

DYSTOPIAN AGE

OUTLAWS OF THE UNION FRONTIER

The Outlaws are a rag-tag mix of men and women. Each forging their own path in the world, each fiercely independent. To the Union and Lawmen, they are viewed as desperate and dangerous criminals. The term outlaw is as a slur among the men and women of the Union. In these troubled times, where war and wages thrive, cut-throats, bandits and mercenaries inevitably follow.

Separately, the Outlaws flock to charismatic men and women who offer them, fame, fortune or a glorious destiny. The Dystopian Age makes such individuals into outlaw nobility, their services for hire as displays of power to intimidate others. Outlaws can turn a rich man into a dangerous one. Of course, it goes without saying that this any relationship based on coin quickly turn predatory if an employer fails to keep his mercenaries well paid.

Though the Outlaws are a varied bunch, they largely fall under one of four Affiliations. The Mercenaries are those outlaws who fight only for money and power. Aided by biomechanical implants and experimental weaponry acquired on the black market, these Outlaws lead a reckless and fugitive lifestyle. They are less concerned with noble causes or lofty ideals and instead are driven by promises of fame and fortune.

The Confederate Rebellion continue to fight the Ore War on behalf of the southern states, even though that Civil war ended more than a decade ago. The Conquistadores are a band of supposedly immortal explorers who find themselves on a holy quest, fighting injustice as they go and answerable to no-one but their god. Finally, the Golden Army are the brave revolutionaries fighting to free their beloved Mexico from the oppressive Union.

Report from Judge Kingsley Stern to High Marshal Frederick Douglass, Washington

It is my duty to report to you the current state of affairs regarding the miscreants who consider themselves outside and above the great Law of our nation. It is a sad truth of the times that there are those who have more and those who have less and despite this being one of society's natural laws, there will always be those who will take what they want without regard or care for those from whom they take it.

I have come to consider myself something of a shepherd to the people of the untamed Western Territories but no matter how diligently a shepherd tends his flock, there is always a single rule that must be observed. The wolf will have his day. And those so-called Outlaws are imbued with predatory natures. In a difficult environment where hard-working men and woman barely scratch a living from the unforgiving terrain, these wolves thrive. Our world is changing and these Outlaws adapt swiftly. They are in possession of three key qualities: strength, charisma and

cunning. By themselves, these traits are useful to those seeking success in our world. When all three are combined... that is where the real trouble begins.



When operating separately these Outlaw leaders are a danger, especially when they sell their services and ally themselves as mercenaries with our enemies. What is most difficult to counter, however, is when these outlaws band together in common cause. Usually it will be for a share of whatever spoils are to be plundered from criminality, but there have been cases where mutual hatred on the Union or the Law has been sufficient to make temporary bedfellows of the most unlikely of miscreants.

I have taken it upon myself to detail those most likely to become known across this great nation of ours. Each is dangerous beyond words and the Federated States Marshal Service should not rest until they are brought to justice and taken to the



gallows to feel the righteous caress of the noose at their throat.

JESSE JAMES

Above others, this name must be marked and noted. It is said that the mercenary man sees opportunity where others buckle in adversity. The recent Union Civil War and the perpetual border clashes around the world present many chances for personal gain. But in the lawless regions, the retribution for a failed gambit can be swift and it can be merciless. In these hardened Territories, it appears that Jesse James has gambled all that he has and all that he was in order to become a self-style 'King of the Thieves'.

His very name is synonymous with division. Most law-abiding folk see him as nothing more than a common criminal: a thief, a bandit, a con-man and, most crucially, a killer. But despite the blatant evidence of his crimes, there are still those who consider this rogue to be a hero, a paragon of the people whose goals are thought be worthy and awe-inspiring. The man is an enigma and plays his cards close to his chest – literally and figuratively.

