

BATTLE TECHNOLOGY

THE MAGAZINE OF COMBAT IN THE THIRTY-FIRST CENTURY



Princes in Peril!

Story on page 8

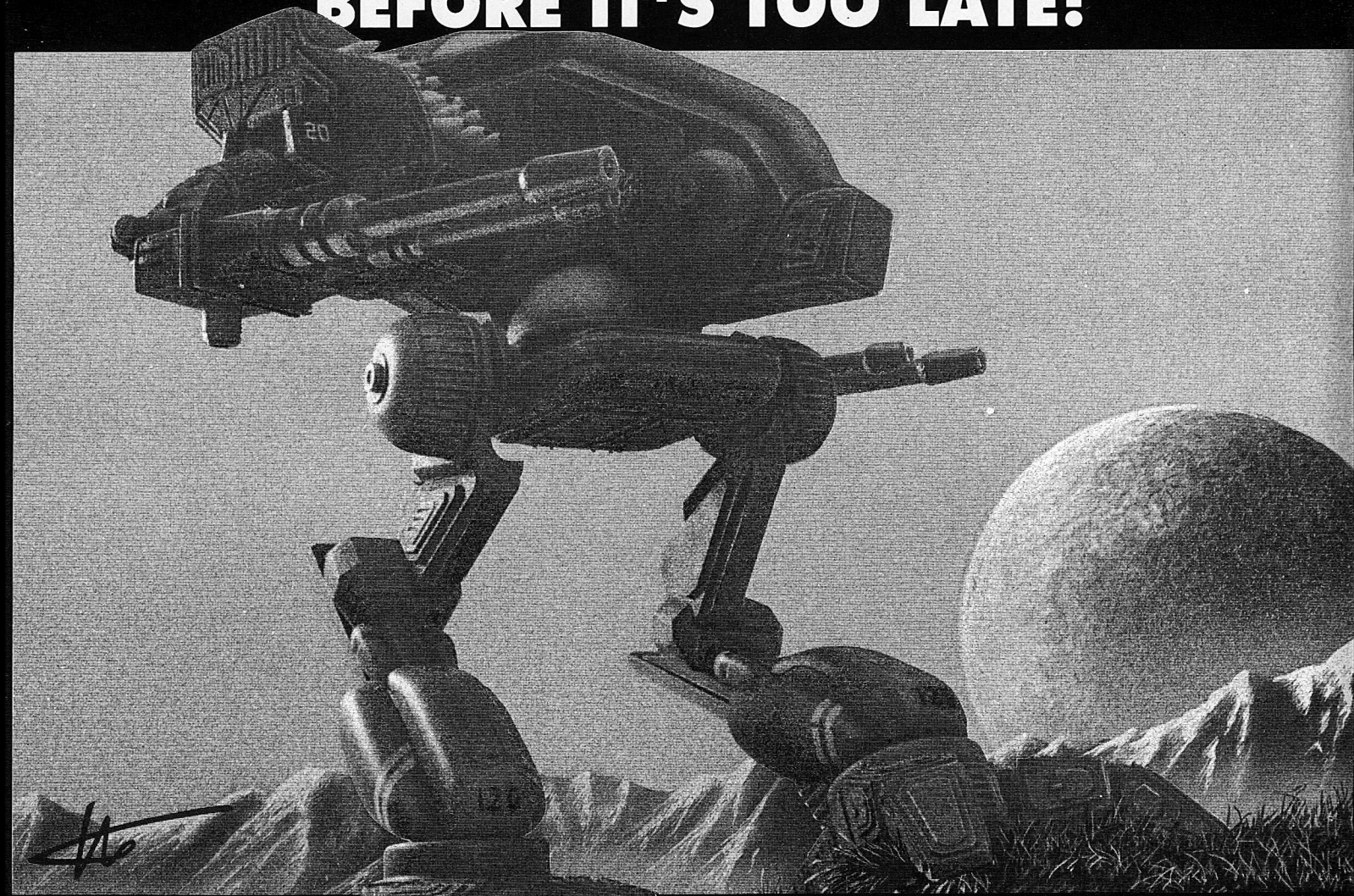


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BattleTechnology

The Magazine of Combat in the 31st Century

Issue #15
August 3050

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World Book, GanSingh, and Centurion Maximus

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The Mercenary in Mid-Century, Romano Liao Letter

by S. Craig Harris

Unit Profile: First Kathil Uhlans

By Matt VanBenschoten

Gone to Ground, Darkfall Pass,

Gan Singh Campaign, Fighting in Caves,

all uncredited writing this issue

by Hilary Ayer

About the Cover:

This issue's cover features a 'Mech from the Ghost Bears, taken by Combat photographer Steve Venters during the invasion of Schuyler, June, 3050. This Clan 'Mech is tentatively titled a 'Mad Cat' by Inner Sphere combatants.

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OPENING SHOTS

DARK DAYS, DARK HUMOR

Dark days. We have set our work out before us. It is hard, bloody, uncomfortable work. We know it will end, but we dare not yet look to that end. It's a lot like walking behind an elephant in a parade; you keep your head down and avoid what — er — difficulty you may.

Those of you who are facing the enemy are ever in our prayers. Those of you who await that ordeal are undergoing a blizzard of all the human emotions. You are exalted, terrified, determined, feverish in preparation, calm, excited, disbelieving...

And bored. It's been months now of waiting to see where they'll hit us next. As long as nothing is happening to our precious skins right now, we humans are capable of being bored under the most amazing circumstances. Here we are, your BattleTechnology staff team, dashing toward the front in an unarmed DropShip stenciled 'Press', wondering — where and when the front will overtake us. Wondering whether the Clans have any respect for the freedom of the press. Like the MechWarriors who read our magazine, we face an unknown danger at a time and place of our opponents' choosing. And yet, as we wait, we manage to be bored. And our humor shows it.

Several dozen sick jokes have been circulating the pressroom. Some are our own; some are forwarded from frontline units in Lyran, Rasalhaguan, and Kuritan space. Here's a sample:

What's the difference between an extended range Clans Laser and a meatball?

If you don't know, PLEASE don't come over to my house to cook dinner!

How many Clans MechWarriors does it take to install a glowstrip?

Five, because they don't know any lower number.

What present won't Theodore Kurita buy for his daughter on Girl's Day?

A Victor.

What did Tor Miraborg say to his first Clans warrior?

Sorry I shot at you, for a moment I thought you were a mercenary.

What photographic process does Romano Liao hate most?

En-Hanse-Ment.

What has five 'Mech companies, fifteen aerospace fighters, twenty Toads, and an attitude?

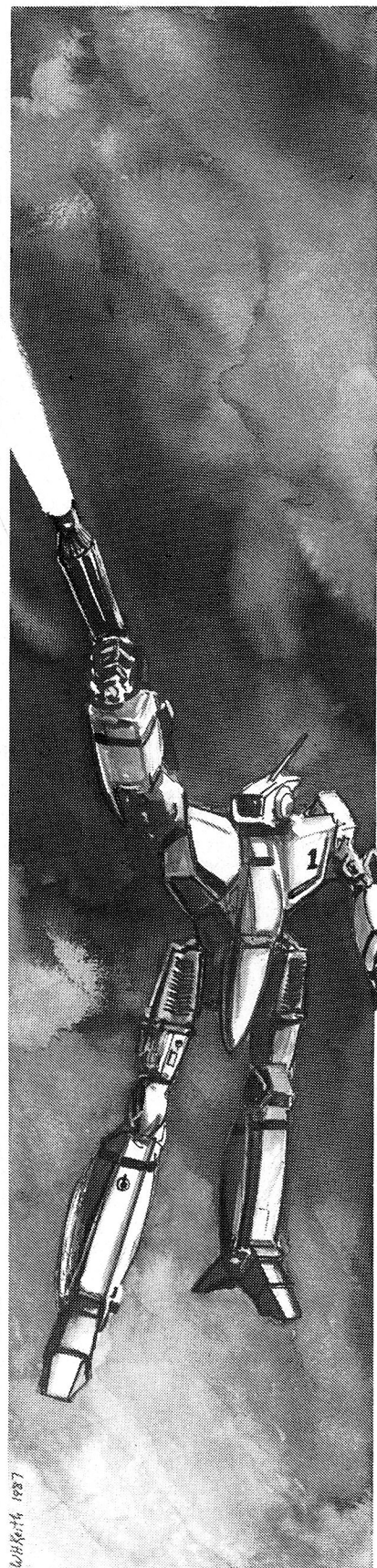
I don't know either, but it's bidding for your planet.

Humor is healing, so they say. Groansome as these jokes are, I value them. They prove to me that the human spirit is indeed undefeated. As long as we keep our hearts up we will reach that end and turn it to our victory.

In the meantime, what have we to offer you this issue? The long-promised update on the Lions of Davion and their most famous action. A Cobalt Coil story, *Reflections of Battle*, that will make you laugh, even in these times. The newest report from the Kurita front, *Armageddon Begins*. Thornhill Arms tries to tempt you with their new releases. *Gone to Ground* is presented as a salute to all the MechWarriors who have ever had to punch out. Scenarios, Tech Readouts, House Marik's most proud MechWarrior Academy's nominee for the best assault 'Mech, and part 2 of The Mercenary in MidCentury complete our mix.

Even more than usual, the staff of BattleTechnology hope that this issue brings you pleasure.

— Hilary Ayer, Lyran Space, August 3050



BattleTechnology

The Magazine of Combat in the 31st Century!

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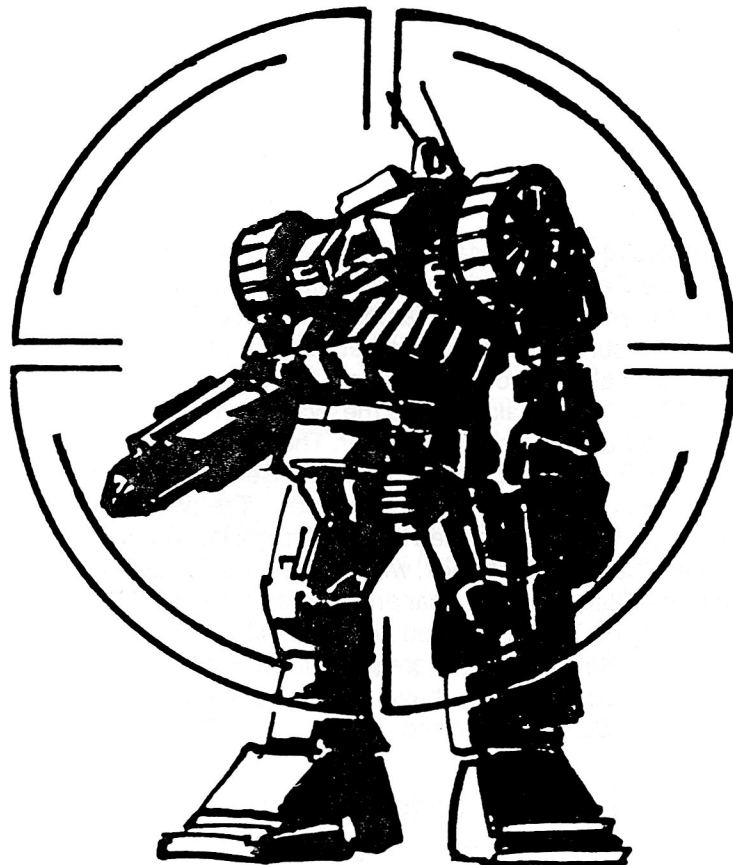
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BattleTechnology, with its BattleTech Simulator, teaches tactics better than anyone but me. And I can't be everywhere! For quality of life, not to mention continuity of life, don't just read the magazine, study it!"

Drillmaster Mameluke ApPrentiss,
Faroes Own Independent Lowlanders

BattleTechnology keeps my customers coming back to me. The only good customer is a live customer.

Abraxas 'Moe' Murasaki,
Owner-Manager BattleTechnicMilitary Salvage Inc

News From The Front: *Buying Time With Lives*

*Necessity is the mother of invention.
War is the father of necessity
∴ War breeds technical progress.*

BattleTechnology salutes the brave this issue. As the body count and the number of lost planets increase, we salute the men and women, in far too many cases the children, who have suffered and died to get this information to us.

This is all we know so far about the Invaders:

1) The Jade Falcons and the Wolf Clan are attacking along the Steiner Periphery Border. The Jade Falcons have taken Bone Norman, Anywhere, Here, Bensinger, Toland, Steelton, Persistence, Winfield, Trelwan, and Twycross. They are reported to be fighting everywhere from Maxie's Planet to Blackjack, with no confirmation available. The Wolf Clan has taken Icar and Chateau, but they're concentrating on The Free Republic of Rasalhague.

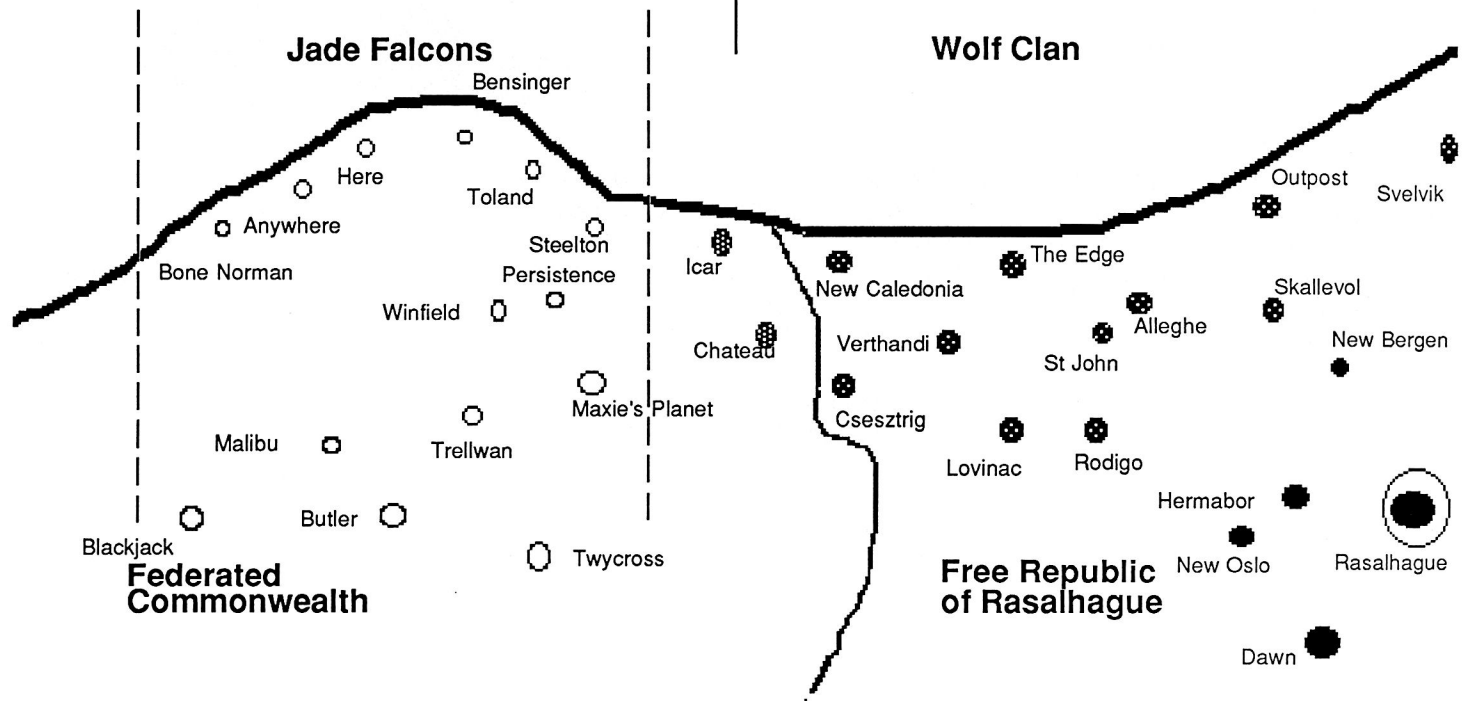
2) The Smoke Jaguars are attacking along the Draconis Periphery Border. They have taken Rockland, Idelwind, Richmond, Schwartz, Bjarred, Tamby, Turtle Bay, Jeanette,

Kabah, Chupadero, Hanover and Albiero. We can only surmise where they will hit next.

3) The Wolf Clan and the Ghost Bears are attacking along the Rasalhague Periphery Border. Mostly it is the Wolf Clan which is active here. They have taken New Caledonia, The Edge, Alleghe, St John, Outpost, Svelvik, Skallevol, and the capital world, Rasalhague itself. They are reported to be fighting on Csesztrig, Loviac, Rodigo, Hermabor, Dawn and New Oslo right now. The Ghost Bears have taken Damien, Thule and Holmsbu. They are fighting on Engadin as of this writing.

4) It seems that all of the Periphery Kingdoms outward in that direction (Duchy of Oberon, Greater Valkyrate, Star's End, Elysian Fields, etc) have already been taken by one or another of these forces.

5) These forces or some combination of them seem able to intercept ComStar transmissions in a selective manner. Much of the routine transmission is getting through. Most of the official transmissions are not. In many cases, we know of the fall of planets only by family calls, not from military reports. How or why this is possible, we cannot conjecture as yet.



6) Their 'Mechs are better made and better weaponed than even our Star League era manufacture. They shoot at longer ranges, more accurately. They take more damage.

7) They have fewer 'Mech designs by far than we do, and to vary weaponry within these designs more than we do. They have under twenty basic 'Mech types, but every type has several variants. Unconfirmed reports suggest that they have some sort of modular framework which permits rapid change of armament in time frames of two to three hours.

8) They fight in unconventional groupings. They have sent in mixed units, a light, a heavy, a couple of assault 'Mechs, and a medium. Or maybe an infantry unit instead of a 'Mech. Even sometimes an aerospace fighter! Their tactics have yet to be analyzed. The only common factor is that each 'lance' is a multiple of five.

9) Our intelligence from Winfield and Romulus makes it certain that the so-called 'Toads' or 'micro-Mechs' are actually a type of augmented infantry. NAIS sources have dubbed them the "Elementals", as they have the drive and unstopability of an Elemental force. Recovered body parts show them to be human in form and genetic material.

10) They don't like mercenaries. They confiscate the 'Mech of any captured mercenary, though they have kept regular units in formation after accepting their surrender.

11) They offer the numbers and names of their attacking

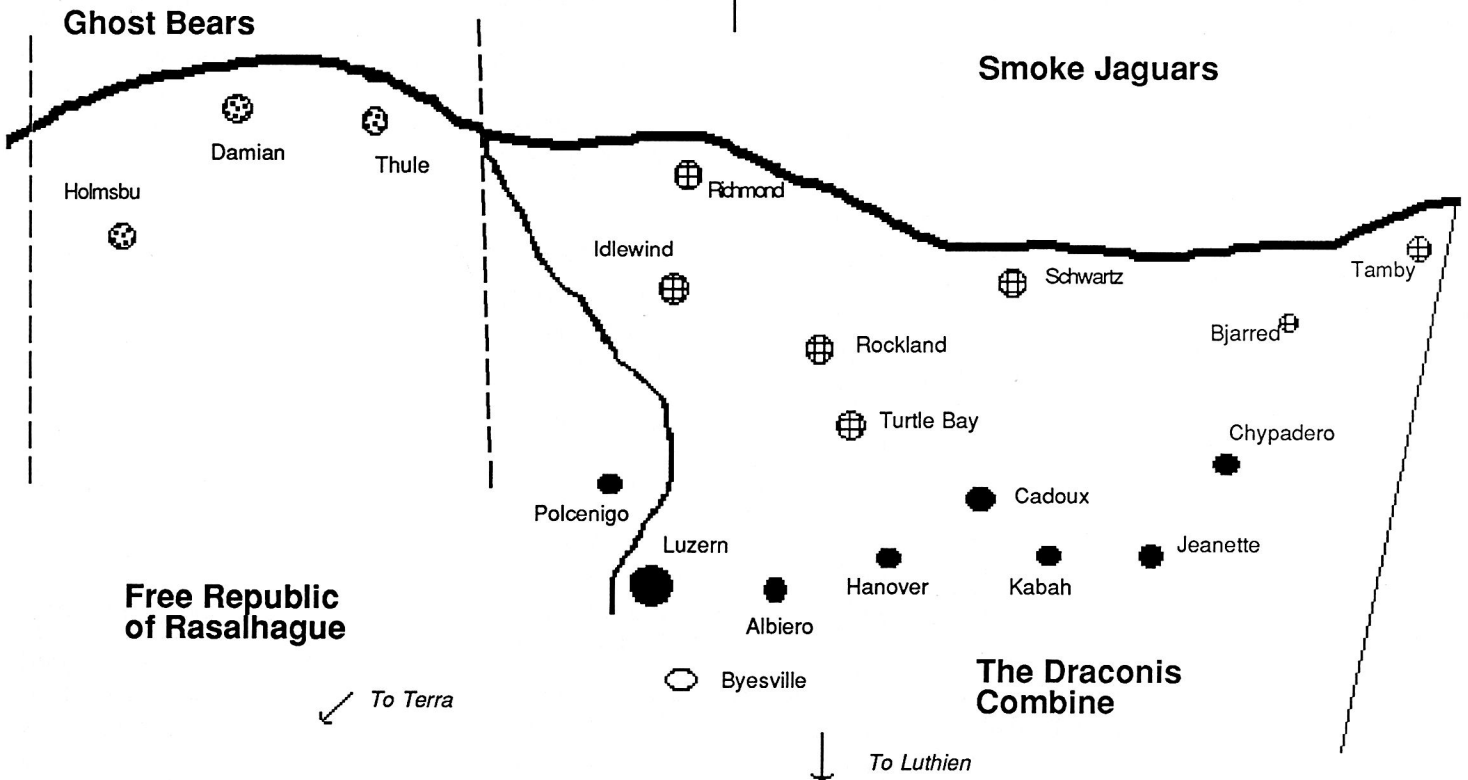
units in a formal ritual which we do not understand yet. They expect us to do the same. They take pride in having studied us well enough to know which units are in which condition as to training and personnel.

12) They react angrily and aggressively to suggestions that their conduct is dishonorable.

13) Their treatment of civilians on captured worlds varies wildly. Sometimes they are hard but fair. Sometimes they are arrogant and, it seems, both bullying and sadistic. Reprisals on civilian personnel for guerilla action seem to be a constant, though the amount of response varies.

14) So far, the Smoke Jaguars are the most savage, having used nuclear weapons on the capital city of Edo (Turtle Bay). It may even mean something that this is a clear violation of the 'Prisoners of War' and 'Captured Planets' section of the Ares Conventions. In several cases now some reference to the Ares Conventions has been made in dealing with these groups. They seem to ignore them.

No matter what we wish the Ares Conventions meant in terms of moral responsibility, there is a bottom line to them. The Ares Conventions assume that we all value certain kinds of technology, learning, and raw materials. Hence we don't fight near JumpShip factories, kill Techs, or destroy mineral deposits. They further assume that we do not treat civilian life, or the resources of universities or libraries, casually. Hence,



The Grim Score Card

Months 1 - 5

<i>House</i>	<i>Won</i>	<i>Lost</i>	<i>Still Fighting</i>
Federated Commonwealth	0	16 **	0
Rasalhague	0	17 *	0
Draconis Combine	0	12-14	0

Invader Force

Jade Falcons	14 **	0	0
Wolves	18 *	0	0
Ghost Bears	4	0	0
Smoke Jaguars	12-14?	0	0

* One out of the new six reported is reliably confirmed.

** Four reports unconfirmed
(reported from personal or family sources)

we ban biological warfare and 'dirty' atomics. We cannot be sure that any of these guidelines will be honored by the Clans.

15) Whether these four groups are rivals, specialists, or military groupings similar to our 'Theater' or 'Operations' is unknown. Each seems uniform within itself in terms of tactics, prisoner treatment, etc, though these policies vary from group to group.

16) We don't know why they are attacking us. It seems to be a war for territory rather than reprisal or genocide.

The motto above indicates Inner Sphere strategy for the next few months. War is the father of necessity — we need to acquire and study samples of their weaponry and vehicles. We need to study their tactics. We need to lose as little territory as possible while doing it, or to keep low-profile 'sleeper' units in lost territory.

We are paying for the time we need, paying in the dearest coin there is. The lives of our warriors are buying the time we need to learn what we need to know to defeat this blood-drenched attacker.

Necessity is the mother of invention — when we know how they fight and what they have to fight with, we will invent what tactics we need to slow them down and contain them.

War breeds technical progress — then we take what they have and we make it better and we use the best of our stuff and the best of their stuff and we take *them*. Kerensky's descendants, Minnesota Tribe, or Giant Mutated Rats, we *will* take them.

Asgard Destroyed

July 12, 3050 Gunzburg Daily News

The Wolf Clan made no effort to hide their JumpShips as they entered the Rasalhague system. We do not mean the edges of the Free Republic; we are speaking of the world itself, the world which is the capital and legislative center of our State. Within three days it is a foregone conclusion that the Wolves have this planet; they are swarming over it, meeting with determined yet futile resistance.

Their intelligence seems to be slightly at fault, for once. Instead of attacking the capital city of Reykjavik to subdue the planet by preemptory strike, they attacked Asgard, the city which is being built — was being built — to serve as the capital of a free people, a city which was to be a symbol.

Rasalhague spent two centuries and more partitioned between the Draconis Combine and the Lyran Commonwealth, under foreign rule. Asgard, named for the Norse gods' dwelling place, was to be a city which had never known slavery, fit capital for a realm of free men and women.

Whatever happens in the long run to this invasion, Asgard will never be built.

Silver Fox Escapes

July 14, 3050 Gunzburg Daily News

In the midst of sorrow for our capital world, a trumpet-note of rejoicing sounds. Escorted by the First Drakon's Aerospace, Elected Prince Haakon Magnusson escaped the capture of our capital planet to lead us again as he did in the days of the Tyr.

Leading Valkyrie Flight of the Drakons is Kapten Tyra Miraborg, the Iron Jarl's daughter. Once again, a Magnusson and a Miraborg triumph over long odds to keep the enemy guessing.

While there remains one free soul in Rasalhague, no one shall take our land from us!

News From the Front: Princes in Peril

It Was Like A Child's Game...

How many times has this scenario been played out? A brutal tyrant usurps the land. A prince is captured, but disguises himself as a common soldier. His faithful servant cannot free him without aid. In desperation the servant begs help from the Thieves' Guild. Although they are hardened rogues, the thieves still love their kingdom. (Shades of Gilbert and Sullivan!) They risk their lives to save the prince. He promises to return and free them; he and his loyal servant escape.

Sounds like the games we used to play after school with character sheets and a random number generator, doesn't it?

This spring it really happened. But somehow, it wasn't as much fun.

On the planet of Turtle Bay, the heir's son to House Kurita was captured with his troops. In fairness to Hohiro Kurita, let us mention that he was both dazed and wounded when he was taken prisoner. He had shown a shrewd grasp of small-unit harrying techniques; Turtle Bay and the Fourteenth Legion of Vega held Smoke Jaguar frontline troops throughout April and most of May.

Somehow he remained undetected in prison while his aide Shin Yodama somehow managed to contact and convince the Yakuza of the planetary capital of Edo to make a daring raid. Early in the month of May, a mass escape was planned from the grim prison of Kurishiiyama, on the Sawagashii River. Somehow, as freed prisoners joined the liberating force to battle Jaguar guards, Prince Hohiro was spirited away. Two days later he was on a JumpShip headed for Lu-thien.

Two of the questions we never asked ourselves as kids were — how cruel is the cruel tyrant? And what happens to the thieves who are left in his mercy?

The Smoke Jaguars are the most cruel of all the inexplicable Clans. They not only confiscated the 'Mechs from captured mercenaries, they shot the MechWarriors. In return for any incidents of unrest, they took their 'Mechs out and destroyed a city block, then another city block, then another...until the perpetrator gave himself up. Then they shot him.

What happened to the Yakuza? What happened to the innocent population who had no knowledge of the raid?

On May 31, 3050, the city of Edo was bombarded from orbit by Smoke Jaguar garrison troops. In an effort to crush resistance, the invaders broadcast the destruction system-wide as they mercilessly turned a city of three hundred thousand people into a lifeless mass of ruin. There were no survivors.

A Storybook Fable...

Trellwan is a planet of famous battles. Fans of the Grey Death Legion will remember that Grayson Death Carlyle first distinguished himself here at Thunder Rift. The several engagements fought here during the Second and Third Succession Wars were less noted in the bloody generalities of war, but students of military history have refought them on paper and on simulator for centuries. It is the sort of place where battlefield legends are made.

Victor Steiner Davion is the heir to the entirety of the Federated Commonwealth, but he was treated much like any other promising graduate. When Victor left The Nagelring, he was assigned to a Kommandant's position with the Twelvth Donegal Guards. Most graduates begin as Leutnants, with only a lance to command. Many sources considered this nepotism. But the tradition is for the top 5-scorers to be so assigned. And the Heir-Designate's marks were among the top five. Proving himself worthy of this lofty first step seemed to be the worst of Victor's troubles. That and keeping his temper.

Two and a half millenia ago, a Terran King called Edward III stood grimly aside from the battlefield of Poitiers while his son the Black Prince led troops into battle to win his spurs. It was just as hard for this royal father as for Davion's First Prince to see his child in the tumult — and the danger — of battle without allowing himself to take a hand. Trellwan looked like the sort of place that the Draconis Combine might attempt to nibble. This assignment was meant to let the First Prince's son "win his spurs" by risking his life leading troops in a small scale action.

