



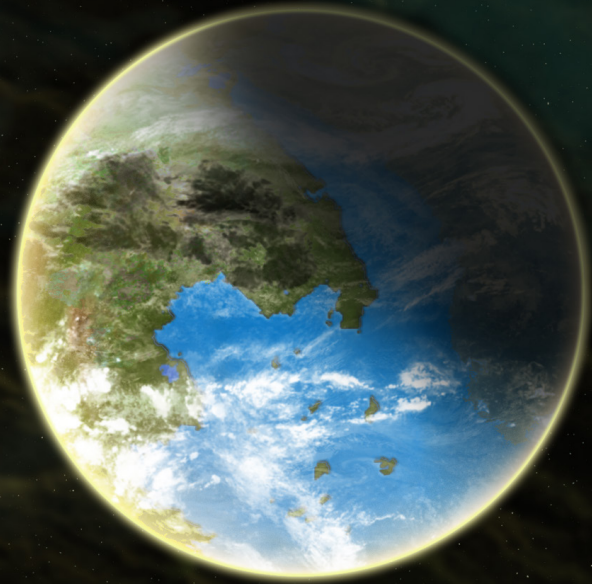
BATTLETECHTM

TOURING THE STARS

ATLAS

BENET III

Star Type (Recharge Time): M5V (206 hours)
Position in System: 3 (of 8)
Time to Jump Point: 2.45 days
Number of Satellites: None
Surface Gravity: 0.65
Atm. Pressure: High (Tainted)
Equatorial Temperature: 28 °C (Arid)
Surface Water: 60%
Recharging Station: None
HPG Class: B
Highest Native Life: Reptiles
Population: 681,035,000 (3096)
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-B-A-B-D
Landmasses (Capital City): Sierra (Donner)



BENET III

First surveyed in 2239, the Benet system was initially written off as unsuitable for colonization. According to legend, the system was named for an unrequited love by the survey mission captain, who took his own life after filing the official paperwork to register the name. Although originally pronounced in the French fashion, over the subsequent centuries the name shifted to have a hard consonantal ending.

Despite the assessment, the first colonists arrived nearly two decades after the system's survey. These first settlers were employees of an industrial conglomerate drawn to the planet's potential mineral wealth, rather than one or more of Terra's coherent ethnic groups. As a result, the populace was never dominated by any one culture and any traditions that grew up over the years were generally localized and small-scale in nature. Planetfall for the initial batch of settlers—all employees of various mining and manufacturing corporations and their families—saw the establishment in 2261 of a small community that would grow into the city of Morningside, later to function as the planet's first capital.

To the early colonists, it was obvious how Benet would likely have gone ignored indefinitely, were it not for its abundant mineral deposits. Sierra, the sole continental landmass, is volcanic in origin, with a string of still-active volcanoes stretching across the northern reaches. Surrounding the peaks and extending most of the way south into Sierra's interior is a wide swath of badlands that made the central regions of the continent unsuitable for large settlements, so the majority of Benet's population resided along the southern coastal regions, with smaller communities scattered along the shores of the Northern Sea. The Scitte Isles, located far off in the Eastern Sea,

were completely uninhabited, being barely able to support a meager amount of native life, let alone human enclaves. Automated harvesters crisscrossed these islands, collecting the chemically rich biological byproducts of what animal life was found there, and periodic transports brought the results back to Sierra for processing.

The primary hindrance to more widespread settlement of Sierra's interior was the dangerous and unpredictable gasses that spewed forth both from the northern range volcanoes as well as many fissures amid the badlands' rough terrain. Frequent seismic activity made it difficult to predict when and where an outgassing would occur, but the deeper into the badlands and closer to the active volcanoes one went, the greater the chances. In the foothills surrounding the volcanoes, the air was so permeated by poisonous gas that rebreathers were necessary; even people living near the southern end of the badlands tended to keep rebreathers on their persons at all times. Today, evidence of this difficult environment is apparent in the number of ghost towns—some quite large—that dotted this region, most having been abandoned during the Succession Wars as it became more and more difficult to maintain the technology necessary to safely live under threat of wandering gas clouds.

Sierra was divided into four administrative districts. Gakken County, covering the majority of the continent, was largely uninhabited, with only the narrow northern coast amenable to settlement. Beaux Pawl was the largest town in the county, but mostly served to support the research facilities and military bases sprinkled across the badlands. The town was also home to the planet's main orbital tracking station (which unfortunately made it the focus of a number of attacks throughout the Succession Wars). The station doubled as an astronomical research

ATLAS

facility and produced many prestigious award winners from its staff. Traffic at the small Beaux Pawl spaceport mainly brought in necessities bound for the bases with only a trickle of outbound mineral shipments.

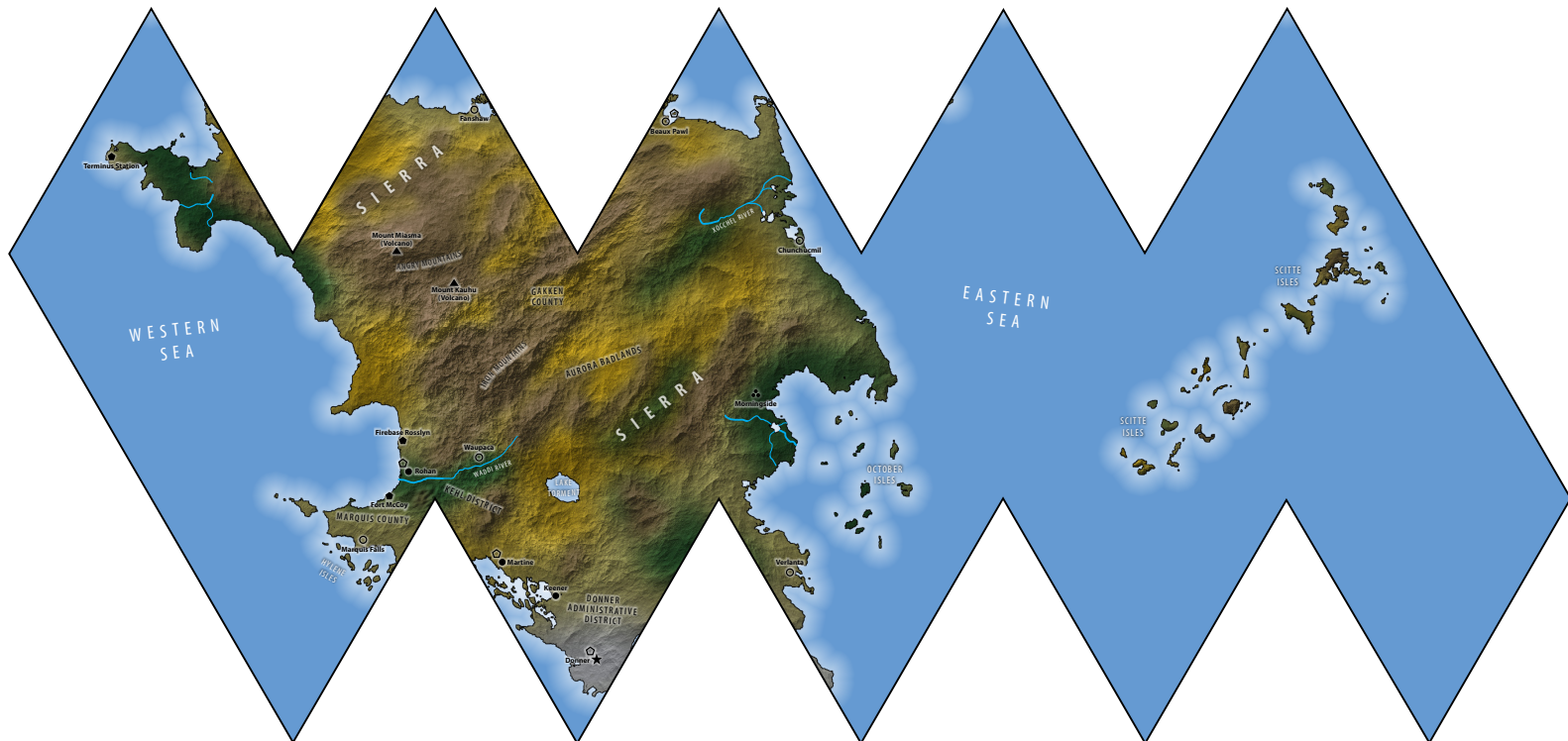
Kehl County, in the southwest, was the most heavily populated region on Benet and home to the majority of the planet's industrial facilities. Johnston Industries operated the largest of these complexes in the foothills around Martine. During the FedCom Civil War, the forests of western Kehl saw intense action between the Forty-first Avalon Hussars and the Fifth Donegal Guards. A number of military bases throughout the region not only provided protection for the valuable factories but also functioned as high-capacity supply depots for several large-scale operations conducted by various ruling powers, dating all the way back to Operation SMOTHER in the 2720s. The massive Martine and Rohan spaceports handled more traffic than the other five spaceports on Benet put together, mostly outbound shipping from Johnston and other manufacturers, as well as raw mineral exports.

Marquis County, a narrow strip of land surrounding the city of Marquis Falls, was the location of what passed for a resort area on Benet. The richest inhabitants of the planet, including all of the senior management at Johnston Industries, owned extensive estates in this county, particularly in the exclusive Hylene Isles just off the coast. Several resort towns dotted the coast and spearfishing in the crystal-blue waters was a popular activity. While Benet did not get much in the way of tourist trade, the Marquis shore was a popular destination for corporate visitors and high-ranking military staff.

The fourth district, the Donner Administrative District, became home to the planetary capital city of Donner, which lay in the heart

of the region. Donner became the capital after a severe gas eruption during the Third Succession War forced the evacuation of Morningside. The establishment of Donner as the capital also coincided with the rise of the Ducrimmon-Davions as Benet's ruling family. A purely administrative city, Donner possessed very little in the way of nightlife or cultural vibrancy to speak of. Extending for a hundred kilometers around Donner stood four of the planet's seven spaceports, three of which were devoted almost entirely to Benet's food distribution network. The lack of adequate agricultural output to sustain the planet's population necessitated a massive amount of off-world imports and extensive rail lines to facilitate food distribution across the continent, at least until the JumpShip shortages of the Succession Wars forced the world into an expensive agricultural independence.

More than anything else in its history, Benet III became known for the so-called "Death Mists" that eventually rendered the planet uninhabitable. Since the mid-3050s, the frequency and intensity of large-scale gas venting in the badlands had been on an increase. Scientists grew especially alarmed in the early 3080s, when two of the most devastating outgassings on record forced the evacuation of nearly a million inhabitants from northern Kehl County. Even with the aid of local militia and the Twelfth Vegan Rangers, the death toll from these events climbed to the tens of thousands. Despite this tragedy, many in the corporate community derided the scientists' warnings as "alarmist fear-mongering". A study commissioned by Johnston Industries in 3086 concluded that the recent outgassings fell well within Benet's historical parameters, and claimed the deaths were due to inadequate government services and poor leadership, rather than any danger from the planet itself.



ATLAS

By early 3093, nearly the entire northern half of Kehl County had been abandoned, though government officials still maintained that the evacuations were temporary and that people would eventually be able to return to their homes and businesses. Behind the scenes, however, officials were growing increasingly worried about the situation. Records later released to the public (during lawsuits against Johnston Industries) indicate that the corporation was beginning to shift its assets to facilities on other worlds such as Addicks, while continuing to downplay the local danger to the public.

The crisis reached its critical point nearly a year later, when a week of nearly non-stop seismic activity opened up thousands of gas vents across the continent. As prevailing winds carried most of the noxious fumes southwards, the northern coast was spared the worst of the event, although several hundred people—mostly elderly or those already ill—lost their lives in and around Beaux Pawl.

For the inhabitants of Sierra's southern regions, however, the death toll was much higher. Without little to no warning, massive clouds of poisonous gas swept down from the badlands and across the towns of Kehl County. Millions found themselves helpless, without rebreathers or shelter from the gas. Everyone else on Benet hunkered down in shelters to wait out the clouds, convinced by years of denials and media manipulation that the crisis would be temporary.

In the initial days of the disaster, most of Marquis County and the Donner Administrative District were spared. Messages were sent out via HPG to nearby worlds and to both Robinson and New Avalon requesting assistance. In the meantime, local militia forces did what they could to help the trapped populace by ensuring that everyone had adequate supplies to see them through the crisis. Despite their efforts, the death toll continued to rise. A number of Succession War-era shelters that had seen little subsequent maintenance suffered catastrophic failures, condemning tens of thousands more to an agonizing, choking death. When, after the first week, DropShips arrived at the Martine and Rohan spaceports, many were shocked to learn that rescue hadn't come. Instead, Johnston Industries was relocating as much of its operations as possible to other systems. More than one firefight broke out between local militia forces and mercenary-reinforced corporate security troops escorting the DropShips. Though separated in their isolated shelters, the people of Benet began to clamor for someone to blame for their situation. Local radio channels were swamped with accusations and recriminations, most directed at Johnston executives and the politicians who had supported them.

Twelve days after the beginning of what had come to be called the "Death Mist," the first help arrived. Under orders from Jerome Sandoval, elements of the First Robinson Rangers and the Robinson DMM arrived to provide assistance and transport to evacuate the planet. The process went smoothly—though slowly—at first. Three days into the effort, a surge of seismic activity in the Aurora Badlands of northern Kehl County unleashed a new round of gas venting, causing the populace and their rescuers to seek shelter together to ride it out. Over the next two weeks, this pattern was repeated several times and every time

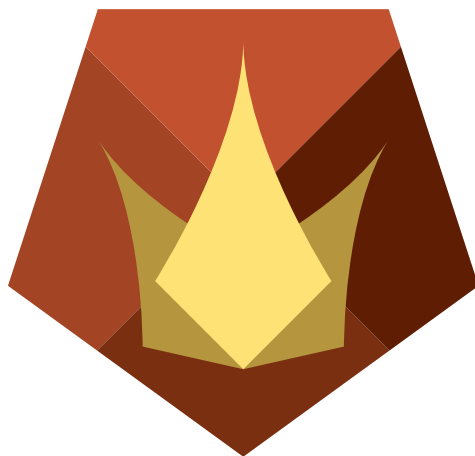
the body count crept higher. An almost constant stream of DropShips traveled from surface to orbit, ferrying a pitiful few evacuees to safety. Commercial JumpShips, contracted or even coerced by Jerome Sandoval, supplemented the efforts of the military, but could only help a small part of the planet's population.

In the second week of July, nearly a month after the crisis began, Duke Tancred himself arrived in system to observe the rescue efforts. Many on the ground, subjected to whisperings that Johnston executives and the Duke had conspired to keep the severity of the looming crisis hidden from the public, greeted his arrival angrily. Sandoval's own actions only made things worse. Four days after his arrival, JumpShips from the Draconis Combine arrived at Benet. Broadcasting their friendly intent, troops from the Fifth Ghost and the Seventh Sword of Light had come to assist in the evacuation effort. Whether from desperation or failure to read the mood of the people, Duke Sandoval accepted the offer of aid and Combine DropShips began landing to take in evacuees. The citizenry, driven by rumors that the Combine was stepping in to claim Benet once the existing populace evacuated, reacted badly and violence broke out. For the next three days, the Combine's aid workers found themselves trapped in their own DropShips by angry mobs and even some militia forces. To their credit, the Robinson Rangers and DMM troops stayed clear of the ruckus and continued evacuating outlying communities. Eventually, Tancred was forced to rescind his

acceptance of Combine aid and the Kuritan ships lifted off without a single refugee on board. After broadcasting words of encouragement and resolution to the remaining people on the planet, Tancred Sandoval retreated to Robinson to discuss the situation with his cousin. The talks from their meetings would eventually give rise to what became known, unofficially, as the Sandoval Civil War just a few months later.

The futile evacuation proceeded for the next four months, with Benet's atmosphere worsening each day. By the time the final refugee transport lifted off from Mount Sheppard spaceport outside Donner, millions had died, and not all from the gas clouds. Increasing tensions as the continuing evacuation efforts dragged on led to many violent outbursts that had to be controlled by the forces on the ground. A little more than ten percent of the pre-crisis population survived the Death Mists. Environmental scientists delivered even more bad news in a series of conferences dedicated to the disaster in 3096: the concentration of poisonous elements in Benet's atmosphere had reached a tipping point and it would be centuries—if ever—before the environment returned to normal. At the conclusion of the conferences, the March government on Robinson declared Benet abandoned and off-limits; ComStar officially removed the system from its maps shortly thereafter.

