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The Flooded City of Downhang

A Psi-punk micro-setting by ASH LAW

Downhang is a nascent country, tottering between utopia and dystopia, and has the highest percentage of psychics to non-psychics outside of a research setting.

No Man's Land

Downhang was formed by the treaty that ended the war between the Andaman Republic and the People's Federation of Kepulauan Riau. When the treaty was signed it was agreed that all land west of the Downhang River would be ceded to the Andaman Republic and all land east to the PFKR. Both sides drew up their official maps and officially ceded areas - but due to a miscommunication both sides ceded the area around Downhang to the other. Now neither side is willing to give up their territorial claim, but can not enforce the claim lest it restart the war. As such the area is a no-mans land. Since then other considerations (such as Downhang getting a nuke) have added to the situation that has kept the city free.

Cosmopolitan

The citizens of Downhang are a diverse bunch. 55% are British or Australian expatriates; a large number of these being from the mercenary companies that were stranded in the area after the war, when their own countries declared them criminals. 30% are a mix of Thai, Malay, Indian, Indonesian, and Chinese. 10% of the population are Old Downhang citizens who stayed behind when the city flooded. The final 5% are international, mostly ultra-rich criminals who have fled to Downhang to avoid extradition treaties and their hangers-on. Around 1/10th of the citizens of Downhang are either psychics or former military, and many are both.

The Floating City

Downhang (not its original name) was originally a coastal city, and has been flooding for as long as the seas have been rising. The city in its current state exists as almost fifty small islands linked by a floating raft of barges, former tankers, and converted ocean liners.

Interesting things to know...

- Downhang is far from the reach of the NAU, and corporations have a hard time keeping a foothold in the city-state. If you are on the run, this is *the* place to go.

- It is hard to get a signal in or out of Downhang - there is too much interference. WiFi tech doesn't work, even two-way-radios have problems.
- Downhang was always poor, and had a lot of non-GM crops. As a result it is now a major food producer and seed exporter, part of the reason it has been left alone.
- English is the main language in Downhang, but a healthy batch of loanwords from Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese, Urdu, and Hindi form part of the language. If you are visiting from the NAU expect to understand only a fraction of what is being said.
- Due to the messed up global weather patterns Downhang has three types of weather: Hot, Hot and Muggy, Hot and Raining. Each season lasts anything from a week to two months, and the changes are unpredictable. There are no seasons.

Important places in Downhang...

Temple Hill

The highest hill of the original city was home to a ruined buddhist temple which in an earlier age was a tourist attraction. The temple has since been reoccupied by buddhists, and the area around the temple has become a garden. The monks allow people onto the island to visit or worship, but food thieves find that the monks are heavily armed. The monks trade food with the other districts.

What to do for fun - Pray, contemplate, visit the temple, bury the dead.

What to buy - Real food.

What to sell - The Monks are always in need of labour.

What will get you into trouble - Violence, Stealing Food (unless you can prove that you are a charity case).

Who runs the joint? - The Buddhist Monestary, run by Lobsang Dave

The Monks live on Temple Hill and produce food. They are peaceful, yet well armed. Their look combines orange robes with flack vests, prayer beads with AK47s. Yes, even in the 2090s the trusty AK is still in use. Lobsang Dave is originally from Tasmania, and is a fair but eccentric leader fond of zen koans.

Chichester Island & Nob Hill

The fortress island of the former mercenaries known as The Setting Sons, Chichester Island has the only airstrip and deep-water port available to the citizens of Downhang and make their money by taxing imports and exports. Espers are always welcome on Chichester Island.

What to do for fun - Gamble, drink, visit the free open-air cinema.

What to buy - Guns, though carrying them inside Chichester Island will get you into trouble. Expect to pick up your purchases on the way out and be searched on the way in.

What to sell - Nothing really. The Setting Sons can import most stuff. If you are an Esper you'll be invited to come live on the island.

What will get you into trouble - Breaking the law. Chichester Island has policemen, courts, and even a prison. Don't get into fights, shoot weapons, break stuff on purpose, or otherwise be a "wrong'un"

Who runs the joint? - The Setting Sons, former British and Australian mercenaries. They are lead by Major Andrew Agnew.

A slice of paranoid first world life in the middle of a third-world city, Nob Hill is over three dozen compounds of ultra-rich criminals. Some are genuinely bad people, warlords and the like, others are simply corporate movers and shakers who moved and shook the wrong things at the wrong times. The denizens of Nob Hill never leave their homes, fearful of the governments or rivals that want them extradited or dead. The army of cooks, cleaners, and body-guards are mostly pulled from Chichester Island, though the Ladies of London are known to be hired in for special parties.

