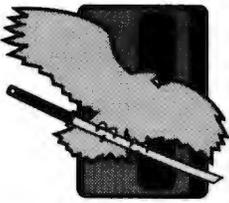


BATTLETECH[®]

**JADE
FALCON
SOURCEBOOK[™]**



FASA CORPORATION • 1992



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COMSTAR CLASSIFIED REPORT
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FROM: Anastasius Focht, Precentor Martial of the Com Guards, Hilton Head Island, Terra
TO: Cadets of the Sandhurst Royal Military Academy, Terra
DATE: 15 March 3053

Greetings to the warriors of Blake's true vision. This report provides the best possible information on Clan Jade Falcon, the proven enemy of any who dare stand between them and their dream of a Star League reborn. This Clan came within an Elemental's jump of forever crippling the Inner Sphere's strongest military, yet fell to its own idea of honor. The Falcons displayed tactical genius on Tukayyid, but failed to achieve victory because of strategic shortsightedness. Despite its failings, Clan Jade Falcon, Avengers of DeChavilier, Followers of Turkina, and Grand Protectors of the Cameron Legacy, nonetheless proved to be one of the fiercest Clans in the invasion.

The general history of the Clans, the overall structure of their caste-driven society, and their military organization appears in the information I provided in the previous report on Clan Wolf. If you remain ignorant of the ways of the Clans, I strongly suggest you seek out a copy of that report.

The wealth of information available about Clan Jade Falcon comes almost entirely from the crew of the *Outbound Light*, one of our JumpShips assigned to mapping the stars. *Outbound Light's* three-year voyage ended abruptly when the ship jumped into an unexplored star system and encountered the Clans. The star system, known as Huntress, belongs to Clans Smoke Jaguar and Jade Falcon. The *Outbound Light's* unexpected appearance must have persuaded those Clans that it was time to make their dream of a Star League reborn a reality.

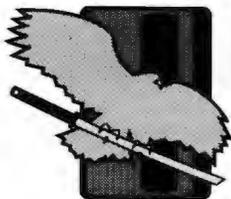
The Clans treated the crew, commanded by ROM Precentor Arabella Bradford, as guests. The Smoke Jaguar Khans apparently wanted to glean as much information on the current situation in the Inner Sphere as possible from the crew, and wisely decided to do so by gaining their confidence instead of picking their brains by chemical persuasion. Placing very few restrictions on their liberty, the Clans allowed the crew to travel to towns, factories, and military installations on Huntress and other Clan worlds. Their report of these experiences provided valuable insights into Clan society, particularly the structures of Clans Jade Falcon and Smoke Jaguar. This treatment also allowed the ship's crew to become comfortable enough with their "hosts" to talk freely about their work and lives, and to gossip about the political environment in the Inner Sphere. Even without revealing military information, the crew of the *Outbound Light* provided a clearer picture to the Clans of what to expect in the Inner Sphere than all their probing missions, including Wolf's Dragoons, put together.

Not surprisingly, the crew of the *Outbound Light* returned to the Inner Sphere with no idea of the location of the Clan homeworlds. Before sending them home, Clan scientists put the crew members through a thorough electro-chemical procedure designed to erase all memories of their trip to Huntress. Brutally effective inhibitors block every attempt our scientists have made to reconstruct the crew members' memories and gain information that could lead us back to the Clan worlds. In fact, most of the explorer ship crew can no longer even travel comfortably in a JumpShip.

We must all continue to study the Clans so that the sacrifice made by all who died on Tukayyid and on other worlds defending the Inner Sphere will not be in vain. The truce between ComStar and the Clans will end in fifteen years. At present, the Inner Sphere and the Clans are too exhausted militarily and at such a low level of morale that both are incapable of mounting any type of campaign. But the Clans will not repeat their mistakes when they resume their assault, and ComStar and the other Inner Sphere warriors must prepare to stand against a stronger and wiser Clan. When that day arrives, the warriors of Clan Jade Falcon will be at the forefront, eager to erase the memory of their defeats and prove that theirs is the better way. How well your leaders heed one of the basic tenets of military strategy—know your enemy—will determine whether they triumph or fall.

