

Table of Contents

1. Showtime	5	Energy Controller Matrices	167
2. Introduction	11	Energy Controller Advancement	174
The Corporate Merc	12	Healer Matrices	176
Things to Know	16	Healer Advancement	184
3. Player Races & Getting Started	19	9. Combat	189
Galactic Timetable	20	Rules	189
Chatilian	23	Critical Hits	192
Cizerack	27	Archaic Hand Weapon Combat	194
Eridani	31	Unarmed Hand-to-Hand Combat	197
Gen-Human	35	The Survival Matrix Roll	199
Human	39	Healing	200
Mazian	43	10. Living in the Future	203
Mutzachan	47	Galactic Forces	204
Orion Rogue	51	Corporations	204
Phentari	55	The Rebels	206
Python Lizard	59	The Arachnid Presence	208
Ram Python	63	Mercenary Groups	208
Zen (Tza Zen) Rigel	67	Vehicles	211
4. Creating A Character	71	Galactic Phenomena	214
Vital Statistics	72	Tech Levels	214
Secondary Statistics	75	Survival in the City	216
I Was Just Growing Up	79	11. The Battle Master	223
Fickle Finger of Fate	80	Non-Player Characters	224
5. Skills	85	Running Your Own Campaign	226
Skill Tables	88	Vital Statistics Checks	227
Skill Descriptions	90	Difficulty Levels	229
6. Armor	103	Malfunctions	230
Armor tables	106	Measurements	231
Armor Descriptions	108	Sponsor	234
Armor Options	112	Employer Tables	236
7. Weapons, Equipment, & Cybernetics	117	Rank	238
Weapon Tables	118	Play Example	241
Weapon Descriptions	122	12. Hell's Point Campaign Setting	245
Equipment Tables	136	Hell's Point Map	247
Computer Tables	137	Places of Interest	252
Equipment Descriptions	138	Hell's Point NPCs	254
Computer Systems	144	The Flexsteel Jungle	260
Cybernetics	149	Player Character Archetypes	263
Modifying Your Character	154	Appendix A - Star Maps	276
8. Matrices	157	Appendix B - Quick Reference	278
Empath Matrices	159	Appendix C - Index	283
Empath Advancement	166	Character Sheet	287



tor switches on their multi-optics visors.

"You see the two sentries, just to the left of the big rock outcropping?" Taskor-idan pointed out. "The rock outcropping itself is the access point. We have seen others pass through it. They touch a hidden panel somewhere on the rock facing and the side of the mountain opens up. Here's the plan. The Ram and I will get close quietly. When we are ready, the Phentari will give the order. He and the Orion will each take out one sentry with their lasers. No noise. Mouth shots. Mutzachan, you ready a fireblast in case anything goes wrong. The guards are wearing AKMB armor so there shouldn't be any problem. If there is, the Ram and I will solve it. After the guards have been neutralized, the Mutzachan and Orion will advance. The rest of us will cover you. Corwin, you must find the secret access point. The Mutzachan will use his bypass matrix to defeat the door's security in case there's a problem. Corwin, use whatever it is that you use, but get that door open!"

"If lock picks don't work, I have enough Jellnite to blow up half the mountain. Don't worry, Taskor-idan, I'll make sure that we get inside."

"Good. Newbee, stay out of the way and don't screw things up! Once we're inside, we move to the elevator and take it to the sub-basement where the lab is. Everyone remember the layout of the base? Good. Let's move out."

"You know, I am more than capable of handling myself," the new recruit responded defensively. "How am I supposed to learn anything if no one ever gives me any responsibility?"

"You are supposed to stay alive. That is your responsibility. I calculate that the chance of a new Human recruit lasting more than three missions is 27.567-to-one against your favor. There is some deviation due to duty station, assignments, I.Q. rating, physical prowess, and other circumstantial modifiers, but that's about it!" The Mutzachan explained, more than happy to make some trivial calculation about the man's chances of survival.

"I hope you die," the Phentari sneered, leaning forward until his face was but a few centimeters from the recruit's. His tongue licked out from behind his atmospheric processor and the squid's mandibles clicked together hungrily. "It would give me pleasure to gut you like a pig and stuff your carcass with tender treats so that I could cook you for

dinner. Please screw up. I want you to screw up!"

"I'm not scared of you squid!" the Human retorted, backing away. "I'm not afraid."

"You really should be. Your chance of matching my prowess is significantly less than your chance to survive the mission, although the two might be distinctly related."

"I said, let's move out, people!" The Swordsaint ordered.

Corwin watched through the night vision display of his helmet as his teammates advanced on the unsuspecting sentries. Within minutes, the Ram Python had moved within meters of the two guards who stood facing each other, smoking and chatting. Both had removed their helmets to talk and neither noticed that a three meter long lizard, disguised as a bush, had moved within arms' length of their position. Nor had they noticed that a Swordsaint had circled around and climbed up onto the rocks directly above, ready to pounce on them at the slightest sign of trouble.

Corwin readied his laser carbine as the two advanced, bracing it against a tree. He scoped in on the left guard, focusing the zoom targeting eye on the man's mouth. On the Phentari's signal, he squeezed the trigger. Hit! The man died in a heap on the ground. The other fell just as quickly.

The moonlight played off the boulders, providing just enough light for him to go to work. The Orion moved swiftly toward the cliff face. Using his advanced knowledge of traps and concealment, Corwin soon located the false panel which concealed a coded keypad. The spy cut back the plastic covering, removed the access plate, and located the correct wiring. Next, he whipped out his handy body computer, re-configured the access code, and voila, they were in!

"Nice going Rogue."

"Don't mention it!"

The door opened onto a corridor which extended some 20 meters forward and ended in a t-intersection. Glow lights illuminated the area.

"It's showtime people! Pharrinsarrious, I want you in the east corridor with your motion tracker. Uugh, Newbee, and Bluerazor, go with him and slaughter anything that comes your way. Set up a killing zone at the fourth junction. Nothing gets through. Corwin, you're with me. Let's move people!"

Corwin wasted no time finding the eleva-

tor. Turn right, pass two intersections, and take the next left. He stopped at the corner and used his laser to knock out the surveillance camera. He pushed the button for the elevator and waited. It slowly descended from four floors above.

