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THE PERIPHERY

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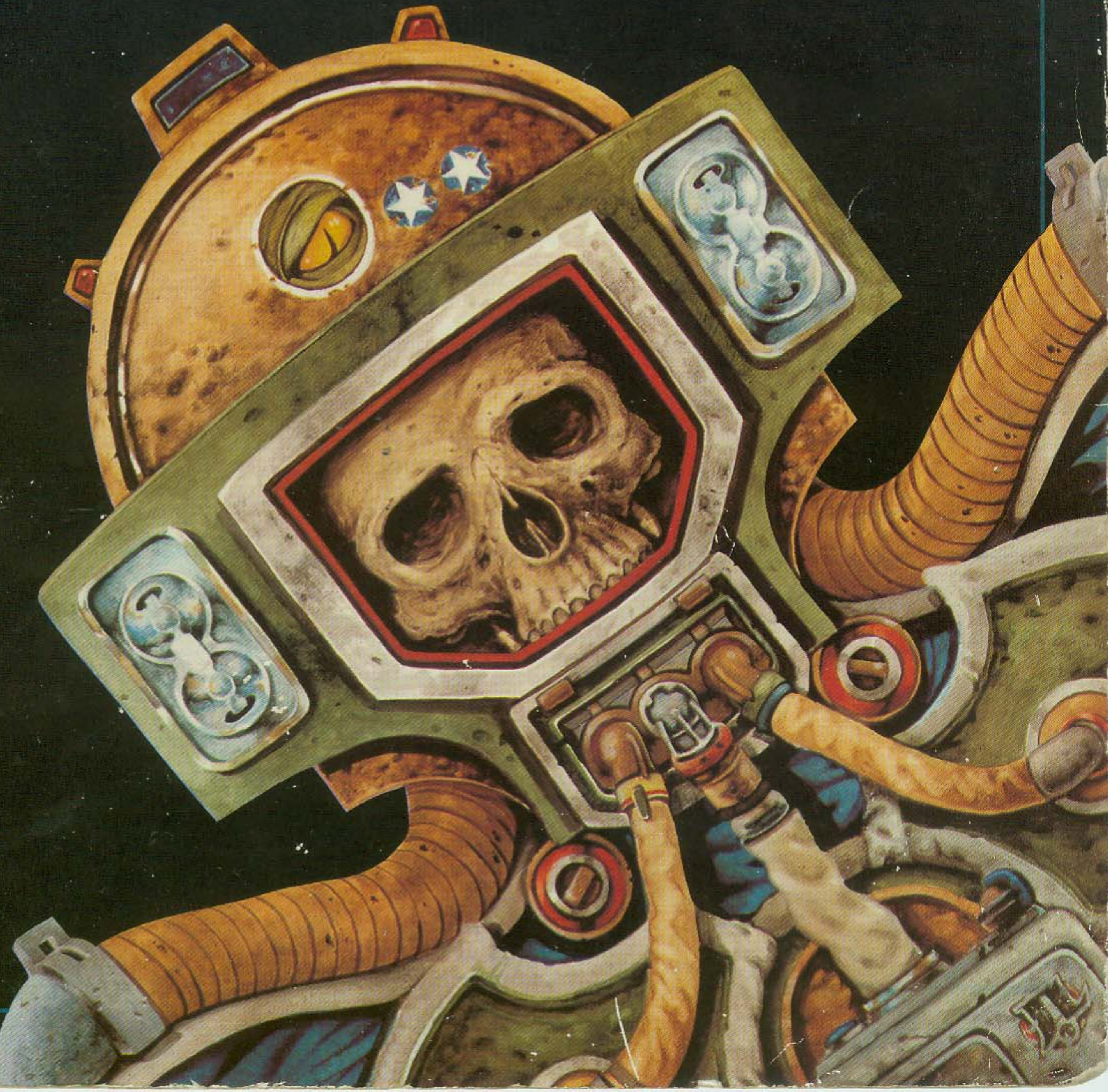

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In preparation for its assault on the Magistracy of Canopus, the Star League assembled its Seventh Corps, consisting of 30-odd regiments backed by twelve regiments of Marik regulars. Overall command of the campaign fell to Captain-General Marion Marik. In June 2577, the Marik dispersed the Canopian naval elements around Gouderak and secured the planet. Following this was an assault on the provincial trading center of Umka, whose numerous island chains required a series of search-and-destroy missions that lasted from August to the end of October.

The Canopian defense forces were kept so highly mobile, in fact, that the entire campaign became a protracted shell game. The more the Terran forces searched for the Canopian navy, the more adept the Canopians became at both evasion and hit-and-run tactics. The special contingencies of interstellar warfare, particularly the impossibility of thorough reconnaissance, prevented the League from making effective strategic decisions, or even being able to make good guesses on how strong a force was needed to take an objective. On Restitution, for example, the League amassed a vast aerospace force to take a single planet-wide information and broadcasting center that was supposed to be heavily defended, only to find that the planetary garrison had been lifted offworld a week earlier to reinforce the defenders of nearby Cranston. On this world, the invasionary force ran into a buzzsaw when the native ground forces proved stronger than expected and the Restitution aerospace forces arrived overhead. This became the course of most of the engagements of the war, as some worlds fell easily and others proved virtually impregnable.

The turning point came during the invasion of the major world of Hardcore, where Star League forces won an easy victory over a skeleton defense force. At this juncture, the Canopian navy, hitherto scattered throughout the interior of the Magistracy, concentrated for a stinging riposte. Catching the Terran 14th Special Task Force napping off the asteroid shoals of Vakarel in November 2577, the Canopians destroyed five JumpShips and an escort, eliminating two battalions of the Star League 25th Chasseurs. Losing so many men and ships without damaging a single Magistracy ship forced Marion Marik to reconsider her plan of attack.

A NIGHT IN DANDAVELLA

I am not exactly a member of Kurita's Order of Five Pillars but, bless my soul, I was not prepared for what I found at the Palais Royale of Dandavella. Imagine a recreation complex the size of an entire city and with as many functionaries as a local government, all devoted only to maintaining a city-wide party that lasts 24 hours per standard day. You could easily get lost inside Dandavella—I did within the first five minutes—but what a hell of a fine time I had trying (not too hard) to get out.

In the Danton quarter, I found a reenactment of an ancient gladiatorial game. Sword and trident-armed warriors were pitted against all manner of beasts—over a hundred in all—all hacking and flaying about while thousands of drunken citizens from a score of Inner Sphere planets cheered them on.

In the cabaret of Gomorrah Prime, I saw things that you only hear about in stories—you know, the kind you buy in black paper bags in the Illuso part of town. By the way, if you ever go to the Gomorrah cabaret, stay awake long enough to see Kristina and Her Pet Python. The things that snake does will redefine your concept of reality forever. Stay away from the Canopian glow-weed, though. You'll enjoy it well enough, but in the morning, you'll have a hard time remembering your name.

Over at Mercedes Falls, you can find mermaids—real, live, biologically engineered half-Human/half-fish people. If you're wondering whether it's possible for mermaids to mate with normal folk, the answer is yes. Sometime when the little woman isn't around, I'll tell you how it's done.

And if you think that's something, wait until you see the Centaur Chorus Line down at Minsky's on Raventhir Boulevard—not to mention the audience participation Happy Hour after each performance.

Don't be alarmed if you see some stuffy, green-clad Capellan with a girl over his shoulder or a Lyran priestess walking about in nothing more than her ceremonial medallions. In Dandavella, there are no Capellans, Lyrans, Davions, Mariks, or Kuritans—just people discovering a million ways to be themselves, whatever that happens to be at the moment.

It's paradise, my friend, paradise.

—Justin Gondonari, from a letter to Kodo Pombleton, *Canopus Correspondence,* Adult Attitudes Press, Canopus, 2547

OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

You might be impressed by the super-abundance of loose wine, loose women, loose morals, and all the rest, but I was not. For all the "redeeming social value" that Dandavella may have, there is another side to this garish, gaudy world of sin, though few care to report on it.

The one thing I noticed above all in this den of iniquity was the presence of beggars—men, women, and children, young and old, sick and well—pleading for coins. The beggars often rob other beggars, the strong and the sound of limb preying on the weak, the lame, and the blind.

Next to the glass-enclosed, gold-rimmed entrances to the Fondame Entertainment Concourse is a rarely used stairwell. If you have the nerve to investigate, this stairwell will lead you to a subterranean chamber hundreds of meters long. There are all manner of Human flotsam and jetsam here—the rejects, the sick and the dying—pitiful bundles of Humanity who live out their days on rat pie and dog stew. Thousands of them, many of whom have not seen the light of day in years.

They do not expect help from the local constabulary. The Dandavella militia is too busy with its own pursuits, which consist mostly of harassing travellers for bribes. And that is not all they will demand of a person before they let him pass freely. I can still feel the touch of hands running up and down my trouser legs.

—From *A Report on the Depths of Human Depravity,* by Reverend Josiah MacKermit, unpublished manuscript, ComStar Archives, 2557

BUQUOY'S PLOY

Although the victory off Vakarel boosted Canopian morale, the war would soon have been over for them had it not been for the action of Colonel Adam Buquoy. Buquoy was a die-hard military man, one of several professional soldiers that the Magestrix had hired to lead her troops. Ever since the broadcast of the Pollux Proclamation, Buquoy had spent his time planning and preparing contingencies for the day when he would have to face the might of the Star League military machine. Noting the League's dependence on high-tech equipment and the Marik's long supply lines, Buquoy decided to launch a surprise attack against the supply nexus on Meadowvale.

Using the Canopian navy to slip behind the Star League lines, Buquoy attacked Meadowvale in the early morning of January 9, 2578. Assaulting the supply depot was Buquoy's own Bandits, supported by the mercenary regiments of Samuelson's Slaughterers, Kincani's Dragoons, and Miselsen's Marauders—nine battalions of BattleMechs and infantry in all. Though well conceived, Buquoy's mission failed to achieve surprise, for the crew at Meadowvale's Jump Point managed to alert the planet's garrison before being overwhelmed by Buquoy's force.

His presence compromised, Buquoy determined to press home the attack anyway. Finding the 15th Terran Armored Division opposing his landings and threatened by approaching BattleMech reinforcements, he dispersed his units to strike at neighboring supply depots. Buquoy's Bandits waged a desperate five-hour holding action until the other mercenary units reported that the depots had been destroyed. Then, the mercenaries (minus most of Buquoy's Bandits) retreated offworld.

The surprise attack on Meadowvale altered the shape of the Marik's campaign. After six months of constructing new supply and operation bases in regular intervals along her supply line, Marion Marik resumed the offensive in late 2578. For the next two years, the Star League offensive ground inexorably forward.

In the summer of 2583, the Marik deliberately left open her left flank to counter raids by the small but effective Canopian navy, which permitted the Canopians to strike a blow at the supply center on Thurrock. Anticipating another Meadowvale, the Canopian forces were themselves surprised by Star League battle squadrons waiting for just such an attack. In the two-day battle over the Canopian AeroSpace Fighter bases among the outer planets of the Thurrock system, the Canopian navy was all but destroyed. With this victory, Marion Marik advanced toward Canopus IV.

Canopus IV was formally invaded in March 2584. After a month of heavy fighting and heavy casualties, the Canopian commander surrendered. The Marik dispatched her son, General Ian Marik, to take control of the capital of Canopus IV. Even with the fall of that world, however, the war continued for four more years, as the Marik went on to take the remaining worlds of the Magistracy.

Following the capture of the last Canopian world, the Star League High Council appointed Melissa Humphreys as military governor of the Magistracy of Canopus. At Humphreys's urging, the Star League undertook an economic revival program to aid the shattered Canopian economy. Governor Humphreys's "good-neighbor policies" were so successful that all occupation forces in Magistracy territory were withdrawn 16 years later.

A PLEASANT DIVERSION

My platoon's mission was simple enough: occupy the metroplex of Haldaine until relieved by reinforcements. As the last of the enemy BattleMechs had been clobbered the week before, it seemed pretty easy. After all, what could we fear from a bunch of fun-loving, drunken civilians?

Nearing the outskirts of the city, we found ourselves confronted by a troop of 20 beauties from the Borishonik Ballet Company, all of whom were rather scantily clad for the time of year. Not knowing what to expect, I deployed my people in a line and awaited events. No sooner were we positioned but the assembled lovelies, accompanied by a raucous fanfare, stripped completely and began to gyrate suggestively, which left us—myself included—with our mouths watering. I ordered Private Carlyle to fire a warning shot over their heads, but by then, my men were lost somewhere in the crowd of writhing bodies. Then, the troop of women departed with my men without a shot being fired. It wasn't my fault, I swear it wasn't!

—From Court-Martial Proceedings of Lieutenant Carmen Reiker, 17th Terran Brigade, ComStar Archives, 2581

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SERIOUS BUSINESS

"Magistrix Crystalla Centrella, you are now my prisoner..."

"Given your reputation, my Lord, I'm looking forward to it."

"Your planet is, at this very moment, occupied by four elite BattleMech regiments."

"Things have been a little dull around here lately."

"All your Magistracy government offices are hereby closed. All your government's functions will hereafter be directed from my command post here."

"Good, you can deal with the actor's guild rep in the morning."

"And I intend to establish my headquarters in these apartments."

"Seems we're going to be seeing a lot of each other from now on."

"As the new military governor of Canopus IV, I expect you to obey my commands without question."

"Coffee, tea, or me, governor?"

—Conversation between Magestrix Crystalla Centrella and General Ian Marik, reported by Lasanna La Rue, lady-in-waiting to the Magestrix, 2596. ComStar Archives

CONQUEST OF THE RIM WORLDS REPUBLIC

Gregory Amaris, Lord of the Rim Worlds Republic, thought that the worst was over when the furor over his Universal Act of Loyalty had died down. Having secured his position with Ian Cameron, Amaris passed a series of tax measures to rejuvenate the Rim Republic's economy by introducing new technology and production centers, albeit at heavy cost to the individual citizen. Through these policies, Amaris hoped to cement his position in the Periphery, with an eye toward financing a state capable of challenging the Great Houses of the Inner Sphere. The average citizen might have shouldered the burden of taxation with little complaint, were it not for Amaris's stupidity in implementing his economic vision.

Through a variety of economic inducements, Amaris attracted a flood of technicians and industrialists into the Republic to fill high-paying jobs that could have gone just as easily to Republicans. In addition, wherever a particular site for a new production or research facility was needed, Amaris used his interpretation of eminent domain to "acquire" the needed property, with little or no compensation to the owner.

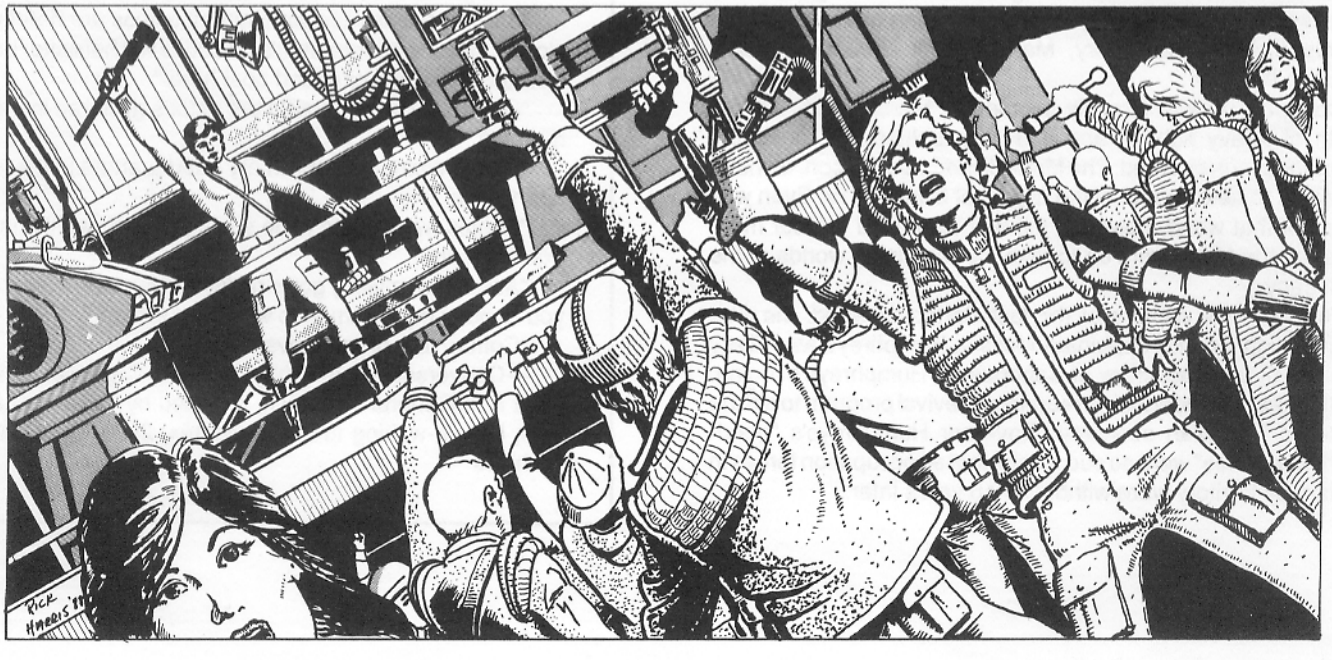
After continually alienating his citizens in these ways, Amaris made his most colossal blunder. Knowing he must pay lip service to the Star League, he supported Ian Cameron's Pollux Proclamation wholeheartedly, for it was too soon for him to take on the mighty League. Amaris was, nevertheless, determined to use the declaration to his own advantage. Simultaneously with his public support of the Proclamation, he announced the Manchester Directive, which outlawed membership in the Rift Republican Army. This group, which had been reduced to an honorary society of ex-soldiers and descendants of soldiers, was the last link to the Rim Worlds Republic of the days before the accession of House Amaris. Ironically, it was the Manchester Directive, even more than the Pollux Proclamation, that drove the Republicans to rebel. Most citizens saw membership in the RRA as a point of honor from one generation to the next. Moreover, the indiscriminate use of Amaris regulars to seize suspected RRA meeting halls and to arrest, without due process of law, anyone suspected of belonging to the RRA convinced the Republicans to ignore Cameron's and Amaris's edicts.

In April 2575, a workers' strike in the Diplass 'Mech production facility on Apollo prompted Amaris to call in a platoon of the Fourth Amaris Dragoons to put down the insurgents. Unknown to him, the majority of the strikers were RRA members hoping to fan the flames of discontent. When the strikers refused to disperse, the Dragoons entered the complex in an attempt to seize the demonstrators. A wild outbreak of fistfights followed, and the Dragoons were overwhelmed by groups of bystanders. In less than an hour, the demonstrators had managed to overpower the Amaris regulars—none of whom had expected such an intense display of violence—and declared the establishment of a new government, with the 'Mech plant as their base of operations.

When word of the plant seizure reached Amaris, he reacted in characteristic cold-blooded fashion, calling out his entire 'Mech contingent and placing the whole planet under martial law. The would-be rebellion might well have ended then and there were it not for Colonel Katherine Dormax. After receiving orders to fire on her fellow citizens, Colonel Dormax, commander of the Seventh Amaris Legionnaires, placed herself at the disposal of the provisional government. Dormax's impassioned speech to the Eighth Amaris Fusiliers roused their patriotic spirit and committed them to the cause, too.

In the hours after capture of the plant, the provisional government bolstered its position. Having recruited the troops sent to disperse them, the new RRA quickly seized control of the capital's starport and broadcast stations. With news that a new provisional government had been formed, other dissident groups poured into the streets, with barricades and blockades thrown up to inhibit the deployment of additional BattleMechs in the crowded streets of the capital.

Within hours, similar groups of rebels, hastily armed with hunting rifles, clubs, and stones, attacked and occupied communications and control centers throughout Apollo's entire northern continent. At that point, the provisional government broadcast its demands for a total surrender of all "offworld" military forces within the Rim Worlds. Meanwhile, Gregory Amaris had withdrawn his remaining loyal forces to guard his private residence and dispatched a courier ship to Terra to seek aid from his Star League masters.



OPERATION MAILED FIST

The Star League response was slow in coming. Trouble had flared in other regions of the Periphery, and none of the Periphery governments had agreed to the articles of the Pollux Proclamation. With more important fish to fry in the Taurian Concordat and the Magistracy of Canopus, the Star League did not organize a campaign against the Rim Worlds until 2581.

In the summer of that year, Operation Mailed Fist began. Eighteen Star League regiments (some drawn from the Taurian Concordat frontier against General Wexworth's anguished protests), six regiments from the Free Worlds League, and three regiments from the Lyran Commonwealth stood poised to strike at the heart of the Rim Worlds where Gregory Amaris awaited rescue from his "docile subjects." Star League strategists agreed, over-optimistically, on a five-year campaign.

That the advance fell far short of its mark is due to a number of causes. Though short on BattleMechs and trained MechWarriors, the Rim Provisional Government did have an abundance of wheeled, tracked, and hover tanks, the traditional arm of the Republican military. In addition, what the Rim forces lacked in experience, they made up for in numbers. Though often poorly armed, the Republicans were determined to see their homes free, once and for all. Patriotism lent these ragged irregulars a depth of endurance and stamina under fire that would come as a shock to the more professional solders of the Inner Sphere.

As the war progressed, Coordinator Hehiro Kurita sent Draconis Combine troops into the Rim Worlds fray. Public sentiment against the "Inner Sphere Devils" ran even higher when, predictably enough, word reached Apollo of atrocities that the Kurita soldiers had committed against partisan groups.

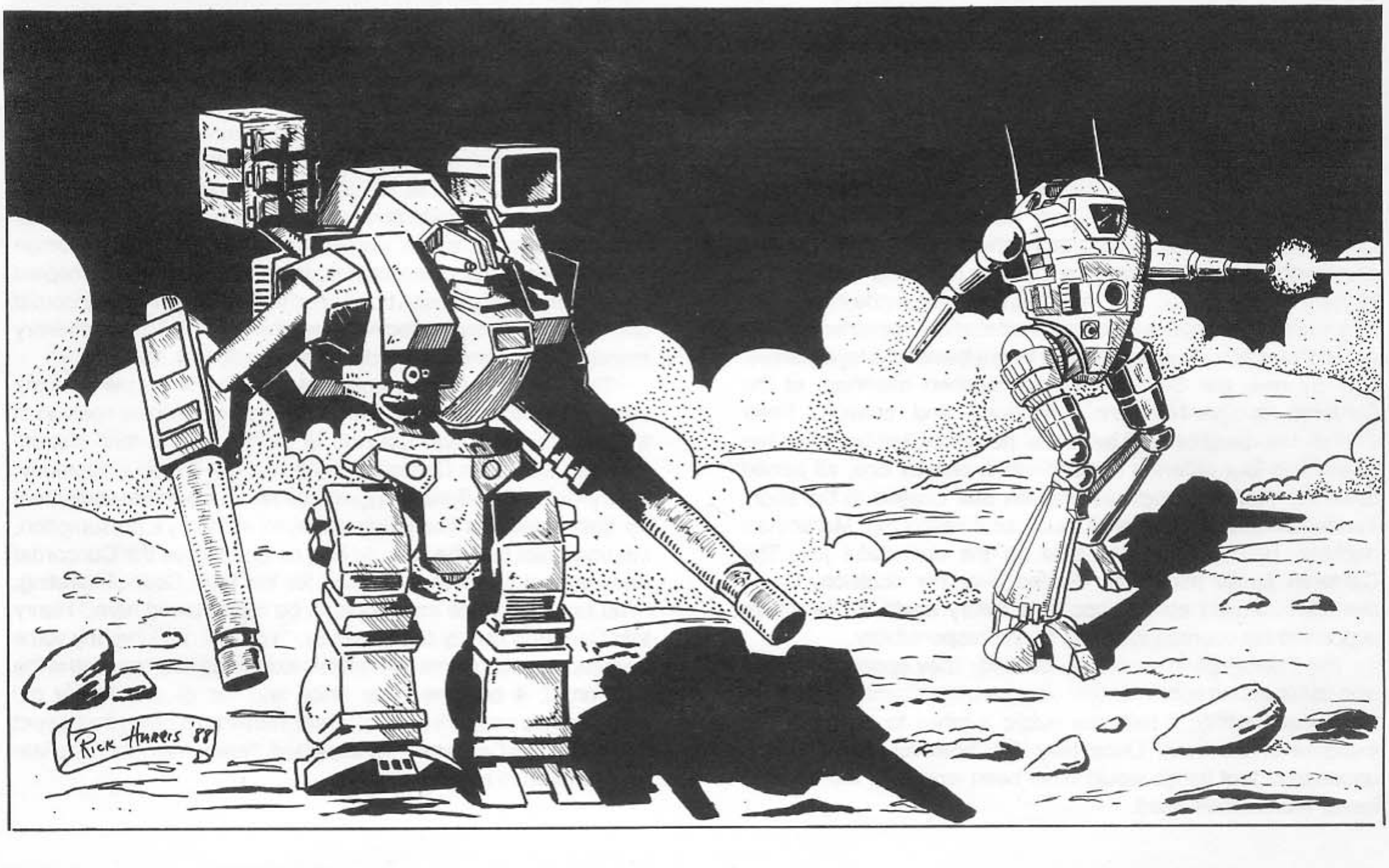
Seeing the brutality of the enemy only fanned the savage determination of the rebel armies. Not surprisingly, the Star League's original five-year plan for the conquest of the Rim Worlds developed into a ten-year plan, and then became a 15-year plan. Eight years into the war, only a third of the Rim Republic worlds had fallen to the invaders.

On March 21, 2595, the Lyran Commonwealth's Fourth Royal Guard landed on Apollo. Well aware of how war-weary were her troops, Archon Viola Steiner-Dineson, commander of the 45th, conceived a bold plan that would, if successful, end the war quickly. Using two companies as bait, the Archon hoped to entice the rebels into drawing their forces away from the capital. Then, at the first sign of weakness in the enemy line, the remainder of the unit would launch an all-out attack on that weak point. With the added reinforcements of the Amaris garrison, the Archon hoped to crush the rebel government.

Under other circumstances, the plan might have succeeded, but a communications glitch kept the Archon's reserves from striking at the critical moment. Caught between three BattleMech regiments, Archon Viola Steiner-Dineson was mortally wounded when her two companies were all but overrun by rebel *Warhammer*s and *Ostsol*s.

The near destruction of the Fourth Royal Guards and the death of the Lyran Archon a month later was the last victory for the Rim Worlds rebels. It would take another bloody year before the League armies had hunted down the last band of rebel 'Mechs, but the outcome of the war for the Rim was a foregone conclusion.

In September 2596, the representatives of the Rim Provisional Government surrendered unconditionally to officers of the Star League military. With the rebellion over and his government secured, Gregory Amaris began to reestablish his power base in the Rim.



TERRITORIAL STATUS

"GOOD NEIGHBOR" POLICY

Following the capture of the last Canopian world, the Star League Council appointed Melissa Humphreys as military governor of the Magistracy of Canopus. At Humphreys' urging, the Star League undertook an economic revival program to aid the shattered Canopian economy. Specifically, Governor Humphreys persuaded business interests in the Free Worlds League to make massive investments in Canopian industry, which greatly expanded and diversified the Canopian economic base. Although the bitterness of war is never easily forgotten, Marion Marik's strict adherence to the Ares Conventions meant that the Canopians felt less resentment toward the Star League than in the other Periphery states. Moreover, Melissa Humphreys's "good-neighbor policies"—and the economic miracle they helped effect—were so successful that all occupation forces in Magistracy territory were withdrawn 16 years later.

Despite a minor resistance movement, smaller in both size and vehemence than similar movements in the other Periphery states, there were fewer incidents of violence between garrison troops and locals in the Magistracy than anywhere else. Indeed, many garrison troops found Canopian society so amenable that they settled there after military service. The last of the Star League troops left Canopian space and home rule was restored in 2604.

Crystalla Centrella, the last Canopian Magistrix, who had been retired during the 16 years of Star League occupation, believed that, at age 68, she was too old to take up the reins of power again. By popular acclaim, her daughter, Rinalla, was swept into office. She pledged immediately to continue Melissa Humphreys's economic policies, which had stimulated the recovery that had been the top priority of her rule. Upon being installed as a Star League High Council member, Rinalla also pledged troops to the Star League's forces out of proportion to the reduced size of the Magistracy, in order to build up her own matching House forces.

TAURIAN BOOTSTRAPS

Matters did not go so smoothly in the Taurian Concordat, where Marantha Calderon's suicide created a succession crisis. Rather than appointing a military governor, the Star League Council sought to defuse tensions between the natives and the occupying force by setting up a member of House Calderon as Marantha's successor. The Taurians, however, made it clear that they would view anyone who accepted such an appointment as a collaborator with the enemy, rather than a leader of a loyal people. One by one, the Star League approached members of the Calderon family—Marantha's husband and consort, Peter Carliss, her daughter and two sons, her uncle, her brothers, her sister, and four different cousins—and, one by one, all turned down the "honor" of representing the Star League to the angry Taurian people. Finally, after much soul-searching, Marantha's nephew, Henry, agreed to take on the distasteful job. The Calderon family itself was divided over his decision. Some members refused ever to speak to Henry again, while others supported his courage in taking on the responsibility.

The Taurian people were not divided. They opposed anyone who collaborated with their Star League oppressors. Because of this initial hostility, it took the public a while to take the true measure of the man. Once they did, however, the Taurians understood that things would have been worse for them with a lesser man at their head.

Just as Melissa Humphreys won over the Canopians with her even-handedness, Henry Calderon won over his people with capable and fair administration, as well as courage in the face of the arrogant Star League. Two incidents stand out in particular. In the first, Calderon used painstaking diplomacy to convince the Star League Council that garrison troops were not only unnecessary, but were downright counterproductive to Star League interests. His argument succeeded mainly because he was able to play on both sides of First Lord Ian Cameron's nature. The noble Cameron wanted a peaceful, unified Human Sphere, and so Henry could reason that the presence of garrison troops would only lead to insurrection against that hard-won unity. The darker side of Cameron, which wanted power over a unified Human Sphere regardless of the cost in war and oppression, accepted Henry's brief that garrison troops currently based in the Concordat could be used more effectively in other areas. Thus did Henry manage to free the Concordat of occupation by 2605.

The second incident, one that won Calderon the genuine affection of his people, came in 2613 during a plenary session of the Star League High Council. In debate over a tariff dispute between the Lyran Commonwealth and the Terran Hegemony, Henry Calderon offered suggestions for an equitable settlement for both sides. Ian Cameron, annoyed at Henry's presumption, informed him that the dispute had no bearing on the Concordat and was not the primary reason for the High Council meeting. "You fought to force my people to be represented here," Henry told Cameron calmly but forcefully. "You will not keep my voice from representing them." When this exchange was reported in the Concordat, it became clear once and for all that Henry did represent his people's best interests, rather than being the puppet that First Lord Cameron had expected. Now it was much too late for Cameron to remove him.

THANKS JACK!
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SECOND INVASION

In the aftermath of the Reunification War, a welcome period of peaceful reconstruction settled over the Periphery. Taking his cue from policies advocated by Melissa Humphreys, First Lord Ian Cameron began a Periphery-wide program of reconciliation and propaganda to create a pro-Star League sentiment among the inhabitants of the Periphery. In the first decade of peace, many Inner Sphere corporations devised a variety of financial aid programs to revitalize the Periphery states' shattered economies. These programs became even more effective with advances in rapid interstellar communications, which culminated in the invention of the HyperPulse Generator in 2630.

More money was flowing into the Periphery, and these distant states benefitted as much as any other when the Star League adopted a universal currency in 2623. In addition, further advances in water purification techniques stimulated renewed colonial expansion into the Periphery, as well as integrating the new Territorial States into the rest of the Inner Sphere.

Not everyone in the Periphery was pleased with life under the aegis of the Star League, however. Many citizens objected strongly to the use of their worlds as "proving grounds" for a variety of new BattleMech designs, for example. The very presence of the dreaded war machine was regarded as a symbol of Star League tyranny. Moreover, most of the major Periphery worlds remained under the heel of Star League occupation troops until 2607. Indeed, House Liao continued to occupy a stretch of worlds belonging to the Taurian Concordat throughout, and even after, the time of the Star League.

Most irritating of all was the wave of ne'er-do-wells who followed in the wake of Star League reconciliation efforts. Between 2610 and 2680, several million "colonists" immigrated to the Periphery in search of new opportunities. This "Second Invasion of the Periphery" was far different from the colonization that had created the Periphery states. In place of dedicated, hardworking individuals with a sense of honor and a love of independence, the new settlers were poor and uneducated laborers, financial speculators, criminals, and cast-offs. This flotsam and jetsam of the Inner Sphere took hold in the Periphery in the first half of the new century. By the end of the 2600s, these "squatters" were slowly robbing the Periphery of its vitality and promise.

PALACE COUP

He who establishes an empire, and does not kill Brutus, or he who establishes a republic, and does not kill the sons of Brutus, will not rule long.

—Niccolo Macchiavelli (1469-1527)

Of the four Periphery powers conquered by the Star League, the Rim Worlds Republic emerged with the strongest power base. Gregory Amaris was a consummate power politician who manipulated the economic advantages of Star League membership and the ambitions of his people to build the Republic into a realm large enough and powerful enough to rival any of the six Inner Sphere powers. Through it all, his own ruling passion was ego gratification. To Gregory Amaris, the smooth and successful operation of his government was the mirror that he used to gauge his own value.

Amaris was assassinated by a military junta in 2599. The leader of the group, Admiral Hakim Wbika, personally shot Gregory with a laser gun, then made an impassioned speech to the Rim Worlds people. He claimed that the time had come to overthrow the tyrant Amaris, for it would be a disgrace to enter a new century with him at the helm of state. To assure a peaceful transition in governmental functions, Wbika announced that another member of the Amaris family, Gregory's mild-mannered son Richard, would be the new president, under the "guidance" of Wbika and his hand-picked staff. This came as a considerable surprise to Richard, who had expected to be murdered, along with the rest of his family, rather than exalted.

Richard was no more a puppet than was Henry Calderon of the Concordat, however. A crafty, secretive man, he saw that if he gave Wbika enough rope, the man would hang himself. While carrying out all of Wbika's "advice" about good government, Richard Amaris bided his time, currying favor with his people and studying the weaknesses of the junta members.

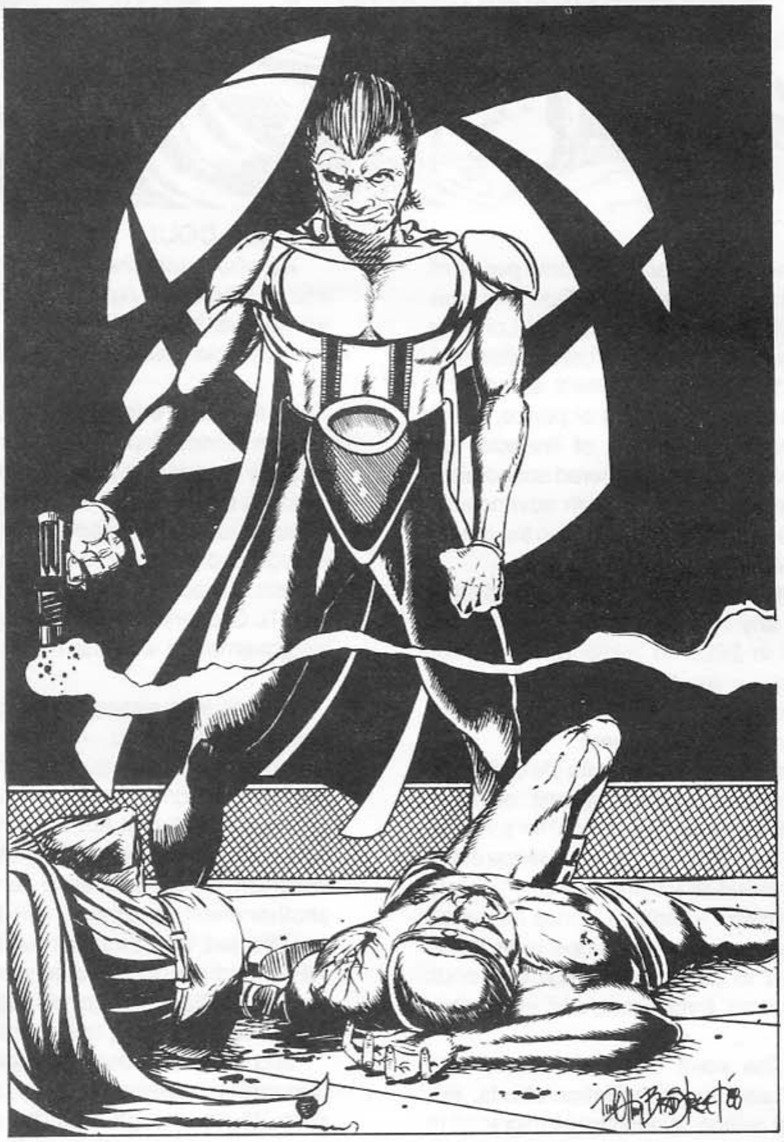
He found just the weakness he needed in Wbika's chief aide, General Samuel Macao. Though highly capable, General Macao was notorious for his inability to control his violent temper, which he vented over the pettiest incidents. Seeing this flaw in the character of his enemy, Richard pulled off perhaps the only open-ended palace coup in history. He cultivated the loyalty of the palace guards, and once he was sure that the time was right for a coup, he began to engineer obstructions, mistakes, and miscommunications among the junta.

Eventually, matters came to a head. One day in 2604, when the stentorian-voiced Macao lost his head and began to shout at Wbika himself, it was the signal to the guards loyal to Richard Amaris to begin to purge the palace of junta members. In revenge for the death of his father, Amaris himself blasted both Macao and Wbika. Only one junta member escaped, being offworld on a fact-finding mission at the time, and he never dared to return to Apollo. Richard later wrote in his memoirs that it was the most exquisite moment of his life when he heard Macao himself giving the signal for the coup that would lead to his own execution.

AVELLAR ECONOMICS

Due to its use of diplomacy to settle its war with the Star League, the Outworlds Alliance did not suffer a succession crisis, as did the other Periphery powers. Though his people supported him, the war took its toll on Grigori Avellar. During the years of fighting, he seemed to age prematurely. Indeed, he would die of heart failure at the early age of 48 just two years after the war was over.

His successor was his son Barton, whose grasp of interstellar politics fell far short of most Outworlds leaders. After decades of the Alliance playing Davion leaders off against Kurita, Barton's only innovation was a crackpot scheme to involve Davion and Kurita financial interests in the same ventures to keep their minds off further aggression against the Alliance. He did not reckon on the financial interests on both sides finding such a partnership undesirable, nor the distrust the scheme would engender in both foreign governments, nor the fact that the scheme would have upset the balance of trade between the Alliance and its two neighbors.



Ironically, it was Barton Avellar's overtures to foreign investors that brought about the coup engineered by Kuritan financial interests in 2600. Intending to set up a puppet government of their own, the Kuritans miscalculated when they chose Barton's bookish young cousin, Rodrigo. Once again, the puppet outsmarted his masters, for Rodrigo turned out to be as highly pragmatic as his uncle Grigori. Not only did he institute imaginative fiscal policies to strengthen the economy (often at the expense of the Kuritans), but he proved to be a skilled enough diplomat to persuade the Council Lords that the Star League's garrison troops must abide by local standards of justice. This helped defuse the tensions that had begun to fester between League garrisons and the people of the Alliance.

When the garrison troops were removed altogether in 2607, it was not lost on the Council Lords that Rodrigo proclaimed a month-long celebration in June of that year. This was the same year that Rodrigo won Coordinator Blaine Kurita and Prince Zane Davion's support in Council for an edict that exempted the Alliance from having to supply troops to the Star League. In return, both the Draconis Combine and the Federated Suns enjoyed Most Favored Nation trade status with the Outworlds Alliance.

"PRINCE CHARMING"

When doctors discovered in 2612 that Rinalla Centrella had developed an incurable brain tumor, she stepped down in favor of her 18-year-old daughter Carla. Carla Centrella was an energetic young woman who had spent most of her adolescence being trained in the techniques of government by her mother. Upon taking office, Carla Centrella quickly proved her mother's faith in her abilities. During her administration, Carla expanded the fiscal policies that were already rebuilding the Canopian economy, while adding investments by Lyran, Terran, and Davion firms to the Marik capital that was already invested in Canopus. She also made a bad marriage.

Though Carla Centrella was politically sophisticated, she had never had a chance to outgrow her adolescent naivete in other matters. It was a simple matter for Curtis Yakubu, a handsome giant of a MechWarrior who was shooting up the ranks of the Canopian House regiments, to sweep her off her feet when his assignment to the general staff threw them together.

Curtis and Carla's whirlwind romance started out as a storybook affair, but its end made it seem almost a cautionary tale. Curtis was a true romantic, never failing to offer Carla some small token—a gift, a word, even a glance—to let her know that he appreciated her as a woman. Carla responded in kind, although her personality was just the opposite of his. They were, in fact, a perfect example of opposites attracting.

It did not take long for problems to arise. Curtis was passionately proud of his Ashanti origins. Upon his appointment to the Central Committee, he proposed that Ashanti be recognized as the second official language of the Magistracy (the first being English). The measure passed as a gesture of good will to the Magistrix's consort, though few people in the Magistracy actually spoke Ashanti. Then Curtis began to insist that his household observe ancient Ashanti traditions, some of which were quite male supermacist. As head of a state that allows only females to rule, Carla at first laughed at the idea of Curtis lording it over her, then she found it irritating, and finally deeply offensive. Perhaps even worse was that Curtis was also a hypocrite who expected fidelity from his spouse, but believed he was free to be unfaithful.

Matters finally came to a head when one of Carla's aides discovered that Curtis had been appropriating Magistracy funds for his private use. No one ever knew what they said the day she called him to her office for a private conference, but the next day Curtis was dispatched to Terra to take command of the Canopian ceremonial troops that guarded Star League headquarters. He held the post until his death, and never saw either his wife or his homeworld again.

Carla ruled for over 40 years. After the economic triumphs of her first decade in office, her administration settled down to steady, gradual growth. Also to Carla's credit is the other major accomplishment to her tenure. Of all the Council Lords, she was the first to recognize the diplomatic potential of the HyperPulse technology developed in 2623. She used it to establish diplomatic and trading relations with the Outworlds Alliance, the Draconis Combine, and the Rim Worlds Republic, states that would previously have been far too distant for the development of any practical contact.

AMARIS POLITICS

After ruling with an iron hand for 15 years, Richard Amaris died of brain fever in 2619. His daughter, Amanda, was sworn in as President the following day. In her first speech to the Republic, she announced her intention of restoring democratic elections no later than 2621.

Before she could make good her promise, Amanda was assassinated in 2620 in a botched palace coup. While a renegade detachment of Home Guards sprayed machine gun fire all over the palace, Willard Amaris, Amanda's cousin and instigator of the coup, was killed in the confusion. When the shooting finally stopped, the person next in line for the Presidency, Amanda's brother Jeffrey, stepped in to restore order. His first action was a pledge to carry out his sister's reforms.

By 2622, the elections took place as promised. In the meantime, the unambitious Jeffrey developed a serious dislike for statecraft. He stepped down in favor of Amanda's baby daughter Selanta, with Jimmy Siever, Honor Chan, and George Wong as joint Protectors. Wong died a few months later in a mysterious air crash and was replaced in the triumvirate by Jonofra Marcus. Shortly before Selanta's 19th birthday, the President-to-be's secret service informed her that all three Protectors were engaged in separate plots to remain in power after Selanta came of age. As none of the plots involved violence to Selanta herself, she kept her knowledge secret and played the three conspirators off against one another. When she reached her majority and became President of the Republic, Selanta "rewarded" her three Protectors for their service to her and to the state with ambassadorships to Canopus, Terra, and the Free Worlds League, all of which she judged to be far enough away to keep them out of trouble.

Selanta was stricken with a rare form of cancer in the late 2640s. By 2649, she was too ill to continue exercising the duties of her office. She chose her young cousin, Tadeo Amaris, who had been Minister of Military Affairs in her administration, to act as regent while she underwent treatment. In this choice, Selanta's experience with her former "Protectors" held her in good stead. Tadeo was an ambitious, militaristic man whom any other ruler would have watched carefully, or removed from power altogether. Selanta, however, lived by the old Terran adage, "Keep your friends close to you, but your enemies even closer." This was an even better philosophy when friend and enemy are indistinguishable, as was often the case among the Amarises. By giving Tadeo the reigns of power, but still retaining the loyalty of the Palace Guards, Selanta knew that if her cousin moved against her she could remove him from power as easily as she had vested him with it. He would be playing right into her hands.

Tadeo moved instead to strengthen the Rim Worlds military, an action that Selanta had secretly desired and expected. For the next two years, Tadeo set about turning Apollo, Gotterdamerung, Erewhon, and several other worlds into armed camps. By 2651, he had garrisoned front-line, elite troops in a state of combat readiness on every border world fronting the Lyran Commonwealth. Archon Sarah Steiner-Dineson protested to the Star League Council, who gave her a free hand to use Star League troops stationed in her domain as she saw fit. Sarah held extensive, well-publicized maneuvers with five BattleMech regiments, complete with infantry, air, and artillery support, on Black Earth, a world just outside the Amaris domains. Faced with the Star League's show of superior force, Tadeo backed down and began to dismantle his military buildup. More than a half-century after its founding, the Star League was still determined to keep the interstellar peace.

It was now Selanta Amaris's turn to protest. Taking office again after her long convalescence, she sent a top-secret message to the Star League Council in early 2652 stating that the best way to keep Tadeo out of trouble was to let him busy himself with the sort of toys he liked. There had never been any real danger of invasion against any Lyran world, she claimed, because she would have stopped her cousin first.

Though this incident further strained relations between the Rim Worlds and the Commonwealth, Selanta had achieved her aims. She had saved face in the Star League Council; she had provided for a smooth transition of government in her absence, and Tadeo, even after dismantling most of his new forces, had left the Rim Worlds far stronger than before she had taken her leave. In addition, the embarrassment of being shown up by Sarah Steiner-Dineson had left Tadeo in an untenable political position. Never again would he have the popular support to become a potential rival for the Presidency. Although Selanta's disease would recur in the decades to come, it is unlikely that any ruler ever accomplished so much from a sickbed.

Soon after the resolution of the Amaris affair, Michael Cameron determined that only a massive research and development program designed to improve League BattleMechs could guarantee the safety of the Star League against would-be aggressors. Thus it was that, beginning in 2651, a series of new tax measures were levied against the Territorial States to finance these operations.

YEARS OF DETENTE

There were two changes of Periphery governments in the late 2620s. By 2629, the aging Henry Calderon was prevailed upon to clarify the succession of his House. It all happened because Marantha had left a line of descendants who might have been able to claim to be nearer in line to the throne than his own heirs, as well as two other family lines descended from Marantha's other siblings. At Henry's request, the Concordat held a one-man, one-vote plebiscite to determine whether or not Calderon could name his own successor. In gratitude for his years of service, the Taurians voted to grant Henry's request. He chose Consuelo Calderon, the four-year-old daughter of his nephew Richard. He named his cousin Carlos Calderon, Marantha's grandson, as Regent, or Protector, to the Protector. (The confusing nature of these titles was a source of jokes, none of them very good, for Carlos's entire tenure as Protector's Protector.)

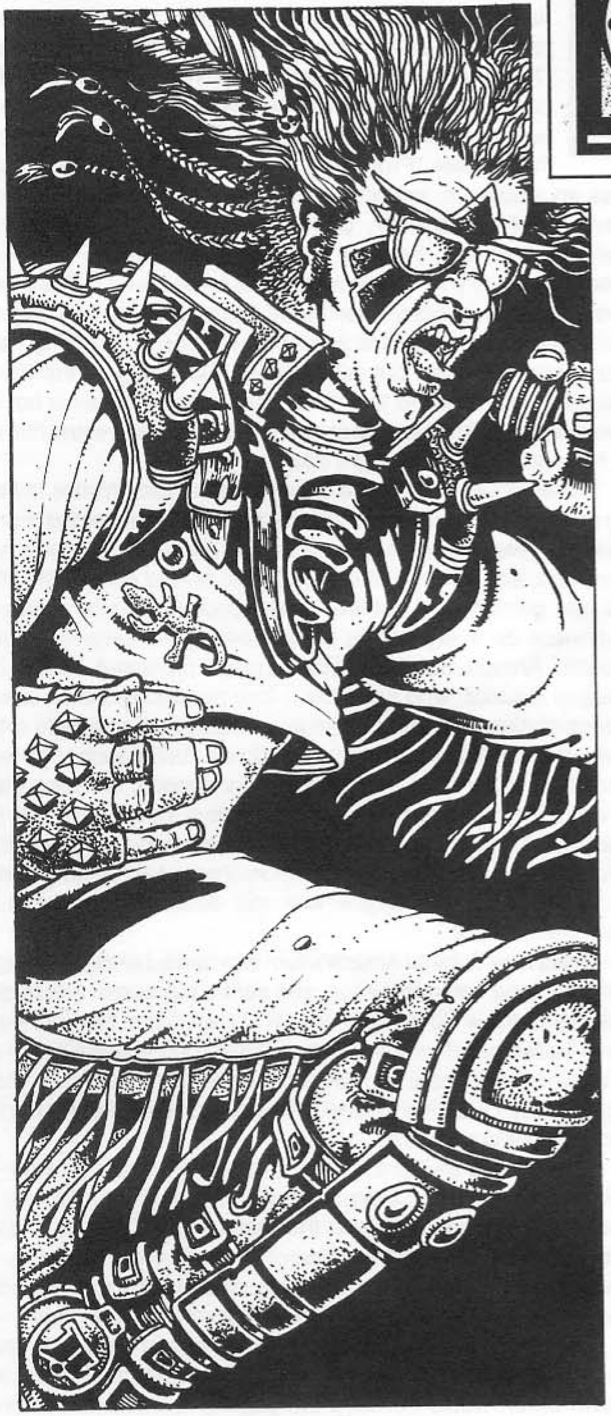
Meanwhile, in the Outworlds Alliance, Rodrigo Avellar died of a seizure in 2628. The Executive Parliament declared a 30-day period of mourning for Rodrigo, after which they confirmed his niece Caryn as Prime Minister.

Caryn Avellar was a multifaceted woman with accomplishments in several fields. While still an undergraduate at the University of Alpheratz, she wrote an analysis of cash-flow problems peculiar to Alliance businessmen that led to an overhaul of whole sectors of the economy. Beginning at age 24, she began a six-year term in the Executive Parliament, during which time she became Rodrigo's chief advisor on foreign affairs. She was also an accomplished musician and an expert on animal husbandry whose work led to the development of a new strain of livestock that replaced Terran cattle as the animal most commonly bred on Alliance ranches.

Though Avellar had never shown the least sign of mental instability until this point in her life, she went suddenly mad during her sixth year as Parliamentary President. In a fit of delusion, she unilaterally proclaimed the League dissolved, and announced a new Star League with herself as First Lord and Alpheratz as its capital. During her term in office, she had never attended a High Council meeting nor met the other Council Lords, pleading that her hands were full just trying to govern her own sphere. Some members of the Council interpreted this as a boycott in protest of a series of petty measures that were unfair to the Periphery in general and to the Outworlds Alliance in particular, but that is unlikely. One way or the other, after her Star League announcements, it was clear to everyone that Caryn was no longer fit to rule. An all-night session of the Executive Parliament chose her younger brother Peter to replace her. The following morning, the Executive Guards led Caryn to her "new office," and Peter Avellar took control of her old one.

Caryn Avellar lived another 40 years, but she never realized that she was no longer President of the Outworlds Alliance nor First Lord of the Star League.

As a replacement, the politically naive Peter Avellar was a poor second. He understood the principle of "one hand washing the other," but seemed constitutionally incapable of offering anyone a fair deal. Under the guise of give and take, he would take what he wanted from Alliance politicians while barely bothering to throw them a bone in return. This made him one of the least popular of Parliamentary Presidents, especially among the Parliamentarians themselves.

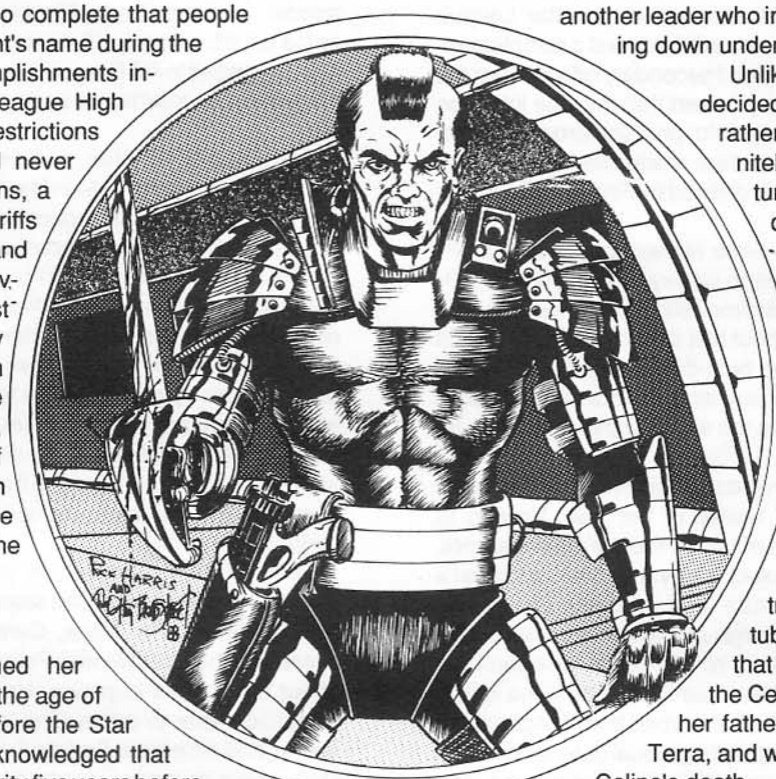


INTERSTELLAR MINSTRELS

One of the more interesting aspects of the Territorial period was the return of troubadours. These wayfarers wandered from planet to planet among the Territorial States, entertaining the households of rich families with songs of patriotic fervor and tales of Periphery heroes in the recent war. Though the interstellar minstrels never stayed long enough in one place to attract the attention of Star League officials, they kept the flames of nationalism alive in the outer worlds until the Territorial States could make a desperate gamble for their freedom.

—From *I Sing a Song of Taurus,* by Jeremy Uncle, Wildwood Press, 3025

During his brief reign, Peter's political incompetence also led to a general decline in standards of workmanship throughout the Alliance. Workers slacked off on the job and pointed to the President as a role model. When, after only six years in office, Peter was killed in a skimmer accident, it turned out that the vehicle had been improperly maintained. Though no one ever learned whether the poor condition of the skimmer was deliberate sabotage or plain incompetence on the part of Peter's mechanics, it was universally conceded that the manner of his death was poetic justice.



Much of the turmoil caused by the unfair Star League edicts and Peter's reign ended with the accession of Adolfo Avellar, Caryn's son, in 2642. Adolfo was a colorless but competent man whose lack of charisma was so complete that people sometimes forgot their president's name during the next 45 years. Yet his accomplishments included persuading the Star League High Council to rescind passport restrictions for Alliance citizens that had never applied to Inner Sphere citizens, a reduction in the protective tariffs aimed against Alliance goods and services, and elimination of several discriminatory laws against Alliance citizens, particularly the one that excluded them from employment in the Star League central government. Indeed, Adolfo's reign was a kind of golden age for his people. When it came to an end, so too did the Outworlders' detente with the Inner Sphere.

CONSUELO THE FAIR

Consuelo Calderon claimed her right of succession in 2650, at the age of 25. In her maiden speech before the Star League High Council, she acknowledged that when she had come to her majority five years before, she had still lacked the administrative and legislative skills needed to rule effectively. She acknowledged a debt of gratitude to her uncle Carlos, whom she had served as privy Councilor over the past five years. In honor of his years as Regent, Consuelo appointed Carlos an Honorary Council Lord, with complete discretionary authority to represent the Concordat in the High Council. Though Carlos was the only person to sit on the High Council without being a head of state, the other Council members accepted him readily, for he had represented the Concordat all during the Protectorate era.

Consuelo was an excellent administrator, and her affectionate people gave her names such as "Consuelo the Fair," which referred to her judicious behavior and not, of course, to her raven hair. As in the Outworlds Alliance, this was a time of detente between the Concordat and the Star League. Indeed, a poll taken in 2665 indicated that more Concordat citizens rated First Lord Cameron as doing "a good job" than they did Consuelo herself. This was the first and last time that ever occurred, however, for Consuelo was a popular leader.

After Carlos's death in 2660, Consuelo once again represented the Concordat in the High Council. She was chosen Second Lord (or Vice-President) in 2663. In 2667, she presided over a session during First Lord Cameron's illness, the only time a Periphery representative did so prior to the usurpation of Stefan Amaris.

CANOPUS IN MID-CENTURY

Carla Centrella's stormy private life did not prevent her from ruling well, but it did affect her outlook on the course of events in the Magistracy. After the breakup of her marriage, close friends and associates noted that she seemed to be going through the motions of her life, though she was no less devoted to her work. Her accomplishments were many, including the establishment of an insurance and health-care program that gave the Canopians a leadership position in the medical field that they have never relinquished. Perhaps this was some consolation for her disappointments in other areas. There are those who draw parallels between Carla and the current Free Worlds League ruler, Janos Marik, another leader who increasingly shows signs of wearing down under personal losses.

Unlike Janos Marik, Carla Centrella decided to step down in middle age rather than to hold onto power indefinitely. In 2654, at the age of 58, Carla turned the Magistracy over to her daughter Celine, a disastrous choice based purely on primogeniture. (The confirmation vote in the Central Committee was close, but Celine won out over her younger sister Gorraine.)

Celine Centrella might be described as a cross between Leonard Kurita and Ewan Marik. Alcoholic and dissolute, she did barely a shred of work during her two years as Magistrix before drowning in her bathtub after a drunken fall. It is possible that the alcoholism that has afflicted the Centrella line may have begun with her father Curtis, who was still living on Terra, and was an even heavier drinker after Celine's death.

Gorraine Centrella's belated accession to the Magistracy took place in 2656. Among the first actions of her paradoxic reign was the political purge she carried out against the members of the Central Committee who had voted against her two years earlier. Her vindictiveness in destroying the careers of people who had acted in good faith at first boded ill for the Magistracy, but Gorraine replaced these with solid appointments. Perhaps the purge also relieved her own character of high-handedness, for she never showed signs of it again. Gorraine Centrella may be the one exception to the principle that power corrupts, as she grew into the job of Magistrix by eliminating the abuses of power that marked the beginning of her term.

Canopian history remembers Gorraine as one of the most important Magistrixes because of her sponsorship of an exploration program that added several worlds to the Magistracy. Her reign was cut short in 2680, however, when she was traveling in an air transport that disappeared mysteriously in a remote mining region of Adhara. In Gorraine's absence, her granddaughter Kim was confirmed as interim Magistrix. Three years later, Kim took the title officially when the wreckage of Gorraine's airship was discovered. Though the cause of the crash remains a mystery, the date of her disappearance, June 17, is a solemn legal holiday in Canopus. The anniversary is known as Gorraine Remembrance Day.

EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

In 2671, Consuelo Calderon died of heart disease at the age of only 46. The Protectorship went to Reginald Calderon, Marantha's great-grandson, whose major achievement was the Education Reform Act of 2678. This law eventually gave the Concordat the highest literacy rate in the Human Sphere, a claim it can make to this day. The Act had followed hard on the heels of Michael Cameron's sweeping educational reform program of the early 2670s, whose aim was to increase the literacy rate throughout the Periphery. Under Cameron's reforms, a free university education became available to any Periphery citizen who qualified, but graduates of such educational largess returned to their homes with tales of stunted curricula and deliberate attempts at pro-Star League political indoctrination. When Cameron introduced a complementary program aimed at elementary and secondary education in the late 2680s, many in the Periphery feared that the true intention was "subversion" of their young into pro-Cameron puppets. Reginald Calderon's reforms therefore made him very popular among his own people, and deeply disliked by First Lord Cameron himself.

In 2687, Reginald retired to write his autobiography, which was closer to political fiction than to history, and filled with self-justifying half-truths. Though Calderon relied on verifiable fact as a framework, he told the truth about half the time, and then went on to blithely contradict even the best-documented accounts of events and people of the era. Of course, he is not the first public figure to write of his life and times the way he fancied them to be rather than as they were.

Reginald's successor was his daughter Jentarra Calderon, undoubtedly the most brilliant leader of her line. Vowing to continue the enlightened policies of her immediate predecessors, Jentarra began a far-seeing project to revamp the Concordat's industrial base, its military structure, and its space exploration policies, along with improving foreign relations. She might have been the greatest ruler in Periphery history had it not been for a poisoning attempt in 2689. Jentarra survived, but some of the slow-acting poison that her skin had absorbed from her poisoned clothing reached her brain and caused a gradual deterioration. As the quality of her leadership degenerated, so did her support. The Privy Council voted her out in 2694, placing Jentarra's younger brother Brandon in power. He ruled peacefully but unimaginatively for the next 30 years.

THE CRUCIAL YEAR

It was also in 2687 that Adolfo Avellar died in his sleep. His grandson Davis Avellar had barely been confirmed as new President of the Alliance when he got off on the wrong foot by instituting tax breaks for immigrants. The measure was intended to encourage immigration, which it did. It backfired because the law generated resentment among Alliance natives, who organized general strikes to protest what they considered unfair discrimination. Davis Avellar was the sort who learns from his mistakes, however. He went before the Privy Council to sponsor repeal of his own pet legislation, which won him the hearts of his people. During the next 19 years of his rule, this Protector was determined to avoid further controversy or internal discontent, and he succeeded.

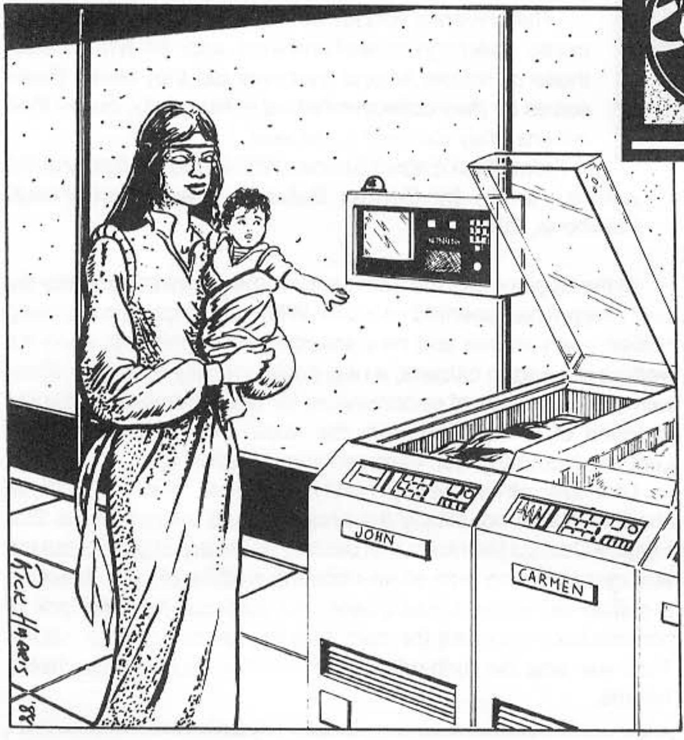
The other significant event of the crucial year of 2687 was the death of Selanta Amaris, who succumbed to a particularly virulent cancer. The history of the Rim Worlds was always bloodier than that of the other Periphery powers, and the succession crisis that followed Selanta's passing was especially grotesque. Before her son Bertram could be confirmed as President, his throat was slashed in the corridor outside the Presidential offices. The assassin was Gregor Siever, whose brother Carl was next in line. Rather than working together to establish a joint regency or a President/Prime Minister-style partnership, Carl and Gregor Siever immediately squared off, with each one intending to seize absolute power for himself. Scarcely an hour after Bertram's murder, Carl and Gregor fought one another hand-to-hand in the same corridor, barely 15 meters from where Bertram had fallen. Carl managed to kill Gregor, but not before the tendons in one of his arms were slashed so badly that the arm was useless forever after.

At this point, no other adult member of either House Amaris or House Siever was directly in line for the Presidency, and so no one could mount effective opposition to Carl Siever. The bloody character of his rise to power took a toll on Carl's mind, though. Unlike others of his line, Carl could not blanket himself in the dehumanizing toughness that leaders so often adopt. It was bad enough that Gregor had murdered their cousin, but the fact that Carl had killed his own brother in self-defense seems to have damaged his spirit. He began to brood and to be suspicious of everyone around him. The court on Apollo had taken on an increasingly Byzantine tone since the inception of Selanta's triumvirate protectorship, and this made Carl more paranoid than ever. Within five years, he had begun to show signs of being seriously disturbed.

When Cynthia Amaris, his grandniece and Selanta's granddaughter, came of age, Carl stepped down in her favor. As part of her preparation for office, Cynthia received Carl's version of events at the Presidential Palace, along with cautionary tales about the abuses of power. He then departed the Rim Worlds Republic, never to return. The last that was heard was that Carl Siever had entered a Buddhist monastery on the Lyran world of Derf, where he was said to be doing penance for the crimes of all his family.

Cynthia Amaris threw herself into ruling the Rim Worlds so thoroughly that she was well into middle age before even considering the idea of producing an heir. She had simply not had time for romance, and the idea of a political marriage offended her. Nevertheless, after her 40th birthday, her people deluged her with messages begging her to marry and produce an heir-apparent to prevent another potentially disastrous succession crisis.

Thus did Cynthia Amaris marry Stefan Gorienko, a multistellar industrialist, in 2716. The following year, she gave birth to her only child, Stefan Amaris. From the first, Cynthia groomed this child for leadership. As soon as he was old enough to understand, she began to tell him tales of politics and power. She tried especially to impress on him the tragedy of internecine conflicts like those that had destroyed her uncles.



CANOPIAN TRIPLETS

Kim Centrella was delivered of triplets in 2689, the only time in recorded history that any head of state has done so. As is traditional in Canopian society, her two sons, John and Carmen, took their father's surname, Raventhir, and her daughter Jehan took her mother's surname. Twenty-three years later, Jehan Centrella would succeed her mother as Magistrix when Kim retired at age 58. John Raventhir met a tragic end in 2718 when his JumpShip suffered a fatal misjump while he was traveling on business to Atreus. Neither Carmen nor Jehan ever really recovered from their brother's death. In honor of the bond among the triplets, the Central Committee approved noble honors for the male line of the family. Although John had died without issue, Carmen, who was married to Sharon Basrahi, sired two sons who were the first of the Raventhiri noble line.

