<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASIC GAMEPLAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character Record Sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biographical Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribute Checks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill Checks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposed Actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Action Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRAITS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character and Vehicle Traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive, Negative and Flexible Traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposing Traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable-Level Traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait Descriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternate ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambidextrous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Antipathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloodmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship/Trueborn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat Paralysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat Sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custom Vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark Secret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Quirk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enemy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptional Attribute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast Learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-Tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass Jaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Hearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gregarious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gremlins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handicap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impatient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implant/Prosthetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In For Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introvert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost Limb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Aptitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain Resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenotype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poison Resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Hearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow Learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thick-Skinned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thin-Skinned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title/Bloodname</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toughness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit Disorientation Syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unattractive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlucky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE FIRES OF HELL: THE CALM BEFORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is a Roleplaying Game?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What's Needed to Play</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE FIRES OF HELL: THE MISSION BEGINS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing the Character Concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character Creation Basics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points-Only Character Creation (Optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prerequisites and Accumulating Experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE FIRES OF HELL: SECURING THE LZ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked Attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity Rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subskills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiered Skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TACTICAL COMBAT ADDENDUM

THE FIRES OF HELL: HEAVY ARTILLERY

THE FIRES OF HELL: RECON

THE FIRES OF HELL: STORMING THE OBJECTIVE

EQUIPMENT

Overview
Supply and Demand
Equipment Ratings
Acquiring Gear
Using Equipment
Equipment Data
Regius

The Warrior's Catalog
Meele and Archaic Weapons
Archaic Melee Weapons
Archaic Ranged Weapons
Modern Meele Weapons
Small Arms
Ballistic Weapons
Energy Weapons
Flechette Weapons
Gauss Weapons
Gyroject Weapons
Miscellaneous Small Arms
Support Weapons
Machine Guns
Grenade Launchers and Mortars
Missile Launchers
Recoilless Rifles
Support Energy Weapons
Support Gauss Weapons

Explosives
Standard Explosives
Demolitions
Ordnance
Specialty Ammunition

Weapon Accessories
Personal Protective Equipment

Flak Armor
AbleFlak Armor
Ablative/Flak (AF/FLAK) Armor
Ballistic Plate Armor
Neo-Chaimail Armor
Myer Armor
Concealed Armor
Combat Armor Accessories
Standard Armor Kits
Exotic Armor

Hostile Environment Gear
Stealth Gear

Available Skills
- Melee Combat Rolls
- Melee Combat Limits
- Range and Line of Sight
- Other Combat Modifiers
- Special Melee Effects

Damage Resolution
- Damage Notation
- Standard Damage vs. Fatigue
- Standard Ranged Attack Damage
- Standard Melee Attack Damage
- Continuous Damage
- Falling Damage
- Fatigue

Damage Effects
- Injury Modifiers
- Fatigue Modifiers
- Consciousness Check
- Bleeding Effect
- Death
- Tactical Kill
- Stun
- Traits and Damage Effects

Armor and Barrier Effects
- Armor and Barrier Types
- AP vs. BAR
- Armor Degradation
- Stacked Armor

End Phase
- Bleeding and Continuous Damage
- Fatigue
- Resolving Extended Actions and Automatic Events

Optional Personal Combat Rules
- Morale Checks
- Hit Locations
- Knockdown Damage
- Lethality Reduction
- Healing and Recovery
- General Healing Rules
- Normal (Unassigned) Healing
- Assisted Healing
- Surgery

THE FIRES OF HELL: HEAVY ARTILLERY

TACTICAL COMBAT ADDENDUM

Overview
The Combat Turn
Initiative Phase
Rolling Tactical Initiative
Tactical Action Sequence
Tactical Action Resolution
Action Phase
Attack Sequence
Movement Actions
Vehicular Combat
Weapon Damage Conversion
Margin of Success/Failure in Tactical Combat
Vehicular Weapon Traits
Battle Armor Weapons
Damage to Vehicle Pilots/MechWarriors
Physical Attacks
End Phase
Heat (Mechs and Fighters)
Special Pilot Abilities
Gunner Abilities
Piloting Abilities
Miscellaneous Abilities

THE FIRES OF HELL: JOURNEY

SPECIAL CASE RULES

Planetary Conditions

Movement Modifiers
Terrain Types
Clear
Vegetation
Rough
Ice
Water
Paved
Urban
Magma
Terrain Conditions
Soft Terrain
Fragile Terrain
Dynamic Terrain
Weather Conditions
Exotic Conditions

Creatures
Encounters
Creature Attributes
Creature Skills
Creature Combat

Creature Compendium: Terrestrials
Creature Compendium: Extraterrestrials
Creatures Table

Diseases
Medical Maintenance
Random Disease Effects

Overview
The Combat Turn
Initiative Phase
Rolling Tactical Initiative
Tactical Action Sequence
Tactical Action Resolution
Action Phase
Attack Sequence
Movement Actions
Vehicular Combat
Weapon Damage Conversion
Margin of Success/Failure in Tactical Combat
Vehicular Weapon Traits
Battle Armor Weapons
Damage to Vehicle Pilots/MechWarriors
Physical Attacks
End Phase
Heat (Mechs and Fighters)
Special Pilot Abilities
Gunner Abilities
Piloting Abilities
Miscellaneous Abilities

THE FIRES OF HELL: JOURNEY

SPECIAL CASE RULES

Planetary Conditions
Betatesters

Special thanks to those of you whose comments during the “Beta” playtest cycle helped to improve this project for the final release. Though I may not know you all by name, a hearty thank you goes to all of the following avatars from the BattleTech forums:


Adventures Seeds

Thanks also to Edward McEneney and John H. McCulloch for the Adventure Seeds The Birthright and The Package.

Herbs Thanks and Dedication

More than any other book prior, I would have to thank my wife, Becky, for her patience and support, especially in the midst of the chaos and stress that swirled around its over-extended creation. And to our “children”—Oscar, Annie, Meggie, Blaze, and Logan—most of whom kept me company when work intervened. And a final farewell to Merlin “Cash” Beas, the fifth feline “Herblet”, who will be missed.

I’d also like to thank my older gaming groups, particularly the “Fundamentally Doomed”: Jamie “Damon” Amiraui, Hal Brown, Jeff “Fletchi” Fletcher, Jay Fletcher, and Kevin Drellock, as well as newer gamers Jason “Jay” Bouchard and Rich “Not ANOTHER Fletchi” Fletcher, Jay Fletcher, and Kevin Dwelley, as well as newer gamers Jason “Jay” Bouchard and Rich “Not ANOTHER MARAUDER!” Putz.

