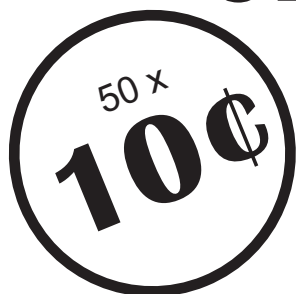


SOLAR SMITH AND THE SKY-PIRATES OF ARCTURUS!



A Hero Plus Adventure for

PULP HERO

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Everything Else: Stev... you get the picture

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to all the *HERO System* fans who've expressed such an interest in our new *Hero Plus Adventures* line, and those who've been asking me to do a Pulp SF setting for months.

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SOLAR SMITH AND THE SKY-PIRATES OF ARCTURUS!



After the amazing scientific breakthroughs of Gernsback and Goddard in the mid-Twenties made space flight possible, an eager and curious mankind set out to explore the stars and found new colonies. Now, as humanity progresses inexorably toward World War II, the brave men and women of the *American Space Travel and Reconnaissance Agency* (ASTRA) investigate strange planets, keeps the spacelanes safe from pirates, oppose the might of the alien Dracon Empire and its wily ruler Krogan III, and struggle to contain the forces of Nazism and Bolshevism.

Solar Smith And The Sky-Pirates Of Arcturus! details the Pulp Hero and Star Hero mini-setting of Aetherial Earth and its universe. It's not described in as much detail as, say, *Terran Empire* or Chapter Three of *Pulp Hero*, but there's enough information for a GM to get a fun campaign up and running. So check your electric pistols and get ready to blast off to adventure!

MANKIND AMONG THE STARS

In 1926, publisher and radio pioneer Hugo Gernsback made a startling scientific discovery. While tinkering with some new broadcasting technologies he'd been developing, he accidentally charged an object with electricity in an unusual way. When he had difficulty moving the charged object, he theorized that it was somehow "pushing against" or "being pulled through" an alternate dimension or state of being. He called this dimension the aether.

While discussing his discovery with fellow scientist Robert Goddard, whose experiments focused on rocketry, the two of them realized that combining Goddard's work with aetherial technology might allow mankind to build rockets that could travel fast enough to reach other worlds! Fired with enthusiasm for this idea, they made their discoveries public so that all humanity might benefit from them equally.

The governments of Earth were quick to realize the possibilities in the pair's work. Whichever nation got to another world first could colonize it, exploiting its vast, untapped resources. And who knows what natural treasures other worlds might possess? Power and wealth were waiting out there among the stars for whoever could get to them.

The first nation to take to the stars was the United States, home of Gernsback and Goddard and thus able to call on them for direct assistance. In 1928, the Americans sent their first rockets into space, visiting both the Moon and Mars. The US quickly claimed Mars, establishing several colonies there after overcoming the resistance of the relatively primitive natives, whose presence had theretofore been suspected but never proven. Other nations soon followed America into space, gobbling up most of the rest of the Solar System in short order.

As scientists improved aetherial technology, faster and faster rocketships were built. By 1932 mankind was able to leave its cradle behind and visit other solar systems. Once again a wave of exploration, conquest, and colonization began, though not without some difficulties. Not only were the nations of Earth competing (sometimes violently) with one another for stellar territory, in 1933 they encountered a rival interstellar species: the Dracon. Tensions ran high for a time, but eventually diplomats from Earth and Sigma Draconis III reached a shaky agreement that has averted war... so far.

Today, in 1935, the frontiers of Human exploration have been pushed 35 light-years away from Earth, to the Arcturus and Pollux systems. Mankind has developed a thriving network of interstel-

HERO PLUS ADVENTURES

Solar Smith And The Sky-Pirates Of Arcturus! is one of Hero Games's *Hero Plus Adventures*, a new series of short, no-frills, inexpensive adventures in PDF format (though this one is actually a mini-setting, not a scenario *per se*). *Hero Plus Adventures* are designed to provide roughly one game session's worth of entertainment, though they include suggestions on how to lengthen or expand the scenario if you want to. (Aetherial Earth, as a mini-setting, actually serves more as the basis for a campaign than as a one-shot adventure.) They're written with simplicity and ease of use in mind so you can run them with a minimum of preparation.

SOLAR SMITH AND “REALISM”

The Solar System and universe of *Solar Smith* aren't portrayed with “realism” in mind. The main influence is the characters and settings and Pulp-style Science Fiction, such as John Carter of Mars, Buck Rogers, and Flash Gordon. But beyond that, the information presented generally depends on the knowledge of mankind circa 1935, or the fictional conventions of the time, not the knowledge of today. Thus, Jupiter is listed as having only 11 moons, rather than the 60-some it's thought to have as of 2005; Venus is depicted as a swampy jungle world instead of a pressure-cooker incapable of supporting intelligent life. The watchword is Fun!, not scientific accuracy. Enjoy!

lar trade, both among the various nations of greater Earth and with the Dracon Empire. The expansion in trade has led to the scourge of piracy, not to mention the “great game” of espionage played among the various governments, but the courageous aethernauts of ASTRA struggle every day to keep space safe for humanity.

Space Forces

Every nation with the technology and finances to do so quickly assembled its own force of space-men as soon as it could. Seven nations have space navies and space trading fleets.

THE UNITED STATES: ASTRA

The United States, the first nation into space, relies on ASTRA — the American Space Travel and Reconnaissance Agency — to protect its interests and those of its citizens from the Moon to Arcturus. The brave and talented men (and even a few women!) of ASTRA regard themselves primarily as a military force, but in truth they function just as much (if not more) as a law enforcement agency. They prevent (or avenge) pirate attacks, protect the space shipping lanes, and perform similar duties. ASTRA's Exploration Branch seeks out new worlds and solar systems to colonize, surveys new planets, and makes first contact with alien species. Some ASTRA ships carry a mix of military and Exploration personnel and perform multiple duties.