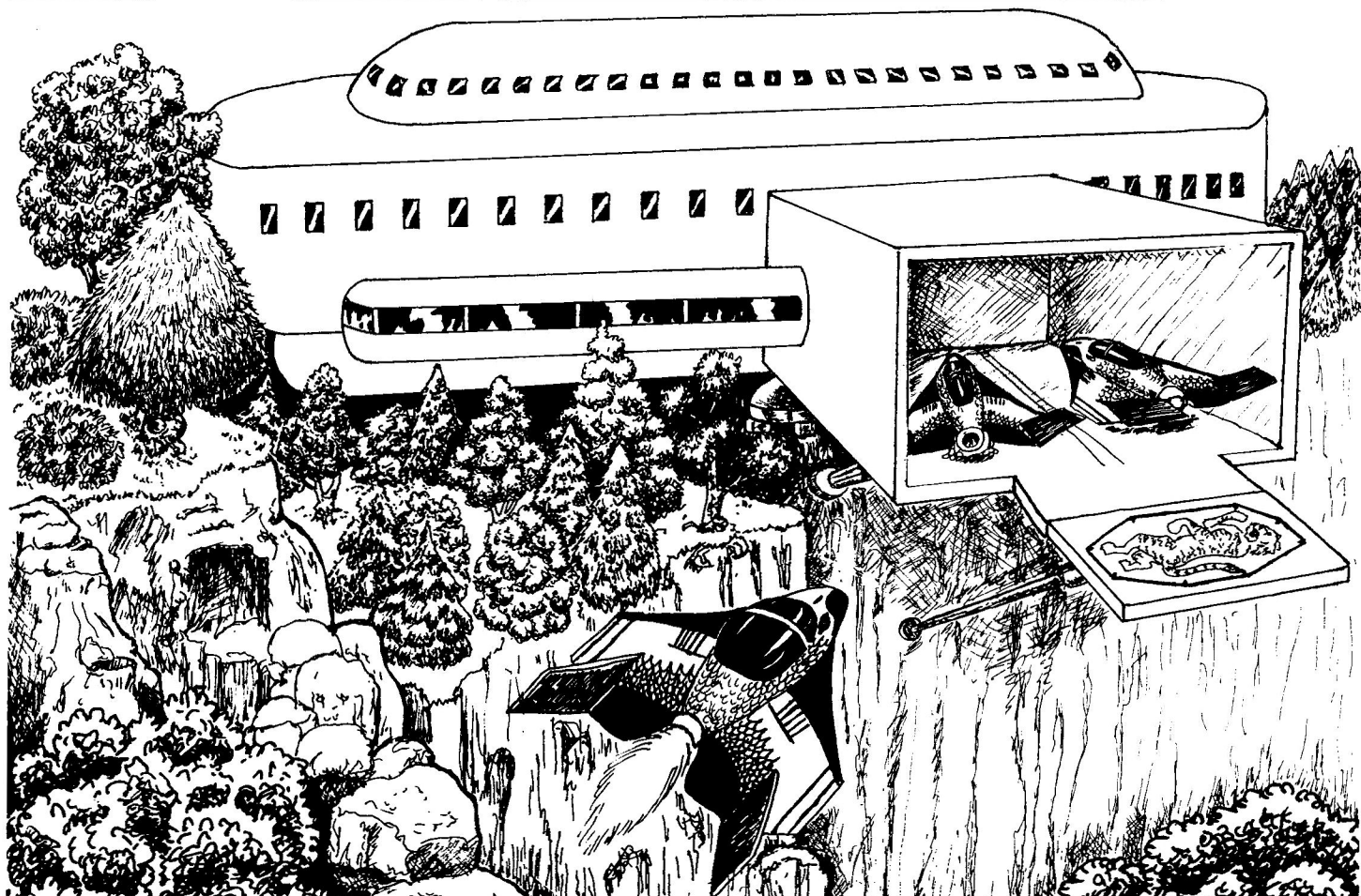
In April of 3050, Trellwan was invaded by the Jade Falcons, and the story changed dramatically. In less than a week any hope of resisting them had been savaged. Kommandant Davion fought bravely; in fact, he is credited with some of the endgame strategy that kept the Falcons tied up a further week.

But Victor was not there to see it. The heir to the Federated Commonwealth was evacuated. It is reported that the evacuation took place by force. His unit, the Twelfth Donegal Guards, was obliterated. The only satisfaction they could have known was Victor's successful escape.

Don't get us wrong; BattleTechnology is pleased that two talented young commanders escaped to fight again. We just wish that real warfare was more like the legends.

One more account to be settled, brothers and sisters at arms!

BattleTechnology News Service



Falling Leaf Lodge, Chesterton, as drawn by Kuan Yin Allard-Liao

Candace: 5, Romano: 0

April 10, 3050, Ducal Hunting Lodge, Chesterton, St Ives Compact

While elsewhere in the Inner Sphere brave warriors fell to the Clans' Juggernaut, the Chancellor of the Capellan Confederation indulged in her favorite pastime — attempting to murder her sister and brother in law.

At 18:40 hours local time, a sentry from the St Ives First Irregulars on duty in the landing dock of the ducal hunting found two men secreted in an incoming transport. He managed to get off a warning before they killed him. The sentry's name is withheld until the family has been notified.

A squad of infantry with blazers cornered the pair. After a brief but bloody battle, the invaders were killed. They fought with such ferocity that it was impossible to take them alive.

The duo of assassins carried a formidable array of modern weaponry, but around their waists were knotted the traditional yellow thugee scarves.

It has been almost two years since the last assassination attempt on Duchess Candace and Duke Justin. On Ambergrist the assassins carried with them a letter from Chancellor Romano which was meant to be left on her sister's body. No such letter was found this time, although there is probably no doubt as to who instigated this attempted assassination. This is the fifth such attempt since the Fourth Succession War.

"We have no intention of allowing this to spoil our favorite rural retreat, nor to alter our pleasant associations with this planet," the Duchess told newsmen calmly.

BattleTechnology News Service

Wolf's Still Not There

July 6, 3050: Black Pearl Base, Sudeten, Tamar March, Lyran Commonwealth

As the Emergency Combined Planning Session of the AFFC moved into its second month, and the important Mercenary Liason Sessions began, luminaries like General Adriana Winston of the Eridani Light Horse, Colonel Daniel Allard and the seldom seen Major Christian Kell of the Kell Hounds formally joined the smaller mercenary groups for combined policy/planning sessions, one celebrated unit still formally under contract to the Federated Commonwealth was conspicuous by its absence. There was no representative of Wolf's Dragoons.

As our readers will remember, the Dragoons began last autumn to return all of their earnest monies, breaking their training companies' contracts all over the Inner Sphere. They have not formally broken their contract with the Commonwealth, but have failed to renew it this year. (The twenty-year contract signed just before the Fourth Succession War ended in 3048; since then the Dragoons have signed on a year-to-year basis.)

All five battalions of the Dragoons have rendezvoused on the planet of Outreach. Since House Davion gave the world to Wolf's Dragoons at the end of the Fourth Succession War, it has seen a heavy military buildup. Weaponry and training is state-of-the-art.

Federated Commonwealth spokespeople deny the idea that Colonel Jaime Wolf and his celebrated unit would even consider turning on the Federated Commonwealth. BattleTechnology sources do note an unusual number of pony-express duty JumpShips waiting in nearby systems.



April 2, 3050 Rearguard Action during the Trelwan Retreat

Kanrei Listens

July 21, 3050: Marshdale, Kagoshima Prefecture, Pesht Military District, Draconis Combine

The Genyosha, The Ryuken, The Swords of Light, even the 'Ghost Regiments' — what do they have in common? They all have representatives on this planet of earthquakes exchanging information and ideas as unsettling as the planet's tectonic plates.

Gunji no Kanrei — Deputy for War — is Theodore Kurita's title. Here on Marshdale, he is indeed his people's chosen war leader. He is active in every conference, brainstorming, soothing egos, creating new units, calling in mercenaries, farmers, refugees, anyone who can give a small scrap of information about the Smoke Jaguars and the Ghost Bears who are ravaging Kurita's territory.

Kanrei Theodore Kurita has shown himself to be a man who knows how to wait until the moment is right. BattleTechnology awaits with interest the results of all of this listening.

The Chancellor Forgives Us

Ed Note: THIS LETTER WAS FOUND IN OUR SARNA OFFICE BY THE MORNING SHIFT. IT WAS PRINTED ON WHAT APPEARS TO BE CHANCELLOR LIAO'S PERSONAL STATIONERY. WE HAVE NO INFORMATION, OTHER THAN THAT THE SIGNATURE IS 100% COMPATIBLE WITH EXAMPLES OF THE CHANCELLOR'S HANDWRITING, DOWN TO PRESSURE EXERTED ON THE PAPER, ANGLE OF PEN, PROBABLE MAKE OF PEN AND SO ON. WE FEEL THAT IT IS GENUINE, OTHERWISE WE WOULD NOT PRINT IT.

To the decadent, irresponsible swine calling themselves the editors of BattleTechnology Magazine:

Know that I am aware of your subversion by the Ghost-Fox Hanse Davion, and that you are insanely jealous of the tremendous advances made by my Capellan Confederation in all areas; science, medicine, art, government, industry, etc. The blatantly slanderous revision of my graciously donated interview with Researcher Donaldson (who is obviously a Davion agent) portrays me as a woman not in control of her mind. In fairness, I must compliment the MIO for the quality of the lies told in this travesty.

I was given to understand that the interview was to be about myself and the Capellan Confederation now and in the future, and would not delve into arcane and unimportant matters. If I deign to give interviews in future, I will know in advance the questions, the better to prepare for the lies that will be published.

It further displeases me and detracts from my serenity that you are able to portray my scheming, theiving former sister and her allegedly independent St Ives Compact as anything other than the snivelling pack of thieves and scum and traitors that they are. You add more insult by placing her before me in your magazine. We will live to see the return of St Ives to its proper place in the Confederation.

Your further antics serve only to amuse me. The traitor Khorsakov you write about is the son of Alexandre Bulganin, also a traitor to my father. The father has paid for his treason; so shall the son.

In summation, I must say that I should have known what to expect from dealing with outsiders to the Capellan press, whose members show proper respect. In consideration that you had not the many advantages of a Capellan upbringing, I say this: you have made the one mistake that fools and the merely ignorant are allowed. I will not be so forgiving a second time.

I am

Chancellor Romano Liao,

Mighty Sword of the Confederation, Sun of Union, Excellent Provider to Her People, Serene Highness of Tikonov and St Ives, Laureate of Universal Reason, Phoenix of Faithful Duty, and Jade Empress of the Marches.

The Mercenary in Mid-Century Part Two

A mercenary commander in today's Inner Sphere has to concern himself far more with political questions than heretofore. In times past, mercs tended to worry only about payment and contract provision fulfillment. This has changed.

Some of these concerns are readily apparent, such as the, to put it frankly, state-fostered hatred for mercenaries in the Free Rasalhague Republic, where a merc cannot safely leave his compound night or day. It has been suggested, only half in jest, that this attitude is a prelude to a Republic-wide confiscation of mercs' equipment, probably after a series of manufactured 'incidents'. (This scenario needs no elaboration for the seasoned hired soldier.) If indeed such is the case, the resulting bloodbath would be too terrible to contemplate. Given the relative skills of some of the Republic's mercenaries, the Republic might well cease to be.

Another ugly situation could be brewing in the Capellan Confederation. Chancellor Romano's nationalization of virtually the entire Capellan economy may have grave consequences, should her economy collapse. This will inevitably lead to a lack of funds with which to pay her House troops, let alone the proportionally large number of mercenaries she keeps.

The Lady Chancellor is certainly aware of what armies have consistently done throughout history when they were not paid, or when the warriors feared for their families.

Mercenaries serving provincial nobles of the Free Worlds League were specifically exempted from the 3037 Addendum. Many consider this to have been the decisive factor in its passage. However that may be, the Marik has contiguously attempted to bring these formations under League control. The concern here is that should Thomas have his way, these mercenary formations could be forced into the League military. Some of the older members of the LCCC have expressed this viewpoint loudly in Parliament. This issue has generated some of the most ferocious political wrangling in Parliament this century,

Draconis-hired mercs are merged into DCMS formations and presumably are treated as regulars. Since 3030, no unit above the company level has been hired. At one times, there was the remote possibility of civil war between Takashi and Theodore Kurita, but since their reconciliation this mercenary's nightmare cannot become real.

Hired troops serving the St Ives Compact are liable to be asked repeatedly to become House units. These requests are not forcible, nor do they reflect adversely on the merc unit in

question; St Ives is quite simply trying to arm itself with experienced troops. The Compact also does not hire extensively, at present fielding only the Kell Hounds 2nd Regiment and a few other, very small, mercenary formations.

ComStar hires fewer mercenaries as time goes on, often using them as swift-reaction forces to deal with raiders, or for truly dirty jobs that ComStar does not want the Com Guards associated with. Brion's Legion, however, remains as part of the Terran garrison. Almost all other long-term contracts have been allowed to expire, though occasionally ComStar will release a unit early, paying for the full contract. Otherwise, duty with ComStar is unchanged from conditions of twenty-five years ago.

Perhaps the most stable employer of the Inner Sphere is the Federated Commonwealth. Fielding over one hundred mercenary 'Mech regiments alone, Federated Commonwealth forces have little apparent difficulty in dealing with the hired soldier. Here again, however, are potential problems. Several small but outspoken separatist movements have made themselves known. Non have hired troops openly as yet, or formally seceded, but there is the remote possibility.

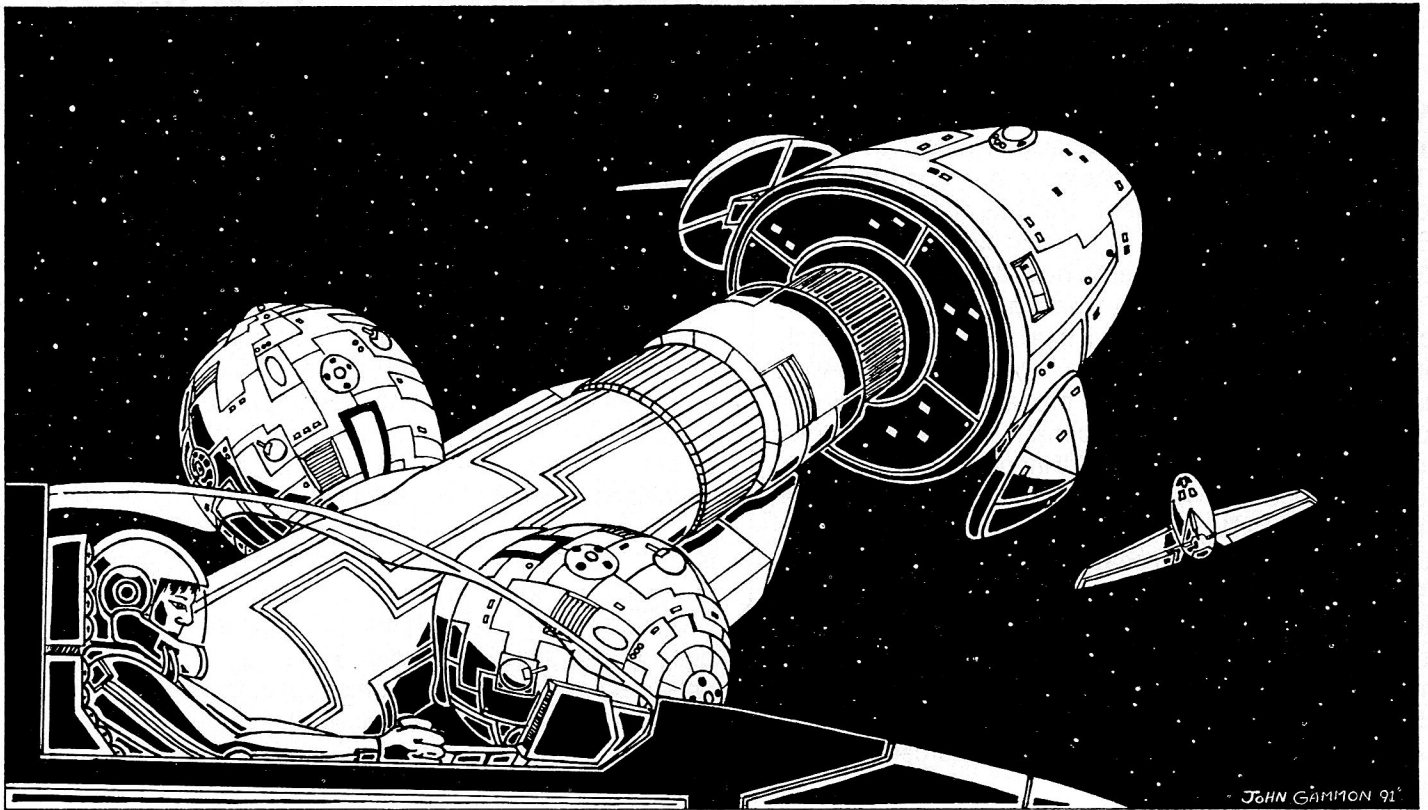
As in the Free Worlds League, lesser Federated Commonwealth nobility can and sometimes do hire mercenary troops for varying purposes. These purposes range from escort to riot control to the extreme of private wars, usually carried out as parts of blood feuds. Some of these have gotten completely out of control, much to the dismay of the nobles involved, as their ruling House sharply intervenes.

The various Periphery states and bandit kingdoms surrounding the Inner Sphere are largely beyond the scope of this article. Frankly, they can be of minor importance at best in a discussion of Inner Sphere concerns.

Today's wise mercenary lead should carefully study the political climate of any potential employers before signing on. Now as never before, the Inner Sphere is polarizing. The results of this polarization remain to be seen.

WRITER CRAIG HARRIS IS A MECHWARRIOR SERVING WITH KHORSAKOV'S COSSACKS, WHICH HAS RECENTLY ACCEPTED A CONTRACT WITH THE FEDERATED COMMONWEALTH. THOSE SEEKING EMPLOYMENT WITH THE COSSACKS MAY REACH THEM VIA FCPO Box 18-2, NEW AVALON.

ARMAGEDDON BEGINS



What I write now is a warning to the Inner Sphere. I have seen the enemy and they have brought Armageddon with them. The story I am about to tell may seem to be fantastic to you but it is the barest truth.

The story begins simply enough. My special operations lance had been given a break with an “easy assignment”. We’d been going for five months straight doing instructional work with the new recruits to the Night Stalkers; we definitely needed a break. My lance was what could be considered a microcosm of the Sun Tzu combat philosophy. That philosophy stresses the combined arms technique, in my opinion the best style of combat. Certainly it’s the best style of combat for our lance, which consists of: my own Mantis LAM (a family heirloom, one of ten or so remaining in the Inner Sphere), a Mark VII landing craft, a Hunter light support tank, and a scout squad. So the Sho-sa ordered us to escort a minor official on his tour of the various planetary militias. We prepared to go with him to his next stop, Rockland. Several of our crew were looking forward to a visit home.

My wingmate Hiro Tetsura took charge of our esteemed

passenger as we flew escort to the waiting Invader class JumpShip *The Black Lotus*. The *Lotus* carried the Mark VII within its small craft bay. On its DropShip collars were a Vengeance-class AeroSpace carrier and two Union-class DropShips. These units were going to various other planets on the *Lotus*’ route for various military maneuvers.

Our passenger almost refused to exit the cargo bay of the Mark VII as my LAM was coming in for docking, because he wanted to see a LAM transform. The problem was solved by an alarm from Hiro that the cargo bay was depressurizing rapidly. Kai Konoë, the leader of the scout squad, took the anti-nausea drugs his body would need within that nebulous time spent in Jump Space, and so the jump took place.

As we arrived in system several alarms went off at once. The first one told the captain that the jump had been successful but had put us at one of the pirate jumps points instead of the Zenith or Nadir points. A second alarm told all of us that there were several warships within system — and that their sensors had noted our arrival. The comm officer piped in with a red-priority message that the system had been invaded. We’d guessed. The commander called a

strategy session with the DropShip captains and JumpShip commander — and me. The commander began speaking, “We must get word to the Coordinator about this invasion fleet. But I’ll need at least 30 hours to recharge the Lotus for the jump.” I’m expected to think quickly in situations like this. A desperate plan came to mind. “Suppose my lance heads towards the planet to draw off some of their fighters to investigate us? Then our honorable DropShip captain will lead a screen defense with his fighter contingent.”

The commander began to nod. Yet the aristocracy must be heard from. “We Sword of Light should be first to enter into battle!” *By the gods, I thought to myself, do these idiots want the honor of being first to die?* “Most esteemed and valiant warrior, may I humbly beg to differ,” I began, hating every groveling moment, “If you go down there, you will be destroyed by those warships before you get a chance to face the enemy on an honorable field of battle.” He bowed to the logic, implying it would befit an officer of his greater standing to give the word of outside invasion to the Coordinator (Rather than some low life pond scum like myself hogging the glory involved). And so the plan went into effect.

I got Kai and Hiro together and told them how we were going to play decoy until the *Black Lotus* could get back to pick us up at this same pirate point. Then I told them that we’d be onplanet doing a reconnaissance. “The Dragon needs as full a report as we can manage. As Stalkers it is simply our duty.” I could tell they didn’t like it, but they followed my lead as we went streaking off to the planet.

As we had figured, the Vengeance was taking most of the heat. Our scanners showed a group of five unidentified fighters. The warships were not willing to enter combat at this time it seemed. Trajectory scans indicated that the fighters meant to intercept us in high orbit around the devastated hulk of a space station. I radioed Hiro to ask what some Mech support would be worth these days. He thought it would draw off at least some of the pursuers; he could probably deal with what was left. So I went to max thrust and entered the station.

Hiro fired off a flight of long range missiles. They hit one of the fighters and drew their attention to him. He flew in so close to the station that I was sure he would impact and send my entire lance to their deaths. But Hiro’s too good a flier for that. A fighter shot past my ambush site and I fired off my medium lasers at it. Apparently it was the same one that Hiro had hit because it silently destroyed itself as the engine overloaded and went critical. In space, explosions are silent. I switched into AirMech form and waited for the next ship. Th communicator crackled. “Chu-i,” said Hiro, “nice shooting, but no triple ace for you today. Three bogies have pulled away; I think they’re signaling for one of the warships to fire upon the station. The wingmate of the one you took

out is at three o’clock close to your position. Good luck; we’ll meet you on the planet.” I picked out a nice large girder and got to the outside hull of the station, waiting to ambush the fighter.

The wingmate came towards the station at dead slow, looking very carefully for any signs of life. I jumped out at full thrust before he could find me, and surprised the invader. Wielding the girder as a sword I thrust it right into the belly of the craft. Now, holding my ‘fighter on a stick’ as he tried to go rocketing off, I carefully took aim with my lasers. I fired at the spot just above the girder’s entry point. taking off enough armor to penetrate that fragile inner circuitry. The fighter literally flew itself to pieces.

On planet, my team had found a nice secluded valley which was not too far from one of the invaders’ outposts and close to some villages. “Well, Bossman, what are we going to do now?” asked Kai. “Kai, have the Hunter provide cover for the end of this valley. You and your boys are going to mix with the locals and find out how these invaders are treating them and what you can on troop movements. Hiro, you are going to be our communications link, Keep this old crate of yours ready to go on a moment’s notice. I will be attempting to contact what may be left of any sort of guerrilla units. “

Examining the maps there were three places within a hundred kilometers that rebel forces could be using as a base of operations. Before going to check these out I had to see how well prepared the invaders were. In fighter form I flew off towards their outpost and targeted a 60 ton ‘Mech, figuring that it might be the right one to respond to my attack and began my run. I streaked out of the lowering sun with lasers primed and ready to go when when I heard the sounds of air bursts about me from anti-aircraft fire. By the time I was in position, my target had still not seen me so I fired with everything I had. It was a one-shot run; I did not hit anything major. I left quickly. Now they would be after a fighter who had been annoying them and hopefully, they wouldn’t be looking for a smaller base. I spotted an old abandoned farm from the air. It looked perfect to hide in. Finding the place deserted, I entered the barn and shut the Mantis down for the evening.

I stayed at the farm for a few days occasionally going out and checking on enemy positions and finding little. On the sixth evening I thought my worst nightmare had come true. A group of five of these invaders came by the farm and had paused in some sort of meeting. The Mantis was shut down and there was no way I could get into her and start her up before their attack. So I waited, for ten minutes they just stood there five dark, menacing shapes waiting for something. When they simply walked off. I knew that there was

some god watching over me then.

A day or two later I found a small town with a tavern where most of the town's inhabitants gathered to discuss local news. The news was simple and terrible. The Smoke Jaguars, as the invaders called themselves, wanted the 'aerospace jock' who had been eluding their forces. They had begun wiping out whole villages or towns, one building at a time, near each place he had been striking at their forces. They had announced that they would continue this slaughter until all resistance leaders had been given up. With sickening force, I realized that I had been responsible for the deaths of at least a thousand Kuritan citizens.

I left the tavern quickly, returning to my concealed Mantis. It was time to face these Jaguars even though I knew it was to be my death. I owed it to those who died because of my avoidance of the enemy, my inattention which had caused the death of so many.

The next morning, I prepared for the battle. I made a ritual cleansing to purify my body, before donning my coolant vest for the last time. I was truly prepared to die. Putting the Mech into AirMech mode I walked out of my hiding place — and right into a group of people who had been waiting for me to come out of the barn.

"Welcome to our camp, Buso-sensei. I am Yamato Jiri, leader of the underground. You have been encamped upon our base since you arrived. We did not know if you were a Jaguar awaiting for us to show ourselves or not. Word of your actions reached us last night and we have come to place ourselves at your command." There were about thirty or so people with him here. The place I had been sitting for the past week was the very base I had been looking for!

I exited the LAM and asked to see their supplies. They had set up a very nice supply depot, and I had just casually parked my LAM over it. Yamato told me that they had had several of these caches set up around the continent, primarily in case pirates attacked, not for a major invasion like this.

"Yamato-san," I began hesitantly, "Could you tell me what you know of these Smoke Jaguars?"

"Certainly Buso-sensei", he began in a crisp, military fashion, "We have recorded our discoveries most carefully. Though they are completely ruthless and have no care for life, they are completely honorable in a fire fight. They seem to have a martial philosophy which is similar to our own. The most unusual thing about their BattleMechs is their weapon systems, which are of a modular construction. We have witnessed the ease which they have in replacing one system with others that were more suited to the job at hand. They seem to use an organization system based on units of five instead of our Star League organizational combat style.

The only thing which is really different about them is their ground troops. I cannot see how they can be human; they

wield weapons that belong on a 'Mech, not with an infantry unit. They are so armored that even 'Mechs have a hard time destroying them. I have been calling them 'Devil Locusts' by the way they move."

"Domo arigato, Yamato-san, you have been a great help to the Dragon. I have great respect for what you and your group have learned." They had accomplished my information gathering for me!

I and my team still had two weeks left before our rendezvous with the *Black Lotus*. I decided that it would be best for everyone involved if I left the Mantis at the Mark VII with Hiro and did some personal scouting with Yamato and his crew. After two days of straight walking I reached the small city which was the rendezvous site and got my first look at one of these infantrymen Yamato had told me about.

He was about two and a half meters tall, dressed in some strange sort of armored exoskeleton Suit. His primary weapon seemed to be similar to the small laser that protected the rear of my LAM. On his back was a jump pack of an unknown, probably advanced design. The hand servos looked like oversized vice grips which would hold onto anything and be hard to shake off. I walked by him as nonchalantly as I could, very aware that I was dressed only in civilian clothes, with only a pistol and a knife for weapons.

I found the cafe where I was supposed to meet with Yamato. I'd waited about twenty minutes when five of these 'Devil Locusts' had walked into the cafe. They checked people's papers, took twelve people out front onto the sidewalk, and simply shot them. Oh, they made an announcement first, these individuals had been condemned for "conspiracy with the criminal organization of Yamato Jiri." After they marched away, while we were still staring at the bodies on the sidewalk, the serving girl told me that Yamato had been captured the night before and was being held in the capital city awaiting execution. I got the impression that Yamato was the hero of Rockland. She mentioned his gallantry during the Fourth Succession War as a Mech-Warrior, and that his 'Mech had been destroyed by the Jaguars.

How could I let Yamato die? I returned to the landing craft and called the teams in. "Gentlemen," I began, hearing in my own voice how serious a matter I was broaching. "We have all seen by now what atrocities these Smoke Jaguars are capable of doing without shame. So far we have been gathering information, forced to remain passive watchers of their persecutions." My voice grew hard and cold as I spoke "The Night Stalkers cannot allow these atrocities to go unavenged. Tonight we will strike at the enemy and ensure that they know they have been hit. Yamato Jiri, our new-found friend, has been taken. We shall release him."

There was a stir among my lancemates. Except for myself, all of my lance was Rocklander. They had kept

themselves in check for so long, awaiting the command to avenge the destruction of their homes! Now at last they would have their chance.

We loaded up the Mark VII. Kai and his team prepared for a high-altitude drop into the security prison. I had the job of drawing off as many of the enemy as I could convince to follow me. Our Hunter tank was going to be dropped off in the woods near the south end of the city to draw off even more of the invaders, then circle to pick up the scout team. We decided to meet in four days at the valley, to leave from there as soon as we could. Hiro would wait for us there.