It was during Jehan Centrella's administration that the Star League High Council began to reinstate some of its discriminatory policies toward the Periphery. Over the objections of Jehan Centrella, Brandon Calderon, Cynthia Amaris, and Beatrice Avellar, the High Council proclaimed a tax of 10 percent of all Periphery goods to be delivered to Star League officials for distribution in the Inner Sphere. Jehan delivered an impassioned speech begging the Council Lords to reconsider, for her own people were as needy as those of the Inner Sphere. As usual, the Periphery Lords were not even permitted to vote, even on a matter so close to their own interests. Only Jonathan Steiner could be persuaded to vote against the proposal. This was but the first in a long list of oppressive measures the High Council would impose on the Periphery in the decades to come.

THE BEATRICIAN ERA

Although Davis Avellar was only 50 years old when first diagnosed with heart disease, he decided that he should resign as President of the Outworlds Alliance. Next in succession was his daughter Beatrice, who was 15 at the time. In the three years before Beatrice could be invested as President, Avellar's sister Heather headed up a Regency government. Heather had no political aspirations of her own, and so she stepped aside readily when Beatrice reached her majority in 2709.

The Beatrician era of Alliance history presents an uncanny parallel to the Victorian era of ancient England on Terra. During her extraordinarily long reign, Beatrice encouraged interstellar expansion, technological progress, humane social structures, and cosmopolitan social mores. Like Victoria, she also institutionalized a severe puritanism that made her as deeply disliked by some of her people as others loved her for other reforms. Beatrice also offered government scholarships, stipends, and tax incentives to anyone willing to make a career of studying classical Spanish. Though the Alliance's official language was English, its ruling House was of Spanish origin. (It is ironic that Beatrice Avellar herself never became fluent in Spanish, though the study of it was an avocation with her.)

NICOLETTA TAKES OVER

After 31 years in office, the diffident President Brandon Calderon officially retired in 2725. The action was more a formality than anything, for it was common knowledge that his son, Hampton Calderon, had long been the power behind the throne. The history of the Concordat took a bizarre turn the following year when an emotionally disturbed 12-year-old cousin killed Hampton with a hand-blaster. No one ever learned where the boy had obtained the weapon, nor the nature of the grudge he held against the President. The child was immediately shipped off to a psychiatric hospital, from which he never emerged. In later years, there would be those who campaigned for his release, but Hampton Calderon's assassin lived out his life in this unofficial punishment.

The Presidency was assumed by Nicoletta Calderon, who would become one of the giants of Periphery politics. Only 18 when she assumed power, Nicoletta devoted much of her long career to combatting the increasingly severe strictures that the Star League was imposing on the Periphery states. Long before any of the other House leaders suspected that change was in the solar wind, she also sought closer ties to the Magistracy of Canopus, seeing the Canopians as natural allies against Inner Sphere aggression. Nicoletta's foreign policy was otherwise deceptively simple. She would concentrate on improving the state of affairs in the Concordat, and let the other House leaders make what mistakes they might. If the opportunity arose, she would take advantage of those mistakes to benefit her own people. By this method, she was able to prepare the Taurian Concordat for the breakdown of interstellar cooperation, whose coming she sensed almost by instinct. Indeed, no other House—whether in the Periphery or in the Inner Sphere—was so ready to face the new era of hostilities when the time came.

WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS

In 2738, Jehan Centrella had to face the severity of her addiction to alcohol. During a single week in March, she arrived stumbling and with slurred speech to a meeting of her Central Committee, could not concentrate during a session of the Crimson Council, and, finally, missed an important meeting with the ambassador from House Davion. Realizing that she was no longer able to perform the duties of her office, Jehan took a leave of absence. The reins of power passed to her daughter Vanura.

This may have been the best thing for the Magistracy, but it was the worst thing for Jehan herself. The responsibility she felt toward the Magistracy was precisely what had kept her drinking problem from being even worse than it was, and so now she had nothing to stand in her way. After a half-hearted attempt at treatment, Jehan descended into an odyssey of degradation before she finally bottomed out and went through a successful treatment program. In the meantime, her "leave of absence" had been terminated, and Vanura been confirmed as Magistrix.

Jehan Centrella's disease had cost her six years of her life, the Magistracy itself, the respect of her people, and the affection of her daughter. Still, she was grateful. Unlike Celine Centrella nearly a century before, alcohol had not cost her her life.

Vanura Centrella faired badly as Magistrix, not so much because of personal weakness, but through lack of ability and sufficient preparation. Through a series of unwise policies and a poor choice of advisors, she ran down the economy, neglected education, and effectively dismantled the Canopian military apparatus. This last turned out to be an inadvertent masterstroke, as it was a major factor in minimizing the Magistracy's participation in the impending Civil War.

Vanura died in her sleep in 2760. Her successor, Janina Centrella, was Vanura's polar opposite. A brilliant dilettante, she deftly played a game of each-end-against-the-middle with the Houses of the Inner Sphere. Janina managed to protect Canopian investments and withdraw the few remaining Canopian troops from Star League service (arguing her need for Home Defense troops) just before the final fall of the Star League.

Janina Centrella did, in fact, became a living symbol to her own people and to the rest of the Human Sphere. Her indifference to the welfare of the Star League was emblematic of Periphery attitudes, and the pleasure she took in the decadent Canopian lifestyle made her both famous and infamous—depending on one's politics. Like her ally, Nicoletta Calderon, Janina was interested only in the welfare of her own people, and if the Inner Sphere Lords (whom she regarded as fools) could not rule themselves and remain at peace, then that was their problem.

WINTER OF DISCONTENT

Many Periphery scholars refer to the period from 2600–2750 as "the winter of our discontent." In this century and a half, the rights of individuals, though protected, became subordinate to the will of the majority. Not everyone in the Periphery accepted this change gracefully, however. Many abandoned their homes to settle worlds like Algenib, which they used as a staging ground for raids against the worlds of the Inner Sphere. Others, inspired by the new expansionist philosophy, left their homes in the Taurian and Outworlds Territorial States to colonize new worlds, much as their forebears had done centuries before. For the most part, however, the Periphery remained quiet, though not subdued, and passive, though not submissive. The only exception was House Amaris of the Rim Worlds Republic.

DARK CLOUDS

> *The universal scholar would be hard pressed to find a worse collection of self-involved, sadistic tyrants than those of House Amaris. Not only did they damn themselves by their collective hatred of Humanity, but by their actions, they damned us as well.*
>
> —From *Black Eagles Stained With Blood: A History of the Amaris Family,* by Gorden Ballantre, Decameron Press, Lackhove, 2955

At the beginning of the 28th century, the peace imposed by the Star League had seemed inviolate. With new colony worlds being settled every month and new scientific advances improving the welfare of League citizens, a new social stability emerged, along with a wide variety of opportunities for advancement. Under the direction of Simon Cameron, the fourth First Lord of the Star League, Humanity was experiencing a golden age.

Like any other shining reality, however, this one had its shadow. It was not simply the prejudice and avarice of the Star League Council Members that destroyed the era of peace, but the willingness of one man to sacrifice the welfare of his subjects in a selfish bid for personal power. His ruthlessness and lack of compassion represent the dark side of Humanity's dual nature. That man was the sixth ruler of the Rim Worlds Republic, Stefan Amaris.

ROOT OF THE AMARIS CRISIS

The Amarises never abandoned their dream of a private empire beyond the Inner Sphere. More to the point, they never renounced their private claims to superiority over any other ruling House in known space. While paying lip service to the First Lords, the Amaris clan secretly resented the position and power of the Camerons. The very fact that the Amarises had been unable to keep the peace in their own backyard and had been forced to call upon House Cameron to save their own hides generated an abiding hatred of everything Cameron. Michael Cameron's insistence that the Amarises disband their new BattleMech regiments was seen as a perfect proof of the Camerons' betrayal.

Behind smiling faces and dutiful posturings, the Amaris clan plotted, planned, and waited for their prey with the patience of a spider. Alert for any weakness, they knew the time would come when they could exploit it to their advantage. Given that, the remarkable thing is not that the Amaris Crisis should come, but that it came as late as it did.

—From *The Amarises,* by Margaret Filimore, Sirius Books, 2810

In the century of peace that followed the Reunification War, the Amaris family ruled their people with an iron hand. Nearly paranoid in their fear of revolution from within, the rulers of the Rim Worlds Republic invested most of their revenues into the formation and training of BattleMech forces strong enough to crush any rebellion, whether real or imaginary. If the Amaris family suffered from paranoia, they also suffered from feelings of inferiority and ambition, a deadly combination. Though outwardly loyal to the Star League, the leaders of the Amaris clan despised the Camerons in private. With every imagined slight and snub, their hatred grew until it bore bitter fruit in the summer of 2751.

Though the Amaris family often faced concerted opposition from political rivals, their influence continued to grow. This was mainly because House Amaris remained the most outwardly loyal of any ruling House in the Star League. Indeed, their demonstrations of support to the First Lords bordered on the extreme.

In addition to vocal support, the Amaris family fostered its own enlightened education movement, which turned out huge numbers of trained diplomats and administrative officials for Star League service. In the military sphere, generous tax and land incentives promoted the construction of numerous Star League BattleMech production facilities and armament plants in the Rim Worlds. In short, what the Amarises created was a carefully constructed facade of cooperation and accommodation with the Cameron government.

STAR LEAGUE PROPAGANDA

In our school, we always opened the day with a pledge of allegiance to the Star League, and then a similar pledge of allegiance to House Cameron. At mid-morning, there was a five-minute meditation period during which we were to contemplate "the many benefits that the bountiful Star League has bestowed on us" (though to be honest, all I ever contemplated was the size of Becky Jorden's chest). At lunch, we paused to say a prayer of thanksgiving to the First Lord. In addition, before our final dismissal, we all had to turn in the direction of Terra to offer our thanks that the Star League had guided us through another day of studies.

Now, let's face it, all this is well and good when you're thirteen years old. By the time you're 20, however, anyone practical enough or cynical was sick of all the nonsense. It's almost as if getting fed up to *here* with the Star League and wincing in pain at the very mention of the Cameron name was what the government really intended all along.

—From *Badlands and Bad Men*, by Terri Kollocan, Dragon Tooth Publishing, Rasalhague, 2952

Shortly after the humiliation of Tadeo Amaris, during which the Amaris family was forced to cut back drastically on the size of their army, the commander of the Rim Royal Army, Fiona Amaris, introduced a new form of training program that permitted a rapid expansion of the Amaris military on short notice. Officially known as the Rim Royal Guard Act, the new training system closely imitated the Prussian "Krumper" system of the Napoleonic era on Terra. While the Rim Worlds officially maintained no more than twelve BattleMech regiments and eight conventional regiments (in compliance with the Cameron Edict of 2650), huge numbers of recruits received advanced military training during a standard three-year tour of duty, after which they returned to civilian life. Subject to periodic recalls for additional training and refresher courses, these reservists could swell the ranks of the Amaris military at a moment's notice. By the time of the Amaris Crisis in 2766, the paper strength of the Rim Worlds Republic was 30 BattleMech regiments and ten conventional regiments. In actuality, the Amarises could field three times that number.

Socially, the Amaris leaders maintained the peace by imposing a long list of rights and responsibilities on their citizens. While guaranteeing a moderate standard of living and universal literacy, the ruling family owned all planetary properties and manufacturing concerns outright. Living and working conditions were subject to the whims of family members. As far as the Amarises were concerned, the meaning of justice was "just us."

SEDUCTION OF RICHARD CAMERON

In February 2751, First Lord Simon Cameron died in a freak accident on the mining world of New Silesia. A hastily convened Council of the Star League proclaimed Richard Cameron, Simon's eight-year-old son, as the provisional First Lord of the Star League. Because of the boy's tender age, General Aleksandr Kerensky was named his "Protector." In so doing, the Council Lords (who already saw themselves as the power behind the Star League throne) clearly hoped to control young Richard by controlling Kerensky.

The appointment of Kerensky as Richard's Protector during his term of regency injured the new First Lord's pride, and Stefan Amaris was quick to take advantage of this. During a five-year stay or Terra, Stefan became an advisor and confidant to the new First Lord and minister of foreign affairs in all but name. He did everything he could think of to curry favor with young Richard at this time, including lavishing exotic gifts on him, renaming the Rim Worlds fleet of JumpShips the "Cameron Line," and even rechristening the capital of the Rim Worlds as Terra Prime.

VENOM OF THE AMARISES

In Richard, Stefan Amaris found what he and his kind had long been searching for—a kindred spirit. The unscrupulous Amaris saw in young Richard a petty, self-centered egotism that he knew could be turned to his own advantage. Using Kerensky as his scapegoat, Amaris subverted the impressionable Richard into believing that he, Stefan, was the young man's only true friend. Infected with Stefan's paranoia, the young "Sun King" (as Amaris called him) began to see plots and threats where none existed. In the autumn of 2757, Amaris played on Richard's fear by magnifying an accidental case of food poisoning into a deliberate attempt to kill the young imperator. Moreover, he persuaded Richard that Kerensky's refusal to allow young Cameron to accompany Amaris back to the Rim Worlds was a deliberate attempt to keep Richard a prisoner in his own capital. Stefan Amaris managed to destroy the Star League by pledging to defend it. Of such machinations is history made.

—From *Chancellor to the Court of Richard Cameron*, by Samuel Isenberg, Strathen and Gebhardt Publishing, Terra, 2819

In March 2762, Kerensky's term of regency came to an end. Three weeks after reaching his majority, Richard Cameron avenged himself on his tormentors by issuing Executive Order 156, a demand that the House armies in the Star League be totally disbanded and replaced with Star League garrisons. Enraged, the Council Lords sent up a howl of protest and forced Richard to rescind the order. There is little doubt that Stefan Amaris was behind this deed intended to gauge the "true allegiance" of Richard's Council Lords. Amaris must have anticipated the negative reaction of the Lords to the Edict, which he used as proof of his own good intentions and the "duplicity" of the rest of the Council. In return for withdrawing his Edict, Richard disbanded the Council and refused to reconvene it. Instead, he would henceforth rule by personal decree alone.

THE FAITHFUL SERVANT

In retrospect, it would seem that Stefan Amaris's most difficult choice in his mad attempt at power was whom he should leave as Regent on Apollo during his five-year stay on Terra. Whatever his other blunders, he chose well in selecting Mohammed Selim, the former speaker of the Rim Worlds Parliament. Selim was that rare and dangerous person, an authentic patriot. Amaris could count on his loyalty, as he could not count on that of his family, because Selim was motivated purely by devotion to the realm he served.

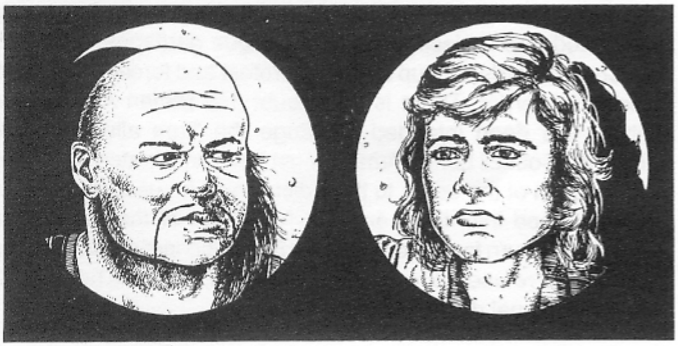
A capable, if unimaginative, administrator, Selim "made the trains run on time," while posing no threat to what he himself regarded as the legitimate ruling party. Trained as a MechWarrior in the Rim Worlds' premiere military academy, the Apollo Military Institute, he was passionately devoted to Amaris's ideal of building a powerful Home Force, little suspecting the use to which this force would ultimately be put.

Selim reported to Amaris regularly throughout the latter's stay on Terra, and received policy decisions from him, but apparently had a completely free hand in implementing Amaris's policies. Though the Amaris family may have been tempted, none of them ever moved against Selim, as they feared Stefan's wrath more than they craved his power. Thus did the Rim Worlds Republic run smoothly in Stefan Amaris's absence.

Mohammed Selim was a good man who deserved to serve a better leader. He also deserved a better fate.

—From *The Best and the Worst: Personalities During the Civil War*, by Doniece Crain, Derf University Press, 2956

To further his own fortune, Richard Cameron passed the Taxation Edict of 2763, which placed the heaviest burdens on the Territorial States. Periphery inhabitants saw Richard's crippling edict as a direct violation of the Reunification Treaties, which guaranteed that no revenue legislation would be levied against the States without due passage in the councils of the Periphery states. That Richard Cameron had passed such a bill was proof that the Star League was about to resume a tyrannical style of rule. When the Territorial States refused to comply with his new taxes, Richard ordered General Kerensky to position 'Mech garrisons on key Periphery trade worlds. In small numbers at first, the worlds of the Periphery prepared, yet again, to defend against invasion. By 2764, the question of rebellion among the Territorial States was no longer an "if" but a "when."



Stefan Amaris   Richard Cameron

AN UNFLATTERING COMPARISON

If asked to come up with a suitable comparison to Richard Cameron from among the many rulers of Terra's long and bloody history, I would have to choose Caligula, the mad emperor of the Roman Empire. Both men exercised their legislative powers in a cavalier manner, with little concern for the consequences. Caligula made his horse Incitatus a senator, for example, and Richard once appointed his pet cat Fluffy as Court Chamberlain. Both despised the masses they ruled, and both believed autocracy to be the only viable form of government.

In their personal lives, these men had particularly lascivious and sadistic natures. Caligula is known to have raped more that one member of his family, while Richard maintained an incestuous relationship with his two sisters as the price for his continued support of their persons. Who would deny we are better off without such "leaders"?

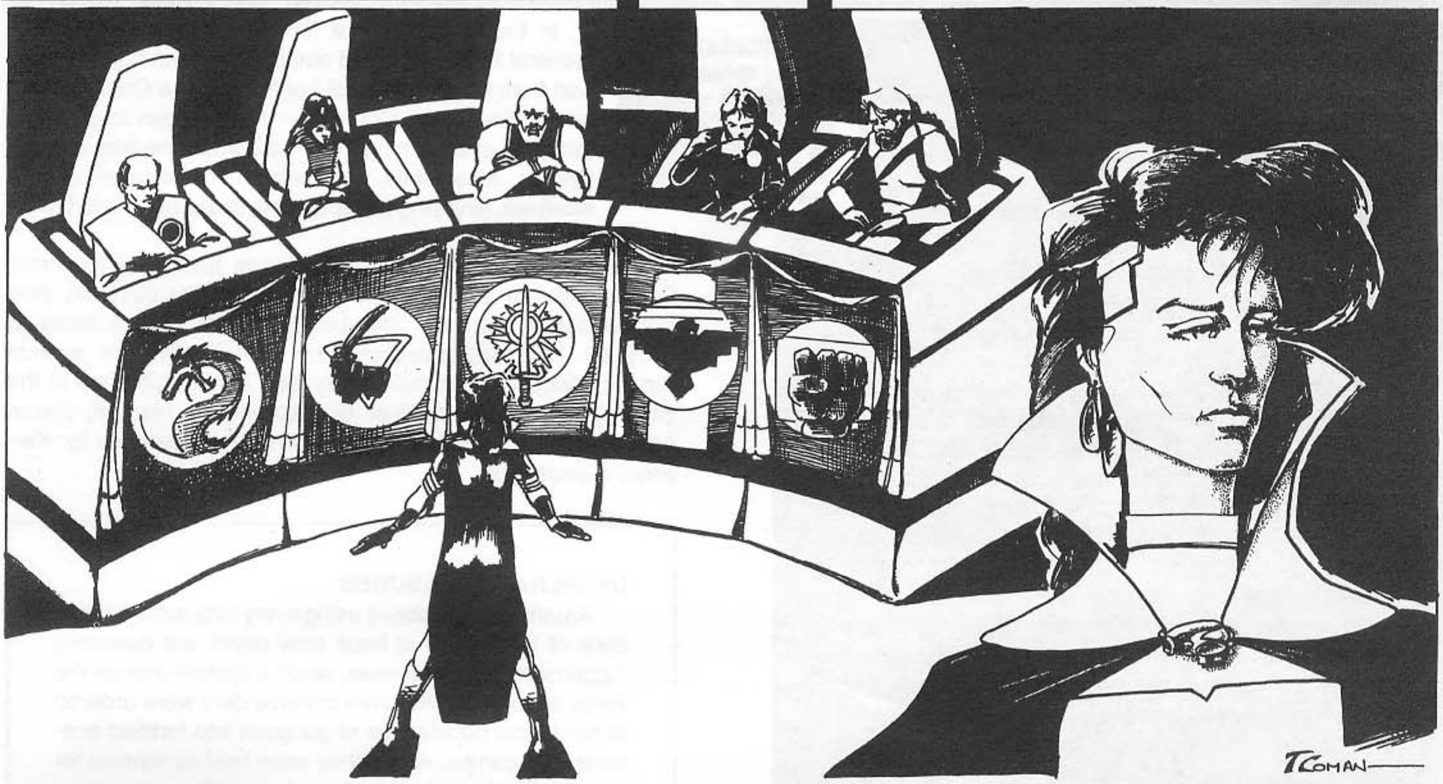
—From an underground Taurian propaganda pamphlet, collected in *Ohms for Peace,* edited by Richard Truth, Taurus Horse Press, New Vandenberg, 2767

THE AMARIS CRISIS

In light of the growing crisis, the Territorial States acted to protect their own as best they could. In June 2764, Janina Centrella proclaimed the right of Canopus to retain its own armed forces, immediately drawing upon her state's immense financial reserves to entice as many mercenary units as possible away from the Inner Sphere. By the latter half of the year, dozens of secret production centers in the Taurian Concordat were working night and day to produce 'Mechs and other war machines. While Richard Cameron dispatched more and more regiments to the Periphery, he was also negotiating a secret agreement with Stefan Amaris. Under the terms of this treaty, Amaris pledged to support Richard in any crisis.

The crisis finally came in 2765. In retrospect, it seems to have been engineered by Nicoletta Calderon. As offended as any of the Periphery Lords by the humiliation the High Council continued to inflict upon them, Nicoletta allowed New Vandenberg and 17 other Taurian worlds to secede from the Star League, while the Taurian Concordat itself officially remained a member. The High Council was in a quandary about how to react. On one hand, the worlds of the New Vandenberg group were clearly rebelling against Star League rule. On the other hand, these worlds were still members of the Concordat, which was a full member of the League. To attack the seceding planets would be an attack on one of the League's own member states.

The Council Lords got little help from Nicoletta, who told them in no uncertain terms that the rebellion concerned only her realm, and so was her problem, not theirs. She proceeded to do absolutely nothing about it, however, which frustrated the young and politically inept First Lord Cameron no end. In the second—and last—time that Richard Cameron ever met Nicoletta Calderon face to face, she informed him simply and directly that Taurian troops would never take up arms against Taurian citizens.



A SMALL PARADOX

In the midst of the New Vandenberg Crisis, the aging Beatrice Avellar died of natural causes. Succeeding Beatrice was her granddaughter, Allyce Avellar, who never quite comprehended what all the fuss was about. After meeting Aleksandr Kerensky, Stefan Amaris, and Richard Cameron, Allyce decide that she liked all three. Moreover, she could not believe that the nice Mister Amaris would kill the nice Mister Cameron, or that Kerensky would be going to war with him over it. So it was that she pledged the Outworlds Alliance to neutrality, because she felt unable to take sides. In this way, Allyce Avellar kept the Alliance out of a Civil War that would kill over one hundred million people, one of the great examples of a complete incompetent doing the right thing for the wrong reasons.

In 2772, Allyce Avellar's brother Simpson staged a palace coup in which he placed his sister under house arrest. The Executive Parliament refused to confirm a usurper as President, however, and some Parliamentarians even cited Allyce's political shrewdness at keeping the Alliance out of the Civil War. As a compromise, all parties eventually agreed upon Allyce's son David as the new President. Avellar ruled a state economically disrupted by his warring neighbors, but that was otherwise at peace.

Throughout the summer and autumn of 2765, Taurian and Star League reinforcements were hastily transferred to the Concordat border. Unable to do more than prevent the rebellion from spreading, Kerensky still felt compelled to defend the former unity of the League. While more and more Star League units were dispatched to the Periphery at Richard's command, regiments of Amaris's own Household Guard were taking their place. By November 2765, Amaris troops outnumbered the skeleton League garrisons that were all that was left in Terra. In late December, Amaris seized his chance. As ruthless as he was ambitious, Stefan Amaris executed the First Lord and every other member of the Cameron line and seized all the worlds of the Terran Hegemony in his own name.

BEGINNINGS OF COMSTAR

When the Kerensky/Amaris Civil War began in 2767, Nicoletta Calderon pledged neutrality toward the two. After the Civil War, during the dissolution of the Star League, Nicoletta Calderon left the most important legacy of her administration. In the final plenary meeting of the High Council, she was one of the primary voices backing the appointment of the Blessed Jerome Blake to the newly created ComStar.

Her arguments were remarkably straightforward. With the breakdown of the monolithic government that had unified the Human Sphere (however unjust its treatment of Periphery states), it was absolutely essential to maintain a single, neutral body that would keep alive the technology of hyperpulse generation so that communications among the galactic civilization of the Human Sphere would remain open.

Though irritated by the idea of the Star League taking any further actions, Minoru Kurita, Robert Steiner, Barbara Liao, and Kenyon Marik agreed to Blake's appointment, with John Davion abstaining.

Blake's work as ComStar Communications Director had precisely the effect that Nicoletta Calderon had predicted. As the Inner Sphere continues to consume itself in the depredations of the Succession Wars, the high levels reached by Star League technology have often been destroyed or forgotten. ComStar is nearly the only technocracy that has held up its end in keeping alive civilization as we know it.

—From *Orientation for Acolytes,* by Precentor Barbara Couthulis, ComStar Press, Terra, 2987

EXECUTION OF RICHARD CAMERON

The air was crisp, the day a bright December morning with the promise of good weather. Into this pleasant atmosphere came the recently arrived Lord Amaris to the First Lord's audience chamber, accompanied by a squad of Republican legionnaires. Amaris was all smiles as he embraced Richard Cameron, and his young protege never dreamed what was the source of Stefan's high spirits.

Having concluded the greetings and other pleasantries, Amaris congratulated the young noble on his decisiveness and maturity in handling the recent troubles in the Taurian Concordat. No sooner said, he brought forth a present for his young friend: a large box wrapped in bright, gilded paper and satin bows. Amaris was enjoying himself immensely as the First Lord unwrapped the present to find a second, similarly wrapped box inside. Both enjoyed the joke as Richard unwrapped another, then another, and yet another box, one inside the other, until he discovered a large hand laser, encrusted with jewels and bearing the Amaris crest on its pommel.

"This is a very special sidearm, my Lord, handcrafted for you, according to my exact specifications," said Amaris. "Allow me. Let me show you how it works."

Amaris drew the weapon out of its velvet container and held it up to the light so that the jewels cast their multi-colored splendor for all to see. An instant later, he brought the weapon down, muzzle first, into the face of the still-smiling First Lord. The last thing Richard Cameron saw was the crooked smile of his mentor as Amaris thumbed off the safety and fired.

As Cameron's head exploded in a shower of brains and gore, Amaris's guard cut down the Star Guards before they knew what was happening. Stepping over the decapitated body of the young Lord, Amaris strode to the velvet throne of the Star League. Seating himself, he savored the feel of its regal plushness for a moment, then dismissed a century and a half of progress with the words, "Clean up that mess."

Thus ended the noblest of Human experiments. Thus ended the Star League.

—From contemporary account by Sergeant Urial Ostermaine, 17th Amaris Lancers, 2766

Unwilling to accept Amaris's offers of friendship, Kerensky was faced with a dilemma. His first responsibility as a Star League officer was to carry out the last orders of his commander-in-chief, Richard Cameron, who had charged him with putting down the Periphery rebellion. As the new First Lord, Amaris quickly seconded these orders, preferring to keep Kerensky at arm's-length as long as possible. Now that Cameron was dead, however, Kerensky did not know whether or not to consider Amaris as the lawful ruler of the government. Though he risked charges of mutiny and desertion, Kerensky decided to turn toward Terra and to deal with the real threat at home.

In the Civil War that followed, neither Amaris nor General Kerensky could obtain more than nominal support from the five Council Lords. With the Cameron line now extinct, each Council Lord had begun to entertain thoughts of becoming the First Lord of the Star League himself. Meanwhile, they were content to sit on the sidelines, enjoying the spectacle of the two rivals bleeding themselves dry.

As Kerensky withdrew his regiments back into the Inner Sphere, system after system in the Periphery declared their independence from the Star League. In the years between 2766–80, Kerensky prosecuted his own, private war against Amaris, stripping practically every Star League garrison in the Inner sphere for use against the Usurper. For his part, Stefan Amaris hastily fortified entire continents in preparation for Kerensky's onslaught.

DESPERATE MEASURES

Amaris was not above using every dirty trick he could think of to stop, or at least slow down, the Kerensky juggernaut. In some cases, when a system was on the verge of collapse, Amaris's commanders were ordered to herd local populations at gunpoint into fortified concentration camps, where they were held as ransom for the garrison's safe withdrawal. In other instances, Amaris used prodigious amounts of biological and bacteriological agents to try to stop the Loyalists. As for Kerensky, compassion took a back seat to military necessity, as he attacked Amaris's positions regardless of how many hostages he controlled, while chemical agents killed as many civilians as they did combatants. Dams and reservoirs were destroyed, flooding croplands, and entire cities were incinerated to "save" them. Civilians suspected of being Amaris/Loyalist sympathizers—whose only real crime was being in the wrong place at the wrong time—were executed. Such was the nature of this Civil War, where there were no winners, only losers.

—From *War Without An Enemy,* by Arnold Bashurkoff, Terra University Press, 2812

System by system, world by world, city by city, and street by street, the Star League forces under General Kerensky continued their steady advance. By 2779, it was clear that Amaris was fighting a losing cause. In the wake of this realization, the Usurper ordered whole city populations—many of them sent to the front lines in leg irons—pressed into service. Such stopgap measures proved only moderately successful, however, as more and more troops began to desert to the Kerensky side.

House Amaris met its final, bitter end when, in the summer of 2779, Star League forces defeated the Usurper's last lines of defense along the Columbia River to the South and at Vancouver Island to the north. By the end of September Kerensky's forces reached the outskirts of Unity City and could see the Court of the Star League. General Kerensky personally led the final assault against the Imperial Palace and battered down its walls and doors in his *Orion* BattleMech. Stefan Amaris was captured on September 30, 2779.

Amaris was escorted to a guarded hotel suite while his fate was decided. Kerensky ordered that Amaris and his followers be treated in the same manner that his own men would wish to be treated if the situation were reversed. Amaris, not expecting such chivalry, quickly ordered all of his forces to throw down their arms and surrender. Thus ended the civil war. Amaris' fate was hotly debated until proof of some of the atrocities he perpetrated came to light. In the end Kerensky himself gave the firing squad the order to fire at the Usurper's execution.

KERENSKY'S ANABASIS

It was never clear to any of us why Kerensky took the course he did—the astrographic course, not his course of action (we all understood that). We never understood why he gathered his troops on New Samarkand, rather than Terra, where the final battle had been fought. When he jumped to the Dieron system, we naturally assumed he was on his way to confer with Kurita authorities. He might have been attempting to lay plans for a new government with Minoru Kurita, or perhaps he was concerned about the transition of the Dieron government from the now-defunct Terran Hegemony to Kurita rule.

After he left the Dieron system without stopping planetside, everyone assumed that speculation about conferences with Minoru Kurita must be correct, as the General's next stop was Styx. The speculation ended when he jumped from Styx to Deneb Algedi, rather than Telos, the usual course toward Luthien. We lost track of his ships after that, and had to admit we had no idea what he was up to.

We all know now what happened after—the jump from New Samarkand into the Periphery, and the silence ever since. I suppose it can be said that we still don't know why.

There is an odd sidelight to the whole business, though. In the backwaters of a world called Annapolis, there is a DropShip cult, one of those religions set up by primitive tribes that worship some advanced technological development from a more sophisticated culture. Anthropologists have found that the tenets of this religion follow the usual course (the miraculous visitors from the sky, their magical powers, the promise, either explicit or inferred, to return), but the anthropologists discovered something else as well. More than eight hundred kilometers from the nearest permanent structure, the natives of the Annapolis tribe have constructed a six-meter high statue of General Aleksandr Kerensky. It is a perfect likeness carved in solid granite, a type of stone that does not appear in nature on Annapolis.

—From *A Broken Phoenix Egg,* by Jean-Pierre Sorcer, aide to John Davion, Porthos Press, 2812

Like the Roman Empire, the Rim Worlds Republic was not dissolved on any specific date, but broke down gradually and irretrievably. (Theoretically, the Republic ended with the death of the Amaris family, but hundreds of other states have maintained their national integrity after the violent death of a ruler. A new ruler is selected, and the state goes on. That this was not the case in the Rim Worlds involved unusual circumstances that were largely determined by Amaris himself, and so it can be said that he sowed the seeds not only of his own destruction, but that of his polity as well.)

NO PLACE FOR A PACIFIST

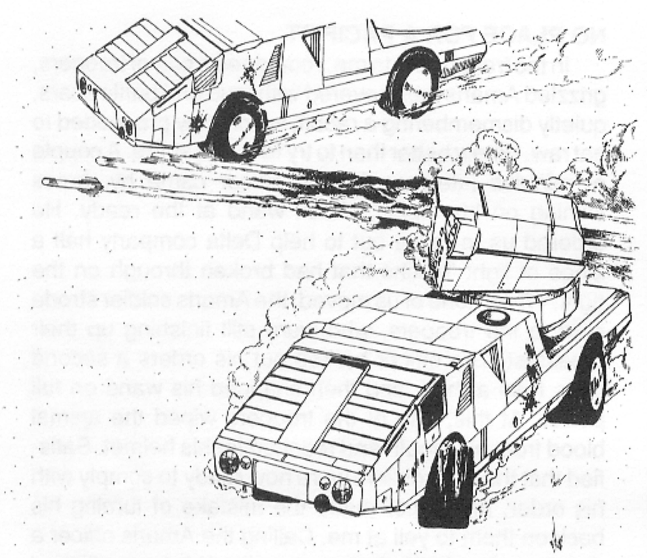
In the trench next to me, I could see a pair of troopers, grizzled Amaris men covered with mud and battle scars, quietly dismembering a rabbit, which they proceeded to eat raw. I knew better than to try to bum a share. A couple of minutes later, an Amaris officer came by, brass shining on his lapels, shock wand at the ready. He ordered us to move out to help Delta company halt a lance of light 'Mechs that had broken through on the right. When none of us moved, the Amaris soldier strode over to the troopers, who were still finishing up their breakfast. The officer barked out his orders a second time, then a third, and then snapped his wand on full power. At this, one of the troopers wiped the animal blood from his mouth and reached for his helmet. Satisfied that the two soldiers were now ready to comply with his order, the officer made the mistake of turning his back on them to yell at me. Calling the Amaris officer a dirty son of a whore, the trooper raised his laser rifle and shot him in two. That night, I figured it was time to go home.

—From *Involuntary Inductee,* by Mortimer Trenshir, Spinoza Press, 2784

The fighting against Amaris was so bitter that everyone involved wanted revenge. The Terran Hegemony was carved up between the Successor States, and the Lyran Commonwealth annexed several of the Rim Worlds, including the capital, which had returned to its original name by this time. This left the remains of the Rim Worlds in a governmental crisis, as anyone connected with the former government was to be excluded from the new regime, and in many cases prosecuted for war crimes. (Mohammed Selim was murdered by an angry mob in the streets of Terra Prime.) In addition, anyone who pressed a claim toward ruling by divine right, either as an Amaris or as someone whose ancestors the Amarises had persecuted, was summarily killed in the general bloodletting.

In the years following the Civil War, the only leaders capable of holding on to their offices, or even their lives, were on planetary or local levels, and most of them were strongmen. As their lines became established as dynasties, the vast Republic broke down into dozens of tiny Bandit Kingdoms. Where there had been a single state that rivalled the Successor Houses of the Inner Sphere, there are now three multi-world realms (not all of them Bandit-oriented) and dozens of individual planets, almost all of them still sunk in barbarism after more than two centuries.

The increasing isolation of the Rim Worlds was underscored by an incident that foreshadowed the First Succession War. One of the emerging pirate bands operating outside the Lyran Commonwealth staged a devastating raid on Bone-Norman, which so infuriated Archon Jennifer Steiner that she pulled defense forces from the Kurita border to defend Lyran worlds along the Periphery. It turned out that the pirates, along with as many as 20 other bands, had been hired and equipped by the Draconis Combine, which wanted to create a diversion from their own plans of attack. When Kurita forces landed on Gram and Trolloc Prime, the Lyran High Command knew they had been had.



The Bone-Norman incident brought home to the Lyrans that, unlike the other Inner Sphere powers, they would have three fronts rather than two, to defend in the coming war. Archon Jennifer took a highly pragmatic course of action. Reasoning that if the Kuritans could hire pirates to do their dirty work, then the Lyrans could turn the presence of the pirates to their advantage in subtler ways. In the next few years, the Steiner government negotiated treaties with several emergent Bandit Kings, offering them the incentive of nonaggression in return for rights to use Periphery worlds as staging areas for deep strikes into Kuritan territory. Naturally, with mutual nonaggression in the interest of the pirates as well as the Lyrans, the unstated implication was that the pirates would make all further raids upon Kuritan worlds exclusively.

Strangely enough, no coalitions of rival pirate bands evolved from this situation. Each pirate band was only out for itself. It did not matter to them if their neighbors were allied with Kurita, Steiner, or no one, as the pirates themselves could never come to any mutual-defense agreement. Nor was there honor among thieves. Pirate bands being independent, none of them respected the others' alliances, and they would steal as readily from each other as they would from Inner Sphere settlers.

This drove the Bandit Kingdoms deeper and deeper into isolation. It was a vicious circle. The more privateering went on in a particular sector of space, the less legitimate trade could take place between Inner Sphere and Periphery business interests. The less free trade, the more the Periphery worlds had to rely on privateering to supply the needs of their people. In those dark days, there were even experiments at reviving slavery to force laborers to work the fields and the factories. The Bandit Kings soon learned, as had slavers in centuries before them, that a stick without a carrot cannot be effective for long.

THE SUCCESSION WARS

Though largely untouched by the civil disorders within the Inner Sphere, the worlds of the Periphery still felt the effects of the Amaris-Kerensky conflict. The disruption of both trade and the delicate communications network linking the Inner Sphere with the Territorial States brought the Periphery Worlds more independence than they had ever dreamed of—or ever wanted, for that matter. In the closing decades of the 28th century, the currency of the Star League became worthless as more and more systems returned to barter and precious metals as the basis of their economies. With all efforts to elect a new First Lord of the Star League totally deadlocked, the withdrawal of Kerensky and over three-fourths of the regular Star League military began a process of disintegration throughout the Inner Sphere and the Periphery alike.

SHOES

The independent world of Comstock (now a part of the Marian Hegemony) was one of those that the Star League sought to dominate by disintegrating the economy. Though the planet had arable land, the Star League built factories and offered good-paying jobs to work them while promising that nearby agrarian worlds would supply food to Comstock in return for shoes. The leather for the Comstock shoe factories would be supplied by offworld Star League ranches. Machinery and replacement parts would also come from offworld. The people of Comstock were able to concentrate entirely on producing shoes for the people of other worlds, and as long as the Star League functioned, so did this system.

When the Amaris Civil War began, Comstock was cut off. Its people quickly fell to a subsistence level of existence. Because no one on Comstock had farmed the land for generations, they had none of the agricultural expertise needed to produce enough food to support a burgeoning population. When Marian exploration vessels landed on Comstock 20 years later, they found widespread famine, disease, and malnutrition.

They also found that the factories had continued to operate (the supply of leather from nearby Francas had continued, along with shipments of fresh meat), for the leaders of Comstock believed that the planet would one day rejoin another megalithic economic structure like the Star League and that people would again buy goods from their factories. All over the inhabited areas of Comstock were thousands of warehouses filled with shoes of all sizes, styles, and descriptions. Many of these warehouses are still standing, and some have not yet been emptied of their contents.

—From *The Development of the Marian Hegemony*, by Professor Frederick T. Bone, University of Luxen Press, 3028

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

With the Star League victory in the Periphery, League politicians and planners sought a strategy to forever bind the outworld planets to the Star League. The Star League's military hold on the Periphery was tenuous at best. With the general demobilization after the Reunification War, the League was barely able to garrison each planet with a single loyal infantry regiment. A concerted effort by the local population could result in that regiment being swiftly overwhelmed. Given communication and transportation time lags, it could take the Star League over a year to assemble sufficient forces to re-establish control on the rebellious planet, and even then, the League forces could face a long, bloody guerrilla war. Moreover, it is doubtful that the League leadership could muster sufficient political will to make the effort. Thus did the Star League seek an economic rather than a military solution.

The Star League Bureau of Economics, Agriculture, and Technology (BEAT) was publicly charged with rebuilding the devastated industrial base of the Periphery and then with integrating those economies into the Inner Sphere. It had a clandestine mission of economically pacifying those same worlds. BEAT made the Periphery economies as dependent on spaceborne commerce as possible. Groups of eight or more planets were declared a Co-Prosperity Sphere. The planets would then specialize in the manufacture or production of some basic item, such as petrochemicals, clothing, food, semi-conductors, machine tools, robotic industrial machines, and so on. No planet was economically self-sufficient. If a planet rebelled, its interstellar trade would be cut off, the economy would collapse, and the people starve.

While Co-Prosperity Spheres looked good on paper, they were totally unworkable in practice. Merely to provide transportation, the Periphery would need three times the commercial DropShip tonnage that the Inner Sphere used. In the seven Co-Prosperity Spheres that were actually formed, massive economic dislocations occurred. Stories abounded of warehouses filled with rotting food awaiting transportation that never came. Waste was rampant. Shortages followed by obscene surpluses of basic commodities occurred on every one of these planets. Food riots, a common wartime occurrence even in the Inner Sphere, occurred at regular intervals on all planets. Riots were also triggered by shortages of other items. Ferris suffered no less than four shoe riots during the five years of its membership in the 23rd Co-Prosperity Sphere. People rioted due to the lack of computer parts, sheet metal, fossil fuel, and food. In one case, they rioted because a DropShip carrying the planet's monthly allocation of toilet paper suffered a malfunction while uncoupling from its JumpShip and plunged into the sun. The situation was so bad that BEAT suspended the formation of Co-Prosperity Spheres in 2602, and by 2612, they dissolved all of them.

After the war, the Star League did not end its attempt to subjugate the Periphery economically; they just took a more pragmatic approach. Rather than making all of a planet's industry directly dependent on interstellar trade, they focused on two areas, power production and water purification. Fusion plants and water purification facilities are very capital-intensive installations, requiring a vast amount of high-tech machinery to construct and a constant flow of spare parts to operate. The investment needed to construct a facility to produce the necessary parts to build such an installation is enormous, but once built, such a facility can support the construction and subsequent maintenance of 500 power or water purification plants. Make the facility marginally larger and it could support over a thousand plants. It was the flow of these critical supplies that the Star League controlled.

The actual production facilities were located in the Inner Sphere, and built with Star League funds. Because of the large production runs and general economic efficiencies of the giant plants, spare parts could be sold profitably to Periphery facilities at prices that no Periphery manufacturer could match. Within 10 years, 94.8 percent of the Periphery's fusion power plants, and 81 percent of its water purification plants, depended on spare parts from the Inner Sphere. Of the Periphery's 237 small manufacturing firms supplying spare parts to these two industries, only 6 remained in business by 2620.

The Star League's problem was solved. By ensuring that no planet could stockpile more than one or two months of spare parts, it would take about six months before a rebellious planet's fusion plants or water purification installations failed. The planet's industry would grind to a halt and its population would begin to die of thirst. Only the most draconian measures by the planetary government could stop this eventual collapse. The Star League had achieved its objective, but in so doing, they sowed the seeds of the Periphery's downfall.

The First Succession War saw the massive destruction of the the industrial base of all the Successor States. Some of the first targets were those same massive production facilities whose products kept the Periphery under control. The remaining production was used to keep the Inner Sphere planets from totally falling into barbarism. The Periphery worlds had to make do with what was on hand.

The results were varied. On some planets, a strong leader took control and the planet was able to maintain a semblance of order and civilization. Other planets fell into total anarchy and civil war, which ceased only when the population fell to a level that could be supported by whatever power and water system the survivors could hobble together. Other planets became totally depopulated.

Even after 200 years of relative peace (at least compared to the Inner Sphere), no Periphery world has been able to rise from the ashes. Any world that starts to rebuild its industrial base on its own immediately becomes a target for water or technology raids by its neighbors and is quickly knocked back down. The Periphery worlds or alliances that are able to defeat raids by their outworld neighbors are normally large enough to attract attention from an Inner Sphere power, who will gladly take away their machines and knock them down again. These factors make it unlikely that a major industrial or political power will ever arise in the Periphery to threaten the Inner Sphere.

—From *An Historical Economic Analysis of the Periphery and its Consequences for the Current Balance of Power*, by Professor Lewis Samuel, ComStar Press, Terra, 3023

In the political vacuum created by Kerensky's unexpected departure for points unknown, Lord Minoru Kurita declared himself First Lord of the Star League, ushering in a new round of war that engulfed the Inner Sphere. With no strong "police force" to keep them in check, various social factions and political power blocks within the Periphery rose up to challenge the established order.

The first casualty was the general level of morality. Thousand of disillusioned, care-worn refugees from the Inner Sphere emigrated to the Periphery, bringing with them a new philosophy of moral recklessness. Known as the New Hedons, these individuals embraced a social creed dedicated to the proposition that Humanity was doomed to extinction. Rather than wasting one's time trying to ward off this inevitability, the New Hedons instead dedicated themselves to the enjoyment of life to the exclusion of all else. As they set up shop among the many worlds of the Periphery, entire planets were quickly transformed into orbiting pleasure palaces that far surpassed even the torrid abandon of the Magistracy of Canopus at its height. As these settlers awaited the inevitable "Dark Age of Man" to descend, they abandoned moral codes of conduct in favor of pleasure for its own sake.

FIRST SUCCESSION WAR AND THE PERIPHERY

A LOW PROFILE

This new isolationism was reflected in other parts of the Periphery as well, though it took different forms in each case. The diplomatic balancing act that the Outworlds Alliance had practiced so well for so long was becoming more difficult. This expanding, essentially pacific realm wedged like a buffer (but assuredly *not* one) between the two greatest military powers of the Human Sphere would inevitably have its problems. This was especially true because Alliance leaders did not have the option of offering their worlds as staging grounds as did the Bandit Kings.

Far worse for the Outworlders was the Kuritan attitude toward them. The militant samurai culture had nothing but contempt for peace-loving people, and refrained from crushing them only because they regarded the Davions and Steiners as worthier opponents. The Davions, meanwhile, regarded the Outworlders as a nuisance. On one hand, they offered no practical resistance to the Kuritans, and so were nearly useless for purposes of alliance. On the other hand, the Davions could not afford to see House Kurita conquer the Alliance. With Alliance worlds as staging areas for attacks against the Federated Suns, the Combine might become an unbeatable opponent.

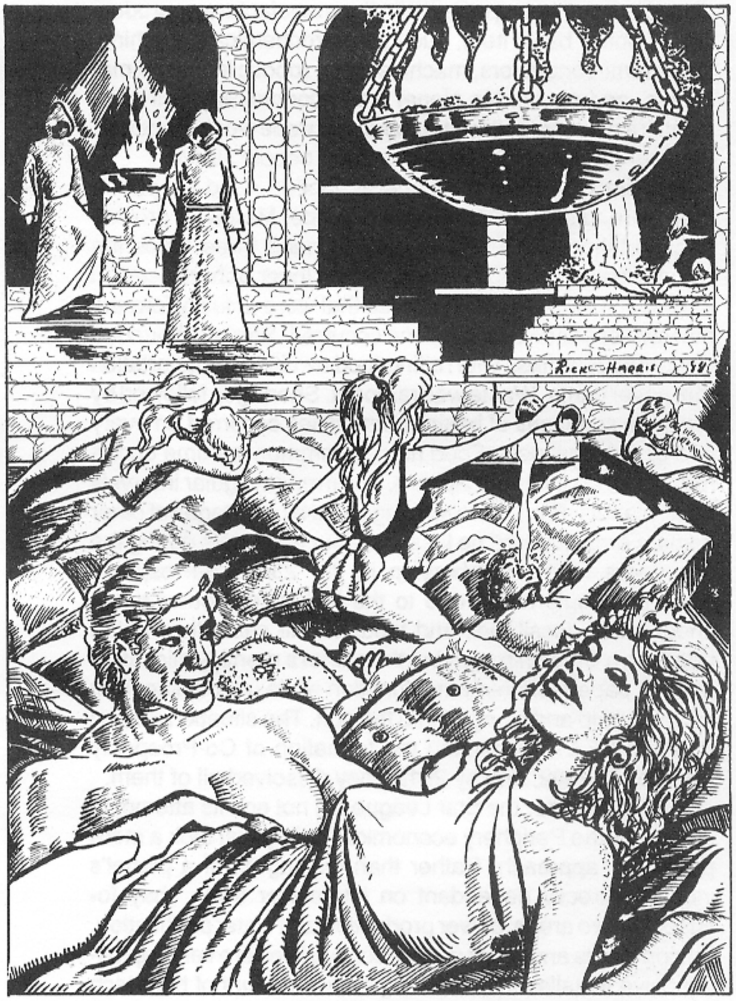
MISSIONARIES

We made our way into the communal bath chamber on the fourth underground level, below a panoply of multihued argon strobe lights. In the steam of the bath and the heat of the ceiling light, we were forced to strip down to the bare essentials. Those around us took little notice, being absorbed in the giving and receiving of pleasure. The room was filled with writhing, undulating bodies, several hundred jammed into the space of a hundred meters or so. The air stank of sweat and sex, and the cushions we lay on reeked of old wine and passion. Because of the surrounding cacophony, it was all we could do to hear ourselves think. At least three different bands were competing to be heard over the sounds of breaking glass and an assortment of grunts and groans that seemed scarcely Human. Somewhere in the distance, I heard a goat bleating his discomfort; from the garden beyond came the long howl of a dog—whether in pain or pleasure, I could not say.

After several minutes, a pair of lovely creatures sat down beside us. Without so much as a word, their bodies began to rub against ours in a manner that left no doubt as to their intentions. As we rolled about, I could see the wine-filled pools beyond, where dozens of bodies, young and old, slim and round, intertwined with abandon. From somewhere above us, I could hear the sound of someone being spanked amid raucous laughter. The last thing I remember before passing out was the sight of a group of young soldiers engaged in a collective attempt to tickle their female companion to death.

Brother Jonathan and I will be returning to the seminary next week, or perhaps the week after. I have to find Brother Jonathan first.

—From a Letter to Bishop Clayton Abarle, by Reverend Duram Lincoln, April 28, 3016, ComStar Archives, Terra



The Outworlders, therefore, kept as low a profile as possible during the First Succession War. The course of the war, as far as they were concerned, was in three stages. The Kurita offensive took several Davion worlds in the 2780s and 2790s, including Kentares IV. Following the Kentares Massacre of 2796, in which Coordinator Jinjiro Kurita ordered the entire population of the planet murdered in retaliation for his father Minoru's death, the Davions rallied to prevent further Kurita conquests. After nearly a decade of stalemate, the tide turned in the Davions' favor in the mid-2810s. By 2818, they had retaken substantial territory, and a new balance had been reached.

During the course of all three Succession Wars, the Alliance military has never participated in a battle.

DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

Neither the Taurian Concordat nor the Magistracy of Canopus has been so lucky. While the Canopians were soon reconciled to Star League influence, as personified by the presence of Marik investments, the Taurians' bitterness toward House Davion goes deeper. Further, the developing rivalry between the Concordat and the Magistracy had erupted several times into hostilities over possession of border worlds that both claimed. Though the two Periphery governments have been natural allies when circumstances demanded it in the current era, they were natural enemies because of the circumstances during the First Succession War.

In 2808, Chancellor Ilsa Liao made a peace proposal to Prince Paul Davion. She asked Davion to return the Chesterton worlds that Davion forces had wrested from the Capellan Confederation during the preceding two decades. In exchange, she offered her support of his claim to First Lordship of the Star League. Paul Davion was incredulous—not because the Star League was two decades dead, but because he believed his claim to rulership of the Star League was so strong that no one should attach strings to any offers of fealty. Though peace with Liao at this crucial point in the war would have assisted Davion efforts on the Kuritan front, thereby assuring an almost certain victory, Prince Paul answered Ilsa's proposal with an invasion of Ulan Batar and Farwell in 2809.

Whatever history's judgement of Paul's decision, the Canopians and Taurians could not have reacted more differently. The Canopians responded to the peace initiative with unbridled joy. Their economy was structured around tourism, and the primary offworld customers for their decadent goods and services were rich Liao and Marik vacationers. Since the start of the First Succession War, the members of this primary market had not been able to travel much outside their own realms, creating considerable privation for the Canopians. (They might have starved, in fact, had not the Marik diversification of the economy early in the Star League era not provided them with alternatives.) Prince Paul's rejection of the initiative was a bitter pill for the Canopians, who held a grudge against Davion interests for decades to come.

The Taurian reaction was just the opposite. Where Melissa Humphreys' enlightened rulership inclined the Canopians to be friendly toward the Free Worlds League, the Davions and Taurians remained traditional enemies. The Taurian attitude to peace between Davion and Liao was, therefore, not a hope that more Davion troops would be free to fight Kurita, but that the Federated Suns would then be able to open an entirely new front against the Concordat. Paul's rejection of Ilsa's offer was celebrated with dancing in the streets throughout the Concordat, as it meant that the Taurians themselves would not be sucked into the holocaust tearing apart the Inner Sphere.

CONCORDAT-MAGISTRACY WAR

Never have relations been so strained between Taurus and Canopus as during the early 29th century. When the Star League collapsed, the agreements establishing secure borders for Marik, Liao, Davion, Canopian, and Taurian space fell by the wayside. The major Houses of the Inner Sphere were too busy fighting one another to look outward for further conquest, but the proximity of the Canopians and Taurians brought them into conflict. Their ancient disputes over minor worlds such as Detroit, Spencer, Rokwellawan, and Portan erupted into violence in 2813.

A SEPERATE WAR

Magestrix Rwannah Centrella had other things on her mind prior to the Rokwellawan Crisis, what with the economic recession and a Liao naval blockade preventing House Marik from delivering a serum that was needed to fight an epidemic in Adhara City. The odd thing about national pride is that even if all sides of a dispute acknowledge that a property is not worth fighting over, the people attacked must defend themselves. If they do not, others will believe they may take anything from these people with impunity.

In any event, the worthlessness of a piece of property has never stopped fools from fighting over it, and Semyon Calderon was a fool. That the Star League's award of Portan and Spencer to the Concordat and Rokwellawan and Detroit to the Magistracy was both fair and equitable did not shake Calderon's determination to take as much ground as possible. His assumption that he needed more territory to stave off Davion imperialism was not only faulty (Prince Davion had his hands full with Lords Kurita and Liao), but by forcing the issue with the Canopians, Calderon destroyed any hope of meaningful alliance against either Liao or Davion.

—From *Condemned to Repeat: A Holistic Approach to History,* by Professor Adelaide Gronsky, Firestar Press, Cerberus, 3019

The Taurian-Canopian War was, in a sense, made possible by the First Succession War. At this point of the Inner Sphere conflict, Marik and Liao were at a standstill, with Marik gearing up for a new round of warfare with either Liao or Steiner. House Liao, on the other hand, still had two fronts engaged. Battles against the Draconis Combine were raging on such former Terran Hegemony worlds as Epsilon Indi, Bryant, and Ingress, while on the Davion front, the Capellans were attempting to take back the Chesterton worlds that the Federated Suns had captured. The Federated Suns had by this time retaken Kentares, but the battles on the Draconis and Capellan fronts still prevented them from moving against the Concordat. In short, Semyon Calderon wasted his realm's natural resources by starting a war to conquer worlds he failed to take, in fear of an invasion that would never come.

The invasion of Rokwellawan and Detroit was ill-conceived in other ways as well. General Natal Choud-houry, who replaced Admiral Gertrude Blake-Andrews as chief of the Taurian military after her disastrous efforts against the Canopians, quipped: "It was not a total loss—it can always be used as a bad example." When Blake-Andrews' forces jumped into the Rokwellawan system, they made no effort to avoid detection. Instead of arriving away from the optimal jump points, they went directly to a recharging station, where Canopian defense vessels spotted them immediately.

By the time Choudhoury's DropShips reached the planet's surface eight days later, the entire defense structure of Rokwellawan was on red alert, with DropShips that had been aboard the JumpShip that spotted them in hot pursuit. Caught red-handed in their "sneak" attack, most of the Taurian forces were shot out of the sky before they could even land, with the remainder little more than sitting ducks as they disembarked. The only unit that did not take heavy losses before surrendering was the 19th New Vandenberg 'Mech Company, whose commander, Major Josiah Brandamas, sent the Canopians a message of surrender even before opening the DropShip's doors. (Brandamas was decorated after he and his troops were returned to Taurian space, for he lost only his DropShip, rather than both DropShip and troops like the rest of the commanders on the raid.)

After this attack, the Canopians responded by raiding the Portan and Spencer systems. The retaliatory nature of the raids was the only conceivable justification for them, as the Canopians had until then been perfectly satisfied with the former Star League treaty. The Taurians, fighting now on their own ground and under much abler leadership, defeated the invaders on both worlds.

On Spencer, the Canopian force was directed at key transportation centers that controlled offworld traffic. As they attacked Capital City spaceport and the shipping centers for the planet's fishing industries, they found themselves in a trap. Anticipating the raids, Taurian defense forces under the command of Brigadier Hendras Mohandun had evacuated the civilian population and barricaded themselves in with several weeks' worth of provisions. They fought the invasionary force to a standstill until reinforcements arrived from offworld to surround the Canopian invaders and forced them to surrender as ignominiously as the Taurians had done on Rokwellawan.

In a more conventional battle, the Canopian invaders on Portan were simply run off the planet by a smaller, but better prepared, home defense force. Being a primarily agricultural world, Portan offered few key objectives; after the initial engagements, the defense forces staged strategic retreats into the countryside. As natives of the area, the Taurian defenders used their vastly superior knowledge of the terrain to confuse and harass the invaders in a classic demonstration of guerilla warfare. After the invaders had been snared into one trap after another, they were forced to retreat offworld to prevent themselves from being butchered.

After three such debacles, both the Canopians and Taurians were ready to agree to a cease-fire. A new treaty—indentical in all its particulars to the disputed Star League treaty—was ratified by both sides in 2814.

This was the only full-scale war in which any of the Periphery powers has participated in the Succession Wars era. Although there have been several disputes between Canopus and Taurus in the intervening two centuries, some of which have led to border skirmishes, all have been resolved by diplomatic means. Most of the fighting by Canopian troops has been against pirates from the nearby Marian Hegemony, who have raided both Marik and Canopian worlds many times. The Taurians, too, have had problems with pirates, though on a much smaller scale. The military of both realms are largely reactive forces, ready to defend their worlds, but rarely called on to do so.

THE BANDIT KINGDOMS

As communication links with the Inner Sphere broke down under the continued pressures of the Succession Wars, pirate raiders began to appear with increasing frequency and destructiveness. These predators were often the remnants of military units fleeing the havoc of war for the "safety" of the Periphery. Others were the tatters of political lost causes and abortive coups.

Among the more daring (and ruthless) of these parasites were the spacefaring soldiers of fortune that gathered on the planets Santander V and Oberon VI, which became known as the Bandit Kingdoms. One of the more powerful of these bandits was Colonel Hendrik Grimm, the ex-Lyran Commonwealth commander of the 65th Lyran Regulars. Having settled on Oberon VI, Grimm recruited a variety of renegade soldiers with no allegiance. It was not long before this cold-blooded leader's reputation for cruelty had spread throughout the Inner Sphere. With more than a regiment at his disposal, Grimm ranged far afield, often attacking planets as distant as Rasalhague and Black Earth. He and his men struck unprotected settlements without warning, taking what they could, and destroying what they could not. Prisoners taken during such raids were later pressed into slave labor, with nothing to look forward to except years of savage mistreatment.

As technology levels declined and pirate raids increased, many Periphery inhabitants sought safety by moving ever further outward into the far reaches of space. Salvaging what they could from shattered lives and shattered dreams, many formed fiefdoms and colonial compacts around charismatic individuals who offered security. Among the first of these new associations was the Lothian League, a collection of ice-and-snow planets beyond the Canopus Magistracy, created in 2815. Settled by scientists and academicians from the Taurian Concordat, these worlds were discovered to be rich in natural radioactives. Turning their good fortune into a semblance of security, the colonists traded the radioactives for mercenary contingents.

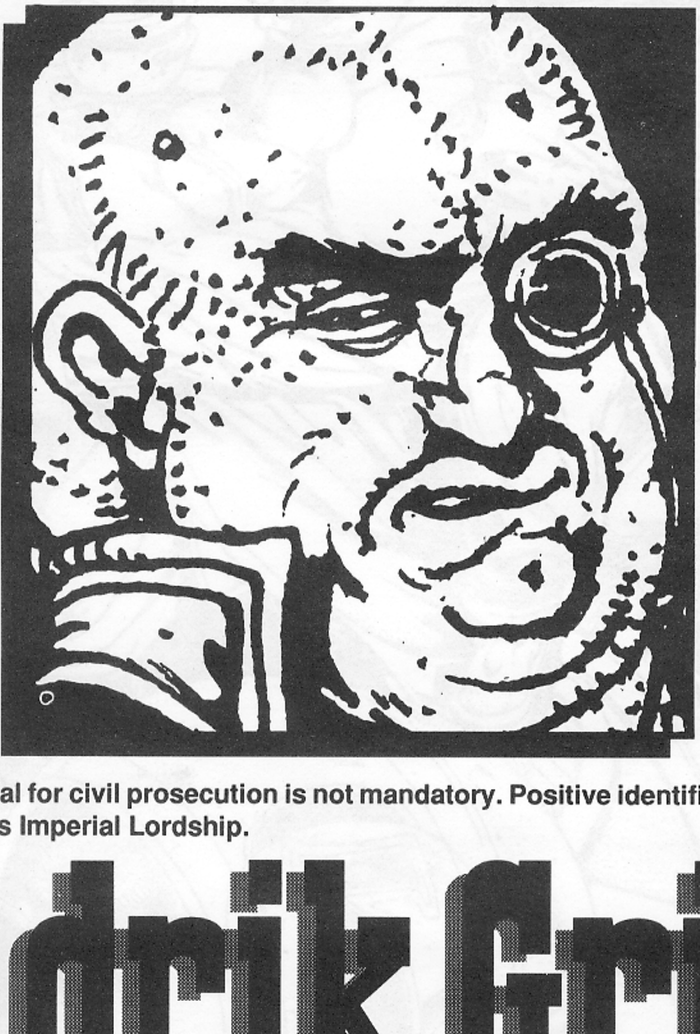
Other splinter groups coalesced around the fragments of interstellar trade and commerce. One such case is that of the Marian Hegemony, outside of the Free Worlds League near the Magistracy of Canopus. Centered on Alphard IV, the Hegemony contains the remains of the once-influential Alphard Trading Corporation, which was decimated by Kerensky's forces and in later conflagrations. The Hegemony established economic and military control over eight planets while maintaining surprisingly high standards of living.

As resources dwindled, government clashed with government and world clashed with world. A new wave of barbarism and atrocity arose, in which planets changed hands again and again in the space of several months. In this ebb and flow, many sought to hold back the tide of destruction by reaching deep into the past for solutions. Most worlds became feudal states, supporting petty aristocrats by force of arms and such booty as could be obtained at their neighbor's expense. Others, such as the planet Essex's World, hired out their people as cannon fodder for the quarrels of others. Still others, like the the Fiefdom of Randis, formed local groups of religiously inspired warriors, modern-day Knights-Templars who, having rejected the horrors of the modern age, turned their backs on the rest of Humanity. On many planets, law quickly disappeared, and order was maintained only by whoever was fastest on the draw.

7
LAUBENSTEIN .88.

WANTED

Be it known that a price of 225,000 K-Bills has been levied by the Ministry of Peaceful Order and Honor against the person of Hendrik Grimm for his numerous crimes of Murder, Rapine, Destruction of Personal Property, Arson, Grand Theft, Assault of Draconis Government Officials, Counterfeiting, Forgery, Piracy, and other crimes against the State too numerous to mention.



Interested parties can obtain information regarding the last-known whereabouts of this Most Heinous Villain at the offices of the Rasalhague Bureau of Official Information. Payment of said reward will be tendered immediately upon proof of this individual's capture and/or elimination at any Draconis Combine Civilian Guidance Corps Center.

The return of this criminal for civil prosecution is not mandatory. Positive identification of the werewolf, dead or alive, is sufficient for His Imperial Lordship.

Hendrik Grimm

225,000 K-Bills!

—Reward poster, Rasalhague, 2987

SECOND SUCCESSION WAR

The Inner Sphere powers arrived at a shaky truce in 2821, due mainly to the total debilitation that came in the wake of more than three decades of all-out warfare. Instead of acknowledging that further warfare was counterproductive to their goals, the Lords of the Inner Sphere concluded that limited warfare (the bombing of exclusively military targets, rather than destroying an entire world's industrial base, for example) was the best way to press their claims. The peace lasted only seven years before the Second Succession War began in 2828.

House Kurita's 2825 invasion of the Lyran Commonwealth was followed by House Liao's preemptive strikes against the Federated Suns and the Free Worlds League in 2828. It was not long before every Inner Sphere power had again declared war on each of its immediate neighbors. None of this had any direct effect on the Periphery alliances, however. Though the Free Worlds League once invaded the Circinus Federation, no Periphery government has taken part in either the Second or Third Succession Wars, though bandit raids have continued steadily throughout the last two centuries.

TACTICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Though the Periphery worlds were not directly involved in the Second or Third Succession Wars, their leaders learned some new tricks from their Inner Sphere neighbors for their own small-scale military or pirate battles. For example, Helmar Valasek, Bandit King of Santander V, has often used textbook Kurita tactics to raid Kurita worlds. In one disastrous Kurita attack on the Lyran planet Thorin in 2840, bad weather caused the light 'Mechs of the attackers to lose the advantages of speed and maneuverability. In response, Yoguchi Kurita himself devised a system of bad-weather combat in which pairs of light 'Mechs would engage a single heavy 'Mech, while another light 'Mech would lay down covering fire to prevent another heavy enemy 'Mech from coming to the rescue.

