

Issue #7

BattleTechnology

P14.80

The Magazine of Combat in the 31st Century



Hanse Davion's New Mech?

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BattleTechnology

The Magazine of Combat in the 31st Century
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Someone will write the history of the Fourth Succession War. If the writer does not refer to the files of **BattleTechnology**, the book will be nothing more than a work of fiction.

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—Thelos Auburn,
Court Historian to Her Grace,
Katrina Steiner,

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0101, August 3027 — report on Davion Op Goliath, MechWarrior mental discipline, FLC-4N 'Falcon' Mech, Battle of Kilgore Engine Swaps, Combat drop on Scheat V, more.

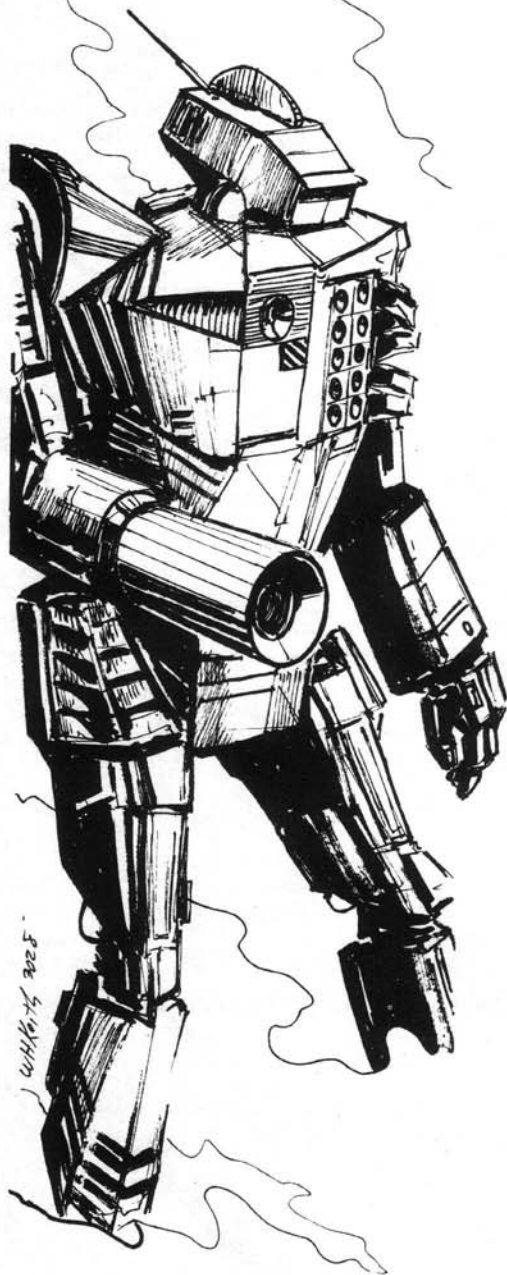
0102, December 3027 — Combat Salvage, Camouflage, Hassid Ricol: The Red Duke, Black Luthien: the Draconis capital, DVE-5B 'Devastor'
0201, February 3028 — Tharkad, Decompression, GLD-3R 'Gladiator', BattleMech Weapons — range versus accuracy, Galaina the Pleasure Planet, Vacuum combat, more.

0202, April 3028 — Hanse Davion Interview, Cavalry Tactics & Applications, Lasers, Banshee BattleMech, Dragonslayers, Battle at Witten-gate, Late-Breaking News, more.

0203, June 3028 — Maximilian Liao Interview, Kearny Highlanders on Mira, Liao Edge on Solaris, Urban Camouflage, more

0204, August, 3028 — WAR ISSUE, Goliaths on St Andre, Miniatures Combat, Reports From the Front, Close Assault

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BattleTechnology

The Magazine of Combat in the 31st Century

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Writing in this issue:

"Deadly Ambition" "Hiring Hall," "Deth Meets Deth" and Deth's letter to Ian Fraser by Dennis Greene
Jeff Morgan's Letter to Ian Fraser by Jeff Morgan
"Combat Efficiency Factors" by Joel Connors
"The ALI-1A Alliance"
and the BattleTechnology News item concerning it by Dale Kemper
Bob Carter's Editorial by "Bob Carter"
"BattleMech Technician" by Stewart Robertson
"Battle for New Egypt" by Stefan Paul Melin-Dempsey and Hillary Ayer
All other writing this issue by Hillary Ayer

About the Cover:

Our representative on Luthien has received this picture, taken by ISF intelligence sources, of the ALI-1A Alliance, the so-called, "Davion Terror 'Mech". The picture was taken during night desert trials on an undisclosed planet. The pilot is said to be the "Fox-Prince, Hanse Davion, himself". No confirmation of the pictures has been possible.

NOTE: this edition is not for sale in the Draconis Combine
Delete the last paragraph of page nine if this copy must be imported into Kurita Space.

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OPENING SHOTS

Sorrow and Determination

I am Bob Carter and I have two difficult jobs. The first is to take up the Editor's chair, here at BattleTechnology. The second is to try to stay alive.

It is with the deepest sense of loss that I have to report the apparent decimation of the Editorial Staff of BattleTechnology. W. H. Keith, Jr., Nina Barton, and several other Staff members were supposed to be in a meeting at the newly re-established BattleTechnology offices at Highport on Exeter. During the scheduled time of that meeting, the block in which our offices were located was destroyed by an explosion. There were neither survivors nor traces found from our many good friends who had gone to continue the high traditions of journalism which BattleTechnology has vowed to uphold.

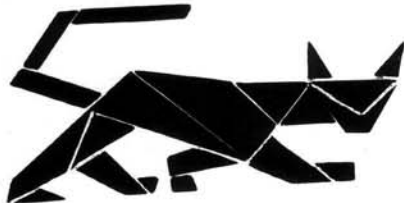
Local authorities have been unable to explain the cause of the explosion. The following letter was found among Editor Keith's affects. The name of the writer has been omitted for her or his protection:

As a new, but enthusiastic, reader of your fine magazine, I have viewed with some amusement the unfolding references to the Nekekami and what would seem to be a covert campaign of destruction being waged against BattleTechnology, its Staff, and — seemingly — anyone with knowledge or connections to knowledge about this mysterious group.

As I did not get the issue with the original article when it was published, I assumed that the postal system had somehow done something untoward with it. However, I have been utterly unable to locate that issue in any merchant location or library at all.

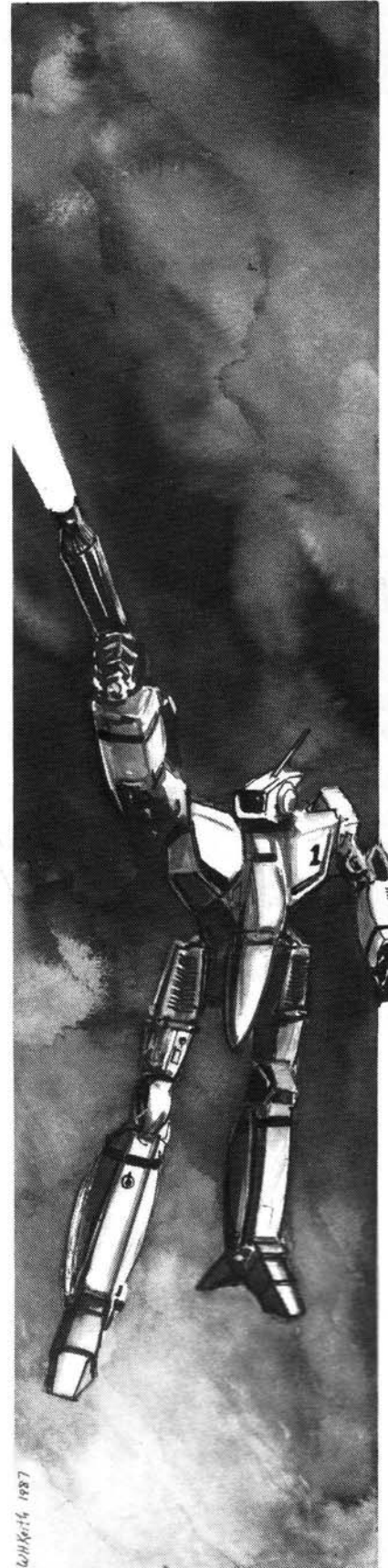
Unable, that is, until last week. I located this issue on microfilm at a library and I assumed that I — and the rest of BattleTechnology's readership — was the target of a colossal prank: there was no article on any 'Nekekami' — the contents included Black Luthien, Improved Lubricant Mixtures for Mech Maintenance, and 'A Dagger's Death', plus the Regular Departments.

Assumed, that is, until this morning. I have located, in a local merchant's, a copy of BattleTechnology Issue 0102 with pages 18 through 25 removed — albeit very neatly and almost undetectably. I found this startlingly strange, especially in light of the crumpled piece of black paper which I found as a placemark in that magazine. I have enclosed it, and it may have more meaning for you than me. When I returned this afternoon, the magazine was no longer there.



We, here at BattleTechnology, are determined to carry on the work of bringing the vital news events of the Inner Sphere to you, our readers. Neither the disruption of the War which has recently broken out nor the threat of reprisal for reporting actual facts nor the paper mill strike which has just begun on New Avalon — none of these will stop us.

Thank you for your support.
— Bob Carter



BattleTechnology Goes to War

If this rhyme reminds you of the elusive Scarlet Pimpernel – it was meant to.

Please don't feel that BattleTechnology Magazine is not responsive to you, our readers and serving warriors. Mr Carter will not answer letters, make appointments, have a personal address or comcode, or go out in public as himself for any reason at all. In his editorial, Mr Carter is too modest to mention the three attempts on his own life before we were able to smuggle him off Exeter. Most of us aren't fighters here, we are journalists. We need to know that our leader is safe and out of the line of fire, that Bob Carter's drive and dexterity are there for us when we need them.

Mr Carter— indeed, all of us here at the magazine have very real and dangerous enemies. Has someone sent professional assassins after the BattleTechnology staff? Has some disgruntled arena fighter, angered by a bad review, decided on his own to take revenge? The truth is – we don't know. We receive death threats daily and weekly. We have received threats from polite Japanese-surnamed gentlemen with no return addresses, on the grounds that our coverage was too sympathetic to House Davion. Some rather large 'Mechwarriors rolled into our Tharkad office last Wednesday to offer us advice on House Steiner's proper ruler. It seems they believed the true Archon to be Frederick Steiner. The advice was meant to be backed up by a comrade in a Griffin. Alas for him, he was so full of Weedbinder's beer that he couldn't climb into his 'Mech. These situations have their amusing side, but somehow we're not able to laugh this week.

I will be contacted by Bob Carter at irregular intervals, and by different means each time and will faithfully pass on all messages, manuscripts, etc, and relay his wishes to you. BE WARNED. I have undergone extensive conditioning in preparation for this assignment; I can reveal nothing about Bob Carter's whereabouts, nor repeat his conversations verbatim. I can't even remember what he looks like. This process was undergone voluntarily as part of BattleTechnology's emergency plan. He will be constantly moving, scouting situations and crises that our readers need to know about. Bob Carter is our Scarlet Pimpernel. Do not expect to see him — but you'll know when he's been there.

— Hilary Ayer
Luthien, December 3028

“They seek him here, they seek him there.

His enemies seek him everywhere.

From his crusades there is no quarter;

The never-to-be-seen Bob Carter.”

BattleTechnology News Service

New 'Mech Design Begins Testing

Dateline: New Avalon, August 3028 — Reliable sources within the New Avalon Institute of Science recently disclosed that a totally new BattleMech design co-created by technicians of House Davion and House Steiner had begun field tests early in August, 3028. Though to be called the ALI-1A ALLIANCE, this 'Mech is reportedly 100 tons in mass, and is equipped with an undisclosed array of offensive weaponry. Additional details concerning this new 'Mech prototype were considered to be TOP SECRET until announced by Federated Suns information sources as the "wedding present" to Hanse Davion and Melissa Arthur Steiner. As soon as further information is available, BattleTechnology will report further details on this 'Mech, the first new design fielded by House Davion or House Steiner in centuries.



ALI-1A Alliance at left

Jamie Wolf A Terrorist?

Dateline: Luthien, August 30, 3028 — N.S. Kadogawa, Minister of Information to the Draconis Combine, today announced the assassination of Warlord Grieg Samsonov, of the Galedon

Military District by "agents of the cowardly Wolf's Dragoons and the Federated Suns." Feeling runs high in the District, with warriors of the Galedon Regulars rioting in the streets.

Mandrinn of Capella to Earn Spiritual Grace

Dateline: Sian, October 3028 — C.K. Leong, press secretary to the Chancellory announced that Tormana Liao, former son to Chancellor Maximilian Liao, plans a retreat at the Evening Peace monastery on Carver IV. This is a monastery of the Living Silence Sect; the visitor, like the monks, is expected to speak no word from dawn to dusk. The charismatic MechWarrior requests that no calls or visitors disturb him at his meditation. He quotes the poem by Li Hseiu (2528-2605), "*If the snake does not coil in readiness, he cannot strike.* Charming as the distractions of your company are in my leisure hours, I must be allowed a time of spiritual growth." The Mandrinn of Capella was slightly wounded in the recent fighting on Algol. Length of the retreat is indefinite.

To the right: a recent sketch of the Mandrinn



BattleTechnology News Service

Wolf Returns to Dragoons

Dateline: Glenmora, Mid October, 3028 — Col Jamie Wolf rejoined his own Alpha Regiment today, slipping into the system through a pirate Jump Point. Wolf narrowly evaded capture by the 16th Galedon Regulars who were waiting at the Zenith Point for him. Col Wolf's ship, piloted by Rae "Raven" Phillips, evaded notice for the two day's travel to Glenmora, by joining a convoy of Combine DropShips. As this was not one of the Dragoon's DropShips, but a battered Leopard-class purchased from BattleTechnic Salvage, the ship was not noticed until it was landing at Hades, still in the midst of the Combine ships. The ships attacked in the planet's atmosphere; one *Shilone* rammed the DropShip, which embedded itself in the concrete of the landing field. Passengers and pilot escaped. Col Wolf is now personally in command of his forces on this world. No further dispatches have reached BattleTechnology: Combine Forces continue to swarm over Glenmora. We hope to have further news of Wolf's Dragoons and the battle for the Galedon System in our next issue.

Tikonov Falls

Dateline: Tikonov, Tikonov Commonality, October 18, 3028 — The planet of Tikonov, capitol world of the Tikonov Commonality, has seen some dramatic fighting of late. The gallant defense of the city of Tikograd, personally commanded by Commander of the Capellan Military Forces Col Pavel Ridzik, made the 7th and 8th Crucis Lancers pay dearly for each district and city block conquered. Yet conquer they did. Col Ridzik refused to be taken prisoner, fighting his way through a company of 6th Lancer 'Mechs to his DropShip. As the DropShip lifted off, all fighters in pursuit, a storm blew up. The ship lost itself in the clouds. Ridzik made rendezvous with a JumpShip hidden near the planet and escaped to the Elgin system.

Today the last pocket of resistance collapsed, with the surrender of the city of Ulan. The AFFS now holds all of Tikonov's cities. The planet must be conceded to the Federated Suns.

Below: Night Fighting near Tikograd



BattleTechnology News Service

Death's Shadows Renews Steiner Contract

Dateline: Halfway, November 3028—Lt Col Joshua Deth, leader of the Death's Shadows Battalion, holder of McKensy's Hammer, announced a two-year renewal of this crack battalion's contract. "House Steiner has treated us well. We are more than satisfied with our treatment here. As an employer, the Archon expects—and pays for—the best. With us, she gets what she pays for. Other employers would do well to take note!" Was this remark was meant as an oblique slap at Chancellor Liao, who, our readers will remember, parted from this unit on less than friendly terms in Spring of 3026, in an action involving the death of Deth's father, Col David Deth? Or was it perhaps meant for Duke Michael Hasek-Davion, whose less-than-generous attempt to recruit the original unit from Fortymile on terms of compulsion led to the formation of the First Fortymile Hikers, and the severing of relations with the Federated Suns, in 3022? To our queries, Lt Col Deth turned a bland face to the camera and inquired if reporters always read sinister meanings into every casual figure of speech. We did not raise the question of the Death's Shadows' anniversary toast, "Death to the Weasel."

Kuo Company, Sarna 3028

Kuo Company—The Saga Ends

Dateline: Sarna, Sarna Commonality, Capellan Confederation, 21 October 3028—Our readers have followed with admiration the brilliant use of terrain by the jagged remnants of Kuo Company (First Battalion, Freemont's Curraissiers), which retreated into the Hellfire Mountains where natural heat sources could hide them as they regrouped. Led by Major Sidney Xong, this group conducted lightning guerrilla actions which tied up an entire regiment of the Aragon Borderers for a month.

These same Borderers referred to Delta Company, the recently-formed double strength assault group as a mere "March Recruit Troop". Yet Delta company, in a brilliant ambush used the heat factor of those same thermally-active mountains against the heavier Marauders the Cuirassiers were piloting. Forcing Kuo Company to do battle against the terrain advantage of a narrow valley locals call "The Slot", Andrew Redburn, CO of Delta Company, First Davion Light Guards, forced the surrender of Major Xong with damage to only one 'Mech.

Our dictionary reminds us that the word "arrogant" derives from the inhabitants of Aragon on Terra. Those Aragonese were pre-space expansion, but their nature doesn't seem to have changed much.



BattleTechnology News Service

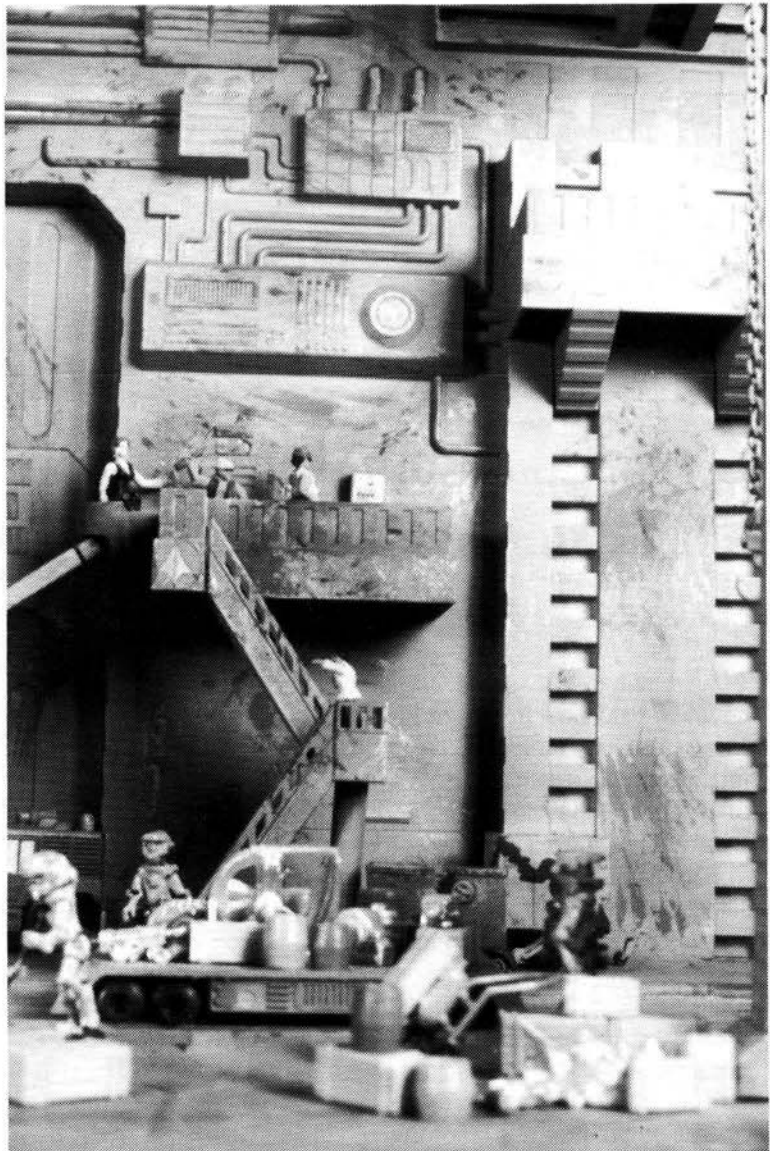
Free Worlds at War With Own Ally?

Dateline: Scarborough, Duchy of Anduri — Followers of the recent actions of the Fre remind us that when Captain-General Ja Operation Dagger on October 1, the Duchy of Anduri refused to take part. Although this thrust against the Isle of Skye netted the worlds of Poulsbo, Timbiqui, Launum, Phecda, and Hilton, Dame Katherine Humphreys argued that it was against the wrong enemy, that the time was now auspicious to attack the Capellan Confederation. On December 2, a hospital on Scarborough treating Capellan wounded was bombed. A Capellan tank regiment on planet for refitting rioted seeing upon so many friends killed. The regiment attacked a local police station, killing everyone there.

This was all the Anduriens needed to fuel their long-held fear of the Capellans. The Fourth Andurien Defenders were heavy-handed in their suppression of the attack. Dame Katherine declared war on the Capellan Confederation. Within the week Andurien troops had taken the Capellan world of Palladaine and invaded several others. Captain-General Marik is said to be mediating between the combatants.

The Sleeping Dragon Awakes

Dateline: Luthien, Dec 20, 3028 — **STOP PRESS ITEM** — The Draconis Combine today began an offensive against the Lyran Federation. Units involved are reported to be the 13th and 25th Rasalhogue Regulars, the Ninth Pesht Regulars, the 7th Sword of Light, the 3rd Dieron Regulars and the Fourth Proserpina Hussars. This action also sees the return of the Kingston Cabelleros thought to be out of action following their fight for the planet Sabiek.



Andurien Prepares, December 3028

The number of planets under attack is not known at this time, but it seems to include Stanzack, The Edge, Sabik itself, and La Blon in the Commonwealth's long-held territory. Results of the actions are not yet final. Fierce fighting continues on all fronts.

News from the Front

Theodore Kurita Rallies Troops on Vega

On other worlds in the Draconis Combine, Theodore Kurita is known by the title, "Prince of Luthien". Here on Vega, they call him "The Colonel". No other officer will ever use that military title again to the Vegan civilians. Col Kurita has almost singlehandedly saved their world.

After his daring escape from Marfik at the beginning of October, Col Kurita landed secretly on Vega with the remnants of the 11th Legion of Vega, the unit he built from the ragbag. Two of Vega's three continents had fallen to the Lyran invaders. The remaining troops, two regiments from the Legion of Vega, were disgruntled and out of supply. The Elite 14th Lyran Guards could be pardoned for thinking that pacification of the planet was a matter of days.

Col Kurita rallied the planet's disorganized militia into partisan units. He organized small-unit lightning raids to take the Lyrans offbalance; the attack units had to be quickly broken down into the small units more effective against these light, quick enemy thrusts. He used civilian rumor and propaganda skillfully against the offworld invaders. He quickly saw that unless his forces could resupply themselves with parts, ammunition, fuel and foods, they had no hope of holding out, far less of winning. The main Lyran supply depot of Colchus was just over twenty clicks away. He could easily mount a destructive raid, and deny supplies to the LCAF forces, but that still would not give his troops enough to survive on.

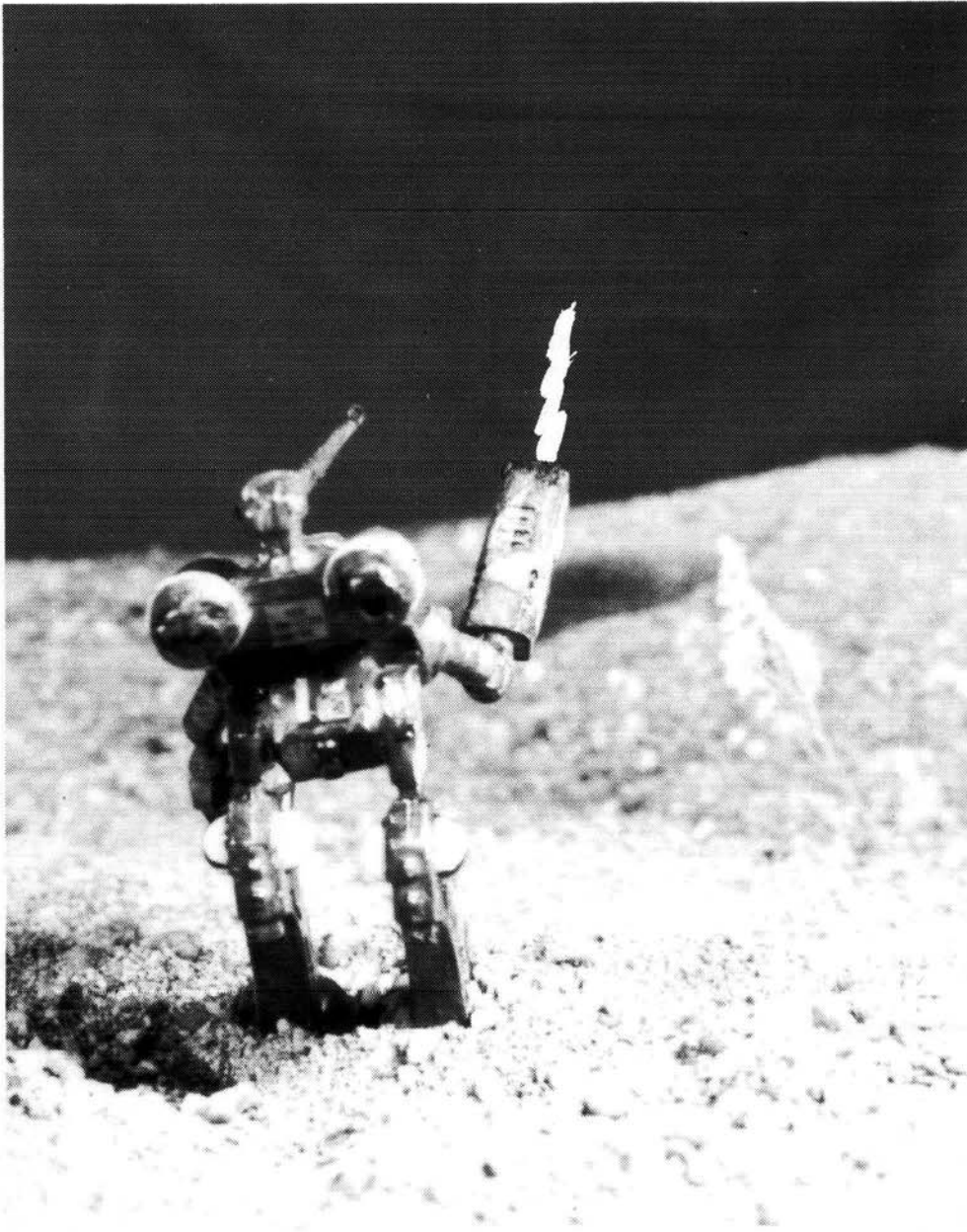
World Name: Vega
Star Type: AOV
Position in System: 7
Time to Jump Point: 27 days
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
Planetary Chairman: Marianne Vron, Duke of Vega
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Noren Glover
Population: 2,284,000,000.
Percentage and Level of Native Life: None

Vega is hot and dry. It is—or is was—a factory planet. Most of its factories have lain in ruins for decades. It's surface is rocky; it supports no native life forms. Some few life forms have established themselves on the planet, mostly plants. Much of the surface is bare rock or desert.