The defensive measures surrounding Nob Hill are almost comical in their zealously. So many electromagnetic jamming devices exist that it is almost impossible to use a wireless device, mobile phone, or satellite phone anywhere in Downhang (only by going via Chichester Island or The Wall can an outside signal be obtained), and at least one paranoid prisoner/overlord of Nob Hill has a weapon that takes out satellites that pass overhead.

The ultra-rich prisoners of Nob Hill do as they please within their compounds, and guards from Chichester Island patrol the streets, but there are limits. If anybody living on Nob Hill tries to keep running their criminal empire or otherwise bring extra outside attention to Downhang then the Setting Sons will withdraw their guards and let the problem resolve itself. Chichester Island has only taken direct action against one resident of Nob Hill, a former banker who used anti-aircraft weapons to indiscriminately fire at anything coming near Downhang. He was found the next morning, in several districts.

What to do for fun - Nothing, the Setting Sons will kick you off the island.

What to buy - Nothing.

What to sell - Protection, food, entertainment.

What will get you into trouble - Getting too near to a compound will get you shot at.

Who runs the joint? - Each compound is its own little kingdom, but the Setting Sons control the island as a whole.

The Setting Sons control Chichester Island and Nob Hill, and on Chichester Island is the only airstrip and deep-water port. Composed of ex-patriot British and Australian mercenaries, the Setting Sons have recently started recruiting from within Downhang - especially ESPers. Major Andrew Agnew is their leader, and they have a military-style command structure. The Setting Sons tend to wear military-style uniforms, though often no two of them will look alike. One might be wearing an old pre-NAU US uniform, another an Australian police uniform with the insignia removed, and still another a uniform from China or India. Their overall look is military surplus, though often with the sleeves removed to account for the heat.

Freehang

A collection of small islands linked by bridges, Freehang is home to the Kinetic Guild, a powerful coalition of psychokinetics. Freehang is known to be the place to go for the latest cybernetics, as well as where you'll find the part you need to fix your boat or get your computer back up and running.

What to do for fun - Visit the bazaar, race bikes down the streets and across the bridges.

What to buy - Cyberwear, electronics, machine parts. Anything else you can think of, though you'll need to find the right place...

What to sell - See 'what to buy'. If you have something unusual all the better.

What will get you into trouble - Not much will get you into trouble here, , though if you disrespect a member of the Kinetic Guild expect to be fined everything you have on you, including your clothes.

Who runs the joint? - The Kinetic Guild, who hold weekly public gladiatorial-style contests to see who among them is the strongest and thus should be in charge. The games are non-lethal, but accidents have happened.

The Kinetic Guild runs Freehang. Freehang is famous for its bazaar. The Kinetic guild patrols the bazaar while riding motorcycles (when they feel like it) and are really a street gang with pretensions rather than the organized groups that run other districts of Downhang. The Kinetic Guild favors bike helmets or face-masks, and tend to dress to match the garish neon paint-jobs on their bikes. If it were not for their power as psychokinetics and their constant honing of their power in their gladiatorial games one of the other groups would have moved in on the rabble and taken over Freehang. The gladiatorial fights pull in quite a crowd and are one of the programs transmitted by Battleship, the winner of each contest becomes the leader of the Kinetic Guild for the next week.

The Float & Underhang

The poorest 'district', The Float consists of thousands of houseboats, tugs, barges, scows, and the like. Navigating it requires walking on planks from boat to boat or navigating the ever-changing waterways. Malnourishment and disease are rife in The Float, but the fishing fleet keeps the money coming in (with two huge powers mutually claiming the area around Downhang international fishing is forbidden - only Downhang fishermen can fish the waters). People from The Float are known locally as Floaters.

What to do for fun - There are plenty of party boats, if you have stuff to trade to get onboard.

What to buy - Fish, Fuel, Clothing. Anything small and that countries bordering Downhang wouldn't consider illegal.

What to sell - Real food. Medicine. Fuel. Pirated entertainment.

What will get you into trouble - Those who live on The Float don't have much, expect to be stabbed or drowned if you try to take it away from them. If you make a lot of trouble the Floaters will get in touch with the Sea Monsters.