The first governor of the Benet III colony was Hamish McClaugherty of Robinson, whose family maintained a prominent position in the planet's administration until the end of its habitation. Jessika McClaugherty, a direct descendant of Hamish's younger brother, was the last mayor of Donner and made a point of being on the final shuttle of the evacuation.



A TIME OF WAR ADVENTURE SEEDS

PILLAGE, PLUNDER, PILFER *"IT'S A FINDERS KEEPERS KIND OF WORLD."*

Recommended Group Size: 4-6 players

Recommended Group Type: Military, mercenary, special ops, covert ops

Recommended Skill Levels: Regular to Veteran (Key Skill levels 3-5)

Inspired by the chaos surrounding Benet III's evacuation, unscrupulous parties have elected to plunder the world's abandoned cities and factories. Johnston Industries' extensive facilities in Kehl County offer a tempting target for the boldest scavengers.

Complications: A few obstacles for players to tackle.

A Nasty Surprise: The folks running Johnston Industries are no idiots; they fully expected that someone might raid their abandoned factories in the hopes of finding something useful or profitable. That's why they've left a number of little "surprises" for anyone who tries. These surprises can range from simple booby traps, such as machinery rigged with explosives or other deterrents, to mercenaries contracted to stay behind as long as possible and protect the factories from pillage. Considering Johnston's extensive contacts in the government, an AFFS protective force would not be out of the question.

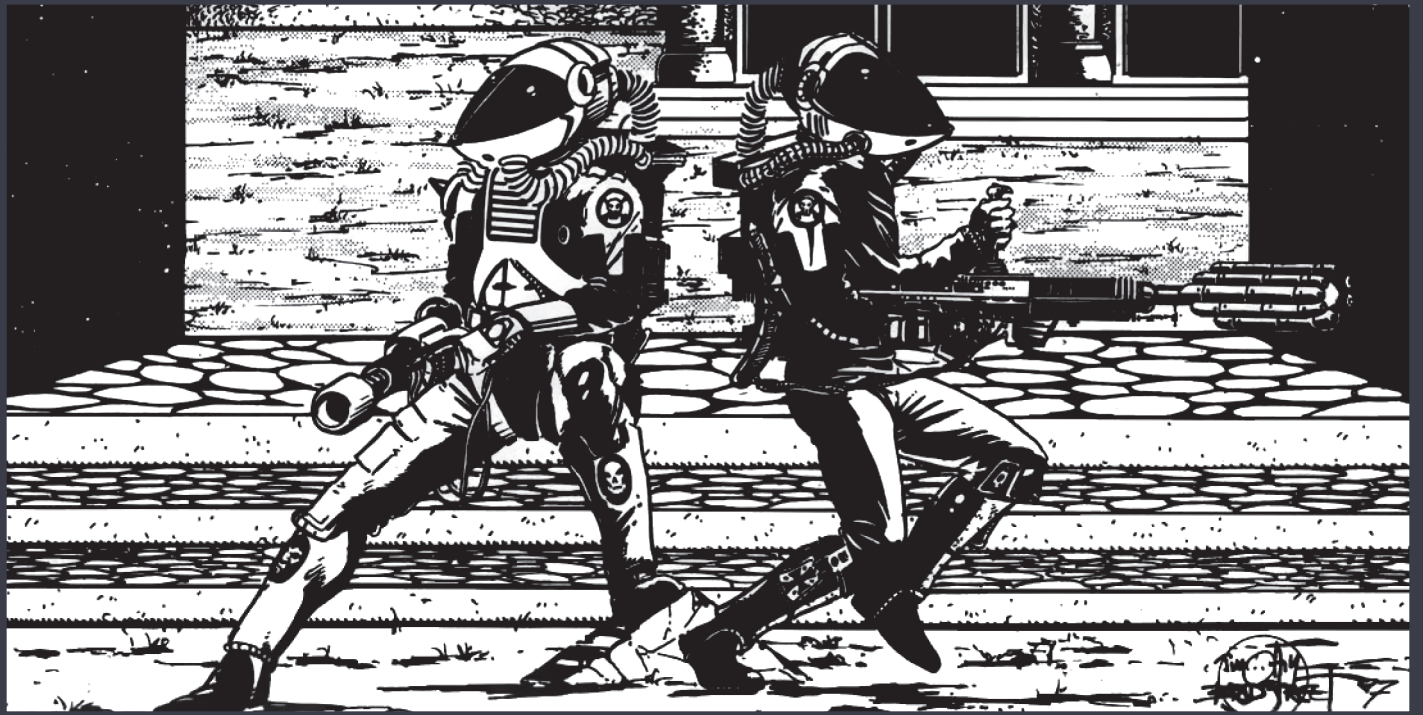
Everybody Wants Something: The potential riches to be gained from raiding the Johnston factories would be irresistible to many different parties, not just the one that hired the players. Before they can abscond with any treasures, the players will have to contend with other scavenging NPC groups. The potential for mayhem and accidental disaster while engaging in combat in a factory setting should keep the players on their toes.

It'll Be Our Little Secret: Johnston Industries is ostensibly a responsible corporation, but who knows just what secret projects they had going on in their Benet facilities? What better place to hide something they didn't want anyone to know about than a crap-hole planet like Benet III? It would be just the players' luck to stumble across some hidden project deep within the bowels of the factory, something that Johnston would do anything to ensure never came to light. Forbidden bioweapons? HPG research to circumvent ComStar's stranglehold? Technological horrors inspired by the hated and feared Manei Domini? Whatever it is, it can't be good.

Tips: It's up to the gamemaster to decide what is left in the abandoned Johnston factories, or even just how abandoned they really are. The chaos of the planetary evacuation can offer a great many wrinkles to this mission. Perhaps the players stumble across a group of citizens hiding out in the factory because they couldn't get to an evac shuttle in time. Do the players help them or continue with their mission? How will the players transport any loot they find away from the factory without alerting whatever authorities remain on planet? What will they do if their employer double-crosses them once they deliver the goods and tries to leave them on a world that will soon be uninhabitable?



A TIME OF WAR ADVENTURE SEEDS



ACTION SCIENCE! *"NERDS, GUNS, POLITICS, AND POISONOUS AIR. WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?"*

Recommended Group Size: 4-6 players

Recommended Group Type: Military, mercenary

Recommended Skill Levels: Green to Veteran (Key Skill levels 1-5)

Increasing seismic activity on Benet over the past several years has been cause for concern among the scientific community. The players are hired to provide protection for an expedition to the Northern Range to investigate the danger to the planet, unaware that there may be a more immediate danger stalking them.

Complications: A few obstacles for players to tackle.

Local Troubles: While the badlands of Sierra are largely uninhabited, there do exist several small communities who live their lives unencumbered by social conformity. These people do not take kindly to any intrusions into their domain and have little fear of any show of force less than a full-on military operation. The meager protection provided to the expedition by the players is certainly not enough to deter attack. Though the players may have a better armed and better-trained force, the natives of the badlands have more experience with the region and a large enough reserve of combatants to balance out any advantages.

Sin After Sin: The purpose of the expedition may be to gain knowledge regarding the planet's troubles, but human nature doesn't take a back seat to scientific progress. Conflicts, whether based on personal or professional friction, have a habit of coming out when least desirable. As security for the expedition, the players may have to deal with the consequences of such interpersonal conflicts. How will they handle it if one of the lead scientists turns up dead in his quarters one night? Who killed him and why?

Cross-Purposes: Not everyone believes in the ecological danger facing Benet III. Some powerful people will stop at nothing to prevent the truth from coming out. The players may have even been approached—as a group or individually—beforehand by agents of these powerful interests with an offer to enrich their own pockets by ensuring that any unwelcome findings made by the expedition never make it back to the public. How will the players handle not knowing whom they can trust, even amongst themselves? Conversely, the expedition's sponsors may have been well aware of the political and corporate opposition to their goals and tasked the players with ferreting out anyone who would try to block the truth from coming out.

Tips: Isolating the players and NPCs in a hostile environment and then throwing complications into the mix can provide some interesting storytelling and roleplaying opportunities. Do not hesitate to make the atmosphere of Benet III into an adversary for the players; as they get deeper and deeper into the badlands the air quality will become increasingly poisonous and their lives will depend upon both their equipment and trust in their comrades.

RULES ANNEX

MAPSHEET TABLES

GAKKEN COUNTY	2D6 Result	Map
	2	Desert Hills (MSC1)
	3	Desert Sinkhole #1 (MSC1)
	4	Box Canyon (MSC2)
	5	City Ruins (MSC1)
	6	Box Canyon (MSC2)
	7	Desert Mountain #1 (MSC1)
	8	Desert Mountain #2 (MSC1)
	9	Deep Canyon #2 (MSC2)
	10	Desert Hills (MSC1)
	11	Rolling Hills #2 (MSC1)
	12	CityTech* (MSC1)

**Place Light and Medium buildings of varying heights in each clear non-paved hex.*

MARQUIS COUNTY	2D6 Result	Map
	2	Rolling Hills #1 (MSC1)
	3	Rolling Hills #2 (MSC1)
	4	Woodland (MSC2)
	5	City Suburbs (MSC2)
	6	River Valley (MSC1)
	7	Rolling Hills #1 (MSC1)
	8	Open Terrain #2 (MSC2)
	9	Open Terrain #1 (MSC2)
	10	BattleTech (MSC1)
	11	River Delta #1 (MSC1)
	12	Rolling Hills #2 (MSC1)

KEHL COUNTY	2D6 Result	Map
	2	Desert Hills (MSC1)
	3	Box Canyon (MSC2)
	4	BattleTech (MSC1)
	5	City Hills Residential #1 (MSC1)
	6	Open Terrain #2 (MSC2)
	7	Open Terrain #1 (MSC1)
	8	Desert Hills (MSC1)
	9	Rolling Hills #1 (MSC1)
	10	Desert Hills (MSC1)
	11	Rolling Hills #2 (MSC1)
	12	CityTech* (MSC1)

**Place Light and Medium buildings of varying heights in each clear non-paved hex.*

DONNER COUNTY	2D6 Result	Map
	2	Rolling Hills #1 (MSC1)
	3	CityTech* (MSC1)
	4	CityTech* (MSC1)
	5	City Street Grid Parks (MSC1)
	6	City Downtown* (MSC2)
	7	Rolling Hills #2 (MSC1)
	8	City Residential* (MSC2)
	9	Rolling Hills #2 (MSC1)
	10	Scattered Woods (MSC1)
	11	Open Terrain #2 (MSC2)
	12	CityTech* (MSC1)

**Place Light and Medium buildings of varying heights in each clear non-paved hex.*

OPTIONAL RULES

The following additional special rules are intended to provide further flavor to games set on the world featured in this supplement. For the most part, these rules may be considered advanced and optional, as they primarily reflect conditions and/or features unique to this one planet or planetary system.

DEATH MISTS

Benet III has become famous for the so-called “Death Mists” that caused the planet’s complete abandonment in the mid-3090s. The atmosphere pre-3094 should be considered Tainted (Poisonous), although the farther one gets from the volcanic peaks in the northern reaches of Gakken County, the more breathable it becomes. Down south, in Marquis County and the Donner Administrative District, the air is breathable without external support, and thus the Tainted atmosphere condition will no longer apply. Player groups operating in the badlands or deeper into Gakken can be subjected to random venting of deadly gasses. So close to the source, these gasses are considered Caustic rather than Poisonous (see p. 56, *TO*) with effects levels that vary from Tainted to Toxic, depending upon the location and time period (as determined by the gamemaster or via random roll).

Post-3094, after the runaway outgassing of Death Mists, all of Benet III’s atmosphere is considered to have a Toxic (Poisonous) atmosphere, with Caustic effects added for any scenarios set within 20 kilometers of a volcano or other gas vent.

The rules for Tainted and Toxic atmospheres are found in *Tactical Operations* (see pp. 56-57, *TO*).

SCREE RAT

The Benetian scree rat, despite its name, is a lizard-like creature quite a bit larger than the average rat. Native to the badlands of central Sierra, this creature is well adapted to life among the region’s rocks and rough terrain. As an ambush predator, the scree rat’s scaly, rock-like skin allows it to hide among the post-glacial talus and await its prey. It is adept at scrambling at great speed across the badlands’ uneven surfaces. Scree rats hunt in packs, and have little fear of humans; many intruders into a scree rat domain have found themselves on the wrong end of a horrifying assault by half a dozen or more these creatures suddenly emerging from cracks in the ground and surrounding rocks.

The scree rat’s resistance to the poison gasses so common in its home territory has made its blood desirable as a folk remedy to treat those who have been exposed to the toxic air. It is believed, however, that not even the scree rat survived the Death Mists.

Mass: 30 kg

STR	BOD	DEX	RFL	INT	WIL	EDG
2	4	3	10	2	4	4

Size Class (Modifier): Small (–1)

BAR (M/B/E/X): Scaly hide 2/2/1/1

Damage (AP/BD): 1M/2

Move (W/R/S): 10/20/40

Traits: Aggressive, Armor (+2), Camouflage (+1), Pack Hunter (6-10), Poison Resistance (+2)

Skills: AniMelee (+2), Climbing (+4), Running (+4)

BENET III TERRAIN

Benet III’s Sierra supercontinent is broadly divided into four counties. The dominant terrain features of these counties are reflected by the various mapsheet tables presented here. Remember that for any scenarios set on Benet III, the planet’s volcanism and geysers create an ever-present hazard of toxic and sometimes caustic chemical taints in the local atmosphere. These effects are covered by the Death Mists rules on this page.

Eruptions: As an added option, scenarios set in the Gakken County region—where the planet’s geology is most unstable—may feature volcanic or chemical eruptions that take place right where the action is. To reflect these effects, the players may consider using the rules for Magma and Hazardous Chemical eruptions found in *Tactical Operations* (see pp. 36-38, and p. 49, *TO*, respectively). The rules for geysers (see p. 48, *TO*), may also prove handy. If the Hazardous Liquid Pools Table is used to randomly determine the severity of a chemical-outgassing eruption, apply a +3 modifier to the 1D6 roll, and treat any modified result of 6 or more as Deadly.

RAPIER FISH

The largest aquatic animal on Benet III, the rapier fish inhabits the warm coastal waters off Marquis County and sport fishing for this creature was a favorite pastime of the rich and well-to-do. Covered in a bony carapace and possessing a thin, sharpened snout for offensive purposes, the rapier fish was a deadly hunter of smaller species but usually was not aggressive towards humans unless provoked. The favorite prey of the rapier fish was the colored kettlefish, which it would spear on its namesake feature and then draw into its mouth using a muscular ridge that undulated along the sides of the spike. Rapier fish rapiers were considered the best tool to use in the popular Benetian sport of spearfishing and a good quality one could fetch high prices on the open market. The status of the rapier fish following the atmospheric catastrophe is unknown.

Mass: 80 kg

STR	BOD	DEX	RFL	INT	WIL	EDG
3	5	5	7	2	2	5

Size Class (Modifier): Medium (0)

BAR (M/B/E/X): Bony carapace 3/2/1/2

Damage (AP/BD): 2M/3

Move (W/R/S): 17/36 (Swimming)

Traits: Armor (+3)

Skills: AniMelee (+3), Swimming (+6)

ATLAS

BOB

(DUNKLEWÄLDERDUNKLERFLÜSSENSCHATTENWELT)

Star Type: M1IV (202 hours)

Position in System: 1 (of 4)

Number of Moons: 1 (Riesenschild)

Days to Jump Point: 2.96

Surface Gravity: 1.1

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Toxic)

Equatorial Temp: 15 °C (Cold-Temperate)

Surface Water: 72 percent

Highest Native Life: Birds

Recharging Station: None

HPG Class: None

Population: 346,000,000 (2765); ca. 956,000 (3130)

Socio-Industrial Levels: C-D-D-D-D (2765);

F-F-C-F-C (3130)

Landmasses (Capital City): Ketznerheimat,

Klüfterlande (Krimhildshausen—2765), Lamarae,

Lunarblessed (Ruprecht—3130)



DUNKLEWÄLDERDUNKLERFLÜSSENSCHATTENWELT (LATER KNOWN AS “BOB”)

Lit only by the dim glow of an M1-class subdwarf star, Dunklewälderdunklerflüssenschattenwelt (later known as “Bob”), was never much of a paradise—at least, not by human standards. First surveyed in the late 2500s, shortly before the Draconis Combine’s entry into the Star League, the world was considered for use as a base of operations against the nearby Outworlds Alliance when the Reunification War broke out. Although the DCMS cancelled those plans, the still-unnamed system was later given a second look during the height of the Star League—this time by Frontiers Unlimited, a “colonial brokerage firm” based in the Lyran Commonwealth. In an operation backed with a number of Combine and Terran developers, FU sent an expedition to the planet to establish its claim, under the leadership of Mission Director Thaddeus Øystein.