At the time of Col Kurita's landing, the only major holding in Combine hands was the capitol city of Neucason. He had two 'Mech regiments, forty tank and infantry regiments, no ships but his personal DropShip, and no supplies. There were no Combine supply caches onplanet. The commander of the Dieron Military District was not in a position—or a humor—to resupply the Legion of Vega. What supplies they received were few, grudgingly given, and too late.

There were two reasons for this. General Vasily Cherenkoff has a personal dislike for Col Kurita, and Cherenkoff is the sort of officer who lets personal animosity take precedence over duty. And the entirety of the Combine military considers the Legion of Vega to be a unit of guttersweepings. Despite the gallant service of the 11th Legion on Marfik, this opinion still prevails, and has hampered the efforts of the Second and Fourteenth Legions on Vega.

Dateline: Vega November 10, 3028



Two dozen partisan units and small strike lances went out on diversionary raids and skirmishes; most lost their lives in the effort, but these brave actions gave Col Kurita the time he needed to mount a major attack on the Steiner supply depot at Colchus. The surprise attack was a complete success; no alarm was raised as the Vegan hovercraft fleet converged on the depot, removing tons of supplies over a period of three days, before the surprised Lyrans could counterattack.

Whatever the Vegans could not take, they destroyed. Now

it was Col Kurita's forces that were in possession of ample stores of parts, fuel, ammunition, and food, while the invading forces suffered privation. Planetary morale completely restored, partisan forces on all three continents regrouped and began fighting anew. As of this report, there remains little doubt that the planet will be retaken shortly.

Coordinator Takashi Kurita continues to concentrate his efforts on the Galedon Military District, on Glenmora, and the other planets defended by his nemesis Wolf's Dragoons. Dragoon casualties are estimated to have reached 60% of the unit. How long can they continue to fight? How long can Coordinator Kurita continue to ignore the rest of the Fourth Succession War? On Vega, Col Kurita continues to receive the best intel available on the front, due to the respectful friendship that he maintains with Subrash Indrahara, head of the ISF. Reports indicate that his father, the Coordinator, is completely ignoring Indrahara's work in his obsession with Wolf's Dragoons.

Desert fighting on Vega, November, 3028

BattleTechnology Recommends:

For more information the Fourth Succession war, currently affecting our lives and our livelihood, the new **The NAIS Fourth Succession War Military Atlas v1 August 3028 — January 3029** is a book which you will frequently want to consult.

News From The Front



Homeward Bound

Dateline: Johnathan, Capellan Front, Dec 21, 3028

The AFFS 5th Crucis Lancers withdrew to their lines under orders and watched quietly as the 2nd Kearny Highlanders marched by, pipes and drums playing "Scotland the Brave". The Highlanders packed their families and loaded their weapons and supplies into their DropShips and left Johnathan peacefully with the blessings of the troops with whom they had been bitterly engaged just one week before.

On Highspire, the 1st Kearny Highlanders collected their families and belongings and began to load their DropShips. Romano Liao's capitol world did not take this tamely; without waiting for orders, a Capellan tank crew opened fire on them, starting a drawn-out battle that left Highspire strewn with wrecked vehicles and dead Capellans before the Highlanders managed their escape offworld.

Highlanders Return Home

Marion's Highlanders and McCormack's Fusiliers were stationed on Elgin. In a tense standoff, two battalions of Capellan 'Mechs watched closely as the units embarked. No battle was joined, much to the amazement of all.

Historians will remember that the tradition-bound world of Northwind was taken by the Federated Suns during the Second Succession War, when all but two of the six Northwind Highlander regiments were offplanet, serving in the interior of the Capellan Confederation. The Highlanders were already famous as mercenaries, and this reputation was upheld by the 3rd Kearny and the Ben Nevis regiments, which were utterly destroyed in this action. This slaughter, and the Capellans' highly colored accounts of atrocities visited on the survivors, caused the other four Highland regiments to swear allegiance to the Capellan Confederation. House Liao promised again and again to mount an attack on Northwind and to reunite the clans. Somehow throughout the Second and Third Succession Wars, this never proved convenient. The families kept in touch through ComStar, but seldom if ever met in person.

In the beginning of the Fourth Succession War, the Highland Regiments fought on several fronts, showing again the mettle of these legendary warriors. Supplies and support from the rest of the Capellan Confederation were slow and incomplete. (Never has Chancellor Liao's reknowned pennypinching cost him more.) The recent events on Mira (see BattleTechnology 0203, #5) had shaken the Highlanders' confidence in House Liao even further.

Col Fiona Chattan, the clan's senior Elder, approached the AFFS forces on Northwind early in December. Lt Gen Ardan Sortek, trusted advisor to Prince Hanse Davion, conducted negotiations on Northwind, and, by coded transmission, with the four offworld regiments. Agreement was reached on December 14. The AFFS was commanded to cease fighting with Highlander regiments and to give what aid they could in the grand return home. This explains the amazing scenes we mentioned earlier.

The agreement states that all of the Northwind Highlanders renounce allegiance to the Capellan Confederation and swear allegiance to the Federated Suns. In return the clan elders received title to their homeworld, the assurance that their officers will always be from the Stuart clan, and Prince Hanse's personal assurance that they will to be asked to serve far from their home system except briefly in times of extreme necessity. This contrasts sharply with House Liao's dictum that no Highlander regiment be allowed to remain on a planet which was not its theater of war for more than a month. The Chancellory's

policy for generations has kept the Highlanders rootless and homeless.

As the four regiments prepare to return home from all over the Capellan Frontier, the question remains as to whether there will be a home for them to return to. Fighting is fierce on Northwind, with elite units of the Draconis Combine said to be preparing a further invasion. BattleTechnology promises to bring you the first reliable reports of this action as the Draconis Combine attempts to cut off the Federated Suns' narrow corridor to Terra.

**BattleTechnology
salutes the valor and
honor of the
Northwind Highlander
Regiments. Whatever
the results of the cur-
rent action may be,
their reunion is the
best news we've
printed in a long time.**



Death's Shadows

BattleTechnology continues to present this column as a special service to those of its readers who are mercenary warriors. In each issue, Hiring Hall gives an in-depth review of potential patrons who could offer employment opportunities for freelance warriors. The patrons reviewed range from wealthy individuals in need of soldier-for-hire, through corporations and merchant organizations, to the Major Houses of the Successor States. Employment opportunities screened here may include anything from individual openings for security guards or bounty hunters up to and including needs for entire mercenary BattleMech regiments.

A three-letter coding system has been developed to rate patrons reviewed in Hiring Hall. Each letter will range from A (very, very good from the mercenary's point of view) through Z (very, very bad), with the average at L through N. This code will be used exclusively in this and other BattleTechnology columns to indicate possible advantages or disadvantages in any potential employers.

The areas rated are:

NEED: How frequently does the patron employ mercenaries? Ratings of A through G suggest a nearly constant need for mercenaries of various types. Ratings of U through Z indicate that mercenaries are rarely, if ever, employed.

PAY: How well does the employer pay? High rating suggest above-average pay scales. Low ratings indicate below-average pay, or a history of noncompliance with mercenary contracts. Note that pay alone is not the only factor used in calculating this rating. Other factors which affect the financial aspect of a potential contract with the

employer are taken into account, such as whether or not the mercenaries must provide their own transportation, and how lenient the employer is likely to be in negotiating terms for battlefield salvage, logistical re-supply, or death benefits.

CONDITIONS: What are the usual conditions under which mercenaries work? High ratings indicate relatively good conditions, including access to recreational or R&R facilities, service on an Earthlike world, or soft tickets such as ceremonial guard duty or providing escort for court functionaries. Low values indicate service under bad or unpleasant conditions, such as on a world with a hostile environment, or on an isolated outpost far from recreational facilities. Many factors are applied to the calculations for each code value. Obviously, pay, conditions, and opportunities may vary tremendously from ticket to ticket, depending on circumstances and on changes in the employer's situation, unreported to BattleTechnology, since the research for this column was completed. For this reason, these codes are intended as guidelines only. BattleTechnology can assume no responsibility, written or implied, for damages, costs, or casualties incurred by readers during service to mercenary employers reviewed in this column.

MERCENARY REQUIREMENTS:

Although the Death's Shadows Brigade is a relatively new unit, it is fast becoming respected. Only mercenaries of quality are chosen. This standard for quality has ensured that the best mercenaries are recruited, but has

prevented it from reaching regimental status as quickly as other units of the same age. To be hired, a warrior must fit into the code that the unit has established, to uphold honor and the spirit of mankind to its highest potential.

The precedent set in 3026, of hiring among the Dispossessed, has perhaps been the unit's greatest strength. These warriors are treated with the same courtesy as any of the other hirelings. Due to this, those warriors have a high sense of loyalty to the unit.

Mercenary troops seeking employment with the Shadows will note a high sense of camaraderie between the unit's regulars and its hirelings, so much so that when the latter's contracts have expired, they are encouraged to become regulars themselves. There is no distinction between hirelings and regular troops. A "great big family" attitude is encouraged regardless of a trooper's status. The two stipulations made are that the mercenary is subordinate to the Shadows officers, and that in a contract signed in blood, they agree never to attack the Shadows for as long as they are warriors.

The Brigade is always looking for more 'Mechs to fill out their ranks. If a unit wishes to merge with the Shadows, they must agree that they will be accepted on an individual basis. If any or all personnel are accepted, the effort is made to ensure that the unit stays together within the brigade. If a pilot brings his own 'Mech, but it is in a damaged condition, he need not worry as long as he meets the requirements. If he is accepted, his 'Mech will be repaired to the best standard which the brigade can manage.

TICKET DETAILS:

The duties of mercenary troops joining the Death's Shadows Brigade will of course depend on the type of duty that the Lyran Commonwealth chooses for the Brigade. It is possible to make arrangements with the Brigade for specific duty, but the mercenary's history is taken into account.

MISSIONS:

RETAINER

STATIC DEFENSE (Garrison Duty, Training Cadres, Security)

RAIDS (Recon, Objective, Diversionary)

INVASION (Relief Duty)

LENGTH OF SERVICE:

24 months minimum, frequently with the option of becoming permanent.

REMUNERATION:

Infantry, Armor, Artillery, Astechs:
(per squad per week)

Elite, Veteran: Cb 10,000 - 13,000

Regular: Cb 5,000 - 9,000

Green: Cb 2,000 - 4,000

MechWarriors, AeroSpace Pilots:
(per warrior per week)

Elite, Veteran: Cb 2,100

Regular: Cb 1,400

Green: Cb 900

Technicians, Engineers:

(per individual per week)

Elite, Veteran: Cb 1,800

Regular: Cb 1,200

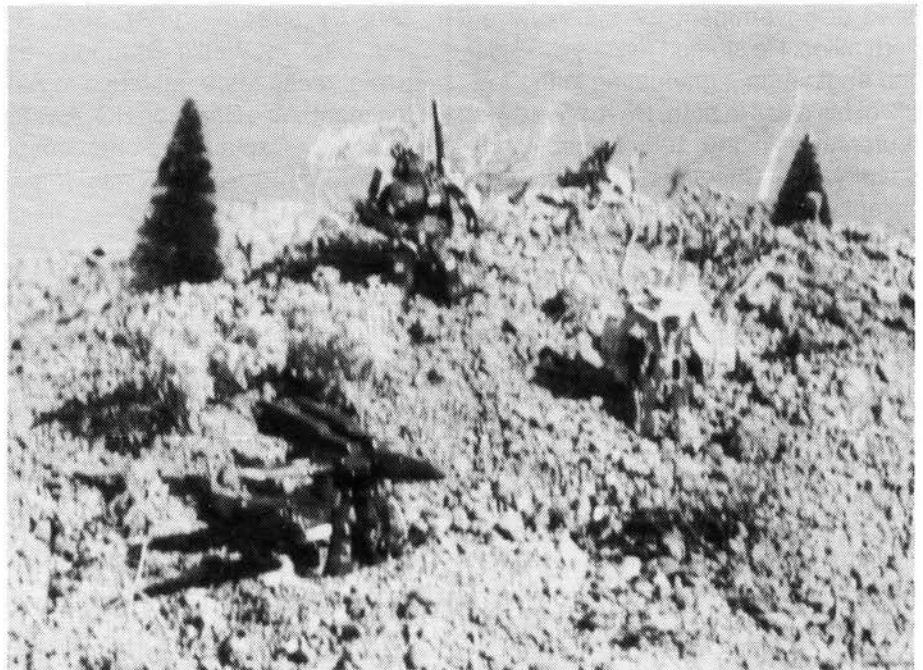
Green: Cb 750

GUARANTEES:

Advance / completion: The mercenary/unit/warrior/etc is awarded 10% in advance of his 24 months pay upon joining the unit. The rest is generally paid out during the contracted period. Monies to be paid to banking institutions on Halfway, or on the planet of the mercenary's reasonable choice. Guaranteed through ComStar intermediary.

COMMAND RIGHTS:

The mercenary trooper will generally be fully integrated within the unit. In the case of full merc units, the House Command System is used with the mercenary unit commander placed directly under an officer appointed by Col Deth, or under the Colonel himself.



TRANSPORT:

All transport will be furnished by the Death's Shadows Brigade. Units with their own transportation may be given preferential terms of employment.

CODE: R / J / I

ASSESSMENT:

This unit is constantly recruiting, but the attitude is that they're "looking for a few good men" rather than hiring en masse. Units that wish a guarantee of service together may find the requirement that each person hire on separately intolerable. The Shadows have proved to keep their word about keeping units together once the individuals concerned were hired. Need is therefore in the moderate range.

Pay is on the generous side of average. Charges against pay for such items as disciplinary fines, etc are almost nonexistent.

So what are the drawbacks to this unit? An old-fashioned mercenary MechWarrior who expects to find himself very much the pampered star of the unit will find the attitude of equality unliveable. For a loner, such as many mercenaries are in temperament, 24 months, the minimum enlistment, is a long time to be forced to be like family with people who are unknown. Take personality factors candidly into account before you sign on. If you suit their type, this is a good billet. This unit has had a good record with civilian personnel, which makes R & R possibilities favorable. The high likelihood that all troops will be taking relief duty in House Steiner's invasion plans make conditions unfavorable in regard to risk; though not as high-risk as invasion troops, garrison and pacification duty on an unpacified planet leaves no room for relaxation to count your medals. For wartime, risk is at an acceptable level. Other conditions would give a C or D rating.

UNIT HISTORY:

Lord David Deth was born in 2992, the son of Count Samuel Deth, the able head of government for the world of Fortymiles. He studied military science and engineering, graduating in the top 1% of his class in both. He received his lieutenancy in the 10th Deneb Light Cavalry, the Cheetahs. After serving gallantly, he resigned his commission in 3017 in order to help his father form a planetary 'Mech Force on Fortymiles, the 1st Fortymile Lancers.

When the unit reached battalion strength in 3022, Duke Michael Hasek-Davion offered to incorporate the unit into his Syrtis Fusiliers. When Count Samuel refused, Duke Michael took it as a sign of rebellion. He publicly disgraced Count Samuel, stripped him of his office, and attempted to incorporate the unit forcibly.

Major Samuel Deth made a formal vow never to return until Michael Hasek-Davion was removed from office or died. Only a company escaped from Fortymiles. They were renamed the First Fortymile Hikers. Almost their first action was a rough encounter with Hanson's Roughriders, which left Lt David Deth as the only survivor.

Feb 9, 3023 — Oct 17, 3023: Lt Deth signs up with the Black Gorgons as the Recon Lance Commander.

Unit employed by House Kurita against House Davion; does well, capturing much equipment and 'Mechs, mainly due to Lt Deth's innovative tactics. Tension arises between CO and Lt Deth

Oct 16, 3023 — Waterworks raid, ambushed by the infamous "Bounty Hunter". Bounty Hunter escapes.

Oct 17, 3023 — See events pg22. Death's Shadows Company formed. Company consists of the two ships, 1 Heavy and 5 Medium 'Mechs.

Mar 03, 3024 — Jul 31, 3024: The units's 'Mechs and pilots enter the games on Solaris as independents. They win enough in prize money and 'Mechs to form an understrength company. Unit now consists of 9 'Mechs: 1

Heavy, 6 Mediums, and 2 Lights. Two pilots hired, one of them Deth's son Joshua.

Aug 01, 3024 — Jan 31, 3025: Sub-contracted to Wolf's Dragoons as a special recon force, attached to Alpha Regiment, Able Battalion HQ. Awarded the rank of Captain and one complete refit courtesy of Col Wolf, with whom he forms a respectful friendship. Unit now consists of 2 Heavy 'Mechs, 6 Mediums and 3 Lights, with two scouts. Son Peter Deth joins.

Feb 23, 3025 — Jul 22, 3025: Contracted to O'Reilly to garrison one of the Depot worlds. Screaming Hawk design funded by O'Reilly. Unit is to receive one 'Mech if it works, and parts for upkeep.

Aug 7, 3025 — Sep 19, 3025: Employed by Magistracy of Canopus. Contract ends abruptly when Unit refused to join permanently. Assassination attempt failed. Equipment and a Union Class DropShip captured. Unit flees to Inner Sphere.

Jan 01, 3026 — Apr 13, 3026: Contracted to House Liao, used as raiding force against House Marik. Information on raid is leaked so that Liao forces can strike elsewhere. The unit clashes with two battalions of the 3rd brigade of the Oriente Fusiliers. The encounter nearly destroys the unit, with 80% pilot casualties, and 60% of the 'Mechs near junk. Captain Deth is killed and his son Joshua assumes command. House Liao breaks contract, citing "Mission not completed and Unit now under contract strength". Liao refuses to repair 'Mechs or award payment. ComStar upholds decision.

Jun 22, 3026 — Sep 19, 3026: Hard times. Company coffers emptied to repair damaged 'Mechs and hospitalize wounded warriors. The Leopard Class DropShip is listed as destroyed on TO&E and renamed the Holy Moley. Capt Joshua Deth begins to hire warriors from among the Dispossessed.

Sep 19, 3026 — Nov 12, 3026: Recent enemy Duke Christopher Halas

offers unit employment as an auxiliary to his Oriente Fusiliers. Low pay, but salvage rights, and a chance to strike back at House Liao. The Duke said, "I want your unit to take the place of the units you mauled, Captain, and in your present situation I think you will agree to my terms." By the end of the contract, the unit is Battalion-sized, mostly due to captured Liao 'Mechs. Unit receives the Liao Campaign and Raiding Ribbons for destroying or capturing over 2090 tons of 'Mechs. Duke Halas gives Joshua Deth the Oriente Legion of Merit and makes him an honorary member of the Legion, with the rank of Major. They part on friendly terms.

Feb 01, 3027 — Aug 31, 3028: Death's Shadows Battalion, now three and one half companies strong, signs on with House Steiner. Acting as a quick reaction force along the Steiner-Marik border, the unit distinguishes itself as fast and hard-hitting. The unit is asked to become a regular unit of House Steiner. Lt Col Deth replies. "Tell Her Grace that her offer is generous, and rewards us greatly, but our founding roots come from Davion soil. Until the 'weasel' is removed, we remain mercenary."

Sep 01, 3028 — Contract renewed with House Steiner, with a 10% pay raise, and an option for a two-year extension at the end of that contract.

After withdrawing to Halfway, the unit's homeworld, for R&R, the Colonel restructures the unit and renames it the Death's Shadows Brigade. The six combat companies, HQ company, and a training company are relocated to Hesperus II in anticipation of a Marik raid on that planet. Lt Col Deth is promoted to full Colonel.



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Phransigars, The Strangler Cult

by Dr Hobart Watson

You've been in transit for days now, caravanning with a group of people coming home from a wedding, a metallurgist, and a parts shipment bound for the seacoast. The metallurgist turns off just before nightfall; the rest of the party puts up at a Trokstop where the wedding group seems to be welcomed with special friendliness. There's quite a party; "Let's drink this stuff up before we get home and have to share it with our uncles!", says one of them. After a while it all seems logical for the party to a journ to the terrace up the hill from the Trokstop to sing to the moon. "Look, look up there!", someone says excitedly. You turn your head up. For just a moment there is a crushing pressure on your windpipe and a pounding in your ears, then consciousness fades, never to return.

You and your companions are never heard of again. Your spouses decide they've been deserted. Your bosses decide you've absconded with a load of goods. Even if somebody believes in you enough to make the long journey from your home, you cannot be traced from the last large city you stayed in, several days before. Your grave is never found. In time you become one more minor mystery in a universe of unsolved happenings.

Once a merchant is on-planet, the most economic way to transport his goods is still the slow, old fashioned way. You have to ground-transit your load, sometimes thousands of miles, to its destination. The driver and his co-pilot travel the long

highways, spelling each other at the wheel. But sooner or later, you have to stop, for fuel, or food or natural causes. You can't keep moving forever. You get to know the places that welcome transies, where you can rent a cot and get some honest sleep, sleep without the back of your mind watching the road while you dream. Places where merchants and travellers and other transies spend an evening or an hour. Places where there are no hijackers, no enforcement officers, when you can have a cup of the local brew and tell a few stories before you get back in your vehicle and the long miles swallow you up again.

Like the caravansaries of old Terra, where the great silk and spice caravans halted for the night, these Trokstops as they're called, are islands of safety in a sea of troubles. But on Terra itself these days, as on Highspire, in the Tikonov Commonality, and in limited portions of the Capellan March of the Federated Suns, this safety is illusion. One of the oldest of the night predators has begun to take its toll of travellers. One of the oldest and most fearsome of predators — man himself.

In the old Terran language of Hindustani, members of this brotherhood were called *thag*, a word which means *deceiver*. The word was corrupted to *thug*, and the name of their cult to *thuggee*. Yet among themselves, they have always been known as *Phransigars* from the word for *noose*. They make their living by stealing, and they never steal without killing. They never attack one of a party without attacking all of it. They murder their victims, and hide the bodies so that the victims are never found. Often a family thinks itself deserted, or a merchant thinks himself robbed by an employee and never know that they are slandering the innocent dead.

Kali, the Dark Mother

Several millenia ago, almost two

hundred years before the first spaceflight, the subcontinent of India on Terra was wracked by civil war and famine. Some of the continent was held by the English, an influential nation in the days before world government. Some was held by innumerable small and warring states. The Urdu poet Sauda talks of houses taken over by jackals, no lights showing in the houses because no one could afford the oil, dead bodies unburied, children dying of starvation as a matter of routine.

In the popular Hinduism, the people's own practices as opposed to the teachings of the priests, the wives of Shiva the destroyer included the death goddess Kali. On ritual days, the precincts of her temples were carpeted in the blood of slain animals, themselves a substitution for the human sacrifices of centuries before. Her worshippers chanted, "*Terrific faced Kali, holding a drawn sword and a noose and a club, wreathed with human skulls, lean, emaciated and terrible. Wide-mouthed, maddened, blood red-eyed, filling the four quarters of the world with your hideous cries...*" Priests of the higher Hinduism, ancestor to the Hinduism practiced today, scorned these rites, regarding them as being based on a literal and misguided interpretation of the Vedas. It is a sign of the horror of those times of civil war that this cult became so popular..

Among these worshippers there was an elite. For them the human sacrifices had never stopped. They regarded themselves as a tribe apart, brothers to the tiger. They lived in villages by themselves, or built houses in a group at one end of a larger town. They grew no crops. They lived by murder. They were clever, and patient. The English thought that they had stamped out this cult, but it only went underground. The cult emigrated along with innocent citizens to the stars.

A Phransigar is Trained

A young person may begin his initiation (or her initiation in the reformed

Tragedy: Phransigar Style

"About twelve years ago, my cousin Aman took with us for the first time my cousin Kurhora, a lad of about fourteen. He was mounted on a newly-painted skimmer, and Hursooka, an adopted son of Aman's, was given charge of him. We met five electronics salesmen traveling to a convention, and offered to ride with them 'to pass the journey more pleasantly'. As we came to a convenient place, Hursooka was told to take Kurhora over a little hill, to keep him out of sight and hearing. The lad grew restless, and suddenly decided to race his skimmer over the hill; Hursooka trailing behind him, calling to him to stop. Kurhora dropped into sight over the hill just as our leader gave the *Jhirnee* (signal to strangle). He heard the salesmen scream, and saw them all strangled. He began to tremble, fell from his skimmer, and became delirious. He was terrified at the sight of the *rumals*, and of the bodies of the murdered men. Whenever anyone touched or spoke to him he talked about the murders and screamed like someone helpless in a bad dream.

We couldn't get Kurhora to move, even after we buried the bodies. Hursooka, Aman and I went and sat by him while the gang went on. We were very fond of him, and we tried all we knew to calm him, but he never recovered. He would not eat nor sleep. By the end of the week he had something resembling a stroke and died, it seemed of terror. Hursooka took his death very much to heart. He left us and became a monk."

When I asked the same informant, "Do your children still love and reverence their Phransigar parents, as children in other families do, even after they know about your trade?" , I was answered, Of course they do. My love for my father never wavered.



Statue said to be Kali or Devi, another protectress of the Phransigar

Origin of the Phransigar

Once on a time the worlds were infested with a monstrous demon named Rukt Bij-dana, who devoured mankind as fast as they were created. So gigantic was he, that the deepest pools of the ocean reached no higher than his waist. Kali cut this horrid being in two with her sword, but from every drop of blood that fell to the ground there sprang a new demon. She went on destroying them, till the hellish brood multiplied so fast that she grew hot and tired from her endless task. She paused for a while, and brushed the sweat off of her arms. From this sweat she created two men, to whom she gave a *rumal*, or handkerchief, and commanded them to strangle the demons. When they had slain them all, they offered to return the *rumal*, but the goddess bade them to keep it and to pass it on to their children, with the goddess's bidding to destroy all who were not part of their tribe.

She presented them with one of her teeth for a pickaxe, one of her ribs for a knife, and the hem of her lower garment for a noose, and ordered them to use the pickaxe to cut and bury the bodies of those they strangled.

White and yellow are the favorite colors of Kali. For this reason, the cloths for strangling are always of these colors. Some of her worshippers will wear no other colors.

sect) as early as thirteen years of age. A great deal of importance is given to learning a trade or trades which can be used as camouflage; sometimes a troop of Phransigars will work say, as diggers for an archaeologist, or mechanics at a Trokstop for months waiting for the most profitable moment. The *Soon*, or apprentice at this time takes one of the old Indian names. As the Phransigars allow entrance into the tribe by adoption, the *Soon* may have any physical appearance whatever.

