

Marna Kounkel
Delegation: Peace River
Nationality: Badlands

Life is like a box of chocolates, they say, but in your experience it's more like a Bank's monitor that hasn't been fed in a few days – long, tough and unpleasant. Your parents were caravan traders in the Badlands, moving from oasis tower to city-state to barnaby station to town, bringing goods from where they were in surplus to where they were in demand, dodging or fighting off rovers, enduring the harsh climate and sometimes lethal weather. You learned a lot about the Badlands as a child, as the caravan's guides taught you how to recognise plants deadly and useful, and animals that could eat or feed you. One such guide was one of the enigmatic Sand Riders, a tribe living in the corrosive wastes of the Great White Desert, and from her you learned of the custom of leaving your tribe to go and explore the outside world. And so when you were old enough, you left the caravan and travelled the Badlands on your own.

In the trash city of Khayr Ad-Din you fell in with a bad crowd, and added the ability to kill to your list of skills. For several cycles you plied your trade there as an assassin for the organised crime groups warring over street blocks and rubbish heaps of turf, before returning to the Badlands. A few cycles later you turned up in Peace River, offering your services as a guide. Your wilderness survival skills were noted and after single-handedly fighting your clients out of a sticky situation with some rovers you were noticed by Paxton Security, Peace River's corporate secret police. By this time the Judas Syndrome was heating up, and someone with your talents could be of plenty of use to a spymaster such as Colonel Lenaris, head of PaxSec. Under his orders you spied, assassinated, tracked, tortured and ambushed your way around Peace River, becoming one of his most trusted operatives. You infiltrated Badlands Revolutionary Front terrorist cells, ensured foreign spies were caught and never seen again, removed troublesome executives by blackmail or black ops, and made sure that anyone fleeing PaxSec's urban sphere of influence into the desert was no safer, because that was your playground.

With the breakout of the War of the Alliance life only got busier. In secret the build-up of the Peace River Army began, and you were instrumental in recruiting and training units in outlying Badlands towns, and of course maintaining the security and secrecy of the operation. When the PRA began to march, you led commando cells deep behind CEF lines, assassinating officers or gathering information. At other times you interrogated CEF captives, organised raids and trained the troops in target recognition – you developed quite a reputation for being able to spot and blow the head off a Jan-class GREL with a sniper rifle faster and more reliably than anybody else.

Since the War things have remained active, with Port Arthur carving out its own power-base in the Badlands at Peace River's expense, and the Badlands Revolutionary Front gaining momentum at home. By this time the strains of your life were taking their toll on you and you were feeling jaded. You started to spend time visiting your sister Uasha, who had married a business owner by the name of Arland Dellasanta in Matters' Folly. The quiet lifestyle, the simplicity of existence out there really appealed to you – for the first time you felt like you had found a place you could settle down in and call home. You started to make plans to finally leave your old life of death and pain and move out here, buy a small homestead maybe, raise a few barnabus iguanas and springers, grow some water-root and johar, drink in the pub at the weekends, tinker with machinery in your spare time. An idyllic retirement back on the land that you loved so much but had come to regard as a killing ground.

But as had always been the pattern your life followed, fate had other plans for you. Some thug from a BRf cell you'd infiltrated cycles ago happened to be in town at the same time as one of your visits, and

recognised you. Fearing for her life she ambushed you as you sat drinking with Uasha in the pub, a sloppy guns-blazing affair which you managed to evade and put her down neatly, but which resulted in Uasha's death and several injuries. You were blamed, and although the law could do nothing about it the social ostracisation was enough to send you back to Peace River and your job for the longer term.

Since then it's been the same old gig, although age is catching up with you and the athletic stuff isn't as much your field as it used to be. Torturing the occasional Port Arthur agent, raiding foreign intelligence safe-houses, pipelining a family out of Skavara in the Emirates, eliminating riot instigators, business as usual. You have yet to come to terms with Uasha's death and have been burying yourself in your hated work to hide from it, but when you got assigned to this diplomatic mission to Matters' Folly as a bodyguard because of your familiarity with the town you saw an opportunity to salvage the dream you had, to iron things out with Dellasanta who blames you for your sister's death, to maybe secure a future for yourself.

