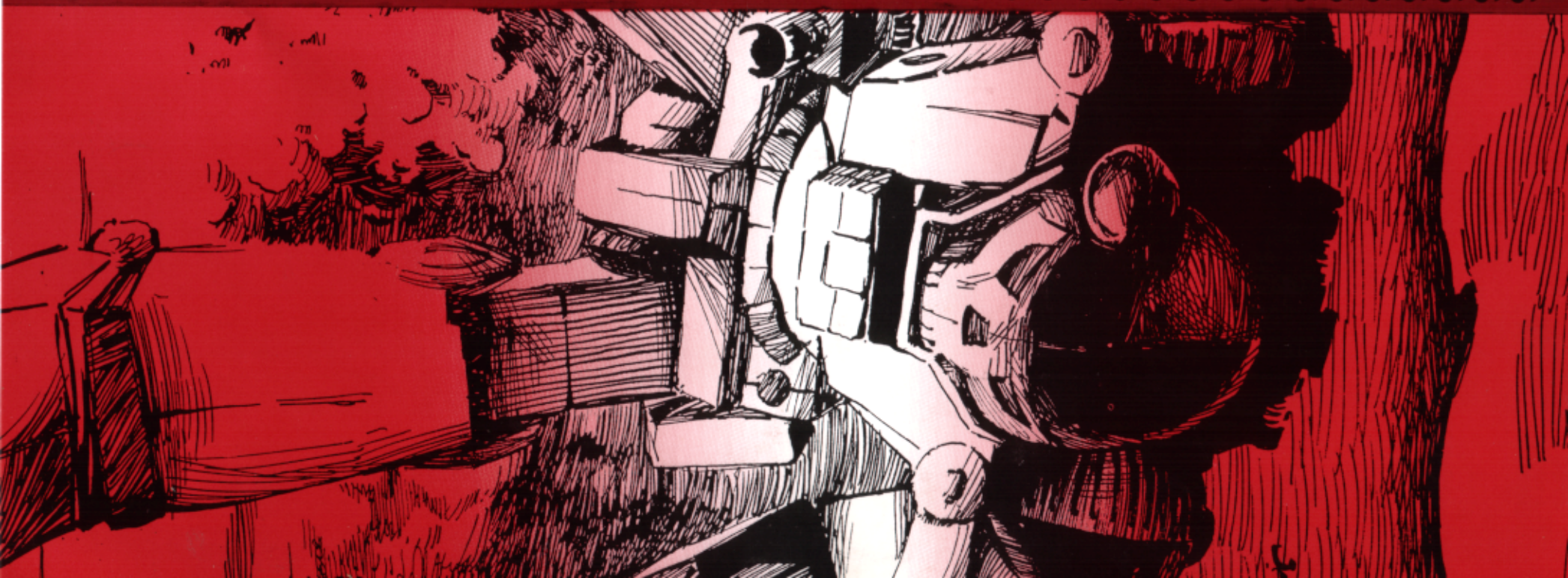
SOLARIS VII™

THE GAME WORLD

PLAYERS BOOK



SOLARIS VII

THE GAME WORLD

PLAYER'S BOOK

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SOLARIS VII

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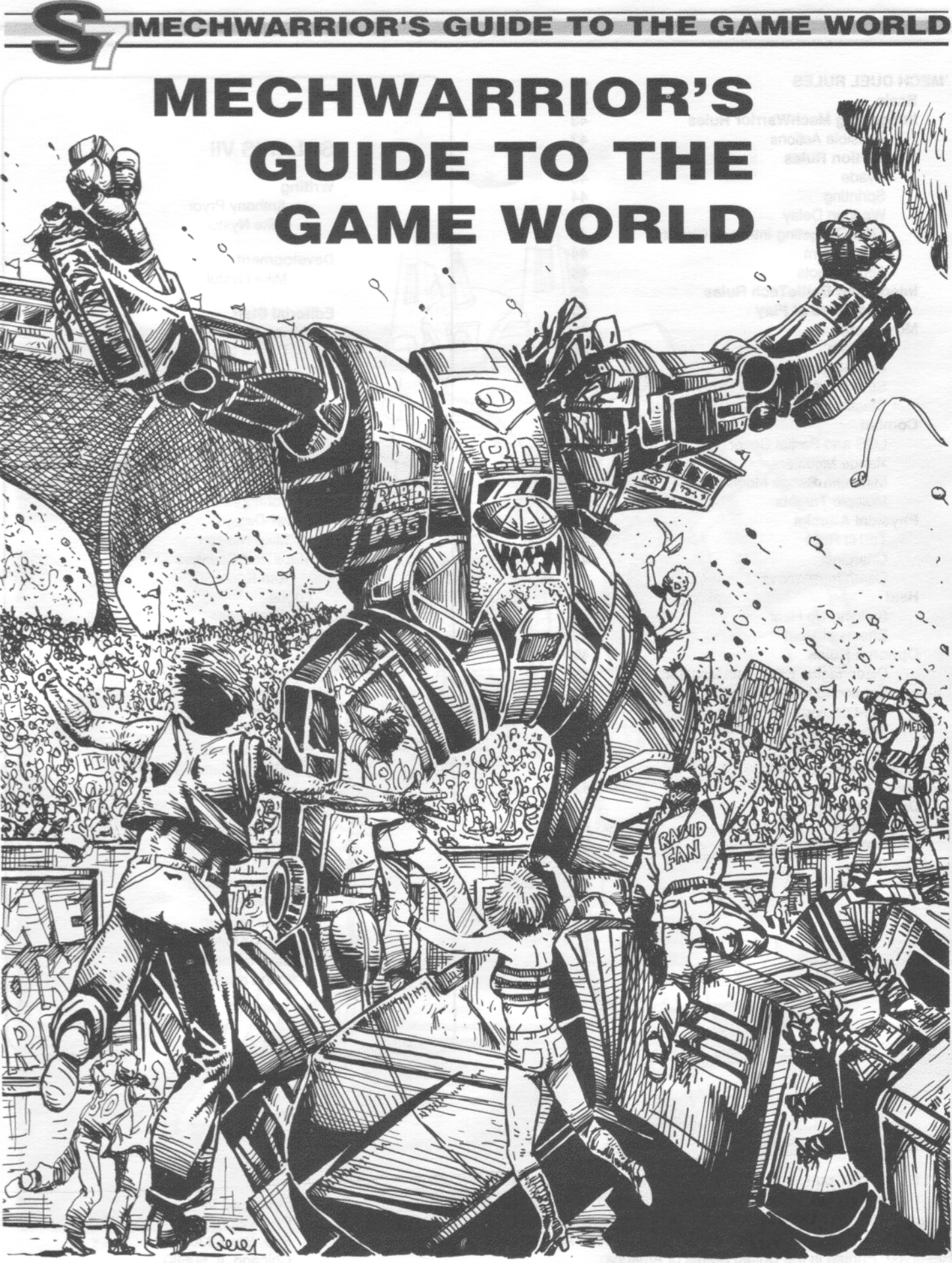
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MECHWARRIOR'S GUIDE TO THE GAME WORLD





SOLARIS VII

Solaris VII. The name conjures up images of veteran MechWarriors battling for fortune and glory, of sweating throngs of eager bettors standing in line to wager their meager earnings on the outcome, of noblemen and crime kingpins reaping C-Bills along with fame, influence, and all their associated advantages.

For centuries, the games of Solaris VII have represented the hopes and dreams of generations, where fortunes are won and lost, and notoriety gained by the lucky few who survive. The roll call of immortal MechWarriors who have fought there is almost endless: Cabol Hirsch, Marco Moliotti, Hans Moder, Billy Wolfson, Gray Noton, Justin Xiang, the O'Bannon sisters, Amanda Hamilton—all these and more have sought, won, and lost glory in the deadly arenas of Solaris.

Through all the years of strife—the endless slaughter of the Succession Wars, the raids and counterraids of the interim periods, and most recently, the Clan invasion that threatened to devour the Inner Sphere—Solaris VII has remained an island where the violence of the Successor States could be organized, channeled, and in some ways, controlled. Here, war is a game and warriors a commodity. All across the Inner Sphere, the teeming masses daily watch the Solaris fights, rooting for their favorites and wagering their C-Bills. Thus has it been in the past and thus, for as long as there is an Inner Sphere, will it remain.

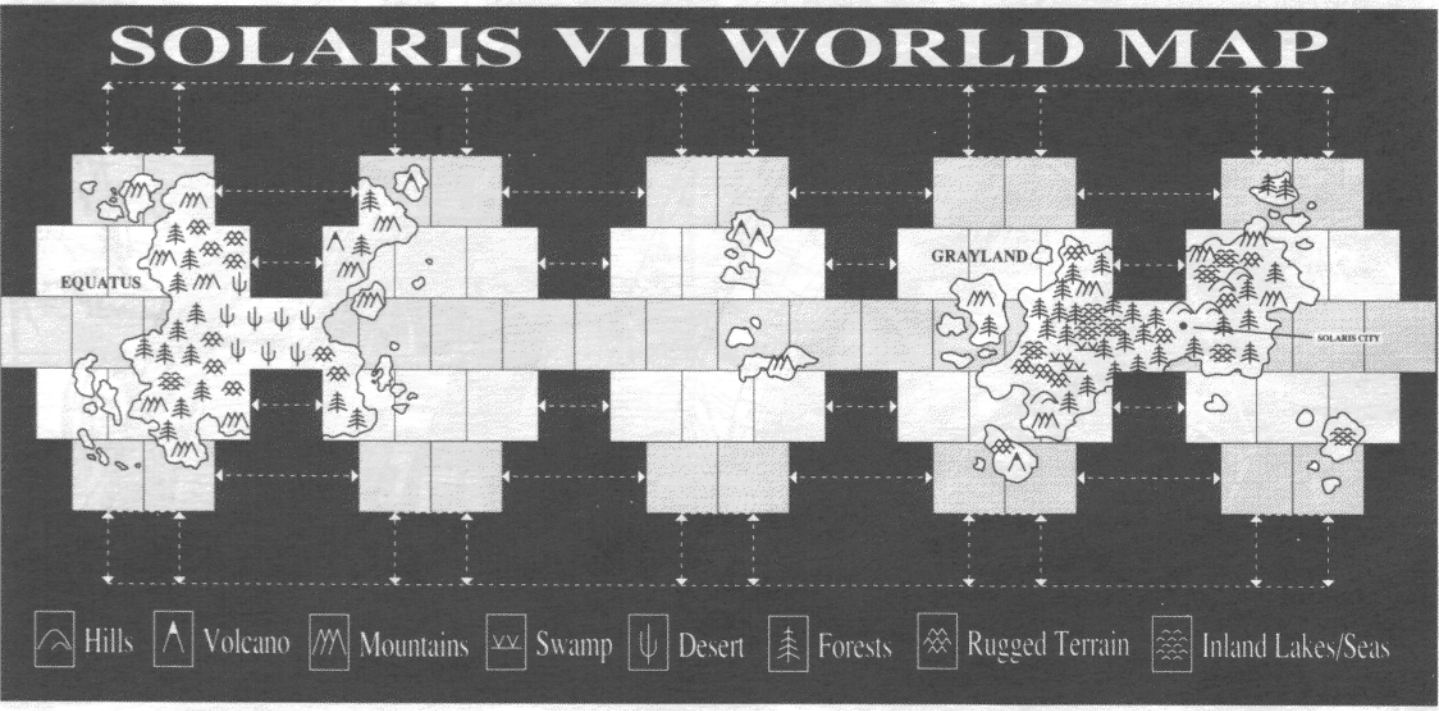
OVERVIEW

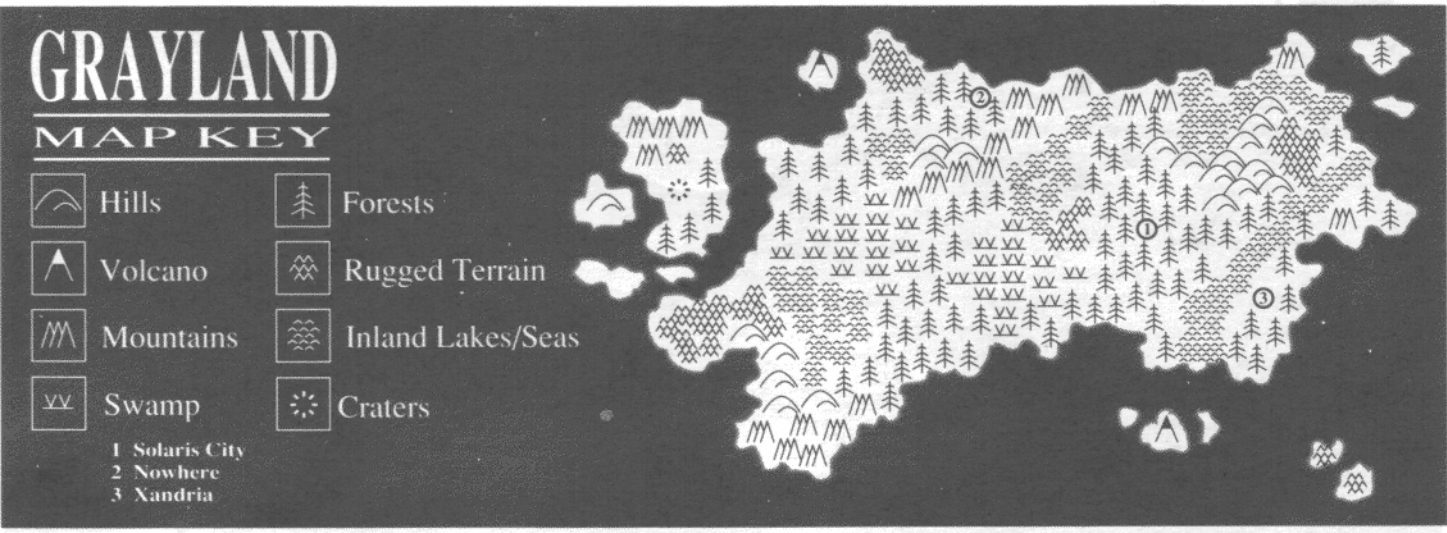
Solaris VII is the largest of the twelve planets in its system. Exploration of the system's other worlds has found them unsuitable for habitation, though the fourth planet is the site of an extensive though only marginally profitable mining operation.

An earth-sized, water-rich world, Solaris has only two major continents, Grayland and Equatus, only one of which is extensively inhabited. Roughly the size of North America on Terra, Grayland is a place of great, shallow seas and wide, sluggish rivers. Vast stretches of taiga in the north give way to forests of conifer-like trees in the central region and open into grasslands in the south. The climate of central Grayland, the location of Solaris City, is damp and chill. A brief spring season brings a wan light for a few weeks before the rains close in again. Were it not for the 'Mech games, Solaris City would be a dismal place, indeed.

The rest of Grayland is comparatively pleasant. Many nobles maintain summer homes along the southern coast, where rainfall is rare and the cool sea breeze moderates a warm climate. Some sections of central Grayland boast forests vast enough to support a profitable timber industry, but even in such communities, the 'Mech games are still the most important industry.

Solaris' other continent, Equatus, has considerably less arable land. Populated with only a few coastal fishing and inland mining communities, Equatus is the planet's "wild frontier."





HISTORY

Despite its prime location along the Steiner-Marik frontier, Solaris VII's history has been relatively peaceful. Originally a Free Worlds planet, Solaris fell to the Lyrans during the First Succession War, then suffered heavily from Free Worlds depredations throughout the Second Succession War. In 2928, a Marik raid severely damaged Solaris City's 'Mech repair facilities, but four years later Steiner forces roundly defeated a major Free Worlds invasion in September 3002.

BattleMech contests are the major industry upon which the entire planetary economy is based, and this has been so almost from the earliest period of Solaris history. Those corporate executives who first used Solaris VII as a testing ground for new 'Mechs could never have imagined that these test trials would one day become gladiator-like contests of a nightmarish form.

EARLY YEARS

Solaris VII's gaming industry began inauspiciously enough. Originally colonized for industrialization purposes during the Star League Era, its heavy industrial base made it ideal for BattleMech production. It was natural that several 'Mech producers should decide to use Solaris as the site for their major testing laboratories.

The planet's rugged terrain provided excellent testing grounds and dry-run sites for new 'Mech designs. Vast 'Mech bays were reinforced and strengthened to serve as live-ammo test sites. It was only a matter of time before rival corporations competing for valuable Star League Military contracts began to pit their prototypes against one another in order to impress government officials.

The first military 'Mech competition between competing designs took place in 2695. In that first conflict, Orguss Industries' fledgling *Phoenix Hawk* defeated rival Defiance Industries' *Sentinel*. Long in use by House Steiner, the *Sentinel* was now under consideration for purchase by the Star League Defense Forces.

Though both 'Mechs eventually found their way into the SLDF, the *Phoenix Hawk*'s performance on Solaris gave it a definite edge. Viewed by a small, select audience of corporate executives and their guests, the fight proved so exciting that within a year, 'Mech contests had become a regular entertainment feature broadcast to the Solaris populace. The Solaris Games had begun.

The popularity of these contests did not escape notice by the rich and powerful. Battles between corporate teams were popular, so why not use that popularity to generate profits? Private 'Mech stables were born, along with cash purses, trideo broadcasts, and the beginnings of the modern betting system.

In addition to corporate teams, mercenary units used Solaris for training purposes, honing their skills in fights against local MechWarriors. Some warriors even found it possible to make their living on Solaris. Although the betting and purse system was informal, and profits varied widely, many Inner Sphere promoters saw the potential to get rich quick.

THE HIDDEN WAR

In 2704, Colonel Daniel Allison, one of the famous Star League Gunslingers, was called in as grand marshal of the 'Mech games. The battle at which he was to officiate was a mock battle with low-powered weapons between two teams of Lyran MechWarriors. The team representing the Thirty-second Lyran Guards won victory that day in a contest that was broadcast throughout the Commonwealth, beating out every other program showing in the same time slot.

This was the era of the Hidden War, when the resentful Coordinator of the Draconis Combine secretly condoned duels of honor between Kurita warriors and members of the Star League Defense Forces. Though the First Lord of the League protested, Coordinator Urizen Kurita explained that these were masterless warriors, or ronin. MechWarriors now served only private armies, since the Edict of 2650 had commanded the various member-states to dismantle some of their official military strength. Kurita pretended that he had no authority over these ronin, who were giving their SLDF opponents a beating.

In response, the SLDF responded in 2682 with what would eventually become known as the Gunslinger program. As part of this project, selected MechWarriors underwent extensive training using the most advanced techniques and technology available. The Kurita challengers were more eager than ever to duel these intensively trained warriors.

In 2709, after the so-called ronin and the Gunslingers had exchanged and accepted another series of challenges, they decided on Solaris as the site of the battles. Once more, enterprising broadcasters arranged to have the fights broadcast, this time throughout the two competing realms.

The response was phenomenal, particularly to a grudge match between Colonel Daniel Allison and ronin Kaneda Fujima. Defeated by Allison two years previously, Fujima had gone into seclusion, shamed by his loss. When Coordinator Urizen Kurita personally requested his return to service, Fujima's first act was to challenge Allison to a re-match.

Allison and Fujima faced each other across the featureless expanse of the battle arena. Here were two masters of BattleMech combat, each representing the pinnacle of achievement in his own culture. Star League warrior faced samurai, and no one could be sure of the outcome.

Colonel Allison cautiously awaited combat at the helm of his brand-new *Black Knight* BattleMech, whose chest showed the Gunslinger crest of crossed six-guns below the Star League sunburst. Opposite stood Fujima's *Marauder*, its only insignia an ancient Japanese rising sun in the center of the 'Mech's wedge-shaped head.

Fujima's external speakers crackled to life. "I challenge the Star League warrior, and with him the Star League's honor. Let us see whose honor is greater."

Allison, who had recently lost a comrade in one of these Hidden War duels, did not reply, but his 'Mech lumbered forward with grim determination.

Action began almost immediately. Fujima fired first, triggering his PPC, which flared blue-white, striking Allison's 'Mech like twin suns. The shots were early, however; the hits were only glancing, striking armor from chest and arm. Allison did not return fire, but came on inexorably, apparently maneuvering for a better shot.

Sensing his foe's tactics, Fujima moved quickly, dashing like a broken-field runner, seeking to throw off Allison's targeting. A desultory spatter of laser fire lanced from Allison's *Black Knight*, more to keep Fujima on his toes than for any other reason.

Suddenly, Fujima changed direction. Skidding about in a stunning display of 'Mech piloting, he twisted his *Marauder*'s torso, firing all weapons directly into Allison's flank before the other warrior could respond. The effect was staggering. Armor exploded from the *Black Knight*'s arm and head, and the external antenna of his comm unit blasted away. Allison's 'Mech staggered, falling to one knee. Fujima had gained the upper hand.



But he did not hold the advantage for long. His *Marauder* obviously overheating, Fujima could not fire a second all-out volley without risking shutdown. Autocannon shells rained down on Allison, but still his humanoid 'Mech rose to its feet, looking for all the world like its medieval namesake. The arm-mounted PPC came up, and now blue-white fire ravaged Fujima's *Marauder*. The ronin's gamble had failed; he had gotten too close, and now he faced the full fury of a vengeful SLDF Gunslinger.

The *Marauder* staggered, then to the accompanying gasp of horror that went up from the spectators who shared the viewing room with me, Allison raced at Fujima, apparently determined to engage in hand-to-hand combat. I winced inwardly. Any opponent who had ever closed with Fujima in the past was signing his own death sentence.

But Fujima was still having control problems. Seeing the *Marauder* move sluggishly, I suspected that Allison's furious volley had damaged the 'Mech's gyro. With a shower of sparks and an audible crash of metal on metal, the *Black Knight* struck the *Marauder*, tearing armor from arms and legs.

Fujima wasn't finished, however. He fought back, visibly straining to grind the *Black Knight* to a halt. For a moment, the two giants struggled against one another, neither giving ground.

Both were badly damaged, I could tell. Much of Allison's armor had slagged away, while Fujima's *Marauder* still moved awkwardly. The end was coming, but no one dared guess what it would be.

Suddenly, PPC fire flared once more. Falling back, Allison had triggered all his weapons again. In my mind, I saw heat scales soaring into the red and heard shutdown warnings howl like banshees. If Allison's shots did not fell Fujima, he was finished.

There was stillness for an instant, a moment of silence as Fujima's *Marauder* stood motionless, fires flaring across its surface. Then, slowly, the 'Mech turned, staggering like a drunken man, and we saw its chest and head on the monitors. Expressions of horror and shock erupted from the MechWarriors in the room, and even I could not suppress a grunted, "Oh, god."

With fires still burning inside, the *Marauder* faced us, black smoke billowing from a gaping hole in its torso, a scatter of sparks beginning to grow.

"His ammo's hit!" shouted an SLDF 'Mech sergeant, leaping to his feet. "Punch out, you stupid snake! Punch out!"

Unable or unwilling to eject, Fujima stood by his machine as the autocannon's ammunition ignited, blowing what remained of the *Marauder* to scrap. Shocked silence filled the room. I heard someone sobbing. To my surprise, I realized that it was the 'Mech sergeant.

To this day, no one knows whether Fujima was still conscious when his 'Mech blew. From what I knew of him, a man who valued personal honor above all else, I believe he knew exactly what he was doing. He might even have set off the ammo himself when he realized that he was beaten.

Stupid snake. Damn him and his kind. Stupid, stupid snake.

BOOM TOWN

After the smashing success of the duels, athletic promoters on Solaris invited ronin and mercenaries to test their skills in the stadia and arenas. By 2750, full-scale battles for blood were common practice. As money from betting rolled in, the economic importance of the 'Mech contests grew. The income generated was considerable, and Solaris was rapidly becoming a showcase for Free Worlds League culture. When Aleksandr Kerensky registered an official complaint against the violence and corruption surrounding the games, Council Lord Ewan Marik politely but firmly refused to end them.

Caught up in the complexities of a slowly collapsing Star League and the tasks of the Regency, Kerensky was unable to respond, and the games continued. Kurita ronin and SLDF Gunslingers also continued to use the world as a neutral location for their fights, which were almost always broadcast. By this time, wagering had become widespread.

By the time of the Amaris coup, Solaris had become famous for its battles, some of which were broadcast across the whole Star League. Solaris, long since surpassed as a major industrial site, had begun to rely upon the 'Mech games.

CHANGING FORTUNES

As the century drew to a close, the Star League had collapsed, General Kerensky had left the Inner Sphere with most of the Star League army in 2784, and the first of what became known as the Succession Wars broke out. When Lyran forces seized many worlds near Solaris VII in a series of lightning strikes, Solaris, never closely aligned with the Free Worlds to begin with, easily changed allegiance. Though it has remained in Lyran hands ever since, the Commonwealth government has approved a kind of neutrality for Solaris, much like that of Switzerland on old Terra.

The battles for Terra, Kerensky's Exodus, and the terrors of the First Succession War had drawn many of the best MechWarriors away from the games. When mercenaries could earn fortunes fighting real battles for the Successor Lords, the comparatively small purses for Solaris contests looked less and less appealing. Within a decade of the Exodus, the planet's prospects seemed no better than the abandoned shells of its 'Mech arenas.

What fires the soul of a poet? Love, beauty, pain, anguish—all these are merely mundane aspects of the same base emotions. No! A poet must seek deeper, more primitive sensations!

The raw, the instinctual—those primordial drives of mankind, it is those I seek to color my words with fresh blood and raw flesh charred but briefly over the tribal fire. Conflict! The most primitive of human interaction—I seek conflict!

In the late summer of 2920, it was with such thoughts in mind that I discovered my desire to live on Solaris VII.

—From *My Life: An Experiment in Prose*, by poet Terrence Dovish, ca. 2944

RECONSTRUCTION

The inexorable descent toward economic ruin began to reverse in 2795, when the surviving promoters came up with a last-ditch plan to save Solaris. Seeing the chance for a new source of income, the Commonwealth government agreed to the unorthodox proposal.

The promoters' plan was simple. Now that the Inner Sphere had split up into the five Successor Houses, the plan was to duplicate the conflicts of the wars in miniature on Solaris, with each House government building and maintaining its own arena, where champions could fight for the glory of their nation. In this way, some reasoned, the bitter conflicts of the Succession Wars could be redirected, and the aggression possibly subsumed in the brotherly spirit of competition.

Of course, no such thing occurred. Although the leaders of the Successor States seized upon the proposal with enthusiasm, the contests on Solaris served only to widen the already irreconcilable differences between the powers of the Inner Sphere.

By 2800, Solaris VII was once more the capital of 'Mech contests. Zones around each stadium in Solaris City began to take on the character of their corresponding Successor House, with emigrants from each state maintaining the character of their respective sectors. The Lyrans quietly allowed this to continue, realizing that encouraging emigration meant greater income.

Though officially administered by the Commonwealth, Solaris became almost an independent planet, with residents allowed to maintain citizenship in their respective states, but required to live in the appropriate sector, or quarter, of the city. Though treaties strictly forbade spying or nationalistic activities, the various House governments treated the law with merry disdain. By the middle of the 29th century, Solaris had become a hotbed of intelligence activity and other intrigue.

The international nature of the world had its advantages. Like the equally neutral Switzerland on old Terra, Solaris became a financial center, where residents of many other worlds of the Inner Sphere maintained numbered bank accounts. The planet's political position kept it safe from attack, with the aforementioned raids in 2928 and 3002 drawing widespread criticism and condemnation. Even Wolf's Dragoons, well known for their rejection of Inner Sphere tradition, left Solaris alone during their famous 'Mech raids into neighboring areas of Lyran space in 3019.

THE SUCCESSION WARS

While conflict smouldered in the Inner Sphere, flaring up periodically into the doomed, pointless struggles known as the Succession Wars, MechWarriors, particularly mercenaries, continued to travel to Solaris for training and to pick up needed cash for repairs and parts.

In the Fourth Succession War, Maximilian Liao, then Chancellor of the Capellan Confederation, believed that the propaganda value of House Liao's victories would be more valuable than any military victory in motivating his weary troops to battle. On Solaris, however, Capellan warriors were not enthusiastic in their response to Maximilian Liao's desperate call for aid in fighting the war. By the time some of these same 'Mech pilots might have become receptive to helping their beleaguered nation, the war had run its course, and House Liao had been defeated and disgraced.

When Houses Davion and Steiner were joined in the marriage between Hanse Davion and Melissa Steiner in 3028, many expected Solaris to change. Because it seemed that peace and a new Star League under Davion leadership was inevitable, many believed that the need for such wasteful violence as the Solaris Games would decline.

These people were dead wrong. Not only did the games continue, but their fervor increased, with Liao fighters determined to avenge the humiliation of the Fourth Succession War. Even the two sectors of Black Hills and Silesia remained officially separate, although freedom of movement between them markedly improved.

WAR AND PEACE

Relations between House Marik and the Federated Commonwealth were strained during the War of 3039, making it look as though Solaris might once more become the target of concerted military action. As House Kurita defended itself against Hanse Davion's final drive to destroy them, the Combine's Coordinator, Takashi Kurita, called upon his allies to attack the Federated Commonwealth to relieve the pressure on his forces.

House Liao, still reeling from the destruction of the Fourth Succession War, could provide nothing save encouragement. House Marik also stood by, sending dire ultimatums and hinting at grim consequences should the F-C armies continue on their course. In one communiqué, Solaris was mentioned as a possible target of Free Worlds operations. The populace braced for the expected attack, then heaved a collective sigh of relief as the war wound to its bloody, inconclusive end. Though Davion won more worlds than he lost, most consider the 3039 War a defeat for the F-C forces. Solaris was once more spared the horror of war.

RASALHAGUE EXPATRIATES

When the invading Clans all but destroyed the Free Rasalhague Republic, everyone believed the Republic was through, militarily, politically, and on Solaris. Prior to the invasion, Rasalhagians had been among the fiercest and most skillful of competitors, and for a time it seemed that they might unseat House Liao as the leading 'Mech fighters on Solaris. After the invasion, however, these hopes dimmed.

Interestingly enough, a heavy influx of Rasalhague refugees made for Solaris, where many had family and friends. Within a few months of the Clans' defeat of the FRR, Solaris had become one of the largest expatriate Rasalhague communities in the Inner Sphere.

Far from vanishing, the Rasalhague edge in the arenas seemed to increase, and the expatriates remained deadly competitors, however small their numbers. Channeling their anger at the destruction of their homeland, they translated it into skill and determination in the arenas.

Dreams of a Rasalhague quarter to match the other five major Solaris City sectors have evaporated. Instead, Rasalhagians take pride in their impartiality, fighting for stables all over the city, regardless of their national origin. In addition to generating large amounts of cash to help less fortunate Rasalhagians, these battles have helped the Rasalhague warriors keep their fighting prowess honed. The thought of someday returning to liberate the Republic from the hands of the foreign invaders is never far from the minds of the FRR expatriates on Solaris.



Despite the violence of 3039, and the subsequent conflicts between the resurgent House Liao and some states of the Periphery, by 3050 peace might have been on the horizon in the Inner Sphere. The technological advances of the past decades combined with general war weariness led many to believe that perhaps the incessant wars would finally end.

In this optimistic climate, the games on Solaris became more popular than ever. ComStar stations linked virtually the entire Inner Sphere, and even the small percentage of revenues that the promoters received for this service made many rich beyond imagining. In this atmosphere of growing optimism, a movement began to ban live-ammo 'Mech fighting, to be replaced by simulated battles with training weapons and damage-mimicking sensors.

Surprisingly, this movement began to win support, even among MechWarriors. In December 3049 a bill went before the Solaris Civic Council, proposing the appointment of a committee to investigate the possibilities of such a change.

COMING OF THE CLANS

In human history, time seems to favor the pessimist, and so when the Clans burst unexpectedly on the scene in early 3050, any hopes for peace in the Inner Sphere were shattered. Kerensky's descendants had returned, but they had grown strange and violent, sweeping down upon the Successor States with fanatic intensity, slaying and conquering. In their wake, old alliances were shattered and new ones forged, and all those solid, reliable things that men and women had come to know and depend upon were swept away as if by a flood.

The apparently unbreakable alliance between Davion and Steiner was showing signs of strain, as some citizens of both Houses still protested the union. House Liao again awoke to thoughts of greatness and ultimate victory. The Free Rasalhague Republic, which had seemed the perfect counterweight against the power of House Kurita, was gutted and brought to its knees. House Marik, largely untouched by the conflict, saw its fortunes rise. Driven together by conflict and catastrophe, Houses Davion and Kurita began to look at each other in a new light. ComStar, the ancient secret Order of Blake, seemed on the verge of collapse.

All these were tragedies for the Inner Sphere, but food and drink to the hungry promoters of Solaris. The fights raged on, any thought of humanizing them or reducing the bloodshed forgotten. Desperate, half-convinced that the end was near, many people spent previously hoarded C-Bills in an orgy of self-indulgence and debauchery. Much of this money found its way to Solaris, as men and women wagered fortunes, hoping against hope that a big win might buy escape or salvation from the Clans' inexorable march toward Terra. Trillions and more changed hands overnight. Paupers became princes in a day, then became paupers again. Blood flowed, 'Mechs fought, and the arenas were always full.

These were grand days for Solaris promoters and MechWarriors alike. Always a microcosm and barometer of the Inner Sphere, Solaris seemed to have run out of control, with its teeming citizens finally acknowledging that the future held nothing but war and terror, and deciding to wager everything on a last fling.

The Frenzy, as it came to be called, lasted well into 3052. When at last the Com Guards halted the Clans' advance, the people of the Inner Sphere began to hope once more that perhaps life might go on. Slowly, the frenetic pace of life on Solaris began to return to normal.

SOLARIS TODAY

In the wake of the Clan invasion, the games continue. At first, many believed that the honor-driven Clanspeople might look favorably on the games of Solaris, providing new blood to the game circuit. Far from admiring Solaris and its games, however, the Clans apparently despise the notion of fighting for money or the idea of wagering on the outcome of combats. They see such activities as a filthy perversion of a noble profession, a twisted caricature of their famous "bidding" system, by which commanders earned glory and status.

