

## Freakshow

### 3.1 History

Daniel Watson's biggest problem in life during the early 1990's was deciding what tie to wear to work. A handsome, successful young businessman, Daniel was one of the up and coming go-getters in Crey Industries' mergers and acquisitions department. He oversaw the forcible takeover of dozens of small research firms and independent laboratories, each time earning himself a big fat bonus check in the process. He has money, women, power, and all the legal and illegal fun he could handle. And yet, despite all of his money and influence he was never really happy. Truth be told, he hated his life.

If Daniel had been able to swallow his pride and see a therapist, he might have found out that a prescription anti-depressant would wash those hate-filled feelings away. But Daniel has never been one to swallow his pride, so instead he wallowed in his hate. He became even more cut-throat in the business world and more vicious in the backstabbing office politics of Crey Industries. But of course all this made him all the more depressed. His life had no meaning, no purpose beyond self-gratification. And yet he didn't really care about other people all that much either. He didn't hate them, but he felt no motivation to help them.

And so finally he snapped. Daniel had never been a violent person. He'd never been in a fight in his life. As he prowled the streets of his upper income neighborhood one sleepless night he chanced upon another young businessman very much like himself. He even vaguely recognized the man, who was drunk and returning home after a night of revelry. Daniel stopped him to ask for a light and then hit him. He kept on hitting him. Daniel pounded the poor drunken yuppie into unconsciousness. He stole the man's wallet and watch and ran off into the night. He had never felt so alive...so happy. For the first time in his life he felt really and truly fulfilled, like he'd done something good for once.

Over the next month Daniel got into a fight almost every night. He had no formal training, just a body sculpted on exercise machines at the gym and a ferocious temper. He always fought men like him – wealthy, young, cocky, and handsome. He felt glorious. For the first time in years he slept like a baby, was pleasant to work with, and actually showed some consideration towards his co-workers. Life was finally seeming worth living. But of course this is Paragon City we're talking about, and no crime wave goes unpunished. One night when Daniel went on the prowl for a yuppie to beat, he found a costume clad hero instead. This time it was Daniel who received the beat down, and a stern talking to as well.

This defeat at the hands of a young, inexperienced hero proved a very sobering moment for Daniel. He tried to give up his nightly brawls but found he couldn't get any sleep. He tried amateur boxing, martial arts, and wrestling, and while the violence was there, the risks and rewards of his illegal assaults were still missing. He still couldn't sleep. And then, one night, as he worked out at the all-night gym, he finally just snapped. He stood up on a weight bunch and let loose with an eloquent, if crazed tirade about the chains of bondage that society imprisons us all within. He declared himself a free man and called on others to join him – to experience absolute freedom to live as they pleased and take what they wanted from life. He then took a pair of 40 pound weights and started smashing the gym up. He was quickly tackled and thrown out, his membership revoked.

As Daniel sat on the sidewalk, panting and exhilarated, two men who had been inside the gym came up to him. They said they liked what he said – and what he'd done. They felt the same way. One was a heart surgeon, the other a successful lawyer. Both hated their lives as much as Daniel seemed to. Neither of them could sleep. Daniel said he had just the cure: the fancy uptown bars would be closing soon and there would be plenty of prey on the streets.

Thus was born the Freakshow – a group of stressed, whiny yuppies who couldn't get to sleep unless they were jumping other yuppies in the streets and pounding them into the pavement.

The group grew and grew, expanding out to include men and women from all walks of life. The police and heroes had a hard time tracking the gang because it had no name, never stole anything, and seemed totally random in its choice of victims. One hero had a theory though, a man calling himself The Red Raptor who had, over a year ago, stopped a single crazed businessman named Daniel Watson.

The Red Raptor tracked Daniel down and, using his ability to fly, easily followed the businessman from his offices at Crey Industries, to his apartment, and then back out into the night. The flying hero watched from above as Daniel met up with more and more of his friends. He looked on as they prowled the back alleys looking for prey and then, just as the group prepared to pound on a financial analyst out for his evening jog, The Red Raptor swooped down and engaged the enemy.