—HISTORY OF CLAN JADE FALCON—





T H E F O U N D E R S

Praised be the Founders of Clan Jade Falcon!

Daniel Mattlov,

From him came the fire of the first Falcons.

Carl Icaza,

From him came the stubbornness and strength.

Lisa Buhallin,

From her came the will to remember.

—From the Jade Falcon Invocation

In 2784, when it became clear that the corruption Stefan Amaris had spread through the five Houses of the Inner Sphere now threatened to engulf the Star League Defense Force, General Aleksandr Kerensky presented the idea of an exodus to his troops. Eighty percent of the SLDF responded when Kerensky gave the Exodus order, and one thousand ships jumped into uncharted space. They traveled more than thirteen hundred light years from the Inner Sphere, eventually settling on five barely habitable worlds that lay within five closely situated star systems. As Kerensky dismantled the artificial military structure created by the journey, old hatreds and distrust re-emerged, and the heirs of the SLDF eventually fell into a twenty-year battle, on the five settled worlds of the Pentagon, that eerily resembled the Succession Wars. Aleksandr's son, Nicholas, recognizing the signs of another debilitating struggle, led another Exodus on the path to a new civilization.

Six hundred warriors followed Nicholas Kerensky back from the world of Strana Mechty to the war-torn Pentagon. No longer members of the Star League Defense Force, Nicholas' force called itself the Clans of Kerensky. With great skill and ferocity, they put an end to the bitter factionalism that had killed millions. Nicholas Kerensky brought the fierce, warrior-based society he had created on Strana Mechty to the survivors on the Pentagon worlds; they hailed him as a hero and embraced his new code.



The Clans pay homage to their founding members with yearly memorials. This praise is not distributed equally, however. Each Clan considers only a handful of their original members to be of particular importance to the Clan, and deserving of the title, Founder. The Founders' importance springs from many sources, but most often for their role during the Exodus Civil War, their support for Nicholas Kerensky as he created his new society, or for the honor that the particular Founder's genetic heritage has brought to the Clan over time.

Clan Jade Falcon recognizes four Founders. They are Lisa Buhallin, Daniel Mattlov, Carl Icaza, and Elizabeth Hazen. Of the four, Elizabeth Hazen is most prominent in the hearts and minds of all Jade Falcon warriors.

ELIZABETH HAZEN

But all hail mighty Elizabeth Hazen and Turkina

As first among equals,

For she was the first Khan

And Turkina her winged soul.

From them came our spirit and destiny.

—From the Jade Falcon Invocation

Clan Jade Falcon history truly begins with the birth of Elizabeth Cynthia Hazen on April 5, 2741, in the city of Alexandria, the state of Virginia, North American continent, Terra. Upon reaching her legal majority, Elizabeth joined the Star League Defense Forces, immediately beginning to demonstrate great prowess as a Mech-Warrior and leader. Though only twenty-five years old at the time of the Amaris coup, Hazen was already commander of a company of the Royal Black Watch Regiment, the elite honor guard of the Cameron family.

Captain Hazen was not with her company the day the Usurper assassinated Richard Cameron and had his troops destroy the Black Watch. She was with her brother Lionel, an aerospace pilot with the Black Watch who had crashed his fighter the day before. When Amaris troopers stormed the hospital where Hazen's brother was being treated, they herded everyone out into the parking lots, leaving behind those patients who could not walk (including Lionel Hazen). Elizabeth Hazen realized something was very wrong. In an act of brutality so typical of Amaris, he ordered the hospital bombed before the eyes of the terrified onlookers.

Elizabeth Hazen and several others managed to escape from their captors in the ensuing confusion. In the months, then years, that followed, Elizabeth gathered together other soldiers and civilians eager to fight back. They formed the Ghosts of the Black Watch (GBW), a guerrilla force that haunted the mountains and forests of the Olympic Peninsula, striking strategic Amaris interests with great skill and fury.