Seeing the value of this tactic, Valasek employed it in a deep raid on Susquehanna in 3024. Though Susquehanna is usually a temperate place, as luck would have it, the worst storm in three years was raging around the South Central Oat and Rice Grainery when Valasek's DropShips landed. The Kuritan defenders were *Atlas*es and *Warhammer*s, but Valasek's light 'Mechs used the weather to their advantage by concentrating fire on the heavier 'Mechs' knees after the enemy heavy 'Mechs got stuck in the mud. Once the heavy defending 'Mechs were immobilized, it was a simple matter of staying out of range while units from the aerospace contingent loaded the grain onto the pirate DropShip.

In another example, the Canopian military has used Marik tactics against bandits from the Marian Hegemony. After ComStar laid down a Communications Interdict against House Marik in 2837, Capellan units easily captured several Marik worlds, forcing Charles Marik to agree to reparations with ComStar so that his interstellar communications could resume. Before he did so, however, Anatoly Tansikoff, commanding general of the Defenders of Andurien, had conceived a ruse for diverting a sneak attack and at the same time turning the raiders' tactics against them. Because pirate attacks usually depend on the element of surprise, bandits often strike at night. With the aid of heat-seeking weapons, they can zero in on targets, such as power stations or factories, that might otherwise be hidden by conventional camouflage. The best defense against such raids is to prepare against sneak attacks.

TROUBLE IN RIVER CITY

Hampden's Holdfast was something of a misnomer. Though Sir Percival Hampden owned much of the planet, other ranchers continued to make good their claims at his expense.

The Marshal did his best to keep the peace, but his battered *Phoenix Hawk* was at least 50 years old. If it wasn't for the automated fire-and-forget programs he'd salvaged from Dastardly Dan's old *Wasp,* why he'd never have survived this long as a peace officer. Now, don't get me wrong. The Marshal is a good man and a good MechWarrior, but he's got only one machine and five hundred square kilometers of trigger-happy ranchers and settlers who shoot first and ask questions later.

Rumor has it that the Dalton gang is back in the Mesa Verde hills. A train load of bauxite ore was hijacked down in New Laredo last week, and people here think it was the Daltons who done it. Over in Carson Central, a lone gunner in an *Ostsol* robbed the Centrex Electronic Bank. Folks that saw him say he looked a darn sight like 'ole Jesse. I hope that's all posh and nonsense, as the last time the Daltons slugged it out over in New Richmond, they had at least a pair of *Stinger*s and *Cicada*s, as well as a *Clint* or two. If they're as fast as they used to be, that could mean trouble, right here in River City.

Reckon we'll be looking for a new Marshal pretty soon. Too bad, 'cause this one had potential. Lasted more'n three weeks.

—From *Bonanzas And BattleMechs: A Collection of Western Yarns For Modern-Day Buckaroos,* by Patrick O'Keefe, Calloway Press, 2997

In 2963, Sandrella Raventhir, commander of the Thraxa garrison, set a trap for Marian bandits based on Tansikoff's theories. It was not until 2978, three years after Raventhir had retired from active service, that the bandits fell into the trap. Dummy installations had been set up in rural areas of Thraxa to simulate the power usages of a major industrial complex. Raiding an "industrial complex" that did nothing and went nowhere was disorienting to the bandits, who lost their heads when they found an entire regiment of BattleMechs bearing down on them. The pirates were routed and Raventhir vindicated in her advocacy of this "monumental waste of energy."

Even the tiny Lothian League has used Inner Sphere tactics against the much larger Circinus Federation. Both alliances claimed the colony world of Dersidatz (which the Circinians had christened with the equally strange name of Blantleff) because each side wanted to breed a large native animal for meat. In the eleven years from 2992 to 3003, small settlements of Circinians and Lothians tended their herds and lived in peaceful coexistence. The prevailing attitude was the old Periphery philosophy that, "Out here, there's room enough for everybody." This would soon change, however, for some Circinian bureaucrat who had never been to Blantleff decided one day that the planet must be either Circinian or Lothian, but that it ought to be the former. (There is some evidence that the Lothian settlers were unaware of the Circinian settlers' existence prior to the conflict. There were, after all, only a few hundred of each, and they lived hundreds of kilometers apart.)

The only university-educated member of the Lothian colony, a man named Blatz, had read of the evasion tactics developed by the residents of Kentares IV to escape Jinjiro Kurita's massacre. The objective for the Lothians, as for the Kentarans, was not only to survive search-and-destroy missions in which aerospace forces and BattleMechs hunted down unarmed civilians. They must also stay in touch with offworld communications centers so that the homeworld would know what was happening to them. The few Kentarans who had survived did so in part by retracking, that is, by following the troops that were hunting them down and keeping just out of sight behind them. (A few of the bravest even stole food from the lightly patrolled bases when the Kurita soldiers were out trying to hunt down and kill them.)

The Lothians on Dersidatz were nomads who knew when to expect a DropShip to bring them supplies and to take their livestock offworld, and so would send out a signal beam at the appropriate time. After the first raid by Circinian troops, the survivors sent out a distress call and shut off all power to their broadcasting equipment until the next DropShip was due. In the meantime, they moved constantly in the same direction that the Circinian attackers had taken after destroying their base, and thereby managed to move always in the wake of the people searching for them. When the Lothian ship arrived with help, the settlers' distress signal led it to the Circinians' rear, which they had not bothered to secure. After the Lothian forces won a decisive victory here, the Circinians, who are busy with difficulties elsewhere, have not attempted to recolonize.

CONQUEST OF CIRCINUS

A lull in the fighting of the Second Succession War allowed House Marik an opportunity to carry out one of the few effective campaigns against Periphery pirates. Under Captain-General Charles Marik, the famous Eridani Light Horse mercenaries led a drive to take the Steiner worlds of Irian and Megrez, then continued on into the heart of the Circinus Federation. This came as a complete surprise to the pirates, who had been raiding border worlds for generations without fear of counterattack by the major powers. (Indeed, the nearby Lothian League had recently been created to offer enough mutual defense that Circinian bandits could no longer raid their worlds with absolute impunity.) The Marik invasion must have been an even bigger shock to the decent, ordinary people of Circinus, who for the most part remained ignorant about the real nature of their offworld "trade."

It has often been said that the best defense is a good offense, but for the Circinians, it worked in reverse. Being geared up totally for offense, the Circinians were totally unprepared to take up a defensive position. When the Marik forces jumped into the Circinus system and dispatched their DropShips, disguised as trading vessels, toward the capital, the Circinians did not even bring their forces to a state of alert. The invaders began with a preemptive air strike against the only major military installation within three thousand kilometers of the capital, napalming the Circinian aerospace vessels and BattleMechs at will. Then they moved on to land a single DropShip in Circinus Park near a scenic pond that lay before the Presidential Palace. The Circinian government surrendered without a shot being fired.

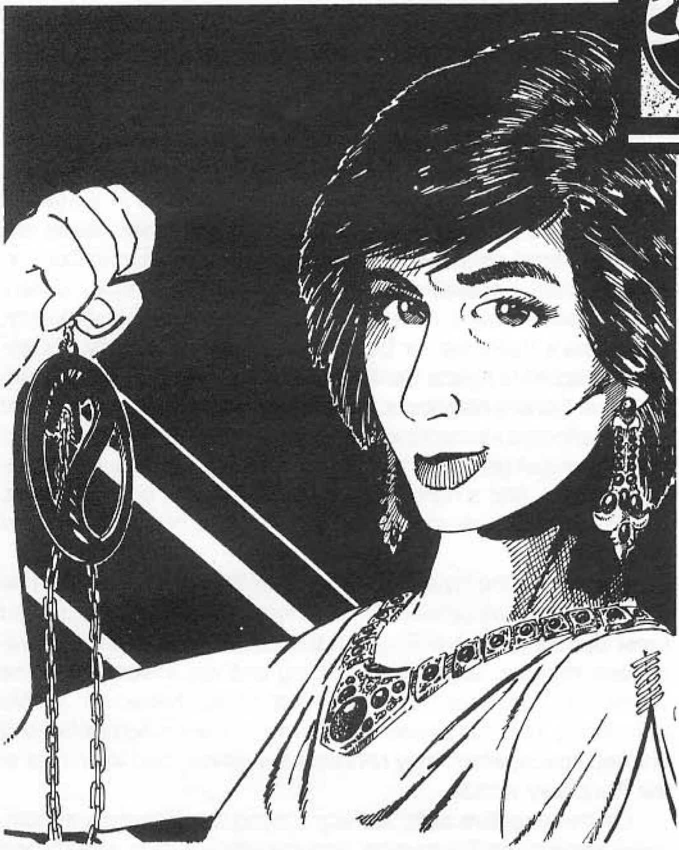
At this point, Charles Marik failed to press his advantage. As a man who was first and foremost a soldier, Charles had little interest in political subtleties and completely overlooked the political opportunity he might have won from the Circinus invasion. He might have taken a lesson from Melissa Humphreys' governorship of three centuries earlier by initiating a propaganda campaign to win over the people of Circinus. He might even have arranged economic incentives to encourage an alliance between the two. As it was, he imposed the standard occupation force, earning his House the undying hatred of the Circinians. The occupation lasted for decades, ending only when Marik-Steiner peace accords fell through and Philippa Marik needed the Circinian occupation force along the Steiner front. To this day, the Circinians thoroughly detest the Free Worlds League.

IGNATIUS CALDERON

In stunning contrast to the Inner Sphere powers, the three remaining major Periphery governments have been remarkably free of crises during the Succession Wars. The Taurians, for example, have been able to go their own way without fear of war because one Davion prince after another has had his hands full fighting the Kuritans on one front and the Capellans on another.

All three realms have, nevertheless, had their share of problems, along with dynamic leaders to deal with them. Perhaps the greatest of these was Ignatius Calderon, who ruled the Taurian Concordat from 2842–84 and resolved the constitutional crisis of 2860. The major opposition party in the Concordat had raised a cry against the violent crime and dishonest business dealings that plagued the realm. Taking a radical position, the Loyal Oppositionists recommended that the Taurians' most basic constitutional protections be suspended. They proposed lie detector tests for anyone questioned by a policeman, presumption of guilt for anyone accused of a crime (unless they could pay the court costs for a trial to prove their own innocence), and censorship of any publication critical of the government. In spite of the Concordat's centuries-old traditions of civil liberties, the crime situation had become so severe that the Loyal Oppositionists won enormous popular support for their promise to "clean up society."

Extremism begets extremism, and some libertarians who opposed the Oppositionists took to violent protest as a means of preventing the creation of a police state. Several Oppositionist offices were bombed in the five years leading up to the crisis, at least one Oppositionist politician's car was attacked and overturned, and several other Opposition leaders had garbage (and worse) thrown at them during public appearances. Their response was that this, too, was crime, and that political criminals who committed acts of civil disobedience should be treated like any other criminal. (They also began to demand loyalty tests for anyone who wanted to stay out of jail.) As distasteful as the Oppositionists' ideas were to a freedom-loving people, the severe public backlash against the bombings made the Oppositionists even more popular as their platform became more outrageous.



Through it all, Ignatius Calderon remained unflappable, and that may have done more to preserve the Taurians' freedom than any other factor. At a time when everyone around him was losing his head to either anger, hysteria, or downright paranoia, Ignatius's coolness was a calming influence.

In an historic address to the people of the Concordat, Protector Ignatius argued from a pragmatic point of view. The government of the Concordat could not govern effectively, he said, unless the people retained the very liberties that the Oppositionists wanted to destroy. Without a free press, for example, the Protector would never know the true will of his people on a particular issue, and without the presumption of innocence, the courts could not truly evaluate the evidence of guilt. (He further argued that it was cold comfort for an innocent person falsely convicted of a crime to reflect that he was safe from crime in the streets if he could not get to the streets because he was locked in a cell with the criminals he wanted to avoid in the first place.) The speech concluded with the Protector's vow to prosecute all acts of violence within the realm, including acts of political violence, though he stressed that he would never condone the abrogation of any citizen's rights.

It was not until the political analysts reported on the speech that anyone noticed that Ignatius had not mentioned the Inner Sphere by way of contrast. He had left it to his audience to draw the conclusion that without their civil liberties, they might as well be Capellans as Taurians. In the end, Ignatius succeeded in turning the tide of anti-libertarian sentiment. For the rest of his long reign, his personal popularity prevented it from ever arising again.

THIRD SUCCESSION WAR

RONAINE AVELLAR

An even deeper crisis affected the Outworlds Alliance in 2964. In one of Ronaine Avellar's first acts of office, she dispatched Eugenio Rosario to Luthien as her ambassador to the Draconis Combine. Hohiro Kurita, the new Coordinator of the Draconis Combine, hoped to take advantage of his position at the head of a new administration to bypass existing treaties in favor of new ones that he would negotiate "from a position of strength." When Rosario refused, under orders from Ronaine Avellar, Hohiro executed the Alliance ambassador. This act flaunted every principle of diplomatic immunity that made interstellar dealings possible.

Ronaine faced a serious dilemma. She could not ignore the murder of a diplomat, yet the Alliance could not continue to exist if she antagonized either of her powerful neighbors. She knew that the Kuritans would as soon conquer the Alliance as look at it, while the Davions could easily swallow up her sector of space in the vastness of their state. Her solution to the problem was as straightforward as it was ingenious.

Avellar agreed to renegotiate all treaties with the Draconis Combine, but only on condition that the new treaties favor the Outworlds Alliance. Hohiro Kurita, an audaciously cruel man who nevertheless appreciated audacity in others, agreed to meet with Ronaine on Luthien. Privately, he promised his nobles that the new treaties would ruin the Alliance.

It was a promise he could not keep. When Ronaine arrived on Luthien, she presented Hohiro with a gift "as a gesture of good will." It was a supply of a rare radioactive sufficient to power a dozen BattleMechs, a gift that greatly surprised a warlord with 'Mechs poised to devastate her realm at the drop of a pin. As the conference wore on, Avellar gradually revealed the information, piece by piece, that her people had lately been busy colonizing new worlds, that mining operations had begun on some of them, that promising loads of radioactives were being produced, that within months there would be enough 'Mechs on every Alliance world to make their conquest far more expensive than they could ever be worth, and that there would be enough radioactives left over to supply all the needs of the Davions, the Alliance's other friends.

Hohiro Kurita was not a man to be intimidated, but he was no fool. He reasoned that if Ronaine was giving him a substance of such enormous military value, it must indeed be abundant in the Alliance's newly colonized worlds. Discretion being the better part of valor even for a man who lives by the way of *bushido,* Hohiro acceded to all of Ronaine's demands in the new treaties, along with official apologies for the "unfortunate incident" involving Ambassador Rosario. He later informed his nobles that his plan was that the treaties would ruin the Alliance slowly. It would not happen in his lifetime, he said, but his son would one day reap the rewards of what Hohiro had sown. The Coordinator also vowed that he would never negotiate with a woman again.

It had all been a bluff. There were no new colonies. The radioactives Ronaine had given Hohiro did find their way into Kurita BattleMechs, but those 'Mechs were never used against the Outworlds Alliance. Ronaine's gamble had paid off.

RENAISSANCE IN PHILOSOPHY

Though battered and bloodied by piracy, torn by internal revolt, and hammered by dictators, the people of the Periphery have survived. Though most were unable to throw off the yoke of servitude to petty princelings, a handful managed to hold out hope for their fellow creatures. New, enlightened philosophies emerged in the Periphery during the late 2900s, each adapted to conditions in a particular part of the galaxy and offering a plan for social unity.

The first of these new philosophies was the Creed of the Far Lookers. Led by Aramis Dunn, a minor noble at the Taurian Court, the Far Lookers dedicated themselves to the proposition that Humankind's future lay neither in the Inner Sphere, nor even in the Periphery, but beyond, in continued expansion among the stars. Dunn's adherents began to agitate for the allocation of resources toward further exploration beyond the Periphery.

Though little more than a fringe group at first, the Far Lookers harkened back to the emotional appeal of man's age-old love of adventure. Beginning in the closing months of the 2990s, they were able to motivate people with power and money to finance dozens of new colonies beyond the outer rim of the Concordat. Though many of these initial efforts failed miserably for want of necessary technology, a few survived, and with them, the hope of a brighter tomorrow.

Not all the philosophies to emerge from the Periphery were positive, however. Among the battered worlds of the defunct Rim Worlds Republic, the Antithesis Creed grew rapidly because of the belief that everything of Terran origin was, by definition, bad or misguided. A variety of anarchist societies that supported this belief sprang up along the Periphery's Lyran-Draconis border. Rejecting anything and anyone who might impose order on them, these cults used violence to "protect" the sanctity of the Rim.

The Inheritors, an offshoot of the Antithesis Creed, are a religious order based in the remnants of the Rim Worlds Republic. Followers of this creed firmly believe that the Periphery states will be the inheritors of the Inner Sphere after the Successor States have destroyed themselves. Their aim is to preserve their numbers and their technologies until their Order leads a vast, new migration from the Periphery back into the Inner Sphere, to claim dominion over the charred remains of the former empires.

A relative latecomer to the philosophical spectrum, the Pan-Humanists, followers of Herodias Ap Gwynn of Ramora (2953-3013), support the proposition that all Humanity is a common entity with a common goal. Thus do the followers of the Pan-Humanist doctrine work to bring about the resolution of political and social differences between the present governments. Often working as healers and teachers, this service-oriented brotherhood has done more than the combined efforts of the entire Star League to bring about a social reunification of mankind.

The Omniss also took hold in agricultural communities, especially those of the Outworlds Alliance. Adopting a philosophy and a way of life, the Omniss are convinced that the rise of technology is responsible for all the ills of history (the Succession Wars being a prime example). Adherents reject all technology and avoid contact with worlds that seek to spread the "contagion" of their sciences. A well-organized religious infrastructure has developed among Omniss communities to support this proposition, while numerous Omniss "missionaries" attempt to undermine technological development in the Periphery.

As each of these creeds developed and matured, the peoples of the Periphery began coming together once again. This intellectual renaissance in the Periphery has given its peoples something they have not had in centuries: hope for a new tomorrow.

CONCLUSION

There is little doubt that the populations of the Periphery have had more than their share of suffering over the centuries. Many place the blame for such troubles on the Star League, and not without good reason. There are indications, however, that times are changing. All the Periphery states, whatever their size, seem to be in a state of transition, either from one extreme or to the other. Some are moving toward greater social stability, as in the Taurian Concordat, Circinus Federation, and Oberon Confederation. Others seem headed toward greater and viler barbarity, as in Astrokaszy, Morgraine's Valkyrate, or Butte Hold. In the Magistracy of Canopus, Magestrix Kyalla Centrella, far from avoiding contact with her Inner Sphere neighbors, has sought a clandestine agreement with disaffected elements within both the Free Worlds League and with separatist groups in the Capellan Confederation. If negotiations, timing, and a hundred other problems can be worked out, the Magistracy may expand at the expense of these two rival governments.

Out among the Hyades Cluster, ComStar activists have done much to repair ties between the shattered Taurian Concordat and Inner Sphere traders willing to make a quick C-Bill. As communications improve, substantial building and expansion within the Concordat becomes more and more likely. Moreover, recent indications from our agents suggest vast new resources beyond charted space, which may revitalize the devastated industries of the Periphery worlds.

On the negative side, literacy among the Periphery's multitudes remains on the decline, and the institutions of slavery and feudalism continue to spread at an alarming rate in the tiny, independent states. Further, the general standard of living has fallen drastically from what it was in the days of Aleksandr Kerensky, while the region's military potential is equally dismal. This lack of military potential may actually serve as a blessing in disguise, for the warlords of the Inner Sphere find little reason to waste precious resources on yet another Reunification War.

Meanwhile, the Inner Sphere tends to look on the Periphery peoples as poor cousins. They seem not to recognize the political maturity of the Outworlds Alliance, Magistracy of Canopus, or Taurian Concordat, or to acknowledge the pockets of culture and philosophy scattered about the Periphery, nor do they seek out the contributions some people or places of this distant region might make to Inner Sphere cultures.

For their part, the peoples of the Periphery tend to be fiercely independent, a psychological state that contrasts dramatically with the economic dependence imposed on them centuries ago by the Star League. Having traveled so far from their homeworlds to be quit of interference from others, the inhabitants of the Periphery are a special breed, with a special point of view. It may be this mindset of fierce independence, rather than the vastness of space, that truly separates the Periphery and the Inner Sphere.

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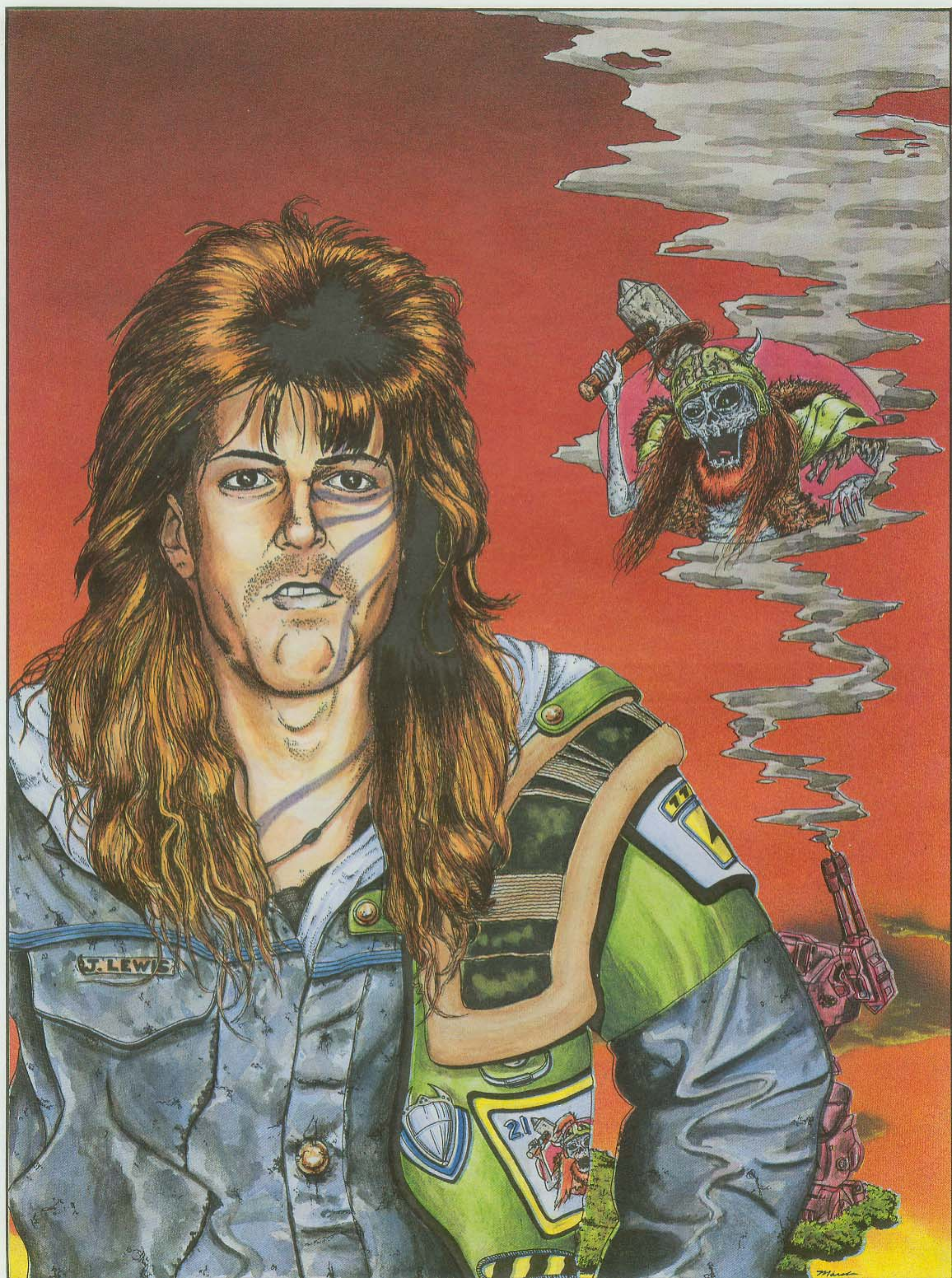

J. LEWIS
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TAURIAN CONCORDAT

Of the many states in the Periphery, the Taurian Concordat maintains the closest resemblance to a Successor State. Under the direction of House Calderon, the highly independent Taurians have a strong central government, a high literacy rate, and a strong military. They appear to be the Periphery community most likely to survive the next century, as well as to become a leader in Periphery affairs and even an influence on the Inner Sphere.

The Taurian Concordat began as a desperate venture into the unexplored space of the Hyades Cluster. Beyond the reach of Inner Sphere governments, the Calderon expedition colonized mineral-rich worlds and quickly transformed them into centers of political and social equality. In turn, these worlds attracted thousands of refugees uprooted by wars in the Inner Sphere.

As early as the mid-24th century, the Taurians were forced to fight aggressors from the Inner Sphere. The Concordat maintained a tense state of armed neutrality in the Age of War but, unlike its Inner Sphere counterparts, it also devoted a major portion of its resources toward improving life for its citizens. On occasion, the success of the Taurian way of life benefited the Inner Sphere as well, as when the Federated Suns revamped its educational system along Taurian lines in the first decade of the new millennium.

In the late 26th century, the Taurians were forced to fight for two decades against Star League forces during the Reunification War. Though eventually battered into submission, the Taurians never renounced their dream of a free and independent state. After two centuries of increasingly harsh rule under the Star League, the Taurians revolted in the latter half of the 28th century. With the fall of the League and the start of the Succession Wars, the Taurians became free of interference from the House Lords of the Inner Sphere, and their independence has grown stronger.

In the last two centuries, however, the Taurians have had to defend themselves against foreign invasion from another part of space. Because of clashes with the Magistracy of Canopus over disputed border worlds, as well as incursions by renegade mercenary units and pirates, the Concordat is obliged to maintain a large and efficient military.

With the rise of the Far Lookers, a philosophical sect advocating the exploration of space beyond its charted limits, the Concordat has expanded its borders, settling worlds beyond the notice of the rapacious Inner Sphere. ComStar is unsure of how many worlds have been settled so far, although we can be sure that none of them is sufficiently developed to be incorporated into the Concordat itself. No significant benefits have come to the Concordat from these new colonies as yet, but the potential of unexplored space is, as we all know from experience, unlimited. Some estimates have indicated that when the new map of the Concordat is drawn, it may be comparable in size to the Capellan Confederation, though nowhere near as densely populated.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

The Taurian Concordat contains over 30 inhabited planets in a zone of space roughly 80 parsecs in diameter extending from the Hyades Cluster. The Taurians also control a variety of small outposts that extend in an arc from the edge of the Magistracy of Canopus to the Verdigreis system of the Federated Suns. Beginning in the late 2900s, the Taurians have resumed space exploration, resulting in the founding of several new colony worlds on systems past the Hyades Cluster.

SOCIOPOLITICAL STRUCTURE

The Taurian Concordat is a collection of representative democracies coupled with a constitutional monarchy. Similar in some ways to the House Davion-Federated Suns arrangement, the hereditary Protectorship of House Calderon grants autonomy to individual member worlds. Charged with promoting the general welfare of the Concordat, the Protector of the Realm maintains supreme control of the Concordat military establishment.

GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

Each of the major governmental divisions of the Concordat are described briefly below.

Protectorship

The Protector of the Realm is the chief executive of the Taurian Concordat. The eldest member of House Calderon, the Protector is the commander-in-chief of all Taurian military forces and the primary policy-maker in both internal and external affairs. Under normal circumstances, the Protector rules with the consent of the Concordia Courts, which periodically review the statutes the Protector has enacted. In time of war, the Protector can invoke emergency powers that permit full and complete authority over matters of state to prosecute the war effort.

Privy Council

Originally drawn from the chief family members of the original Calderon expedition, the Privy Council has evolved into an advisory board to the Protector. It consists of a representative from each of the major Taurian governmental departments, as well as other councilors that the Protector may appoint. The Privy Council meets monthly to review matters of state and makes recommendations to the Protector, who is in no way bound to follow such recommendations.

Ministry of Defense

The Ministry of Defense is a board of advisors and military specialists—staffed by both civilian and military personnel—charged with the coordination of defense policy, training new recruits, equipping units in the field, research and development, and economic liaison with the private sector for the acquisition of materiel. Its major concern is the constant revision of contingency plans to be used in the event of invasion.

Exchequer

The Taurian Exchequer, under the direction of the Treasury Director, formulates policies to maintain the Concordat economy and manages fiscal affairs relating to member planets. In addition, the Exchequer manages the Concordat Bank of Taurus, the government mint, and the Taurian Treasury Reserve located on the Concordat capital.

Ministry of the Interior

The Ministry of the Interior is concerned with matters of internal security. The Minister commands the Concordat Constabulary, a paramilitary force responsible for maintaining civil order on all Concordat worlds, as well as guarding against infiltration by foreign agents. He is also charged with gathering intelligence pertaining to civil and military order within the Concordat.

Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education provides for the education of the Taurian people, from elementary through university levels. To this end, the Ministry is responsible for maintaining literacy standards throughout the Concordat, appointing and promoting instructors and administrators, and developing new educational and research institutions within the state.

Ministry of Trade and Colonization

The Ministry of Trade is responsible for stimulating trade and commerce within the Concordat. It is also directly involved with the charting and colonizing of new worlds.

Concordat Courts

The Concordat Court system is the judicial branch of government. There is a civil court for every ten thousand inhabitants on each Concordat world, with a Planetary Court of Appeal for every three worlds. A separate Court of Judicial Review periodically reviews statutes and decrees of the Protector and other government branches, with the power to strike down any legislation that might threaten individual civil liberties.

Concordat Functionaries

In the Concordat, the term "functionary" refers to a variety of civil servants empowered to carry out a wide range of administrative duties. Functionaries are divided into two general categories: Auditors and Masters of Requests. An Auditor's function is similar to that of the ancient office of Inspector General. Masters of Requests make up the majority of the Taurian bureaucracy, handling the enormous load of paperwork required to keep the government afloat.

INTERNAL POLITICS

By law, the Taurian Concordat government guarantees a free and open society, individual rights, and the general welfare of its citizens. All citizens can move about freely within the Concordat, without the need for passes or work permits, and individuals can pursue their own economic and social goals without regulation. In return for government-sponsored education and protection, Concordat citizens must serve in some capacity to defend their state for a period of four years. Beyond this obligation, Taurian citizens are free to lead their lives as they please. Planetary governments may adopt the form of representation they deem appropriate, as long as each maintains a viable, working allegiance to the Protector and the Concordat.

POLITICAL GOALS

The primary goal of the Taurian Concordat is to preserve the independence and safety of the individual Concordat citizen. Beyond this, the Protector of the Realm is also concerned with the expansion of the Taurian state through colonization at the edge of the Periphery, rather than at the expense of his neighbors. Though attempting to maintain peaceful interstellar relations, Concordat leaders view renewed hostilities as a very real possibility. Thus, a strong military is a major priority for what they perceive as the continued security of the Concordat.

INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

The following is a summary of the Taurian Concordat's relations with its neighbors.

Capellan Confederation

Having fought several minor skirmishes with the Capellan government, the Concordat is mistrustful of House Liao. Though a Capellan Consulate operates in the Taurian capital, Concordat officials are suspicious of the Capellans' desire for peaceful coexistence. Most feel that Maximilian Liao intends to use acquisitions won at gunpoint from the Concordat as staging areas for strikes against the Federated Suns.

> It's not so much that the damn Davions keep crossing the borders and destroying our homes all the time, but that their tank shells are all covered with quotations from Michael Hasek-Davion...
>
> —Taurian grafitti of unknown origin

Federated Suns

Of all the opponents of the Taurian Concordat, the Federated Suns is the primary threat to the Taurian state. Few in the Concordat are willing to forget or forgive the Federated Suns's role in the Reunification War, and fewer still are willing to concede that peace between the two states is possible. Since gaining independence, the Concordat has deployed its military to meet any new invasion from Davion space. To upset House Davion, the Taurians have recently resumed diplomatic relations—however tenuous—with the Capellan Confederation, while rejecting similar gestures from the Federated Suns. Lord Calderon has rejected secret proposals by Michael Hasek-Davion for a mutual defense pact against the Capellans.

Magistracy of Canopus

The Magistracy of Canopus is the state most closely allied, however informally, with the Taurian Concordat. Though the two governments have clashed over various border worlds in the past, such disagreements have generally been worked out through diplomatic channels. The Taurians have even made formal overtures for the formation of a mutual defense pact with the Canopians. As the survival of the Magistracy is in the best interests of the Concordat, the Taurians are likely to come to its aid should it be invaded, whether or not a formal agreement between the two states exists.

Outworlds Alliance

Distance has historically limited the extent to which the Taurians have maintained contact with the Outworlds Alliance. In the last century, however, trade contacts have resumed at the behest of the Alliance. More recently, the Alliance has promoted an exchange program in which military "advisors", specifically Alliance AeroSpace Pilots, have journeyed to the Concordat to work with their Taurian counterparts in exchange for a corresponding number of educational specialists.

ComStar

Relations between the Taurians and ComStar have been both cautious and cool over the last century. While permitting ComStar presence on various Taurian worlds and acknowledging the benefits that ComStar can bring to the Periphery, the Taurians remain suspicious of ComStar's real motives. Few ComStar officials are permitted positions of authority in the Concordat, and those allowed to serve in the Taurian government do so in a strictly advisory capacity only.

TAURIAN NOBILITY

Taurian nobility is bestowed on those individuals who render special service to the state (i.e., the Taurian people rather than the government). Many nobilities are hereditary, while some nobles have achieved recognition in the areas of education and administration. All titles reflect the notion that aristocrats must serve the people they command.

Nobles have few material advantages compared to their Inner Sphere counterparts, a condition unique to the Concordat social structure. This mirrors the Taurian social concept that an enlightened aristocracy provides the greatest good to the greatest number. Specific titles are similar to those used in the Successor States.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The Taurian Concordat has a strong central government backed by a service-oriented nobility concerned with the welfare of its citizens. Viewed as a servant of the Concordat citizenry, each branch of the government operates with a well-defined sense of mutual obligation. The greatest strength of the Concordat may be the dedication its government has shown to ensuring individual rights. In doing so, it has eschewed the short-term benefits of the police state (law and order, simplified governmental structure) in favor of the greater creativity and productivity of people allowed to follow their own inclinations. Indeed, this may be the greatest single reason that the Concordat continues to be a growing, healthy entity despite the depredations of the Succession Wars. In light of this, the uneasiness many Taurians feel about the growing power of the Concordat Constabulary is understandable.

The Concordat government has taken on problems that it might have avoided, however. The other side of the exploration issue, for example, is that it is a gamble. Though the potential of new colonies may eventually bring in greater wealth for the Taurian people and greater power to the government, the Concordat may be overextending itself, creating indefensible borders and expending enormous sums on colonies that may never pay off.

All in all, the Taurians are playing a dangerous game. Their continued growth could one day make them a new superpower, but it also makes them a more tempting target in the here and now.

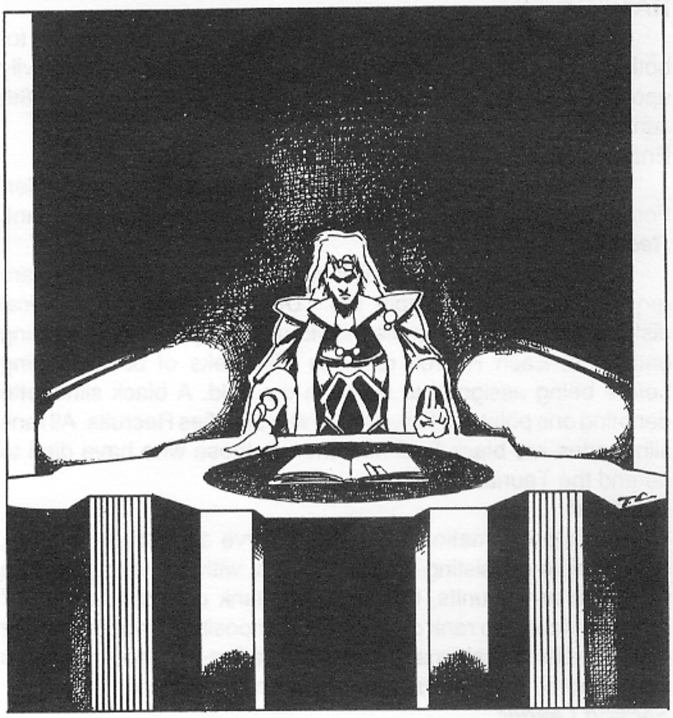
RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

All forms of religious and philosophical expression are tolerated within the Taurian Concordat, reflecting centuries of tradition and popular precedent. Unique to the Concordat, however, is official support of a state religion, Deism (in keeping with many of the social trappings of the Terran Age of Reason that the Taurians have adopted). Though no citizen is forced to belong to the Taurian Deist Church, and indeed many question the point of even having a Deist "church" at all, this institution receives government support and can boast the largest following of any religious persuasion in the Concordat.

In the last century, two philosophical creeds, the Far Lookers and the Inheritors, have gained prominence in the Concordat. Both owe their growth to the Calderon family, and both seek to establish a pragmatic approach to daily life in the Periphery.

The creed of the Far Lookers suggests that life in the Periphery should not be as static as it has been. Just as the original founders of the Periphery states settled the Taurian Concordat, so, too, the Far Lookers insist, should contemporary Taurians explore new worlds at the edge of the known galaxy. They argue that expanding the boundaries of the state is necessary to keep it vital and strong. As one of the few Periphery states with the resources and a sufficiently integrated economy to do so, the Taurian Concordat is more likely than any other to move in the direction the Far Lookers suggest.

The Inheritors accept the philosophical premises of the Far Lookers, but they go one step farther. The Inheritors posit that the age of the Inner Sphere is over, and that Humanity is on the verge of a galaxy-wide cataclysm. When this happens, the Inheritors predict that the enlightened peoples of the Periphery will pick up the pieces, resettling and repopulating the Inner Sphere to bring about a new and more vibrant social order.



MILITARY FORCES

The well-organized and well-trained Taurian Defense Force (TDF) is arranged along the principles of 19th-century Napoleonic armies. A total of twelve BattleMech regiments are grouped into four separate operations corps: The First, Second, Third, and Taurian Guard Corps. Naval elements are attached directly to Corps Commanders, with each fleet divided further into two demi-squadrons each. There is also the Concordat Constabulary, a paramilitary force normally used for internal security purposes, but which can be mobilized in time of war. Overall, the TDF is a highly motivated force of professional soldiery supported by a variety of heavy industries.

UNIFORMS

The traditional dress uniform of the Concordat military is a red tunic with silver buttons (gold for officers), black trousers, and black lapels. Distinctions between branches are denoted by the colors of oversized berets or field caps: dark green for infantry, light green for armor, brown for BattleMech, sky blue for navy, and light gray for all support services. In the field, troops wear a standard dull-red or burgundy fatigue uniform with rank insignia on their uniform lapels. Designs for personal gear such as neurohelmets and flight gear have been borrowed from Liao and Davion models, with slight modifications from unit to unit.

Dress uniforms within the TDF correspond to standard uniform styles, with silver sashes and white gloves for all enlisted ranks, and gold sashes and white gloves for officers. Marshals of the Concordat are further denoted by gold lanyards on both shoulders.

RANKS

Ranks within the TDF are organized along a six-level tier for both officers and enlisted personnel. Individual titles draw heavily upon the influence of French and English armed forces of the 18th century.

Enlisted Ranks

The six enlisted ranks are Recruit, Corporal, Section Leader, Force Sergeant, Lance Sergeant, and Battalion Chief-Sergeant.

Recruit

By Concordat-wide law, all individuals, male and female, are required at age 18 to join the TDF. Planetary geographical districts (cantons) assemble individuals into provisional training battalions. Each Recruit receives 18 weeks of basic training before being assigned to a unit in the field. A black silhouette denoting one point of a five-pointed star signifies Recruits. All rank silhouettes are black to commemorate those who have died to defend the Taurian systems.

Corporal

In infantry formations, Corporals serve as maniple leaders, one maniple consisting of five troopers, with two maniples to a squad. In armor units, Corporals are tank commanders. In all other services, the rank denotes a junior position involving one or more specialist positions. Two points of a five-pointed star denote the Corporal, who wears his insignia on his left lapel.

Section Leader

Section Leaders in the TDF infantry are squad commanders, while in Taurian armor units, they command a maniple of two armored fighting vehicles (three maniples to a lance). In all other services, the rank denotes senior specialist positions. Section Leaders wear three points of a five-pointed star.

Force Sergeant

A Force Sergeant commands a platoon of 25 men (two squads). In TDF armor units, a Force Sergeant commands an armor lance of three maniples (six vehicles). This rank is also used to denote junior AeroSpace Pilots in the Taurian AeroSpace Arm. Four points of a five-pointed star denote the Force Sergeant.

Lance Sergeant

A Lance Sergeant serves as assistant platoon leader to a Cornet officer. In armor units, he acts as assistant company commander to a Sub-Altern. In the AeroSpace Arm, Lance Sergeants are pilots in charge of an air lance. A five-pointed star on the lapel denotes this rank.

Battalion Chief-Sergeant/Air Master

Battalion Chief-Sergeants are the senior battalion NCOs in all Taurian ground units. The equivalent rank of Air Master is used in the AeroSpace Arm to denote junior flight commanders controlling two air lances. The insignia for both ranks is a five-pointed star surrounded by laurel leaves.

Officer Ranks

The six commissioned ranks are Cornet, Subaltern, Brigadier, Colonel, Comptroller, and Marshal.

Cornet

The Cornet is the lowest-ranking junior officer in the TDF. Cornets serving in ground units typically act as company commanders. Aboard ship, they are assistant department heads, and in the AeroSpace Arm, they command a wing of two air lances. In BattleMech units, Cornets serve as MechWarriors. A crescent moon on the lapel denotes the Cornet.

Subaltern/Air Master, Junior Grade

Subalterns are battalion commanders in the Taurian ground forces and assistant commanders of air divisions (consisting of two wings of four lances each) in the AeroSpace Arm. In BattleMech units, Subalterns command lances of four BattleMechs. Air Masters, junior grade, act as department heads aboard naval vessels. Subalterns wear two crescent moons, face to face.

Brigadier/Air Master, Senior Grade

Brigadiers act as regimental executive officers. Often, they lead commands of four or more companies into battle, depending on assigned mission tasks. Senior grade Air Masters command an aerospace corps consisting of three aerospace wings. The insignia for both ranks is four crescent moons, two facing right and two facing left.

Colonel/Space Master

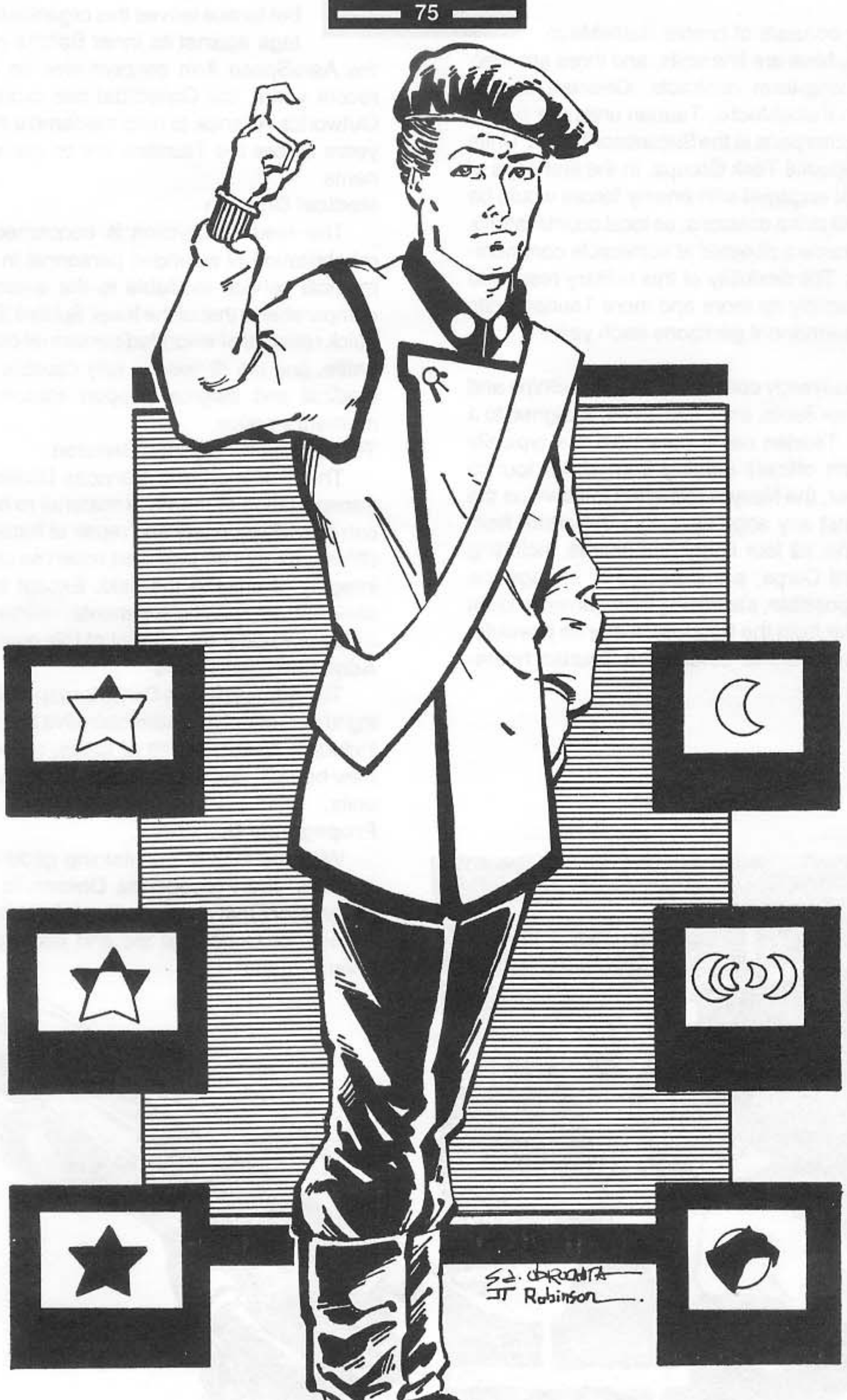
A Colonel is a senior regimental commander. Space Masters act as ship captains aboard Taurian naval vessels. All officers of this rank wear a full moon on each lapel.

Comptroller/Commodore

A purely organizational rank, the Comptroller belongs to senior command and planning staff found at the corps level. In certain circumstances, a Comptroller may be delegated to command a regiment or part of a regiment for special missions. Commodores command demi-squadrons, which are a collection of naval vessels assembled according to the dictates of specific mission requirements. A black eagle on each lapel denotes both ranks.

Marshal

At present, there are five Marshals in the Concordat military, one commanding each corps, and one Senior Marshal, a hereditary rank given to the Protector in his role as Commander-in-Chief. Two oak leaves denote a corps commander, and three oak leaves denote the Senior Marshal.


S.J. Obrocta
JT Robinson

TAURIAN RANKS AND UNIFORMS

STRUCTURE OF THE TDF

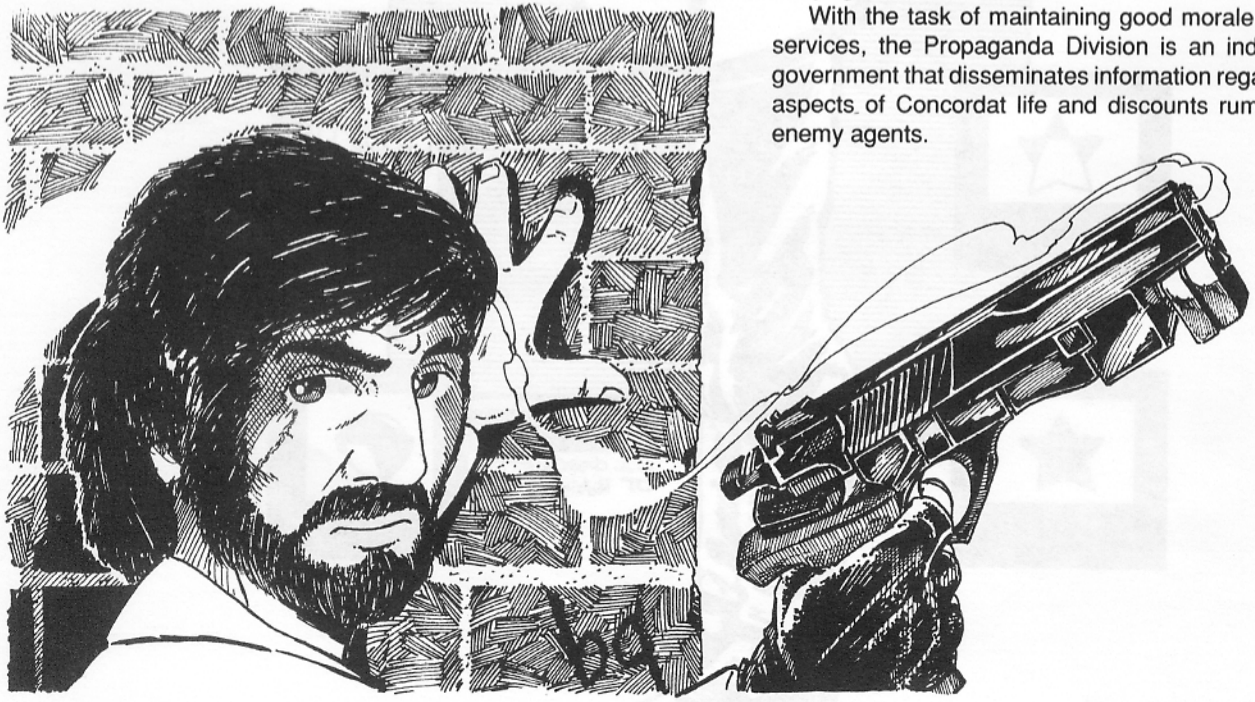
The following is a brief description of the major divisions of the Taurian Defense Force.

Concordat Army

The Concordat Army consists of twelve BattleMech regiments (30 battalions). Nine are line units, and three are mercenary regiments with long-term contracts. Oriented toward lances of light-to-medium BattleMechs, Taurian units are similar in composition to their counterparts in the Successor States. Units are routinely trained as Special Task Groups. In the first days of an invasion, battalions not engaged with enemy forces would be earmarked for special STG strike missions, as local counterattack teams or as deep-space raiders directed at vulnerable communication and supply points. The flexibility of this military response remains to be seen, especially as more and more Taurian units are being committed to permanent garrisons each year.

Concordat Navy

The Concordat Navy currently consists of 117 DropShips and JumpShips divided into four fleets, each fleet being assigned to a corps front commander. Taurian naval personnel are typically long-term volunteers, with officers serving from about four to seven years. In time of war, the Navy is expected to serve as the first line of defense against any aggressor. In a departure from Reunification War doctrine, all four fleet components, including that of the Taurian Guard Corps, are expected to engage the enemy as far forward as possible, sacrificing themselves to blunt the enemy's invasion as far from the Hyades Cluster as possible. Few vessels would be retained to defend the Taurian homeworlds.



AeroSpace Arm

Though staffed, like its naval counterpart, with long-term professionals, the AeroSpace Arm remains the weakest of three principal military branches. A general lack of equipment and experience against modern combat tactics leaves this organization at a distinct disadvantage against its Inner Sphere counterparts. As a result, the AeroSpace Arm concentrates on ground-support roles. In recent years, the Concordat has brought in advisors from the Outworlds Alliance to help modernize the arm, though it may be years before the Taurians are on par with their potential opponents.

Medical Division

The Medical Division is concerned with the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded personnel in the field. At present, the medical service available to the average Concordat soldier is comparable to that of the Inner Sphere. Emphasis is placed on the quick retrieval of wounded personnel close to the forward edge of battle, and the division is fully capable of deploying emergency medical and surgical support stations via support craft at a moment's notice.

Transport and Service Division

The Transport and Services Division is responsible for the transportation of men and materiel to battle areas. In addition, it can provide recovery and repair of battle-damaged craft and machines, as well as transport reserves capable of maintaining the integrity of units in the field. Except for those vessels directly assigned to specific regiments, military DropShips and JumpShips are under the control of this division.

Administrative Corps

The Administrative Corps is responsible for all matters pertaining to personnel and administrative functions in the armed forces, including disbursement of funds, recordkeeping, promotion review boards, and the acquisition and management of mercenary units.

Propaganda Division

With the task of maintaining good morale within the armed services, the Propaganda Division is an independent arm of government that disseminates information regarding the positive aspects of Concordat life and discounts rumors instigated by enemy agents.

UNIT PROFILES

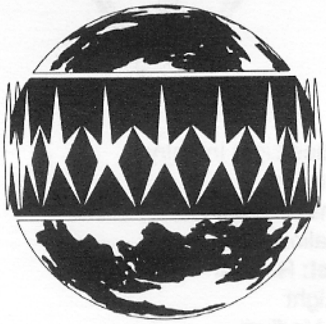
Following are brief descriptions of the Taurian Concordat's military units.

The Taurian Guard Corps

The Taurian Guard Corps consists of three regiments (nine battalions) deployed within the boundaries of the Hyades Cluster.

Unit Name: The Taurian Guard
Unit Type: House Unit
CO: Colonel Brenda Calderon
Unit Size: 3 Battalions
Experience Level: Veteran
'Mech Weight: Medium-Heavy
Fighter Weight: Medium
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Unit Symbol: A planet surrounded by a ring of five-pointed stars on a red field
Unit History:

Originally only a single battalion, the present Taurian Guard is an amalgam of several senior regiments, all of which were nearly destroyed in the Reunification War. Reformed during the last war of independence, the Taurian Guards saw considerable action against the Star League forces of Aleksandr Kerensky in the defense of New Vandenberg. Since then, they have occasionally spelled junior regiments along the border and have clashed with mercenary "expeditions" originating from the Federated Suns. The Taurian Guards represents the best that the Concordat has to offer.

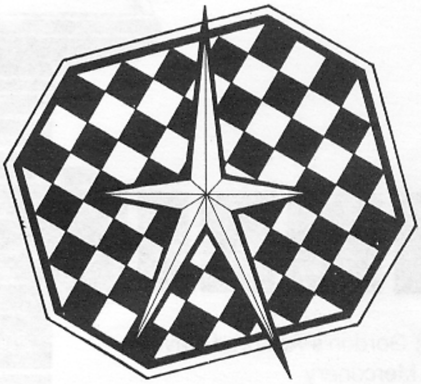


Unit Name: The Taurian Velites
Unit Type: House Unit
CO: Colonel Anastasia Dreede
Unit Size: 3 Battalions
Experience Level: Veteran
'Mech Weight: Medium
Fighter Weight: Medium
Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Unit Symbol: Viking raising a warhammer against a red field
Unit History:

Formed from noble volunteer battalions and covert officer cadres during the last rebellion against the Star League, the Taurian Velites saw heavy fighting against the 14th and 71st Star League Striker Regiments in the defense of Pinard, which lasted over 140 days, During this period, the Velites were among the few Taurian units to employ AeroSpace Fighters. The Velites later saw action along the Magistracy border, where they were occasionally called upon to back Taurian claims on disputed border worlds. Rotated back to the interior of the Concordat in the late 2990s, the Velites remain one of the more experienced units in the Taurian military.

Unit Name: The Concordat Commandos
Unit Type: House Unit
CO: Colonel Samuel Mahar
Unit Size: 3 Battalions
Experience Level: Veteran
'Mech Weight: Medium
Fighter Weight: Various
Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Unit Symbol: A gold five-pointed star against a red-and-green checkered field
Unit History:

The Commandos were first blooded in and around New Vandenberg in the last war of independence. During this campaign, they gained a reputation for skill and daring by striking repeatedly at key Star League supply and communication centers deep behind enemy lines. Though they took serious casualties in these actions, the Commandos inflicted even more losses on the forces of General Kerensky. Following the departure of Kerensky, the Commandos served for a brief period along the Capellan border, where they clashed with elements of the St. Ives Armored Cavalry. Indeed, much of their current store of war materiel is the result of their successes against the Capellans. The Commandos have served within the Hyades Cluster since 3022.



The Taurian I Corps

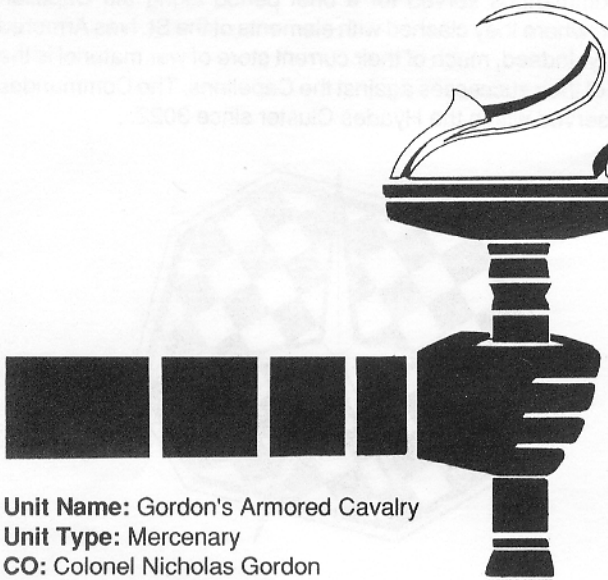
The Taurian I Corps consists of three regiments (nine battalions) deployed along the border extending from the Capellan Confederation to New Vandenberg.

Unit Name: The Concordat Jaegers
Unit Type: House Unit
CO: Colonel Patrick Sterling
Unit Size: 3 Battalions
Experience Level: Veteran
'Mech Weight: Medium
Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Unit Symbol: A five-pointed star surrounded by laurel leaves
Unit History:

Raised from a collection of local defense battalions from Atreus Prime and New Vallis, the Concordat Jaegers have served almost exclusively along the Taurian-Capellan border. Like the Commandos, they have seen considerable action against the Capellans in the last century, and, like the Commandos, have generally come out the better for it. The Jaegers have the distinction of being the only "new" regiment of the Taurian Concordat ever to invade Capellan soil, for they carried out the successful raid against the supply center on Larsha in 2998.

Unit Name: The Red Chasseurs
Unit Type: House Unit
CO: Colonel Valerie Makepeace
Unit Size: 3 Battalions
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: Medium
Fighter Weight: Medium
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Unit Symbol: A hand-held torch on a white field edged in red
Unit History:

Stationed between the Taurian Concordat and the Magistracy of Canopus, the Red Chasseurs have been the primary force engaged in clashes with the Canopians, as well as seeing action against units from the Capellan Confederation and the Free Worlds League. Typically used as a quick reaction force, the Chasseurs are capable of deploying to a trouble spot with as little as six hours' notice.



Unit Name: Gordon's Armored Cavalry
Unit Type: Mercenary
CO: Colonel Nicholas Gordon
Unit Size: 3 Battalions
Experience Level: Veteran
'Mech Weight: Medium
Fighter Weight: Medium
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Unit Symbol: A knight atop a light tank
Financial Status: Fair
Contract Expires: May 3026
Unit History:

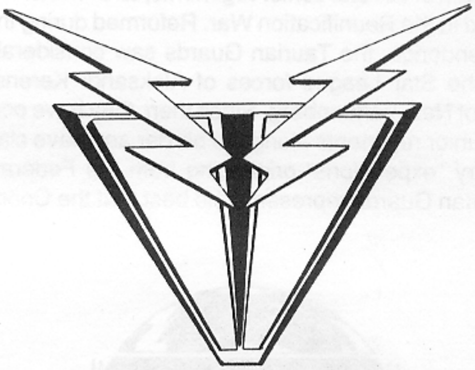
Originally formed from several independent mercenary companies, Gordon's Armored Cavalry defected from the Capellan Confederation in the spring of 3024, when a technicality in their contract deprived the unit of the right to several BattleMechs taken from the Federated Suns. Feeling little love for their former employer, the unit is eager to even the score with Maximilian Liao, and have repeatedly petitioned Thomas Calderon to permit them to conduct penetration raids against Capellan holdings. Though the Protector has not yet agreed, there is little doubt that Lord Calderon would unleash these mercenaries should House Liao troops ever cross his border.

The Taurian II Corps

The Taurian II Corps consists of three regiments (seven battalions) deployed between the Federated Suns border and the Hyades Cluster.

Unit Name: The Concordat Cuirassiers
Unit Type: House Unit
CO: Colonel Caroline Montaine
Unit Size: 3 Battalions
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: Medium
Fighter Weight: Medium
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Unit Symbol: Two lightning bolts
Unit History:

The most decorated of the Taurian regiments, the Cuirassiers repeatedly fought in engagements against Michael Hasek-Davion's Syrtis Fusiliers between 2995 and 3020. Renowned for their absolute hatred of the Federated Suns, the unit has gone on record as refusing to take prisoners from Davion units.

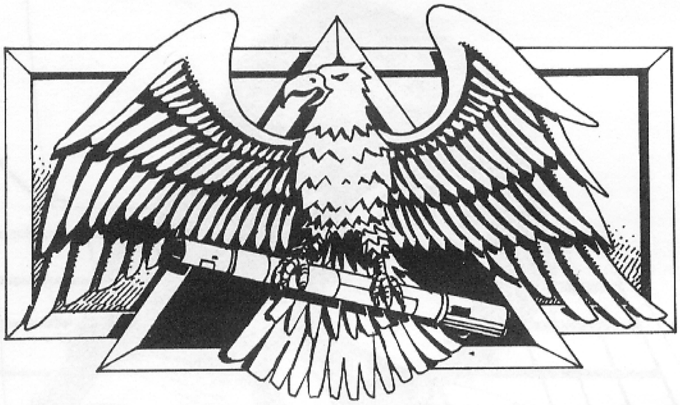


Unit Name: Hyades Light Infantry
Unit Type: House Unit
CO: Colonel Fiona Jamesen
Unit Size: 2 Battalions
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: Light
Fighter Weight: Medium
Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Unit Symbol: Two musketeers holding crossed muskets
Unit History:

Formed from the special services elements that defended Flannagan's Nebula during the Reunification War, the Hyades Light Infantry is the most mobile Taurian regiment. Consisting of highly trained jump troops as well as rotary aircraft, the unit can engage an enemy in a variety of environments. In recent years, the Light Infantry has proven its worth by repelling surprise attacks from the Tortuga Dominions.

Unit Name: Longwood's Bluecoats
Unit Type: Mercenary
CO: Colonel Felix Longwood
'Unit Size: 2 Battalions
Experience Level: Regular
Mech Weight: Medium
Fighter Weight: None
Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** No
Unit Symbol: A blue-coated pikeman
Financial Condition: Fair
Contract Expires: March 3027
Unit History:

Another ex-Capellan mercenary band, the Bluecoats also saw service with the Federated Suns before coming over to the Taurians in 3024. Since their arrival, they have taken part in a variety of anti-piracy actions against the Tortuga Dominions. Though they perform well in the field, the Bluecoats' reliability is questionable due to their past association with House Davion.



The Taurian III Corps

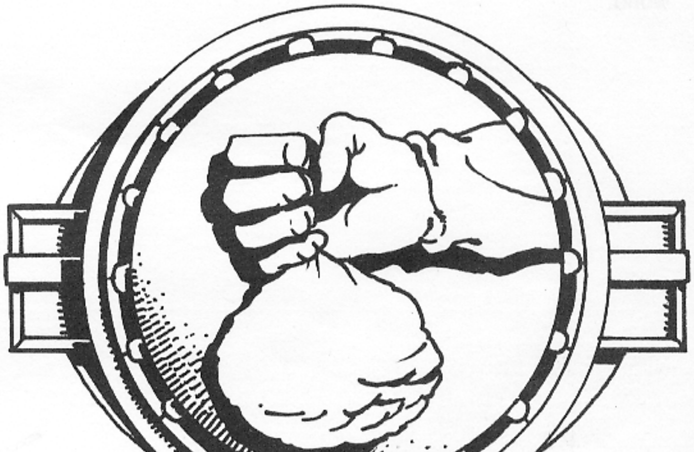
The Taurian III Corps consists of three regiments (eight battalions) deployed toward the Hyades Cluster.

Unit Name: Pleiades Hussars
Unit Type: House Unit
CO: Colonel Jamison Firth
Unit Size: 3 Battalions
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: Medium-Heavy
Fighter Weight: Medium
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Unit Symbol: An eagle carrying a missile in its talons
Unit History:

One of the senior regiments in the Taurian military, the Hussars were called upon during the War of Independence to defend a group of agricultural worlds against several Star League Light Horse regiments. What followed was a mobile war of attack and counterattack, in which the Hussars waged a war of attrition for over five months. In recent years, the Hussars have served along the Taurian-Federated Suns border, conducting reconnaissance along Davion border installations to gauge Davion military response.

Unit Name: Taurian Lancers
Unit Type: House Unit
CO: Colonel Victoria Norman
Unit Size: 3 Battalions
Experience Level: Green
'Mech Weight: Medium
Fighter Weight: Medium
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** No
Unit symbol: Two white unicorns, face-to-face
Unit History:

The Lancers are the newest unit to join the TDF. Only the first battalion has seen combat in skirmishes with various pirate bands. The Lancers represent an experiment in TDF tactical doctrine, emphasizing an equal ratio of heavy battletanks to 'Mechs in each battalion.



Unit Name: Bannockburn's Bandits
Unit Type: Mercenary
CO: Colonel David Bannockburn
Unit Size: 2 Battalions
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: Light
Fighter Weight: Medium
Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** No
Unit Symbol: A hand holding up a bag of gold
Financial Situation: Good
Contract Expires: May 3026
Unit History:

The oldest mercenary unit in the employ of the Concordat military, Bannockburn's Bandits have served with the TDF since 2997, when they left the Inner Sphere in anger over the way the Draconis Combine treated them. Though lightly armed, the Bandits have held their own against repeated raids from the Tortuga Dominions. Presently confined to a strategic defense role, the Bandits are capable of mounting offensive operations as well.

SPECIAL FORCES

The following summarizes the three wings of TDF Special Forces: the Concordat Constabulary, the Taurian ASF, and the Noble Family Regiments.

Concordat Costabulary

The Concordat Constabulary is a dual-function local defense force, charged with intelligence-gathering and internal security operations. It is also a source of conventionally armed troops in time of war, when each Taurian planetary system reverts to martial law under the control of the Constabulary. The military potential of the Constabulary is two to six battalions of conventional troops (600 men each) available for active duty on each Taurian world.

