

***WRITING BATTLETECH:***  
**THE SWORD AND THE DAGGER**

*By Ardath Mayhar*

By 1986 I had a long list of published books to my name, and my agent was Ray Puechner, who had sold a goodly number of those for me. Being in my usual state of financial embarrassment, I welcomed the sometimes odd and unusual projects he found for me to do. Also clients of his at the time were Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman, who had contracted with FASA, publishers of the BattleTech games and books, to write the second in that sequence of novels.

They had written a short synopsis of their proposed novel when a much better deal came into being, one they could not afford to refuse. Ray knew that I could write the BattleTech book, so he arranged to transfer their contract to me.

Along with the ten-page synopsis, I received a gaming packet containing the history of this future universe in which the BattleTech books are set, along with details of the Mechs and the names and houses of the principal participants in the novel. Examining these, I found that the synopsis as written would not work well, for the logistics were wrong for the areas of the star systems in which the plot must be acted out.

I took the basic idea, which was the substitution of a major ruler with a look-alike created by his enemies. Then I turned my imagination loose and had a great time getting inside Ardan and Hanse Davion and watching them interact and work out their tasks and their destinies.

I loved those Mechs. Being under-sized myself, the thought of expanding my bodily capabilities by means of such creations was most intriguing. I had great fun creating the conflicts featuring those. However, the material I received did not give any details of more personal weaponry or that operating in space. Because of that my ability to write believable battles that did not involve Mechs was much curtailed. To solve the problem the editors asked Walter Keith, author of the first novel, to write the scenes using those weapons, which he did so well that I have a hard time determining what he wrote and what I did.

Even more intriguing was working out the personalities of the main characters and Ardan's fellow Mech-Warriors. Internal conflicts concerning loyalties, as well as overt ones with enemies, became compelling factors in the story. I also had the opportunity to invent some pretty interesting alien creatures and landscapes (or swampsapes).

The plot formed before my eyes as the situations evolved, and I found the ending suited me very well indeed. I hope it suited readers as neatly.

This was a project that I wrote, as I do all my work, with all my heart and soul. I enjoyed doing it, and though I made very little from it the book has brought some most interesting people within my ken.

I do think it a shame that while most of the rest of the series has been reprinted those first two novels have never been reissued, as copies of my book, at least, have become very rare and are selling at much inflated prices. Perhaps the later ones went in a different direction, but those two had a lot going for them, I have always believed.

It is too bad that this was work for hire, as that does not allow me to get rights reverted so I can put The Sword and the Dagger up with my electronic publishers, Renaissance E. Books and Fictionwise, where most of my out of print and unpublished work is appearing regularly. I think there are many gamers who might like to read it, as I get frequent requests for copies, which I do not have.