Who runs the joint? - Nobody really. There are gangs who come and go, most of them deal drugs but protect their turf from trouble-makers. Mostly the gangs don't fight each other, but turf wars when they happen are both short and vicious.

Most of Old Downhang is flooded, but to a person skilled in psychometabolism that is no great barrier. The shadow-city of Underhang consists of hundreds of air-pockets in buildings and sunken ships, and the only people who live in Underhang are the Sea Monsters. Underhang supplies a lot of interesting things to the city above - a lot got left behind when Old Downhang flooded. The Sea Monsters sell these finds to the people of The Float.

What to do for fun - Avoid the Sea Monsters.

What will get you into trouble - Being there. Causing enough trouble in The Float that they call up the Sea Monsters for help.

Who runs the joint? - A group of changelings and amphibious cyborgs who call themselves the Sea Monsters.

The Sea Monsters run Underhang, the submerged underbelly of the city. They are rivals of the Junior Kaiju Klub, for they two are shape-changers who adopt monstrous forms. The Sea Monsters spend almost all of their time under the water, either exploring the ruins of Old Downhang or living in air-pockets in submerged buildings and sunken ships. Most of the air pockets are just single rooms, but recently the Sea Monsters have been building and expanding, and some buildings are entirely dry inside now. The Sea Monsters have a symbiotic

relationship with the people of The Float. The Sea Monsters barter found items with the floaters, and in exchange for preferential deals they will occasionally haul themselves glistening out of the salt-water to hunt down those who have crossed the inhabitants of the floating shanty town. The Sea Monsters tend not to change their shapes too often, preferring to find a shape that works in the water and stick with it. Most resemble humanoid killer whales or huge shark-people, but some are lithe like dolphins or are strange spine-covered mixtures of lobster, squid, and turtle. They don't really have a leader, but some worship The Kraken who lives in/under Tower District.

The Strand

A partially flooded area, The Strand is what remains of the financial district of old Downhang. The upper floors of parking structures and banks have been converted into homes and shops, and suspension bridges and water taxis link the area together into a cohesive whole. The Strand is controlled by a coalition of changelings: The Ladies of London, the Junior Kaiju Klub, and the Wizards. The Ladies of London are shape changing adult entertainers who also produce a drug called 'morph'. The Junior Kaiju Klub are changelings who have chosen to live with permanently monstrous forms, most of them a lumbering hulks of armoured muscle and claw-tipped tentacles. The Wizards specialize in polymorphing non-living objects and other people.

What to do for fun - The shape changing Ladies of London can be hired to entertain. There are rooftop cafes. There are jugglers, fire eaters, and all sorts of performers. At night there are dance clubs. Take your pick.

What to buy - Services. Companionship. Bespoke items made by the Wizards. Morph. Protection (members of the Junior Kaiju Klub will hire themselves out for an hourly fee).

What to sell - Alcohol. Food.

What will get you into trouble - Not paying your tab, theft, violence, or causing a ruckus. While the Junior Kaiju Klub look dangerous (and are), the really dangerous ones are the Ladies of London.

Who runs the joint? - There is no official leader, if you are a changeling you just get together with other changelings and enforce your will. It seems to work.

The Ladies of London consist of nightclub singers, entertainers, strippers, adult escorts, and psychic healers. Despite the name they are neither all-female nor all from London, though they try to give that appearance through shape-changing and fake accents. The Ladies have many smaller sub-gangs within it, and these rise and fall in importance. Currently the most important gangs are the *Muscle Bois* who adopt a male physical persona in contrast to the majority of the Ladies, the *Pink Slips* who wear ballgowns and are known for their organizational prowess and the production of Morph, *The Ladies in Lace* who run many of the clubs in the district, and the *Cocktail Club* who wear black cocktail dresses or tuxedos and carry switchblades and sword-canes. However, most Ladies of London do not belong to a sub-gang and tend to wear very little, Downhang being hot and invariably humid (and The Strand seeming to get the worst of the heat). Nobody really 'runs' the Ladies of London, but certain voices are respected more than others. Current non-leaders are Aunty LeToyah Destroyah (who runs a protection racket on the water taxis of Downhang and is on the Council of Clades), Prince Ladyman (who is recognized as the best psychometabolic healer in Downhang), and Queen McCube (senior member of the *Pink Slips* and controller of the production and sale of Morph). Most of the Ladies adopt titles

such as 'lady', 'princesses', 'aunty', 'mother', 'grandma', 'duchesses', and 'queen' (the Muscle Bois use masculine terms), but the system is loose and informal.