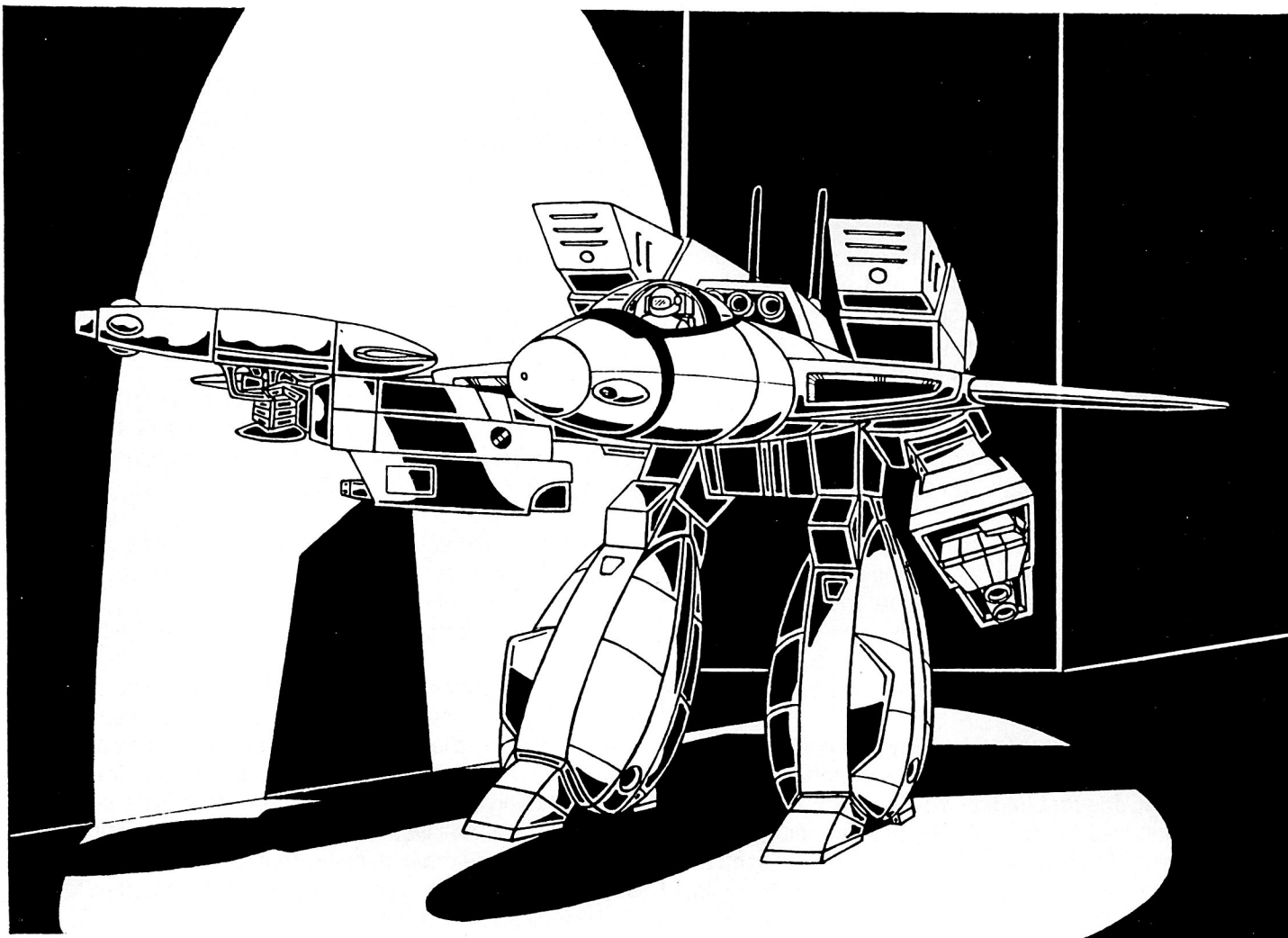
We got to our positions without incident. I landed atop the tallest building in the city, changed into 'Mech form, and turned my radio on to full range, loudspeakers and all broadcast facilities.

"Attention, you Smoke Jaguars who call themselves warriors!" I waited for heads to turn toward me, then continued, "I am Chu-i Jason Oshara. I have made fools of your forces for the past two weeks. You call yourselves warriors? I say

that you are not, for what true warrior makes war only upon the weaponless, the innocent? You have destroyed whole towns! They had done nothing! I was able to elude your foolish efforts by skill and guile alone!" Yes, I could see them pointing toward me now. "I challenge you, try to destroy me! Try to make me less than a warrior! You call yourselves Jaguars but you behave like craven JACKALS!"

My impromptu speech had gone very well. Looking around, I could see the effect that I wanted. Every single Jaguar unit in sight was moving toward me, confident that they had me trapped on this building. I'd let them get closer before I made my move. Turning to the watching civilians, I said with all the feeling I could muster, "People of Rockland, You have resisted the invaders well! The Dragon will now take the weight of this war off of your shoulders. On my family's honor and the honor of my regiment, I promise that we shall free you. The Dragon salutes your bravery! Wait for our return!"

The Jaguars must be close by now. I leapt off the



building, transforming into AirMech form as I fell.

I flew down a winding alley and waited there. A recon lance of light 'Mechs was right behind me, moving faster than anything I had ever seen. I let the first four go by; as the fifth passed my position, I jumped out and shot it in the back. All four laser bolts went into its center. I must have penetrated something fragile, because the 'Mech stopped moving. I didn't stop to talk. I went rocketing down the street to another part of the city. Here the battles had destroyed most of the buildings, leaving a grim parody of a playground in piled ruins and twisting metal.

'Mechs were moving through the rubble searching for me. I got my first closeup look at these invader BattleMechs. It surprised me to see how alike they were, twelve or thirteen of the same type. All that varied from 'Mech to 'Mech were the weapons systems. These were optimum weapons of war, not the expressions of individual design and technique common in the Inner Sphere.

Hiding within the ruins of a building, I awaited the enemy. I was sure I was perfectly concealed, but one of them opened up on my position anyway. I suppose they were trying to flush me out. That was a bit much for me. I began to transform again, relying on the advantage of speed that the Mantis has over the normal 'Mech. I had just finished converting when a laser shot creased my torso. My tracking computer identified it as a medium laser — but gave me a range reading of other a thousand meters! It was definitely time to go!

I tore off as fast as I could. It was as I'd hoped! The Smoke Jaguars were not expecting to fight a Land-Air 'Mech. It had hit me that, since we began our surreptitious watch of the enemy, I had not seen a single LAM. Perhaps they had never seen the use of having transformable 'Mechs!. Intriguing possibility, isn't it?

I rocketed off into the atmosphere, making it clear that I was the 'AeroSpace jock' they were looking for. I spent the next several hours appearing and disappearing about the planet in fighter mode. The idea was to keep all the Jaguars on full alert, but never to approach their bases. I made it back to the valley as my time was running out. Just as I was cresting the hill, I took in the scene before me — and froze. The Jaguars had found our little valley. The valley mouth was covered by two companies of 'Mechs. The Hunter was in smoking ruins. Hiro was broadcasting that he had run out of long range missiles.

Despite the spot we were in, I felt only anger. Recklessly, I signalled their commander on an open channel. "What is it you want most, Jaguar Leader? You want what you do not have — myself and Yamato Jiri. I want my people safe. So...I propose..." I paused for dramatic effect, "a contest. Say, a race between one of your best and my LAM. If I win, you let my people leave in peace and take no more reprisals

against the people of Rockland for any action before today. If I lose, you take all of us captive, including myself, and we are in your hands." Hiro would know what I really meant; if I lost, we'd set our engines on overload to cause a series of explosions the Jaguars would not quickly forget.

"The idea intrigues me, Chu-i. A moment while I get permission from my galaxy commander." Galaxy commander? Sounded like bad vid drama. Bad *Marik* vid drama. "A contest of skills? We had thought that mercenaries were not worth the testing. Perhaps... just a moment... Yes, I have received permission. You will start at Capital City and race to the Nadir system point. Your people may proceed there at once to await you."

Five fighters appeared to 'escort' me to the starting point. I was to fly against what appeared to be a Stuka. I knew this was going to be a long flight. We both got out of our fighters and bowed to one another. He seemed normal enough, except for the unfamiliar uniform with its green cats on the sleeve patches. It would be interesting to see what he had planned for me. We turned to the leader, this 'galaxy commander'. He spoke in a monotone, "The rules of this contest are simple. The first to make the Nadir point is the winner. Otherwise, you may do as you please. Remember, Kuritan, this contest is on your honor."

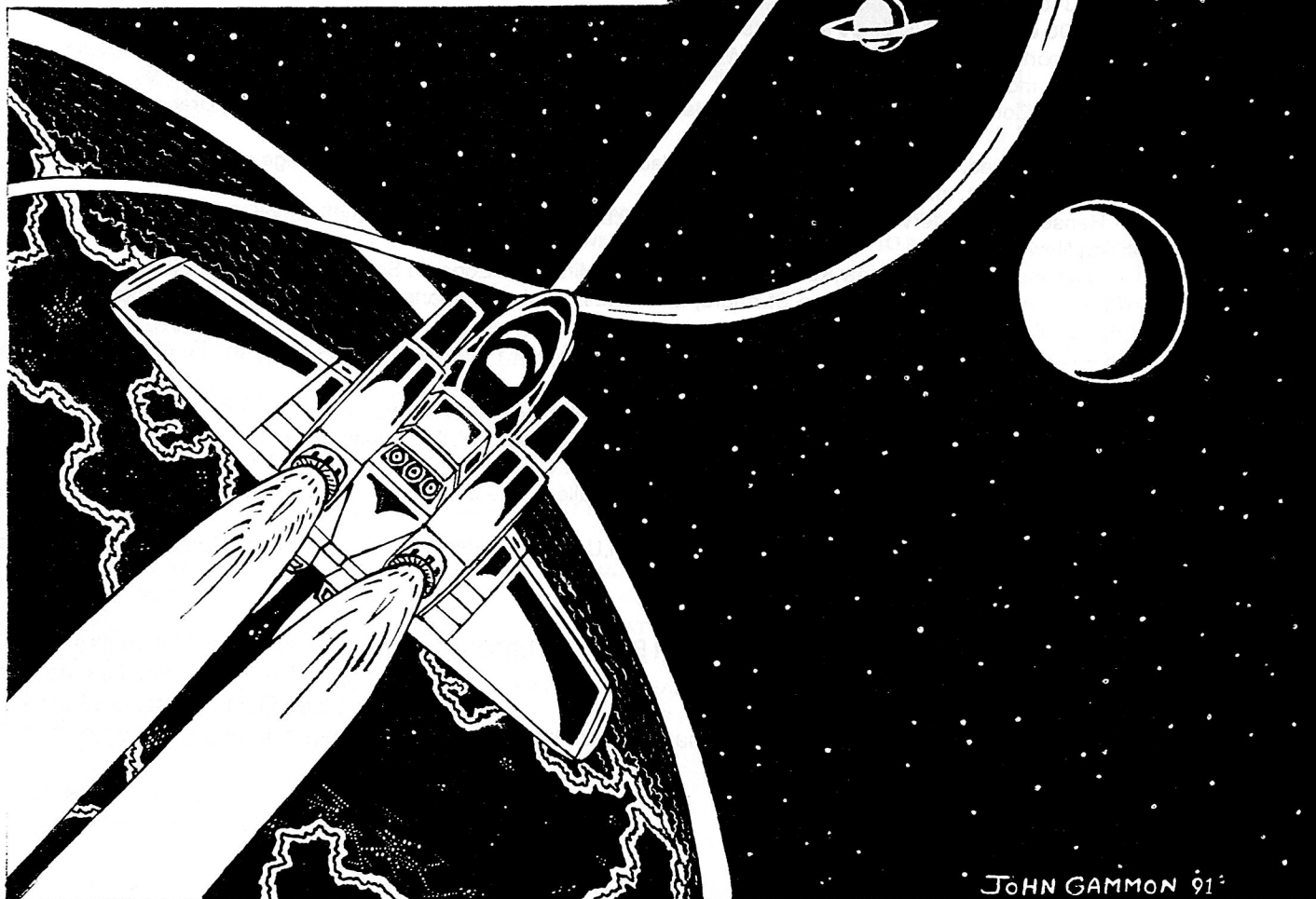
We went back to our fighters and awaited the signal. I let him take the lead, because I knew that I could not take even one shot to the rear. If he used all his weaponry I would be toast. As we cleared atmosphere I received a good luck message from Hiro, with the coded signal "backing your play". When I heard that they were on their way, I began my move. I had been holding at a klick behind my opponent. I began hostilities by taking aim for his tail section and firing all of medium lasers at it, knowing that I would never get through on a first shot. All of the shots hit, and armor melted away like butter in a frying pan. I quickly sideslipped so that his rear lasers would have a harder time tracking me. He pushed his fighter into a bootlegger reverse so quickly it almost caught me off guard. But I had been holding out on him, too. I had the advantage of speed. I rocketed past him, doing a slide maneuver to bring my guns right back to bear on his vulnerable engine area. I took another shot, but only a couple of my lasers hit. He fired his rear lasers, but neither hit my LAM.

Next my Jaguar opponent tried to loop behind me. As soon as my sensors registered a weapons lock, I surprised him by punching a leap frog maneuver which made all of his missiles go flying off as I got into position above him. As he went rocketing away, I fired what was to be the final shot into his tail section. As I watched him become a minor, if short-lived sun, I remember thinking that it must have been a wonderful display for the night side of Rockland. I flew to the Nadir point and announced, "I am the first to arrive. By the

terms of the contest, upon your honor I may leave without being harmed."

I turned, making my way through their fleet with my back prickling, waiting for the shot that would end my life. Miraculously, it never came. I got to the rendezvous point alive. The *Black Lotus* was fully recharged by now. We wasted no time in jumping back to Matsumara, where the Night Stalkers are based.

I have made my reports, and now I must implore the Dragon to gather all its strength, and to look for additional resources, even additional allies. These Invaders are deadly beyond belief; they will almost certainly destroy the life we know. Armageddon has come; it is time to take up the weapons of total war.



JOHN GAMMON '91

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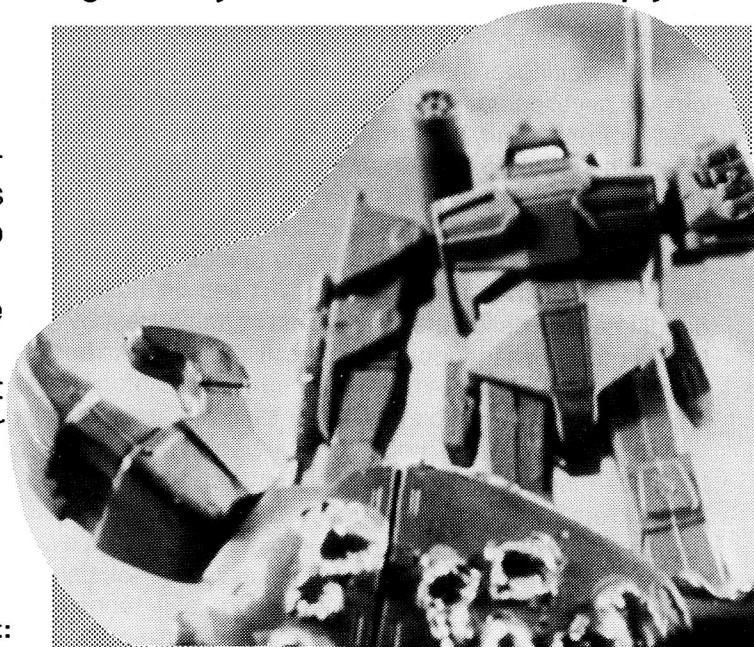
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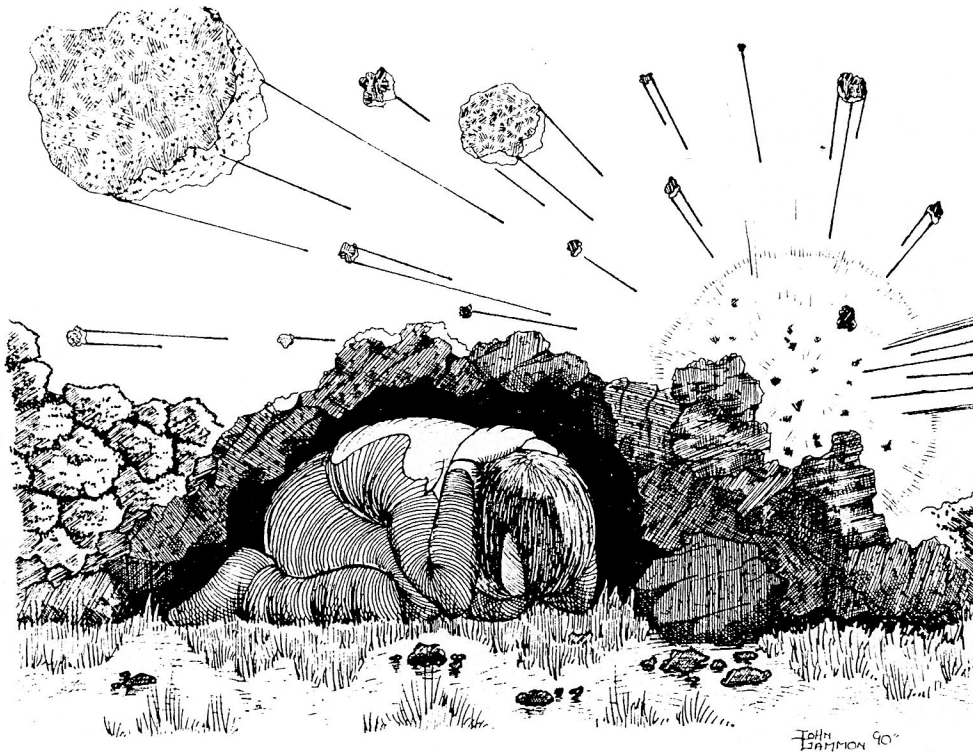
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PRESTON WAS SCREAMING AGAIN, TOSSING ON HIS CUMFOCOT AND THRASHING THE COVERS WITH HIS FEET. I REACHED OVER TO SHAKE HIM. HE BEGAN THRUSTING WILDLY WITH HIS ARMS, TRYING TO WARD OFF SOMETHING IN HIS NIGHTMARE.

"PRESTON! STOP IT BEFORE YOU WAKE EVERYONE IN CAMP!"

HIS FOREHEAD WAS COVERED WITH SWEAT NOW. HE'D STOPPED SCREAMING. NOW THE SOUNDS THAT CAME FROM HIM WERE LIKE TINY FRIGHTENED MOANS. MUTTERING TO MYSELF I GOT UP. STANDING OVER HIM, I WATCHED FOR A MOMENT, THEN GRABBED HIS ARMS TO AVOID DAMAGE FROM HIS RESTLESS MOTIONS, I SHOOK HIM.

"WHAT! No!..UH. OH. TIM. YEAH. THANKS. I'M HERE NOW. I MEAN, I'M AWAKE."

"NONE OF MY BUSINESS, BUT ONE OF THESE DAYS YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO TELL SOMEONE ABOUT THOSE DREAMS. YOU 'RE GETTING THEM EVERY OTHER NIGHT NOW. AND YOU'RE GETTING JUMPY OUT THERE."

"I KNOW, I KNOW. IF I COULD TELL ANYONE, IT WOULD BE YOU..."

"LET'S GO DOWNSLOPE FOR A BREATH OF AIR."

THE MOON WAS RISING. ITS COPPER DISK COLORED THE WAR-BATTERED LANDSCAPE LIKE BLOOD. I TRIED NOT TO RESENT BEING WAKED UP. THE SLOW HARSH BATTLE FOR THIS WORLD WAS TAKING ITS TOLL ON ALL OF US. PEOPLE SNAPPED AT YOU. GEAR AND NERVES WERE WEARING OUT. I HAD THIS TENSION RASH THAT WAS DRIVING ME NUTS. I SCRATCHED AT IT ABSENTLY. IT WAS HOT AND STILL. I DIDN'T LOOK AT PRESTON, JUST AMBLED ON DOWN THE PATH.

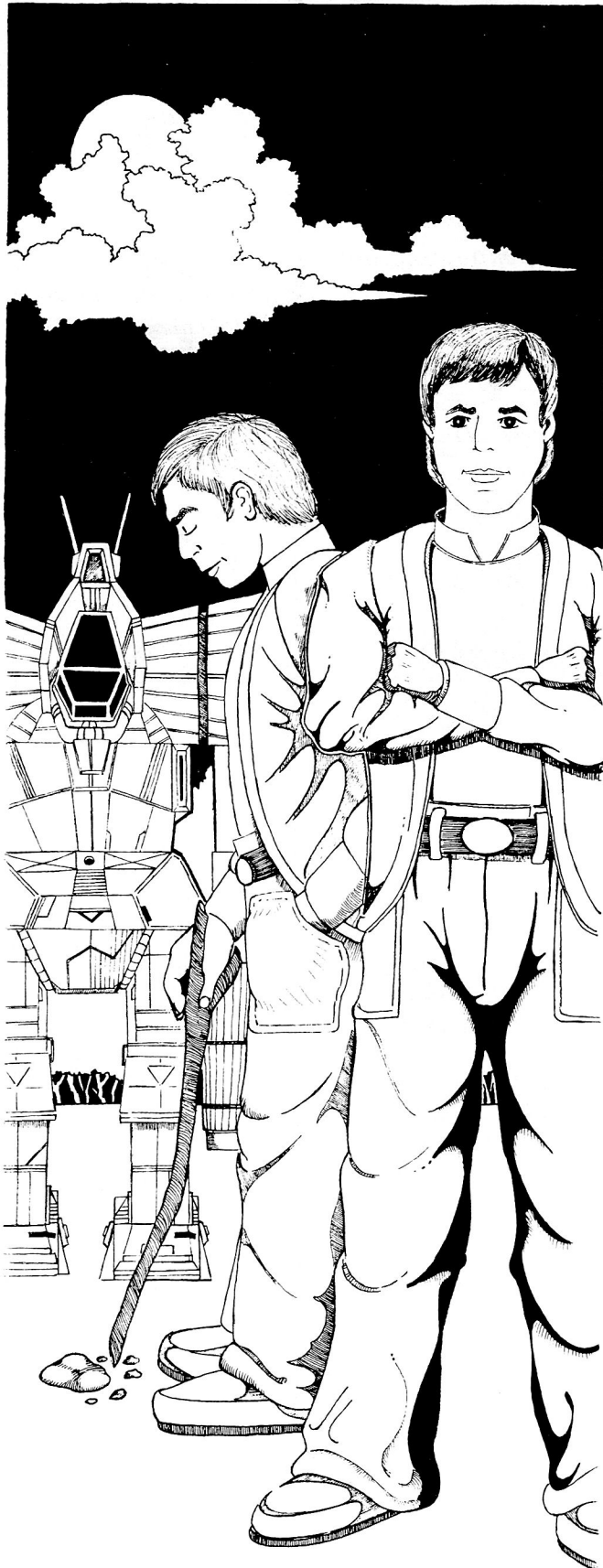
I PICKED UP A STICK AND STARTED POKING AT ROCKS.

"UH, TIM?"

"UMM."

"IT'S JUST THAT...IT'S A STUPID DREAM. BUT IT SEEMS SO REAL."

"YEAH? WHAT HAPPENS?" I KEPT MY VOICE CASUAL, KEPT POKING AT ROCKS.



"IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE IN A LOT OF WAYS. IT SORT OF STARTS IN THE MIDDLE..."

We were moving out to take up an ambush position. Most of the lance was there. I'd taken a little damage in the last two weeks, nothing much. Some armor off the center torso. That left leg actuator was acting up again. I was hot in my Mech, but my gauges read all right. I was pushing my way through a tight clump of live oaks when...

"Blue Three, behind you, the Thor!"

If anybody ever says that to me for a joke, I'll deck him. But only after I cut his heart out.

"Behind you! Behind you, there's three of them!"

They were kidding, I was almost positive. We had heard that only the Jade Falcons used these seventy-ton jump-capable mobile assault 'Mechs while what we were facing here on was the main thrust of the Wolf Clan. We knew that. They had called to identify themselves before the world was attacked. Our newest intelligence indicated that when they did this bizarre information ritual of theirs, they never lied. So these were Wolf 'Mechs. Thors — they intimidated even me. They stood taller than any other Mech on the battlefield, they were the deadliest Mechs we'd ever faced because of their quick response and varied-range firepower. Yes, I could see one off to my right exchanging fire with Lt Ramirez, while behind me there was the sound of jump jets!

I turned my Zeus, extending my left arm to fire my PPC. On my screens shone the familiar glow of a PPC about to discharge. Not mine. I got my shot off. I suppose it hit. I didn't see because all of a sudden that actuator froze. My left leg halted mid-stride while my right leg kept going. I fought to stay on my feet, swaying uneasily.

All of his shots hit. They all hit me. His Gauss Rifle, his LRM, and one of those long range Clans' large lasers. As my damage sensor panel began to glow like a Christmas tree, I got my hand on the button. Engine hit, a bad one! I smelled acrid smoke, coolant, something that smelled like melting myomer. My left leg lurched and gave way. As the Zeus began its long tumble, I heard my lance leader.

"Blue Three, that fire's near your ammo! If you can hear me, punch out! PUNCH OUT!!"

My thumb went down. I curled into my couch as the canopy blew.

The air was cold and rushing, full of little bits that stung as they flew into me. I held my breath; I didn't want to breath in minishrapnel or coolant gas. The Zeus exploded just as my chute jerked me out of my

falling arc.

I hung like a weight in the air.

The afterwind of the explosion knocked me sidewise and I bounced upward! Then gravity took over. I was jerked against the chute straps. I was falling. Faster than I should have fallen. I looked up into the chute. One panel was nothing but sky. I've never hated the stars until I saw them through that torn chute. The wind shifted the hole about until I saw Ramirez' attacker down on one knee, then the hating stars leered at me again.

I hung there, falling. The chute panel caught against the magflap, swayed, closed. I fell still, but the fall was now controlled. I took a deep breath. Adrenalin eased its fear-grip on my muscles. I got ready, got ready again, looked to see when I would be landing and rolled with the landing. So quickly, it was over.

I lay exhausted in the billows of my chute. Already the winds were tugging at it. I was still close to my burning Zeus, too close. The engine hadn't blown yet! Adrenalin released, and I found I could move again. One foot, other foot. Find the catches that release the chute. Keep the emergency pack. Keep the sidearm. Regret the candy bar I was going to put in the pack but forgot. It felt like desertion, to run away from my Mech now. But there was nothing I could do to stop its continuing destruction. If I got caught close to the explosion there was a lot a cascade of hot shrapnel could do to stop me.

I jogged away. Pick a direction, any direction, as long as it's away. How different the terrain looks from the ground. Where was that range of mountains I'd oriented on, coming into this skirmish? Lost somewhere behind the trees. The forest blocked my line of sight now that I was at infantry level.

Whoom! Before my mind had registered that that shock was a loud noise, that that loud noise was an explosion, that that explosion was my Mech, that there was probably shrapnel searing through the air in my direction, my reflex lunge had taken me behind a boulder and half-buried under a damp rotting log. "Good choice," my mind thought as it caught up. "At least this log won't catch fire. What direction is the main force of the explosion? Am I hit yet?"

But no, I didn't seem to be hit. The blast path was over thataway. Several smaller trees were uprooted. A couple were blazing. A bush near me was smoking from the impact of a hot fragment of ... of what had once been my Zeus.

I forced my sense of loss below the surface of my consciousness. Time enough to grieve; time enough to think what to do after the battle. Right now I was in a field with BattleMechs weighing upwards of seventy tons. They were moving at running speed, much faster than I could ever go. If one of my friends stepped on me, he'd be real sorry if he ever found out. Or she. Lydia, especially... You

know how we both feel about Lydia. And how chicken we both are when it comes to telling her so...

But I'd be a little red squirm on the bottom of some Mech's foot, liberally mixed with mud and used coolant. Not appealing. I'd always fancied dying at ninety in someone's bed. Preferably not my own. Or nobly, taking out the King of the Pirates in Mech to Mech combat. Or...not while standing daydreaming with my mouth gaping open in the middle of a battlefield. Somebody was exchanging fire with a third Thor way downslope. Was that you? The Thor was shooting his missiles right out of the air! How could it do that?

I didn't see the other two Mechs from our lance anywhere, but Lydia's Victor thundered by, too close for comfort. I saw her leveling her autocannon to fire at the same time as her SRM-4 volleyed, and wondered if she were close to overheating. Lydia always pushed her heat limit. But if I was close to Lydia, and if Lydia was shooting, then somebody was probably shooting at her... I dove back under cover.

Just in time. The bolt from a large laser sizzled along the ground. It was missing her, but it fragmented the smouldering bush to my left. Lydia dodged left; she was fifty meters away now and still coming. I rolled myself down a tiny slope behind a rockpile. I hoped she'd choose to avoid the uneven footing. She ran straight for me, but lengthened her stride to avoid the slippery pile. She came within meters of me. My knees were trembling by the time she got past. *Now hug the ground, guy! The woman you yearn for didn't kill you this time, but the guy who's trying to kill her just might!"*

This time it was a miss from his Gauss Rifle that sent rock spraying all around me. As rock fragments jagged down, I covered my head with my arms and thanked whatever gods there were for the longer cooling vest that Lt Ramirez had insisted we wear. I got a tear across my back, a little skin gone. It smarted a bit. Without the vest, I think I'd have lost a kidney there. I felt fond of my kidneys just now, fond and very protective.

Speaking of Ramirez! Speaking of Ramirez, that bucket of misaligned repairs he calls an Awesome fired all three PPCs as his attacker fired an SRM salvo. Two rounds hit, which left four unaccounted for...one over to the north a way; one to my right; one seemed not to explode anywhere, just to wham into the ground behind him. One, oh mother, one hit the other side of the rockpile and I was rolling again, down the slope just however it went. Whatever scraped or banged couldn't be anything worse than the force which shook me into the air and slammed me down again.