"Wonder if anyone knows we're here yet?" he half-asked the Eridani.

"If they don't, it's only a matter of time."

"Come on elevator. Come to me baby. Damn! It stopped. Someone is getting on. On the floor right above us."

"It will be their last ride." The Swordsaint replied icily, moving off to the right side of the elevator, blade ready. Corwin raised the RKM to his shoulder. A moment later, the door opened on two rebel soldiers. The blade severed one man's head. Corwin pumped a single laser shot into the other's forehead. The bodies crumpled to the floor. No noise.

"Funny how some people lose their heads over their jobs!" Corwin laughed, jumping into the elevator and pushing the down button.

"Your attempt at humor is feeble, Orion."

A tremendous explosion rocked the elevator as it descended, staggering both of them. The lights dimmed for a moment.

"What the hell was that?" Corwin exclaimed.

"The others just rang the doorbell to let our hosts know that we are here! The time for battle has arrived."

The sound of gunfire erupted somewhere on the floor above them. Corwin could make out the distinctive sound of a pulse cannon firing on automatic. The battle sounded fast and furious.

"One less newbee," came Pharrinsarrious's raspy voice over the headset. "Reflex missile. Never knew what hit him. Pieces of sandwich meat everywhere." Pause. "We've got visitors. Stand by for an update!"

"Uugh kill now!" The Ram spoke in a child-like voice and Corwin imagined the three meter tall lizard charging into combat with that heinous smile plastered all over his face. "Ultimate battle!" the lizard bellowed.

"On your left. Two of 'em. Grenade!"

Another explosion ripped the floor above them as they left the elevator and Taskor-idan stopped in his tracks.

"Wait here till I call. I'm going forward to check out the situation."

"Fine Taskor-idan! No problem. I have no interest in dying. Go ahead, be a hero!"

The Swordsaint's eyes blazed with intensity but he said nothing. He moved cat-like to the next intersection, where he hesitated, checking around the corner for the enemy. Finally, he waved the Orion forward. More firing above. Corwin turned and backed toward Taskor-idan, covering their rear. It took a minute to cross the distance. When he finally reached the hallway, the Swordsaint was no longer there, but Corwin could plainly hear the scuffle of hand to hand combat no more than a couple feet away. A trickle of blood flowed past the spot where he half-crouched, half-squatted behind the corner of the wall. The adrenaline was pumping now and his mouth suddenly felt parched and dry. What was going on! What was happening to Taskor-idan? He licked his lips apprehensively and hesitated some more. He had never been the hero type. He didn't need any theme music. That's why he was still alive. But the Swordsaint was obviously in over his arrogant head! Finally, Corwin took a deep breath, flipped the selector switch on his laser to automatic, said a quick prayer to the money god, then charged around the corner into combat.

Error! Instead of engaging the enemy and saving the Swordsaint, Corwin stumbled over the Eridani's rear leg, dropped his weapon and sprawled himself out on the floor. He crawled around on all fours like a real hero and eventually recovered his weapon. He looked up and winced.

A Human male was impaled on the end of Taskor-idan's two-handed sword. One hand feebly clutched at the blade sticking out of his chest while the other hand struggled to reach his holstered gun. A gurgling noise emanated from the mortally wounded man's mouth. Blood flowed freely down over his chin, dripping in a large pool on the floor. The man's eyes bulged as he writhed in agony on the end of the blade. He looked pleadingly into the cold, grey eyes of his Eridani assailant for a sign of remorse or explanation. The man tried to speak, but managed only a cough. He gagged, then spit a mouth full of blood onto the Swordsaint. The Eridani did not flinch. He merely regarded his victim with a steely detachment, as if measuring the effect of the wound. One last gurgle and the body went limp, folding forward to lean against Taskor-idan's shoulder. The Eridani offered a brief, twisted smile of triumph. Then, in a single fluid motion, he lifted his right leg and kicked

the Human from the end of his blade while pivoting on the heel of his left foot. With a reverse stroke of his two-handed sword, the Buddon sword master chopped off the man's head. The skull made a sick crunching noise as it struck the floor at Corwin's feet.

"Hey, Taskor-idan. Don't you ever feel any remorse when you chop the head off some guy whose only crime was that he was breathing when he happened to run into you," the Orion asked half-seriously.

"No I do not . . . Nor do I appreciate people who insist on talking to me when I have already killed them. It is a sign of great weakness." The Swordsaint replied in icy tones, turned on his heel, and advanced up the corridor.

"Remind me never to piss you off."

"You have so been reminded." The Swordsaint moved off.

"Yeah, I bet . . ."

Footsteps approached from the rear. Corwin whirled around, ready to blow apart whatever was coming. Fortunately, when his cross-hairs centered on the target, he realized that he was again pointing his weapon at the Phentari.

Quickly lowering the rifle, "What the hell happened up there Pharrinsarrious? What's going on?"

The squid approached with the energy controller in train. Chunks of metal had been torn from the Mutzachan's armor, and his left arm plate was missing altogether.

The matrix controller responded, scared badly. "Ran into some friends, some heavily equipped friends. They must have picked us up when we killed their watchdogs. That's all I can figure. We dropped the ceiling in on them which should keep them busy for awhile. The total mass of the fall . . ."

"I see the sword-puke has been busy again, preparing my meals for me. I appreciate his thoughtfulness." The Phentari dipped two tentacles into the fresh blood surrounding the corpse and relished the taste. "Not bad. Not bad at all!"

"You aren't going to eat the Human now, are you?" Corwin choked. "I'm really not into the cannibalism stuff. Don't do this to me! For Gilmock's sake, there is a battle going on here. Ugh! Where did Uugh get to?"

"Rogue, I will answer one question at a time," The Phentari hissed derisively, pausing to show the Orion that he could not possibly be bullied into answering out of his own time.

Finally, he spoke, slow and deliberate.

"The Ram ran off a few minutes ago, right after we blew the ceiling. He had that stupid grin on his face. Said he was going off to eat a LAW rocket and kill a couple of sentries on the east side of the compound! I don't know. Didn't make any sense to me, but he's the best diversion we could possibly ask for. Allowed us to retreat. I wasn't about to argue with him. He had that look in his eyes."

