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Assailed for centuries by enemies on every side, House Liao's Capellan Confederation faced its own oblivion time and again. Now, nearly forty years since the realm teetered on the very brink of collapse, the Confederation has returned, reclaiming the pride and unity lost when the armies of Steiner and Davion rolled across their worlds to shatter them. Led by the crafty and charismatic Sun-Tzu Liao, and embracing the spirit of Xin Sheng—rebirth—House Liao once again has become a political and military power to be reckoned with, defying those who would see them fail, and deadly to all who oppose them.



Handbook: House Liao compiles the history, politics, and cultures of the Inner Sphere's smallest—and perhaps least understood—Great House. This sourcebook also includes game rules for use with *Total Warfare*, *Tactical Operations* and *A Time of War: The BattleTech RPG*, including new support vehicles, equipment, creatures, and more!



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HANDBOOK: HOUSE LIAO

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AID AND COMFORT

NUWA BADLANDS

HUNAN

LIAO COMMONALITY, CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION

12 APRIL 3067

Sao-wei Tzu-Chien Hao watched Hunan's sun rise over the distant lip of the Bloodrime Mountains from the cockpit of his *Vindicator*. He paused in his shaving, turned the pocket-size electric razor off and set it on his lap. The sunrise was beautiful, red and gold and blue all at once, and it bathed the Badlands in blood-red light that shifted toward yellow the farther the light reached, as if the sun was melting bloody snow from the land. He chuckled. *Bloodrime indeed*. He resumed shaving.

The razor's quiet buzz overshadowed the sounds of his 'Mech at rest—weapons off, reactor on standby, with a trickle of power to keep the circuits warm and the cockpit heater running. His sensors were reading in passive mode, drinking in whatever data their collectors might receive and pinging his heads-up display with anything the simpleton computer thought he might be interested in. A new caret appeared on the HUD, near the *Vindicator's* foot. *Yes, child, Hao thought. I know Si-ben-bing Howard is awake.*

The infantryman waved haphazardly at the 'Mech's cockpit. The NCO wiped the stubble on his chin and grinned up at Hao, then turned around and began rousting his platoon. One of the APCs' big diesels turned over, belching black smoke into the chilly morning air. The whole camp began to move as the sun climbed higher over the mountains.

Hao put his razor away and wiped his shorn chin with a towel. No new messages were waiting in his queue. *Sanchez was quiet during the night, then.* Hao's jaw clenched. His mind filled the silence with the sizzle-pop of human-fed fires in Chandler. *Sanchez's men had come through, burned out the farming hamlet for fleeing Capellan sympathizers.*

They were citizens, Hao told himself. Capellans, yes. But citizens, not sympathizers. Hunan was again a Capellan world—it wasn't sympathy to accept that. It was reality. Sanchez and his band—so-called "resistance fighters," a hundred or so men with rifles and a few vehicles—were insane, trying to turn the people of Hunan against the Chancellor's rule. The Confederation had liberated Hunan.

It was time Sanchez learned that. Hao keyed his comm. "Any word from the scouts?"

Beneath him, *Si-ben-bing Howard*—sergeant in the old ranks—held a hand to his helmet, listening. He looked up at the *Vindicator's* cockpit and shook his head. "Morning, sir. Nothing. Tracks into the Badlands, still."

"Then we pursue," Hao said. "One hour for breakfast, and we break camp."

"We'll be moving in forty, sir," Howard said.

Hao clicked the comm off. The Home Guard NCO would have his troops loaded in thirty minutes or less, unless Hao missed his guess. He'd been impressed with the man. Howard, along with his platoon of riflemen and two old Condor hover tanks, had been assigned to *Sao-wei Hao* and ordered to deal with Sanchez and his

men. They'd been on the trail for two weeks, through Hunan's outback and now into the Badlands—craggy bluffs, arroyos and deep, narrow canyons.

Ambush ground, if Sanchez had anything heavy enough to threaten the infantry's armored personnel carriers, much less Hao's forty-five ton *Vindicator*. A BattleMech should be enough to cow Sanchez's men into surrender—so thought the Diem, anyway—and they'd be able to have nice, public trials.

By Hao's clock it was twenty-nine minutes when the lead APC rumbled into motion, followed by one of the Condors. Hao fell into the center of the formation, sensors active.



"He knows you're coming after him," the farmer said.

Hao and Howard were standing along a fence row in waist-high neowheat. The farmer, clad in hardy denim, was pointing to the east, deeper in the Badlands. "Came through here about midnight, he did. Told me he was running from the Home Guard—said there was a 'Mech after him." The farmer peered up at the quiescent *Vindicator*. "Guess he was right."

"How many men with him?" Hao asked.

"I saw a dozen or so," the farmer said. He frowned. "Buncha trucks, though. Big, eight-wheel jobs. Full beds, too."

"Cargo beds?"

The farmer nodded. "Couldn't see what they were full with, though."

"You gave him food?" Hao asked.

"Sure, some bread, a bit of ration cans we had in the basement."

Hao met the farmer's gaze. "You have aided a criminal."

"I gave food to a man with a gun, sir." There was no fear in the farmer's voice, and he held Hao's stare with no hesitation.

Howard cleared his throat. "He left right off, then?"

The farmer nodded. Hao considered asking another question, then thought better of it and turned away. Howard made their goodbyes and followed him to where he waited at the foot of the *Vindicator*. Two other men waited as well, the vehicle commanders of the Condors.

"He was here," Hao said once Howard was with them. "Last night."

"Not far, then," the Home Guard armor sergeant said. He looked toward the Bloodrimes.

"I want you two to move ahead. Reinforce the scouts, recon in force. If you encounter Sanchez's band, attack to disable and hold them in place until we can move up." He gestured to himself and Howard. "I'll stay with the APCs and provide escort for the infantry." The two Condor commanders nodded and moved toward their tanks. Hao looked at Howard. *Do I...*

"You think I was wrong to accuse the farmer," Hao said.

Howard glanced at the retreating tankers and then askance at Hao. Hao nodded. "I would've done the same in his place," Howard said. "Man comes into my home, man with guns, men. I give him what he wants and get rid of him."

Hao nodded. "Then you do nothing but aid him."