A decade after the coup, General Kerensky's forces liberated Terra from Amaris rule in 2779. Elizabeth Hazen and her followers emerged from hiding, looking, in the words of General Kerensky, "like a band of starving wolves." The Star League awarded Elizabeth Hazen the Star League Medal of Honor and inducted her into the Order of the Sword as a reward for her constant loyalty. She was the last to be accorded such honors.

The Ghosts of the Black Watch suffered great physical and emotional hardships during their decade of resistance, and Elizabeth Hazen may have suffered most. When General Kerensky offered her a position on his command staff, she requested release from the SLDF instead. For a year Hazen wandered across Terra, sometimes teaching English to support herself, and finally settling as a language tutor in Budapest. The brothers of a Catholic monastery high in the hills above the city introduced Elizabeth to falconry.

After Kerensky's defeat of Stefan Amaris, he waited patiently another three years for the leaders of the five Great Houses to elect a new First Lord of the Star League. When the Council Lords failed to elect a new First Lord and instead disbanded the Star League because each wanted the highest power for him or herself, General Kerensky gave his troops the exodus order rather than face what he saw as the coming Armageddon. Somehow, Elizabeth Hazen learned of what was happening; many Jade Falcon poets and loremasters believe that General DeChavilier traveled to Budapest to inform her, an opinion unconfirmed by our historians. This version of events would also support the unconfirmed belief that Elizabeth Hazen and Aaron DeChavilier shared more than a passing friendship.

The fact remains that Elizabeth Hazen joined the Exodus, recommissioned by General Kerensky himself to the rank of major and given a position in General DeChavilier's command staff.

Recorded history reveals little about Major Hazen's role in the Exodus. Most likely, she had little to occupy her time until the *Prinz Eugen* mutiny. When nine warships in the Exodus fleet rebelled against Kerensky's authority, and decided to return to Terra, Kerensky sent a large force, including Major Hazen, to capture the fleeing mutineers. When the pursuing force returned with the nine renegade ships, General Kerensky ordered the leaders executed, and put Hazen in command of one of the firing squads.

THE LEGEND OF TURKINA

*Then Warrior Hazen grew cold
Watching noble DeChavilier die.
She heard her mind whisper
Urging her to fly,
To forget her duty.
But with a defiant cry
Proud Turkina dove
From the realm of death
To seize Hazen's heart
And shake it free of fear
Leaving pure her soul
And her duty clear.*

—*The Remembrance (Clan Jade Falcon), Passage 8, Verse 36, Lines 58–66*

In the course of their travels away from Terra, General Kerensky and his followers came upon a cluster of marginally habitable star systems, less than a jump apart. His soldiers, and the civilians who shared his vision enough to accompany him so far from Terra, colonized five of these worlds, naming them Arcadia, Circe, Dagda, Eden, and Babylon.

For several years peace reigned among the General's followers, though life was not without danger as the colonists fought and

struggled to tame their hostile new homeworlds. To carry out this work, Kerensky realized that he must demilitarize his followers, reducing his forces by 75 percent through a series of severe tests that only the most skilled soldiers could pass. Elizabeth Hazen passed easily, retaining her commission and taking command of the Dagda military garrison, where she also became involved in the fledgling civilian government.

These peaceful years marked the Exodus scientists' first major breakthroughs in genetic engineering. Their earliest efforts produced predators designed to hunt down native life forms that posed a particular threat to the colonists. Perhaps the most beautiful of these man-made creations are the jade falcons. The jade falcon, created from the genes of the peregrine and gyrfalcon, is the size of Terra's largest eagle. With its razor-sharp talons the jade falcon hunts the Eden serpent, a large, venomous, winged reptile native to the planet Eden. The jade falcon was soon exported to Dagda to deal with a similar menace on that world. There the jade falcon's prey was a creature the colonists named the dagadar, a large quasi-avian that attacked the colonists' livestock.

According to Clan lore, Elizabeth Hazen was the first to completely tame and train a jade falcon. She named her prize Turkina, after the particularly powerful wife of one of the ancient Mongol khans on Terra. The sight of Hazen and Turkina became a familiar one throughout the Pentagon. Some stories even claim that Turkina read her mistress' mind.