I lay with all the breath knocked out of me for a long moment. Legs...still there. Head not hit. Lungs, raw, but not seared; only the edge of the hot gas had hit me. Arms...still worked. One of my ribs screamed when I moved. Have to be careful with that. I could see further now. That mass was a hill, and that one was Ramirez' Awesome, and that

gleaming column was the leg of the Thor which had been down and was now up and preparing to fire! I screamed a warning nobody could hear as he sighted on Ramirez and fired his short range missiles. The battle scene was lit from above as two of his rounds exploded harmlessly in midair, while four of them smashed into Ramirez' cockpit. The Awesome swayed. My attention was forcibly drawn away as the flash revealed a nearer threat.

Lydia was behind me now. She had landed awkwardly, twisting her Mech's torso to maintain balance. She stayed there an instant too long. Her attacker, Thor Number Three, must have got a good lock on her. He sent a salvo of missiles into the thinner armor of her back. Her Victor shuddered as the missiles hit: armor cascaded to the ground in tiny shards. Tiny to a Mech, that is! Jagged splinters as long as my arm were landing all around me, point first, deep into the ground. Then she was up again, fast and accurate. When Lydia was good she was a delight to watch, I thought. She ... circled the Thor, constantly catching him off balance. Even though that superarmor of theirs cut down the damage of each hit, if she hit him enough in the same place, she'd make a hole. These 'Wolf Clan' BattleMechs were good, but if you hit them hard enough, we had learned, you could take them.

I had ceased hugging the ground now. I was standing, standing staring in the midst of all that hellish fire. I knew that this would be my death fight, a fight in which my opponents would never see me, a fight in which I could no longer strike a blow. Fey, they call it on my homeworld. A state of otherworldly sight. Prophecy. Knowledge of your fate. I was in this state of exalted knowledge. There was no room in me for fear now, simply because there was no hope of survival.

Lydia was on a roll. She was beautiful in a terrible way, leaping the Victor as if it could not fail and could not fall. I knew she must be playing the edge of her heat counters like a gambler plays with chance, risking and winning each time. She landed. She fired. She was airborne again, as rocks impacted around me, shattered into the air by Thor Three's missile salvo.

The surging fire of her jump jets matched the flame in my heart. How proud I was of her piloting. No wonder I had never had the courage to speak of private matters to this warrior queen! I wondered suddenly if she had been as lonely as I, if she had also found it difficult to speak...

Spitting flame, far too fast for me to evade, Lydia was coming down. Her Victor's trajectory lead straight to my hillside. *I won't be a smear after all, I thought, I'll be a streak of carbon. Nobody will ever find my body.* I saw her large laser hit home on the crumpling Thor. That was the last mortal thing I saw. Flames washed my visor. There was a moment of terrible agony...

"THAT'S WHEN I WAKE UP, WITH YOU SHAKING ME. ALWAYS AT THAT SAME POINT." HE WAS STILL PALE, HIS EYES HUGE WITH REMEMBERED FEAR. NEVER MIND. I KNEW HOW TO BRING HIM BACK. I KNEW JUST WHAT TO SAY.

"LOOK, GUY, THERE'S SOMETHING YOU NEED TO TELL YOURSELF NEXT TIME YOU HAVE THIS DREAM. SOMETHING THAT'LL EXPLODE IT LIKE THE FLARE ON A TRAINING BALLOON! YOU DON'T PILOT A ZEUS ANY MORE!! REMEMBER, 'LIGHTNING' GOT BLOWN SKY HIGH IN THAT AMBUSH WHERE WE PICKED UP THE TITAN? YOU HAVE A TOP-OF-THE-LINE MECH NOW, BUT IT ISN'T A ZEUS. SHOOT, I'M PROBABLY GETTING SOME OF YOUR OLD MECH IN MY REPAIRS WHEN WE GET BACK TO BASE! YOU DON'T PILOT A ZEUS! THIS CAN'T REALLY BE HAPPENING TO YOU!"

I SWEAR HE GREW THREE INCHES AS HE STRAIGHTENED. "THAT'S RIGHT! IT'S BEEN TWO YEARS SINCE I PILOTED ONE." HIS FACE LOOKED LESS HAUNTED NOW. IT BEGAN TO LIGHTEN WITH LAUGHTER. "AND WHEN I WAS PILOTING A ZEUS, I'D BARELY NOTICED LYDIA! SO IT SIMPLY CAN'T BE TRUE! DOES NOT COMPUTE!" HE STRETCHED, CRACKED A HUGE YAWN "I THINK — AWWWWW — I THINK I CAN SLEEP NOW, TIM. THANKS. THANKS A LOT."

"ONE FOR ALL, ALL FOR ONE. ALL THAT DREK," I SAID LIGHTLY. I'M NO GOOD AT ALL WHEN THE CONVERSATION TURNS EMOTIONAL. "LET'S GET SOME SLEEP."

EARLY, FAR TOO EARLY, WE WOKE TO LYDIA'S BRIGHT CONTRALTO. "GOOD NEWS IS, COFFEE'S UP. BAD NEWS IS, SO ARE WE. UNFRIENDLIES ON THE WAY, AND WE GET TO PLAY WELCOMING PARTY. POWER UP AND MOVE OUT, GUYS!"

MERCIFULLY, SHE DID HAVE COFFEE READY. WE FILLED OUR HOT BOTTLES AND CLIMBED INTO OUR MECHS. AS WE POWERED UP (AND I TRIED TO WORK THE KINKS OUT OF A BALKY LEG ACTUATOR), RAMIREZ FILLED US IN ON THE SITUATION.

"TIM, VILLIERS ISN'T BACK FROM HQ, SO YOU'RE BLUE THREE THIS MORNING. PRESTON IS BLUE FOUR. THE WOLFHEADS WERE SPOTTED HEADING DOWN THE CENTRAL VALLEY EIGHTY KLICKS AWAY. TWO OF THOSE STRANGE MIXED LANCES. ONE IS SUPPOSED TO BE THREE THORS AND TWO KOISHI. THE OTHER IS SOMETHING LIKE A MAD CAT AND A VULTURE, TWO OF THOSE BIG THINGS WE HAVEN'T DECIDED WHICH NAME TO USE YET, AND WHAT LOOKS LIKE A LOCUST. THE HEAVY LANCE — I GUESS WE'LL CALL IT THAT — IS ON THIS SIDE OF THE VALLEY. THE LIGHTER LANCE IS DOING A RECON AHEAD OF THEM, AWAY FROM US.. THE SIGHTING IS THREE HOURS OLD. DON'T RELY ON ANY OF IT BUT THE MECH TYPES! USE EXTREME CAUTION. DO NOT ENGAGE IF YOU CAN AVOID IT. THERE'S A GOOD PLACE FOR A ROCKSLIDE AT THE FAR END OF THE VALLEY. OUR JOB IS TO SLIP BY THEM AND PREPARE A THUNDERING WELCOME."

I WAS TIRED AND WIRED AT THE SAME TIME. WE SPLIT UP, HUGGED COVER, POKED CAREFULLY FOR SURPRISES AS WE PROCEEDED. WE SPOTTED A KOISHI; IT DIDN'T SPOT US. WE WERE GETTING PRETTY CLOSE TO THE NARROWS OF THE VALLEY. I PUSHED INTO A CLUMP OF OAK TREES WHICH COULD HAVE SCREENED A MECH, SHOULDERED MY WAY OUT, AND THEN...

"BLUE THREE, BEHIND YOU! THE THOR!"

AS PRESTON'S FEAR-LADEN GROAN CAME OVER THE COMM, AS MY ZEUS TURNED FAR TOO SLOWLY TO SIGHT WITH ITS PPC, AS MY UNKNOWING LOVE LYDIA SET HER VICTOR FLAMING IN A JUMP TO AUTOCANNON MEDIUM RANGE, I KNEW JUST WHO IT WAS THE DREAM WAS MEANT TO WARN. NOT PRESTON, BUT HIS BEST FRIEND, THE ONLY ZEUS PILOT LEFT IN THE LANCE.

IT WAS A WARNING OF DOOM, JUST AS HE HAD FEARED.
NOT HIS DOOM.
MINE.

Incoming

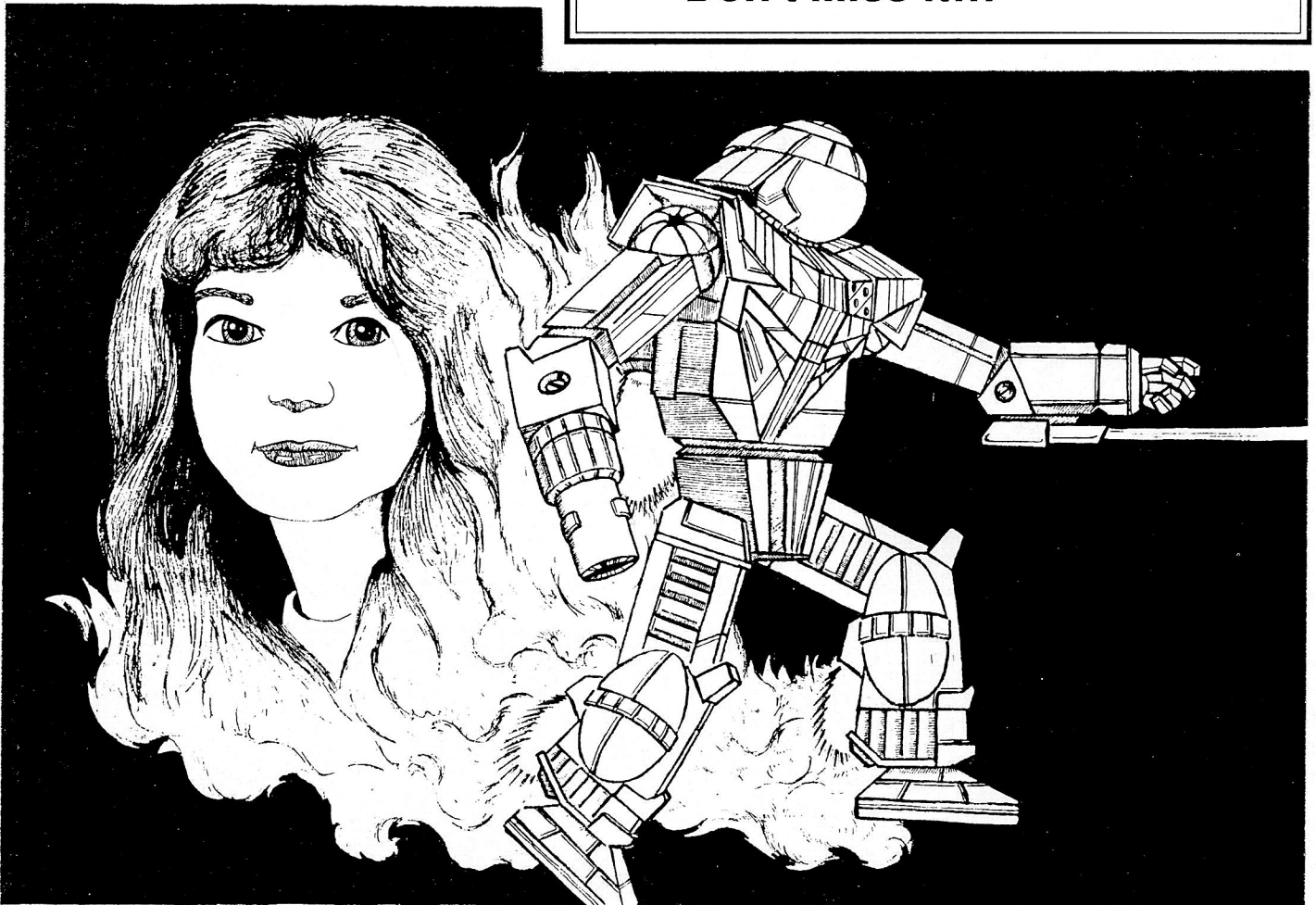
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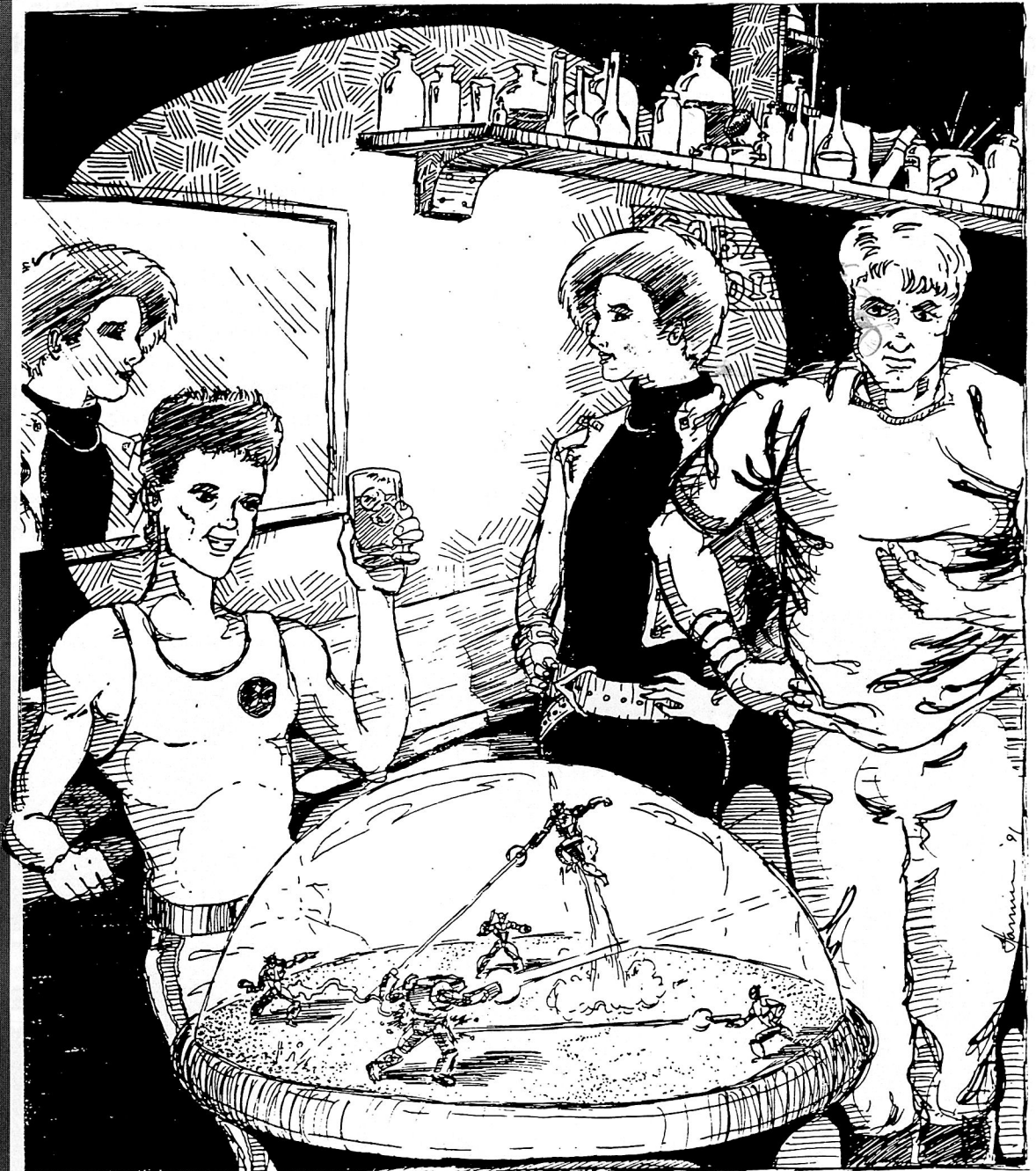
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REFLECTIONS OF BATTLE

It was Friday night at the Cobalt Coil and, as happens every two weeks, the PPC's were going as fast as half-price ammo in a war zone. The fights were on. Sure, I know, walk into just about any bar on Solaris and the vids will be showing some gladiatorial Mech bout, either live or taped. But the Coil's different. Most of our customers are tied with the arenas some way. Blake's Blood, most of this God-cursed planet's population lives and dies by the games. At the Coil, we figure that they may want to get away from the steel and death of combat for a few hours. Most of the time our vids are dark. Besides, the chatter of the commentators would get in the way of story telling.

But...this half-price night happened to fall on the same night as a special bout. Four of our regulars were taking on a single opponent. Hanset, Edelwise, Chon, and Proudfoot all had rattletrap Stingers. The four of them formed a tight knit little clique, splitting warehouse and mechanic fees, watching each other; generally keeping each other out of trouble, all the while maintaining a boisterous, infectious friendship. They were well liked at the Coil. They'd accepted a contract to fight an exhibition bout, the four of them against a Grand Dragon.

The Grand Dragon was piloted by an arrogant little wretch who always wore black. He had 'Kurita' practically stamped on his forehead. You could almost taste the contempt in his voice in the pre-battle interview. I hoped the kids were getting good Cb's for this.

The battlefield this time was a quarter-klick wide circle of empty sand that was used by people who wanted to stage a spectacle rather than a fight. You know, something designed to show off massive fire power, not good piloting. This exhibition was to show off the Grand Dragon; I suspect the Combine was paying for the whole thing. So we watched because four of our friends were fighting for their lives.

Did I mention the special battle-contract condition? All of the warriors concerned had to disarm their ejection systems. Nice touch.

In any case the Grand Dragon got more than he bargained for. Our kids fought as a team, a well practiced and coordinated team. Three of them would draw his attention and make themselves targets, trusting to their mobility to protect them, while the fourth slipped behind to chip away at his back armor. The Dragon finally realized what was going on and set his back to the Arena wall. So the kids fell back out of range of his weapons and saturated the air waves with comments about Takashi Kurita's many deviant sexual preferences. The Grand Dragons took this for about four minute, then came out of his corner raging in Japanese and firing all his weaponry as fast as he could.

In the Coil, we all started cheering. If there is one thing that has killed more Mechs than shoddy Tech work, it's out-of-control warriors. Once you let your emotions take over on

the battlefield, it's time to check the scrap armor prices.

As we all predicted, the Dragon managed to overheat his 'Mech and chew up the arena pretty good. (He wasn't getting *his* damage deposit back!) The kids moved in and took that machine apart. By the time it was done, Hanset and Chon were out of the fight and I don't think their Stingers would ever move 'cept by crane. When the official announcement came through, awarding the full purse to our four, all of who made it out alive (though Chon was laid up for two months and still walks with a limp), the cheers damn near leveled the entire block. I stood a round for the bar to toast our friends' valor, and the PPC's started flowing in earnest. The Kurita variant became the drink of the evening, and we nearly ran out of sake. Then, sure enough, someone started in with a story.

The subject of weight differentials came up. Now you all know that generally the heavier Mech in a given contest will have the advantage. If for no other reason, because they sport more armor. But a lot of other factors can come into play, things like mix of weaponry, speed, use of terrain and such. But the single largest balancing factor is skill and experience. And that was the subject of the night.

An ex-aerospace jock turned merchant finished his tale of an old wingman of his that suckered a fighter twice his size into a rather nasty atmosphere, then watched as his adversary's larger craft was shredded in the horrendous cross winds of the gas giant's upper atmosphere. We all got quiet for a few moments, thinking to the cold, crushing death in a methane hell, and I set out a new round. Then Suntrov took the floor.

Suntrov was a pilot for an outfit that ran a ferry service to and from the local jump points. The ferry men would take small DropShips out to the jump points to meet JumpShips and transport cargo and passengers in system. The shuttle jocks tended to be a flamboyant lot that handled their DropShips like aerospace fighters and Suntrov was no exception. Tall and lean, he dressed like something from an old Terran vid, with calf high black boots, a billowing silk shirt, and snug black slacks that showed off his leg muscles. He wore a saber for show, but I knew he kept a micro-needler holstered at his wrist for real fighting. Suntrov was all right. At the Coil he could let the image slip a little, revealing the friendly, witty man behind the swashbuckler image. He played a mean hand of bridge, too.

So Suntrov lifted his Steiner PPC and cleared his throat. Once he was sure he had our attention, he began to speak.

"If our master barkeep will charge the offered glasses, I'll tell you of a lopsided 'Mech duel I witnessed. And I do mean duel, not a simple battlefield encounter that happens to bring two warriors together in combat. This was premeditated. It was back when I was flying an aerospace fighter for a mercenary company called Randal's Freefighters. Ran-

dal was long dead, but we kept the name to provide a sense of history. We were working for the Commonwealth doing garrison duty on a small ag-world called Apollo; it's out by the Dark Nebula. Apollo had been hit regularly by some very professional Periphery bandits, so our group, led by Hauptman Kiero, got to stand guard.

Kiero was not your usual merc captain. For one thing he was a Draconian, and for another, he was a good, patient man, hardly what I'd expect from the Combine. Kiero was of humble birth, but early testing had showed his potential. With lots of hard work he got admitted to the Dieron District Gymnasium. Not the best of schools, but it taught him the basics of 'Mech combat. When mixed with his natural talents, this was a potent enough combination to get him sent to the prestigious Wisdom of the Dragon Academy. He lasted two years before washing out. Officially, it was a discipline problem. In truth, Kiero was too good and too inventive. The offspring of the Draconis Lords didn't like an upstart showing them all up with tactics that weren't by the book.

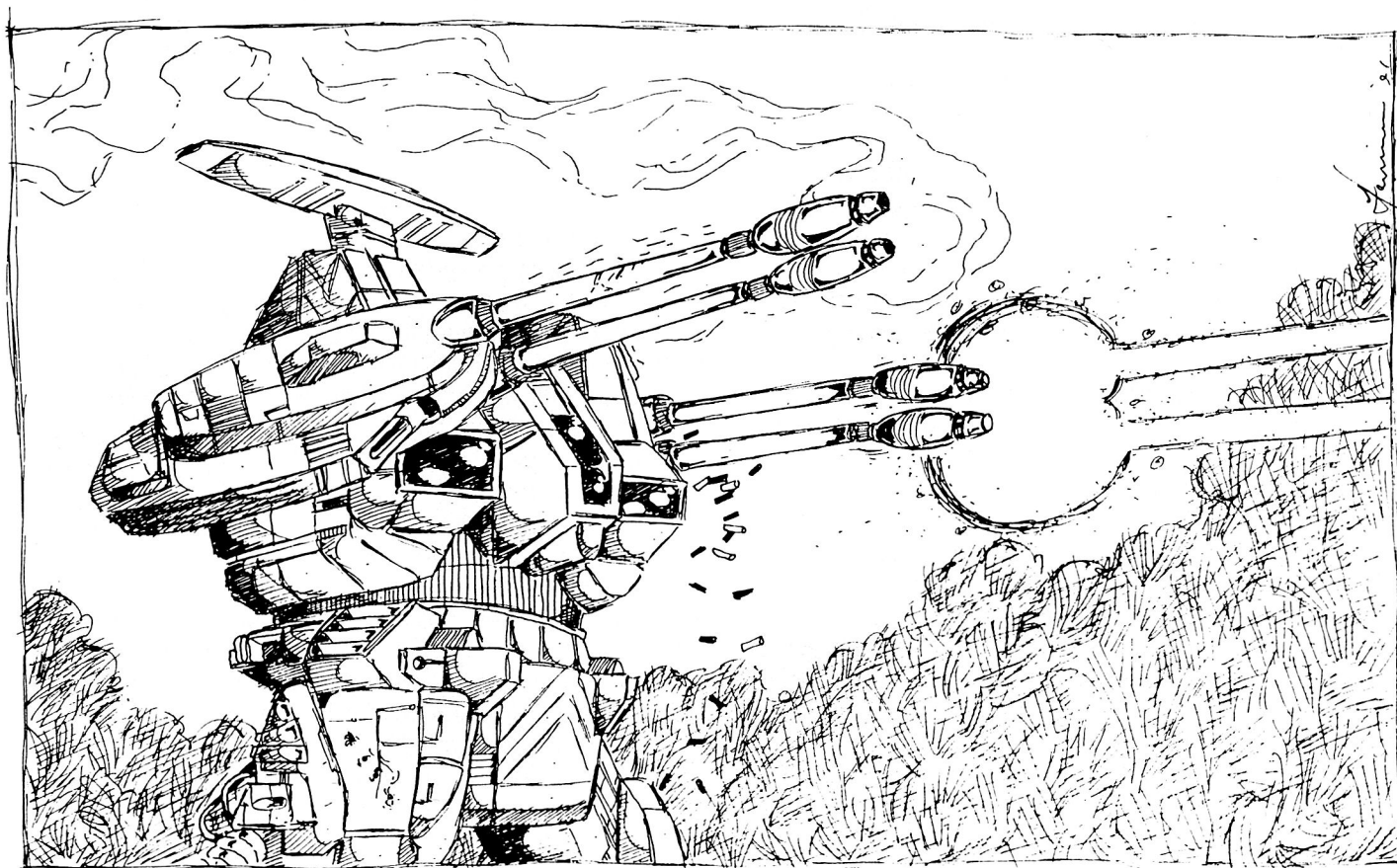
So Kiero 'Meched around the Combine army for five years in a battered old Phoenix Hawk until a garrison commander pushed a little too far. To his credit, Kiero didn't take the unit out, he simply found a Lyran merchant willing to slip him off

planet, and left the Combine to try his luck in the Commonwealth. He requested political asylum, explaining that he was unwilling to betray his old comrades, bad blood notwithstanding. The Lyrans understood more or less, but since he wouldn't completely share his knowledge, they wouldn't let him join their armed services. I suspect they thought he might double back again. This suited Kiero. He asked for a list of small merc groups under long term contract to House Steiner that would not be likely to see service in the Combine theaters, and applied to Randal. Randal took him; Kiero's own skill saw to his rapid advancement. When Randal died he left Kiero in charge.

Enter Kiero's antagonist.

There was nothing wrong with Yohan that a quick burst from an assault rifle wouldn't cure. The son of a noble family, Yohan knew he was destined for great things so he didn't bother working for anything. His father kept putting him into 'Mech academies but Yohan kept getting tossed out. Finally the old man bought a training billet with the Freefighters. Oh joy. At least the kid brought in a worthwhile machine. It was a Rifleman in mint condition, which significantly upped our unit's combat strength. If only it hadn't been linked to Yohan.

Yohan started antagonizing the entire unit from day one. You'd have thought we were his servants, all of which



should be thankful for his presence. Kiero did what he could to keep the frayed tempers from breaking. He kept pointing out that it was only for a year, and that if we didn't take Yohan our contract might suddenly expires. So we suffered, each keeping Yohan as far away as possible and counting the days. Then the bandits hit, and everything changed.

How they snuck on planet we never found out. They were from the Marian Hegemony. Besides wanting food, they were after parts from the main water processing plant. Expecting the plant would be a prime target, Kiero had stationed us there. We scrambled and met them as they were exiting their DropShips. A good fight ensued.

Yohan wasn't there. The commander had left him at base with specific orders to guard against incoming fighters. Our fighters were to take the offensive, so only tow were on base defense. Yohan, certain that he had been given a behind the lines post in order to rob him of a warrior's glory, decided to recut his orders. He made it to the water plant in time to get a few shots in at the departing ships.

When we made it back to base we found the results of Yohan's dereliction. Four bandit fighters had got through to the base. Our fighters destroyed three of them before being destroyed themselves, but that fourth had wrecked holy hell before breaking off. Lacking the Rifleman's specialized anti-aircraft weaponry, we lost tons of ammo, a warehouse of spare parts and twenty-two noncombatants, including four civilians.

All the officers gathered for a debriefing that night, most of us still in combats. Acting Lieutenant Yohan knew he'd messed up big, but he tried to bluster through, claiming he'd picked up a call for reinforcements from the battle. Kiero didn't dispute his lie. He just started outlining plans for reconstruction. Yohan, thinking he'd got the best of the old man, loudly suggested that the night's debacle was 'command's fault', that perhaps it was time for a change of leadership. The ward room got suddenly quiet as we all waited for the CO to blow. Even Yohan sensed he'd made a mistake. Kiero was silent for a few moments as those brilliant black eyes of his bored into Yohan. Then he spoke in those same soft tones he always used.

"I accept the lieutenant's challenge for command. We will meet at sunrise at Valley 14 in the north training area," he said. Then he got to his feet and left, amid a chaos of shouted questions and protests. A sudden grin split Yohan's face as he too got up and swaggered out. He expected a target shoot come dawn.

I was the first out of the wardroom behind the CO and even then it took me a good twenty meters to catch him. I

grabbed him (why he didn't break me for that I'll never know) and asked him what this was all about. He looked at me with those hard yet gentle eyes and said, "This is the only way to preserve this unit's honor." Carefully, he removed my hand.

"He'll cut you to fragments!" I shouted as he walked away.

"Reflect on that," he responded as he stepped out into the compound.

Kiero was gone all night. You'd think he'd have been checking his machine after the previous battle in preparation for the duel, but he just vanished from the base. The entire Tech crew was up all night on his Phoenix Hawk, that was how much we cared for him. Yohan had to do his own Teching, but that didn't dampen his spirits. He kept working at that impeccable Rifleman, telling passers by how things were going to be run once he was in command. A few of us almost took prybars and wrenches to him. But we didn't; it

WHAT DEVELOPED WAS A LETHAL GAME OF FOLLOW THE LEADER...

was Kiero's show and we respected that. Might have been kinder if we hadn't.

Kiero showed up an hour before sunrise and climbed into his machine without a word. Yohan mounted up and the two of them, escorted by the rest of the unit, headed out to Valley 14. Valley 14 was located five clicks north of the base in a blister of mountains. They were heavily wooded and nearly deserted so we used them for practice. The air wings got there first and did a few low level flyovers. This was our signal to the locals to clear out. Half an hour later the 'Mechs arrived.

The rules were simple. Once they were in position Ramirez, the unit exec, would count fifty. Then they'd have at it. The other warriors were to watch from the ridge lines but we all had to maintain radio silence. Kiero made it quite clear he would cashier anyone who tried to take sides, then he and Yohan moved into the valley and we all took watch positions. I had a good view from my fighter, though Kiero made sure we knew not to hover or circle over one duelist. And then, as the first light of false dawn appeared, Ramirez

began her slow count.

