

# FREELANCER: LIBERTY OVERVIEW

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*Eight great ships were launched during the Exodus, each protecting their precious cargo of humanity deep within their metal wombs. They fled for the stars, away from the final spasm of war that swallowed their first home in fire and then in blackness. Somewhere out there they would make a new home, they would begin again and this time -- this time they would not repeat the mistakes that had been made before.*

*Eight great ships. Four were lost to accidents, to conflict, to the void. The names of the other four have become legend: Kusari, Rheinland, Bretonia, and Liberty...*

## **Pre-Settlement**

The *Liberty* was the first of the great sleeper ships to launch from Earth during the tumult of the Exodus. There are whispered suggestions, even today, that the launch date may have been intentionally moved forward -- against the explicit wishes of the Great Planners -- in order to allow the *Liberty* free access to the worlds of the Sirius Sector before the other sleeper ships arrived, but all proof of such a betrayal of trust has been lost along with Earth. Even if the *Liberty* had launched early, there is little that can be done about it now...but there remains a lingering feeling of resentment among the other houses: a vague feeling that, somehow, Liberty does not entirely deserve the position of superiority it enjoys eight centuries later.

When the *Liberty* first arrived in the Sirius Sector they found an area rich in resources but lacking in habitable planets. With a hundred systems at their fingertips, they settled on those near the center of Sirius where the highest number of main sequence stars and Earth-like planets existed and a fair number of resources could be easily obtained. Eventually they made planetfall on Manhattan in the system they christened New York and began the difficult task of rebuilding civilization, two full years before any other sleeper ship arrived.

*NOTE: Dates are calculated as Standardized Years "after settlement." 0 A.S. is synonymous with the landing of the Liberty.*

## **0-10 A.S.**

Manhattan was an easy planet to settle, a place of oceans and prairies and warm breezes. After planetfall, colonists immediately set about building a permanent settlement under the guidance of military command. Survey teams were deployed to

map their new home and locate pockets of valuable minerals while automated agricultural equipment brought from Earth was assembled to farm the fertile soil. Within a decade schools were constructed to educate the first generation of native Libertonians, while Manhattan itself had become a small but vibrant community of explorers, scientists, and architects, all intent on inventing a new society that would avoid the mistakes of the old one.

## **12 A.S.**

After much debate, the Reformed Constitution is ratified by a two-thirds majority of the Manhattan population and the Liberty State is officially declared. The military government is dissolved, and in the first popular election in Liberty history, Commander Susan Jimenez (retired) narrowly defeats Eugene Kennedy for the presidency.

## **15 A.S.**

Valhalla Contact.

A survey team locates a strange structure of apparently artificial construction hidden deep within the Pike Mountains and undetectable by scanners. Upon investigation, scientists determine that the structure -- codenamed "Valhalla 1" -- is over 100,000 years old and almost certainly built by a non-human intelligence (NHI). It is the first sign of NHI that humanity has found in recorded history.

Valhalla 1 is immediately seized by the Liberty military and the site along with all information relating to it are declared national security secrets under the Omega Protocol. Breach of the Omega Protocol is considered high treason and is automatically punishable by solitary life imprisonment. All scientists and surveyors who have had prior access to the site are debriefed, quarantined, and subjected to intense psychological studies for six months. The unedited transcript of these sessions is known as the Valhalla Record, and even eight hundred years later it is still classified under the Omega Protocol and available only to the highest levels of the Liberty government and military.

Over the next year, military specialists attempt to gain access to Valhalla 1 which has so far proven impervious to all intrusion methods. A gifted physicist with a background in music, Dr. Wade Walker, finally manages to decode a portion of the inscription surrounding Valhalla 1 and finds that it equates a polyphonous musical scale to basic chemical elements. Using this knowledge, Dr. Walker manages to craft a "key" of musical tones that miraculously unseals Valhalla 1 for the first time in ages beyond counting...

Inside, scientists find a wealth of strange artifacts and holographic crystalline matrices that appear to be a form of document storage. Everything -- from the composition of the walls to the room temperature to the location of individual dust particles -- is recorded, filed, and eventually the objects are transported to the military research complex in Cheyenne. It will take them three years to even make a rudimentary translation of the table of contents on one crystalline cube.

Five years later, the Order of Cincinnatus is convened.

