Mission 7a: Battle of Town 3

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

Dthall and Mirth lead a small group - including the Lancers - on the first true offensive mission against the Bicameral in Godown.

This setup assumes a branching path where the players have chosen to join Dthall and Mirth rather than stay behind in Mycol Fields/Home to defend against the Machine.

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

## Denial of Service

Follows a similar setup as the book. There are three towers on the map (Evasion 5, HP 15 for 3-4 players, 20HP for 5 players) Players must destroy each of them by the end of the 6th round. Spawn the Bicam at the middle of the map, players at an edge of their choosing. Encouraging them to spread out will open them up to be isolated by the Bicam Mechs.

Let the players do a little narrative bit on how they sneak up to base, imposing statuses and conditions on the player’s mechs at the start of the encounter based on their actions (i.e. if a player shuts down their mech to avoid detection, their mech starts shut down, etc)

Recommended Encounter balance:

Include a combination of high-mobility striking and CC NPCs in combination with a Commanding support-type or two and a few meaty defenders. Hornets and Aces work well for the first category; A Support Commander or a Priest Commander paired with a non-templated version of whichever isn’t chosen works well for the second category (if you are expanding your NPC roster outwards, the Sergeant from Suldan is excellent here and synergizes well with Commander Template and the feeling of fighting a more intelligent foe than the machine)

For the Third Category; Bastions, or Sentinels are groovy. If you wanna get spicy with a group of experience players, make the Defender an Ultra Vet who is really dang tired of being assigned to the worst possible places. In my campaign I included an Ultra Vet Gladiator from Suldan with the backstory of being an old Bug Bout veteran kept alive through extensive cybernetics and happy to have another war to fight.

The fight shouldn’t be too challenging, though it should poke them hard in their resources. It serves as a good opportunity to remind the players that they don’t need to destroy all the enemies to achieve their objective

## Interlude: Narrative beats

Encourage the players to describe how they are approaching. Include a narrative flashpoint here. Use the ones from the notes as inspo, but also lean in to your players here and the emergent narrative beats. Maybe the Commander from the last fight sent a fast-flier to alert Town-03 or another base. How do the players try to prevent it from happening? Or do the players come across a minefield and have to navigate through it.

There is no need to make a dedicated combat map for any of these. I do strongly recommend using short clock to measure the player’s progress. If you want to light a fire under them, have a global “Bicam Calls for Reinforcements” Clock with 12 segments to represent the closing window of opportunity before the HUC must retreat. This doesn’t need to be an actual fail state. The players are pretty powerful at this point. But the threat of a campaign-altering fail state will help keep them on task.

## **Hollow Hope**

The fight along the edges of Town 3 is a Gauntlet against a combination of Machine forces and the Bicameral Alliance. Narratively, this is an opportunity to show the distinction in how these two factions collaborate: the Machine acting as a wall between well entrenched Bicameral Artillery mechs

Encounter Balancing:

Use long range artillery and controller units for the Bicam here, and stick them behind the nice defensive wall. Bombards paired with Scouts work great here, with a defender like a Bastion to help peel them off. A Commander Hive to guide them can make it clear that they’re the ones in charge. You don’t need many Bicam units, just enough to poke the players as they attempt to close the gap.

If the Bicam need to leave the wall to take cover behind the conveniently placed hard cover out front, describe small gaps rapidly opening or closing to let them units in and out. Maybe a player will try and use this to their advantage, by either grappling a bicam unit or attempting to mimic the IFF signal. Reward them for their creativity here, but don’t make it easy for them to pull it off.

For the machine, cataphracts and barricades work well here. Describe them as walking on a mindless loop until a player mech enters line of sight from them. Even then, they shouldn’t move towards the players, but rather force the players to move towards them. One of these units should be a tough-to-kill centrepiece threat

Think of this as a sort of redux on [The Horde] from Mission 1, only a little tougher. The Machine units that have survived this long are a little nastier than their fellows, and have a bag of tricks up their sleeves. I had a recurring Machine Barricade NPC called [The Citadel] show up here, an Elite Veteran with the Feign Death optional and had him be a sneaky little scamp who’d wait until the final round when the players were almost off the map to do his revival trick and run away.

Your players will eat nemesis characters like that right up. Create an itch that drags out across multiple missions and it will be all the more satisfying when they finally end it.

## Interlude: Narrative beats in Town-03

As before, lean into the narrative. The notes have some fun beats describing building to building fighting against entrenched Bicam force. Expand on that. Even though the players have successfully made one entrance, do they need to hold it for a while so their allies can help secure the beachhead into Town-03? Maybe those allies arrive quickly and they can go support another offensive, then run that offensive as a narrative bit if you don’t want to make another map and keep things moving.

Something I did here was a soft-introduction of Hierophant-3 in the form of uniformed synthskin subalterns rushing to the aid of fallen Bicam force, evacuating them or doing rapid field repairs on their mechs. Emphasize how these subalterns don’t operate like Beggar-One’s horde. They’re faster, nimbler, more interested in buying time for their allies and much, much smarter about how to disable enemy mechs. If they try to hack the subalterns, emphasize how much firmer Hierophant’s defenses are (Heroic Checks with difficulty are good here!) With devastating consequences if they get it wrong (Hierophant counter hacks and shuts down their mech’s systems, forcing a lengthy reboot process, Hierophant disables a weapon or system on their mech, forcing the player to choose whether to save the system or lose the opportunity to accomplish what they wanted, Hierophant infects a player’s NHP with a lesser version of Cynosure and now they’re hyperfocusing on civic planning)

For a particularly tense narrative moment, maybe a Hierophant unit breaks into one of their mechs and tries to manually subdue a player. Hierophant doesn’t need to speak here, just be a clear, present, and unstoppable threat… all the way up until the moment passes where their ally achieves an important strategic goal at which point the subaltern shuts down and bricks itself. This can help establish how the Bicam have a different relationship with the Machine Horde, while setting up a juicy hook for players to explore during downtime

## Keyholder

The final combat of the battle, as written in the notes.

This is a Control Sitrep where the players start at a disadvantage, with the secondary goal of taking Bicameral Commanders alive. Have 2 to 3 of them on the field, each of different classes. At least two of them should be either Commander Elites or Command Veterans. For experience or large groups, include a Commander Ultra.

This is a tough fight, but remember that the player’s goal is taking and holding various control points across the map. Mobility is the real key here; Force the players into rough positions and lock them down in the alleys. Give them just enough time to formulate a strategy then break it with an unexpected NPC activation.

For enemy comp:

Hives, Priests, Goliaths, Seeders, and Sentinels work well for the commanders

Seeders, Sentinels, and Avengers work well for the mooks. Did a Bicameral NPC manage to escape from an earlier fight? Bring them back in here for that juicy payoff.