The *Soon* begins as a scout, sent to watch for approaching strangers during a killing. He is kept away from the sight of death, but given an equal share of the proceeds. (Phransigars share equally between the most senior and most junior members of a party) The second time, he is told that the money is the proceeds of a robbery; the next time, he is informed of the fact of the murder, but not allowed to witness it. The fourth time he is allowed to witness; it is presented to him as a special privilege, one that is only for adults. Once he is accustomed to the idea of death, he advances to gravedigger. The next stage, at age 16 or 17 is that of *Shumseea*, one who holds the victims' hands. The young Phransigar is conditioned to feel that only members of his cult and his tribe are truly human. They are led step by step to have no empathy, no mercy at all for their prey. Each *Soon* must kill once, as an initiation, but only those youths who are courageous enough, and in the course of their bloody apprenticeship prove that they can hold the victim helpless without pity or protest as he is being strangled, can hope to achieve the final rank, that of *Bhurtote*, or strangler. A youth who believes himself to be worthy will seek out the most resolute of the *Bhurtotes* as a *gooroo* or teacher and beg him to teach the art of strangling, the proper tying of the *rumal* knot and other such sacred matters. He will ever afterward show this man the utmost respect, bending to touch his feet every time they meet.

With every expedition there will be three men, collectively called *Hilla*; who are in charge of the most necessary parts of the enterprise. The *Beyla* chooses the places of murder and burial; the man who carries the *kusee*, or sacred pickaxe; and the man who carries the *goor*, the sacred coarse sugar for the dedication ceremony, sugar the color of the tiger.

Methods

The Phransigars are taught to follow centuries-old guidelines. They do not strike at all unless every member of the party can be killed. Their chief object is the ritual murder, with the proceeds of robbery being seen as the Goddess' reward for their piety; therefore they never rob without killing. They choose only victims who are not on an exact schedule, or whose whereabouts on any one day are not easy to pin down. They never strike close to home; you are nowhere safer than in a Phransigar village! Nor will you find a more scrupulous, more hardworking group of laborers than a Phransigar band which is plotting to kill you. Merchants who have become *saur*, (escaped from a murder attempt) have been known to comment that the Phransigars were the "best workers I ever had", and to refuse to believe that they had been the attackers. Phransigars prefer to become friendly with their victims, to lull their suspicions utterly until the party comes to a *tuppul*, or convenient killing ground. Suddenly the *Beyla* gives the *Jhirnee* signal, and the thing is done in moments.

A typical Phransigar attack involves several days of comradeship, followed by death, a swift assessment of the loot (transport vehicles and their contents, personal valuables, etc), and the utter disappearance of the victim's remains. This last is accomplished frankly and brutally by the cutting and breaking of the body until it fits into an impossibly tiny space. The *Lughae*, or senior gravedigger, makes a study of burial of bodies in different sorts of

terrain with the object of disguising the grave and discouraging scavengers which might cause the grave to be discovered. The watchwords of the Phransigars are caution and patience.

Balance against this the fact that killing is a holy act to them; that a Phransigar will feel unworthy and dishonored if he has been unable to kill for Kali several times a month. A Phransigar who has been unable to kill for several weeks may become desperate. Impelled by his need to please his Goddess, he will begin to take chances.

Why may he not have been able to kill? In addition to tactical reasons such as the victim party being too large, too well known or well armed, or having long range communications gear, there are reasons for aborting a kill which the Phransigars consider plain common sense. An outsider might refer to these as superstitions:

A shower of rain that does not fall during the rainy season is cause to abandon an expedition.

A funeral of anyone from your village is a bad omen, while the funeral of a stranger is a good one.

Another good omen is a party of weeping friends saying goodbye to a bride.

During the first week of a journey, a traveller wearing gold is exempt from killing, because gold is a sacred metal.

If a hat or head covering catches fire, the wearer is dreadfully unlucky, and must be sent home immediately so prevent his bad luck from becoming general.

If a hare runs across the road, the party must turn back.

If wild cats fight during the first watch, it is a good omen; if later, it means bad luck.

In addition, any smelter of metals, carpenter, stone cutter, a professional laundryman, a blind or disfigured person, a worker in ceramics, or a cowherd is regarded as sacred to the Dark Mother, and not to be harmed. A party travelling with any one of these, or with someone leading a female goat, may

not be harmed. Remember, the whole party must be killed, or none of them may be. A desperate Phransigar may attempt to influence such a person to leave the party, or may even attempt to kill one privately. His pious companions will be forced to restrain him or even to kill him to prevent such sacrilege.

A Phransigar who feels he is successfully fooling a party will not become desperate. The more trusting a victim has become, the more Mother Kali will relish the sacrifice. Time spent in this active preparation of prey is part of the "stalking process" (remember, they are sibling to the tiger).

Military Uses of the Phransigars

Phransigars may in some circumstances consent to act as elite commandos. They are trained to be credible and likable, so they find little difficulty in an open approach to their victims. If they must use covert tactics, it will be a *khomusna*, or lightning raid and quick withdrawal, never a planned, long term assault. Do not believe for a second that their caution reflects a lack of courage. They are brave to the point of fanaticism. Offering one's own death to Kali while attempting to bring her a sacrifice will insure an afterlife of nonending bliss. If caught in the act, Phransigars see no reason to surrender; they seek to be killed in battle. If defeated and cornered, a party will strangle or smother each other, with the last man attempting to burn the bodies and throw himself onto the sacred fire.

Phransigars will always go in parties of three or more; they will not do solo missions. They are at their best in groups of five to fifty. A group as large as three hundred has been known, but it was too difficult to control and soon broke up. These groups expect to have periodic meetings in which everyone's voice will be heard. They expect to demand, and get, explanations from the leaders and to talk over present and future courses of action at great length. If given a chance for each to have a say the group will then meekly do exactly

Ramasee: the Secret Language

adhoreea: a person who happens to separate himself from a party before the Phransigars murder them, thereby escaping death unknowing.

bae hojana: to become public. May be used of the bodies of victims or of some news of the Phransigars' actions.

bajeed: safe. The leader is informing the troop that this is a good place for the killing.

bisul purna: awkward strangling, with the *rumal* around the head or face. The victim is then said to have been *bisull*.

boja: the Phransigar who takes the body of the murdered person to the grave.

bugjana: to become aware of the designs of the Phransigars upon oneself.

bunij: (literally merchandise or goods) a traveller whom the Phransigars think worth murdering.

chookadena: to cause a victim to sit down, and then to trick him into looking up; this puts him into a perfect position for strangling. Sacrifices made in this manner are the most pleasing to the Dark Mother.

dhaga: finding out the intentions of travelers; negotiating with someone in authority for protection, or for the release of a Phransigar who has been arrested.

dhokur: a dog, also a person who takes hold of a Phransigar, attempting to halt a killing.

dhurdalna: to strangle.

doonr: the loud screams of a victim for help.

ghookhee: a person who is transporting the body of a relative for burial. (Not a professional undertaker.) This person is doing a deed greatly pleasing to Kali. He or she is not to be killed.

goneeait: a person who has lost a hand or a nose. It is very unlucky to kill such a person.

goor ghaunt: the special knot for tying Kali's coin into the *rumal*.

jhummanta: a person who is not a Phransigar, but who knows what they are. A person to be avoided. In some troops, such a person is felt to be under Kali's protection.

zywalo: a victim left for dead who is later found still living.

khomusna: to rush in upon and kill travelers when there is not time for the usual ceremonies

khuruk: the noise made by the pickaxe when

digging the grave.

kucha: (literally, unburied) a dead body, or a Phransigar who has talked to the authorities.

Luckman Sing: a person's name used as a signal that someone is coming; do not murder just now.

maulee: the man who takes money home from Phransigars on an expedition for the maintenance of their families.

phur jharna: To clean the place of murder. After a killing, some members are left behind to remove all signs that may be seen by daylight.

pola: the sign made at a crossroad to guide troop members who are travelling behind. A line made on the road surface in the direction taken. If the other members must hurry, this will be a broken line, or a line with just one break if it must be that evening. The line may be of paint or oil from an "accidental" spill, or of leaves or branches, coolant, scrap, or whatever else they find which is useable.

saur: a person who escapes from the Phransigar while they are in the process of strangling him.

soon: a Phransigar by birth or adoption who has not yet done his first ceremonial killing.

sotha: the Phransigar who convinces travellers; always the most persuasive in the troop.

tonkal: a party of people too large for the Phransigar to kill



what the leaders tell them that the group has decided to do. If they are restrained from free speech a group will eventually turn on its leader. Such times of discussion will not take place during the stalking process unless the group is close to breaking apart.

The chief military problem with the use of the Phransigar is acquiring them in the first place. They are hard to identify. Once they suspect you have identified them, they will prefer to kill you to protect their secrets. If you can convince them to listen, you come to the greatest barrier of all. They do not hire out to infidels. Killing is a religious duty — the proceeds of a robbery are the reward the Dark Mother gives for performing the duty. The destiny of such a victim is written invisible on his forehead from the day he or she is born. Killers for pay are profaning Kali's very nature. The mercenary viewpoint is totally alien.

If you can convince Phransigars that you are a higher servant or priest of Kali (and remember, they will discuss you and your signs of holiness at length), there is a very good (50-75%) chance that they will agree to accomplish your goal. This agreement will frustrate the military mind; they will accomplish your goal by their own means and in their own way. There have been cases of clever officers who recruited Phransigars to their cause only to be tied up and have their mission performed to four thousand year old specifications!

Romano Liao, Duchess of Sian, is known as the Lady of Highspire. Some elements in its population insist that she is the human *avatar*, or human embodiment of Kali, and is therefore to be worshipped and obeyed as if she were the goddess. The Duchess has never acknowledged these claims — but if it is true, she might be the

Tuponee the Ritual of Sacrifice

As soon after a killing as possible, this ritual is performed. A carpet is spread on a clean, freshly cleared spot on bare earth. The sacred *kusee* (pickaxe), the consecrated sugar called *goor*, and a piece of silver for an offering are placed upon this carpet.

The Phransigar who is most learned, and deemed to be most in favor with the Dark Mother, sits on the edge of the carpet facing west. The most accomplished of the *Bhurtotes* sit next to him facing in the same direction. The rest of the troop arrange themselves on the ground facing the carpet. The leader of the ceremony makes a small hole in the ground and reverently sprinkles some of the *goor* into it. He then prays aloud to Kali to "fulfill our desires". The troop repeats the words of the prayer after him.

He sprinkles water on the pickaxe and into the hole, and puts a small amount of the *goor* into the hand of each of the *Bhurtotes* on the carpet with him. One of the gang then gives the *Jhirnee* signal, as if for a kill. The Phransigars on the carpet eat and drink water in solemn silence; some of the *goor* is then distributed to each of the members whose rank entitles him to eat of it. (Only Phransigars who have strangled with their own hands are so entitled.) Unconsecrated sugar is distributed among the lesser Phransigars, as a token that they will someday be bloodthirsty enough to participate.

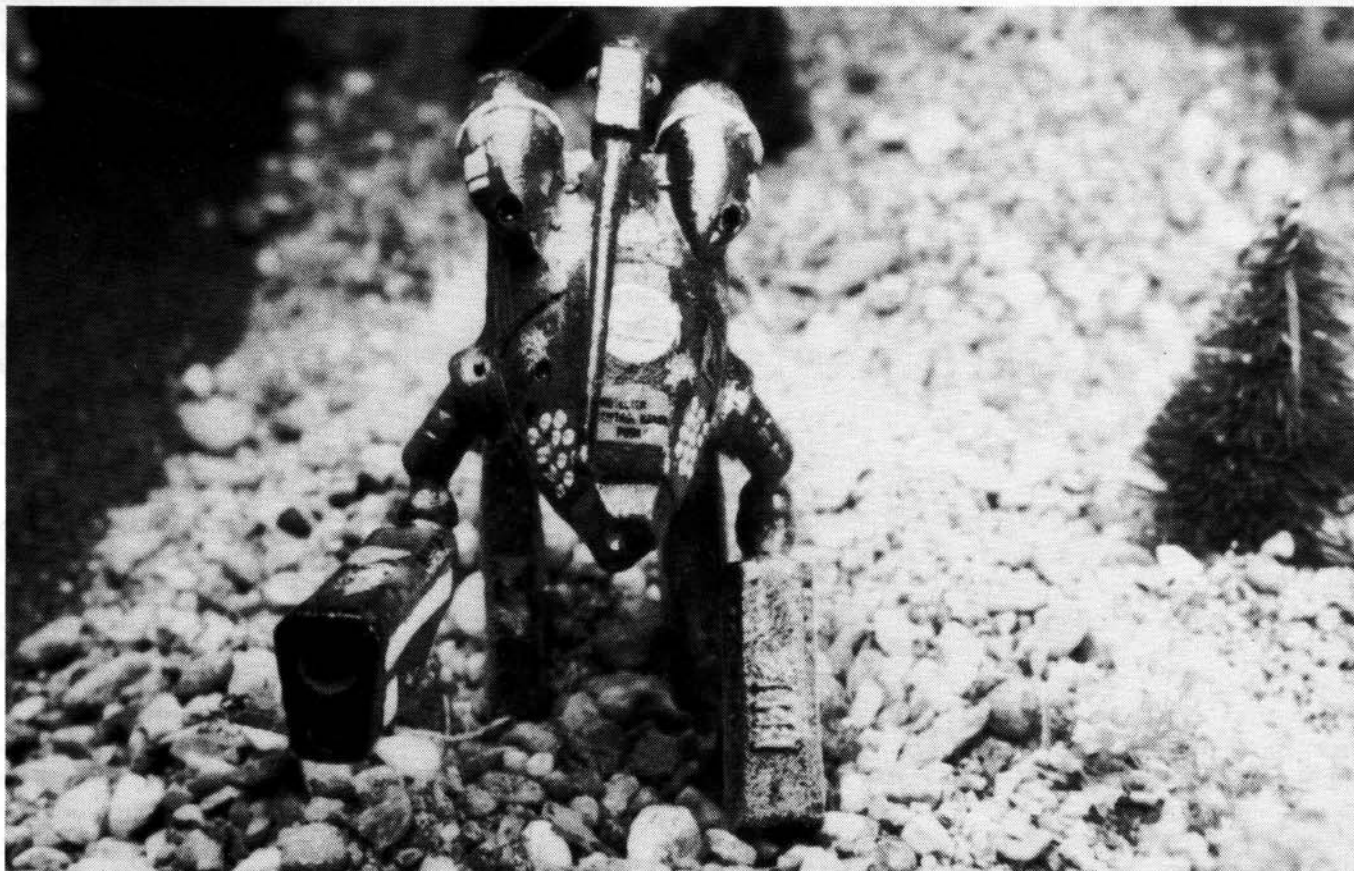
The effects of the *goor* are said to be irresistible. A Phransigar who has eaten eat need never fear to feel pity. "Let a man once taste of that *goor*, and he will be a Phransigar, though he know all the trades and have all the wealth in the worlds."

first military mind ever to successfully use the Phransigars.

Phransigar Weapons

For ritual killing, they use only the *rumal*. The knife may be used as a backup weapon, but if it is used, the body may not be counted as a sacrifice to Kali. The *rumal* is 18-30 inches long, with a silver coin consecrated to Kali tied in one corner. The end with the coin is whipped around the victim's neck, while the strangler holds onto the other end. A quick tug with both hands, "the same gesture you use to tie off a bale", one informant tells us, and the deed is done. The reformed sect uses higher technology. They have been known to use monofilament garrottes; there is one story of an infantryman's combat suit being modified with the neck fastening chemically treated to respond to the night chill by contracting rapidly, constricting around the neck and strangling the unwary victim. This story is unsubstantiated, so without seeing physical evidence, this writer refuses to believe it possible.

The illustrations accompanying this article were taken from the drawings of an English military officer, Captain John Paton, who served in the campaign against the original Thuggees in the mid-Nineteenth Century on Terra. For the ThirtyFirst Century versions, see the scenario on page 43.



Deadly Ambition

Captain David "Shadow" Deth

There were five of us crammed into one of the small cubicles on board the *Le'pard*, an old, beat up Leopard-class dropship. The cubicle was turned into a makeshift conference room. There was Captain Wilma Jenkins, Ship's Captain, to my right, then Sergeant Amthor, second in command of my recon lance. Next came MechWarrior Brian Iggman, and finally Brenda Gealgood, recently made Lieutenant jg (Captain Blackthorne's fiancée).

As I gazed around the table, I tried to read their faces. Capt Jenkins was an ace pilot with an efficient crew. She'll keep her opinions to herself until we can speak privately, I thought.

Sgt Amthor was a valiant warrior, with the hot bloodedness of his Norse ancestors. He piloted the modified Shadow Hawk-K awarded to us by our "Hosts" of House Kurita. Though I trusted him, his opinions could be abrasive, and could cause trouble if the CO got wind of them.

MechWarrior Iggman was a recent graduate. With some good coaching and his better-than-normal reflexes, he would become a competent fighter. The eagerness on his face brought a smile to mine. He piloted one of my Phoenix Hawks, taking to it as easily as a bird to flight.

Then there was Lieutenant jg Gealgood. I didn't feel too comfortable about having her come along for the ride. I'd only seen her pilot that monster Atlas of hers. Since she would be piloting the other Phoenix Hawk, I wasn't sure if she could adjust to the differences. Then there was the aspect of her being the Captain's fiancée. If she got hurt, we'd be pulling KP for the rest of our lives.

"OK, people, listen up. Captain Blackthorne sent us on this mission as a reward for doing such a terrific job on Capra."

"You call this a reward," growled Amthor, picking up the orders. "This is...", I looked sharply at him, flicking my eyes to Brenda. He paused and finished, "not my idea of how I'd like to be spending my R&R." I breathed a little easier. I made a mental note to speak with Amthor about toning down his opinions around the Captain's fiancée.

"That's right, Sergeant, it's a reward to me and to this lance." I paused before continuing. "The Captain has placed great faith in us to accomplish this task. Just like he did on Capra. We didn't let him down then, and we won't now." I said, looking straight into Amthor's eyes.

"Ha, we're on this mission because you embarrassed Captain Blackthorne in front of his Draco masters. Why if it wasn't..."

"THAT WILL BE ALL, SERGEANT!", I yelled, jumping to my feet and slamming the table, making everyone jump. I winced inwardly, not wanting to overact. He had a point, though. Perhaps he hit more of a sore spot than I wanted to admit.

I slowly sat back down, wishing I hadn't done what I just did. Spreading out my hands on the table, and gazing at them, I continued in a softer tone. "Captain Blackthorne has sent us on a raid to retrieve some waterworks parts. These parts are needed on our homeworld to replace the aging waterworks they have there now. Intel places one, possibly two light to medium 'Mechs to guard the area, with no infantry or Aerospace support. As this is such a backworlds planet, Captain Blackthorne is confident that this is an accurate report. He has assured me that we will be meeting token forces only." I glanced up as I heard Amthor make choking noises.

"You have a comment to make...Sergeant?" I asked tightly.

"Yes, sir. If that's the case, why are we making a *combat* drop? Wouldn't it be better to land in the Le'pard, grab the parts and be away before anyone knew we were there?", he asked with barely

concealed sarcasm.

Amthor was a good warrior, but I was getting tired of his flamed criticisms. Making a supreme effort, I managed to keep my voice even and controlled.

"How many drops have you made, Sergeant?"

"Seven...Sir", he replied warily.

"Correct. Brian here has dropped once, Lt Gealgood four times, and I've dropped fourteen, with the last one over a year ago. The Captain feels that we are in need of practice, and with the intel he's received, he's decided that this is as safe as we're likely to get. Therefore, we are going to get a refresher on the subject. Understood, Sergeant?" Locking eyes with him once more, I waited for him to reply.

Amthor swallowed, then staring straight ahead replied smartly, "Yes, Sir."

"Very well, any other questions?" Noting Brian's nervous gesture, I nodded.

"Ah...well, Sir, the orders say we're to drop into the area directly." He spoke with some apprehension. "Won't that be a little risky, with the buildings, hills, trees, and that large salt lake right there and all? I mean wouldn't it be safer to drop in a less populated area, as far as terrain is concerned?" My opinion of Brian went up a notch. He'd noticed the very thing I had when I first received the orders. Ordering the unit to make a combat drop for the purpose of training in a relatively safe area was one thing, but to complicate it with uncertain terrain struck me as rather odd. Especially in light of the fact that we hadn't fought together as a unit before.

"Captain, this is after all a practice drop, no need to make it anything else. I would like you to adjust your course on final entry to take us in a quadrant 16, mark 2, opening the bay doors at Angels 10."

"Roger, quadrant 16, mark 2. Door open Angels 10, not 20."

"The dropship shouldn't be in any danger without aerospace fighters to harass you, should it?"

She shook her head. "Rendezvous unchanged?"

Captain Jenkins was definitely top notch, anticipating my next orders. "No," I said, "I will want you in a low geosynchronous orbit, just in case we get into trouble. I want you able to get to us with the minimum amount of time. Besides, I need your "eyes up high" where they can see our situation."

There was a sour look on Lieutenant Gealgood's face.

"You have something to say, Lieutenant?"

"I don't think you ought to be changing the Captain's orders. I still don't think you should have put a Sergeant above me, second in command."

"Lieutenant, we've been in transit for five weeks, and you were promoted just before we left. Before that you too were a Sergeant. Isn't that right?" She nodded. "I've been letting your attitude slide; before we drop, I'm going to explain a few things to you. Sergeant Amthor is a permanent member of this lance. Sergeant Amthor is second in command of this lance. You were attached to this lance for this mission only; the Captain did not inform me of any changes in the lance command structure. Last, but not least, I command this lance and what I say goes. You will be Sergeant Amthor's lance-mate. He remains second in command. Is that clear, Gealgood?"

She looked as if she could explode, but give her credit, she just nodded, with a dark look in her eyes. So much for making friends and influencing people. "That's all, people. We have six hours until planetfall. I suggest you get some rest before we drop". I said with a sigh, suddenly very tired.

Captain Jenkins stayed behind after the others had left. "Want to tell me what's overheating your systems?"

"Why send us way out here for something as trivial as a waterpump? Surely there are closer targets. With all the salvage money we received on the last job, the company could have just bought one. I hate this kind of raiding! It

gives mercenaries a bad name! Blackthorne and I had words just before we left. He accused me of trying to usurp his command and take his company away from him. After my original unit was destroyed by Hanson's Roughriders, the Black Gorgons gave me a new lease on life. I thought I was starting to repay them for that when we captured those six 'Mechs on Capra without firing a shot. But the Dracos weren't pleased that a junior officer was responsible, instead of the Company CO. They even slapped an ISF officer on us; the Captain's sore about that."

After I was through spilling my guts, Captain Jenkins just smiled. "Feel a little better now? They're all valid points, but there's nothing we can do about them. Do you think you can concentrate on this mission now, so we can get home and get our rest and relaxation?"

"Yes," I said, really feeling much better. "Remind me to treat you to a fabulous dinner after this is all over, where you can unload whatever's on *your* mind, okay?"

Her laughter was genuine and pleasant sounding. "Okay, you have a deal, Lieutenant."

"David," I said.

As I climbed up my 'Mech's external ladder, I admired its graceful lines and deadly demeanor. Its outward appearance resembled that of its lesser cousins, the Shadow Hawk and the Shadow Hawk LAM, but that's where the similarities ended. It had been designed to specifically to be misleading, hoping the element of surprise would give me an edge in first time encounters. A Phoenix Hawk carried a large laser, a pair of medium lasers and machine guns with eight and a half tons of armor. My 'Mech, the only one of its kind, used the chassis of a Shadow Hawk with a beefed up internal structure, and by removing the troublesome conversion assembly, entered the 55 ton class. It sported a Fusigon PPC, molded to resemble the large laser on the original

Hawk. It retained its medium lasers and replaced its machine guns with and LRM five pack. It also supported 10 tons of armor, making it the most armored of its class, barring the Gladiator. I called it the Screaming Hawk.

The unique design of the 'Mech, though, was its modular weapons systems. I was part of the design team which invented this while I was at the College of Military Science. This modular system allowed me to remove the LRM and replace it with an SRM four pack for an added close range punch, without much trouble or rearrangement of the 'Mech's internal structure. With another Tech, and the proper tools, it averages 24 hours to swap the weapons systems. For this particular mission I had the LRMs installed. Some day I hoped to get the backing of House Steiner, or — when and if Michael Hasek-Davion falls off the edge of the universe — House Davion, for full production.

Reaching in as I climbed up to the cockpit assembly, I switched on the power and then I pulled myself in, tugging the breaker bar down in place to close the hatch. A deeply muffled rumbling assured me that the fusion engine had come on line as I seated myself in the control couch. The power from the fusion plant powered up the console by the time I had strapped myself in, plugged in my vest and hooked up the biofeedback tabs. Checking the worry board, I smiled as all indicators showed green. I reached over and flicked a switch to pressurize the cockpit and retract the ladder. Chewing furiously on my gum, I relieved the pressure in my ears.

As I went through pattern check, code check (my father's motto: *No mercy to those who embrace chaos*), as I armed my weapons, switched on my monitors, and unlocked my controls. I felt the usual thrill as my machine came to life. I keyed my mike, "Hawk's Nest, this is Hawk Leader, how do you read?"

"Loud and clear, Hawk Leader. Doors open in T minus five minutes on

my mark...Mark." The reply came rather loudly. I adjusted the volume hastily and set my timer. Switching to command channel, I keyed my mike again. "Shadow Lance, report status."

"This is HawkTwo, all systems on the line and operational." Within the confines of his 'Mech, Amthor was all business.

"Hawk Three reporting in. All systems A-okay." Gealgood's electronically duplicated voice sounded a dull monotone. I wondered if it was because of the transmission or if she was still angry. I'd better keep a close watch on her.

After waiting for a handful of heartbeats, I opened a private channel to Brian. "Everything okay?"

"No, sir, I'm getting a fluctuation on my fusion engine readings. I can't seem to locate it, or lock it down," he said, his apprehension making it through transmission.

Securing one of the monitors for the channel, I instructed Brian to feed me his readings. Before he transmitted them he said, "It's all right, Sir, I found it. It was the linkage control between the engine and the jump pack. I've bypassed primary controls and am now operating on backups." "Good" I said, "Feed me the readings anyway, okay?" I was concerned about his 'Mech's altered balance. On a hunch just before this mission I had secretly had his Phoenix Hawk configured to carry electronic warfare equipment instead of his MG's and ammo. Only Brian and I knew. It never hurts to have an ace in the hole.

"Roger, transmitting now." The monitor flicked for a moment and then steadied down to show Brian's Hawk's engine power readings. The indications looked solid, but the level of power was a little low. "Do you want to abort, Hawk Four?"

"Negative, Hawk Leader. All systems now on line. I have control." came his crisp answer.

I smiled to myself. Yes, I thought, he'll make a warrior. "Roger that, Hawk

Four. Keep feeding me your power readings until after the drop."

The telemetry showed that the Le'pard was nearing its intended launch point. Glancing quickly at the countdown, I verified the indication. 30 seconds.

"Shadow Lance, doors commencing to open, T minus 30 seconds." Almost immediately there was a loud clang as the huge Mechbay door in front of my 'Mech began to open. After the dim interior, the light from outside was nearly blinding as it streaked in like a laser from underneath the door in an ever widening swath. My 'Mech's polarized canopy reduced it to a manageable amount, but not before leaving spots in front of my eyes.

