The Long Patrol

By Duvalasur

(psst, if you like this and the other stuff I’ve done, feel free to buy me a Ko-Fi <https://ko-fi.com/duvalasur>)

# Setup

The remnants of Beggar-One’s Machine army are exhibiting new, abnormal behaviours. For the first time since the defeat of their commanders, they are waking up. Ilyr Ordo, Primoz Commorand, and Terror have concluded that additional preparations need to be made if the Mycol fields are going to whatever threat this new behaviour forecasts. They order the players to investigate and disrupt the source of this change. Winter is coming early again.

*Long Patrol is a* ***free form*** *mission. After each assignment is completed, players will be presented with two new encounter options (henceforth called Assignments) at a time. The encounters are tagged by faction: Machine Remnants and Bicameral Alliance. The encounter option not chosen will remain as new options are presented to the players. The Mission ends after four encounters have been completed.*

*All encounters are balanced for 4-player groups. Adjust according to your table’s preferences*

## Clocks

There are three clocks to be aware of on this mission: HUC war readiness, Bicameral Entrenchment, and the Resurrection of the Machine Army.

**HUC War Readiness [ six segments ]** represents the preparedness and morale of the HUC Rangers in the face of the coming conflict with the Bicameral Alliance. It starts at zero segments. Tick this clock up each time the players successfully complete an assignment, including the first.

**Bicameral Entrenchment [ six segments ]** measures the position of the Bicameral Invasion force on Solo Terra. Tick this clock up each time the players do not choose a Bicameral Assignment. The more segments are filled in, the harder it will be to dislodge them in the battles ahead.

*Use this clock to determine the difficulty of Flashpoints checks made during the Battle of Town-03 and the Battle of Laguna.*

**Resurrection of the Machine Army [ six segments ]** represents the re-mobilization of the Machine Army following the death of Beggar One. Tick this clock up each time the players do not choose a Machine Remnants

*The more segments are filled in on this clock, the harder it will be to fend them off during their attack on Mycol Fields.*

# Mission Structure

Players can take a short rest after every two assignments. There are seven assignments in total. Players can complete a maximum of five assignments before Landmark arrives and they are called back to Mycol Fields.

Assignments are revealed in sequence. Each time the players complete an assignment, the two assignments from the next sequence are revealed.

| Sequence | Assignments | Faction |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Overlook | Machine Remnants |
| 2 | More it Changes | Machine Remnants |
| Falling Star | Bicameral Alliance |
| 3 | Sun’s Out, Gun’s Out | Bicameral Alliance |
| Red Eye | Machine Remnants |
| 4 | Ounce of Prevention | Bicameral Alliance |
| Descent | Machine Remnants |

Machine Remnant Missions

## Overlook (Recon)

### Description

First Encounter of Long Patrol. Players must find the appropriate location to set up sensor equipment. Serves as a refresher on combat if there’s been a break.

### Summary

Ilyr Ordo and Terror, after conferring with their strategic advisers, have concluded that whatever threat this strange new Machine behavior may forecast, if Mycol Fields is going to weather it then they need to be prepared. To that end, they've tasked the salvage printer with fabricating the components for an early warning network to be distributed across the valley; sensor nets, long-loiter recon drones, signal interceptors. However there's one particular spot they've noted that would be able to provide exceptional surveillance coverage across the ruins of Evergreen themselves, a bluff overlooking the abandoned settlement with clear sightlines. The problem is getting there to deploy the systems in the first place. That's where the players come in.

Their mission here isn't to take the fight to the Machine. At this point no one even knows who or what is behind this sudden resurrection. Beggar One is *dead,* anybody who was present at the time can definitively confirm as much, but NHPs are strange creatures so who can say for certain that some remnant shard of code hasn't sprung to life within the subalterns and chassis previously thought dormant?

That's a mystery for another day. Right now, they have a hill to take.

Time isn't as crucial a factor for this mission so the players are free to plan their approach to the designated location as they like, though no route will truly be without danger. An assortment of skill challenges as well as combat encounters (at least one or two) should be seeded along the way depending on whether they adopt a more direct approach or choose a circuitous route that may require several more days of travel and pose new, unexpected risks.