The Junior Kaiju Klub tends not to wear clothing, though when they do it is ripped purple jeans. The reason for their nakedness is they want to show off as much of their massive bulk, armor plated and scaled hides, and spikes as possible. No two of them look quite the same but there are similarities, mostly the visibility of natural weapons and an abundance of muscle-mass that puts each of them in the same weight category as a small rhino. Currently the fashion among them is for a reptilian snout, bull horns, gills down the back, and a clubbed tail. Last month it was stinging tentacles and chameleonic hide. The Leader of the Junior Kaiju Klub is the charismatic (and 15-foot-tall) King Dinokrush, and has been for many years. King Dinokrush is keen to protect the secret of Lish production and has posted guards around many buildings in The Strand. Below King Dinokrush are a whole mess of 'Lords' and 'Barons' and 'Knights', a strict hierarchy that the King maintains.

The Wizards are the third group that co-runs The Strand. Unlike their fellow shape-changers the Wizards concentrate on controlling inanimate objects, on shape-changing others, and on flashy effects from other psionic powers. They model themselves after a series of movies about a fictional wizard's academy and even adopt 'wizarding names' and wardrobes (though in the heat most prefer silk robes to heavy cotton). They have altered several buildings in The Strand to resemble gothic castles and work in these to create items of rare beauty to trade with the outside world. Their current leader is known as The Archmage Esisopimus. She oversees the production of the local currency, the chit (€), a plastic-looking coin that comes in bright colors. Though they keep to themselves the Wizards are feared and respected; the Ladies of London might stab you and the Junior Kaiju Klub might eat you, but the Wizards can turn you into a frog!

The Wall

Old Downhang had a sea barrier to prevent flooding, and most of it is still standing. The Wall is run by an extended family of Australian electrokinetics who keep the tidal floats and wind farms that power the city running, and supply fresh water. The water is free, but if you want power you have to pay. The Wall is home to the famous St Kylie's Synagogue and the Reformed Downhang Mosque.

What to do for fun - Not much. Go to synagogue or temple. Fish off the wall.

What to buy - Electricity.

What to sell - Machine parts, electronics.

What will get you into trouble - Syphoning electricity.

Who runs the joint? - The Redburn Clan, led by Grandma Lucy Redburn.

The Redburn Clan run The Wall, the old flood barrier that was supposed to protect the city. An extended family of electrokinetics and electrical engineers they supply the city with free fresh water and not-free electricity. The electrokinetics only produce some of the energy they sell to the city, the majority comes from the wind farm that covers the top of The Wall and the tidal and wave-powered generators that float out at sea. Their matriarch, Grandma Lucy Redburn, has instilled in her clan a healthy respect for others and has set aside areas on The Wall for places of worship. So far only St Kylie's Synagogue (the place of worship for a hardline christian/jewish fusion faith that originated in New Zealand) and the Reformed Downhang Mosque (Japanese NeoMuslims) have taken up the offer.

Tower District

The largest still-standing building in Downhang, the Grand Prosperity Tower was at one point in the early 21st century the largest free-standing structure in the world. Economic setbacks meant that while the superstructure was completed the tower went uninhabited save for maintenance staff until Downhang flooded.

Physically the building looks like an elongated pyramid, though the shining solar-glass panel facade was looted decades ago to be repurposed for the many solar panels line Wall. Now the structure is fuzzy with green, a vertical forest nurtured by a group called the Druids.

What to do for fun - Explore. The druids are pretty laid back about who they let in, and even let people stay for a while... and if you stay for long enough and help out you'll have joined the Druids.

What to buy - The druids make everything they need and give away what they don't. You can buy food here, but if you wait around for long enough they might give you some for free. Wood from trees is sold, both as fuel for cooking fires and as building materials for those that can't shape raw materials with their minds.

What to sell - 'Nightsoil'

What will get you into trouble - Hunting animals (some of the animals are changeling druids).

Who runs the joint? - The Druids, but they tend to listen to the Kraken when he communicates with them.

The Druids are a community of ecologically-minded individuals, most of whom are non-psychics. Psychics among the druids tend to gravitate to leadership positions or become 'shamans'. They maintain the tower itself, repairing and modifying the structure with their psychic abilities or with engineering. They also created the vertical forest that occupies the tower. Deer and wolves roam the concrete corridors and stairwells. Trees burst through the the empty windows and crowd the balconies. Hawks nest. Despite their number and relative power within the tower the Druids are not a force to be reckoned with outside the tower, and are not afforded a seat on the Council of Clades or even representation in parliament. The druids are more a collection of extended families and small tribes than a major force.