And of course, I would also like to thank Bryan Nystul, who brought me into BattleTech over 12 years ago now; Randall Bills, for putting me in this position and being a great mentor and virtual boss; Loren Coleman, for his dogged support, even when I was screaming at him; Ben Rome, for taking Masters & Minions away when I needed it most; and to the cadre of other “core writers” I’ve worked with through these past ten years: Chris Hartford, Chris Trossen, Ken’ Horner, Kevin Killiany, Camille Klein, Nick Marsala, David McCulloch, Steve Mohan, Diane Pirson-Gelman, Jason Schmetzer, Paul Sjardijn, Øystein Tvedten, Andreas Zuber, and so many more!

©2010 The Topps Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved. A Time of War: The BattleTech RPG, Classic BattleTech, BattleTech, ‘Mech, BattleMech and MechWarrior are registered trademarks of The Topps Company, Inc. in the United States and/or other countries. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the Copyright Owner, nor be otherwise circulated in any form other than that in which it is published.
"Watch out!" came the cry from across the bay.

Lunging forward, Sergeant Busby “Buzzy” Matvey caught the teetering metal case just before it plunged down to the mid-sized hangar’s ferrocrete floor. With a grunt, he shoved the olive-drab canister back onto the top of its stack while the forklift backed away.

But not fast enough.

Buzzy smiled as Lieutenant Luella Hildebrand boiled up to the side of the lift like a miniature tornado. He shook his head as he returned to his work transferring the supply crates into the tight cargo bay of the Mark IV Landing Craft. Already, Luella’s dressing-down of the poor lift driver was reaching a staccato pace that even a Mydron Minigun couldn’t match.

“Hot one, her, yes?” asked Buzzy’s lanky partner.

“Da,” he replied, handing over another narrow crate marked, “CAUTION: FLAMMABLE”.

“You know I wasn’t talkin’ about her looks, now. ” Buzzy sighed. “Da,” he responded again, this time looking his companion full in the face. A grizzled soldier, Ethan Naoko had once more neglected to shave the stubble from his pointed chin. “You know, if the Captain sees that scruff, he’ll have words again.”

The older man shrugged. “So what? Not like we’re on a mission. Unless you’ve heard something I’ve not?”

“Nope,” Buzzy replied. “I just know as much as you.”

Pivoting, he grabbed another case from the stack. Luella’s rapid-fire delivery finally ceased in the background and he noted the lift’s whine as it backed away, almost as though the machine itself were sulking.

He heard Ethan’s low whistle behind him. “Still, y’know, she’s pretty hot…”

Buzzy sighed again and smiled. He turned and thrust the case at Naoko, cracking a smile.

“Da.”

Lieutenant Luella Hildebrand stalked away from the retreating lifter, the confrontation filed away and forgotten. There was still too much to do and clearly not enough time. Detonators, she thought. Did we pack enough?

She consulted the datapad clutched in her left hand and scrolled down the list, her determined stride missing not a hitch as she stalked down the corridor toward the Captain’s office. Without looking up, she deftly avoided collisions with her fellow officers, finally stopping in front of a nondescript gray-green door. Knocking once, she didn’t wait for an acknowledgement and stormed in.

“Problem, Luella?” asked the man seated in front of her, his night-black face cast strangely aglow by the monitor he was staring into.

The Lieutenant snapped to attention and saluted. “Captain Travis,” she barked. “No, sir. Just a lift driver who isn’t aware of the regs regarding volatile and explosive cargo.”

Captain Jared Travis leaned back, looking over at his exec. His white teeth practically lit up his face. “I assume you re-educated him?”

Luella relaxed slightly. “Yes, Captain. I’ll report him later.” Jared waved it off.

“No need,” he said. “We’ve got more important things at the moment.” He stood and turned, searching the cluttered shelves behind him. “Has Corporal Logan reported in yet?”

“No yet, sir.”

“Very well. He should soon, I would expect. The shuttle from the Duquesne was probably delayed. Ah-ha!” The captain snagged a small book from the shelf and turned back to Luella. “Have the team report to the hangar at twenty-hundred hours,”
he said as he opened the leather-bound book to a ribbon-marked page.

"Very good, sir." Luella turned to go, already churning through the supply list in her head.

"Oh, and Luella?" Jared called.

She stopped and turned to look back at him. "Sir?"

"Take a few minutes to relax. Don’t know when we’ll get the chance again."

Captain Jared Travis closed the small Bible in his hand and leaned back in his office chair, unable to concentrate enough to quiet his own self. The butterflies he felt in his stomach weren’t from the orders sitting on his monitor, or their promise of action.

No, he thought, it’s because she’s coming.

Jared took a deep breath and released it slowly. The last time he and Belle Lee had crossed paths—two years ago—it had been a torrential downpour of violence, emotion, stress and fatigue. And it all ended with a failed marriage proposal.

Ancient history, Travis! he chided himself. Get a grip!

He had no idea why his mind was dragging it all back up again. Yes, the fighting on Kittery was horrific; their escape from that Blakist hellhole a nightmare ordeal that still kept him awake sometimes.

But it was all in the past.

Travis snapped himself out of his reverie. The General was coming to brief them on a mission, not to re-ignite some short-lived, war-fueled relationship. Jared refocused on the monitor in front of him.

The orders were simple enough on the surface, but that wasn’t saying much; a reconnaissance mission to an as-yet-undetermined planet, part of a larger operation currently being assembled. Travis knew without a doubt that the target world was already determined, but that operational security demanded such information be withheld until all the players were in place and ready to strike.

That was simply how these things went down.

The rest of the orders contained little else in the way of useful information beyond the standard bureaucratic rhetoric. Indeed, the only part that had Jared’s insides doing somersaults was the last line: "General Belle Lee will present your operational orders in person."

Shaking off the malaise, he refocused again on the screen, bringing up the profiles of his two new team members. He tapped past Luella’s dossier; she’d already been here a week and he felt he had her pegged.

That brought him to the “newbie”: Franz Logan.

Jared’s mouth turned down as he scanned Logan’s short record. Recent academy grad from Skye, failed the MechWarrior MOS twice, two reprimands from his drill sergeant for daydreaming on watch. Excellent weapons skills, passable first aid, and licensed to operate standard WorkMechs.

“So basically, we’ve got ourselves a wannabe ‘Mech jock who knows which end of the rifle goes where and is most likely to succeed as a battlefield casualty when the crap hits the fan,” he said to the empty office.

“Wonderful.”

Corporal Franz Logan pressed his face against the unyielding surface of the observation deck’s massive, armored window, looking
down on the planet below. One hand pressed against the glass above his head, the other clutched a nearly full bulb of raspberry juice.

He still couldn’t believe he was finally seeing this place in the flesh: Hesperus II.

Home to one of the largest BattleMech manufacturing centers in the Lyran Alliance, if not the entire Inner Sphere!

Franz drank in the planet’s details as his DropShip drew ever closer. Once upon a time, he’d memorized every detail about this place; to him, it was the seat of the gods of war. He smiled as the DropShip turned slightly, bringing the gigantic Myoo Mountains into view. The massive mountain chain was easily visible even from high orbit.

It was like visiting Mecca. More like, ‘Mecha’, he thought to himself. He snorted loudly at the joke in his head.