In one such story, Elizabeth happened to challenge the developer of a piece of land whose price she believed to be ridiculously high. When she confronted the man with her suspicions, he threatened her with a convenient "accident"; she was alone, and no one would ever know what happened. Hazen replied that she had all the protection she needed, and pointed up at a tiny speck circling in the cloudless sky. At that instant, Turkina gave a screech of defiance, folded her wings, and plummeted straight at the terrified developer, only to pull out of the dive with her talons just centimeters from his face.

Major Hazen and Turkina became unwilling celebrities for a time, but their fame was quickly forgotten as tensions over scarce food and other essentials erupted on Dagda and the other Pentagon worlds. This fed old hatreds over cultural differences, which escalated so quickly and violently that Kerensky, once again titled Protector of the Star League, prepared to mount a diplomatic-military mission to try to defuse the situation and avoid civil war. He

EXCLUSIVE JADE FALCON BLOODNAMES

General Bloodnames

Chistu
Hazen
Malthus

Elementals

Icaza
Mattlov

MechWarriors

Helmer
Buhallin
Roshak
Pryde

Pilots

Binetti
Thastus
Von Jankmon



began by ordering General DeChavilier, with Major Hazen as his second in command, to disarm a Liao separatist faction that had refused all peaceful overtures on the southern continent of Eden.

The order found Elizabeth Hazen caring for an ailing Turkina, who had been stricken by a virus. Two hours before Hazen shipped for Eden, the fabled Turkina died. The loss of her falcon companion devastated Elizabeth, and she left for Eden with a heavy heart.

Ten days later, DeChavilier and Elizabeth Hazen used their 'Mechs to lead a force of infantrymen through the dense Pokill jungle. Under the reddish midday sun, the force entered a clearing and met an ambush.

Elizabeth Hazen's 'Mech, a *Black Knight*, fell first when it stepped into a concealed, oil-filled pit. Elizabeth ejected clear as her 'Mech pitched forward and sank chest-deep into the black liquid, then exploded in flames an instant later. The major's relief at avoiding a fiery death was short-lived. As she floated down toward solid ground, a bullet hit her helmet, knocking her unconscious.

Hazen woke to the sight of a desperate battle. DeChavilier's 'Mech, its mangled right leg dragging behind, had also fallen into a concealed pit. Instead of bailing out, however, the general continued firing his weapons with apparent disregard for his perilous position. In an attempt to protect their leader, his soldiers established a perimeter guard around the 'Mech and began a fierce barrage of weapons fire.

As Elizabeth Hazen struggled out of her harness and stumbled toward the fray, the jungle erupted with the sound of hand-held missiles leaving their tubes. Some missed their targets and set trees aflame. Others fell among the infantry, who lived for a few tortured seconds until the flaming jelly burned the flesh from their bodies.

But most of the missiles hit DeChavilier's 'Mech, smearing it with burning petrochemical and setting the pool of oil around it on fire. Elizabeth could imagine the waves of heat building in the general's 'Mech, could almost see the heat indicators creep up toward the critical range. She must have whispered a prayer that General DeChavilier would eject.

The hatch on the 'Mech finally jettisoned, and for a moment, it looked as though Elizabeth's prayer had been answered. An instant later, the general's ejection seat lifted him out of the stricken 'Mech on a column of fire, just as another salvo of missiles streaked from the jungle toward the 'Mech. One struck the general, creating a fireball of flame, smoke, and debris.

A story called *The Falcon Vision* chronicles the tale of DeChavilier's death and the succeeding events. Said to have been written shortly after Elizabeth Hazen's death, the tale's ornate language makes it very long, but quite beautiful. All Jade Falcon cadets memorize the story during training and recite it at their graduation ceremony. *The Falcon Vision* provides the best version of what happened next.

"...and our Founder knew fear and despair, for as the glow from the fireball faded, she heard the cheers of the enemy, and the sound stripped away what courage was left in her heart.