Should the Clan Wars begin again, many believe that one of their first goals will be to destroy the world they consider a den of degeneracy and evil—Solaris. Meanwhile, the games go on. They can never end until the Successor States have passed away, and peace again reigns over the thousands of stars of the Inner Sphere.

Far have we traveled from our distant cosmic egg, where imperfect man gave rise to less-imperfect Clansman. It grieves me, this treaty, this honor-bound thing that we must respect, this agreement that prevents us from carrying our crusade farther. Crusaders such as I would rather sweep forward, expunging the perversion that these pre-men have made of our beloved Star League.

Nowhere is the Inner Sphere's degeneracy more odious than on the world called Solaris VII. Having heard that this world produced great MechWarriors, I came there, foolishly believing that they would be men and women to test our mettle and hone our warriors' skills. I could not have been more mistaken.

—Galaxy Commander Trey van Timons, Clan Jade Falcon, personal account written after a visit to Solaris VII, ca. 3053

THE GREAT ONES

O, mighty BattleMech, standing on the field, looking for all the world like a knight of old, with PPC and laser instead of sword and axe. As noble as you seem, you are the steed, the charger, and the MechWarrior is truly the knight...

Damn! I can't think of any more metaphors!

—From the unpublished notebooks of Terrence Dovish

The roll call of famous 'Mech fighters from Solaris is almost endless. Three centuries of names still invoke memories and images. On Solaris a 'Mech pilot can win all the respect and notoriety of a Successor House MechWarrior without ever seeing real battle. Fortunes have been won and lost, and those who battle in the Solaris arenas live on in the memories of their fans and supporters.

The point at which the 'Mech games moved from military exercise to sporting event is somewhat hazy. Certainly the first celebrities to come out of Solaris were the Star League Gunslingers and their Kurita opponents. Some of the first battles to the death were fought as part of the Hidden War between the Kurita ronin and the SLDF Warriors. Meanwhile the holobroadcasts poured money into Free Worlds coffers.

Many date the start of the Solaris Games with Colonel Daniel Allison's showdown with ronin Kaneda Fujima. Captain Wilbur Frews, MechWarrior Amanda Kazutoyo, and ronin Trent Latimore all fought duels in the Solaris arenas.

It was the institutionalization of the games and the betting system, however, that began the star tradition. The first Open Class hero was, without a doubt, Cabol Hirsch. A native Solarian and worker in the timber industry, he rose to prominence as a pilot of lumber-loading industrial 'Mechs. Early victories in Class One Arenas in 2808 led to quick advancement, and by 2812 Cabol Hirsch was a genuine superstar, an undefeated Open Champion and the darling of his home world.

In the end, though, Hirsch's success was his undoing. Allowed to pick and choose matches because of his Open status, he began slumming almost immediately upon reaching the peak of his profession. He invariably fought weaker, less-skilled opponents, which made his victories come more easily. At first spectators were bored, then repulsed by the carnage Hirsch inflicted. Soon, he had acquired the nickname "Hitman."

Hirsch seemed unconcerned, living a fast, decadent lifestyle and squandering his winnings on drugs, women, and wagers on other 'Mech matches. His final defeat came at the hands of the second great 'Mech games star, Marco Moliotti.

Considered a strong beginner, Moliotti had also risen quickly through the ranks. Too quickly, some believed, expecting him to meet an early end at the hands of a more experienced fighter. When the brash and seemingly overconfident Moliotti challenged the champion in public, adding a stinging rebuke of Hirsch's lifestyle, many predicted the end of the young man's promising career.

THE WORM TURNS

I arrived late at the Taj Mahal, an expensive restaurant and casino favored by the elite. "Hitman" Hirsch was looking forward to yet another lavish party, with simpering yes-men and beautiful women hanging on his every word, eager reporters gathering his comments for yet another trivid puff-piece, and, of course, gallons of intoxicants and acres of rich, imported food. Fortunately for those of us who had long since grown weary of Hirsch and his excesses, tonight he would be disappointed.

It was customary for Hirsch to invite a few young, rising MechWarriors so that they could gawk wide-eyed at the legend, and from whom he could choose the least skilled as a future opponent. This party was no exception—the usual flock of junior warriors was there, all insecure and over-dressed, wearing tuxedos like BattleMech armor, carrying drinks in their hands or women on their arms like shields.

One was different, however. He had come unescorted, and was dressed casually in a black shirt and trousers. Dark and silent, he calmly scanned the crowd until he spotted Hirsch in the midst of his usual entourage of sycophants and hangers-on. I watched in fascination as the young man moved slowly and unerringly toward Hirsch.

I, too, moved closer so that I might hear what they would say. Approaching Hirsch, the young man let his face take on the eager, smarmy look of yet another bootlicker, and my heart sank. Until, that is, he began to speak.

"Mister Hirsch," he said, extending his hand, looking for all the world like an enthusiastic puppy. "I'm Marc Moliotti."

Hirsch deigned to glance at Moliotti. The champion was still a big man, though his frame carried considerably more bulk than at the start of his career. His skin was mottled and his eyes bleary from overindulgence, but the sparkling crowd of statuesque women and garishly dressed men pretended not to notice, gazing on in admiration as he took the young man's extended hand.

"Pleased to meet you, Marc," Hirsch said, the normally polite phrase twisted into an expression of utter contempt and condescension. "Hope you're enjoying the party."

"Thank you," Moliotti replied, his voice suddenly shifting to a tone crisp with authority and confidence. "I've been looking forward to meeting you in the arena."

Hirsch paused a moment, taken aback by the brash statement. Then he chuckled. "Well, we'll see, youngster," he said, turning away. "We'll just have to see about that."

"No!" barked Moliotti, drawing himself up to his full height. Unused to such treatment, Hirsch seemed stunned, responding only with astonishment as Moliotti's hand shot out, pinning his shoulder. "No, we will not see, you pathetic lump of garbage. We *will* meet, and I *will* beat you."

Hirsch stared, his mouth working, but nothing coming out. His entourage seemed similarly shocked, and stared in silent horror.

"You're pitiful," Moliotti said, his voice echoing through the room as the crowd fell silent. "You and your booze and your drugs and your money and your whores! You shame the name of MechWarrior, and I will bring you down."

Moliotti whirled to address the room's occupants, who still watched in fearful fascination. "You heard me, all of you! He can't weasel out of this! I challenge the great Cabol Hirsch, and he can't just brush me off and pick some wet-behind-the-ears newbie who he can crush for the sake of wallowing in more so-called glory!"

Turning to Hirsch once more, Moliotti fixed him with a deadly stare. "I'll take you, Hirsch. I'll take you, and teach you what it means to be a MechWarrior."



The resulting battle, with Moliotti's outmatched *Archer* meeting Hirsch's top-of-the-line *Warhammer*, defied all expectations. Sluggish from the previous night's debaucheries, Hirsch lumbered his 'Mech out and fought in an uninspired fashion, expecting his green young opponent to wither up and die before him. To Hirsch's surprise, then horror, Moliotti shrugged off his initial attacks and responded with unabated fury, felling the champion's *Warhammer* and pounding away mercilessly. Hirsch was able to eject before his 'Mech was destroyed, but his career was in tatters, and Moliotti was the new Solaris champion.

At a press conference following the fight, Moliotti and his manager revealed that Hirsch had for some time been sabotaging his opponents' 'Mechs, and only their own vigilance had prevented the same fate from befalling Moliotti. After police patrols began to comb the city in search of the missing ex-champion, his body was discovered on the banks of the Solaris River, a single bullet through his head. The subsequent investigation never proved whether Hirsch's death was suicide or a possible gangland execution.

Moliotti proved a worthy champion, retiring undefeated five years later. His success and sportsmanlike conduct (he never killed an opponent) became bywords for champions to come. Others followed, with varying degrees of success and popularity.

Moliotti's successor, a fiery woman named Andrea Haskell, served as champion for the following year before dying in the arena in a fight with her bitter rival, Drew Onada, a former mercenary.

The line of champions who followed Onada into history is impressive indeed. It includes François Drullet, who piloted his damaged *Stalker* to victory over Mark Good's superior *Atlas*, and Oliver Two Horse, the only champion to reign non-consecutive years, defeating champion Maki Murahashi in a furious battle to regain the title he had lost the year before.

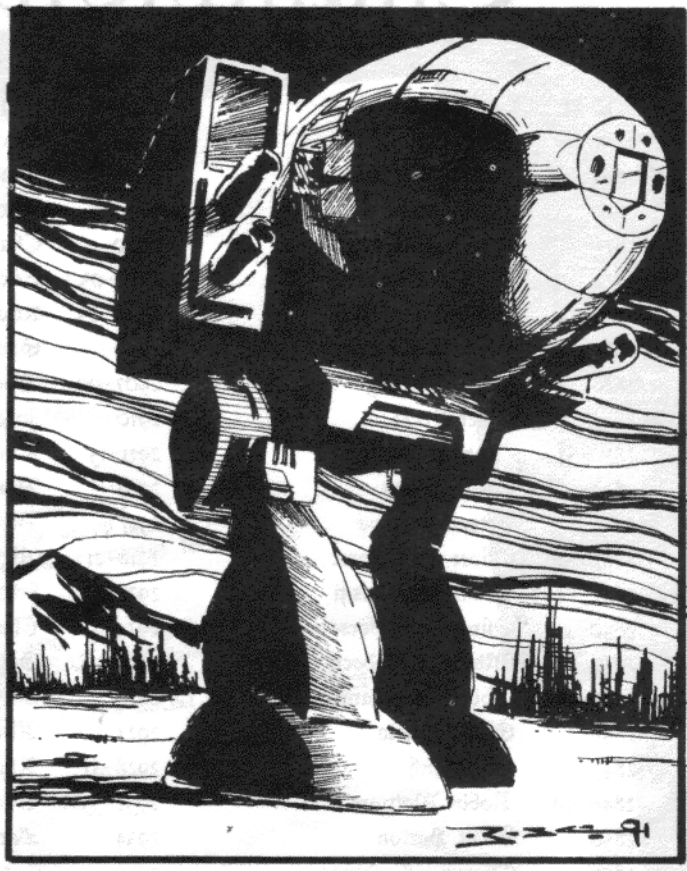
Many tales surround the warriors of Solaris, with both heroes and villains to spare. A leading villain is Norman Bales who, from 2943 to 2945, invariably left his opponents crippled or dead, until he met his own death in a fight with Hideto Moriyasu, husband of Nona Simkins, whom Bales had killed in battle the previous year.

Among the heroes is one James O'Gordon, who arrived on Solaris a dispossessed survivor of the destruction of his mercenary regiment, O'Gordon's Rifles. Through good luck and skill, he earned enough to reform the Rifles and lead them back to glory in the Inner Sphere.

As the games continued down through the decades and the Succession Wars began to rage across the Inner Sphere, Solaris champions came to represent the values of their respective native Successor Houses.

In the years just before of the Fourth Succession War, a string of champions came and went. After the retirement of long-time champion, "Legend-Killer" Gray Noton, warriors like Philip Capet, Hans Moder, Billy Wolfson, and Peter Armstrong were all major competitors. All were swept aside, however, by the arrival of Justin Xiang, an exile from the Federated Suns fighting under the banner of the Capellan Confederation. Wolfson, Armstrong, Capet, and others fell to Xiang's near-fanatical drive against all things Davion, and within a year, the new MechWarrior was generally considered the best on Solaris.

Xiang's unprecedented rise was followed by his mysterious disappearance, then reappearance as a confidant and aide to Capellan Chancellor Maximilian Liao. In a tale now well-known in the annals of the Inner Sphere, Xiang was eventually revealed as a Davion double-agent who played a major role in House Liao's downfall, eventually ending up, with his wife Candace Liao, at the head of the tiny St. Ives Commonality. His recent tragic death



remains a mystery, but many suspect vengeful agents of then Chancellor Romano Liao.

It was not until after the War of 3039 that another MechWarrior gained fame comparable to Xiang or Hirsch. Amanda Hamilton, a down-on-her-luck former mercenary, arrived on Solaris with a somewhat battered *Stalker* and driving ambition. By 3045, Hamilton had defeated 24 opponents, and many believed that the great Solaris champions finally had a worthy successor.

Hamilton's unexpected retirement in 3046, and her subsequent disappearance, left fans in shock and a gaping hole in the world of the Solaris Games. By the time of the Clan invasion, another name had replaced Hamilton's in the hearts of aficionados, a name borne by not one, but two, people.

Elizabeth and Tanya O'Bannon, sisters from Kentares IV, burst on the scene in 3046. Working their way up through Class One and Two arenas, the O'Bannons seemed unstoppable. Many critics attacked the pair when the truth about their background came out. Though their official publicity claimed them to be simple farm girls who made good, the pair were actually former F-C MechWarriors, who clearly outclassed their opponents. The furor over this apparent deception led to abandonment of the old 'Mech vs. 'Mech betting system, and the institution of a more sophisticated odds procedure.

The sisters weathered the storm of controversy and by 3050 were co-champions of the Open Class circuit. The days of The Frenzy that accompanied the Clan invasion were good for the O'Bannons, and by the time the hysteria subsided in 3053, the sisters were rich beyond belief, with respective records of 28–4 (Elizabeth) and 26–3 (Tanya). The sisters' fights are fewer these days, and there is talk of their retirement to start their own 'Mech stable.

Champions of Solaris

2812–14	Cabol Hirsch
2815–18	Marco Moliotti
2819	Andrea Haskell
2820	Drew Onada
2821	Falai Fouadi
2822	Victoria Shandell
2823–24	François Drullet
2825	Shinobu Kanedo
2826	Xin Lee Kiang
2828–29	Peter Grigg
2830–31	Charlene Madan
2832–35	Casai Jusang
2836	Tetsuo Konawa
2837–38	Oliver Two Horse
2839	Maki Murahashi
2840–41	Oliver Two Horse
2842	Michael Craddock
2843–45	Robert Singharaj
2846	Shola Umoja
2847	Shih Fenh
2848–49	Robin Wolfram
2850	Trent Barton
2851	Cuatemoc Cardenas
2852	Viktor Petrov
2853	Mohammed al Ibrahim
2854–55	Arleta Gordon
2856	Winston Carter
2857–58	Roger Bostwick
2859	Harriet Granger
2860	Yi Hiang
2861	Danielle Jenner
2862–64	Martin Essex
2865	Letitia Donovan
2866–67	Kyle Burton
2868	Arvid Shiner
2869	Samui Chichi
2870–74	Paul Fokker
2875	Jenette Hart
2876	Drake Morder
2877	Clinton Finn
2878	Steven Mak
2879–80	Shanda Rambeaux
2881–84	Harrison Kent
2885	Edmond Arens
2886	Sheila Marie Bellows
2887–88	Gunther Bellows
2889	Tag Burton
2890	Richard Napier
2891–92	Linda Schwartz
2893	Echigo Kama
2894	Shelley Hine
2895–98	Paul Reese
2899	David Sells
2900	Charles Tabey
2901–03	Erica Smale
2904–05	Kwan Tong Ngo
2906	Susan Geitz
2907–09	Michael Ross
2910	Joseph Miracle
2911–15	Kan Sho
2916	Nance Hogan
2917	Brent East
2918–21	Meyer Bellagiorre
2922–23	Fritz Schleiffer
2924	Thar Drickle
2925	Sandra Higgins
2926	Stephanie Van der Kellen
2927	Rico Totze
2928–31	Rhian Caselton
2932–33	Michael Plevant
2934	Lars Tebbit
2935	Cara Grafwallner
2936	Francis Rypczynski
2937–38	Daryoush Sabahi
2939	Arthur Hames
2940	Noburu Kuichi
2941	Margaret Portillo
2942	David Ewell
2943–45	Norman Bales
2946–47	Hideto Moriyasu
2948	Rex Falconburg
2949	Julie Baumgartner
2950–51	Bennet Hammond
2952	Alberto Diez
2953	Gary Markstaller
2954–55	Alan Stubbs
2956–57	Robert Cramer
2958	Henry Eurman
2959	Desiree Careaga
2960	Rajid Malool
2961–63	Corneliu Dlocea
2964	Faezeh Djeyfrouddi
2965	Duane McComas
2966–68	Rosemary Rubenstein
2969	Diane Byassee
2970	Jame Caggiano
2971–73	Kevin Langworthy
2974	Tomas Greissman
2975–76	Jas Czesla
2977	Masud Ahmaddi
2978–79	Rafael Marella
2980	Astrid Schagler
2981	John Wahpehpah
2982	Sidney Lakey
2983–84	Thomas Moe
2985	Charles Fagen
2986	Ernest Burroughs
2987	Hector Garcia
2988–89	Gloria Lillehaugen
2990	Michael D. Martin
2991–93	Dale Krueger
2994–95	Gordon Marquand
2996	Nita Krevando
2997–99	Akia Toyoshima
3000	Brett Hartenberger
3001	Hans Schleinning
3002–05	Terri Bates
3006	Phyllis Barnes
3007–08	Vanh Daravivanh
3009–12	James O'Gordon
3013	Orlando Perez
3014	Joel Groshong
3015	Maxwell Boddi
3016–22	Gray Noton
3023	Manuel Delvalle
3024–25	Hans Moder
3026–27	Phillip Capet
3027	Justin Xiang
3028	Chaka Mobuto
3029	Anya Terrel
3030	Allen Fitz
3031	Maurice Potter
3032	Richard Townsend
3033	Taleb Hammadi
3034–35	Debra Fromherz
3036	Andrew McCafftey
3037	Bao Zhan Fu
3038–39	Matthew Balcomb
3040–43	Amanda Hamilton
3044	Niculcea Dumitrescu
3045	Kyle Isaacs
3046–47	Julia Marroquin
3048	Michael Romney
3049	Grady Kiefer
3050	Jason Bloch
3051–53	Elizabeth and Tanya O'Bannon (co-champions)

THE LEGENDS

In the nearly 250 years since the Solaris Games began, only 13 MechWarriors have served as champion for four or more years. Of these, two were champions for five years, and only a single MechWarrior—the legendary Gray Noton, the Legend-Killer—served for an unbelievable seven.

These are the true legends of Solaris, unquestionably among the finest warriors ever to pilot 'Mechs. Their stories have been passed down through countless retellings, and will live on into the future. With passing time, it becomes more difficult to separate fact from fiction, but the following notes are reasonably close to historical truth.

Cabol Hirsch (2812–14)

"The Hitman," as he was called by contemporaries, was the first real Solaris champion. Acclaimed throughout the Lyran Commonwealth and beyond, Hirsch became his own worst enemy, eventually believing the praise and adoration that surrounded him. Reluctant to give up the fame and fortune of a Solaris champion, he and his technical crew turned cheat, choosing inexperienced warriors as opponents, then sabotaging their 'Mechs. In the end, a pathetic wastrel, Hirsch was exposed as a fraud and died from a gunshot to the head.

Marco Moliotti (2815–18)

Hirsch's replacement served as the model for gallant and honorable 'Mech combat for centuries to come. Moliotti combined a fierce competitiveness with a deep reverence for BattleMechs and their pilots, sponsoring several new warriors, donating heavily to charities, and treating all his opponents with an impeccable sense of sportsmanship. Unlike Hirsch, who seemed to derive a perverse pleasure from making his opponents suffer, Moliotti never inflicted more damage than necessary, and retired with honors in 2818. Today, a bequest from Moliotti continues to fund an annual scholarship to the Lyran Commonwealth's prestigious Nagelring Military Academy.



Casai Iusang (2832–35)

The next four-year champion was a quiet, introverted man who kept to himself when not in combat. A former mercenary noted for his methodical and intellectual approach to strategy, Iusang was equally systematic in arena combat, thoughtfully approaching each battle and gearing his tactics to his opponents' strengths and weaknesses. His style of fighting prevailed for four years, failing him only at the end when he was unseated by a relative unknown, Tetsuo Konawa, whose strength lay in his unpredictability. Iusang retired after his defeat, living out the rest of his days on a country estate in southern Grayland.

Oliver Two Horse (2837–38, 2840–41)

A MechWarrior who rose through the ranks, Two Horse began as a humble LoaderMech pilot who would eventually unseat Tetsuo Konawa as champion. His defeat two years later seemed to end Two Horse's career, but the canny champion was not finished. Deprived of stable backing, he staked his fortune on a new 'Mech and returned in 2040, retaking his title in a furious battle. His death in combat the following year did little to diminish Two Horse's legend; in many ways it enhanced it. To date, no other MechWarrior has served nonconsecutive years as champion.

Paul Fokker (2870–74)

Generally considered the best until the meteoric rise of Gray Noton, Paul Fokker piloted his *Stalker* to no less than five consecutive championships before retiring undefeated in 2874. Dashing, outgoing, and handsome, Fokker was plagued throughout his career with ugly rumors about his private life as well as a spate of paternity suits and a legion of women claiming to be jilted lovers.

Though his non-arena exploits were sensational, Fokker was a consummate MechWarrior, equally at home in a spindly *Locust* as in his hulking *Stalker*. Instructors at leading military academies throughout the Inner Sphere studied his combat techniques, with the result that many modern 'Mech tactics are direct descendants of Paul Fokker's innovations.

Harrison Kent (2881–84)

A loud, flamboyant braggart with a taste for fancy clothes, fast women, and high living, Harrison Kent managed to offend nearly everyone on Solaris during his rise to the top, and by the time his ride ended in 2884, few were sorry to see him go. Winning through his unpredictable tactics and an unerring sense of his opponent's strengths and weaknesses, Kent continually proclaimed his greatness, even going so far as to predict exactly which of his enemy's 'Mech areas he would damage and at what point his opponent would be forced to eject.

Such antics attracted widespread attention, but Kent overstepped his bounds in 2884, failing to note that his opponent was piloting a heavily modified 'Mech that did not behave in the expected manner. Sticking doggedly to his pre-fight predictions, Kent launched poorly conceived attacks and found himself on the ropes almost immediately. When he finally ejected, fans were relieved, confident that they were finally free of Harrison Kent's buffoonery.

They were wrong.

After announcing his retirement, Kent went on to become host of the long running *Harrison Kent Report*, a popular weekly trivid talk show in which he harangued about various aspects of 'Mech combat, politics, or contemporary issues or mercilessly attacked his guests, who continued to appear despite his fearsome reputation. Kent's death on the air in 2891 drew huge ratings, leading some to speculate that continued popularity would cause him to rise from the dead in order to further antagonize the Solaran populace.

Paul Reese (2895–98)

"Pretty Paul" is still remembered as the most handsome and stylish 'Mech champion ever to grace the Solaris arenas. After his initial victories and subsequent appearances dressed in the height of fashion with a succession of beautiful women on his arm, Reese swiftly moved from simply wearing fashions to setting them. A leader in dress and attitude as he was in the 'Mech arena, when Reese wore a certain shirt or jacket, it was only a matter of days (sometimes hours) before every trendy male on Solaris was wearing something similar. For four spectacular years, Paul Reese was the man whom every Solaran male wanted to be.

All of this obscures the fact that Reese was a brilliant, if somewhat unsubtle, MechWarrior, with a tendency toward foolhardiness, who was only successful because of his incredible luck. He remained in competition for several years after his defeat in 2898, but then faded from the scene, eventually dying alone and broke in a filthy Cathay apartment amid a few tattered souvenirs of his former glory.

Kan Sho (2911–15)

Quiet, confident and—in public—amazingly arrogant, Kan Sho dominated the arenas for five years, one of only two MechWarriors to do so. Piloting his *BattleMaster*, which he had named Kwan Yin after the Chinese goddess of mercy, Kan was anything but merciful, ruthlessly exploiting his opponents' smallest weaknesses, and doing anything necessary for victory, even if it meant the death of his opponent.

Kan was a complex character, far more so than the ruthless warrior of his public image. Those who knew him well say that in private he was a kind, soft-spoken man with impeccable taste in art, architecture, and fashion. When he approached a 'Mech arena, however, any shred of kindness or sensitivity vanished, and he became a silent, brutal killer.

Many biographies have probed the mystery of Kan Sho, but few have provided satisfactory answers to the troubling enigma of his life. Kan retired undefeated, living out his last decade in virtual seclusion. Speculation existed that his death, in 2927, was a suicide, but his body was cremated and no further facts were forthcoming.

Meyer Bellagiorre (2918–21)

Bellagiorre, widely considered the best medium-'Mech fighter on Solaris (Class Three champion for five years straight), went on to greater heights in 2918 when he won the Unlimited Class championship in his first year of competition.

Bellagiorre's career was full of such surprises, and luck was invariably on his side. Nearly beaten in the 2920 championship match by an up-and-coming MechWarrior named Thar Drickle (who went on to become champion in 2924), Bellagiorre survived and emerged victorious when his opponent's 'Mech struck a mine and stumbled at a crucial moment, giving Bellagiorre a chance to strike its unarmored back.

Luck followed him throughout his career; for his part, Bellagiorre never seemed to lose the wide-eyed wonder and boyish innocence that many fans, particularly females, found appealing. Finally, in 2921, realizing that even the best of luck had its limits, Bellagiorre retired to his home district of Donegal, there to found a chain of fast-food restaurants. He died in 2967.

Rhian Castelton (2928–31)

During her lifetime, Castelton was a woman of some mystery, appearing unexpectedly on the scene and immediately making a name for herself in the Class One and Two circuits. By 2925 she had acquired a first-class ride with White Hand Stables, and was fighting her way to prominence as a Class Five pilot. Her four years as champion were uneventful, with Castelton disposing of opponents with cool professionalism and sportsmanlike conduct.

Defeated in 2931, Castelton soon vanished from the scene, but the truth about her background and origin did not come out until eight years later. Under her real name of Shanda McConnell, she had been banned from arena combat due to allegations of fraud and cheating.

After extensive plastic surgery and a reasonable lapse of time, she returned with a new identity, determined to reclaim what she believed was her due. As for the truth of the original allegations, most believed that she had been unjustly accused and framed by rivals, but no one knows for certain to this day.

Terri Bates (3002–05)

A small, attractive woman with a quick wit, Bates was the last individual one might expect to be piloting a 100-ton *Atlas*. The antithesis of the hulking, muscular MechWarrior of fiction and popular imagination, Bates was nonetheless a fierce competitor, winning match after match with only an occasional setback.

Her shining moment came in 3002, when she unseated defending champion Hans Schleinning in The Jungle, in a fight whose odds heavily favored her opponent. Weary of arrogant, self-centered MechWarriors and meaningless cults of personality, the public immediately embraced Bates, who won fans with her unassuming, modest demeanor.

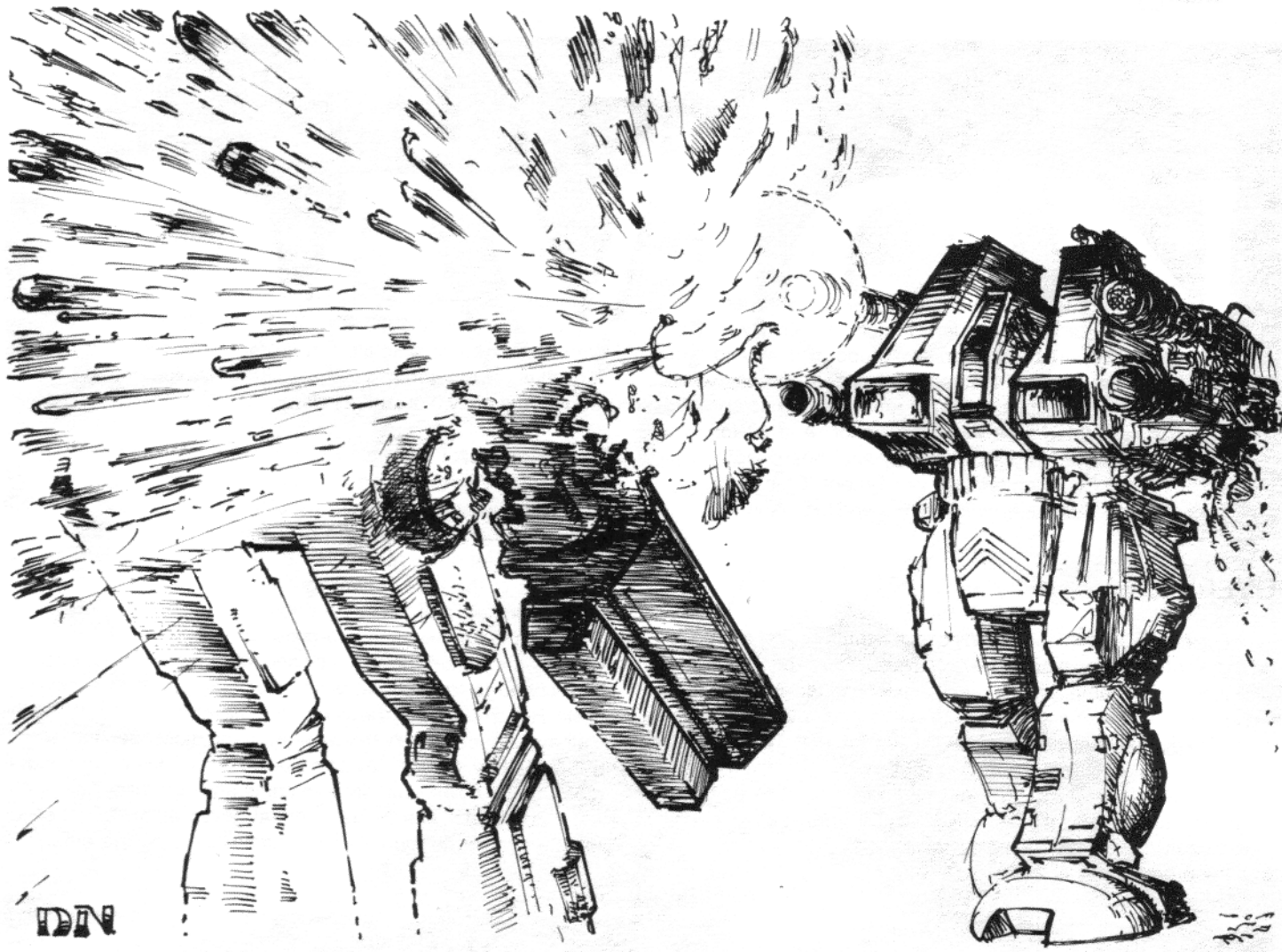
Four years as champion followed until an injury forced her retirement in 3005. Although she recovered fully, Bates never returned to the arena.

James O'Gordon (3009–12)

When O'Gordon's Rifles, a leading mercenary regiment, was defeated and scattered in 3007, few believed the unit would ever return. But these observers failed to reckon with the Rifles' irascible leader, the legendary James O'Gordon. Starting with a single serviceable 'Mech known only as *BattleMaster Number One*, O'Gordon traveled to Solaris, receiving the backing of the Wardogs 'Mech cooperative, and ascending to championship-level competition in short order.

Though defeated in 3008 by Vanh Daravivanh, O'Gordon fought his way to victory the following year, reaping huge returns on longshot-odds and funneling all profits into the Wardogs and his dream of reforming his regiment. Over the next years, O'Gordon continued to fight successfully, shunning the sponsorship of established stables, who fought back brutally. Badly beaten by thugs in 3011, O'Gordon nonetheless went on to defeat his opponent in the finals, becoming champion for the third year in a row.

After his final victory in 3012, O'Gordon announced his retirement, adding that O'Gordon's Rifles had returned as a battalion-sized mercenary unit, incorporating personnel from the old regiment and his comrades from the Wardogs Cooperative. The Rifles subsequently returned to their winning ways, reaching regimental strength within a few years, continuing today under O'Gordon's grandson.



Gray Noton (3016–22)

Only one MechWarrior can claim to have been champion for a full seven years running. In almost 250 years of conflict, only the Legend-Killer, Gray Noton, has remained at the pinnacle for so long.

Arriving on Solaris VII as a stowaway, Noton began with a minor Class One stable, swiftly rising through the ranks, but avoiding the brutal competition of the Unlimited Class despite numerous offers. At 25, he left Solaris to fight as a mercenary. When he returned five years later in 3015 with a brand-new *Rifleman*, he announced his intention to compete in Class Five arenas.

Even some ardent supporters of Noton expressed skepticism at his ability to compete in the assault 'Mech circuit in so undistinguished a vehicle as a *Rifleman*. Initial successes silenced these doubters, everyone wondering how the 65-ton 'Mech managed to overcome such awesome opponents as *BattleMaster*s and *Stalker*s. Meanwhile, Noton won victory after victory.

His success continued more than seven years. One warrior after another fell to the aptly nicknamed Legend-Killer, and until he retired in 3022, Noton seemed unbeatable. Rumors swirled around Noton after retirement, hinting that in addition to his modest import/export business, he dabbled in espionage and assassination. More questions surrounded his death in 3027, which remains still unsolved.

Also unsolved was the secret of Noton's surprising success. His *Rifleman* was obviously outmatched in the Unlimited Class, but carried him to success nonetheless. One theory, advanced in the years since the arrival of the Clans and the rediscovery of Star League lostech, suggests that, while operating as a mercenary in the Periphery, Noton stumbled upon a Star League-era *Rifleman* equipped with such advances as pulse lasers, ultracannon, endo steel frame, XL engines, double heat sinks, and so on. In addition, some evidence exists that Noton's 'Mech weighed considerably more than 65 tons, and had been upgraded to 80 or 90 tons in a fashion similar to the *Marauder II*, with extra armor added to its legs and arms.

These are only a few of the mysteries of Gray Noton's life and death, but none can obscure the fact that he was unquestionably the finest MechWarrior ever to fight on Solaris VII.

Amanda Hamilton (3040–43)

The last four-year champion of Solaris, Hamilton was a former mercenary who quickly rose to the top, easily defending her title against a wide range of opponents. Surprisingly little solid information exists on Hamilton, and she herself is not talking, having retired in 3043, then disappearing altogether three years later. Numerous individuals throughout the Inner Sphere claim to have seen Hamilton over the last ten years, but none of these reports can be substantiated.