In addition, the Constabulary retains the services of a special Engineer Company (125 men) on each planet outside the Hyades Cluster. These individuals are charged with maintaining planetary defenses and fortifications. All Constabulary units also maintain at least one company of armor in the capital of each inhabited world.

Taurian SASF

The Taurian Special Asteroid Support Force is a body of five thousand soldiers and naval personnel trained on Zero-g defense platforms throughout the Hyades Cluster asteroid belt, from which they can attack invading forces. As the survival potential of forces in combat is low, the Taurian SASF is a voluntary force of individuals motivated by the highest degree of patriotism.

Noble Family Regiments

In the event of war, the Taurian aristocracy is expected to raise and equip local defense regiments at their own expense. The number and quality of these "Home Guards" cannot be estimated at this time, but their strength in the Reunification War suggests the possibility of from one to two dozen such units, ranging from 1,000 to 3,000 conventional troops.

DEPLOYMENT OF TDF FORCES

The following is a breakdown of current dispositions of the armed forces under the direction of the Taurian Concordat as of 3025. The Homeworld column indicates the headquarters and administrative center of each unit, although individual units are expected to move at a moment's notice to enemy invasion points when JumpShips are available. In addition to the forces listed below, an estimated one to two equivalent battalions of Concordat Constabulary are permanently garrisoned on each Taurian world.

BATTLEMECH REGIMENT DEPLOYMENT TABLE
(as of 3025)

Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld
The Taurian Guard (CO: Marshal Morton Grenadine)			
The Taurian Guard (CO: Colonel Brenda Calderon)			
1st Battalion (CO: Subaltern Josiah Tellwater)	Elite	Fanatical	Taurus
2nd Battalion (CO: Subaltern Hadji Doru)	Veteran	Fanatical	Hyades Cluster
3rd Battalion (CO: Subaltern Samantha McGrinn)	Veteran	Fanatical	Hyades Cluster
The Taurian Velites (CO: Colonel Katherine Hamilton)			
1st Battalion (CO: Subaltern William Heise)	Veteran	Fanatical	Taurus
2nd Battalion (CO: Subaltern Randolph Webber)	Veteran	Reliable	Hyades Cluster
3rd Battalion (CO: Subaltern Richard White)	Veteran	Reliable	Hyades Cluster
The Concordat Commandos (CO: Colonel Samuel Mehar)			
1st Battalion (CO: Subaltern Jacob Mornay)	Veteran	Fanatical	Taurus
2nd Battalion (CO: Subaltern Elizabeth Bharat)	Veteran	Reliable	Taurus
3rd Battalion (CO: Subaltern Dennis King)	Veteran	Reliable	Hyades Cluster
1st Corps (CO: Marshal Cory Calderon)			
The Concordat Jaegers (CO: Colonel Patrick Sterling)			
1st Battalion (CO: Subaltern Kai Shoguwa)	Veteran	Fanatical	New Vandenberg
2nd Battalion (CO: Subaltern Beatrice Davenport)	Veteran	Reliable	Pinard
3rd Battalion (CO: Subaltern Mikhail Kandinsky)	Veteran	Reliable	Grossbach
The Red Chasseurs (CO: Colonel Valerie Makepeace)			
1st Battalion (CO: Subaltern Pablo Ibarrez)	Regular	Reliable	Landmark
2nd Battalion (CO: Subaltern Michael Griswald)	Regular	Reliable	Brisbane
3rd Battalion (CO: Subaltern Adam Beufort)	Veteran	Reliable	Grossbach
Gordon's Armored Cavalry (CO: Colonel Nicholas Gordon)			
Quinn's Lancers (CO: Subaltern Mariette Quinn)	Veteran	Reliable	Grossbach
Cristoph's Chasseurs (CO: Subaltern Charles Cristoph)	Veteran	Reliable	Pinard
Browne's Banshees (CO: Subaltern Garett Browne)	Elite	Fanatical	New Vandenberg
2nd Corps (CO: Marshal Nim Chok Soo)			
The Concordat Curaissiers (CO: Colonel Caroline Montaine)			
1st Battalion (CO: Subaltern Thomas Mann)	Veteran	Reliable	Organo
2nd Battalion (CO: Subaltern Philip Canderson)	Veteran	Reliable	Perdition
3rd Battalion (CO: Subaltern Douglas Owen)	Regular	Questionable	Amber Grove
The Hyades Light Infantry (CO: Colonel Fiona Jamesen)			
1st Battalion (CO: Subaltern Tanis Verbret)	Veteran	Reliable	Jamestown
2nd Battalion (CO: Subaltern Malcolm Campbell)	Regular	Reliable	Masterton
Longwood's Bluecoats (CO: Colonel Felix Longwood)			
Hadrian's Hell-Raisers (CO: Major Gerald Hadrian)	Veteran	Questionable	Perdition
Morion's Marauders (CO: Major Herbert Morion)	Regular	Questionable	Jamestown
3rd Corps (CO: Marshal Francis Derry)			
The Pleiades Hussars (CO: Colonel Jamison Firth)			
1st Battalion (CO: Subaltern Boris Tharn)	Regular	Reliable	New Ganymede
2nd Battalion (CO: Subaltern Robert Taylor)	Regular	Reliable	Celentaro
3rd Battalion (CO: Subaltern Elena Barkley)	Green	Reliable	Celentaro
The Taurian Lancers (CO: Colonel Victoria Norman)			
1st Battalion (CO: Subaltern Sergio McDaniel)	Regular	Reliable	Norman's World
2nd Battalion (CO: Subaltern Nelson O'Donnel)	Green	Reliable	Centavido
3rd Battalion (CO: Subaltern Therese Harper)	Green	Questionable	Centavido
Bannockburn's Bandits (CO: Colonel David Bannockburn)			
Leslie's Lancers (CO: Major Arnold Leslie)	Veteran	Reliable	MacLeod's Land
Nathan's Commandos (CO: Major Pete Nathan)	Regular	Reliable	MacLeod's Land

WEAPONS INDUSTRIES

The following is a brief summary of industries producing war materiel for the Taurian Defense Force.

Name: Taurus Territorial Industries
Plant Locations: Taurus, Sterope
CEO: Adam Harkness
Weaponry Manufactured At Taurus: TDR-5S *Thunderbolt*, WHM-6R *Warhammer*, MAD-3R Marauder, HOT-3F *Hatchetman*, LCT-1V *Locust*, WSP-1A *Wasp* BattleMechs; LTN-615 *Lightning*, TRB-D36 *Thunderbird* AeroSpace Fighters; *Leopard* Class DropShips; personal weapons and small arms ammunition
Weaponry Manufactured At Sterope: SYD-21 *Seydiltz* Class AeroSpace Fighters, Hunter Class Tanks; *Union* Class DropShips; anti-personnel mines and static gun emplacements
Notes:

The largest weapons producer in the Concordat, Taurus Territorial Industries is a government-subsidized manufacturer created in the late 2700s. It is geared toward both offensive and defensive weapons production.

TAURUS
TERRITORIAL
INDUSTRIES

Name: Vandenberg Mechanized Industries
Plant Locations: New Vandenberg, Pinard, Illiushin
CEO: Mary Fisher Celn
Weaponry Manufactured At New Vandenberg: ARC-2R *Archer*, STG-3R *Stinger*, MAD-3R *Marauder* BattleMechs; Hunter Tanks; CHR-W5 *Chippewa* AeroSpace Fighters
Weaponry Manufactured At Pinard: TDR-5S *Thunderbolt*, WHM-65 *Warhammer* BattleMechs; Vedette Tanks; Artillery ordinance and munitions
Weaponry Manufactured At Illiushin: STG-3R *Stinger*, COM-2D *Commando*, GRF-1N *Griffin* BattleMechs; *Union* Class DropShips
Notes:

Maintaining the largest Taurian weaponry production centers outside the Hyades Cluster, Vandenberg Mechanized Industries is the result of a merger of seven smaller independent firms that operated covertly during the Star League occupation of New Vandenberg after the Reunification War.

Name: Pinard Protectorates Limited
Plant Locations: Pinard, MacLeod's Land, Organo, Perdition
CEO: Judith MacLeod
Weaponry Manufactured at Pinard: MAD-3R *Marauder*, personal energy weapons and munitions
Weaponry Manufactured at MacLeod's Land: STG-3R *Stinger*, LCT-1V *Locust* BattleMechs
Weaponry Manufactured at Organo: SB-27 *Sabre* AeroSpace Fighters
Weaponry Manufactured at Perdition: Rommel and Vedette Tanks; J. Edgar Hovercraft; WSP-1A *Wasp* BattleMechs; TRB-D36 *Thunderbird* AeroSpace Fighters
Notes:

Formed in 3020, Pinard Protectorates Limited is the newest Taurian defense industry. The Board of Directors of this publicly owned, private industrial concern is responsible to their stockholders, rather than to the Taurian government. Though its the line of goods is small, PPL hopes to improve its position in the marketplace by producing its wares cheaper than its competitors. The company runs on a profit-sharing system; workers are paid in both salaries and stock in the company.

PPL

TAURIAN MILITARY ACADEMIES

Alone of all the Periphery states, the Taurian Concordat maintains large military training academies. At present, there is one academy for each major combat branch: the Army, Navy, and AeroSpace Arms. The army training academy is the Taurian École Militaire, located on Taurus. The Taurian Naval Institute and the Concordat AeroSpace Flight School are located on New Vandenberg and Samantha, respectively. Each has well-developed training programs for both NCOs and officers and can accommodate upward of five hundred personnel.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

On the whole, the Taurian military consists of highly trained and well-motivated individuals. It nevertheless suffers from several debilitating factors. The shrunken size of the Concordat, in comparison with its original holdings in the 2500s, means that in any full-scale war, the Taurians will be unable to trade space for time as they did in the Reunification War. Within the first few months of fighting, the Taurians can expect to lose several key planetary systems, after which they will be forced into either a desperate counterattack or a withdrawal into the Hyades Cluster. Many of the Taurians' key industrial centers are located outside the Hyades zone, making them prime targets of occupation. The protection of these manufacturing centers forces the Taurians to commit most of their battalions to a relatively static role.

CULTURE AND ARTS

The Taurian Concordat has retained the highest literacy rate in the Periphery. Indeed, the Taurian educational system has served as a model for other states, including those of the Inner Sphere. The Concordat government has traditionally given the educational system a high priority. During the Reunification War, many of the Taurians' largest educational institutions were lost when the Star League forces overran planets where the schools were located. In the years of the Concordat's Territorial status, the Star League attempted unsuccessfully to modify the educational structure to emphasize the benefits of membership in the Star League. Since regaining their independence, the Taurians have rebuilt their schools to pre-Star League levels. They can now boast no fewer than six universities. These universities, located on Taurus, Samantha, Pinard, New Vandenberg, MacLeod's Land, and Euschelus, graduate an average of over forty thousand students annually.

Viewing itself largely as a servant of the people, the Taurian government has traditionally refrained from censoring its media, even in time of war. Throughout the Concordat, individuals retain the right to free expression without the threat of government intervention, as long as such expression cannot be proven libelous. The average Taurian can expect free medical care, old age pensions, and a living allowance. There are also guaranteed death benefits to surviving family members at the government's expense.

Like most free societies throughout history, the Taurian Concordat has been inconsistent about producing major artists. One generation may see a flowering of great visual artists, followed by a generation of great writers. Currently, there is a renaissance of novelists producing exceptional work. Unlike most such artistic trends, the Taurian novelists are not part of a single movement, but have divided themselves into two camps, the Realists and the Futurists. The Realists advocate essentially the same principles as other such movements in the past, whereas the Futurists tend more toward symbolic representations of realistic situations, some of which are almost hallucinogenic in their intensity. Debate surrounding these two schools of writing have spread to literati as far away as New Avalon, Atreus, and the Outworlds Alliance.

SOCIOECONOMICS

The Taurian government has traditionally maintained a laissez-faire approach to monetary policies. Though government-sponsored institutions such as the Bank of Taurus, the Concordat Mint, and the Taurian Treasury Reserve, do exist within Taurian space, they serve only to maintain the stability of the Taurian monetary system. The government intervenes only when unusual circumstances threaten runaway inflation or economic recession.

Much of the Concordat's private sector operates on the profit motive, but with curious limitations. Though trade is encouraged with Periphery neighbors, the Taurians have drastically curtailed their trade with the Successor States, viewing such trade as politically undesirable. Consequently, the Taurians often suffer from a lack of venture capital for investment in local industries. Despite this, renewed colonization along the edge of the Periphery by government and private concerns may yield enough new raw materials to stimulate the economy.

CORPORATE PROFILES

Name: Taurus Majoris Mining
Home Office Location: Laconis
President/CEO: Dirk David Sorenzen
Business Summary:

With major holdings in both the Laconis and Camadeierre star systems, Taurus Majoris Mining is the largest commercial extractor and refiner of ores in the Concordat. In addition to employing over two million people, many of whom are engaged in stellar prospecting afield, TMM maintains a commercial fleet of over ten DropShips and 20 mobile refinery stations throughout Taurian space.

TAURUS
MAJORIS
MINING

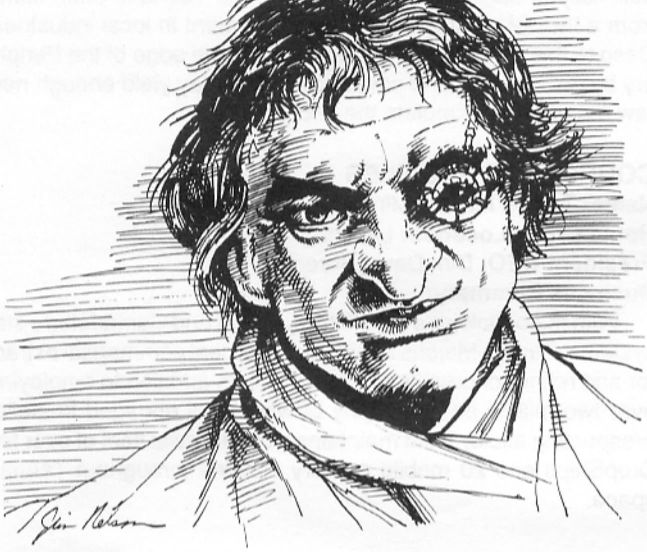
Name: Pinard-Dicolais Electronics
Home Office Location: Pinard
President/CEO: Morgan Pinard
Business Summary:

Specializing in electronics for both commercial and military applications, Pinard-Dicolais Electronics is the largest privately owned and operated industry in the Concordat. Founded in the early 2500s by Fiona Pinard, the company saw most of its holdings seized by the Star League during the Reunification War. Nevertheless, it is presently the oldest and most viable of all Concordat corporate concerns.

PERSONALITIES

Name: Thomas Calderon
Title/Rank: Protector of the Taurian Concordat
Position: Chief Executive of the Taurian State
Birthplace: Taurus, Taurian Concordat
Age: 44
Sex: Male
Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Thomas Calderon has a medium build and curly black hair. He has only one eye, having lost the left one in a hunting accident during his youth. A sensory-enhancer set in gold and silver covers this lack.



Brief History

The eldest son of Zarantha Calderon, Thomas succeeded his mother as ruler in 3017. Since then, his chief preoccupation has been modernization of the Taurian AeroSpace Arm. Through his efforts, advisory pilots from the Outworlds Alliance have been brought in to aid the Concordat. In addition, he is responsible for founding two new universities outside the Hyades Cluster, the first in the Concordat since the Reunification War. Most consider him a fair but occasionally harsh ruler, though all concede his genuine interest in the welfare of his citizens.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Secretly, Thomas would like nothing better than to launch a preemptive strike against the Inner Sphere to deter what he believes to be an inevitable invasion of the Concordat. It is not known whether he regards House Davion or House Liao to be the greater threat. It is clear that the alliance with the Magistracy is largely a matter of convenience, as Thomas does not trust House Centrella and views the decadence of Canopian society with repugnance.

Manner:

A borderline paranoiac, Thomas is obsessed with the possibility that the Concordat will be attacked by forces from the Inner Sphere. He has also become increasingly agitated over rumors of foreign agents in the Taurian worlds, and has accordingly given greater power to the Concordat Constabulary. He is, nevertheless, a devoted husband and father, and enjoys nothing more than an evening with his wife and five children.

Special Skills/Powers: None

A BRIEF ATLAS

The following is a brief description of some worlds making up the Taurian Concordat.

In the last two centuries, under the growing influence of the Far Lookers movement, the Concordat Ministry of Trade and Colonization has made numerous efforts to expand the holdings of the Concordat beyond the range of charted space. These efforts have been cloaked under heavy government secrecy. Consequently, the exact number of such colonies is uncertain, as is the Taurians' success with them. In recent years, however, there has been evidence that at least two efforts have met with marginal success.

World Name: Taurus
Star Type: G3V
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 8.52 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Political Leader: Thomas Calderon
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Barbara Kooper
Population: 2,169,000,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 45%, Mammal
Description:

The original site of the Calderon settlement of the 24th century, Taurus is the capital of the Taurian Concordat. Surrounding it is a thick natural barrier of asteroids, which is host to elements of the Taurian Guard, the elite battalion of the Taurian Defense Force. Taurus is also home to a variety of industries, many of which produce BattleMech designs and spare parts. As the nexus of the Concordat social system, Taurus is one of the few cultural centers of the Periphery and presently supports a population of over two billion inhabitants.

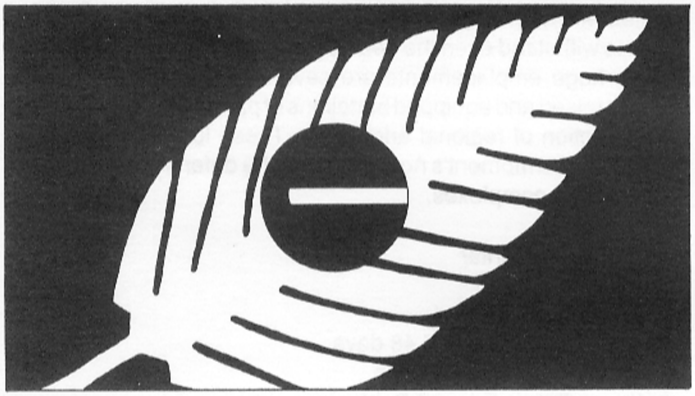
World Name: New Vandenberg
Star Type: F5IV
Position in System: 6
Time to Jump Point: 14.93 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Political Leader: Fyodor Malvena
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Gregori Havellack
Population: 1,312,000,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 15%, Avian
Description:

Next to the Taurian capital itself, New Vandenberg is the most important world in the Concordat. The site of bitter fighting during the Reunification War and center of a harsh post-war occupation, its inhabitants have sworn to prevent their world from ever being occupied again. Accordingly, the Taurians have established a large permanent garrison backed by an extensive array of fortifications on the planet.

At present, New Vandenberg supports a population of well over a billion and the largest Taurian war materiel industry outside the Hyades Cluster. In addition, the planet is known for its rich variety of rare and exotic avian life-forms, many of which remain protected in nature preserves in the planet's southern hemisphere.

World Name: Celeano
Star Type: F4V
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 16.09 days
Recharging Station: None
Political Leader: Hirachi Angara
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 69,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: Unknown
Description:

From what little information is available, Celeano appears to be a warm, temperate world settled sometime in the early 3000s. It is rumored that vast stores of Star League technologies, including BattleMechs, have been discovered on the planet, the remains of a lost Star League expedition or a military contingent that disappeared sometime during the Reunification War. If even half the rumors are true, the Taurians may have uncovered a source of scientific knowledge and artifacts that could substantially improve their social and military systems.



World Name: Mirfak
Star Type: G2V
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 9.11 days
Recharging Station: None
Political Leader: Logan Serduci
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 49,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: Unknown
Description:

From all accounts, Mirfak appears to be a hot, dry world rich in germanium and radioactives. Although the accuracy of such rumors has not been established, the government has approached several small mining concerns to assemble exploitation teams for duty on this newly discovered world. The degree of security surrounding this matter suggests a substantial find somewhere in the Mirfak system.

World Name: Brisbane
Star Type: G2
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 9.11 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Political Ruler: Edward Calderon
ComStar Facility Class: C
ComStar Representative: Precentor Braxton Horrowitz
Population: 15,288,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 55%, Mammal
Description:

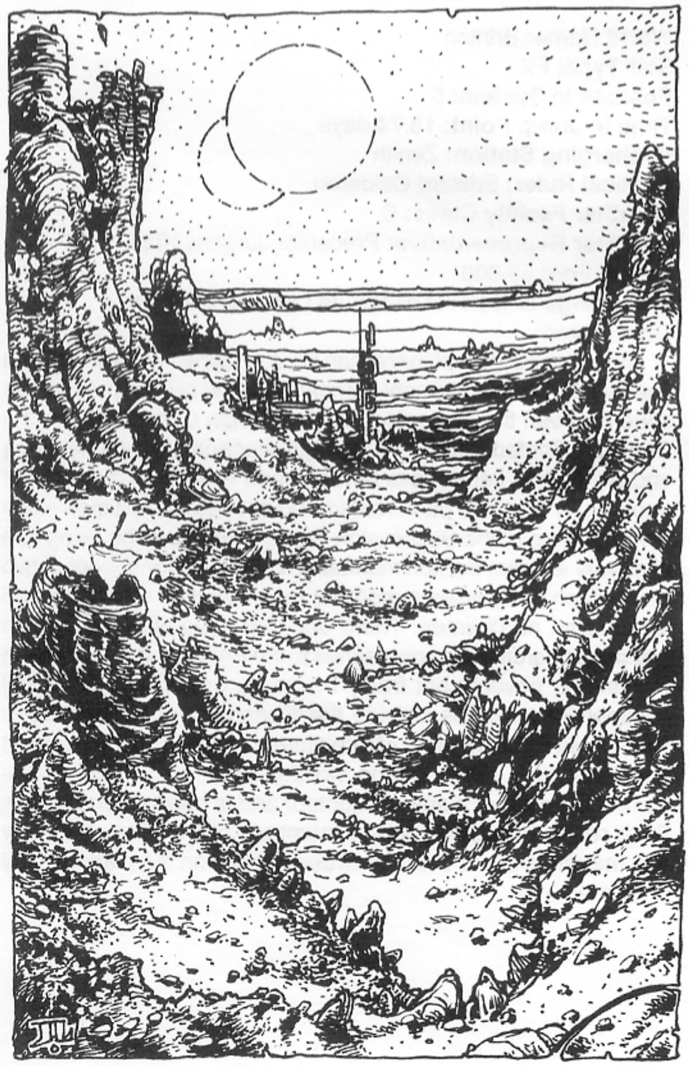
A plush water world situated along the less-than-clearly-defined border between the Taurian Concordat and the Magistracy of Canopus, Brisbane has been the scene of numerous clashes between Taurian, Magistracy, and Independent forces in the last generation. Prized for its abundance of fresh-water sea life as much as for its surviving water purification plants dotting the southern hemisphere, Brisbane is a gigantic reservoir of marine foodstuffs and desalinized water stores. With over 80 percent of the planet's land mass in the form of small island chains, the Taurian Concordat has had to resort to unorthodox expedients to defend the planet. For this reason, Brisbane has the only Taurian sea-going naval contingent in the Concordat as well as a contingent of traditional BattleMech and infantry forces in support of the planet's main starport in the northern archipelago. Brisbane is also home planet to the Second Battalion of the Taurian Red Chasseurs, who maintain a constant garrison on the planet.

World Name: Brinton
Star Type: F2
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 18.74 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Political Ruler: Edward Calderon
ComStar Facility Class: C
ComStar Representative: Precentor Jurgens Kepler
Population: 55,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 45%, Avian
Description:

With a population of more than 50,000 trained technicians and specialists, Brinton is a cool, temperate world lying in the triangle zone between the outer edge of the Taurian Concordat and the Capellan Confederation. As a major electronics manufacturing and production center, this border world is a tempting target of opportunity that has been raided and sacked many times since the beginning of the Succession Wars. To combat the rising tide of enemy attacks, Brinton maintains a standing contingent of two BattleMech companies supported by a battalion of well-trained local militia at all times. There are also several large Taurian warships guarding the approaches to the Brinton system. Though the Brinton government freely trades its goods with individual commercial concerns outside the Concordat, they maintain a strict quota on the number of foreigners permitted on the planet at any given time. Anyone who violates these restrictions is assumed to be either a spy or saboteur and is treated accordingly. Such restrictions also apply to members of ComStar, with only 100 members of our Blessed Order allowed on the planet at any one time.

World Name: New Ganymede
Star Type: G2
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 9.11 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Political Ruler: Edward Calderon
ComStar Facility Class: D
ComStar Representative: Precentor Xavier Hollandais
Population: 112,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 15%, Mammal
Description:

A barren, desert world, New Ganymede lies in the interior of the Taurian Concordat near the edge of the Hyades Cluster. Swept by high winds and frequent dust storms, this bleak and unattractive world is valuable for its enormous deposits of radioactive ores. Supporting one of the Concordat's largest mining operations, New Ganymede is home to over 40,000 miners and scientists, many of whom are directly involved in the collection and processing of these ores via massive surface ore extractors. The importance that the Taurians give to this inhospitable planet is indicated by the presence of the First Battalion of the Pleiades Hussars as a semi-permanent garrison on New Ganymede. The First Battalion is usually garrisoned near the planet's few sources of fresh water in the southern latitudes. New Ganymede also hosts an extensive desert warfare training facility, which is located near the northern polar regions where the planet's frequent storms are less severe.

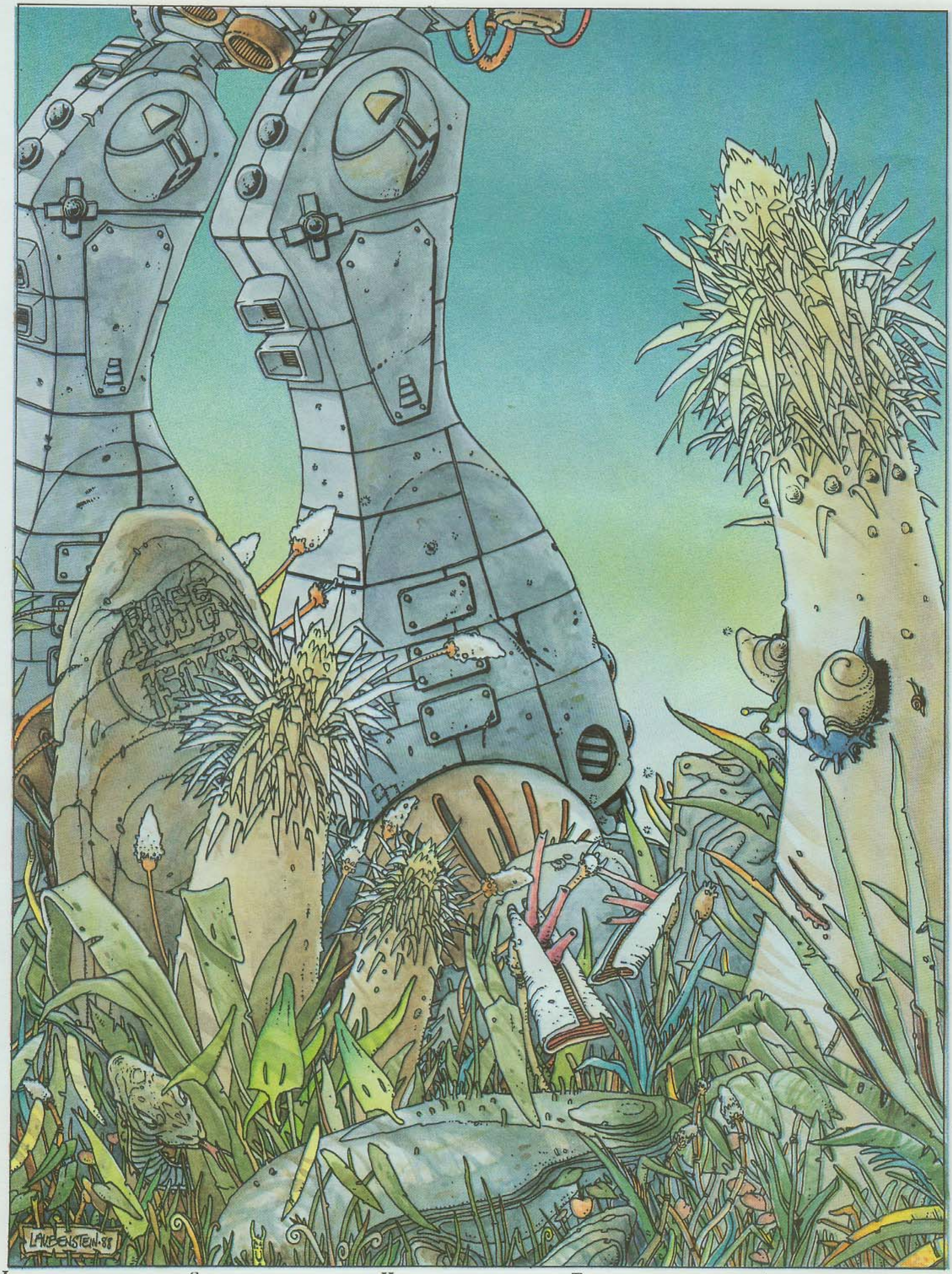


World Name: Sterope
Star Type: K2
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 4.87 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Political Ruler: Edward Calderon
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 78,000,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 45%, Mammal
Description:

Often referred to as "New Taurus," Sterope is one of the largest centers of weapons production found outside the Hyades Cluster. With a native population of more than 75,000,000, Sterope is homeworld to Sterope Defense Industries as well as numerous firms managed by Taurus Territorial Industries. Weapons manufacture on Sterope runs the gamut from DropShips and AeroSpace Fighters to tanks, armored fighting vehicles and small arms. Considering how important Sterope is to the Taurian war effort, the planet is not assigned an ongoing garrison of BattleMech-armed troops. However, Sterope's planetary landscape is dotted with numerous redoubts and heavily fortified strong-points able to withstand even the heaviest concerted attack. Backing up these huge emplacements are several of Noble's Regiments, locally raised and equipped battalions of paramilitary forces under the direction of regional aristocrats. These local troops can be called up at a moment's notice to aid in the defense of the planet's vital factory complexes.

World Name: Ishtar
Star Type: G5
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 7.48 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Political Ruler: Edward Calderon
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 90,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 35%, Mammal
Description:

Originally settled in the early days of the Concordat, the agricultural world of Ishtar has since become the major exporter of foodstuffs and related commodities. With a population of close to 90,000, this warm temperate world has become a key producer of native minerals and wines as well. Because the Taurians recognize the significance of this world's natural beauty, they have taken the unprecedented step of demilitarizing Ishtar in hopes of reducing the likelihood of enemy attack. In addition to being the principal Taurian agricultural world, it is also distinguished as the only undefended planet in the Concordat sphere of influence. The Taurians are so determined to preserve the "neutrality" of this idyllic world that they have also barred ComStar representatives admittance to the planet for fear that the presence of ComStar technology will invite unwarranted aggression by deep-space raiders.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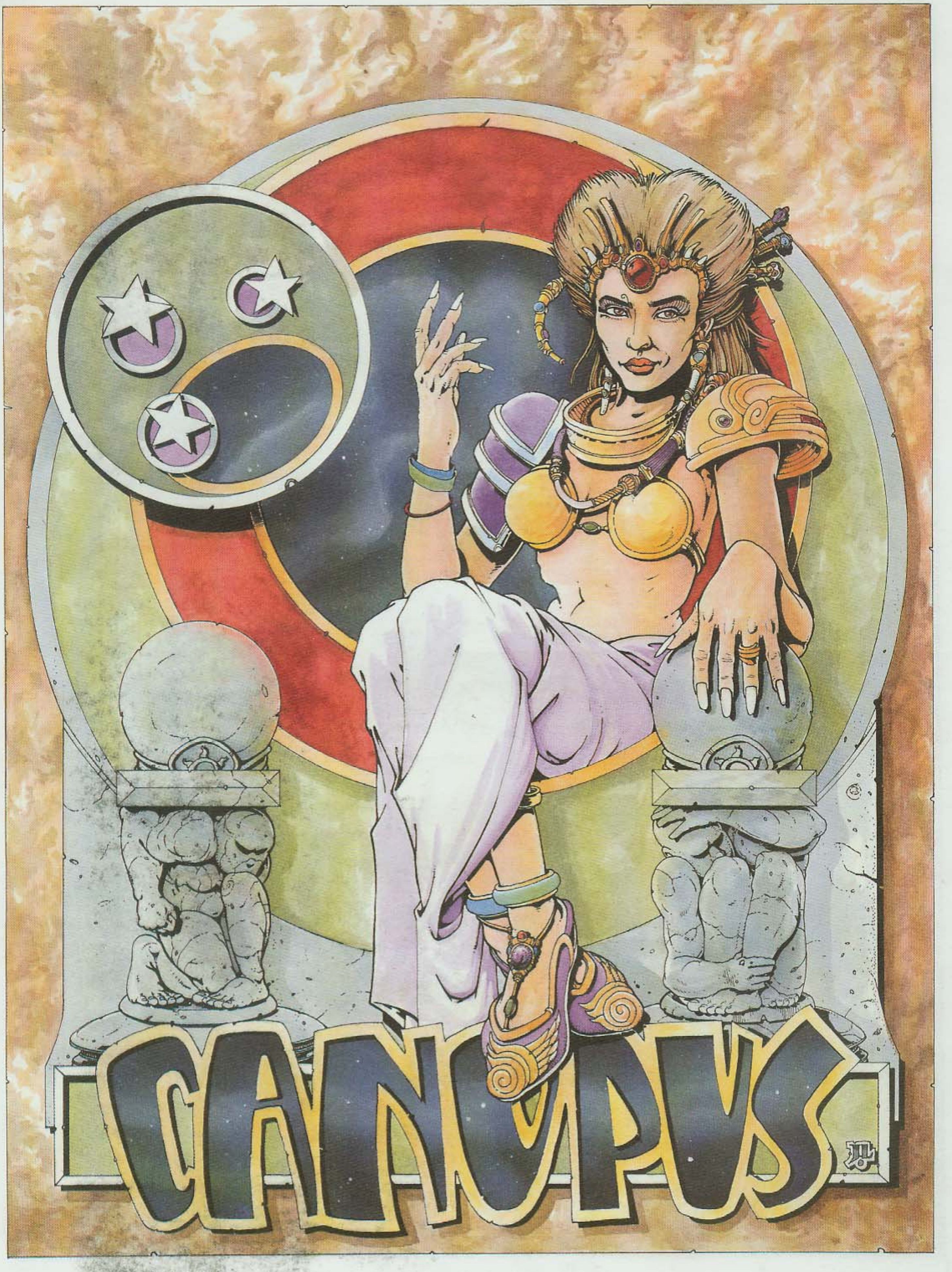

CANOPUS

THE MAGISTRACY OF CANOPUS

Lying outward of the Free Worlds League, the Magistracy of Canopus is the third largest of the Periphery States. Founded in 2530 by Kossandra Centrella, an ex-Marik MechWarrior, the Canopian Magistracy is an autocratic state where women traditionally manage the government and the military. In the early years of the Magistracy, population pressure and social prejudice within the Inner Sphere produced widespread emigration to many Canopian worlds. Taking advantage of the abundant mineral resources found there, Floral Centrella, third Magestrix of the Canopian Free States, transformed this backwater collection of misfits and malcontents into a prosperous financial and political entity.

For nearly a century, the Canopian Magistracy was synonymous with decadent sensuality and freedom of expression (in every sense of the term). The riches that the Canopians collected eventually proved their undoing when they became a prime target in the Reunification War. The Canopians' unique social contributions and sizable cash reserves, however, did much to mitigate the consequences of military occupation by the Star League. As a Territorial State under Star League control, the Canopian Magistracy returned to its old ways, encouraged by an influx of immigrants who embraced the philosophy of "Happy Days and Hectic Nights."

Following the breakup of the Star League, the Magistracy began a massive rearmament program and hired many mercenaries, which once more drew to them the unwanted attention of their ambitious neighbors.

Beginning in the early 2800s, the Magistracy lost many holdings in a series of border disputes with the Free Worlds League, the Taurian Concordat, and the Capellan Confederation. Seeing the pleasure planets and remaining industrial centers being repeatedly sacked and looted, the hereditary leaders of the Canopian matriarchy (House Centrella) ordered its few remaining industrial plants to be moved deep within the Canopian holdfast.

The miniature Magistracy emerged alive and surprisingly healthy after two and a half centuries of warfare, though a mere shadow of its once-illustrious past. The destruction of galactic trade and tourism during the Succession Wars has left the great majority of Canopian worlds lacking the barest of technological necessities. Never self-sufficient even in the best of times, the Magistracy has seen numerous famines and agricultural failures, leading to significant depopulation and social unrest.

With the difficulty of civilian space travel during the Succession Wars era—and thus few customers able to buy their pleasures—the Magistracy has turned to more mundane industries. Once noted for their famous courtesans and dancers, the Canopians of today are highly regarded as healers, many of whom travel far afield in service of their state. Weary of their past adventures, poorer in body and spirit, but nonetheless wiser for their suffering, the Magistracy's intelligentsia is beginning a slow resurgence that may yet have a profound impact on the rest of the Periphery.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

The Magistracy of Canopus is a roughly circular shell of planetary systems some 40 parsecs in diameter. Though the government is officially neutral, the current Magestrix of the Canopian state, Kyalla Centrella, is known to be in communication with various dissident elements within the Free Worlds League and the Capellan Confederation. Her major objective is to restore technological exchange with the various states of the Inner Sphere, but she also hopes to woo these elements to the Magistracy banner. Already, she has pledged to supply troops to support the Duchess of Andurien's bid for independence from the Free Worlds League.

SOCIOPOLITICAL STRUCTURE

Since its founding nearly five centuries ago, the Magistracy of Canopus has been ruled by a matriarchy, with supreme power vested in the person of the Magestrix. Though theoretically open to anyone obtaining a two-thirds majority of the Canopian Central Committee, the Magestrix has always been a member of the Centrella family, the original founders of the Canopian state. Despite this political domination, the Magistracy has retained a surprising number of individual freedoms; its judicial and legislative bodies support human rights to a degree often lacking with the governments of the Inner Sphere.

The center of the Magistracy government is Canopus IV, founded by Kossandra Centrella in 2530. Here, the Magestrix maintains her Royal Court, the Canopian Central Committee, and the Royal Courts of Appeal.

GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

In the early years of the Magistracy, political positions were open exclusively to women, reflecting the Centrellas' personal bias against the male-dominated systems of the Inner Sphere. Beginning with the administration of Floral Centrella, however, the Magestrix has gradually reduced these restrictions. Following the Reunification War, the Canopians were forced to modify their political structure under the direction of a Star League-appointed military governor, Melissa Humphreys. Under the Humphreys administration (2588–2604) the position of Magestrix was modified to that of a constitutional monarch and suffrage was extended to all, irrespective of sex, origin, or social status.

Following the Magistracy's declaration of independence from the Star League during the Amaris Crisis, the power and privileges of the Magestrix were restored to their former levels, though many rights granted individuals during the "Territorial Period" were retained. At present, each Magistracy citizen is guaranteed the right to elect legally protected representatives. Other rights, including trial by jury and freedom of speech, are protected as much by tradition as by Star League precedents.

Magestrix

The position of Magestrix, or supreme head of the Canopian State, evolved in the mid-2540s. Beginning with Floral Centrella, the fourth of her family to run for office, a revamped Canopian Constitution provided for a strong centralized government headed by the Magestrix. Holding a lifetime office, the Magestrix is responsible for the welfare of all Magistracy citizens. This responsibility includes virtual control over taxation, the appointment of military officers and civil officials, and the formation of internal and external policies.

During the Magistracy's Territorial Period, many of these sweeping powers were assumed by the Military Governor of the Canopian Territorial State, and later by the Star League Council itself. The Magestrix's authority was limited to maintaining civil order and promoting Star League policies within the Magistracy. Following Canopian independence from Star League control in the late 2700s, the Magestrix was restored to its original status, albeit with the addition of a Central Committee of legislative peers.

In its present form, the office of Magestrix remains largely authoritarian, with legislative veto powers and the right to command the Canopian military. Ever since Melissa Humphreys established numerous democratic Peoples Councils, the position of Magestrix has diminished somewhat in stature, if not in actual capability.

Unlike similar institutions within the Inner Sphere, the Magestrix does not have the right to nominate her own successor. At the death of an incumbent Magestrix, specially selected officials, the Canopian Electors, nominate a new executive and forward their choice to the Central Committee. The Committee then votes for a new Magestrix; if a two-thirds majority of electoral votes is not present, it instructs the Electors to repeat the process until a majority vote is reached. In theory, the assembled electors may choose any citizen in the Magistracy, though a female member of the Centrella family (though not necessarily the oldest) has always been selected.

Central Committee

Drawn from popularly elected representatives from each planet of the Canopian systems, the 33-member Central Committee is a creation of the Humphreys administration of the early 2600s. Originally designed as a Board of Legislative Review, this body was revised and expanded in the latter days of the Star League to provide legislation for the Magestrix's approval, as well as to review policies handed down from above. By 2750, membership in the Central Committee was opened to all citizens of the Magistracy, irrespective of gender, with terms of office set at five-year intervals. With the Magistracy's independence, this term of office was reduced to two years. As may be expected, the office of the Magestrix and the Central Committee have often opposed each other.

Crimson Council

Formed as a result of an Imperial edict by Coranna Centrella (2570–2582), the Crimson Council administers matters pertaining to Canopian nobility. The Magestrix appoints this six-member panel, which rules on the creation of new nobility, the assessment of noble privileges and responsibilities, and general accountability to the state and its citizenry. On rare occasions, the Crimson Council (named for the traditional dyed red ermine worn by Canopian nobility) has served as a judicial review board in cases of misconduct involving Canopian nobility. Membership in the Crimson Council is for life, although the Magestrix reserves the right to dismiss a Council appointee.

Canopian Judiciary

The Canopian Judiciary is divided into three branches: the Canopian Provincial Courts, which conduct all manner of civil and criminal law at the planetary level; the Canopian Star Courts, which handle all matters pertaining to corporate and business law; and the Canopian Courts of Appeal. Canopian citizens may bring cases to a Provincial Court if they can also produce a witness able to corroborate their case. Generally, the findings of the Provincial Courts are binding, and special officials of the court, known as Magistracy Field Officers (the equivalent of local marshals and deputies), enforce their rulings. When an individual wishes to appeal to a higher court, he may present his case to a Court of Appeal if the Central Committee approves his petition. In general, the Canopian Court system maintains a high regard for the rights and privileges of the individual citizen, but protects the traditional privileges of the Canopian nobility as well. When rights are in conflict, the Magistracy Courts typically favor the private citizen.

Canopian Electors

The Canopian Electors are a select group of individuals whose sole governmental function is to choose a new Magestrix when the current one dies. Two Electors from each Canopian planet are appointed for life. Though originally restricted to members of the aristocracy, Canopian electorship was extended to private citizens in the mid-2800s. They are selected by popular vote, with special elections held to fill vacancies. Though limited in function, the position of Elector is most prestigious, and one that carries considerable power to influence future events. Thus, aspirants to the office will spend vast sums of money to secure the popular support needed for election. Nor is it uncommon for Electors to become wealthy overnight through "gifts" tendered by Magestrix candidates. Beginning in 2955, the office of Elector became hereditary in several influential families, though popular election still applies for the majority of Electors.

MAGISTRACY NOBILITY

Canopian nobility is unique because it is not hereditary. Extensions of noble titles and privileges to successive generations depends on special service to the state. With the passage of time, the strictures regarding service have loosened dramatically, but some token service is still required for those wishing to retain honors that may be generations old.

The Canopian nobility is divided into three components. The first, the Froness, are families who settled the Canopian systems in the first decade of colonization. The Durachi represent the various merchant princes, whose corporations have helped to develop trade with the Periphery and the Inner Sphere and have made substantial contributions to the office of the Magestrix. The newest class of Canopian nobility, the Girin, are those rare individuals whose personal services to the state, both civil and military, have warranted special recognition. During the early years of the Magistracy, only the Magestrix herself could grant noble status. Beginning with the reign of Coranna Centrella, however, this function was transferred to the Crimson Council, where it has resided ever since. This Council regulates all new appointments to the noble classes, as well as arbitrates disputes over the prerogatives of each.

For the most part, the Canopian nobility is an aristocratic body of service-oriented elites. Though most noble families are content to serve in minor governmental functions, members of the Froness are concentrated in the royal court on Canopus.

Among the many privileges that the Canopian nobility enjoy are the right to hire a substitute to fulfill their military service, the right of the female to select her own mate (who cannot refuse her, under Canopian law), the right to conduct foreign trade outside the Magistracy, and the right to serve in specially appointed governmental positions, including military commands.

There is great factionalism and peer prejudice among the Canopian nobility. Many of the Froness believe themselves to be the only true Magistracy nobility, for example, while the Durachi and the Girin consider the Froness to be pure social snobs. During the Canopian heyday, the Girin family accepted many entrepreneurs into their line because of how well those individuals had managed the many Canopian pleasure industries. In the post-Reunification War period, many of these nobles lost their positions due to widespread Star League "neo-Puritanism". The loosening of moral strictures in the days following the Amaris Crisis and the recent introduction of the New Hedon philosophies have reversed this trend, creating bad feelings between many prominent families.

The Magestrix has covertly encouraged this traditional factionalism of the rival noble families. Should the nobility ever put aside its petty differences and unite, the Magistracy's social structure may radically change.

INTERNAL POLITICS

The original Constitution of the Magistracy Free States, established in 2531, granted citizenship to all individuals desiring political, religious, and social freedom from oppression. Any individual who can prove that he is the victim of such oppression is granted unconditional status as a citizen of the Canopian state for the duration of his life and the lifetimes of his descendants. No Canopian citizen can be tried unless due cause and corroborating testimony have first been presented to a judicial official. No Canopian citizen can be extradited to another foreign power without the express permission of the Magestrix. Canopian citizens are free to own land, to transfer property rights to their descendants as they see fit, and to pursue whatever social status they desire.

In exchange, each Canopian citizen must help provide for the common defense of the state. This obligation may be fulfilled through military service, by involvement in the educational system (as literacy is considered essential to the ongoing preparation for defense), or by donating land or materiel to the war effort in times of crisis. Though political parties are banned as being divisive, all Canopian citizens are required by law to participate in all elections.

INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

Since the onset of the Succession Wars, the Magistracy of Canopus has maintained a position of armed neutrality. In the last two centuries, it has been forced to beat back several incursions, punitive strikes by both the Free Worlds League and the Taurian Concordat, and a variety of pirate attacks. The Canopians have been able to maintain a tenuous hold on their "heartland" systems, which provides the basis for future expansion.

Free Worlds League

Successive Magistracy governments do not recognize the "award" of many of its industrialized planetary systems to the Free Worlds League after the Reunification War. Subsequent acquisition of additional isolated systems by later Captains-General has further raised the Canopians' ire. At present, the Magistracy refuses to receive diplomatic delegations from the Free Worlds League (trade delegations are another matter) until House Marik is willing to discuss the return of captured Canopian systems. Various Canopian nobles, particularly those in entertainment industries, are known to have informal contacts with Marik officials through the mediation of the Capellan Confederation.

Capellan Confederation

Historically, the Magistracy of Canopus has had little to do with the Capellan Confederation. Generally, Canopians disdain any contact with a regimented, repressive society like that of the Capellans. In recent years, a series of small border actions against Capellan units has not done much to improve the situation. Though the Canopians have accepted a Capellan embassy on Canopus, their reaction to Capellan overtures for closer diplomatic ties is frosty at best. Given the Capellans' use of slavery within their sphere of influence, it is unlikely that relations between the two states will improve until the Confederation improves its human rights record.

Taurian Concordat

Despite numerous clashes between the Magistracy and the Taurian Concordat in the last few decades, the Magistracy maintains close diplomatic ties with its neighbor. Whatever their differences, the Taurians are seen as fellow Rim-Worlders, suggesting a social affinity that peoples of the Inner Sphere cannot appreciate or understand. Thus do the Taurians enjoy a favored-nation status with the Magistracy, and the two governments have jointly explored remote star systems at the edge of charted space. In recent years, the Taurians have suggested the creation of a Pan-Periphery State but the Canopians have continued to meet these proposals with polite refusals.

Other Inner Sphere Governments

For all its dislike and suspicion of its immediate neighbors, the Magistracy has been striving to establish relations with the Federated Suns and the Lyran Commonwealth. Here too, the Canopians' skill in the art of medicine and their demonstrated superiority in the health sciences have done much to pave the way for future profitable relations. The Magistracy's position as an impartial "Galactic Red Cross" make it a desirable ally.

ComStar

ComStar maintains two communications facilities in the Magistracy of Canopus: one at the University of Luxen and the other on Canopus IV. Ambassadorial assistants and a nominal staff of technicians and administrative support personnel work at both facilities. Relations between the Magistracy and ComStar have traditionally been polite, if not overly warm. Like most existing governments, the Magistracy leaders appreciate the importance of ComStar's presence, but they resist any effort by our Order to influence Magistracy internal policies.

POLITICAL GOALS

Beyond attempting to maintain its own territorial integrity, the Magistracy's primary diplomatic focus is to establish new trade links with anyone willing to deal with so distant a trading partner. As part of this ongoing process, the Magistracy is attempting to obtain viable technologies to enlarge its miniscule merchant marine. In recent years, the Canopians have made notable strides through the "exportation" of medical and health-services personnel to neighboring systems in return for raw materials and technicians. In addition, efforts to increase exploration and exploitation of new worlds holds out the promise of a revitalization of the Canopian economy.

Behind the scenes, Magestrix Kyalla Centrella is secretly planning for the day when war and civil disorder will destroy the Free Worlds League once and for all. In anticipation of this, she has identified various dissident elements within both the Free Worlds League and the Capellan Confederation. Since 3017, the Magestrix's envoys have been in secret communication with Dame Catherine Humphreys, the Free Worlds League's Duchess of Andurien, in an effort to unite their two realms. Similarly, representatives from the Magestrix's inner circle have made contact with various minor Lords and Ladies along the Capellan border. The aim of these maneuvers is the fulfillment of Kyalla Centrella's pet dream: the creation of a new, stronger Magistracy. It would extend beyond its pre-Reunification War boundaries, incorporating systems lost to House Marik in the Succession Wars and the territories of the Duchy of Andurien, plus various Capellan worlds. In addition to the offer of military support, the promise of newly discovered wealth beyond the edge of charted space serves as a lure for future negotiations.

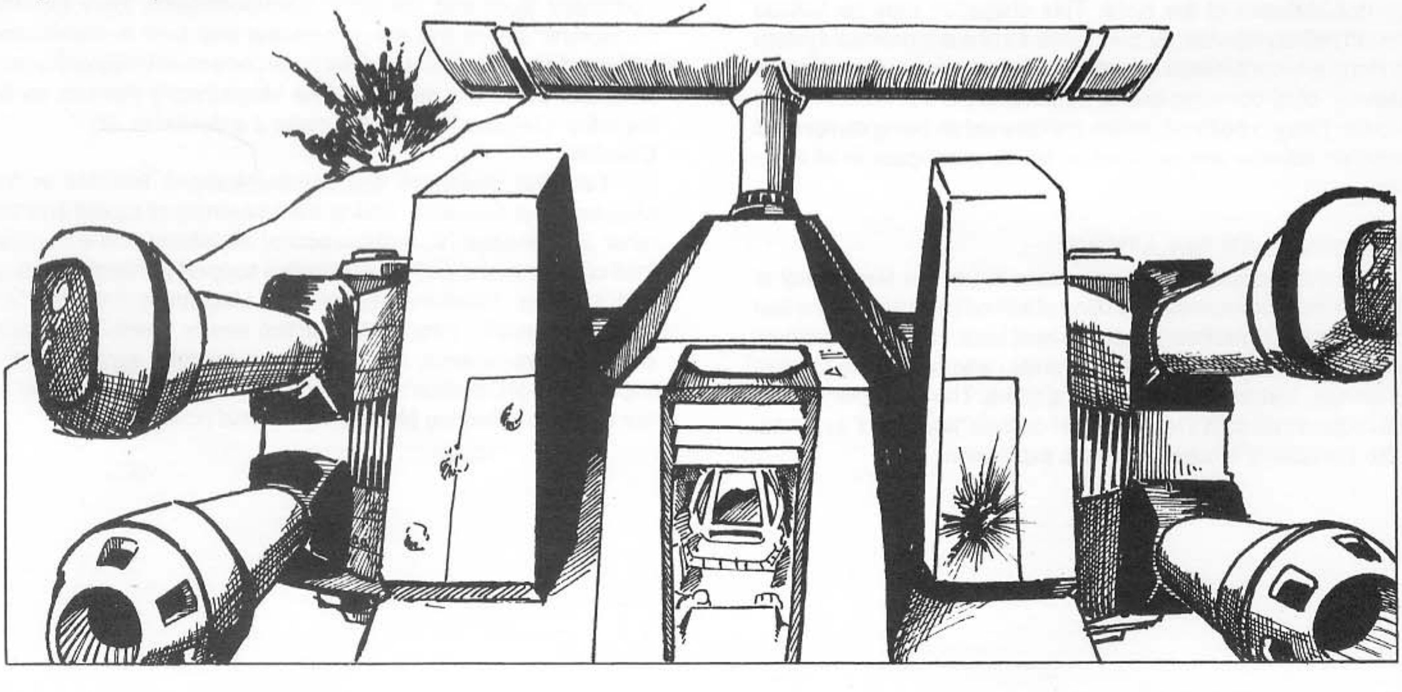
STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

In many respects, the Magistracy of Canopus represents the best and the worst of modern Human development. Though autocratic in nature, its centralized government remains deeply conscious of the needs of its citizenry. The continued factionalism of the Canopian aristocracy weakens the central government's efforts to bring about rapid change, and the general decline in literacy rates among the Magistracy's lower classes makes revitalizing the Canopian state more difficult.

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

Of all the Periphery states, the Magistracy of Canopus is the most tolerant of the various religions and philosophies. The original constitution, supported by later Royal Edicts, grants complete freedom of religion and philosophical expression so long as individual worship does not infringe on another's safety. All the major traditional religions exist in the Magistracy, as well as an abundance of newer philosophies. Indeed, the Canopians, more than any other Periphery people, have embraced the spirit of the New Hedon philosophy, which combines the ideas of free love and epicureanism. The philosophy harks back to early Canopian history, when the Magistracy was the galaxy's pleasure retreat. Though the days when over four-fifths of the Canopian economic base was geared toward pleasure services are gone, a sizable segment of the population still embraces this "Eat, Drink, and Be Merry" lifestyle, with occasional destabilizing effects on the society.

No religious or philosophical doctrine may hold any official connection with governmental affairs, as special interest groups and lobbies are forbidden. The introduction of the One Star Faith into Canopian space in the last century has led to an informal alliance between the Star adherents and members of the Inheritors philosophical sects, however. This alliance has been the motive force in the efforts to rebuild the Magistracy economy and military.



MILITARY FORCES

In the peaceful atmosphere that has dominated most of the Magistracy's history, a standing military has been considered a necessary evil at best. It is not surprising, then, that the Magistracy has traditionally fielded one of the smallest armed forces in the Periphery, while relying heavily on local constabularies and mercenary forces. In the years before the outbreak of the Reunification War, however, the Canopian government began a series of crash rearmament programs to redress this lack of well-trained and disciplined forces. It was too late, however, to do more than fight a delaying action against the best that the Inner Sphere could put in the field. During the Canopians' years as a Territorial State, its military was reduced to a symbolic cadre of veteran soldiers confined to service as palace guards. Military buildup renewed after the Magistracy's declaration of independence, but the loss of many key industrial worlds stunted the military's potential for growth. In the present era, the Canopian armed forces remain a curious combination of local militia and highly trained federal troops. The individual Canopian soldier is highly motivated and capable of enduring considerable sacrifice. Far from being "velvet pillow pushovers," the Canopians are fully capable of giving as good as they might get from any invaders who fail to take them seriously enough.

UNIFORMS

Standard uniforms within the Magistracy Armed Forces are variations on a single theme. Ground forces wear a tight-fitting dark blue tunic and trousers that have contrasting light blue collars and cuffs. Naval uniforms are the reverse, with personnel dressed in light blue uniforms whose collars and cuffs are dark blue.

Dress uniforms are the same except for silver piping on trouser legs and cuffs for enlisted personnel, and gold piping for officers. As the Canopian Navy controls the AeroSpace Fighter Arm of the military, AeroSpace Pilots wear the same uniforms as their naval counterparts, except that lapel and piping are green. Support personnel, including technicians, administrative personnel, and special service functionaries wear the standard uniforms of their "line" regiment counterparts, except for red piping to denote their elevated status.

When preparing for battle, infantry forces wear a brown uniform with black lapels and cuffs. Enlisted personnel wear their insignia as a black silhouette on the lapels only; officers have similar insignia, but wear them on the cuffs. Armor personnel typically wear dull-black field uniforms with off-white insignia. Canopian MechWarrior battle dress is similar to that of Inner Sphere MechWarriors, with some modifications. Due to the Magistracy's lower technology level, Canopian neurohelmets are larger than those used elsewhere. In addition, they allow for longer hair styles to accommodate the Canopians' disproportionate number of women warriors. Magistracy AeroSpace Pilots wear the simplest uniforms. Its single notable feature is the presence of the arm-length protector, which contains emergency circuitry systems and life-sign monitors.

RANKS

The system of ranks used by the MAF is similar to those of military orders throughout the galaxy. Currently, about four million men and women are on active duty in the MAF, distributed among ten different ranks: four officer grade and six enlisted. The insignia for all MAF personnel is diamond-shaped, which reflects the Canopians' love of wealth.

Enlisted Ranks

The six enlisted ranks of the MAF are Volunteer, First Ranker, Lance Corporal, Star Corporal, Command Sergeant, and Banner Sergeant.

Volunteer

All Canopian citizens are required to serve a minimum of three years in the MAF (though aristocrats can secure exemption by hiring a substitute). All new recruits are referred to as Volunteers and wear the silver-edged diamond insignia on their lapels and cuffs.

First Ranker

All graduates of basic training receive the rank of First Ranker, unless subject to some disciplinary action. The First Ranker then enters into several months of advanced training in a particular area of expertise. Further promotion within the MAF depends on individual initiative and performance. Two silver-edged diamonds, one nested inside the other, identify a First Ranker.

Lance Corporal

The Lance Corporal is roughly equivalent to a Sergeant in other military services. They are expected to be competent instructors in the field and to command units averaging between 15 and 20 troops. A third nested diamond bar distinguishes Lance Corporals from First Rankers.

Star Corporal

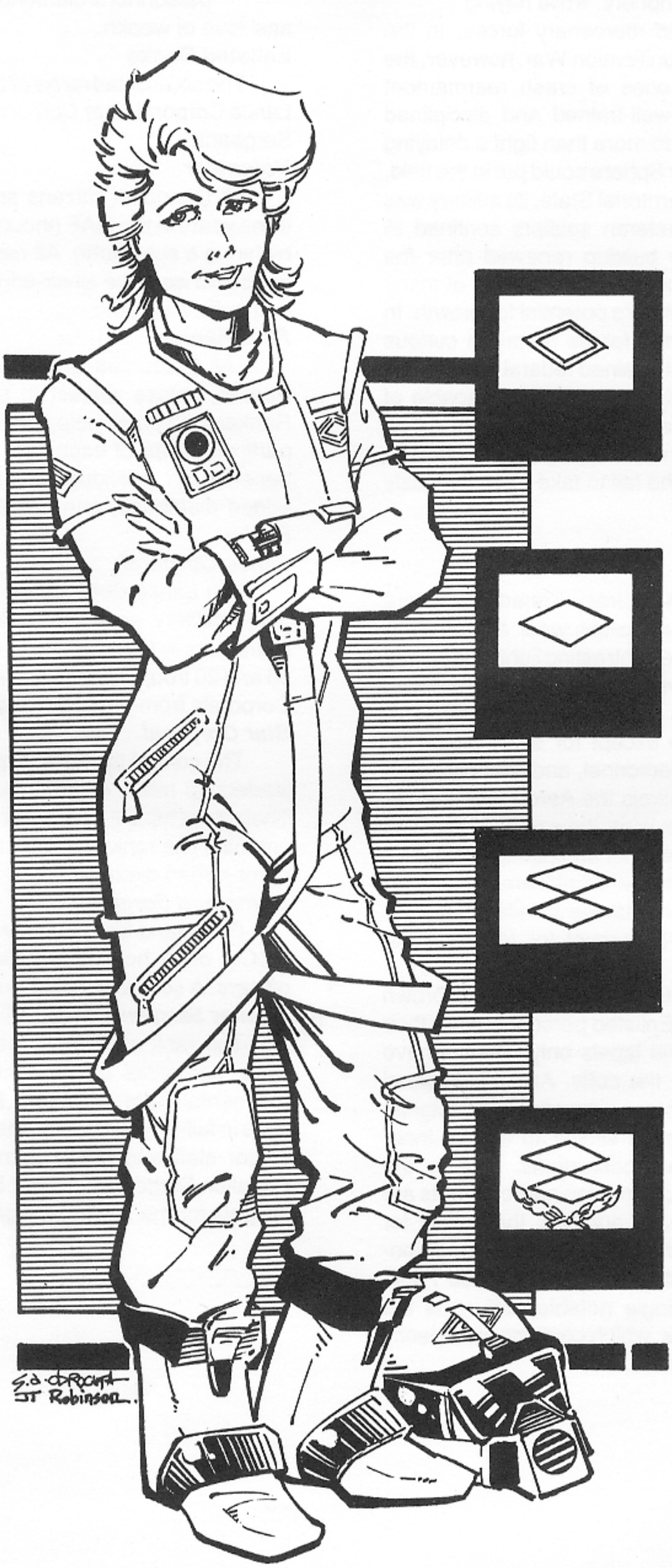
The core of the MAF, the Star Corporal serves in a variety of leadership roles, often in the absence of ranking field officers. Their most typical role is the equivalent of a platoon sergeant in combat. The rank is named for its insignia, a silver star within a silver-edged diamond.

Command Sergeant

Command Sergeants are the equivalent of senior company NCOs, often holding a variety of staff positions under senior officers. A solid silver diamond denotes the Command Sergeant.

Banner Sergeant

The rank of "Banner Sergeant" harkens back to the days when personnel of this rank were responsible for their unit's regimental colors. Though Banner Sergeants still handle unit flags in full-dress parades, they are primarily responsible for filling senior staff and field commands. They are the equivalent of Battalion Sergeants in Inner Sphere military structures. The rank insignia for the Banner Sergeant is two solid silver diamonds.


JT Robinson

CANOPUS RANKS AND UNIFORMS

Officer Ranks

Junior officer slots within the MAF are usually purchased positions, a feature unique among Periphery military systems. The practice is in keeping with Magistracy tradition, which holds that those able to afford the cost of command positions (the nobility) are those best suited to lead. In all cases involving senior grade officers, however, such purchases require the confirmation of the Magestrix. Though the merits of this policy may be questionable, this system has gone unchallenged for four centuries. Typical purchase prices for commissions in the MAF are given below in standard C-Bills.

Though there is less discrimination against male officers in the MAF than previously, it does still exist. Females are likely to pay a lower price for an officer slot than an equally qualified male.

AVERAGE MAF COMMISSION PURCHASE PRICES

Rank	Line Regiment	Guards Regiment
Ensign	10,000–12,500	18,00–25,000
Commander	16,000–20,000	30,000–35,000
Major (Comcapt)	24,000–30,000	40,000–45,000
Colonel (Rearad)	33,000–40,000	50,000+

Ensign

The rank of Ensign appears in both the Canopian navy and army. Ensigns rarely command set numbers of troops, but may control from ten to a hundred individuals at any given time, depending on their unit assignment. An Ensign's rank insignia is a gold-edged diamond.

Commander

The rank of Commander is equivalent to the Inner Sphere ranks of Lieutenant, Lieutenant Commander, and Commander. Aboard ship, a Commander may serve as a department commander or his assistant. On the ground, a Commander typically heads up a company or battalion. The insignia is two gold-edged hollow diamonds, one inside the other.

Major

MAF majors are typically employed as senior battalion commanders and brevet regimental commanders, especially in training commands. In the MAF navy, the rank of Major is usually referred to as Comcapt (a bastardization of Commodore-Captain). A Comcapt can command anything from a ship up to a squadron of from three to six vessels. A single gold diamond insignia denotes a Major; a gold wreath below the diamond denotes a Comcapt.

Colonel

MAF Colonels are the regimental commanders of the MAF. Aboard ship, the rank is referred to as Rearad (from Rear Admiral). In addition to the various regimental commanders, there are three Senior Colonels who coordinate defense plans for the Magestrix. Two Rearads command the diminutive Canopian Navy fleets. Two horizontal solid gold diamonds denote the Colonel; a Rearad also has a gold wreath.

STRUCTURE OF THE MAF

The structure of the Magistracy Armed Forces is simplistic. Its small size allows it to be streamlined with few distinctions between branches.

Magestrix Command Center

At the apex of the MAF is the Magestrix Command Center (MCC). Located on Canopus IV, this division of the MAF is directly responsible to the Magestrix for all top-level strategic planning and defense initiatives. Staffed by three Senior Colonels and their naval counterparts, the MCC coordinates the deployment of all Canopian forces to meet a variety of threats from foreign powers. All operational plans developed by the MCC are subject to the Magestrix's final approval.

Magistracy Army

All ground units within Canopian space are a part of the Magistracy Army. Due to its small size, the army does not differentiate sub-branches beyond the distinctions of infantry and armor commands. Artillery and jump troops, when available, are classified as infantry. Engineers and special forces units are all but nonexistent within the Magistracy Army.

Magistracy Navy

At present, the size of the Canopian Navy is less then four dozen DropShips and two dozen JumpShips, complemented by many smaller, independently owned merchant vessels, which can be used as privateers. The Canopian Navy is divided into two fleets, with two squadrons of two flotillas each. The Canopian Battle Fleet is charged with the defense of orbital space around potential targets of invasion. The second, Reserve Fleet, patrols in and around the Canopus IV system under the personal direction of the Magestrix.

Magistracy AeroSpace Arm

There are fewer than one hundred AeroSpace Fighters in Canopian space, most of which are captured and refurbished light or medium craft. Given the small numbers of fighters, operational command of the AeroSpace Arm is relegated to the Navy, with individual fighters divided among the Magistracy's two fleets.

