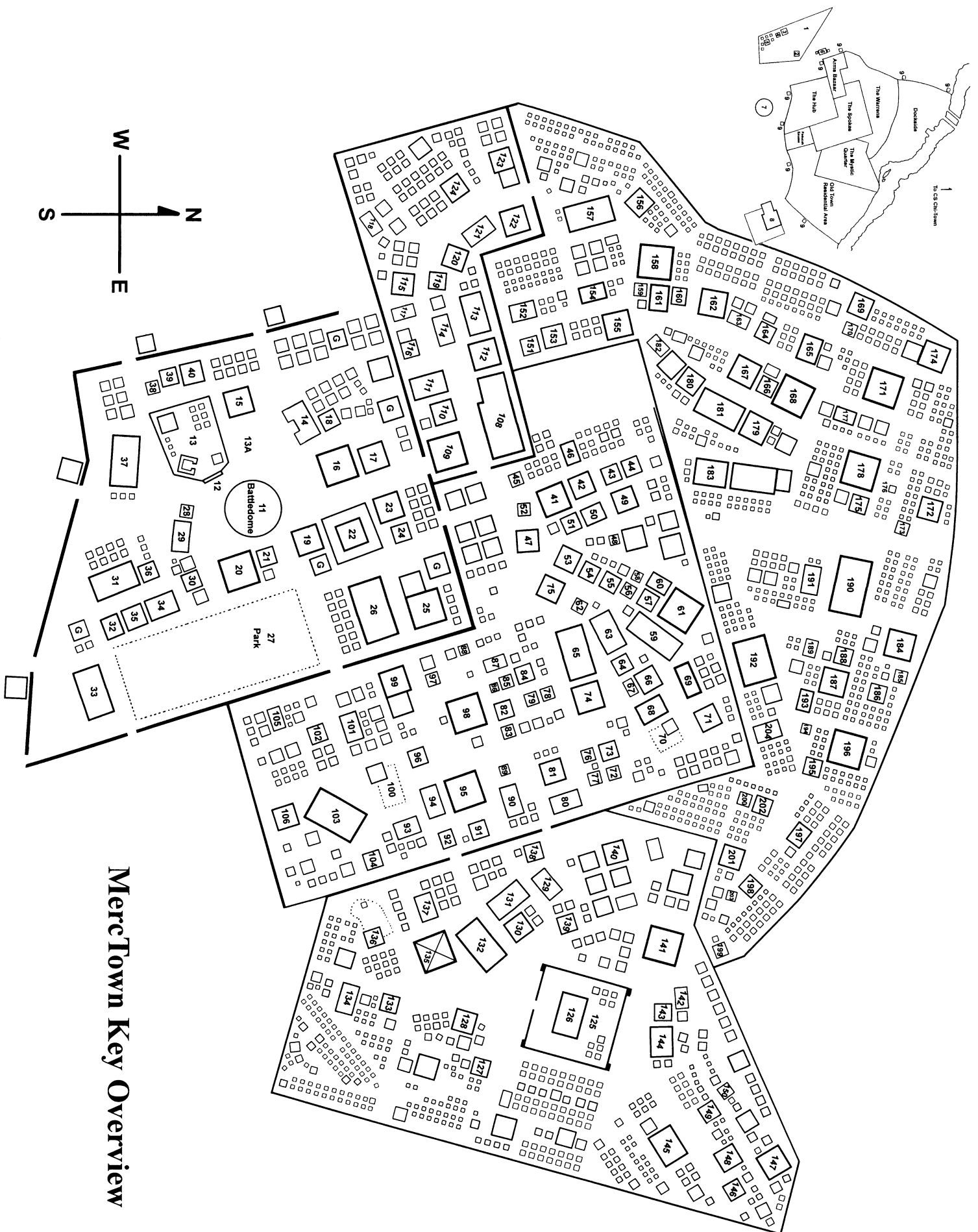
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