Keying my mike, I ordered, "Shadow Lance, prepare to drop on a count of five, I repeat a count of five." Hawk's Nest began counting down. "T minus 20 seconds... 10 seconds..." By then the doors were completely open. I gently nudged my controls to ease my 'Mech closer to the door. "Five seconds...good luck, Shadow Lance," Captain Jenkins' voice, but I was already counting down, "Five... Four... Three... Two... One... Jumping." I stepped out the door, and was immediately slammed to one side of my control couch by the winds and turbulence generated by the Le'pard's passing through the atmosphere. For the barest instant I saw Amthor's Shadow Hawk step from the Le'pard simultaneously with my 'Mech.

As I steadied my 'Mech into drop position, I punched up a map of the area we were supposed to drop into. I sighed, as I recognized all the landmarks. Captain Jenkins had dropped us right on target. Now it was up to us to get there in one piece.

Our forward momentum was still too great to allow a landing, so the next order of business was to slow our forward velocity. Glancing at the altimeter I saw we were at 9 kilometers.

"Shadow Lance, prepare to roll and burn on my mark... Mark." I felt my

attitude through my neurohelmet and gently thumbed my controls to bring my 'Mech around so that its feet were facing into the path of travel. I hit my jump jets full on to slow my forward speed. My mech began to vibrate.

I could see my lance now, and I was proud of their neat formation. We were all within a few hundred meters of each other. At five kilometers I again activated my jump jets and noted that the rest of the lance did also. I did a double take on Brian's 'Mech; his jet stream looked odd. The monitor showed a steady drain on his power readings. It appeared that his jump jets were failing.

"Sir, I'm getting an unusual drain on my power readings. It's possible that the shaking up earlier may have damaged the jump jet backups." The worst horror a pilot has to face during a combat drop is that his jump jets may fail. Brian seemed to be holding up well, despite the fear that he must be feeling. He'd need some steadying if he was to remain calm. What could I say? There was nothing I could do if his jets failed entirely. Unless...

I can't just watch while he crashes!

"Brian, hold tight while I come closer. When I'm close enough, grab hold of my 'Mech." His 'Mech weighed 45 tons, while mine weighed 55. Our jump jets were powerful enough to lift a 'Mech off of the ground and carry it for short distances, but we won't need that extra power to lift off. Adding the power of his malfunctioning jets to mine, I might be able to assist him in slowing down his 'Mech to prevent his outright destruction on landing. It was a terrific gamble, and I had never heard of it done before, but otherwise I'd be letting Brian fall to his death without a fight.

As I maneuvered over to Brian, a light on my console flashed, indicating

someone wanted to talk to me privately. I switched to the private channel. "Go ahead," I said, concentrating on the delicate moves needed to get closer and closer to Brian's Phoenix Hawk.

"Ah, Sir, is this a good idea?" I heard Amthor's voice in my headphones. You're going to get yourself and him killed trying to carry him down like that."

"Maybe," I said, "and maybe I can prevent him from being scattered all over Tancredi's surface. I appreciate your concern, but I can't just watch while he crashes. You're in command until this is over. Hawk Leader out."

We were so close that I could see Brian through our 'Mech canopies. His eyes were wide open in fear and he looked to be on the very edge of panic.

I gently maneuvered my 'Mech closer to his, and then there was a loud screeching of metal against metal. I grabbed his 'Mech in my arms and saw him do the same with mine. We started to tumble from the impact. I quickly adjusted with my attitude thrusters, and heard them scream trying to straighten out 100 tons of tumbling metal. Slowly, agonizingly slowly, our tumbling stopped.

"We've got to stop meeting like this, Hawk Four, the rest of the lance will talk." I said in a light tone on the private channel, hearing Brian chuckle nervously.

I glanced at our altitude, less than one kilometer to go. "Fire jets, on a count of two." I said. "Two... one... fire!" I activated my jets, literally standing on the pedal controls. Brian did the same, and both our 'Mechs began to shake from the mutual thrust against gravity's pull. Metal screamed from the strain. My jump jet indicators rose into the red. Grimly I held my jets full open. Our altitude decreased. 800 meters... 700 meters. It was working, the 'Mechs were slowing. 600 meters... 500 meters... our speed was still a little fast, but we might make it. The shaking was so bad now that I had to grit my teeth to prevent them from chattering. 400 meters... 300 meters... "Okay, Brian,

prepare to separate at 100 meters and good luck." 200 meters... 100 meters—separation *now*." We hit the ground almost immediately. I tried to hit and roll to minimize any damage. There was a moment of confusion and noise, and then quiet.

There was the taste of blood in my mouth and my shoulders hurt where the straps held me in place. I looked at my worry board, and miraculously all lights showed green. Gently, slowly, I brought my 'Mech to a sitting position and then a standing position, not quite believing my instruments. Everything seemed to be functioning okay. I was in shock at our success. It was pure luck that I survived at all.

I didn't want to move; I didn't want to turn to see if Brian had made it, but I forced myself. Nudging my 'Mech's controls I started to turn. She handled beautifully! Then I saw his 'Mech. His Phoenix Hawk was 93 meters away, on its back with one leg propped up and bent at the knee like some school boy lying under a tree. The 'Mech's legs looked crumpled. He must have landed stiff legged, instead of trying to roll with the fall like I did.

"Hawk Four, this is Hawk Leader. Do you copy?" I held my breath...

"Roger, Hawk Leader, loud and clear. What hit me?"

"Switch back to command frequency and report your status, Hawk Four." I said, trying to gain control over my reactions.

I switched back to command frequency just in time to hear Amthor saying, "Come on! I saw them hit just over that small hill. I hope they're not too badly broken up."

I heard Brian, trying not to break into laughter, say, "Hit is right! Ah... I'm okay, Lieutenant, my Hawk took the brunt of the landing on both legs. Indicators show damage to armor on both of them, I guess from buckling on impact. Otherwise, she appears to be okay. I'm going to have a hell of a bruise on my shoulders, and I think I may have lost a tooth."

I walked over to Brian's 'Mech and helped him to his feet as my scanners picked up Amthor's Shadow Hawk coming over the hill to our Northwest, with Gealgood right on his heels. We had overshot our target slightly.

"Well, Sergeant, you don't get command of my lance that easily.", I said lightly. "Let's form up the lance and do what we came here for. Hawk Two on my left, Hawk Four on my right. Hawk Three, fall in with Hawk Two on his left.

Punching up a close up of the target map, I outlined the building we were sent to raid. The computer showed it to be 5 clicks relative to our position.

I watched the lance advance as through the least obstructive path to the waterworks building. There was a road leading directly to it. When we got closer I would determine our plan of attack.

Our target was one point five kilometers directly ahead on the shores of a greenish-blue lake. A road led almost directly to it, passing slightly north of the buildings, bypassing the lake and crossing a river which fed into it. Hills and sparse woods kept pace with the road on either side. South of the road was a relatively open area dotted here and there with patches of trees. The road looked very inviting, allowing a fast and unobstructed path to our target. But somehow the road felt wrong; some sixth sense that I've learned to pay attention to screamed that something wasn't right. I adjusted my scanners to read into the infrared; two intermittent symbols flickered on my monitor. I increased the gain on my sensors, and the symbols steadied to indicate two bogies concealed in some trees near the waterworks facility, one to its north and the other directly in front of it.

The computer identified them as a Griffin and a Shadow Hawk. The Griffin was a 55 ton 'Mech armed with a PPC and an LRM ten rack. It had good speed and jump capabilities. The Shadow Hawk weighed just as much, carrying a balanced mix of long and

short range weaponry. It had an Armstrong autocannon, an LRM five rack, an SRM short pack and a medium laser. These must be the token forces intel warned us about. The pair of them made a good team with formidable firepower, but nothing my lance couldn't deal with. We outnumbered them and had more than twice their firepower.

Again that prickly sensation drew my eyes to the road. It looked too easy, too inviting. I made a quick decision. "Shadow Lance, stay away from that road. If you have to cross it, use jump jets. We're going through the clear area to its south. Hawk Four, close the gap between us."

I watched the lance advance as ordered. "Bogies at twelve and one o'clock, range 1500 meters. Keep your eyes peeled, people. Switch to Magnetic Anomaly Detectors, and scan for mines. I don't want any surprises." I adjusted my monitor to MAD scanners and immediately lost my lance on the screen as well as the enemy 'Mechs.

"Hawk Leader, this is Hawk Two. I can't pick up anything on MAD. The lance and the rogue 'Mechs don't register. Switching back to IR."

That prickly sensation was getting worse. "Anyone else?" I asked.

Yes, Sir," came Brian's answer. "Mine aren't functioning either. I thought it was because of the fall I took."

"What about you, Hawk Three, are our scanners operational?"

"Affirmative, Hawk Leader. I'm registering the lance, the bogies, and a large concentration of metal in our target building. The road shows no metal indications."

It might be just a coincidence, but three identical malfunctions was pushing it a bit. "Amthor, when we get out of here, I want to know who the Tech was that did our preflight."

"Roger, Hawk Leader." Amthor's voice held a note of doom.

"Keep your scanners tuned to MAD, Hawk Three, everyone else switch to IR. My scanners are out also; you'll

have to be our eyes in the metal department, Brenda. Stay sharp."

This easy mission was beginning to smell. Something kept worrying in the back of my mind. What was out of place here? So far everything was fitting the information that we'd received, yet a part of me was screaming of danger. I glanced at the IR monitor once more. The two 'Mechs hadn't moved yet; surely they had us on their scanners by now. Even if they hadn't picked us up, they should at least be doing their patrols. They just stood there, generating very little heat. They looked as if they were *trying* to be inconspicuous. If I didn't know better, I'd say that they were expecting us and had positioned themselves for... an ambush! Something was wrong here, very wrong.

"Hawk Four, switch to private." I adjusted my radio for a tight beam transmission. "Is your EW still in the green, Hawk Four?"

"Yes, Sir," came Brian's confused reply.

"Good. On my signal, activate your equipment."

"Roger, Hawk Leader." I noted that he complied even though I knew he wanted to ask why. I smiled, glad to have him in my lance. I had a feeling that there was more to Tancredi IV than met the eye.

"Switching to combat frequency, Hawk Leader out," I said, and adjusted back to the command frequency. "Shadow Lance, prepare to use hand signals and PA broadcasts only. I smell a rat. Stay sharp and cover your lancemate. Hawk Leader out."

I looked at the map of the target area, and tried to think of where I would position forces if I were defending this area.

The 'Mechs were positioned well; one covered the field entry and the other the road. Both were in such a position as to aid each other with overlapping fire lances. If I had infantry,



...loose dirt and sand cascading from them like so much water

I would place them along the road, perhaps in some of the wooded areas to enable them to get close range shots off without being detected too soon. I'd set skirmish line in front of that hill between us and the waterworks. I'd also place artillery on that hill directly in front of us, to cover both the infantry and the 'Mechs when the time came to launch the attack.

As I thought of that, I sighted in on the hill and increased the magnification to see if there was artillery positioned there under some sort of camouflage netting. To my relief, everything looked peaceful.

We were about 600 meters away from that hill when my rear motion detectors set off an alarm. Adrenaline hit me in a wave, as I quickly adjusted a monitor for a look at my six o'clock. What I saw turned me cold inside. It was a trap! We'd walked into it pretty as you please. I cursed myself for my stupidity, especially when I had just

gotten through hypothesizing an ambush.

"Hawk Leader, I detect two, no three, bogies coming out of the ground directly behind us. Range 480 meters." My ears burned.

I turned my 'Mech to engage whatever was rising forth from the ground like angry demons from hell. "I see them, Hawk Two. Shadow Lance, prepare to... Oh my god!", I said, with mixed reverence and horror.

There before me, with loose dirt and sand cascading from them like so much water, stood a Marauder, a Thunderbolt, and another Shadow Hawk. The Marauder, resembling someone's grotesque idea of an insect, was armed with twin PPC's medium lasers and an autocannon. This one didn't carry the dorsal mounted cannon, giving it an even more ominous demeanor. I wondered what surprises it had in the cannon's place.

The Thunderbolt looked like a de-

formed version of a giant gorilla, with its squat torso and oversized arms. Its weapon complement consisted of a large laser, an LRM fifteen rack, three medium lasers, a SRM short pack and dual machine guns. Both 'Mechs carried massive amounts of armor. They far outclassed any of our medium 'Mechs.

"Time to meet your namesake, Lieutenant Deth, we're so glad you could drop by." I heard a voice say in my headphones as the Marauder made an awkward bow. My eyes narrowed as I saw its paint scheme. It was painted all in green with large credit symbols decorating its surface. It was the "Bounty Hunter", the most infamous of his kind, and the most dangerous.

My blood was beginning to boil at being caught like this. A storm of missiles fell about my 'Mech and the rest of the lance, causing more confusion than damage.

I resisted the temptation to turn and took a hurried glance at my rear monitor as I fired at the Marauder with my own missiles, and my PPC. Both scored with negligible damage. He returned fire, missing with one PPC and destroying some armor on my left leg with the other, causing me to step back. Then I registered what was showing in my monitor. The hill which I'd thought would be an ideal place for artillery had concealed them, inside the surface. Two slits opened to reveal what seemed to be a pair of large lasers and a very large missile launcher of the LRM twenty rack variety. The original 'token' 'Mechs had broken their concealed posts and were approaching our rear. We were caught in a crossfire!

I stabbed savagely at my transmitter, "Lance, storm that hill, we can outrun these slugs," (meaning the heavy 'Mechs) "then use the hill for cover." Then I hissed, "Eat Static, Bounty Hunter! Brian, now!" Immediately my radio started screeching and hissing with the noise generated by Brian's 'Mech. I turned down the volume and turned my 'Mech around, dodging

more fire coming from the trio of 'Mechs in the Bounty Hunter's group. Stoking up the power levels on my fusion engine, I sprinted right into the waiting weapons of the hill bunker.

Although it was a risky gamble having Brian jamming communications, I was hoping that with the large force under the Bounty Hunter's control it would hurt him more than it would hurt me with my four 'Mechs. Curse me for believing that intel report! This was a recon lance, and I hadn't used it like a recon lance. I'd broken the first rule of 'Mech warfare. *Scout out the area of your attack and become familiar with your opponent.* I'd just waltzed in, confident of that report and of my abilities to cope with any problems. I hoped that I'd survive long enough to learn from my mistake.

If you don't engage something, warrior...

Apparently, our charge caught the ambush forces flat footed. The Bounty Hunter and his two 'Mechs stood where they had come out of the ground taking ineffectual shots at our fleet 'Mechs. The fire coming from the bunker was inaccurate, causing minor damage to Amthor's 'Mech and mine. The two 'token' 'Mechs seemed confused at our charge, moving north, wide of our incoming path.

Suddenly there was a whoosh. Amthor's Shadow Hawk erupted into flames! From the middle of his chest up to his head, he was covered in clinging fire. I scanned the area and saw what I had said moments before I would use if I had been defending this place. Infantry! Apparently carrying inferno packs. Brian fired on them with his large laser and both mediums; seconds later, all that remained were the screams of dying men.

Amthor, blinded by the flames,

charged straight into the bunker. There was a loud crashing of metal against reinforced ferrocrete, with lots of dust, smoke and fire. He began to thrash about himself like an enraged beast. Well, so much for the bunker!

While Amthor was taking revenge, I began trading shots with the Griffin, scoring multiple hits along its right arm and torso. It fired back, the mad-made lighting of its PPC melting and destroying armor on my center torso. Its missiles went wide, missing me. I motioned Brian and Brenda to take cover behind the hill while I covered them.

The flames were beginning to subside on Amthor's Shadow Hawk now, but I knew that their heat must be causing him problems. I switched on my external speakers and shouted, "Run to the lake; we'll cover you, Hawk Two!" Instead he deliberately raised his medium laser and fired on the approaching 'Mechs we had just left, hitting the Thunderbolt in the head!

It paused a step and then continued its methodical march of death. Taking Amthor's cue, I too began to fire on the Thunderbolt, backing up slowly behind the hill that had once contained the bunker. I watched my targeting crosshairs center on the monstrous 'Mech and caressing my triggers, letting loose with everything I had. Blue lightning crossed the gap between our 'Mechs, ripping a long gash along the Thunderbolt's left shoulder, striking a weak area and causing the missile rack to twist back at an awkward angle. This was followed immediately by twin ruby beams, travelling the same path and drilling into the big 'Mech's head, splitting it apart like a melon! My missiles went wide, tearing up real estate. The temperature in my cockpit jumped 30 more degrees. The computer recommended immediate shutdown. I slapped the override switch cutting off the alarm, amazed at my luck. One down, four to go.

We had been fighting now for several minutes, managing to hold off our attackers. Our superior speed allowed

us a temporary upper hand, but it couldn't last. The damage on our 'Mechs was beginning to take its toll. Amthor's damage was the worst; it seemed that enemy 'Mechs were drawn to his 'Mech as moths to the flame. Perhaps they were sensing him as crippled because of the inferno gel.

I targeted on the Marauder, triggering every weapon. A wave of heat hit me as I scored hits all over the big 'Mech, but it shrugged off the damage as a mere annoyance. If it was getting hot in my 'Mech, Amthor must be roasting. He kept taking careful aim with his medium lasers, scoring hit after hit on one of the Shadow Hawks in an uneven duel. His 'Mech was pitted and scored by the damage from incoming fire and the heat being generated by the inferno gel. If we came out of this alive, I'd recommend him for a medal.

Brian's 'Mech was trading shots with the other Shadow Hawk, giving better than he got. Although he was doing well his 'Mech wouldn't be able to take much more punishment. A Phoenix Hawk just doesn't have enough armor to sustain the type of fire my lance was receiving.

The only 'Mech doing well was Brenda's. She seemed to have stayed out of the fight altogether! I quickly glanced at the readings on the other 'Mechs in my lance and saw that we had all taken terrific amounts of damage while her 'Mech didn't have a scratch. What was going on here Had she lost her nerve?

Then, abruptly, I had troubles of my own. The Bounty Hunter was attempting to rearrange my armor displacement by carving it off with his own PPCs. I stabbed my PA system while I targeted on the advancing Marauder. "Hawk Three, engage!" I fired just my PPC, trying to give my heat sinks a chance to dump the excess heat I had built up, seeing it hit one of the Marauder's massive forearms.

"No, sir, I'm not going out there, I'll be killed." Rage engulfed me, coloring all before me red. I stepped away from

the hill, wreathed in smoke from the multiple craters in my chest, and brought my weapons to bear on her 'Mech. "If you don't engage something right now, warrior, I'll kill you myself!"

I heard Brian's voice dimly in my headphones. "Sir, Sir! Hawk Four to Hawk Leader! I have a HUGE tank coming out of the waterworks building! Hawk Four to Hawk Leader, do you read me?" Still covering Gealgood with my weapons, I responded, "Why have you broken EW, Hawk Four?"

I heard static; turning to where Brian's 'Mech was, I saw him on the ground and smoking. Only 180 meters away there was a nightmare. A Schrek, an 80 ton tank that carried three PPCs! How could we continue to face these kind of odds and win? Especially if someone wasn't pulling her weight? I swallowed in relief as Brian levered his 'Mech up on one arm. He fired his heavy and medium laser at the terrible newcomer.

...I'll junk you here and now!

"There, help Brian engage that tank or I swear by all that's sacred, I'll junk you here and now!" Backing away from me, Brenda turned and ran towards Brian, who was now crouched and continuing to fire while struggling to stand.

My rage still not appeased, I turned back to the battle and targeted in on the closest 'Mech, a Shadow Hawk which was closing in on Amthor. I freed the terrible energies of all my weapons and watched with a smile as they hit all along his left leg. My PPC, lasers and missiles had blasted away armor, exposing myomer cables, and destroying hip and leg actuators. That ought to slow him down! The Marauder continued to fire at me, hitting with both PPCs. I felt myself reel from the impact. My extra armor withstood the terrible pounding I was taking, but it wouldn't last much longer.

Gealgood was firing ineffectually against the heavy tank. I cursed her incompetence. Brian was standing now, contributing his laser as well. He missed as he sidestepped a trio of PPC blasts. Amthor's 'Mech was blackened but the fire was out. He had climbed out of the ruined bunker and was firing a steady stream of long and short range missiles at the Griffin in an attempt at cooling down while he maintained pressure on the attackers.

I targeted in on the Griffin. When the crosshairs changed color for a lock-on, I fired my PPC and missiles. Blue fire mixed with red explosions erupting from its right shoulder, ripping the LRM launcher clean off its mounting. It staggered, firing its PPCs at me in return. It hit in my left arm destroying armor, causing red lights to flash on my worry board; he had destroyed my medium laser and the lower arm actuator.

Think, I berated myself. This is your command and it's dying. What are we facing? Bounty Hunters. What do they fight for? Money! Maybe, just maybe, we could outbid their contract. Desperate actions for desperate men; I was getting desperate.

"Shadow Lance, this is Hawk Leader. How much money can you contribute to the "Save the Lance" fund? I'm going to personally offer my entire savings." There was a long pause, then "Hawk Leader, this is Amthor. I've got a little over 300,000 Cb's saved for my retirement." "I've got about 35,000 Cb's, Sir," came in Brian's voice. I didn't get a reply from Gealgood, but then, I hadn't expected any. I did some quick mental calculation. 950,000 Cb's with what I had.

I switched my transmitter to general broadcast. "This is Hawk Leader of the Shadow Lance, calling Bounty Hunter forces. Anyone who will agree to a cease fire will share in a 950,000 Cb bond for doing so."

There was a brilliant flash as the Schrek exploded. Our two Phoenix Hawks had great timing! It punctuated my offer dramatically. I held my breath.



He was covered in clinging flame

Odd for me to be hoping for a pilot to behave dishonorably! I hoped that just one of them would be convinced to stop firing at us. That would even up the odds...

"I will," I heard with disbelief. It was working! The Griffin raised one arm slightly. "Don't go near the road, it's heavily mined!"

"You die, traitorous scum! No one doublecrosses me! I knew I shouldn't have hired Hendrick's whelps!" To my shock, I saw the Marauder lurch into the air assisted by — jump jets! So that was his trade for the dorsal cannon! He headed right for the damaged Griffin, but something went wrong; one of his jets cut off prematurely. The big 'Mech slowly turned over and crashed. The Bounty Hunter landed upside down, sliding into the Griffin and knocking it off its feet. Neither "Mech moved. Marauders aren't meant to fly!

In the uncertain business of warfare, the battle can turn suddenly upon the

actions of one person. In this case, the one person was in the enemy party, and he delivered us a victory. The two Shadow Hawks surrendered. I contacted the DropShip, realizing I should have thought of that earlier. I would be cursing my own oversights for a long time because of this battle.

We salvaged the Shadow Hawk with the least damage and the Bounty Hunter's Marauder. The Marauder's canopy was crushed; there was a lot of blood, but we didn't find his body anywhere, and believe me, we looked. The Griffin's pilot was alive; he had been knocked unconscious from the fall. He'd be one of the Dispossessed now; there was no salvaging his 'Mech.

There's no easy way to tell this. There was a bounty on my lance, a bounty of six hundred thousand Cb's! Another two hundred thou for my dead

body! I couldn't believe it. This was the largest bounty offered in history. When I questioned him as to who it was that had put up such an ungodly amount, his answer rocked my sense of reality. A Captain wearing the insignia of the Black Gorgons, and a man with a Sun Zhang Academy accent, attempting to disguise the bearing of an officer, had put up that huge sum. I could believe that Blackthorne had been that angry, but that our employers would go along with him! And Gealgood was their trump card. She was supposed to ensure that my body was brought back as a gift for her disgusting Captain.

I'd dreamed of having my own unit, sometime in the misty future. Here I was, betrayed by my employers just as my father had been, responsible for a lance and a dropship. It was either go

back to square one, hiring on with whatever company would take me, or... start a company a little sooner than I'd intended. The lance and the ship's crew voted in my favor. We dropped Gealgood off on a little habitable planet and sent word to the Gorgons of her whereabouts. (There were more than a few votes for spacing her, but that seemed too much like what she'd tried to do to us. I wouldn't start my unit with an act like that.)

There's a new badge on my arm now. It has my Screaming Hawk standing over a Marauder, with a shadow, the outline of the Grim Reaper falling across its surface. We call ourselves the Death's Shadows. You'll be hearing from us.

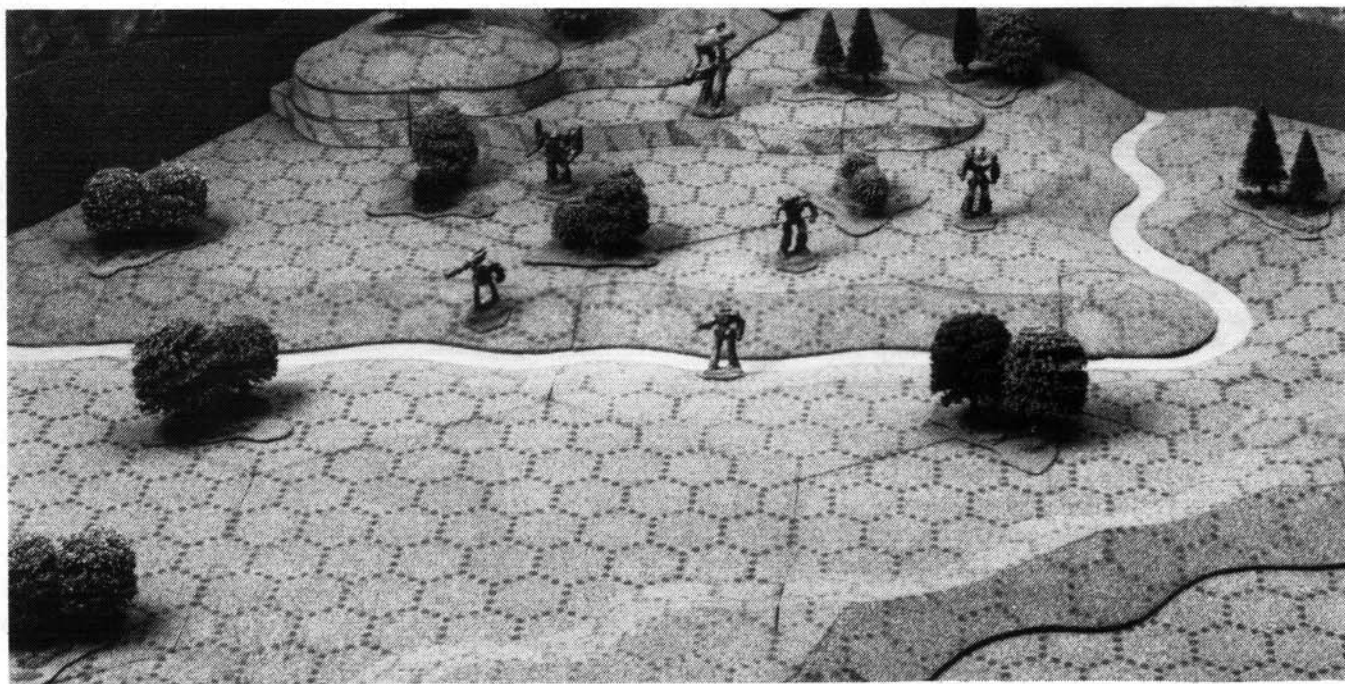
David "Shadow" Deth

Lord David Deth was born in 2992, the son of Count Samuel Deth. David studied both military science and engineering, then served in the Tenth Deneb Light Cavalry. Lt Deth resigned his commission in 3017 to help his father form a planetary 'Mech Force, the First Fortymile Lancers. When Duke Michael Hasek-Davion attempted to force the Lancers into his Syrtis Fusiliers, father and son vowed formally never to return until the Duke was removed from office or dead. The company-sized unit that escaped Fortymile renamed themselves the First Fortymile Hikers. One of their first actions was against Hanson's Roughriders, an encounter the unit — and Major Samuel Deth — did not survive.

