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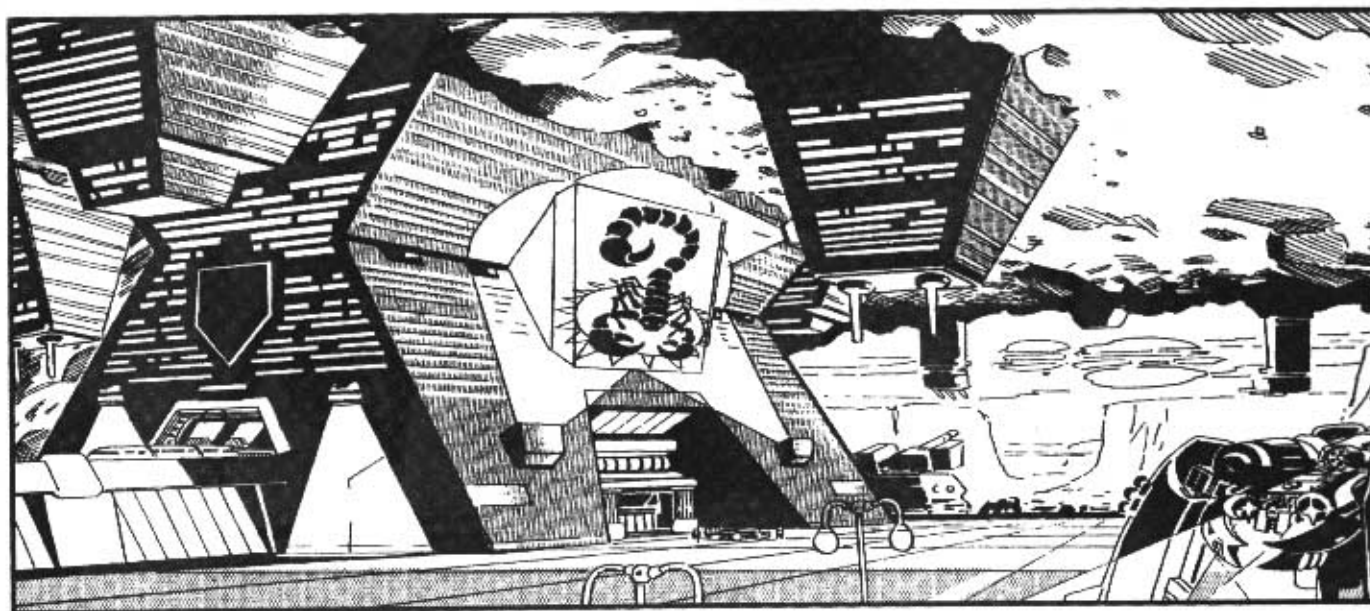
THE CLANS

WARRIORS OF KERENSKY



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THE CLANS: **WARRIORS OF KERENSKY**



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WARRIORS OF KERENSKY

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INTRODUCTION



Father,

Much has been written about the Clans, most of it little more than speculation. No previous work has come from the viewpoint of a contemporary insider, and so the Inner Sphere's knowledge of us is riddled with misconceptions and accidental errors. In several cases, Clan sources intentionally misled the authors; I should know, having been used as a conduit for such misinformation by Ulric Kerensky.

This account suffers no such drawbacks. It is based on first-hand information: my own observations and those of my immediate staff. As a Khan, I have access to material beyond the knowledge of many warriors—and despite my Wolf Clan's exile on Arc-Royal, our databases hold much information still unknown to the Inner Sphere. That information forms the core of this work. I also retain a high-level source in Clan space who keeps me abreast of recent events there. (I think Vlad suspects, but hasn't done anything about it yet.) The information in the following files is as current as I can make it.

One of the "little tasks" Ulric gave me was to foster a better understanding of the Clans within the Inner Sphere. This primer on Clan history and culture is a step in that direction. Ultimately, I want to disseminate this material to each of the Great Houses, to provide them with an in-depth look at how and why the Clans act as they do. This book cannot substitute for real experience of Clan life, but it should offer a starting point. Keep in mind also that the success of

Operation Bulldog and Task Force Serpent may produce some changes in the Clans' attitude toward the Inner Sphere. They respect martial prowess, and the task force's accomplishments have earned respect and fury in equal measure. Even the Jade Falcons silently applaud the annihilation of the Smoke Jaguars, though no Falcon warrior would ever thank the Inner Sphere for it.

For simplicity, I've broken the files into four main sections. The first covers the history of the Clans, up to about 31 January of this year. The history begins with a retrospective on the Star League, to put the development of the Clans into context. Much of this material has appeared in previous sources, and it covers the Clans as a whole rather than delving deeply into each Clan's idiosyncracies. (Readers interested in the history of specific Clans should consult the internal Clan Field Manuals supplied over the past two years.)

The second section covers Clan society. It contains numerous chapters that cover politics, economics and technology. Much of this material is new to the Inner Sphere, and describes the nitty-gritty of how Clan society works. Most people in the Inner Sphere think of the Clans as a warrior culture, and yet warriors comprise less than one-tenth of one percent of the total Clan population. This section describes what the other 99.9 percent of the Clans do. I've also included a third, somewhat cursory, section on individual Clans. It sketches the key players, the resources they muster and their general outlook. For details of their military capabilities, see the aforementioned Field Manuals.

The final section focuses on Clan space. More than a few people may be surprised at the number of worlds and the volume of space the Clans control. This section offers a whistle-stop tour of major worlds, including the current most important sites, as well as other salient information. The files cover all the worlds in the Kerensky Cluster, but space limitations forced me to keep the information on most worlds brief. Finally, those unfamiliar with Clan terms can use the Clan glossary to acquaint themselves with common words and concepts used by the descendants of Kerensky.

As a final note, I thank Ranna Kerensky, Evantha Fetladral and Carew Nygren for their assistance—particularly their insightful perspective on many recent events. Ragnar has been similarly invaluable on this project, both as a sounding board and general researcher for early drafts. Any mistakes remaining are mine, and no reflection on his abilities. He will be missed.

I'll sign off here before my language deteriorates. Let me know if you have any comments, and I'll see what revisions I can incorporate.

Best wishes,

Phelan

Arc-Royal, 27 February 3062

THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE CLANS

"History shows there are no invincible armies."

—Joseph Stalin

To understand the Clans, you must understand their history. Many of their traditions and actions, including the rationale for the recent invasion, spring from the last days of the Star League—the Amaris Coup and its immediate aftermath. Many in the Inner Sphere see these events as ancient history, the long-ago fall of a golden age. To the Clans, the Star League and its fall are the reason for their existence and the driving force behind their way of life.

Much of the information in this section is known to the Inner Sphere, but shrouded in half-truths and misapprehensions. The story has been told so many times that the truth has been obscured. The following account is factually accurate, though to claim that it is the whole truth would be presumptuous. I have no doubt given my own bias to the telling—I am a Warden, and have spent only a third of my life as part of the Clans. I also have the resources of a Khan at my disposal, allowing me greater insight into Clan affairs than past authors could claim—but even I am limited to the archives held by my own Clan. Gaps undoubtedly exist in our knowledge of the other Clans (the Clans in general disapprove of espionage); such omissions will be noted wherever possible.

RISE OF THE STAR LEAGUE

Many in the Clans and the Inner Sphere look back on the Star League with rose-tinted glasses. They view the Star League era as an age of peace and prosperity in which the various Inner Sphere states coexisted in harmony. People lived much longer than they do today, sustained by advanced medical technology and unrivaled standards of living. From the common present-day perspective, the Star League was a veritable Eden until the arrival of the serpent Amaris.

The truth is less clear-cut.

Ian Cameron, Director-General of the Terran Hegemony, founded the Star League in 2571 after eighteen years of arm-twisting, threats and blackmail. Cameron was a consummate politician and diplomat who excelled as a peacemaker and mediator between the other Inner Sphere powers. One by one, he persuaded his fellow leaders to support his vision of a unified humanity, culminating in the 2569 Treaty of Vega. The signing of that document marked the Draconis Combine's decision to join the Star League—the last of the Inner Sphere realms to do so.

Almost immediately, the "peaceful" Star League found itself headed for war. Cameron's vision of a united humanity included the Periphery realms, which had declined to sign on. When economic sanctions failed to persuade them, the Star League issued an ultimatum: Join us or face war. The Periphery states chose the latter; the resulting Reunification War lasted for more than twenty years. This bloody clash cost more lives

than the entire Age of War that had preceded the Star League's formation.

The Star League's victory brought all of humanity together under one government, but did little to quell human aggression. To give just one example, beginning in 2681 and continuing until about 2750, elements of the Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery regularly engaged Star League troops in duels, often to the death. These encounters later became known as the First Hidden War. These skirmishes bear more than a passing resemblance to the Clan system of combat Trials. (As you will see throughout this manuscript, Nicholas Kerensky was not very imaginative when he created the Clans.)

The Star League did indeed bring peace and prosperity to billions of people throughout human-occupied space, including the Periphery realms that had fought so hard to retain their independence. As the historical record shows, however, constant political intrigue kept that peace on the proverbial razor's edge. In retrospect, it was only a matter of time before the Star League succumbed to internal pressures.

By the early 28th century, support for the League in the Periphery had begun to wane, prompting a period of saber-rattling and a renaissance in military technology. First Lord Jonathan Cameron, more than a little paranoid, predicted the fall of Terra to "strange coarse men"; to ward off this coming disaster, he expanded the SLDF to unprecedented size. Meanwhile, the Draconis Combine and Federated Suns became embroiled in a bitter war that only ended when SLDF troops (including a young Aleksandr Kerensky) intervened. The SLDF could do nothing when the Free Worlds League collapsed into civil war—disputes within member-states were beyond the Star League's jurisdiction. (Internal disputes within Clans are similarly beyond the reach of the Clans as a whole—once again, it is clear where Nicholas Kerensky got his ideas.)

TIME OF TROUBLES

The beginning of the end came in 2751 when First Lord Simon Cameron died in a "tragic accident" on New Silesia. He was most likely assassinated, but we will never know for certain and it does not really matter. A regent was appointed for the eight-year-old heir, Richard Cameron—General Aleksandr Kerensky, overall commander of the SLDF. The Clans venerate Kerensky as a man of vision, but in truth he contributed greatly to the Star League's collapse. Perhaps my judgement is unfair, but Amaris never would have wheedled his way into a position of power had Kerensky had more time for young Richard. The Star League Council must also bear a share of the blame; they refused Kerensky's offer to step down from his military post in order to devote himself to the regency. With the League on the brink of war in the Periphery, the council saw Kerensky's military expertise as too valuable to lose. (This ill-fated decision is one more thing for which the Clans hate the Inner Sphere.)

ALEKSANDR SERGEYEVICH KERENSKY: THE GREAT FATHER

Born: 16 December 2700, Moscow, Terra
Graduate: Tharkad University (class of 2721)
Graduate: Nagelring Military Academy (class of 2723)
Graduate: War Academy of Mars, Gunslinger (class of 2724)
Promotions: Lieutenant (2727), Captain (2729), Colonel (2729), Lieutenant General (2731), Major General (2733)
Appointed General of the SLDF: 21 April 2738
Married: 9 June 2763
Children: Nicholas (4 May 2764) and Andery (9 November 2766)
Protector of the Star League: 2751–62 (regent), 2779–80
Died: 11 June 2801

Born to Nikolai Maksimovich and Anna Trochina Kerensky, both former members of the SLDF, Aleksandr was a sickly child. Plagued by a heart condition until he was three years old, Aleksandr took another two years to recover from the surgery that saved him. The young Kerensky was shy and retiring, but an excellent student. He inherited his parents' academic leanings—his father was curator of the People's Museum of History, and his mother passed on to him her love of literature. He earned a scholarship to Tharkad University in 2718, where he met and befriended Michael Steiner—the future leader of the Lyran Commonwealth, who was serving as a research assistant. Their friendship would last until the Exodus.

Late in his course of study, a routine medical exam identified Kerensky as having a keenly responsive nervous system. Supported by a battery of physical and psychological tests, this capability earned him a place in the MechWarrior training program at the Nagelring Military Academy. Kerensky graduated from the Nagelring with honors and went on to join the Gunslinger program organized by the War Academy of Mars. After graduating from the program in 2724, he became a duelist of the 564th Hussar Regiment, fighting numerous engagements against DCMS troops in the later years of the First Hidden War. By 2729, Kerensky had reached the rank of captain.

He led his first combat command on the planet Royal during Operation Smother, the

Kerensky was away from Terra throughout much of his regency, especially during the war between the Capellan Confederation and the Federated Suns (2760–62). During his absences, he left the boy in the care of numerous advisors and courtiers. Stefan Amaris, ruler of the Rim Worlds Republic, was one such individual, who wormed his way into the confidence of the lonely young lord. He became a key advisor and friend to the boy, and retained Richard's favor when Richard assumed the Star League throne in 2762. Amaris prompted Richard to take a series of actions that alienated the rest of the Star League Council, including limiting the size of each lord's standing army. As the Star League Constitution clearly named the First Lord as first among equals rather than a dictator, the Council Lords took Richard's grandstanding badly. In hindsight, the bad blood between the First Lord and the Council was part of Amaris' master plan to shatter the League from within.

In 2765, the Periphery world of New Vandenburg erupted in rebellion, sparking off Periphery-wide revolts. Only the Rim Worlds Republic stood aloof from the turmoil, ostensibly demonstrating Amaris' loyalty to the League. Kerensky was forced to commit the bulk of the SLDF to operations almost five hundred light years from Terra, little knowing that the entire New Vandenburg incident was one more trap engineered by Amaris.

On 27 December 2766, Stefan Amaris assassinated First Lord Richard Cameron and plunged the Star League into chaos. Naming himself emperor, he claimed the Star League throne and suggested that Kerensky join him. Kerensky refused, then brought his Periphery campaign to a swift conclusion. After seizing Amaris' Rim Worlds Republic as a base of operations, he turned his efforts toward Terra.

The campaign to liberate the Terran Hegemony was a drawn-out and bloody affair. It took ten years just to reach Terra; the fight to free the capital of the Hegemony and the Star League took another two and a half years. The SLDF ultimately defeated Amaris' forces, but lost almost half its fighting strength in the process. The liberation of Terra cost a hundred million lives, left four hundred million wounded and a billion homeless. The Hegemony—and the Star League—were in ruins.

The Star League Council reconvened on 10 October, 2780. The Council Lords' only notable action was the appointment of Jerome Blake as Minister of Communications. Eight days later, the council stripped Kerensky of his position as Protector of the Star League and ordered the disbanding of the SLDF. Kerensky withdrew to the SLDF command post on New Earth to consider his next course of action.

General Aaron DeChevilier, a friend and close advisor, urged Kerensky to depose the Council Lords and name himself First Lord of the Star League. Kerensky refused, however, stating that he would remain loyal to the Star League for as long as it existed. Before long, however, events rendered his loyalty moot. On 12 August, 2781, the Star League officially ceased to exist. Kerensky spent the next two years attempting to mediate between the five Successor States that had taken its place, working to resurrect the Star League. Kerensky finally abandoned his shuttle diplomacy in August of 2783, when recruiters from the Successor States began approaching SLDF units with job offers. These cynical machinations prompted Kerensky to enact a plan he had been considering for some time.

EXODUS

Despite the commonly held belief among the Clans and in the Inner Sphere that Kerensky came up with the Exodus, the plan was actually a cooperative effort with General DeChevilier. According to Nicholas Kerensky's diaries, which are still held by the Wolf Clan, Kerensky and DeChevilier discussed the matter in Nicholas' presence shortly after the liberation of Unity City in 2779. They knew that almost all of the Cameron heirs were dead, and suspected that the Great House lords would not support any moves to rebuild the Star League. Aleksandr foresaw a future in which the Houses would pick over the carcass of the Terran Hegemony, and wished to avoid it. Half-seriously, DeChevilier suggested that the SLDF head off into deep space to

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found their own colony, away from the wars that looked set to engulf known space. From this conversation was born the Exodus.

On 14 February, 2784, Kerensky outlined the plan to more than two hundred SLDF officers. The majority, almost eighty percent of the armed forces, opted to follow Kerensky into exile. Feverish preparations ensued over the next few months, until 8 July. On that day, Kerensky issued the fateful one-word command to the SLDF: Exodus.

The armed might of the Star League traveled to the rendezvous point at New Samarkand: thirty-two BattleMech divisions (each containing nine regiments), seventy-six infantry divisions and sixty-three independent regiments, a total of just over seven hundred line regiments. To put that figure into context for present-day readers, the ComStar battle group fielded on Tukayyid was equivalent to 144 combined-arms regiments. The allied force in the recent Operation Bulldog, widely cited as "the largest offensive operation of our time," involved roughly eighty-five BattleMech regiments, with just under two hundred support regiments. The force that left with Kerensky was a fraction of the SLDF's pre-New Vandenburg strength.

Carried by 1,349 JumpShips, the fleet comprised over five thousand DropShips. A fleet of more than four hundred WarShips provided security. In all, two million troops and almost four million dependents went on the Exodus out of known space. On 5 November, the massed fleet jumped toward the Periphery, leaping into the unknown and disappearing from the ken of the Inner Sphere.

The lumbering fleet made slow progress through the Periphery. WarShips and scout JumpShips operated in advance of the main body, along its flanks, and behind it to discourage pursuit. Several vessels were lost to mechanical failures and jump accidents; others simply disappeared. Picket vessels hunted for worlds from which the fleet could resupply—the sheer size of the operation made rationing a part of daily life. At first, people accepted the hardships of the journey—after all, the great Kerensky was leading them to a better life. As time passed, however, dissent grew, culminating in open rebellion.

On 19 August 2785, a nine-ship group centered on the Texas-class WarShip Prinz Eugen mutinied against Kerensky's command and declared its intention to return to the Inner Sphere. Kerensky responded with brutal efficiency, ordering Elizabeth Hazen—later one of the founders of Clan Jade Falcon—to recapture the rebels. In a daring assault, Kerensky's troops took control of the Prinz Eugen, prompting the others to surrender. To discourage any further seeds of rebellion, Kerensky ordered the execution of all rebel officers above the rank of captain.

This draconian action did little to quell anxiety among the travelers, however. Rumors began to circulate that General Kerensky had no firm destination in mind, and the entire Exodus hovered at the brink of collapse. Kerensky responded by issuing General Order 137. This document, now an ingrained part of Clan culture, justified his actions and spurred the people on. Its message became the core of the Hidden Hope Doctrine: that the Inner Sphere would collapse in chaos, and that the SLDF would one day redeem it. The people of the Exodus must stand apart in order to survive, so that their descendants could one day return to lead the Inner Sphere back to the ideals of the Star League.

Clan culture formed around the Hidden Hope Doctrine, which has since been used to justify almost every permutation of Clan society and policy. By declaring that one day the descendants of the SLDF would return to the Inner Sphere, Aleksandr Kerensky could not possibly have known what he had set in motion.

STAR LEAGUE IN EXILE

General Order 137 restored an air of semi-normality to the fleet, but Kerensky knew that the journey could not go on forever. Yet in Kerensky's mind, the SLDF was still too close to the Inner Sphere. A chance discovery might alert the Successor States to their presence. The fleet pressed on, but by July of 2786 tensions once again began to rise.

On 24 August of that year, the Exodus fleet reached a cluster of five habitable worlds, and Kerensky announced that they had arrived at their destination. To this day, even the Clans do not know whether this cluster was Kerensky's original goal or whether he chose to settle on these less-than-ideal worlds in order to head off another revolt. Clan ideology, which dictates that the Great Father

Star League operation to end the ongoing Draconis Combine/Federated Suns conflict later known as the Second Hidden War. When the regiment's command staff died in a DropShip accident, Captain Kerensky took over and extricated the unit. For his decisive actions, Kerensky received the Medal of Valor and a two-rank promotion to colonel.

His new command was the 261st Royal Dragoon Regiment, based in the Taurian Concordat. There, he became embroiled in local politics as he sought to stamp out corruption among local government officials and businessmen. His actions earned him the respect of the people, but angered many of the higher-ups. Kerensky's honesty and integrity interfered with their plans to exploit the Periphery realms, and so the Council Lords arranged his promotion to lieutenant general. Kerensky was assigned to the Planning and Strategy Sub-Command on Terra, where he met First Lord Jonathan Cameron and his sister, Mother Jocasta (then de facto ruler of the Star League). Kerensky also became a firm friend of Simon Cameron, a friendship that would turn out to be vital.

Continuing his rapid rise, in 2733 Aleksandr Kerensky was promoted to major general and assigned as aide to SLDF commander Rebecca Fetladral. Throughout his term of service, he continued his anti-corruption crusade. When General Fetladral retired following the death of First Lord Jonathan, her backing and the friendship of the new First Lord gave Kerensky the post of General of the SLDF. At only thirty-eight years of age, he commanded the greatest military war machine ever assembled. After First Lord Simon Cameron's death in 2751, Aleksandr Kerensky became regent to Simon's eight-year-old son, Richard.

The rest, as they say, is history.

THE VOICE OF KERENSKY

Aleksandr Kerensky never intended the "Star League in Exile" to stay in the Pentagon worlds forever. With an eventual return to the Inner Sphere in mind, on 9 September, 2786, he broadcast a message toward the planets he had left behind. Known to the Clans as the Voice of Kerensky, this message would travel at light-speed back to the Inner Sphere. It would arrive at the edge of the Periphery roughly 770 years after its broadcast (the Clan worlds being that far from the Inner Sphere-Periphery boundary), in approximately 3550.

The message read as follows:

"To all citizens of the Inner Sphere do I, Aleksandr Kerensky, send greetings.

"Know that I have taken the remnant of the Star League Defense Force which has remained true to its purpose beyond the boundaries of the Inner Sphere, beyond the Periphery. I have done this, neither out of disappointment with those whom we leave behind, nor out of spite or disdain, as some will say. No, we have left the Inner Sphere because we love it too much to see it destroyed. In the wake of the Usurper's coup, and the long, bitter fighting that came with it, I fear that my forces would do incalculable, possibly irreparable, harm to our society. We are sworn to ward the Star League and its subjects, not destroy it.

"Thus, we have left the only homes we have ever known to place the destructive capability of this armada beyond the reach of those who would use it, not for defense, but for conquest. Perhaps, with the might of our 'Mechs and ships out of their reach, the leaders who now grapple with one another will relinquish their dreams of subjugating their neighbors and learn to live in peace with them.

"Perhaps, one day, should mankind step back from the brink of the abyss, we, or our children, or our children's children will return, to once more serve and protect and guide the Star League in mankind's quest for the stars.

"Farewell."

The Clans that Nicholas Kerensky created chose to return barely 260 years after the general's transmission, long before the message could reach the Inner Sphere to reveal the survival of the Star League's descendants. By coincidence, however, Task Force Serpent—the New Star League force sent to assault the Clan world of Huntress—encountered the Voice in early 3060.

can do no wrong, assumes that these planets were the intended destination. I remain skeptical.

Nicholas Kerensky's diaries give no indication that he was privy to any particular destination. In an entry dated barely a month before the landings, he comments, "There will be another Prinz Eugen if we don't make planetfall soon." I suspect the elder Kerensky was "winging it" rather than having a particular goal in mind. Either that or the initial destination—perhaps one of the supply worlds en route—proved unsuitable, or social pressures forced the Exodus fleet to stop short of Kerensky's original goal. In any case, the five planets later known as the Pentagon worlds were it.

The Clans still celebrate landfall in the Pentagon as Founding Day, their primary festival, though the actual landings did not begin until early September. First to ground were members of the SLDF science corps; they surveyed the worlds, cataloging native flora and fauna. Ordinarily, they would have spent several months on-world assessing threats before any colonization effort took place, but Kerensky knew that holding six million people on the ships so close to their new home would likely spark another revolt. Within ten days of the first landings, members of the SLDF engineering corps made planetfall and began setting up prefabricated buildings. The first colonists set foot on Pentagon soil a week later.

Many have speculated about the Exodus fleet's ability to support itself in those early years; certainly few members of the SLDF counted agricultural or heavy industry workers in their immediate families. Anticipating this problem, Kerensky and DeChevilier had "invited" farmers, miners and engineers to accompany the Exodus. With their homes in ruins and rendered destitute by the depredations of Amaris' forces, most were willing to join up. However, available records hint that the leaders of the Exodus may have resorted to intimidation and even outright blackmail to ensure an appropriate range of skills.

Yet even the skills of these individuals were insufficient to support the nearly six million colonists, and so General Kerensky ordered a controlled demobilization of three-quarters of the SLDF. This action added 1.5 million able-bodied men and women to the work force, who learned the rudiments of farming and construction from the experts. The demobilization order met with little resistance; the people knew they must work together or perish. Also, demobilization was not arbitrary; Kerensky instigated a series of tests to ensure that only the best warriors remained in uniform. The fleet's vast military surplus, ranging from sidearms to BattleMechs and WarShips, was placed in several arms dumps later known as Brian caches. Those supply depots would return to haunt Kerensky at the turn of the century.

The months of preparation back in the Inner Sphere paid off in the early weeks of colonizing the Pentagon. In addition to housing materials, the exiles had brought along industrial machinery and prefabricated factory units; the first factories were on-line within five months of landfall. The few scientists who had accompanied the fleet immediately plunged into study of their five new homeworlds, though not in time to avoid tragedy. Two worlds were marginally habitable; the other three harbored microorganisms hostile to humans or to the livestock they had brought with them. The exact death toll of the early years remains unknown, but estimates suggest that up to sixty thousand people perished.

Kerensky had ordered the inclusion of a wide range of Inner Sphere flora and fauna among the fleet's cargo, and by 2790 most of these had been introduced to the worlds of the Pentagon and the Kerensky Cluster. Many were genetically modified to survive the rigors of the new worlds. The most aggressive, together with a handful of native predators, would later form the totem animals of Nicholas Kerensky's Clans.

By 2794, the new colonies had rounded the corner and were beginning to prosper. Ironically, that very prosperity eventually doomed the so-called Star League in Exile. The remaining active fleet explored a nearby cluster of worlds and founded

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more colonies, including Strana Mechty. Many colonists volunteered to relocate to the new worlds, but the bulk of the exiles remained in the increasingly sophisticated Pentagon colonies. As daily life turned away from matters of survival toward comfort and personal gain, the darker side of humanity—greed, jealousy and so on—once again began to emerge.

SERPENT IN EDEN

We will never know precisely why Aleksandr Kerensky allowed the situation to deteriorate as far as it did, but the death of his beloved wife Katyusha in 2796 surely contributed. The loss of Katyusha Kerensky plunged Aleksandr into a period of prolonged mourning, during which he ignored the calls of dispossessed warriors to create planetary militias that would restore their pride. In addition, the colonies' industrial base was still too small to provide the luxuries craved by many. Resentment festered, and the exiles began to polarize into factions along social or nationalist lines. This in turn created more friction, as each group sought to promote its own social, ethical or religious agenda. Kerensky, rapidly approaching one hundred years of age, did nothing to halt this disaster in the making.

On 28 November, 2800, rioting broke out on the planet Eden between colonists of Capellan and Federated Suns origin. The first clashes were small-scale scuffles, but the level of violence soon increased. Full-scale rebellion erupted on 5 May, 2801, with the Capellan faction declaring independence from the Star League in Exile and moving to take control of one of the planet's Brian caches. This time, Kerensky did not hesitate. He sent General Aaron DeChevilier and a regiment of troops to restore order. DeChevilier died in an ambush on 14 May, setting the scene for Armageddon.

Distraught at his friend's murder, Kerensky cited General Order 137 in ordering massive reprisals—among them the execution of all rebels. Settlements were razed, their populations scattered or killed. Loyalist SLDF troops killed almost twenty thousand colonists in what became known as the DeChevilier Massacre. Rather than cowing the remaining population, however, the massacre had the opposite effect. Violence erupted on the other four Pentagon worlds; only the subsistence-level new colonies in the Kerensky Cluster remained unaffected.

As the death toll rose, Kerensky's popularity plummeted. Few respected his orders or the authority of the SLDF, and the situation spiraled out of control. By early June, the skirmishing on Eden had become all-out war. Aleksandr Kerensky began planning a campaign to secure the world, but fate intervened. At 11:47 a.m. (TST) on 11 June 2801, Aleksandr Kerensky suffered a massive coronary at his command post. He was certified dead ninety minutes later.

TIME OF DARKNESS

In the wake of the DeChevilier Massacre, few people mourned Kerensky's passing. With both its leaders dead, the SLDF collapsed into infighting. Aleksandr's oldest son, Major-General Nicholas Kerensky of the 146th Royal BattleMech Division, was the general's designated heir; however, almost all

of the remaining SLDF commanders rejected him on the grounds that he lacked combat experience. Meanwhile, they pressed their own claims to the leadership.

Respected by his own unit and the bulk of the navy, Nicholas was urged by several friends to take charge. As his father had done with the vacant Star League throne, he refused. As he put it, "Individuals stricken with envy and avarice, hiding behind false patriotism and sham justice, cannot be made to change; they must either burn the sickness out of their lives with years of futile fighting, or die a senseless death as all fools do." Realizing that civil war was inevitable, he chose to take his loyal followers on a second Exodus.

Protected by the guns of loyalist WarShips, those who wished to escape the impending violence were evacuated from the Pentagon and transplanted to one of the new colony worlds, named Strana Mechty ("Land of Dreams"). Nicholas placed considerable emphasis on rescuing scientists, and by the end of December his forces had evacuated almost a quarter of the civilian population—roughly a million people. The bulk of the military remained in the Pentagon; the 146th and 149th were the only complete divisions that sided with Nicholas. The last evacuation shuttle left on 29 January, 2802. Within three weeks, all five Pentagon worlds were embroiled in the Exodus Civil War, which would last for almost twenty years.

BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY

As Pentagon society destroyed itself, Nicholas and his followers established themselves in the Kerensky Cluster. Based on the world of Strana Mechty, their society thrived. During the early years, troops and ships loyal to Nicholas ensured security; after the rebel navies destroyed themselves, Nicholas' people no longer faced an outside threat.

Nicholas realized that the Pentagon worlds' greatest problem was the natural human tendency to settle in like groups. Inevitably, the Exodus colonists had formed communities around their former cultural ties. The Cluster worlds, with their smaller populations and relative lack of leisure (they remained rough-and-ready frontier worlds, where working together was imperative) were relatively unaffected by the disturbances. However, Kerensky realized that eventually they too would succumb. The only solution was to remodel society, eliminating cultural bias as much as possible. To accomplish this, Nicholas created the Clans.

Ever his father's son, Nicholas was an avid student of history, particularly the medieval period of old Terra. The feudal model of society that had pervaded the Inner Sphere was based on that European political system, but Nicholas hated the corruption and favoritism endemic to feudalism. He wanted a society based on merit and ability rather than parentage. It is ironic that his descendants reversed his intentions, espousing the superiority of select bloodlines.

Nicholas borrowed from various historical eras to create his new society—among them the Mongol hordes of the thirteenth century, whose terminology he adopted. Other major influences included Shogunate Japan (the warrior ideal and

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THE EXODUS CIVIL WAR

The Exodus Civil War was like no other in history. The SLDF believed in using all the tools at its disposal, and the rebels took this to extremes in the fighting on the five colony planets. As in the early years of the Succession Wars, orbital bombardment and nuclear attacks were commonplace. Some records hint that chemical and biological weapons also saw extensive use, though this has never been confirmed.

The rebels seized control of numerous Brian caches and armed the population. The sheer number of caches, however, meant that many remained unopened until Nicholas Kerensky's return. Cached WarShips were much sought after and became the focus of several pitched naval battles. Few ships were reactivated; those that were soon fell victim to their sister ships controlled by opposing factions. By 2806, the rebel navies had virtually annihilated each other.

Meanwhile, the fighting continued unabated on the ground. After the first brutal years, the use of nuclear weapons ceased, and the destruction of the rebel fleets eliminated the threat of bombardment. However, each faction maintained sizable 'Mech, armor and infantry assets, which they mercilessly threw into the meatgrinder of the civil war. Battles that had once involved thousands of troops were replaced by clashes between small bands of armed colonists.

By 2819, the five worlds had settled into pseudo-feudalism, with the warlords using their control of military assets to maintain their hold on the reins of power. These petty lords raided each other, occasionally forming alliances to combat a common foe. No faction dominated, but slowly a hierarchy developed. If left to their own devices, the Pentagon worlds might have recovered. However, the carnage of the wars reserved advanced technology for the warlords and their armies. Battles were fought with twenty-eighth-century weapons, while the general standard of living had deteriorated to the equivalent of Terra's eighteenth century. Of the four and a half million people left behind by the second Exodus, barely two million remained alive—and that number looked likely to dwindle.

Then Nicholas Kerensky's army returned, and forever changed the history of the Pentagon.

honor code) and twentieth-century China (which provided the model for Clan society as a whole). In creating the Clans, Nicholas wanted to break all pre-existing ties, including those of the divisions that had journeyed to Strana Mechty. He therefore chose to dramatically reconfigure those units. Of the thousands of troops who joined the second Exodus, only eight hundred were selected to join Nicholas' new military units: twenty "Clans," each a reinforced battalion of forty warriors.

Rigorous testing ensured that only the best warriors were included in the new units, which Nicholas named for various predators of the worlds of the Star League in Exile. He used no other criteria: no gender bias, no cultural quotas, no racial restrictions. Ability alone determined who became a Clan warrior. The new units included Lyrans, Kuritas, Hegemony citizens and so on, even some former Rim Worlds troops. The Clans were the ultimate meritocracy. Nicholas participated in the combat trials to prove his worth, as did Jennifer Winson (who later became his wife).

On 9 June, 2815, Nicholas declared himself ilKhan, Khan of Khans and supreme ruler of the Clans. In his enthronement speech in the city of Katyusha on Strana Mechty, he called on his troops to work together for the common good: "If there is no unity, nothing can be achieved."

Morgan: *I know you said he borrowed ideas, but Nicholas' misappropriated sayings are starting to sound like the misquotations of a ComStar adept.*

Phelan: *Sorry, I missed that one.*

Morgan: *"Nang-la dra ma-shuna, chi-ki tonta droki mare"—"If there is no unity within, nothing can be achieved outside." Comparative religion never was your strong suit at school. It's a Buddhist proverb.*

Intended to liberate the Pentagon, Nicholas' new army was dominated by BattleMechs and aerospace fighters, with other arms playing a minor role as security troops. However, the eight hundred were not the only "Clan" force. The largest portion of the loyalist military—those who had failed the testing—remained in the colonies of the Kerensky Cluster. Many later rejoined the Clan military, but their absence from the Pentagon campaign counted against them. They were denied a place in the eugenics program and thus the "mainstream" Clan military, becoming instead the ancestors of today's freeborn warriors and the Clan paramilitary police.

Many of these "excess" troops were armor, which explains their latter-day absence from the ranks of the "trueborn." The clear superiority of BattleMech forces in one-on-one engagements resulted in the dearth of armor and vehicle units in the Pentagon campaign, and thus in the Clan military as a whole. Infantry troops have skills that 'Mechs and fighters cannot match, and so regained a role in the Clan military; armored vehicles could make no such claim. Not to denigrate vehicle crews, but the need for teamwork in operating a vehicle effectively goes against the Clan ideal of individualism in combat—and ton for ton, 'Mechs are more versatile and powerful. Most Clans have vehicles in their Toumans, and Kerensky's successor, Jerome Winson, ordered the creation of a whole range of Clan vehicles. However, few Clans use them in front-line units.

WarShips presented a special case. Though the majority of the active SLDF navy supported Nicholas, the loyalists had less than forty WarShips at their disposal, as the majority remained in orbital caches. Dominated by technicians rather than warriors and scarcely involved in the liberation of the Pentagon, the crews of these vessels were initially denied the honor of Bloodnames. However, over the years it became apparent that Bloodnamed command personnel were necessary. Therefore, most officers were graduates of the fighter arm. (Clan Snow Raven eventually came to treat WarShips as a distinct military branch, but they are the exception to the rule.)

According to his journal, Nicholas originally intended to apply the term "Clans" only to the warriors of his new society. However, it quickly became apparent that some other allegiance was needed to break the ties that bound many of the exiles—

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most of whom had been born and raised in the Inner Sphere. Nicholas therefore broke up existing groups among them and scattered them throughout the twenty Clans. Each Clan became a multicultural society, containing elements of every pre-existing faction. No longer able to fall back on old cultural and political allegiances or unit affiliations, the new Clans largely bonded together.

I will not gloss over the negative elements of the new order. Kerensky used several strong-arm tactics to force through his reforms, including threats and even violence as the situation dictated. However, most of the exiles were weary enough of strife to accept his benign despotism with little fuss. Again, his diaries reveal his thought processes. On 6 February, 2802—barely five weeks after the second Exodus—he wrote, “We will not ‘do what we must to win’. We will simply do what we must.” To Inner Sphere sensibilities, Nicholas Kerensky’s most brutal act was the destruction of family units, which he saw as part of the overall social reorganization associated with tearing down old cultural barriers. He did not do this suddenly—even the most ardent loyalists would have balked at such a radical change—but instead encouraged the fostering of children with other families (once again reviving an ancient tradition). Fostering encouraged a wider understanding of people and society, eliminating much of the prevailing cultural friction. By the time the Clans returned to the Pentagon, fostering was commonplace; by the time of Nicholas’ death, it had become the norm.

The Clan eugenics program, begun in 2819, further weakened family bonds in Clan society, though cause and effect are often confused regarding this issue. Some have suggested that the program destroyed family life in Clan space by demonstrating the viability of raising children outside the family unit. In truth, the roles were reversed. Nicholas’ diaries suggest that he originally planned for the children of the iron wombs to be fostered “like freeborn children” (Nicholas coined the term freeborn, although at that time it had no negative connotation), in the hope that trueborn and freeborn would form a harmonious society with no divisions. However, life in the Kerensky Cluster was hard and most adults worked full-time. They had little time to look after children (despite encouragement to have large families), and so most Clan offspring were raised in community crèches. Eventually, as the number of vat-grown children increased beyond their society’s ability to foster them, scientists and educators took over the crèche system and removed all family connotations. The resulting method of raising, educating and training youngsters became known as “sibling companies,” later shortened to “sibkos.”

RETURN TO THE PENTAGON

By mid-2821, Nicholas judged his troops ready (and the forces of the warlords sufficiently weak) to launch the liberation of the Pentagon, called Operation Klondike. Four Clans targeted every Pentagon world, each assigned a specific sector. Assigned to Arcadia were Clans Ghost Bear, Blood Spirit, Star

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Adder and Steel Viper; to Babylon, Clans Sea Fox, Ice Hellion, Coyote and Cloud Cobra; to Circe, Clans Nova Cat, Mongoose, Snow Raven and Wolverine; to Dagda, Clans Burrock, Fire Mandrill, Goliath Scorpion and Widowmaker; and to Eden, Clans Smoke Jaguar, Wolf, Jade Falcon and Hell's Horses. Too much happened in the yearlong campaigns to do them justice in a few hundred words. Suffice it to say that the Clan assault was devastating. The warlords had little warning, and though the fighting was less one-sided than Nicholas had hoped, the Clans swiftly swept the defenders aside. The outcome of the battles shaped the modern-day Clans in many ways: the Wolf-Falcon feud stems from Operation Klondike, as does the brutality of the Smoke Jaguars, the infighting of the Fire Mandrill Kindraas and the Snow Raven's aerospace bias.

On 26 May 2822, the last resistance ceased and Nicholas began the long process of rebuilding society. He ordered the surviving population divided between the Clans, absorbed into the civilian castes of each. The ease with which the liberated (or subjugated, depending on your point of view) people went along with Kerensky's proclamations shows how severely their spirits had been broken by two decades of war. The Pentagon survivors were soon absorbed into Clan society, which generally accepted the newcomers with open arms.

Previous histories of the Clans have focused on the willingness of the Pentagon civilians to join Nicholas' new order. Of course they were willing. Exploited mercilessly by the warlords and subject to near-constant fear of attack, they reached out to Nicholas as their savior, which goes a long way toward explaining the near-messianic awe in which many Clansmen still hold him. The exploiters, however, were a different story.

Many died in the Clan assault. Those who remained at large were hunted down; the ones who survived what became known as "The Coursing" were used as object lessons. Most were tried and convicted of treason, and subsequently executed by firing squad. Others were prompted to "confess" their sins, and then publicly humiliated and beaten. This process, known as "Thamzing," formed a cornerstone of Nicholas' tactics to subdue the Pentagon planets. Such sessions encouraged the people to denounce the old order, often turning violently on their former oppressors while systematically destroying the old political systems and authority. The people expressed their anger at two decades of war, at the same time becoming accomplices to Nicholas' actions. The sessions were extremely unpleasant but devastatingly effective, just as they had been eight centuries earlier for the Chinese government on Terra (which invented the technique). The sessions also demonstrated that Nicholas Kerensky would do anything to ensure his new society's survival. Brutal situations called for brutal measures. The individual—at least, the non-military individual—would be far less important than the Clan. With the example of Thamzing before them, no one outside the military elite questioned Nicholas' authority.

The sheer brutality of the post-liberation months prompted some within the Clans to revise their opinions of Nicholas. While they agreed that the warlords should be punished, torture and

degradation went against everything they stood for. They feared Nicholas would become another Adolf Hitler, Mao Tse-tung or Stefan Amaris. Criticism mounted, until it eventually reached a crisis.

WOLVERINE TREACHERY

The first rumblings of discontent came from a surprising source: Clan Jade Falcon. Many in their ranks were upset that Nicholas had chosen to join the Wolf Clan rather than the Falcons at the end of Operation Klondike. Disappointment made them question Nicholas' ideals (though not his methods), and for a time they walked a fine line between criticism and treason. Eventually the Falcon Khans cut out what they termed the "cancer" at their core. In July 2823, they purged dissident elements, in effect cutting off part of themselves so that the whole Clan would survive. The Falcons that emerged from what they called "The Culling," though weaker militarily, were totally committed to Kerensky's vision and were thenceforth counted among the most traditional-minded Clans. However, the Falcons were not alone in their treasonous mutterings.

Most of what follows is recreated from Nicholas' journals. Unlike official Clan records, they were never purged of their references to the Not-Named Clan.

Nicholas feared (probably correctly) that his grip on the Clans was slipping, and flexed his muscles as ilKhan against the main opposition to his authority: Clan Wolverine. At Nicholas' urging, on 28 August, 2823, the Grand Council declared that the Brian cache on Circe—which the Wolverines had used to supply their Touman—was no longer Wolverine property. The Council ordered them to share it with their neighbors, Clan Snow Raven. Violating the Clans' socialist principles, the Wolverines objected strenuously. The ensuing political battle raged for several weeks. On 30 September, while the Wolverine saKhan was attending to business on Circe, the Council called for a vote (the Wolverine saKhan cast his vote via HPG). The Wolverines' protest was rejected, whereupon they demanded a Trial of Refusal as was their right under Clan law. The Trial was fought on 7 October; the Wolverines lost.

The situation deteriorated further in the Grand Council chamber, as frayed tempers led to increasingly acrimonious exchanges. Wolverine Khan Sarah McEvedy hoped to win over other Clans to her cause; she knew that Nicholas' dictatorial actions worried several of her fellow Khans. However, Nicholas was a canny politician and knew McEvedy's weaknesses. As her support grew, he goaded her into making a fatal mistake. In a particularly blunt exchange, she insulted him directly—and by extension, the Clans themselves. With a few ill-chosen words, McEvedy destroyed her power base and any hope of liberalizing the Clans. To make matters worse, when Nicholas called for a Trial of Grievance, McEvedy committed the ultimate sin: she declared the Wolverines independent of the Clans. In doing so, she gave Nicholas exactly what he wanted—an excuse to destroy his opposition.

Khan McEvedy escaped Strana Mechty and returned to Circe, where saKhan Franklin Hallis had already placed the

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Wolverine Touman on full alert. When Snow Raven forces acting on their own initiative probed the Wolverine border on 10 October, the Wolverines counterattacked. They showed no mercy, and after a short battle sacked the Raven capital of Dehra Dun. They retreated in the face of Clan Mongoose and Nova Cat forces massing, but not before making an object lesson of the city. After driving all civilians from the area, they used a low-yield nuclear weapon to destroy the Raven genetic repository. The message was simple and brutal: You have backed us into a corner, and we will do anything and everything to stop you. Cowed by this "barbaric" action, the Mongoose, Nova Cat and Snow Raven forces withdrew pending the Grand Council's final deliberations.

With the destruction of the repository, the question of how to punish the Wolverines took a new twist. The Grand Council had voted on 8 October to censure McEvedy and the Wolverines, but had ultimately intended to bring them back into the Clan fold. Now they enacted the ultimate punishment. On 11 October, the Khans voted for the Annihilation of the entire Wolverine Clan. As sentence was passed, Nicholas delivered what became his most famous quote: "Those who break faith with the Unity shall go down into darkness." Over the next few days, the remaining nineteen Clans battled for the honor of destroying the rebels; eventually the contest came down to Clans Widowmaker and Wolf. However, in order to win the bidding, the Wolves were forced to go below the accepted cut-down.

Khan McEvedy arrived back on Circe on 13 October and took charge of preparations for the impending assault. The Wolverine Khans suspected what Nicholas planned, and saKhan Hallis deliberately absented himself from the Council for the fateful vote. Following McEvedy's orders, he was preparing for a third Exodus. McEvedy and Hallis both knew that the Wolverines would never be safe in Clan space. To ensure their Clan's survival, they scattered small units throughout the Pentagon worlds and the Kerensky Cluster, collecting material from supply caches and preparing to flee. The Ghost Bears spotted one such unit, but kept the information secret for decades.

Wolf Clan forces began their assault on 25 October, beating off a Wolverine counterattack on their landing zone. They fought the rebels on land, in the air and in space. The battle raged for two days, and though outnumbered, the Wolves prevailed. A running battle ensued as the Wolverines attempted to flee Clan space. Many vessels on both sides were destroyed, but after nineteen days the Wolves were victorious. Almost eighty percent of the Wolf force died; there were no Wolverine survivors. Nicholas Kerensky killed Hallis in a brutal, three-hour duel on Circe. No trace was ever found of McEvedy. For the next two months, the Wolf force systematically destroyed the Wolverines' holdings, demolishing buildings and forcibly sterilizing their civilian castes. All sibkos containing Wolverine genes were terminated.

Despite these measures, on 22 January of 2824, the Wolf Loremaster presented a troubling report to the Grand Council. A census of the Wolverines' population and equipment showed numerous discrepancies. While most of the Wolverine front-line troops had been accounted for on Circe, many of the second-line warriors appeared to be missing—along with most of the 331st Division's equipment from the disputed Brian cache. Similarly, there were fewer civilians than expected. Officially, the discrepancies were put down to bad bookkeeping. In reality, however, the Grand Council suspected that a sizable portion of the Wolverines had escaped, probably to the Inner Sphere.

Morgan: So there were survivors. What happened to them? Are they the mysterious Minnesota Tribe?

Phelan: We do not know. There probably were survivors—the Ghost Bears admitted as much—and from what Anastasius Focht told me, there is evidence that the Minnesota Tribe were the surviving Wolverines. Why they hit the worlds they did or where they went afterward, no one knows. ComStar

CROSSING THE LINE

—Excerpt from Grand Council security tape; 8 October, 2823 (annotated by Phelan Kell, December 3061)

Kerensky [ilKhan]: My honorable friend the Khan from Clan [CENSORED] continues to ignore the decisions of this body, as verified by the recent Trial. I do not care that the cache is that of the 331st Royal Division, her father's command. This body is agreed that the caches are a resource belonging to the Clans as a whole. In the old order, her paternal loyalty would be commended, but this is not the old order. We are the Clans. We stand on our own merits, not those of our ancestors.

Sarah McEvedy [Wolverine]: Except you.

Kerensky [ilKhan]: I beg your pardon?

McEvedy: I said, except you. You seem perfectly happy to bask in your father's achievements. He was a visionary who sought justice and peace for all. You seek control.

Mitchell Loris [Mongoose]: Khan [CENSORED], you go too far.

McEvedy: Do I? I know many of you in this chamber found our ilKhan's actions to secure control of the Pentagon population offensive. The Star League did not believe in torture and brutality. Those are the tools of power-hungry madmen. Is that what you have become, Nicholas Kerensky? A power-hungry madman?

<<Raised voices from all parties.>>

Kerensky: SILENCE! [CENSORED], Khan of Clan [CENSORED], I, Nicholas Kerensky, ilKhan of the Clans, do call for a Trial of Grievance. By our laws, you may—

McEvedy: Hang your laws. Does the truth hurt so much, Nicholas?

Kerensky: Fellow Khans, our colleague is clearly overwrought. I call for a vote of censure. Loremaster Ward, please—

McEvedy: Don't bother, Nicholas. I'll leave. In fact, we'll all leave. Clan [CENSORED] no longer recognizes the authority of the ilKhan or the Grand Council. From this point forward, we are an independent power. We decide our own fate, fairly and according to the morals and standards of the Star League.

Kerensky: You cannot do this.

McEvedy: I can and I have.

<<McEvedy moves to leave.>>

Kerensky: Arrest her!

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continued from p. 13

<<McEvedy draws her pistol; the Khans and security guards back off. A detachment of Wolverine troops arrives.>>

McEvedy: If you want to face us, fine—but we will not hold back. Prepare to reap the whirlwind.

<<McEvedy storms out>>

Kerensky: My Khans, we face a serious decision . . .

tried to find out. They sent a fleet under the command of Emilio Travis to locate the survivors, but lost the trail spinward of the Outworlds Alliance.

Morgan: You know my views on ComStar.

Phelan: But we can trust Focht.

Morgan: I said ComStar, not Focht. They kept their army secret for more than two centuries.

Phelan: The Clans took genetic samples from everyone they captured or killed in the invasion. Save for one brief scare, no links to the Wolverines were found.

DEATH AND REBIRTH

The annihilation of the Wolverines shocked the remaining dissidents into line. Other "problem Clans" like the Ice Hellions and Cloud Cobras put their own houses

in order, or else were "chastised" by their peers (as happened to Clan Blood Spirit). This classic "divide and conquer" strategy worked exactly as Nicholas had intended, leaving his authority unchallenged for the next decade. To Inner Sphere sensibilities, his methods and goals were unconscionable, but he did manage to build a thriving society from the ashes of the original Exodus. To the population of the Pentagon, anything was better than continual war. They threw themselves into the restructuring of society, regardless of the fact that the new order made most of them second-class citizens. They had fled the Inner Sphere to escape war, and yet whole generations had grown up in an era of factions and warlords. War would never go away, but the Clans' rules of engagement would minimize damage to civilian interests.

By 2830, Clan society was flourishing. Explorers were charting the worlds of the Kerensky Cluster and establishing colonies, industrial complexes rose and food production was at an all-time high. The Pentagon worlds were once more self-sustaining and would soon become economic powerhouses. The education of the children born in the eugenics program was proceeding apace. The oldest were eleven years old, and the Clan population as a whole was clawing its way back toward pre-civil war levels (which it reached in 2832). Over the coming decades, the growth rate would increase exponentially. The future looked bright under the lordship of the Great Khan Nicholas Kerensky. As the year 2834 dawned, the people expected great things. What they got was tragedy and bloodshed.

To rebuild after the Wolverine Annihilation, the Wolves had encouraged their merchant caste to trade throughout Clan space, turning the Clan into an economic powerhouse and allowing them to rebuild much faster than anticipated. However, like any industrial power, Clan Wolf needed more and more raw materials to sustain growth. Eventually, they challenged the Widowmakers for a year's production from the bauxite mines on Dagda. Vital for the production of ferro-alluminium, the bauxite would allow the Wolves to expand their forces considerably. Wolf merchants had made initial approaches; the Wolf military stepped in and issued a formal challenge to a Trial of Possession only after the Widowmaker Khans blocked the trading of the ore.

The challenge alone would not have caused problems between the two Clans; they and others had traded such challenges for more than a decade. However, the obvious freedoms granted to the Wolf merchants and the respect shown them by the Wolf military prompted an outcry among the Widowmaker merchants. After losing the Trial and being forced to give away the ore, the Widowmaker merchants claimed that the warrior caste's machismo had lost their Clan a valuable resource. So incensed were they that they petitioned the Grand Council to censure Khan Jorgensson for what they termed his negligence. The Widowmaker Khan's response was swift and brutal. On 7 June, he ordered mass arrests and the execution of the merchant ringleaders.

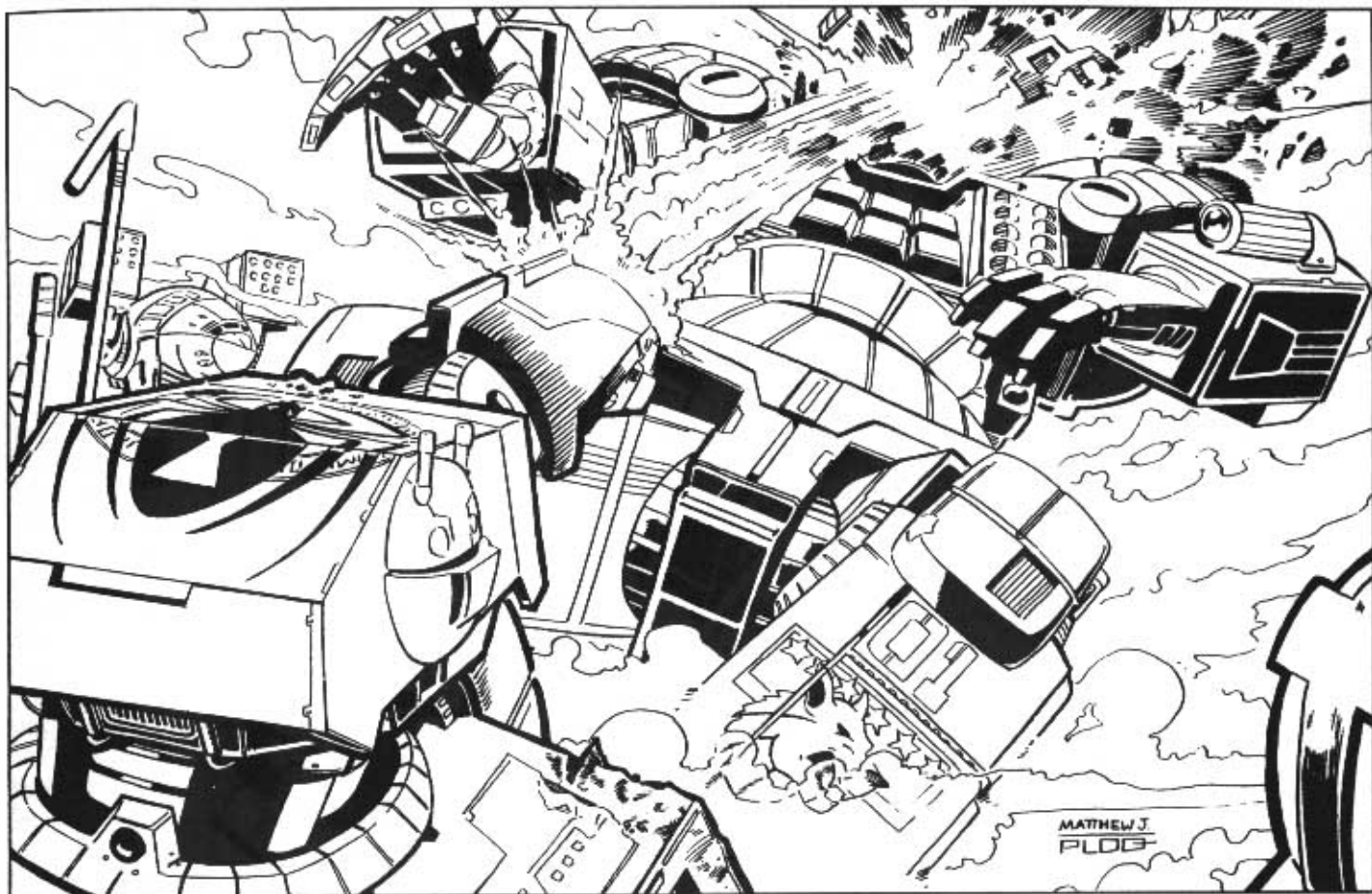
The Widowmaker warriors' actions against their own people shocked the other Clans. When Jorgensson accused the Wolves of inciting the merchant uprising, the other Clans supported Wolf Khan Jerome Winson's counterproposal: that the Widowmakers had forfeited their right to govern. He called for the Widowmakers' Absorption, a motion that passed unanimously. As expected, the Widowmakers called for a Trial of Refusal.

The Trial took place on 7 October, on the Steitz Plains of Ironhold—the capital world of the Jade Falcons and thus a neutral venue in the dispute. The forces were closely matched; ten Stars of Widowmakers and eleven of Wolves. Because of the seriousness of the matter, ilKhan Kerensky and the Khans from the other seventeen Clans served as umpires. The fierce battle soon focused on the duel between Khans Jorgensson and Winson. The overall battle wound down as umpires and combatants became spectators at this duel, forming an impromptu ring around the two fighting Khans. Just as Jerome Winson seemed about to defeat his opponent, a Star of Widowmaker 'Mechs leaped into the fray and attacked the Wolf Khan. With the rules of zellbrigen so flagrantly breached, Nicholas led the umpires into the fray to support Khan Winson.

According to his testimony at the ensuing Grand Council trial, Jorgensson was dazed by Winson's attacks and shocked by his own troops' actions. When an Atlas stooped over his downed 'Mech, he fired instinctively at the perceived threat and hit the large 'Mech squarely in the head. As it fell backward, he recognized the machine and its pilot and cried out in dismay. Nicholas Kerensky was dead before his 'Mech hit the ground.

The death of their leader provoked the Wolf warriors to near-insane rage. They turned on the surviving Widowmakers and cut them down. Ironically, Jorgensson survived the battle, only to be executed after the briefest of trials. The combined Clans then laid waste to the Widowmaker Toman; only a handful of warriors survived to be Absorbed by the Wolf Clan. Natasha Kerensky, regarded by many as the

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epitome of the Wolf Clan, traced part of her genetic makeup to one such survivor.

GOLDEN CENTURY

It is ironic that the dissidence and factionalization of the Clans likely saved them from collapse. Historically, personality-based empires—such as those of Charlemagne and Genghis Khan—had fragmented on the death of their founder. The Clans, however, were already little more than a loose confederation, and so no grab for resources and power ensued after Nicholas Kerensky's demise. Furthermore, the clear culpability of the Widowmakers in the IlKhan's death gave the other Clans a focus for their grief and anger, serving to bind them together. If anything, Nicholas' death strengthened the Clans.

The surviving eighteen Clans dealt with their grief in different ways. Some, like the Ghost Bears, turned inward, seeking to strengthen their own bonds of fellowship. Others, such as the Nova Cats, indulged in mysticism. The Smoke Jaguars and the Steel Vipers chose to hone their martial skills, while Clans Blood Spirit and Hell's Horses isolated themselves from "corrupting" influences. Many—among them the Nova Cats, Wolves, Sea Foxes (later Diamond Sharks) and Jade Falcons, became consummate merchants. One Clan, the Fire Mandrills, factionalized into a microcosm of Clan society. Most Clans pros-

pered, and the years between 2830 and 2930 are widely known as the Golden Century.

The reconstruction of the Pentagon continued, as did the foundation of new colony worlds. Two factors limited the colonies' growth: lack of population and a desire to maintain a tight grip on the reins of power. The latter was the more significant; by the late 2830s, the first generations from the eugenics program were entering service in the military, and the civilian population was growing exponentially as a result of Nicholas' mandatory marriage policy. Politics assumed ever greater importance; political intrigue led to several brutal incidents, which I will cover later.

During the Golden Century, Clan culture underwent a metamorphosis that set it apart from the Inner Sphere. The liberalization of attitudes and the relaxation of traditional taboos and social mores—vital in the years following the second Exodus to ensure the survival of the exiles—became an integral part of Clan culture. To many in the Inner Sphere, the result was an amoral people. This assumption is wrong. The Clans believe deeply in their own set of standards; however, save for the people of the Draconis Combine, few in the Inner Sphere can fully comprehend the Clan way.

The Clans also made considerable scientific and technological progress, though much of it was evolutionary rather than

revolutionary. For example, the OmniMech (first fielded by Clan Coyote in 2854) came from ideas incorporated into the Star League *Mercury BattleMech* design. Similarly, battle armor (first used by Clan Wolf in 2868) was an amalgam of heavy armor and commercial exoskeleton technology. From a technological viewpoint, neither development was truly revolutionary—though their impact on warfare was, as attested by the Inner Sphere's swift adoption of such systems in our own time.

Despite its overall prosperity, the Golden Century saw its share of troubles. The Smoke Jaguars Absorbed Clan Mongoose in 2868 and destroyed much of their own merchant caste (to their subsequent cost), while the Steel Vipers fought their own civil war following the ascension of Khan Sanra Mercer. Many ongoing feuds between Clans stem from this period, among them the Steel Viper-Snow Raven hostility, the Coyote-Fire Mandrill feud and the mutual hatred between Clans Blood Spirit and Burrock (which has found new life between the Blood Spirits and the Star Adders following the Absorption of the Burrocks by the latter Clan).

THE DRIVE TO WAR

Perhaps the most unusual feature of the Golden Century was the apparent waning of the powers of the ilKhan. Nicholas Kerensky had been the Clans' supreme lord, deferred to by the Khans of individual Clans. His successor, Jerome Winson, was held in less exalted regard. Though they acknowledged his authority in matters concerning all the Clans, the other Khans were less willing to take notice of the ilKhan's opinions on internal matters. The ilKhan became little more than a figurehead for the Grand Council, elected to mediate a series of crises. After 2947, the position appeared to lapse, until the Outbound Light arrived at Huntress in 3048.

Without an ilKhan to mediate between them, the Clans drifted further apart. The feuds and grievances from the Golden Century intensified until they became as much of a driving force behind Clan actions as the long-term goal of returning to the Inner Sphere. Together with a radical reinterpretation of Nicholas and Aleksandr Kerensky's teachings—particularly the Hidden Hope Doctrine—this factionalism led to a significant schism within the Clans.

On one side of the debate were those who felt that the Clans should protect the Inner Sphere and its people from outside threats, while developing their own distinctive Clan culture. Members of this faction, headed by the Wolves and Coyotes, were dubbed Wardens after a passage in Nicholas' diaries: "...to ward the Inner Sphere from all outside forces until that time when the Star League is reborn." The Warden philosophy dominated Clan Councils throughout the Golden Century (though the term "Warden" was not coined until some years later), but began to wane under the increasing divisiveness that plagued the Clans in the 30th century.

The other faction in the debate argued for invasion of the Inner Sphere. Known as Crusaders, they sought to re-establish the Star League by conquest, with themselves as its rulers.

Headed by the Jade Falcons (and later the Smoke Jaguars), the Crusaders believed that the Kerenskys had always intended to return and take over the Inner Sphere. Support for this concept was particularly strong among the civilian castes, who suffered most in the harsh conditions of the Pentagon and Kerensky Cluster; they came to see the Inner Sphere as a paradise which was theirs by right. With the Crusader philosophy taking hold at the most basic level, many Clans—particularly the weaker and poorer ones—were caught up in it. They had little choice but to call for invasion, as the only possible way of bettering their circumstances. Many of the Crusaders had other motives that were not entirely selfless. Cloaking their desire for battle and conquest in the teachings of the Great Father, they sought self-aggrandizement and the raw materials that the Inner Sphere contained.

For many years, the Grand Council remained neutral in the debate. By 2980, however, the Crusader cause had gained sufficient support that the Grand Council could no longer ignore the call for war. After many years of trying, the Jade Falcons introduced a formal proposal for invasion to the Grand Council. Though unable to force a vote in favor, they ensured that the matter would not be put aside. The ensuing discussions, known to Clan history as the Great Debate, gave rise to the general use of the Warden and Crusader labels.

The Wardens knew that popular opinion was turning against them and maneuvered to gain time. They argued that without intelligence on the Inner Sphere's current situation, the Clans could not make any rational decision. These arguments resulted in the formation of Intelser, an intelligence-gathering network intended to give the Grand Council a clearer picture of events in the Inner Sphere since the SLDF's long-ago departure. Posing as merchants, members of Intelser infiltrated various Periphery realms, gathering information and relaying it to the Clans. However, such material was largely second-hand and unreliable, resulting in a confused picture of the Inner Sphere. The Clans learned that the Inner Sphere had suffered two centuries of near-constant warfare, and that its technology level had fallen drastically. Many seized on this as a pretext for invasion. They quoted General Order 137, in which Aleksandr Kerensky had said, "When the time is right, when the strength of our will and our honor is humanity's only hope to struggle up from the ashes, only then can our descendants make the long journey to the home that is rightfully ours."

The debate raged for years, significantly interrupted only by the events surrounding the renaming of Clan Sea Fox as Clan Diamond Shark in 2985. Though ostensibly an internal matter, the renaming—prompted by the introduction of a Snow Raven-bred predator to the oceans of Strana Mechty—reflected the Warden-Crusader split. Sea Fox Khan Damon Clarke was a staunch Crusader, and so other Crusaders supported his motion to rename his Clan. Warden Clans largely dismissed it. The clear wrongdoing by the Snow Ravens was irrelevant: Clarke's motion failed, sixteen votes to eighteen. Clarke ultimately triumphed by calling for and winning a Trial of Refusal.

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THE COMPROMISE

With the renaming behind them, the Grand Council returned to the invasion debate. The Sea Fox incident had demonstrated widespread support for the Crusader cause; the Warden Khans knew that the Crusaders would soon gain a majority and force the invasion issue. Their only option was to stall, to buy time in which to identify some means of stopping the Crusader juggernaut.

By the year 3000, the Clans were poised on the brink of invading the Inner Sphere. Khan Nadia Winson of Clan Ghost Bear served as Grand Council Head in that year; a staunch Crusader taken as abtakha from Clan Wolf, she called for a vote on the invasion. Khan Kerlin Ward of the Wolves swiftly responded that the Intelser missions had met with limited success, and that a lack of reliable intelligence remained a major obstacle. The Jade Falcons and Smoke Jaguars might be willing to attack the Inner Sphere "blind," but how many other Clans wanted to risk throwing their troops away on a hasty attack? Instead, Khan Ward proposed dispatching a reconnaissance force to make a thorough survey of the Great Houses and their militaries. Faced with the prospect of being sacrificed on the altar of Falcon and Jaguar ambition, most Clans opted for caution and approved Ward's suggestion. Seeing the magnitude of Ward's victory, Nadia Winson voted in favor of the motion, delegating Clan Wolf to oversee the operation. Kerlin Ward created Wolf's Dragoons, soon to become famous in the Inner Sphere.

Comprised of freeborn warriors drawn from Wolf Clan police Clusters and strengthened by a handful of Bloodnamed warriors, the Dragoons would masquerade as a mercenary unit. From Intelser reports, the Clans knew that the Inner Sphere used such units. Though they disapproved of the practice, the Clans recognized it as an opportunity for the Dragoons to seek employment with each Great House in turn, which would enable them to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each Successor State's army. With the unit formed and ready to go, Ward dropped his bombshell. To be of any value, the survey would take many years to complete. In all probability, twenty-five years—between three and five generations of warriors—would pass before the reconnaissance force returned home. Given the preparation time for the mission, this meant an invasion was highly unlikely to take place before 3030. Despite a near-rebellion by the Ice Hellions, the Wardens had their breathing space.

The picture painted by the Dragoons contradicted that given by Intelser in many regards. The Inner Sphere had fought and was still fighting a series of devastating wars, but the warring nations remained viable. Much technology had been lost, but the people had taken active measures to prevent further decline, and it seemed likely they would eventually return to the level of the Star League. They were not barbarians to be saved from their own dark sides, like the people of the Pentagon, nor were they on the verge of creating a new Star League on their own.

The Dragoons' apparent abandonment of their mission around 3019 stirred up the Crusaders, who once more agitated for invasion. When rumors of the Steiner-Davion alliance and the Fourth Succession War reached the Clans, the debate rose to fever pitch. Once again, a Wolf Khan—this time Ulric

Kerensky—counseled caution. Wary of tricks to table the invasion, the Crusaders contested Kerensky's motion to postpone debate until after the end of the Fourth Succession War. The motion passed by a slim margin, buying time for news of the stalled Lyrans-Federated Suns campaign to reach the Clans. Clearly, the Inner Sphere was not on the brink of unification. A similar scare accompanied the War of '39, but was similarly defused. The Great Debate rumbled on, until the fateful summer of 3048.

THE GO VOTE

ComStar Primus Adrienne Sims had founded the Explorer Corps in 2959, allegedly in response to visions of a threat to the Inner Sphere from beyond the Periphery. The Corps' mission was to survey space around the Inner Sphere, with the aim of warning the Inner Sphere of the return of Kerensky's fleet or of the approach of any hostile force. Unfortunately, the Explorer Corps triggered the very apocalypse that Sims had sought to avert.

In its 85 years of operation prior to the Outbound Light mission, the Corps rediscovered many lost colonies and introduced them to the teachings of ComStar founder Jerome Blake. The survey that departed from the planet Bone Norman in mid-June of 3046 was typical: an exploratory mission into the Coreward Operations area, scheduled to last three years. The mission commander was Precentor Arabella Bradford; Precentor Vincent Dupont commanded the JumpShip and its attendant DropShips. On 27 September, 3048, the Outbound Light jumped into what its crew thought was an unexplored G7V star system. The system's primary planet was Huntress, capital of Clan Smoke Jaguar.