“Find something amusing?” came a voice next to him.

Startled from his planetary worship, Franz gave a small cry and involuntarily squeezed his hands.

Including the juice bulb in his right.

Horrified, he turned quickly. “Watch out—”

Too late! The stream of juice shot forth from the bulb’s opening and struck the voice’s owner dead-on, slashing a red stain across her otherwise pristine and nondescript gray jumpsuit.

Franz felt the blood drain from his face. He stared, slack-jawed, as the voice’s owner turned slightly, bringing the gigantic Myoo Mountains into view. The massive mountain chain was easily visible even from high orbit.

“And three months from retirement,” Ethan finished for him. He looked down, chewing thoughtfully on the unlit cigarette. “Tell the truth, no,” he said quietly.

A Warrior VTOL screamed across the sky, running low to the ground. Its passage kicked up dust and grit, but added a sudden welcome breeze to an otherwise dry afternoon in Hesperus’ so-called “temperate zone”. The thumping rhythm of the craft’s rotors echoed long after it disappeared.

“Thirty-plus years I’ve put in, Buzzy,” Ethan said, showing his hands into his pockets and walking slowly toward the barracks entrance a short distance away. “I’ve run the gamut of war, I think. ‘Mech jock, infantryman, prisoner of war, desk jockey. Even ended up going from one army to another, thanks to the vagaries of what flag’s flying when.”

“Wait, what? I never knew that!”

Ethan looked over at the bigger man. “Yep. Did my time in the DCMS and was a civvie when the Feddies showed up on Breed back in ’63. Conscripted a bunch of us for grunt work. Somehow, we got loaded up and shipped off with the rest of the Feddie army back to Robinson as fresh AFFS recruits.” He spat out the mangled cigarette.

“You’re so full of shit.”

Franz felt the blood drain from his face. He stared, slack-jawed, at Ethan.

“Sell it to the greenie, Ethan.” The distant rumble of a DropShip’s fusion engines were audible. Both men turned toward the makeshift drop pad to the east, where the ovoid craft now settled on a descending column of fire.

“New shipment’s arrived,” Buzzy said.

Naoko nodded. “Maybe this one’s got our orders.”

That’d be nice. Bein’ a glorified cargo grunt isn’t my idea of fun.

“Fame, fortune, women?” Buzzy suggested with a smirk. “And guns, of course. Always the guns.”

Luella adjusted her headphones to no avail; the heavy thrum from the massive GM 520-OR drive train permeated everything around her. If she concentrated long enough, she was sure she could feel her bones vibrate from the Defiance E-class ground tug’s inexorable crawl towards the Duquesne.

Despite the noise, it was the first few moments of rest she’d had all week.

She’d been assigned to Recon Squad Four, part of the “Stone’s Lament” regiment, after the horrendous losses to her squad on Coventry. Her reassignment came as part of some agreement the Alliance had with Devlin Stone. She didn’t understand it, but didn’t have to; her superiors ordered her, and here she was.

Along with her came new operational orders; the unit was being resupplied and prepared for action somewhere along the Blake Protectorate border. Where that would be, she surmised, would come soon enough—the briefing officer, along with additional supplies for the squad and the squad’s final member, were all on the DropShip now looming over the makeshift drop pad.

Not all of the Duquesne’s cargo was for the squad. Far from it.

The massive Excalibur-class carried an enormous amount of cargo, if not BattleMechs. This one, according to the data file currently showing on Luella’s small screen, was full mostly of construction supplies and material for the rebuilding project going on in Maria’s Elegy. The city had been virtually razed in the brutal
Franz decided to disembark from the _Duquesne_ through one of the large 'Mech bays. He'd discovered the lance of BattleMechs being transported by the DropShip early in the voyage from the star's nadir point and made it a point to visit them every single day. He actually spent a lot of the trip just sitting in the bay, admiring the gigantic war machines and drinking in their details. He knew them all by heart; leaving through the bay was more to a chance to say goodbye to his silent companions than anything else.

As the 'Mech bay doors ground open and the harsh light from the Hesperan sun exploded into the bay, Franz noticed a small group of men and women clustered near one of the larger 'Mechs, a _Victor_. He did a quick double take when he spotted a shock of red hair; it was the woman from earlier that morning, the one he'd sprayed with raspberry juice.

He felt himself blush again.

He dared not approach them, as they seemed deep in conversation. All of them were dressed in familiar garb: t-shirts, cooling vests, shorts and heavy combat boots. One even wore a Trinity-style cowboy hat, though he also carried a bulky helmet under his arm. All bore a manner of unmistakable confidence. Franz knew the attire and the attitude well—and what they represented.

To many, MechWarriors were the "gods" of war, the specialized elite who commanded mighty BattleMechs—titanic knights in shining armor.

It was a group that Franz didn't belong to, and could never belong to. Horrible scores and failure to pass the tests back on Skye saw to that. He stood off at a distance, in the shadows of a cargo pallet, unwilling to approach.

_Ashamed._

Yet unable to tear his eyes away from those who lived his shattered dreams.

After a few minutes, the four warriors broke up. Each went toward a different 'Mech. Franz thought the woman would move toward the smaller _Phoenix Hawk_, but was surprised when she turned and scrambled up the side of the _Victor_, the heaviest 'Mech in the bay.

His watch beeped, a subtle reminder of his looming appointment with his new superiors, but Franz didn't hear it. Instead he continued to stare as each 'Mech thundered out of its gantry and trooped down the DropShip's ramp to the ferrocrete pad below.

From the top of the ramp, Franz watched the lance form up and move off, tromping their way across the tarmac—deftly avoiding an approaching ground tug as they went. The retreating metal titans headed off toward the nearest Defiance complex entrance, rumbling the earth with every footstep.

An eternity later, Franz became aware of someone shouting at him. She was a short, lithe woman in a standard, olive drab jumpsuit. She wore an expectant look as she stalked up the ramp.

"April Fool's, you and me again, "man said. "Don't think for a moment that I'm going to let you get away with that this time!"

"You think it's funny, do you?"

Franz immediately noticed the dual arrows sewn into her fatigue suit—the insignia of a Lyran "lieutenant"—and the nametag "Hildebrand" stitched over her left breast. Dropping his duffle, he snapped to attention and saluted.

Hildebrand stopped, looked at the datapad in her hand, and— with obvious annoyance—asked, "Corporal Franz Logan?"

"Sir, yes sir!"

Hildebrand returned his salute and barked, "At ease, soldier. I am Lieutenant Luella Hildebrand. You can quit land-gazing, grab your gear, and help me load up that half-track behind you. Then, maybe, I'll forget your inattentiveness."

Logan relaxed a bit and snatched up his dropped bag as the Leutnant—no, "Lieutenant"—stepped past him. He noticed the half-track strapped on the pallet as the cargo bay laborers began unstrapping it from the floor mounts. "This one, ma'am?"