SOLARIS CITY

See Solaris and see what these freeborn usurpers have done to our beloved Star League. It is a city of excess and debauch, of mindless greed and wicked cruelties. Here, some of the best of the Inner Sphere's warriors battle, smashing valuable equipment to scrap, forever besmirching their lives and honor. And all for money. This is what wounds my Falcon soul most deeply.

—Galaxy Commander Trey van Timons, Clan Jade Falcon, personal account written after a visit to Solaris VII, c. 3053

OVERVIEW

The crown jewel of the Solaris circuit seems on first glance to be a gray and gloomy place. Near-constant rain keeps the streets slick and the air damp. The sluggish expanse of the Solaris River varies between swamp and sewer. Vast slums surround the city, which is also the center of planet-wide criminal activity.

But Solaris City is much more than this. It is the home of the five Open Class Arenas, as well as of the five distinct sectors that support them. The Open Class battles are the most lucrative but the most deadly of the 'Mech contests; fortune and fame come and go with the predictability of the daily rainstorms.

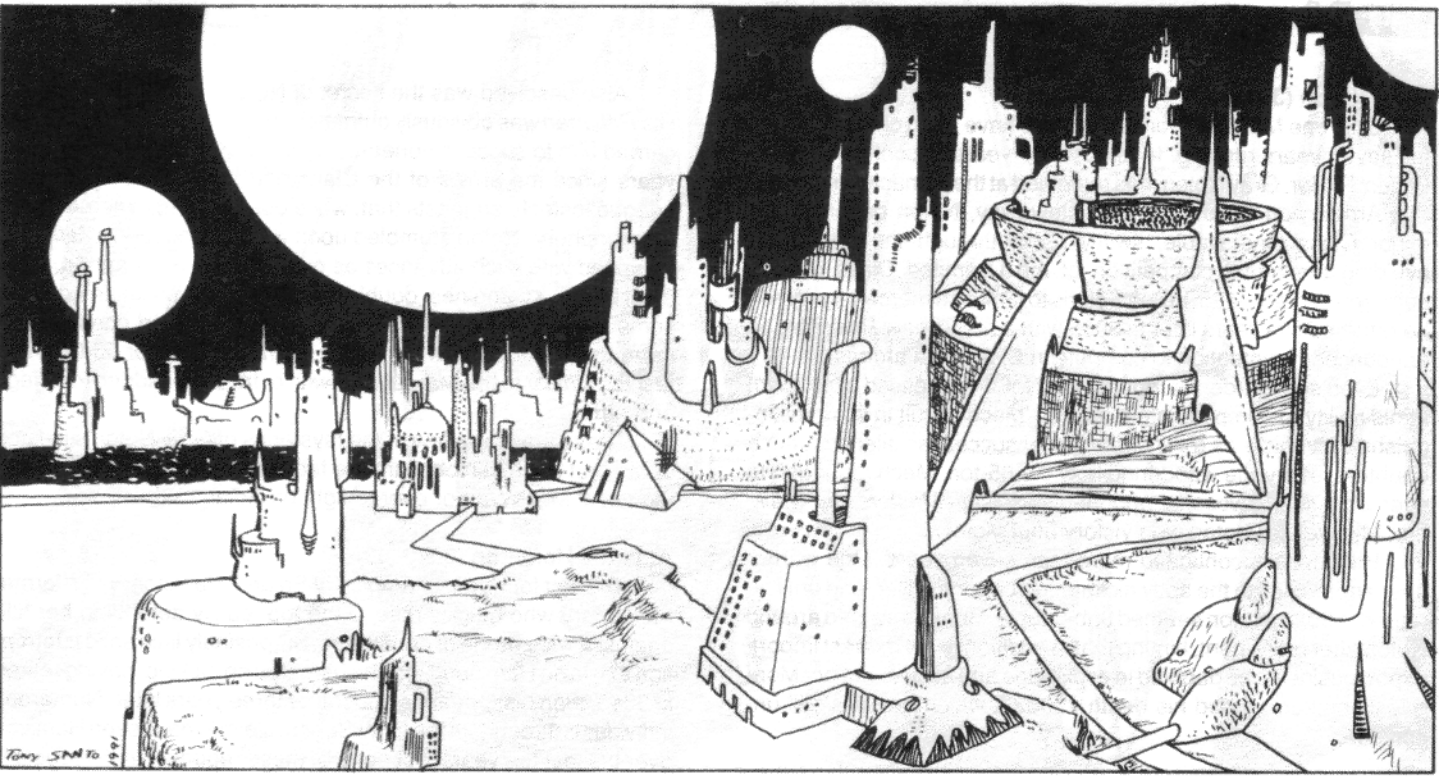
Home to nearly three million, Solaris City is the focus of hopes and dreams throughout the Inner Sphere. The aspiring Mech-Warriors who come to Solaris City do not see the incessant rain, the filthy river, or the grinding poverty. For them, the potent allure of fortune and glory blots out all else.

GOVERNMENT

Solaris City is divided into separately administered sectors, each roughly corresponding to one of the Great Houses of the Inner Sphere. In the sprawling slums beyond the city proper, the smaller states (the Periphery realms, the Bandit Kingdoms, and even the remnants of the Free Rasalhague Republic) maintain their own zones in imitation of the larger ones.

Each major sector has a distinctive character. Interestingly enough, the sector's prominence and relative importance does not correspond to the political position or strength of its Successor State. House Liao, long the sick man of the Inner Sphere, maintains Cathay, unquestionably the wealthiest and most beautiful quarter of Solaris City. House Davion's Black Hills, on the other hand, is mostly a run-down slum rife with crime and corruption.

Each sector has its own central government, which sends representatives to monthly civic council meetings to determine



policy for city-wide issues. This system, which requires five separate sets of civil laws, six separate police forces, and a wild variety of currencies, is inefficient in the extreme, but has become an entrenched part of Solaris, growing larger and more complex and taking on a malevolent life of its own, far beyond the ability of authorities to control it. Solaris City is like a world unto itself, set apart from the Inner Sphere, yet a vital part of society and popular culture nonetheless.

Whatever the official pose, the elected representatives who administrate the sectors of the impotent Civic Council do not hold real power. The Solaris Games clothe and feed the people of Solaris VII and maintain the wealth of their leaders. Because 'Mech stablemasters and game promoters wield so much actual power, they have a stranglehold on the economy. These individuals have more power over Solaris VII than any other authority, and one of their major priorities is maintenance of the city's decentralized government, which assures their continued control.

CURRENCIES

As might be suspected, Solaris is an economist's nightmare, with no less than seven separate currencies. The ComStar C-Bill, valued throughout the Inner Sphere for its stability, is the most desirable currency, but usually only tourists and wealthy Solarans have them to spend.

House Bills, referred to by the initial of their respective Successor House (S-Bills, D-Bills, and so on) are the next most valuable, though acceptance of an H-Bill is only guaranteed in the appropriate quarter. Since the merger of the Lyran Commonwealth and the Federated Suns, S-Bills and D-Bills have theoretically equal value, and both are accepted in the Black Hills and Silesia quarters. In practice, nationalism remains strong, and Steiner or Davion merchants often refuse to accept the other's House Bills. The small Hasek-Davion community in the Black Hills does its best to encourage such behavior, and friction between the two supposedly related houses is mirrored in Solaris City.

At the bottom of the ladder is Solaris scrip, considered virtually worthless. Scrip is accepted only by those who have no choice—the poor, the homeless, and the working poor. The rate of exchange between H-Bills fluctuates somewhat, but the value of scrip varies the most, as the table below shows.

Scrip's value is, theoretically, based on the ComStar C-Bill. Unfortunately, this value is not officially fixed, leading to runaway speculation in which wealthy Solarans and crime syndicates manipulate scrip's value by buying, then selling, large amounts of it. The practical result of this is a wildly fluctuating value, varying from week to week, with a scrip bill being worth anywhere from 100 percent of its full C-Bill value all the way down to 1 percent of a C-Bill.

CURRENCY CONVERSION TABLE

Currency	C-Bill	K-Bill	D-Bill	S-Bill	M-Bill	L-Bill
C-Bill	1.00	1.25	1.11	0.91	1.43	2.00
K-Bill	0.80	1.00	0.89	0.73	1.14	1.60
D-Bill	0.90	1.13	1.00	0.82	1.29	1.80
S-Bill	1.10	1.38	1.22	1.00	1.57	2.20
M-Bill	0.70	0.88	0.78	0.64	1.00	1.40
L-Bill	0.50	0.63	0.56	0.45	0.71	1.00
Scrip	—	—	—	—	—	—

LAW AND ORDER

A city with no less than six major administrative areas is a law-enforcement nightmare, but Solaris City has gradually developed a complex but effective system of law enforcement.

Each sector maintains its own law-enforcement group, a police force whose authority extends throughout the appropriate zone. This authority varies from sector to sector, however. Kurita police in Kobe, for example, have far more authority than the security forces of Silesia or the Black Hills.

International areas are the realm of the Solaris Police Department, which also has authority over those who cross sector borders to escape prosecution. Solaris police may, theoretically, move throughout the city, but sector security forces often resent their presence, which creates considerable friction between them.

CRIME

As daily life on Solaris revolves around the games, most major social ills are also related to the 'Mech competitions. Gambling is both a cause and a symptom, leaving few Solarans untouched. Legal gambling reduces the common people to a state of semi-penury, and drives the poor to criminal acts such as robbery, prostitution, drug-dealing, and murder for hire. Ground down by daily life, many turn to alcohol or narcotics in a self-perpetuating cycle of degradation.

None of this concerns the ruling elite of Solaris, the nobles, stablemasters, and wealthy MechWarriors, who are the only real winners from the exchange of wealth that takes place in betting. Police actions mostly consist of containment actions or sweeps of high-crime areas whenever the city's powerful suddenly get a little nervous. Though some privileged Solarans do not condone the sorry situation of the common people, few are inclined to make any moves to change it.

The billions of C-Bills that change hands each year from gambling and crime have attracted all the major criminal groups of the Inner Sphere. These various organized crime syndicates maintain near-complete control of serious crime on Solaris today.

Mafia

Of all the criminal groups, the Mafia has traveled the farthest from its roots. Except for the name, little of the old Sicilian traditions remain. Membership is open to all races, nationalities, and sexes, and the tradition of advancement through assassination has been largely eliminated.

The power behind the Mafia on Solaris is the Bertoli family (none of whom are actually named Bertoli), whose organization is a model of democracy and benevolent capitalism. The family is run as an employee-owned corporation, with even the lowest thug considered a partner. Stock is held, traded, and sold, and members determine company policy at yearly stockholder meetings. At these meetings, the members choose the patriarch (more colloquially known as "Godfather" or "El Capo de Capo"), who runs the family's day-to-day operations. For the last 18 years, the Bertoli family patriarch has been Martin Bialistock, a canny, intelligent, and sophisticated man with impeccable taste in food, clothing, books, and art.

Below the patriarch are the capos (that is, "chiefs" or "captains"), each responsible for a different aspect of crime: drugs, gambling, prostitution, and so on. Beneath the capos are the lieutenants, thugs, runners, and hitmen who make up the at-large Mafia membership.

In spite of these trappings of respectability, the Mafia remains a brutal organization, dedicated to profit from crime, violence, and corruption. The Bertoli family controls most of the drugs, trafficking, prostitution, illegal gambling, protection, and extortion on Solaris, and maintain this control with ruthless efficiency. The days of splashy, violent mob rub-outs are no more. Those who oppose the Bertolis simply disappear, with no questions asked. The Mafia is the single most powerful and dangerous criminal entity on Solaris VII.

Yakuza

These criminals of Japanese descent bear many similarities to their predecessors on Terra. Membership is usually limited to those of Japanese blood, but a few outsiders have managed to gain admittance and to rise high.

At the head of each yakuza family is a patriarch, or warlord, whose underlings serve him in the manner of feudal vassals. Their code of honor is quite strict; anyone who commits a major breach of honor must commit seppuku, while minor offenses are pardonable if the offending party voluntarily performs an act of self-mutilation. Yakuza operatives with one or more fingers missing are not uncommon.

Several yakuza families operate on Solaris, but little competition exists between them. Conflicts over territory and operations are resolved by a meeting of warlords. The triads and the Bertoli family are hated enemies, but the yakuza prefer the more subtle methods of threat and extortion to outright violence.

Triads

Triads are more contentious than the yakuza, which is precisely what prevents them from gaining more power on Solaris. Even so, triads (the term is derived from their symbol, a mystic triangle made up of the equal forces of earth, body, and spirit) are a force to be reckoned with. Under the absolute authority of a warlord and his minions, each triad controls a territory, supervising drug traffic, prostitution, and gambling, and providing "protection" against other gangs (and the triad itself).

Prominent triads include the Red Cobras (active primarily in Cathay and Silesia), their arch-enemies, the Hundred Swordsmen (Cathay), the Steel Brothers (Kobe), the Demons (Kobe, Black Hills), the Heavenly Warriors (Cathay, Montenegro), and the Eternal Flames (Montenegro, Silesia).

Bloods

Like the Mafia, the bloods have changed with the times, becoming fully integrated and expanding their business to incorporate a wide variety of criminal activities. Like the street gangs of the 20th century, the bloods are well-organized and heavily armed, but have ceased the destructive measure-for-measure gang hits of the past.

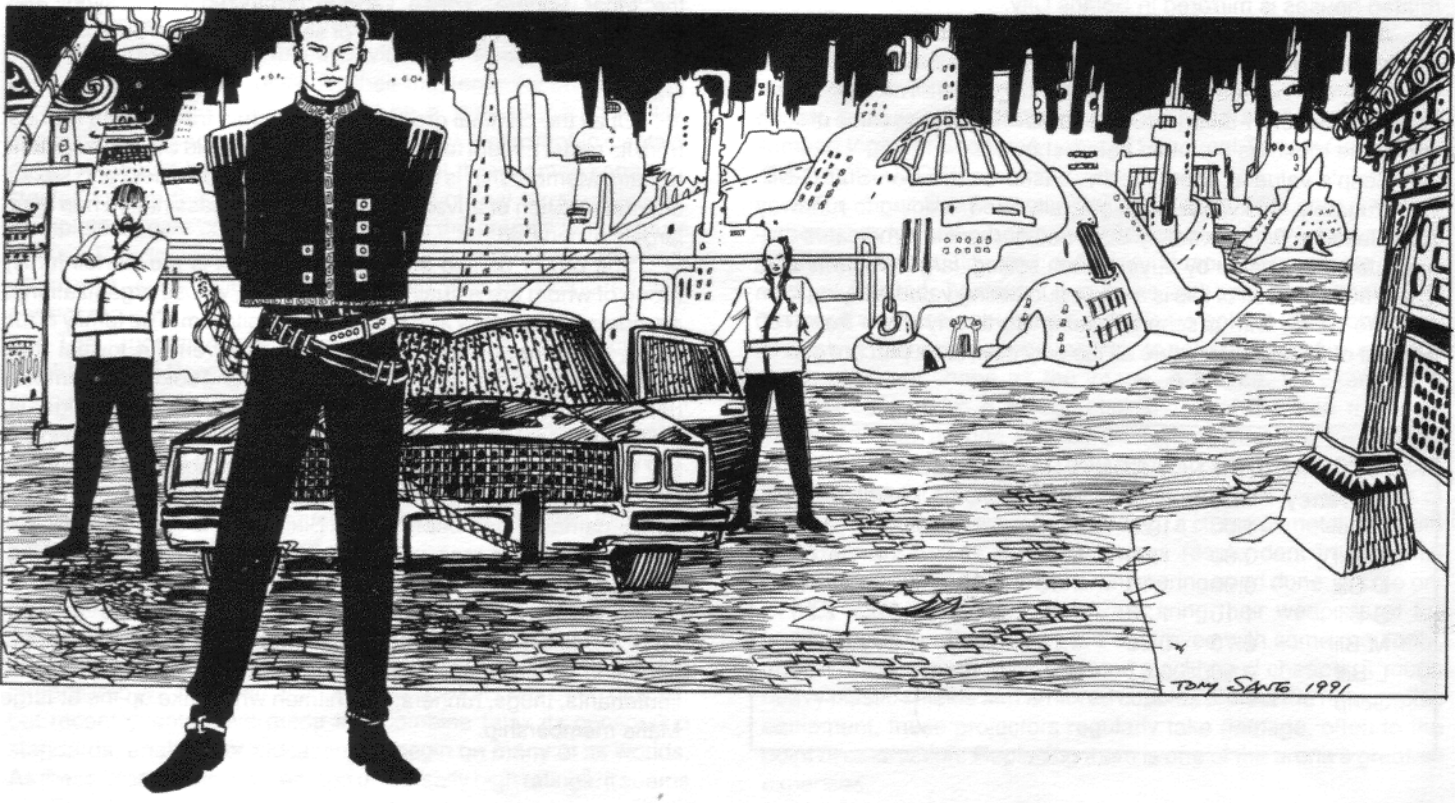
One major element of bloods organization remains: the gangs are male-dominated. The best rank a female can hope to achieve is that of "bloodette," a place only slightly higher than that of gun moll.

Numerous subgroups of bloods exist throughout Solaris. Unlike the triads, these groups generally cooperate with each other, and open conflict is rare. The bloods and the yakuza hate one another with a passion, and although open warfare is rare, violence between the two groups is near-continuous.

Independent Gangs

Dozens, possibly hundreds, of small, independent crime gangs exist on Solaris ranging in size from a half-dozen to a hundred members. Most of these gangs deal only with one or two criminal activities, being quick to flee or relocate should the authorities or larger gangs take an interest in their affairs.

Independents are most common in the outlands and in smaller cities, where the major gangs of Solaris City are unable or unwilling to gain a toehold.



THE GAMES

Solaran culture revolves around the games. The economy is driven by these contests, entertainment centers on them, and conversations seem always to turn to them. On Solaris, one may make a fortune one hour, only to lose it the next. Compulsive gambling, along with its attendant woes of drug abuse, crime, and alcoholism, runs rampant throughout the world, but is most prevalent in Solaris City. Even the lowliest cab driver or janitor in Solaris City may have a tale of winning an incredible sum one day, which then slipped through his fingers the next.

Betting terminals are sprinkled throughout the city, always functional and in good repair even in the poorest districts. The games form, or odds sheet, is the holiest of texts, read more widely than the Bible, the Koran, or any other sacred book. The latest fight is always on everyone's lips, and people know the records of favorite MechWarriors backward and forward.

Solaris is a crucible, and the dispossessed or impovershed MechWarriors who come to this world to seek their fortune feel the heat more than anyone. Hundreds of such hopefuls arrive on Solaris daily. Some die, some leave dead-broke but alive, some have pyrotechnic moments of prominence, only to vanish in the same flash, while a few—a very few—make it to the top.

The cult of the MechWarrior exists with a vengeance on Solaris. Books, movies, holovid series, posters, magazines, newspapers, all these and more are devoted to the tiny minority of MechWarriors who reach the top. Media programs feature promising young warriors, who grant interviews like ancient royalty granting audiences. Images of MechWarriors and their 'Mechs are also popular, as are biographies and lurid fiction. Without question, Solaris VII is the center of the Inner Sphere's obsession with the romance of its MechWarriors.

The deceased, identified as one Clinton "Halfback" Arbe, was found at 0800 by two children wandering near the Cathay River Town. Decomposition and overall condition of the body indicated that it had been floating in the river for at least three days.

Cause of death was tentatively identified as a .45-caliber slug through the left temple, apparently fired from close range. The bullet had pierced the skull, then mushroomed and flattened itself against the opposite side of the cranium, making identification of the murder weapon virtually impossible.

Arbe, usually referred to by the street name "Halfback" because of his fondness for combatball, is a known associate of the Heavenly Warriors triad, for whom he frequently worked as a freelance enforcer, runner, or hitman. His recent activities on behalf of the Warriors seem to have raised the ire of either the Swordsmen or the Red Cobras, both of whose territories are in dispute with the Warriors. Known associates state that Arbe disappeared four days ago, and suggest that Cobra or Swordsmen hitmen are responsible for his death.

—From Cathay Security Police Report, June 5, 3022

A few other industries do still exist. Some outlying communities harvest timber or engage in some farming, for example, but even these boast their own BattleMech arenas and sponsor Class One or Two competitions.

GAMBLING

In the early days of the Solaris games, betting was informal. As time passed, the underworld became and more involved, and elements of triad gangs, the yakuza, bloods, and other criminal groups gradually gained more influence. Bookies got rich or went broke, chronic bettors borrowed fortunes from loan sharks for a long-shot payoff, enforcers collected money or fixed fights, ganglords raked in the profits, and bullet-riddled members of every group were daily found floating in the Solaris River.

The advent of formalized rules for 'Mech competition was intended to eliminate these abuses, but the only effect was to drive it underground. Bookies continued to offer better odds than the official ratings, and loan sharks continued to happily extend credit. Far from decreasing, the number of bodies floating in the Solaris River doubled within ten years.

Many of the betting conventions were considered, at best, unconventional. The tradition of betting on 'Mechs rather than their pilots caused considerable controversy, especially during the Fourth Succession War, when a string of low-grade MechWarriors were replaced by experienced ringers at the last minute, resulting in some lopsided victories and massive losses.

The 'Mech vs. 'Mech betting system remained in place more because of tradition more than for any other reason. In the wake of the abuses of the 3030s, the game promoters instituted a new system. They created current odds by combining the relative experience and reputation of MechWarriors with the size and effectiveness of their 'Mechs in a complex equation. This might produce a green pilot in a *Shogun*, for example, sorely challenged by a veteran in a less powerful *Ostsol*, with the odds favoring the *Ostsol* pilot. Straight 'Mech vs. 'Mech betting still exists, but is far less popular than before.

Official betting terminals are located throughout Solaris City. Odds for daily matches are updated continuously, and may even change while someone is in the process of betting. Ticket-sellers accept C-Bills, debit cards, or Solaris scrip, although the exchange rate may fluctuate so radically that even the most profitable bet would become worthless before a match is over. The terminals dispense tickets with bets and amounts printed on them, along with a specially coded magnetic strip. Winners may cash in their tickets at readily available official exchanges.

Numerous terminals and exchanges are scattered about both the arenas and throughout the city. Almost every small town also has at least one of each, often at the same location. All link up to the central computer exchange in Solaris City, which offers odds on every official match on the planet, down to the most obscure exoskeleton match in East Nowhere.

As mentioned, the underworld is deeply involved in gambling. Illegal bookies offer far more generous odds on battles, and will pay high prices even for losing tickets for use in forgery. Fake tickets are common, but only the best imitations can pass official scrutiny, which employs specially designed code-readers.

The secret of Solaris gambling is that no one ever gets ahead. Only the promoters, stablemasters, and (occasionally) MechWarriors have any chance of finding riches in this brutal environment, a world that swallows ordinary men and women whole.

SOLARIS SITES

The teeming center of the Solaris game circuit is the focus of dreams and fantasies of the entire Inner Sphere. Some believe that fame and riches are here for the taking. Others call Solaris City the spider at the center of a web of corruption, vice, and the perversion of noble warrior virtues.

Regardless of one's attitude, Solaris City is a place of limitless adventure and danger for MechWarriors, agents, merchants, speculators, and the bored rich from distant Adhara to the Bandit Kingdoms.

Surveyed and plotted in 2340, the original Solaris City bears little resemblance to the multicultural metropolis of today. It was not until the great influx of outsiders into Solaris in the 2700s that the ethnic nature of the various Solaris sectors began to emerge.

Staking claims to various zones of the city and building according to their own national and cultural preferences, these new Solarans created a metropolis unique in all the Inner Sphere. In Solaris City, citizens from every Successor State live side-by-side, united by the common bond of what some call sport and some call senseless violence. The following sections describe places of importance and/or interest to visitors to Solaris City.



INTERNATIONAL AREA

Many areas of the city are under direct control of the central authority. These areas, primarily public-works installations and tourist areas, are collectively referred to as "international" and are patronized by all members of Solaris society.

CITY ADMINISTRATION

CENTRAL UTILITIES BUILDING (I-24)

Solaris City's heat, water, and power are all coordinated through this imposing structure, which also contains offices, equipment garages, and a vast, computerized record system with schematics and plans for the city's water and sewer network and power grids.

SOLARIS CITY 'MECH BAYS (I-2)

Solaris is a major receiving point for BattleMechs from across the Inner Sphere. Regardless of their condition, 'Mechs are checked into this facility upon arrival, for inspection and registration by Solaran game officials.

SOLARIS CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT (I-40)

Although their sphere of influence is limited, the Solaris police exercise a high degree of professionalism and skill. Officially employees of the Lyran Commonwealth, Solaran police are considered some of the best in the Commonwealth.

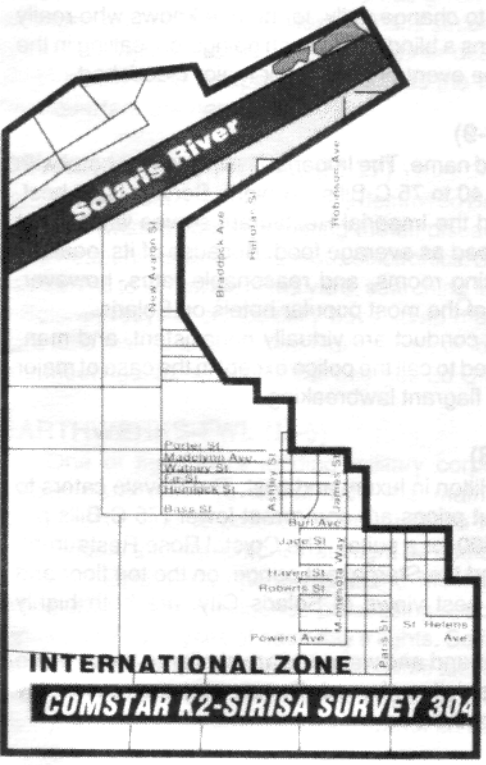
Police Chief Theo Clarke best embodies the professionalism of his force. Uncorruptible and—after decades of making enemies among Solaris' underworld—virtually unkillable, he is a tough, no-nonsense cop who strives to instill the same passion for duty and dedication to justice in all his officers.

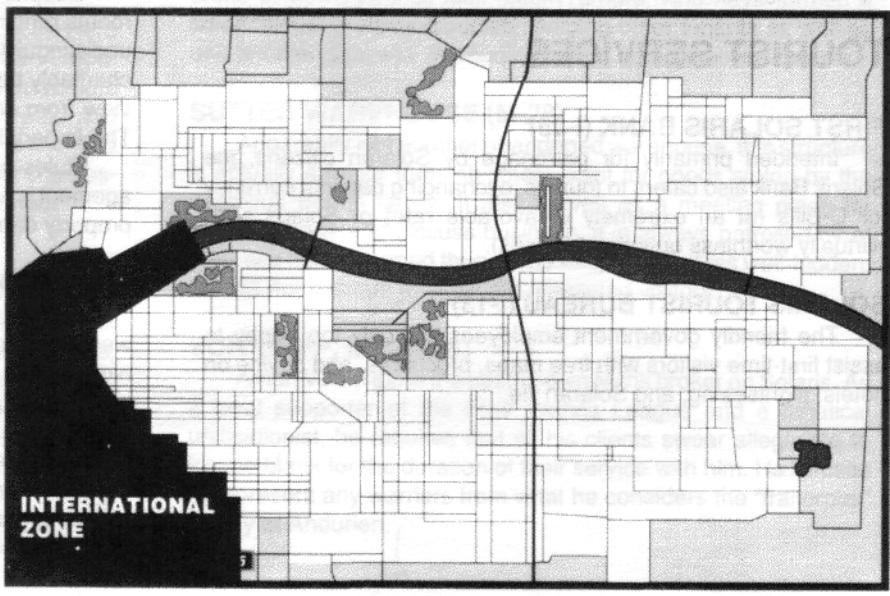
SOLARIS COUNCIL HALL (I-38)

The Civic Council, such as it is, meets here daily. Although each city sector runs more or less independently, representatives from each must agree on such mundane matters as street maintenance, river traffic, import and export regulations, law enforcement, utilities, and so on. The council is generally considered a dull lot of petty bureaucrats more concerned with preserving their own careers than with safeguarding the welfare of ordinary Solarans.

SOLARIS GENERAL COURT (I-39)

The respective sectors deal with most crimes in their zones, but some offenses, such as crimes against foreigners, damage to public property, and smuggling, are tried in Solaris General Court. A small lockup holds prisoners awaiting trial; those convicted are sent to the Solaris Prison near Xolara.





INFORMATION

COMSTAR RELAY STATION (I-18)

This vital link with the Inner Sphere is the major transmission point for reports and footage from Solaris. The station is constantly crowded with correspondents, sports writers, and tourists sending greetings home, as well as secret agents transmitting coded messages to their employers. Prices are commensurate with normal transmission costs throughout the Inner Sphere. This station was temporarily seized by F-C forces after the recent ComStar debacle, but operational control has been returned to the techs of ComStar.

SOLARIS BROADCASTING CORPORATION (I-23)

While SBC caters to the entire Solaris population, with news, entertainment, and other features, its primary function is as a production center for other broadcasting entities, a service for which SBC charges dearly. Each day, footage from 'Mech battles is inspected, edited, and prepared for broadcast to viewers across the Inner Sphere. SBC's equipment is top quality, using many recently rediscovered items of lostech holography and broadcast technology.

Ace correspondent Barbara Emerson is SBC's current superstar, and her exposés of crime and corruption in the gaming world have made her both friends and enemies on Solaris. Her recent reports connecting the yakuza to the management of Ishiyama Arena have led to rumors that the yakuza may attempt to retaliate. So far, that has not happened, but SBC has doubled security in an attempt to keep Emerson safe.

THE SOLARIS TIMES (I-37)

The planet's highest-circulation newspaper is published in this baroque structure, with its characteristic clock tower. The paper's journalism borders on sensationalism, although it rarely descends to the depths of the tabloid press. The *Times* prints morning and evening editions, available in both flat and trivid versions. Its reporters pride themselves on their independence and tenacity; death or serious injury is not an uncommon fate for a *Times* reporter who pushes too far. The paper's contacts range far and wide, and a cover story in the weekend color supplement can make or break a promising MechWarrior's career.

TOURIST SERVICES

FIRST SOLARIS BANK (I-25)

Intended primarily for patronage by Solaran citizens, the Solaris Bank also caters to tourists, exchanging national currency for C-Bills (at an extremely unfavorable rate) or Solaris scrip (virtually worthless outside of Solaris).

SOLARIS TOURIST BUREAU (I-13)

The friendly government employees are only too happy to assist first-time visitors with free maps, brochures, and advice on hotels, sightseeing, and Solaran life.

HOTELS

GOLDEN ATLAS (I-10)

More a front for a gambling casino than anything else, this hotel's decor is garish, its rooms cramped but cheap, its staff either indifferent or rude, and its food and drink about as palatable as its wallpaper. The Atlas' casino, on the other hand, is a major tourist attraction, offering traditional games such as blackjack, roulette, poker, craps, and The Succession Wars. Also competing for gamblers' attention and C-Bills are holovised 'Mech games and simulator battles.

Proprietor Geraldo Perez is a huge bear of a man with a gold incisor and a ready sense of humor. He frowns on cheating and rude behavior toward his staff, and is quick to show his displeasure via his small army of bouncers, who will eject, injure, or otherwise discourage all undesirables.

HOTEL ROW (I-6)

Monorail and taxi traffic brings visitors to this long, rather unattractive stretch of pavement where crouch the city's major hotels. Most are notable for their outrageous prices, although service, accommodations, and the view are all spectacular. International hotels accept payment in C-Bills only, but hotels in other areas accept their House currencies.

HOTEL SOLARIS (I-11)

Looking more like a group of ugly cinder-block boxes than a hotel, the Hotel Solaris is the ultimate budget accommodation. Rates are low (25 C-Bills per night) for a luxurious single room with cramped bath and small pay-trivid set (2 C-Bills per hour). Room service consists primarily of ice and soft-drink machines located at one end of each building. Despite limited facilities, the Hotel Solaris, like The Imperial, is usually packed with tourists on low-rent tours.

The hotel is also popular with the underworld, which uses it as a meeting place and transfer point for contraband. The management (which seems to change daily, for no one knows who really owns the Solaris) turns a blind eye to such goings-on, calling in the authorities only in the event of gunplay or major bloodshed.

THE IMPERIAL (I-9)

Despite its grand name, The Imperial is a mid-range hotel with rooms ranging from 40 to 75 C-Bills per night. Service is, at best, undistinguished, and the Imperial Restaurant serves what might charitably be described as average food. Because of its location, view from south-facing rooms, and reasonable rates, however, The Imperial is one of the most popular hotels on Solaris.

Rules on guest conduct are virtually nonexistent, and management is not inclined to call the police except in the case of major property damage or flagrant lawbreaking.

THE ROYALE (I-8)

Second to the Hilton in luxury and cost, The Royale caters to wealthy clientele, but prices are somewhat lower (75 C-Bills per night double, up to 500 for a suite). The Crystal Rose Restaurant, on the main floor, and the Stargazer Lounge, on the top floor and offering one of the best views of Solaris City, are both highly recommended.

Rules on contraband and weapons are similar to those at the Hilton, but are less strictly enforced. Guests who are reasonably discreet will not be bothered.

SOLARIS HILTON (I-7)

Solaris' prime hotel is, not surprisingly, also its most expensive. At the Solaris Hilton, room rates start at 200 C-Bills a night for a double, all the way up to 750 per night for a suite. Rooms are spacious, furnished luxuriously, and offer every imaginable comfort. Service of course is prompt and courteous. The Amber Garden, located on the hotel's main floor, is a four-star restaurant with five-star prices (expect to pay 50 to 100 C-Bills per person, plus gratuity). The hotel's pool is double-olympic size, in an environmentally stable glass enclosure with a magnificent view of the city below. The Hilton is the favorite home away from home of visiting nobles, famous MechWarriors, wealthy merchants, and other members of the Inner Sphere elite.

