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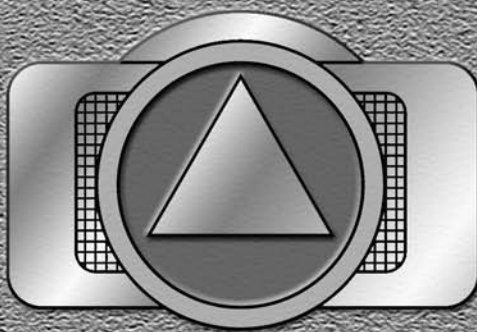
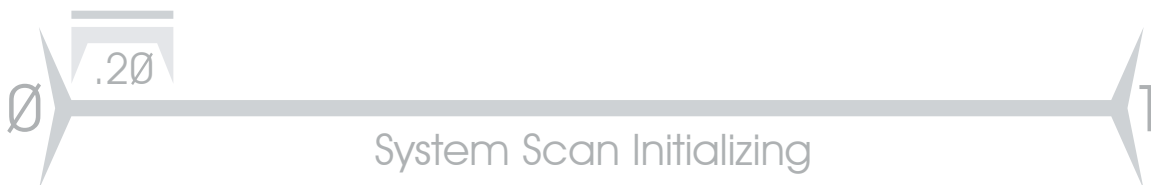


TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE ILLUSION OF POWER	5	INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITIONS	37
INTRODUCTION	8	Overview	38
How to Use This Book	8	History	38
MechWarrior, Third Edition	8	Operations	39
THE DARKNESS OF LIGHT	9	Conclusion	41
THE SIXTH OF JUNE	12	Draft Report Addendum	42
Sixth of June: Unravelling the Mysteries	13	Gamemaster's Section	47
Fracture and Reformation: A Historical Perspective	13	Goals of Interstellar Expeditions	47
Power and Fanaticism	15	Known Facts	47
Machiavellian Politics, Plots and Free Enterprise	16	Character Involvement	49
The Master and Followers	17	GENECASTE	50
Final Thoughts and New Revelations	18	Paranoid Fantasy or Horrific Reality?	51
Gamemaster's Section	21	Nightmares	51
Organization	21	Genecaste: The Real Story	54
Sixth of June Scenarios	21	Genecaste Society	54
THE ILLUMINATI	22	Gamemaster's Section	58
Absolute Power	23	How to Use the Genecaste	58
The Illuminati's Past	23	BROTHERHOOD OF CINCINNATUS	60
The Rising Order	24	Patriots or Terrorists?	61
The Great Illuminati War	25	Origins of the Brotherhood	61
Activities in the Present Day	28	The Brotherhood Speaks	63
Gamemaster's Section	29	Gamemaster's Section	66
IRIAN CORPORATE CABAL	30	The Real Evolution of the Brotherhood	66
Irian Technologies: Ruler of the Galaxy or Simply Business?	31	Organization and Goals	67
History of Irian Technologies	31	THE EXITURI	68
Politics and Other Pastimes	32	Encyclopedia Galactica: Exituri	69
Playing the Puppeteer	33	Encyclopedia Galactica: Shiloh	69
Business is Business is Life	34	Irian News Interstellar Syndicated Article: As He Wills	70
Gamemaster's Section	35	Gamemaster's Section	75
The Truth Behind the Cabal	35	The "Truth"	75
Organization and Goals	36	THE ONE STAR FAITH	76
Characters and the Cabal	36	Destination Unknown	77
		The Faith Among the Clans	77
		Is It As Bad As It Looks?	79

KIRI-J(F) SYSTEM SECURITY SCANNER (12.3.87 BUILD 396)

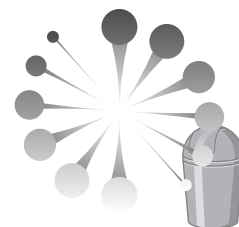


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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Gamemaster's Section	80	The JärnFolk	109
Goals of the One Star Faith	80	Contact Report ESC-COL 67-4-7	109
Organizational Structure	81	Blood Simple: The Journal of Adept Jonas Veranov	112
The One Star Faith and Players	81	Gamemaster's Section	114
THE BOUNTY HUNTER	82	The Hidden	115
The Bounty Hunter: Piercing the Legend	83	From Atlantis to Jardine, are the lost really "lost?"	115
The History	83	RULES ADDENDUM	116
The Myth	84	Classic BattleTech RPG Rules	117
The Man	86	Traits	117
The Legend Reborn	86	Influence (New)	117
Answers, Or More Questions?	87	Special Contact (New)	119
Gamemaster's Section	88	Special Enemy (New)	119
The Bounty Hunter's Associates	88	Skills and Fields	119
Support	88	Martial Arts/Systema (New)	119
Hiring the Bounty Hunter	89	New Occupational Fields	120
Player Character Involvement	89	Personal Equipment	121
DAVION WARRIORS' CABAL	90	Järnfolk Pistols	121
Gamemaster's Section	94	Suicide Implants	121
Organization and Goals	95	Concealed Toxins	121
Player Character Involvement	95	Incendiary, Chemical and Explosive Implants	121
MINOR GROUPS	96	Remote or Automatic Activation Implants	122
The Far Lookers	97	Battlesuit/Exoskeleton	122
Looking Outward	97	Space Operations Adaptation (Inner Sphere)	122
A New Era	98	Environmental Survival Implants	123
Winters of Discontent	98	Roleplaying Addendum	124
Changing Times	99	Brainwashing	124
Building a Better Tomorrow	99	Living in a Micro-Gravity Environment	125
Conclusion	99	Roleplaying With Interstellar Players	126
Gamemaster's Section	100	Interstellar Player NPCs	128
The Coterie	101	Bounty Hunter Game Rules	128
Thoughtful Echoes	101	Genecaste NPCs	128
Gamemaster's Section	103	Genesubcaste Rules	128
The Scourge of Death	105	Manei Domini As Non-Player Characters	131
Omni Public Archive Record: The Scourge of Death	105	Classic BattleTech Rules	134
The Coursing	106	Manei Domini Infantry	134
The Sangreal	107	The Bounty Hunter	135
Gamemaster's Section	108	Record Sheets	138



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THE ILLUSION OF POWER

Hands clasped together, slender fingers joined in a thoughtful steeple, Morgana sat at the head of a long table of polished, deep-stained pseudo-oak and savored—for the moment—the luxury of her high-backed synthleather chair. She surveyed the rest of the gathering as men and women, clad in suits and dresses as conservative and severe as her own—some adorned only as much as their solemn modesty would allow—claimed their seats around the conference table.

Still muttering among themselves, those who enjoyed their vices of fine brandy and finer cigars drained the dregs from their glasses and crushed out the last of their tobacco. The room's auto-refreshers quickly scrubbed clean the thin mist they left behind, replacing the pungent odor with the fresher, sweeter scents of Morgana's favored native lilac blossoms.

In the dim lighting of overhead chandeliers, the grand chamber, its bulletproof bay windows concealed beneath heavy white drapes and gold braids, seemed far too ostentatious for the boardroom attire of its occupants. Its rows of bookshelves, crammed full of classic print volumes in synthleather bindings, instead hinted at a more classical and ancient library or study. Of course, the classical surroundings were, like most things in these people's lives, a ruse to distract those from outside their selective order. Beneath the bookshelves, under the table's polished surface and even entwined with the air conditioning and refreshers, an array of hidden sensors, displays, holographic emitters and electronic jammers made the room more of a command center than a study, a place to plan and influence.

A command center befitting a member of those who truly—rightfully—ruled the affairs of all humankind.

The Illuminati.

A genuine smile came to Morgana's face as Balder claimed a seat beside her, first offering a half-bow of respect to the evening's host. Balder, like Morgana, claimed his name only for the occasion—a name associated with the culture of the realm his family ruled, above even its own ruling House. Though all Illuminati made it a point to know each other's true names, at functions such as these tradition demanded the veneer of false identity.

As the Steiner Illuminist sat, Morgana once more savored the warm glow of pride, but masked her feelings with a light sip from her own wineglass. A warm blend of peaches and native grapes hit her tongue as she silently enjoyed the deference of her guests, her supposed equals. The sensation was as gratifying as the lifetime of quiet, virtually unmatched rule Morgana enjoyed over her own realm, a sensation made all the more pleasant by that fact that she—like

her peers—knew this kind of power for *real*, while the so-called Great Houses would know it only as an illusion.

Clearing her throat as she set down the glass, Morgana rose as the last of her colleagues finally settled down, and tapped a concealed key at her end of the table. A soft click sounded from the chamber doors behind her and at the far end of the room as locks engaged to prevent any servants from entering unbidden, while jammers in the ceiling simultaneously engaged to scramble any sensor accidentally or deliberately trained on this chamber from within or without. Thirteen pairs of eyes focused on Morgana as the chandelier nearest to her increased its glow slightly, responding to another light tap on the table.

"Welcome, my brothers and sisters," she said, her cool voice commanding respect as her eyes met each Illuminist in turn. "I am pleased and honored that we could gather here this evening. It has been far too long since our last converse."

"The honor and the pleasure is ours, Morgana," said Izanagi, the Combine's Supreme Illuminist, who claimed the chair to Balder's right. His dark Asian eyes demonstrated none of his Lyran colleague's deference to the hostess, but instead held the intensity of one determined to show no weakness, expose no secrets, and—above all else—to get the job done. Morgana had to admire that about him, even if his politely phrased interruption egged her on.

Morgana nodded to Izanagi to let him know she got the message. *Let's get down to business, then.*

With another subtle tap, the large, apparently seamless surface of the pseudo-oak table separated at the center. Four panels slid noiselessly into the remainder, forcing Minerva—the Free Worlds' Supreme Illuminist—to quickly snatch back her half-filled wineglass before it could topple into the crevasse. From within the thick tabletop, a mini-holotank arose, broad and flat and unlit until it reached its apex three centimeters above the table. As the room lights automatically dimmed in response, the projector brought to life a floating, two-dimensional image of the Inner Sphere and its nearest Periphery neighbors.

"Once more, my friends, we stand at a crossroads," Morgana told them. "Though the recent fighting has had its desired effects, hardening the various armies of our realms and strengthening the resolve of their peoples toward our common goals, our plans are far from complete. Stagnation—principally, the stagnation of certain leadership structures still in place—remains our greatest adversary."

Lei-Kung, the Capellan Illuminist seated at the far end of the table, scoffed at her remark. Morgana could feel the hard gaze of House Liao's smooth-headed master upon her, even though his eyes and figure remained shrouded in the dark-



THE ILLUSION OF POWER



ness beyond the holographic veil of the Inner Sphere. *Quick to the defensive as always.* Even Lei-Kung's chosen name, that of some Chinese god of retribution, seemed a deliberate ploy to raise her ire needlessly. It was a none-too-subtle needling from the Illuminist whose people long served as the focus for the unity of her own, as hers served his—all underscoring a fundamental principle of conflict serving the cause of unity.

Naturally, however, Lei-Kung's outburst brought only an annoyed glance from Minerva and a look of mild scorn from Michael, the Illuminist to Morgana's left. Michael frowned in contemplation as he turned again to face the projection, his arms crossed tightly before him.

"I assure you, Brother Lei-Kung, that I meant no disrespect," Morgana said. "Our people have all made great strides in readying the masses for the coming conflict, but we have played on the momentum of the status quo, and we all know it. A status quo that leaves our forces openly divided in the face of our rivals."

"Surely, Sister Morgana, you are not making your case for all-out war *again*?" Lei-Kung challenged. "Haven't we had this debate too many times before?"

"And with no resolution, one might add," Michael grumbled, a rare comment from the Illuminist who handled both ComStar and the Word of Blake. "Thus, as ever, we prepare two paths, when only one should be necessary."

Morgana spared a moment of pity for Michael's position, but only a moment. While it was true his people had been most openly divided between those who sought a final battle with the Traitor Illuminists of Kerensky and those who wanted normalization and reintegration with the Clans, in essence the situation was merely another ages-old ploy of their organization. Manipulation through perception. Conflict to distract the masses from the underlying truth. Unity hidden in division. Even those who commanded the vast armies and empires in wartime rarely suspected that, in the end, they all fought for the same masters.

Even when those masters were themselves divided.

It was time to reclaim control of this meeting.

"Be that as it may," Morgana said, breaking the tension that had followed Michael's words, "we have agreed to two paths, and we again thank you, Michael, for bringing us the means to follow both, presenting us with our sword and our shield."

Michael turned to her and nodded, but his eyes never emerged from their dark pools of shadow despite the multicolored lights cast by the holomap. Nevertheless, she caught the hint of a smile on his lips. The sword-and-shield reference had swollen his ego that much more.

"For now," she went on, "we should review our controls. This is too critical a time to leave anything to chance."

A muttered chorus of agreement answered.

Balder spoke first. "The decentralization of the Alliance continues apace," he said, his rich voice reverberating throughout the room. "We have broken down many of the structures of the

FedCom to improve flexibility, and we have seen a marked improvement in local initiative. This should keep the last wildcard in our plans there in check, until such time as we need to remove him."

"And to remove him? Are you still planning to use the Brotherhood?"

Balder leaned back in his chair and steepled his fingers. "The symbolism works out well. Their numbers continue to grow, and their influence over the military has matured. When and if we need a military man, the successor we choose would be an instant draw for them to back. True to form, it will be a military coup without a military uprising. Very Steiner."

"Excellent," Morgana said. "I have prepared much the same remedy for our own vestigial FedCom leadership through the Cabal and the Citizens. Depending on how forceful or urgent the need, we can move at any time as well. Izanagi? How are your controls?"

Izanagi tapped on the holomap, sending a ripple through the three-dimensional image centered on Luthien.

"I have a number of contingencies in place, to be played as needed," he said. "Of course, the *Kokuryu-kai* maintains all the illusion we need should anything go wrong, I also have a number of fail-safes in play, including IE, and a number of pivotal individuals. Any of them may be employed to provide the proper nudge at the proper time. Naturally, in keeping with the society, such change will be bloody—the masses would not accept any less—but I believe we can contain any real damage to less reliable elements."

Morgana nodded. Izanagi was absolutely committed to the final battle, but would play along with the rest of the Illuminati's plan. To that end, even a bloody coup and a vicious and open purge against his own people became an acceptable cost.

Minerva spoke next, having used Izanagi's speech as an opportunity to finish her wine and put the glass aside. "We, of course, have a number of factors in play as well—including corporate, militant, and religious stimulant groups. I have shared a number of these with Michael, so we can better coordinate the sword, if needed. Our sovereign remains problematic, however."

Morgana arched an eyebrow. "Problematic?"

"As you know, he remains stubbornly reformist and centrist, and is not obeying all his directives. Still, it will take only minimal effort to contain him, and Michael again has volunteered his services in that regard. In the meantime, we have managed to thwart his more dangerous reforms, and left others in play as a potential pretext for his removal."

"Hrmph!" Lei-Kung snorted. "In that, I suppose, we should be glad that your people have long ago become accustomed to changing leaders as others change socks."

Minerva rolled her eyes as the Capellan Illuminist continued. "The Chancellor has made great strides in consolidating his power base and bringing the Periphery back into our fold. Though I do not share Minerva's and Izanagi's desire to play the role of the

THE ILLUSION OF POWER

sword just now, I feel that Sun-Tzu's reforms need no checks and balances at this time. Nevertheless, I too have called upon Michael for some back-up, and there is, of course, the Genecaste factor."

A groan went up from several at the table.

"We should not need those abominations," Balder said irritably. "I often wonder why we allowed them to continue for so long, when we could have nipped them in the bud long before the Traitor left us and forged his thrice-damned Clans."

"Agreed," Minerva added. "Besides, with the added resources of IE and others, we can easily find something equally distracting that will not shatter the appearances of normality we've so long tried to build up for the masses. Leave the mutant factor out of this."

Lei-Kung feigned indifference as he waved away the comments, but Morgana could hear the pain of insult in his reply. "Should the conflict come that so many of you seek, we may find that we need all the help we can get," he said. "Controlling leaders is easily accomplished, but how suspicious do you think a series of coups across the Inner Sphere will look—benign or otherwise? If you need to draw your 'sword' so quickly, doing so with five separate overthrown governments will definitely tip our hand to the Traitor Illuminists, and will almost certainly get the masses' tongues wagging."

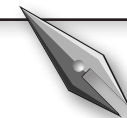
"No coups will be pulled off so rapidly," Morgana said wearily, "and you know it. We all agreed to our next course of action at our last meeting."

She turned to Michael, but directed her words at the others. "Michael has given us the means to present a neutral peacemaking force and an army of true believers who will stop at nothing to assure the integrity of our universal order. At the next transfer, we shall unveil our sword in all its glory, and the Traitor Illuminists will have to accept our resolve and our strength once and for all."

"And if they do not?" Lei-Kung challenged again. "If they call our bluff?"

"Then the sword must be drawn," Michael said before Morgana could reply. "And with our very survival at stake, I think we should not care how many rulers must be sacrificed in the name of victory."

—Excerpt from *Shadows and Shadow Kings*, an unpublished manuscript by the late Sherman Greene



INTRODUCTION



Well over twenty-two hundred worlds exist in the *Classic BattleTech* universe, the affairs of which are largely directed by the governments, militaries and intelligence agencies of the five Great Houses, the various Clans and a host of Periphery states to greater or lesser degree. With a population so large and space so vast, however, there exist groups well beyond these mere political entities who pull strings of their own, devoted to their own ideas and methods, working toward ultimate goals not apparent to the casual observer.

Massive megacorporations, far-reaching and ancient secret societies, quasi-religious orders—many such groups lurk in the shadows (or even in plain view, hidden behind a more benign façade) in pursuit of their own agendas. Often, their efforts go unnoticed or are written off as the actions of a more monolithic government. Other actions are recognized by the general public, but dismissed as harmless or simply misguided. Conspiracy theorists who suspect the real purposes of these groups and societies weave endless speculations on how they manipulate humankind's destiny or take an active role in shaping the history and governments of millions. Often written off as rumor and innuendo, these musings add to the mystique—and the power—surrounding these interstellar players.

Then again, many conspiracy theories are just that. The trick is picking reality out of the gossip.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Interstellar Players is a new type of sourcebook for *Classic BattleTech*, providing a look at some of the hidden potential power players whose agendas and methods may forge the fate of billions across the stars. Many of these groups, societies and individuals have been mentioned in past sourcebooks and novels, while others are entirely new to the *Classic BattleTech* universe. Far from representing the only power-mongers outside of interstellar governments, the entries in this book offer a diverse section of possible threats that *CBT* players and gamemasters can use to formulate a legion of role-playing adventures and scenarios.

Each entry begins with a short piece of fiction, presented as part of a renegade publication of assembled reports. Dedicated to

uncovering conspiracy theories around the Inner Sphere, this publication cites sources as varied as declassified intelligence reports, scientific brochures and even uncovered letters purportedly from “inside” people. Each entry offers enough basic information (facts, rumors, advice and warnings) to arm characters against these interstellar players.

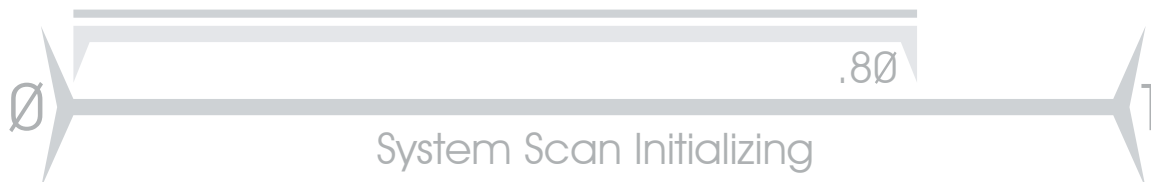
Following the fiction section, the gamemaster section provides a guide for placing each group in its context within the *BattleTech* universe, as well as game rules for *Classic BattleTech* and *Classic BattleTech RPG* adventures and scenarios. Together, the gamemaster sections and additional game rules in the back of this book provide a guide for introducing and using elements of each interstellar player in *Classic BattleTech* and *Classic BattleTech RPG* settings.

Players and gamemasters should note that not all is as it seems in *Interstellar Players*. The gamemaster sections and the rules provide behind-the-scenes details and a means to use these various power brokers in any type of *CBT* campaign, but gamemasters and players ultimately decide for their own campaigns whether or not a given interstellar power broker actually pursues the agendas given in this book... or even if they exist at all. Unless otherwise stated, the organizations, gamemaster briefings and rules presented in this book are optional elements of any *Classic BattleTech* game, an inspiration for potential adventures and scenarios off the beaten path of Successor State conflicts, Clan wars, mercenary operations and so on.

In addition to the *Classic BattleTech Master Rules, Revised* (if playing *BattleTech*) or *Classic BattleTech RPG* (if roleplaying), players and gamemasters will find the following rules expansions helpful: *Classic BattleTech Companion (CBTComp)*, *Combat Equipment (CE)*, *Lostech (LT)* and *A Guide to Covert Ops (CovertOps)*.

MECHWARRIOR, THIRD EDITION

MechWarrior, Third Edition (MW3) was originally published by FASA Corporation. Upon its reprint by FanPro LLC, the name changed to *Classic BattleTech RPG (CBT: RPG)*. This product refers to pages in *CBT: RPG*, but the page numbers are identical regardless of which volume you own.





THE DARKNESS OF LIGHT

I have come to bring you truth and enlightenment—all the things your leaders and your gods promise, but never quite deliver. Who am I? Well, I know too much to give you my real name, but for the sake of argument, just call me Starling. The more enlightened among you may find it as illuminating a hint as I'm ever going to give.

I'll tell you what the biggest conspiracy is. Our whole universe is being run by a group of people from the twenty-first century. Time travelers, akin to the crew from the *Manassas*. Early experiments with K-F drives, previous to the "official" publication of the notes. Yeah, I can hear some of you laughing at me right now. But take a step back and look at the facts. Assuming we can trust ComStar and their documents (a question I'll get into later), we have an inordinate number of people with an interest in the late twentieth/early twenty-first century. WHY?!? There are far more important and interesting times in our history than that block of years. Ok, so they were the first ones to go into space. So they were the first to use the Bomb. So what? They never got any further than Terra's moon. Back then, Kearney and Fuchida weren't even itches in their fathers' loins. But these people, scattered throughout the Inner Sphere and yes, even in Clan space, have permeated our society on a level that would make the Illuminati proud. And to think Snord's Irregulars sit at the top of that society. No, not the Illuminati, but these shadowy figures who shape our very lives without our knowledge, and for damned sure not our consent.

But enough about my view on things. This project, something new for me, is a gathering of notes about the many shadow groups in this great universe of ours. I've striven to keep my opinions on these groups out of the write-ups, pretty much by putting my three C-bills at the start. I also used this opportunity to bring others into my world of truth telling. It's good to see like-minded people out there who don't accept the word given to them by those controlling the universe as a whole. Who knows—someday I might hand down my pen to one of these guys and gals.

Yeah, right. Like I'm going anywhere. What I am going to do is get down to business.

We're here to look at some of the big conspiracies of our time. But before we do that, let's look at where conspiracy awareness got its start. Eighteenth-century Terra was still very much a religious planet. Not a bad thing really—it gave the people something to do and it pretty much kept the rabble under control. This was also the era when education became more and more widespread. As times progressed, some people decided, for whatever reason, that they did not want to be religious. Which is fine, if you ask me. As a very wise man once said: "More people have died because they had the 'wrong' answer to the God question than for any other reason."

Not surprisingly, the people who started living a secular existence found there was something missing in their lives. The intellectuals, always buried in their work, filled in the missing aspects of their psyches with their work. The common man,

however, still had that big God-shaped hole in his outlook on life. Many mysteries remained unexplained, and this bothered him. So he had two choices. Go back to religion (in whatever form) and admit that the church/temple/prayer group/et cetera actually served a purpose. Or take on the trappings of religious thought by emulating it, creating shadowy and intangible groups and entities he could point his finger at to explain why something otherwise inexplicable happened the way it did. Our common man found it much more believable to pin things on a group of powerful people rather than on some deity—a group of people that, with enough determination and leg work, a person might join. This was the birth of the conspiracy theory, the new opiate for the masses.

The conspiracies themselves tend to target the biggest guys on the block. Prior to humankind's space colonization efforts, the vast majority of conspiracies involved corporations that operated on the multi-national as well as the national level. Their presence could be felt everywhere, and they had the leverage to influence governments over various business deals and rights, beating out local companies who vied for the same contracts. Inevitably, those who lost out on the deal turned jealous. Claims of unfair treatment, backroom deals and bribery surfaced that would make a Steiner corporate mogul proud. Though sometimes the deals were legitimate, complaints to local authorities actually did turn up unfair business practices often enough to give conspiracy theories a ring of truth. Ninety-nine out of a hundred people shrugged their shoulders, accepted the decision and got on with their lives. But that one remaining person could never accept it. For them, a vast conspiracy provided the only logical explanation.

Corporate conspiracies, generally speaking, boil down to the corporation supplanting the established government and then twisting government authority to serve corporate profits. It's easy to understand why people believe this kind of story line. Unlike most governments, where change is usually slow and subtle (revolutions and invasions aside), corporations are generally agile enough that change is visible. This visible motion plants the seed of desire in the people for a change of government, which manifests itself in the conspiracy rather than in the hard work of changing a corrupt government system from within. Truly the mark of the creative yet lazy mind.

On the other side of the coin, we have government conspiracies, usually cover-ups of some embarrassing event. People dying under unusual circumstances, or getting caught in compromising positions, illegal deals and so on. For any scenario anyone can dream up, somebody else has "proof" that it happened, plus there are at least three different conspiracy theories to explain it. Because these conspiracies involve the highest-profile people on a planet, the leadership, they tend to be the most popular. I mean, who doesn't enjoy hearing about somebody so powerful, so visible, so governmental, being naughty? It's my favorite thing to read about, and definitely my favorite thing to write about.

THE DARKNESS OF LIGHT



I'm going to focus on the original conspiracies, from the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. So I'm lazy. Sue me. You shelled out C-bills for this info, and if you had a good head on your shoulders, you would have skimmed it first before paying for it. And I can hear one or two of you already: "Oh my! He's one of those time travelers from the twenty-first century he talked about earlier!" Aside from being personally insulted, I am professionally insulted that any of you would think such a thing. Why would I mention that group if I'm a member of it, let alone bring it up in the opening of this book?

Truthfully, the main reason I chose this era is because later conspiracies are simply retellings of the originals, all dressed up for the modern age. If you show me a conspiracy story that started in the past five hundred years—the death of Simon Cameron, the power plays of ComStar, the Minnesota Tribe, Hanse Davion's double and on and on and on—I'll show you one from the first fifty years that barely differs except for the names and places. Much like the tri-vids that come out every Friday, nothing is original. I'll also concentrate on the conspiracy theories based in the ancient United States of America. Blame America's contemporary, the Soviet Empire, for this one. The Soviet lockdown on the media from that era (as well as their eventual downfall) has kept most of the data from those days from passing down through time. Also, there really weren't any juicy conspiracies from the Soviet Empire. The Soviet authorities had absolute control. Everything that happened could be traced directly back to them, and that makes for boring reading.

Yes, I hear a few of you so-called historians talk about the work of the Catholic Church from the downfall of the Roman Empire through the nineteenth century. "Blah blah controlled Europe. Blah blah fought the Crusades. Blah blah wanted to control humanity." The problem is, they ended up just like the Soviets. The Church didn't hide their control; they reveled in it. However, after the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church saw a decline in its sway over people, marked by a big drop in attendance. Fewer posteriors in the pews every Sunday wasn't limited to the Catholics, of course. All the various sects of Christianity saw a decline, though some of that stemmed from "faction-hopping" between sects. Some of the most creative conspiracy theories popped up right around that time, the most famous tying into the Church's involvement in the Second Terran World War. A favorite story claimed that, while the Church did not support the activities of Adolf Hitler's Third Reich, neither did it oppose them because the Nazis were not targeting Christians. Surprisingly, this was the only major conspiracy involving the Church outright, as later Church leadership focused on modernizing efforts to increase attendance as well as clean up an image regarded as outmoded for then-modern times.

With respect to the United States of America, the Second Terran World War gave us a bevy of fun conspiracies, starting off with that nation's entry into the war. At the time, an isolationist mentality had kept the United States pretty much confined to their own hemisphere. Though the U.S. government limited its activities

to supplying the United Kingdom, Soviet Union and China with overt and covert supplies, some claimed the government was looking for an excuse to enter the war. The story goes roughly like this. Knowing that the people would not accept a pre-emptive declaration of war against Nazi Germany and its ally, Imperial Japan, the government enacted legislation and policy not only to stem the Japanese Empire's imperialistic designs, but to push them to take action against the United States. The culmination of these actions was the infamous "surprise" assault on the United States' forward naval base at Pearl Harbor. That the Japanese government's declaration of war came only a few hours after that attack, and that the delay itself was blamed on a clerical error, has only fed the conspiracy.

Wars are boring, though, compared to some of the other stories out there. After all, we just finished a series of conflicts ranging from the re-integration of the St. Ives Compact into the Capellan Confederation to the border flare-up between the Draconis Combine and the Ghost Bear Clan to the Inner Sphere-spanning Federated Commonwealth Civil War. We've all heard the conspiracies that go along with those events. It's during peacetime that the really enjoyable tales come to life. Staying with the United States of America during the second half of the twentieth century, we get some of the more interesting conspiracies. One of my favorites involves the death of a film actress and her affairs with the then-President and his politico brother. This actress, Monroe something-or-other, associated herself with President Kennedy in an extramarital affair. Her other paramours included a Mafia boss and a union leader. Her sudden death, ruled a suicide, was part of a series of events that did not seem to make sense, and that sparked the conspiracy theory surrounding Monroe's death. Supposed pressure came from the President's brother, then Attorney General of the United States, to hide evidence from the death scene. Speculation as to Monroe's being drugged, whether by an accidental overdose or intentional poisoning, ran rampant. No water was found with which she could have swallowed the barbiturates that killed her. A coroner's investigation found no signs of injection. Somebody once joked that her death was a literal "pain in the rear," whatever that meant.

Interestingly, death involving the members of this sordid little affair seemed to be a common occurrence. Both of the Kennedy brothers were killed, the President first, followed by his brother. The man who pulled the trigger on the President, Lee Harvey Oswald, was variously reported to be a lunatic, under mind control, a Communist (kind of like the Capellans, especially before this Xin Sheng business) or just a dupe. If this last bit was the case, I feel sorry for the guy. But I don't think it was. Oswald was seen traveling in some suspicious places, including the embassies of two Communist countries, seeking permission to leave his homeland and relocate to those countries. They rebuffed him, which seems to have been the straw that finally broke that camel's back. So he gets his trusty rifle out (seems he was a soldier in his homeland's

THE DARKNESS OF LIGHT

military) and decides to put a few shots into President Kennedy as the guy drives by. I guess it's a nice rifle. Somebody got the idea to build replicas of it a few hundred years ago. I found one cheap in good condition, so I picked it up. This guy I know made me some ammunition that would work in the rifle, and we put a watermelon on a groundcar to see if the reports were true that said no one could have shot the rifle as fast as Oswald did with the accuracy he achieved. The shooting was easy, actually, and surprisingly we had plenty of good watermelon left over to eat. In any case, this little conspiracy got wrapped up nicely when Oswald was shot and killed a few days after he'd killed the President.

The death of Kennedy's brother Robert, however, was a strange dog. Even though he'd been a pretty high-profile political entity (brother of the dead President, Attorney General of the United States, federal representative of a geopolitical subsection of said United States), and even though he was running for the leadership of the U.S. government, the junior Kennedy was nothing special. Most of the questions that sprang up revolved around the actions of local police as well as why the assassin, Sirhan Sirhan (yes, that's his real name), had even pulled the trigger. The local police stated that Robert Kennedy sent them home, strange as that sounded. Then, in an effort to save some face, they "cleaned up" the crime scene and listed some bullet wounds as coming from other sources. After that, they fired the coroner who said Sirhan Sirhan could not have acted alone. Reports also listed Sirhan as being in a trance-like state. His p-shrink said he was under mind control, hypnotically "programmed" to perform the assassination. This programming, an absolute control job in which the subject's personality is supplemented by a desire to perform a given action, was the key to proving an insanity defense. In this case, it worked. Frankly, this outcome amazes me. We've seen Max Liao and Vikkie Steiner-Davion each try this trick and fail miserably (Max kicked the snowball down the hill that ended in the Fourth Succession War, while Victor got smacked hard by the Marik-Liao offensive). Maybe they should have done their homework a little more thoroughly.

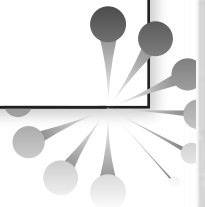
Still, my favorite conspiracies as a documenter of the strange have to be the ones involving aliens. These date back to 1947, when the backwater town of Roswell in the United States of America found something that had crashed somewhere nearby. Had the local military folks simply gone out and picked up the pieces, said

it was a weather balloon (which they did, but you'll see why it didn't matter) and gone about their business, people probably would have believed them... or at least given less thought to the events at hand. Instead the military cordoned off the area, changed their story on a few occasions and generally did plenty to look like they were covering something up. Even if they didn't find anything more than a downed weather balloon, their actions and the "If they're saying no, they must mean yes" mentality that followed forever etched Roswell and aliens into humanity's collective psyche. Even before humankind left Terra in the following centuries, this singular event was tied to military developments made after 1947. It also sparked various entertainment shows and "documentaries," and loonies who sought attention used it to support claims of alien abduction. Once travel to the stars became possible, those who hoped we would find life around us in the galactic neighborhood were disappointed. We've met nothing more advanced than other primates, though we came close. When Kerensky's Cronies...er, Clans invaded, their Elemental suits could shrug off direct hits from BattleMech-scale weapons, and so some folks figured them for super-duper human-killing, brain-sucking, soul-stealing creatures from beyond. In reality, they were just super-soldiers with a fantastic technological edge over their opponents.

As a footnote, the Clan invasion brought its own little conspiracy with it. It seems the Minnesota Tribe, the remnants of the 331st Division of the Star League Army that went with Kerensky, has disappeared from the collective radar of the Clans. Rumor has it the Tribe is holding off an onslaught of alien marauders. I'd love to see how and where that conspiracy theory developed.

I could blather on like this for days. After all, the spread of mass media during the twentieth century supposedly brought enlightenment. But if you scratch and sniff, you'll find such "enlightenment" only casts humanity's fascination with darkness into sharper focus.

So keep an open mind, read on, do some digging of your own...and tell me I'm crazy for trusting no one with my name.



THE SIXTH OF JUNE





NOTES

I love an article that starts off with "So-and-so disappeared without a trace". It makes for good reading, sometimes, but it is an annoying cliché. You'd think the "villains" would understand this and pay better attention. The Sixth of June (who comes up with these names, anyway?) sounds like it could be a supremely evil sect of the Word of Blake's Toyama faction. Or a way to conveniently tie up a few dozen loose ends that bothered somebody with an overactive imagination. Or this could simply be another example of ComStar's supposed "perfect" storehouse of humanity's history—a storehouse that, with the very recent release of Bertram Habeas' study of House Steiner, has been shown to have gross inaccuracies and holes in it big enough to fly a Mammoth DropShip through (not that my faith in Habeas' accuracy is much better, but he at least makes more sense than the self-proclaimed guardians of knowledge in ComStar).

Now, what makes this write-up all the more interesting is that after its publication, it was not picked up by a holonews program or any other "respectable" print publication. Not a single one. Only those like me who work in dank, dark places kept it going. Makes you wonder.

—Starling

SIXTH OF JUNE: UNRAVELLING THE MYSTERIES

BY SANDRA RAINES

Editor's Note: Sadly, shortly after filing this article, Sandra Raines disappeared. No trace of her has yet been found. We honor her memory by releasing her final report.

Nothing conjures up images of shadowy figures, assassins and secret agents like the mysterious world of the clandestine. Ever since the dawn of time, humankind has sought ways to learn about its enemies and allies through the most nefarious means, which often included assassination, espionage and inciting rebellion. Secret organizations have come and gone, each leaving their unique mark on the world of the clandestine. Some, like the Templar Knights, the Illuminati or the Black Dragons, have even altered the fabric of the societies that spawned them. The Sixth of June is such a group, acknowledged by many intelligence experts as one of the most mysterious organizations operating today.

Working undercover for the past two years, I sought to unravel the mysteries surrounding the Sixth of June. The information in this report shows why they went to the lengths they did to stop this investigation. Moreover, it shows just how evil they truly are.

SIXTH OF JUNE

FRACTURE AND REFORMATION: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

After defeating the Clans at the Battle of Tukayyid, Precentor Martial Anastasius Focht and Sharilar Mori as ComStar's new Primus brought sweeping changes and reforms to the Holy Order of ComStar. In response, former Precentor Atreus Demona Aziz fled ComStar's headquarters on Terra and relocated in the Free Worlds League. Aziz called those she termed "loyal to Blake's word" to follow her, accusing Primus Mori and Precentor Focht of overthrowing ComStar in a coup d'état. Captain-General Thomas Marik, leader of the League, granted asylum to Aziz and other members of ComStar who could not accept Primus Mori's reforms.

During my investigation, a mutual friend introduced me to a former ComStar intelligence agent. Going by the name of Damocles, this recently "retired" precentor was more than willing to sit down and answer a few questions. He was quite candid with his answers, especially concerning the Sixth of June. He believed this information needed to get into the public eye before something catastrophic happened. His recent work on Project Phoenix had clearly proved that to him.

We met in a safe house on Sheratan in the Chaos March. Surrounded by his "friends," I could easily believe he wasn't the only one who had "retired" from ComStar's intelligence apparatus. When I first encountered Damocles, he impressed me with his self-assurance. As we spoke, he never stopped scanning his surroundings, a habit from years of experience as a covert operative.

Transcript of Recorded Interview:

SANDRA RAINES: Thank you for meeting with me.

DAMOCLES: You're welcome. I must admit I was intrigued when I found out why.

SANDRA: A mutual friend said you were an expert concerning [the Sixth].

DAMOCLES: Well, one has to be if one plans on surviving when operating against them.

SANDRA: Before I get to the Sixth of June itself, can you shed some light on what happened in the First Circuit's chambers before ComStar fractured?

DAMOCLES: I wasn't there, of course; I was on special assignment in the Clan OZ at that time. However, I have reviewed the unedited recordings and transcripts of what happened. Focht was furious at Waterly for Operation Scorpion. Her actions nearly cost the Com Guards their victory at Tukayyid, and then her scheme failed anyway because a source within the Order tipped off the House Lords. To this day, I've never found out who that was. Focht forced Waterly to retire after exposing her complicity in Scorpion.

SANDRA: He retired her? Did he kill her?

DAMOCLES: That's just a rumor. She died shortly afterward of a massive aneurysm.

THE SIXTH OF JUNE

SANDRA: Really?

DAMOCLES: Yes.

SANDRA: Okay, so tell me about Demona Aziz.

DAMOCLES: A power-hungry, self-serving bitch, deluded by her own visions of grandeur.

SANDRA: Pardon?

DAMOCLES: Forgive me. That was unprofessional.

SANDRA: Understood, I was at Tukayyid and I remember what happened.

DAMOCLES: I checked you out, Sandra. I *know* your credentials and your other affiliations. We wouldn't be having this conversation if I hadn't. That said, I believe we're on equal ground here.

SANDRA: Thank you.

DAMOCLES: You're welcome.

SANDRA: When Demona Aziz stormed out of the First Circuit's chambers, did anyone think it would end up fracturing ComStar?

DAMOCLES: No. No one could have envisioned that happening. Mori and Focht considered Aziz a radical and a zealot. They didn't believe she could create such a problem because they had no idea how many allies she'd attract.

SANDRA: But she had such a loyal following.

DAMOCLES: Not exactly. She expertly manipulated the loyal followers ComStar had created across two centuries—playing on their dedication to the supposed word of Blake, as initiated by Conrad Toyama.

SANDRA: But that ended up being the same thing, right?

DAMOCLES: True.

SANDRA: Why did the Primus allow the flood of refugees to leave ComStar's ranks?

DAMOCLES: She believed it would flush out the malcontents who wouldn't accept her changes. The bad thing was, it nearly crippled ROM when more than eighty percent of the operatives joined Aziz.

SANDRA: Were you a member of ROM or something else?

DAMOCLES: Well...yes, I was a member of Blake's Wrath as well as ROM, among other things.

SANDRA: When did you discover the Sixth of June movement?

DAMOCLES: Our intelligence sources literally stumbled over some references to this movement. When we were able to assess the information, we realized these people represented a very dangerous faction in the Word of Blake. Though small, they're far more radical than any of the other factions. Power-crazed and fanatically devoted to Conrad Toyama's teachings, they seek complete control of the Word of Blake. We believed them capable of any act of aggression to further their goals. They certainly caused us some problems. My team engaged them on numerous occasions, including during Operation Odysseus.

SANDRA: What are their main goals?

DAMOCLES: Destroying the Successor States and assassinating the House Lords.

SANDRA: Wait...destroying the Successor States and killing the House Lords? How are they going to pull that off?

DAMOCLES: Not a clue, though it appears they started with the Blakist leadership.

SANDRA: Oh? Who?

DAMOCLES: Trent Arian, for one; Klaus Hettig, for another; and the Shunners.

SANDRA: So that's how St. Jamais became the Blakists' Precentor Martial?

DAMOCLES: It appears that way.

SANDRA: Klaus Hettig?

DAMOCLES: Was the leader of the Expatriates.

SANDRA: Was he assassinated too?

DAMOCLES: No, he was executed.

SANDRA: Why?

DAMOCLES: Alexander Kernoff exposed him as an operative for ComStar's ROM who left the Order to join the Blakists after Victor Steiner-Davion became Precentor Martial. Allegedly, Kernoff—the Blakist Precentor ROM—had proof of his duplicity.

SANDRA: I know of Kernoff. According to reports, he's one of the best in counterintelligence.

DAMOCLES: Yes, he is. He's very dangerous, and that's why St. Jamais has him running ROM. Rumor has it that the Master personally chose Kernoff.

SANDRA: Master?

DAMOCLES: Yeah. That's supposedly what they call the leader of the Sixth of June.

SANDRA: Do you know who the Master is?

DAMOCLES: Not a clue. But I've got my suspicions.

SANDRA: Kali Liao?

DAMOCLES: What makes you ask that?

SANDRA: Some information I've obtained suggests her involvement with St. Jamais.

DAMOCLES: Possibly. Kali and Cameron have been observed meeting together secretly, the last time on Highspire.

SANDRA: Do you know the outcome of this meeting?

DAMOCLES: Not really, though we noticed increased activity in the Chaos March that benefited the Capellans.

SANDRA: How dangerous do you believe the Sixth of June truly are?

DAMOCLES: Very dangerous, unpredictable and willing to use any means necessary to achieve their goals.

SANDRA: Such as?

DAMOCLES: If they had access to weapons of mass destruction, they'd use them.

SANDRA: Do they?

DAMOCLES: At this point, I can't say for sure.

SANDRA: Did you know that the entire stockpile of UrbStryc-A gas stored on Wei vanished without a trace?

DAMOCLES: Yes. A contact of mine in Free Capellan Intelligence informed me of that.



THE SIXTH OF JUNE

SANDRA: Is it true that the Sixth of June had a part in the Black May attacks during the Capellan-St. Ives War, as a favor to Kali Liao for having Demona Aziz killed?

DAMOCLES: That's what I hear.

SANDRA: So what did you hear?

DAMOCLES: After the affair on New Detroit, St. Jamais supplied Kali with information she used to entice Sun-Tzu. In turn, the Chancellor personally killed Aziz.

SANDRA: Wait. Sun-Tzu Liao supposedly killed Aziz?

DAMOCLES: The evidence strongly suggests he pulled the trigger.

SANDRA: What's the connection between the Sixth of June and Vicore?

DAMOCLES: Nothing.

SANDRA: Nothing?

DAMOCLES: As far as I know. I did find out that Precentor Dag Kesselring was a member of the Sixth of June. I even found evidence suggesting Katherine Steiner-Davion's involvement with them, based on her signature authorizing the release of Lyran technology to the Blakists.

SANDRA: That's a stunning revelation. Who was Kesselring, and was the Sixth of June supporting Katherine during the FedCom Civil War?

DAMOCLES: Kesselring commanded the Sixty-sixth Division on Tharkad and directly aided General Nondi Steiner during the Battle of Tharkad. Yes, Sixth of June supported Katherine. They sent in their best Special Operations team commanded by Precentor Jerome Marks. He and his Light of Mankind team were responsible for operations in the Federated Suns. Allegedly, they staged the explosion that supposedly killed Arthur Steiner-Davion.

SANDRA: What do you mean, supposedly? Arthur died on Robinson.

DAMOCLES: Maybe. However, evidence we uncovered during Project Phoenix suggests otherwise. Unfortunately, we couldn't find anything more to substantiate that.

SANDRA: Why?

DAMOCLES: Not sure. We assumed for bargaining chip, or something else.

SANDRA: Does Victor know?

DAMOCLES: Yes, he's read my report.

SANDRA: What was his response?

DAMOCLES: Indifference, from what I understood.

SANDRA: Hm... okay, let's change directions here. What can you tell me about the Bloody Hand?

DAMOCLES: How did you hear about them? Never mind. A word of caution, Ms. Raines: Leave that alone.

SANDRA: Why do you say that?

DAMOCLES: In Latin, they're called *Manei Domini*. Roughly translated, their name means either "Bloody Hands" or "Hands of the Master". They're insane sociopaths who kill for the love of it, answering only to the Master.

SANDRA: Can you—

DAMOCLES: What's that noise? Hammer, check it out.

HAMMER: Company.

DAMOCLES: This meeting is over. Go with Shrike and Javelin. They'll take you back to your ship safely. Hammer, have the team suit up and deploy.

Damocles' "friends" quickly rushed me out the back of the cottage to a waiting hover vehicle hidden in the woods. Laser and slug weapons fire sounded in the distance as we sped away. Though we were not pursued, I couldn't shake the feeling of being watched even after leaving the planet. Damocles got word to me before I lifted that he would see me again. Somehow, I didn't doubt him.

POWER AND FANATICISM

The Sixth of June took its name from the date of Myndo Waterly's death. Its members are far more radical in their beliefs than the average Blakist. Those most familiar with the Word of Blake believe Aziz ordered Waterly's body stolen soon after its interment in ComStar's Holy Shroud of Blake Cemetery, secretly enshrining it somewhere on Gibson. Additional rumor has it that Aziz then had the former Primus's body hermetically sealed in a glass sepulcher. Supposedly, Sixth of June members journey to Waterly's final resting place and reaffirm their devotion to her memory as part of their final indoctrination.

While the Word of Blake contained many factions by 3059, only the Sixth of June—a part of the Toyama faction—proved more resourceful and active than the other major players, the True Believers and the Counter-Reformists. This became apparent during Operation Odyssey, the assault on Terra. "Mordecai," a well-placed source of mine in the Word of Blake, provided me with a recorded meeting between the Sixth of June leadership. Present at this meeting were Demona Aziz, Cameron St. Jamais and a host of others. They discussed the exclusion of the Toyama faction (and by extension the Sixth of June) from the upcoming operation against ComStar on Terra. They took it as a deliberate snub from Precentor William Blane, nominal leader of the Word of Blake. The underlying tone of the discussion demonstrated that they would go to any length necessary to improve their position, including removing Blane.

During 3059, Aziz's Toyoma faction funneled weapons and technology to the Marian Hegemony. However, Cameron St. Jamais had his own agenda. According to Mordecai, St. Jamais made contact with Kali Liao and leaked Aziz's plans, setting in motion Aziz's demise. Armed with this information and enraged by her manipulations, Capellan Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao secretly led a force against Aziz and her Toyamas on New Detroit. Allegedly, Sun-Tzu killed Demona Aziz while Naomi Centrella—heir to the Magistracy of Canopus—watched. (St. Jamais, previously a constant presence at Aziz's side, had mysteriously "disappeared" before these events, leaving Aziz to face the Chancellor alone.) According to Mordecai, St. Jamais acted as he did because he viewed Aziz as too much of a loose cannon to be an effective leader. Aziz's death cleared the

THE SIXTH OF JUNE



way for St. Jamais (and the Sixth of June) to lead the Toyamas to preeminence in the Word of Blake.

A former member of Blake's Wrath, St. Jamais quickly built support, which included the entire Toyama enclave (something his predecessor had never enjoyed). St. Jamais assumed the position of Precentor Martial after his Sixth of June operatives assassinated the former holder of that office, Trent Arian, in 3061. Afterward, St. Jamais worked tirelessly to rebuild and expand the Word of Blake Militia. During this time, St. Jamais often disappeared for months on end, leaving Terra to head out into the Periphery. Here, he secretly met with Kali Liao until her incarceration on Highspire. He even managed to meet with her there at least once.

Soon afterward, St. Jamais solidified his power base through a series of carefully planned disasters. In one such instance in 3059, the Shunners' enclave on Venus was destroyed when the planet's last atmospheric terraforming control plant was allegedly vaporized by a tactical nuclear device of Capellan origin. In another, Precentor Daphne Chrysler of the True Believers died during a training accident in the Alps in the fall of 3066. These and other events, appearing to the general public as a string of unfortunate accidents, left the Toyamas and the Expatriates largely unscathed. In 3065, however, Alexander Kernoff, the Blakist Precentor ROM, exposed several highly placed Expatriates—including their leader, Klaus Hettig—as ComStar agents. According to unconfirmed reports, the Sixth of June effectively destroyed the Expatriates after ROM's massive purge of all "heretic agents." Those who survived the purge joined the Toyama faction, further increasing the Sixth's power, and weakening that of Precentor Blane.

According to another source, the Sixth of June has allegedly compromised SAFE and most of the Free Worlds League military. One SAFE operative, code-named Striking Eagle, died mysteriously after delivering this information. According to the document Striking Eagle obtained, the Sixth of June has infiltrated the highest levels of the Free Worlds League's government, including the Captain-General's own staff. Another allegation revealed that the Sixth of June stole a large percentage of the profits from Free Worlds League arms sales, as well as from many non-military trades and HPG operations. Reportedly, Word of Blake accountants discovered this discrepancy while conducting an audit prior to their acceptance into the Star League. In an early report, instead of the allotted five percent of military sales profits originally authorized by Precentor Blane and Captain-General Thomas Marik, the Blakists siphoned off an extra ten percent over the course of a decade. Supposedly, that number later doubled to thirty percent of *all* state sales since the early 3050s. If true, Sixth of June has amassed hundreds of trillions of C-bills in funds, enough to rebuild an army the size of the present-day Federated Suns to its pre-civil war strength. Mordecai alleges that St. Jamais used these finances to build his militia to match the strength of the Com Guards prior to Tukayyid, an allegation supported by Damocles' information. The question remains, where are these forces?

MACHIAVELLIAN POLITICS, PLOTS AND FREE ENTERPRISE

In order for the Sixth of June to expand its power base, its leaders required more resources, personnel and supporters. Having secured funding, they turned their efforts toward obtaining whatever their larger military required. Manpower they had, with a large pool of inhabitants to recruit from on Terra despite an ongoing low-level rebellion there against Blakist rule. Presently, the Terran Liberation Front (TLF) is leading this rebellion and is supposedly causing quite a stir for the Blakists. This could explain why St. Jamais has returned to the Periphery with a vengeance, to expand the Word of Blake's sphere of influence into the major and minor Periphery powers, including many pirate groups. Sixth of June operatives have since allegedly staged raids against Successor State manufacturers, diverted military shipments and struck supply depots to obtain needed materiel. Though this is only conjecture, they allegedly recruited the rogue Fifth FedCom RCT into their ranks soon after the end of the FedCom Civil War. At this point in my own investigation, I literally stumbled onto information that caught all but ComStar by surprise: Project Phoenix.

The Vicore InterStellar Corporation had recently begun producing 'Mechs, through its Vicore Industries manufacturing division, on its homeworld of Demeter. What intrigued me was that many of the designs proposed by Vicore were *already* operating in the Periphery before any of the Successor States deployed them. In fact, many Blake Militia units fielded a large number of these refurbished designs, allegedly derived from plans purchased from Vicore before the company went public with them. Mordecai's report also states that the Blakists paid for the reconstruction of Vicore's Demeter BattleMech plant with St. Jamais' blessing in exchange for the new designs. Further allegations claim that Vicore used former FedCom agents to conduct industrial espionage against the Blakists who originally designed these new upgraded 'Mechs, but I could find nothing to substantiate those charges.

Damocles also believes Vicore sold its designs to the Word of Blake first in return for its new 'Mech plant. According to him, Giovanni Estrella De la Sangre, governor of Demeter and CEO of Vicore, personally led several business trips to Terra. Damocles told me the Vicore CEO ran a completely legitimate operation, and nothing exists to implicate him in any wrongdoing in his well-documented business dealings with the Word of Blake. Vicore's latest project allegedly even put a team of engineers and technicians on Terra, to aid the Blakists in retooling their factories for the production of Vicore designs.

Obtaining support required minimum effort from the Sixth of June. Working through contacts on Astrokaszy, St. Jamais offered the Periphery nations upgraded military technologies, in exchange for various concessions. In one instance, the Sixth secured sole rights to a new source of germanium discovered in the Marian Hegemony's Horatius system in return for a 'Mech factory to build newly refurbished *Locusts* and other Project Phoenix BattleMechs. In addition to military hardware, the Sixth of June allegedly



THE SIXTH OF JUNE

helped train substantial military forces for the Hegemony and the neighboring Circinus Federation (despite hostilities between both states). Likewise, on Dante in the Outworlds Alliance, the Sixth has allegedly invested a large sum of money in military personnel and equipment. The Sixth of June has even secured bases of operations on the worlds of Hansa, Nueva Castile, New St. Andrews and throughout the Mica Majority. Perhaps most disturbing, they now allegedly have complete control over Alfirk and Astrokaszy, regardless of what previous reports may say.

St. Jamais' greatest achievement thus far is the supposed subjugation of the Circinus Federation. A trusted source sent me a top-secret memorandum issued by St. Jamais describing the final stages of Operation Daedalus, the overthrow of Federation President H.R. "Little Bob" McIntyre. The memo directed McIntyre's son, Precentor Calvin "Zeke" McIntyre—a suspected member of the Sixth—to take direct control of the Federation government after Little Bob's demise. Calvin McIntyre did just that, and after assuming power disposed of personnel loyal to his father, including the commander of the Black Warriors, Colonel Fritz Donner. The rest of the Black Warriors, however, vanished before Calvin McIntyre could move against them.

Scattered reports out of the Federation since indicate that the McIntyre House Guards have quadrupled in size. Large portions of these new conscripts, apparently ranging in age from the eighteen to forty-five, form three to five divisions of mechanized infantry that may include battle armor troops. Among other shocking details from these reports are hints that the Blakists have uncovered long-lost Star League supply depots within and outside Federation space, as well as in the Deep Periphery (on a world described as Mundo Nublar, associated with something called Erinyes). Yet another of these depots is allegedly a facility devoted to building weapons of mass destruction (again, connected to Erinyes), along with a secret naval base (code-named Gabriel) for the maintenance and possible construction of a secret WarShip fleet.

The report also alleges that a large number of WarShips formerly in mothballs are once again operational. Questions remain as to where the Blakists are getting the support and resources needed to accomplish these efforts. Though Terra is the cradle of humanity and a bastion of military production, it lacks the staggering volume of raw materials necessary to support the production level St. Jamais requires. I have yet to uncover that answer, but I did find some interesting information that credibly hints at the identity of the Master.

THE MASTER AND FOLLOWERS

The most difficult part of any investigation is tracking down leads and information. I found this especially true concerning the Master. Various references in documents I obtained concerning the Master appear to hold this mysterious leader in reverence and fear. Supposedly, loyalty to the Master runs so deep that members of the Sixth of June have a near-religious experience in following her commands, regarding her almost as some sort of goddess. Followers

CONFIDENTIAL: YOUR EYES ONLY

ROM SECURITY PROTOCOL: Omega Level III
DATE/TIME: 12523066 – 0436 Zulu Local
To: Precentor Calvin McIntyre
From: Precentor Martial Cameron St. Jamais

Greetings, brother. The Master is pleased with your progress in Operation Daedalus. We are very close to the final phase—you must be strong and keep your eyes on our objective in fulfilling the prophecies of Blake. Our primary obstacle is your father. The Master believes the time has come for you to lead your nation, and I can assure you that the McIntyre Guards will provide the backbone of your support. Fritz Donner and his Black Warriors, on the other hand, are a liability. Use whatever force necessary to remove them. Once you have accomplished this, our plans can move forward with the activation of the Omega Regiments. Intelligence will be forthcoming to aid you in your planning. When the time comes, you will receive authorization to move against your assigned targets.

Attached to this message are detailed plans to help you increase the military strength of your personal guard and train a large army to support them. Military advisors will arrive shortly; necessary funds to support your endeavor are available now. Use both with the Master's blessing.

The day of reckoning is nearly upon us. Soon the Master will rise above the House Lords, and we will assume our rightful place as the protectors of the Inner Sphere. Your loyalty, service and support will not be forgotten. May the peace of Blake go with you, President McIntyre.

In Blake's name.

may willingly give their lives in suicidal bombings to prove their love and loyalty to the Master. Though many view the Blakists in general as religious zealots, members of the Sixth are far more than that. Their willingness to die in wanton acts of terrorism and their fanatical loyalty to the Master separates them from the rest of the Blakists by an order of magnitude. In addition, history has shown that fanatics are far more capable of action in championing their beliefs.

The records I obtained describe in detail the Master's control over the Sixth of June, and also suggest that her power extends throughout the Word of Blake. Information from Mordecai showed that most of the Blake Militia's upper command echelon—including many division commanders—are followers of the Master. Mordecai—and, to a lesser extent, Striking Eagle—alleged that Precentor Blane and Thomas Marik are nearly isolated from most of the Word of Blake (excluding the True Believers). Blane is holding onto his power base by sheer force of will, with the Toyamas' power expanding through the Master's manipulations. One contact, a former INN researcher stationed on Terra, sent the following letter via special courier. It convincingly shows the power and influence wielded by the Master and the Sixth of June.

THE SIXTH OF JUNE

HPG COMM TRANSMISSION A-473B78-0988

Sandra,

I hope this message gets through to you. You'd not believe how bad things are around here. ROM's Rho/Omicron and Mu/Psi operatives are thick as flies looking for non-believers. My luck held while I raped their network. I used every trick I know to get you the information you requested. Don't worry; I left enough worms and ghosts to cover my tracks. They'll be busy for months just trying to figure out what happened.

In researching your Master, based on the criteria given, I turned up some interesting results and came up with two possibilities: Precentor Jerome Marks and Kali Liao. I looked at Kernoff, but dismissed him because he has way too many responsibilities running ROM. Despite being the Toyama sect's leader, he ultimately answers to St. Jamais.

Precentor Jerome Marks, a member of Light of Mankind, came up repeatedly. Apparently, he's some kind of strategic genius who commands a lot of respect and power. Evidence suggests he was instrumental in helping Katherine Steiner-Davion engineer the deaths of Melissa and Hanse Davion and Arthur Steiner-Davion. His code name was "The Executioner." Supposedly, he received severe injuries from an explosion and required radically invasive cybernetic replacements to keep him alive. According to the stories, the cyber implants drove him insane. Now he sits somewhere and experiments with designing high-tech toys, the proverbial mad scientist locked away in a padded room.

That leaves Kali Liao. Allegedly, Kali's Thuggee cult spans the Inner Sphere with a vast network of followers, from which the Sixth of June has selectively recruited. Some evidence suggests that with Kali's help, St. Jamais compromised the Maskirovka. Evidence also suggests that Kali enabled St. Jamais to make inroads into the CCAF, including a few of the Warrior Houses, some of the Death Commandos and even St. Ives units. There are even hints that she has her own Special Forces units on Highspire, working for St. Jamais. (All I could find on that was a name: *Xi Bo Li Ya Lao Hu—Siberian Tiger*.) Moreover, it appears command and control originates from Highspire. Evidence also suggests that St. Jamais has constant contact with Kali. Allegedly, St. Jamais possesses the latest updated field manuals of all the House militaries and those of the Periphery realms. Finally, the relationship between Kali and St. Jamais appears akin to a master and servant. In every message from Kali to St. Jamais, she refers to him as "my faithful Cameron."

I also managed to dig up information on the Manei Domini. Their name is Latin for "Hands of the Master." They appear to be a subcult of the Sixth, comprised largely of regular Sixth of June members, Thuggees and some former Clanners—most of the latter being disenchanting members of the sundered Smoke Jaguars and expatriate Nova Cats. Supposedly, a few from the other invader Clans are also among their numbers, mostly Elementals, with a few MechWarriors. Allegedly, the opportunity to live on Terra and exact a level of revenge for their current situation was all the motivation they needed. Among other shocking details, these dishonored Clansmen willingly accepted cybernetic enhancements as part of the deal! However, the implants supposedly have nasty side effects, including eventual insanity. It appears the Manei Domini are responsible for eliminating many WolfNet and other intelligence operatives in the Chaos March.

I found something else that might interest you. It completely contradicts history and may explain why ComStar and now Word of Blake hated Houses Davion and Steiner so much. I found this diary (it belonged to a Colonel Hanni Schmitt) in an old archives building in Geneva (supposedly recovered after the liberation of Unity City, but "lost" afterward). Schmitt was the last commander of the Royal Black Watch at the time of Richard Cameron's murder. The diary is very specific about the events leading up to and including that day. This should shed light on the motivations of ComStar of old and Word of Blake concerning the FedCom.

This is some scary shit, Sandra. Please take care; you may not survive if they find you...

Sincerely,

...[name removed]...

FINAL THOUGHTS AND NEW REVELATIONS

Sadly, after sending this letter, my contact vanished. I hope he went underground and escaped; however, I have no way to verify that. His letter all but confirmed Kali Liao as the Master.

The diary contained some shocking revelations. I was awed to read the words of a long-dead soldier, even more so because they came from the last commander of the Royal Black Watch. Colonel Schmitt's diary contradicts the events of December 27, 2766 as we



THE SIXTH OF JUNE

know them. History states that the entire Cameron bloodline died that day. However, according to Colonel Schmitt, Richard's twin children—Amanda and Ian Richard—survived. History also states that Richard and his wife Elise had only one child. Yet Schmitt's own words speak of saving twins. Whose child died in the throne room, and why was there only one? Could Amaris have known the twins had escaped and tried to cover it up? Or did ComStar initiate the cover-up? Data from that day is virtually nonexistent, which gives credence to the cover-up theory.

So how did Schmitt pull this off? Both children were spirited away during the confusion of that fateful day, in a daring plan that ultimately cost the colonel her life. Schmitt and the rest of her command died on the Gorst Flats in an effort to give Major Ian MacIntosh and his lance time to get the children offworld. Apparently, while Schmitt held off the Fourth Amaris Dragoons, MacIntosh made it to a hidden base under Puget Sound where the *Abyss*, a *Colossus*-class DropShip, lifted them off-planet. The Reagan Space Defense System protected the transport as it traveled to the dark side of Luna, where a hidden WarShip waited. That ship—the *Triptiz*, a *Black Lion* class battlecruiser—took them out of the Terran system. Schmitt's diary explains what was supposed to happen after leaving Terra.

My first reaction was to discount the diary. After all, if it was found after the liberation of Unity City, then why would it not have

EXCERPTS FROM COLONEL HANNI SCHMITT'S DIARY

12 December 2766

It's only a matter of time. The dark cloud that rose with the death of our beloved Star Lord has grown into a towering thunderhead following the departure of General Kerenzky and most of the SLDF to fight the war against the rebellious Periphery realms. I have tried repeatedly to speak with our young Lord Richard about my mistrust of this self-styled "Lord Amaris" from the Rim Worlds Republic, but he refuses to listen. No one but that snake-charmer has his ear any more. I once considered this posting the highlight of my career, an honor dearer than anything else life might bestow upon me. But no more—not since witnessing the slow slide downward these past fifteen years. Am I the only one who sees what is happening? Or am I the only one who cares? I sometimes wonder whether two hundred years of peace and enlightenment is simply too much for warlike humans to handle. Five thousand-odd years of warfare instilled in us the instinctive response of raising our fists instead of our open hands. Only the charismatic leadership of the Cameron family kept the greedy states of the Inner Sphere from each other's throats all this time. And as much as it pains me to admit to weakness in the person I have sworn my life to protect, it is only natural that someday a bumbling fool like poor Lord Richard would slip through the cracks and sit on the Star League throne. Is it any wonder all hell is breaking loose? The worse affront happened today, when I once again sought audience with my lord to speak with him about the snake-charmer. This time I had real hopes of success. I had convinced several of my fellow officers, as well as several influential nobles—all of whom worry about the increasing number of Republican troops on Terra—to join me. But he scoffed at us. All of us. He mocked our fears and said he would tell Amaris that his name was being besmirched. Our lord then had us forcibly removed from his chamber.

It's a cold night. I feel in my bones that the end is near. I pray I have the strength to face it.

18 December 2766

Someday I pray my lord will forgive me. I have taken traitorous actions. Never mind they

CONFIDENTIAL

My faithful Cameron,

Your recent efforts on our behalf were inspired and inspiring. Tikonov would not be ours again had you not gifted the Free Republic Revolutionaries with a measure of your own strength. Take them, with my gratitude and my blessing, and I hope they bring you as much favor as they have brought us. You truly walk in the shadow of the Goddess.

In keeping with our private agreement, my followers have spirited to me the attached file, which I now pass along to you. It is a four-year assessment of the military, prepared for *Sang jiang-jun* Talon Zahn, to be appended to our Field Manual. The Capellan fighting arm is as strong as its ancient soul. We are formidable allies in your quest against the dark forces that wish to enslave both our peoples. This you will see.

And thank you for my gift! It is so much the sweeter that I did not expect it. I am thoroughly enjoying General Killson's stay on Highspire, though she has proven such a fragile thing...

With affection,

Kali Liao, 3 September 3067

EXCERPTS FROM COLONEL HANNI SCHMITT'S DIARY

are for his own good. I know that writing this condemns me; wouldn't the snake-charmer love to strip me of my title and execute me to further his hold? But I must find release from my anguish somehow. I have known for far too long that the snake-charmer may try to harm poor Richard, but overt actions have been denied me; even more so since my last rebuff from my lord. And so I have taken action, a year and more in the planning, which should save his life. If all else fails, I ~~an~~ will take him—take them both—to safety.

God forgive me.

21 December 2766

It is quiet today. Too quiet, as though before a monstrous storm. The last pieces are now in place. I've instructed Major MacIntosh to be ready from this time forth. At the first sign of trouble, he will secure my lord and head to the extraction zone.

My bones are aching. Is it simple fatigue, or the sheer weight of existing in this twilight dread?

27 December 2766

Oh, that we have come to this day! The dark cloud has finally unleashed its storm and the snake-charmer has shed his mask; all my fears have become reality as he moves to topple the Star League. If all unfolds as we have planned, I ~~an~~ will already have made the body double switch and will be safely on his way to the Abyss. Yet I do not know if he managed this. We dare not communicate; any attempt to make contact might tip our hand and ruin all our carefully laid plans. And so I stand to cast my entire command on the sword by moving most of the Black Watch to Gorst Flats, in hopes of diverting the snake's attention long enough for I ~~an~~ to make it beyond Terra, to safety in the Hegemony somewhere. If not, he will turn to our "friends" in Houses Davion and Steiner for refuge.

