

CBT: RPG, REVISED V. 3.2

01 FICTION 1: "INTRODUCING THE PLAYERS" (5,250) BEN R.

For the new RPG book, as in all core rulebooks, a series of short fiction will precede the major rules chapters, adding depth to the entire presentation. Unlike the other core books, however, instead of set-piece stories related only to the following chapter, the RPG will develop a complete through-story that is broken into individual chapters instead, but unite to form a cohesive whole.

The story itself is set in the latter stages of the Jihad, as Devlin Stone and his coalition are closing the noose around the Blake Protectorate and preparing for the first assaults against Cameron St. Jamais' "Maginot Line". In prelude to this campaign, a number of "independent operations" are launched, aimed at reconnaissance and espionage to determine the enemy's strengths and weaknesses. (In essence, what we will be introduced to here is a typical "player group"; as the RPG book proceeds, these characters will appear in the various examples shown.)

The first chapter of our story prefaces the book's overview of role-playing games in general. For all intents and purposes, this will be our "establishing shot", where we get some background and character info.

Our Story: The small group we meet here is a covert operations group (In this case, a resistance force loyal to Devlin Stone) who has just slipped into the Rochelle system in the Blake Protectorate (see info on Rochelle in red text below). The group's general assignment is one of intelligence gathering and opportunistic espionage.

The group includes the following characters:

(Commander) Jared Travis: Male officer of FedSuns origins. Veteran of the Jihad and the FedCom Civil War. Specialized in infantry combat and often functions as the team's "sniper" and support specialist.

(XO) Luella Hildebrand: Female officer of Lyran origins. She is the squad's vehicles expert, trained in ground and VTOL vehicle types.

(Doctor) Grace Luther: Female, of Lyran (or possibly Free Worlds) origins. The team's medic and communications specialist, Grace is a pacifist conscripted originally by Alys Rousset-Marik's resistance and "transferred" to Stone's banner. She has little to no experience in martial arts save some basic hand-to-hand training for self-defense.

(Pilot/Heavy Weapons) Busby "Buzzard" Matvey: Male, of possible Tikonovian origins, "Buzzard" is the squad's "brute". The team's aerospace shuttle pilot and heavy weapons specialist, he comes off as the typical jock/grunt type who knows nothing beyond the arts of combat and the latest Solaris match scores.

(Lifer) Ethan Naoko: Male, Combine expatriate. Ethan is a veteran whose experiences go all the way back to the War of 3039. A font of wisdom, but fond of cryptic phrases and obscure knowledge, his military skills are only average. Trained as a MechWarrior, he has survived most of his many decades more by his wits and luck than on battle skills alone, and is an excellent scrounge, salvager, jury-rigger.

(Recruit) Franz Logan: Male, young, likely of Lyran origins). Fresh from boot camp, full of ideas and fantasies about war, Franz dreamed of being a MechWarrior since he was a child, but ultimately flunked out of his MechWarrior MOS training. Often hangs on every word Ethan utters, enamored with the Lifer's experience and 'wisdom'.

<<<DATA ON ROCHELLE>>>

ROCHELLE

Star Type: K7V

Position in System: 2 (of 6)

Number of Moons: 3 (Derika, Nohea, and Ululani, plus dust ring)

Days to Jump Point: 4

Surface Water: 86%

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Tainted)

Surface Gravity: 0.74

Equatorial Temperature: 40° C

Highest Native Life: Reptiles

Population: 1,710,000,000

Governor: Preston Petrokovich

Planetary Legate: Piotr Illiarveski

Overview (pre-Jihad): With vast mineral resources capable of sustaining a broad industrial base, and further blessed by an abundant water supply and soils rich enough for planting, Rochelle was an easy colony world to establish and settle in the early days of mankind's race to the stars. After the fall of the Terran Alliance, this world became a part of the Federation of Skye, thanks to a trading alliance with the McQuiston family or Skye, which further boosted its economic and industrial growth, until its subsequent conquest by the nearby Free Worlds League. In the wars that followed the collapse of the Star League, Rochelle and its material wealth became a hotly contested border world, particularly ravaged during the savagery of the First and Second Succession Wars. In fact, as the Second War finally ground to a halt, House Marik's economic experts concluded that the mining, refining, and manufacturing centers on Rochelle had become hopelessly damaged by the widespread use of weapons of mass destruction. Indeed, so much nuclear and chemical waste had been released in the past eight decades of warfare, that the League officially classified Rochelle as "unsalvageable"; reconstruction efforts were soon abandoned, and the planet virtually evacuated. Despite this, the proud people who remained on Rochelle continued to mine valuable ore for export sale to industries deeper within the League, suffering through the next two centuries of war and death. For a time, the world even became the headquarters of MediQuick, an interstellar mobile medical services corporation that offered its services to close to two dozen worlds on the Steiner-Marik border, until questionable business practices ultimately led to that company's demise. Despite the best efforts of the locals, the economy and infrastructure of this tortured and poisoned world continued to erode, leaving it a mere border post for League military forces to guard against their Lyran counterparts. During the Jihad (circa 3067-3069), Lyran strike teams assaulted this world in retaliation for renegade Free Worlds attacks, laying waste to the crumbling capital city of Arzenburg, on the northern continent of Caredon.