## **28 A.S.**

When the Reformed Constitution was ratified and the military government dissolved, several prominent members of the government -- including then President Jimenez, ranking military personnel, the Liberty Planners, and the *Liberty* artificial intelligence -- were of the belief that a democratic government was not necessarily the best response to any number of potential disasters that could befall a fledgling colony. Popular representation and personal liberties were cherished ideals that should be nurtured and encouraged, but they were disposable luxuries in comparison to the need to preserve the Liberty way of life. As a hedge against a future that none of them hoped would ever become a reality, the Order of Cincinnatus was formed. A secret organization composed of members from the highest levels of government, military, science, and industry, the Order was to step in with the full powers of a dictatorship if the survival of Liberty was threatened, and then retreat back into the shadows once that threat had passed. The Order exists even today, the second most closely guarded secret in Liberty, though it has only met a handful of times.

The most closely guarded secret in Liberty was the presentation of findings that was made to the Order at their first meeting: We Are Not Alone. Valhalla 1 was the product of an incalculably advanced alien species who called themselves -- as best could be transliterated -- the "D'am Kvosh." The information contained in Valhalla 1 only hinted at the scope and complexity of their technology, capable of molding genetic codes or bending time and space as easily as we would knot a piece of grass. From what scientists had been able to decipher, Valhalla 1 was something of a "seed library" designed to impart a carefully calculated portion of their technology to their successors. When pressed as to who that might be, the scientists merely looked chagrined and said "that information was lacking."

But what information was present could prove of enormous boon to all of humanity - - while insuring that Liberty remained the dominant force in the Sirius Sector at the same time. It might take centuries to decipher all of it, maybe even longer, but even the most basic fragments of their technology were far in advance of our own. For example, the elements corresponding to the musical key to Valhalla 1 discovered by Dr. Walker formed an immensely strong and flexible polymer material (later to be used in the construction of ship hull panels). Scientists were confident that with study, major advances derived from the D'am Kvosh library could be put into practical application within a decade.

The Order agreed.

#### **44 A.S.**

A relatively new firm, Valhalla Research, with backing from major interests in the government and military, unveils a breakthrough in materials research that allows the miniaturization of the same drive technology that was used to power the great sleeper ships while increasing both their power and efficiency. Travel between neighboring star systems can be accomplished in a matter of months rather than years.

#### **48 A.S.**

The Liberty Space Exploration Council is formed to oversee all civilian space navigation.

## **51 A.S.**

Spurred by the huge windfalls reaped by Valhalla Research and the new frontiers soon to open up in other systems, several of the major Manhattan construction companies merge into a giant construction conglomerate with extensive experience in both planetside and orbital construction; mining; refining; and materials. The new company, Monument Engineering, is awarded the contract to build the Roosevelt Shipyards.

## **54 A.S.**

The first survey ship incorporating the new Valhalla drive technology, the LSEC *Lewis & Clark*, charts the nearby system of Texas. While the most habitable planet in the system, Houston, is an arid world vulnerable to solar storms, the abundance of rare metals makes it an attractive location for industrial development.

## **58 A.S.**

Monument Engineering completes construction of the Roosevelt Shipyards and immediately begins working around the clock constructing new, larger vessels outfitted with the Valhalla engines for use in colonization.

## **60 A.S.**

While most of the systems bordering the Barrier Nebula are ill-suited to human habitation, the LSEC *Byrd* stumbles upon the California system during a routine resource assessment of the area. Like a jewel set against the vivid background of the nebula, the planet of Los Angeles is a lush, green world, early in its evolutionary development. Unfortunately, the salinity of the local ecosystem presents problems for any long-term agricultural development.

## **65 A.S.**

Colonization of the planet Houston in the Texas system begins with the establishment of a boron processing facility by Monument Engineering.

## **67 A.S.**

The LSEC *Lewis & Clark* completes its initial survey of the Colorado system; as suspected, the sizeable asteroid fields present contain huge quantities of steel, titanium, copper, and aluminum. The only planet even remotely habitable is a foreboding world of rock and ice, but the enormous amount of raw ore makes the system of strategic importance to the long-range plans of the Liberty military-industrial complex.

## **84 A.S.**

After nearly two decades of attempting to scratch out a life on Houston in the face of crop failures and poisonous alkali storms, the "Great Texas Flight" results in almost half of Houston's population leaving the planet. Many of these colonists re-settle on Pittsburgh in the New York system, or eventually end up in the Colorado system. The remaining Houston colonists are either too stubborn or too impoverished to leave.