In 3023, Lt David Deth signed with the Black Gorgons as their recon lance commander. In that same year, the Death's Shadows was formed. The unit history is told on page 12. David Deth died in action in 3026, piloting a borrowed 'Mech. His son Col Joshua Deth now commands the Shadows; his son Peter pilots the Screaming Hawk, and his daughter Janet serves with the unit as well.

'Mechs for this article courtesy of Ral Partha

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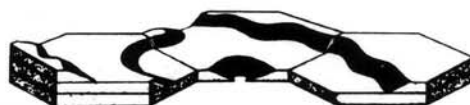
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The Wedding

that

Made War

by Kumala Chatterji

Military intelligence is where you find it. We are reprinting selections from the daily copy of Miss Chatterji as published in the popular society magazine The Dragon's Nest. We believe that a careful reading of these selections will show personal and political interactions that were not apparent at the time. Our readers will remember that this account has had to pass ISF censorship.—Editor's Note

(Arrival Day) From the beginning, this wedding smells of war. The smell of orange blossoms and wedding cake which permeate the air of Comstar's First Circuit Compound are frequently overcome by the metaphorical stench of burnt *ashqua* as warriors from the different Houses refight old battles verbally and size each other up for new ones. I feel as if I had walked unawares into a holocaust of a Borgia feast. If Prince Hanse believes for a minute that his wedding guests genuinely wish him well, he doesn't deserve to be called "The Fox". (In Davion and Steiner tradition, the fox has none of our associations with the Spirit World. It is purely and simply a trickster, not overscrupulous in its conduct. It does not steal the souls of children like our Shinto fox-spirits. Nor has it the power to disappear at will.)

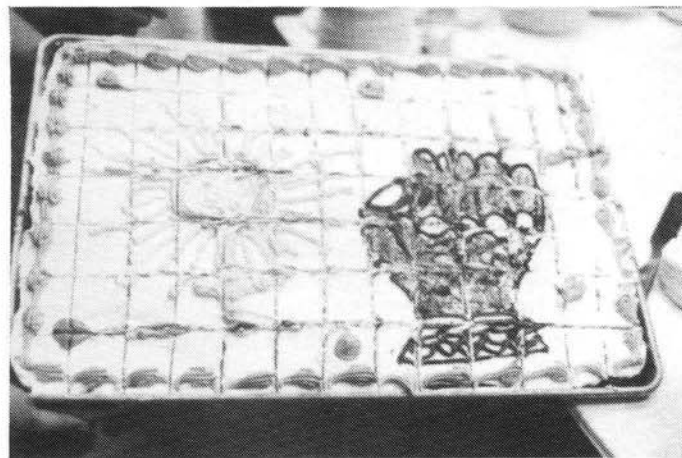
Which of these festively-attired guests who chatter and smile have murder in their hearts? Almost all of them. And I do not except the women. Romano Liao, gorgeous in her usual yellow and white, was half the room away with her back turned when a waiter dropped a serving tray. The turn-

ing leap-and-crouch she performed revealed two interesting items. One was the unusual degree of her martial arts training. The other was the unusual state of her nerves...

The real question is not which of the guests have murder in their hearts. How many vials of poison lie next to those same hearts? Comstar insisted that we leave all weapons on our ships, even to ceremonial swords for the officers. They searched our persons and our baggage, and even sent us through scanners to check for implants. Yet if I were you, little bride, I would not go for a walk with anyone named Marik...

(The opening reception) Prince

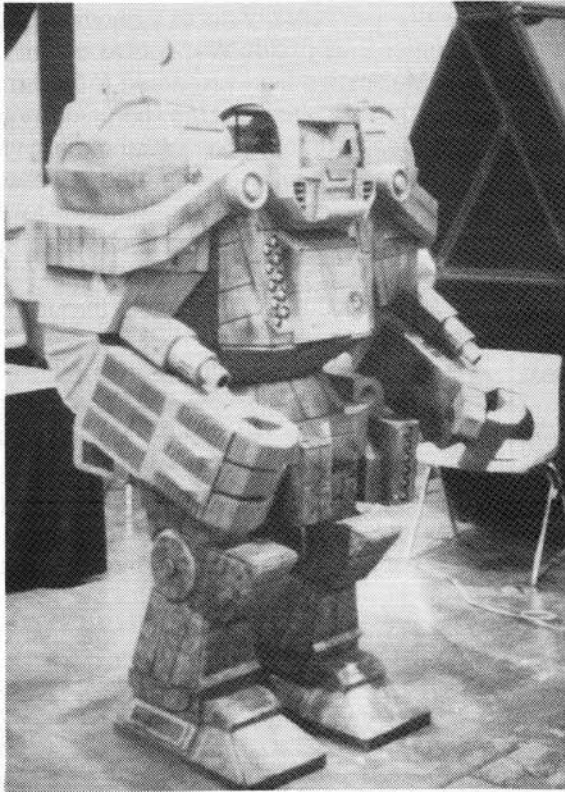
Davion Minister of Security Quintus Allard watched the guests benignly, like a brighteyed robin redbreast looking for signs of shifting alliances among the worms. When second daughter Romano of House Liao chose Tsen Shang, a high-ranking Maskirova official, to be her escort, tongues wagged at this evidences of their support for her candidacy for the heirship. But when first daughter Candace Liao, Duchess of St Ives, Capellan Heir-Designate appeared, Allard's wife Tamara forgot herself sufficiently to grasp at her husband's arm. Candace's escort was his son by a former marriage Justin Xiang, now a citizen of the Capellan Marches. (Watchers of the Arena will remember Xiang's spectacular victories there in 3026-27 —



Wedding cake, Courtesy of Ogden Food Services

Hanse Davion and his intended bride, Archon-Designate Melissa Arthur Steiner greeted their guests with urbane charm, and on her part, with genuine sweetness.

and his crusade of vengeance against MechWarriors of Davion affiliation. Quintus Allard ignored his son for the entirety of the reception. Not so the



House Kurita's model Atlas, A variant with two LRM 10-racks instead of the usual LRM-20. This 'Mech was the Draconian gift to the bride and groom.

Allards' other son Daniel, who had a moving interview with his brother. Daniel was informed publically that Citizen Xiang was now entirely Capellan in his loyalties, and that his former family was dead to him!

A note beyond the social occurred when Colonel Jaime Wolf of the celebrated Wolf's Dragoons appeared at the reception with two officer's presentation swords and flung them dramatically at the feet of Coordinator Takashi Kurita. We were not privileged to overhear their dialog, but body language showed us that Col Wolf's extreme anger. Was he casting the Coordinator's honors back at him, or returning the swords of a dead man? Col Wolf remained at the reception, keeping to the company of other soldiers, notably Kell Hounds Morgan Kell and Daniel Allard. This conversation seemed to be friendly, despite previous participation on different sides of campaigns. I am informed that the two units never actually fought against one another...

(Third Day) Yet another Allard, the lovely young Riva (new PhD Candidate at the NAIS) was seen in openly flirtatious conversation with *Chu-Sa* Akira Brahe of House Kurita's delegation during our tour of ComStar's facility. *Chu-sa* Brahe, son of a mixed marriage himself, must have informed her of the racial purity doctrine in a manner less than tactful. An abrupt clapping

sound brought several "civilian observers" to their feet groping for their nonexistent sidearms (remember, ComStar put all of our weapons in bond). The lady withdrew with an angry expression, while the *Chu-sa* wore the mark of her handprint red on his cheek. A warning to citizens of House Kuria who must travel among strangers! It is not necessary for purity to be worn upon the sleeve. *Engrave purity upon your heart, and the wa so formed will guide your actions in a seemly manner. This will cause lesser beings to seek to emulate you, rather than to engage in useless struggle.* So said Kadagowa Sensei in 2609. We recommend his advice to *Chu-sa* Brahe.

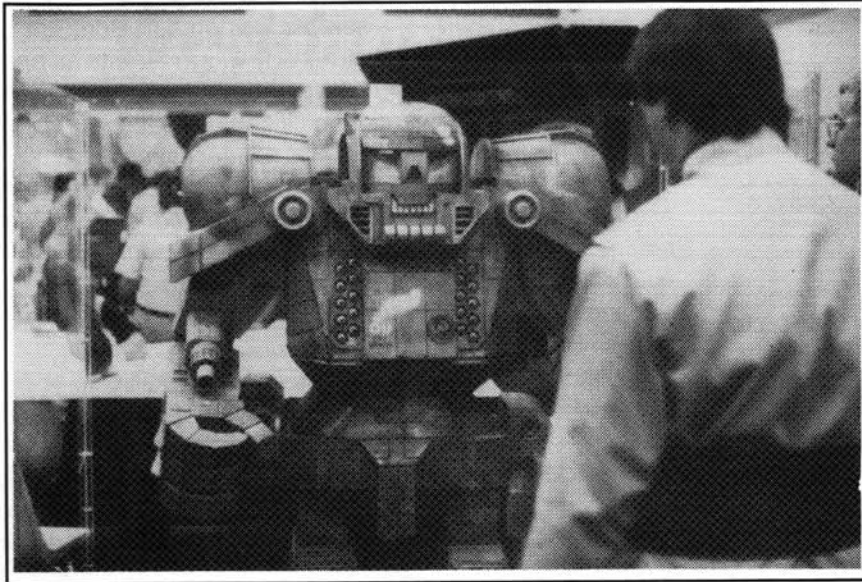
Alliances we do not believe purely political include: Consolidating Davion-Steiner alliances: Kell Hound Daniel Allard (yes, the same busy Daniel Allard) and Lyran Jeana. Bad Luck, Baroness De Gambier! This luscious blonde has been trying to show young Allard just how much her given name of Felicity is deserved...The bride's Maid of Honor Misha Auburn and Andrew Redburn of Delta Company are reported to be considering such a match as well. One wonders what — or who — the lovely Misha, daughter of Lyran Court Historian Thelos Auburn, will be dreaming of at the altar...Archon Katrina Steiner is escorted everywhere by Morgan Kell, the CO of the newly-reformed Kell Hounds. The Archon is said to have left her heart in her husband's grave, but Morgan Kell was Arthur Luvon's best friend...

Free Worlds League Citizen Elespeth Battin found herself the object of a scolding from her father Anton Battin, Underminister for Defense. The reason? Little Elespeth found herself next to an handsome gentleman in the buffet line and enjoyed an animated conversation with him, despite his unfamiliar accent. He wasn't in uniform, so she didn't recognize the Steiner minister responsible for the Lyran strategy known as "Flypaper". You know, take a Marik border planet, wait six months, leave a skeleton garrison to lure back the defending forces, pounce on them as they arrive with the troops you have in reserve offworld, then wait six months...Elespeth will not be attending the wedding.

Elizabeth Jordan Liao honored Col Pavel Ridzik with several slow and graceful dances during the dancing which ended the reception. Elizabeth seems to have chosen a new favorite. I noticed daughter Romano glaring daggers at the lovely Elizabeth. Does the lithe Romano feel threatened by her mother's maturer charms?

We were struck by the absence of sons and heirs. The Prince of Luthien is, of course, on duty with his regiment on Marfik. But surely Janos Marik could have allowed one son — or cousin — to attend. Tormana Liao, "former son" to Chancellor Liao, was also among the missing. The Chancellor, it seems, did not fear corruption for his daughters.

(The Wedding) We watched with interest as the usher asked the traditional question "Friends of the bride or of the groom". Janos Marik answered curtly, "Seat us on the



what he meant. The much-tried Capellan people were enduring yet another invasion! Another Succession War was to begin!

Maximilian Liao screamed to his family to pack up their plates, as they contained valuable intelligence information! (Candace's, I happened to see, was the Federated Suns' world of Axton). Mistress Rafsani hurried to Janos Marik's side — he seemed to suffer something like a heart attack. Coordinator Kurita sat dignified, the Mountain that lasts through all the petty storms.

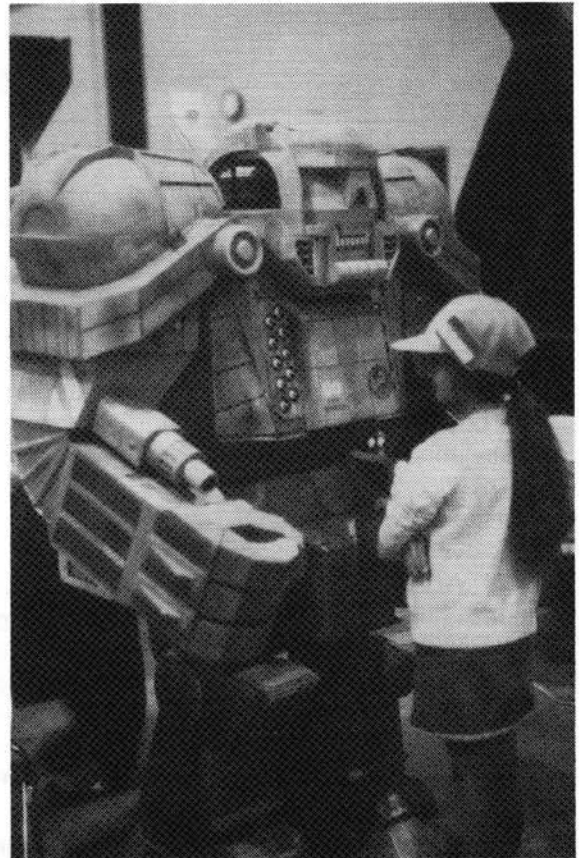
Justin Xiang toasted Prince Hanse, then crushed the glass in his metal hand, a state-of-the-art production of Davion's own technology...I put my plate in my purse immediately. I now possess a valuable historical souvenir. It represents the backworld Nashira, a world of which I had never heard until that day.

"The last time I saw one of these, it was ripping my 'Mech's arm off" Matthew 'Killer' Kelly

the Steiner side. I supposed that the bride had one advantage to him — she wasn't a Davion yet. The lovely Candace, despite her escort's objections, chose the Davion side. She even asked the usher, Lt Gen Ardan Sortek, if "that wasn't a difficult question for many of the guests to answer?"

Coordinator Kurita and family chose to exhibit their good will toward the groom. His manner was, as always, an example to all of us in an ambivalent situation.

(The Wedding Reception) The tables were set in a hexagonal pattern, with open space in the middle for service — or insulation. The Wedding Party table faced Liao directly, with Marik opposite Steiner, and Kurita opposite Davion... Each table had a little card telling us that the china, glassware etc were made especially for the wedding, and that each place set would be given to the guest to take home. The crystal included the Hasek crest for the Best Man, Morgan-Hasek-Davion. He has reverted to the old crest, with the Davion Sunburst once again included... The plates each had depicted a different world from the Inner Sphere, planets loyal to all the Houses. Much merriment began among the guests as they disputed whether the plates were distributed at random, what this guest's possible connection could be with the steamy world of Mira, etc... When the wedding cake was served, I looked at my plate again to see what world I'd got, and found it obscured by a paper doily. The bride gave the groom a bite of wedding cake, and a regiment of 'Mechs. The groom toasted his bride, first removing the doily from his plate and passing the glass across it. "I give you," he said, "the Capellan Confederation!" No one for an instant doubted



Elespeth Battin & Friend

(The Next Day) I saw the vehicle leaving early this morning, returning the bride to her people of the Commonwealth. It seems that the Lyrans don't trust the Fox not to corrupt their pretty heiress. So after one night of wedded

bliss, the bride returns to Mama's arms. Perhaps she was relieved. I picked a scrap of rice paper up off the ground, the sort of paper officers use. On it, two haiku in different yet similar calligraphies. Father and son? My heart wishes to believe so...

These photographs are supplied through the kindness of Shield Laminating, makers of forms for 'MechWarrior training. Photographs taken in the Hall of Exhibits, GenCon-Origins, held here this year as a courtesy to the distinguished guests.



Warriors of four Houses pose for a once-in-a-lifetime picture.

Left to right, they are:

Edward 'Buck' Wolf, 30th Marik Militia, Apocalypse Legion;

Sashuma Honda,

Elite 2nd Sword Light, House Kurita (The Steel Dragon), Commander (Chu-i) of Heavy Recon Lance, The Deadly Fists;

Chuck 'Swoop' Wolf, 3rd Crucis Lancers: Achernar Lancers, Commander Medium Recon Lance;

Matthew 'Killer' Kelly, 11th Lyran Guard.

We are indebted to Miss Chatterji for the haiku which appear in More Than Warriors this month. The haiku, believed to be written by Yorinaga Kurita and Akira Brahe, appear at the end of this issue, along with a drawing by Rae "Raven" Philips, DropShip pilot now serving with Wolf's Dragoons. Raven's recent feat of piloting is described in BattleTechnology News.

In Memoriam

Our Photographer, Antoni Fitzwalter, BattleTechnology's representative at the Wedding, was one of the first casualties of the war. The craft which was returning him to the DropShip exploded on the landing dock. There were no survivors among passengers or crew. Goodbye, Antoni, you will be missed. Antoni's will requests that donations be sent in his name to the Action Archives on Solaris in lieu of flowers, or if the giver wishes something more personal, a blood donation to the Indigent Journalists Association, any branch.



Life and Times of a

BattleMech Technician

by Stewart Robertson

Good BattleMech Technicians are often a little crazy. They regard the 'Mechs they work on as their personal property on loan to the pilots who take them into battle. Pilots have actually apologized to a Tech for damaging "his" 'Mech. I've even known a Tech to attack a pilot with a torque wrench for getting an arm blown off a Shadow Hawk after he spent a week rebuilding said limb.

When first assigned to a different unit, a Tech will go down to the 'Mech main-

tenance bays, or "The Pits", as we refer to them, to personally inspect the BattleMechs. Often he does this before reporting to the commanding officer. During this inspection, he sometimes adopts a "baby", a 'Mech which he feels specifically needs his attention. Such idiosyncracies annoy the commanders of House companies. Because of their 'tin god' attitudes, House commanders prefer to have the last word on anything and the best of everything for themselves.

A few years ago a senior repairman named Drexler was assigned to the Ninth Lyran Regulars after his own group was destroyed. The company commander was pleased at the prospect of having a personal Tech to work on his Warhammer. Indeed, the 70-ton Mech had a small scar on its armor from his last battle (led from twelve kilometers away — after all, one can't expect a Captain to risk HIS life, can one?). Several hours after Drexler was due to report, Captain Malten finally went looking for him only to find the errant Tech helping a grateful Stinger pilot to rebuild his battered 'Mech.

This isn't to say that Technicians have no respect for pilots or officers, and any repairman who gets too flippant with his superiors will soon find himself in serious trouble. But because BattleMech Technicians are the only people who can keep the giant war machines in operating condition, they have considerable leverage to use if necessary. The Techs are out there to do a job, and they will not tolerate any obstacles in their work.

I recall ten years ago during a planetary assault on Koren. First Lieutenant Reiko Konn, commanding the 2nd Benjamin Regulars 3rd Company on garrison duty, had her JagerMech reduced to walking junk by enemy fire. After spending over an hour cataloging the damage, Senior 'Mech Tech Jiro Shin and his crew decided to strip the crippled machine for parts to repair the company's other three heavy 'Mechs. Reiko demanded that the entire Tech

crew work non-stop until her own 'Mech was in perfect battle ready condition. Jiro explained that to repair the Jager-Mech would take months of intense labor and spare parts they didn't have. Reiko was adamant and threatened to withhold the Tech crew's back pay unless they fixed her machine.

That was her biggest mistake. Never threaten a Senior Tech; it only causes trouble. When Reiko later went down to The Pits to check the progress of the repairs, she was shocked to find that none of the damaged 'Mechs had been touched. The entire Tech crew was busy drinking beer, playing cards, and ignoring her. Finally she realized she was trapped. Unless the Tech crew repaired the BattleMechs soon, her entire command would be in jeopardy when the enemy next attacked. The company would have to withdraw from the planet or risk capture or death. So she reached a compromise. The crew removed some parts from her 'Mech to repair the others, but left the basic structure intact so it could be rebuilt at a later date.

There is a mistaken belief among some people that Technicians really don't know how to repair the various parts of a BattleMech. They believe the old technology is beyond our understanding; that we can only replace non-working systems with duplicate working systems. However, Technicians must have a thorough knowledge of the inner working of the BattleMechs they maintain. Non-technically trained people make this assumption because there is seldom time in combat situations to properly fix an important component. It is quicker to replace an entire system and then repair it at a more opportune time. For example, a damaged laser would take a repair team two and a half hours to replace. To repair it can take several days, or even weeks, depending on how bad the damage is.

Admittedly, not all damaged systems can be repaired. If the energy focusing synthetic ruby core on a laser is

cracked, for example, there's no way it can be made functional again. But many times the laser isn't really destroyed when hit by enemy weapons. Often minor damage to the firing circuitry or power capacitors can keep it from working. Machine guns and auto cannons stop working if the ammunition feeds get bent or jammed. The same rules apply to actuators, gyros, life support, and sensor equipment. It is possible to take parts from two "destroyed" systems of the same type and combine them to get one working unit. A highly trained Tech can even fabricate new parts from stock metal if he has access to machining facilities. The Technical crews of the Waco Rangers are particularly adept at building fully functional 'Mechs from battle salvage.

It's not easy to become a fully qualified BattleMech Technician. Teachers are hard to find, since any Tech worth his tool kit can earn good money in any House or mercenary unit. To truly understand the inner working of any complicated machine, the student must have plenty of hands-on experience. This requires a functional 'Mech to work on. For these reasons the only course left to hopeful repairmen is to be accepted as an apprentice.

Each apprenticeship program is entirely up to the Master Technician running it. Usually it consists of the young trainee spending at least two standard years doing nothing but "grunt" work; fetching fools, cleaning damaged parts, and helping to carry heavy equipment. Soon the student is rewarded for all his effort by being allowed to help the Technicians rebuild and repair the various 'Mechs in their charge. Eventually he or she works his way up to doing minor repairs with a minimum of supervision. After three or four years, the apprentice is given some sort of test, usually overhauling a large laser or repairing a damaged hip servo. If he succeeds, he becomes a full-fledged Tech.

Of course after the apprentice passes his final test there is still the

matter of initiating him properly into the Brotherhood of BattleMech Technicians. Each repair group has its own traditions, but all share the same common themes; welcoming the newcomer, testing his "worthiness", and general riotous partying. The initiate is required to do something along the lines of drinking half a bottle of cheap liquor while dancing on top of a replacement heat sink. Often he is "baptized" by having a quart of lubricant dumped on his head. Some initiations can prove very dangerous. Team Banzai once required new Techs to climb their tallest 'Mech with just grappling hook and rope.

Once the initiation is over (and the new Tech has lived through the hang-over), he is now accepted as a full-fledged Technician. The other Techs chip in to buy him a new tool box which becomes his most prized possession. He may now receive the work, pay, and respect of a trained Technician in any unit he may choose to work in.

Some people think that the apprenticeship method of teaching BattleMech maintenance is old-fashioned. Many believe the new schools, like the New Avalon Institute of Science, will be the training grounds of future Techs. I personally don't believe anybody can learn how to repair a 'Mech from just sitting in a classroom. These schools may have much to offer for the education of young repairmen, but the only way to really understand 'Mech repair work is to get your hands dirty.

Five years ago, I was Senior Tech for the Crucis Lancers of House Davion. One day they brought me a young lad called Edwin to be my assistant. I was informed that Edwin had just graduated with full honors from a prestigious college program as a 'Mech Technician. The company commander decided Edwin could help me to better understand new BattleMech technology while I found him a suitable niche in the Senior Tech crew.

Our first job together was on a Wasp. The light 'Mech had been hit by an

autocannon right between the "eyes", so the head was in need of a complete rebuild. As I started to tear down the damaged electronics, I told Edwin to clean the air filter in the life support system. He informed me that the filters were supposed to be changed after every battle. (As if filters grew on trees or something). Even a first year apprentice knows how to blow an old filter clean with compressed air. Experienced 'Mech pilots consider themselves lucky if they even *have* an air filter.

That was only the beginning of my problems with this "highly trained individual". I told him to program the replacement permanent memory IC chips for the targeting computer; he programmed it to check the radar rangefinder before firing the weapons. No Wasp-sized 'Mech has had functional radar for a hundred years! I told him to test the tension on the myomer bundle "muscles", and he asked me for a dynamic/static calibration meter. It was the first time I ever met a repairman who couldn't test the myomers by twanging them like guitar strings. I knew I didn't want him working in my repair team without some real training. Still, he wasn't totally stupid; when I questioned him, he gave me names for parts I didn't even know had names. Since the boy showed promise, I took him under my wing. The company commander was upset at finding his new "Senior" Tech cleaning parts and fetching tools like a first year apprentice, but Edwin just wanted to learn; he was willing to do anything required. Today Edwin is the second highest ranking Tech of the Crucis Lancers, and has a reputation for being extra hard on *his* apprentices.

Being a Technician isn't as easy as many people seem to think. During combat campaigns every Tech is expected to perform miracles on a regular time schedule with little or no spare parts available. They work long hours for days on end only to see their 'Mechs return from combat as battle scarred

wrecks. Sometimes the 'Mechs don't return at all!

A reliable source of spare parts is the biggest problem Techs face. Armor and heat sinks get destroyed whenever there's combat. Weapons, servos, and gyros are far easier to replace than to fix. 'Mechs must be maintained even when not in battle. Wear and tear can disable these machines as effectively as enemy fire. Without replacement parts even the greatest BattleMech will eventually grind to a halt.

Getting spare parts is hardest for the small mercenary lance. Individual 'Mechs and 'Mech lances depend on battlefield salvage for much of their supplies. However, these units regularly find themselves attached to larger companies. This makes it hard for the smaller unit to get their fair share of salvaged parts. The problem is worse if the larger force is a House company or battalion; in such an organization the "little guys" often get no salvage at all. Sometimes they even find their own cache of spare parts looted by the other units!

Large battalions and companies have less trouble getting battlefield salvage. As they are more powerful, they have less trouble capturing enemy 'Mechs. But they also have their problems. With more 'Mechs to maintain there is a far greater demand for parts and equipment. The Techs of most small units would be happy to get their hands on a few heat sinks or circuit boards. It takes a dozen tons of parts to make a dent in the repair work of a large sized company.

The numerous problems in getting spare parts are worse in a House company. With several battle units to supply, the Successor Houses must carefully regulate their limited resources. But where regulation goes, greed and bureaucracy always follow. Many times, Techs have gone to fully stocked House supply depots, only to be told they have "used up their allotment" or "haven't filed the correct paperwork". Often this is an excuse as

House leaders attempt to hoard their resources. Sometimes the problem is just stupidity. Either can cut a unit off from needed supplies.