He led a recent raid (and I am reluctant to acknowledge, a daring one at that) on the newly-established Heavy Rail line, which supplies the border forts and Marshal stations out here on the frontier. James and his posse successfully de-railed the RJ-locomotive, an act which scattered a year's worth of guns, vehicles and other equipment across the desert just west of Kansas City. Before the Union had even drawn up an inventory of the stolen goods, any number of outlaws under James' banner were armed to hilt with weapons just as powerful as those back east, given that they originated at the *Pipeworks*. In this one, bold act, Jesse James has shifted the balance of power out here.

It is my understanding that the man should have been dead a long time ago, but whether it be luck or some greater power at work, the man cheats death repeatedly. A fight with a vicious beast known as a Weylyn (*see my report on the Warrior Nations*) did not stop him and by all rights it should have: both arms were ripped from his body.

Further investigation suggests that James forged an alliance with Burson Carpathian, the infamous scientist from the Covenant of the Enlightened. Carpathian's name will appear over and over again in my reports and I attribute much of the woes of the Frontier, as well as our great country, to that

detestable technological autocrat. Whatever deal James struck meant that Carpathian gifted him with two extraordinarily crafted artificial limbs, said to be quite exquisite and intricate in design. Bandits I have questioned (shortly before hanging of course) believe that the price of this 'gift' means that Jesse James is now at Carpathian's beck and call. I can't imagine a man like James cares much for Carpathian, but nonetheless, he has been given another opportunity to take and steal from life what he so clearly believes he is entitled to.

BILLY BONNEY AND HIS REGULATORS

A man with a reputation as large as Jesse James will naturally cast a shadow in which other, lesser men will eternally skulk. William Bonney is one such man. Young, headstrong and impetuous, Bonney rarely teams up with Jesse James. When he does, things allegedly flare up and the two egos clash. It is a simple case of Bonney perceiving James as a broken man who has served his purpose and who should make way for a faster, younger man. In return, James likely sees Bonney as not only a challenger to his ill-fitting crown, but as little more than an upstart. It is said that James coined the sobriquet 'The Kid', which Bonney allegedly despises.

Bonney champions the opportunistic Carpathian's RJ-1027 technology in its many forms and has been quick to switch to 'juice' as the fuel is known colloquially. He utilises modern weaponry in his various criminal activities, which include but are in no way limited to, bank and stage robberies, street brawls and on occasion, simply 'settling an argument'. He has been heard to bad-mouth Jesse James in public on more than one occasion and his jealousy of Carpathian's 'gift' apparently knows no bounds.

From reports – and from first hand observations – Bonney has no sense of guilt or remorse relating to the murders that he commits and I am forced to conclude that the man revels in the sheer, bloody joy it must bring to his repulsively tarnished spirit. William Bonney is man quick to anger, quick to revenge and, it appears, quick to round up like-minded individuals who share his goals.

He is the leader of a hopelessly loyal gang known as the Regulators, who tread a curious line between notoriety and legitimacy. This is down to the interfering of desperate Lawmen, men and women who I am adding to my list of those who require justice to be served up to them in due course.



For all his anger and youthful belligerence, Bonney's nature, I suspect, belies a calm, calculating intelligence. He acts instinctively, but it cannot be disputed that at times he will plan meticulously before engaging in any sort of activity.

He is young and physically impressive, and it is this youth and vibrancy which lends him an edge that not even Jesse James can enjoy. To utilise the vernacular used by these outlaws, he is the quick – and those in his way will likely become the dead.

JOHNNY RINGO AND HIS COWBOYS

There are those in the frontier like the hard-working Lawmen who occasionally earn a degree of public repute through acts of selflessness and heroism. But there are more by far who become famous during their own lifetime for infinitely less salubrious acts. Those are the men and women for whom the taste of notoriety is a finer wine by far. Johnny Ringo is just one man among many mean-spirited, foul-mouthed and lawless villains, but he is also by far and away one of the most bloody-minded. Set apart from many other by dint of his inherent charm and good breeding, Ringo is supremely arrogant and self-absorbed; using his "superior" intellect to bamboozle his underlings and impress the gullible.

Ringo is a crack-shot, cold-blooded killer; a marksman without peer and he is justly feared for it. He is rumoured to have taken down more duel opponents than any other man in the West and this may well be true. It is certainly not something our deputies contest – at least not to his face.