Even the lone hero was more than a match for the dozen or so men that Daniel had with him that night. None of them had any real training, while the Red Raptor had his speed, flight, and martial arts expertise. The hero finished the lot of them off in under a minute. He gave them another stern talking to and let it be known that he was watching them. With that he flew off into the night sky. Daniel felt more enraged and more impotent than he ever had in his entire life. He was apoplectic. Then he thought about his job, and a plan began to form.

In the preceding week Daniel had overseen Crey's acquisition of a medium sized biotech firm that had developed an experimental drug designed to help fight pain. As a surprising and welcome side effect, it not only made the user immune to pain while keeping him alert and awake, it also increased strength and endurance. As part of his duties in the acquisition, Daniel still had access to the company's labs and samples of the drug. The next morning he went and made a big show of wanting to see everything again. He managed to distract the company managers and steal several dozen doses of the drug.

That night he distributed the serum to his cohort and went into the middle of an empty lot and called the Red Raptor out. As he suspected, the flying hero had been watching him. Thinking he had another easy victory at hand, the cocksure hero landed in the middle of the group and prepared to beat them all once more. But it didn't happen that way. Instead Daniel and company, juiced on the powerful drug, beat the Red Raptor, breaking his every bone before leaving the dead carcass draped atop a pile of garbage. The group had never felt more alive – they'd made their first kill.

Now Daniel knew that this drug, called Excelsior, was the key to unlocking all of his future dreams. He returned the next day and stole more samples, but he knew he would need a much larger supply. Indeed, he needed a way to manufacture the drug for himself. Stealing the formula was easy enough, but finding someone to synthesize it for him would prove more difficulty. In the meantime he needed a large enough supply to carry him and his friends through until they could start making their own. Once again his Crey connections came in handy. He was able to learn about a truck carrying a large supply of the drug to a local hospital for trial studies.

The next day, Daniel and his friends dressed in wild, punk rock inspired clothing, died their hair, donned masks and injected large doses of Excelsior. Then they carried out the first of what would be many daring daylight robberies. They waylaid the truck carrying the cases of Excelsior, tipping it over with their bare hands and ripping off the back door. Laughing manically they ran off with several months worth of drugs, while one of them stayed behind long enough to spray paint the words "What a Freakshow" on the truck's roof. When Daniel asked the young accountant why he'd done that, the man said, "I dunno, seemed like it'd be fun. And it was."

The nightly news led with the story of this bold attack by a group of clownish thugs calling themselves the Freakshow. Daniel and his buddies liked the sound of it and so the name stuck. They were now officially a gang, albeit a gang with day jobs that paid in the six-figures. This made them one of the better funded gangs out there, as each member cashed in his 401k, sold his stocks, and put everything he had into the Freakshow's first and most important

product: making their own Excelsior. All the while their membership continued to grow, with new members coming from many other parts of the city.

The Freakshow's crimes were seldom as well planned and executed as the truck heist. Instead they would simply head out into the city and do as they pleased. Their wild hair, piercings, makeup, and clothes not only hid their identities, they also helped them let loose all of their inhibitions. They followed Daniel's first and only precept: Take what you want, but be ready to fight for it. They stole alcohol, food, and drugs for parties. They trashed fancy restaurants and jewelry stores just because they could. They got into fights with other gangs, and with plenty of costumed heroes. Sometimes they won, sometimes they lost, but they always had fun doing it. Fate smiled upon the group when they found a gifted young scientist who was willing to join the gang. He brought with him all the expertise needed to synthesize Excelsior. Once the Freakshow stole the equipment and raw materials, the drug factory was up and running. The gang's membership soared, as they started selling the drug on the streets or sometimes just giving it away. People who sought direction or meaning in their otherwise hopeless lives flocked to the gang for the fun, freedom, and power it offered them. The Freakshow became a regular part of the underground party scene in Paragon City. Sometimes they would crash a party and make it even better – giving out drugs and favors and just kicking things up a few notches. Other times they would crash a party and just trash it – fighting everyone there. Sometimes they'd do both. Any way it went down, it was always exciting.