It was like something from a vid. Two huge war machines, their feet sinking into the grass, separated by a hundred meters, waiting while the numbers tolled over the comlink like a funeral bell. The odds were running against Kiero, but I don't think anyone bet. No one wanted to make book on Yohan. As the final numbers sounded, daylight flooded the valley. And chaos erupted.

Before Ramirez finished saying 'fifty', both 'Mechs acted. The Phoenix Hawk lifted up on a plume of jump exhaust as a sleet of autocannon rounds and laser beams slashed beneath it. Yohan's curses came over the air waves as his 'Mech spiked red with waste heat. That's a problem with the Rifleman, not enough heat sinks. But Kiero didn't close for a kill. He hit the ground and his machine tucked into a shoulder roll like a gymnast. Kiero's 'Mech tumbled sideways and ended up on its knees. He snapped off a single shot from his heavy laser that carved armor from the Rifleman's left shoulder, then was up and running back into the trees. Yohan sent a few barrages of autocannon rounds after him, clipping the Hauptman's 'Mech in the legs, but not slowing it. Kiero paused at the tree line, fired his laser again and sliced armor from his opponent's left leg before disappearing from sight. Grumbling, Yohan started after him, tearing huge divots of soil free with his lumbering 'Mech.

Yohan hit the woods like a mad bull, knocking over trees in his haste to catch Kiero. He needn't have hurried, the CO was waiting for him just inside the trees. Three laser beams stabbed from the Phoenix Hawk. One missed, one cut the Rifleman's side, but one beam destroyed the radar antenna above the head. Before Yohan could react, Kiero was up on his jump jets again and out of sight. The Rifleman followed.

What developed was a lethal game of follow the leader. Kiero handled his 'Mech like the master he was, tempting Yohan back into the maze of valleys and gorges, keeping him alert with sniped shots. Whenever Yohan sighted Kiero, he'd cut loose with his laser and autocannons. A lot of his shots went wide; Yohan was no great marksman; but some hit. The Hauptman kept jumping, staying clear of the brunt of Yohan's attacks, but we could see the damage accumulating on both 'Mechs. A Rifleman can soak up more hits than a Phoenix Hawk. Then it happened.

Kiero was a little slow on an escape. Both heavy lasers caught him on the left arm as he was still airborne. The ruby beams sliced through the arm like a medtech's saw, severing it. The arm fell in a shower of molten metal. Unbalanced, the Phoenix Hawk tumbled, smashing into a grove of trees. We all held our breath, fearing for the Captain and our unit. My hands strayed for my weapon controls, but somehow I restrained myself. Then Kiero was up and running, his 'Mech dodging autocannon fire as he sent a burst of machine gun bullets at the Rifleman. Yohan shouted in

triumph, sensing the kill, and hurried to give chase.

He lost the Hauptman in the winding canyon, but even a blind Capellan can track a running 'Mech by its footprints. You don't dance 45 tons of metal across even the hardest ground without leaving signs. The tracks led up canyon until they came to the cross where the canyon continued north and south while two others joined it from the east and west, forming an X. Just shy of the intersection, Yohan could see the blast marks from a fresh jump jet liftoff, but there was no sign of the Hauptman. Suspecting an ambush, Yohan moved forward slowly, swinging his 'Mech's weapons from side to side.

I think I'm the only one who saw exactly what ended the duel. The watching 'Mechs had fallen behind the duelists, since they had to follow the ridge lines, and I was the only fighter in position to see both the west and east branching canyons. This is what I saw. Just as Yohan's 'Mech came flush with the side canyons, Kiero reappeared, but there were two of him. I saw his Phoenix Hawk rise up out of a small river in the east canyon and the same thing happened in the west branch. Yohan, looking east, saw only one machine. For a moment, I thought the Hauptman had cheated, bringing in a backup warrior, but then I noticed that an arm was gone from both machines. Perfectly synchronized, both Phoenix Hawks lifted their large lasers. The one behind Yohan held its laser in its right hand; the one in front held it in the left. They didn't jump. This was to be the showdown. Yohan's whoop of triumph must have been audible for three parsecs as he locked all weapons on the Phoenix Hawk in front of him. It seemed to ripple for a moment, then he fired. For a moment I saw the dazzle of reflected laser light, then the Phoenix Hawk simply disappeared. A couple of the autocannon shells detonated where it'd been standing but most simply passed through and blew holes in the valley side. Yohan's 'Mech spiked red with excess heat, then the Phoenix Hawk behind him fired. Three lasers hit the Rifleman in the back, slashing through armor and burning into the main compartment. An explosion of sparks erupted from the front of the stricken 'Mech as it tottered for a moment. I could tell Yohan's gyro was gone. Sixty tons of Rifleman hit the ground with a grinding crash. It lay there on its chest like a giant corpse.

Kiero simply walked away, as the smoke of burning myomer marking the wreckage of the loser.

Yohan survived. We shipped him off with a full explanation. His family wasn't pleased. They'd paid a lot to set up their eldest son and now he was disgraced. They made trouble, and within a few months Kiero left the unit. It was either that or we were going to have to violate our contract, which would have effectively spelled the end of the unit. Within a year I got in an argument with the new command and shipped out.

Kiero wouldn't talk about the duel. The one time I cornered him in private and told him what I'd seen, he just smiled and said, "Never underestimate the wisdom of reflection."

That wasn't enough for me. On my next day off I flew up to the battleground to check things over. I found this."

Suntroy took out a battered ID fold. He dumped it on the bar. After returning C-bills, his local pilot license, and assorted scraps of paper, he held up a torn fragment of shiny plastic. I recognized it. It was aluminized mylar, the stuff used to make radar chaff.

"Shreds of this stuff were scattered all over that east branching canyon. And I found a set of cleats with broken guy wires on two trees that flanked the canyon about twenty meters in." Suntroy smiled and picked up the mylar. "That old b—— set the whole thing up from the moment he 'accepted' the challenge. He hiked out there and strung a huge mylar curtain by himself at night. During the duel he made sure he disabled the Rifleman's radar. Then he drew Yohan up, moved out of sight and stumped into the west river. He concealed himself there by lying down, quite a risk with a shot-off arm. He must have watch for Yohan with his magnetics, and once he was in position, Kiero stood up and delivered the ultimate sucker punch.

What took me the longest to figure was how he knew Yohan would fall for it.

Yohan was running on visuals, targeting with line-of-sight. And like most righthanded people, he tended to lead right with just about everything. So when he stepped into the canyon intersection, he faced right first and saw the mirror image of Kiero's 'Mech. If he hadn't been too eager, he might have noticed the reflection ripple as the mylar trembled in the breeze. I did, but I didn't realize what it meant. Or the fact that the large laser was suddenly in the other hand; Yohan wasn't very observant."

Suntroy lifted his drink in his right hand and we all drank to Kiero's craftiness. Old Liao himself would have been proud of that plan. The Suntroy spoke up again.

"Kiero taught me a very important lesson that day. This scrap of plastic reminds me of it each time I reach for a C-bill. If ever anybody offers you a fight, think about it before you swing. Because he might have, and you could be facing a set-up."

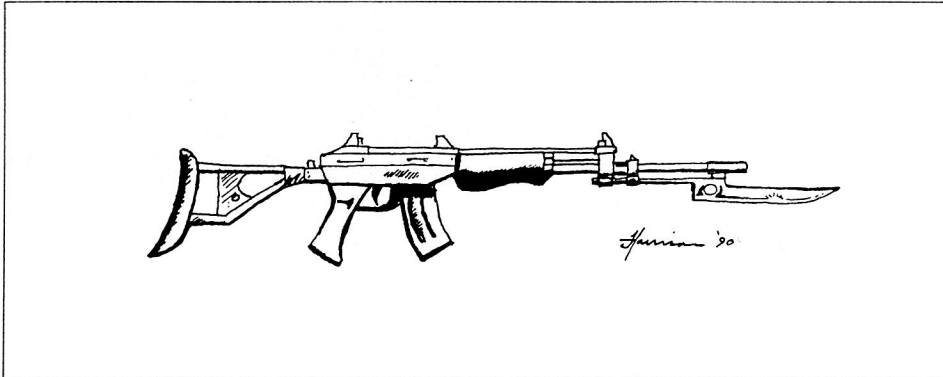
Suntroy grinned his lopsided grin and scanned the bar.

"He taught me the power of reflection," he said, and lifted his drink in another toast.



Thornhill Arms

Preserving the Past To Enjoy the Future



The Basilisk Automatic Rifle®

(above)

No larger than a standard rifle, the Basilisk® combines the best features of the rifle and the submachine gun. Weighing in at only 3.5 kilograms, the Basilisk® is made of Thornhill Arms' state-of-the-art injection molded metallic silica and composite, with a baked vinyl folding stock; as such it is almost unbreakable. The stock holds a 20-round clip; bayonet mounts are included. The Basilisk® is chambered for standard 10mm rifle rounds. It mounts either the standard 20 or the optional 50-round ammo clip. As with all Thornhill Arms equipment, the Basilisk® is rated XXX for high reliability in a wide range of environmental conditions. Modular construction allows for easy field mounting. Available in Flute Black, Gun Metal Blue, Matte Green, and assorted Camouflage patterns.

Cost: 95 C-bills 20-round Clip: 1 Cb 50-round Clip: 2 Cb Bayonet: 3 Cb

Hedgehog® Needle Rifle

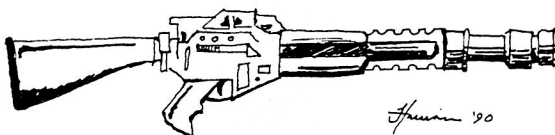
(below)

At last, something completely new in personal arms! Thornhill's own Hedgehog® Needle Rifle projects a stream of 1mm diameter stainless steel slivers by means of oscillating magnetic fields (the same principle as used in rail guns) which accelerate these tiny projectiles to speeds approaching 350 kilometers per second, giving the Hedgehog® an effective range of 100 meters. Silent except for the hiss of the flying projectiles, the Hedgehog® has no muzzle flash to reveal its location. Due to the relatively low kinetic energy of the projectiles, the Hedgehog® is not designed to punch through heavy armor. Against most unarmored targets the effects can be spectacular. Internal rechargeable battery provides for 3 hours of continuous use while magazine allows for 15 shots without reloading. Made primarily of Thornhill's revolutionary composite, the weapon does contain a number of metal parts, all of which have been sealed against corrosion with a baked enamel finish. Shock resistant, fully grounded, and virtually unbreakable, the Hedgehog® is an electronic device, and as such requires a lighter

touch and more maintenance than weapons such as the Basilisk® and the Viper®. We at Thornhill believe its firepower and its many unique features more than compensate for the increased care required. Manual and gas mask are provided with each rifle. Available in flat black and assorted camouflaged patterns.

Cost: 300 C-bills Weight: 3.5 kg

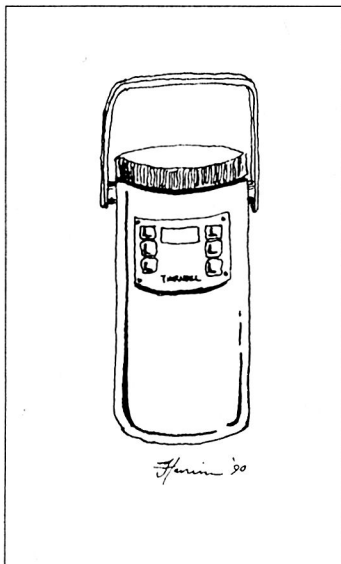
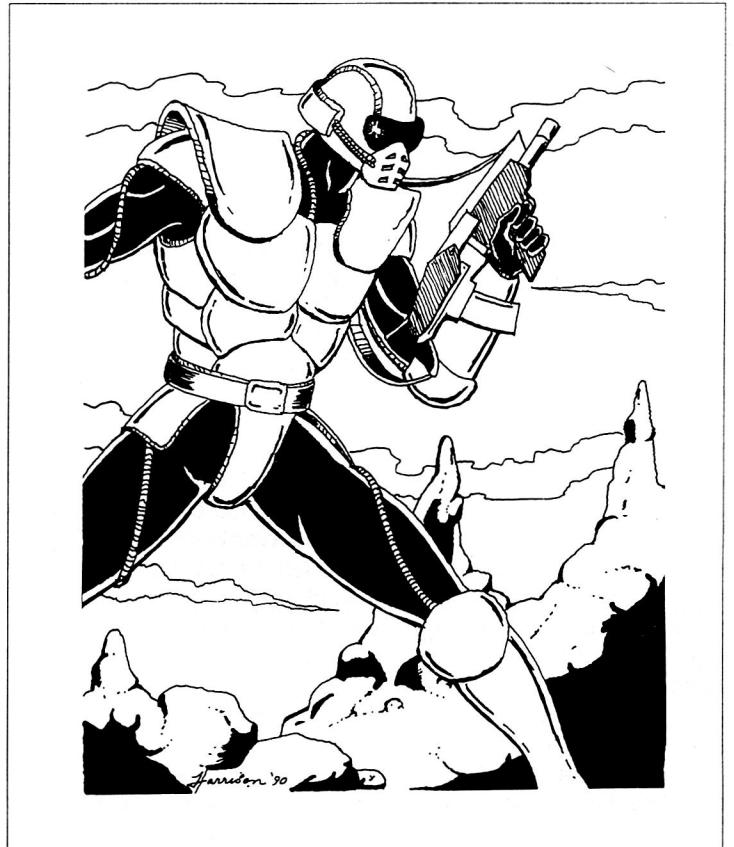
Reloads: 10 for 1 Cb



Terrapin® Armored Light Environment Suit

Combining all the advantages of an Environment suit with the armor advantages of our Thornhill Arms TechMail®, the Terrapin® offers protection at two levels, complete coverage with the integral filter mask and protective goggles against dangerous environments (O₂ concentration of at least 10%, temperature range to -25° C). Flexible plates of Thornhill's revolutionary kevlar-based composite armor provide protection better than the most complete flack suits. Optional extra: 1 kg heater with 18-hr battery pack extends temperature balance to -80° C. Available in a number of camouflage patterns. Each suit is custom fitted at time of purchase to ensure a comfortable fit.

Cost: 450 C-bills Weight: 8 kg Optional Heating Unit: 60 Cb



Insta Hot-Pot®

You've just spent four days living in your machine, processing radar across the frozen wastes of some backwater planet. Finally, job finished, you get a chance to climb from your 'Mech, stretch your muscles, and do something you've been waiting days for. And after all that, wouldn't a cup of hot coffee or tea taste great? Thornhill Arms Insta Hot-Pot® produces one and a half liters of your favorite hot beverage in an average of three minutes. Using a contained microwave heating chamber and a time-controlled infusion system, the Insta Hot-Pot® fixes your drink just the way you tell it to and keeps it hot indefinitely. Integral sail collector provides the internal power pack with six hours worth of power. Fracture resistant and fully washable. Available in white, pearl gray, navy blue or avocado green.

Cost: 18 C-bills Weight: 1.25 kg.

Unit Update

Ed Note: This article was in preparation when the Unofficial Frontier War with the 'Clans' began. The present assignment of the Uhlans is still the Sarna Marches of the Federated Commonwealth, but in wartime, a unit may be reported to be in one place and actually be halfway across the Known Sphere.

In the years following the Fourth Succession War the First Kathil Uhlans have become one of the most famous regiments in the Federated Commonwealth. The Lions of Davion, as they are also called, are more than just the darlings of the media. They are a highly potent and experienced unit. The diversity and strength of the Uhlans' companies make them able to handle almost any situation.

To accurately tell the tale of the Uhlans we must go to the Davion planet of Kittery in the Cappellan March of the Federated Suns in the year 3026. Stationed on planet were the First Kittery Training Battalion, light 'Mechs piloted by MechWarriors who could never have had the chance to attend one of the MechWarrior academies in the Federated Suns. On a training mission the Battalion was attacked by a large number of Capellan Cicadas. Major Justin Xiang Allard, commander of the training battalion was checking sensor readings, leaving then-Lieutenant Andrew Redburn in command of the trainees. After a short battle the Capellans were beaten back. The Davion forces tended to their injured, among them Major Allard, who had most of his arm destroyed. It seemed he would never pilot a 'Mech again. The NAIS built him a new arm but while he was still getting used to it, Major Allard was accused of treason. After a short trial, he resigned, giving up home and rank and even his very name. Calling himself "Justin Xiang", he then went to Solaris, waging a one-man war against Davion MechWarriors. He was recruited by the Maskirova, the Capellan intelligence network. Winning Chancellor Maximilian Liao's favor, he became a high ranking member of the Chancellor's Advisory Council. After the matter with Xiang was over, Lieutenant Redburn went to the Lyran Commonwealth with then-Lieutenant General Ardan Sortek to escort the Archon-Designate Melissa Steiner to Davion space. The DropShip *Silver Eagle* was diverted by a traitor to the Kurita planet of Styx. A rescue was mounted by the Kell Hounds. As a result of this incident Redburn was given command of an assault company with twice the normal twelve BattleMechs. These light 'Mechs were piloted by the Kittery Training Battalion.

After a successful campaign on St. Andre, Delta Company moved on to Hunan and there helped defeat the first battalion of Freemont's Cuirassiers. Next was the planet Algot Delta Company found itself in battle with the remnants of the 2nd Ariana Fusiliers. Delta Company was enjoying some badly-needed R & R on the peaceful planet of Bethal in the Capellan March when an Overlord carrying the battered Tau Ceti Rangers appeared in system. Captain Redburn left control of the 23 'Mechs that had already off-loaded to Lieutenant Craon, and took a lance with him back to base to head

off a Leopard-class DropShip headed for the Terra Dyne Electronics Manufacturers. Redburn found a lance of 'Mechs and infantry at the Company and engaged the 'Mechs. Justin Xiang, had come to oversee the Liao operation of stealing a new triple-strength myomer cable the Davion scientists had been working on. Xiang defeated his old friend Redburn but did not kill him. The Liao forces escaped offplanet with the new technology.

Hanse Davion received news that Liao was going to do the unspeakable, attacking the irreplaceable JumpShip factories on Kathil, a major violation of the Ares Conventions. The only forces close enough to save the factory were Delta Company and the company of MechWarriors who had survived the disastrous assault on Sarna. Under the command of then-heir to the throne of the Federated Suns, Morgan Hasek-Davion, these MechWarriors were reorganized as a unit integrated with the battalion of planetary militia. The First Kathil Uhlans thus formed were charged by Morgan to act as "the Lions of Davion" in a desperate fight. The Uhlans didn't have to wait long. Soon DropShips appeared. The enemy were identified as Death Commandos, the best Liao has to offer. (although other evidence has the Death Commandos participating in a raid on NAIS the same day). Aiding these warriors was a battalion of the 4th Tau Ceti Rangers. One Union class DropShip carrying Death Commandoes was destroyed by microwave transmissions from the factory. Delta Company along with a company of Militia were to defend the Yare ground station against the Death Commandoes. The Commandoes were destroyed to the last man, but not without serious casualties, Robert Craon was severely injured in the battle. The few remnants of the 5th Syrtis Fusiliers with the other two companies of Militia defeated the Tau Ceti Rangers with relative ease.

The Uhlans' work was not over yet. They were to go to Sian to retrieve the spy that had given them the information about the raid. They were to take the Rangers DropShip back to Sian claiming they had Morgan Hasek-Davion as a prisoner. When they reached Sian they charged off the DropShip and were met by the Elite 'Mechs of House Imarra, which had been installed with the new myomers. A green gas deployed by the DropShip caused the myomers to melt once they were exposed to it. Captain Redburn was able to rescue the spy, who was none other than Justin Xiang Allard. Allard brought with him Candace Liao, Max's daughter and Duchess of the St. Ives Commonality, with whom Allard was in love. The Davion forces were able to escape and then went to New Avalon where there was a huge celebration for them, the end of the war and the pregnancy of Melissa Steiner Davion.

The Uhlans took the changes that were to occur with the joining of the Federated Suns and the Lyran Commonwealth easily once they had received replacements for warriors who had been killed. Notable among these was who took control of the new Delta

First Kathil Uhlans

The Lions of Davion

Battalion of the Uhlans. The War of 3039 saw the Uhlans on Klathandu IV with Gamma Regiment of the Vegan Rangers. The High Command decided to attack the Draconis Combine before it could recover from the lashing it took in the Fourth Succession War. This would also be the first time the Federated Commonwealth would fight as a unified state. Defending against the Federated forces on Klathandu IV were the Elite 2nd Sword of Light and a battalion of the 15th Benjamin Regulars.

After several months of fighting the Uhlans had seen relatively few 'Mechs, despite the stiff resistance of the armor and infantry. Lieutenant General Andrew Redburn, Commander of the forces on planet, feared a trap and ordered all units to return to the main city on planet. On the way to the HQ, Beta Battalion was ambushed by two heavy battalions of the 2nd Sword of Light. Despite a very good effort on the part of Beta Battalion they were annihilated by the elite and heavy Kurita forces. The Uhlans' Beta Battalion was crushed; less than two lances of 'Mechs escaped. Although all of the enraged Federated forces would have joined in seeking revenge, only Delta Battalion was allowed to escort the armor regiments back to HQ. On the way back they encountered one battalion of the Second Sword of Light. Less than a company of the Dragons escaped that attack. In a city west of that Alpha Battalion ravaged the Benjamin Regulars while the Vegan Rangers held off the rest of the Sword of Light. In the city the Gangs of Alpha Regiment used their newly devised tactics to defeat the Regulars.

This victory was short lived as two of the Kurita 'Ghost' regiments arrived on planet to bolster Kurita forces. During the subsequent 'Strategic Withdrawal' into Federated space the Uhlans were ordered to push the Kurita forces off Xhosa VII. but when they got there they found out the Dragon had left several days earlier.

In 3042 House Marik sent an unofficial force to the planet Gan Singh to test backwater defenses on this world of icy gasses and valuable mines. For four months they occupied Gan Singh unopposed while the Uhlans planned their strike. Then, led by Lt General Andrew Redburn, Beta and Delta battalions arrived insystem through a pirate Jump Point and began the counterstrike. Gan Singh's cities are a giant system of ice caves; mankind cannot live on its surface. In a series of daring raids on the surface mining and climatological installations, Redburn secured the planet's surface.

In 3045 a company of Uhlans and a battalion of infantry were on Bora in the Sarna March helping to train Militia. House Immara, still feeling that humiliating defeat on Sian 15 years earlier attacked Bora and over half of the Uhlans forces on planet. The Immara then sent a tape that began with a gloating commentary on the action, following with the footage of the infantry being burned by fire from the

skies.. In the official records of the AFFC the next several months of communique are listed as 'garbled in transmission'. Reading between the lines, the Uhlans went to avenge their own. It appears that several units of Uhlans chased the House Immara forces to the planet of Preston and there they engaged the Liao 'Mechs. The Uhlans were getting the better of the Cappellans until a regiment of Mac Carron's Armored Cavalry arrived to push the Uhlans off planet. Redburn's message to House Immara was short and to the point, "This was not the end. We promise you will reap the crop we've paid so much to sow. " When they returned to the Federated Commonwealth they were not disciplined but instead received men and women to replace the valiant warriors who died on Bora.

Since then the First Kathil Uhlans have not been in any major operations, though it must be conjectured that they are waiting to repay House Immara.. The Badgers were most recently noted on New Aberdeen where our sources indicate they had been trying to

"We promise you will reap the crop we've paid so much to sow..."
Lieutenant General Andrew Redburn

incite a rebellion to push the Combine off that world. With the abilities and training levels of these troops, it is highly unlikely that they will remain inactive for long. You'll soon be reading more about the Lions of Davion.

Name: First Kathil Uhlans

Commander: Lieutenant General Andrew Redburn

Unit Status: Regular

Unit Nickname: The Lions of Davion

Unit Insignia: A black lion against a Federated Sunburst, the border and lion's eyes are Steiner Blue

DropShip Assignments: *Wotan*, *Gold Gryphon*, *Lion's Wing*, (Overlord class), *Marlborough*, *Wellington*, (Union class), *Viper's Fang*, *Black Eagle*, *Daniel Allison*, *Goshawk*, *Heracles*, *Ulysses*, *Achilles*, (Leopard class), *Peterson*, (Triumph class), *Hannibal*, *White Wind*, (Fury class)

The First Kathil Uhlans of 3050 is a highly motivated and well supplied overstrength regiment which uses all different weight

classes of BattleMechs. Hanse Davion saw the use of the type of fighting style Andrew Redburn and his Uhlans innovated to such great effect during the Fourth Succession War. He decided that the regiment be given the units it needed to conform to almost any situation. The Uhlans are the victims of their reputation for innovative use of weaponry; far too frequently for comfort they find themselves testing new weapons for Team Banzai. But in compensation, the Uhlans now have over one hundred and forty 'Mechs, and a large number of Aerospace fighters. Most precious to them were several JumpShips so that they would have quick reaction time to situations in the Capellan March. Hanse Davion has incorporated overstrength companies like Delta Company into other regiments across the Federated Commonwealth. The First Kathil Uhlans are a force to be reckoned with by even the most seasoned regiments.

Name: Alpha Battalion, First Kathil Uhlans

Commander: Kommandant Allana Damu

Unit Status: Veteran

Unit Nickname: The Lion's Roar

Unit Insignia: A Gold Lion's head, roaring, against a red background with a gold border

DropShip Assignments: *Lion's Wing* (Overlord class), *Marlborough*, (Union class) *Black Eagle*, (Leopard Class)

The heavy hitters of the Uhlans, Alpha Battalion has a large percentage of Assault or Heavy BattleMechs. In 3034 Prince

a celebratory mood.

Name: Beta Battalion, First Kathil Uhlans

Commander: Kommandant Richard Pichot

Unit Status: Regular

Unit Nickname: The Leopard's Strike

Unit Insignia: A Leopard's head and right paw raised to strike, against a blue background with a black border.

DropShip Assignments: *Gold Gryphon*, (Overlord class), *Wellington*, (Union class), *Daniel Allison*, (Leopard class)

Beta Battalion's tale is the shortest and also the saddest. In 3037 Beta Battalion was added to the Uhlans, mostly to complement the already famous Delta Battalion. Andrew Redburn found that they were an extremely potent weapon on their own. So two years later Beta accompanied the rest of the Uhlans on their way to Klathandu V in the Draconis Combine to take part in their mission in the War of 3039. The Uhlans and Gamma Regiment of the Vegan Rangers were able to establish a Beachhead on planet. After several weeks of hard fighting between Beta Battalion and the elite 2nd Sword of Light together with a battalion of the 15th Benjamin Regulars, the Federated forces were beating the Arm of the Dragon off the planet while taking heavy losses. Beta Battalion was responding to a call about a company of heavy 'Mechs in the large forest on the western side of the continent. However when they arrived it was a full two battalions of the elite 2nd Sword of Light. The battle was short and

the outnumbered and less experienced Beta Battalion was reduced to barely a lance of 'Mechs. Rallied by the victory and the arrival of two "Ghost" regiments the Draconis units were able to push the Federated forces off planet, although not without Delta Battalion

They often spend time in the brig for swordfighting in public streets when in a celebratory mood.

Hanse's general staff had another idea for a 'Mech unit. The unit would be a company with eighteen BattleMechs, subdivided into six teams of three 'Mechs each. The idea behind these so called 'Gangs' would be for an entire team of three 'Mechs to concentrate fire upon a single 'Mech at a time, with the massed firepower from three BattleMechs destroying the target in a single salvo or at the most two. Morgan Hasek-Davion suggested the first gang be sent to the Uhlans because of their success with unconventional unit formations. The Prince agreed. The first gang outdid itself in a raid into the Capellan Confederation a year later. On the planet Ares the "Diamondbacks", savaged two companies of the 1st Battalion of the 15th Dracon. The Diamondbacks received public acclaim throughout the Federated Commonwealth. Also in Alpha Battalion is another oddity, a company of 'Mechs who are used in guerilla operations, who consequently are not there very often. What makes them different is their interest in Medieval Terran History. They even had their names changed to ones that are more colorful. They often spend time in the brig — for swordfighting in public streets when in

destroying two companies of 'Mechs while officially "covering a strategic withdrawal".

Marshal of the Armies Morgan Hasek-Davion suggested to the Prince that the Battalion be reformed. Beta Battalion was given the next generation of graduates of the Kittery Training Battalion (the starting place of the Uhlans more than ten years ago). Reformed by these home grown MechWarriors, Beta Battalion was made an almost exact reproduction of Delta Battalion, except that the 'Mechs employed include some Wolfhounds. Beta Battalion has seen continuous action: a deep raid into the Capellan Confederation in 3045 and numerous smaller raids, some even going into the Free Worlds League. The unit's reputation is "they get the job done."

Name: Delta Battalion, First Kathil Uhlans

Commander: Kommandant Jackson George

Unit Status: Veteran

Unit Nickname: The Tiger's Claw

Insignia: A black and gold tiger paw with scratch marks made by the

claws against a green background with a black border. DropShip Assignments: *Robert Craon*, (Overlord class), *Goshawk*, *Heracles*, *Ulysses*, *Achilles*, Leopard class)
 Delta Battalion is the best of The Uhlans' three Battalions. Before the fourth Succession War Delta Company was formed by the MechWarriors of the First Kittery Training Battalion. In the war they turned the tide of several important battles, and they singlehandedly destroyed a few excellent Capellan units, finally they spearheaded the raid on Sian to retrieve the Davion spy, Justin Xiang Allard. Delta Battalion's core is the close assault overstrength company, Delta Company. After the war their losses were replaced and they were instructed to mold a superior regiment to use in almost any situation. During the War of 3039 Delta Battalion suffered relatively light losses despite many pitched battles. When Marshal Morgan Hasek-Davion fights with the unit, Lt General Redburn commands this company. For this reason, Kommandant Jackson George is the junior Kommandant of the Uhlans, recently confirmed from battlefield brevet rank.