Security Chief Aldo Riesfield strictly enforces hotel rules forbidding weapons, contraband, and other illegal items in rooms. Violations are rare, for most guests realize that Riesfield will not hesitate to call in the police.

ENTERTAINMENT

BATTLEMECH CENTER (I-21)

A popular destination for would-be or wannabe MechWarriors who wish to experience at least a small slice of BattleMech combat, the center features individual pods in which participants, for 6 to 8 C-Bills per ten-minute session, control a simulated 'Mech, guiding it through computer-generated trivid terrain. The experience is probably as realistic as a non-MechWarrior can get, but many consider the training trivids, featuring drill-instructor style lectures by actors, to be unbelievably obnoxious.

GRAFINA GERBERT CONCERT HALL (I-28)

Orchestras perform the music of three millennia in this imposing neoclassical structure. Recent performances have included Wagner's Ring Cycle in a BattleMech motif, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony by the New Avalon Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir, and "An Evening with the Beatles," performed by a variety of mid-20th century re-creationists.

THE MECHWARRIOR (I-20)

High-class and high-priced, The MechWarrior is the premier sport bar in Solaris City, catering to wealthy foreigners, nobles, crime bosses, and an occasional 'Mech superstar or two. The MechWarrior's luxurious lounge features live trivid broadcasts from the 'Mech arenas, with drinks and food served around the clock. This is a prime spot for stablemasters wishing to recruit young warriors into their stables.

Owner/Manager Akim Rashid goes to great lengths to encourage and accommodate such clientele, while his staff has strict orders to remove any undesirables such as tourists or sightseers. Rumor has it that he can provide any form of entertainment—legal and illegal—if the price is right.

SOLARIS MALL (I-14)

Souvenirs, clothing, books, pictures, and numerous other items are available to tourists at the duty-free stores of this mall, once an industrial park. Some major businesses are listed below.

Nakatomi Clothiers (A)

A wide range of quality and prices is available here. From simple BattleMech T-shirts ("Thunderbolt, the 'Mech Destroyer!") to expensive leather jackets with elaborate embroidery and 'Mech patches, Nakatomi provides wearable keepsakes of a trip to Solaris VII. Mister Nakatomi (he never uses his first name) is the picture of ice-cold efficiency, and rarely smiles.

Grigg's Souvenirs (B)

Elmo Grigg is always on hand to greet his customers with a jolly "hello." Dressed in his favorite loud shirts, sunglasses, straw hats, bermuda shorts, and sandals, he spends most of his time in the shop. The items for sale are generally on the tacky side, with cheap plastic 'Mechs, gaudy cheesecake tri-D posters portraying buxom female "MechWarriors" (who have never seen the inside of a BattleMech), patches, bumper stickers ("I saw the 'Mechs of Solaris"), and miniature BattleMechs in crystal-ball paperweights that make snow when shaken.

Mechboox (C)

This shop offers an extensive selection of BattleMech-related literature, including lurid paperback novels chronicling the highly fictionalized adventures of Inner Sphere nobles in the Fourth Succession War to expensive, hard-cover tri-D coffee-table volumes of 'Mech photos, and serious historical treatises on Inner Sphere conflict. The most recent bestseller is *The Clans: Who? Where? Why?*, by Colonel Jaime Wolf, which is said to contain some intriguing speculations and surprising revelations about the inner workings of the Clans. Mechboox has not been able to keep this title in stock, and has had it on backorder for several months.

Mechflix (D)

Owned by Mechboox, Mechflix sells trivid and flatscreen tapes and discs, all with a BattleMech slant. Although the shop carries such serious works as *The Fourth Succession War: Soldiers' Stories*, from F-C Historical Films, and director Ernst Brockman-Mueller's award-winning documentary *The Shattered Sphere*, the most popular titles are somewhat less cerebral. They are currently: *Maddox III: 'Mech Fury*, the latest installment in a bloody and mostly unrealistic action series starring heartthrob Miles Cramer; *Assault on the Clans*, a cheaply produced piece of wishful thinking in which the firm-jawed MechWarrior hero and his over-endowed female companion singlehandedly thwart the evil Smoke Jaguars on an unnamed F-C planet; and *'Mech Jocks!*, a second-rate compilation of stock footage of 'Mechs, with two-dimensional characters and a barely decipherable plot.

Solaris Memories (E)

Less tacky than Grigg's Souvenirs, Solaris Memories sells numerous 'Mech- and Solaris-related items, including models, stationery, paperweights, games, and so on. Prices are higher, but the merchandise is of better quality.

Battle Theater (F)

A first-class trivid theater, this house specializes in 'Mech-related movies of the sort available from Mechflix.

POINTS OF INTEREST

BATTLEMECH MUSEUM (I-31)

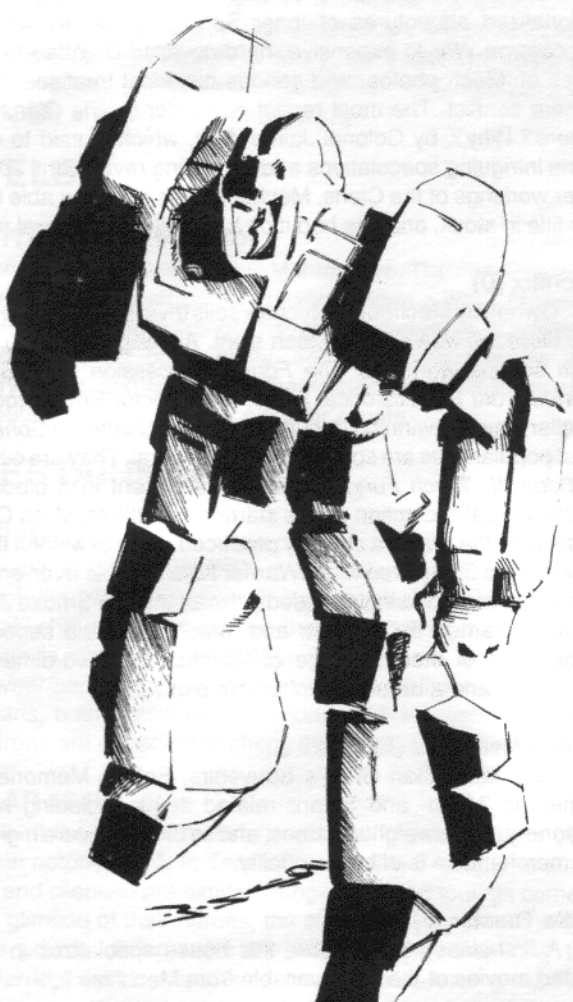
Besides the 'Mech games themselves, this is one of the most popular tourist spots on Solaris. Its displays include BattleMech technology, interactive demonstrations of combat, piloting, strategy, and tactics, and valuable artifacts from the Succession Wars. Some of the museum's most treasured items are the cockpit from Aleksandr Kerensky's *Orion*, a head and partial torso from an antique *Mackie*, a group of ancient Kurita battle flags, and Kenyon Marik's personal banner, among numerous other priceless items. Sophisticated alarm systems and a troop of guards protect the museum.

RIVER PARK ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS (I-30)

The zoo's collection of Terran and extraterrestrial animal life offers a welcome relief from the often mindless violence of the 'Mech games.

SOLARIS RIVER WATER PARK (I-29)

This narrow strip of green hugs the curve of the Solaris River and provides both visitors and citizens with a pleasant place for relaxation or weekend outings. Its thick hedges and shaggy fir trees also make excellent locations for secret meetings, transfers of contraband, and other illicit activities.



SOLARIS TOWER (I-16)

A tall, graceful monument topped with the symbols of the five Successor Houses, the Tower was built as a tribute to what its designers called "the fighting spirit of Solaris VII." Narrow, winding stairs lead to the viewing deck at the top, where, if one can withstand the almost-constant blast of wind, he or she can enjoy a view well into the squalid outskirts of Solaris City.

STAR LEAGUE PARK (I-12)

Located at the end of Hotel Row, this pleasant spot of green is saturated with rain most of the time, requiring covered walkways for visiting tourists and local Solarans. Sheltered picnic tables and barbecues have been built into the downslope. The Solaris River winds below, and visitors may observe river traffic through pay-telescopes located at an enclosed viewpoint below the picnic area.

THELOS AUBURN GROVE (I-32)

This pleasant semicircle of trees features a statue of the late court historian to House Steiner.

TRANSPORTATION

BUDGET TRANSPORT (I-22)

Budget rents out personal hovercraft for daily jaunts through the city. Rates vary from 20 C-Bills per day for a small economy model to 50 per day for a large luxury sedan. A planet-wide chain, Budget is staffed by a rotating group of harried, underpaid clerical types who never seem to last more than a few weeks.

FOUNDERS BRIDGE (I-33)

This ugly span of black metal spans the Solaris River. Though the bridge has been extensively renovated to allow for the passage of traffic to and from Highway One, its pilings date back to the city's earliest days, when settlers began their first major engineering project.

MASS TRANSIT (I-4)

Solaris Public Transport runs buses throughout the city. Fare is 1 C-Bill per person per sector traversed.

MONORAIL (I-3)

This impressive example of Inner Sphere technology consists of a sleek, bullet-shaped train that runs on a magnetic rail, carrying visitors directly from the spaceport to Hotel Row. Fare is five C-Bills, and the seats are comfortable, if somewhat narrow. Monorail passengers may transport up to 10 kilograms of baggage without charge.

RAIL STATION (I-17)

Solaris possesses a well-developed rail net. Here, cargo and passengers arrive from and depart to widespread locations throughout the main continent.

SOLARIS HIGHWAY 1 (I-5)

The planet's main highway cuts directly through the center of Solaris City, with numerous exits to each major city sector. The highway is designed to handle both wheeled and hover traffic. Beneath its towering abutments, the lowest level of Solaran society huddles in tenements or hobo jungles. Solaran authorities routinely roust out squatters to prevent tourists from catching sight of them.

SOLARIS SPACEPORT (I-1)

Solaran officials have decided that a tourist's first look at Solaris City be a view of its best face. Solaris Spaceport, set on a peak in the Black Hills, is a wonder of modern design and graceful architecture. When the weather is pleasant, the view of the city from here or the nearby Hotel Row is nothing short of magnificent.

Landing Pads (A)

DropShips land here, majestically descending on pillars of flame visible across the entire city. From this point, visitors are transported to and from the terminal in comfortable shuttle buses.

Transport Sheds (B)

Shuttle buses are garaged in these sturdy sheds, safe from the exhaust of the landing DropShips.

Terminal (C)

Crowded at all hours, the terminal is where passengers arrive and depart, claim baggage, check seat availability, and book flights from Solaris.

Monorail Station (D)

From the terminal, passengers may travel to Hotel Row on a sophisticated magnalift monorail.

Taxi Area (E)

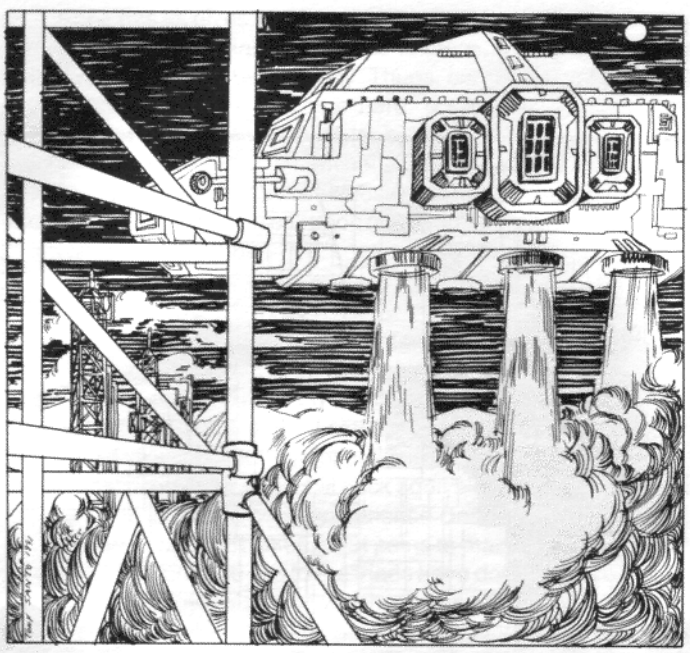
Wealthy visitors may take taxis or limousines from this area to any location in Solaris City.

Runways (F)

Conventional aircraft arrive and depart from here to various airports across Solaris. As this is the only major spaceport on the planet, ordinary air traffic is especially heavy.

Hangars (G)

Conventional aircraft and DropShips are housed and repaired here.



STEEL BRIDGE (I-34)

A double-deck bridge, the Steel carries conventional ground traffic on its upper deck and train tracks on its lower section. Fully in keeping with the industrial districts around it, the Steel Bridge is even less attractive than the Founders.

WHITE BRIDGE (I-35)

A soaring, reverse-suspension bridge, the White was designed specifically to contrast with the city's uglier bridges.

'MECH TECH

CY'S 'MECH CITY (I-26)

Cy Armstrong is an example of the eternal used-vehicle salesman, who seems to follow mankind throughout the universe. Combining an insinuating charm with an effusive false friendliness, Cy claims that he can sell anything to anyone.

One of several dealers in scrapped and rebuilt BattleMechs, Cy's lot is the only one located in the international zone and thus considered neutral territory. Cy's 'Mechs vary from serviceable machines suitable for novice MechWarriors or stables, to barely recognizable scrap useful only for spare parts.

GUILD HALL (I-36)

Needless to say, Solaris is a prime source of mercenary MechWarriors, as successful participants in the games move "up" to "real" combat. The Guild Hall is a long, warehouse-like structure, decorated in a somewhat incongruous Greco-Roman motif. It is invariably packed with MechWarriors, brokers, talent scouts, and representatives of the Successor Houses, Periphery states, and mercenary units looking for young talent. Those MechWarriors caught in the grind of Solaris and indebted to suppliers, organized crime, or crooked managers often use the hiring hall as an escape to the relatively safe world of civilized warfare.

MISCELLANEOUS

ASTRID PALMER MEMORIAL HOSPITAL (I-27)

This well-equipped, ultra-modern facility caters mostly to wounded MechWarriors and wealthy foreigners.

COMSTAR COMMUNITY CENTER (I-19)

Here is where ComStar acolytes and adepts who operate and maintain the relay station live and work. Though ROM agents operate in all levels of Solaris society, the civic authority generally turns a blind eye. Few know that the battalion of the Com Guards' veteran 247th Division, the Thoughts of War IV-pi, is based in an underground bunker deep beneath the building. In extreme cases, the facility can supply and maintain a full regiment of 'Mechs, as well as AFVs and aerofighters. Exactly why ComStar has put so many military resources into Solaris is uncertain.

THE SOLARIS EXCHANGE (I-15)

Tied in to all the major exchanges throughout the Inner Sphere, the Solaris Exchange does a brisk business, particularly in the realm of foreign-currency speculation. Though far from being a financial center, this exchange is definitely a place where fortunes may be made and lost.

BLACK HILLS

House Davion likes to project the public image of a paragon of virtue and defender of civilization against the likes of House Kurita and the Clans. The grim reality, reflected in the gloomy conditions of the Black Hills, is that the Federated Suns is just another Successor State, with all the same strengths and weaknesses. The Black Hills is a place of contrasts between the lush mansions of the haves and the grim squalor of the have-nots laboring far below. Crime, corruption, and violence are as prevalent here as in the slums of Cathay, and the authorities just as helpless to prevent it.

The unification of Houses Davion and Steiner theoretically eliminated travel restrictions between the Black Hills and Silesia, but the geographical distance between them, as well as local prejudice, has kept Black Hills culturally separate. The Davion loyalists, who consider themselves the true leaders of the Federated Commonwealth, look down on individuals from Silesia and on those with Lyran surnames.

The Hasek-Davion faction, long enemies of mainstream Davion rule, also exists on Solaris, under the leadership of Drew Hasek-Davion. The Hasek-Davion faction is every bit as dangerous as House Davion's other enemies, though they move with more ease through Davion society.

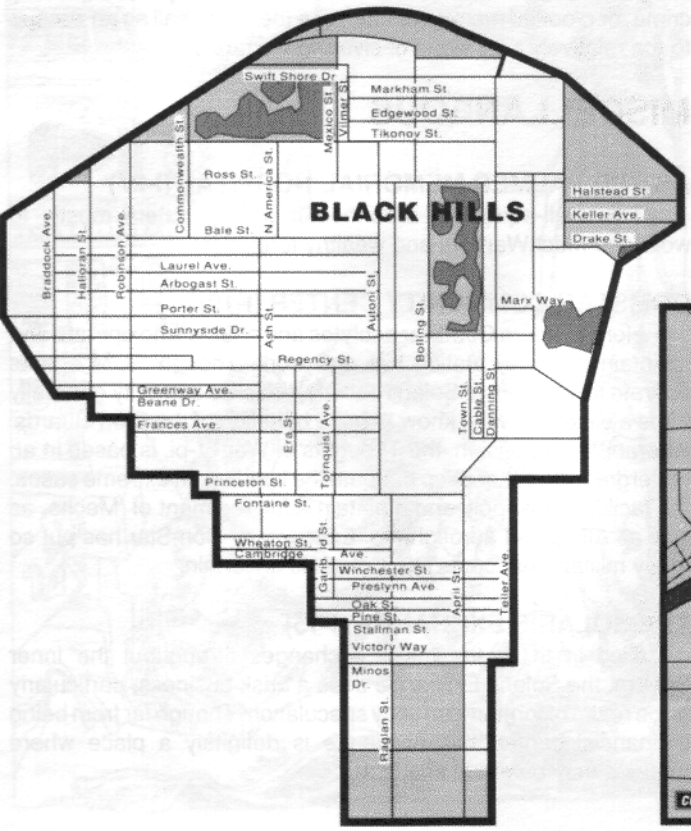
CITY ADMINISTRATION

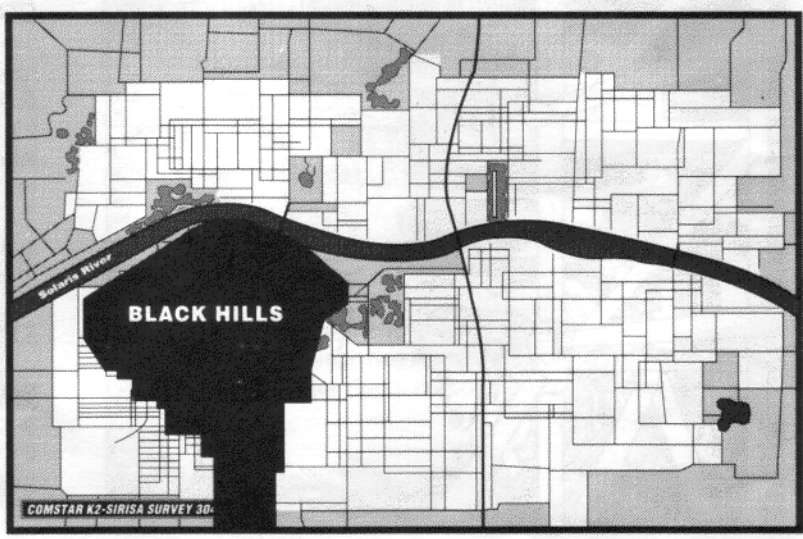
FEDERATED COMMONWEALTH POLICE DEPARTMENT (B-23)

Positioned conveniently on the heights above the slums, the F-C Police Department is often called in on sweeps of the crime-infested streets below. This structure houses nearly a thousand well-equipped police officers, as well as support vehicles and a lance of recon 'Mechs specially modified for crowd control.

SORTEK BUILDING (B-5)

This ugly brick building houses the administrative offices for the Federated Commonwealth.





NEIGHBORHOODS

RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT (B-29)

The lowland portions of the Black Hills are the domain of the common citizens. The contrast between the haves and the have-nots is particularly striking here, for the slums of the Davion quarter are scarcely distinguishable from the neighboring slums of Cathay. Crime runs rampant, with gambling, gang violence, and drugs daily destroying lives, but the authorities can do little. The lowlands remain an eyesore and an embarrassment to the Federated Commonwealth.

INFORMATION

F-C BROADCASTING (B-8)

Now the largest single broadcasting entity in the Inner Sphere ("Spanning space from Delos to the Dark Nebula," as the promos say), FCB maintains extensive facilities on Solaris. Here trivid tapes from daily battles are edited and sent to relay stations throughout the Federated Commonwealth. Reporters tend to focus on the games and little else; few really skilled investigative reporters have emerged from FCB.

F-C NEWS SERVICE (B-7)

The print media is still a major force in the Federated Commonwealth, and the F-C News Service produces some of the most popular sports reports in the Inner Sphere. From this building, amid blinking data terminals and uplink antennae, FCNS dispatches reports all across the Federated Commonwealth. FCNS is currently hiring new reporters, and Editor-in-Chief Katherine Theissen is constantly searching for talented young journalists. She is a hard-nosed superior, but her training style has launched many of the top reporters of the Federated Commonwealth.



FEDERATED COMMONWEALTH INFORMATION CENTER (B-3)

Eager young staff members, who always seem to be smiling, are happy to provide all information possible about the Federated Commonwealth, even going so far as to help expatriate members of other Successor Houses apply for citizenship. Tourists may use the data terminals and colorful displays to obtain information on the Black Hills zone or Davion space in general.

TOURIST SERVICES

CITY TOURS (B-4)

Wheeled buses carry tourists throughout Solaris City from this large garage. Announcers have their spiel down pat ("On your left is the scene of Justin Xiang's fateful showdown with Philip Capet, the vast, mysterious fastness of Ishiyama Arena."), and the tours are always popular.

FIRST F-C BANK (B-11)

This bank caters primarily to F-C citizens, but others may obtain a favorable exchange rate for D-Bills.

HOTELS

THE SUN AND SWORD (B-2)

This is a Davionist hotel for Davionist guests, with Davionist staff, Davionist decor, Davionist food, and Davionist prices (80 to 250 D-Bills per night). The Sun and Sword features 30 floors of luxury rooms, with suites named for famous members of House Davion.

Hotel manager Niles Chelsey seems to have been chosen for his fanatical pro-Davion views; he is often on hand to greet guests personally. He always wears the Davion sun and sword (not the hybrid symbol of the Federated Commonwealth) prominently as a stickpin or tie pin.

ENTERTAINMENT

DAVION ARENA (B-19)

Surrounded by acres of parking and transit stations, the ultra-modern arena occupies a vast area.

THE NEW AVALON (B-15)

Second only to The Silver Swan in price, luxury, and snobbery, The New Avalon is a bit less discriminating about its clientele. Indeed, its staff treats all diners with equal disdain, regardless of their political alignment. An average meal starts at 75 D-Bills, and anyone can dine here as long as he can pay. Owner Rex Simmons was a major Solaris games contender a decade ago, but gave up the fast life for the more sedate existence of a restaurant owner. He maintains a soft spot in his heart for MechWarriors, who can expect fast service and even an occasional discount on their bills.

THE PELICAN (B-21)

This upper-crust bar caters primarily to MechWarriors and their guests. Stablemasters and brokers often come here to recruit clients. On Tuesday and Thursday fight nights, the owner closes the doors to the general public, letting MechWarriors watch the games on closed-circuit trivid.

Manager Lou Kinsel generally minds his own business, but draws the line at fights or concealed weapons. His chief bouncer, Trav, boasts that he defeated a Smoke Jaguar Elemental warrior in hand-to-hand combat on Idlewind, and he seems big enough to have actually done it.

THE RUNNING FOX (B-26)

This exclusive country club, named in honor of the late Hanse Davion, features a luxuriously appointed clubhouse, an 18-hole golf course, and fully equipped bar and trivid theater for viewing the games.

SEVENTH HEAVEN (B-22)

What The Pelican is to MechWarriors, Seventh Heaven is to techs. MechWarriors, smugglers, merchants, and mercenaries often visit Seventh Heaven looking to hire competent assistants or daring DropShip pilots.

Many customers use Seventh Heaven as a flea market, buying, selling, and trading tech items as they enjoy a brew and traditional F-C cuisine. Several prominent "wizards" frequent the establishment; legendary tech Gerry Rambaldi often says he considers Seventh Heaven to be his second home.

THE SILVER SWAN (B-6)

The Swan is possibly the most exclusive dining establishment in Solaris City. Not only is the management proud of this fact, they're smug, too.

The Swan's gracious interior includes a dining room that is nothing short of decadent, featuring crystal chandeliers, opulent table service, spotless linen, mahogany and padded leather chairs, and plush imported carpets. The food is excellent but expensive, (75 to 100 D-Bills per person) and served in somewhat small portions, and the help is downright sycophantic. The Swan is a popular spot for nobles; in fact, many suggest that one must be a nobleman to even obtain reservations.

Maitre d' Alphonse Wrigley has an unerring sense for detecting interlopers, and is quick to have any imposters ejected. Tourists and hangers-on often try to sneak in for a peek at the famous clientele, but the management is wary of such antics.

POINTS OF INTEREST

ALL SAINTS CATHEDRAL (B-18)

This Anglican shrine is a masterpiece of Gothic architecture amid the post-modern excess of the Black Hills. The stained-glass windows are real, and for the most part, of the highest artistic standards, although many critics have looked askance at the portrayal of David and Goliath, in which the Philistine giant appears to be modeled on the AS7-D *Atlas* BattleMech.

Father John Cooper specializes in counseling MechWarriors and those involved in the games, but also teaches Sunday school and runs a small publishing house out of the cathedral's basement.

CALLISTA'S BLUFF (B-25)

Fiona Loudon, current leader of the White Hand Stable, makes her home in this multi-room mansion. A 'Mech bay to the rear of the grounds has room for two BattleMechs, and the practice field nearby is used for training, although 'Mechs are not allowed to run or fire their weapons. Picture windows at the rear of the house permit those inside to observe the great vehicles moving majestically around the grounds, and mock battles are sometimes staged for the benefit of guests.

DAVION ARMS (B-12)

These high-class condos house numerous wealthy Davionists, although the view of the slums below is often obscured by a smelly haze.

FREEDOM GATE (B-1)

An elaborate archway crowned with the Davion sunburst, Freedom Gate was built in 2892 to commemorate the Federated Suns' victory over House Kurita on Robinson. It has since come to symbolize, at least in the eyes of most Davionists, the inevitable victory of the Federated Suns (or, as today, the Federated Commonwealth) over its enemies, and the triumph of House Davion's own brand of truth and justice. Needless to say, those loyal to other Houses are scornful of this, and the monument is periodically defaced by Kuritan or Liao graffiti.

GREEN MANSION (B-27)

This rather garish dwelling set on carefully manicured grounds is the home of Drew Hasek-Davion, leader of the dissident political faction that opposes the union of Houses Davion and Steiner. Hasek-Davion is also the owner of Blackstar Stables, one of the best-known on Solaris, which he uses extensively to help promote his own political agenda and to embarrass stables loyal to the Davionists. A particular rival is Starlight Stables, with the bad blood going back nearly 20 years.

GUZMAN PARK (B-30)

The centerpiece of the Black Hills' residential district, this heavily forested park is a place of winding trails, fountains, tennis courts, and several soccer fields. Unfortunately, the park is dangerous after dark, the scene of repeated turf battles between various slum gangs.

MARINA (B-31)

Wealthy Davionists dock their yachts and houseboats in this enclosed marina, which is continuously patrolled by mercenary guards in speedboats. The nobles' floating palaces are the setting of opulent entertainment and weekend getaways, and many have closed-circuit trivid or downlink antennas that enable their occupants to view 'Mech battles as they lazily float downstream.

MIRABILIS HOUSE (B-13)

Count Victor Danning, former ruler of Doneval II, and his wife Amanda live here, along with an army of servants. Now retired from public service, Danning makes his home in Solaris City, where he is known for his enthusiasm for the games, his great generosity, and his elaborate parties, which occur at least twice a month and are attended by the cream of Solaris society. Anyone who is anyone in the city receives an invitation, and should a promising MechWarrior wish to speak to a major stablemaster, Mirabilis House is the place to do it.

STARLIGHT HOUSE (B-28)

Starlight Stables, currently under the leadership of Tran Ky Bao, experienced a long decline after the Fourth Succession War, but has since begun to recover its reputation. Tran maintains Starlight House in fine condition, and its groves of cherry trees herald the brief Solaran spring with their blossoms. The current conflict with Drew Hasek-Davion's Blackstar Stables has sapped much of Starlight's resources, but Tran's MechWarriors seem to be gaining the upper hand.



VIEWPOINT (B-14)

This magnificent vantage point looks out over the whole of Solaris City and the rolling woodlands beyond. A concrete railing extends around this windy peak, and brass plaques point out major landmarks in the distance.

WINGED VICTORY (B-20)

This Fourth Succession War memorial portrays an avenging angel armed with a sword. A list of Federated Suns victories are etched around the statue's cylindrical base. A small grove of trees and a nearby picnic area are popular places for weekend relaxation.

TRANSPORTATION

LUXURY TRANSPORT (B-16)

Daniel Drake's speeders, groundcars, and hovercars all have one thing in common—price. Like most businesses in this section of the Black Hills, LT caters to the elite of Solaris City, and Drake has numerous contacts with stablemasters, nobles, and even the occasional crime boss. Drake himself stays neutral, selling to anyone, with no questions asked. Though a dapper man with a dry sense of humor, he rarely mixes business with pleasure.

'MECH TECH

'MECH SALES (B-24)

Both 'Mech pilots and mercenaries patronize Roger Epstein, who sells high-quality rebuilt 'Mechs. Only a few 'Mechs are actually on the premises at any one time; the rest are stored throughout the city. Epstein is a quiet man, but perfectly capable of fighting tooth and nail for top dollar. No one knows much about his past, but he takes a keen interest in the exploits of mercenary units such as the Waco Rangers and the Blue Star Irregulars, and has an amazing knowledge of 'Mech engineering and tactics.

NEW AVALON TECHNOLOGIES (B-9)

Although New Avalon Tech lowers its prices considerably for those warriors who bear F-C colors, the firm is willing to sell to anyone. Their personal sidearms are first-class, and customers can buy or order almost any BattleMech weapon system.

Administering the Solaris NAT offices is Vice President David Tebbits, who hires and fires with ruthless efficiency. Having risen to his current position by accusing a supervisor of Kurita sympathies, Tebbits will do virtually anything to maintain his position. He retains a small army of freelance investigators to look into the affairs of business rivals.

MISCELLANEOUS

DAVION GENERAL HOSPITAL (B-17)

Davion General is not discriminating about its clientele, accepting all patients regardless of their ability to pay.

MAINLINE MECHWARRIORS (B-10)

A brokerage house that specializes in F-C warriors, Mainline is known to be honest, although its fees are higher than average (15 to 20 percent). Una Bradley, president of Mainline, insists on strict impartiality and fairness on the part of her employees. A former MechWarrior herself, she has been known to occasionally work on the tech crews of Mainline's clients.

CATHAY

Cathay embodies the contrasts of Solaran society more clearly than any other quarter. Wealthy Liaoists live in luxury high above the houses of poorer citizens, the latter mostly foreign laborers brought in to keep Cathay running.

Plagued by serious crime and gang activity, Cathay has developed a ruthlessly efficient police force, which responds swiftly to overt crime. Despite this, corruption in the police department and crime continue to exist.

Though the lowlands and River Town are both places of great poverty and desperation, the highlands are probably the most luxurious region of Solaris, where wealth and nobility buy the best of everything.

CITY ADMINISTRATION

CAPELLAN HIGH COURT (C-25)

The Capellans on Solaris prefer to try their own criminals, and those slum-gang or triad members captured in infrequent sweeps of the lower city often wind up here, where Liao judges mete out heavy sentences. Gang leaders and high-level operators rarely end up in court, however, preferring to simply grease palms in lieu of a trial.

This building contains a security station manned by veteran guards and an underground cell complex that can hold up to 100 prisoners. Widely considered escape-proof, the High Court and its attendant facilities are a place most criminals would just as soon avoid.

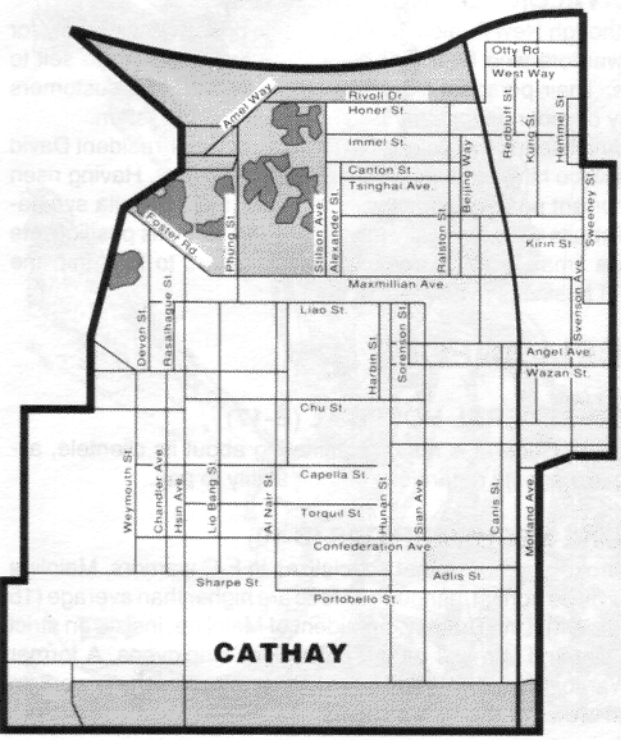
CATHAY SECURITY HEADQUARTERS (C-26)

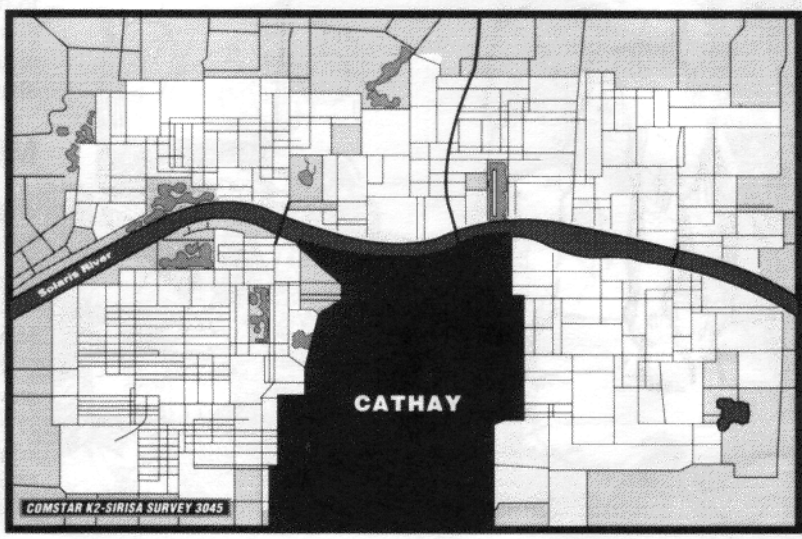
This grim, brooding structure is the control center for Cathay Security, nearly a thousand well-armed personnel. Their equipment includes small arms, some support weapons, armored personnel carriers, and BattleMech support, should the need ever arise. Major military action against Capellan citizens has rarely been necessary, raising questions about the need for such a heavily armed force. Many claim that the Capellans keep the force here in case of a possible military coup.