Not surprisingly, Daniel's performance at work was beginning to suffer. He scarcely paid attention to his duties, and were it not for his innate ability to cover up mistakes and spread blame onto others, he probably would have been fired much sooner. As it was, he held his job just long enough to learn about yet another technical acquisition by Crey Industries. This time it was the Delgado-Harris Cybernetics firm. They had been developing new advances in replacement limb and organ technology with military applications. In other words, they were making cyborgs. Daniel was intrigued. Already growing greedy for strength beyond what Excelsior could give him, he saw great potential in this new technology. It also appealed to him aesthetically, since he had recently become a big proponent of tattooing and body piercing and modification.

Daniel ended up inviting Delgado-Harris' chief engineer out to dinner and the two hit it off almost immediately. Risking everything, Daniel invited the man, Victor Blueck, to come to a party with him. It was, of course, a Freakshow gathering. Daniel knew that if Victor didn't join that night he'd have to kill him. Fortunately Victor took to it like a fish to water. Freakshow had found another member – and this one brought with him some very special knowledge that would change the gang forever.

With Viktor on board, Daniel needed to find a way to steal the parts and equipment necessary to build his own cybernetic enhancements. Ultimately a clever plan eluded him, so the Freakshow went with its old standby: overwhelming violence. The gang assembled, juiced up on Excelsior and one night simply stormed the Delgado-Harris labs in force. They overran the security guards and handily dealt with a trio of heroes who happened by. Using stolen trucks they carted off several tones of equipment before setting the entire building ablaze.

The group set up its first cybernetics lab in a sprawling warehouse that Daniel had purchased at bargain prices through his connections at Crey. It took a few more raids and truck heists to get everything else Viktor needed, but within a month they were ready to try out their new toys on a live subject. Ever the leader, Daniel insisted on going first. He through a huge party of course, to celebrate his rebirth. He had quit his job at Crey earlier that morning and now announced that he was taking the leap – he would live the Freakshow life for the rest of his days and give up the name his parents had cursed him with. Now he was nothing – and as nothing he was utterly free. He was Dreck. Daniel went away when Viktor removed his arm and replaced it with a clunky, deadly mechanical limb that could crush steel. Now there was only Dreck.

The crude cybernetic limb would not have worked with a normal person – which is to say, someone not already addicted to Excelsior. The crude nerve attachments and muscle implants caused intense pain. Fortunately, as long as Dreck kept taking his drug of choice, he never felt a thing. Seeing how powerful their leader had become, the other Freakshow members lined up to be next. Of course there was only so much cybernetic equipment to go around – much less than the demand. Thus a trend was set that persists within the Freakshow to this day. The cyberware went not necessarily to the first in line or the most senior members of the gang, but rather to those strong enough to fight off anyone else who tried to take it from them. And of course once they had their mechanical limbs or other implants, they were very much stronger indeed.

In this spontaneous rumble for replacement limbs, several different Freakshow members emerged as among the strongest and most ambitious in the gang. They also proved to be among the most capable of the group's new leaders. Among them was a dominating young woman named Eve Van Dorn, who took on the new name Clamor. There was also an outspoken veteran named Ralph Francesco, who took the name Bile. Both Bile and Clamor had been active in the Freakshow for quite some time and it was no surprise that they were able to assume the mantle of leadership. The third new leader was surprising – a scrawny 17 year old boy named Ike White managed to win his way to the front of the line through sheer tenacity and willpower. He took the rather fitting name Upstart. These three became Dreck's top lieutenants and each soon attracted a devoted following of Freaks willing to follow their every command. Word of the gang's new found robotic power spread quickly through the city's underground, and new members flocked to the gang. Between the drugs, the parties, and the radical body modifications, the Freakshow appealed to the most desperate and depraved elements, as well as those looking for a total escape from their lives. Of course this flood of new members only increased the drive for more cybernetic parts and more drugs. It didn't take long for the gang to grow into a major criminal force within the city.

