

SPINWARD MARCHES CLUSTER BOOK 1

THE BOWMAN ARM

A SUPPLEMENT FOR TRAVELLER

BASED ON THE AWARD-WINNING TRAVELLER GAME SYSTEM AND UNIVERSE BY MARC MILLER

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The Bowman Arm is set in the Spinward Marches of Official Traveller Universe, in the period just after the end of the Fifth Frontier War. As such it is compatible with either the official Hard Times – Collapse – Recovery – New Era timeline or an alternate wherein the assassination of Emperor Strephon does not occur.

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INTRODUCTION

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

The Bowman Arm is set in District 268 of the Spinward Marches, a region on the very outer fringe of the Third Imperium. This book gives an overview of the region and details one world within it. It stands alone as a game setting. However, this book is intended to be compatible with a series of supplements detailing the worlds of the cluster. Each of them stands alone, too, but the whole is a complete description of the region; it can play host to a multitude of adventures. Alternatively, any of the single-world books can be easily transplanted and used somewhere else, or in an entirely different game setting.

This book ties in with the ongoing 'Golden Age' adventure series from QLI and Avenger Enterprises. The first of the Avenger adventures, *Call of the Wild*, takes place just outside The Bowman Arm, on Steel in the Sword Worlds subsector.

STANDARDS AND ASSUMPTIONS

In order to use this supplement you will need one or another of the Traveller rules sets. This supplement is more or less stat-free except for Universal World Profiles. The interpretation of UWPs is the same across all versions of Traveller, so this represents no compatibility problem.

You will also need some dice as appropriate to your chosen rules set (normal 6-sided dice for CT and a variety of dice for T20). Pens, pencils and paper are useful, plus maybe something to drink and munchies of some kind. Double chocolate muffins are popular at present.

Dates: All dates correspond to the standard Imperial calendar. This supplement assumes that the date is around 001-1111 (i.e. the beginning of year 1111 since the founding of the Third Imperium). Time will flow normally once play begins. If a different date is required, for example to fit the adventure into an existing campaign, then the start date can be altered with little or no disruption to the adventure.

Place: The supplement is set in District 268, a subsector of Spinward Marches sector.

BACKGROUND

The following information is provided for the use of the Referee, who should decide how much of it is freely available to the characters, and also how distorted any information they may discover should be. Note that what is presented here is not the whole story in many cases, and is open to a certain amount of interpretation.

THE IMPERIUM IN 1111

The Third Imperium is 1110 years old. It has weathered civil war, frontier conflict and some rather serious internal crises but remains as strong and stable as ever; at least on the surface. There is no reason to suppose that any of the many problems facing the Imperium and her Emperor, Strephon, are serious enough to merit extreme measures, let alone that they might threaten the peace and stability of the Imperium.

The Fifth Frontier War, fought against a coalition of Vargr, Sword Worlders and Zhodani (and led by the latter) has been recently brought to a successful conclusion. The early stages of the war did not go well for the Imperial forces, mainly due to poor leadership and strategy among senior Imperial admirals. That changed when Duke Norris dramatically took charge of the situation, purging the upper echelons of the Imperial command structure ruthlessly. Some critics have suggested that Norris abused the power given to him by an Imperial Warrant; others say that this is exactly why the Emperor trusted Norris with the Warrant in the first place.

Today, the ripples caused by the war are beginning to subside. The political situation in the region is a little turbulent due to disaffection in some quarters. The sacked admirals (obviously) but also their political supporters and allies are up in arms about the way they were simply sidelined – heroic victor or not, there are many who feel that Norris has over-reached himself and needs to be cut down to size. The implications of Norris' dramatic assumption of personal command may be more far-reaching than anticipated. Already there are rumors that nobles in far corners of the Imperium are seeking to make their own powerplays, though most are proceeding cautiously while they wait to see what the Emperor has to say about the situation.

Reserve naval and ground forces units are already entering the Marches to make good losses incurred in the war, and a new round of shipbuilding has been approved to bring the reserve strength back up to establishment levels. The numbers of warships lost, while large, are a drop in the ocean compared to the might of the Imperial fleets. The war has not significantly reduced the ability of the Imperium to defend its territory.