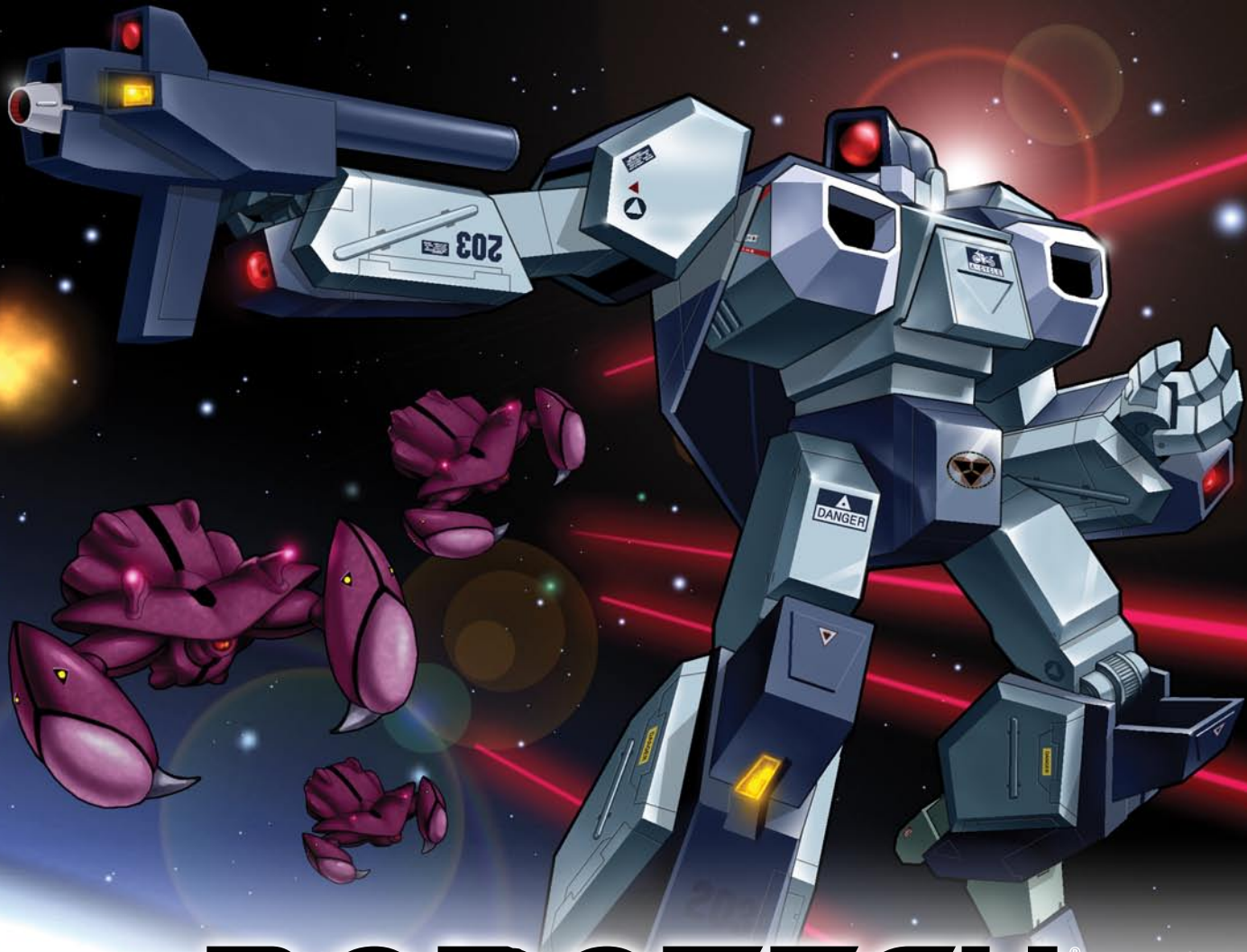
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