It also didn't take long for the new made leaders of the gang to start asserting themselves more strongly. For his part, Dreck had no particular ambitions for the Freakshow beyond the simple heartfelt desire to create a group where everyone fought together to live as free as they pleased. As long as the group as a whole remained committed to this ideal, he refused to give any more direction. He viewed his main job as making sure there was always plenty of Excelsior to go around and a steady supply spare parts and new technology to keep the body modifications coming. Achieving those two goals usually meant dealing with police and do-good heroes and proved more than enough of a challenge for Dreck to handle. If he started caring about anything else then he wouldn't have time to party – and then what would the point be? But others saw greater potential within the group. Here was a veritable army of powerful men and women with nothing to lose and a burning hatred for the establishment. Some thought it would be a shame to waste such potential. If the members wanted to destroy things so badly, why not direct their destructive impulses towards some socially responsible or politically active goals? As a result, numerous different sub-factions within the Freakshow began to emerge, each forming around the ambitions and personalities of an individual leader.

Clamor was one of the first to form a politically minded coterie. In her former life she had been an organizer for anti-globalization movements and other, more radical left wing causes. She rallied about her Freaks willing to fight the forces of globalization and one-world economies. Her troop continues to thrive to this day, attacking, pranking, and otherwise disturbing the various multinational corporations and government offices that maintain offices in Paragon City.

Bile took a more philosophical approach to his group. He preached a doctrine of self-empowerment and freedom from the "toxic memes" of modern day life. Bile's group targets media outlets, schools, and other institutions that try to influence the way people learn and think. Bile's group believes empowerment must come through absolute freedom of information. They've been known to use the Internet to spread any secrets they find themselves in

possession of – no matter who gets hurt as a result. Because of this use of the ‘Net, Bile is often referred to as “Bile the Technophile.” They also support various guerilla theater and free speech movements. On a slightly tangential note they’re also promoters for radical local bands and proponents of music trading and copyright busting/piracy.

Upstart has perhaps the most radical agenda of all. He is a through and through anarchist and his followers are devoted to smashing all forms of authority in the world. Upstart established one of the larger sub-groups very quickly, primarily because his philosophy is quite simple to execute: attack and destroy anything that represents “the Man,” which turns out to be almost anything at all.

As these three and other leaders emerged within the Freakshow, the group as a whole became much more active in the city. Where once they were a dangerous gang of thieves, now they became a coalition of dangerous and disruptive social disruptors. As a result, they suddenly received much more attention from both local law enforcement and the city’s heroes. With so many of the Freakshow’s new targets highly placed and wealthy corporations, there was tremendous political pressure to deal with the group as quickly as possible.

In the first of what was meant to be a series of crackdowns, a team of experienced heroes led by a hero calling himself Max Justice ran a year long campaign to round up the sub-group they found most dangerous: Upstart’s anarchists. In the end they were successful, or so they thought. They captured Upstart and brought him to trial, along with hundreds of his followers. Sentenced to life in prison, Upstart’s movement seemed sure to die off. But others picked up where he had left off, and the anarchist corps within the Freakshow continues to operate today, only they have numerous different leaders instead of just one.

Max Justice and his crew might well have continued rounding up different parts of the Freakshow one by one, but the Rikti invasion suddenly interrupted their plans. During the war even the Freakshow members banded together with the city’s heroes to fight the alien menace. Certainly the Rikti seemed willing to attack the cybernetic gangsters as they were the army and heroes. After the war, with the city and world still in chaos, the Freakshow pretty much took up where it had left off. Max Justice was crippled during the war and most of his crew killed or driven into retirement. Ever since the Freakshow has continued to grow, with more and more people asking themselves why they have to live in a society with walls, gates, and rampant corporate greed. Feeling powerless and hopeless they turn to the Freakshow for an escape from it all. And if your idea of escape is body alteration, drugs, crime, violence, and self-mutilation, then the Freakshow is the place for you.