Director Øystein and his team made landfall in February of 2689, and finished establishing their initial settlement—Krimhildshausen—by the following April. It was only then that the new colonists announced the name of their new homeworld: Dunklewälderdunkleflüsseschattenwelt. Literally translated (from the corrupted form of German that Mr. Øystein spoke) as “shadow world of dark woods and darker rivers,” Dunklewälderdunkleflüsseschattenwelt was easily the longest world name on record at the time—or since. Indeed, it would even gain an extra “n” when House Kurita incorporated the planet in its own registries as a part of the Draconis Combine’s Galedon Military District.

When challenged about the name, Øystein justified his choice for two solid reasons. The first of these was that the coined name was a perfectly accurate description for the new planet; thanks to a variety of factors, the world existed in a near-continuous state of shadow, with forests and rivers tinged nearly black in casual observation. For the second reason,

the director noted how easy it was to find on a map; where many Star League-era colonies tended to receive short, easy to remember names like Capra and Enif, the thirty-six (or, rather, thirty-seven) letter name he bestowed on Dunklewälderdunkleflüssenschattenwelt stood out on maps like a mountain among ant hills.

Nomenclature aside, Dunklewälderdunkleflüssenschattenwelt’s development was fraught with a number of issues. Although it orbited its parent star within the habitable life zone, possessed a human-friendly gravity and climate (albeit on the colder side), and was blessed with ample water supplies, the planet’s evolution had created some unique complications.

For starters, its subdwarf sun was not only noticeably dimmer and cooler than that of an equivalent main sequence star, but its ultraviolet radiation was significantly higher—a condition the settlers termed “ultraviolet excess.” Although the planet had a sufficient magnetosphere to protect against cosmic rays, its ozone layer was weak against the continuous bombardment of ultraviolet. This resulted in a biosphere that wanted for warmth, but was rich in all manner of plant-life. To adapt to these needs, the flora of the planet developed darker pigmentation to draw in as much heat from the light as possible, while the ultraviolet radiation infused them with energy to spare. Trees on the planet regularly grew to dizzying heights, extending canopies of thick, green-black leaves that virtually blotted out the sunlight along the forest floors, while equally dark algae and aquatic plant life transformed even the shallowest freshwater ponds into inscrutable expanses that could be mistaken for tar pits. Even the planet’s air was tainted by this gloom, as pollens from the abundant plant life created unnatural clouds of organic, green-gray dust on a seasonal basis.

ATLAS

Fortunately for the first settlers, the water and air contaminants could be managed well enough with basic filtration technologies, but the danger of exposure to the ultraviolet excess all but forced them to locate most of their settlements under the shade of Dunklewälder dunkleflüssenschattenwelt's obsidian hyper-sequoias. Human encroachment thus began amid the planet's forests, which soon revealed the existence of several unique predators, including the jet-black, blood-sucking nachzehrers (a native, toothy, bat-like bird named for vampires of ancient Germanic lore), and the shambling valdvicts (a large, ambulatory plant capable of launching barbed vines to stun and ensnare prey).

These alien predators—particularly difficult to handle, thanks to their large numbers and tendency to blend in with the surroundings—were especially dangerous to the colonists' food supplies. Because human biology could not process the majority of the planet's native species, virtually all of the local agriculture and ranching grew dependent on imports. Efforts to create adequately protected havens for transplanted livestock and crops often drew more attention from native fauna, and it was only through carefully coordinated culling programs that Dunklewälder dunkleflüssenschattenwelt's developers gained enough breathing room to grow. In addition to these plant and animal hazards, many of the world's residents suffered from regular bouts of various illnesses and allergic reactions traced to other impurities found throughout the global biosphere. While Star League medicine largely kept these cases in check and lethality was rare, additional mental health issues continued to plague the first generations of settlers—a result of their extended living in a world of such perpetual darkness.

Despite the challenges, Dunklewälder dunkleflüssenschattenwelt persevered, its population growing past 300 million by the 2760s. By this time, House Kurita's leadership had seen fit to establish a permanent garrison base on the planet, ostensibly to keep an eye on the nearby worlds of the Outworlds Alliance and guard transit routes to and from other frontier worlds such as Antallos.

In 2784, after the dissolution of the Star League, General Aleksandr Kerensky and most of the surviving SLDF gathered at New Samarkand in preparation for their final exodus from the Inner Sphere. Alarmed at the sudden military build-up, House Kurita began scrambling its military forces in anticipation of a possible assault by a vengeful Kerensky. Located relatively close to the region, the DCMS garrison on Dunklewälder dunkleflüssenschattenwelt—the Twelfth Dieron Regulars—was among those redeployed.

When the Combine troops failed to return after Kerensky's departure, and news of war with Houses Steiner and Davion came just two years later, Governor Patton MacDonald decided to make several sweeping changes. Some of these common-sense efforts aimed to improve local security and infrastructure, but others focused more on keeping the people distracted in these uncertain times. In 2788—one year before the centennial celebration of the planet's initial settlement—Governor MacDonald announced a global referendum to replace the planet's cumbersome name. On 1 April 2789, amid much fanfare, the votes were tallied and a surprising new name (chosen decisively by the unlikely of grassroots campaigns ever waged in recent history) was found.

From that day forth, Dunklewälder dunkleflüssenschattenwelt became known, simply, as "Bob."



ATLAS

Of course, what nobody imagined happening was the complete collapse of all interstellar travel to the planet once the name change took place. With the DCMS invasion of the Federated Suns well underway, the communiques reported from Bob—delivered by courier ship, as the planet's HPG had failed during the Amaris Crisis years—never found their way to all the necessary officials. The oversight, which would go unnoticed for more than half a century, led to calamity as Dunklewälder dunklerflüssenschattenwelt vanished from the maps, and was replaced by a new world named Bob...

While all shipments earmarked for the planet's very survival still bore the old name.

Worse still, the Combine's growing need for ships to support their war effort stripped away all "non-essential traffic" in the area. Within months of the name change ceremonies, trade to the frontier world had abruptly ceased. With no working HPG station to report in, "Bob" was completely cut off from the interstellar community. Efforts by the MacDonald administration to keep the crisis quiet while they sought a means to get word out before starvation ensued failed. Soon, the cessation of traffic and news from off-world became painfully apparent, creating an economic downturn that went from bad to worse with each passing month. Agricomplexes failed, medical facilities ran out of supplies needed to keep local pathogens in check, and illness became widespread. With no native fuel sources—Bob lacked reasonably accessible native fuel sources, and thus relied heavily on imported fuel, fuel cells and fusion technology—on-world travel across the planet slowed to a crawl, further undermining the local infrastructure.

The rioting began in the fifth year of Bob's isolation. Governor MacDonald started ordering crackdowns, diverting security forces optimally raised to maintain the culling cycles. As the increasingly paranoid and desperate citizens fought back, the populations of nachzehrers and valdvicts rebounded at an alarming rate. Whole cities burned, while outlying towns fell to rampaging predators.

Between the fighting, starvation, and collapse of infrastructure, more than half of Bob's planetary population succumbed over the next ten years. When the last vestiges of the planetary government collapsed entirely in 2805, the various survivor settlements found themselves left to their own devices. By 2815, ComStar survey teams found the world's many cities burned out and abandoned, their streets filled with skeletal remains stripped bare by local predators, while the air and water tested high in a variety of native toxins. Bob—still recognized under its old name of Dunklewälder dunklerflüssenschattenwelt in ComStar's database—was written off as another incidental casualty of the First Succession War.

[Editor's Note: As was the case for many such worlds, however, there were many pockets of human survivors left behind and overlooked by these survey teams. Those on Bob managed to survive in small, scattered communities with varying level of success, while nature overran their abandoned cities and towns—in many cases, literally.]

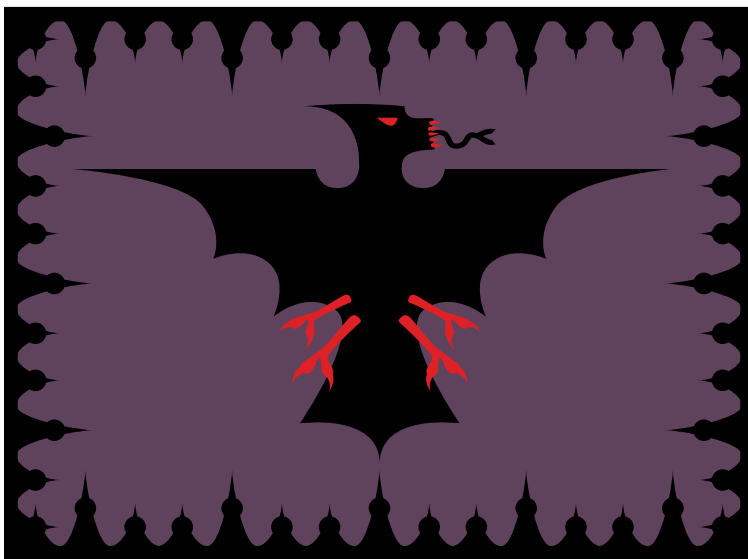
Bob is remarkable not only for the interesting species of flora and fauna that call its dark lands home, but also for the obvious signs of a great cataclysm that clearly befell the planet perhaps as recently as ten thousand years before mankind came along. At some point in the planet's past, its single moon was struck by a large, fast-moving celestial object—possibly another moon, spun off from one of two ice giant planet that occupy the system's outermost orbits.

The impact tore a chunk of Bob's own moon away, sending large hunks of lunar debris into the planet below, creating numerous craters that can still be seen in the geography today. Most of these impacts struck the vast expanse of the planet's largest continent (Ketzerheimat), while a particularly violent strike near the shores the smaller, southern continent of Klüfterlande formed a gulf the locals named Kesselmeer. Volcanism triggered by this particular impact formed a prominent spike of igneous land that rises from the center of this gulf, and was named the Himmelsspitze ("Heaven's Point"). Other evidence of the so-called "Great Lunar Fall" can be seen in the form of island chains created by impact ejecta, and there are even signs of strikes beneath the frozen wastes of the northern Lamarae continent. Indeed, only one major land mass on Bob appears to have been

spared the direct effects of the ancient cataclysm: Lunarblesst—the planet's other southern continent.

[Editor's Note: Because the early surveys suggested that the presence of Bob's moon likely prevented a more direct hit on the planet itself, the surviving remnant was named Riesenschild ("Giant shield") by the Øystein Expedition. Today, with all the major fragments long since fallen to Bob or spun away entirely, only a fine trail of smaller debris follows Riesenschild's progress across the sky, creating an irregular and incomplete dust ring that shares the lunar orbit and makes it appear as if the planet is being perpetually circled by its very own comet.]

It is interesting to note that most of the planet's occupied settlements stand on this landmass today, with the largest township (Ruprecht; population: about 25,000) serving as the closest thing the planet has to a capital city. These people—descendants of the few survivors of the planet's collapse centuries ago—have only a fragmentary knowledge of what followed in the wake of their ancestors' downfall. What they do seem to recall, however, paints a picture of horrors that suggest a



ATLAS



period of barbarism, in which many of the locals turned on one another. Some even claim that tribes of cannibalistic men—called Dunkels by the locals—still linger in the forgotten woodlands of the distant lands, their existence devolved to pre-civilized times. [*Cursory surveys to these regions by reputable explorers have yet to reveal whether any “Dunkel” groups actually survive today, or whether they are spoken of only in the manner that one might use to scare children into good behavior.*]

Reduced to a technological sophistication roughly analogous to Terra’s European region during the nineteenth century, the Bobbies (as they call themselves) have developed a hardy resistance to the planet’s natural toxins that would have made their forefathers envious. While visitors to their world still must rely on filtration technologies to drink the water or breathe the air—especially in the local spring and autumn seasons—today’s Bobbies require no such aid. This might be attributable to a remarkable addition made to the people’s diet: the pulpy “flesh” of the valdvict.

Evidently, this ambulatory floral predator held within its thick hide a secret ability to process the nutrients of its animal kills in a way that could—with some effort—be consumed by humans. Although this “plant meat” is tougher and chewier than cattle jerky (and is still unpalatable and barely digestible to non-natives of this world), the people of Bob have learned to harness this new food source in a way that has enabled them to live on past their own “dark age,” and enter a new age of enlightenment.

Despite their throwback existence, it is clear that the Bobbies never forgot that humanity came from the stars, and the locals still remember childhood tales of a “Great Red Dragon” that once ruled over their world generations past. But they know nothing of the Clans, the Jihad, or the Republic of the Sphere. The Bobbies speak in a language that is mostly English, but mashes in some words of Germanic and Japanese origins, and they retained the basic principles of mechanical and electrical engineering possible for such technological conveniences as artificial lighting, recorded music, printing presses, and indoor plumbing. With a lack of even fossil fuels to work with, however, engine technology on Bob has regressed to steam and hydroelectric power sources. Local literature exists, with many samples clearly transcribed from copies of ancient Star League-era texts, as well as original tales—some of which appear to be romanticized versions of their own half-forgotten past.

Curiously enough, however, there is one word that has been forgotten completely by the people of Bob:

Dunklewälder dunklerflüssenschattenwelt.

A TIME OF WAR ADVENTURE SEEDS

IT SEEMED LIKE SUCH A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME!

Recommended Group Size: 2-4 player characters

Recommended Group Type: Military, Security, Resistance, Survivors

Recommended Skill Levels: Green-Veteran (Key Skill levels of 1-5)

For the people of Dunklewälder dunklerflüssenschattenwelt, April Fool's Day of 2789 was the beginning of a long and grisly end. Governor MacDonald, of course, had no way of knowing that the planet's name change to "Bob" would prove so disastrous, but when he found that his world and its people were suddenly and inexplicably shut off from the very universe, he quickly entered panic mode.

Aware that the cessation of off-world traffic and news would not go unnoticed for long, MacDonald began preparing the various security and police agencies for the inevitable unrest. Stalling for time, he told his fellow "Bobbites" (the original term the rechristened planet's inhabitants gave themselves) an endless series of lies. Local merchant JumpShips, he claimed, had been "temporarily reassigned" or "experienced technical difficulties," while the planet's HPG techs were receiving word "almost daily" from the Kurita leadership, and would be able to restore transmission services to properly report the crisis "any day now."

Meanwhile, MacDonald's administration desperately tried to reestablish some form of contact with the Draconis Combine, the Outworlds Alliance, or even the equally isolated world of Antallos. Planetary communication satellites were turned outward, beaming distress calls into deep space, and several of the planet's resident merchant DropShips were commandeered for "special errands," their skeleton crews tasked with "slow-boating" their way to the nearest star systems—missions that, tragically, would never succeed.

As the people gradually became aware of just how dire the situation was, and that their governor had hidden it for so long, the tensions fueled by years of lies and dwindling supplies reached their boiling point. In the years to come, Bob's entire civilization would plunge into chaos.

Complications: A few obstacles for players to tackle.

The Natives are Restless: Whether assuming the role of security personnel working for the MacDonald government, or citizen agitators struggling with the very real threat of imminent starvation, these will be dangerous times indeed. MacDonald's efforts will aim at restoring calm with minimal bloodshed at first, but when things turn ugly, the fighting will be devastating. Lacking heavy equipment beyond police vehicles, riot control will not happen in the form of unassailable BattleMechs; it will get up close and personal.

Warriors of the Road: Food will not be the only precious commodity drying up as traffic to Bob stops. Every consumable resource, from fuel sources and batteries, to engines, equipment, and ammo will begin to grow scarce. Having not anticipated such a sudden disruption of access to the local trade routes, stockpiles will be non-existent, and it will not take long before the authorities or common survivalists realize their only hope may lie in securing as many of these limited resources for themselves.

Survival of the Fittest: As the months and years go by, and society crumbles entirely, the desperate and increasingly hungry populace will have to consider securing alternative food sources. With few digestible options that do not come at the cost of lingering illness, and carefully tended crops and cattle herds overrun by predators or consumed by other humans, the unthinkable may be necessary to survive.