I have betrayed my lord by forcibly laying hands on him. I have sacrificed two innocents, whom the snake will surely slay. I lead an ignorant command like lambs to the slaughter, all for a hope that may already be lost. The ache has left my bones, at least. I know this will be my last entry.

God help me.

TH OF JUNE

been destroyed to safeguard the escape of the Cameron children? Or at least used to hunt them down? However, in my years of reporting, I've found that the truth is often stranger than fiction. I can easily see such a diary being lost in the chaos that followed the death of the Usurper and the events leading up to the Exodus. I am continuing to track down more information on this subject. If the diary proves true, the ramifications could be stunning...Cameron blood mixed with another House? After 300 years, however, the trail is cold indeed.

Concerning Kali Liao, I needed something more concrete than what I got from [name censored]. Against my better judgment, I contacted Mordecai one last time. He came through for me, but it may have cost him his life. He supplied the letter Kali sent along with the updated Capellan Field Manual to Cameron St. Jamais. The letter conclusively demonstrates Sixth of June involvement in the FedCom Civil War.

This provided undeniable proof that Kali Liao is the Master. Additionally, the Sixth of June used the confusion of the FedCom Civil War to mask operations in the Chaos March—among other things, aiding the Capellans in their conquest of Tikonov. With five worlds under their control and three more under their influence, the Word of Blake has formed its own little realm in the region and has amassed a far more powerful force than is needed to defend eight worlds—even including Terra.

With the evidence gathered in this investigation, I can only conclude that Kali Liao intends to launch a war of conquest to claim many of the worlds around Terra, perhaps forming some kind of Pan Terran-Capellan-Free Worlds Hegemony. Such a union would forge the most powerful realm in the Inner Sphere. Allegedly, the bulk of Kali's army will come from the Sixth of June-dominated Blake Militia, with support from the revitalized Capellan and Free Worlds militaries. Once she achieves it, Kali will proclaim herself Empress of this Hegemony.

The likelihood of anyone stopping her is remote. With the Steiner, Davion and Kurita militaries devastated by their savage wars and in utter disarray, they cannot oppose Kali, especially if the Sixth's allies in the Marian Hegemony, Circinus Federation and Taurian Concordat launch their own attacks against the Great Houses to support Kali's military conquests. Making matters worse, the House intelligence agencies and militaries are apparently oblivious to what's going on, more worried about internal matters than the threats outside their borders. Even ComStar appears focused on the Clans and rebuilding their neutral reputation.

Damocles' warnings appear to have come to fruition. The Inner Sphere has battered itself into a stupor with the recent wars, while a dangerous storm is gathering to unleash its fury. With the threat of the Clans all but ended and quiet on all fronts, the Houses have grown lax in the belief that the worst is over. The signs of the coming disaster are there, but their focus on the Clans and on internal strife have blinded them.

For INN, this is Sandra Raines reporting.



THE SIXTH OF JUNE

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

The Sixth of June has been driven by a single all-encompassing goal ever since its founding: to kill the House Lords and cleanse the Inner Sphere with fire while reshaping it in the Sixth's own image. To accomplish this, the group is pursuing a strategy of terrorism, assassination and general mayhem. Once an obscure faction within the Toyama sect, this organization grew in size and power, eventually taking control of the Toyama. Since then, the Toyama has become the major power bloc in the Word of Blake, and so the Sixth of June now controls many key positions and can circumvent the Blakist conclave at will.

The Sixth of June's beliefs classify it as an ultra-fanatical, quasi-religious organization. The foundations of the Sixth's beliefs come from Conrad Toyama's interpretation of Jerome Blake's word. As a whole, they believe that all outside their ranks require their guidance, and brand those who refuse it as heretics. Through diligent work, they have sought out foreign intelligence operatives who present a danger to their cause, eliminating them at every opportunity. To date, the Sixth of June has nearly cleared the Chaos March of all non-Blake operatives. The Sixth of June uses Blakist efforts in the Chaos March as cover to further the will of their mysterious Master. Because the Blakists' general appearance of benevolence and compassion have won the hearts of ordinary citizens, the Sixth of June can move about freely in the region without fear of exposure, though even so, very few have heard of the Sixth of June by name. Even the intelligence community has only limited knowledge of this group.

Almost no one outside the Sixth of June knows of the Master, and only a select few in the Sixth know her identity. To the average member in the Sixth, however, the Master's word is beyond question. Members willingly give their lives rather than disobey the Master's will, and no one can join the Sixth who does not demonstrate zealous loyalty to Blake's word as interpreted by Conrad Toyama.

Each Sixth of June aspirant looking to join the group's military or covert operations must undergo rigorous physical and mental conditioning for at least a year before taking the final test of loyalty. The test often requires an aspirant to seek out and kill a Blake's Wrath operative or an equally highly placed member of ComStar's military or intelligence communities.

Under the guidance of Cameron St. Jamais, the Sixth of June-controlled Word of Blake Militia has expanded beyond anyone's imagination. Ten full divisions are known to exist, and more are hidden from the prying eyes of "heretic" intelligence agencies until the time of the "Third Transference of Power" allegedly prophesied by the Master.

ORGANIZATION

Sixth of June followers live to serve the greater good of Blake's will. Highly trained and motivated, members are fanatical about their cause and zealously spread Blake's message in their travels. Loyalty, devotion and steadfastness are the hallmarks of the Sixth of June. Manei Domini followers are the most fanatical of all, consisting only of those undeterred by the prospect of killing whoever they may be ordered to or giving their lives without question. Those accepted into the Manei Domini have exhibited devotion to the Master beyond the average Sixth of June member.

The Sixth of June and Manei Domini use Special Operation Groups (SOGs), set up as cells. Each cell may function independently or in support of other cells. The Sixth operates throughout the Inner Sphere, inserting as many cells into a given area of influence as required. Once inserted, these groups work diligently to set the groundwork for their mission objectives as members of the local community, infiltrating society at every level from the local sanitation engineer to militia explosive disposal team member. Once a cell activates, nothing short of death can deter its members from accomplishing their mission.

SIXTH OF JUNE SCENARIOS

Given the size of the Sixth of June, the depths to which they have penetrated so many different organizations and levels of society, and the chaotic nature of their goals (truly known only to the Master), almost any type of situation can involve this powerful group. For example, a mercenary unit may suddenly discover that its benefactor is really the Sixth of June. Player characters in that unit may find themselves fighting for their lives as the locals rise up against them, blaming them for the assassination of the beloved local leader; investigations by local lords lead right back to the Word of Blake. Or player characters may get caught up in the collateral damage of a suicide bombing or surgical hit, whether at a military unit, an industrial park, or even while they are out to eat and so on. Information planted unknowingly on a player character by the Sixth might implicate the whole player group as the police round up bystanders to find out what happened. Or the crops on a backwater farm world where the player characters' House unit is stationed may begin to die, and manipulation by the Sixth of June causes locals to blame the player characters' unit. As famine threatens to sweep the land, the player characters must survive the threats of nature and hostile natives, and clear their names... after all, they can't just cut and run.

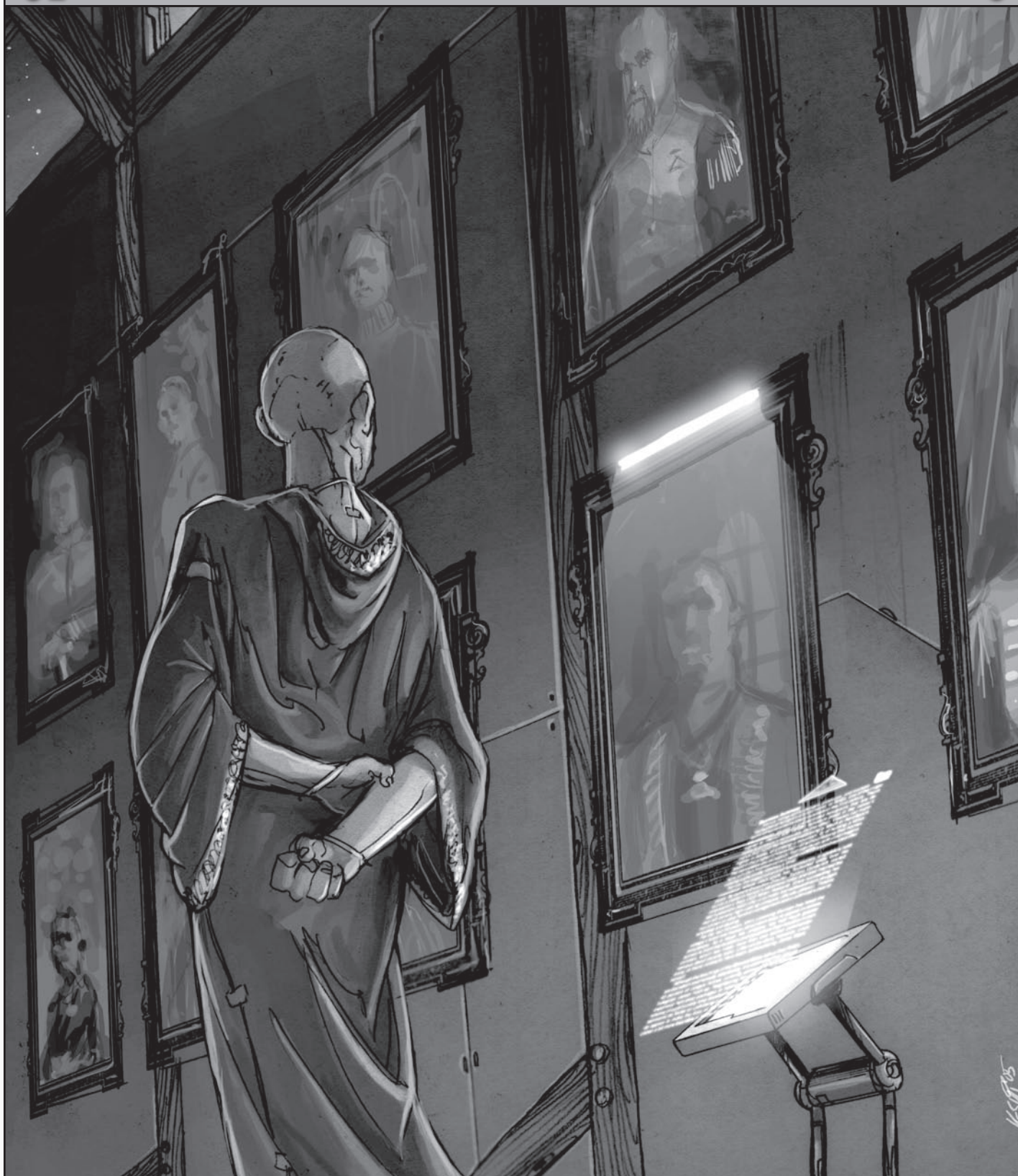
The list goes on and on, limited only by the gamemaster's imagination and the scope of campaign the group wishes to play.





connection/INTERSTELLAR PLAYERS/section06: THE ILLUMINATI

THE ILLUMINATI





THE ILLUMINATI

NOTES

Nothing beats a conspiracy group that refuses to go away. Of course, the Illuminati aren't just another fringe group. They've been around for well over a millennium. Dabbling in the affairs of nation-states, they made the whole of humanity their play toy for centuries. Their arrogance kept them from foreseeing their own fall, especially from within.

When they eventually noticed, the Illuminati splintered. Factions turned against each other. External wars became shows put on as extensions of their internal conflicts—all of this being in turn an extension of the whole group's petty nature. "Illuminati" means "enlightened", which is what they like to think they are. Enlightened people? Ha! My left foot is more enlightened than any of these schemers.

—Starling

ABSOLUTE POWER

The following broadcast was aired on 4 July, 3067 by the Triumvirate Public Broadcasting Network in the Saiph Triumvirate.

[VOICEOVER, NARRATOR]: To most of humanity, the life-altering events and wars that have occurred throughout our history have had a multitude of reasons. Some in hindsight seemed inevitable, others random, and still others tragically avoidable if only someone had spoken the proper word or made the proper gesture to stave off the horrible consequences. Given the recent bloody conflicts within local space over the past fifteen years, New Canton and the rest of the Saiph Triumvirate appear destined to lie under the storm cloud of war.

But according to a select few who can claim extensive connections, all of the life-changing events in the Inner Sphere since its earliest existence were predetermined, caused and taken advantage of by an ancient, highly secretive group known as the Illuminati. Sometimes acting against one another, sometimes acting as one entity, they have been blamed for inflicting wars, famine and misery on the human race in order to further their goal of absolute power. Those few who know of the cabal but are not part of it often keep quiet about it, for fear of retribution and public ridicule—but now, with the New Canton Guerillas stepping up terrorist activity, several brave individuals have come forth, albeit anonymously, to brief us on what really has been going on behind the curtain of interstellar politics.

THE ILLUMINATI'S PAST

Using the alias Henri Koles, one of our prominent contacts who earned several doctorates in various periods of history briefed us on the beginnings of this ancient organization. In fact,

Mr. Koles alerted us to its continued existence in the thirty-first century. Much of the information we gathered for our report was based on his tips and suggestions. He even put us in touch with our other contact, a former Illuminist known for this broadcast as Doctor Roland Fortus.

[VOICEOVER, DR. KOLES]: *"The Illuminati we know today began in the late eighteenth century, though powerful individuals made many other attempts to create such a group earlier on in human history. The current incarnation of this group was founded by thirteen wealthy friends, the most publicly known being Doctor Adam Weishaupt and Mayer Amschel Rothschild. Worshiping a very different version of Christianity than the one familiar to billions of people, their goal was the abolition of all other forms of religion and government and the establishment of a new world order, to be run efficiently and effectively by them."*

[V/O, NARRATOR]: The Illuminati brought in only a few people, mainly wealthy and educated people of noble background. They preferred to infiltrate other occult groups and influence their agendas to serve the Illuminati's desires. As their influence spread, they permitted more members to join, allowing for a rotating headship normally held by the most influential member at the time. Rulers of nations, mob bosses and prominent international bankers all held this leadership position, though the group never went too long without a Rothschild at its helm until the "fall" of the Star League. The Illuminati have played a patient game, buying time and influence with their incredibly vast wealth. Influencing elections, the media and justice systems, their long-term plan was to create apathy among the masses. Through exhausting wars and visible corruption of governments, they intended to disenfranchise people and make them so tired of the status quo that after one last apocalyptic war, the Illuminati could sweep in and be welcomed with open arms. To further this effort, each generation of Illuminati raised the next to take over and continue the cause.

One of their first overt efforts to install a true one-world order in modern history, the Soviet Civil War, initially failed to achieve its desired effect. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's military overwhelmed the hard-line Soviet loyalists, whose equipment had fallen into disrepair. Even with the unleashing of chemical weapons (particularly against NATO's main staging area), the war ended after several weeks, with casualties in the mere tens of thousands. This swift victory brought jubilation to the survivors, not the devastation and despair the Illuminati had sought. Instead, the last impediment to world peace had been swept away with less bloodshed than expected.

The Terran Alliance was allegedly the first of several attempts by the Illuminati to run their New World Order. The group apparently could not cease its tradition of manipulation and corruption, and they knew that because the Alliance came into existence

TRIAL AND ERROR

Excerpt from an interview with Doctor Fortus, former Illuminati turned humanist:

Q: What was the reaction of the Illuminati to the Soviet Civil War and the subsequent NATO intervention?

FORTUS: Disappointed and discouraged, to say the least. But they didn't just give up. They decided to try again, instigating the formation of the Western Alliance and the Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere to replace NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Using a Japanese blockade as the catalyst, they took what they learned with the last conflict and attempted to bring about their New World Order, not as a group picking up the pieces from a apocalyptic war, but as a reformist movement dedicated to preventing any future conflict.

Q: Did they intend their rule to be public?

FORTUS: Of course not! They wanted to be sure there would be no obstacles before overtly taking power, so they put some of their most trusted puppets into positions of authority. Until they were sure, they sent out exploration ships in secret to find and prepare sites for the coming colonization of the solar system and beyond.

Q: Are you saying the Illuminati had fusion and FTL technology before history credits scientists with their discovery?

FORTUS: Do you honestly think we were so lucky as to blindly pick out a star system with an inhabitable planet for colonization on the first try? Or that everything worked with such a low accident rate starting off?

Q: So when did the Illuminati start exploring? What were the costs?

FORTUS: We had our first success in 2021, and that's when we decided to start preparing the human race for exploration by allowing Kearny and Fuchida to publish their papers. Our success rate was initially one in ten, but by the time the *TAS Pathfinder* left the shipyard, we got it to ninety percent with a dozen systems explored and ready for settlement, just in time to ship the politically restless off Terra.

peacefully, the masses would desire more from that government. At home on Terra, the Illuminati ensured that the political parties publicly bickered nonstop, keeping the people disinterested in current events, while the colonized systems were too busy trying to survive to care. Those out in space who became restless might find a much-needed water shipment delayed, or even lost.

By 2314, the political polarization between the two main parties on Terra had reached its peak. Both sides had grown so bitter that the simplest governmental function became a monumental hassle. The population no longer cared what their government did. Most of the colonies had left the Terran Alliance and were completely reliant on the Ryan Cartel and other private companies to get enough supplies to survive. Despite this hardship, the colonies endured, and record numbers of people left Terra for other systems. Citizens seemed to feel anything was preferable to living with the corruption that had infested their former democracy.

The Illuminati apparently allowed this polarization to expand and then explode violently in 2314. By then, perhaps, they realized that everything—even their New World Order—worked in cycles. No matter how well they set their new order, or how popular their puppets, things would eventually break down. No one can say for certain whether the Illuminati create these conditions or simply adapt to them, but when they occur, the Illuminati never fail to

ILLUMINATI

take advantage of them. So when civil war finally engulfed humanity's birth world, the Illuminati used it to plant Admiral James McKenna in charge with a massive show of force. When McKenna's independent-minded son unwittingly permitted the brewing of a massive conspiracy to expose the Illuminati, his father's intervention was required to stop it. This put the younger McKenna out of the Illuminati council's favor, and when it came time for a new Illuminist to take charge, the McKennas were supplanted by a family previously unknown to human history: the Camerons.

We began to wonder why a Cameron, with no known ties to the Illuminati, was placed in charge of the Terran Hegemony and not someone more fitting, like the traditionally ambitious Rothschild family. Digging through public records about Rothschild family history in the Inner Sphere produced nothing for the past thousand years involving the direct ancestral lineage. Instead, the main Rothschild line seemed to have ended mysteriously sometime in the late twentieth century. Baffled, our staff searched the archives long and hard for any shred of Rothschild presence in the Inner Sphere, but to no avail. At that point, we first made contact with Dr. Fortus. Acting on his suggestion to look at the Cameron connection, we searched through the histories of all the Camerons before they came to prominence in the Terran Hegemony.

Through DNA testing and public records left from where the Rothschilds and the Camerons had traveled, we now believe that Jessica Cameron married Baron Richard de Rothschild, but retained her maiden name. Her children, who at the time were reported as being born out of wedlock, carried the Cameron name as well, obviously to disguise themselves from those who had grown suspicious of the Rothschilds. The rise of the Camerons meant that a Rothschild was still running the Illuminati, while overtly ruling the finest incarnation of their New World Order, the Terran Hegemony.

THE RISING ORDER

By the time Brian Cameron took power, the problems inherent in ruling such a vast Interstellar empire must have become apparent to the Illuminati. Puppets recruited to help oversee the hundreds of colonized systems became numerous, and the most senior aides became Illuminati themselves in recognition of their longstanding loyalty and service. This expansion further diluted the influence of the descendants of the original thirteen families and increased the risk that the group's existence would be revealed. In addition, several of those recruited wished to use the Illuminati to further their own ends. Dr. Koles helped clear up for us this chaotic period, which became known to human history as "The Age of War":

[V/O, DR. KOLES]: "Many of the younger families brought into the Illuminati lacked the wisdom and patience of the elder bloodlines. They wanted power within their lifetimes, not content with preparing things for their grandchildren. So the puppets began to greedily gobble up land and resources, using their newfound influence to rig elections, install their own people in office and even assassinate their rivals' puppets."



THE ILLUMINATI

"Though the Old Guard initially tried to contain it, they realized that even this could eventually serve their goals, and so they allowed the feuding to spread until the Tintavel Massacre. Many in the Illuminati at that point realized they had to get a handle on the situation, and they forced their puppets to sign the Ares Conventions. Apparently, none of the puppets realized that ruling an empire is pointless if all your subjects are dead or incapacitated. By the time the last of the treaties creating the Star League were signed, the masses had reached a point once again where they were eager for peace, even if it meant pledging loyalty to a new group of leaders."

[V/O, NARRATOR]: Indeed, most were eager to put the destructive wars behind them and join the Star League. The Illuminati placed their most loyal aides in positions of power at this time. So grand was this government, and so intricate its bureaucracy, that not even skeptics could detect a hint of corruption. The people of the Inner Sphere wholeheartedly accepted the righteousness and purity of the Star League.

Outside the Inner Sphere, however, people were less accepting. Those in the Periphery naturally distrusted large governmental bodies, preferring smaller-scale local rulers to faceless representatives of a government hundreds of light years away. The few groups that suspected or feared Illuminati influence over the Star League also fled to these Periphery states, further fortifying them against infiltration.

The exception was the Rim Worlds Republic. Though the population distrusted the Star League, House Amaris was descended from one of the original Illuminati aides, Ruben Porter. While other Illuminist families preferred the more advanced and developed systems closer to Terra, House Amaris traditionally enjoyed the rustic lands of underdeveloped worlds. When the Illuminati called upon the Amaris family to serve, its ruling patriarch, Gregory Amaris, answered. Amaris made boisterous pro-League declarations, and when the people engaged in open revolt, he put them down hard.

By 2575, we are told, the Council of Illuminati families had grown from the original thirteen to more than thirty. The Star League was theirs to rule, their long-sought New World Order, and yet the independence of the Periphery stuck in their craw. Despite their wealth, influence and ability to intimidate, the free Periphery realms—the Magistracy of Canopus, the Outworlds Alliance and the Taurian Concordat—remained staunchly opposed to Star League membership. Gregory Amaris remained loyal, but each day brought his realm closer to another revolt. The Illuminati decided to take action and called upon their puppets to mobilize the military and bring the upstart Periphery realms into the fold.

What military analysts expected to be a five-year campaign stretched out over a quarter of a century. The Illuminati staged logistical and maintenance problems to keep the SLDF from achieving total victories in the field, used dummy resistance groups and provided the Periphery powers with "missing" SLDF equipment and supplies to keep them fighting. Fearing a repeat

of the difficulties that had followed the too-quick victory after the Soviet Civil War, they made sure to draw out this conflict, to kill as many of those who were willing to fight as possible. By the end of the Reunification War, they wanted the Periphery people so sick of fighting that they would accept anything as the price of peace.

The Illuminati must have gone to great lengths. Gregory Amaris allowed a popular revolt to occur, forcing a Star League invasion of the Rim Worlds Republic that destroyed most of its military and infrastructure along with its rebel groups. Even that occurrence paled by comparison to events in the Outworlds Alliance. The Illuminati provided an entire military to that realm, via negotiations through House Davion, so that it could rationalize the razing of what little industrial capacity the Alliance rebels had. Nothing was too expensive or extravagant in the push to subdue the entire population of human-occupied space. By 2596, the last of the Periphery rebels finally had their fill of conflict and sued for peace.

In the wake of the stick, the Illuminati gave the population the carrot to win their trust. Thousands of engineers and pieces of advanced equipment flooded every corner of the ruined Periphery states, in a titanic effort to rebuild what they had just destroyed. After some time, the Star League had won over most of the Periphery population as they had the Inner Sphere. They had finally achieved their goal of a unified order where the people welcomed Illuminati government as the only way to ensure peace.

THE GREAT ILLUMINATI WAR

The period known as "the Good Years" to the public was probably remembered similarly by the ruling Illuminati. With no need for any war or wider effort to subvert and control the human race, all the Illuminati had to do was keep a low profile and continue to ensure that their puppets remained in power. For the time being, the universe was their oyster.

As a reward, the Illuminati allowed humanity to publicly research and produce technology at record rates. They even released the secret of the hyperpulse generator, which they allegedly had kept to themselves for fifty years or more. This "discovery" allowed communications between worlds more than twice as quickly as previously believed possible. The Illuminati permitted other technological developments as well, and soon the human race was advancing at its fastest pace since the Industrial Revolution.

The Good Years came to an end at the onset of 2751. To the then-current members of the Illuminati Council, their "Star League" had always been around and always would be. They no longer saw it as an objective of universal rule to reach and hold, but rather as their birthright. This outlook, fiercely resented by Simon Cameron, would prove the Illuminati's undoing.

A lover of books, Simon Cameron was raised amid his family's extensive library, in particular the writings and diary entries of the original Illuminati. As he watched the current members, he compared them with his romantic visions of how it once had been, and found them vastly wanting. He had no trouble with the

THE ILLUMINATI

Council running things, but he abhorred the orgy of power abuse in which so many of them were indulging. Simon wanted to go back to the quiet efficiency of the velvet glove. From the information we have managed to gather, many of the hidden wars that raged beneath the surface during the Star League era stemmed from several Illuminati members playing power games among themselves. Simon could not bear the waste of it all, and began to give aid not only to anti-Star League groups, but also to those who suspected the Illuminati's existence.

In January of 2751, the Illuminati learned that their most powerful member was working against them. As punishment, they imprisoned and tortured Simon Cameron in the most painful way possible, by making him witness the destruction of everything he held dear before his own death—sacrificing, in their minds temporarily, the unity of the Star League for bitter vengeance. Afterward, the Illuminati met to decide the fate of the now-leaderless Star League. Where the people had once looked to Camerons, a seat of power was empty, awaiting a ruler for the people to celebrate and adore—the heroic General Aleksandr Kerensky, who fought and seemingly deposed Stefan Amaris in one of the greatest “show” wars of all time.

Now the Illuminati needed a public leader, but none wished to step up. Kerensky looked like the obvious choice. The Illuminati planned to have their puppet House lords bicker and argue and pretend to disband the Star League. Then, as an apparent last resort, Kerensky would assemble the remaining SLDF forces over New Samarkand. He was to issue one last threat to the Houses, demanding that they repeal the disbanding of the Star League and support his bid to be the next First Lord. Otherwise, he would take the Star League Defense Force into exile to rebuild. Then he would return, without warning, and invade world after world until they acquiesced or were conquered. Pretending to be cowed by his forcefulness, the Houses would agree to his demands and the Star League would rise once more.

Part of the Illuminati plan did indeed come to pass, but ultimately General Kerensky proved an unreliable minion. Whether because he wanted power for himself, or because he felt guilty over the Cameron affair, the General no longer wished to be merely a puppet of the Illuminati. After knowing the Illuminati for most of his life, Aleksandr Kerensky felt he could do a better job running the Inner Sphere—not as a figurehead, as he had done during Richard Cameron's childhood, but as the real thing. Quietly gathering support from other aides and puppets of the Council, he promised them more power than the Illuminati would ever be willing to give them.

Surprisingly, the Illuminati did not realize what was happening until too late. The Council members were busy calming the chaos they had created and hunting down surviving supporters of the Camerons. Others went back to their old ways of abusing power. After destroying Simon Cameron and his bloodline, the Illuminati were confident that no one else would be foolish enough to challenge their rule.

When it came time to issue the final threat to the House Lords, however, Kerensky instead sent a threat to the Illuminati. He made

THE LAST STAR LORD

Another excerpt from our Interview with Dr. Fortus:

Q: So why did the Illuminati kill off its most powerful bloodline?

FORTUS: Simon Rothschild-Cameron was a different kind of Illuminati. He was the only one who cared enough about those beneath the group to feel bad about what happened to them. When he learned that the Periphery was preparing to rise up again, he felt sympathetic. He believed the Illuminati had strayed from their supposed purpose of efficiently running things to become power-drunk fools. They considered those beneath them toys for their pleasure and targets for their frustrations.

Q: So they killed him for thinking that?

FORTUS: No, nobody except his closest aide knew about that. When he turned thoughts into action, that's when things got dangerous for him. He began sending groups in the Periphery intelligence on SLDF troops, and supplies to assist in the uprising. The Illuminati Council didn't know until Cameron's aide, Stefan Amaris, informed them of his actions. Simon was using Amaris as his contact with the dissident groups, so Stefan could account for every document and every gun. Simon's ultimate goal was to publicly reveal the Illuminati's existence and motives, apparently. Stefan Amaris didn't seem to mind being a puppet, until Simon Cameron tried to make him be one against the Illuminati instead of for them.

Q: So when Cameron went to Star's End, they killed him?

FORTUS: They *didn't* kill him. They only made people think he was dead. No, they had a fate much worse than death for him. They holed him up in a hidden chamber by the throne room and forced him to watch as they raised his son, twisting him, turning Richard from a bright young man destined for greatness into a spoiled, perverted brat, while Kerensky crushed the movements Simon had tried to help. Then, after Richard came of age, they made Simon watch as Amaris murdered him and the rest of the Cameron family. They left the carcasses in the throne room, right outside Simon's prison, so he could see them every day until the so-called Kerensky-Amaris war ended. And every day, they'd bring in pictures and holovids of the stuff they'd done to Simon's subjects. He eventually died of natural causes in 2779, a pathetic shell of a man.

Q: So the entire war was just one big punishment for Simon?

FORTUS: Yes. The Council also felt it was time to thin out the herd, so to speak. The only thing they didn't count on was Kerensky's ulterior motives.

Q: And what happened to Amaris?

FORTUS: He changed his identity and was inducted as a full-fledged member of the Illuminati. His House remains one of the more respected families within the Illuminati Council and the Inner Sphere.

is plans abundantly clear and very similar to what he would publicly say. He was taking the Star League Defense Force into exile to rebuild itself, but not to conquer the Houses. One day, Kerensky vowed, he or his children would return and take out the Illuminati. Their judgment day would come.

With the message sent, Kerensky gave the order to jump. The man who had become the most beloved figure in the Inner Sphere took the most technologically advanced and best-trained military force out of the Illuminati's sphere of influence. For the first time, the Illuminati did not know what to do.

Some argued to immediately pursue Kerensky. Others thought that with no existing infrastructure in the far reaches of space, Kerensky was doomed to failure. Still others simply wished



THE ILLUMINATI

to punish those who had failed to spot Kerensky's plans. Only a single member at the time, Jerome Blake, advocated a workable plan. He proposed to slowly rebuild the Inner Sphere, to prepare for Kerensky's return. It would take many years, he said, for Kerensky to follow through on his threat. Throwing the might of the Inner Sphere behind them, the Illuminati could be prepared in time for his return. Not until many years later, however, did anyone listen to the man who would become the first Primus of ComStar.

While the oldest Illuminati bloodlines argued over who was to blame for their loss and what to do next, they did not initiate the first battles of what came to be called the Succession Wars. The younger members, angry over their shame, began to point fingers at one another. Most were ready to start fighting right away, but a few cooler heads bought enough time to convince the rest of the human race that the coming war sprang from a disagreement over who would be the new First Lord over the dead Star League. Had they not gotten that story out in time, the human race might have learned of the secret society's existence and their role in history.

Initially, the Illuminati held nothing back during the Succession Wars. City fighting, orbital bombardment and extensive use of weapons of mass destruction—obliterating entire worlds—all occurred during the first decades of this terrible, seemingly unending conflict. Though Council members were off-limits as targets, any of their aides or puppets were fair game. As the group took out their frustration and anger on one another, humanity suffered as their proxies.

The Illuminati did not care about the misery they were inflicting on the inhabitants of the Inner Sphere. They were above such things, and when the momentum of the conflict threatened their safety, they did nothing to stop it aside from getting out of the way. By this point, many of the Illuminati likely no longer felt truly human. In their minds, they had evolved past the rest of the human race. They had become gods. Given this attitude, the death of virtually an entire Illuminati sect on Sakhalin in 2863 shocked the Council to its bones. That particular sect, known as the Stealths, loved the adrenaline rush of fighting on the front lines and often participated in 'Mech battles. During one such confrontation, the Stealths took heavy casualties, many of them Illuminists.

After the Sakhalin incident, many of the Illuminati were shocked that no one did anything to stop the slaying of fellow Illuminists. The Council investigated and found that several aides in high positions within the Draconis Combine knew the Stealths were on the planet, but had made no changes in battle plans to take that into account. The investigation did not make clear whether the aides were merely negligent or deliberately ignored the possibility of killing Illuminati, but neither was excusable. Acting as judge, jury and prosecutor, the Council deemed guilty all parties involved. Few of the aides in question were willing to go quietly, and a brief but bloody war erupted as the Council hunted them down. The Illuminati executioners started from the top, assassinating the most public figure first. They took out Coordinator Yoguchi Kurita

through Snow Fire, one of his preferred courtesans. The rest took more time, and a good portion of it became public—known to historians as the "Shadow War" within the Draconis Combine. By 2866, all of the guilty parties and their supporters had been eliminated.

This series of unprecedented events reformed the bonds between the various Illuminati sects. In 2864, the surviving two dozen Illuminati convened on Earth for the first time since the fall of the Star League to set aside their differences. They came to realize that they were playing right into Kerensky's hands by weakening each other. Kerensky had left with a military force larger than anything any one of them could put together, for the stated purpose of coming back and destroying them. They should have been preparing for him, preserving now-scarce factories and JumpShips for future use. Subsequent to this pivotal meeting, the Illuminati secretly rebuilt several destroyed factories to mass-produce 'Mechs and vehicles in anticipation of Kerensky's return.

Most historians note a drastic change in military procedures around this time, lending credibility to our contact's claims. Units no longer fought each other to destruction, but only until a clear victor became apparent. WMDs, once commonplace, now became essentially forbidden. The Illuminati wanted to make sure they were prepared for their Lucifer's return and the resulting Armageddon.

However, as the years wore on, the Council grew impatient. No one, not even the omniscient Illuminati, could figure out what Kerensky and his followers were doing, or what size force they had amassed. Impatience apparently turned to nervousness, and in 2959 the Illuminati decided they had waited long enough. They sent scouts into the Deep Periphery, and what ComStar claims as the formation of the Explorer Corps may really have been a move to strike at Kerensky before he could strike at them. Upon discovery of Kerensky's force, the Illuminati intended for the House Lords to make a public proclamation re-instituting the Star League. ComStar would claim it had discovered Kerensky's destination, only to find that humanoid aliens had destroyed the SLDF and absorbed their technology. In order to keep the same from happening to the Inner Sphere, the Houses would attempt a massive operation to pre-empt attack by the alleged "aliens." With the Inner Sphere's population reliant on Illuminati-controlled media, no contrary evidence could surface, and the soldiers meant to fight this war would believe whatever their commanders told them. Their plan laid out, the Illuminati Council put events in motion, confident that they could destroy their nemesis. Even they, however, must have found it ironic that the JumpShip *Outbound Light* ultimately triggered what we know as the Clan Invasion.

Though before the invasion, the Illuminati had agreed to fight the Kerenskys tooth and nail, now that battle was actually joined, attitudes changed. Roughly half the council wished to continue the fight against Kerensky's Clans, bringing more of their hidden industrial capacity into public view while expanding their military presence. The rest wanted to bring the Clan Illuminists back into the fold, impressed by how easily they had

THE ILLUMINATI



manipulated their subjects without the periodical cullings of massive warfare. Neither side budged, but fortunately for the Council, neither side was willing to risk another civil war, especially with the Clans poised to roll them over.

Disagreements became so severe that the Blake sect—known publicly as ComStar—visibly separated into two distinct groups. What we know as the remnant of the old ComStar came under the influence of those who favored reintegration, while the more fanatical Illuminists who wanted to wipe out Kerensky's army formed the Word of Blake. This split led to heightened tensions, as the confrontationists held the more powerful military while the re-integrationists controlled territory and transportation routes to and around the Clan occupation zones.

In 3057, we are told, the confrontationists decided that if they could not get to the Clans, they would weaken the re-integrationists to the point where the Clans could get to them. They began by planting evidence that Victor Steiner-Davion, the lone member of the Illuminati whose bloodline remained in the public eye, had murdered Thomas Marik's son and tried to replace him with a double. None of this ever happened, but it played well with the public. Using pictures of her many trysts with staff members, the agitators managed to turn Victor's sister, Katrina Steiner-Davion, against him, prompting her to take the Lyran half out of the gigantic Federated Commonwealth. This move stranded half of Victor's available military force in a newly made "enemy" realm, so that when the Blakist military surged across the FedCom border, they met with great success.

Our sources cannot tell us which side did it, or whether a third party was responsible, but at the onset of hostilities, hundreds of nobles and planetary officials in what is now known as the Chaos March received notification of the Illuminati's existence and goals. We aren't sure how many people took the messages seriously, but their effect was far-reaching. Dozens of worlds began announcing their independence from the Great Houses and establishing their own domains. Obviously sickened at what had really been going on in the Inner Sphere, who can blame them for departing from their masters? We of the Saiph Triumvirate now live in the Chaos March, one of the few areas supposedly free from the Illuminati's grasp.

The group's exposure has not done much to dampen their morale or deter them from their goal of re-establishing one order in which they rule over all. From the rebirth of the Star League to the Great Refusal to the FedCom Civil War, all these events are simply part of the Illuminati's plans to further their agenda, though our contacts have informed us that several major events occurred without the unanimous consent of the other sects. It is even possible, we are told, that Illuminati members may once again be working at cross-purposes.

ACTIVITIES IN THE PRESENT DAY

Seeking confirmation of the Illuminati's existence remains a difficult task, even with their influence apparent everywhere. Tensions within the remaining independent worlds of the Chaos

March have risen in the wake of recent terrorist attacks and the formation of the Allied Mercenary Command. After all the fighting in the Chaos March following the FedCom Civil War, the Illuminati are more than ever convinced that only they can be trusted to run things, even if only behind the scenes.

Our systems and other independent worlds have broken free from Illuminati influence, but the arrival of the mercenary coalition seems to indicate that they want to bring us back into the fold. The mercenary presence, which we did not ask for, appears intended simply to provoke wars within our borders. If what our sources tell us is true, the Illuminati are once again counting on the brutality and fear of never-ending warfare to wear us down to the point where they or their minions can step in as our "saviors" and be welcomed with cheers and flowers.

Even our own government is fearful of speaking out too clearly about the Illuminati. During the ceremony marking the Triumvirate's formation in 3057, Baron Balatine announced:

"No longer shall we lie waiting for protection or orders from faraway, secretive figures. The days of our slavery to their manipulation are over. We are free people, with a right to choose our destiny! If they cannot respect our rights, then we can no longer be a part of their conspiracy to oppress..."

If the good baron was not referring to the Illuminati, then of whom was he speaking? Not even Victor Davion's supposed attempt at switching Thomas Marik's heir fits these remarks. Combined with what we know now about Operation Guerrero, it is highly likely that Baron Balatine was among the nobles notified about the Illuminati and their many tentacles. If so, his remarks were clearly directed at the Illuminati, not their puppet House Lords. However, when asked to comment on current events involving the illuminati a week ago, Baron Balatine equivocated:

"We have no evidence of Illuminati influence within our borders, or evidence indicating that the Illuminati even exist. However, if such a group does exist, it would go a long way toward explaining how the terrorist Zhazheng de guang has managed to continue with their reckless endangerment of millions of Triumvirate innocents. Despite our victories in battle, they remain intent on exhausting our people through countless attacks—which, I believe, are supposed to be a preferred strategy of this 'Illuminati' you asked me about."

Like the once-free people living in the Periphery back in the days of the old Star League, the arrival of a sizeable military presence within our borders seems to have cowed even the normally blunt baron into silence. But with no conclusive evidence of Illuminati existence or interference, it is unlikely that people will unite to oppose efforts to deceive them. Such evidence is equally unlikely to arise over the coming months as the violence increases.

This is Investigative Reporter Nadine Pelozzini, for TPB Entertainment and News.

THE ILLUMINATI **GAMEMASTER'S SECTION**

The Illuminati may be the most powerful and influential group in human history, and the best tool a gamemaster can ever bring into play. From lucky (or unlucky) breaks and last-minute changes in schedules, to weird occurrences and disappearances, just about anything can be an Illuminati trademark. This super-secret organization, bent on dominating all of humanity, can be a temptation for gamemasters and players alike. Adventures can lead players to try to disrupt Illuminati operations or try to join up with them, rising through the ranks of a particular sect.

Gamemasters are advised, however, not to turn the Illuminati into a crutch. Much of this secret organization's mystique is lost if they serve to explain away every little occurrence.

Illuminati Organization and Behavior

The spread of humanity across the stars has done much to create rifts between the Illuminist families, evolving their shadowy organization into something like a tribal council. The current head of an Illuminist family normally holds a seat on this council, while those serving or recruited by the family are all considered part of the family's sect. Unless one is born or marries into the dominant sect leader's bloodline, it is unheard of for another to take the place of the current seat-holding member. Nevertheless, anyone who joins the Illuminati is expected to groom any heirs to serve the group, perpetuating a cycle that has lasted for millennia. Being Illuminati is more than being in for life; members and their families are Illuminati until the end of time.

The first rule of being an Illuminati is that no one spills the beans. The group values secrecy above all and those who cannot keep their mouths shut won't get far within the organization. Secrecy strictures, however, have not stopped many members from using their increased power and influence to their own advantage through connections and intimidation. Most of this occurs in the middle levels of the power ladder, among individuals comfortable enough with their positions not to fear potential trouble with every step they make, but not yet fully aware that their actions have more repercussions than they expect. More often than not, a player can determine where in the chain a suspected Illuminist fits (if the character is in or aware of the Illuminati) simply by watching the individual's behavior.

One thing to note about the Illuminati is that professional courtesy between members goes a long, long way. Unless out-and-out war between two or more sects is occurring, one sect usually attempts to accommodate another's requests and operations within their area of control. For example, it is not uncommon for wanted parties to flee to other areas for safety, only to find other sects helping out in the manhunt.

Illuminati Operations

Illuminati involvement ranges from the largest to the smallest operations. Many legal endeavors provide resources and funds to the organization while allowing them to publicly yet quietly influence events and people. Charities, human rights groups and other private interest organizations spread goodwill, often while preaching about coming together under one umbrella or group.

With illegal activities, Illuminati involvement is just as vast. While a New Avalon drug dealer or his supplier may not be involved with the Illuminati, the head of the cartel that creates and ships their products may be a mid-level Illuminati operative. Bribery, blackmail and election-rigging are all preferred illegal methods used by these operatives, often to support Illuminati agents who already control most higher public offices.

After spreading their influence for more than a thousand years, the Illuminati no longer need to do much recruitment outside of their "farm" organizations. Freemasons, universities with Skull and Bones chapters, and other knightly orders are all used to induct promising individuals whose families have not already been inducted. Such groups are prime recruitment areas, as they create a bond of brotherhood between members and strictly require secrecy. They dramatically decrease the need for a filtering system, and also make it just about impossible to actually infiltrate the "farm teams" short of raising an agent from birth for that specific purpose (and the only groups with those kinds of resources are typically already controlled or infiltrated).

Those who know about the Illuminati or its recruitment groups rarely talk about them. The few people who do are often dismissed as eccentric conspiracy nuts who base their accusations on anecdotal experiences and overly paranoid rambling. This is not to say they are always wrong, however. Many of the smaller details fall apart upon investigation, while their broader theories and connections often prove true. The Illuminati is content to allow the majority of such individuals to live their lives, as their often-incoherent ramblings do more to obscure than to reveal what the Illuminati are doing. Indeed, a few "experts" may even be on the payroll of the Illuminati, making the case seem faulty and unbelievable on purpose.

Those who can sound plausible to the point of drawing undesired attention to the Council's activities are discredited, suffer hardships or simply fall victim to mysterious accidents. However, if such a figure is extremely prominent and useful, the Illuminati may attempt to bring him or her into the fold.





connection/INTERSTELLAR PLAYERS/section07: IRIAN CORPORATE CABAL

IRIAN CORPORATE CABAL





IRIAN CORPORATE CABAL

NOTES

Better business through overthrowing the government. If I were a Steiner, that motto would probably make me the happiest guy in the Inner Sphere. But I'm not, so I'm not. In any case, we have in this write-up a megacorporation with greater aspirations than market share. A conglomerate that started out as a little company on Terra, Irian grew like every other company, through a combination of legitimate business practices and backroom deals.

The following files are transcripts of intercepted conversations with a bearing on this cabal (corporation = cabal). What makes this story interesting is how far Irian is taking things.

—Starling

IRIAN TECHNOLOGIES: RULER OF THE GALAXY OR SIMPLY BUSINESS?

"Good morning, Director."

"Good morning, Daniela. Did you get what I asked for?"

"Yes, Director. One essay about the so-called 'Irian Corporate Cabal', a conspiracy of power-hungry business magnates preparing to take over the Free Worlds League, coming right up!"

"Ah. No joking this time. This is a serious matter!"

"As you wish. If you allow, I'll begin with a short retrospective on the assumed heart of the whole thing: Irian Technologies."

BUSINESS PROFILE

League Stock Market Symbol: IrTech

Home Office Location: Irian, Free Worlds League

President/ CEO: Sigmund Hughes

Founding Date: July 2182

Principal Divisions:

Division Name: Irian BattleMechs, Unlimited

Division Head: Nathaniel Rivarez

Chief Product: BattleMechs

Division Name: IMB Systems

Division Head: Mirka Kjellsdottir

Chief Product: Sensor arrays

Division Name: United Fiber Optics

Division Head: Samuele Dilani

Chief Product: Fiber-optic cable

Division Name: Irian Non-Ferrous

Division Head: Chris Blocher

Chief Product: Metals

Division Name: Technology Transfer (ITT)

Division Head: Timotheus Wepf

Chief Product: Marketing

Associates:

Name: Irian Media Interstellar (IMI)

Head: Lucy Tsagarides

Chief Product: Hologram-news

Name: Irian Skyrail

Head: Benjamin Weibel

Chief Products: Public transport, interstellar cargo

Name: Independent Traders Consulting

Head: Ricardo Mbutu

Chief Products: Services, financial advice

Name: Pier 25 Imports

Head: Maxim Havelaar

Chief Products: Foodstuffs, luxury goods

Name: Happy Free League

Head: Sandra Tomanovic

Chief Product: Recreation

"So... Our friend Rivarez finally did it. Nice to know. Do you know since when? Oh, never mind. Please continue."

HISTORY OF IRIAN TECHNOLOGIES

Irian Technologies was founded in 2182 as United Fiber Optics (a manufacturer of underwater communications cable). Over the years, the company prospered and soon expanded into mining and metals. By 2309, when Irian accepted membership in the fledgling Free Worlds League, it already operated over thirty facilities across Irian and three neighboring worlds. Its headquarters at the mouth of the Kirin River had grown into one of the universe's largest single-owner industriplexes.

With the rise of BattleMech technology, however, IrTech truly came into its own. Four IrTech scientists were included in the fifteen-person Project Arcturus team that built the League's first copies of the Hegemony's *Archer* and *Wasp* BattleMechs, and IrTech secured one of the first League contracts to manufacture those prototypes in 2482. Within 25 years, the Irian BattleMech plant on Soapstone Mountain was branching out and producing its own 'Mech designs, among them the successful *Hermes* and *Guillotine* models.

Around 2698, IrTech opened new facilities in the lucrative markets of the Duchy of Andurien, adding the ability to produce weapons systems, aerospace flight instruments, controls and sensor arrays to the company and further strengthening its autonomy. Unfortunately, during the Succession Wars, Irian's financial star began to wane. The company's well known stature in the defense marketplace and its heavy concentration of facilities near the League borders made it a high-priority target in the First and Second Succession Wars. In fact, of the 87 factories and laboratories belonging to Irian BattleMechs Unlimited, less than 20 percent survived unscathed. The company stubbornly refused to move its operations further into the League's interior, declaring publicly that "Irian is and always will be our home." The intervening years have taken a heavy toll and left IrTech a smoking shell of its former greatness, which to this day remains beyond its grasp.

IRIAN CORPORATE CABAL



Of course, Irian Technologies never broke, either. After being razed again by Anton Marik's forces during the Civil War of 3014, IrTech slowly rebuilt. Step by step, the various divisions shifted and expanded their fields of expertise into lucrative markets, IMB Systems at the head of them all.

Irian BattleMechs Unlimited kept a rather low profile after the wars, churning out small yearly runs of *Wasps*, *Awesomes*, *Hermes IIs*, *Stalkers* and later *Trebuchets*. The company surprised everyone by not taking part in the great arms race that began in reaction to the Clan invasion during the early 3050s. Apart from using recovered technology to resurrect the *Hermes* and *Guillotine* designs and licensing the *Blackjack* OmniMech from Luthien Armor Works, Irian added only two entirely new designs—the *Tempest* and the *Albatross*—to its portfolio.

Today, Irian Technologies is nowhere to be found among the truly major military-industrial players, but its numbers are solidly in the black, with reasonable growth and profit every financial period. This makes Irian stock a highly reliable commodity on the exchanges.

"If you believe the published numbers, that is..."

"Aaah, yes! But nothing comes down to simple numbers. Ever. So, what's the deal on Irian in that matter? Politics and back room activities, I'd guess?"

"Exactly, Director!"

POLITICS AND OTHER PASTIMES

All the way back to its founding days, the company owed its success to extensive political activity on all levels. Unlike other corporations, which simply bought or wrestled their way to political power, IrTech's actions consistently displayed incredible skill and finesse, hinting at perfect planning in its campaigns as well as extensive knowledge about the do's and don'ts of the political stage.

Still legendary (locally at least) was United Fiber Optics' ten-year-campaign to completely take over the Irian planetary government. This unparalleled operation was swift, perfectly legal and beautifully executed, from the initial acquisition of Irian Media Interstellar to the final declaration of the planet's new corporate government constitution on 23 September 2255, establishing a system that remains unchanged to the present day. Belittled or frowned on by its rivals for this coup at first, IrTech calmly showed the advantage of its actions by using its new financial power base—taxes—for systematic expansion, steadily diminishing the critics' market share.

Five decades later, after accepting membership in the Free Worlds League, IrTech made sure its political influence systematically grew alongside its business expansions. This combination of economic power and political support gave Irian and its partner corporations a unique edge in the business opportunities that emerged during the delicate formative years of the star-spanning empire. Of course, the company faced opposition on a regular

basis, but strangely enough, nobody came close to endangering Irian's activities—at least not where it really counted.

In 2715, the corporation received the ultimate acknowledgement of its League-wide importance when CEO Carlton Brigham was appointed MP from Irian. An IrTech CEO would hold that post seven more times over the next 300 years.

During the golden days of the Star League, IrTech institutionalized its fusing of political prowess and technical knowledge through its Irian Technology Transfer Division (ITT). This subgroup became instrumental in turning scientific gains into economic profits, identifying new markets for the company's goods and arranging cooperative exchanges of know-how and raw materials with other firms. Today, ITT still serves as a key marketing arm of the company, albeit on a much-reduced scale, and ITT field teams usually travel in small *Explorer*-class JumpShips carrying a crew complement of four to eight. The company retains about ten of these vessels in active service at the present time.

"Pretty standard stuff, again. Thoroughly believable, albeit a little too clean, if you ask me."

"Again: exactly, Director. Of course, there is a lot of hidden dirt behind that pretty façade, as we suspected. But show me someone who hasn't gotten dirt on his vest in this business..."

[Silence]

"You know, that whole history just looks a bit too good to be true. Or is it just me who's getting paranoid now?"

"Yesss... my thoughts exactly. So I started to dig a little deeper."

"And?"

"Nothing."

"WHAT?"

"Indeed, Director. Nothing solid, at least; just a few more things that don't feel right—like the fact that funding for ITT has held steady at the same exorbitant level ever since the fall of the Star League. But except for the unusual number, there's nothing wrong with those budgets!"

"Aww, come on, Daniela! There has to be something. Strange project funding, sudden 'accidental' deaths, unexplained visits by inconspicuous men in conspicuous black suits, sabotage attempts, militarily supported coups. Anything!"

"Of course there are, Director. But as I said, nothing off the scale for such corporations. Both publicly and privately, this 'Irian Corporate Cabal' looks to be no more than a large corporation with an unobtrusive yet consequential company policy that holds tight control over its homeworld and partner firms. Not like they would hide that."

"Definitely too good to be true."

"Exactly my thoughts again, but I have no clue where to look. Right now, I'm even inclined to believe those rumors."

"Rumors?"

"Pfft! Fairy tales, really. Usually, I wouldn't bother with such things, if not for the source of this 'theory'..."

"Show me."

"Very well. But don't accuse me of wasting your time later!"



IRIAN CORPORATE CABAL

PLAYING THE PUPPETEER

[Record starts]

"In my opinion, drunk people say a lot of stupid things. Educated people also say a lot of stupid things. And drunk, educated people with doctorates and too much time on their hands should be instantly shot. Fortunately for our guest, such a law doesn't exist, or he wouldn't be standing in front of you tonight!"

[Audience laughs]

"Oh, and just for the record: He wasn't drunk while conjuring what he will be unveiling this evening."

[Audience laughs]

"Not that it would have mattered, since—according to some friends of his—he can't be counted as an educated person anyway."

[Audience laughs louder]

"Alas then, fresh out of reasons to legally put him out of this world, you will be stuck up here with him for an endless hour of fanatical rambling. 'Here' being, of course, the final night in our series of presentations for the award for improbable research at the University of Atreus. A rather special prize given only to the most creative scientific minds, to reward them for their endless quests for things humankind doesn't need to know!"

[Fanfare]

"Please welcome with me the non-drunk, well-educated holder of the Chair of Economic Sciences at our very own University of Atreus, Professor Doctor Claus van Kienzle! Applause!"

[Applause as an old man enters the stage, grins at the audience and steps up to the podium.]

"Here he is, ladies and gentlemen. And be assured: contrary to yesterday's guest, he's here willingly and not likely to leave quickly. Oh, and don't forget next month's guest speaker, renowned xenobiologist Rolan Macnole. Enjoy your evening..."

[Louder applause as the two men shake hands. The old man then pulls the microphone to his height while the moderator leaves the stage.]

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I can't tell you how surprised and excited I was when an invitation to present my little life's work at this extraordinary event fluttered onto my desk. 'Finally!' I said to myself, 'someone has seen the value of my research. Even if it's just the Committee for Improbable Research!'"

[Applause]

"Well, well. Since I don't want to waste your precious time with needless introductions, let's begin. Lights?"

[Room lighting dims, man clears throat]

"Most of what I am about to tell you was, understandably, hidden beneath layers and layers of lies, buried deep in ages-old archives and passed from owner to owner. More often than not, it was pure chance that led me to these findings, but the existence of such information alone proves my words, if taken into account how much knowledge in general humankind lost in the last few hundred years.

"It is a well-known fact—at least among educated citizens like ourselves—that the history books are written by the victors. They depict themselves as knights in shining armor, strong-hearted heroes of the people who did what was necessary to preserve or further the one and only true way of life—be it by slaying the threatening beast or sacrificing their own lives for the greater good.

"Of course, this is not entirely true, some of you might say. And rightly so, because ever since the dawning of humankind, it has rarely been a simple beast that stood on the opposing side. No, usually men fought men. With words, fists, rocks and every other weapon imaginable through the ages.

"And usually some of that other side survived, driven from their lands, or oppressed in the same, or simply withdrawing in defeat with only a bloodied nose to show for their efforts. Those people wrote—and still do write—their own history, with other heroes and other great feats.

"Through time, humankind refined those basic lessons to further their goals, boasting of their achievements and exaggerating the failures of their adversaries. Rare is the humble person who downplays his successful deeds. Those who do so are usually saints, simpletons or persons with something to hide!

"But there is a fourth kind: people, *organizations* who simply do *not* exist in history, not because they were forgotten, erased or overlooked, but because they avoided the spotlight. They stand below every level of recognition and consistently act to keep it that way. I'm not talking about simple people like you and me, nor of the many thinly or badly veiled attempts to hide an unpleasant truth that many have attempted over the centuries.

"No. Tonight, you will hear a story that many of you will laugh at, or even discard outright as nonsense, born of the mind of an attention-hungry young man.

"I know that. And I will not hold this against you. The only thing I ask is that you walk out of here with an opened mind, wary of some things that you did not remark until now. And perhaps, you will come to see the truth as I have found it.

"Do you—for example—ever wonder why there is always war in our universe? Of course you do. Drifting into discussions about the human psyche, trying to understand it. But I ask you, who profits from war in our time? When the simple survival of a state is rarely endangered, and land gains only serve to briefly quench the thirst of power-hungry madmen? Who gains every time? Who will always be needed, even in wars with sticks and stones?

"Exactly! The ones who hammer stones out of solid rock, collect sticks and supply them to those who are willing and able to use them! Yes, dear friends; the ones truly responsible for everything are the producers of the toys of war—large corporations, with nothing but profit on their minds. Men and women in suits who—to refer to an ages-old metaphor—not only pull the strings, but own the whole theatre, and tell the puppet-masters which show to run.

"Politics and business walking hand in hand is not a new concept. By all indications, in fact, humanity might still be stuck

IRIAN CORPORATE CABAL



on Terra were it not for those few corporations whose leaders emptied their war chests to sponsor a drive to the stars while the planetary government drowned in debts.

"But somewhere along the way, in the centuries since, something changed in this well-working arrangement. While the nascent interstellar Houses reached back in time to feudalism in order to create a kind of government suitable for such large empires, the corporations marched forward.

"Suddenly, business wasn't walking side by side with politics anymore. It had begun to walk several steps ahead. Reluctantly at first, then more and more sure of themselves, company managers began to actively take advantage of this situation. By sparking a fire here and making suggestions there, they made sure their products stayed in high demand.

"Time went by and the golden age of the Star League began, a period of rich harvests for everyone that had something to sell, especially with the SLDF throwing credits out the window by the billions. Admittedly, I'm not entirely sure if this union of the Great Houses came to be naturally, or if the aforementioned corporations had something to do with it.

"But I do have solid proof that they were central to its demise.

"Face it. An Inner Sphere without war, full of happy citizens and an army strong enough to defend such a way of life was financially interesting during the build-up, but after a certain time it slowly turned into a shareholder's nightmare."

"You're right: a perfect waste of time. He didn't even present his 'proof.' Ramblings of an old man, indeed."

"Not just an old man, Director. Dear Professor van Kienzle worked fifteen years as a simple desk clerk on Sigmund Hughes' personal staff before going to Atreus to study economic science. I'd say we're talking inside information here."

"Ah, now you're just being silly! At best, that man clearly has a grudge against his former employer."

"Does he? Then please explain why a substantial amount of good old C-bills was transferred to one of the professor's bank accounts a few hours after his speech, by a financial institute known to be closely tied to IrTech? Hmm? Sound like a successful case of blackmail to you?"

"Oh... Well, you may have a point there."

"Sadly enough, not a valid one: van Kienzle left Irian more than twenty years ago. It would hardly be current information. And since the Committee for Improbable Research received a similar sum, I'd actually rule blackmail out."

"Mirrors within mirrors. If it weren't so interesting, I'd ask you to stop messing with my head!"

"Hang on, Director. It gets worse."

BUSINESS IS BUSINESS IS LIFE

"That's where I first heard mention of a so called 'Irian Corporate Cabal'. Back then, a series of unofficial meetings took

place between the heads of the largest corporations in the Free Worlds League, organized by the then-most influential company: Irian Technologies. Hence the name.

"In the beginning, the goal of these meetings was to further economic growth through coordinated efforts. Or—as they liked to call it—'pondering ways to make things better again.' Rather quickly, however, they discovered that governments wouldn't tolerate such actions and that the corporations alone weren't powerful enough to outweigh the many levels of governmental power in the League.

"So officially, the Irian Corporate Cabal was disbanded due to 'internal difficulties' while moving from public view into absolute secrecy. At the same time, Irian Technologies invited additional top-level companies from throughout the Inner Sphere. Today, I am certain that somewhere along the line in these secret meetings, the corporations discovered their true power.

"This is where the record of hard facts suddenly stops—a reality clearly intended to make a casual inquirer lose interest. But exactly this behavior—secrecy combined with unity of action between ages-old competitors, and then sudden silence—sparked my curiosity again. For me, the logical conclusions were easily made, and from there I quickly unravelled the mystery of those cold-hearted men and women with enough C-bills to buy a large part of the galaxy.

"And how they did..."

"Just a few years later, Stefan Amaris and his schemes plunged the Inner Sphere once again into darkness. Amaris' actions, though entirely planned by that traitor, could not have succeeded unless he and his Rim Worlds Republic had significant economic support from powerful sources. Sources which at the same time supplied the SLDF, enabling them to strike back, but only after an appropriate time had passed. Sources who—after the wars—made an honest man, hero of the Star League Aleksandr Kerensky, believe it was in the best interest of the future to gather the last thing capable of ensuring peace—the SLDF—and lead it out into unknown space. Sources that helped a desperate Minister of Communications named Jerome Blake on Terra to build an enterprise known as ComStar...

"Yes, ladies and gentlemen. ComStar. This organization, which held—and still holds—the very heart of civilization in its hands, whose leaders proved to be masters of deception and which ultimately tried to shape the universe to its will, was itself merely a puppet of a conglomerate of corporate magnates, scheming to increase their profits!

"Centuries passed. History was written by victors, as well as by losers. Sticks and stones are in higher demand than ever.

"And the puppets still dance to the tune of puppetmasters who do not even realize how the rent for the theatre rises and rises..."

"Thank you."

[Applause]

[Record fades out]



IRIAN CORPORATE CABAL

"I'm beat, Daniela. Seriously beat. What a shitload of lunatic crap!"

[Sigh]

"But you did your job. Well done. I'll go over the material again."

"The economic data, at least. From what I've seen there, I'd give us reasonable chances for a foothold on Acubens. Surely the local market will appreciate a chance to escape the existing monopoly."

[Door opens and a visibly shocked employee storms in]

"Director! Director!"

"What is it, Mr. Dhoruba?"

"Our stocks just dropped ten percent..."

"WHAT?"

[Voice over speaker-phone cuts in]

"Director, there's a gentleman in the lobby who would like an appointment. Says he's from Irian Technologies. Shall I tell him to come back later?"

[Silence. Teeth grinding]

"No, Marlies. No. Send him in. Right now."

IRIAN CORPORATE CABAL

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

The following section provides some ideas for gamemasters to incorporate the Irian Cabal into their campaigns.

THE TRUTH BEHIND THE CABAL

Irian Technologies is a huge, complex conglomerate of companies, subsidiaries and partnerships covering the whole range of markets, from raw materials to foodstuffs, from basic services to sophisticated technology, from diapers to a prince's bed gowns. The prevailing view that its core competence lies in the arms industry is nothing more than a carefully cultivated façade; in truth, military tech is responsible only for a fraction of the cabal's actual income and a majority of its expenses. The true pillar of IrTech's wealth is the simple citizen. IrTech satisfies his everyday needs through retail chains scattered throughout the League, often with products that he never suspects come from such a huge company.

Even more central to IrTech's power, however, is the way the corporation collects and spends the citizens' tax money. Made possible through IrTech's complete political control over the world of Irian and some of its adjacent systems, the non-democratic governments dominated by IrTech's top management function virtually as a complete, self-sustaining division of the company. While this means that IrTech has to support several planets and their inhabitants out of its own pocket, this arrangement fills these same pockets again and again with tax money, a cycle of investment and income that easily accounts for up to a third of IrTech's annual revenues.

Also, it is no secret that Sigmund Hughes, the current CEO of IrTech, still spends most of his time in and about the Atrean court social scene instead of in his Irian offices. This more than hints at a well-groomed connection between IrTech and the Free Worlds League government, as well as providing the obvious explanation for the exclusive contracts the company has won throughout the years, and the mostly blind eye turned toward its less scrupulous activities.

Beyond these obvious signs of IrTech's power, many more are open to speculation.

Some of the more persistent and plausible rumors concern hidden business alliances and hostile corporate buyouts. Some of these are generally confirmed (if not by IrTech officials), like the takeovers of Brooks Incorporated, Diverse Optics' League operations and the Grumman Amalgamated facilities on Irian and Shiro III, respectively. Other unconfirmed but probable alliances include rumored partnerships with the Kali Yama Weapons Cartel, the Alphard Trading Corporation, Andurien Aerotech and even possible ties to the Quikscell and Brigadier corporations. At this point, evidence of further connections becomes nearly impossible to find, lost in the jungle of stock markets, sucked down the maelstrom of dummy companies and swept away or cut apart by the avalanche of balance sheet "optimizations"—all routine happenings in the turbulent interstellar economy.

Increasing IrTech's reach are a host of informal agreements between the largest corporations in the Inner Sphere, some already operating in several Successor States at once. Curtiss Hydrosystems, Ceres Metals, Earthwerks Limited, Tengo Aerospace, Hellespont Industrials, Kallon Industries and Hildco Interplanetary from the neighboring Capellan Confederation may be IrTech allies. Matabushi Incorporated, Tanadi Computers, New Samarkand Metals and Wakazashi Enterprises in the Draconis Combine, the Davion financial giants of Federated-Boeing and Interconnectedness Unlimited, and even long-standing rivals like Defiance Industries and Nashan Diversified in the Lyrans Alliance, may also have backroom deals with the Irian Cabal in the name of corporate superiority over government and society far beyond what is publicly known.

Though considered to be among the wildest rumors about IrTech, some critics even claim that the Irian Corporate Cabal stands as front for an unknown, larger-than-secret alliance of all the big business players governing all happenings in the Inner Sphere toward their own bottom lines. This alliance may even be a facet of universal dominion, like that attributed to the ancient

IRIAN CORPORATE CABAL



and mythical Illuminati. Usually, these notions are rejected as paranoid delusions even among casual fans of conspiracy theories, and no hard evidence exists of such a plan. Defenders of the theory claim there is no proof it *doesn't* exist, hardly be surprising if such powerful groups could actually manipulate the Great Houses and ComStar for centuries.

An even more recent variation of the corporate conspiracy—and current favorite among the most hard-core paranoids ever since rumors about trade relations with Clan Diamond Shark were confirmed—says that not only did the cabal send the SLDF away from the Inner Sphere, it also organized and guided their descendants' return as the Clans, first reviving the arms sector with the help of a savage war and now opening new markets for Clan technology.

ORGANIZATION AND GOALS

Regardless of the level on which the Irian Corporate Cabal now operates—something that might never be fully discovered—or of what the cabal really is, its philosophy differs greatly from other secret groups and conspirators. Unlike its fellows, the Irian Cabal is strictly business. It has no obligatory pseudo-religious mumbo-jumbo, it never had a lodge system or order of inheritance like the pompous Illuminati, and it even lacks any trace of the classic cell structure common to countless underground organizations. This reality is exactly what makes the cabal so dangerous and successful. It is no more and no less than a group of intelligent men and women with a lot of power, wealth and economic might sitting at a round table, combining their efforts in a visionary plan to control the present and the future. Its members are willing and patient enough to sacrifice short-term highs for the greater and lasting good, even down several generations.