### **3.2 Beliefs and Goals**

The Freakshow does not have any one, overarching goal. Indeed, to have such a single minded purpose would belie the gang’s very existence. They exist to enjoy a kind of freedom and even hedonism that simply do not exist in civilized society. For many it seems that the Freakshow want to overthrow society and bring about a state of global anarchy. Indeed, for some of the members this is no doubt true. There is no prescribed doctrine and so each member is free to think and feel as they please. If there is one rule in the Freakshow, it is “Take what you want, but be prepared to fight for it.”

Although founded on the idea of freedom of thought and self-gratification, it turns out that most people aren’t that comfortable making ideological decisions for themselves. Those who join the Freakshow seek guidance and direction as much as anyone else. They’ve made the big decision for themselves: they’ve dropped out of society and become rebels. Now they need to how to be a rebel. As head honcho and spiritual guru to the Freakshow, Dreck stays above such issues. He guides the group from above and makes sure it adheres to the core principal of freedom from any constraint. He is the sole person who can get the entire Freakshow rallied around any specific goal. This seldom happens though, unless the Freakshow’s very existence

is somehow threatened.

The one rule that Dreck and his Enforcers insist upon being honored is absolute freedom within the group. No one is forced to join, anyone can leave whenever they want. No one has to do anything they don't want to do and there are no obligations to anyone except yourself. This presents some problems from time to time, but not as much as you might think. Certainly there is theft and infighting within the group, but it is relatively rare. Moreover, the Freakshow members are pretty good at policing themselves. Someone deemed harmful to the group as a whole is liable to end up dead or beaten until he learns his lesson. Dreck is fine with this kind of justice. After all, everyone should face the consequences for their actions.

Below Dreck are the other gang leaders within the Freakshow. Each has its own philosophy that compliments the group's core beliefs and applies them to the world at large. Clamor and her cohorts take much of their ideology from the anti-globalization movement, particularly focusing on the malfeasance of big companies. Bile focuses on freedom of information and expression and promotes a certain kind of independent artistic spirit while lashing out at anything else. Upstart's followers continue to honor his pursuit of total anarchy in America. There are of course dozens of other groups within the Freakshow, some consisting of only a handful of members, others comprising hundreds. It is also perfectly feasible for a single Freak to belong to several different sub-groups. Indeed, they often cooperate with one another and swap members back and forth. They rarely compete directly with one another, although spirited contests do take place fairly often (such as which group can blow up the most chain coffee shops in a single day).

One factor that all of these sub-groups have in common with each other is that they all feel that violence is indeed the answer. Unlike the many protest groups and political movements they take their cues from, the Freakshow have no use for protest, peaceful marching, and non-violent demonstrations. For the Freakshow the answer is always violent, direct action.

### **3.3 Technology**

The Freakshow doesn't develop any special technology of their own. They simply use things created by others. They'll occasionally tinker with them or even heavily modify them (in the case of the cyberware arms) but they invent next to nothing on their own. When it comes to weaponry, they only use what they can beg, borrow, or steal. They have very limited access to high tech weaponry such as laser weapons, although a few such devices do fall into their hands from time to time.

The only real technology they can claim as their own is the drug Excelsior, which the original maker long ago abandoned as too dangerous and addictive. The effects of Excelsior are almost immediate, giving the user a boost in all physical attributes and a temporary boost to hit points.

### **3.4 Behavior Patterns**

The Freakshow's decentralized organization means that some part of the group is always active somewhere in the city, and like a hydra, if you cut off one head, two more will seemingly grow to replace it. The group's behavior patterns fall into two distinct categories: activities that support the gang as a whole, and activities that support a particular ideological constituency within the group.

When it comes to the larger group behavior, robbery tops the list. The Freakshow members have no jobs and produce no products besides the drugs they use to keep themselves from collapsing in pain from their implants. As a result, they must steal everything they use, from party supplies to electrical generators and weaponry. Roving gangs of Freakshow members constantly rob citizens, shops, offices, labs, and anything else they can get their hands on. They tend to prefer to steal from the upper classes rather than the lower, though if they grow desperate or bored, they become less discriminating.