Magistracy Medical Corps

The Magistracy Medical Corps is the one area where Canopians excel over their Inner Sphere counterparts. The MMC takes pains to ensure adequate medical care for every trooper, sailor, and pilot. The medical teams take pride in their speed in removing the wounded from the field and later returning the recovered soldiers to their units with a minimum of delay. The ratio of skilled medics and surgeons within the MAF is roughly 1 medical specialist for every 7 fighting troops, as opposed to a ratio of 1 to 20 (or more) in other modern-day armies.

Magistracy Support Corps

The Magistracy Support Corps is a catch-all division that is responsible for all administrative, supply, quartermaster, and personnel-related functions of the other military systems. The Support Corps is likewise responsible for training recruits, advanced officer training, contractual liaison with mercenary units, and research and development of new weapons systems.

TYPICAL MAF UNITS

MAF units in the field closely model the deployment schemes found in the armed forces of the Inner Sphere, with minor variations due to its small size. MAF ground forces are usually concentrated in one heavy battalion, with most of the regiments' BattleMechs formed into four-man lances. Support battalions generally consist of whatever armor (mostly reconditioned tanks) and infantry forces are available. Air Lances are typically absent from MAF forces, the exception being the Magistracy Royal Guards, which contain one air lance per battalion. All other MAF air lances are under the control of the Magistracy Navy, which provides for their transportation, deployment, and repair.

Infantry platoons vary in size from 30 to 50 men, with companies of 120 to 180 men. Jump troops, special forces, and engineers are virtually unknown within the MAF.

The Magistracy maintains a number of local Militia Defense Battalions. Drawn from the populations of the major Canopian planets, these conventional forces represent reservists with a minimal amount of training. Canopian militia forces maintain a large number of armored fighting vehicles and they construct local fortifications. Though these militia units cannot stand up to regular forces, they give a good account of themselves when combined with regular armed forces. Militia are typically employed in over-sized battalions of five companies each.

The average Canopian soldier enters service at the age of 16. If the individual is a male, he will typically have the equivalent of a 12th-grade education; females have slightly higher educational backgrounds. Following basic training, the individual undergoes service with a home defense unit for three to four years. Those who choose careers as enlisted personnel join training battalions near the Canopian borders to undergo additional training before serving in a regular line unit. Instead of attending Officer Training School, those selected as officer candidates (where there is a marked bias toward females) are posted as military aides-de-camp to an officer on duty in a regular line regiment. Nowhere is the concept of on-the-job training taken more seriously than in the MAF. An official commendation from a candidate's "sponsor" makes it possible for him or her to purchase their first commission (often with their sponsor's assistance).

UNIT PROFILES

Following are profiles of various units currently employed in the Magistracy of Canopus. These are categorized as either Regular or Mercenary units.

Unit Name: Magistracy Royal Guards
Unit Type: Regular
CO: Colonel Holly Van Dame
Unit Size: 2 Regiments
Experience Level: Veteran
'Mech Weight: Medium
Fighter Weight: Light
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Unit Symbol: An Amazon warrior trampling a snake
Unit History:

The Magistracy Royal Guards are drawn from previous units destroyed during the Reunification War. The Guards gained its royal appellation after its defense of Canopus IV against Star League forces between 2592–95. Officially disbanded following the conclusion of the Reunification War, the Royal Guards was reconstituted under Magestrix Janina Centrella following her Declaration of Independence in 2786.

In the Succession Wars era, the Royal Guards have seen little service, except to garrison Canopus. The unit distinguished itself, however, in the relief of Thurrock against Marik invaders in 2804, and in a successful counter-assault against renegade mercenaries on Luxen in 2817. In recent years, the Guards have been deployed in various border disputes with the Taurian Concordat. In the most significant of these actions, the Guards repelled Taurian attacks against the agricultural worlds of New Abilene and Firthimond. Since 3015, the unit has returned to its original palace guard duties. Among all the units of the MAF, the Guards can boast the highest level of preparedness and reliability.

MAF

Unit Name: Chasseurs à Cheval
Unit Type: Regular
CO: Colonel Trisha Tellaverde
Unit Size: 2 Regiments
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: Light
Fighter Weight: Medium
Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Unit Symbol: A female dressed in a red and green cloak. She rides a horse bareback while wielding a lance
Unit History:

The senior unit of the MAF, the Chasseurs à Cheval were formed in the early 2500s as the sole military unit of the Canopian homeworlds. Since then, these regiments (originally four in number) have participated in every campaign involving the Magistracy. Prior to the outbreak of the Reunification War, the Chasseurs gained considerable experience against Marik insurgents in a variety of unofficial, anti-Terrorist actions between 2570–75. During the Reunification War itself, the four regiments of the Chasseurs formed the initial bulwark against the Star League invaders. Though beaten back in the face of overwhelming odds, the Chasseurs earned the grudging respect of their opponents. In 2582, Marik Militia forces surrounded the Third Canopian Light Horse on Tetski. Unwilling to surrender, the Chasseurs's Third Regiment was decimated following a three-week long siege of the planet's central BattleMech complex.

More recently, the Chasseurs fended off a series of Marik raids into the Canopian interior. They also squared off against St. Cyr's Armored Grenadiers in 3005, the only time the Capellan Confederation attempted to penetrate the Magistracy with a "reconnaissance in force." In their expert defense against the intruders, the Chasseurs completely gutted one company in a four-day battle off Luxen, which yielded weapons and salvagable BattleMechs and forced the Capellans to rethink their strategic options in the Periphery.

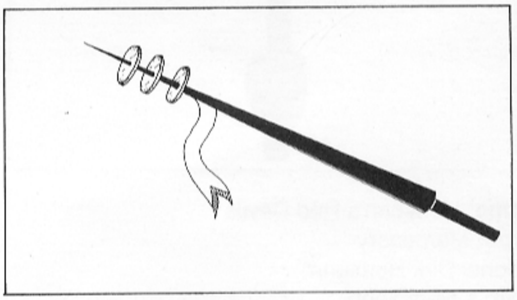
Unit Name: Canopian Fusiliers
Unit Type: Regular
CO: Colonel Patty Gorden
Unit Size: 3 Regiments
Experience Level: Green
'Mech Weight: Light
Fighter Weight: Light
Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Unit Symbol: Three gold diamonds above a bloodstained sabre
Unit History:

Though the Fusiliers were decimated in the Reunification War, the unit was rebuilt during the Amaris Crisis. Since then, it has seen more action than any other Magistracy unit, combatting a variety of opponents (Marik, Liao, Taurian, and pirate) over the last century. As a result, the Fusiliers have suffered the greatest casualties and equipment losses of any Canopian unit in the field. Lack of spare parts and technicians have plagued the unit, especially in the last two decades. Despite systems failures, few spare parts, and a recent infusion of raw recruits, overall morale in the Fusiliers remains high.

Unit Name: Cassandra's Volunteers
Unit Type: Regular
CO: Colonel Cassandra Jordan
Unit Size: 1 Regiment
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: Medium
Fighter Weight: Light
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Unit Symbol: Three gold coins pierced by an iron lance
Unit History:

The "National Guard" of the Canopian Magistracy, Cassandra's Volunteers was organized from local militia groups during the Reunification War. In the postwar period, the Volunteers were formally disbanded in accordance with Star League disarmament decrees, but a cadre of officers carried out a clandestine training program for "patriots" throughout the Magistracy. With the Magistracy Declaration of Independence, the best of these isolated bands were amalgamated into the Volunteers.

In 2892, the Volunteers participated in the first of several border clashes between the Magistracy and the Taurian Concordat. Bloodied in the defense of New Abilene, the Volunteers struck back in a successful raid of the Taurian oil refinery complex on Coromondir in 2896. In 2940, the Volunteers' first battalion took part in the ill-fated deep strike against the Taurian BattleMech complex of Girondas, which wiped out over half the battalion. Having been gradually reequipped and reorganized over the last decades, the Volunteers have remained in the interior of the Magistracy ever since.

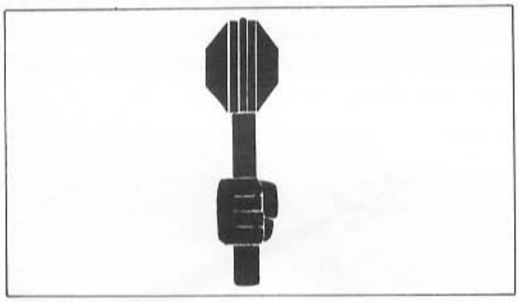


Unit Name: Canopian Highlanders
Unit Type: Mercenary
CO: Major Harrison Long
Unit Size: 2 Battalions
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: Medium
Fighter Weight: Medium
Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Unit Symbol: A stylized planet wearing a tam.
Financial Situation: Good
Contract Expires: November 3028
Unit History:

Originally drawn from refugees of the Rim Worlds Republic at the conclusion of the Reunification War, the Canopian Highlanders is the oldest mercenary unit in the service of the Magistracy. Of Scots-Irish descent, the Highlanders are well-known for their hatred of the Inner Sphere. Indeed, they have sworn never to take prisoners when pitted against regulars of an Inner Sphere House. During the Succession Wars, the Highlanders have often formed the first line of defense against incursions from neighboring independents and the Free Worlds League. The unit's most notable operation has been the defense of Luxen in a year-long siege by Marik troops in 2927. Rebuilt in recent years, the Highlanders remain among the most dependable units in Canopian space.

Unit Name: Harcourt's Destructors
Unit Type: Mercenary
CO: Major Thaddeus Hagarson
Unit Size: 2 Battalions
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: Heavy
Fighter Weight: None
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes
JumpShip: First Battalion Only
Unit Symbol: A mace held in hand against a white field.
Financial Situation: Excellent
Contract Expires: January 3029
Unit History:

Originally formed from independent mercenary companies operating in the Taurian Concordat, the Destructors were forced to flee the Concordat after they were discovered in a plot to assassinate a Taurian official. Since coming to the Magistracy in 3003, the unit has served along the border reaches near the Capellan Confederation. During their tour of duty, the Destructors have proved their worth by defeating the Capellan St. Ives Armored Cavalry when the latter attacked several Canopian border worlds. As a result of these engagements, the Destructors have been able to add *Thunderbolt* BattleMechs to their inventory.

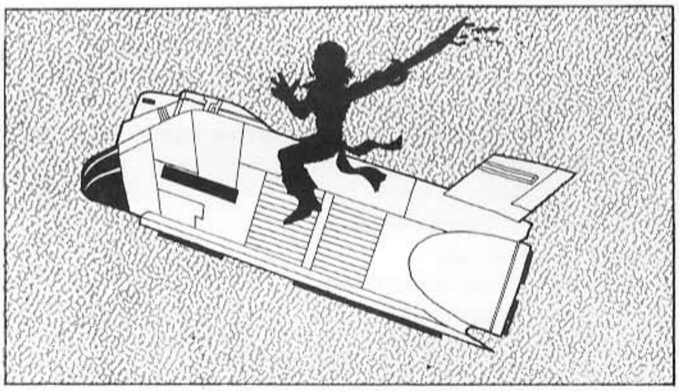


Unit Name: Hudsenn's Red Devils
Unit Type: Mercenary
CO: Colonel Dirk Hudsenn
Unit Size: 1 Regiment
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: Medium
Fighter Weight: Medium
Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Unit Symbol: A grinning red devil head surrounded with a gold wreath.
Financial Condition: Excellent
Contract Expires: February 3038
Unit History:

Hudsenn's Red Devils are a collection of ex-Marik regulars who banded together to oppose the Free Worlds League. Originally formed near the end of the Second Succession War, the original two battalions saw extensive service with the Lyran Commonwealth before being defeated by the Defenders of Andurien during a deep-space raid in 3005. With their avenue of retreat into Lyran space cut off, the Red Devils sought the relative safety of the Periphery, arriving in the Magistracy in the spring of 3007. Since then, they have added a third battalion of Canopian recruits, many of whom are illiterate yet dedicated soldiers. As a whole, the unit has decent combat capabilities, as shown by their successful defense of Canopian border systems against Marik incursions between 3010 and 3012. Their black and red *Warhammers* are paragons of efficiency and dependability, and so the Red Devils enjoy a lucrative career in service to the Magistracy.

Unit Name: Ramilie's Raiders
Unit Type: Mercenary
CO: Major Newton Ramilie
Unit Size: 1 Battalion
Experience Level: Elite
'Mech Weight: Medium
Fighter Weight: Medium
Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Unit Symbol: A pirate seated atop a *Leopard* DropShip.
Financial Condition: Fair
Contract Expires: July 3030
Unit History:

The newest of the mercenary forces to join the Magistracy, Ramilie's Raiders was formed from the remnants of mercenary units destroyed in the early days of the Third Succession War. Major Newton Ramilie is the second officer to command the Raiders, following the death of his father in the spring of 3022. In the past, the Raiders alternated service with the Capellan Confederation and the Federated Suns. Contract difficulties (especially when in service to Maximilian Liao) forced them to change sides frequently. After a final breach with the Capellan Confederation in 3022, the Raiders quit Liao space in a hurry. Stopping only to raid a Capellan border arsenal along the way, the Raiders—now with a price on their heads—withdrew to the Magistracy, where they have served as a reaction force. Despite the unit's relatively small size, it consists of hard-core professional soldiers, whose performance and reliability are considerably above the average Canopian regiment.



DEPLOYMENT OF MAF FORCES

Following is a breakdown of current dispositions of Canopian armed forces. Unlike military forces within the Inner Sphere, the Canopian military makes no allowance for individual theaters of operations. All jump-capable Canopian forces are expected to redeploy at a moment's notice to deal with an invasion from any quarter. The Homeworld column indicates the headquarters and administrative center of each unit, although units may be dispersed to adjacent star systems.

UNIT DEPLOYMENT TABLE
(as of 3025)

Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld
Magistracy Royal Guards (CO: Colonel Holly Van Dame)			
Raventhir's Iron Hand (CO: Major Vernyce Alkobar)	Veteran	Fanatical	Canopus IV
Canopian Cuirassiers (CO: Major Alexandra Vakirrov)	Veteran	Fanatical	Canopus IV
Chasseurs à Cheval (CO: Colonel Trisha Tellaverde)			
1st Canopian Light Horse (CO: Major Cynthia Evans)	Regular	Reliable	Megrez
2nd Canopian Light Horse (CO: Major Sharon Lasonpiri	Regular	Reliable	Fanandir
Canopian Fusiliers (CO: Colonel Patty Gorden)			
1st Canopian Fusiliers (CO: Major Sandra Aupriz)	Regular	Reliable	Lindenmarle
2nd Canopian Fusiliers (CO: Major Regina Von Strot)	Green	Reliable	Lindenmarle
3rd Canopian Fusiliers (CO: Major Wilhelm Archal)	Green	Questionable	Marantha
Cassandra's Volunteers (CO: Colonel Cassandra Jorden)			
Magistracy Militia (CO: Major Antonia del Green)	Regular	Reliable	Canopus IV
Novo Sinclair Volunteers (CO: Major Aiki Doshuwa)	Regular	Questionable	Duncanshire
Clayborne's Commandos (CO: Major Pali Fitzengraber)	Green	Questionable	Thraxa
Canopian Highlanders (CO: Major Harrison Long)			
Long's Light Lancers (CO: Commander Allen Chingrazi)	Regular	Reliable	Brixtana
MacGraw's Marauders (CO: Commander Norbert Kingelt)	Regular	Reliable	Luxen
Harcourt's Destructors (CO: Major Thaddeus Hagarson)			
Harcourt's Aliens (CO: Major Kathryn Shaw)	Regular	Reliable	Luxen
Drummond's Destroyers (CO: Major Dunstan Shaft)	Regular	Reliable	New Abilene
Hudsenn's Red Devils (CO: Colonel Dirk Hudsenn)			
Jenkin's Armored Cavalry (CO: Major Paulette Duiren)	Regular	Fanatical	Canopus IV
Mordecai's Maulers (CO: Major Vincent Shwai)	Regular	Reliable	Duncanshire
Kincaid's Slashers (CO: Major Braderick Morgenstern)	Green	Reliable	Thurroch
Ramilie's Raiders (CO: Major Newton Ramilie)	Elite	Fanatical	Thurroch

WEAPONS INDUSTRIES

The Magistracy Armed Forces suffers from the loss of many key industrial centers in the last two centuries. In particular, the ability to produce BattleMechs and 'Mech replacement parts is virtually nonexistent in the Magistracy. At present, only two BattleMech production facilities remain intact in Canopian space. Located on Canopus IV and Duncanshire, these two centers have a very low annual output (less than 60 machines per year), and produce mostly *Locust*s, *Wasp*s and *Stinger*s. The only medium-sized BattleMechs produced within the Magistracy are *Shadow Hawks*, but usually no more than ten per year. Production for armor, AeroSpace Fighters, and motorized vehicles run roughly 30 each per year.

Name: Majesty Metals and Manufacturing
Plant Locations: Canopus IV, Duncanshire
CEO: Gabriel Priest
Weaponry Manufactured At Canopus IV: LCT-1V *Locust*, STG-3R *Stinger,* WSP-1A *Wasp* BattleMechs
Weaponry Manufactured At Duncanshire: Munitions, Manticore Tanks, *Leopard* Class DropShips, and SHW-1 *Shadow Hawk* BattleMechs
Notes:

The present facilities on Canopus and Duncanshire represent the remaining weapons-producing plants in the Magistracy. Because of a lack of raw materials and trained technicians, annual output remains low.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

While the Magistracy Armed Forces consists of well-meaning and dedicated individuals, the armed forces suffer from a lack of just about every type of mechanical or electronic necessity, from the largest gridwork structure to the smallest microcircuitry board. With recent increased trade with other systems, the Canopians may be able to rectify this disparity in the future. Another problem confronting the Canopian military is the low literacy level of its new recruits. The basic training manual for the new Canopian soldier is presently written at a twelve-year-old reading level, but this may have to be revised downward in the near future. The MAF needs time to train and time to rebuild.

CULTURE AND ARTS

If the Magistracy of Canopus has one overriding concern, it is education. The average Canopian never progresses far beyond an elementary school education. This sorry state of affairs is mostly because of the lack of funds to rebuild the educational institutions destroyed since the Star League's fall. This has led to a gradual decline in literacy rates over the last two centuries. Only two universities (basically technical schools) still exist in Canopian space: the University of Canopus and the University of Luxen. Because average enrollments are less than five hundred students and because of the lack of qualified teachers and educational professionals, the Canopians will continue to struggle with attempts to reverse the trend.

The Canopian health sciences represent the sole exception to this state of affairs. Developed in the Magistracy's early years, the medical disciplines have retained a high national priority, at times overshadowing the military in their share of economic resources. Today, the Canopian health industry maintains the highest standards of care to be found in the entire Periphery, and is in many respects superior to that available in the Inner Sphere. In recent years, many Canopian physicians and surgeons have begun practice outside Canopian space on long-term service contracts to other governments in hopes of stimulating the Magistracy economy. Indeed, one of the major opportunities for the Magistracy to upgrade its educational system is in the area of foreign cultural exchange, where they may develop programs that "trade" medical care personnel for teachers, technicians, and other professionals.

Though the Magistracy's once-fabled entertainment industry has nearly disappeared, it still remains a haven for the artist and the actor. The more literate Canopians have traditionally valued the contributions of writers, painters, and performing artists more than any other Periphery peoples. Artists can find employment readily available, with government subsidies in abundance. The only demand placed on the individual is high-quality work. By extension, the Magistracy government maintains few restrictions on the dissemination of information and political thought, the only exception being the censorship of materials imported from the Inner Sphere or the Taurian Concordat.

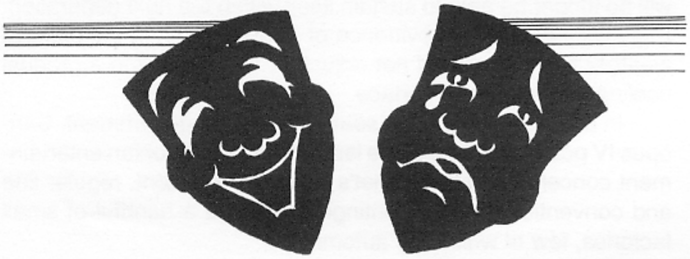
Though generally pragmatic and level-headed, Canopian citizens are generally inclined to accept things as they are, enjoying what little comfort they can, rather than making sacrifices for an uncertain future.

MAF

SOCIOECONOMICS

Though once the richest of the Periphery States, the present-day Magistracy of Canopus is economically stagnant. After many decades of deliberately channeling their resources into entertainment industries, the Canopians now suffer from having created such an undiversified economy. Lacking even the shadow of a corporate-industrial base, the current economy is based on cottage industries and small artisan guilds. An official ban on the importation of Inner Sphere technologies (except for military technology obtained from the Taurian Concordat) has further hampered economic development. Recent efforts by Magestrix Kyalla Centrella to trade the services of Canopian physicians for Inner Sphere technicians and business experts may begin to change this situation.

CORPORATE PROFILES



Name: Canopus Delights Limited
Home Office Location: Canopus IV
President/CEO: Lillian Murithen
Business Summary:

Founded in the heyday of the Magistracy's golden age of commerce, Canopian Delights Limited remains the largest commercial entertainment enterprise in the realm. Providing live entertainment, both public and private, for business or personal consumption, CDL is one of the economy's few remaining major money-makers.

MAGLIS SPIRITS

Name: Magliss Spirits
Home Office Location: Early Dawn
President/CEO: Samantha Carter Wiley
Business Summary:

The largest producers of wines and brandies in the Periphery, Magliss Spirits has a virtual monopoly on the distribution of wines and spirits in the Magistracy. Known in particular for its vintage 3020 Chablis and Chianti, Magliss has recently begun wholesale exports of their more expensive wares to the Free Worlds League and the Taurian Concordat.

PERSONALITIES

Name: Kyalla Centrella
Title/Rank: Magestrix
Position: Royal Defender of the Magistracy of Canopus
Birthplace: Luxen
Age: 44
Sex: Female
Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Two meters tall with a black complexion, gray eyes, and dark wavy hair, Kyalla prefers Canopian silks to all other forms of clothing. She typically dresses in sleeveless garments or clinging gowns that set off her trim and muscular figure. Her high cheekbones give her the air of a predatory animal, which contributes to her striking personal magnetism.

Brief Personal History:

Kyalla Centrella is the 16th Magestrix of the Canopian Magistracy. She was elected to the throne following the death of her Mother, Tamara, in 3012. To outside observers, Kyalla typifies the best and the worst of the Canopian people. Since assuming the throne, she has advanced an aggressive series of far-reaching social programs that, once fully implemented, may revitalize the Canopian economy. Her adoption of a service-for-service approach to foreign relations has increased the number of skilled technicians and scientists working in the Magistracy. Privately, Kyalla's life has been less successful. Married and divorced three times since assuming the throne, Kyalla is as insatiable as her forebears. Indeed, her numerous love affairs have sparked a variety of palace plots and subplots.

Personality:
Motivations/Desires/Goals:

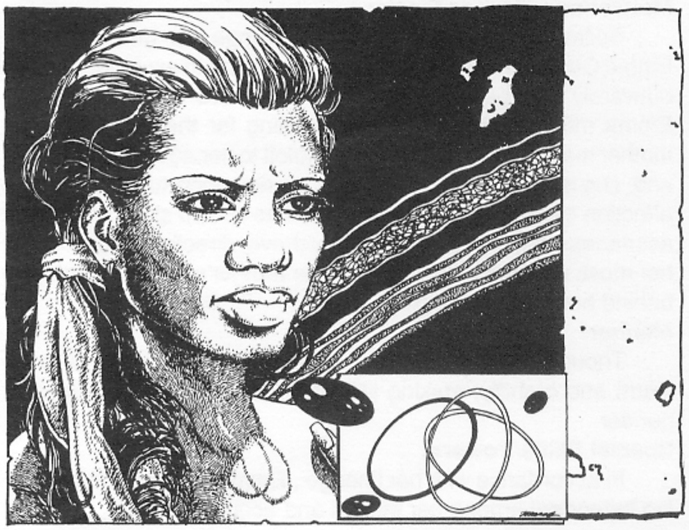
As with all members of the Centrella family, Kyalla learned from an early age to despise the Free Worlds League and to view anything coming out of the Inner Sphere with suspicion. For many years, Kyalla has been seeking an understanding with the Duchess of Andurien in order to create a new Periphery state by merging their two realms. If such a state were ever formed, it might be the key to finally defeating House Marik.

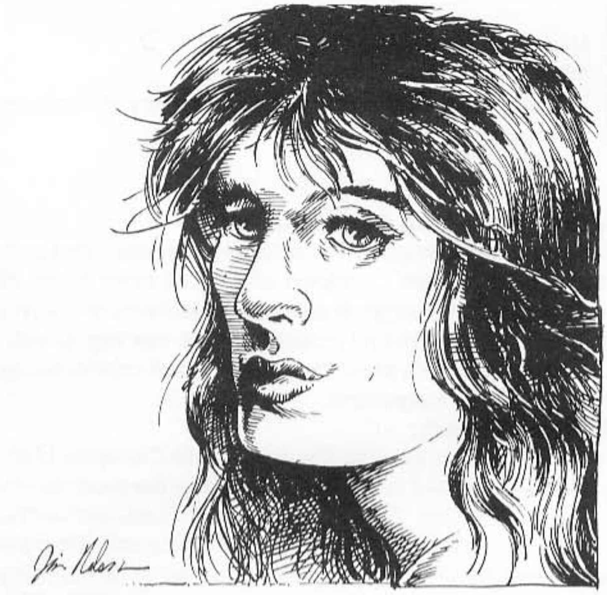
Manner:

Though discreet and respectful to friends and foes alike, Kyalla is a modern-day libertine whose love of sensual pleasure is held in check only by her desire to improve her subjects' lives.

Special Skills/Powers:

Kyalla is a student of ancient potions. It is said that she can control anyone with whom she can get close enough to share a drink.





Name: Emma Centrella
Title/Rank: Duchess of Luxen, Ensign
Position: Daughter of Magestrix Kyalla Centrella
Birthplace: Luxen
Age: 17
Sex: Female
Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Emma has a dusky complexion with steel-gray eyes and long, curly, dark hair. Her small frame belies a strong, muscular body hardened by many years of physical conditioning.

Brief History:

Emma Centrella is the only scion of the Magestrix. The product of Kyalla's second marriage, she lost her father when he was condemned to death for plotting to overthrow the Magestrix. Though unable to deny her father's guilt, Emma knows of her mother's many infidelities, which eventually drove her father to treason. Despite all this, Emma has maintained an outward show of loyalty to her mother's policies. Though too young to have much political clout, her enthusiastic support is a valuable commodity in terms of public relations. Since the age of 15, Emma has been training as an apprentice MechWarrior in the Magistracy Guards. Though unlikely to see combat, she is being groomed for an important new staff position.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Because of a secret desire to avenge her father's death, Emma Centrella may be a time-bomb waiting to explode. Though outwardly she behaves like the Magestrix's devoted servant, Emma may be biding her time, waiting for the day when her mother makes a slip that she can exploit to her advantage. To this end, she is determined not to pass up any opportunity to win the affection of her future subjects. She has shown signs of political astuteness that may send her in whichever direction would benefit her most, whether it be loyalty to her mother's regime or intrigue behind her mother's back.

Manner:

Though self-directed and aggressive, Emma can also be warm and friendly, making little distinction for social origins or gender.

Special Skills/Powers:

In accordance with her lineage , Emma's stamina is becoming legendary among her friends and acquaintances.

A BRIEF ATLAS

World Name: Canopus IV
Star Type: F5IV
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 14.93 Days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Noble Ruler: Magestrix Kyalla Centrella
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Emiliar Grinn
Population: 537,000,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 20%, Fish
Description:

Canopus IV is the mother-world of the Magistracy. Founded in early 2530 by a band of ex-Marik soldiers of fortune, the planet turned out to be rich in mineral and natural resources. It has been greatly exploited over the last two centuries, with wide-scale strip mining creating extreme soil erosion and ecological damage. At present, the planet's resources are on the decline, and best estimates show that, at the present rate of consumption, Canopus will no longer be able to sustain itself within the next generation. Especially alarming is evidence of a radical shift in the planet's weather patterns that, if not adjusted, could result in a gradual cooling of the planet's surface.

In addition to being the seat of Canopian government, Canopus IV possesses one of the last remaining Canopian entertainment concerns. On the planet's northern continent, regular line and conventional militia contingents defend a handful of small factories, few of which are automated.

World Name: New Abilene
Star Type: K2V
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 4.87 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Noble Ruler: Allison Mambalay
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 114,000,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 30%, Mammal
Description:

New Abilene is a rough-and-ready border world that has been given over entirely to food production, primarily the raising of cattle and sheep. Since its settlement in 2581, the Canopians have fought with the Taurian Concordat several times over control of the planet. New Abilene is divided into a number of large baronies, millions of hectares of pasture land owned by wealthy landlords. Frequent quarrels over water rights and grazing areas have led to the introduction of "Range Riders," MechWarriors in the service of a local landowner. In turn, this has led to gradually escalating range wars between bands of soldiers seeking to protect the interests of their employers. Under Magestrix Kyalla Centrella, a number of MechWarriors have been sent to New Abilene as frontier marshals, to keep the peace and reestablish law and order.

World Name: Luxen
Star Type: M2V
Position in System: 6
Time to Jump Point: 2.83 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Noble Ruler: Liryl D'Angonia
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Olaf Fredericksenn
Population: 94,600,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 15%, Reptile
Description:

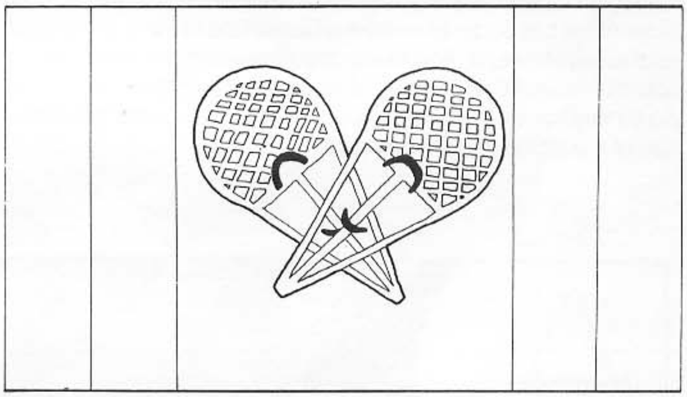
Luxen is one of the few worlds of the Canopian Magistracy to have escaped the ravages of the Succession Wars. Originally a provincial capital, the planet has abundant precious metals and rare gemstones in its southern continental shelf. In the post-Star League era, its importance has grown as a producer of an even scarcer resource—trained medical technicians and physicians. Housing the Canopian Medical Sciences Research and Training Complex, the University of Luxen assumes an importance beyond that of many industrial worlds found in the Inner Sphere. Because of its importance, permanent military garrisons of both regular and militia troops guard Luxen, and the Canopian Navy regularly holds training exercises in this region of space.

World Name: Hardcore
Star Type: G3
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 8.52 Days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Noble Ruler: Kyalla Centrella
ComStar Facility Class: C
ComStar Representative: Precentor Therese Hinton
Population: 54,500,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 25%, Mammal
Description:

One of the most financially successful of the Magistracy's celebrated entertainment centers, the pleasure planet Hardcore caters to the upper crust of Canopian society as well as the wealthier Inner Sphere clientele. With a permanent staff of over 75,000 professional entertainers, this warm, temperate world boasts every conceivable type of pleasure palace along its equatorial and northern latitude rim. With a capacity to serve well over ten million guests annually, Hardcore's entertainments range from the tame to the terrifying, and from ballet to full-scale blood sports. In particular, Hardcore hosts a series of MechWarrior games each spring, turning over vast regions of the planet's northern hemisphere to competing BattleMech teams for weeks on end while the planetary populace enjoys the carnage live and in color on the public monitors. Beyond this, Hardcore is famous throughout the Magistracy for its emerging film industry, which produces hundreds of full-feature erotic epics quarterly for distribution even deep into the Inner Sphere.

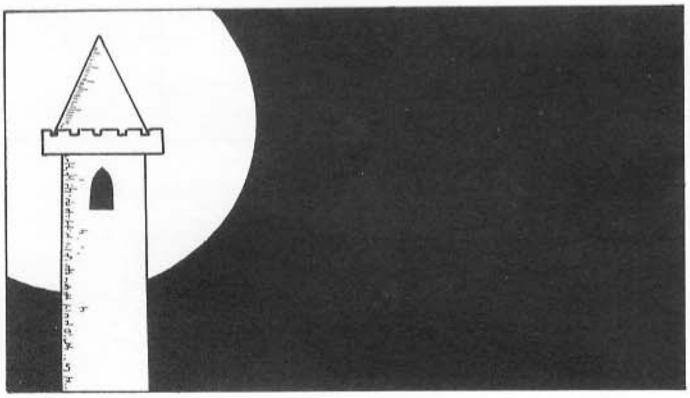
World Name: Thraxa
Star Type: M1
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 2.98 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Noble Ruler: Kyalla Centrella
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 12,300,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 50%, Mammal
Description:

A border world lying near the edge of the Marian Hegemony, Thraxa is atypical of most Magistracy worlds in being nearly self-sufficient. For over two generations, this semi-arctic world has developed a variety of local commercial concerns, including a lucrative fur trade, forestry, coal mining, and a modest textile and wool industry to provide necessities for its own population as well as for export offworld. The inhabitants of this "maverick" world are among the more individual-minded and stubborn of all the Magistracy's peoples. It is not surprising that Thraxa is garrisoned by Clayborne's Commandos, one of the premier combat units of Cassandra's Volunteers, a unit that has seen more than their share of successful clashes with the upstart Marians and occasional mercenary intruders.



World Name: Cate's Hold
Star Type: M2
Position in System: 1
Time to Jump Point: 2.83 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Noble Ruler: Kyalla Centrella
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 20,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 40%, Mammal
Description:

A border world lying near the Taurian Concordat, Cate's Hold has evolved in two directions over the years. Originally founded as a major gaming and entertainment world along the lines of the planet Canopus, it became, by default, a major supply and repair facility for the Magistracy navy during the Reunification War. This lasted until the end of the war, when the planet was overrun by Kerensky's forces. For a time, the Free Worlds League claimed Cate's Hold, but the population managed to rebel and to win their freedom at the start of the Second Succession War. In the last century, the discovery of large deposits of radioactives in the planet's southern hemisphere, coupled with the recent discovery of caches of Star League equipment, have done much to make this a strategically important Periphery world. As a result, the Magistracy and the Taurians have clashed numerous times over the control of Cate's Hold in the last 50 years, which has strained relations between the two governments. Despite numerous attempts by the Taurians to wrest control of the planet from the Canopians, determined resistance combined with superior local technology has so far allowed the Canopians to keep a firm hold on this border world. At present, the population of Cate's Hold is approximately 20,000, many of whom continue to serve in local militia and home-defense companies each year under the direction of Canopian military advisors.

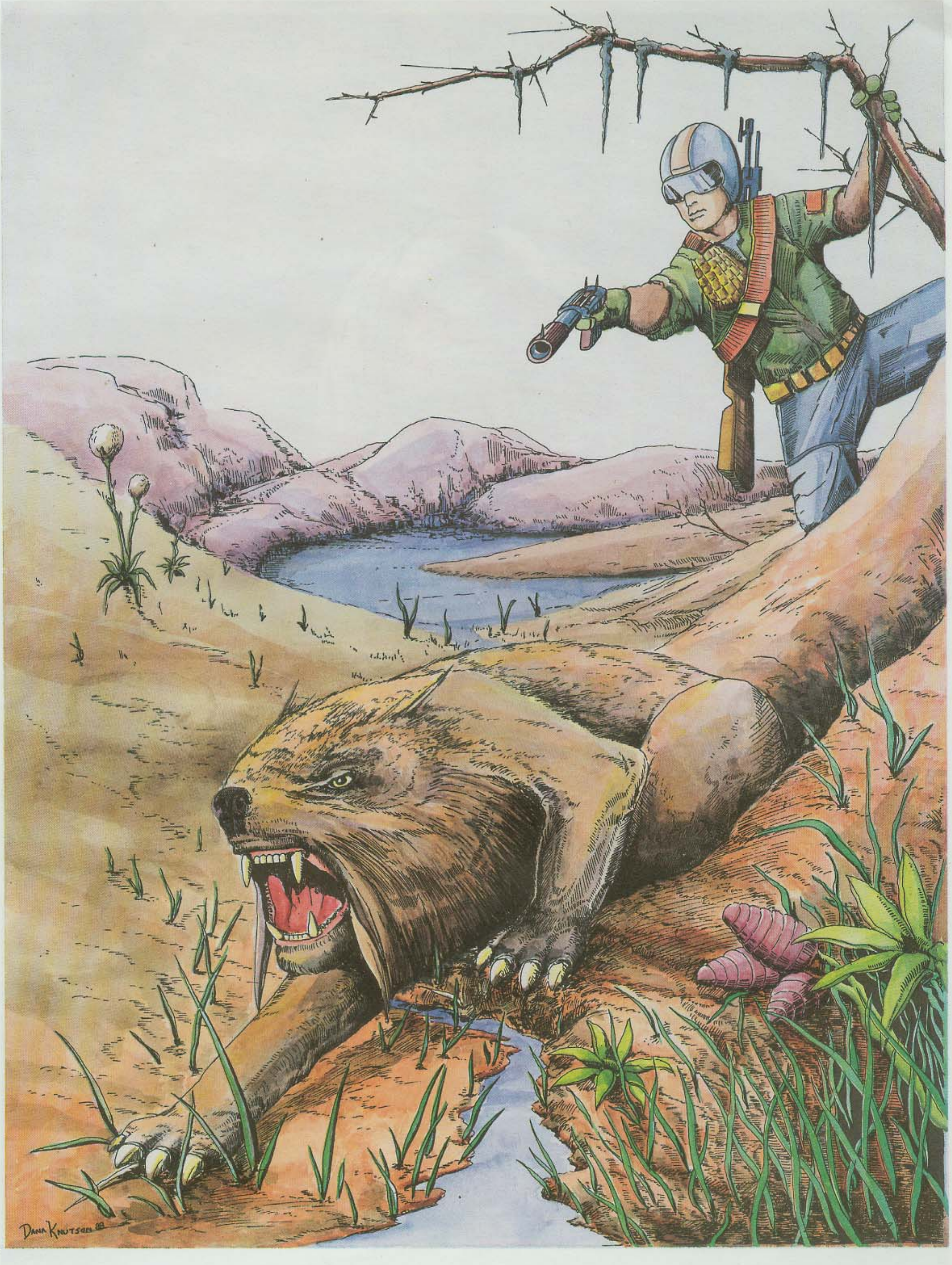


World Name: Wildwood
Star Type: G4
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 7.98 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Noble Ruler: Kyalla Centrella
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 5,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 40%, Avian
Description:

The major agricultural and wine-producing planet of the Magistracy, the planet Wildwood is maintained in its natural wilderness state. Though no ground troops are present, it is protected by numerous rings of armed and armored orbital satellites that make any unauthorized approach to the planet a dangerous proposition at best. A warm, temperate world with a standing population of some 5,000 inhabitants, Wildwood's abundance of native avian lifeforms is an added tourist attraction that contributes significantly to Canopian revenues. Because Wildwood is a basically non-military planet, it is one of the few Magistracy worlds that has avoided the general destructiveness of the Succession Wars and the Periphery conflicts of the last century.

World Name: Vixen
Star Type: G3
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 8.52 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Noble Ruler: Kyalla Centrella
ComStar Facility Class: C
ComStar Representative: Precentor William Qantas
Population: 8,300
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 45%, Mammal
Description:

The most recently settled Canopian colony world, Vixen is owned and operated by a consortium of small corporations determined to develop this cool, temperate world as the kind of Canopian entertainment planet that was so successful in the pre-Succession War era. More than 8,000 people currently occupy this minor winter world that offers such a variety of pleasure options to vacationing Canopians. In particular, Vixen is now the site of the most elite series of winter sports, with the ten-mile cross-country ski and bobsledding competitions chief among the many contests. Of particular interest to offworlders is the emergence of all-girl hockey teams, whose reputation for gamesmanship and brawling have attracted thousands of visitors to this backwater planet in recent years. An additional draw is the opportunity for hunting the native mammalian lifeforms that inhabit the largely untouched wilderness forests of Vixen's southern continent. Because of Vixen's purely recreational character, there are no military units of any type present on the planet. For defense, the planet relies on its distance from major trade routes to discourage the occasional marauding band.


DANA KNUTSON 88

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THE OUTWORLDS ALLIANCE

Of all the government systems to emerge in the Periphery, the Outworlds Alliance claims the strangest collection of separatists and anti-social types. Indeed, many political commentators have referred to the Outworlds Alliance as a geographic expression of collective political chaos. Unlike the Taurian Concordat or the Magistracy of Canopus, the Outworlds Alliance was never intended to be a lasting political entity. Indeed, its existence was due to accident as much as to design.

The founding father of the Outworlds Alliance was Admiral Julius Santiago Avellar. As a junior naval officer in the closing years of the 2300s, Avellar was appalled by the ease with which the states of the Inner Sphere sought to settle their differences through increasingly destructive wars. Withdrawing to the world of Alpheratz in 2413, Avellar devoted the rest of his life to literary denunciations of the warmongers of the major Houses.

Though he may have planned to live out his life in obscurity, Avellar became the leader of a virtual cult. His compassionate pleas for an end to war created the Omniss, a new philosophical sect. Advocating the rejection of any technology that did not contribute to the preservation of life, followers of Omniss flocked to Avellar's agrarian haven in the Periphery, much to the chagrin of the hermit-like Avellar.

Before long, people from every social order began to descend on his home on Alpheratz. As the hundreds quickly became thousands and the thousands became tens of thousands, Avellar's homestead was quickly overrun with political and social dissidents. Expanding outward from Alpheratz in all directions, Omniss farmers and their supporters began to colonize neighboring star systems in a frenzy, persuaded by Avellar's writings that galactic doomsday was just around the corner. Faced with the growing problems of managing and caring for the well-meaning but technologically inept multitudes on his doorstep, Avellar was forced to do the one thing that he hated most: to create a government able to provide for the needs of his newfound followers. The result was the Outworlds Alliance, a union born more of necessity than actual desire.

Since the beginning of the 31st century, the situation in the Outworlds Alliance has become particularly grim. With the general loss of technology, Alliance worlds have suffered from declining population and literacy levels. Though protected by a strong military, many of these planets are unable to feed their own people. The people feel that their government has betrayed them, and there have been many riots and demonstrations against the hereditary Avellar regime in recent years. Although no one has yet seriously challenged the right of House Avellar to rule the Outworlds, armed rebellion is likely if the deteriorating situation does not reverse itself.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

The Outworlds Alliance is the second largest Periphery state and the weakest of the major alliances both politically and economically. Lying at the juncture between the Draconis Combine and the Federated Suns, it consists of 38 inhabited worlds in a volume of space approximately 55 parsecs in diameter, which is one-fourth its former size. Its attempts to hold onto these few remaining worlds have created serious economic and political problems.

The threat of rebellion stems not so much from political dissent as from the Alliance's inability to feed and care for its multitudes. In recent years, renegade mercenary bands have staged frequent raids on Alliance worlds, seriously disrupting commerce and trade. With less than 40 serviceable JumpShips, the Merchant Marine cannot hope to protect its outermost worlds. Numerous Planetary Parliaments have criticized the Avellars' commitment to maintain the Alliance military, particularly the AeroSpace Arm, at the expense of the industrial base. Barring a major change in the policies of the Executive Parliament, the military will continue to receive the lion's share of the Alliance's meager resources.

SOCIOPOLITICAL STRUCTURE

Ratified in 2417, the Alliance Charter is the basis of government within the Outworlds Alliance. Its provisions guarantee all citizens of the Alliance freedom of expression, freedom of religious belief, and the right to pursue any lifestyle or economic pursuit that does not infringe on the rights of other citizens. Alliance citizenship is granted at birth, while an individual may be naturalized after a ten-year residency and demonstrable proof of his productivity in society.

The Alliance Charter created the framework for a streamlined representative government. While acknowledging the right of House Avellar to hold executive power, representatives of the Alliance citizenry must agree unanimously on legislation before it can become law. Likewise, the charter allows for the establishment of planetary representative bodies (known as planetary Parliaments) and judicial courts of appeal, which protect the rights of citizens from governmental abuse. When the Alliance military was established in the mid 2800s, the Alliance Charter was amended to include a fourth government organ, the Alliance Military Review Board.

GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

The government of the Outworlds Alliance can be described as democracy at its best, though few individuals take all the responsibility that they might for conduct of the state. Legislative action is a lengthy process that, though democratic, is highly inefficient compared to many systems found in the Inner Sphere.

Executive Parliament

As described by the Alliance Charter, the Executive Parliament is the chief governmental organ of the Alliance state. Overseen by the Parliamentary President (an office reserved for the senior member of the Avellar family), the Parliament consists of one representative for every ten inhabited planets of the Alliance. At its largest, the Executive Parliament had 16 members, though this number has shrunk to four (not including the President). This is largely because both the Draconis Combine and the Federated Suns annexed Alliance worlds at the end of the Reunification War. Added to that have been outright planetary secessions in the last two centuries because of poor relations with the Alliance central government.

The Executive Parliament is charged with the conduct of all foreign and internal affairs, subject to a unanimous vote of all members present. This last, rather awkward requirement reflects the desires of Alliance citizens to prevent any individual from imposing a dictatorship on the majority. Such a provision makes it dificult to pass any but the most conservative policy directives.

The Executive Parliament is also responsible for military affairs within the Outworlds. Traditionally, a four-person executive subcommittee handles such matters. With the rise of a standing army, however, the Executive Parliament created the Alliance Military Review Board, which can veto this sub-committee's operational directives whenever the Board judges such directives to be contrary to the best interests of the Alliance. The President can override the Board's decision, but such action is considered politically dangerous.

Planetary Parliaments

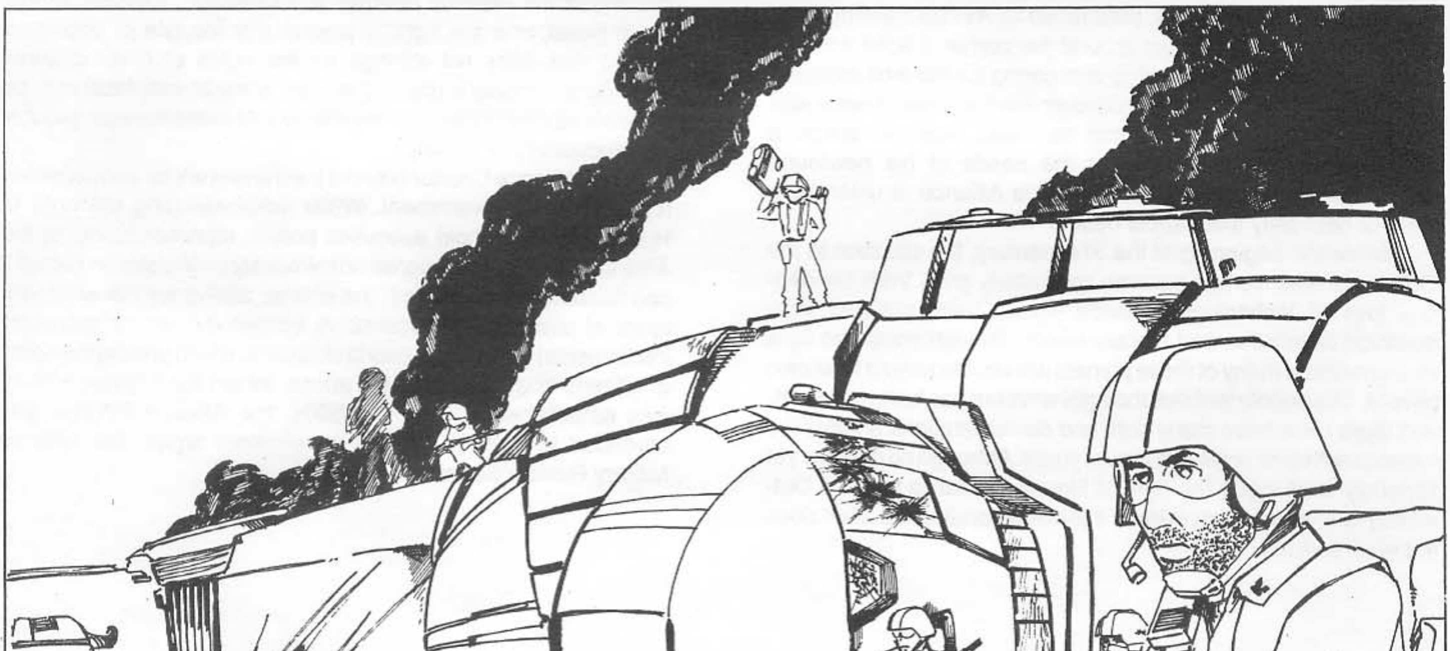
Bodies of chosen representatives, known as Planetary Parliaments, govern every inhabited world within the Outworlds Alliance. Each Planetary Parliament consists of one representative for every ten thousand inhabitants, elected by annual popular vote. In addition, Planetary Parliaments select one representative to the Executive Parliament for a three-year term. With full authority to pass any legislation needed to govern their worlds, Planetary Parliaments are subject to the will of the Executive Parliament only in the broadest sense of the term.

Courts Of Appeal

For every five thousand people, there is a five-member Court of Appeals. The purpose of the Court of Appeal is twofold: first, to enforce local laws with powers of prosecution; and second, to review the directives handed down by the Executive Parliament. It is entirely possible that one or more Courts of Appeal may decide that an executive directive is unconstitutional, and may subsequently rule that the directive is null and void within its jurisdiction. Once every three years, representatives from each Court of Appeal meet on Alpheratz to confirm or reject nominations to the Executive Parliament and the Military Review Board for the next session.

Military Review Board

The latest addition to the Alliance political structure is the Military Review Board. This board consists of four individuals, one selected from each Alliance provincial capital and subject to approval by the Courts of Appeals' confirmation committee. Responsible for reviewing the organization and deployment of Alliance military forces, the Review Board has the power to veto (except in a state of Alliance-wide emergency) Executive Council decisions regarding any use of the military. Thus can it safeguard citizens from the threat of a military dictatorship or the misuse of funds earmarked for military appropriations.



POLITICAL GOALS

The primary political objective of the Outworlds Alliance is survival. More than two centuries of isolationism have left it with little economic and scientific vitality. Faced with an industrial decline to pre-Star League levels, the Alliance has recently opened its borders to immigration from the Draconis Combine and the Federated Suns. Within the last decade, it has also begun to offer trade agreements permitting outside interests to mine Alliance worlds in exchange for technological contributions. President Neil Avellar hopes that the influx of new people and technologies may improve the economy, though many have argued that the influx of foreign concerns may threaten the Alliance's independence.

INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

Following is a summary of the Outworlds Alliance's relations with its interstellar neighbors.

The Federated Suns

Relations between the Federated Suns and the Alliance have improved over the last decade, largely because Neil Avellar has granted House Davion the right to exploit lucrative mining sites within the Alliance. Begun in 3020, an Educational Exchange program, bringing in numerous Davion teachers and educational specialists, has increased overall literacy among the Alliance population. Although the Federated Suns enjoys a favored-nation status with it, the Alliance has flatly refused offers of military assistance, either offensive or defensive, and forbids the presence of Davion warships or "military advisors" within its confines.

There can be no question that the culture and political ideals of the Outworlds Alliance are more compatible with those of the Federated Suns than with the Draconis Combine. At any point during the Succession Wars (including the present time), it would have been infinitely preferable to them for the Davions to emerge triumphant in their battles with the Kuritans. However, at no point during the Succession Wars have the Outworlders had the option of joining the Davions in any form of formal alliance, nor even of helping them covertly, as Kuritan intelligence is far too efficient for it to be worth the risk. The Coordinator's agents have made every effort to uncover even the slightest hint that the Avellar family has violated Outworlds neutrality, which evidence they could use as an excuse for an invasion. It is for this reason that ComStar believes that the Kuritans may have more agents on Alpharetz than on either Tharkad or New Avalon.

Draconis Combine

Relations between the Draconis Combine and the Alliance are cautious and reserved. Though Draconian merchants have lately been allowed limited trade with the Alliance, many Outworlders still look upon the Combine as a greedy empire that would like to snatch up the Outworlds at the first opportunity. Yet, many Alliance politicians look to the Combine as a source of revenue. They have recently concluded a treaty with the Combine, which allows the Kuritans to build several AeroSpace Fighter production facilities in Alliance space, where production costs are extremely low, while the Alliance gains a hefty bounty and a percentage of all craft produced.

Taurian Concordat

Though far removed from the Alliance, the Taurian Concordat is on excellent terms with House Avellar, and citizens have complete freedom of movement between the two states. Taurian naval elements also have the right to conduct secret maneuvers within Alliance space, and Taurian military advisors are known to be present aboard several Alliance naval craft. For their part, the Taurians receive good training from Alliance AeroSpace Fighter Pilots, several of whom serve as advisors within the Taurian military.

ComStar

Though normally suspicious of any non-Periphery peoples, the Alliance has eagerly welcomed ComStar within its borders since the late 2790s. Of all the Periphery states, the Alliance is the least resistant to the presence of ComStar facilities within its domain. In recent years, many Outworlders have joined ComStar as prospective acolytes. The Executive Parliament hopes that assistance from ComStar may help stabilize its government and economy.

The average Alliance citizen, however, seems to view ComStar as a brotherhood of magicians at best, or a grand coven of witches and warlocks at worst. Because the average Alliance farmer or shepherd lacks even rudimentary education, he often views with sincere alarm anything that smacks of ComStar.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Of all the Periphery states, the Outworlds Alliance has the freest and openest society. This strength is also its greatest weakness, making the people of the Alliance highly resistant to change. Representative democracy is rather inefficient, especially when unanimous approval of the Parliament is necessary to enact legislation.

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

Within the Outworlds Alliance, all religious and philosophical disciplines are tolerated. Unlike many worlds in the Inner Sphere, where different religious communities coexist in the same area, Outworlders of various religious persuasions have settled on different planets. For example, on the capital world of Alpheratz, the predominant religious faith is Islam, while on the provincial capital of Ramora, the dominant faith is Taoism.

Of the many philosophical doctrines in the Alliance, the Omniss creed predominates. Omniss is similar to the cultures of the Mennonite and Amish religious groups of Terra during the 19th and 20th centuries. Foreswearing the evils of technology in even its simplest forms, the Omniss advocate an agrarian, close-knit, and decidedly anti-militaristic lifestyle. This last facet of the Omniss culture has had a major impact on Alliance society. At the height of the Outworlds Alliance, over two-thirds of its citizenry were members of the Omniss creed, and thus in a position to prevent the creation of standing Alliance military. The lack of a military almost proved the Alliance's undoing in the Reunification War. Though the Omniss are less influential today, their continued opposition to military appropriations still has an effect on both government and society.

One of the newest religious groups to emerge are the Gregorians. Named after the founder of the Order of Dominant Selection, Mathias Gregory, the Gregorians advocate a lifestyle in which multiple marriages are not only the rule but a fundamental necessity. As a general decline in population threatens this state's existence, the creed has gained substantial acceptance in all levels of society. An estimated 30 percent of all Outworlders belong to, or support, the Gregorian creed.

Despite the wide diversity of philosophical and religious creeds in the Alliance, there has been a surprising lack of conflict between these groups. Due in part to planetary segregation, this tolerance is also due to the basic philosophy of Outworlders, who feel that religious bigotry is a mental disease of the Inner Sphere that must never be permitted to infect the Alliance.

MILITARY FORCES

The Alliance military is in some ways a contradiction in terms. For most of its history, there was no standing army except for the local retainers of House Avellar. With the outbreak of the Reunification War, the Alliance militia began to evolve as the state's sole defense. These ill-equipped citizen-soldiers did little to slow the hordes of the Star League. Although the Alliance government had to accept the military restrictions that the Star League imposed on them after the war, the Alliance leaders also recognized that the day would come again when they would have to fight for their freedom. Gradually, the concept of maintaining a professional military arm became accepted in the Alliance.

In the years since the beginning of the Succession Wars, the Alliance Military Corps (AMC) has been based on a citizen militia force, albeit one well-trained and well-equipped. The Alliance has made AeroSpace Fighters its primary offensive and defensive arm, because Outworlders disdain BattleMechs as a symbol of Inner Sphere destructiveness and a tool of petty tyrants. Though the Alliance maintains BattleMech troops, these Warriors have neither the high status nor the high wages they command in most other armies.

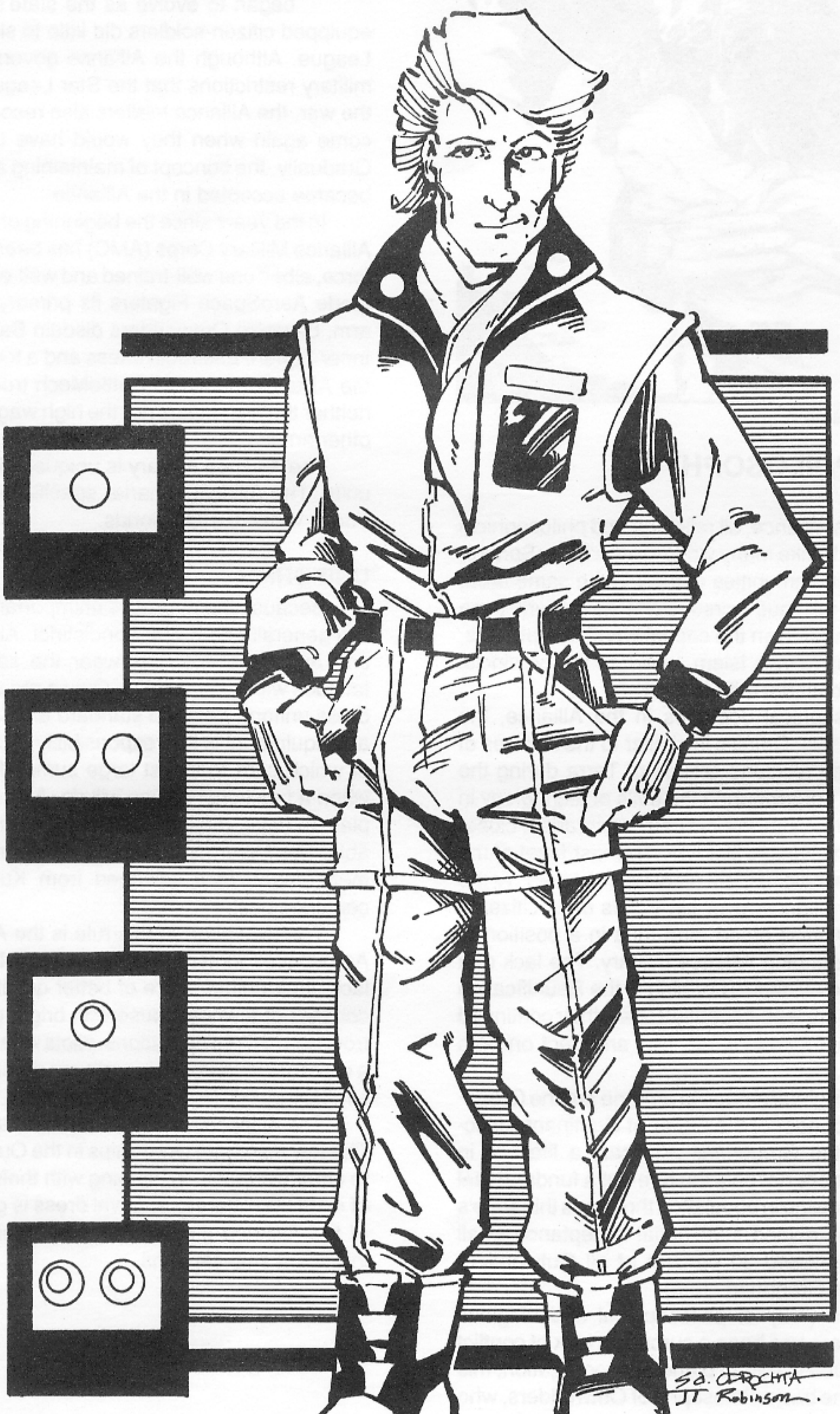
The Alliance military is unique in its total lack of mercenary units. The Alliance Charter specifically forbids the use of such troops within the Outworlds.

UNIFORMS

Because the military is unimportant in the Alliance, uniforms are generally drab and nondistinct. Alliance militia, MechWarriors, and support forces wear the same uniform: dark brown fatigues with green piping. Only a red scarf distinguishes the the dress uniform from the standard uniform. Provision for uniforms and equipment is the responsibility of planetary parliaments, few of which care to invest large sums of money for special dress when a functional design will do. As a result, units from different planets have varying equipment, often relying on what is available. MechWarriors, in particular, use a wide variety of equipment, much of it salvaged from Kurita and Davion units of centuries past.

The exception to this rule is the AeroSpace Arm. Because Aerospace Fighter Pilots enjoy a prestige that the ground forces lack, their uniforms are of better quality. The traditional uniform consists of a white blouse with bright green piping and sky-blue trousers. In flight operations, pilots wear an all-white flight suit with a green collar and cuffs, and such personal equipment as may be available.

The Alliance navy does not exist as a separate combat arm. The few merchant DropShips in the Outworlds have been refitted to carry weapons, in keeping with their role as privateers in time of conflicts. Therefore, naval dress is generally the same as that of the Alliance merchant marine, which is at the discretion of individual ship captains.


S.a. Ochta
J.T. Robinson

OUTWORLDS RANKS AND UNIFORMS

RANKS

To downplay the importance of a standing armed force, the Alliance's rank structure is extremely sparse. Only four enlisted and officer ranks are permitted within the AMC, as described below.

Enlisted Ranks

Enlisted ranks reflect the soldiers' role as servants of the state, while officer ranks denote administrative rather than combat duties. Enlisted personnel typically serve for a period of four years.

Defender

All recruits in the Alliance military enter service as the result of lotteries, with the respective Planetary Parliaments establishing annual quotas. Each inductee is presented with the title "Defender of the State," a rank that reflects a variety of occupations. The term typically denotes enlisted personnel roughly equivalent through the rank of Corporal in Inner Sphere military systems, and the soldiers wear a bright-green circle on each collar lapel to denote this rank.

Protector

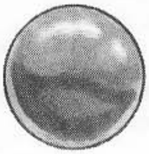
Enlisted personnel who have served a minimum of one year of active duty are granted the rank and responsibilities of Protector of the Homeland. The obligations of the rank correspond to those of Junior Sergeants in Inner Sphere systems. Two green circles on each lapel signify this rank.

Guardian

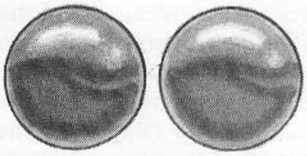
The term "Guardian of the Homeland" denotes enlisted personnel who have completed a minimum of two years of active service in the AMC. Responsibilities correspond to those of Staff Sergeants within the Inner Sphere. Soldiers of this rank wear a brown circle within a larger green circle on their lapels.

Preceptor

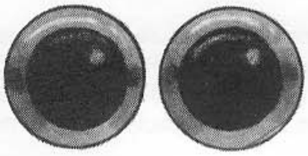
The rank of "Preceptor" is awarded to individuals who have served at least three years in the AMC. A Preceptor is roughly equivalent to a Senior Sergeant or Sergeant-Major in Inner Sphere armies, though the Preceptor's responsibilities are typically less because of the smaller size of the Alliance military. Their insignia is the same as that of the Guardian, except that two green circles are worn instead of just one.



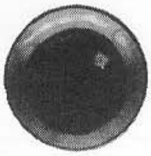
DEFENDER



PROTECTOR



GUARDIAN



PRECEPTOR

Officer Ranks

To become an officer in the AMC, an individual must be nominated by their Parliamentary representative and approved by the Military Review Board. An officer serves a minimum of five years.

Supervisor

A Supervisor in the Alliance military is equivalent to an Ensign or Second Lieutenant in the Inner Sphere. Most are employed as platoon or lance commanders in BattleMech or AeroSpace Fighter detachments. These officers wear a single green horizontal bar on their lapels.

Section Leader

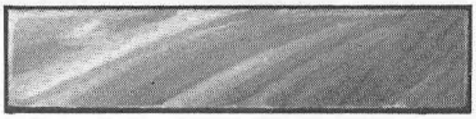
The equivalent of a First Lieutenant or Brevet Captain within the Inner Sphere, a Section Leader typically commands two or more platoons of infantry, or two or more lances of BattleMechs or AeroSpace Fighters. They wear two horizontal green bars side by side on their lapels.

Director

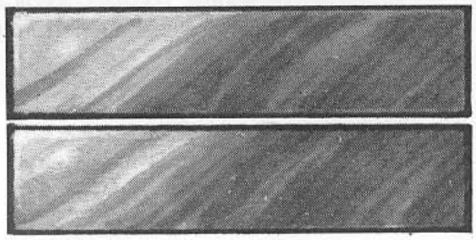
A Director is a staff planner or senior commander in the field, typically commanding a company of infantry, BattleMechs, or AeroSpace fighters. Directors wear solid brown lapels and one brown stripe on both cuffs.

Chairman

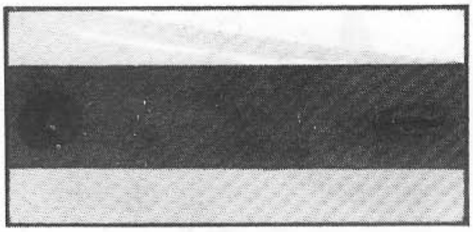
Alliance Chairmen serve a dual function in the AMC. At a tactical level, they can command upwards of a battalion of infantry, 'Mechs, Fighters, or a mixture of several different types of companies. In addition, they serve as senior staff planners and specialists. Solid green lapels and green stripes on both cuffs denote these officers.



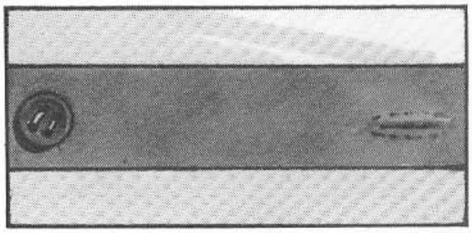
SUPERVISOR



SECTION LEADER



DIRECTOR



CHAIRMAN

STRUCTURE OF THE AMC

The structure of the Alliance Military Corps allocates many of the normal functions of military divisions to Planetary Parliaments or the Alliance Military Review Board. Thus, there are only three distinct branches of the military.