The Kraken is not a community but an individual. A veteran and victim of the secret psychic experiments of the early 20th century, little Billy Smith started growing - fast. For most of the 20th century he was kept in ever-larger large tanks of water, and suffered endless torture at the hands of scientists. He finally escaped confinement in 1979 and swam out to sea. He is now the largest sentient organism on the planet and occupies the submerged parts of the tower like a giant mollusk. The inner core of the tower is threaded with his body, and every year the tower becomes stranger looking. The Kraken is immobile but is served by some of the Sea Monsters and Aquilae who worship him as a living god.

The Aquilae are a community of body-modified fliers who live in the upper reaches of the tower, beyond the cloud layer where the air is thin and dry. Physically they resemble thin bat-winged androgynous humans, frail yet beautiful. Only a few of them are psychometabolic, most of them were modified by the Kraken in exchange for services rendered. They spend their days basking in the sun, and soaring above the ocean on thermals. The Aquilae live fairly ascetic lives, having little and wanting only to fly. Some work now and again as messengers, but most are only seen as specks in the sky.

Battleship

The far side of the Strand from Chichester Island is the area known as Battleship. A collection of almost a hundred large craft, it includes two mid-century supertankers, almost a dozen cruise

liners, and a handful of genuine military vessels including two nuclear submarines. All of these were moored near the flooding Old Downhang due to be broken apart for scrap at the beginning of the Andaman-PFKR war. By the end of the war the scrap purchasers had gone bust and the destination scrapyards had flooded. With nowhere else to go the ships made their way to Downhang and ended up becoming part of the growing city. Most of the vessels are no longer seaworthy, and have become fused together into a web of gantries and walkways. A city-within-a-city Battleship is largely self sufficient. The decks act as gardens, and hydroponic bays in the ships hold produce hundreds of tons of food a year.

The two nuclear submarines, lost in the paperwork chaos of the formation of the NAU, are particularly noteworthy. The USS H.R. Clinton has a still-running reactor that supplies Battleship with power independent of the electrical supply of The Wall. The USS Kearny's reactor is offline but has obtained several cruise missiles that have been retrofitted as nuclear weapons -making Battleship, and thus Downhang, a nuclear power.

Battleship contains Downhang's only hospital (unless you want to go to The Strand and bargain for psychometabolic healing) which provides basic services for free, several cinemas, schools, swimming pools, and even two powerful old-style VHF TV transmitters.

What to do for fun - Watch TV, go to school, go swimming in clean water, go ice-skating.

What to buy - Machine parts, food.

What to sell - Biodiesel, services.

What will get you into trouble - Going into a restricted area, or looking like you might want to. Causing loud trouble. Theft. Murder.

Who runs the joint? - A council of captains.

The Council of Captains run Battleship, each captain responsible for their own ship alone. A mutually agreed upon code of law keeps them together as a co-operating entity, and they formally meet to hash out changes to the code and talk shop twice a year. Captains often visit with each other, and ship crews maintain a grapevine, so information flows freely between those who run Battleship. The most important captains are Cptn. Janet Stevenson of the submarine USS Kearny, Cptn. Brian Rice of the submarine USS H.R. Clinton, and Cptn. Simpson Whitmarch of the cruise ship SS Ocean Joye.

Caractacus Crater

Formerly the highest hill in Downhang and home to the unflooded university, the crater was created when the PFKR attacked Downhang. 'The Scuffle', as it has become known, happened about 20 years ago when the inhabitants of University Hill started selling revolutionary new biocomputers on the open market. This cut into the PFKR economy and the military junta decided upon a punitive strike on the 'rogue state' of Downhang. Three nanotech-load warheads were launched by the PFKR. One created Caractacus Crater, the other two mysteriously hit the then-capital city of the PFKR; this was the end of the PFKR junta. Caractacus Crater is an atoll. *Nobody lives there, the nanotech still lingers.*

Nobody knows who is responsible for the two missiles turning back - some say that is what happens when you attack a city bursting with psychics, others that it was the Kepulauan people ridding themselves of their leaders.

Interestingly Caractacus Crater puts out a lot of interference in the EM spectrum, much more than the deliberate communications jamming of the pampered paranoids on Nob Hill.

