



A U N I V E R S E A B L A Z E

In late 3067, the Word of Blake unleashed its Jihad, fanning the flames of violence and spreading it across the Inner Sphere. Three mercenary commands struggled to find their footing and profit from the all-encompassing warfare. As they navigated their way through the conflicts erupting on hundreds of worlds, these mercenaries grew in power, prestige, and character. Facing adversity, victory, defeat, and enemies within and without, they were typical of many commands touched—for ill or for good—by the Jihad.

As the Jihad unfolded through the *Jihad Hot Spots* plotbooks, players were introduced to the *Chaos Campaign*, a new game play system that gave players the opportunity to craft their own games around specific battles and events of the Jihad. Now that campaign, spanning fourteen years of conflict, has been collected and updated. Presented here are all of the *Chaos Campaign* tracks from the *Hot Spots* plotbooks and interwoven with select tracks from the *Jihad Turning Points* e-publication series and several all-new tracks and mini-campaigns.

This volume also includes detailed reports on nearly forty planetary campaigns, providing context and details previously clouded by interstellar media, local reports, and personal journals. With an updated and streamlined core ruleset for the *Chaos Campaign* and new Jihad-era Random Availability Tables for the Word of Blake, Mercenaries, and Militias, this book has everything players and gamemasters need to recreate the pivotal campaigns of the Jihad and lead their forces to victory.



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This product came about after an initial idea from Øystein Tvedten, who provided the impetus to make this book more than a simple e-publication on Operation SCOUR. Many thanks go to Paul Sjaridijn, who helped craft the original *Chaos Campaign* rules. The success of the *Jihad Turning Points* series comes from those writers who helped craft the history of the Jihad on the House capital worlds: Ken' Horner (New Avalon), Nick Marsala (Tharkad, Sian), Jim Rapkins (Atreus), and Ben H. Rome (Luthien, Dieron). In addition, the writers of Chaos tracks in the *JHS* products: Nick Marsala, Ben H. Rome, Adam Sherwood, and Paul Sjaridijn. All of these people helped form the complete arc of the Chaos campaign, of which their work is found updated here.

Additional thanks to the fans of BattleTech—both who have loved and hated the Jihad storyline—because without you, our game wouldn't be here. Hopefully the information provided in this book answers, in part, the clamor for "more detail!" on battles and campaigns of the Jihad. While we couldn't hope to get all of it in here, we've given it our best shot.

You may notice that one of the primary characters of this book is named after a son of one of our playtesters. This book is for all the children out there who are diagnosed with any form of life-threatening disease. Gannon Derer is one such boy, who fought and survived leukemia at a way-too-early age. While Gannon Derer is one of the survivors, many others lose their hard-fought battle. This book is dedicated to these strong young warriors: may your aim be true, your campaign successful, and your names remembered in the halls of love and life.

Finally, Ben would like to thank his wonderful and stalwart wife Rianne (inspiring the character of Belle Lee), who continues to support his playtime in the BattleTech world with all its wonderful toys.

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Lakefront North, Harlech
 Outreach, Chaos March
 11 October 3067

Two men were waiting for me by the time I took my familiar seat by the window. One ugly, one handsome. And old.

We hadn't met before, but they knew who I was—and that meant they knew what I could do for them. There's a trick to negotiation my old commander used to go on about: first one to speak, loses. I sat in silence and waited for them to start talking.

My mind wandered to another of my former commander's axioms while we stared around the table. *The only time the truth comes out of a normal person's mouth is when they're face-to-face with their Maker or what-have-you waiting on the other side.* I figured their talk would clock in around sixty percent on the bullshit meter. Thanks to my former mentor-turned-traitor, I've got a nose for such quadruped-pockey.

The clock over the bar clicked ahead another digit. I didn't mind; I'd already determined I wasn't breaking out the 'I haven't got all day' speech.

I waited for them to become uncomfortable enough to break the silence. The way I see it, everyone's got a built-in discomfort meter and when it hits seven, most start babbling. These guys—these guys were good. They made it to *nine*.

"We are aware of your reputation," Ugly said. He had a face even his mother couldn't love. "And your price."

"Everyone is," I replied. "That and the fact that paying it gets the job done." I paused for effect. "If I decide to take it."