Bluerazor nodded in confirmation. "I saw him get hit as we were pulling out. A missile ripped off his helmet along with half his face. The stupid Ram was laughing all the way. He was suicidal, totally mad!"

"To answer your first question, my friend," the Phentari continued, "I would not be so rude as to snack on an arm or two in your presence. I shall wait till I have some privacy before I feast on the soul of my next sandwich!"

The energy controller began to babble. "Do not worry, dear Corwin. You know Therick's Equation On Universal Balance theorizes that nothing has been lost here. At the exact instant, at the very moment that the Human died, another one of its kind was born into the universal realization. It occurred at the moment when the other's vision of the universe was lost. See, universal balance equates to the locus of probability that . . ."

"One more word," the Phentari cut in, "and you will be the next one to wind up a corpse, Melonhead." Pharrinsarrious kicked the dead body to dramatize his point.

Overreacting as usual, Corwin thought. He regarded the Phentari, who still glared menacingly at the Mutzachan. The being stood almost 2.5 meters tall, and wore battle armor that was completely unscratched by the recent combat, a testimony to the cunning of the race. Four sinuous tentacles snaked outward from the shoulders of the squid. Two of the tentacles held Savage-B laser pistols, weaving a slow hypnotic dance in the air. The other two tentacle arms cradled a Fundamentalist laser shotgun. Sixty-seven kill marks had been painted in purple on the breastplate of the Phentari's armor. A gold crescent moon crowned nine of the marks, each representing an Eridani kill. The eyes were cold, black, and malevolent. Corwin shuddered, even though he and the squid were close friends.

The squid continued, "Orion, are you going to be able to bypass the security and get the stuff? We don't have much time!"

"No sweat. Piece of Dujack. Just waiting for our hero to return. He's checking out the hallway to the front. All of this for some friggin' plant seeds that the higher-ups want to use to create some new biochemical weapon!"

"Yeah right. I hope the Eridani gets himself killed." Pharrinsarrious replied, "And by the way, each Rebel here has enough firepower to vaporize each and every one of us! That's why we had to cave the roof in. We were out-gunned bad."

"I have calculated our chances for success at three-hundred ninety to one in favor of the enemy. The margin of error is . . ."

"Mutzachan, I'm not going to tell you again. Shut up before I ventilate that big head of yours!" Pharrinsarrious swung all three lasers to face the energy controller.

The once meek Bluerazor now responded angrily. "I suggest quite frankly that you rethink the situation, Pharrinsarrious. I am getting tired of your insults. You know as well as I do that even though I am sick, I am more than your equal. My powers could easily defeat you."

Something came over Corwin's headset.

"Taskor-idan, is that you?" Corwin asked.

No response.

"Let's move forward and find out what's happening." The squid set off. "The sword maggot is obviously unable to handle the situation without my superior skills."

The three of them advanced up the corridor to the next intersection, the Mutzachan guarding their backs. Another body, this time a female lab technician.

"We must be getting close. The Eridani keeps leaving donuts behind as markers. I'll be back for this one. Looks tasty."

Where the Eridani had gone to was anyone's guess. However, each time they thought they were lost, they came across another fresh, dismembered corpse. Slowly, the group worked deeper into the Rebel complex. A full five minutes had elapsed since they had last seen the Swordsaint. The rebels would be returning their wake-up call anytime now and Corwin was beginning to have doubts about their chances of survival. He glanced back.

The Mutzachan said nothing. He just guarded their rear, grim and determined.

The mercenaries continued to move toward the laboratories. Down another set of stairs. Right turn. Left at the power generators. Suddenly, directly to their front, about 10

meters up the hall, the Eridani stood, poised to attack something that Corwin could not see. The Swordsaint glanced over his shoulder back at them.

"The enemy is before us. I charge to greet their challenge!"

"What?" is all Corwin had time to say before an explosion rocked the corridor. The impact staggered the Swordsaint. A second super-plasma grenade landed at the Eridani's feet and Corwin saw him ripped in half by a second blast. Instinctively, the Orion flattened himself against the wall, just as an Omega pulse tore the Phentari's head from its shoulders. The squid fell in a crumpled mass of steel and tentacle.

Suddenly, five soldiers in heavy assault armor appeared out of nowhere! Corwin fired



wildly at them as they closed on his position. Another blast ripped out a chunk of the wall just below his knees.

"It looks like it's all over, Bluerazor!" He laughed dryly, unloading on full auto with his weapon. "Looks like we're gonna meet the great scotch maker!"

"Not just yet. I have been preparing something special for the occasion."

Green light spewed forth from the energy controller's body, filling up the corridor, blocking the enemy advance. Sparkling energy formed a shimmering but solid barrier in front of them. Shots struck the wall but simply exploded in sparks without penetrating.

"That should hold them for a micro or two, but it won't last long. And I think you're right. There is the distinct probability that we will be reduced to our component atoms!"

Bluerazor turned to flee but stopped dead in his tracks. His eyes bulged with fear.

Corwin cringed, looking slowly over his shoulder.

"Holy Jask!"

A massive creature stood behind him, blocking their retreat. The monster was so big that it blocked out the light. The beast bled profusely from the midsection where part of his armor's chest plate had embedded itself in his rib cage. One eye was missing and flesh dangled from the bloody socket. Ugh the Ram Python had found them and now stood in the corridor cradling a Devastator Omega cannon in the three remaining fingers of his right hand.

"Big guy, are you all right?" Corwin asked, more than a little concerned.

The Ram responded with a grunting noise.

"Me happy. Got big gun. Already smash five people. Me like smashing. Me very very happy. Corwin are you happy?" the Ram smiled his gory grin.

"Yeah, now that you're here." the Orion replied, sliding behind the Ram to use him as a shield.

The barrier began to buckle under the constant barrage of heavy weapons. The noise was deafening. Corwin held his ground and so did the enemy. Taking on a suicidal Ram Python armed with a Devastator Omega cannon wasn't considered bright, no matter who you were.