Despite his tendency to bear grudges and pursue personal revenge against any number of foes, Ringo is, in his own way, a superlative leader, commanding respect and fear from those who follow his command. He is equally at home planning a bank heist as he is at opening fire on a Lawmen posse just for the sheer and unbridled joy of it.

Ringo harbours a particular hatred of our own High Marshal Wyatt Earp and the other Lawmen attached to the city of Tombstone. It is surely a matter of time before that situation comes to a head. For now, Ringo and those who follow him stampede their way through the West, robbing, killing, gambling and drinking their way to their notion of glory.

PANCHO VILLA AND HIS GOLDEN ARMY

We move further south from the western frontier

lands with this individual. Pancho Villa was born and raised in the hills of Northern Mexico. He is the eldest of five children and records suggest he grew up in comparative poverty. As is often the way with large families, an individual swiftly learns that the best way to be noticed was by making the most noise – and Pancho Villa makes plenty of noise.

As he grew from boy to man, what is certainly a hair-trigger temper clearly dictated his path. In common with his contemporaries, he is a bitter man, perpetually angry at what he sees as the unfair hand that Fate has dealt him. These traits have produced a most dangerous individual indeed.

It seems that Pancho Villa has chosen to steer his own destiny. A desperate desire to improve his lot has driven him to acts of theft and banditry and, like so many others who walk this ill-fated path, he too has become a stone-cold murderer of his fellow man.

Despite his denouncement by the authorities, Villa discovered that his acts of murder had not cause revulsion among his peers. Indeed, despite some obvious cruelty, particularly towards women, this pauper-made-good had somehow become a local hero. On the subject of women, I am reminded of a particularly gruesome tale regarding Villa's second wife. Though no doubt embellished in parts, the story goes that in a fit of jealous rage Villa is said to have killed a man simply for massaging the foot of his wife. The woman, Maria, was then blinded in one eye and badly disfigured by Pancho's own blade. Maria was left for dead to serve as a warning to all others: This is what happens to those who disrespect Pancho Villa.

It is likely that Villa's path became clear when the Union swept in and occupied Mexico. This was his country and he was not prepared to be told what to do by – and I quote – 'some blue-jacketed soldier boy'. He fomented a revolution, slow to catch, but when it finally did, it burned as outright rebellion.

The next part of this report is pure hyperbole, information gathered over a number of interrogations of many of Villa's cronies and followers. It is believed that he had a chance meeting with the Nazombu witch, Marie Laveau (*note: see my report 'Persons of Interest'*) and from her, he received a prophecy.

Allegedly, she told him of a boy from Durango who would rise up at the head of a 'golden army' and conquer the Americas. It seems that he has taken



this prophecy and determined to shape it to his own ends. His rebellion grew, both in size and in reputation and expanded beyond Mexico's borders. The men and women who flocked to his banner became known as his Golden Army in accordance with the prophecy.

Villa led a revolution in the south, taking lands where he could and becoming rich and powerful in the process. He was driven back by the Union many times and yet his passionate Golden Army remained undeterred, engaging in ever-more bold and daring acts.

Eventually, Mexico was no longer enough for Villa. He masterminded a surprise attack on a Union garrison in Texas. In this single act, Villa made himself known as a force that the government could no longer ignore and had to take seriously. The riches of technology and resources he seized during his next raid on an Enlightened convoy were soon deployed in support of his army.

It seems that he wants a share of the riches offered by the wealthy Union. As far as I have been able to determine, where Pancho Villa is concerned, his share is 'all'.

JUAN PONCE DE LEON

On encountering the self-styled Conquistadores gang, I was struck by the spectacle as they came replete with appropriately gaudy golden armour to add verisimilitude to their ridiculous story and sobriquet. Of all the outlaws operating on the Union Frontier, the story of Juan Ponce de Leon and his Conquistadores is by far the most incredible. By incredible I of course mean that it is beyond credulity. Such an account cannot be taken as anything more than self-delusion and hearsay, however as we have so little to report on this particular band of miscreant we must retell the extraordinary tale here.