Senior Jaguar Khan Leo Showers ordered the vessel captured and its crew interrogated. There has been some debate about what happened to the crew, particularly their questioning and repatriation. Though he is a good friend, I regret to say that Precentor Martial Anastasius Focht deliberately muddled the waters, alternately claiming that they were treated as honored guests and referring to interrogation. The former may have been true at first, but the crew did undergo the Clans' typical chemical interrogation process. I have seen the tapes, and can testify first-hand to the effectiveness of the method. The crew revealed considerable information on the Inner Sphere's political and military situation, as well as the apparent goals of its major players. To my knowledge, only the 7-member survey team of the 53-person crew were returned to ComStar; all exhibited deep psychological scars from the incident. The remaining Explorer Corps personnel—the vessel crews—were held by the Jaguars. Even after the recent liberation of Huntress by Task Force Serpent, their whereabouts remain unknown.

The capture of the ComStar crew gave the ambitious Jaguar Khan the first solid information on the Inner Sphere in decades. Armed with it, he forced the Grand Council to vote on the long-postponed invasion. Faced with the prospect of Inner Sphere vessels discovering the location of the Clan homeworlds, and the very real prospect of an Inner Sphere dominated by the

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technologically advanced Federated Commonwealth, the Clans had little option. On 21 November, 3048, they voted to invade the Inner Sphere.

Clan Wolf alone opposed the move. As was his right, Khan Ulric Kerensky demanded a Trial of Refusal. The Wolf Third Battle Cluster fought valiantly despite being outmatched four to one (bidding had reduced the odds from sixteen to one) by Leo Showers' Crusaders. The Wolves were narrowly defeated, and the Council decision stood.

With inter-Clan cooperation vital, the Council decided to elect an ilKhan to oversee the invasion. Vacant since 2947, the post nevertheless carried immense prestige. There was only one viable candidate for the job; on 12 December, 3048, Leo Showers was elected the seventh ilKhan of the Clans.

Aided by a fellow Crusader Khan, Elias Crichton of the Jade Falcons, ilKhan Showers set about planning the massive military assault code-named Operation Revival. On Crichton's suggestion, the Grand Council agreed that the Clan whose forces conquered Terra would become ilClan, ruling the other Clans. The victorious Clan's senior Khan would become ilKhan in perpetuity, and the ilClan would also assume control of the "Free Guilds"—those elements of the civilian castes that form part of Clan society but do not belong to a specific Clan.

Despite the reports from the crew of the Outbound Light, the Clans largely dismissed the combat abilities of the Inner Sphere militaries, and chose to send only four of the seventeen Clans to attack the Successor States. Many feared that even this was too much. The bidding and Trials to determine the participants were fierce. As the Clan of the Kerenskys, the Wolves were given one place; the Falcon and Jaguar Khans felt that forcing the dominant Warden Clan to join the invasion was a suitable punishment for the Wolves' temerity in challenging the Crusaders' will. Not surprisingly, the Falcons and Jaguars also won places. Some Clans, like the Star Adders, removed themselves from the operation by bidding low in hopes of dominating the "Home Clans." Others were underbid or failed to deliver the hoped-for performance in the Trials. Clan Ghost Bear became the fourth Invading Clan, with the Steel Vipers as reserves. The others withdrew to lick their wounds and exploit the absence of their more powerful companions.

The invasion was expected to last until late 3053, divided into fifteen waves of ten weeks each (eight weeks of combat operations and two weeks of R&R). Though the plan originally called for the assembled Clan armada to depart in June, many warriors from the four invading Clans challenged their Khans to allow select units to begin the journey in late February. Having waited for more than two hundred years, the Clansmen could wait no longer. These advance guards would sweep the Periphery for bandits, providing much-needed information for the following fleet. They would wait at the edge of the Inner Sphere for the arrival of the bulk of the Clan forces. After some debate, Operation Revival was modified to include this additional phase, and the most elite Clusters from all four Invading Clans departed on 21 February. The rest of the armada departed in mid-June, following the original campaign plan.

The advance guards' first contact with Inner Sphere troops in the Periphery led many in the assault force to believe—mistakenly—that their leaders were being unduly cautious. Single warriors equipped with low-tech 'Mechs and fighters were no match for Clan equipment or the skills of soldiers literally bred for war. The Clans crushed every unit in their path, seizing control of Deep Periphery realms to serve as staging posts (for example, the Khwarazm Empire and the Chainelane Isles). Clan WarShips and fighters destroyed all vessels that attempted to flee with news of the approaching juggernaut. By the beginning of 3050, the Clans were poised on the border of the Inner Sphere.

OPERATION REVIVAL

The first assaults broke like a tidal wave over the coreward edge of the Inner Sphere. They began on 7 March, 3050; by 20 March, every invading Clan was engaged against troops of the Federated Commonwealth, Draconis Combine or Free Rasalhague Republic. Little expecting an attack of such magnitude from the Periphery, the Inner Sphere's defenses swiftly collapsed, though on several worlds the defending troops went to ground and waged effective guerilla war. The Clans came close to seizing the heirs of the Federated Commonwealth and the Draconis Combine; unknowingly, the Smoke Jaguars imprisoned Combine heir Hohiro Kurita for several weeks on Turtle Bay. Only after his escape from the infamous Kurushiyama prison did the Jaguars realize who had slipped through their fingers.

Hohiro Kurita's escape is significant for another reason. It prompted a series of riots on Turtle Bay, which culminated in the Jaguar flagship's orbital bombardment of the city of Edo. So intense was this attack that many in the Inner Sphere believed that the Clans had used nuclear weapons. Almost a million people died in the assault, a singular act of brutality that turned the Inner Sphere and even many Clans against the Jaguars. Even ilKhan Showers and Falcon Khan Crichton were outraged, and the other Khans willingly followed the Wolves' lead in eliminating WarShips from their bidding. However, this did not stop the Falcons from threatening to use similar tactics against Zoetermeer during the invasion's fourth wave.

By late April, the first wave was drawing to a close. Drunk with the euphoria of conquest, the Clans failed to achieve the cooperation called for by ilKhan Showers. All four Clans provided after-action reports on their assaults, but those of the Falcons and Jaguars were as much fiction as fact. This set the tone for the rest of the invasion; rather than a concerted drive into the Inner Sphere, it became a point-scoring race between the Invading Clans. Discarding the pre-planned attack schedule, the Clans waited only a week before launching new assaults. They finished this second wave by the end of May. When the Wolves submitted a revised schedule for their third wave, accelerating the pace of assaults by merging third- and fourth-wave targets, the other Clans were outraged. If the Wolves succeeded, they would become de facto leaders in the race; if they failed, they would create a weakness that the enemy could exploit. The move was particularly galling to the Ghost Bears,

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who had been forced to contract the Steel Vipers for additional forces to suppress rebellions on their "liberated" worlds.

Ulric Kerensky's decision to assault the Free Rasalhague Republic's capital, which lay on the border of the Wolf and Ghost Bear invasion corridors, forced the two Clans to bid against each other for the honor of capturing the planet Rasalhague. By bidding during the third wave rather than waiting until the fifth, Ulric was violating an agreement made with the Ghost Bear Khans some months earlier, but the Bears would lose face if they insisted he abide by it. Instead, the Bears did all they could to inconvenience the Wolves, hampering their other assaults. The new Ghost Bear Khans, Bjorn Jorgensson and Aletha Kabrinski, forced the Wolf Khan to bid far below the accepted outbid if he wanted to win Rasalhague for the Wolves. They expected the Wolves to be handed their heads in the assault. However, Ulric had a secret weapon.

Me.

By using intelligence I collected for him, Ulric manipulated Rasalhague's defenders into doing what he wanted. Unlike the Falcons or Jaguars, who eagerly used frontal-assault tactics against the Inner Sphere forces, Ulric wished to minimize his own losses as well as collateral damage to what would become Wolf territory. Jealousy of the Wolves' achievement on Rasalhague would ultimately lead to the Jaguars' humiliation on the planet Wolcott, though not for some time yet.

Meanwhile, the Smoke Jaguars also accelerated the pace of their assaults. Led by the ilKhan, they made short work of their targets. They finished ahead of the Jade Falcons and the Ghost Bears, but soon fell victim to divisions within their ranks. The so-called "Paradise Syndrome" (a near-reverence for captured Inner Sphere planets) led to an increase in Trials of Possession for land and property, placing the Clan in a difficult position when Combine-sponsored rebellions erupted on their worlds. They lost valuable supplies, and though they swiftly crushed the uprisings, such activities would plague them until Operation Bulldog in 3059.

The fourth wave of assaults began in August 3050, July for the Falcons and Wolves. Few expected the drama that occurred not long afterward. On 10 September, the Federated Commonwealth launched a counterattack on the world of Twycross, captured by the Falcons in June. The FedCom troops expected to encounter second-line Clan warriors, who would provide little resistance to the counter-invasion. Instead they found a front-line Cluster, the Falcon Guards. The daring actions of Kai Allard-Liao in the Great Gash allowed the FedCom troops to claim a narrow but significant victory. However hard-fought the battle, the fact remained that a Clan force—a supposedly elite one—had met defeat at Inner Sphere hands. Worse was to follow.

Seeking to make up ground lost to the Wolves, the Smoke Jaguars assaulted Wolcott on 2 October. Hohiro Kurita goaded the Jaguars into a series of mistakes, and they walked straight into a Combine trap. They withdrew after agreeing not to attack the world again and to supply the DCMS with four OmniMechs and twenty-four suits of battle armor. Convinced that the DCMS troops had dishonored the sacred rituals of the Clans, the



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Jaguars vowed to never again accept a batchall (the ritual negotiation to decide the goals of an engagement and the forces employed by each side) from Inner Sphere troops.

Meanwhile, the Ghost Bears plodded on. After the failed bidding for Rasalhague, they successfully completed several other assaults. These achievements, which accompanied the appointment of two new Khans, brought about a change in the Bears' attitude that would eventually make them the strongest of the Clans and convert them to the Warden cause. However, one more shocking event would occur before they embarked on that path.

With the Wolf Clan's lead steadily growing, ilKhan Showers ordered a Grand Kurultai to convene on 1 November, 3050—presumably to censure Khan Ulric. The Clans would never discover ilKhan Leo's intentions, however. As the fleet gathered at Radstadt on 31 October, a convoy escorting Free Rasalhague's Elected Prince Magnusson jumped into the Radstadt system. The Rasalhagian force immediately deployed fighters to buy time for the Prince's JumpShip to escape. The pilots showed immense heroism, especially my old friend Tyra Miraborg. Her fighter crippled, Tyra flew it on a suicide run into the Wolf Clan flagship, the Dire Wolf. She died instantly; the impact also killed ilKhan Leo Showers and nearly killed Ulric Kerensky. Singlehandedly, Tyra Miraborg halted the invasion for an entire year.

Morgan: "Old friend"? You forget I've met Anika and had the reports from Gunzburg.

Phelan: It was a long time ago, and the Clans taught me not to dwell on the past. It's bad enough that the Clans idolize her alongside Kai and named a DropShip class after her.

Morgan: You must not be paying attention to events in the Free Rasalhague Republic. They idolize her every bit as much as the Clans do. They've created a new medal, the Miraborg Cross, and they've built the Tyra Miraborg Memorial Academy.

Phelan: I am reminded of her every time I see this belt. But I will not make an issue of it, especially if the "Ice Queen"—dear Kate—might be reading this eventually.

THE YEAR OF PEACE

Some Clansmen argued that the death of the ilKhan should be answered with vengeance, visited a thousand times over on the people of the Inner Sphere. Luckily, cooler heads prevailed. The Invading Clans chose to return to their capital world, Strana Mechty, to elect a new ilKhan. The resulting lull in the fighting became known as the Year of Peace.

The Clan homeworlds lie 1,300 light-years from Terra, roughly eight hundred light-years beyond the Inner Sphere/Periphery border. The length of the Clan armada's homeward journey gave the Successor States time to establish temporary alliances, as well as the opportunity to learn how to fight back. While the Clans gathered on Strana Mechty, the leaders of the Inner Sphere did likewise on the world of Outreach—

home to Wolf's Dragoons, who had by this time openly thrown in their lot with the Inner Sphere. The Dragoons taught the Inner Sphere war leaders what they could of Clan fighting styles, knowing that the respite would not last long.

Meanwhile, the Clans began proceedings with an inquiry into Leo Showers' shocking demise. Almost to a man, the Clans regarded the death of the first ilKhan in a century at Inner Sphere hands as a very bad omen.

The highly charged debate found no fault with any Clan or Clansman for the death of the ilKhan, but served as the springboard for other, more dangerous political games. Many of the Home Clans were unhappy with the progress made by the invaders and petitioned for admission to the invading force. The Invading Clans opposed any diminishing of their authority, and so worked to ensure that one of their number would be the new ilKhan. As they rightly argued, only someone tempered in the flames of war against the Inner Sphere would be suitable for the post.

The eventual nomination and election of the Warden-minded Ulric Kerensky came as a surprise to many, especially given the dominance of Crusaders among the Invading Clans. Those who engineered it, however, had their reasons. By elevating Kerensky out of the Wolf Clan Khanship, the Crusaders hoped to replace him with a Khan more sympathetic to their cause, thereby solidifying their grip on the Grand Council. They also appreciated the irony of forcing a Warden ilKhan to further the Crusader agenda. Ulric, however, outwitted them by giving the post to the fabled Natasha Kerensky, who had recently returned to Clan space. As the only surviving Bloodnamed warrior in Wolf's Dragoons, Natasha was the only one bound to heed the recall order sent them by the Clans. She was a staunch Warden and her selection as Khan ensured Ulric of the Wolf Clan's support. This gave the new ilKhan some flexibility, despite the constraints imposed on him by the Grand Council's Crusader majority.

Bowing to pressure from the Home Clans, Ulric activated three more Clans: the Steel Vipers and the Nova Cats as assault forces, and the Diamond Sharks as a new reserve Clan. This act served three purposes. First, it strengthened the invasion force while inconveniencing the strongest elements of the Crusader opposition. The two additional assault Clans were assigned to the outermost attack zones, the Jade Falcon and Smoke Jaguar invasion corridors. These assignments cast aspersions on the Falcons' and Jaguars' combat abilities, and more importantly required the two original Invading Clans to give the newcomers some of their captured territory.

Second, the addition of these particular three Clans diluted Crusader power in the assault. The Diamond Sharks and Nova Cats were Warden Clans, while the Steel Vipers were known as "fence sitters," straddling the two philosophies. Clan Wolf's own Warden stance made for three Warden Clans to counterbalance the three Crusader Clans. Meanwhile, the Ghost Bears were steadily drifting away from the Crusader view, and so Warden dominance seemed assured.

Third, the gesture pacified the Home Clans. By adding three of their number to the invasion force, Ulric eliminated the

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justification for the others' demands to be included. The Ice Hellions, one of the most prominent Crusader Clans, had hoped to be chosen, but their own actions a few years earlier had ensured otherwise. Disgruntled at having been left out of the original invasion force, they had launched a series of raids (dubbed the "Hellion's Fury campaign") throughout Clan space. The attacks demonstrated their martial prowess and virility, but also cost them units and alienated the other Clans. Therefore, they had almost no chance of selection when Ulric chose the Clans that would join the invasion.

TEARS OF BLOOD

The Clans returned to the Inner Sphere in late 3051, beginning their offensive operations in early November. They made good progress in general, but the Year of Peace had allowed the Inner Sphere to develop tactics and equipment to counter some of the Clan advantage. In response to the slow pace of the Clan advance, and backed by the ilKhan, the Nova Cats and Smoke Jaguars decided to launch a knockout blow against the Draconis Combine. On 20 November, Ulric petitioned ComStar for information on their target, "a world of some importance": Luthien.

The assault on the Combine capital began on 4 January, 3052, with five Galaxies—three Jaguar and two Nova Cat—landing across the planet. Their principal target was Imperial City, but excellent intelligence had enabled Gunji-no-Kanrei Theodore Kurita to prepare for the attack. Arrayed against the Clans were sixteen regiments: nine Combine units and seven mercenary units. Among the former were the elite Second Legion of Vega, the Otomo, the First Sword of Light and both Genyosha units; the latter included elite troops from the Kell Hounds and Wolf's Dragoons, both sent to Luthien's aid by Prince Hanse Davion of the Federated Commonwealth. Together with numerous second-line units, the defenders held their ground for two days, and ultimately prevailed. Both sides saw numerous acts of heroism, as well as phenomenal losses. Luthien was the largest battle of the invasion to date, and less than half the Jaguar and Nova Cat force escaped from it.

Their loss on Luthien taught the Clans several lessons. First, they could no longer claim that their defeats on Wolcott and Twycross were aberrations. Luthien was a stand-up fight, and even though the Combine used deception as part of its battle plan, most of the battle was fought above-board. The Inner Sphere militaries had proved themselves a force to be reckoned with. Second, the battle demonstrated the problems of coordinating two Clans' actions without the personal support of the ilKhan. The Nova Cats and Jaguars blamed each other for the defeat, shattering any possibility of future cooperation between them.

All too soon, however, the situation on Luthien paled into insignificance. On 7 January, Myndo Waterley, Primus of ComStar, met with the ilKhan on the world of Satalice. There, Ulric revealed the Clans' ultimate goal: the "liberation" of Terra and the reestablishment of the Star League.

ComStar, which up to this point had been cooperating with the Clans, suddenly took a more belligerent stance. While other

assaults continued, ComStar's Precentor Martial planned the battle for control of Terra. Neither he nor the ilKhan wished to fight on humankind's home planet, and so they chose a proxy world: Tukayyid, located in what remained of the Free Rasalhague Republic. The battle for Tukayyid would pit all the Invading Clans against the Com Guard, each Clan with its own objectives. If the Clans won, ComStar would cede them Terra and would become their administrative arm. If the Clans lost, they would abide by a fifteen-year truce, capturing no worlds closer to Terra than Tukayyid.

The epic battle began on 1 May, 3052, and lasted for twenty-five days. Only one word truly describes it: bloodbath. The Com Guard lost forty percent of their troops, with the same proportion injured. Clan losses ranged from nine percent dead and twenty-nine percent wounded for the Steel Vipers, to thirty percent dead and sixty percent wounded for the Smoke Jaguars (who sought revenge for Luthien, and so fought with reckless abandon). Only the Wolf Clan achieved its objectives, though Clans Jade Falcon and Ghost Bear achieved draws. The Clans' defeat bound them to the Truce of Tukayyid; the invasion could not resume until 3067.

ENFORCED PEACE

The truce did not sit well with the Crusaders. Even after a Grand Kurultai ratified the agreement on 12 June, they sought ways to circumvent it. The aftermath of ComStar's Operation Scorpion—Myndo Waterley's ill-conceived attempt to take control of the Inner Sphere—had hardened the Clans' attitude toward the "Spheroids." Despite Waterley's abrupt resignation, they felt that ComStar could no longer be trusted. It is a testament to Ulric Kerensky's political skill that he persuaded the Khans to accept the truce, and continued to fend off all challenges to it until the fateful events of the Refusal War.

A warrior culture deprived of a battlefield, the Clans sought another outlet for their pent-up aggression. Numerous Trials and skirmishes erupted among them, and inter-Clan raiding—unheard of during the invasion, at least in the occupation zones—became commonplace. The long-running Viper-Falcon feud escalated, with the latter losing nine occupied worlds to the Vipers between 3052 and 3055. At the same time back in Clan space, the Star Adders fought a series of engagements against the Diamond Sharks to demonstrate their strength and superiority among the Home Clans. Clan Burrock's similar reclamation of territory from the Fire Mandrills led the latter Clan to withdraw into their enclaves to lick their wounds.

Meanwhile, the Jade Falcons found themselves facing a two-front war. In 3051, they had negotiated an alliance with Clan Snow Raven, an expansion of the deal that had gained them the loan of ten Raven WarShips during Operation Revival. However, the Ravens apparently manipulated the situation in a way that prompted the Falcons to abrogate the agreement, which launched the two Clans into a bitter feud. With the bulk of the Falcon forces in the Inner Sphere, the Ravens had little to fear, though a series of raids left their navy bloodied. However, the fighting gave the Vipers sufficient breathing room

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to consolidate their gains—an ironic outcome, given the long-standing hatred between the Vipers and the Snow Ravens.

All this factional infighting mattered little to the people of the Inner Sphere. More significant to them were the so-called "Red Corsair" raids. Though the truth has never been proved, the Jade Falcons sought to destroy the Truce of Tukayyid by sending troops across the truce line. Unable to do so openly, they worked in secret with the Crusader faction of the Wolves to engineer "bandit raids" that would force the Inner Sphere to send a unit into Clan territory. The Clans could then claim that the Inner Sphere had violated the treaty, and resume the invasion with impunity. This much I know, as I led the Wolf Clan force charged with upholding the treaty and bringing the Red Corsair to justice. I personally faced Conal Ward, the principal Wolf conspirator, in a Circle of Equals. He admitted what the Crusaders were doing, though his confession remains the only hard evidence of the Falcon link. However, the unexplained disappearance of almost a Cluster of Falcon warriors during this period cannot be a coincidence. In any case, the plan failed; however, overt raiding against the Inner Sphere continued.

In the summer of 3057, the Crusaders made yet another attempt to discredit Ulric and abrogate the treaty. The Crusader faction of the Wolves brought a series of charges against the ilKhan, hoping to replace Ulric with a Crusader. As ilKhan, Ulric was under no compunction to answer the charges, but did so in an effort to break the Crusader Wolves' power bloc. Instead, he fell into a cleverly laid trap—the Crusaders accused him of plotting genocide by denying Clan warriors their right to combat against the Inner Sphere for the remaining decade of the truce. Ulric could have fought the charge in the Wolf Clan Council and won, but he knew the accusation would come back to haunt him in later years. He therefore chose to take the charge to the Grand Council, even knowing that he would likely lose. The result was the Refusal War.

The Council accepted the charge against Ulric by a narrow margin: nineteen judged him guilty, fifteen innocent. As he had planned from the moment the charge was presented, Ulric called for a Trial of Refusal against the verdict. However, this Trial would go far beyond a simple one-on-one or Star-on-Star engagement. With the support of Natasha Kerensky and myself, both then serving as Wolf Khans, Ulric bid the entire Wolf Clan against the Crusader Clan he knew would insist on the "honor" of taking him down: Clan Jade Falcon. By this maneuver, he hoped to win the Trial and shatter one of the strongest Crusader Clans in the process.

As expected, the Falcons fought for the Grand Council's decision. The ensuing battle raged throughout their occupation zone. The Wolves pushed themselves to the limit and shattered almost every Falcon unit they encountered. However, their bravery could not compensate for their own shocking losses. Realizing that the odds of victory were slim, Ulric ordered me to lead a representative section of the Wolf Clan's assets into exile in the Inner Sphere. As we fought off Falcon pursuers on Morges, the attacks led by Natasha and Ulric faltered. Natasha Kerensky, the famed Black Widow, died in a duel in the Great

Gash on Twycross; not long afterward, Ulric was killed by Falcon treachery on Wotan. With the ilKhan and both Wolf Khans dead or in exile, the Falcons claimed victory—a Pyrrhic one, as it turned out. The Wolves had reduced the Falcon Toman to a shadow of its former self, and subsequent attempts by the Falcon leadership to absorb the remaining Wolves left both Falcon Khans dead. Vladimir Ward, formerly a Star Captain, took charge of the resurrected "Crusader" Wolves, who gratefully elected him their Khan.

Desperate to demonstrate that they remained a viable Clan, the Falcons launched an invasion deep into the Lyran Alliance in 3058, penetrating as far as the industrial world of Coventry before making a stand against the best the Inner Sphere could throw at them. At the same time and for a similar reason, Vlad's Wolves launched raids against the Smoke Jaguars, netting much-needed breeding stock. The Falcons used the battles on Coventry to blood a new generation of warriors (the origins of whom are unclear). When Victor Steiner-Davion arrived on-planet at the head of a massive relief force, however, the Falcons faced a dilemma. They had been hard-pressed by the coalition forces already on Coventry, and the relief force's strength roughly matched the remaining Falcon units. In addition, Vlad's Wolves were moving to capture several worlds in the Falcon occupation zone. Falcon Khan Marthe Pryde knew that if she shifted troops from Coventry to meet the Wolf assaults, the likely result on Coventry would be mutual annihilation. On the other hand, retreating from Coventry without a fight meant a significant loss of face. Prince Victor's offer of hegira gave Pryde an honorable way out; she accepted it and ordered her troops to withdraw.

TWILIGHT OF THE CLANS

As 3058 ended, the Clans and the Inner Sphere gathered for councils of war. On 19 November, the Clans met on Strana Mechty and elected a new ilKhan, Lincoln Osis of the Smoke Jaguars. Osis' mandate was the resumption of the invasion. He set about planning the operation, allowing six months for preparations. That delay would cost him his Clan, his position and eventually his life.

Meanwhile, the leaders of the Inner Sphere met on the Lyran capital of Tharkad. Four days before the election of Osis as ilKhan, the Inner Sphere powers elected their own supreme leader, a new First Lord of the Star League. Unlike the old Star League's hereditary position, the new post of First Lord would last for a fixed term, changing every three years. The first to hold the post was Chancellor Sun Tzu Liao of the Capellan Confederation. He faced the gargantuan task of fulfilling the new Star League's primary goal: nothing less than ending the Clan threat once and for all. Events on Coventry had shown that the Inner Sphere powers could work together in mutual defense. Now, led by ComStar Precentor Martial Anastasius Focht, they planned a massive joint offensive against the Clans.

The Inner Sphere leaders knew that they could not hope to defeat all the Clans, and so they set a more attainable goal: altering the balance of power in the Clans to favor the Wardens.

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To accomplish this, they intended to attack and utterly defeat a Crusader Clan. The target they chose, for several reasons, was Clan Smoke Jaguar.

As both sides prepared for their respective operations, another conflict erupted in Clan space. The discovery of underhand dealings between Clan Burrock and the bandit caste led to calls for the Burrocks' Absorption, and Clan Star Adder won the right to carry out the Council's verdict. (Ironically, the new Burrock Khan's attempt to clean up his Clan and distance them from the bandits brought the prior corruption to light and prompted Clan Star Adder to propose Absorption.) The Absorption battles lasted for two weeks in February of 3059. After their failed attempts some months earlier to engineer the Absorption of the weakened Wolves and Jade Falcons, the other Clans were spoiling for a fight; several challenged the Adders to Trials. Clan Blood Spirit, historically a bitter foe of the Burrocks, went so far as to intervene in the Absorption. This action cost them dearly when the Adders and Burrocks temporarily put aside their Trial and turned on the Blood Spirit interlopers. In the debacle, the Spirits lost almost five Galaxies of troops. Distraught, they withdrew to the Kerensky Cluster world of York, ejecting the Snow Ravens and Jade Falcons on that planet. They also abandoned their settlements on the Pentagon planet of Arcadia, determined to further remove themselves from the "corrupting influence" of other Clans.

The Invading Clans were active as well during this period. Over the strenuous objections of Ice Hellion Khan Asa Taney, who had hopes of becoming ilKhan, Khan Vlad Ward declared that Home Clan forces would join the renewed invasion only as *isoria* taken by an Invading Clan in a series of "Harvest Trials." The Wolves were immediately flooded with preemptive batchalls—announcements of the forces a Home Clan unit would use to defend themselves against a "hypothetical" Trial of Possession, in effect an invitation to a Wolf attack. The other Invading Clans received similar offers. Through the Harvest Trials, Vlad's Wolves managed to rebuild a substantial portion of their strength. The Jade Falcons followed suit, though on a much smaller scale.

On the eve of the invasion, the Grand Council received disturbing news: the Inner Sphere had united under the banner of a new Star League, and a coalition force was ejecting the Smoke Jaguars from their occupation zone. The assault, code-named Operation Bulldog, was the largest operation in living memory. Involving eighty-five BattleMech regiments and roughly two hundred support units, it dwarfed Tukayyid; the only engagement in recent years to match it was Hanse Davion's Operation Rat, during the Fourth Succession War. When the scope of the Inner Sphere operation became apparent, ilKhan Osis offered the Home Clans a place in the invasion. Khan Pryde, however, backed by Vlad Ward, stated that any Clans wishing to join the

TAMING THE NOVA CATS

On the worlds of Avon, Caripare, Chupadero and Mualang, the Trials of Possession between the Nova Cats and the SLDF were straightforward battles. On other planets, the two sides employed less traditional methods. On Sawyer, the Nova Cats surrendered after a challenge involving the arcade game *Slayer!* (official reports list this as an "aerospace simulator duel"), while on Bjarred a coin toss (in which the Nova Cats called edge) decided the matter. On Irece, a "test of stamina" between infantryman Ewan Paltrow and Nova Cat pilot Sola resulted in the small Clan aerjock's hospitalization with alcohol poisoning. On Itabaiana, a soccer match decided control of the world; the Fifth Sun Zhang Cadre won 5-3 after penalties.

invasion must first defeat the Falcons and Wolves. This declaration dashed the ilKhan's hopes of saving his Clan's Inner Sphere holdings.

Having seen a vision of their Clan's destruction by the Draconis Combine, Clan Nova Cat had spent several years in negotiation with the Combine. When the Inner Sphere launched its assault, the Cats sided with the new SLDF. To save the Nova Cats' honor, SLDF units had to capture Nova Cat troops and holdings in Trials of Possession. As the Nova Cats had intended, they succeeded, whereupon the Cats joined them in attacking Jaguar enclaves on the shared worlds of Avon and Caripare. Combined with the unusual neutrality of the Ghost Bears, the Cats' aid and the skill of the SLDF cleared the Jaguars out of their occupation zone in a mere four months—even though the planners had expected the operation to take as many years.

The unthinkable had happened. A Clan had been driven from the field of battle—not simply forced to withdraw, but routed. However, the nature of the collapse meant that a stream of refugee Jaguars was heading back toward the Clan homeworlds. The Star League coalition did not find this good news. Their plan called for a second assault against the Jaguar capital of Huntress, and the attack force was already underway. Task Force Serpent, led by Federated Commonwealth Marshal of the Armies Morgan Hasek-Davion, was capable of defeating the under-equipped Jaguar garrison Galaxies known to be stationed on Huntress. The forces fleeing the Inner Sphere, led by Galaxy Commander Hang Mehta, were another matter. When Operation Bulldog ended, Morgan was somewhere beyond the Periphery but not yet

at Huntress, and the SLDF troops in the Inner Sphere could not contact him. Victor Steiner-Davion, deputy commander of Operation Bulldog, did the only thing he could. He assembled a handpicked force and set off in pursuit of the fleeing Jaguars.

THE FALL OF HUNTRESS

By early 3060, Task Force Serpent had arrived in Clan space. After Morgan Hasek-Davion's murder under mysterious circumstances en route, command of the assault fell to General Ariana Winson, leader of the Eridani Light Horse. The first SLDF forces—DEST troops dropped from the SLS Stiletto, a Broadsword-class assault DropShip—landed on Huntress on 2 March. They infiltrated the Jaguar command post and destroyed the planetary sensor net, its command, control and communication (C3) facilities, and the control center for the Reagan surface-to-orbit weapon system. This task accomplished, the main attack began. Though the Jaguars' three defending WarShips inflicted significant damage on the attackers, they were no match for the combined might of the SLDF armada. With the naval battle over, the SLDF launched its planetary assault.

By 12 March, the SLDF forces had secured several landing zones. Vicious fighting took place in and around the cities of Lootera, Pahn City, Bagera and New Andery, with the jungle surrounding the latter posing a particularly thorny problem. The task forces assigned to take New Andery and Pahn City also encountered a completely new unit type that inflicted devastating damage. Between battle armor and light 'Mechs in size, these new machines were highly mobile and capable of taking considerable punishment. Called ProtoMechs by the Clans, they were a wild card in the already unstable situation.

The SLDF forces clung to their positions, fighting off repeated counterattacks. At Bagera, the Eleventh Lyran Guards only seized their objectives after calling in fire support from one of the orbiting WarShips. Within a day of landing, the Star League controlled Huntress, and set about destroying the Jaguars' ability to make war.

On 19 March, Hang Mehta's rag-tag refugee fleet jumped into the Huntress system. Detecting the SLDF WarShips in orbit, Mehta's troops launched a counter-invasion on the ilKhan's orders. The Jaguar forces grounded on 24 March, and the fighting began anew. On that same day, ilKhan Lincoln Osis led a relief wave from Strana Mechty that recaptured Lootera from the SLDF. Jaguar saKhan Brandon Howell staged additional landings near Lake Osis, but elements of the SLDF force under the command of General Andrew Redburn withdrew into the Dhuan Swamp and forced the saKhan's troops to pay a fearsome price.

The northern SLDF battle group, under the command of General Winson, counterattacked the Jaguar position in Lootera but was pushed back. Hang Mehta's troops attacked again, forcing the Northern Army onto the defensive, but were defeated at tremendous cost in a bloody last-ditch engagement. General Winson was killed in the final moments of the battle. Her opposite number, ilKhan Lincoln Osis, narrowly escaped the destruction of the Jaguar Secondary Command Facility. Gravely wounded, he withdrew to Strana Mechty. When Victor Steiner-Davion landed at the head of a relief force on 7 April (having arrived in-system on 30 March), Huntress was firmly in the hands of what remained of the SLDF.

THE GREAT REFUSAL

On 12 April, elements of the SLDF under the command of Victor Steiner-Davion jumped into the Strana Mechty system. Granted safon, they grounded near to the Hall of Khans. A delegation of SLDF officers, led by Prince Victor and the Precentor Martial, met with

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the ilKhan and called for a Trial of Refusal against the invasion of the Inner Sphere. The ilKhan agreed, and the Grand Council ratified his decision. The Ghost Bears, however, declared the matter a refusal of the Crusader philosophy. Naming themselves a Warden Clan, they declined to take part in the Trial. Other Warden Clans followed their lead. The Crusader Clans, including the last remnants of the Smoke Jaguars, stood alone to represent the Grand Council. In an unanticipated move, the Khans of Clan Nova Cat—already viewed by many as traitors for the seeming defection of their troops in the Inner Sphere—chose to fight for the SLDF.

On 23 April, SLDF and Crusader Clan units met in battle to decide the future of the invasion. Eight SLDF companies squared off against eight Crusader Clan Binaries.

As with Tukayyid, the Trial of Refusal was fought as several mini-engagements. The Blood Spirits and the Genyosha clashed in Coldrill Valley; this brutal battle ended shortly after the Combine troops knocked out the 'Mech of the Blood Spirit Khan, Karianna Schmitt. The Fire Mandrills fought the Capellan Red Lancers, but the philosophical and political differences that divided the Mandrills into often-warring "kindred associations" (Kindraa) hampered the operations of their troops. Their lack of cohesion enabled the Lancers to separate the two Mandrill Stars and defeat them. The wooded valleys of the Sciaee District in which they fought allowed the Lancers to escape with minimal losses; the skirmish ended when the last three Mandrills surrendered.

The Ice Hellions fared little better, meeting in a bitter clash with the Nova Cats. The only battle to use aerospace forces (reflecting the expertise of Hellion Khan Taney, an aerospace pilot), the fight ranged far over the Duergar Plains. The Hellions' own hatred of the Nova Cats prompted them to make several mistakes that led to their downfall. The Nova Cat Khans undertook much of the fighting themselves, badly injuring the Hellion Khan before they were slain. The Cats lost only one other 'Mech and claimed victory when the Hellion stragglers withdrew.

The SLDF's first loss came at Zhaloba Mountain, where the Jade Falcons demonstrated to ComStar's Precentor Harvison that they too could make intelligent use of terrain. As ComStar had done eight years earlier, the Falcons chose the best possible defensive position and smashed the Com Guard force as it attempted to approach. In testament to the skill of the Com Guard force, the Falcon unit took a beating, but their victory was never in doubt. When Khan Pryde offered the Com Guards hegira, they accepted.

The most surprising result came between the Hell's Horses and the Third Drakøns of Free Rasalhague. Meeting on the rolling hills of the Breyan district, the Horses initially repulsed the Rasalhague unit, but this temporary defeat only spurred on the SLDF troops. Despite another counterattack by Horse Khan Fletcher's forces, Överste Dahlstrom and her people managed to take control of the ridge that was their objective, and so were declared victorious.

The Clans' second win came in the Perium Swamp. Using Elementals and light 'Mechs as a lure, the Star Adders drew the

First Free Worlds Guards into a trap and pounded them mercilessly. Barely a third of the SLDF troops escaped the ambush; with no chance of winning their objectives, they withdrew.

Knowing that the Wolf Clan was the greatest threat, Prince Victor assigned the St. Ives Lancers under the command of Kai Allard-Liao to meet them. The Clans knew little of the unit, and Victor hoped that Khan Ward would underestimate these elite troops. As it turned out, the two forces were evenly matched. The Lancers' durability and marksmanship offset the Wolves' mobility and fury. Kai Allard-Liao and Khan Ward met in single combat, and Kai forced Vlad to abandon his 'Mech. However, neither side could gain a substantive advantage, and the two leaders agreed on a draw.

The final battle took place in the appropriately named Bloody Basin of the arid Lechenka District. Prince Victor Steiner-Davion led a combined unit of the Tenth Lyran Guard and First Kathil Uhlans against some of the last surviving Smoke Jaguars. Nine BattleMechs and a point of Elementals were all that remained of that Clan's Touman, and they fought to the bitter end against the best troops of the Federated Commonwealth. The Jaguars abandoned the rules of honorable combat, but in doing so freed the Inner Sphere troops to do likewise. Using long-range weapons, the FedCom units reduced the Jaguar force to nothing. The SLDF suffered only one casualty in this engagement: Danal Centrella, daughter of the Magestrix of Canopus (and Victor's best hope of foiling Sun Tzu Liao's attempt to build a Capellan-Periphery alliance). At the battle's climax, Prince Victor met ilKhan Osis face to face and killed him. His death ended the Great Refusal and the invasion.

END OF AN ERA

The net result of the Great Refusal was five victories for the Inner Sphere and two for the Clans, plus one draw. When Victor Steiner-Davion addressed the Grand Council two days later, he formally announced what they all knew: the invasion was over.

Then he went beyond that simple statement, in an attempt to build something from the ashes of eleven years of war. He pointed out that the SLDF victory was not a judgement on Clan culture (though many in the Clans see it that way). In his own words, the SLDF took action "not to impose our way of life upon you, but to stop you from attempting to impose your way of life on us." Victor offered the Clans the chance to rejoin the Star League: "The invasion is ended, but not so our contact and our futures. There are countless individuals in the Inner Sphere who have learned to hate you, but we do not intend to prosecute a war against you—at least, not as the Star League. As the Star League, we invite you back to the Inner Sphere, to allow your people and ours to become acquainted. We have things to offer you, as you have to offer us. Beneath this umbrella of peace there are many new possibilities. We invite you to explore them."

Several Grand Council members turned deaf ears to Victor's speech, fearing that the Inner Sphere meant to absorb them. Khan Vladimir Ward took the chance to point out that his Clan had abstained from the refusal vote and had fought the SLDF to a draw. Therefore, he argued, the Wolves were not

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bound by the cessation of hostilities. However, he agreed that the Treaty of Tukayyid would continue to bind his Clan until 3067. In response, Prince Victor stated that the SLDF would take "swift and devastating retribution" against any future Clan adventurism.

In his last act before the Council, the Prince declared that though SLDF troops would withdraw from Clan space, Huntress' capital of Looteria would remain an open and neutral city under Star League administration. Sir Paul Masters of the Knights of the Inner Sphere became the city's military governor on 18 July, shortly before the SLDF forces began the long journey back to the Inner Sphere.

On 27 April, the Grand Council met again to discuss equally weighty issues. Khan Cassius N'Buta of Clan Star Adder called for a Trial of Annihilation against the Nova Cats because they had sided with the SLDF in the Great Refusal. Led by the Ghost Bears, the Warden Clans blocked the motion, but Khan Ward of the Wolves put forward another—this time for Abjuration. Attaining the necessary four-fifths majority and with no Khans to represent the Nova Cats in the Grand Council, the motion passed without contest. The Nova Cats were given a month to vacate their Clan space holdings.

This exchange brought to light the Ghost Bears' secret relocation of almost their entire population to their Inner Sphere occupation zone, abandoning all their enclaves except those on Arcadia and Strana Mechty. This revelation prompted Heli's Horses Khan Malavai Fletcher to demand the Abjuration of the Ghost Bears. In an eloquent speech, Bjorn Jorgensson said that his people were not abandoning the Clans, but simply exploiting their gains from the invasion. When Khan Ward of the Wolves agreed, citing the futility of expelling a Clan that had already left, Fletcher withdrew his petition. In any case, Jorgensson knew his Clan would not be Abjured. He had already secured the support of the Diamond Sharks and Snow Ravens, gifting them several former Bear enclaves. This three-Clan bloc could defeat any motion for Abjuration.

WARS OF POSSESSION

While the Nova Cats began preparations to withdraw from Clan space, other Clans fought Trials of Possession for former Smoke Jaguar assets. With no Clan claiming Absorption rights and no Jaguar troops remaining to fight the Trials, the challenges bogged down in political and legal wrangling, eventually resulting in bitter military clashes between rival claimants. Few of these challenges were settled conclusively, and a series of secondary Trials against the new owners are currently under way. This cycle of Trials appears to be self-perpetuating, with each successful Trial prompting another or a Trial of Refusal. Even now, almost two years after they began, Trials rage on several Clan worlds.

The Fire Mandrills and Ice Hellions remain enmeshed in Trials for Smoke Jaguar assets on Atreus, as do the Wolves and Jade Falcons on Eden and the Ice Hellions and Coyotes on Londerholm. On Circe, the Snow Ravens faced off against the Wolves, with the added prize of that planet's Nova Cat territo-

ries. The world of Tranquil fell to the Wolves without a shot being fired, as did Kirin to Clan Hell's Horses—disappointing those Horse warriors who expected a major engagement. Vinton, long a source of contention between the Jaguars and Clan Diamond Shark, quickly fell to the merchant Clan. On Homer, homeworld to Clan Cloud Cobra, that Clan and the Steel Vipers clashed over the Jaguar enclave. However, the Steel Vipers stood little chance against the massive Cobra force. Their situation became even less tenable when the Cobras allowed Snow Raven forces to land; the Ravens immediately challenged the gains made by the Vipers, long their enemies. At that point, possession of the Jaguar assets became secondary as the two squared off. The arrival of troops from the Inner Sphere at the end of 3061 finally resolved that dispute.

The Ghost Bears' announcement of their relocation to the Inner Sphere shocked the Grand Council, particularly as it had clearly been under way for years with the covert support of other Clans. The departing Ghost Bears gifted what little remained of their Clan space assets, save for their enclaves on Arcadia and Strana Mechty, to their two principal allies: Clans Snow Raven and Diamond Shark. Their forces already on alert, the two Clans swiftly occupied their new possessions, over the objections of several other Clans. Clan Hell's Horses, long-time foes of the Ghost Bears, moved against the Bears' former capital and managed to secure several sites before the Snow Ravens were firmly entrenched. These two Clans staged several Trials until the Ravens realized that the Horses' actions were not directed against them. Already overstretched, the Ravens agreed to share the assets, thereby avoiding bloody conflict.

On Tokasha, where the Bears had given their holdings to the Diamond Sharks, the Ghost Bear Khans had not reckoned on the swift reactions of the Jade Falcons. Realizing that something was amiss on the world, the Falcons had relocated the Second Falcon Velites from Marshall to Tokasha. When Khan Jorgensson announced the Bears' plans, the Falcons moved to seize the colony, as did the Goliath Scorpions. The Diamond Sharks landed troops from their Gamma Galaxy on Tokasha and quickly gained a commanding position. However, it soon became apparent that holding the world would prove costly. After blooding their troops, the Sharks chose to withdraw and consolidate their other gains from the Ghost Bears on Paxon. The Falcon presence on Tokasha did not deter Clan Hell's Horses from moving against the enclave of their old enemy, the Ghost Bears. Fighting between the Horses, Falcons and Goliath Scorpions on Tokasha died down briefly in late 3060, but flared up again in the summer of 3061. Currently, the Falcons and Scorpions hold sixty-four and twenty-three percent of the planet respectively, while the Horses have gained thirteen percent.

The SLDF withdrawal from Huntress created a power vacuum. Almost every Clan staged raids against the former Smoke Jaguar capital with the goal of gaining ProtoMech technology, but only five Clans made serious attempts to take control of sections of the world. Clan Jade Falcon occupied almost half the continent of Jaguar Prime, taking the cities of New Andery and Bagera. Clan Fire Mandrill's Kindraa Mattilla-Carrol occupied

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Pahn City and its environs, while Clan Star Adder seized the nearby city of Myers. Clashes are still occurring between these two Clan forces. The remaining two Clans were left with some of the planet's least hospitable terrain. The Goliath Scorpions took control of the Continent Abysmal, while the Ice Hellions

occupied the Path of the Warrior Peninsula. The SLDF enclave—Looter and all territory within a hundred kilometers of the city—has so far escaped Clan raids.

Several Clans moved against the Nova Cats, whom they regarded as traitors, before the expiration of the one-month

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withdrawal deadline. The Cats lacked the extensive preparation time available to the Ghost Bears, and could not simply evacuate their people overnight. They were faced with a choice: immediate withdrawal to the Inner Sphere and the abandonment of their civilian castes, or fighting a delaying action beyond the original deadline to allow as many civilians as possible time to escape. They chose the latter, knowing it would likely mean the death of their remaining warriors in Clan space.

On Barcella, the Nova Cat capital, the Ice Hellions and Jade Falcons tore into the Nova Cat defenders almost as soon as the Clan was Abjured. However, help came from an unexpected source—Clan Diamond Shark. Always on the lookout for profit, the Sharks offered to assist the Nova Cat evacuation, providing ships and troops under contract. This alliance of convenience slowed the Crusader assault, but did not halt it. Seeing that the situation was hopeless, the Cats granted most of their remaining assets to the Sharks and withdrew with almost ten percent of their population on Barcella. Trials between the Sharks, Hellions and Falcons have gone on ever since the Cats' departure.

On Bearclaw, the Nova Cats contacted the Snow Ravens, who had recently occupied that planet's Ghost Bear territories. In exchange for support from the Ravens' extensive navy, the Cats agreed to give them Cat territory on Bearclaw and Circe. However, they reckoned without the Hell's Horses. The Horses' long-running feud with the Ghost Bears prompted them to challenge for control of Bearclaw. They gained a foothold and then moved against the Nova Cat enclave, prompting a brief three-way battle. Small-scale Trials continued for several months; by the time the Nova Cats finally withdrew in September of 3060, the Horses held almost a third of the planet.

Only on Circe did the Nova Cats have the chance to withdraw unmolested. Clan Snow Raven had already moved to consolidate its hold on former Smoke Jaguar assets, an action that brought the Ravens into conflict with the Wolves. The fighting effectively prevented the Wolves from moving on the Nova Cats, while the Raven fleet discouraged other Clans from attempting to intervene. When the smoke finally cleared, the world was divided roughly 70-30 between the Ravens and the Wolves. However, Khan Ward shows every inclination of continuing challenges against the "upstart scavengers."

On Brim, the Nova Cats stood alone against the Star Adders and Cloud Cobras. The attacking Clans were surprisingly generous, allowing the Cats to withdraw after several brutal clashes early in the campaign. Though only five percent of the civilian population was evacuated, those who remained were guaranteed good treatment by their new masters. Showing the Nova Cats mercy enabled the Adders and Cobras to take control of Brim before other Clans could intervene, though Clan Coyote foolishly tried. Rather than facing demoralized Nova Cat forces, they ran headlong into the Star Adders, who took great pleasure in teaching the Coyotes the error of their ways. When Clan Cloud Cobra joined the fray, the Coyotes realized they could not win and withdrew.

The fighting on Gatekeeper between the Jade Falcons' Fifty-third Battle Cluster and the Nova Cat defenders was similarly

bloody. The Falcons regarded the Cats as *dezgra*, and so had no qualms about using their numerical advantage. Ordinarily, the Cats would have made a fighting withdrawal, but that would have allowed the Falcons to claim Gatekeeper's major population centers. So the Cats stood and fought, and died. As on Brim, few civilians escaped.

The Diamond Sharks and Nova Cats reached an accommodation on Delios, allowing the Cats to withdraw much of their scientific and military equipment in exchange for granting the Sharks control of their enclave. Initially, no Clan challenged the Diamond Sharks' possession of the enclave. In May of 3061, however, Clan Coyote launched several aggressive raids from territory it already held on the world. The raids have escalated over the past few months, and several other Clans are watching developments in hopes of finding an opportunity to exploit.

On Hoard, the situation soon turned chaotic. The Ice Hellions, Star Adders, Wolves and Hell's Horses vied for the Nova Cat assets, resulting in a level of confusion that the Cats used to their advantage. With their claims overlapping in many areas, the attackers fought more Trials among themselves than against the Nova Cats. Clans Wolf and Hell's Horses, both of whom lacked a base on Hoard and had to fight for a foothold, took the highest losses. Working under contract to the Wolves, the commander of the Hell's Horses Steelhorse Cluster, Star Colonel Douglas Mitchell, must surely have wondered at the wisdom of the assault. Yet by mid-October his Clan controlled ten percent of the planet—their share of the spoils. Though most Nova Cat warriors on Hoard died in the fighting, almost a quarter of their civilians managed to withdraw.

HUNTING THE HUNTER

Clan Steel Viper's minimal participation in the Wars of Possession had surprised many Khans, until the reason became apparent in April of 3061. The Vipers had covertly been moving troops and materiel to the Inner Sphere since the Great Refusal; on 1 April, they launched a massive assault on thirteen worlds in the Jade Falcon occupation zone. They quickly gained control of these planets, and on 16 May launched a second, more conservative, wave of assaults intended to isolate the remaining Falcon worlds.

Despite being relatively well-planned and executed, the operation was far from perfect. The unexpected arrival of Khan Marthe Pryde and a large troop contingent posed a major threat, but the Vipers assumed their numerical superiority would eventually win the day. However, they had left the entire coreward area of the occupation zone lightly defended, which allowed the Falcon reinforcements to overrun the Viper garrisons. In addition, the cooperation of the Wolf Clan allowed the Falcons to strike deep into the zone's spinward flank and catch the Vipers unawares.

Shocked by the enemy's sudden arrival, Viper forces were quickly overwhelmed and forced on the defensive. Within two weeks, the Falcons had liberated several critical worlds, and the fighting moved on to Viper holdings. The most crucial battle took place on Waldorff, where both Clans arrayed several Galaxies of

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troops. Both sides abandoned zellbrigen and the battle degenerated into a bloody melee. A massive assault by the Vipers split the Falcon force; the Vipers immediately beset the smaller portion, comprising the Falcon Guards and the Khan's Irregulars. This choice would prove the Vipers' downfall.

Viper kaKhan Perigard Zalman was determined to avenge what he considered a stain on Clan honor by the Jade Falcons—the presence of a Bloodnamed freeborn warrior in the Falcon Guards. Zalman hunted Diana Pryde mercilessly, eventually locating her on Daemon Beach. Despite the Vipers' greater numbers, Star Commander Pryde felled the Viper Khan, shattering what remained of Viper pride. Zalman knew his forces could not prevail; when Khan Marthe Pryde offered them hegira, the Vipers grudgingly accepted. They withdrew not only from the Falcon worlds they had occupied, but from the Inner Sphere.

As the Falcons consolidated their hold in the occupation zone, the Vipers returned to the Clan homeworlds. Though defeated, they were far from destroyed. Upon arriving back in Clan space in mid-January of 3062, the large, battle-hardened and angry force quickly proved its prowess by ejecting the Snow Ravens from Homer in a short and brutal campaign. Since then, the Vipers have concentrated on consolidating their Clan space holdings. It seems likely that they will use their martial skill to expand their Clan space territory at the expense of their fellow Clans; only the Star Adders can hope to match them in the field. Therefore, the Wars of Possession are unlikely to end any time soon.

NEW ORDER

Though the scale and brutality of the Trials of Possession may seem more shocking to Inner Sphere sensibilities, the SLDF assault left a less visible but deeper mark on the Clans. It shook their faith in Clan superiority, hitherto unquestioned. The SLDF sacked Huntress, a Clan capital world, and defeated the best the Crusader Clans had to offer. The central tenet of the Crusader cause—the Clans' duty to invade the Inner Sphere and save it from the "barbarians"—has been decisively repudiated. The Crusaders still retain their power base, however; also, the Clan leaders' control over media in their territory has allowed them to downplay the consequences of recent events and forestall any major backlash from their civilian castes.

Though Prince Victor stated otherwise, many Clansmen see the SLDF assault as a challenge to their way of life. They believe the Clans should remain isolated, avoiding the contamination that they claim has seduced the Ghost Bears and Nova Cats. Others argue that the Clans should take up the SLDF's offer of stronger ties, returning to the home from which they have so long been exiled. At present, no single viewpoint dominates; the debate looks set to continue for quite some time. In the long run, these discussions may lead to new philosophies that will replace the Warden-Crusader divide. Only time will tell.

Undoubtedly, some Clans will find ways around the outcome of the Great Refusal. Vlad Ward has already stated that he does not regard the Wolves as bound by it, though he accepts the provisions of the Truce of Tukayyid. The Falcons are similarly likely to exploit any weakness they perceive in the Lyran Alliance, which borders their occupation zone. Many Lyran worlds will suffer if the widely predicted civil war erupts between the Alliance and the Federated Commonwealth. However, the invading Clans are likely to attempt to keep other Clans out of the Inner Sphere, though the recent arrival of Clan Hell's Horses graphically demonstrates that that may be more difficult than anticipated. They may be unable to stop diplomatic or trade missions, but their resources and military strength are sufficient to prevent any attempt at colonization or conquest. In any case, the threat of SLDF reprisals hangs over them.

Most likely, the Clans will undergo a period of introspection. Some fear this will lead to civil war, for which the current Trials raging in Clan space may be a prelude. We can hope that events will turn out otherwise, but historical precedent suggests that whenever a major external threat vanishes, previously subsumed divisions reassert themselves—often violently.

Certainly, the Clans will not change overnight. The road they will take remains to be seen.

STEEL VIPER TARGETS

First Wave (1 April–15 May)

Toland
Steelton
Winfield
Butler
Denizli
Alyina
Apolakkia
Devin
Dompair
Colmar
Sudeten
La Grave
Quarell

Second Wave (16 May–1 June)

Maxie's Planet
Romulus
Selduts
Evciler
Leskovik
Zoetermeer
Baker 3

Jade Falcon Counterattack (1 June–4 July)

Bensinger
Toland
Winfield
Trell I
Butler
Waldorff
Goat Path
Maxie's Planet
Romulus
Selduts
Evciler
Leskovik
Zoetermeer
Sudeten

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COMPARATIVE TIMELINE

This timeline compares the timing and progression of significant events in the Inner Sphere and Clan space, beginning with the death of Richard Cameron. The Inner Sphere events are in normal type, the Clan events are italicized.

2766

(27 Dec) Amaris Coup.

2767-79

SLDF reconquers Terran Hegemony.

2779

(30 Sept) Amaris executed.

2780

(Oct) Aleksandr Kerensky stripped of protectorship.

2781

(12 Aug) Star League dissolved.

2784

(14 Feb) Kerensky outlines Exodus plan.
(5 Nov) SLDF fleet departs the Inner Sphere.

2785

(July) Prinz Eugen Revolt.
(Aug) Fighting breaks out between the Lyrans Commonwealth and the Draconis Combine.

2786

(24 Aug) The Exodus fleet arrives at the Pentagon.
(Dec) Minoru Kurita proclaims himself First Lord of the Star League. The claim is rejected; over the next few months, other House Leaders make similar claims.

2787

Official start of the First Succession War. Each Great House launches major attacks on its neighbors; weapons of mass destruction are widely used. ComStar declares its neutrality.
(Jan) Kerensky's forces capture a Rim Worlds Republic ship and learn of the deteriorating situation in the Inner Sphere.

2788

In the chaos of the war, Jerome Blake captures Terra with "mercenary" troops in Operation Silver Shield. In reality, the soldiers are SLDF troops who chose not to accompany the Exodus.

2796

Aleksandr Kerensky's wife Katyusha dies of a mysterious illness.
(July) Minoru Kurita is killed by a sniper on Kentares IV. Kentares Massacre ensues.

2797

(Feb) Kentares Massacre ends with 90 percent of the planet's population dead. Kurita morale collapses, allowing the Federated Suns to stage a counterattack.

2800

(28 Nov) Riots break out in the Pentagon worlds.

2801

Combine forces ambush and destroy the Tamar Tigers on Benjamin.
(5 May) Pentagon riots devolve into civil war.
(14 May) General Aaron DeChevilier killed in rebel ambush. The DeChevilier Massacre ensues.
(11 June) Aleksandr Kerensky dies. The SLDF refuses to support his heir, Nicholas Kerensky.
(Autumn) Nicholas leads second Exodus to Strana Mechtly.

2802

(Jan) The last ships of Nicholas' Exodus leave the Pentagon.
(Feb) Outbreak of Exodus Wars.

2808

Ilsa Liao offers to recognize Paul Davion as First Lord of the Star League in return for control of the Chesterson Worlds. He refuses and attacks Liao territory.

2810

Nicholas Kerensky founds the Clans.

2811

ComStar's ROM agency formed.

2815

(9 June) Nicholas Kerensky declares himself iIkhan.

2819

Nicholas Kerensky begins the Clan eugenics program.
(15 May) Jerome Blake dies. Conrad Toyama succeeds him.

2821

With all participants exhausted, the First Succession war grinds to a halt.
(2 July) The Clans return to the Pentagon and eliminate resistance in Operation Klondike.

2822

(26 May) The Clans overcome the last rebel forces in the Pentagon.

2823

(July) Jade Falcon "Culling" takes place.
(Oct) ComStar interdicts the Lyrans capital of Tharkad after a Lyrans attempt to treat ComStar as a "business" and tax its income.
(Oct) Clan Wolverine declares independence from the Clans. The Wolverines are annihilated after using a nuclear device to destroy a genetic repository. A few are believed to escape.

2824

Steadily slipping into insanity, Jinjiro Kurita instigates the "Chain Gang" missions to provoke war with the Lyrans Commonwealth.
Clan Burrock calls for the Annihilation of Clan Blood Spirit.

2825-26

The "Minnesota Tribe" appears in the Inner Sphere. They liberate prisoners from Richmond and disappear into the Periphery. Subsequent history suspects them of being the remnants of Clan Wolverine.

2828

The Second Succession War begins.

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2834

The Federated Suns assault on Tikonov stalls when Draconis Combine forces attack the enemy staging area.

Nicholas Kerensky killed; Clan Widowmaker Absorbed by Clan Wolf.

2837

(22 March) Convinced that ComStar has betrayed him, Charles Marik orders the ComStar HPG station on Oriente destroyed. ComStar retaliates by placing the entire Free Worlds League under Interdiction.

2838

Clan Ice Hellion recovers a Wolverine cache, triggering a three-way feud that includes the Fire Mandrills and Goliath Scorpions.

(9 Nov) Marik accedes to ComStar's demands; ComStar lifts the Interdiction.

2850

LCAF agent Snow Fire assassinates Combine Coordinator Yaguchi Kurita.

2854

Clan Coyote develops the OmniMech.

2858

Draconis Combine troops seize Robinson.

2864

Second Succession War ends.

2866

Third Succession War begins.

2868

Clan Wolf uses battle armor to win a challenge by Clan Nova Cat. Clan Mongoose is Absorbed by Clan Smoke Jaguar.

2870

Clinton's Cutthroats disappear from Verlo. They are believed to be Star League scouts.

Clan Hell's Horses fields genetically modified Elemental warriors.

2872

The Fire Mandrill Smythe-Jewell Kindraa is destroyed by a joint Hell's Horses/Coyote attack force.

2897

Steel Viper-Snow Raven Trials for control of Hellgate begin. The Ravens abandon the world two years later.

2905

Start of 25-year cease-fire between the FedSuns and Capellan Confederation.

2906

The Free Worlds League enacts the Home Defense Act that will later hamstring League military operations.

2921

Coordinator Shinjiro Kurita signs the Davarapala Accords, normalizing relations between the Coordinator and the ISF.

Clan Ghost Bear takes control of Tokasha MechWorks from Clan Hell's Horses. Khan Kilbourne Jorgenson dies in the battle, prompting an ongoing feud between the two Clans.

2931

(Nov) ComStar threatens the Draconis Combine with Interdiction and the use of force after Coordinator Hugai Kurita orders the abduction of his elder sister Necess, a ComStar adept. The Combine knuckles under.

2933

Formation of the ComStar Guard and Militia, later known as the Com Guard.

2935

IlKhan Corian Tchernovkov dies in a testing "accident."

2947

Assassination of Primus Hollings York; ascension of Adrienne Sims.

IlKhan Tobias Katib impeached and executed for his role in the death of IlKhan Tchernovkov.

2959

(Nov) Primus Sims founds the Explorer Service, later known as the Explorer Corps.

2965

Clan Cloud Cobra encounters the Tanite civilization.

2977

Clan Blood Spirit reinstates the position of Snow Raven ilChi and begins negotiations with that Clan. The Cloud Cobras complete their conquest of the Tanites.

2979

The Tripitz Affair occurs when Com Guard forces destroy a derelict SLDF Black Lion battlecruiser near New Vandenburg. This incident leads to the legend of the "Vandenburg White Wings."

Clans Snow Raven and Blood Spirit conclude a 'Mechs-for-WarShips trade deal.

2980

Clan Jade Falcon calls for invasion of the Inner Sphere. They fail, but the call crystallizes the Crusader and Warden political factions.

2983

Clan Snow Raven fails in an attempt to seize Sea Fox oil fields on Priori.

2984

Khan Howell of the Snow Ravens releases the genetically engineered diamond shark into the oceans of Strana Mechty. It destroys the sea fox, resulting in Clan Sea Fox's petition for the right to change their name.

Through Intelser, the Clans learn of the Succession Wars.

2985

(Sept) After numerous Trials of Refusal, Clan Sea Fox becomes Diamond Shark.

2982

The ECV Fortitude and Discovery begin their 1,600 light-year journey to the Orion nebula.

3000

Twelfth Battle of Hesperus.

(11 Nov) The Crusaders force a vote on invasion. The Clans reach the Dragoon Compromise. Ice Hellion Khan Norizuichi is killed by her saKhan, Ernest Wick, in a "Trial of Annihilation" regarding the compromise.

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3004

Wolf's Dragoons depart Clan space. They arrive in the Federated Suns in 3005.

3015

(8 March) Anton Marik takes Wolf's Dragoons' dependents hostage. When Joshua Wolf refuses to capitulate, he executes them.

(22 March) Wolf's Dragoons assault Anton Marik's New Delos base. They kill him and crush his forces, ending the Marik Civil War.

3028

(20 Aug) Hanse Davion marries Melissa Steiner. Fourth Succession War begins, lasting until January 3030.

3029

Ulric Kerensky forestalls a new call for invasion.

3034

Free Rasalhague Republic formed. The Combine's Ronin Wars follow, lasting until 23 May.

3039

(April) War of 3039 begins (ending in December).

3046

A Ghost Bear assault on Niles kills Hell's Horses Khan Lair Seidman. His successor, Malavai Fletcher, is a staunch Crusader who pushes the Clan into the Crusader camp.

3048

(27 Sept) Clan Smoke Jaguar captures the Explorer Corps vessel *Outbound Light* in the Huntress system.
(21 Nov) Crusaders win invasion vote.
(12 Dec) Leo Showers elected ilKhan.

3049

(Feb) Advance Clan units depart for Inner Sphere.
(June) Bulk of Clan units depart for Inner Sphere.
(Aug) First contact between advance Clan units and Periphery forces.

3050

(7 March) Clans launch first wave against Inner Sphere targets.
(7 May) Smoke Jaguars raze city of Edo on Turtle Bay.
(mid-year) Hellion's *Fury* campaign launched.
(10 Sept) The AFFC retakes Twycross from Clan Jade Falcon, in the first victory against the Clans.
(2 Oct) DCMS troops hold Wolcott against Clan Smoke Jaguar.
(31 Oct) Clan invasion halted after the ilKhan is killed by a Free Rasalhague Republic suicide attack.

3051

Natasha Kerensky rejoins Wolf Clan.
(Jan) Inner Sphere leaders gather on Outreach.
(28 Feb) Memorial service for Leo Showers.
(19 June) Ulric Kerensky of the Wolves is elected ilKhan. He activates the Steel Vipers, Nova Cats and Diamond Sharks and adds them to the invasion force.
(29 Oct) The Clans resume their attacks.

3052

(5 Jan) Battle of Luthien.
(1-21 May) Battle of Tukayyid begins, as does ComStar's Operation Scorpion. The 21-day engagement ends in victory for ComStar and a fifteen-year truce barring further Clan advances.

3054-55

Dragoon Civil War.
Falcon-Raven pact collapses.

3055

(Feb) Clan forces masquerading as the Red Corsair move to abrogate the truce. Wolf Clan troops and the Kell Hounds stop them.
(Feb) The Ghost Bears complete work on their Leviathan-class ark ships and begin moving their people to the Inner Sphere.
(April) Star Captain Trent of Clan Smoke Jaguar defects to ComStar. He journeys along the Exodus Road, arriving in the Inner Sphere in late 3058.
(19 June) Melissa Steiner assassinated.
(11 Sept) Red Corsair defeated on Arc Royal.

(25-26 Oct) Red Corsair and her co-conspirators apprehended on the Periphery world of Elissa.

3057

(10 June) ilKhan Ulric Kerensky indicted for treason.
(18 Sept) The Lyran sector of the FedCom secedes to form the Lyran Alliance.
(8 Aug) Ulric is convicted and demands a Trial of Refusal. The Refusal War ensues.
Refusal War rages across Falcon territory. The Falcons gain a nominal victory by killing Ulric. They recast the Trial as one of Absorption and move to claim the remaining Wolf Clan assets.
(Sept-Dec) The death of Joshua Marik prompts war between the Federated Commonwealth, Capellan Confederation and Free Worlds League.
(14 Dec) Star Captain Vladimir of House Ward challenges the Falcon decision, killing the Falcon saKhan and earning freedom for the former Wolves. They become known as the Jade Wolves.

3058

(2 Jan) Vlad Ward of the Jade Wolves kills the new ilKhan, Elias Crichton. Ward then announces the birth of a "new" Wolf Clan.
(15 March-10 May) To prove her Clan's vitality, Falcon Khan Marthe Pryde leads the Jade Falcons into the Lyran Alliance. They capture several planets and occupy Coventry.
(1 Oct-21 Nov) Delegates at the Whitting Conference agree to form a new Star League and take the war to the Clans.
(15 Nov) Sun-Tzu Liao elected First Lord of the Star League.
(19 Nov) Lincoln Osis of Clan Smoke Jaguar is elected ilKhan. His mandate is the resumption of the invasion.

3059

(Feb) Absorption of Clan Burrock by Clan Star Adder. Clan Blood Spirit attempts to intervene and gets mauled.
(March) Blood Spirits withdraw to York. They eject the Jade Falcons from the planet; the Snow Ravens withdraw.
(1 May) Task Force Serpent begins its journey to Huntress.

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(20 May–18 Sept) Forces of the new Star League attack the Smoke Jaguar OZ. Routed, the Jaguars flee toward Huntress. Victor Steiner-Davion and Precentor Martial Focht lead a force in pursuit.

(15 Dec) Task Force Serpent fights a naval engagement with a Ghost Bear relocation flotilla.

3060

(3 Jan) Morgan Hasek-Davion assassinated under mysterious circumstances.

(9 Feb) The last Ghost Bear transport leaves Arcadia, bound for the Inner Sphere.

(March) Discovering Victor Steiner-Davion's absence from the Inner Sphere, Sun-Tzu Liao begins operations to seize control of the Disputed Territories on the border between the Federated Commonwealth, Capellan Confederation and Chaos March.

(1 March) Task Force Serpent, commanded by Ariana Winson, begins its attack on Huntress.

(24 March) Smoke Jaguar forces led by Hang Mehta counterattack. A second Jaguar force led by Lincoln Osis arrives.

(30 March) The Jaguars are broken and a badly wounded ilKhan Osis withdraws to Strana Mechty. Ariana Winson dies in fierce fighting, just before Prince Victor's relief force arrives at Huntress.

(5 Apr) The last Jaguar troops on Huntress are eliminated.

(18 Apr) Victor Steiner-Davion leads an SLDF task force to Strana Mechty and challenges the Grand Council to a Trial of Refusal.

(23 Apr) The Great Refusal is fought between the eight Crusader Clans and the SLDF. The Inner Sphere forces win five, draw one and lose two of the engagements. The Nova Cats fight on the SLDF side.

(25 April) Victor Steiner-Davion goes before the Grand Council and announces the end of the invasion. He invites them to return and join the Star League, but threatens harsh reprisals for any military adventurism.

(27 April) The Grand Council Abjures the Nova Cats, making them fair game for the other Clans. Several Warden Clans, most notably the Diamond Sharks and Snow Ravens, aid the Cats' withdrawal from Clan space.

(May–present) Trials for former Smoke Jaguar, Nova Cat and Ghost Bear enclaves rage among the Home Clans.

(July–April) Clan Steel Viper covertly moves large amounts of materiel and several crack units into Inner Sphere space.

(18 July) The SLDF prepares to return home. Lootera, capital of Huntress, is declared an open city under Star League authority. Sir Paul Masters remains as Military Governor and SLDF ambassador to the Clans.

(22 Sept) Forces of the St. Ives Compact attempt to capture or kill Sun-Tzu Liao on Hustaing. They are defeated by House Hirsut.

(Oct) The last Nova Cats depart Clan space to join their brethren in the Draconis Combine.

