

tion network. Created by brilliantly insane netrunner and master hacker **Rache Bartmoss**, overnight DataKrash invalidated the entire structure of information that made megacorps and governments viable. With no way to keep records, no way to organize—no way to even track economies and money (the United States government went from solvent to bankrupt in a matter of minutes), the very foundations of the Information Age collapsed into the rubble of its already ruined cities.

But people survive, even if institutions don't. From out of the rubble, the survivors, often led by the cyberpunk rebels they had feared and despised, began to hammer their lives together again. Without corporations to manipulate them, or governments to control them, the remnants of humanity created their own systems of information and barter. No longer trusting the worldwide Net that had betrayed them, they devised their own "infra-nets" organized around common interests. Rejecting the ethic of megacorporate mono-culture ("everyone eats at McDonalds., everyone watches Hollywood movies"), humanity split into dozens of new cultures, each with its own beliefs, social rules and even calendars.

So came the **Diaspora**—the splitting of mankind into new tribes, each headed its own way. First, the fully cyborged, whose cybernetic body shells had long made them feared and hated by the rest of mankind, fled to the deserts of the southwest, to seek freedom from persecution and slavery. Next, the scattered tribes of the **Nomads** gathered together once again to travel the open road, this time in gigantic rolling cities that could shelter thousands as they wandered.

Not every **Nomad** took to the roads. Some took to the sea instead, led by ex-Nomad leader Jon Meta and his vision of an undersea utopia deep in the Gulf of Mexico. When the colony was threatened by the corporate wars, Meta joined forces with OTEC (Ocean Technology & Energy Corporation) team leader John Neptune, who turned from battle to lead a colony of fellow bioengineered humans to a new destiny. Neptune's people were not the only gene tailored to seek freedom; several thousand humans force-altered by the megacorps to serve as Martian colonists managed to commandeer several large cargo blimps and escape to form the nucleus of an aerial society high in the stratosphere.

High overhead, deserted by the Megacorps (many of who took flight starward in secret and unsuspected colony ships), the orbit-dwelling **Highriders** fell from grace, reduced to scavenging parts from decaying space platforms just to survive. As their brethren on Luna and Mars starved or fell ominously into radio silence, the highriders took stock of their options. Hurling rocks onto the ravaged cities below was no longer an option; there was nothing left to threaten. But the highriders still controlled the orbital satellites—the only remaining links to worldwide communications. And so their path moved from exploring outwards to turning earthwards as the messengers and storytellers of a fragmented humanity, known forever after as the **Fallen Angels**.

Horrified by the ravages to their native Japan (home of the mighty Arasaka megacorp, the land of the rising sun was hit the hardest of all), the great floating cities of Tokyo, Osaka and Nagasaki cut themselves adrift on the open sea, there to seek healing and make atonement for their part in the great war. Still another Nihongi survivor chose his own path; emulating his idol (and past employer), he set out to build gigan-

tic, self-sufficient "theme park cities" where all would be safe from conflict and free to live peaceful, balanced lives.

Even the dead found a new refuge—as the disembodied victims of Soullkiller; a vicious digital assassin program that ripped its targets' souls out of their dying bodies and encapsulated them into computer engrams—gathered to colonize the mainframes of cities abandoned during the War. Led by Soullkiller's creator (and first victim), programmer Altiera Cunninham, these digital "ghosts" created their own world; a universe of digital constructs as real to them as our own world is to us, entering this "reality" only to explore or plunder as needed. Soon, others chose to leave their bodies behind and join them of their own free will.

And what of the mighty corporations themselves? organizing a private corporate army is a sure way to get everyone down on your back.

Finally, the **Cyberpunks**. The war with the Corps had been won, but at a price only a hardened veteran of the mean streets could have faced. While many poured out of the cities to recolonize long deserted villages and towns, the vast majority stayed in their urban complexes. With nanotechnology, cybernetics and techniques looted from Corporate research labs, the now self-renamed Edgerunners have rebuilt and expanded the vast cities, hurling them skyward in multi leveled tiers and thrusting deep into caverns under the earth. Two great megacities have emerged—Boswash from the ruins of New York, Boston, and Washington, the other, Night City from the amalgamation of San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego and (of course) Night City. A third megacity, Chi-cag, is even now exploding along the Great Lakes, to swallow Chicago, Detroit and Toronto in its expansion.

Veterans of change and wary of extremes, the **Edgerunners** are known for toleration of other groups, if they can face the mean streets of megaurban culture and survive. Indeed, if there's a Casablanca anywhere in the post corporate age, it's Night City, where everyone comes to make their deals and find their fortunes. Metalled-up edgerunners now stand shoulder to shoulder with glittering robo-men, mobile-city panzerboys, bioamped gillmen, aquatic and aerial drifters, techie mechanauts, corporate mafiosi, highrider deltajocks and enigmaic digital ghosts. The lessons that brought them to this place have been harsh and unforgiving—they eye each other warily as they reach out to make a future together.

And that brings us to now. This moment, this time and place. From the ashes of one age, into the dawn of another.

There are a million ways to shape the future. One of them is yours. All you have to do is choose.

## Cyberpunk V.3 Coming in 2001

(Includes new Lifepath to bring your old characters up-to-date—assuming they survived!)