THE SPINWARD MARCHES

The Spinward Marches Sector has relatively little significance in Imperial affairs, except that it is the Imperial border with the Zhodani Consulate and also with certain Vargr states. Lying fully 44 weeks' transit from Capital by Express Boat (a little less by Jump-6 courier, but not much), and separated from the Imperial core by the upper claw of the Great Rift, the region is considered to be a fairly unimportant backwater that serves as a convenient buffer against the Zhodani. However, the Spinward Marches were also the origin of Admiral Olav Hault-Plankwell's bid to become Emperor. The last thing Emperor Strephon wants is another Civil War, so the government of the Marches must be strong... but not too strong.

It will be some time before matters return to normal in the Marches. The naval bases and orbital defenses are being rebuilt and the battle squadrons replaced, but losses to minor warships will take longer to make good. In the interim, the Navy is doing all it can to maintain order on the spaceways but the inevitable upsurge in piracy, smuggling and general lawlessness has the remaining naval assets overtaxed. Some of the slack is being taken up with mercenary and even Scout Service vessels, but things are unsettled at best.

The war has also cause massive economic disruption even in areas where no fighting took place. Local defensive forces are gradually standing down while merchant ships return to their routes from wherever service as naval auxiliaries may have taken them. There are new opportunities for the taking in this shaken-up environment, and dangers to match.

The most troubled regions lie of course along the Imperial-Zhodani border, where tensions still run high. The Sword Worlds subsector is also unstable at present. The defeat of the Sword Worlders has resulted in Imperial occupation forces being based on some worlds, while others have been absorbed into a grouping now known as the Border Worlds. This group includes some former Sword Worlds and also the former Reserve Worlds of Steel, Mithril, Bronze and Iron. There are big plans for this area, which will in time provide a link to Imperial territory in Five Sisters subsector. However, it is early days yet.

THE SPINWARD MAIN

The Spinward Main is a vast chain of star systems sprawling across the entire Spinward Marches sector. It provides a Jump-1 link to Deneb and Foreven sectors and links some of the most prominent worlds of the sector: Regina, Mora, Lunion and Glisten. Much of the Main is underdeveloped, but still large numbers of small merchant ships make their living freighting or engaging in speculative trade along the Main. By long tradition, heading in the direction of District 268 (broadly Spinward-Rimward) or along the Trin Arm (Trailing-Rimward) from Regina is 'Down the Main'; the opposite direction is 'Up'.

The Spinward Main forks in several places. An arm of the Main diverging at Biter in the Sword Worlds subsector allows access to the Sword Worlds and ultimately the territory of the Darrians, but this is not considered part of the Main by Imperial traders as it passes through the potentially dangerous territory of the Sword Worlds Confederation. Another divergence takes place at Caliburn. The Collace Arm leads Rimward from there, diverging again at Talos. The Collace Arm proper winds onward through Collace and finally terminates at Froin in the e Five Sisters subsector. The Glisten Arm heads Trailingward into Glisten subsector and contains more than half its worlds.

The Bowman Arm meanders to Spinward, to the edge of Foreven sector. It links the handful of Imperial worlds in Five Sisters subsector with the rest of Imperial territory. This arm sees much less traffic than the more central parts of the main, though since the end of the Fifth Frontier War there are big plans to open up District 268. The Bowman Arm will be an important part of this expansion.

Traffic on the Spinward Main is varied. Small tramp freighters wander along it or ply a short section of it under contract. Many such are Subsidized Merchants, an ideal design for this kind of work. Larger vessels work segments of the Main, but these tend to be Jump-2 or higher vessels which can move quickly between the more lucrative ports of call on and off the Main. Most of the sector can be accessed by a jump-2 ship using the Spinward Main, so vessels belonging most of the larger shipping firms can be encountered somewhere on it.

It has long been suggested that, with suitable investment in ports and supporting infrastructure, the Spinward Main could help the Marches become an economic powerhouse with internal trade facilitated by a web of large and small shipping concerns centered on the Main. The money has never been available, and the need is not at this time perceived since the Marches are a backwater of no great importance in the wider Imperium.