Alliance AeroSpace Arm

Receiving the lion's share of annual fiscal appropriations, the AeroSpace Arm is charged with first-line defense of all Alliance homeworlds. It consists of four Fighter regiments, which in turn are composed of three wings each. A wing is composed of three combat flotillas of three air lances, which consist of two Fighters. A separate command wing brings the total number of Fighters in each regiment to 60, for a total of 240 AeroSpace Fighters of various types. Though many of these craft are the salvaged remnants of previous conflicts, some 40 percent are less than two generations old.

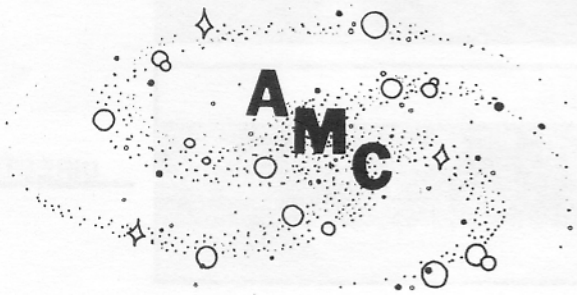
The Aerospace Arm also commands twelve JumpShips and two dozen DropsShips, which deploy the AMC's Mechanized Corps forces when not engaged in aerospace support.

Alliance Ground Defense Arm

The Ground Defense Arm is divided into two separate forces: the Planetary Militia and the Mechanized Corps. The Planetary Militia consists of those citizen militias and Freicorp battalions designated strictly for home defense. Its function is not to contest an invasion of the world, but to tie up their resources and pin the attackers in place until reinforcements arrive. The Alliance Mechanized Corps consists of two BattleMech regiments, and a regiment of armor and motorized infantry. Two-thirds of the Alliance BattleMechs are light, *Wasp*s and *Stinger*s mostly, and the rest is an assortment of medium and heavy 'Mechs produced on Alpheratz.

Alliance Service Arm

The Alliance Service Arm is a polyglot corps containing all noncombatant services found in the military. Most of these services are meager, however, due to a shortage of equipment and of dedicated, long-term service personnel. The AMC Medical Corps is generally ineffective and relies on local support from civilian institutions.

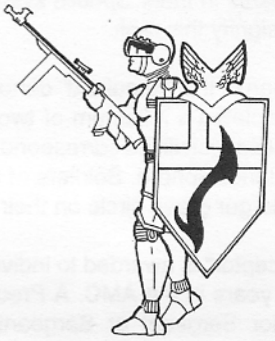


UNIT PROFILES

The following profiles of selected regiments represent typical military units that may be found in the Outworlds Alliance.

Unit Name: The Alliance Borderers
CO: Chairman Uriah Jurn
Unit Size: 1 Regiment
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: None
Fighter Weight: None
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** No
Unit Symbol: An Infantryman with a green shield of the Outworlds coat-of-arms
Unit History:

Formed during the Reunification War, this unit was created, trained, and equipped by elements of the Pitcairn Legion. Though effective enough when operating with BattleMech troops, the Borderers rely on superior armor and infantry tactics against superior firepower. Today, the unit is dispersed among various outlying worlds of the Alliance to act as a quick-reaction force against aggressors.



Unit Name: The Alliance Grenadiers
CO: Chairman Gabriel Arenthir
Unit Size: 2 Battalions
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: Medium
Fighter Weight: None
Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip**: Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Unit Symbol: Two grenades on a white field edged in gold
Unit History:

First formed in the latter years of the Reunification War, the Grenadiers served extensively with the Pitcairn Legion. Following the war, the Grenadiers disbanded, in keeping with the restrictions of the Alliance's Territorial status. When the Alliance declared its independence, it captured the Star League 'Mechs stored within its borders and delegated those in decent condition to the newly reformed Grenadiers.

In the last century, the Grenadiers have seen extensive service against pirates among the outlying worlds of the Alliance. Though the unit is typically short of equipment and spare parts, its morale is high, and the Grenadiers can be expected to perform well in combat.

DEPLOYMENT OF AMC FORCES

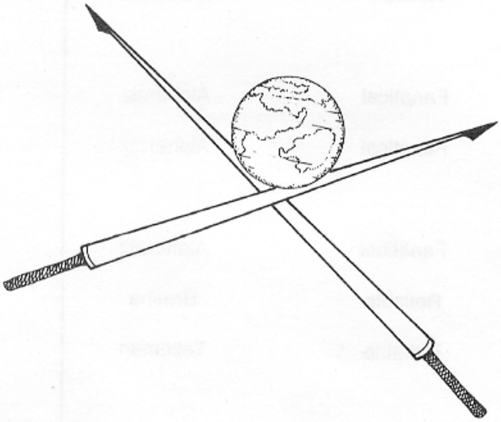
The following list of the deployment and disposition of Alliance Military Command forces is current as of 3025. The Homeworld column indicates the headquarters and administrative center of each unit, although its subunits may be located on other worlds. In addition to the forces listed below, there are between two and four battalions of conventional militia battalions permanently garrisoned on each Alliance world.

BATTLEMECH REGIMENT DEPLOYMENT TABLE
(as of 3025)

Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld
The Alliance Borderers (CO: Chairman Uriah Jurn)			
1st Battalion (CO: Chairman Fitzroy Candly)	Regular	Reliable	Ramora
2nd Battalion (CO: Chairman Dieper Denby)	Regular	Reliable	Coraines
3rd Battalion (CO: Chairman Heloise Moran)	Green	Questionable	Mitchella
The Alliance Grenadiers (CO: Chairman Gabriel Arenthir)			
1st Battalion (CO: Chairman Enrique Abenze)	Regular	Fanatical	Sevon
2nd Battalion (CO: Chairman Karl Hemhoff)	Regular	Reliable	Cerberus
The Avellar Guards (CO: Chairman Maurice Avellar)			
1st Battalion (CO: Chairman Douglas Carmichael)	Regular	Fanatical	Alpheratz
2nd Battalion (CO: Chairman Ngo Shu)	Regular	Fanatical	Alpheratz
1st Air Regiment (CO: Chairman Tallyce Mar)			
1st Air Wing (CO: Chairman Montigue Van Owen)	Regular	Fanatical	Alpheratz
2nd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Bandar Elia)	Regular	Reliable	Brasha
3rd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Ti Sho Kwok)	Regular	Reliable	Telleman
2nd Air Regiment (CO: Chairman Philip Definne)			
1st Air Wing (CO: Chairman Jorge Aguillez)	Regular	Fanatical	Grondass
2nd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Sando Ipar)	Regular	Reliable	Jordanwais
3rd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Elliot Sandburg)	Regular	Reliable	Kincaid II
3rd Air Regiment (CO: Chairman Morris Akigomo)			
1st Air Wing (CO: Chairman Tanya Kellergeis)	Regular	Reliable	Morthac
2nd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Geoff Liao ben-Stein)	Regular	Reliable	Valasha
3rd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Charles Penhaligan)	Regular	Reliable	Trimaldix
4th Air Regiment (CO: Chairman Korshk Xerminsk)			
1st Air Wing (CO: Chairman Doba)	Regular	Reliable	Lushann
2nd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Anthony Moraville)	Regular	Fanatical	Praxton
3rd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Candice Sian-Marik)	Regular	Reliable	Quiberas
5th Air Regiment (CO: Chairman Andrew Cunningham)			
1st Air Wing (CO: Chairman David Finkle)	Regular	Reliable	Loparri
2nd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Sylvester Domhaven)	Green	Questionable	Dindatari
3rd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Ignatz Maru)	Green	Reliable	Claish II

Unit Name: The Avellar Guards
CO: Chairman Maurice Avellar
Unit Size: 2 Battalions
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: Medium
Fighter Weight: None
Armor: No **Infantry:**Yes **DropShip:** Yes
JumpShip: Yes
Unit Symbol: Two crossed lances supporting a planet
Unit History:

Formed after the Alliance's declaration of independence, the Avellar Guards serve as Household Guards to the Avellar family and also as the sole BattleMech reserve of the AMC. In its brief history, the Guards have fought a number of minor actions against Davion and Kurita interlopers, acquitting themselves well. Though only rarely seen outside the Alpheratz system, the Guards have many ex-officers from commands within the Inner Sphere. Its experience and abundance of equipment (at least by Alliance standards) make this unit a force to be reckoned with.



Unit Name: First Alliance Air Regiment
CO: Chairman Tallyce Mar
Unit Size: 10 Lances
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: None
Fighter Weight: Heavy
Armor: No **Infantry:** No **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip**: Yes
Unit Symbol: An angel with a sword
Unit History:

The First Air Regiment is the AMC's senior AeroSpace Fighter unit. Supported by a variety of aerospace craft, the First has the best training and morale in the Outworlds' military. Like its fellow air regiments, it has participated in a number of border clashes and search-and-destroy missions against pirate and renegade mercenary bands over the last century. Opponents can expect to receive a rough welcome from the First's many hotshot pilots.

WEAPONS INDUSTRIES

Although the Outworlds Alliance is nearly devoid of major industry compared with the production potential of the Successor States, it does maintain a few minor industrial concerns devoted to weapons production.

Name: Alliance Defenders Limited
Plant Location: Alpheratz
CEO: Government Owned and Controlled
Weaponry Manufactured at Alpheratz: WSP-1A *Wasp*, LCT-1V *Locust*, STG-3R *Stinger* BattleMechs
Notes: The largest of all the Alliance industrial complexes, Alliance Defenders Limited is the mainstay of the AMC. Because it is the only manufacturer of 'Mechs in the Outworlds Alliance, loss of this manufacturing center would cripple the Alliance military.

Name: United Outworlders Corporation
Plant Locations: Mitchella, Ramora
CEO: Hardisen Avellar
Weaponry Manufactured at Mitchella: Hunter and Vedette Tanks
Weaponry Manufactured at Ramora: LTN-G15 *Lightning* and SYD–21 *Seydlitz* Fighters, machine guns
Notes: Recently reorganized with the help of Draconis Combine production assistants, the United Outworlders Corporation is the largest producer of AeroSpace Fighters in the Alliance. This makes the UCC's plants on Mitchella and Ramora prime targets for renegade raiders.

Name: Lushann Industrials Limited
Plant Location: Lushann
CEO: Maxwell Chatham
Weaponry Manufactured at Lushann: Ammunition, flamers, large lasers
Notes: The oldest surviving industrial concern in Alliance space, Lushann Industrials Limited has taken severe damage during the Succession Wars. As most of its heavy industry has been lost, the remaining plants produce only small weapons and ammo, leaving the production of larger equipment to better-protected worlds of the interior.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

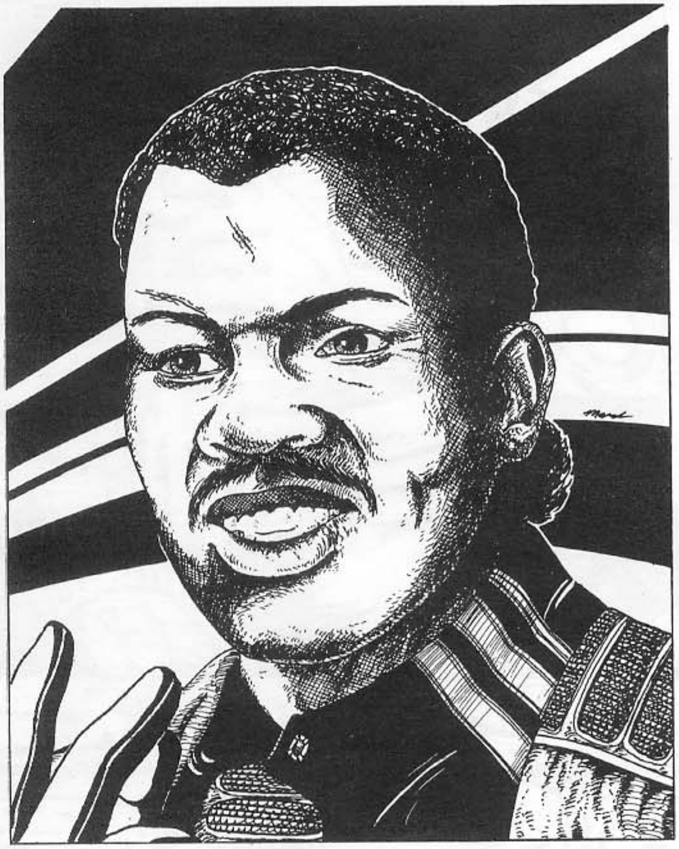
The Outworlds Alliance military is a mixed bag. Its officers emphasize defensive operations involving AeroSpace Fighters to deter enemy attacks or to inflict heavy damage once an aggressor has penetrated the Alliance defense perimeter. The lack of BattleMechs and support craft in any real numbers make offensive operations outside the Alliance impractical. The Alliance militia can offer only marginal resistance, though several units, especially those from planets in the interior, may be of stronger mettle. The Alliance Ground Defense Arm is capable of putting up a good battle, but its years of isolation from the Inner Sphere may leave unit commanders at a serious tactical disadvantage.

CULTURE AND ARTS

Much of the Outworlds' social structure revolves around its agrarian lifestyle, which is due mainly to the influence of the Omniss philosophy. In recent years, however, the Alliance has experienced a shift in social norms, as technicians and scientists, once regarded as second-class citizens, have begun to win new respectability as their talents have become more in demand. This notwithstanding, the average Alliance citizen is only marginally literate and prone to a number of superstitions. A lack of educational systems beyond the secondary school level aggravates this condition. Much of the Alliance educational structure was destroyed during the Reunification War, and the subsequent isolation of the Alliance has done little to improve the situation. Only one university exists within the Outworlds, the University of Alpheratz, and this institution has few disciplines devoted to the hard sciences.

Unlike many other Periphery states, the Alliance bestows few titles of nobility. With the exception of minor appellations (largely hereditary titles reserved for members of the Avellar family), most people regard the presumption of nobility as proof of an individual's desire to gain power at the expense of his neighbors.

The average Alliance citizen is a hard-working, if superstitious, individual who values personal loyalty and has a strong work ethic. Less than 10 percent of the Alliance's population can be classified as well-to-do, and even these have very little in comparison with their Inner Sphere counterparts.



SOCIOECONOMICS

The Outworlds Alliance has the weakest economy of all the Periphery states. During the Reunification War, Star League forces leveled 90 percent of this state's industrial concerns, and what remained intact was heavily damaged. The Star League's levying of heavy tax burdens on the Alliance hampered government efforts to rebuild its broken industries. Such industry as remains in the Outworlds suffers from a lack of modern technology. Assembly lines are manual, for example, and little automation exists (even in government-sponsored concerns such as weaponry production).

Despite recent efforts to encourage foreign industry, the economy of the Alliance continues to stagnate. The situation is so bad that many worlds have reverted to the barter system to meet the needs of their populations. The establishment of a central reserve bank and a planetary stock exchange have failed, largely because such institutions are regarded as tyrannical inventions of Star League dictators. Even the introduction of ComStar C-Bills as a means of exchange has done little to reverse this process. Unless drastic reform takes place in the next decade, the Alliance could easily suffer total economic collapse.

CORPORATE PROFILES

Name: Alliance Industries Diversified
Home Office Location: Sevon
President/CEO: Adam Smith Pallas
Principle Divisions
  Division Name: Alliance Motors Ltd.
    Division Head: Maxwell Raventhall
    Chief Products: Farm Implements, Tractors, Combines
  Division Name: Alliance Chemicals
    Division Head: Mary Joan Ballantre
    Chief Products: Petrochemicals and Pharmaceuticals
  Division Name: Alliance Mining And Geology
    Division Head: Susan Long
    Chief Products: Ore Extraction and Refining
Business Summary:

Alliance Industries Diversified is the sole industrial survivor of the Reunification War. Originally founded as a mining concern, AID expanded into new market areas in the late 2600s. Renegade and pirate legions have destroyed many of AID's factory and production centers since the start of the Succession Wars. Despite many government subsidies, the company continues to operate with meager profit margins. Indeed, in the last decade, AID has been in the red six years out of ten.

The Avellar government is currently considering whether to permit ComStar to buy out AID to rebuild the staggering firm. Though the proposal has met with opposition in many circles, the prospect of widespread unemployment if AID should close its doors for good may leave the Alliance government no alternative.

PERSONALITIES

Name: Neil Avellar II
Title: Lord Avellar
Position: President of the Executive Parliament
Birthplace: Alpheratz
Age: 38
Sex: Male

Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Lord Avellar is a tall man, with shoulder-length black hair and piercing blue eyes.

Brief History:

The current ruler of the Outworlds Alliance, Neil Avellar took his position as President in 3015, after the death of his father in a hunting accident. Since then, he has faced a number of economic and political problems in his attempts to bring the Alliance back into the mainstream of Inner Sphere culture (or at least on a par with them technologically). At present, both the Draconis Combine and the Federated Suns are pressing Avellar in hopes of cementing a defensive alliance. He has resisted all such blandishments, though he has concluded several trade agreements with each government. President Avellar greatly fears that the hostilities between the Houses of the Inner Sphere will spill over into the Alliance.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

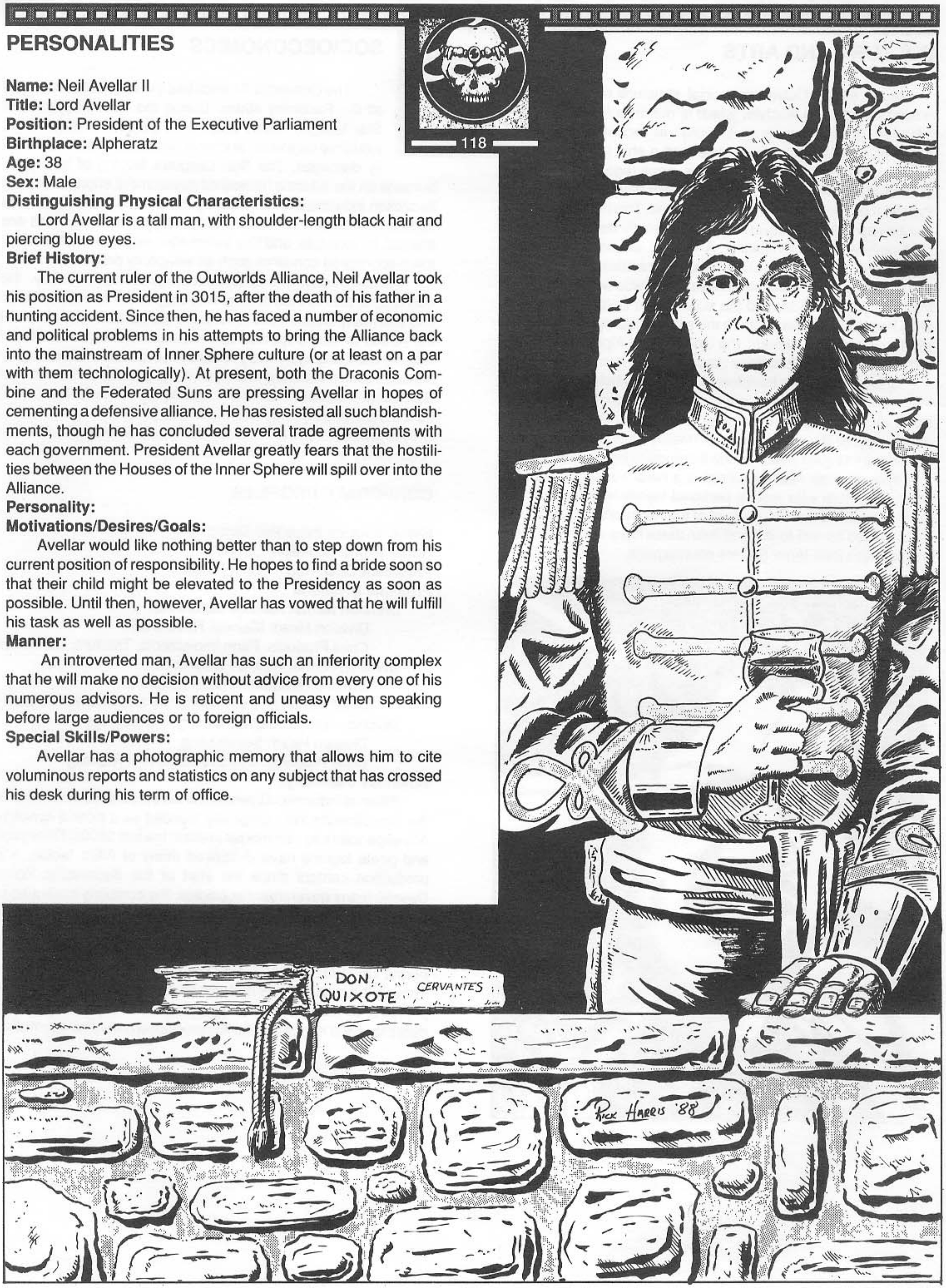
Avellar would like nothing better than to step down from his current position of responsibility. He hopes to find a bride soon so that their child might be elevated to the Presidency as soon as possible. Until then, however, Avellar has vowed that he will fulfill his task as well as possible.

Manner:

An introverted man, Avellar has such an inferiority complex that he will make no decision without advice from every one of his numerous advisors. He is reticent and uneasy when speaking before large audiences or to foreign officials.

Special Skills/Powers:

Avellar has a photographic memory that allows him to cite voluminous reports and statistics on any subject that has crossed his desk during his term of office.



A BRIEF ATLAS

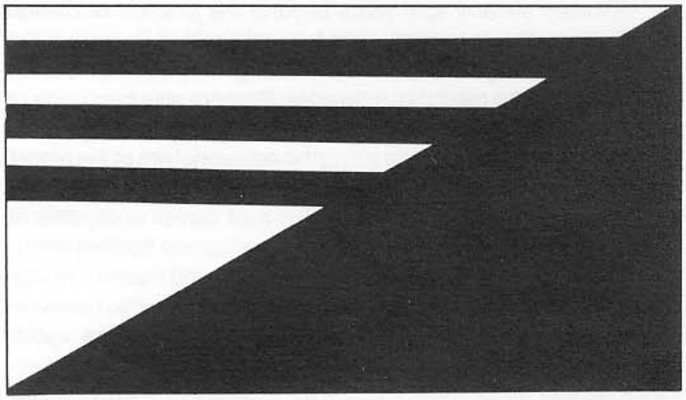
Following is a brief description of the more notable worlds making up the Outworlds Alliance.

SELECTED WORLDS

World Name: Alpheratz
Star Type: K5V
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 4.10 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Political Ruler: President Neil Avellar II
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor David Ferguson
Population: 2,159,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 30%, Mammal
Description:

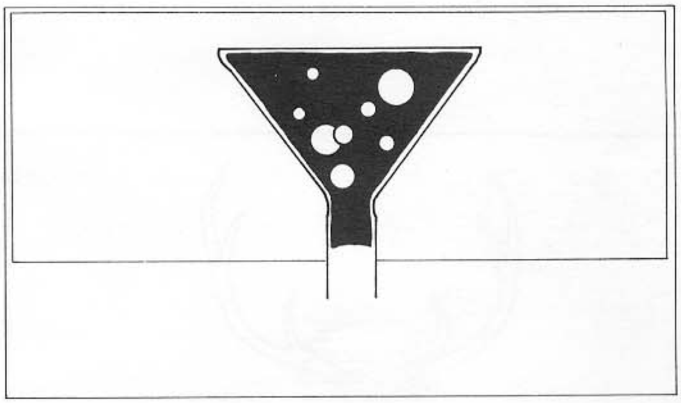
The capital of the Outworlds Alliance, Alpheratz is a temperate world that houses the Alliance Executive Parliament and most of the Alliance's remaining heavy industries. It has a population of about two million, most of whom are employed in industrial plants and research facilities. Though Alpheratz has never been occupied by foreign troops, it suffered heavy orbital bombardment during the Reunification War and marauding pirates since the start of the Succession Wars.

Alpheratz is one of the few worlds in the Alliance where barter is not the economic staple; daily trade activities are conducted with ComStar C-Bills. There are three principle cities on Alpheratz: Famindas and Algolmarle, on its northern continent, and Carolinas in the southern, each with a population of more than 100,000. The remainder of the population is dispersed among small farming communities throughout the planet's northern outback.



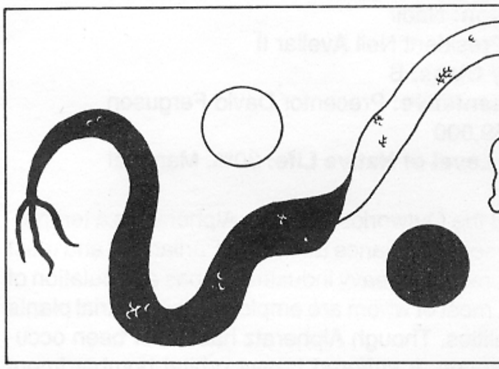
World Name: Sevon
Star Type: M2IV
Position In System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 2.83 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Political Ruler: Ferdinard Magyar
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Judith Romano
Population: 1,244,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 30%, Fish
Description:

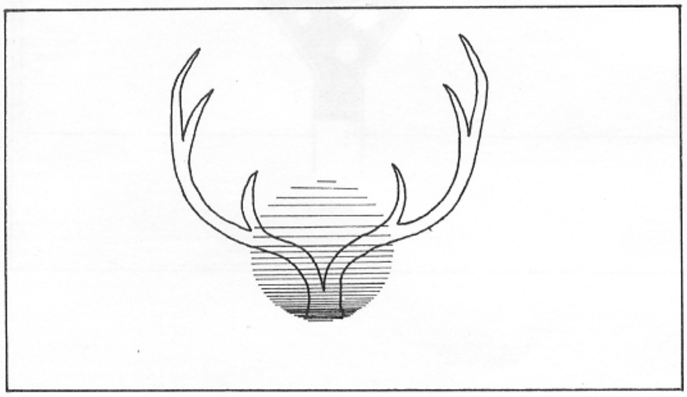
A temperate and largely unsettled world, Sevon was a principal target during the Reunification War, when most of its agrarian population was killed outright. Presently, some one and a quarter million inhabitants occupy the planet, most gathered along the planet's equatorial zone. Sevon is the home of Alliance Industries Diversified, which produces petrochemicals and pharmaceuticals. The planet's southern continent boasts House Avellar's private estate of several hundred square kilometers. Generally, Sevonites are hard-working but suspicious of any offworlder, whether he is a citizen of the Alliance or not. The principle city of Sevon is Shandahar, located on an island chain near the planet's equator.



World Name: Ramora
Star Type: G3
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 8.52 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Political Ruler: Neil Avellar
ComStar Facility Class: C
ComStar Representative: Precentor Maxwell Elias
Population: 70,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 45%, Mammal
Description:

Situated several light years beyond the junction of Davion and Kurita space, the warm, semi-tropical world of Ramora is the center of the largest weapons-producing facility in Outworlds space outside the capital homeworlds. Ramora also hosts one of the newest joint Draconian-Outworlds aerospace fighter production centers, which is located along the equatorial rim of the planet and operates through one of United Outworlds Corporation's major arms production factories. This joint center is capable of producing an estimated 100 *Lightning* Aerospace fighters annually, as well as the engineering of space parts and machinery vital to any long-term Alliance defense plan. Ramora is also noteworthy from a cultural standpoint, for it is the nexus of the Taoist religion in Alliance space. Given its military and cultural importance, as well as its relative proximity to potential enemy attacks from "over the border," Ramora maintains a permanent garrison of a Battalion of Alliance Borderers. At present an estimated 13,000 technicians and specialists work on this key world.



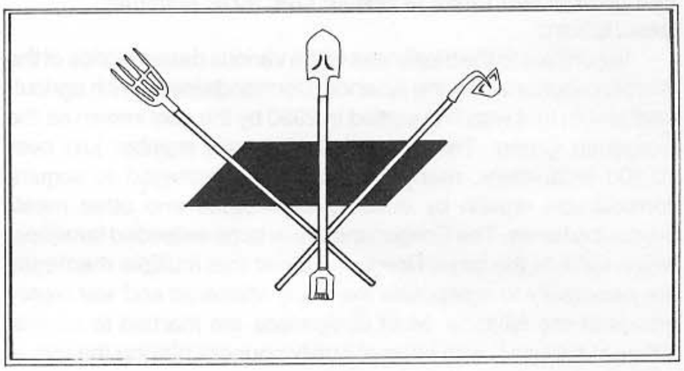


World Name: Lushann
Star Type: M3
Position In System: 8
Time to Jump Point: 2.69 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Political Ruler: Neil Avellar
ComStar Facility Class: C
ComStar Representative: Precentor Hudsenn Brax
Population: 28,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 35%, Mammal
Description:

A semi-arctic world, Lushann is the main source of petrochemical production and refinement in the Alliance. Because of the planet's lengthy orbit and the weakness of its parent sun, much of Lushann's northern hemisphere is covered in permafrost. Lushann is nevertheless home to over 6,000 technicians and scientists as well as being the garrison world of the First Air Wing of the Fourth Alliance Air Regiment. The majority of Lushann's inhabitants work for Lushann Industries, a diversified conglomerate with marginal ties to the Federated Suns. They are usually employed in underground work centers or in one of dozens of domed city enclosures that dot the planet's surface. As a diversion from the normal bleakness of life on Lushann, annual MechWarrior games are held each summer in the northern capital of Grimandi. This activity is a rare exception to the general Alliance rule of strictly limiting non-Alliance military and paramilitary experts in Outworlds space.

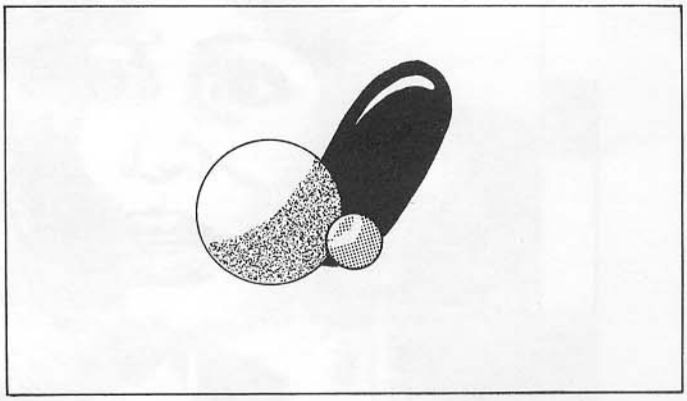
World Name: Dante
Star Type: K4
Position In System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 4.34 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Political Ruler: Neil Avellar
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 5,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 25%, Aquatic
Description:

Dante is an agricultural world whose moderate climate is ideally suited to the cultivation of grains and other seasonal crops. It was first settled after the First Succession War by waves of Kurita immigrants seeking to begin their lives anew, but has been an unofficially demilitarized planet since the late 2800s. The planet currently depends on its stance of global nonviolence as protection against raids from other systems. From its simple origins, Dante has evolved into the major cultural center of the Omniss cult, a group based on the rejection of all nonessesntial technologies in favor of an agrarian social code. Thus have planetary assemblies banned permanent garrisons on Dante for the last 150 years. At present, over 5,000 civilians, mostly farm laborers and cottage-industry craftsmen, inhabit Dante. The local government maintains a strict ban against the importation of all technology not directly related to the medical or life sciences. Because of this technology ban, ComStar is not permitted to maintain communication facilities in the Dante system.



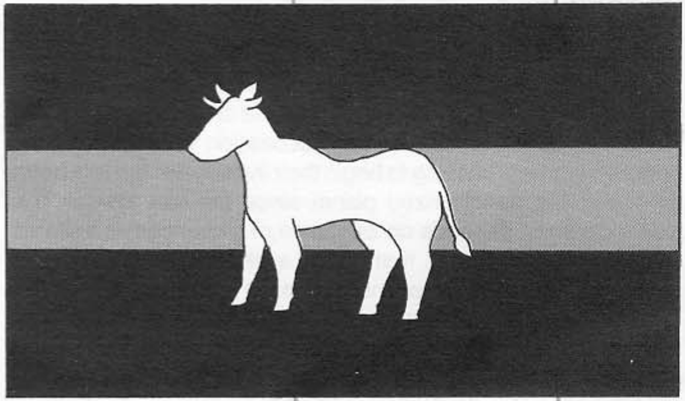
World Name: Quantraine
Star Type: G4
Position In System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 7.98 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Political Ruler: Neil Avellar
ComStar Facility Class: D
ComStar Representative: Precentor Patrick Lograin
Population: 4,500
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 30%, Avian
Description:

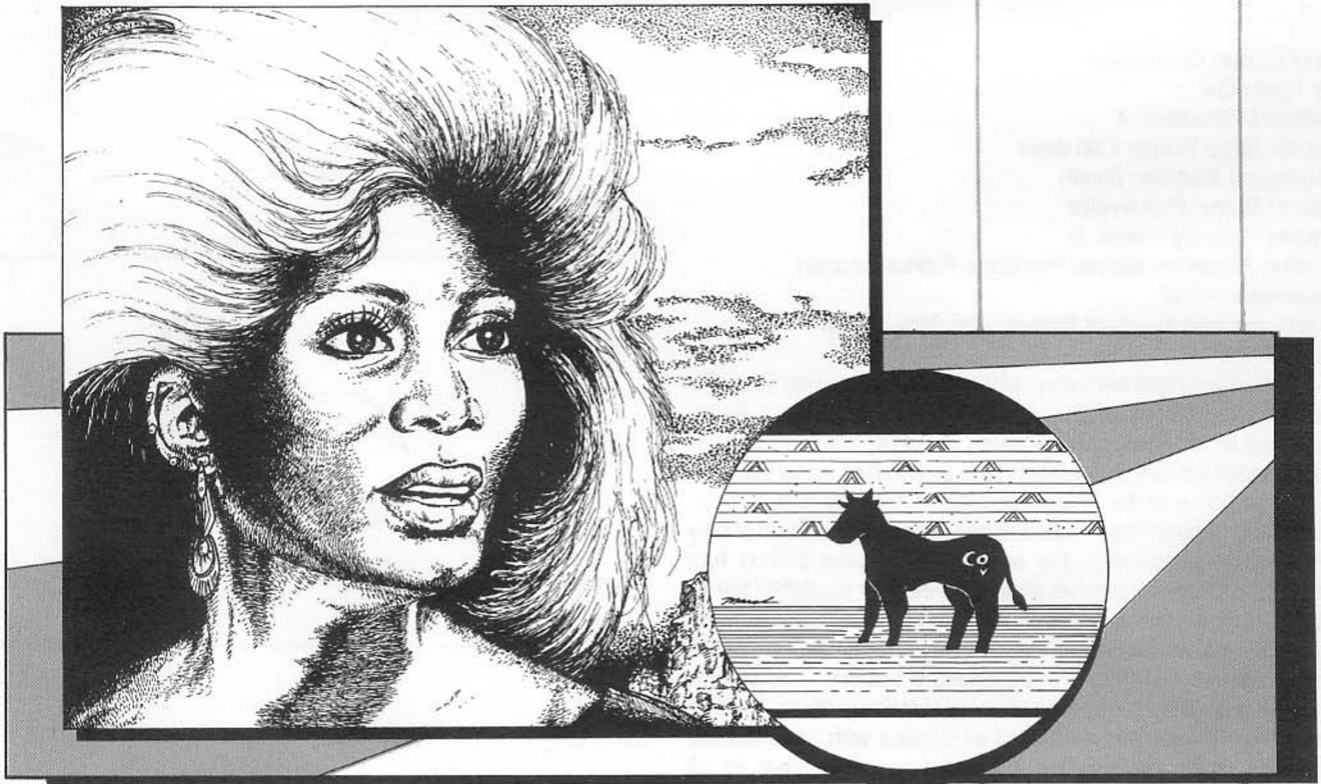
First settled in the early days of the Third Succession War, the original mining colony of Quantraine was wiped out in a deep-space raid by ex-Kurita mercenaries in 3014. Settled again in 3016 by religious fundamentalists, the planet has since become the cultural home of the Islamic religion in Alliance space. Supporting itself through the successful mining and exportation of rare and precious gemstones, the second Quantraine colony has managed not only to survive its initial years of hardship but to prosper. It would most certainly have become a major cultural community except for the outbreak of a rare contagious blood disease accidently brought in by offworld traders. The plague carried off more than 60 percent of the population in 3020. The few who remained have since banned all contact with non-Alliance commerce while inaugurating an Alliance-wide appeal to all Islamic peoples to come to the aid of their brethren. In the last five years, the population of Quantraine has recovered marginally, growing from a bare 400 survivors to over 4,500. The current inhabitants remain among the most xenophobic of any of the Alliance's many diverse peoples.

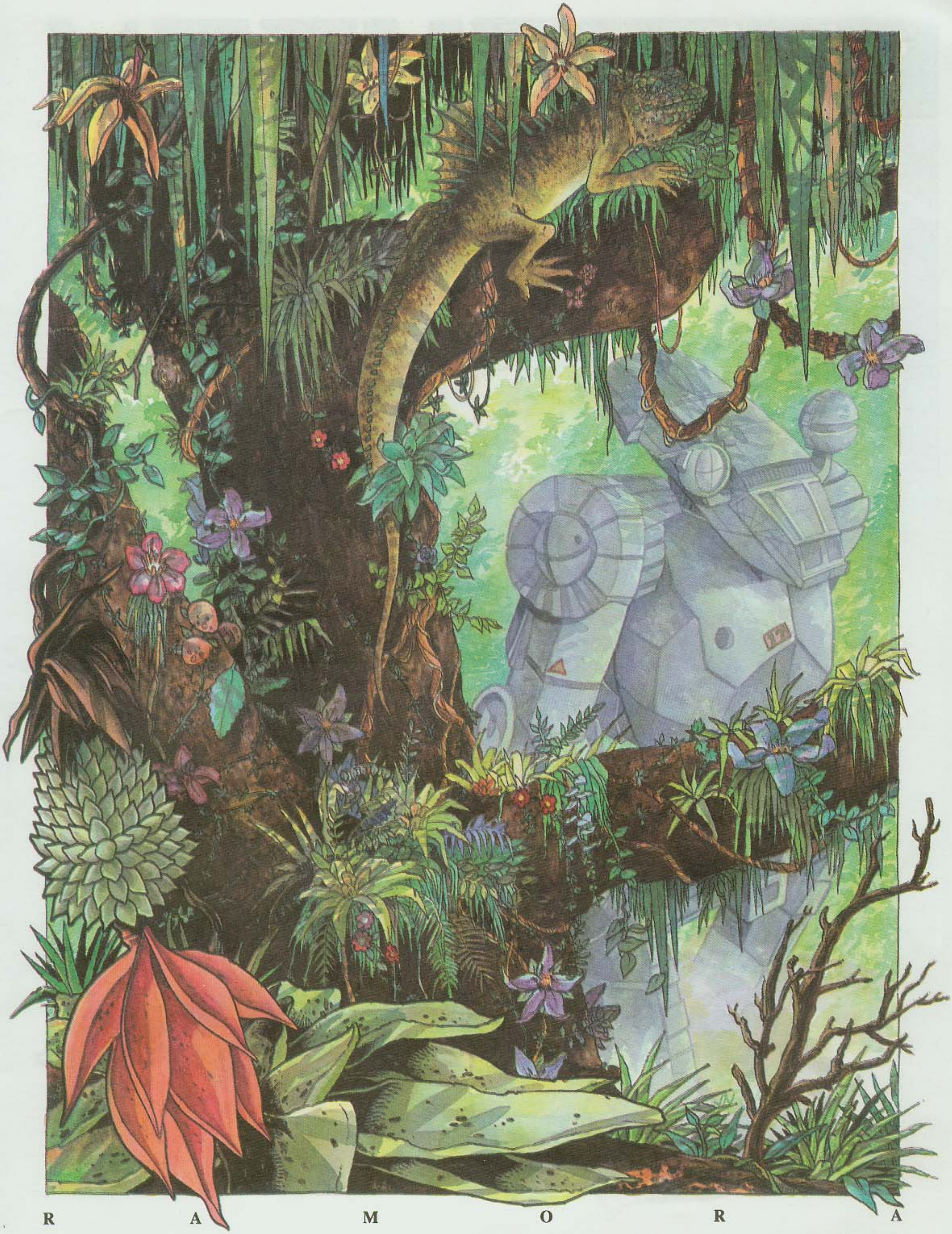


World Name: Dormandaine
Star Type: F4
Position In System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 16.09 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Political Ruler: Neil Avellar
ComStar Facility Class: D
ComStar Representative: Precentor Gorden Cameron
Population: 10,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 40%, Mammal
Description:

In contrast to the bleakness of the various desert worlds of the Islamic cultures within the Alliance, Dormandaine is a rich agricultural planet that was first settled in 2990 by the sect known as the Gregorian Creed. The Gregorians currently number just over 10,000 inhabitants, many of whom have managed to acquire considerable wealth by building large cattle and other meat-producing herds. The Gregorians live in large extended famililies, which reflects the basic Gregorian belief that multiple marriages are necessary to repopulate the many shattered and war-weary worlds of the Alliance. Most Gregorians are married to several different spouses, with internal family councils playing the role of political legislatures and councils.

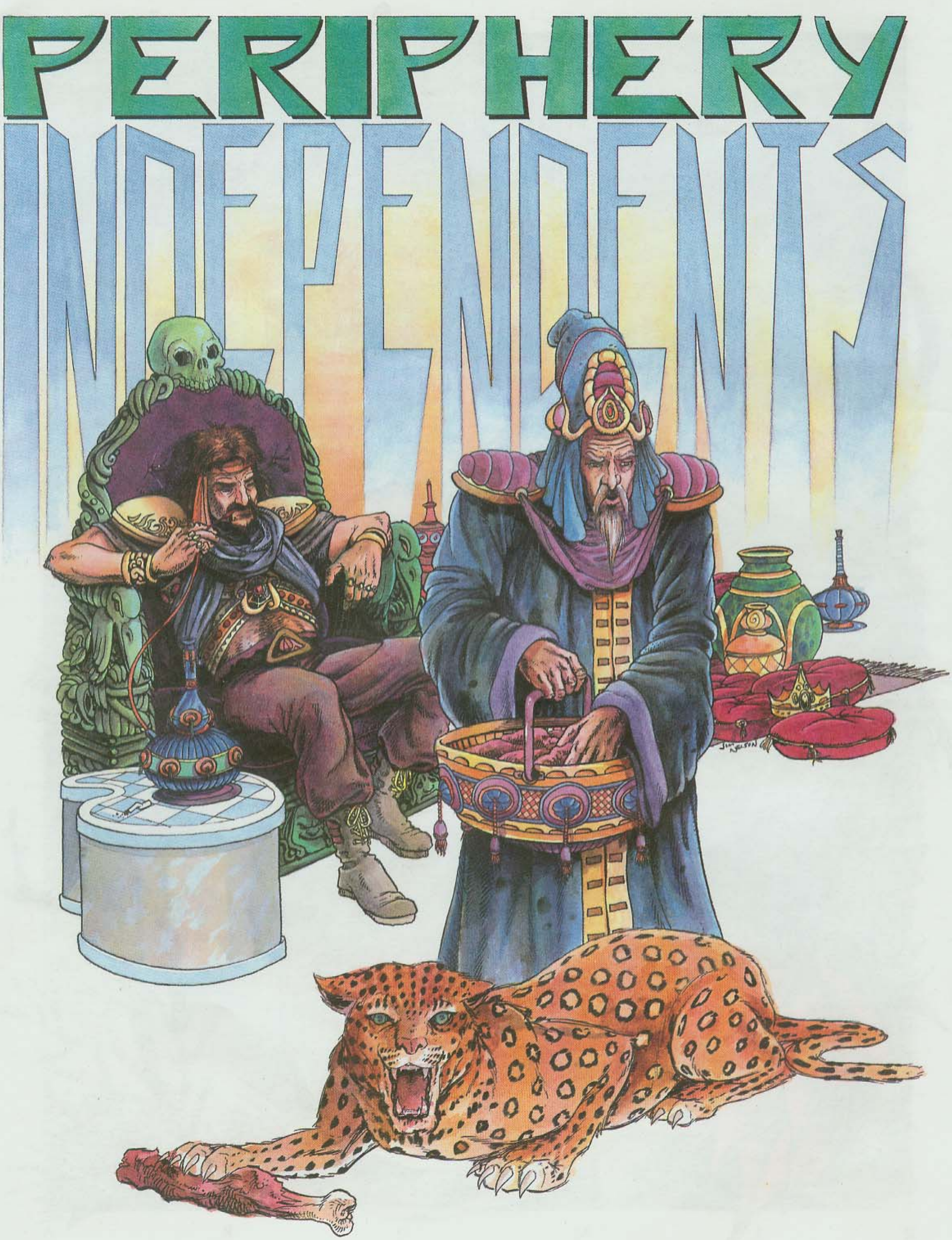






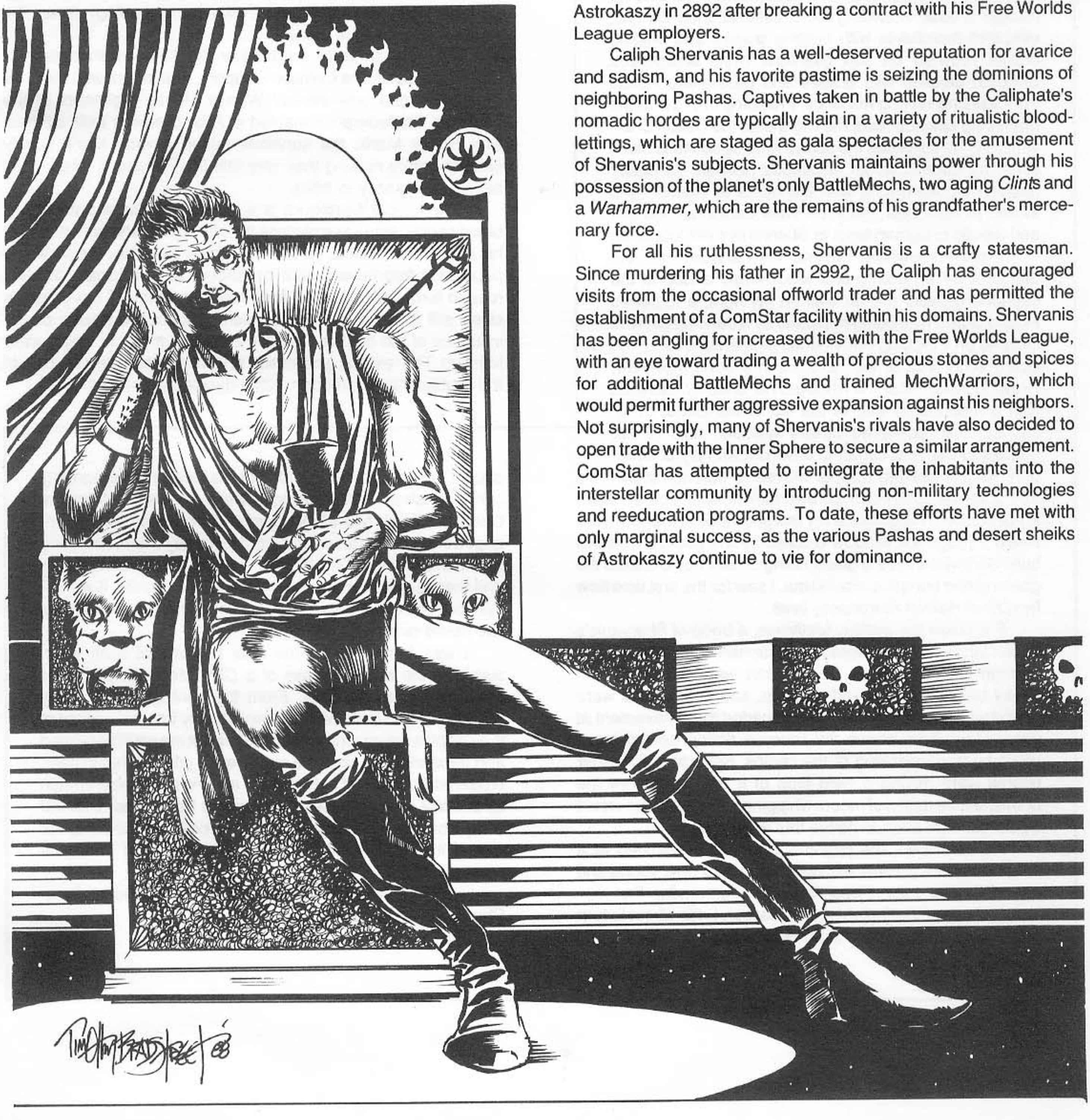
RAMORA

PERIPHERY INDEPENDENTS



PERIPHERY INDEPENDENTS

With the coming of the Succession Wars, much of the Periphery's stability broke down under the pressure of rival warring factions, both internal and external. From 2800 to 3000, hundreds of nation-states rose and fell in the Periphery, only to be replaced by still other powers, many no larger than a single world or continent. Although a rare few have managed to win a measure of comfort and security, their populations remain mostly downtrodden wretches scrabbling for mere existence.



ASTROKASZY

Lying between the Marian Hegemony and the Free Worlds League, Astrokaszy is a planet with a distinctly Arabic ambience. Inhabited by bands of roving hunters and slavers, it is divided into a number of local "Caliphates" under the control of local suzerains. The largest of these is the Caliphate of Omar Shervanis, a fifth-generation descendant of the mercenary leader who settled Astrokaszy in 2892 after breaking a contract with his Free Worlds League employers.

Caliph Shervanis has a well-deserved reputation for avarice and sadism, and his favorite pastime is seizing the dominions of neighboring Pashas. Captives taken in battle by the Caliphate's nomadic hordes are typically slain in a variety of ritualistic bloodlettings, which are staged as gala spectacles for the amusement of Shervanis's subjects. Shervanis maintains power through his possession of the planet's only BattleMechs, two aging *Clint*s and a *Warhammer*, which are the remains of his grandfather's mercenary force.

For all his ruthlessness, Shervanis is a crafty statesman. Since murdering his father in 2992, the Caliph has encouraged visits from the occasional offworld trader and has permitted the establishment of a ComStar facility within his domains. Shervanis has been angling for increased ties with the Free Worlds League, with an eye toward trading a wealth of precious stones and spices for additional BattleMechs and trained MechWarriors, which would permit further aggressive expansion against his neighbors. Not surprisingly, many of Shervanis's rivals have also decided to open trade with the Inner Sphere to secure a similar arrangement. ComStar has attempted to reintegrate the inhabitants into the interstellar community by introducing non-military technologies and reeducation programs. To date, these efforts have met with only marginal success, as the various Pashas and desert sheiks of Astrokaszy continue to vie for dominance.

World Name: Astrokaszy
Star Type: G4V
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 7.98 days
Recharging Station: None
Noble Ruler: Varies from region to region
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Girindas Blaine
Population: 200,000–500,000 (estimated)
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 10%, Mammal
Description:

Huge bands of semibarbarian nomads under the control of various Caliphs inhabit this dry wind-swept world. The Caliphate cities contain some notable remnants of technology, and a few even have the ability to manufacture munitions and energy weapons. For the most part, however, technology is on the decline all across the planet.

The inhabitants of Astrokaszy are the descendants of a mercenary band, the Crimson Reapers, that fought with the Free Worlds League until several Warrior House regiments of the Capellan Confederation mauled it. After breaking their contract with House Marik, the survivors raided several Marik supply centers before making their way into the Periphery, where they settled Astrokaszy in 2892.

The typical Astrokaszi is a fearless fighter and a lover of blood sports, who still practices the warrior life and philosophy of his ancestors. Indeed, since the planet's founding, the surviving population fragmented as it expanded, as charismatic leaders rose to form their own self-imposed rule. Many of Astrokaszy's cities still show a marked Moslem influence because of the influence of the original Crimson Reapers, many of whom were Moslem. The result is a collection of jeweled oases reminiscent of the Arabian Nights, though with a decidedly sinister aspect.

A FOOL'S PARADISE

The Caliph's palace was something out of a video based on the ancient Arabian Nights. In the center of the high-vaulted pavilion dozens of naked dancing girls gyrated with multicolored silks and satin streamers. Though they had to pause occasionally to kick away a spectator who wandered too close, the dancers never missed a beat. Crowding the circular attendance hall, besotted merchants with bulging purses and bulging bellies reclined on soft cushions while sharp-eyed Bedohin plucked wild grapes and passionate kisses from passing serving wenches. Presiding over it in all his menacing splendor was His Highness, the Caliph Shervanis. As he surveyed the scene with his soulless black eyes, he sucked on an enormous hookah, its heady hashish smoke mixing with the odors of incense and sweat. At his elbow, the Arch Vizer Candoralh fed bits and pieces of human flesh to Shervanis's pet leopards.

From somewhere beyond the banquet hall, the music of desert drums and windchimes added to the cacaphony. Near the far wall on my right, a turbaned House Guard was being harassed by a dancing girl who insisted on wrapping her sinuous legs around him. The guard soon tired of the female's intentions, however. Drawing his scimitar, he whacked her shapely backside with a resounding slap of the flat of his blade. In response, the red-haired beauty grabbed hold of the guard's turban and began to unwind it with joyful abandon. As the insulted trooper moved to defend himself, his tormentor escaped into the crowd with the object of her desire in hot pursuit. This gave me my first good look at the courtyard below through the window blocked by the guard's massive bulk. Sliding toward the glass, being careful not to disturb the grinding and bumping around me, I saw for the first time how the Other Half on Astrokaszy lives.

Far below the midday festivities, a troop of Shervanis's desert lancers led a procession of farmers and their families through the city square. Their backs were burdened with heavy baskets of fruit and produce, and their ankles were bound with heavy shackles that impeded their movement at every step. Even above the raucous rioting behind me, I could hear the clanking of the chains. Several of the older figures were having a hard time of it and most bore the unmistakable marks of recent whippings. No one in the crowd below seemed even to notice this dreary troop.

As I watched, the pilgrims' progress terminated at a small warehouse. Here, the workers, one by one, young and old, unloaded their crops for inspection under the watchful eye of the Caliph's tax assessor. I was about to turn away from the squalid sight when another disturbance caught my attention anew. One of the locals had apparently come up short in his quarterly yield. At a word from the Caliph's official, two of the lancers dismounted and disengaged the unfortunate wretch from his family chain. Knocking him to the ground, the collector spat on the cowering figure and then lancers turned their horse whips on him. It was all the poor sod could do to cover his head with his arms as the two flayed him again and again.

I was transfixed by the utter brutality of it all when suddenly the metallic mass of a *Clint* 'Mech on perimeter patrol obscured my view. From the vantage point of my window, I could look for a moment directly into the cockpit of the Caliph's war machine. Glaring back at me was the tanned and turbanned figure of the steely-eyed pilot. In that instant, I realized that the gulf between me and the man being beaten so brutally was narrower than I would have liked. I turned away from the window and grabbed a passing maid. For the rest of the afternoon I tried hard to forget what I had just witnessed...

—From Confidential Report, 2.15.3020, filed by ComStar Agent Josiah Mintaine.

BARONY OF STRANG

Located outside of the Lyran Commonwealth, the Barony of Strang (sometimes referred to as the Barony of Lost Hope) is a small planet ruled by the self-proclaimed Baron Otto Von Strang. The Baron is a descendant of Colonel Gunthar Strang, commander of the 18th Amaris Chasseurs, one of the last 'Mech forces that General Aleksandr Kerensky defeated in the Civil War. The current Baron Von Strang dreams of gathering enough MechWarriors to launch a Holy War of Redemption to reclaim the lost Rim Worlds Republic planets once ruled by the Amarises. While few seriously believe him capable of carrying out such a threat (most consider him a glorified crackpot), his family fortune, augmented by local diamond mines, is sufficient to lure the occasional MechWarrior into his service. Von Strang heartily despises anything pertaining to the old Star League government, and he extends this prejudice to all things originating from the Inner Sphere. Any material (or persons) arriving on his holdfast from the Inner Sphere is subject to immediate seizure and imprisonment.

Von Strang has turned his planet into a gigantic fortified camp to repel the "inevitable" invasion from the Inner Sphere. That is also how he justifies keeping the planet's civilians in a feudal bond to local Wardens, providing labor and related services for sustenance. In recent years, Von Strang's forces, estimated at over a full battalion of BattleMechs with two DropShips and a JumpShip, have begun raiding Lyran Commonwealth outposts along the border. Though the Lyrans have ignored the attacks to date, at some point, they may decide to confront Von Strang head to head.

World Name: Von Strang's World
Star Type: F5III
Position In System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 14.93 days
Recharging Station: None
Noble Ruler: Baron Otto Von Strang
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 18,000–20,000 (estimated)
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 20%, Mammal
Description:

A temperate world lying along the edge of the defunct Rim Worlds Republic, Von Strang's World is home to descendants of Stefan Amaris's supporters. The present population consists of literate artisans and feudal laborers devoted to the construction and maintenance of hundreds of fortifications. What once may have been a necessary defensive measure has devolved into an archaic social imperative used to justify the continued subordination of the majority to the wishes of the Von Strang family.

At present, the planet is believed to hold over 18,000 inhabitants. Outside contact is discouraged, and few who visit Von Strang's World have returned. Those who have report the planet poor in natural resources and its populace poor in individual freedoms.

ELYSIAN FIELDS

An oddity even among the strange worlds of the Periphery, Elysian Fields is a private hold of the Inheritor philosophic movement. The Elysian worlds (Elissa, Mangringaine, and Nyserta) are temperate planets maintained in their pristine wilderness state. The people support themselves mainly as hunters and gatherers. Foreswearing any military presence on their worlds, the Inheritors have entered into an agreement with the Oberon Confederation whereby Hendrik III guarantees to protect these planets in exchange for emergency repair and shore-leave rights for Oberon ships and personnel. As the Elysian worlds have no commercial or geological value, few see any need to violate their sanctity. In the last several years, however, Nyserta has hosted a number of clandestine meetings between representatives of Hendrik Grimm and various Inner Sphere governments. Recently, the Inheritors have established a small colony in the neighboring star system of Porthos, though that world has not yet come under the protection of Hendrik III.

World Name: Nyserta
Star Type: A9III
Positon in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 23.76 days
Recharging Station: None
Political Ruler: Warden Akir Dobuguq
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 43,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 15%, Plant

PASSIVE RESISTANCE

Jedidiah first heard the sound as a distant rumbling, like thunder, shortly before dusk. Sitting down to his meager evening meal, Jedidiah mused absently on the unlikelihood of autumn storms starting up so soon this year. Still, the crashing sounds continued. Halfway through dinner, Jedidiah noticed the sounds getting closer, but there was still no rain, not even a cloud in sight. At last, he could bear it no more. Abandoning his meal, Jedidiah donned his cloak and went out of his cottage. What he saw not ten meters from his door at once shocked and dismayed him. Standing like some hideous metallic spider was a huge contraption—war machine by the looks of it—with its owner dangling his feet from a perch near the top.

"Hey Pops, hold it right there! Anybody else 'round here?"

"No sir. I am the Master of Ballantre."

"The Devil, you say!"

Lowering himself to the ground, the braggart came over to where Jedidiah stood. He was youngish and muscular in build, a good 20 years Jedidiah's junior in age and a several centimeters his superior in height. Stripped to the waist, he wore a wicked-looking sidearm on one hip and a map case on the other. In manner and demeanor, the man was menacing, to be sure.

"I'm Clancy Tobias of Roger's Ravagers. We're the new 'Masters' of Ballantre and everything else on this sorry-looking rock!"

"I pray you, good sir, what is the meaning of this intrusion?"

"It means, Old Man, that you and yours, one and all, are now the prisoners of Roger's Ravagers, one of the most vicious and hated mercenary units in the Inner Sphere! You got anything to eat around here?"

"Well, yes, that I do—That is to say, you're welcome in my humble house—Oh, please, don't step on the rose bushes—Enter kind sir—Oh, please do wipe your feet—and what is it brings you to our humble world?"

"I'll say it's humble, all right, like this hovel of a home. Bet you don't even have anything worth 'appropriating' round here..."

"The herd is in the north pasture this time of year, good sir, and I don't have..."

"FOOD! I Want food, Old Man. Been living on concentrates and artificials since we jumped last fortnight. Enough! I want food!"

"Coming right up, sir. I beg you, please have a seat. Oh, not that one. That's my—I don't have much to offer, kind sir, but what I have is yours."

"You're learning, you bleeding sod-buster. What you have IS mine and you better get used to it. Herd you said..."

"Try some of this stew, good sir. It's not much, but it is filling, and I have some freshly baked bread and meat..."

"WINE! Bring me wine, Old Man, and make it snappy!"

Jedidiah reached for the only bottle of peach wine left in the house, while scooping out a generous helping of stew in a wooden bowl. Pausing to extract a wooden goblet from the topmost shelf in the larder, he spied a small red-colored jar whose stopper was off. A slight twist of the hand was all it took to topple the jar off the shelf and into the stew.

"Oh dear me, dear me! Look what I've gone and done. A moment, kind sir. I really must..."

"I SAID FOOD, OLD MAN, AND WINE, OR YOU WON'T BE GETTING MUCH OLDER!"

"Oh, well, sir. If you insist. Here you are."

"That's more like it. Hmmmm, I've had better, but this'll do for now. You got any farm machinery 'round here? If you do, that's ours, too. Starting right now..."

"Just a small combine. I really think I should warn you, sir, that I..."

"All resistance will be crushed and the leaders and their families killed."

"Well, I say, that's not very civil of you..."

"Fill this bowl again and be quick about it!"

"Since you put it that way, whatever you say. You deserve another bowl, kind sir...but what brings you to our world, dear sir?"

"The Lyran Commonwealth brings us...Damn! Is it always so hot in here?"

"And what does the Lyran Commonwealth want with our small world?"

"It occupies space, Old Man, and can serve as an excellent base from which...damn, but my stomach hurts... which can serve as an excellent jumping off point for attacks against the Kuritans!"

"Indeed...do finish the rest of the stew, kind sir. I've already eaten..."

"That's more like it, anticipating the needs of your betters...Hey, why do I suddenly feel so lousy?"

"Perhaps you bit off more than you could chew this time, dear sir."

"You...damn my gut...you did it, Old Man [crash, thump, heavy body sliding to the floor]...you poisoned me, you bast..."

Jedidiah stepped over the body of the lifeless intruder. Walking out onto the veranda, he looked past his ruined rose garden to stare up at the motionless metal Spider, already a home to a dozen sparrows...what a flower pot it would make...

"INDEED, kind sir, you have all bitten off more than you can chew this time..."

—From *Farmers of Nyserta,* a non-fiction novel by Conrad Wendorf, Cerberus Press, 3006

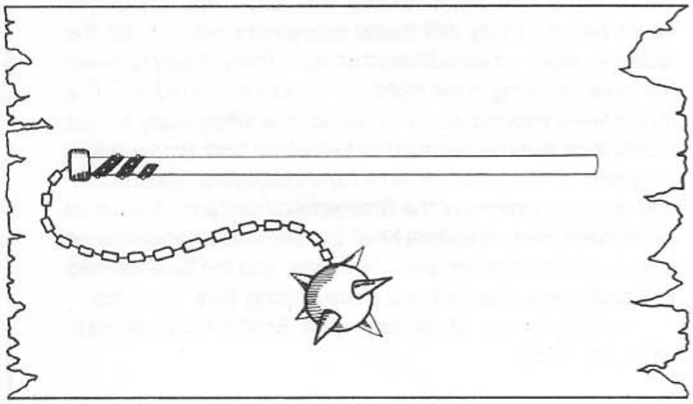
FIEFDOM OF RANDIS

A nondescript world boasting few natural resources, Randis is the home of a band of Knights-Templars, MechWarriors who have joined a pseudo-religious order, the Brotherhood of Randis, dedicated to the perpetuation of the art of war. To members of this order, the MechWarrior is the culmination of the history of armed combat. They avoid all other forms of combat as contemptible and "unchivalrous". Indeed, the members of the Brotherhood have dedicated their lives, their fortunes, and their families to this code.

Although the Brotherhood consists largely of individuals who have rejected all other social systems, it also contains many burned-out and washed-up MechWarriors with nowhere else to go. Thus, though the Brotherhood's ideals may hold some merit, its military competence is questionable. At present, less than three thousand individuals occupy Randis, and best estimates place the number of serviceable BattleMechs on the planet at less than twelve, mostly lighter types of dubious quality.

World Name: Randis
Star Type: K4V
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 4.34 days
Recharging Station: None
Noble Ruler: Grand Knight Jacob Ben Volcroth
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Adrien Brix
Population: 3,000–5,000 (estimated)
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 30%, Fish
Description:

A warm tropical world located in the stellar desert between the Taurian Concordat and the Outworlds Alliance, Randis has some modest importance as a stop-over point for traders plying Periphery spacelances. Occupied in 2988 by Erdelmaine Randis, the planet has since become the home of a theocratic band of MechWarriors from all parts of the Inner Sphere. The Brotherhood provides a home, security for one's family, and a secure (if modest) economic base. Occasionally, it contracts out to neighboring systems, where local brush wars provide ample opportunity for the brethren to hone their skills. At present, some three to five thousand people inhabit the planet. Most are unskilled laborers used to clear the central rain forests for the construction of repair facilities that, in time, will net much-needed revenues. In the two generations of the Brotherhood's existence, little has been done to industrialize the planet. All are concerned only with the continued training of MechWarriors to the exclusion of practically everything else.

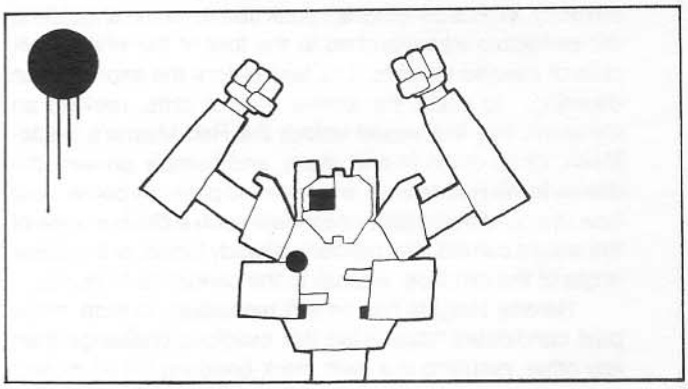


FRANKLIN TERRITORIES

Situated along the border of the Outworlds Alliance near the Fiefdom of Randis, Novo Franklin is an agricultural world where feudal warlords exploit their family serfs. There are no less than 55 separate kingdoms, principalities, baronies, fiefdoms, and domains, each held together by a system of social rights and obligations (almost all of which are imposed on the peasant). Lords and ladies of the territories are given to ritualistic combats (BattleMech jousts are a common entertainment for the masses) and bashing in the heads of their subjects and sometimes each other to enforce family interests. As such, the planet is continually at war; only the occasional desperate peasant revolt interrupts the border wars between warlords. Social and scientific progress are all but absent. The majority of the planet's population of 100,000 persons remain illiterate and poor. Best estimates suggest a full battalion of various BattleMechs on the planet, but these are dispersed among dozens of political states over half the northern continent. It is unlikely that any state could muster more than two lances.