Among these risks are the anomalies that have begun to manifest around Evergreen in the wake of Beggar One's death. Paracausal energies which erupted from the shattered remains of his casket amid his death throes have saturated the valley, creating an altogether new form of hazard beyond mere conventional radiation. Though not existentially dangerous to Hercynia in any fashion, they nonetheless pose a threat to incautious travelers. Short-lived metafolds, pocket dimensions outside of realspace, envelop people before depositing them back into the real world minutes or hours later or shunt them elsewhere in the valley, energetic disturbances flare up out of nowhere before subsiding just as suddenly, and zones of unusually high or low gravity appear without warning. The rangers attempted to chart the locations of these anomalies when they first encountered them but as they don't seem to remain in fixed locations the effort was quickly abandoned. The one noted regularity is that the frequency and intensity of these anomalies increases the closer one gets to the Governor's Farm in Evergreen.

Whatever obstacles the players face along the way, they'll have one final challenge to overcome once they finally arrive at the designated location.

### Combat

As the players approach the bluff overlooking Evergreen they'll find themselves having to cautiously navigate through the apparent wreckage of fallen Machine forces, destroyed or rendered dormant after Beggar One's death. Unlike the ones down below, these chassis and subalterns don't appear to have been affected by the same reanimating imperative as the others...at least not at first. Scans don't show any signs of power or activity within their frames, but as soon as the players reach the target location they spring to life, rampant codebursts causing sensors to glitch wildly as they attack in force.

This combat is handled as a Recon sitrep. The sensor equipment that the players have brought with them needs to be deployed in the optimal position to maximize effective coverage. They won't need to worry about protecting the equipment once it's deployed as it's been outfitted with active camouflage and sensor baffles, they simply need to get it into the proper position to do its job.

### Anomalies

Complicating this matter is the eruption of several anomalies as the remnant Machine forces begin their attack. Seeded throughout the map are 3-4 anomaly zones, Blast 1 areas with variable effects. At the start of each round, roll a d6 to determine the effect these zones will have for the round (you can roll for each zone individually, or simply make one roll for all of them to keep things simpler):

* 1-2: The anomaly zone becomes **Difficult Terrain** and all characters within it are **Slowed** until they leave the zone or the zone's effect changes.
* 3-4: All characters within the zone are subject to the rules for **Dangerous Storms** on page 278 of the *Lancer* core rulebook.
* 5-6: All characters within the zone must pass a Systems check at the end of their turn. If they fail they are immediately teleported to a free space of their choice within a different anomaly zone. The GM chooses the destination zone for players, the players choose the destination zone for NPCs.

### **NPCs**

| **NPC Type** | **Tier** | **Templates** | **Optional Systems** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Barricade | 1 | Veteran | Seismic Repulsor, Drag Down, Feign Death |
| Demolisher | 1 | Elite | Concussion Missiles, Broad Sweep Haft |
| Assault | 1 | Commander | MicroMissile Barrage, Press the Attack |
| x2 Support | 1 |  | Defensive Pulse, Empowered Cloud |
| x12 Berserker  ( deploy in pods of 4 on every even round)) | 1 | Grunt | Harpoon Gun |

Subaltern Swarms lie scattered around the map (10 HP), reactivating at the start of combat. They stay in one place, attacking any hostile characters that enters their area. All attacks automatically hit against them.

Barricade, Demolisher, and Assault, and Supports are all already present on the map. Berserkers only spawn on even-numbered rounds, in groups of 3 to 4, from different corners of the map.

## Plus ça change (Escort)

### Description

Protect the demolitions team on their approach to the communication tower

Signal interceptors recently began picking up unusual transmissions coming from the direction of Evergreen. They aren't HUC or Landmark, and in fact don't seem to be decipherable at all. A recon team was sent to investigate, and when they returned they reported that the Machine forces have begun doing...something to one of the old Evergreen communication towers. Precisely what they aren't sure. It appears that subalterns are patching additional power units to the tower's base, adding additional relays in configurations which make no sense, even welding bits of scrap to the surface in a crude approximation of armor.

