

erwise known as the Night of Rage. As if there had been some worldwide conspiracy (and there may have been), riots sprang up around the world and targeted metahumans, along with their friends, families and wannabes. Hundreds to thousands died; many were rounded up for their own “safety” and detained under armed guard.

In Seattle, Hand of Five terrorists attacked the warehouses and docks to which the metahumans had been led. Many places were set on fire, people panicked, and the Metroplex Guard did nothing. From the tragedy of that night the Ork Underground was born. Those who clearly remember that night at best harbor a bitter resentment against anyone displaying an ounce of bigotry, and at worst simply hate all humans.

Three days later, Alamos 20,000 reared its ugly head again, this time blowing the supports of the Sears Tower in Chicago. The resulting destruction took out or significantly damaged many buildings around several city blocks. No one wanted to rebuild there, so it became known as Shattergraves, an underground haven plagued with ghosts and hungry ghouls.

Boston had Bloody Tuesday during the St. Patrick’s Day March. Knights of the Red Branch, bigots disgruntled at being ousted from their former homes in Tír na nÓg, set off a bomb in a well-populated elven restaurant along the parade route. It killed twenty-four people, injured dozens more, and set off race riots all over Boston that killed and injured hundreds more. There’s still a lot of anger and resentment there about it.

UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

What appeared to be a humanitarian organization that preached acceptance and love first opened up shop in California in 2042, followed by a branch in Seattle in 2045. Other branches opened elsewhere, such as Denver and Chicago, though mysteriously (at the time) they were prevented in places like Tír na nÓg. Most of these branches offered counseling, and some included soup kitchens and free medical clinics, which were seemingly godsend for those who couldn’t afford proper care.

Nearly a decade later, however, we all found out just what the UB was harboring: insect spirits. In 2055, the UCAS FBI found out that the bugs were using the Seattle UB as a front to recruit hosts and summon more bug spirits. Quicker than you could say “Queen Euphoria,” they started shutting down every UB branch across North America. Other organizations may have been alerted, because it was closed down worldwide by 2056. All cited financial corruption, unmotivated terrorist violence, and other related offenses to keep the public from finding out the truth. Sad to say that we found out regardless, thanks to the debacle in Chicago.

Cermak Blast

Ares investigative teams discovered that Chicago had held one of the largest hives in North America. A small army of Knight Errant Security personnel was sent in to deal with it, but they botched it up badly, sending bug spirits flooding throughout the city. To add insult to injury, the city was walled off, trapping citizens inside. An Ares force also trapped inside put the final nail in Chicago’s coffin: whether deliberately or accidentally, they set off a subtactical nuke, which, by luck or providence, was mysteriously contained. While the Cermak Blast may

have killed some of the insect spirits, others still swarmed the city and terrorized everyone—self-proclaimed warlords and civilians alike—remaining within the doomed metroplex. Even though Ares and the UCAS government later cleaned the city out (well, mostly ...), the astral space there is still contaminated.

THE CORPORATE SHUFFLE

While the corporate landscape always has been and likely will always be in some state of flux, the megacorporations as we know them in 2070 have all been fairly recognizable since at least the ’40s. It was during this time that they began solidifying their respective corporate identities into some of the monolithic giants under whose shadows we’ve lived since 2033. Each of these following “AAA-rated” corps is part of the corporate cabal that runs the whole show, otherwise known as the Corporate Court.

ARES

It starts with Damien Knight. No one had heard of him before, but they sure did after the Nanosecond Buyout in 2033. With this programming feat masterminded from Stockholm, Sweden, he managed to buy 22 percent of Ares Industries and make himself CEO Leonard Aurelius’s rival for control of the corp. Some say that he did it with the great dragon Dunkelzahn’s help, and some say that Knight used to be Echo Mirage’s ex-team leader David Gavilan, gone underground and reborn. Whatever the truth of the matter, no one can say that Damien Knight is not a savvy corporate shark, because he’s been swimming ever since.

FUCHI

The next year, Matrix Systems of Boston came out with the first gray-market cyberterminal (Portal). The founders, Ken Roper and Michael Eld, were among the Echo Mirage survivors who had put their knowledge to use developing a portable version of the equipment they’d used to fight the Crash Virus. They didn’t live long to enjoy the rewards of their labors, however: both died under mysterious circumstances in accidents. This left a corporate raider named Richard Villiers, who had bought 49 percent of their company, with total ownership. He brought all relevant information on the Portals as well as several models to a company named Fuchi Industrial Electronics and demanded one-third ownership in exchange for handing all of this over to the company. Korin Yamana and Shikei Nakatomi, the other owners, reluctantly acquiesced and thus began Fuchi’s meteoric rise in the cyberdeck market. Thing is, it also kicked off years of infighting within the corp, so the seeds of its own destruction were also sown.

SAEDER-KRUPP

Once upon a time, there was a company named BMW that was the backbone of the Saeder-Krupp empire. A very smart lady named Wilhelmina Graff-Beloit owned it, having wrested it from the man who created it: her own husband. In 2037, in a move that may have coined the phrase “Never deal with a dragon,” the great dragon Lofwyr announced that through various avenues, he owned a 63-percent share of the company’s stock and was thus taking over as president. He gave Mina the boot (after which she went up the well to the Zurich-Orbital Habitat in 2050 and spent her time stewing over it until she died), got rid of the current