Hildebrand half-turned and nodded. "That's correct, Corporal. All those crates on the next pallet over need to be loaded into the squad bay in the rear. Once you're done, we'll travel back to barracks and get things started. We're behind schedule."

"Yes ma'am. The _Duquesne_ had some plant issues halfway through our travel from the nadir. Or so the Captain said!" Logan tossed his duffle into the small space behind the driver's seat and flipped the switch to drop the rear ramp.

"Regardless, step it up. We don't have all day. Be done when I get back," she snapped and moved farther into the bay, heading toward the interior lift.

Logan didn't bother to reply. He rolled up his sleeves and started grabbing crates.

_Ethan._

Ethan dropped heavily into the chair opposite Buzzy, his tray clattering onto the table and sloshing the gray paste that passed for soup around its shallow brim. Flecks of soup splashed onto the lacquered surface in front of Buzzy.

"Hey man, trying to be neat here!"

"Sorry," Ethan replied. He grabbed a biscuit and dug into the vast array of food arranged on his tray.

The two ate in companionable silence, despite the normal mess hall noise. As they were finishing up, a woman in tan fatigues with a stethoscope dangling around her neck pulled out a chair beside them and sat down with a cup of coffee. Doctor Grace Luther wrapped her hands around the mug as if to warm herself and sighed.

"What's up, doc?" Ethan piped up, chuckling.

Grace moaned. "Doesn't that ever get old with you?"

"Naoko defines old, Doc," Buzzy smiled. "You know that."

"I suppose so. And don't call me 'Doc,' Busby. It's Grace."

"Sorry?"

Ethan stuffed the last of his shortbread into his mouth and mumbled.

"Man, talking with your mouth full is no way to talk to the lady," Buzzy said, kicking his friend under the table.

The older man swallowed hard and wiped his mouth on his sleeve. "Sorry, Doc—I mean, Grace."

"It's okay, Ethan. I'm too tired to really care about you two and your pathetic attempts to date me." She ran her fingers through her dirty blonde hair, tucking the stray strands back over her ear.

"What, no answer?" Grace smiled. "You're losing your wit, old man."

Buzzy laughed. "Not me, Grace. You know I have a girl back home. He pushed his tray away from him. "It's ol' Ethan here you've got to watch out for. Sly as a fox, that one."

Ethan colored slightly and mumbled under his breath.

"No answer?" Grace smiled. "You're losing your wit, old man."

The three of them laughed lightly, breaking the building tension. Grace took a long sip of her coffee, then looked at her two companions. "They're pushing harder to finish the preps," she said, "Any idea what this mission's all about?"

The two men glanced at each other, then at the doctor. "No clue," Ethan admitted. "Just that the ElTee's been like a wolverine getting
Jared looked up from his reading. “Obviously you have something to say, Lieutenant, so out with it.”

“Permission to speak freely?”

The captain sighed. “Look, Luella, I know you’re a stickler for rules and regs. But believe me, you’ll be on my good side if you toned down the rigidity with me when we’re in private.”

Luella appeared to contemplate this for a moment, then nodded. “Sir, there is something on my mind.”

“So I can tell.” He set the stack down and looked her in the eyes. “Speak.”

“Sir, I know—I mean, I’ve heard that Lieutenant Jamison was close to you…”

Jared nodded. “We served together nearly ten years. He was my XO for six and was there with me on Kittery.”

She looked around, casting for the words. “I’m… I’m really sorry about what happened to him. And I’m not sure I can live up to his reputation around here.”

The captain looked at his new executive officer thoughtfully, pursing his lips. “Is that what’s been bugging you, Lieutenant?”

“Yes, sir. I feel as if you don’t trust me to do my job,” she said, her eyes locking back on his. “Sir.”

Jared smiled slightly. “You’re right,” he replied, noting the small shock in her eyes at his response. “But it’s not because of you, nor is it because of Lieutenant Jamison’s death.”

“It’s simply because until we fight as a unit and I see what you’re capable of under the stress of combat, I can’t trust you.”

Luella opened her mouth to reply but Jared cut her off. “That’s not to say I don’t think you’ll do a great job. But in all honesty, what concerns me is your record.”

“Sir?”

Jared fixed her with a hard stare. “You’re noble-born, Luella,” he said. “You got your position through your family’s name, not by your merits.”

Luella’s eyes widened, and her mouth hung open. Her fists clenched and she looked ready to leap at her commanding officer. “How—how dare you?” she seethed.

“Attention!” Jared snapped.

Luella froze and assumed a rigid stance, her face flushed and mouth stretched into a thin frown.

“Now,” Jared continued. “This is my personal impulse and direct opinion. It is also your chance to prove me wrong.”

“You want to know what killed Richie and Donald? Oh, it was the Blakists—they pulled the triggers, after all. But if it wasn’t for some blue-blooded half-wit minor noble from some back-assed Lyran planet, they wouldn’t have been in that position to start with.”

“See, this half-wit’s family had some type of ‘summer home’ here on Hesperus. When we arrived with Stone, it was still standing and miraculously untouched. So our General Hogarth—the aforementioned half-wit—orders us to hold our position and guard the house. Not because of some strategic value, but because it held some worthless art that his family didn’t want to see destroyed.”

Luella’s jaw relaxed and understanding began to dawn in her eyes.

“Speak. ”

So we got caught by a Blakist battle armor advance, with poor cover. All of that house’s precious art couldn’t stop the laser beams and machine gun rounds that ended up taking Richie and Don’s lives. Hogarth ends up with a medal and commendation; we end up with two friends needlessly dead and not even an apology.

“So pardon me if I seem a bit leery of you for now, Lieutenant. Your family name isn’t unknown to me and I’m fairly sure you got transferred over to this unit because up until last week, we were...”
“Sergeant Ethan Naoko, ” he said. “This here’s Corporal Busby studying a datapad. word since he entered, and remained otherwise silent in her chair, you’d enjoy the experience—” hair, blue eyes, body that’d probably wrap you up in a pretzel and except… “ Franz’s voice trailed off .

“General?”

“Yeah. ”

Franz’s heart froze and ice shot through his veins.

Franz approached the larger of the two men and stuck out his hand. “Corporal Franz Logan, LAAF.”

The larger man looked at the proffered hand and then at Franz’s face with an unreadable expression. “Problem with your arm, son?” he asked, his Russian accent heavy.

Reddening, Logan snapped a quick salute and replaced it with the nearest rifle barrel. “Pleased to meet you both. Um…are these new recon squads all this casual?”

Franz approached the larger of the two men and stuck out his hand. “Corporal Franz Logan, LAAF.”

The larger man looked at the proffered hand and then at Franz’s face with an unreadable expression. “Problem with your arm, son?” he asked, his Russian accent heavy.

Reddening, Logan snapped a quick salute and replaced it with the nearest rifle barrel. “Pleased to meet you both. Um…are these new recon squads all this casual?”