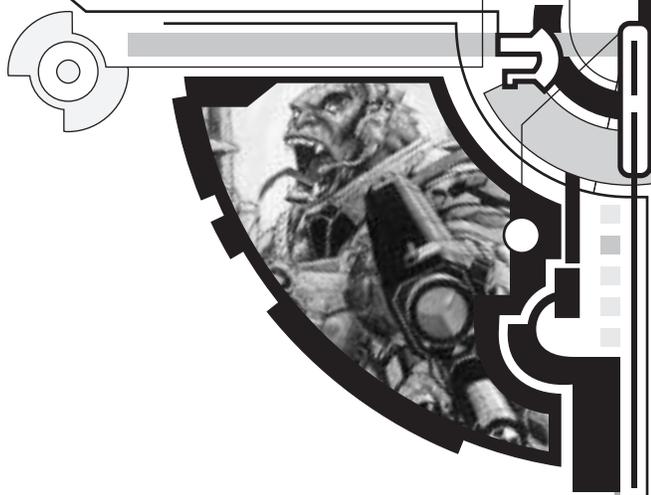
"Me like shiny lights. Pretty lights. Good. Good. Good." the Ram laughed.

"Ugh, what would you postulate as the solution to this problem?" queried Bluerazor. "I have no definitive answer."

The energy barrier failed under the next hit and Ugh glanced down at the Orion.

"Simple. If it moves, kill it. If it doesn't move, pick it up and kill it!"





IN THIS CHAPTER...

**What Does Roleplaying Mean?
Corporate Merc
Things to Know**

◀ **Downtown, New Taos City, Kermadec. Over 40,000,000 inhabitants, mostly Orion Rogues, call Kermadec home. It's carefree attitude and free-spending inhabitants cover up a vast underworld of pirate and Rebel operations.**

THE TIME OF RECKONING IS 2279

The exploration and development of the known universe is going on at a fantastic rate. The Galactic Alliance has prophesied complete control of the local group of galaxies by the turn of the millennium. Huge, powerful mega-corporations run it all from

behind the scenes. The Twelve Races of the Alliance work as caretakers, shaping and expanding the horizon of knowledge, extending to touch the farthest reaches of space. Frontier Colonies populate neighboring galaxies: Andromeda, Fornax, Spirax (M33), and the Magellanic Clouds. Outposts dot M32 and the cluster galaxy of Talcos in Ursa Major, some 200,000,000 light years from the Core Worlds. The continuing battle rages on to drive out the Arachnid presence. Strange reports of ghost ship sightings, robot warriors, and evidence of ancient human cultures all filter their way across the vast, empty stretches of nothingness to the hearts of the bold, strong, and curious. There is a demand for warriors, for men and women with the mettle and vision to protect the lives of the innocent. The call for assistance can be heard across the galaxies, as colony worlds struggle to survive in a morass of conflict, uncertainty, and danger. The word goes out from the isolated reaches of The Thendrax Empire in Spirax to the urban centers of the Industrial Provinces of the Fornax galaxy. "Come. Bring your weapons. Bring your courage. Bring your honor!"

And so the mega-corporations have hired on a few good men to get the job done. They are referred to as Battlelords. Some are veterans of war; others are not. But they all have one thing in common. Each believes that he can make a difference. They come from everywhere: from the vast savannahs of Cashoulis, to the infernal volcanic regions of Trishmag, from the methane hell of Eridine, to the great Seas of Pythos. They are energy controllers, bounty hunters, Swordsaints and changelings, aliens from different worlds with different agendas, thrown together in a morass of danger to carve out a common destiny.

From behind the scenes, Mega-corporations wield more power and influence than the central government, which acts more as a figurehead than a leading body. Loyalty is not to the Alliance as much as it is to the company. Loyalty to the company never upstages loyalty to the team. The mercenary team embodies everything that is valued in society: esprit de corps, honor, and valor. At least, that's what the papers say. In reality, it is nothing more than a bunch of individuals, usually allied by common needs than by common goals. The mercenary's job is a simple one: do anything and everything to stay alive. And when in doubt, lock-n-load. Balance is the key to everything, and a well trained mercenary unit can take on just about anything. The company gets all the press. The merc picks up his paycheck. And nothing is usually said about methods and tactics, as long as the job is done on time!

The Battlelords Universe

Battlelords of the 23rd Century is a universe of make-believe, a place of mystery and danger. The game was designed for 2-8 players and, unlike other games, has no definitive end. Players assume the part of mercenaries working together to accomplish a common goal. The mission parameters are set by the company and vary from heavy combat, often encountered by exploration teams, to urban espionage. This game is different from most typical games in

that there is no winner. There is no end. The object is simple: to keep the character that you are playing alive until the next mission. You try to amass power and prestige as your character adventures around the universe. As long as your character doesn't bite the big one, then you're winning! That's the fun of playing the game; developing and furthering the interests of a make-believe character in a futuristic make-believe world!

What Does Roleplaying Mean?

It's not satanic nonsense where everyone believes that they are the devil and tries to be as evil as possible. You don't wake up the morning after playing a roleplaying game and honestly believe that you are a methane breathing, laser wielding, bipedal squid that eats Humans. Roleplaying is story telling! Someone tells a story. You play the part of a character in that story. So do your friends. The narrator takes you on an adventure and you try to solve it. Sometimes solving it just means your character survives. It's like playing a part in a movie, except you don't know what the ending is or what will happen next. The narrator's job is to unveil the plot bit by bit, leading you on a journey to discovery. Simply put, roleplaying is using your imagination to have fun!

The System

Battlelords of the 23rd Century is a futuristic roleplaying game designed to simulate the life of explorers and combatants in the not too distant future. Your playground is the Milky Way, the Fornax Galaxy, and more. The system was designed to provide a gaming environment which is a mixture of roleplaying and combat action. It is my belief that players will enjoy the system more if they concentrate on the roleplaying aspect instead of the combat aspect, but that is up to you. This book provides the player with a complete, current history of events, a thorough understanding of viewpoints, and the subtle nuances of futuristic life. Battlelords of the 23rd Century has 12 fully developed character races (with sub-species). The game system works efficiently, utilizing percentile dice for combat and skill checks, with critical hit tables. This effect makes gaming more realistic, yet not tedious. The focus of generating special powers is accomplished by using a point system. If you've got the points, then you've got the power! This system provides a balanced environment for combat and roleplay action. Experience is awarded more for roleplaying than for killing. This is how roleplaying at its best should be.