First Kathil Uhlans Unit Roster as of 3050

Regimental Command Company

Command Lance

[Marshal Morgan Hasek-Davion, on detached duty, AFFC General Staff]
 Lieutenant General Andrew Redburn Elite Marauder
 Hauptmann Angelo Registraro Elite Warhammer
 Sgt Catherine Sharsheir Veteran Cyclops
 Lieutenant Charles Ulrich Elite Phoenix Hawk LAM

Command Aerospace Lance

Kommandant Michael Wood Elite Stuka
 Vince Metzger Elite Stuka

Armor Company ("The Flames")

Black Flames

Hauptmann Kenji Yoshida Elite Behemoth
 Lt Janette Voodell Veteran Behemoth
 Sergeant Robin Likens Elite Schrek
 Sergeant Kevin Zysk Elite Schrek

Red Flames

Lieutenant Butch Lawson Regular Rommel
 Sgt Matthew Resitaris Veteran Rommel
 Sgt Zachary McDougal Regular Rommel
 Sergeant Karen Anthor Regular Patton

White Flames

Lt Robert Busemeyer Regular Beatie
 Sergeant Michelle Hill Green Beatie
 Sergeant Terrence Killens Green Beatie
 Sergeant Jeff Sizemore Green Beatie

Blue Flames

Lieutenant John Lichtie Veteran Harasser
 Sergeant Kevin Rabbie Regular Harasser

Sergeant Allison Tepe Elite J.Edgar
 Sergeant Ahmad Vedinak Green J.Edgar

Fire Support Company

Artillery Lance A

Kommandant Scott Hain Elite Long Tom
 Lieutenant Steven Spille Elite Long Tom
 Lt Salvador Vanelli Regular Long Tom
 Lieutenant Ponce Baldwin Elite Long Tom

Artillery Lance B

Hauptmann Margaret McDowell Regular Sniper
 Lieutenant Angela Williams Veteran Sniper
 Lieutenant Heather Lowell Regular Sniper
 Lieutenant Bruce Shoemaker Green Sniper

LRM Support Lance

Lt Robert Polliti Regular LRM Carrier
 Sgtt Thomas Kebe Regular LRM Carrier
 Sgt Sharon Moran Regular LRM Carrier
 Sgt Jeffrey Hutton Regular LRM Carrier

SRM Support Lance

Lt Richard Greerson Green SRM Carrier
 Lt Lenny Chastein Green SRM Carrier
 Lt Darna Falurian Green SRM Carrier
 Lt Hermann Ferrar Green SRM Carrier

Motorized Infantry Company ("The Red Legion")

Command Platoon

Hauptmann Nick Taylor Elite Motorized Squad (Laser)
 Lieutenant Lizzy Allensworth Elite Motorized Squad (Laser)
 Sergeant Brian Losekamp Elite Motorized Squad (Flamer)

Sergeant Jenny Wolfe Veteran Moto Squad (SRM)
 Transport Sergeant Justin Lynch Elite Maxim Hover Transport

Heavy Platoon

Lieutenant Erica Gardener Veteran Motorized Squad (SRM)
 Sergeant Sonny Crushiel Veteran Motorized Squad (SRM)
 Sergeant Heather Daley Regular Motorized Squad (SRM)
 Sergeant Teresa Russell Regular Motorized Squad (SRM)
 Transport Sergeant Billy Boren Regular Maxim Hover Transport

Medium Platoon

Lieutenant Matt Johnson Green Motorized Squad (MG)
 Sergeant Colin Brosmer Regular Motorized Squad (MG)
 Sergeant Eric Blom Green Motorized Squad (Flamer)
 Sergeant Amy Wyatt Green Motorized Squad (Rifle)
 Transport Sergeant Felipe Montiguadío Regular Maxim Transport

Medium Platoon

Lieutenant Mark Stohl Veteran Motorized Squad (Laser)
 Sergeant Anatole Severance Elite Motorized Squad (MG)
 Sergeant Eno Kamazami Veteran Motorized Squad (Rifle)
 Sergeant Drew Middleton Green Motorized Squad (Rifle)
 Transport Sergeant Katya Slamanenkov Elite Maxim Transport

Jump Infantry Company ("POUNCING PUMAS")

Command Platoon

Hauptmann Jean Randell Veteran Jump Squad (Laser)
 Sergeant Jenny Schumann Veteran Jump Squad (MG)
 Sergeant Aldonis Tyrell Veteran Jump Squad (Rifle)
 Sergeant Geneva Williamson Veteran Jump Squad (Rifle)

Heavy Platoon ("The Ramblers")

Lieutenant Betina Harris Veteran Jump Squad (SRM)

Sergeant Maggie Huber Elite
Jump Squad (SRM)
Sergeant Erik Kadon Elite
Jump Squad (Laser)
Sergeant Nathan Maeir Elite
Jump Squad (Laser)

Fire Platoon ("Fireflies")
Leftenant Susan Biddle Regular
Jump Squad (Flamer)
Sergeant Bethany Adiasano Regular
Jump Squad (Flamer)
Sergeant Ruth Adams Green
Jump Squad (Rifle)
Sergeant Lori Smith Veteran
Jump Squad (Flamer)

Light Platoon ("The Vipers")
Leftenant Brian Haines Regular
Jump Squad (MG)
Sergeant Guy Barritari Green
Jump Squad (Rifle)
Sergeant Mark Fletcher Green
Jump Squad (Rifle)
Sergeant Selia Zamsharo Green
Jump Squad (Rifle)

ALPHA BATTALION ("LION'S ROAR")

Battalion Command Lance
Kommandant Allana Damu Elite Victor
Lt John Harrington Veteran Wasp LAM
Sergeant Kenyar Gannoway Veteran Atlas
Erik Heidt Elite Zeus

*Battalion Command Aerospace Lance
("Greece's Angels")*
Hauptmann Castillio Darnell Elite Corsair
Maurice Gaulik Regular Corsair

1st Provisional Company

("The Broadsword Brigade")
Command Lance ("Blade Prime")
Hauptmann Ian McClellan Elite
Battlemaster
Leftenant Satorius Elite Grasshopper
Lassder Veteran Marauder-D
Nevak Elite Ostsol

Rifle Lance ("Strong Blades")
Leftenant Alaric Veteran Awesome
Sergeant Jedithreve Elite Awesome
Duncan Elite Marauder
Cromwell Regular Marauder
Strike Lance ("Swift Blades")
Leftenant Randell Elite Phoenix Hawk
Sergeant Oron Elite Ostscout

Keldane Regular Phoenix Hawk-D
Cullin Elite Spider

Aerospace Lance ("Fligh Blade")
Sergeant Alexander Veteran Sparrowhawk
Aberon Elite Sparrowhawk

1st Gang ("The Diamondbacks")
Command Team ("The Victors")
Hauptmann Rex Archambauld Elite Victor
Sergeant Terri Roat Elite Victor
Lisa Barris Veteran Victor

Heavy Team ("The Marauders")
Leftenant Trent Sakaro Veteran Marauder
Leonardo Staciella Veteran Marauder
Siegfreid VonKleiderburg Regular Ma-
rauder

Heavy Strike Team ("The Grasshoppers")
Sergeant Nancy Champion Elite Grasshop-
per
Tre Amatulli Veteran Grasshopper
Mary Beth Coyne Green Grasshopper

Medium Strike Team A ("The Enforcers")
Leftenant Nick Gusteff Regular Enforcer
James Nagumo Veteran Enforcer
Steve Lasher Regular Enforcer

Medium Strike Team B ("The Hatchetmen")
Sergeant Paul Snyder Elite Hatchetman
Chris Staat Elite Hatchetman
Diane Pynes Green Hatchetman

Light Strike Team ("The Panthers")
Sergeant Daniel Earls Elite Panther
Fletcher Zenias Veteran Panther
Lee Vondrahar Veteran Panther

Aerospace Lance ("The Skulls")
Sergeant PJ Martin Elite Corsair
Mark O' Malley Veteran Corsair 2nd Gang
("The Wild Ones")

Command Team ("The Rouges")
Hauptmann Opal Karsten Elite Marauder
Jessica DiCristaferrio Elite Marauder
Larry Collins Veteran Marauder

Heavy Strike Team ("The Freebooters")
Leftenant Eric Dechui
Veteran Grasshopper
Tam Ngo Veteran Grasshopper
Andy Young Regular Grasshopper

Tiger Lance
Lt Kara Cameron Regular Wolfhound
Sgtt Robert Turner Regular Wolfhound
Lawerance Furiel Green Wolfhound
Musashi Miamoto Green Jenner
Damon Emgee Regular Jenner

Leopard Lance
Lt Shelly Whiting Veteran Firestarter
Sergeant Aaron Black Green Firestarter
Chris Leaton Green Jenner
Dhira Stone Regular Jenner
Erik Haystack Green Jenner

Aerospace Lance A ("Gryphon Lance")
Leftenant Jon Morgan Veteran Corsair
Vance Johnson Regular Corsair

Aerospace Lance B ("Phoenix Lance")
Sergeant Hanni VonHeiden Elite Stuka
Joe Hull Elite Stuka

DELTA BATTALION ("TIGER'S CLAW")

Command Lance
Kommandant Jackson George Elite Ma-
rauder
Leftenant Jack McKinney Elite Atlas
Axel Jarvis Regular Wolverine
Melissa Rigsby Veteran Orion

Command Aerospace Lance
Hauptmann Megan Rich Elite Thunderbird
Elsey Otley Veteran Thunderbird

3rd Provisional Company ("The Ice- picks")

Command Lance
Hauptmann Noi Kwong Veteran Zeus
Leutnant Renard Sanderlin Green Archer
Patrick Sublett Regular Zeus
Jenny Nerone Elite Alliance

Rifle Lance
Leftenant Eileen Barron Veteran Crusader
Sergeant Tricia Long Regular Archer
Molly McGovern Regular Archer
Elizabeth Vestrig Regular Rifleman

Recon Lance
Leftenant Julie Gerwe Veteran Thunderbolt
Sgt Robert Buckley Regular Phoenix Hawk
Mojou Sarsfeild Regular Wasp
Logan Greenhart Green Stinger

Aerospace Lance A
Leftenant Janet Cutter Regular Hellcat
William O'Crohan Regular Hellcat

Aerospace Lance B
Sergeant Peggy Pontinano Veteran Seydliz
Rory Boland Regular Seydliz

Aerospace Lance C
Sergeant Amy Witte Regular Corsair
Tracy Hagarty Green Corsair

Delta Company
Command Lance
Hauptmann Geoffery St. Omer Elite Phoenix Hawk
Leftenant Andre Litinov Elite Phoenix Hawk

Archer Lance
Leftenant Hanrahar Jones Elite Valkyrie
Sergeant Thomas d'Or Elite Valkyrie
Sarah Rosebane Elite Valkyrie
Keith Hillson Veteran Valkyrie
Valentine Skeat Green Valkyrie

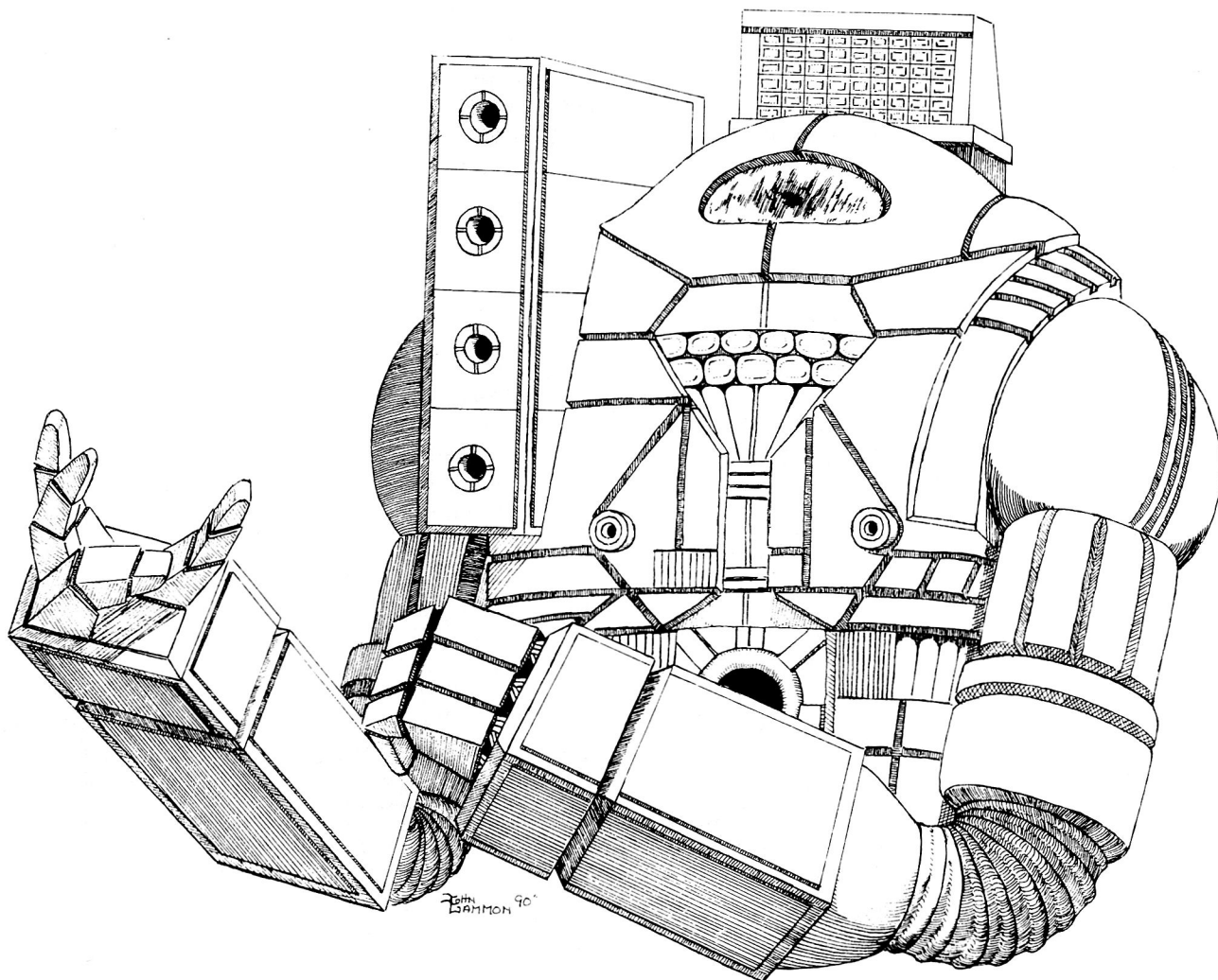
Demon Lance
Leftenant Patrick O'Locklain Elite Valkyrie
Sergeant Nodo Fujimita Elite Valkyrie
Rick Mulroney Elite Valkyrie
Jodi Brooks Regular Valkyrie
Jon Denison Regular Valkyrie

Fox Lance
Leftenant Wally Allman Elite Jenner
Sergeant Milton Sungstack Veteran Jenner
Sammie Rikeer Veteran Panther
Hal Vanny Elite Panther
Forrest Leiber Regular Panther

Cat Lance
Leftenant Favina Priolla Elite Javelin
Sergeant Cheryll Okami Veteran Javelin
Chrig Mirhora Elite Javelin
Alberta Tereshova Elite Commando
Roger Stalling Veteran Commando

Bullseye Lance
Lt Jacques L'ecurie Veteran Wolfhound
Sergeant Morris Sharkie Elite Wolfhound
Dale Torella Green Javelin
Sheila Duggan Green Javelin
Scott Finch Green Javelin

Aerospace Lance ("Joker Lance")
Lt Shawn Rhone Elite Sparrowhawk
Harold Malaganta Elite Sparrowhawk



The Gan Singh Campaign

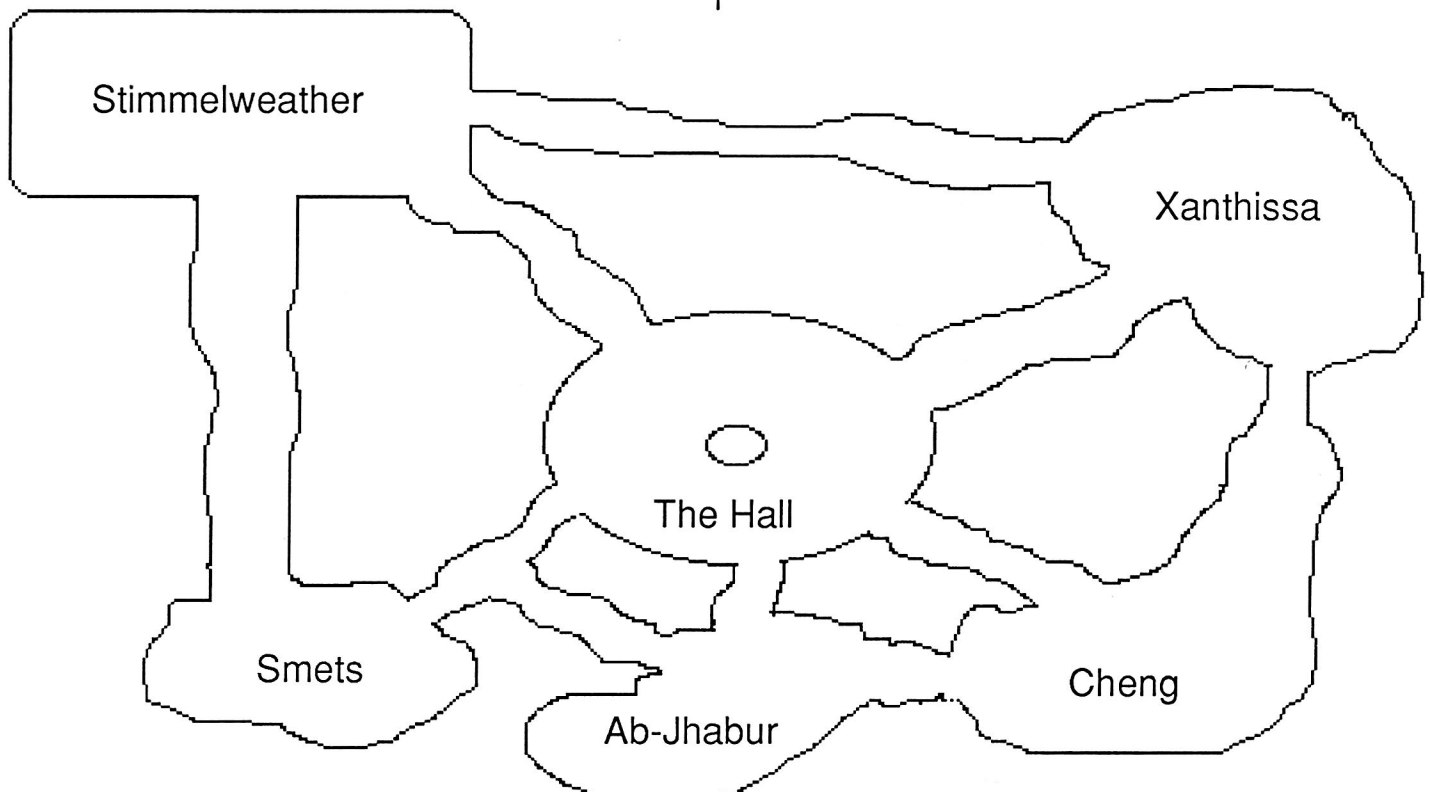
IT WAS AN UNOFFICIAL INVASION, TO BEGIN WITH. MERCENARY UNITS ATTACHED TO HOUSE MARIK ON ONE AND TWO-YEAR CONTRACTS MADE UP THE FORCES. THESE WERE EXPENDEABLE TROOPS, NEW UNITS, UNITS DOWN ON THEIR LUCK, UNITS WHO WEREN'T THERE OFFICIALLY, LIKE THE 'TRAINING COMPANY' FROM KRISTEN'S KRUSHERS, OR THE RAGGLETAIL ENDS OF MIRSHAM'S BATTALION NOW CALLING THEMSELVES THE MIDNIGHT MANIACS. OVERALL LEADERSHIP WAS VESTED IN ONE PIOTYR PLEKHANOV — LIETENANT GENERAL PLEKHANOV, A SELF-PROMOTED MAN WHO HAD AN IMPRESSIVE PEDIGREE — UNTIL YOU CHECKED THE LENGTH OF HIS SERVICE IN VARIOUS PRETIGIOUS UNITS, AND THE CONDITIONS OF HIS DISCHARGES.

HE HAD CHARISMA, AND WHATEVER IT TAKES TO MAKE THE TIGHT-FISTED CAPTAIN GENERAL OF THE FREE WORLDS LEAGUE PUT LARGE AMOUNTS OF C-BILLS INTO WHAT AMOUNTED TO A FISHING EXPEDITION.

HOW WELL WERE THESE SARNA MARCH WORLDS DEFENDED? THE ONLY WAY TO FIND OUT WAS TO NIBBLE THE BAIT OF THIS MINERAL-RICH WORLD. IT TOOK THREE MONTHS BEFORE THE CONQUERORS FELT THE HOOK...

The Gan Singh Planetary Militia and its cache-cairns of supplies were an important part of Lt General Redburn's strategy for the defense of Gan Singh. Those tourist attractions of wind-sculptured ice contained several dozens of 'ringers', artificial supply dumps which included weapons for the militia itself, ammo for any of several prepared combined arms scenarios worked out at the yearly Militia Liason meetings, and short-burst radio transmitters at preset frequencies. Every second or third cairn masked entrances to the underworld where this planet keeps its cities, entrances large enough for several 'Mechs abreast.

The scenarios themselves existed only on paper and in the minds of two militia members per unit. The planet had allowed itself to be invaded, turning over computerized military information without a fight. While the invaders waded through meticulous quartermasters', disciplinary, and recruitment reports and the populace imitated a docile resignation to their fate, Redburn timed his entrance for the



holiday of Thomas Marik's Accession Day. His JumpShips came in at a pirate Jump Point; his DropShips made planetfall undetected. Each team went to a specific cairn and sent out one zip-squealed message in the hard-to-break substitution code. Example for Corella's largest city of Cheng: "Apples aren't oranges."

Each militia unit aimed itself at the assigned surface cache and began a preset operation. The idiot lights in the Uhlans' caches blinked off as each cache was opened to the chill outside air; thus they would have known if the Marik troops had entered any of the caches while the Lions of Davion were en route to their planet. Not one of the caches had been found, and as each unit armed and went to position, Uhlans' intel kept track.

First strikes were simultaneous in each city. Stimmelweather, where the Mariks had dug into the administrative centers, was a long-fought battle. The Hall's militia were defeated by a well-organized garrison of the Krushers. The other cities fell like clockwork. Then it was up to Redburn to pry Marik and mercenary alike out of the cavern-city of The Hall.

He accomplished this by the use of by-ways, the abandoned and/or less-trafficked tunnels between The Hall and its neighbors Xanthissa, Cheng, and Ab Jhabar. The Uhlans are justly famous for their piloting. Stealthily creeping from cavern to cavern, these huge metal killing machines followed their mining 'Mech cousins as tunnels were enlarged and a three-pronged army gathered. Many were the bitter small scale fights as a Marik lance met death underground before it could break radio silence. The one place where the Mariks were roused, at Xanthissa Approach Beta, a brave Phoenix Hawk pilot, Sgt Hyrup, deliberately ignited a liquid nitrogen gas pit with his jump jets, killing himself and three enemy Battlemechs, but camouflaging his unit's advance.

In all, the retaking of Gan Singh lasted three weeks. It would have been two, but for the necessity to allow the Krushers a corridor to their DropShips. The MIO could not ascertain whether their unit commander was present on planet, so the unit had to be encouraged to escape. It would have caused diplomatic notice to be taken if The Marik's sister had been captured as part of the invasion forces on a planet of the Federated Commonwealth!

"THE FIRST KATHIL UHLANS' DEFENSE OF GAN SINGH IN MARCH-APRIL OF 3042 IS ALMOST A TEXTBOOK EXAMPLE OF LIGHTNING-FAST TACTICS-OF-RESPONSE. THE UHLANS HAD PREPARED SEVERAL OVERALL BATTLEPLANS. THEY HAD ALSO PREPARED SIMULATOR TAPES FOR THE UNIQUE CONDITIONS ON GAN SINGH, AND REHEARSED THE WARRIORS IN TACTICAL RESPONSES IN SPECIALIZED TERRAIN FEATURES SUCH AS NITROGEN-PIT AREAS, POISONOUS-GAS SURFACE VENTINGS, NARROW AND IRREGULAR CAVE FIGHTING, ETC.

AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THIS DEFENSE WAS THE WHOLEHEARTED COOPERATION WITH THE PLANETARY MILITIA. THE UHLANS ARE A SORT OF CINDERELLA SUCCESS STORY FOR MILITIA. (BE GOOD ENOUGH IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME AND YOU TOO MAY SAVE THE COMMONWEALTH AND BECOME A FIRST-STRING HOUSE UNIT!). AS A MATTER OF POLICY, UHLAN LIASON WITH PLANETARY MILITIA IN THEIR MARCH IS CONTINUAL AND CORDIAL. UHLAN LEADERSHIP MEETS WITH MILITIA HEADS ON A BIENNIAL BASIS, AND POLICY RECOMMENDED AT THESE MEETINGS IS CONSIDERED MOST CAREFULLY, WITH UHLAN SECONDING MANY PLANETARY AND SYSTEMIC MILITIA RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE FEDERATED COMMONWEALTH HIGH COMMAND. THE UHLANS MAINTAIN BOTH COVERT AND OPEN LIASON OFFICERS ON EACH PLANET UNDER THEIR PROTECTION. THIS IS A MAJOR INVESTMENT OF TIME AND MONEY, BUT IT HAS PAID OFF HANDSOMELY SEVERAL TIMES, MOST NOTABLY ON GAN SINGH..."

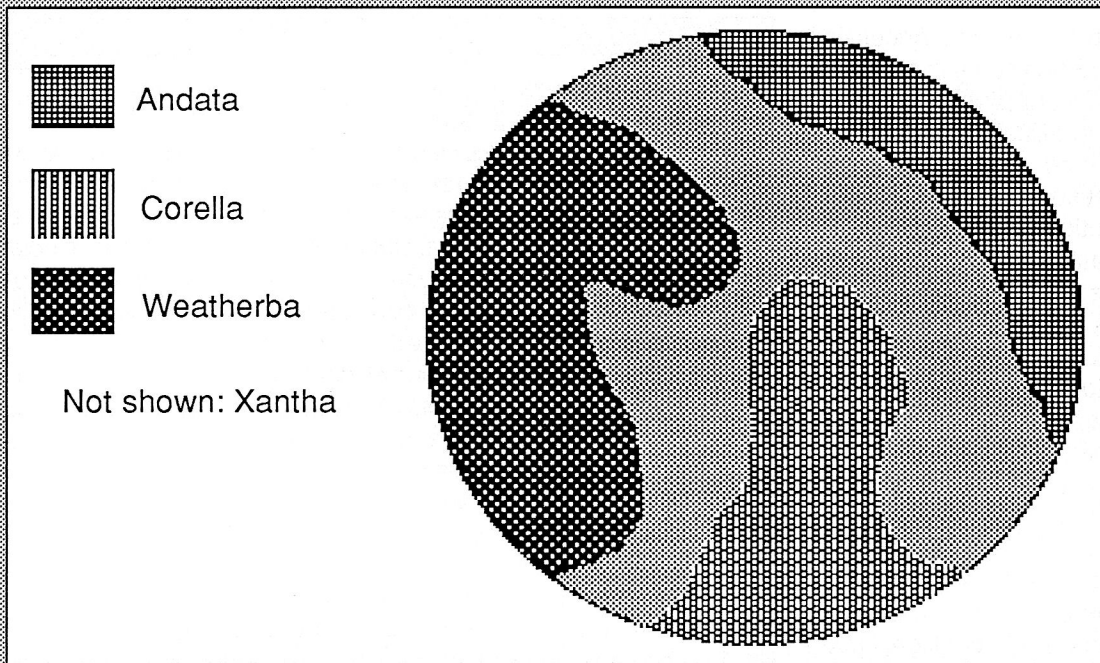
The Uhlans as I Knew Them, Andrew Halliday Golightly,
TacTix Press, Poulsbo, 3045

BattleTechnology's research indicates that Kristen Marik not only was not on the planet, she hadn't been informed of the unit's participation in the invasion! Remember how unsettled House Marik was at the time. The Captain General had asked his sister to go on a 'recruiting mission' in the troubled Abbey District, to pacify civic leaders and show some of the royal presence.

When Colonel Kristen returned, some of her officers lost their commissions over the Gan Singh affair. But it never made the papers in the Free Worlds League.

Back to Gan Singh itself: reparations from the units involved (MechWarriors make terrible miners!) covered half the damage done to the planet's tunnels and the looting of her cities. A populace energized with civic pride turned to and organized a model relief effort for the displaced and the dispossessed. Gan Singh has come back stronger than ever.

And none of their neighbors will ever underestimate the First Kathil Uhlans again!