Tips: For *A Time of War* scenarios, this is going to get nasty. As basic filtration technologies fail, Bob's environment itself will turn on its surviving humans. Illnesses of various types—most side effects of consuming local food, drinking poorly filtered water, or even breathing the air during the planet's spring and autumn months—will grow commonplace. Gamemasters should use the Disease rules (see pp. 245-249, *AToW*) as a guide. Many of the local illnesses are recoverable, but it will take the survivors on Bob several generations to develop enough tolerance to these dangers. It will also be necessary to keep track of any and all consumables the characters use in the aftermath of society's collapse; scavenging and scrounging will be only way to survive in what will quickly become a wild wasteland.



A TIME OF WAR ADVENTURE SEEDS

YOU'RE NOT FROM AROUND HERE, ARE YOU?

Recommended Group Size: 2 to 8 player characters

Recommended Group Type: Pirate, Explorer, Mercenary

Recommended Skill Levels: Veteran (Key Skill levels of 4-6)

The oversight that led to Bob's demise on interstellar maps took over fifty years to come to light. By then, of course, the Succession Wars were in full swing, and both technology and casual travel across the Inner Sphere were in decline. With little to recommend it before the collapse, and a death sentence passed by ComStar after all was said and done, few saw any reason to give the world another look.

Naturally, this made the system a haven for bandits and a destination for explorers. With so much left in ruin, and an environment far from hospitable, visitors never stayed long—though some may have never left, depending on where they landed, how lacking they were in defenses, and who (or what) emerged to greet them.

Welcome to Bob!

Complications: A few obstacles for players to tackle.

The Forest is Alive!?: The dark woodlands of Bob provide shadow for many forgotten settlements, and an ideal place to hide from pursuit for those living a life on the lam. It also tends to protect visitors to the planet from the worst of the sun's ultraviolet excess. Unfortunately, they are also host to a wide array of alien predators, which includes some of the nastiest flora and fauna on the planet. The worst of these are the dreaded valdvicts and nachzehrers. Adapted to blend into their surroundings, or to lurk so high up in the towering foliage as to be effectively out of sight and mind entirely, these creatures often lie in wait, striking at their prey with little to no warning, day or night.

Meet the Locals: Depending on where visitors to Bob set down, they might encounter the planet's remaining human inhabitants. On the continent of Lunarbled, these humans will tend to be the relatively civilized Bobbies, who live a primitive existence similar to Terra at the turn of the twentieth century, and will be rather non-violent—though not necessarily friendly or trusting. The Bobbies see the worlds beyond theirs as people who abandoned them, and thus hold a deep belief that they have no real need for the humanity that rejected them. They will fight if threatened, using rather primitive—but nevertheless effective—weaponry. Visitors who land elsewhere—particularly on the continents of Ketzerheimat and Klüfterlande—will more than likely encounter the barbaric "Dunkel" tribes. These harsh wilderness survivors have regressed to a truly primitive existence, and their language has degraded to the point of near incoherence. Like the Bobbies, they are largely immune to the planet's tainted biosphere, but their diet is often supplemented with human flesh—as much a result of desperation as a remnant of their brutal existence. Dunkles are tight knit and completely untrusting of outsiders; they are as likely to attack as they are to flee, and are capable of laying traps to snare anyone or anything they consider a potential food source.

The Ruins of Fliegerabwehrbataillon: Among the more curious artifacts of Bob's fallen greatness still standing, the ruins of Fliegerabwehrbataillon are located in northern Ketzerheimat, where the planet's largest continent meets the barren, arctic expanses of Lamarae. Judging by the vast expanses of cracked ferrocrete and the nature-overrun towers, Fliegerabwehrbataillon was a large spaceport and military base that dates back to the days when a DCMS garrison called this world home. The surrounding fortifications include a number of ancient, corroded weapon emplacements, and an assortment of bunkers underground have collapsed, flooded, or are now home to unknown surprises. Curiously, a cautious inspection may reveal signs of repeated visits over the last few centuries, including a segment of glassy ferrocrete indicative of fairly recent DropShip landings on the ancient tarmac. The mysteries of who has been coming to visit this ruin—and for what purpose—are excellent fodder for explorers and lostech scavengers alike.

Tips: *A Time of War* gamemasters should read up on the rules for creatures (see pp. 238-244, *AToW*; and pp. 106-119, *AToWC*) to handle encounters between player characters and the local fauna. Consult the Optional Rules for Bob's Flora and Fauna for more information (see p. 12). Likewise, bear in mind that Bob's environment is generally inhospitable for human life. Although its atmosphere is considered Toxic, the fact that most effects are not immediately lethal so much as they are continuously debilitating, consult the appropriate Tainted Atmosphere rules (see p. 238, *AToW* or pp. 56-57, *TO*).

Among the human survivors, the Dunkel peoples possess very primitive, improvised weaponry no more advanced than sticks, stones, and slings, and limited personal armor. Their civilized Bobbie counterparts are better equipped, but still primitive by modern standards. More information on this is also found in the Optional Rules (See p. 12). If fighting either group on the tactical level, the locals will work as conventional infantry; there simply hasn't been much demand for armored vehicles on Bob since the world's collapse.

OPTIONAL RULES

The following additional special rules are intended to provide further flavor to games set on the world featured in this product. For the most part, these rules may be considered advanced and optional, as they primarily reflect conditions and/or features unique to this one planet or planetary system.

BOB'S FLORA AND FAUNA

Bobbian flora and fauna largely reflect and amplify the planet's dark, shadowy nature. Most plant life has a deep green to black coloring, which allows them to draw and retain heat better, while an abundance of ultraviolet light has given them energy to spare, resulting in some truly impressive growth. (The average height of Bobbian trees ranges from 20 to 50 meters, with the native "hyper-sequoias" reaching dizzying heights of 300 meters or more.) Because such gigantic foliage requires extensive root systems and branch spread, however, a typical Bobbian forest actually tends to have enough open land to move vehicles and BattleMechs through unhindered. The tactical gameplay effects of this may be found under Bob's Terrain (see p. 14).

Some of Bob's flora is so energized that it has taken on animalistic qualities. Bob has a number of plant forms that are carnivorous and/or mobile, with attack features that include toxic secretions, "exhaled" poisons, and prehensile limbs. Of these killer plant-animal hybrid forms, the valdvict is arguably Bob's apex predator, capable not only of remarkably fast movement and a kind of thermal "perception," but also a deadly, short-ranged vine grapple attack. Worse still, even when a Bobbian plant form is *not* actively trying to hunt and kill something, the pollen of most Bobbian flora has proven toxic to human beings. Regular seasonal releases of Bobbian pollen—which looks much like blowing ash—can cause outbreaks of various seasonal illnesses and severe allergies. Fortunately, few of these are lethal in nature, but only the natives of Bob have lived on the planet long enough to withstand these ill-effects completely.

The animal forms on Bob include insects of various sizes, fish, some amphibians, reptiles, and toothy, bird-like avians. Most of these creatures mimic the darkness of their environment, largely for camouflage purposes, but also for some degree of heat retention. Of these animal forms, the nachzehrer is the most vicious of the planet's avian predators (but not necessarily the largest). Having long developed an affinity for perching in the high limbs of Bobbian trees, this bat-like creature tends to swoop down on its prey in small flocks that can quickly overwhelm even a human adult in seconds.

BOB'S CHILDREN

The human survivors on Bob are divided into two broad groups: the primitive and tribal Dunkels, and the much more organized and sophisticated Bobbies. Both groups have developed a tolerance to the planet's normally sickening ecosystem, and both may pose a threat to unfamiliar visitors. To reflect this, all natives of Bob who are born or live after 2850 automatically possess the Fit Trait (see p. 117, *AToW*).

Among the Dunkel, personal weaponry consists of nothing more advanced than sticks, stones, slings, and other improvised low-tech weapons—none of which use refined metals in any way. Some Dunkels have developed a kind of personal armor made from flexible bark-hide of the valdvict (BAR 2/2/1/1). Dunkels have no functional knowledge of advanced firearms or heavy equipment, and all are considered illiterate (see p. 119, *AToW*).

The civilized Bobbies have retained a level of industrial technology, but in the absence of economical fuels and full-scale production facilities, most of their equipment is hand-made by dedicated craftsmen. Bobbie weapons typically include bows (including crossbows), steel swords and knives, and basic slug throwers—most of which use simpler technology (represented by Tech Level B equipment in *AToW* Equipment Tables). Bobbies don't often make use of personal armor, but some town guardsmen have been known to wear a kind of locally-produced, valdvict leather-backed chainmail that functions much like a vintage bulletproof vest (BAR 1/3/1/2). Bobbies maintain an economy largely based on barter, but there is also a form of local print currency used as a means of credit.

VALDVICT

The name valdvict—evidently an Anglicized corruption of "Wald Wicht" (or "Forest Wretch")—refers to one of the nastiest predators on Bob...one that is not an animal in the true sense of the word. This ambulatory plant form typically stands anywhere from three to four meters in height, with the bulk of its body resembling the stout trunk of a local hyper-sequoia sapling. Its "feet" are a knotted group of 20 to 30 small, prehensile appendages that resemble thick roots anywhere from 30 to 60 centimeters in length, which enable the creature to move by coiling and uncoiling in concert.

Wrapping around the trunk of the valdvict are a number of leafy vines that otherwise blend in with the creature's flexible brown-black bark skin. These vines descend from a cluster of thicker limbs that spread out from the top of the plant like the branches of any other tree, with an ample number of black-green leaves that gather much of the creature's energy during long dormancy cycles. "Buds" among these limbs and among the creature's root-like "toes" serve as sensory organs that detect the presence and position of nearby water and heat sources.

The valdvict normally remains stationary for long periods, preying only on small creatures that happen by while absorbing water, nutrients, and ultraviolet energy in the same manner as most plants. During this time, the creature tends to bury its root-feet into the soil, and remains largely stock-still for days, weeks, or even months at a time, gathering energy slowly. Indeed, until it attacks (or a dearth of nutrients in the immediate vicinity forces it to move in an effort to stave off its own starvation), valdvicts look and act just like most common plant forms in the universe. Only when the creature has stored enough energy for extended movement will it generally do much more than passively absorb the minerals it needs, sometimes even casually snaring small creatures lured by pheromones excreted from the base of its trunk. As a result of this habit, it is not uncommon for larger animals or people to pass a valdvict many times over a span of several days before finally triggering an attack. Because their senses are more acute at night, most valdvict strikes tend to happen after sunset.

When the valdvict does launch an attack, however, the movement is alarmingly swift. A whip-like twist of the creature's trunk is usually the only warning, giving alert prey only one or two seconds to react. At that point, the creature releases one or more of its dangling vines, each of which can extend as far as five meters in any direction to ensnare and stun its prey. The combination of the vines' impact, and the paralyzing toxins released by rows of retractable, fang-like "thorns" along their length, is typically enough to stun a creature long enough

OPTIONAL RULES

for the valdvict to then move toward it as its vines begin to constrict, further immobilizing the victim. Once a valdvict reaches its prey, it clambers atop the fresh kill's body, and begins to dig its roots back into the surrounding soil, while gradually widening its trunk base to accommodate its meal. It is the crushing and suffocation that results from that which typically kills the valdvict's prey, even as numerous channels in the creature's base begin to absorb the proteins of the hapless animal. Digestion of a valdvict's prey can take hours, but the valdvict usually retains enough energy to move away if it senses danger nearby.

Like most pseudo-animal plant forms, the valdvict appears to have no distinct brain or complex organs to speak of, but its behavior suggests a kind of rudimentary predatory intelligence more complex than other ambulatory plants. Furthermore, much like a tree, valdvicts can survive the loss of several limbs, leaves, vines, and roots before it loses the ability to function. That most of these appendages can be grown back in time means that the most reliable way to truly kill a valdvict is to shatter its trunk (though burning and poisoning the creature can be effective means as well).

STR	BOD	DEX	RFL	INT	WIL	EDG
17	25	1	1	2	0	0

Mass: 320-480 kg

Size Class (Modifier): Large (+1)

BAR (M/B/E/X): 4/4/3/3 (Bark Hide)

Damage (AP/BD): 2M/6*

Move (W/R/S): 4/12/35

Traits: Armor (+4), Camouflage (+2 [E/I/C: 0/0/5]), Exceptional Attack/Constrict, *Exceptional Attack/Whip (base damage on successful attack, plus Poison; Range: 2/4/5/6), Poison (Injected: AP/Strength: 25/6; Duration: 4 turns; Continuous, Subduing), Offensive Adaptation (Retractable Thorns)

Skills: AniMelee (+2), Perception (+2)

NACHZEHRER

Compared to Bob's homicidal plant forms, the nachzehrer is much more easily understood. Named for vampires of ancient Germanic lore, these black-feathered avians look almost like terrestrial bats in their wing and tail shape, and indeed were initially classified as bats, thanks to their behavior and appearance, until closer inspection revealed their feathers, hollow bone structure, and the eggs that they lay in their high-altitude nests.

Unlike most bird species, the nachzehrer does not have a beak, but rather a lamprey-like snout, ringed by sharp teeth that the creature uses to latch onto its prey. Four sharp-taloned feet enable the creature to maintain its grip on the high branches of the Bobbian trees this species calls home, and also helps them capture and restrain smaller victims. As dedicated blood-suckers, nachzehrer favor all manner of land animals, and appear to be just as content feeding off of native fauna as they do humans, even though it is known that human blood is nearly as indigestible to these creatures as most Bobbian fauna is for humans.

The favored tactic of nachzehrer is to hang from the branches of their trees, patiently scanning the grounds below for signs of movement while remaining motionless for hours on end. To maximize



their potential for finding prey, nachzehrer work in flight packs of six or more creatures, often spaced out to cover a wider area. When a suitable victim is sighted, the lead bird typically lets out a short, ultra-high frequency cry that lets its pack know to attack, before beginning its dive. The entire group then converges on the target, each latching onto a different body location to feed.

Because the various ambulatory plant forms on Bob offer no nutritional value to nachzehrer, these bird-bats almost never seem to attack them. Even though nachzehrer are known to be drawn to movement, the species has apparently learned to ignore the motion of the resident foliage—possibly for their own good. After all, it appears certain that creatures like the valdvict don't really care what their prey is when they strike.

STR	BOD	DEX	RFL	INT	WIL	EDG
3	4	5	5	4	6	4

Mass: 2-3 kg

Size Class (Modifier): Very Small (-2)

BAR (M/B/E/X): 1/0/0/0 (Feathered Hide)

Damage (AP/BD): 2M/3

Move (W/R/S): 1/75

Traits: Aggressive, Blood Sucker, Camouflage (+1 [E/I/C: 0/0/3]), Offensive Adaptation (Fangs/Talons), Patient, Night Vision (+3), Pack Hunter (6-10)

Skills: AniMelee (+4), Perception (+6), Stealth (+2), Tracking (+1)

OPTIONAL RULES

GEFERLIXING

For those inclined to think that the only real hazards to life live on land, the geferlixing exists to remind them that even Bob's rivers are unsafe. The name is another Anglicized corruption of the species original Germanic designation—*Gefährliches Ding*—which literally translates to “dangerous thing.” Encountered early on by the first colonial expeditions to the world, the geferlixing was originally identified as a mysterious marine life form of unknown shape, size, and capabilities, because the dark river waters of the planet made visual contact impossible. It thus took nearly five years before the settlers could agree that their “Ding” was, in fact, a long-bodied, fang-mouthed eel.

The geferlixing—available in both saltwater and freshwater varieties, as well as some oceanic versions with truly titanic proportions—nominally feeds on the floating concentrations of pollen-infused seaweed and algae found along the planet's coastal and inland waters. However, these creatures are actually omnivorous, since their diet can also include smaller fish, as well as any other creatures that dare to enter their waters. Like most of Bob's native marine animals, geferlixings do not rely on visual sensory organs to guide them, but use a mix of magnetic and sonographic sensory organs for navigation. As a result, these six-finned eels (the river-dwelling versions of which can measure up to two meters in length) possess no identifiable eyes, and look mostly like a mouthful of teeth connected to a long, oily black tail.

