

## Interstellar Players

*Preview:  
The Bounty Hunter*

*By far one of the most enigmatic warriors since the days of Hannibal, the Bounty Hunter is also one of the most interesting. He never shows his face, but without a doubt his bad attitude on the battlefield has left more than one opponent howling mad. Still, like stories of pirates, dread or otherwise, the Bounty Hunter's legend lasts longer than the man himself, apparently. Who picks up the mantle when the current incarnation of the Hunter falls, and who felled the great original? Read this "respectable" (as if my other sources are not respectable) news article and make up your own mind.*

*—Starling*

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## *Art By Dave Allsop*

Dave Allsop has been working as an artist and games designer in the RPG industry since the early nineties. He has developed *SLA Industries* for Nightfall Games, the forthcoming *Book of Unremitting Horror* for Pelgrane Press. Dave has also produced artwork for most of the major games companies - Wizards, White Wolf, Games Workshop (Black Library) and of course, FanPro.

## *The Bounty Hunter: Piercing the Legend*

From The Atreus Post, 27 July 3067

By Richard Bancroft

*Where life had no value,  
Death, sometimes,  
Had its price.  
That is why the  
Bounty Killers appeared.*

Almost everyone in the Inner Sphere and in the Periphery has heard of the Bounty Hunter. Even people in the Clan homeworlds have heard of him. Partly through the holovid series that took the Inner Sphere by storm and partly through stories that have begun to circulate again thanks to his reappearance a decade after fading from the public eye, the Bounty Hunter has once more captured the imaginations—and fears—of countless individuals throughout the Human Sphere.

Here, to the best of our abilities, is the true story.

### ***The History***

Bounty hunters have been a part of human civilization for as long as any individual has had a price on his head. Throughout history, bounty hunters have been reviled and praised, though rarely respected. Beyond those who make their living by hunting their fellow man, few people take comfort in the notion of one man hunting another for money, and even many in the field find their own work distasteful. Of course, when “dead or alive” bounties are placed, corpses are easier to “bring in” than live bodies. And dead men tell no tales. Yet throughout the ages, bounty hunting has been an extremely lucrative, if dangerous, profession.

The popularity of bounty hunting has ebbed and flowed along with the relative lawlessness of society. Following humanity’s exodus to the stars, the bounty hunter became more and more important as criminals took to the anonymity of the fledgling colonies. During the centuries before the Star League, the profession flourished, especially once pirates and other outlaws began to prey on colonists unable to defend themselves. Outlaws quickly





began to rank themselves by the total bounties placed on their heads. Likewise, bounty hunters had their own “social strata” based on the bounties they brought in—and the number of corpses.

The formation of the Star League brought the era of the bounty hunter to a close. While some still made a living hunting down fugitives, the bounty hunter “lifestyle” essentially died, until the fall of the Star League. During Kerensky’s drive toward Terra, bounty hunters were in greater and greater demand as the SLDF concentrated its energies on bringing down Stefan Amaris. Soon afterward, when the Succession Wars engulfed the Inner Sphere, the bounty hunter once again became a necessary evil.

Somewhat surprisingly, throughout the “ages of the bounty hunter,” only a handful of these individuals have gained any amount of fame. Senn Urorii. Colonel Octavius Mortimer. Judge Harald the Deathbringer.

But none more famous—or infamous—than the Bounty Hunter.

### ***The Myth***

No one is exactly sure when the Bounty Hunter first appeared. Stories of the Bounty Hunter begin in the 2920s, when a masked individual piloting a green *Warhammer* gained some notoriety by hunting down rogue MechWarriors with prices on their heads. No one ever found out his name, but he brought in some of the biggest bounties of the time—most of them dead—which is likely why stories of his exploits spread so far and so quickly. After a century and a half, fact-finding is more than a little difficult, but stories of this individual taking down entire ‘Mech battalions by himself are certainly tall tales, though they may be rooted in fact. The tale most often told is one in which this mysterious bounty hunter brought in the bodies of twenty-nine men who had robbed a bank on El Giza. He allegedly collected millions in bounties, and later sold their BattleMechs for even more. Though the story cannot be fully verified, enough evidence exists to suggest that the tales may not be far off the mark.



The man with the green *Warhammer* apparently disappeared from public view after collecting the El Giza bounties. Three

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decades later, in 1957, a man in either an environment suit or a full Star League-era MechWarrior combat suit, piloting a green *Warhammer*, appeared and claimed the bounties on a group of pirates that had been preying on worlds in the Principality of Regulus. Since then, the tale of the Bounty Hunter has grown to titanic proportions.

The Bounty Hunter, as that masked individual quickly came to be known, spent years working solo, traveling across the Inner Sphere and Periphery, tracking only those criminals with the highest bounties. More often than not, he brought in their corpses. The Bounty Hunter worked alone for more than two decades, but by the 1980s he had assembled a team of MechWarriors to aid him in taking down the biggest prey. Originally, that team may well have been temporary, assembled from “friendly” bounty hunters and/or mercenaries only when additional manpower was needed.