Scaled down to a one-company level, such a cabal's goals are pretty obvious: profit, more profit and then—if possible—additional profit. All within legal boundaries, or if outside them, without getting caught. Inside such a company's steadily expanding radius of operations, competitors are swiftly dealt with. Petty wars and political struggles are fiercely fought with pens, money and lawyers. Blood is spilled vehemently, but only in the form of too much ink on too much paper. The conflicts of others are pretty much ignored, except when they collide with company interests. Business as usual, in its rawest form.

A House- or Sphere-spanning Irian Cabal would be a very different matter. Because the existence of such an organization exceeds imagination, to guess its goals proves nearly impossible. Nobody knows what the cabal's long-standing plans encompass, nor what they did, or even the level of detail to which the cabal tampers with the life of every citizen. Picking up on current events, for example, the recent uptick in activity by the World of Blake might be in preparation for another major strike designed to fill the cabal's pockets. After all, the success of Vicore Industries CEO Giovanni Estrella De la Sangre in gaining virtually every major 'Mech producer for his ambitious "Project Phoenix" looks a tad

staged. The fact that only IrTech apparently got left out bolsters this argument.

The opposite might be true as well. Perhaps the cabal lost control over its own creation with the ComStar Schism. Dealing with the Clans, it suddenly found itself unable to put the techno-fanaticism it once created back under a lid, and is now reduced to gazing in horror at what is slowly creeping out of this Pandora's box.

Be it as it will, in the end only one thing remains absolutely sure:

"Every time you pop a can of 100% NATURAL BUBBLE-FIZZ D'ACUBENS, you're doing wonders for your body!"

(0.5 Eagle/can at your nearest PIER 25 store)

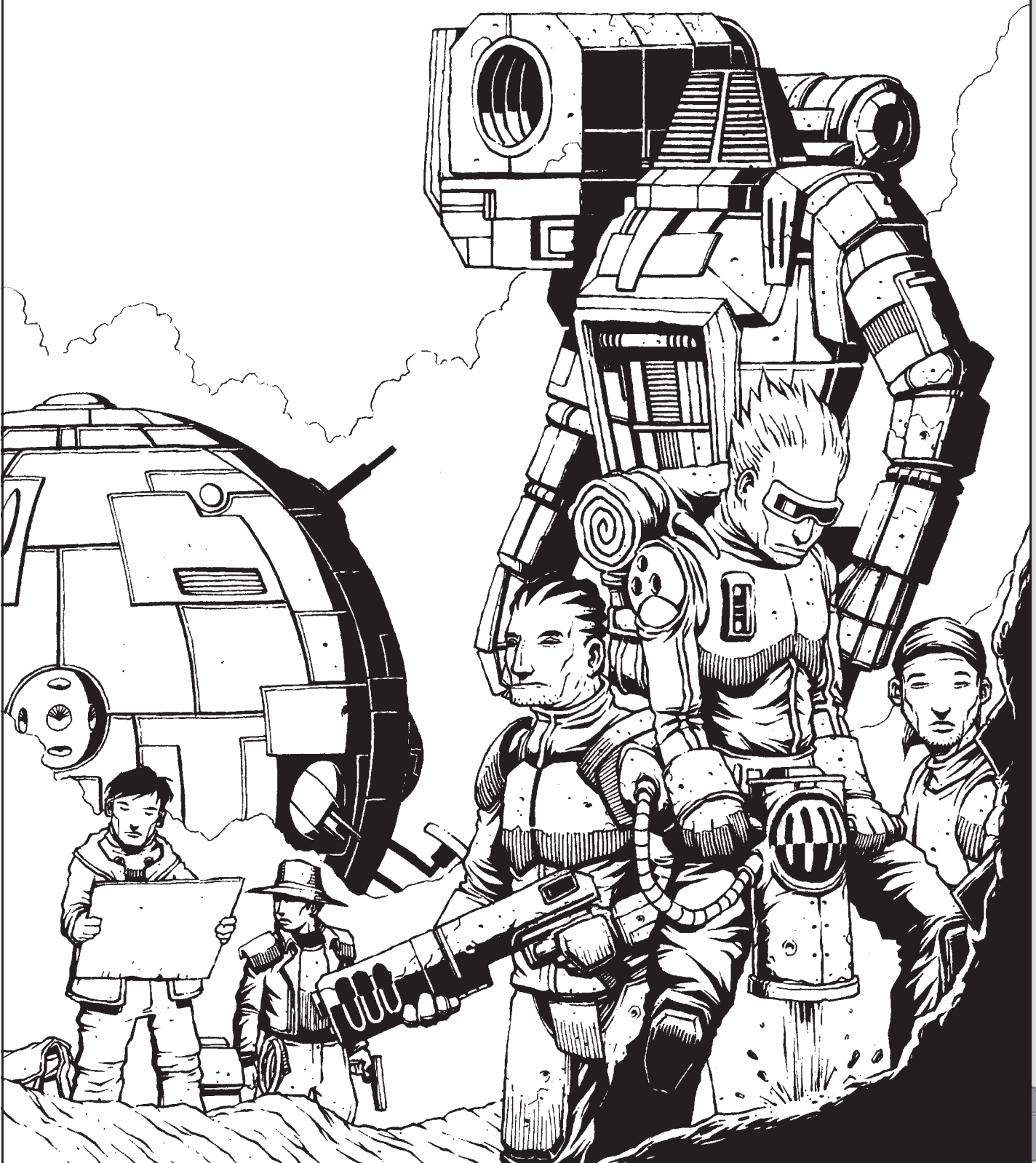
CHARACTERS AND THE CABAL

Player characters may be drawn into the web of corporate intrigue that surrounds Irian Technologies as hirelings of Irian companies or unwitting patsies of the cabal's manipulations. As a corporate entity with interplanetary interests, IrTech is a well-known employer of mercenaries and civilian security operatives, and maintains many of its own secret security and intelligence agencies spread among the company's many holdings. Adding to this their total domination of Irian's government and strong influence in neighboring systems (as well as in the Atrean royal court), the cabal has access to all levels of the Free Worlds government, including the military and nobility.

As the cabal has long grown accustomed to the profits of war, many of their activities may center on inciting conflict or brokering arms deals. These manipulations can be short-term or long, and may involve secret alliances with rebel factions (both for and against the Free Worlds) or even other interstellar conglomerates in hostile neighbor states (like the Lyran Alliance). Some or even all of the above rumors of the cabal's alliances may be true, or the cabal itself may be a facet or influential pawn of a much larger group, like the Illuminati. This makes the Irian Corporate Cabal an ideal candidate for all sorts of intrigue, limited only by the game-master's imagination.

Because Irian Technologies presents such a widely known public face, any covert activity by the company or its cabal masters may involve various "deniable assets," including mercenaries often hired through smaller front businesses that can be isolated and cut off in the event anything goes wrong. This makes a simple case of corporate espionage extremely difficult to track back to its true source, and those who try to investigate by infiltrating the various cabal-run companies and planetary governments may quickly find themselves in a rat's maze against an all-powerful quarry fully aware of their activities and intentions. In such a case, whatever the cabal's activities and goals truly are, they will not hesitate to silence interlopers who learn too much or present too great a threat.

INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITIONS



THE WOLVERINES AND MINNESOTA TRIBE REVEALED AT LAST!

Ha! I knew I could get your attention! No, this write-up isn't about the Wolverines or the Tribe per se. It's about Interstellar Expeditions, a corporate-style entity that has spent thousands of man-years looking for them, among other mysteries of human-occupied space. Interstellar Expeditions is a for-hire archeological team that likes to poke around the far reaches of humanity's expanse. A noble cause, aside from the for-hire part, but I guess everybody needs to pay their bills. And their travel logs usually make for a fun read. However, the company has suffered a series of setbacks recently that have all the hallmarks of a coordinated effort. Which raises the question—who might be behind these efforts, and why?

—Starling

<FORUMID797.1011.43.175.13/INNER SPHERE HISTORY>

SUBJECT: Anyone Have Info on This?

Is there some mercenary archaeology unit out there that looks for UFOs and other paranormal stuff? I thought I saw something about it in a documentary, but can't remember now. Help!

:-Bonduurr

Don't remember the name. Aren't they a bunch of priests or whatever that travel around performing occult ceremonies and rituals?

:-19HUCK885

Not quite. This should answer some questions!

:-Veladrum

Begin Upload 20245...

RESTRICTED/NO SENSITIVE

SLIO66-24253

Distribution: Unlimited Member Organizations

Subject: Interstellar Expeditions

OVERVIEW

Interstellar Expeditions is a private organization devoted to historical research and interstellar archaeology. Technically not a corporation, IE is a closely aligned federation of interdependent groups, some professional and some part-time hobbyists. These groups contract their services to private individuals and organizations. Services include research into family trees and family history, research on and discovery of lost settlements, special stellar and terrain cartography services, archaeological expeditions and surveys, and anthropological and archaeological analyses of artifacts. Various IE groups provide additional services all related to archaeological and historical research and discovery, including setting up expeditions and managing and operating dig sites. IE operates within local laws and the guidelines set down by the Interstellar Archaeological and Anthropological Society. IE is a for-profit organization that uses its proceeds to fund its own expeditions and operations, as defined by its senior leadership.

HISTORY

The origins of Interstellar Expeditions lie in three different groups of loosely aligned archaeologists, historians and anthropologists. The Millennium Foundation and the Federation of Star Lookers specialized in mounting archaeological expeditions for universities, museums and other institutions when, in 2889, at the height of the Third Succession War, they merged to become the Star Group.

As the Third Succession War dragged on, the Star Group fell on hard times. With economies stagnating and drifting into recession, fewer and fewer of the surviving educational institutions and museums could pay for the services of these "mercenary archaeologists."



INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITIONS

To remain viable, the Group was forced to turn to fortune hunting (searching for ancient valuables and selling them on the open market) and even working for military and secretive government organizations (gathering intelligence, aiding in attack planning and even participating in raids on universities and museums).

A large percentage of the membership found this work unsatisfactory and left the organization, which led to a crisis in 2968. Group leaders considered disbanding the organization, but ultimately accepted a merger offer from the Mutual Exploration Network (MEN). MEN was a loose-knit collection of wealthy spend-thrifts, conspiracy theorists and archaeological hobbyists whose only stated goal was to discover the truth behind the mysterious appearance and disappearance of the so-called Minnesota Tribe (though since MEN's formation in 2894, the network has also devoted significant time and resources to seeking the truth behind other mysterious happenings).

Though this proposed merger caused a great deal of trepidation within the Star Group, ultimately the membership's fears proved unfounded. MEN and the Star Group merged to form Interstellar Expeditions in 2974; the Star Group's senior management provided the organizational leadership and academic credentials that MEN lacked, while MEN provided the funding that the Star Group needed. The new organization proved stronger than its components, and quickly mounted a number of expeditions that bore fruit.

Since that time, IE has made a name for itself throughout the Inner Sphere and the Periphery. Though especially well-known in academic circles, IE has lately also broken into mainstream recognition thanks to two notable finds in the Lyran Periphery, both of which were attacked by an unknown group of BattleMech-equipped pirates (this group is colloquially known as the Green Ghosts).

OPERATIONS

Interstellar Expeditions has functioned along the same lines for most of this century. While individual IE groups have wide latitude in how they interpret organizational regulations, few diverge significantly from the following set-up.

Goals and Fundamental Assumptions

Interstellar Expeditions' public mission statement is "To advance the knowledge and understanding of the human race through the discovery and study of humanity's past," summed up by its tagline, "Bringing the past to light." To that end, IE sells its services to universities, museums, public organizations (including government-sponsored organizations) and private individuals and entities.

Privately, IE has a number of additional goals. As a federation of semi-independent groups (see *Organization*, below), its many affiliates typically have unique motivations. The number and localized focus of these affiliated groups make it impractical to cover their various goals in this document. Beyond these affiliate-specific

goals, however, the entire organization has several non-public aims that it actively pursues. First, as widely reported in the interstellar media, IE is actively searching for clues to the so-called Minnesota Tribe. Though never officially confirmed by the organization, this particular search is considered an open secret.

Less well known is IE's frequent searching out of religious artifacts and sites. Though no amount of digging has yet determined the extent to which this represents an organization-wide goal, IE has in the past turned down better-paying and higher-profile contracts in order to pursue self-generated, religious-themed assignments. To date, IE has not specifically targeted any religious group or order, but the organization apparently has a plan in place to explore a number of religious sites across the human-occupied sphere. A number of former Millennium Foundation groups have taken particular interest in pursuing these aims, some of them well outside the IE "mainstream" in the fervency of their goals and methods. Certain groups have even been dismissed from the IE, though these are by far the exception rather than the rule.

Other private goals include investigating unexplained historical occurrences (such as the disappearance of Clinton's Cutthroats or the bulk of the Seventh Crucis Lancers), finding the contents of the Vatican's libraries (stolen during Stefan Amaris' occupation of Terra), discovering the Chalice and Tablets of St. Kamen DeGreun (lost in 2183 following his execution in Istanbul) and even rediscovering the secrets of Greek Fire.

Organization

Interstellar Expeditions follows an unconventional organization. Approximately 435 individual groups, each of varying size and specialty, make up IE. These groups are united in a federation run by a Council of Peers and an executive office. The Council of Peers consists of 29 officers elected by representatives from the individual member groups; this council debates matters of significance to the organization and provides oversight and counsel to the executive office. The executive office consists of officers who carry out the day-to-day operations of Interstellar Expeditions, including the Chief Financial Officer, the Chief Counsel and the Chief Executive Officer.

IE is divided into eleven regions (one for each Successor State, one for the old Terran Hegemony, one for the Free Rasalhague Republic and Clan Occupation Zones and four for the Periphery), providing a level of intermediate administration. Technically, each region is responsible for all IE operations within its territory, though in practice groups frequently operate outside of their particular region, especially those with highly specialized skills or capabilities.

Individual groups may initiate and accept small contracts on their own, though any that involve travel to other worlds or the participation of other IE groups require coordination with and approval at higher-level headquarters. The various individual groups have no standard organizational structure; they need only have a treasurer or other money-tender, a nominal leader and a representative who

INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITIONS



can speak for the group at the highest levels. Any other structure is entirely up to the local group and its members.

Leadership

Dr. Reiner Wooden has served as IE's Chief Operating Officer since 3056. Prior to that, he served IE in a variety of roles since joining the organization after receiving his doctorate in 3034. Under his leadership, IE has expanded its operations and even made overtures to entities within the Clans. Though most of these have been rebuffed, IE personnel did take part in the Babylon Diet of 3062, and have since made some tentative contacts within the Clans. Additionally, based on evidence uncovered in the past few years, Dr. Wooden is pushing for additional IE missions into the Lyran Periphery. Though Dr. Wooden is likely pursuing evidence of long-lost Rim Worlds Republic settlements, some conjecture exists that he is actually looking for something else.

For the most part, Dr. Wooden enjoys wide support within the organization, though a few groups oppose some of his initiatives, especially his overtures to the Clans. These groups have thus far refused to participate in any activities they do not endorse, and are actively working behind the scenes to build support for their views.

Membership

Membership in Interstellar Expeditions is unique among significant non-governmental organizations. The origins of the organization mean that some IE members are employees, some are volunteers and some are hobbyists. The Millennium Foundation was an entirely professional organization, consisting of individuals with qualified backgrounds and well-supervised trainees. The Federation of Star Lookers was more open to individuals who volunteered their time to participate in archaeological expeditions, though qualified, credentialed professionals supervised Star Looker operations. The merger with the Mutual Exploration Network opened the door to hobbyists, enthusiasts and other unqualified individuals with an interest in archaeology and historical research.

Currently, as for most of this century, IE has several different levels of membership. A little more than half the members are paid employees; these include individuals in administration and logistics (full-time or part-time) and credentialed academics, researchers and explorers who supervise and largely conduct the organization's work. Additionally, IE makes extensive use of interns and students, providing valuable field-related work experience in exchange for one or more years of service at greatly reduced pay scales. Occasionally, IE also adds academic and museum personnel "on loan" from their usual employers, as well as mercenary, security and support services personnel typically hired for the duration of a single expedition.

Beyond these professional employees, IE also uses non-professional personnel. Like many groups that organize and conduct archaeological expeditions, IE uses volunteers to supplement expedition manpower. These volunteers come from all walks of life,

from business to engineering to labor to retirees, and freely donate weeks or months of their time to aid in archaeological digs. These people are not paid salaries, though they are housed and fed with the rest of the expedition crews and receive full coverage under IE's insurance. They are not employees, and may not speak for IE. A small but dedicated core group of volunteers, especially retirees and others with larger amounts of free time, participate in multiple expeditions. In fact, several such groups have essentially devoted their lives to IE, forming gypsy-like bands that travel with the expeditions. These "dig-gypsy" groups began to coalesce in the decades following IE's establishment, and have since built a unique mini-society. They bring their families along with them, and when not participating in an expedition, they sell homemade baubles and miscellaneous items they found at dig sites (taken with permission from dig organizers). Though only a few IE groups allow these "dig-gypsies" to participate in their operations, a variety of news reports and other media coverage in the past several decades have fueled a widely held belief that Interstellar Expeditions consists entirely of these individuals. To date IE has failed to dispel this myth in the Inner Sphere and Periphery.

Finally, IE employs hobbyists in a variety of roles. While all of IE's component founders are dedicated to archaeological exploration, MEN was far from a professional organization. Instead, it was run and funded by wealthy individuals who considered it anywhere from a distraction (like solar sailing and deep space walking) to a serious hobby, but never as a serious business. For the most part, they freely funded expeditions that looked and sounded interesting, and allowed almost anyone to participate. They regarded exploration as a hobby that they spent money on and brought their friends and family into, regardless of the overall success of the missions undertaken.

Because of this, when MEN merged with the Star Group, IE was obligated to continue using these hobbyists. Unfortunately, a great many of these individuals had few applicable skills and little motivation to work hard to successfully complete a dig. Though over the years IE has managed to rid itself of many of these hangers-on, a significant number remain involved with the organization because of their relationships with the core group of IE benefactors. On the other hand, a number of dedicated individuals, while pursuing other careers, possess the dedication and qualifications to aid IE in its pursuits, and do so on a part-time or as-needed basis. These individuals typically take care of research and analysis duties at home in their free time and only rarely take part in expeditions away from their home worlds. Despite the existence and efforts of these qualified amateurs, however, the unqualified hangers-on—along with the "dig-gypsies"—have given rise to a negative perception of IE among the general public.

Logistics

Interstellar Expeditions boasts more than 40,000 employees, though at least half of these fall into the "hobbyist" category. In



INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITIONS

addition, at any one time, an active operation can involve as many as several thousand more contract employees and volunteers, all of whom must be supported. Consequently, IE has developed an extensive administrative and logistical structure capable of supporting large numbers of personnel in a wide variety of roles and locations. IE has contracts with numerous commercial sources of food, construction and excavation equipment, mechanical and electronics supplies and the like throughout the Inner Sphere. Likewise, it has agreements with large- and small-scale DropShip and JumpShip operators to allow its personnel to undertake expeditions throughout civilized space.

IE also owns a number of DropShips and JumpShips, as do some of the organization's benefactors. IE uses these vessels for expeditions to unknown and/or uninhabited star systems that do not have an HPG and/or a readily accessible recharge station at a jump point. This policy is intended to prevent IE personnel and property from getting lost in the vastness of space. Teams on these types of missions must regularly communicate with regional headquarters, generally through IE's contracts with ComStar. In the past, IE has even contracted with ComStar to provide mobile HPG services and field technical assistance.

Because of the nature and targets of its expeditions, IE hires outside entities to provide security. Various companies provide site security via uniformed and undercover bonded armed officers, while mercenary BattleMech, armor, aerospace and/or infantry units provide security from pirates and raiders. IE also sometimes hires detectives and similar agents to uncover potential threats before security is compromised. IE usually offers generous compensation packages and makes regular use of organizations that have performed well for them in the past.

Political and Financial Support

IE does not align itself with any particular government, political group or socio-industrial entity, as it must freely operate across borders. It does, however, maintain contacts in every recognized nation and major political subdivision, as well as with other significant powers. Often, these contacts can smooth over local problems, sometimes with and sometimes without the use of bribes and other gifts. These contacts also serve in many cases to direct potential clients to IE. As with any good recruiter, IE pays finder's fees to those who recommend qualified clients and who aid materially in the success of their operations.

IE has two main streams of operating capital. The organization benefits from a core group of wealthy benefactors that provides a great deal of funding with which IE pursues many of its own aims. (Of course, these same benefactors saddle IE with unqualified and often poorly motivated hobbyists, individuals interested in archaeology simply because it makes them appear erudite.) Additionally, IE negotiates contracts with museums, universities and private cultural groups throughout the Inner Sphere and Periphery to provide their professional services in return for

monetary compensation. Typically these agreements include a flat fee for a set amount of time (including research, travel and dig time), along with a healthy bonus structure based on the type of ruins or information found and the quantity and quality of artifacts returned.

While most of IE's operations are executed under contract to other entities, approximately 15 percent of the expeditions undertaken originate within the organization. These expeditions are almost always tied directly to IE's organizational goals (though these ties are occasionally tenuous at best). Though few of these missions generate immediate financial gains, IE has come across a number of extraordinary finds, each of which ultimately brought the organization a great deal of positive press along with some profit.

IE has component groups based in each of the five Successor States, the Free Rasalhague Republic, the Clan Occupation Zones, the four major Periphery nations and even in the Rim Collection and the New Colony Region. Throughout its history, IE has undertaken expeditions within each of those areas, as well as in literally hundreds of systems currently left off common astrographic charts. To date, IE has registered expeditions as far out as the region claimed by Nueva Castile. Intelligence reports compiled over the past several years, as well as those gleaned from member-state intelligence networks dating back decades, indicate IE has sent expeditions as far as 500 light-years rimward from the commonly accepted borders of the Inner Sphere, and similar distances both spinward and anti-spinward. Those reports indicate that a disproportionate percentage of expeditions—almost half again as many as to other areas—have been dispatched into the anti-spinward region. This discrepancy may be explained by the fact that the Rim Worlds Republic was located there, despite rumors of different explanations.

CONCLUSION

Interstellar Expeditions is a large non-governmental organization that spans the Inner Sphere and Periphery, and can call upon a large number of personnel. It is relatively well financed, has a capable administrative and logistical structure and has no political ties to any significant organization or entity. While it suffers from some internal divisiveness, these divisions have not hampered its operational capabilities. Public perception of IE is skewed by non-professional personnel associated with the organization. Its overall goals bear some scrutiny, though for the foreseeable future, Interstellar Expeditions poses no threat to the economic, political or defensive security of the Star League.

Monitor for tech/intel finds. Good recruitment potentials.
Good cover story.//RA//

Watch Periphery. Where going? RWR can't be it.//GVW//

Break/Break/Break

Distribution: Limited/SLDF only

***DRAFT* REPORT ADDENDUM**

Reports concerning IE indicate that some entity (or entities) is actively interfering with IE organizational goals and operations. Entity unknown. Identity and background of entity's agents unknown, but some suspected within IE organization. Entity has agents operating in governmental bureaucracies throughout Inner Sphere; these agents have blocked IE from undertaking several self-originated expeditions. Most of these blocked expeditions focused on determining the origins and fate of the Minnesota Tribe. IE has worked around these blocks on several occasions, though has suffered reprisals. In ten instances in the past eight years, expeditions suffered pirate/raider attacks five times and bureaucratic fallout seven times, including three instances when the expedition was attacked. Efforts to track the origins of the raiders have been unsuccessful. All traces end in the Chaos March, the Free Worlds League or the Anti-Spinward Periphery. Intelligence reports received from Star League member agencies (see Attachments 24253DI-DXII) seem to indicate that this interference is not coming from within the governmental or military structures of any of the member states.

Full details to follow. Attachments include Most Secure reports from member-state agencies.

[illegible]

I haven't been able to secure the attachments yet, and I don't know that I'd post them even if I did. But there should be enough there to answer most of the basic questions... and ask a few new ones. Interesting that the notes at the end of the main file were apparently added by SLDF personnel. "RA" is likely Colonel Robert Anderssen, SLDF (Deputy Director of Intelligence for Inner Sphere) and "GVW" is likely Mr. Gerhardt Von Wolt, intelligence attaché to the Star League mission on Tukayyid.

Holy Hell! I'd heard about this group before, but never knew anything about the secrets behind them. Now I'm interested. What's the deal here?

Interesting file. I've seen most of that information before, just not all in one place. In fact, I had the chance to take part in an IE expedition back at university (the University of Donegal sponsored an archaeological dig to Cameron during the break between my third and fourth years in which IE people were involved), so I picked up much about the group firsthand. I spent almost six months with people from IE and never once heard about outside interference or any other problems like that. The most I heard were stories about bureaucrats without clues, or professors with their own agendas, or expedition personnel who stole artifacts.



INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITIONS

You'll forgive me then if I'm a little hesitant to accept this "addendum" at face value, especially without any of the so-called supporting documentation. How did you come across these files? What are their origins?

:-Dr Rigal Suren

Take the analysis file at face value or not. How I got it isn't up for discussion. But all of that information is readily verifiable, even the information in the addendum. Do a few hypersearches and you'll come up with more information than you can handle.

:-Veladrum

A number of "freelance" archaeology groups are operating out there today, but none of them are anything like Interstellar Expeditions. Most are made up entirely of academics and professional diggers and work for a select group of universities. They don't go off on their own missions and they don't go around looking for little green men or the supposedly reincarnated versions of millennia-old mummies. And they don't bring along unsupervised people with no training and no good reason for being there.

IE is anything but a professional organization, a fact the analysis document touches on, but doesn't really go into. The Interstellar Association of Anthropologists, Archaeologists, Historians and Sociologists (IAAAHS) has never given IE any professional or academic certification (though some of IE's "members" have in the past received professional certification from IAAHS through their work with other, reputable organizations). There's a reason for that. Within IE there is no impetus for "professionally" conducting their digs. More often than not, individuals with no training or personal responsibility to anyone but themselves are brought along and given no oversight. There are hundreds of documented cases in just the past decade of individuals stealing from dig sites, and even though many of these were convicted in courts of law, IE imposed no internal discipline on them because of who they are or who they know.

Worse still, any organization truly dedicated to understanding and uncovering the past would never sell its services or its discoveries to the highest bidder. Nor would its organizational goals include such utter nonsense as trying to uncover supernatural phenomena or groups that exist only in legend and myth.

:-Ander Irichi, Ph.D.

And yet IE has been around longer than any of these so-called "professional organizations"? And made more discoveries and more money? If their services weren't wanted, they wouldn't still be around.

:-Trajan Riis

Interesting analysis. But that article brushes right past the most intriguing quality of IE—its dedication to discovering the origins and fate of the Minnesota Tribe!

As a kid, I always loved stories about the Minnesota Tribe, right along with tales of Clinton's Cutthroats, the SLS *Brodan*, the New Vandenburg White Wings, the Pirates of Haroldsson the Red and all those other unexplainable tales told by parents at bedtime. During secondary school and university, I spent far too much time looking for explanations of those mysteries, and when I couldn't find them through typical means, I turned to less mainstream methods. One of those was IE.

After graduating from university in 3043 with degrees in history and interstellar relations (I spent six years at Epsilon E. University, mainly because of my preoccupation with unexplainable things), I sold everything I had and became one of those "dig gypsies" for a few years. In 3045 I had the opportunity to participate in IE's "Grand Tour," where they retrace the Minnesota Tribe's every step through the Inner Sphere. We started in an uninhabited system some 50 light-years coreward of the Elysian Fields and continued on, jumping from system to system—some inhabited, some not—around the outer reaches of the Draconis Combine and into the deep Periphery between the Tortuga Dominions and the Mica Majority. We landed on every world that the Tribe did, and explored every ruin and site they did.

IE people do this every ten years, and you can't believe how interesting and educational it is. Every one of these "Grand Tours" finds new evidence of the Tribe because new star systems are surveyed and fresh eyes comb over what we already know. Many still think the Tribe continued on around the FedSuns and is now in the Rimward Periphery, but other than the recently discovered world of McEvedy's Folly, where possible evidence of the Tribe has been uncovered, the trail is long cold.

INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITIONS

INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITIONS

For a thousand years humanity has traveled among the stars, looking for new Earths to call home and for new resources to maintain the march of progress. But along the way, we lost track of where we came from. In our inexorable advance, we paved over our history, left our forbears behind like so much refuse. Interstellar Expeditions exists to undo that mistake.

The Inner Sphere is immense. Its span, breadth and depth are greater than any can imagine, and the Inner Sphere itself is just one small fraction of the entire galaxy. Even in our thousand years of walking among the gods our ancestors looked up to in the evening skies many centuries ago, we have touched a mere handful of the worlds and systems that surround us. Yet since the days of the Star League, we have lost so much. It is as if the gods have punished us, for our hubris in assuming we could walk among them as equals.

Exploring the Stars...

By the end of the Third Millennium, humanity had built new homes and new lives on more than two thousand worlds, but we had visited many, many more, establishing at least temporary habitats on countless new planets. Yet so many of those settlements have since become lost to the ages. Who will scour the history books and roam across the stars searching for these long-lost outposts?

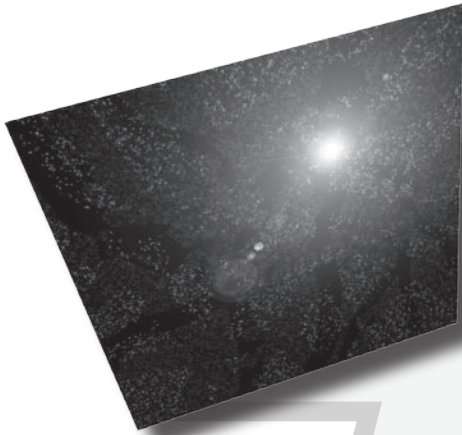
Searching for the Past...

The clues to our past lie hidden just out of view, beneath meters of ground and rubble or in some desolate crater on a long-forgotten rock in deep space. Cities and entire colonies wiped out by war, disease and apathy await rediscovery. Our ancestors may be buried right beneath our feet and we'd never know it. Who will find those treasures and stake a claim to our collective human legacy?



INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITIONS

BRINGING YOUR PAST TO LIGHT!

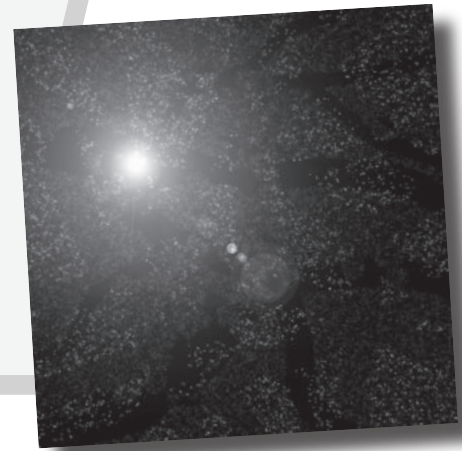


Telling the Story of Who We Are...

If history shows us anything, it is that the past defines the future. The wars and conflicts we face today grew from the misunderstandings and feuds of yesterday. The alliances and friendships we presently enjoy likewise resulted from the events of the past. Yet with so much of our past wiped away, do we really know how or why the relationships we deal with each day developed? Can we be sure that what we know in our hearts is what really happened? Do we want to face the challenges of the future without a clear grasp of the past? If not, who will uncover the true story?

And Where We Came From...

Humanity has touched more and seen more than any of us can possibly know—and far more than is recorded in history books. We all know our ancestors left Terra a thousand years ago, but what happened between then and now? History records a mere fraction of what our progenitors actually experienced. What worlds did they visit and call home? What happened to the thousands of expeditions that never returned? Who will trace your lineage and answer those questions for you once and for all?



Interstellar Expeditions... Bringing the Past to Light

Who will undertake those daunting tasks? Interstellar Expeditions, that's who!

We are not treasure hunters or thrill seekers. We are not a mega-corporation and we are not agents of a government. In fact, most of us are regular folks, just like you. While some of us are archaeologists and stellar cartographers, some are also accountants, construction workers and schoolteachers. We are doctors and businessmen and academics. And we are fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, grandparents and grandchildren. We have no hidden agenda, except a singular need to uncover what humanity lost so long ago. And we have no greater desire than to serve you and your needs.

Interstellar Expeditions is a federated network of stellar archaeologists, historical analysts and space-age anthropologists that specializes in rediscovering human settlements lost to history, be they buried beneath radioactive wastelands or hidden on long-abandoned asteroids. Whether you seek the grave of an ancestor buried eight centuries ago or a mining settlement abandoned during Kerensky's long march to Earth, we can help you achieve your goal—from searches of records to mounting an expedition to operating an archaeological dig site.

INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITIONS

My four years with IE were some of the best of my life. I've since gone on to other things—right now I'm a senior political counselor for a major FWL corporation—but I'd love nothing more than to retire and go on another one of those tours, this time with my family! Maybe in eight years?

:-OLBennen65

And as an aside, I have had some experience with this "opponent" organization that has been blocking IE operations. Through my governmental contacts, I've heard stories of bureaucratic blocks being placed in IE's path from some of the highest levels, yet with no apparent source. And this isn't just in the FWL—this has happened in every single nation in the Inner Sphere! Even within the Clan OZs, there's something going on that seems to be coming from on high, yet at the same time must be coordinated from outside. You constantly hear stories of the "Illuminati" or the all-knowing "Brotherhood of Unum." In all my dealings with governments and other large and powerful organizations, I've never seen any evidence to lend credence to those stories, except for what's opposing IE! There certainly are small-scale groups, but NOTHING that could be doing this. Except there very obviously IS something doing this!

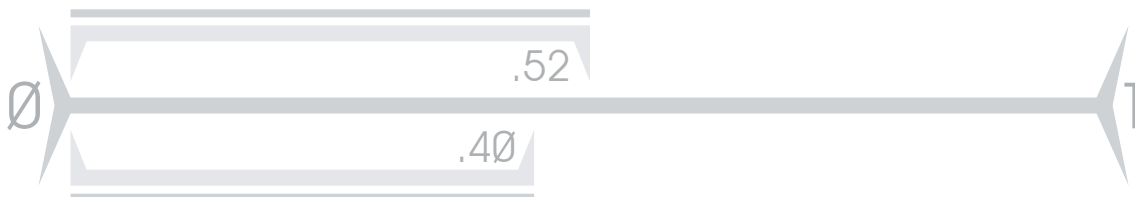
:-OLBennen65

You know, I think you're on to something. I'm a lieutenant in the Periphery Star Guard, a mercenary unit that has worked for IE many times now. For the last several years, they've hired us to provide security for them out on the Lyran Periphery, first out past Jerangle and then in two different expeditions out past Issaba, along with two more missions in the Melissia region. Every time, we ran into governmental interference. Worse, we encountered the Green Ghosts twice—including a mission to a system three jumps out of Issaba. Both times they swatted us aside and took what they wanted, which as far as we could tell were just a bunch of old religious documents and family lineages. Around the same time, they hit Khartoum. And then there was the incident a friend of mine in the Triesting Militia told me about—a group that looked like the Green Ghosts attacked an archaeological dig there, only to get pounced on by the REAL Green Ghosts. All the militia could do was stand there and watch.

I don't know what's going on out there, but it's all got to be more than coincidence. SOMEONE is directing these attacks. And someone is actively working to block IE from taking its expeditions into the Periphery. They even screwed with OUR supply requisitions!

:-LTSmasch

KIRI-J(F) SYSTEM SECURITY SCANNER (12.3.87 BUILD 396)



SECURITY LEVEL DIAMOND



INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITIONS

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

Interstellar Expeditions is almost exactly what it sounds like: a conglomeration of professional and non-professional anthropologists, archaeologists, sociologists, historians, researchers and other similar academics that focuses its energies and resources on discovering long-lost and abandoned human settlements, as well as other evidence of humanity's chronicles following the race to space. IE has trained personnel who can plan, supervise and carry out all facets of an archaeological dig, including all the research leading up to the expedition as well as post-dig study of objects and information discovered.

Only a few things separate IE from similar groups that can be found in many universities and museums throughout the human-occupied sphere. First and foremost, IE is an interstellar organization with a presence on almost four hundred worlds across the Inner Sphere and Periphery (many larger worlds are home to two or more IE groups). Second, and no less important, IE is a for-profit organization that hires its services out to other entities who want to create a dig but lack the manpower or logistical capabilities to do it themselves.

Beyond that, IE seeks to uncover evidence about some of the Inner Sphere's most famous—or infamous—mysteries. It does not do so publicly, though that goal is known to anyone who makes more than a cursory search for information about IE. Why IE pursues this goal is not publicly known, however. In fact, the great majority of the organization's own members do not know why IE wants to solve these mysteries, other than the simple fact that the Mutual Exploration Network (MEN)—one of IE's founders—originally formed around a core group who devoted their free time to researching the Minnesota Tribe.

Only a relative few within the organization know the truth. And even then, different groups within the organization pursue their own agendas.

GOALS OF INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITIONS

IE's primary goal is to turn a profit. While it has benefactors to help fund its operations, its primary source of funding comes from hiring its services out to others, with secondary revenues from selling artifacts and information to interested collectors and scholars. IE therefore includes professional marketing and communications personnel to aid it in conducting its business.

Within IE, a number of specialized sub-groups exist that each have their own aims and methodologies. The most widely known of these is MEN, whose members drive the search for the origins and fate of the Minnesota Tribe. This goal has attracted the most non-professionals to IE (those without any academic background in subjects such as anthropology, archaeology, sociology and similar fields), along with more than a few professionals and academics. Because of this, IE is the single source for information concerning the Minnesota Tribe (see *Known Facts*, below). As an outgrowth

of this search, IE has for years devoted significant resources to researching other significant mysteries that have captured the imaginations of people throughout the human-occupied sphere.

Another, far less well-known goal likewise stems from the era prior to the merger of the three groups that formed IE. The Millennium Foundation originated within a secular organization devoted to recovering religious artifacts and related items lost during the mass exodus from Terra and later after Stefan Amaris' occupation. Eventually, a splinter group from the Padric Order joined with the Foundation to aid it in its work. The priests of the Padric Order were also looking for specific relics lost ages earlier. Some IE groups continue in this work, seeking religious icons and artifacts from all of humanity's many faiths.

And then there are those who look at everything they have seen and heard and pursue a different interpretation. Science and faith can explain only so many things, and so these relative few individuals within IE look for more fantastic solutions. They actively seek out unexplained phenomena and spend much of their time attempting to link them to more mundane occurrences, in an effort to make a case that all of these occurrences are the result of supernatural means or non-human intelligences. Individuals in this category represent less than one percent of IE's total manpower, but can still call upon significant resources when necessary.

KNOWN FACTS

During more than two centuries of research by various associates, Interstellar Expeditions has learned quite a lot about the Minnesota Tribe, as well as other research subjects. Some of that information appears below.

Minnesota Tribe

This is the mystery that IE personnel have been researching the longest and to which they have devoted the most resources.

- IE knows about Clan Wolverine and is almost certain that the Minnesota Tribe is this wayward Clan.
- They have discovered dozens of systems that the Tribe visited during their tour around the Inner Sphere (the most notable being Knutstad, Naikongzu, Michtal, Beligorra, Hergazil, Mackolla, Cooperland, and Bye's Ship), and have a large and eclectic collection of items relating to the Tribe (from patches, clothing and uniforms, and personal equipment to vid-recordings of Tribe activities, scrap and garbage left behind, a few unidentified tissue samples and even the remains of a deceased individual thought to be a Tribe member (buried in a manner not typical of the era, and not typical of current Clan customs).
- They have traced the route the Tribe used through dozens of systems, from coreward of the Elysian Fields to the FedSuns Periphery. They "lost" the trail rimward of the Taurian Concordat. They have not attempted to go

INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITIONS

any further coreward than about 200 light-years off the current Clan Occupation Zones (the few expeditions that did go further have never been heard from again).

- IE personnel have participated in the last two Babylon Diets and have used the opportunity to make contacts in Clan Space. Thus far, no Clansman has volunteered to aid them in their search, though some have made thinly veiled threats about what would happen if the Tribe were ever discovered to be the remnants of Clan Wolverine (the Ghost Bears seemed particularly virulent). No Clansman currently knows about the Tribe "artifacts" in IE's possession (and IE will do everything it must to keep it that way).
- The world McEvedy's Folly remains a mystery. There is some evidence that settlements on it may have been founded by wayward Minnesota Tribesmen, yet no direct link exists. These founders have been separated from the Tribe for more than a century and lost track of any cultural roots they once had.

Rim Worlds Republic

While not a mystery per se, the story of the Rim Worlds Republic is fraught with inaccuracies, falsehoods and seemingly contradictory facts.

- For one reason or another, IE teams have spent a great deal of time in the Lyran Periphery and have discovered quite a few star systems once claimed by the RWR, some of which are still inhabited. Though these systems are no longer on common civilian navigation charts, IE maintains a complete catalog of all the systems they have visited, including these.
- IE has come across at least two "hidden" Amaris outposts. Though long since stripped of useable technology, these outposts have provided valuable information, including the possibility of finding more hidden facilities.
- The mystery of what happened to the people of the RWR is far from solved even today. Some individuals in IE continue to explore the various possibilities. A few have even tried to link the Minnesota Tribe with the lost Amaris population.
- Several societies exist in the deep anti-spinward Periphery, just as in the coreward Periphery. IE has come across regions of space controlled by the Society of St. Andreas, the Union of Samoyedic Colonies and the Axumite Providence. Thus far, IE has kept knowledge of these regions to itself and has gathered information on each for decades.

The Green Ghosts

In the course of its operations, IE has crossed paths with the so-called Green Ghosts a number of times. More specifically, the

two groups seem to have their sights set on similar historical sites. IE has paid a great deal of attention to these pirates; over the past several years, IE has liquidated significant assets to pay for information about them (using bureaucratic contacts, private agencies and a great deal of bribery).

- The Ghosts have specifically targeted historically significant sites, often religious in nature, for raids. They take artifacts, books and data storage devices, and even some architectural items (including windows, statues and even stones and wood from walls or floors).
- There seems to be no rhyme or reason to their raids, yet they appear to have highly placed sources that inform them the instant potentially valuable sites are uncovered.
- Some observers speculate that the Green Ghosts are tracking the spread of one or more specific families from the 2200s and 2300s, or perhaps religious orders. The items recovered could easily be parts of a family collection and/or information that might lead to additional findings.
- The Ghosts are well financed and well equipped. They do not fight with typical Clan tactics, but they do have some Clan equipment, including 'Mechs. They also have Star League-era equipment, though the source of it remains unknown. To date, they apparently have not lost a single battle.
- This group has several DropShips and JumpShips. All are apparently well maintained, on a par with the best a Successor State can accomplish.
- This group came on the scene after the Seventh Crucis Lancers experienced a serious loss in 3060. There is no known connection between these events, except that many of the BattleMechs this group uses are typical of an AFFC RCT. The Ghosts have not been encountered in the region of space in which the Seventh Crucis Lancers were operating, however.

The Mysterious Enemy

No one knows who or what is actively opposing IE's explorations to find the truth about the Minnesota Tribe, or its other missions, for that matter.

- Though evidence trails left by this "enemy" typically end in the Chaos March or the Free Worlds League, no known or obvious tie has surfaced to entities within those regions, including the Word of Blake.
- IE has experienced interference in every single nation in the Inner Sphere and most within the Periphery.
- This interference typically only extends to operations initiated by IE, and then only to expeditions that may turn up evidence of the Minnesota Tribe or that may lead to knowledge of societies outside the known human-occupied sphere.



INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITIONS

- Interference generally consists of bureaucratic blocks, though IE has had to face on average more pirate attacks during its own operations than on any other expeditions. Additionally, IE offices are frequently burglarized each year, losing seemingly innocuous items.

CHARACTER INVOLVEMENT

Characters can become involved with Interstellar Expeditions in a number of different ways. The following paragraphs describe the most common methods, as well as other related role-playing aspects.

Professional Association

Characters with an appropriate academic or hobby background may become involved with, or even a full-fledged employee (or associate) of, IE. Any character with the Anthropologist, Archaeologist, Cartographer, Historian, Planetary Surveyor, Scientist or Scout field(s) may automatically join the organization. Alternatively, a character in a Stage 3 Life Path at an appropriate university, whether or not that character is studying for one of the above fields, may join IE as an intern and/or may participate on a dig (assume this association comes through the character's involvement with the archaeology department in some way, as a volunteer or because of a class taken).

A character who becomes involved with IE in this way during character creation (either Stage 3 or Stage 4) may take the Travel Life Path (see p. 51, *CBT: RPG*), spending only one to two years (1D6/3, rounded up) to do so. If taken during Stage 3, this also counts as an additional and optional Stage 3 Life Path (much like a Subpath: Special Training). Additionally, for every year that the character works full-time for IE, he or she gains +2 to any one of the following skills: Academics/Any, Career/Any Appropriate, Interest/Any Appropriate, Navigation/Air or Ground, Scrounge or Survival. A character can take this Life Path as many times as he or she wants, but must pay the usual -1 to even rolls for each pass beyond the first.

Association Through a Contact

A character may have an acquaintance associated with Interstellar Expeditions. This requires an appropriate Contact (2) or Contact (3) who works for IE or a Contact (3) who is one of IE's benefactors. The character may become a hobbyist associate of the organization. These individuals are not paid for their services, but may participate in IE digs and other activities.

A character involved in IE in this way may take the Travel Life Path in Stage 4 as many times as he or she wants, paying the usual -1 to even rolls for each pass beyond the first.

Contract Association

IE often hires mercenaries and other security personnel to guard them and their dig sites during expeditions that take them far from civilization, even on well-populated worlds. IE generally hires units and people that have worked for them before and performed their tasks well, giving the potential for a long-term association with the organization.

IE hires mercenary units to perform the following missions: Defensive Campaign, Extraction, Garrison, Reconnaissance, Relief Duty, Retainer and Security Duty. They pay a flat 1.1 Payment Multiplier, offer full overhead compensation and provide anywhere from 50 to 100 percent straight support (depending on negotiations), along with full salvage and independent command rights. IE never provides battle loss compensation (asking for it is a deal-breaker), but typically provides transport. IE usually seeks out units with a B or C rating, and will not deal with units that have a reputation for criminal activity. For more information, see *Running a Mercenary Unit*, starting on p. 153 in *Field Manual: Mercenaries, Revised*.





connection/INTERSTELLAR PLAYERS/section09: GENECASTE

GENECASTE





GENECASTE

NOTES

This has to be the scariest thing that has ever crossed my plate, or just the weirdest. And I'm leaning toward the second. Holovid producers come up with stories like this, but even then they're B-grade productions. After looking into the eye of the woman who brought this...material...to me, however, and seeing fear, determination and the absence of a future all rolled into one disturbing gaze... Either that, or she's been hitting the hookah way too much.

Even though I should take this very seriously, I'm going to hand this one over to Lefty. He's one of the few people I trust enough to handle this stuff. Not that I trust him with my name, or his for that matter, but enough to be capable of making an assessment that lives up to my standards.

She did have one nice trick, my informant. The data crystal she produced was stored in a "pocket" in her left leg. It was a nice prosthetic, definitely expensive, looked damned real. She actually ripped open the synthskin, ruptured a blood packet in the process, and removed the crystal before handing it over to me. She must have thought she was the cat's meow with that one, but I saw the same trick last month in one of the serial thrillers I watch.

—Starling

PARANOID FANTASY OR HORRIFIC REALITY?

The following is a holomessage from the woman who handed over the cyberware recording, overwriting part of the corrupted files. I have every right to be freaked. Every right. —Lefty

Deadman.

There's freedom in knowing you've outlived yourself. Living on the run, knowing the ghosts have your scent and are closing in. Knowing from one breath to the next your gray matter will paint the wall for some disgruntled, low-paid spun-up maid to clean up. No questions asked. None given.

Freedom in knowing you've got nothing to lose, so lose it all.

They tried to break me. Oh god, how they tried. Everything in the book. But they forgot. They trained me! The bastards trained me to withstand exactly what they threw at me.

Of course, anyone breaks. Even the best. No one survives what they do. It's not the body. Never is. Even when they take yours again and again and again, with anything at hand. No, it's the mind. God, they're good. And I crawled on my belly through my own piss, blood and juices and licked their boots and spit out what they wanted to hear.

But they were overconfident. They slipped. Just a small slip. But when you're a ghost as well, all you need is a crack. The whiff

of a fault line and your hands taste their blood and you're through and the night swallows you. And you're gone.

But you can't stay lost. They'd assumed they could break me. And to their credit, they did. At least the outer walls. But they slipped before taking down the last.

I've snuffed my own now. And I've got information they'll pull down entire worlds to eradicate. Information to shatter existence as we know it. Information they want to bury. Information they destroyed what's left of my unit to hide.

Information I give to you.

I don't give a damn about taking down the Magistrate. Those REMFs will destroy themselves. And I could care less about a Magistracy flag. One colored rag's like any other. I'm not a patriot. I'm soldier. A killer. They trained me and I followed orders.

No, it's the others like me. And the others who'll be like me some day. They deserve to know what's coming. They deserve to know the monsters in the dark, 'cause command sure as hell won't tell 'em. They deserve to know the truth. Then they can decide whether to fight or catch the next JumpShip coreward. For them I'm giving this up, knowing I'm guaranteed two bullets between my eyes.

'Cause that's how I'd do it.

NIGHTMARES

This couldn't be more chaotic. Apparently it's a badly corrupted cyberware personal log (can't for the life of me decipher the code used on the logs, though I'd place an easy thou it's pulled from a corpse), with one audio file. The scary thing, as terribly jumbled as this is, it still seems to have been cleaned up and organized—or at best I might expect given the obvious constraints someone had to work with—lending credence to what she said. Especially when some of it looks to have been corrupted intentionally; I've added an asterisk any time I think an intentional corruption occurred after they (whoever "they" are) cleaned it up. And of course, the glimpses you find in the mess...well.... —Lefty

Log Entry 45: 73B1

The next time I find the guy who asked if I wanted to volunteer for the elite of the <<<*12 corrupt>>>, I'm going to take pleasure in easing him out of life. Oh, the excitement. The danger. The killing! Can't remember the last time I even held my weapon on these worthless trips; at least the few guys can hold their guns to pass the time. How long they gonna stick us out here in the deep searching for something that don't exist. Can't remember the last time we hit <<<*45 corrupt>>>

Course, I'm sure I'll get reamed for recording this. If not by the REMFs, then by the Commander; not like she seems to have a problem with not knowing nothing. Course, she likely knows ex-

GENECASTE



actly what we're doing, or enough to keep her trigger finger calm. Damn! Give me something to do, not this endless inactivity. My finger's itching!

Log Entry 49: 78B1

What, can't even take a leak without recording it <<<29 corrupt>>> we're making planetfall, if you want to call this rock a planet. Sheesh, I've seen Capellan Pleasure Boys more inviting than this hellhole. Still, getting out and stretching the legs, even if I've got to wear a full envirosuit, will do me some good.

Log Entry <<<2 corrupt>>>

Triple damn. The planet's inhabited. On the way now. Weird thing is, we didn't get a reading on a single dome anywhere. Must be underground. Or could just be the metallics messing the sensors. Why the hell would anyone live on a place like this? I mean, I've actually made landfall on Sirius V, and methane pea soup is a summer vac-spot compared to this. Between the gravities and the atmosphere, I think the only reason I'm still walking are the implants. And our sensors can't even seem to get a firm reading on everything swimming around in the air. Makes my skin crawl to think how close my lungs are to this <<<17 corrupt>>>

[Start Audio File 77x3b2]

I originally thought the strange dialects and down right odd syllables and phrasing were the wash of atmospheric noise overcrowding the voices, but once they went under, it became obvious either they've some great voice actors for a wonderful hoax, or.... -Lefty

Commander: For the transcendence of the Geneform Kilta bloodline and her geneclan, we beseech audience.

<<<*2 corrupt>>>: The echoes of your request reach my ears. On the path, only two may step.

Commander: I will tread that path. And my swordform <<<*4 corrupt>>>

<<<*2 corrupt>>>: So be it. In the heart of <<<23 corrupt>>>

Commander: Star Corporal. With me.

Extreme weather distortion almost vanishes, followed by 20.5 minutes of trudging and heavy breathing in a confined space; eerie music and/or chanting just audible in the background. -Lefty

<<<*2 corrupt>>>: The path of two has become one.

Commander: I am that one.

<<<*2 corrupt>>>: Then pass, you, the threshold and beware the Fourthforms. They let none pass lightly.

Commander: For transcendence <<<12 corrupt>>>

[End Audio File 77x3b2]**Log Entry 42: 51C1**

Bloody hell! I don't care what the Commander says about keeping calm no matter what we see. This is a giant cluster! Some guy steps out from behind a rock out in the middle of the flattest wasteland you ever saw, wrapped in some freakish-looking gauze outfit—no breathing apparatus I could see!—and then they exchange some religious mumbo jumbo I'd expect a Wobbly to spout and then she drags me down into that warren. I don't care what they say about the re-breathers, that stench curdled my nose with who knows what filth and at every step there's another shaft going off at some god-awful angle, twisting and turning. What the hell? They make their home in some burrowing creature's mound? Then I'm left standing too close to Mr. Gauze-man while she goes through a door that gives me a glimpse of some type of city beyond, but I've no idea what the hell I saw because it just didn't make sense. So I try

GENECASTE

to talk to Mr. Gauze-man. Be all friendly like, and he might as well be a statue. So I try again and again and finally he swivels his head like he's double-jointed and damn it all, his eyes! Had to be the low light in that place. Had to be. I turn away, find myself staring at the wall trying to pretend I didn't see anything unusual. Who knows how much time passed. Then the Commander's back and we're trudging to the surface with two new gauze-men, but these are moving awful strange and I wonder if they're sick or something and one stumbles and then I turn away, 'cause I just didn't see nothing. Banner sergeant told me years ago if I was smart but not curious, I'd go a long way. Maybe even more than I could purchase. But the higher you get, the minute you get curious or you find an imagination, the quicker you'll find command dropping your 150 kilos of dead meat in a ditch. I didn't see anything!

Log Entry 49: 57C1

We're back on the ship, outbound to the <<<*4 corrupt>>> the others are as freaked as I am. Our three "guests" entered their cabin and the Commander's camped outside the door. We thought we knew her, but this. This. Double-damned Ministry. Even worse than Forces at keeping you in the dark.

Log Entry 51: 49D1

Ten jumps. Ten and still hardly a recognizable star in sight. Back to the endless boredom. Until one of those freaks came out. Twisting and sliding along the corridor in ways that make you turn away with a hollow stomach, with the Commander acting like she's waiting hand and foot on this guy. Like he's a damned noble or something. And there's an odd whistling coming from the guy, sounds like breathing but the gauze-wrap around the head ain't movin' and then he turns those god-awful eyes on me and I know the low light wasn't a trick and I'm turning away, knowing I just saw too much. And I'm the best at keeping curiosity at bay. What about<<<39 corrupt>>>

Log Entry <<<xxcorrupt>>>

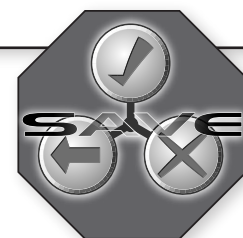
<<<47 corrupt>>> couldn't stop himself and opened fire without thinking. I know he didn't. He's too damn good to fire consciously. But he saw even more than I did. Damn it! What the hell did we bring on board?! And then the Commander's trying to calm people down, and then <<<*3 corrupt>>> intestines drop to the floor like his belly's been cut with a saw-toothed machete and <<<27 corrupt>>> fire and decompression of Holds Three and Four and we're holed up in Two, just knowing the monsters are <<<79 corrupt>>>

<<<Log Terminated/corrupt>>>

So, what do we have here? Pretty skimpy and chaotic info, right? I've read it over and listened to it at least two dozen times and I'm still not convinced it's anything but a brilliantly played hoax.

If that's not wacky enough, I've got one better to keep you scratching your noggin for long nights to come. I've heard of this guy for a while. Rolan Macnole. One certifiable xenobiologist. This is the guy spouting off about homo-pig-sapiens on Folly, sentient chicken people out in the Periphery and let's not forget the aliens that live in hyperspace. He's been shooting off about the "genecaste" for a while now; says he stumbled on them in the Deep Periphery and lived among them for years. Now, most folks dealing with the Galactic Insinuator don't bother making eye contact. They just head for the nearest DropPort fast as they like before this guy can sell 'em beachfront around Tharkad City. However, a contact of mine happened to send me a brochure, and though most of it makes you spit java out your nose...well, it happens to jive just enough with what I'd dug up myself, so I had to include it as well.

As Alice says, "curiouser and curiouser." -Lefty



GENECASTE



GENECASTE: THE REAL STORY

By Rolen Macnole

From the moment Nicholas Kerensky founded the Clans, there have been those who could not or would not accept Clan society, leading to the formation of the Dark or Bandit Caste. Scraping out an existence at the edges of Clan society, the Dark Caste is filled with the oddballs, malcontents and rebels who cannot live by the Way of the Clans.

The Clan homeworlds are marginal planets at best, and so the Dark Caste learned to survive in even less hospitable locales, leading to a horrendous mortality rate as they scattered from one planetoid to the next, trying to adapt to each new hellish environment while hiding from the Clans' attempts at eradication. During the height of the Golden Century, as the Clans enjoyed overwhelming prosperity and growth, a small cadre of scientists and warriors in the Dark Caste formed a loose association and began to espouse thinking too drastic even for many in their own radical segment of Clan society.

The Clans had taken the medical knowledge of the Star League and pushed it to new heights in their genetic breeding programs. Though they discarded the family unit and grew their young in iron wombs, the Clans still considered excessive tampering with the human genome taboo; aside from slight manipulations to join advantageous qualities from select bloodlines, the Clans generally allow nature to take its course. For this small and radical coalition, however, that was not enough. Just as humans spent centuries terraforming worlds to make them hospital for human occupation, the Clans held the burgeoning technology for geneforming humans to adapt to inhospitable locales. Without the mammoth resources of an entire star empire to tame a planet, and pushed to the edge of extinction by brutal environments and enemies, this group cast off any final reservations about radically altering the human genome and began their experiments.

There was, of course, no miraculous transition from one stage to the next. Hunted and hounded, with few resources, the first years resulted in horrors more often than success. Yet the struggle to survive has always driven humans to the utmost and as the years became decades and then a century, the gene caste perfected their technology, while acquiring more adherents to their way of thinking as well as increasing their population through their own style of breeding programs. As one century became two, the small and ultra-secretive society developed their own culture, views and goals.

GENECASTE SOCIETY

A complete write-up on the society of the gene caste is beyond the scope of this brochure (please send any HPG requests for additional information on

the gene caste to Professor Rolan Macnole, #3C47-E400B-2-ZE, along with a \$100 C-bill donation). However, a general description of their society follows.

I've sent seven HPG messages to date. No replies and out almost a thou. Of course. -Lefty

Geneclans

The gene caste is not a monolithic entity ruled by a single person or council. Instead, it is comprised of a large number of geneclans, each composed of anywhere from a few dozen to thousands of individuals. These geneclans are not based on astrogeography, bloodlines or ideologies. Instead, geneclans are built around environments and the geneforms used within a given geneclan to adapt to said environment. Another way to think of geneclans is as colonies, each based on a different environment and the special circumstances and geneforming required to adapt to it. For example, a gene casteman adapted to underwater living cannot live on land, in ultra-light gravity or in vacuum, just as a light-gravity gene casteman would find it unbearable, if not deadly, to dwell on a heavy-gravity world.

Given these circumstances, there is understandably little contact between each geneclan. If not for outside factors, in all likelihood, each geneclan would quickly spin off into its own complete society, with its own rules and even its own dialect. In fact, such evolutions have already begun on many levels. Two outside factors, however, have forced the geneclans as a whole to keep at least minimal contact with their brethren.

The first outside factor is the very environments they have reshaped themselves to inhabit. The extreme paucity of every type of resource in most of these locales means that most geneclans must import additional resources or their colonies will die out. Though this does not connect all geneclans (some of them are simply too far removed from one another to need any resources that might be bartered or traded), it does create a thin web of interconnection. Each geneclan almost always has genenorms who can participate in such trading.

The second outside factor, and the one that binds all geneclans together regardless of their disparate situations, is the overriding knowledge that if the Inner Sphere or the Clans (particularly the Clans, who consider them beyond abominations) discover them, either one will do all in their power to eradicate the gene caste. This constant pressure to "hide beneath the rocks" provides a genesis for at least the exchange of information (if not outright mutual defense agreements), allowing most geneclans to learn (albeit months out of date) what is going on with other geneclans.

As with the Clans proper, if one of these two outside factors should be removed, the geneclans will likely splinter, perhaps even to the point of



GENECASTE

open hostilities between the more radically divergent groups. Of course, given their extreme differences in physicality and the sociology that comes with such radical geneforming, the chances of the gene-caste ever finding widespread acceptance in the Inner Sphere is remote. Among the Clans, such an occurrence is almost impossible. On the other hand, if the gene-caste ever found a leader who could truly unite them, they would be a terrifying enemy.

Okay, I can buy a lot of this; provided I buy any of it. But some of it just makes you scratch your head. I mean, sure, the Clans got boned with the worlds they colonized in the Kerensky Cluster. I got hold of a pirated copy of "The Secret History of the Clans" that ol' Khan Phelan wrote for daddy dearest and no wonder they think the Inner Sphere's a paradise. But come on. If I'm to believe the woman who hacked out a data crystal from her meat, then they've traveled far from such desolate shores. And sure, there are some piss-poor regions of near space to colonize, but why the hell didn't they find a new spot to settle down—a spot that didn't require them to grow gills and tentacles to live? Unless they thought that by sticking to such hellish hidey-holes, they might avoid detection, 'cause after all, how do you undo something like that? Okay, I guess I can stomach that idea.

-Lefty

Genesubcastes

The gene-caste recognizes several different genesubcastes, different categories of physical appearance. The genesubcastes determine how much respect an individual is due and how much influence a gene-casteman can exert among a particular gene-clan. Though geneforms technically do not aid or hinder leadership ambitions—a sufficiently talented and charismatic genenorm can rise to the top of the leadership structure within the various geneclans—an inbred bias does exist toward the more geneformed for such duties, creating a glass ceiling for all but the most talented and ambitious genenorms or lower genesubcastes.

The various subcastes fall roughly as follows:

Altform: Apparently a term for non-gene-caste geneformed groups.

[Editor's Note: I'm irresolute over the definition of this term, as it might simply be a colloquialism. I only overheard its use two or three times, and as with many aspects of gene-caste society, they refused to indulge my curiosity, displaying hostility when I attempted to further investigate the possibility of a sub-genesubcaste.]

Genenorms: Genenorms are considered the lowest of the low, akin to freebirths among the warrior caste of the Clans. However, they can still prove useful. Though most geneclans don't trust them for

critical missions, they serve as spies when appropriate, not to mention as adaptable trading prefects.

Firstform: Firstform gene-castemen display no outward modifications. All the results of their genetic manipulation lie beneath the skin, undetectable to the human eye. Firstform castemen are most often sent to spy within the various factions of the Inner Sphere and Clans.

Secondform: Secondform castemen show slight alterations to their physical appearance: strange-looking eyes, odd ears, slight webbing of hands and feet and so on. Secondform castemen usually have specific abilities that surpass those of Firstform castemen, and so are often sent on specific missions despite the slight possibility of detection.

Thirdform: Thirdform castemen appear radically altered in some way; for example, they may have drastically extended arms. In general, only a specific part of a Thirdform gene-casteman is changed, leaving the rest of the body's appearance normal. A Thirdform's modifications make him more effective at specific endeavors, and so Thirdforms may be sent on certain covert missions requiring a particular skill, but they find it difficult to hide their geneforms.

[Editor's Note: I was unable to observe Fourthform and Fifthform castemen directly. However, I beheld circumstantial evidence sufficient to conclude that they exist and are the real power behind the various geneclans. Their existence also coincidentally provides the "magic 5" numeral so integral to the Clan way of life (keeping in mind that genenorms are generally not considered part of the genesubcaste system).]

Fourthform: Fourthform castemen take the simple geneforms of the Thirdform, but display changes across the entire body, such as chitinous skin.

Fifthform: Fifthform castemen are the ultimate expression of genetic modification to adapt to the environment. Stick figures with wings for use on ultra-light gravity worlds; multi-limbed and squat forms for ultra-heavy gravity worlds; finned, eyeless and blubbery specimens for underwater living—the Fifthform take their geneforming to a level that alters their physical appearance almost beyond recognition.

Okay, I'm no expert. But this is where it really starts falling down for me. If I'm buying beachfront by Tharkad City, then I'm also buying sunscreen. Anything up to, say, the Thirdform, I can stomach. But come on! The Fourthform—and let's not even start with the Fifthform—would take way longer than a paltry two centuries to develop, regardless of what technologies the Dark Caste may have.

Slid this info by a friend of mine involved in this type of work (sorry, can't say more or he'd have to kill me and that would suck for him), and after he finished

GENECASTE



blowing java out his nose, he agreed the top end of this stuff...just not gonna happen in the time frame ol' Rolan is giving us.

Of course, with that said, he did make some interesting observations; he's even better at risky real-estate ventures than I am, it seems. He tossed some ideas out about how such things might exist. For one thing, genetic therapies for treating inherited problems are standard medical practice stretching back to the Terran Alliance, and the Alliance used gene therapies to enhance most of humanity's immune systems to prepare them for first exposure to alien microbes. It's no wonder that in the circles (or would that be squares?) he frequents, stories have been hanging around for a dog's age about geneforming experiments going on since Terran Hegemony days. After all, Michael Cameron and his daughter Lady Margaret Cameron pushed the sciences on every level, ensuring the Hegemony an edge in everything from medical sciences to the military-industrial complex; myomers and workMechs were developed during this era. And don't you for a second believe they didn't have the cajones to start such wild experiments on humans. Then you've got several mentions of mermaids and even centaurs in the Magistracy as early as the twenty-sixth century, though these don't tend to come from "reliable sources". Still, if they're true, what better way to hide such heinous experiments than in the reviled Periphery, where any discovery could be attributed to the "barbarians" and a 'Mech division could quickly wipe out any traces of it: so sorry, Canopus, for ten thousand dead, whether you were in on the scheme or not, but who's going to believe you anyway? And let's certainly not forget Stefan Amaris. If ever there was anyone capable of this kind of experimenting despite the human cost, the usurper would take the cake, the table and chairs, house and whole damn world. If he simply discovered and stole work that had been underway for decades or even centuries under Hegemony seal...well, any of those sources could have led to a breakaway society that has remained hidden all these years and developed completely apart from the genecaste (or perhaps they've even come across each other, leading to all sorts of fun, eh?).

That, then, could give you, what—five, six, maybe even seven hundred years of technological development and evolution? My friend says given that amount of time (again, provided we're all buying sunscreen), Fifthforms might just exist out there...and imagine what those societies might look like! —Lefty

Genecaste Breeding

With few exceptions, each geneclan holds the rights to breeding. Though bloodheritages still exist

among the genecaste, they have shifted from warrior-oriented permutations to a geneforming orientation. Genecaste scientists constantly strive to improve a bloodline's ability to adapt to geneforms. Those bloodlines that more easily accept geneforming are revered and respected above others.