Geferlixings appear to have no fear or sense of scale, which is what truly made them so dangerous to the human settlers. While their normal diet consisted of small morsels of floating detritus and marine life, these creatures often attack any larger land animals that step deeply enough into their watery domains. In most such cases, a geferlixing will swim swiftly toward the intruder, and either latch directly on its feet with its jaws, or simply encircle the legs in an attempt to force its prey to trip. Human survivors of geferlixing attacks have even claimed that these beasts have enough strength to snag and pull an unsuspecting leg or arm, attempting to drag their victims down much the same way terrestrial alligators do when trying to drown larger prey.

STR	BOD	DEX	RFL	INT	WIL	EDG
4	6	4	6	2	6	3

Mass: 31 kg

Size Class (Modifier): Medium (+0)

BAR (M/B/E/X): 1/0/0/0 (Light Scale Hide)

Damage (AP/BD): 2M/3

Move (W/R/S): 12/25

Traits: Aggressive, Blood Rage, Camouflage (+1 [E/I/C: 0/0/3]), Good Hearing (+4), Offensive Adaptation (Fangs/Bite Grip)

Skills: Animal Agility (+3), AniMelee (+4), Perception (+4), Stealth (+2), Swimming (+3)

BOB'S TERRAIN

The terrain on Bob is significantly dominated by massive woodlands, river valleys, and mountains, most of which are tinged with darkness, even when lit by the planet's weak sun. Many of Bob's larger mountain chains, small islands, and coastlines are actually the remnants of the huge craters that formed during a massive catastrophe the early colonists called The Great Lunar Fall.

MAPSHEETS TABLE

WOODLANDS	2d6 Result	Map*
	1	Scattered Woods (MS2, MSC2)
	2	BattleTech (CBT, MS2, MSC1)
	3	Woodland (MS6, MSC2)
	4	River Delta/Drainage Basin #1 (MS4, MSC1)
	5	River Delta/Drainage Basin #2 (MS4, MSC1)
	6	Scattered Woods (MS2, MSC2)

*See rules for additional conditions

Because of the sheer height and size of Bobbian trees, the floor of a typical woodland on Bob is actually quite open. To reflect this, for any scenario set inside a Bobbian woodland, use the Bobbian Woodlands Table presented here, and treat all heavy woods hexes on the map as impassible terrain that blocks line of sight (representing the massive trunks of a Bobbian super-tree). Light Woods hexes on the same mapsheets are treated as Heavy Woods for line of sight and cover purposes, while any Rough/Rubble hexes should be treated as Light Woods. Water features and elevation changes are unmodified under these rules. In addition to this, combat inside a Bobbian woodland is treated as though it is happening under Full Moon Night conditions (see p. 58, *TO*) during the planet's daylight hours. If the battle takes place at night, the effects become those of a Moonless Night instead (see p. 58, *TO*).

Finally, as noted under the Tips for the *You're Not From Around Here* Adventure Seed, treat the atmosphere on Bob as Tainted (see p. 56, *TO*).

BOB'S WATERS

Bob's waters, especially in the rivers and coastal areas, are chronically darkened by a blackish muck thanks to its forests' common black pollen drifts and the various species of marine plant forms that have inherited the same tendency to assume extra-dark green-black colors as their surface analogs. Because of this, little light penetrates the waters' surface, drawing in heat and allowing little of it to escape.

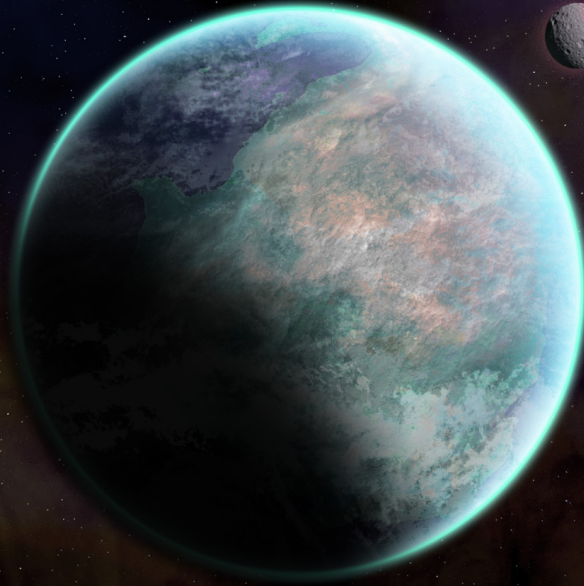
While basic filtration technology can easily make the waters safe and clean enough for drinking and indoor plumbing, moving through rivers or coastal waters can be a unique and hazardous endeavor, especially as there are a number of Bobbian marine species just waiting for unsuspecting surface fauna to intrude upon their bleak realm. The almost tropical warmth of these waters, however, has made many of the planet's inland rivers and lakes an inviting place for the more cold-blooded native species.

To reflect these characteristics, any time a character or unit enters Bobbian waters, it must make a relevant Action Check to avoid falling (a RFL Attribute check for characters, or a Piloting Skill check). To reflect the increased difficulty in seeing and gauging the underwater terrain, all such rolls for entering and moving through the black Bobbian waters must apply a -2 modifier to the dice roll's result. Units or characters that become fully submerged in Bobbian black waters will find the darkness cannot be penetrated by searchlights, and thus must apply all visual modifiers for Pitch Blackness when performing any actions while submerged (see p. 236, *AToW*; or p. 58, *TO*).

ATLAS

BONE-NORMAN

Star Type (Recharge Time): G6V (187 hours)
Position in System: 2 (of 9)
Time to Jump Point: 7.01 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Devil's Pinch)
Surface Gravity: 0.92
Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 24°C (Temperate)
Surface Water: 65%
Recharging Station: None
HPG Class: B
Highest Native Life: Birds
Population: 6,500,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: C-D-D-B-C
Landmasses (Capital City): Hapsburg (Red Stone Palace), Renick



BONE-NORMAN

A stark world on the fringes of the Inner Sphere proper, Bone-Norman's desolate, haunting geography can spook even the most experienced warrior, convincing them that enemies lurk just out of sight and that the planet itself does not want them there.

Selected as a potential breadbasket world for the Rim Worlds Republic, early settlers to Bone-Norman encountered a major obstacle to their colonization effort. The elliptical passage of Bone-Norman's single, unusually dense moon creates powerful tidal forces that, over eons, have radically impacted the planet's two main landmasses: Hapsburg and Renick.

On the large Hapsburg continent, the tides collided with the land's normal drift to force up sharp mountain peaks along the landmass' long, western "leading" edge. These mountains, the Rücken range, stretch three-quarters of the distance from pole to pole. The result is a dramatically rocky littoral zone where the difference between high tide and low tide can be hundreds of meters, overlooked by steep mountains. Ocean winds slam into the Rückens, leaving the windward side of the mountains damp and creating a fierce, frequent Foehn wind phenomenon on the backside of the range. Over time, this warm, dry, fast-moving air scraped all vegetation from the leeward side of the mountains as it rocketed past, and created badlands stretching far to the continent's interior. The winds carved a network of rock formations and caverns across these badlands, and their unnerving, eerie howl through these formations is audible even inside the sealed confines of a BattleMech cockpit. Bone-Norman's people maintain that those on the lee side of the mountains are subject to the ancient *Föhnkrankheit*, or "wind-sickness," with symptoms ranging from migraines to outright psychosis. No serious medical study has ever proven any ill effects, but

most residents of Bone-Norman's interior accept it as a reality and give those from the Rückens a wide berth.

Hapsburg's hilly badlands eventually give way to rolling plains filled with blue grass, and thick stands of forests populated by an odd native tree the locals call werewillows. The Rücken winds lose little of their velocity crossing the plains, and the werewillows evolved to work with their windswept environment. While the trees grow to just eight or nine meters in height, their long limbs stretch nearly thirty meters downwind, supported both by small amounts of lift from the howling winds and by heavy metals drawn up by the trees' roots deep in the soil and spread through every branch and leaf. This rare phenomenon wreaks havoc with most modern sensor equipment, obscuring many types of scans and causing magres imagers to display only large, blotchy masses wherever werewillows grow.

Meanwhile, on the tiny island continent of Renick, severe tides rise high enough that every five years the world's oceans sweep across the entirety of the landmass. When the moon, named Devil's Pinch by the first Rim Worlds explorers, passes near to the world at a certain point during apogee, the moon's influence wanes, and water rushes in to turn much of Renick's rich, arable land into a bayou-like landscape. Despite the periodic flooding the hardy werewillows on Renick still persevere, sinking their roots deep into the bedrock and providing a gloomy canopy over significant portions of the island, but their branches do not grow nearly as long as their Hapsburg cousins.

The first settlers on Bone-Norman eked out a meager existence, lacking the resources to weather Renick's violent tidal shifts and enduring the screeching winds of the mainland as best they could. Among other Rim Worlders, Bone-Normanites earned a reputation for

ATLAS

surliness, attributed by off-worlders to the unending irritation of living in a wind tunnel. As part of the Reunification Treaties, the nascent Star League agreed to provide its know-how and financial backing to help invigorate dozens of worlds, including Bone-Norman. On Renick, the construction of enormous seawalls and waterworks helped calm some of the more volatile tidal areas, and sturdy-stilted habitats delved deep into the planet's bedrock to ensure colonists' safety and comfort. Star League botanists also brought special quick-growing crops, a common approach for those worlds with short farming seasons. Star League engineers could do little to calm the howling gusts of Hapsburg, but economic support jumpstarted a mining industry into the ore-rich Rücken range.

The League's efforts won much of the locals' gratitude on Bone-Norman, and it was likely for that reason that this world's residents largely welcomed Kerensky's SLDF task force when it invaded the Republic during the Amaris Civil War. The planet opened its storehouses to offer the SLDF assistance, but by then those cupboards were largely bare, having been picked clean during the reign of Regent Mohammed Selim. Unfortunately, this loyalty earned little reward for Bone-Norman's residents as the SLDF completed its Republic conquest and turned quickly toward Terra. The new government born of the Rim Republican Army held Bone-Norman in little better regard than Amaris, seeing it only as a typical, semi-productive backwater that best served the nation with continued production.

Archon Robert Steiner II targeted Bone-Norman among the last worlds for invasion during Operation ALMARIC. Depleted in both resources and spirit after a half-decade of uncertainty and conflict, the

world's remaining residents nonetheless mounted a brief but fierce resistance. Their efforts were highlighted by a strike shortly after the invading forces made landfall, during which a small band of local partisans caught a Lyran company unknowingly bivouacking in an ill-advised portion of the turbulent western flood plain on the windward side of the Rückens during a season of rising tides. Hemming in the invaders long enough for the tide to come in, the partisans exulted as the encampment drowned under a rush of water.

That lone victory only drew harsh retribution from the surviving Commonwealth forces, which cracked down on civilian access and rights as special forces operators quickly identified and hunted down those responsible. The resulting public executions at the foot of Red Stone Palace, the planetary defense hub, doused any further resistance. But those harsh acts cemented widespread hatred across Bone-Norman not only against the Commonwealth occupiers, but against General Kerensky for abandoning the former Rim Worlds holding he once promised to protect. When Kerensky's children returned centuries later, the latter animosity easily transferred to the Clans and helped fuel the world's resolve against them.

Under Commonwealth rule, Bone-Norman became a reliable—if somewhat ill-tempered—exporter of luxury foods and ores over the ensuing centuries, valuable for its relatively protected location from both enemy and pirate raids. But the distribution of the Helm Memory Core brought a new industry to this world: biomedical research. Buried within the core were notes by a late Star League-era botanist on possible biomedical discoveries and applications around Bone-Norman's vast intertidal zones. An astonishing variety of life



ATLAS

called these zones home, traveling with the flow of the sea between the dramatic tidal shifts. Arc Royal-based BioHarvest, Inc. was the first to recover these notes, and rushed to establish a presence on the planet in 3031.

By fortunate coincidence, the Grave Walkers, a vaunted mercenary regiment long in House Steiner's employ, had set up operations on nearby Apollo, after they were held out of Operation GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG during the Fourth Succession War. The mercenaries regularly rotated units through Bone-Norman for mountain terrain and amphibious assault training. Through well-conducted political maneuvering and favor-trading, BioHarvest executives successfully secured an ongoing, long-term sub-contract which would place one of the two Grave Walkers regiments on Bone-Norman to watch over their interests. The company hoped to leap years ahead of its competitors with research on the world, but blundered by accidentally transmitting internal correspondence revealing the existence of their facilities. A handful of other biomedical research firms began negotiations to carve out their own fiefs on Bone-Norman, but their efforts were cut short by the coming of the Clans.

The presence of the Grave Walkers served another purpose, one not disclosed to the planet's leaders or its new corporate inhabitants: the field-testing of an advanced early-warning satellite surveillance system developed by the Federated Commonwealth. For this, Bone-Norman offered several distinct advantages: it was far enough away from prying eyes to deter espionage; the Grave Walkers' modern communications technology could effectively simulate that of a Federated Commonwealth line regiment; and the mercenary unit was a trusted command with several centuries' standing, whose silence was ensured. Furthermore, the unusual terrain on both of Bone-Norman's continents would help demonstrate the advantages of early warning and deployment ahead of an enemy assault.

Colonel Dennis Merwin, commanding the First Grave Walkers regiment, expected a test to commence in the first few weeks after the system went online—but the exact timeline for the drill was not shared with his subordinates, so that he could simultaneously test his troops' response time. Rather than a drill, the mercenaries received an all-too-real test when the new system functioned perfectly, and gave them significant notice of the in-system arrival of a strike force calling itself Clan Jade Falcon.

Arriving at Bone-Norman's nadir jump point, Jade Falcon Khan Elias Crichtell and saKhan Timur Malthus tasked Malthus' own Turkina Keshik with the honor of claiming a one-time Rim Worlds holding

and leading the way back into the Inner Sphere. Eager to display the obvious superiority of his Clan against the first Spheroid barbarians they faced, Malthus pushed his bid low. His aggressiveness earned both respect and concern in equal measure from Crichtell, but the senior Khan allowed his subordinate to carry out his attack. Ignoring archived records of Bone-Norman's unusual geography, the confident Malthus planned a headhunting stroke by dropping virtually on top of Red Stone Palace with his Keshik command Star and two Trinaries.

Alerted to the Clan's arrival and what seemed to be suicidally few forces burning toward the planet, Merwin committed an uncharacteristic act of hubris. Rather than simply encapsulate the invaders and demand their surrender, the veteran battle commander opted for a crushing show of force by ambushing them as they landed at Red Stone Palace. Obliterating the interlopers would serve two purposes: the Commonwealth would see that their early-warning system worked; and BioHarvest board members, increasingly uneasy with the funds spent to retain a top-tier mercenary unit on a world that never saw conflict, would see the value of keeping the Grave Walkers on their payroll.

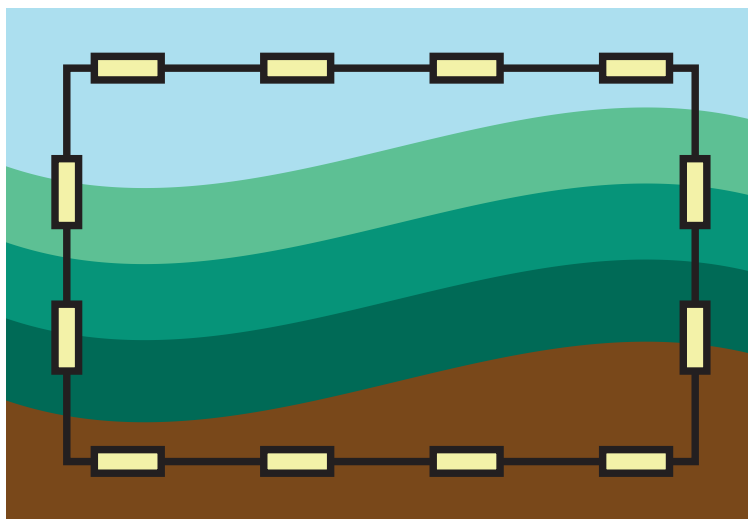
The mercenaries engaged the Falcons shortly after the Clan forces landed, using a pincer movement to cut them off from their DropShip. Though heavily damaged, the Keshik's superior technology spared them from total destruction. The Falcons broke through the Grave Walkers' lines and attempted to regroup in the wind-torn

badlands. The mercenaries reveled in their victory over the mysterious enemy, but Merwin and his senior officers held a more somber tone; reviewing battle footage in their command center, they could see the obvious power of the invading force, and the skill of their MechWarriors. Worse, the early-warning system now showed a robust contingent of reinforcements burning toward the planet.