Monument Engineering continues to operate its boron processing operations, though at reduced capacity.

#### **91 A.S.**

Communication between the other houses had been possible since the earliest days of settlement, but the distances involved made any kind of extended dialog difficult at best. Realizing the enormous potential for technological cross-pollination (not to mention the new markets that could be opened), the Liberty government passes a resolution creating a new branch of the military, the Communications Corp, responsible for building and maintaining a communications infrastructure between Liberty and the other houses.

#### **96 A.S.**

The LCC *Einstein* arrives in Rheinland, finally making real-time communication possible through a series of FTL relay buoys. One of the first pieces of business conducted over the new communications link is a technology swap: Valhalla's improved engine design in exchange for Rheinland's advances in construction.

#### **100 A.S.**

A nascent colony is established on Denver in the Colorado system to begin building a planetary infrastructure. Many of those same colonists are re-settled from either Houston or Pittsburgh after being offered incentives by the government. A Liberty bureaucrat is caught in an unguarded moment suggesting that it "might be best if those people were moved some place where they could contribute to society."

#### **106 A.S.**

The LCC *Edison* arrives in Bretonia; shortly thereafter, Valhalla's improved engine systems are exchanged for Bretonian advances in materials technology.

#### **118 A.S.**

The LCC *Einstein* arrives in Kusari, and Liberty reaps the benefits of Kusari technological advances in exchange for the "Liberty engine."

#### **120 A.S.**

Valhalla Research introduces their newest technological wonder, incorporating recently discovered superstrong crystalline polymers and frictionless bearings; when connected to orbital docking rings, these materials can be used to create "elevators" that almost completely negate the cost of boosting men or materials out of a planetary gravity well. Exploration and industry are revolutionized almost overnight, opening up the entire New York system for commercial exploitation. Valhalla licenses the technology to the other houses, reaping huge returns in the process.

#### **123 A.S.**

All three of the asteroid fields within the New York system are the subject of intensive mining operations, all directed towards feeding the increasingly voracious

demands of Liberty industry, particularly Valhalla Research and Monument Engineering.

### **125 A.S.**

At a secret meeting between the Order of Cincinnatus and the highest ranking board members of Valhalla Research, Valhalla scientists outline an ambitious plan to create so-called "jump gates" within fifty years. Using research derived from Valhalla 1, these gates would theoretically allow instantaneous travel between two distinct points in space, forever shattering the tyranny of distance that had ruled over humanity for so long.

### **126 A.S.**

Valhalla Research announces that they will be building a major research facility in Texas, working in conjunction with the Liberty military on a number of secret projects. Monument Engineering is selected to provide construction services.

### **128 A.S.**

Monument Engineering completes construction of the *Dallas*, an enormous research station and manufacturing facility in the Texas system; the military immediately declares a large portion of space surrounding the *Dallas* off-limits to civilian navigation. Texas experiences a renaissance as both Monument Engineering and Valhalla Research expand their operations in the system. Rumors abound as to what kind of research goes on in and around the *Dallas*, but information is carefully compartmentalized so that workers seldom know exactly how their small piece of the puzzle relates to anything else.

### **130 A.S.**

The Alaska system is surveyed.

### **130 A.S.**

Houston residents in the northern hemisphere who happened to look up at exactly 15:34 HST were witness to one of the most historic events in all of human history, though it's doubtful they knew it at the time. A brief flash, like a meteor streaking across the sky...and then nothing.

That flash was a small drone leaping across the light years in the blink of an eye. It was the first successful test of the jump gate system -- and the dawning of a new age.

### **142 A.S.**

A colony is established on Los Angeles in the California system with the intent of turning the planet into a food basket for the Liberty state. While the soil and climate are well-suited to growing any number of crops from the *Liberty's* seed library, the salinity of the ecosystem requires that all of the water must be painstakingly purified before it can be used. Monument Engineering proposes a project that would resolve the problem through bombardment of the planet with ice asteroids, releasing purified

water into the atmosphere; the Liberty government agrees to contract, and bombardment begins three years later.

### **150 A.S.**

A small company, Sirius Shipping, begins conducting supply runs between New York and California.

### **173 A.S.**

Colorado Silver Rush.