"She crawled away from the battle until she reached a small green clearing that was cool and quiet. She wondered what to do. Her heart told her she had suffered enough these past few days; first at the death of Turkina, and now the violent death of her best

friend. Could anyone suffer such sorrow and not think of running away, or worse?

"One small part of her argued against this urge to flee. Yes, the universe had struck terrible blows against her, but she still lived, and should continue the struggle.

"But that thought grew fainter and fainter, until it was little more than the droning of a mosquito against the siren's call to throw off her uniform and slip into the jungle, where she could wait for oblivion.

"A familiar cry pierced the air and cut short her reverie. Before her mind had registered its astonishment, our Founder watched great Turkina land on a perch in front of her. The bird's emerald eyes looked sternly upon the battered form of her mistress.

"Turkina opened her beak; not to scream, but to speak with contempt.

"Weakness,' Turkina said. 'Weakness from my mistress? It is not possible!'

"When our stunned Founder made no reply, Turkina ruffled her feathers angrily and spoke again.

"Why do you sit here like a frightened pigeon, hiding from the fight?' she asked. 'You should be out there, talons ripping, beak dripping with the blood of your foes, not crouched here waiting to die a coward's death!'

"At that, the pride of our Founder rose like bile.

"I decide what I do, and will not let some hallucination tell me to die a meaningless death!'

"Hallucination? Let this be the doings of a hallucination, then!' Turkina bent and slashed the back of our Founder's left hand with her beak, drawing blood and pain."

Elizabeth Hazen accepted that it was indeed Turkina perched before her, impossible as that seemed. In a voice full of self-pity, Hazen confessed her fear and despair. Turkina replied that every death held meaning, as long as the life was honestly given for the common good. The specter falcon chastised her former companion, claiming that a warrior who turned from a fight was worse than a coward, and acted against nature. "Some are born to till the fields, some are destined to create. You trained from birth to be a warrior, just as I trained at your fist when I had barely escaped the shards of my shell. To turn your back on your destiny because you are frightened or sick of the hunt is an abomination against nature."

Elizabeth rose, swearing to be true to her nature and reenter the fight. Turkina rejoined, "If this is true emotion, then swear upon the love we shared when you were my mistress to give all that you have and are to protect and advance the virtues you hold dear. Fight so that your children may look back upon what you have done and say, 'Praised be the name of Elizabeth Hazen, for she was what a warrior should be.'"

Our Founder, her voice choked with pride and honor, swore upon all that was holy to fulfill Turkina's vow.

Our Founder turned to rejoin the fight, only to discover that she no longer wore her sidearm.

"I have no weapon. How will I avenge the death of DeChavilier?" she asked.

"Have you not yet learned that a warrior's weapon is his body, and that swords and lasers and 'Mechs are but extensions of that weapon?" Turkina said. With a cry that sounded like a laugh of triumph, Turkina launched into the air, and like a ray of light, disappeared into the sky.

Fearing that she had lost the blessing of her wondrous vision,

Elizabeth Hazen set out toward the clearing, determined to use her hands, feet, and mind to continue the struggle. When she heard Turkina's clear cry once more, she looked into the sun, and suddenly Turkina reappeared, her talons gripping a battered katana.

Turkina dropped the sword and the Founder caught it, overwhelmed by a flood of memories.

"Yes, loved one, that is the sword you gave Aaron DeChavilier long ago. I pried it from his lifeless hands for you—even in death he gripped his weapon, as should every warrior in the last moments of his life. Cherish it and his memory, and use it to draw the blood of any who would dare stand in the way of destiny."

With tears in her eyes, Elizabeth turned again to enter the battle, but paused once more to hear Turkina's parting words.

"Before you leave, pull five feathers from my wings, and take back this leather cord," the jade falcon told her. "As I wore your jesses in life as a token of my devotion, now you and those who will follow you must swear devotion to me and the ways of my falcon kindred. You are now warriors of the wing."

The tale concludes with Elizabeth Hazen returning to the battle and killing many enemy soldiers in a particularly violent and gory fashion, then leading what remained of her troops in a successful attack against the separatist stronghold.