Using This Book

This book contains all you need to start playing right away. It is essentially split into two halves, the first containing information on the twelve player character races and all the information needed to "roll up" a character. The second half contains background information on the Battlelords Universe as well as information needed by the Battle Master to run a game. Also included is the Hell's Point campaign setting, with a mini-scenario, Non-Player Characters, and Player Character Archetypes. This will allow new players to jump into the game quickly with a minimum of reading.

This rulebook is all you need to play Battlelords. Battlelords supplements, like the Lock-N-Load equipment manual, provide additional source material, background info, new player and non-player character races, and a wealth of other material.

So let's get started! Below is a section on the Mega-Corporation and the Merc, to give you a feeling of who and what your character can be. Following that is the real meat of the game: the player character races. Dive in and immerse yourself in the 23rd Century!

THE CORPORATE MERC

The life of a corporate merc is as glorious as it is dangerous, and many a celebrity has risen through the ranks from the obscurity of mediocrity to legendary status. The masses, vulnerable and scared, are enamored of their super heroes, regarding them as demi-gods. Often, it is a warrior who brings excitement to a commoner's boring life of routine and struggle. The primary topic at many dinner tables around the galaxies is which mercenary team has done what recently, how many have lost their lives, and what good have they brought to the community.

The Lancer

Many young mercenaries begin their careers as lancers, short for freelancer. They initially sign on with a small firm whose parent company is one of the major mega-corporations. The parent company holds the contract for the new recruit and pays his salary. The smaller firms are called the "minor leagues" and all newbies start out here, learning the ropes, honing their skills, and developing into effective combat teams (the word combat is used loosely to describe any type of operation that is directly involved in conflict, whether violent or not). The subsidiary company acts as a training ground for raw recruits who often lack discipline and control. Many young warriors are violent and dangerous, having managed somehow to pass psychiatric screening and sign with a company. They kill without purpose and cause wanton destruction of the environment. Furthermore, new units have extremely high mortality ratings, often losing entire teams on a single mission. The subsidiary company acts as a front, as well as a filter, deflecting the damage that is caused when carnage wrought by a mercenary unit spills over into the public eye. Citizens seldom link the acts of a minor league team to a major leaguer, thus protecting the polished image of the mega-corporations. The trash is weeded out by attrition and decision. Only when a merc has shown that he is capable, as well as responsible, is he brought up into the big leagues to play hard ball.

Most minor league teams shop around and use their players as freelancers. The company picks up private contracts, then farms them out to their employees. The mercenary unit often has a say in which contracts it will take. The unit bids on how long it will take them to complete the assignment, and the job specifications needed to get the job done. This includes miscellaneous money and equipment. The company offers the assignment to those groups with the lowest bids. Freelance mercenary units who ask for too much or fail to complete assignments are called pinch hitters and are looked down upon. Most pinch hitters never make it to the big leagues and are given the worst assignments or are released from service altogether.

There are few unit commanders in the minor leagues; mercenary units must delegate responsibility among themselves. It is up to the group to decide who is in charge. Often, the group has carte blanche in determining how the mission will be completed. The minor league company allows them free rein to assess the abilities of the unit. The reasons for this are simple: first, the mercenary unit is forced to bond or be destroyed. Personal differences must be ironed out or left behind

in order to establish trust for one another. Individuals are not allowed to kill each other and must somehow determine a leader who best suits the group's disposition while still offering the best chance of completing the mission. Second, by acting alone, the best qualities of the unit will surface, or the group will be destroyed. Finally, major league players must have the mega-corporation's complete trust. Major league teams are often sent on missions for extended periods of time, usually exceeding a year in the field. During this time, the unit often cannot make contact with the company. Many units keep their own petty cash funds during these missions. Thus, it is in the best interest of the parent company to make sure that their freelance mercenary ends up capable and trustworthy, or dead! Given below are the major league parent companies and their minor league teams. All listed information is in addition to mega-corporation signing contracts.

Telydyne Syndicates: Contrax Mercenary Company. Recruited units are allowed limited free-lancing opportunities. Strict punishment codes. Salary advances available up to 1/2 year.

Space Systems Development Corporation: Xplore Inc. Minor league teams are encouraged to free-lance. Xplore Incorporated carries out some of the most dangerous combat assignments and has a 66% attrition rate.

Eridi-Corp: No minor league teams.

Balshrom Science Corporation: The Rod and Gun Club. Free-lancing is offered on a unit-by-unit basis only after mercenary teams have proven themselves during the first year of service.

AMC: Interstellar Combat Directory is considered to be the most efficiently run of all subsidiary companies. The pay is lousy though (-10% of starting salaries).

The Chatilian Interest Firm: Illusionary Inc. Free-lancing is encouraged heavily at Illusionary Inc., which believes that an intelligent mind should be unleashed so that it may prosper.

Bio-Cyberdyne: Cybernetic Assistance Firm. Free-lancing is encouraged. However, borgs have a tracer implanted into their skulls for the first two years of service so that their activities can be monitored at all times.

Orionus Konglomerates: The Traders Guild. Minor league teams who prove themselves are often offered leasing terms on spacecraft. This occurs only after 2 years of restricted service.

Erectus: No minor league teams.

Cyber Research Institute: The Fornax Collective. Operatives are only hired if they are to act alone or in three man teams on espionage and surveillance missions. All other recruits work for the parent corporation.

F.U.R.I.E.S.

F.U.R.I.E.S. are non-combat troops used by the company to achieve ends other than violence and mayhem. The acronym stands for Force, Urban, Reconnaissance, Intelligence, Espionage, Soldier. The status of F.U.R.I.E.S. may change from Lancer and back at any time. Often, Freelance units are given special assignments as F.U.R.I.E.S. These units are held in much higher regard than Free-lancers, and are exclusively composed of troops who have proven that they can complete missions while incurring minimal casualties. Like Free-lancers, F.U.R.I.E.S. do not follow a rank structure. They are, however, expected to perform with military bearing and discipline. Generally, these units are posted to populated urban centers where missions must be carried out with a high degree of discretion and professionalism. Missions include rescue, reconnaissance, intelligence gathering, assassination, kidnapping, etc.