Abstracts from situation report, MIIO Sarna March to UhlanIntel, January 3042

Gan Singh was colonized late in the Terran Exodus as a prison planet. Convicts were loaded over and left with a bare minimum of supplies... Nobody really wanted to be there as it is a barren, rocky, and cold planet. ... One of the features visible from space is a huge ice storm, "The Old Man", which perennially swirls around the planet... As a result of these factors, most homes are underground, bunker-like structures descended from the original convicts' burrows. One of the first leaders to emerge in the community of Gan Singh was Hans Stimmelwether, a man of indeterminate origins whose charisma was an overpowering factor over his fellow criminals. Stimmelwether formed a small nation on one of the four continents of the world, two of the others being inhabited by similar nations. His was the first to live in a large community complete with underground tunnels and large dwellings, shown below. Stimmelwether also pioneered the research in developing hydroponics and other underground food sources. In doing so he made a stunning discovery: there were underground caverns full of liquid nitrogen. The first discovery led to the accidental death of fifteen miners... Construction workers are now much more careful, and the liquid nitrogen is now the planet's principal export, used on many worlds as a coolant. (See map) Because of the liquid nitrogen, and because of its position in Liao space, Gan Singh has long been a military target for various forces... Extreme caution while traveling on the surface is advised, for 17 MechWarriors have been lost in storms on Gan Singh, and 5 have fallen into pits of liquid nitrogen close to the surface.

Combat on Gan Singh is a tricky affair. Since there is always at least a ten kilometer an hour wind, long ranged projectile weapons are not guaranteed to work, and often ice, snow, and rain are falling, limiting the use of energy weapons... Finally, there have been scattered rumors of recent seismic and volcanic activity. If so, these could be major factors in planetside combat... In any case, the defense of Gan Singh by the Lions of Davion would most likely be accomplished by strategic use of familiarity of terrain coupled with knowledge of nitrogen pits and seismicly-induced sinkholes. Weather forecasts could also be of use. The light quick Mech theory would be advisable, as jumpjets and light weight could save any Mech's butt on that planet... On the same token, Heavy Mechs have far less chance of slipping so at the very least speed should be kept to a minimum... Note that there are very few rock formations on Gan Singh, but several huge and rather beautiful formations made of perennial ice.

GAN SINGH:

STELLAR DATA

Catalog # AGM I 4-208-364 A

Star: Din Quan

Type: F5T

Mass: .97 Sol

Luminosity: 1.05 Sol

Radius: .92 Sol

Estimated Time Remaining on Main Sequence: .83 beyear

SYSTEM DATA

Planetary System: 6 major bodies, 1 asteroid belt

PLANETARY DATA

Planet III: Chi-sin

Common Name: Gan Singh

Mean Orbital Radius: 1.12 AU

Orbital Eccentricity: 0.0114

Periastron Orbital Distance: 1.1134 AU

Apastron Orbital Distance: 1.1479 AU

Period: 1.574 TS years

(574.51 TS days)

Mass: 0.75 Terra

Equatorial Diameter: 12483.0 km

Mean Planetary Density: 4.95 g/cm³ (.09 Terra)

Mean Surface Gravity: 0.96

Escape Velocity: 8.37 kps

Rotational Period: 34.2 TS hours

Axial Inclination: 1deg. 22'14.5"

Atmosphere: Inhospitable

Composition: N₂-43%; H₂O-12%; M₂-34%; sulfur and sulfur compounds-11%

Hydrographics: 15% of the surface covered by frozen H₂O/H₂NO₃, not potable

Temperature Range (weather recording station on Corella): -40C (winter, night) through +7C (summer, day), temperatures at Stimmelwether colony average +27C.

GENERAL PLANETARY INFORMATION

PLANETOGRAPHY:

Radius: 6246 km; Circumference: 39196.62; Total Surface Area: 313,572,960 sq km; Land Surface Area: 266,537,016 sq km; Inhabited Surface Area: 0 sq km.

Surface Topography: Ocean/Sea/Lake15%; Valley/Rift/Basin13%; Rising Ground 17%; Lowlands 17%; Steppe/Plain 22%; Low Hills 5%; High Hills 2%; Low Mountains 5%; High Mountains 4%.

FINANCE:

Currency: Standard FC-Bills; Per Capita Income: Cb 95; Gross Domestic Product: Cb 1.005 billion; Imports: Natural (Hydroponic and cold-adapted) Agricultures, Petrochemicals, Armaments, Heavy Manufactured Goods, Light Manufactured Goods; Principal Sources: Exports: Mineral Ores, Liquid Nitrogen.

TRANSPORTATION:

Chief Ports: Port Hanston; Off-Planet Facilities: Orbital: none; Deep Space: none; Enclave: none; Merchant Fleet: JumpShips: 0; Freighters: 1; Shuttles: 2; System Jump Point: Distance: 15.4 AU; Travel Time (typical): 229.6 TS hours (9.57 TS days).

HEALTH:

Life Expectancy at Birth: 61 TS years; Birth Rate (3045): 6%; Mortality Rate: 4%; Population Growth Rate: increasing at 2% per year.

EDUCATION:

Literacy: 45%; Technicians/100 population: 6; Universities: 4.

ARMED FORCES:

Defense Spending: 24% of GDP; Military Manpower Potential: (40%); AeroSpace Forces: Orbital Facilities: 0, Deep Space Facilities 0, JumpShips: 0, DropShips: 2, AeroSpace Fighters: 4, Escorts: 0, Monitors: 0, Cruisers: 0; Battalions: Infantry: 2, Armor: 1, Air: 0, Mech:0; Hiring Data: L/H/M

PEOPLE:

Population: 1,657,824; Population Density: .12 pperson per sq km; Urbanization: 75%; Ethnic Groups: Central European (62%), North American (15%), Black (all) (20%), others (3%); League Anglic (62%), English (38%); Religions: Church of Blake (57%), Protestant Christian Sects (7%), Neo Buddhist (14%), Universal Catholic Church: (10%), Neo Calvinist (.1%); Capitol and Largest City: Port Hanston; Other Major Cities: Chiston, Freeland.

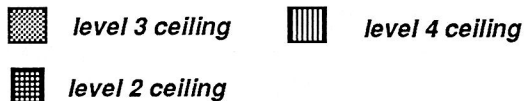
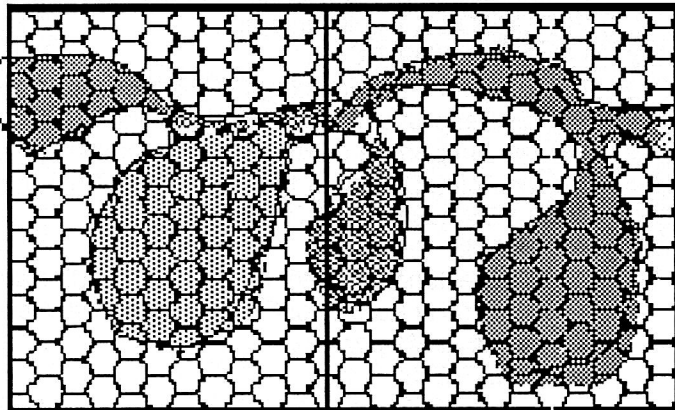
GOVERNMENT:

Allegiance: Associate World of the Federated Commonwealth; Government: Hereditary Aristocracy; Head of Government: Joseph Stimmelwether; Local Administrative Districts: 0.

ECONOMY:

Natural Resources: Ores, Nitrogen; Processed/Manufactured Goods: None; Arable Land: 0%; Labor Force: (73.2%), Service (5%).

Darkfall Passage



"Eagle Patrol Two to Eagle Patrol Leader. Come in, Eagle Leader."

"Eagle Leader. I copy you, Patrol Two. What gives, Jerry?"

"Unexpected and erratic heat signature showing on I/R, ma'am. Some sort of thermal emission in the caves here."

"And you think..."

"Possible geo-thermal source. Sure live up a dull patrol if we could stake a claim here. Wouldn't you like to be rich?"

"Permission to investigate given, Eagle Patrol Two. Report in two hours, even if there's nothing happening. The way these ore deposits block transmission, I have no other way to keep tabs on you."

Last Known Communication from Patrol Lances One and Two, March 15, 3042

Attacker: Elements of the First Kathil Uhlans
Alpha Battalion

Note that the skills given are more than five years old; these are not the same as these warriors' current levels.

from Rifle Lance ("Badger's Claws")

Cpl Jedithreve Awesome Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 2

from Strike Lance ("Badger's Cunning")

Sgt Randell Phoenix Hawk Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 3

Cpal Oron Ostscout Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 4

MWr Keldane Phoenix Hawk-D Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 4

MWr Cullin Spider Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 2

Militia MWr BJ Rosen, Hunter Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 3
(Liason & Guide)

Defender: Elements of Kristen's Crushers

Medium Lance

Cicada Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 4

Vulcan Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 3

Vulcan Piloting: 2, Gunnery: 3

Hunchback Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 4

Heavy Lance

Orion Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 3

Archer Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 2

Crusader Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 3

JagerMech Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 4

Victory Conditions: Attacker: Retreat at least one unit offmap. If Defender does so, he has managed to report the presence of the First Kathil Uhlans troops. Attacker: Keep defender from retreating any of his 'Mechs, and maintain at least two of your 'Mechs in fighting condition. The battle continues until one side is dead, inactivated, or retreated completely.

Gan Singh, 18:15 Hours March 15, 3042

Situation: Darkfall Passage is a long-disused cave tunnel between two of the main routes to the cave cities of Gan Singh. In a linked series of caverns a kilometer below the surface of Corella Continent, an alternate route is possible between Ab-Jhabar and The Hall. It is a route with many pitfalls, and many wrong turnings. This action is the spearhead of Lt Gen Andrew Redburn's lightning strike against the mercenary coalition in The Hall. If the action fails, a battalion-level attack will be thwarted.

Defender: See Inset

Attacker: See Inset

Game Set-Up and Special Rules: Place four BattleTech boards together, blank side up. Take a 2-meter long piece of string and tie the ends together. Make a random pattern on your map to simulate a series of six linked caverns. Allow the string to go off the map at beginning and end of the series. (See illustration).

Designate your caverns as numbers 1-6. Attacker enters at cavern # 1; Defender is in place in caverns # 5 and # 6. Defender sets up first. Each side rolls 1 D6. The cavern whose number is rolled by the *defender* has a low ceiling. See next page for special rules.

The cavern whose number is rolled by the *attacker* has liquid nitrogen pits below the surface. Each time a hex within that cavern is entered for the first time, the entering player must roll 2 D6. On a roll of 6 or below, the hex has a pit in it, and the 'Mech breaks through its surface. A piloting roll must be made at a minus three to get out of that pit. A failed roll requires three rolls on the kick damage table. The pits are only level 2, but damage is figured as for level 4, because liquid nitrogen chills the 'Mech's structure down to a brittle state where the armor and even internal structure can shatter. If a 'Mech does not make its piloting roll for four turns running, its motor systems freeze in place. It can no longer move. The only way it can be moved is for another 'Mech to assist it (the second 'Mech makes a piloting roll at minus 1). After 8 turns in a pit, the affected 'Mech may no longer fire. Once a pit has been found, the hex may be marked by one of the counters included. (Photocopy them if you don't want to cut the magazine page). Thereafter, a 'Mech entering the hex makes a regular piloting roll to avoid the pit. A failed roll still requires damage as above. Once a hex has been safely entered by either side it is safe for the rest of the scenario. (Note to referee: it is suggested that these conditions be explained to the players, but that actual play be on a you-said-it, you-did-it basis. This simulates the rapid progress from cavern to cavern, with no real time for situation map reading, conditions of the original battle-fatigued MechWarriors.

It is perfectly possible for these two conditions to coexist in one cavern.

It is not recommended for a Jump-capable 'Mech to use its jump jets in a pit of liquid nitrogen. The volume of gas thus created will expand as rapidly as steam from a burst boiler. It could easily pop the 'Mech into the cavern's unyielding ceiling (Damage as in Death-From-Above, with the 'Mech's own weight substituted for the Attacker, and the distance calculated at an average of seven hexes (unless it is a cavern with a low ceiling, in which case the distance is three hexes). If a player gets the idea of shooting into one of these 'pit-capable' hexes before it is entered, the 2 D6 roll may be made to expose a nitrogen pit. HOWEVER, If a '2' is rolled, an expansion of gas will result, figured as knockback damage.

All 'Mechs involved are considered to have been adapted for planetary conditions of cold. Allow -2 to each turn's heat buildup calculations. The other special consideration is in the case of liquid nitrogen. A 'Mech will go to zero heat upon break-through to a pit. See special problems as above.

All special rules for fighting in caverns are in force. See next page.

Optional Rules: Fighting in Caves

For purposes of this rules set only, BattleTechnology is using the word 'cave' to specify a single big hole underground or in a mountain side, and 'cavern' to specify one of a series of linked big underground holes. These holes may be anything from too small to fit a 'Mech into to the size of a large city. All 'cave' conditions apply to 'caverns'. Some 'cavern' conditions do not apply to 'caves'.

- The first problem noticed by a novice cave fighter is that he or she has trouble seeing. There is no light source in most caves. Sensors become vital. Therefore 'Mechs taking sensor hits must roll 2 D6. On a roll of 9 or above, non-essential systems (for these conditions) are hit. 'Mechs adapted for underground fighting mount exterior floodlights as well as the normal sensor array. On a roll of 7-8, the exterior mounted floodlight is hit. You have no light source. If another 'Mech is in the cavern with you, the area is fairly well illuminated. If all 'Mechs in the area lose or turn out their lights, you are at -4 on targeting-tracking, which translates to -2 gunnery, -1 on your piloting. If all lights are out, proceed as for visual sensor loss below. On a roll of 5-6, com gear is hit. You have no way of telling friend from foe except on visual or I/R signature. On a roll of 3-4 or below, visual tracking systems fail entirely. On a roll of 2, I/R will go out as well. Once visual is out, movement is done cautiously; anything above 1/4 speed (round up) requires a piloting roll. If visual and I/R are both out, gunnery rolls are allowed only upon a 'Mech which has fired upon anyone in the same turn, or on a 'Mech which has fired and not subsequently moved. If both of these systems are out, a firing 'Mech missing its gunnery roll must roll again to see if it hits the nearest other 'Mech. After two 'non-essential' sensor hits, roll 1 D6 only and apply conditions as above. These conditions are cumulative.

- Rock is more dense than air. This give rise to several special situations. While it is possible to fire from cavern to cavern, it is not possible to fire unless the firing 'Mech has line-of-sight. Indirect fire conditions are so unlikely as to be ruled out entirely in unrefereed games. If this is a refereed game, referee may choose to allow indirect fire under certain circumstances.

In addition, in 'cave' conditions, there is a single en-

trance to the outside. If the cave has less than a 3-hex passage to the entrance, then during the day a 'Mech from outside the cave may not fire from outside even if line of sight is clear. He cannot see the target inside a darkened area. The inside 'Mech may fire; he is firing from darkness to light so his target is illuminated for him.

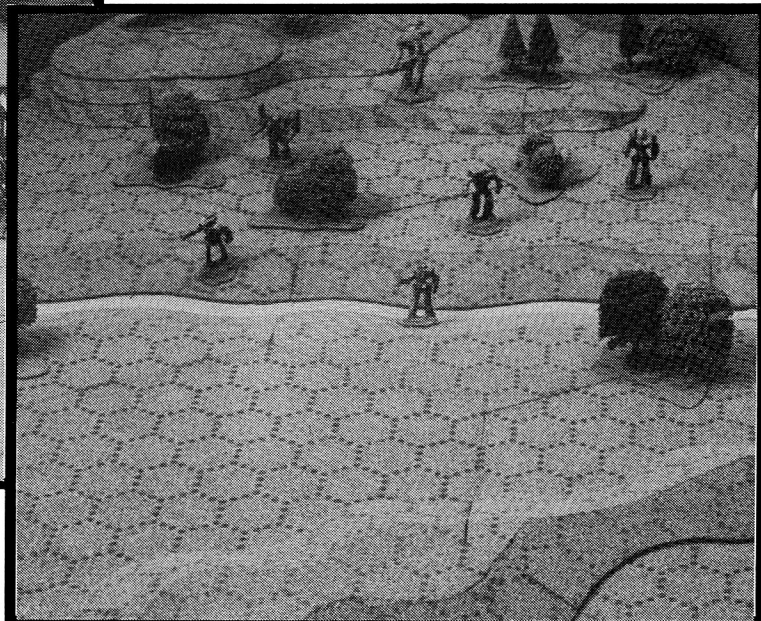
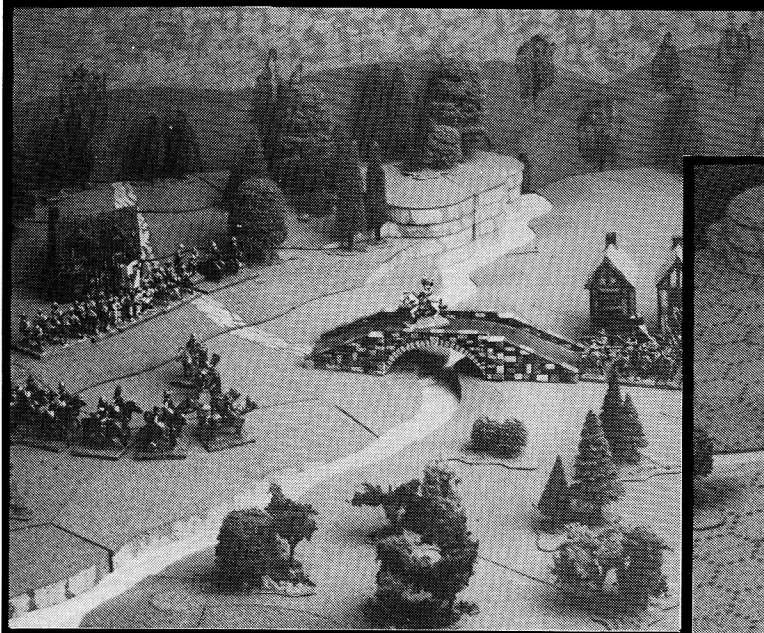
- Roll 2 D6 again for radio communication through this rock. On a roll of 2-4, rock is of a composition which interferes with radio traffic. Secure tight-beam communication (as in hard to intercept traffic within lance only) is limited to line-of-sight as well. Ordinary radio communication may pass through up to four walls. From the second wall on, roll 2D6 whenever it is attempted. For communications passing through a second wall, a roll of 4 or better gets through; for transmissions through a third wall, a roll of 7 or better gets through; for transmissions passing through a fourth wall, a roll of 12 gets through. Beyond that number, no transmission is possible. (This rule postulates irregular formations, pocket spaces, etc.)

- The cavern walls are dense (Hardened) and may not be fired through. If a 'Mech fires into a cavern wall at point-blank range (as in a miss), he must roll on the appropriate hit location table for half damage (even a laser weapon will create a rapidly-moving shower of hot rock fragments). Any 'Mech within a one-hex range makes this roll. A 'Mech may choose to do this deliberately, but he will suffer the appropriate damage.

- In 'low ceiling' areas, any movement which is performed in an arc, rising and then curving down, is severely limited. Missiles which have a minimum-range limit are arced-fire missiles; they will misfire on a roll of 9 or less, causing damage similar in location to death-from-above to the firing 'Mech. As jumping is an arced movement, the maximum jump possible is the ceiling level minus one in hexes; default number of 4 hexes jump where ceiling level is unspecified. Death-From-Above is not allowed under these conditions.

- It is possible to retreat offmap where the perimeter allows. 'Mechs which do so are considered to be in disorderly retreat, and may not reenter. Referee may wish to have retreating 'Mechs roll to see if they became lost in a maze of caverns.

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Rockland, Draconis Combine

The Voice of the Invader

People of Rockland, cease your resistance! Your leaders have signed the surrender document. There is no longer a chance for you to change this. Understand that you begin new lives here and now. You will learn our ways; your fate is bound with ours. Bondsmen and Clansmen alike will see a great future. Strive to learn quickly what part you may play in it.

Continue your daily work for now; block monitors and shop monitors will be selected who will direct your efforts more efficiently. There will be a rule of law. You will be treated fairly...

Electrical and electronics engineers with the following specialities will register with their shop monitors for retraining...

The following are the production quotas for supply to headquarters commissary in Yedo...

If the outlaw Yamato Jiri is not turned over to us within twenty four hours, a hostage will be taken from each city block. We will execute one for each hour he remains free...

Official Communiques reported by the Night Stalkers Recon Team which escaped Rockland early in May

Gauntlet of Fear

Background: On March 19, 3050, a group from beyond the Periphery calling themselves the Smoke Jaguars struck at the planet Rockland in the Draconis Combine sphere of influence. Within a week they had all of the planetary forces devastated and the people all but subjugated. They used harsh tactics which did not succeed in converting the people to their cause, though they were killed at the slightest provocation. This scenario deals with last stand of Yamato Jiri and his stalwart allies in the final battle between the Rockland Militia and the Smoke Jaguars. It is set in one of the innumerable box canyons that dot the surface of Rockland. It was a bloody battle, as neither side was willing to give in

Game Setup: The setup for this scenario is intriguing. Place three standard BattleTech boards end to end running north to south. Then place another board on the east side of the northern board. Place the final board on the west side of the southern board. All but one of the sides of the boards are surrounded by level 9 cliffs. The exception is the furthest western board, which is open to the plains of Rockland. In the center of the eastern board is a lake which is 7 hexes in diameter and 3 levels deep. A level 1 river runs down the center 3 hexes of all the boards and empties into the plain.

Defender Setup: The defenders may set up anywhere within the gauntlet they wish to. They are aware of the Smoke Jaguars, and have prepared to ambush them. Defender forces consist of:

Yamato Jiri Marauder Piloting: 2, Gunnery: 3

Modified: Autocannon replaced by large laser and 2 heat sinks

Damaged: 5 pts of armor off CT, and 4 pts off of RL

Miko Naugra Cicada Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 5

Jiro Naugra Jenner Piloting: 5, Gunnery: 5

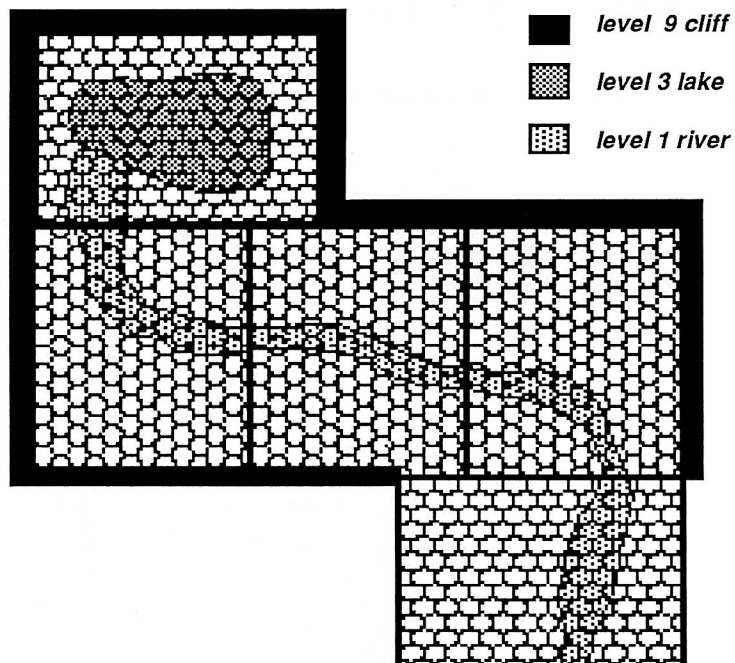
3 Pegasus Scout Hover Tanks

2 Jump Infantry Laser Platoons

2 Motorized SRM Infantry Platoons

Defender Goal: To insure that Yamato Jiri survives the battle, and to hold up

April 10, 3050



enemy forces as long as possible. Jiri will not leave until his Marauder is completely destroyed. If this happens, defender morale is so affected that a 1 D 6 roll must be made by each element. On a roll of 3 or higher, that element will surrender. Otherwise the defenders will fight to the death.

Attacker Setup: The attackers begin the scenario with one Star at the mouth of the canyon/guuntlet. They will receive five more additional 'Mechs every 12 turns until every defender unit is destroyed or captured.

Attacker Star (Lance) # 1: Koishi A, Puma, Black Hawk D, Ryoken, Ryoken D

Attacker Star (Lance) # 2: Ryoken A, Koishi C, Vulture, Puma, Puma

Attacker Star (Lance) # 3: Vulture, Ryoken B, Koishi, Daishi, Masakari

Alternate these three typical Smoke Jaguar Stars for additional reinforcements if needed.

Attacker Goal: The Smoke Jaguars want to capture or kill Yamato Jiri so that the populace will not have a leader for their resistance movement. The faster that they complete this mission the more prestige they will gain among their fellows.

All pilots are assumed to be Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 2

Special Conditions:

MechWarrior on ground

Once Jiri has punched out, he moves at one hex per 2 turns. Each time a 'Mech enters a hex, or a shot lands in that hex, roll 1 D6. On a result of 1-2, Jiri is unharmed. On a result of 3-4, he receives a wound that immobilizes him, but he is not seen. On a result of 5, he is killed. On a result of 6, the 'Mech's pilot or the gunner that fired the shot spots him. If the 'Mech is an enemy 'Mech, it is presumed to have captured him. If a shot is fired by the enemy, the next enemy 'Mech to enter that same hex while Jiri is still in it is presumed to have captured him. If Jiri is able to enter another hex in the interim, he is presumed to have escaped surveillance and must be re-spotted to be captured. If Jiri is left on the board immobilized but unseen at the end of the scenario, he counts as captured.

Attacker Major Victory: Capture or kill Yamato Jiri and every defending unit before third Star enters.

Attacker Minor Victory: One of the above.

Draw: Defender keeps at least one unit *or* Yamato Jiri functional until third star enters.

Defender Minor Victory: Defender keeps at least one unit *and* Yamato Jiri functional until third star enters, *or* Defender keeps three units functional until third star enters.

Defender Major Victory: Jiri escapes *and* defender keeps one or more 'Mechs functional past 12 turns.

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COMSTAR CENSUS

Did you ever.....

Are you now
Or have you ever-

military
background?
Regular
Mercenary
Unit?

The Clans Are:
(check one)
1) A play by Theodore Kurita
2) A play by Hanse Davion
3) Minnesota Tribe Returned
4) Periphery Bandits

To be certain that we are serving the needs of all of our readers, ComStar has asked us to undertake a census of our readers with every issue. You may submit this census anonymously, however one entrant from each issue will be chosen at random to receive a three issue subscription or extension with BattleTechnology's compliments; this entrant will be chosen from those census answers which include a return address.

- 1) Issue Number (enter "15").
- 2) Are you a subscriber? (1 for yes, 0 for no).
- 3) Male or Female (M or F)
- 4) How old are you?
- 5) How many people will read this copy of BattleTechnology, including you?
- 6) Are you a MechForce member? (If not, and if you want to be, contact the FASA Corporation, Box 6930, Chicago, IL 60680. BattleTechnology and the MechForce are independent of each other.)
- 7) How many years have you played BattleTech? (Including MechWarrior, BattleForce, CityTech, AeroTech, etc.)
- 8) How many hours a month do you spend playing BattleTech?
- 9) How many BattleTech books and modules do you own?
- 10) How many BattleTech miniatures do you own?
- 11) How many others play BattleTech with you?
In order of 5=most, 4= second most, 3=third most, 2= 4th most, 1=least, and 0= I've never played it; rate which you play.
- 12) BattleTech
- 13) BattleForce
- 14) CityTech
- 15) AeroTech
- 16) MechWarrior
- 17) BattleTroops
- On a scale of 0= I hate it to 5=Wonderful, rate the contents of this issue.
- 18) Armageddon Begins
- 19) Honor Has No Price
- 20) Reflections of Battle (Cobalt Coil)
- 21) News From the Front: Buying Time With Lives
- 22) News From the Front: Princes in Peril
- 23) Romano Liao Letter
- 24) BattleTechnology News Service
- 25) Tech Readout: Templar BattleMech
- 26) Tech Readout: Ventilator BattleMech
- 27) Tech Readout: Centurion Maximus
- 28) WorldBook: Gan Singh
- 29) Scenario: Darkfall Pass
- 30) Variant Rules: Fighting in Caves
- 31) Scenario: Dark of the Moon
- 32) Unit Update: First Kathil Uhlans
- 33) Mercenary in Midcentury
- 34) Thornhill Arms
- 35) Inner Sphere Trivia
- 36) The Cover
- 37) Interior Photographs
- 38) Interior Artwork (& page # of any you like specially)
- 39) This census itself
- On a scale of 0= I hate it to 5=Wonderful, how do you rate the departments of BattleTechnology? (Not all departments are present in every issue.)
- 40) WorldBook
- 41) Hiring Hall
- 42) MechTacs
- 43) Simulator: Scenarios
- 44) Simulator: Tech Readouts
- 45) Simulator: Rules Variants
- 46) More Than Warriors
- 47) Letters to the Editor
- 48) Technical Fact Articles like The Price of Cannon Fodder

- 49) Action Accounts like Armageddon Begins, Gone to Ground
- 50) Stories and Tales in the 31st Century like Reflections of Battle.
- 51) Background material such as Black Luthienor Rasalhague, a Glimpse of Independence
- 52) Personal arms data
- 53) Combat arms data
On a Scale of 1-5 where 1=a lot fewer, 2=somewhat less, 3=about the same, 4=more, and 5=a lot more, would you like to see more or less of the following:
54) Lance-to-Lance Scenarios
55) BattleTroop Scenarios
56) AeroTech Scenarios
57) CityTech Scenarios
58) MechWarrior Scenarios
59) Coverage of House Davion
60) Coverage of House Kurita
61) Coverage of House Steiner
62) Coverage of House Liao
63) Coverage of House Marik
64) Coverage of Periphery and its kingdoms
65) Coverage of the Small Inner Sphere States like Rasalhague, St Ives
66) Coverage of a specific region within a House (like Tamar Pact, Sarna March...)
67) Longer fact articles
68) Longer Rules Variant pieces
More about you
69) Do you consider yourself to be affiliated with a specific House?
1=no, 2=Davion, 3= Kurita, 4= Steiner, 5= Liao, 6= Marik, 7= Rasalhague, 8= St Ives, 9=Mercenary (primary allegiance is to your unit), 10= Peripheral kingdom or regional alliance.
If you answered 9 or 10, please specify which one.
1=yes, 0=no
- 70) Do you play other board games?
- 71) Do you play other role-playing games?
- 72) Do you play other science fiction games?
- 73) Do you read science fiction?
- 74) Do you read fantasy?
- 75) Do you read science fact?
- 76) Do you play a BattleTech Computer Game? Which One(s)? 1= Crescent Hawk: Inception, 2= Crescent Hawk: Revenge, 3= Mechwarrior, 4= Atari version, 5=Other (please specify)
- 78) Rate the above game on a scale of 0-5.
- 79) Does your household own one or more computers?
0=none, 1=1, etc
- 80) What kind of computer?
1=IBM PC or Clone, 2=Mackintosh, 3= Apple, 4=Atari, 5=Commodore, 6=Amiga, 7= other (specify)
- 81) Do you play Play by Mail Games? 0= no, 1= yes
- 82) Do you play Play by Mail BattleTech?
0=no, 1=yes, the Fantastic Simulations version, 3=a home-grown version
- 83) If you play BattleTech by mail, rate your current cam-

Trivial Quest Answers from page 55

Common Knowledge

- 1) Aleksandr Kerensky
- 2) Left
- 3) The Magistracy of Canopus
- 4) 12
- 5) Wolf's Dragoons
- 6) New Avalon
- 7) House Liao, or The Capellan Confederation
- 8) The Fourth Succession War
- 9) Jerome Blake
- 10) Stefan Amaris

Experts Only

- 1) November 5, 2784
- 2) Colonel Charles Kincaid
- 3) Barbara Liao
- 4) Lady Shandra Noruff
- 5) August 12, 2781
- 6) True
- 7) To the right
- 8) Katrina Steiner
- 9) Subrash Indrahar
- 10) 3
- 11) Duncan Marik
- 12) 101
- 13) The Elysian Fields
- 14) Brion's Legion
- 15) 3 and 4
- 16) 10 and 11
- 17) Defiance Industries
- 18) 2468
- 19) The Star League Medal of Honor
- 10) 2439

paign on a scale of 0-5.