While the riots and rebellions continued elsewhere, all-out civil war broke out on Eden. Perhaps it was the death of his old comrade DeChavilier, perhaps it was despair at facing yet another civil war, but it was not long after that General Aleksandr Kerensky died. Nicholas, his son and heir, realized that he could not stop the rising violence, and decided to let the fire erupt and burn itself out quickly, rather than continue the fight.

Gathering together his followers, Nicholas led those loyal to his vision in another Exodus, this time to Strana Mechty, a nearby

globular cluster of worlds. When his personal warship left the Pentagon, Elizabeth Hazen stood by his side.

Of course, the idea that the falcon Turkina broke the bounds of death, distance, and nature to visit her former mistress is ludicrous, but Jade Falcon members say the story is supported, however slenderly, by certain relics, including five dusty wing feathers from a jade falcon, a leather thong, and a battered katana bearing scratches along its blade that Jade Falcon warriors swear were made by Turkina's talons when she gripped the sword.

DANIEL MATTLOV

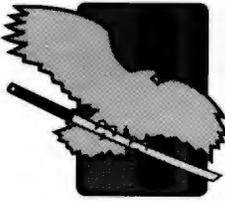
I really don't care if the Star League is ever reestablished. I'm more concerned with today. And today it is obvious that without the wisdom of Aleksandr Kerensky and the leadership of General Nicholas, we are little more than dirt-hugging, back-stabbing barbarians. The vision of the two Kerenskys is the reason we have survived until now, and as long as I can still pilot a 'Mech, pick up a pistol, or even spit in someone's eye, I will defend it.

—Excerpt from a letter written by Daniel Mattlov to Elizabeth Hazen

Daniel Mattlov, a soldier known as much for his loyalty to the Kerenskys as his considerable abilities as a fighter pilot, joined Nicholas Kerensky in the second Exodus.

Born on the Hegemony world of Caph as the second son of the Duke of Caph, Daniel Mattlov was a member of one of the Terran Hegemony's richest and most influential families. He grew up unwilling to fulfill his family's expectation that he devote his life either to business or politics, and rebelled by enlisting in the Star League Defense Forces. He trained as a fighter pilot at the Flight





Academy of Graham, graduating with honors and then reporting to the elite fighter wing of the Eleventh Royal BattleMech

Division (Orion Division).

His military career had been full of contradictions. Though a fighter pilot of exceptional skill and bravery, his haughty, prideful manner and short temper earned him numerous reprimands and cost him any chance of promotion above the rank of lieutenant. Many of these "incidents," twenty-nine in all, put him on report for assaulting someone who insulted the SLDF, his unit, or his commanding officer. His fierce sense of loyalty governed his whole life; perhaps this is why the trait is one prized above all others by Clan Jade Falcon warriors.

Despite his problems, Mattlov proved himself an excellent soldier. He performed brilliantly during General Kerensky's attempt to quell the Periphery Uprising beginning in 2765 and in the struggle to defeat Stefan Amaris after he seized Terra and most of the Hegemony worlds. He made ace ten times over and suffered injuries on five separate occasions, the last when he deliberately crashed his burning fighter into a column of Amaris 'Mechs on Caph. That crash wounded him so severely that the doctors feared he would never recover.

Daniel did, however, survive his injuries, and stood among the first to offer his support when General Kerensky issued the call to exodus, though at the time he could barely walk. Making the decision to go was not easy. His entire family had died fighting the Amaris invasion of Caph or during the Amaris occupation, leaving Mattlov the title of Duke of Caph and the family's wealth.

Loyalty to General Kerensky and the SLDF won out. Daniel left his family's future and fortunes to a distant cousin and joined the Exodus. Daniel Mattlov's activities during the Exodus and colonization of the Pentagon worlds remain largely unknown, but a few terse medical records show that he continued to pilot aerospace fighters against the judgment of his doctors, who believed his days as a soldier had ended.