Overwhelmed by the sudden assault, Malthus had no choice but to call in his previous bid, consisting of the Eighth Falcon Regulars. The haughty warriors of the

Keshik despised the Regulars and their Star Colonel Brikai Buhallin, whose fraternization with freeborn warriors and the lower castes was the subject of frequent Trials of Grievance. But Malthus swallowed his pride, believing that the prospect of being thwarted in his effort to seize a hated Rim Worlds planet—and one of their Clan's first targets—by a band of lucre-warriors was a worse shame.

With the sober realization that the loss of Bone-Norman was now just a matter of time, Merwin shifted strategies to attempt to equip the planet's militia and citizens as best he could, laying the groundwork for a guerilla resistance. The Walkers' deep ties to Bone-



Norman shone through in the way the mercenaries fought and died to buy time for those efforts, and barely two companies survived to board their DropShips. Merwin himself perished just before the unit departed, torn from his cockpit by Elementals while supporting distribution operations at a supply point. Sadly, the surviving Grave Walkers found no relief. As the remaining mercenaries attempted to regroup on Black Earth, they were shattered when the Jade Falcons surged onto that world just two months later. Malthus earned one of the Clan's first victories, but the incident on Bone-Norman did him no favors when he was ousted as saKhan following the disaster on Twycross later that year.

Ignited by the Grave Walkers' heroic sacrifice, Bone-Norman's residents rediscovered their cantankerous streak and staged a bold resistance effort during most of the 3050s. But the planet's distance behind the new Occupation Zone line began to tell in the lack of supplies and support from the Commonwealth. By the early 3060s, little in the way of organized opposition remained. The planet's mines were quickly reopened after the initial invasion, but Clan scientists only haltingly picked up some of the work left behind by BioHarvest, refocusing that research on emergency medicines rather than cures for diseases.

A few short years later, a Clan once again shattered the short-lived peace on Bone-Norman. Clan Ice Hellion targeted the world in its 3071 invasion of the Jade Falcon Occupation Zone, but severely underestimated the difficulties they would face. Facing the Hellion's elite Lithe Kill Keshik, comprising saKhan Conner Rood's 200th Attack Cluster, was the Falcons' Eleventh Provisional Garrison Cluster under the command of Star Colonel Idris. Desperately outgunned, and knowing defeat was inevitable, Idris nevertheless vowed to tie down Rood's forces as long as possible in the hopes of throwing a hitch into the invaders' strategic timetable. To accomplish this, Idris bid a Trial for the planet and chose the entire Hapsburg continent as his Circle of Equals. The choice allowed the Falcon defenders to counter the Hellions' preferred fast-strike tactics by choosing their own engagements and orchestrating ambushes without breaking *zellbrigen* and forfeiting the Trial.

Two frustrating weeks later, the Hellions were forced to expose Rood himself in a series of patrols, an opportunity that the saKhan knew the Falcons could not pass up. Indeed, the Eleventh met the Hellions on the Red Stone Plains, and the ensuing battle led to each side springing a carefully prepared trap. The pragmatic Rood instructed a subordinate to begin a general melee, allowing him to call in an additional Trinary that was not part of his initial bid. Star Colonel Idris in turn unleashed a formation of *Erinyes* ProtoMechs, which nearly succeeded in penetrating Rood's cockpit and severely burned him just a short time before the Hellions claimed victory.

Weeks later, the Jade Falcons returned in the form of the reconstituted Falcon Guards, who had embarked on an independent action to disrupt the Hellions' new holdings. The Guards successfully bid a Trial for the planet and defeated the Hellions' thin garrison within hours of landing, using mobile combined-arms forces to maximum effect and reclaiming Bone-Norman for the Falcons.



A TIME OF WAR ADVENTURE SEEDS

MEDICINE MEN *"THIS LITTLE PLANT HAD BETTER BE WORTH IT..."*

Recommended Group Size: 4-8 player characters

Recommended Group Type: Military, Mercenary, Black Ops

Recommended Skill Levels: Green-Elite (Key Skill levels of 1-8)

If someone has made a breakthrough, someone else is probably going to try to steal it. The players are that someone, sent to Bone-Norman to scoop up a newly discovered plant which may hold the key to curing a disease prevalent across the Inner Sphere—and unlocking handsome profits for the benevolent company offering the cure.

Complications: A few obstacles for players to tackle.

Over the Counter: The research facility housing the find isn't the local corner drug store—it's deep in a marshy bayou, well off any common transportation route. Finding the place deep in the swamp will be hard enough, but accessing the stilt-raised structure will be tricky.

Bat Country: There's a reason medicine from the plant hadn't been approved for human trials yet—the plant continually lets off spores which cause a powerful hallucinogenic reaction. The effects may be mild, for comedic play, or borderline debilitating.

Feed Me, Seymour: There's a better reason medicine from the plant hasn't hit shelves—the plant is rather large and rather hungry. Will subduing the carnivorous flora destroy the cure the players' employers are so eager to market?

Just Here for the Planet: As the players prepare to abscond with their find, an enemy force—possibly the Jade Falcons, or perhaps the Ice Hellions—lands with the intent to seize Bone-Norman. Escaping will require a low profile and some quick decisions.

Tips: Traveling to and from the research facility provides a great opportunity to showcase Renick's gloomy high-tide season, when much of the interior landscape turns into swampy marshes and gloomy bayous. Play up the uncertainty of what lurks beneath the unusual setting.



MANHUNT *"DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING?"*

Recommended Group Size: 3-6 player characters

Recommended Group Type: Any

Recommended Skill Levels: Regular-Veteran (Key Skill levels of 3-6)

A notorious criminal who sought refuge on the fringe of the Inner Sphere is at large in the badlands of Bone-Norman. Wanted by several interstellar authorities for the kind of unspeakable acts that fuel holovid police procedurals for years, the players must venture into the howling winds and retrieve the monster, dead or alive.

Complications: A few obstacles for players to tackle.

Watch Your Step: The felon knows the players are coming and has left some lethal surprises to discourage their pursuit. The traps may be fully lethal, or may only injure group members, allowing the killer to draw out his fun.

Failure to Communicate: The winds tearing off the mountainsides make normal conversation outside very difficult, and dampen most sounds—including human screams.

Dead or Alive: The criminal has no intention of submitting peacefully, and as he fled, obtained enough devices and gear to ensure that his last stand will be a bloody affair for anyone pursuing him.

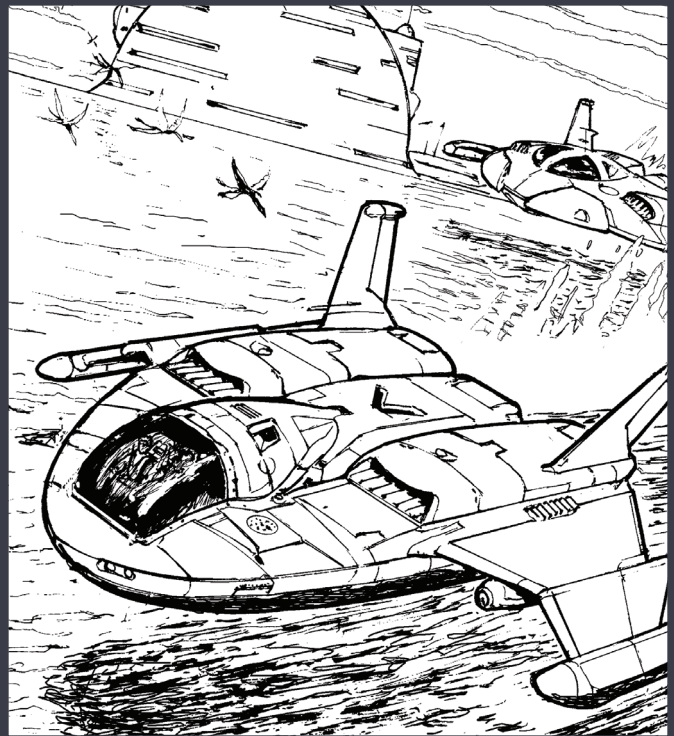
Tips: Bone-Norman's landscape is stark and foreboding, both in the murky werewillow forests of the interior, and the winding caverns of the badlands. The players should never know what's around the next corner as they hunt their quarry amid the eerie, shrieking winds.

RULES ANNEX

MAPSHEETS TABLES

HAPSBURG	2d6 Result	Map
	2	Mountain Lake (MS2, MSC1)
	3	Desert Mountain #1 (MS3, MSC1)
	4	Desert Mountain #2 (MS3, MSC1)
	5	Desert Sinkhole #1 (MS3, MSC1)
	6	Rolling Hills #1 (MS3, MSC1)
	7	Scattered Woods (MS2, MSC1)
	8	Rolling Hills #2 (MS3, MSC1)
	9	Desert Sinkhole #2 (MS4, MSC1)
	10	Desert Hills (CBT, MS2, MSC1)
	11	Heavy Forest #2 (MS4, MSC1)
	12	Woodland (MS4, MSC1)

RENICK	2d6 Result	Map
	2	BattleTech (MS3, MSC1)
	3	Rolling Hills #1 (MS3, MSC1)
	4	Archipelago #2 (MS7)
	5	River Delta/Drainage #2 (MS4, MSC1)
	6	Lake Area (MS2, MSC1)
	7	Large Lakes #2 (MS4, MSC1)
	8	Coast #1 (MS7)
	9	River Delta/Drainage #1 (MS4, MSC1)
	10	Archipelago #2 (MS7)
	11	Rolling Hills #2 (MS3, MSC1)
	12	Woodland (MS6, MSC2)



OPTIONAL RULES

The following additional special rules are intended to provide further flavor to games set on the world featured in this supplement. For the most part, these rules may be considered advanced and optional, as they primarily reflect conditions and/or features unique to this one planet or planetary system.

TERRAIN AND WEATHER

Bone-Norman's inhabited areas feature harsh terrain and weather that can starkly vary with the phases of the moon. The Mapsheets Tables presented here reflect the nature of Bone-Norman's dominant terrain based on which continent the scenario is set. For scenarios taking place on Hapsburg, the Hapsburg Mapsheets Table reflects the rocky and windswept expanses of the supercontinent. Scenarios set on the island continent of Renick should use the Renick Mapsheets Table instead.

Werewillows: To reflect the sensor-scattering effect caused by the unique high-metal content of Bone-Norman's werewillow trees, treat all woods hexes on Bone-Norman mapsheets as one level of extra density for line of sight purposes. (E.g. Light Woods hexes affect LoS as Heavy Woods; Heavy Woods hexes affect LoS as Ultra-Heavy Woods.) Werewillow trees do not change movement purposes, however. Thus, a single light woods hex of werewillows will impose a +2 to-hit modifier for attacks that enter or pass through them, but will only cost +1 MP to enter or pass through. Additionally, each hex of werewillows also produces ECM effects identical to those of a Guardian ECM Suite, applicable only to attacks or sensor checks that trace a LoS through the wooded hex.

Thanks to the bayou-like conditions of Renick, the werewillows there grow much closer together than their Hapsburg cousins. Hidden Units (see p. 259, *TW*) in an Renick werewillow hex can remain hidden until an enemy unit moves to an adjacent hex.

Weather: Hapsburg is constantly punished by howling winds, especially near the extensive Rücken mountain range, so scenarios taking place there may make use of Wind effects (see p. 61, *TO*). To determine the strength of these effects, the gamemaster should roll 1D6 prior to the start of the scenario, and consult the Hapsburg Weather column of the Bone-Norman Weather Table.

For scenarios set on the Renick island continent, where flooding is a more pertinent issue, the same pre-scenario roll determines the extent of flooding that takes place. In cases of Light Flooding, all non-water map hexes adjacent to water of any depth must be treated as Mud (see p. 50, *TO*). Moderate Flooding transforms the underlying terrain of all land hexes into Swamp terrain (see p. 51, *TO*). Under Heavy Flooding, the map is so inundated with water that all Level 0 terrain is treated as though it were immersed in Depth 1 water, while all water features and other terrain hexes with a Depth of 1 or more are increased by 1 level of water Depth. Only terrain features of Level 1 and higher are treated as being above the water in Heavy Flooding conditions.

BONE-NORMAN WEATHER EFFECTS

D6 Result	Hapsburg Weather	Renick Flooding
1	No Wind	No Flooding
2	No Wind	No Flooding
3	Light Gale	Light Flooding
4	Moderate Gale	Light Flooding
5	Strong Gale	Moderate Flooding
6	Storm	Heavy Flooding

NUDIBS

Related to the sea swallow of Terra, these soft-bodied mollusks live in the vast tidal pools along the continental coastline created by the tides of Bone-Norman. Nudibs cling to the surface of the pools by sucking air into a gas sac, and expel the air to drop down onto their prey. As long as a man's forearm, the Bone-Norman nudib has developed a potent poisonous sting which can prove dangerous to humans—moreso because nudibs are often found in colonies across large pools. Swept into the pools by the rising tide, many of the mollusks are often left behind when the tide retreats and the pools begin drying out.

Mass: 2-4 kg

STR	BOD	DEX	RFL	INT	WIL	EDG
2	1	1	1	2	1	1

Size Class (Modifier): Small (-1)

BAR (M/B/E/X): Normal 0/0/0/0

Damage (AP/BD): 1M/1

Move (W/R/S): 0.5/—/—

Traits: Poisonous (Sting: [Contact; AP/Strength, 1S/1D, Duration: 1 turn]), Skittish

Skills: AniMelee (+0), Swimming (+1)

CAIMONSTOS

Legends of enormous reptiles lurking deep in swamplands date back to the bayous of old Terra, but on Bone-Norman, they are very much a reality. Drawing their name from a crude portmanteau of "monstrous Caiman," the caimonstos make their home in the flooded interior of Renick during the wet season. Growing to nearly ten meters in length, the flat-nosed reptiles grow quickly and are notoriously aggressive thanks to a rather short lifespan. As the retreating tide inexorably shrinks their swampy habitat, caimonstos turn on each other in an orgy of violence, until only a few of the largest, meanest specimens remain in the small bayous which remain wet year-round, burying themselves in the mud to await the next high tide, and their next meal.

Mass: 1,800-2,200 kg (adult)

STR	BOD	DEX	RFL	INT	WIL	EDG
38	35	3	6	3	5	2

Size Class (Modifier): Very Large (+3)

BAR (M/B/E/X): Scaly hide 2/2/1/1

Damage (AP/BD): 1M/4

Move (W/R/S): 5/10/15 (land)

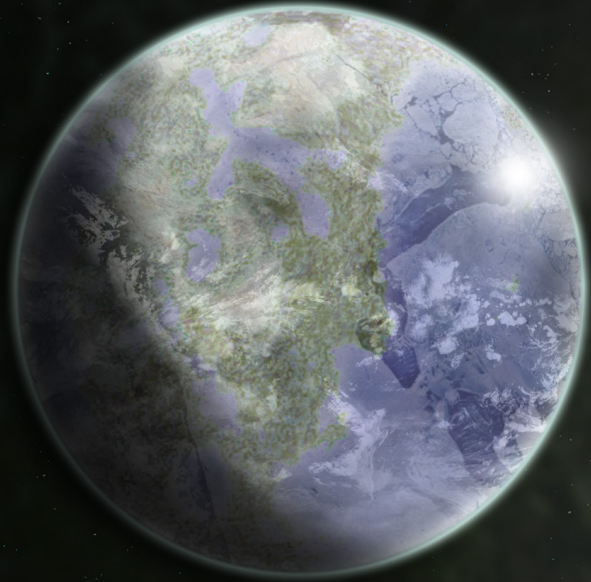
Traits: Aggressive, Armor (+2), Cold-Blooded, Patient

Skills: AniMelee (+4), Perception (+2), Stealth (+3), Swimming (+2)

ATLAS

LONE STAR

Star Type (Recharge Time): M1V (202 hours)
Position in System: 5 (of 12)
Time to Jump Point: 2.96 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Vespa) (2450–2825);
None (after 2825)
Surface Gravity: 0.8
Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 22°C (Arid, before 2800);
–5°C (Arid, after 2822);
Surface Water: 40%
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir (before 2780);
None (after 2780)
HPG Class: A (before 2780); None (after 2780)
Highest Native Life: None
Population: 573,000,000 (2780); 25,000,000 (2822);
None (3150)
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-A-A-A-A (2780);
C-D-C-D-D (2822); N/A (3150)
Landmasses (Capital City): The Belt (Volgadon)



LONE STAR

Owing to its 120-year terraforming process, Lone Star was one of the last worlds settled within the Terran Hegemony. As a terraforming subject, Lone Star was especially challenging. Located well beyond its primary's conventional life zone, the planet was desperately cold, much like Mars in the Terran home system. Its atmosphere was thin and nitrogenous, with its modest water reserves entirely locked up in sheets of polar ice. Yet, despite the difficulties in establishing and maintaining a habitable climate, Lone Star was finally declared open for settlement in 2533. Part of the planetary terraforming effort even required moving a local asteroid (Vespa) into orbit to host a skyhook and mines.