(Nov–Dec) Katherine Steiner-Davion persuades her sister Yvonne to step down as the FedCom regent. She takes control of the Federated Commonwealth, reuniting it with the Lyran Alliance.

(1 Dec) First Lord Sun-Tzu orders SLDF troops into the St. Ives Compact to form a buffer zone. They attempt to disarm the St. Ives troops on border worlds. Compact troops resist.

3061

(January) The situation in St. Ives worsens. By the end of the month, the Confederation and the Compact are effectively at war.

(January 1) Marthe Pryde departs Clan space for the Falcon occupation zone, accompanied by a large body of troops.

(15 March) The remnants of Task Force Serpent arrive back in the Draconis Combine.

(1 April) The Steel Vipers launch their first wave of assaults on the Jade Falcon Occupation Zone. They target thirteen worlds, and over the next six weeks take them all.

(16 May) The Vipers launch a second assault wave, which is halted after only two weeks.

(1 June) The Falcon forces led by Khan Pryde reach their occupation zone. From Wolf Clan territory, they stage a devastating counterassault against the Vipers. Viper worlds also become targets.

(6 June) Precentor Martial Trent Arian is assassinated. Cameron St. Jamais becomes new Precentor Martial.

(4 July) The Falcons defeat the Vipers on Waldorff, including an embarrassing personal defeat for Viper Khan Zalman. The Steel Vipers accept hegira and withdraw from the Inner Sphere.

(Nov) Elected Prince Haakon Magnusson of the Free Rasalhague Republic steps down. Ragnar Magnusson, a captured Clan warrior, becomes Elected Prince; General Christian Månsdotter is made Elected Prince Regent until his return.

(1–5 Nov) The Second Whitting Conference takes place on Tharkad. In a dramatic move, Victor Steiner-Davion is named Precentor Martial of ComStar and Commanding General of the SLDF. Theodore Kurita becomes First Lord.

3062

(January) The Steel Vipers arrive at the Clan homeworlds.

CLAN SOCIETY

To date, every book published on the Clans has focused on their martial nature, their Inner Sphere holdings or their technology. Little has been written about Clan society as a whole, and the few works that exist are biased. The occupation zones are poor representations of Clan society, being largely comprised of citizens born in the Inner Sphere, with only a handful of imported Clan warriors, technicians and merchants. Even the Ghost Bear occupation zone, which contains most of that Clan's population (roughly sixty-five million born in Clan space and several billion Inner Sphere denizens) cannot truly be said to represent Clan life. Understandably, to the people of the Inner Sphere, the Clans are their military. The dominance of warriors and technicians in the occupation zones has skewed public perception.

Contrary to Inner Sphere propaganda, the Clans are not evil, only different. As we all know, however, differences and the resultant misunderstandings have ever been a source of conflict. In this section, I will attempt to offer insight into true Clan society, dispel many of the myths about the Clans, and hopefully promote understanding that will allow us to live together.

CULTURE AND LIFESTYLE

In the space available, I cannot hope to do justice to the Clans' culture and way of life. Consequently, rather than providing skimpy material on a wide range of subjects, I have chosen to concentrate on key areas where the Clans and the Inner Sphere diverge. Being born and raised in the Federated Commonwealth, I naturally have a certain bias toward its cultural norms. Some things I see as different about the Clans are likely to be familiar to a subject of the Draconis Combine or the Capellan Confederation, while elements I pass over as familiar might be alien to them.

This opening segment of material on Clan society deals with the structure of the Clans as a whole, the backbone that shapes and binds them. In addition to describing what Clan society is like, I also hope to explain why it works that way. I may therefore digress a little, diverging occasionally from the topic at hand, I can only ask readers to bear with me.

THE CASTE SYSTEM

Many citizens of the Inner Sphere find the Clan caste system alien, even abhorrent, and yet similar practices are commonplace in many societies. A caste system forms part of Hindu culture, and so is prevalent in certain regions of the Capellan Confederation and Free Worlds League. The social stratification of the Draconis Combine gives it a similar structure. The Clan version is simply more formalized.

At base, caste systems assume that an individual's parentage determines his or her role in society. The Clan system deviates from examples like the Hindu caste system in that merit also plays a major role. Most children enter the same caste as their parents (almost all Clan "marriages" are within the same caste), but extensive testing allows Clan scientists to determine

whether an assigned caste is appropriate. Each child's skills and aptitudes are noted, and the final caste assignment reflects that child's strengths and weaknesses. Those who perform better or worse than expected may be "elevated" or "demoted" to a different caste. Most often, however, they are streamed into the appropriate sub-class of their designated caste.

Unlike the Hindu system, with its four classes (rulers, priests, merchants and servants), the Clans base their structure around the ever-present number five. The Population Estimates by Caste Table provides my best extrapolation, based on available information, of the percentage and total number of Clan members (in the whole of Clan society) currently belonging to each caste, in descending order of status.

**POPULATION ESTIMATES
BY CASTE**

Caste	Percentage	Total
Warrior	0.01	110,500
Scientist	6.41	73,820,500
Merchant	18.58	213,976,500
Technician	7.87	90,635,000
Laborer	67.12	772,979,000
Dark (Bandit) Caste	Unknown	Unknown

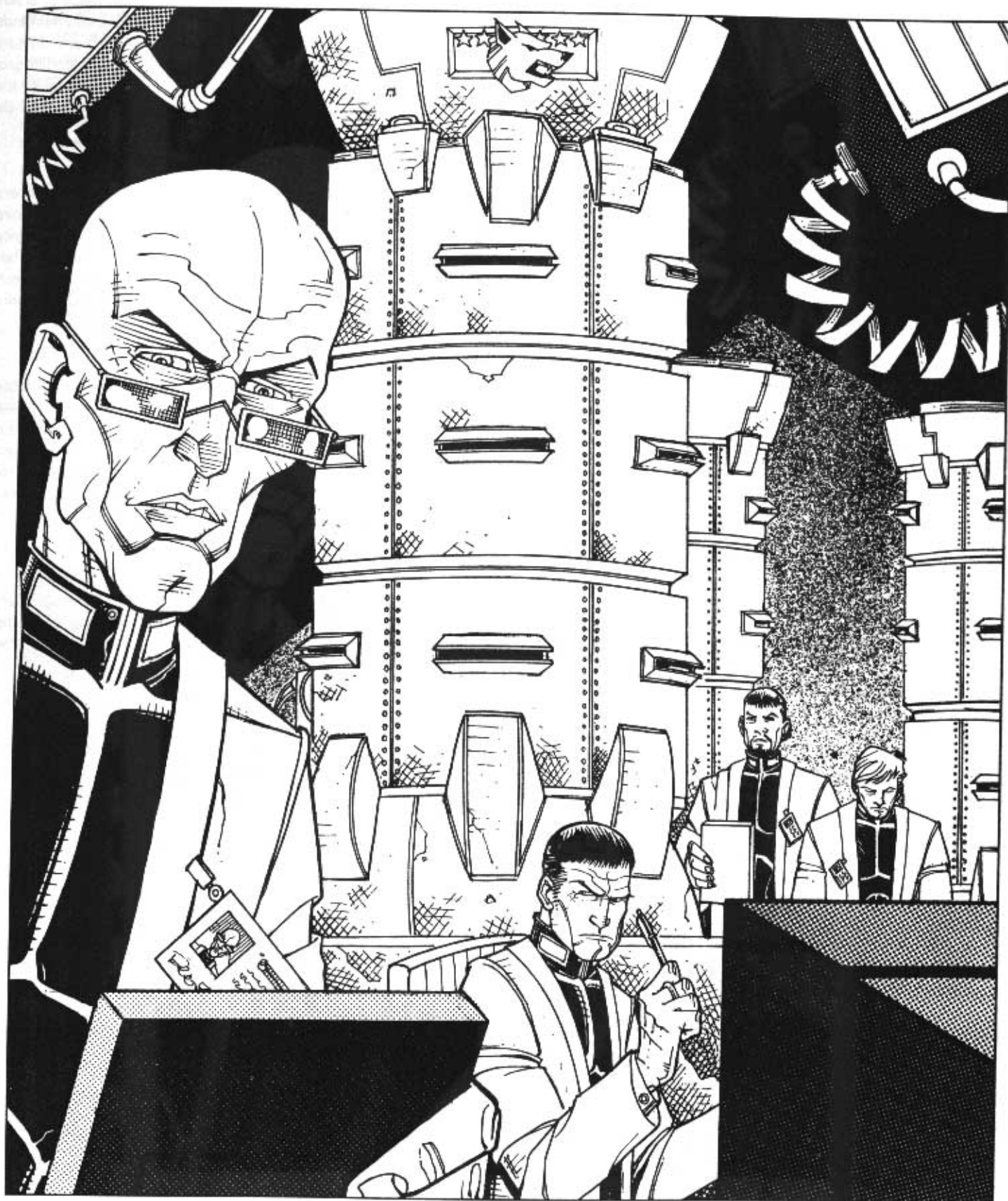
Warrior Caste

The warrior caste serves as protectors and rulers. The Clans regard them as the pinnacle of Clan society, and the work of the other castes is ultimately intended to support them. This caste contains several distinct divisions, most notably that between "trueborns" (warriors produced by the eugenics program) and "freeborns" (warriors born naturally). The Clans generally see the latter as inferior, though how much of that is due to genetics and how much to the poorer training given to such troops is debatable. All Clans make a distinction between trueborn and freeborn, but the degree of discrimination varies considerably. The Smoke Jaguars allowed no freeborn warriors in their ranks at all; the Wolves elected me, an Inner Sphere freeborn, as Khan. Subdivision also occurs by role, with MechWarriors, aerospace pilots, Elementals and paramilitary police the only specialties present in all Clans. Intelligence officers, WarShip command staff, conventional infantry and vehicle crews also form small sub-castes in some Clans. Only Bloodnamed members of the warrior caste may be elected Khan and lead a Clan.

Scientist Caste

Members of the scientist caste oversee the Clans' research and development efforts, including the eugenics pro-

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ISORLA, ABTAKHA AND BONDSMEN

The Clans wholeheartedly believe in the adage, "To the victor go the spoils." Many Clan Trials occur over control of facilities, equipment or genetic legacies, in which the winner claims possession of the prize. The Clans call such spoils of war isorla. Frequently, they also take prisoner enemy warriors and civilians, to whom they refer as bondsmen. Bondsmen are bound, not by ropes or chains, but by their own honor. A bondsman is honor-bound to work for his new Clan; any attempt to shirk his responsibilities is a stain on the bondsman's personal honor as well as that of his original Clan. Consequently, most bondsmen cooperate with their new masters. Civilians taken as prisoners but not specified as the target of a Trial are the notable exception to this practice. Such individuals may refuse the bond-oath and request repatriation, though few do so.

Captive members of civilian castes are usually absorbed into the appropriate caste of the capturing Clan. They wear a two-strand bondcord on the right wrist for the first year, which acts as a probation period. Warriors are treated somewhat differently; they serve as members of the laborer caste, or, if qualified, the technician caste. As their occupations may bring them into conflict with their former Clan, the process for adopting warriors is more rigorous than that for adopting civilians. Captive warriors wear a three-strand bondcord around the right wrist, the color and patterning of which denote the Clan and unit that captured them. In order, the cords symbolize integrity, fidelity and fighting prowess. When a bondsman demonstrates one of these traits to the satisfaction of the warrior who captured him (known as his bondholder), the bondholder may sever the appropriate cord. Once all three are cut, the captive warrior becomes a free member of his new Clan. Many bondsmen are never freed, serving out their lives as members of other castes. Others are adopted into the warrior caste after a token period. The outcome depends on the Clan, the bondsman and the captor.

Contrary to the rumors in the Inner Sphere, bondsmen are not regarded as slaves, but hold a status roughly comparable to indentured servants. They are expected to work for their new Clan, but receive food, clothing and shelter for their efforts and may earn their freedom. However, life as a bondsman is far from

gram. They generally focus on technologies with military applications, but many developments have also proved beneficial to the civilian sector. The importance of scientists to the Clans has earned them a degree of latitude in their actions and demands not tolerated in other castes. Notable scientist sub-castes include teachers, doctors and development teams; the most prestigious are those who serve the eugenics program. Many Clan scientists are test-downs from the warrior caste. Because of the nature of their work, the scientists are the only caste allowed—under specific circumstances—to overrule warriors.

Technician Caste

Technicians serve as an adjunct to the other castes, maintaining their machinery, weapons, computers and vehicles. The majority work with warrior units, maintaining their war machines and crewing ships so that they function at maximum efficiency. Many serve the merchant and laborer castes in a similar manner, maintaining their equipment and allowing them to carry out their work with minimum disruption. The technician sub-castes reflect specialized skills in fields such as electronics and weaponry. Most JumpShip, DropShip and WarShip crews belong to the technician caste.

Merchant Caste

All the Clans require materials and tools with which to work; the acquisition and/or manufacture of such items is the responsibility of the merchant caste. Without such goods, a Clan cannot function properly; it comes as no surprise that many of the strongest Clans militarily also have strong economies, and thus influential merchant castes. (The Diamond Sharks demonstrate the perils of placing too much emphasis on mercantile efforts, however.) The merchant caste covers a wide range of occupations, from the free-traders familiar in the Inner Sphere to machinists and artisans.

Laborer Caste

The largest group, the laborer caste stands on the bottom rung of Clan society. As their name suggests, they are the builders, dockworkers, cleaners and other providers of physical labor. Many lack the extensive formal education of the other castes, but they are nonetheless highly skilled. Without them, Clan society would grind to a halt.

Dark (Bandit) Caste

Officially, every member of Clan society belongs to one of the five recognized castes. In practice, a sixth caste—known variously as the Bandit Caste, Dark Caste or Unproductives—linguishes unrecognized by the Clans at large. These people are misfits, rebels or criminals who cannot or will not fit into Clan society. Largely operating outside it, they must fend for themselves, and often turn to robbery or piracy. This "dishonorable" behavior earns them the wrath of their fellow Clansmen, and Dark Caste communities are frequently the targets of military action.

THE EUGENICS PROGRAM

The popular image of the Clan eugenics program is of the so-called iron wombs, the artificial systems that allow the development and birthing of trueborn warriors. However, the program is more than those machines. It gives structure to Clan life and society at the most basic level. Controlled by the scientist caste, the eugenics program creates the population required for each Clan to grow and function effectively. It therefore involves civilian castes as well as warriors.

The Clans control civilian-caste genetics through mandatory marriages, usually between members of the same caste. Occasional cross-caste matches do occur, though they usually involve the transfer of one member to the other's caste. According to Clan law, the scientist caste determines the appropriate genetic match-

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es, though in practice many marriages come about through more conventional means and are simply rubber-stamped by the authorities. However, individuals who flout mandatory marriage can face severe punishment. Fines are the usual penalty, but chemical reprogramming, torture and even executions are not unheard-of. Such measures may sound a little extreme for what is tantamount to eloping, but the Clans regard interfering with eugenics as among their gravest crimes. (For the record, the Wolf Clan has never enacted such harsh measures.)

In the case of trueborn warriors, fertilized in-vitro and brought to term in an artificial womb, the scientists' goal is to create the ultimate fighter. Trueborns fall into three principal phenotypes: MechWarriors, aerospace pilots and Elementals. For several years, rumors of a fourth type circulated in the scientific community, though its existence was never confirmed. After reading the reports from Huntress, I presume this "fourth type" was an attempt to breed pilots for ProtoMechs; I understand that failed aerospace pilots currently pilot such machines.

Each Clan maintains extensive documentation on every trueborn warrior, ranging from physical characteristics to test scores, kills achieved and injuries sustained. Clan scientists use these records to determine which Bloodlines to combine in their quest for the perfect warrior. This information is maintained at a central genetic repository and also in the codex wristband worn by all warriors. Freeborn troops also wear codexes, but it merely contains information on their careers and health; officially, only Bloodnamed trueborn warriors may be included in the breeding program. At best, a freeborn can hope for his or her ashes to be used as nutrients.

Clan law does not specifically forbid the use of genetic material from freeborns, but simply limits the honor of formal inclusion in the eugenics program to Bloodnamed warriors, the bulk of whom are trueborn. Several methods exist by which

a freeborn warrior can theoretically claim a Bloodname—I am living proof of that—but I leave the details of

such practices to the following section. Occasional use of genetic material from those few freeborns talented enough to win a Bloodname allows for the introduction of new genes into the pool and prevents stagnation of the warrior caste. Out of approximately 1.15 billion Clansmen, only 110,000 are warriors, which makes for a gene pool about the size of a puddle.

The Clans have managed an impressive rate of population growth, averaging at about 2.35 percent a year over the past two and a half centuries. This compares with the Inner Sphere average of 0.7 percent. To put that into perspective, the Clan population will grow by roughly 26 million people over the next year. Unlike the Inner Sphere, much of whose growth comes from the survival of an aging population, the Clan mortality rate has remained constant. The Clans owe their population expansion to the sheer volume of new births.

easy. Bondsman are generally held in lower regard than regular members of the laborer caste, though adoptees—known as abtakha—are treated little differently from those born into the Clan. I spent more than a year as a bondsman before being adopted into the Wolf Clan, and I eventually became a Khan. However, the Wolves are an unusually open-minded Clan, known for accepting anyone who can prove his worth. More hidebound Clans like the Jade Falcons generally adopt only those who show exceptional skill. I understand that the Smoke Jaguars went even further, adopting only trueborns. They saw everyone else as a prisoner and treated them as such.

A Clan warrior may attempt to avoid becoming a bondsman through the ritual known as bondsref. The decision to use this rite is rare: the victor has a right to claim the spoils of war, including his opposition. An individual who cannot reconcile his honor with becoming a bondsman, and who also has not been claimed, may commit suicide to "refuse the bond" (as was the case with Hang Mehta on Huntress). To enact bondsref after receiving a bondcord, and without the bondholder's permission, is highly dishonorable.

AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCIES

Inner Sphere Clans	89.7 years
Warrior	45.2 years
Scientist	79.6 years
Technician	62.7 years
Merchant	71.9 years
Laborer	57.8 years
[Dark Caste]	35.6 years]

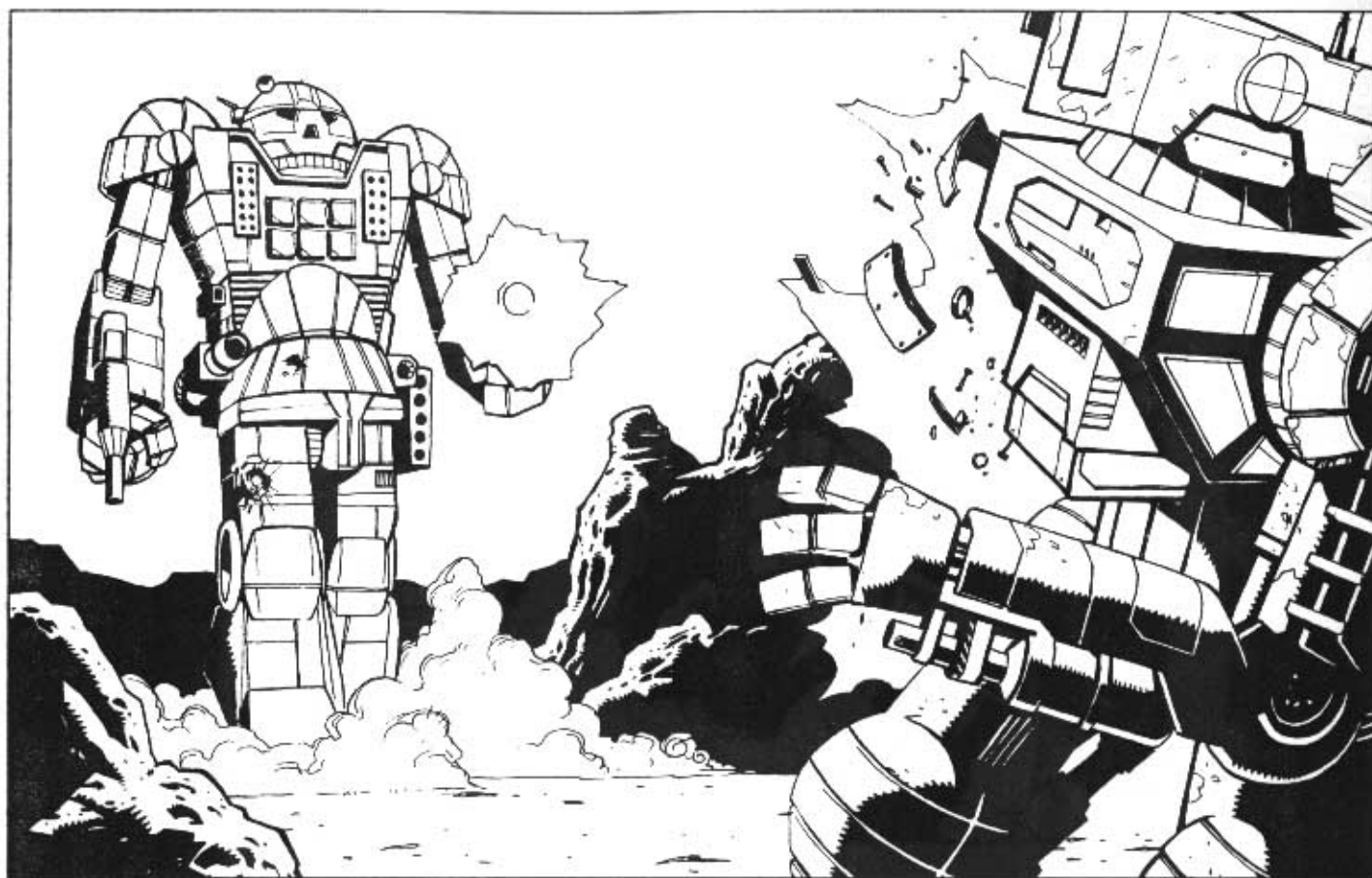
BLOODNAMES

Most people in the Inner Sphere are familiar with the concept of Bloodnames, but considerable confusion about the issue remains. The origin of Bloodnames is well known; Nicholas Kerensky decreed that only the descendants of those warriors who accompanied him into exile, became part of the Clans and subsequently liberated the Pentagon were allowed to use surnames. To quote the Remembrance, "From Kerensky's Stars came the Eight Hundred, beneath a banner of Truth and Righteous Light."

Actually, there were 803 Bloodnames including Nicholas' own, that of his wife Jennifer Winson, and that of his brother Andery. However, there were only 787 different names, including two Kerenskys (Andery and Nicholas). Several siblings and parent-child groups formed part of the original Clans, leading to multiple Bloodrights (or lineages) with the same name, but not the same ancestor. And that is the easy part; the hard part is understanding how the system works.

Number of Bloodnames

Before Operations Bulldog and Serpent destroyed Clan Smoke Jaguar, the Clans claimed 682 extant Bloodnames. This number in itself has caused some confusion. Long ago, Cyrilla Ward told me that Nicholas Kerensky and Jennifer Winson had led six hundred warriors to liberate the Pentagon, which I duly reported to the Precentor Martial. As far as I can tell, Cyrilla simply made a momentary slip.



I now know there were eight hundred warriors and thus eight hundred Bloodnames when the Clans formed; however, the genes of about six hundred non-warrior loyalists were also included in the eugenics program to ensure genetic diversity. Focht reported this fact in his works on the Clans, but most analysts overlook it.

From eight hundred to 682 leaves a gap of roughly 120 Bloodnames. Many belonged to Clan Wolverine, whose Bloodnames were Abjured and erased from Clan records. Sibkos containing Wolverine genetic material were terminated; contrary to some rumors, no Clan took in any Wolverine assets after that Clan's Annihilation. Similarly, many Clan Mongoose names disappeared when that Clan was Absorbed into the Smoke Jaguars. Ever a proud Clan, the Jaguars refused to use Bloodnames "tainted by defeat," and so only a handful of Mongoose lines have survived to the present day. The Wolves likewise allowed three-quarters of Clan Widowmaker's Bloodnames to die out, though their genetic material lives on as part of other Bloodheritages. Those three Clans account for 107 of the "lost" Bloodnames. The remainder are failed or disgraced bloodlines from existing houses, such as Kinnison from the Steel Vipers. Bloodlines that fail to produce even mediocre warriors are abandoned; these and a handful of lines that have been Abjured or Annihilated over the years accounts for the remainder. A few Bloodnames have been added, my own name of Kell being one of them.

In the aftermath of the battles in the Jaguar occupation zone and on Huntress, we can safely strike from the Clan rolls those Bloodnames belonging exclusively to the Jaguars and Nova Cats, bringing current the total down to 660.

Gaining a Bloodname

Nicholas Kerensky decreed that up to twenty-five people could hold any given Bloodname at a single time, with the Bloodnames going to new bearers via a series of ritual battles. At first, these battles simply involved defeating all challengers for the honor. The Clans' rapid growth as a result of the breeding program, however, forced Clan leaders to impose regulations on the process. They decided that a maximum of thirty-two warriors could compete for any given Bloodname. Twenty-four would be nominated by existing Bloodname holders, who could make one recommendation apiece. A committee headed by the Loremaster of the Clan controlling the Bloodname (or, in the case of no such exclusive control, the Bloodname's House Leader) would select the remaining aspirants, except for the thirty-second slot. That place would be filled by the winner of a grand melee fought among other contestants. Once all participants were selected, the Trial of Bloodright would be fought in five elimination rounds, with the eventual victor awarded the Bloodname.

The Bloodnames for which a Clan warrior is eligible depends on the warrior's genetic parentage. The concept of family has little relevance for trueborn warriors, born in artificial wombs and raised in sibkos, but these warriors nonetheless take pride in their descent from valorous and skilled forebears. The codex of a warrior's gene-father and gene-mother are vitally important to him. If the gene-parents are disgraced, that disgrace passes to their offspring. Conversely, the offspring of honored gene-parents are expected to live up to that honor by doing well.

Freeborn warriors can claim Bloodnames through various methods. The warrior may be declared the progenitor of a new Bloodname—a rare occurrence, generally reserved as the ultimate reward. The best known example is Wolf's Dragoons; the Wolf Clan spurred Jaime and Joshua Wolf to their best efforts with the promise of including their DNA in the breeding program and the recognition of Wolf as a Bloodname. An ilKhan may also create a Bloodname to reward successful completion of a mission, as Ulric did with the Bloodname of Kell.

Finally, warriors born naturally but with a genetic makeup comparable to a trueborn's may end up winning a Bloodname. In a recent test case, a Jade Falcon warrior named Diana was allowed to compete for the Pryde Bloodname. Diana was the freeborn offspring of two trueborns from the same sibko, though only one—the legendary Aidan Pryde—retained warrior status. Diana's victory, which most Clansmen saw as the first of its kind, set an interesting precedent. In fact, however, she was not the first freeborn descendant of a trueborn bloodline to compete for a Bloodname. As a descendant of Jal Ward, one of Nicholas Kerensky's loyalists, I was allowed to join House Ward and compete for the Ward Bloodname. Mine was a special case, as few of those who joined Nicholas left descendants in the Inner Sphere. However, my success shows that the Clans (or at least, the Wolves) can be flexible on the issue of genetics when it suits them.

Bloodheritages and Bloodrights

The Clan eugenics program keeps close track of the history of each Bloodname, both as regards the genetic makeup of each holder and the Bloodname's overall lineage. Unlike a conventional lineage, which follows a biological parent-child path, the lineage of each Bloodname—known as a Bloodright—is simply a record of the holders. The bearers are genetically related, but in many cases only through the Bloodname's founder.

With the lack of a traditional parent-child relationship, each Bloodright takes on immense importance. Through the Bloodright and its history, called the Bloodheritage, key Bloodrights provide Clan warriors with a sense of identity and superiority. For example, two Bloodrights of the Jones Bloodname become available. The first was held by Bill Jones, a mediocre warrior from a line of mediocre warriors. The second was held by Sam Jones, the most recent of a line of ristar. Any Clansman would choose the latter because it confers more prestige. Through it, the warrior is associated with heroes and victors, and so competition for that Bloodright will be fierce. The other Bloodright—the inferior line—will likely get its share of applicants, but they will not be the best warriors. This cycle perpetuates itself: the best warriors gravitate toward the prestigious lines, the poor warriors to the mediocre lines.

Those who win "inferior" Bloodnames are not bad warriors, but they are not classed among the truly elite. By winning a Bloodname, they have proven themselves worthier than those warriors without one; however, the taint on the line from its poor Bloodheritage and the lack of decent opponents will overshadow that accomplishment unless the warrior can redeem himself and the Bloodright through some great deed. Classic examples of this include Celine Kabrinski's heroic stand against the Star Adders, Karl Devalis' epic clash with Haim Andrews, Taman Malthus' encounters with Kai Allard-Liao and Aidan Pryde's heroic sacrifice on Tukayyid.

Occasionally, a Bloodright or even an entire Bloodname is deemed to have failed, paving the way for that Bloodright or Bloodname to be eliminated in the process known as Reaving.

WARRIORS OF THE DOUBLE HELIX

I do not pretend to understand the technicalities, but Clan scientists go to great lengths to ensure the perpetuation of each genetic line. Gene-splicing and chromosome modification ensures an equal balance of males and females born to each house, though several scientists have told me that they do this more from tradition than from need. To them, modifying chromosomes to determine sex is a primitive application of their knowledge. They can take DNA strands from two individuals and use recombinant techniques to splice them into sperm and ova gametes, creating a zygote irrespective of the gender of the donors. Therefore, a male warrior can theoretically be a "gene-mother" if his DNA is spliced into an ovum, and a female warrior can be a "gene-father." In general, however, the Clans prefer not to meddle too much with nature, and so most often use simple in-vitro fertilization techniques. Likewise, they rarely use gene modification to modify physical or mental traits. Instead, they tend to use genetic engineering simply to identify and correct adverse recessive traits. These are usually inactive, being dominated by the other half of the genetic pairing; however, if combined with appropriate genes, they may manifest and cause problems. In most cases, Clan scientists allow nature to "take its course," albeit in a laboratory.

To give some examples, say a warrior is born using the unmodified genetic material of Tanya Ward and Peter Kabrinski. As Bloodname eligibility is determined matrilineally, that warrior can claim the Ward Bloodname (that of the gene-mother) but not Kabrinski (the gene-father). A second warrior is born using the genetic material of Alice Nygren and Helen Mattlov. The Nygren DNA is spliced into the male gamete (sperm) and the Mattlov DNA into the female gamete (ovum). In this case, the warrior would be eligible for the Mattlov Bloodname, because Mattlov is the Bloodname held by the gene-mother.

The matrilineal tracing of Bloodnames, widely reported in Focht's studies of the Clans, has always seemed unworkable to many in the Inner Sphere. I have heard people argue that, because fifty-two percent of the human population is female, therefore only fifty-two percent

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of Bloodnames would have survived the first generation. Well, yes and no. The first generation born from the iron wombs could claim the Bloodname of either gene-parent. They were divided equally into claimants for each Bloodname (save those of mixed warrior/non-warrior lines, who by default entered the Bloodname house of their warrior gene-parent). From the second generation and beyond, matrilineal descent became the rule.

Theoretically, the Clans can create clones, splicing a warrior's DNA into sperm and ova and creating an individual whose genetic makeup is identical to the donor's. The technique has existed since the 20th century, but Clan scientists rarely use it. The Clans believe in evolution and natural selection; simply replicating an individual implies stagnation. They call the product of such processes a "re-tread."

Despite advances in genetic screening, the Clans still retain a form of incest taboo. Clan law discourages the combining of genes from closely related warriors, usually taken to be within three generations. Such an occurrence, however, is extremely unlikely.

Bloodcount and Reaving

When Nicholas Kerensky created the Clans and announced that his warriors would receive the ultimate accolade of a Bloodname, he decreed that only twenty-five individuals could claim each one. He did not set a minimum, however. Contrary to popular belief, every Bloodname does not have twenty-five Bloodrights. The exact number of active Bloodrights associated with each Bloodname is known as the Bloodcount.

The leaders of each Bloodname House soon recognized that some lines were not performing as well as had been expected. To prevent the dilution of their Bloodname's prestige by a plethora of mediocre Bloodheritages, they created the Reaving ritual so that they could tailor the number of Bloodrights associated with each Bloodname to match the Bloodname's potency. Some names, such as Kerensky, N'Buta and Mattlov, have never suffered the Reaving. Others have been reduced to twenty Bloodrights or even fifteen, while the poorest may have a Bloodcount as low as five. Through this method, a handful of the most degenerate lines have ceased to exist.

The complex process for reducing a Bloodcount involves the leaders of the Bloodname House and the Grand Council. When a Bloodname House announces a Trial of Bloodright, a Bloodnamed warrior of another house (acting with the authority of that house as determined by majority vote) may call for a Reaving against the house holding the Trial. This action suspends the Trial of Bloodright until the Reaving is settled. The Grand Council then deliberates over the call for Reaving and votes on the issue. A Trial of Refusal inevitably follows—demanded either by the targeted house to refuse the Reaving motion, or by the sponsoring house to force the motion's passage. Known as the Trial of Reaving, this combat decides if the Bloodcount changes.

The Bloodnamed warrior who called for the Reaving, along with others of his or her Bloodname House, fights in favor of the Reaving. Opposing them are the warriors nominated to fight for the Bloodright. Bidding usually reduces the forces fielded to a single Star or Elemental Point. If the pro-Reaving force wins, the Trial of Bloodright is

canceled and the Bloodname's count reduced by one. If the pro-Bloodright force wins, the Trial of Bloodright takes place. The pro-Reaving house also becomes the subject of a Reaving vote the next time one of its warriors dies. This penalty ensures that no one calls for Reaving lightly.

The ilKhan has a little-known option to decree the cancellation of a Bloodright Trial. (Ulric Kerensky applied this to the Bloodright of the treacherous Conal Ward.) Though not technically Reaving, such a decree has the same effect: the Bloodcount is reduced by one, and the cancelled Trial consigns the Bloodname to limbo until the ilKhan or the Grand Council decides to allow it.

Bloodrights and Bloodnames trimmed by Reaving or the ilKhan's decree are not destroyed; only Annihilation or Abjuration can do that. According to Clan law, they are simply suspended and may be reactivated. The scientist caste may call for a Bloodcount to be increased in order to aid the eugenics program. This decision is based on several factors, including the genetic diversity of the Clan in question and the current potential of the Bloodname (in the scientists' opinion). In this case, the issue goes before the Grand Council for a vote. A Trial of Refusal frequently ensues, known as the Trial of Propagation. Unlike the Trial of Reaving, there is no censure motion against the faction opposing propagation of the Bloodname. Occasionally, others holding the Bloodname perform so well that the assembled warriors simply agree to the increased Bloodcount (though the count may never exceed twenty-five).

With rare exceptions, reactivated Bloodnames are scorned. Operation Revival provided the most notable exception in recent years. Many inactive Bloodrights came back into use for the invasion, often on a kind of probation; if the holder performed well, that Bloodright and heritage would be fully reactivated. If not, it would revert to dormancy upon the death of the bearer. This mechanism allowed the Wolves to field a thousand Bloodnamed warriors (the maximum allowed to each Clan) during the invasion, though many Bloodrights were not renewed after Tukayyid. A handful were redeemed in the invasion, but these were offset by those placed under threat of Reaving—most notably the Jade Falcons' Malthus line, disgraced by the Falcon Guard's defeat on Twycross. Another block of Bloodrights from the hitherto ignored Widowmaker lines were reactivated by the Crusader Wolves following the Refusal War.

Unfortunately, what began as a way to preserve Clan honor has become corrupted over the years. The Rite of Reaving is frequently perverted into a political tool; several Clans use the threat of it to gain control of Bloodname Houses and thus their voting blocs. On numerous occasions, the threat has been carried out—not to maintain the strength of a Bloodname, but simply to reduce opposing votes in Clan Councils.

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In general, the Clans look on the whole issue of Reaving and Propagation with a degree of shame. It implies that their breeding program is not as superior as they might wish to believe. Because of this, the Clans deliberately withheld information on the Bloodcount and Reaving from Precentor Martial Focht during his diplomatic missions.

Scientist Labnames

Labnames used by members of the scientist caste are not Bloodnames; they simply represent recognition within the scientist caste of some notable achievement or skill. Bestowed by a vote of colleagues, they are the names of famous historical scientists. Though Clan warriors generally tolerate this aping of Bloodnames, labnames are only used within the scientist caste. Most outsiders view them with disdain and rarely, if ever, refer to them.

CLAN PSYCHOLOGY

Though the Clans are biologically human, their mindset is alien to many in the Inner Sphere. They have a distinctive outlook, shaped by their needs and goals. Four main elements of Clan psychology that distinguish them from denizens of the Inner Sphere are their belief that "might makes right," a certain scavenger mentality, anti-Spheroid sentiment bordering on xenophobia, and a high regard for conformity. Another concept, known as the "honor road," pervades the Clan warrior caste. Some of these elements also exist in Inner Sphere cultures, but their combination in the Clans creates a unique society.

Might Makes Right

Having been founded by a warrior with a single goal in mind, and having been ruled by warriors for almost 250 years, it is not surprising that the "might makes right" ideal pervades the Clans. In this, they resemble many martial orders in the Inner Sphere, such as the Capellan Warrior Houses. However, the Clans lack the cultural or ethical restraints of those Inner Sphere orders—for example, the balance between duty and honor that defines the Draconis Combine's samurai class. The Clans' sterling military performance during the Inner Sphere invasion at first appeared to validate their view of the rights of power, but the recent annihilation of the Smoke Jaguars—especially the razing of Huntress and the Great Refusal on Strana Mechty—has shattered many illusions. The Clans are no longer invincible, an unpleasant truth that has prompted many to rethink their stance.

Waste Not, Want Not

Their origin as refugees from the Inner Sphere, and later from their own wars, has taught the Clans to maximize material resources. In many ways they might be called "techno-barbarians," with core technologies far advanced beyond those in the Inner Sphere, but with available resources restricted to key areas—almost always military. With the notable exception of people, the Clans rarely waste any resource. Many of the 'Mechs used by second-line units are Star League vintage, and

most units aside from front-line Clusters are equipped with hand-me-downs. The Clans have been described as utilitarian compared to the Inner Sphere, placing great emphasis on function. Despite their spartan lifestyle, however, the Clans have developed surprisingly sophisticated arts (see *The Arts*, p. 48).

Xenophobia

The experiences of Aleksandr and Nicholas Kerensky led the Clans to see the Inner Sphere as a den of corruption, as the House Lords were ultimately responsible for the fall of the Star League and Aleksandr Kerensky's Exodus. The privations of living in the Pentagon worlds reinforced this view; many Clansmen came to regard the Inner Sphere as a "lost paradise" inhabited by barbarians. Initially faced with forging a disparate and often mutually hostile population into a unified new society, Nicholas Kerensky encouraged this xenophobic attitude as a means of focusing his newborn Clans' energies, though it did not fully take hold until the Golden Century.

Conformity

Taking a leaf from ancient Asia, Nicholas and his successors steered the Clans by establishing an official "party line": that the Clans are the honest, noble, true descendants of the Star League, while Spheroids are corrupt and deceptive. It logically follows from this attitude that Nicholas Kerensky's actions and plans were the only way to save humankind from itself, and that all things proceeding from them must therefore be right. To suggest otherwise, or to generally voice dissent, is viewed as "un-Clanlike" and therefore treasonous. The Clans have little use for individuality and free thought, both of which are punished. Clansmen are raised to watch their neighbors and report any un-Clanlike tendencies; they generally see such actions not as spying, but as serving the honor of the Clans and the common good. Unlike Maoist China, a society of ancient Terra that espoused similar principles, the Clans are uniformly committed to the rightness of their course. It takes the injection of an outside element, such as the multicultural Inner Sphere, to upset the system.

As shown by the defection of the Nova Cats and the relocation of the Ghost Bears, Clan conformity can no longer be taken for granted. Recent events in the Smoke Jaguar occupation zone on Huntress and on Strana Mechty have simply added more fuel to the fire; the long-term consequences remain to be seen.

Morgan: So the Clans are egotistical, paranoid bullies with a pack-rat mentality?

Phelan: That may be a little strong. Overconfident, perhaps, though they have reason to be proud of their martial prowess. What hindered many Clans in the invasion was their inflexibility, though that is changing.

Morgan: You mean they had become too accustomed to ritualized war.

Phelan: That is part of it, but the famous Clan rigidity applies to the entire culture, not just the military. The

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Steel Viper's dreams of cooperating with the Inner Sphere were doomed because they wanted to do things their way, though most of the invading Clans did try to work through established systems. Only the Wolves and Bears actually managed it, and the Bears got off to a bad start.

Morgan: So in the Wolf and Ghost Bear occupation zones, the guys at the top of the heap have changed, but the basic system remains the same?

Phelan: Exactly. And because the planets in those zones were Lyrans-Rasalhague-Combine border worlds, most of the people were used to occasional change of government. Provided their lives were not turned upside down, the general population did not and still does not much care who rules them.

Honor Road

Paralleled only by the Draconis Combine's bushido ideals (on which it is based) and the code espoused by the Knights of the Inner Sphere, the Clan "honor road" is an ethical system for which Clan warriors are both respected and reviled. It guides their responses and shapes their actions, providing a means to prevent a repeat of the devastation that occurred in the Pentagon Civil War. However, the Clans were not always so honorable in warfare.

The honor road and zellbrigen—the rules of combat that epitomize it—can be traced to the death of Nicholas' brother Andery during the liberation of Eden. In those days, the Clans fought with tactics similar to those of the SLDF. They fought total war, using any and every weapon at their disposal. But the Clans were a small force, and on many occasions found themselves facing numerically superior foes. After Andery Kerensky was killed in an ambush, Nicholas vowed to prevent a recurrence. Over the next decade, the Clans adopted the honor road and the rules of combat that Nicholas Kerensky created.

The civilian castes do not follow the honor road *per se*, but similarly value honorable conduct in their everyday lives. Compared to Inner Sphere civilians, the Clan castes suffer less from crime and violence, and rarely practice deception in their dealings. The people also exhibit a certain naiveté, which many outsiders find both refreshing and infuriating. Clansmen in general tend to avoid lying outright; instead, they settle for not always telling the whole truth, especially to "outsiders" (those not of their House, Clan or military unit). However, if a Clansman says he will do something for you, he will do his best to honor his pledge—assuming you are a fellow Clansman, of course.

Honor works on several levels in Clan society. Most important is the honor of the Clan, followed by that of the unit or caste, and then of the individual. On most occasions, these work together in harmony, but occasionally individual honor is at odds with that of his caste or Clan. Different individuals may also find themselves at odds with each other over a matter of personal honor. To cope with such situations, the Clans have developed extensive rituals and Trials to minimize strife (see *Rituals, Trials and Traditions*). These rituals often prompt actions incomprehensible to non-Clansmen.

For example, many in the Inner Sphere were shocked when the Jade Falcons "ganged up" on Inner Sphere troops during the battle for Alyina. However, doing so greatly increased the Falcons' chances of capturing Prince Victor Steiner-Davion. That feat would have been a great honor for their Clan, especially as they had failed to capture him on Trell I and the Smoke Jaguars had lost Hohiro Kuirita on Turtle Bay. In this situation, the honor of the Second Jaegers (then commanded by Marthe Pryde) and its warriors took second place to that of Clan Jade Falcon as a whole, which allowed the unit to use tactics that would otherwise be regarded as dishonorable.

Morgan: So they can cheat as needed?

Phelan: Sort of. It depends on the Clan. We Wolves like to think of ourselves as flexible, adapting to the needs of the situation. When fighting another Clan unit, we generally play by the rules, but against Inner Sphere forces, who would likely attempt to use their perceptions of Clan honor against us, we wouldn't. Even the jarhead Jaguars learned that lesson on Wolcott.

Morgan: So we can't expect the Clans to play by "Clan rules" in combat?

Phelan: Again, sort of. Most of them will try to fight honorably, but will adapt if necessary. The Falcons are rigid traditionalists, so Alyina was an aberration for them. On Coventry and elsewhere, they have tended toward traditional tactics, but actually use a blend of old and new fighting styles that matches the rules of engagement to the situation.

Morgan: Even those who haven't fought the Inner Sphere?

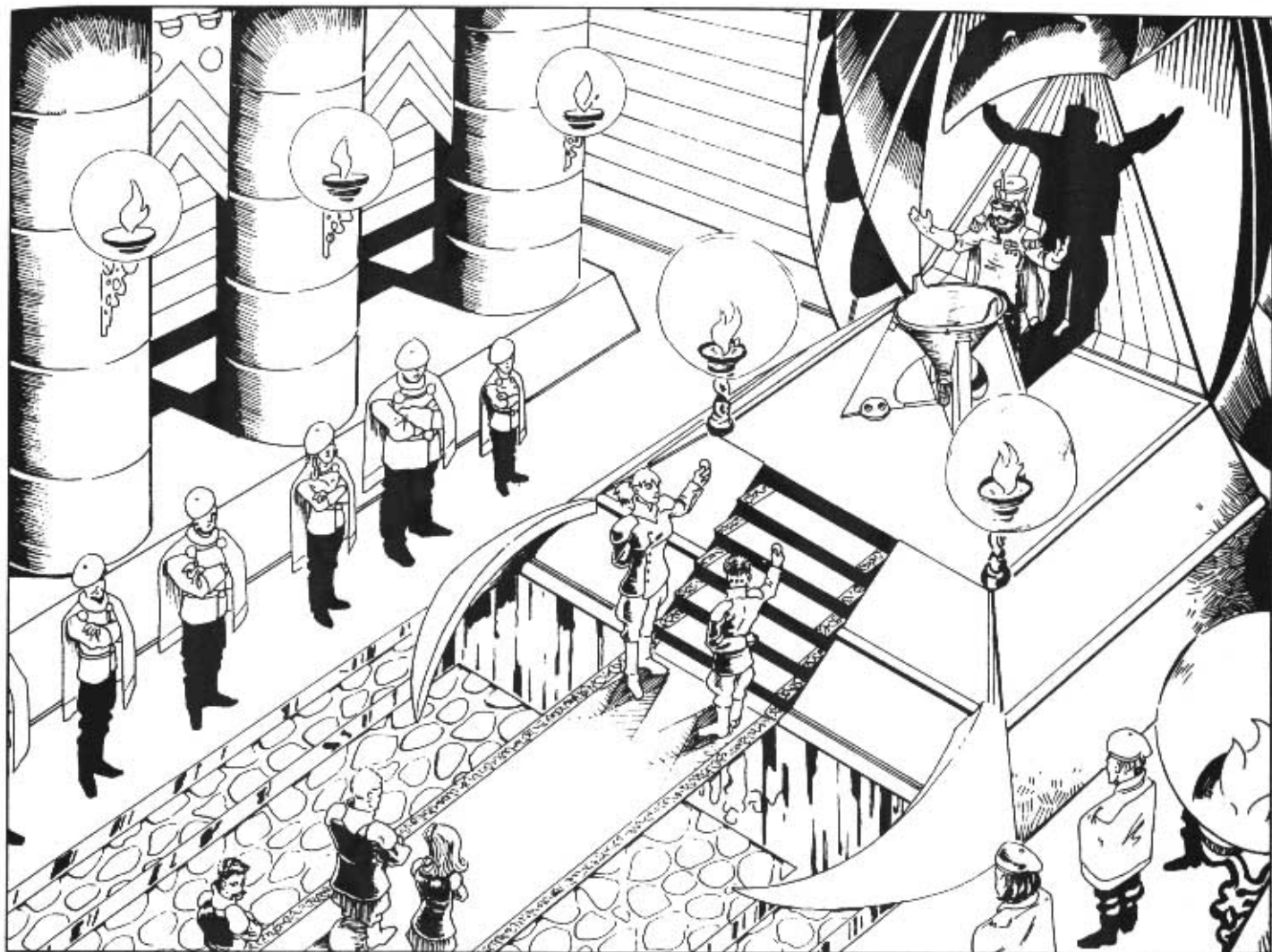
Phelan: Probably not. I am talking primarily about the invading Clans here. The home Clans will fight old-style on almost every occasion. They lack the experience to do otherwise, and several of them thought the stories of the Successor States' dishonorable battlefield conduct was just a whitewash for the invaders' loss at Tukayyid. Operations Bulldog and Serpent, as well as the Great Refusal on Strana Mechty, have demonstrated otherwise, but the lesson has yet to fully sink in.

RITUALS, TRIALS AND TRADITIONS

The ideals of conformity and honor have led the Clans to develop a series of rituals to limit conflicts within a caste or Clan, or between Clans. Many of them are martial in origin, as might be expected from a society ruled by the military, but over time the civilian castes have adapted many to their own use. A convoluted protocol determines when such actions are appropriate, but often it comes down to individual interpretation and the honor of the participants.

Most of the following rituals relate to individuals within the same caste and Clan. In situations where members of another caste or Clan are involved, either the Clan Council or the Grand Council decides the outcome. For example, the Clan Council

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(exclusively members of the warrior caste) settles disputes between the scientist and merchant castes. Of course, if the warrior caste gets involved in a dispute with another caste, the Clan Council still renders judgement. This may seem unfair to the civilian caste, but in most cases the honor of the participants results in what the Clans consider a fair verdict.

In general, problems only crop up among overly authoritarian Clans, such as the Jaguars and Widowmakers. They tended to believe that a warrior is always right, no matter how guilty he is. In such situations, the lower castes have been known to "end run" their own Clan Council and approach the Grand Council directly. However, even after two centuries the specter of the Widowmakers' action against their own merchant caste in just such a situation gives civilians cause to be wary.

The Clans most commonly use six Trials and three other rituals, most of them associated with the warrior caste, though other castes practice some of them as well. (These do not include Reaving and the Trial of Propagation, which are specific versions of a Trial of Refusal.)

Surkai

All castes practice surkai, the Rite of Forgiveness. Akin to the yakuza Yobitsume (finger cutting) ritual, surkai is an admission by the person enacting the rite that he or she was wrong to disagree with someone or to do a certain thing. In the honor-bound Clans, surkai is a matter of pride; they value the strength to admit mistakes and accept punishment for them. Most often, Clansmen invoke surkai after disagreeing with a superior: a warrior and an officer, a caste and the Clan Council, or even an entire Clan and the Grand Council.

The rite has considerable power in this conformist culture. Those undertaking the rite and accepting the relevant punishment are honor-bound to put the past behind them. Those who refuse to enact surkai are shunned and may receive punishment that enforces repentance. In the case of a major offense, the "wronged" party may refuse surkai and instead demand a Trial of Grievance. This prevents devious individuals from using the Rite of Forgiveness as a shield from the full consequences of their conduct.

Trial of Grievance

The Trial of Grievance, also used by all castes in one form or another, is intended to settle disputes, particularly with regard to matters of honor. When such an impasse is reached, the participants have two choices. They can appeal to the Caste or Clan Council, or to the Grand Council in the case of Bloodnamed warriors or those holding senior posts, or they can undergo a Trial of Grievance. In a council appeal, the aggrieved parties avoid all unnecessary contact until the matter is decided. If they choose a Trial of Grievance instead, a competition is arranged, of which the winner will be deemed right.

Among warriors, the Trial of Grievance is a duel, fought with or without equipment as determined by those setting its terms. The Clans take care to ensure that neither participant gains an artificial advantage from the style of combat, often by requiring both to use comparable equipment. For example, in a Trial between a light 'Mech pilot and a heavy 'Mech pilot, both would use medium 'Mechs with which neither warrior was familiar, and each would receive several days to practice before the Trial was held. Trials between members of different sub-castes—for example, Elementals and MechWarriors—are a special case. In situations like that one, where there is no fair common ground, everything possible is done to level the playing field.

The combat takes place within a defined area known as a Circle of Equals, which may measure anything from a few meters to hundreds of kilometers across, depending on the type of duel. Only the combatants may enter the circle; if forced to leave, a contestant forfeits the Trial. Voluntary withdrawal from the circle before the issue is resolved indicates both cowardice and an unwillingness to stand by one's convictions. Any non-participant's entry into the circle invalidates the Trial and is regarded as a great dishonor.

The civilian castes also use the Trial of Grievance, in contests tailored to the skills of those involved. For example, disputing members of the merchant caste may be assigned a period in which to gather a predetermined amount of revenue. As with the warrior caste, differences between sub-castes can cause problems. A potter and a trader are both members of the merchant caste, but their skills are not comparable. For this reason, Trials of Grievance are less common within the civilian castes than referrals to the Caste or Clan council. The Clan Council handles all disputes between members of different castes, save in those rare cases where the Grand Council is more appropriate.

Trial of Refusal

Associated with the Trial of Grievance is the Trial of Refusal, practiced by the warrior caste. This Trial recognizes that, according to Clan law, the warrior caste alone rules the Clans. It embodies the concept of "might makes right" by providing the right to challenge in combat any decision made by the Clan Councils or Grand Council. Over the years, the concept has filtered down through military units and is used occasionally within the Tournan to settle disputes (often lumped together with the Trial of Grievance). Many Inner Sphere powers dispar-

age this "trial by combat" as undemocratic, but the domination of most Inner Sphere by dynasties with near-absolute power makes such criticisms a touch hypocritical.

In a Trial of Refusal, the refusing party declares what forces he or she will use to challenge the decision. The opposing side then declares what forces will uphold the verdict, up to the ratio of the decision. For example, if someone challenges a decision that passed two votes to ten (a ratio of one to five), the defenders may deploy up to five times as many troops (in Points rather than individual warriors) as the attackers. However, in practice, bidding among the defenders for the honor of upholding the decision usually reduces this ratio in the challenger's favor. As with a Trial of Grievance, the force that wins is deemed to be in the right.

The Trial of Refusal has its limits, however. First, the challenge must come from someone cited in the decision or within the appropriate body. Furthermore, Clan law forbids challenging the outcome of a Trial of Refusal with another Trial of Refusal but members of the council in question and those cited in the matter may stage additional Refusals. These usually occur simultaneously but may, if circumstances demand, be carried out separately if those cited in the matter were not given the opportunity to challenge the original decision. This helps protect the interests of those cited in the matter and only one such Refusal need be successful for the motion to be struck down. However, though the first Refusal must be accepted, a majority vote of the council may deny the petition for a second challenge. Clansmen also cannot challenge a Satarra, the Clan Council's right of veto regarding disputes between castes. Finally, as the Refusal War demonstrated, these rules do not prevent combatants from using allied forces. However, by participating in the Trials, the allies place themselves under the same judgment as the accused. If the Trial fails, they too suffer the consequences. Such was the case with Clan Wolf when they lost the Refusal War.

Trial of Possession

One of the most common Trials among the warrior caste, the Trial of Possession resembles the Trial of Refusal in that it reflects the dominance of warriors in Clan society. Members of civilian castes exchange goods and services for the materials they need; warriors simply requisition what they require. Within a Clan this causes few problems, as the sole purpose of the other castes is to support the warriors. Dealings with other Clans are not so simple. Merchants may trade for various goods, but many items cannot be acquired that way, and so the warriors must take whatever they (or their Clan's other castes) need. The Trial of Possession is a combat Trial to determine ownership of resources.

These Trials can be fought over almost anything: genetic legacies, military units, even worlds. In all cases, the attacking force issues a challenge to the current owners of the contested prize. The attackers state their identity and objective, then request the defenders to name what forces they will use to maintain possession. This process is known as the batchall. Once the defender has replied, attacking units bid among them-

selves for the honor of achieving the goal. Bidding minimizes waste, cutting down the number of troops committed to what in effect are mini-wars. The side that wins gains or retains ownership of the disputed resource.

In the Clan view, they acquired each world taken from the Inner Sphere during the invasion through a Trial of Possession. After their defeats on Wolcott, Twycross and Tukayyid, the Invading Clans learned not to trust Inner Sphere bidding or batchalls.

Prisoners captured during a Trial of Possession may be taken as bondsmen or returned to their original Clan. By Clan law, taking a Bloodnamed warrior as a bondsman or directly through a Trial of Possession does not allow the capturing Clan to use that warrior's DNA in its eugenics program, thereby preventing the uncontrolled dissemination of genetic material. In practice, there is little to stop a Clan from doing so; however, their reverence for tradition makes such action virtually unheard of. Instead, if a Clan wishes to incorporate outside genetic material, that Clan must stage a Trial of Possession for the desired genetic legacy (not just a warrior of that bloodline). Batchalls for such Trials usually begin with the words, "Who defends the spawn of" If such a Trial is successful, scientists transfer a copy of that legacy into the winning Clan's genetic repository. This means that the outcome of a battle hundreds of light years away could have the net result of moving a small plexiglass container a few hundred meters on Strana Mechty.

Rite of Absorption

Another exclusive practice of the warrior caste, the Rite of Absorption is an amalgam of a Trial of Refusal and a Trial of Possession, in which an entire Clan is absorbed into another. Any Clan may call for another's Absorption. Because of the seriousness of the matter, the Grand Council must vote on it, and the motion can only pass with a unanimous decision (with the exception of the Clan to be Absorbed). If Absorption is approved, the other Clans bid for the right to carry it out. The bidding process often involves a series of Trials of Refusal, as the various Clans seek to prevent each other from gaining a decisive advantage. The target Clan inevitably also calls for a Trial of Refusal against the verdict, and so some or all of the Clan's Touman will face that of the Absorbing Clan. (The attacker sees this as a Trial of Possession.) The last side with active forces on the field wins.

The Rite of Absorption is not always fought to the death. Many of the defenders are taken as bondsmen and adopted into the new Clan, as happened in the recent Star Adder-Burrock Absorption Trial. This practice makes up for the losses inflicted on the Absorbing Clan. On the three occasions that such Trials have occurred (the Wolf Absorption of Clan Widowmaker, the Jaguar Absorption of Clan Mongoose and the Star Adders' Absorption of the Burrocks), bidding between the potential attackers gave the defenders a numerical advantage. While not enough to allow them to escape their fate, it did temper the victories of the absorbing Clans, and so every Clan thinks long and hard before attempting such an action.

After the fact, the Jade Falcons declared the Refusal War a Trial of Absorption as a means of making up their horrendous losses. This maneuver was a blatant violation of Clan law. There had been no call for Absorption in the Grand Council; the council voted to impeach Ulric, not absorb the Wolves. Second, the impeachment vote was not unanimous and there was no inter-Clan bidding for Absorption rights. The Falcons paid the price for their opportunism, however. Much as I hate to say it, I respect what Vlad did to wreck Khan Chistu and Khan Crichton's political games.

Trial of Position

Position within the Clans is determined by ability. The civilian castes determine such matters in their own councils and work groups, while the warrior caste requires a practical demonstration of martial skills. The Trial of Position fills this role.

Every warrior undergoes at least one Trial of Position when he passes from cadet to full-fledged warrior, traditionally on or around the cadet's twentieth birthday. Several Clans graduate warriors at eighteen, however, and extreme circumstances may prompt Trials of Position even earlier. In a Trial of Position, the warrior must defeat at least one opponent (usually out of three) to qualify for active duty. Failure to do so results in the survivor (the Clans use live ammunition in the Trial, which makes for a high casualty rate) being relegated to one of the civilian castes—usually the scientist or technician castes. Failed warriors may be assigned to the laborer caste; assignment to the merchant caste is extremely rare among most Clans. Officially, most Clans do not allow a second Trial (the Jaguars, Blood Spirits, Hell's Horses and Steel Vipers being notable exceptions). However, on occasion a promising individual has covertly been allowed to retest. The most famous example of this is Aidan Pryde, hero of Clan Jade Falcon.

If a cadet defeats one opponent in his Trial of Position, he gains the rank of warrior. Defeating two earns the rank of Star commander; three, the rank of Star captain. Such Trials often test two cadets simultaneously, and so the surviving cadet can attain even higher ranks. Natasha Kerensky holds the record within the Clans: four "kills" and the rank of Star Colonel, which she accomplished in our joint Trial. I understand that in the Dragoon Trials on Outreach, Kai Allard-Liao made five "kills" and was well on his way to a sixth when he was defeated. Such an event is totally without precedent; together with his destruction of the old Falcon Guards on Twycross, that feat prompted the awe in which the Clans hold him.

The exact methodology of this Trial varies between Clans. The Wolves place the combatants in assault OmniMechs and expect the cadet to fight all three foes while piloting a lighter 'Mech (sometimes not lighter by much, however). The Jade Falcons require their cadets to first face a foe outside of a 'Mech, battle armor or fighter, and then to face three warriors individually in increasing order of skill. Others, like the Steel Vipers, require contestants to fight each other.

Warriors are required to retest frequently throughout their careers, usually on the anniversary of their original Trial of

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Position. However, role and assignment offer a degree of flexibility, and combat performance is frequently accepted in lieu of a formal Trial. Where Trials are required, each Clan goes to considerable lengths to stagger the events through the year so as not to weaken their militaries. Those who perform well "test up" and are promoted. Those who do not either retain their current status or "test down" and are relegated to second-line units and non-combat posts or demoted to a lower caste.

These annual retrials, which unlike the first, need not involve 'Mechs or battle armor, are often more akin to Trials of Possession, with senior officers fending off challenges by their juniors and peers competing for limited promotion slots. To prevent anarchy, such direct challenges are limited to non-war situations and require the approval of the Clan Council or Khan. Direct challenges for the post of Galaxy Commander or Khan are frowned on, and in many cases the requalification of such officers is routine. However, any warrior whose performance or status is questioned, such as Natasha Kerensky's was upon her return to the Clans, or Elias Crichton's upon his ascension to iIkhan, may be required to prove his or her combat skills.

Trial of Bloodright

To a Clan warrior, a Bloodname is everything. Without a Bloodname, the warrior is denied a place in the breeding program and the higher posts in society. In a Trial of Bloodright, thirty-two warriors compete for the right to use a Bloodname. (This number remains the same irrespective of the given name's Bloodcount.) The participants fight up to five rounds of combat: the sixteen winners of the first pass on to the second round, the eight winners of the second go on to the third, and so on until only two warriors remain. The winner of the final battle claims the Bloodname.

Pairings are determined by lot, though Clan politics often mean that the process is less random than might be imagined. Frequently, "seeding" occurs, with the most likely candidates prohibited from meeting each other until the later rounds. Each participant has a coin bearing his name on one side, and on the other his Clan insignia and the name of his Bloodname House. At the start of each Trial, the participants recite the deeds that make them worthy of participating. They then place their coins in a cone, where they race to the bottom. The coin that lands on top is deemed the hunter: its owner may choose the style of combat, either augmented (using battle armor, 'Mechs or fighters) or unaugmented (bare fists). The other warrior, the prey, determines where the Trial will take place.

The whole system is intended to represent the fickle nature of war: a warrior will never know in exactly what situation he may be asked to fight and so must be able to adapt to conditions. A canny warrior can achieve victory from either position. For example, in an unaugmented fight an Elemental has a decisive advantage over a MechWarrior, but the MechWarrior can negate it by selecting appropriate terrain for the encounter.

Occasionally, two warriors will kill each other or the victor will be unable to continue. On such occasions, one person in the next round receives a "bye," an automatic victory. A bye

does not apply to the final round—no one can win a Bloodname by default (though an opponent may surrender, as I understand happened to Vlad). If both finalists kill each other, the Trial is considered void and begun again from round one with new contestants as needed.

Ritual of Adoption

Occasionally, adults may be inducted into the warrior caste through the Ritual of Adoption. The specifics of this rite vary by Clan, and in a few it involves little more than paperwork. However, most Clans insist on a ceremony in which the adoptee is forced to run a figurative gauntlet of those opposing his or her adoption. The adoptee faces an aerospace pilot, an Elemental and a MechWarrior, the order varying depending on the adoptee's intended sub-caste. The newly adopted warrior must also pass a Trial of Position, usually within six months, or else be returned to his or her former status.

Unlike freeborn warriors brought into the caste at a young age, or warriors captured from other Clans and integrated through becoming bondsmen, those who undergo the Ritual of Adoption are traditionally awarded an honorname reflecting their new Clan. For example, had I been adopted into the warrior caste of Clan Ice Hellion, I would have been known as Phelan IceHellion.

Ritual of Abjuration

Occasionally, differences within a caste or Clan are insurmountable and the troublesome elements must be eliminated. The Ritual of Abjuration, which any caste may carry out, and the warrior caste's Trial of Annihilation are the two ways of dealing with such grave situations.

In the Ritual of Abjuration, the disaffected members are kicked out of caste and Clan, consigned to the bandit caste. That caste lies outside Clan law, and its members are easy pickings for the Clan military—in theory, at least. In practice, the bandit cast is tougher and better organized than the Clans like to think. Many actually prosper in this enforced exile; the Wolf Clan force based in the Arc-Royal Defense Cordon is one such example. Others, like the remnants of Clan Smoke Jaguar, turn to the piracy that earned the bandit caste its name.

Any Caste Council may enact the Ritual of Abjuration against its own members, or the Clan Council may do so in matters involving multiple castes. The council must attain a four-fifths majority in the vote to pass the motion—which, given the heinous nature of the actions that generally lead to the call for Abjuration, is not difficult to achieve. As Vlad demonstrated by abjuring the Warden Wolves, a council can also be stacked in favor of one position. Those Abjured traditionally have five days to surrender any items in their possession that belong to the Clan (which in practice means almost everything) and to leave Clan space. After this point, they are considered bandits and may be killed on sight.

If present when the Abjuration vote is taken, the accused may appeal to higher authority or call for a Trial of Refusal (known as the Trial of Abjuration). However, if the decision is rat-

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ified, the sentence takes effect and is assumed to have started from the original decision date. If the appeal took more than five days, the loser is immediately imprisoned or executed.

Trial of Annihilation

Where the Ritual of Abjuration offers a hope of eventually returning to the Clan, the Trial of Annihilation does not. As its name suggests, the sole goal of this Trial is the destruction of the target. Invoked only for the most heinous crimes against the Clans, a Clan Council may call for the Annihilation of its members, whether individuals or units. The vote for Annihilation must be unanimous, and the victim may not appeal. The Trial of Annihilation is considered the accused's Trial of Refusal. If they survive it by defeating the forces sent against them, they are vindicated. Otherwise, they die.

The Grand Council may also call for Annihilation, but may only take action if the crimes in question affect or threaten to affect the Clans as a whole. The most famous case is the Annihilation of Clan Wolverine for "crimes against the Clans"; almost every record of that Clan's existence has since been stripped from the records. As far as the Clans are concerned, the target of a Trial of Annihilation ceases to exist.

To Inner Sphere ways of thinking, the Annihilation of a single warrior pales into insignificance beside the death of an entire Clan. To the Clans, however, there is more than a single warrior at stake. The sins of the father (so to speak) apply to the children, and so any descendants of that warrior are also subject to Annihilation. In one case, a Clan Mongoose Star was targeted; when they lost, so did every one of their living progeny. Prior to the discovery of their crimes, the members of the unit had been regarded as ristar, and so they had numerous offspring. In the end, the Annihilation of those five warriors cost the lives of another sixteen service personnel and 306 cadets and children in sibkos. The crimes of those five warriors led to the death of everyone bearing their bloodline.

The Clans only declare a Trial of Annihilation when it is possible to punish the culprits, and the principal targets are warriors. Those out of reach or comprising only civilian castes are subject to the Ritual of Abjuration. In the rare cases, where civilians become targets of a Trial of Annihilation, they are rarely executed. Most often they are sterilized, left alive to work but denied the chance of continuing their bloodline. Many Clansmen regard this as a crueler punishment than the clean death meted out to warriors.

LANGUAGE

The recognized root of Clan language is Star League English, the language of government and commerce in the Terran Hegemony and the Star League it spawned. Like many things associated with the Star League, the Clans revere this language, which has led to an interesting tradition: a prohibition on the use of contractions in speech.

To me, this prohibition is inconsistent with the idea of preserving the culture of the Star League. If I recall my history correctly, contractions have been a part of speech for millennia.

From the tapes I've heard, officials of the Star League certainly used them, so why do the Clans find their use so offensive? Natasha Kerensky once said, "Slavish adherence to ritual is a sign that one has nothing better to think about." That is how I see the embargo on contractions—as adherence to ritual simply because that is the way it has "always been done."

According to Ranna, however, use of contractions implies a lack of care, and no warrior wants to be accused of sloppiness. The Clans also tend to approach life as a formal and serious business, and consider the use of contractions in speech and writing too informal. This fits with one of my pet theories that the occasionally convoluted speech required when not using contractions—for example, saying, "do you not agree" rather than "don't you agree"—sounds archaic and so gives the Clans a sense of history and tradition. It also requires speakers to think more about what they intend to say. The more politically astute may also point out that control over language is another method of controlling people. Placing a petty restriction on what people can say gives authority another handle; by shaping language, they shape thought.

Their disdain for contractions aside, the Clans have not allowed the language to stagnate. They have created several buzzwords by abbreviating existing phrases, like rising star to "ristar" or bond refusal to "bondsref," or by reawakening archaic forms of language (like the words "rede" and "troth"). They have also imported words from other languages, particularly Russian, some of which have also become buzzwords. Finally, they have also added the suffixes "quiaff" and "quineg" to rhetorical questions, denoting where a positive or negative answer is expected—a construct that previously existed in a number of languages, though not in English.

RELIGION

Perhaps the most well-known description of the role of religion belongs to Karl Marx, who called it "the opiate of the masses." Well, not these people. Religion is widespread among the Clans, but its usual role in human hearts has been taken by Kerensky's Hidden Hope doctrine. Most Clansmen (outside the Cloud Cobras, anyway) will tell you they are not religious. However, a look at the structure of their lives offers another picture.