Juan Ponce de Leon emerged from the Florida coast with claims that he is the very same man who set out in search of the Fountain of Youth nearly three hundred years ago. Of course we cannot believe even a shred of his preposterous claims for even in a world of mechanised corpse-flesh, shapeshifters and our own Federally endorsed super-science, the fountain of youth is still considered little more than a fairy tale. To give the man some credit, whether one believes these claims about the outcome of de Leon's quest he cares not, for he is self-assured in the truth as he sees it. The reality may be stranger than the fantasy however. I have spoken to him

directly and he seems to view the events that led him to this point through the eyes of one who is trying to reconcile what he believes with what he has experienced. Perhaps Investigator Miller may be a better person to interview him when he is apprehended?

He claims to have been guided to a sacred shrine some three centuries ago where he found his Fountain of Eternal Life. As foretold to him in a vision, de Leon took a golden goblet from his knapsack and placed it into the fountain so that it might be filled with life giving waters. In a split second his hand had aged centuries and then was gone. The goblet fell from his grasp and tumbled into the volatile waters at the heart of the fountain. They were beset on by all manner of strange creatures as the shrine shook violently at the transgression. As his men were cut down there was a blinding flash and de Leon and his men awoke to find that three centuries had passed.

Unable to comprehend what had happened to him or his Conquistadores, de Leon lives with the delusion that he has been granted eternal life and now explores this new world like a traveling lord. Several of our Lawmen have tried to challenge this delusion but he dismisses their prattling as temptation to lure him from his righteous path. The Conquistadores under his command remain loyal, though a few, like Tomasito Bernal, have shown less of the zeal and fervour his supposed sacred task requires and only infrequently accompany him.

Since his supposed "reawakening" Ponce de Leon has led his men from the jungles south of the Socialist Unity of South America up to the Union Frontier. Along the way he has broken countless laws and found himself righting wrongs where he finds them - upholding his view of justice where he can. Though popular with the people, he has rightly drawn the ire of the authorities. Juan Ponce de Leon is a noble man with a delusional mind. We can neither tolerate his brand of vigilante justice nor the crimes he and his Conquistadores have committed when unsavoury characters have exploited their delusions to their own ends.

JONATHAN JACKSON'S REBELLION

I broach this group with caution, for despite their criminality, there are those who regard them as heroes and their leader, Jonathan 'Stonewall' Jackson, as nothing short of a military genius.

The capitulation to the Union's terms by the



Confederate army in their surrender occurred more than a decade ago. Yet this decision is still bitterly regretted by many, not least of which are those who served under the command of General Jonathan 'Stonewall' Jackson.

It is unquestionable that Jackson is regarded by most who fought in that most brutal Civil War to be the most gifted tactician and commander ever to graduate from the Union Academy at West Point. He carved out a reputation during clashes along the Mexican front and during this time, commanding the Stonewall Brigade, he earned his epithet.

He won virtually every battle he waged and having been laid low following an ambush by Union skirmishers Jackson knew eternal shame as he was carried from that field of battle in a state close to death. None expected him to survive and without their most gifted commander – not to mention being beset on all sides by an enemy with a clear technological advantage – the surrender of Jackson's beloved Confederacy followed less than a month after his incapacitation.

But Fate plays strange games and Jackson did not die. A young socialite, sympathetic to the Confederate cause, brought a man known as Kyle the Black to see the dying General. In this moment, Jackson experienced the skills of the Enlightened at first hand and was saved from certain death.

Like all who make deals with such devils, Jackson was aware that the price for his resurrection would likely be steep – but it is a price that perhaps he must pay some other day. For now, he has gathered his still-loyal forces to him, taken to the mountains to make a camp of sorts and begun developing his strategies once more.

For over a decade, he and his men have waged guerrilla warfare against the 'accursed and arrogant' Union. His tactics, over the years, have changed and evolved as new technologies are brought forth (including those which allow his loyal followers to avoid detection), but Jackson understands well that the fundamentals of war will never change. He makes alliances and undertakes missions for his various Enlightened patrons, often under the guise of legitimacy, but I deeply suspect that he nurtures his dream of restoring the Confederacy to its former greatness.