Two years ago the Eridani Light Horse was assigned to the planet Hoff. They were defending this House Davion world from an attack from the Draconis Combine. After several successful battle, Brevet General Armstrong had units from the 7th Striker Battalion pull back for repairs. They had captured numerous enemy 'Mechs and were planning on using them for spare parts. However, upon reaching the Davion base they were told by the House Liaison Officer, "No parts may be used from captured 'Mechs until they have been inspected, categorized, and listed, with said list approved, signed, filed..." The argument could have lasted for days except that the Liaison Officer was accidentally run over several times by a small tank. Fortunately, Major Robert Green-Davion, the unit's new Liaison Officer, has more sense than his predecessor did.

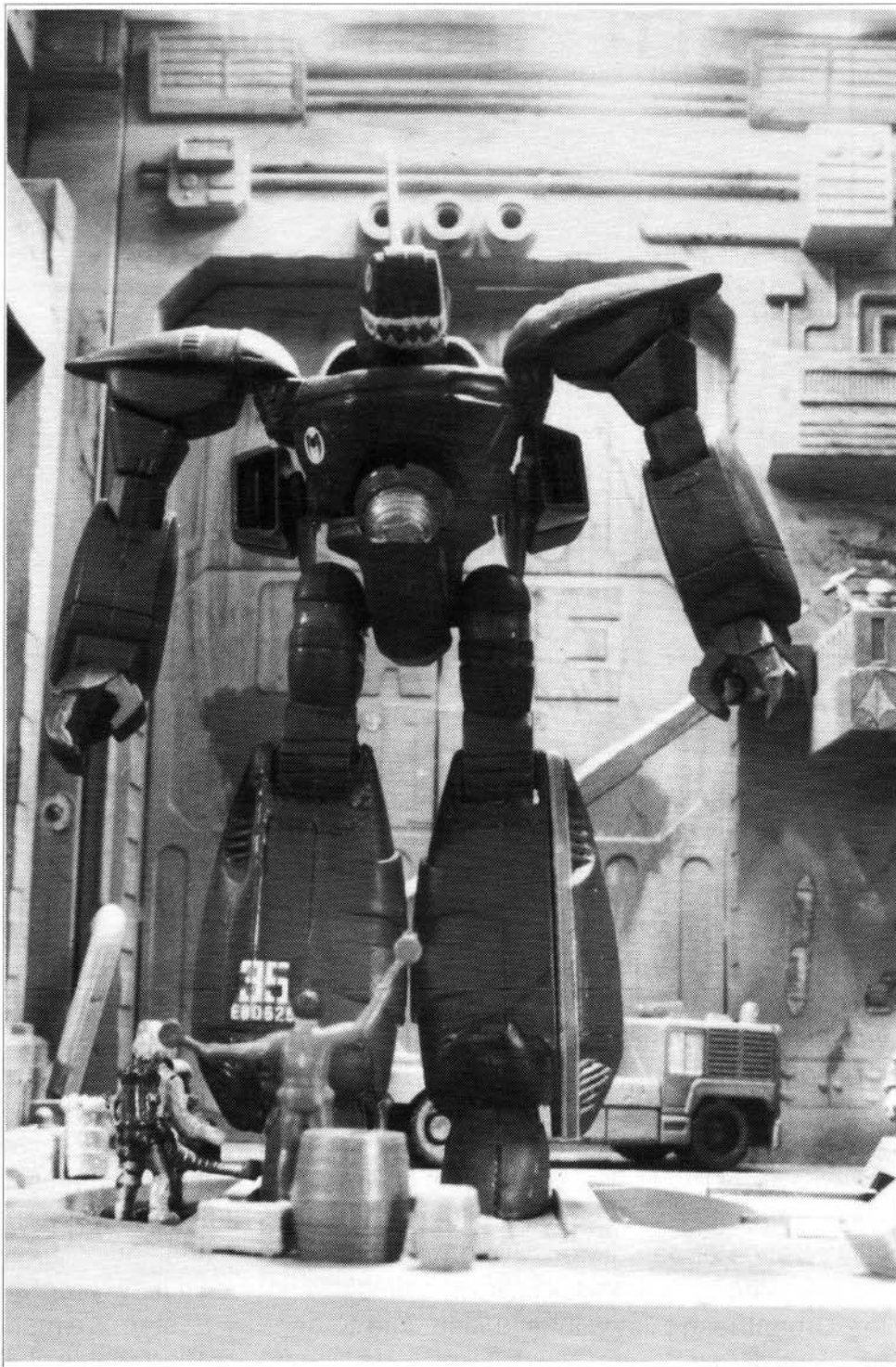
In any well-equipped battle group, it is best to have a senior Technician assigned to each 'Mech, with a squad of lesser Technicians, electricians and mechanics working under him. Many companies try to get by with one Senior Tech in charge of The Pits with a regular Tech responsible for each individual Mech's repair crew. Some mercenary lances try to get by with just one good Tech with a few "grunts" under him to do all the work. In all cases it is the Senior Tech who does the jobs requiring the utmost precision, who keeps the maintenance schedules in line, and who does the regular inspections. It is his job to keep the unit commander informed of the condition of each 'Mech. If a 'Mech fails due to improper maintenance, the responsibility is his alone.

So why do we do it? Why do we go through the headaches, backpains, and skinned knuckles to keep these ancient machines going? For some it's the money. Others do it for the elevated

social status of the occupation. For most it is the pride of accomplishment we get in taking a battered and burned wreck and making a functional 'Mech out of it. I know more than one Technician who has cried for joy at the sight of a rebuilt Wasp taking to the battlefield after being reduced to scrap by enemy laser fire.

Biography

Sired by an AsTech and born to a Warhammer pilot, Stewart McCobb Robertson grew up surrounded by the tools of his future career. He apprenticed early (age 10) to the company's repair crew in order to spend more time with his parents. He showed a great aptitude for BattleMech engineering, and later turned down the chance to pilot his mother's 'Mech in order to continue his technical training. Today he is a Senior Tech, and has his pick of jobs. Sporting a full head of white hair, Stewart has worked for four of the Successor States, and for more companies, both House and mercenary, than he cares to remember. Although he admits he's over sixty, his eyes, skill, and stamina have yet to lose any of their edge. Many younger Techs expect Senior Tech Robertson, the "Old Man of the Pit", to be around for a long time.



Before & after pictures of Stewart's current "baby" are supplied courtesy of his Pit Crew, as a surprise for Stewart. The 'Mech is a Falcon Hawk, a rare predecessor to the Phoenix Hawk. It had been lying damaged in a storehouse for over fifty years before Stewart decided to salvage it.

BATTLETECH SIMULATOR

Combat Efficiency Factor:

Making Simulator Combat
Equal

By Professor Eieon McLeary, NAIS

The Tactics Department of the Military Science school of the NAIS were courteous enough to release this new simulation aid to us for publication.

A Mechwarrior must constantly train to be the best he can be. Whether he is a green recruit learning to pilot an old battered Wasp or a regimental commander in her shiny new Zeus, the warrior must constantly train. He must hone his skill to a sharp edge and he must learn every capability of his 'Mech. Simulation combat is the way to maintain or train a Mechwarrior. It is the way a warrior learns the ins and outs of his 'Mech.

Yet no matter how good a pilot is, he stands little chance of defeating a 70-ton Archer with a 35-ton Urbanmech. In such an unmatched fight the Urbanmech pilot will have little time to hone his skills or to learn his 'Mech's limits. He'll be far too busy trying to stay alive to worry about things like that. If you look at it from the other point of view it is a similar problem. How good will the Archer pilot be if he always fights against Urbanmechs?

He'll find little challenge to hone his skills or extend his 'Mech's abilities.

To learn anything from simulation combat, the two sides need to be as close to equal as possible so as to challenge, but not to overpower either side.

This raises the question of how to determine the equality of the sides. Surely a Jenner and an Ost-scout are not equal matches, even though they do weigh in at the same tonnage. And are four Valkyries an even match for a lone Rifleman? Or is the Rifleman severely outgunned? We of the NAIS Tactics Department believe that we have the solution. After four years of use in our Mechwarrior training program, the Combat Efficiency Factor System is a marked success, taking into account all of a 'Mech's abilities in actual 'Mech combat. The system assigns a numerical value for each of the abilities of the 'Mech. By totaling these numbers, you'll achieve a system for accurately assigning a

WFR Table

| Weapon | WFR |
|----------------------|-----|
| small laser | 0.6 |
| medium laser | 1.4 |
| larger laser | 2.3 |
| particle cannon | 2.5 |
| autocannon/2 | 2.0 |
| autocannon/5 | 2.3 |
| autocannon/10 | 2.5 |
| autocannon/20 | 3.0 |
| machine gun | 0.5 |
| flamer | 0.5 |
| Long Range Missiles | |
| 5-pack | 2.3 |
| 10-pack | 2.5 |
| 15-pack | 3.0 |
| 20-pack | 3.5 |
| Short Range Missiles | |
| 2-pack | 1.3 |
| 4-pack | 1.8 |
| 6-pack | 2.3 |

DF Table

| Tonnage | DF |
|---------|----|
| 20 | 4 |
| 25 | 5 |
| 30 | 6 |
| 35 | 7 |
| 40 | 8 |
| 45 | 9 |
| 50 | 10 |
| 55 | 11 |
| 60 | 12 |
| 65 | 13 |
| 70 | 14 |
| 75 | 15 |
| 80 | 16 |
| 85 | 17 |
| 90 | 18 |
| 95 | 19 |
| 100 | 20 |

To gain the Combat Efficiency Factor (CEF) of a Battle-Mech, take some scratch paper, the WFR and DF tables, and the complete stats for the given 'Mech. The procedure is as follows:

1. Divide tonnage by 10. Record.
2. Record armor weight.
3. Record walking MP.
4. Add .25 for each jump to # 3. (If the 'Mech is jump capable add .25 for each jump M.P. to step 3.)
5. Calculate Weapons Factor Rating. Record. (Using the WFR table, add together all of the WFRs of all the 'Mech's weapons.)
6. Calculate Safe Weapons Factor Rating, Record. (Going from greatest to least WFR, add all weapons that can fire without overheating the 'Mech.)
7. Record Hand to Hand Damage Factor. (Compare the 'Mech's tonnage to the DF table to get this number.)
8. Add all steps 1-7 to gain CEF.

C.E.F.s for the Most-Used 'Mechs

This is a listing of all 'Mechs in Technical Readout 3025® published by the FASA Corporation, in accordance with the system presented here. If any unit has come up with another method, we invite you to present your variant.

Light 'Mechs

| | |
|-----------|------|
| Locust | 22.8 |
| Wasp | 21.9 |
| Stinger | 17.3 |
| Commando | 27.9 |
| Javelin | 28.9 |
| Spider | 28.1 |
| Urbanmech | 23.7 |
| Valkyrie | 29.0 |
| Jenner | 35.0 |
| Ostscout | 27.8 |
| Panther | 29.9 |

Medium 'Mechs

| | |
|-----------|------|
| Assassin | 34.6 |
| Cicada | 32.8 |
| Clint | 34.2 |
| Hermes | 33.9 |
| Whitworth | 39.2 |
| Blackjack | 44.8 |

continued

| | |
|--------------|------|
| Hatchetman | 35.6 |
| Phoenix Hawk | 38.9 |
| Vindicator | 39.9 |
| Centurion | 41.7 |
| Enforcer | 39.2 |
| Hunchback | 41.2 |
| Trebuchet | 43.7 |
| Dervish | 46.9 |
| Griffin | 39.7 |
| Shadow Hawk | 45.9 |
| Scorpion | 36.6 |
| Wolverine | 43.8 |

Heavy 'Mechs

| | |
|-----------|------|
| Dragon | 46.8 |
| Ostroc | 46.5 |
| Ostol | 46.8 |
| Quickdraw | 49.0 |
| Rifleman | 48.4 |
| Catapault | 53.5 |

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Archer | 56.9 |
| Grasshopper | 58.8 |
| Warhammer | 52.7 |
| Marauder | 54.3 |
| Orion | 56.0 |

Assault 'Mechs

| | |
|--------------|------|
| Awesome | 55.7 |
| Charger | 43.8 |
| Goliath | 57.0 |
| Victor | 53.8 |
| Zeus | 58.9 |
| Battlemaster | 65.0 |
| Stalker | 70.8 |
| Cyclops | 56.5 |
| Banshee | 58.3 |
| Atlas | 76.2 |

After 14 years the rules for the most popular science fiction miniatures have been revised

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a scenario for MechWarrior



Note: The material in this scenario is for the MechWarrior referee's use only! The referee should arrange the presentation of this scenario in such a way that the characters do not know in advance that they will meet the Phransigars, as their plausibility is a major part of the encounter. This may mean obtaining the players' promises that they will not read the following material until the adventure has been completed, or it may require that the referee change the names, etc, presented here in order to keep the vital element of surprise. Referee is urged to be completely familiar with the article on page 16 as well as this scenario.

In the Name of the Dark Mother

by Dr Hobart Watson

SIMULATOR INFORMATION

The feature article entitled "Phransigars, the Strangler Cult" (see page 16) describes the ancient cult which may be encountered in Capellan Space, particularly on planets settled by those of Indian descent.

Those MechWarriors and trainees who use FASA's MechWarrior role-playing game rules to expand their BattleTech Campaigns or to flesh out individual BattleTech scenarios may find themselves up against this cult, or people trained within it. (Members are able to take "leaves of absence" to pursue further learning or their cover careers and remain members in good standing). The information given in this simulator piece may be used by MechWarrior referees either as an adventure in its own right, as part of a larger campaign, or as a source of ideas for other scenarios of the referee's own design.

Phransigar player-characters should be few and far between, both because of their unbalanced skills and abilities, and because the social background has been researched only from the outside; we do not know, for example, how a Phransigar initiation is conducted, or a funeral. A band of Phransigars may be encountered by the players as NPC characters as an unusual "random encounter" or as a major event in the player characters' lives, at referee's discretion. Phransigars will not attack if their numbers are not in a majority

The Scenario:

As part of your last contract, you were to receive 10 % across the board of all battlefield salvage from battles your unit participated in. Your Techs put themselves at risk, watching the battles from closer than usual range and making careful listings of each 'Mech defeated, the shape it seemed to be in, etc. You have "shopping lists" from the Tech crew as to which parts are needed, and which are desirable in trade for your anticipated next assignment. Now those crates of parts have been unloaded halfway across the planet, at a central warehouse facility belonging to the House you worked for. The contract is completed; you may or may not choose to hire on with them again. It is now your job to inspect the crates assigned to you; to bargain or barter or bluster until you have gotten the parts from the other crates assigned to other companies or the House Factor's storage

facility. Players have two vehicles, one of which is a heavy transport: neither is air or hover craft. Rate of movement is therefore 100-120 km per day, the rate of the slowest vehicle. If any of the player characters have 'Mechs needing special parts, use the following table to determine whether or not such a part was captured and is now available to you. The referee should as always modify these according to the game balance of existing campaigns. Whatever you decide, make it sound as if it would be harder than it is. Allow the players to get one part which is truly rare. The players should be lead to think that they have now accomplished most of the scenario.

Chance to Acquire a Specific Part

| Exists? | Unit Got | Players Got | Players can get |
|---------|----------|-------------|-----------------|
| 95% | 35% | 95% | 35% |
| 90% | 30% | 95% | 30% |
| 85% | 27% | 95% | 25% |
| 80% | 25% | 90% | 25% |
| 75% | 23% | 90% | 23% |
| 70% | 22% | 90% | 22% |
| 65% | 21% | 85% | 21% |
| 60% | 20% | 85% | 60% |
| 55% | 19% | 40% | 50% |
| 50% | 18% | 40% | 50% |
| 45% | 17% | 30% | 30% |
| 40% | 16% | 25% | 30% |
| 35% | 15% | 15% | 15% |
| 30% | 14% | 10% | only if you |
| 25% | 13% | 10% | steal it |
| 20% | 12% | 5% | " |
| 15% | 10% | 0% | heavily |
| 10% | 8% | 0% | guarded |
| 5% | 3% | 0% | " |

Col 1 — Ref decide how common the 'Mech is AND how common the part is: average together.

Col 2 — The % chance this part has been salvaged in usable condition.

Col 3 — The % chance this part IF salvaged was allotted to the players.

Col 4 — The % chance this part IF SALVAGED BUT NOT ALLOTTED can be acquired by the players, if they show initiative. Ref's discretion; trading, bribery, or chicanery may be tried. We recommend that you allow Scouts and Rogues an extra 10% chance here.

The players have acquired their parts with relative ease. They must refuel before beginning the 1300 km journey back. The planet is arid and dry, like high desert country. At the refuelling station, they run across several transport vehicles, with their transies discussing the formation of a caravan to travel the road which the characters must take. There have been some hijackings, and a solitary vehicle has always a poorer chance in case of breakdowns, etc. Meer Ali will be complimentary to the PC's ability. Kirsten will cast them shy, interested glances. Noor Khan will be extremely persuasive. If all else fails, he will offer money. To have real soldiers along will increase survival chances so greatly, he says. He praises his sister Hollna's cooking and offers to share meals with the party. Whatever it takes; he really wants you. (Stats for these NPCs on pg 47).

Phransigar Non Player Characters:

The Tinker "family", fix-it specialists, who are in reality the first party of Phransigars:

Bhowanee: *Beyla* of the expedition

| | | | | |
|------|----|-----------------|------------|--------------|
| BODY | 9 | | | |
| DEX | 10 | Brawl 4 | Rogue 2 | Atheletics 2 |
| LRN | 9 | Blade 2 | Stealth 2 | Climbing 1 |
| CHA | 8 | Mechanical 1 | Disguise 2 | Running 2 |
| PIB | +5 | Rumal 2 | Bribery 1 | Acrobatics 3 |
| HTK | 90 | Diplomacy 1 | Listen 3 | |
| | | Interrogation 1 | | |

vibroblade, cudgel, rumal (special scarf for strangling), dagger

Noor Khan: sexton, convincer

| | | | | |
|------|----|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| BODY | 9 | Brawl 1 | Rogue 1 | Athletics 1 |
| DEX | 8 | Blade 1 | Stealth 1 | Acrobatics 2 |
| LRN | 8 | Diplomacy 3 | Disguise 1 | Running 1 |
| CHA | 12 | Interrogation 1 | Listen 1 | |
| PIB | +4 | Driver 1 | Hide in Cover 1 | |
| HTK | 90 | Tactics 1 | | |
| | | Rumal 1 | | |

cudgel, tranq gun, rumal, dagger

Mandhata: young *Soon* due to make his first kill this expedition, shy & charming — rumal & dagger

Ormeea: Handholder, slightly older, know-it-all — rumal, dagger

| | | | | |
|------|------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| BODY | 7 | Brawl 1 | Athletics 2 | Rogue 1 |
| DEX | 8 | Blade 2 | Acrobatics 2 | Stealth 1 |
| LRN | 8 | Rumal 1 | Running 3 | Hide in Cover 1 |
| CHA | 9 | Streetwise 1 | Climb 1 | Listen 2 |
| HTK | 80 | Mechanical 2 | | |
| PIB | none | | | |

same stats for both characters

Bhowanee is Elite. Soor Jun, Hallna, and Noor Khan are veterans. Mandhata and Ormeea are the only green Phransigars. The others are regular.

Soor Jun: Hardened, very pious, growing desparate

| | | | |
|--------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| BODY 8 | Brawl 2 | Athletics1 | Rogue 1 |
| DEX 9 | Blade 2 | Acrobatics 1 | Stealth 2 |
| LRN 7 | Driver 1 | Running 1 | Disguise 1 |
| CHA 6 | Mechanical 2 | | Bribery 1 |
| PIB +3 | Rumal 2 | | |
| HTK 60 | Streetwise 2 | | |

rumal, knife, cudgel

Hollna: (fem) Strong & wiry, *Bhurtote*. Competent, keeps to herself. Mandhata's aunt, sister to Noor Khan.

| | | | |
|--------|-----------------|--------------|------------|
| BODY 8 | Mechanical 2 | Athletics 2 | Rogue 1 |
| DEX 10 | Brawl 1 | Acrobatics 2 | Stealth 2 |
| LRN 10 | Rumal 2 | Climb 2 | Disguise 2 |
| CHA 8 | Streetwise 1 | Run 2 | |
| PIB +5 | Interrogation 2 | | |
| HTK 80 | Listen 1 | | |

rumal, vibroblade, tranq gun

Second Party of Phransigars:

The "miners" returning home for the New Year holidays join your party at the third trokstop. This party has various bundles which they say contain gifts. They also have sleeping mats, which they will happily offer for the viewing of the meteor shower. Vehicle: a junked looking ground car that actually is in excellent condition.

Peera, *Bhurtote*, carries pickaxe
second in command, active, lively, asks questions

| | | | |
|--------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| BODY 9 | Blade 1 | Rogue 2 | Athletics 1 |
| DEX 10 | Brawl 2 | Listen 3 | Acrobatics 2 |
| LRN 9 | Mechanical 1 | Stealth 2 | Running 1 |
| CHA 8 | Rumal 2 | Disguise 2 | |
| PIB +5 | Diplomacy 1 | Hide in Cover 1 | |
| HTK 90 | | | |

Man Khan: *Shumseea*, gambler, sarcastic

| | | | |
|--------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| BODY 8 | Brawl 2 | Athletics1 | Rogue 1 |
| DEX 9 | Blade 2 | Acrobatics 2 | Stealth 2 |
| LRN 7 | Driver 1 | Running 1 | Disguise 1 |
| CHA 6 | Mechanical 2 | | Hide in |
| PIB +3 | Rumal 1 | | Cover 1 |
| HTK 60 | Streetwise 2 | | |

Knife, Sonic stunner, rumal

vibroblade, cudgel, rumal, dagger

Feregeea, Sexton, sleepy, goodnatured

| | | | |
|--------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| BODY 7 | Brawl 1 | Athletics 2 | Rogue 1 |
| DEX 8 | Blade 2 | Acrobatics 2 | Stealth 1 |
| LRN 8 | Rumal 1 | Running 1 | Hide in Cover 3 |
| CHA 9 | Streetwise 1 | Climbing 1 | |
| PIB +3 | Mechanical 2 | | |
| HTK 70 | | Hide in Cover 1 | |

rumal, cudgel

Motee Lal, carries the *goor*

| | | | |
|--------|-----------------|--------------|------------|
| BODY 9 | Brawl 2 | Athletics 1 | Rogue 2 |
| DEX 8 | Blade 1 | Acrobatics 2 | Stealth 2 |
| LRN 8 | Diplomacy 1 | | Hide in |
| CHA 12 | Interrogation 1 | | Cover 3 |
| PIB +4 | Driver 1 | | Listen 1 |
| HTK 90 | Tactics 1 | | Disguise 2 |

Rumal 1
cudgel, tranq gun, rumal, dagger

Kumali (fem): Chatters, likes kids. A *Bhurtote*

| | | | |
|--------|-----------------|--------------|-----------|
| BODY 8 | Mechanical 2 | Athletics 2 | Rogue 2 |
| DEX 10 | Brawl 2 | Acrobatics 3 | Listen 2 |
| LRN 10 | Rumal 3 | Climb 2 | Stealth 2 |
| CHA 8 | Blade 1 | Run 1 | Bribery 4 |
| PIB +5 | Interrogation 1 | | |
| HTK 80 | | | |

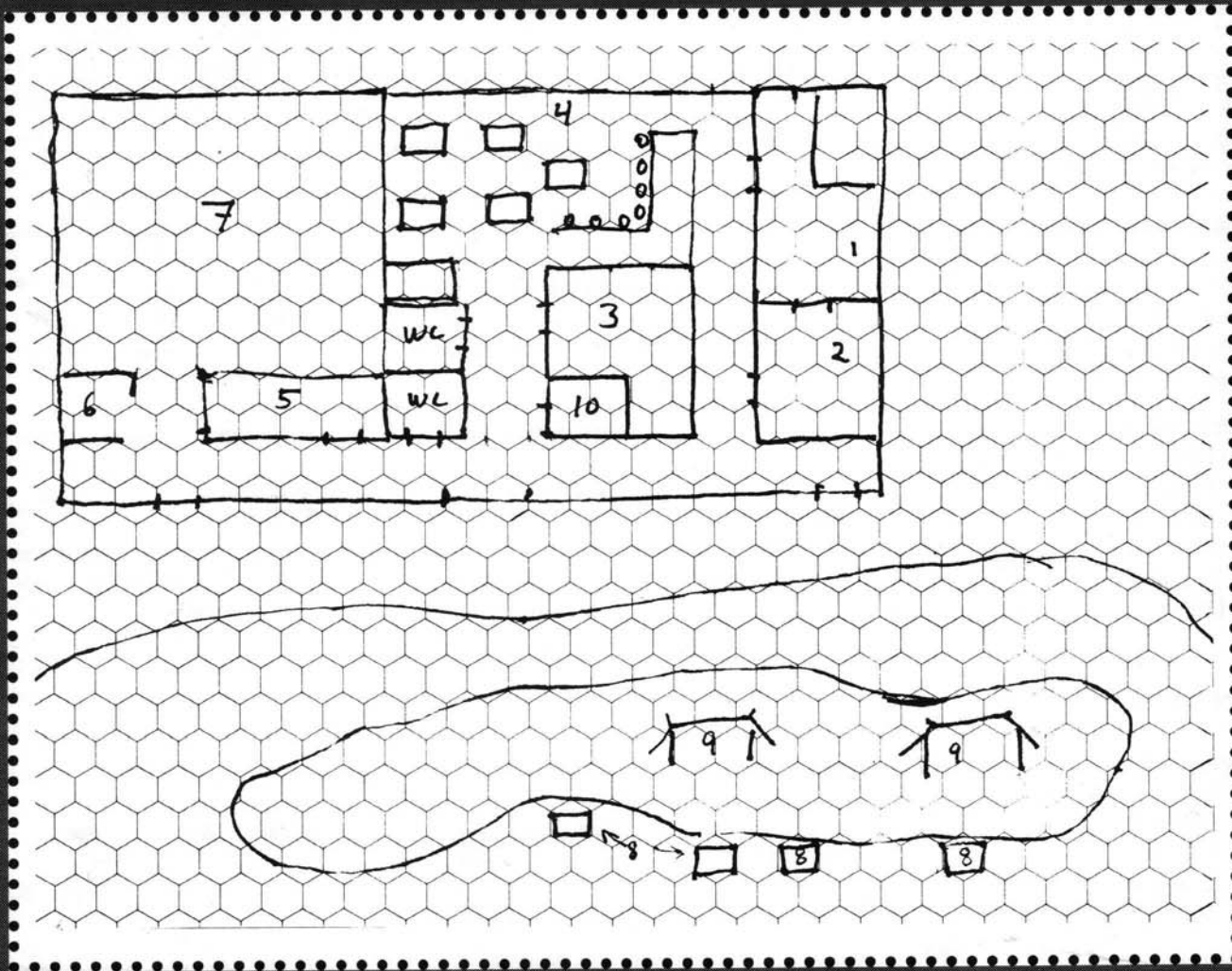
sonic stunner, rumal

Jooghar: *Shumseea*, tells long jokes & laughs at them

| | | | |
|--------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| BODY 8 | Brawl 2 | Athletics 1 | Rogue 1 |
| DEX 9 | Blade 2 | Acrobatics 1 | Stealth 1 |
| LRN 7 | Rumal 2 | Running 1 | Disguise 1 |
| CHA 6 | Mechanical 1 | | Bribery 1 |
| PIB +3 | Rumal 2 | | |
| HTK 60 | Streetwise 1 | | |

rumal, dagger

Here are some other names available if you must expand the Phransigar party: Keema, Poorun, Deroo, Bhodi, Lal Khan. You should have nine more Phransigars than the number of player characters. This is because there are seven NPCs who will fight with the party, and the Phransigars must always be a majority. Minimums for the Phransigars are: Body 5, DEX 8, LRN 6, CHA 7. 1 level of Rogue is given. 1 level of Brawling is given. 1 level of Athletics is given. No formal schooling is given.