What to do for fun - Anything you like. There is nobody to stop you.

What to buy - If you are here to buy something it is probably so dodgy that this is the only place you can make the trade.

What to sell - There is hardly anybody here to sell to, unless you've arranged to meet them there.

What will get you into trouble - Lots of strange plants grow here. Eating them will get sick or worse.

Who runs the joint? - Nobody does.

Economy of Downhang...

The Downhang economy is as messed up as the local weather patterns. Local trade is either in barter or in the local currency the chit, a coin produced by the Wizards of The Strand.

Located close to the bay of Bengal and the South China Sea, Downhang has sea access to some of the most energetic free markets in the world. Here are some important things Downhang trades with the outside world.

Real Food

Downhang was always poor. Local farmers could not afford GM crops and so kept farming with traditional seed stocks. Initially this kept the area poor. When the great famine started the local crops became one of the causes of the war between the Andaman Republic and the People's Federation of Kepulauan Riau. Once nano-food was developed and the region flooded it became less strategically important and the war shifted to other fronts.

Downhang now produces a lot of 'real' food. Compared to the rest of the world the citizens of Downhang eat very well, only occasionally supplementing their food with nano-food. In fact the usual situation is reversed, nano-food is an expensive import but real food is affordable.

The unofficial exports of food and seed stock to the Andaman Republic and the PFKR account for most of the real food in the region, and the two states are likely to keep their hands off Downhang as long as the exports continue. The fact that Downhang has likely got at least one nuke and trying to take Downhang would restart the regional war probably keeps them at bay too.

Despite real food's expense in the rest of the world, sellers from Downhang receive only a fraction of its actual worth - the Andaman Republic and the PFKR have a monopoly on purchasing it and conspire to keep their purchase price low so they get maximum profit when reselling it on the open market.

Morph and Lish

New drugs made in Downhang, Morph and Lish are possibly the first in a new series of psychoactive drugs.

Morph is produced by the Ladies of London in The Strand. When taken it melts the user's body like running wax before re-forming it. While horrifying to watch it is very pleasurable to experience, and is described by users as 'a blissful rush' with a lingering high for hours afterwards. Morph has two interesting side effects - occasionally for the high period afterwards the user strongly resembles the psi who made that batch of Morph, and any existing substances are flushed from the user's system. This means that Morph can be used as a disguise, or to flush toxins or poisons from the user's system. Morph is painful to take if the user has cyberware, but doesn't interfere with the operation of cyberwear itself. Habitual morph users slowly change their base bio-template - many who flee to Downhang but have not got the cash

to set up on Nob Hill end up taking Morph as a means towards a cheap long-term disguise, and they blend in with the citizens of Strand.

Lish is made by the Junior Kaiju Klub and is similar to Morph but is universally painful to take. Its effects are dramatic, reshaping the user into a monstrous form. Those who can't use or afford cyberwear and don't mind looking like a freak take Lish to gain new physical advantages - claws, eyes that can see wider spectrums, subdermal armor, and so on. The effects of Lish are temporary, lasting for only a few hours, but if Lish is taken over a long enough period the effects become permanent. Some members of the Junior Kaiju Klub are in fact Lish users rather than psychic shape-changers.

Morph and Lish are hot items outside Downhang, and are currently bringing a *lot* of money into The Strand, but that won't last.

By unspoken consent the corporations leave Downhang alone because every couple of years the inhabitants will come up with something amazing that a corporation wouldn't think to research. As soon as a corporation works out how it is made or how it can be made on an industrial scale they patent it and stop buying it from Downhang. The last time it happened was with a shape-changing plastic called 'psi-stuff' that reacted to the thoughts of even non-psi who came into contact with it. 10 years later and it has been patented under a dozen names for a hundred applications, from perfectly fitting bras to next-gen military armor to ultra-comfortable chairs... and nobody is buying it from Grandma Redburn anymore.

The psychometabolics of The Strand are playing their cards close to their shape-changing chests. Both Lish and Morph are sold as vials of liquid containing food proteins, DNA, human cells, food coloring, and anything else they think will throw researchers off the trail and keep the money coming in for a bit longer. All that is known about the drugs beyond the inner circle is that a single psychometabolic practitioner can make it alone with only minimal lab equipment, probably most of the process takes place from glands that they grow within their own bodies. There are rumours that mundanes who take Lish or Morph gain psychic powers, but that is an urban legend.