Buzzy laughed. “Heck no, just us. But from the looks of it, don’t try to get casual with the El-Tee. She’s more liable to rip your spine out and replace it with the nearest rifle barrel.”

“Yeah, I got that impression when I met her earlier today on the flight line.”

Ethan chuckled. “So, Franz. You came in on the Duquesne?”

“Yeah.”

Buzzy slipped into a chair and stretched. “Did you meet the General?”

Both men took chairs on either side of the larger man. “General? I… I don’t think so. Didn’t really see anyone of note, except… ” Franz’s voice trailed off .

“Except who?” prodded Ethan.

“Yeah, who?” echoed Buzzy.

“Well, there was this hot fox that I ran into on the way down. Red hair, blue eyes, body that’d probably wrap you up in a pretzel and you’d enjoy the experience—”

A heavy sigh came from the far corner of the room, suddenly reminding Franz of the doctor’s presence. Grace hadn’t said a word since he entered, and remained otherwise silent in her chair, studying a datapad.

“She was one of the MechWarriors that arrived,” he finished, his voice lowered.

“Nice!” Ethan whistled. “What’s she pilot?”

“Victor.”

“Assault-class jock? And to die for? Damn, what I’d give to be back in the cockpit again.”

Franz looked at Ethan as the door behind them opened. “You were a MechWarrior?”

A deep voice rumbled behind them all. “He was, a long time ago. Don’t let him fool you, though—he drove a Stinger.”

Ethan and Buzzy jumped to immediate attention upon hearing Captain Travis’s voice; Franz instinctively followed his new teammates’ lead. Trailing in the big, dark-skinned man’s wake was the petite Lieutenant Luella Hildebrand.

“At ease,” the Captain said, nodding to Luella who stepped over to the tri-vid system. The doctor slid into the seat beside Ethan as the team got comfortable.

“Glad to see you’re all here. I assume we’ve all made our introductions?” Jared looked at Franz, who nodded affirmatively. “Good. So you all know we’ve been assigned to an upcoming operation; until today, we didn’t know what that exactly entailed.” Jared looked at the four of them, then at Luella.

“Now we do.” He tapped a command on the podium. The lights dimmed and the tri-vid lit up with a slowly revolving planetary image. “This is the primary planet in the Rochelle system. I’ve already downloaded the planetary informational file into your personal datapads; it’s been appended with information we’ve received from Alys Rousset-Marik’s resistance group.” The rotating image flashed in spots, with small data windows opening up.

The four seated team members shifted in their seats and Buzzy raised his hand.

“Yes, Corporal?”

“Is this a large-scale op or are we going point for a small force?”

Captain Travis tapped his podium again and the tri-vid image shifted to a system view. “I’ll let the commander of that operation answer it for you. Atten-shun!”

The room immediately snapped to attention as the door admitted a striking, red-haired woman with flashing blue eyes and wearing the standard green jumpsuit with a general’s diamond cluster on each collar.

Franz’s heart froze and ice shot through his veins. The woman from the observation deck! The MechWarrior who drove the Victor! He’d sprayed a general with common fruit juice!

It was all he could do to remain standing.

Buzzy glanced at the now-green corporal standing next to him and then at the general. He elbowed Ethan, who stole a look and shook his head with a grin.

“At ease,” she commanded. The room relaxed and they all settled back into the room’s rigid chairs.

Captain Travis’s stomach squirmed slightly at the sight of the General, but kept his face passive. She definitely commands a room, he thought. “General Belle Lee, commander of Stone’s Lament. General, this is Recon Squad Four, at your service.”

Belle returned Jared’s salute and turned to face the team. “Good evening, everyone. We’ll put aside pleasantries for now,” she began, then looked at Franz directly. “We’ve got a mission to attend to; there will be time for drinks later.”

At that, Corporal Franz Logan fell out of his chair.

As the room devolved into controlled pandemonium, Ethan looked at Buzzy and winked. “At least the kid has good taste.”
**Inner Sphere:** General term used to describe a region of space roughly one thousand light-years across, composed of more than two thousand populated planets, with Terra (Earth) at the center. This area is further divided into geopolitical regions, where one power or another holds sway. For most of the centuries since humankind took to the stars, the vast majority of these worlds have belonged to one of the five Great Houses. Smaller powers have come and gone over this same time period. Any world or geopolitical power outside the Inner Sphere is said to lie in the Periphery, considered the frontier of the known universe.