Rochelle's other continent, the southern landmass of Martinasia, however, remains largely abandoned, thanks to the high radiation and acid rains, lasting effects of the first two Succession Wars.

Addendum (3075): As of 3075, there are three Divisions of Protectorate Militia on Rochelle, as well as heavy fortifications of recent construction.

<<<END DATA>>>

05 **FICTION 2: "PLANNING STAGES" (3,000) ANDREAS Z.**

Chapter 2 of the opening fiction story prefaces the Character creation section, and so should focus more on character development than anything else.

This chapter will cover a final mission briefing by Commander Travis as the team's DropShip "sneaks" into planetary orbit. The squad will be going down to the planet via a Landing Craft piloted by Busby "Buzzard" Matvey and we should see descriptions of the characters and how they handle the drop—Ethan giving pointers to Franz, Travis reviewing the mission with Luella, "Buzzard" checking his gear and stowing them in a small vehicle in the shuttle's cargo bay before taking the controls. This should cover the "why we are here" of this mission.

The Mission: discover what the Blakists are doing on Rochelle. Determine their defenses. Parameters are broad, with a suggested landing zone and target complex considered to be a primary objective. Once the strengths of the defenses are, the waiting fleet is to be notified so the invasion can commence. There is a limited time frame of two weeks; after which, the team will be assumed dead and the invasion commander will decide what to do.

The banter and briefing should showcase at least one 'uncommon' trait of each character, such as what cultural background the XO may have, the Doc's aversion to combat, the Recruit's backwater world upbringing, the Heavy Weapon's obsession with Solaris, etc. The idea is to flesh each character out with one trait or characteristic that is NOT common to their stereotype.

07 **FICTION 3: "THE MISSION BEGINS" (3,000) STEVE M.**

The third chapter precedes the Traits section.

POV: Busby "Buzzard" Matvey

Situation: Once launched from the DropShip, the ride down is rough. Bad weather and an unexpected Blakist aerospace patrol puts the team well off course and the mission timetable is tossed out the window. After eluding pursuit, Busby has some interaction with Commander Travis and the others, taking some flak for his crazy maneuvers while discussing the mission parameters now that things have already gone awry. During a quick sensor scan / sweep (by Luella), a previously unknown fortification / complex is discovered and the decision is made to head there

instead (adhering to the mission's primary goal of recon). But just as the shuttle is swooping in for a discreet landing, it is hit by ground fire and crashes.

09 **FICTION 4: "SECURING THE LZ" (3,000)** **PAUL S.**

The fourth chapter precedes the Skills section

POV: Grace Luther

Situation: Grace tends to the wounded—which largely include Busby, Franz, and Luella—after the crash. Knowing a Blakist attack may come soon, the team sets up an ambush site for the Blakists. As the LZ suddenly becomes a hot zone when a Word of Blake probing force (squad or two of infantry) close in, Grace must reconcile her own "do no harm" principles with healing and protecting the wounded.

Grace is busy with Franz when a Blakist soldier appears, and—in a tense moment—opts to defend her charge by using Franz's weapon to shoot the soldier. The shot doesn't kill the Blakist, however, so she has to wrestle with saving his life as well, or letting him die.

11 **FICTION 5: "RECON" (3,000)** **KEVIN K.**

This chapter precedes the combat section

POV: Executive Officer Luella Hildebrand

Situation: A few days after their crash landing, the team has successfully eluded pursuit by going deeper into the local wilderness. Some interrogation of Grace's "prisoner" (whom was then knocked out and left stranded near the crash site) nets the team info on the mysterious complex, which still lies over a week away on foot. Currently, reconnoitering a makeshift Blakist firebase that is the center of the enemy's search operations, Luella evaluates and sizes up what she is seeing (some static defenses, occasional overflights, one *Malak* OmniMech defending the encampment, and some random Protectorate guards). Something nags the back of her head, however: the guards seem pretty light. A conversation with Ethan brings up the possibility that maybe the complex is under-defended to begin with, and manpower is short, so with so many Blakists out looking for the team, the Word may not have enough guards for this complex. Another possible reason that crosses her mind—just as a couple of Blakist battle armor and a tank appears behind their small camp—is that it was all just a trap...