World Name: Novo Franklin
Star Type: F6V
Position in System: 8
Time to Jump Point: 13.87 days
Recharging Station: None
Nobel Ruler: Various petty kings
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Hadror Ninn
Population: 100,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 10%, Reptile
Description:

A hot, agricultural world known for its long summers and mild winters, Novo Franklin was settled in 2598 by refugees from the Outworlds Alliance who were fleeing Kurita invaders. Unable to decide on a common form of government, the refugees broke up into diverse factions, each going their own way. During the following centuries, these various groups evolved into a starkly feudalized system. Now the majority of the planet's inhabitants are bound to serving the needs of a privileged minority capable of enforcing its will with BattleMechs.



INITIATION DAY

The night before the long-awaited initiation rites into the military order of the Randis Brotherhood was a solemn occasion. The candidate spend what few hours remained in the chapel, making soulful inner preparations while contemplating the events of the morrow. At 0500 hours, two black-clad members of the First Circle came and stripped the candidate to the waist. With arms bound, the candidate was led blindfolded to the first place of testing, the hallowed Hall of the Initiates. Though unable to see, the candidate must have sensed the presence of others in the cold morning air. Twenty members of the Brotherhood's elite were there, arranged to either side in even rows, each one armed with a club or knout or whip. Forced to run this menacing gauntlet, the candidate suffered the indignity of countless stings and blows at the tender, loving hands of the Brotherhood's best. More than one candidate in recent memory has been known to end his life in that bloody hall, but such was not the case today. After more than twenty passes through the lines, the candidate was bloodied and battered, weary and afraid, but still alive.

The test of endurance being over, the candidate's blindfold was removed. The test of strength would now commence at Hilton's Hellground, a small greensward within sight of the castle walls. With outstretched arms attached to leather thongs, whose straps were fastened to a pair of horses, the candidate would try to hold ground, in place, while the two beasts pulled in opposite directions for an unspecified length of time. At an unspoken signal from the Red Master, the beasts were whipped into action and the trial of strength began. Sad to say, more than one otherwise worthy candidate was ripped asunder on this bloody ground within the last six months. In the heat of the morning sun, the beasts contested with the candidate for more than an hour before the Red Master, after what seemed an infinity, was satisfied that the candidate would prevail again and called the test met. The two beasts were led away to their stalls for a much-deserved rest while the candidate was led forward to the next challenge.

With the contests of strength and endurance decided, the candidate must now endure the Brotherhood's trial of dexterity. With a 30-kilogram pack tied to naked shoulders, the candidate was marched to the foot of the white chalk cliffs of Heloise Heights. The task before the aspirant was daunting: to scale the almost vertical cliffs, retrieve an electronic key that would unlock the Red Master's BattleMech, climb down in one piece, and humbly present the device to the Red Master, who awaited patiently below. Just how the candidate was to negotiate such a climb in view of the weight carried, the exertions already faced, or the sheer angle of the cliff face, was up to the candidate to decide...

Heloise Heights has an evil reputation. In truth, more past candidates have failed this insidious challenge than any other, resulting in a swift, neck-breaking fall 90 meters to the craggy rocks below. In truth, more than one of the Brotherhood's number wagered on the success or failure of the candidate during that long afternoon. On that hot August day the odds doubled and doubled again as the candidate slipped, occasionally tumbling 20 or 30 meters or more before recovering, by some miracle, and trying again. Some of the Brotherhood's Inner Circle ended up the poorer at the end of three hours, for the candidate somehow managed to retrieve the desired object and return it to the Red Master, exhausted but unbowed.

One final test, that of courage, now remained. While the aspirant took a brief respite, the unmistakable sounds of an approaching BattleMech filled the shady glen. As the candidate lay flat against the cool, dry earth, the ominous bulk of the Red Master's black *Griffin* loomed above, blocking out the sun like a harbinger of doom. With infinite care, the black metal monster moved to where the candidate lay silent, stopping only scant centimeters from the fragile form. With infinite care, the *Griffin*'s left leg lifted slowly, poised for a moment, and then slowly began its descent toward the torn and bleeding flesh of the candidate. Stopping bare centimeters above the candidate's chest, the battle machine waited, hovering in an eternity of indecision. For many candidates, this predicament was enough to send them raving into the night; for others, it was the last sight they would ever see. Imagine what the candidate must have been thinking as the metal foot began to descend, millimeter by millimeter.

The candidate would begin to feel the weight in earnest now... *Don't scream, don't shout, close your eyes and endure, endure—one way or the other, it will be over soon.* Pressure, endless crushing, eye-popping pressure. Breathing impossible, sight dimming...still more pressure, more pain, more darkness...

Patty Krail woke to find herself in bed, the cool air of evening sweeping over her from an open window in the castle wall. About her resting place hundreds of votive candles blended in a calm glow of silent respect. At the first sign of her awakening, a bevy of maids came forward with wine for her lips, soft pillows for her tortured back. Though her wounds had been treated with balm and bandages hours before, Patty still found movement difficult. As the ladies-in-waiting helped her sit upright, Patty slowly focused her eyes, drinking in the sights and sounds around her. The maids were moving about in attendance while Patty's eyes slowly took in the images at the foot of her bed. Arrayed with care were the unmistakable red and black silks, steel mesh, and gleaming sword of the Brotherhood uniform. A wave of relief rolled over candidate Krail. But she was a candidate no longer, having met her final challenge, and the Brotherhood of Randis now counted one more among their numbers.

—Anoynmous statement, The Brotherhood of Bastards, ca. 3002

JOUST ANOTHER TYPICAL DAY

There is nothing more outrageous or plainly ludicrous than a bunch of old, washed-up MechWarriors getting up at the crack of dawn to go a jousting on horseback, pretending to be modern-day knights. Except, that is, a bunch of drunk, washed-up MechWarriors getting up at the crack of dawn—more or less—to have at it on horse-back...

And Sir Reginald was definitely drunk...

As Sir Reginald's squire, I can attest that this paragon of knightly virtue had royally outdone himself the night before. Indeed, I had to drag him, feet first, from Lady Mortfontaine's bedchamber shortly before Lord Mortfontaine's return. Then I spent hours pouring gallons of hot, black coffee into Sir Reginald so that he could pour himself into his armor in time for the opening match of the day. Neither task was easy. First, there was Reginald's mistaking me for his Lady Love of the night before, and then there was his determination to throw up inside his armor plate...

I finally managed to get his Lordship suitably ensconced in his best armor and sufficiently convinced that I was not, after all, the Lady Mortfontaine, in time for his first—and probably only—match of day. Then My Lordship mounted his trusty destrier—backward, of course—but the timely arrival of a passing *Stinger* helped us to get Sir Reginald properly turned around and in good order. Unfortunately for Sir Reginald, the early hour and the pounding of his horse's hooves on the cobblestones were threatening to give him a splitting headache, but such are the trials of Knighthood on Franklin Fief...

As luck would have it, Sir Reginald was paired with Lord Mortfontaine in the first match. From the look in Mortfontaine's eyes, I had no doubt but that My Lord's opponent knew with certainty where Sir Reginald had been the night before. My heart sunk to my boots as I watched Lord Mortfontaine select his lance and lock the setting on maximum power. For the record, Sir Reginald was every bit the gentleman as he attempted to shake hands with his cuckolded opponent. In truth, Sir Reginald might even have succeeded in this joust if he had been more fortunate in deciding which of the three blurred images before his eyes was the real Lord Mortfontaine. It was with a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach that I led my poor master into the lists, where Lord Mortfontaine was so eager to avenge the insult to his honor and Sir Reginald so eager to crawl back into bed with Lady Mortfontaine...

Fearful of disaster but unable to tear my eyes away, I watched as the two opponents, the one drunk with anger and the other just plain drunk, charged one another at the first tilt. Fortune, as they say, favors the foolish. So it was with Sir Reginald. Two meters from their impending intersection, Sir Reginald bent low to his right in order to disgorge a stomach full of bile, only to have his upturned lance smash—quite unintentionally, I assure you—into his enemy's shield. Instead of being unhorsed and splattered to bits by his opponent's lance, he dodged the death blow that should have dealt him his last hand.

Having miraculously escaped the first clash of arms, Sir Reginald surpassed himself in surviving the second when, a microsecond before receiving what would otherwise have been another mortal blow, a providential sneeze on Sir Reginald's part resulted in his ducking under Lord Mortfontaine's leveled lance while inadvertently backhanding his opponent with his trusty shield...

In the third and final encounter that morning, the mighty Sir Reginald was less than four meters away from his doom when he spied the shapely form of Lady Mortfontaine in the grandstands beyond. True to his chivalrous nature, My Lordship bowed low and doffed his helmet in salute to his Lady Love, just in time to smack his Lordship Sir Julius Mortfontaine, right in the puss with a force sufficient to unhorse him and lay him hors de combat, flat on his back.

However unconventional the tactic, Sir Reginald was not slow in recognizing the situation for what it was. Sliding off the rump of his horse (and receiving a swift kick in the chops from his noble destrier in the process), My Lord, now dazed and befuddled—which is to say more than normally so—tottered over to where the slowly reviving form of his archenemy still lay prostrate on the ground. Even at this late juncture, Sir Reginald's opponent might have won the day, had he been able to right himself and resume the fray once more. Sir Reginald's dexterity saved him again as he fell backward after one stumble too many. My Lordship landed flat on top of Lord Mortfontaine, followed by an unexpected but timely attack of gas, which was all that was needed to seal Lord Mortfontaine's fate...

Thus it was that the unfortunate Lord Mortfontaine expired on the field on honor and My Lord Sir Reginald the Unorthodox won possession of Lord Mortfontaine's prize *Warhammer.*

Of such are legends on Franklin Fief made.

—From unpublished papers of Squire Edward Nottingham Willinby, dated March 17, 2999

HEROTITUS

Founded in the late 2600s, Herotitus has the dubious distinction of being the center of the New Hedon movement, one of several Periphery philosophical sects that have sprung up in the last 50 years. Located between the Magistracy of Canopus and the Taurian Concordat, Herotitus is one of the few worlds in the Periphery that does not support a standing military. Instead, the inhabitants of Herotitus, the New Hedons, support a simple philosophy of "eat, drink, and be merry and let some other fool die fighting." In the decades since its founding, the entire planet has been given over to here-and-now enjoyment of earthly pleasures. Though not as elaborate as the Canopian Magistracy worlds in their prime, Herotitus is an oasis of sensual pleasures, which are supported by heavy trade tariffs and duties. Though occupied more than once in its history, Herotitus has remained untouched by the ravages of time and Inner Sphere conflicts. Meanwhile, the popular adage is still true: "On Herotitus, anything goes, and usually does."

World Name: Herotitus
Star Type: G3IV
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 8.52 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Political Ruler: Gabriel Fur' Seng-Gang, President of the Council of Herotitus Libertines
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Maxwell Klanis
Population: 240,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 20%, Reptile
Description:

Herotitus lies athwart the trade routes of the Magistracy of Canopus and the Taurian Concordat. Prior to the Reunification War, both governments organized a joint settlement there in a rare example of mutual development. Left largely to themselves, the inhabitants developed a stable agricultural community until philosophical dissidents from the Taurian Concordat arrived in 2997. These New Hedons conquered the planet, which quickly became a mirror image of Canopian pleasure planets. Though contested by the Magistracy, the Concordat, and the Capellan Confederation, the planet remains mostly untouched by the ravages of the Succession Wars. None wish to destroy one of the few remaining centers of pleasure left in the Periphery.

TURN OF A FRIENDLY CARD

Shen Fanin (the name being a corruption of an ancient Terran phrase meaning "Ourselves Alone") can best be described as a combination of elements from various old Terran games of chance, principally baccarat and poker. Each player stakes the house a standard ante and receives two cards facedown. The object of the game is to obtain a matching set of cards, with the highest two-of-a-kind being the winning hand. Once the initial cards have been dealt, running clockwise from the bank, each player has the option of standing pat or asking for an additional card, discarding one in the process. Doing so required the player to deposit an extra Ducat with the bank (the Heroditans firmly believe in getting their share). A person might conceivably get a pair in his hand only to break up his pair in the hopes of acquiring a higher pair later, depending on whether he has enough money and enough time.

Once all the players have what they think is a winning hand, the real bidding among the players themselves begins. (The bank has already "gotten theirs.") In the end, one player after another will fold as the bidding increases until only two remain. At that point, one or the other either bluffs his way to victory or ends up calling his opponent's bluff, when the cards are revealed and the higher pair wins. In the event that both players have an equal set of pairs, each draw one card from the bank, another round of bidding and counter-bidding develops, and the higher card drawn eventually wins the hand. Among the denizens of the Silver Spike, Shen Fanin is one of the more popular Herotitan games of chance and the reason I had traveled 17 parsecs to play.

...The first few hands that evening were fairly evenly dispersed among the players assembled. A Davion merchant from New Syrtis took the first two followed by a slant-eyed Capellan mercenary with a thick nose, and two more for yours truly. After the next five rounds, during which I managed to hold my own, the Capellan found the game too rich for his blood and bowed out. In place of the Capellan with the thick nose, a Heroditan noblewoman took the vacant chair, with her arrival punctuated by the swirl of semi-transparent silks and a heavy pheromone-based perfume. The Lady Andracor presented the bank with a handful of crisp, new 1,000 Ducat notes, exchanging them for the proper triangular betting chips. I caught the eye of my Davion counterpart, who merely shrugged at the ostentatious show of old wealth, and the game resumed.

...In the space of two hours time, it became clear that the Lady Andracor possessed remarkable gamesmanship as well as personal charms. (Don't let anyone tell you that perfume doesn't work!) At the end of the third hour, our Davion pigeon, thoroughly plucked clean, packed his proverbial bags and left for parts unknown. The Lady motioned to the dealer, indicating that she desired no further parties at our table. Much to my surprise, the House assented. A smile crossed her lips as the Lady watched our table being quietly roped off from the gathering crowd. So, it was to be just the two of us, a duel to the death. Well, I had come to Heroditus for a challenge...

...The challenge almost turned out to be more than I had bargained for. In the first half hour, through exquisite bluffing and tactical combinations that astounded me, the Lady with the luscious lips had won half my profits acquired in the last three days of play. Ah, but then, the turn of a friendly card marked what would eventually be my renaissance as slowly, hand by hand, I managed not only to break even but to make savage assaults against the Lady's winnings (which by this time was not the only thing I wanted to assault, savagely or otherwise)...

...It was three in the morning and looked as though a final hand would determine whether I could manage to wipe out my chesty combatant once and for all. No less than 23 separate bids followed raises, only to be followed by counter-raises. Over 12,000 Heroditan Ducats lay on the table. The Lady Lovely Hips saw my last thousand-Ducat raise and called. With a deft flip of the hand, I turned over my two aces, only to see my raven-haired beauty turn over her two aces as well!

As the dealer gave us each one more card, face down, I pondered what a fine predicament I'd gotten myself into and what finely shaped legs the Lady had. Turning over my card, a knave of diamonds grinned back at me. Good, but not an automatic kill. So, I'd have to bet my way to this pot...

"I'll raise you 5,000 Ducats..."

"The gentlemen must know I have no more cash on hand...The game is yours, then, and much is the pity because I know I have the winning card. Thank you for..."

"Now, wait a minute. I don't think you DO have that card, and to prove it, I'll stake you the five thousand you need. How 'bout it?"

"All right. But only under one condition. If I win, you get your five thousand back, I get the table stakes, and you agree not to play against me again. You see, you're a little too good for my liking."

"And if you lose?"

"Why, then you can have me for the evening and we call it even in the morning..."

"Either way, I can't lose," I said, flipping my cards over. "Beat that!"

The Lady Andracor looked at my smiling knave and smiled back in return. Taking her third card in hand, she looked at it one last time and proceeded to turn it face up—only to stop in mid-movement, and after scant moment's hesitation, deposited it inside her abundant silk cleavage.

"What say we adjourn to a more fitting location and discover the extent of your winnings...Hhhm?"

Postscript: Dear Mom and Dad, having a wonderful time, glad you're not here.

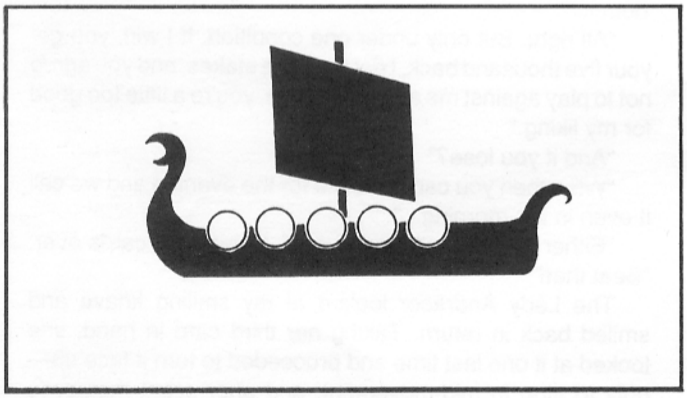
—From *Betting on Borrowed Time*, Herotitus Tri-Video Film Productions, 3019

ILLYRIAN PALATINATE

The Illyrian Palatinate is a collection of four worlds lying between the Circinus Federation and the Lothian League. Ruled by an oligarchy of rich trading families, the Palatinate survives through modest trade with the Free Worlds League, primarily in iron ore and processed steel. The Scandinavian descendants of the original 24th-century colonists maintain a precarious hold on their star systems against continued depredations by the Circinus Federation. At present, their military consists of a miniscule trading fleet and several companies of BattleMechs, mostly mercenaries and officers who have fled the Inner Sphere for one reason or another. Supplementing the Palatinate's revenues are large sums of cash earned from staging annual MechWarrior games, in which contestants battle to the death for salvaged BattleMechs and spare parts.

World Name: Illyria
Star Type: G4V
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 7.98 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Political Ruler: Various family leaders
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Adrien Clothos
Population: 190,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 15%, Mammal
Description:

The center of the Illyrian Palantinate, Illyria supports a small shipbuilding center on its southern continent. The population, largely individuals of Scandinavian ancestry, spend much of their time scavenging for stores of Star League equipment thought to be on the planet. To date, some modest amounts of equipment have been recovered, and there is evidence that Illyria may once have hosted a Star League 'Mech repair facility. Reports of stashes of servicable BattleMechs along the northern territories remain unsupported, however.



TO SERVE AND PROTECT AND MAKE A PROFIT ON THE SIDE

Militiaman Fenton Harcord Dastrell sat atop his *Cicada* 'Mech watching as the crowds of midday merchants and shoppers filed pass the crowded archways of the central marketplace. Dangling his feet over the edge of his open hatch and munching contentedly on his saya-sandwich, Militiaman Dastrell mused silently to himself on his good fortune of drawing traffic control duty that morning.

"Officer! Officer! Please come quickly!"

"Hallo...who calls officer Dastrell?"

"Officer, please come quickly! A beer lorry has just collided with a passenger bus in the next block. I fear there are injured among the victims."

"In a minute."

"What did you say?"

"I said, in a minute. Can't you understand the common tongue?"

"But...but...there are injured civilians in need of aid."

"And I'm on my lunch break. And besides, you're not sure there are injuries. You only said you feared there *might* be injuries."

"Well, I don't know for certain that there are injuries, but their might be. Please, we need your machine to move the bus off several citizens trapped underneath."

"It'll cost 'ya."

"Say what?"

"It'll cost you if I have to work extra duty. It specifically states in the Revised Militiaman's Code, as of 3022, chapter V, section 45656—and I quote—'No officer shall be expected to perform services above and beyond normal duties expected of established position or job descriptions, unless said officer is duly compensated in kind for said services rated.'"

"So what exactly does all that mean?"

"It means my fee is 50C an hour..."

That's outrageous!"

"Hey! I'm giving you the Good Citizen Discount!"

"All right, all right. I'll pay it. I'll pay it. Just get your bloody 'Mech over there on Constance Way and give us a hand."

"Hold on a second. I said *my* fee is 50C an hour. If you want to use my 'Mech, too, that'll be an extra 50C an hour."

"What! But you just said..."

"The revised militiaman's code, as of 3022, chapter VI, section 45909, paragraph 489, specifically states that—and I quote—'The rental of official police or civil governments property under conditions not explicitly implied by existing contracts shall not be undertaken...'"

"All right."

"'... unless arrangements for the rental of such equipment be made in advance with the governing official responsible for said machinery.'"

"All right. All right already. I'll pay it. I'll pay it. Just get moving."

Pocketing his 100C in crisp new bills, Militiaman Fenton Harcord Dastrell reflected that he was very lucky to have pulled traffic control today. Even after deducting the 25C he would have to pay Jurias Kincaid for the use of his lorry, it was still a very lucky day after all...very lucky, indeed.

—From "Around the Town," syndicated column by Carlos Winfield in *The Illyria Press-Challenger,* April 16, 3018

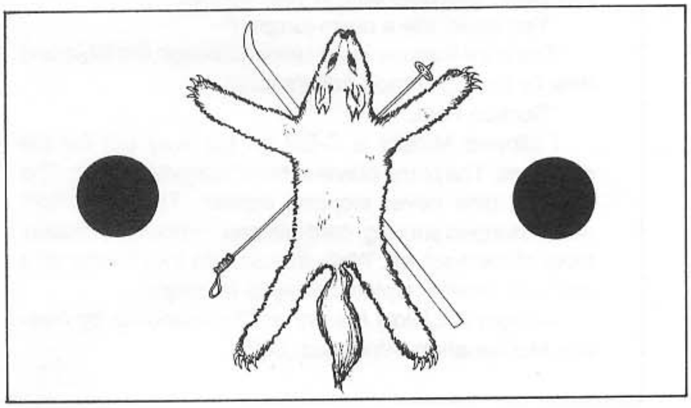
THE LOTHIAN LEAGUE

The Lothian League is a collection of seven ice-and-snow planets located beyond the outer reaches of the Lyran Commonwealth. The League ruler is Dame Lorelei Logan, "the Ice Maiden" and the direct descendant of Angelina Logan (leader of a group of patriots from the Taurian Concordat who fled into deep space to avoid capture by the Star League). Settled in 2691, Lothario, the capital of the Lothian League, was discovered to be rich in metals. In the last century, these have been used to foster expansion deeper into the Periphery to form a confederation, with the Logan family at its head.

The only serious threat to the League's existence came in 2933, when renegade mercenaries from units shattered in the latest round of Succession War fighting stumbled upon the League quite by accident. For four years, both sides conducted a series of raids and counter-raids until, at long last, the mercenaries left to seek easier prey elsewhere. These actions cost the League its few JumpShips and damaged what little industry on Lothario had managed to emerge over the last three centuries. This destruction forced the ruling Logan family to renew trade ties with other planets of the Periphery in a desperate effort to avoid economic ruin. In the last century, the League has become a principal supplier of copper and iron ores to the Magistracy and the Taurian Concordat, receiving in turn agricultural and mining equipment to sustain its fragile existence.

Though on good terms with her Illyrian and Circinian counterparts, the Ice Maiden wants little to do with the Houses of the Inner Sphere. She has limited contact with the Inner Sphere to contract with small mercenary bands to defend League worlds against raids from the Marion Hegemony. At present, the Lothian League has two mercenary battalions within its territories, though the identity and quality of these units are unknown.

The typical Lothian citizen is a rugged individualist who wants little to do with the universe at large. As long as he and his family can eke out a marginal living, he is content to let the rest of the universe pound itself to dust. Literacy and technology levels are low, but the average standard of living is surprisingly adequate. The Lothian League remains an archetypical example of the old adage: *Let sleeping dogs lie.*



World Name: Lothario
Star Type: M3III
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 2.69 days
Recharging Station: None
Noble Ruler: Lorelei Logan, Grand Mistress of the Lothian League
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 2,020,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 20%, Mammal
Description:

The capital of the seven-member Lothian League, Lothario is typical of the other worlds of the League. This small world has a thin atmosphere and is perpetually covered in ice and snow, with only marginal zones of habitation centered upon the planet's equator. A rather beautiful world, it is known for its spectacular aurora arising from the frequently intense solar winds of its parent sun.

Lothario exports large quantities of furs, iron, and copper ores to worlds within the Magistracy and Taurian Concordat. Indeed, its trapping industry has created impressive revenues as demand for the rich pelts has grown in the last century. Most of the planet's inhabitants exist in subterranean conclaves, though a few hardy souls continue to scrape out sustenance on the planet's surface, fiercely defending their small agricultural plots. The average Lotharian is highly territorial and suspicious of any off-worlder.

WE'RE LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD SKIERS
Position Available
The Lothian League

Due to a recent expansion of our mining operations in the North polar cap area, a position has become available for an experienced physician to act as Circuit Medical Administrator for our North Polar Slope Region. Interested applicants should possess basic surgical and pathology skills as well as general skills consistent with an advanced internship or general appointee. Prior service as a resident physician or general pratictioner is desirable but not a must. Applicant must also possess a great love of the outdoors, must be comfortable with winter climates, and be able to ski. The demonstrated ability to work over a long period of time without supervision from superiors is a must.

Salary is commensurate with experience and past job performance. Salary range 15–22KC annual, plus transportation reimbursement, free parka and assorted winter clothing, skis, and relocation adjustment at the termination of contract. Contract for a two-year period, with option to renew, if desired.

Interested parties reply by sending FAX SHEET and professional certification records to your nearest ComStar Administrator's Office. Replies addressed to CSFX #453-900-ASAS. All responses will be read in confidence.

—Advertisement in the *Regulan Morning Herald,* Regulus, April 26, 3022

THE MICA MAJORITY

The Mica Majority consists of three mineral-rich worlds located near the Delos IV star system between the Federated Suns and the Outworlds Alliance. Known for their extensive deposits of gold, uranium, and other precious minerals, Mica II, V, and VII each have a harsh arctic climate that makes mining operations costly. With only the thinnest of atmospheres, the Micanites must live in pressurized dome-towns, similar to the raucous Yukon-Klondike towns of Terran North America. Miners, drifters, bartenders, and assorted ne'er-do-wells vie with one another to cash in on newfound wealth (or at least live long enough to spend some of it).

Ore from the mining fields is collected at central distribution points and shipped out to the system's Jump Point every summer when scores of merchants from the Federated Suns and the Outworlds Alliance arrive to trade with the Micanites. For several weeks and even months, thousands of miners compete against, barter with, steal from, drink with, lie to, wench with, gamble with, win from, and lose to merchants and other miners aboard the Micanite Space Center (built in the waning days of the Star League). Thus do the neighboring systems of the Federated Suns and the Outworlds Alliance gain badly needed resources at one-tenth the price asked by Inner Sphere mining concerns. For their part, the miners receive machinery and modern conveniences, clothing and chemicals, brandies and brides, all of which they need to continue their precarious existence. Given time, a more stabilized form of economic exchange may develop. For the time being, however, both sides are satisfied with the present arrangement.

World Names: Mica II, V, VII
Star Type: K3V
Positions in System: 2, 5, 7
Times to Jump Point: 4.3 days, 4.6 days, 5.1 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Political Ruler: Various Dome Directors
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Hurlock Jamis
Population: Mica II, 45,000; Mica V, 255,000; Mica VII, 38,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 10%, Mammal
Descriptions:

The worlds of the Micanos star system are drab and barren wastelands perpetually covered with ice and snow and ravaged by fierce solar winds and occasional meteor showers. In such conditions, life is possible only under pressurized domes, which dot the mineral-rich Micanite worlds. These domes, varying from eight to twenty per planet, are a legacy of the Star League at its technological finest. The first Micanite settlers were involuntary laborers forcibly transferred there for their political opposition to the Kurita regime. Many did not even have the most elementary knowledge of geology or mining techniques, and most died within the first decade.

Located near the system's zenith jump point is a huge orbital complex constructed in the late 2600s when the vast resources of the system became known. With only brief interruptions during the Succession Wars, large-scale barter and trade between the descendants of the original Micanite laborers and the Inner Sphere have remained intact.

FRIDAY NIGHT AT BLACK MINSKY'S

It was Friday night at Black Minsky's, which was to say that the prospectors were in from the fields, the assay office had finally closed down for the day, the booze and beer were already flowing, and more than one stiff-necked rabble-rouser was either whooping it up or deep in his cups by the time I arrived on the scene. Parking the dog sleigh near the general store, I dodged a flying patron as I walked, then palmed the thermal release that opened the magna-seal doors to Minsky's interior. (Minsky detested deadbeats.) The glowing light of the interior revealed a bevy of beauties doing a time honored can-can to the beat of pounding feet and weary piano keys. I searched the tables, lifting snoring heads and stepping over prostrate bodies until I found the man I was looking for.

"Amos, Amos wake up."

"I'm not going to wake up until you promise to stop breathing so loud."

"Still alive, I see, despite all your best efforts to defy the laws of nature."

"Spare me, You know my liver sued for separate support years ago. What's up? And please stop rocking the floor."

"The word is out that you've had a run of good luck lately, Amos. By the way your eyes are refusing to focus and by the dent in that there bottle, I'd say the word was pretty spot on this time..."

"Well, you know how it is, Gregori. S'person's luck gotta change sooner or later."

"Yes, but with you, Amos, when your luck turns good, it usually means someone else's has gone plumb bad. So, been up to the North Ridge lately?"

"Now, why would I be a traipsin' all the way up there?"

"Because Leo the Longfoot was up there last week and word has it he found himself a new vein."

"So what has that to do with me?"

"Simple. Leo dissappears and two days later you reappear, with gold dust in your pocket."

"You callin' me a claim jumper!"

The blast from my laser seared through the table and directly through Amos Adler's torso.

"Reckon I am."

I slipped Minsky a C-Bill on the way out for the damages. The piano players never stopped playing. The can-can girls never stopped dancin'. The spectators never stopped snoring, card-playing', catcallin' or makin' fools of themselves. Well, why should they? After all it was just another typical Friday at Minsky's...

—From *A Child's History of Claimjumping,* by Atropos McClanahan, Alpheratz, 3021

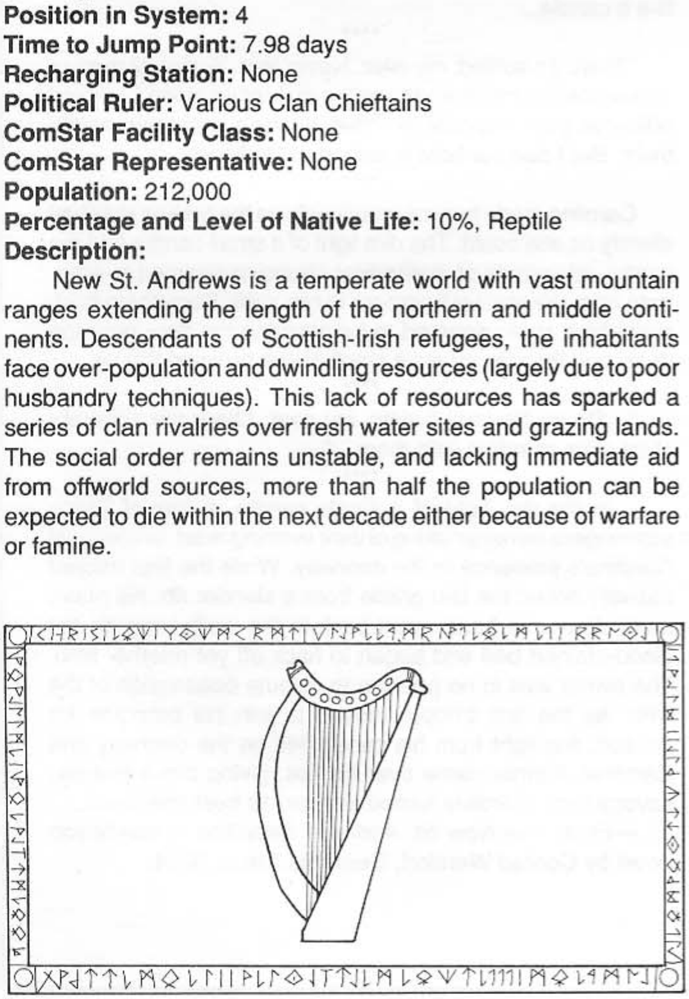
NEW ST. ANDREWS

A world of highland clans and Gaelic traditions, New St. Andrews hosts the remnants of the old Stewart Confederacy, which was conquered by the Free Worlds League. After fleeing the wrath of the Captain-General, the refugees were admitted into the Rim Worlds Republic. After fleeing the onslaught of General Kerensky's forces during the Amaris crisis, the survivors of the Brannigan, MacGregor, Sterling, and Stewart families withdrew to this remote world lying near the Circinus Federation. There, they licked their wounds and increased their numbers while the rest of the galaxy forgot that they had ever existed. In the years since New St. Andrews has been settled, the inhabitants have populated more than half the planet. Today, more than 120,000 people maintain an agrarian economy based on sheep-raising and horse-breeding.

Increased population pressures, political differences, and a scarcity of natural resources have combined to split the band of settlers. In the last century, there have been a series of limited but destructive border wars among the rival clans. With little technology to support them and only rare visits from wayward merchants to remind them of worlds beyond, the highlanders of New St. Andrews may one day descend into barbarity. If substantial contacts with these hearty mountaineers can be reestablished, however, the clans may develop a viable culture capable of adding social stability to the region.

World Name: New St. Andrews
Star Type: G4V
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 7.98 days
Recharging Station: None
Political Ruler: Various Clan Chieftains
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 212,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 10%, Reptile
Description:

New St. Andrews is a temperate world with vast mountain ranges extending the length of the northern and middle continents. Descendants of Scottish-Irish refugees, the inhabitants face over-population and dwindling resources (largely due to poor husbandry techniques). This lack of resources has sparked a series of clan rivalries over fresh water sites and grazing lands. The social order remains unstable, and lacking immediate aid from offworld sources, more than half the population can be expected to die within the next decade either because of warfare or famine.



POINTS OF VIEW

...The ballroom was flooded with the blaze of a thousand lights reflecting off the sheen of hundreds of medals and special orders worn by the multitude of high-ranking officers assembled. By 1900 hours, the party was already in full swing and many of the lords and ladies present were already well into their cups...

****

...Lance Corporal Caroline Vox emptied the contents of her third magazine into the charging bodies, temporarily stemming the tide sweeping toward her. The situation was all too apparently hopeless. From all indications, Caroline was the sole survivor of her platoon, Harvey and Clarissa having bought the farm in the last rebel assault wave. The time to move was now, move while you still could, move before the next wave came up and turned her into dog food in this stinking, death-filled trench...

****

"Is this your first campaign against these Periphery rebels, general?"

"Hardly, your ladyship. Actually, it's my sixth, each past campaign a smashing success, each one involving more responsibility than the last. Would you care for more wine, M'Lady?"

"Yes, thank you. Tell me, general, exactly where are the rebels now?"

"Oh, I would say approximately 20 kilometers from this command site. We keep constant tabs on them, but they are a cowardly lot. They don't like to show themselves in the open too often, so we have to go out and root them out, as it were, as it were...Truffles my dear..."

****

...The rain was beginning to fall again as Caroline edged her way slowly out of the trench for the last time. In the distance, obscured by the smoke and the onset of night, the unmistakable sounds of heavy BattleMechs could be heard, the vibrations from their footfalls barely muffled through the muddy landscape... There was little thought of trying to hold on now...where was the damned artillery they'd promised...? where was the bloody air support...?

****

"Of course, there is no doubt of our eventual victory, you understand, M'Lady. We have the superior manpower, the superior weaponry...

"—GOOD EVENING, COLONEL. WE STILL ON FOR CARDS TOMORROW AFTERNOON? SEE YOU THERE—Our troops receive the finest training in the Inner Sphere, which the rebel farmers cannot hope to match..."

****

(continued on page 138)

POINTS OF VIEW (CONT.)

In the gathering gloom of night, Caroline stumbled and fell for the umteenth time...Trying to right herself yet again, she found her left leg had gotten tangled in the discarded cable from a wire-guided missile spent long ago. The sounds of the approaching rebel 'Mechs were closer now. She could see the barest glint of moonlight reflecting off a *Marauder* heading straight for where she lay…

****

"How is it then, general, that the rebels have not been dispersed by this time? One would think that any sane person would have given up by now…"

"Why my dear—and may I say that is a lovely dress you're wearing this evening—you have hit on it. Right on the nose, as it were. The rebels are not sane. They're fanatics. Why, by all rules of civilized warfare, they should have surrendered ages ago…"

****

Caroline's screams were drowned out by the roar of rebel particle cannon scant meters from where she lay. With a last bit of strength born of desperation, Caroline managed to free herself, rolling to the left seconds before the lead 'Mech would have crushed her underfoot. Scrambling to her right, as far away from the approaching death machines as she could hobble, Caroline made for the direction of Locarno, a village in ruins, long since taken and retaken time and again. Pausing in a shellhole to catch her breath, she wished, not for the first time, that she'd had the chance to eat something that day, or the day before, or the day before that…

****

"…Do try these Prosperina melons, my dear. They're simply exquisite. Yes, any civilized people would have abandoned their lost cause ages ago. The best they can hope to do is to raid our supply lines and harass us with their desperate measures. But, never fear. Our troops remain undaunted. Where a Draconian plants his foot, there he stays…"

****

Caroline ran like a frightened rabbit for all she was worth. Auto weapons fire picked up again as she dashed for the nearest house.

At least, the rubble and broken concrete would make a 'Mech's task of digging her out more difficult if they wanted to come after her. Mortar rounds! They were targeting the village again, churning up the broken bricks and broken bodies littering the streets. Caroline looked around her, discovered she was pressed against the remains of what was once a two-story home. On the north side of the house, she saw a gaping hole large enough for her to squeeze through. Any port in the storm…

****

"The secret of our success must inevitably lie, however, in our superior communications, you understand. Why, we can concentrate our forces, control the operational direction, and maintain the flow of men and materiel all from this central command center, secure from any possibility, however remote, of interference from the enemy…"

"That may be so, general, but I do confess that I find the thought of rebels breaking in here, into my quarters, at night, with me all alone, quite, quite frightening."

"There is no need for that, my dear, but if you are indeed frightened, then it is my duty to protect you from whatever fears, real or imaginary, you might have...Should you wish to avail yourself of my protection for the evening…"

****

At first, Caroline thought she was alone in the burned-out house, but after a bit, there came sounds, as of someone chopping wood. Scavengers perhaps? Draconians like herself, come to salvage some firewood from the teak paneling that still remained in the place? Perhaps there was someone who could help her, someone who could provide her with some spare bandages for her wounds…upstairs, a light, dim, like a candle…

****

"Then, it's settled, my dear. Never fear. You shall receive all due consideration and have the skills of a trained Combine officer at your disposal for however long you shall require them. But I see our host is calling us to dinner…"

****

Caroline made her way cautiously up the broken stairs as silently as she could. The dim light of a small candle and the continued sounds of methodical chopping seemed to emanate from the master bedroom to her right. Something fluid, something sticky seemed to be covering the floor near the door, and the strong, stale smell of salt hung on the air.

****

"…Do try the veal cutlets, my dear. I hear the admiral's chief does wonders with them…"

****

…In the dim light of a single candle, a pair of Draco scavengers were partaking of their evening meal, unaware of Caroline's presence in the doorway. While the first trooper casually licked the last gristle from a slender rib, his mate, meat-cleaver in hand, went back to the body lying on the blood-stained bed and began to hack off yet another limb. The owner was in no position to dispute possession of the limb. As the first trooper moved to join his comrade for dessert, the light from his candle fell on the doorway and Caroline. A smile came over his lips, giving him a beastly, savage look. Caroline turned and ran as best she could...

—From *The New St. Andrews Rebellion*, a non-fiction novel by Conrad Wendorf, Cerberus Press, 3004.

NIOPS ASSOCIATION

The Niops Association consists of three worlds lying between the Circinus Federation and the Marian Hegemony. In mid-2700, Star League scientific research teams settled these planets to observe stellar evolution, but they became cut off from the Inner Sphere at the start of the Civil War. Contact was later renewed when refugees from the Capellan Confederation arrived at the close of the First Succession War. The tales of mass destruction and loss of life convinced the locals that they would be better off forgotten by the galaxy. While the scientific community on the planet continued their elaborate research, the Capellan newcomers were gradually absorbed into the social order as skilled laborers and agricultural specialists.

As the descendants of the science teams became increasingly influential over the semi-skilled laborers and farm hands, a scientific technocracy developed in the Niops planets. Gradually, the majority of the planets' populace bartered away their freedoms in exchange for guarantees of economic survival and education for their children. This last element became a powerful weapon, as the ruling elite saw education as a way to keep the masses in check.

With Star League technology at their disposal, the technocrats have developed a "Master Purpose" that has grown to semi-religious proportions. Maintaining a cold-blooded aristocracy, the privileged elite are loyal only to themselves and their own petty desires.

World Name: Niops VII
Star Type: M5V
Position in System: 7
Time to Jump Point: 2.44 days
Recharging Station: None
Political Ruler: High Associator Brandex Da-Ri
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 13,245,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 30%, Fish
Description:

The capital of the Niops Association is a cold, temperate planet with abundant aquatic life and fresh water sources. Like its companion planets, Niops V and VI, Niops VII was settled so that scientists could establish the first generations-long examination of a failing star. Isolated by the events of the Civil War and later the Succession Wars, the Niops community polarized into a elite scientific minority and a dependent unskilled labor force made up of refugees from the Inner Sphere. With plenty of geothermal energy and fusion technologies at their disposal, the ruling elite provide comfortable standards of living for their multitudes of "retainers," but at the price of complete submission to their wills and their desires.

LET'S CUT A DEAL

GOOD EVENING, ladies and gentlepersons, and welcome to another exciting evening of Let's Cut a Deal, the show that offers you a way of ending your troubles, boosting your personal riches, promises quality education for your children, and gives you something constructive to do during your non-working hours besides sleeping like the dead. Can we have the first contestant please?... Good evening, sir, and what is your name, please?

...Horace Quimberly 45789.

That's an excellent number, Horace. Now tell me, what do you do for a living?

...I'm a sludge mover, Alpha Level, Dock 4589.

What a noble profession. Now then, Horace, I assume you're familiar with how the game works. Pick a card please...Oh goodie, you selected Popular People and Places. What a lucky choice. If you'll just take a seat in the grounded punishment chair, sir, we'll begin...Now then, for your first question. For 100 volts, Horace, what is the name of the southern capital of the Magistracy of Canopus's largest colony world founded after 3010?

...Canopus who?

Oh, I'm sorry, Horace, that is not correct. That will be 100 volts, please...

...Arrrghhh!

Right! Now then, Horace, isn't this fun! You don't look too bad for your first encounter of the strange kind. And now for your second question. For 500 volts, what is the name of Capellan Confederation Chancellor Maximilian Liao's third cousin, twice removed, on his mother's side, who once had an illegitimate child by a Davion arms merchant in 3017?

...I don't wanna' play any....AURRGGHHH!!!

That's a good man...there, there, old man. I say, you're holding up rather well. Isn't he holding up rather well, ladies and gentlepersons? A little singed around the edges but otherwise in good shape for a man who's just had 500 volts shoot through him...And now for your third and final question...What was the name of the southernmost state of the ancient Terran political union known as the United States of America at the close of the 20th century...

...Ah,why I...

HA-WA-II! That is correct! Oh, we do have an intelligent player with us tonight, ladies and gentlepersons...

...Can I go home now...?

...A veritable encyclopedia of information at his greasy fingertips...As you know, ladies and gentlepersons, Horace decided at the close of our program last evening to select a year's worth of elementary eduction for his oldest daughter as his prize. In accordance with our standing policy, this prize will be awarded to Horace's daughter, Gertrude, at her fifth birthday party next July...However, Horace did not answer all three questions correctly and so must step up and spin our Wheel of Misfortune...BUT FIRST A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR!

—From Recorded Tri-Video Taping of *Let's Cut A Deal*, program aired December 13, 3025, Niops Association Channel One

PORT KRIN

Once a prosperous trade world located between the Outworlds Alliance and the Draconis Combine, Antallos has been sacked repeatedly during the Succession Wars for its depots of Star League technologies. The inhabitants of the planet have reverted to semi-barbarism, with Nomadic and Asian tribes holding sway on the planet's surface. Among these, the rulers of Port Krin, the planet's largest trading center, have imposed a social structure based on male domination and the widespread use of slaves.

Though much of the planet has been looted, there still exist largely unexplored pockets where Star League technology may still exist. Because roving bands of bandits control these areas, attempts to verify the existence of such technologies remain unsuccessful.

In recent months, the ruler of Port Krin, Controller Aden Vorax, has been negotiating with Draconis Combine officials for the acquisition of several large BattleMechs in exchange for the right to excavate possible sites of Star League depots. If such an arrangement develops, Port Krin could become the dominant political state on the planet, and the Combine could gain immeasurable scientific advantages.

World Name: Antallos
Star Type: K4IV
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 4.34 days
Recharging Station: None
Political Ruler: Various city-state rulers
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Hadrian Long
Population: 1,800,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 20%, Avian
Description:

Settled in 2674, Antallos suffered repeated sacking by Kurita and various bandit forces. In the late 2800s, after several particularly savage Kurita raids destroyed over half of the population, the social structure of the planet fragmented into a collection of city-states, each advocating its own sociopolitical systems. During the last century, one of these city-states, Port Krin, rose to prominence through the use of slaves in its military forces. Over the years, they have transformed this economic system into a political system based on male dominance. Its viability depends on the fortunes of the Port Krin slavers, military tacticians, and their offworld dealings with House Kurita.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC AUCTION TO BE HELD ON THE ESTATES OF SIMON BARTHOLOMEW EROP
BE IT KNOWN:

That at 1200 hours on the morning of Tuesday next a public auction for the purpose of selling 17 slaves from the estates of His Right Honorable Lord Bartholomew Erop, will be held in selection arena 12 next to Jasmine Way. Among the slaves to be offered at this public selection are the following special attractions:

ITEM LOT #8923

Female. Name, Karintha, Age 29. Domesticated serving girl with extensive kitchen and scullery experience. Housebroken, obedient, and thoroughly submissive. Prior service, seven years. No demerits in outstanding work record. Price: 34,000 C.

ITEM LOT # 8945

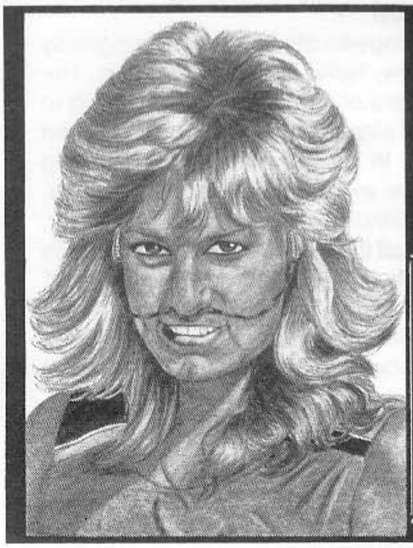
Male. Name, Oscar, Age 45. A skilled teacher of the musical arts, accomplished in seven different forms of musical expression, is literate and good with small children. Can be employed as a tutor for a noble's family or as an entertainer at small gatherings. No demerits in outstanding work record. Prior service, 16 years. Price: 45,000 C.

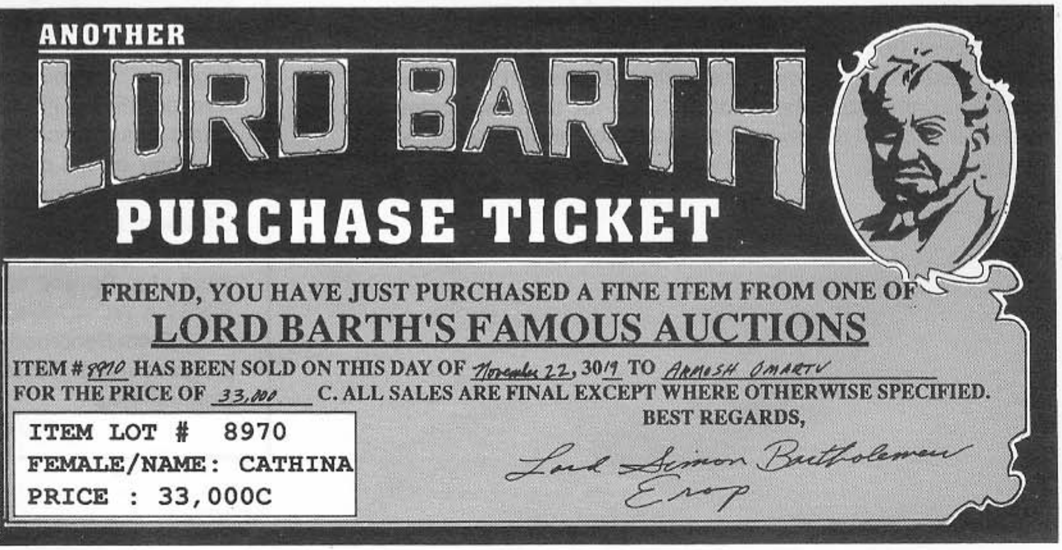
ITEM LOT # 8967

Female Twins. Names, Lorana and Firimila, Age 32. Exotic dancers and domesticated serving girls. This matched set of twins will be sold as a package lot. Each has served in the Erop household since birth. Some minor demerits and records of floggings in outstanding work record but fully amenable to discipline. Price: 67,000 C.

Interested parties should assemble at the appropriate selection arena. A pre-sale display of all goods slated for purchase to begin at 1130 hours. Cash or Krin Kredit Kards accepted.

—Handbill posted in Port Krin, November 28, 3021, ComStar Archives





ANOTHER

LORD BARTH

PURCHASE TICKET

FRIEND, YOU HAVE JUST PURCHASED A FINE ITEM FROM ONE OF

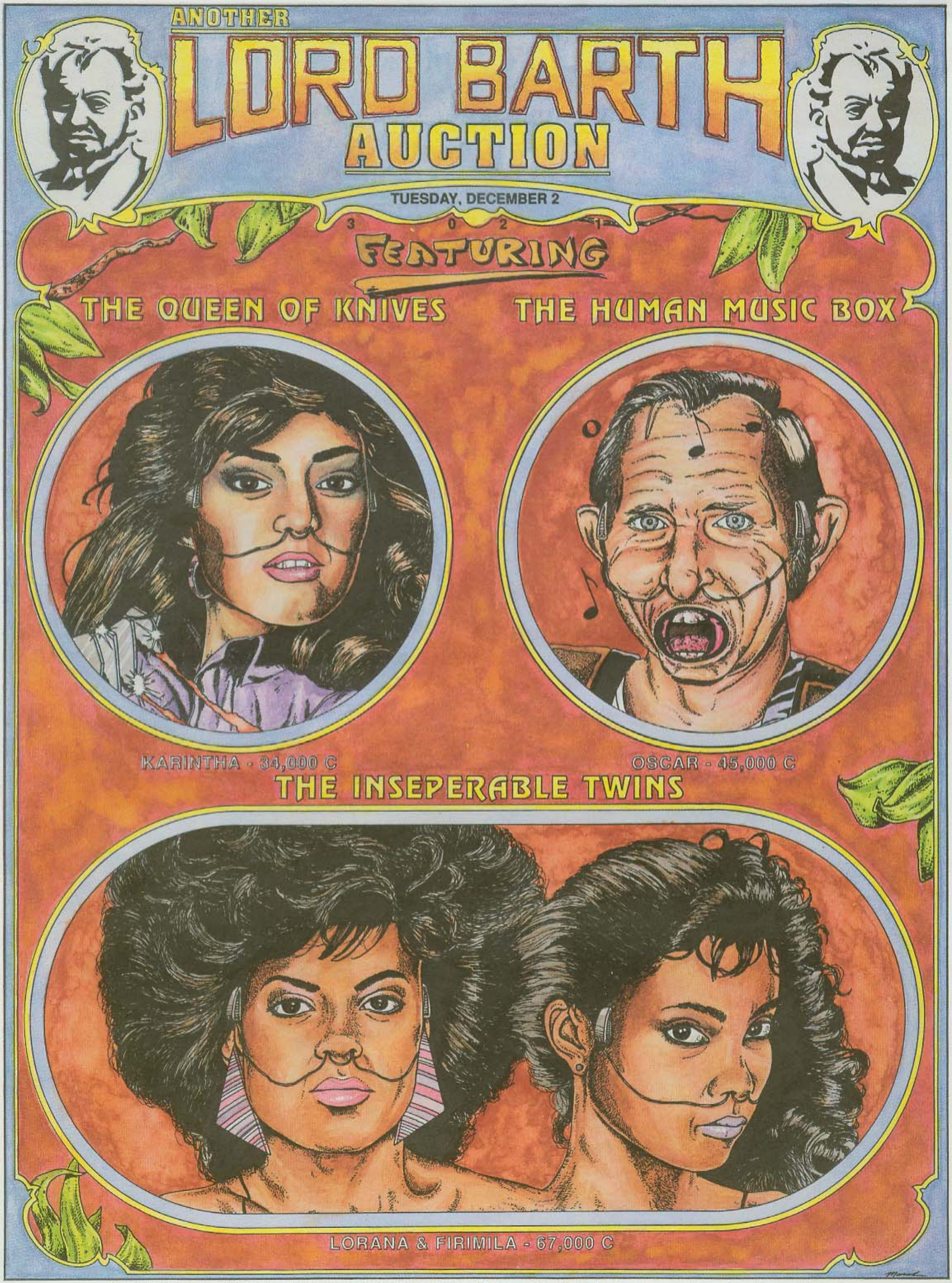
LORD BARTH'S FAMOUS AUCTIONS

ITEM # 8970 HAS BEEN SOLD ON THIS DAY OF November 22, 3019 TO ARMOSH OMARTV
FOR THE PRICE OF 33,000 C. ALL SALES ARE FINAL EXCEPT WHERE OTHERWISE SPECIFIED.

BEST REGARDS,

Lord Simon Bartholomew Erop

ITEM LOT # 8970
FEMALE/NAME: CATHINA
PRICE : 33,000C


ANOTHER
LORD BARTH
AUCTION
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2
3 0 2 1
FEATURING
THE QUEEN OF KNIVES
THE HUMAN MUSIC BOX
KARINTHA - 34,000 C
OSCAR - 45,000 C
THE INSEPERABLE TWINS
LORANA & FIRIMILA - 67,000 C

Exaggerated posters like the one above are displayed throughout the city to draw a larger buying audience.

THE BANDIT KINGDOMS

When people think of the Periphery, the thought that immediately comes to mind is that of bandits, modern-day pirates preying on the vital trade that is the life-blood of the Inner Sphere. Though most information on these spacefaring brigands is based largely on hearsay and rumor, the various Bandit Kingdoms have a well-deserved reputation for slaughter and rapine. Born of the conflicts of the Amaris Civil War and the Succession Wars, the Bandit Kingdoms consist of desperate men and women who, in their own rapacious manner, attempt to survive as best they can.

Following is a summary of verifiable information concerning these desperate peoples. With the exception of the Circinus Federation and the Oberon Confederation, little formal contact between ComStar and the Bandit Kingdoms has been possible for several centuries. What follows, therefore, is the result of numerous independent investigations, many of which have ended in tragedy. Information on specific worlds, individual leaders, and selected military units is provided, though the dangerous nature of these investigations has left some areas of inquiry incomplete.

BELT PIRATES

Location: Outward of the Draconis Combine, near Santander's World
Number of Worlds: One
Current Ruler: Morgan Fletcher
Military Strength: 1 Battalion
Technology Level: Good
Literacy Level: Fair

After the end of the Reunification War, refugees from the Rim Worlds Republic refused to lay down their arms against the Star League and decided to settle the Star's End system. Since then, the Pirates of Star's End have maintained a steady stream of scavenger raids against both the Lyran Commonwealth and the Draconis Combine. Eventually, piracy became a way of life that has been passed down through the generations. The inhabitants of Star's End are a prime example of a predatory culture restrained only by the availability of space-going vessels.

The Pirates of Star's End have not been above lending a hand to either the Lyran Commonwealth or the Draconis Combine in their frequent clashes in the Succession Wars. In each instance, however, pirate involvement was nominal and purchased at a high price in hard cash and equipment. This notwithstanding, the pirate bands lodging in the asteroid fields of the Star's End system have been known to break their contracts without warning when an employer presents the least sign of weakness.

These pirates have confined their activities to neighboring Jump Points with an eye toward capturing valuable machinery and spare parts for their vessels. The Star's End system contains several starship construction facilities fully capable of repairing and building new vessels at a modest annual rate. The present leader of the pirate coalition is Morgan Fletcher, a swarthy, swaggering woman whose actions are motivated as much by her hatred of men (especially those of the Inner Sphere) as from a genuine love of wealth.

UNWELCOME VISITORS

The unexpected thunder of multiple blasters ripped through the crowded church, shattering the Sunday morning quiet. Dozens died in the initial volley, never knowing the why or wherefore. Dozens more perished as they crawled from beneath shattered walls as a second and then a third volley shattered the foundations. Those stumbling, dazed parishoners who did manage to reach the outside were herded by black-clad troopers into a hastily-erected pen ringed with electrically charged cabling. There they remained while their captors began to loot Losantaville Prime with a vengeance under the waving skull and crossbones of the jolly roger...

They set us to work burying our dead. Under the circumstances, the best we could do was push the bodies into a shallow trench. There were just too many of them, and the pirates laughed to see bits and pieces of our wives and husbands, friends and lovers, sticking out of the muck and mire. One female hand in particular continued to poke stubbornly out of the dirt, pointing, swaying, even waving as it were, in the blasts from the gray 'Mech's heat exchangers. This singular bit of the macabre tickled the funny bones of the pirates in a morbid sort of way. While two of the bastards kept watch over us with lasers leveled, the rest made it a point of walking up to the grotesquely pointed arm to shake hands with the fair young damsel, while they made crude jokes and insults about the deceased. Some even began to do a mockery of a jig, holding the dead hand and prancing drunkenly around the upstretched arm to the merriment of their compatriots.

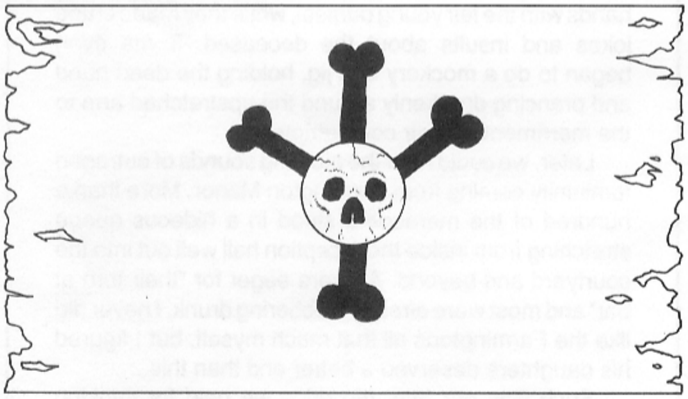
Later, we could hear the piercing sounds of outraged femininity coming from Farmington Manor. More than a hundred of the marauders stood in a hideous queue stretching from inside the reception hall well out into the courtyard and beyond. All were eager for "their turn at bat" and most were already slobbering drunk. I never did like the Farmingtons all that much myself, but I figured his daughters deserved a better end than this...

Such was our fate, the price we paid for thinking ourselves immune to predators. Such was our fate, the price for believing that peace was free for the asking.

—Martin Preston, *Memoirs of a Pirate Captive,* Longenrode Press, 3017

Name: Novo Cressidas
Start Type: M5V
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 2.44 days
Recharging Station: None
Political Ruler: Morgan Fletcher
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 30%, Mammal
Description:

Novo Cressidas is a barren, desolate world shielded by a ring of global asteroids and rocked by frequent ion storms that make orbital navigation hazardous. Because of its inconspicuous appearance and the danger in transiting the system, this small rock of a world was an ideal base for the collection of space marauders known as the Belt Pirates, under the command of Morgan Fletcher. Indeed, Novo Cressidas has proven to be a blessing in disguise to its owners. Beginning in the mid-2800s, massive deposits of germanium, which is essential to starship construction, were reported in locations under the planet's southern ice cap. In the decades since, there have been rumors of vast underground mining and industrial complexes that stretch from the polar cap to the equator, and that point to a major center of hyperdrive ship construction. Such rumors remain unconfirmed, however, because the inhospitable local terrain and the equally inhospitable pirates have maintained the strictest silence about whatever secrets Novo Cressidas may hide.



CIRCINUS FEDERATION

Location: Outside of the Periphery juncture of the Lyran Commonwealth and the Free Worlds League
Number of Worlds: Nine
Current Ruler: C. J. "Bob" McIntyre
Military Strength: 1 Regiment
Technology Level: Poor
Literacy Level: Fair

After being accused of contract violation against the Free Worlds League in 2770, the Black Warriors mercenary unit abandoned Marik space, narrowly escaping capture by the Free Worlds navy. Vowing eternal vengeance on House Marik for their outlawed status, the Black Warriors settled on the planet Circinus and joined the pirates already operating there. Colonel Zachariah Cirion, leader of the Black Warriors, began to support his people through a series of sneak attacks against outlying Marik agricultural worlds. Both the Star League and the Marik House forces had their hands full with the Amaris Crisis, and so the Circinus pirates flourished in the absence of reprisals. In 2785, a small convoy of settlers fleeing the destruction in the Lyran Commonwealth landed on the planet to make a new start. Warrior and farmer combined their forces to establish a viable economy and culture.

The Lyran farmers apparently were never fully aware of the nature of their new allies. The pirates were involved in what remained "covert operations," but the farmers asked no questions as long as their allies provided the tools and consumer goods the farmers needed. The pirates, for their part, welcomed the farmers for two reasons. First, they provided stability and the possibility of internal law and order (without the brutal punishments and intimidation that mark pirate societies elsewhere), that would keep the band of cutthroats from turning on one another. Second, they helped the pirates present the illusion of a respectable, agrarian society to the neighboring worlds who were their victims.

Despite the fact that the Free Worlds military occupied Circinus during a lull in the Second Succession War, it is still the most successful of the Bandit Kingdoms, having long since adopted a presidential system of government. Piracy is a major governmental function, with covert "agencies" responsible both for the raids themselves and for covering them up. Lyran pundits often note that the Circinian president's chief duty is to look the other way so that he will not have to acknowledge the crimes his government is constantly committing.

In recent decades, the inhabitants of Circinus have been cautiously settling neighboring star systems, claiming eight planets between 2990 and 3020. From this new empire, President C. J. "Bob" McIntyre has entered into a series of joint reconciliation talks with leaders of both Inner Sphere governments. Through skillful diplomacy and judicious return of prisoners, and without once admitting to any wrongdoing on the part of his people, McIntyre has managed to avert a wholesale counterattack against his Federation while playing on the mutual suspicions of his Marik and Steiner counterparts.

McIntyre's position has lately improved with the arrival of numerous mercenary recruits who see him as a Napoleon of the Periphery. Moreover, by convincing both House Marik and House Steiner that his support could be invaluable, he has managed to acquire shipments of badly needed BattleMech spare parts and a small contingent of AeroSpace Fighters.

Nevertheless, several of McIntyre's lieutenants, yearning for more wealth and power, have challenged his position. Because of the continued infighting between McIntyre and his subordinates, it is uncertain whether the Federation will commit itself to either House.

The chief of the officially nonexistent pirates is Adam Cirion, a descendant of Zachariah Cirion, founder of the Federation.

World Name: Circinus
Star Type: G5IV
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 7.48 days
Recharging Station: None
Political Ruler: C.J. McIntyre
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Kim-Han Alighieri
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 10%, Reptile
Description:

A dry world rich in crystals, gemstones, and radioactives, Circinus is the capital of the Circinus Federation. The capital city, Clayborne Remembered, maintains a population of just under 10,000 people. Rumors abound of secret bases and training facilities in the northern deserts, where it is said that the Circinians have collected an abundance of materiel looted from Steiner and Marik worlds.

Name: Adam Cirion
Title/Rank: Lord Cirion
Position: Director of Covert Operations
Birthplace: Circinus
Age: 42
Sex: Male
Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Adam Cirion is a short man with curly red hair and steely gray eyes. He has a scar from a laser blast on his right forearm, an injury sustained during a Marik attack on Circinus when he was just a child.

Brief History:

A descendant of Zachariah Cirion and the hereditary leader of the Black Warriors, Adam Cirion has a deep and abiding hatred for the prosperous worlds of the Inner Sphere. Though an able tactician, he lacks the military and economic strength to wrest any worlds from either House Steiner or House Marik. Thus, he has had to wage a war of privateering against targets of opportunity while lusting after an economic empire just out of reach.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Cirion knows that there is no way that his small band of renegades can hope to topple either House Marik or House Steiner. He hopes, with McIntyre's help, to carve out his own buffer state, which will one day rival those of the Inner Sphere. He would like to legitimize his ambitions by marrying into a House's noble family.

Manner:

Cold and emotionless in the company of others, Adam suffers from an inferiority complex, which pushes him into greater acts of barbarism in an effort to prove his worth to others.

THE LEGACY OF CHARLES MARIK

There was a time, many years ago, when the Inner Sphere was a relatively peaceful community. People respected each others' rights, more or less, and if a man killed another, he was hanged for it. These days, the average Joe scans the FAX every day for news of some new slaughter; farmboys and down-and-out 'Mechies blindly obey the orders of smug superiors who squander those kids' lives by the tens of thousands in the name of some petty warlord. Here and there, so-called patriots support their cause with the same tools as their oppressors and try to vindicate themselves by saying that they are fighting for freedom.

All this continued madness, this self-destructiveness, this decay of civilization, has been brought about through the hopes and dreams of those self-righteous, self-involved families who dare to call themselves the "Lords" of the Star League. What a joke. Most live their petty, luxurious lives in stupid simplicity, letting the average commoner spend his life breaking his back to support their decadence. And, should any other Lord insult their petty pride, why there's any number of equally petty, greedy generals, admirals, and diplomats frothing at the mouth to send more of their subjects to their doom in retaliation. Behind the frothing generals and the admirals and the rabid diplomats stands the Puppet Press, proclaiming the greater good at the highest price in Human lives, fat on the profits they make from the "contributions" of the arms merchants and the literary prostitutes of the universities.