The founding of the Clans is shrouded in legend, thanks to the tight control of books and information, and this air of mystery and superstition has all the hallmarks of a religion. Aleksandr Kerensky is the father figure—Moses, if you like, for those of a Judeo-Christian background—who led his people into the wilderness but did not live to see the Promised Land. Nicholas Kerensky is seen as a messiah figure, the savior and founder who rescued the people from their own darkness by forming the Clans. Individual Clan founders are similarly enshrined. This "Cult of Kerensky" and the Hidden Hope concept of an eventual return to the Inner Sphere are vital to the civilian castes, giving them figures to look up to and a powerful driving force in their lives. However, with the Clan war machine and thus the Great Vision faltering, there are signs of cracks in the hitherto monolithic Clan society.

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Classic religions also exist, together with some weird hybrid creeds that have developed since the Exodus. All the major pre-Exodus Inner Sphere religions are represented: various forms of Christianity and Islam (including Bahai), Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Judaism, Jainism, Shamanism, Shinto, Confucianism and so on. However, several factors hinder more widespread acceptance of these belief systems.

First, many of them are incompatible with various central aspects of Clan society. For example, Buddhism prohibits taking any life, and so is rarely found in the warrior caste. Consequently, it has a poor image (though it is widely practiced in the merchant and laborer castes).

Second, there is the matter of control. Historically, religious infrastructures have been powerful political forces, and the Clans have discouraged any alternative power structures. Religion has the potential to challenge any established power structure, including the Clans—after all, the Clans have existed for less than 250 years, while most religions are thousands of years old. Some even argue that religion is "poison," polluting people's minds with alien and unreachable ideals that will inevitably kindle the flames of revolt. Though the Clans rarely indulge in outright religious persecution, life is not easy for adherents of any faith.

Third, the Clans' "waste not, want not" outlook works against religion. In the mind of many Clansmen, religion serves no useful purpose and is merely a drain on material resources. Others argue that people whose spiritual as well as material needs are met are more likely to give their all in their day-to-day work. Consequently, religion is tolerated, if not widely practiced.

Finally, many in the warrior caste have difficulty believing in God. For the most part genetically engineered and utterly confident of their own abilities, Clan warriors have little room in their psyches for an almighty God figure. They see themselves as the pinnacles of evolution, the product of a scientist's work in a lab rather than of a supernatural Creator. Religious warriors are therefore rare outside of the Cloud Cobras.

Clans Cloud Cobra, Coyote, Goliath Scorpion and Nova Cat have all developed their own forms of spirituality that encompass their warrior as well as their civilian castes. The Cloud Cobras are noted for their piety, and their Cloisters center around different religions. They follow what they call "The Way," a belief in God (or Fate, depending on your point of view) in all forms. The adherents of specific religions gather in Cloisters, though in my opinion these groupings have less to do with religion and more with political and personal power. However, the Cobra belief in "The Way" has gained converts in other Clans, most notably the Nova Cats.

The Coyotes, Scorpions and Cats, while not overly religious per se, believe in using "visions" to guide them. The Coyote tradition derives from that of ancient America, with vision quests and communing with nature as a central part of their lives. Nova Cat beliefs are similar, but less identifiable, though deprivation and hardship are central to both. In stark contrast, the Goliath Scorpions use addictive and often lethal hallucinogens to alter their perceptions in an attempt to rediscover the past. This last

is one of the most insidious traditions among the Clans, and is almost solely responsible for limiting the Scorpions' progress.

THE ARTS

Most people of the Inner Sphere see the Clans as a drab, utilitarian, military bunch who exist only for conquest. This stereotype has some truth to it, but to tar all of Clan culture with this brush is a gross oversimplification. It may come as a great surprise to many that the arts are well developed within the Clans. In many regards they lack the organization of Inner Sphere arts, instead reflecting more personalized views and tastes. The arts provide an escape from the pervading drudgery of Clan life, and frequently show the magnificent and often deadly beauty of the Clan worlds.

Perhaps the most common form of expression, the visual arts are practiced by the widest range of individuals. No caste boundaries apply; a warrior is as likely to be a painter as a member of the merchant caste. However, various professions tie certain crafts most closely to specific castes. For example, pottery is most common among the merchant caste's artisan sub-caste. Like the Renaissance's fixation with religious iconography, much of Clan art extols their past achievements, particularly the victories of each Clan and the mythology surrounding their forefathers. The Kerenskys are a favorite subject, as are great warriors, Clan totems and landscapes.

Architecture is a special case. The Clans discourage wasteful expense when building housing and factories, and so the bulk of Clan cities and outposts are sternly utilitarian. They differ little from city to city, planet to planet or Clan to Clan. With the exception of modifications made for local conditions, the reuse of city plans is commonplace. However, prestigious buildings such as genetic repositories and government buildings include some of the most unique and spectacular constructions in the known universe. Built in the gothic style, the massive Hall of Khans on Strana Mechty features massive arches, buttresses and numerous sub-halls for each Clan. The style of these sub-halls and their attendant Bloodname chapels depend on the Clan in question, individual Clans having their own style and appreciation of architecture. Architecture on Strana Mechty is something of a mish-mash, while the daughter worlds are more uniform.

For example, the Wolves and the Falcons (though both would be loath to admit it) share a love of dynamic construction that demonstrates strength and vitality. The Smoke Jaguars, by contrast, preferred simplicity of form, clean lines and smooth walls—often viewed as sterile by adherents of more dynamic styles. It is said—truthfully, as it happens—that one can determine the original founders of each city and colony by their layout and architectural styles.

The performing arts—drama, music and dance—are less prevalent among the warrior and scientist castes, who regard them as time consuming and of little value. However, they maintain a solid grip on the merchant and laborer castes, for whom they provide release and entertainment. An entertainment "super-caste," part merchant, part laborer, has developed over

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time to fill the civilians' demand for this "wasteful" activity. However, even performance has been turned toward the "good of the Clan," with stories and song lyrics either expounding some Clanlike moral or associated with major historical events.

With the exception of *The Remembrance*, literature is almost unknown in the Clans. The few books in circulation were written post-Exodus and are heavily vetted. The control of information has stilted this form of expression; the Clans have no Shakespeare, Tolkien or Vyse. They rely on an oral tradition, much as their ancestors did millennia ago, passing stories from person to person rather than via books. As with other arts, Clan ideals dominate; many tales are parables, quite often plagiarized from existing Inner Sphere sources and changed to reflect the Clan viewpoint. Undoubtedly, caches of pre-Exodus material exist within the Clans, but access is tightly controlled and limited to a privileged few.

MEDIA

As in any technological culture, the media is omnipresent in Clan society. However, the Clans know that the media is a two-edged sword, and maintain tight controls over print and broadcast centers. The conformist mindset helps in many ways, reducing people's expectations of the media—if you never know something, you do not miss it.

No two Clans have exactly the same attitude toward the media, and so what follows is a collection of sweeping generalizations. At one extreme, the Smoke Jaguars rarely allowed "non-essential" broadcasts, and so they had virtually no media industry. By comparison, the Diamond Sharks, pioneers of the Chatterweb system, have a well-developed media empire that rivals many in the Inner Sphere; they sell many of their media products to other Clans. The rest lie somewhere in between.

Compared to the thousands of newsfaxes, trideo channels and other media in the Inner Sphere, the handful in Clan space seem like a pittance. The smaller number of outlets allows Clan authorities to maintain a solid grip on what is disseminated. The Clan concept of media may seem naive when compared to that of the Inner Sphere, but they understand the benefits of propaganda, with broadcast and other media an ideal tool.

Whereas the Inner Sphere broadcast media tends toward commercialism, seeking to make a profit directly or by promoting products, Clan trideo tends toward information and indoctrination. Commercials are unknown to them, and in any case the Clan economy is need- rather than demand-driven—a subtle but fundamental distinction between it and the economies of the Inner Sphere nations. The Clan media's bias toward propaganda will be familiar to those who have grown up in the Capellan Confederation or Draconis Combine, with information commonly manipulated or withheld.

In many ways, the Clans are more honest than the Inner Sphere; they at least acknowledge their self-censorship. In the Federated Commonwealth, a so-called "bastion of free speech," the media often serves as a political weapon, as Katherine Steiner-Davion demonstrated throughout 3060. Of all the Inner Sphere realms, only the Free Worlds League has anything like a



truly free media. I do not mean to act as an apologist for Clan practices, but can we honestly say Inner Sphere ways are better?

Clear distinctions exist between the media produced for each caste. Material intended for warriors focuses on Trials, battles and military technology. The closest thing to entertainment are biographies of great leaders and docu-dramas that cover great battles. Programming intended for the scientist caste strongly emphasizes the advancement and dissemination of knowledge. Programming for the other three castes is more familiar to the people of the Inner Sphere, ranging from soap operas and cookery programs ("new and interesting uses for this month's rations") to documentaries and rigidly controlled news broadcasts. All of it is pervaded with the message that "the Clan knows best."

Not surprisingly, children's programming serves to indoctrinate them in Clan ways. The most popular show among pre-teen children of the merchant caste, "The Adventures of Clan Spaniel," follows the exploits of a group of anthropomorphic warriors. Led by their parrot Khan, Polly, they are on a never-ending quest to liberate their homeworlds from five tribes of evil monkeys (thinly disguised Spheroids). The use of animals

thought of as pets in the cartoon avoids promoting or denigrating any individual Clan, while providing a forum for teaching overall Clan virtues. Each episode is a morality tale or illustrates some aspect of Clan life. Many in the Inner Sphere might call such actions unethical, but from what I recall of trideo in my childhood, the Inner Sphere essentially did the same. Both use the media to teach children what they regard as moral values. In this, the Clans and the Inner Sphere are alike.

HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

Like the people of the Inner Sphere, the Clans celebrate several holidays. Some are caste- or Clan-specific, while others are Clan-wide. There are hundreds of festivals in all, some marked with little more than a cursory gathering, others providing an excuse for thousands to gather. The Clans also believe in rest days, working a rolling schedule of eight days out of every ten, and so holidays occasionally clash with existing days off. When this happens, the individual affected may take the following day as a holiday instead. This practice leads to many major celebrations being staggered over several days. A similar practice applies when major mobile and fixed festivals occur on the same day.

The following are the most significant Clan holidays and festivals.

New Year (31 December/1 January)

The only holiday that the Clans share with the Inner Sphere, New Year is a time for celebration, marked by spectacular fireworks and raucous parties. As in the Inner Sphere, Clansmen reflect on the events of the past year and look forward to the new. The celebration, which covers New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, is considered a time of truce between warring Clans.

Homecoming Day (1 May)

A new holiday first celebrated by the Nova Cats in 3060, Homecoming Day celebrates the Cats' return to the Inner Sphere and the Star League. A time for reflection, it honors the fallen and gives thanks for their sacrifice that enabled the Nova Cats to "come home" to the Star League.

Liberation Day (26 May)

This occasion marks the liberation of the last of the Pentagon worlds and serves as a general day of remembrance for those who have fallen achieving the Clan's goals. Though all castes respect Liberation Day, only the warrior caste performs special rites. Each Clan holds a ceremony outside its primary genetic repository to recognize the sacrifice of those who have gone before, paving the way for the glory of the Clans. Warriors are selected by lot to attend this ceremony, the honor of attending which is second only to Founding Day. Individual units spend at least an hour paying homage wherever they are based.

Hell's Horses Trial of Renewal (22 August)

As a preamble to Founding Day celebrations, the Hell's Horses Alpha and Omega Keshiks meet in mock combat to

hone their fighting skills. This spectacular match, which coincides with the Keshiks' rotation between Strana Mechty and the Hell's Horses world of Niles, is broadcast throughout the Hell's Horses domain, and many outside the Clan also watch. The venue of the battle is determined by lot, but is always within the Strana Mechty system, allowing the winners to head the Horses delegation to the Founding Day celebrations.

Founding Day (24 August)

The most significant Clan holiday, Founding Day is the only event celebrated by the Clans in concert (most Clan-wide events are celebrated individually). It commemorates the Exodus fleet's arrival at the Pentagon worlds in 2786 and is marked by parades and pageantry. Celebrations occur in each town and village, and everyone watches the live trideo broadcast of the celebrations on Strana Mechty. The Clans gather to stage a stupendous march past the Hall of Khans, putting aside their petty squabbles to demonstrate their martial strength. The highlight of the parade is the "flyby" of the *McKenna's Pride*, the flagship of both Aleksandr and Nicholas Kerensky. As with New Year's, a general truce exists between the Clans on Founding Day, though they have no compunction about fighting "barbarians" from the Inner Sphere or Periphery.

Exodus Day (5 November)

This Clan-wide celebration marks the Exodus from the Inner Sphere in 2784. Celebrated by a day of fasting, it culminates with a meal of thanksgiving to honor the vision of Aleksandr Kerensky.

Invasion Day (21 November)

Initiated by members of the Crusader faction, Invasion Day celebrates the "go vote" that initiated Operation Revival, and is marked by carousing and fireworks. Since the Clan loss in the Great Refusal, many Clans have abandoned this holiday.

Star League Day (27 December)

Another solemn occasion, on this day every Clansman commemorates the assassination of First Lord Richard Cameron in 2766 that led to the fall of the Star League. It is a day of reflection, usually accompanied by considerable invective aimed at the Inner Sphere powers whom the Clans believe destroyed the League. In the Inner Sphere, the day has developed a reputation for violent clashes between immigrants from Clan space and locals.

Star Festival (every 6,407 days on Paxon)

One of the most remote outposts in Clan space, the world of Paxon has little to make it stand out except the Theta Pyxidis nova and the Star Festival. A recurrent nova—that is, a variable binary star with a short "repeat cycle" (in this case 17.5 years)—Theta Pyxidis is located roughly sixteen light-years anti-spinward of the Clan world. Whenever the star is due to flare, the population gathers to witness the spectacle. Though visible elsewhere in the Kerensky Cluster, the event is at its most spectacular on Paxon, and is marked by a week-long festival.

SPORT AND GAMES

Though the average Clansman sees most leisure activities as frivolous, sports form a part of everyday life in the warrior caste. Unlike more sedentary pursuits, sports encourage physical fitness, teamwork and competition. The Clans practice a wide variety of sports, ranging from athletics to wrestling, and all warriors are trained in some form of martial art. Team sports dominate, the range of games varying by Clan. Two of the most popular are lacrosse and football.

Lacrosse

A variant of lacrosse is most common in Clans Wolf, Coyote and Fire Mandrill. Appropriately, the game developed from a Native American martial training game called baggataway. Played on a rectangular field fifty by a hundred meters, the objective of the game is to get the twenty-centimeter ball, made of hard rubber, into the opposing team's goal. Each of the ten players per side is equipped with a netted crosse (stick) to manipulate the ball; the length of the crosse varies according to the player's position. Each team also has a goalkeeper, whose crosse is longer and wider than that of regular players. The players wear light body armor that offers minimal protection against the violence of the game and which contains a sensor net to register any hits.

In the Clan variant, each team begins with one hundred points and scores fifty points for each goal. However, any player carrying the ball may be hit with the butt end of the crosse. Each successful hit in the designated target area deducts a point from that team. Play continues for an hour or until one team is forced into negative points. The team with the highest score wins.

The game is frequently played between teams from different Bloodname Houses, who see the rough-and-tumble of each match as a surrogate for combat. In general the smaller, lighter players—usually pilots—take offensive positions, while MechWarriors occupy midfield and defensive positions. Few Elementals play; those who do normally take the role of goalkeeper.

Football

Various forms of football, a game in which a spherical or ovoid ball gets moved across the opposing goal line, exist within the Clans. All three principal variants—rugby, "American" football and soccer—encourage teamwork and competition.

Rugby is the principal version of football played by the Steel Vipers, Ice Hellions and Star Adders. A competitive game with fifteen players each on two sides, rugby involves moving a heavy ovoid ball, usually made of leather, from the center line of a hundred-meter pitch. Any player may carry the ball; it may not be thrown toward the opposing goal line, but can be kicked forward. Points are scored in three ways. Carrying the ball across the opposing goal line and grounding it, known as a try, is worth five points. Kicking the ball between the opposing goal posts and over the cross bar is a goal, and is worth three points. (An extra-point "conversion," kicking the ball over the crossbar and between the goal posts from a line perpendicular to where the

try was grounded, is worth an additional point.) The third method of scoring, unique to the Clans, involves tackling the ball carrier. If the ball carrier is grappled and drops the ball, the opposition gains a point. Each match lasts for eighty minutes, broken into two halves. At the end of the second half, the team with the highest score wins.

A variant of rugby known as "American" football has found favor in the Ghost Bears, Hell's Horses and (formerly) the Smoke Jaguars. Played on a 110-meter by 50-meter pitch, "American" football focuses on the execution of pre-planned plays and is thus less fluid than rugby. The game emphasizes teamwork and planning, with a touchdown (akin to a rugby try) worth six points. Again, as with rugby, a touchdown can be "converted" by either kicking the ball between the goal posts for an extra point or running (or throwing) the ball across the touch line. Played almost exclusively by Elementals, "American" football involves a team of up to thirty players per side, though a maximum of eleven are allowed on the field at any one time. The Ghost Bears' expertise at "American" football stood them in good stead when they assaulted Sheliak in 3051. The planetary defenders challenged the Clan to a football match to decide the world's fate, and the Bears won 84 to 3.

Played by a team of eleven (ten players and a goalkeeper), soccer involves moving a spherical ball from the center line of a 120- by 90-meter pitch to the opponent's seven-meter wide goal. Each team receives one point per goal, and the team with the highest score after two 45-minute "halves" is the winner. In soccer, only the feet are used to move the ball, though the goalkeeper may use his hands if he is in the "penalty area" (a six-meter rectangular box around the goal). Like rugby, soccer is free-flowing and players must develop and counter strategies on the fly. Most soccer players are pilots and MechWarriors.

MORALS, SOCIAL MORES AND TABOOS

One thing that makes the Clans seem alien to the people of the Inner Sphere are their different morals and social mores. In truth, the Clans are in many ways not much more "different" than any other culture or nation with which one is unfamiliar. For example, someone raised in the FedCom would be horrified at the prospect of using a unisex toilet, and yet they are common in the Draconis Combine. Similarly, someone raised in the Combine would regard the Free Worlds League tendency toward blunt speech as vulgar. In the realm of cultural differences, the Clans are just a little more different than most.

The difference that threw me the most at first was the warrior caste's concept of love and relationships, particularly the role of sex. I became involved with Ranna very early in my time with the Clans, and we became intimate. This is not unusual; though the warrior caste tends not to regard love highly, it is commonplace in the civilian castes, and warriors have been known to succumb. However, the dominance of the eugenics program has divorced the act of sex from reproduction, resulting in a much more casual approach to such matters. While most Inner Sphere cultures regard sex as indicative of intimacy

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in a relationship, the Clans regard it as part of friendship. Coupling with friends, usually members of the same sibko, is part of regular life, and so the concept of sexual fidelity is largely lost on Clan warriors.

Civilian castes work more like the Inner Sphere; couples are the norm, albeit often arranged by the caste. These official pairings are essentially arranged marriages between individuals deemed appropriate by the scientists. In effect, this is the low-tech end of the eugenics program, using breeding rather than sophisticated scientific techniques, and is much like the arranged marriages common to many Inner Sphere cultures. Because the matches are largely for genetic purposes, the Clans have little regard for the institution of marriage; by comparison to the Inner Sphere, even the civilian castes are promiscuous. The scientist caste usually turns a blind eye, provided birth control is used in non-sanctioned coupling (the opposite of "official" relationships, where large numbers of children are encouraged).

When combined with the Clan tendency toward honesty, rampant promiscuity can lead to some interesting situations. In the Inner Sphere, individuals invest considerable effort in the courtship process, but the Clans regard this as a waste of time. They are as likely to walk up to a virtual stranger and ask if he or she would like to couple as they are to attempt any form of seduction. This generally relaxed and open attitude toward sex gives rise to other situations considered unusual in the Inner Sphere. Clan warriors think nothing of taking unisex showers or undressing in front of members of the opposite gender. Modesty does not exist; a Clansman who walks in on another Clansman undressing or taking a shower will start talking or going about his business as if nothing had happened.

Similarly, the eugenics program has desensitized warriors to death, both their own and that of others. A warrior's ultimate

goal is to die honorably in battle, thereby ensuring that his or her stored DNA will be used in the breeding program. Consequently, Clan warriors can be suicidally brave and expect much the same of other warriors. They also lack the moral baggage associated with civilian casualties, and exhibit little emotional response to the death of innocents. They may regret the "waste" of personnel or creating new enemies, but if it suits them to brutalize or kill non-combatants, they will. As always, the Clans live by the rule of the strong. Taking hostages does not work when dealing with the Clans: they will let hostages die without turning a hair.

The Clan tendency toward honesty extends to property, making theft considerably less common in Clan space than in the Inner Sphere. Part of this dearth can be attributed to often brutal Clan law and order, but most often the idea of stealing simply does not occur to them. If someone wants an item, he or she will go through official channels, either requisitioning it or instigating a Trial of Possession for it. The Clans tend to use security systems to guard military or scientific facilities and equipment, which are likely to be the targets of Trials.

Clan honesty applies to attitudes as well as to deeds. If a Clansman says he will do something, he will. In this matter, honor plays a role even among the civilian castes. Not keeping your word casts doubt on your honor, as well as that of your Clan. This type of conduct fosters trust, which leaves the Clans open to deception by those who do not share their honest bent. However, bear in mind that this dissertation on Clan honesty is a gross generalization. Several Clans, the Cloud Cobras and Snow Ravens in particular, can be positively Machiavellian. If it suits them, they will do their utmost to keep to the letter rather than the spirit of an agreement. Do not assume that because they are honest, Clansmen are gullible.

CLAN GOVERNMENT

As the Inner Sphere understands it, the warrior caste and their councils rule the Clans, dictating to the civilian castes. This view is correct, but only as far as it goes. The warriors do rule the Clans, but the convoluted process by which they govern requires the cooperation of civilian caste councils and a vast bureaucracy.

Keep in mind that the Clans are not a monolithic entity. They are a loose association, nominally allied behind a single goal: the restoration of the Star League. Sharp disagreements frequently occur between and within Clans regarding how best to accomplish this, which leads to a degree of factionalism unparalleled in the Inner Sphere (with the possible exception of the Free Worlds League before the ascension of Thomas Marik). Feuds have simmered for decades and even centuries, making Clan politics all but incomprehensible to outsiders. This looks like a recipe for disaster, and yet the Clans have thrived.

As a confederation rather than a single nation, each Clan is responsible for its own internal affairs, while other bodies oversee matters that concern the Clans as a whole. This political structure gives the Clans flexibility in handling crises that might shatter a more homogeneous empire. The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of the Clan governmental system. Not all aspects apply to every Clan; where possible, I will attempt to point out the exceptions.

THE GRAND COUNCIL

Comprising the Khans of all the Clans and the ilKhan (if there is one), the Grand Council is the most important of what might be called "federal" governing bodies. During peacetime, the council meets in the Hall of Khans on Strana Mechty, assembling whenever petitioned by three or more Clans to do so. During times of crisis, when the Martial Code is in effect, the council may be convened at the request of the ilKhan to allow a swift resolution of serious matters. Real-time HPG links between the homeworlds and the occupation zone—an impressive feat, given the distances involved—allow for a "virtual Kurultai." Only for the most significant and solemn events, such as the election of an ilKhan, is the Grand Council required to assemble in person, and even this tradition has been flouted on occasion.

The Grand Council has authority over a wide range of matters, particularly issues concerning more than one Clan. These can range from ensuring fair play in a Trial of Possession to investigating the death of an ilKhan to voting on calls for Absorption or Annihilation. In the first case, the council members serve as arbitrators and reserve the right to intervene if the dispute threatens the Clans as a whole. I understand that the Grand Council considered such intervention in the Refusal War, but Ulric's death shortly before the scheduled vote shelved the matter.

Investigations are less well defined. The Grand Council may call witnesses from throughout Clan space, a summons no one may refuse. The Khans may then spend as much time debating

the matter as they see fit. Those dissatisfied with the council's decision can challenge it, but the council wins out more often than not.

Votes on major issues such as the return to the Inner Sphere, the Absorption of a Clan or the election of an ilKhan are the most significant matters handled by the council, and are few and far between. For every universe-shaking decision, the council deals with hundreds of minor issues, usually handled via a "virtual Kurultai" rather than an actual assembly.

The Grand Council may not intervene in any matters judged internal to a Clan, or in the affairs of Bloodname Houses except for Reaving and Propagation (though the ilKhan has some jurisdiction in this area). The less a matter impinges on the interests of the Clans as a whole, the less the Grand Council has to do with it.

The Grand Council also serves as the highest court in Clan space (excluding the battlefield), and much of its work stems from this position. The council receives many petitions from the civilian castes, most of which are deemed frivolous and referred to Clan Councils. Others, especially those that involve a Clan's warrior caste, are usually taken up for examination. Foremost among these are Trials of Grievance involving warriors or high officials. Others include any matter in which the impartiality of the Clan Council is in question, or which has implications beyond a single Clan.

THE HALL OF KHANS

The semi-circular council chamber is deceptively small, designed to hold roughly fifty occupants—the original forty Khans and a handful of observers. Despite its size, the granite and slate construction positively radiates power. Designed to intimidate visitors, the hall is dark and brooding, throwing strangers off balance and reminding them that they are at the mercy of the assembled Khans. With the dwindling number of Khans, however—twenty-eight now, compared to thirty-four when I last attended—some of the majesty has been lost.

Officially, all Grand Council sessions are held *in camera*, behind closed doors with no observers. In practice, holo-cameras record the sessions and relay them to the offices of all the Khans. Though it technically violates council rules, many senior warriors observe the goings-on in this way. Physical access to the Council Chamber is controlled by the Ebon Keshik, black-clad Elementals who owe allegiance to all Clans rather than any given one. The members of this unit answer only to the ilKhan and the Grand Council, and despite their honor-guard status are respected as among the Clans' best warriors. Invitations to join the unit are extremely rare, and Elementals consider them among the highest of accolades.

Foremaster of the Clans

Council proceedings are managed by the Foremaster of the Clans, who decides on the order of business, calls votes and

CLAN GOVERNMENT

CLAN ILKHANS

The ten Clan ilKhans, in the order they were elected.

Nicholas Kerensky (2815-34)

Venerated above all, Nicholas is the Founder of the Clans.

Jerome Winson (Clan Wolf, 2834-51)

Elected as a force for unity after Nicholas' death at the hands of the Widowmakers and their ensuing Absorption, Winson acted as a calming influence over the Clans. He died in office in 2851, taking poison after a stroke left him crippled.

Zenos Danforth (Clan Burrock, 2858-70)

Originally elected to ensure fair play in the Trials of Possession for OmniMech technology, Danforth remained in office long enough to fill a similar role in the Trials for battle armor technology and the Absorption of Clan Mongoose.

Victoria Ward (Clan Wolf, 2873-91)

Elected to stem the rising tide of factionalism after the Horse-Coyote assaults on the Fire Mandrills' Kindraa Smythe-Jewel, Ward remained in office as a stabilizing influence for eighteen years. She resigned in 2891 so as not to serve longer than the Founder, Nicholas Kerensky.

Corian Tchernovkov (Clan Coyote, 2920-34)

When inter-Clan relations deteriorated again in the early 30th century, the Clans elected Tchernovkov to moderate in disputes. She attempted to mediate in the Ghost Bear-Hell's Horses feud, which threatened to escalate out of control following the Bear assault on Tokasha in 2921. However, she died in a testing "accident" in 2934 before resolving the situation.

Tobias Katib (Clan Cloud Cobra, 2935-47)

Charged with continuing Corian Tchernovkov's mandate, Tobias Katib worked to ensure harmony within the Clans. However, as the years passed it became apparent that he was more concerned with furthering his own Clan's goals. In 2947, Clan Snow Raven presented the Grand Council with evidence linking Katib to the death of ilKhan Tchernovkov. Despite his protestations of innocence, Katib was stripped of his rank, found guilty and ex-

renders judgment on points of law. This individual is usually the most senior Clan loremaster and the most knowledgeable about Clan law, history and society. The Loremaster of the Clans is a member of the warrior caste who has never held the post of Khan, and is therefore ineligible to vote in council. He or she is expected to be impartial in all Grand Council matters, setting aside loyalty to his or her own Clan if necessary. Partisanship may result in a motion of censure and the loremaster's removal. The current Loremaster of the Clans is Kael Pershaw of the Jade Falcons.

ilKhan

Intended to provide unity in times of crisis, the post of ilKhan has wide-ranging powers. Originally the head of the Grand Council and the Clans' supreme military commander, the ilKhan is expected to put the interests of the Clans as a whole above those of his or her original Clan. However, increasing misuse of the position's authority led the Clans to virtually abandon it after the impeachment of ilKhan Tobias Katib. Even Ulric Kerensky abused the post, as his actions at Tukayyid were calculated to further the Warden agenda.

An ilKhan is elected by a simple majority vote, which (like most things in the Clans) may be challenged in a Trial of Refusal. A sitting ilKhan may be similarly removed by a majority of the Grand Council, either as a simple vote or through impeachment. In the case of the latter, a single Clan must begin the proceedings; however, unless it is authorized by a Khan, the ilKhan need not accept an indictment.

The ilKhan's powers are varied. Best known are the powers conferred on the ilKhan as the war leader of the Clans. He or she determines the overall strategy of large-scale operations such as the invasion of the Inner Sphere, but rarely makes tactical decisions unless invited to do so. The ilKhan is the coordinator and facilitator rather than the battlefield commander. Battlefield command falls to individual Clan Khans. The ilKhan gathers intelligence and monitors troop abilities, determines available forces, calls in additional troops and Clans as required, and suggests the number of troops to be used in an engagement. On-the-ground commanders determine the deployment of such troops, with internal bidding often reducing the actual force, as happened on Tukayyid.

Less well known are the ilKhan's political and societal powers. The ilKhan may create a new Bloodname and may order the halting of Bloodname Trials (in effect reducing that name's Bloodcount by one). Under the provisions of the Martial Code, the ilKhan may expedite Grand Council proceedings, overrule individual Khans and loremasters, and order the dismissal of any charges deemed spurious and wasteful of the Clans' energies during times of crisis. The ilKhan need give no reason for such a dismissal.

The ilKhan's power is not absolute, however. He or she acts as the voice of the Grand Council, negotiating on its members' behalf but also at their sufferance. Many decisions are subject to ratification by the Grand Council or may be easily reversed by a successor. On matters of wider-ranging policy, the ilKhan can order the Grand Council to debate an issue, but cannot dictate the outcome.

During council sessions when there is no ilKhan, one council member serves as its nominal head. This individual shares many tasks with the Loremaster of the Clans, introducing bills and maintaining order. Unlike the Loremaster or the ilKhan, the Head of Council is not expected to remain neutral in disputes, giving the post considerable power but little actual authority.

CLAN COUNCILS

Clan Councils comprise all of a Clan's Bloodnamed warriors, and deal with matters pertaining solely to their Clan. Unblooded warriors may attend council meetings as spectators, witnesses or aides, but may not vote or contribute to the debate unless invited to do so.

CLAN GOVERNMENT

As with the Grand Council, matters are decided by vote. Unlike the Grand Council, which has stringent limits on its actions, the Clan Councils have near-absolute power over those in their charge. Any challenge to their authority (carried out before the Grand Council) must prove that the Clan Council's actions are contrary to the interests of the Clans as a whole. Because each Clan's autonomy is a cornerstone of Clan society, a wise challenger must be very sure of the outcome.

The Clan Council can debate almost any issue concerning the Clan, but tends to limit discussions to military or general policy matters. Like the Grand Council, the Clan Council takes on investigations and judgments, but the needs of governing a Clan rather than determining overall policy results in a much higher workload. To lighten it, council members often delegate "lesser," non-military issues—particularly those relating to infrastructure and economics—to an appropriate group among the civilian castes. That group passes its findings to the Clan Council, whose members debate the report and accept or reject its recommendations as they see fit. Though the warriors hold the reins of power, they often simply rubber-stamp civilian caste suggestions. Different Clans work in different ways and associate at different levels with the councils of their civilian castes, but the basic principle holds true.

When all the Clans were located in the compact region of the Kerensky Cluster and the Pentagon, assembling the Clan Council for debate posed little problem. However, with several Clans now spread over a corridor of space almost a thousand light-years across, such assemblies are difficult to organize. The quorum for a council meeting is fifty percent, though some votes and issues may require a higher number. The logistics of arranging a "virtual Kurultai" for hundreds of warriors make such a proposition impractical for all but the most important matters (which in any case would likely require the physical presence of the Bloodnamed warrior). This difficulty has led to increased emphasis on the role of the Khans, allowing them to make day-to-day judgments. Major decisions are subject to after-the-fact review by the council, which may serve as grounds for a Trial of Refusal and the removal of one or both Khans. This review acts as a brake on misuse of the Khan's powers, while allowing Khans the flexibility to make decisions for the Clan without waiting weeks or months to assemble a quorum. Save in the most extreme circumstances, the council generally accepts the Khans' decisions without a formal vote.

CLAN HALLS

Each Clan maintains several halls in which its Clan Council can meet. The principal hall of each Clan is located on Strana Mechty, part of the complex surrounding the Hall of Khans. Though each hall differs in architectural style, they have many points in common. All are circular or semi-circular, with tiered stone benches reminiscent of an amphitheater. Each seat is equipped with voting and communications equipment (audio and typed), allowing the attendees to communicate among themselves or to address the council at large. A rotating central dais contains the seats of the Khans and the Clan loremaster, as well as a podium from which speakers may address the gathering. Cameras and microphones relay details of the proceedings to a series of massive screens that hang from the ceiling, allowing all attendees a clear view.

Subsidiary halls, usually on the individual Clan's capital world or on "provincial capitals" in the Inner Sphere, are less consistent in style and construction. Many in the Inner Sphere were formerly used for other purposes. For example, the Wolf Clan hall on Tamar was once the home of the Tamar Pact legislature, while the new Ghost Bear assembly hall on Alshain was formerly a convention center.

KHANS AND SAKHANS

Each Clan Council elects two of its number as Khans, who serve as rulers of the Clan and its representatives on the Grand Council. Officially, these individuals are the Clan's best warriors; in practice, however, the best politicians tend to get elected. In that regard, the Clans differ little from the Inner Sphere. In theory, any Bloodnamed warrior of a Clan may stand for the Khanship, but must be nominated by other members of the assembly. Though a member of the assembly can challenge an incumbent Khan, a successful chal-

cuted. After this incident, respect for the post of ilKhan declined, and the Clans vowed not to reactivate it for anything less than a return to the Inner Sphere.

Leo Showers (Clan Smoke Jaguar, 3048–50)

When the Explorer Corps vessel Outbound Light stumbled on the Clan world of Huntress in the late summer of 3048, Khan Leo Showers seized the opportunity to press for a return to the Inner Sphere. After the go vote, he was elected ilKhan to coordinate the invasion effort. He died in the Battle of Radstadt when a Rasalhague fighter rammed the WarShip on which he was traveling.

Ulric Kerensky (Clan Wolf, 3051–57)

After narrowly escaping death in the crash that killed ilKhan Showers, Ulric Kerensky—leader of the strongest Invading Clan—was elected ilKhan by his political rivals in a failed attempt to seize control of the Wolf Clan. He earned notoriety among the Clans by agreeing to the Battle of Tukayyid and the resultant treaty, surviving several attempts to unseat him. Finally indicted on charges of treason in 3057, Ulric died leading the Wolf Clan in the Refusal War.

Elias Crichtell (Clan Jade Falcon, 3058)

Elected in the field to replace Ulric and resume the invasion, Elias Crichtell became the ninth ilKhan in January of 3058. He lasted barely seven minutes, most of which he spent fighting for his life against Wolf Khan Vladimir Ward, who had disputed Crichtell's warrior qualifications.

Lincoln Osis (Clan Smoke Jaguar, 3058–60)

Returning to Strana Mechty to elect yet another ilKhan, the Khans chose Lincoln Osis, Khan of the strongest remaining Crusader Clan, in November 3058. In 3060, the Smoke Jaguars were destroyed by Star League attacks against their Inner Sphere holdings and their capital world. Osis narrowly survived to lead the second, failed counterattack against the SLDF on Huntress. He died on Strana Mechty while leading the Crusader forces in the Great Refusal.

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lenger does not necessarily become Khan (though that often happens). Such a challenger must seek election like any other candidate, by majority vote or acclamation of the council.

Traditionally, the most senior Khan—officially called the kaKhan, though that form is rarely used—acts as the head of the Clan, overseeing relationships between castes and Clans. The junior Khan, the saKhan, acts as the Clan's warlord. In practice, the senior Khan determines the exact distribution of tasks. Both Khans command elements of the Clan Touman in addition to serving as overall commanders—usually an elite Keshik, but sometimes an entire Galaxy.

A Khan has wide-ranging powers, but his or her decisions are subject to ratification by the Clan Council. This arrangement allows the Khans to make day-to-day decisions regarding the Clan's operation, serving as a proxy for the council while eliminating the need to keep half the Clan's Bloodnamed warriors tied up in council meetings. Most Khans are canny enough to present their decisions in such a manner that the council will accept them, giving them power considerably beyond their legal remit.

The balance of power between Khans and council has become a major difference between the Home and Invading Clans. In the case of the former, the proximity of worlds makes it easier to assemble the council, and so the Khans play a lesser role. Among the Invaders, where in-the-flesh councils are impractical, the Khans have near-dictatorial powers. Not surprisingly, this change parallels the rise of feudalism and dictatorships brought by the rapid growth of the Inner Sphere's star empires.

A Khan acts as his Clan's supreme military commander, and by extension has authority over all military-related research and industries. Nominally, this mandate includes the eugenics program, from which the Khans can withhold their DNA. An obscure provision of Clan law allows them to claim as their own any isorla taken by their subordinates, though to my knowledge I am the only recipient of that honor.

Another obscure tradition, only used twice to my knowledge (and one for which I am sure Vlad is eternally grateful), enables a Khan to split off part of the Clan and form a new Clan. A natural corollary to the Trial of Absorption, this provision allows a

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Khan to settle insoluble disputes within a Clan by separating the opposing portions. Doing so avoids Abjuration or Annihilation, allowing the Khan to resolve matters that would deadlock the Clan Council. The Clans regard such an action as a last resort, to be used only if necessary to avoid more damaging internal strife or to otherwise gain an advantage. The closest example in the Inner Sphere of this provision in action is the formation of the Free Rasalhague Republic by the Draconis Combine; it divested the Combine of a troublesome region while negating many of the Lyran gains in the Fourth Succession War.

The Khanship is a post rather than a rank. Though Khans are regarded as superior to their Clan's other Bloodnamed warriors, they retain their pre-existing ranks, and revert to them after resigning or being stripped of the Khanship. For example, Natasha Kerensky was made a Khan of Clan Wolf on 19 June, 3051, but did not retest as a warrior until 21 July of that year, at which point she was recognized as a Star colonel. Similarly, Ulric Kerensky reverted to the rank of Star colonel after being stripped of the ilKhanship.

LOREMASTER

In addition to two Khans, each Clan elects a loremaster, who acts as an arbiter and keeper of knowledge. Unlike the Khans, who are nominally above political infighting in the Clan Council, the loremaster can take a proactive role in any inquiries and trials, acting as advocate or inquisitor. However, by tradition the loremaster does not vote on issues save to cast the deciding vote when breaking a tie.

This position carries considerable political power, encompassing several minor roles such as High Bailiff (responsible for issuing writs and summonses), Provost Marshall (head of the Clan's police) and Adjutant General (chief administrator). The loremaster also oversees any Trials resulting from Clan Council decisions and is the final arbiter in such disputes. In addition, the loremaster can authorize an internal investigation without the Khans' consent if the Khans are implicated in the charges. In times of crisis, legal provisions allow the loremaster to take a Khan's place in the event of incapacity, death or censure. As a result, many ambitious warriors view the post of loremaster as a stepping-stone to a Khanship.

BLOODNAME HOUSES

Consistently overlooked by outsiders, Bloodname Houses are the closest things to political parties or families in the Clan warrior caste. Each house oversees a Bloodline descended from Nicholas Kerensky's original warriors or created since the formation of the Clans. Any warrior who can trace a matrilineal link to the house founder may join a Bloodname House. Theoretically, this includes freeborns of appropriate lineage, but in practice only a few are formally accepted. From the Clan point of view, accepting freeborns is wasting effort on warriors who can never aspire to high office. However, my own rise to power in the Wolf Clan and the Jade Falcons' decision to allow a freeborn to compete in Bloodname Trials has prompted several Bloodname Houses to reexamine their acceptance practices.

In conjunction with scientists, the Bloodname Houses maintain complete records of their Bloodheritages, tracing the various strains and cross-mixes to determine the strongest lines. The houses control Bloodright competitions and thus have considerable influence in the eugenics program.

HOUSE LEADERS

A single warrior, elected by the Bloodnamed of a house and granted near-absolute authority to handle its affairs, serves as house leader. These individuals, traditionally the oldest Bloodnamed house members, wield immense political power and so are among the most feared and respected in the Clans. Most have held other forms of high office, such as Galaxy command or even a Khanship, which further enhance their reputation.

The house leader handles all matters associated with the house's Bloodheritages. House leaders schedule Trials of Bloodright, and in conjunction with the Keepers of the house bloodlines, arrange cross-breeding with other genetic lines. The house leader also looks after the interests of house members, Bloodnamed and otherwise, directing their votes in the Clan Council like a miniature power bloc. The leader's reputation also gives him or her considerable political clout beyond simple voting ability. House members know that in the Clans' conformist culture, the house leader's endorsement (or lack thereof) often makes the difference between success and failure. Even loremasters and Khans respect the power of house leaders.

Of course, many Bloodname Houses are split across several Clans, which dilutes the power of the house and its head but also gives the leader greater insight into Clan politics as a whole. Gathering reports from house members in various Clans, leaders of such scattered houses often make up in information brokering what they lack in voting power.

KEEPERS

Members of the scientist caste known as Keepers oversee the bloodlines of each house. Among the few non-warriors honored by the Clan military, Keepers fall into two groups. The first and largest are those assigned to individual Bloodname Houses; the second contains those responsible for a Clan's genetic material and eugenics program.

The house leader arranges the trading of genetic material between houses, but the Keepers do much of the physical work. They keep the records and arrange physical transfers of material. They also oversee the Bloodname Chapels in the Svoboda Zemlya, the great park surrounding the Hall of Khans complex, maintaining memorials to their Clan's founders and past Bloodnamed of their House.

Clan Keepers (often referred to as Keeper of the Clan's Kin) oversee their Clan's genetic repositories, ensuring that only authorized personnel have access to the facilities. They also work closely with genetic scientists to create new generations of warriors. While the genetic scientists deal in DNA, chromosomes and genetic traits, the Keepers know the histories and backgrounds of the bloodlines and giftakes in their care. Their care and respect for their charges, combined with a Clan-wide

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reverence for the eugenics program, makes these individuals among the most honored in Clan space despite being members of a technically "lesser" caste.

Repositories and Chapels

If the Keepers are the priests of the Clans, the genetic repositories are their cathedrals and temples. Several subclasses of repositories exist, forming a hierarchy parallel to that of the Keepers.

Located on Strana Mechty, the Master Repository of the Clans forms part of the Hall of Khans complex. It comprises all the Bloodname Chapels of the Svoboda Zemlya as well as the massive genetic storage building in Katyusha City. Between them, these buildings contain genetic samples from every Bloodnamed warrior and play a vital role in the eugenics program. Any transfer of genetic material between Clans occurs here, materials passing from the Bloodname Chapel to the victorious Clan's nearest repository. However, the Master Repository is not necessarily the first to get every warrior's giftake. Most often, a new giftake goes to the Clan repository first; only later are copies transferred to Strana Mechty.

Each Bloodname Chapel stands close to the Clan Hall to which its founder belonged. These structures are among the Clans' holiest sites; no combat of any kind is allowed in them or in the surrounding park. Built of limestone, these house-sized buildings are covered in ornately carved friezes that depict the exploits of the house founder and any notable descendants. The chapels are works of art in progress, with new friezes being added whenever a worthy subject presents itself. Those of the most successful bloodlines have expanded to meet the need for storage space; those of the least successful are abandoned, their contents transferred to the Katyusha City site. Overgrown with ivy, they are mute testament to fallen Bloodname Houses. The chapels belonging to the Not-Named Clan have been deliberately left to crumble.

Each chapel contains the DNA of every member of the Bloodname House, living and dead. Physical samples are maintained in cold storage; digital representations are stored in the computer system, which also maintains a history of each sample, its ancestors and its descendants.

The Katyusha City facility is similarly ornate, a massive gothic edifice designed by Nicholas Kerensky's wife, Jennifer Winson. The massive central building comprises two hundred-meter towers that form the centerpiece of the complex. These towers contain administrative facilities and numerous labs; a series of underground vaults contain the gene stores. These facilities are allegedly buried deeply enough to withstand a nuclear strike or orbital bombardment, a precaution enacted after the Wolverines' destruction of the Snow Raven repository at Dehra Dun.

Each Clan maintains a series of repositories or gene-storage centers: a master repository on its capital world, a site on Strana Mechty, and small-scale centers throughout that Clan's sphere of influence. Colloquially, these sites are known as homes. The Master Repository is the most significant, contain-

ing material from all of a Clan's Bloodnamed, usually organized by house and line. The buildings' design and layout reflects their importance, as well as something of the mindset of the Clan that built it. For example, the Jaguar Master Repository at Looteria on Huntress is a pyramid, surrounded by statues and set on a parade ground; cold, isolated and unapproachable. By comparison, the ornate Cloud Cobra repository on Homer forms the centerpiece of the capital city. Each Master Repository is treated with great respect and is honored by all the Clans.

Ever since the Wolverines' destruction of the Snow Raven repository, each Clan has maintained secondary sites to ensure that a single devastating strike could not cripple their breeding program. Though physically less impressive than the Master Repositories, these sites fulfill a similar role, storing and cataloging genetic material. They are found on most major colonies; the Invading Clans have constructed new facilities in the Inner Sphere.

Little work on the eugenics program is carried out at these sites. Dedicated birthing centers exist for the combination of sperm and ova, and the subsequent birthing of new trueborn warriors.

CIVILIAN COUNCILS AND GOVERNANCE

The civilian castes have ruling councils as well, responsible for organizing caste members to best execute the tasks assigned them by the Clan Council. Each caste has its own council—a merchant conclave, technician's guild, science council or laborer assembly. The sheer numbers of civilians, however, require operations to be organized on a planetary or regional level. (Just as an example, most cities contain more members of the laborer caste than there are warriors in an entire Clan.)

Delegation of tasks is common, along with considerable emphasis on teamwork, though in relatively small units. Few outside the ruling elite see "the big picture," reinforcing the idea that each Clansman is a small cog in a very large and complex machine. The Clan Council, often prompted by the civilian castes, decides on a course of action and directs the caste councils to deal with the matter. In turn, the councils delegate the work to individual teams, either directly or via a convoluted chain of command that usually involves planetary and regional councils.

The number of workers assigned to each team varies, depending on the task and workload involved. For example, technician and scientist teams tend to be small, while merchant and laborer teams often involve hundreds of individuals. In many cases, the assigned tasks are a routine but vital part of Clan life (such as maintenance or growing food), and such teams rarely receive new assignments. Their only contact with the chain of command is through routine reports to their superiors. Others work on specific tasks for a limited time, frequently moving between assignments.

Not all Clan civilians passively accept their lot in life. The civilian power structure is much larger than that of the military and so contains more grades of responsibility. Rather than the uniform seven levels of the warrior caste, civilian castes contain

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dozens of grades, making promotion more likely. Ambition is therefore a driving force, especially in the merchant caste. Politics in the warrior caste is simple: strength wins. "Dirty tricks" are more common in the civilian castes, though everyone takes care not to offend the warriors. (Sometimes the politics of strength has its advantages.)

The most senior members of the civilian castes are extremely powerful, with authority potentially rivaling that of the Khans. In practice, the heads of the technician and laborer castes wield little practical authority, while the heads of the scientist and merchant castes are generally too involved in their own power politics to meddle in the affairs of the Clan. With the exception of the Diamond Shark merchant caste, and rumors about the head of the Jade Falcon scientists, I know of no systematic abuse of power by the head of a civilian caste. The threat of bloody reprisals from the warriors keeps them in line. However, the potential for a revolt by the masses is real, prompting even the Clan Council to make concessions when necessary (though they would never call them that, preferring to term them "rewards for service" or "inducements to enhance performance").

CLAN ADMINISTRATION

Though the Clans are governed by the warrior caste, a civilian administration carries out the day-to-day operations that allow the Clan to function. You might say they form a sub-strata of bureaucracy to the warrior caste's "executive branch." A multi-tiered body, the administration works on several levels—Clan-wide, planetary, regional and citywide—with sub-units formed of several castes.

Administrators are granted considerable leeway in accomplishing their duties. Gathering in multi-caste councils known collectively as assemblies (the exact title of each varies), they form a decentralized government well suited to the Clan way of life. Because the administration consists of many self-contained cells, any change in ownership of a facility, city or even a planet means little more than a change in the civilian reporting structure. The actual day-to-day work carries on as before.

To minimize the effects of such transfers of power, each cell is largely self-sufficient and contains all the functions needed to allow that section of Clan society to operate. The following paragraphs describe some of the administration's disparate elements, together with the minimum level at which they operate and the caste that controls them.

Welfare

Welfare within the Clans covers a wide range—food, housing, health care and so on. A basic tenet of Clan society is that the Clan will support you if you support it. If you work, the Clan will feed, clothe and house you. If you do not contribute, the Clan will cast you aside.

Every Clansman receives a "work target" and grade. Based on age, skills and caste, the work target determines what constitutes a full day's work. For laborers and merchants, the target may be as simple as producing a certain number of items or mak-

ing a certain level of profit. Targets for scientists and administrators get more complex, and are frequently tied to long-term goals. An individual's grade determines the amount of credit available to him (see *Economics*, p. 66), with which he acquires clothing, food and accommodations. A person who exceeds his or her work target may receive an increase in grade to reward his performance. Likewise, those who perform consistently below target have their grades reduced, and may even be cast out of Clan society.

There are limits to the amount of work available within any given work group, and thus a limited amount of credit. These limits foster a sense of competition and an unwillingness to carry extraneous personnel, maximizing the use of resources. Each work team must be large enough to carry out its task in the allocated time, but beyond that civilian society resembles the military in seeking to do the work while expending the least resources. Consequently, hard work is an accepted part of life. The Clans do not understand shirking or laziness.

The civilian castes contain twenty-five grades, Grade One being the lowest and Grade Twenty-Five the highest. In addition to acting like a pay scale, this grading determines the individual's access to housing, transport, medical technology and a host of other amenities. Each grade also contains sub-categories that reflect the needs of the individual. For example, a laborer, whose work is strenuous and physical labor, requires a higher caloric intake. That individual therefore receives a larger food allowance than a sedentary technician of the same grade. This difference is a simple recognition of different needs and reflects the Clans' desire to get the most from their workers.

Grade also determines accommodation, with those of higher grades given more spacious and luxurious housing. All except the most senior individuals live in apartment blocks—often drab, utilitarian structures whose design is similar throughout Clan space. Little distinguishes the accommodations of lower grades, save perhaps subtle differences in furniture. Higher grades live in blocks with larger rooms and more facilities. However, by comparison to residences in the Inner Sphere, even the best are decidedly average.

Hard work is rewarded by an increase in grade, and thus remuneration. Team members are encouraged to report individuals who fail to meet their work allocation or who impede the efforts of others. No Clan wants to carry dead weight, and so they make every effort to encourage the workers to perform well. Those who fail to comply are punished. In many ways, the Clans exemplify social and economic Darwinism—the strong prosper at the expense of the weak. As a corollary, there is no such thing as retirement in the Clans. With the exception of young children, everyone is expected to work (and even children work to some degree). Work for school-age children takes the form of apprenticeships and vocational training to support theoretical knowledge gained in classes. The Clans find tasks suitable to the skills of older people. If you do not work, you starve.

Despite their sophisticated medical technology, the mortality rate in Clan space is much higher than in the Inner Sphere, reflecting the harshness of conditions and Clan attitudes. It is

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each Clan's best interests to keep its people fit and working, it they run their health care systems as a kind of triage, casting off those who do least for the Clan in order to save resources for those who do more. For example, older people and those suffering critical injuries are less likely to receive treatment. This is especially true for low-skill manual workers, where replacements are readily available. The more highly skilled individuals (usually reflected by a higher grade) are more likely to receive medical attention to prolong their usefulness. If it is more "cost effective" to replace an individual than to treat him, the Clans will do so.

Money per se is not part of Clan life for the individual, though it does exist. The Clans do not use cash, but have developed a voucher system to facilitate trade. The simplest level rewards the individual for work and allows him to acquire goods. The second level, used by the merchant caste, applies to bulk trading.

Each Clansman receives a monthly credit allowance that he or she uses to claim food, clothing and other essentials. This work credit must be used within a set period—usually three months, to allow the acquisition of more expensive items. Unused credits are reclaimed by the Clan, on the theory that a worker who does not use it obviously does not need it. This is the main distinction between work credit and pay as the Inner Sphere knows it. Pay belongs to the individual, to do with as he or she chooses. Work credit exists at the sufferance of the Clan and simply authorizes the transfer of goods between individuals. Ownership of the credit and any items bought with it remains with the Clan.

Planetary Transport

The administration controls all aspects of on-planet travel. Each city is responsible for its own transport system, which is organized and operated by the merchant and laborer castes, respectively. Mass transit systems such as railways, subways and buses dominate, reflecting social and economic considerations. Such systems are efficient, using the minimum amount of resources to move the maximum number of people. The systems are sufficiently well developed that the Clans hardly notice the scarcity of personal transports.

A pool of personal transport vehicles is maintained for those who find public transport unsuitable—for example, workers who deviate from established routes or who cannot be restricted by timetables. These vehicles include bicycles for those traveling relatively short distances, fusion-powered groundcars and compact vans, and even aircraft for inter-city trips. The higher his grade, the less likely a Clansman is to use public transport. Outside of the military, only the most senior members of the merchant caste and some scientist caste teams have vehicles permanently assigned to them.

Many cities cooperate to develop regional transport systems—generally a mix of air, rail and road transport to facilitate the exchange of goods and personnel. Though most of this activity occurs within a single Clan, cooperation between Clans on such matters is not unheard-of, particularly in the Pentagon and on Strana Mechty. However, access to long-distance travel

requires a host of permissions (work group, supervisors, city administration and so on), and so most Clansmen never leave their city of birth.

Interplanetary Travel and Exploration

Interplanetary travel is one of the most tightly controlled aspects of Clan life. As with inter-city travel, prospective passengers require a series of permissions, including that of the local military commander at the point of embarkation (with the exception of certified ship's crewmen), and must personally finance their passage. Most often, travelers pay in "transport vouchers," which are Clan- or caste-sponsored promissory notes. Individuals may also work off the cost of passage. Warriors simply requisition whatever transport assets they need, but even they cannot force a JumpShip captain to change his or her schedule without recourse to high authority.

The merchant and warrior castes share control of interplanetary and interstellar transport. The merchant caste maintains and operates non-military vessels, with technician and laborer crews; the warrior caste oversees all WarShips and military transports. As in the Inner Sphere, commercial vessels are often subordinated to military duty, and so layers of command involving several castes are not unusual: a warrior commanding the ship, a merchant first officer, and a crew of technicians and laborers. Merchant vessels operating outside the Kerensky Cluster or the Pentagon must carry a military observer who can overrule the merchant captain's decisions. In practice, this requirement is often ignored; with their massive expansion into the Inner Sphere, the Clan militaries no longer have enough trained personnel for the task. I have heard rumors of Clan merchants penetrating deep into the Inner Sphere without warrior chaperones, even as far as Gallery or Hachiman.

Within Clan space, civilian flights are scheduled well in advance. Merchant caste administrators ensure that systems en route and the ports of call are notified of arrivals, so that the technician-caste traffic controllers can quickly identify and report any suspect craft. However, schedules change frequently; unanticipated arrivals are relatively common, as are reprimands issued to the administrators.

The Clans generally maintain jump-route security by the simple expedient of providing each vessel with only the information it needs for its current journey, and then often for only part of the route. This condition applies particularly to vessels travelling the Exodus Road, the route between Clan space and the Inner Sphere, for which no single Clan vessel has complete information. Instead, the journey is broken into legs. At the end of each leg, a member of the navigator technician sub-caste transfers aboard from a waiting vessel. The navigator erases information relating to the previous leg and then programs the coordinates for the next series of jumps. The encryption system, known only to navigators and supplemented by an optical chip key, is complex enough to be virtually unbreakable, making any attempt to identify the route to the homeworlds by breaking encryption impossible.

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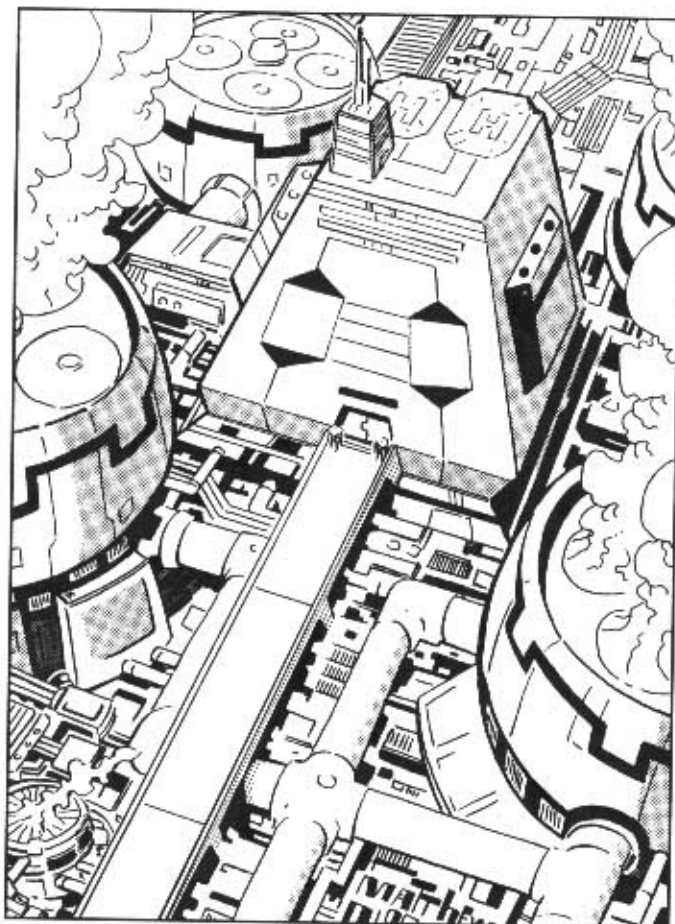
The Clans also maintain their own small-scale version of the Explorer Corps. Organized by individual Clans and answering to senior naval authorities, the explorers seek out new worlds suitable for colonization or mining within the Kerensky Cluster and the Deep Periphery. Ostensibly, such explorations fall under the merchant caste's jurisdiction, but scientists carry out the actual surveying. A detachment of warriors accompanies each mission, officially for security but also to keep the other two castes in line; the warriors know where too much freedom can lead. These missions have led to a steady expansion of the Clan sphere of influence and have brought the Clans into contact with many of their Deep Periphery neighbors. The Clans have occupied some Periphery states, most notably the Khwarazm by the Jade Falcons and the Tanite worlds by the Cloud Cobras. Others, such as the Hanseatic League, have been allowed to remain independent.

Energy Production

Clan policy on energy production reflects their "no waste" philosophy. Solar power (on the planet's surface and orbital arrays with microwave down links), hydroelectricity (river and sea-based), geothermal power and aero-generators ("wind farms") are their predominant energy sources. Clean and renewable, these technologies make optimal use of resources and the environment. The Clans harness the often extreme climates of their worlds for their own benefit. Where such systems are impractical, fusion plants are the norm, but the Clans have attempted to restrict such fuel-based technologies to military facilities. "Dirty" power sources, those that burn fossil fuels or rely on nuclear fission, are almost unheard-of in Clan space.

Cities or regions generally handle power generation, though in cases where one Clan has absolute authority, that Clan may establish a planet-wide power grid. Most use a range of technologies to avoid shortfalls: usually renewable sources as the main producer, with battery stores and fusion backups. Administered by the merchant caste and operated by technicians, many of the power plants are engineering marvels. The former Ghost Bear aerogenerator complex on Bearclaw, now managed by the Snow Ravens, is the largest in the known universe, covering 2,500 square kilometers and containing almost

forty thousand individual wind turbines. Located on the windy Narvik Peninsula, it supplies twenty power-storage complexes, which in turn supply the needs of the rest of the planet.



Communications

Communication within the Clans is a thorny subject. Free speech is discouraged, and non-essential communications are tightly controlled. Most apartments come with communications equipment, but sophisticated computer systems monitor its use and note any "inappropriate" communications. The precise definition of "inappropriate" is somewhat nebulous. Some Clans regard control of communications as another means of manipulating the population and clamp down on even the most insignificant transgressions. Other Clans allow relatively free rein, provided that communications do not impinge on military security or contain treasonous material. The Smoke Jaguars were ultra-strict, considering a thirty-second call to arrange child care acceptable if work-related, but wasteful if associated with social events. Conversely, the Diamond Sharks actively encourage communications, with interesting results.

In practice, the Clan communications network is a series of interlocking systems. These range from the cellular communications network used by personal communicators, through fiber-optic landlines and relay satellites used for data, image and voice transmission, to the microwave and laser links used by the military. Systems may be associated with a region, a city or even a single building as needed, and are maintained by the technician caste (administered, as always, by the ubiquitous merchant caste).

Planetary systems link into the HPG network, allowing communication between worlds. The relatively small number of worlds in the Kerensky Cluster and the Pentagon, together with their proximity, allows near-instant communication between two points and so permits pseudo-real time contact across several light-years (there is a delay of roughly 0.25 seconds per step along the route). ComStar-style batch messaging is the norm, however. Unmanned relay satellites allow communications across the largest inter-world gaps, such as that between the Pentagon and the Kerensky Cluster. A similar chain, supple-

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mented by WarShips, allows rapid communications with Clan forces in the Inner Sphere.

Interestingly, this pervasive network allowed the creation of a system without an Inner Sphere parallel: the Chatterweb. Developed by the merchant caste of Clan Sea Fox (now Diamond Shark), the network allowed easy exchange of information, giving the Clan an important military and economic advantage over its fellows. Originally built to link Sea Fox/Diamond Shark worlds, the Chatterweb's systems became the standard throughout Clan space, expanding to include every world. Though it uses many of the same communication nodes, the Chatterweb remains distinct from the regular communication system, serving as a forum for "underground" communications. Of course, as with the regular system, the warrior caste uses sophisticated computer algorithms to scan messages, identifying those of an inappropriate nature and taking action against the senders. The mere threat of being identified as an un-Clanlike "subversive" is enough to keep the Chatterweb relatively clean.

Education

Education in the Clans is an interesting affair. One system exists for those born as warriors, another for everyone else. The former is as much a system of childcare as education, offering a surrogate family as well as instruction. The educational process also begins earlier and is much more intensive, leading to precocious children. Some have said, with a degree of truth, that warriors have no childhood; it is certainly true that warrior-caste children are intellectually and emotionally more mature than those of the same age-frame in the civilian castes.

Civilian caste children undergo extensive tests between the ages of three and six years, the results of which determine their caste assignments and thus their education. Once full-time education begins at seven years, it is difficult to change caste, with the exception of warriors. For them, failure results in "testing down" to a civilian caste—often the scientist or technician castes for MechWarrior or aerospace phenotypes, the laborer caste for Elementals.

Until the children reach seven years of age, civilian caste schools teach from a similar syllabus. After that point, education diverges in content and duration. For example, the few children born into the scientist caste receive the broadest and longest period of education, which often lasts into their mid-twenties. By comparison, laborer children generally receive basic education until they reach age fourteen, at which point they begin work. Exceptions to these generalizations exist, however. Some laborers, particularly those involved in manufacturing, receive considerable vocational training beyond the basic curriculum. The engineering sub-caste, part of the technician caste, contains many with a scientist-grade education in construction-related physics. Whatever the students' caste or level, typical Clan indoctrination pervades the coursework.

The warrior caste uses a radically different system, based around sibling companies (sibkos). All trueborn warriors are part of such a group, though the exact procedure varies by Clan.

Some Clans, like the Jade Falcons, create sibkos of a particular genetic line, whose members are literally siblings. Other Clans, such as the Wolves, mix bloodlines and even phenotypes; it is not unusual for a Wolf sibko to contain MechWarriors, pilots and Elementals. The size of sibkos also varies; the largest extended sibkos contain hundreds of potential warriors, while the smallest may have as few as twenty. Usually, only a small number from each sibko pass their initial Trials of Position. The remainder either die or test down to a civilian caste.

As the members of a sibko grow older, their education shifts away from intellectual to practical skills: weapons, tactics and so forth. These begin with simulator exercises, switching to live-fire exercises as the time for the Trial of Position approaches. By the time a warrior is ready for his or her Trial of Position, he or she is fully qualified, with the benefit of a lifetime of physical and mental preparation for the warrior role. It is little wonder that most Clan warriors are superior to their Inner Sphere equivalents.

Most Clans allow a potential warrior a single Trial of Position. This practice, however, is a custom rather than one of Nicholas Kerensky's dictates. On occasion, a warrior has failed the first test and is overtly or covertly retested. The Smoke Jaguars made retesting standard practice in order to make up for numbers lost by their refusal to use freeborn warriors; variants of the practice exist in Clans Blood Spirit, Ghost Bear, Hell's Horses and Steel Viper. In all the other Clans, a second Trial of Position can only be authorized by the Clan Council, and then only in exceptional circumstances (for example, if a technician's error caused a mechanical fault).

Law and Order

A little-known sub-caste of the warriors, the Clan paramilitary police are comprised almost exclusively of freeborn troops and test-downs. Though poorly regarded by mainstream warriors, freeborn and trueborn alike, the police units maintain law and order throughout Clan space. Essentially a militia, their primary duty is to patrol cities, though they also undertake compound security duty. Small detachments serve as a more traditional police force, investigating crimes, but such duty is not highly regarded, and performance is poor compared to their Inner Sphere counterparts. Rather than solving crimes, their primary role is to discourage them by promising extreme punishment to those caught and convicted. Clan police therefore tend toward brutal and authoritarian behavior, often taking out their anger on the very people they are meant to protect.

To Inner Sphere sensibilities, the Clan judicial system is equally brutal. Like so much of Clan society, it favors the warrior caste, both in its deliberations and in appeals. An inquisitor, a cross between a detective and a prosecutor, investigates the circumstances of each case. In cases where warriors are on trial, the inquisitor acts solely to support the prosecution, while an advocate plays a similar role for the defense. In matters involving only civilians, the inquisitor acts as a "devil's advocate," working to uncover the truth. Inquisitors and advocates are members of the warrior caste, but receive special training in

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law and investigative techniques. Some are non-combatant members of the Supply and Support command, but most are warriors on active duty.

Clan court trials are more interactive than those of the Inner Sphere. The jury may ask questions via the inquisitor, which helps and hinders the process. Such involvement eliminates many of the misleading tactics employed by Inner Sphere lawyers, but also moves the jury away from their traditional neutral position. In the case of warrior-caste tribunals, a loremaster acts as arbiter to ensure fair play; civilian caste trials rarely receive such supervision.

The jury for each court trial depends on the caste of the accused and the severity of the crime. In the case of misdemeanors, the jury is often made up of the accused's immediate peers, members of the same caste and work unit, supervised by an inquisitor. Punishments for such offenses are minimal and the rite of surkai is often sufficient to escape serious punishment. More serious offenses generally involve a jury of higher-ranked officials of the same caste, usually from the same city or military unit. Occasionally, a caste's ruling council may sit in judgement, though the Clan Council usually handles cases of such magnitude. The Clan Council automatically tries the most heinous crimes, as well as those involving high officials, and all warriors have the right to appeal to the Clan Council as the Clan's supreme warrior body. Matters that cross Clan boundaries or that have significance for the Clans as a whole come before the Grand Council, though the infrequency of Grand Council sessions often subjects the proceedings to a long delay.

Members of civilian castes must accept a trial verdict. Warriors have another option: the Trial of Refusal. They may demand this trial by combat at odds commensurate to the decision; if victorious, the warrior is considered in the right.

Punishments vary according to the nature and severity of the crime, though many may be reduced if the offender enacts surkai. The jury and officials involved decide whether to accept the ritual. The most common punishment for petty offenses is community service: compulsory work in addition to the offender's regular duties, for which the individual is not remunerated. The amount of work required ranges from fifty to two hundred hours. In some circumstances, public humiliation is more appropriate. In the Jade Falcon warrior caste, the Memorial Ribbon—better known as the Dark Band—is one such punishment, forcing an individual who cannot or will not enact surkai to recognize his or her mistakes. Forced to wear a black, cummerbund-like belt that displays an image of his crime or victim, a warrior "under the band" may not speak unless spoken to. By tradition, such individuals are shunned for the month-long punishment period.

Punishments for more serious crimes include a reduction in grade (marked on the individual's codex, a permanent stigma) and short-term imprisonment. Custodial sentences of more than a year are rare; more common are Abjuration, physical punishments such as flogging, or even execution. By Inner Sphere standards this seems harsh, but the system serves as an effective deterrent.



Long-term imprisonment is generally reserved for those for whom other punishments are inappropriate. Such individuals are consigned to the darkest and most foreboding prison in Clan space, the infamous *Prinz Eugen*. Located in the outer reaches of the Strana Mechty system, the vessel is synonymous with rebellion, and so no Clan would take it into their Toman. Instead, it serves as a veritable Alcatraz or Europa for the Clans. Its inmates are predominantly members of the civilian castes too influential to execute or exile. Only a handful of warriors are currently serving time on the vessel; convicted warriors normally fight a Trial of Refusal and are either vindicated or die in the process. Those who do not fight a Trial, or who lose one and survive may find themselves on the *Prinz Eugen*, the ultimate degradation.