That had changed by the 1990s. Prior to that point, the Bounty Hunter’s team was different every time they were seen in public, and their ‘Mechs never sported the same paint jobs. In fact, not even the Bounty Hunter’s own ‘Mech remained a constant—at times he piloted the *Warhammer*, while at other times he rode a *Grasshopper* or even a *Griffin*. Eventually, the team settled to between four and six members, including the Bounty Hunter, with each ‘Mech frequently painted the same green (though many times, the Bounty Hunter’s comrades sported other colors on their ‘Mechs).

The Bounty Hunter did more to change the way he had previously operated. In addition to using cohorts, he began to take on a much darker image. Rather than just hunt the worst criminals with the largest bounties on their heads, he took to accepting contracts for hunting down just about anyone for money. This soon led the Bounty Hunter to accept contracts from the Great Houses to capture or kill notable enemy MechWarriors, generals and even businessmen and engineers. By the start of the new millennium, the man who had gained notoriety as the one person who could



bring in the most dangerous criminals was reviled throughout the Inner Sphere and Periphery. Where once MechWarriors dreamed of working with the Bounty Hunter, now they cursed him for hunting and killing others of their kind, for no other reason than money. Worse still, the Bounty Hunter embraced that image. He began

to display monetary symbols on his 'Mech, letting all know where his true loyalties lay.

From that point on, the Bounty Hunter became a blight on humanity... at least, according to the stories. He killed anyone who got in his way. He lied, double-crossed and stole. And he did so with glee. One of the earliest stories portrays him and his MechWarriors landing on the Federated Suns world of Markesan in 2996, killing two AFFS generals and everyone else in their command post, including a host of staff and non-combat personnel, and stealing their BattleMechs before sneaking offworld. While traveling to claim their bounties for that assault in the Draconis Combine, they slipped onto Le Blanc, where they bargained with a new and untested mercenary unit to provide them safe transport into the Combine. In return, the hunters agreed to arrange a contract with the DCMS for that merc unit. The Bounty Hunter and his compatriots posed as members of the unit, but as soon as they had safely crossed over into the Combine, they killed everyone belonging to the mercenary unit and then took their 'Mechs and even their DropShip.



Other stories recount exploits in the Free Worlds League in 2998-99, when the Bounty Hunter tracked down officers and popular MechWarriors, presenting their heads, as the story goes, to then-Colonel Katrina Steiner. Still more speak of events in 3005, when he apparently turned on his Steiner benefactors to hunt Lyran nobles, politicians and generals. He also allegedly took alternating contracts with the Federated Suns and Capellan Confederation to kill or kidnap notables on both sides of the border, always one-upping his own deeds at the behest of the side he had just targeted.

And then there were his infamous run-ins with the Black Widow, Natasha Kerensky. The first one took place in 3014 on the world of Nova Roma. Both the Bounty Hunter and Kerensky were hunting those still loyal to Janos Marik when the Bounty Hunter turned on the Widow, leaving her for dead and claiming her *Marauder*, which he took over as his own signature BattleMech. Kerensky lived through the ordeal and vowed to exact vengeance (some even say she somehow got her hands on his *Warhammer* and began to use that as her trademark 'Mech).

The second recorded run-in took place on Le Blanc in 3024. The exact details of this meeting remain unknown (though rumor



has it that Duke Michael Hasek-Davion attempted to lure Wolf's Dragoons—through Kerensky—into a contract with him), but apparently the Bounty Hunter killed two of Kerensky's MechWarriors out of sheer spite. The final meeting amazingly saw the two temporarily allying on Benet III in 3027 when their employers—Kerensky working for the Combine and the Bounty Hunter working for the FedSuns—left them both without support on a planet full of enemies. Once they escaped that world, they went their own ways, though the animosity between the two apparently never cooled.

Those are just a few of the most famous of the Bounty Hunter's exploits. He worked as a free agent throughout the Fourth Succession War, accepting contracts from each of the five Great Houses at various times. After the war, he uncharacteristically began hunting prominent Combine officers, apparently without a contract, only to spend the next several years in the employ of the Draconis Combine.

By the time of the War of 3039, the Bounty Hunter was once again selling his services to the highest bidder and displaying no mores. He continued this way throughout the 3040s, serving as a proxy in the "cold war" between the Great Houses. But when the Clans appeared, the Inner Sphere needed a hero, and the Bounty Hunter stepped up to accept that challenge. Whether simply for the money and prestige or for more noble reasons, he did take on the Clans, and even gave the Inner Sphere a couple of victories. He claimed three solo kills in as many months in late 3050, though only at the cost of his comrades and his trademark *Marauder*. In return, he captured a Smoke Jaguar *Mad Cat*, riding that into battle and into a new era of fame. Suddenly, the most hated MechWarrior in the Inner Sphere was a hero once more.

Then, just as quickly as he had begun to gain fame in a new signature BattleMech, he disappeared. Some reported him dead. Some reported him captured. For years after, many people kept alive a hope that he would resurface, but nothing came of it. The Bounty Hunter was finished.

Or was he?

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