FRANCE

The French aetherial fleet, known simply as the Aetherial Navy, is relatively small since France has only a few Solar System colonies and little official presence beyond Sol. French traders and explorers usually rely on ASTRA for protection and assistance. Recent setbacks for the French-supported forces on Jupiter have only made France less inclined to space adventurism; some in the National Assembly have called for an end to the Aetherial Navy.

GREAT BRITAIN

The British took to exploring space and founding empyrean colonies with the same gusto that led them to explore and colonize so much of Earth. The daring and fortitude of the Royal Space Navy has given Great Britain the means to establish major colonies on Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, and beyond — and perhaps more importantly, to safeguard trade between those colonies and Earth as much as possible. Admiral Sir Robert Finchley, a noted peer with two advanced degrees in science, commands the RSN from his enormous flagship, the cruiser Stymphalian, which can usually be found orbiting Venus.

GERMANY

Hitler and Goering were quick to grasp the opportunities offered by space travel, and pushed German science and industry hard to catch up to the US and Great Britain in the space race. Their efforts paid off — as of 1935, Germany has the

third biggest Human space empire, with major colonies on Jupiter, Saturn, and several extra-solar worlds. The Reichsraum Marine (Reich Space Navy) is large, well-armed, well-commanded, and aggressive.

ITALY

Italy's penchant for aviation and aerial warfare extends to space as well — Mussolini sees “conquest of the heavens” as further augmenting his glory and his empire. Although Italy only has a few space colonies so far, its aethernauts are daring explorers, ever in search of new worlds to conquer so they can win Il Duce's favor.

JAPAN

The Imperial Space Patrol maintains Japan's presence among the stars. The Japanese military sees space as a battleground where it has a real chance to flex its muscle and accomplish something — where it won't get bogged down the way it is in Manchukuo. The Japanese people consider it shameful that their only Solar System colony is on Jupiter, prompting the ISP to work hard to win favor by conquering other worlds... and taking territory from other nations when it can.

THE SOVIET UNION

The *Komitet Kosmicheskikh Ussledovaniy i Kolonizatsiyi* (“Committee for Space Exploration and Colonization”), or KKUK, is in charge of all Russian activities in space. Russian space merchants must obtain a permit from it to operate their ships, and must obey its officers' orders at all times; colonists must also follow KKUK commands. The Secretary of the KKUK reports directly to Joseph Stalin, who's said to have taken a keen interest in space exploration... and exploitation.

Related Forces

In addition to typical space naval forces, most nations maintain other groups of soldiers beyond Earth.

ROCKETMEN

The United States, Germany, Great Britain, and Japan all have squadrons of rocketmen — soldiers of the air. Using a neptunium-fueled rocketpack (see page 23), a rocketman can fly faster than a bird. His limited fuel supply prevents him from remaining aloft for very long, but while in the air he can fight enemy rocketmen, conduct reconnaissance, deliver messages, and perform other invaluable tasks.

PLANETARY FORCES

It's often necessary for a colonizing power to maintain a military force on a planet. Typically the soldiers are there to protect the colonists from hostile creatures and other dangers, but they may also fight against native warriors, help keep restless natives in line, and so forth. On worlds such as Jupiter, where multiple nations have colonies, they may skirmish with other Human soldiers.

SPIES

With so much of economic and military importance going on in space, spies are everywhere. From Britain's Secret Intelligence Service, to Nazi Germany's Abwehr, to America's much more informally-organized group of spies, intelligence-gathering agents can be found on any important planet.

THE HUMAN STELLAR EMPIRE

Humanity as a whole controls a significant number of planets. However, unlike the Dracon Empire (page 10), which is ruled by a single overlord, the Human "Empire" is a mish-mash of colonies and protectorates controlled by the seven Great Powers capable of space travel. Lacking the unity of the Dracon Empire, it could easily fall prey to the Dracon or other enemies.

The Solar System

The oldest, largest, and in many ways most important Human space colonies are located right in Earth's backyard — the Solar System. From Mars to Neptune, mankind has spread throughout the Solar System, finding new worlds to explore, new resources to exploit, and strange new neighbors to conquer.

THE MOON

When it became apparent that space travel was possible, thought immediately turned to visiting the Moon. This sparked protests around the world as people rejected the idea of seeing the Moon's silvery face turned into nothing more than a gigantic cityscape in the sky. After extensive discussion, the Great Powers responded to this concern by signing the Treaty of Venice. The Treaty stipulates that no nation may permanently occupy the bright side of the Moon. Only exploratory expeditions and their short-term base camps are allowed, thus preserving the Moon as Humanity's posterity. The dark side of the Moon was evenly divided between the Great Powers, which can establish colonies, mines, and other permanent facilities there as they choose. As a result, today all seven nations having thriving lunar colonies inhabited by "Moon-men" who explore, conduct scientific research, and mine for selenic minerals. Life in a Moon colony is difficult and dangerous due to the lack of atmosphere, but for some men it represents an invigorating challenge.

MARS

Mars and its two moons are the property of the United States. ASTRA aethernauts visited the Red Planet during their first journey beyond the Moon. What they found was an ancient world, one with a thin but breathable atmosphere and a dryer climate than Earth's. Water flows mainly along a series of vast canals that criss-cross the surface of the planet, though in some regions there are shallow lakes. Valleys, including the enormous Valles Marineris,

include both bodies of water and luxuriant plant life; the rest of the world tends to be wasteland, desert, or scrub prairie.