Key to Map:

This is Trokstop 4, but it may be used for other Trokstops: vary it slightly by exchanging vid room and laundry, etc. Trokstops are similar to each other as they follow traditional patterns of architecture.

- 1) is a small store, sweets, common trans parts, vids, etc.
- Stairs behind the counter are the only way to the family quarters.
- 2) is a storage room. Both doors into it are locked.
- Above 1 & 2 are the family's living quarters.
- 3) is the kitchen.
- 4) is the dining room.
- 5) is a shower room. You have to pay with a coin in a meter.
- 6) is a laundry room, with coin-operated wash and dry machines.
- 7) is a twostory dormitory room, with two levels of bunks along the walls of each room, and a table with four chairs along one side, and chairs in the center of the downstairs room.
- 8) are picnic tables
- 9) are heated Shelters
- 10) is the vid room, coin-operated

Friendly NPC Stats

| | Meer Ali | Dilip | Honest Dan | | Ralf | Marta | Anders | Kirsten | |
|------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------|--------------------------|------------|--------|-----------|---------|--|
| BODY | 5 | 6 | 5 | BODY | 9 | 7 | 8 | 5 | |
| DEX | 8 | 10 | 8 | DEX | 6 | 9 | 6 | 10 | |
| LRN | 10 | 8 | 9 | LRN | 8 | 10 | 9 | 8 | |
| CHA | 8 | 10 | 5 | CHA | 6 | 7 | 6 | 10 | |
| HTK | 50 | 60 | 50 | HTK | 90 | 70 | 80 | 70 | |
| Driver | 2 | 2 | 1 | Driver | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | |
| Brawl | - | 1 | 2 | Brawl | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | |
| Mechanical | 1 | - | 1 | Mechanical | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | |
| Running | 1 | 3 | 1 | Running | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | |
| Weapon | rug hook (like sword) | wrench (like club) | tranq gun | Weapons (all at level 1) | | | | | |
| | | | | dagger | vibroblade | wrench | tranq gun | | |

Merchants: These all know one another from previous trips:

Ralf and Marta Holgerson, son Anders & daughter Kirsten. They are parts brokers from Raselhogue. They are tough, unscrupulous bargainers and fighters. Kirsten is gentle, the "white sheep" of the family. She could try to mediate between the PCs and her family. They want several of the parts you have, and really need to get one. See "resolution" section.

Meer Ali, rugs and textiles. Ingratiating, shrewd.

Dilip, his helper. Shy, strong, friendly. Dilip and Kirsten are interested in each other. Vehicle: Heavy Transport, good condition.

Honest Dan, the vegetable man. A market trucker. Knows this run like the back of his hand. Vehicle: Adapted surplus heavy transport, old and cobbled together.

Mudee, his helper. Scowling, grouchy. "Chip on his shoulder".

Actors: Only know each other:

Reynolds & Simpson: a comedy troupe. Two Vans, and a tent trans. Mack Simpson and Ron Reynolds are the owners, MCs, and stars. The others are Morna, a soubrette, Alfie and Darryl, the tumbling act. Pelisa, who stands around and looks pretty (the costumer, shrewder than she looks, but only interested in clothes and the company), and Fred, the stage manager, set up manager, driver, etc etc. Morna and Fred are a couple. Referee: they are here for local color only and may be left out.

Sequence of Events:

Trokstop One:

If player makes a roll, he notices Soor Jun talking with Hallna. Mandhata will ask you questions about battles. If anyone befriends him, keep a note. Later, Dan quarrels with Mudee. Mudee makes preparations to leave. Will start walking back to the city of your start next morning. If you interview him, you will notice that he is missing part of his right hand. Hollna asked Dan to fire him; said he was dishonest, she had known him previously. Dan has a short temper. When Mudee talked back upon being questioned, Dan fired him. Mudee is insulted. Even if players offer him a job, he will not stay. The actors quarrel about who got the most applause. Sign left in road. The sign is a crude arrow made to look like a drip of lubricating fluid. Players may miss it easily.

Trokstop Two:

Kirsten will begin to talk to one of the player charac-

ter. If he converses for more than fifteen minutes, he may notice that she knows more about 'Mech repair than is usual for a civilian. Referee may try to make it seem as though Kirsten is a watcher of the vids from Solaris, sort of a 'Mech groupie. A vague impression should be left that this family is not your average travelling salesman. Noor Khan tells Mandhata about the upcoming meteor shower, which will be starting in two more nights, for a period of five nights. Mandhata pretends great excitement. The actors gossip about the production they are going to do next. Someone overhears Ormea teasing Mandhata, using the word "bisul". If the young men are asked, they will lie convincingly, saying that it is the name of a local vegetable which makes Mandhata flatulent. Sign is left in the road. It is more likely to be seen this time. The players should roll to see if they remember the other sign.

Trokstop Three:

The "miners" join the party. Peera and Bhowanee will talk after everyone has gone to bed. Honest Dan will attempt to hire Dilip away from Meer Khan. Anders will show open hostility, first to Dilip, then generally, certainly including the player characters. The "miners" begin to talk of the meteor shower to come. It sounds like an excellent excuse for a party. The actors play cards all night and talk loudly. Kirsten and Dilip may be seen talking together — regular boy-girl stuff, but it may look suspicious. One of the player characters may catch Anders looking over your transport from the outside, as he plans a break-in. Noor Khan suggests that we all try some of the local brew while we wait till the meteor shower starts, about 10 pm local time tomorrow. No sign in road.

Trokstop Four:

The night set for the killing. The owners of this trokstop are a man and wife, Neemal and Doera, with two daughters, Falma (aged 10) and Reema (15). They are courteous enough to the player characters, but they do not talk on a personal level. It is possible that they are in league with the Phransigars, but nobody will ever know for certain. Roll 2 D6. On a die roll of 12, one of the prohibited class of victims (see *Phransigars, the Strangler Cult*, pg 16) will already be staying at the Trokstop. If this happens, he /she will ask to join the caravan, and Soor Jun will become rude and noisy, trying to refuse him / her. On a die roll of 1-10, the attempt will proceed as planned. On a die roll of 11, if someone has made friends with him, Mandhata will attempt to warn his friend among the player characters. He won't tell them what is to occur; he will attempt to persuade the friend to go to see a local hot spot, or to leave the party for some other reason. If anyone interrupts or overhears them, he will be scared off, and become ashamed of what he has done, betraying his tribe to a stranger. He will subsequently deny that such a conversation ever took place.

Trokstop Five:

If the killing attempt did not take place last night, and was not disclosed or detected, it will take place tonight. The owner here is Mo Jhan, a tall thin mournful fellow who seems only to care about money. His food is not delicious, but it won't kill you. He will stay in his quarters during the attack. If a player character brings the attack to his attention, he will shelter the individual and claim to the Phransigar that the character ran down the road to escape, but he will not fight in your favor.

The Killing attempt

There are picnic tables with heated shelters on a hill behind the trokstop. The party begins there with much of the local barley beer, which is surprisingly good and very potent. It makes you sleepy. A little before 10, the whole party will all either be in their beds or in the clearing, waiting for the meteor shower. The only com set will be in use by one of the host's daughters. She will not give it up to anyone. No matter what is said to her, she'll reply, "Just a minute!" in tones of intense irritation.

The Phransigars have disabled each vehicle, including the players unless they are keeping a watch and make a roll. Hollna will do the job on the players' vehicle. The Phransigars own vehicles are untouched, and in excellent running order. Each Phransigar has a modern weapon as well as his traditional ones. (All are looted from the dead.) He will use this only in order to escape.

The Phransigars intend to advance through the trokstop wiping out everyone...

The Phransigars intend first to attack and wipe out the outdoor party which is awake, then to advance through the Trokstop wiping out everyone except the host and his family. The Trokstop dormitory will be guarded by a number of Phransigars equal to the number of characters in the dorm; they are pretending to be asleep in bunks by the door. The other Phransigars will be in the party watching meteors. Allow one of the player characters to notice the first meteor fall. It will be followed by 1 D6 more of them within the first five minutes. The Phransigars will be sitting all throughout the party. Each one will have chosen a victim.

Bogheera nods to Noor Khan. Noor Khan looks up casually, stiffens. He points dramatically, and exclaims, "That's not a meteor! It looks like a ship, but it's so big! What is it?" Almost everybody will look up. (Ask the players what they choose to do.) Whether or not they look, the attack will be made. Peera will not attack anyone the first round. He will help any Phransigar who needs aid except Mandhata, who is supposed to do this on his own.

Resolution

1) If the Phransigars take the whole party by surprise: You don't want to wipe out the whole unit of players. Here is where the question of game balance comes in. If all of the players choose to look up, let someone notice out of the corner of his eye as another player is attacked. If the party is warned, let them take their chances.

2) If the Phransigars make the attempt and do not succeed: They will retreat, giving whistle signals as they go. The members keeping watch in the dormitory will start their killing at 10:15, unless someone comes in to tell them to wait or they hear whistle signals. They will retreat to the front, and pile into a vehicle. (Even the car will hold seven at a pinch.)

3) If some or all of the Phransigars fail and are cornered: They will try suicide attacks to get the party to kill them. Hollna will kill Mandhata herself to keep him from prison. If they fail and are put in jail, it will take very sophisticated interrogation techniques to get any information from them. They are very well conditioned and will suicide under almost impossible circumstances. This sort of interrogation will not be done unless the players stay in town and oversee it.

If the Holgarsons are all killed, or all but Kirsten, the players will find who they were, and that they were planning to rob the players. (Ralf's notebook). If you continue traveling with them, at Trokstop 8, they will give you a chance to sell to them at 40% of what they will sell the parts for. You are only getting this offer because Kirsten pleaded. It will be at 50% if you've fought together. At Trokstop 9, they will try a hijack if no deal has been made. They know exactly what you have. If Anders was undetected at Trokstop 3, they



know where the players have the desired parts. If they get a 20 minute head start, they will hide themselves in territory they know; they will not be found.

If the players do choose to stay and prosecute the Phransigars, eventually their protector in the police department will not be able to help them; the ground around the picnic tables will be dug up and several dozen bodies will be found. Stress to the players that even now the surviving Phransigars will seem to be so likeable and pleasant that they will find it hard to believe what their own eyes saw.

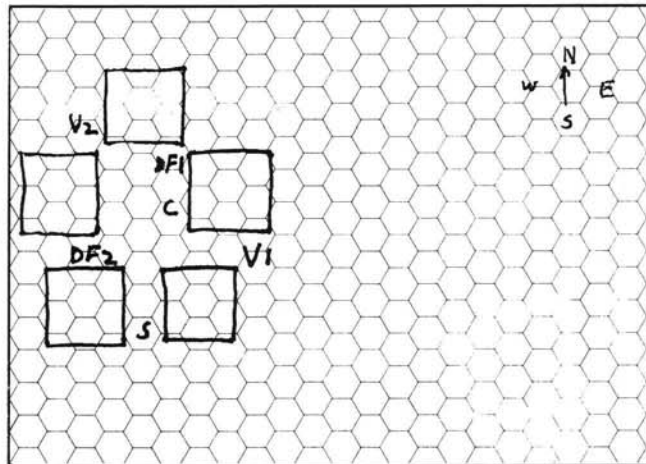
"Dr Hobart Watson" is a professor of historical linguistics who currently teaches in a university which has been generously endowed by Archon Katrina Steiner. He asks that we not identify him beyond this because he fears reprisals from the group whose secrets he reveals here. The editors of BattleTechnology feel that this is an extremely reasonable request.

Fight For New Egypt

Grand Dragon

This 'Mech is an experimental variant on the Dragon, created at the request of Coordinator Takashi Kurita because of his constant wish for more powerful 'Mechs. Its presence on Vega was due to an anomaly, a casual mention to the Coordinator by the Director of the ISF that a unit like the Legion of Vega, which deals with a variety of duties (ie, whatever duty under whichever conditions might be an insult to offer to a more prestigious military organization), might use the 'Mech in more different ways in a shorter period of time than, say, the Proserpina Hussars.

This was one of its first battletests. The 'Mech was given to an experienced Mechwarrior, Suziko Mihami, who got the best from it and perished in the performance of her duties.



Background:

To divert suspicion from his daring raid at Cochus, Col Theodore Kurita mounted a series of raids and skirmishes all along the front to divert the Lyran forces' attention from their supply base. One of the most intriguing actions took place at New Egypt, twenty miles inland from his position. New Egypt is a tycoon's folly built during the Star League Era by the eccentric Aram Sanders, who believed in the ancient religions practiced by the oldest nation in Terran history. There is little else of interest on Vega—New Egypt therefore attracts more attention than it would on a sensation-sated central world. A stylized pyramid is represented on the world's crest. There are persistent rumors of treasure here. As Col Kurita began to plan his strategy, he instructed native agents to spread the rumor that he had reliable intel of a Lostech depot at the New Egypt site, and that he would mount a raid to seize it. On October 14, the 3rd Lyran Guard sent a lance to hold the area until further troops could be sent. On October 16, one day before the Cochus raid, a Kurita lance moved in, and the action described here took place. The Vegans won, then defended the site against all comers for four days, skirmishing at the last from pyramid to pyramid, fighting to the destruction of the last men and 'Mech. Only two of the Combine forces survived, one of whom died later from his wounds. This heroic defense was all the more noteworthy because they were defending nothing. They died to keep the secret that there was no secret. It took three Lyran lances to do the job.

The Grand Dragon, still regarded as an experimental 'Mech, was the last of the 'Mechs to be destroyed. Its energy weapons generated a good deal of heat, which had to be allowed for, yes. On the other hand, it didn't run out of ammo as the other 'Mechs did, because of those same energy weapons.

Game Set Up:

The pyramids are arranged in an equilateral pentagon. They are sixty feet on a side, fifty feet in height. Treat them as heavy buildings. They are solid, honey-combed with tunnels and traps. The Lyrans have not had a chance to hollow one

Vega: Oct 16, 3028

out; 'Mechs can be hidden behind the pyramids, but only men can hide inside them. The defenders are set up in the battle array which they used that fateful morning. As Vega is oppressively hot, a heat modifier of **PLUS 5** must be added into every heat calculation. If you think that this causes problems in the simulation, just imagine how the 'Mech pilots felt as they fought and fried in their cockpits! There are no interruptions to line of sight for miles except the pyramids themselves. By this time of day, the pyramids radiate heat from their outer surfaces, though their interiors remain at 45° F. A 'Mech can mask its heat if it is directly next to one.

Attacker enters from the East. The Grand Dragon enters one round behind the rest of the force.

Defender

| | | |
|--|-------------------------|----------|
| | Third Lyran Guard Lance | Veterans |
|--|-------------------------|----------|

| | |
|---|--|
| Sr Corporal Fritz Schneider Valkyrie # 1 Piloting: 3 Gunnery: 3 | Corporal Max Hartsenplatz Valkyrie #2 Piloting: 4 Gunnery: 4 |
|---|--|

| | |
|--|--|
| Pvt 1st Class Wolf Ehrenhart Catapult Piloting: 2 Gunnery: 4 | Corporal Helga Greim Scorpion Piloting: 4 Gunnery: 3 |
|--|--|

2 platoons Desert Forces specialized Infantry, 28 men each, armed with rifles.

Attacker

| | |
|---------------------------|----------|
| 14th Legion of Vega Lance | Regulars |
|---------------------------|----------|

| | |
|--|--|
| Corporal Ganesh Mihar Panther Piloting: 4 Gunnery: 3 | Lance Corporal Suziko Mihami Grand Dragon Piloting: 3 Gunnery: 2 |
|--|--|

| | |
|--|---|
| Private Kenji Nakadegawa Rifleman Piloting: 3 Gunnery: 3 | Scout Unit Pegasus Scout Hover Tank, The Tank's weapons are fully loaded; the 8 men of her crew have only pistols. |
|--|---|

Except where otherwise noted, 'Mechs and vehicles are in good condition and fully supplied.



"Kurita" in neo-Egyptian
Royal Cartouche

GRAND DRAGON

| | |
|------------------|---------|
| Weight: | 60 tons |
| Movement: | |
| walk: | 5 |
| run: | 8 |
| jump: | 0 |

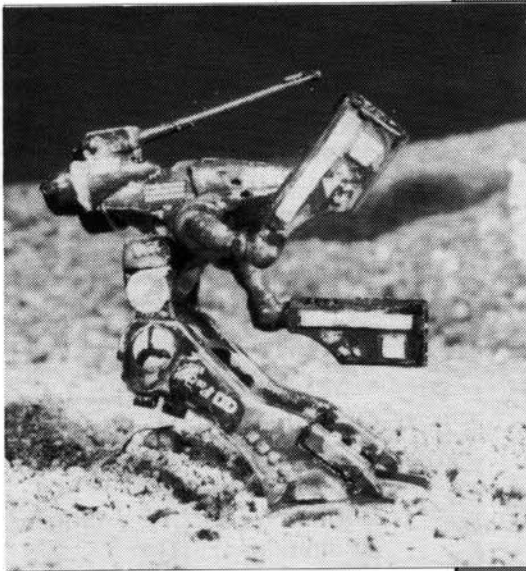
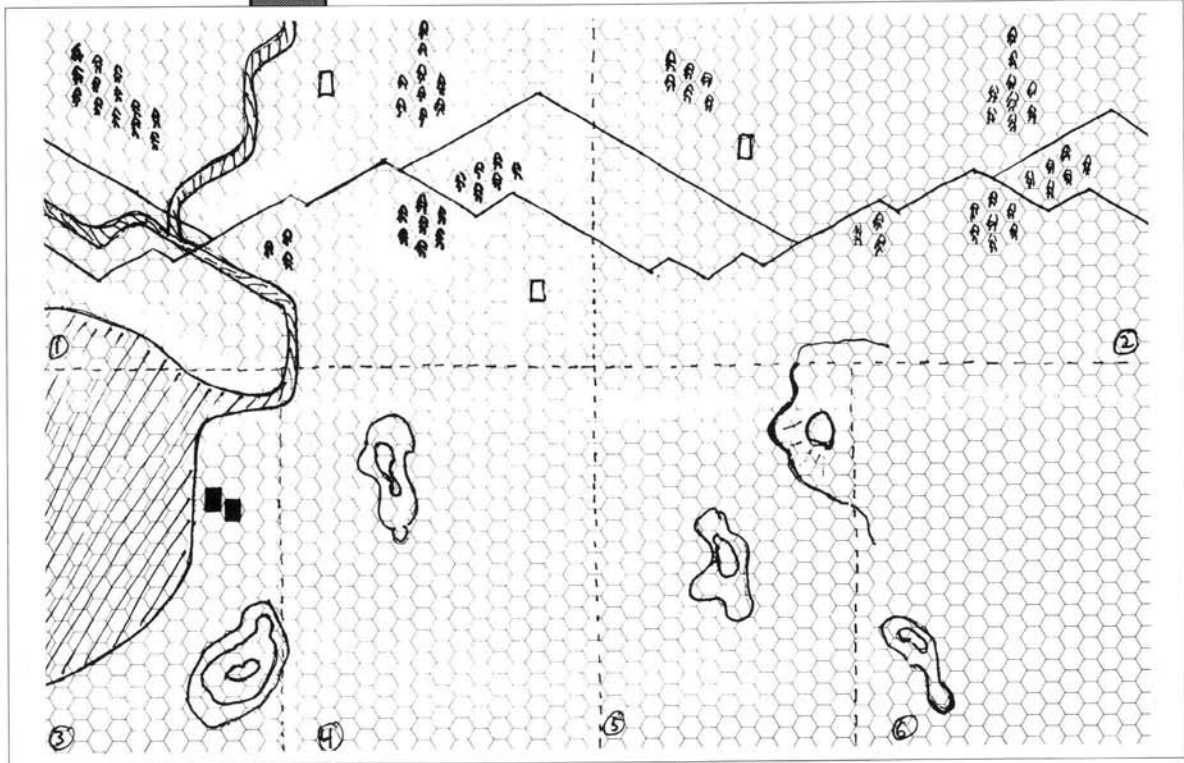
Internal Armor:

| | | |
|--------------------|---|----|
| Head | | 9 |
| CT Front | | 27 |
| CT Rear | | 12 |
| R / L Torso | F | 16 |
| R / L Torso | R | 8 |
| R / L Arm | | 14 |
| R / L Leg | | 18 |

Weapons:

| | | |
|-------------------------|----|------|
| LRM 10 | CT | |
| PPC | RA | |
| Medium laser | LA | |
| Medium laser | LT | rear |
| Medium laser | RT | |
| Ammo 24 (LRM 10) | | |
| Heat Sinks: | 12 | |

Deth Meets Death



The Bounty Hunter's face is unknown...

GAME SET-UP:

Lay out four standard *BattleTech* maps and two *BattleForce* maps as shown. An optional set-up is to set out only two *BattleTech* maps and one *BattleForce* map, and move to the next set of maps when 'Mechs exit the west edge of the maps. All terrain represents basically what is on the printed maps with the following exceptions:

1. There are three light structured buildings on the *BattleForce* maps as indicated.
2. The heavy lines represent a large lake. The border hexes in this lake are level 1 water; the hexes next to them are level 2; the other lake hexes are level 5. All other water hexes are simply open terrain.
3. The two heavy buildings next to the lake represent the waterworks facility and should be treated as one building..
4. The river network on the second *BattleForce* map is treated as open terrain, and the bridges are treated as highway.

Attacker:

The Attacker's forces represent the ambush set up by the Bounty Hunter, and bandits hired from Bandit King Hendrick.

- The Bounty Hunter, Elite, **Marauder**, Piloting 4, Gunnery 3
- Mechwarrior Drek Bli, Regular **Shadow Hawk**, Piloting 4, Gunnery 5
- MechWarrior Sara Gic, Veteran, **Thunderbolt**, , Piloting 5, Gunnery 4
- MechWarrior Bo Trenton, Regular, **Shadow Hawk**, Piloting 5, Gunnery 5

16 October, 3023 Tancredi IV

MechWarrior Marven Plak, Green, **Griffin (M1)**, Piloting 5, Gunnery 6
Tank Crewmen, Regular, **Schrek***, Piloting 5, Gunnery 5
Pillbox Crew, **Gun Emplacement** or **Bunker**, Gunnery 5
Infantry squads 1,2,3, Regular, **SRM Packs***, Squad 1, 14 men, 2 & 3, 10 men each

*Placement of the Attacker forces are determined in the Special Rules Section of this scenario.

Defender:

Lt David "Shadow" Deth, Elite, Screaming Hawk, Piloting 3, Gunnery 2
MechWarrior Brian Iggman, Green, **Phoenix Hawk**, Piloting 6, Gunnery 4
Sgt Curtis Amthor, Veteran, **Shadow Hawk -K**, Piloting 4, Gunnery 4
MechWarrior Brenda Gealgood, Green* **Phoenix Hawk**, Piloting 4*, Gunnery 8*

* See special rules.

The Defender sets up anywhere on the east edge of the map. All units must face west, and at least one unit must set up north of the road. See special rules for alternate set up.

MechWarrior Brian Iggman's Phoenix Hawk has 10 points of damage to each leg. All other 'Mechs are in perfect condition. The Bounty Hunter's 'Mech has been modified; remove the autocannon, and install four jumpjets in the legs. The jump jets will fail on a roll of 4 or under on 2 D6. Add 1 medium laser firing to the rear and 4 heat sinks.

*Special Rules:

The Bounty Hunter's 'Mech, the Thunderbolt, and Drek Bli's Shadow Hawk must be set up within three hexes of each other, and are considered buried. After turn two roll one die; on a roll of 1 or 6 the 'Mechs are available for combat. Each turn after that, increase the chances by one for each range of numbers. (1-2 or 5-6 on turn three, automatic on turn four.) The Bunker is concealed in a Hill hex on the same map as M2. It remains hidden and may not fire until the Bounty Hunter's buried force arrives. It has only a 60 degree firing arc. You may place the infantry anywhere. If they are placed in a building or in a woods hex, they are hidden; otherwise, place them on the map. Each infantry squad has one round of infernos, then treat them as having SRMs.

At start of play, the attacker rolls one die secretly, adding 3 to his roll. This is the turn during which the *Schrek* may join in the battle. Place him in one of the hexes near the waterworks building.

The road is heavily mined. Anytime a 'Mech, attacker or defender, enters a road hex, roll one die. On a roll of 3-5, there is a mine, and the 'Mech takes 10 points of damage to each leg. (A particular hex can only contain three mines; after three exploded mines, no further mines will explode there.)

*MechWarrior Gealgood is actually a Regular pilot. If and when one of the other Defending 'Mechs is destroyed, she is to defect to the Attacking forces. Her actual skills are Piloting 4, Gunnery 4. She may not use these figures until after her defection. She will attempt to stay out of the combat until that time, unless persuaded otherwise.

If at any time two of the Attacking force's 'Mechs are destroyed, along with the Bunker and the Schrek, roll one die for each of the remaining Attackers, except the Bounty Hunter. On a roll of 6, that party ceases fire. If the Bounty Hunter's 'Mech and the Thunderbolt are destroyed or rendered useless, the Attackers surrender.

Alternative Setup:

An alternative set up places all 'Mechs on the board. The Bounty Hunter's force is set up within three hexes of each other on the last *BattleTech* map along hex row 09XX. The Defending force is set up within three hexes of each other along hex rows 09XX-07XX on the third *BattleTech* map, facing west.

Victory Conditions:

The Attacker wins a marginal victory when Lt Deth and his 'Mech, and either of the other two pilots and his 'Mech are destroyed. A major victory is won if all three are destroyed. If Gealgood's 'Mech is destroyed by the Attacker's forces, it is an automatic defeat for the Attacker.

The Defender wins by destroying the two heavy 'Mechs, the Bunker and the *Schrek*, or by causing the Attacker to surrender as in the Special Rules..

Tactical Notes:

The Defender is heavily out-classed. This is not a simulation for the faint hearted. If the Defender uses his superior speed and natural cover, he can win this encounter. Concentrate your fire on the Heavier 'Mechs and either neutralize the Bunker or get out of its firing arc. The Attacker has a more difficult time of it than may at first appear. Beware of the fact that his forces can suddenly stop fighting, or even surrender.

Technical Readout

ALI-1A ALLIANCE

LATE BREAKING NEWS FLASH!

Just at our press deadline, **BattleTechnology** was able to obtain specifications and background on the new Davion-Steiner 100 ton 'Mech known as the Alliance. We have been assured that this currently Top Secret information should be released for publication by the time of this issue's release, and we feel that information such as this should be in the hands of you, the 'MechWarrior, as soon as possible. Because of this, **BattleTechnology** has suspended its policy not to release sensitive information for this item only.