The police are constantly on the alert for armed combat teams, and F.U.R.I.E.S. teams are versed in avoiding direct conflicts. F.U.R.I.E.S. earn fifty percent more than their Free-lance counterparts. The extra pay is an urban combat dispensation out of which units are expected to purchase the extra materials necessary to complete missions. The parent company will, on occasion, offer to loan a F.U.R.I.E.S. unit equipment to complete its mission. This is rare because these units are often forced to leave equipment behind while operating in the field. Urban combat teams readily have access to cosmetic alteration such as plastic surgery, DNA masking, skin grafting, etc. Most units are offered special espionage training.

The Grunt

Grunts are paramilitary soldiers who function as front line combat units. These mercenaries follow a strict military regimen, much like that of Alliance forces. Grunts are revered by the public, who see them as Alliance soldiers in charge of maintaining the peace. Combat missions follow the exact same parameters as with government troops. Mercenary combat units battle hostile forces, guard ammo dumps, carry out search and destroy missions, peace missions, and a myriad of other tasks. Grunts always wear their uniforms when on duty and are sometimes allowed to carry heavy weapons when operating in public areas.

Grunts never work for the subsidiary, and all grunts must carry a special combat permit which carries certain dispensations for collateral damage to the public. Mega-corporations maintain the best legal staff to protect their grunts, and the company must gain permission from the central government to carry out combat activities on a mission per mission basis. All team members operating in the field are reported to the government's central roster before the commencement of hostilities. Units draw weapons and are deployed to the field where they carry out assignments.

The parent company acts quite differently toward Grunts as compared to Free-lancers or even F.U.R.I.E.S. Most companies are reluctant to loan out equipment to mercenary units because of the careless attitudes often displayed by these groups. The company cannot afford to lose expensive equipment that is often worth much more than the individual soldier. The weapon is dependable. Mercenaries often are not. Because of this, most Freelance and F.U.R.I.E.S. units must pay for their own equipment. Grunts, however, seldom pay for anything, except for those things which we cannot discuss in this book! The company loans

them equipment to facilitate carrying out each mission. Troops are expected to only ask for what they need and are expected to return all unused munitions.

Cream Puff Boys

Mega-corps require a variety of staff to oversee their business operations. These people are called Cream Puff Boys. Cream Puffs earn more money than their combat counterparts and are subject to a much less lethal life-style. About the only thing dangerous about being a Cream Puff Boy is getting slapped for staring at the secretary's legs, or having a heart attack after climbing a couple of flights of stairs because the elevator broke. However, many Cream Puff Boys are former F.U.R.I.E.S. and Grunts who have paid their dues to the company and were offered secure, cozy jobs in the "rear." Cream Puffs have excellent benefits, generally get paid handsome amounts of money, take long, paid vacations, and work from nine to five. Many still hire out their own services when off work to add to the weekly paycheck.

There exist temporary Cream Puff Boys called Buttercups. A Buttercup is a F.U.R.I.E.S., Free-lancer, or Grunt who has been severely wounded (-5 body points or below) in action and requires time to convalesce. During his recovery, he is posted to office duty. Many warriors use this time to embellish their heroics, telling long, drawn out stories of how they landed in the hospital in the first place. Next, they brown nose hard for a safe position with the well-to-do. Why? Simple. Many wannabe tough guys have lost a little nerve after seeing their buddies get whacked one after another.

Suits

Suits are businessmen and women who were originally hired out by the corporation to push paper and oversee company affairs. Suits have never seen combat duty. They are ordinary people who attended college long enough to get a masters degree (a prerequisite for entering into the management field), then were hired by the corporation. Suits get paid top dollar, more than mercenaries, and this fact has caused much strife between the two classes. Many suits think that mercenaries are nothing more than commodities, to be bought and traded. Some don't even attempt to hide their contempt for the "lesser masses," proffering that each person has been posted to his natural position in life. Mercenaries, almost to the individual, consider Suits to be soft, lazy, two faced, useless paper-chasers who make their living as vultures, feeding off the dead corpses of fallen warriors! The Suit smiles to your face, then makes sure you get sent on a mission where no one is expected to survive.

Note: Many a manager has gone home, used the head, and been blown to little pieces when the toilet flushed. It keeps the balance. Suits with axes to grind don't send mercenary units out to get killed, and mercs don't slip while walking with a laser carbine and shoot some suit in the face!

The interaction between upper level management and workers is a subject of much contention, and there are few apparent solutions to the problem. Office areas are always tense when units return from missions to fill out operations reports. Often mercs are required to fill out death certificates for lost comrades, then hand them to a half-amused, pot bellied idiot sitting behind a mahogany desk. Many mercenaries believe that full auto is excellent for office renovations, but admit that it is bad

for sales! Space Systems Development Corporation is known for having the greatest rift between management and lower echelon workers. Mercs claim that it is the incompetence of the Suits that has lead to the company having the highest attrition rate of all the major corporations. Reports cite failure to obtain correct pre-mission intelligence on targets as a reason for high attrition rates. Several senior managers have been indicted for falsifying weapons testing data in order to shave production costs. Four men known as the Spirax Quartet currently stand accused of embezzling millions of credits from pension funds. Nine former SSDC mercenaries are on death row at New Leavenworth for murdering company officials. Warrants are outstanding on sixteen others.

Telydyne Syndicates has dealt with the matter of management alienation by requiring that all managers, except for those with the most critical job skills, go on active duty once a year for a period of no less than two weeks. Furthermore, many of Telydyne's top officials are former front line troops who have been in the Jask before! An open door policy allows for individuals to bring problems to the immediate attention of the combat operations director for that subsector.

The Chatilian Interest Firm steadfastly holds to the belief that individuals are posted to their natural positions. Mercs work out of fear, for all of the upper level managers are powerful matrix controllers. Aspiring managers can advance by proving themselves resourceful and shrewd, as well as intelligent. Persons seeking advancement must also gain powers as an empath.

All Asteroid Mining Consortium officers are former mercenaries. This is company policy. No one can become an upper level manager without having spent at least 2 years on active duty in the mercenary corps. Lesser white collar positions do not require that one have served in the field, but most sector directors demand that all employees be at least trained in weapons and go through a two week annual training exercise. Furthermore, all aspiring managers must go back to college and obtain a masters degree in their chosen field before hanging their coat on the chair behind the desk. Consequently, there is little strife among AMC staff and its workers.