Even more surprisingly, Mars had natives! The news that life existed beyond the confines of Earth rocked the scientific and religious communities — and, of greater immediate concern, posed some obstacle to colonization of Mars. The natives, a tall race of reddish-skinned humanoids, were aggressive and viewed the first Human visitors with suspicion and distrust rather than awe. When a group of hotheaded Martian warriors attacked and massacred a group of American explorers without provocation, ASTRA responded with force to protect American citizens and interests. Within two years, the planet was controlled by the United States... mostly. Some clans of Martians, accustomed to living in the more desolate and desertified regions of their world, retreated into areas where Americans would not or could not go. From there they mount raids and attacks on Human settlements to this day.

The capital of Mars is New Washington, a small city in the Cydonia region (not far from the now-famous Face). Dozens of other settlements are scattered across the planet, most of them near canals or in valleys. Food, including a native Martian grain called yogan that Humans can eat, is grown, but Humans also import a lot of foodstuffs; light industry has taken hold in some regions, offering new forms of employment to many Martians. Most towns have a garrison of US Army soldiers to protect settlers from raiders and bandits.

The Martians And Their Civilization

The natives of Mars are a race of humanoids superficially similar to Humans in many ways. They're tall (averaging 6'4" for men and 5'11" for women), and usually thin (even lanky). Their skin is notably red, sometimes fading to a more pinkish hue as they age; a few clans are naturally somewhat lighter- or darker-skinned, such as the almost burgundy-colored Hmool tribe of raiders. They're mammalian, with hair on their heads much like Humans, but very little hair elsewhere on their bodies. Typically their hair is black, but blonde, light green, purplish, and bluish hair also exists naturally; brown and red hair are unknown. The women often possess what Human men describe as "an exotic beauty."

The Martians group themselves into enormous clans linked by blood and marriage among extended families. The clans in a region usually owe allegiance to a ruler equivalent to (and referred to by Humans as) a king. Kings organize their kingdoms in different ways, with princes, ministers, courtiers, diplomats, generals, and other functionaries appointed as the king sees fit. Some kingdoms have elaborate bureaucracies and political customs; others are crude, informal things or lands ruled by long-standing customs as much as Martians.

The Martians have a more or less medieval-level society, which is the main reason America could conquer the planet so easily. Their soldiers use swords, spears, and similar weapons, with an

MARTIAN PACKAGE DEAL

The Martians do not have a Package Deal. Like Humans, they represent a sort of “baseline” from which other races diverge (as indicated by their own Package Deals).

VENUSIAN PACKAGE DEAL

Venusians have +2 STR, +2 CON, and Extra Limbs (two more arms, Inherent), for a Package Deal cost of 12 Character Points.

ZARKS

For zarks, use the Giant Snake character sheet on page 116 of *The HERO System Bestiary*, with a Venom Multipower: one slot venomous bite (Drain CON 3d6 + RKA 3d6, NND); one slot a venom spittle (RKA 2d6, Penetrating, range 4”); and one slot for venom spit into the eyes (Major Transform 8d6, seeing being to blind being).

emphasis on personal bravery, dueling, skill, and honor; the use of shields or armor (beyond the leather harness most Martian warriors wear) is considered cowardly. The equivalent of the horse is a four-legged mammal called a *xrn* that resembles a cross between a bighorn sheep and a percheron; some warriors ride *xrn*-pulled chariot-like vehicles into battle. Trade and travel mainly take place along the canals.

There’s some evidence that tends to suggest the Martians once had a much more advanced civilization — perhaps even more advanced than Humanity now is. The canals, for example, are works of engineering that would seem to be beyond the Martians’ current level of scientific and political development. The same could be said of the exquisitely-sculpted Cydonian Face, about which the Martians refuse to speak. Explorers have found some tantalizing ruins and other evidence of long-dead societies, but as yet most of Martian history remains a mystery to mankind.

The Martians do not seem to have any kind of religion... or if they do, they conceal it from Humans. A few settlers have heard odd (and sometimes disturbing) references to someone called “the One” by their Martian servants, but it’s unclear if this refers to a deity, a culture-hero, a ruler, or something else. Missionaries have had a little success converting Martians to Christianity, but not much.

VENUS

Venus is a hot, humid, rainy world of jungles, swamps, and marshes. There are a few large bodies of water, such as what Humans call Nelson’s Sea, but for the most part streams and small rivers predominate in the non-swampy areas. The climate becomes more tolerable toward the poles, but in general breeds all sorts of diseases against which Humans as yet have few defenses. Despite this, two nations — Great Britain and France — have established large colonies on Venus after pacifying the natives in the regions they now control. The settlers raise crops (some Venusian fruits are considered delicacies on Earth), mine for gemstones, and the like.

The abundant Venusian flora and fauna represent a resource that Humans are only beginning to tap — partly because many plants and animals are poisonous or have other qualities that caused early colonists to simply slaughter them outright whenever they had the chance. For example, reptiles are the predominant form of life, and include many large species that fill the same ecological niches as tigers and panthers do on Earth. Leather goods made from their skins fetch a high price back home.

Early explorers felt that the thick, cloudy atmosphere of Venus would be perfect for aviation (much like on Jupiter; see below). Unfortunately, the frequent rainstorms turn flying into a risky affair. Even worse are the lightning-storms, which make going up in a zeppelin tantamount to a suicide mission.

The Venusians And Their Civilization

The first Humans to explore Venus did not at first realize it had native intelligent life, since Venusians are relatively low in numbers. Despite a few touchy incidents and some battles, early encounters with the Venusian people were mostly amicable, and today the Venusians share their world with mankind in what the British refer to as a “peaceful protectorate.” In truth Humans effectively dominate the planet through military and technological superiority.