THE MILITARY

The best known aspect of the Clans, the pinnacle of their society and the sole reason for their existence, is the military. Much has been written elsewhere on their organization and tactics, and so I will not go into great detail; however, no treatise on Clan society would be complete without a cursory examination of the military. Those wishing to know more should consult the recently acquired Clan Field Manuals.

Many readers may be surprised to learn that the military and the warrior caste are not one and the same. Clan warriors are the combatants, but the Clan military also includes members of other castes, particularly the technician caste, who serve in a supporting role. For example, the merchant caste manages military logistics, while technicians handle communications and maintenance. Technicians also make up the bulk of WarShip and DropShip crews.

VARIOUS CRIMES AND PUNISHMENTS

Crime	Standard Punishment
Public intoxication	50 hours community service
Slander	2-step reduction in grade
Vandalism	100 hours community service
Racketeering	2-step reduction in grade and public flogging
Assault	30 days' imprisonment and public flogging
Petty theft	2-step reduction in grade, public flogging and 50 hours community service
Grand theft	Varies from 1 year in prison and a 5-step reduction in grade to Abjuration or execution
Kidnapping	Abjuration or execution
Negligence	90 days' imprisonment, followed by public flogging; occasionally Abjuration
Manslaughter*	Imprisonment or Abjuration
Murder*	Imprisonment, Abjuration or execution
Treason/Espionage	Execution

* Full punishment of warriors for these crimes is rare.

Each Clan maintains its own fighting arm, known as a Touman. The Touman in turn is divided into Galaxies, each roughly analogous to an SLDF brigade (three regiments). These units are self-contained, with integral supply, transport and medical assets that allow them to mount independent operations. In practice, an entire Galaxy-size force is rarely deployed. Instead, sub-units known as Clusters (which occupy the same niche as regiments, but are the size of reinforced battalions) are the main units deployed. Each Galaxy contains between three and six Clusters, subdivided into Trinaries (the equivalent of reinforced companies, three to five per Cluster) and Stars (reinforced lances, three per Trinary). Each Star comprises five Points; a Point may be a single BattleMech, a pair of OmniFighters, a pair of combat vehicles or five Elementals. Other nomenclature is Clan-specific or relates to composition. Support assets such as engineers, artillery and MASH units are attached at the Galaxy level, but may be detached for operations with Clusters as needed.

Though commanded by the Clan Khans, each Touman recognizes the ilKhan as their supreme commander and are honor bound to follow his or her directives. Aside from this, few formal mechanisms exist for overall command of the military, and so the whole structure is at the mercy of the Khans and the ilKhan. As shown on Tukayyid, the only real test of the Clan command system, the will and cooperation of individual leaders, is necessary for success. Political game-playing destroys opportunities in the field. Had the Clans worked in concert, they could have defeated

ComStar and claimed Terra for their own ten years ago. They refused to do so, and ilKhan Ulric Kerensky showed no inclination to coerce them, so they failed.

One of the few areas where overall authority leaves a mark is in ensuring system compatibility. When the first OmniMechs were constructed in the 2850s, they were plagued with a host of mechanical, electrical and software problems. The Grand Council intervened and created specific guidelines on system integration to ensure compatibility. These guidelines became a cornerstone of the military-industrial complex, ensuring the dominance of the OmniMech. A similar principle applies to rank structure, though much of it was handed down by Nicholas Kerensky and so has seen little change over the centuries.

A major difference between the armed forces of the Inner Sphere and the Clans is the age of the soldiers. While some Inner Sphere militaries deploy troops as young as sixteen, as opposed to the Clans' standard of twenty, Clan units have a lower average age. Most Clan warriors are between twenty and forty-five. Younger generations dominate front-line units, while older troops normally serve in second-line or solahma units. A warrior who has not won a Bloodname by his or her thirty-fifth birthday is unlikely to do so, and will be relegated to the sidelines. Unless they achieve high rank, even Bloodnamed warriors may suffer this fate eventually. Warriors like Natasha Kerensky or the Nova Cat Khans, all in their eighties at the time of their deaths, are notable examples of superlative warriors who remained on active duty far beyond the average. However, even they required the cooperation of their Clans to retain their ranks.

Together with their rigid adherence to honorable combat style, ageism is one the Clan system's few weaknesses. It stresses raw ability over experience and makes it possible for opponents to exploit the younger warriors' naiveté. As Natasha was fond of saying, "Old age and treachery will beat youth and beauty every time." This age discrimination seems contrary to the general "waste not, want not" attitude, but it is pervasive nevertheless. Even Natasha Kerensky's successful and record-breaking Trial of Position at the age of 78 has caused only minimal re-evaluation of the practice.

POLITICS

Most people of the Inner Sphere think they understand Clan politics: might makes right and rulership by oppression. This is true, but only to a point. At the most basic level, Clan society turns on the principle that the strongest fight their way to the top of the heap. However, this concept represents the power structure of the Clans rather than their internal politics.

The most basic political divisions are based around the Warden and Crusader philosophical viewpoints. The former believes that the Clans should develop their own culture and serve as protectors of the Inner Sphere. The Wardens take as their credo one of Nicholas Kerensky's sayings, which describes the Clans' role as "to ward the Inner Sphere from all outside forces until that time when the Star League is reborn."

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CLAN MILITARY STRUCTURE

Unit IS	Equivalent	Composition	Senior Officer
Clan	—	—	Khan
Galaxy	Brigade	3-6 Clusters	Galaxy Commander
Fleet	Fleet	2-5 Naval Stars	Star Admiral
Cluster	Regiment (battalion)	3-5 Trinaries	Star Colonel
Naval Star	Flotilla/squadron	5 WarShips	Star Commodore or Star Admiral
Trinary	Reinforced company	3 Stars	Star Captain
Binary	Light company	2 Stars	Star Captain
Star	Reinforced lance	5 Points	Star Commander
Point	—	1 BattleMech/ 2 aerospace fighters/ 2 combat vehicles/ 5 Elementals/ 5 infantry	Warrior Pilot/Point Commander Warrior/Point Commander Point Commander Point Commander

The latter favored the reformation of the Star League by force, with the Clans at its head. They also used a Kerensky's words to justify their position—those of the Great Father, Aleksandr. They chose a passage from General Order 137 that states, "When the time is right, when the strength of our will and our honor is humanity's only hope to struggle up from the ashes, only then can our descendants make the long journey to the home that is rightfully ours." Whether by omission or design, the Crusaders chose to ignore one of Aleksandr's other sayings. In the last lines of the Voice of Kerensky, his broadcast back to the Inner Sphere, he says: "Perhaps, one day, should mankind step back from the brink of the abyss, we, our children, or our children's children will return, to once more serve and protect and guide the Star League in mankind's quest for the stars."

"Serve and protect and guide" seems clear enough to me, but then I am a little biased. However, I cannot deny that since the mid-30th century, the Crusader cause has caught the imagination of more and more of the population. It has particularly appeal for the civilian castes, whose often hard and dreary lives make the Inner Sphere seem like paradise. Even the most staunchly Warden Clans like the Wolves partly succumbed to the Crusader call; only with recent events has the general attitude begun to shift toward the Warden viewpoint.

Since the launching of Operation Revival in 3049, a new political divide has arisen within the Clans, between the Invading Clans and the Home Clans left behind in Clan space. Despite their many setbacks, the Invaders have increased their prestige and power considerably. Their battles against the forces of the Inner Sphere proved the strength of Invading Clan bloodlines and gave their troops unparalleled combat experience, while also giving them control over the resources of dozens of worlds.

While reviling the Invaders for their failure at Tukayyid, the Home Clans are nonetheless jealous of the power amassed by

those who took part. The Invaders are likewise possessive of their status. It is not unusual to see Home Clans working together, irrespective of Warden or Crusader philosophies, to further their mutual interest: limiting the power of the Invaders. However, while their goals are similar, their motives may differ considerably. The Home Wardens seek to weaken the Invaders so that the Clans can return to non-interventionist policies. The Home Crusaders seek to weaken the Invaders so that they can take their place.

Likewise, historically antagonistic Invading Clans have worked together to ensure their dominance and the exclusion of the Home Clans. The Invading Crusaders do this to ensure that only they will reap the glory of fighting to restore the Star League, while the Invading Wardens seek to rein in the invasion's excesses. This makes for strange bedfellows—in some cases literally, if my intelligence is correct. Of course, the fact that both invading factions have no desire to lose the assets they have gained is completely irrelevant ...

Morgan: So there are four political groups: Home Crusaders, Home Wardens, Invading Crusaders and Invading Wardens.

Phelan: That more or less sums it up, though in practice things are less distinct. Some Warden Clans ally with Crusaders, while adherents of the same philosophy may be locked in a feud. Furthermore, adherence to one philosophy or another is not as fixed as some might have you believe. It is a dynamic process; over time, Wardens can become Crusaders, and vice versa.

Morgan: Like the Ghost Bears and the Wolves.

Phelan: Exactly. As in the Inner Sphere, political relationships can shift for a host of reasons. Expediency can cause two Clans to ally or break off relations, and events can also have unexpected repercussions. Who would have dreamed of the Falcons and Wolves as allies? Some Clans, like the Steel Vipers or Snow Ravens, constantly waver between the two philosophies, supporting whichever is likely to benefit them most. At present, both are nominal Wardens, but the Steel Vipers' belief in military strength makes them hard to classify.

The ejection of the Smoke Jaguars from the Inner Sphere, the subsequent razing of Huntress and the Crusaders' loss to the SLDF on Strana Mechty shocked the Clans and cast into

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doubt the correctness of the Crusader cause. As a result, for the first time in a century the political tides have shifted in favor of the Wardens. The Crusader ideology still retains many adherents, but the end of the invasion—properly accomplished according to Clan law and through due process—without attaining the Crusaders' goal has weakened their cause considerably. The Warden philosophy is ascendant for the moment, though there seems little chance the Invading Clans will withdraw from those portions of the Inner Sphere that they now call their own.

The Wardens currently dominate the Grand Council, but no one knows for how long. I am certain that at some point in the future, the Crusader ideal will reassert itself; despite the knocks they have taken recently, the Crusaders' voting power in the council has not diminished much. In my view, however, the Clans will never again stage an Operation Revival, though there are likely to be clashes between the Clans and the Inner Sphere. Following the Great Refusal, Vlad of the Wolves declared that Clan Wolf had not voted for the Trial and hence were not bound by its results. Additionally, the Jade Falcon victory over the Steel Vipers has renewed the Falcons' battered pride and made them increasingly belligerent. They are likely to exploit any weakness in the Federated Commonwealth or the Arc-Royal Defense Cordon.

The Steel Vipers are the wild card, an Invading Clan ejected from the Inner Sphere by the Jade Falcons. Some Clans regard them as failures, but the Viper Touman remains one of the best equipped and most experienced in Clan space. No Home Clan, with the exception of the Star Adders, can hope to stand against the Vipers in open battle, and the Vipers' shame at being forced to accept hegira from their bitter enemies has left them spoiling for a fight. It remains to be seen whether the Viper presence in Clan space will prove a stabilizing force by prompting other Clans to put aside their disputes, or whether it will trigger further rounds of conflict that could dwarf the bloodshed of the past year and a half.

I would also hesitate to rule out any future involvement in the Inner Sphere by the Home Clans. While all of Clan space may spend months or even years locked in Trials of Possession for the assets and technologies of the Smoke Jaguars, Nova Cats and Ghost Bears, eventually those struggles will end. When they do, we can expect trouble; Hell's Horses have already proven that. I doubt things will simply return to the way they were. The current Clan infighting turns on self-interest, and I think the most aggressive Clans are likely to launch raids against the Inner Sphere as well as each other. The threat of Armageddon has diminished—no single Clan can hope to defeat the entire Inner Sphere—but the likelihood of "brushfire wars" has increased dramatically.

ECONOMICS

Though it might seem at odds with their martial aesthetic, the Clans have developed a strong economy. Unlike that of the Inner Sphere, it has a single goal—to support the warrior caste, either directly (by providing materials to build weapons) or indirectly (by supporting the other castes, who in turn support the

warriors). The merchant caste shoulders this burden, controlling all aspects of state-owned industry. Primary industries like mining or farming and secondary industries such as manufacturing dominate. Tertiary service industries exist, but with the exception of trading houses, they are much smaller than their Inner Sphere counterparts.

The monolithic trading houses control the distribution of goods within each Clan, and their members oversee transactions with other Clans and outsiders. Trading factors connected to these houses operate throughout their areas of responsibility, working with local administrators to arrange the shipment of goods where needed. At the lowest level, these individuals are little more than bureaucrats, cataloging and organizing shipments at a local level. More senior individuals oversee regional or planetary transfers. Most prestigious are the factors assigned to trade with other Clans, who are responsible for acquiring everything their Clan needs and for making the most profit on such dealings. Clan warriors fight with weapons and 'Mechs; the merchants wage a parallel battle with the control of goods. The trick is balancing the two, knowing when to trade and when to stage a Trial of Possession.

The primary distinction between Clan and Inner Sphere economic systems is the motivating force behind them. The Clans trade for what they need, and little is wasted. The Inner Sphere economy, by contrast, panders to what people want. Many markets are artificial creations, existing solely to make money. These markets serve no useful purpose, something the Clans avoid. Clan merchants deal in essential items, with few luxuries. Efficiency is central to the Clan model, and recycling forms an essential part of daily life. However, signs have begun to appear of corruption by outside forces—a small supply of Inner Sphere luxury goods has entered Clan society through Inner Sphere contacts. Given the Clans' political and ideological crisis following the recent SLDF assault, some analysts predict that the Inner Sphere's "consumer culture" will bring down the Clans from within.

MONEY

The Clans find money an awkward concept. For most Clansmen, there is no such thing; work credit and grading takes its place. All goods remain the property of the Clan and may be redistributed at will. The absence of hard currency and the draconian provisions associated with work credit (such as reversion of unused credit to the Clan), serve as another control on the Clan population. This cashless society is the main obstacle to the encroachment of capitalism in Clan space. Work credit is only usable via the official network of shops, bars and so on, and people can only use it to "purchase" goods on an official, standardized list. Consequently, it is difficult to sell non-standard goods. An electronic record exists of every work credit transaction; these records are examined and used to create an individual's socioeconomic profile. Despite these restrictions, however, a substantial black market exists, centered in Katyusha City on Strana Mechty.

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The merchant caste uses a form of currency for inter-Clan dealings (with outsiders, they use a barter system). Called a Kerensky (KE), this "macro-currency" smoothes mercantile exchanges, allowing the flow of goods without forcing the participants to barter materials. In almost all cases, merchants use the KE in electronic form, with fund transfers between financial institutions much like those in the Inner Sphere. Actual KEs are gold disks, each roughly two centimeters across and minted in 1, 5, 10 and 20 KE denominations. Larger sums—one hundred, one thousand, ten thousand and one million KEs—are denoted by rectangles, each two centimeters by four centimeters. The disks and rectangles contain an ID chip, as well as chemical compounds, that make forgeries easy to detect. Ownership of physical currency is limited to the merchant caste. Clan law regards any non-merchants with hard currency in their possession as black-market racketeers, and punishes them accordingly.

A C-bill/KE exchange rate is hard to peg, as differing levels of availability mean that some goods are cheaper in the Inner Sphere, while others are cheaper in Clan space. At best guess, however, a KE is worth roughly five C-bills. For reference, the monthly "wages" of an average Clansman equates to roughly twenty Kerenskies, plus five Kerenskies per grade (that is, 25–145 Kerenskies equals 150–725 C-bills).

High Finance

Inner Sphere readers may be surprised to learn that the Clan merchant caste dabbles in some of the more convoluted and ephemeral financial transactions. Each Clan has what amounts to a central bank that maintains and tracks work credits and Kerenskies. These "banks" are actually a series of institutions associated with major mercantile concerns that incorporate many accounting functions. They work with the administration to arrange remuneration for goods and organize fund transfers between trading blocks. The richest—those with the most assets under their control—also arrange loans to other groups, within and outside their Clan, in exchange for a pre-determined fee (related to the duration of the loan and the sum involved). The borrower must put up assets, whose value is related to that of the loan, as collateral. Any default on the loan results in control of those assets passing to the loan organization. With loans between Clans, this can result in the transfer of actual ownership of the assets. The defaulting Clan may refuse to honor the deal, but this occurs about as frequently as do inter-Clan loans—not very often. Though regarded with suspicion by the warrior caste, this "making money from money" nevertheless plays a role in strengthening the economy and thus the Clan. Clan Jade Falcon is well known for its sharp banking practices: "As sharp as the talons of a Falcon banker" is a popular expression.

Though the Clans have no stock market, several Clans place considerable emphasis on their equivalent of futures trading. By buying up appropriate tools and equipment, some Clans underwrite their neighbors' mining and exploration efforts in exchange for a percentage of the profits. If the exploration turns up nothing, the Clan absorbs the expense. If resources are uncovered, the Clan gains access to materials with minimal effort. Clan Diamond Shark is the main proponent of this technique, as were the Nova Cats before their fall. However, most profits made by the merchant caste come from traditional exchanges of material.

TECHNOLOGY

Clan technology is a paradox. In general, the Clans have a technological base considerably more advanced than that of the Inner Sphere. However, they have focused most of their research on technologies applicable to their military efforts—weaponry, genetics, computing and materials chemistry. Less relevant technologies have been virtually abandoned. Few advances in civilian technologies occur, save as spin-offs of military research. Consequently, the general level of technology in the homeworlds differs little from that of the Inner Sphere. In fact, it lags behind in some areas (most notably entertainment).

The Clan fixation on the Star League has also played a part in stagnating technological development. Many items used by the civilian sector are exact duplicates of those used in the Star League. During my time on Strana Mechty, I was assailed by feelings of déjà vu, seeing items in common use hitherto only known to me from holovids or museums. The ubiquitous presence of such items gives Clan life a "retro" feel.

MILITARY SYSTEMS

Though the Clans are renowned for their advanced military technology, most of their systems are evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Most have crude Inner Sphere analogues, but the lighter, more compact and more efficient Clan versions give them a decisive edge in battle. Several items have evolved over time; though the concept of a BattleMech has changed little since 2439, likening a Mackie to a Daishi is like comparing a flintlock pistol to a needler. Both are firearms, the latter a descendant of the former, but there is little doubt as to which is superior.

COMPARATIVE PRICING

The absence of an official exchange rate between C-bills and Clan pseudo-currency makes comparative pricing difficult. The following table provides a rough guide to the range of prices in Clan space.

Service	KE Cost (% of C-bill cost)
Accommodations	50–70
Armor	150–200
Clothing	50–80
Communications equipment	150–200
Electronics	120–170
Food and drink	80–110
Medical equipment	80–120
Power packs	100–120
Transportation (surface)	100–130
Transportation (space)	150–200
Vehicles (civilian)	150–200
Vehicles (military)	200–300
Weapons	200–300

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In a similar manner, Clan military technology has evolved over the years. Until Operation Klondike, the Clans used technologies identical to those of the Star League. After the liberation of the Pentagon, new designs such as the *Annihilator* and the *Shogun* began to appear. The first OmniMechs, which came into service in 2854, were based on the *Mercury BattleMech* design. These OmniMechs, though more flexible than previous designs, used Star League weapon systems.

The Clans' trademark advanced weapons developed over two centuries; the ultra-sophisticated machines used in Operation Revival did not exist before the 31st century. Many of the chassis used in them existed prior to that time, but the weapons and electronics they carry have continued to evolve. As the recent development of heavy lasers by Clan Star Adder has shown, weapons technology is an ongoing process.

The battle armor created by Clan Wolf in 2868 is the closest to a truly revolutionary technology. The Star League had no antecedent for these suits, though the technologies that went into them—advanced armor composites and exo-skeletons—already existed. Combining such elements into a new form is the cornerstone of revolutionary advancements. By the same measure, ProtoMechs—first used in the recent battles on Huntress—are not revolutionary. Though their control system differs from those of 'Mechs and battle armor, the basic technology is simply a scaled-down version of that used in 'Mechs.

MOLECULAR AND CHEMICAL ENGINEERING

Clan scientists have excelled in materials chemistry. They have developed a wide range of stronger and lighter materials, such as endo-steel, ferro-aluminum and ferro-fibrous armor, for military and civilian use. These materials allow for more efficient structures and vehicles, stronger and more resilient than their Inner Sphere counterparts. A related development is memory metal, compounds that can "remember" their shape and return to it upon application of an electrical current. One such compound, known as Clan copper, is used by the military to construct resilient and self-repairing helmets and body armor.

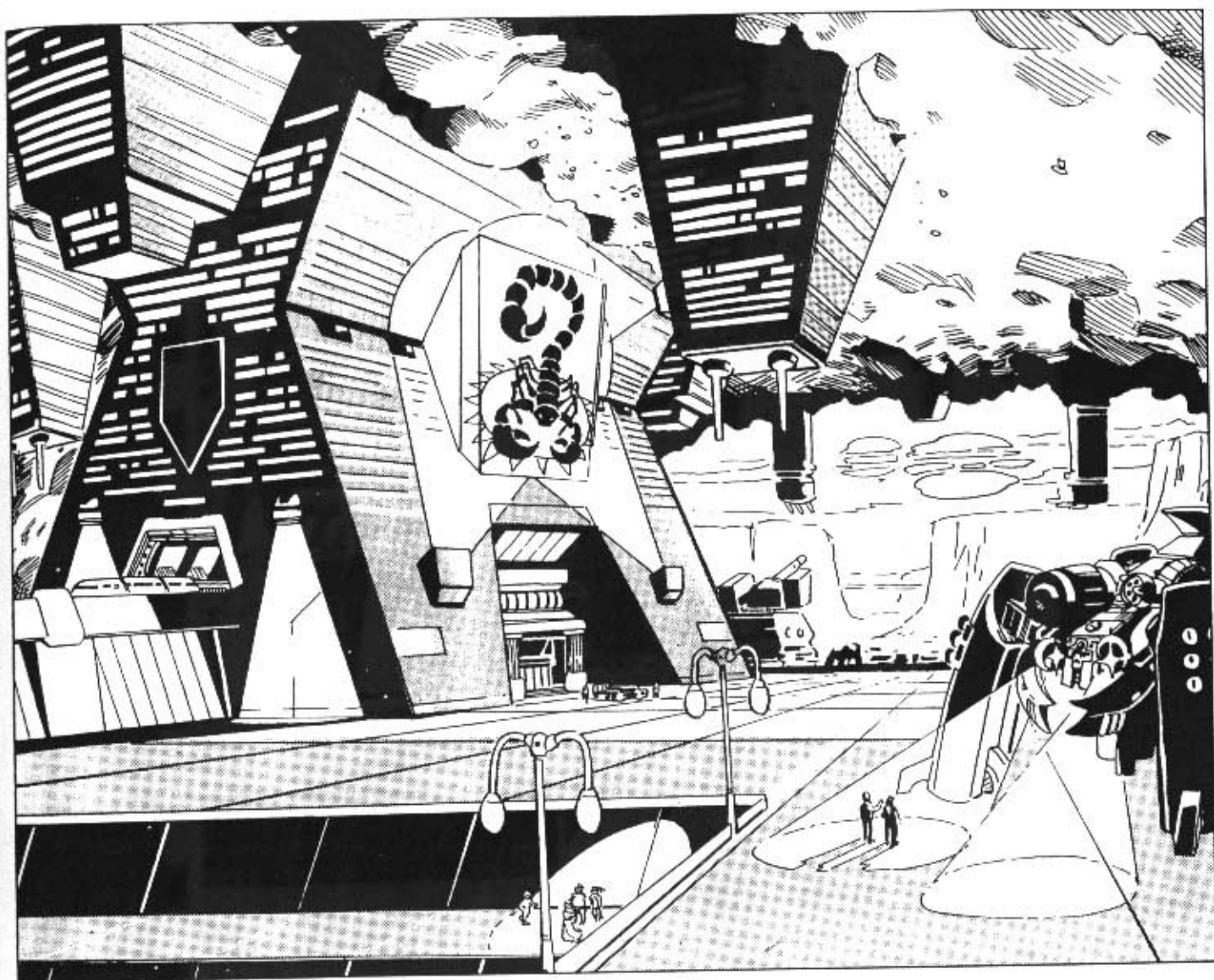
Adaptive architecture ("smart buildings") allows the construction of structures in otherwise unsuitable environments. Incorporating memory metals and similar compounds, and controlled by sophisticated computer systems, these buildings adjust their shape and rigidity to suit their surroundings, literally moving with any tectonic activity or atmospheric conditions. In addition to allowing colonization of inhospitable regions, this technology has also allowed the construction of larger and taller buildings. The Steel Vipers' Mercer Building on New Kent has 211 stories and is more than a thousand meters tall.

MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY AND GENETICS

In the field of medical technology, the Clans are way ahead of the Inner Sphere. The harsh nature of their worlds and the need to support a large military machine prompted considerable research, leading to major advances in life-support systems and regeneration technologies. The Clans can sustain an injured warrior indefinitely, and can regrow or rebuild destroyed limbs. The elderly and those with crippling injuries, however, are often abandoned in favor of younger or less damaged individuals.

Ironically, what most people see as the Clans' "greatest medical achievement"—the Iron Wombs—is nothing of the sort. The basic technology used in the iron wombs has been around for more than a thousand years. It originated as a life-support system for premature babies in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, and moral and social implications restricted the system's use to a life-support role. Though refined over the years, the Star League system differs little from that pioneered by Jutendo University on Terra in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. However, the need to quickly increase population prompted Nicholas Kerensky and his scientific teams to abandon the ethical restrictions for the use of artificial wombs. The first child grown to term in the system was born in late 2816. By 2819, when the breeding program officially began, dedicated "birthing systems" were coming into use. The technology evolved steadily over the years; Clan Sea Fox developed the current version of the system in 2850.

THE CLANS



The distinctiveness of each individual Clan gives the Clans their extraordinary vitality and strength. Following is a limited attempt to look at the similarities and differences of each Clan.

Each Clan listing is broken into several distinct sections: history, society, their military, allies and enemies, and their possessions. Furthermore, a sidebar lists various vital statistics, including prominent individuals, their military strength, worlds and population. Several of these statistics need explanation.

Three figures indicate the Population Growth Rate (PGR), the proportion by which the Clan population expands annually. The first is the annual percentage growth. The second is the annual number of births (per thousand), and the third is the annual number of deaths (per thousand). For example, the Jade Falcon Population Growth Rate line reads 2.6 percent (72/46);

meaning an average growth rate of 2.6 percent, 72 births per thousand, and 46 deaths per thousand. To put these figures in context, the average PGR of the Inner Sphere states is 0.7 percent per year (birth rate 16 per thousand and death rate of 9 per thousand); the Clan average is 2.3 percent. This might not seem that dramatic—local PGR in the Inner Sphere can reach 3 percent—but the birth and death rates show how harsh Clan life can be.

The Self-Sufficiency Index indicates how much of the raw material a Clan needs it produces itself and how much is acquired through trade with other Clans or outsiders.

The list of Clan Space Worlds shows the percentage of each world a Clan controls. In addition to the worlds listed, each Clan maintains an enclave on Strana Mechty.



BLOOD SPIRIT DEMOGRAPHICS

Affiliation: Crusader

Capital: York

Population (Clan Space): 65,714,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 1.9 percent (61/42)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 100 percent

Leaders

Khan: Karianna Schmitt

saKhan: Troy Boques

Foremaster: Bayle Campbell

Scientist-General: Peterson (Le Duc)

Merchant Factor: Yasia

Master Technician: Soon

Senior Laborer: Margaretha

Military

Clusters: 27

WarShips: 4

Clan Space Worlds

York (100 percent)

SOCIETY

The Blood Spirits believe that everyone is important to society and there is little of the inter-caste bickering found in other Clans. All the castes are bound by common training, re-creating the sense of brotherhood the Clan once had with the others. However, this does not prevent the ubiquitous trueborn-over-freeborn bias, although if a freeborn warrior can prove his worth to society the Clan does not place additional obstacles in his way.

To describe the Blood Spirits as insular would be a major understatement. They rarely take bondsmen, and often attempt bond-sref rather than be taken in by other Clans. Those few taken by other Clans rival the Fire Mandrills in their lack of cooperation.

Their isolation restricts the Blood Spirits' access to modern technology, and what technology they have obtained has been acquired through a circuitous route. This hardly bothers them, because they see technology as a means to an end. They believe that their abilities alone are sufficient, without the need for a technological "crutch." In a similar vein, they shun the use of cybernetics and related systems. They believe such systems detract from the warrior's spirit, and while a few individuals have cybernetic prostheses, no Blood Spirit warrior had enhanced-imaging (EI) implants (a neural network implanted in a MechWarrior that, along with a computer, provides the warrior with a virtual battlefield that can be viewed from any angle) prior to the Absorption War. Since then, a small number of more aggressive warriors have made use of the system.

CLAN BLOOD SPIRIT

Named for the esprit-de-corps that bound the original 800 Clan warriors, ironically, the Blood Spirits are the most isolationist and bitter of the Clans. They believe that the other Clans have abandoned the way set down by Nicholas Kerensky, little caring that they too are guilty of abandoning Kerensky's vision.

HISTORY

Founded by Colleen Schmitt, the Blood Spirits set about living up to their name by creating the post of ilChi—ambassador/messengers assigned to each of the other Clans to smooth communications and foster good will. Their dream did not live long. The Blood Spirits had expressed some sympathy for Clan Wolverine, and the Burrocks called for the Spirit's annihilation, too. The motion foundered but it was the start of a long feud.

The other Clans, predominantly the Burrocks and Mongoose, targeted the Spirits with near-constant raids, and the Spirits eventually lost their holdings on Albion and Homer. Abandoned by the other Clans, the Blood Spirits chose to abandon their former comrades. The ilChis were withdrawn and over the years the sense of brotherhood was replaced by hatred.

Years of fighting had shattered the Spirits, but their isolation, small size and lack of any resources worth fighting over probably saved them from Absorption. They were surprised in the middle of the Golden Century when the Fire Mandrill Kindraa Smythe-Jewell approached them, offering OmniMech technology in exchange for land. Though wary, the Spirits took the deal and made a similar arrangement with the Snow Ravens a century later, trading a number of their little-used WarShips for the bulk of the Snow Raven's second-line BattleMechs.

Although the Blood Spirits participated in the bidding for Operation Revival, they did so in a lackluster manner that ensured their failure to win a place in the trials, let alone the invasion force. Though they follow the Crusader philosophy, the Blood Spirits did not think the time was right for an invasion of the Inner Sphere. They derived some measure of satisfaction and vindication when the invaders faltered at Tukayyid.

In early 3059, the Spirits' long-time foe, Clan Burrock, became the target of a Trial of Absorption, and the Blood Spirit Khans made a rare appearance at the Grand Council to support the measure. The Spirits were horrified when the honor of Absorption went to the Star Adders and decided to take unilateral action; they launched their own attacks against the Burrock enclaves on Priori and Albion.

However, the Spirits underestimated the Adder and Burrock response. Though locked in a trial over the Grand Council's decision, the two Clans worked together to counter the interlopers. The Blood Spirits lost five Galaxies in the assault and gained nothing. They returned to their isolation, emerging only for the Great Refusal a year later.

THE CLANS

Though they work together, all members of Clan Blood Spirit are protective of their privacy. Most have some form of hobby, often artistic, that they use as a distraction from the routine of their lives. The Khans and the caste heads have encouraged the practice, and it appears that by granting each member time to "be themselves" they have strengthened the Clan's internal bonds. Knowing the Clan respects them and their ideas, the individual Blood Spirits do their utmost to further the goals of the Clan.

And yet things appear to be changing in the Blood Spirits. Staunch believers in tradition, their actions in the Absorption War (as they call the action against the Burrocks and Star Adders) flew in the face of tradition and many have questioned Khan Schmitt's judgment. Furthermore, the Clan's defeat at the hands of the Genyosha in the Great Refusal on Strana Mechty has exacerbated their intense dislike of the Inner Sphere. What were once regarded as "uncouth barbarians" are now viewed as "rabid despoilers."

Further, the Spirits are horrified that the Inner Sphere has attained near-parity with their Clan in technology, and may in fact be ahead in some areas. They cite the carelessness of the other Clans for this state of affairs, blaming them for the loss of the Great Refusal on Strana Mechty. The Spirits intend to exploit the potential of the ProtoMech, which they gained in a Trial of Possession on Huntress following the Great Refusal, as their best chance of fielding advanced technology with their limited resources.

MILITARY

The Blood Spirits continue to follow the organizational doctrine laid down by Nicholas Kerensky (three 'Mech trinaries, one infantry Trinary and one vehicle trinary per cluster) rather than the modified form used by most other Clans. They deploy aerospace assets from the naval reserve as needed. Only Clan Hell's Horses makes such widespread use of conventional troops.

Training for Blood Spirit warriors is perhaps the toughest in the Clans, making up for the small number of graduates with their quality. However, while individual warriors are unparalleled in their abilities, Blood Spirit units suffer from a lack of initiative. Star captains and Star colonels are too accustomed to acting on the orders of their superiors, leading to a rigidity that a wily foe can exploit.

The Clan has taken the unusual step of training all its personnel in basic combat techniques. This gives the Spirits a massive, if low-skilled, reserve to fall back upon in the event of an attack on their capital (which, with the exception of their Strana Mechty enclave, is now their only territory). The reserve also serves to bind the civilian and warrior castes together, the bond of common training creating the *esprit-de-corps* they no longer have with the other Clans.

ALLIES AND ENEMIES

The Blood Spirits have no official alliances with other Clans, but the continued posting of ilChis to Clans Fire Mandrill

and Snow Raven forges a bond and makes those Clans *de facto* allies. In addition, the Blood Spirits have a tacit relationship with the Diamond Shark, using them as brokers and suppliers.

The Spirits regard most of the other Clans with disdain or hatred, but they single out three for particular attention. Clans Hell's Horses and Coyote are regarded as treacherous for their joint assault that destroyed the Fire Mandrill Kindraa Smythe-Jewel, the association that gave the Spirits OmniMech technology. However, even this hatred pales into insignificance when compared to that they have for the Star Adders. The Adders absorbed Clan Burrock largely intact, and the Spirits have transferred their feud with that Clan to the Adders.

POSSESSIONS

Worlds: 1 (1 exclusive)

The Blood Spirits have never held significant territory. At their greatest extent they spanned five worlds, and for much of their history they have had only their enclaves on Arcadia and Strana Mechty, as well as dominant (but not absolute) control of York. Since the Absorption War, they have enacted a deliberate policy of isolation, taking the extreme step of withdrawing their people from Arcadia to York. Furthermore, they seized complete control of their capital, forcibly ejecting the Jade Falcons and persuading Clan Snow Raven to withdraw.

On Strana Mechty, their holdings have always been distinct from those of other Clans, isolated by distance from their neighbors. Since the Absorption War, the Spirits have enacted strict controls on passage through their territory, further reducing the already minimal contacts.

CLAN CLOUD COBRA

Named for the species of snake that developed from Terran cobras released onto Arcadia, Clan Cloud Cobra is a study in contrasts. They are the most religious of the Clans, paying homage to a concept they call The Way that enshrines aspects of all religions. And yet they are also one of the most devious and political of Clans, equating The Way with the Warden cause, while seeking to further their own agenda.

HISTORY

Shrouded in mysticism, parable and dogma, the history of Clan Cloud Cobra reflects the Clan's founding by Windham Katib, an SLDF chaplain. Together with his saKhan, Vice Admiral Rafe Kardaam, Katib forged the Clan into a solid unit. Although ostensibly putting cultural differences aside, Katib fostered a number of debates to encourage understanding among his troops of different religions and ethnic backgrounds. Together the Cobras forged a new philosophy, comparable to the Inner Sphere "Unfinished Book" movement, which sought the common ground between all religions. Katib called this non-denominational system "The Way," and it would form a fundamental part of the Clan's existence.

Though badly bloodied on Babylon, the Clan fulfilled its objectives during the liberation of the Pentagon. However, an ambush by rebel forces cost the Clan almost half its number,



CLOUD COBRA DEMOGRAPHICS

Affiliation: Warden

Capital: Homer

Population (Clan space): 58,374,000 (3060; excludes Tanite worlds)

Population growth rate: 2.2 percent (68/46)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 87 percent

Leaders

Khan: Din Steiner

saKhan: Kieran Telinov

Foremaster: Eleni Riaz

Scientist-General: Goran (Pasteur)

Merchant Factor: Joshua

Master Technician: Franco

Senior Laborer: Yuu

Military

Clusters: 22

WarShips: 15

Clan Space Worlds

Babylon (26 percent)

Brim (54 percent)

Homer (85 percent)

Tanite Worlds

Tanis

Alexandria

Stacha

leaving aerospace forces in the ascendant. The Clan sustained further damage in the internal strife that followed Operation Klondike. The Cloud Cobras avoided the fate of the Wolverines, but their internal fighting further weakened them. This prompted many raids against them for their most valuable commodity: technological expertise. The most prominent raiders were Clan Coyote, and counter-raids and captured Coyotes eventually netted OmniMech technology for the Cobras.

When a large number of civilians and warriors belonging to Clan Burrock defected to the Bandit Caste, the Cobras accompanied the loyal Burrocks on a mission to return their wayward kin to the Clan fold. The Burrocks claimed to have punished the transgressors, a story accepted until Clan Star Adder proved it a lie in 3058.

In 2935 the Cobras were honored when their Khan, Tobias Katib, was selected as ilKhan. He ruled for more than a decade, doing much to advance the cause of the Cloud Cobras. However, Katib's indictment in 2947 tarnished the gains. Katib was found guilty of murdering his predecessor, and the Grand Council stripped him of his office and executed him. Suspicions of a wider conspiracy were never proven.

As the Clans chose sides in what would become the Crusader-Warden debate, other divisions within the Cobras came to the fore. Predominantly religious in nature, these divisions led to a factionalization of Cobra society akin to that which consumed the Fire Mandrills. The Cobras divided into groups known as Cloisters, some of which supported the Wardens and others the Crusaders. However, The Way ensured that as a whole the Clan supported the protectionist policies of the Wardens. When the *Outbound Light* triggered a call for invasion, the Cloud Cobra Khans voted to attack, but lacking the strength to prosecute the war, the Cobras withdrew from the bidding, angering several pro-Crusader Cloisters and triggering dissension.

When Clan Star Adder uncovered details of the Burrock deception regarding their lost members and ongoing dealings with the Dark Caste, the Cloud Cobras were among the most vociferous in calling for the Burrocks' absorption. The venom of their call led many to suspect a hidden cause for their actions, perhaps associated with the Burrocks' crime, but possibly the Cobras' revulsion at the treachery of their former allies.

SOCIETY

Cloud Cobra society centers around the Cloisters and the religions of The Way. Their warriors serve also as priests and teachers, requiring a higher degree of philosophical and theological awareness than is found in other Clans. While the Cloisters are divided in their interpretations of The Way, their common devotion to it also serves to limit their divisiveness. The result is greater internal cohesion than is found in other splintered Clans such as the Fire Mandrills.

The Cloud Cobras accept bondsmen, but those taken by the Clan often have difficulty adapting to the theological debates that are part of everyday life. Cloud Cobras taken as isorla by other Clans rarely abandon their faith, therefore enclaves of belief in The Way exist in many other Clans.

Cobra civilians, through the Cloisters, have a limited say in the governance of the Clan. In addition to warriors, each Cloister contains ordained ministers of the civilian castes, who (in theory) advocate the interests of the people. And yet the Cloisters are elitist institutions, with menial work beneath their members, which reinforces the caste divisions. In fact, many regard the Cloisters as political rather than spiritual organizations, used by opportunists to further their own goals.

Most Cloud Cobras are pragmatic, realizing that many of their goals (largely unknown to the rest of the Clans) cannot be easily achieved and they are willing to take

the long-term view. This may be one of the strengths of the Cloisters. While most Clansmen plan for now, or at best a few years into the future, the Cobras appear to plan generations in advance. Each Cloister, headed by an ecKhan, takes a proactive role towards attaining its goals, building or breaking alliances as needed.

Cobra technological expertise is among the best in the Clans. Although Clan Diamond Shark claims the credit for developing the current Iron Womb technology, much of the expertise in genetic engineering stems from the Cobras. Their military technology is similarly well developed, although much of their work is refinement of existing systems rather than new developments.

THE CLANS

MILITARY

The Cloud Cobras have a relatively small Touman, a result of a series of catastrophic events in their history. They emphasize aerospace, as a result of the major losses suffered on Babylon, leading to their focusing on what assets remained.

This aerospace bias has colored their tactics, with aircraft used to "soften up" targets in advance of a ground assault. However, their small ground force means that the Cobras are prepared to be very patient, allowing the air arm to complete their task rather than the ground forces being goaded into action.

The number of places in front-line units is strictly limited, and only the best go straight to such units. Most new graduates join one of a series of reserve units attached to each Galaxy. These serve as a trained pool of troops ready to make up losses in the principal units.

The Clan follows a combined-arms doctrine, making use of conventional infantry and vehicles. However, many units are not well rounded, being dominated by BattleMechs or aerospace fighters. Cobra Elemental forces are surprisingly weak.

ALLIES AND ENEMIES

The Cloud Cobras have few real enemies. Their belief in The Way makes them natural allies of the Warden faction, but also allows individual Cloisters the freedom to espouse Crusader views. The Cobras regard even die-hard Crusaders such as the Jade Falcons as simply "misguided." Only the Coyotes are their enemies.

However, this also means the Clan has few staunch allies. They worked with Clan Burrock for many years, sharing mutual interests such as the Tanite worlds, and this relationship has transferred to Clan Star Adder. While many in the Clan regard the partnership with Clan Star Adder to be a new move for the Clan, there are suggestions of decades-old deals between the two.

Clans Diamond Shark and Clan Snow Raven are also peripheral allies of the Cobras. The former provides useful mercantile contacts, allowing the Cobras to prosper. Clan Snow Raven espouses similar military principals and the two share information and technology.

Least known are the Cobra's tacit alliances with the Nova Cats and Wolves (in Exile). The Cobras applaud our willingness to do what conscience and visions dictate. To them the true mark of The Way is firm belief in a cause.

POSSESSIONS

Worlds: 6 (All shared)

The Cloud Cobras appear to have extensive possessions, but only three of their six worlds fall inside the accepted bounds of "Clan Space." The other three, the so-called Tanite Worlds, form a distinct body outside the Kerensky Cluster or the Pentagon. Discovered in 2965, these worlds, a former Star League colony, were forcibly absorbed. This stretched the Cobra Touman to its limit, prompting the Cobras to contract with Burrock (and later Star Adder) forces to help garrison them in exchange for mineral rights.

In the wake of the Great Refusal, the Cobras have moved to consolidate their position. They gained numerous assets from Clan Nova Cat, though in many cases what the Nova Cats expected to be Cobra support for their withdrawal became an occupying force instead. The Cobras justify their actions, the most significant of which took place on Brim, as necessary to forestall an attack by Clan Coyote.

CLAN COYOTE

The Strana Mechty coyote, a descendant of the Terran mammal, can be found on just about every inhabited world in the Clan sphere of influence, a fact directly attributable to Clan Coyote's one-time presence on each of those planets. Sitting at the top of the food chain, the packs of coyotes have nonetheless slowly thinned over the last several decades, a fact that likewise describes the Clan.

HISTORY

Founded by Dana Kufahl, a close friend of the Kerensky family and, indeed, Andery Kerensky's love, the Coyotes have from their inception practiced a number of mystical rituals. From their first days, they have also maintained a close association with the chosen Clan of the Kerenskys, Clan Wolf.

After a number of successes in Operation Klondike, in which they began the widespread use of zellbrigen (one-on-one engagements) even as they clashed with Clan Sea Fox over those same tactical doctrines, the Coyotes quickly jumped ahead of the other Clans in economic and industrial potential. The Golden Century was exceptionally generous to the Coyotes, who, in pursuit of ever bigger and better weapons, developed the OmniMech and so became the preeminent military power in the Clan sphere of influence. The Coyotes were second only to the Wolves in absolute population and territorial holdings. Together these two Clans formed a political bloc in the Grand Council that none could hope to stand against successfully.

As the Coyotes grew in strength during the Golden Century, they butted heads with a number of other Clans. In 2742 they entered an alliance with Clan Hell's Horses to destroy the Fire Mandrill Kindraa Smythe-Jewel, who had used what has been called "dubious bidding practices" against both Clans. Six years later the Khans of Clan Snow Raven uncovered incontrovertible evidence that ilKhan Tobias Katib, of the Cloud Cobras, had engineered the death of the Coyote's own ilKhan Corian Tchernovkov some years earlier. The Coyotes embarked on a campaign designed to severely punish the Cobras for the actions of their former Khan. After twenty months of heavy action, in which they inflicted severe losses on the Cobras but at the same time lost control of a number of worlds, the Coyotes scaled back their operations.

As the Warden and Crusader factions grew within all the Clans, the Coyotes experienced a deep division that could have brought about their Absorption by another Clan. Eight entire Bloodname Houses were eliminated because of that strife, later known as the Blood Scandal, but the Coyotes emerged seemingly stronger than ever and devoted to the Warden cause.

Affiliation: Warden

Capital: Tamaron
Population (Clan space): 73,360,000 (3060)
Population growth rate: 1.9 percent (60/41)
Self-Sufficiency Index: 91 percent

Leaders

Khan: Sullivan Koga
saKhan: Silas Kufahl
Loremaster: Clarissa Jericho
Scientist-General: Ricarda (Remer)
Merchant Factor: Kavindra
Master Technician: Onyda
Senior Laborer: Hillard

Military

Clusters: 35
WarShips: 12

Clan Space Worlds

Babylon (27 percent)
Delios (36 percent)
Foster (40 percent)
Londerholm (32 percent)
New Kent (19 percent)
Tamaron (100 percent)

MILITARY

MILITARY

The Coyotes developed the OmniMech, and naturally, OmniMech units form the basis of the Clan's Touman. Omnis are often found even in their garrison Clusters, giving the Coyote garrison units far more flexibility and firepower than similar units in the other Clans. Following standard tactical doctrine (as much as possible in the Clans), the Coyotes deploy more than adequate Elemental and aerospace fighter forces in their combined-arms Clusters. Conventional vehicles and infantry, which are rare, are deployed only in solahma units.

The Coyote Touman has just finished nearly eight years of extensive reorganization under the guidance of Khan Sullivan Koga. Her plan did not advance without problems, as quite a few of her senior commanders objected strenuously to it. She continued on, however, dealing with those who stood in her course along the way. The Coyote Galaxies are now efficient fighting organizations, led for the most part by those who chose to back Khan Kufahl. Training levels still fall somewhat below Clan standard, however.

Members of Clan Star Adder were implicated in this plot to challenge the Coyotes' legitimate authority, leading to yet another of Clan Coyote's long-time feuds.

But cracks began to develop in the Coyote's foundation. Already deeply enmeshed in their existing feuds, the Coyotes became a prime target for Crusader Clans looking to crush Clans to weaken the Warden resolve. By the time the *Outbound Light* made its appearance, the Coyotes laid claim to a mere quarter of the holdings they had boasted half a century previous. Led now by a Khan who recognizes the perils facing her Clan, the Coyote Touman has recently undergone a radical reorganization, aimed at streamlining the organization and turning the Clan around again. Only time will tell if these changes will make a true difference.

SOCIETY

SOCIETY

The Coyotes have perhaps the most conservative mindset of the Warden Clans. The warrior caste commands, while the civilian castes are expected to serve their every whim. While not particularly unusual for a Clan, this situation has nevertheless led to some inter-caste strife, especially in the past several years, though nothing nearly as extreme as Clan Smoke Jaguar's actions against its civilian castes during the famine on Londerholm in 2912. Reports of warriors harshly punishing members of lower castes for real or imagined wrongdoing are not uncommon. Due to the successes they have experienced in the past, the scientist and technician castes enjoy a certain amount of freedom from supervision in accomplishing their tasks; but the punishments for failure are also accordingly severe.

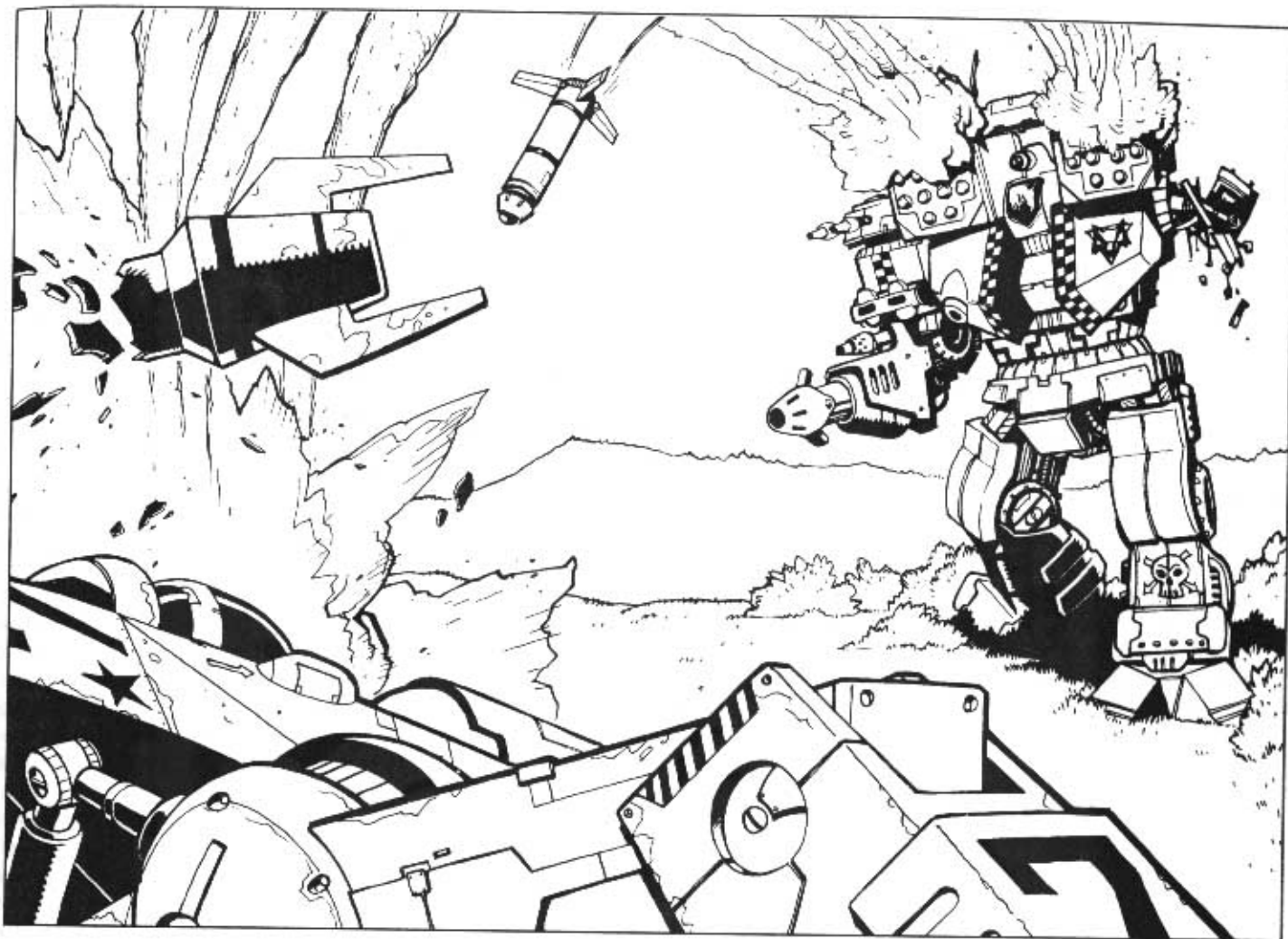
Freeborns hold little standing or regard within the Clan. That trend is slowly changing, however, as the number of freeborns successfully serving in the Touman has increased, and several Coyote Council members have taken up their cause. On the other hand, Coyote Warriors are quite accepting of bondsmen, provided the bondsmen prove themselves capable and willing to serve.

Several of the mystical rites that Dana Kufahl taught her Clan in the early years are still practiced, but primarily by members of the warrior caste. Vision quests and other rites used by Native American tribes to better foster an understanding of nature have evolved more into celebratory practices, at least for the majority of Coyote warriors. A vocal minority in the Clan, however, still hold strictly to the spirit of the teachings of Kufahl's native tribe on Terra.

All members of the Clan have access to any number of diversions in their free time. The most popular are arena sporting events that pit combatants, both warriors and the occasional volunteer from the lower castes, against some of the more dangerous creatures to be found in the Cluster, or even other participants, in deadly combat. Such so-called blood-sports are held at least weekly in every major Coyote city, and usually more often in the largest of population centers.

These are not the only diversions practiced by Clan Coyote's members. The Coyotes have a highly developed artistic bent, especially in holography and laser sculpture, but this is found mostly in the civilian castes. Though widely regarded among connoisseurs of such art among all the Clans, most Coyote warriors shun or even deride this "pedestrian" fare.

THE CLANS



ALLIES AND ENEMIES

A leader in the Grand Council for decades, the Coyotes have gained a number of perfunctory allies and enemies over the years, though few that could be called strong. Their primary ally was the Wolves until the Refusal War sundered that Clan. Following that action, the Coyotes severed nearly all ties to Vlad's Crusader Wolves. The Coyotes have grown increasingly cold toward the Wolves (in Exile), though that is surely due mostly to distance and the political realities of the Council.

Clans Cloud Cobra and Star Adder share the dubious honor of being the Coyote's most hated opponents, though those feuds have gone on for years with little intensity. The Coyotes also share bad blood with the Fire Mandrills and Blood Spirits over events surrounding the destruction of the Kindraa Smythe-Jewel so many years ago.

The only real alliances the Coyotes still enjoy are with Clans Diamond Shark and Hell's Horses. The relationship with the Diamond Sharks started on shaky ground, but ever since they cooperated in the development of the OmniMech, the two Clans have remained friendly, though recent clashes on Delios have somewhat soured the relationship. The Alliance with the Horses

has waxed and waned, depending upon the tides in the Grand Council.

POSSESSIONS

Worlds: 6 (5 shared, 1 exclusive)

Though they once dominated the Clan sphere of influence, the Coyotes have suffered a number of losses over the years, reducing them to a mere quarter of what they once held. Though Tamaron was once considered only marginally habitable, the Coyotes have overcome its ecosystem and built a thriving culture there. They have held on jealously to the planet since its discovery and colonization more than two centuries ago, allowing no other Clan to lay claim there.

CLAN DIAMOND SHARK

The foundation of Clan Diamond Shark is shrouded in controversy. Originally named Clan Sea Fox for the reptile-like amphibian predator native to Strana Mechty, they were renamed in 2985 following the introduction of the diamond shark to Strana Mechty, where it supplanted the sea fox in the food chain.



DIAMOND SHARK DEMOGRAPHICS

Affiliation: Warden

Capital: Strana Mechty
Population (Clan space): 67,859,000 (3060)
Population growth rate: 2.8 percent (67/39)
Self-Sufficiency Index: 88 percent

Leaders

Khan: Barbara Sennet
saKhan: Angus Labov
Loremaster: Semi Kalasa
Scientist-General: Trudy (Bland)
Merchant Factor: Lorenzo
Master Technician: Warren
Senior Laborer: Vaslav

Military

Clusters: 33
WarShips: 18

Clan Space Worlds

Babylon (24 percent)
Barcella (47 percent)
Delios (64 percent)
Lum (18 percent)
New Kent (9 percent)
Paxon (62 percent)
Priori (52 percent)
Strata Domingo (65 percent)
Tathis (50 percent)
Vinton (100 percent)

forced the warriors to give up considerable power to the merchant caste in order to accomplish their goals, but the warrior caste recently regained some of that power by agreeing to allow the merchant caste to travel to and trade with the Inner Sphere.

HISTORY

The only Clan not to underestimate the defenders of Babylon, the Sea Foxes emerged from the Pentagon Campaign with the respect of their peers. The Sea Fox Khan's early initiatives to promote material prosperity and the strength of the Clan's economy soon paid off. The Clan pioneered developments in the artificial womb technology, and worked with the Cloud Cobras on genetic engineering techniques. However, it was in trade, both material goods and information, that Clan Sea Fox made its reputation. They prospered for more than a century.

However, jealousy of the Sea Fox's success festered among the other Clans. Following a humiliating defeat in a trial of possession—and Sea Fox bragging about the victory on the Chatterweb—the Khan of Clan Snow Raven took extraordinary measures. Releasing a genetically-engineered breed of shark into Strana Mechty's oceans, he sought to destroy his enemy's totem animal. Although one colony of sea foxes remained, the success of the diamond shark led the Clan to petition for a name change. Viewed as near heretical for casting off the name given them by Nicholas Kerensky, they were nevertheless allowed to do so after winning a Trial of Refusal. On September 30, 2985 Clan Sea Fox was renamed Clan Diamond Shark.

For many years the Clan attempted to keep out of politics, because political disputes were bad for business. Eventually the Sharks succumbed to the Great Debate. Though predominantly Wardens, their desire to return to the Inner Sphere led them to support the Crusader cause, as much to limit the brutality of Clans Jade Falcon and Smoke Jaguar as to exploit Inner Sphere resources.

When the call for invasion went out in 3048, the Diamond Sharks failed to win a primary place in the invasion, but were designated third reserve after the Steel Vipers and Nova Cats. To further improve his Clan's position, Khan Ian Hawker entered into an alliance with the Jade Falcons. As the invasion progressed, Diamond Shark observers attached to the invasion force traveled with the fleet, identifying the goods the Invaders needed. They passed this information to the Clan's merchants, who made considerable profits. However, the situation soured when an arms transport fell into the hands of Kuritan rebels who used the captured arms against Clan Smoke Jaguar. The merchants were expelled.

When the Clan was finally activated after the death of ilKhan Showers, they were forced to fight the Ghost Bears for a base world, and looked set to share the Bears' invasion corridor. However, before the arrangement was formalized, the Battle of Tukayyid shattered the Shark Touman and they retreated in disarray. The Ghost Bears soon recaptured the Sharks' base world of Nyserta, leaving the Diamond Sharks little option but to return to Clan space.

With the warrior caste in disarray, the Clan's merchant caste became ascendant, in effect determining Clan policy. Angus Labov, a retired warrior and head of the merchants, became de facto leader of the Clan and worked hard to rebuild the Sharks. The merchants established trade links with the other Clans and the Inner Sphere powers, always with an eye to strengthening their position. By the time of the Harvest Trials the Clan had returned to its former strength, and in the aftermath of the "Great Refusal," Khan Ian Hawker resigned.

SOCIETY

Unlike other Clans, the Diamond Sharks view the civilian castes as supporting the entire Clan rather than just the warrior caste, allowing the lower castes to flourish. The Diamond Shark economy is the strongest in the Clans, which can be attributed to the strong bonds between the castes. This economic success has resulted in disparaging comments from the other Clans (the Coyotes have a saying, "when there are fins in the water, don't go swimming"), especially after the disaster of Tukayyid, but has allowed the Clan to rebuild quickly. The requirements of rebuilding

The Diamond Sharks take bondsmen wherever possible. One Star colonel put it, "Bondsmen are a simple byproduct of another action, one we can exploit." It is not unknown for the Diamond Sharks to return bondsmen to their original Clan in exchange for some form of concession. This allows them to repatriate any troublesome elements and still make a profit.

The Sharks understand honor, but their own application of it is somewhat flexible. They understand the need to display an honorable countenance to smooth dealings with other Clans, but believe strict adherence to the Honor Road is detrimental to the Clan's best interests. To do so would cut the Clan off from many opportunities, something even the warrior caste is loathe to do.

Similarly, the Clan is not overly political. Their viewpoint wanders between the Crusader and Warden philosophies. Since Tukayyid and their ejection, they have espoused the Warden cause, but generally prefer to remain apolitical, because favoring one camp too strongly would be bad for business.

The primary reason for the Sharks to support the Crusader faction in the invasion was to gain access to Inner Sphere markets, which they regard as largely untapped. They fully intend to take up Prince Victor's call for stronger ties with the Inner Sphere, and rumors circulate that they have established relations with Inner Sphere trading cartels.

MILITARY

Although the Sharks fought in the Inner Sphere, most other Clans look on the Diamond Shark military with disdain. Gutted on Tukayyid, the Diamond Shark Touman has rebuilt in the ten years since with the assistance of the merchant caste. The Sharks rarely resort to violence, preferring to get their way through mercantile means. However, interference with their commercial operations frequently elicits a devastating response.

Like most Clans, the Diamond Sharks discriminate against freeborn warriors. However, the need to guard their territory and merchant vessels means the Clan cannot be too picky, and they do use such troops, mainly in second-line militia. Many freeborns train to fight as marines aboard ship, or to act as guards at compounds.

Unusually, many Shark warriors retire from active service and take up positions in lower castes. Little stigma is attached to such actions, and Bloodnamed retirees may retain their warrior qualification by passing an annual Trial of Position. Because of this policy, the Diamond Sharks have few solahma units.

Over the years the Diamond Sharks have developed a reputation as sharp bidders, forcing opponents to miscalculate and lose more frequently than would be expected. Although such tactics have offended the other Clans, the Sharks view them simply as an extension of the standard efficiency measures.

ALLIES AND ENEMIES

The Diamond Sharks know that building strong relationships with particular Clans, whether adversarial or friendly, could harm their relationships with others. Consequently, they

have steered a path of neutrality with most Clans. However, there are some notable exceptions.

The closest the Sharks have to allies are the Blood Spirits and Fire Mandrills, for whom they serve as intermediaries to the other Clans. They have also had historically good relationships with Clan Wolf. Although relationships with the Wolves under Vlad Ward have cooled, they still maintain limited covert contacts with the Wolves in the ARDC. Similarly, the Ghost Bears respected the Sharks sufficiently to grant them territories when the Bears withdrew from Clan space.

The only Clan the Diamond Sharks despise are the Snow Ravens, who instigated the series of events that lead to the renaming. They have taken every opportunity to slight the Ravens in business, and the Ravens have been atypically passive in their response.

POSSESSIONS

Worlds: 10 (9 shared, 1 exclusive)

Although they always maintained wide-ranging possessions, the recent Trials of Possession have benefited the Diamond Sharks considerably. Clan Ghost Bear gave them their enclaves on Tokasha and Paxon, but though Diamond Shark forces landed on Tokasha, the Khans decided holding that enclave was not cost-effective and withdrew after blooding Gamma Galaxy, choosing instead to consolidate their grip on Paxon. In exchange for giving the Nova Cats military and logistical support in the Cats' withdrawal, the Sharks gained much of the Nova Cat's Barcella and Delios enclaves. The Sharks continue to face trials on Barcella against the Jade Falcons and Ice Hellions. The Clan's greatest gain came against the Smoke Jaguars. The world of Vinton had long been a source of friction between the two Clans, and preparations were underway for a Trial of Possession even before the SLDF attack on Huntress. Within two weeks of the Great Refusal, the Diamond Sharks occupied Vinton, their first exclusive possession.

CLAN FIRE MANDRILL

The Kerensky Exiles introduced the fire mandrill, a member of the genus *mandrillus sphinx*, to Eden where it thrived. Named for its fire-red coat, the fire mandrill earned respect for its aggressiveness and loyalty to the pack, making it an ideal totem animal for one of the new Clans. It seems appropriate, therefore, that the rivalry and aggression between fire mandrill packs should also be reflected in their namesake Clan. The Fire Mandrills are a microcosm of the Clans, broken into a number of factions that each maintain their own traditions, philosophies and methods.

HISTORY

Since their earliest days the Fire Mandrills have fought among themselves. This fractiousness began during Operation Klondike, when each warrior sought to demonstrate his prowess and the strength of his bloodline. The relationship between Bloodname houses was difficult but several banded together to share resources and to advance their own cause on the Clan

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FIRE MANDRILL DEMOGRAPHICS

Affiliation: Crusader

Capital: Shadow

Population (Clan space): 81,719,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 2.3 percent

Self-Sufficiency Index: 96 percent

Leaders

Khan: Amanda Carrol

saKhan: Garret Sainze

Foremaster: Drew Tanaga

Scientist General: Arkady (Crick)

Merchant Factor: Bianca

Master Technician: Lom

Senior Laborer: Todd

Military

Clusters: 30

WarShips: 7

Clan Space Worlds

Atreus (65 percent)

Dagda (26 percent)

Foster (30 percent)

Huntress (13 percent)

Marshall (15 percent)

Shadow (100 percent)

council. These groupings were known as "Kindred Associations" or Kindrasc, although later this would be shortened to Kindraa. Political tensions between the associations had reached the boiling point when the Kindraa Sainze claimed sections of the Widowmaker enclave on Dagda for their own. Recognizing the benefits this would give the Sainze, the rest of Clan Fire Mandrill sought to join one or another faction, leading to a virtual collapse of the Clan's organization.

The system remained stable for many years until the Kindraa Smythe-Jewell sought to strengthen their position. The Fire Mandrills had obtained OmniMechs from Clan Coyote through what the Coyotes described as dubious practices, and the Kindraa Smyth-Jewell gained immeasurably when they traded the system to the Blood Spirits in exchange for territory on Foster. Furthermore, Smythe-Jewell sought to enhance their power by using the Kindraa Payne as pawns in a raid on the Hell's Horses. This would prove Smythe-Jewell's undoing, as the Horses, together with Clan Coyote and allegedly aided by the Kindraa Payne, shattered the Smyth-Jewell association. This provided ample demonstration that while each Kindraa could be likened to a Clan in miniature, they lacked the resources to face another Clan alone. As a result, the Fire Mandrills returned more authority to the Khan and saKhan, which posts are decided by Trials of Possession rather than election, giving the Fire Mandrill leaders power closer to the levels possessed by the Khans of other Clans.

Having fought among themselves for years, the Fire Mandrill warriors were honed to a fine edge and should have won a place in the Operation Revival. However, their factional politics lead to a series of internal trials over who should represent the Clan in the inter-trials for the open slots in the invasion force. These battles shattered the Mandrill Touman, leaving them in a poor position and resulting in their exclusion from the Invasion.

Further losses to the Ice Hellions in the "Fury" campaign and to Clan Burrock on Dagda persuaded the Clan that it was time to rebuild. Although Kindraa rivalry remains a focus of Mandrill life, the Clan sees the need for a unified front. Over the last decade the Kindraa have put aside some of their rivalries and have begun to work together. This has allowed them to retake much of their Dagda enclave from Clan Burrock, as well as to capture large swaths of the former Jaguar enclave on Atreus. However, the internal divisions re-emerged in the force selected to represent the Clan in the Trial of Refusal on Strana Mechty, resulting in their defeat by the Capellan Red Lancers.

SOCIETY

To the Fire Mandrills, the Kindraa and the Bloodname House is the center of their existence. Each Kindraa contains elements of every caste (but not always a full range of sub-castes) and is largely self-sufficient. Kindraa rulers have powers akin to a Khan over their people. However, each Kindraa believes in its own superiority and rarely takes genetic material from others. Although genetic engineering prevents the usual perils of interbreeding, this lack of diversity has resulted in the stagnation of the lines. It is rumored that to inject new blood into these Kindraa, a few have incorporated freeborn DNA into the breeding program.

The Fire Mandrill attitude to bondsmen is mixed. They are leery of outsiders and regard those they take with suspicion. However, they do not wish to waste resources

and although few warriors can expect adoption into the warrior caste, use of bondsmen in civilian castes is as prevalent as in other Clans. Furthermore, the Mandrill's insular and fractious nature makes them bad bondsmen, as the Jade Falcons, among others, recently discovered, and any taken in by other Clans, regardless of caste, will be disruptive. Members of the Kindraa Sainze routinely enact bondsmen.

The Clan's civilian castes are well rounded, but while capable of supporting their Kindraa, the Clan's lack of overall cohesion limits their potential. For example, the scientist caste lacks the pooling of resources that has allowed other Clans to make technological leaps, forcing the Mandrills to acquire technology from outside the Clan. To this end, the Clan's merchants, the least fractious of the castes, have achieved some prominence, frequently working with the Clan Diamond Shark. The Shark merchants act as middlemen and mediators, minimizing the Mandrill's contact with other Clans. However, there is no doubt that the warriors rule the Mandrills.

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In most cases the honor of the Kindraa is placed above that of the individual, and this leads to surprisingly good relations between the castes. Most warriors are willing to help out with any work that needs to be done, strengthening the bonds between them and the civilians. The notable exception is Kindraa Sainze, who value individual honor and consequently have a poorer relationship with non-warrior members.

While the Mandrills are a Crusader Clan, many of the Kindraa hold to Warden principals. The current Khans are from the Crusader Kindraa Mattila-Carol and Sainze and have worked for the Crusader cause. Historically, the Clan has been more neutral in its politics, dominated by the pro-Warden Kindraa Payne and the pro-Crusader Sainze. With the Clan's defeat on Strana Mechty, their politics are liable to return to the middle ground.

MILITARY

Overall, the Mandrill Touman is well rounded, but the composition of units varies by Kindraa. For example, Kindraa Payne is staunchly pro-MechWarrior to the exclusion of other branches, while Kindraa Beyl-Grant and Kindraa Mick-Kreese have a pro-aero-space bias. Vehicles and conventional infantry are represented in the Clan, but only in Kindraas Payne and Kline. Each Kindraa fields the equivalent of a Galaxy of troops, each comprising between three and five Clusters with associated support services.