As the colonists on Denver begin to expand beyond the planet and conduct more detailed assays of the Colorado system, they make a surprising discovery: many of the asteroids in the system actually contain large deposits of silver. The initial LSEC survey missed the silver due to the scattering effect of steel alloying compounds present in many of the same asteroids. Within a year, the news had reached New York: Colorado was a treasure just waiting to be mined.

Thousands of potential prospectors took their life savings and laid hands on whatever retrofitted ships they could find, taking off for Colorado with dreams of finding that silver motherlode. But silver mining proved to be a volatile business, even in the rich fields of Colorado, and over the next several centuries, silver mining companies would form, break apart, and recombine with dizzying regularity.

One of the few enduring success stories of the Colorado silver rush was Sirius Shipping. Already running the six month round trip route between Colorado and New York, Sirius leveraged all of their assets to make a massive purchase of silver from the newly active fields in Colorado. They then turned around and hauled the silver to California, betting they could meet the growing need for silver on Los Angeles before any of their competitors. As it turned out, they gambled right: Los Angeles required large amounts of silver to conduct cloud seeding and induce rain so that the fresh water from the ice asteroids could be cycled into the ecosystem. Sirius Shipping was first, and consequently, reaped enormous profits which they then used to finance regular shipments of silver between Colorado and California. The regular influx of revenue from the silver shipments then allowed them to expand their operations in other sectors. Within five years, Sirius Shipping will be the major shipping company in Liberty.

### **180 A.S.**

In a coded communication to the President, Valhalla Research scientists in Texas reveal that they have successfully conducted the first test of a full-scale jump gate between Texas and Alaska. Working in conjunction with Monument Engineering, they expect that mass production can begin within five years.

### **181 A.S.**

Sirius Shipping, now one of the largest commercial concerns in Liberty, signs a landmark contract to handle the shipment of components between the R&D labs of Valhalla and construction projects being built by Monument Engineering.

### **185 A.S.**

In a ceremony that is broadcast throughout the Sirius Sector, Liberty unveils the jump gate project to the public. The President hails this advance as "the next giant step in humanity's flight from the darkness of the past and towards the light of enlightenment among the stars." The CEO's of both Valhalla Research and Monument Engineering are recognized in a special ceremony.

Almost immediately, inquiries from the other houses concerning terms for the purchase of this technology begin pouring in.

### **189 A.S.**

The first official jump gates are built between New York and Colorado, opening up the mineral riches of the Colorado system to the rest of the Liberty.

### **192 A.S.**

The amount of arable land on Los Angeles in the California system increases by threefold as a direct result of the terraforming and cloud seeding.

### **202 A.S.**

Jump gates are completed linking Texas and New York.

### **207 A.S.**

Soon after the completion of the jump gates connecting New York and California, Los Angeles becomes a popular destination for many of the Liberty elite who have made fortunes from investments in the holy troika of Liberty industry (Valhalla Research, Monument Engineering, Sirius Shipping). A haven for the rich and powerful seeking a respite from the hustle in Manhattan, they soon began to use their money and political contacts to insure that Los Angeles remained a paradise. Stringent environmental regulations are passed banning "dirty" industries and encouraging clean, high-tech businesses. Despite the continuing terraforming efforts of Monument Engineering, fresh water was still a precious resource, so living permits were instituted to ensure that the population remained under control; of course, who received one of those permits was almost entirely up to the elite -- who preferred to associate with their own kind whenever possible.

### **215 A.S.**

While jump gates already link most of Liberty, other houses continue to clamor for gates of their own. Valhalla Research builds a manufacturing facility for the mass production of crucial jump gate components in Colorado to meet the demand. Once constructed, components are transported by Sirius Shipping to the Monument Construction sites in whichever systems the gates are being constructed. While theoretically a private enterprise, it doesn't escape the notice of the other houses that the jump gate technology remains under the complete control of Liberty...but for now there is little they can do about the matter.

### **218 A.S.**

As mass production of jump gates moves into high gear, funding becomes an issue for many foreign corporate and government entities that wish to finance jump routes of their own. To encourage further construction, Valhalla Research and Monument Engineering capitalize a whole independent entity, Interspace Commerce, to offer loans and assist in the financing of jump gate construction.

### **223 A.S.**

As resources mined in New York begin to dwindle, Colorado becomes the chief supplier of raw materials for Liberty manufacturing.

### **230 A.S.**

The military builds the Eisenhower Shipyard in New York and construction of the Liberty Navy officially begins.