Venusians are about the same size as Humans on the average, but have four arms and are reptilian rather than mammalian. Their scaly skin is usually a dark green color, but some Venusians are a lighter green, and others darken to brownish. Most Venusian cultures feature elaborate customs of courtesy and protocol, which the Venusians learned long ago was necessary to prevent the constant tribal warfare that kept their population from growing significantly. Venusian clothing likewise tends to be elaborate, with designs that seem fancy, colorful, and even overdone to Human eyes; both genders wear garments resembling vests and short skirts/kilts.

Venus is a patchwork of kingdoms and principalities, with government ranging from kingdoms, to oligarchies, to theocracies. Warfare between realms, while not nearly as common as in past centuries, occurs frequently. Venusian warriors mostly use weapons of wood, bone, and stone, since metal is rare (and thus valuable). Some advanced nations have the equivalent of Human muskets (though again, these are rare due to the need for metal and the difficulty of keeping gunpowder dry); most rely on bows, crossbows, clubs, spears, and similar weapons. The most common riding animal is the *zark*, a sort of giant snake that can rear the front third of its body up to allow the rider to see great distances or strike downward at his foe. Zarks are fierce, hard to control, and poisonous; their venom, delivered by bite or spit, is a sort of acidic compound that can scar or blind as well as simply kill.

The Venusian religion is a form of ancestor-worship. Each family maintains a shrine to its departed, where it performs ceremonies on certain holidays. The wealthier and more prominent the family, the larger, better-constructed, and richer the shrine; the best and largest are virtual temple-complexes of extensively-carved stone. Venusian legend and myth are rich in tales of heroes, spirits, monsters, and demons; a few Human explorers claim to have encountered beasts remarkably similar to some of these monsters, but have as yet been unable to bring back proof to verify their stories.

JUPITER

Jupiter, the largest planet in the Solar System, is unique in that it’s the only world yet discovered to have evolved more than one form of intelligent life. Like the Moon, it’s colonized by all seven Great Powers, but not under the terms of any treaty. As such it’s become something of a proxy battlefield where the nations of Earth practice for the war that many Humans feel is soon to come to their own world.

Thanks to Jupiter's vast size, the early Human explorers from each of the Great Powers were able to visit and explore it, make contact with at least some of its native peoples, and enter into relationships with them without coming into conflict. That peaceful time has ended. With the backing of their new Human "allies," the natives of Jupiter have continued their millennia-long wars with advanced Human technology... and, oftentimes, the help of Human aviators and soldiers. The governments back on Earth, while providing assistance to their Jovian allies, tacitly ignore the fact that their nationals are fighting and dying on Jupiter so they can avoid the possibility of the war spreading to Earth. In fact, some diplomats secretly hope mankind can work out its aggressions on Jupiter and leave Earth itself in peace.

Jupiter includes every type of climate, ecology, and topography known on Earth, and perhaps more. Desert and wasteland predominate in some regions; others are tropical and lush. About 61% of the surface is covered with oceans, seas, inland seas, lakes, and other bodies of water. Rain and storms are frequent in most parts of the planet (though not nearly so frequent as on Venus). In some regions, violent storms have lasted for decades or centuries, and show no signs of abating. The most notable of these is the feared "Red Spot," known to the Jovians themselves by various names that translate as something like "Hell" or "Unending Torment of Wind and Rain."

Jupiter has a total of eleven moons, the most prominent of which are Io, Callisto, Europa, and Ganymede. Each one is claimed by the Americans, British, Germans, and Russians, respectively.

Races Of Jupiter

Jupiter has spawned a remarkable five intelligent races (collectively referred to by Humans as "Jovians"). Today numbering in the trillions, over the past 200,000 years the members of these species have spread out all over the planet to every habitable region (some places, such as the Red Spot, the many deserts, and numerous mountain ranges, are unlivable). They have often fought wars with one another (or among themselves) over territory, resources, religious differences, political ambition, and the like.

Butars, or Green Jovians, resemble a cross between a Human and a giant frog or toad. Short, squat, ugly, and often foul-smelling, they're disliked (and warred upon) by most other Jovian races. They've proven quite adept with modern weaponry and can often be found manning Humans' zepelins in lesser positions, or serving as "advance troops" for Human armies. They've allied themselves with both the Germans and Japanese to make war on any other people or tribe that angers them — the Greens aren't known for their ability to get along well with others, and have fought against each of the other four races at one time or another in the recent past. However, their Human allies have kept them from fighting other races and tribes they (the Humans) are also allied with... for now.

Kruhars, or Blue Jovians, are the most non-

Human of the Jovian races — although basically humanoid, they have large, seven-fingered hands (five fingers with a thumb on each side of the palm), legs with backward-hinged knees that remind Humans of birds' legs, and two small "fins" on their bald heads (males' fins are larger). Due to the shape of their hands, Blue Jovian equipment is difficult for Humans and other Jovians to use, while they suffer similar problems trying to use other races' weapons and gear (-2 to OCV or Skill Rolls in either case). They live in oddly-constructed cities that Humans sometimes find difficult to navigate, and are allied with the Russians.

Lailags, or Purple Jovians, have a sort of purple-bluish skin that's distinct from the coloration of Blue Jovians. It's not clear whether they're a separate race, or a crossbreed race resulting from the mingling of Blue and Black Jovians tens of thousands of years ago. Most Human explorers consider them a separate race, since they seem to have a culture that's no more influenced by Blue or Black culture than by any other Jovian civilization; but others remain unconvinced. Purples are great travelers and traders, going hither and yon over the face of Jupiter in gundar caravans (see below) to buy and sell. They're also very religious, with an elaborate faith focused on a trinity of gods to whom they sacrifice certain animals; they consider all other Jovians "unbelievers" and thus unworthy to live except as slaves to Purples. They're allied with no one Human nation — they shift their allegiance frequently, always seeking a better deal.