Protection

If you have the money you can buy a spot on Nob Hill. Provided you don't ever leave your compound no country or corporation can touch you. Battleship has at least one nuke, maybe more. The last country who tried to attack Downhang suffered badly. Anybody who tries to invade will face a confusing watery maze of a city guarded by psychic gangs and aquatic monsters. Finally anybody who sends an assassin in will get caught by the Setting Sons - there is a reason ESPers get to live on Chichester Island for free.

Politics of Downhang...

Downhang is run by a rough-and-ready parliamentary system. The parliament meets on Temple Hill in the buddhist temple itself.

A lower house of 27 members is elected by the people, with three members of parliament from each important district (Tower District, despite looming over the skyline, isn't considered important enough to be given a vote). Each member of parliament has their vote weighted by the number of people who voted for them. The monks of Temple Hill refuse to vote, so have no members of parliament to represent them. The votes of those on Nob Hill are collected by the Setting Sons and always seem to favor candidates friendly to the Setting Sons, so the Setting

Sons have 6 members of parliament. The Sea Monsters vote for candidates from The Float, as no Sea Monster has stood for election. In reality that brings the number of members of parliament down to 21 individuals as nothing stops somebody from running in multiple districts. The laws passed by the lower house are sent up to a council called the Council of Clades. The Council of Clades consists of one member from each of the nine most important groups. The current council members are:

The Monks - Lobsang Dave.

The Setting Sons - Lt. Jaime Branson (proxy for her commanding officer Major Andrew Agnew).

The Kinetic Guild - Whoever is in charge that week.

The Ladies of London - Aunty LeToyah Destroyah.

The Junior Kaiju Klub - King Dinokrush.

The Wizards - Master Quizzlefitz, Professor of *Defending Against Dark Magics (and Guns)*

The Sea Monsters - Whoever the people of Float can convince to turn up, usually an empty seat.

The Redburn Clan - Grandma Lucy Redburn.

The Council of Captains - Cptn. Janet Stevenson.

Generally the Council of Clades won't pass any law that the parliament proposes that impinges of the ability of each group to do as they will within their own district or districts, though there are exceptions to every rule. One notable law passed is that if you flee a crime from one district to another and are caught you are tried in the district that you committed the crime in but if found guilty sentenced in the district that you are caught in and by the group that catches you.

Martial Arts of Downhang...

The Downhang has a lot of psychics per head and they have developed some unique fighting arts that use their abilities.

War Song uses telekinetic abilities in a unique way. The practitioner constantly pushes outwards with their powers, but so lightly as not to move anything. This means that the telekinetic is constantly 'touching' everything around them. As soon as they feel an opponent's muscles tense to attack them the practitioner of this art squeezes the internal organs of the opponent, inducing dizziness and weakness before the opponent can even throw a punch.

Hornets and Shield is a flashy psychokinetic art, relying on the practitioner having a handful of metal objects. The martial artist heats these and keeps them whirling around her or his body as a high-speed shield, then sending an arc of whirling white-hot metal out to strike their foe.

The Way of the Four Elements is four distinct techniques unlocked by psychometabolism. The first form, earth, teaches the practitioner how to instantly grow rigid armor before a blow lands and re-absorb the armor an instant later. The second form, air, teaches how to grow new joints and bend the body in unexpected ways so as to avoid blows. The third form, water, teaches the practitioner how to become liquid - flowing the body around fists, bullets, and blades so that there is no impact or cut possible. The final form, fire, teaches the practitioner how to exude powerful acids from every cell and flow their body back over blades and fists to consume the arm that made the attack.

Monster Stomp is a simple art, similar to sumo but with more biting and claws and tentacles. The Junior Kaiju Klub uses the art, as does to a lesser extent the Sea Monsters. Unless you weigh as much as a small elephant and are covered in spikes the art is pretty useless.

The Shifting Staff is an art used by psychometabolism users who can change objects. Armed with a metal bo staff the practitioner warps it as it moves, allowing it to strike around guards and wrap around necks or become sharp and sword-like to stab and cut. Facing it is like fighting a metal snake.

Lightning Fists is based on boxing, though without the queensbury rules and with energy-infused hands.

The Invisible Path is an art used by those who have ESP, or Precognition, and involves expert dodges combined with well timed strikes. It doesn't look flashy, in fact those watching won't see any superhuman feats beyond exceptional choreography.