As with the Clans from which they diverged, the genecaste has a general distaste for freebirthing (natural conception, gestation and birth). Even among genenorms, freebirthing is unusual, but among the heavily geneformed, it can be deadly. Combined with the inability of the geneformed to produce geneformed offspring, such breeding must occur by other means, with most Thirdform (and higher) genecastemen electing sterilization.

The vast majority of breeding is accomplished by two methods. First is the standard iron womb technology used by the Clans. A given geneclan determines what specific geneforms it requires for the good of the geneclan at any given time. Armed with such knowledge, the Genekeepers select and begin production on a future sibko, which will decant with the appropriate geneforms in place. To a certain point, this technology has long been perfected, and few mistakes appear.

The second and infinitely more radical breeding program has only recently begun and is years from full acceptance even among the various geneclans. It is also likely decades from perfection. This method takes geneforming to an entirely new level, with a female Fifthform given the dubious honor of becoming a geneclan's birthformer. The Fifthform in question has her physiology altered beyond recognition, turning her into a biological iron womb that permits the all-important breeding of a genecasteman whose subsequent offspring will breed true to the geneparent's geneforms.

[Editor's Note: I was unable to see a birthformer, and my inquiries met with stern reproof and outright hostility. In one instance, my life was threatened. Nevertheless, as with my confidence in the existence of Fourthforms and Fifthforms, I don't doubt this second form of breeding exists as well.]

As this method pushes the boundaries of what even the genecaste are willing to accept, it has caused some of the first discord in a century among the genecaste. Some of the overall less radically altered geneclans are beginning to militantly oppose this new type of breeding, despite (or perhaps because of) the potential for streamlining the geneforming process—reducing waste and hoarding precious resources—as well as moving the genecaste to an entirely new evolutionary path away from humankind.

And here we just found our Davion-loving Capellan, peaceful Kurita and open-minded Blakist, all sitting down together for their suntanning session on the sandy, hot beaches of Tharkad City! —Lefty



GENECASTE

The Geneforming Trap and Paranoia

The dire needs of the progenitors of today's genecaste to survive in the extreme environments to which the Clans originally chased them prompted them to begin geneforming. Yet the very thing that allowed them to survive has now become a Catch-22. They geneformed to adapt to their harsh environments, and yet in so doing they assured their own destruction should they ever be discovered, and so they must continue hiding in the most extreme and resource-poor environments. This in turn pushes them toward more radical geneforms, and so on. At this point, this vicious cycle is unlikely to be broken.

These circumstances create extreme paranoia that permeates all levels of genecaste society. Though this attitude has saved them as a whole countless times, it has also led to an atmosphere where every genecastemen looks over his shoulder seeking a doom that must surely come. Additionally, though their paranoia generally unifies each geneclan, it also tends to set geneclans against one another, each fearing the other may be attempting to sell them out in exchange for the right to exist.

To date, the occasional wild accusations among the geneclans along these lines have led merely to

individual honor duels, with the ultimate threat of the Inner Sphere and Clans dwarfing all else and forcing each geneclan to work at least moderately well with its fellows. However, as the geneclans continue to diverge and as the hot topic of biological iron wombs raises its ugly head, the possibility of geneclans attacking one another over their own fears has substantially increased.

Once again, his sales pitch is starting to lose its luster here. Seems to me if I was a genecasteman terrified of discovery, I wouldn't specialize to such an extreme that I'd be trapped in a given locale. After all, at any moment a Clan Genecaste ExtermoSquad could come a-calling and I'd need to uproot and move wholesale. Overnight. How the hell do you pull off that hat trick if you're stuck breathing liquid methane while swimming under twenty gravities? Then again, maybe you have both kinds. Some, feeling secure in a demon's own environment, allow themselves to adapt to an extreme that ties them down, while other geneclans remain ever vigilant for trouble coming down the pike. -Lefty

GENECASTE

So, what to make of all this?

First, the freak show masquerading as a woman who gave over all this stuff might have come from the Magistracy's new du-so-secret covert ops agency—the one whose existence they deny emphatically, but that you can dig up tidbits on if you know where to go sniffing. Everyone knows the Magistracy has played its own genetic engineering card tricks for centuries. Then again, as I tossed out before, it might have been someone else's ace they were sliding from their cuff. Perhaps they're trying to expand it, whether it's theirs or not. Or they're just playing it that way while they try to develop some new super weapon that'll make 'Mechs obsolete and they've got to hide that fact. Or it could be a word of Blake ruse for the same thing, not only disguising their true work, but also pinning the cover-up on the Periphery's most powerful player at the moment. Talk about knocking them down a peg or two if it all goes south.... Or maybe the Davions are behind it, trying to distract the Concordat...I could go on for hours this way.

Then again, there is that bloodline reference buried in there. Only one group of people I know puts so much emphasis on bloodlines, and that slides in like a Lyran fist over a Kroner with mad-dog Rolan's brochure... I wonder how the Clans might feel if such dirty laundry gets aired in public? After all, we all know their distaste for free-birthing, much less what this stuff might mean.

We also have the truly alien angle. But I've seen enough of those cards played over the years to have no faith in them whatsoever.

Finally, and it has to be said, this might not be hoax. Whether it's tied to the Clans, a lost Star League colony, a secret operation by an Inner Sphere power or you name it, if it's not a hoax...well, maybe there are monsters in the dark.

I know I'll be staring out the viewport of the next JumpShip hop, wondering.... -Lefty

GENECASTE



GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

To capture the flavor of the genecaste, it is important to note that they are not the grotesque, tentacled, blubbery monsters shown in B-movies about what happens when humans attempt to genetically manipulate the human genome. Such an image not only leaves little room for adventure prospects beyond killing a horror, it also requires little imagination and does not lend itself to the development of a unique and interesting society.

Though such genetic horrors likely did result in the beginning—and some still turn up now and then—they are ruthlessly destroyed, and unless the fault can be proven unequivocally to spring from outside factors, that bloodline is eliminated. However, the rare exceptions that might escape (with or without help) retain the intelligence and cunning of a human, making them infinitely more dangerous than any alien fauna.

Just as Spheroids and Clanners use their technologies to create tailor-made equipment for conquering inhospitable planets, the genecaste use their technology to geneform their own bodies to accomplish the same tasks. Where a Spheroid uses IR goggles to see in the dark, a genecasteman may have cat-like eyes to achieve the same goal.

Though monstrous to Spheroid and even Clan sensibilities, the genecaste have their own views on what they are and where they are going, regardless of how “alien” they have become. This unique culture can be allowed to blossom into exotic and exciting adventures that stretch the boundaries of what players are accustomed to in the *BattleTech* universe.

HOW TO USE THE GENECASTE

The ways in which gamemasters can use the genecaste in adventures are legion. The easiest, of course, is as unique creatures to throw into an adventure, like a sphinx raptor or a godan. However, even the most hideously geneformed have a working human brain, making them far smarter and deadlier than any mere beast. The genecaste also provide many other opportunities, depending on how much effort a gamemaster is willing to dedicate to the project.

Some members of the genecaste are tailor-made for covert operations and undercover/mystery-style adventures. As described on p. 55, Firstform and Secondform castemen make perfect spies and bogeymen, with an added taste of the strange. Additionally, instead of simply having a bizarre spook pop up and then vanish, a gamemaster can spin things up several levels and let such genecastemen infiltrate an intelligence agency, either at the low end or all the way up to the top. For example, perhaps the Magistracy Intelligence Ministry has already been infiltrated. After all, how did they move forward so quickly with perfecting cyberware technology for their Ebony Magistrate personnel?

Clan players can enjoy several different types of adventures involving genecastemen. If they discover the genecaste, of course,

Trials of Annihilation will follow immediately. Or perhaps the genecaste still has ties with the Dark Caste, providing rare and precious metals that only some geneclans can easily procure, in exchange for information on Clan movements and explorations. Or perhaps the connections to the Clans rise even further, with a Clan scientist caste cabal not only aware of the genecaste, but also secretly dealing with them for their knowledge of genetic manipulation—knowledge they are trying to slowly inculcate among the Clans following the Great Refusal and the realization that perhaps the Clans' current genetic breeding program has failed. If the player group discovers such a connection, it might rock a Clan to its very foundation.

Lostech treasure hunters, pirates, colonists and Explorer Corps teams all can end up discovering a planetoid with strange inhabitants who can be as alien as the gamemaster wishes (Thirdform and higher), leading to first contact or a mad dash for their lives as “aliens” erupt from a crumbling, strange city.

Finally, based on the small glimpses of genecaste society in this section, a gamemaster can push the envelope of his own imagination and the adventures of his gaming group to fully flesh out the alien culture of the genecaste (including inventing his own Fourthform and Fifthform genecastemen), making the player characters the first contact with a civilization ready to reveal itself to the rest of the universe...for good or bad.

Goals of the Genecaste

Almost without exception, the entire focus of the genecaste is simply to survive. Any dealings they have with the Inner Sphere and the Clans serve the overriding need to assure their own continued existence.

Because their entire society is dependent on its invisibility to Inner Sphere and Clan powers, almost all geneclan actions are covert, with Firstform and Secondform personnel the norm (though they do use genenorm personnel, many geneclans consider them untrustworthy because they do not physically differ enough from Spheroids). Such covert actions usually involve infiltration or spying, all with an eye toward discovering what a given power knows about the genecaste, and spreading disinformation where necessary. Additionally, unlike many spies for other intelligence agencies—who more often than not find motivation in the money used to bribe them or the sense of adventure they get from spying, rather than any loyalty to a state—genecastemen are fanatically loyal to their own and will die rather than be captured (they usually implant small chemical incendiary devices in their bodies, which destroy them as thoroughly as possible to keep their secrets from falling into enemy hands).

When the genecaste must act overtly, they usually do so with extreme overkill. If a geneclan believes a JumpShip has wandered too close to one of its holdings, or that a new colony on a nearby world threatens discovery of the geneclan's asteroid home, and they have expended all covert avenues to deal with the threat,



GENECASTE

they'll send an eradication team. As the years of such pogroms from the Clans have taught them, the genecaste won't hesitate to slaughter an entire colony. They then use elaborate measures to cover their tracks and lay careful and convincing clues that will lead subsequent investigators to any number of false conclusions about why the colony died out, all pointing away from the genecaste.

Genecaste Military

As a rule of thumb, the genecaste do not have a standard military. Given the relatively small numbers of genecastemen within a given geneclan dedicated to military tasks (usually defensive) and the resource-poor locales they inhabit, they simply lack the ability to produce large-scale military-grade equipment such as battle armor, vehicles, ProtoMechs, BattleMechs, aerospace fighters and so on. In addition, many of the genecaste are so radically altered that they cannot use such standard battlefield equipment, while the driving force of genecaste technology has been to develop themselves instead of external objects to house them.

Because of these realities, only in very unusual cases should a player group encounter genecastemen using standard warmaking equipment. Exceptions might include a Firstform who has infiltrated an Inner Sphere or Clan military and is discovered, or who simply

steals a 'Mech or battle armor suit for use, and so on. However, generally speaking, the genecaste have access to all personnel weapons, along with appropriate support weapons and equipment, though the gamemaster should feel free to limit the genecaste's use of the newest faction-specific weapons and gear.

They're Just Creepy

As usual, in the end, the gamemaster decides how to use the genecaste in his or her campaign. However, one key way to use the genecaste in creating an enjoyable gaming experience is through mood.

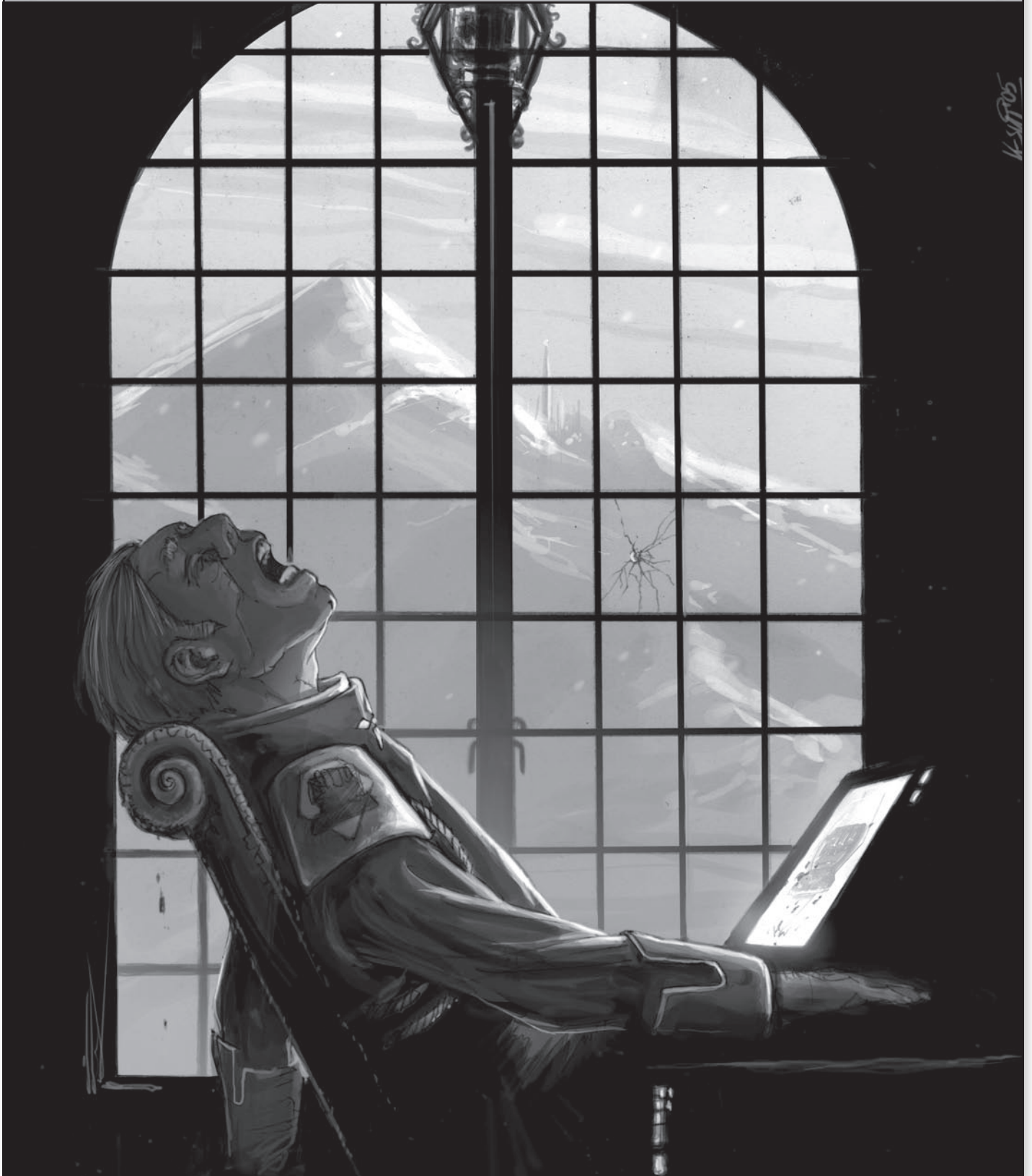
The genecaste are creepy, strange and downright alien, more so than anything else in the *BattleTech* universe. Use that to its full extent, creating a sense almost of ghosts and ghoulies as the players slowly come into contact with the genecaste. Instead of leaping directly to the heart of it, spread the discovery across many sessions, heightening the tension along the way with a "haunted house" or "horrifying alien on your ship" type of feel that will provide a unique experience for any *BattleTech* gaming group and leave them clamoring for more.





connection/INTERSTELLAR PLAYERS/section10: BROTHERHOOD OF CINCINNATUS

BROTHERHOOD OF CINCINNATUS





BROTHERHOOD OF CININNATUS

NOTES

These guys are the yang to Heimdall's ying, an LCAF/LAAF veterans' club that grew into a self-declared watchdog group. But a less-than-intelligent move in its past, attacking "soft" targets and taking credit for it, brought the weight of the Lyran government down on the Brotherhood and reduced most of its activities to recruitment or cleaning up its tarnished image.

Despite this, rumors occasionally make the rounds that part of the Brotherhood still yearns for Steiner political purity. Not unusual for these members to take action against what they call "undesirable elements." Furthermore, the Brotherhood has lumped groups such as Free Skye and Heimdall (of all the choices!) under the heading "undesirable." I even heard one story about an element of the Brotherhood that struck out against a seated member of the Lyran nobility (albeit an extremely minor individual). The shocking conclusion of that tale involved a few Brotherhood bodies floating down a river. The gunmen were never found.

—Starling

PATRIOTS OR TERRORISTS?

The Brotherhood of Cincinnatus.

To many across the Alliance, especially in the wake of the recent FedCom Civil War, that name invokes a confusion of images, combining the worst sort of fanatical nationalism with the boldest principles of loyalty and honor. Over the past several decades, reports have linked this group to terrorist bombings against the government and missions of mercy on behalf of worlds endangered by invaders and disaster. Only the secretive and elusive organization known as Heimdall can compete in the minds of the Lyran people for sheer speculation and endless debate over whether they serve the public good or represent the ultimate threat to the nation's stability.

In the post-war age, with more and more of the Brotherhood emerging to declare their faith and their ideals, we again face the question: just who are these men and women, who began merely as a nationwide veteran's club, but have become so much more? Are they heroes or villains? Terrorists or patriots? Who are the Brotherhood of Cincinnatus today? Where did they come from, and—most importantly—what are they doing now?

I'm Foster Sinclair, and in tonight's DBC Newsweek Extra, our panel of experts and I will tackle all of these questions—and more.

ORIGINS OF THE BROTHERHOOD

SINCLAIR: Our first guest tonight, joining us from the Chekswa School of Literature here on Donegal, is Professor of History Wolfgang Detlev. Professor, thank you for joining us.

DETLEV: Thank you for having me, Mister Sinclair.

SINCLAIR: Professor, what can you tell us about the Brotherhood's origins? Where did they come from, exactly?

DETLEV: Ah, well, the Brotherhood of Cincinnatus as we know it today actually formed in 2889, when several smaller veterans' groups throughout the Lyran Commonwealth chose to unite under one banner. By unifying, these disparate organizations hoped to keep alive the ties between former comrades-in-arms in the years after service, while also gaining enough political clout to enable them to provide various social services for their membership.

SINCLAIR: That sounds like any other veterans' group, Professor.

DETLEV: True, but when the Brotherhood formed, it encompassed almost every part of the military under the sun. It included hundreds of smaller organizations devoted to various branches of the service, or to warriors who served in prestigious units or during prestigious battles. The Brotherhood offered a much broader forum for communication and support, enabling them to amass memberships of many smaller groups.

SINCLAIR: Now, the Brotherhood—despite its name—was not solely male in membership, was it?

DETLEV: [chuckles] Oh, certainly not. In this case, the term "Brotherhood" referred to the sense of camaraderie among its members, the "brothers in arms" bond, so to speak.

SINCLAIR: And Cincinnatus?

DETLEV: An historical reference, of course. The original Cincinnatus was a fourth-century Roman warrior-turned-farmer, who assumed the mantle of dictator and war leader just long enough to protect his nation from danger. After the crisis passed, Cincinnatus returned to the simplicity of civilian life rather than retain his power, an example that hearkens to the kind of warrior's honor we tend to see today among many who have served in recent conflicts.

SINCLAIR: You mean, men like Victor Steiner-Davion.

DETLEV: [chuckles] Oh, I wouldn't presume to guess what motivates a man like *him*! No, to be truthful, Cincinnatus would prove an inspiration for other veterans' groups throughout history. In fact, a similar postwar veterans' group did arise in the ancient Terran nation-state of America soon after their war of independence from the British crown. Like the one we know, that Brotherhood of Cincinnatus was essentially a social club for retired officers who served in that conflict.

SINCLAIR: Fair enough. Then what happened, Professor?

BROTHERHOOD OF CINCINNATUS



DETLEV: What happens to so many such groups willing to embrace those from all walks of life? Over time, the Brotherhood grew in numbers and influence. Nobles and career soldiers alike counted themselves among the organization's ranks. Chapterhouses appeared all over the Commonwealth, and an entire bureaucracy formed around it all. The Brotherhood's voice could be heard in the Estates General and the Royal Court, always championing greater financial, political and social support for those who served their nation.

SINCLAIR: But it was more than that, wasn't it?

DETLEV: How exactly do you mean? Larger organizations carry with them a degree of prestige, and so it was with the Brotherhood. The group came to be seen as a bastion for the faithful soldier. Brotherhood members were highly visible in parades, at memorial services and in the lobby of the Estates General. They sponsored commercials to boost recruitment throughout the Third Succession War and helped organize entertainment for troops on tense border worlds. But mostly, their mandate remained—first and foremost—to take care of their own, and assure that veterans of the LCAF were never ignored or forgotten in the grand scheme of things.

SINCLAIR: Then how, Professor, did the Brotherhood go from being simply a special interest group for war veterans into the political force they are today? A force, I should point out, that has even taken credit for several acts of terror throughout the past few decades?

DETLEV: Ah, Mister Sinclair, that question is a touch more difficult to answer. And the way you phrase it, well, is misleading. It conjures images of this sudden transformation from a benign social order to a group of power-mad thugs.

SINCLAIR: Would you care to expand on that?

DETLEV: Absolutely. You see, near the closing years of the twenty-ninth century, the Commonwealth—like the rest of the Inner Sphere—was embroiled in a war that had lasted for more than one hundred and thirty years. The fighting had degenerated into a seesaw series of raids, with no end in sight—until Archon Alessandro Steiner managed to rally the military and reclaim several Lyran worlds from the Draconis Combine. At almost the same time, the LCAF successfully fended off several counterstrikes by Combine and Free Worlds forces—all of this coming on the heels of a much-celebrated campaign of deep raids against the League, also the brainchild of the new Archon.

SINCLAIR: But not all campaigns were so successful in those years.

DETLEV: Oh, no! Certainly not all. In fact, just after the Tenth Battle of Hesperus—a battle barely won as it was—an LCAF counterstrike against the Free Worlds planet of Khalidasa would ultimately prove a disaster when League forces again struck at Hesperus II. But in the late 2990s, people saw far more progress, far more victory than defeat. More than a century of stalemate looked to be drawing to a close under the rule of a strong military-minded leader.

SINCLAIR: So how did this affect the Brotherhood?

DETLEV: The Brotherhood was at the forefront of Commonwealth patriotism at this point, visible anywhere the nation needed to see the flags waved and the people fired up for Archon and country. Inherently, there was nothing wrong with this, but by this stage, the group had become a political player and operated on a substantial budget. Their influence could be felt in many things, all infused with a fervent belief in the righteousness of the realm.

SINCLAIR: Yet they were more than cheerleaders, Professor.

DETLEV: Of course! In the waning years of the 2990s, in fact, the Brotherhood saw its ranks swell by as much as a quarter of a million new members as the LCAF underwent a surge in recruitment, and troops were able to rotate. Those warriors coming home, many of them officers and young nobles flushed with the same sense of national pride and optimism, joined the Brotherhood en masse. Some even scored positions in the Brotherhood's lower-level administration.

SINCLAIR: So you're saying that this influx of younger, more optimistic members shifted the Brotherhood into a militant society?

DETLEV: Again, you're taking a leap here, Mister Sinclair. Certainly, the Brotherhood became more patriotic than ever before, but they were comprised of veterans who had fought and bled for their nation. They *deserved* to feel pride in their accomplishments. Some, however, took this attitude to an extreme. They saw House Steiner and the Lyran Commonwealth as the ultimate power in the Inner Sphere, a fact that the recent string of victories would go on to prove—in their minds, at least.

SINCLAIR: Then you're suggesting a militant minority of "Steiner supremacists" effectively tipped the balance?

DETLEV: Not immediately, to be sure, but over time, and in a way, yes. Many were crushed after the stunning defeat of Archon Alessandro's later strategies—Concentrated Weakness in particular—nearly cost us Hesperus again, as well as opening the door to Marik raids that threatened nearly every one of the Commonwealth's most critical military industry worlds.

When these events ultimately led to Alessandro's abdication in favor of Katrina Steiner, many of the former Archon's strongest supporters in the Brotherhood watched what they considered a stalled but definite momentum of successful offensives transformed into a new defensive strategy. A return to the seesaw raids of old that had kept the Third War raging for so many



BROTHERHOOD OF CININNATUS

generations seemed assured. It was as though the Commonwealth's last, best hope for victory over its enemies had been denied by a woman who only saw fit to play it safe.

SINCLAIR: What were they hoping for, Professor? Alessandro's return?

DETLEV: Not necessarily, Mister Sinclair. What these men and women wanted was an ultimate victory. Not a cease-fire won by decades of attrition, but a decisive triumph that would forever end the Succession Wars in the Commonwealth by putting both of its ancient enemies in their place forever.

SINCLAIR: Instead, they got Katrina Steiner's peace proposal.

DETLEV: Exactly. It was only after the new Archon voiced her desire to end the war peacefully that the first terror attacks began, especially when it became known that talks of a formal alliance with another Great House—Davion, as it happened—were in the offing. Now, mind you, not all members of the Brotherhood may have felt that way, but a vocal minority did. Whether actual Brotherhood members launched the attacks or merely extremists who shared their views is still a matter of public debate.

SINCLAIR: Professor, that "public debate"—as you call it—was coupled with a declaration by Archon Katrina Steiner denouncing the Brotherhood's increasingly xenophobic attitudes. The bloody attacks of the 3020s and 3030s—launched against Lyran citizens by agents claiming to act in the name of the Brotherhood—led to an official government censure, to the point where many local governments closed chapterhouses and outright banned the Brotherhood. And yet, you seem to feel that labeling them terrorists is extreme.

DETLEV: As you say, Mister Sinclair. But note that you had to qualify those statements with terms like "claiming". Even today, it remains unclear who exactly was behind the bombings. Those captured and convicted of the crimes were denounced by the Brotherhood, no matter how fervently they proclaimed their identity with the group. That kind of heavy-handed media and government condemnation oversimplified the problem, and has only made a bad situation worse.

SINCLAIR: By that you mean what, exactly?

DETLEV: Well, thanks to being labeled terrorists by the mass media and the government, membership in the Brotherhood understandably declined sharply. Those who remained in control of the organization found many of their ties to government cut, while lower-ranked members found their veterans' benefits revoked and were forced to accept inferior and less illustrious government programs instead. This hurt their pride—one of the key things that kept the Brotherhood so strong—and fostered further dissent among their ranks.

SINCLAIR: Then it was a bad move for the Archon to combat terrorism?

DETLEV: Oh, not at all! Not at all. The Archon's actions were wholly justified, given the rash of bombings on Suk II, Tamar, Kobe and elsewhere, but she acted against the Brotherhood in the absence of complete and convincing evidence. Was it truly the Brotherhood that orchestrated this campaign of terror, or was it simply a radical subfaction, or other bigots interested only in derailing the alliance and the Archon's peace process? We may never know in any event.

But the legacy of that failure to fully investigate the events and the people involved has served only to further distance the Brotherhood from its once-benign nature. Today, we see an organization that still attracts members from the ranks of war veterans and active-duty soldiers and officers, but no longer because they represent a kind of social security blanket and a symbol of national pride.

SINCLAIR: What do they represent now?

DETLEV: Defiance? Solidarity against a changing universe? It has been a rough few decades, Mister Sinclair, ever since the formation of the Federated Commonwealth that alienated so many in the Brotherhood. In uncertain times, one tends to flock to any banner.

SINCLAIR: I see. Thank you for your time, Professor.

DETLEV: Thank you, Mister Sinclair.

Clearly, the origins and rise of the Brotherhood of Cincinnatus began with the noblest of intent. But to many who know the order today, or have heard speeches by its most vocal and high-ranking members, their goals seem to have changed. Brothers like General Cyrus Andes—who led a popular campaign against the Com Guard garrison on Graceland, and who was later lost during the Jade Falcon invasion of Pandora—and John Nelson, the retired Second Donegal Guard hauptmann who recently surfaced as the head of the Brotherhood chapter on New Capetown, have defined an organization dedicated to returning their brand of purity to the Lyran state. Their words invoke images of hatred, but is that truly what the Brotherhood seeks?

THE BROTHERHOOD SPEAKS

SINCLAIR: Joining us now for an insider perspective is Colonel Alfonso Hamsun, commander of the Gacrux Freedom Theater Militia and self-proclaimed member of the Brotherhood of Cincinnatus. Colonel, thank you for coming.

BROTHERHOOD OF CINCINNATUS



HAMSUN: You're welcome, Mister Sinclair.

SINCLAIR: Colonel, let me start by asking what you thought of Professor Detlev's assessment.

HAMSUN: I'm disappointed with it. I would have expected a more accurate understanding of the Brotherhood from one of the nation's luminaries.

SINCLAIR: In what way, Colonel?

HAMSUN: Well, his description of how the Brotherhood came to be and how we grew throughout the Third Succession War was accurate, but he makes it sound as though we hinged all our hopes on a cult of personality after more than a century of faithful devotion to our mission.

SINCLAIR: Well, you have to admit, the transformation around the time of Alessandro's abdication—

HAMSUN: If you want to get history right, son, start by using the proper terms. Archon Alessandro did *not* abdicate; he was *deposed*. The fact that he did not bring his cause to war proves his patriotism above all else. If the people would not have him as their rightful ruler, then he would step aside, but it was not until Katrina rose to defy him that the coalition of politicians and social-climbing armchair generals crawled out from under their proverbial rocks to help her take the throne.

SINCLAIR: Then you believe Alessandro was wrongly forced from office.

HAMSUN: Wrongly, perhaps. Alessandro was a soldier first and foremost. He knew his duty, and if he stepped down, it was in performance of that duty, and to assume upon himself the burden of his few strategic missteps. The only question is in whom he placed his trust as a successor.

SINCLAIR: Then the Brotherhood *does* blame Katrina Steiner—

HAMSUN: Archon Katrina was a fine ruler, Mister Sinclair, a hero of battle herself, on Hesperus II and on Khalidasa. I do not besmirch her integrity as a warrior, but I question her motives as a leader.

SINCLAIR: Colonel, as a military man, surely it is not for you to decide state policy.

HAMSUN: As a military man, one devoted to protecting a pure and mighty Commonwealth—

SINCLAIR: Alliance, you mean.

HAMSUN: *Commonwealth*, sir. You may change the name, but you cannot change the people, or the spirit of the state. And as I was saying, as a military man, my duty—above all others—is to protect the nation against all threats. In my time, I have seen those threats materialize from outside and from within. To me, the likes of House Davion and ComStar have posed as much a threat to our sovereignty as the Jade Falcons, the Draconis Combine or the Free Worlds League.

SINCLAIR: But, Colonel, for years the Lyran and FedSuns states were part of one alliance. What of the generation or so of children born of that union, or the industrial and commercial growth we experienced thanks to expanded trade with the Suns?

HAMSUN: The union with the Federated Suns was a tragic mistake, Mister Sinclair, no matter how many children resulted. Until that time, there had been almost no blood spilled between our nations. Until that time, Lyran soldiers did not take part in *starting* wars, but did their best to *finish* them. Then came the Fourth Succession War, and our greatest triumphs were ridiculed by smug Davion officers, while dozens of worlds—hard-fought with Steiner blood—were surrendered to a newborn state in order to buy time for another war demanded by a far-flung prince who had no right to send our boys and girls back to the front.

I have nothing against children, Sinclair. I have two of my own, in fact, and both will be fine officers now that the Lyran state is free to go its own way. But to use them—or, for that matter, a few billion more kroner in commerce per year—as justification for our greatest failure in recent history trivializes the sacrifices made by our brave men and women in the recent war to undo that horrendous mistake.

SINCLAIR: Forgive me, Colonel, but this rhetoric sounds similar to the Free Skye movement's calls for secession during the time you describe—

HAMSUN: Son, I didn't come here to be insulted. The Brotherhood is *not* Free Skye. We do *not* advocate the dissolution of the Commonwealth—or any of its member states—on vague principles of freedom and prosperity. Our nation was built on the principle of mutual protection against its enemies, and a pure and peaceful exchange between member worlds.

SINCLAIR: And at what cost will this "purity" come from, Colonel? To what lengths will the Brotherhood go to reclaim the Lyran state as you see it?

HAMSUN: The Brotherhood will go to any lengths to protect the nation we hold dear.

SINCLAIR: But *how* far? Terrorism?

HAMSUN: [scoffs] Only cowards resort to terrorism!

SINCLAIR: Civil war?



BROTHERHOOD OF CINCINNATUS

HAMSUN: Believe what you will, sir, but the Brotherhood is not some demoralized and disorganized band of lost souls and bigots. We love the Commonwealth with all our hearts, in spite of itself, and we do not wish to plunge our people into another disastrous civil war as our enemies surround us, waiting to strike. We, like Archon Alessandro, still know our duty, and those among us—whether we still wear uniform or not—shall deal with all enemies of the state as we will, without compromising what it means to be Lyrans.

SINCLAIR: And what does it mean to be Lyrans, to you, Colonel?

HAMSUN: If you can ask a question like that, Mister Sinclair, then I truly weep for what the Commonwealth has become.

Once numbering in the millions, today the Brotherhood of Cincinnatus boasts a nationwide membership barely larger than ten thousand. Many of them are former officers and soldiers of the Lyrans armed forces, who proclaim their loyalty to ever-thinning numbers of spectators on the few worlds where their message can still be made public.

Though most, like Colonel Hamsun, call the revival of the old Lyrans Commonwealth in the post-FedCom era their greatest hope for the future, to others the ancient enmities burn brightest. Last year alone, of all the documented cases of hate crimes against foreign business owners or emigrants from outside the Alliance, law enforcement sources tell us more than ten percent were linked to known or suspected members of the Brotherhood of Cincinnatus. Meanwhile, public rallies on New Capetown, Graceland and Gacrux continue to denounce the new Archon and policies that date back to the Federated Commonwealth.

And so, as we close tonight's program, we once more ponder the nature of the Brotherhood of Cincinnatus. How did a once-benign political action group and social club for veterans become a band of fanatics cloaked in patriotism, yet willing to embrace violence so readily? Does the fault lie in our history as a nation, or is there some truth to their charge that the Lyrans state has changed more than even we dare to recognize? As always, every answer brings with it more questions.

Until next time, I'm Foster Sinclair, wishing all of you good night.



BROTHERHOOD OF CINCINNATUS



GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

Every nation has its patriots, willing to give all in the belief that by doing so they will help secure a safe and prosperous future for their motherlands. And every nation its fanatics, who not only embrace such thinking, but believe themselves the only true adherents to their patriotic duty, and regard leaders who deviate from their dreams as the enemies of the people. Once a patriotic social club for war veterans, the Brotherhood of Cincinnatus has long since drifted into the realm of fanaticism, its goals no longer simply espousing a love for the Lyran state, but pursuing a deep-rooted belief in protecting the purity of House Steiner against all foes inside and out.

THE REAL EVOLUTION OF THE BROTHERHOOD

With more than a century behind them in the closing years of the Third Succession War, the Brotherhood arose from a simple collection of veterans' groups to a politically active force and a symbol of Lyran patriotism. To support the group's expansion and the administration of so many far-flung chapters—mostly on worlds in hostile border regions—a huge bureaucracy formed that came to be dominated by the group's elders, an elite core of its most affluent and politically savvy members.

In order to retain and expand their power, these elite members gradually expanded Brotherhood membership to include active-duty officers in the LCAF, ostensibly to reward acts of heroism and valor on behalf of the state. As a result, many new

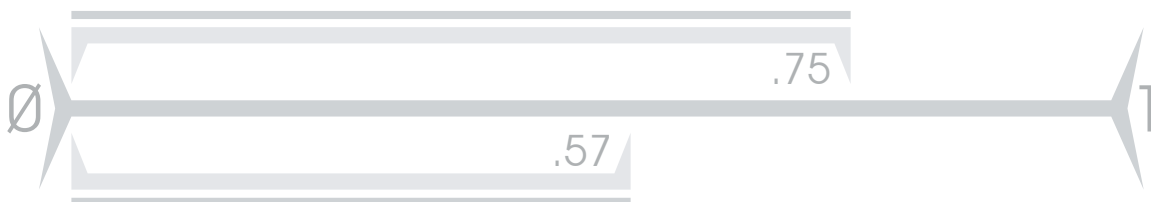
inductees hailed from prominent MechWarrior families and noble houses. They also carried with them a supreme sense of patriotic duty that bordered on fanaticism after a string of victories under Archon Alessandro Steiner made the war seem almost winnable.

Alessandro's abdication in the face of a power bloc loyal to Katrina Steiner came as a hard blow to these new elite in the Brotherhood, prompting a series of terrorist attacks against supporters of Katrina's peace initiatives in the hopes of rousing the people to action. Unwilling to oppose the Archon directly, the Brotherhood tried to cover its tracks, but just enough evidence of their involvement surfaced to cast blame on the entire organization, leading to a long period of censure in which its membership and political influence dropped considerably.

Forced to work in the shadows, the Brotherhood turned into an even more elitist secret society, its leadership often meeting in dark boardrooms far from prying eyes. It began to operate like a resistance cell system, with members referring to one another only as "Brother" or "Sister." Over the decades of the Federated Commonwealth era, the Brotherhood's remaining leaders continued to recruit in secret, gathering contacts among those who felt the Lyran state was being corrupted by the alliance with the Suns.

With the secession of the Lyran Alliance, many of the Brotherhood publicly returned, cloaked in the patriotism for which their organization had become known, to proclaim their support for a newly pure Lyran state.

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BROTHERHOOD OF CINCINNATUS

ORGANIZATION AND GOALS

The Brotherhood today retains a cell-like arrangement, with some cells more active and specialized than others, while a secretive group of surviving elite retains ultimate control over the entire apparatus. Individual cells, generally planet-based, operate under a pseudo-military structure, their missions—with broadly defined parameters—handed down from this “Shadow Council of Elders.” The rank structure of a Brotherhood cell is not easily apparent, as most members refer to each other and to potential recruits as simply “Brother” or “Sister.” In general, however, the organization of each cell follows a definite chain of command, with the head of the local chapterhouse considered the head of the local cell.

Cell Structure

At their lowest ranks, Brotherhood cells focus on recruitment of like-minded individuals, preferably those with military experience and patriotic ideals. Potential recruits must undergo a series of trials determined by the local cell leader to prove their loyalty to a pure Steiner state above all else, but even the best of these who pass such trials tend to remain in the lowest tiers of the organization unless they hail from nobility or hold a key position in the Lyran socio-military structure.

Better-connected members tend to hold middle-management positions within the cell for a period, but also must undergo trials to move further up the chain of command toward the cell leader. Duties for these members range from overseeing the activities of the lowest ranks to acting as foot soldiers for any covert activities (usually aimed at silencing locals deemed too “unpatriotic” or “tainted” for the cell leader’s tastes). These members also cultivate contacts outside the Brotherhood, from sympathizers to future “fall guys” for the organization’s plans. Many of these members serve as the public face of the Brotherhood, preaching to the masses about the contamination of the Lyran state and trying to put the best face on the Brotherhood’s activities.

At the highest level, leaders are brought into a secret society within the cell that oversees and administers its activities. These individuals are generally middle-management types who passed enough trials to win the confidence of the cell leader, and any of them may be groomed as a potential replacement. These members typically decide the focus of the cell’s activities, based on directives handed down through the cell leader from the Council of Elders.

Brotherhood cell leaders are often members of the Council, or the trusted lieutenants thereof. To reach this position, the member’s devotion to the Lyran state must be beyond question, and he or she must have served the order with distinction for many years. Being well connected to nobility, industry or the military is another requirement for those who hold such high office, as the Brotherhood often works through contacts rather than direct interaction.

The Shadow Council of Elders consists of the Brotherhood’s highest-ranking and most devoted members, and officially does not exist even to the middle management ranks. Not even the upper tiers of individual cells know who belongs to the Council, a failsafe that allows the rest of the Brotherhood to dismiss any cell that violates the Brotherhood’s goals or is destroyed in the course of its activities. In this way, the Brotherhood’s membership can often seem to be working toward totally different goals at the same time, relying on local contacts in most cases to accomplish their varying missions.

Typical Brotherhood Operations

Brotherhood missions range from recruitment and public relations to cultivation and subversion of contacts in industry, politics and the nobility, to active campaigns of intimidation or terror designed to drive off or destroy “impure” elements in Lyran society. Though terrorism remains within the realm of the Brotherhood’s activities, the order prefers to work in more subtle ways, resorting to violence only when absolutely necessary, and only when blame can be shifted to someone else—preferably someone “tainted”.

Even in such extreme cases, attacking the Steiner family or the major institutions of Lyran government (though not necessarily its individual members) is considered an ultimate act of betrayal. Those who violate this ultimate taboo among the Brotherhood and undertake such acts receive swift and permanent retribution. For this reason, it is not uncommon to see members of the Brotherhood acting as unofficial bodyguards and supporters of local institutions and members of the Steiner family. Such actions, though technically vigilantism, have the added benefit of enhancing the Brotherhood’s public relations in the grand scheme of things.

Though the Brotherhood promotes the purity of the Steiner state, this bigotry extends principally to political venues. Believing in a unified Steiner state, the Brotherhood opposes anything that resists the ultimate authority of the Steiner government, including citizens of foreign realms and members of rebel factions such as the Free Skye movement and Heimdall. Politicians whose views run counter to the ideal of a united and strong Steiner state are targeted by Brotherhood operatives for anything ranging from public smear campaigns to assassination, though again the Brotherhood prefers to avoid overt violence when other options remain available.

THE EXITURI





THE EXITURI

NOTES

God bless the religious sects; I'm sure Lefty agrees, based on the comments he left after a quick once over. (Not that I believe in The Guy through "formal" ways, but He's out there.) The Exituri are yet another one, and they've been around for a while now. They took the major religions from Exodus-era Terra, as well as a minor one, threw them in the blender and came up with their own smoothie faith. Only catch is, the easiest way to get in is to be born into it.

The leadership, subject to the pendulum of strictness in faith, has left the liberal side and is fast swinging toward conservatism. Shiloh, being a Free Worlds League system and thus under Word of Blake control for communication, must give some of the Blakies headaches. Already known for a conspicuous lack of technological advances, it seems the Exituri are itching to get rid of everything techie on-planet. Will they make an attempt on the Shiloh HPG? If they do, throwing away fifteen years of relations... let's just say things could get interesting.

—Starling

ENCYCLOPEDIA GALACTICA: EXITURI

A hybrid faith with ascetic elements, originating on pre-Exodus Terra (exact founding date unknown). Based on a strict moral code (though the severity of this credo depends on the incumbent Blessed Leader, as the most senior Exituri is known), the Exituri draw their primary inspiration from Islam and Hinduism, though elements of Judaism and Christianity (in particular Puritanism) also appear. Practitioners pray toward Terra several times daily—usually at dawn and dusk, but also at noon and other key times on holy days—in specially prepared worship sites known as *ashrams* (a Sanskrit word meaning “place of striving”) that segregate men from women. Exituri believers display few outward signs, though adherents generally dress simply in clothing made without the assistance of advanced technology. They consider machines anathema, stranding much of Exituri society at a state equivalent to eighteenth-century Europe. Some members of the faith wear religious symbols—a crucifix, a Star of David or a pentagram—though these appear to be sect markings within the Exituri rather than indicating membership in the faiths that these symbols usually represent. Ironically, given the hybrid nature of their own faith, the Exituri tend toward intolerance of other religions and oppose their practice and the consecration of their holy sites. Such opposition is usually peaceful but forthright, though violence and vandalism frequently arise during periods of strict orthodoxy.

Examining the Exituri belief system is difficult. They appear to adhere to some of the more stringent aspects of Vaishnavism as outlined in the Hindu Bhagavad-Gita, which restrict knowledge of the faith and its practices to members and mandate hiding those practices and principles from outsiders. To know the Exituri is to

be Exituri, and even those who forsake the faith rarely speak of it. [Must make recruitment tough. “Want to join our cult?” “Maybe. What does it believe in?” “Sorry, can’t tell you.” Class.—Lefty] Only the effects of the faith are apparent to outsiders—the Exituri loathing of technology, their moralistic tendencies and their belief in personal accomplishment and honor. They seem to feel God has abandoned humankind because of our reliance on the evils of technology and our general decadence and corruption; only through self-discipline and personal purification can we regain the divine favor. In this regard, Exiturism has strong Hindu overtones—in particular, its concepts of rebirth and the wheel of “life debt” (karma). In addition, however, rumors continually circulate of a prophesied leader, a messiah, who will bring “truth and knowledge to all.” Such a belief, central to the Judeo-Christian faiths, is in stark contrast to Hinduism.

The harshness of Exiturism leads many, particularly the young, to abandon the faith and often its birth world of Shiloh as well (which has the highest emigration rate in the FWL). A trade in Exituri “foundlings” has grown up in recent years, with well-to-do families in the League and beyond adopting teenagers as family members (or occasionally workers). Few of these children appear to adhere to the faith of their parents. Periods of liberalism generally arise to counter this trend, the last of which took place in the 3030s and 3040s and was among the longest such awakenings. As is common with religions, the liberal flowering has been followed by a period of strict orthodoxy under Blessed Leader Elena Kubayshev. Extolling a firebrand version of the Exituri faith, fundamentalist in its teachings and methodologies, Kubayshev has sought to drive all outsiders from Shiloh and to sever the planet’s links to the outside universe. In fascinating contrast, the “Prophetess,” as she styles herself, has simultaneously hinted at the desire to “teach the forsaken the errors of their ways”—a statement widely taken to mean some type of evangelical mission.

ENCYCLOPEDIA GALACTICA: SHILOH

The Exituri settled on Shiloh, the fourth planet of an A8V-class star system almost 90 light-years from Terra, in 2138, one of the earliest (and then most distant) of human colonies. A harsh and desolate world, Shiloh is ideal for this ascetic cult, whose anti-technology members use oxen and plows to grow crops. Shiloh has the highest birth rate in the Free Worlds League (and is among the highest in the Inner Sphere), counterbalanced by severe infant and adult mortality rates. Only one in ten children grows to adulthood and few Shiloh natives live beyond age forty-five. The Exituri accept such harsh realities as “the way things are,” believing that those who perish were too weak to survive this life and will be reborn. For much of its existence, Shiloh has had a stable population estimated at around a million, though no official census has ever taken place.

Food is the planet’s only significant import; its main exports are handicrafts such as wood and bone carvings, textiles and

THE EXITURI

metalwork. In recent years, Shiloh has become the focus of the “adopt an orphan” trade. The harsh life on Shiloh guarantees a steady supply of such needy children, and the growing affluence of FWL citizens has led childless families to flock to the planet to adopt young natives—usually in their early teens—who find new homes across the League and sometimes beyond. High-profile adopters include industrialist Sigmund Hughes and Lyran Archon Peter Steiner-Davion, who employs two Shilohan foundlings as pages at his Tharkad residence.

Only one official spaceport exists on Shiloh, in the fortified city of Kandahar roughly 100 kilometers south of the capital city, Vedic. The port is the only legal entry point to Shiloh, with arrivals undergoing formal questioning and examination before being allowed into the general population. “Undesirable elements” (whose precise definition is indeterminate) are summarily deported. *[In practice, DropShips occasionally land at ad-hoc sites across the planet, sometimes sanctioned by the religious authorities but more often than not “avoiding local entanglements.” The low-tech Exituri have few means of imposing an embargo or monitoring arrivals. —Lefty]*

IRIAN NEWS INTERSTELLAR SYNDICATED ARTICLE: AS HE WILLS

—by James Shaw

[30-9-67]

“You’re kidding me.”

My first words after arriving at Shiloh on the *Daisy Marie*, a modified *Union*-class cargo-hauler, were not an auspicious start to the trip, though they pretty well summed up how I felt. I’d expected this, but still, it’s different when it actually happens. The zealots at the “immigration post” in the spaceport confiscated all our recording gear—the tri-vid unit and the personal comps. We weren’t here to visit the adoption center, jutting up above the low-rise city skyline, so we’d been singled out for particular scrutiny. They allowed us to pass, but told us that our “recording apparatus” would be limited to pencil, paper and memory. Luckily, the goons at the spaceport weren’t that familiar with technology. We managed to sneak a few items past them, most notably Thomas’ pair of micro-transmitters that could uplink to the larger rig we’d left back on the *Daisy Marie* (which would stay in-port for at least a week), and my own implanted microphone I’d had lodged in my mastoid bone last month in anticipation of just these problems. Memories of the “simple procedure” made me wince, and the goon smiled. “Bad tooth? You see Guru Lega. He have good medicine.” I smiled back politely.

Images will be largely out of the question, I think. Mac smuggled a still camera through, but whether he’ll be able to use it will depend on the presence—or absence—of religious enforcers and informers on the streets. Though Kubayshev has been Blessed

Leader for half a century, the last fifteen years have seen a brutal crackdown on “unorthodox activities.” That crackdown had drawn me to Shiloh, hoping for an interview (or should that be audience?) with the Prophetess.

Passing out of the port complex and onto the ochre-colored streets of Kandahar was like stepping back a thousand years. We saw no groundcars or ‘Mechs on the dry and dusty roads, though I knew a military cantonment existed somewhere between here and Vedic, the capital. Instead, transport seemed to be via animal-drawn wagons and a few human-drawn ones, too. Mac negotiated with a rickshaw driver to take us to our lodgings—hotel was too grand a word for it—and the little Shilohan huffed as he pulled us three off-worlders—none of us particularly svelte—and our luggage. It took only a few minutes, but as our ride bumped onward, it was impossible to escape the oppressive heat and dryness of the air. We saw a few natives, men wrapped in *djelabas*, but otherwise the streets were surprisingly quiet.

At the lodging, the proprietor took down our personal information and arranged for his boys to move our luggage up to the chambers we’d been allocated. We took sponge baths in lukewarm water—running water seemed unknown, let alone showers—and then chatted about our plans in the common space, a small courtyard resplendent with cushions and a central fountain. It was surprisingly cool and pleasant there, as we drank sweet mint tea served with snacks of olives and lamb. The waiters were pleasant if not overly friendly, hospitality—even to outsiders—being one of the traits of Shilohan culture. The dinner—more lamb and mint, this time with couscous—was superb and the chef, whom the proprietor summoned, ecstatically received our praise.

Then it struck me. We were here to see the Prophetess, but in our first day on Shiloh we’d seen not a single woman. Where were they?

[1-10-67]

“Can you hear me?”

My first words with the implant mike turned on. Thomas gave the thumbs-up signal, so I knew it was coming through loud and clear to his transmitter box. “Clean signal,” he said. “You have about a 200-meter range on the internal, boosted to about 20k if you use the box as a relay.” He handed me one of the micro-transmitters, which I dropped into the pocket of my sand-colored jacket. “Ready?”

“As I’ll ever be.”

We’d decided last night that using the spaceport guard’s “toothache remedy” as a cover, I’d try to contact this Guru Lega and see if he—or others I might meet on my travels—could point me in the direction of the Prophetess and make my interview possible. I enquired of the proprietor where I might find this famous personage and he directed me toward the Souk, summoning another rickshaw to transport me there. Ostensibly there were no restrictions on our movements, but I had the feeling of being



THE EXITURI

watched as soon as I stepped into the street. Of course, it may have been paranoia—my safari suit made a stark contrast to the local dress—but in fifteen years of investigative journalism, I've come to trust my feelings.

The journey took scarcely ten minutes—the streets were little busier than they'd been when we arrived—but I did see a couple of women, scotching my idea that the Exituri were cloistering their females like some of the strict Azami sects. Most looked to be in their fifties—very old by Exituri standards—and a handful were pre-teen girls. "Where are the women?" I asked my driver, who glanced at me blankly as he pulled the rickshaw. I gestured with my hands, pointing to the old ladies and the young girls. "The other females?"

He smiled at me. "Duty," I think he said. His accent was thick and he was missing several front teeth. This time it was my turn to look blank. He grinned and spun to face me, trotting backward as the cab coasted. He blew out his cheeks, stuck out his belly and then cupped his hands around his protruding abdomen. Ah. The demographic bias within the city began to dawn on me, the sheer number of children compared to the number of adults. No wonder there was a booming trade in Shiloh's youth to the outside universe. The preponderance of adults didn't surprise me, though. I'd read about the horrendous child mortality rate among the Faithful, who combine their disdain of modern medicine with a Nietzschean sense of "that which does not kill us makes us stronger," and presumed this was counterbalanced by the staggeringly high birth rate. How many of these children would survive if outsiders didn't adopt them?

At any rate, Guru Lega would be an interesting man, I suspected—part doctor and part religious leader, at least if the old Sanskrit meaning of the title held true.

The cab dropped me off at the end of a gloomy alley and the driver pointed me toward a redwood door, inscribed with a pentacle. Glancing to make sure no one was watching me, I slipped the transmitter box into the woodpile by the door and then knocked cautiously. After an instant, an old woman opened it.

"Jee haan?" She squinted at me, taking in my outlander garb. Her "Yes?" was heavily accented, but understandable.

"I'm looking for Guru Lega. Is this the right address?"

She gestured for me to enter and led me up a flight of stairs to a bright room with rosewood furniture, ornate sculptures and delicate cushions. The Exituri may disdain technology, but their craftsmanship is spectacular. This was some of the finest work I'd ever seen, a stark contrast to the rude environment of the dusty streets. The room opened onto a balcony overlooking a verdant courtyard. I sipped lemon tea, brought to me by a boy of around six years old, while I gazed out over a colorful garden of roses and chrysanthemums. One of the foundlings?

"Salaam Alaikem. How can I help you, Mister ...?"

I turned to face the new arrival—a tall, slender man dressed in a fine robe with his hands resting on the shoulders of another child, a girl slightly older than the boy who had brought my refreshment.

"My name is Shaw, James Shaw. Guru Lega, I presume." I debated holding out my hand but opted to bow, the universal mark of respect. He smiled.

"Please, sit." He gestured to the cushions. "You already have refreshment. How can I help Mister Shaw?" Lega lowered himself into the seat opposite me, aided by the girl, who put her arms round his neck, kissed him on the cheek and then left.

"Your granddaughter?"

"One of my family, yes." His smile was enigmatic. "But I don't think you meant to come here and ask about children, not that the young ones aren't important to us."

"The children of your world are well known, but yes, I'm a journalist, Guru, and I came to learn more about the Exituri."

"Ah, so it is true, what they say of you. You want to talk to the *Daadi*?"

"If you mean Elena Kubayshev, then yes."

He frowned at me. "In our society, it is considered impolite to refer to someone of importance—and someone whom you do not know personally—in such familiar tones."

"My apologies."

He waved his hand. "You are *ajnaabee* and were not to know. We call her the *Daadi*, the grandmother."

"If I'm not being too presumptuous, I have heard her called by another name. Prophetess."

His eyebrows arched. "Have you indeed?" He held up his cup. Almost instantly a child—not one of the two I'd seen previously—appeared and refilled his tea. "That is a name few outside the Faithful would use."

"As I said, I wish to learn more about the Exituri."

"Ah, but you are not of the Faith. You would need to demonstrate understanding and enlightenment."

"*Kriyamana karma*?" I was glad I'd studied Hindu, Moslem and Christian beliefs before coming here. *Kriyamana* meant the karma being made here and now.

"You understand *agami* and *vartamana*?" I nodded, and he smiled. "Perhaps your soul is not yet beyond reach."

"I understand that one's actions not only affect your own path to enlightenment, but those around you, your family, your community." I recited the edict of karma. I hoped the Exituri interpretation hadn't strayed too far from the Hindu version.

"You have children?"

"Yes, a son, Richard. He will be thirteen at his next birthday."

"Very good. Children are a blessing, and strong boys doubly so. Thirteen years, good, good. He is a man by our standards and ready to go out into the world to do his duty. Now if you excuse me, I have business to attend to. Perhaps you would like to return tomorrow for dinner?"

The old lady showed me out and I carefully retrieved the comm box. So far, I didn't know what to make of Lega and his household.

THE EXITURI



[2-10-67]

I returned to Lega's the next evening, the dinner commencing a little after 10 p.m. local—the Shilohans favor late meals, waiting until the sun sets before commencing their repast. This caught me a little by surprise and I was ravenous by the time the cabbie arrived. The streets were much busier this late—a stark contrast to my morning visit to the Souk—with vendors hawking almost every kind of ware. Many were little more than children, some scarcely into their teens, but all were keen to make a sale. True market forces in action.

At Lega's house, I couldn't stash the micro-transmitter, and instead took the risk of carrying it on me. I was sure they wouldn't have any means of detecting it but I hated to think what might happen if somehow they found out their conversations were being recorded. Some societies thought cameras stole their souls. Might these anti-technologists feel the same way about my concealed recording gear?

The old woman led me to the same room where I'd met Lega previously. The guru was there waiting, together with another man whose age had been rendered indeterminate by the ravages of the sun. A desert-dweller. A pair of children—perhaps the same as yesterday, I couldn't be sure—served tea and sweetmeats.

"Shalom Aleichem. This is Baba Nicolayev, Mister Shaw, who happens to be visiting this evening also." The other visitor inclined his head in my direction. I returned the bow.

"A colleague?" I asked, hoping my voice showed sufficient deference. My guess was, this visit was no accident. If my intuition about Lega's influence was correct, then Nicolayev might be a senior member of the Exituri.

"After a fashion." An enigmatic smile accompanied Lega's response. Nicolayev snorted.

"My apologies, Baba Nicolayev. I meant no offense. Please excuse this outsider's ignorance. I assumed you were a doctor like Guru Lega."

The desert-worn figure smiled and bowed his head. "None taken, Mister Shaw. You are not far off the mark. Lega and I have interests and responsibilities in common." That piqued my curiosity, but I knew not to press. "I gather you know something of our ways."

"I am a student, seeking the truth. I cannot claim to know much." I tried to sound sincere, but to my own ears it sounded horribly self-serving.

"A news seeker." Nicolayev almost spat the words. "A sensationalist."

"I am a journalist, yes, but that doesn't make me a sensationalist." He didn't seem convinced. "I am a knowledge seeker, though I won't pretend my motives are entirely selfless."

"Had you done so, I would have asked you to leave immediately." Lega said calmly. "I appreciate honesty over sycophancy. 'A wise man—or one who seeks wisdom—must never deceive himself or others.'"

"Your scripture?" I ventured, perhaps pushing my luck, "Or the words of the *Daadi*?"

"The words of a wise one, Mister Shaw." Nicolayev's eyes narrowed. I wasn't sure if he was offended or intrigued by my mention of the Prophetess. Oh well—neck, meet block.

"No offense intended. I merely seek to learn."

"As do we all, Mister Shaw, as do we all. A never-ending cycle of self-discovery." One of the children entered bearing another tray of food, this time thin slices of fruit.

"I presume education starts young." I gestured at the departing child. "I see there are a lot of children here. Healthy children. Healthier than the tales in the outside universe would have people believe, particularly with the number of them who find homes among the stars. To them, the Exituri are primitives—denying technology that would improve your lives—but I am not so sure. Your young seem well cared for. You are a teacher, perhaps?"

For a moment there was dead silence. Had I gone too far? Then a grin spread across Lega's face. "Educators, yes, you could say that."

I breathed a sigh of relief. "May I ask what you teach? I have seen no schools here."

"There are many *ashrams* and *madrassahs*. As for what, well, in terms you would understand, I believe the phrase for my contribution would be ethics and Baba teaches ... physical education. We make sure all are prepared before they commence their duty."

Nicolayev laughed, a deep booming sound that wasn't the slightest bit jolly. He wagged a finger at Lega as paroxysms of laughter took him. "My apologies, Shaw," he said after a moment. "A private joke."

"One I hope to understand at some point."

"Perhaps," he said, almost purring like a cat. Why did I get the feeling I was a mouse?

[From here on, Shaw's entries exist only as voice logs, transcribed from the recovered micro-transmitter.]

[4-10-67]

Muffled voice: Get up.

Shaw: Who are ...

[sound of a blow]

Voice: No questions. You come with us

Shaw: Okay, no questions. Give me chance to put some clothes on.

Voice: One minute, then we go.

[Muffled rustling]

Voice: Come. Now!

Shaw: Where are we going ... okay, okay, no questions. You can put the knife away.

[Muffled grunt. Sound of feet on stairs]

Shaw: Point taken



THE EXITURI

Voice: Up.

Shaw: I can't ride

Voice: Learn, or we tie you on.

Shaw: Oops.

[sound of a fall, then repeated blows]

Voice [translated from local dialect]: Tie him securely. *Daadi* will not want her guest too badly hurt.

[5-10-67]

[sound of wind]

Voice: You are back with us, Mister Shaw

Shaw: How long was I out?

Voice: Long enough. We arrive soon.

Shaw: These canyons, they remind me of somewhere.

Voice: Old Earth had a place like it. The rose-red city.

Shaw: That rings a bell. A grand place.

Voice: A favorite of the *Mahdi*.

Shaw: The Prophetess?

Voice: No. You will learn soon enough. We arrive.

Voice: Here, let me help you down.

Shaw: Oops, sorry. My legs are a bit wobbly.

[Sound of rustling and an item hastily being thrust into the sand.]

Voice: It is understandable. Your ways are soft and not of the desert. Come, she waits.

[Footsteps are faintly audible, then grow louder with the hint of an echo.]

Voice: In the presence, you will kneel, yes?

Shaw: Of course, I honor the *Daadi*.

Voice: And you shall.

Woman's Voice: Come in, Mister Shaw, come in. I have heard so much about you. Don't be offended that I don't rise to greet you—the perils of old age.

Shaw: You honor me, *Daadi*. If I might be so bold, how many summers have you seen?

Woman's Voice: [Laughing] This year will see my eighty-second summer. I am among the oldest of my people.

Shaw: With age comes wisdom.

Woman's Voice: Indeed, but also a treacherous body. I hope this shell endures long enough for me to complete the Great Work.

Shaw: The Work?

Woman's Voice: You have already seen some of it, and guessed at more, I think. That is why I brought you here.

Shaw: You mean the children.

Woman's Voice: Lega was right about you. Sharp, for an infidel.

[Hands clap. The sound of many feet follows.]

Woman's Voice: My children.

Shaw: So many. The Exituri are surely blessed.

Woman's Voice: The *Mahdi* so wished it when he came among us half a life ago. All have done their duty.

Shaw: Half a life? That would be twenty years in the words of my

world, I think.

Woman's Voice: Fifteen. The Blessed One walked among us in 3052, after the Great Betrayal.

Shaw: The betrayal? You're talking about—

[sound of a blow]

Woman's Voice: One tolerates only so much impertinence. Do not interrupt me again, or I'll have to send you to dear Nicolayev.

Shaw: My apologies, *Daadi*.

Woman's Voice: Accepted. When the Blessed One came among us, I was horrified that one such as he should be *Imam Mahdi*, but he demonstrated his wisdom and insight and showed me the true path. And it is said, "He will come among us when there is war, great disputes and much bloodshed," and, "A tyrant will emerge, usurping the holy places and positions of faith, but one of my blood shall stop him and none will be saved except those who aid the *Imam Mahdi* in his time of need."

Shaw: The *Qur'an*. The signs of the Messiah. And you believe it is his time?

Woman's Voice: The signs have appeared. This is no false *Mahdi*. Not since the days of Prophet Enrique Kim has there been one such as he. A return to traditional values, and he brought word of the Great Work you see before you.

Shaw: My apologies, *Daadi*, I don't understand. Children are the great work?

Woman's Voice: Children are the future, the vessels of our knowledge and belief that shall bring enlightenment to the stars.

Shaw: You—you're talking about a missionary campaign? I didn't think the Exituri believed in evangelism.

Woman's Voice: We don't. A campaign, yes, but not one of words.

Shaw: A crusade? A children's crusade? Oh my god.

Woman's Voice: No, not YOUR god. You people made Him turn away from humankind with your technologies and vices. The *Mahdi's* gift to humankind will be pure, unsullied by the evils of your world. Only you infidels will consider them children, an error of judgment you will not long survive.

Shaw: Bows and swords will do you little good against modern arms, and you are too few.

Woman's Voice: The arrogance of the infidel. You mistake a righteous disdain of the evils of technology for primitivism. Firearms have existed for almost two thousand years, Mister Shaw. Perhaps not as sophisticated as those wielded by your armies, but no less able to kill. And as for numbers, you see that fallacy around you.

Shaw: An army of ten thousand, fifty, a hundred thousand. Against the galaxy? You'd be butchered.

Woman's Voice: [laughter] Is that what you think? The Elixirs of the *Mahdi* have made the young strong, able to survive even the rigors of Shiloh, and ready to do their duty. We are not the scattered tribes you think we are. We never have been, but now three million young, pure souls are pledged to the cause. And you hope to stand against the whirlwind of Exituri fury? I think not.

THE EXITURI

Shaw: Oh, hell. Oh, hell. Blakist medicine. Vaccines and all those Shilohan children scattered across the stars ...

[Sound of a sharp blow and bones breaking. A scream from Shaw.]

Woman's Voice: Do not take that name in vain, Mister Shaw! The *Mahdi*—whom you will meet soon enough—would not like it. Take him to Nicolayev for preparation.

[10-10-67]

Voice: I know you're awake, I can tell by your breathing.

Shaw: You're a demon, Baba.

Voice: I prefer artist.

Shaw: UNGH, UNGH.

Voice: See? I can inflict great pain on you, but you won't die. Not until *Daadi* or the *Mahdi* wish it, anyway.

[Sound of spitting]

Voice: That wasn't nice. I'll have to educate you some more. Do you know what this is?

Shaw: Screw you, Nicolayev.

Voice: It's called a flensing knife, used to remove flesh from bone.

Shaw: ARGH!

Voice: Sharp, isn't it?

Shaw: Bastard!

Voice: That's the spirit. But don't hold out too long. I want to shape you, not break you.

Shaw: ARGH! ARGH! ARGH!

Voice: Well, you'll never be pretty now, but the *Mahdi* doesn't like unbroken things.

Shaw: Aii! ARGH! Mnnn!

Voice: Hello, what have we here?

[Sound of metal on metal and whimpers from Shaw]

Shaw: Mnnn! Mnnn!

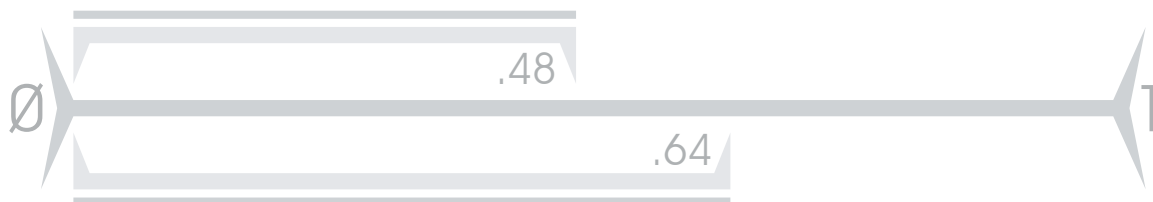
Voice: Naughty boy. A transmitter is it? We'll have to fix that before we ship you off to ...