SECURITY STATION (C-14)

Though some sections of the slums, notably The Maze, are off-limits to security forces, Liao authorities maintain a strong presence here. The main security post is heavily fortified, its garrison well armed and professional. Light BattleMechs sometimes accompany major sweeps or attempts to put down severe disturbances, and these machines can be housed, supplied, and repaired in the bunkers beneath the security station.

The outpost's commander, Captain Jane Chih, has grown weary of her job, but has thus far been unable to transfer elsewhere.





NEIGHBORHOODS

CHANCELLOR'S QUARTER (C-19)

A stark contrast to the slums below, the Chancellor's Quarter is home to Cathay's elite. Despite the desperate poverty of the slums, Cathay still has the highest average standard of living on Solaris, testimony to the wealth, power, and beauty of this region.

Gleaming towers or rambling estates are the rule here, all well-defended and scrupulously patrolled by Li'ao security forces. Many of Solaris City's crime bosses or slum landlords make their homes here, far from the misery they help create.

MIDDLE TOWN (C-12)

Living here in Middle Town are middle-class residents of Cathay, who enjoy a comfortable standard of living because of the wealth and influence of upper-class Liaoists. The streets of this area are clean and well-patrolled, houses and apartments are neat and comfortable, and crime generally stays in the slums. Occasionally, the violence and corruption of the poorer sections erupt into Middle Town, but so far no major penetration has occurred.

RIVER TOWN (C-2)

The lowest level of the Cathay slums lies along this filthy stretch of water, a combination of shacks on rickety piers and squalid houseboats. The population density is unbelievable, with as many as ten adults to a single cramped room. Cathay's criminal element, the triads, slum gangs, and others find a rich source of recruits in River Town. Most residents are foreign workers or their families.

TENEMENT AREA (C-6)

This slum area is spread throughout with tumbledown buildings. Most are dirty, crowded, and structurally unsound, housing vast extended families. Crushing poverty is the rule, and only rarely does anyone escape this miserable existence. Drug dealers, slum gangs, extortionists, enforcers, and protection racketeers are present in epidemic proportions, and a life of crime is often the best to which a young resident can aspire.

Most residents of this region are foreigners, shipped in by the Liaoists as cheap labor. Their affairs are of little concern to the wealthy Capellans who live in luxury high above the despair of the slums.

THE MAZE (C-7)

The absolute center of Cathay's crime and poverty, this twisting labyrinth of streets, burned-out storefronts, decayed shacks, tottering tenements, bars, and opium dens is home to many of the area's major triad gangs and crime families. The Red Cobras, the Hundred Swordsmen, the Bertolis, the yakuza, and numerous other smaller groups base their operations here, where the authorities rarely enter. A recent sweep of The Maze by security forces yielded few arrests but resulted in the deaths of nearly a dozen security men.

HOTELS

CATHAY ARMS (C-22)

The best-known hotel in Cathay is patronized by vacationing Capellans, who would consider staying at any other hotel an act bordering on treason. Rooms are decorated in an imperial Chinese motif. The stiff rates (75 to 200 L-Bills per night) are payable in Capellan H-Bills, the only currency accepted at the Cathay Arms. Loyal Capellans are not expected to cause trouble, and hotel security or the sector's police deal harshly with any illegal activities.

RAVEN'S ROOST (C-18)

This rundown bar and rooming house serves as headquarters for the Bertoli family, currently in a contest with the Red Cobra triad for control of this area. The second floor has been fortified with heavy metal doors, surveillance systems, sniper holes, and other traps. Manager Ivan Toviesh is a crack shot, and his bouncers always carry sidearms. These officially sanctioned arms are the only weapons allowed in the establishment; patrons must leave all weapons at the door, on pain of death.

ENTERTAINMENT

THE BITTER POOL (C-3)

Everyday life in the slums grinds even the strongest man down. The pleasures of The Bitter Pool can help numb the pain, if only for a time. The Pool is a dingy bar, offering numerous cheap intoxicants and brief female companionship. Its dark, smoky interior is invariably crowded with hordes of the downtrodden. Few speak, preferring to keep their thoughts to themselves.

Notorious criminal and former triad leader Shad Grenville, surrounded by a fanatically loyal squad of bodyguards, rakes in massive profits from the Bitter Pool, using the money to keep his former comrades off his back. Grenville is a survivor, who is utterly ruthless in eliminating anyone in his way.

THE BRASS LILY (C-8)

Outwardly a surprisingly pleasant public house where Maze residents can seek refuge from violence and ugliness, The Brass Lily is actually the nerve center for one of Cathay's most powerful triad gangs.

Unlike other triad leaders, who make their homes in the wealthy section of Cathay, Xun Li Binh, master of the Hundred Swordsmen, chooses to live in The Maze, where he can better direct his gang's operations. Xun's headquarters is a virtual fortress, bristling with security devices, cameras, and alarms. Xun's personal bodyguards, the Hundred Swordsmen from which the gang takes its name, are based here, available at a moment's notice to defend their leader. An underground bunker houses Xun's quarters, security command, armory, and other vital locations.

THE COBALT COIL (C-13)

A colorful, sometimes rough tavern where 'Mech jocks, pilots, and techs gather to exchange information and tall tales, the Coil is located on the border between the poor and middle-class sections of Cathay. Made famous by a series of semi-factual stories published under the title *Tales of the Cobalt Coil*, it is also a popular destination for tourists seeking local color and (possibly) an authentic Solaris bar-fight.

THE CRANE (C-23)

This staggeringly expensive restaurant (patrons should be prepared to pay 100 L-Bills and up per person) serves Szechwan, Cantonese, and New Sian-style cuisine in dimly lit luxury. Non-Capellans can expect to be kept waiting for quite awhile, and Liao currency is the only one accepted. The Crane is a favorite haunt of triad leaders, Capellan nobles, and hot young MechWarriors.

DRAGON HOUSE (C-10)

Dragon House is typical of the dozens of gambling houses throughout Cathay. Here, cheap liquor and opium are available while patrons gamble, play games of chance such as poker, blackjack, and four-card drax, and (most popular of all) wager on BattleMech contests shown on Dragon House's expensive trivid system. An illegal tap into SBC transmissions enables patrons to watch battles uncut and unedited.

Two brothers, Vijay and Kalish Ramajiva, manage Dragon House jointly, and are always on the lookout for muscle and hired help. Protection payments keep the triads and yakuza at bay, and big profits help the two brothers maintain luxurious quarters in the wealthy section of Cathay.

THE JUNGLE (C-5)

The Jungle rises above the Cathay slums, a tribute to the greatness of House Liao amid the pathetic tenements of the teeming masses.

THE KIRIN (C-4)

This filthy little hole caters to even baser tastes than does The Bitter Pool. In plain words, The Kirin is an opium den, where addicts drug themselves into oblivion.

Li Ban, a major operative of the Red Cobra triad, controls the Kirin, taking a cut of all profits, and staffing the place with enforcers. High-level Red Cobra meetings often take place here. A recent attack by the Hundred Swordsmen resulted in several Red Cobra fatalities, setting off a massive war between the two gangs that continues to this day.

THE PERFUMED GARDEN (C-24)

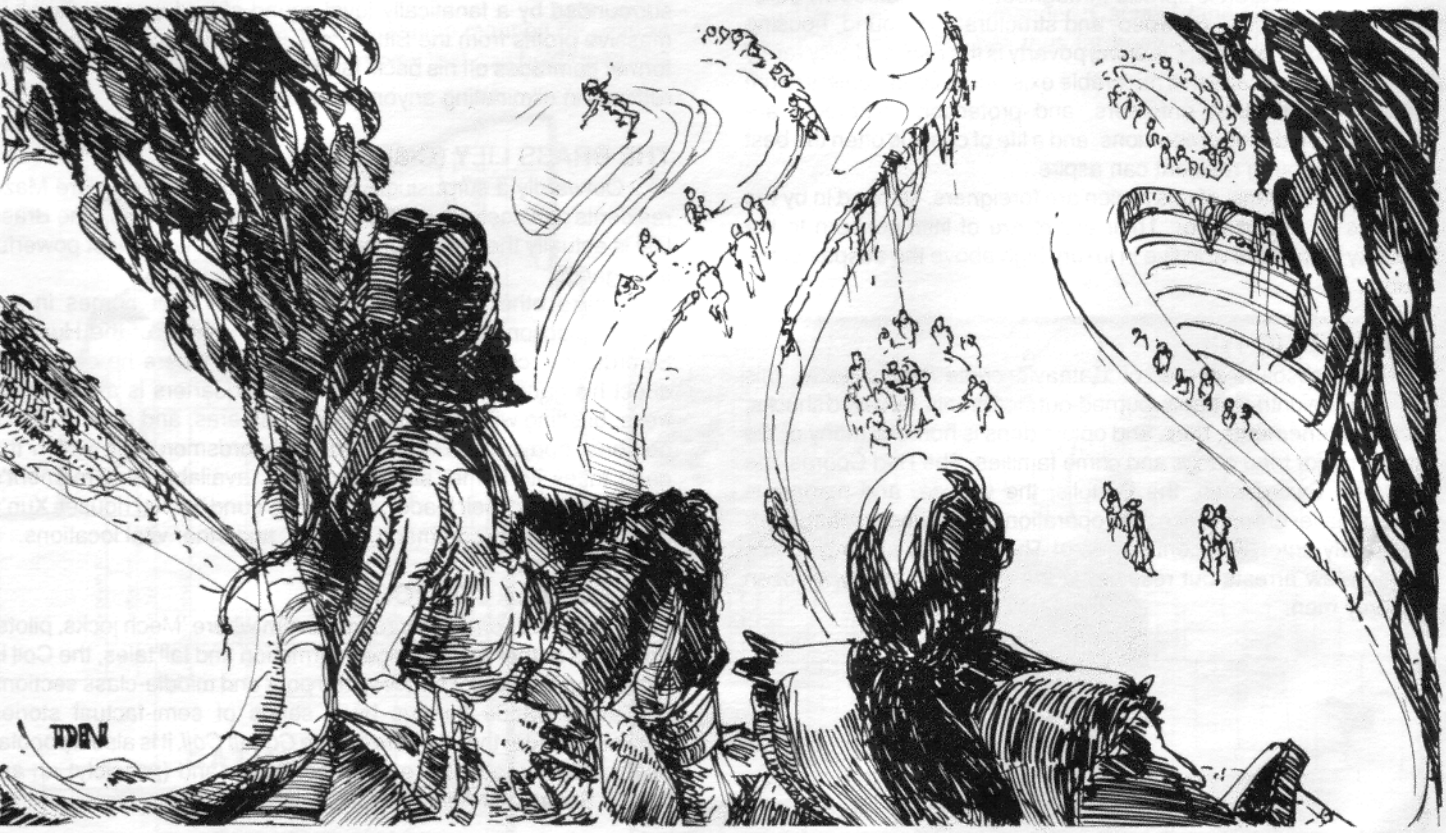
The best-kept open secret in Cathay, The Perfumed Garden is an expensive brothel that counts several prominent Liao officials among its clientele. Only Capellan citizens and their guests are admitted, but the gate fee (50 L-Bills) is stiff. Having paid, clients can do as they please, with extra charges added only for fulfilling unusual requests.

The decor is exquisite, with art treasures drawn from throughout the Capellan Confederation, and individual rooms (also available for sleeping at 50 L-Bills a night) rival the bedchambers of wealthy Capellans. In the center of the building is a courtyard filled with lush greenery, where patrons can eat, drink, and converse.

Madame Mai Shi was once a celebrated court beauty on Sian, rumored to have been a favorite concubine of Maximilian Liao. Even today, at 60, she shows considerable beauty and charm, while running the establishment with an iron hand.

WARRIORS' HALL (C-11)

Poor MechWarriors, aspiring MechWariors, and their hangers-on spend their evenings in this raucous, crowded, smelly human zoo. A combination bar, restaurant, roominghouse, and brothel, Warriors' Hall restricts admittance to individuals known to management, and their guests. Prices for all forms of entertainment are reasonable, kept that way by former clients who hit it big and then donate part of their winnings to their old haunt.



The interior of the Hall is pleasantly (if sturdily) furnished, with pictures of great Liao MechWarriors decorating the walls. A notably blank section of one wall once bore a portrait of Justin Xiang, now considered a traitor by most Liaoists because of his secret Davion loyalties. Despite periodic good-natured brawls or violent drinking games, Warrior's Hall is a place of camaraderie and good cheer, where all patrons are united by the common bond of the Solaris Games.

POINTS OF INTEREST

CAPELLAN WAR MEMORIAL (C-15)

This heroic figure portrays a bloody but unbowed Liao MechWarrior pointing an accusing finger west toward the Black Hills and—by implication—at House Davion, the aggressor of the Fourth Succession War. The names of dozens of Capellan warriors who died heroically are inscribed on the statue's base. Today, over two decades after the Federated Suns' invasion of the Confederation, loyal Capellans still leave flowers in honor of fallen heroes.

THE GLASS TOWER (C-21)

Another elegant condominium residence, the Tower is notable as the home of several triad leaders, who live here, not out of any affection for one another, but because this is one location where security is so tight that they are safe from each other.

THE STRAND (C-20)

Generally considered the most beautiful and exclusive residence in Cathay, The Strand is a soaring structure of over 70 floors, its graceful white buttresses surrounded by a lush garden. Outwardly peaceful and unguarded, The Strand is actually protected by a complex network of spy cameras, hidden guardposts, and alarms. Those who live in The Strand's condominiums are among the wealthiest in Cathay, and Cathay's criminal element considers the theft of an item from The Strand to be a badge of honor.

Condominiums in the Strand are dear, averaging 1,500 L-Bills per month.

TANDREK PALACE (C-27)

Roger Tandrek, head of Tandrek Stables, resides in this walled villa amid super-security measures. Tandrek lives in what many consider tasteless opulence, his lack of discrimination a sign of his humble origins. Tandrek currently controls a stable of nearly a dozen MechWarriors, and his fortunes have risen abruptly with the success of Joseph Paulson, a promising new MechWarrior.

Tandrek's parties are the scene of orgiastic excess fully in keeping with his extravagant tastes. Some claim that he has expanded into the realm of organized crime, challenging several prominent triads for a slice of the Cathay pie, but no proof yet exists.

ZELAZNI ESTATE (C-28)

Tandrek's rival, Victor Zelazni, is a long-established stablemaster who has attained near-legendary status. The passing years have done little to sap Zelazni's astonishing intelligence and ability to spot natural talent. It is widely known that Zelazni considers Tandrek an ill-mannered rube and a bit of a clown. With Tandrek's star currently in ascendence, Zelazni is determined to destroy his rival once and for all.

'MECH TECH

CATHAY BATTLEMECH BAY (C-29)

The Liao government maintains this 'Mech bay, allowing all major Liaoist stables to use it free of charge. Individual 'Mechs are well-guarded to prevent espionage or sabotage. This vast structure can house up to 30 BattleMechs at one time and is usually full.

MACAMIS' PLACE (C-9)

Apparently just another ragtag second-hand shop of a sort common in Cathay, Guire MacAmis' little storefront is actually one of the best pirate weapon and contraband shops in Solaris City. Hidden rooms house MacAmis' vast store of weapons and high-tech equipment. A former tech, MacAmis is available for work on BattleMechs, and is popular with low-ranked or outlaw MechWarriors. He sets his fees based on his client's apparent ability to pay.

Virtually any hand-portable item is available at the shop, or else eventually located by MacAmis. Some go so far as to suggest that he has now developed a secret pipeline to the Clans, and can obtain Clan tech at outrageous prices. The recent appearance of several Clan weapons on Liao 'Mechs in the games gives some credence to this rumor.

MISCELLANEOUS

AMIDA BUDDHA HOSPITAL (C-17)

This institution, staffed exclusively by Buddhist volunteers, cares for those unable to pay for their medical treatment. As this represents a large portion of Cathay's slum population, the hospital is invariably crammed with patients, ranging from those wounded in gang battles to dying drug addicts and dispossessed MechWarriors.

Private rooms are non-existent, patients are housed in long, echoing halls packed with cots, watched over by overworked nurses and the hospital's all-too-few doctors. Lack of money and resources mean that care is sometimes only a few steps above primitive shamanism, and the recovery rate is low despite the staff's concern and slavish devotion.

THE DOCKS (C-1)

Though the Solaris River is not an important trade route, some barges and small boats do give it river traffic. Food, luxury items, and other goods are offloaded here prior to sale or storage in the warehouse district. Commerce in the dock area is often a front for such illegal activities as smuggling of contraband, weapons, and 'Mech parts.

WARRIOR'S WAY BROKERAGE (C-16)

Andrea Rigsby works the low end of the 'Mech circuit, matching out-of-work or dispossessed warriors to disreputable or broke stablemasters. Her cut is 10 percent of the MechWarrior's first-year purses, which is considered quite reasonable. Rigsby is a pleasant person, but quickly turns nasty if she feels she has been cheated or double-crossed.

KOBE

Kobe, the Kurita sector of Solaris City, is easily the most beautiful—and certainly the safest—zone. Numerous parks, shrines, and attractive buildings fill the streets, and its police keep the peace with great efficiency. This is not to say that Kobe does not have problems. Its poorer sections are crime-ridden, and corruption may extend to the highest levels of the zone's civil administration.

In spite of this, Kobe is a lovely place. Visitors are advised to be polite and to avoid overt illegal acts, for the local police are efficient and swift to respond.

CITY ADMINISTRATION

GOVERNMENT HOUSE (K-4)

With a sweeping view of the War Memorial Park below, this stately white building is the official residence of the Kobe governor, as well as the center of civil administration for the sector. Most of the building is taken up with offices, while the actual living space is relatively small. The current governor, Marquis Yao Kinebate, is a workaholic who barely notices this lack, however.

KOBE SECURITY (K-5)

Kobe's police and security forces are notoriously hard-nosed, determined to maintain the peace and beauty of the district. This station houses 500 security troops, a force that may be supplemented with armored personnel carriers and BattleMechs if need be. Commander Miramatu Tokodana takes his job seriously; indeed, no one can remember ever seeing him smile. Though some complain that his enforcement tactics are overly harsh, he points out that they seem to work. Few can argue.

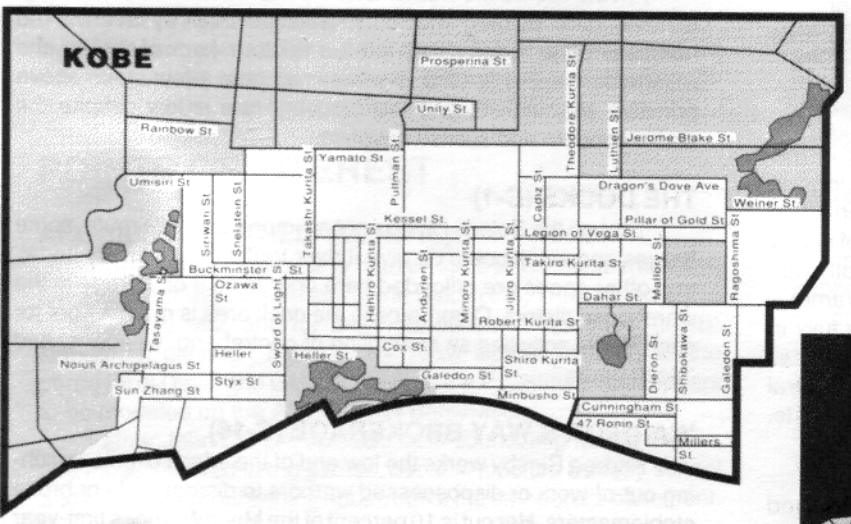
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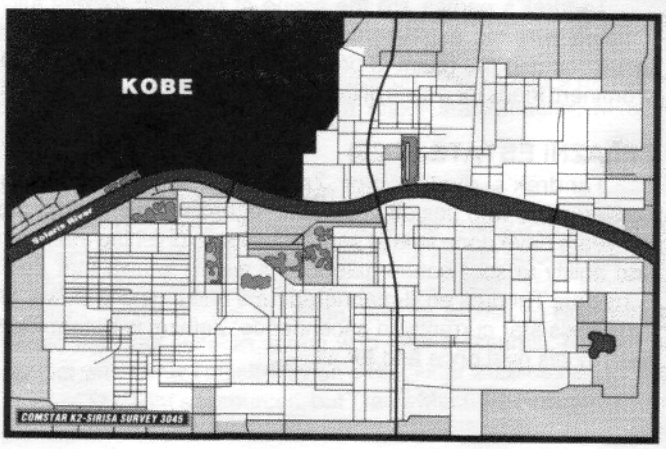
KOBE SLUMS (K-22)

Despite Kobe's general high standard of living, some of its citizens live in poverty, pursued by the demons of gambling addiction and crime. Slum gangs, yakuzas, and triads are all active in the tightly packed tenements and high rises of this area, although security forces are almost always here in force.

WHITE LOTUS DISTRICT (K-11)

The standard of living in Kobe is second only to that of Cathay. The streets of this residential area are kept spotless, security patrols are near-constant, and the homes are little short of palaces. Though poorer Kuritans live near the river and are plagued by crime and violence, this district is the safest in the city.





HOTELS

THE BAMBOO PALACE (K-9)

Another luxury hotel popular with Kurita tourists, all the rooms are decorated in rich blues and greens, with spacious bathrooms and spectacular views. Doubles begin at 75 K-Bills per night, suites at 300. When stablemasters bring in promising MechWarriors from offworld, they usually put them up here. Criminals and street rowdies generally keep clear of the Palace, whose security is tight.

DRACONIS COMBINE DORMITORY (K-6)

House Kurita treats its MechWarriors well, regardless of their stable affiliation. Those who fight for the Combine on Solaris may live at this vast barracks-like installation at minimal cost (50 K-Bills per month room and board). Accommodations are spartan, but they include a full-service gym and a cafeteria serving plain but nutritious meals at no extra charge.

HOTEL DRAGON (K-7)

The finest hotel in Kobe caters to Kuritan clientele, although Marik citizens are also welcome, so long as they pay in K-Bills. A double room costs 80 K-Bills per night; suites cost as much as 500 per night. Rooms seem more appropriate to the palaces of rich Kuritans than to tourists, and the food from room service rivals that of the finest restaurants in Solaris.

ENTERTAINMENT

ISHIYAMA ARENA (K-27)

Iron Mountain, the centerpiece of Kobe and destination of thousands of game fans each week, stands here.

KOBE THEATER (K-16)

This open-air auditorium is the site of kabuki, noh, and other types of drama during the spring and summer.

THE MARAUDER (K-21)

Kobe has its dives and low-life havens like every other sector of Solaris City. The Marauder is one of these, a watering hole for the lower rungs of Kobe's society. Thugs, gangsters, yakuza, and triad members all like to come here, particularly at night. The Marauder is also a favorite spot for hiring individuals of questionable character to carry out criminal activities. Patrons must leave weapons at the door, a rule ruthlessly enforced by several awesome bouncers, who can call upon numerous weapons of their own if anyone makes trouble.

THE PARADISE (K-8)

Close by Hotel Dragon is this restaurant, an elegant establishment where meals start at 50 K-Bills per person and can end up virtually anywhere. Decor is an attractive combination of dark hardwoods and authentic oriental antiques imported from Terra. The Paradise's specialty, camphor wood and tea-smoked duck (or, on Solaris, riverwader, the local duck equivalent), costs 75 K-Bills, but the taste is said to be an experience close to true paradise.

Owner Quan Chih takes great pains to maintain the best staff available. His rumored ties to the triads have done little to dampen enthusiasm for the restaurant, which attracts patrons from throughout Solaris, regardless of their political alignment.

THE SNOWBIRD (K-15)

Kobe's bars are models of luxury and gracious service. The Snowbird, a popular hangout for MechWarriors and the occasional stablemaster looking for new talent, is typical. Drinks range from 5 to 10 K-Bills per person, and the surroundings are both comfortable and esthetic, featuring Japanese woodcuts, sculpture, and tapestries. Although primarily a drinking establishment, The Snowbird also serves food, but most people come here to observe 'Mech contests on the closed-circuit trivid. Of course, loud or boisterous behavior is frowned upon, making The Snowbird a fairly quiet place, even on game nights.

The Snowbird is owned by several Kuritan businessmen, but managed by Tanya Childress, who takes pains to maintain the establishment's reputation.

THE SWALLOW (K-20)

This restaurant, famed for its seafood and Southeast Asian beef noodle soup, is popular with noblemen and wealthy Kuritans, most of whom do not suspect that it is actually a front for activity by the Heavenly Warrior triad. The thriving restaurant keeps the authorities from becoming too suspicious, while money, weapons, and drugs move freely through the place after hours.

POINTS OF INTEREST

DELON ESTATE (K-14)

Thomas DeLon, head of DeLon Stables, lives here. A former 'Mech pilot, he has made his home resemble a military base more than an estate, and it is the scene of constant drilling by DeLon's private security forces, as well as the occasional BattleMech. DeLon Stables have recently been linked to the Bertoli Mafia family, and some also accuse DeLon of connections with yakuza clans, but these remain little more than reliable rumors.

THE DRAGON ARCH (K-1)

This graceful structure is considered the gateway to Kobe. It consists of twin pillars entwined with elegant dragons, all decorated in brilliant red and yellow. A squad of security officers is on continuous watch, marching in slow circles around the arch, on the lookout for loiterers or vandals.

KOBE TEMPLE (K-17)

A twelve-meter-tall gilded Buddha is the centerpiece of this temple, popular with the wealthy and powerful of Kobe. Priests continually manicure the lawn and maintain the building, making it one of the most impressive in Solaris.

PHOENIX HOUSE (K-19)

It is an open secret that this attractive mansion is the headquarters for major yakuza activity in Kobe. Phoenix House is an administrative headquarters where criminal operations are coordinated, meetings take place, and strategy is planned. Contraband and weapons are rarely handled here, for that would be inappropriate. So far, other gangs have been reluctant to attack Phoenix House directly for fear of terrible reprisals.

SHINTO TEMPLE (K-3)

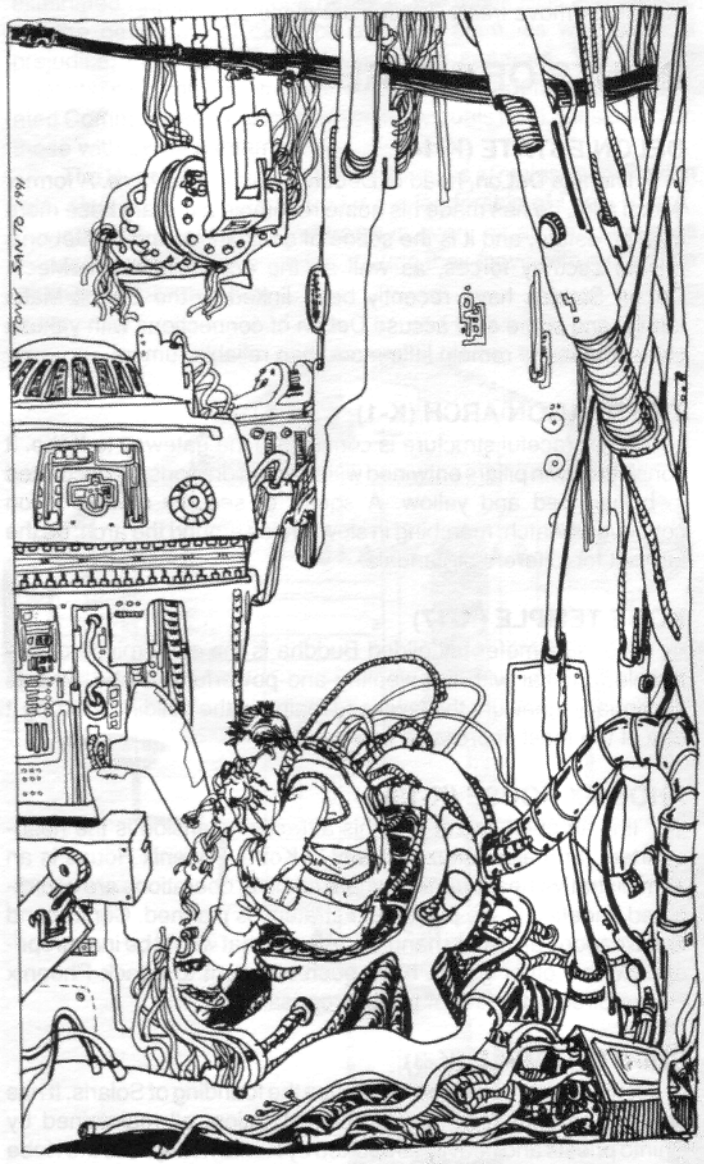
This temple has stood here since the founding of Solaris. It has shrines, gardens, and places for meditation, all maintained by Shinto priests and heavily supported by Kurita nobles and the Kobe government.

SILVER DRAGON GROVE (K-13)

The Grove is the exclusive domain of Anna Nevil, matriarch of the Silver Dragon Stables. This stable has, over the last 20 years, moved to the forefront of Solaris gaming, and currently has few rivals for absolute leadership. Nevil herself is a mysterious figure. She first appeared in 3030, purchased the estate of a bankrupt nobleman, then set out to build her stable to its present prominence. Today, she rarely ventures outside her manicured grounds or sprawling mansion, watching her stable's fights on closed-circuit trivid. Rumors about her true origins and history abound, but none have been confirmed.

TAKEO SHINDEN ESTATE (K-12)

A retired MechWarrior of some standing in the Draconis Combine, Shinden now lives here in palatial splendor on Solaris, giving elegant parties, betting heavily on the games, and occasionally loaning money or expertise to a favored 'Mech stable. The estate is walled, heavily patrolled, and rumored to contain numerous valuable art works, as well as classified information on the Draconis military.



WAR MEMORIAL PARK (K-2)

This tribute to fallen Combine soldiers is surprisingly understated, a simple slab of white marble listing dozens of major battles and the casualty figures from each. Surrounding the memorial is a pleasant park containing tea gardens and Buddhist shrines. The park is a popular relaxation spot for tourists.

WATERFRONT (K-26)

Shrines, parks, and statuary line the immaculate waterfront of Kobe, which is also regularly patrolled by Kurita security forces. In spite of this, or perhaps because of it, the waterfront remains a popular spot for meetings between crime bosses and gang leaders, often to discuss peace treaties in ongoing gang battles or to divide territory.

'MECH TECH

DRACONIS COMBINE EQUIPMENT LIAISON (K-10)

House Kurita considers Solaris a prime showcase of Combine military prowess. To help promote the Kurita edge in the arenas, the Liaison arranges to sell used, obsolete, or surplus BattleMechs to pro-Kurita stables. This facility is where government representatives negotiate with stablemasters to buy 'Mechs in varying condition that arrive by DropShip from Combine space approximately once a month. The quality of these 'Mechs varies greatly, but the Equipment Liaison can be a source of great bargains for enterprising Kuritan stablemasters.

TEKSHOP (K-24)

BattleMech technician Amo Lee operates from this small shop, which is always crammed with bits of electronic gear, scraps of metal, discarded computer parts, food containers, printouts, and other detritus. Customers do not enter the shop so much as pick their path through the debris. Despite his sloppy habits, Lee is one of the best techs in Kobe, and is a particular favorite of the Silver Dragon Stables.

MISCELLANEOUS

CRAMER ASSOCIATES (K-25)

Theo Cramer is known as a reasonably honest 'Mech broker charging reasonable fees. What is not known is that he is also a major capo for the Bertoli family in Kobe, and his contacts with stablemasters, noblemen, techs, and MechWarriors give the family a major edge over its yakuza and triad rivals in the protection, smuggling, drug, and gambling rackets.

INDRAHAR MEMORIAL HOSPITAL (K-23)

This first-class hospital cares primarily for rich patients as well as Kurita MechWarriors, whose expenses are paid by the Combine government.

THEODORE KURITA BUILDING (K-18)

This impressive high rise contains the offices of 'Mech brokerage houses and major Kurita corporations on Solaris.

MONTENEGRO

Despite a name that calls up visions of pomp and circumstance and exotic European nations, Montenegro is a grim place, with only a few pleasant islands to break the monotony of vast wastelands of abandoned industrial sectors. Possibly the ugliest of the Solaris sectors, Montenegro has deep troubles with crime and gang violence.