Daniel Mattlov was one of the first to swear loyalty to Nicholas Kerensky when Aleksandr died while preparing the campaign to secure the rebellious world of Eden, and he probably met fellow supporter Elizabeth Hazen during the Exodus to Strana Mechty, in the nearby Kerensky Cluster. An easy friendship grew between the two as they recognized a similar devotion to the ideals embodied by Nicholas Kerensky.

When Nicholas released the preliminary rosters of the twenty Clans given the honor of ending the civil wars plaguing the Pentagon worlds, Daniel Mattlov's name was missing. Outraged, Daniel confronted Nicholas Kerensky and his command staff and demanded to know the reason for this insult. When told he had been passed over because of his medical condition, Mattlov retorted that, while he might never pilot an aerospace fighter again (his lungs had been permanently weakened by his last crash), he could "damn well pilot a 'Mech better than any one of you fools."

For once, his brashness earned him not a reprimand, but respect. Daniel immersed himself in training as a MechWarrior, and proved to be as skilled at controlling a 'Mech as piloting a fighter.

The final rosters for Nicholas' twenty Clans must have given Daniel Mattlov great pride: his name was among those warriors who took an active part in the fighting, and his commander in Clan Jade Falcon was his friend, Elizabeth Hazen.

CARL ICAZA

How does Icaza take bad news? Let me put it this way. I'd rather be covered with paper cuts and then thrown into a vat of lemon juice than tell Icaza something he ain't goin' to like.

—Captain Danielle Marks, aide to Colonel Carl Icaza

Nicholas Kerensky's final roster appointed Carl Icaza commander of the Clan Jade Falcon infantry. While Clan lore is full of stories about Carl Icaza, his early history eluded our researchers.

We eventually realized that our difficulty in tracing Carl Icaza's roots lay in the fact that Icaza was not his real name. The discovery that he was born Carl Benno of Skye, in the Lyran Commonwealth, revealed more information, including that Carl served three years in prison.

A man of considerable size and strength, Carl Benno née Icaza staunchly opposed the class system on Skye, a very tradition-bound planet. He was expelled twice in his early years at Sanglamore Military Academy for trying to unionize the university's maintenance staff. But it was a long-standing grudge between Icaza and Count Vimmons Donakowski, Lyran Dean of the Academy and staunch hater of liberal views, that landed him in jail.

The focus of their almost-constant skirmishes shifted dramatically with the appearance on campus of Geena Drallith, eldest daughter and heir of the Duke of Kochab. An instant and dramatic passion sprang to life between Carl and Geena, who spurned Count Donakowski for her true love. Donakowski decided to devote his considerable political and social influence to making the young couple's life miserable.

If that were not enough, Carl later faced charges of treason against the Lyran Commonwealth. The Count, acting as chief prosecutor, accused him of passing confidential information about important students to operatives of the Terran Hegemony, and backed up the accusations with physical proof. At first glance, the charges appeared to have been contrived by the jealous count; however, deeper scrutiny shows no proof to suggest that he framed Carl or faked the evidence.

The time spent in jail turned Carl's life around. Geena, shattered by the publicity surrounding the trial, left Carl and Skye for home, and so little remained for Carl in the Lyran Commonwealth. Shortly after earning a parole, Carl Benno left Skye for the Terran Hegemony under the name Carl Icaza. There he joined the SLDF. (That he managed to evade the surveillance the Count placed on him after his release from prison goes a long way toward proving that Carl did indeed hold strong ties to the Hegemony intelligence services.)

Under his new name, Carl became a cadet in the West Point Military Academy of Terra and graduated three years later as an infantry lieutenant. He served with distinction in a variety of units, and, by the time of the Amaris coup, commanded the 889th Jump Infantry Regiment with the Seventeenth Jump Infantry Division (the Golden Talons).

The Golden Talons, stationed just outside the Hegemony at the time of the coup, played a vital, but little-remembered, role in bringing down the Usurper. They helped evacuate the survivors of SLDF units stationed on nearby Hegemony worlds, then launched a campaign of probing attacks to test the mettle of Amaris' forces. These pitched and often brutal battles were fought at great cost to