The success of Lone Star's transformation was a matter of national pride. It also resolved some political issues in creating a new provincial capital world without the "baggage" of the much-older colony systems around it. By 2600, its population was in the hundreds of millions; its local industry was burgeoning, thanks to tax breaks and cheaper land than most of the Hegemony; and its agricultural sector was exporting a wide range of luxury foods.

Lone Star's land is concentrated in an unusual belt of continents that follow the prime meridian around the poles. These five linked landmasses all had formal names in the system's early settlement days, but the residents obstinately came to refer to the unbroken expanses as simply "The Belt." In its terraformed heydays, most of the world's free water came to be concentrated in two roughly circular, highly saline oceans (known to the locals as "Big Pond" and "Other Pond"), respectively situated almost antipodal to each other in the eastern and western hemispheres. The abundance of polar land, and Lone Star's low axial tilt, produced large ice caps

that came to serve as its settlers' principal source of fresh water. The large continental interiors, meanwhile, were hyper-arid, with terrain varieties spanning the gamut of deserts found all across the Inner Sphere: hot ergs, chilled rocky plains, saline wastes, dry mountains, and more. Today, of course, these continents and oceans are mostly covered in ice.

Before its fall, Lone Star had some regions with very pleasant climates and its populations largely concentrated in those areas. In 2765, the planet's 573 million residents lived in nine major metropolitan regions. Eight of these dense metropolises (collectively called "The Pond Cities") were located along the northern and southern temperate-zone coasts of the Ponds, with four cities per ocean. Those regions boasted temperatures moderated by the oceans and fed by abundant freshwater, either collected from ocean-driven precipitation or supplied by the polar meltwater rivers.

The preplanned Pond Cities were compact for their populations, an arrangement driven by land-price analyses by Lone Star's development corporations: dense urban areas saw faster price growth than typical colonial sprawls across low-cost rural lands. To maximize their economic and political power, the first planetary government used its zoning powers to bottle up its settlers and their descendants in the Pond Cities. By 2765, each of these cities claimed over fifty million residents in its soaring skyscrapers and arcologies. Yet, despite some off-world depictions, individual accommodations were spacious. Multi-tiered transit systems of buses, trains (both underground and elevated), and VTOLs provided reasonably swift movement for the huge populations. There were no suburban sprawls around the cities; they transitioned immediately to nature preserves and farm fields.

ATLAS

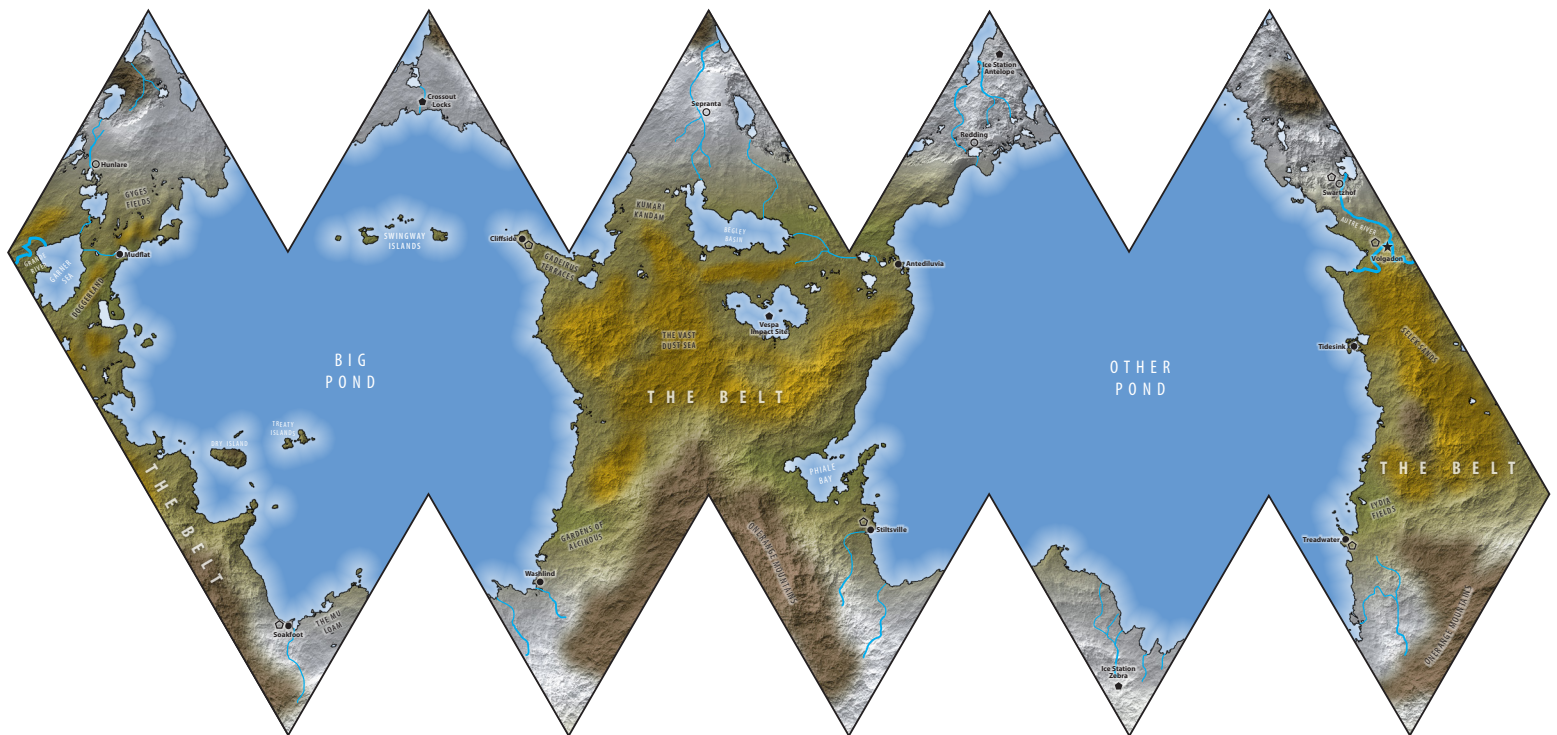
All eight Pond Cities were also unusual in layout thanks to the enormous tides generated by Lone Star's sun. These swells could often rise more than twenty times as high as those of Terra's lunar tides; although the pull of the system's fourth planet had prevented tidal locking, Lone Star had a rotational cycle fifty-six hours long, and thus possessed slow tides. For coastal cities, this prompted several adaptations. Four of the Pond Cities sat on natural and manmade highlands along the coasts. Among them, the city Cliffside on Big Pond frequently won architectural awards for the dramatic arcologies it built along its granite cliffs. By comparison, three other cities favored columns and pilings that enabled them to rise above their estuaries and tidal flats. The cunningly named Stiltsville on Other Pond made a point of incorporating its massive pilings into its architecture, rather than trying to hide them as simple foundations—a feat that inspired the brutalist “Big Iron” architectural style that became popular in the mid-twenty-seventh century. Finally, the Pond City of Mudflat took a more confrontational approach, pitting the Hegemony's engineering against nature by expanding into the tidal zones with sealed buildings, dykes, and “amphibious infrastructure” designed to either survive or prevent daily submersion. It was normal for dykes to be made of ferroglass, so residents could stroll beside transparent walls of high tide water, while the sealed lower floors of buildings would continue normal business as fish swam outside their windows. Lone Star's dramatic tides even served its electrical needs, providing a lower-cost alternative to fusion power.

Inland from the surging seas, the Pond Cities grew crops in abundance, supporting herds of free-ranging farm animals that

give “Loners” (as the planet's inhabitants referred to themselves) a meat- and dairy-rich diet unknown on less fortunate worlds. With no native ecosystem to protect and rich soil produced as a byproduct of terraforming, Lone Star's agricultural sector cultivated a complicated mix of plants and animals originally imported from many worlds across the Hegemony.

Lone Star's ninth metropolis was its capital city, Volgaddon, situated at a narrow point in The Belt within the planet's northeastern quadrant. Volgaddon straddled a low continental divide between the two major polar rivers (Grande and Autre) that drained to Big Pond and Other Pond, respectively. The city was built around a large, elaborate canal-and-lock system that linked Grande and Autre, effectively tethering the two oceans together. Despite having much less water coverage than Terra, Lone Star was highly dependent on inexpensive water transport because of its cities' concentration around the Ponds. Volgaddon's canals thus provided a final, critical link to global trade. Predictably, the savage fighting between Stefan Amaris and SLDF forces destroyed these canals, which would not be repaired until 2783.

Volgaddon was an oasis on The Belt, but grew little food for itself. About once every eight weeks, Lone Star's sixty-day year and axial tilt warmed the north pole, which caused cold, humid winds to roll off the northern icecap and across the deserts, delivering fierce, days-long dust storms to the region. Lone Star's slow rotation did little to deflect the southern march of these storms. This plant-suffocating, ultra-fine halide dust made it impossible for local farmers to compete effectively with their Pond City counterparts, who did not need greenhouses and dust canopies. Thus, the capital's economy was dominated by its public



ATLAS

sector, electricity production (cascades of dams on the two watersheds produced abundant power), and tourism on the manmade, tide-free lakes behind the dams.

While Lone Star's population lived primarily in the urban zones, there were other cities and towns scattered elsewhere. These much-smaller cities included the likes of mining cities, such as Swartzhof (which was destroyed during the SLDF's liberation effort).

One of the advantages that made Lone Star an agricultural exporter and regional capital for the Hegemony was its short transit time. DropShips could reach the planet, exchange cargos, and return to the jump point all within the span of a conventional JumpShip's recharge period. Because the local sun was relatively dim, clusters of recharge stations were constructed just inside the proximity limits of the zenith and nadir points and—prior to the Amaris Coup—were home to Star League Navy's Second Star Squadron. These facilities, further protected by the system's SDS network, became primary targets for the SLDF during its liberation campaign. Lone Star was never able to afford to replace the stations before its final environmental collapse.

The short transit distance and least-inflated land prices of the Hegemony also made Lone Star a favored site for export-oriented manufacturing. By the Star League Civil War, Loners were making a wide range of "background" components (from computer parts to myomers) used in many other industries across the Star League. The planet's business community was particularly adept at securing contracts for the Territorial States of the Periphery. Lobbying the small, oft-overlooked Star League offices that managed Periphery affairs could get new restrictions placed on the Canopian, Concordat, or Outworlds production of certain high-tech goods deemed "disruptive or insightful of secessionism." With an inside track on such upcoming restrictions, Lone Star's manufacturers would position themselves to become the primary suppliers for those goods. A wide range of vital technologies from fusion reactors and JumpShip drive controllers to computers, medical scanners, and so forth, were built on Lone Star for Periphery export. While this practice was not limited to Lone Star, this world did excel at it; the Periphery realms did not appreciate being so "economically enslaved" to slipshod factories six months and more away from their borders, but had little option.

While Lone Star's civilian population started with a weak majority in favor of Stefan Amaris' reign, the new, Director-General of the Hegemony enjoyed only the most fragile grip on this opinion. The use of terrorist bombings and chemical attacks to eliminate SLDF forces and loyalist militia regiments left Loners wary of the new regime, and some even formed resistance cells. When Kerensky finally liberated the planet in a campaign that ran from 2772 to 2774, each of the Pond Cities

had suffered at least one WMD attacks. With most of its agricultural zones suffering damage from biological weaponry, and roughly three-quarters of its herd animals killed off, Lone Star's agricultural output was as devastated as its cities' once-vast manufacturing districts. Worse yet, the quick battle to seize Vespa wrecked the station-keeping drives it used to maintain the asteroid-moon's orbit against the tidal influences of the sun and Lone Star IV.

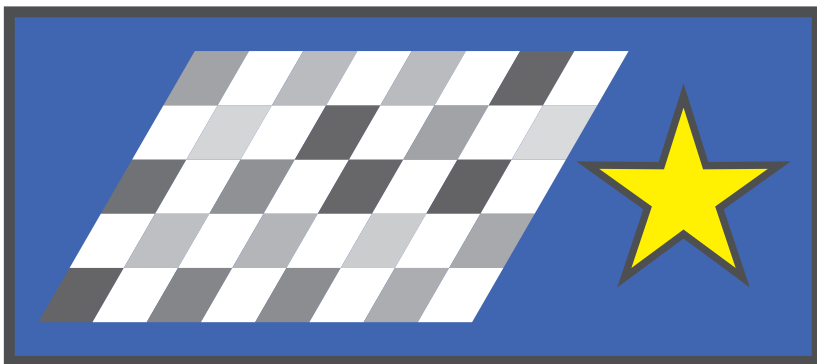
In the thirteen years since its liberation and the onset of the First Succession War, Lone Star made little progress toward recovery. Not only had it suffered severe damage to its industry and cities, its

planetary government was a wreck, and tens of millions of wartime refugees struggled to survive without even the most basic support. Like many Hegemony worlds, Lone Star's people violently threw from office anyone who had served in government during Amaris' rule, and the SLDF proved unable to spare any personnel to manage the world's day-to-day affairs.

Private businesses and House troops were able to re-establish some basic services and security in the absence of government interference, but with the lack of regulation, even these efforts were hindered by corruption and price-gouging.

The post-Amaris government of the Terran Hegemony only made matters worse for Lone Star. In attempting to coordinate the recovery of its war-torn worlds, the crumbling interstellar bureaucracy often managed only to completely deprive vital resources to some planets in vain, misdirected efforts to meet the needs of others. Like many, the people of Lone Star were agast when General Kerensky launched his Exodus. However, it followed the lead of nearby Inglesmond in eschewing Hegemony-wide needs over those of its regional community. The Lone Star Province would rebuild itself—hopefully deterring the adventurous Houses at the same time—and then aid its fellow Hegemony remnants. This plan might have worked had the First Succession War been longer in coming, and far less devastating in scope.

After several initial defeats at the hands of Hegemony militias in the Lone Star Province, the Houses took different approaches in their efforts to annex the area. For the Lyran Commonwealth, this meant stepping up its diplomacy with worlds suffering from Combine raiders. For the Draconis Combine, it meant "taking off the kid gloves" by destroying the shipyards at nearby Inglesmond. Lone Star itself did not escape the Dragon, either. Kuritan agents released bioweapons on the planet's polar ice caps, which specifically targeted the specially engineered flora and algae that made it possible for terrestrial life to survive and thrive on the planet. These toxins in turn spread toward the interior reaches via the bimonthly dust storms. Without directly killing a single Loner in battle, the so-called "Dragon Plague" thus undermined the world's



ATLAS

artificial ecosystem. The plague took a couple of terrestrial years to run its course, during which time Lone Star's populace concentrated all possible efforts on preserving the plants that helped maintain Lone Star's environment. So engaged by this effort, the planetary government could only surrender when DCMS forces finally threatened a full invasion in 2789. As a "reward" for this bloodless capitulation, the Combine provided several atmospheric processors to the Loners, most of which were destined for the surviving Pond Cities.

House Kurita found little of value in Lone Star beyond the glory of conquering another Hegemony world. Having been ravaged so badly in the Civil War, the local industries could produce little of strategic value for the Combine's war machine and so the planet received little protection from the military that only recently threatened to force itself upon it. Because of this, Lone Star suffered a devastating blow when Lyran raiders destroyed the still-incomplete atmospheric processors in 2803. The terraformed environment began an irrevocable slide back into its frigid, pre-human state as the artificially-maintained greenhouse effect collapsed, and the population dwindled as a two-decade exodus followed. Within a few years, virtually all local agriculture (using plague-resistant crops) ground to a halt, and the

millions who had yet to evacuate began starving to death. By 2822, Lone Star's population was less than four percent of its pre-Amaris levels. ComStar, which had never managed to re-establish HPG services on the destitute world, wrote the world off its maps in 2824.