Eridi-Corp maintains an interesting policy about upper level managers. First, all persons seeking to become managers must sign on to work for the company for life. Those who fail to pass the general competency test required to become a manager are enlisted into the mercenary ranks until they die. All managers must be Buddons, who are rotated between combat duty and desk jobs every three months to ensure mental sharpness. Again, those personnel who are absolutely crucial to their professions are exempt from combat duty. Any Eridi-Corp manager who is passed up for promotion more than twice must kill himself for dishonoring the company. He has proven that he is inferior and incapable of leading his subordinates. He has also embarrassed the company which made the mistake of hiring him in the first place.

Around the Office

There is a certain mystique that continually swirls around the walls of a mega-corporation, something that compels the average citizen to stop and stare, marveling at the secrets that must be kept inside. They dream of agents in black who go off on dangerous missions from which few return. Mega-corporations are powerful businesses, set up to generate a tremendous amount of revenue. Overall, they maintain impeccable business practices and flourish.

Corporate buildings are some of the most beautiful structures imag-

inable, huge edifices that sprawl across acres of land. Most are located in and around major metropolitan areas. They tower above even the largest buildings and can be seen from kilometers around. Sightseers marvel at these awesome icons of society, whose workers protect the freedom of those who live around them. Each corporation maintains its own symbol of perfection. A bald eagle flies atop all Telydyne Syndicate buildings. The Space Systems Development Corporation is symbolized by a cross. A longsword graces the top of Eridi-Corp buildings, its tip pointed toward the stars and toward Eridine itself. A glowing Omega symbol stands atop all Balshrom Science Corporation sites.

Corporate sites are laid out with one thing and one thing only in mind; security. It is virtually impossible to break into a mega-corporation's place of business. The upper floors crawl with uniformed guards, posted at almost every turn. I-bots walk the secure area, disguised as employees. Every type of overt and covert security system has been employed in corridors: cameras, motion sensors, DNA sensors, EMP pulsars, and stun nullifiers which prevent matrix generation. The above-ground portion of the building is dedicated to running the daily affairs of the business: making money, picking up and selling new contracts, accounting, maintenance, etc. Rumor control is therefore inaccurate when it claims that mud covered, blood smeared mercenary teams regularly stroll through corporate lobby areas with heavy weapons, while businessmen pay them little heed. In reality, mercenaries pass through security screens in a heavily guarded section of the ground floor. These check points utilize state of the art detection devices to catch objects being smuggled into the perimeter. The group then boards elevators which suck them down into the bowels and safety of the earth.

Once they step out of the elevator, some 2km below the surface, they are searched again, this time with mental and emotional discriminators which evaluate one's mental status and surface thoughts. They then pass through a set of redundant security measures, exactly like those on the surface above, and finally down an access tunnel into what is generally referred to as the "brain," or central command post.

Each company's brain is laid out differently, but all maintain basically the same functions integral to carrying out secretive affairs such as research and development, intelligence gathering, and military operations.

Battle Rooms: Most sector headquarters have three to four battle rooms where military personnel oversee combat operations. Tracking of enemy movements, communications, command and control, and logistical analysis are carried out in the battle rooms.

Armory: Only guards and select personnel are allowed to carry weapons within the command post. Thus, the armory is split up into three distinct sections. Each maintains its own weapons and equipment storage, separate from the others. Merc units draw weapons from their own armory, as do combat units from theirs, and staff from theirs.

Motor Pool: Upgrades and maintenance of company vehicles takes place in one of several areas. The motor pool is separated into four general sections, called bays, which include civilian, military ground, atmospheric, and deep space. Each bay maintains its own tech supply to assist in the upkeep of vehicles.



• Mega-corp headquarters are studies in luxury and opulence. No expense is spared in providing the highest tech accessibility and comforts for their leaders.

Crew Quarters: Facilities are maintained to support all military and paramilitary units beneath ground for extended periods of time, providing mess halls, gyms, holo-rooms, virtual reality game centers, pleasure services, and sleeping quarters.

Operations: Directors, generals, and other top officials work here to run the clandestine operations. This section is generally very large and contains numerous office areas. People working here exhibit a professional, no games mindset. Guards shoot to kill.

Communications Core: Long range communications equipment is set up in this section of the command post. Intelligence personnel and operatives transmit, receive, and analyze communications traffic throughout the subsector from the communications core.

Interrogation: Special labs for interrogation are usually located adjacent to the medical facilities. Workers here exhibit a morose, dark sense of humor, making sick jokes about their methods and victims.

Launch Port: Virtually all corporations maintain an underground launch facility which contains diplomatic, combat, and personal spacecraft. These can all be launched at a moment's notice. The launch port is usually reached through a heavily defended access tunnel in the deepest bowels of the command post. In a crisis, vital personnel can reach the launch port via launch tubes which are strategically situated throughout the complex. Launch tubes deliver a person into a pre-programmed vehicle, based on DNA and retinal scans which are required to activate the unit.

Bunker: Usually adjacent to the launch port and accessed through the security tunnel. All businesses run under the constant threat of a hostile attack and personnel come here in case of such an event. Most bunkers can withstand several direct hits on the installation from either nuclear weapons, energy, chemical, or biological attacks without being compromised.

The Public Reaction

It is an "either/or" proposition. Either you are a bigger than life superhero who can do no wrong, or you are villainous scum that has crawled out of the sewers and should be cleansed from the universe with the same zeal that most of us would kill flies! Whatever the case, mercenaries get more press than the President. Much depends on the company you work for. If you are employed by Telydyne, most people will generally give you the benefit of the doubt. Few question your actions because the company that employs you is on the up and up! You are considered above reproach. Moms say, "Why can't you marry a nice boy, you know, like that one from Telydyne Syndicates who walked you home from the store last week?"

On the other hand, you could be a Space Systems Development Corporation lackey, a dirtball loser who would kill off his own grandma just for beer money. You could give your life to save someone else's and it would be dismissed. You were trying to kill the person in the first place. It is all a matter of perception, for that is what quantifies reality.