The pretty one raised an eyebrow at that. He leaned forward a little. His voice was little more than a whisper. "If you decide to take it? There is no *if*. Not if you want to stay here."

"Tut-tut. You haven't even bought me a drink yet... let's save the threats until after the foreplay."

"Mr. Wooden does not like to mix business with pleasure," said Ugly. Now, I'm a big believer in first impressions. With this guy, I wouldn't take the old hose out to urinate on him if he was on fire. I suspect it was mutual. I'm a pro, though, and keep personal prejudices out of business. I don't need to *want* to urinate on you to work with you. Still, I've got a problem with idiots who make like they're the Big Cheese. They always get up my nose.

"I can see why he'd want to do that. Pleasure's overrated." I saw the hint of anger rising in the pretty one's eyes. *Wooden*. His mug didn't exactly match the file photo I'd snagged earlier. Caution signs lit up in my brain.

Wooden raised a hand, silencing Ugly.

"I see Mister Askai is dry and would appreciate a refill. Why don't you go see to it?"

"Coffee's fine," I said. I didn't feel like being sociable. I had a job to do—or at least consider. Ugly raised a hand to flag down a server, but Wooden stopped him.

"What part of 'go see to it' did you not understand?"

I let the flicker of a smirk flit my face. I was beginning to appreciate Wooden—or whatever his name was. Names really aren't that important these days, not in my line of work.

When Ugly moved on, I looked Wooden in the eye and sized him up. That's why I like face-to-face meetings, no electronics to filter tone and expression. He, in turn, was doing his own bit of weighing; I added another respect point to his meter.

"So, Mister Askai," he began.

"Just Askai," I said, keeping eye contact.

"First name or last name?"

"The only one that matters."

"I like you, Askai."

"You don't know me."

"I know enough. You're a straight talker."

"Straight talking doesn't cost anything and gets you to the point where money changes hands quicker."

The man laughed, an easy sound but one I suspected didn't spring to his lips that often. "You've heard of Interstellar Expeditions I take it?"

I nodded. It was a ridiculous question. Anyone who'd been on Outreach for more than a day couldn't *not* have heard of them. Sure, the actual whys and wherefores of their business might be a bit vague for the average civvie, but it was enough to know they had their sticky fingers on anything related to history, artifacts, and interstellar mysteries.

"Well, let's just say I have a somewhat influential role within the company."

"Why not just say you pretty much run the show," I replied. I recalled another tidbit from the file. "Actually, let's go one further and say you and that fat Kurita have full control over the day-to-day business."

"You've done your homework. Good."

"Knowledge is power, right? I take it tea boy over there isn't one of Kurita's?" I nodded back towards Ugly at the bar.

Wooden barked out a short sharp laugh. "No. That is Hon. He is not as important as he thinks."

Ugly returned bearing coffee. Hon tried valiantly to join in the conversation, but unlike my bed, there was no room for three. He sat in silence, scowling.

The coffee was good, the best I had tasted for a while.

"As I was saying, I have a job for someone like you, a man with your very special talents."

"You can say what you like," I said. I didn't ask what he thought my special talents were. I needed a job if I was going to build my life yet again. Right now, it was all about keeping two steps ahead of my former employers. Beggars not being choosers and all that.

"I need a negotiator. A man capable of using his initiative while working within a very strict remit."

I smirked. "You need a yes-man."

"No, I need someone capable of following orders. There's a difference."

"And you think I'm your man? I'm beginning to think I should have had something stiffer to drink."

Ugly Hon wriggled beside Wooden. Body language again. I bet he had wanted the job and been passed over.

.. THE ONLY ONE THAT MATTERS

"Any guns involved?" I asked. I've not got anything against them, but if Wooden had said no, I'd have known he was talking out of his rear area.

"I cannot rule it out."

I nodded. "I like your honesty."

"Then you'll take the job?"

I paused. "There's one more if."

"And that is?"

"If the money is right," I said. Was there really no one else on Outreach capable of doing whatever he needed? What kind of job needed someone with the baggage I had? *And* guns? A dirty one. Down-in-the-muck-smelling-like-sewage-and-death kind of job.

In other words, *my* kind of job.

"I'm sure you'll be happy with the money. What about your previous employers?"

"I don't intend on paying them a commission, if that's what you are worried about."

"I am more interested in making sure your previous ties have been severed."