And they wonder why we don't want to have anything to do with their kind? Is it any mystery that we should so despise those of the Inner Sphere? Why shouldn't we prey on such a deceitful and rotting culture? God, I wonder what would happen if the bastards ever gave a war and nobody showed up?

—From a public forum video featuring remarks by Maddigan Blaine, Assistant Undersecretary for Diplomatic Affairs to the Circinus Federation, February 14, 3022

MARIAN HEGEMONY

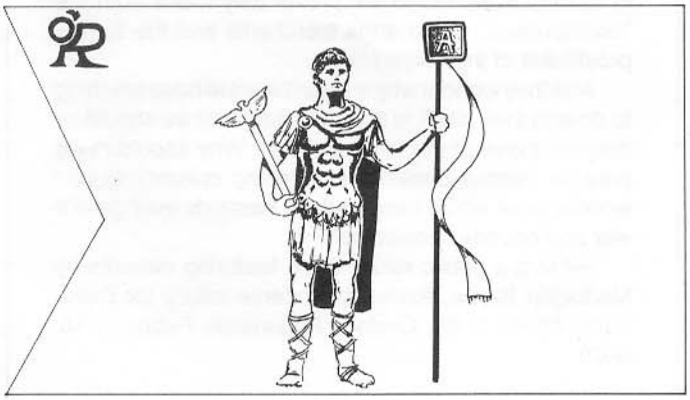
Location: Outside of Free Worlds League, between Magistracy of Canopus and Circinus Federation
Number of Worlds: Eight
Current Ruler: Marius O'Reilly
Military Strength: 1 Regiment
Technology Level: Average
Literacy Level: Fair

The Marian Hegemony is a recent addition to the Periphery. Centered on the tradeworld of Alphard, the Hegemony consists of the remains of the Alphard Trading Corporation (ATC). In 2920, Johann Sebastian O'Reilly arrived on the desolate and uninhabited planet Alphard. Though the world seemed like a wasteland, he chanced upon a hidden storehouse of germanium worth at least 50,000,000,000 C-Bills. With this newfound wealth, O'Reilly hired 'Mech units and established a colony on Alphard. Johann formed his new Marian Hegemony along the disciplined lines of the ancient Terran Roman Empire during its republican days. The arrival of war refugees helped to expand the Hegemony, whose people began to settle other star systems in the vicinity.

Under the leadership of Johann's grandson, Marius O'Reilly, the Marian Hegemony views expansion as the key to survival. In the last decade, the Marian navy and ground forces (estimated at roughly three small battalions of assorted BattleMechs) have clashed repeatedly with their neighbors over possession of border worlds. The Hegemony welcomes the presence of ComStar, but only at the price of an annual tribute to the Imperial Treasury.

World Name: Alphard
Star Type: G3IV
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 8.52 days
Recharging Station: None
Political Ruler: Marius O'Reilly, Hegemony Imperator
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precenter Laura Trin
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 10%, Mammal
Description:

The capital of the Marian Hegemony, Alphard is the center of a government formed along the ancient Roman precepts from Terra. Alphard is one of the few treasure troves of Star League technology, particularly of germanium. Beyond this, modest industrialization offers the inhabitants a reasonable standard of living and nominal creature comforts. If the Hegemony government does not endanger its industry by inviting attack from its neighbors, Alphard could become a stable economic force in the Periphery for generations to come.



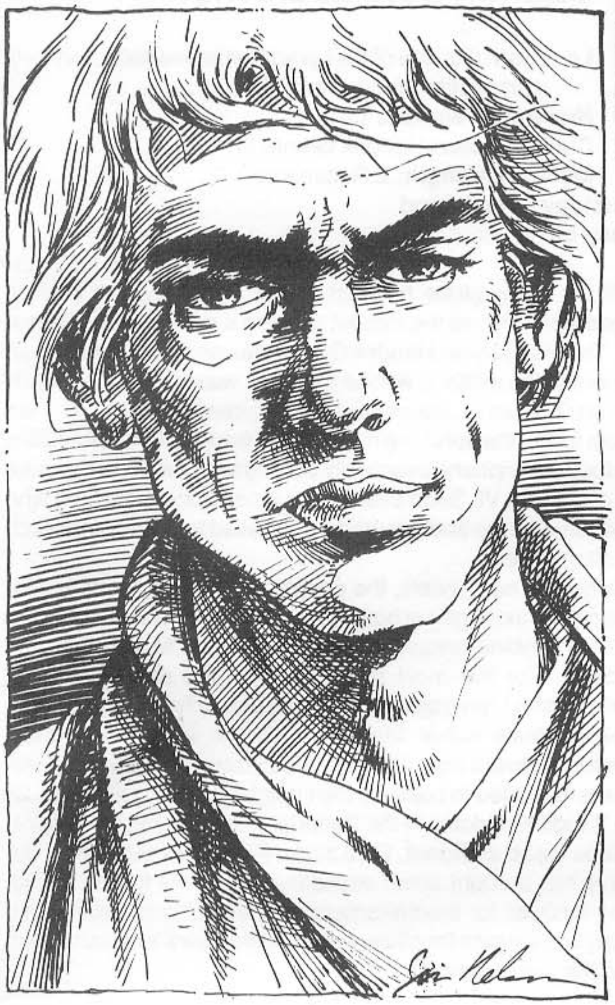
DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

The typical Marian pirate crew is a mixed lot, ranging from gentlemen and ex-nobles through impoverished farmers gone bad. There was also a good sprinkling of individuals—both male and female—who could only be characterized as the lowest scum. For all this, most were moral enough among themselves. They were "starfarers", bands of brothers—and sisters—with few illusions about what life was really like or where it would lead them. This was in stark contrast to the somber and solemn bunch that invariably made up the Free Worlds League border garrisons.

A modern-day Hegemony privateer, ironically enough, is a democratic sort of organization. Articles of Plunder drawn up between the captain and his crew—many of which are on file with ComStar—attest to this fact. Discipline (often brutal) and obedience (absolute) were considered essential to effective shipboard life, and more often than not, anyone found to be derelict in his duty suffered an unimaginable fate.

This situation was not entirely one-sided, however. If the crew decided that a captain was neglectful of his duty, that man would soon find himself walking out the nearest airlock without a pressure suit. There was, of course, careful attention paid to the equitable division of plunder. Boys or girls under the age of twelve were typically given half-shares, at least until the individual had killed his first man. Specialists such as technicians, computer operators, 'Mech repair people, and the ship's surgeon generally got a share and a half, with the officers getting double shares and the rest dividing up equally whatever was left over. More often than not, goods and products seized in a raid were kept in the common pool—and woe to the one who held out on his mates by so much as even a half-C-note. Once the pirates were safely in space, far from any pursuers, they would divide up the common pool. First, though, came certain "special deductions." Anyone wounded in combat, especially if he lost a limb or suffered other permanent damage, received double shares. A special tenth part of a share was set aside for the grounders back home—those now too old, too lame, or too feeble to carry on their evil trade but who had served the order well in their time. Democracy, old age pensions, disability benefits...all were the stuff of the modern-day Periphery privateer. In truth, more than one poor soul found his way into a hanging bunk in the bowels of some dark, stinking privateer for just these reasons—the hope of making a few extra credits to send home. Pirate bands sometimes offered people more opportunity and equality than they were likely to find on their native worlds of the "civilized" Inner Sphere.

—From *Periphery Privateers,* by Fiona Del Rio, Andurien Free Press, 3024



Name: Marius O'Reilly
Title/Rank: Imperator
Position: Leader of the Marian Hegemony
Birthplace: Andurien
Age: 39
Sex: Male
Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

A shock of blond hair tops Marius's tall frame. His large, aquiline nose adds to the regal air that he adopts in public.

Brief History:

Marius is the grandson of Johann Sebastian O'Reilly, founder of the Marian Hegemony. Since assuming the position of Imperator in 3009, he has attempted to heal the wounds that exist between his government and the Magistracy of Canopus. At present, negotiations between Marius and the Circinus Federation have been largely unproductive, but he hopes that this will change as more and more of his colonists occupy worlds along the edge of the Periphery.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Marius views himself as a modern-day Caesar, destined to set the foundation of a glorious empire. Once the Inner Sphere falls in the war of mutual destruction, he believes that his successors will incorporate vast territories into a grand empire that will last for a thousand years.

Manners:

Marius is aloof and chooses his words carefully. He presents himself with the air of a Caesar.

MORGRAINE'S VALKYRATE

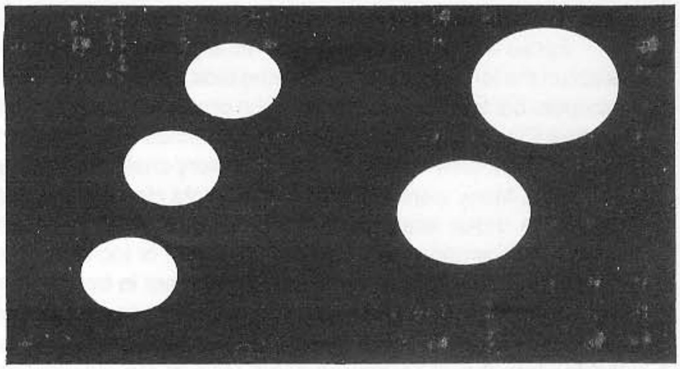
Location: Outside of Lyran Commonwealth, near Oberon VI
Number of Worlds: Five
Current Ruler: Dominatrix Maria Morgraine
Military Strength: 1 Battalion
Technology Level: Poor
Literacy Level: Poor

The newest of the pirate clans to populate the Periphery, Morgraine's Valkyrate is a collection of five ice worlds beyond the border of the Lyran Commonwealth. Originally a lieutenant of Hendrik Grimm, Morgraine broke with her master after her lover, Redjack Ryan, was expelled from the Oberon Confederation. Denouncing the "male-dominated" rule of the Grimm pirate dynasty, Morgraine and her female followers established their own pirate outposts, from which they have begun to raid Lyran space. Within this female pirate haven, males are accorded rights and privileges according to their abilities, but all command decisions are reserved to Morgraine and her valkyries.

Much of the Valkyrate's social order mirrors that of ancient Terran Norse mythology. Given time, this veneer of Nordic tradition will continue to evolve. Morgraine currently holds forth in her court on Gotterdammerung, ruling with an iron hand over an estimated five to six thousand inhabitants scattered over her various holds. Due to Morgraine's xenophobia, attempts to place ROM agents in this region have all failed.

World Name: Gotterdammerung
Star Type: M2V
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 2.83 days
Recharging Station: None
Political Ruler: Dominatrix Maria Morgraine
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 10%, Mammal
Description:

A cold world (in keeping with the temperament of its ruler), Gotterdammerung is typical of the worlds held by Maria Morgraine. Much of the surface is covered with layers of ice and snow; the only habitable region is a thin belt of tundra near the equator. The population of just over a thousand have managed to scratch out a meager existence by hunting the small herds of reindeer-like animals.



Name: Maria Morgraine
Title/Rank: Dominatrix
Position: Commander of Morgraine's Valkyrate
Birthplace: Chahar
Age: 39
Sex: Female
Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Morgraine is a swarthy, buxom pirate with shoulder-length brown hair. She is proud of her several dueling scars, the legacy of numerous combats.

Brief History:

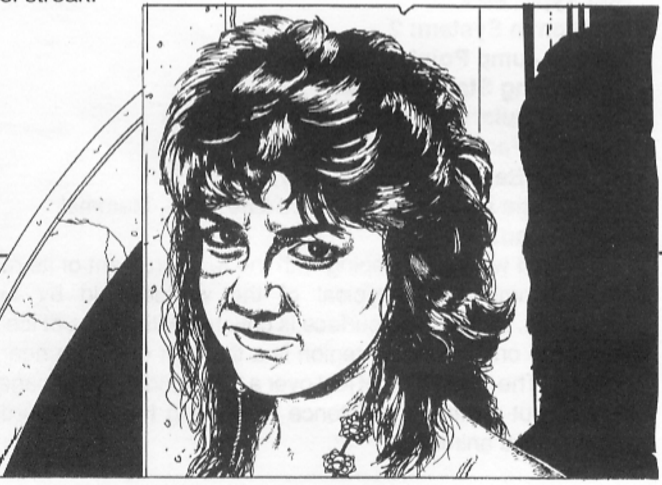
Morgraine was a loyal follower of Hendrik Grimm until the Bandit King dismissed her lover, Redjack Ryan. After several particularly vicious confrontations with Grimm, she gathered together a band of loyal followers and left the Oberon Confederation to carve out her own pirate state. In the last few years, Morgraine has begun to raid Commonwealth territories to attract the notice of Ryan (whose current whereabouts she does not know).

Personality:
Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Morgraine would like nothing better than to have Hendrik Grimm's head served to her on a silver platter. Piracy is the only way of life that she understands, and so the woman despises the people of the Inner Sphere as weak and decadent fools to be exploited at every opportunity. Morgraine earnestly desires to be reunited with Redjack Ryan, with whom she hopes to plot the downfall of the Oberon Confederation.

Manner:

Greedy and self-centered, Morgraine has a particularly nasty cruel streak.



OBERON CONFEDERATION

Location: Outside of the Lyran Commonwealth; formerly part of Rim Worlds Republic
Number of Worlds: Ten
Current Ruler: Hendrik Grimm III
Military Strength: 2 Regiments
Technology Level: Good
Literacy Level: Poor

Of the many pirate holdings in the Periphery, the Oberon Confederation comes the closest to being a miniature Successor State. The first Colonel Hendrik Grimm was an officer in the Lyran Commonwealth military, whose regiment was battered by Marik troops on Graham IV. Believing that the Lyran high command had left them to die, the surviving members of the 65th Lyran Regulars made for the Periphery, eventually settling on the warm temperate world of Oberon VI. Soon after, many Inner Sphere soldiers who were weary with the endless warfare travelled to Oberon in search of an alternative.

During its early years, the people of the Oberon state conducted pirate raids against both the Lyran Commonwealth and the Draconis Combine, usually in search of spare 'Mech parts and electronics. For the most part, however, the descendants of Hendrik Grimm I have been concerned primarily with the welfare of their subjects rather than with plunder for its own sake. Expanding outward from Oberon, the citizens of the Confederation have managed to colonize their neighboring star systems. Of all the Bandit Kingdoms in the Periphery, the Oberon Confederation alone is self-sufficient. On a social level, a limited form of democracy has brought about educational systems for the young, training facilities for MechWarriors and technicians, and even a modest pension plan for officers and enlisted personnel who have served the Confederation.

THE CONSCIENCE OF A QUEEN

Faced with the heavy fire from totally unexpected opposition in the fort's garrison, Morgraine took a squad of her best troopers back to the cathedral. In the pre-dawn hours, it was by now filled to overflowing with town wretches who had been rousted from their homes by falling artillery shells and heavy laser fire. Many were still clad in their night clothes or not at all. From those assembled, Morgraine selected a dozen males, from among those too old, too weak, or too scared to be much bother to anyone, and herded them in front of her lead *Wasp*. Crying, begging, confused, and scared out of their wits, these helpless few were marched across Gentry bridge into the open ground in full view of the local militia garrison commanding the heights above.

The plan was simple enough: Morgraine would use the wretches as a shield so that her 'Mechs could advance close enough to batter down the fort's outer walls. At first the plan seemed to be working. What were the militiamen to do? Could they fire on their own friends and neighbors who cowered before them, begging them to surrender the fort? In the end, a splatter of machine gun fire finally rang out and two of the locals fell dead where they stood. This began a free-for-all that left at least one of Morgraine's *Stinger*s crippled by heavy weapons fire.

The plan was ultimately successful, however, though it worked by indirect means. While everyone's attention was focused on the spectacle in the greensward below, two of Morgraine's *Phoenix Hawk*s had managed to slip upriver to attack the garrison from behind. In less than five minutes, the skull and crossbones appeared over the burning citadel in the dim light of a new day. Then the real slaughter began, for Morgraine would take few prisoners that night.

—*Ten Years with the Devil: Privateering with Lady Morgraine,* by Spaceman Nathaniel Urvine Gunther Hall, unpublished manuscript, ca. 3022

The recent development of Oberon into an increasingly stable, diversified state is due mainly to the vision of Hendrik Grimm III. Where Grimm's grandfather founded the state as a mockery of a government, and his father simply continued the family business of brutality, King Hendrik III takes the duties of his office seriously.

Another sign of Oberon's growing political maturity is Grimm's attitude to the nearby Elysian Fields. Though Oberon seems to be approaching the stage that Circinus reached two centuries ago—that of a viable nation-state supported in part by piracy—Grimm appears to be seeking the respectability that standard interstellar trade will bring. Thus, Grimm's pirates are not allowed to raid the Elysian worlds. Indeed, Hendrik has entered into trade and territorial agreements with them, the most important of which offers Grimm's navy docking rights in return for military protection against the many other Bandit Kingdoms in the area. As the Elysian Fields continue to develop, and thus become more tempting targets, ties between the two realms can be expected to grow closer. The potential for provincial unification—similar to that which led to the foundation of the Free Worlds League and Capellan Confederation seven centuries ago—may become irresistible to the leaders of both realms.

Recognizing the utility of social stability on their borders, representatives from both House Steiner and House Kurita have approached Hendrik III with offers of formal alliance. To date, Grimm has been reluctant to commit his peoples one way or the other, remaining cautiously neutral.

World Name: Oberon VI
Star Type: F5III
Position in System: 6
Time to Jump Point: 14.93 days
Recharging Station: None
Political Ruler: Hendrik Grimm III
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Damien Hope
Population: 43,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 20%, Mammal
Description:

Oberon VI is a warm, temperate world rich in natural resources, particularly gold and coal. Since the late 2900s, Oberon has been heavily industrialized to include factories able to produce pharmaceuticals and electronic components, as well as small arms and energy weapons. Though much of the planet remains unexplored, Oberon's population exceeds 40 thousand inhabitants, many of whom are skilled technicians and scientists.

Name: Hendrik Grimm III
Title/Rank: General
Position: Leader of the Oberon Confederation
Birthplace: Oberon VI
Age: 48
Sex: Male
Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Grimm is rather obese, and gives the impression of a self-indulgent merchant gone to seed.

GRUDGING ADMIRATION

Over the years, Hendrik Grimm turned into one plain arrogant son of a bitch. Now, he had flashes of insight a time or two, even what some might unreasonably call genius, but for the most part, he seemed pretty stupid to me. For all his so-called managerial expertise with his rabble, he really couldn't see any use in making long-term logistical plans. He was dead-set against innovations in BattleMech designs. Why, he even outright forbade me from trying to outfit my *Warhammer* with jump jets! I guess that he sensed in me a rival for the leadership of his men and the affections of his ladies. But I have to give him credit for one thing: he was a born recruiter. God! But he could draw the scum to him!

Now, you have to remember that before our parting of the ways, I had a good opportunity for close contact with him. The picture I keep in my mind of ole Grimm is that of a bloated man with a nose perpetually red from too much booze. An aging, slightly confused and befuddled grandfatherly type of a sop. Of course, put him into a 'Mech and he was a veritable tiger. He'd invariably be the first one to set foot in a drop zone under fire or the first through the hatch in a boarding action. And if things went sour, by damn, he'd be the last one out of the line. But once you dragged-pulled-squeezed-pushed him out of his 'Mech and back onto solid ground, he reverted to being a dumpy, drunken lout. Nothing like me, you understand...

So there it is! As you can see, I'm still very much on the man's side, if only he could be reasoned with...the obese, putrefying, curiously strong mass of obstinate courage. One of these days, if we ever get together again, I'll buy him a drink or throw one in his face.

—From *Redjack Ryan: Table Talk Sayings and Reminiscences,* unpublished manuscript by Gordan "Griffin" Jackson, ca. 3019

Brief History:

Ruler of the Oberon Confederation since 3012, Grimm has taken major steps to improve the diplomatic position of the Confederation. He has secured several trade pacts with both the Draconis Combine and the Lyran Commonwealth and even managed to secure a cash grant from the Lyran government in exchange for emergency berthing/repair rights on Confederation planets. At present, Grimm is negotiating with both sides over possible formal alliance. For the moment, however, he is more concerned with improving the economic status of his citizens than with becoming involved in Inner Sphere politics.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Grimm has no love for the worlds of the Inner Sphere or their governments. Preserving the welfare of his thousands of citizens is his major concern. Though he is content to play a defensive game of armed neutrality, he is likely to consider "all bets off" if attacked and would probably personally lead his forces against the aggressor.

Manner:

Boisterous and expansive, Grimm has a booming voice and an infectious laugh.

PIRATES OF BUTTE HOLD

Location: Outside of the Lyran Commonwealth, near Oberon VI
Number of Worlds: One
Current Ruler: Redjack Ryan
Military Strength: 2 Battalions
Technology Level: Poor
Literacy Level: Poor

Founded in 3018, Butte Hold is one of the more recent additions to the many Bandit Kingdoms. The inhabitants are a motley collection of cutthroats nominally under the command of Redjack Ryan, an arrogant, strutting MechWarrior with delusions of grandeur. The Pirates of Butte Hold epitomize the worst characteristics of Periphery bandits.

Redjack Ryan was once a battalion commander under Hendrik Grimm. In 3017, while "on loan" to the Lyran Commonwealth, Ryan's unit was ordered to occupy a Marik border world. During the course of his occupation of Lysidas, Ryan's troops sacked the cities, enslaved the populace, and destroyed many industries, including a fusion power plant. The destruction of the fusion plant poisoned half the planet's atmosphere, bringing an immediate halt to Ryan's carousing.

Following this blunder, troops from both the Oberon Confederation and the Free Worlds League pursued Ryan and his mob out of the Inner Sphere. Ryan took his men to Butte Hold, where he set up shop. Since then, the bandit has launched a series of indiscriminate raids against the Lyran Commonwealth, the Draconis Combine, and even an occasional snipe at a Confederation world. To date, none of these governments have retaliated because of the many prisoners Ryan holds hostage. Few like to contemplate what an angry Ryan might do to them.

Another version of the story of how Ryan broke away from Oberon states that Ryan apparently has no other interests in life than rapine, and so he could not face the prospect of handling actual responsibilities, as Grimm wanted him to do. Whether Ryan's own most vicious lieutenant, Agnar Satanson, will turn on Redjack the way he turned on Grimm remains to be seen.

Attracted by the lure of booty, Ryan has won numerous recruits since his break with Grimm, enough to maintain two battalions of BattleMechs. Ryan's hold on his subordinates is tenuous at best, however. He spends as much time guarding against a knife in the back as he does planning his next raid. Left to their own devices, the pirates of Butte Hold may well destroy themselves. In addition, one raid too many against an irritated Lyran or Draconis government may bring a full-scale assault against the pirate holdfast.

World Name: Butte Hold
Star Type: G8
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 6.19 days
Recharging Station: None
Political Ruler: Redjack Ryan
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 150,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 99%, Fish

Name: Redjack Ryan
Title/Rank: Lord Commander
Position: King of Butte Hold
Birthplace: Unknown
Age: 37
Sex: Male
Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Ryan is tall and lanky with sandy-blond hair and shifty gray eyes.

Brief History:

Ryan is the illegitimate son of a noble descendant of Rudolph Ryan. He was born within the Lyran Commonwealth, although the exact location has never been determined. Thrown out of the Commonwealth military academy for doctoring evaluation reports, Ryan made his way to the Oberon Confederation, where a sizable donation of hard cash secured his position as a battalion commander. In 3018, Ryan destroyed a good part of a Marik border world while "garrisoning" it, and had to flee back into the Periphery.

From his base on Butte Hold, Ryan and his supporters have conducted many pirate raids against just about every neighboring government, which consider him a rabid dog that should be destroyed at the first opportunity.

Personality:
Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Ryan is a particularly unsavory individual. This lecher delights in rapine and wanton murder as proof of his "manly" prowess.

Manner:

Besides being arrogant, self-centered, and avaricious, Ryan could hold a grudge throughout eternity and has a predilection for savage cruelty and sadism.

THROWING DOWN THE GAUNTLET

To: The Right Honorable Kalvin Mitchel Michalmas III,
Admiral Extraordinaire in command of Her Majesty the Archon's Periphery Forces,

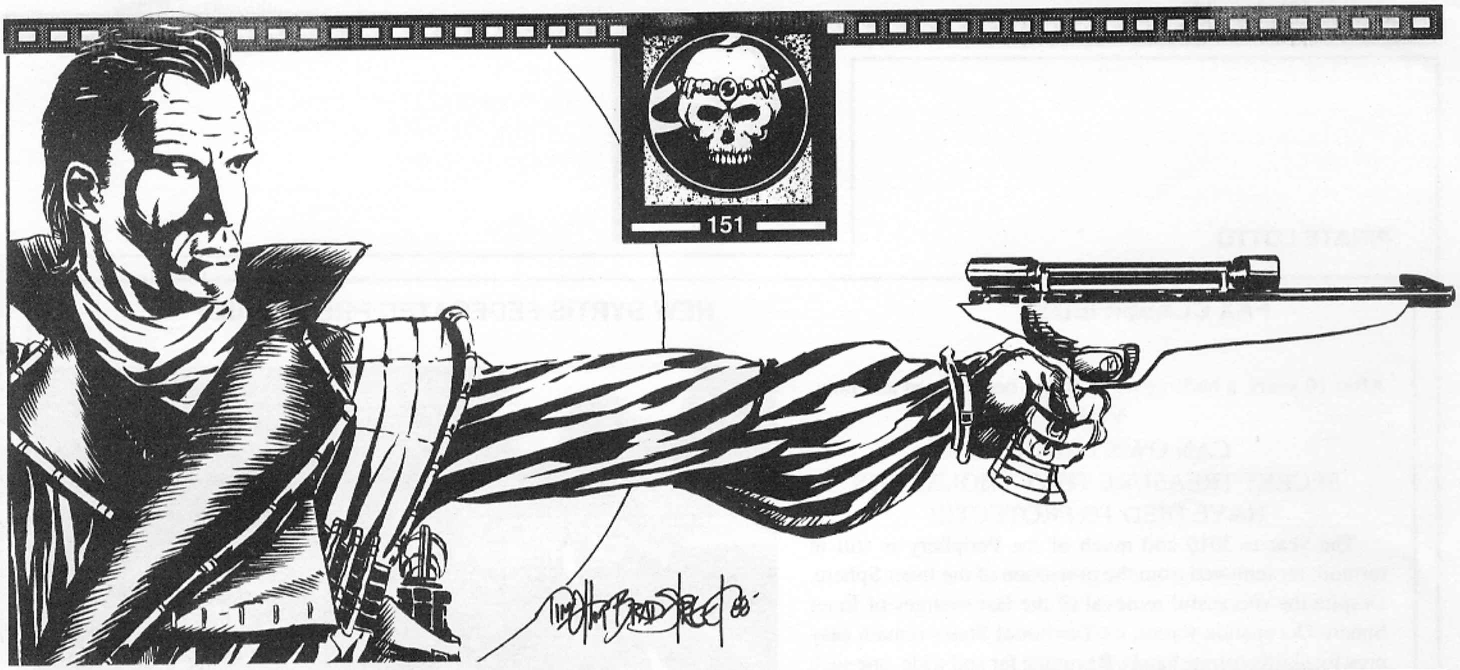
Sir:

I have received your communication of last month in which you state your intention to hunt down, pen up, eradicate, and ultimately destroy myself and my band of fellow privateers. As an aside, sir, may I respectfully point out that I prefer to be called a "Corsair." Yes, I rather fancy that. The term "pirate" is such a widely misused and hackneyed term these days.

At any rate, as to your letter, I welcome the opportunity to meet you in deep space, but please do not be too slow in coming to me. You see, sir, I have a special reception already planned for you and yours. If you are not soon in coming, I shall have no alternative but to come looking for you. I have long fancied a visit to Tharkad before I die. Indeed, more than once I have considered the acquisition of a large palace on one of the Archon's smaller estates for use as a memorial brothal in my honor. I much enjoy the thought of leaving behind something of lasting value.

So please come. Bring your fleet and your BattleMechs and your troopers. We are waiting for you. Ah, but do plan to stay a long time...a very long time.

—From a letter by Redjack Ryan to a member of the Lyran High Command, published in the Tharkad Universal Tribune, December 11, 3022



INCIDENT NEAR BUTTE HOLD

Once we knew for certain that the ion storm had driven us off-course into the Periphery, everyone aboard the *Demeter Empress* knew it was only a matter of time. We were simply too close to pirate space, too close to Butte Hold, and knowing that was enough to make some of us start to make out our wills neat and proper-like. Sure enough, not five hours after the storm ended and our repairs had begun, a huge JumpShip, battle-scarred and bearing a grinning death's head emblem on its bow, vectored in alongside us. For the record, let it be stated here that the Captain and his people did what they could to prevent our capture. The pirates opened fire at extreme range, the deadly accuracy of their fire hulling the ship forward, knocking out our forward laser battery in seconds. A moment later, the bridge was riddled with missiles and reduced to an airless, lifeless shell. Some of the passengers forward even saw some of the torn and shattered remnants of crewmen's bodies as they floated off into deep space.

The boarding party was not long in coming afterward. What happened on this occasion can, mercifully, be related briefly. Several of our men managed to break into the forward arms locker to defend themselves briefly. Though the pirates lost a man to our unexpected laser fire, they blew the compartment emergency doors and swept the entire compartment with slug and energy weapons until our defenders surrendered for fear that the rest of us would be slaughtered. These were, in turn, quickly disarmed and beheaded by black-clad marauders.

Amid the blood and gore, several of the women, my mother included, tried to resist the more unseemly advances of the renegades as they examined us for hidden goods. She, and those like her, were summarily executed as examples. Once divested of our arms and our goods, we were herded into the after mess hall where a slender figure dressed in shiny black silks absentmindedly cleaned his nails with a dagger while we lined up for his inspection. Though we didn't know it at the time, this sandy-haired, disheveled, dreary-looking fellow was none other than the infamous Redjack Ryan, and we girls were being arrayed for his pleasure. In the end, four of us were selected. I don't know what happened to the rest of the passengers, though I dare say they were probably the lucky ones.

Once aboard Redjack's ship, the four of us were separated and placed in what I can only call isolation cells, for they had no light and little fresh air. How long I remained in that place I cannot say for sure, but I soon became aware of the unmistakable vibrations of power rumbling through the ship that meant the engines and ship were under way. After what seemed like hours, a pair of filthily dressed and foul-smelling guards came to fetch me from my cell. They kicked me to the head of a small stairwell and into a small, plain, white-walled room, a room completely bare save for a small table with leather straps at the sides They stretched me face forward over the table, ripping my clothes off in the process and attaching my limbs to the restraints on either side. Someone began to smash my head against the wooden table over and over for no apparent reason other than to inflict pain. From somewhere out of sight behind me, I heard the unmistakable sound of a whip whistling in the air.

Off to the left, a panel slid open, allowing a tall, slender figure in lose-fitting black silks and a long, white scarf to enter the room. The figure wore dark sunglasses and he was carrying, of all things, what looked like a lawn chair and a bucket of ice. After arranging himself in a comfortable position that would give him a full view of what would happen, he removed his sunglasses to reveal the smiling features of Redjack Ryan. God, how I learned to hate that smile in the weeks to come.

A moment later, the whistle of a Combine whip rang through the air and a sharp line of fire sank deep into my skin. I yelped my fear and outrage. To one side, my "host" beamed all the wider. As the second whiplash reached out for me, I could see Ryan digging into his ice bucket to retrieve a bottle of some foreign brew. This he proceeded to down with relish as my screams intensified with every blow. My loudest cries, my deepest tears, served only to make him grin and applaud his henchmen with a sinister delight. In an effort to keep my mind in control, I tried at first to count the blows, but gave up the idea after I'd reached 200. In the end, I counted discarded beer bottles, for the bastard Ryan went through no less than 15 before he raised a hand and called a halt to my torment.

—From testimony taken by the ComStar Investigative Committee on Periphery Depredations, March 13, 3020

FAX CLASSIFIEDS

NEW SYRTIS FEDERATED PRESS DAILY

After 16 years, a baffling mystery has been solved and now
YOU
CAN OWN PART OF A
SECRET TREASURE THAT THOUSANDS
HAVE DIED TO PROTECT!!!

The year is 3010 and much of the Periphery is still in turmoil, far removed from the protection of the Inner Sphere. Despite the successful removal of the last vestiges of Inner Sphere Occupation forces, ex-Territorial States remain easy prey for skillful pirate bands. Ravaging far and wide, one such hearty band from Santander's World this year launched a concerted attack against the Draconian Provincial capital of Rasalhague. Until now, the Rasalhagians had been safe from attacks because of their insular position deep within the Combine.

In a raid that should have been impossible, hundreds died at the hands of the bloodthirsty pirate marauders. More importantly, the Draconian Provincial Bank of Rasalhague was robbed of more than three million C-bills in the daring attack. Unfortunately for the pirate investors, pursuit ships soon overtook the raiders as they crossed into the Periphery. Seeing that they could not outrun their attackers, the daring pirate band hid their stolen swag on one of many uncharted worldlets of the Periphery arm before their capture.

In the months and years that followed, hundreds of ex-pirates have been tortured and beaten in an effort to uncover the whereabouts of the hidden Rasalhague treasure, but the secret has remained buried...UNTIL NOW!

Through the acquisition of new computer technology from several Lyran spacers who no longer had any need for such things, the independent corporation of Santander-Valasek Ltd. used extensive computer modeling and projections to discover—at long last—the hiding place of the appropriated millions. And, best of all, the lost swag lies buried, not in a single hiding place, but divided evenly into hundreds of small caches throughout various locations in the Periphery.

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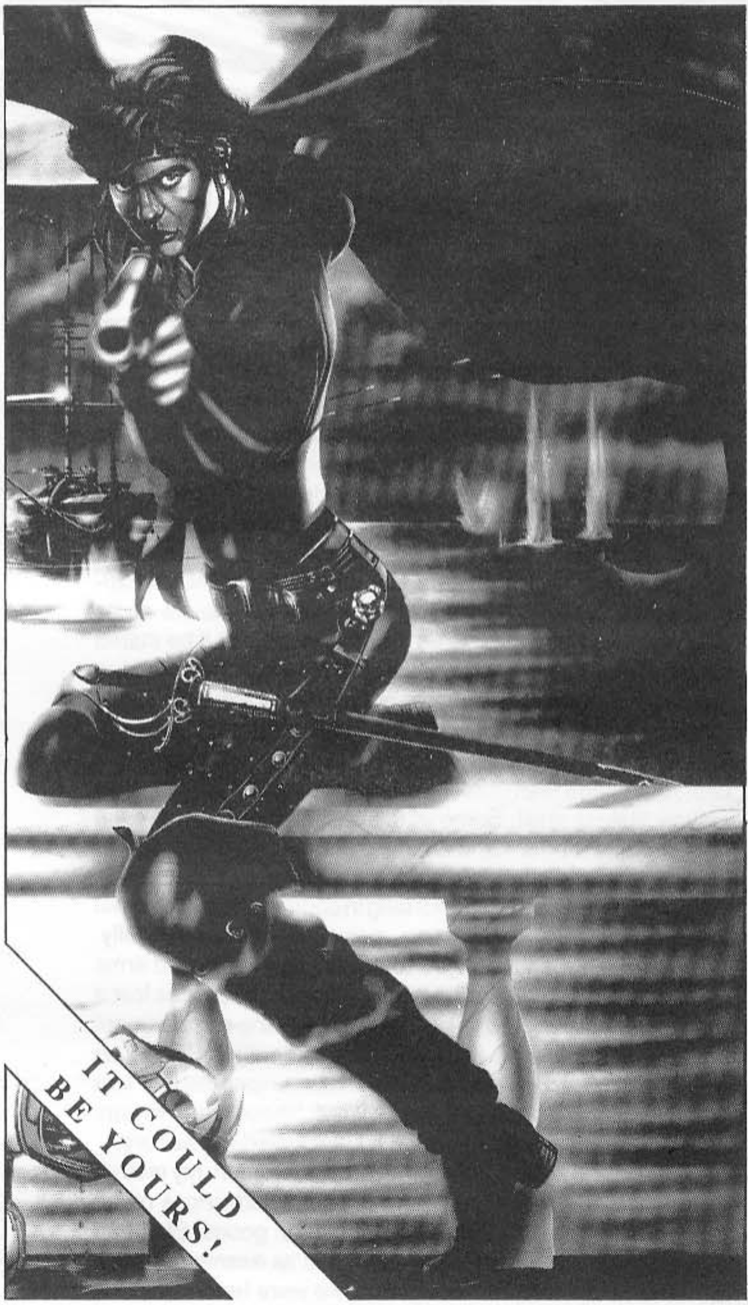
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SANTANDER'S WORLD (SANTANDER V)

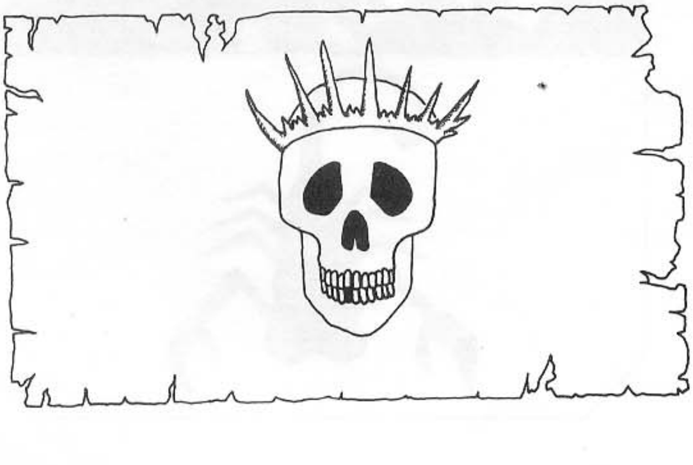
Location: Outward from the Draconis Combine
Number of Worlds: One
Current Ruler: Helmar Valasek
Military Strength: 1 Battalion
Technology Level: Poor
Literacy Level: Poor

What little is known about the pirates of Santander's World is not very pleasant. Founded in 3019 by ex-Davion officer Helmar Valasek, Santander's World boasts one of the most vicious pirate bands operating in the Periphery. Whereas most of the Periphery's pirate groups engage in raiding, Santander's World has become a Murder Incorporated. Much of Valasek's treasury consists of payments made for covert assassination attempts. Operating singly or in small groups, Santander assassins are known to have penetrated Davion and Kurita space to slaughter government officials and financiers. Where practical, Santander raiders engage in kidnapping, often stopping merchant vessels along established trade routes to remove wealthy passengers for later ransom. In addition, Valasek contracts for terrorist activities and may well have affiliations with various dissident groups within the Inner Sphere.

All members of Valasek's band take a blood oath to their murderous leader, vowing to die most horribly should they "squeal" on their fellows. More than once have these pirates killed their own members suspected of renouncing their pledge.

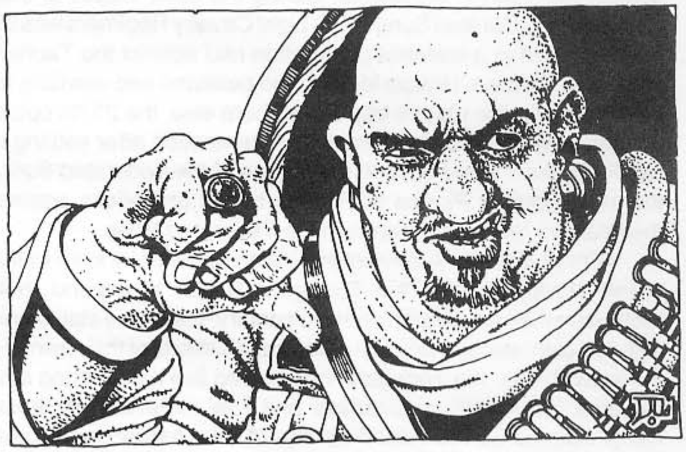
The Santander pirates are an irritant that the Successor States will probably destroy at the first opportunity. It is believed, however, that Valasek maintains an intricate web of spies and informants that might tip off Valasek to any impending strike. Therefore, any such attack would have to be made with the utmost secrecy.

World Name: Santander's World
Star Type: K4
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 4.393 days
Recharging Station: None
Political Ruler: Helmar Valsaek
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 7,500
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 99%, Plant



Name: Helmar Valasek
Title/Rank: Captain
Position: Commander of Santander's World
Birthplace: Parma
Age: 46
Sex: Male
Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Helmar Valasek's most obvious physical characteristic is his extreme obesity. His short stature only serves to emphasize his girth. His demonic cruelty is blatantly scrawled across his face. His eyes are blue, and he is bald.



Brief History:

Valasek showed great promise as a young man, rising from backwoods on a minor Davion world to graduate with honors from Kilbourne Academy. He was one of the youngest Captains in the Davion military when, in 3003, he turned renegade due to quarrels with his superiors about discipline, pay, tactics, postings, leave time, and practically everything else that came to mind. After commandeering a DropShip he and a handful of other disaffected soldiers spent the next sixteen years leading Davion, Kurita, and Avellar authorities a merry chase over nearly half the settled galaxy. During this time, his narrow escapes from authorities became legendary—despite official attempts to keep them secret—and his pirate band grew accordingly.

It is believed that several years of high living have taken their toll on Valasek, leading to his settlement on Santander V in 3019. He is reported to weigh over 300 pounds, and may be impaired to some degree by the medical problems attendant on his lifestyle and physical condition. Neither he nor his pirate band should be regarded as any less dangerous for that.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Valasek's motivations are difficult to determine. On the surface, he seems to be just another avaricious, cruel, rapacious pirate. But on further examination, his actions seem to be driven more by nihilism than by evil. His every deed speaks less of immorality than of an amorality, of a conviction that none of his actions really matter.

Manner:

Fluctuating between almost manic activity and a bored lethargy, Valasek's manner depends greatly on the circumstances he is in. Under stress he exhibits a deadly, total concentration on the task at hand. At "play" the diabolic enjoyment he clearly derives from the obscene tortures of his victims is frightening to behold. At other times, he lapses into an almost comatose inactivity.

TORTUGA DOMINIONS

Location: Near the border of the Taurian Concordat and the Federated Suns
Number of Worlds: Six
Current Ruler: Dame Paula Trevaline
Military Strength: Two Companies
Technology Level: Poor
Literacy Level: Poor

The Tortuga Dominions are a result of the Reunification War against the Taurian Concordat. During the latter stages of that conflict, the Federated Suns 237th Light Cavalry Regiment was all but destroyed in a wasteful penetration raid against the Taurian outpost of Sterope. Unable to hold their positions and unwilling to be thrown into the vicious fray somewhere else, the 237th opted to jump outward into the unknown. A generation after settling a small, pleasant world beyond the fringes of the Federated Suns, the newly formed Pirates of Tortuga began operations against their callous former comrades in the Federated Suns.

With equipment and machinery won at gunpoint from half a dozen Davion worlds, the Tortugans began to expand their foothold in their new world. Within a century, they were stable and self-sufficient enough to begin colonization efforts of their own. By the early 2700s, the Tortugans had settled five neighboring star systems. Abundant radioactives and raw materials on these newly claimed worlds helped the rise of what has since become known as the Tortuga Dominions.

Of all the Bandit Kingdoms in the Periphery, the Tortuga Dominions maintain the largest spacefaring navy. Estimates place the size of the Tortuga jolly rogers at about 15, though a lack of spare parts and machinery has forced the Tortugans to cannibalize several of these.

In the last two centuries, the Tortuga raiders have struck deep into the Federated Suns and the Taurian Concordat. Already known for utter depravity and ruthlessness, it appears that the Tortugans are becoming more desperate as their planets are now finally beginning to run out of resources.

World Name: Tortuga
Star Type: G2IV
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 9.11 days
Recharging Station: None
Political Ruler: Dame Paula Trevaline
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 10%, Plant
Description:

A world of vast savannahs and once-abundant raw materials, Tortuga has the dubious distinction of being the center of the Tortuga Dominions. The ruler of Tortuga is the self-styled Dame Paula Trevaline, also known as "Lady Death" to friend and foe alike. The descendants of the original settlers, the remnants of a Federated Suns Light Cavalry regiment, have degenerated into a tight-knit band of pirates who prey on Taurians and Davions alike.

Over the years, Tortuga has been stripped of almost all its ore, and it is currently nearing ecological exhaustion. An estimated sixty thousand brigands of every description inhabit Raiders Roost, the sole settlement on the planet. Most live in conditions of near destitution, as the major share of captured booty goes to Dame Trevaline's most experienced cutthroats.

Name: Paula Trevaline
Title/Rank: Dame Murderess Extraordinaire
Position: Leader of the Pirates of The Tortuga Dominions
Birthplace: Tortuga
Age: 34
Sex: Female
Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Tall and muscular, Trevaline has waist-length red hair and gray eyes. She sports long fingernails reputed to be coated with a poisonous polish.

Brief History:

Born in the backwater area of Tortuga, Paula spent a desperate childhood as the unwanted child of a pirate gunnery master. At age eleven, she killed a rival and has never looked back since. Though sheer bravado, she scratched and clawed her way to the position of senior mate of Tortuga City's Council of the Damned. Around 3015, Paula achieved her dream of supreme power by winning a fencing match with the reigning monarch of the Dominions, Lord Kalvin Bar-Dyness. Even if Paula's skill had not won her the match, her poison-tipped sword would surely have done so.

Since assuming power, Paula has renewed her people's efforts to "squeeze those Inner Worlds till they bleed dry." Rumors suggest that she has been as good as her word.

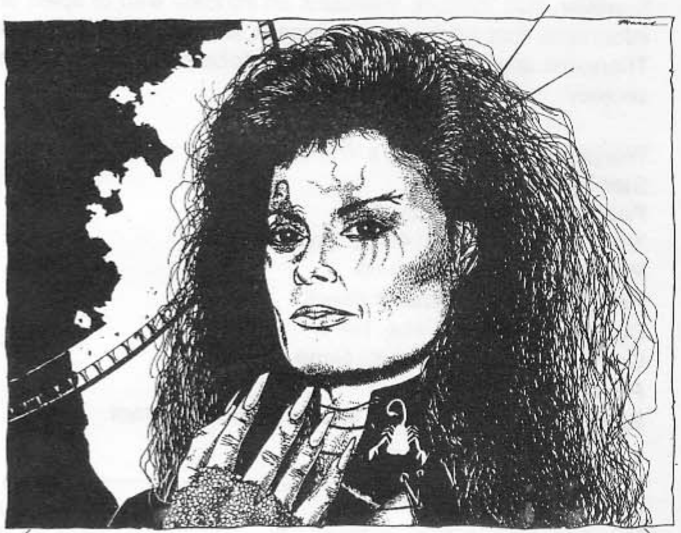
Personality:

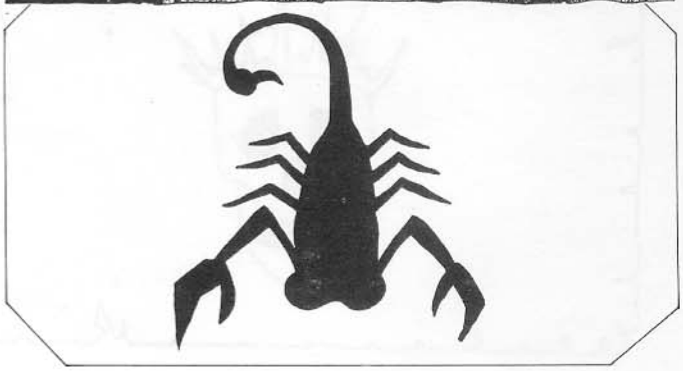
Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Paula's goal in life is to accumulate wealth and power at others' expense and to maintain her position as long as she can.

Manner:

Arrogant and cruel, Paula delights in throwing her weight around and forcing others to do her bidding. In particular, she delights in humiliating her captives before executing them.





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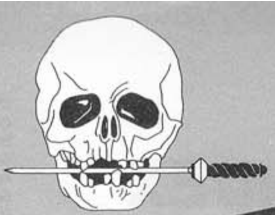
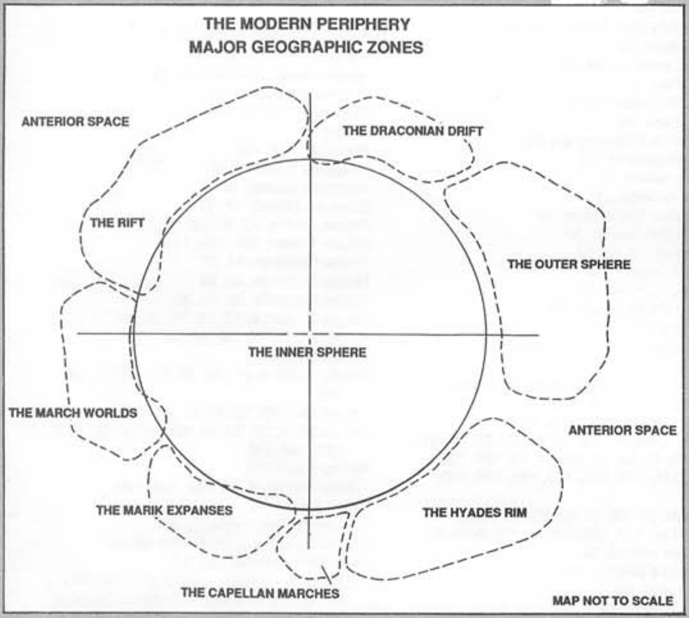
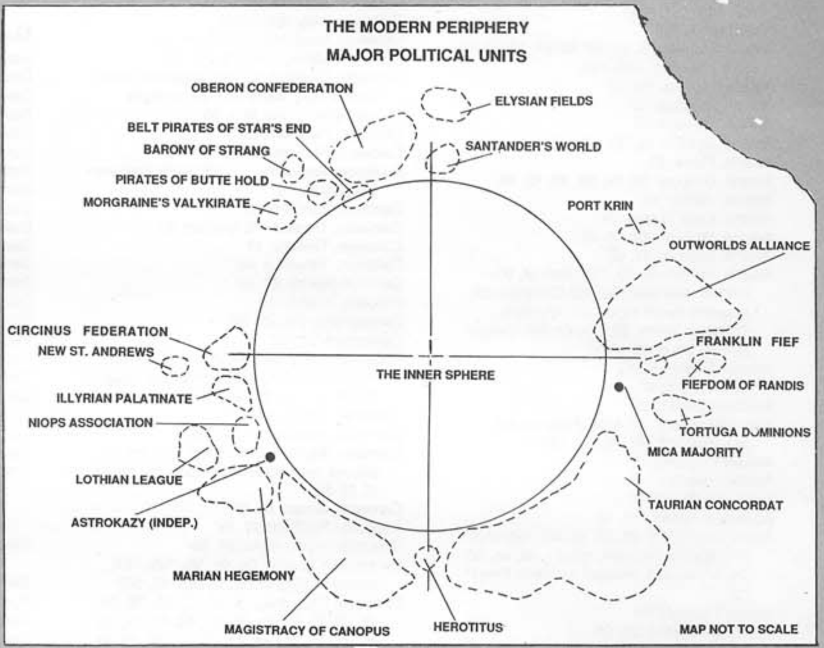




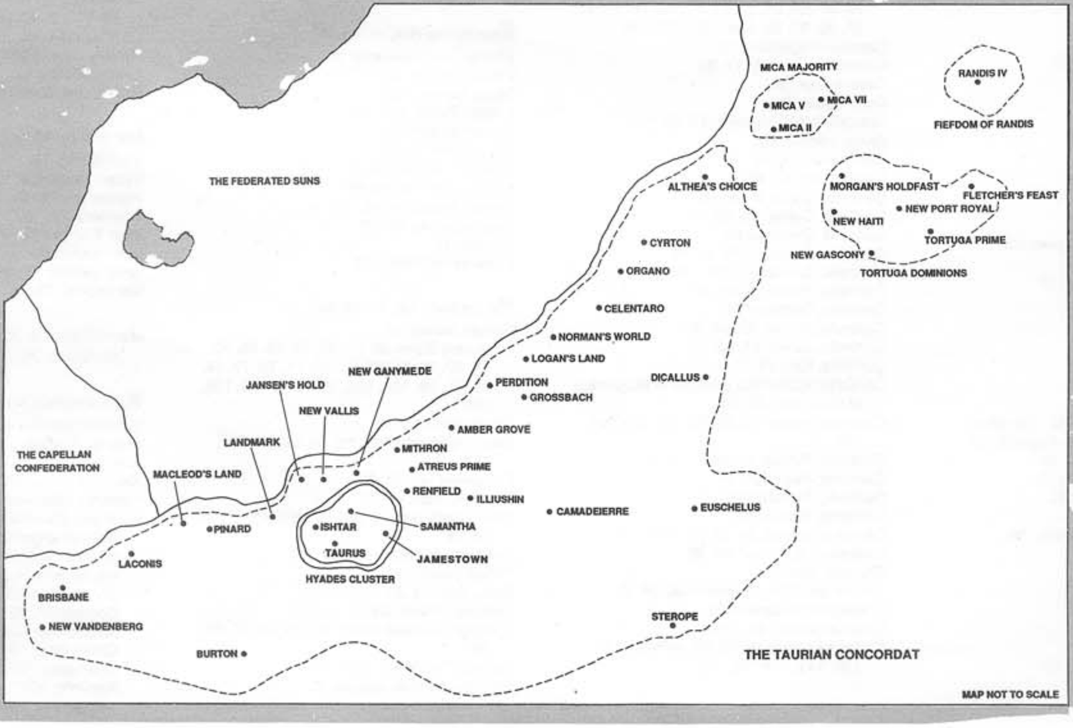
THE MODERN PERIPHERY
MAJOR GEOGRAPHIC ZONES

ANTERIOR SPACE
THE DRACONIAN DRIFT
THE RIFT
THE OUTER SPHERE
THE INNER SPHERE
THE MARCH WORLDS
ANTERIOR SPACE
THE MARIK EXPANSES
THE HYADES RIM
THE CAPELLAN MARCHES
MAP NOT TO SCALE



THE MODERN PERIPHERY
MAJOR POLITICAL UNITS

OBERON CONFEDERATION
ELYSIAN FIELDS
BELT PIRATES OF STAR'S END
BARONY OF STRANG
SANTANDER'S WORLD
PIRATES OF BUTTE HOLD
MORGRAINE'S VALYKIRATE
PORT KRIN
OUTWORLDS ALLIANCE
CIRCINUS FEDERATION
NEW ST. ANDREWS
FRANKLIN FIEF
THE INNER SPHERE
FIEFDOM OF RANDIS
ILLYRIAN PALATINATE
NIOPS ASSOCIATION
TORTUGA DOMINIONS
MICA MAJORITY
LOTHIAN LEAGUE
TAURIAN CONCORDAT
ASTROKAZY (INDEP.)
MARIAN HEGEMONY
MAGISTRACY OF CANOPUS
HEROTITUS
MAP NOT TO SCALE



MICA MAJORITY
MICA V
MICA VII
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RANDIS IV
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THE FEDERATED SUNS
ALTHEA'S CHOICE
MORGAN'S HOLDFAST
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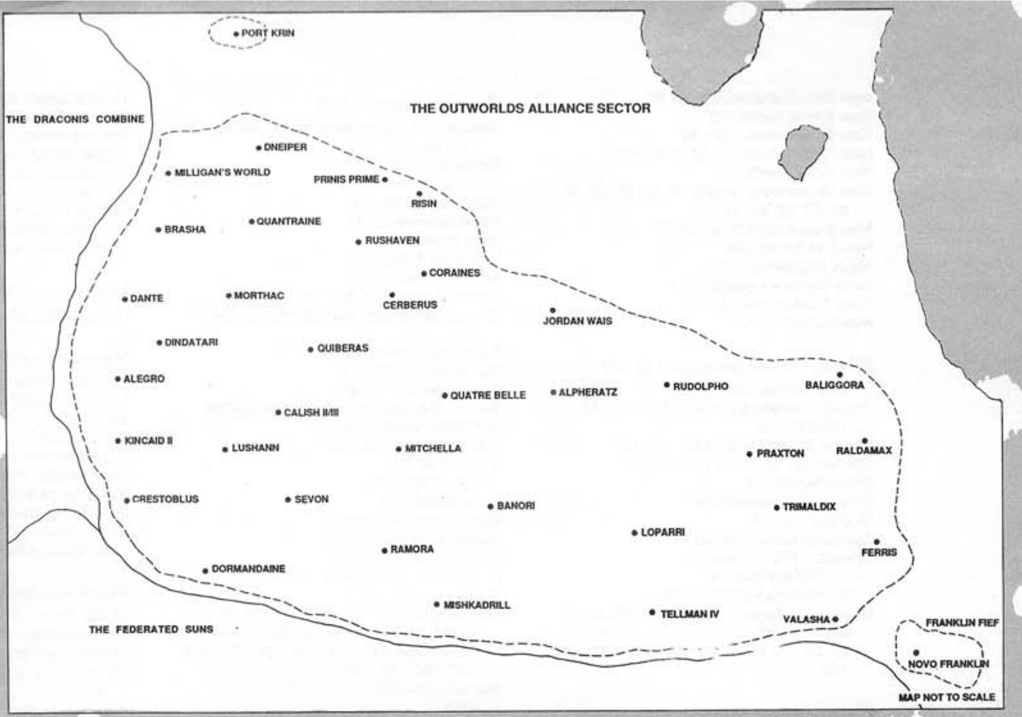
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THE OUTWORLDS ALLIANCE SECTOR
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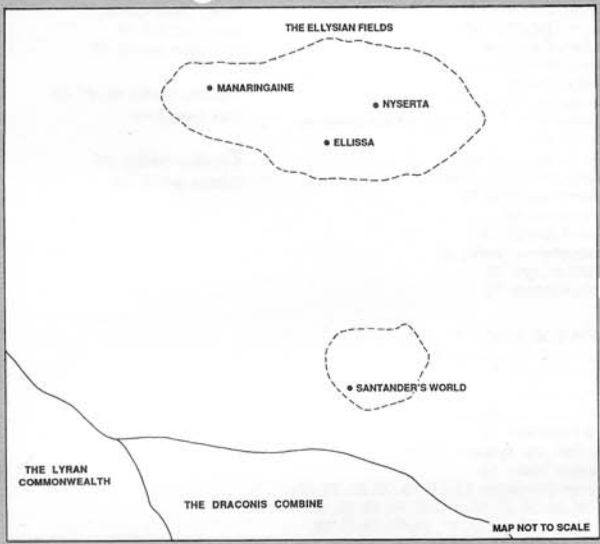
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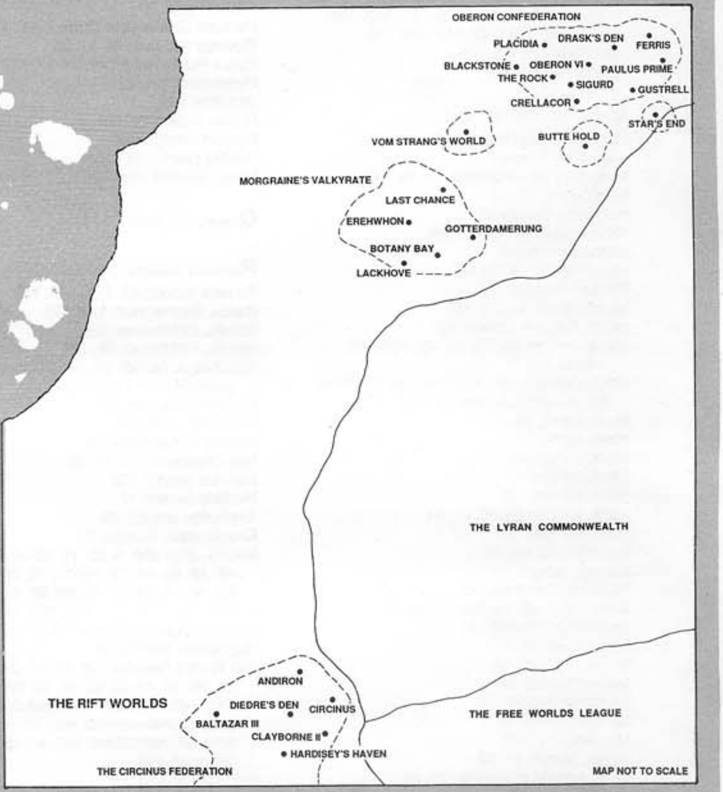
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BOTANY BAY
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THE LYRAN COMMONWEALTH
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THE RIFT WORLDS
DIEDRE'S DEN
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HARDISEY'S HAVEN
THE FREE WORLDS LEAGUE
THE CIRCINUS FEDERATION
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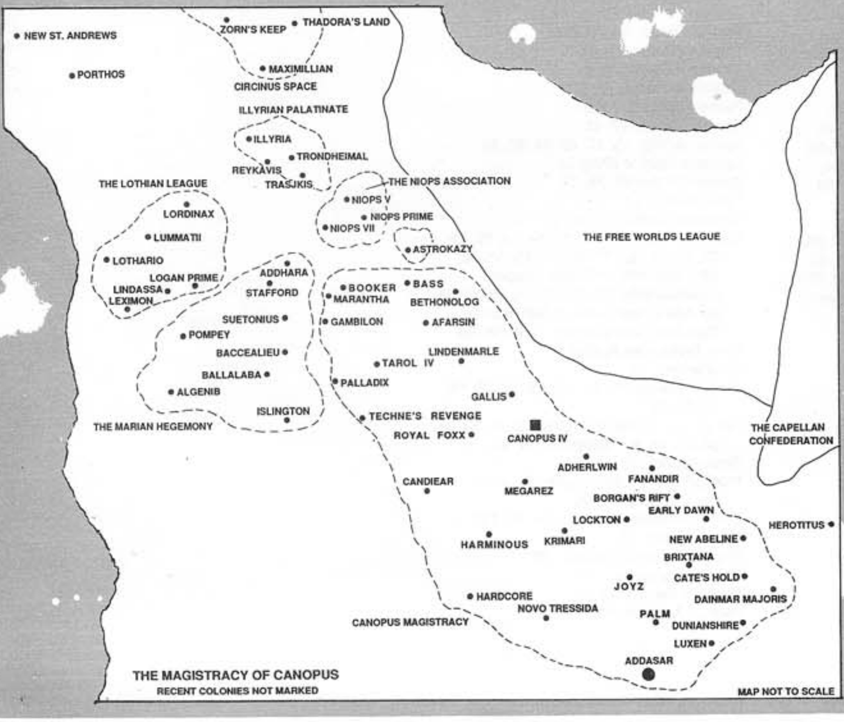
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ILLYRIAN PALATINATE
ILLYRIA
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THE MAGISTRACY OF CANOPUS
RECENT COLONIES NOT MARKED
MAP NOT TO SCALE

MAP OF THE PERIPHERY

Map compiled by COMSTAR.
From information provided by the COMSTAR EXPLORER SERVICE
and tHE STAR LEAGUE ARCHIVES on Terra.

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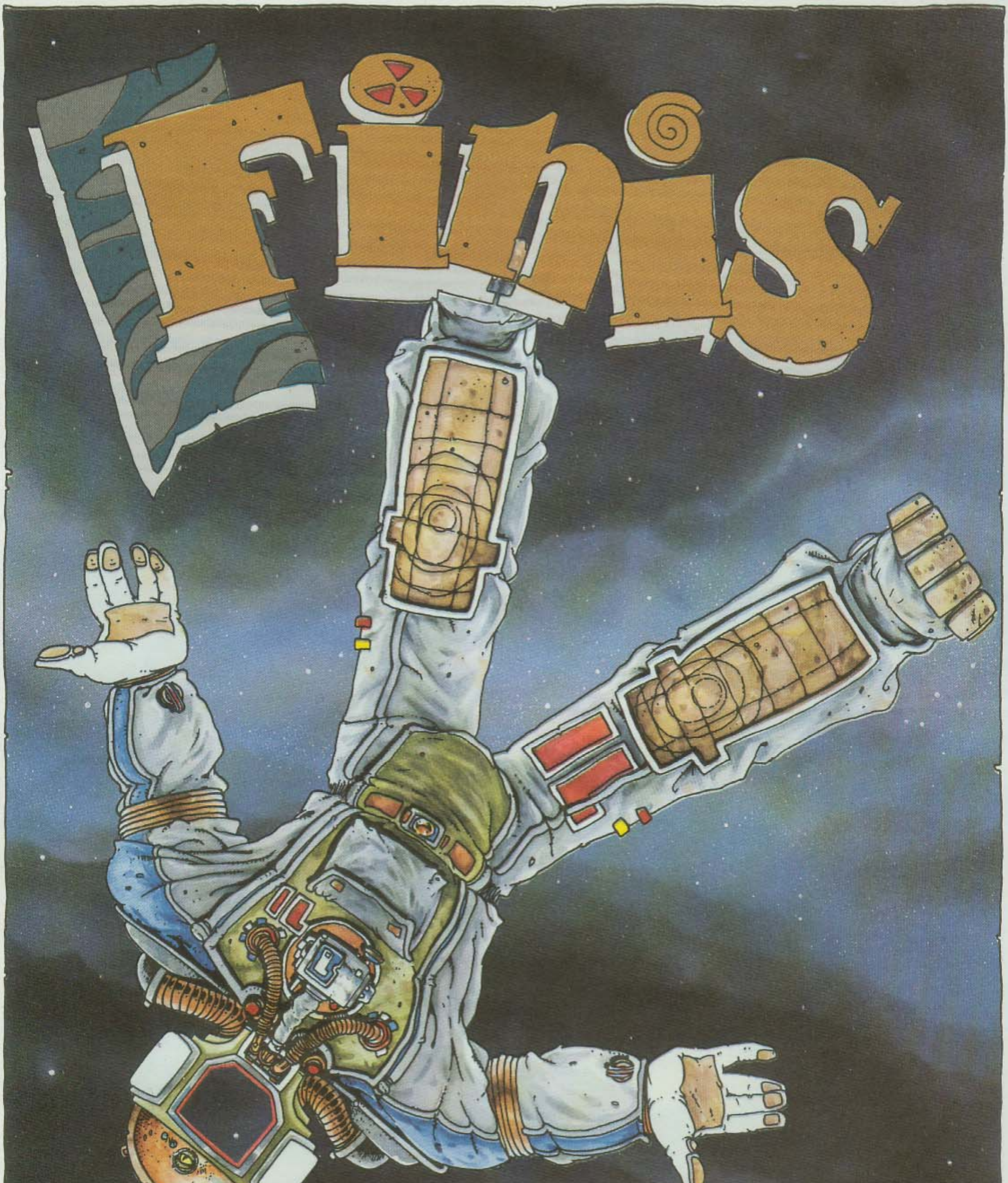
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