— *Encyclopedia Galactica*
**GHOST BEAR DOMINION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULER</th>
<th>Khan Aletha Kabrinski</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>Clan (Caste-driven, Warrior-dominant hierarchy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD)</td>
<td>Silverdale, Alshain and Erinyes, Orestes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S)</td>
<td>English (official), Swedish, Japanese, German, Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT RELIGION(S)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHABITED WORLDS</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CLAN NOVA CAT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULER</th>
<th>Khan Santin West</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>Clan (Caste-driven, Warrior-dominant hierarchy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD)</td>
<td>New Barcella, Ircce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S)</td>
<td>English (official)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT RELIGION(S)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHABITED WORLDS</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CLAN WOLF OCCUPATION ZONE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULER</th>
<th>Khan Vlad Ward</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>Clan (Caste-driven, Warrior-dominant hierarchy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD)</td>
<td>Essen, Weingarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S)</td>
<td>English (official), Russian, German, Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT RELIGION(S)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHABITED WORLDS</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CLAN SNOW RAVEN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULER</th>
<th>Khan Lynn McKenna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>Clan (Caste-driven, Warrior-dominant hierarchy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S)</td>
<td>English (official)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT RELIGION(S)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHABITED WORLDS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOUSE KURITA (DRACONIS COMBINE)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULER</th>
<th>Coordinator Hohiro Kurita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>Autocracy (Japanese feudal stylings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD)</td>
<td>Yamashiro, New Samarkand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S)</td>
<td>Japanese (official), Arabic, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT RELIGION(S)</td>
<td>Shinto (official), Buddhism, Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHABITED WORLDS</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOUSE DAVION (FEDERATED SUNS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULER</th>
<th>Princess-Regent Yvonne Steiner-Davion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>Constitutional Aristocracy (Western European feudal stylings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD)</td>
<td>New Avalon City, New Avalon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S)</td>
<td>English (official), French, German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT RELIGION(S)</td>
<td>Christianity (Catholic), Buddhism, Judaism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHABITED WORLDS</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOUSE LIAO (CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULER</th>
<th>Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>Dictatorship (Chinese feudal stylings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD)</td>
<td>Zi-Jin Cheng (Forbidden City), Sian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S)</td>
<td>Chinese (Mandarin, official), Chinese (Cantonese), Russian, English, Hindi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT RELIGION(S)</td>
<td>Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHABITED WORLDS</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOUSE KURITA (DRACONIS COMBINE)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULER</th>
<th>Coordinator Hohiro Kurita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>Autocracy (Japanese feudal stylings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD)</td>
<td>Yamashiro, New Samarkand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S)</td>
<td>Japanese (official), Arabic, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT RELIGION(S)</td>
<td>Shinto (official), Buddhism, Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHABITED WORLDS</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CLAN SNOW RAVEN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULER</th>
<th>Khan Lynn McKenna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>Clan (Caste-driven, Warrior-dominant hierarchy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S)</td>
<td>English (official)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT RELIGION(S)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHABITED WORLDS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOUSE KURITA (DRACONIS COMBINE)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULER</th>
<th>Coordinator Hohiro Kurita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>Autocracy (Japanese feudal stylings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD)</td>
<td>Yamashiro, New Samarkand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S)</td>
<td>Japanese (official), Arabic, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT RELIGION(S)</td>
<td>Shinto (official), Buddhism, Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHABITED WORLDS</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOUSE LIAO (CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULER</th>
<th>Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>Dictatorship (Chinese feudal stylings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD)</td>
<td>Zi-Jin Cheng (Forbidden City), Sian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S)</td>
<td>Chinese (Mandarin, official), Chinese (Cantonese), Russian, English, Hindi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT RELIGION(S)</td>
<td>Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHABITED WORLDS</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOUSE LIAO (CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULER</th>
<th>Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>Dictatorship (Chinese feudal stylings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD)</td>
<td>Zi-Jin Cheng (Forbidden City), Sian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S)</td>
<td>Chinese (Mandarin, official), Chinese (Cantonese), Russian, English, Hindi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT RELIGION(S)</td>
<td>Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHABITED WORLDS</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOUSE LIAO (CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULER</th>
<th>Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>Dictatorship (Chinese feudal stylings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD)</td>
<td>Zi-Jin Cheng (Forbidden City), Sian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S)</td>
<td>Chinese (Mandarin, official), Chinese (Cantonese), Russian, English, Hindi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT RELIGION(S)</td>
<td>Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHABITED WORLDS</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOUSE KURITA (DRACONIS COMBINE)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULER</th>
<th>Coordinator Hohiro Kurita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>Autocracy (Japanese feudal stylings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD)</td>
<td>Yamashiro, New Samarkand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S)</td>
<td>Japanese (official), Arabic, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT RELIGION(S)</td>
<td>Shinto (official), Buddhism, Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHABITED WORLDS</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOUSE LIAO (CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULER</th>
<th>Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>Dictatorship (Chinese feudal stylings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD)</td>
<td>Zi-Jin Cheng (Forbidden City), Sian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S)</td>
<td>Chinese (Mandarin, official), Chinese (Cantonese), Russian, English, Hindi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT RELIGION(S)</td>
<td>Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHABITED WORLDS</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOUSE LIAO (CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULER</th>
<th>Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>Dictatorship (Chinese feudal stylings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD)</td>
<td>Zi-Jin Cheng (Forbidden City), Sian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S)</td>
<td>Chinese (Mandarin, official), Chinese (Cantonese), Russian, English, Hindi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT RELIGION(S)</td>
<td>Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INHABITED WORLDS</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Ruler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Hanseatic League</strong></td>
<td>The Council of Merchants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rim Collection</strong></td>
<td>President Elian Whitney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marian Hegemony</strong></td>
<td>Caesar Cassius O’Reilly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rim Commonality</strong></td>
<td>Chairman Ardal Thomasson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Circinus Federation</strong></td>
<td>President Calvin McIntyre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fronc Reaches</strong></td>
<td>President Carver Trondel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Outworlds Alliance
- **RULER:** President Mitchell Avellar
- **GOVERNMENT:** Parliamentary Confederacy
- **CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD):** Famindas, Alpheratz
- **DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S):** English (official), Japanese, French
- **DOMINANT RELIGION(S):** Christianity (Gregorian), Islam, Agnostic, Shinto
- **INHABITED WORLDS:** 41
- **FOUNDING YEAR:** 3072
- **CURRENCY:** Escudo

### Word of Blake
- **RULER:** "The Master"
- **GOVERNMENT:** Corporate Confederacy (with mystical trappings)
- **CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD):** Hilton Head Island, Terra
- **DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S):** English (official), others by realm of birth
- **DOMINANT RELIGION(S):** Word of Blake
- **INHABITED WORLDS:** 143
- **FOUNDING YEAR:** 3052
- **CURRENCY:** C-Bill

### Clans
- **Clan Hel's Horses**
  - **RULER:** Khan James Cobb
  - **GOVERNMENT:** Clan (Caste-driven, Warrior-dominant hierarchy)
  - **CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD):** Srzged, Csesztreg
  - **DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S):** English (official)
  - **DOMINANT RELIGION(S):** None
  - **INHABITED WORLDS:** 45
  - **FOUNDING YEAR:** 3071
  - **CURRENCY:** Kerensky

- **Clan Wyvern of the Clans**
  - **RULER:** Clan Chief
  - **GOVERNMENT:** Clan (Caste-driven, Warrior-dominant hierarchy)
  - **CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD):** Clan Capital
  - **DOMINANT LANGUAGE(S):** English (official)
  - **DOMINANT RELIGION(S):** Word of Blake
  - **INHABITED WORLDS:** 50
  - **FOUNDING YEAR:** 3072
  - **CURRENCY:** C-Bill

### Minor States
- **Brotherhood of the Azami**
  - **RULER:** Caliph Sahalli Odessa
  - **CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD):** Algiers, Algedi
  - **INHABITED WORLDS:**
  - **FOUNDING YEAR:** 3072

- **Garamond Coalition**
  - **RULER:** Coalition Council
  - **CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD):** Undredal, Filtvelt
  - **INHABITED WORLDS:** 21
  - **FOUNDING YEAR:** 3072

- **Kittery Prefecture**
  - **RULER:** Devlin Stone/David Lear
  - **CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD):** CanFu City, Kittery
  - **INHABITED WORLDS:** 4
  - **FOUNDING YEAR:** 3072

- **Malagrotta Cooperative**
  - **RULER:** Voorzitter Gary Tiqualme
  - **CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD):** Torida, Malagrotta
  - **INHABITED WORLDS:** 7
  - **FOUNDING YEAR:** 3073

- **Tortuga Dominions**
  - **RULER:** Gary Tiqualme
  - **CAPITAL (CITY, WORLD):** Raiders Roost, Tortuga Prime
  - **INHABITED WORLDS:** 6
  - **FOUNDING YEAR:** c. 2593
“This is the Inner Sphere, thousands of planets colonized by humankind. Once, it was united under the Star League, but for the last three hundred years, it has been consumed by savage wars...”

WELCOME TO THE BATTLETECH UNIVERSE!

It is a universe at war. Even as humankind reached out to command the stars, the human lust for conflict and conquest could not be overcome as easily as the distances of light years. Driven by the dream of one day ruling all of humanity, mighty empires formed, fell, and rose again. From the chaos of war arose the Star League, the pinnacle of human civilization, a Golden Age where a lasting peace and time of prosperity seemed possible at last. But greed, ambition, and treachery combined to tear it all down once more, plunging all the worlds humans called home into centuries of simmering conflict.