Would you like to see the following in BattleTechnology? (The usual scale of 0=no way to 5= do it immediately)

- 86) Mech armor diagram/hit sheets to copy on the 'Mechs we print?
- 87) Tech readouts on non-battlemech vehicles?
- 88) Photographic illustration in general
- 89) Artist's illustrations in general
- 90) Convention Calendar
- 91) Combined Arms Scenarios
- 92) New BattleTech Releases column
- 93) Do you like the entire magazine being in 31st Century terms?
94-100) Not used this time.

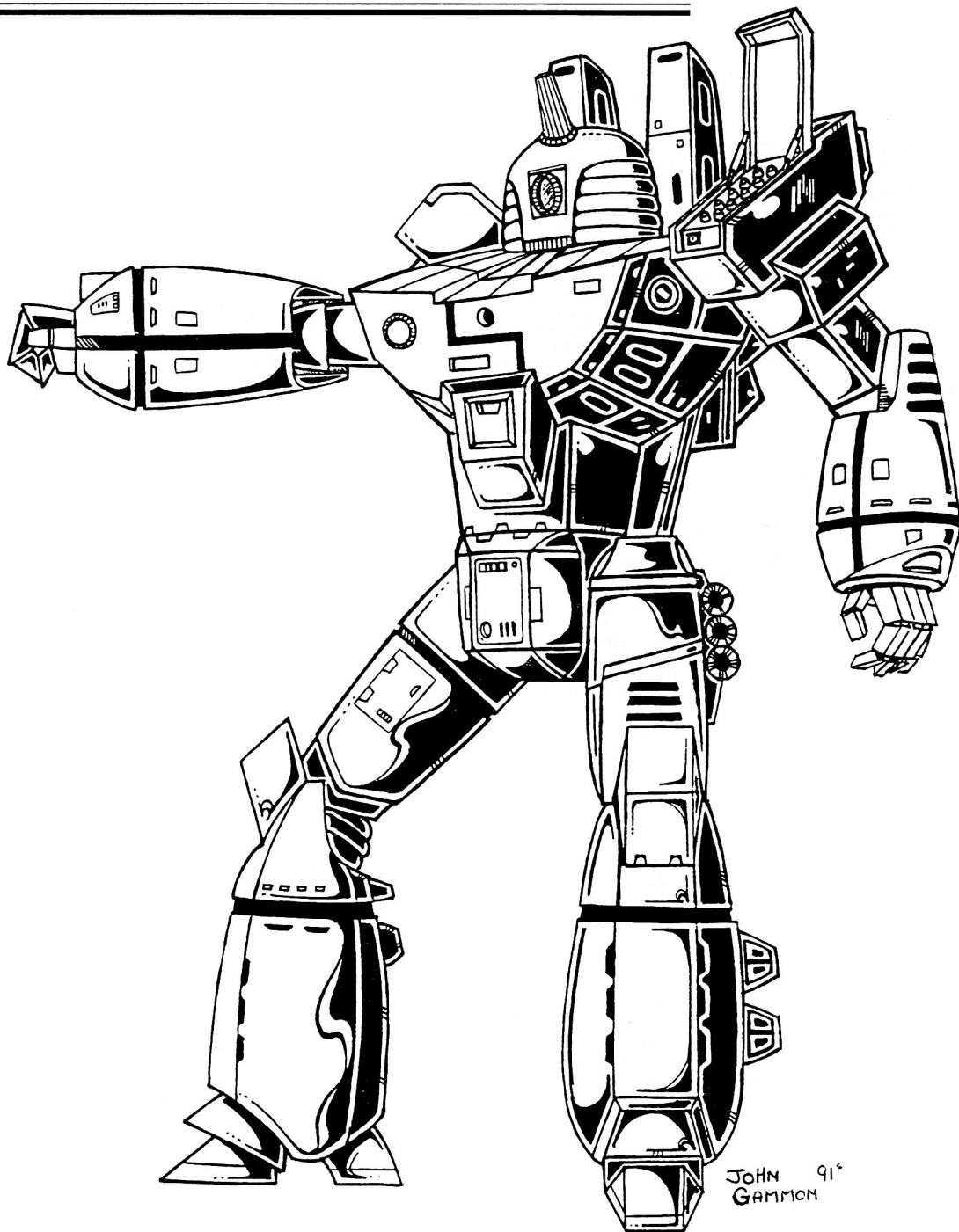
Is there anything you would like us to add that we don't currently include?

Is there anything you would like us to drop?

Yes, BattleTechnology takes freelance submissions. Please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope for contributors' guidelines. Submissions must include your Social Security Number. The reason for the social security number is that if we pay you anything, we must file a form with the Federal authorities.

Technical Readout

TMPL-1R Templar



Overview:

The TMPL-1R Templar is one of the new BattleMechs using some of the top of the line LosTech that has been recovered over the last twenty years. It is based upon the Crusader-L 'Mech, and made by the same manufacturers and suppliers. The 'Mech can handle itself well in all combat situations. With this versatility, it is almost perfect for city or mountain fighting. The Templar can also make an effective scouting 'Mech; its speed keeps its opponents going almost all of the time.

Technical Data:

The LosTech which inundates the Templar is incredible. The chassis structure uses advanced techniques of zero g construction and is about half as heavy as would be expected. The engine is lighter but has an expanded casing which makes it more vulnerable in the torso's weakly armored areas. The heat sink system is what makes this particular 'Mech all but invincible. Testing has determined that even infernos could not shut this 'Mech down.. The weapons systems are basic to the Inner Sphere; nothing fancy about them. But their very familiarity makes the 'Mech easy to learn and to service. The ammo bays for the missile systems are something to see. They employ specially designed buffers which force any ammunition explosions to be funneled through the rear of the 'Mech so that none of the critical circuitry or the engine itself are damaged, and the Templar can continue its mission with minimal interruption. Overall the TMPL-1R Templar will make a fine addition to any Inner Sphere force.

TMPL-1R Templar

Mass: 65 Tons
Chassis: Crucis-D
Power Plant: 325 VOX XL
Cruising Speed: 57.1 kph
Maximum Speed: 81.5 kph
Jump Jets: Lancer Propulsion 30
Jump Capacity: 120 meters
Armor: Riese-500
Armament:
2 Longbow LRM-10 Launchers
2 Harpoon SRM-6 Launchers
2 Intek Medium Lasers
1 Rose Small Laser
Manufacturer: Kallon Industries
Communications System: Garnel T12-C
Targeting/Tracking System: Garnet A6

Type:		Tonnage
TMPL-1R Templar		65.0
Internal Structure:	Endo Steel	3.25
Engine:	325 VOX XL	11.75
Walking MPs:	5	
Running MPs:	8	
Jumping MPs:	4	
Heat Sinks :	16 (32)	6.0
Gyro:		4.0
Cockpit:		3.0
Armor Factor:	192	12.0
Location:	Internal	Armor
	Structure:	Value
Head	3	9
Center Torso:	21	33 / 8
Rt/Lt Torso:	15	24 / 6
Rt/Lt Arm:	10	20
Rt/Lt Leg:	15	21

Weapons and Ammo:

	Location	Critical	Tons
Medium Laser	LA	1	1.0
Medium Laser	RA	1	1.0
Small Laser	CT	1	0.5
LRM-10	LA	2	5.0
LRM-10	RA	2	5.0
Ammo LRM (12)	RT	1	1.0
CASE	RT	1	0.5
Ammo LRM (12)	LT	1	1.0
CASE	LT	1	0.5
SRM-6	LL	2	3.0
SRM-6	RL	2	3.0
Ammo SRM (15)	CT	1	1.0
CASE	CT	1	0.5
Jump Jets	RT	2	1.0
Jump Jets	LT	2	1.0

Technical Readout

VNT-1A Ventilator

Overview

The Ventilator BattleMech was discovered in a Star League supply cache on the planet Thule by the mercenary unit Knights of Thunder (employed by House Davion) in the year 3026. The 2nd Sword of Light units in contact at the time mis-identified the Ventilator as a Warhammer (a design it closely resembles), thereby attaching no significance to its discovery. The Knights of Thunder were able to extract the BattleMech and to return it to New Avalon, where the NAIS commenced several years of research into the design. In exchange for the 'Mech the Knights of Thunder (who had salvage rights by contract) were promised either the prototype or two production models as compensation.

Based on technical data retrieved with the design, the Star League Defense Force (SLDF) must have introduced the Ventilator into service sometime around 2780. This was in response to a demonstrated need to provide long-range fire support in both the assault and anti-air roles. It was also determined that the design required a MechWarrior to pilot the BattleMech as well as a Weapon Systems Technician (WST) to operate the Target Acquisition systems and to perform the duties of a Forward Observer for artillery call for firing.

The combination of the paired Gauss Rifles' Target Acquisition Gear (TAG), the StarLink/Benicia Model communications system, and the Targa-7 Targeting and Tracking System (TTS) amply met this requirement.

With the collapse of the Star League government in 2781 and General Kerensky's subsequent exodus with all of the existing Ventilators in service, the BattleMech's true worth was never realized. The final production run, or the number of surviving Ventilators is not known, as only this one has been uncovered. The serial number of this existing model is XX328.

Capabilities

The secret to the Ventilator is the Pitban 320 XL power plant, which allows sufficient engine weight savings to mount the paired Gauss Rifles and provide it with a maximum speed of 65 kph.

The on-board system and weapons are controlled by the pilot (seated in the forward cockpit with the WST behind and slightly above him in the aft cockpit) while the WST monitors communications, targets high-priority artillery missions, and provides corrections on fire missions. In addition, the TAG and the medium lasers are controllable by the WST in order to free the Pilot to maneuver

in order to avoid close-in threats. The WST can thus designate separate targets without penalty, which BattleTechnology predicts will be a positive aid when it comes up against Clans 'Mechs. All emergency overrides and safety features are duplicated at both stations, although the WST lacks the full cockpit configuration, prohibiting the WST from piloting the 'Mech.

The massive amount (15.5 tons) of Endosteel armor, combined with a pair of K-7 Gauss Rifles, gives the Ventilator a very high survivability ratio, allowing the 'Mechs to withstand extremely heavy damage from either ground or air attacks.

Opposing MechWarriors usually close with the Ventilator believing it to be a standard Warhammer, at least until the gauss rifles start blasting away armor long before the PPCs are in range. Then the spinning TTS antenna confirms their suspicions as to its identity. Infantry attacking the 'Mech are equally dismayed by the four medium lasers which provide the Ventilator with such deadly close-in firepower. As to air attacks, the gauss damage potential linked with the TTS against air targets has left many aircraft commanders without an aircraft to command.

Finally, the Ventilator carries the StarLink/Benicia Model AS829G communications system, which allows the WST to monitor and disseminate intelligence data throughout the battle area, to designate targets directly with the TAG systems or indirectly by datalink to conventional artillery units, acting as the forward observer for corrections to the fire plan. This capability provides an awesome amount of firepower to be concentrated on a designated target, making the Ventilator an asset to any unit's TO&E.

Battle History

Although the Ventilator had a traumatic initial engagement, it has proven its worth in combat.

Once research was completed, the Ventilator was assigned to the Knights of Thunder for a combat evaluation under 'controlled circumstances'. The site selected was the planet Satalice, with the Ventilator leading a lance consisting of a Crusader, a Catapult, and a Warhammer. A battalion-sized objective raid was selected in order to provide the NAIS with adequate feedback on performance without raising too much interest or response from the Draconis Combine. It was also believed that a battalion would provide adequate security should the 'Mech be damaged sufficiently to require evacuation. The NAIS also insisted that the

pilot commanding the 'Mech be selected by them (or by the NAIS-Davion Liason Officer with the Knights of Thunder). Once the details were worked out the drop was made without incident. All units advanced toward the objective, meeting only light resistance.

It was during the advance that the Ventilator's lance found itself facing several companies of the 2nd Battalion of the 9th Rasalhague Regulars, which was defending an ammunition and reloading depot. Believing the opposition to be easy targets, the Regulars attacked with three lances in a staggered line formation using Dragons and Trebuchets.

Major Walter Crowel, the Davion Liason Officer, of the Davion Light Guards commanded the lance as he piloted the Ventilator in this initial baptism of fire. Realizing his exposed position on the left flank would not provide for immediate reinforcements, he opted for surprise, ordering his lance to hold its fire until maximum PPC range was reached. He designated the Trebuchets as initial priority targets, hoping to reduce the LRM advantage. Meanwhile, Sergeant Fawkner (the WST) attempted to call in either an air strike or artillery support.

When the lance commenced fire, his targeted Trebuchet received a hit in its right torso, stripping away what remained of its armor, and detonating the LRM ammunition stored there. The 'Mech was destroyed.

The Major next concentrated on one of the Dragons providing fire support to the Trebuchets. After several hits he managed to destroy the 'Mech's head with a Gauss Rifle hit. Two kills, with only light damage to his armor! Now here was a BattleMech worth piloting. He named the 'Mech *Belial* at that point, remembering the old Terran stories of the Hebrew prophecy.

By now, of course, the Kuritans had identified the threat and concentrated their fire on the Ventilator. In response, the Major ordered the lance to close into medium laser range, hoping to negate the concentration of LRM and AC/5 fire from the remaining Dragons by remaining inside their minimum ranges. With the Catapult providing fire support against the remaining Trebuchet, the other three 'Mechs closed on eight Dragons.

When the smoke cleared, six of the Dragons had been destroyed and the other two heavily damaged, both 'Mechs beating a hasty retreat. As the Davion lance pursued them, another lance of Dragons appeared and started to do consistent damage to the Major's lance; disabling the Crusader (leg actuator destroyed) and the Warhammer (gyro destroyed), but losing another Dragon in the process.

It was during this final assault the WST succeeded in getting an air lance to provide close support while *Belial* withdrew with heavy damage to its head and center torso. Almost simultaneously, two additional lances from the Knights of Thunder arrived, ensuring the successful completion of the mission.

The senior surviving officer of the 9th Rasalhague Regular later sent a personal messenger to acknowledge the bravery demonstrated by the lance. He asked for the commander's name so that he would be properly identified in the Kurita report.

Although successfully withdrawn, *Belial* had received several LRM hits to the head area, eliminating all external armor, but not sustaining any critical damage to the cockpit area itself. Unfortunately, the same could not be said for the Major, who later died of

critical wounds received during the engagement. The WST, severely wounded as well, survived the engagement and was able to augment the telemetry provided by the 'Mech with important technical feedback.

VNT-1A Ventilator

Chassis: GeoMetric 530 Hard Core

Power Plant: Pitban 320 XL

Cruising Speed:

Maximum Speed:

Jump Jets: None

Jump Capacity: None

Armor: Mitchell Argon Ferro-Fibrous

Armament:

2 M-7 Gauss Rifles

4 Sorenstein Medium Lasers

1 Target Acquisition Gear (TAG)

Manufacturer: Star Corp Industries

Targeting and Tracking System: Targa-7 / Vid-Com 17

Type:		Tonnage
VNT-1A Ventilator		80.0
Internal Structure:		4.0
Engine: Pitban 320		11.0
Walking MPs:	4	
Running MPs:	6	
Jumping MPs:	0	
Heat Sinks :	10	0.0
Gyro:		4.0
Cockpit: (Dual Cockpit)		6.0
Armor Factor:	247	15.5
Location:	Internal	Armor
	Structure:	Value
Head	3	9
Center Torso:	25	40 / 10
Rt/Lt Torso:	17	30 / 4
Rt/Lt Arm:	13	26
Rt/Lt Leg:	17	34

Weapons and Ammo:

	Location	Critical	
Gauss Rifle	LA	7	15.0
Gauss Rifle	RA	7	15.0
Ammo (Gauss) - 16	LA	2	2.0
Ammo (Gauss) - 16	RA	2	2.0
Medium Laser (2)	RT	2	2.0
Medium Laser (2)	LT	2	2.0
TAG	CT	1	1.0

Technical Readout

CNT-9 Centurion Maximus

Overview

Jedediah Reavre, part-time asteroid miner and full-time bandit made his home on Butte hold. When the Clans came he and his old *Centurion* were sent back into service for Redjack Ryan. Despite terrible odds, Reavre was personally responsible for the destruction of two Stars of Clan Mechs, and an aerofighter. Because of this he was taken with Ryan when he escaped Butte Hold and came to the Inner Sphere, trading amnesty with Davion for the extensive information (including technical readouts) in his Mech's computer. In gratefulness Intelligence Secretary Justin Allard offered any one request to Reavre. He chose to refit his Mech.

Having seen the Clans in action, Jed knew exactly what he wanted. But he realized it would take planning, and to this end he recruited Karl Radlar, son of the man who designed the *Zeus* BattleMech. Karl was every bit his father's son, and soon he was hard at work poring over diagrams and specifications put together by Reavre.

Radlar began by recognizing that he needed at least 20 more tons to fit all the extra equipment in. In order to take advantage of the Wesley 300 XL being produced for the MAD-5D *Marauder*, he made it 25. He therefore literally ripped the machine apart and put it back together. When he was finished it stood about 3 meters taller than before and had added several meters to its chestline. Reavre's approval was wholehearted.

They then supervised the replacing of the old Luxor-D AutoCannon with a Poland Main Model A Gauss Cannon, which was so modified to fit by Radlar that it became an entirely new class: the Main Model B. The old Photech lasers were removed and replaced by four of the new Magna Pulse Lasers. The LRM system had been replaced by a Devastator Class rescued from a scrapped *Valkyrie*, and the designers saw no reason to change it, though it had been slightly squished into place by its owner. Later an

Artemis IV blister was added to increase hit potential and make up missing weight. CASE was added to protect the reloads and the volatile charger core of the Gauss Rifle. Finally armor was almost doubled in the chest and legs.

Capabilities

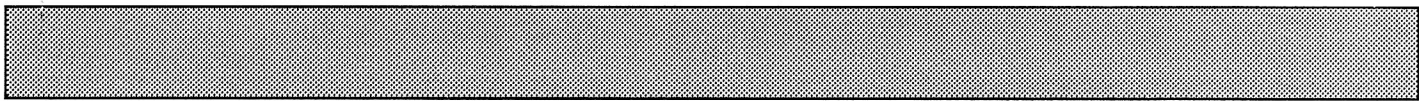
The *Centurion Maximus*, as it is called, has a medium-high damage curve at long ranges which quickly increases as distance lowers. All weapons function normally, with no known malfunction caused by the extensive modifications inflicted on them. The Mech's speed is average for its weight, adequate to expectations for its weight class. The place where the *Centurion Maximus* excels is in protection. It carries more armor than many assault Mechs, and ammunition is kept to a minimum, which along with the Cellular Ammunition Storage Equipment drastically lowers worries about ammunition detonation. In close combat, the 'Max' is also a decent Mech. The chest-mounted laser can fire even as a debilitating kick or punch is launched.

The CN-9-MAX can sometimes incapacitate a small foe at long ranges. However, ammunition is usually conserved for larger foes, leaving the lasers to deal with lighter ones. The Gauss rifle, even with two tons of projectiles, can only fire 16 times before ammunition must be replenished, and missiles even less. Because of this, a zealous pilot may run out of ammo and be picked apart by foes armed with longer ranged weapons than his pulse lasers.

Battle History

The *Centurion Maximus* has seen only minimal fighting since its creation, mostly test runs. However, due to his excellent knowledge of Clan Mechs and tactics, Jedediah Reavre, along with his Mech, was attached to the Tenth Lyran Guard under a certain Kommandant Davion for battlefield testing.

In the battle Reavre had 1 confirmed Clan kill, and and



Mass: 75 Tons
 Chassis: Reinforced Corean Model KL 77
 Power Plant: Wesley 300 XL
 Cruising Speed: 42.3 kph
 Maximum Speed: 63.7 kph
 Jump Jets: None
 Jump Capacity: None
 Armor: Durallex Special Heavy with CASE
 Armament: 1 Poland Main Model B Gauss Cannon
 1 Devastator Series-09 LRM-10
 4 Magna 400P Medium Pulse Lasers
 Manufacturer: Corean Enterprises, Jalastar Aerospace
 (Special Modification by Jedediah Reavre)
 Communicaton System: CommuTech Multi-Channel 10
 (Salvaged)
 Targeting/Tracking System: Federated Hunter
 (Salvaged)

unknown number of assists. 3 Clan light Mechs were known to have been damaged severely from single barrages from the Gauss Cannon and LRM. During the chaotic melee which ensued when a group cut off the Archon-Prince, heat did not appear to be a problem. At one point the *Centurion* rushed a Star of *Ryokens*, madly firing his lasers and missiles. He actually ran two of them over, and gave chase to the others, all with no appreciable rise in heat.

It should be noted that the Gauss Rifle was used to destroy the cockpits of six Mechs while they were on the ground, a tactic similar to one used by the pilot during his guerrilla campaign on Butte Hold. It is possible that this is a manifestation of the feeling of invulnerability imparted by a large gun. The pilot was in fact heedlessly reckless during most of the action, but as it worked, we won't knock it.

Variants

Despite the obvious intelligence of the designers, no variants for the *Centurion Maximus* have been created yet.

Notable Mechs and Pilots

Jedediah Reavre and *Diamonds and Rust*

The creator and owner of the most top-secret *Centurion* in the Inner Sphere (after *Yen-lo-Wang*, of course) is a genius, no mistake. But he is an unusual one. Nobody would guess by looking at the grizzled ex-Bandit that he possesses possibly more knowledge about the Clans than they do themselves. It is this disarming hick-ness, and his rather outdated drawl which causes people to underestimate him so much. A brilliant tactician with no mind for strategy, he is best set loose in an enemy formation and then left alone until he comes back smiling.

CN-9-MAX Centurion Maximus

Type:		Tonnage
CN-9-MAX Centurion Maximus		75.0
Internal Structure:		7.5
Engine:	300 XL	9.5
Walking MPs:	4	
Running MPs:	6	
Jumping MPs:	0	
Heat Sinks :	14	4.0
Gyro:		3.0
Cockpit:		3.0
Armor Factor:	240	15.0
Location:	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	9
Center Torso:	23	37/12
Rt/Lt Torso:	16	25/9
Rt/Lt Arm:	12	24
Rt/Lt Leg:	16	32

Weapons and Ammo:

	Location	Critical	Tonnage
Gauss Rifle	RA	7	15.0
Ammo (Gauss) 16	RA	2	2.0
CASE	RT	1	0.5
Med Pulse Laser	CT	1	2.0
Med Pulse Laser	CT (R)	1	2.0
Med Pulse Laser	LA	1	2.0
Med Pulse Laser	LA	1	2.0
LRM 10	LT	2	5.0
Artemis IV	LT	1	1.0
Ammo (LRM) 12	LT	1	1.0
CASE	LT	1	0.5

Test Your Inner Sphere Trivia

Ever since 3047, the Inner Sphere has seen a comeback in games that are played on a 'board that is either laid flat on a table or the floor. Games of this type have not had this sort of popularity since way, way back in the 20th Century.

So we here at BattleTechnology thought we'd give you a preview of some of the questions from the next edition of probably the hottest 'board' game in known space, *Trivial Quest*, so you can test your knowledge.

These questions are divided up into two parts. The first part, *Common Knowledge*, contains the easy question, questions only a Bandit King couldn't answer.

The second part, *Experts Only*, asks the tougher questions. Even the great Thelos Auburn might have had trouble with these. Good Luck!

Common Knowledge

- 1) Name the Star League general who left the Inner Sphere with three-fourths of the Star League Defense Forces.
- 2) What hand is the Steiner Mailed Fist?
- 3) What Periphery Realm is famous for its pleasure circuses?
- 4) How many BattleMechs are in a standard company?
- 5) What famous mercenary regiment arrived in the Inner Sphere in 3005?
- 6) What planet is the capital of the Federated Suns?
- 7) What Successor State is famous for its Warrior Houses?
- 8) What great event began in 3028 and ended in 3030?
- 9) Who was the founder of ComStar?
- 10) What is the name of the man who killed First Lord Richard Cameron and caused the downfall of the Star League?

Are you warmed up? Okay, here comes:

Experts Only

- 1) Name the date and the year of Kerensky's Exodus.
- 2) Who was the first MechWarrior?
- 3) Who was Chancellor of the Capellan Confederation during the Amaris Crisis?
- 4) Name the wife of First Lord Ian Cameron.
- 5) Give the date and year that the five Council Lords dissolved the High Council of the Star League.
- 6) True or False: Lyran commandos stole the plans of the BattleMech from the Terran Hegemony.
- 7) Which direction does the Free Worlds Eagle look?

- 8) Who issued the peace proposal of 3020?
- 9) Who is the head of the ISF?
- 10) How many children have Theodore and Tomoe Kurita?
- 11) Who assumed the Captain-Generalcy after Janos Marik died?
- 12) At what age did Urizen Kurita retire from the position of Coordinator of the Draconis Combine?
- 13) Name the Periphery area that is a private hold to the Inheritor philosophic movement.
- 14) What mercenary unit defends the Terran system?
- 15) On the ComStar clock, between which numbers is New Avalon located?
- 16) On the ComStar clock, which numbers is Tharkad between?
- 17) What corporation is the backbone of House Steiner's defense industry?
- 18) What year did Sian become the capital of the Capellan Confederation?
- 19) What was the highest award a person could receive from the Star League?
- 20) What year was the BattleMech created?

Well, how did you do? If you got over half of them correct, consider yourself pretty fluent in Inner Sphere history. If you got twenty or more right, stop watching the education holovids, and catch a few more episodes of the Immortal Warrior. If you got all the questions correct, then you probably should get out more.

The new edition of *Trivial Quest* should be available to most planets in the Inner Sphere within the next few months. It could be longer for certain areas of the Periphery and the Capellan Confederation.

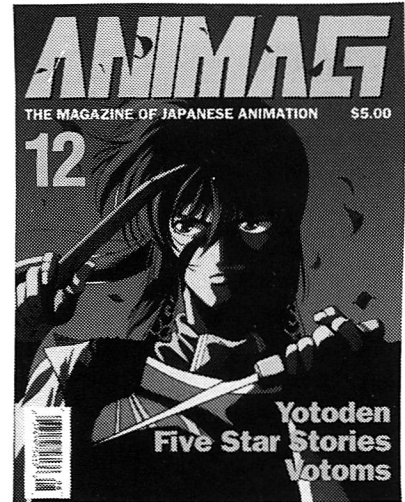
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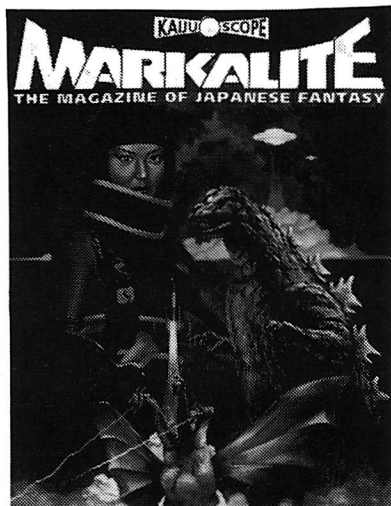
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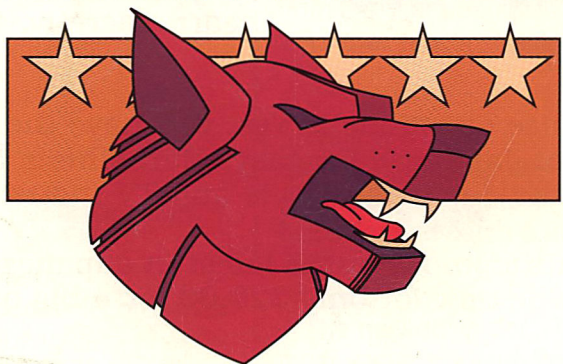
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