Of course the commodity most in demand is cybernetics. The Freakshow has no capacity to produce its own cybernetics. The group's chop shops are all temporary structures where back-alley surgeons can implant and tinker with the existing electronics, but there's no way they could manufacture computer chips, precisely machined parts, and other materials necessary even for the crude contraptions they use. Much of Dreck's time is spent organizing or just encouraging raids on laboratories, factories, warehouses, and arsenals to get the parts the group needs. In Paragon City the theft of these kinds of parts is so rampant that, even with increased security, anyone who deals in them expects to lose 10-20% of their stock to theft.

Since the war there has been an even tighter clamp down on such high-tech parts and security has gotten even tighter. As a result Dreck has had to start making other arrangements to meet the demand. He now has some more traditional business deals with several manufacturers, including a number of subsidiaries of Crey Industries. Some of the smaller companies he simply blackmails, threatening an all out attack by the Freakshow if they don't pay a weekly tithe of parts. Others, like Crey, he offers to do favors for – attack competitors, take out meddlesome heroes, and so on. Dreck keeps these arrangements a secret from most of the rest of the group, especially his more ideologically fervent followers like Bile and Clamor. Out of respect they don't ask too many questions. As long as the parts keep coming, they're happy.

The other key ingredient for Freakshow happiness is Excelsior. Although they long ago gathered the knowledge and equipment necessary to make the drug, they still need the raw materials, some of which are quite rare. Keeping a steady supply of the drug is absolutely vital for the group's continued existence. Without it those with cyberware enhancements would soon become crippled with pain and their bodies would begin to reject the implants. The results would be catastrophic. One of the most organized and forward thinking things Dreck has done is to secret large emergency stashes of the drug all over the city – a kind of strategic drug reserve in case the flow of raw materials ever gets cut off. Meanwhile, the chemicals for the drug keep flowing in much the same way as the cybernetic parts do. The Freakshow steals most of them and Dreck secretly trades for some, especially the rarer and more expensive ingredients.

The final key ingredient in making the Freakshow a success is the parties. The whole point of joining the Freakshow is to free oneself from the constraints of society and live a happy, joyful life. How can you do that without frequent parties? Well, according to the Freakshow, you can't. As a result, a sizable portion of the group's energies goes into preparing for and holding massive, drunken celebrations. Of course all the food, beverages, and even the locations have to be stolen first, and entertainment secured. The gang contains a number of talented DJ's and musicians and the parties themselves often attract talent from outside the Freakshow. Within a certain segment of the city's population, it has become all the rage to attend Freakshow parties whenever possible. While deadly brawls and random violence are de rigueur at such events, the added danger only heightens the enjoyment for these thrill seekers. And, inevitably, a few of them never leave, choosing to join the gang and make it a lifetime commitment.

The various sub-groups provide the driving force behind most of the Freakshow's many other activities. Each has its own list of targets it likes to concentrate on. Clamor and company go after big business. Bile attacks media outlets and stages his own thought provoking events. The Upstarts smash government property whenever and wherever they can. All of the groups are particularly fond of various kinds of pranks, some of them quite dangerous. Computer hacking, identity theft, forgery and vandalism are all integral elements for every group.

Another politically active sub-group has recently sprouted up, although this one doesn't have any particular leader as a driving force. Calling themselves the HypoCritix, they are a band of vicious pranksters who take great pleasure at revealing hypocrisies within the modern world. They watch the activities of politicians, government officials, corporate executives, and leading members of society for any sign of misbehavior. Naturally they seldom have to wait long. Once they see something that strikes them as particularly outrageous, they strike. They usually try to invoke some kind of poetic justice. For example, a moralizing politician found cheating on

his wife would end up kidnapped, drugged, and photographed with a bevy of brothel workers. They are seldom subtle in their techniques, and someone almost always gets hurt in the process. They can also be quite enterprising when it comes to investigating potential targets. On more than one occasion they have found evidence the police would have missed, although its admissibility in court is usually in doubt.