Naivars, or White Jovians, have whitish skins that remind many Humans of a very pallid Caucasian. They lack external ears (but are otherwise fine-featured) and have only three long fingers and a thumb on their hands. They prefer to live in what a Human would describe as a "Mediterranean" climate, and have complex social and religious institutions. Their temples, which dominate their cities, are large, multi-spired cubical buildings. They're allied with America and Great Britain, and to a lesser extent France.

Scoravs, or Black Jovians, are slightly taller than Human average, and tend to be broad-shouldered and muscular; their hair is usually black, grey, or white, but they have a tendency to baldness in both genders. Humans often think of them as being a little "slow" mentally, but that seems to be a stereotype based on some early encounters rather than a trait that holds true across the entire population. Black Jovians usually live in hilly and mountainous regions, and make excellent miners and climbers. They're allied with the Germans and Italians.

Jovian Civilization

Most observers compare the level of Jovian civilization at the time of Humans' arrival to roughly that of eighteenth-century Europe, but with some significant differences. For example, the main weapon used by the Jovians is a firearm, but they never invented the bullet — their guns, known as "boltcasters," fire short metal arrows or spikes. They've never learned how to build tall structures, since there's so much space on Jupiter that build-

JOVIAN PACKAGE DEALS

Lailags, Naivars, and Scoravs don't have Package Deals. Like Humans, they represent a sort of "baseline" from which other Jovian races diverge (as indicated by their own Package Deals).

Butars have +1 STR, +1 INT, and -2 COM. They also take the Social Limitation Butar to represent the fact that so few people like them (Frequently, Minor, Not Limiting In Some Societies; 5 points).

Kruhars have a 0-point Physical Limitation regarding their limited ability to use other races' weapons and equipment properly; all other races have similar Physical Limitations regarding the use of Kruhar gear (see text).

GUNDARS

For gundars, use the Pteranodon character sheet on page 155 of *The HERO System Bestiary*, but with a few changes. Depending on size (and sometimes breeding and training), gundars typically have Damage Resistance (2-4 PD/2-4 ED), 10-30 BODY, STRs of 25-40, and Flight 12-30”.

Raising gundars can be a valuable profession on Jupiter. Different breeds are regarded as better for racing, cargo carrying, riding, and other uses, and Jovians debate endlessly about the merits of the different strains and breeders.

NEPTUNIUM IN GAME TERMS

In *HERO System* terms, neptunium is required for rocketpacks (page 23). Rocketships use ordinary fuel most of the time, but can fly longer and faster on neptunium fuel. If a rocketship is fueled with neptunium fuel, increase the END of its Endurance Reserve by 50%.

ings can remain flat and broad and still provide plenty of living space. As a result, Jovian cities tend to be large and spread out.

Fortunately, Jovian fauna provides a solution to the problem posed by the planet's size. The main beast of burden isn't an animal resembling a cow or horse, but a pteranodon-like reptilian creature called a *gundar*. A small gundar can carry one or two people; a large one can carry multiple people and/or loads of a ton or more. Unlike Humans, who've only been able to fly for about three decades, Jovians took to the skies tens of thousands of years ago. This makes it much easier to cross long distances quickly. The typically broad, flat-roofed Jovian buildings make fine landing platforms; gundars “parked” on roofs awaiting their masters' return are a common sight.

Thanks to the size of Jupiter and its population, the Jovians have every different form of government and society imaginable: kingdoms, autarchies, oligarchies, democracies, theocracies, militocracies, and many more (including some with no real Human equivalent). Keeping track of the shifting political, social, and military landscape taxes the brainpower of even the cleverest Human explorer... especially since the tens of thousands of Jovian languages often make communication difficult!

The Jovian Wars

Humans soon discovered that while they greatly outmatch the Jovians technologically, the inhabitants of Jupiter outnumber Human explorers by millions or billions to one, making true conquest impractical. Instead, Earth's governments adopted policies of “allying” with different races, nations, and cities, building relationships in which various Jovian peoples would come to depend on Humans' better technology and superior cultural values, making their nations in effect Human protectorates. This plan succeeded admirably, thanks in large part to the tradition of frequent, usually short-term, warfare among Jovian peoples and countries.

As noted above, Humans often help the Jovians fight their wars directly, not just by providing material. Human soldiers and explorers man (or at least command) the airships and tanks sent to Jupiter, and more than a few have ended up dead on Jovian battlefields. Each of the seven Great Powers knows this is going on, but deliberately ignore the implications so they can avoid provoking a war on Earth and can keep using Jupiter as a testing ground for new weapons and tactics.

Since the Jovians have had air transport for thousands of years, much of their fighting takes place in the skies, between soldiers riding gundars and firing boltcasters at the enemy. Human aid often takes the form of airplanes and zeppelins, with which the Jovians are relatively comfortable. The thick atmosphere of Jupiter makes it ideal for aircraft, particularly dirigibles... provided one stays well clear of the Red Spot and other such storms.

SATURN

The ringed planet is a disputed territory, claimed by both Germany and Great Britain. While it seems to possess no native life, intelligent or otherwise, its natural resources (both on the ground and in the rings) are vast. Both nations have devoted large numbers of rocketships to try to protect their prospectors and explorers on Saturn; raids, skirmishes, and even small battles take place frequently.

NEPTUNE

The planet Neptune, a stormy, wintry world with little to recommend it to Humanity, is a Russian colony. Initially it was passed over by all the Great Powers, since it has no native life and there were easier pickings in terms of resources. But a maverick Russian prospector exploring a range of Neptunian mountains discovered something that altered the equation: a new mineral called *neptunium*. When processed and mixed with ordinary fuel, neptunium makes that fuel far more powerful and efficient. Neptunium fuel has become one of Russia's most important exports, and it guards the source of neptunium jealously. Occasionally a daring prospector tries to slip past the Russian rocketship blockade to mine a shipful of neptunium, but far more often than not such thieves are captured, tried, and executed.