Power over billions now rests in the hands of those who can claim noble blood, or the heritage of elite warriors. Generations of soldiers have done battle across countless worlds, fighting for a dream long dead, perpetuating the cycle until few could imagine any other way. The most elite among these men and women—like modern-day knights in the neo-feudal realms that now hold sway—are the MechWarriors, those who command the mightiest war machines of the thirty-first century: BattleMechs.

The BattleTech universe is a realm of perpetual war between interstellar dynasties and feuding Clans. It is a realm where humankind’s greatest enemy is itself, rather than alien invaders. It is a universe where flags and governments change with regularity on the border worlds, and high-minded ideals like “honor”, “glory”, and “freedom” are the catchphrases of warlords.

It is a universe where life is cheap, but BattleMechs are not.

STARTING OUT

A Time of War: The BattleTech RPG (BTRPG) is a role-playing game set in a distant future where ongoing warfare and neo-feudalism are the norm. Humanity has settled thousands of worlds and forged mighty empires, but remains bitterly divided. Warring factions struggle endlessly for dominance, each devoted to their own vision of restoring a long-lost Golden Age. Fighting for these massive empires, interstellar conglomerates, and feuding noble families are warriors, mercenaries, pirates and spies.

WHAT IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

If you have ever read a book, seen a movie, or watched a television show where, upon finding a character saying or doing something really dangerous or foolish, you thought, “I wouldn't have said/done that!” then you have a good idea of what makes up the core premise of a role-playing game. While the actions of a character in a book, movie, or television program may be beyond your control, in a role-playing game, you control the actions of your character, effectively determining the character’s fate through decisions and actions whose outcomes can range from spectacular success to tragic failure.

A role-playing game (RPG, for short) is essentially an improvisational theater: part storytelling, and part game. A single player (called the gamemaster, or GM) directs the game for a group of players that assume the roles of characters in a fictitious setting. This setting could be a mystery adventure set...
in the 1930s where the characters travel the globe in search of treasure and intrigue, or a fantasy realm inhabited by dragons, trolls and sword-wielding barbarians, or even a science fiction setting complete with aliens, spaceships and world-crushing weaponry. The players pick a setting that they find cool and want to play in. The players then craft their own characters, providing a detailed history and personality to bring each to life. These characters have a set of statistics—typically numerical values that represent skills, attributes, and other abilities. The gamemaster then explains the situation in which the characters find themselves. The players, through their characters, interact with the storyline and each other’s characters, acting out the plot. As the players role-play through some scenarios, the gamemaster will likely ask a given player to roll dice, and determine the success or failure of a character’s attempted action based on the roll’s result, using the rules of the game as a guide.

Together, the players control the storyline (the adventures), which evolves much like any movie or book, but within the flexible plot directed by the gamemaster. This gamemaster’s plot provides a framework and ideas for potential courses of action and outcomes, but is simply an outline of what might happen; nothing is concrete until the players become involved. If you don’t want your character to walk down those darkened stairs, your character doesn’t. If you think you can talk yourself out of a situation in place of pulling a gun, then try to make it happen. Only the story into which the players are immersed is scripted; their reactions to it are not. And so the story can be changed based on the characters’ actions and their responses to the events of the story, creating a constantly evolving adventure.

The best part is that there is no “right” or “wrong” way to play an RPG. Some games may involve more combat and dice rolling-related situations, where other games may involve more storytelling and improvised dialogue to resolve a situation. Each group of players decides for themselves the type and style of game they enjoy playing!

WHAT’S NEEDED TO PLAY
To play a game of A Time of War, you need the following.
• A group of players and a place to meet (in “real life” or online);
• One player to act as the gamemaster
• The contents of this book
• Something for everyone to take notes with
• Three 6-sided dice per player (or a digital equivalent)
• Imagination

A Group of Players and a Place to Meet
While role-playing games are flexible enough to allow any number of people, most gaming groups number around four to eight players. This number of people brings a good mix of personalities to the table and ensures great cooperative play without getting too chaotic or too focused on just one or two characters.

Once a group of players have determined to play A Time of War, they’ll need to designate someone as the gamemaster (see below), and work out a time and place to meet.

While most role-playing groups meet locally and regularly, each group is different and should determine where, when, and how often they’ll play. One group may decide they can only get together once a week, at a friend’s house, around four people; another group might have to meet “virtually” via internet chat rooms, synching up their schedules for a once-a-month six-hour gaming marathon.

As long as the player group can meet with regularity, and includes a gamemaster and at least one or two character-controlling players, all the makings of a good role-playing game campaign are present.

Starting Players: When playing groups meet for the first time, the players should use this first session to generate their characters (as opposed to generating them outside of the group). This will make it far easier for the gamemaster to coordinate the party’s creation and tailor it to the needs of the planned campaign, while avoiding any possible clashes that can result from players accidentally making characters that are too different—or, worse, too similar—to each other. It also allows the more experienced role-players in the group a chance to help out those who may be newer to role-playing.

One Player to Act as the Gamemaster
Once a group has been determined, one player in a role-playing game must step up and take the reins of the
The gamemaster controls the story. This player keeps track of what is supposed to happen and when, describes events as they occur so that the players (as characters) can react to them, and keeps track of other characters in the game (referred to as non-player characters, or NPCs). The gamemaster is also the official judge of the rules for the campaign, and helps the players resolve their characters’ actions based on the situation and the suggested rules that may cover them.

The gamemaster describes the world as the characters see it, functioning as their eyes, ears, and other senses. Gamemastering may not be easy, but the thrill of creating an adventure that engages the other players’ imaginations, testing their gaming skills and their characters’ abilities in the game world, can make the entire experience worthwhile. While supplements and sourcebooks produced by Catalyst Game Labs will follow to support *A Time of War* with a wealth of gamemaster and player support, gamemasters can always adapt the game universe to suit their own styles.

The Contents of This Book

Whether you have purchased the print or electronic version, this book is specifically organized to present the information needed to start your own adventures in the universe of *BattleTech*. Below you’ll find a summation of each chapter of this rulebook.

**The Universe Before You:** An introduction to gaming and a short review of the *BattleTech* setting described and covered by *A Time of War*.

**Basic Game Play:** The core rules and game mechanics are covered in this section, describing the general rules governing the characters’ use of skills, attributes, and traits.

**Character Creation:** This chapter covers the character design process, enabling players to create a unique persona to face the challenges in *A Time of War*.

**Traits:** Traits are special capabilities a character may have that go beyond training and attributes. The rules for these special capabilities are found in this chapter.

**Skills:** The character’s skills represent trained abilities that are often at the core of virtually everything the character does in the course of his or her adventures. Skills determine what the character knows how to do (and how well the character can do it).

**Combat:** The heart of any role-playing game set in a universe of war, the *Combat* chapter provides rules for handling game play when negotiations break down and the only solution left is violence.