"Like a bloody stump."

"And there's *nothing* you feel you need to tell me?"

"Nope," I lied. I could have told him that my former employers wanted me back, which wasn't stretching the truth too far. *Why* they wanted me back is where it got suspect. I had important stuff trapped inside my head and they wanted to get it out. I'm fairly sure they'd be happy just hacking my head off and scooping it out if they could, but that would irritate the others who would rather see me dead than have those secrets revealed. Damned if I do or don't—or something like that. Maybe working for IE would offer enough money and protection to avoid picking up something terminal.

"Then welcome aboard," said Wooden. He extended a hand across the table.

Hon shifted uncomfortably in his seat. It was getting more difficult to ignore his ugly mug. He was nervous. I didn't like that. A bead of sweat started to form on his forehead. Something was wrong. My self-preservation instinct kicked in right as the fine hairs on the back of my neck started to prickle.

In the silence between heartbeats the window beside me shattered into a million pieces.

As my heart drummed out its next beat, the hubbub of voices around the bar turned to cries and screams. Panic. Violence. Chairs scraped back as people ducked and cowered and dived or ran for the door. There's a difference between people like them and people like me who live in a world of violence. I was already on my feet, tipping the table on its end to act as a shield. I grabbed Wooden's shoulder and drove him down beneath the line of the table. Dead guys don't pay. Hon, on the other hand, could look after himself.

Bullets began slapping the floor, tables, walls.

I pulled my trusted Hawk Eagle from inside my jacket. Another axiom from my dead mentor: *Only draw if you intend to fire; only fire if you intend to drop the other guy.* It had kept me alive this long; I wasn't about to change the habit of a lifetime.

Bottles behind the bar popped like firecrackers.

The screaming around me got on my nerves.

It took all of about two seconds to work out we were in the presence of a bona fide miracle because, despite the press of bodies in the bar, the gunman wasn't hitting anyone. He was missing because he *meant* to. Why?

My brain worried over the situation even as my reflexes took over. That's how my mind works—it digs in and worries at stuff until it makes sense. Sometimes, I don't like the sense it makes of the senseless.

I risked a glance over the top of the table.

Three gunmen framed in the broken window, guns spitting bullets.

Three of them missing the mass of flesh again and again.

I could have jumped up and down waving my arms and they wouldn't have hit me.

Scratch that—they might have hit me.

Only because they'd come looking for *me*.

No one else.

Funny, I didn't *feel* special.

This had Word of Blake written *all* over it.

I risked a second glance as another volley tore into the back wall.

I had to factor a few things into my next move—the odds of a police response, likelihood of medical help getting through, how fast the Home Guard might show up. Such considerations would affect what happened next.

I opted for telepathy with Wooden. I looked back at him, putting it all into my eyes: *run when I give you the signal.* He looked at me and nodded. Maybe he understood?

I was counting on the fact they wanted me alive. If they hadn't, the table would have been riddled with bullets and I'd have been decorating the mirror behind the bar like a Starling painting.

I fully intended to use their orders to my advantage.

Before the first gunman could step through the window, I pressed the muzzle of my Eagle to the table and pumped a full clip through the flimsy wood. Cheap furniture for a classy eatery. I shook my head as I pulled the trigger.

Despite the chaos, I heard the loveliest sound in the world: bullets hitting flesh. Assuming they didn't have reinforcements outside, I'd just significantly evened the odds. The problem would be if they got close enough to trade punches.

I counted to five in my head—a good round number. Long enough for them to react. *Or not.* The silence meant they were hanging back in case I opened fire again. I liked that—it was dull and unimaginative tactics. I could work with that.

I scrambled across the floor. Slivers of broken glass cut into my empty hand and knees. I needed distance between me and my new employer. It was the best shot I had at keeping him breathing.

I raised myself into a crouch, broken glass skittering under my boots. Inhaled. Held it. Let that breath leak slowly out of my mouth. Head down, heavy pistol in a two-handed grip. Breathing.

A bullet slammed into the barricade I'd taken shelter behind. The bullet hole blossomed perilously close to my knee, but in close combat, a centimeter was as good as a kilometer. A sizeable chunk of timber splintered off and buried itself in my leg. I shrugged off the pain and put my hand to the wound. It came away sticky. It was big enough—and deep enough—that I didn't