[recording ends]

[3-11-67]

My name is Macintosh Jirik. I was—am—Shaw's cameraman. We saw nothing of him after he disappeared on October 4 and have no idea of his whereabouts. The recordings—which we recovered a week after his disappearance, when James set the box to re-transmit—make me fear the worst. We didn't have the equipment to triangulate the signal, which could have come from anywhere within twenty kilometers, and we were forced to abandon the search after a few days. The local authorities refused flat-out to cooperate with our efforts. Shaw's words, included here unexpurgated, may be his final legacy to journalism, though I sincerely hope not.

KIRI-J(F) SYSTEM SECURITY SCANNER (12.3.87 BUILD 396)



SECURITY LEVEL TOPAZ

THE EXITURI **GAMEMASTER'S SECTION**

The insular Exituri culture makes it difficult for outsiders to function on Shiloh (though dealing with such challenges may be an adventure in its own right). Players arriving via official channels face stringent anti-technology checks and are placed under constant surveillance. Only the spaceport complex and FWLM military cantonment are free of Exituri control, a consequence of the Faithful's efforts to avoid technology. Most outsiders stand out among the native population, principally with regard to their physical appearance and clothing, but also in their mannerisms. Surprisingly, both the FWLM and Word of Blake go to great lengths to make sure visitors to Shiloh stay within the prescribed zones.

With Shiloh hostile to strangers, characters are most likely to make contact with Shilohans who are "foundlings" scattered among the stars, adopted by well-meaning families and groups—the Shilohans have proved adept at avoiding placing their children with those prone to exploit them. Such children are extremely healthy, fit and polite. All are intelligent, albeit with a restrictive education that demonstrates their Exituri upbringing, and well mannered. In many regards, they are ideal children ... atypically so. Of course, a large question exists about the veracity of Shaw's claims. Are the implications of his "messages" true? Is each one of these foundlings really a sleeper agent for the Exituri and their *Mahdi*, deeply enough indoctrinated into their faith despite outward appearances to secretly assassinate a bevy of nobles at a critical moment? Or is the tale from Shiloh merely a journalist's hyperbole, created to sell newsvids and sully the reputation of needy children? Each gaming group can decide for themselves.

THE "TRUTH"

The anti-technology Exituri have long sought a Messiah—a *Mahdi*—and over the last decade and a half, a shadowy figure has emerged to spur the people of Shiloh onward. The aged and decrepit Elena Kubayshev remains as Blessed Leader of the Exituri, but also serves as the mouthpiece of the *Mahdi*, carrying out his Great Work. Since 3052, an influx of "healing elixirs"—a neat sidestepping of the Exituri faith's anti-technology tenets—have greatly reduced the infant mortality rate on Shiloh. Unknown to most outsiders, the inhabitants' high birth rate coupled with the newly increased rate of child survival has more than tripled the population. These "Children of the *Mahdi*" are all under fifteen years of age, but have been inculcated into Exituri beliefs almost from birth. They have likewise been trained in physical and martial arts for almost their entire lives, those who remain on Shiloh being equipped with crude but effective weapons from foundries that dot their planet's scattered settlements. Hardened by Shiloh's harsh environment, these children form a veritable army whose fanatical loyalty to the *Daadi*—and the *Mahdi*—knows no limit. It only remains to be seen when—not if—these zealot children are unleashed by the Blessed Leader or her unknown master.



THE ONE STAR FAITH





THE ONE STAR FAITH

NOTES

And God bless the people who don't give up. Even when their whole belief structure came crashing down like an Overlord with engine failure, the One Star Faith endured.

An associate of mine compiled this section, and it casts them in an interesting light. These people believed they knew where Kerensky went, and turned their desire to find the vanished SLDF into a full-blown religion (sounds like a tax dodge, doesn't it?). Then, after years of searching, the Clans invaded. Kerensky found the One Star, as it were, and it turned out to be Strana Mechty. The Faithful weren't stopped, however, just... delayed. So the OSF took a look at itself, restructured and set up shop in Clan space. Brave, but not very intelligent, if you ask me.

—Starling

DESTINATION UNKNOWN

Young in comparison to the more popular religions, the One Star Faith has nonetheless managed to stand the test of time, enduring for more than two and a half centuries since its foundation in 2801. Wealthy from the beginning, the Faith owes its existence to Simon Kroeger, a rich and powerful merchant. Living quietly on Graceland, he saw a vision one night while peering through a neighbor's telescope. Rather than the normal sky, rich in stellar light, he saw only one star, burning blue with purity. Around a green world orbiting that one star, he saw the abandoned ships of General Kerensky and the SLDF.

Despite being a reluctant prophet, Kroeger attracted followers to his vision. Before long, he vacated Graceland to begin his pilgrimage to find this "One Star." As faith in his vision spread, believers began installing telescopes and building observatories. They met in small groups and systematically scanned the heavens, all seeking the "star that burned with truth as its light." To supplement Kroeger's dwindling fortune, donations flowed into a common fund, used to maintain the Faith and offset the costs of its mass migrations as more joined in his quest. Even though money inevitably brings problems—and this dawning religion was no exception—the Faithful proved quite successful at defeating those who tried to swindle them.

Members of the Faith have adopted a strict code of morals allegedly inspired by Kroeger's monk-like piety after receiving his vision. Professing a puritanical attitude toward property, work, gender and sexuality, these morals made the Faithful stable employees and neighbors, but their migrations detracted somewhat from their appeal. Ardent supporters of Archon Katrina Steiner-Davion, the One Star's followers found their political allegiance sorely tested by the recent FedCom Civil War, but the real test of their deepest beliefs came earlier with the appearance of the Clans.

Before the Clan invasion, the One Star Faith had finally found a destination in the visions of Egan Telosa: the star of Elissa, then under the dominion of Hendrik Grimm IV of the Oberon Confederation. As the Faithful gathered the 100 million C-bills that Grimm had demanded to allow its members to emigrate there, a few brave souls set out for the world to prepare it for the Faithful's arrival en masse. Then the Clans came. The return of Kerensky's children shattered the One Star Faith, leaving only a fraction of its members still willing to believe.

We know what happened to the Faith here in the Inner Sphere, but what happened way out there? Some members of the Faith, braving Elissa's harsh environs without Grimm's protection, were already on the Periphery world when the Clans arrived. This intrepid reporter got their story. And more.

THE FAITH AMONG THE CLANS

Hitching a ride with Diamond Shark merchants, I accompanied them to the Clan homeworlds, in hopes of stopping at Elissa on my way back. While gathering a wealth of information on Clan trading protocols, I was shocked to find disciples of the One Star Faith among the Clans. On Attenbrooks, I attended a meeting of the One Star Faith, and there found that these faithful had diverged from those still within the Inner Sphere. After several stops, many conversations and many more suspicious glares, I pieced together the story of the One Star Faith among the Clans.

It seems that some members of the One Star Faith who had preceded the planned move to Elissa did so in order to escape criminal charges awaiting them in the Commonwealth. At first, this group—led by Cyrus Grissom—had no problem fitting in among the rough and dirty pirates that frequented and terrorized the planet. They managed to convince most to leave their people alone, but with the arrival of the Clans, their new homeworld underwent a massive change. At this point the tales diverge, some suggesting that the Faithful fought the Clans while others claim they passively refused to accept Clan rule. Either way, most of these Faithful were killed, but one man named Garland Greene managed to find his way to the Clan homeworlds as a trader.

I almost caught up with Greene on Babylon, but Ice Hellion warriors detained me. I did learn, however, that though he is not terribly charismatic or articulate, Greene is insightful and a true believer. He managed to tell others in the Clans of his faith and of the visions he had received, that showed men and women of the Clans, Periphery and Inner Sphere taking a long journey, led by Clan WarShips, to find the One Star. With the Children of Kerensky leading the way, this belief appealed to the Clans' lower castes, who sensed in it a pathway to equality with the warriors. With no real personal wealth, they found it easy to give all of themselves to this religion. Rather than material possessions, they donated time and effort. Though the warrior caste tried to put down this movement as it grew more prevalent, they could not easily dispute a vision where the Clans led the way, nor could they afford to

LEISURE LAD

Egan Telosa's visions and Fritz Haber's financial planning have managed to lead the One Star Faith on the road to recovery from the crushing blow the religion suffered with the arrival of the Clans. Their recent courtroom victory over the *Dieron Enquirer* made them the talk of the Inner Sphere as they brought the tabloid to its knees. Staff reporters Dexter Cameron and Elsa Conine caught up with Telosa and Haber during a stopover on Zebebelgenubi.

Leisure Lad: So, what is the One Star Faith, really?

Telosa: To put it simply, we know a paradise exists out there and we've seen visions of it. It is guarded by Kerensky's fleet and awaits true believers to find it. Of course, this basic tenet of the Faith isn't enough to describe our religion. For a fuller view, people should come and visit a membership hall.

Leisure Lad: You haven't always been a believer, have you?

Telosa: No, I was raised Lutheran. I was in Sunday School with Melissa Steiner. The Faith called to me in a dream and I answered.

Haber: My parents converted when I was a young teenager. Before that, my family was somewhat lost, religiously speaking.

Leisure Lad: The appearance of the Clans really fractured your cult.

Haber: We're not a cult....

Telosa: We *are* a cult. History is full of cults: the Christians of Rome, the Mormons of the Utah Territory, the Shi'ites of Persia, and so on. Of course, now that those cults have been around for centuries and people realize they aren't going to make their followers drink deadly punch, they've been accepted. We are the same way.

Leisure Lad: Back to the Clans....

Haber: Yes, some of the less faithful left their path with the appearance of the Clans. However, we've maintained our core membership and we're rebuilding.

Telosa: Many could not see that we are only human and that our interpretations of the divine are not perfect. We thought the time was near, but it was only the first phase, where the fleet of Kerensky makes its appearance. Now we have to convince them to find the Promised Land.

Leisure Lad: Does your faith require vows of celibacy?

Haber: I've been happily married for 22 years.

Telosa: No, it's not regular practice to be celibate, but we teach that marriage should come first.

Leisure Lad: I guess we won't have a "Girls of the One Star Faith" issue, will we? So, do your jobs pay well? I've heard you compared to presidents and CEOs of companies.

Haber: No. We get a small salary from the Faith, not much more than the average worker in the Lyran Alliance.

Leisure Lad: The average Lyran worker? We have pictures of Mr. Telosa in a new Gienah HoverVette.

STAR FAITH

blatantly oppress those who supplied them with all they needed.

So it happened that this dream spread to most Clan worlds, with a few ardent supporters working to make Greene's vision come true. Most of the Faithful in the Clans have come to think of it as something that will one day happen, many generations from now. However, one man, who I'll call Diamond, told me there was a movement to organize an expedition within a decade or two, uniting members from various Clans in a journey to find the One Star. He said even members of the warrior caste were getting interested, especially the naval officers, to whose egos the vision particularly appeals.

At first, I doubted the rumors Diamond conveyed to me. The warrior caste usually holds little in the way of religious views, being pragmatic and seeking immortality not in the hereafter, but in the gene pool. However, upon visiting a Cloud Cobra enclave, I ran into members of the Star of the Magi Cloister. Initially, this Cloister descended from Christian beliefs, and its members historically maintained that the star followed by the three Magi (or Wise Men) to Bethlehem was not just there for the birth of Jesus. It was also a star they were meant to find, that would lead them to Heaven or Eden. As the One Star Faith worked its way across the Clan homeworlds, members of the Star of the Magi thought this vision might point to that same star. The Cloister is divided over this issue, though most of its members remain in the middle. How this will play out is still a mystery, but it lends credence to the possibility that warriors may yet believe in the One Star.

Upon finally arriving at Elissa, I found not only the One Star Faith I had met in the Clan worlds, but also the version that most of us know. The latter view the Clans as corruptors of Kerensky's vision. While both movements remain peaceful, an uncomfortable tension exists between the two views, at least on Elissa. I tried to determine if rumors were true that either faction was communicating back to the Faithful in the Inner Sphere. However, after a few unpleasant conversations (accompanied by a civilian peacekeeper's stun stick to my head), I could not find any conclusive evidence that this was so.

With the *Alpheratz New Freedom Journal*, I'm Vince Larkin.

LEISURE LAD

Telosa: Well, we didn't take vows of poverty, or we'd be paid like the average Capellan [Telosa grins]. That hovercraft was donated by a new member, and my one vice is that I like to race fast. Everyone needs a hobby.

Leisure Lad: Donation? Are you sure it wasn't taken from a brainwashed abductee?

Telosa: Never! Our people have free will. We test their faith at first, but they don't have to—

Haber: This interview is over! Over!

—*Leisure Lad Magazine*, Dustball Press, Ltd., July 3067



THE ONE STAR FAITH

IS IT AS BAD AS IT LOOKS?

—SAFE field operative report, agent codename Sweet Parrot

The One Star Faith suffered a near-collapse with the arrival of the Clans. Scores of members, disappointed and disenfranchised, left their clandestine religion for a more mundane existence, mainly within the Lyrans Alliance. Some employers, especially governments, were leery of the onetime Faithful's past ties, but in general they were welcomed back after the fall of their former religion.

What does this have to do with my assignment? Directly, very little. However, digging up background on some of my fellow employees, I found that many are former members of the Faith. They still behaved like those who followed the One Star, complete with puritanical views on sexuality, property and work, as well as sexist attitudes toward women as "happy homemakers." While no one would expect their mindset and morals to be swept aside dramatically just because of disillusionment, there should have been some softening of views and opening of minds. The apparently total lack of any such process is faintly disturbing.

In another odd quirk, though these former Faithful do not attend organized religious gatherings or have observatories in their backyards, many made a point of joining book clubs, bowling leagues or rock climbing teams together. Their wives throw SupperWare parties and pastry bakes for local schools, in which the majority of the participants are former One Star members. Again, it's perfectly natural to be comfortable mainly with people you know, but these people had arrived on-world after the One Star's breakup. Few had any roots here before joining the Faith. What sort of a coincidence is that? I think their coming here was planned, not merely a statistical anomaly.

Curious, I checked recent employment of former One Star members. A much higher percentage than normal took government positions. Other favored jobs include those in the space travel, shipping and agricultural industries. Many are even working their way up through the LAAF Quartermaster Corps. This situation reminded me of the ComStar schism, when people

joined the "exodus" as a cover. With my suspicions aroused, I managed to attend a pastry bake and left behind a pie with a bug in it, which I bought a few days later at the bake sale. I've labeled the voices in alphabetical order from when they speak, and also by gender. Static is shown by X's.

Abe: How are things proceeding?

Beth: We're ahead of schedule on the medical end and have the COs in place. We need to get some NCOs transferred over and start working on the support personnel.

Carl: NCOs are hard to find. Moving them isn't easy.

Abe: None of this is easy, but we have a goal here. We can't fall behind.

Dexter: I've heard foodstuffs is ahead of schedule and we may be able to bring more people. We should look at more military.

Ethel: Let's not get ahead of ourselves. We haven't heard anything about expanding our scope.

Abe: That's right, when I talk to...

Frank <whispering>: Mmmm, this looks yumXXX

Beth: XXXXme on yXXXXXXXXXnevXXXXXXXXXX

Abe: XXXXX ColonXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Carl: XXXXXX early tomorrow.

Beth: Bill, will you show them to the door while I clean up here?

Dexter: Yes, dear.

Abe: Book Club, three weeks.

At this point, they all leave. I should note that there was a finger hole in my pie that someone had tried to hide with some additional dough.

What does this mean to us? Well, we should make sure this group hasn't infiltrated any of our vital posts. When they do get around to leaving, they'll leave a big hole in the Alliance. I suspect some military units will leave with the One Star Faith, and the Lyrans will also have a lot of empty positions to fill. This will leave them vulnerable in the short term as well as creating potential security holes in the long term.



THE ONE STAR FAITH



IS YOUR LIFE NOT WHAT YOU WANT?

IS THERE SOMETHING MISSING?

LOOK TO THE STAR FOR ANSWERS!

Tired of people treating you like a robot? Want to escape the person who is hurting you? Do you just need to find something to fill that void inside? Look to the Star, The One Star!

What's so special about the One Star Faith? Many things! Right now you may have to deal with that driver who passes everyone on the shoulder, the vendor who gives you bad fruit, the repairman who doesn't completely fix what's wrong or the customer who rants just to get something for nothing—but when dealing with the members of the One Star Faith, you won't have to! Have we found a new breed of humanity? Have we given mass lobotomies? No! We live life with a sense of com-

munity, because we understand that life is better for all of us if everyone just gives a little thought to others. Turn on the trid and what do you see? Sex, violence, substance abuse and commercials. Well, even the One Star Faith can't stop commercials, but we can stop the other three. Violence and substance abuse don't benefit anyone, and sex is something to be shared between the participants, not the neighborhood—or worse, the children! Are you ready to give up on your marriage? We aren't! Marriage is a sacred commitment, not something where you throw in the towel after six months because the going gets a little tough. We teach communication and understanding, things vital for the success of any relationship. We are all here for each other, something that's sadly missing in today's impersonal, go-to-work-to-home-to-work society.

Are you ready for a new way of living... a way that feeds your mind and heart and soul? Then drop on by a membership hall and check us out... and welcome home!

Contact Pasig HPG Box 9945-3264 or look for a local congregation.

THE ONE STAR FAITH



GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

The One Star Faith is hardly a nefarious organization seeking power and dominion. However, its members are tired of the treatment their beliefs have received, and woe to him who comes between the Faith and its vision of religious freedom. Though recovering from serious setbacks in the Inner Sphere, the Faith retains significant wealth and connections. Among the Clans, the Faith has grassroots support from the lower castes and a significant portion of the Star of the Magi Cloister. The Clan branch does not have anywhere near the financial resources of the Inner Sphere organization, but it does not face discrimination, either. The Clans regard it as just another religion.

GOALS OF THE ONE STAR FAITH

Unlike many organizations, the Faith has no desire to conquer or assume power. Members have an overwhelming desire to leave known space and find the One Star. In the past, the Faith was willing to be patient, turn the other cheek and strive to rise above those who mocked or abused them. No longer. The modern-day Faith has decided to be more proactive and use whatever means necessary to reach their goals. To achieve these results, the

Inner Sphere portion of the Faith is using all the tools at its disposal, which can be many. Drives to replenish membership lost in the past decade have largely succeeded, and the membership is finally starting to grow. To increase the capital they need to prepare for their exodus, recruiters target the wealthy, often using aggressive tactics. It is not uncommon for new recruits to sign over their wealth, though celebrity converts are generally only asked to make a generous contribution. The Faith has no qualms about heavily selling its beliefs when necessary, even brainwashing when the governing Council feels it essential to the cause.

In leaving the Inner Sphere, the Faithful know that they cannot simply wander into the wilderness unarmed. Recently they have sought to convert soldiers, though not overtly. The organization has begun looking for mercenary units willing to work for the Faith, not only when they leave, but to keep others from interfering with their ultimate goals. They are also using their small fleet of JumpShips and DropShips to earn extra money and develop contacts in the shipping industry so they can hire additional transportation when the day of exodus comes. Of course, such a journey also requires enough supplies to provide all the essentials for the community. Currently, the Faith has enough to



THE ONE STAR FAITH

support three times its present membership, most left over from the aborted journey to Elissa.

Among the Children of Kerensky, the Faith is currently focused on expansion, though the emphasis on converts is aimed largely at the civilian castes and members of the Clan fleets, especially those in preeminent spacefaring Clans like the Snow Ravens. These warriors find the religion rather appealing, as it speaks to the egos of ship crews and officers who feel they have been pushed aside in favor of MechWarriors and Elementals. (Aerospace fighter pilots tend to get caught somewhere in the middle, frequently working with the fleet but also involved in ground actions, where most combat occurs.) The Faith is moving much more slowly among the warriors than the lower castes.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

In the Inner Sphere, the One Star Faith is led by a Grand Council, with the current High Visionary—Egan Telosa—as the Faith's spokesperson. The other members of the Council are referred to as High Elders. The High Visionary can be changed by rule of the Council, but this has only happened once, shortly after Telosa's appearance and the resignation of Joseph Prather, who claimed he had lost his Faith and needed to rediscover it. The Council also assigns other positions as needed. Currently existing are the departments of Finance, Facilities, Personnel, Expansion, Astronomy and Faith. Each of these departments is structured differently. Finance is structured like a typical corporation, while the Faith department is a theocratic hierarchy, starting with a local StarGazer who leads his congregation, a Stellant who oversees congregations on a planetary level, and Novas who act as traveling representatives of the Council.

Numerous organizations request the assistance of higher members of the Astronomy department, led by Robert Anderson, as they are among the best astrocartographers in the Inner Sphere. Even ComStar has hired One Star consultants. Elizabeth Orden was recently promoted to head up the Facilities department, which controls all the real estate owned or leased by the Faith. Under her watch the Faith has begun selling off its properties and negotiating leases to allow the Faithful to use them for up to twenty-five years at only a kroner a year. Orden's appointment may show a shift in gender roles in the Faith, or may just reflect her exceptional abilities. Chris Anderson, Robert's cousin, currently heads up the Personnel department, where he makes sure that all members of the Faith are fed, clothed and paid.

The StarGazers, leaders of local chapters, are not above any other member in the way that a priest is in other religions. Instead, they act more as teachers and organizers. The chapters are structured according to size and need; a small chapter may have a handful of members who gather at each other's houses with a telescope, while a large chapter may own or rent an observatory. The One Star compound on Pasig, for example, is huge—a virtual city within its walls. Larger facilities usually have some sort

of security to protect the facilities from vandalism, keep members from being "rescued" by friends or family members and to deal with protesters.

The hidden operatives who secretly work to further the goals of the Faith are known as Shooting Stars. They answer only to the Shooting Star Council, which reports to the Expansion director, Kousuke Sasaki, a former Marine with the Fourth Royal Guards. The Expansion department is also responsible for spreading the Faith, geographically and socially. The Shooting Stars avoid the typical trappings of the Faith because they know their mission is more important than ceremony. They keep in touch through blind drops and encryption, though they confine their communications to those that are necessary. They know the House intelligence agencies outnumber them and are better trained and equipped, and so they try to limit opportunities for others to discover them.

In the Clan worlds, things are even less structured. Most congregations meet in public areas after dusk. Where the Star of the Magi Cloister is present, congregations sometimes meet in their chapterhouses. A few Cloisterhouses have fully converted, while in others the Faith is forbidden. Garland Greene shows up from time to time as he travels around Clan space, making sure the congregations are staying on the path. His travel apparently lacks any logical plan, but so far he has managed to keep all the congregations on the same page. Being adopted as a member of the merchant caste has helped Greene, as well as access to the Chatterweb, used by the Faith as another way to stay united despite their physical separation.

THE ONE STAR FAITH AND PLAYERS

Players have many opportunities to get involved with the One Star Faith. The most obvious is having one of the player characters or someone close to one of them become a convert, willing or unwilling. The player characters may go along or try to extricate the new recruit. The Faith may even try to silence the player characters if they start making too many headlines.

The player characters might also stumble across one of the Shooting Stars. These undercover agents target transportation and logistics departments and agencies. The Faith even has a few members in the LCAF and is working toward assembling a regiment where the senior officers are all members or sympathetic to the cause. The Faith will stop at nothing to keep their actions secret.

If the player characters are among the Clans, they might come across this new religion and be caught up in an attempt to repress it. The characters can assist the Faith or try to wipe its stain from the honorable legacy of Kerensky. An even more exciting run-in with the Faith might see the player characters caught in the middle of a civil war among the Star of the Magi Cloister.

THE BOUNTY HUNTER





THE BOUNTY HUNTER

NOTES

By far one of the most enigmatic warriors since the days of Hannibal, the Bounty Hunter is also one of the most interesting. He never shows his face, but without a doubt his bad attitude on the battlefield has left more than one opponent howling mad. Still, like stories of pirates, dread or otherwise, the Bounty Hunter's legend lasts longer than the man himself, apparently. Who picks up the mantle when the current incarnation of the Hunter falls, and who felled the great original? Read this "respectable" (as if my other sources are not respectable) news article and make up your own mind.

—Starling

THE BOUNTY HUNTER: PIERCING THE LEGEND

From *The Atreus Post*, 27 July 3067

By Richard Bancroft

*Where life had no value,
Death, sometimes,
Had its price.
That is why the
Bounty Killers appeared.*

Almost everyone in the Inner Sphere and in the Periphery has heard of the Bounty Hunter. Even people in the Clan homeworlds have heard of him. Partly through the holovid series that took the Inner Sphere by storm and partly through stories that have begun to circulate again thanks to his reappearance a decade after fading from the public eye, the Bounty Hunter has once more captured the imaginations—and fears—of countless individuals throughout the Human Sphere.

Here, to the best of our abilities, is the true story.

THE HISTORY

Bounty hunters have been a part of human civilization for as long as any individual has had a price on his head. Throughout history, bounty hunters have been reviled and praised, though rarely respected. Beyond those who make their living by hunting their fellow man, few people take comfort in the notion of one man hunting another for money, and even many in the field find their own work distasteful. Of course, when "dead or alive" bounties are placed, corpses are easier to "bring in" than live bodies. And dead men tell no tales. Yet throughout the ages, bounty hunting has been an extremely lucrative, if dangerous, profession.

The popularity of bounty hunting has ebbed and flowed along with the relative lawlessness of society. Following humanity's exodus to the stars, the bounty hunter became more and

CISKLE & EBERSON'S ENTERTAINMENT TODAY

MINDLESS ENTERTAINMENT TO UNMITIGATED DREK

"In 2972, a crack commando team was sent to prison by a military court for a crime they didn't commit. These men promptly escaped from a maximum security stockade to the Inner Sphere underground. Pursued by the government they once worked for, they survived as soldiers of fortune, ultimately passing the torch to a new generation of heroes. Today, if you have a problem, and you can find them, maybe you can hire the Bounty Hunters."

Those words are indelibly etched into the minds of almost every man between the ages of 25 and 35, thanks to the holovid series that debuted across the Free Worlds League in August of 3047—and spread like wildfire to the rest of the Inner Sphere within a year. Even today, the rolling beat of a snare drum is enough to prompt many to mentally recite those words—the lead-in to a theme song that most people have a tough time getting out of their heads.

"The Bounty Hunters" was a wild commercial success, at least for its first three years, thanks in no small part to its being based on a real individual. Of course, the facts surrounding the actual Bounty Hunter, few though they were, were all but thrown out in favor of a fantasy concoction more appealing to the masses. And the masses ate it up. Though other holovid shows captured greater market shares at the time, among key male demographics, there was no better-ranked show. "The Bounty Hunters" made the show's stars and producers rich beyond most people's dreams.

Of course, it didn't last. But during its five-year run, it made an impression on the people of the Inner Sphere—so much so that many cannot separate the fiction of the holovid from the reality of the actual Bounty Hunter. After all, what ten-year-old boy didn't have a model green *Marauder*—the Bounty Hunter's trademark BattleMech—in his toy chest?

Week after week, month after month, "The Bounty Hunters" crew traveled across the Inner Sphere, battling injustice, hunting criminals and generally bettering all the lives they touched, all in a nice, neat ninety minutes. And they did so while being pursued by Special Forces operatives that were always a step or two behind—except when needed, of course. The grandchildren of the original "Bounty Hunters," they devoted their lives to the ideals of their fathers and grandfathers before them. On two different occasions, they even teamed up with their fathers to take care of family business. Those two sets of two-part episodes were among the highest-rated in the show's history.

By 3050, however, attitudes in the Inner Sphere were rapidly changing, thanks to the coming of the Clans. In the Free Worlds League, ratings remained strong, but elsewhere the show plummeted. Looking to recapture their ratings share and capitalize

THE BOUNTY HUNTER

CISKLE & EBERSON'S ENTERTAINMENT TODAY

on the general hatred directed toward the invaders, the producers "re-imaged" their hit—and killed it in the process.

In Season Four, the Bounty Hunter crew was captured by a shady retired general. In exchange for a pardon, they agreed to work for the very government that had spent the better part of a century trying to put them and their families behind bars. Instead of escapist adventure, the show turned into a wretched piece of jingoist propaganda. Rather than bringing common criminals to justice, the Bounty Hunters became an instrument of the state. The nameless "enemy" they fought were obvious stand-ins for the Clans, and in plotlines that paralleled the course of the Clan war, they single-handedly rescued POWs, lifted sieges and basically won the war for the "good guys."

Of course, no one bought it. With real war footage so readily available, and real heroes to follow, audiences in the Combine and FedCom quickly dissolved. At the same time, existing fans in the League and Capellan Confederation—nations untouched by the Clan war—were alienated and tuned out.

The show died. But its legend lives on, in syndication and in memorabilia.

more important as criminals took to the anonymity of the fledgling colonies. During the centuries before the Star League, the profession flourished, especially once pirates and other outlaws began to prey on colonists unable to defend themselves. Outlaws quickly began to rank themselves by the total bounties placed on their heads. Likewise, bounty hunters had their own "social strata" based on the bounties they brought in—and the number of corpses.

The formation of the Star League brought the era of the bounty hunter to a close. While some still made a living hunting down fugitives, the bounty hunter "lifestyle" essentially died, until the fall of the Star League. During Kerensky's drive toward Terra, bounty hunters were in greater and greater demand as the SLDF concentrated its energies on bringing down Stefan Amaris. Soon afterward, when the Succession Wars engulfed the Inner Sphere, the bounty hunter once again became a necessary evil.

Somewhat surprisingly, throughout the "ages of the bounty hunter," only a handful of these individuals have gained any amount of fame. Senn Urorii. Colonel Octavius Mortimer. Judge Harald the Deathbringer.

But none more famous—or infamous—than the Bounty Hunter.

THE MYTH

No one is exactly sure when the Bounty Hunter first appeared. Stories of the Bounty Hunter begin in the 2920s, when a masked individual piloting a green *Warhammer* gained some no-

tority by hunting down rogue MechWarriors with prices on their heads. No one ever found out his name, but he brought in some of the biggest bounties of the time—most of them dead—which is likely why stories of his exploits spread so far and so quickly. After a century and a half, fact-finding is more than a little difficult, but stories of this individual taking down entire 'Mech battalions by himself are certainly tall tales, though they may be rooted in fact. The tale most often told is one in which this mysterious bounty hunter brought in the bodies of twenty-nine men who had robbed a bank on El Giza. He allegedly collected millions in bounties, and later sold their BattleMechs for even more. Though the story cannot be fully verified, enough evidence exists to suggest that the tales may not be far off the mark.

The man with the green *Warhammer* apparently disappeared from public view after collecting the El Giza bounties. Three decades later, in 2957, a man in either an environment suit or a full Star League-era MechWarrior combat suit, piloting a green *Warhammer*, appeared and claimed the bounties on a group of pirates that had been preying on worlds in the Principality of Regulus. Since then, the tale of the Bounty Hunter has grown to titanic proportions.

The Bounty Hunter, as that masked individual quickly came to be known, spent years working solo, traveling across the Inner Sphere and Periphery, tracking only those criminals with the highest bounties. More often than not, he brought in their corpses. The Bounty Hunter worked alone for more than two decades, but by the 2980s he had assembled a team of MechWarriors to aid him in taking down the biggest prey. Originally, that team may well have been temporary, assembled from "friendly" bounty hunters and/or mercenaries only when additional manpower was needed.

That had changed by the 2990s. Prior to that point, the Bounty Hunter's team was different every time they were seen in public, and their 'Mechs never sported the same paint jobs. In fact, not even the Bounty Hunter's own 'Mech remained a constant—at times he piloted the *Warhammer*, while at other times he rode a *Grasshopper* or even a *Griffin*. Eventually, the team settled to between four and six members, including the Bounty Hunter, with each 'Mech frequently painted the same green (though many times, the Bounty Hunter's comrades sported other colors on their 'Mechs).

The Bounty Hunter did more to change the way he had previously operated. In addition to using cohorts, he began to take on a much darker image. Rather than just hunt the worst criminals with the largest bounties on their heads, he took to accepting contracts for hunting down just about anyone for money. This soon led the Bounty Hunter to accept contracts from the Great Houses to capture or kill notable enemy MechWarriors, generals and even businessmen and engineers. By the start of the new millennium, the man who had gained notoriety as the one person who could bring in the most dangerous criminals was reviled throughout the Inner Sphere and Periphery. Where once MechWarriors dreamed of working with the Bounty Hunter, now they cursed him for



THE BOUNTY HUNTER

hunting and killing others of their kind, for no other reason than money. Worse still, the Bounty Hunter embraced that image. He began to display monetary symbols on his 'Mech, letting all know where his true loyalties lay.

From that point on, the Bounty Hunter became a blight on humanity... at least, according to the stories. He killed anyone who got in his way. He lied, double-crossed and stole. And he did so with glee. One of the earliest stories portrays him and his MechWarriors landing on the Federated Suns world of Markesan in 2996, killing two AFFS generals and everyone else in their command post, including a host of staff and non-combat personnel, and stealing their BattleMechs before sneaking offworld. While traveling to claim their bounties for that assault in the Draconis Combine, they slipped onto Le Blanc, where they bargained with a new and untested mercenary unit to provide them safe transport into the Combine. In return, the hunters agreed to arrange a contract with the DCMS for that merc unit. The Bounty Hunter and his compatriots posed as members of the unit, but as soon as they had safely crossed over into the Combine, they killed everyone belonging to the mercenary unit and then took their 'Mechs and even their DropShip.

Other stories recount exploits in the Free Worlds League in 2998-99, when the Bounty Hunter tracked down officers and popular MechWarriors, presenting their heads, as the story goes, to then-Colonel Katrina Steiner. Still more speak of events in 3005, when he apparently turned on his Steiner benefactors to hunt Lyran nobles, politicians and generals. He also allegedly took alternating contracts with the Federated Suns and Capellan Confederation to kill or kidnap notables on both sides of the border, always one-upping his own deeds at the behest of the side he had just targeted.

And then there were his infamous run-ins with the Black Widow, Natasha Kerensky. The first one took place in 3014 on the world of Nova Roma. Both the Bounty Hunter and Kerensky were hunting those still loyal to Janos Marik when the Bounty Hunter turned on the Widow, leaving her for dead and claiming her *Marauder*, which he took over as his own signature BattleMech. Kerensky lived through the ordeal and vowed to exact vengeance (some even say she somehow got her hands on his *Warhammer* and began to use that as her trademark 'Mech).

The second recorded run-in took place on Le Blanc in 3024. The exact details of this meeting remain unknown (though rumor has it that Duke Michael Hasek-Davion attempted to lure Wolf's Dragoons—through Kerensky—into a contract with him), but apparently the Bounty Hunter killed two of Kerensky's MechWarriors out of sheer spite. The final meeting amazingly saw the two temporarily allying on Benet III in 3027 when their employers—Kerensky working for the Combine and the Bounty Hunter working for the FedSuns—left them both without support on a planet full of enemies. Once they escaped that world, they went their own ways, though the animosity between the two apparently never cooled.

THE ENCOUNTER OF A LIFETIME

Yeah, I crossed swords with that sonuvabitch. Twice.

I don't know what I can say. The first time was worse than Hell. I walked away with my ass and that's about it. It was like something out of a bad tri-vid. He just *appeared* out of the smoke and haze and began to mow us down. And then our line broke. *Our* line. We were the damned Sirian Lancers, and we just broke like a bunch of children.

Sam went down first. Then Vic tried to block the Bounty Hunter from taking any more shots on her. His *Orion* went up in the biggest fireball I've ever seen. 'Bout that time is when the rest of the company decided to turn and run instead of backing up their friends. I took a couple of shots, but didn't hit squat.

He wasn't quite so unlucky with his return shots.

Next thing I remember, I woke up at the bottom of a gorge. The techies' best guess was that his PPC hit somehow triggered one of my jump jets.

Anyway, by the time they found me, it was all over. Apart from me, only two others managed to get away, and only because they turned and ran the minute they saw his *Marauder*. He didn't even leave any bodies behind, that sonuvabitch.

I took me a long time to get over it. Hell, I probably never got over it, really. Every time I saw a green *Marauder*, I nearly lost it. It's been almost forty years since that happened, and I still get...

But that's not the thing. I crossed paths with the Bounty Hunter again several years later, but it was... different. I didn't go off into some kind of rage when I saw the *Marauder*. I just kinda froze. And you know what? So did he. We stood there for what seemed like an hour before he raised an arm and just walked away. Like he was waving good-bye.

And I swear to God, it was just like Vic Travers used to do!

— Interview with Force Commander Dante Kreiss, FWLM (Ret.),
14 August 3067

Those are just a few of the most famous of the Bounty Hunter's exploits. He worked as a free agent throughout the Fourth Succession War, accepting contracts from each of the five Great Houses at various times. After the war, he uncharacteristically began hunting prominent Combine officers, apparently without a contract, only to spend the next several years in the employ of the Draconis Combine.

By the time of the War of 3039, the Bounty Hunter was once again selling his services to the highest bidder and displaying no mores. He continued this way throughout the 3040s, serving as a proxy in the "cold war" between the Great Houses. But when the Clans appeared, the Inner Sphere needed a hero, and the Bounty Hunter stepped up to accept that challenge. Whether simply for the money and prestige or for more noble reasons, he did take on the Clans, and even gave the Inner Sphere a couple of victories. He claimed three solo kills in as many months in late 3050, though

THE BOUNTY HUNTER



only at the cost of his comrades and his trademark *Marauder*. In return, he captured a Smoke Jaguar *Mad Cat*, riding that into battle and into a new era of fame. Suddenly, the most hated MechWarrior in the Inner Sphere was a hero once more.

Then, just as quickly as he had begun to gain fame in a new signature BattleMech, he disappeared. Some reported him dead. Some reported him captured. For years after, many people kept alive a hope that he would resurface, but nothing came of it. The Bounty Hunter was finished.

Or was he?

THE MAN

Who was the Bounty Hunter?

That question has perplexed countless individuals across the Human Sphere for well over a century. Unfortunately, scant few hard facts out there can lead to any conclusions. Which means there are almost as many theories as there are individuals looking for answers.

Certainly, no reputable researchers believe there has been only a single individual Bounty Hunter. After all, such a person would have had to have been more than 110 years old at the time of his disappearance in 3051—impossible, based on the tri-vid that does exist of the Bounty Hunter climbing out of his *Mad Cat* in 3050. But that leaves open the question of who these Bounty Hunters were, and how they came into possession of the suit and the green *Marauder*.

The most common answer to that question is that the identity was passed down through a family of MechWarriors. At the height of the Third Succession War, when the Bounty Hunter first surfaced, the ranks of the Dispossessed far outnumbered those who still had BattleMechs. Any MechWarrior unfortunate enough to be Dispossessed would do just about anything to regain a BattleMech, which is partly why the profession of bounty hunting grew to such heights during that time. Many have deduced that only a Dispossessed MechWarrior could hunt others with the detached vitriol that the Bounty Hunter exhibited.

On the other hand, the Bounty Hunter didn't show this bloodthirsty nature until the last decade of the 30th century. Many blame this change on a "personality switch"—when the old Bounty Hunter retired and a new individual took his place.

In any event, it is certain that there have been many Bounty Hunters. Countless individuals have come forward through the years, either claiming to have been the Bounty Hunter or to know who he was. Unsurprisingly, none of those claims has ever been proven, though some appear to have led researchers close to the truth. Every one of those leads has come to a dead end, however, including a few corpses with indeterminate causes of death.

While the most common theory is that the persona was passed down from generation to generation in a particular family—with the Varnays and the Mariks as the two families most often suggested as being the genesis of the Bounty Hunter—a

notion currently gaining popularity is that the Bounty Hunter persona is given up or even "sold" every few years to a member of the Bounty Hunter's team. Precious few facts have been found to back up that theory, other than second- and third-hand rumors and gut feelings. Rumors suggest that candidates from Archon Katrina Steiner to Precentor Martial Anastasius Focht to Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao have all spent time as the Bounty Hunter. The most persistent rumors say that former Combine Warlord *Tai-shu* Michi Noketsuna and former FedSuns intelligence advisor Quintus Allard each spent a number of years posing as the masked MechWarrior. While those rumors are highly unlikely, they are representative of the stories that have spread around the Human Sphere.

THE LEGEND REBORN

The legend of the Bounty Hunter had just about reached mythical proportions when suddenly the Bounty Hunter burst back onto the scene. But the question is, is this the "real" Bounty Hunter?

When he disappeared in 3051, hundreds of stories circulated purporting to explain what happened to him, but none of them could ever be proven. Despite more than a decade of concerted investigations, there was no trace of him. He simply vanished, by all accounts after landing on the world of Rasalhague.

Then, at the height of the FedCom Civil War, the Bounty Hunter reappeared.

He did not come back to any fanfare, nor did he seek media coverage. Beginning in 3064, the story of a mysterious MechWarrior in a full body suit and piloting a green *Mad Cat* began to circulate around the Lyran Alliance and then the Chaos March. At first, that story got buried amid the chaos of the civil war, but as the war ground down, interstellar media outlets began to pick up on the tales of this new Bounty Hunter. Before long, the legend of the fearless and fearsome Bounty Hunter was reborn.

The first tale of the new Bounty Hunter to make the rounds was an account of how he turned over two significant lieutenants of John Dundee—the public leader of the most recent Free Skye Revolt—to General Caesar Steiner, and later how he snuck onto Tikonov to capture General Nadine Killson, who apparently hasn't been heard from since being turned over to Archon Katherine Steiner-Davion's government.

Since that time, the Bounty Hunter has once again formed a team and has been seen all across the Inner Sphere. At the same time, there is some question as to how many Bounty Hunters there are. While every incarnation of the Bounty Hunter travels in a modified *Mule*-class DropShip, one group is centered around a *Mad Cat* while another is fronted by a *Marauder II*. Both teams also include a *Shadow Hawk* and a *Falconer*. Furthermore, all the 'Mechs are painted the same green, and the lead 'Mechs are decorated with the same credit symbols that made the earlier Bounty Hunter so infamous. The chaos of the FedCom Civil War has made it impossible to compare sighting dates and locations of these two

THE BOUNTY HUNTER

different groups with any amount of certainty. They could well be the same group, just operating with different 'Mechs. Or it could be two separate groups. For now, no one knows.

ANSWERS, OR MORE QUESTIONS?

After all these years, the only thing we know is that there are more questions than answers about who the Bounty Hunter really is. Certainly, someone out there must know the truth, along with many more who, if they could all come together to share what they know, might be able to piece the truth together. To date, however, we are left only with reports of scattered sightings, legends that have undoubtedly grown considerably over the past 150 years, and rumors and innuendo.

All we really know is this: the Bounty Hunter as he is known today began operating in 2957 (though perhaps as early as the 2920s). He has never taken off his full body suit and helmet in public, and no one has ever produced any pictures of him or been able to describe him. Almost certainly, multiple individuals took on the Bounty Hunter persona. Historically, he piloted a green *Marauder* and surrounded himself with a select group of allies. He was an extremely skilled MechWarrior, as were his comrades, and would perform almost any contract for any employer—so long as the money was right—with no obvious pangs of conscience.

In short, he was the perfect killer. And he never lacked for clients.

Apart from appearance and *modus operandi*, there is nothing to suggest that the current Bounty Hunter is at all related to the Bounty Hunter of history. On the other hand, except for an almost fifteen-year break from the public eye, there is nothing to suggest that the current Bounty Hunter *isn't* the old Bounty Hunter.

Today, reporters and intelligence agents throughout the Inner Sphere and Periphery are scrambling to find out more about the Bounty Hunter. If the rumors can be believed, this latest incarnation is every bit as ruthless and deadly as the Bounty Hunter of legend, which only fuels the rumors. Within the past few months, two separate and wholly unverifiable rumors have made the rounds, one saying that the Bounty Hunter carried out a death sentence against Archon Katherine Steiner-Davion and the other claiming he captured Lieutenant General Annette Leyland and the remains of her Fifth FedCom RCT and turned them over to the AFFS. As with so many Bounty Hunter stories, no hard facts exist to back them up.

But that never stopped a story from turning into a legend. And when all is said and done, that's all the Bounty Hunter is. Legend. Because the real story can never equal a century and a half of tall tales told around the campfire.



THE BOUNTY HUNTER



GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

The Bounty Hunter is a mystery to everyone but the Bounty Hunter. Even those who have worn the suit and piloted the *Marauder* in the past are curious as to who has taken over the persona. But while the identity of this person or persons remains a mystery, the Bounty Hunter's motivations and methods are the same as they have been for decades.

The Bounty Hunter is first and foremost motivated by money, though other factors may also push him to do what he does. He seemingly has a need to accomplish "impossible" contracts, and though he does not take potentially suicidal chances, he does often take calculated risks if they are likely to result in a bigger "splash" or more potential press—especially if they will lead to even greater tales of his exploits.

The Bounty Hunter will do just about anything to complete his contracts. While he does not go out of his way to kill or harm those not directly related to his job, neither does he shy away from destroying any obstacle in his path. Likewise, he rarely thinks twice about engaging in combat, even with those ostensibly opposing his chosen target, if they happen to be between him and his mark.

On the other hand, he is neither foolish nor sadistic. He is well-versed in battlefield tactics and will make the most of what he has to work with, though he often chooses to attack from ambush or from the least likely direction. He is not capricious and does not find joy in inflicting pain, though given enough provocation he has been known to seek vengeance against those that have wronged him.

THE BOUNTY HUNTER'S ASSOCIATES

The Bounty Hunter typically takes to the field with three to five associates, each piloting a BattleMech. Normally, the 'Mechs they pilot are painted the same green as the Bounty Hunter's 'Mech, though not always. All the 'Mechs are in pristine condition and carry full loads of ammunition (unless the circumstances or the MechWarriors themselves dictate otherwise).

The MechWarriors who accompany the Bounty Hunter are recruited through a variety of methods. In the past, he drew his

associates from family and close friends, and also occasionally from opponents captured in battle. Much like the Clans with their bondsmen, the Bounty Hunter has cultivated professional bonds and even friendships among his defeated foes, occasionally giving those with the right skills and mindset the opportunity to pilot a 'Mech in his lance.

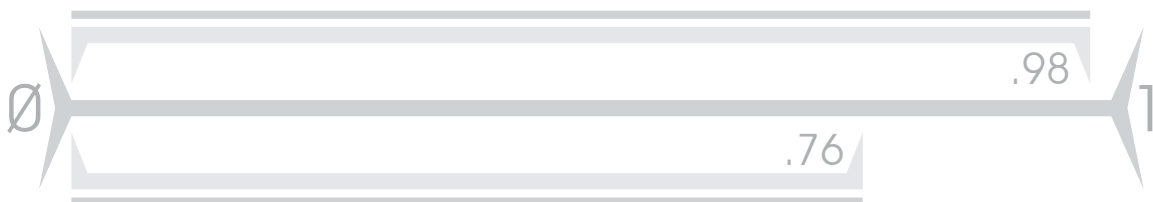
Obviously, he only gives those he trusts with his life the chance to work with him this way. Anyone who has ever held a permanent place in his team knows his face, if not his actual name, as well as the true history of the Bounty Hunter. Those who betrayed him have never lived long enough to tell the tale. Members of the team receive generous shares of the bounties collected.

From these trusted individuals, each Bounty Hunter selects his protégé and ultimate replacement. Typically, each Bounty Hunter maintains the persona for five to ten years before "passing the torch," including the signature 'Mech, the DropShip, typically one-quarter to half of the war chest and any other assets, to his successor (after all, it doesn't take long to become incredibly wealthy as the Bounty Hunter). When this passing of power happens, the old Bounty Hunter goes off to live the rest of his life in rich anonymity.

Occasionally, several of that individual's closest associates "retire" with him. Likewise, death and other circumstances occasionally leave the Bounty Hunter's lance with some openings. When this happens, he typically takes time off to find more associates or takes smaller and less risky contracts until he can fill those billets.

SUPPORT

The Bounty Hunter's support team is second to none. His tech teams are extremely skilled, with each team member cross-trained in a number of different skills. Likewise, each MechWarrior, except for the Bounty Hunter himself, is also expected to participate in 'Mech maintenance and repair. The chief tech is also the Bounty Hunter's personal technician; like the MechWarriors, this individual knows who the Bounty Hunter is and shares in the bounties equally. None of the other techs knows the secrets of the Bounty Hunter (those few who do somehow learn them do not last long). In fact, every time a new Bounty Hunter takes command, the old technical staff (including the DropShip crew and other necessary





THE BOUNTY HUNTER

personnel) is fired and a new one hired. Often, the chief tech has also been a MechWarrior who served with the Bounty Hunter.

The Bounty Hunter's *Mule*-class DropShip has been heavily modified, including the addition of heavy armor plating and some self-defense weapons, along with high-tech electronics, ECM and sensors, spacious crew quarters, and 'Mech cubicles and drop chutes. The ship is more than large enough to accommodate the entire crew as well as replacement equipment, ammunition and stores, with enough room left over to secure equipment salvaged from the battlefield.

The Bounty Hunter has contacts throughout the Inner Sphere in many different fields. He uses them to arrange travel, purchase supplies and even procure weapons, ammunition and other types of restricted military hardware. For example, for decades GM has quietly provided him with logistical support under the guise of "special projects" in recognition for his continued use of his signature *Marauder*. He does not use House supply channels, even when offered substantial deals by contract, and only rarely turns to the black market. All business he conducts to support his operation is legitimate, even if the contracts he executes are often considered criminal in nature.

HIRING THE BOUNTY HUNTER

The Bounty Hunter obviously does not use the MRBC or any other guild—no reputable organization would allow him to join even if he tried to. He is a free agent of sorts, who is never short of work. While most regular bounty hunters work for a single employer or hunt fugitives and other wanted individuals without contracts, the Bounty Hunter typically works from a negotiated contract. It generally includes a "dead or alive" clause that more often than not leads to the return of a corpse.

While the Bounty Hunter negotiates contracts like mercenary units do, he and his MechWarriors are not mercenaries in the traditional sense. They only accept missions that require them to find, secure and return a specific object to their employer. They do not take part in assaults, raids or any other military actions, even if incidental to their ultimate objective. Furthermore, if the target is well-protected, the employer must provide an acceptable route to and from the target (be it via a massive invasion, carpet bombing, covert agents to disable key defensive mechanisms or just a map that plots a course safely past the dangers). Of course, the Bounty Hunter and his team will fight their way in to reach their target and get back out, if necessary. Likewise, they will fight to protect themselves (but are not above negotiating with their target or their employer's enemies if it means saving their lives and equipment). And they never allow an employer who sets them up to go unpunished.

PLAYER CHARACTER INVOLVEMENT

The Bounty Hunter is an enigmatic figure in the *BattleTech* universe, and perhaps the most feared individual in the Human

Sphere. He can just as easily be the good guy as the bad guy, and can change sides as easily as he breathes. Most important, he is not a "typical player," insofar as he involves himself only in his own day-to-day business. He should be more of a "bogey man" than anything—a mythical figure to scare the player characters with. If the player characters ever encounter this individual, it should be a momentous—and likely humbling—experience. Such an encounter should not be an ordinary occurrence; after all, the Bounty Hunter was Natasha Kerensky's bitterest enemy, and they only encountered each other on three occasions.

Neither the Bounty Hunter nor any of his associates should be player characters, nor should any player character have them as contacts. The Bounty Hunter is neither trusted friend nor ally and should never be used as such.

The following are a few ways in which the player characters might encounter the Bounty Hunter.

Chance Battlefield Encounter

While the player characters are involved in battle, on patrol or otherwise engaged in other operations, the Bounty Hunter appears. He might be working for the same side as the player characters, or he may be working for someone else. Either way, chances are he has the current password or security clearances to get past the player characters. In any event, if the player characters don't interfere with the Bounty Hunter, they won't be attacked—unless they happen to have surprised the Bounty Hunter and are between him and his prey, (or look likely to pose a threat to him).

They've Made a Powerful Enemy

One or more player characters has made an enemy of the wrong person. Perhaps the character participated in an assault that targeted the holdings of a powerful noble or businessman, or killed or maimed (not necessarily on purpose) someone close to such a person. In any event, someone has a grudge that must be satisfied, and that person hires the Bounty Hunter to bring the player character(s) to him or her. With any luck, that person will want the player character(s) alive. If not, the characters had better have a lot of Edge if they want to live through the encounter.

Hunting the Wrong Man

Hunting fugitives and other wanted people is not solely the purview of the Bounty Hunter. Perhaps the player characters are working for a Great House or some other powerful entity that wants a particular person or group of persons returned; perhaps they were captured, or escaped with certain secrets, or just committed so heinous a felony that they must be returned to stand trial. Unfortunately, someone else wants that person or group more than the characters' employer—and has hired the Bounty Hunter to gain custody of the objective.

DAVION WARRIORS' CABAL





DAVION WARRIORS' CABAL

NOTES

Hardliners. In a word, that's what these people are. They seek the return of their own glory in the Federated Suns. Militarily, MechWarriors are at the top of the food chain, and the good folks of the Warriors' Cabal see no reason why this state of affairs shouldn't extend into the realm of politics. Distressed at their slow decline under a succession of First Princes, they're starting to build up steam again. Or at least that is what this letter implies; an associate of mine swears it's not a forgery.

If nothing else, these guys will be fun to watch. They're groping around with rebuilding like a pair of virgins in the back seat of a borrowed hovercar. Steadfastly determined to get something they think they want, they have no clue how to get there. So they'll bumble, fumble, butt heads, poke, prod, reach and either succeed or fail miserably (and leave a bad taste in somebody's mouth).

—Starling

My dear Sebastian,

I was most pleased to meet you on Markesan several weeks ago. Truly, the trip would have been a complete waste of my time, were it not for the luck of encountering you.

As I said during our many meetings, conversing with you was like a breath of fresh air during those cold winter months of the Year of Our Lord 3065. I had not expected to find someone with such similar opinions of affairs within the Federation.

You may have been aware that I held back from fully revealing my own thoughts. That you said so much while I tried to say so little made me think someone had informed you about my political leanings. It seemed you reached out to me on the recommendation of someone you trust. Well, my learned friend, your trust was not misplaced. I received a verigraph from our mutual acquaintance upon my return from Markesan, and have decided to follow her advice by sending you this letter. Attached you will find a number of documents

and data supporting my position. I will be extremely frank about my opinions and efforts, in the hopes of convincing you to join me in my endeavor. Because, my friend, things are far graver than even you imagined.

I do not believe we can expect matters to be resolved in our favor through peaceful means. You may well consider me a radical for that estimation, as many others have done, but it is the truth as I see it.

And yes, there are others like me.

Now first indulge me in a small history lesson. I know you are aware of the effects, but you must also understand the causes. I know you do not yet, not because you lack the ability, but because you lack the experience. I do not hold your youth against you, however.

The mess we find ourselves living with started in 3020, when Katrina Steiner—cousin, not her name!—issued her sniveling Peace Proposal. I have no doubt that Hanse Davion—fool that he was—thought in his arrogance he could become the new First Lord within just a few decades by turning the Lyrans into Davion vassals. Then, when Katrina threw in her young wench to sweeten the deal, the old man must have lost his focus, distracted by blonde locks and long legs. I have it from good sources that the old lecher even insisted on "inspecting the merchandise" before their first meeting, and got a detailed "portfolio" of Melissa Steiner some time before their betrothal. It is a fact, though not widely known, that he skipped his trophy wife-to-be out to the Suns even before the wedding, escorted by those damned Kell Hounds. That the wench did not spawn more Steiner-Davions before she came of age is a testament more to luck than any semblance of self-control on our late great leader's part, I assure you.

That spawn, surprisingly numbering only five instead of twenty-two, stands at the root of our problems—those who survived, anyway. Thankfully, Arthur is no longer among us, though it was intriguing to see to what extent Sandoval had turned the boy into his personal puppet.

Peter, that creepy little weasel, is of little direct concern. Apparently, before holing himself up in that monastery, he managed to be a bad boy. I recently came across some interesting footage of a little personal urban renovation he perpetrated on Lyons. A few recent and unexpected friends assure me that the footage in question has finally reached the most productive hands somewhere on Skye. The revelations in it should keep "Archon-Prince" Peter out of our hair. Katherine was no prize either, but at least she respected our rightful position more than the other Steiner-Davion spawn. I could almost pity her fate.

Victor, that simpering poster boy for feigned righteous indignation, continues to be more a caricature from a moral indoctrination program for ten-year-olds than anything resembling a functional or effective ruler. Were it not for the shadow of his dead father's accomplishments, the skills of those around him and just plain bad luck, we could have been done with him

DAVION WARRIORS' CABAL



decades ago. Instead, we must worry about his incompetence at the head of those ComStar fanatics, and the possibility that he actually bred with that Kurita tart before someone put her out of our misery.

Last-but certainly not the least of our woes-Yvonne is an absolute disaster. Typical of his moronic Steiner upbringing, Victor had the gall to install the worst of his siblings as our regent, rather than a pure, and more capable family member like the honorable Jackson Davion, for instance. Now there's a man who would have made old Ian Davion proud! But it seems that anyone not called Steiner-Davion doesn't really count. Of course, that cuts both ways. Installing his idiot teenaged kid sister was an idiotic move, only workable if he intended for her "advisors" to actually run the show. And in the end, even that failed. Certainly, Tancred Sandoval had the right qualities on paper, but he has proven himself sadly lacking in practice.

Of course, the root of the problem was Hanse himself. Ian Davion concentrated on the right priorities and entrusted the lesser details of statecraft to those more qualified. Then Ian died and little brother Hanse took the throne, and got it into his greasy head that there might be a new Warriors' Cabal lurking just on the horizon, ready to snatch power from him or kill him. Doubting our loyalty? Begrudging us our rightful due, our retainers, our might in Battlemechs, DropShips and aerospace fighters? Preposterous!

Just like his predecessor Prince Peter, Hanse sought to curtail the alleged threat we posed to his sovereignty. To give him credit, he achieved this far more subtly, though no less insidiously. His reforms of the various military academies were pure brilliance, in one stroke transforming our nation's warriors into the automatons of a "professional" army loyal only to Hanse's state. While this move built House Davion's military might, it sacrificed the very foundations of the national power structure of our national power structure. Hanse's design was so subtle that our predecessors failed to recognize the implications until it was too late. After all, our applicants were not denied entry to the academies. They were simply outnumbered five to one by common peasants who could gain the honor of becoming warriors! Common riffraff came to wear the spurs that once were the divine right only of those with proper blood. The Armed Forces of the Federated Suns went virtually overnight from a band of noble warriors to a mercenary rabble!

The NAIS played a more cancerous role still. Initially touted as a means to recover lostech, and even develop newer weaponry and equipment for our better defense, we did not foresee the immense influx of new designs the NAIS made possible-especially when coupled with Hanse's Steiner alliance. Suddenly the bastard Federated Commonwealth had an upsurge in 'mechs, plus technology swaps that would eventually expand with the atrocious exchanges Victor authorized with the Combine-the Combine! If ever we needed proof of treason, there you have it! 'mechs became commodities, common tools used by common troops-an outrage that those like us did not see coming until it happened.

By then, the Clans had come. Hanse Davion had neutered the entire noble class, and thanks to the spawn of Kerensky, we could do nothing to reclaim our birthright without seeming to be traitors. The number of trained mechWarriors we can provide and the number of Battlemechs we retain-all had to be sacrificed on the altar of the "needs of the state." While it is true that no First Prince has liked the power we have always enjoyed, none have come so close to crippling us as Hanse did. As you see us now, we have lost much, and teeter on the brink of losing our most sacred right-our very right to rule.

And rule we must! Simon Davion was right; no interstellar realm can be effective politically, socially or militarily if everything is centralized. We cannot survive in a state ruled by the absolute power of one person, no matter how benign, no matter how clever, no matter how lucky.

And now here we sit, ruled by Hanse's failed spawn, who simply cannot deal with a reality in which they do not reign absolutely. Where they must share some of their power. But are we not all destined to lead? Is that not what separates us from the common folk, our ability to govern and dictate? That is the very principle on which the Davion family rests. Hanse and his offspring have forgotten this, or perhaps they merely wish to do away with it.

Now, good sir, you know the enemy, and we can fight it. In this effort, we will need all possible help to undo the damage done to us. And we need an organized effort. Just recently, I learned that all my candidates for the War College of Goshen were refused. When I investigated, fearing that my plans had been compromised, I learned instead that a valued compatriot simply made the cut first, pushing mine out of the tier. A miraculous stroke of good fortune, but had we coordinated our efforts, we could have accomplished so much more. The lesson, I trust, is not lost on you; we simply cannot stand alone any more.



DAVION WARRIORS' CABAL

Be assured also that we have the sympathies of-if not outright aid from-many people in prominent positions. In fact, it seems there are many groups currently evaluating their options and efforts who share goals similar to ours, though some may seem more radical than others.

Lest you think this treason, let me assure you otherwise. Our objectives are not the murder of innocents or even the eradication of the Steiner-Davions, as some more reactionary elements would have it. We wish merely to disrupt the policies set out by Hanse Davion decades ago, policies continued by Victor and Yvonne today. They are only half as efficient as Hanse at enacting these edicts, which gives us a unique opportunity to finally address the problem you and I know so well. Though the threat of economic sanction by the Davion family and their holdings looms over many of us, and the public calls for the removal of nobles like ourselves increase almost daily, many among us are not exactly rushing to toe the line our "First Princess" would force us to toe. Indeed, rather the opposite is occurring, a remarkable sign of hope for our common cause.

Nonetheless, confrontation may be inevitable. Not even a new Draconis or Capellan march war can stop it anymore. The rift has been growing for decades, and the worst may yet be unavoidable. In this, you can be of assistance, my dear Sebastian. I trust you will find my arguments and supporting data persuasive. If so, contact me and we can discuss how you might fit into the picture.

Oh, and to be certain I did not misjudge you, you will have no luck using any of this material, including this letter, as proof of treason on my part. None of it identifies me save for your memory of our conversation-a conversation that I recorded, incidentally. Attempting to raise a stink over this material will only complicate matters for you.

May I say in closing, I do not expect complications, but we have to be careful; you understand.

Sincerely yours,

A like-minded individual of equal standing

POLITICS AS USUAL

FILTVELT (30 April 3067) – For the fifth consecutive time, the Filtvelt elections are the source of controversy surrounding accusations of vote tampering by all parties involved.

Duke Jonath failed to calm the waters with his endorsement of the supposed winner eight days after Ranni Gebren's election victory was announced. Immediately after the duke's endorsement, Mahamath Muammer and his Muammer For Filtvelt party renounced the decision, implicating Duke Jonath in the vote tampering. While rumors and veiled accusations have been a common component of the controversy surrounding Filtvelt's elections for the past twenty years, this is the first time that any party has publicly accused Duke Jonath of complicity in the events.

Muammer, who led in the polls with a margin of fifteen percent prior to the elections, claims to have proof that funds were siphoned to various election officials from companies connected to Duke Jonath's holdings. He additionally claims proof of direct intervention, supported at the press conference by a few photo- and holographs of Jonath aides and personnel entering many large voting centers during and shortly after the election. The conference ended with Muammer indicating he would bring all his evidence to the attention of the First Princess with the demand that she relieve Duke Jonath of his

POLITICS AS USUAL

position. He also promised to forward the information to the offices of the AFFS, demanding that they strip the duke of his rank for conduct unbecoming an officer.

No official comment could be obtained from the offices of Mr. Gebren, nor did Duke Jonath release any official response. Halle Burgand, Duke Jonath's press secretary, did characterize the accusations as the "unfounded, unsupported, spiteful lashing out of a sore loser."

POLITICS AS USUAL

FILTVELT (22 May 3067): Major cities on Filtvelt have been engulfed in riots today following the reported death of major government opponent Mahamath Muammer and the destruction of his mansion and offices in the foothills of Brennerburg.

Witnesses report massive damage to Muammer's compound, and fifty-three members of his staff have been reported missing. The planetary militia has cordoned off the area for an official investigation. Airspace above the compound is closed off, and a pair of aerospace fighters can be seen patrolling the skies at all times.

POLITICS AS USUAL

Shortly after the outbreak of the riots, Duke Jonath declared martial law, ordering the planetary militia and the Jonath Household Guard to enforce the peace and restore all government functions and public services. So far, activities by police, militia and Household Guard have been restricted to the deployment of infantry assets. However, 'Mechs have been spotted patrolling the outskirts of the capital.

No official authority has yet offered any explanation for the destruction of the mansion, nor have they confirmed or denied Mahamath Muammer's death.

POLITICS AS USUAL

FILTVELT (9 September 3067): As riots and reports of guerrilla warfare continue, elements of the Third NAIS Cadre have begun making landfall, allegedly under orders of First Princess Yvonne Steiner-Davion to support the militia and the Filtvelt Academy Training Battalion.

Major Edmund Ferris of the Third authorized a brief press release in which he indicated that his force has come to restore peace and ensure due process. He added, "It's a damn shame that we have to deal with this [expletive deleted] right after a civil war." He did not answer any questions regarding the unit's plans or intentions beyond that initial remark.

DAVION WARRIORS' CABAL**GAMEMASTER'S SECTION**

It is human nature not only to seek additional power, but also to maintain what power one already possesses. The distinction may seem moot, but it lies at the core of the human tendency to resist change. Fearing that any change will result in a reduction rather than an enhancement of the status quo, human resistance often grows stronger when a suspicion of a slight turns into the knowledge of one.

The nobility of the Federated Suns have maintained an uneasy balance with the Davion family since 2417, when Simon Davion instituted the noble class within the Federation. For the majority of the past seven centuries, this balance did little to disrupt Suns society, even though it often leaned slightly in the Davions' favor. Examples of economic sanctions and even embargoes exist, as well as instances of nobles being stripped outright of their titles for supposed crimes or incompetent rule. The Laws of Noble Conduct and Review are almost as powerful a tool of Davion control as that family's economic leverage across the Federated Suns. While technically the laws depend on citizens to organize an effort against a noble, such an effort is easily organized and fueled with minimal propaganda. Media can convict without a trial, and the Davion dynasty has given the people the power to execute their judgments, right or wrong.

However, recent events have publicly showcased the independence of the Draconis and Capellan March dukes. These, along with more ancient examples including the MechWarrior brotherhoods and cabals, clearly illustrate the limits of Davion power. Their control is challenged from time to time by those seeking to expand their own power or acting to maintain what they perceive as rightfully theirs.

Such a movement arose again shortly after Ian Davion's death in 3013. The nobility's position of power had begun to recover strongly after Andrew Davion's reforms in the 2960s, following First Prince Peter's murder. The ongoing decades of warfare, especially under Ian's rule, drastically increased the num-

ber of BattleMechs owned by nobles, and MechWarrior scions and retainers manned increasing numbers of military units, including other service branches of the AFFS. This was especially true in the Capellan March, where George and Michael Hasek eagerly padded units with whatever "loyal" officers and enlisted men they could find.

When Hanse Davion toured the Capellan March after recovering the Halstead Collection in 3013, he likely realized that matters were beginning to revert to the situation Peter Davion had faced. Learning a lesson from the terrible events of a mere few decades ago, Hanse knew he would have to develop a fundamentally different solution to the problem.

Taking a page from Terra's medieval history, Hanse patterned his reforms to recreate the historic evolution from a feudalistic military to a professional one, as it had occurred across Europe and the rest of Terra in the late Middle Ages. By expanding existing academies and teaching students to hold allegiance to the state rather than to noble families, Hanse's reforms fostered a technological and military boom, complete with generations of newer, more advanced war machines owned by the AFFS rather than the FedSuns nobility. This policy continued to make headway well into the 3050s and early 3060s.

