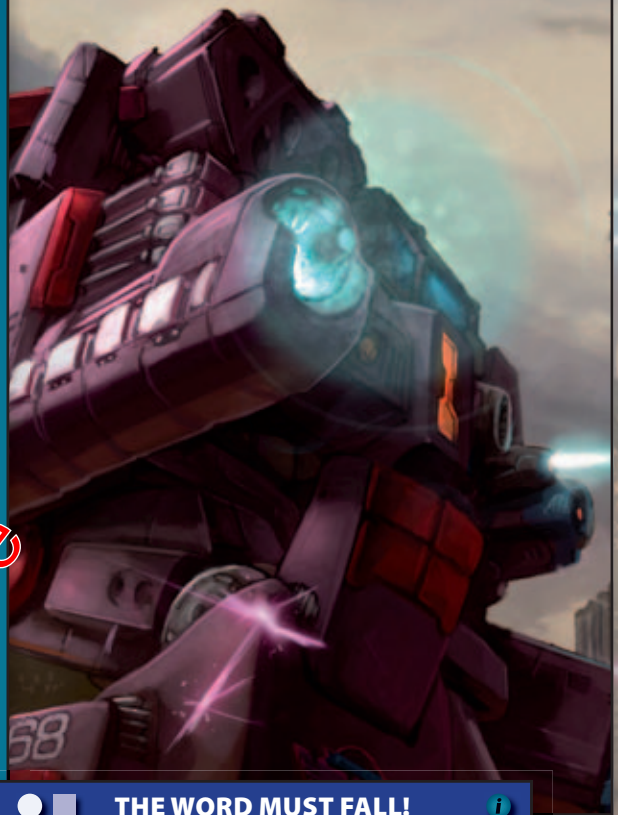


TEARING DOWN THE WALLS!

For more than ten years, the Word of Blake's Jihad has engulfed the states of the Inner Sphere and the invading Clans in chaos and fire. Reeling from attacks on all fronts, realms have fought one another while the Word's masters built a powerful Protectorate around humanity's home: Terra. But with the rise of a resourceful rebel leader, Devlin Stone, the collective might of the Great Houses and rival Clans have united for an all-out assault against the Protectorate—one that can only end when humanity's home is free once again!

Jihad Hot Spots: Terra™ continues the Jihad plot book series started with *Blake Ascending*, bringing readers into the latter years of the war between the Word of Blake and the Inner Sphere. Seen from the eyes of those who fight and die in this epic struggle, this book includes articles and intelligence excerpts from across the Inner Sphere, along with additional rules and campaign tracks for both *BattleTech* campaigns played using the *Total Warfare* and *Age of War* game rules. This book also provides a rare, in-depth look at the Terran system itself, including the history and varied cultures who live on these most revered worlds. Also included are rules and units for the elaborate defense network the Word of Blake unveiled against Stone and his allied Coalition throughout the Protectorate campaign.

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THE WORD MUST FALL!



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INN NEWS UPDATE...

Jihad Hot Spots: Terra

Sample file



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CREDITS

Writing

Joel "Welshman" Bancroft-Connors
 Herbert A. Beas II
 Craig Erne
 Chris Hartford
 Ken' Horner
 Nick "Gunslinger" Marsala
 Dana Maynard
 Mike Miller
 Jim Rapkins
 Ben H. Rome
 Adam Sherwood
 Paul Sjardijn
 Øystein Tvedten
 Patrick "Roosterboy" Wynne
 Andreas Zuber
Misplaced Childhood
 Chris Hartford
Chaos Eternal
 Nick "Gunslinger" Marsala
 Ben H. Rome
Rules Annex
 Joel "Welshman" Bancroft-Connors
Additional Writing
 David L. McCulloch

Product Development

Herbert A. Beas II
Rules Development
 Randall N. Bills

Product Editing

Ben H. Rome
Editing Assistance
 Herbert A. Beas II

BattleTech Line Developer

Herbert A. Beas II

Production Staff

Art Direction
 Brent Evans
Cover Art
 Klaus Scherwinski
Cover Design
 Matt Heerdt
BattleTech Logo Design
 Shane Hartley, Steve Walker and Matt Heerdt
Evolved Faction Logos
 Jason Verjan
Layout
 Matt Heerdt
Illustrations
 Douglas Chaffee
 Brent Evans
 Alex Iglesias
 Aaron Miller
 Mark Winters
Map (Devils Tower)
 Ray Arrastia
Record Sheets
 David L. McCulloch

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Playtesters and Fact-Checkers

Ray Arrastia, Ron Barter, Roland M. Boshnack, Paul Bowman, Rich Cencarik, Jason M. Donahue, Nicholai Duda, Bruce Ford, Joshua Franklin, William "MadCapellan" Gauthier, Tanic Half-Munchken, Keith Hann,

Térence Harris, Johannes Heidler, Glenn Hopkins, Daniel Isberner, Chris Marti, David M. McCulloch, Mike Miller, Darrell "FlailingDeath" Myers, Aaron Pollyea, Craig Reed, Rick Remer, Luke Robertson, Jason Robinette, Andreas Rudolph, Eric Salzman, Christopher K. Searls, Jason Schmetzer, Björn Schmidt, Chris Smith, Peter M. Smith, Joel Stevenson, Geoff Swift, Chris "Chinless" Wheeler, Patrick Wynne.