Nobody's sure what the Machines are broadcasting or to who, but whatever it is can't be good. That's why, in a moment of poetic irony, you're being sent to Evergreen to destroy the comms tower.

Unfortunately the place isn't quite the way you left it. The Machines have established a fairly well fortified position around the tower and have even up-armored its structure, so a hit-and-run strike won't be enough to guarantee that it goes down for good. To that end Brava Hadura has assembled a mixed team of engineers from Evergreen and Hercynian demolition specialists. Your job will be to escort the team to the tower and cover them while they set the charges.

Upon arriving at the tower the players discover that these machines are different from those previously encountered; they are half-melted, coherent, and somewhat conversable. They proclaim that they are no longer royalists, having found atomic divinity in the **Mendicant.** They will not elaborate further and attack the players shortly thereafter.

### Structure

This battle is a modified Escort sitrep where the players are tasked with providing protection to the demolition team’s remote-controlled drones on their approach to the communication tower. The approach to the tower itself is likely to be littered with debris and swampy from the rampant flooding that's affected the area, creating both cover and difficult terrain.

The remote-operated demolition drones have the following stats [15 HP, 1 armour, 8 Evasion, 8 EDef). There are six of them on the field. They function as normal escort target, moving only when the players do. When destroyed, they exploded in a blast 2 radius, dealing 3d6 Explosive damage. Enemies always prioritize the players whenever possible, though their area-damaging effects may catch the drones in firefight. If you feel this is too punishing, reduce the damage to 2d6 Explosive.

Anomalies such as those encountered during **Overlook** may also be present.

The players will need to work quickly if they don't want to risk further Machine reinforcements breaking off from Evergreen and joining the battle. If they can successfully escort the demolition team to the extraction zone before the end of the eighth round then their mission is accomplished and the tower goes down.

If by the end of the eighth round the demolition team hasn't reached the extraction zone then further reinforcements arrive and overwhelm the players, forcing a difficult choice; retreat with the mission objective unsuccessful, or elect to destroy the tower using Power At a Cost. If they choose the latter option, in addition to whatever other costs are deemed appropriate the demolition team save for Tyrell Markey will be lost in action.

Success in this battle means the tower will be silenced, ending its mysterious transmissions, but also the demolition team will take the opportunity to quickly pilfer several interesting looking bits of tech for further analysis before they detonate the charges. After being extensively thoroughly and carefully inspected for infectious viral code, the recovered technology can be repurposed for combat use.

### **NPCs**

| **NPC Type** | **Tier** | **Templates** | **Optional Systems** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1x Pyro | 2 | Exotic | Superhot, Unshielded Reactor |
| 1-2x Goliath | 2 | Exotic | Crushing Embrace, Watchful Guardian |
| 1x Witch | 2 | Elite, Exotic | Spread suffering, Chain, Regenerator |
| 1-2x Cataphracts | 2 | Exotic | Capacitor Discharge |
| 2x Cataphracts (Reinforcement) | 2 | Exotic | Capacitor Discharge |
| 2x Pyro (Reinforcement) | 2 | Exotic | Superhot, Unshielded Reactor |

**Tactics**:

Adjust initial deployments depending on player skill level. Stagger deployments of cataphract and pyro reinforcements on subsequent rounds, based on how well the players have been performing so far. If they’re struggling, keep the reinforcement in reserves. The large number of drones will give the players a safety net, but if one goes it is likely to take out several others - and any nearby players as well. Keep the Goliaths close to the witch, and use the Cataphracts to pull the players away from each other and towards the pyros. There should be constant forward pressure. Encounter ends after six rounds.