Overview:

New BattleMech designs have been a thing of Star League history for a number of centuries. But recently, various state-sponsored corporations have once again been experimenting in prototype 'Mech designs with varying degrees of success throughout the Known Sphere. One of the more successful of these experimenting organizations is the New Avalon Institute of Science. Sources have recently revealed that the NAIS will be testing its first prototype of a new 'Mech design built with the cooperation of leading 'Mech technicians from the Lyran Commonwealth. This new design, known as the ALI-1A ALLIANCE, was announced as one of the "wedding presents" to Hanse Davion and Melissa Steiner on the occasion of their wedding ceremony. It is not known whether the "regiment of 'Mechs" which were the bride's gift to the groom is to

be composed of these 100-ton assault 'Mechs.

Capabilities:

Information is sketchy on the capabilities of this new 'Mech design, since it has just begun field testing with various Steiner and Davion 'Mech regiments (we have received reports that up to 20 prototype Alliance 'Mechs are now undergoing full testing under battlefield conditions along the Kurita border.)

The Alliance has been designed to reportedly "out Atlas the Atlas" and field tests will stress the one on one actions between these two 'Mech designs. Provided with more armor protection than the Atlas developed by NAIS research labs, the Alliance should prove to have more staying power. This armor, known only as "Type 23" in NAIS circles, is a composite plasti-steel/ceramic blend that should allow for more resiliency and less hit penetration than other more common types of armor such as the Durallex fitted to the Atlas.

The Alliance contains the same powerplant as its opponent: the Vlar 300 series. This is a tried and true system that has been known throughout the Successor States for centuries. It is reported that the 20 Alliance 'Mechs currently being tested contain new Vlar 300 systems purchased by House Davion from unknown agents who claim they can obtain at least 300 more. We can only surmise that a hidden old Star League supply / repair base has been discovered somewhere within the Known Sphere by persons unknown.

The Alliance is armed with standard

'Mech weapons that give it a heavy punch at all ranges. Its two torso-mounted Whirlwind Type 10 Auto Cannons provide the same punch as an AC/20 but with less heat retention and more weapons redundancy and ammo capacity. The Delta Dart Long Range Missile Ten Rack provides the support firepower that is necessary in any assault situation. And the standard Diverse Optics Type 20 Medium Lasers mounted in the head and each wrist offer that firepower at medium range that is so essential on today's 'Mech battlefield. New, improved NAIS-80 heatsinks should reduce any heat retention that these weapons cause.

It should be noted that this is not considered to be the final armament arrangement for the Alliance. Several different weapons' mounts are being tested on the prototype models and it has not become clear which will eventually find its way onto the production model.

Battle History:

No reports of any actions involving the new Alliance 'Mechs have been received by any outside groups or agencies at this time. It is hoped that a report will be available by the release date of the next issue of **BattleTechnology**.

Variants:

As stated above, a number of different weapon arrays are being tested on the 20 Alliance 'Mechs now undergoing field tests. Some officials have argued that the standard Alliance armament as stated above is undergunning the 'Mech. Weapons arrays are being tested that accentuate heavier laser armaments while others use heavy missile armaments or PPCs. One prototype contains a set of Rawling Type 500 jump jets! It is not known whether all these different weapon arrays will be standardised when the final armament decision is made or if the

prototype 'Mechs will be allowed to keep them in their battle careers. It is hoped that this situation will clear up in the upcoming months.

Notable 'Mechs / 'MechWarriors:

As a class, all 20 of these Alliance 'Mechs should be notable on the battlefield with their unusual silhouette and shock value. None of the names of the 'MechWarriors piloting the prototypes into battle could be obtained by our sources but we have learned that Alliance 'Mech Number 21 is nearing completion at the New Avalon Institute of Science's Fabrication Complex and its pilot will be none other than Hanse Davion himself!

BattleTechnology will provide more information on this new 'Mech as it becomes available.

Statistics: ALI-1A ALLIANCE

- Mass:** 100 tons
- Chassis:** NAIS special
- Power Plant:** Vlar 300
- Cruising Speed:** 38.4 kph
- Maximum Speed:** 52.8 kph
- Armor:** NAIS Type 23
- Armament:**
 - 2 Whirlwind Type 10 Auto Cannons
 - 1 Delta dart LRM-10
 - 3 Diverse Optics Type 20 medium lasers
- Manufacturer:** NAIS Stellar 'Mech Fabrication and Repair Complex
- Communications System:** Highpoint System A783
- Targeting / Tracking System:** Instatrak Mark IX

NOTE: The Alliance is one of the few operational new 'Mech designs in centuries. Twenty prototypes are now undergoing field test under battle conditions. No reports on the performance of this new 'Mech design are currently available.

ALI-1A ALLIANCE :

| Item | | Tons |
|----------------------------|----------|-------|
| Tonnage: | 100 | 100.0 |
| Internal Structure: | | 10.0 |
| Engine: | Vlar 300 | 19.0 |
| Walking MPs: | 3 | |
| Running MPs: | 5 | |
| Heat Sinks: | 22 | 10.0 |
| Gyro: | | 3.0 |
| Cockpit: | | 3.0 |
| Armor Factor : | 320 | 20.0 |

INT STRUCTURE

| | | ARMOR |
|-----------------------|----|--------------|
| Head: | 3 | 9 |
| Center Torso: | 31 | 49/12 |
| Rt / Lt Torso: | 21 | 30 /12 |
| Rt / Lt Arm: | 17 | 34 |
| Rt / Lt Leg: | 21 | 41 |

WEAPONS & AMMO:

| Type: | Location | Critical | |
|--------------|----------|----------|----|
| AC / 10 | RT | 7 | 12 |
| AC / 10 | LT | 7 | 12 |
| Ammo | RT | 1 | 1 |
| Ammo | LT | 1 | 1 |
| LRM 10 | RT | 2 | 5 |
| Ammo | 2 LT | 1 | 1 |
| Medium Laser | H | 1 | 1 |
| Medium Laser | RA | 1 | 1 |
| Medium Laser | LA | 1 | 1 |



Technical Readout

SCR-1A Screaming Hawk

Overview:

The Screaming Hawk is a unique 'Mech, based on the versatile Phoenix Hawk LAM. It was designed by David Deth in 3019. It should be noted that Deth studied engineering as thoroughly as he studied tactics, piloting or gunnery. He was a level 8 Tech, with a through knowledge of the Phoenix Hawk. By strengthening the internal structure of its basic lesser cousin, and removing the troublesome conversion equipment, the new 'Mech was enabled to support heavier armor and slightly expanded weaponry.

David Deth was given permission to use one of House Davion's repair facilities to create and test his design in 3022. Shortly after he completed the prototype, his father was disgraced and David Deth was "politely" asked to discontinue the project. He left the facility, taking his 'Mech with him. With the help of his fellow workers on the project, he also took his plans and some equipment already modified to the Screaming Hawk design.

While Deth was serving a mercenary contract with O'Reilly, the ATC became interested in his design. They saw a way to produce their own 'Mechs by modifying existing Phoenix Hawks. They offered Deth and his family a partnership in return for his designs.

It's rumored that the ATC has plans to build a BattleMech production facility to produce the Screaming Hawk from the extensive designs of David Deth, as well as a facility to modify existing Phoenix Hawks. In 3027, both House Steiner and House Davion expressed an interest in the Screaming

Hawk design. Arrangements were made to purchase two 'Mechs, one for each House, for experimental purposes from the ATC.

Capabilities:

The Screaming Hawk is still able to perform all the functions of a scout, while its armor and weaponry permit it to be included in sustained combat situations. Its one PPC, dual medium lasers and its modular missile package which allows either an LRM 5-rack or an SRM 4-pack allow it to engage much heavier opponents than can the original Phoenix Hawk design.

The 'Mech carries the same electronics equipment as does the Phoenix Hawk, ensuring plenty of parts for repair.

Battle History:

The Screaming Hawk has seen perhaps a dozen pitched battles since the encounter mentioned in this issue (See *Deadly Ambition*, pg 22). It has performed well each time.

Variants:

The only variation is in the modular missile package which allows it to carry the LRM 5-rack or the SRM 4-pack for an added close range punch.

Statistics:

Mass: 55 tons
Chassis: Dort 100A
Power Plant: 275 CoreTek
Cruising Speed: 54.0 kph
Maximum Speed: 86.4 kph
Jump Jets: Rawlings 55A
Jump Capacity: 150 m

Armor: Duralex Medium

Armament:

One Fusigon Particle Projection Cannon
 Two Maxim 50 Medium Lasers
 One Holly Long Range Missile Rack (5)
 or One Holly Short Range Missile Pack (4)

Manufacturer: Alphard Trading Corporation

Communications: Tek BattleCom
Targeting and Tracking Systems: Garret T11C

SCR-1A Screaming Hawk

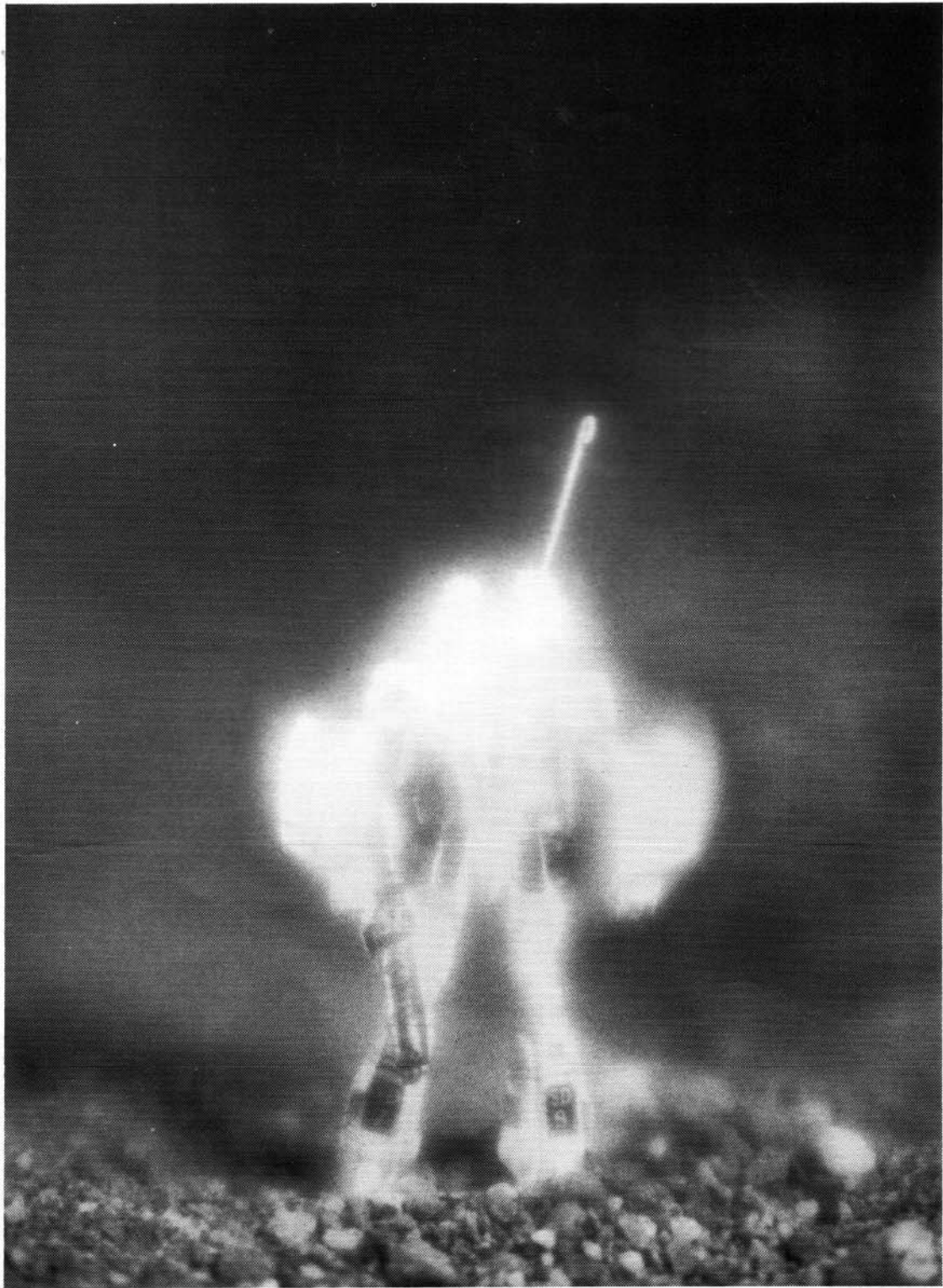
| Item | | Tons |
|----------------------------|-------------|------|
| Tonnage: | 55 Tons | 55.0 |
| Internal Structure: | | 5.5 |
| Engine: | 275 CoreTek | 15.5 |
| Walking MP's : | 5 | |
| Running MP's : | 8 | |
| Jumping MP's : | 5 | |
| Heat Sinks: | 14 | 4.0 |
| Gyro: | | 3.0 |
| Cockpit: | | 3.0 |
| Armor Factor: | 160 | 10.0 |

Int Structure

| | | |
|----------------|----|------|
| Head | 3 | 9 |
| CT | 18 | 30/5 |
| R/L T | 13 | 20/4 |
| R/L Arm | 9 | 16 |
| R/L Leg | 13 | 18 |

Weapons and Ammo:

| Type | Location | Critical | WT |
|------------------|----------|----------|-----|
| PPC | RA | 3 | 7.0 |
| Med Laser | RA | 1 | 1.0 |
| Med Laser | LA | 1 | 1.0 |
| LRM 5 | | | |
| or SRM 4 | RT | 1 | 2.0 |
| Ammo | LT | 1 | 0.5 |
| (LRM/SRM) | 12/25 | | |
| Jump Jet | CT | 1 | 0.5 |
| Jump Jets | LT | 2 | 1.0 |
| Jump Jets | RT | 2 | 1.0 |



Screaming Hawk on Infrared



Letters to ~~the~~ Editor

Ian
Fraser

Editor's note: Many of you have written to us in concern for Ian Fraser. A staff member who is a personal friend of this gallant soldier was offered the chance to print here some of the offers which have been coming in for his services. One of the most critical things in a MechWarrior's life is the decision when and where to sell his contract. Most of you are still "making your reps"; you might enjoy seeing the offers a warrior of experience can choose between. Fraser may choose any or none of these. Our regular letters to the Editor Column will return next issue. Keep those letters coming. It's important to us to know what you think.

Death's Shadows Battalion
Halfway, Lyran Commonwealth

July 19, 3028

TO: Captain Ian S Fraser
FROM: Lieutenant Colonel Joshua Deth

SUBJECT: Employment

No MechWarrior of your caliber should be among the ranks of the Dispossessed. If you have yet to accept an offer of employment, then the Death's Shadows Battalion offers you a home within our ranks.

My Battalion has need of someone with your skills and mindset. I have an opening for someone with command experience, who has seen combat, and has dealt with personnel not used to co-operating.

The position I refer to is for a Company Commander, with the rank of Captain, with all the benefits (such as they are), privileges and responsibilities that go with the job.

I'm forming a training company with new personnel. Your job will be to shape this new company into an Elite, honorable fighting force. I would very much like to form this new company around you, Captain, and make use of your experience.

Don't let the title, "training company" put you off. It's a title I give to each of my "new" companies. After a suitable period of time (much more than just a week) and not before you're ready, the company will become an active part of my battalion.

I can't have any of my company commanders 'Mechless, therefore you will have your choice of the following 'Mechs: Wolverine-M, Centurion, Whitworth, or the lesser 'Mechs at my disposal. My personal recommendation is the Wolverine-M. Its comm package makes it an ideal command 'Mech. As an added incentive, after a honorable service period of five years with my battalion, I will transfer whichever 'Mech you choose into your family's holdings.

Once the unit has been trained, you will be given the option of remaining its commander or of training another company as material and personnel become available.

The Death's Shadows Battalion is currently in the employ of House Steiner, so no worries on the subject of Liao. What was done to you is an outrage. It should never have happened.

I give you my assurance that nothing of the sort will happen within my battalion. I have learned to value and listen to what my people have to say, especially to my command officers.

If you choose to join in our family, you have one week to get your personal affairs taken care of. I apologize for the inconvenience of such a short time for your decision making. Awaiting you at Wrightport Starport are three first class tickets for you and your family or comrades who may wish to join you. In your cabin you will find uniforms of the proper fit and rank, as well as all the necessary forms for employment. Adjacent to your cabin will be that of Lt Patterson. He will brief you on your duties and answer any questions you may have.

One last item before closing. Any past responsibilities or obligations you may have would become those of the Death's Shadows as well, once you have become a member of our family.

Embracing those who hold chaos at bay.

Respectfully yours,
Lt Col Joshua Deth
CO, Death's Shadows Battalion

P.S. Regardless of your decision, luck follow your path. Our door is always open to you and yours.

MORGAN'S HIGHLANDERS
June 27, 3028

Dear Mr Fraser,

I command a company-sized mercenary unit called Morgan's Highlanders. Several of our best men are former House Liao troops from other units who have been poorly used by the Capellans).

Though I was not there, I can understand any anger or resentment you may feel toward House Liao or your former unit for the treatment you received.

In regard to your first ad, I am looking for a person of your qualities and experience for a position as Captain of the

THE PERIPHERY

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edge of the
Successor
States.**

**Beyond law
and order.**

**Beyond
belief.**

The Periphery is home to the small barbaric worlds civilization has forgotten. These kingdoms and alliances, having lost contact with the Inner Sphere, have developed on their own... some in very unexpected ways.

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BattleTech Miniatures!

2nd Light Strike Company of Morgan's Highlanders. I offer you 1,000 C-Bills a month. As for your condition (being Dispossessed), I have at my disposal an Archer and a Vindicator. I offer the Vindicator for familiarity, or the Archer (even after your experiences) because it's the only working heavy 'Mech I have unallocated.

As for your other ad, I have inquired here on New Avalon about POWs captured on Mira, and they have promised to get back to me. I will be happy to write to you or connect you with them if you accept my offer.

Sincerely,
Captain Jeff Morgan

The following was found on a torn scrap of paper found in Ian Fraser's pocket. He did not see it placed there.

If you feel like you want to get back at the big shots who call themselves Chancellors and Princes; if you're tired of working for wages decided by someone else, and taking your R&R on planets where cows walk down Main Street; if you'd like see your 'Mech (your like-new Marauder) maintained with all the spare parts your initiative can provide, leave a message at the Bull and Bear Pub on (deleted) You will be contacted. Danger high, pay negotiable. I can promise it won't be boring.
R. Ryan

Rasalhague,
Draconis Combine

A warrior of honor knows no other life than the constant testing of battle. If you wish an honorable death — or the bare chance to win a place among a force of the elite, this offer is open to you here with our forces on Thannhausen.

Reply direct to:
Military Prefect, Kirchbach

Do you paint them?
Are you going to DunDraCon this year?
Bring your miniatures and enter our painting contest!
Free BattleTech poster to each entrant.
Prizes!
Your 'Mech photographed for BattleTechnology.
Details in Dundracon Program Book.

Company letterhead torn off
November 26, 3028

Dear Ian,

I hope this letter finds you well. My last known location for you was on Chesterton. It's possible that this letter may have to be forwarded, and may be opened. For that reason only, and not because I do not trust you, this letter must be guarded.

A certain House has been proved to have lied to us recently. This makes it possible that they lied to us in the past, even in the far past, when our unit decided to accept employment from them. Atrocity stories have been proved to be among those lies.

It has been made possible to reexamine the past with the possibility of a change of plan as far as the unit allegiance goes. Archives and Vids have been laid open to us clear back to the First Succession War.

The remote hope that has lain in each of our hearts may become a reality. It will take some hard fighting, and we need good men. If we are renouncing former masters, we may also renounce their errors. I can give you no further assurances. If you want to fight along with your own again, find the Davion — yes, Davion — Consul on whichever world you now inhabit. Give him the code word, "Flora MacDonald". Be prepared for immediate departure.

With Regards,
B. MacHenry

INCOMING!

In the next,
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- Wolf's Dragoons at War
- Lt Darryl James
the further adventures of Max
- Invasion with
the Free Worlds League:
Operation Dagger begins
- News From the Front:
— Northwind
and its Highlanders
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- What Now for Hasek-Davion?

• Plus other feature articles;
regular columns; battle simula-
tions; news from all over the
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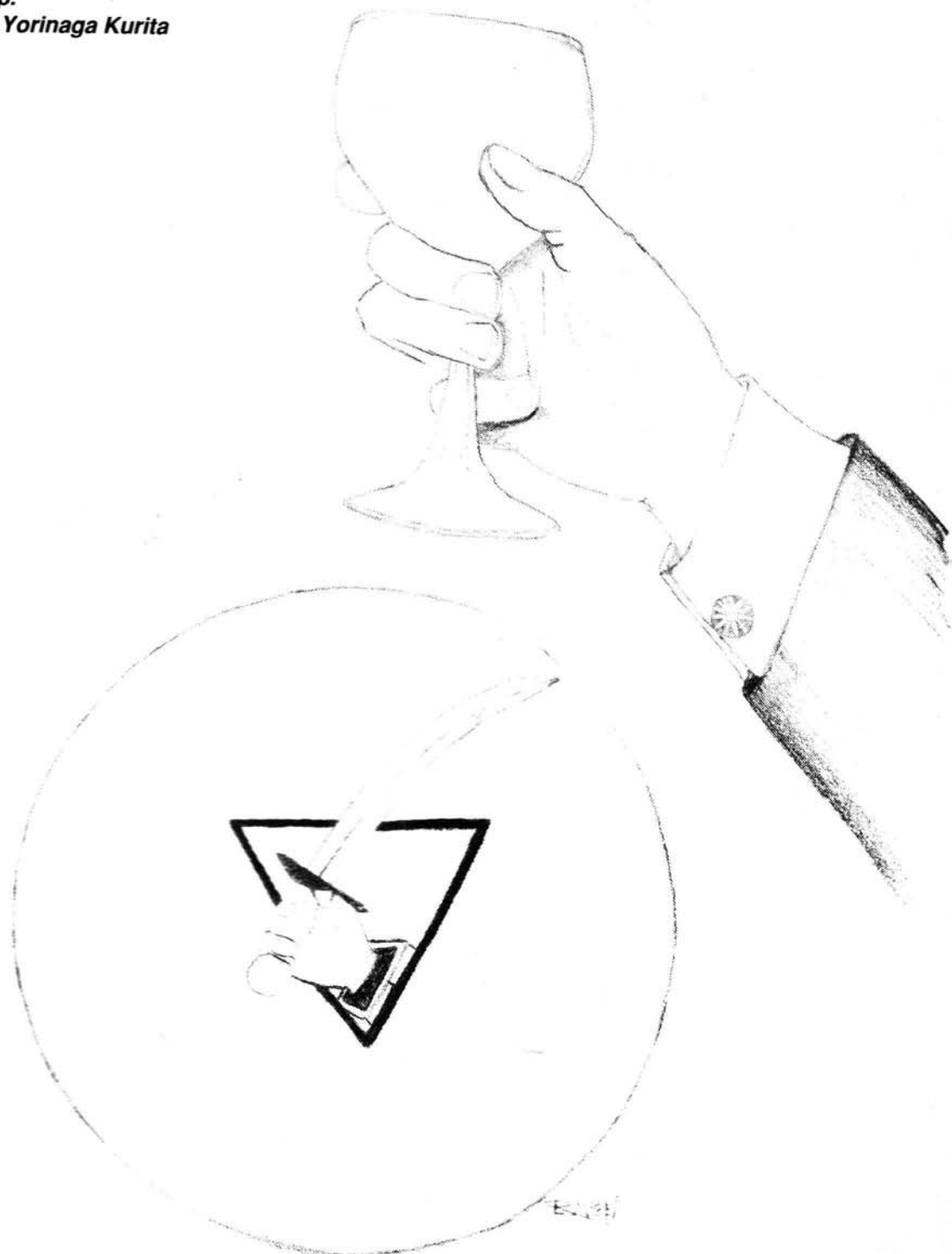
**AND MUCH, MUCH MORE!
DON'T MISS IT!**

We regret to inform you that, due to wartime restrictions beyond our control, including but not limited to the rising cost of paper and transport between warring sectors, we are forced to raise our prices. Effective with the next issue, BattleTechnology will cost \$4.95 per copy. Subscription rates as of this issue are now \$24.00 for six issues in the US, for APOs and FPOs; \$27.00 for Canadian subscribers; \$48.00 for air mail elsewhere. Existing subscriptions will be honored.

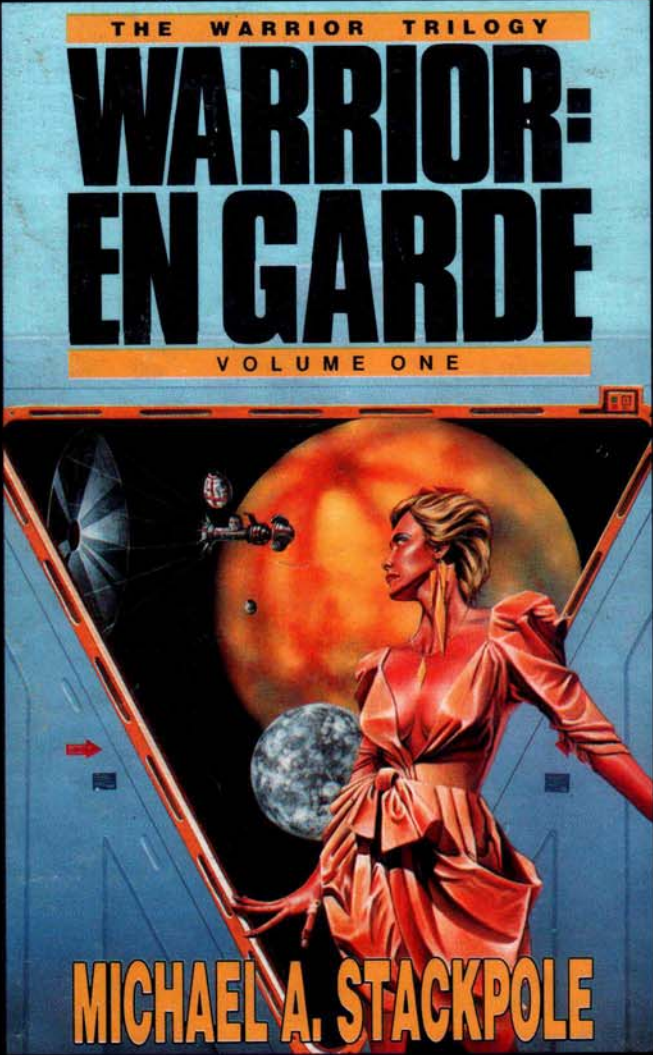
Two Haiku — Found at a Wedding

*Like empty speeches,
Bubbles of ambition rise—
Vintage of despair.*
attributed to Akira Brahe

*A heady nectar—
Wine of enemies' promise.
We will drain that cup.*
Attributed to Yorinaga Kurita



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