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Find us online:

Precentor_martial@classicbattletech.com
 (e-mail address for any *BattleTech* questions)
<http://www.classicbattletech.com>
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MISPLACED CHILDHOOD



AARON MILLER

MISPLACED CHILDHOOD

**DEER LODGE, MONTANA
NORTH AMERICA, TERRA
BLAKE PROTECTORATE
15 DECEMBER 3078**

"No, the left loader," Precentor Darius Ogden growled at his subordinate's incompetence. "Get it on the track and engaged!" He tugged the neck of his jacket up, tucking his chin back into the minimal protection of the collar, the frigid air burning his nostrils. The weak sunlight did little more than glint off his rank insignia; it was still twenty below out of the shade. He longed to be somewhere warm, but there was little chance of that.

Hurry up and slow down. That was the mixed message from command since the Unbelievers had invaded Holy Terra. Efforts to throw back the horde commanded by the arch-heretic Steiner-Davion and his cronies had proved ineffective, a far cry from the bloodletting that accompanied the disastrous "Case White" assaults not long after the start of the glorious Jihad to spread the Word of Blake across the stars. Geneva was lost, as were Singapore and Tokyo, though the heretics had been bloodied there and elsewhere. Matters looked grim, and St. Jamais had called all the faithful who could make it to converge on the Bear Lodge Supply Fort, a suitable redoubt for the last stand against the fall of right that would follow should the heretics prevail.

And now this, forced out of the Court by advancing heretic forces and a desperate force-march to the bastion, only to suffer a blown drive train on the low-loader in the middle of this Blake-forsaken wilderness. He scowled at the stricken vehicle, sundry access panels open and machinery everywhere as technicians attempted to bring it back to life, incantations mixed with cursing and technical jargon. By rights they should press on but with supplies so scarce, abandonment of the vehicle and its precious cargo wasn't an option.

To say they were exposed was an understatement—Ogden glanced over his shoulder at the snowy expanse of the valley bottom, then back at the crews manhandling crates. At least it wasn't a wooded killing ground like the narrow terrain they'd sped through overnight. That really *was* bandit country, the territory of the Kalispell Witch, and he was surprised they'd made it through without major incident. He'd hoped to make Bozeman or even Billings before nightfall. But at *this* rate they'd be lucky to make Butte, and sitting out in the open was just asking for trouble, either from the bandits or the heretic orbital forces. Rumor had it that the barbarian Clans had thrown their lot in with the heretics, and it didn't take much to imagine them using orbital bombardment to mop-up St. Jamais' loyalists.

He checked his chronometer. Almost three hours stuck here now, and the chaos looked no nearer resolution. Too long. It was time to move.

"You and you," He gestured at the nearest workers. "Get those tied down and then get ready to—"

A low whistle rose into a tearing shriek, crossing from right to left just in front of him. Instinctively his eyes tracked the sound and noted the fist-sized crater in the side of the low-loader's cab. For an instant his frost and fatigue-addled brain struggled to comprehend what was happening, then his head snapped right, toward the origin of the sound. There was a brief flash on the edge of the distant tree line. "*Sni—!*"

Something punched him hard in the chest and he careened off the nearest crate like a rag-doll carelessly discarded by a child. He didn't feel the impact, but instead found himself wondering why the world was tilting alarmingly. His face came to rest on the powdery snow and he was distantly aware of the ice crystals burning his skin. Slow. The cold analytical part of his brain screamed for attention. Snow should be white, not red. It should be—
Blackness.



Sabrina Nial stomped her feet in a vain attempt to restore circulation. The icy wind knifed through her smock and coat as if they weren't there. She'd never felt so cold, even when skiing back on New Avalon. Then again, an afternoon out doing winter sports followed by the après-ski in a toasty lodge was a far cry from a troglodyte existence halfway up a frigid mountain. She'd been here ten days and already wanted to escape. The people she'd been sent to meet had been doing this for years. Decades even.

"A crisp morning," the rugged-looking woman said, grinning as she brushed aside the camouflaged tarp and emerged from the tunnel complex. Grey dominated the petite woman's hair, pulled back in a severe braid, but there were hints of red and gold that complemented her deep green eyes. Her face was weather-beaten, with a scar running the length of the left side of her face from temple to jaw. It was impossible to put a precise age to her—Sabi guessed at early sixties, but it could easily be ten years either way. "But at least it's not snowing." She carried a steaming tin mug in each hand and offered one to the AFFS officer.

Sabrina felt her fingers tingle as the mug's warmth seeped through her gloves, the start of pins and needles. She sniffed the contents gingerly; supplies were scarce here and this