ALLIES AND ENEMIES

The Mandrill's nature means that they have great difficulty accepting outsiders as allies, and over the years only two Clans, the Blood Spirits and Diamond Sharks, have had anything like good relationships. Most other Clans are simply regarded as outsiders, and are held in contempt. However, the constant raiding by Clans Burrock and Smoke Jaguar earned them the status of traditional enemies and the Star Adders have inherited the Mandrill-Burrock feud.

Since invasion of the Inner Sphere, the Mandrill's relationship with Clan Steel Viper, hitherto regarded as little more than an annoyance on the shared world of Marshall, has deteriorated. Following their activation, the Vipers denigrated the Mandrill's performance in the pre-Invasion trials, prompting a number of Trials of Grievance that have spilled over into a general Mandrill-Viper feud.

The Mandrills have long viewed Clan Coyote with disdain. In the Mandrills' view, the Hell's Horses had just cause for attacking the Kindraa Smythe-Jewel, but the Coyotes were just opportunists.

POSSESSIONS

Worlds: 6 (1 exclusive, 5 shared)

The holdings of Clan Fire Mandrill are surprisingly compact; all but Dagda are located within two jumps of Strana Mechty. The Mandrills' failure to expand beyond these, the oldest of the colony worlds, is symptomatic of the Clan's internal divisions, but that they held onto the territory is also a testament to their prowess.

In the last few years the Clan has retaken much of the territory it lost to Clan Burrock on Dagda, and has solidified its hold on Atrous. After their defeat on Strana Mechty, the

Mandrills failed to exploit the ongoing land grab. Since the SLDF withdrawal, the Mandrill Kindraa Matilla-Carol have occupied Pahn City on Huntress but are locked in clashes with Clan Star Adder.

CLAN GHOST BEAR

The Strana Mechty ghost bear is a patient predator that waits hours, even days, buried in the snow, for its prey to come into view. When the moment is right, the massive animal strikes with such lightning speed and strength that the naked eye can barely see the ghost bear at all. The surface of the snow settles again with only a faint bloodstain as evidence of the fierce and deadly battle.

Like its namesake, Clan Ghost Bear is a conservative hunter. Never hasty, the prevailing Ghost Bear attitude is "wait and see." When the Bear finally moves, the results are swift and often extreme. Once the Bear has its mind set on something, nothing can stand in its way. Such is the Way of the Bear.

HISTORY

The Ghost Bears are the only Clan to be founded by a married couple, and it almost did not happen. Hans Jorgensson and Sandra Tseng were valued advisors to Nicholas Kerensky. Although they were married, Nicholas had decided to place each of them in separate Clans to make best use of his most valuable people. Tseng and Jorgensson agreed that they would rather die together than live apart, and so they set out on a journey into the antarctic of Strana Mechty.

Their journey became the stuff of legends when a family of ghost bears reportedly saved them from death by starvation and exposure. Regaining their strength, they returned to the Clans. The solidarity shown by Tseng and Jorgensson so impressed Nicholas that he left them stay together as Khans of the Ghost Bear Clan.

The Ghost Bears thrived in the Golden Century, but their cautious attitudes kept them from standing out. The Clan's main advancements were industrial; the asteroid-mining techniques they developed during this time gave them a distinct edge in production.

When Operation Revival began, the Ghost Bears earned a place in the initial invasion force, attacking the Draconis Combine and Free Rasalhague Republic corridor. Easy victories in the Periphery and early encounters with Rasalhague troops lulled the Bear Khan into a false sense of security. Together with a lack of sufficient supplies, this resulted in a poor showing for the Bears through the first two waves of the operation.

The turning point was the death of Khan Theresa DeVillar. The Clan's dynamic Oathmaster, Aletha Kabrinski, succeeded her and immediately called for the removal of the Clan's other Khan, citing poor performance in the invasion to date. Kabrinski nominated Bjorn Jorgensson, who handily defeated the sitting Khan to take over command of the Clan. Jorgensson and Kabrinski immediately initiated sweeping reforms, putting the Clan back on track, and their performance in the later stages of the invasion was impressive. On Tukayyid, they managed to take

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GHOST BEAR DEMOGRAPHICS

Affiliation: Warden

Capital: Alshain (IS)

Population (Clan space): 24,294,000

Population growth rate: 2.1 percent (43/22)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 99 percent

Leaders

Khan: Bjorn Jorgensson

saKhan: Aletha Kabrinski

Foremaster: Laurie Tseng

Scientist-General: Jorge (Agassiz)

Merchant Factor: Werner

Master Technician: Alejandro

Labor Leader: Alia

Military

Clusters: 58

WarShips: 14

Clan Space Worlds

Arcadia (25 percent)

one of their objectives, while all other Clans but Wolf and Jade Falcon failed to achieve any sort of victory.

In the years following Tukayyid, the Bears moved to solidify their position in the Inner Sphere. Known for treating their civilians well, the Bears continued that course, working closely with local governments to keep the population as content as possible under their new leadership. Ambitious industrial expansion projects were widespread, keeping employment rates up and enhancing the Bear Touman in the process.

The Ghost Bears were so successful in their Occupation Zone that Khan Jorgensson proposed a bold plan: to move the entire Clan permanently into the Inner Sphere, streamlining supply and manufacturing and strengthening the Clan. Putting the matter to a vote of the entire Warrior caste, as are all important matters that concern all Ghost Bear castes, the Clan voted to move. Although relocating from Clan space was not in violation of any Clan laws or traditions, the move was conducted in secrecy to prevent undue predation against Ghost Bear holdings or vessels during the relocation.

The return to the Inner Sphere began in early 3055, and by mid-3059 was nearly complete. A pair of massive *Leviathan*-class WarShips transported huge numbers of civilians in secret. Each had the appearance of a fearsome battlecruiser, but was actually a large-scale armored transport. Each *Leviathan* can transport more than a quarter of a million passengers, plus supplies and prefabricated settlements. Supposedly patrolling the Clan's Deep Periphery supply lines, they were in fact moving millions of Ghost Bear civilians to the Inner Sphere.

The capture and adoption by Clan Ghost Bear of Ragnar Magnusson, Prince of Rasalhague and former warrior of Clan Wolf, put the seal on the Ghost Bears' relocation. Currently a Star colonel in the Bear Touman, his presence legitimizes the Bears' claim to their Inner Sphere possessions, and it seems likely that Ragnar will eventually be elevated to a high position within the Clan.

SOCIETY

Hard work and dedication are cornerstones of Ghost Bear daily life. Though these values are typical of the Clans, the Bears further reinforce them with the concept of family. A word repugnant to all other Clans, *family* has a unique meaning to this Clan founded by a married couple. In their years as the Ghost Bears' first Khans, Tseng and Jorgensson imparted to their initial forty warriors a sense of camaraderie and fellowship. To them, the Clan was a family, and the father of that family was the Khan.

As the years passed, those first warriors passed this sense of pride and belonging to those under their command. The intensity of the relationship faded as the Clan grew, but the general sense remained. Ghost Bear warriors maintain tight bonds with their trothkin and starmates. True friendship among them is widespread, and some

even say love is common among the ranks (although the Bears deny this).

In the civilian castes, where families are common in other Clans, the concept is far closer to the Inner Sphere norm than in other Clans. Children generally stay with their parents rather than being raised in community crèches. In most cases, this means the crèches are more like day care than permanent homes for the children, and the parents take care of their own children as much as they can while still performing their duties for the Clan.

MILITARY

The Ghost Bear Touman centers on strength and speed, employing 'Mechs with powerful arrays of weapons, often to the point where armor and heat sinks are compromised. They use fast 'Mechs such as the *Fire Moth* to deploy their significant force of Elementals, the largest of any Clan. In fact, the Ghost Bears have deployed an entire Galaxy consisting solely of Elementals. Generally, Ghost Bear clusters consist of two Stars of 'Mechs, one Star of Elementals and a mixed Nova of either 'Mechs and Elementals or 'Mechs and aerospace fighters.

Ghost Bear training is harsh and especially physical. All warriors undergo personal combat training, and it is interesting to note that Clan Ghost Bear never adopted the aerospace pilot genotype for its pilots, instead using what other Clans would consider MechWarrior stock for that role. Many suspect the Bears made this move not only because of their famous reluctance to adopt new

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methods, but also because the pilot genotype makes for poor hand-to-hand combatants.

ALLIES AND ENEMIES

The Bears are a powerful but moderate Clan, and as such offend few and have worked alongside almost every Clan over the years. However, the only Clan that could be termed a true ally is Snow Raven, who have worked with the Ghost Bears periodically for the last hundred years. The Ghost Bears' comparatively weak aerospace force is complemented nicely by the Ravens, who benefit from the Bear's exceptional Elemental force in battles where the two work together.

A powerful Clan always attracts rivals, and the Ghost Bears are no exception. Topping the list are the Hell's Horses, who have had long-running border disputes with the Ghost Bears. One such conflict in the Golden Century resulted in the death of Kilbourne Jorgensson, arguably the most popular Ghost Bear Khan in history. The Ghost Bears have held a simmering hatred of the Horses ever since.

Also on less than sterling terms with the Bears are the Steel Vipers, with whom they just never got along, and Clan Wolf. The Wolf Clan enmity dates back to the Annihilation of Clan Wolverine and the fact that the Ghost Bears were denied the right to participate in the trial. The Bears let a Wolverine unit slip past them in spite, and have regretted it ever since. The

scar of that incident is borne to this date by all Ghost Bear warriors, who also harbor a long-standing grudge against the Wolf Clan for failing in the honor of fully destroying the Wolverines when they had the chance.

POSSESSIONS

Worlds: 43 (Clan space: 1 shared world. Inner Sphere: 42)

Before their relocation to the Inner Sphere, the Ghost Bears held considerable territory in Clan space. However, they now maintain only their enclave on Arcadia and the traditional posting at Strana Mechty; their remaining holdings were ceded to allies or lost to Trials of Possession. All other Ghost Bear troops and civilians have been relocated to their Inner Sphere occupation zone, which has been named the Ghost Bear Dominion. The Ghost Bears recently captured the Inner Sphere worlds of Leoben, Skandia and Radstadt in Trials of Possession against Clan Wolf.

CLAN GOLIATH SCORPION

The Babylonian goliath scorpion is renowned for its suicidal defense of nests and its lethal venom. The latter forms an important part of Clan Goliath Scorpion's rituals, which has earned this Clan's members equal measures of respect and disdain from their fellow Clans.



GOLIATH SCORPION DEMOGRAPHICS

Affiliation: Warden

Capital: Roche

Population (Clan space): 67,238,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 2.4 percent (84/60)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 91 percent

Leaders

Khan: Ariel Suvorov

saKhan: Nelson Elam

Foremaster: Kyrie Ben-Shimon

Scientist-General: Germon (Wilkinson)

Merchant Factor: Palos

Master Technician: Noam

Senior Laborer: Suu

Military

Clusters: 24

WarShips: 17

Clan Space Worlds

Dagda (29 percent)

Huntress (18 percent)

Marshall (36 percent)

Roche (83 percent)

Tokasha (23 percent)

SOCIETY

The Goliath Scorpions are generally less disdainful of freeborns than other Clans, having relied on them to compensate for the fatalities resulting from warriors' use of scorpion venom in vision quests. Trueborns maintain something of their Clan-wide mystique, but are not regarded as the pinnacle of evolution. Similarly, Bloodnamed warriors are respected, but not put on a pedestal. These relatively egalitarian attitudes stem in part from the Scorpion "living heraldry" system.

Living heraldry seeks to turn the history of the Clan and its members into works of art that outlive them. Individual warriors use living heraldry as a visible codex, announcing their own abilities and the history of their bloodlines. Rather than medieval-style coats

HISTORY

The Scorpions' founder, Cyrus Elam, was not a typical soldier-Clansman. He was a combat engineer specializing in bridge-building and demolitions, skills that proved vital in the advance on Dagda. His saKhan, Jenna Scott, was equally unusual: an intelligence officer whose influence led to the Scorpions' specialization in information-gathering. The Clan's third and unofficial founder was Ethan Moreau, a member of the SLDF who rejected Nicholas Kerensky's call for a second Exodus and remained in the Pentagon worlds throughout the civil war. After the liberation, he underwent the public confession and humiliation known as Thamzing. Moreau's genuine contrition for his error in remaining behind so impressed Nicholas that he created surkai, the Rite of Forgiveness. Moreau was allowed into Clan Goliath Scorpion, but was denied a Bloodname and a place in the eugenics program because he was not among the original 800 Clan founders.

As the Golden Century dawned, a flood of new warriors outstripped the available machines in the Scorpion Touman. In an effort to weed out lesser warriors, the Clan's leaders created a coming-of-age ritual that required a new warrior to subject himself to the sting of a goliath scorpion. The death toll from the venom soon grew high enough to threaten the genetic stability of the Scorpion Bloodlines and force a halt to the practice. Khan Shandra Dinour then ordered the scientist caste to find an alternative that maintained the ritual's spirit while lessening its lethality, without destroying the valuable visionary effects imparted by the scorpion's sting. Two years later, the scientists introduced necrosia, a derivative of the scorpion venom. Necrosia soon became a part of almost every cadet's induction into the Goliath Scorpion warrior caste.

When Clan Coyote developed the OmniMech, the poor showing of the Scorpion military in attempts to capture the new technology embarrassed the entire Clan. In an effort to increase the martial skills of her warriors, Khan Dinour created a series of tournaments known as the Circle of Honor, based on the Martial Olympiad of the Star League. This gladiatorial tradition still thrives in the present day.

As the Golden Century progressed, Clan Goliath Scorpion's warriors increasingly sought personal connections to the half-forgotten glories of the past, using necrosia-induced "vision quests" to direct their searches for ancient relics. The warriors claimed that the venom cocktail allowed them to see beyond the mundane world, making connections between artifacts from the past and events of the future. Many Scorpions became solitary wanderers, lacking the cohesion of the other Clans. The actions of these so-called seekers often led Clan Goliath Scorpion into skirmishes with other Clans—their only official contact with outsiders for much of their history. More often than not, the small groups of nomadic Scorpions fell prey to their better-organized and -equipped neighbors, hampering their Clan's development.

In recent years the Khans of Clan Goliath Scorpion have recognized these weaknesses and undertaken steps to compensate for them. They have entered into negotiations with Clan Snow Raven, offering to trade Scorpion military backing in future enterprises for equipment—mainly aerospace fighters—and Raven tactical advisors. The Ravens are driving a hard bargain, but a deal appears imminent. In addition, Khan Ariel Suvorov's reforms of the Scorpion Touman have amply demonstrated their success in recent months through the Clan's victories in the Trial of Possession for Ghost Bear holdings on Tokasha.

of arms, living heraldry involves collecting animals, objects and followers that somehow express the individual warrior's identity. Together with their vision quests, the Scorpions regard living heraldry as a form of practical mysticism that allows them to honor the past—particularly the Star League—and to reassemble it with relics.

As part of this system, bondsmen are closely associated with their bondholders, regarded as living trophies and serving as squires. These bondsmen provide a tangible demonstration of a warrior's abilities. Members of the technician caste act as de facto bondsmen to the warriors they serve, remaining with an individual warrior throughout their careers rather than with a given military unit. Other Clans generally refrain from taking Goliath Scorpions as bondsmen or adopting Bloodnamed Scorpion warriors, as so many Scorpion warriors are physically and psychologically addicted to scorpion venom. With those liabilities, taking them into another Clan is frequently considered a waste of effort.

The nomadic lifestyle adopted by so many members of this Clan has hampered the Scorpions' technological and economic development; consequently, most other Clans consider the Scorpions backward. The Scorpions also consider an individual's vision quest a more important obligation than the Clan's military goals, a distinctly un-Clanlike attitude that has led many other Clans to shun them. However, this same absence of a rigid infrastructure and relative lack of resources has spared them the raiding suffered by many other Clans.

The Scorpions are staunch Wardens, but their interpretation of that philosophy deviates from the norm. Like other Wardens, they do not believe that the Star League should be recreated through conquest. Instead, they believe it must be reborn through rediscovery of the past. They view the people of the Inner Sphere as misguided, to be brought back onto the true path through the teachings of their betters.

MILITARY

The Goliath Scorpion Touman is built around mixed Trinaries tailored to the needs of the unit and the situation, allowing Scorpion forces considerable flexibility to meet any opposition. Most units are overloaded with ground forces, a weakness the current Khans are addressing. However, many of the Scorpions' new aerospace pilots have more experience providing ground support than dogfighting or achieving air superiority.

Small-unit actions and night engagements typify Scorpion tactics. However, as with the incorporation of aerospace assets, the Clan is expanding its repertoire of skills so as to be less predictable on the battlefield. Most Scorpion units have mascot animals, reflecting this Clan's fondness for pets.

ALLIES AND ENEMIES

The Scorpions' isolationism and tendency to stay out of disputes between Clans has given them few enemies or allies. Politically, the Scorpions have followed the lead of Clan Wolf, regarding themselves in debt to the Clan of Kerensky for Ethan Moreau's long-ago redemption. This alliance is somewhat one-sided, however, as the Wolves barely acknowledge the Scorpions' existence.

This Clan's only real enemies are the Ice Hellions, with whom they have clashed for many years.

POSSESSIONS

Worlds: 5 (all shared)

Until recently, Goliath Scorpion territory had remained constant, all of it underdeveloped by Clan standards. The Clan's recent expansion on Tokasha, in which its warriors claimed part of the former Ghost Bear holdings in the face of similar moves by Clans Jade Falcon and Hell's Horses, represents the Goliath Scorpions' first appreciable growth since the early years of the Golden Century. The move netted them several heavy industrial sites, but it remains to be seen if the Scorpions can retain possession of them in the face of more experienced enemies. The Clan has also taken control of the Abysmal continent on Huntress.

CLAN HELL'S HORSES

Attempts to adapt horses to the deserts of Circe resulted in a carnivorous beast uncontrollable through conventional taming methods. Scheduled for termination, these animals were released by a sympathetic soldier, and have since thrived on Circe. Respected for its tenacity and unadulterated aggressiveness, the hell's horse made an ideal Clan totem.

HISTORY

Founded by the commander of the SLDF's Thirty-fifth Infantry Division, Clan Hell's Horses has believed in combined-arms operations since its inception. The Clan served in a support role during the campaign to liberate Eden, which earned its members less prestige than the other Clans but also meant proportionally fewer casualties. This gave the Hell's Horses an advantage during the post-war era.

For many years, the Clan focused on colonization, expansion and self-improvement. In expanding the boundaries of Clan space, the Hell's Horses took a major risk that the increased freedom necessary for successful colonization might result in open revolt against the strictures of ordinary Clan society. Other Clans tightly controlled exploration and colonization for exactly that reason. Whether through careful planning or good luck, however, the Horses avoided any major incidents.

Apolitical for many years, they remained in the background, sparring with their neighbors only for resources or new technology. Many Hell's Horses encounters resulted in negotiated settlements—most notably the deal with the Wolf Clan for Elemental suits, which colored the relationship between the two Clans until the present day.

The turning point in the relationship of the Hell's Horses with the other Clans came when the Horses developed the genetic enhancement techniques used to create the Elemental phenotype. This innovation forced the other Clans to reevaluate the Horses. A series of Trials for the techniques and genetic material ensued, including a treacherous assault by the Fire Mandrill Kindraa Smythe-Jewell, in which Kindraa Payne unwittingly served as a diversion while the Smythe-Jewell forces took their objectives. Disgusted by these un-Clanlike tactics, the



HELL'S HORSES DEMOGRAPHICS

Affiliation: Crusader

Capital: Niles

Population (Clan space): 95,317,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 2.1 percent (71/50)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 93 percent

Leaders

Khan: Malavai Fletcher

saKhan: Tanya DeLaurel

Loremaster: Helena Fletcher

Scientist-General: Mohamed (Kepler)

Merchant Factor: Sonja

Master Technician: Amanda

Senior Laborer: Jan

Military

Clusters: 37

WarShips: 10

Clan Space Worlds

Bearclaw (30 percent)

Eden (31 percent)

Hoard (10 percent)

Kirin (100 percent)

Niles (100 percent)

Strato Domingo (35 percent)

Tiber (50 percent)

Tokasha (13 percent)

Horses called for a Trial of Annihilation against the Mandrills, but were refused. Soon afterward, they allied with Clan Coyote and in 2872 crushed the offending Kindraa. This action earned the Horses the respect of other Clans and demonstrated the benefits of inter-Clan cooperation.

In 2921, battles against the Ghost Bears for control of Tokasha escalated out of hand. The bitter fighting involved atypically large forces, with each side fielding an entire Galaxy. The Hell's Horses had the upper hand for much of the battle, until Bear Khan Kilbourne Jorgensson was killed and the Bears went into a frenzy. The maddened Bears shattered Horse units, forcing them to withdraw. Both Clans have nursed a feud ever since—the Horses for the loss of their manufacturing facilities on Tokasha, and the Bears for the death of their Khan.

During the early thirty-first century, the Horses shifted drastically from political neutrality to clear support of the Crusader cause. They participated enthusiastically in the Trials of Possession held for positions in the Inner Sphere invasion force, but failed to win a place. The failure angered many in the Clan, and after Tukayyid they supported every initiative to resume the invasion.

Clan Hell's Horses fought in the Great Refusal on Strana Mechty in defense of the invasion, and were horrified by the ease with which Free Rasalhague's Third Drakons defeated them. In the months that followed, they took out their frustration on their neighbors. They fought under contract to the Wolf Clan on Hoard, as well as on their own to seize former Ghost Bear assets on Bearclaw and to reclaim their old possessions on Tokasha.

Clan Hell's Horses seems to be facing a brighter future; they recently took three Inner Sphere worlds from Clan Wolf. It remains to be seen whether they can capitalize on this de facto occupation zone.

SOCIETY

The Hell's Horses believe that everyone has his or her place. The Clan's castes cooperate with each other, enjoying generally good relations. The warrior caste remains dominant, but its members listen to and respect the opinions of the civilian castes. However, the Horses' relative lack of aggressiveness and absence of major politicking has led other Clans to hold them in low esteem until their recent successes in the Trials of Possession for former Ghost Bear assets. Despite these gains, however, the Hell's Horses clearly remain followers rather than leaders. On many issues they still defer to their "brothers" in the Wolf Clan, and rumors of Khan Fletcher's mental instability have not helped their cause.

The Hell's Horses refuse to take bondsmen from sources they consider dishonorable, including bandits and Clan Fire Mandrills (except for Kindraa Payne). Their ongoing feud with Clan Ghost Bear has not kept them from attempting to capture Ghost Bear bondsmen, whom they regard as living trophies. Many such prisoners are humiliated and abused, but not to the extent that the Smoke Jaguars used to abuse their prisoners. The Ghost Bears have begun re-ciprocating, and so the two Clans have little expectation of leniency when they clash.

While respecting the benefits of new technology, the Horses regard it as a means to an end. New technologies allow them to work better, especially warriors who would otherwise be retired because of injury. Khan Malavai Fletcher is a staunch

proponent of cybernetics—understandable, if one believes the allegations that cybernetic parts have replaced half of the unstable Khan's body.

Politically, the Hell's Horses are somewhat unusual. The Clan's rank and file are Wardens, but to avoid friction with the other Crusader Clans, Khan Fletcher has ensured that Crusaders hold all senior posts. In general, the Horses see the Inner Sphere as a lost cause in need of redemption, not territory to be conquered and ruled.

Honor and tradition bind this Clan together, as expressed in its unique rituals. Most notable is the Branding, in which a team of warriors hunt and capture a Circian hell's horse to brand it. Those who succeed without losing any team members in the process are awarded the prestigious Mark of the Horse.

THE CLANS

MILITARY

The Hell's Horses have a bias toward infantry and vehicles, reversing standard Clan doctrine by regarding 'Mechs and fighters as support troops. This combat philosophy often limits their flexibility, and ultimately proved their undoing in the Great Refusal. Aside from that setback, however, the Horses appear to have suffered few adverse results from their unusual emphasis on conventional forces. One reason for this is the size of their Touman, which is unusually large for a Home Clan. The Horses have historically beefed up their forces by allowing failed warriors a second Trial of Position. If a warrior fails to qualify for his or her primary warrior sub-caste, that warrior may undertake a second Trial for assignment to a lower sub-caste; for example, MechWarriors to vehicle crews, Elementals to conventional infantry, or aerospace pilots to ship crews.

The Horses have also formalized several ranks that other Clans consider junior or senior postings within the same rank. Nova commander denotes command of two Stars—a Nova or Binary—and falls between Star commander and Star captain in seniority. Nova captain denotes command of four Stars—two Novas or Binaries—and falls between Star captain and Star colonel.

ALLIES AND ENEMIES

Since the long-ago battle for Tokasha, the Hell's Horses have hated the Ghost Bears. The Bears return this enmity in full, and the Horses were furious to learn of their relocation to the Inner Sphere. To a lesser extent, the Horses dislike the Fire Mandrills, though this grudge stems from the actions of the defunct Kindraa Smythe-Jewell and therefore carries less weight. The Horses have a grudging respect for Kindraa Payne, whose members they regard as the only honorable Fire Mandrills.

The schism within the Wolf Clan has confused the Horses, who historically considered themselves Wolf allies. The number of Warden-leaning officers within the Horses does not help the Clan's relations with the new Crusader Wolves, but the two Clans recently undertook a joint military venture on Hord in spite of their political differences. In addition, Hell's Horses is currently waiting for the Wolf reaction to the Horses' occupation of three of their Inner Sphere worlds. Though not formally allied with them, the Horses respect the Coyotes, Steel Vipers, Snow Ravens and Jade Falcons, all of whom they believe have demonstrated admirable traits and abilities over the years.

POSSESSIONS

Worlds: 11 (Clan space: 8 worlds; 6 shared, 2 exclusive. Inner Sphere: 3)

The Horse Touman has performed well in recent months, successfully opposing the Jade Falcons and Ice Hellions to recapture some of the assets they lost to the Ghost Bears in 2921. They also managed to capture parts of the Bear capital on Bearclaw, along with sections of the Nova Cat enclave on the same world. They prepared for a major conflict with the Snow Ravens, to whom the Bears had given most of the world, but man-

aged to reach a compromise that kept fighting to a minimum. On Kirin, they took advantage of the Smoke Jaguars' weakness to regain exclusive control of the colony world, returning it to the status quo of half a century ago.

Working under contract to the Wolves, the Twelfth Mechanized Cluster attacked the former Nova Cat world of Hord. Originally slated to aid the Wolves in a renewed invasion of the Inner Sphere, the unit instead seized a foothold on the planet for the Wolves. However, Khan Vlad Ward was obliged to grant the Horses half the gains of the campaign; each Clan now controls roughly 10 percent of the planet, and the fighting continues. The Clan also now possesses the formerly Wolf worlds of Engadin, Stanzach and Vorarlberg in the Inner Sphere.

CLAN ICE HELLION

A predator native to Hector, the ice hellion preyed on many of the planet's early colonists. Nicholas Kerensky respected the creature for its predatory instinct and pack-hunting skill, and so named a Clan for it.

HISTORY

The founders of Clan Ice Hellion chose to mimic their totem animal's speed and pack mentality. Using light and medium 'Mechs and aerospace fighters, they served as scouts in Operation Klondike. This role led to some friction with Nicholas Kerensky, as the Hellions felt he had denied them the fights they deserved. The Clan still bears this proverbial chip on the shoulder, aggressively defending its martial abilities.

Light but powerful, the Ice Hellions did well in the early years after the Pentagon campaign, using their speed to devastating effect in various conflicts with other Clans. The other Clans soon developed effective counter-tactics, however, and the Hellions found themselves assailed from all sides. For a time, Hellion saKhan Lucius Moore was a hero to his Clan for his seeming ability to win in hopeless situations. Then senior Khan Cage discovered that Moore was using drugs to enhance his troops' abilities. Enraged at what he took as a grievous slight against the Clan eugenics program, Cage brought charges before the Grand Council and called for a Trial of Grievance against Moore. The fighting that followed was essentially a civil war within the Hellions, costing them 60 percent of their strength but freeing them of the taint of saKhan Moore's dishonorable actions. Other Clans probed the Hellions' weakness, but the Hellions fended them off. To compensate for their lower numbers, they developed several new technologies, including the enhanced-formula endo-steel and ferro-fibrous armor used in modern OmniMechs.

In the debate over whether or not to invade the Inner Sphere, the Ice Hellions were avid Crusaders. When the Grand Council agreed to the Warden-sponsored Dragoon Compromise in the year 3000, Hellion Khan Jena Norizuchi was outraged. Going against the Grand Council's decision, she prepared to launch a pre-emptive invasion of the Inner Sphere. SaKhan Ernest Wick declared a secret Trial of Grievance against her for going against the Council's mandate, and once again the Ice



ICE HELLION DEMOGRAPHICS

Affiliation: Crusader

Capital: Hector

Population (Clan space): 101,309,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 3.1 percent (82/51)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 91 percent

Leaders

Khan: Asa Taney

saKhan: Sellen Cage

Loemaster: Jonas Cage

Scientist-General: Ken (Pascal)

Merchant Factor: Martine

Master Technician: Lukas

Senior Laborer: Lew

Military

Clusters: 21

WarShips: 13

Clan Space Worlds

Atreus (35 percent)

Babylon (23 percent)

Barcella (38 percent)

Foster (30 percent)

Hector (100 percent)

Hoard (40 percent)

Huntress (8 percent)

Londerholm (68 percent)

Marshall (9 percent)

New Kent (6 percent)

Tathis (30 percent)

serving distinct roles. The Hellions even train their freeborns in separate camps from trueborn warriors. Most freeborns serve in flurry units, militias that contain regular armor and infantry and that bulk out the Hellion Touman. The Hellions acquired Elementals and battle armor late, and so have a poor opinion of them.

Hellions found themselves fighting a civil war. The details of this so-called secret Trial did not emerge until recently, save that saKhan Wick won and the Hellions kept faith with the Grand Council.

When the call finally went out for the invasion in 3048, the Hellions fared poorly in the Trials for inclusion in the invasion force. Outraged, many Hellion warriors vented their frustration in the "Hellion's Fury" campaign. This series of raids throughout Clan space netted the Hellions many resources and much territory, but also alienated them from many of their fellow Home Clans.

In recent years, Khan Asa Taney has attempted to use the dissatisfaction among the Home Clans to form a coalition that would elect him ilKhan and elevate the Hellions to Invading Clan status. Even after the Khans of the Invading Clans destroyed his power base, Taney remained close to the centers of power, and was one of the four Khans who accompanied the ilKhan when they met with Victor Steiner-Davion to negotiate the Great Refusal. During that Trial, the Hellions met the Nova Cats and were shattered. Khan Taney was badly injured by Nova Cat Khan Severen Leroux, and only returned to active duty in November of 3060.

SOCIETY

Ice Hellion society follows Clan traditions, with warriors regarded as clearly superior to the civilian castes. Inter-caste relations remain generally even, though the warriors distrust the merchant caste. Believing merchant ways inherently corrupt, the Clan Council assigns troops to escort and keep watch over all merchant vessels.

The people of Clan Ice Hellion are hard-working, thriving on the marginal worlds that the Clans claim as their own. This work ethic has forged strong bonds within the technician and laborer castes. Both know that the other castes undervalue them, and are thus very supportive of each other. Family units show similarly strong ties, as do work groups and military units. Appreciation of others' abilities within the family or unit is a natural extension of the bond within Hellion "packs" (as they frequently term their various subgroups), and this willingness to recognize the talents of others has made performance arts a common pastime.

Bondsmen are a feature of Hellion life, particularly civilians taken in raids or when acquiring territory. Expansionistic and belligerent, the Hellions know that bondsmen are living evidence of their military strength. However, few captured warriors are allowed to become abtakha, principally because of problems adapting to the Hellion's emphasis on speed and other unique battle tactics.

The idealization of speed colors all aspects of Ice Hellion life. The Hellions place considerable emphasis on first impressions and snap judgments rather than long-term contemplation and its associated second-guessing. Such an attitude often works well in combat, where swift reaction time can mean the difference between life and death; in politics or business, however, it can pose major problems. The Hellions do not think things through, which has hurt their mercantile concerns as well as their leaders' political ambitions.

Almost all members of this Clan are strong believers in technology, but none more so than the warriors. Anything that enhances their machines' speed or a warrior's reaction time—more powerful engines, lighter components or EI implants—is much prized in Clan Ice Hellion.

MILITARY

The Hellions despise the necessity of including freeborns in their combat units, but the small size of their Touman compared with the size of their territories requires this practice. Trueborn and freeborn warriors rarely mix, forming their own units and

THE CLANS

The Hellions place less emphasis on sibkos than other Clans, breaking them up during training to foster self-reliance among the troops. They believe that by weakening the links to the sibko, a new warrior will develop stronger ties to his or her new unit.

Aside from their penchant for speed, Hellion warriors are best known (and much derided) for their ability to "talk a good fight." The Wolves take particular enjoyment in baiting the Hellions for this habit.

ALLIES AND ENEMIES

The Ice Hellions believe so much in their own strength that they see little need to develop alliances with other Clans. They occasionally form alliances of convenience, but nothing that lasts beyond a single campaign or event.

Despite the Hellion's Fury campaign, the Clan has no real enemies. They share a mutual antipathy with the Wolves, who regard the Hellions as ineffectual and who often refer to them as "rime-stoats" (a type of weasel). The Hellions understandably dislike the Wolves for this attitude, and also for Khan Vlad Ward's dismissal of Asa Taney's efforts to advance the Hellion cause. Despite Taney's incapacity after the Great Refusal, this antipathy looks set to develop into a full-blown feud.

POSSESSIONS

Worlds: 11 (10 shared, 1 exclusive)

The Hellions made extensive gains in the Hellions' Fury campaign, particularly in the area spinward of Strana Mechty. They have added to these gains in the recent Trials of Possession for Ghost Bear, Smoke Jaguar and Nova Cat holdings, taking sections of Barcella, Hoard, Atreus, Londerholm and Huntress. However, all five worlds remain contested. With the Hellion Touman stretched to its limit, the Clan may have to abandon some of its new gains.

CLAN JADE FALCON

Named for a genetically engineered Eden predator, Clan Jade Falcon has historically ranked among the most powerful and active Clans. Aggressive and tenacious, this Clan constantly strives to advance its own agenda without losing sight of Nicholas Kerensky's teachings (as the Falcons interpret them). Staunch traditionalists, the Falcons were the driving force behind the development of the Crusader philosophy.

HISTORY

The Falcons performed admirably in the liberation of the Pentagon worlds, but fell short of Nicholas Kerensky's expectations. His decision to join the Wolf Clan gave rise to a bitter feud between the two Clans that continues to this day. After shaking off the near-fatal malaise that had gripped them in the wake of Kerensky's choice, the Falcons transformed their Clan into one of the foremost advocates of the Founder's ideals.

Viewed as hidebound by some other Clans, the Falcons developed mercantile and military interests simultaneously. Taking a slower approach than other Clans brought them sus-

tainable growth with appropriate support from the civilian castes, and the Falcons ended the Golden Century as one of the most powerful Clans.

The Falcons led the Crusader movement to invade of the Inner Sphere, and continued to push for invasion despite the Wolf Clan's blocking tactics. Their efforts ultimately won them a place in Operation Revival, and Falcon Khan Elias Crichton became one of ilKhan Leo Showers' most trusted advisors. The Falcons did not perform as well as expected, however, and so ilKhan Ulric Kerensky paired them with the Steel Vipers—one of their bitterest rivals—after ilKhan Showers' death. Achieving a draw against the Corn Guards on Tukayyid restored some of the Falcons' prestige, but they chafed under the truce signed by ilKhan Kerensky. They undertook several schemes to abrogate it, the last of which resulted in the removal of the Warden ilKhan and the shattering of the Wolf Clan. Their own Clan suffered as greatly, however, leaving the Falcons too weak to exploit their victory politically. Lincoln Osis of the Smoke Jaguars, rather than a Falcon Khan, became the new ilKhan.

With the Smoke Jaguars gone, the Falcons are once more on the ascendant. They repulsed a recent attack by Clan Steel Viper, in the process strengthening their Inner Sphere holdings. In addition, backed by the volume of resources only available to the invading Clans, the Falcons have rebuilt their military in record time.

SOCIETY

The Falcons believe wholeheartedly in the right of the warrior caste to rule. Trueborn warriors look down on freeborns, and all warriors look down on the other castes. Unlike the extremist Smoke Jaguars, however, the Falcons recognize the importance of the civilian castes to the war effort. While often brusque in their dealings with civilians, Falcon warriors recognize that the Touman would suffer without their efforts. Falcon civilians therefore enjoy a standard of living above average for the Clan worlds, in recognition of their contribution to society.

Given their martial bent, the Falcons have an unusually large mercantile network, second only to that of the business-minded Diamond Sharks. Without the materials to fight, warriors are nothing; because the merchant caste provides those materials, its members receive considerable support. Similarly, members of the scientist caste command considerable respect for their wide-ranging work on behalf of the Clan. However, this respect does not translate into much personal freedom; the Falcons have always crushed rebellion without mercy. Such a hard-line approach works well with Clansmen, who know what to expect, but has caused problems with the Falcons' Inner Sphere populations. Clan Wolf exploited Falcon heavy-handedness during the Refusal War, as did Archon-Princess Katherine Steiner-Davion more recently when she sent agents to incite unrest on Falcon-held worlds.

The Falcons frequently take bondsmen. Though a bondsman is often harshly treated while wearing the bondcord, little stigma is attached to those accepted into the Clan. The sole exceptions are Fire Mandrill warriors taken as isorla during the

THE CLANS



JADE FALCON DEMOGRAPHICS

Affiliation: Crusader

Capital: Ironhold

Population (Clan space): 116,264,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 2.6 percent (72/46)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 93 percent

Leaders

Khan: Marthe Pryde

saKhan: Samantha Clees

Foremaster: Kael Pershaw

Scientist-General: Etienne (Balzac)

Merchant Factor: Moriz

Master Technician: Sanders

Senior Laborer: Tae

Military

Clusters: 47

WarShips: 23

Clan Space Worlds

Barcella (15 percent)

Dagda (9 percent)

Eden (34 percent)

Gatekeeper (100 percent)

Glory (45 percent)

Huntress (42 percent)

Ironhold (100 percent)

Marshall (6 percent)

Tokasha (64 percent)

Sphere, fourteen recently taken from Clan Steel Viper, they have enclaves on nine Clan worlds. Ironhold, which the Falcons hold outright, is the Clan's capital and the location of its primary training facility. The planet serves as the Clan's administrative capital, though the Khans usually work from either Strana Mechty or the new Inner Sphere "provincial capital" on Sudeten.

The Falcon Clan increased its holdings in the shakeup that followed the elimination of Clans Smoke Jaguar and Nova Cat, and the Ghost Bears' virtual departure from the homeworlds. The Falcons' most significant and infamous gain is Huntress, formerly the Smoke Jaguar capital, where Falcon forces occupy almost half of the Jaguar Prime continent. Less well known is the Jade Falcons' loss of their possessions on York when the Blood Spirits went into isolation. The Clan has similarly downplayed the losses sustained at the hands of the Diamond Sharks on Tokasha.

recent Harvest Trials, largely because they have refused to integrate with the Falcons—a situation that leaves the proud Falcons completely mystified.

Historically, the Jade Falcons preferred deeds over words, but recent years have seen a number of politically astute Khans. After the political power games of Khan Elias Crichton brought the Falcons to the brink of destruction, his successor, Marthe Pryde, immediately returned to the Clan's more action-oriented tradition and launched an invasion of the Lyrn Alliance to prove her Clan's strength. The events of the past few years, however, have convinced Khan Pryde not to neglect politics completely. In recent months, she shook the foundations of Clan society when she allowed a free-born—albeit one born to two trueborns—to compete in Trials for the Pryde Bloodname.

MILITARY

Despite being badly bloodied during the Refusal War, the Falcon military remains strong. Upon taking office, Khan Pryde took a number of actions to rebuild her forces, including an invasion of the Lyrn Alliance to blood new recruits. Though understrength on paper, the Falcons remain more than a match for most of the home Clans, and demonstrated their potency against Clan Steel Viper.

Historically, the Falcon Touman contained a broad mix of troops, with no one branch dominant. Since the Refusal War, the Touman has been forced to rely more on second-line equipment, though this will likely change as the Clan continues to rebuild. Falcon front-line Clusters comprise five Trinaries, usually three of OmniMechs, one of Elementals and one of aerospace fighters. Second-line Clusters contain between two and four Trinaries.

ALLIES AND ENEMIES

As staunch Crusaders and often-boastful advocates of their own strength, the Falcons frequently enrage the other Clans. However, they have collected a surprisingly small number of long-term enemies. For many years, Clan Wolf was the Falcons' primary foe, though the ascension of Marthe Pryde and Vlad Ward to the Clans' respective Khanship has led to a degree of rapprochement. However, the odds of a lasting alliance seem slim. The Falcons also nurse a long-running feud with the Steel Vipers. After suffering multiple humiliations at Viper hands in the years following the Battle of Tukayyid, Khan Pryde finally solved "the Viper problem" by handing them a stunning defeat in the summer of 3061. The Falcons' troubles with Clan Snow Raven are of more recent vintage, resulting from the latter's political and territorial machinations. Since they trounced the Vipers, however, the Ravens have attempted to resume friendly contact with the Falcons.

The Falcons have no firm allies, save their fellow Crusaders—and even those ties are not strong. The relationship between the Falcons and the equally Crusader-minded Smoke Jaguars soon soured, and the Falcons do not mourn the Jaguars' passing. Similarly, the adversarial relationship between Home and Invading Clans has prompted the Falcons to distance themselves from the Home Clan Crusaders.

POSSESSIONS

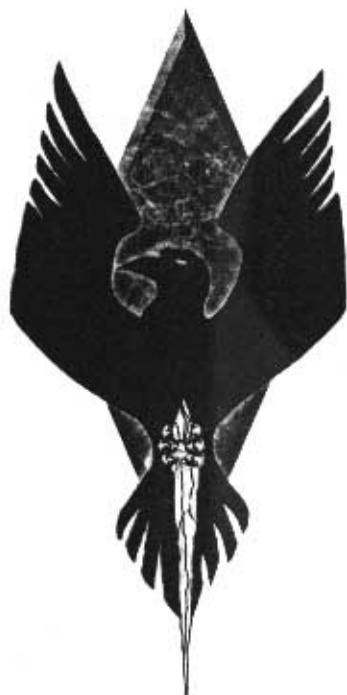
Worlds: 62 (Clan Space: 9 worlds, 2 exclusive, 7 shared. Inner Sphere: 53)

Despite their losses in the Refusal War, the Jade Falcons remain one of the most powerful Clans. In addition to the fifty-three worlds they hold in the Inner

THE CLANS



MATTHEW J.
PLOG



SNOW RAVEN DEMOGRAPHICS

Affiliation: Warden (nominal)

Capital: Lum
Population (Clan space): 94,199,000 (3060)
Population growth rate: 2.2 percent (49/27)
Self-Sufficiency Index: 96 percent

Leaders

Khan: Lynn McKenna
saKhan: Bryn Cooper
Loremaster: Klaus Harper
Scientist-General: Charlotte (von Braun)
Merchant Factor: Louis
Master Technician: Mattias
Senior Laborer: Emili

Military

Clusters: 26
WarShips: 40

Clan Space Worlds

Bearclaw (70 percent)
Brim (19 percent)
Circe (70 percent)
Hellgate (100 percent)
Lum (82 percent)

Ravens' Byzantine politics and complex relationships mean that the readily apparent reason is unlikely to be the real one.

Much of the Clan's internal politics centers on its Bloodname Houses, frequently referred to as the Families, and any interference in their business is viewed as a mortal insult. The authority of House leaders is absolute, and the leader's will determines how the

CLAN SNOW RAVEN

The snow-white ravens of Strana Mechty's southern tundra are respected for their unwillingness to waste anything. The Clan named for these birds shows a similar reluctance to waste any resources or any opportunity. They are scavengers and politicians without peer.

HISTORY

Clan Snow Raven faced considerable hardship in its early years. The last Clan certified combat-ready, the Ravens were ill-prepared for the challenges of the campaign to liberate Circe during the Pentagon civil war. They took massive losses storming rebel compounds and barely survived the campaign. Worse was to come not many years later, when Clan Wolverine rebelled against the Grand Council. The Wolverines beat back the small Raven force, and the Raven capital of Dehra Dun, together with its genetic repository, was destroyed with a nuclear device. The repository was later rebuilt and the samples it contained replaced from the master site on Strana Mechty, but deep emotional scars remained.

Vowing never to allow such a catastrophe to strike them again, the Ravens set about becoming masters of their own destiny. They developed their navy and expanded their holdings, making themselves indispensable as explorers, escorts and manufacturers of components for DropShips, JumpShips and WarShips. Behind the scenes, they sought to become master manipulators and purveyors of information.

In 2947, the Ravens brought before the Grand Council details of ilKhan Tobias Katib's complicity in the death of his predecessor, Corian Tchernovkov. Katib was impeached, found guilty and executed for his crimes. Suggestions that the Ravens had also been involved in the Tchernovkov affair were never proven, but their sudden betrayal of a former ally is a hallmark of Snow Raven political maneuvers. More often, however, they prefer subtler manipulations. Raven Khan Ian Howell, who destroyed the totem animal of Clan Sea Fox by releasing the genetically engineered diamond shark into the waters of Strana Mechty, fell victim to his own inability to play such subtle games. After Howell admitted his guilt, his own saKhan challenged him to a Trial of Grievance and slew him—officially because he had disgraced his Clan, but more likely because he was stupid enough to get caught.

The Snow Ravens fought hard to join the Inner Sphere invasion force, but took too many losses before the Trials and were denied a place. However, the Ravens did gain from the operation; they contracted out almost a third of their fleet to Clan Jade Falcon to serve as escorts, an arrangement recognized by a formal alliance during the Year of Peace.

This alliance was doomed from the start, as the two Clans' philosophical differences overshadowed their mutual interests. Relations between the two Clans became strained in 3055 over issues relating to the Ravens' McKenna Bloodname House. The matter briefly escalated into skirmishes, but the Falcons were too engrossed elsewhere to prosecute a campaign in the Clan homeworlds, and so the trouble soon died down.

In recent weeks, since their defeat by the Steel Vipers on Homer, the Ravens have sought rapprochement with the Falcons, while consolidating their considerable gains in the recent Trials for Smoke Jaguar, Nova Cat and Ghost Bear possessions.

SOCIETY

Snow Raven society is extremely tight-knit and distrusting of strangers, a trait stemming from the tribulations of the Clans' formative years. Snow Raven warriors let no outsiders past their guard, fearing that any associates will turn on them. In addition, no member of this Clan does anything without a reason. However, the

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Bloodnamed vote. Cutthroat internal politics determine who becomes House leader, and only the most politically astute remain in power for more than a few years.

The Snow Ravens take bondsmen from other Clans, but most wear the bondcord for many years before being accepted into the Clan. Few "outsider" warriors are adopted into Clan Snow Raven, and those few are barred from rising above the rank of Star colonel. The Snow Ravens' distrust of outsiders means that bondsmen often have difficulty integrating with their new Clan.

Caste divisions are readily apparent in Snow Raven society, as are the sub-groups within each caste. Individuals rarely mingle outside their immediate circles, enhancing the "us against them" attitude that pervades this Clan. Competition for promotion is fierce, and friends often find themselves battling for command slots or military objectives.

Snow Raven technology is tightly focused on aerospace and naval systems. The Ravens have the largest fleet in Clan space and control most of the shipyards and repair stations. Other Clans are obliged to seek them out for maintenance, either trading for use of the facilities or staging Trials of Position (for which the Ravens demand collateral, and win often enough to remain profitable).

The well-developed Raven merchant marine supports the Clan by trading and contracting its ships and personnel out to other Clans. The Ravens made considerable profit by supplying the Invading Clans with transport assets and escorts, enhancing their status among the Home Clans.

MILITARY

The major losses on Circe and to the Wolverines almost destroyed the Ravens early on in their development. Needing to strengthen his Clan quickly, Khan McKenna—himself a pilot—chose to strengthen the Raven aerospace arm with fighters and ships from orbiting Brian caches. No other Clan objected to McKenna's action; by the time the other Clans reconsidered, the Ravens dominated the field and jealously guarded their advantage.

However, this aerospace bias has given Clan Snow Raven the smallest BattleMech contingent of any Clan. To offset this disadvantage, Raven ground forces form combined-arms Trinaries known as Triads, comprising a Star of 'Mechs, a Star of Elementals and a Star of fighters. Though ideally suited to defensive operations, Triads have limited offensive capabilities.

ALLIES AND ENEMIES

Despite the paranoia that leads many Snow Ravens to distrust anyone outside their Clan, they have managed to avoid making any real enemies. The Clan's most prominent foes are the Steel Vipers, with whom the Ravens have feuded since 2897.

The severing of ties over the recent House McKenna incident led to conflict with Clan Jade Falcon, prompting mutual recriminations and several military engagements. However, the Ravens have recently contacted the Falcons with a view to nor-

malizing relations. The Falcons have yet to respond to this attempt at rapprochement.

Clan Diamond Shark and the Snow Ravens have been adversaries since the diamond shark incident. However, rather than taking up arms against the Ravens, the Sharks have waged a war of words and assets. Unusually, the Ravens have launched no reprisals, and still allow the Diamond Sharks access to their shipyards.

Only three Clans can claim to be anything like Raven allies. The Snow Ravens had a formal alliance half a century ago with Clan Blood Spirit, through which the two Clans exchanged war materiel; the Ravens retain limited contact with the Spirits. The Cloud Cobras share the Ravens' military disposition and taste for Machiavellian politics. The Ravens have also often traded technology and expertise with Clan Ghost Bear; the massive ark-ships used by the Bears in their exodus to the Inner Sphere were likely designed and built with Snow Raven help, or at least tacit support. The Ravens' acquisition of Bear assets in recent months suggests some type of deal.

POSSESSIONS

Worlds: 5 (4 shared, 1 exclusive)

The Snow Ravens have historically had few assets, but their holdings have almost doubled within the past year. The Ghost Bears granted the Ravens their asteroid-mining sites and their enclave on Bearclaw, and the Ravens negotiated control of the rest of Bearclaw with the Nova Cats when the Cats withdrew from Clan space. The intervention of Clan Hell's Horses reduced Raven control of the world to two-thirds.

The Ravens also consolidated their hold on Circe, staging a blitzkrieg that secured them much of the Jaguar and Nova Cat enclaves (the latter with the Cats' permission). These successes brought them into conflict with Clan Wolf, and the fighting has yet to be resolved. The Ravens maintained a foothold on Homer throughout 3061, but were recently ejected from that planet by the returning Steel Vipers.

CLAN STAR ADDER

The genetically engineered star adder is one of the most merciless predators in the Pentagon worlds. Unrelentingly aggressive, it punishes those who stray into its territory or whom it views as a threat. The same is true of Clan Star Adder, one of the strongest Clans and arguably the dominant force in the homeworlds.

HISTORY

Absalom Truscott, commander of the 149th BattleMech division, was one of the few of his rank to stand with Nicholas Kerensky following Aleksandr Kerensky's death, and was rewarded with command of one of Nicholas's new Clans. A friend of Nicholas Kerensky's for many years, Truscott was also allowed to select his own warriors. Truscott's command surveyed the Pentagon in advance of the Clan assault, and planned the mission later known as Operation Klondike.



STAR ADDER DEMOGRAPHICS

Affiliation: Crusader

Capital: Sheridan

Population (Clan space): 108,695,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 2.4 percent (62/38)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 94 percent

Leaders

Khan: Cassius N'Buta

saKhan: Tabitha Paik

LoRemaster: Dagmar Lahiri

Scientist-General: Bas (Meitner)

Merchant Factor: Sylvian

Master Technician: Armand

Senior Laborer: Francis

Military

Clusters: 52

WarShips: 28

Clan Space Worlds

Albion (100 percent)

Arcadia (38 percent)

Brim (27 percent)

Dagda (22 percent)

Hoard (39 percent)

Huntress (16 percent)

Marshall (13 percent)

Priori (48 percent)

Sheridan (100 percent)

Tathis (20 percent)

The Wolverine and Widowmaker treacheries reinforced this Clan's belief in presenting a united front, but the steady growth that resulted from the Star Adders' unity provoked jealousy in other Clans. Perceived as a threat, they came under attack, most notably by Clan Mongoose. The attacks led to an escalating feud that hit infrastructure as well as the Clan military.

In a foreshadowing of the situation between the Adders, Burrocks and Blood Spirits in 3059, the Adders supported moves calling for the Absorption of Clan Mongoose, and were outraged when the right of Absorption went to Clan Smoke Jaguar. As the Blood Spirits would do centuries hence, the Adders launched pre-emptive assaults to regain lost territory. Adder successes sparked enmity with the Jaguars, who regarded the lost assets as theirs.

The Adders sought to strengthen their position by entering into a pact with Clan Burrock. Like the Nova Cats and Diamond Sharks, they took part in futures speculation during the Golden Century, underwriting and supporting Burrock exploration in exchange for a share of the profits (which proved extremely lucrative).

When the Clans split into Warden and Crusader camps over the question of invading the Inner Sphere, the Adders stood solidly in the Crusader camp. Their belief in cooperation with other Clans made them stand out from the other Crusaders, but vast numbers of them favored a swift return to the Inner Sphere. However, they held themselves aloof from the petty squabbles of the two competing philosophies, preferring to focus on preparing for the invasion. Their decision to bid conservatively in the invasion Trials stemmed from their recognition that the fighting would be bloody; eventually, they reasoned, the Invading Clans would need to call for additional support, and the Adders would get their chance. In the meantime, they set about making themselves the dominant Clan space power.

In 3058, the Adders discovered that their erstwhile allies in Clan Burrock had maintained links with the Dark Caste. They brought the matter before the Grand Council, calling for the Burrocks' Absorption. As the Clan responsible for bringing the matter to the Council's attention, they were granted the right to carry out the task. Dismayed at their own leaders' perfidy, many Burrock units came over to the Star Adders after only token engagements—including many that did not fight alongside the Adders when Clan Blood Spirit attempted to intervene in the Absorption battles. Though the Trial of Absorption cost the Adders dearly, they suffered far fewer losses than the Blood Spirits, and the Burrock isorla allowed the Adders to rebuild quickly.

In the Great Refusal on Strana Mechty, the Adders were one of only two Clans to defeat their Inner Sphere opponents, further enhancing the Clan's prestige. However, the need to consolidate their Burrock holdings limited their gains in the Trials of Possession that followed.

SOCIETY

Relationships between castes in Clan Star Adder stem from mutual understanding that allows the Clan to present a truly unified front. The civilians know they need the warriors to prosper, and the warriors appreciate that without the civilians, their fighting abilities would be seriously impaired. The civilian castes have no say in government, but the warriors listen to and take note of their views. An individual known as the Clan Adjutant serves as the de facto leader of the civilian population and reports to the Khans, fostering a strong bond among the people. However, warriors still regard themselves as superior to civilians; they steadfastly avoid menial work, and assignments to aid civilian caste workers are a favorite form of punishment.

The Adders see bondsmen as a way of enhancing their strength, and accept them as part of the Clan from the outset. Captured warriors who demonstrate fidelity to their new Clan can expect adoption with little fuss.

Like many Clans, the Star Adders claim to dislike politics, but are nonetheless adept at such maneuverings. They regard politics as a necessary evil, without which their Clan would be at a major disadvantage. The Adders' internal politics are almost as complex as those of the Fire Mandrills or Snow Ravens, with loyalties first to the unit and the House, and then to the entire Clan. However, though

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they jockey hard for position, no Star Adder will do anything that threatens the future of his or her Clan.

The Star Adders are notable for their attitude toward Nicholas and Aleksandr Kerensky. Unlike most of the other Clans, the Adders regard them simply as superb leaders and warriors rather than demigods. In this the Adders are perhaps the most pragmatic Clan, and therefore one of the most dangerous.

MILITARY

The Star Adder Touman follows the "total force" paradigm, with no service dominating. The Clan's only weakness is its infantry, with notably small numbers of Elementals and conventional troops. However, more and more Elementals are being assigned to front-line units and naval vessels. The Adder navy is the second strongest in the Clans, having recently inherited several Burrock ships.

The primary task of the surprisingly well-respected second-line units is to guard the Clan's extensive assets. Heavy BattleMechs form the mainstay of such units, but Elementals, fighters and even conventional infantry and vehicles are also common. The Adders' Kappa Galaxy is unique among the Clans as an "OpFor" unit, trained to fight using the doctrine and tactics of enemy units. Kappa's warriors have carried out this task for forty years, and over the past decade have demonstrated the quirks of Inner Sphere-style combat to their fellows.

The only real problem facing the Adder Touman is the integration of so many Burrock units. The Touman is still struggling to adapt, though the abtakha warriors appear to fit in well.

ALLIES AND ENEMIES

The Star Adders have long sought neutrality toward the other Clans, but their generally apolitical stance and alleged coddling of their civilians has earned them the disdain of many outsiders. The Blood Spirits' intervention in the Absorption war against the Burrocks, in addition to the losses the Spirits inflicted on the Adders, has turned the Adders' historical ambivalence toward the Blood Spirits into bitter hatred. The Adders' once-excellent relations with the Snow Ravens have cooled following the growth of the Adder fleet, which the Ravens see as a threat to their naval superiority. The Adder naval adjutant, himself of Raven genetic stock, believes relations between the two will soon normalize, however.

The Star Adders' closest allies are the Cloud Cobras. Since the Absorption of the Burrocks, the Adders have chosen to honor the Burrock-Cobra contract to garrison the Tanite worlds, further strengthening relations between the two Clans.

POSSESSIONS

Worlds: 10 (8 shared, 2 exclusive)

The Adders made major advances by Absorbing the Burrocks, gaining complete control of the Burrock capital of Albion, as well as sizeable enclaves on Dagda, Hord and Priori. Though limited by the need to restructure their Touman in wake of the Absorption, the Adders managed to expand their holdings on Hord in the

recent Trials of Possession. The ongoing battle on Hord currently involves the Ice Hellions, Wolves and Hell's Horses.

The Adders also expanded their holdings on Brim by seizing parts of the former Nova Cat enclave, a negotiated settlement with the Cloud Cobras that minimized the number of Trials between the two Clans. However, Clan Snow Raven has threatened action against the Adders from its own enclave on Brim, "to secure Snow Raven interests."

CLAN STEEL VIPER

The Arcadian steel viper is one of the deadliest creatures in Clan space. Its namesake Clan has done everything within its power to mimic the lethality of its totem beast. Introverted almost to the point of complete isolationism, the Vipers believe that they alone know Kerensky's true vision: the creation of a new Star League through cooperation.

HISTORY

The early years of Clan Steel Viper were troubled. Though the Clan performed well in the liberation of the Pentagon worlds, the descent into madness of Khan Ellie Kinnison and her attempt to assassinate Nicholas Kerensky's wife led to a long period of instability, which was finally resolved with the ascension of Khan Sanra Mercer in 2860. Claiming to know of meetings between ilKhan Nicholas and Viper Khan Steven Breen shortly after Operation Klondike, Mercer won control of the Clan and instigated sweeping changes.

Her most significant action was to isolate the Vipers from the other Clans, calling the others a divisive influence. Already sharply focused on martial prowess, the Clan's warriors set about improving themselves even further in order to fulfill Khan Mercer's vision: that the Vipers would one day lead all the Clans back to the Inner Sphere. Despite this goal, the Vipers were never staunch supporters of the Crusader cause; instead, neither Warden nor Crusader, they went their own way. This position, combined with their self-serving and seemingly erratic voting in the Grand Council, earned the Vipers the enmity of the Jade Falcons.

Though the Vipers secured a place in the Inner Sphere invasion force, they were initially unhappy at being relegated to reserve status. How could they fulfill their grand ambition to lead if they could not fight? When the death of ilKhan Showers forced the Invading Clans to return to Strana Mechty, Viper Khans Breen and Zalman petitioned the new ilKhan to make the Vipers a full partner in the invasion. ilKhan Ulric Kerensky agreed, but forced them to work alongside the hated Jade Falcons.

On Tukayyid, the Vipers were forced to withdraw just short of their objectives. However, the withdrawal enabled them to preserve much of their forces and take the fewest casualties of any Clan involved in the battle. Their relative strength left them in a good position to exploit the enforced truce, most notably in seizing nine worlds from the Jade Falcons in the Falcon/Viper occupation zone. Internal disputes, however, kept them from similarly exploiting Falcon weakness in the aftermath of the



STEEL VIPER DEMOGRAPHICS

Affiliation: Warden

Capital: New Kent

Population (Clan space): 57,275,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 1.8 percent (72/54)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 91 percent

Leaders

Khan: Perigard Zalman

saKhan: Brett Andrews

Foremaster: Arthur Stoklas

Scientist-General: Gunther (Kuroda)

Merchant Factor: Turhan

Master Technician: Dor

Senior Laborer: Alberto

Military

Clusters: 39

WarShips: 15

Clan Space Worlds

Arcadia (37 percent)

Grant's Station (55 percent)

Homer (15 percent)

Marshall (21 percent)

New Kent (66 percent)

to the Viper training program, which graduates fewer warriors, and the Clan's former insistence on using only trueborns. The Vipers fared badly in the recent Harvest Trials, making negligible gains and losing several Crusader-minded Clusters to the Wolf Clan via pre-emptive batchalls. The Clan's recent defeat at the hands of the Jade Falcons, however, should not be taken as a sign of weakness. They remain strong and may yet prove their strength in the homeworlds. Indeed, Zalman's liberalization of recruitment may bring the Clan more solidly into the Warden fold.

The Vipers do not favor any combat arm, but make extensive use of conventional infantry in garrison Clusters. Front-line forces normally comprise forty-five OmniMechs and seventy-five Elementals. Viper tactical doctrine places less emphasis on aerospace support, and so only fifteen OmniFighters are assigned to each Cluster. More fighters are assigned to support Viper naval vessels, a sensible precaution given the Clan's on-again, off-again hostilities with Clans Jade Falcon and Snow Raven. This practice also represents an exploitable weakness in the Viper Touman. Though Clan Jade Falcon managed to take brutal advantage of this predictability in their

Refusal War. In 3061 they launched a major operation against the Jade Falcon occupation zone, gaining more than a dozen worlds, but an unexpected Falcon counterattack reversed these gains and resulted in the Vipers' being forced from the Inner Sphere completely.

SOCIETY

Since the days of Sanra Mercer, Viper society has been tightly controlled. While other Clans allow limited mingling between the members of their civilian castes and those of other Clans, Viper society prohibits such fraternization. Aside from a few common-sense exceptions, such as the merchant caste—who must by definition deal with outsiders—all such meetings are closely monitored, and unnecessary contacts punished with death.

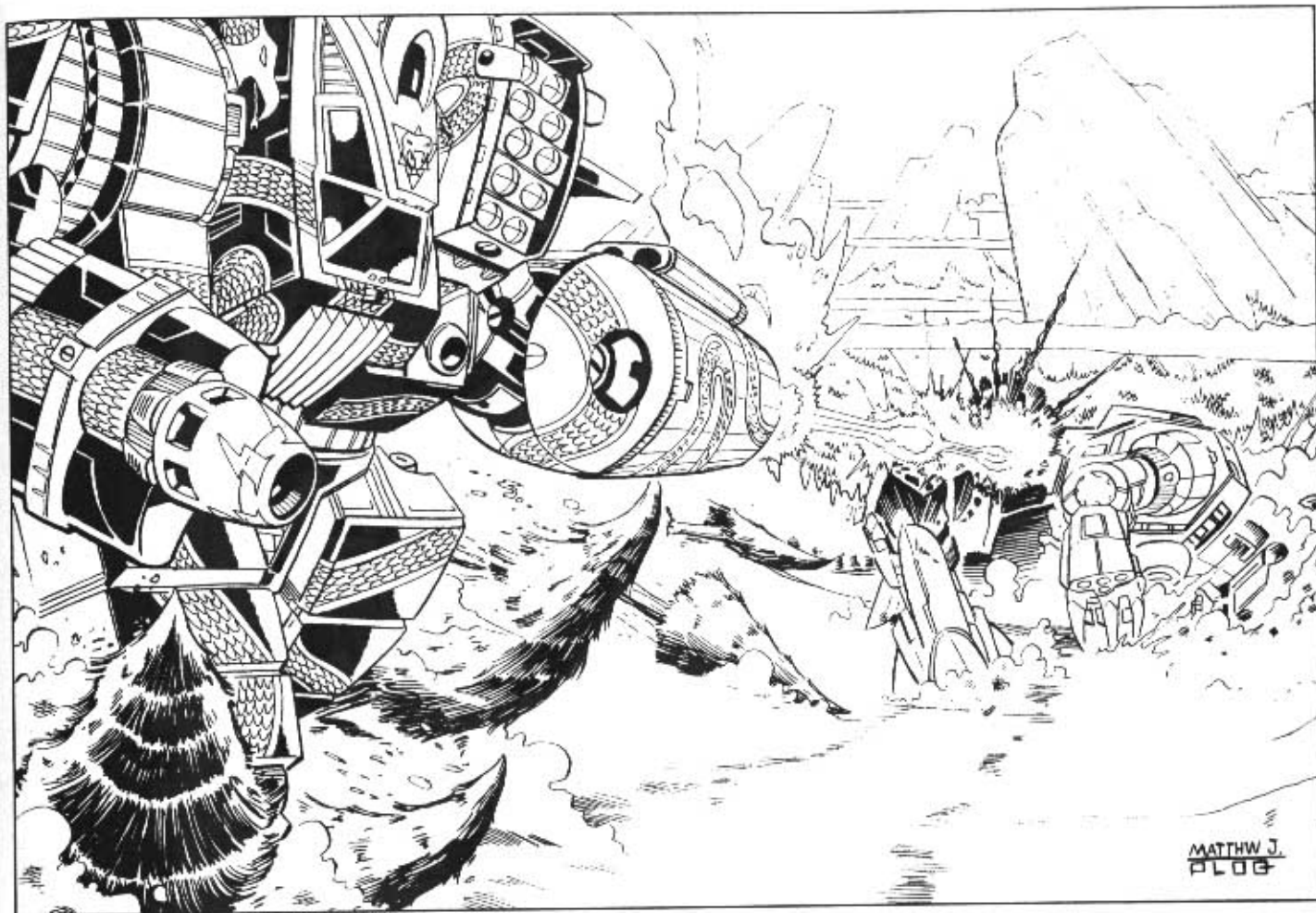
The Vipers' ultra-strenuous warrior training program results in an above-average level of dropouts and a proportionately higher number of trueborn personnel in their civilian castes. With a success rate of only two percent, little stigma is attached to failure. Failed trueborn warriors often serve as rulers of their new castes, forming a bridge between the warriors and freeborn civilians. This practice strengthens ties within the Clan, enhancing the idea that everyone is a part in a complex machine, working together for the Clan's overall good.

The insular Vipers generally have trouble accepting strangers, but those taken as bondsmen are welcomed as foundlings who have "come home" to Kerensky's true vision. The Vipers believe that, once taken into the Clan, outsiders can be shown the error of their ways and the superiority of the Viper view. This works well with other Clansmen, who are culturally conditioned to accept such transfers of allegiance, but was less effective in the Inner Sphere occupation zone. The Vipers' increasingly tense relationship with their Spheroid citizens led to paramilitary police cracking down on frequent unrest. The Vipers' drift toward harder-line policies prompted a split within the warrior caste. Many feel the Khans have moved away from Sanra Mercers's teachings, and without the vision of Kerensky to guide them, they fear the Clan will founder.

Ostensibly a defeat for the Clan, a few Wardens have cited the Vipers' ejection from the Inner Sphere as "a victory for the Clans as a whole." This strange assertion originates with Perigard Zalman's defeat at the hands of a freeborn warrior on Waldorff. Though angry that his Clan was defeated, Zalman is pragmatic about his personal loss; reports suggest that he acknowledges that his staunch anti-freeborn stance weakened his Clan. In further support of this theory, the Viper Khan has ordered the training facilities on Arcadia and New Kent to include a limited number of freeborn warriors in the next intake of cadets. Apparently, however, saKhan Andrews has contested this order and may attempt to reverse the decision. Indeed, on the journey back to the homeworlds, Zalman defeated three challenges to his leadership.

MILITARY

Despite their long tradition of martial excellence, many consider the Vipers to be the weakest of the invading Clans. Even at full strength, the Viper Touman is seven Clusters smaller than that of the Jade Falcons. Much of this can be attributed



recent conflict, resulting in major Viper losses, Clan Steel Viper seems unlikely to change this strategy in the near future.

ALLIES AND ENEMIES

Being neither Crusaders nor Wardens, the Vipers have earned a measure of distrust from many other Clans on both sides of the political divide. The Vipers' self-serving actions have long since alienated Clan Jade Falcon, and their military conquests during the Golden Century—particularly the conquest of Hellgate—earned them the hatred of Clan Snow Raven. Though the Vipers' ground troops are more than a match for the puny Raven force, the Ravens dominate aerospace and naval warfare, and are consummate political manipulators. Both of these strengths make them a bad enemy.

More recently, the Vipers have alienated the Fire Mandrills, a Clan with whom they share the world of Marshall. When the Vipers were chosen for Operation Revival, they made sure their neighbors knew that they would prove the worth of Sanra Mercer's visions and return to rule all the Clans. The Mandrills, never on particularly good terms with the Vipers, strenuously objected to such arrogance, and the two Clans have nursed a low-level feud for the past thirteen years.