Some things about being a company mercenary are great, no matter what. Every once in a while, you'll be granted some special dispensation which allows you to carry heavy weapons in public. You stroll

into the late night grocery store to grab a couple of Yum Yum snacks and a carton of milk. Old ladies faint. Young kids run up and desperately beg for your autograph. Store clerks frantically call the police. The police scramble to the scene. And you... well, you just stand there all cool and smug, trying to decide whether or not to waste the guy in aisle seven with your Omega cannon!

THINGS TO KNOW

Dice and the System

Battlelords of the 23rd Century uses percentile dice as its main focus to carry out combat, skill checks, etc. Different dice are used to determine damage. Dice are referred to by the number of faces each has. A d4, for example, is a 4-sided die. A d20 is a die with 20 sides. Occasionally, you will be asked to roll a d2 or something completely strange like that. We all know that there are no two sided dice. Well, don't freak out. It's easy. Roll a d6. 1-3 equals a 1, while 4-6 equals a result of 2. Rolling a d3 would hold to the same rationale. A 1-2 would equal a 1, 3-4 a 2, and 5 or 6 would equal a 3.

On other occasions, you might have a weapon where the damage yield is something way strange like 2-7 points of damage! The question that comes to mind is, "What the hell do I roll? What kind of dice do I use?" Simple. In the case of 2-7 points of damage, roll a d6 and add 1 to the result. 3-9 points is another weird damage result. Roll 2d4 and add 1 to get the results.

Modifiers

Modifiers are changes to the base chance to accomplish something, based on the surrounding circumstances. The Battle Master is in charge of the game. He will assign penalties and bonus modifiers to your character's chance to do something, based on the situation at hand.

Vital Statistics Checks

There are eight vital statistics in Battlelords of the 23rd Century. Each is important and relates to a specific aspect of a character. The statistics are Strength, Manual Dexterity, I.Q., Agility, Constitution, Aggression, Intuition, and Charisma.

The Battle Master will sometimes ask you to make a statistic check at a penalty. Simply subtract the penalty number from the appropriate statistic. The resulting number or lower must be rolled in order to be successful.

Secondary Statistics Checks

There are 4 secondary statistics: Terrestrial Knowledge, Military Leadership, Persuasion, and Bargaining. Again, from time to time the Battle Master will ask you to make a secondary statistic check at a penalty. This is handled in the same way as for a primary statistic: subtract the penalty from the appropriate statistic to determine the chance to succeed.

Non-Combat Skill Checks

Normally, you will be asked to make a skill check when attempting to perform a task. There are two skill types, combat and non-combat. The base chance to successfully make a non-combat skill check is 50%,

plus 10% per level of skill. The Battle Master will assign a penalty modifier to the base chance of success, depending on how difficult the task is. This penalty is expressed as a level number; this number times ten is the penalty to your chance to succeed. (For example, a Level 5 check would result in a -50% penalty to your skill check.)

Combat Skill Checks

Weapon skill checks are rolled when attacking. The base chance to hit is determined by weapon type. Then add 04% to the chance to hit per level of skill. The result is the unadjusted chance to hit with the weapon. The Battle Master will assign modifiers based on cover, terrain, lighting, etc.

Armor

Armor has three important aspects: armor integrity, absorption, and threshold. Armor integrity defines how well the armor is holding together. When an attack hits, it rips away a certain amount of metal. Armor integrity represents exactly how much metal there is to the armor. When you run out of armor integrity in a certain area, you have no armor left there at all (that means no protection!).

Threshold represents how tough the armor is to penetrate. The threshold is how much damage must be done by standard attack forms in order to penetrate the armor. If the attack doesn't penetrate, then there is no damage to the armor or wearer—the attack “bounces.”

Absorption is the armor's ability to soak up damage; basically, the armor's body points. Whenever the armor's threshold is penetrated, the attack passes on to the absorption polymers, which reduce damage on a point for point basis. When you run out of absorption, the next attack that penetrates the armor hits you. It is quite possible to run out of absorption and still have plenty of threshold and armor integrity—you're basically wearing a shell with no cushioning.

Survival Matrix Rolls (SMR)

The Survival Matrix Roll (SMR) is the base chance for your body to survive non-standard attacks forms such as nerve agents, radiation, sonic attacks, and so on. The Battle Master may assign a penalty to your base chance of success. If so, subtract the penalty from your SMR to determine the number you must roll. Rolling this number or less indicates minimal or no effects on the character.

Important Terms

Adjusted Light Year: The distance travelled by light in one standard year (see below). Equal to 11.34 trillion kilometers.

Arachnids: The alien race of spider-like creatures presently at war with the Galactic Alliance.

Battle Master: The overseer of the game. The Battle Master sets up and adjudicates situations that occur during the play of the game.

Campaign: This word is used to describe a series of ongoing adventures.

Galactic Alliance: The body governing the “secured” quadrants of the universe. It is primarily run by Gen-Humans.

Galactic Corporations: Huge, powerful companies that run the government from behind the scenes.

Generation: The process of harnessing and releasing psycho-kinetic energy.

Heavy Points (HP): 1 Heavy point equals 100 normal damage points.

Kinetic Based Attacks: Those attacks which utilize objects which impact with other objects to cause damage.

Matrix: The specific formula/process used to channel psycho-kinetic energy from its potential to active state.

Matrix Controllers (MC): Those individuals who possess the ability to harness and transmit psycho-kinetic energy.

Parsec: 2.72 adjusted light years.

PC: Player Character

Percentile Dice: Take two ten sided dice. State which is the tens dice and which is the ones. The tens are called “high.” The ones are called low. The high die is read first. When both dice are 0 the result is 100.

• **Example:** Red is called high and green is called low. A red six and a green three are rolled. The result is a 63.

Roleplaying: Creating a fictitious character and playing him during the course of a campaign.

Scenario: This is the specific adventure that the players are involved in at any given moment. Normally, the Battle Master has set up a plot that is to be followed. This is called the scenario.

Standard Day: A 30 hour period of time.

Standard Week: 7 standard days.

Standard Month: 5 standard weeks.

Standard Year: 350 standard days, or ten standard months.

Survival Matrix Roll (SMR): The Survival Matrix represents the chance an individual has to resist the effects of a non-standard attack form. The SMR is made in the event of such an occurrence.

Vital Statistics: Numbers that denote the physical and mental prowess of an individual. 50 is considered average.