There are also sub-group's that don't have any particular political aspirations, but are rather bound by some common interests. One of the more important groups is the Wrenches, the tech-heads who take it upon themselves to help the rest of the gang maintain their cyberware and install new upgrades onto their comrades. Each member is responsible for providing their own parts and equipment, but most people end up trading with others for what they need. The Wrenches' skills are in such high demand that they never have to find anything for themselves or go out and fight. They get all the parts, drugs, drinks, food, and fun they can handle, as long as they keep their friends in working order.

One of the more interesting sub-groups is the Terminal Ward, made up exclusively of members with serious health problems for which there are no cures. Obviously this is a relatively small group with a very high rate of turnover. The Terminals jack themselves up with cyberware and fill their systems with Excelsior just to keep moving and active. With nothing left to lose, they've decided to throw themselves into the world of the Freakshow and do whatever they can to fully live out their last days on earth. This desperation makes them extremely dangerous and deadly – two qualities the other Freakshow members find very admirable and useful.

Another sub-group within the Freakshow calls itself IDX. They specialize in information and identity crimes, and their most important function is erasing any computer or paper trail a Freakshow member might have left in the "real world." IDX not only hacks computer networks, it also blows up records halls, destroys family homes, and does anything else necessary to remove every trace that a Freak ever existed. They're also quite adept at creating new ID's when needed, although it's usually impossible to disguise a person with a mechanical arm's true nature.

### **3.5 Enemies and Allies**

The Freakshow have very few permanent friends or sworn enemies. As with so many other aspects of their unruly lives, there's little predictability and even agreement upon how to feel about the other groups operating in Paragon City. Of course everyone agrees that the heroes are the enemy, but beyond that, different factions will inevitably work with any other villain group when the mood strikes them. Some bonds are stronger than others however.

There is for example a contingent within the Freakshow that very much supports and admire the 5th Column. While their fascist ideology repels some, others admire their relentless crusade to tear society down to the ground. While the Freakshow might not like the new society that the 5th Column wants to build, that's a battle for another day. For now it's fun to help the funny men in their uniforms smash things up, especially when the pay is good.

On the issue of pay, no one can compete with Crey Industries. No one in the Freakshow knows for sure how much the Countess Crey knows about the ties between Dreck and Crey Industries, but it's safe to assume that she has some idea. If so, she doesn't seem too worried or angry about it. While some Freakshow crews do attack Crey targets from time to time, it is more common to see Crey paying Freakshow to perform some unsavory task, such as burning down a rival company's corporate headquarters or stealing some prototype invention. The relationship with Crey is especially important since the company continues to be a major source for spare parts and new cybernetic enhancements.

At the other end of the spectrum are the Rikti, with whom the Freakshow has no real dealings – or so they think. Even the drug addled mind of a Freakshow thug has some residual feelings of devotion to the Earth as a whole, and few of them want to see their planet ruled by aliens. However, the Freakshow has worked with the Lost on numerous occasions, not realizing that



the group is in fact a human wing of the Rikti invasion plan. The Freakshow have a definite affinity for the homeless savagery of the Lost and it's not uncommon to see the two groups working towards a common goal.

As for the more mystically oriented groups, well, few members of the Freakshow have much faith or interest in such matters. The Circle of Thorns even scares the group to a certain extent, given how incredibly powerful and mysterious they are. The one exception is the Banished Pantheon, which seems to have just the right kind of nihilistic attitude for many Freakshow crews. Thus, while not common, it occasionally happens that the two groups will work together.

### **3.6 The Future**

In the coming months and years, the Freakshow's fragile coalition of different sub-groups will begin to fracture apart. Dreck holds the group together through his personality and his continuing ability to provide the cyberware and drugs that are so important to the group's continued survival. Once the more politically active sub-groups find out the kind of deals Dreck's been cutting with groups like Crey, fractures will begin to develop. The group will splinter into several different distinct criminal organizations, each of which will quickly evolve along its own line.