Ice Volcanoes Of Triton

Neptune has but one moon, Triton, whose name was only recently agreed upon. Like its parent world, Triton is icy and desolate, with enormous “ice volcanoes” that spew chunks of ice and near-frozen water over vast distances. Even more intriguingly, it orbits Neptune in the opposite direction of Neptune's own rotation and has a highly-tilted orbit. The Russian protective cordon around Neptune includes Triton; if anything, the Russians protect Triton even more strongly than Neptune itself, which is unusual given that they don't seem to have any mines or other facilities there.

THE UNCOLONIZED WORLDS

Mercury, Uranus, and Pluto remain uncolonized, and largely unexplored. Approaching Mercury is dangerous, since getting that close to the Sun's heat usually destroys aetherial sails. Explorers who've tried to get there, typically by approaching from within the planet's shadow, have almost always ended up dead due to mischance or miscalculation. Uranus and Pluto are easy enough to reach, but don't appear to offer any resources worth pursuing when so many other worlds are keeping Humanity busy. Someday that may change, and even today an occasional daring prospector or explore sometimes picks over Uranus and Pluto, hoping for a major discovery that will make him rich and famous.

MINERVA, THE TENTH PLANET

In 1931, one of the early space explorers, an American named William Hazel, discovered something no astronomer had ever suspected — a tenth planet! Located several million miles beyond Pluto (which itself was only discovered in 1930), and

only about three times Pluto's size, it was named Minerva. America claims it as a colony, and has established several small, domed mining communities on its airless surface.

Beyond Sol

As Humanity soon learned after entering space, the Solar System isn't the only piece of galactic real estate open to mankind. Several other nearby stars have planets of their own... sometimes with native life.

HUMAN COLONIES

Mankind's imperial ambitions aren't limited to the Solar System. Several worlds orbiting other stars have become Human colonies or protectorates.

Alpha And Proxima Centauri

The triple star of Alpha Centauri A and B and Proxima Centauri is the closest star to Earth after Sol, and supports a system of five planets. Two of these planets, named Chiron and Pholus, have roughly Earth-like atmospheres and are naturally inhabitable by Humans; the other three are airless and good only for mining and the like. The Americans and British have colonized Chiron, which has no intelligent life; the Italians control Pholus, a world of gigantic vegetation inhabited by the *Suradi*, a race of bear-men.

Sirius

Sirius, a star eight light-years from Earth, has fourteen planets, only one of which, the third, supports life. Conquered in 1933 by the Imperial Space Patrol, it's the home of a race of semi-intelligent ape-men now enslaved by the Japanese. Sirians frequently serve on Japanese ships or in other Japanese colonies as menial servants and laborers; they can be trained to perform simple duties like waiting on table, farming crops, and hauling heavy loads.

Epsilon Eridani

Epsilon Eridani is a difficult to traverse system of five asteroid belts, two dust rings, and ten planets. Two of the planets, known simply as C and D, are worth colonizing, though they have no life-forms more advanced than insects and fish. The Italians have settled on C (at a high cost in ships and men); and the French have claimed D and built there a pleasant seaside town known as New Marseilles. Many travelers heading further out into space stop at New Marseilles for a few days of rest and relaxation on the ground.

Procyon

Procyon has a single planet, a lush world with wide belts of forest, jungle, and grasslands. Several Great Powers have tried to colonize it, but all such efforts have failed, for two reasons. First, over one-

third of Procyon's plant and animal life possesses venom lethal to Humans. Second, the natives, a pygmy race called the Zrgash, have fought all potential colonizers fiercely, using primitive (but poisoned) weapons and berserker tactics to slaughter any offworlders they encounter. No explorer has dared to visit Procyon since 1933.

Tau Ceti

Tau Ceti is a relatively Sol-like star, and knowing that, explorers raced to see who'd be the first to reach it and claim any planets it might have. The winners were a Russian ship and an Italian ship, which entered the system almost simultaneously in 1931. What they discovered, unfortunately, was a system of nine worlds, all of which were relatively deficient in iron and other heavy metals, making them poor candidates for mining.

On the third planet they found something more interesting: intelligent life. The natives were a race of insect-men sometimes called the Cetians or Ceti bug-men, but most often known by a translation of their own name for themselves: the *Tau Collective*. The Tau are a "hive mind," with each Tau connected to the others by a psychic bond that even Human sensitives can't entirely fathom. But since in effect every Tau can know anything any other Tau knows, there's little privacy and society usually responds to threats and opportunities as a single unit (or, at the very least, as several large groups with distinctly-defined opinions).

Recognizing both the danger the newcomers presented and the opportunity they offered, the elders of the Tau Collective quickly entered into negotiations with both the Russians and the Italians to establish trade relations. They pointed out that their planet had relatively little of the usual resources Humans wanted, such as iron and gems, and instead established treaties based on the exchange of native goods and other items of lesser interest. As a result, to this day Tau Ceti remains uncolonized by mankind; it's just a trading partner. The Tau have mid-nineteenth century technology, but no rocketships and no particular desire to go into space.

Kapteyn's Star

The eight-planet solar system of Kapteyn's Star is a German possession. The natives of the fourth planet, known to mankind simply as the Kapteyn, are very Human-like in appearance, but tend to be three or four inches taller than Humans and have light green skin and dark green hair. Strong, aggressive, and accustomed to discipline and structure under a planetary government that's ruled for two centuries, they make ideal German subjects. The Reichsraum Marine and Wehrmacht have even begun fielding some all-Kapteyn fighting squads with German officers.