Though some nobles saw the changes early on and resisted, most did not recognize their gradual loss of prominence throughout the various wars with which Prince Hanse occupied his nation. What little resistance occurred was disorganized, and even now no single power is behind the nobility's efforts, despite rumors of a leading House Davion scion being in charge of the so-called Warriors' Cabal. Several nobles do cooperate to achieve similar goals, but overall they have no single agenda or standard operating practice.

The FedCom Civil War has begun to tip the scales back in favor of the nobles. The immense attrition of the AFFS resulted in a recruiting surge, allowing many weakened noble families to insert their own trained and sometimes seasoned personnel into the



DAVION WARRIORS' CABAL

order of battle, replacing and displacing many of the "commoner" officers who rose in the military just prior to the Fourth Succession War. Many of the personnel and equipment losses in the recent civil conflict shattered line regiments wholesale, while family-trained and retained troops often sat out the fighting. Indeed, various minor nobles throughout the realm often withheld them for that very reason.

This strategy has allowed the nobility to recover much of its lost leverage, while also contributing to the maintenance of much of the AFFS's strength and quality ratings after the civil war. These family-linked troops, while ostensibly loyal to the Federated Suns, ultimately owe their fealty to the complex web of nobility now united in a new Warriors' Cabal. At the same time, other nobles have begun to weaken the Laws of Noble Conduct and Review that have long been a part of FedSuns law, and some are using the Chancellery of the Exchequer as a means of maintaining and expanding their economic holdings in the postwar era.

The means toward those ends vary from extremely subtle plots and manipulation to crude brute force, and sometimes a combination of the two. For example, on Filtvelt, academy students of common birth have become increasingly prone to fatal accidents and pirate activity has increased. The fact that the local pirates show a peculiar tendency to attack the Filtvelt Academy Training Cadre and almost always hit isolated patrols commanded by those of common birth has so far been dismissed as rumor.

ORGANIZATION AND GOALS

Currently, the Cabal has little structure to speak of, existing more as a unifying concept than a true organization. Several nobles operate independently, and a few have allied with like-minded individuals. There are rumors and other indications that an increasingly large group of nobles is cooperating, allegedly under the ultimate leadership of a Davion scion high up in the line of succession. It seems likely that, if left unchecked, this movement may evolve into a full-fledged Warrior's Cabal in the next few years. Already this group appears to be organizing into independent cells, which would make its activities far more difficult to counter.

The goals of the various subversive nobles are as diverse as their numbers. Many are not actively working against Yvonne Steiner-Davion or the Federated Suns government, but are merely furthering their own agendas in less than ethical ways. This makes them vulnerable to other nobles who are striving to expand at the expense of the government. Goals for these less organized nobles vary wildly, from simple gains in wealth and local power to actively attempting to depose the Steiner-Davion dynasty. Some genuine radicals, emboldened by their recent reversal of fortune, are thought to seek assassination of the Steiner-Davions in favor of a "pure" Davion or of themselves. These extremists often lack support from the rest of the Cabal.

The more organized Cabal nobles typically seek to expand their own power while curtailing the efforts of the current First Princess and her administration. They also vary wildly in their available resources, methods, strength and commitment to the cause. While Filtvelt appears to be an extreme, harassment of commoners attempting to join a military academy has drastically increased nationwide. Authorities on the worlds most affected have so far failed at investigating and prosecuting the perpetrators of such violence. Though these excesses are nowhere near as severe as they were under the MechWarrior Brotherhoods of the past, things are growing steadily worse.

PLAYER CHARACTER INVOLVEMENT

Player characters can cross the path of the Warriors' Cabal and its many satellites in a variety of ways, most likely being hired for a mission to further the Cabal's objectives. Such contracts usually involve clandestine missions that subvert the Steiner-Davion government or the AFFS in a fashion intended to enhance the power and influence of the nobles. So far, the Cabal has kept its machinations relatively subtle, but its activity is increasing, and the acts being perpetrated are rapidly becoming more violent. The types of assignments on which player characters may be sent should reflect this shift.

Dealing with the Cabal may also become increasingly urgent depending on how matters play out. Government agencies should definitely respond, and while the nobility fill the higher-level offices in most agencies, the majority have not been subverted sufficiently to reduce their efficiency. As this hidden war escalates, player characters may find themselves on either side or caught in the crossfire.

Military enterprises can include assaults on or even the outright murder of commoner MechWarrior cadets, or posing as pirates to inflict casualties and 'Mech losses on commoner units that can be replaced by "proper" nobles. As part of a concerted campaign focusing on the Cabal, the player characters may become protagonists or antagonists with regard to the Cabal's goals, operating to curtail or to further their efforts. These objectives can escalate as sharply as the gamemaster desires, all the way to a brilliantly executed coup against Yvonne Steiner-Davion or the complete disruption of the Cabal.

The Warriors' Cabal stands as a powerful sign that the effects of the FedCom Civil War are far from over, and that all is not well with the Federated Suns. This destabilizing force provides many hooks for adventures in the Suns and outside her borders, as foreign intelligence agencies attempt to cause further unrest in the Suns by aiding the Cabal.

MINOR GROUPS





MINOR GROUPS: FAR LOOKERS

NOTES

Fringe groups. The backbone of this little...industry...of ours. I've gone ahead and picked out the information I've compiled on my five favorites from the pile I have sitting here (and let me tell you... it's quite a pile!). And what's not to love about them? We have a charity group with aspirations toward interstellar domination. A supposed political group harder to kill off than cockroaches (now *there's* an oxymoron). We have assassins who require the use of an International Keyboard (why are they still called that!?) just to spell their name properly. We have the "real" reason the Taurians can't seem to get themselves out of first gear. And my personal favorite, the worlds someone don't want you to find. Enjoy!

—Starling

THE FAR LOOKERS

[To say that the FedCom Civil War caused traumatic social upheavals is an understatement—though of course, the Federated Suns is not alone in seeing power slip from the grasp of centralized authority. What follows is a paper submitted by a New Avalon Institute of Science student in my Socioeconomics class. Dr. Parker thought you would find some of the conclusions interesting. —J.S.]

A Study of the Economic Impact of Social Movements in the Taurian Concordat

by Adam J. Lewis

At first glance, the Taurian Concordat should be an economic and industrial powerhouse. Not having quite reached the technological heights of the Inner Sphere during the First Star League era, the Taurians were far better positioned to survive the ravages of the Succession Wars. Also, with the major powers focused on each other, the Concordat has never (despite fear that sometimes borders on paranoia) faced a serious challenge by the Federated Suns or the Capellan Confederation following the Reunification War.

So why has the Concordat failed to capitalize on its unique position? The answers can be found in the powerful social and economic currents that flow beneath a deceptively placid façade—a façade that events have recently swept aside.

LOOKING OUTWARD

In the late thirtieth century, Aramis Dunn (a noble of the Taurian Concordat court) argued that humanity's future (and that of the Concordat) lay in expansion through exploration and colonization. This idea would become the foundation for a new social movement in which even members of the ruling Calderon family would participate. Private colonization efforts and voyages of exploration inspired by Dunn's beliefs begin to push out into the darkness of the universe, and recent events have transformed this movement into a powerful social and political entity in its own right.

Since the end of the thirtieth century, more than thirty groups—each with their own goals and unique methods—have come together. Collectively they are known as the Far Lookers. The most prominent among them are the Explorers, Settlers, Arcologists, Adaptors and Inheritors.

- **Explorers:** Dedicated to charting new star systems and exploring new worlds, historically the Explorers benefited greatly from contacts within House Calderon. Scions of the Concordat's ruling family often sated their wanderlust by serving on an Explorers expedition crew. Generous bequests from the survivors (and legacies left by those who vanish beyond the edge of known space) have allowed the Explorers to maintain a flotilla of JumpShips and DropShips. Recent events have cooled relations with the Calderon family, however, and ugly rumors persist that the Explorers supplement their private funding through piracy.
- **Settlers:** Believing that only territorial expansion can keep the Concordat vital and strong, the Settlers are dedicated to colonization. Dependent on funding from wealthy backers, they have benefited from legislation (such as tax breaks) introduced by members of the Calderon family to support Settler efforts.

Of the many colonization attempts made, most end in failure. The few successes have been brought into the Concordat upon reaching the requisite size for incorporation, literally redrawing the map of the Taurian Concordat. The Settlers also have several terraforming projects under way, but even the most advanced of these is not expected to yield results for several centuries.

- **Arcologists:** As much at home living in space as on planets, these Taurians have abandoned the quest for new worlds to fully exploit those systems already occupied. Utilizing Concordat expertise in zero-g construction and closed environments, the Arcologists are the preeminent builders of space habitats outside of Clan space.

MINOR GROUPS: FAR LOOKERS

The Arcologists have focused their efforts in the Burton, Mithron, Renfield and Sterope systems in the Hades Cluster (which is notorious for heavy meteorite activity). Their greatest triumphs are the Knossos asteroid habitat in Renfield and the giant Sparta habitat positioned at Burton's L5 point.

Such ambitious construction projects are incredibly expensive, and the Arcologists subsidize their efforts by hiring out teams of zero-g construction workers to other factions.

- **Adaptors:** One of the newest groups, the Adaptors broke away from the Settlers following disagreements over more radical colonization techniques. While the Settlers seek habitable environments (or attempt to terraform near-habitable worlds) and the Arcologists create artificial habitats where they please, the Adaptors believe in integrating with the environment as they find it. They are proponents of prosthetic adaptation to otherwise hostile environments, something only recently made possible through access to medical technology from the Magistracy of Canopus. Unsubstantiated horror stories of unwilling "volunteers" being seized by the Adaptors, modified and then dumped into one of their small colonies have been circulating for some time.
- **The Inheritors:** Exploration and colonization are slow and expensive undertakings at best. Those who lacked patience for these endeavors ultimately broke away from the rest of the Far Lookers. Now known as the Inheritors, they firmly believe that the age of the Inner Sphere is over, and that humanity is on the verge of a cataclysm. When the expected disaster happens, the Inheritors predict that the enlightened peoples of the Periphery will pick up the pieces, resettling and repopulating the Inner Sphere and bringing about a new and better social order.

A NEW ERA

The Far Lookers have always prided themselves on their ability to "take the long view," a useful trait for people engaged in endeavors measured in lifetimes. However, the changes in the Taurian Concordat over the past three decades were inconceivable at the turn of the century. Economic and social shifts have had a profound impact on the Far Lookers, serving as a catalyst to turn a mere social movement into a cohesive, influential and powerful organization.

With Hanse Davion's triumphant Fourth Succession War over, Protector Thomas Calderon (prompted by his growing paranoia) ploughed ever-increasing levels of funding and resources into preparing the Concordat's defenses for an attack that never came. The Arcologists were the first of the Far Lookers to feel the sting of this policy, with vital construction materials becoming virtually unavailable. The Explorers were next, with the Taurian Defense Force requisitioning several vessels for duty as naval auxiliaries.

With more and more Far Lookers turning to the Inheritors, leader Loren MacKenzie began to organize her fellow Far Lookers. As Protector Calderon's mania began to affect their activities, she established a "trust fund" into which monies could be siphoned from other government departments. As an auditor assigned to the Ministry of Trade and Colonization, MacKenzie managed to keep the movement of funds hidden from casual scrutiny. To oversee the use of the trust and more tightly coordinate Far Looker activities, MacKenzie persuaded the other groups to put forward candidates to form the Far Lookers Council.

Though the Taurian government was riddled with Far Looker adherents, their best efforts could not prevent an increasingly obsessed Protector from abolishing the tax breaks for colonization introduced in 3035. However, by that point the Far Lookers had diverted billions of C-bills for their own use. With a reliable source of finance, the Settlers continued their efforts, while the Explorers offset the temporary loss of their vessels by hiring replacements from the Free Worlds League. Meanwhile, the Arcologists began to stockpile material and founded the Dunn habitat at Mithron, an ambitious project that may eventually rival Sparta.

WINTERS OF DISCONTENT

These misappropriations went unnoticed until they started to affect Concordat efforts to scale up production of high-tech weapons. Thomas Calderon was eager to provide his forces with any edge against the Davion horde he expected to come storming over the border any time. The Protector considered it a priority to increase production of ferro-fibrous armor (copied from samples recovered from a ruined SLDF storehouse on Celeano in 3019). Previous production had only been sufficient for a handful of Star League-era APCs produced by the Concordat each year. With no discernable results from his expansion program, the Protector launched an investigation in 3037, and the Far Lookers' activities soon came to light.

Furious, Calderon ordered the entire Ministry of Trade and Commerce arrested. Only the intervention of the Protector's wife prevented him from having them all shot. Instead, many (including Loren MacKenzie) faced lengthy prison terms. The bust came too late, however. Efforts to mass-produce advanced weapons in the Concordat had been set back decades, and would require Capellan aid as part of the Trinity Alliance to get back on track. Despite its best efforts, the Concordat Constabulary has recovered very little of the misappropriated funds and materials.



MINOR GROUPS: FAR LOOKERS

With the harsh treatment meted out to their fellows in the Ministry of Trade and Commerce, the Protector lost what little support the Calderon name had bought him among the Far Lookers. The political situation degenerated further when the Protector moved the TDF to full alert in 3049. He began to conscript more and more of the civilian workforce to construct planetary fortifications intended to make attacking Davions pay dearly.

The resilient Taurian economy might have survived the next five years of neglect, but for the inadvertent damage to the infrastructure already perpetrated by the Far Lookers. The balance had been tipped, and the Taurian Concordat plunged into recession. More significantly, with the different Far Looker groups working in concert for the first time, their understated but pervasive influence in Concordat society was a factor in the events surrounding Thomas Calderon's removal from office in late 3055.

CHANGING TIMES

Thomas' son, Jeffrey Calderon, immediately stood down the TDF and repealed civilian conscription and restrictions on new colonization. He followed these acts with the stunning announcement of a treaty with the Magistracy of Canopus and the undertaking of joint Concordat/Magistracy colonization efforts.

The Far Lookers remain split over this announcement, many of them still disenchanted with the Calderon family. While they welcomed the chance to accelerate the pace of colonization, many Far Lookers were also deeply unhappy that the pioneering spirit of the Concordat alone would not build these new worlds. Heightened tensions in the ranks and closer ties to the medically advanced Magistracy triggered the emergence of the Adaptors. Unwilling to wait for terraforming that could take centuries, the Adaptors embraced cybernetic adaptation to marginal environments, opening up many more potential colony sites.

The untimely demise of Protector Jeffrey Calderon robbed him of the chance to undo all the damage caused by his father's policies. From that point on, the Far Lookers would hold the Protector (and the Calderon family) at arm's length.

With no designated successor, it fell to the Court of Judicial Review to sort through a tangled web of claims from several cadet branches of the Calderon clan. In the interim, the court persuaded the highly respected Lord Grover Shraplen to assume the post of Protector pro tem. Shraplen quickly proved politically astute, recognizing that securing Far Looker backing would ease the introduction of potentially unpopular policies. Sharing (to a lesser extent) Thomas Calderon's fear of attack from the Federated Suns, Grover Shraplen instigated several policies that he claimed were necessary to secure the Concordat's future security and prosperity. Far Looker support dampened public objections to the Trinity Alliance—and later Taurian membership in the new Star League—far more muted than pundits had expected. In return for support on these issues, the Protector expanded on pro-Far Looker measures introduced by Jeffrey Calderon.

The breach between the Far Lookers and the office of Protector appeared well on the way to healing when, in rapid succession, the New Colony region declared its independence and the Calderon Protectorate broke away, pledging support for Eric Martens-Calderon as Jeffrey Calderon's rightful heir.

BUILDING A BETTER TOMORROW

At a stroke, the Concordat had lost control over almost every planet on which the Far Lookers had established colonies. This stunning blow left the Far Looker Council reeling. Some proposed supporting Shraplen's military answer to the Calderon Protectorate problem. Others called for a negotiated solution, fearing the inevitable damage war would inflict on the colonies' vital support infrastructure. In their darkest hour, Jacob Mallory of the Explorers came forward, urging his fellow Far Lookers to remember their roots and rediscover their "long view." Mallory's words appeared prophetic when the arrival of elements of the Fighting Urukhai derailed Protector Shraplen's plans to attack the Calderon Protectorate. Shraplen mistook the mercenary unit's appearance in Taurian space for a Davion invasion and redirected all military effort into a counterattack against Federated Suns territory. With the Protector focused on the campaign in the Pleiades Cluster, the Far Lookers had time in which to seek a negotiated settlement with the Calderon Protectorate. Meanwhile, the Settlers and Adaptors have redoubled their efforts on new colonies, preparing them for incorporation. The Explorers have launched a new wave of expeditions into the void, and the Arcologists build on relentlessly. The Settlers are now confident of achieving their goals, no matter how long it takes.

CONCLUSION

The Taurian Concordat is a perfect example of the dangers that await any state when social imperatives and state policy collide. The stresses of the Federated Commonwealth Civil War not only split the Federated Suns and Lyran Alliance apart, but created cracks within each state that are now becoming evident. To a lesser extent, the same problems are appearing in the Free Worlds League and the Draconis Combine. Only the Capellan Confederation, under the tyrannical rule of the Liao dynasty, appears immune.

MINOR GROUPS: FAR LOOKERS

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

With Protector Thomas Calderon's paranoia systematically tearing apart everything the Far Lookers had worked for, Loren MacKenzie labored tirelessly to establish the Far Lookers Council to meet the threat. Each recognized Far Looker group is eligible for representation on the Council. In theory, the size of each group's membership dictates the degree of influence it exercises. In reality, a great deal of political horse-trading goes on.

Since the days of Aramis Dunn, the Far Looker movement has grown into an understated but omnipresent fact of life in the Taurian Concordat. While many Concordat citizens are casual members of one or more Far Looker groups, a smaller core of more dedicated members is actively engaged in exploration and colonization. Progression from casual membership to active involvement is usually by invitation, and new recruits often have ties of family or friendship to active members.

Overall, the Far Lookers' objectives are essentially as stated. However, individuals within the organization are not above using their positions for their own ends. Gamemasters can use the following overview of Far Looker groups to generate ideas and spin off new plot hooks for how player characters can become involved with the Far Lookers.

Arcologists

Governed by a conclave of habitat commanders, each of whom wields influence in proportion to his or her habitat's population, the Arcologists do not feel the same impetus to expand the Concordat as other Far Lookers. They cooperate closely with the Explorers, providing safe havens for rest and resupply without attracting official attention. Unknown to Taurian authorities, the Explorers aided Loren MacKenzie's escape from prison during the chaos surrounding Thomas Calderon's fall from power. Following Grover Shraplen's amnesty, MacKenzie assumed command of the Athens habitat in the Renfield system.

The Arcologists' biggest secret is that the Sparta habitat is built around a compact Kearny-Fuchida core salvaged from a derelict Star League-era battleship. Though it has taken years, the Arcologists are close to bringing the core online. Whether the habitat can survive a jump attempt remains open to question, and this maneuver is intended as the habitat's last line of defense.

Considering Taurian attempts to hold the Pleiades Cluster foolish, and with their habitats threatened by continued pirate activity, the Arcologists have redirected several weapons shipments bound for the beleaguered TDF troops, significantly upgrading habitat armament and bolstering internal security with battle armored troops and armed construction exoskeletons. The Arcologists have also hired mercenary aerospace units to further bolster habitat defenses.

Adaptors

Always searching for fresh volunteers for their colonization efforts, the Adaptors (unlike other Far Looker groups) are far more likely to recruit strangers from among the population. Usually traveling in pairs, Adaptors actively canvass public areas and even make door-to-door calls in residential neighborhoods.

While no record exists of the Adaptors forcing unwilling subjects to undergo modification and join one of their colonies, many people remain wary of close dealings with them. Certainly, most Taurians have had the unpleasant experience of answering the door, only to discover a pair of Adaptors ready to drone endlessly about the advantages of pushing the boundaries of human experience.

Explorers

The Explorers are aiding the Calderon Protectorate, using their Periphery explorations as a cover. They transport passengers and cargo, including vital supplies and weapons, into the Protectorate. The TDF's focus on the Federated Suns front has only simplified this task. In the time since Jeffrey Calderon released their vessels from TDF service, the Explorers have purchased three new JumpShips from yards in the Free Worlds League with funds raised by selling seven of their oldest JumpShips to the Word of Blake.

Seniority in the Explorers is achieved through accumulated command experience. Any member able to find funds and personnel can petition for access to Explorer assets to launch an expedition. Success breeds success, as those with a proven track record get priority, though occasionally an "upstart" bypasses this procedure and hires vessels on his or her own. Currently, the most prominent explorers and de facto leaders are (in order of seniority) Jacob Mallory, Jane DuKirk and Sigmund Amunsen.

Settlers

The Settlers were previously organized along the same lines as the Arcologists, with the elected leader of a successful colony wielding influence in proportion to population. With the loss of so many worlds to the New Colony Region and Calderon Protectorate, the debate about whether these worlds should still be represented in Settler conclaves continues to rage. Until the matter is finally resolved, the Settlers are guided by a triumvirate: Sonja Couvert, Edward Franks and Timothy Blain.

Unknown to the other Far Lookers (or indeed, to most of the Settlers), several of the "failed" colonies were not such failures as reported by Timothy Blain (the project director on each). While none of these secret colonies can be called a garden world, each is rich in exploitable resources. Of special note is the hellish world of Milton Keynes, site of rich germanium deposits. Using slave labor acquired by preying on merchant shipping and lightly defended Federated Suns worlds, these rogue Settlers have employed Adaptor technology to modify their work force to increase efficiency.



MINOR GROUPS: THE COTERIE

WHAT MAKES THEM GO MISSING

Three years have gone by since she went missing. They came to our world during a planetwide drought, when a passing comet pulled us closer to the sun. Initially, they built irrigation and water reclamation devices. They left when the first ice-ship arrived. Everyone loved them, and my daughter was drawn in. She had the naiveté of any child: the desire to help others, to shield them from harm. And the Coterie can actually pull it off. The attraction to such a life's work, along with their quasi-Christian rhetoric about helping those in need.... I should have been more careful.

One day, she was gone. And those Coterie mongrels won't release any information about their members! Scum.

I finally tracked her down on Maduin, at one of their schools. I didn't get very close—they use Skulkers to patrol their "neutral grounds," for crying out loud. I only saw her on my rangefinder. The next day, she'd vanished. I found out they'd moved a bunch of their personnel offworld by DropShip at the end of the day I spotted her. Right now I'm tracking down the third JumpShip captain, who ferried that DropShip to the Periphery. She can tell me what system they went to, and what JumpShip took them to their next destination. I'm sure the slave hauler can be persuaded.

Meanwhile, I write to you to make sure you include another threat to children everywhere in your book. Beware the Coterie of crime.

—From *What Makes Them Go Missing*, by Huan Cho-Tok, Ionic Press, 3066

THOUGHTFUL ECHOES

The opinions of the columnist are his own, and do not indicate Monarchy Inc.'s position, explicit or inferred.

If you happen to live on a world without the Coterie, you're lucky. It means your planet hasn't been plagued by famine, mass death or war any time in the recent past. Or at least not to the extent that it's deemed newsworthy enough to generate airtime on other planets.

4.9 million dead? Sorry, you didn't make the cut. 5 million? We're on our way.

Per capita income of 200 C-bills? Sorry, your world is just too wealthy. Only 150 C-bills? Don't worry, we'll be there.

I'm certain some of the more inexperienced readers among you are wondering why the Ventriloquist bothers bashing an innocent little charity organization, suggesting insidious motives where instead it's simply a matter of the Coterie's ability to define what they can and cannot do. To such readers, I say: you haven't read me for long enough to realize I'm never wrong. At least not when I write it down for you. I'm on to something here, and you'd better keep up!

Somewhere within this organization, someone applies perfectly acceptable math when deciding where to deploy. This method of policymaking has placed the Coterie on many a world, temporarily or permanently. To many, the Coterie's presence among the stars seems random, beyond the group's propensity to dwell on the more wretched worlds. Places like that give them an abundance of people grateful to have the Coterie break their bread and fish into a feast for multitudes for a mere twenty silver pieces. But surely the charity has no additional motive?

Of course not.

For a charity organization, the Coterie seems to spend quite a bit of money and effort away from feeding the hungry and helping the needy. Indeed, if you can believe their own payroll administration, 50 percent of their personnel focus entirely on recruitment. Those who refer prospective Coterie acolytes or who decide to jump on the bandwagon of their own volition can receive substantial rewards. Anyone who bothers to inquire about this generally hears blather like the following quote from the honorable Dr. Reverend Sabrina Heems: "The Coterie is greatly interested in helping anyone it can, wherever it can. We are limited only by the number of talented devotees, a limitation we are eager to reduce so that we can ensure basic human rights for all."

Surely there is no hidden meaning behind such recruitment methods? *Of course not.*

For a group whose main focus is the well-being of others, it's odd that they don't extend this initiative to every member of the human race. Oh hush, I'm not about to suggest something as vulgar as racism in their ranks! No, the Coterie merely seems to have strong opinions about those they think might harm their flock. They communicate these opinions via the business end of mercenary PPCs, and the typical recipient tends to be whoever passes for lowlife scum in their locale. Good riddance? Indeed! A bunch of well-armed, mercenary-employing monks are nothing to be suspicious of, right?

(No, you don't get another "of course not" here. I am not that predictable!)

If at this point you're not the least bit wary of the Coterie, you're too stupid to live, let alone read my column! Drop your rag and get lost! Retards like you are the reason I'm not making more money! Go play on a DropShip landing pad!

My friends, those of you who can honestly comprehend my words, we are facing a particularly insidious force. Those few of you who know a bit about history surely must have seen some parallels between this group and pretty much every known terrorist organization in the recent past. Heck, my own research proves that this type of setup was used as early as the 22nd century on ancient Terra!

Put together a charity group as a front, a fundraiser, a recruitment engine. Separate the wheat from the chaff, and the sheer bulk of your numbers means you'll get some talented individuals. Keep a low profile until you're ready to strike, and then you suddenly

MINOR GROUPS: THE COTERIE

have an army no one saw coming! (I know, the armchair generals out there will insist that this kind of scheme is impossible. After all, surely the vaunted intelligence organizations of the various Great Houses would catch wind of such things. Wouldn't they? Right, the same organizations that so epitomize the human intellect! No, wait, I won't start. If you're a regular reader—and by this point, you'd better be!—you can't have missed my analyses of the (dis)abilities of the various intelligence organizations out there.

The truth is that the Coterie has managed to assemble quite a bit of military kit on its prime worlds, and not insignificant amounts of hardware on some of its other ventures. How to accomplish this? Just be selective about whom you pick. Grab those losers of the merc business, the Dispossessed. Make sure that another man's war (or company store!) has done the dirty work for you, and offer a way out. Got a loser MechWarrior behind the controls of that vintage *Catapult*? Got an outstanding Dispossessed MechWarrior? Just swap the two—easy to do, since you have to surrender your belongings to the Coterie in order to become a member. I've seen footage of a MechWarrior thanking his brothers when they took away his *Cobra*, so don't think it doesn't work that way! Don't ever underestimate the seductive attraction of belonging, of having all your worries removed, the powerful pull of self-righteous knowledge on the ignorant.

So what, you say. Who cares about some pirate-busting religious nuts out in the Periphery? Well, just ask the militia on Maduin. They got attacked by a 'Mech force, that much everyone knows and admits. None survived. Again, no contest. It was Circinian raiders, the Coterie claims, and we're here to protect you from those pirates. I gotta tell you, it's been damned hard to find anyone who says otherwise. And wouldn't you know it? My informant managed to get hit by a bus the next day. Such bad luck! You know, the damage to her car looked an awful lot like a 'Mech stepped on it a couple of times, but hey, what does this lowly columnist know, huh? Those Maduin buses are big!

Guys and girls, I don't begrudge anyone a bit of megalomania, some hypocrisy or secrecy. Stepping on my informants, on the other hand...not something to do when you want to remain on my Christmas card list. But de facto occupying some Periphery slum planet, I can barely be bothered to care.

No, what gets me is what I found out about who runs these clowns. Did I mention some meticulous design in the Coterie's deployment? Well, it took me a couple of months of "borrowed" CPU time on the NAIS server farm, but I managed to retro-engineer the characteristics of the planets they target.

I won't bore you with the details, but I was right. The cut-off isn't a nice obvious number or parameter. It's almost random, but not quite. I've run a program predicting the Coterie's moves for several weeks now, and it's accurate almost to the number of goons they deploy on some haphazard pit of a world!

So who runs this program they organize by? Who runs the show? Any traces run cold real quick once you hit their upper echelon. At a certain point, people stop meeting each other. So how do they organize? Well, I did notice that the truly big buffs have their own little JumpShip to move them around. And they make sure no one gets too close. But wouldn't you know it? Some good sport managed to show me a picture of the aft of one of those JumpShips. Pretty much normal, except for this weird little array. I've seen it before a few times, usually when I happened to be near a Class A HPG relay.

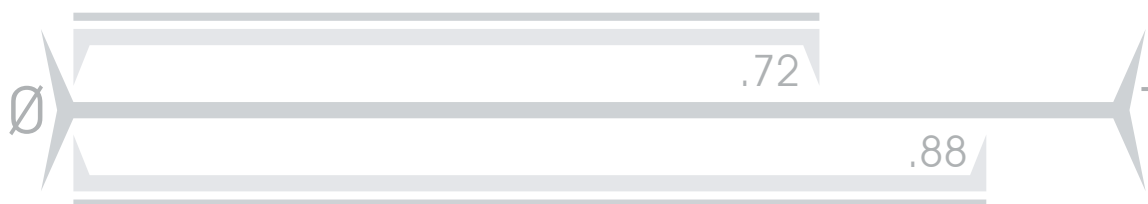
So who's picking up the receiver to these believers?

I lied, incidentally. I've noticed that a couple of this group's Grand Poobahs often manage to disappear completely, usually when they get within a jump or three of Solaris VII. Guess they go meet their Big Cheese every now and then. Recharge the dogma batteries a bit, and they're good to go again.

Watch your back around these guys, boys and girls. You can reason with the evil or the criminal. But there's no talking to fanatics!

—Your Thought Ventriloquist.

KIRI-J(F) SYSTEM SECURITY SCANNER (12.3.87 BUILD 396)



PROTOCOL OMEGA INITIATED : SECURITY LEVEL AMBER



MINOR GROUPS: THE COTERIE

Sarah,

I finally got around to checking this guy's claims about using the NAIS servers. Either he's got access to gear or a hacker who's a couple of decades ahead of the rest of the human race, or he's blowing smoke. I checked all the access logs, and beyond the stuff I have no clearance for, there's no recorded CPU usage anywhere near what this guy would need.

I know, because I did that pattern analysis he mentioned. Funny thing, it actually works a bit. About as accurately as local weather predictions, but still. I'm running it right now on the Trixie server, if you can spare a peek. You know, where I hide stuff from Ernst and his goons.

Anyway, the amount of usage you'd need for that analysis would've shown up: either by CPU spike, or because the process would have a long time-stamp. I even tried to find pattern parameters of the program I made in the server logs (you know I

love going that extra mile for our annual thank-you card), and still nothing. Like I said, he's either good or just a pompous jerk. Have you read any of his other stuff? This article's pretty sedate, so guess which option has my vote.

I did notice a few echoes to the Coterie, though, when I did that pattern parameter check. All from the secure landlines to the departments that don't exist. Guess a few of those spooks figure something's going on. I couldn't help myself: their current processes didn't start until this guy published his article. Well, a bit before, actually. Right after that Maduin business.

Anyway, the NAIS net is safe, at least from this loudmouth. You might want to lob this stuff up the chain to IGS, you never know.

Say, when are we going to meet again? I got this friend of mine who's dying to meet you! Nice guy, I'm sure you two'll get along great! Lemme know!

MINOR GROUPS: THE COTERIE

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

The road to hell is paved with the best of intentions, a phrase that applies well to the Coterie. Initially intended as a loosely organized effort to assist others burdened by natural or man-made disasters, the Coterie, known for its open and casual way of going about its business, quickly became too large for its own good. Its transformation occurred almost exponentially; little obvious change occurred initially, until suddenly the organization became radically different. Now the Coterie is a large entity with considerable influence and power. On some worlds, they even outclass the local government.

Where Intentions Went Awry

The Coterie started as the brainchild of independently wealthy construction tycoon Eleanor van Doorn. Bored with business, van Doorn chose to divert her attention and immense fortune toward setting up relief and charity efforts. Rather than being confined by the strict regulations and models common to an interstellar business, van Doorn insisted on an informal atmosphere and decreasing the importance of red tape. Initially she maintained this risky setup mostly through her shrewd choices of companions, but as the organization grew, van Doorn's direct control quickly diminished.

Aloysius Mestering is credited with formalizing the organization a bit when he went to Campoleone along with many others to assist that troubled world. At first, Mestering's organizational skills were hailed as a boon, because van Doorn's purposefully lax approach to organized efforts was often counterproductive. The other factor behind the Campoleone mission's triumph was Mestering's more open approach to recruiting. Van Doorn found it hard to argue with success, and her death soon afterward of

complications from a previously diagnosed heart condition averted a potential internal power struggle.

Things proceeded steadily for several years until the Coterie suddenly exploded in activity, popping up on a number of worlds. The original chapters were initially unaware of this expansion, and of the religious overtones espoused by newer recruits. Most of these older chapters dissolved in disgust when they learned that their fellows were recruiting mercenaries on Skeptana and Campoleone.

Organization

The Coterie operates under a strict hierarchy with military-style ranks, a tradition among the more regimented charities originating on ancient Terra. Ranks tend to be awarded based on individual actions, experience and usefulness, and it is common to find large numbers of "officers" out on assignment accompanied by handful of lower-ranking members. Very few members see (or even know about) the organization's highest-ranking officers—indeed, many believe the Coterie has only one general, when actually it has five. No one knows much about the movements and trappings of these individuals, though each is believed to head up a specific area of Coterie activity: planning, support, recruitment, finance and operations. Multiple functions fall under these departments, with the efforts of the Coterie's various paramilitary assets coming under operations. Rumor has it that another individual determines the overall course of the Coterie, but it is just as likely that the most senior general uses this story as a cover.

Planning: The most nebulous of the Coterie's components, it is not clear who controls this department. In its way, planning is the most powerful of the five functions, as it directly influences

MINOR GROUPS: THE COTERIE

the course of the whole organization. General Genwan Omar supervises planning, and travels frequently to meet with his fellow generals and other influential officers.

Support: Support takes care of logistics, which typically involves transporting and housing personnel in designated areas. More recently, this group has made greater efforts to house and maintain the Coterie's steadily growing military component. Headed by General Mohammed Pastun, support personnel control the largest amount of assets while operating the most under the radar.

Recruitment: Religious overtones and aggressive persuasion are the cornerstones of the recruitment department. Head recruiters seem well versed in judging the approach most likely to work on potential candidates. Other departments may identify potential recruits, but this group handles the actual induction and training. Controlled by Tempest Mestering, rumored to be Aloysius' descendant, recruitment is the other public face of the Coterie.

Financial: Responsible for managing the Coterie's financial resources, the finance department is presumably a separate entity from support or planning in order to reduce any potential conflict of interest. Administered by General Tracy Wagner, finance is the Coterie's most powerful internal division.

Operations: Initially split off from support and recruitment, operations personnel are expected to get things done. Typically, this involves the execution of relief efforts and building projects, but more recently this group has provided security to the various Coterie components. So far, most of the more military elements appear to have been recruited and raised on-site, but some minor personnel and equipment movements have also occurred, typically to bolster established missions. Operations is governed by General Arisa Kinamoto.

The Coterie's largest concentration of BattleMechs exists on Maduin, currently two companies strong. Major operations on Skeptana, Campoleone and Quimberton appear to be supported by 'Mech elements as well, though in smaller numbers. Accurate estimates of the total number of MechWarriors and other military personnel recruited by the Coterie do not exist outside the organization.

Goals

Even its members do not know the Coterie's overall goals. The organization appears to focus on altruism and expansion in

resources and personnel, but even the generals seem unaware of whatever greater purpose is meant to be served thereby.

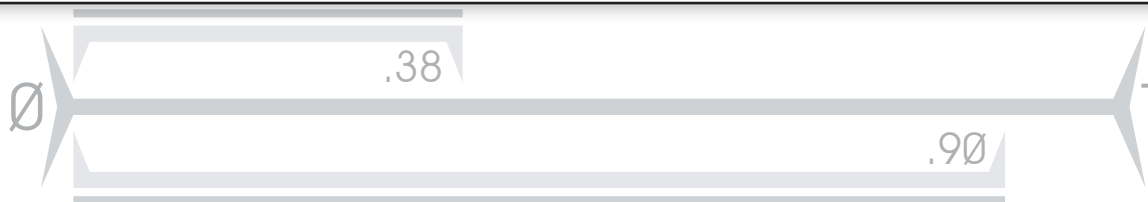
How to Use the Coterie

The Coterie is always hiring. They require substantial resources to safeguard their various operations all over the boondocks and backwaters of the Inner Sphere. Hired security personnel are typically selected based on their poor records and condition, criteria often successfully masked by the Coterie's claims to be looking for "affordable" security assets. Player characters hired by the Coterie will be subjected to a Company Store scheme based on the relative isolation of their assignment and the long terms of the contract. While employed, they are constantly subjected to the Coterie's religious beliefs, and Coterie members will use increasing amounts of persuasion to involve them in various group rituals. If all bribes and persuasion fail, the Coterie may turn to duress. The Coterie wants to expand, but will only lift the veil of secrecy for people who appear susceptible to their brand of religion.

Once the player characters have been properly indoctrinated, or have successfully fooled their employers, they can expect to serve on missions that escalate in complexity and danger. The Coterie is engaged in anti-pirate activities, and regularly sends relatively small forces to known pirate strongholds to take out specific elements. This strategy relies on the pirates' practice of letting rival groups stand (and die) on their own. While this strategy does work, it is hardly foolproof, and player characters can only expect limited support in the field. The Coterie's objective with such high-risk missions is to eliminate employees who fail to assimilate and test those that show promise.

Once the player characters have won the Coterie's trust, they can discover that the Coterie generates work for itself by carefully creating or magnifying problems on suitable worlds. Such worlds, and the activities needed to make them ripe for the Coterie's machinations, are carefully selected and planned for.

The Coterie's objective is to continue expanding its considerable profits gleaned from donations and the absorption of recruits. The player characters can play a crucial role in aiding this scheme or exposing it. Accomplishing the latter will not be easy; the Coterie keeps a close watch on those who know too much, and will not hesitate to destroy any threat to its schemes.





MINOR GROUPS: SCOURGE OF DEATH

NOTES

Taken in isolation, most of these pieces mean little, but perusing them together suggests that a whole new series of power games is afoot in the FWL. Exactly who is responsible, I'll leave you to guess, but if the paranoid RSS are worried—and assuming said documents are genuine—then there's plenty to ponder.

—Starling

**OMNI PUBLIC ARCHIVE RECORD:
THE SCOURGE OF DEATH**

Keywords: Assassination, Atrous, Marik (world), Marik (family), Regulus, Protectionism, SAFE, Selaj, Scourge

The group known as the Scourge of Death appeared in 2667, one of several factions that plagued the Free Worlds League during the golden age of the Star League, standing in opposition to the FWL's Star League membership and in particular the loss of technology and riches to the other member-states. Such groups arose in response to the social and economic freedoms brought by that era of peace and prosperity, an ironic social and cultural phenomenon of rebellion against the Inner Sphere-wide improvement in social conditions. The first Scourge attack was the bombing of the Atrous spaceport on 19 April, 2667, seemingly targeting industrialists arriving for free-trade talks. The action, like the anti-capitalism and anarchist protests of the previous half-millennia, triggered a major investigation, but the group's leaders remained hidden. The Scourge of Death then drifted into hijackings, robberies and murders, ensuring them a place on SAFE's "Most Wanted" list. However, neither Free Worlds nor Star League policing agencies managed to stop this group, whose members struck on worlds as far apart as Marik, Tamarind, Olafsvik and Vanra. For ten years this "gang of thugs" was a thorn in the FWL's side—one whose pinprick assaults were about to escalate dramatically.

On 19 October, 2678, a bomb ripped through the Marik family mansion during a soiree, killing Captain-General Terrence Marik and his brother Theodore (the head of SAFE), as well as thirty-five other members of the Marik family. Only one senior member of the Mariks survived—Gerald Marik, who became the new Captain-General despite life-threatening injuries (he received the last rites in the aftermath of the attack).

Suspending many aspects of the Free Worlds Constitution, Gerald launched a two-pronged attack on the Scourge, using SAFE and the Marik Militias to crush the enemy's bases with ruthless efficiency. Several planetary governments initially protested the Captain-General's heavy-handed approach, until the punishment meted out to the "unpatriotic" government of Aerie (a world since lost in the chaos of the Succession Wars) silenced all opposition. Even when the central government used its "security measures" to eliminate political opponents and seize property, organized protest

NEWS REPORT: BLOOD DEBT

REGULAN NEWS

REGULUS CITY, 12 APRIL 3067

A spokesman for Prince Cameron-Jones announced that Regular Security Service agents have seized considerable bomb-making and intelligence equipment from a raid on an apartment in West Trahn. The fierce gun battle that erupted in the complex is the third major operation in the last forty-eight hours as agents hunt those responsible for Wednesday's assassination attempt against the prince. Six conspirators are believed to have been killed in the operation and two taken prisoner. The terrorists apparently attempted to detonate an explosive device, intent on killing themselves along with the RSS teams, but security technicians disarmed the device in time to prevent major loss of life among the local civilian population. Nonetheless, casualties among the RSS were described as "substantial." The two men captured in the operation both hold Canopian passports, though the Magistracy Consulate on Atrous has so far declined to comment.

Prince Cameron-Jones continues to recover from his injuries at his Lake Wyse retreat, where his personal physicians describe his condition as comfortable. The Prince is not, however, expected to attend the funeral on Monday of James Lu and Vincent Riks, the RSS security agents slain defending him. Meanwhile, repair work continues on the Prince Martin Expressway where the attack took place, but is not expected to be completed until the end of the month. Contra-flows are in effect on several routes in the Western Districts.

remained almost nonexistent. By the summer of 2679, the public had begun to lose interest in the "war" against the Scourge. Then SAFE teams on Westover made a shocking discovery: computer records seized in a raid linked the purchase of equipment used by the Scourge to the powerful Selaj family of Regulus.

A tribunal conducted amid public furor convicted the Selaj leaders in absentia, and Gerald Marik invaded Regulus with a view to bringing the Scourge's leaders to justice. The war was brutal and hard fought, but by the end of 2679 a combination of Marik military prowess and defections among Regular troops brought the Captain-General the vengeance he desired. The remaining members of the Regular dynasty fled, taking with them vast riches (reputed to be worth trillions of C-bills in modern currency). Hundreds of Regulars who did not flee were tried, imprisoned and in many cases executed. The ringleaders, the Selaj family, remained safe in their new Canopian estates, and would be a prime target of SAFE assassination missions for the remaining quarter-century of Gerald's reign. The Selaj—and with them the Scourge—disappeared from FWL records in the 28th century, but

MINOR GROUPS: SCOURGE OF DEATH



the legacy of their attacks remains in SAFE's broad civil monitoring powers (at which the agency continues to excel) and the cloud of bodyguards surrounding most Marik notables.

The ideals of the Scourge of Death remain a focus for several anarchist groups in the FWL, but SAFE has judged these groups little threat to the League and has taken no action against them.

EYES ONLY: PRINCE CAMERON-JONES



RSS Security Report:

Eyes Only: Prince Cameron-Jones

14 April 3067

My Prince,

Our preliminary investigation of materials seized during the operation at West Trahn suggest a more sophisticated and capable organization than the attack on your person would suggest. Electronic records linked to one of the deceased conspirators tie into a secure bank account with the Ninth Star Bank here on Regulus.

The account was established during the Star League era, but has been dormant in recent centuries. Ninth Star managers are cooperating with RSS investigators. Ninth Star was the private bank of the former rulers of the Principality of Regulus, and some suggest that this account may be linked to the Selaj family's criminal endeavors. However, only circumstantial evidence suggests any link to the Selaj or their puppets, the Scourge of Death, whom we believe SAFE dealt with effectively in the years after the Dormuth Bombing. It does seem possible that those disaffected with your government have unearthed an ancient Selaj account—perhaps via records kept by the Dormuth assassins after their flight to Canopus, and subsequently "lost" with them until now.

Another possibility, certainly more likely than the return of the Selaj, but equally insidious if proven, is that the attack on your person was carried out by SAFE at the behest of the Captain-General and financed using the massive quantities of Selaj assets seized by the Mariks during Gerald Marik's long-ago campaign. Using an existing threat as a smokescreen for operations against their enemies is typical of the Marik family and of SAFE, though it is uncharacteristic of Thomas Marik. His aides, however, are more than willing to employ such black ops with tacit approval from the executive office. Nor can we rule out the involvement of Thomas Marik's long-standing Word of Blake allies, who have opposed us ever since the Gibson Crisis. The Blakists' malign influence over Atreus and the Captain-General remains a danger irrespective of the evidence (or lack thereof) uncovered by our investigations.

—Slev Ohokawin, Chief of Operations, RSS

THE COURSING

(Discovered among the possessions of Dominique Alex, formerly of West Trahn)

Dishonor and disgrace were the legacy of our determination, marking the road walked by the Saints on their path to Apotheosis. These were their only reward for taking on tyranny and corruption, death's caress their only recompense for challenging those who had usurped rights not theirs. Desperate times call for desperate measures, and our great work against the oppressors was the only avenue left open to us. To make them give up what they unjustly took, we vowed to strike their assets, the buildings and organizations they used to impose their political and economic will, as well as those who collaborated with the oppressors of Marik and Atreus.

Many fell before our righteous fury, a great work that some call "terrorism" and others call "organized crime." Our campaign lasted many years. Yet our greatest "success" was nothing of the kind; rather, it was a cynical fabrication by our more ruthless foes to consolidate power in their own hands. In this we underestimated them, and instead were forced to endure the bitter coursing of our worlds by forces loyal to the oppressor, the bloody fratricide—though none recognized it as such—used to justify their bitter crusade.

We were not the only ones to suffer—the enemy used this fabricated campaign to eradicate all resistance to their rule—but we bore the brunt of their venom. They began cautiously, but as the campaign progressed they became increasingly confident, presenting "evidence" to a shocked public—none of it ever verified by impartial bodies—that allowed them to take direct action against those who were, in truth, their victims. Us.

The pre-emptive war against Regulus was one of the most unjust campaigns ever fought, a heinous crime enacted to cover up the foe's own greed and viciousness. The people stood with us but could not hope to prevail against the armed juggernaut launched from Marik. Our allies fled, dissuaded by cunning lies and propaganda. Faced with annihilation or flight, we chose the latter, knowing that our efforts to escape persecution would be twisted and used against us. Our enemy painted the flight of our forefathers to Canopus as an admission of guilt, but thankfully even the enemy's arrogance balked at waging war with their neighbors, at that stage at least.

They then sought to eradicate all trace of our existence. Wave after wave of assassins targeted men, women and children suspected of even the faintest hint of Selaj blood. Whole families were exterminated, all of them innocent of any crime, yet singled out for the bloody harvest of the Marik butchers. Nonetheless, we prevailed and survived, our bloodlines protected and nurtured. We grew stronger, all the while biding our time. The foe lost interest as the Succession Wars ruined the universe, simultaneously freeing us of the tyranny of the Star League. Some called for reprisals against those who had stolen Regulus away from us, but our leaders refrained. Rather than show our hand, we chose to remain in the shadows, a bulwark against any future treachery by the enemy.



MINOR GROUPS: SCOURGE OF DEATH

Years became decades and decades became centuries, but we were not needed. Some lost the faith and resumed mundane lives. We remained faithful and determined, certain that one day we would be called upon to save the Free Worlds League. Our determination proved justified when the League agreed to join a second Great Tyranny. The years of service to the devilish alliance of Steiner and Davion already had us on our guard, though that trade allowed the Free Worlds economy to prosper. From its inception, the "Second Star League" was a sham, a façade designed to facilitate a military alliance. We knew this, and so even though many called for a resumption of the Great Work, we did not strike. We watched, ever vigilant.

To many, this new League seemed benign, no more than the sham everyone knew it to be in their hearts. Yet our watchers soon began to notice discrepancies, economic trends and financial irregularities that showed a whole new level of activity hidden behind the façade. Someone was building an empire, acquiring vast quantities of material and funds. The money trail was convoluted, hidden behind layers of deception and misdirection. Yet we had the skills of centuries spent monitoring the Free Worlds infrastructure and so managed to unravel this web of lies, cutting through the Gordian knot to show the spider at the heart of this secret empire.

Thomas Marik and his Blakist allies.

Despite its benevolent public face, we now recognized the true evil at the heart of the Marik Empire. Hidden behind the mask of a benign elder statesman was an evil despot whose ambitions rivaled those of the hated Camerons—how ironic that one of their descendants should sit upon our Regular throne—and who merely awaited the moment to strike. Indicators pointed to a "grand convergence," plans by the Marik to bring forth his new empire at the next Star League council when, as seemed likely, he would take up the reins of power. We had no choice. We had to strike, resuming our Great Work and seeking to bring low the enemy.

None will be spared our wrath: not the treacherous Mariks, not the usurping princelings of Regulus and certainly not the cultists aiding the Marik who couch their political ambitions in the guise of "Blake's will" and safeguarding technology. Woe be-tide those who believe they can profit at the expense of the Free Worlds League!

THE SANGREAL: THE HIDDEN "BLOOD ROYAL" OF THE SELAJ

Like the rumored bloodline of the Magdalene, popular myth in the Free Worlds League—and especially the Principality of Regulus—suggests that descendants of the Selaj family yet survive, living in the fringes of the FWL or in the Periphery, protected by an enigmatic secret society while simultaneously serving as the "loyal guardians" of FWL sovereignty and independence (an oxymoron

THE PAST IS PROLOGUE

IRIAN NEWS INTERSTELLAR SPECIAL REPORT: (20 APRIL 3067)

Yesterday's bombing of the West Ferry spaceport complex on Atreus brings the current spate of terrorist incidents in the FWL to a new and dangerous juncture. Thirty-two people are known to have died in the attack and another two-hundred and ninety-six received hospital treatment. Nineteen victims remain in a critical condition. The most high-profile victim of the outrage was Trade Secretary Michael Junction, who was at the complex to greet the Gibson delegation to the Tamarind Round of trade negotiations. Three delegation members remain missing, and hope is fading for a successful rescue from the ruined terminal.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, but the significance of the date and location has not been lost on analysts. It is exactly four hundred years since the Scourge of Death began their campaign of terror and murder. SAFE analysts have cautioned against any rash pronouncements, but suspicions are mounting that that the incident is a "signature"—legitimate or misdirected—of a succession of strikes that include the bombing of INI's offices on Oriente, disruption of the power supply to HPGs on Sirius and Zion, and last week's assassination attempt against the Prince of Regulus. A massive car bomb outside the Star League's district offices in Atreus City was defused two days ago. No warnings were received before any of these attacks.

Security measures around Parliament and the Marik Palace—already on heightened alert since the Black May attacks in the Capellan Confederation—have been visibly boosted with the deployment of body-armored infantry and fighting vehicles. Additionally, Marik Militia 'Mechs are reportedly guarding key approaches to Parliament, helping to enforce security checkpoints imposed in January. Local reaction to the cordon-sanitaire remains mixed, with MPs applauding the FWLM's security measures and others denouncing the action as part of an "orchestrated campaign of intimidation by the Captain-General."

MINOR GROUPS: SCOURGE OF DEATH



if ever there was one). Like the Magdalene/Grail myths before it, these stories of a “hidden House” have inspired a succession of pot-boiler novels and “historical treatises” that seek to unveil the “truth” of the matter (or at least line their authors’ pockets).

Works like those of Nab Bruin (best known for *The Cocteau Cypher*, a poorly written murder mystery) take a handful of conspiracy theories and “facts” (often erroneous) and weave a tale that, while fascinating, is no more real than the worlds of Tolkien, Pullman or Doge. Unfortunately, many people treat these works as reliable historical tomes. They—and in many cases, the authors as well—use any attacks on these volumes’ flimsy structure and ill-founded hypotheses as justification for their beliefs, asserting that there must be something in what they say to provoke established academics or authorities to try to “cover up the truth.” Of course, these same individuals would likewise believe themselves validated if the Powers That Be ignored them, claiming that their opponents could not dispute their case. The term for this in psychology is a self-reinforcing delusion.

A couple of examples from *The Cocteau Cypher* demonstrate the fragility and ludicrousness of the “Sang Real” hypothesis and the idea of a secret society protecting the independence of the FWL.

According to Bruin (and other authors), the Selaj and the Mariks had a secret pact regarding the governance of the FWL that the Mariks broke, triggering the tragic events of the Scourge of Death. No record of any such agreement appears in the ar-

chives of Regulus or Marik, and evidence of such a pact only exists in hearsay and legend.

Bruin suggests that the Selaj-Scourge connection “discovered” by SAFE was a fabrication and that in reality Gerald Marik orchestrated the situation as part of his own quest for power. That Gerald had twice turned down the post of Captain-General is something the “historian” Bruin casually overlooks.

Bruin would have us believe that a cadre of “Saints Selaj” watches over League affairs, infiltrating all levels of economic and political life to safeguard the liberties of the common man. That the Selaj were self-serving thugs, extortionists and thieves seems to pass him by—that is no fiction, as he would have us believe, but provable by a host of documentary and other evidence collected over decades.

The sudden re-emergence of the Scourge of Death—though no group has yet formally claimed such a name—as a reaction to the reborn Star League is not supported by any evidence in Bruin’s book. Instead, the “facts” put forward are nothing more than the author’s opinions, often based on spurious information, written in such a way as to carry great weight. His citing of Thomas Marik as “more concerned with empire building than the welfare of the FWL” flies in the face of the facts. The Captain-General is the “elder statesman” of the Inner Sphere, a peacemaker and mediator, not the latter-day Amaris Bruin would have his readers believe.

—An extract from *Eagle Tales: Legends of the Free Worlds*

MINOR GROUPS: SCOURGE OF DEATH



GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

The Scourge of Death has long been a bugbear of the Marik family and SAFE, but frequently it is no more than that. The new wave of terrorism in the FWL certainly claims the Scourge as its inspiration, but no hard evidence exists of Selaj complicity, just as no information exists to confirm Marik fabrication of evidence against the Selaj (as some have claimed), or of current or historical attempts to use the organization for political gain. Neither does any evidence exist of a secret society in the FWL that protects the League from itself (and from the Mariks). Yet should the absence of such information be taken as proof of non-existence, or a testament to their skill in concealing themselves?

Indeed, has there ever been a single Scourge of Death, or have the organization and its symbology been the tools of a succession of masters, directed toward their own ends? The original Scourge was a political movement, but did the same incarnation strike at Dormuth, or had the political terrorists been suborned by Selaj ambition? Are the modern endeavors attributed to the Scourge in any way linked to the Star League-era group, or are new terrorists trading on the reputation of the ancient organization? In all probability, portrayals of the group contain truth and

lies, and its motivations, organization and methods remain open to interpretation by the gamemaster.

How to Use the Scourge of Death

The Scourge may appear in campaigns in a number of ways. The upsurge in terrorism may serve as a backdrop to any campaign set in the FWL, with the precise motivations, actions and even existence of the group simply a media portrayal whose veracity is unclear. Player characters may also get caught up in the burgeoning terror campaign, as bystanders caught in an event, being employed to hunt the insurgents or perhaps even being employed to create such incidents (or at least pave the way for other groups). The exact nature of the player characters’ involvement depends on how the gamemaster chooses to employ the Scourge in the campaign. Are they truly the descendents of the Selaj, a new group seeking to exploit the infamy of the original Scourge, or perhaps a government operation to create a “common enemy” to unite the fractious FWL? The player characters’ involvement may give them unparalleled insight...if they survive it.



MINOR GROUPS: THE JÄRNFÖLK

NOTES

This is my favorite little coup in the last several months; a report taken directly from Explorer Corps secured systems. Bad enough every Inner Sphere faction has its black bag men, now we got these freaks too?

—Starling

CONTACT REPORT ESC-COL-67-4-7

First Contact: 30 March 3066

Nature of Report: Extended Contact: First Contact +12 months

Social Structure: Factional (extended family units). The Järnfölk follow a clannish social order, based around strong leadership and extended families. At present, nine “great families” rule Järnfölk society and membership is a source of pride that they protect jealously. Distinct tiers exist within the family units, the secondary families in each adhering to a hierarchy and seeking to prove their superiority over other families within the larger unit. This jockeying for influence produces a dynamic social order. Järnfölk language contains a multitude of nuances describing family relations—for example, clearly identifying maternal or fraternal relationships through words like “morfar” for “mother’s father” and “faster” for “father’s sister”. Members of the same clan refer to each other as “søskende” (siblings) irrespective of blood relationship. Personal and family honor is central to Järnfölk existence, and insults (deliberate or otherwise) or attacks can lead to duels (usually to first blood, often to the death) or ongoing feuds, some of which may last for generations. Conflict outside of sanctioned duels and designated vendettas, referred to as blood feuds by the Järnfölk, is forbidden and perpetrators face summary justice.

Seat of Government: No central authority; government is family-based.

National Leader: None. Family leaders are Mattias Essendorp, Jensen family; Elin Skjolden, Skjolden family; Hans Gudmundsson, Gudmundsson family; Jacob Hansen, Klünder family; Maiken Pedersdottir, Höeg family; Jon Jespersen, Jespersen family; Jannick Hastrup, Hastrup family; Thor Torvald, Torvald family; and Alice James, James family.

Principal Language(s): Hybrid of several ancient Scandinavian tongues, notably Danish and Old Norse. Each planet has a unique but comprehensible dialect; for example Järnfölk—as pronounced and spelled on Trondheim—more commonly appears as Jernfölk on Ålborg. Command staff on spacefaring vessels speak Standard English, but the degree of fluency varies considerably.

Approximate size: 2,650,000 people across four worlds: Hamar, Trondheim, Ålborg and Hofn

Economic Status: Principally agrarian. The Järnfölk planets support some high-tech industries as well, generally limited to small-scale artisans such as jewelry-makers. Small arms—ex-

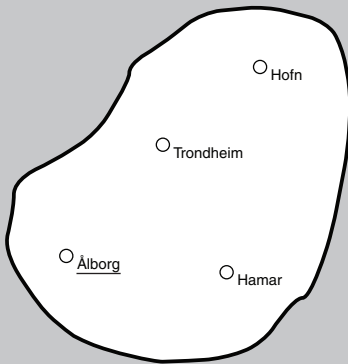
clusively slug-throwers—are treated as works of art and status symbols among the Järnfölk. Trade exists mostly between the four worlds in the Järnfölk Cluster, but JumpShip crews also travel to nearby systems to trade with the locals. These family-controlled trading fleets—all highly decorated in family-specific motifs—are kept in mint condition (how remains unclear), and service with one such “sælgeflåde” (trade fleet) is one of the highest honors in Järnfölk society.

Standing Army: None, though notables within the ruling families each retain a cadre of highly trained bodyguards.

Contacts and Alliances: The Järnfölk have had contact with the Clans, who seized a Järnfölk vessel during their sole encounter, much to the chagrin of the Trondheim-based Heyerdal family. (That family’s subsequent fall from grace allowed the ascension of the James family, though the Heyerdahls’ Old Norse trappings continue to color Clan perceptions of the Järnfölk.) Hints exist of much wider contacts, particularly with the Hansa, though little solid evidence has appeared as yet.

History: The Järnfölk count 16 July, 2504, as the birth of their “nation”—the date of the first landings on temperate Ålborg—but the forefathers of the colonists departed the Inner Sphere at least nineteen years before that, escaping Combine predations in Rasalhague. Existing for many years as itinerant explorer-traders, the colonists sought to preserve the traditions of their ancient Scandinavian homelands, creating a faux-Scandinavian culture in much the same way as House Kurita built its pseudo-Japanese hegemony. With feuding and a rough lifestyle keeping their numbers in check, the Järnfölk (named for their “Järnskip,” or “iron ships,” the JumpShips in which they traveled to their distant homeworlds over several generations) have not expanded much beyond their four colonies, though their vessels trade far and wide. Järnfölk society formed during its early spacefaring era, with the ruling families descended from the command staff of the nine vessels while the subsidiary families are descended from their crews. The bonds and outlook fostered during this time—now more than half a millennium in the past—remain central to Järnfölk culture. The colonists had no substantive contact with the Star League or the Successor States, but records from Columbus suggest some dealings between the sælgeflåde and SLDF explorers stationed there. No evidence exists, however, to suggest that the Järnfölk were in any way responsible for the tragic events that befell the Columbus garrison. Järnfölk sagas speak of a highly militaristic group deeper in the Periphery, though it is unclear whether this refers to the Clans or some as-yet undiscovered entity.

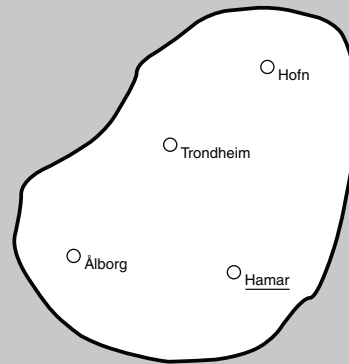
MINOR GROUPS: THE JÀRNFÖLK - EXPLORER CORPS ATLAS



Alfirk

ALBORG**Noble Ruler:** None**Star Type (Recharge Time):** F2IV (173 Hours)**Position in System:** 3rd**Time to Jump Point:** 18.75 days**Number of Satellites:** 2 (Sjælland, Skåne)**Surface Gravity:** 0.98**Atm. Pressure:** Standard (Breathable)**Equatorial Temperature:** 33° C (Cool-Temperate)**Surface Water:** 71 percent**Recharging Station:** None**HPG Class Type:** None**Highest Native Life:** Reptiles**Population:** 1,200,000**Socio-Industrial Levels:** C-C-B-D-B

The most hospitable of the Järnfölk worlds, Ålborg is a verdant planet whose temperate climate and rich soil have allowed farming to flourish. Consequently, this world supports almost half the Järnfölk population, and the extended families who reside there are among the most powerful within that loose confederacy. The Skjoldens and Jensens in particular maintain a stranglehold on what passes for a planetary government, but their main power is economic, particularly around the capital city of Christiana. In addition to farming, Ålborg boasts abundant mineral riches; many of the materials used to craft the Järnfölk's famous sidearms are mined in the uplands of the western continent.



Alfirk

HAMAR**Noble Ruler:** None**Star Type (Recharge Time):** K6V (197 hours)**Position in System:** 7th**Time to Jump Point:** 3.91 days**Number of Satellites:** 1 (Jotunheim)**Surface Gravity:** 0.88**Atm. Pressure:** Standard (thin)**Equatorial Temperature:** 25° C (Cold)**Surface Water:** 81 percent (55 percent liquid, 26 percent ice)**Recharging Station:** None**HPG Class Type:** None**Highest Native Life:** Mammals**Population:** 220,000**Socio-Industrial Levels:** C-C-B-D-C

A study in contrasts, icy Hamar is barren and inhospitable, but its volcanic uplands—often poking through ice sheets and semi-frozen oceans—are extremely rich in precious metals and gems. The constant demand for such materials guarantees a Järnfölk presence. The upland mines are only made livable by artificial aids, such as re-breathers and atmospheric generators for homes. The lowland communities, though little warmer, exploit rich volcanic soil to make the world agriculturally self-sufficient. A brisk trade exists between the food-rich lowlands and the mineral-rich uplands, but frequently this exchange turns violent and many feuds exist between the two elements of Hamar's population. Only the transience of the upland population—of approximately 50,000 uplanders, only around 10,000 are permanent residents—has so far prevented a large-scale conflict.

Järnfölk

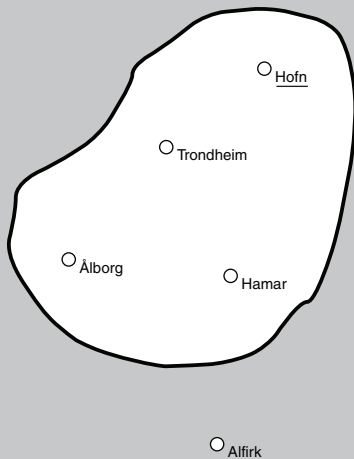
30 LIGHT YEARS

60 LIGHT YEARS OR 13.4 PARSECS

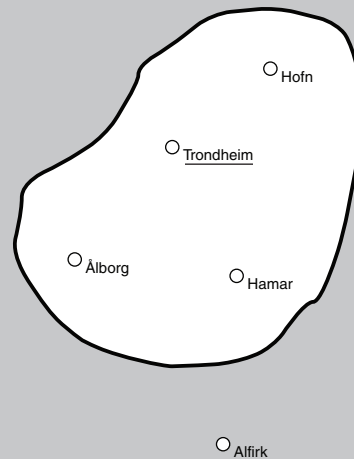
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MINOR GROUPS: THE JÄRNFÖLK - EXPLORER CORPS ATLAS

**HOFN****Noble Ruler:** None**Star Type (Recharge Time):** G8III (198 hours)**Position in System:** 4th**Time to Jump Point:** 6.19 days**Number of Satellites:** 3 (Myvatn, Geyser, Jockulsarlon)**Surface Gravity:** 1.02**Atm. Pressure:** Standard (Breathable)**Equatorial Temperature:** 34° C (Cool-Temperate)**Surface Water:** 95 percent**Recharging Station:** None**HPG Class Type:** None**Highest Native Life:** Bird**Population:** 580,000**Socio-Industrial Levels:** C-D-C-D-B

The warmest of the Järnfölk worlds, Hofn also has some of the cluster's worst weather. Storms wrack this water-rich world, sometimes with winds exceeding 300 kph. The solid local architecture reflects this reality, lending Hofn settlements a blocky militaristic appearance. Many settlements are semi-subterranean, extending much further than appears on the surface. This underground existence protects residents from the elements and also allows the Hofnites to make the most of their limited land area. Ironically, the weather also provides Hofn with its principal export: almost limitless energy from the many wind-farms that dot the planet's archipelagos. Fishing is also a major industry and ocean produce dominates the local diet, with dishes such as lutefisk and gravlaks being staples of Hofn meals. Many of Hofn's fortified settlements are home to a single extended family and each has a communal stabbur (store) for foodstuffs, as well as a communal dining area.