**Tactical Combat Addendum:** Set in a universe where combat is often resolved using armored battlefield units, this chapter provides rules specifically designed to mesh the role-playing experience with the tabletop wargame described in *Total Warfare*, *Tactical Operations*, and *Strategic Operations* (see *The BattleTech Universe*, p. 31, for more information).

**Special Case Rules:** Whether it be the alien environs of a thousand distant worlds, or the perilous flora and fauna that often come with them, this chapter covers the special cases dealing with game play events beyond the normal interactions between human beings and their weapons of war.

**Equipment:** Also known as the player-character’s toy box, this chapter covers a wide range of personal gear a character might want (or need), ranging from mundane gadgets like personal computers and communicators, to powerful support weapons, explosives, and even cybernetic implants.

**Character Advancement:** The evolution of a character from game session to game session can come in many forms, be it improved skills and attributes based on experience, or improved wealth and power from a rise in rank or title. This chapter covers those elements of the game.

**The GM’s Toolkit:** This chapter is a veritable how-to manual for gamemasters, providing a guide for when and how to use...
The following terms are commonly used when playing games set in the BattleTech universe:

**Action Check**
Any time a character must complete an action whose outcome is in doubt (such as the use of a Skill or the test of an Attribute), it requires a dice roll. This roll is referred to as the Action Check.

**Attribute**
A feature that measures raw physical or mental capabilities.

**Attribute Check**
Any Action Check that tests a character’s Attribute is referred to as the Attribute Check.

**Burning Edge**
The act of using a character’s Edge Attribute to change an Action Check outcome or otherwise “cheat fate” is referred to as “burning Edge”.

**Dice/Die (D6)**
Dice are used to resolve Action Checks. A Time of War uses six-sided dice (often abbreviated as D6).

**Experience (XP)**
The measure of a character’s advancement is accomplished by the accumulation and distribution of Experience (XP) points.

**Gamemaster (GM)**
In a role-playing game, the gamemaster (GM for short) is the one who controls all the non-player characters, tells the story, and sets up challenges for the player characters.

**Margin of Failure (MoF)**
The difference between a target number and a modified roll result that falls below that number is referred to as the roll’s Margin of Failure (or MoF, for short).

**Margin of Success (MoS)**
The difference between a target number and a modified roll result that equals or exceeds that number is referred to as the roll’s Margin of Success (or MoS, for short).

**Modified Roll**
The result of a dice roll after all modifiers are applied is referred to as a Modified Roll.

**Modifiers**
Any number that is added to (or subtracted from) a dice roll, a target number, or a damage value is referred to as a modifier. Modifiers that apply to a target number are called TN modifiers. Modifiers that apply to the dice roll result are referred to as roll modifiers. Modifiers that apply to a damage result are referred to as damage modifiers. Modifiers may be added or subtracted as appropriate (positive modifiers will increase a roll result; negative modifiers will decrease it).

**Multipliers**
Multipliers are special modifiers that require the player to multiply a roll result, target number, or damage value instead of adding or subtracting.

**Net Margin of Success (Net MoS)**
In any Opposed Action Check, the Net Margin of Success (Net MoS) is defined as the sum of the winning character’s MoS plus the losing character’s MoF. If neither character failed in the roll, the character with the higher MoS wins, and subtracts the opposing character’s MoS to find the Net MoS. If neither character made a successful roll, there is no Net MoS.

**Non-Player Character (NPC)**
Any characters not controlled by the players in a role-playing game are referred to as non-player characters (NPCs for short).

**Opposed Action Check**
A special Action Check that pits one character’s roll against another’s is referred to as an Opposed Action Check.

**Party**
A common term for a group of player characters.

**Player Character (PC)**
Any player-controlled characters in a role-playing game are referred to as player characters (PCs for short).

**Skill**
Any trained ability a character possesses is referred to as a Skill. Skills vary in complexity, and the character’s proficiency in them is identified by a Skill Level. A character that does not possess a given Skill is said to be Untrained in that skill.

**Skill Check**
Any Action Check that tests a character’s Skill is referred to as a Skill Check.

**Target Number (TN)**
The base number that a dice roll must equal or exceed to achieve a successful result. A target number may also occasionally be referred to as a to-hit roll.

**Trait**
Additional features a character may possess that are not quantified by Attributes and Skills are referred to as Traits, and may be positive or negative.
the rules, and a wealth of easy-to-use resources for generating unexpected campaign events and encounters to keep a player group guessing.

Something for Everyone to Take Notes With
Role-playing can get pretty in-depth over time. Each character the players and gamemaster control has a number of statistics and other resources that must be tracked over time to maintain continuity in the game. For this reason, character record sheets are provided at the back of this book, and may be photocopied as needed to facilitate easy record keeping for characters. In addition, notepads (or word processing programs) may be used to record any other information the players or gamemaster deem important throughout the course of a session.

Additionally, some groups enjoy a synopsis of each session that can be compiled and read at a later time in order to enjoy and share their exploits. This can be particularly useful if a player is unable to attend a given session, providing a quick re-cap that can be quickly read before the next gaming session begins and avoiding any bog-down that could occur as the player tries to catch up on current events. The session scribe can be a shared responsibility or assigned, all based on what a given playing group finds works best for them.

Three Six-Sided Dice Per Player (or a Digital Equivalent)
As will be described in the Basic Game Play section (p. 34), three six-sided dice (3D6) are required to play A Time of War. Dice are used to help resolve actions the characters may perform where the possibility of success or failure exists. For players gaming through an on-line medium, such as chatrooms, dice-rolling programs (often referred to as “dicebots”) are a common and easily accessible equivalent, providing similar randomized results to the clattering of physical dice across a gaming table.

Imagination
Last, but by no means least, a role-playing game requires imagination. All too often, it’s easy for someone looking at a pencil-and-paper based RPG to be intimidated by the rulebooks and the numbers. But at the core, the focus is to have fun, to delve into a fictional reality where control over the characters’ actions—the characters’ fates—lies in the hands of the players controlling them. The imagination—more than the game rules—is what truly brings the player into the game; without it, a role-playing game would merely be an exercise in mindless dice-rolling.

The need for imagination goes for the gamemaster, too. A large part of the gamemaster’s job is to tell a good story, a story the players can dive into. Inspiration can be drawn for this effort from film, television, or even a good book. Pay attention to how the story is put together, how the characters are built, and how the plot unfolds, and find ways to use these ideas in your own game, adding plots and subplots that perhaps you didn’t notice were there before. The players, too, can aid in constructing this story, both by their own reactions to the events the gamemaster constructs, and by telling a part of the story themselves as they execute their actions.

For further inspiration, players and gamemasters can even explore the wealth of sourcebooks, rulebooks, and stories written for the BattleTech universe, many of which are described later in The BattleTech Universe (see p. 31). Finally, a wealth of resources exists online for any player interested in the BattleTech universe, from the forums and official product information provided by classicbattletech.com, to the quality fiction provided by battlecorps.com.