DRACON PACKAGE DEAL

Dracons have +1 CON
and +1 COM.

The Dracon Empire

Nearly twenty light-years from Earth mankind encountered its first rival among the stars. The Dracon Empire, born on the third world orbiting the star Humans call Sigma Draconis, controls that system as well as the systems of Altair, Vega, and several other stars.

ASTRA ships first made contact with the Dracons in 1932, at which point by Human estimates the Dracons had been traveling in space for around 30 years. Internal political turmoil, resolved in 1929 with the ascension of the powerful emperor Krogan III, kept the Empire from expanding further (and perhaps even reaching and conquering Earth). At first relations between the Dracons and Humans were peaceful, if tense; some trade developed. But in 1934 a clash between Human and Dracon explorers led to a short but intense war between the Empire and the combined space fleets of the United States, Great Britain, France, and Italy. The war ended in a draw, with the participants dividing the planets in the disputed systems among themselves, but relations between Earth and Dracon have remained shaky ever since.

THE DRACONS

On the outside, the Dracons resemble Humans in most respects, though their eyes and hair tend to shades impossible on Earth (bright blue, green, purple, pink). Typically eye and hair color match, though not always; baldness is extremely rare, and usually regarded as a sign of the gods' disfavor. Internally, the Dracons have two stomachs, allowing them to eat substances Humans cannot (outside of that, Human and Dracon food is highly compatible; the Dracons particularly enjoy Russian and various Eastern cuisines, and several Dracon spices have become popular on Earth). To Human eyes, Dracons, particularly Dracon women, tend to be exotically attractive; the Dracons seem to feel the same way about Humans. According to the best Human estimates, the overall population of Dracons is about half again as large as the population of Humans.

Imperial Government

The Dracon Empire rules not only all of Dracon itself, but all other worlds in the Empire, with an iron fist. The Empire has existed for nearly a thousand years, with the current ruling dynasty — the House of Ronak, to give its Human name — in power for about the past three centuries. Rule is hereditary, passing to the eldest child (male or female) upon the death of his or her parent.

The emperor's power is absolute, but he depends on a large coterie of nobles (referred to as dukes, counts, and barons by Humans) and an extensive, efficient bureaucracy to administer his empire. Many emperors, including Krogan III, have large families and rely on their adult children to assume special responsibilities (though with some risk of a prince or princess deposing his parent and seizing power). Krogan III has eight children, five of them adults and three teenagers. His eldest and

heir is the beautiful Princess Aluria, who seems to possess all his gifts of wisdom, diplomacy, courtesy, subtlety... and treachery.

The Dracon Empire maintains a large and powerful military. Soldiers and aethernauts alike wear distinctive uniforms with brown tunics and boots, gold pants and gloves, gold piping on the chest and shoulders to indicate service and rank, and a finned golden helmet.

Dracon Technology

In many respects, Dracon technology is slightly — slightly — less advanced and powerful than Human devices. For example, Dracon energy pistols fire a weaker beam, and Dracon rocketships are just a little slower than Human ones. But the Dracons have made some advances that still elude Humans. The most notable of these are air-cars — small flying vehicles that move through the air by manipulating gravity rather than using propellers or rockets. Every Earth government covets this technology, but the Dracons guard it very closely.

Dracon cities tend to resemble Human cities, though the Dracons prefer less decor on their buildings than Earth-men do. Dracon buildings are often much taller than the equivalent Human structures, with landing-ramps for air-cars and sometimes sky-walkways connecting two or more buildings.

Dracon rocketships work much the same way as Human ships, but their appearance is slightly different (see page 14).

The Frontier

The furthest Human explorers have reached so far is Pollux, a star 35 light-years from Earth. Out on the frontier colonies tend to be few, life rough, and pirates and raiders a constant threat.

ARCTURUS

Arcturus is an enormous system with 16 planets spread over a much greater area than Sol's ten. What's more, at least a dozen of them seem to possess extensive mineral or other resources desirable by Humans, and four have Earth-like environments. Every Great Power has established at least one colony here, with the four habitable worlds claimed by Great Britain and France, Italy and Germany, the United States, and Russia and Japan respectively. However, all claims remain somewhat in doubt pending final resolution of the issue by negotiators back on Earth, so everyone out there's scrabbling for as much as he can.

Two Arcturan worlds — Aramec, the one claimed by Italy and Germany, and Azimech, claimed by the United States — have intelligent native life. The Aramecans are a primitive reptilian folk easily conquered by the armies of Duce and Führer, and who are now used for menial labor by the Italians and Germans. The Azimechans are a bird-people with wings sprouting from their backs that allow them to fly; they've become an American protectorate in exchange for favorable trade treaties and access to many forms of American technology.

POLLUX

The Pollux system of nine planets has only barely been explored so far, mostly by the Italians. They haven't firmly determined its suitability for colonization, but it seems as if two of the worlds might make valuable possessions.

PIRATES

Because the Arcturan system is so distant from Earth (even the fastest ships take just over a month to get there) and so rich, it's become a particularly fertile ground for piracy. Pirates in search of riches waylay and board merchant vessels in search of valuable ore or native goods, which they can sell for good money elsewhere. All the Great Powers have stationed military rocketships in the Arcturus system to protect trade, but there are only so many ships to go around and the pirates are many and clever.

TECHNOLOGY

The discovery of the aether and its properties has led technology down many strange and wondrous avenues that would otherwise have remained unexplored for centuries (if ever). It's enabled mankind not just to create rocketships capable of crossing interstellar distances, but amazing new weapons and other devices that have made the world of 1935 a very, very different place from the Earth of previous generations.

Rocketships

The most amazing aetherial invention is, of course, the rocketship — a vehicle that allows Humans to travel from Earth to other planets and solar systems.