### **238 A.S.**

Valhalla Research relocates their headquarters from Manhattan to Los Angeles in the California system.

### **240 A.S.**

The military places one of the nebula within the New York system under quarantine, forbidding all civilian or commercial navigation within its confines. Deep within the nebula behind huge clouds of scanner-absorbing dark matter, the military creates Zone 21 specifically for research into the offensive and defensive applications of technology from Valhalla 1.

### **252 A.S.**

The military builds the Patton Shipyard in the Colorado system.

### **271 A.S.**

In Bretonia, scandal erupts when it is revealed that many members of the Bretonian ruling body had invested heavily in private companies and manipulated the market to their advantage. Now that many of these companies are facing bankruptcy in the wake of overextending themselves to take advantage of the new opportunities offered by the jump gates, Bretonia teeters on the edge of financial dissolution. The Liberty government -- along with several private investors -- agree to a massive bail-out of the Bretonian government.

### **280 A.S.**

Valhalla Research introduces their next advance, in many ways just as miraculous as the jump gate technology first revealed almost a century ago: the trade lane. Using a variation of the jump gate architecture, the trade lanes can be built along arbitrary routes through systems and accelerate ships to superluminal velocities.

### **300 A.S.**

The last ore-laden asteroid in the New York system having finally been ground to dust, the Liberty government is now almost entirely dependant upon Colorado, and to a lesser extent, Texas for its raw materials. The Roosevelt Shipyard -- where many of the first ships in Liberty space were constructed -- is closed, but the Eisenhower Shipyard continues to perform repair and maintenance for the Liberty Navy.

### **310 A.S.**

The Edison Shipyard is built in Colorado for the construction of civilian ships.

### **350 A.S.**

Most of Liberty space is now crisscrossed by trade lanes. With financing from Interspace Commerce, the trade lane network is rapidly being extended into other houses creating a truly sector-wide economy.

### **380 A.S.**

As the volume of intra- and inter-house trade escalates, so does theft and piracy. While crime had always existed in Liberty it had usually been isolated and easily contained by local police, but in recent years attacks began showing signs of organization. The military begins to suspect that attacks are not originating from within Liberty space but from unclaimed systems nearby where the pirates are locating their bases of operation. Both the police and military presence in Liberty systems is stepped up, but they are unable to determine how these pirates are able to enter and leave the system without using a jump gate. Liberty scientists theorize that they may be using natural "jump holes" that had somehow escaped detection until now. Despite some success by the military and police in thwarting pirate activity, shipping companies increasingly turn to independent "freelancers" to provide security.

### **420 A.S.**

The Valhalla Research facility in Colorado downshifts production of jump gate components and concentrates on production of trade lane components. Colorado is now a bustling planet.

### **480 A.S.**

For the first time in over two centuries, the silver mining operations in Colorado begin to falter. After a decade of watching their yield curves fall flat, the data now points to the inescapable conclusion that almost all of the silver in Colorado will be completely mined within a decade.

### **500 A.S.**

The Texas Incident.

The entire Texas system was decimated.

Valhalla Research scientists aboard the *Dallas* had begun the second phase of testing a new, long-range jump gate that would have allowed travel beyond the confines of

the Sirius Sector -- and could have potentially opened the entire galaxy for exploration. Unfortunately, an unforeseen concentration of dark matter along the jump route created a feedback wave that not only destroyed the *Dallas* and everyone aboard, but expelled huge masses of dark matter and radioactivity. A quarantine was immediately erected across half the system -- not for security, this time, but for the safety of anyone foolish enough to stray into the dangerous morass. The jump gate itself sank into a monstrous singularity that still hangs at the edge of the Texas, an evil, swirling eye, that casts its gaze upon the wasteland of Houston.

### **508 A.S.**

"Remining" has become a common practice in Colorado as initial deposits of ore are consumed and new deposits become increasingly difficult to find. Chemicals are used to dissolve asteroids and squeeze a few more tons of copper or titanium from their rocky corpses, but the resulting toxic clouds spread unchecked through the Colorado system.

### **521 A.S.**

Rheinland/Kusari Trade Embargo.

After having pursued ambitious programs to construct jump gates and trade lanes, both Rheinland and Kusari find themselves deeply in debt to Interspace Commerce and chafing over what they (with more than a little justification) view as inflated construction costs and usurious interest rates. Already uncomfortable with complete Liberty ownership of such a vital part of their sovereign space, both nations move to completely nationalize their jump gates and trade lanes. All payments to Interspace Commerce from either house cease.