CITY ADMINISTRATION

ANDURIEN BLOCK (M-2)

As a symbol of the Anduriens' autonomy and defiance of central authority, the Duchy of Andurien staunchly maintains this squat, ugly building as its main government offices. The Anduriens have come up with endless reasons for delaying their move to Marik Tower. Many believe that the Anduriens will never move, and short of force, the Marik government can do nothing about it.

MARIK TOWER (M-1)

This brand-new mountain of glass and steel bears the Marik eagle proudly over its main entrance. In an attempt to reinforce the new spirit of the Free Worlds League, the Marik government requires that all member-states maintain diplomatic and government offices here. This is also the location of the Montenegro civic authority offices.

MONTENEGRO WATER WORKS (M-21)

Along the river squats this vast assemblage of pipes, holding tanks, and pumphouses, from which Montenegro and much of southern Solaris City gets its water.

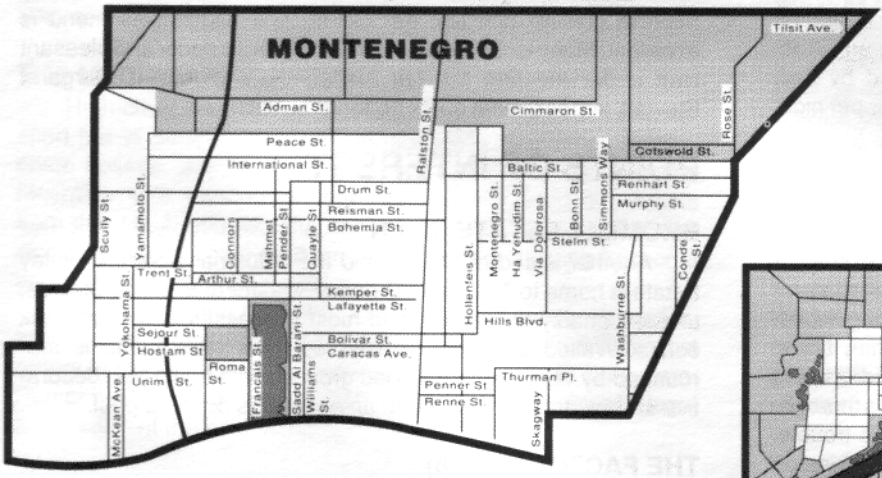
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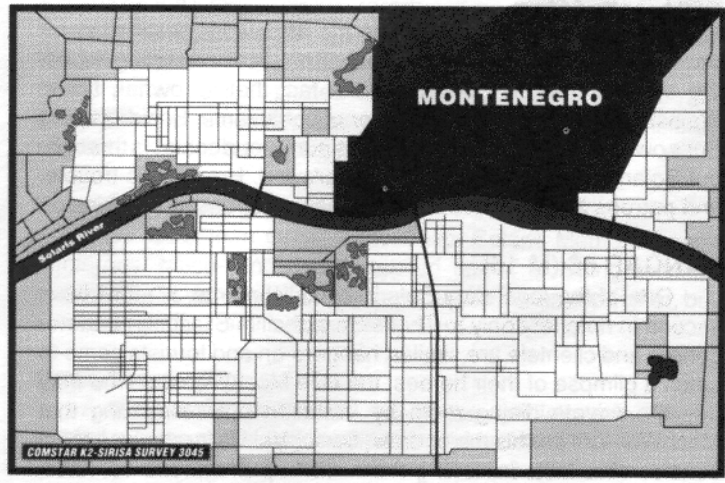
ALLMAN DISTRICT (M-20)

The common people's residential area is every bit as bleak and charmless as the rest of Montenegro. Anonymous high-rises and identical row houses are the rule, with few parks or amenities to break the monotony. Despite the new spirit of unity in the Free Worlds League, residents of the Allman area tend to cluster in groups paralleling their own national ancestry, be it Andurien, Orientan, Regulan, Silver Hawk, and so on.

GREY INDUSTRIES (M-29)

Formerly offices for a now-defunct Solaris corporation, this building now houses squatters and poor tenants, as well as being the secret headquarters for the Red Cobra triad. Cobra leaders gather here to map strategy and also use the place to store and maintain their substantial arsenal.





THE RIVERFRONT (M-26)

A place of burned-out warehouses and the twisted remains of dock cranes and loaders, the Riverfront, like the Wasteland, is home to numerous gangs, squatters, and other criminals.

THE WASTELAND (M-19)

Beyond The Factory lies this grim, deadly jungle of abandoned manufacturing plants, warehouses, foundries, and offices. Only the homeless and dirt-poor live here, squatting in empty buildings, keeping to themselves, and dodging the occasional police patrols sent into the area. The Wasteland is a good place to hide, although many of the residents jealously guard their space and will rob and kill anyone likely to be carrying valuables.

INFORMATION

FREE WORLDS NEWS SERVICE (M-5)

Various publications of print and broadcast news are produced here, all with a Marik slant. Reporters Cal Helmway and Sharona Avner both have gained notoriety for their vicious condemnations of F-C corruption and excesses on Solaris, while turning a blind eye to similar activities by House Marik and its ally House Liao.

TOURIST SERVICES

KINEBATU TRAVEL (M-17)

Ostensibly a travel agency, Mariko Kinebatu's firm also serves as a discreet hiring service, through which financially secure clients may hire mercenary DropShips and JumpShips. The ships and crews so hired are guaranteed not to ask too many questions, and are generally of high professional quality.

HOTELS

THE FIVE PRINCES (M-10)

Considered the best hotel in Montenegro, The Five Princes is nonetheless an ugly structure, converted from a block of abominable industrial office buildings. The interior, however, is an attractive combination of brick, metal, and wood enlivened by lush greenery, pools, and waterfalls. Rooms start at 80 M-Bills per night for a double, rising to 500 per night for a suite.

ENTERTAINMENT

BRIT'S (M-22)

A working class bar, Brit's is the after-work destination for dozens of weary Montenegrans. Though physically undistinguished, the establishment is notable for the fact that its owner, David Weinstein, is a former MechWarrior of some fame. Besides being Brit's owner/bartender, Weinstein has numerous contacts throughout Solaris, both legitimate and underworld. He dislikes trouble, and patrons are expected to check their weapons at the door.

HANGAR 66 (M-16)

One of the legendary Solaris establishments, Hangar 66 is second in notoriety only to Thor's Shieldhall in Silesia. The atmosphere and clientele are similar: hangers-on and tourists come to catch a glimpse of their heroes, the elite MechWarriors who may use the private dining room by invitation only. Realizing that MechWarriors are his major draw, owner Val Halloran gives them considerable latitude, letting them rack up enormous bar tabs, spend hours without ordering, and making the tastefully appointed luxury apartment that he maintains upstairs available to important MechWarriors who might wish to spend the night.

HOME GUARDS CLUB (M-7)

This elite social club, open only to active or retired members of House Marik's Home Guards, maintains this plush clubhouse on Solaris. Here, members may dine, read, relax, drink, and converse in comfort; they may also view 'Mech contests in the club's private theater and lounge.

Although full membership (which includes voting rights and free lodging for up to seven days) is open only to the Home Guards, associate membership (which allows use of club facilities for a fee) is available to non-Guardsmen if sponsored by a member and approved by a two-thirds vote of chapter members. The club sometimes offers associate memberships to successful MechWarriors if the members admire the pilot's fighting prowess and believe he or she brought honor to the Free Worlds League.

THE RIEVER (M-9)

Aerospace pilots are in constant demand on Solaris, for tours, escort, and transportation. Solaris also attracts mercenary pilots who hope to sell their services in the hiring halls. The Riever, notable for the full-sized mockup of the 100-ton Marik fighter hanging from the ceiling, is a bar where these pilots come to relax, tell tales, and occasionally sell their services. Non-pilots can expect considerable ribbing if they come in, even if looking to hire mercenaries. All the same, nobles, warriors, and other individuals in search of top-notch fliers consider The Riever a prime place to find them.

Owner/bartender Rico San Lucas never served in the military, but is an avid collector of Marik memorabilia, particularly that relating to the aerospace services, and to Rievers and Riever pilots in particular. His interests make him turn a blind eye to any illegal or boisterous conduct by his pilot patrons.

STEWART INN (M-15)

Though Solarans like to joke that the Stewart Inn serves only Scottish cuisine (thistles, oat cakes, and haggis), its menu is excellent. Many locals enjoy the Inn's authentic decor and pleasant staff under the firm but fair management of owner Margaret Stewart. A good meal costs 15 to 20 M-Bills.

POINTS OF INTEREST

BROMLEY ESTATE (M-11)

Another island of green amid the industrial gloom, Bromley Estate is home to Thaddeus Bromley, master of Bromley Stables, unquestionably the largest and most successful to fly the Marik colors. Walled and heavily patrolled, Bromley's home is surrounded by verdant, landscaped grounds with fruit trees, decorative shrubs, tennis courts, and an enormous covered pool.

THE FACTORY (M-18)

House Marik's pride, the arena stands in perfect harmony with the barren industrial landscape. Parking lots, souvenir stands, and food stands crowd around The Factory, as if seeking shelter from the surrounding decay.

FREE WORLDS THEATER (M-14)

This structure offers different entertainments from night to night, with live theatre, trivid movies, 'Mech fights, and concerts predominating.

GREENWAY PARK (M-3)

One long, continuous park built to relieve the industrial monotony of the surrounding landscape, the Greenway runs all the way from Marik Tower to the river. The park is replete with statuary, benches, shaded paths, and water fountains. Its character varies from a pleasant, well-maintained place of peace and tranquility (near Marik Tower) to a run-down dump infested with transients and slum gangs of criminal intent as it reaches the river.

MELWAY FOUNTAIN (M-4)

The Melway Fountain is a central water column surrounded by numerous small water jets, each set to constantly change shape, pressure, and flow-rate to create a random dance of waters that changes from one moment to the next. At night, this effect is enhanced by colored lights that flash on and off at random, making the water jets change hue and shade. By day, many workers enjoy their lunch here when weather permits.

SHADOW DOWNS (M-12)

Bromley's current rival, Fitzhugh Stables, are the domain of Andrew Fitzhugh, a wealthy Andurien and supporter of the Andurien cause who arrived on Solaris only five years ago. Since then, he has proceeded to develop a first-class stable. Bad blood between the two stablemasters is well-known; neither can tolerate being in the same room with the other. When Fitzhugh purchased Shadow Downs, it was a run-down estate on the market for commercial development. He transformed it into one of the most beautiful places in Montenegro, with plentiful greenery, a Japanese garden, and a private stream fed by water diverted from the Solaris River.

'MECH TECH

DANNER'S SPARE PARTS (M-23)

Theodore Danner is a scavenger with a talent for finding useful parts on 'Mechs that everyone else has given up on. His stock of salvaged and refurbished 'Mech parts is second to none, and his prices average 50 percent of new. Danner deals extensively with small stables and independents such as the Black Lions, whose headquarters are next door.

DEVALL'S SCRAPYARD (M-27)

The final destination of many a destroyed BattleMech, DeVall's yard is a twisted tangle of rusting metal, discarded armor, irreparable weapons, and miscellaneous electronics. Broke MechWarriors pay DeVall to scrounge in the yard, searching for useful items, and a Solaran recycler periodically buys scrap metal by the ton. The yard also makes an excellent hiding place or location for clandestine meetings, for which DeVall charges 25 C-Bills per hour.

EARTHWERKS-FWL (M-6)

One of the FWL's leading military corporations maintains offices here, both to assist with the maintenance of Marik BattleMechs and to process information on new 'Mech tactics, innovations, and equipment that might be useful in actual combat. Teams of Earthwerks operatives attend 'Mech fights seeking such information, while intelligence-processing specialists review trivid tapes and IR analyses of each day's fights. So far, Earthwerks has developed several innovative 'Mech battle tactics, as well as made improvements in maintenance techniques and existing equipment from information obtained by Earthwerks on Solaris.

MISCELLANEOUS

THE BLACK LIONS (M-24)

Groups like the Black Lions can survive on Solaris, but their existence is precarious. The Lions are an independent, cooperative group of MechWarriors who fight in the arenas under their own banner, owing allegiance to neither Successor House nor nobleman's stable. This course of action appeals to the rugged individualist, but it is dangerous. Recognizing the danger to their power and profitability posed by independents, the major stables seek at every turn to frustrate, bankrupt, or even destroy them. The Lions are currently engaged in a feud with Blackstar Stables, whose 'Mechs attack them with murderous intent. Only the skill and professionalism of the Lions have kept them alive.

The members of the Black Lions meet in a run-down tenement, which they acquired when a previous owner lost it in an ill-advised bet against them in the 'Mech games. Membership is open to all, but requires a two-thirds approval by the other members. After paying initiation dues of 1,000 C-Bills, all members are required to contribute 25 percent of their winnings to the club treasury, toward the purchase of supplies, equipment, housing, food, and other necessities. Staying in the clubhouse is free, although the accommodations are somewhat spartan. A large 'Mech bay that can service two 'Mechs (as long as they remain horizontal) occupies the main floor.

HORZIBA MANOR (M-25)

Typical of high-rise housing in this area, Horziba charges fair prices of 500 M-Bills per month, and is reasonably secure. Apartments are small, one or two-bedroom affairs with bathrooms and microscopic kitchenettes. A few MechWarriors make their homes here, probably considering it temporary lodging until their luck improves.

SANDWAY BUILDING (M-13)

Various corporations on Solaris maintain offices in this block, which once housed administrative facilities for the Sandway Corporation, one of the largest industries on Solaris in the Star League era. Today, it is a low-income housing site, plagued by drugs, crime, and gang activity. The Sandway is also known to welcome broke or down-on-their-luck MechWarriors, who have formed a small mutual-protection society, helping other tenants as well as one another deal with marauding gangs and protection rackets.

SUTTER WAREHOUSE (M-28)

Apparently just another abandoned warehouse, this structure is actually a major trans-shipment point for goods stolen by the infamous Bertoli family. It also serves as a meeting place for Bertoli's leaders to discuss business. It is always patrolled by at least two heavily armed thugs, who keep themselves well-hidden, but will not hesitate to eliminate unwanted visitors.

VON TRIPP, INC. (M-8)

Anton Von Tripp is the best-known Marik broker on Solaris. As a loyal supporter of the Free Worlds League and a fanatical unificationist, he requires that all his clients swear allegiance to House Marik for the duration of their service with him. He refuses to represent any warriors from what he considers the "traitorous" Duchy of Andurien.

SILESIA

Although Lyran Commonwealth officials are careful to maintain Silesia as a showpiece of Lyran culture, it suffers the same problems as the rest of Solaris City. Police are conscientious and efficient, but crime and corruption find their way into the sector all the same.

As with the Black Hills, the existence of the Federated Commonwealth has done little to change Silesia's population and character. Davionists are not particularly welcome here, for most Lyrans on Solaris consider them to be arrogant and selfish.

CITY ADMINISTRATION

THE LYRAN BUILDING (S-1)

The armored fist of House Steiner graces the entrance to this grim, gray structure, where Lyran officials administer their sector of Solaris. Theoretically, this is now a Federated Commonwealth operation, but the employees here remain stubbornly Steinerist.

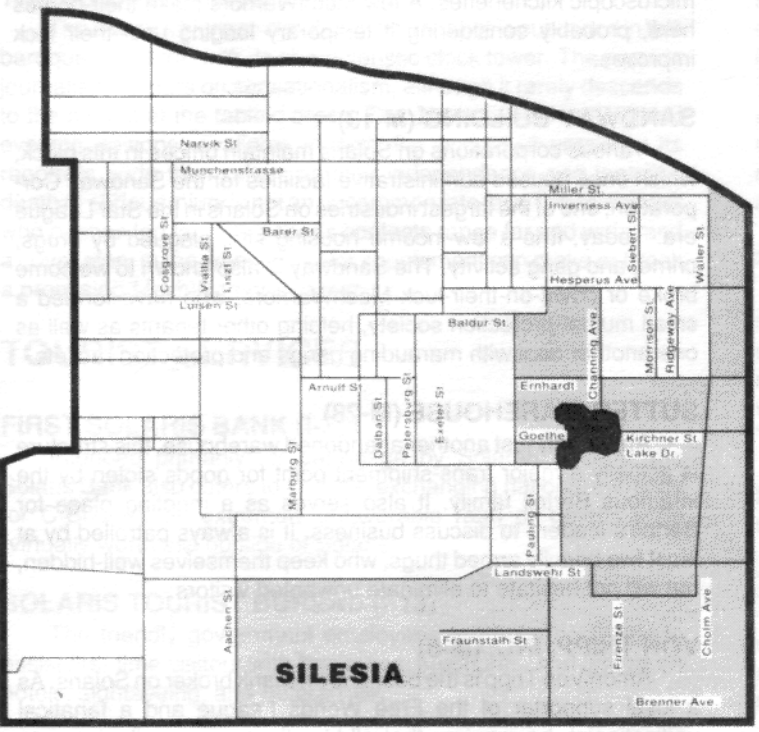
NEIGHBORHOODS

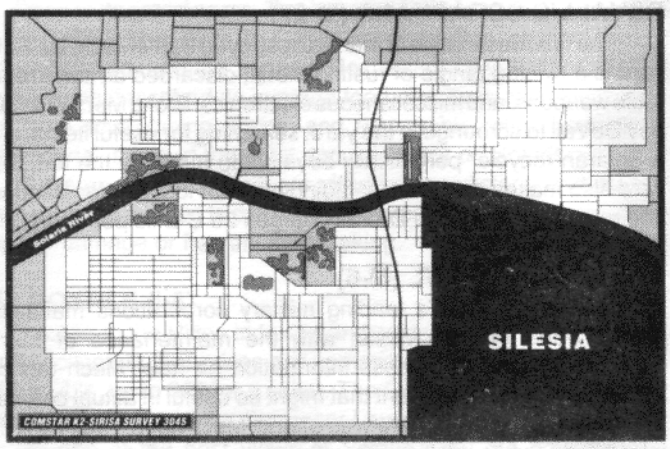
BLACKTHORNE DISTRICT (S-23)

Though Lyran authorities go to great lengths to maintain this residential area as clean and relatively trouble-free, crime is still prevalent. Near the river, where the standard of living declines, the ravages of the bloods, the Mafia, and the triads become more and more apparent. Cheap bars double as gang hangouts, gambling houses, and opium dens, while most citizens pack firearms, making the streets even more dangerous after dark.

THE RIVERSIDE (S-15)

Within sight of Cathay River Town, the Silesian waterfront is the location of numerous high-class hotels and condominiums.





HOTELS

THE ARMORED FIST (S-3)

A staunchly Steiner institution (they accept D-Bills, but S-Bills are preferred), The Armored Fist is a popular hotel for Lyran tourists. Rooms start at 40 S-Bills per night, rising to 100 per night for suites. Melissa's, a comfortable restaurant in the lobby, serves meals priced from 20 to 50 S-Bills per person.

THE OFFICER'S CLUB (S-16)

For a small fee, officers of the Lyran military may stay here while visiting Solaris. Accommodations are spare but reasonably comfortable, and the dining room and library are well-furnished and pleasant.

THE TAMAR DOMAINS (S-4)

The Fist's chief rival as the leading Lyran hotel, The Domains rents rooms from 50 to 150 S-Bills per night. Eusabio Birkin, The Domains' manager, has been accused of using underhanded tactics to attract customers away from The Fist, including suggesting that the head chef at Melissa's spits in his soups.

ENTERTAINMENT

THE COPPER COIN (S-6)

Shades McCabe's establishment is a combination bar, restaurant, and casino, where food is plentiful and cheap (as little as 2 S-Bills per person), the help is friendly, and the drinks are watered. Betting terminals are conveniently located at tables, and on fight nights, the Coin is crowded with rowdy, often drunken crowds of fight fans.

Shades—so-called for the dark glasses he wears even at night—does not object to a fight or two, so long as nothing major is broken. If things get too wild, however, he will call in security or the police.

THE GRATEFUL BURGER (S-24)

This unusual institution caters to bohemians, counter-culture poets, authors, philosophers, game designers, and similar unstable types. The end products of numerous small, obscure breweries, along with traditional Terran-American cuisine, are served here. The clientele also includes members of the mysterious "Deadhead" cult, which is extremely secretive about its ceremonies and traditions (although they apparently involve ancient music of some sort).

The Burger appears to be run communally by a group of counter-culture types who tend to wear their hair longer than current fashion dictates. The acknowledged leader is one "Sunshine" Talbot, a woman who favors headbands and wire-rimmed glasses, and tends to tell people that they are "beautiful."

LYRAN THEATER (S-13)

The theater's yearly Shakespeare festival is all the rage every summer, often attended by offworld visitors with no interest in the 'Mech games. At other times of the year, the best in contemporary drama and classic opera continues to draw wealthy or trendy Silesians.

THE SEA KING (S-5)

Featuring seafood from across the Inner Sphere, the Sea King's specialty is Solaris snapper served cajun-style for 12 S-Bills. Other entrees range in price from 5 S-Bills (for fish and chips wrapped in the day's *Solaris Times*) to 100 S-Bills (for steak and Terran lobster). This is a popular hang-out for aerospace pilots and MechWarriors.

Owner Wallace Simms has little tolerance for failure, and his staff turns over regularly. Most consider him a petty tyrant with an overinflated sense of his own importance.

STEINER STADIUM (S-22)

Built to resemble an ancient Roman coliseum, the stadium is the major landmark of this area.

THE SWOOPING CRANE (S-27)

A Szechwan restaurant of some note, The Swooping Crane is actually a front for the Hundred Swordsman triad, a drop-off place for bookmaking profits, protection money, and drugs. A recent raid by the bloods resulted in several deaths, but it was hushed up and the evidence hidden before the authorities arrived.

THOR'S SHIELDHALL (S-28)

Located near the Cathay border, the Shieldhall, and, more specifically, the exclusive Valhalla Club that it houses, is famous throughout the Inner Sphere as a watering hole for the rich and famous of Solaris. The main bar is open to the public, and is invariably crowded with tourists, groupies, and thrill-seekers hoping to catch a glimpse of a 'Mech-game superstar.

In back, Valhalla is open only to the most powerful and influential of MechWarriors, whose position at the long table is determined by their relative influence in the arena. The highest of the high, those who have attained legendary status, are allowed to sit in booths bearing their personal heraldry. Competition for seats is intense, and many arena rivalries carry over into the rarified confines of Valhalla.

POINTS OF INTEREST

CHAHAR LAKE (S-26)

This man-made lake is a pleasant spot for boating, walks, picnics, and general meditation, although at night the paths around it tend to be a lair for muggers and drug dealers. A regular patrol by horse-mounted F-C security forces has not been able to reduce the problem much.

COMMONWEALTH MUSEUM (S-19)

Memorabilia, artifacts, and exhibits on Lyran history and culture are displayed here. The white Greco-Roman building contains several major art treasures, and is heavily guarded.

OONTHRAX ESTATE (S-8)

Oonthrax Stables, the leading Steiner stable, is headquartered here. Vito Oonthrax, a 'Mech games fanatic, maintains a small 'Mech bay and workshop out back, and often does the tech work for his own BattleMechs. His estate is somewhat neglected, and it is not unusual to see numerous 'Mechs, in various stages of repair, scattered about the grounds.

PARMUS ESTATE (S-7)

Jarvo Parmus, a nobleman known to dabble in 'Mech fighting (he is a former mercenary), maintains this estate, which resembles a medieval castle. Parmus has sometimes financed out-of-work MechWarriors just for sport, but does not maintain anything that could be called a real 'Mech stable. Parmus is said to be a good-natured man, both generous and loyal.

SHRIMPTON GALLERY (S-20)

This private gallery specializes in 'Mech-oriented art, celebrating glorious victories or heroic defeats involving Davion or Steiner forces. An abstract study of a *Locust* cockpit by Lyran artist Andrea Burr recently sold for more than 500,000 C-Bills. The Shrimpton is well-protected with alarms and security guards.

STEINER PARK (S-2)

Near the Lyran Building is this pleasant stretch of green, which displays statues of celebrated individuals from Lyran history.

VERNON SINGH MANSION (S-25)

Singh, head of Lion City Stables, lives on this walled estate decorated in middle-eastern style, with reflecting ponds, pavilions, and a small menagerie. Though Lion City is a well-known stable, its MechWarriors have recently had a string of bad luck, leading many to harbor a suspicion that Singh is the target of inter-stable sabotage.

WHITE PINE (S-18)

This estate is owned by Rhianna Murray, owner of the Overlord Stables. Her taste runs to neo-Victorian, a design style originating in the Donegal District and incorporating elements of 19th-century English art and architecture. White Pine Manor is built and decorated in this style, but the appearance of the occasional light BattleMech teetering around the grounds adds a jarring element. Overlord is an honest stable, considered one of the best rides on Solaris. Unfortunately, they accept only the best and most promising young MechWarriors, and so membership is somewhat exclusive.

'MECH TECH

FALCHER'S REPAIR (S-10)

One of Solaris' leading techs, Falcher does not come cheap (charging up to 500 C-Bills per hour, depending on how well he likes his client). He has, however, been known to work miracles, repairing 'Mechs considered irreparable, modifying and jury-rigging weapons, and improving existing systems. His current waiting list is six months and growing, but his clients do not seem to mind.

FUJIMA'S 'MECH BAY (S-9)

Carlos Fujima maintains these facilities, which are open only to MechWarriors who wear Steiner blue. 'Mechs may be stabled here for 10 S-Bills per ton per month. Repairs and resupply are available to all, but Lyran MechWarriors receive a 20 percent discount. Fujima has space for 24 BattleMechs.

MISCELLANEOUS

HOLLIS SECURITY (S-21)

The top security firm in Silesia, Hollis will hire out its guards by the month for anywhere from 500 S-Bills for lightly armed guards to 1,000 S-Bills for armored, laser-armed private security troops able to give BattleMechs a run for their money. Rumors abound that Hollis can, for a price, also fund mercenary units and triad foot soldiers, but so far nothing has been proven.

Vincent Hollis III inherited the business from his father, since then running it with great efficiency. Vincent is now more than 70 years old, however, and he will soon have to turn the helm over to 35-year-old Vincent IV, a loudmouthed wastrel with little administrative skill. The younger Vincent has squandered great sums on the 'Mech games, and now sees the family business as a source of more loot. Rumor has it that he is plotting his father's early demise in order to hasten the transfer of ownership.



ISHER WEAPON SHOP (S-11)

Isher limits its sale of weapons to those who can prove citizenship in Lyran space (even Federated Suns citizens are excluded). A wide variety of personal weapons, from holdout pistols to assault lasers and hand flamers, is available here. Customers are usually corporate security officers, and occasionally mercenaries.

LARSSON CLOTHIERS (S-12)

The elite of Silesia society consider Gunnar Larsson the finest tailor in Solaris. He does not discriminate against non-Lyrans, but Lyrans usually get to him first. Larsson is also a gossip, and it might be possible to learn from him privileged information confided by customers. A Larsson suit costs anywhere from 500 to 1,500 S-Bills.

MURDOCK BROKERS (S-17)

A leading Steiner 'Mech broker, Gabrielle Murdock has had particular success lately, setting up hot MechWarriors with the Overlord and Hammer Stables. Her luck may have run out, however. She is a gambling addict, and her recent run of luck has inspired several triad and Mafia loan sharks to call in their markers. Murdock is currently looking for protection from her more enthusiastic creditors.

NASHAN DIVERSIFIED (S-14)

Nashan's corporate facility on Solaris serves mainly to field-test the firm's new targeting systems and computers. Nashan also allows its analysts to hire out to other corporations, as long as such activities do not threaten Lyran security. Many rival corporations would kill (or commit similar mayhem) to obtain the data and readouts produced in this well-guarded building.

THE ARENAS

Each sector of Solaris maintains a dueling arena. The arenas primarily serve to generate income for the individual governments, but their secondary, more important function is as a source of pride for each House. The victories and defeats of House-sponsored MechWarriors are a visible yardstick by which the prestige and political strength of each House can be measured.

DAVION ARENA

Name: Davion Arena
Location: Black Hills Sector, Solaris City
Class: 5+
Owner: United Federation Corporation
Manager: Abo Kinsholo
Terrain: Variable
Seating Capacity: 76,000
Seating/Viewing: Private booths (closed-circuit trivid; total capacity 2,000), box seats (closed-circuit trivid; total capacity 4,000), general seating (large-format closed-circuit trivid; total capacity 70,000)
Admission Prices (C-Bills): Booths: 100; Box seats: 60; General seating: 35

HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

In 2786 the Federated Suns undertook construction of the largest and most sophisticated arena on Solaris. A consortium of corporations, lumped under the collective title of United Federation Corporation, undertook the actual construction. The area they proposed as a location was indeed vast: four square kilometers located in a defunct industrial area. When UFC began construction of two geothermal power plants nearby, specifically dedicated to supplying the new arena, it became obvious that the Davion Arena was to be no ordinary stadium.

The new arena, dubbed Boreal Reach, featured vast snowfields, glaciers, ice caves, actual snowstorms, and killing subzero temperatures. The Reach was an instant success, its challenging fighting conditions making for great excitement and top-rated broadcasting.

As the years passed, Davion Arena maintained its tradition as an excellent stadium presenting first-class competitions. Little did the residents of Solaris City, or those of the Inner Sphere, realize what UFC was planning. In the wake of the triumphs of the Fourth Succession War, the consortium planned to celebrate the unification of the Federated Suns and the Lyran Commonwealth (and the supposedly inevitable reconquest of the Inner Sphere by the forces of light and justice) with a massive renovation of its famous stadium.

Time seems suspended. We stand in anticipation, our very heartbeats stilled. What will happen? Will it work?

The question is answered in spectacular fashion. A pair of BattleMechs appear, to be instantly surrounded by the frigid terrain of an arctic plain, complete with ice hills, swirling wind, and blowing snow. A cheer erupts from the gathered masses.

The BattleMechs go through a choreographed combat, firing low-powered weapons at one another, demonstrating the holo-technology's true three-dimensional qualities and its weather control. The cold weather permits the 'Mechs to keep firing long after they would normally have to shut down, but it restricts the movement of their actuators.

Abruptly, the terrain shifts. Suddenly, the two 'Mechs are silhouetted against a scene of hell. Jagged rock mounds replace the ice hills, rivers of lava replace the ice floes, firestorms rage in place of blizzards. A second, louder cheer goes up. Now, the weather-control systems heat the terrain to almost 100 degrees Centigrade in seconds, making the 'Mechs move slowly, picking their shots, struggling to conserve heat.

Again, the scene changes. Now it is a dense pine forest, with grassy knolls and colorful wildflowers replacing the rock mounds. In this sylvan paradise, the two vast war machines continue their staged fight. Using trees for cover, they splash into the shallow streams in a vain attempt to reduce their heat.

The cheers are deafening, and grow more so as the scene shifts through all the other options—jungle, grassy plains, devastated cityscape, even underwater (although this last is more visual than physical, and the 'Mechs move freely). As the demonstration ends and the announcer declares Davion Arena officially reopened, I feel a deep surge of pride. Here, indeed, is what the Federated Commonwealth can offer the Inner Sphere. Here, indeed, is proof of the inevitability of change and the triumph of freedom.

—"At the Grand Reopening, A Personal View," by Sydra Trask. *Insider Magazine*, February 3039, New Avalon

Hot and cold, light and dark, sunlight and shadow—the Boreal Reach proved to be my favorite arena. There I could observe the titanic metal warriors meeting in mortal combat on a frozen plain like grim Nordic gods, and (just incidentally) also wager a C-Bill or two on the outcome.

My companions were thinkers and dreamers such as myself, all souls too fragile for the outside world, who came together to breathe in the ambience of combat, the thrill of battle. We watched on a friend's closed-circuit trivid set, which he had tapped into the main F-C communications trunk, allowing us to watch for free and unedited. I vividly recall one night when we lounged about, sipping PPCs and nibbling kincha. My arm was around a slim girl's waist, my eyes on the trivid drama unfolding before us, my mind on the Celtic epic poem that I was composing; life had never seemed so grand.

The two BattleMechs seemed well-matched—a *Thunderbolt* and a *Warhammer*—twin weapons wielded by ancient gods, now meeting on a battlefield well-suited to their titanic majesty. The ice-fields glimmered white and frost-blue, vividly reproduced in my friend's living room as if we were ourselves gods, watching the puny struggles of mortals far below us.

Some minutes passed while the two combatants searched for one another. I had been told that the cold weather and blowing snow helped reduce infrared signatures, and consequently made it harder for the 'Mechs to see each other.

"This is boring," said my companion, a slim blonde dressed all in black. "What's on CNN?"

"Ssh!" I hissed. "Don't you understand what we're seeing? These are the new war gods, and we are privileged to be watching them for free."

She rolled her eyes. "I'd still like to see The Steinhearts. Viola is thinking of having an affair with Jacob Morik."

I shook my head sadly. What a little fool. How little she knew.

—From *My Life: An Experiment in Prose*, by poet Terrence Dovish, ca. 2944

In 3028, a mercenary unit called the Gray Death Legion recovered a Star League data core on Helm. The information derived from this core formed the basis of the technological renaissance that swept the Inner Sphere after the Fourth Succession War.

In addition to the military secrets, the core contained information that led to significant advances in holotechnology, communications, visual display, and information transferral. As these secrets were revealed to trusted Davion and Steiner corporations, UFC began to develop plans for their masterstroke on Solaris.

The new Davion arena would be a state-of-the-art facility, exploiting all aspects of the new technology. Holographic displays of terrain would be combined with actual three-dimensional obstacles to give the appearance and feel of real terrain features. Complete climate control could increase the arena's temperature to over 100 degrees Centigrade or take it to far below freezing, while mist, snow, wind, and rain could also be simulated with perfect realism.

The renovation took nearly three years, during which time combat in the Boreal Reach was severely curtailed. The grand opening was intended to coincide with Hanse Davion's triumphant campaigns against House Kurita in 3039. While Davion's invasion was anything but triumphant, the consortium that built the arena, including Federated Boeing, Mendham Electronics, McRae Quik Construct, and even the ubiquitous Interconnectedness Unlimited, had every reason to be proud.