**TRONDHEIM****Noble Ruler:** None**Star Type (Recharge Time):** G2V (183 hours)**Position in System:** 1st**Time to Jump Point:** 9.75 days**Number of Satellites:** 2 (Trollveg, Glittertindane)**Surface Gravity:** 1.06**Atm. Pressure:** Standard (Breathable)**Equatorial Temperature:** 28° C (Cool-Temperate)**Surface Water:** 72 percent**Recharging Station:** None**HPG Class Type:** None**Highest Native Life:** Plants**Population:** 650,000**Socio-Industrial Levels:** C-B-C-B-C

Once dominated by the Heyerdal family, Trondheim recently came under the sway of the James clan following the loss of their Järnskib to the Clans. The Järnfölk's second most populous world, Trondheim is the most industrialized planet in the cluster and the main venue for JumpShip and DropShip maintenance. Consequently, most major families have a presence on Trondheim, and its de facto planetary capital, Narvik, is the site of numerous large family estates. The city is also home to some of the few heavy industries in the Järnfölk worlds, manufacturing starship components that are shuttled up to the orbiting dry docks. The industrial complexes appear heavily automated, possibly using robotic assembly systems dating back to the colony's founding. These sites are closed to "foreigners," and the families who share the duty of protecting the complexes—one of the few cross-family endeavors among the settlers—are willing to use deadly force against interlopers if necessary.

MINOR GROUPS: THE JÄRNFÖLK

**BLOOD SIMPLE:****THE JOURNAL OF ADEPT JONAS VERANOV**

9 April 3067: It is a year since we first made contact with the Järnfölk, following up on the leads of the last decade and brokering a deal between the families and the Explorer Corps on Columbus. The deal is largely economic, but contains a provision for a liaison officer. That's me, the only person on Columbus who has any experience in Norse tongues—at least, ever since Teddy K pulled his funding and all those Swedenese speakers dashed off home. This assignment could be a challenge, even with most of the Corps' linguistic database to help with translations. I arrive in two days; only then will I know how good—or otherwise—my preparations are.

17 April 3067: So much for linguistics. I'm currently ensconced with a cadet branch of the Skjolden family on Ålborg, where my basic Swedenese is pretty much useless among the Danophone Ålborgers. Okay, I'm overstating the case slightly. We can communicate, though pronunciation is so wildly different it might as well be a whole new language. Writing is closer to the mark, but tedious and time-consuming. I've had little contact with the "powers that be" in the Skjolden clan; mainly, I've talked with the trio of protectors assigned to me. By my limited understanding, this Skjolden protection detail—licensed bodyguards from a martial guild—marks me out as a person of some importance in JF society. Still, I can't help feeling they're as much jailers as bodyguards. The leader, Niels, is a hulking cold fish, hard as nails and equally communicative. His second, Nina, is a pixie-cute elf, prone to enigmatic smiles and playful comments in half-understood dialect. I could fall in love with her easily if I hadn't watched her kill a man in cold blood. If anything, she's harder than Niels, her soft exterior hiding an iron center. The third member of the team, the frequently absent Mikkel, is a ghost. I think his specialty is information, but I also got the impression that he's adept at "quiet eliminations." Assassinations, in other words.

12 May 3067: Today I had a chance to meet *THE* Skjolden, Lady Elin. I'd expected a wizened old matriarch, so I was somewhat taken aback by her youth: late 20s or early 30s at most. Of course, one doesn't ask a lady, particularly one of such authority, her age. There was no doubting her strength of character and determination. She spoke in accented but clear and eloquent SL-standard English, a welcome change from my struggles with the native tongue. "My apologies for the unpleasantness at the landing ground, Ambassador Veranov." (She meant the man pixie-Nina had gunned down.) "That was an unsanctioned attack by zealots who wish us to remain isolated from the Inner Sphere. I am glad your detail was able to deal decisively with the situation. The agitators have been...discouraged."

I nodded. Mikkel's disappearances and talk of assassinations suddenly made sense. Discouragement indeed.

"The families know to be scrupulous in their filings," she went on. When I queried what this meant, Lady Elin explained. "Of vendetta. Contracts to take your life." I must have blanched, because she gave me what looked like a wry smile. "It is, to some extent, a sign of status in our society. The more important the individual, the more severe the sanctions used against them. This shows that people think highly enough of you to want to kill you. Killing someone after a filing is politics—only without such a declaration is it murder."

Wonderful.

19 June 3067: "How many today?" I asked my usual question of Mikkel as I passed the guard post on the way to breakfast.

"Only one," Mikkel grinned. "Their interest in you must be waning."

The number of "filings" had soared in April and May, but tailed off markedly as my team "discouraged" frivolous contracts. After a few object lessons, many filings were withdrawn without any attempt on my life. A few hard nuts remained—the insane or the influential. With a patron like Skjolden, only the powerful or those who didn't care about status (an aberration in Järnfölk society) were willing to declare vendetta, and even these had begun tailing off as my insignificance became apparent. Some saw opportunities in dealing with the outside world I represented; others simply ignored me. Nonetheless, tonight's festivities—the Summer Solstice, a major social event among the Järnfölk—posed a significant challenge. As I ate breakfast, Nina appeared, smiling as ever, a velvet box in her hands. She bowed and handed it to me, then withdrew, still grinning. Carefully, I opened the box. Inside, held secure by its padding, was a small pistol, decorated with intricate patterns and inlaid bone. It was gorgeous and deadly.

"Nina thought you might need it," Niels said dryly.

"For protection?"

"As a mark of rank," he replied, an edge of humor in his voice. "At least it isn't hers. Yet." He burst out laughing, the first time I'd seen him do so and a scary occurrence. Clearly, I was missing something.

20 June 3067: What a difference a night makes. Blood, sweat, tears. Exhilaration and fear in equal measure. As we approached the festivities, I asked Niels about the martial art they practiced. "Poznai sebia," he replied. It took a moment for the words to sink in—they weren't Scandinavian, but Russian, a language I knew intimately from my time in the Chaos March. The Know Yourself Way, better known as *Systema*. A few proponents remained in the Inner Sphere, particularly in the Tikonov worlds. And now the Word of Blake was picking it up, after annexing those worlds into the Blakist hegemony. Niels explained that in addition to knowing themselves well, practitioners got to know their companions as if they were extensions of their own bodies. He, for example, knew exactly where Nina and Mikkel were, their fatigue levels and their combat readiness. Teamwork and self-knowledge taken to the nth degree. The team worked as a cohesive entity, one always by my side (usually Niels, but sometimes Nina), one clearing a path and one standing as rearguard



MINOR GROUPS: THE JÄRNFÖLK

(almost exclusively Mikkel). While we stood, talking to some notable or other, Niels and Nina hovered at my shoulders while Mikkel blended into the crowd. He appeared briefly from the shadows whenever the situation changed. I was talking to one of the Hansen family when Mikkel did his re-appearing trick. His target had drawn a knife and was stepping forward. My close-protection team—Niels and Nina—would likely have taken down the assailant, but Mikkel wasn't taking any chances. As the would-be assassin drew his weapon and lunged, Mikkel blocked the assault and counterattacked. The assailant died before he hit the floor, his neck broken. Silence reigned for an instant, followed by a flurry of motion as various protection details moved to secure their principals. The noise level rose as conversations resumed.

Mikkel examined the corpse. "Contracted?" Niels asked.

"Nej. Skåret," was Mikkel's terse reply. I didn't understand. Cut? What did that mean?

Mikkel saw the perplexed look on my face. "Clanless," he said coldly. "Outcast."

22 June 3067: The story of those cast out of their families for various transgressions against Järnfölk society came out slowly through the rest of the night and the next day. The outcast were forced from their homes and made to eke out an existence in the harsh hinterlands. They could be dealt with freely—the traditional forms of filing vendetta and following blood feuds did not apply—and few survived long. Some were subsequently adopted into other families, where they became known as *stedsøskende*, step-siblings. Others worked as freelancers outside the protections and limitations of the law, in the four colonies and father away across the *Svarturhavet*—the black ocean of space.

"Where?" I asked Niels. "The Hansa?"

He nodded "As assassins and bodyguards to fat merchants," he spat.

"The Inner Sphere?"

"Perhaps. Look for unexplained but very personal deaths. No bombs or rifles. Always within arm's length; only at such ranges is the slaying honorable. They may be outcast, but the *skåret* still follow our ways."

"And if they don't?" I let the question hang.

"They are dead," he replied.

23 July 3067: Nina gave me another box today, this time containing the black snub-nosed pistol she had been carrying. "I trust you, but I cannot trust myself," she said.

What was this? An admission of guilt? I looked at the ever-present Niels, who sighed.

"Repressed Spheroids," he grumbled. "Kiss the girl or tell her to leave. She just proposed to you."

Oh, hell.

ALL POINTS ALERT

From: HSF Command, Lübeck

To: All Hansa vessels

Date: 27 June, 3067

URGENT

Be on the alert for three individuals wanted for questioning regarding the assassination of Factor Jared Reynolds, the planetary representative to the Council of Merchants. Factor Reynolds was slain as he left the Lübeck Bourse, the assailants a trio of gunmen armed with pistols. Working in close coordination, two of the attackers dispatched the factor's two-man escort while the third engaged Reynolds. All three victims were pronounced dead at the scene by the attending medical teams.

The assailants were dressed as residents, but their coloration and their Germanic language—as yet unidentified by witnesses—indicate an origin outside the Hanseatic League or its client states. Their advanced martial skills suggest the Clans, but no evidence yet links them to that group. A Spheroid or hitherto unknown group is suspected.

An exhaustive hunt of the Bourse environs failed to uncover the murderers, who are believed to have gone to ground or escaped off-world. All Hansa vessels and HSF personnel must remain alert for any information regarding such a group, and for the three assailants in particular. [SecureCam images enclosed]



SECURE COMMUNIQUE

From: Precentor Padraig O Bhaoil
To: Precentor Martial Victor Steiner-Davion
Date: 27 October, 3067

Victor,

We pulled the above message from standard SigINT in the Hanseatic League, but it took a little while to decrypt and put onto the DRUM network. On the surface, this looks like a simple APB for a murderer, but something about it worried me. It took a bit for the details to click—I was thinking about the modus operandi, linking it to the Hansa and their puppets in Nueva Castile. Veranov's Jårnfölk postings sent me off on another track and I began digging through records. We've seen this MO before, the point-blank murder of some well-guarded individual: the New Samarkand assassinations in '62, Solaris in '59 and Tikonov in '49. No great surprises, you might think—some outcast Jårnfölk operatives—but I came up with two interesting spins. First, three assassins were reported in all the above cases, sounding very much like Veranov's guard detail and presumably with the same training and skills. Would such "professionals" truly go rogue, or have some of the Jårnfölk been hiring out their skills?

Second, and even more interesting, are the references in the archives to similar incidents across the Inner Sphere dating back pretty far into the twenty-ninth century. Have these outsiders—or elements of them—been working among us as spies and saboteurs for more than two centuries? If they have, why has ROM never detected them—or have they, but the knowledge never got passed on to the First Circuit? Are Jårnfölk assassins the ultimate disposable black-ops team, completely off everyone's radar and thus sidestepping all the extant counterterrorism and security provisions?

Some pleasant thoughts to cheer you as you head to the Star League Council.

—Paddy

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

The Jårnfölk, as a culture, have yet to be explored in *BattleTech*, and *Interstellar Players* provides only a cursory glimpse of their society. Of greatest significance to the universe at large is the suggestion—a new idea to the Explorer Corps, though widely known among senior Jårnfölk—of rogue elements in their honor-

PS: THE JÀRNFÖLK

bound society operating as mercenaries in the Hanseatic League and beyond. Such operatives do exist, mainly outcast individuals from the colonies, but also including a number of volunteers from among the martial guilds. Many of the latter view these "foreign" contracts as practice for their true work in the Jårnfölk colonies.

Do these "guild assassin" operations point to a hidden agenda? Officially not, but their broadening range of contacts (along with suggestions of their activities in the Inner Sphere for far longer than ComStar has known of them) has proved unsettling to the Explorer Corps. Precisely who knows about the Jårnfölk and their unofficial freelance operatives remains to be discovered. The Clans, and through them Wolf's Dragoons, certainly know, but who among the Inner Sphere powers has the knowledge and connections to deal with the freelancers? Have corporations or governments employed them in the past? Uncovering such information can be the focus of a single adventure or an ongoing campaign.

How to Use the Jårnfölk

The Jårnfölk can easily appear in a campaign as protagonists or antagonists, or even as a background element. Characters who make their way to the quartet of Jårnfölk worlds will find themselves in a society as alien as that of the Clans (and perhaps even more dangerous, with the slightest faux pas possibly leading to a bloody confrontation). More likely, characters will encounter a sælgeflåde in the Deep Periphery (or perhaps the fringes of the Inner Sphere, now that official contact has been made). Most dangerous is the possibility that the characters are bystanders caught up in a Jårnfölk contract slaying, or are even the targets of one. Politically oriented campaigns may see the player characters seeking to hire Jårnfölk hit men.

Whether such attacks come from guild assassins undertaking freelance contracts or from *skåret* outcasts is largely irrelevant to their methods and techniques. However, the former will follow guild rules (filing vendetta on the Jårnfölk worlds, not targeting bystanders, carrying out their mission swiftly and efficiently, and so on). The *skåret*, by contrast, almost always strike without warning and show little compunction about eliminating witnesses to their actions. Mercy is also less common among the outcasts, who may deliberately inflict pain on their targets, sometimes refraining from a death blow and instead leaving the victim to suffer for hours, days or even weeks.

MINOR GROUPS: THE HIDDEN

NOTES

I saved my favorite one for last. All the write-ups you've been reading, they've been great. But this one, though it's only as big as the other four you just read, is the one I've put the most effort into researching. Five planets. At least five entire worlds. Gone. Not bombed out in the early wars. Simply disappeared. Completely. What happened? Where did they go?

ComStar's cartographers don't have these systems on their maps. Go back; research it. Dig through the journals, testimonies, reports. Start with the Succession Wars. Planets are named, but nobody knows where they are. Or the maps you do get can't keep the names straight. How in the name of all things holy did they disappear? And don't go telling me that the people got their systems mixed up. Too many people, spread over too much of the Inner Sphere, getting the same names too many times.

No, they're out there. I don't know where they are, or even when they went missing (and neither do those nuts in the robes; I checked). But I know they're out there. Now whether remnants of the Rim Worlds Republic, led by some long-lost Amaris heir, have built a secret empire on these "hidden worlds" and are plotting their revenge...that's a whole other ball o' wax.

—*Starling*

FROM ATLANTIS TO JARDINE, ARE THE LOST REALLY "LOST"?

—Attributed to Mirjam Torhansson, *The Truth Underground*,
Renegade Press, 1 April 3066

The tales are as old as time. Lost places, forgotten societies, a promise of wonder that draws the adventurous or the greedy to great lengths, often to disappointing ends. From the mythical unspoiled lands of Eden (the Garden, not the Clan homeworld), to the lost Terran continent of Atlantis (said to have been home to a hyper-advanced civilization), to the golden cities of Macchu Pichu and El Dorado that drove many an ancient Terran treasure hunter mad with lust and greed, stories of such places have always existed. Humanity's legends of lost civilizations did not end with the drive into space, however. If anything, space travel exacerbated the phenomenon by thousands of times.

And yet, what are legends without some grain of truth? Sure, we eventually learned the truth behind Eden, Atlantis, Macchu Pichu and El Dorado, lost lands and cities that as often as not turned out to be mere fables. But what of the lost worlds of the Inner Sphere? Worlds like the Marik planet of Jardine, known to have existed because of its best-known export, the felinoid tabiranth, and yet missing from virtually every astronomical map and record, even going back to the days of the first Star League?

Cities may be lost, but worlds? That's another matter.

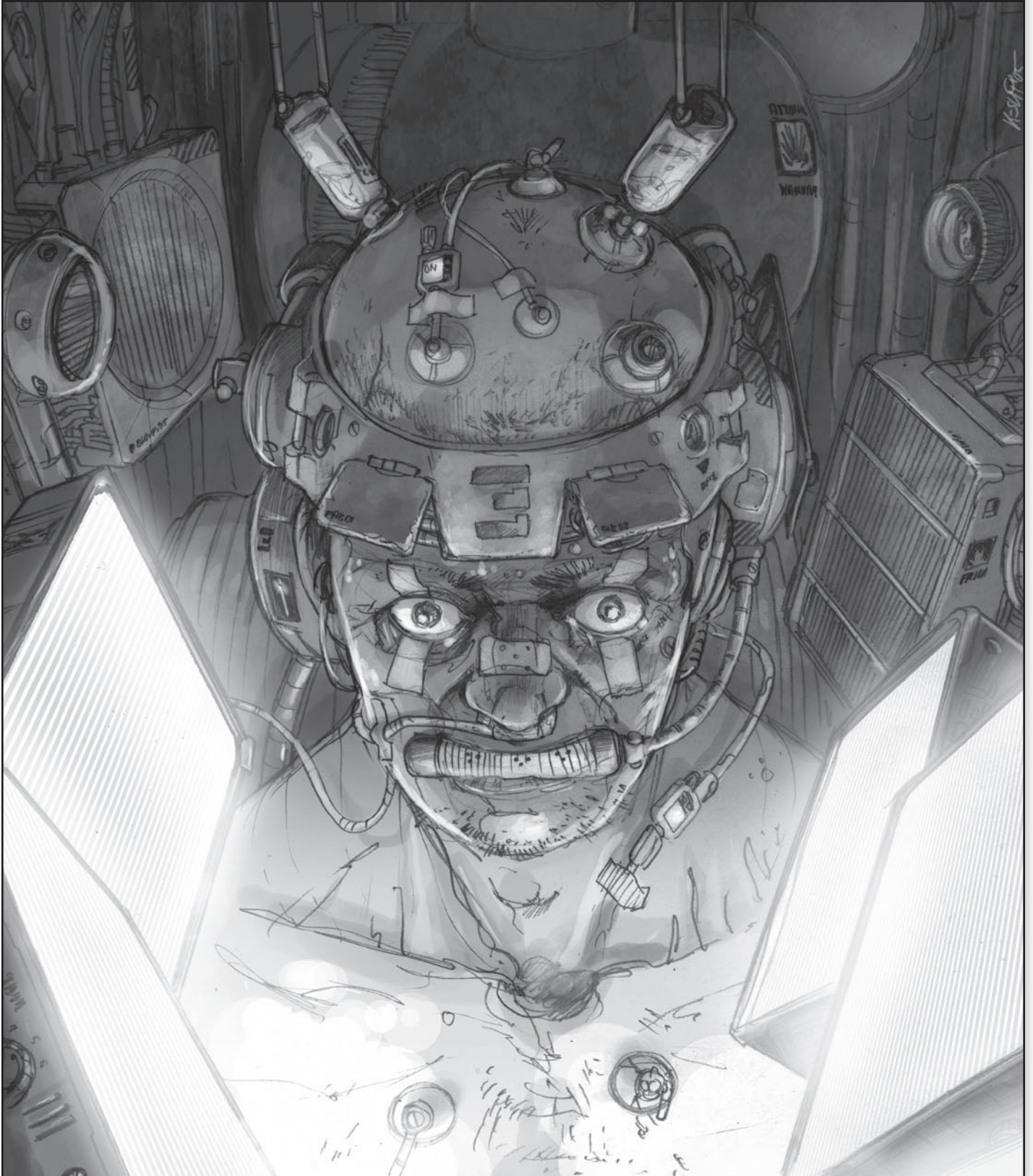
010 "Dear reader, what would you say if I told you that Jardine is not as lost as some may think, or that hidden among the thousands of stars where humankind walks are more worlds just like it, still alive, still thriving and (perhaps most shocking) still a danger to us all?" 001

[illegible]



connection/INTERSTELLAR PLAYERS/section16: RULES ADDENDUM

RULES ADDENDUM





RULES ADDENDUM

The following rules cover roleplaying as well as the *Classic BattleTech* board game, allowing players to integrate the entities described in this book into almost any type of campaign or game play.

CLASSIC BATTLETECH RPG RULES

The following rules expand on those presented in the *Classic BattleTech RPG (CBT: RPG)*, as well as its supplements, such as *Lotech (LT)*, *Classic BattleTech Companion (CBTComp)* and *Combat Equipment (CE)*.

As noted in the *Introduction*, most players and gamemasters may consider these rules optional for their campaigns. Some rules, however, are generic enough to add depth even to games that do not include the organizations and entities featured in this book, though all players in a gaming group should agree upon the inclusion of any of these rules.

TRAITS

The following section contains a selection of new traits and expanded rules for existing traits. Unless otherwise stated, these traits follow the rules in *CBT: RPG* (see p. 78).

Some of these new traits are so closely related to existing traits (such as *Contacts*) established in previous rulebooks that players can exchange them at the end of character creation to give existing characters more flavor. When making such trait swaps, however, the player must switch among similar traits of equal point values, with the gamemaster determining whether the exchange is appropriate.

INFLUENCE (NEW)

As a character progresses up (or down) the ladder within certain groups, he or she often builds (or loses) power, status and authority through connections, resources and reputation. How much or how fast one rises in the ranks depends on a character's actions for or against their respective groups and the gamemaster's discretion.

The Influence Trait reflects a character's overall power and status within his or her organization, and may be used to "pull some strings" or affect the outcome of negotiations and other social interactions within and beyond the organization's umbrella. This trait applies only to the character's membership in covert organizations and secret societies; for more public roles, such as government administrations, military command structures, noble society and corporate circles, the SOC Attribute remains the measure of the character's stature.

Initial Influence

Characters who possess the *In for Life* Trait automatically gain an Influence Trait for their group. Assume that the starting level of

the character's Influence is 0. For every two Life Paths taken while *In for Life*, the character's Influence in that organization increases by one level, to reflect the connections made over the years. In addition, the character's Influence Trait also increases by 1 for any event roll result of 17+ on a 2D10 Life Path (or a result of 10+ for a 2D6 Path). If an event roll result is 8 or less on a 2D10 Life Path, or 5 or less on a 2D6 path, the character loses one level of Influence.

Players may not purchase additional levels of Influence during character creation; they can only be earned through role-playing.

Nick's PC, John Doe, takes the Street Life Path and gets a result of 11, meaning that he joins the Yakuza and thus gains Influence (0): Yakuza. His next two paths, Military Enlistment and Tour of Duty, yield event roll results of 6 and 8, respectively, and so John's Influence rises by one level for the time spent, to Influence: 1.

Nick decides to go back into the breach, and on the Tour of Duty Life Path hits pay dirt with an event roll result of 11, pushing his Influence to 2. Nick decides it is his lucky day and tries the path for a third and final time. Unfortunately, his result this time is a 3. He loses a level of Influence and drops back to 1. However, because this is John Doe's fourth path taken since he gained his In for Life: Yakuza Trait, he automatically gains an additional level of Influence, bringing his final initial Influence level to 2.

Altering Influence

Events in which a character gets involved often cause that character's influence to rise and fall, depending on his or her participation and the outcome. Certain events cause an automatic shift (promotion within the organization, making new contacts and so on), while others may or may not increase a character's influence. The Influence Table below provides a guide to which situations improve a character's Influence and which may decrease it. Certain events cause an automatic change in value, as demonstrated under the Automatic Events header, while others yield an opportunity for Influence change either positive or negative, as appropriate to the situation.

For possible changes, the player must make a SOC Attribute Check, adding the character's current Influence Level divided by 4 (rounding down) to the result. If the check is successful on a possible opportunity to raise Influence (noted by a "Positive" listing under Type of Roll), the character's Influence increases by one level for every 5 points (or fraction thereof) by which the roll succeeded. If the check fails on a roll for a possible decrease in Influence (indicated as "Negative" under Type of Roll), the character loses one Influence Level for every 5 points (or fraction thereof) by which the check failed. Any other results—failure in an opportunity to increase Influence or success when determining possible Influence loss—have no effect on the character's Influence Trait.

RULES ADDENDUM



A character also receives one free attempt to increase his or her Influence for each year in game time that progresses during a campaign. Treat this freebie as a positive possible change roll, but it may increase the character's Influence by no more than one level, regardless of the roll's Margin of Success (MoS).

To avoid undue Influence inflation or over-use, gamemasters should exercise discretion in deciding what event should or should not be worth changing a character's Influence Trait.

INFLUENCE TABLE

Automatic Events	Influence Change
Promoted within organization	+1
Demoted within organization	-2
Eliminated threat to organization	+2
Created threat to organization	-4
Successful mission for organization on own initiative	+1
Gained new Contact (special or normal)	+ value of contact
Exposed organization secret	-5
Possible Changes	Type of Roll
Successful mission for organization under orders	Positive
Increased level of Reputation (good or bad)	Positive
Eliminated rival within organization	Positive
Failed mission for organization	Negative
Acquired Enemy	Negative
Under observation by authorities or media (per game month)	Negative

Effects of Influence

Unlike the SOC Attribute or the Glory and Prominence traits, which denote a character's standing in open societies and public life, Influence represents a character's standing within specific circles. The Influence Trait has no effect on someone unfamiliar with or uninterested in said group, and when interacting with a rival organization may even have a negative effect.

Players using the advanced Contacts/Enemies rules (see pp. 209-212, *CBTComp*), may also use their character's Influence Trait to aid in finding a contact through the organization's resources, adding a modifier equal to one-third of the character's Influence level (rounded down) to any required Protocol, Streetwise or Scrounge checks as necessary. Rather than making such checks only once per day, however, a character with the Influence Trait and access to his or her organization's resources may make as many attempts per day as the character has levels in Influence.

Same Organization: When dealing with other members of the same organization, add the character's Influence level to the result of all SOC-related checks.

Different Organizations: When using Influence between characters of different organizations that are somehow related or aware of one another (which depends on the campaign and is

ultimately up to the gamemaster's discretion), the character with the higher trait level gains a bonus to all SOC-related checks between them (such as Protocol) equal to the difference between their Influence levels.

Rival Organizations: When two characters with Influence in rival organizations interact, modify all SOC-related checks inversely by the character's unmodified Influence Level. This means that a character with Influence 10 must apply a -10 penalty to the SOC-related roll result, rather than adding his usual +10. This penalty, however, only applies if both interacting characters are aware of each other's ties to rival groups, as determined by the gamemaster.

Nick's character has the Influence (10): Illuminati Trait and is currently dealing with a character who has Influence (6): Brotherhood of Cincinnatus. The gamemaster decides that in this campaign, the Brotherhood is an organization the Illuminati uses to farm new recruits, and so their spheres of Influence overlap. As Nick's character has a higher Influence, he adds 4 to all SOC-related checks ($10 - 6 = 4$), while his counterpart receives no modifier. If the trait levels had been the other way around, Nick's counterpart would add 4 points to his SOC-related check results, while Nick's checks would have received no modifier. If, on the other hand, the gamemaster had decreed that the two organizations had no mutual ties, neither player would receive an Influence bonus to his skill checks.

Influence and Contacts/Enemies

Under the Advanced Contacts and Enemies rules presented in *CBTComp* (see pp. 209-218), the contacts and/or enemies acquired by player characters during character creation or role-playing are given an overall Influence Rating to reflect their resources, usefulness or status. For a more precise accounting of this NPC characteristic, an additional Influence Rating may be assigned to any Contacts or Enemies a player character has, if said character is connected with an organization that can exercise vast powers on the interplanetary scene.

To calculate this additional Influence Rating for an NPC Contact or Enemy, consult the Contact/Enemy Template Table on p. 209 of *CBTComp* to find the relevant NPC's Influence Rating. Then cross-reference the result with the Contact/Enemy Influence Rating Table below, noting whether or not the relevant NPC is part of a criminal, government or military organization or other secret society (and thus has the appropriate In for Life Trait to reflect that).

Any Special Contacts or Special Enemies automatically double their relevant Influence levels, as they are invariably ranking members of secret societies or high-placed organizations.



RULES ADDENDUM

CONTACT/ENEMY INFLUENCE RATING TABLE

NPC Influence Rating	Influence Level
None	1
Low	2
Medium	5
High	8
Very High	12
Additional Modifiers	
NPC is not In for Life	Influence Level x 0
NPC is Special Contact or Special Enemy*	Influence Level x 2

*Special Contacts/Special Enemies are always In for Life.

SPECIAL CONTACT (NEW)

Cost: 2/4/6/8

A Special Contact is in turn connected in some way with organizations so secret and influential that this contact may be able to influence the actions of governments without a government's own leaders knowing of or believing in the organization's existence. Wielding increased knowledge and resources, even the lowliest Special Contact may be able to come through for the character at a critical time—but his or her services always come with a price tag attached.

Players interested in obtaining a Special Contact for their characters in the later stages of character creation—after the Life Paths stage—may do so by exchanging an equivalent point value in standard Contact or Well-Connected traits (a minimum of two Contacts must be exchanged in this fashion, reflecting the rarity of encountering and earning the trust of one individual so well-connected). The cost of this trait, like that of a standard Contact, reflects the influence of the Special Contact within his or her organization.

Special Contacts are always In for Life within a major organization—secret or otherwise—and are beholden to said organization's goals and directives. They also tend to hold far greater influence as a result, and are often far more skilled and capable than comparable NPC Contacts and Enemies, typically wielding enough clout to have the player characters do their bidding rather than the other way around. If using the *CBTComp* Advanced Contacts and Enemies rules (see pp. 209-218) to locate

a Special Contact, add the point cost of the Special Contact Trait to the base TN, to reflect the difficulty in getting through to these secretive character types. However, this same value is subtracted from any TNs when using a Special Contact's influence to obtain manpower, information or supplies, reflecting this individual's superior ability to make things happen.

To reflect a Special Contact's power, unless the specific organization's rules state otherwise, the Special Contact/Enemy Template Table shown below effectively replaces the standard Contact/Enemy Template Table presented on p. 209 of *CBTComp*.

SPECIAL ENEMY (NEW)

Value: 2/4/6/8

A Special Enemy is the polar opposite of the special contact, a foe in turn connected to a larger organization and capable of wielding far more influence than a regular Enemy of effectively the same station. Special Enemies may even have one or two of the characters' existing Enemies on their payroll, and are often capable of recruiting more. However, despite their power and influence, these Enemies rarely hunt down the player characters outright, either for fear of exposing their position or because they still see a way to manipulate and destroy the character in far more subtle and practical ways in accordance with their own agendas.

As with Special Contacts, players may obtain Special Enemies for their characters after the Life Paths stage by exchanging an equivalent point value in standard Enemy or In for Life traits (a minimum of two Enemies must be exchanged in this fashion, reflecting the rarity of crossing one individual so powerful, and doing so badly enough to remain on his radar). The value of this trait, like that of a standard Enemy, reflects the influence of the Special Enemy within his or her organization. Also as with Special Contacts, the Special Contact/Enemy Template Table below may replace the *CBTComp* template for Special Enemy NPCs, and they are always In for Life with some organization.

SKILLS AND FIELDS

The following section contains a new skill and several skill fields for *CBT: RPG* characters. Unless otherwise stated, these follow the rules in *CBT: RPG* and *CBTComp*.

MARTIAL ARTS/SYSTEMA (NEW)

The martial art known as Poznai Sebia or Systema (The System) is a collection of martial arts stressing physical, educational and spiritual self-knowledge. The form employed by the Järnfölk stresses cooperative action and knowledge of teammates, and so confers a series of bonuses when

SPECIAL CONTACT/ENEMY TEMPLATE TABLE

NPC Ranking	Attributes	Traits	Skills (Points)/Limits	Influence	Sample NPC Type
Level 1	+1	+1	9-12 (24)/+2	Low	Sixth of June Initiate
Level 2	+5	+2	12-15 (30)/+3	Medium	Bounty Hunter Henchman
Level 3	+10	+4	15-18 (42)/+5	High	Irian Cabal CEO
Level 4	+12	+6	18-24 (55)/+7	Very High	Illuminati Family Aide

RULES ADDENDUM



used by several characters in concert. All members of a team attempting to use a Systema special ability must have the minimum required skill bonus for the ability being used.

Martial Arts/Systema bonuses require all practitioners in a character's team to attain a certain level of expertise with this skill. To reflect the complex training required to learn Systema, Martial Arts/Systema confers no special abilities at skill level bonuses of +1 or less.

Furthermore, though practitioners of Systema often train as a team from the start, those skilled in using this technique may quickly bond with a new team. However, when a team with a new member (or members) first uses Systema in actual combat, the team functions as if its members all possess one skill level *lower* than its least-skilled member. (BOD/WIL)

Team Knowledge

Characters with a Martial Arts/Systema rating of +2 or greater are aware of the general positions and dispositions of their teammates. They have a general sense of the subject's health and condition—healthy, tired, lightly wounded and so on. Team Knowledge has a range of 3 meters per rating point of Martial Arts/Systema (for example, 6 meters for 2+, 15 meters for 5+ and so on). A character may only monitor a number of teammates less than or equal to his or her Martial Arts/Systema rating at any one time.

Acting as One

One of Systema's key strengths is its ability to coordinate the actions of its practitioners, allowing several individuals to act as one. This phenomenon allows the practitioners to support each other while remaining independent actors, and allows them to focus their efforts on a single target.

Characters with Martial Arts/Systema +3 or greater can help out a comrade by positioning themselves, creating distractions or through a host of other methods. Provided both have yet to act in a given turn, a character may transfer some or all of his or her Martial Arts/Systema bonus to a colleague, who may add that bonus to his or her own skill rating until the end of the turn. The donating character acts with his or her reduced skill level until the end of that same turn. The maximum bonus a character may receive is half (round up) his existing skill level, and the maximum range of such loans is 2 meters per rating point of the loaning character.

A character with Martial Arts/Systema +4 decides to loan half his rating to a hard-pressed companion who has only a +3 bonus. For the remainder of the turn, the gifting character has an effective skill bonus of +2 while the recipient has an effective skill of +5. Because the loaning character has a base rating of +4, he can loan points to characters up to 8 meters away.

In order to focus their strengths on a single target, all practitioners in the team must have Martial Arts/Systema +5 or greater. In such cases, all Systema-trained characters attacking the same target may make individual Initiative rolls, but act as if the results were equal to the highest roll among the participants. Such cooperating attackers may not delay their actions.

Three Systema-trained characters attack the same target. Their initiative rolls are 18, 23 and 20. Each character acts as if he or she had rolled 23, the highest of the three roll results.

NEW OCCUPATIONAL FIELDS

The following fields are available to any characters who complete a Stage 3 University or other similar life path, and may be taken in place of the Scientist Field under the Sciences Major mandatory university subpath.

Anthropologist (12 CPs)

Prerequisite: INT 4
Academics/Anthropology
Interest/History, one culture
Investigation
Language/Any Two
Linguistics

Archaeologist (14 CPs)

Prerequisite: INT 4
Academics/Archaeology
Appraisal
Interest/Geology
Interest/History (Any)
Investigation
Navigation/Ground
Perception

Cartographer (12 CPs)

Prerequisite: INT 4, WIL 5
Career/Cartographer
Computers/Operation
Navigation/Air
Navigation/Ground
Perception
Sensor Operations



RULES ADDENDUM

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

The equipment described below follows the standard rules in *CBT: RPG*, *CBTComp*, *LT* and *CE*.

JÄRNFÖLK PISTOLS

The pistols employed by the Järnfölk are of uniformly high quality, as much status symbols as weapons. The basic characteristics of such weapons differ little from those of the Inner Sphere, with models equivalent to the firearms listed on p. 28, *LT*. However, in addition to their basic statistics and a one-level increase in their Availability Ratings, each of these weapons has an additional rating between 1 and 3. This rating serves as a cost multiplier over and above the base cost of the weapon (and its equally refined ammunition), as a bonus to the wielder's Pistols Skill Rating, and as a penalty for monthly Gunsmith or Tech/Ballistic checks to maintain the weapon. For example, a 2-rated Järnfölk equivalent to the Magnum Auto-Pistol costs 225 C-bills [75 C-bills base x (1 + 2 for rating) = 225 C-bills], carries a -1 TN modifier [+1 base TN for Magnum Auto-Pistol, -2 TN for rating = -1] and requires monthly maintenance at +2 TN (for rating).

The skill bonus for a Järnfölk pistol may not exceed the wielder's own Pistols Skill Rating. For example, a character with Pistols +2 may gain a maximum bonus of +2 from a Järnfölk weapon. Even if he wields a +3 weapon, he receives only a +2 skill bonus.

SUICIDE IMPLANTS

A grisly but often necessary tool among those involved in hyper-secret organizations everywhere, suicide implants provide the ultimate defense against enemy agencies learning anything from captured operatives, either through interrogation or post-mortem inspections. Though these devices are most commonly used by field operatives, even more highly placed officers and members of secret societies and government agencies may be candidates for such implants, in order to keep their knowledge and expertise from falling into enemy hands. The use of suicide implants is the ultimate expression of a member's bond to his or her organization.

Basic Suicide Implant Rules

In *CBT: RPG* games, all suicide implants have a TN for implanting, detection, disarming and removal, based on their nature and sophistication. Detection requires access to an X-ray or similar device and may be accomplished by a successful MedTech or Surgery check. Only a successful Surgery Check, however, may accomplish the implanting, disarming and removal of such devices. The base TNs for each procedure—given in each item's description—may be modified as normal for use of proper facilities and such, as well

as the presence of a relevant secondary skill (such as Demolitions for incendiary and explosive devices).

Failure to disarm or premature removal of a suicide implant activates the device, causing half damage on a minor failure (Margin of Failure 1-3) or full damage (Margin of Failure 4+) to the operative, as well as any secondary damage to the operating staff from blast effects typical of most incendiary, chemical and explosive devices. Failure to successfully implant a suicide device renders the device useless (Margin of Failure 1-3), reduces its damage values by half (MoF 4-6) or prematurely activates it just like a failed disarming attempt (assume a Margin of Failure to disarm or remove of 7+). While Detection Checks may be repeated each time an implanted character is examined, implanting, removing or disarming a suicide implant is a one-shot effort and may not be repeated.

Varied in sophistication and effectiveness, the following represent a few general samples of the more common suicide implants used in the modern-day *BattleTech* universe.

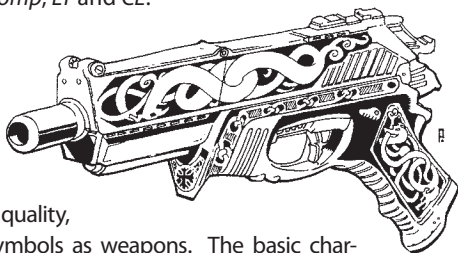
CONCEALED TOXINS

Concealed toxins are typically poison capsules embedded in false teeth or implanted just below the skin with a sophisticated pressure and code-sensitive release mechanism, appearing to observers as little more than a minor imperfection in the character's appearance. Upon activation, operatives using these devices immediately receive a lethal dose of poison, killing them within seconds of injection or ingestion. However, these devices, though simpler to produce and harder to detect than most others, are the most prone to accidental activation, and many documented cases exist in which the dosage failed to kill the agent quickly enough to avoid capture, medical intervention and subsequent interrogation.

In *CBT: RPG*, concealed toxins have a detection TN of 19, and may be disarmed on a TN of 20. Attempts to implant or remove a concealed toxin implant have a TN of 17. For an operative to activate his or her own concealed toxin is a Simple Action. When activated, a typical concealed toxin implant acts as a Lethal poison, with 5D6 base damage, continuous effect, 1-turn speed and a detection difficulty of +3, and works in accordance with the Poisons and Antidotes rules (see p. 114, *LT*). The toxins are usually painless to the user, enabling the operative to ignore any pain-related penalties to actions taken while the poison does its work.

INCENDIARY, CHEMICAL AND EXPLOSIVE IMPLANTS

An alternative to concealed toxins is the incendiary, chemical or explosive implant. Easier to detect on X-rays or similar devices, but typically far more effective, these devices are rarely self-activated and are instead set off by remote signals or signals from implanted bio-monitors. Essentially akin to planting a live bomb inside the operative, these devices offer a far more dramatic and foolproof method of terminating the agent and possibly taking out his would-be captors in the bargain.



RULES ADDENDUM



In *CBT: RPG*, these implants (regardless of type) have a detection TN of 15, and may be disarmed on a TN of 19. Attempts to implant or remove an incendiary, chemical or explosive implant have a TN of 18. Attempts to implant, remove or disarm such devices also benefit from any skill bonus the operating character has in Demolitions (applied as a bonus to the relevant check in addition to the character's Surgery Skill Check). For an operative to activate any of these implants is considered a Complex Action.

When activated, the typical device acts as either a 200-g block of pentaglycerine (for explosive implants; see p. 35, *LT*), or a Class C Inferno Ordnance (for chemical or incendiary implants, both of which have a burning duration of 6 turns, though the chemical device has only half the blast radius of the incendiary device). Because these devices are often implanted in the subject's torso or head, the operative suffers double the base damage upon activation and receives no armor protection. Characters standing within the blast radius may suffer damage as though the exploding operative *was* the detonating device.

For double the cost, chemical and incendiary suicide implants may be designed to destroy only the operative's own body, leaving surrounding individuals and equipment unharmed (save for slight chemical burns). These devices work just like their standard-model cousins, but are smaller and more focused, making them slightly more difficult to detect, disarm and safely remove.

REMOTE OR AUTOMATIC ACTIVATION IMPLANTS

A modification to the standard implant types, remote- or automatic-activation triggers are often added as a means of ensuring the successful use of a suicide implant in the event the operative cannot do so himself. Remote triggers, which use specially modified microcommunicators, may be activated by a partner or controller once they receive the properly encoded signal from within a 1-kilometer radius. (These systems have the added effect of enforcing the operative's loyalty in the event of possible corruption or betrayal.) Automatic triggers, by comparison, make use of

implanted bio-monitors that trigger the suicide device whenever the operative's life signs dip below—or rise above—acceptable pre-programmed ranges, as may happen in the event of critical injury or extreme torture.

In *CBT: RPG*, using a remote-activation trigger to activate a suicide device is a Simple Action by the controlling agent, as long as the operative in question is within the signal radius and the signal is not interrupted by local interference such as hostile ECM fields, heavy radiation shielding, strong electromagnetic fields and the like. An automatic trigger, on the other hand, activates the moment the implanted character suffers a Critical Wound in the torso or head, or his total Wound Value equals or exceeds twice his BOD or WIL (whichever is lower). A suicide implant activated by remote automatically acts as though the character had set off the device himself.

The presence of these triggering devices adds a -2 modifier to the TNs for Medtech or Surgery checks to detect any suicide implants, but adds a +2 modifier to any Surgery Check TNs to disarm or remove them.

BATTLESUIT/EXOSKELETON SPACE OPERATIONS ADAPTATION (INNER SPHERE)

While civilian zero-g construction exoskeletons have incorporated many of these systems for centuries, the Taurian Concordat is the first non-Clan power to successfully adapt them for a combat role on battle armor. The Inner Sphere version of space operations adaptation gear lacks the extra protection the Clans achieved through the use of HarJel.

CBT RPG: Battle armor outfitted with Inner Sphere space operations gear receive the benefits listed in *CBTComp* (see pp. 181-182), except that while in vacuum, attacks against the suit receive the normal +2 AP modifier.

BattleTech: Lacking HarJel, Inner Sphere battle armor receives double damage from all attacks while operating in vacuum (see p. 85, *BMR*).

SUICIDE IMPLANTS

Implant Type	Equipment Ratings	Detect	Implant	Disarm	Remove	Cost	Effects
Concealed Toxin	C/D/F	19	17	20	17	2,000	Simple Action to use; Lethal poison: 0•5D6; 1-turn duration; Continuous Effect; +3 Detection Difficulty
Explosive	D/D/F	15	18	19	18	1,500	Complex Action to use; Damage 8•10D6, Type X; Blast (quarter radius)
Chemical, Std.	D/D/F	15	18	19	18	1,800	Complex Action to use; Damage 2•5D6, Type E; Blast; Incendiary; 6-turn duration
Incendiary, Std.	C/D/F	15	18	19	18	1,250	Complex Action to use; Damage 2•5D6, Type E; Blast (half radius); Incendiary; 6-turn duration
Subject Only	—/—/—	+1	—	+1	+1	x2	Complex Action to use; Damage as normal (no blast)
Remote Trigger	+1/+1/—	-2	—	+2	+2	+300	Simple Action to trigger; Range: 1 km
Automatic Trigger	+1/+1/—	-2	—	+2	+2	+400	Triggers on Critical Torso/Head Wound or combined WV of 2xBOD or 2xWIL (whichever is lower)

RULES ADDENDUM

Combat Operations: Battle armor using this equipment receives the same bonuses as similarly equipped Clan-designed battle armor, except that the armor rating is still divided by 2 when computing its armor value (see p. 75, *Combat Operations*).

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVIVAL IMPLANTS

Appearing when humankind first ventured forth from the Terran system, cybernetic implants enabled a few adventurous human beings to survive in less-than-hospitable environments. Dispensing with the need for bulky environmental suits and equipment, these devices turned marginal worlds into viable colony sites. During humankind's Golden Age, however, the sheer number of worlds terraformed by the wonders of Star League technology virtually eliminated the need for environmental survival implants (ESI).

Even during the ravages of the Succession Wars, ESI technology allowed small groups of miners and settlers to venture into alien environments, and the Clans have likewise modified members of their lower castes to subsist on marginal worlds. Today, the Adaptors, one of the sub-sects of the Taurian Concordat's Far Lookers Movement, are by far the greatest champions of this technology. Spearheading a revival of ESI use, the Adaptors employ these devices to survive the otherwise uninhabitable worlds that they have chosen to colonize.

By contrast, some societies (such as the Free Worlds League) hold a negative view of cybernetic modification. The technology used by the Adaptors is often difficult to conceal, which has often been enough to keep such modified humans out of public view rather than suffer the scorn of their fellows. Characters equipped with obvious cybernetic modifications may receive a 1-point CHA reduction during initial dealings with unmodified characters, reflecting the initial discomfort that even the more open-minded may otherwise feel toward users of cybernetics (as determined by the gamemaster).

In game terms, implantation of ESIs requires access to hospital facilities and a successful Surgery Check with a TN of 12. An unsuccessful check means the procedure fails and further attempts to install that implant will not work. Success grants the subject the abilities of the relevant implant, as outlined below. Also, characters hailing from societies with an anti-cybernetics bias who receive these implants must automatically take Stigma/Bionics.

Bone and Joint Reinforcement

For people living in micro-gravity environments for extended periods, implantation of alloy fibers can counteract the inevitable decalcification of their bones. A mesh of fibers reinforces the bones and joints without interfering in the production of blood cells in the long bones of the body.

A character who receives bone and joint reinforcement avoids the effects of bone decalcification (see *Living in a Micro-Gravity Environment*, p. 125). However, the reinforcement does not increase the character's physical strength or resistance to damage.

Eye Covers

These permanently implanted lenses protect the eyes and eyelids from damage through exposure to hostile environments. For the convenience of the colonist, these implants are also photo-reactive, helping to negate blinding caused by sudden flashes of light.

A character equipped with eye covers receives AV2 protection against the effects of flash ordnance and AV1 against gas attacks (AV3 if the character also possesses a filter implant). Against stun ordnance, the user gains AV1, unless he or she is wearing an environmental suit or battle armor, in which case the protection provided by that equipment takes precedence.

It is virtually impossible (short of wearing a full helmet and visor) to hide eye covers, or to remove them without surgery.

**Filtration Liver**

An aid to surviving in exceptionally hostile environments, where the local food chain and water table are contaminated, the filtration liver can extract toxins from the bloodstream. This device also renders its user immune to many ingested or injected poisons.

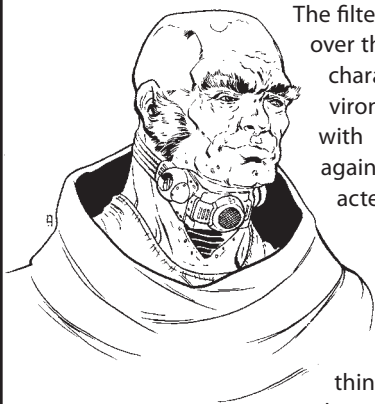
The character using a filtration liver has the equivalent of the Poison Resistance Trait. If the character already possesses that trait, then the filtration liver provides an additional -1 bonus to poison resistance TNs. Gamemasters may decide, however, to impose penalties if the character using a filtration liver is exposed to particularly exotic toxins.

While possessing a filtration liver has no obvious external indicators, a side effect makes the user's perspiration more fragrant than usual. This can be an embarrassment in social situations (reducing the character's CHA by 1 whenever sweating occurs), and deadly when an enemy can track the character by smell. The latter situation adds a TN modifier ranging from +1 to +3 to the character's Stealth Checks when the character attempts to stay hidden, depending on the ambient heat, humidity, stress and other factors that may cause excessive sweating, as determined by the gamemaster.

Filter Implant

Three kinds of Type I filter implants exist. The first is designed to remove impurities from an otherwise breathable atmosphere. While it can deal with most atmospheric taints and toxins, it provides little protection against biological agents and poisons that work on external contact. The implant includes two filters, each of which lasts for 24 to 72 hours (depending on the level of atmospheric contamination, as determined by the gamemaster).

RULES ADDENDUM



The filters naturally cleanse themselves over the course of 24 hours, once the character returns to a "clean air" environment. A character equipped with a filter implant receives AV1 against gas attacks (AV3 if the character also possesses eye covers).

The second Type I filter deals with dense and high oxygen content atmospheres that would otherwise be deadly. The third deals with thin atmospheres and those with low oxygen content. In game terms,

all three kinds of filters work the same way.

A Type II or Type III filter can incorporate the abilities of other types, but the cost increases significantly. Most users receive an implant tailored to a specific environment. A Type II filter incorporates the capabilities of two filter types, while the Type III possesses the capabilities of all three Type I filters.

The bulky filter is implanted high on the user's neck, just under the chin. It can be concealed with bulky clothing, but invariably adds a harsh metallic tone to the user's voice.

Humidifier

Used on extremely arid worlds, humidifiers add water to the air breathed in and also recover much of the water normally exhaled. Colonists equipped with humidifiers can cut their normal water requirements by up to a third. Fitted over the nose, this implant is virtually impossible to conceal.

Gill Implant

Rarely used, except on worlds with no suitable atmosphere, this implant enables its user to draw oxygen directly from water. While the gills provide effectively unlimited endurance in operating underwater, the implants do not counteract the effects of

extreme pressures or temperature or water-borne toxins that may bond with oxygen, which generally limits divers so equipped to depths of 100 meters or less.

Fitted on the neck just under the ears, the bulky gill implants are extremely difficult to hide.



ROLEPLAYING ADDENDUM

The following information for gamemasters and players of *CBT: RPG* campaigns is intended to cover other aspects of life related to the "power players" in this book, and should be used to add a more distinctive flavor to such campaigns and characters. However, as with the skills, traits and equipment listed previously, many of these game rules may apply even to campaigns where secret groups are not a factor.

BRAINWASHING

A favorite tactic of the military, religious cults, governments and teachers, brainwashing can range from simple repetition to a scientifically planned assault on the psyche. Also known under other euphemisms such as "thought reform," "coercive persuasion," "totalism" and "mind control," planned brainwashing first emerged during the middle of the twentieth century when it was used on prisoners of war. Ever since, many government agencies, religious cults and other groups with a political or sociological agenda have been accused of employing brainwashing techniques to instill fanatic loyalty in their members or even their enemies. Though many of these allegations proved untrue, a few were well founded and often had tragic results. To combat this, counter-brainwashing methods known as "deprogramming" were eventually developed.

Brainwashing is often portrayed in the media as a way to "program" someone like a robot, either rewriting their belief system or instilling some Pavlovian response to commit some act that only the victim can accomplish, such as assassinate a heavily guarded leader. While such feats may not be possible in reality, the technique is far from useless to subversive agencies. Through brainwashing, the human psyche can be beaten

ENVIRONMENTAL SURVIVAL IMPLANTS TABLE

Implant	Equipment		Weight	Afil.	Notes
	Rating	Cost			
Bone and Joint Reinforcement	C/A/B	10,000	—	—	Immune to bone decalcification
Eye Covers	C/A/C	1,000	—	TC	AV2 vs. flash ordinance; AV1 (AV3 w/Filter Implant) vs. gas and stun ordinance
Filtration Liver	D/A/C	10,000	—	TC	Poison Resistance (−1 TN bonus if already possessed)
Filter Implant I	C/A/C	5,000	—	TC	See rules
Filter Implant II	C/A/C	15,000	—	TC	Combines two Type I filters
Filter Implant III	C/A/C	45,000	—	TC	Combines three Type I filters
Humidifier	C/A/C	3,000	—	TC	See rules
Gill Implant	D/A/C	8,000	—	TC	See rules



RULES ADDENDUM

into subservience and lose its will to rebel against the forces restraining it. While some individuals are strong-willed enough to resist such abuse, others can willingly fall into a state in which the victim accepts his or her reconditioning as long as the stimulus (such as the authority figures, group or surroundings responsible) remain present. Removing the victims of brainwashing from these stimuli usually results in a gradual recovery of that person's original values and personality, though some permanent damage may linger from the psychological trauma suffered in the brainwashing process. Others, however, may still cling to lifelong allegiances toward those who brainwashed them.

CBT: RPG Rules

Brainwashing is a long drawn-out process, not merely a roll of the dice on a "brainwashing" skill. The most important factor in the process is the subject's Willpower Rating (WIL). Training and experience can help, but the strength of the psyche is the most vital element of this procedure.

The base time for each brainwashing session is one week, though taking more or less time can impose modifiers on the eventual Action Check. Additional modifiers may be applied as the gamemaster sees fit for the facilities and the condition of the subject. Techniques such as sleep deprivation, starvation and other methods frequently used in conjuncture with brainwashing may result in fatigue. These and other modifiers may be applied per the table on p. 17 of *CBT: RPG*.

To set the stage for each session, the brainwasher (considered the attacker) may make one Opposed Negotiation and Interrogation check against the subject per session. The results of these checks affect the final roll result (called the Session Result Check) used to determine the outcome of the session as the attacker's logic or badgering helps or hinders his cause. If the attacker wins these opposed rolls, a +2 modifier applies to the Session Result Check for each successful opposed check, while each victory by the subject imposes a -2 penalty to the Session Result Check. These modifiers only apply to the session in which the opposed checks are performed. At the end of the session, the attacker performs the Session Result Check by making an Academics/Psychology or Career/Psychology Check against a TN equal to 5 times the subject's current WIL, adding to the check the attacker's current CHA and the modifiers described above. If the check is unsuccessful, the session is wasted. However, if the attacker is successful, the subject's WIL is lowered by 1 point.

This process repeats until the subject's WIL is reduced to zero or the attacker ceases. When the subject's WIL reaches zero, he or she is considered "broken" and the attacker can spoon-feed his or her dogma to the subject, who will unquestioningly obey at this stage. The subject's WIL then rises to its original value at 1 point for every two weeks of continuous sessions. Though no further rolling is required in this period, the subject is considered fully brainwashed once his or her WIL returns to normal in this fashion.

A subject who has yet to be fully brainwashed may try to regain WIL. If the attacker is still present and continuing the brainwashing process, once every two weeks the subject may make a WIL Attribute Check, adding half the attacker's CHA (rounded up) to the TN. A successful check restores 1 point of WIL. If the subject is not under the attacker's influence or undergoing a session, this 1-point WIL restoration is automatic, requiring no check. A subject has not been successfully brainwashed until his WIL is completely drained and then restored to its original level.

Deprogramming works the same way as brainwashing, though adding negative conditions may have negative repercussions in the future. A subject who has gotten separated from his attacker or the attacker's organization/affiliation may attempt to "self-deprogram," reflecting the character's own dawning realization that the beliefs he currently holds do not fit his true sense of self. In this case, the subject makes a Session Result Check as indicated above once for every week in which the attacker or any authority figures from the attacker's organization have left the subject on his own. The target number is still 5 times the subject's current WIL, but the subject's *original* WIL score is added to the roll result. This roll, however, must be made like an Untrained Skill Check (whether or not the character has the relevant Academics or Career Skill), using 3D10 and taking only the worst two dice rolls for the result. A successful check reduces the subject's WIL by 1 point, eventually breaking the programming once the character's WIL reaches 0. After this, the character recovers 1 point of WIL per week without a check, so long as the attacker or his associates do not return to "reprogram" the subject.

LIVING IN A MICRO-GRAVITY ENVIRONMENT

A major stumbling block to humankind's early exploration and colonization efforts were the devastating effects on the human body of prolonged exposure to a micro-gravity environment. While early research showed that a rigorous exercise regimen could reduce degradation of the muscles, an unstoppable decalcification of the bones appeared to be an insurmountable barrier.

Shortly after the introduction of the Kearny-Fuchida jump drive, Terran Alliance scientists developed a battery of drugs that could significantly slow the decalcification process. Others—such as Clans Snow Raven and Diamond Shark, both of whom have significant numbers of continuously space-bound personnel—have sought more systemic solutions, including genetic therapy. In the thirty-first century, anti-decalcification drugs are an omnipresent feature of long-distance space travel—indeed, such endeavors as Operation Serpent would not have been possible without them.

CBT: RPG Rules

For every month in which a character spends at least half his or her time in a micro-gravity environment, the character must make a successful WIL Check. Failure indicates that the character did not perform the exercises necessary to prevent muscle dete-

RULES ADDENDUM



rioration. In game terms, the character suffers the physical effects of aging (STR, BOD, DEX and REF modifiers) for the next age band. Each subsequent failure moves the character into the next age band. Once a character moves beyond the last age band, he or she is effectively bedridden. Recovery is only possible in a normal gravity environment, with the character moving back through the age bands to his or her true age at a rate of one band per full month spent out of micro-gravity.

Characters can prevent critical bone decalcification through consumption of commonly available drugs at a cost of 50 C-bills per month (this medication has C/A/A Availability Ratings). Anyone failing to use these drugs suffers a loss of 1 point of BOD per month, which the character can only regain in a normal gravity environment at a rate of 1 point of BOD per two months. These BOD modifiers are in addition to the penalties for failing to observe the micro-gravity exercise program.

Even with the drugs, bone decalcification takes its toll over extended periods of time. For each year that a character spends more than half of his or her time in micro-gravity, the character must make a BOD Check with a -4 TN modifier. Failure results in the permanent loss of 1 point of BOD. The effects of BOD loss from decalcification can be offset by receiving bone and joint reinforcements (see *Environmental Survival Implants*, p. 123).

ROLEPLAYING WITH INTERSTELLAR PLAYERS

The various interstellar players presented in this sourcebook are just a few of the shadow organizations and individuals that wield considerable influence beyond otherwise ordinary members of government, business and the military who have long been the focus of life in the *Classic BattleTech* universe. In general, most of these groups play out the same way, with upper-tier leaders clinging to the shadows while pawns and followers interact with the outside world, acting as eyes, ears and hands for their unseen masters. Though methods and styles may vary from group to group, and can be adapted to suit any gaming environment a gamemaster chooses, the following guidelines provide a general sense of how to use these interstellar players and other shadow groups in a standard RPG campaign.

Character Creation and Shadow Groups

Strictly speaking, every time a character gains the In for Life Trait, he or she has become a member of a shadow group, be it a criminal organization, a political conspiracy, or membership in a secret intelligence agency or one of the interstellar players featured in this product. Membership in all such cases carries with it an imperative to keep the whole truth of the character's organization, its motives and its goals a closely guarded secret, available only to those who have earned the proper level of respect and trust.

To reflect this secrecy and general distrust of outsiders, players whose characters acquire the In for Life Trait may also add

either the Dark Secret or Quirk (1)/Paranoid traits, if they have not yet obtained either one during the creation process. In exchange, the player may add 1 point to either of the character's SOC or WIL Attributes (regardless of affiliation limits, to a maximum of 10), signifying a rise in public status or intensity that often accompanies membership in such dangerous and powerful groups. A character with In for Life must also compute his relevant Influence Trait level within that group (see *Influence*, p. 117).

Characters should not be able join just any shadow group during character creation. While covert groups, government conspiracies, rebel factions and organized crime are certainly possible, the likes of the Illuminati, the Genecaste and the Manei Domini should not simply be chosen or randomly rolled. Such groups are highly restrictive and so secretive as to be nearly invisible in daily life, accessible only through roleplaying. Gamemasters should carefully review what groups may or may not have an impact on their games and decide up front whether their players can generate characters who belong to such groups.

Roleplaying and Shadow Groups

By and large, the player characters will encounter most shadow groups through their NPC members. Entire adventures may be based on discovering, joining or even attempting to destroy or reveal the existence of a shadow group to the universe at large. Once again, it falls to the gamemaster to determine how hard or easy any of this is, using the published source material on such agencies and organizations as a guide. Joining the ranks of the Brotherhood of Cincinnatus may be a simple enough feat for a Lyran-born character with a noted hatred of the Draconis Combine, but slipping the same character into the Davion Warriors' Cabal should be nigh impossible.

Because these powerful groups shroud themselves in secrecy, player and non-player characters may well be In for Life with a shadow group before they gain enough influence to affect the group or learn its secrets. The Illuminati, for instance, may put prospective members through a series of tests with and without the character's knowledge, all of which the character must overcome to reach a new level of trust within the order. Less sophisticated groups may ask the same of a player character, usually through tests of loyalty such as killing a member of a rival group or an individual in society, risking life and limb as necessary to achieve such rites of passage. These tests often have the additional effect of forcing the character to accept the leadership of the shadow group, as they can shatter long-standing allegiances to others or even violate laws in ways that make the character an outcast from normal society, hunted and shunned by all but his new "comrades in arms."

The gamemaster should always work out the ultimate goals of any shadow group, even if the top leaders of the shadow group never reveal themselves to their members. Most groups pursue multiple goals at once, all of which are pieces in a larger puzzle.



RULES ADDENDUM

Still others may operate at the behest of an even larger organization.

Characters who are not In for Life with a shadow group may easily find themselves under the sway of such an organization, through Special Contacts or Special Enemies in such groups who can pull strings or make demands that the characters must abide by or suffer the consequences. Indeed, the player characters' reaction to these individuals may ultimately prove to be their initial rite of passage into the shadow group, and their "success" may make them In for Life with an organization that chose them rather than the other way around.

Spheres of Influence

All shadow organizations exert some kind of influence over society and politics at large, but not all organizations may be considered equal. Some, like the Combine's ISF or the Capellan Maskirovka, also have well-defined spheres of influence that pervade their home nations and reach into neighboring realms, but are noticeably weaker beyond that. Many also have caps on their reach and resources, limiting how powerful and far-reaching they can be, with the likes of the Bounty Hunter paling in comparison to the more powerful Sixth of June. Still others have a social sphere of influence, a single area of society on which they focus, such as the religious orders of the Exituri and the One Star Faith. Yet others have their own special requirements for membership that may affect the normal hierarchy of influence within their organizations.

To clarify how the various shadow groups operate, the Shadow Groups Table below provides a general description of each group's political and social spheres of influence, plus any special rules regarding membership and activities within the organization beyond those previously discussed, and the maximum attainable Influence Rating a group's members may reach. Gamemasters may modify these tables as they see fit, as the nature of most shadow organizations makes them hard to easily quantify.

For Political Spheres of Influence, each group has an entry of Home, Neighbor or All, reflecting

how far the group's reach extends relative to its base of operations. Home means the group works only within the political boundaries of its own state or local region, while Neighbor indicates a group that is equally active at home and within neighboring realms. Groups listed as All may have operatives at large anywhere in the Inner Sphere, Periphery and even Clan Space (though some organizations may have blind spots, such as Interstellar Expeditions, which has no significant contacts in the Clan homeworlds).

For Social Spheres of Influence, each group is rated as Underworld, Political, Religious, Corporate, Military, All or Renegade. Underworld spheres encompass the realms of organized crime and the black market, and blatantly operate outside the law. Political spheres cover state intelligence agencies and political conspiracies, which may not always operate outside the law, but often involve some degree of ethical flexibility. Religious spheres focus almost exclusively on spiritualism and inspire an often-fanatical following. Corporate groups revere the bottom line above all, and often operate legally but with the cold and calculating methodology of a machine. Military spheres can range from armed rebel sects and militias to a grouping of like-minded soldiers dutifully serving their state, but are universally armed for bear. All spheres can reach into many aspects of society, groups so pervasive that their influence can be felt everywhere. The final classification, Renegade, represents none of the above, reflecting small and personal groups such as mercenary commands and bounty hunters.

Special membership requirements may vary, but most include required combat training (with more restrictive groups specifying the realm that does the training) and rites of passage

SHADOW GROUPS TABLE

Shadow Group Or Group Type (Examples)	Political Sphere of Influence	Social Sphere of Influence	Maximum Influence	Special Membership Requirements
Organized Crime (Yakuza, Mafia)	Home	Underworld	12	None
Rebel/Terrorist Group (Heimdall, Black Dragon)	Home	Military	12	Combat training
Intelligence Agency, State (LIC, ISF)	Neighbor	Political	16	Training by the state
Intelligence Agency, Military (DEST, DMI)	Neighbor	Military	16	Training by the state
Religious Cult (One Star Faith, Exituri)	Home	Religious	14	Rites of passage
Sixth of June	All	Political	16	Combat training; rites of passage
Illuminati	All	All	35	Min. Influence 10+; rites of passage
Irian Corporate Cabal	Home	Corporate	15	None
Interstellar Expeditions	All	Renegade	12	None
Genecaste	Neighbor	Renegade	20	Hereditary membership
Brotherhood of Cincinnatus	Home	Military	14	Rites of passage
Bounty Hunter	All	Renegade	8	Rites of passage
Davion Warriors' Cabal	Home	Military	14	Min. SOC 5+; rites of passage
Järnfolk	Neighbor	Renegade	12	Hereditary membership
The Far Lookers	Neighbor	Political	12	None
Scourge of Death	Home	Military	12	Rites of passage
The Coterie	All	Military	12	Combat training; rites of passage

RULES ADDENDUM

(which vary from group to group and can range from massive donations to illegal acts such as destruction of property and even murder). Some are even hereditary, with most members born into the group and new recruits from outside almost unheard of. Still others may have minimum Attribute or Trait requirements. For those that require a minimum Influence Rating to enter, members already In for Life with the group may not use the Influence Trait until they attain a certain level of influence within the organization. After that, the trait functions normally.

INTERSTELLAR PLAYER NPCS

The Bounty Hunter, Genecaste and Manei Domini troopers presented in this book are all special characters whose abilities can have an extraordinary—and potentially unbalancing—effect on roleplaying campaigns. These characters should never be used in campaign play as player characters, as evidenced by their lack of Life Paths for character creation. All three of these character groups are presented here exclusively for use as non-player characters (NPCs), each with special rules pertaining to their capabilities in roleplaying campaigns.

BOUNTY HUNTER GAME RULES

In game terms, for an employer to even set up an initial contact with the Bounty Hunter, he or she must have at least two Contacts (3) who each have worked with the Bounty Hunter before or have some sort of business relationship with him and can serve as positive references. The Bounty Hunter will make an extensive background check of this potential employer, using his many contacts (assume he can use 2D6 Contacts (3) to make these checks) before setting up a personal meeting. Prior to the meeting, the potential employer must place one million C-bills in a private account, which the Bounty Hunter will use to travel to the meeting. The remainder will be refunded, minus an additional 100,000 C-bills, if the Bounty Hunter refuses the contract. If he accepts the contract, this “fee” will be taken out of the contract’s bonus.

In negotiating the contract, the Bounty Hunter effectively has 350 Dragoon Rating Points in his pool. He only accepts extraction or assassination missions, independent command and full salvage rights. He further demands full transport, straight support and battle loss compensation. For additional information, see *Running a Mercenary Unit*, starting on p. 153, *Classic BattleTech Field Manual: Mercenaries, Revised*.