As if death by starvation were not enough, one last tragedy remained to befall Lone Star: Vespa was going to hit the planet. Without the giant station-keeping drives that kept the tiny moon in a stable orbit, its orbit became increasingly eccentric. In 2825, the fifteen-kilometer asteroid struck the surface with an impact greater than the "dino-killing" Chicxulub impact on ancient Terra. Although none of the planet's major population centers was directly hit by Vespa's fall, the aftermath effectively destroyed what little of the global environment that could have been salvaged.

Today, unlike some other cases of failed terraforming, Lone Star retains a breathable atmosphere. Minerals in the crust are only slowly binding atmospheric oxygen at a rate of about one percent per millennium. However, it is a desperately cold world where the only surviving life are microbes at seafloor volcanic vents. Combine salvagers looted anything of value in the Second Succession War. Since then, only climatologists visit, and then infrequently.



A TIME OF WAR ADVENTURE SEEDS

WHAT A PLEASANT BREEZE

Recommended Group Size: 2-4 player characters

Recommended Group Type: Military

Recommended Skill Levels: Green-Elite (Key Skill levels of 2-8)

North of the capital city, on the banks of the Autre River, is Swartzhof, a city of 75,000 that has grown up in a district with a complicated geological history. In the district, ancient plumes of mantle-type rocks have intrusions of later, completely different volcanic deposits. The volcanism is a billion years dead, but it left behind a mineral cornucopia. Mining operations based in Swartzhof yield chromium, nickel, manganese, copper, gold, platinum, and related metals. Because free oxygen is new to the world, the deposits are not heavily weathered and easy to process into metals. (Some of the original settlers wanted to name the city "New South Africa," but the majority preferred to name it after an internationally famous pornography and action holovid star, Amelia Swartzhof, who was born in the district.)

Excellent transportation systems supported Swartzhof's enormous mining operations, including a large seaport on the river. With navigational improvements, Autre was an aquatic highway that could deliver 100,000-ton freighters to the capital of Volgadon and its lock system, which led to either ocean. There was also a large spaceport at Swartzhof, through which the city imported titanic mining machines and exported its mineral wealth. As a bonus, the local weather was often pleasant: cool, sunny, very dry, and often with a northerly breeze.

Despite the city's status as a mining and industrial hub, Swartzhof was strategically unimportant to planetary defense. Combined with the virtual absence of other population centers for two hundred kilometers in every direction, an invader could conceivably seize the area for nearly a year before the factories of the Pond Cities began to notice any shortfall of metals.

In 2772, the SLDF thought all of these conditions made Swartzhof a perfect beachhead for the world's liberation. But for the Amaris Empire's garrison troops, Swartzhof's isolation meant they could attack the assault force without restraint.

Complications: A few obstacles for players to tackle.

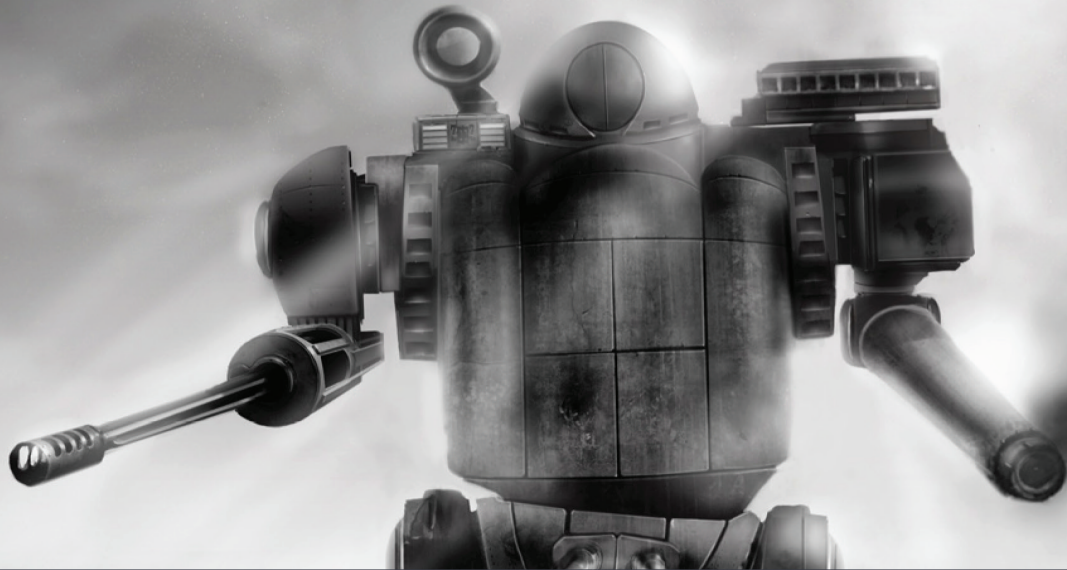
Look What I Can Do: In all the excitement at Swartzhof, the planet thought it would be a good idea to show its new visitors one of its famous dust storms. Only this one proved to be a once-in-a-century storm that would last for days. BattleMechs, aerospace fighters, and characters on the streets alike will have trouble seeing more than thirty meters. Historically, this drove Amaris' forces to blanket the city with bombs in hopes of catching some of the invisible SLDF invaders, but it is an opportunity for both sides to exploit.

Unexpected Guests: For most of the three days the 2772 dust storm raged at Swartzhof, both sides were prone to blundering into each other. Civilian sympathizers on both sides took to using the local communication network to report troop movements for their favored side, while opposing scouts often called in BattleMech, aerospace, or orbital fire support.

Tips: For *A Time of War* scenarios, this is an excellent opportunity to use respirators and look into the rules on illnesses and poisons (see pp. 245-249, *AToW*) to represent the "brown lung" effect of breathing in Lone Star's halide dust. *Total Warfare* and *Alpha Strike* combat scenarios should refer to the rules for Lone Star's dust storms on p. 12.



A TIME OF WAR ADVENTURE SEEDS



WHO WANTS TO TELL THE COORDINATOR?

Recommended Group Size: 2-8 player characters

Recommended Group Type: Military, Scientists

Recommended Skill Levels: Regular-Veteran (Key Skill levels of 2-6)

After diplomacy failed, the Houses began resorting to strong-arm tactics to annex worlds from the incapacitated Hegemony. This, among many other actions, eventually avalanched into the First Succession War. While common historical treatises on the First War focus on the titanic battles between the five House armies that ravaged the worlds of the former Hegemony, the truth was that there was a sixth combatant in the First Succession War: the Terran Hegemony itself.

The Hegemony never truly recovered from the Star League Civil War, in part because of widespread policies that banned anyone who served in government under Amaris' reign from serving in government post-Amaris. This prevented almost everyone with useful bureaucratic experience—from local governors to meter maids—from effectively doing their jobs. Their replacements were war-scarred, ideological novices who faced the nigh-impossible job of rebuilding a shattered realm while surrounded by enemies on all sides. These leaders did such a poor job that, in many cases, Hegemony worlds eventually came to welcome an allegiance with a neighboring House, or joined such realms after brief negotiations. Some planets, though, could not countenance a partnership with the avaricious Successor States, and so continued to try rebuilding themselves and their fallen Hegemony until they were forced to surrender at gunpoint.

Lone Star was one of the Hegemony loyalists. It attempted to form a coherent interstellar alliance with other Lone Star district worlds, though its poverty, shattered industry, and bumbling planetary government meant it could contribute little to the regional community. Nevertheless, when the Combine did arrive, its militia fought, and even managed to repulse the first raid.

If there was a little more time to expand the militia, or a little more success getting the world back on its feet, or planetary security had caught the Combine saboteurs dispersing bioagents on the ice caps, then history might have played out very differently.

Complications: A few obstacles for players to tackle.

Did They Loot a Mackie Museum?: As one of the poorer Hegemony worlds after the Civil War, Lone Star had to make do with older, second-hand salvage and export-grade equipment. On the other hand, a couple of companies of militia MCK-9H *Mackies* can ruin the day of DCMS troops sitting in their landing zones. Historically, one of the DCMS officers in the understrength invasion drew the unfortunate “honor” of informing Minoru Kurita of their failure against museum hardware (and was never seen alive again).

Ice Station Zebra: The PCs are DCMS, Hegemony, or planetary personnel who have annoyed someone enough to be sent to Lone Star's ice caps. DCMS forces will need to deploy dozens of multi-ton bioagent dispersal modules to catch the polar winds without the locals getting wise and stopping them. Hegemony and/or local forces would want to stop any activities being performed by invaders to their world. Local scientists studying the life cycle of polar bacteria, meanwhile, might just wonder what DCMS personnel are doing on their planet.

Tips: These scenarios can give a gamemaster a chance to exercise the *A Time of War* hostile environment rules (see p. 237, *AToW*), or pit Hegemony upgrades of elderly Age of War designs against Star League-era DCMS equipment.

A TIME OF WAR ADVENTURE SEEDS

SATAN'S MALLET

Recommended Group Size: 2-8 player characters

Recommended Group Type: Military, Technicians

Recommended Skill Levels: Regular-Veteran (Key Skill levels of 2-6)

Lone Star was a moonless world when humanity reached it, but the terraforming process—borrowing directly from Terra IV's Project Lowell—required a skyhook to gently deliver vast amounts of volatiles. Faster cometary deliveries of light elements would, ironically, slow the terraforming because their impacts would ravage the transforming environment for decades. Unlike the Phobos Skyhook, the resulting Vespa Skyhook was not in a truly stable orbit because of the influences of nearby planets and Lone Star's sun. And unlike the expansive Terran system, Lone Star's was very compact: no less than six planets orbited within 0.5AU of the sun, and there were twelve planets overall. These influences had prevented Lone Star's tidal lock to the nearby star, but also made moons (at least at Vespa's altitude) untenable. The Hegemony had addressed this with WarShip-scale fusion engines that supplied the micro-gravity thrust required for Vespa's orbital stability but the SLDF's liberation of the system from Amaris forces wrecked that stationkeeping drive. Within fifty years, Vespa's orbit had been pumped into a highly eccentric orbit that was grazing Lone Star's atmosphere.

2825 was the last chance to loot the frozen, dying planet, and both the Lyran Commonwealth and Draconis Combine knew it. Lone Star had been looted by many salvage operations during the First Succession War, all of which focused on industry, militia and SLDF stockpiles, and technically savvy survivors. What was left by 2825 interested only opportunists, mercenaries, and looters: the artistic and financial wealth of a Hegemony world, which had been uninteresting to the government salvagers before them.

Complications: A few obstacles for players to tackle.

It's A Small World After All: The well-known, well-mapped Hegemony planet meant that several groups of looters who showed up at the last minute might target the same Hegemony District Bank and Platinum Reserves, or the same Lone Star Museums of Expensive Antiquities and Overvalued Art. Hopefully, the characters brought enough guns to stake their claims.

Spare Some Rations?: ComStar said the world was dead and abandoned, so the characters felt no compunctions about visiting with cargo freighters meant to depart burdened with nothing but gold, gems, and artwork. Finding that survivor community near their salvage site could present a moral quandary.

Don't Forget Your Mittens: Even before Vespa's "asteroid winter," the collapsing greenhouse effect on Lone Star meant the planet was chilling fast. By 2825, temperatures in interesting salvage sites might be easily cold enough to strain characters' gear (or give their BattleMechs a much needed assist in cooling) at -40°C and below.

Say Chicxulub Three Times Fast: Pinning down the final impact of Vespa is difficult for many reasons, including the difficulty of modeling asteroid aerodynamics in the upper atmospheres of planets. Another issue is that after crossing Lone Star's Roche limit, Vespa has shed its regolith hide into an ever-evolving ring arc that is producing an erratic rain of debris and making it hard to track its several large metallic core fragments. Players should consider *Tactical Operations'* meteor shower rules (p. 56), earthquakes (p. 55), assorted wind conditions (p. 61) or, if a core fragment lands within 100 kilometers of their forces, the afterlife.

Tips: These scenarios can give a gamemaster a chance to exercise the *A Time of War* hostile environment rules (see p. 237, *AToW*) or *Tactical Operations'* terrain and weather conditions. And more than just rules, it's a chance to run characters through a desolate, frozen wasteland of once-wealthy cities under the clock of a continent-shaking doom.

RULES ANNEX

MAPSHEETS TABLES

VOLGADON*	D6 Result	Map
	1	Lake Area (BT, MS2, MSC1)
	2	River Valley (MS2, MSC1, HPLR)
	3	City (Suburbs) (MS6, MSC2)**
	4	Scattered Woods (MS2, MSC1)
	5	Wide River (BT, MS6, MSC2)
	6	BattleForce (MS6)

*Volgaddon is vulnerable to the Lone Star dust storms described on p. 12.

**Place Light and Medium buildings of varying heights in each clear non-paved hex.

SWARTZHOF*	D6 Result	Map
	1	Wide River (BT, MS6, MSC2)
	2	City Street Grid/Park #1 (MS4)**
	3	Large Lakes #2 (MS4, MSC1)
	4	Desert Mountain #1 (MS3, MSC1)
	5	Open Terrain #1 (MS5, MSC1)
	6	Wide River (BT, MS6, MSC2)

*Swartzhof is vulnerable to the Lone Star dust storms described on p. 12.

**Place Light and Medium buildings of varying heights in each clear non-paved hex.

POND CITY*	2D6 Result	Map
	2	CityTech Map (MS2, MSC1, HPCR)
	3	City (Skyscraper) (MS6, MSC2)
	4	Coast #1 (MS7)**
	5	Coast #2 (MS7)**
	6	CityTech Map (MS2, MSC1)**
	7	Large Mountain #2 (MS5, MSC1)***
	8	River Delta/Drainage Basin #1 (MS4, MSC1)**
	9	River Delta/Drainage Basin #1 (MS4, MSC1)**
	10	City (Skyscraper) (MS6, MSC2, HPCR)
	11	City (Downtown) (MS6, MSC2)
	12	City Street Grid/Park #2 (MS4, MSC1)

*Place Light, Medium, and Heavy buildings of varying heights in appropriate paved hexes.

**Treat all depth 0 water as Mud (see p. 50, T0) and all clear terrain as Swamp (see p. 51, T0)

***Treat all elevation changes as sheer cliffs (see p. 39, T0) unless the hex has pavement.



OPTIONAL RULES

The following additional special rules are intended to provide further flavor to games set on the world featured in this supplement. For the most part, these rules may be considered advanced and optional, as they primarily reflect conditions and/or features unique to this one planet or planetary system.

LONE STAR DUST STORMS

A likely target for any invaders of Lone Star is the capital city Volgaddon. However, about every two months (i.e., once per local year, during the summer), winds blowing down from the northern pole generate continent-blanketing storms of fine saline-rich dust. (This also happens a month later from the south pole, but only a few hermits and mining facilities lie in the path of Lone Star's southern dust storms.)

Long-Term Effects: In the long term, these dust storms can clog engines, cause respiratory ailments, and short out inadequately sealed electronics. Gamemasters may resolve these long-term effects by requiring any personnel and equipment exposed to dust (without suitable safeguards such as filter masks and environmental shielding) to make a 2D6 roll once for every full hour of exposure. On a result of 2, unprotected personnel will experience severe respiratory irritation the locals call "brown lung", while exposed electronics and engine components will become clogged or caked to the point of malfunction by dust particles. Equipment so effective will become non-functional until repaired by a successful Technician Skill check, with a -1 modifier to the dice roll. Personnel affected by "brown lung" will suffer a -1 Attribute modifier to BOD and STR scores, and a -1 dice roll modifier to all Skill checks for each time they suffer a "brown lung" roll effect. These "brown lung" modifiers stack, to a maximum of -3 per Attribute and Skill roll modifier, until treated with a successful MedTech Skill roll (with a dice roll modifier equal to the level of "brown lung" the character currently suffers) and a day or more of bed rest. If a character suffering from the maximum level of "brown lung" receives an additional "brown lung" effect result before being properly treated, the character goes into severe respiratory distress and becomes incapacitated. MedTech Skill checks needed to treat and stabilize a character in this condition will suffer a -4 dice roll modifier; if *this* roll fails, the afflicted character will go into acute respiratory failure and die within seconds.

Short-Term Effects: In the short term, a Lone Star dust storm will turn a battlefield into a short-ranged brawl, if opponents can find each other at all. If wind speeds are low (moderate gale or less), the effects of a Lone Star dust storm mimic those of Light Smoke (see p. 47, *TO*) that will blanket all outdoor and/or exposed areas, and will be found up to 100 levels above the underlying terrain. In heavy gale or stronger wind conditions, heavier sand particles will compound these effects, adding the Blowing Sand condition (see p. 62, *TO*) as well.