Davion Arena has since become the most popular of Solaris City's arenas, with the infinitely variable terrain making every contest unique. The F-C media has sought to make broadcasts from Davion Arena available throughout the Inner Sphere. Making inroads into the Capellan and Combine markets has been difficult, but recent events have made the Combine relax its censorship standards, enabling broadcasting to begin on many of its worlds. As these broadcasts have earned universally high ratings, it seems likely that such operations will be expanded.

Since the death of Hanse Davion, the former Prince of the Federated Suns, a movement is afoot to rename the arena the Hanse Davion Memorial Arena. Needless to say, some dissident factions on Solaris will fight this tooth and nail.

CAPABILITIES

The astonishing realism of Davion Arena is achieved through a system of computers, holographic projectors, variable solid-terrain modules, weather, temperature, and sound systems, all lumped together under the name of Universal Terrain Generation System, or UTGS.

The Gray Death Legion's Star League data core included schematics for holographic projectors that could produce images of unheralded quality and definition. Despite the realism of the images created, however, they were still only projections, with neither true mass nor volume. Engineers solved this problem by projecting the holographic images onto solid objects of roughly the same size and shape as the image. A fir tree, for example, is roughly conical, so a holographic image of the tree might be projected onto a cone-shaped obstacle, giving the tree image apparent mass and volume. Under holographic projection, a collection of metal boxes becomes, for example, a craggy heap of stones. A long box becomes a building, a clump of metal cylinders becomes a stand of deciduous trees resplendent in seasonal colors, a low mound becomes a whispering sand dune, and so on.

Of course, as 'Mech pilots are firing their weapons at full power, these terrain features are destroyed with some regularity, and so are designed to be replaced quickly and cheaply. Though heavy plastic shields and armored cupolas protect the holographic equipment, these projectors regularly take damage, often to the point of destruction. Replacing them is one of the arena's greatest expenses.


OFFICIAL COLLECTORS EDITION
DAVION
ARENA
PROGRAM
25.00 C-BILLS
3039
GRAND OPENING
Interconnectedness Unlimited

COMBAT IN THE DAVION ARENA

Very few conditions are impossible in the Davion Arena. The controller can program the arena's computer to create and simulate anything from the sea floor to the meteor-ravaged surface of an airless moon, with varying degrees of realism.

Undersea and vacuum conditions are the most difficult and the least realistic. Aerosols and limited lighting simulate range restrictions and darkness underwater, and governors may be installed on 'Mech actuators to duplicate movement restrictions. Low gravity is impossible to duplicate, but movement rates would remain the same relative to other 'Mechs in any event. While ranges and energy-weapon effectiveness are both markedly improved without the attenuating effects of an atmosphere, such conditions are difficult to duplicate, and airless conditions are usually simulated with lighting and terrain only.

The arena is at its best when creating Terran-type terrain—forests, swamps, deserts, mountains, and even the arctic tundra that originally made the Davion stadium famous. After one particularly brutal encounter in a dense forest, a victorious MechWarrior commented that the simulation was so realistic he could "almost smell the pines."

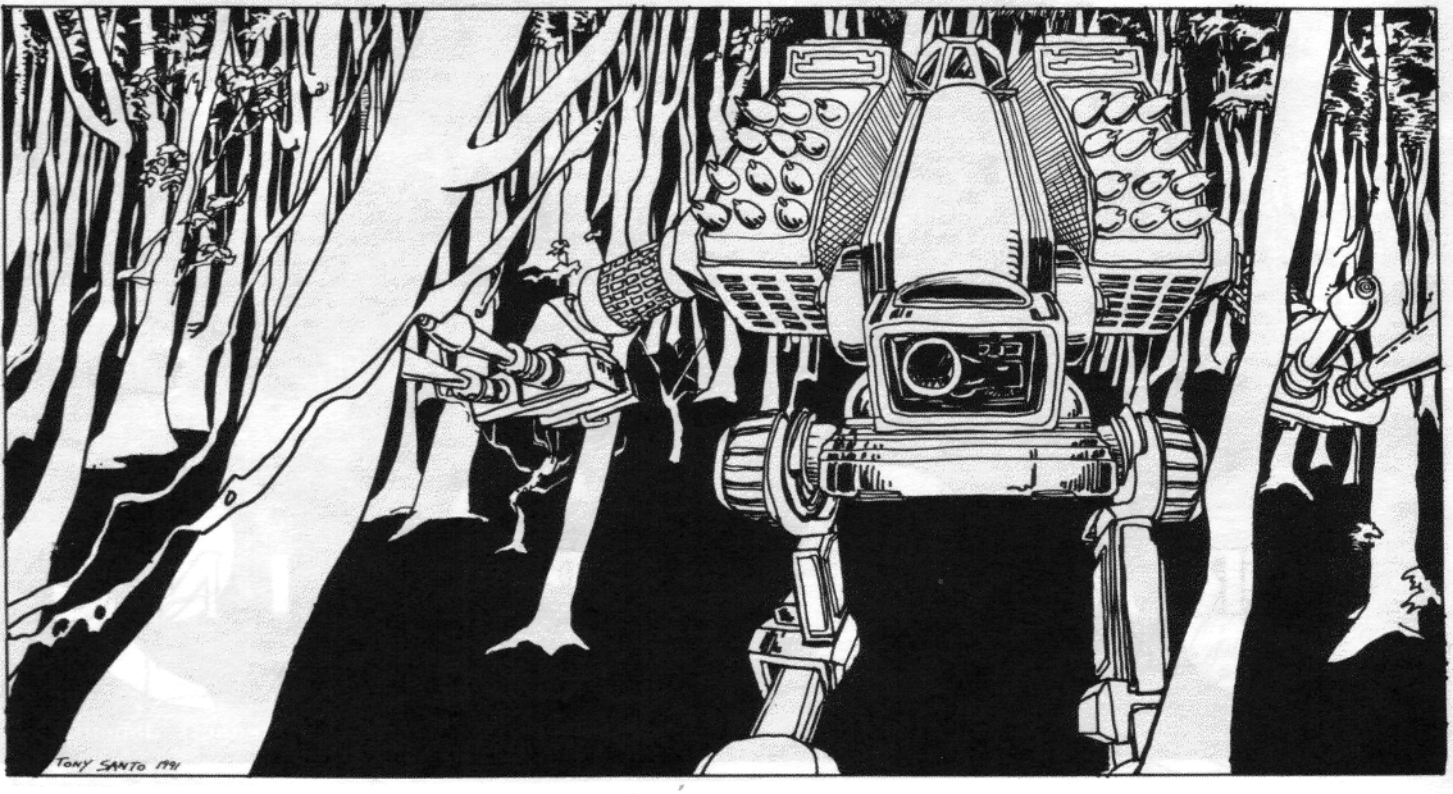
MechWarriors and spectators alike have flocked to the arena, eager to see the new technologies tested to the limit. Revenues of other arenas have declined as a result, forcing their owners to consider upgrading their facilities. It is probably true that, once the novelty of the new arena wears off, spectators will begin to drift back to the other arenas.

Last night the Davion Arena was the scene of an exciting tag-team match between the O'Bannon Sisters and the up-and-coming team of Anson Rollins and Magya Iorcu. The arena's technical wizards outdid themselves, accurately duplicating the airless surface of Deimos, the Martian satellite. The sky was night-black, with innumerable points of light representing the stars. The ground was pitted with large and small craters and low, rounded hills.

Tanya O'Bannon and Iorcu were the initial combatants, striding majestically across the barren landscape in twin *Marauders*. Acquisition was quick, because heat sources stood out like torches in the darkness of the ravaged scene. PPCs and autocannon fire flared, with both sides scoring hits at surprisingly long range. The equally matched 'Mechs moved closer, weapons still firing. These women were going for broke, ignoring heat accumulation and slamming into one another with unbelievable fury. It was just a matter of who would fold first.

A heavy hit to Iorcu's leg decided matters. Once a flare of blue-white light and a spray of shattered armor signalled a penetrating hit, Iorcu's movement grew slow and painful almost immediately. Her leg actuator, specially modified to duplicate the conditions of exposure to vacuum where none really existed, had frozen, and she was on the ropes.

Iorcu stumbled back toward her starting position, seeking to switch with Rollins. O'Bannon pursued, adding as much new damage as possible before breaking off to let her heat dissipate and to assess her own damage. By this time, everyone knew that this would be a fight to remember.



THE FACTORY

Name: The Factory
Location: Montenegro Sector, Solaris City
Class: 5+
Owner: Free Worlds Industries
Manager: Viscount Jarvo Greenwald
Terrain: Industrial/Urban
Seating Capacity: 36,000
Seating and Viewing Options: Box seats (closed-circuit trivid; total capacity 6,000), general seating (large-format hirez flatscreen; total capacity 30,000)
Admission Prices (C-Bills): Box seats: 75; General seating: 20

HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

Free Worlds Industries, a limited partnership formed in the late 2700s, undertook the massive project of converting an abandoned industrial complex into a 'Mech battlefield that would serve as House Marik's showpiece on Solaris. The Factory, as it came to be called, had originally been a production facility for shuttlecraft. Industrial 'Mechs carried out most of the work, and so much of the building's interior was already scaled to 'Mech size, making it a perfect combat arena.

CONFIDENTIAL
TO: Nora Hammaker, CEO, Earthwerks-FWL
FROM: Carlton Bergman, CEO, Irian Technologies
RE: Solaris VII arena

This is to inform you that Irian has recently obtained the abandoned Fleetham Industrial Park on Solaris VII. Rather than restoring it to working condition, we have been toying with the idea of converting it to a 'Mech arena, to serve as the official Free Worlds League stadium, just as the other Great Houses have done with their own arenas.

Despite our high level of resources and considerable technological expertise, Irian cannot handle such an undertaking alone. For this reason, we have decided to contact you informally to discuss the possibility of forming a consortium or limited partnership to investigate the project.

Should you find that this is a feasible project (we can make our own expense and potential income projections available to you), I would be happy to meet with you personally to discuss business arrangements and any other partners you may wish to involve. My thanks.

Scotty—Can you believe this guy? "Our high level of resources and considerable technological expertise..." Bergman can never resist sticking it to his competitors, even if he's asking for their help. All the same, it sounds like an interesting idea. Do you think it's worth a brief chat with the SOB?

Conversion of the facility was easy, consisting primarily of structural reinforcement and installation of holovid equipment. The twisted wreckage of the interior, which had become even more cluttered and nightmarish over the years, was left in place. Later management went so far as to add more scrap to the mix, causing even more headaches for MechWarriors. Very little of the original structure remains, and what there is resembles a twisted nightmare of blasted metal and concrete.

Located nearby, spectator facilities consist of expensive box seats and crowded general seating. From the beginning, The Factory was popular, and it is a rare fight that does not attract a packed house, despite the limited facilities.

Initial reviews of the arena were good, especially after early battles in which multiple light 'Mechs took on much heavier opponents proved exciting. The battered, limited terrain favored faster, more maneuverable 'Mechs, and the massive amounts of metal and other obstacles effectively limited much conventional detection and tracking gear.

With each match, The Factory grew more and more devastated. In The Factory there was no middle ground. A fight was either a thrilling blend of tactics and brute force combined to produce an exciting, challenging battle, or it was a boring affair of two 'Mechs hiding and sniping at each other until time ran out. Daring MechWarriors were rewarded with either quick victory or defeat, while cautious warriors merely survived dull draws that the long-suffering crowd only tolerated. Additional wreckage and terrain changes served only to heighten the distinction between battle styles.

After the doldrums that followed the Fourth Succession War, Free Worlds Industrial revamped The Factory's interior with various lighting and climate-control devices to make it competitive with the improved technologies of the other arenas. The smashing success of the Davion Arena has since cut into The Factory's popularity, and so its owners have begun to consider further renovation, which is currently in only the discussion stage.

CAPABILITIES

The basic layout of the Fleetham Industrial Complex was purposely maintained when construction began. Additional walls, braces, and structural improvements were made to match existing architecture, even going so far as to make new girders appear rusted and pitted with age while retaining their original structural strength. The Fleetham facility was, of course, never intended to be a site for BattleMech combat, and so some areas required extensive renovation to become suitable.

The previous owners had left behind much of the original, obsolete manufacturing equipment when they abandoned the site—assembly lines, cranes, hydraulic presses, forges, and other miscellaneous debris. These remained as they were and, over the years, were systematically reduced to wreckage not recognizable as the machines they once were. New pieces of obsolete industrial machinery are added periodically, usually dumped at random, with no regard for their effect on tactics and movement. Combatants have often accused the owners of favoritism when a new piece of junk shows up in an inconvenient area. So far, the charge seems specious, for the new obstacles impede Marik fighters as much as everyone else.

Holovid cameras are liberally sprinkled throughout the arena. The Factory has excellent broadcast facilities, and a good sportscaster can make even the dullest of matches seem interesting, splicing in statistics and scenes from past fights whenever he needs to liven things up.

The Factory boasts few technical features that require control from outside. Lighting and climate controls were added almost as an afterthought, and the control booth, located in the seating structure, exists primarily to supervise broadcasting and spectator viewing.

The arena's weakest point is its seating. Box seats are reasonably comfortable, and holovid transmissions are of high quality, but general seating is cramped, crowded, and uncomfortable. The close quarters tend to shorten tempers, leading to frequent fights. Spectators are seated in colored sections corresponding to the House fighters they support. The value of this system is questionable because dishonesty and varying levels of support make some sections overflow into neighboring areas.

All things considered, The Factory has seen better days, and declining revenues are forcing its managers to consider either selling the facility or making the massive investments it would take to improve it. Recent political events, including closer relations between House Marik and House Liao, may result in some technological exchanges and mutual renovation projects.

ALLEN STEVENS: So, Chet, I understand that you had some tracking problems during your last bout in The Factory.
CHET MARX: Well, yes, Bill—
AS: Al.
CM: Right. Al. Anyway, Al, as you know, the electromag sources in The Factory, along with all that wreckage and scrap metal...well, you can probably imagine...
AS: YEAH.
CM: It drives our EM and tracking gear friggin' crazy...Can I say friggin'?
AS: Yes, I think so. Dave, can he say friggin'? Yes, that's fine.
CM: Anyway, as I was saying, my tracking gear was going nuts. You know, locking onto piles of scrap, tracking falling girders, giving me false detect signals...Jeez, I even had an overheat warning go off before I'd even fired a shot. By the time I found Wiggins, I was ready to shut everything down and go 100 percent visual. Thank god I found the bastard when I did. Can I say bastard?
AS: I think so.
CM: Well, it turns out that Wiggins is having the same trouble! So I'm thinking, I'll be damned, let's plug this slimeball. I open up and catch him friggin' flatfooted!
AS: We're watching footage of your run-in with Wiggins right now. It seems as if your weapons aren't hitting very well for such close range.
CM: Well, like I said, the lock-ons were pretty hard. But you'll notice that I did beat him in spite of all of that, didn't I?
AS: You sure did, Chet. Well, I'd like to thank you for being with us today.
CM: My pleasure, Bob.
AS: Al.
CM: Right. Al.
AS: And now we go to Shep Balaban on the Kolovis River, where we'll learn the fly fishing secrets of...

—Clip from *The Solaran Sportsman*, Solaris Broadcasting, August 10, 3028



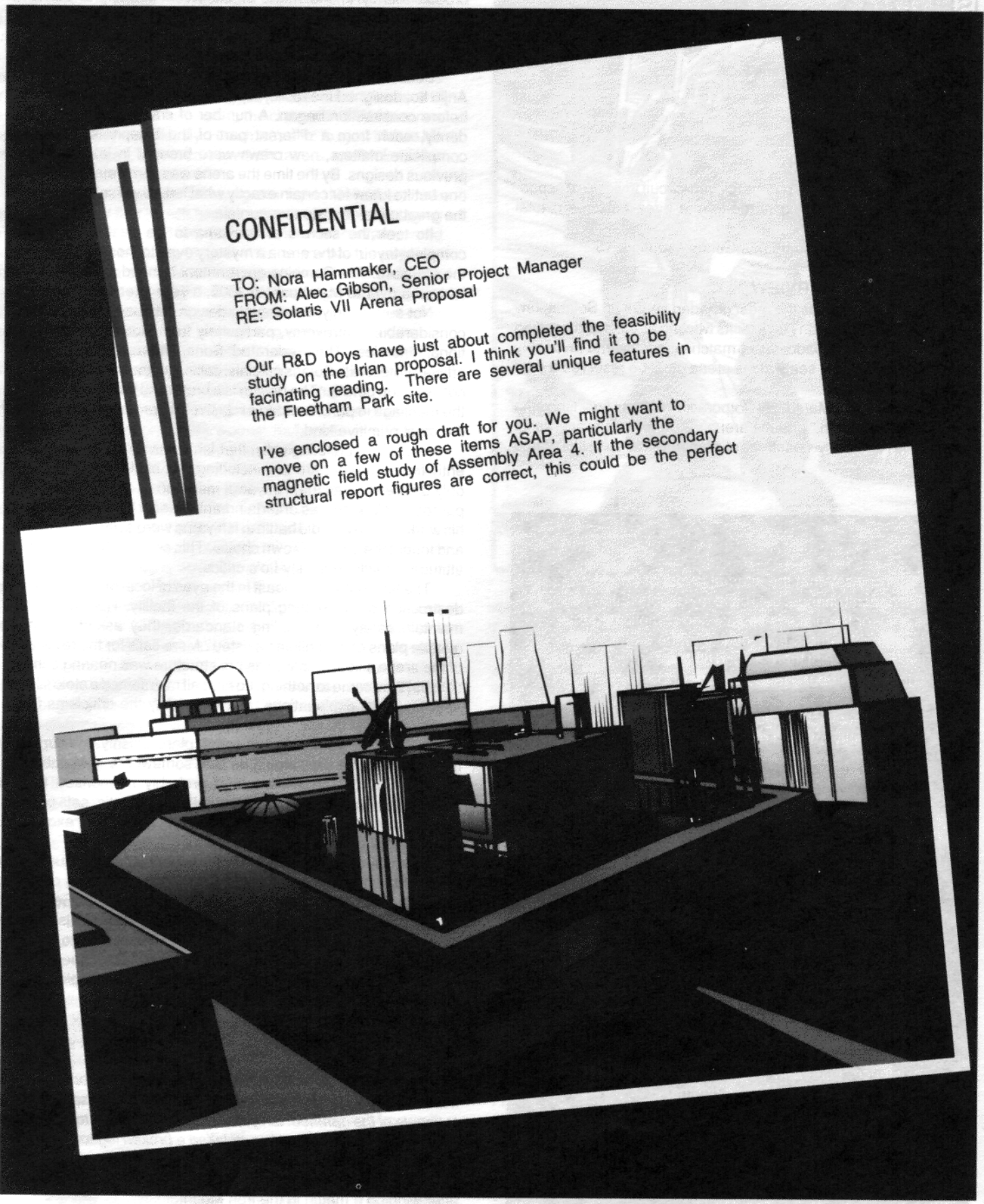
COMBAT IN THE FACTORY

The Factory can be a brutal crucible full of noise and violence or a blind alley where little happens. Active, aggressive warriors seem to like this arena, especially for open matches in which a skilled warrior in a light or medium 'Mech takes on a heavier opponent. Some say The Factory favors the thinking MechWarrior, but it is a delicate combination of intellect and daring that makes for success in the arena. Too much caution can result in a meaningless draw, the kind of fight that drives off viewers and sends ratings plummeting.

Outside-controlled factors are limited. Lighting may change unexpectedly, or perhaps the heat and humidity, but the jagged terrain of The Factory removes the need for any radical alterations or for the mines and vibrabombs favored at other arenas.

Many MechWarriors claim that The Factory itself is a greater enemy than any human. Though the basic structure of the complex remains sound, and is continually strengthened and repaired, very little maintenance is performed on the interior beyond dumping in more scrap metal, obsolete equipment, and debris. Floors are covered with jagged wreckage, overhead girders and cranes are in constant danger of collapse, and elevators work only sporadically, tending to stop at inopportune moments, trapping desperate MechWarriors between floors. Other hazards include pitfalls that open unexpectedly, ejected or unexploded ammo that goes off as a 'Mech passes by, and magnetic disturbances that wreck lock-ons and frustrate tracking. All these hazards combine to make The Factory a deadly arena even when not actually the scene of combat.

Though mobile 'Mechs such as *Stingers* and *Locusts* can use the terrain to outfight larger vehicles, wreckage has a tendency to appear in unwanted locations, tripping fast-moving 'Mechs. Heavier machines and those designed for city-fighting, such as the *UrbanMech*, tend to find strong positions and hold them, firing as opportunities arise. For this reason, fights between smaller 'Mechs tend to be more mobile, with more furious action and quicker conclusions.


CONFIDENTIAL
TO: Nora Hammaker, CEO
FROM: Alec Gibson, Senior Project Manager
RE: Solaris VII Arena Proposal
Our R&D boys have just about completed the feasibility study on the Irian proposal. I think you'll find it to be facinating reading. There are several unique features in the Fleetham Park site.
I've enclosed a rough draft for you. We might want to move on a few of these items ASAP, particularly the magnetic field study of Assembly Area 4. If the secondary structural report figures are correct, this could be the perfect

ISHIYAMA

Name: Ishiyama
Location: Kobe Sector, Solaris City
Class: 5+
Owner: Matabushi, Inc.
Manager: Milos Kashanski
Terrain: Subterranean
Seating Capacity: 34,000
Seating/Viewing: Private booths (closed-circuit trivid; total capacity 1,000), general seating (large-format hirez flatscreen; total capacity 33,000)
Admission (C-Bills): Booths: 75; General seating: 15

HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

Ishiyama is perhaps the most dreaded venue on Solaris; few MechWarriors profess any love for its twisting tunnels and echoing caverns. Yet, trivid broadcasts of matches in Ishiyama invariably draw high ratings, and seats at the arena must be reserved a year or more in advance.

Managed by the Matabushi Corporation, a Kurita firm, Ishiyama means "iron mountain," and the arena's exterior certainly lives up to its name. A craggy construct of titanium and steel, Ishiyama broods silently in the midst of the Kobe quarter, at sundown silhouetted in the blood-red light of the dying sun. The mysteries that lie at Ishiyama's heart are known to but a few, and and these have been sworn to secrecy.

Construction on the arena began in 2785. One man, architect Anjin Ito, designed the facility, splitting the plans into several parts before construction began. A number of crews worked independently, each from a different part of the blueprints. To further complicate matters, new crews were brought in later to modify previous designs. By the time the arena was completed in 2787, no one but Ito knew for certain exactly what lurked within the interior of the great metal and stone mountain.

Ito took the secrets of Ishiyama to his death, leaving the complete layout of the arena a mystery even to those who manage the structure. The Combine government handed management of Ishiyama over to Matabushi in 2805, a year after Ito's death.

Not surprisingly, the arena's design has been the subject of considerable controversy, particularly from House Kurita's traditional enemies. The Federated Suns ambassador lodged an official protest with Solaris officials, calling for the revocation of Ito's construction permit. "The design is a brutal and barbaric one," read the message in part, "created exclusively to promote bloodshed of the most primitive kind."

Ito replied, quite logically, that Ishiyama functioned no differently from the other arenas, including that of House Davion. The only difference was that Ishiyama made no secret of its intended purpose—slaughter as entertainment. Ito saw little need to justify his work. Those who did battle in Ishiyama were aware of its nature, and fought there by their own choice. This seemingly cold-blooded attitude did little to mollify Ito's critics.

The final outrage, at least in the eyes of local officials, was the destruction of all existing plans of the facility. How could they maintain safety and building standards, they asked, when no reliable plans of the building existed? More calls for the revocation of the arena's license came as the structure was nearing completion, but they came to nothing. Ito himself maintained a stoic silence after his initial explanations, and eventually the criticisms faded away.

No one knows whether any other plans of Ishiyama survived. If so, at least one copy would be filed somewhere in Matabushi's corporate offices on Albiero, and probably memorized by the manager of that site. Numerous so-called "authentic" sets of plans for Ishiyama have surfaced over the years, but without exception, they have all been fake.

From the start, Ishiyama has been a popular arena. Audiences went wild for the exotic interior and vast, natural-looking caverns; media facilities within the arena are also extensive. Seating is limited, which made tickets hard to come by. Kurita officials cracked down hard on black marketeers, who sold tickets to popular matches for as much as a hundred times their face value. Though the practice is still a crime, the scalpers continue, making huge profits overnight when important matches come up.

CAPABILITIES

How would I describe Ishiyama? Perhaps you could say that it is the closest one can come in mortal existence to sampling the torments of the damned. Ishiyama is Solaris' answer to hell. I have even heard that Shaitan himself faked a broken leg to get out of a match in Ishiyama.

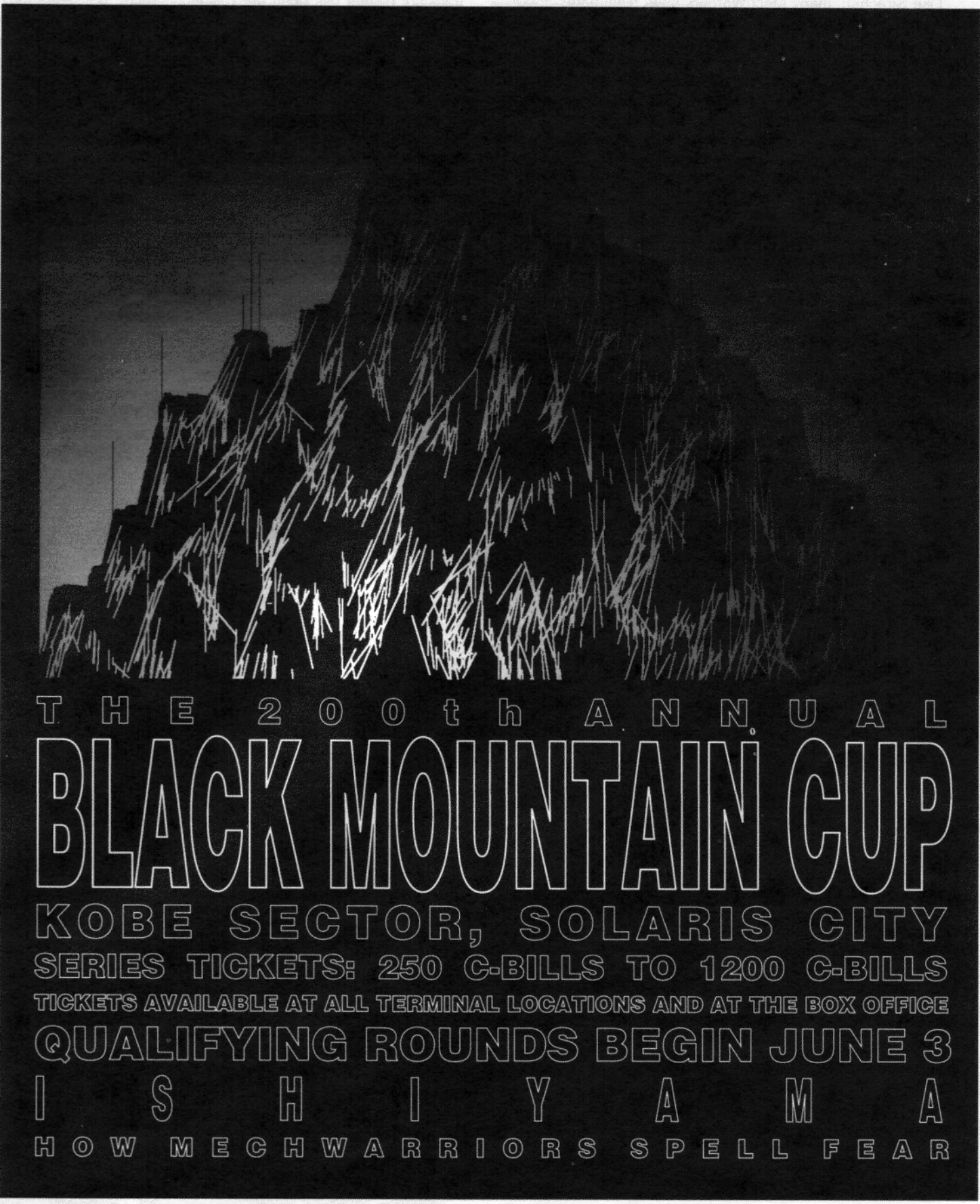
—MechWarrior Anja Singharaj, overheard in Thor's Shieldhall after winning a match in the Iron Mountain

They say that the internal layout of Iron Mountain doesn't change, but I have my doubts. Either this is a lie, or the place is so vast and complicated that few MechWarriors ever deal with the same terrain twice. I've fought there a good half-dozen times, and I don't remember ever being able to identify a single feature.

My recollections, for what they are worth, are as follows: Ishiyama is a place of twisting tunnels, vast artificial caverns, columns, stalactites, deadfalls, pits, dead ends, and shifting passages. The place can be eerie darkness one moment, blinding light the next. Carefully laid plans go down the tubes in an instant when a secret door opens to disgorge a horde of enemy 'Mechs. A seemingly solid floor might turn out to be an elevator to the next level or a bottomless pit to swallow up both you and your 'Mech.

Ishiyama is another world, separate from Solaris City and the other arenas, a place where death can come at any moment, and nothing is certain. Ishiyama was a place of dread for me. Even in these long years since my retirement I still sometimes wake up in a cold sweat, shrieking with nightmares about those endless corridors. I have long since exhausted my need to fight, and I live contented with my peaceful existence. I can only pity those who must battle in Ishiyama's dark, frightening depths.

—MechWarrior Allan Strachan, upon his retirement in 3030, in "It Was Like This," a weekly column in the *Kobe Commentator*


THE 200th ANNUAL
BLACK MOUNTAIN CUP
KOBE SECTOR, SOLARIS CITY
SERIES TICKETS: 250 C-BILLS TO 1200 C-BILLS
TICKETS AVAILABLE AT ALL TERMINAL LOCATIONS AND AT THE BOX OFFICE
QUALIFYING ROUNDS BEGIN JUNE 3
ISHIYAMA
HOW MECHWARRIORS SPELL FEAR

Like Strachan, many MechWarriors have nightmares about Ishiyama. The tunnels and caverns are only the tip of the iceberg; hidden passages, traps, variable lighting, and multi-level combat arenas complicate matters to a horrific degree. Only the rich purses offered for combat in Iron Mountain keep MechWarriors coming.

Though no one knows the complete layout of Ishiyama except possibly the manager, each section is controlled by a level boss who operates lighting, climate, broadcasting, secret passages, elevators, and traps. Even the number of level bosses is a closely guarded secret. Some speculate that each level has several bosses, each unaware of the others' area layouts.

The arena's manager and level bosses are all implicitly trusted with a floor plan, which is considered a Kurita state secret. Never in Ishiyama's history has a manager or boss betrayed his trust and revealed any of the arena's secrets (or so the Kuritans claim; some say that the managers are as susceptible to bribery as any other government officials). Maintenance crews rotate constantly, and few have any real knowledge of the arena's layout.

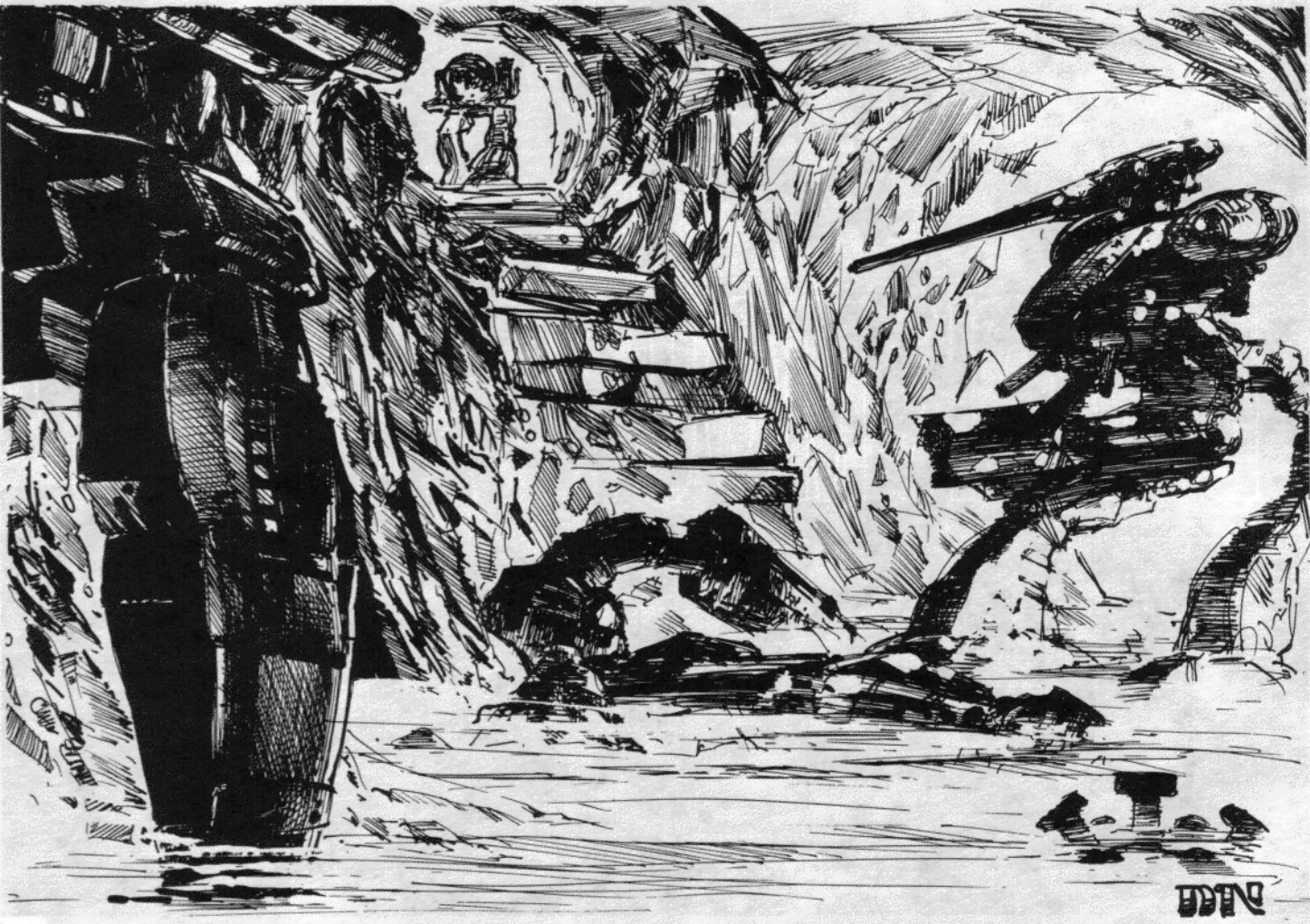
COMBAT IN ISHIYAMA

The eerie darkness of Ishiyama is enough to drive the bravest MechWarrior to distraction. Apparently designed by sadistic imps intent on making honest fighters suffer, Ishiyama succeeds on virtually every level. Tight, cramped tunnels frustrate sighting and tracking; hidden pits open unexpectedly; secret passages may appear to disgorge hordes of bloodthirsty enemies; a sneak attack from the rear may score deadly damage, while the restricted terrain prevents the victim from turning around. All these hazards and more combine to dog those who come to do battle in the Iron Mountain.