POSSESSIONS

Worlds: 5 (all shared)

With the second smallest Clan-space population, the Vipers' status as an invading Clan gives them access to a wide range of resources. However, their dream of cooperation with a subdued Inner Sphere never became a reality. Though courageous, and offering huge potential gain, their attack on the Jade Falcon occupation zone was ultimately futile. For the Clans, victory is everything and, far from winning, the Vipers were forced to accept hegira and withdraw entirely from the Inner Sphere.

During the recent redistribution of territories in Clan space, the Vipers attempted to expand their holdings on Homer, but were rebuffed by the Cloud Cobras and found themselves in conflict with the Snow Ravens. The struggle lasted for nearly eighteen months, but was resolved in favor of the Vipers. New Kent serves as the nominal Viper capital, even though the Vipers share the world with three other Clans—making this world a likely first battleground in Khan Zalman's attempts to prove his Clan's potency.



WOLF DEMOGRAPHICS

Affiliation: Crusader

Capital: Strana Mechty

Population (Clan space): 101,849,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 2.3 percent (56/33)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 87 percent (Crusaders)
31 percent (Wardens)

Leaders

Khan: Vladimir Ward (Crusaders)

Phelan Kell (Wardens)

saKhan: Marialle Radick (Crusaders)

Marco Hall (Wardens)

Foremaster: Katya Kerensky (Crusaders)

Daphne Vickers (Wardens)

Scientist-General: Rudi (Sinclair) (Crusaders)

Del (Temin) (Wardens)

Merchant Factor: Michael (Crusaders)

Jarl (Wardens)

Master Technician: Nymar (Crusaders)

Adam (Wardens)

Senior Laborer: Bork (Crusaders)

Sylvia (Wardens)

Military

Clusters: 24 (Crusader), 11 (Warden)

WarShips: 13 (Crusader), 6 (Warden)

Clan Space Worlds

Circe (30 percent)

Dagda (14 percent)

Eden (35 percent)

Glory (55 percent)

Grant's Station (45 percent)

Hoard (11 percent)

Paxon (38 percent)

Roche (17 percent)

Tiber (50 percent)

Tranquil (100 percent)

CLAN WOLF

Unique among the Clans, the Wolves have and yet do not have a long and glorious history. They are Crusaders and Wardens. They are the oldest Clan, and the newest. Shattered in the aftermath of the Refusal War, the Clan exists as two separate entities: the Crusaders under Khan Vladimir Ward and saKhan Marialle Radick, and the Wardens under myself—Phelan Kell—and saKhan Marco Hall. The dual nature of my Clan makes the following biography somewhat different from those that preceded it. The two Wolf Clans share a common history, but are strikingly different.

HISTORY

Founded by Jerome Winson, Nicholas Kerensky's brother-in-law, Clan Wolf was the first of the twenty Clans and always seemed destined for greatness. It is little surprise that Nicholas chose to join the Wolves after their performance in Operation Klondike. The Wolves were Nicholas's right hand, dispensing the Grand Council's justice to Clan Wolverine and exacting revenge on Clan Widowmaker after warriors of the Clan murdered Nicholas Kerensky. Though the fighting against the Widowmakers left Clan Wolf bloodied and weak, their Absorption of Widowmaker assets and the election of Jerome Winson as ilKhan enabled the Wolves to rebuild their strength.

A staunchly Warden Clan, the Wolves blocked moves by the Falcon-led Crusaders to launch an invasion of the Inner Sphere, staving off the most serious call with a plan later known as the "Dragoon compromise." Knowing that the Clans lacked solid information on the Inner Sphere, Wolf Khan Kerlin Ward proposed sending a reconnaissance force to gather intelligence. This force, composed of Wolf Clan freeborn warriors, would serve as mercenary troops with every one of the Inner Sphere militaries and send data back to the Clan homeworlds. From this scheme was born Wolf's Dragoons, one of the Inner Sphere's most famous merc units. Knowing that the Crusaders could not be forestalled forever, Khan Ward eventually ordered the Dragoons to remain in the Inner Sphere and prepare the Successor States to withstand the Clan juggernaut.

Selected for the invasion force as punishment for daring to vote against the Grand Council, the Wolves decided to beat the Crusaders at their own game. They sought to capture the largest amount of territory with the least impact on the existing population. This prompted the other Clans to accelerate their attack schedules, often with disastrous results. The Wolves were the undoubted leaders of the invasion, and the selection of their Khan as ilKhan after the death of Leo Showers was judged only fitting. In fact, it was an attempt to manipulate the Clan into the Crusader camp that misfired badly. The Wolf ilKhan, Ulric Kerensky, agreed to the proxy battle for Terra on Tukayyid, leading to the treaty that halted the invasion. The other Clans protested at the enforced fifteen-year peace, but eventually ratified the agreement.

In 3057, the Jade Falcons sought to remove Ulric and continue the invasion. In so doing, they plunged the Wolves and Falcons into war. After the Council tried Ulric for treason and voted him out of office, the Wolf Clan stood with him in his Trial of Refusal against the verdict. Knowing that the chance of victory was slim, Ulric, Natasha Kerensky and I moved to ensure that the Wolves would not be the only Clan to fall. War raged throughout the Falcon occupation zone as the Wolves pushed the Falcon forces back. To ensure our own Clan's survival, Ulric ordered me to take a contingent of warriors and a cross-section of the other castes to the Inner Sphere while he and Natasha sought to break the Falcons.

They came close to achieving their goal, but eventually the Falcons slew them both. Their deaths ended the Refusal War, after which the Falcon Khans moved to Absorb the Wolves who remained in the occupation zone and to Abjure those who had found a haven in the Inner Sphere. The Absorbed Wolves eventually won their freedom,

first as the Jade Wolves and later as a "new" Wolf Clan. Under Clan law, this Crusader-dominated group was an entirely new Clan, free of the guilt—and history—of their forebears. Meanwhile, I have continued to lead the exiled Warden Wolves.

Ever since then, the two halves of what was once a single Wolf Clan have lived separate lives. The Crusader Wolves sought to regain their strength, raiding the Smoke Jaguars and staging the so-called Harvest Trials in Clan space to rebuild their Touman. In the Inner Sphere, my Warden Wolves work closely with the troops of the Arc-Royal Defense Cordon (ARDC) to bolster the defenses of the Lyrn Alliance against the Jade Falcons.

In the past three years, while the Warden Wolves helped strengthen the ARDC against the Falcons, Vlad Ward entered into a short-term alliance with Falcon Khan Marthe Pryde to ensure the survival of both Clans. After the Warden Wolves sided with the SLDF to eject the Smoke Jaguars from the Inner Sphere, the Crusaders fought alongside the Jaguars in the Great Refusal, gaining a draw against the St. Ives Lancers. The Warden Wolves' most recent engagement was a Trial of Possession against Clan Ghost Bear on Utrecht that netted the Wolves considerable amounts of manufacturing equipment, but cost several warriors. Star Captain Ragnar, Prince of Rasalhague and one of my closest advisors, was among those lost to the Bears.

SOCIETY

The Wolf schism has had a profound effect on Wolf Clan society, but both factions have many aspects in common. Unless otherwise noted, the following description applies equally to both groups.

The warrior caste still dominates, but Wolf society is more open and egalitarian than most Clans. Personal freedoms form a major part of Wolf Clan life for every member, warrior or civilian. Each individual holds his or her own political views and attitude to religion, for example, and may express himself (artistically or otherwise) as he or she chooses. The "conformist culture" believed by outsiders to be typical of all the Clans is at its weakest among the Wolves; however, all individuals are expected to follow the orders of their superiors and to work for the good of the Clan.

In shaping the Crusader Wolves, Khan Vlad has adopted a more authoritarian stance, and his forcible recruitment of civilians as freeborn warriors to bulk out the Wolf Touman has strained inter-caste relations. The Warden Wolves hold true to the original principles of the Wolf Clan, treating the civilians who accompanied them into exile as the valued citizens they are. The support of the ARDC is a major help, leaving the Warden Wolves under less pressure to rebuild their military. The small size of the Warden Wolves has allowed us to develop strong inter-caste ties, helping maintain our sense of identity. However, we have our own problems with the people of the ARDC, many of whom still mistrust us as "Clanners" and "traitors." The clash of cultures has led to several unpleasant incidents, which both sides are trying to live down.

The Wolves have always been consummate politicians, and both factions are adept at wars of words. Vlad Ward of the Crusaders has displayed a ruthlessness that allowed him to rebuild his Clan as well as shatter the ambitions of the Jade Falcons and Ice Hellions. Though his hard-line policies have

earned him few friends and cost the Wolves several allies, his staunch Crusader viewpoint allowed him to remain at the heart of Clan politics despite being head of the newest Clan.

The Wolves have always believed in allowing bondsmen the opportunity to demonstrate their worth and earn adoption into the Clan. This practice formed the core of the Harvest Trials, which allowed the Crusader Wolves to skim warriors and other martial assets from other Clans. The position of the Warden Wolves is somewhat awkward in this respect. With a few notable exceptions, most other Clans regard them as bandits and refuse to cooperate with them when captured. On the other side of the coin, captured Crusader Wolves can expect honorable treatment, but Warden Wolves taken by another Clan will likely meet a bandit's death.

The original Wolf Clan's traditions form a major difference between the two factions. Khan Vlad has actively sought to destroy many "Warden" traditions in order to ensure the continued dominance of Crusaders among his Wolves, while the Warden Wolves cling fiercely to the old ways. Such rituals and traditions define us. We respect the beliefs of others (though most Warden Wolves see the Crusader Wolves as misguided) and demand that others respect ours in turn.

Both factions strongly support sibko units, and mix bloodlines and phenotypes to foster comradeship and understanding among the warriors according to Wolf tradition. However, the Clan schism has separated many Wolf warriors from their sibmates. The Warden Wolves allow contact with their Crusader brethren, but the Crusaders are under standing orders not to communicate with the "traitors" who fled to the Inner Sphere. Despite this prohibition, however, contacts are maintained through unofficial channels (and a few little-known official ones).

The Wolves respect technology as a tool that allows warriors to achieve their maximum potential. Genetics is the most respected branch of the sciences because it enhances the Clan's gene pool; cybernetics, by contrast, are reviled for seeking to turn individuals into something they are not. Few Wolf warriors use cybernetics, preferring vat-grown replacement limbs. Many Crusader Wolves use enhanced-imaging technology, however.

Both factions have complete copies of the Wolf Clan's genetic legacies and have pursued their own eugenics programs. Both have also held their own Trials for Bloodheritages, resulting in the existence of two holders of each—one Crusader, the other Warden. Unofficially, the Wardens have shown a willingness to arrange Trials only for the heritages they took into exile. However, I remain the only Wolf to accept the Abjuration of his Bloodname. Rather than fight to retain the name of Phelan Ward, I have chosen to take the Bloodname of Kell, awarded to me by ilKhan Ulric before his death.

MILITARY

Both Wolf militaries emphasize close cooperation between MechWarriors, Elementals and aerospace pilots. However, the Crusaders have been forced to co-opt many members of the civilian castes into the military as freeborn warriors, predomi-

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nantly as vehicle crews and regular infantry, but also as second-line 'Mech pilots. Given Vlad Ward's well-known hatred of freeborns, he must find the necessity for this particularly galling.

Under similar pressure, the Warden Wolves have remained true to the Clan's traditional organization. Rather than drafting civilians, they are backed by the forces of the ARDC and the Smoke Jaguar warriors taken as abtakha during Operation Bulldog. The Warden Wolves have obtained Clan equipment from various sources, most notably their fellow exiles, the Nova Cats.

The Wardens' status as outcasts makes bidding and Trials difficult. Many units from other Clans ignore Clan traditions when dealing with them, though occasionally a Clan commander will honor the batchall and traditional styles of combat. Each Trial must be handled on a case-by-case basis.

ALLIES AND ENEMIES

Relations between the Wolves and the other Clans remain in chaos. The philosophical switch of the "official" Wolves to the Crusader camp has caused relations with the Clan's pro-Warden allies—most notably the Coyotes and Goliath Scorpions—to cool somewhat. However, it has also allowed a degree of cooperation with long-time enemies like the Jade Falcons. Though little more than an alliance of convenience, Khan Vlad and Khan Marthe Pryde of the Falcons have managed to put aside their differences for mutual gain during the crises of the past three years. Vlad Ward's actions to stall the ambitions of Khan Asa Taney and his Ice Hellions have earned the Wolves the hatred of that Clan, and a feud is brewing.

The Warden Wolves were forced to cut their ties with almost every Clan. Technically, they are enemies of every Clan represented on the Grand Council, though in practice many keep up covert contacts. The Diamond Sharks, Ghost Bears, Coyotes and Goliath Scorpions have done so since the schism, as did the Nova Cats until they left the Clans for the Inner Sphere. Since their Abjuration, the Nova Cats have exchanged several envoys with the Warden Wolves.

Surprisingly, ties between the Warden and Crusader Wolves remain strong. Unofficial channels have allowed individuals to communicate, and at least one high-ranking member of the Crusader Wolves is a Warden sympathizer who has done much to aid our cause. I believe Vlad knows of this individual's actions but chooses to allow them to continue, providing a semi-official channel between our two groups and leaving the door open for future rapprochement.

The Crusader Wolves are divided on the subject of the Warden Wolves. Many regard us as traitors and call for our Annihilation, but a larger group advocates neutrality toward us or even eventual reconciliation. The Crusader leaders so far remain silent on the matter.

POSSESSIONS

Crusader Worlds: 93 (Clan space: 10; 9 shared, 1 exclusive.

Inner Sphere: 83)

Warden Worlds: None (Arc-Royal shared with the mercenary Kell Hounds)

The Crusader Wolves have the largest number of assets in the Clans, holding the bulk of the Free Rasalhague Republic as well as a thin strip of the Federated Commonwealth. They also have one of the largest holdings in Clan space. Though the Crusader Wolves remain militarily weak, their Inner Sphere holdings seem relatively safe. The Jade Falcons are weak as well, and must pay considerable attention to their other neighbors: the Lyran Alliance and the ARDC. The Crusader Wolves' other main rivals, the Ghost Bears, seem content with their own occupation zone. Consequently, Khan Vlad had been able to devote considerable resources to maintaining and expanding his Wolves' Clan space holdings. On Eden and Circe, Vlad's Wolves seized sections of the Smoke Jaguar enclaves, as well as taking complete control of the world of Tranquil. In partnership with the Hell's Horses, Khan Ward has even challenged for former Nova Cat assets on Hord, as much to annoy the Ice Hellions as for practical gain. The Wolves and Horses have so far each occupied roughly 10 percent of the planet. The Ghost Bears siezed three Wolf worlds in 3061—perhaps an indication that they are no longer content to occupy only their current holdings, possibly a precursor to an invasion into the Wolf occupation zone, or maybe simply a warning to Khan Vlad Ward. Vlad's reaction was somewhat surprising: he allowed Clan Hell's Horses to bid for possession of three Wolf worlds on the border of the Ghost Bear dominion, effectively giving them an occupation zone of their own and clearly hoping that the Horses will curb Bear adventurism.

The Warden Wolves have few possessions to call their own. They received a land grant on Arc-Royal that serves as their base of operations, and brought the sophisticated Lupus Majoris modular space station with them when they came to the Inner Sphere. Aside from those assets, they rely mostly on the good will of the people of Arc-Royal and the ARDC, though recent Trials against Clan Ghost Bear have netted the Warden Wolves a sizable quantity of Clan-tech manufacturing equipment.

The Wardens' relations with Arc-Royal's civilians have posed a few problems. Relations are particularly strained with the FRR expatriates also present on the world, as Clan Wolf was largely responsible for the Free Rasalhague Republic's virtual destruction. Though the Wolves largely keep to their own enclave on Arc-Royal, the extremist FRR group Ragnarok has threatened terrorist action and interfered with Wolf trade.

THE FALLEN

Once there were twenty Clans; now only fourteen remain. Three have been Absorbed by other Clans and two Annihilated: one by the Clans and another by the Inner Sphere. The sixth fallen Clan, the Nova Cats, have been Abjured and exiled. The following briefly describes each Clan and the reasons for the actions taken against them.

CLAN WOLVERINE

(Annihilated by Clan Wolf in 2823)

The Wolverines were among the most vocal critics of Nicholas Kerensky's authoritarian rule over the Clans. Official

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Clan histories state that they were Annihilated for espousing anti-Clan sentiments, such as democracy and independence, but the reality is somewhat different. Many Clans were suffering internal strife at the time of the Clan Wolverine incident, and Nicholas saw that the Clans as a whole were on the brink of rebelling against his authority. The Wolverines served as both object lesson and common enemy against whom the other nineteen Clans could unite.

Clan Wolf carried out the Grand Council's sentence against Khan Sarah McEvedy and her Clan, but a later investigation strongly suggested that some individuals—predominantly civilians and second-line troops—had been able to flee. Officially put down to bad book-keeping, the whereabouts and disposition of any survivors remains unknown.

CLAN WIDOWMAKER

(Absorbed by Clan Wolf in 2834)

Clan Widowmaker long had an adversarial relationship with Clan Wolf, most notably expressed during the run-up to the Trial of Annihilation against Clan Wolverine, when the Widowmakers forced the Wolves to bid below the accepted cutdown. In the summer of 2834, the Widowmakers took brutal action against their own civilians, leading Khan Jerome Winson of Clan Wolf to question their right to rule. The Grand Council agreed with Winson and gave the Wolves the right to Absorb them.

The Trial of Absorption, staged on Ironhold, had unforeseen and tragic consequences. When members of the Widowmaker Touman intervened in a duel between Winson and Khan Jorgensson of the Widowmakers, the referees—led by ilKhan Nicholas Kerensky—intervened. Whether by design or accident, Jorgensson killed Kerensky, sending the Wolf Clan into a frenzy of vengeance. The subsequent attacks, a virtual Trial of Annihilation, left few Widowmaker warriors alive.

CLAN MONGOOSE

(Absorbed by Clan Smoke Jaguar in 2868)

Overly reliant on political maneuvering, the Khans of Clan Mongoose were fond of quoting the writings of the Great Kerenskys to justify their actions. However, when they attempted to use such a maneuver to escape a Grand Council decision that ran contrary to their wishes, they were declared unfit to rule, and their Clan became the target of a Trial of Absorption.

Clan Smoke Jaguar won the right to Absorb the Mongoose assets, though actions by Clan Star Adder in advance of the official Trial limited the Jaguar gains. The Jaguars destroyed the Mongoose Touman, but refused to take any of the Clan's genetic legacies. The Cloud Cobras acquired eleven legacies, which they continue to use.

CLAN WOLF (IN EXILE)

(Abjured in 3057)

The Warden Wolves—those who followed me into the Inner Sphere—were the subject of an official Rite of Abjuration, cast out of the Clans and stripped of all rights and ties. Like the Nova Cats, the exiled Wolves are considered "fair game" by the other Clans.

CLAN BURROCK

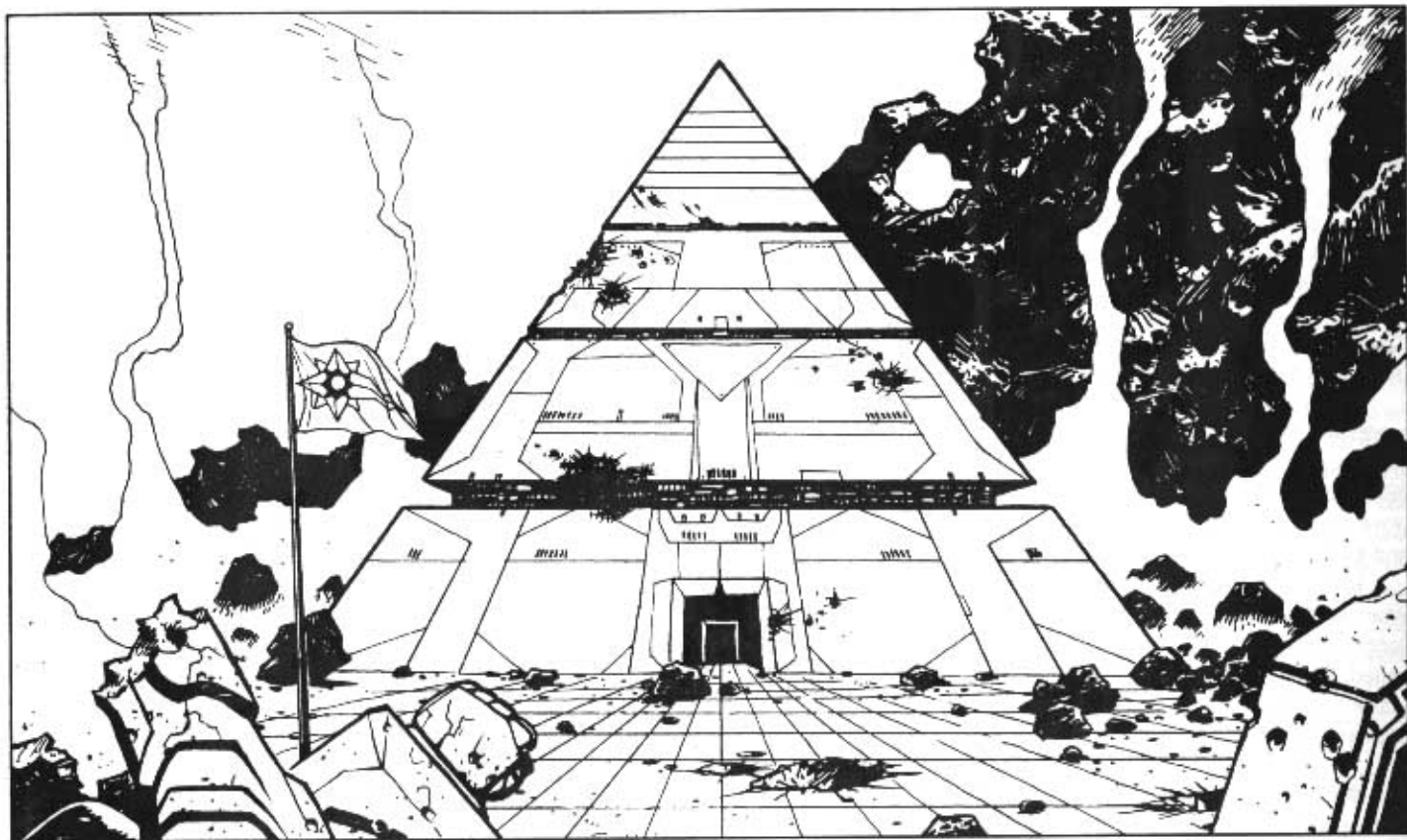
(Absorbed by Clan Star Adder in 3059)

For many years, Clan Burrock conspired with the Dark Caste for its own purposes, a secret the Burrocks managed to keep from the other Clans until late 3058. When the Star Adders brought the matter to the Grand Council's attention, the Council declared a Trial of Absorption. The Burrocks' long-time enemies, the Blood Spirits, moved against them simultaneously with the official Star Adder Absorption, prompting the Burrocks and Adders to work in concert to defeat the interlopers.

Many Clan Burrock units, appalled by their leaders' collusion with the Dark Caste, staged pre-emptive batchalls against the Star Adders, putting up only token resistance before being incorporated by that Clan. With the exception of the battles against the Blood Spirits, this was the least violent Absorption in Clan history. The bulk of Clan Burrock remains intact as part of Clan Star Adder.



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CLAN SMOKE JAGUAR (Annihilated by the SLDF in 3060)

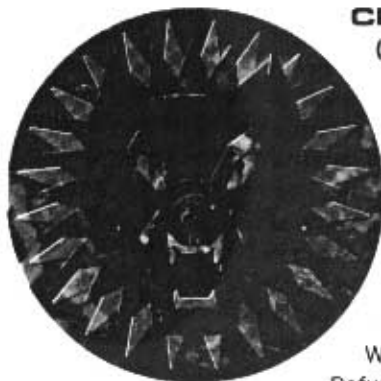


The most aggressive of the Clans, the Smoke Jaguars earned the enmity of the Inner Sphere by using orbital bombardment to destroy the city of Edo on the Combine world of Turtle Bay. When the re-formed Star League decided to take the war to the Clans, they chose to destroy the Jaguars because of their past actions and because they were the strongest Crusaders. In addition, the possibility of an Inner Sphere-Nova Cat alliance offered the opportunity to cut the ground from underneath the Jaguars' feet.

A multinational force under the banner of the Star League began a major assault on the Jaguars' Inner Sphere occupation zone in May, 3059. The campaign, expected to last several years, took less than four months; the SLDF caught the Jaguars readying themselves to renew the assault on the Inner Sphere and ill-prepared for defensive operations. Simultaneously, an SLDF task force traveled to the Jaguar capital of Huntress in Clan space, arriving in March 3060 and razing its defenses and military indus-

tries. The last Smoke Jaguar warriors died during the Great Refusal on Strana Mechty. With the exception of the city of Looteria on Huntress, which became an SLDF protectorate, the Clan's assets were absorbed by other Clans.

CLAN NOVA CAT (Abjured in 3060)



The defection of Nova Cat units to the SLDF during Operation Bulldog, and their Khan's decision to side with the SLDF in the Great Refusal, earned the Nova Cats the enmity of the other Clans, Warden as well as Crusader.

Within days of the Great Refusal, the Nova Cats were Abjured. Many Clans moved against the

Cats' Clan space enclaves, forcing the Cats still in the homeworlds to stage a hurried withdrawal and join their brethren in the Inner Sphere. Most of the Cats' assets were taken by other Clans.

The bulk of the Nova Cat Touman is located in the Inner Sphere. Their former holdings in the Jaguar/Cat occupation zone, recently reclaimed by the Draconis Combine, have become a "special administrative district," the Irece Prefecture, under the joint authority of the Combine and the Nova Cat Clan Council.

CLAN SPACE

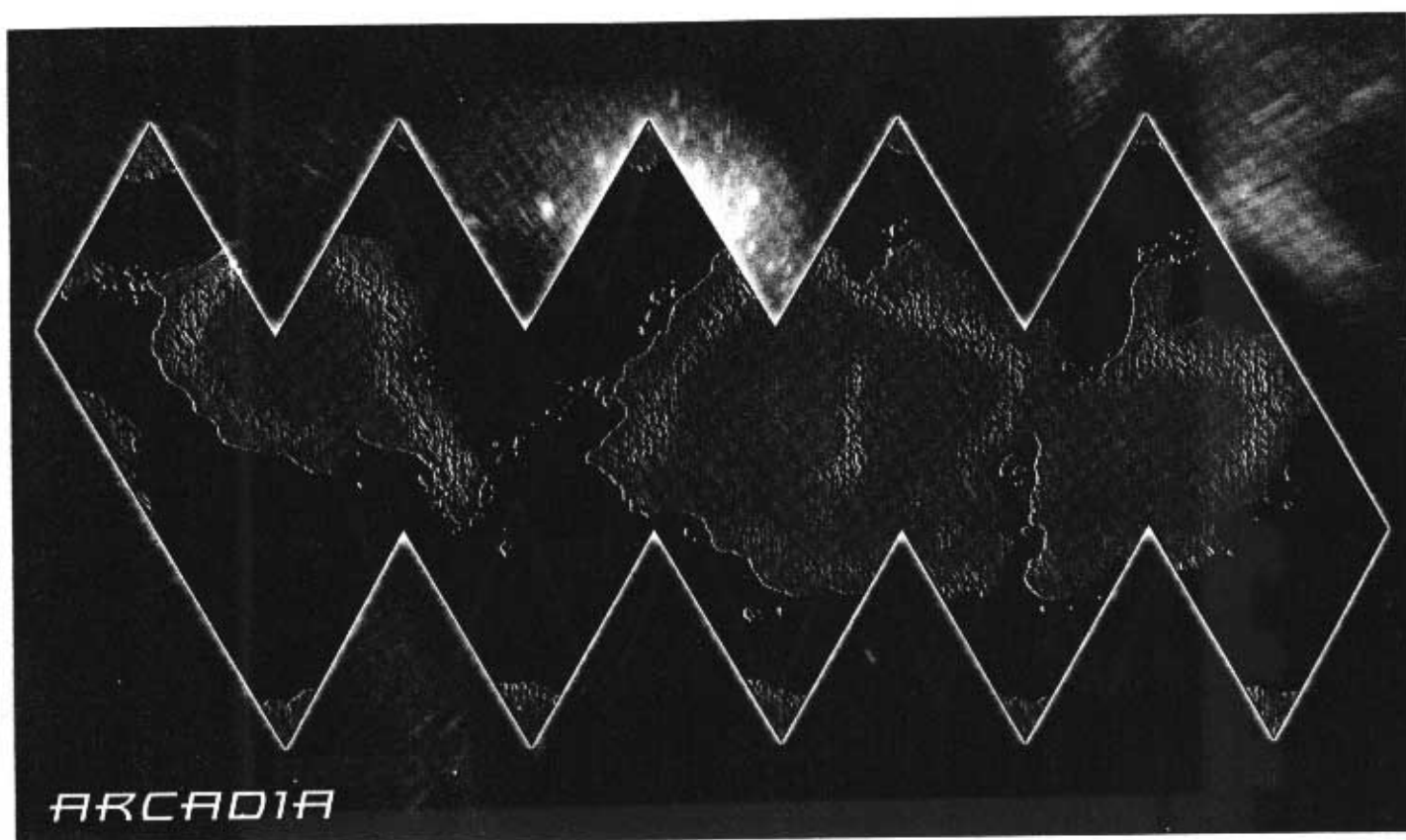


The Clan sphere of influence encompasses forty-one worlds: the five worlds of the Pentagon and the thirty-six worlds of the Kerensky Cluster. Most are considered marginal for purposes of supporting human life, and several are downright hostile. Despite the hardships imposed by their climates, these worlds—located roughly 1,300 light-years from Terra—have supported the children of Kerensky for more than 270 years. Despite warfare's integral role in Clan society, the need to preserve the precious resources of these worlds ensured little collateral damage.

The invasion of the Inner Sphere disrupted the fine balance that the Clans had maintained since Operation Klondike, the liberation of the warring Pentagon by the original Clans. Several of the invading Clans took control of more and better worlds than

existed in Clan space. The Wolves alone have more than twice as many Inner Sphere worlds as there are habitable colonies in the Kerensky Cluster; given such gains in territory and resources, it is little surprise that the invading Clans dominate the Grand Council.

The following section describes a selection of Clan worlds in the Pentagon and the Kerensky Cluster. These worlds are the main centers of conflict in Clan space, and also illustrate the variety of conditions that forged the Clans. The Clan Space Worlds Table at the end of this section provides the star type, position in system, surface water, atmospheric pressure, surface gravity, equatorial temperature and highest form of native life for all the worlds in Clan space. The Political Balance Table indicates the percent of each world controlled by each Clan.



ARCADIA

Star Type: G7V

Position in system: 1 (of 6)

Surface Water: 50 percent

Atm. Pressure: High (Breathable)

Surface Gravity: 1.5 G

Equatorial Temperature: 30°C

Highest Native Life: Mammals

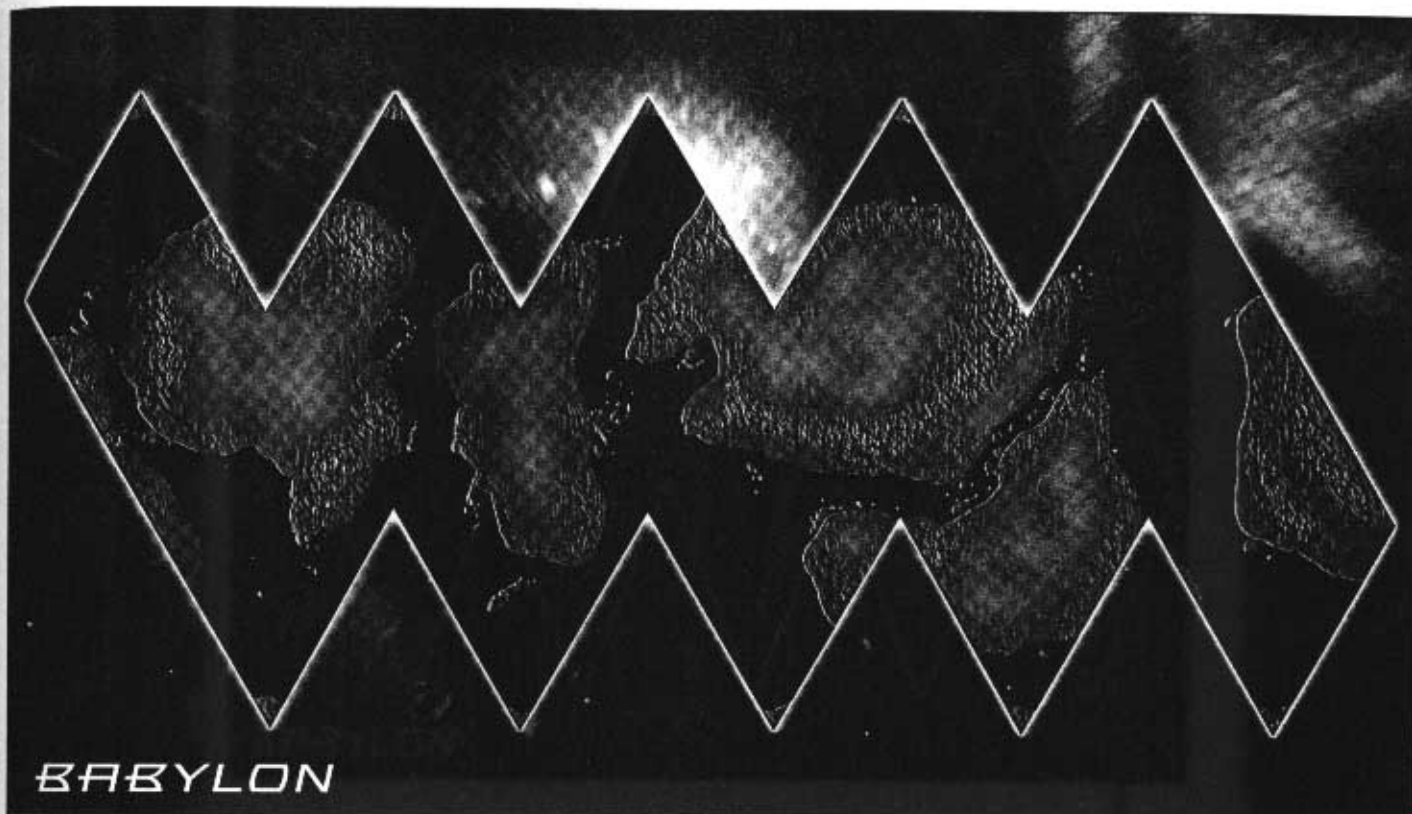
Occupying Clans: Ghost Bear, Star Adder, Steel Viper

Population: 54,000,000

One of the original five worlds settled by the Exodus fleet in 2786, Arcadia superficially resembles its namesake. Though water covers only half its surface, the planet supports considerable dense vegetation and a fully developed ecosystem. Many analogues to Terran flora and fauna exist on Arcadia, including the Arcadian mammoth, a large hairy herbivorous mammal with huge tusks and an extended snout, and the Arcadian russet, a mahogany-like hardwood. The world's colonists also introduced a number of Terran species, modified to survive Arcadia's environmental conditions. Most notable of these is the cloud cobra, which soon carved out a niche for itself in the misty equatorial jungles. The colonists also attempted to introduce the cobra to the temperate grasslands, but the native steel viper decimated the cobra nests within months of the cobras' release.

The presence of a harmful virus in the atmosphere caused many deaths among the early colonists before the development of counter-agents. Some areas of the planet suffered earthquakes and intense volcanic activity; these were a source of many valuable minerals, prompting the establishment of extensive mining camps. Some particularly beautiful areas, such as the southern islands, became vacation resorts, while the rich soils of the Aeschal Plateau were ideal for growing genetically modified foodstuffs. Arcadia's relative abundance of resources had its downside, however. Considerable fighting took place on Arcadia in the Exodus Civil War, devastating most of the planet's cities and industrial centers. As farmers and workers were drafted into the armies of the petty warlords, the planetary economy collapsed, causing widespread famine and death.

Reconstruction took many years. As with Inner Sphere worlds devastated in the Succession Wars, the use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons rendered many cities uninhabitable for centuries. The ruins of cities and military enclosures dot the Arcadian countryside. The planetary capital of Rivera was spared such destruction, and today serves as neutral ground for the three Clans present on Arcadia. A fourth Clan, the Blood Spirits, withdrew to their colony world of York in 3059. Administrative and mercantile facilities occupy most of Rivera, along with the Hall of Arcadia. Made of local iron-rich red granite, it serves as a meeting hall and houses the command mechanisms for the planetary SDS system. Aerospace bases on the world's single moon provide additional protection against attack.



BABYLON

Star Type: G7V

Position in system: 2 (of 6)

Surface Water: 40 percent

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)

Surface Gravity: 1.5 G

Equatorial Temperature: 35°C

Highest Native Life: Reptiles

Occupying Clans: Cloud Cobra, Coyote, Diamond Shark, Ice Hellion

Population: 51,000,000

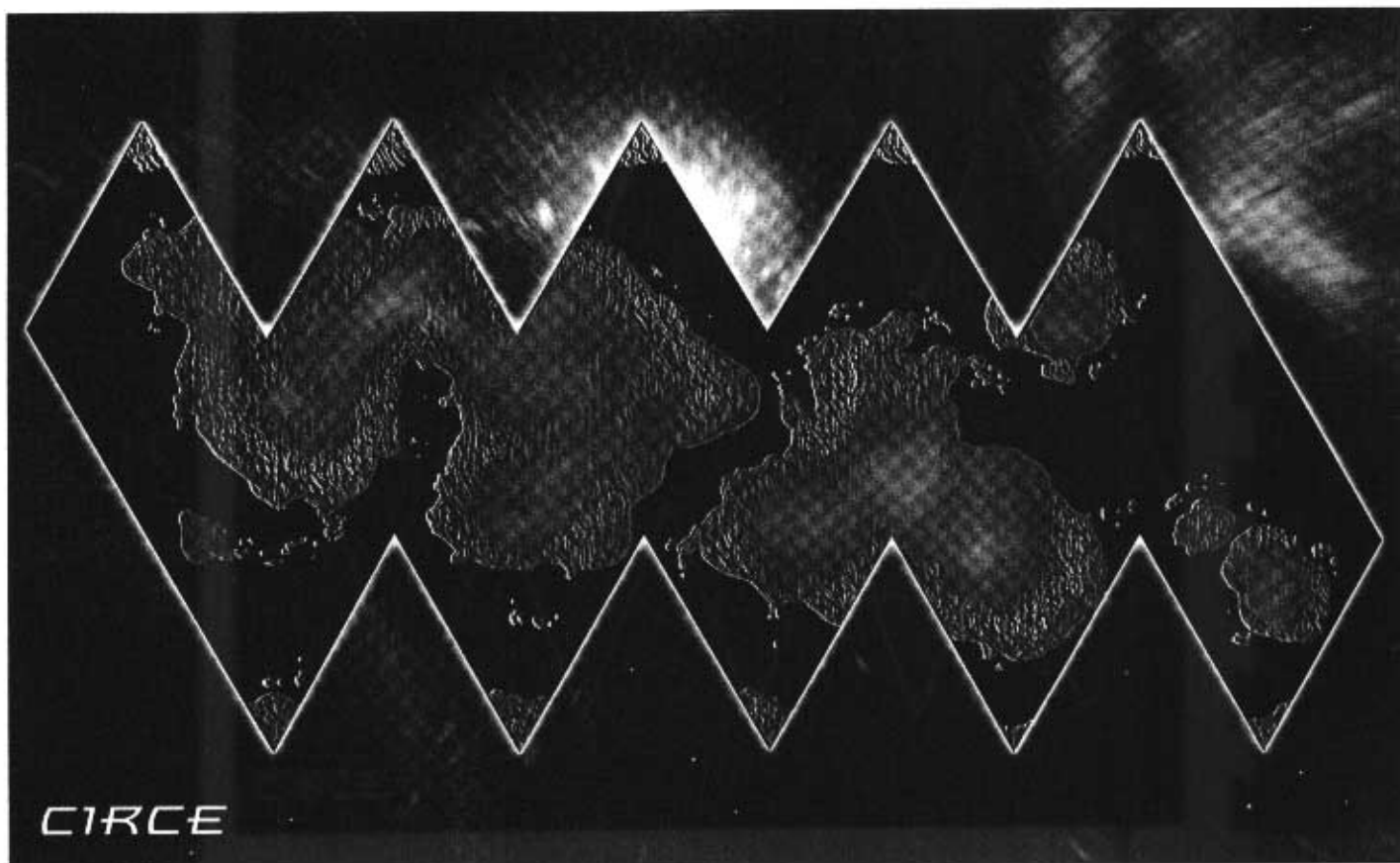
Massive deserts dominate all five continents of Babylon, another of the original Pentagon worlds. The largest, called the Spiked Heart, covers two-thirds of the world's largest continent and is broken by rugged mountains. Rising to almost six kilometers above mean sea level, the Snaefell mountains trigger major precipitation, resulting in deeply incised valleys on the windward side of the range, each with verdant forests and grasslands. However, even outside the deserts, much of the rest of the world is arid and inhospitable. A large reptilian cattle analogue known as talasi evolved in the Snaefell valleys and later became a staple of the settlers' diet. Other species, like the goliath scorpion, developed in unique ways that allowed them to thrive in the arid wastes.

Like Arcadia and Eden, many of Babylon's native bacteria were hostile to humanity and took a horrendous toll on the first

colonists. Working from a hurriedly constructed base on the world's single moon, scientists raced to combat the worst of these, dubbed the "Babylon Plague." Their efforts produced a vaccine within four months, but by then thousands had died.

The colonists could have eked out a living in the Snaefell valleys, but the discovery of substantial mineral deposits in the deserts prompted a major exodus from those safe havens. With such resources, the colonists could rebuild much of the civilization they had left behind in the Inner Sphere. However, the move to the deserts brought the colonists into the hunting range of the goliath scorpions. These predators killed hundreds until the colonists learned to avoid scorpion nests.

Today, Babylon is a major industrial center, involved in processing raw materials and producing considerable volumes of civilian equipment as well as war materiel. The Diamond Sharks have established a stranglehold on planetary commerce, but the other Clans retain control of their own military manufacturing. However, Shark-owned refineries like the massive Port Talbot complex dominate the supply of petrochemicals and related products, in effect allowing the Sharks to profit from the needs of the other Clans. Also of note are the Ice Hellion-owned aerospace plants in the cities of Marron and Yoma, and the Diamond Shark-controlled orbital DropShip construction yards—one of the few such facilities outside of Snow Raven control. Agriculture is another a major industry, with ranching particularly common around the cities of Hope and New Drineshane.



CIRCE

Star Type: G2Ia

Position in system: 1 (of 4)

Surface Water: 50 percent

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)

Surface Gravity: 0.8 G

Equatorial Temperature: 35°C

Highest Native Life: Plants

Occupying Clans: Snow Raven, Wolf

Population: 37,000,000

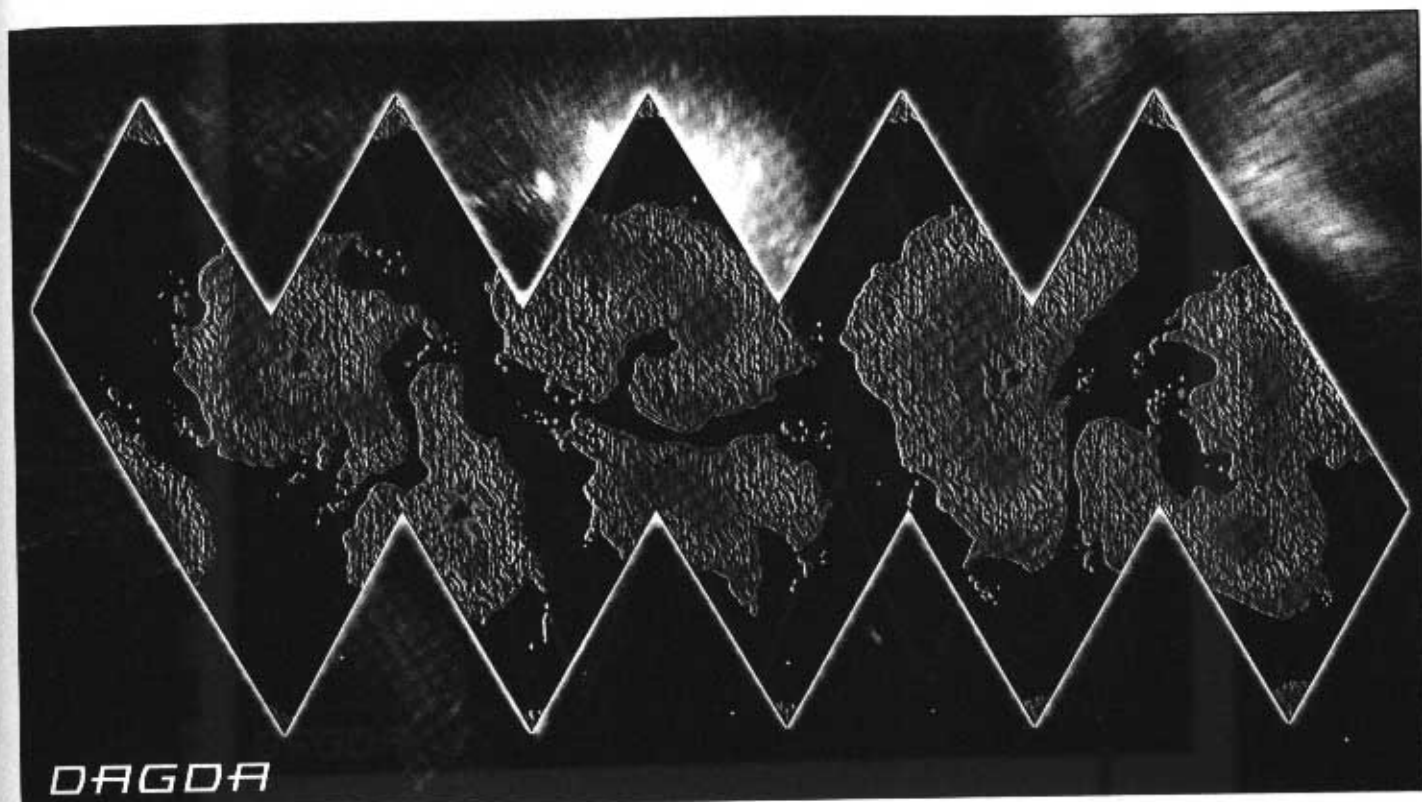
Circe's erratic orbit results in a seven-hundred year climatic cycle that has limited the development of the planetary ecosystem, with a handful of plant varieties the only species native to the world. The early colonists faced a long struggle to develop a world capable of sustaining human life, fighting climate as the world approached perihelion in 2831 as well as near-toxic levels of heavy metals in the soil. The settlers spent considerable effort introducing Terran flora and fauna, mostly deliberately, but with occasional accidental releases like the genetically engineered hell's horse adding an element of chaos to the mix. The hell's horse adapted to a niche for which the scientists had few plans: the vast deserts.

Forests now cover Circe's rolling hills, with Circian oak a prized commodity. However, the planet's violent storms—a

result of Circe's massive twin moons—frequently wreak havoc with the oak plantations as winds of up to 200 kph uproot even the oldest trees. Buildings on Circe are reinforced against these storms, using the latest adaptive architecture; in the early days of the colonization effort, however, the storms caused major loss of life. Scientists on Circe have undertaken numerous studies on the impact of the planet's reaching aphelion, due to occur in 3184. They expect the storm systems to worsen, possibly prompting evacuation sometime in the thirty-second century.

Circe is the site of the Clan's greatest infamy: the Wolverine treachery. The largest element of the traitor Clan defended their enclave against the Wolves and used nuclear weaponry to destroy Dehra Dun, the capital of their long-time enemies, Clan Snow Raven. Like Hiroshima before it, the center of Dehra Dun stands as a monument to the horror of such weapons.

Until recently, four Clans occupied Circe. The recent fall of the Smoke Jaguars and ejection of the Nova Cats, however, prompted a major shift in the balance of power. Working with the withdrawing Nova Cats, the Snow Ravens launched a blitzkrieg assault that netted them more than two-thirds of the planet. Wolf Khan Vlad Ward has so far refrained from taking decisive action against the Ravens' aggressive expansion, but such a move is almost certainly part of the Crusader Wolves' long-term plans.



DAGDA

Star Type: K4V

Position in system: 3 (of 8)

Surface Water: 60 percent

Atm. Pressure: Low (Breathable)

Surface Gravity: 1.1 G

Equatorial Temperature: 25°C

Highest Native Life: Mammals

Occupying Clans: Fire Mandrill, Goliath Scorpion, Jade Falcon, Star Adder, Wolf

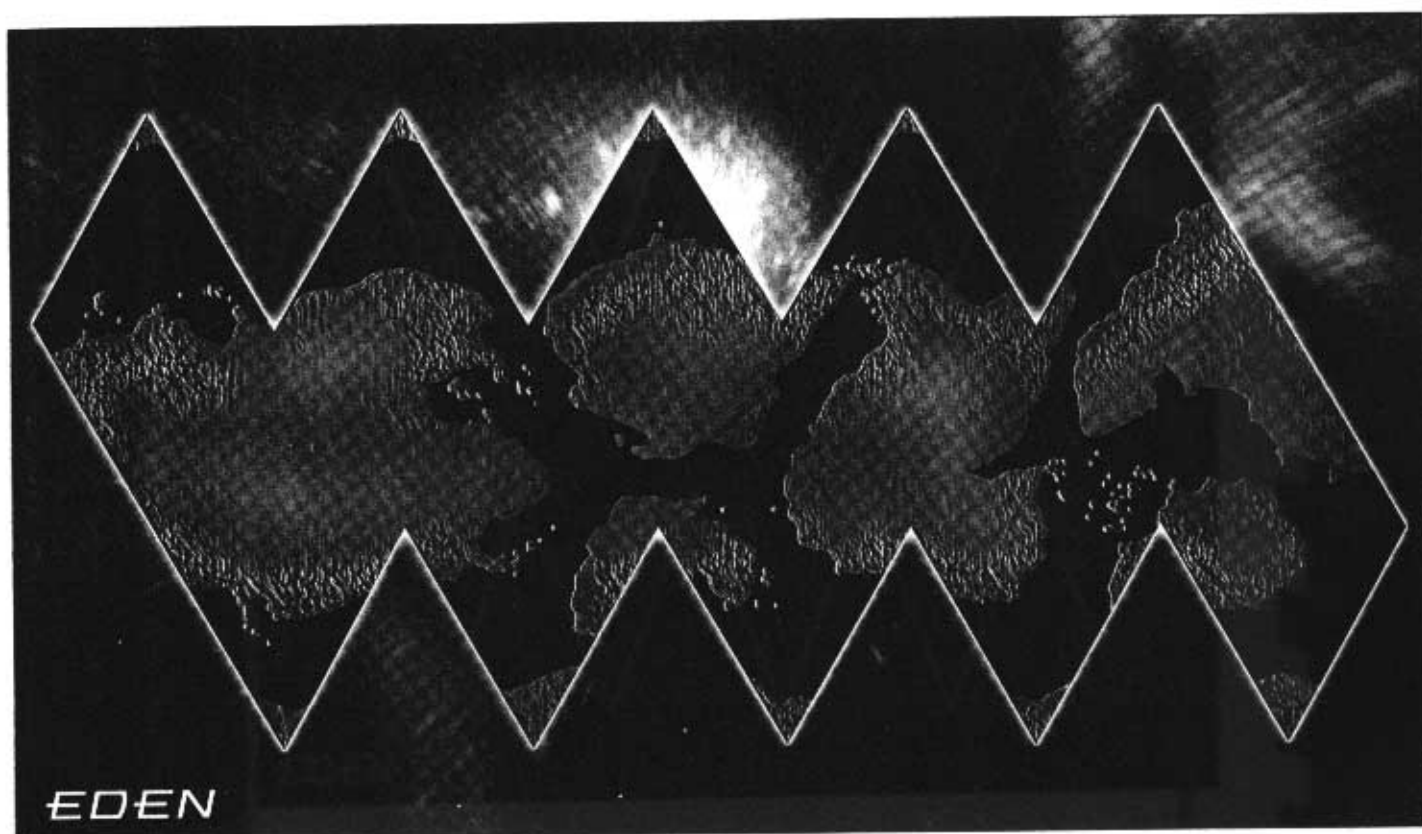
Population: 52,000,000

The fourth of the Pentagon worlds, Dagda has one of the strangest ecosystems in Clan space. With land divided across six mountainous continents, several of them wracked by massive volcanic activity, much of the planet's principal flora and fauna developed in the oceans. When compared to the barren land, the ocean ecosystem is verdant and highly developed, culminating in a dolphin analogue that shows signs of rudimentary intelligence. The few land-based species native to Dagda live in the lowlands on the ocean fringe, as the oxygen pressure on the inland plateaus is too thin to support large animals. With relatively little habitable land for grazing herds to develop, predators dominate the ecosystem. The nova cat is the best known of these. Though superficially similar to a Terran feline, the nova cat has evolved a number of defenses akin to those of a porcupine. When threatened, the cat's barbed and poisonous mane stands on end, discouraging attacks—especially those of

the sphinx raptor, an ultra-aggressive pack hunter. Nicholas Kerensky considered the sphinx raptor as a Clan totem animal, but though he admired its lethality, he regarded the species as a poor role model, too lethal and single-minded for its own good. The raptor kills everything it encounters with little view to the future, thus limiting its own survival.

The Kerensky exiles founded several colonies on Dagda to exploit the natural resources in its oceans. Working to extract resources from ever-deeper ocean trenches led to the development of pressurized mining suits, the forerunners of Elemental battle armor, and the establishment of several undersea colonies. Several free-floating fishing platforms constantly relocate on the planetary surface, exploiting the seasonal movement of fish and marine mammals.

Many of Dagda's cities focus on manufacturing or processing these resources, particularly those on the continent of Riva. That continent lies closest to several extraction sites and contains many riches of its own. Mining is a major industry, especially around the cities of Borodino and Graz. A few mining installations exist in the Gressen and Tien Shan mountain ranges, but most are automated because of the thin atmosphere. Only those in the most inhospitable terrain, like the Goliath Scorpion-owned plant on the plateau known as Satan's Table, have permanently assigned personnel who must wear bulky respirators and pressure suits. Satan's Table workers wear armored mining suits akin to those used underwater, as regular pressure suits are too vulnerable to the razor-sharp edges in the lava fields.



EDEN

Star Type: F4Ib

Position in system: 1 (of 2)

Surface Water: 40 percent

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Viral taint)

Surface Gravity: 1.1 G

Equatorial Temperature: 30°C

Highest Native Life: Mammals

Occupying Clans: Hell's Horses, Jade Falcon, Wolf

Population: 61,000,000

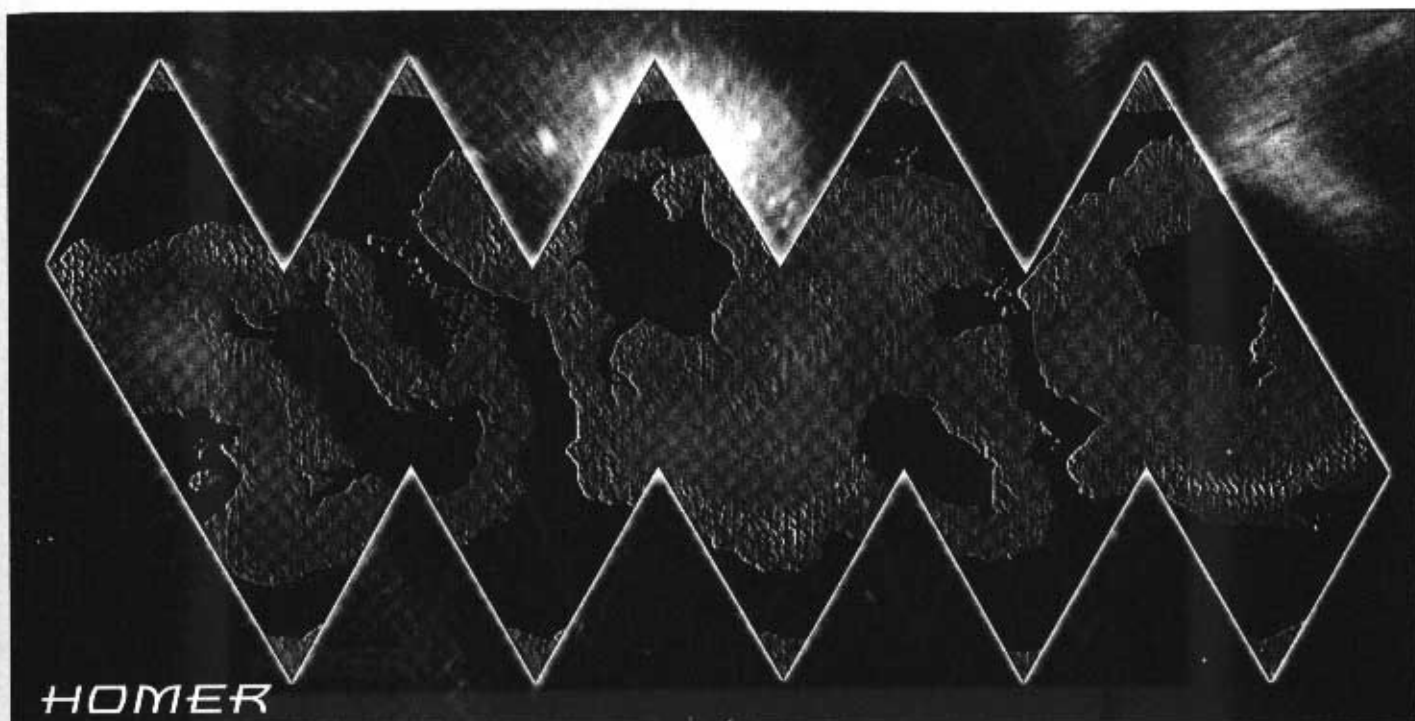
The last of the Pentagon worlds, Eden served as the exiles' capital from their arrival in 2786 to 2801. Much of the planetary precipitation falls in a narrow band around the equator, resulting in sharply contrasting patterns of vegetation. Within twenty degrees of the equator there are lush jungles and verdant plains; rainfall drops off sharply outside of this area, resulting in large swathes of rocky desert. Local microclimates give rise to vegetation outside the equatorial band, but the plant life is often seasonal.

Though a range of surface-dwelling species evolved on Eden, few are of appreciable size. The largest surface-dweller is the Eden beaver, a semi-aquatic mammal that lives off insects and fish. The largest species on the planet is the burrock, a large subterranean invertebrate. Rarely seen, the burrock is prized for its adaptability and determination. The colonists also

introduced many Terran species, of which the widowmaker spider (growing to three times the size of its Terran equivalent) and the jade falcon (a genetically modified peregrine) are the best known.

As with Babylon and Arcadia, much of the life native to Eden is hostile to humanity. The so-called "Curse of Eden," a form of brain fever, claimed the life of Aleksandr Kerensky's wife Katyusha and very nearly killed Nicholas. Those who survived often suffered considerable brain damage. The pathogen that causes the illness remains an active part of the planet's environment, and visitors to the world must be inoculated or risk infection.

The planetary population is concentrated in large urban enclaves, most of which date their founding to the Star League in Exile. The Hell's Horses planetary capital of Hades (formerly known as Vesta) on the Purgatory Peninsula has the distinction of being the oldest enclave remaining in use. Many others were lost in the destruction of the Pentagon civil war. The Clans chose not to resettle Aleksandr Kerensky's capital, Novy Moscva, after Operation Klondike. Instead, the ruins serve as a memorial under the care of the Wolf Clan. Nature has been allowed to reclaim much of the city, but key sites like Aleksandr's command post are maintained by specially trained keepers. Access to the site is by invitation only, with the site's guardians—a pack of Strana Mechty wolves—trained to attack anyone not accompanied by a keeper.



HOMER

Star Type: G6IV

Position in system: 2 (of 3)

Surface Water: 30 percent

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)

Surface Gravity: 1.4 G

Equatorial Temperature: 30°C

Highest Native Life: Amphibians

Occupying Clans: Cloud Cobra, Steel Viper

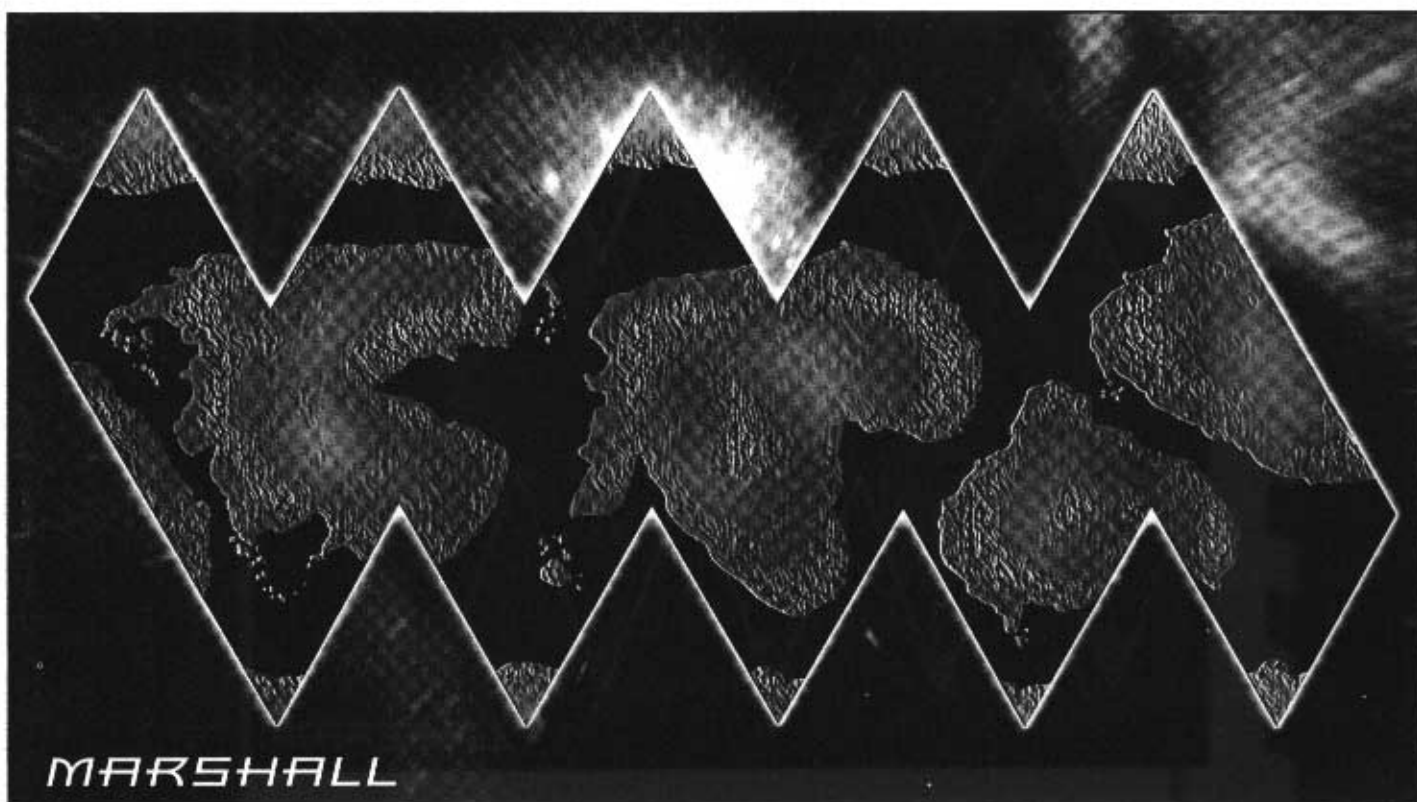
Population: 36,000,000

Arid and with gravity at the upper limit for human comfort, Homer attracted the Clans' attention with its large, readily accessible mineral deposits. The first settlers landed on Homer in 2839, and within a decade had established a thriving colony. The principal colonists were members of Clan Cloud Cobra, who had named the world Zara. In 2850, Cobra Khan Homer Telinov fell defending the colony against a Jade Falcon Trial of Possession. Spurred on by Telinov's sacrifice, the Cloud Cobras ejected the Falcons, and as undisputed masters of the world voted to rename it after their fallen Khan.

Homer consists of nine pseudo-continents divided into two principal land masses. Four landlocked seas contain most of the planet's water, though a heavy-metal taint makes this water unsuitable for drinking or irrigation. Surprisingly, these seas were home to Homer's principal predator, the gila toad. Growing up to a meter long, these amphibians decimated early attempts at sea farming, prompting an annual cull. Though the meat of the gila is inedible, the hide is prized for footwear.

Built to support scattered cities and agricultural centers, massive water processing plants dot the planet's surface, drawing water from the seas as well as from the few rivers and subterranean lakes. The largest body of water, the Ochre Sea, separates the Caulder landmass (comprising the continents of Amis, Ortin and Bagrain) from the world-dominating Fortuna block of continents. Further broken up by the Sakros Mountains (which divide Amis and Ortin) and the Isthmus of Param (which links Bagrain and Amis), Caulder is the only area in which the Cloud Cobras have allowed other Clans to establish colonies. Until recently, the Steel Vipers and Smoke Jaguars shared Bagrain, but the death of the Jaguars threw that region into chaos. The Vipers moved to take control of the Jaguar enclave, but were repulsed by the Cobras. Adding insult to injury, a detachment of Snow Raven troops took control of the Jaguar Firebase Hermes, seemingly with the complicity of the Cobras. The arrival of battle-hardened and angry Viper troops from the Inner Sphere allowed Clan Steel Viper to eject the Ravens from Homer, and the current massing of Viper troops indicates that they may try to challenge the Cloud Cobras next. In response, the Cobras are gathering around their capital of El Ghaza in an equally impressive show of force.

Located on the northern shores of the Ochre Sea, El Ghaza centers on the massive and ornately decorated genetic repository. Built of Ortin marble, the repository is surrounded by a large plaza from which broad, tree-lined boulevards radiate, an extravagance on this water-poor world. The Cobras have taken considerable care to ensure that all of the buildings around the plaza—known as the Field of Remembrance—do not detract from the majesty of the setting.



MARSHALL

Star Type: F4V

Position in system: 3 (of 3)

Surface Water: 50 percent

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)

Surface Gravity: 1.1 G

Equatorial Temperature: 30°C

Highest Native Life: Reptiles

Occupying Clans: Fire Mandrill, Goliath Scorpion, Ice Hellion, Jade Falcon, Star Adder, Steel Viper

Population: 17,600,000

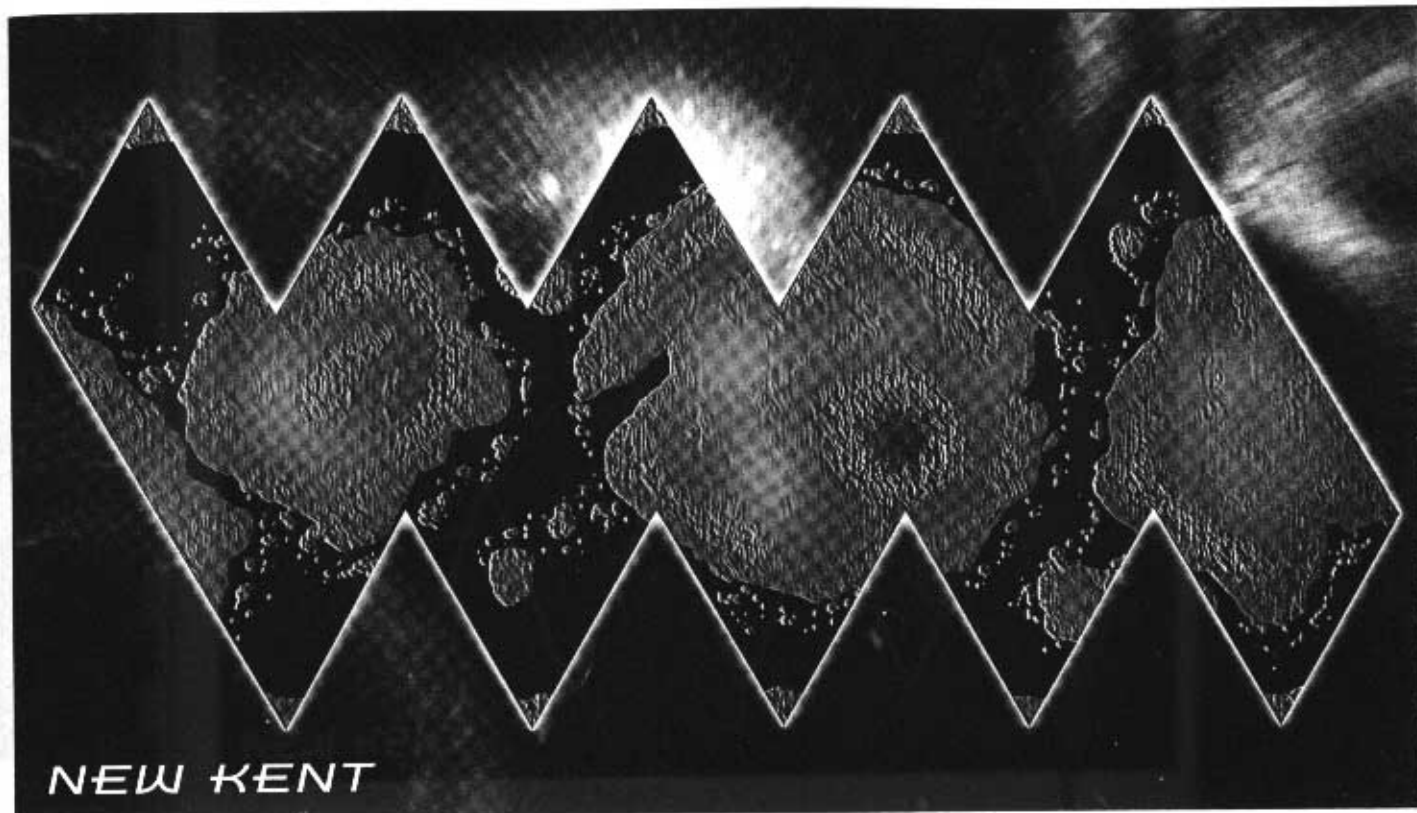
Marshall has been likened to Terra at an earlier stage in Terra's development. The diversity of plant and animal life is much smaller on Marshall than on humanity's homeworld, with reptiles the most advanced species of fauna. Nevertheless, the planetary ecosystem is broadly compatible with human needs, making the world a prime candidate for colonization. An unprecedented six Clans are crowded onto the world; the Steel Vipers and Goliath Scorpions control almost half of Marshall between them, and the Star Adders control another fifth. The other three Clans are shoehorned into the remaining land. This dense and diverse population makes Marshall the focus of many inter-Clan feuds and disputes, with Trials commonplace.