Combat ensues as the team tries to escape; however, combat is quick and ultimately, the team is captured. Though Busby and Franz are missing...

14 **FICTION 6: "HEAVY ARTILLERY" (3,000)** **JASON H.**

The sixth part of the multi-part story precedes the vehicular combat addendum.

POV: Franz Logan

Situation: During the chaotic battle at the enemy base camp, Busby and Franz are chased deeper into the jungle, but manage to lose their tails. When the sound of combat fades, they return to find their comrades captured, along with some serious Blakist back-up. They have no choice but to follow at a distance and look for an opportunity to rescue.

Both team members hatch a plan to bust their friends out at night from the Blakist outpost; Busby is freshly injured from the last firefight, so Franz has to carry out the diversion. Franz sneaks into the Blakist hangar and manages to elude detection by the night techs. Faced with a choice of an assault-class Ontos tank, and a much lighter *Griffin* BattleMech, he succumbs to his childhood dream and mounts up into the 'Mech. [Need to find a plausible way to bypass security codes – maybe a hacking program chip, or maybe it is obviously down for maintenance?]

Lumbering out of the 'Mech bay, he starts shooting up the camp as Busby breaks the rest of the team out and leads them towards the hangar. Just then, the *Malak* spotted before returns...

16 **FICTION 7: "JOURNEY" (3,000)** **KEN H.**

The seventh act of the multi-part story precedes the special rules section (which covers environments and critters).

POV: Ethan Naoko

Situation: With a week now behind them since the daring escape and evasion of Blakist forces, the team has successfully lost their pursuers—but only by going through the thick and unknown mangrove-like swamp that lies between them and their objective, and ditching the BattleMech Franz captured.

The team bickers back and forth; Busby's injuries and a nasty infection have forced them to slow down significantly, and Franz has been insufferable since successfully winning his first 'Mech engagement (by sheer luck, as Luella repeatedly points out). The stress is obvious.

Ethan regales the team with stories from his past, which helps calm the team down and makes the journey a bit more pleasant...until they encounter a swamp tiger, bent on making at least one of them dinner.

18 FICTION 8: STORMING THE OBJECTIVE (3,000) JIM R.

The eighth part of the multi-part story precedes the equipment section.

POV: Commander Travis

Situation: Almost two weeks have passed since the team's bumpy landing on Rochelle and finally, the previously unknown complex is in sight. Apparently unguarded (which makes Travis understandably nervous) the complex is soon discovered to be protected by several technological security devices—and a couple of Manei Domini battle troopers.

The action is fast and furious, in part a flight of terror from the approaching MD, and in part an exercise in luck and skill at defeating the security measures. [Killing / mortally wounding Busby here will make it more believable, and also deliver a devastating injury—close to mortal—to Franz as well!] The climax comes as the team finally takes down their last tormentor as they bust into the command center, discovering that it's part of a network of fixed orbital emplacements – currently being trained on the now-incoming invasion force (Travis notes with some annoyance that the invasion commander clearly decided to go forward with the invasion, without waiting for the team's input—and now they're about to be wiped out!)... [Leave as a cliffhanger, to be revealed in the final fiction article.]

20 FICTION 9: EPILOGUE (3,000) BEN R.

The final part of the multi-part through-story precedes the Character Advancement section (where payment and experience use are covered).

POV: All

Situation: The team is being debriefed as they wind down from the harrowing experience – they managed to disrupt the planetary defense network long enough for the invasion force to land mostly unmolested (aside from Blakist aero assets).

Grace is questioned about some odd data she scooped out of the complex's nodes (before the Blakists remotely burned the system); reference is made to some sort of “planetary failsafe” system organized by a Manei Domini named “Lucifer”. [This is a reference a smaller-scale version of the Meggido project that being ‘tested’ on the world. But while he’s credited with its design here, Lucifer himself is unaware that Meggido's true purpose (on Terra) is actually a scorched earth network].

Franz, still recovering from his injuries, is trading stories now with Ethan, while Luella is quietly taking it all in. Travis thanks his team with a quick speech and acknowledgment of Busby's sacrifice in the operation. But before the mood can turn to sour, the invasion force commander arrives and tells the team they need to mount up. Seems there's a corporate complex on-planet that's shut up tight and may be harboring “enemy assets”. Rather than cause a possible “interstellar incident”, the team is being sent in to “persuade” the corporate suits to open up...