Liberty is incensed, and insists that such actions are unlawful and will carry "dire repercussions." Rheinland responds by ceasing all mineral shipments to Liberty; Kusari soon follows, embargoing critical shipments of fuel. With resources in New York totally exhausted and those in Colorado declining rapidly, Liberty quickly finds that its threats sound more than a little hollow.

### **523 A.S.**

After several years of negotiation, the Sirius Commerce Pact is widely hailed as a miracle of compromise. Interspace Commerce agrees to forgive all debts while ownership of all jump gates and trade lanes is officially turned over to the house in whose space they reside, though the critical components of jump gates and trade lanes remain the sole property of Valhalla Research. In return for clearing their debt, all houses agree to pay a toll to Interspace Commerce for the next 200 years.

### **528 A.S.**

The Order of Cincinnatus convenes to consider the troubling events surrounding the recent the Kusari/Rheinland trade embargo. In an effort to address their perceived vulnerability, a secret shipyard is ordered built in Alaska (now the center of Liberty secret research after the Texas Incident) to pursue the development of a new type of propulsion system. Derived from the latest data decoded from Valhalla 1, this new propulsion system would allow a ship to instantaneously jump across light years without the need for either a gate or trade lane.

At the same time, the Order also creates the Liberty Security Force (LSF). Answerable to neither the government or the military, the LSF is charged with protecting Liberty's interests -- wherever they may be.

### **535 A.S.**

Interspace Commerce expands its operations and begins insuring shipments throughout Sirius. Within a century, insurance will form the bulk of Interspace Commerce's business as they work with both government and private agencies to protect trade lanes from the growing threat of piracy.

### **543 A.S.**

Great California Drought.

After its initial success, the Los Angeles terraforming project was proving to be a disappointment. As the supply of ice asteroids in the system was consumed, engineers increasingly used "dirty ice" containing high amounts of carbon dioxide and methane which contributed to a build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This problem alone might have been surmountable, if the supply of silver used for cloud seeding had not ceased.

Rainfall plummeted, and as it did, the native ecosystem reasserted itself. Salinity of most water sources increased dramatically while fresh water -- already a carefully guarded commodity -- became a rarity. Planetside agriculture was destroyed within the space of a decade and many of the elites who had made Los Angeles their home fled for the more comfortable climes of Manhattan.

### **550 A.S.**

The jump gate disaster in Texas indelibly scarred the system, and in its wake both Valhalla Research and Monument Engineering had withdrawn most of their operations leaving an underclass of poor, disgruntled, and impoverished, who had no way to leave and no where to go even if they did. Already forced to cope with a criminal population that was overwhelming planetside prisons back in New York, the Liberty government ordered the construction of the prison ship *Huntsville* in orbit around Houston. While many prisoners were allowed to do their time planetside in one of the several work programs, those stamped NCR -- "no chance for rehabilitation" -- were sent to The Walls (common Texas slang for the *Huntsville*).

### **558 A.S.**

Reluctant to abandon their home, several biotech wizards in California begin working on a solution to the problem of planetary agriculture on Los Angeles. After several years of intense research, and a number of dead ends, they finally unveiled a genetically engineered plant that required 80% less water than any crop currently known. But while rich in nutrients, the plant was not edible in its native form; the real genius lay in the invention of enzymes that could break the plant down into a digestible form and, in different combinations, replicate the taste of thousands of different foods. The scientists founded NutraForm, Inc., and became a literal overnight success. Not only did their discovery reinvigorate Los Angeles, but over the

next century it would become one of the most popular foods in the entire Sirius Sector.

#### **590 A.S.**

The Edison Shipyard in Colorado shuts down, having been edged out by competition from Kusari shipbuilders.

#### **593 A.S.**

A new group, unaffiliated with any house, begins to infiltrate Liberty. These "Junkers" frequent the debris fields of systems such as New York and Colorado, scavenging for abandoned equipment and materials, then selling them to smelting plants or refurbishing them for sale. While many of the Liberty elite find them distasteful, they keep to themselves and are consequently more or less left alone.

#### **600 A.S.**

With the prison population continuing to rise, the Liberty government is forced to construct a second prison in orbit around Houston, the *Sugarland*. But more troubling is the increasing number of prisoners who identify themselves with a grass-roots political movement, the "Xenos."