In the early days of the colony, these clashes were extremely bloody, as demonstrated by one incident in 2844. An assault by Clan Mongoose on the Star Adder enclave turned into a mas-

sacre when the Adder civilians took up arms to defend their homes. The Mongoose commander ordered his troops to slaughter the civilians for this affront, provoking massive retaliation from the Adder commanders. In a brutal campaign, the Adders killed every Mongoose warrior involved in the atrocity, and claimed the Mongoose colony of Tokasha as reparation. They then ordered Tokasha's population transported to Marshall to repopulate the Adder enclave. Since then, Marshall's inhabitants have developed a pragmatic approach to Trials. Several large areas are designated as common live-fire ranges, allowing battles to be fought without endangering local industry or agriculture.

Marshall has six continents, a seemingly ideal number for the occupants. However, the uneven distribution of arable land and the loss of large swathes of two continents under polar ice caps forces the often antagonistic inhabitants into close proximity. Though the Star Adders cannot claim the largest enclave, they are in the most defensible situation, isolated by the Waushaura Mountains and free to exploit the massive Poren Basin and the fertile Morten Plains nearby.

A moon of the outermost world in the Marshall system, the gas giant Xian, has an atmosphere and scrub flora. Named Diamondstar, Jade Falcon scientists have spent considerable effort studying the native life on this proto-world since wresting it from Steel Viper control in 3042, though the moon's mineral wealth is of more interest to the Clan's leaders.



NEW KENT

NEW KENT

Star Type: F2II

Position in system: 2 (of 2)

Surface Water: 40 percent

Atm. Pressure: Standard (CO₂ Taint)

Surface Gravity: 1.5 G

Equatorial Temperature: 40°C

Highest Native Life: Amphibians

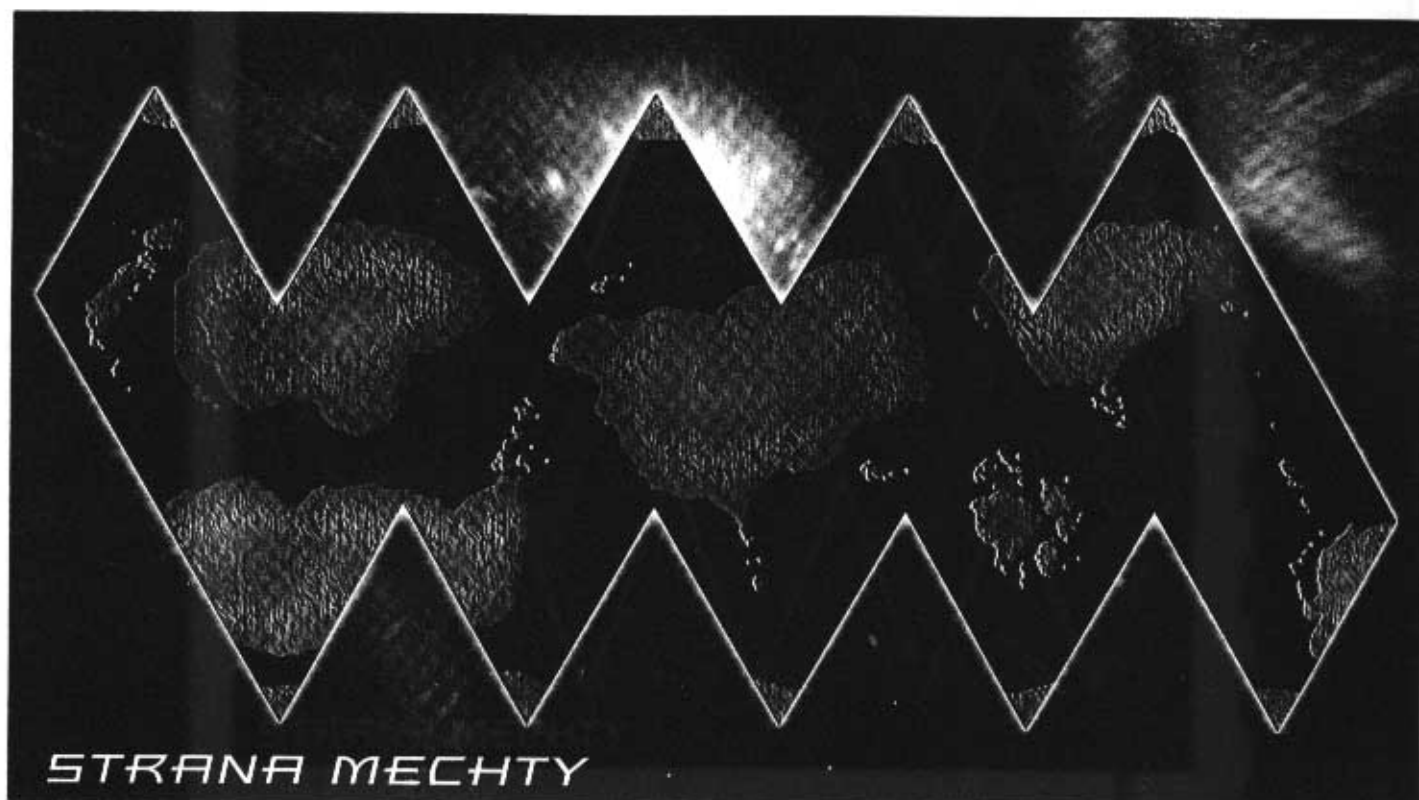
Occupying Clans: Coyote, Diamond Shark, Ice Hellion, Steel Viper

Population: 27,000,000

A high concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere requires the people of New Kent to wear breather masks. Several native fish and amphibian species exist in the planet's small oceans, but few animal species above insects and invertebrates have evolved on land. Instead, over the centuries the colonists introduced a number of Terran mammals, including rabbits, deer, bears and wolves, all genetically modified to survive the higher CO₂ levels. The same atmosphere that discouraged the development of native fauna allowed plant life, native and introduced, to thrive. Large swathes of the planet are covered in lush forests that provide a habitat for many introduced mammal species and a resource to be exploited by the human inhabitants.

New Kent has three principal land masses: jungle-covered Celebes, arid Kang and mountainous Ionia. Clusters of islands surround each land mass, but strong tides resulting from the world's three moons have discouraged coastal settlements. The Steel Vipers claim the world as their capital, controlling two thirds of the land, but Clan Coyote also maintains sizable holdings. Both have access to a wide range of the planet's natural resources, in stark contrast to the much poorer Ice Hellion and Diamond Shark holdings. The latter are heavily industrialized and contain mining interests in the Eagle Crater region, a massive astrobleme resulting from a cometary impact several millennia ago. This impact killed off much of the planetary ecosystem, but also brought vast mineral wealth to the surface. Several major 'Mech factories and weapons plants exploit New Kent's abundance of raw materials.

Less well known are the Steel Vipers' research facilities hidden in the Shandrake Massif. One such complex was recently the target of a major Ice Hellion raid, but a combination of natural defenses and an alert garrison drove off the interlopers with minimal loss to the Vipers. Also on New Kent is the Viper command center, the Mercer Building. The tallest structure in Clan space, rising to 1,000 meters, the building serves as the heart of Viper military and civilian administration and contains the Clan's primary meeting hall. Recent weeks have seen a marked increase in activity in the complex, lending credence to the rumors of a planned major Viper operation against the neighbors.



STRANA MECHTY

Star Type: G3VI

Position in system: 4 (of 7)

Surface Water: 70 percent

Atm. Pressure: Standard

Surface Gravity: 1.1 G

Equatorial Temperature: 25°C

Highest Native Life: Mammal

Occupying Clans: All (serves as Wolf and Diamond Shark Clan capital)

Population: 136,000,000

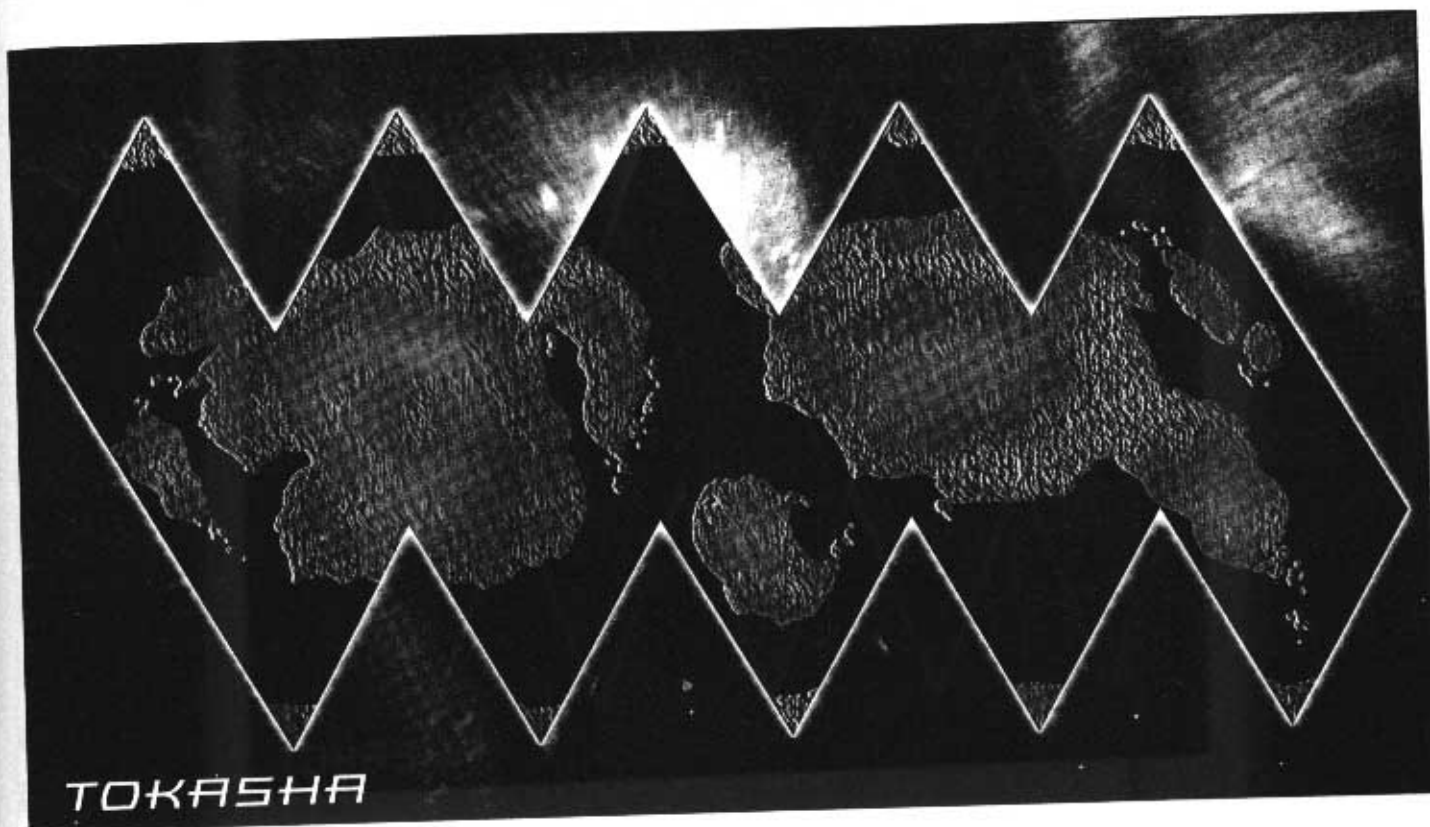
A survey mission discovered the world that would become the capital of the Clans in 2792. Aleksandr Kerensky's wife Katyusha named it Strana Mechty, Land of Dreams. Slightly colder than Terra, Strana Mechty was nonetheless ideally suited to colonization and by 2800 was thriving. Most native species proved benign, though the crana—a rodent-sized insect known as a vector for disease—proved problematic until the star adder was introduced to control their numbers. Other introduced species flourished, adapting well to the environmental conditions. Many of the Clan totem animals are descended from Terran stock introduced to Strana Mechty.

The planet consists of four major land masses: icy and mineral-poor Cameron in the southern hemisphere, warm and wet McKenna straddling the equator, and Novy Terra and Kerensky Prime in the temperate northern latitudes. Numerous archipel-

agoes and island groups dot the freshwater oceans, all named after Star League and Terran Hegemony heroes. Care is taken to maintain an equal division of land (though not resources) between all the Clans on Strana Mechty. The enclave of any Clan Absorbed, ejected or destroyed is divided between those who remain. Thus, while each Clan maintains the original block of land granted to it by Nicholas Kerensky, each also controls several enclaves scattered across the planet. Control of the southern continent of Cameron, formerly dominated by Widowmaker and Mongoose holdings, has fragmented under this policy. When the SLDF staged the Great Refusal, Cameron was the logical venue, having the lowest population and being divided among all the Clans.

The capital city of all the Clans, Katyusha, is located on Novy Terra and is renowned as a marketplace, legitimate and otherwise. Distinct from any Clan enclave, a special police force drawn from all Clans—associated with but not part of the Ebon Keshik—maintains order in the city. Their area of responsibility includes the Clans' master genetic repository that dominates the city and ends at the boundaries of the Svoboda Zemlya, the great park that surrounds the Hall of Khans complex. The park and the complex fall under the authority of the highly respected Ebon Keshik.

The *McKenna's Pride*, flagship to both Kerenskys, remains in geo-stationary orbit above Katyusha, maintained and operated by a crew from all the Clans. The vessel remains a trust of the Grand Council until the day one Clan is designated the ilClan by capturing Terra.



TOKASHA

Star Type: K5IV

Position in system: 4 (of 5)

Surface Water: 60 percent

Atm. Pressure: High (Breathable)

Surface Gravity: 0.8 G

Equatorial Temperature: 35°C

Highest Native Life: Birds

Occupying Clans: Goliath Scorpion, Hell's Horses, Jade Falcon

Population: 14,600,000

Settled in 2840 by members of Clan Mongoose, Tokasha has a high level of oxygen in its atmosphere that has restricted colonization efforts, particularly near sea level. Most major cities are located at high altitude, where the lower atmospheric pressure reduces the oxygen content below toxic levels. However, the main mining sites and their attendant industrial complexes are by necessity located in the lowlands. As giving each complex its own atmospheric processing equipment is impractical for many, several of them use the local atmosphere and require the workers to wear respirators. A few individuals have implants to filter the air so that they can work without bulky respirators, but as the implants restrict their ability to live elsewhere, such modifications are restricted to the laborer caste.

In addition to the atmospheric mix, the local flora and fauna are hostile to human life. A wide range of reptiles and avian species hunt in the dense jungles and forests of the two princi-

pal continents. Ranging from the size of mice to small horses, most attack interlopers on sight, and the colonists have learned to avoid their ranges. The lethality of the native species has limited the introduction of Terran fauna to a few small enclaves around human settlements. The notable exceptions are the sheep ranches on the sub-arctic Cashell peninsula, which is isolated from the main body of the continent by a series of massive mountain ranges. More insidious than the native animals are microbial life forms. The disease known as Laen's Regret is a classic example, with symptoms ranging from a mild fever and rash, through delirium and nausea, to death if left untreated. Even in mild cases, the disease can recur in later life if not treated properly.

Clan Mongoose lost control of Tokasha in the wake of the Marshall Massacre, and eventually found itself excluded from the colony world. For much of its history, four Clans have dominated Tokasha: Clan Ghost Bear, Goliath Scorpion, Hell's Horses and Jade Falcon. In 2921, a major battle between the Ghost Bears and Hell's Horses cost the latter their holdings, including the impressive Tokasha MechWorks Alpha. When the Ghost Bears withdrew from Tokasha in 3060, they ceded their holdings to the Diamond Sharks. The Diamond Shark Gamma Galaxy initially took possession of the former Ghost Bear territory, but the Clan viewed the rapidly deteriorating situation on Tokasha—particularly the arrival of Clan Hell's Horses, who laid claim to the Bear enclave—as contrary to their long-term interest and chose to withdraw.

CLAN SPACE

CLAN-SPACE WORLDS TABLE

World	Population	X	Y	Star Type	Position in System	Surface Water* (%)	Atmosphere**	Surface Gravity (In Gs)	Equator Temp. (°C)	Native Life
Albion	7,300,000	-92	26	K1V	2 (of 8)	60	Standard	0.8	25	Reptiles
Arcadia	54,000,000	-148	-176	G7V	1 (of 6)	50	High	1.5	30	Mammals
Atreus	8,100,000	39	-31	G5VI	3 (of 3)	40	Standard	1.6	35	Amphibians
Babylon	51,000,000	-158	-182	G7V	2 (of 6)	40	Standard	1.5	35	Reptiles
Barcella	37,000,000	-64	122	G6III	3 (of 9)	60	Standard	1.3	35	Birds
Bearclaw	41,000,000	120	-48	A6V	2 (of 4)	50	Standard ¹	1.1	20	Fish
Brim	6,500,000	-59	-2	F9II	4 (of 4)	20	Standard ²	2.0	25	Fish
Circe	37,000,000	-158	-164	G2Ia	1 (of 4)	50	Standard	0.8	35	Plants
Dagda	52,000,000	-164	-181	K4V	3 (of 8)	60	Low	1.1	25	Mammals
Delios	1,700,000	-57	31	G6III	2 (of 8)	80	High	0.9	30	Reptiles
Eden	61,000,000	-167	-174	F4Ib	1 (of 2)	40	Standard ³	1.1	30	Mammals
Foster	11,700,000	9	-37	M9III	1 (of 2)	50	Standard ¹	1.0	25	Amphibians
Gatekeeper	4,300,000	-63	6	B0III	2 (of 2)	10	Standard ⁴	0.8	20	Plants
Glory	6,200,000	61	71	G4IV	4 (of 5)	50	Standard	0.9	40	Mammals
Grant's Station	7,100,000	-114	67	G6III	3 (of 9)	70	Standard	1.5	35	Birds
Hector	44,000,000	123	3	B1III	2 (of 2)	25	Low	1.0	15	Mammals
Hellgate	250,000	7	71	F7Ia	1 (of 1)	20	Standard ⁴	0.7	40	Plants
Hoard	6,600,000	3	117	A2V	2 (of 5)	50	Standard	0.8	15	Plants
Homer	36,000,000	-122	31	G6IV	2 (of 3)	30	Standard	1.4	30	Amphibians
Huntress	39,000,000	12	-11	G7V	2 (of 7)	60	Standard	1.1	25	Birds
Ironhold	43,000,000	12	-28	K4V	2 (of 8)	70	Standard	1.1	20	Birds
Kirin	8,800,000	-62	68	M9IV	1 (of 1)	30	Low ¹	0.9	20	Amphibians
Londerholm	7,700,000	-92	116	G7III	2 (of 8)	70	Standard	1.5	30	Birds
Lum	32,000,000	-33	-16	K2IV	4 (of 5)	70	Standard	0.9	15	Birds
Marshall	17,600,000	27	29	F4V	3 (of 3)	50	Standard	1.1	30	Reptiles
New Kent	27,00,000	91	27	F2II	2 (of 2)	40	Standard ²	1.5	40	Amphibians
Niles	40,000,000	90	-63	A3II	1 (of 1)	20	Standard ¹	0.8	35	Microbes
Paxon	8,300,000	-120	112	K9III	4 (of 9)	60	Standard	1.3	35	Reptiles
Priori	6,300,000	-34	33	K0II	7 (of 8)	50	Standard	1.1	35	Fish
Roche	31,000,000	32	108	F2III	1 (of 1)	50	Standard	0.8	40	Reptiles
Shadow	42,000,000	-41	-26	B8IV	1 (of 2)	40	Standard ³	0.7	30	Reptiles
Sheridan	43,000,000	92	31	G0IV	1 (of 4)	80	High	1.0	35	Mammals
Strana Mechty	136,000,000	0	0	G3VI	4 (of 7)	70	Standard	1.1	25	Mammals
Strato Domingo	1,100,000	-27	115	K6VII	2 (of 6)	70	High ¹	1.2	35	Birds
Tamaron	37,000,000	51	49	A3III	1 (of 2)	40	Low ¹	0.7	35	Plants
Tathis	4,200,000	52	119	B4V	1 (of 2)	30	Standard	0.7	25	Plants
Tiber	5,300,000	74	-41	G8VI	3 (of 9)	40	Standard	1.0	25	Reptiles
Tokasha	14,600,000	97	-14	K5IV	4 (of 5)	60	High	0.8	35	Birds
Tranquil	34,000,000	-43	91	F-V	1 (of 1)	60	Standard	0.8	45	Reptiles
Vinton	8,000,000	-34	134	G8VI	3 (of 7)	60	Standard	1.1	30	Reptiles
York	56,000,000	-118	34	F2V	2 (of 5)	70	Standard	1.3	35	Amphibians

* Refers to the percentage of the planet's surface covered by water or ice.

** Refers to the density of the atmosphere. Ideal atmospheric pressure for humans is labeled Standard. Unless otherwise noted, all planets have breathable atmosphere. Tainted atmospheres have too much or not enough of certain gasses or other particles that make them difficult or impossible to breathe without artificial aid, such as a filter mask or portable respirator. The water of a planet with a tainted atmosphere is also tainted and must be purified or filtered before drinking.

¹ Tainted

² Tainted (CO₂)

³ Tainted (Viral)

⁴ Tainted (Sulfur)

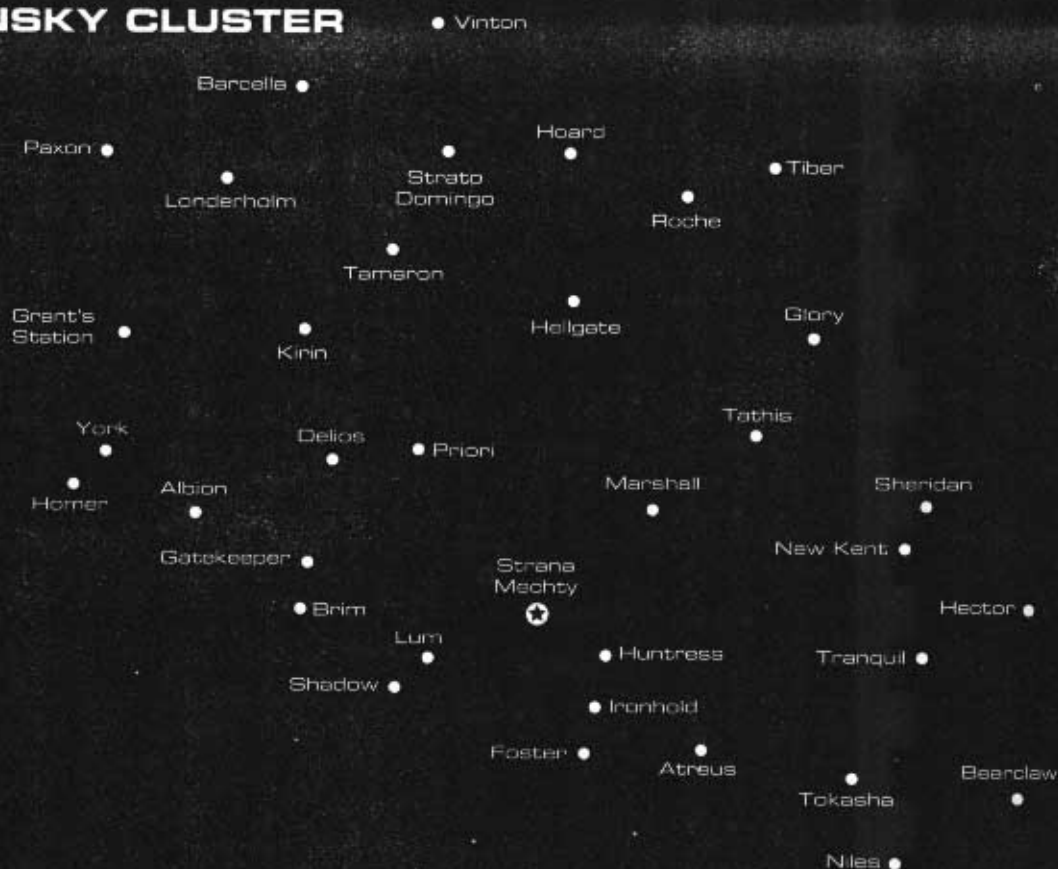
CLAN SPACE

POLITICAL BALANCE TABLE

Worlds	Blood Spirit	Cloud Cobra	Coyote	Diamond Shark	Fire Mandrill	Ghost Bear	Goliath Scorpion	Hell's Horses	Ice Hellion	Jade Falcon	Snow Raven	Star Adder	Steel Viper	Wolf
Albion												100		
Arcadia						25						38	37	
Atreus					65				35					
Babylon		26	27	24					23					
Barcella				47					38	15				
Bearclaw								30			70			
Brim		54									19	27		
Circe											70			30
Dagda					26		29			9		22		14
Delios			36	64										
Eden								31		34				35
Foster			40		30				30					
Gatekeeper										100				
Glory										45				55
Grants Station													55	45
Hector									100					
Hellgate											100			
Hoard								10	40			39		11
Homer		85											15	
Huntress					13		18		8	42		16		
Ironhold										100				
Kirin								100						
Londerholm			32						68					
Lum				18							82			
Marshall					15		36		9	6		13	21	
New Kent			19	9					6				66	
Niles								100						
Paxon				62										38
Prior				52								48		
Roche							83							17
Shadow					100									
Sheridan												100		
Strana Mechtv	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Strato Domingo				65				35						
Tamaron			100											
Tathis				50					30			20		
Tiber								50						50
Tokasha							23	13		64				
Tranquil														100
Vinton				100										
York	100													

Note: The numbers in this table represent the percent of each world a Clan controls.

THE KERENSKY CLUSTER



PENTAGON WORLDS



KERENSKY'S
EXODUS ROUTE

CLAN INVASION ROUTE
(EXODUS ROAD)

PENTAGON WORLDS THE KERENSKY CLUSTER

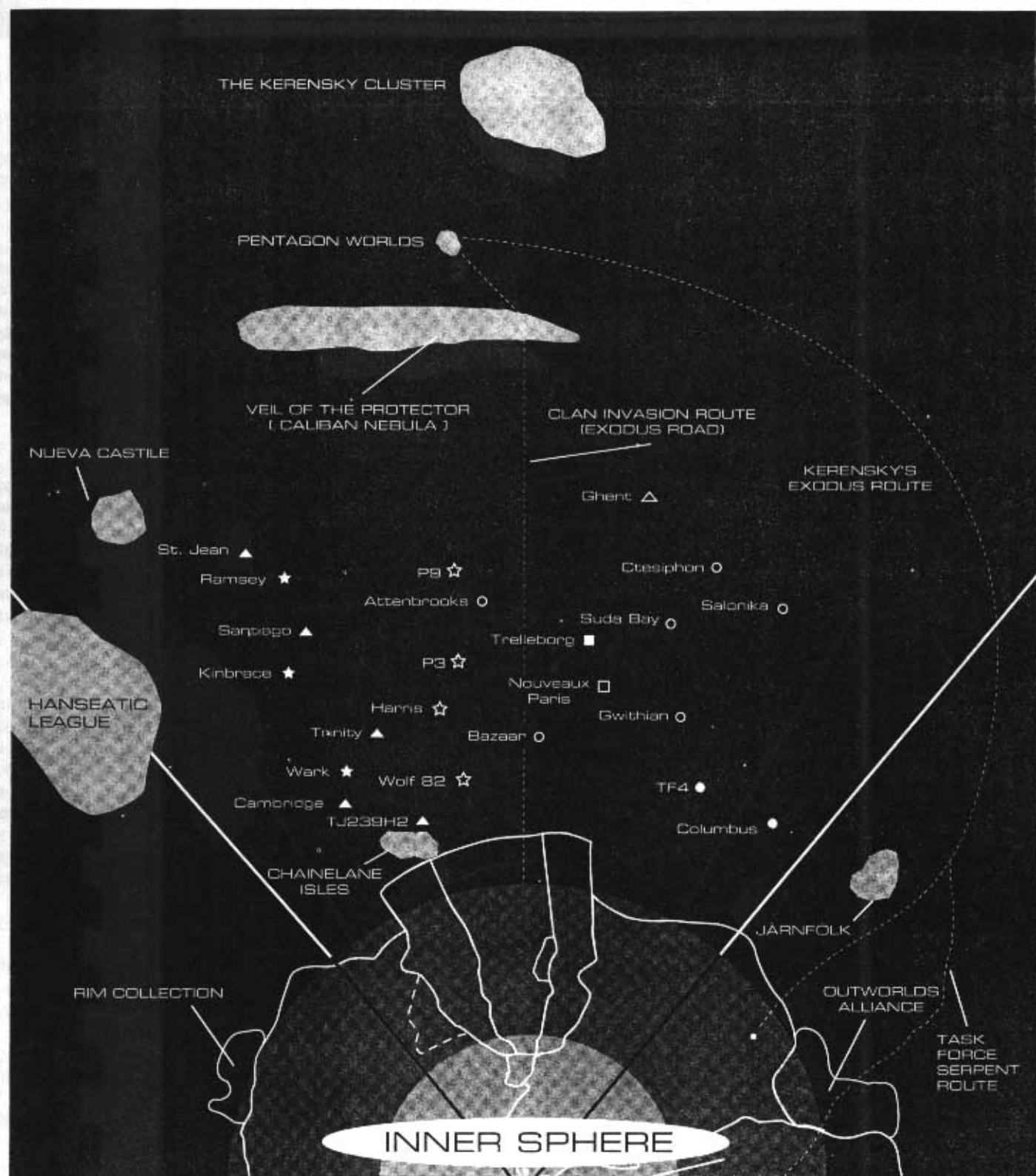
LEGEND



80 PARSECS OR 260.0 LIGHT YEARS

Map Compiled by CLAN WOLF
From information provided by the CLAN EXPLORER CORPS
© 3062 CLAN CARTOGRAPHIC CORPS.

MAXIMUM JUMP APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS
FOR NAVIGATIONAL PURPOSES USE 8 PARSECS = 26.0 LY



DEEP PERIPHERY (Corward Sector)

Known Periphery Facilities

ComStar
Diamond Shark
Ghost Bear
Hell's Horses
Jade Falcon
Snow Raven
Steel Viper
Wolf



LEGEND

8 PARSECS

80 PARSECS OR 260.8 LIGHT YEARS
Map Compiled by COMSTAR

From information provided by the COMSTAR EXPLORER CORPS
and the STAR LEAGUE ARCHIVES on Terra
© 3052 COMSTAR CARTOGRAPHIC CORPS

MAXIMUM SCALE APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS
FOR REFERENCE ONLY. PURPOSES USE 1 PARSECS = 2.33 LY

GLOSSARY

The language of the Clans is based on what is known of Star League Standard English, but they have added many words unique to their culture. Some were adapted by the Kerenskys from the Russian language and military terminology. All these words represent the Kerenskys' efforts to express concepts they felt were lacking from Star League Standard English. The following list includes terms used by the warrior caste and other useful explanations of Clan concepts. This list is not exhaustive, and does not reflect the many differences in terminology existing between the various Clans.

Abjuration, Trial of

When a problem within a caste or Clan can be resolved by no other process, the troublesome element may be ejected from Clan society through a Trial of Abjuration. The target of the ritual is stripped of rank and caste, which places them outside Clan law, and is usually forcibly ejected from Clan territory. Members of the Clans may no longer even speak the name of the abjured member or Clan and, in the case of warriors, their genetic material is purged from the gene pool. A Clan also may abjure a warrior for negligence of duty or conduct unbecoming a warrior.

The results of a Trial of Abjuration may be overturned by the Clan Council that enacted it or by the Grand Council.

Abtakha

A warrior adopted into the warrior caste of the Clan that captured him or her is known as abtakha.

Annihilation, Trial of

The ultimate punishment in Clan society, the Trial of Annihilation calls for the destruction of the accused. Such trials may only be carried out following a unanimous vote of the Clan or Grand Council, and may be invoked only for the most heinous crimes. Such sanctions have been declared against individuals, Stars and Clusters, and once was used against an entire Clan. Everything associated with the target—possessions, genetic material and descendants—is destroyed, and no member of any Clan may speak the name of those annihilated.

Batchall

The batchall is the ritual by which Clan warriors issue combat challenges. Though the challenge may take many forms, in most cases the batchall begins with the attacker identifying himself, announcing the objective of the trial and requesting to know what forces stand against him. The defender must reveal the forces they intend to use in the trial, and also may choose the site of the battle. The defender also has the right to ask the attacker to ante up a prize of equal value against the possibility the defender wins the trial, though the challenged party rarely takes advantage of this opportunity.

When the batchall is complete, the attacking and defending units bid among themselves to determine who will participate in the battle. The subcommander who bids lowest wins the right and responsibility of the battle, a practice that minimizes losses.

Because Inner Sphere troops regularly use deception and other tactics the Clans consider dishonorable, many Clans abandon the batchall when fighting Inner Sphere foes.

Bloodcount

The Bloodcount is the number of active Bloodrights associated with a Bloodname, and thus the number of individuals who may use that Bloodname. Traditionally, this is twenty-five, but in the case of inferior Bloodnames the count may be as few as five. The process for reducing a Bloodcount is known as Reaving, and the process for increasing it is called Propagation. A Bloodcount may also be reduced by Abjuration or by an ilKhan's decree.

Bloodname

A Bloodname is the surname associated with a Bloodright, descended from one of the eight hundred warriors who stood with Nicholas Kerensky to form the Clans. A warrior must win the use of a Bloodname in a Trial of Bloodright. Only Bloodnamed warriors may sit on Clan Councils or hold the post of Loremaster, Khan or ilKhan, and only the genetic material from the Bloodnamed is used in the warrior caste eugenics program.

Bloodname House

The warriors bearing or eligible to bear a particular Bloodname form a Bloodname House. The House acts as a substitute family for the warriors and exerts considerable political influence in the Clans. In some Clans, most notably the Fire Mandrill Kindraas and the Cloud Cobra Cloisters, groups of Bloodname Houses band together to form larger, more powerful associations.

After the first generation, Bloodnames are determined matrilineally and so a warrior may only claim membership of one Bloodname House.

Bloodheritage

The history of the Bloodnamed warriors of a specific Bloodright is known as the Bloodheritage.

Bloodright

A specific "lineage" of a Bloodname is known as a Bloodright. Unlike in the conventional Clan Bloodname lineage, the members of a Bloodright need not be directly related to each other, only to the original founder of the Bloodname. Each Bloodname may consist of up to twenty-five Bloodrights.

Bloodright, Trial of

The Trial of Bloodright is a series of one-on-one, single-elimination duels fought by warriors to win possession of a Bloodname. Each competition consists of thirty-two entrants, the majority of which are nominated by the existing Bloodnamed warriors of the House. The Head of the House (or Clan Loremaster) nominates all but one of the remaining entrants, and the thirty-second slot is filled by the winner of a Grand Melee.

Bondcord

The woven bracelet worn by bondsmen is known as a bondcord. Warrior-caste bondsmen wear a three-strand bondcord on their right wrist, with the color and patterning of the cords signifying the Clan and unit responsible for the warrior's capture. The cords represent integrity, fidelity and prowess. The bondholder may cut each strand as he or she feels the bondsman demonstrates the associated quality. According to tradition, when the final cord is severed, the bondsman is considered a free member of his or her new Clan and adopted into the warrior caste. Each Clan follows this tradition to varying degrees: for example, Clan Wolf accepts nearly all worthy individuals regardless of their past, while Clan Smoke Jaguar generally chose to adopt only trueborn warriors.

Bondholder

A bondholder is the individual, traditionally the member of the warrior caste, responsible for the bondsman's capture, to whom he or she "belongs." The Clan considers the bondholder responsible for the actions, education and punishment of the bondsman.

Bondsman

A bondsman is a prisoner held in a form of indentured servitude until released or accepted into the Clan. Most often, bondsmen are captured warriors who fulfill roles in the laborer or technician castes. Their status is represented by a woven bondcord, and they are obliged by honor and tradition to work for their captors to the best of their abilities.

Bondsref

The ritual by which a warrior avoids the fate of a bondsman is called bondsref. Because the Clans consider escaping after being captured dishonorable, bondsref allows the warrior to die before being given a bondcord, either by suicide or at the hands of an accomplice. Performing the ritual of bondsref after receiving a bondcord is considered cowardly and dishonorable, unless the bondholder gives his or her permission.

Brian Cache

A Brian Cache is a Clan equipment store, usually one established during the demobilization process Kerensky created upon arriving in the Pentagon. The name is derived from the Star League Castle Brian fortresses.

Canister

Canister is Clan slang for the artificial wombs.

Canister Born

Clan slang for the artificial breeding element of the eugenics program or the trueborn warriors that result from that process.

Caste

The Clans are divided into five castes: warrior, scientist, merchant, technician and laborer, in descending order of influence. Each has many sub-castes based on specialized skills.

The warrior caste is largely the product of the artificial breeding program; those candidates who fail their Trial of Position are assigned to the scientist or technician caste, giving those castes a significant concentration of trueborn members. Most of the civilian castes are made up of the results of scientist-decreed arranged marriages within the castes.

The children of all castes undergo intensive scrutiny during their schooling to determine the caste for which they are best suited, though most end up in the same caste as their parents. This process allows children born to members of civilian castes to enter training to become warriors, though they belong to the less-prestigious ranks of the freeborn.

Chalcas

Someone or something that challenges the Clan caste system is known as chalcas.

Circle of Equals

The area in which a trial takes place is known as the Circle of Equals. It ranges in size from a few dozen feet for personal combat to tens of miles for large-scale trials. Though traditionally a circle, the area can be any shape.

Cloisters

Cloisters are the political-military factions of Clan Cloud Cobra, organized around religious beliefs.

Codex

Most often worn as a bracelet, a codex is a warrior's identification and service record. It includes details of his bloodline, House and generation as well as an electronic representation of his DNA for identification.

Contract

The Clan definition of a contract denotes an agreement between two commanders by which one officer may include the troops of another in his or her bidding. Usually agreed upon between Clusters or Galaxies, such contracts are occasionally undertaken between Clans.

Coregn

The personal aide to a Star colonel or garrison commander is called a coregn.

Crusader

A Crusader is a Clansman who espouses the invasion of the Inner Sphere and the re-establishment of the Star League by military force. Most Crusaders are contemptuous of the people of the Inner Sphere, whom they view as barbarians, and of freeborns within their own Clans as well.

Cutdown

The cutdown is the accepted minimum force necessary to win a trial. Bidders who force their opponents below the cutdown are considered clever, while those who win trials with forces below the cutdown receive great honor.

GLOSSARY

Dezgra

Any disgraced individual or unit is known as dezgra. Disgrace may come through refusing orders, failing in an assigned task, acting dishonorably or demonstrating cowardice.

ecKhan

The leader of a Clan Cloud Cobra Cloister is known as an ecKhan.

Elemental

The large, muscular infantry derived from the Clan artificial breeding program are called Elementals. Their battle armor suits also are referred to as Elementals.

Enhanced Imaging (EI)

EI refers to implanted neurocircuitry that allows a MechWarrior or aerospace pilot to better control his or her machine. Though EI implants greatly enhance a warrior's reaction time, evidence suggests that the equipment eventually causes paranoia and outright madness.

Eugenics Program

The Clans believe strongly in the principals of eugenics, the improvement of the population by controlled breeding. The Clans implement such a program along two distinct strands. The warrior caste uses an artificial breeding program based on genetic engineering and incubation in artificial wombs in order to create the ultimate warriors. In the civilian castes, a system of mandatory arranged marriages provides a similar but less technical means of advancement. According to a strict definition, both of these methods may be called eugenics, but within the Clans only the artificial breeding program is commonly referred to as such.

Founder, the

The Founder is the Clan name for Nicholas Kerensky, who founded the Clans.

Freebirth

Freebirth is a Clan epithet used by trueborn members of the warrior caste to express disgust or frustration. For one trueborn to use this curse to refer to another trueborn is considered a mortal insult.

Freeborn

An individual conceived and born by natural means is referred to as freeborn. Its emphasis on the artificial breeding program allows Clan society to view such individuals as second-class citizens.

Giftake

Giftake refers to the sample of DNA taken from a warrior who died with great glory in combat.

Grand Council

The Grand Council is the body responsible for governing the Clans as a whole. It consists of the assembly of Khans, two

from each Clan, as well as the ilKhan (if one exists). Its authority covers any matters involving more than one Clan, and it also determines general policy for Kerensky's descendants. The Grand Council serves as the highest court of the Clans.

Great Father, The

The Great Father is the Clan name for Nicholas Kerensky's father, Aleksandr, the general who led the SLDF into exile.

Grievance, Trial of

The Trial of Grievance is used to settle disputes between two parties. The victor in the match is deemed to be in the right. Often such trials are fought over points of honor, and often to the death.

Hegira

Hegira is the rite by which a defeated foe may withdraw from the field of battle without further combat, and with no further loss of honor.

Honguard

This term refers to the honor guard assigned to escort a giftake to the genetic repository.

ilChi

The ambassador-messengers that Clan Blood Spirit assigns to its allies are called ilChi.

ilKhan

The ilKhan is the war-leader of the Clans, elected from the members of the Grand Council. He or she also serves as arbiter between Clans in times of crisis, acting with the power of the Grand Council. The ilKhan enjoys wide-ranging powers in military matters, but not absolute; the ilKhan answers to the Grand Council and his authority is limited to those matters ordinarily belonging to the Grand Council. The ilKhan normally may not interfere in events deemed internal to a Clan, but when the martial code is in effect they operate largely unhindered.

Inquisitor

An inquisitor is the official assigned to advance the prosecution's case at any Clan legal trial.

Isorla

The spoils of battle, including bondsmen, claimed by the victorious warriors is called isorla.

Keshik

The Keshiks comprise a combination of bodyguard and command unit, usually serving a Khan. Traditionally, a Khan commands a Keshik, but in practice a Star colonel oversees day-to-day matters. Keshiks range from Trinary to Cluster size.

Khan (kaKhan, saKhan)

Each Clan Council elects two of its number as Khans, who serve as rulers of the Clan and its representatives on the Grand Council. Traditionally, these individuals are the best warriors in

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the Clan, but in practice many Clans instead elect their most skilled politicians. The senior Khan, sometimes referred to as the kaKhan, acts as the head of the Clan, overseeing relationships between castes and Clans. The junior Khan, known as the saKhan, acts as the Clan's warlord. The senior Khan decides the exact distribution of tasks, and may assign the saKhan additional or different duties.

The term "kaKhan" is considered archaic, and is rarely used.

Kindraa

A Kindraa is a political-military faction within Clan Fire Mandrill composed of one or more Bloodname houses.

Kurultai

A kurultai is a Clan war council. A Grand Kurultai is a war council involving all the Clans. Traditionally, Grand Kurultai are held in the Hall of Khans on Strana Mechty and may only be convened by the petition of three or more Clans. An ilKhan may call a Grand Kurultai at any time or place.

Foremaster

The Foremaster is the keeper of Clan laws and history. He or she plays a key role in investigations and trials and is the only individual allowed to take action against active Khans. Unlike the Khans, who are nominally above the political infighting in the Grand Council, the Foremaster can take a proactive role in any inquiries and trials, acting as either advocate or inquisitor. Traditionally, however, the Foremaster does not vote on issues save in the event of a tie, at which point his vote decides the issue.

The position grants considerable political power, encompassing the equivalent of several more familiar minor roles such as the High Bailiff (responsible for issuing writs and summonses), the Provost Marshall (head of the Clan's police) and Adjutant General (chief administrator). The Foremaster also oversees any trials resulting from Clan Council decisions and is the final arbiter in such disputes. Further, it is the only post within the Clan able to authorize an internal investigation without the authority of the Khans (though only when the Khans themselves are implicated in the charges). In times of crisis, legal provisions allow for the Foremaster to take the place of a Khan in the event of incapacity, death or censure. As a result, many ambitious warriors view the post of Foremaster as a stepping stone to a Khanship.

Martial Code

The Martial Code is a collection of rules and laws governing Clan actions in times of war. Its primary goal is to minimize the political prevarication that often accompanies Grand Council meetings, forcing the participants to keep to the matter at hand and to carry out business with the minimum of fuss. When in effect, it also grants the ilKhan extraordinary powers, such as the right to dismiss any charges brought before the Clan or Grand Councils that he or she deems frivolous.

Master Codex

The master codex comprises the master files of the Clan breeding program, mapping the DNA and genealogy of every trueborn warrior, alive or dead.

Melee

A melee is a free-for-all battle offering no targeting restrictions and ignoring the rules of zellbrigen. Any trial may become a melee if a participant violates zellbrigen by firing on a target already engaged in combat with another participant. The battle to determine the thirty-second place in a Trial of Bloodright is called a Grand Melee.

Oathmaster

The Oathmaster serves as the honor guard for any official Clan ceremony. They administer all oaths taken at the ceremony and are traditionally the oldest and most experienced Bloodnamed warrior at the gathering.

Ovkhan

Ovkhan is a term of respect for someone of higher rank.

Position, Trial of

There are two forms of the Trial of Position. The first—also known as the bleeding—determines if a warrior candidate is qualified to take his or her place as a member of the warrior caste. Failure in that trial results in demotion to a civilian caste; success (defeating one or more opponents) determines both status and rank.

The second form of Trial of Position, known as testing, is held periodically and determines whether a warrior is qualified to maintain his or her rank. Those who perform as expected (against targets based on role, rank and age) maintain their rank, while those who perform better than expected "test up" (are promoted). Those who perform more poorly than expected "test down," or are demoted. A non-officer MechWarrior, pilot or Elemental who tests down is relegated to a non-combat role or else is transferred to a civilian caste.

Possession, Trial of

A Trial of Possession resolves disputes between two parties over ownership or control. This can include equipment, territory or even genetic material. The traditional batchall forms the core of the trial in order to encourage the participants to resolve the dispute with minimal use of force.

Powless

The vulnerability of a warrior forced to fight without his or her customary weapons is known as powless.

Propagation

Propagation is the ritual of increasing the Bloodcount associated with a particular Bloodname. A Bloodcount reduced by Reaving may be increased on the advice of the scientist caste and after a vote of the Grand Council. This motion may be

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opposed by a Trial of Refusal known as a Trial of Propagation, but no penalty attaches to either the aggressor or the defender in this case. (See *Reaving*, p. 119)

Quiaff/Quineg

These are grammatical constructs associated with rhetorical questions. They are a formalized version of language structures used with spoken language, intended to remove any ambiguity. When the speaker expects a negative answer, he or she ends the sentence with quineg; when expecting a positive answer, the sentence ends in quiaff.

Ransom

Clan custom dictates that a warrior who has been successful in his first Trial of Position may be rewarded with a gift. The gift depends on the degree of success in the trial, ranging from a personal weapon to a 'Mech or unit command. This gift is known as a ransom. In exceptional circumstances, a ransom may be given for later Trials of Position, such as Natasha Kerensky's re-testing after her return to the Clans in which she was awarded the right to form the Thirteenth Wolf Guards.

Reaving

Reaving is the ritual of reducing the Bloodcount associated with a particular Bloodname. Originally established to mitigate the impact of a poorly performing Bloodname, over time the Reaving has become a political tool used to control the number of warriors from a single Bloodname House, and therefore votes, in Clan Councils. A Reaving is called by a Bloodname House (rather than a Clan) against a Bloodname House that has announced a Trial of Bloodright. The Grand Council debates the merits of the Bloodname, and the matter is traditionally resolved by a Trial of Refusal, known as the Trial of Reaving, based on the results of the Council vote. If the pro-Reaving force wins the trial, the targeted Bloodname's Bloodcount is reduced by one and the Trial of Bloodright is canceled. If the defending force wins, the Trial of Bloodright takes place as scheduled and the Bloodname House that called for the Reaving suffers sanctions.

Rede

A rede is an honor-bound oath. Usually administered by a Clan Council, anyone breaking a rede is severely punished, commonly by execution.

Refusal, Trial of

Any decision made by a Clan Council or the Grand Council may be challenged by a member of that body. The Trial of Refusal epitomizes the Clan belief that might makes right, with the victor of the trial being regarded as in the right. The odds of the battle are determined on a pro-rated basis, with the forces of the two sides matched according to the ratio of winning and losing votes. The challenger announces what forces they will use and the defender can field forces proportionate to their margin of success in the vote. For example, a Trial of Refusal against a decision that passed five-to-one could give the defender a force five times the size of that used by the challenger. In

practice, the result of bidding among those wishing to defend the decision usually shifts the odds in favor of the challenger.

Remembrance, The

The Remembrance is an ongoing heroic saga that describes Clan history from the time of the Exodus to the present day. Each Clan maintains its own version, reflecting its opinions and perceptions of events. Inclusion in *The Remembrance* is one of the highest honors possible for a member of the Clans. All Clan warriors can recite passages from *The Remembrance* from memory, and written copies of the book are among the few non-technical books allowed in Clan society. These books are usually lavishly illustrated in a fashion similar to the illuminated manuscripts and Bibles of the medieval period. Warriors frequently paint passages of *The Remembrance* on the sides of their OmniMechs, fighters and battle armor.

Ristar

A gifted warrior on his way to a high position in the Clan is referred to as a ristar: literally, a rising star.

Safcon

Safcon is a Clan ritual that allows troops to land on a world unmolested in advance of a trial. In the absence of safcon, the incoming DropShips, JumpShips and WarShips are open to attack. Even in those cases when Clan ships are not approaching a world to engage in a trial, the inbound vessels may broadcast a "beam of neutrality"—a message indicating non-hostile intentions—when they are attempting to make planetfall while avoiding any hostile actions from the occupying troops.

Satarra

A satarra is a veto used in Clan Councils to settle or postpone disputes within or between castes. Traditionally, the Councils invoke satarra only when negotiations have reached an impasse or the dispute threatens the ability of the Clan to function as it should.

Savashri

A Clan epithet.

Seyla

Seyla is a ritual response in Clan ceremonies. The origin of this phrase is unknown, though it may come from the Biblical notation "selah," thought to be a musical notation or a reference to contemplation.

Sibko

A group of trueborn warrior-caste children raised and trained together is known as a sibko. In many Clans, sibkos are produced from the same gene-parents and thus are literally siblings. A few Clans, most notably Clan Wolf, create sibkos from members of a number of Bloodname Houses and sub-castes. Such groups tend to be smaller (twenty individuals rather than the hundred or so in gene-parent based sibkos), with more emphasis given to cooperation. In both types of sibko, usually only four or five warriors pass their initial Trial of Position.

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Sibkin

Members of the same sibko.

Sibbies

Derogatory name used within Clan Jade Falcon for those members of sibkos who underwent accelerated training and whose Trial of Position consisted of the Coventry campaign. This term is also used as a derogatory epithet to imply poor training or a young, inexperienced warrior of any kind.

Solahma

Clan warriors considered too old to serve in mainstream units are assigned to solahma units. The members of such units generally seek suicide missions in order to die in combat, but most often they serve as garrison troops.

Stravag

A Clan epithet, probably a corruption of *stran*, meaning independent, and *vagon*, meaning birthing.

Surkai

Surkai is the rite of forgiveness. When two parties disagree, or when one offends the other, Clan society expects the opponents to undergo surkai. As a matter of honor, the offending party admits his wrongdoing and requests punishment. The Clan views those who do not request surkai as a divisive influence and finds another way to deal with such members. Actions too severe to be excused by surkai result in a Trial of Grievance.

Surkairede

Surkairede, the Rede of Forgiveness, is the honor-bound oath associated with surkai. It binds the two parties and ensures that the offender suffers no further disgrace from the offense once he or she accepts punishment.

Test-down

Test-down refers to the demotion of warriors who do not perform as well as expected in their Trials of Position to maintain or advance in rank.

Touman

The fighting arm of a Clan is known as the Touman.

Trothkin

Used formally, trothkin refers to members of an extended sibko. It is more commonly used to denote members of a gathering, and warriors also frequently use it when addressing someone they consider a peer.

Trueborn/Truebirth

A warrior born of the Clan's artificial breeding program is known as a trueborn. In less formal situations, the Clans use the term truebirth.

Vineers

Members of some Clans, most notably the Nova Cats, collect keepsakes of their battles. These items are called vineers, probably derived from the word souvenirs.

Warden

A Warden is a Clansman who believes that the Clans were established to guard the Inner Sphere from outside threats rather than to conquer it and re-establish the Star League by force. Most Wardens were therefore opposed to the invasion of the Inner Sphere.

Zellbrigen

Zellbrigen is the body of rules governing duels. These rules dictate that such actions are one-on-one engagements, and that any warriors not immediately challenged should stay out of the battle until an opponent is free.

Once a Clan warrior engages a foe, no other warriors on his side may target that foe, even if it means allowing the death of the Clan warrior. Interfering in a duel by attacking a foe that is already engaged constitutes a major breach of honor, usually resulting in loss of rank, and also opens the battle to a melee.

INNER SPHERE DESIGNATIONS FOR CLAN 'MECHS

Clan Name	Inner Sphere Name
Adder	Puma
Bane	Kraken
Black Python	Viper
Conjurer	Hellhound
Dire Wolf	Daishi
Executioner	Gladiator
Fire Moth	Dasher
Gargoyle	Man O'War
Glass Spider	Galahad
Hellbringer	Loki
Horned Owl	Peregrine
Howler	Baboon
Ice Ferret	Fenris
Incubus	Vixen
Kit Fox	Uller
Mad Dog	Vulture
Mist Lynx	Koshi
Huntsman	Nobori-nin
Nova	Black Hawk
Stone Rhino	Behemoth
Stormcrow	Ryoken
Summoner	Thor
Timber Wolf	Mad Cat
Vapor Eagle	Goshawk
Viper	Dragonfly
Warhawk	Masakari

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The following rules describe Clan honor in game terms.

CLAN HONOR

The Clan codes of honor or *zellbrigen*, also known as "rules of engagement," are not part of the formal *BattleTech* game rules. However, players can use these codes to enhance the roleplaying aspect of *BattleTech*, creating a richer game experience more closely linked to the fictional *BattleTech* universe. In addition, enforcing the rules of engagement restricts the power of Clan forces, giving Inner Sphere forces a fighting chance against the Clans' superior weapons and skills.

Using Clan honor puts Clan units at a distinct disadvantage. To compensate, in scenarios where the Clans must abide by these rules of engagement, the Clan side should have stronger forces or higher skills than they might otherwise have. This change helps to offset the limitations that the honor codes place on Clan tactics. Players should be aware, however, that it is generally difficult to accurately balance *BattleTech* games; the use of Clan honor codes makes absolute game balance almost impossible. Through game play you will discover what works best for you and your fellow players. Because everyone plays Clan honor a little differently and each Inner Sphere commander opposes it differently, no two games are alike.

HONOR LEVELS

Clan honor codes fall into four categories, each dealing with a different part of combat: batchall, *zellbrigen*, physical attacks and retreat. Because the batchall takes place before the scenario begins, guidelines for its use appear in *Creating Scenarios* (p. 97, *BattleTech Master Rules*). Within each of the other three categories, a number from 1 to 4 represents the level of commitment to Clan honor. Honor Level 1 means strict conformity to the Clan codes; Levels 2 and 3 require conformity only under certain circumstances; and Level 4 throws Clan honor out the airlock.

Normally, a fighting force's overall commitment to Clan honor is rated at Level 1, 2, 3 or 4. However, some scenarios may include more than one honor level; for example, Honor Level 1 may apply to physical attacks and retreat, while Honor Level 2 applies to *zellbrigen*. Each honor level is determined by the circumstances of the scenario and the particular Clan fighting in it.

Clan dueling rules and restrictions on physical attacks apply only to enemy 'Mechs. Clan MechWarriors may attack conventional vehicles and unarmored infantry targets without reference to Clan honor. Likewise, Clan unarmored infantry and vehicles need not follow the rules of engagement. Battle armor and ProtoMech Points follow the code of *zellbrigen*, with each Point considered a single unit for dueling purposes.

ZELLBRIGEN (DUELING)

Under the rules for ritual dueling, or *zellbrigen*, Clan players must declare a target for each of their dueling 'Mechs. A typical declaration might sound something like, "I am MechWarrior Seth of Clan Steel Viper, I pilot the sole *Summoner* in Alpha

Star. I hereby invoke the ritual of *zellbrigen* and challenge the pilot of the *Orion* adorned with the unit designation eleven to a duel of warriors. In this solemn matter, let no one interfere!"

During a duel, no other Clan warrior may attack either of the dueling 'Mechs. If a third unit interferes with a duel, the dueling Clan warrior may attack the interfering unit, provided that another Clan 'Mech has not already challenged the interloper to a duel. A duel ends when one combatant is destroyed, disabled or retreats from the battlefield.

At Honor Level 1, the Clan warrior upholds all the rules of dueling regardless of his opponent's actions. At Honor Level 2, the Clan warrior follows the rules of dueling until the Inner Sphere side takes an action that violates the Clan honor code (a third party interfering, a unit involved in one duel firing on a 'Mech involved in another duel, and so on). If this happens, the duel immediately degenerates into a free-for-all. During the Weapon Attack Phase, if a player declares that his unit will fire on a target already involved in a duel, any Clan player whose declaration of *zellbrigen* follows the Inner Sphere player's declaration of a "dishonorable attack" may attack that Inner Sphere 'Mech without regard for honor rules. Only the violator may be attacked in this way.

At Honor Level 3, any infringement of Clan honor in the dueling rules renders the entire ritual of *zellbrigen* null and void, leaving the Clan 'Mechs free to attack any enemy unit without restraint for the remainder of the game. At Honor Level 4, dueling rules do not apply.

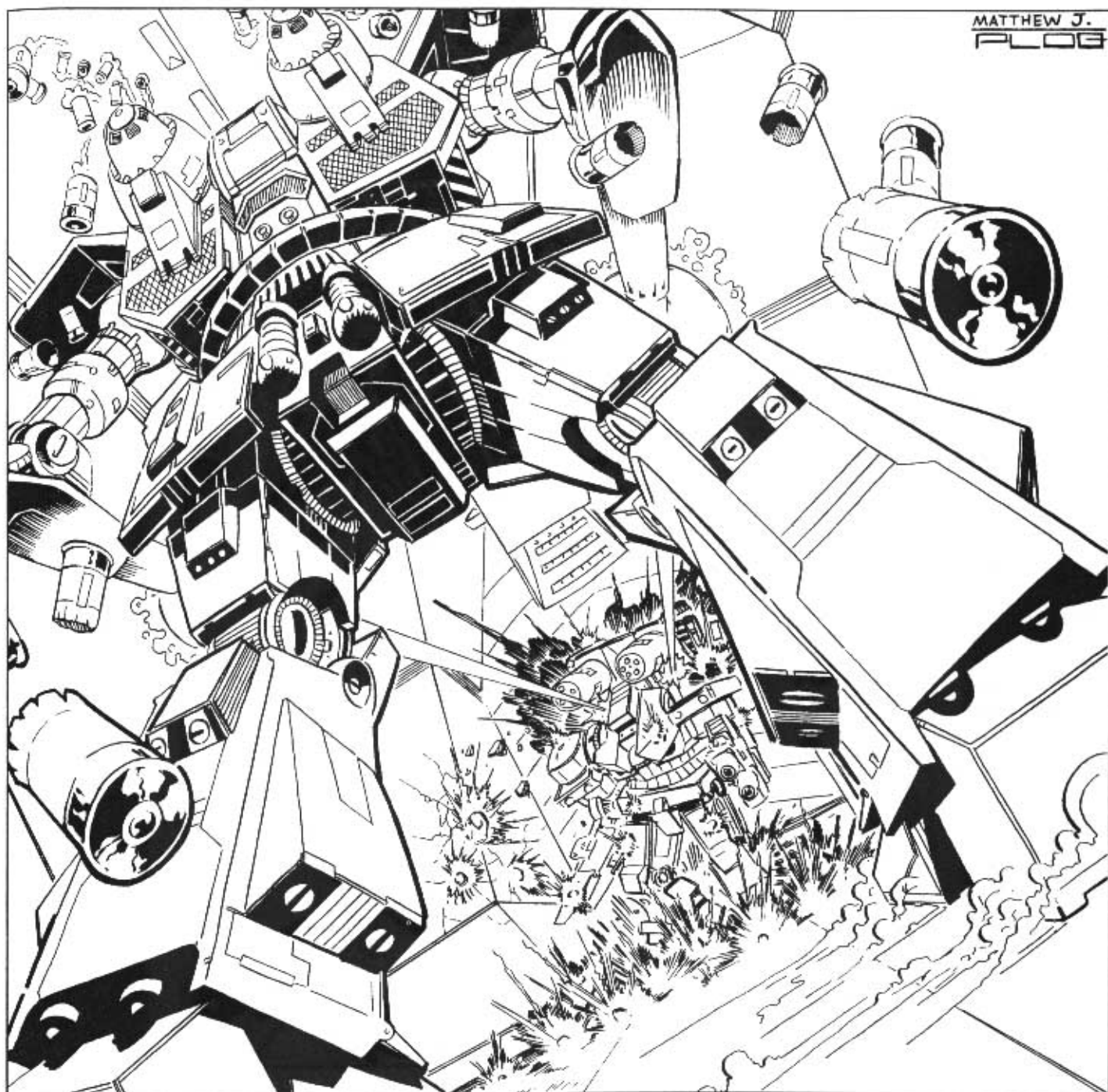
Using *zellbrigen* in a game requires a certain degree of cooperation between players. A crafty Inner Sphere player can exploit the rules of engagement to deny the Clan player any targets at all. Not only is this grossly unfair, but it is also inaccurate in terms of the *BattleTech* universe (plus, it's not much fun for the Clan player).

Finally, the Clan player should not be expected to adhere to the rules of engagement when it would be foolish to do so (as in the following example).

You are playing the Clans in a scenario with Honor Level 1. You have one Daishi and your opponent has four 'Mechs: a Banshee, an Orion, an Atlas and a Spider. The Spider challenges the Daishi to a duel, which the Daishi accepts. The Spider then proceeds to use its superior movement rate to hide behind hills and heavy woods so that the Daishi never gets line of sight to it. Meanwhile, the other three members of the Spider's lance pound the Daishi to dust. The Daishi cannot retaliate because its player must adhere to Clan honor, which in this case means he can only attack the 'Mech that challenged him to a duel. He vainly attempts to chase the Spider, while "off-limits" enemies destroy his BattleMech.

Requiring the *Daishi* in this example to strictly obey the rules of engagement means that the Clan player must sit back and allow his unit to be destroyed. To give players some options

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in such situations, use the following guidelines to adjudicate the use of zellbrigen in game play.

Making the Challenge

One of the most important parts of the duel is the challenge. This takes place during the Weapon Attack Phase, when attacks are declared. When a Clan unit declares an attack on a unit that it has not attacked before, it is effectively announcing its intention to duel—the Clan player should verbally issue his

challenge at this time. Dueling makes Initiative even more important, as Initiative also determines the order of attack declaration and challenges.

If the Inner Sphere side outnumbers the Clan side, it is considered bold (but acceptable) for a single Clan 'Mech to challenge more than one opponent at the same time. All of a single 'Mech's opponents are considered part of the same duel and may fire on the lone challenger. However, at least one target must be left for each 'Mech on the Clan side (this tradition does

not apply to non-Mech Clan units). In fact, Clan MechWarriors greedy for battlefield glory may force their own armored vehicles, infantry units or even Elementals out of combat in this way.

Though a single Clan 'Mech may challenge more than one Inner Sphere 'Mech, additional Inner Sphere 'Mechs cannot invite themselves into a duel even if the Clans outnumber their side. Such an action is a breach of zellbrigen.

Refusing a Challenge

A Clan warrior need not accept a challenge issued by an Inner Sphere warrior, especially if he suspects the challenge is simply a ploy to abuse the ritual of zellbrigen and achieve victory through deceit. As a general rule, a Clan warrior can refuse a challenge from a 'Mech of a different weight class than his own, as long as he issues a challenge against another Inner Sphere 'Mech instead.

Also, though Inner Sphere warriors are not expected to accept or refuse challenges, the Inner Sphere side must abide by Clan honor when Honor Levels 2 or 3 are in effect or else risk touching off a melee. In these cases, the Inner Sphere player is also allowed to refuse challenges from Clan 'Mechs outside the challenged 'Mech's weight class as long as an alternate challenge is made.

Finally, any challenge must be accepted if there are no alternate targets in play.

Declaring a Duel Void

Certain situations may make a duel void, even if strict adherence to the rules of engagement (Honor Level 1) is in force. In these cases the judgment of the players must prevail; however, the gamemaster can use the following simple penalty system to judge these situations. The penalty system is intended to enforce the idea that dueling 'Mechs must actively fight one another for the duel to be valid. Because Clan warriors call people without honor dezgra, the penalties are referred to as dezgra points.

Each of the infractions listed below earns the violator a dezgra point, unless the violator's opponent declines the penalty (which he might do if he decides that the action was tactically appropriate). If a dueling 'Mech accumulates 3 dezgra points, it is clear that the duel is dishonorable, and so it becomes void in the End Phase of the turn in which the third point was earned. No dueling 'Mech can earn more than 1 dezgra point per End Phase.

If a dueling unit intentionally moves out of its opponent's line of sight, the unit earns 1 dezgra point.

If a dueling unit has line of sight to its opponent but intentionally fails to fire at the enemy, the unit earns 1 dezgra point. (This guideline assumes that at least one shot must be possible, meaning that the enemy unit is within the firing arc and range of the weapon being fired.)

If a dueling unit moves out of the firing range of all its weapons, the unit earns 1 dezgra point.

If the unit earns no dezgra points in a turn, it may remove 1 dezgra point in the End Phase of that turn. A unit may not, however, eliminate all its dezgra points (reduce them to zero) in this way.

Once a unit has accumulated 3 dezgra points, any Clan unit may freely fire on it for the remainder of the scenario without violating the dueling rules.

Area-Effect Weapons

Any weapon system or special munitions that can cause damage to more than a single unit in a turn or requires multiple units to operate (for example all artillery weapons, TAG, C³ Systems, Swarm, Swarm-I, Thunder and Semi-Guided LRMs, etc.), by their nature violate zellbrigen.

No Clan warrior will use any area-effect weapon system or area-effect special munition while fighting at Honor Levels 1, 2 or 3. Only at Honor Level 4, when dueling rules do not apply, will a Clan warrior use such systems.

The response of a Clan warrior to an Inner Sphere unit declaring an attack using such a system against a Clan unit depends on the honor level in use. At Honor Level 1, the Clan warrior upholds all the rules of dueling, regardless of the type of weapon used. At Honor Level 2, the duel degenerates into a free-for-all, with the violators—the unit that fired the area-effect weapon, designated with a TAG or used a C³ system—all open to attack by any Clan unit. At Honor Level 3, the use of area-effect systems renders the entire ritual of zellbrigen null and void.

PHYSICAL ATTACKS

Unlike the formal ritual of dueling, the Clans' dislike of physical attacks in 'Mech combat is an informal, if widespread, custom. No explanation has yet been given for this distaste, though some experts suspect that Nicholas Kerensky chose to encourage a long-range fighting style among the Clans.

At Honor Level 1, a Clan warrior never makes physical attacks in 'Mech combat. At Honor Level 2, a Clan warrior may make a physical attack only if an enemy unit makes one first. During the Physical Attack Phase, if the Inner Sphere player declares a physical attack, any Clan unit whose declaration follows that violation of Clan honor may freely engage that 'Mech in physical combat.

At Honor Level 3, a single physical attack by an Inner Sphere 'Mech allows all Clan warriors to retaliate in kind against all enemy units for the remainder of the game. At Honor Level 4, the taboo against physical attacks no longer applies.

RETREAT

Clan MechWarriors despise their Inner Sphere counterparts because they consider Inner Sphere armies dishonorable warriors fighting in inferior 'Mechs. Therefore, Clan warriors consider retreating from Inner Sphere opponents a disgrace almost beyond redemption. When allowed to choose whether or not to flee a losing battle, many Clan warriors prefer to fight to the death.

At Honor Level 1, a Clan warrior never retreats. At Honor Level 2, Clan warriors may retreat from enemy 'Mechs that are using advanced technology, but never from 'Mechs, vehicles or infantry units using 3025 (Level 1) technology. At Honor Level 3, Clan warriors may retreat from any vintage of enemy 'Mech, but will not retreat from vehicles or infantry units. At Honor Level 4, Clan warriors may retreat at will.

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