Air Tracking is a rare psychometry art. It requires the practitioner to sense the past of air or water molecules, enabling them to follow a psychic 'scent' unerringly to its source. Not a fighting art itself, it is a vital tool for bounty hunters and assassins.

Hackers of Downhang...

Apart from brute-force radio transmissions (like those from the TV stations run out of Battleship or the transmitting equipment maintained by The Wall or Chichester Island) not much can get through the EM interference put out by Nob Hill or Caractacus Crater. The Wall does run data lines along with the power lines, but most of those suffer breaks pretty frequently. Sending data is insecure in Downhang - the data and power lines thread over and through the boats of The Float. Most anything worth hacking is not connected to the low-baud data lines but is part of the Downhang Sneakernet.

The Downhang Sneakernet is a network of disks, optical drives, data sticks, magnetic tapes, quantum crystals, and print-outs that is physically moved around Downhang. A great deal of these are archives of pirated entertainment that are traded around between anybody who has a solar panel and an old media station. Games, movies, feelies, and songs move around hand-to-hand ... as do a lot of viruses. It is usual to have to reformat an average downhang computer about once a month.

Hacking in Downhang therefore consists of intercepting couriers and physically taking their data media, then decrypting it. Downhang hackers are more likely to use a knife than a keyboard.

An elite sub-group of couriers are the Writers. These psychics imprint data files into the minds of others, and have colleagues at their destination read the data back from the unknowing courier's mind. It is hard to intercept or co-opt a courier if they themselves do not know that they are carrying data. Typically a Writer will sit in a crowded souk or bar and pick passersby at random, sending dozens of copies of their file out with a subtle mental nudge to go to the destination. However, the method is not 100% secure - not only can 'Fishers' mentally scan crowds for signs of couriers but sometimes couriers discover the remains of the data file in their dreams.

Unusual professions from Downhang...

Face - You have been biosculpted and your job is to pose or show off at the entrance to your sculptors' shop (usually a tent in the Freehang bazaar or at a boat moored at Strand). You are a

living advertisement. Suggestions: *Perfect body. Freak. Living Artwork.* Suggestions: *Perfect body. Freak. Living Artwork.* Equipment: *Swimsuit. Moving tattoos. Access to a surgeon/healer.*

Singer - You are a biokinetic who specializes in vocal manipulation and dancing. You probably spend a lot of time in the clubs at Strand or go to private functions on Nob Hill, and sculpt yourself to be attractive (or to fit your audience's desires). If you aren't a member of The Ladies of London then you are at least on good terms with them. Suggestions: *Downhang Opera. Living Drum Set. Party Girl.* Equipment: *Fashionable micromesh clothing or fetish/club-wear (maybe both). Luminescent makeup. Knife.*

Pro-Courier - You can sneak data from one place to the next, and are adept at passing for a regular person. You have the skills of a spy, together with being able to do parkour and swim when you are spotted. Suggestions: *Boat-runner. The Face-in-the-crowd. The Tough Guy.* Equipment: *Collapsible taser-baton. Waterproof bag. Disguise. Data-implant.*

Ghost - You specialize in changing your form to look like others. Sometimes this is for sexual reasons, but mostly your clients want to say a last goodbye to somebody they lost. You are part bereavement counselor, part actor, part adult escort. Suggestions: *Blank Canvas. Mother. Lover.* Equipment: *Nice home. Boat. Sword.*

Line Swimmer - Your job is to fix the breaks in the power lines that run to and from The Wall. Often this involves swimming between boats in The Float. You are one part engineer, two parts diplomat, and when somebody has been pirating electricity you are an enforcer too. Suggestions: *Electrician. Secret Hacker. Thug.* Equipment: *Skiff. Tools. Small caliber gun.*

Gyrocopter Pilot - Water taxis are slow, and have to take circuitous routes. You specialize in getting one or two passengers or small loads from A to B fast. Just don't fly too near to Nob Hill or you might get fired upon. Suggestions: *Hotshot. The Guy with One Ear To The Street. Auto-Rickshaw Union Member.* Equipment: *Gyrocopter. Fuel canisters. Maps.*

Freelance Judge - People come to you with their problems and disputes for your wisdom. Not every gang or cult wants to deal with arguments over who caught what fish or who owes who for fixing whose boat. You are on good terms with most of the people who run your district, and know how to get along with the people of neighboring districts too. Suggestions: *Former Corporate Drone. Street Politician. Old Wise One.* Equipment: *Begging bowl. Sharp suit. Rifle.*

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