As the economic forecast for both Colorado and Texas turned increasingly bleak and both systems were abandoned by commercial interests, the remaining population were forced into a squalid existence of bare subsistence. Frustrated that their jobs were being "taken" by Kusari shipbuilders or Rheinland miners (and ignoring the rapacious consumption of resources by Liberty itself), the Xenos nursed a hatred of all foreigners. Soon many of these Xenos took up arms, and using the ample radioactive clouds and debris fields of Texas and Colorado as cover, began attacking vessels from other houses. Xeno philosophy eventually evolved to include not only foreigners, but also the Liberty elite and their puppets, the military and police. While still mainly a nuisance, many security personnel worry that the Xenos could potentially present a major threat, particularly if the factions in Texas and Colorado were ever able to join together and coordinate their actions.

#### **614 A.S.**

Detroit Munitions begins operation in New York, specializing in the manufacture of small- and medium-arms. Military, police, and independent buyers all become frequent customers.

#### **620 A.S.**

NutraForm introduces its first orbital biodome, a self-contained food production factory. Biodomes are franchised to individual owners and soon become a common sight in almost every system.

#### **653 A.S.**

To deal with the burgeoning prison population and its skyrocketing budget requirements, the Liberty government agrees to turn over both the *Huntsville* and the *Sugarland* to Liberty Police, Inc. (LPI), a corporation backed by a number of

investors in New York and Colorado. LPI proceeds to completely revamp the prison work programs, greatly expanding them to create labor-intensive consumer goods that can be sold for profit elsewhere in Liberty. Within five years, LPI is breaking even; within seven years, it turns a profit. Despite this, several human rights advocates object to the living conditions within the LPI-run prisons and suggest that LPI is working with Liberty police to round-up "undesirables" who may or may not be guilty of any crime.

### **672 A.S.**

In an effort to stabilize the Rheinland State after its coffers are exhausted by the Eighty Year War with the neighboring Gas Mining Guild, Liberty agrees to a bail-out of Rheinland. Unfortunately, the resulting devaluation of Rheinland currency leads to hyperinflation and revolution.

### **700 A.S.**

Valhalla Research and Interspace Commerce partner to develop a system for real-time scanning of cargo passing through jump gates and trade lanes; by attaching a Universal Ship Identification number to every vessel and piece of cargo, governments can automatically scan for contraband while Interspace Commerce can more accurately assess insurance fees. Valhalla selects their facility in Colorado for developing and manufacturing the new scanners.

### **734 A.S.**

Despite NutraForm's agricultural revolution in California, the necessity of rationing water on Los Angeles caused many of the Liberty elite there to begin looking for a new home. Once Valhalla Research selected Colorado as the location for their new project, Colorado suddenly became a popular alternative. Much in the same way as they had on Los Angeles, the elite quickly made Denver their own, passing laws prohibiting "dirty" industries and crowding out the locals who had been trying to scrape out a living on the rocky planet. Friction with the elites on Denver only serves to energize the local Xenos, who construct a permanent base in the old Edison Shipyard.

### **738 A.S.**

The failure of a trade lane linking New York and Colorado is linked to "lane hackers." Using information derived from disgruntled employees of Valhalla Research, these lane hackers have developed a method of temporarily deactivating a trade lane junction, allowing them -- or anyone else with access to the technology -- to then raid the defenseless ships passing through that junction. The timing of later attacks leads the police to believe that they also have access to Valhalla's new Universal Ship Identification system and that they may be selling this information to the highest bidder. Despite Valhalla's best efforts to defeat the lane hackers or patch the USI system, the hackers remain a constant thorn in Valhalla's side.

### **745 A.S.**

The drug cardamine is officially declared illegal by the Liberty government, but continues to remain popular among both the elites and the underclass. Drug smuggling accordingly becomes a serious problem throughout Liberty space.

### **767 A.S.**

A relatively new addition to the long history of Liberty companies, Hauser-Scott Biopharmaceuticals is a promising young upstart. While they hold several significant patents, they have still not perfected their ultimate goal: an anti-aging drug. Rumors abound that with substantial backing from the Liberty elite they are financing a number of expeditions to border worlds in search of genetic material from undiscovered flora and fauna that may provide the ultimate solution.

### **800 A.S.**

Today.