Bicameral Missions

## Falling Star

### Description

Players must recover a recently-fallen Cassander drop pod before St Tellan forces claim it for themselves

### Details

//PRIORITY ALERT:::SM-D (ANTIPATER:::CASSANDER:::CRATERUS) HAVE BEEN COMPROMISED:::REPEAT:::SM-D (ANTIPATER:::CASSANDER:::CRATERUS) HAVE BEEN COMPROMISED:::CONTINGENCY [SUNSET\_TRUE] IS NOW IN EFFECT:::ALL REMAINING PLANETARY FORCES REPORT TO DESIGNATED REDOUBT SHELTERS:::GRID COORDINATES TO FOLLOW VIA EMERGENCY DROP AND COMMAND AUTHENTICATION (INDIGO:::SIENNA:::ONYX):::WE WILL FIGHT TO THE LAST:::GODSPEED:::MESSAGE WILL REPEAT : : :

A ping hits the city's omnihooks one evening, a wideband signal transmitting on a Union channel, but a very, very old one. After cleaning the signal up the above message can be heard playing on a loop, notifying anyone who's listening of something referred to only as Contingency Sunset. At the same time, the Skywatcher arrays established by some of Evergreen's engineers to warn about possible incoming air attacks picks up a fast-moving contact on an orbit-to-surface trajectory.

After a brief panic, it becomes apparent that this isn't an orbital attack. If the players are in the right place they might even be able to look up and see the blazing comet trail in the sky of something entering Hercynia's atmosphere. Whatever the object is it's landed a ways away, most likely several days' travel. It doesn't respond to any communication attempts, simply broadcasting the same message over and over again.

Perhaps by going through some of the old Union hardcopy records Mycol Field has on hand the players can discover enough clues to piece this particular puzzle together. The SM-D platforms were considered by Union high command to be one of the cornerstones of their control over the Hercynian theater. The capture or destruction of all three platforms was to be considered a worst case scenario. Should that happen, theater command's plan was, essentially, to abandon Hercynia, pull back to a reinforced position, and consider options for long-travel planetary bombardment.

This plan didn't allow for off-world evacuation, as it was assumed the loss of the SM-D platforms would mean that the Egregorians would control Hercynian airspace and orbit absolutely. Thus, during the early days of the war a number of hardened, subterranean "redoubt shelters" were constructed in secret locations across Union-occupied territory. In the event of what was designated Contingency Sunset, remaining Union forces were to go to ground in these shelters, which contained supplies for them to wage an ongoing guerrilla campaign against the enemy until Union could reassert control of the planet or, the more likely outcome, they were killed.

To preserve the secrecy of these shelters until they were needed, the coordinates were stored on black boxes to be launched from the SM-D platforms themselves, dropped into what was once Union territory from orbit. Some critical damage or system failure aboard the Cassander must have finally triggered this protocol, sending one of these black boxes plummeting to Hercynia's surface. This presents a unique opportunity. These shelters could contain a treasure trove of resources and supplies if the players can locate the black box and pull the coordinates from it. Of course they'll have to move fast, because they surely aren't the only ones to receive the transmission.

### Setup

This combat scenario is a **King of the Hill** sitrep (see . When the players finally arrive at the drop location they find they aren't the only ones there. A rapid reaction force from St. Tellus was dispatched to locate and secure the drop pod after the automated signal was intercepted, and they arrive either shortly before or shortly after the players do, prompting a fight.

If the players have the highest score at the end of the **4th** round then they succeed in holding the position long enough to retrieve the black box information, which triggers an automated self-destruct shortly thereafter. If the St. Tellan force is victorious, they drive the players off and retrieve the information for themselves.

On a tie, the pod's self-destruct triggers and the data is lost to everyone.

Success in this battle means that computer techs and analysts back at Mycol Fields will be able to, with some trial and error, decrypt a partial list of shelter coordinates. These shelters are buried underground or built into geological formations but with the proper information and access codes, along with some heavy machinery, accessing them is relatively straightforward. Not everything stored within the shelters weathered the passage of 500 years intact, but enough did to be well worth the trouble.

Inside the players will find a substantial quantity of old-pattern Union weapons and personal armor, stable explosives, survival gear, maps (mostly out of date, but still geographically accurate), communications equipment, and while even military rations can't survive for half a millennium each shelter contains a coldcore-powered cryovault stocked with medical supplies, including broad-spectrum antibiotics and antiradiation supplements. All of this helps alleviate a number of supply shortages, easing the burden for everyone, and in addition to the substantial narrative benefits it also grants **the players +1 Accuracy to all downtime actions they take during the next downtime involving the people of Mycol Fields.**

(Author’s note: still adapting the rest of these)