Clamor takes her group of anti-corporate activists and is the first to break away. They form their own group of hard-core radicals who eschew the pleasure seeking attitudes of the Freakshow for a much more militant activism. The group becomes almost paramilitary in nature, carrying out a highly organized campaign of guerilla warfare against corrupt corporate interests.

Bile's group of free idea loving individualists get swept up in a kind of technology collective, supporting the free software and music movements and the creation of a kind of computerized hive mind. They drift away from the main Freakshow not out of malice, but because it is no longer possible for the rest of the gang to communicate with them, or even understand what they're talking about. Their technophile, hive mind discourse alienates anyone outside their group.

Upstart's followers also grow disgusted with Dreck's pandering to "the man" and so they also break away, letting loose a self destructive, anarchic wave of violence and terror on the city. While destined to burn out, the question remains: how much damage can they do before they die?

Finally a new sub-group will emerge, only to be quickly ousted from the main gang. A group of young Freaks begin experimenting with a new kind of body-modification, one based on stolen Rikti technology. The Rikti have been using this technology to transform the Lost. Now Freakshow members begin using it to transform themselves. The use of alien technology gets them booted from the Freakshow and they start their own gang of body morphing hooligans.

### **3.7 Villains**

The Freakshow's minions are primarily differentiated by two factors: the amount of cybernetic enhancements they possess and the amount of Excelsior that has built up in their systems.

The stronger, tougher, and more charismatic a person is, the more cyberware they'll manage to get their hands on. Indeed, there are members who have been in the gang for years and still have no cyberware simply because they lack the strength of will to fight others for it. As for the Excelsior, the gang makes as much as its members want, so for the most part anyone who wants it has access to a normal daily dose. Over time, the drug builds up in the system, permanently changing the nerve and muscle structures and eventually producing more profound mutations and distortions in the body. As a result, unlike some drugs that lose their efficacy over time, Excelsior becomes more and more effective as the months and years of continued use pass by.

There is no formal hierarchy of any sort within the Freakshow. Dreck alone has some sort of invested authority because he founded the group and many see him as a kind of spiritual guru.

Other leaders, like Clamor and Bile, only “lead” because people like what they have to say and agree with their various schemes. Anyone can have such a scheme and exert such influence. It’s not at all uncommon for a member who’s been in the gang less than a month to sway a clutch of much more experienced and powerful members to his cause and end up leading them into battle. Of course, they’ll give up on him as soon as they find something more interesting to do or lose faith in him, but never let it be said that the opportunity wasn’t there.

### **3.7.1 Freaks**

The Freaks make up the vast majority of the Freakshow membership. They are generally members who have been with the group for only a few weeks or months. As with any gang, there is a high level of turn over amongst these low level troops. They’re the most likely to get caught by heroes or police, the most likely to die in action, and the most likely to quit once they realize what they’ve gotten themselves into. Unlike many other criminal organizations, the Freakshow does not care if people leave the gang after deciding they don’t like it. After all, freedom is the group’s byword, and it’s something they truly believe in. Thus across the city one can find hundreds of former members, many of whom look back on their time in the gang as a period of youthful indiscretion. More than a few still maintain loose ties with the group and continue to support its basic beliefs.

Since Freaks have not yet had any cybernetic implants, many of them still live double lives. They work by day and party, rob, and fight by night. More importantly, many of them hold decent, sometimes even high paying jobs. The group still appeals to the nihilistic drives lurking deep within the city’s professional class. Thus the Freaks are continually a valuable resource for the Freakshow. Eager to please and be a part of the gang, they often steal valuable technology and information from their day jobs and pass it on to the gang.

Freaks arm themselves with whatever weapons they can lay their hands on. Without any cybernetic enhancements, they rely solely on the drug Excelsior to give them an edge in combat. Fortunately, it’s quite an edge, putting even the newest Freak head and shoulders above your average thug when it comes to strength, toughness, and accuracy with a weapon.