The old warhorse, I would dare to suggest, has more than a few battles left in him.

THE RAIDERS OF WILLIAM QUANTRILL

Tragedy is a strange form of romance, particularly when it is attached to an individual. Much like his former commander, Quantrill is perceived as a romantic hero in the eyes of Confederate sympathisers rather than the war criminal he truly is.

During the Ore War, Quantrill's Raiders were a band of irregular Confederate cavalry who specialised in guerrilla tactics - sweeping relentlessly through unprotected townships, leaving untold devastation in their wake. Such actions bring a reputation and such a reputation brings a price. For William Quantrill, that price was exacted when the Union detained female relatives of the Raiders in a Missouri jail. Regrettably, when that jail collapsed, killing and maiming the women and children within its walls, the Raiders were compelled to exact a swift and bloody revenge with Quantrill very much at the fore.

The resulting massacres perpetrated by Quantrill's Raiders have left hundreds dead. Despite the toll living life on the run has taken, for Quantrill the war will never end. He rallies the most violent and the most extreme elements of the old Confederacy and its sympathisers and attacks military and civilian targets alike.

Over time, many of the original Raiders have gone, either to meet their makers, or others, like Frank and Jesse James chose to leave and have since found their own causes. Quantrill remains a constant, however, and will often be found at the head of such attack. The Union rightly sees him as a criminal, but in his eyes, it is he who is the wronged party and his fervent belief in this sustains him. A man with nothing to lose is a dangerous man indeed.

MARCUS WAYWARD AND HIS EIGHT

Captain Marcus Wayward had everything going for him and nothing against. As a charismatic young soldier whose heroism ensured he rose through the ranks, he was generally considered the pinnacle to which all young Confederates should climb. He was admired, respected and could generally do no wrong in the eyes of his superiors. That all changed the day he held up his hands in surrender.

For Marcus Wayward, there was no understanding or sympathy. Nobody cared that he had taken the decision to save the lives of his squad who were hemmed into an impossible-to-escape corner



during a battle that claimed countless lives in the now long-destroyed Tranquility river valley. In his unexpected act of surrender, they saw only a coward, a man who had turned his back on all that Confederate army stood for and he was duly stripped of his rank, his uniform, his weapons and his pride. Ejected from the Confederacy under a dark cloud, his squad startled everyone by refusing to allow him to suffer alone. They insisted on continuing to call him Captain and no matter how hard he tried to shake them off – and admittedly, he didn't really try at all – he couldn't seem to ditch them.

Collectively, they have become known as the Wayward Eight and they pick up mercenary jobs for whoever has the readiest cash. One of Marcus' first decisions was to accept a Warcradle Ironhide as down payment for a dirty job Carpathian needed doing. The crew trust Wayward to choose their jobs for them, but his decisions aren't always good ones. A particularly ill-fated excursion was undertaken last year on behalf of Burson Carpathian. How many times does that man's name crop up in relation to the Outlaws of the Union Frontier I wonder? That excursion has left the Wayward Eight somewhat more of a broken and angry force of late. But I suspect it will take more than the loss of a limb and a few poor choices to keep down the irrepressible spirits of Marcus' crew.

THE ONLY LAW

It grieves me to pen details of these criminals, these Most Wanted. But the mercenary heart of every outlaw, whether surrounded by their brothers and sisters, or whether sitting along at a corner table glaring at the world, calls them to prove their worth – and to enjoy the fruits of this age of plenty on their own terms. Nobody is going to tell them what they cannot do, where they cannot go, or who they can or cannot kill.

Each of these individuals and others like them, are kings and queens in their own mind. They obey the only laws they truly understand: survival of the fittest and to the victor goes the spoils.

Rest assured that my fellow Marshals and I will strive for as long as it takes to bring these felons to the justice they so richly deserve. No one person is above the great laws of our country. You may trust in me that these 'Outlaws' will not prosper.

I remain, your most faithful servant,
Kingsley