Finally, the Bounty Hunter demands payment of half the bounty up front and the remaining 50 percent upon completion of the contract. The employer must make these payments, as with the one million C-bill up-front payment, via a transfer to a private account, though the Bounty Hunter has been known to accept easily transportable commodities (precious gems, germanium and so on) instead.

Once the Bounty Hunter has completed a contract, he provides that employer with the means to contact him in the future for additional contracts. For subsequent jobs, the employer in question may bypass the necessary two Contacts (3) before arranging for a new meeting (though the rest of the process remains the same, including the one million C-bills up front).

Note: For statistics on the Bounty Hunter’s CBT capabilities, including his personal BattleMech and those of his henchmen, see the *Classic BattleTech Rules* section on p. 134.

GENECASTE NPCS

The Genecaste represent a society and culture so far removed from those in the *BattleTech* universe that an entire section of a sourcebook (if not the entire book) could be dedicated to fleshing them out, allowing for endless adventures—not to mention the limitless cool possibilities of actually creating Genecaste player characters. However, that is beyond the scope of this sourcebook.

The Genecaste are presented here as Enemy NPCs, using the Advanced Contacts and Enemies rules beginning on page 209, *CBTComp*. Through the use of such NPCs, the gamemaster can spice up any type of adventure without expending undue effort.

To convey the uniqueness of the Genecaste, use the following rules.

GENESUBCASTE RULES

Given humanity’s general inherent distaste for genetic manipulation of the human genome, the more radically altered a Genecasteman, the more difficulties a non-Genecaste character has when encountering one. These difficulties can range from a simple reluctance to speak, to a paralyzing fear when dealing with the most radically altered.

Any attempts by a non-Genecasteman to use First Aid, MedTech and Surgery checks on a Genecasteman (with the exception of a genenorm) incur a +4 modifier, with an additional +1 for every level of geneform. For example, medical care on a Firstform receives a +5 modifier (+4 modifier, +1 level of geneform), while a Fifthform receives a +9 modifier (+4 modifier, +5 levels of geneform).

Also, characters encountering some geneforms may be forced to make a WIL Check to avoid penalties to subsequent checks, reflecting their shock and horror at seeing such examples of altered humanity in the flesh. Bonuses may apply to these checks if the character possesses the Brave Trait or has had previous encounters with the same geneforms, while penalties may apply if the character possesses the Timid or Introvert traits.

All Genecastemen automatically receive the Quirk/Xenophobia (2) Trait toward any non-Genecastemen. This trait drops one level when dealing with other Genecastemen whose geneforming differs radically from their own.



RULES ADDENDUM

Genenorm

No one can recognize a genenorm via the naked eye, though their xenophobia may betray them. For all types of rules, treat them exactly like normal humans.

Firstform

Like genenorms, a Firstform Genecasteman cannot be perceived by the naked eye, though their xenophobia can be a giveaway. Any time a non-Genecaste character uses the First Aid, MedTech or Surgery skills on a Firstform Genecasteman, a successful Intelligence Check against a TN of 25 enables the character to notice something unusual about the Firstform's blood work, cellular structure and so on.

Secondform

When a character encounters a Secondform Genecasteman for the first time, on a successful Intelligence Check against a TN of 20, the character notices something odd about the NPC's physical appearance. Players may make this Action Check only once per encounter. At each subsequent encounter, the TN drops by 1.

Any time a character uses First Aid, MedTech or Surgery skills on a Secondform Genecasteman, a successful Intelligence Check against a TN of 20 enables the character to notice something unusual about the physical characteristics of the NPC.

Thirdform

When a character encounters a Thirdform Genecasteman for the first time, an Intelligence Check against a TN of 16 lets the character notice something odd about the physical appearance of the NPC. Players may make this Action Check only once per encounter. At each subsequent encounter, the TN drops by 2.

Any time a character uses First Aid, MedTech or Surgery skill checks on a Thirdform Genecasteman, on an Intelligence Check against a TN of 10 the character notices the specific geneform. If a character is required to use the Skill Check on the part of the body with the geneform, the character automatically notices it.

Once a character becomes aware of the specific geneform, the character must make an immediate Willpower Check against a TN of 16. If this check fails, the character receives a -2 modifier to all Action Checks for the next four turns.

Fourthform

When a character encounters a Fourthform Genecasteman, the character must make an immediate Willpower Check against

a TN of 20. If this check fails, the character receives a -4 modifier to all Action Checks for the next six turns.

Fifthform

When a character encounters a Fifthform Genecasteman, the character must make an immediate Willpower Check against a TN of 25. If this check fails, the character receives a -6 modifier to all Action Checks for the next eight turns.

GENECASTE NPC TEMPLATE TABLE

Geneform Ranking	Attributes	Traits	Skills (Points) / Limits	Allowed Contact/ Enemy NPC Ranking*	Max. Geneform Limit/Level†
Genenorm	+0	+0	+4 (+8) / +3	Henchman	0/0
Firstform	+0	+0	+5 (+10) / +4	Level 1 and below	1/1
Secondform	+1	+1	+4 (+8) / +3	Level 2 and below	1/2
Thirdform	+2	+2	+3 (+6) / +2	All	2/3
Fourthform	+4	+3	+2 (+4) / +1	Level 1 and above	2/4
Fifthform	+6	+4	+1 (+2) / +0	Level 2 and above	3/5

*Including Special Contact/Enemy Traits

†The number of geneforms a Genecaste NPC may possess are given left of the slash, while the maximum level of any geneforms taken are given on the right. A Genecaste NPC may take only one geneform at the character's maximum level, but for any additional geneforms desired (up to the maximum number allowed), the character may select from geneforms of a lower level. Thus, a Thirdform Genecasteman may be created with up to two geneforms, but only one of these may be a Level 3 form; the other must be Level 2 or lower. Genecaste characters may not possess more than one of the same geneform.

GENEFORMS

As a gamemaster creates geneformed Enemy NPCs (see p. 209, *CBTComp*), each one may include a specific geneform, which conveys additional abilities (see *Choosing Geneforms*, below). Each Geneform Ranking modifies the given statistics of an Enemy NPC Ranking as shown on the Enemy Template Table, page 209, *CBTComp*. For example, a Thirdform Level 3 Enemy has the following modifiers when creating an NPC character: Attributes +12, Traits +6 and Skills (Points)/Limits 12-18 (41) / +6.

CHOOSING GENEFORMS

It would be so easy (and fun) to fall into the minutiae of geneforming, providing a plethora of cool, real world science—mixed liberally with science fiction—to describe exactly how these geneforms work. However, such an undertaking is beyond the scope of this publication. Instead, the Genecaste are presented as straightforwardly as possible, to make them easy to use for the gamemaster.

Each time he or she creates a Genecaste Enemy NPC, a gamemaster may choose from the following list of geneforms, conveying additional abilities with the restrictions shown on the Genecaste Enemy Template Table, above. Unless specifically noted, all modi-

RULES ADDENDUM



fiers are cumulative with those for Attributes, traits, skills and equipment (that is, all these geneforms can be combined with any traits, skills or equipment for a cumulative effect, when appropriate). No Genecasteman may take more than one of the same geneform.

Higher Geneforms: The following list only covers First-, Second- and Thirdforms. Based on the examples given, a player and/or gamemaster can generate additional higher-level geneforms that take the transformation of the standard human body to even greater heights: chitinous skin across the entire body, chameleon-like effects for camouflage, multi-limbed or even radically altered in size and so on. Only your imagination should stop you, but keep in mind that in all cases, a geneform should be a logical extension of the transformation of the human body to survive in a given environmental extreme. The gamemaster, as usual, should have final say over the exact nature of any additional geneforms. The gamemaster will need to use his or her judgment in many instances, deciding on a case-by-case basis when certain types of equipment cannot be used with specific geneforms.

Eel Hands (Level: 1)

The hands generate an electrical charge similar to that of an eel.

Rules: If the Genecasteman touches a character's exposed skin (in a non-combat situation) or makes a successful melee attack (if in melee combat), in addition to any other damage, the target character receives an additional 1D6 points of energy damage and must make an immediate Knockout Check.

Environmental Adaptations (Level: Variable)

The essence of the Genecaste geneforming philosophy, environmental adaptations alter a body to adapt to the harsh conditions of a given locale. The more extreme the environment, the more radical the alteration.

Terran Surface Extreme Adaptation (Level: 1): An NPC with this geneform is at home in Terra-like extremes of deserts, jungles and high altitudes, as well as zero-g adaptations (bone loss resistance) and high-g tolerance (up to 2Gs continuously, or 4Gs in brief accelerations), suffering no adverse penalties in such environments.

Non-Terran Surface Extreme Adaptation (Level: 2): An NPC with this geneform is at home on other planetoids that push past the boundaries of Terra-like environments: jungles and deserts where heat ranges from 60-80C, altitudes or thin atmospheres with atmosphere pressures down to 0.1, and high-g tolerance (up to 4Gs continuously or 8Gs in brief accelerations), suffering no adverse penalties in such environments.

Exotic Environment Adaptations (Level 3): An NPC with this geneform is at home in radically different environments, such as underwater, no atmosphere, continuous heat up to 100C and so on, and a high-g tolerance (up to 6Gs continuously or 12Gs in brief accelerations), suffering no adverse penalties in such environments.

Fatigue Resistance (Level: 1)

This geneform fortifies the body against damage and fatigue.

Rules: A Genecasteman with Fatigue Resistance adds +4 to his WIL when checking for Fatigue (see *Fatigue*, p. 115, *CBT: RPG*) and adds a -2 modifier when making any Knockout Checks.

Muscle Enhancement (Level: 1)

This geneform strengthens the musculature across the body.

Rules: After finalizing the NPC, the Strength Attribute (regardless of minimums or maximums) is increased by 1.

Venom Gland (Level: 1)

This geneform develops a sac of venom underneath the tongue, along with changes in musculature required to spit the poison at a target.

Rules: Use the rules for poison on pp. 121-122, *LT*: Poison Spray, 1/3/4/5 [2D6; Lethal; Contact; 1 turn]. The Genecasteman with this geneform is effectively immune to his own venom, though not necessarily that of another Genecasteman with the same geneform. When full, the venom gland can store 20 doses, and naturally "refills" itself at a rate of one dose per hour.

Visual Augmentation (Level: 1)

This geneform covers several eye and visual cortex modifications.

Rules: Each modification below is a separate geneform. Genecastemen with Visual Augmentation retain the ability to see normal light.

Enhanced: An NPC with this geneform applies a -2 modifier to the target number for any Perception Checks.

Low-light: This geneform acts as a night vision device (see p. 149, *CBT: RPG*), with the following modifications; the cumulative TN modifier at short range is +0, while the NPC ignores the standard +1 TN modifier when performing any other delicate action that relies on fine eyesight.

Thermographic: This geneform acts as a Heat Sensor (see p. 107, *LT*), but with a range of only 500 meters.

Enhanced Spectrum Vision (Level: 2)

Unlike visual augmentation, this vision-based geneform noticeably alters a Genecasteman's visual appearance. A fine network of conductive cells grows along the surface of the skin across a large portion of the cranium (an organic antenna), allowing stimuli to be translated through the visual center of the Genecasteman's brain so that the recipient can "see" radio frequency emissions.

Rules: When radar is being used (see *Radar Monitors and Sensors*, p. 108, *LT*), a Genecasteman NPC who makes a successful Perception Check when in an effective radar radius will "see" the radar in use.



RULES ADDENDUM

Full Spectrum Hearing (Level: 2)

This geneform exponentially modifies the ears, along with the related regions of the brain, to discern and interpret any type of sound.

Rules: Voice distorters and white noise generators (see p. 107, *LT*) do not work against a Genecasteman with full spectrum hearing. Additionally, full spectrum hearing acts as a seismic sensor (see p. 108, *LT*), but with a range of only 500 meters. Finally, a Genecasteman with full spectrum hearing applies a -3 modifier to the target number for any Perception Checks.

Oxygen Storage (Level: 2)

This geneform alters the body in one or more ways to allow a genecastemen to hold his or her breath for extended periods.

Rules: The genecasteman can go without breathing for one hour with no effect, assuming minimal activity. For every minute past that hour, the NPC takes a Fatigue point, and for every five minutes he takes a Wound. Halve these times (round down) for moderate activity (walking, slow swimming and so on), and quarter them (round down) for vigorous activity (running, fighting, swimming and so on).

Superior Articulation (Level: 2)

Each joint is elasticized and in some cases joints are added, providing the genecasteman with extreme dexterity well beyond any human norm.

Rules: After finalizing the NPC, the Dexterity Attribute (regardless of minimums or maximums) is increased by 1.

Ultrasonic Voice (Level: 2)

The voice box and neck muscles are heavily modified (creating an unusual thickening of the neck), allowing the geneform to produce a high-pitched and modulated shout that can stun an opponent.

Rules: The ultrasonic voice acts as a sonic stunner (see p. 139, *CBT: RPG*). Additionally, a genecasteman with an ultrasonic voice and either full spectrum hearing or enhanced spectrum vision can act as an ultrasonic detector (see p. 104, *LT*).

Chitinous Chest (Level: 3)

This geneform transforms the epidermis of the chest into an insect-like chitin shell. The genecasteman can hide his geneform from casual observation with a thick coat or other covering.

Rules: The character has the following armor value: 3/2/1/1, Torso. (This can be combined with other armor per stacking armor rules (see p. 140, *CBT: RPG*). If the final damage result of an attack is a Minor Wound or greater, all the AVs of the chitinous chest armor are reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 0) at the end of that round of combat. This reduction is reversed once such wounds are healed.

Prehensile Appendages (Level: 3)

The hands and/or feet of this genecastemen are augmented for use in a zero-g environment, a low-gravity or arboreal environ-

ment, and so on. This geneform gives its recipient longer fingers and additional knuckles on the hands, longer toes, opposable thumbs added to the feet and so on.

Rules: An NPC with this geneform may perform three Simple Actions in a turn.

Tailored Lungs (Level: 3)

The lungs of a genecastemen are radically altered, allowing the character to breathe standard air, poisonous gas and even underwater. Even more so than with the oxygen storage geneform, tailored lungs make the chest of this genecastemen noticeably different from the norm.

Rules: Genecastemen with tailored lungs are not affected by gas ordnance (see p. 36, *LT*) and can breathe underwater, but still require oxygen.

MANEI DOMINI AS NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

As the self-proclaimed protector of advanced technologies, the Word of Blake has judiciously attempted to keep its monopoly over those technologies. The perversion of those same technologies was bound to occur, as demonstrated by the Sixth of June's Manei Domini. Fusing advanced medical technology with military hardware, the Manei Domini have produced abominations the likes of which have never before appeared in the history of humankind. Like Frankenstein's monster, the Sixth of June's Manei Domini are an example of science gone wrong to horrifying effect.

Comprised of Blakists, Thuggees and former Clansmen, Manei Domini members willingly undergo elective surgery for body alterations ranging from simple enhancements to highly invasive modifications. Typically, they fall into five groups. Sensory-enhanced scouts (Alpha Ghosts) and infiltrators (Beta Wraiths) infiltrate the most secure areas for reconnaissance or sabotage. Defenders (Delta Banshees) and assault troops (Tau Zombies) feature more extensive modifications designed to enhance their battle prowess, making them incredibly strong, resistant to injury and all but unstoppable by anything less than an armored Clan Elemental. Finally, MechWarriors and various vehicle pilots (Omegas) work with and support these other units, piloting the best machines available.

Typical Manei Domini operatives use a Sixth of June cell organization, with six-man teams deployed in various units. Delta Banshees typically lead a defense force supported by militia units and/or other Sixth of June forces, while Tau Zombie and Beta Wraith cells do not integrate with other troops, preferring to work independently. All Manei Domini troop types may work in conjunction with Alpha Ghosts and Delta Banshees, however.

To aid in creating Manei Domini characters as NPCs, using the Advanced Contacts and Enemies rules (see p. 209, *CBTComp*). The Manei Domini NPC Template Table below modifies the standard Contact/Enemy templates presented in the *Companion*. It pro-

RULES ADDENDUM

vides the Attribute and trait point modifiers (relative to the player characters) per class of Manei Domini operative, as well as the recommended level and number of skills, minimum recommended ranking as an Enemy and the maximum number of cybernetic implants the operative may receive, chosen from the list of implants described below.

MANEI DOMINI ENEMY TEMPLATE TABLE

Manei Domini Ranking	Attributes	Traits	Skills (Points) / Limits	Allowed Contact/Enemy NPC Ranking*	Maximum Cyber Implant Limit/Level
Alpha Ghost	+1	+0	+4 (+8) / +3	Henchman	3/3
Beta Wraith	+2	+1	+3 (+6) / +2	Level 1 or higher	4/3
Tau Zombie	+4	+3	+2 (+4) / +1	Level 2 or higher	5/5
Delta Banshee	+6	+4	+1 (+2) / +0	Level 3	7/5
Omega	+3	+4	+2 (+4) / +0	Level 3	4/4

*Including Special Contact/Enemy traits

For ease of selection, the various implant types are given a value in place of the standard equipment ratings and costs. A Manei Domini operative may take as many implants as noted for his maximum implant limit, but may take no implants rated higher than his maximum implant level. In addition, all Manei Domini operatives are equipped with internal self-destruct devices to deter their capture. Wired into their implants, these devices are commonly explosive or incendiary (see *Suicide Implants*, p. 121), and will automatically destroy the implants to which they are wired, even if they fail to kill the operative. Note that suicide implants do not count against an operative's Implant Limit.

Prosthetic Hand/Foot/Arm/Leg (Level: 1)

Type 4 or better prosthetic limbs are a normal feature on Manei Domini operatives and are easy to spot.

Rules: These limbs function as described on p. 145 of *CBT: RPG*.

Enhanced Prosthetic Hand/Foot/Arm/Leg (Level: 2)

Type 4 or better prosthetic limbs enhanced to carry weapons and tools are the most basic upgrade found on Manei Domini operatives.

Rules: The Prosthetic Limb Weapons Table below provides statistics on prosthetic limb-mounted weapons, while the capabilities of other tools mountable in a cybernetic limb are listed under Other Prosthetic Upgrades. Beyond carrying these devices, enhanced limbs function as described on p. 145 of *CBT: RPG*, while additional rules for the tools and weapons appear on pp. 108-115, *A Guide to Covert Ops*.

Cybernetic Eye/Ear/Speech Implants (Level: 3)

Cybernetic eyes enhance the vision of Manei Domini operatives, with available models featuring infrared, telescopic and laser sighting for better use in surveillance and targeting small

arms fire. Cybernetic ears include enhanced audio ranges and even radio signal pick-ups to allow for eavesdropping on enemy communications. Cybernetic speech implants allow for variable voice modulation or ultrasonic frequency speech easily received by enhanced ears. All of these are common tools for Manei Domini Alpha Ghosts and Beta Wraiths.

Rules: The capabilities and game effects of cybernetic eye, ear and speech implants appear under Cybernetic Upgrades in the table below. For more detailed rules see pp. 108-115, *A Guide to Covert Ops*.

Recorder/Transmitter/Receiver/Communications Implants (Level: 3)

Select Manei Domini operatives of every type use electronics to record, transmit, receive or carry on two-way communication via cybernetic eyes, ears or speech implants. These electronic implants require at least one of the other sensory implants to function.

Rules: The range of communications (including one-way transmission/reception) and the duration of recordings are listed for each of these enhancements under Cybernetic Upgrades in the table below. More detailed rules appear on pp. 108-115, *A Guide to Covert Ops*.

Vehicular Direct Neural Interface (Level: 4)

Allegedly based on Federated Commonwealth research, the Manei Domini vehicular direct neural interface (VDNI) enables Omega warriors to literally "jack in" to their BattleMechs, aerospace fighters and vehicles. Though the system works in principle like Clan EI neural implants, improved circuit breakers and a chemical agent regularly ingested by users of this technology allows these warriors to stave off the worst short-term effects of this technology.

Rules: VDNI control systems are available for battle armor, BattleMechs, aerospace fighters and combat vehicles weighing up to 200 tons, and are so extensive that non-VDNI piloting systems are removed, making the machines impossible to operate by warriors not equipped with a neural interface implant. Vehicles that ordinarily require crews are operated by a single VDNI-implanted Omega, so long as the warrior possesses the requisite Piloting and Gunnery skills for the vehicle type.

Similar to Clan EI neural implants, when plugged into a machine equipped for a direct neural interface, the operative equipped with a VDNI implant receives a -1 bonus to all Piloting Skill Checks. In addition, the warrior halves all Gunnery Check modifiers for Aimed Shot, Attacker Movement and Target Movement (rounding down). However, whenever the vehicle suffers internal damage or a critical hit, the controlling character(s) must immediately make a BOD/WIL Attribute Check or suffer 2D6 points of damage (plus the roll's margin of failure) directly to the head. Armor does not protect against this injury.



RULES ADDENDUM

PROSTHETIC LIMB WEAPONS

Item	Skill	Damage	AP • Type	Range S/M/L/E	Shots*	Notes
Laser	PIS	3•2D6	E	5/11/25/60	3 pps	Obvious port (power)
Ballistic	PIS	2•2D6	B	1/3/5/10	2	—
Dart Gun	PIS	1•1D6	B	1/2/3/5	1	May use tranquilizer darts
Needler	PIS	1•3D6	B	1/3/6/10	5	Splash, AP 0 vs. barriers
Shotgun	SHT	1•4D6	B	1/3/6/8	1	Splash, +1 TN (recoil)
Sonic Stun	PIS	0•3D6	S	1/2/3/5	2 pps	Subduing
Sub-Gun	SMG	2•1D6	B	2/5/10/20	20	Burst (4/2), jam on fumble
Laser Sight	—	—	—	90 (max)	0.05 pps	–2 to weapon attack TNs
Blade	BLA	1•1D6	M	—	—	—
Needle	BLA	0•1D6	M	—	1	Effect as poison or medication†
Shocker	BLA	0•3D6	E	—	3 pps	—
Vibroblade	BLA	4•2D6	M	—	1 pps	—

*Energy-based equipment uses micro power packs only, listed ammo is in power points per shot (pps)

†Capabilities of poison needles (one injected dose) appear in the rules for poisons and antidotes (see pp. 114-117, LT)

OTHER PROSTHETIC UPGRADES

Item	Range S/M/L/E	Notes
Climbing Claws	—	–1 TN modifier to Climb (per limb); 1•1D6 damage in melee
Electromagnet	1/2/3/5	Pwr Use: 2/min; 5 kg max.; –1 TN modifier to Climb (magnetic, per limb)
Grapppler	2/5/8/12	50 kg max.; –4 TN modifier to ensnare or Climb
Holster/Cargo	—	–3 TN modifier to Quickdraw (holster only)
Lockpick	—	–1 TN modifier to Security Systems
MicroComp	—	Pwr Use: 0.3/hr; –2 TN modifier to Computers/Hacking; no electromagnets

CYBERNETIC UPGRADES

Item	Notes
Cybernetic Eye (IR)	No darkness TN modifiers
Cybernetic Eye (Telescopic)	–2 TN modifier to M/L/E when used with weapons or surveillance skills
Cybernetic Eye (Laser Sight)	–4 TN modifier to M/L/E when used with weapons or surveillance skills
Cybernetic Ear (Enhanced)	–3 TN modifier to surveillance skills; +2 TN to stealth against the user
Cybernetic Ear (Signal Pickup)	100 meter range
Cybernetic Speech (Variable)	—
Cybernetic Speech (Ultrasonic)	—
Recorder Unit	Duration: 6 hours, looping
Transmitter Unit	Range: 100 meters
Receiver Unit	Range: 100 meters
Communications Unit	Range: 100 meters
Vehicular Direct Neural Interface (VDNI)	–1 to Piloting, half all Aimed Shot, Attacker Movement and Target Movement modifiers
Dermal Myomer Armor Implant	+2 BOD, +2 STR, +1 AV Increase: 3/3/3/3, Pain Resistance, –1 CHA, Unattractive
Triple-Strength Myomer Implant	+4 STR, +2 REF, Toughness, –1 CHA, Unattractive

Note: For additional rules and descriptions of prosthetic enhancements and cybernetic upgrades, see pp. 108-115, *A Guide to Covert Ops*.

In the long term, VDNI—like Clan EI implants—can lead to madness and eventually death for the user. While Word of Blake's scientists have discovered a neural-inhibitor treatment that can theoretically stave off this outcome for as long as a decade, gamemasters looking to add a little more flavor to a Manei Domini Omega using VDNI may wish to account for this factor by giving such warriors one level of any Madness trait for every two full years the operative has had the implant (rounding down). Unless the operative has the VDNI implant removed beforehand, at the end of the tenth year with the implants, the operative suffers terminal brain damage.

Additional VDNI rules—including their application in *Classic BattleTech* games—appear under *Manei Domini Infantry*, p. 134.

Myomer Full-Body Implants (Level: 5)

An outgrowth of medical myomer applications, myomer full-body implants used by the Capellan Confederation and other secret intelligence organizations eventually evolved into combat versions for special field operatives. Though hard to maintain when damaged, the advantages of dermal myomer armor implants and triple-strength myomer implants have given special operatives incredible strength, fighting prowess and resistance to injury. To many, these effects are more than worth the excruciating pain of the implantation process and the constant migraines from their ongoing use. Manei Domini Assault and Defender operatives routinely use these modifications.

Rules: The effects of dermal and triple-strength myomer implants are shown under the Cybernetic Upgrades header in the table below. Additional rules pertaining to their repair and maintenance appear on pp. 108-115, *A Guide to Covert Ops*.

RULES ADDENDUM

**CLASSIC BATTLETECH RULES**

The following rules are compatible with the *Classic BattleTech Master Rules, Revised (BMR)*.

MANEI DOMINI INFANTRY

As the hyper-elite troops of the Word of Blake's Sixth of June movement, the secretive, fanatical and powerful Manei Domini are rarely seen on the battlefield, but their technologically-enhanced capabilities can prove formidable. Manei Domini infantry is typically fielded in six-man battle armor squads or 24-man conventional platoons (comprised of four six-man squads each), all of which receive cybernetic implants that can enhance their combat capabilities in the field.

Manei Domini MechWarriors, vehicle crews and aerospace fighter pilots also use implanted technology, and are invariably fielded in full Level II units, equipped with 'Mechs and vehicles either chosen from the Word of Blake A column Random 'Mech or Vehicle tables or rolled from the A column tables of any Inner Sphere force. One member in each Level II may also roll on any Front Line vehicle or 'Mech table of any of the following Invading Clans (Jade Falcon, Wolf, Ghost Bear or Nova Cat).

Additional rules for Manei Domini units in *Classic BattleTech* games are given below. The following modifiers apply regardless of what type of battle armor or standard infantry platoon type the player chooses to enhance, and are cumulative with the standard modifiers conveyed by a specific battle armor or standard infantry platoon type.

Alpha Ghosts: Alpha Ghosts use enhanced vision and hearing implants as well as implanted communications, enabling them to function as if equipped with an Active Probe with a 2-hex range, whether battle armor-equipped or not.

A full platoon of standard Alpha Ghost infantry also gains stealth abilities from camo suits, imposing a +1 to-hit modifier for attacks against them at medium range and a +2 to-hit at long range. Beagle Probes and their Clan equivalents may not locate hidden standard Alpha Ghost infantry platoons. These benefits do not apply for Alpha Ghosts using battle armor, unless the armor is so equipped.

Beta Wraiths: Beta Wraiths use the same enhanced vision, enhanced hearing and implanted communicators as Alpha Ghosts, for the same 2-hex Active Probe capabilities whether battle armor-equipped or not.

In addition, standard Beta Wraith infantry platoons possess cybernetic arms and legs enhanced for climbing, giving them a -2 to-hit modifier when making anti-BattleMech Leg and Swarm attacks. Full platoons of standard Beta Wraith infantry gain the same stealth bonuses from camo suits as the Alpha Ghosts, imposing a +1 to-hit modifier for attacks against them at medium range and a +2 to-hit at long range. Beagle Probes and their Clan equivalents may not locate hidden standard Beta Wraith infantry platoons. These anti-'Mech and stealth benefits do not apply

for Beta Wraiths using battle armor, unless the armor is properly equipped.

Delta Banshees and Tau Zombies: Delta Banshee and Tau Zombie standard infantry use subdermal armor or triple-strength myomer implants as a means of improving their survivability and strength in combat. On the battlefield, these enhancements make both of these standard infantry platoons capable of sustaining 2 points of damage per trooper, rather than the usual 1 point. Also, non-battle armor-equipped Delta Banshee and Tau Zombie standard infantry platoons do not sustain double damage when hit by weapons fire in open terrain.

When using battle armor, Manei Domini Delta Banshee and Tau Zombie troopers also count the trooper inside the battle armor as 2 points, rather than the usual 1. Whether battle armor-equipped or not, Tau Zombie infantry also gains a bonus of -2 when making anti-BattleMech Leg and Swarm attacks due to their enhanced strength.

Omeegas: Using enhanced sensory implants and a variation of the Federated Commonwealth's failed direct-neural interface technology, Manei Domini Omeegas (MechWarriors, fighter pilots and vehicle crews) receive a -1 modifier for all Piloting and Gunnery skill rolls. In addition, Manei Domini vehicle crews, fighter pilots and MechWarriors should be rolled as Veteran warriors or better when randomly assigning skills.

If a vehicle, fighter or BattleMech controlled by an Omega suffers internal damage or a critical hit, the controlling player should roll 2D6, and apply 1 point of damage to the warrior on any result of 8+, rolling for pilot consciousness as normal. (Conventional vehicle units should use the MechWarrior condition table from a BattleMech record sheet to track pilot damage and consciousness target numbers.)

Remember that all vehicles ordinarily requiring crews need only one VDNI-equipped Manei Domini warrior to operate, for purposes of tracking manpower in accordance with *Combat Operations*.

RULES ADDENDUM

THE BOUNTY HUNTER

The following rules cover the unique aspects of the Bounty Hunter for both *CBT: RPG* and standard *CBT* play.

The Bounty Hunter's Body Armor

The Bounty Hunter has sported a unique suit of body armor since his first re-emergence in 2957. Of indeterminate design and manufacture, it has become just as much a trademark of the Bounty Hunter as his green *Marauder*, and apparently gives him as great an advantage outside his 'Mech as he has inside it. Many have speculated about the source of the Bounty Hunter's armor, but most agree it is some sort of Star League-era prototype powered armor.

In roleplaying game terms, the Bounty Hunter wears a modified MechWarrior Combat Suit (see p. 49, *LT*) that also functions as a Space Suit (see p. 52, *LT*), but without the thruster pack and with an attached Medipack (see p. 144, *CBT: RPG*). This suit is not encumbering, has an Equipment Rating of E/D/C, an AV of 1/4/1/2, Cost/Patch of 20,000/50, Weight 10 kg and full coverage, and provides +1 to armor values for the torso. In all other ways, it functions like a MechWarrior Combat Suit combined with a Space Suit. The integral Combat Neurohelmet (see p. 53, *LT*) includes an integral Rangefinder Binoculars and Night Vision Device (see p. 149, *CBT: RPG*). At a minimum, the Bounty Hunter wears this suit whenever he is in the cockpit of his 'Mech or in the public eye.

In addition, when expecting to enter combat outside his 'Mech, the Bounty Hunter wears a special PA(L)/combat exoskeleton. This suit utilizes Standard Stealth Armor (ECM: +6; IR: +6), has an integral Jump Pack (see p. 150, *CBT: RPG*), an extra fuel tank (1,000 additional fuel points), a power pack (provides an additional 10 hours of use) and Armored Gloves. Its Equipment Rating is E/F/E; it has an AV of 4/5/6/5; Weight 400 kg; full coverage; Attribute Modifiers STR +2, DEX -2, RFL -1; and a Melee AP of +1. The suit has no integral weapons, but can use standard infantry weapons (traditionally, the Bounty Hunter wears a pair of Sternsnacht pistols while in this armor, in addition to any other heavy weapons he might use).

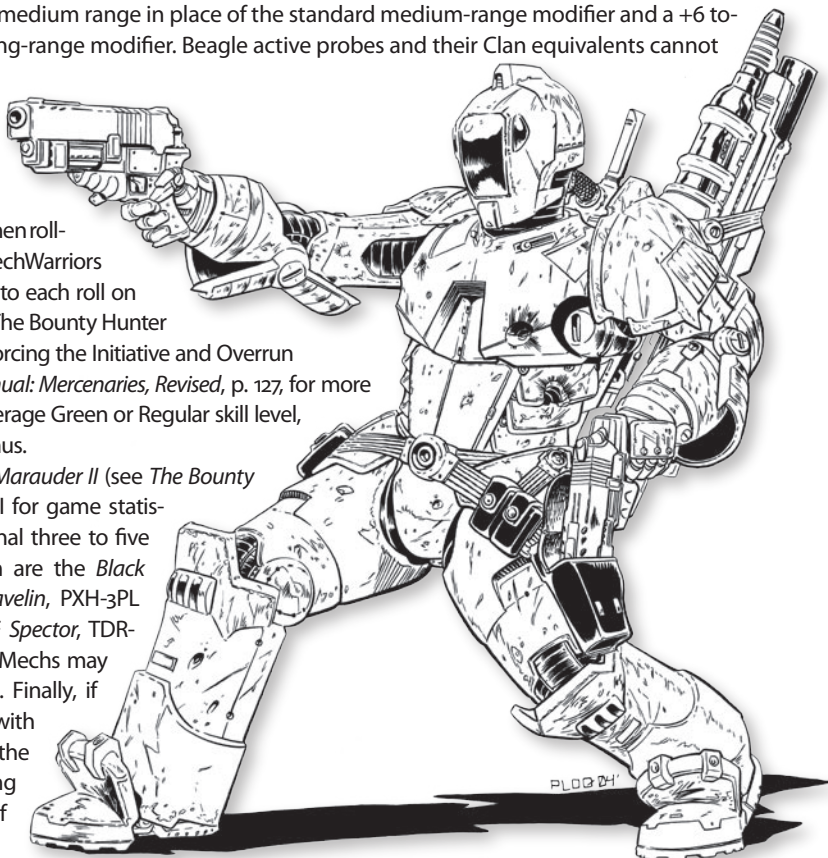
In *Classic BattleTech* terms, the PA(L)/combat exoskeleton has three Jumping MP and three MP when moving on the ground; 2 points of armor, plus 1 additional point of armor that represents the trooper inside; no integral weapons, but can make Anti-BattleMech and Leg attacks; and can ride on OmniMechs using the Mechanized Battle Armor rules. Also, because of its stealth armor, units attacking it suffer a +1 to-hit modifier at short range, a +3 to-hit modifier at medium range in place of the standard medium-range modifier and a +6 to-hit modifier at long range in place of the standard long-range modifier. Beagle active probes and their Clan equivalents cannot detect this armor suit when hidden.

For campaigns set prior to 3034, the jump pack and stealth armor do not function.

The Bounty Hunter and Classic BattleTech

The Bounty Hunter has a MechWarrior skill of o/o. When rolling to randomly determine the skills of the rest of the MechWarriors in his unit, all are automatically Elite; apply a +2 bonus to each roll on the Random Skills Table (Expanded) in the *BMR*, p. 114. The Bounty Hunter and his MechWarriors may use the Banking Initiative, Forcing the Initiative and Overrun Combat special abilities (see *Classic BattleTech Field Manual: Mercenaries, Revised*, p. 127, for more information). Finally, when facing units that have an average Green or Regular skill level, the Bounty Hunter and his troops gain a +2 initiative bonus.

The Bounty Hunter pilots either a *Mad Cat* or a *Marauder II* (see *The Bounty Hunter's Mad Cat* and *The Bounty Hunter's Marauder II* for game statistics). Additionally, his team may consist of an additional three to five BattleMechs available to his team are the *Black Hawk-Ku*, *Cauldron Born*, *FLC-8R Falconer*, *JVN-11D Javelin*, *PXH-3PL Phoenix Hawk*, *Ryoken*, *SHD-5D Shadow Hawk*, *SPR-5F Spector*, *TDR-7SE Thunderbolt* and the *WHM-9D Warhammer*. OmniMechs may be equipped for any of the standard configurations. Finally, if both players agree, the OmniMechs may be outfitted with custom configurations and some or all of the rest of the 'Mechs may be equipped with a C slave unit (by dropping a heat sink or medium laser), assuming one or more of the Omnis has been fitted with a C master unit.



RULES ADDENDUM

**THE BOUNTY HUNTER'S MARAUDER (3015-3043)**Type: **Marauder Bounty Hunter-3015**

Technology Base: Inner Sphere

Tonnage: 75

Battle Value: 1,686

Equipment		Mass
Internal Structure:		7.5
Engine:	225	10
Walking MP:	3	
Running MP:	5	
Jumping MP:	3	
Heat Sinks:	18 [36]	8
Gyro:		3
Cockpit:		3
Armor Factor:	231	14.5

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head:	3	9
Center Torso:	23	36
Center Torso (Rear):		10
L/R Side Torso:	16	24
L/R Side Torso (Rear):		8
L/R Arm:	12	24
L/R Leg:	16	32

Weapons

And Ammo	Location	Critical	Tonnage
PPC	RA	3	7
Medium Laser	RA	1	1
PPC	LA	3	7
Medium Laser	LA	1	1
PPC	RT	3	7
Medium Laser	RT	1	1
Medium Laser	CT	1	1
Medium Laser	LT	1	1
Jump Jet	CT	1	1
Jump Jet	RL	1	1
Jump Jet	LL	1	1

THE BOUNTY HUNTER'S MARAUDER (3044-3051)Type: **Marauder Bounty Hunter-3044**

Technology Base: Inner Sphere

Tonnage: 75

Battle Value: 1,788

Equipment		Mass
Internal Structure:		7.5
Engine:	225 XL	5
Walking MP:	3	
Running MP:	5	
Jumping MP:	3	
Heat Sinks:	15 [30]	5
Gyro:		3
Cockpit:		3
Armor Factor:	231	14.5

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head:	3	9
Center Torso:	23	36
Center Torso (Rear):		10
L/R Side Torso:	16	24
L/R Side Torso (Rear):		8
L/R Arm:	12	24
L/R Leg:	16	32

Weapons

And Ammo	Location	Critical	Tonnage
ER PPC	RA	3	7
Medium Laser	RA	1	1
ER PPC	LA	3	7
Medium Laser	LA	1	1
Gauss Rifle	RT	7	15
Ammo (Gauss) 16	RT	2	2
Medium Laser	H	1	1
Jump Jet	CT	1	1
Jump Jet	RL	1	1
Jump Jet	LL	1	1



RULES ADDENDUM

THE BOUNTY HUNTER'S MAD CAT

Type: **Mad Cat Bounty Hunter**

Technology Base: Clan

Tonnage: 75

Battle Value: 2,393

Equipment		Mass
Internal Structure:	Endo Steel	4
Engine:	375 XL	19.5
Walking MP:	5	
Running MP:	8	
Jumping MP:	0	
Heat Sinks:	16 [32]	6
Gyro:	4	
Cockpit:		3
Armor Factor:	230	12

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head:	3	9
Center Torso:	23	36
Center Torso (Rear):		9
L/R Side Torso:	16	25
L/R Side Torso (Rear):		7
L/R Arm:	12	24
L/R Leg:	16	32

Weapons

And Ammo	Location	Critical	Tonnage
Large Pulse Laser	RA	2	6
Medium Pulse Laser	RA	1	2
Large Pulse Laser	LA	2	6
Medium Pulse Laser	LA	1	2
Medium Pulse Laser	RT	1	2
ECM Suite	RT	1	1
Targeting Computer	RT	4	4
Medium Pulse Laser	LT	1	2
Active Probe	LT	1	1
Light TAG	CT	1	.5

THE BOUNTY HUNTER'S MARAUDER II

Type: **Marauder II Bounty Hunter**

Technology Base: Clan

Tonnage: 100

Battle Value: 3,305

Equipment		Mass
Internal Structure:	Endo Steel	5
Engine:	300	19
Walking MP:	3	
Running MP:	5	
Jumping MP:	3	
Heat Sinks:	17 [34]	7
Gyro:		3
Cockpit:		3
Armor Factor:	307	16

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head:	3	9
Center Torso:	31	46
Center Torso (Rear):		16
L/R Side Torso:	21	31
L/R Side Torso (Rear):		11
L/R Arm:	17	34
L/R Leg:	21	42

Weapons

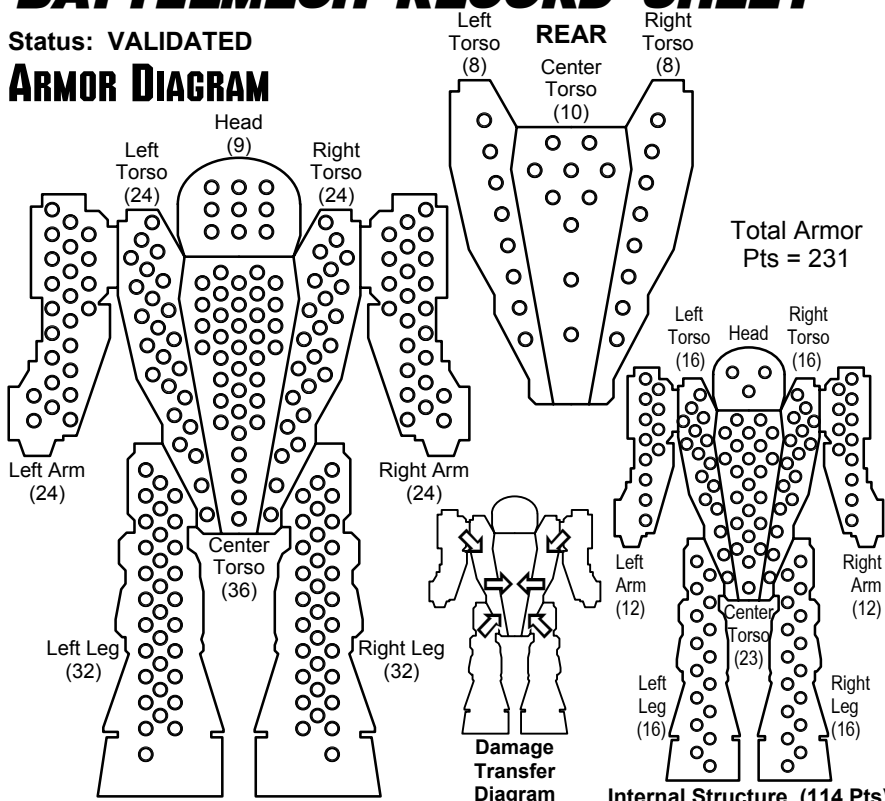
And Ammo	Location	Critical	Tonnage
ER PPC	RA	2	6
2 Medium Pulse Lasers	RA	2	4
ER PPC	LA	2	6
2 Medium Pulse Lasers	LA	2	4
Gauss Rifle	RT	6	12
Ammo (Gauss) 16	RT	2	2
Jump Jet	RT	1	2
Targeting Computer	LT	7	7
Jump Jet	LT	1	2
Jump Jet	CT	1	2

BATTLETECH®

BATTLEMECH RECORD SHEET

Status: **VALIDATED**

ARMOR DIAGRAM



Internal Structure (114 Pts)

Left Arm

1. Shoulder
2. Upper Arm Actuator
- 1-3 3. Double Heat Sink
4. Double Heat Sink
5. Double Heat Sink
6. Double Heat Sink

1. Double Heat Sink
2. Double Heat Sink
- 4-6 3. PPC
4. PPC
5. PPC
6. Medium Laser

Left Torso

1. Double Heat Sink
2. Double Heat Sink
- 1-3 3. Double Heat Sink
4. Double Heat Sink
5. Double Heat Sink
6. Double Heat Sink

1. Double Heat Sink
2. Double Heat Sink
- 4-6 3. Double Heat Sink
4. Medium Laser
5. Roll Again
6. Roll Again

Left Leg

1. Hip
2. Upper Leg Actuator
3. Lower Leg Actuator
4. Foot Actuator
5. Jump Jet
6. Roll Again

CRITICAL HIT TABLE

Head

1. Life Support
2. Sensors
3. Cockpit
4. Roll Again
5. Sensors
6. Life Support

Center Torso

1. Fusion Engine
2. Fusion Engine
- 1-3 3. Fusion Engine
4. Gyro
5. Gyro
6. Gyro

1. Gyro
2. Fusion Engine
3. Fusion Engine
- 4-6 4. Fusion Engine
5. Jump Jet
6. Medium Laser

Engine Hits ○ ○ ○
Gyro Hits ○ ○
Sensor Hits ○ ○
Life Support ○

Battle Value: **1,686**
Weapon Value: **2,321 / 2,321**
Cost, C-Bills: **6,755,875**

Right Arm

1. Shoulder
2. Upper Arm Actuator
- 1-3 3. Double Heat Sink
4. Double Heat Sink
5. Double Heat Sink
6. Double Heat Sink

1. Double Heat Sink
2. Double Heat Sink
- 4-6 3. PPC
4. PPC
5. PPC
6. Medium Laser

Right Torso

1. Double Heat Sink
2. Double Heat Sink
- 1-3 3. Double Heat Sink
4. Double Heat Sink
5. Double Heat Sink
6. Double Heat Sink

1. PPC
2. PPC
3. PPC
- 4-6 4. Medium Laser
5. Roll Again
6. Roll Again

Right Leg

1. Hip
2. Upper Leg Actuator
3. Lower Leg Actuator
4. Foot Actuator
5. Jump Jet
6. Roll Again

'MECH DATA

Type: **Marauder Bounty Hunter-3015**

Mass: **75 tons**

Movement Points: Tech, Config. & Level:

Walking: **3** Inner Sphere

Running: **5** Biped 'Mech

Jumping: **3** Level 2 / 3015

Weapons Inventory: (hexes)

Qty	Type	Loc	Ht	Dmg	Min	Sht	Med	Lng
1	PPC	RA	10	10	3	6	12	18
1	Medium Laser	RA	3	5	-	3	6	9
1	PPC	LA	10	10	3	6	12	18
1	Medium Laser	LA	3	5	-	3	6	9
1	PPC	RT	10	10	3	6	12	18
1	Medium Laser	RT	3	5	-	3	6	9
1	Medium Laser	LT	3	5	-	3	6	9
1	Medium Laser	CT	3	5	-	3	6	9

Total Heat Sinks: **18 Double (36)**

oooooooooooo oooooooooo

Auto Eject: ☐ Operational ☐ Disabled

Weapon Heat: **(45)**

WARRIOR DATA

Name: _____

Gunnery Skill: _____ Piloting Skill: _____

Hits Taken	1	2	3	4	5	6
Consciousness #	3	5	7	10	11	Dead

HEAT SCALE

30	Shutdown
29	
28	Ammo Explosion, avoid on 8+
27	
26	Shutdown, avoid on 10+
25	-5 Movement Points
24	+4 Modifier to Fire
23	Ammo Explosion, avoid on 6+
22	Shutdown, avoid on 8+
21	
20	-4 Movement Points
19	Ammo Explosion, avoid on 4+
18	Shutdown, avoid on 6+
17	+3 Modifier to Fire
16	
15	-3 Movement Points
14	Shutdown, avoid on 4+
13	+2 Modifier to Fire
12	
11	
10	-2 Movement Points
9	
8	+1 Modifier to Fire
7	
6	
5	-1 Movement Points
4	
3	
2	
1	
0	

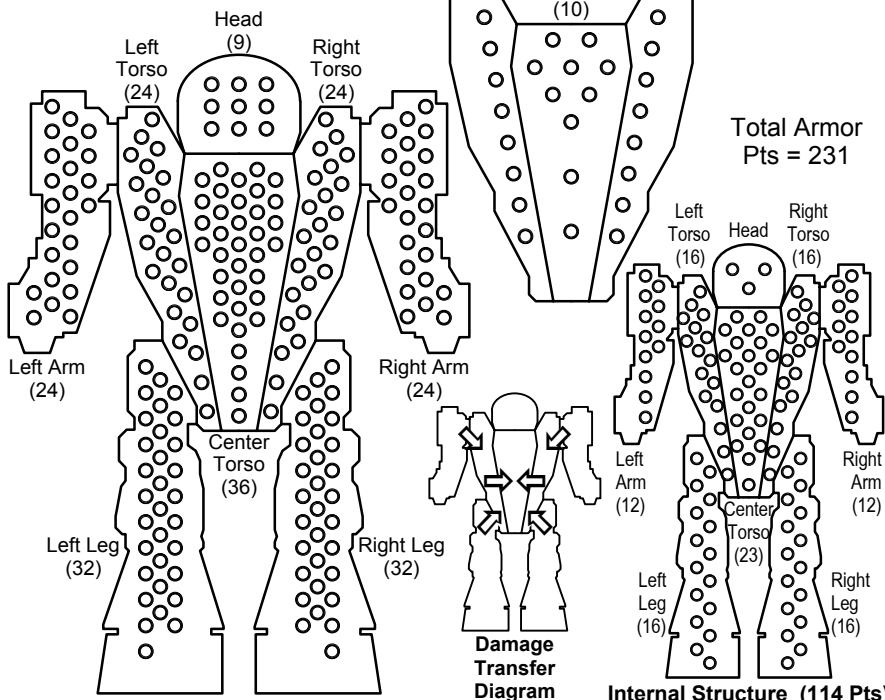
WZKAMEP

BATTLETECH®

BATTLEMECH RECORD SHEET

Status: **VALIDATED**

ARMOR DIAGRAM



'MECH DATA

Type: **Marauder Bounty Hunter-3044**

Mass: **75 tons**

Movement Points: Tech, Config. & Level:

Walking: **3**

Inner Sphere

Running: **5**

Biped 'Mech

Jumping: **3**

Level 2 / 3044

Weapons Inventory: (hexes)

Qty	Type	Loc	Ht	Dmg	Min	Sht	Med	Lng
1	ER PPC	RA	15	10	-	7	14	23
1	Medium Laser	RA	3	5	-	3	6	9
1	ER PPC	LA	15	10	-	7	14	23
1	Medium Laser	LA	3	5	-	3	6	9
1	Gauss Rifle	RT	1	15	2	7	15	22
1	Medium Laser	HD	3	5	-	3	6	9

Ammo Type: Gauss Rifle
Rounds: 16
BV: 101

Total Heat Sinks: 15 Double (30)

oooooooooooo oooooo

Auto Eject:

Weapon Heat:

☐ Operational

☐ Disabled

(40)

WARRIOR DATA

Name: _____

Gunnery Skill: _____ Piloting Skill: _____

Hits Taken	1	2	3	4	5	6
Consciousness #	3	5	7	10	11	Dead

HEAT SCALE

30	Shutdown
29	
28	Ammo Explosion, avoid on 8+
27	
26	Shutdown, avoid on 10+
25	-5 Movement Points
24	+4 Modifier to Fire
23	Ammo Explosion, avoid on 6+
22	Shutdown, avoid on 8+
21	
20	-4 Movement Points
19	Ammo Explosion, avoid on 4+
18	Shutdown, avoid on 6+
17	+3 Modifier to Fire
16	
15	-3 Movement Points
14	Shutdown, avoid on 4+
13	+2 Modifier to Fire
12	
11	
10	-2 Movement Points
9	
8	+1 Modifier to Fire
7	
6	
5	-1 Movement Points
4	
3	
2	
1	
0	

WZKAMEP

Left Arm

- Shoulder
- Upper Arm Actuator
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink
- ER PPC
- ER PPC
- ER PPC
- ER PPC
- Medium Laser
- Roll Again
- Roll Again
- Roll Again

Left Torso

- XL Engine
- XL Engine
- XL Engine
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink

Left Leg

- Hip
- Upper Leg Actuator
- Lower Leg Actuator
- Foot Actuator
- Jump Jet
- Roll Again

CRITICAL HIT TABLE

Head

- Life Support
- Sensors
- Cockpit
- Medium Laser
- Sensors
- Life Support

Center Torso

- XL Engine
- XL Engine
- XL Engine
- Gyro
- Gyro
- Gyro
- Gyro
- XL Engine
- XL Engine
- Jump Jet
- Roll Again

Engine Hits ○ ○ ○ ○
Gyro Hits ○ ○
Sensor Hits ○ ○
Life Support ○

Battle Value: **1,797**
Weapon Value: **2,126 / 2,126**
Cost, C-Bills: **13,085,625**

Right Arm

- Shoulder
- Upper Arm Actuator
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink

Right Torso

- XL Engine
- XL Engine
- XL Engine
- Gauss Rifle
- Gauss Rifle
- Gauss Rifle
- Gauss Rifle
- Gauss Rifle
- Gauss Rifle
- Gauss Rifle
- Gauss Rifle
- Gauss Rifle

Right Leg

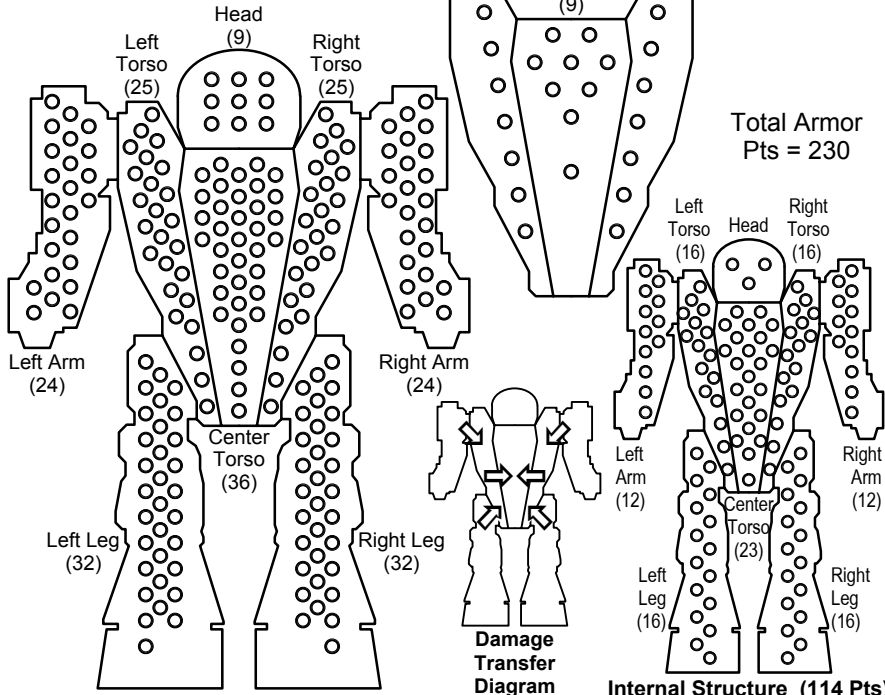
- Hip
- Upper Leg Actuator
- Lower Leg Actuator
- Foot Actuator
- Jump Jet
- Roll Again

BATTLETECH®

BATTLEMECH RECORD SHEET

Status: **VALIDATED**

ARMOR DIAGRAM



'MECH DATA

Type: **Mad Cat Bounty Hunter**

Mass: **75 tons**

Movement Points: Tech, Config. & Level:

Walking: **5**

Clan

Running: **8**

Biped OmniMech

Jumping: **0**

Level 2 / 3060

Weapons Inventory: (hexes)

Qty	Type	Loc	Ht	Dmg	Min	Sht	Med	Lng
1	Large Pulse Laser	RA	10	10	-	6	14	20
1	Medium Pulse Laser	RA	4	7	-	4	8	12
1	Large Pulse Laser	LA	10	10	-	6	14	20
1	Medium Pulse Laser	LA	4	7	-	4	8	12
1	Medium Pulse Laser	RT	4	7	-	4	8	12
1	ECM Suite	RT	0	-	-	-	-	6
1	Medium Pulse Laser	LT	4	7	-	4	8	12
1	Active Probe	LT	0	-	-	-	-	5
1	Light TAG	CT	0	-	-	3	6	9

1 Targeting Computer

Total Heat Sinks: **16 Double (32)**

oooooooooooo oooooo

Auto Eject:

Weapon Heat:

☐ Operational ☐ Disabled

(36)

WARRIOR DATA

Name: _____

Gunnery Skill: _____ Piloting Skill: _____

Hits Taken	1	2	3	4	5	6
Consciousness #	3	5	7	10	11	Dead

HEAT SCALE

30	Shutdown
29	
28	Ammo Explosion, avoid on 8+
27	
26	Shutdown, avoid on 10+
25	-5 Movement Points
24	+4 Modifier to Fire
23	Ammo Explosion, avoid on 6+
22	Shutdown, avoid on 8+
21	
20	-4 Movement Points
19	Ammo Explosion, avoid on 4+
18	Shutdown, avoid on 6+
17	+3 Modifier to Fire
16	
15	-3 Movement Points
14	Shutdown, avoid on 4+
13	+2 Modifier to Fire
12	
11	
10	-2 Movement Points
9	
8	+1 Modifier to Fire
7	
6	
5	-1 Movement Points
4	
3	
2	
1	
0	

WZKAMEP

CRITICAL HIT TABLE

Left Arm

- Shoulder
- Upper Arm Actuator
- Lower Arm Actuator
- 1-3 Large Pulse Laser
- Large Pulse Laser
- Medium Pulse Laser

- Ferro-Fibrous
- Roll Again
- 4-6 Roll Again
- Roll Again
- Roll Again
- Roll Again

Left Torso

- 1-3 XL Engine
- XL Engine
- Double Heat Sink
- Double Heat Sink
- Medium Pulse Laser
- Active Probe

- Endo Steel
- Ferro-Fibrous
- 4-6 Ferro-Fibrous
- Roll Again
- Roll Again
- Roll Again

Left Leg

- Hip
- Upper Leg Actuator
- Lower Leg Actuator
- Foot Actuator
- Endo Steel
- Endo Steel

Head

- Life Support
- Sensors
- Cockpit
- Ferro-Fibrous
- Sensors
- Life Support

Center Torso

- 1-3 XL Engine
- XL Engine
- XL Engine
- Gyro
- Gyro
- Gyro

- Gyro
- XL Engine
- XL Engine
- 4-6 XL Engine
- Endo Steel
- Light TAG

Engine Hits ○ ○ ○
Gyro Hits ○ ○
Sensor Hits ○ ○
Life Support ○

Battle Value: **2,393**
Weapon Value: **4,832 / 4,832**
Cost, C-Bills: **23,736,562**

Right Arm

- Shoulder
- Upper Arm Actuator
- Lower Arm Actuator
- 1-3 Large Pulse Laser
- Large Pulse Laser
- Medium Pulse Laser

- Ferro-Fibrous
- Roll Again
- 4-6 Roll Again
- Roll Again
- Roll Again
- Roll Again

Right Torso

- 1-3 XL Engine
- XL Engine
- Medium Pulse Laser
- Roll Again
- ECM Suite
- Targeting Computer

- Targeting Computer
- Targeting Computer
- Targeting Computer
- 4-6 Endo Steel
- Ferro-Fibrous
- Ferro-Fibrous

Right Leg

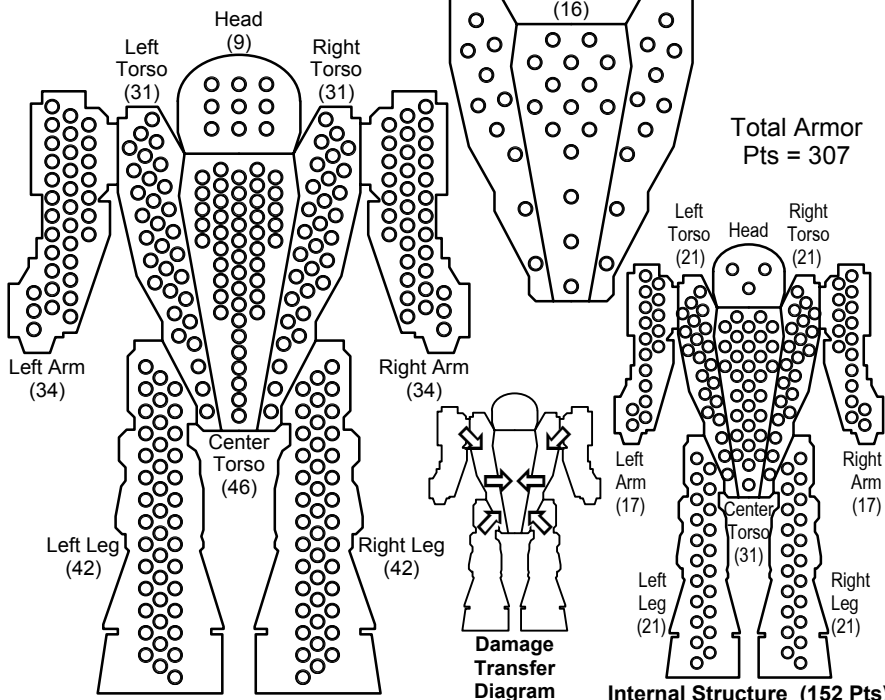
- Hip
- Upper Leg Actuator
- Lower Leg Actuator
- Foot Actuator
- Endo Steel
- Endo Steel

BATTLETECH®

BATTLEMECH RECORD SHEET

Status: **VALIDATED**

ARMOR DIAGRAM



Internal Structure (152 Pts)

Left Arm

1. Shoulder
2. Upper Arm Actuator
- 1-3 3. Double Heat Sink
4. Double Heat Sink
5. Double Heat Sink
6. Double Heat Sink

1. ER PPC
2. ER PPC
- 4-6 3. Medium Pulse Laser
4. Medium Pulse Laser
5. Ferro-Fibrous
6. Ferro-Fibrous

Left Torso

1. Jump Jet
2. Targeting Computer
- 1-3 3. Targeting Computer
4. Targeting Computer
5. Targeting Computer
6. Targeting Computer

1. Targeting Computer
2. Targeting Computer
- 4-6 3. Endo Steel
4. Endo Steel
5. Endo Steel
6. Endo Steel

Left Leg

1. Hip
2. Upper Leg Actuator
3. Lower Leg Actuator
4. Foot Actuator
5. Endo Steel
6. Endo Steel

CRITICAL HIT TABLE

Head

1. Life Support
2. Sensors
3. Cockpit
4. Roll Again
5. Sensors
6. Life Support

Center Torso

1. Fusion Engine
2. Fusion Engine
- 1-3 3. Fusion Engine
4. Gyro
5. Gyro
6. Gyro

1. Gyro
2. Fusion Engine
3. Fusion Engine
4. Fusion Engine
5. Jump Jet
6. Endo Steel

Engine Hits ○ ○ ○
Gyro Hits ○ ○
Sensor Hits ○ ○
Life Support ○

Battle Value: **3,305**
Weapon Value: **5,991 / 5,991**
Cost, C-Bills: **11,404,000**

Right Arm

1. Shoulder
2. Upper Arm Actuator
- 1-3 3. Double Heat Sink
4. Double Heat Sink
5. Double Heat Sink
6. Double Heat Sink

1. ER PPC
2. ER PPC
- 4-6 3. Medium Pulse Laser
4. Medium Pulse Laser
5. Ferro-Fibrous
6. Ferro-Fibrous

Right Torso (CASE)

1. Jump Jet
2. Double Heat Sink
- 1-3 3. Double Heat Sink
4. Gauss Rifle
5. Gauss Rifle
6. Gauss Rifle

1. Gauss Rifle
2. Gauss Rifle
3. Gauss Rifle
4. Ammo (Gauss) 8
5. Ammo (Gauss) 8
6. Ferro-Fibrous

Right Leg

1. Hip
2. Upper Leg Actuator
3. Lower Leg Actuator
4. Foot Actuator
5. Ferro-Fibrous
6. Ferro-Fibrous

'MECH DATA

Type: **Marauder II Bounty Hunter**

Mass: **100 tons**

Movement Points: Tech, Config. & Level:

Walking: **3** Clan

Running: **5** Biped 'Mech

Jumping: **3** Level 2 / 3067

Weapons Inventory: (hexes)

Qty	Type	Loc	Ht	Dmg	Min	Sht	Med	Lng
1	ER PPC	RA	15	15	-	7	14	23
2	Medium Pulse Laser	RA	4	7	-	4	8	12
1	ER PPC	LA	15	15	-	7	14	23
2	Medium Pulse Laser	LA	4	7	-	4	8	12
1	Gauss Rifle	RT	1	15	2	7	15	22
1	Targeting Computer							

Ammo Type: Rounds: BV:
Gauss Rifle 16 90

Total Heat Sinks: 17 Double (34)

○○○○○○○○○○ ○○○○○○

Auto Eject: ☐ Operational ☐ Disabled
Weapon Heat: (47)

WARRIOR DATA

Name: _____

Gunnery Skill: _____ Piloting Skill: _____

Hits Taken	1	2	3	4	5	6
Consciousness #	3	5	7	10	11	Dead

HEAT SCALE

30	Shutdown
29	
28	Ammo Explosion, avoid on 8+
27	
26	Shutdown, avoid on 10+
25	-5 Movement Points
24	+4 Modifier to Fire
23	Ammo Explosion, avoid on 6+
22	Shutdown, avoid on 8+
21	
20	-4 Movement Points
19	Ammo Explosion, avoid on 4+
18	Shutdown, avoid on 6+
17	+3 Modifier to Fire
16	
15	-3 Movement Points
14	Shutdown, avoid on 4+
13	+2 Modifier to Fire
12	
11	
10	-2 Movement Points
9	
8	+1 Modifier to Fire
7	
6	
5	-1 Movement Points
4	
3	
2	
1	
0	

WZKAMEP

BATTLE ARMOR DETAILS

Type: **Bounty Hunter**

Configuration: **Humanoid**

Armor Value (M/B/E/X): **4/5/6/5**

IR: **+6** ECM: **+6** Camo: **0**

Coverage: **Full**

Melee AP: **0**

Target Size Modifier: **0**

Movement Modifiers:

Walking: **+4** Running: **+8** Sprinting: **+12**

Jump: **90 m/turn**

Attribute Modifiers:

Strength: **0** Dexterity: **0** Reflexes: **0**

Equipment Rating: **E/E/F**

Battle Armor Suit Cost: **286,500 C-Bills**

BATTLE ARMOR EQUIPMENT

Heads-Up Display (-1 TN modifier to ranged attacks with weapons)

Enhanced Optics (includes rangefinder binoculars, infrared, night vision)

Military Communicator (10km range)

Functions as hostile environment suit

Armored Glove, Left Arm - Melee AP: 0, can use AP weapons/equip

Armored Glove, Right Arm - Melee AP: 0, can use AP weapons/equip

Standard Stealth Armor - ECM: +6, IR: +6

Fuel Tank (Increases fuel capacity by 1,000 points)

Power Pack (Adds 10 hours (IS) 12 hours (Clan) to suit endurance)

WEAPONS

LEFT ARM

Weapons
(none)

AP•Dmg Type

Range

Shots Notes

RIGHT ARM

Weapons
(none)

AP•Dmg Type

Range

Shots Notes

BODY

Weapons
(none)

AP•Dmg Type

Range

Shots Notes

CONSUMABLES

Power (34 Hours):

○○○○○○○○○○
○○○○○○○○○○
○○○○○○○○○○
○○○○

Life Support (12 Hrs):

○○○○○○○○○○
○○

MediPack (12):

○○○○○○○○○○
○○

Fuel (2,000 Pts):

(2 pts per 10m, min 10)

NOTES



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