Of course, as far as Lenaris is concerned – the never-sleeping, all-seeing nemesis of loose ends – your job is to keep an eye on the official diplomats in your delegation, both to ensure no harm comes to them and that they cause no harm, and to do what you can behind the scenes to ensure no advantage is gained by Port Arthur and that if possible every advantage is gained by Peace River. But if there's one thing you've seen in your time in PaxSec, it's that once Lenaris has taken a liking to you, leaving the intelligence game is a task he will make very, very difficult for you.

About Your Delegation <

- **Herb Bilanski-Adams** – You've read the PaxSec briefing on him, which says he's a worker caste member occupying a token position in the diplomacy bureau. Based on some reports and routine surveillance he's considered a potential security risk, with some anti-establishment opinions. He doesn't know you're PaxSec and you haven't talked to him much, but you can see that there's some serious marital problems with him and the wife.
- **Lalla Bilanski-Adams** – Her file says she's an executive caste member on something of a fast track through the ranks of the diplomacy bureau. She also doesn't know you're PaxSec and doesn't seem interested in talking to you – you're part of the furniture as far as she's concerned. She doesn't seem much interested in talking to her husband either.

About Others You Know <

- **Mayor Dellasanta** – Made it to Mayor, eh? A business-owner who your sister Uasha married and had two kids with before her death. Blames you for that, and you can certainly see why.
- **Shad Kolkman** – A nice guy, head of the farmers' association and a genuinely good person. You'd like to make friends with him.
- **Marshal Hadland** – Seems pleasant but is tough enough when it gets down to it. She saw you were innocent of the incident where your sister died, but ran you out of town for your own good then.
- **Frank** – A caravan trader, and possibly a rover too. There's a PaxSec file on him and although nothing's been pinned on him Peace River caravans tend to blow up around where he's sighted.

- **Major Krakauer** – A CEF tank officer who was captured and who you interrogated during the War of the Alliance. Fanatic about the righteousness of the CEF's cause, but is no idiot. Looks to be with the Port Arthur Korps now.

Resources <

You were escorted to the pick-up point by a squadron of Peace River Defence Force combat hoppers. Although Laila Bilanski-Adams is the official leader of this delegation and therefore has command over the escort, you have been cleared to override her authority if deemed necessary.

Goals <

- Ensure Port Arthur emerge from these negotiations in the same position they entered them, or preferably worse. Try to get the maximum possible advantages for Peace River.
- Make peace with Mayor Dellasanta, who sees your sister's death as your fault. Without Dellasanta on your side to some extent you'll never be accepted in this town.
- Arrange for retirement out here as soon as possible (like right now if you can). You've got a bit of money put aside, but not a lot – you'll need some friends.

Additional Player Info: Marna Kounkel <

A sort of cross between the darkest aspects of Crocodile Dundee and James Bond, with lots more darkness mixed in, Marna has seen so much violence in his life he's not even sure what's real anymore – it's overwhelming and his mind is trying to make sense of the sheer volume of it. People remark about the good aspects of war, like the camaraderie, but Marna saw none of that, constantly moving from unit to unit, directing a single mission and then taking off again, sometimes without his troops even knowing his name. The only real friends he's ever had were his fellow thugs back in Khayr Ad-Din, and those weren't happy times. His whole life has seemed somewhat railroaded to him – wherever he went or whatever he did he just ended up deeper and deeper in this web of violence until he gave up looking for another way and just went with the flow. He's learned not to have opinions because they don't fit with the job, so he tends just to take things as he sees them. He doesn't hate Earthers, he just kills and tortures them because that's the job. He doesn't hate GREs, he just sees them as something you look at down the scope of a sniper rifle. He's floated down the river of blood, but recently he has glimpsed a way out, and means to fight to get to it.

In truth, he blames himself for his sister's death, too. In part because he should have been more careful, should have adopted a more tactically sound position in the pub, should have kept his eyes open around town – but mostly because he immersed himself in death and now it drips off him wherever he goes. His lifestyle followed him and killed his sister. He's tired of what his life was and wants to live the rest of it in peace, and whatever's as close to happiness as he's now capable of feeling.

Peace River is to all intents and purposes owned and run by Paxton Arms, and all citizens are part of the caste system – the worker caste are the majority and do all the work, the management caste manage the workers, and the executive caste run things from the top. If you're born in Peace River, you become part of the caste your parents belong to. Groups of malcontents, specifically the Badlands Revolutionary Front (a terrorist group operating in several locations but particularly strong in Peace River) are fighting to change the way things are.