BattleMechs are transported to random locations in the arena with their sensors and vision systems disabled, then let loose to fight. Perhaps the most nerve-wracking part of combat in Ishiyama is the desperate uncertainty of where a MechWarrior will end up. Many is the combatant who finds himself in a narrow passage with an enemy directly behind him, or in the middle of a vast, open cavern, at the mercy of whoever opens fire.

After getting his bearings, a MechWarrior's troubles have only just begun. Sadistic arena managers place pits in dangerous locations, to be blundered into by the first 'Mech to approach. Mines are also scattered about in areas certain to be traversed by moving 'Mechs.

The blind challenge, one of the most dreaded forms of combat, is unique. A BattleMech is set against a randomly selected opponent of similar mass, but the MechWarrior has no idea what type of opponent he will face until he actually sees the opposing 'Mech. These combats are especially popular, and the blind challenge is usually accepted by young MechWarriors eager to prove themselves.



THE JUNGLE

Name: The Jungle
Location: Cathay Sector, Solaris City
Class: 5+
Owner: Capellan Confederation Sports Collective
Manager: Shih Ling
Terrain: Jungle
Seating Capacity: 51,000
Seating/Viewing: Private booths (closed-circuit trivid; total capacity 1,000), general seating (large-format hirez flatscreen; total capacity 30,000), standing enclosure (flatscreen monitors; total capacity 20,000)
Admission (C-Bills): Booths: 100; General seating: 25; Standing: 10

HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

The vast structure that is The Jungle was originally designed as a Buddhist sanctuary. The project was terminated in 2770 when construction was only half-completed, but the Capellan government, eager to create its own arena on Solaris, took over and assigned the task of completing construction to industrialist Geraldo Ling. A practical and profit-minded man, Ling commissioned the famous Capellan architect, Vladmir Veltovic, to redesign and complete the arena. Veltovic was known as a Capellan chauvinist, a fanatical devotee of the Confederation's struggle against House Davion.

Today, The Jungle is a huge, pyramidal, ferrocrete stadium, with smaller attached structures housing 'Mech facilities, viewing areas, and maintenance sectors. The arena is an impressive, if somewhat austere and intimidating sight, a response fully in keeping with Veltovic's intentions.

The arena's interior belies its dour outer shell. It is a lush wonderland, a jungle crisscrossed with streams, sprinkled with hidden pitfalls, mines, vibrabombs, and other surprises. The Cathay arena represents an attempt to duplicate the jungles of Spica, and is one of the most dreaded venues on Solaris. The congested terrain and hot, humid air combine to force MechWarriors into early, furious combat, with many matches degenerating into hand-to-hand slugging matches.

The Ling family continues to control the arena, all concessions, and game broadcasts. No one disputes that the arena is a major asset to both the Lings and the Confederation. Seated in luxurious booths reached by private underground tunnels, the wealthy can observe the action in private holovid tanks, using individual control panels to switch from camera to camera at will. The management sees to it that those who can afford box seats lack for nothing, including food and drink served to each box. Many boxes feature private dining salons, luxurious restrooms, anterooms, and even conference rooms, where meetings take place and business deals are struck, with 'Mech battle-viewing as an aperitif.

The next step down in price and luxury is general seating: hard wooden benches from which spectators can view battles on gigantic hirez flatscreens. Vendors roam the crowd hawking food and drink, and Capellan Reserve security guards constantly patrol to keep order. Arena security duty is considered a great honor for reservists, and only the incorruptible are chosen for the task.

The sweltering fastness of the Cathay Arena was like a great, green heart, pulsing with the songs of insects, the humid air almost solid. The 'Mech battles there were particularly brutal, for the heat and poor conditions almost dictated that combat be quick and decisive.

One particular combat stuck in my mind. This was the one between David Chelsey, a known Davion sympathizer, and Steven Peller, a sworn rival from a FWL stable.

As the announcer informed us that the heat and humidity had been set to maximum, the two metal giants moved with painful slowness, their great legs tearing up sod, arms sweeping up great masses of jungle vines and vegetation, splintering trees, splashing through streams. Chelsey had a *Crusader*, splendidly painted in mottled green and brown, a Davion sun-and-sword symbol on its head. Peller piloted a *Thunderbolt*, resplendent in green, with a black Marik eagle on its shoulder plate.

In this terrain, the two 'Mechs did not immediately sight one another. The cameras kept switching back and forth between the combatants, with the announcer chattering away about Chelsey and Peller's respective records and how difficult it was to fight in this arena. After several nail-biting minutes, Chelsey's *Crusader* whirled in an almost human crouch; he had seen Peller.

But Peller was quick. He dodged into a thick growth of trees as missiles tore up chunks of soil and vegetation. He knew the arena. Now that contact had been made, victory would have to come swiftly. His 'Mech moved like lightning, running through the thick terrain, nimbly avoiding disaster to strike Chelsey's *Crusader*, sending it staggering. Chelsey tried to respond, but the heat and humidity were too much. His shots went wide and his attempted evasions were slow and clumsy.

Peller fired at close range, and Chelsey staggered again. His 'Mech's foot slipped along the bank of a stream, and he crashed slowly to the ground. As the announcer's voice rose to a hysterical babble, Chelsey's *Crusader* hit the floor, and a massive explosion obscured its head and chest.

"It's a mine!" shrieked the announcer. "Chelsey's hit a mine! He's had it now!"

He had that right. Struggling to rise, a desperate Chelsey tried to shake off the effects of the mine that had blasted his 'Mech's head and torso. A kick from Peller sent Chelsey down once more, and just as Peller triggered another volley, the explosive bolts on the *Crusader*'s head fired, ejecting Chelsey to safety.

"That's it! Chelsey's conceded! It's all over!"

I looked down at my watch. From the time first contact was made, the battle had lasted a mere five minutes.

The standing enclosures are a crowded, foul-smelling, close-packed sea of humanity, where small black-and-white monitors relay the action to the area, and fights often break out as spectators jostle for the best view. Reservists and private security are responsible for keeping order, and they will brook few violations. It is not uncommon for security guards to hit an entire wing of the standing enclosures with stun-gas to prevent or end a riot; more than a few spectators have been crushed or suffocated during such incidents. The Lings accept these incidents philosophically, and usually respond by hiring more guards.

One of Veltovic's greatest design miscalculations was in underestimating the need for restrooms in the general seating and standing-room areas. Apparently believing that sheer patriotism would keep citizens in the stands and away from the facilities, Veltovic left room for very few. Long lines are almost constant in the general seating area, while spectators in the standing enclosure, packed like a tin of Carmen Bay sand shrimp, often forgo even trying to reach the restrooms, which adds to the already unpleasant odor of the standing area.

The arena is much better equipped with betting areas than sanitary facilities. Numerous booths where spectators may queue up and place their bets are scattered throughout the seating areas. Private boxes have individual betting terminals.

CAPABILITIES

As The Jungle continues to be a source of great national pride, even after the humiliations of the Fourth Succession War, Capellan authorities spare no expense to maintain its facilities at peak level. 'Mech repair bays can service a dozen BattleMechs at a time; technical expertise and spare parts stores are on a par with the finest military installations.

BattleMechs arrive at the underground service bunker via elevators located in concrete structures on the surface, and then still more elevators transport them to the interior of the arena.

Inside the jungle-choked arena, numerous holovid cameras are cleverly camouflaged and hardened to reduce damage from stray hits. Gardeners constantly sculpt and reshape the interior terrain to prevent MechWarriors from becoming too familiar with the layout. A jungle stream that runs directly through the middle of the arena one week may appear in another spot the following week or else vanish completely the next.

Mines, vibrabombs, and other booby traps are electronically controlled from the arena's command center, and are deactivated before maintenance crews enter the interior. The arena is also a popular destination for tourists, sightseers, and even picnicking families, and so the Lings are careful to keep the interior safe. The arena's original role as a Buddhist garden is still evident, with some areas notable for their striking beauty.

The arena command bunker is located under ten meters of ferrocrete at the center of the arena. Here, the arena manager and technical crew control all aspects of the combat—weather, temperature, humidity, location of active mines and traps, broadcasting, and communications. Scrupulously maintained and constantly refurbished by the Capellans, The Jungle's command center is one of the most sophisticated on Solaris, rivaled only by the Davion Arena. Rumor has it that the Capellans intend to enhance their arena's capabilities by duplicating House Davion's impressive holographic technology, but nothing has been confirmed so far.

In many ways, The Jungle was the culmination of Veltovic's entire career and design philosophy. His devotion to the Capellan cause, as well as his fanatic egotism, are clearly revealed in the following letter written to his friend Orman Jei in 2796:

"The arena is the ultimate expression of my belief that architecture serves the state. You should see it, Orman—or perhaps you already have in the triumphant trivid broadcasts from Solaris. If so, I promise you that the vids cannot do this structure justice. I believe I have succeeded beyond my dreams in my intention to impress the citizens with the sheer magnitude and monolithic authority of the state. It is a tribute to the unwavering strength of the Confederation. The Jungle, as we have named the arena, symbolizes Capellan strength and unity, and will secure my place as one of the Chancellor's most loyal and dedicated servants."

The opening of the arena, and the attendant hubbub and acclaim, brought Veltovic to the pinnacle of his career, and also marked the beginning of his decline as an influence on Inner Sphere architecture. When his "Monument to the Inevitable Triumph of House Liao" on Teng was condemned by Chancellor Warren Igor as "an obscenity and an affront to the decency of the Capellan state," Veltovic fell out of favor, ending his life in obscurity on his estate on Drozan. In his own words, "I've missed my chance by not dying at the right moment. How I would have been mourned if I had died immediately after completing the Cathay arena!"

—From "Veltovic: A Brief Biography," *Capellan Architecture*, June 10, 2796

The area beneath The Jungle is honeycombed with access tunnels and shafts for maintenance of lights, video, power, and communications. Broad, well-lit corridors, where technicians scurry on foot or via electric carts, extend out from the command center. Infirmaries are located in these corridors, with emergency medical facilities for treating wounded MechWarriors. Badly injured contestants are stabilized here, then flown by VTOL to nearby medical facilities.

COMBAT IN THE JUNGLE

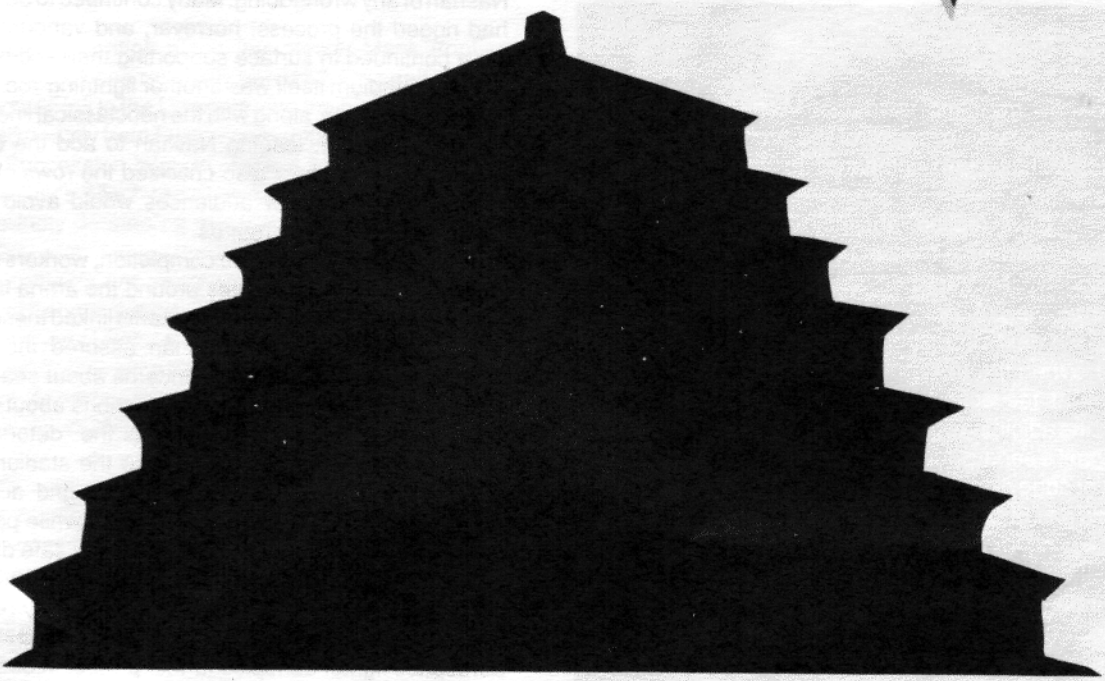
Combat in The Jungle tends to be fast and furious, as the congested jungle terrain precludes the use of many long-ranged weapons, and artificially high temperatures and humidity cause overheating problems. These factors force MechWarriors to seek quick resolution to their battles.

The control center may also add rain and mist to further complicate matters; though this may bring temperatures down, it can disastrously reduce visibility at critical moments. Darkness, dusk, and full daylight may also be simulated.

Combats take place throughout the year, but are most frequent during the tournament season in the spring. Single combats are the most popular, but team events and grudge matches have their adherents and generate considerable income.

WHEN ON SOLARIS 7, VISIT THE AWE-INSPIRING

JUNGLE



BATTLEMECH DUELING AT ITS FINEST!

SIAN

T•R•A•V•E•L

Your Gateway to the Universe!

STEINER STADIUM

Name: Steiner Stadium
Location: Silesia Sector, Solaris City
Class: 5+
Owner: Nashan Diversified
Manager: Andrea Neil
Terrain: Open
Seating Capacity: 44,000
Seating/Viewing: Private booths (direct viewing; closed-circuit trivid; total capacity 1,000), box seating (direct viewing; large-format hirez flatscreen; total capacity 3,000), general seating (direct viewing; total capacity 40,000)
Admission (C-Bills): Booths: 100; Box seats: 75; General seating: 20

"You know, my friend," said Duke Michael, scanning the sandy, open expanse of the arena below, "this stadium has been compared to the ancient Roman arenas."

"Hmm," Clive replied, absently contemplating his bowl to determine if the kincha was fresh.

"Seriously," Michael persisted, speaking over the blare of the PA system as it announced the names of the next contestants. "The comparison is quite apt. When the next battle reaches its climax, don't look at the action down there. Look at the people in the adjoining boxes. Just watch their faces."

Michael's serious tone made Clive look up from his bowl of soggy kincha. Down in the arena, a fight between a pair of *Stinger*s was progressing from the initial jockeying for position to a firefight, and finally, to a brutal hand-to-hand struggle. At length, one of the combatants literally gained the upper hand, and raised its arm-mounted laser for the coup de grace.

With considerable effort, Clive managed to turn his attention to his neighbors, a group of Lyran nobles decked out in jewels and finery. To his surprise, their faces showed a ferocious joy and anticipation that he had never seen before. As the winner's laser flashed and the crowd roared, one Lyran, a sultry, dark-haired beauty, closed her eyes as if in the throes of passion, while the men hooted and capered like animals. Clive turned away in revulsion.

"Interesting exercise, wouldn't you agree?" Michael asked.

Clive nodded numbly. Even more than the bloodlust he had seen on the Lyrans' faces, he was disturbed by the realization that their expressions were like gazing briefly into a mirror. How he hated what he saw.

—From the novel *White Heart*, by Grafina Gerbert, Tharkan Media Associates, 3025

HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

Nashan Diversified, one of the largest corporations in the Lyran Commonwealth, built Steiner Stadium. Indeed, the Steiners decided that their arena must outdo The Jungle, the Capellan arena, which required them to make a massive investment. It was obvious that the Solaris games were going to become a major source of income and prestige, and the Archon did not intend for the Commonwealth to come up short.

The final design for the stadium was the result of a Commonwealth-wide contest sponsored by Nashan Diversified. Oddly (and, in many people's minds, suspiciously) enough, the winning design was submitted by one of Nashan's leading architects. Imitating the lines of an ancient Roman coliseum, it had a generally oval shape with a sandy, largely featureless combat arena.

This design drew widespread criticism, as well as accusations of fraud in the selection process. The Rahneshire Supreme Court appointed a board of inquiry, whose report completely exonerated Nashan of any wrongdoing. Many continued to believe that Nashan had rigged the process, however, and various bits of evidence have continued to surface supporting their accusations.

The stadium itself was another lightning-rod for criticism. The total lack of terrain, along with the neoclassical lines of the structure proved unpopular, leading Nashan to add the option of pop-up terrain features. Many also criticized the rows of seats lining the arena, wondering how audiences would avoid direct hits from PPCs and live missile rounds.

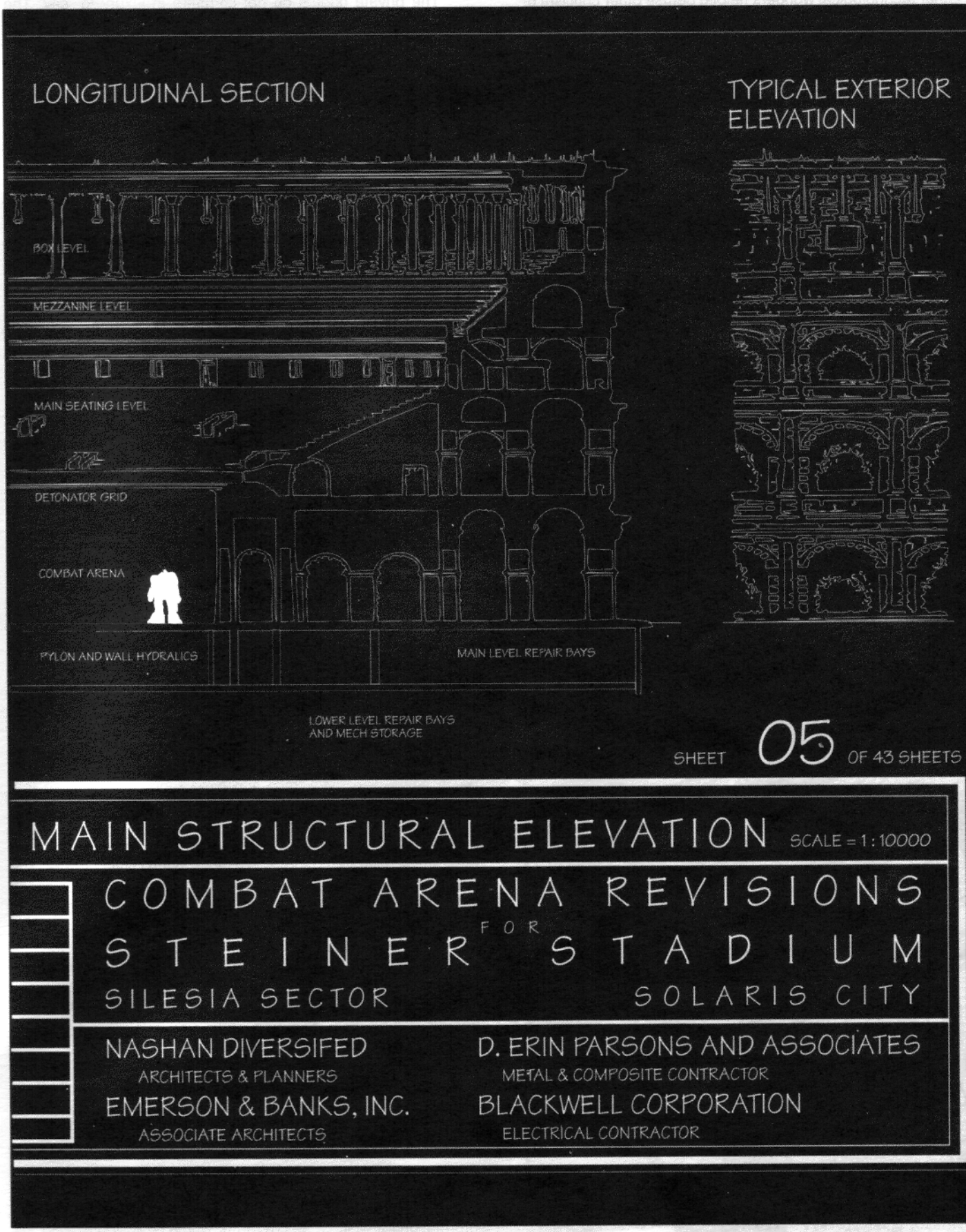
As construction neared completion, workers began to install a lattice of monofilament wires around the arena floor. A system of relays and unusual circuit components linked these to the stadium's main power lines. This, Nashan assured the Commonwealth officials, was the solution to concerns about seating safety.

Nashan refused to answer questions about the nature of the power lattice, referring to it only as the "detonator grid." When testing began several weeks before the stadium's opening, observers were amazed to see that the grid actually detonated missiles before they reached the seats, while powerful magnetic fields flung shrapnel and other debris in a safe direction. The grid also seemed to drain the force of energy weapons in some fashion, so that they struck the box area with greatly reduced intensity. Heavy sheets of ferroglass similar to that used in BattleMech and aerospace fighter canopies further protected observers in the box seats.

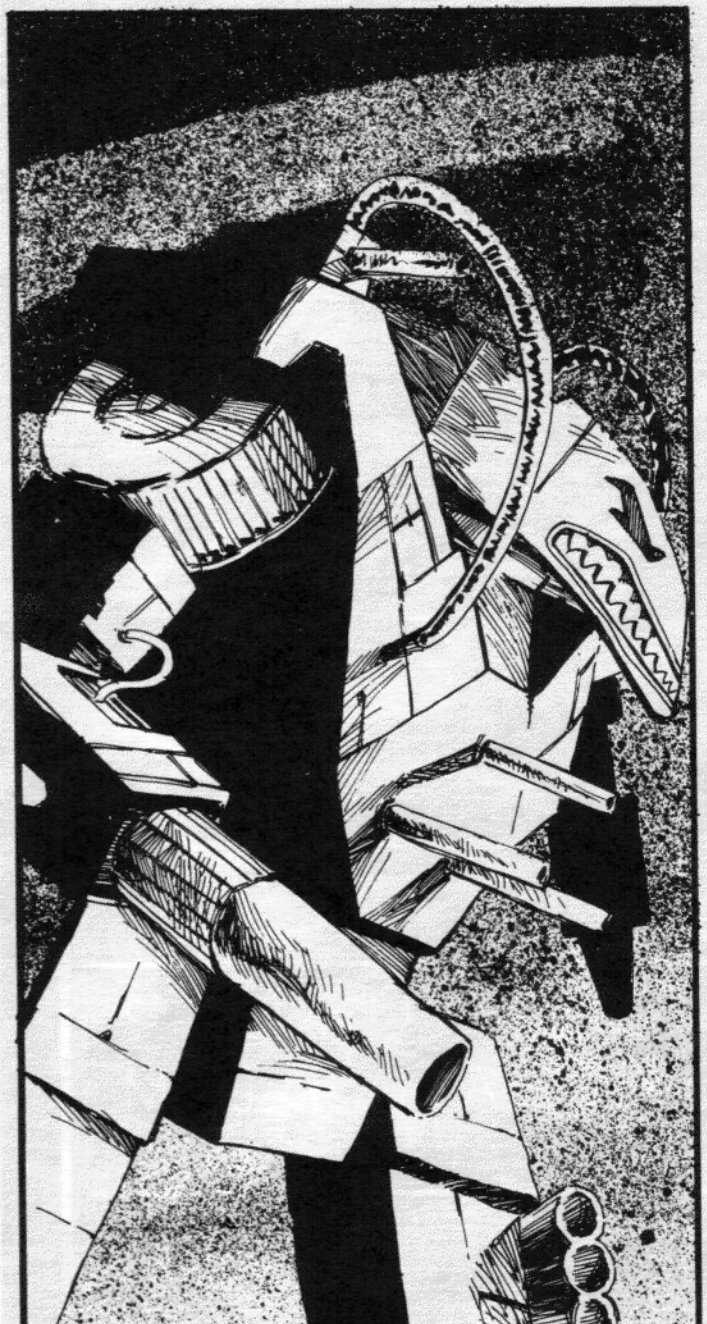
Steiner Stadium's detonator grid remains one of the most fascinating pieces of technology in the Inner Sphere. It has yet to be duplicated, for the technology is part of Star League era lostech. Power records for the stadium indicate that the grid consumes massive amounts of energy, suggesting that the grid, despite its success, would be impractical for any other application, i.e., adapted for BattleMechs, making them virtually invincible.

Facts about the grid's true composition are sparse. Recently, the Blackwell Corporation, headquartered on Outreach, has begun to experiment with a similar system as a means of containing the plasma in a fusion engine. Their intent is apparently to produce an engine using XL technology, but without the excessive volume that XL engines currently require. Blackwell has also developed electromagnetic armor-enhancement that reduces the effectiveness of some energy weapons in a manner similar to that of Nashan's detonator grid.

No one knows exactly how Blackwell developed these items, but their similarity to Nashan's grid system, coupled with Blackwell's well-known ties to Wolf's Dragoons, have fueled considerable speculation.


LONGITUDINAL SECTION
TYPICAL EXTERIOR ELEVATION
BOX LEVEL
MEZZANINE LEVEL
MAIN SEATING LEVEL
DETONATOR GRID
COMBAT ARENA
PYLON AND WALL HYDRALICS
MAIN LEVEL REPAIR BAYS
LOWER LEVEL REPAIR BAYS AND MECH STORAGE
SHEET 05 OF 43 SHEETS
MAIN STRUCTURAL ELEVATION SCALE = 1:10000
COMBAT ARENA REVISIONS
FOR
STEINER STADIUM
SILESIA SECTOR
SOLARIS CITY
NASHAN DIVERSIFED
ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS
EMERSON & BANKS, INC.
ASSOCIATE ARCHITECTS
D. ERIN PARSONS AND ASSOCIATES
METAL & COMPOSITE CONTRACTOR
BLACKWELL CORPORATION
ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR

Other technological wonders helped defuse other criticism of the arena. The stadium's elevators move both vertically and horizontally. Its computer system calculates odds continuously and dispenses bets with considerable efficiency. A wealth of betting terminals, refreshment stands, and restrooms make waits reasonable, and roomy, comfortable seats mean few fights or disagreements over seating arrangements. A recent so-called "riot" turned out to be the work of Free Worlds agents seeking to create a disturbance to cover a Marik MechWarrior's attempt to sabotage his opponent's vehicle.



The private booths do not compare in luxury to, say, The Jungle's, but are comfortable nonetheless. Here, as nowhere else on Solaris, nobles and wealthy spectators can directly observe the combat that takes place below, secure behind the mysterious yet effective detonator grid. All obstacles in the arena are placed at right angles to the box area, so that no view is ever blocked.

General seating is also pleasant, although spectators do not have as choice an angle on the combats. Seats are cushioned and clean, and refreshments are available at reasonable prices. Many of the still-remaining critics of the detonator grid fear that a failure during combat could result in numerous casualties in the stands, but no such failure has ever occurred.

Nashan security guards keep a watch on things, but their main duty seems to be ensuring that patrons put their trash in designated receptacles. The recent "riot" at the stadium pointed up several deficiencies on the part of Nashan's guards, particularly in the realm of crowd control, and the corporation is currently retraining employees to deal with such problems.

CAPABILITIES

After the technological marvels of the stadium's seating areas, the actual arena is something of a letdown. A featureless expanse of sand, the Steiner Stadium's terrain is enlivened here and there by hidden mines and pop-up obstacles. Unfortunately, the location of these obstacles is fixed, and many veteran warriors have memorized their location, thus able to move into combat anticipating where certain obstacles will appear. The obstacles pop up only randomly, however, which can still spell disaster for an overconfident MechWarrior.

Ramps at either end of the stadium give access to the arena. Underground 'Mech bays provide only limited repair facilities. Other facilities, such as an infirmary, broadcast booth, and maintenance systems, are similarly limited. Facilities located behind the southside box seats control broadcasting, obstacle positioning, and communications.

The sloping rows of seats lining the sides of the stadium provide some of the most spectacular game views in all of Solaris City. Notable events, closeups, and statistics play on large-format flatscreens set on the inside of the ferroglass shields. Box and booth seats also have trivid and hirez replay facilities, so that wealthy observers can watch the combat below in greater detail.

In 3048, planning began to upgrade the stadium's facilities and combat options. Included would be more varied terrain and perhaps limited climatic changes, like those in the Davion Arena. The unification of the Federated Suns and the Lyran Commonwealth led to much sharing of technological information, a situation from which Nashan officials were determined to profit.

The Clan invasion changed all of that, diverting most technological expertise to the war effort and the development of weapons to match the invaders' vast superiority. Plans for updating the stadium were put on hold, and only recently has Nashan begun to gear up again.

COMBAT IN STEINER STADIUM

Steiner Stadium is not considered one of the more challenging arenas, but that is not necessarily a disadvantage. A familiar battlefield is a friendly battlefield, and experienced MechWarriors often look forward to battles at Steiner Stadium. Though the location of obstacles is under the control of the command center, veteran fighters have grasped the favored patterns of many operators, and so the identity of the operator is often a valuable piece of information for which a MechWarrior would be willing to pay.

SOLARIS SLANG

As with any language, new words and new meanings for old words develop in response to current events and technology. The MechWarrior games have spawned many slang expressions peculiar to Solaris. Those considered "hip" and part of the "in crowd" like to use the following phrases in their almost-constant discussions of the latest, and upcoming, duels.

Arrowhead: Aerospace pilot.
Blood pit: Small, undistinguished 'Mech arena, usually outside of Solaris City.
Dead Zone: Anywhere where nothing is going on. In reference to person, suggests stupidity.
Divorce court: The Federated Commonwealth. A reference to the current state of relations between Houses Steiner and Davion.
DOA: A clearly outmatched MechWarrior.
Farmer: One who pilots a **tractor** (see below).
Frakker: All-purpose epithet, along the lines of "dipstick" and "lamebrain."
Fringer: Anyone from the outlands, i.e., not a resident of the five major sectors.
Ghost: An undercover agent for a Successor State, criminal cartel, or corporation.
Gremlin: A thug working for a crime syndicate.
Headhunter: Derogatory term for a MechWarrior who seems to favor killing his opponents.
Hillies: Davionists from the Black Hills sector.
Hitman: A MechWarrior who enjoys injuring or killing his opponents. After "Hitman" Hirsch, the first major 'Mech champion.
Jack in the box: MechWarrior who favors jumping from behind cover to fire down on his opponents.
Knievel: A reckless or glory-hungry MechWarrior who takes unnecessary risks.
Mayflies: Young MechWarriors who advance too quickly to high-level competition, only to be defeated and forgotten.
Mechbunny: A somewhat derogatory term for fans who enjoy associating with MechWarriors. Both male and female Mechbunnies exist (the O'Bannon Sisters have a particularly large following). Also known as wannabes.
No-hitter: A dull 'Mech fight, particularly one in which no weapon hits are scored.
Peeker: An individual who comes to watch the 'Mech games but does not bet.
Pinball machine: A particularly flashy or extensively modified BattleMech.
Pinball wizard: A highly skilled 'Mech tech. Also simply "wizard."
Rackit: To overheat a 'Mech, specifically when all the weapons are fired in an all-or-nothing shot at a quick victory. Also, to push anything to its absolute limit.
Rats: The inhabitants of the slums of the Black Hills and Cathay.
Romans: Silesians. A reference to the Roman-inspired Steiner Stadium.
Sawbones: A cheap 'Mech repairman.
Scavs: Scrap merchants who deal in wrecked BattleMechs.
Scrappers: Montenegrans. A reference to the numerous pieces of wrecked buildings and scrap metal scattered about the quarter.
Seat-filler: A low-class MechWarrior recruited at the last minute to fill up a fight card.
Spinner: A flamboyant MechWarrior given to fanciful moves and maneuvers; usually applied to light 'Mech pilots.
Splitter: A MechWarrior who fights in the arenas solely as a means of hooking up with a mercenary unit or finding work elsewhere.
Timey: A MechWarrior past his prime. See "zombie."
Toilet paper: Solaris scrip.
Tractor: A worthless or badly designed 'Mech such as the CGR-1A1 *Charger*.
Tumor: An upper-class Solaran. In some circles, a "healthy tumor" refers to a dead upper-class Solaran.
Ugly: A vicious or particularly violent 'Mech battle.
Vampire: A 'Mech broker.
Wizard: A particularly successful or talented technician. See **Pinball wizard**.
WrenchWarrior: Battlemech technician.
Zombie: A burned-out or washed-up MechWarrior who continues to fight (perhaps hoping to be killed in the arena). See "timey."




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