The rocketships of the *Solar Smith* setting are tall cylinders that taper to a point at the forward, or top, end. They have three or more large fins at the aft end (where the rocket thrusters are located) that support them when they rest on the ground. Some have "spars" projecting out of the front; these often contain space radio antennae and scanners. In game terms, they range from Size 5 (a one-man fighter, with strong rockets, weak aetherial sails, and lots of maneuverability) to Size 22 (roughly the same size as a modern aircraft carrier).

PROPULSION: ROCKET THRUSTERS AND AETHERIAL SAILS

Rocketships have two propulsion devices. The first and foremost are chemical rocket thrusters located at the aft end of the ship. These allow the ship to blast off from or land on planetary surfaces, and provide for short-range, low-speed travel within space itself. They use normal rocket fuel.

At one or more of three points along the body — just forward of the fins, about one-fifth to one-fourth aft of the top, and along the spar — are circular "vaness." Every rocketship must have at least one vane (most have multiple vanes), for it is these devices that allow the ship to reach the speeds

necessary to fly between planets and stars quickly. Engineers call them aetherial propulsion units (APUs), but most aethernauts and other people refer to them as *aetherial sails*.

A rocketship uses its rockets to leave a planet's atmosphere and attain what's known as aether-speed: the speed at which the electrically-charged aetherial sails can "catch the aetherial wind" or "push against the aether" (theoretical physicists describe the phenomenon differently, and argue about it constantly). However it works, the effect is the same: it allows the ship to reach the translight or near-translight speeds that make interstellar travel feasible. The more aetherial sails a rocketship has, the faster it can travel; at present the fastest known rocketships can reach speeds of roughly one light-year per day.

Unlike the canvas sails of aquatic ships, aetherial sails don't work just by being present — they require a charge of electricity from the ship's power plant to keep them "turned on." Through valence modulation — the alteration of the flow of electricity to the aetherial sails — a rocketship's pilot adjusts its speed; minor adjustments in the angle of the fins allow him to steer and maneuver. (In some cases, valence modulation can also improve a ship's speed or maneuverability slightly.)

Propulsion In Game Terms

In *HERO System* terms, rocketships represent their movement abilities with a two-slot Multipower. The first slot, the rockets, is Flight that Costs Endurance; the END is supplied by an Endurance Reserve that can only Recover through refueling. Thus, a ship has to carefully monitor how often it uses its rockets — since it needs the rockets to reach translight speeds with the aetherial sails, burning too much fuel leaves it stranded. This is especially problematic for ships that might engage in space combat (see below).

The second slot is FTL Travel that does not cost END (its power is supplied by the ship's power plant, which for game purposes has a basically limitless ability to generate electricity for the ship's needs). This represents the aetherial sails. The top speed for ships is 1 light-year per day (28 points' worth of FTL Travel), unless the GM rules otherwise. The fastest ships tend to be the mid-sized ones — "destroyers," in space navy parlance — because they have room for large rockets and plenty of aetherial sails. Small ships can't mount large rockets or many sails, and large ships have too much mass to move quickly.

A ship can only activate its FTL Travel slot if (a) it's in space (i.e., outside an atmosphere), and (b) after it reaches a velocity of at least 500" per Phase. This is a -¼ Limitation on the FTL Travel slot.

THE DYNOTRONIC BRAIN

Even the smallest rocketship is a fantastically complex piece of technology that has to function smoothly at all times lest its occupants die in the pitiless vacuum of space. Keeping all of its systems working in concert as they're supposed to is a task that would strain the attention span, patience, and

ingenuity of a whole corps of well-trained engineers. But fortunately, Humans don't have to do the work.

In 1927, as the nations of the world were first beginning to experiment with Gernsback-Goddard aetherial rocket technology, American scientist Vannevar Bush developed a device that he first called simply an "electronic brain," but later renamed as the *dynotronic brain*. Bush's work on this device was another reason for America's early superiority in space travel and colonization.

A calculating device of immense power and complexity, a dynotronic brain can monitor all of a rocketship's functions, keep the ship's most important systems (such as life support) calibrated and operating properly, and otherwise perform many necessary but onerous shipboard tasks that would otherwise fall to more fallible Humans. Additionally, a ship's dynotronic brain serves as a vast library and scientific instrument, giving the crew access to much of the assembled knowledge of mankind and the capacity to perform all sorts of scientific tests and scans. A ship without a functioning dynotronic brain is, in effect, crippled.

Dynotronic Brains In Game Terms

In game terms a dynotronic brain could be built as a Computer. For the most part they're simply plot devices — none of the example ships later in this section has one — but players and GMs can add them to their ships if they like.

WEAPONS

While most rocketships are built for peaceful purposes — travel, exploration, trade — there's no denying that the world's governments field many a ship for military or law enforcement purposes. These rocketships are armed with various weapons and defensive systems. Similarly, some peaceful ships may have "tools" that can function as weapons; for example, an asteroid prospector might mount an energy beam for cutting up large chunks of rock that he could turn against a pirate ship if necessary. Human rocketships carry two type of weapons: klystron beams and space torpedoes.

KLYSTRON BEAMS	
Effect:	RKA 10d6, Increased Maximum Range, No Range Modifier
Target/Area Affected:	One rocketship
Duration:	Instant
Range:	16,000" (20 miles)
Charges/END Cost:	Varies (see text)
Breakability:	75 DEF
Description: Based on technology similar to that found in electric pistols (see page 21), the klystron beam (or klystron projector) is a weapon that fires a large bolt of energy which can cut through metal (and sometimes energy shields) with ease. Based on the device's exact settings and systems, the beam may have different appearances (again, just like electric pistols); different Human nations typically have distinctive beams so they can identify their own ships in combat.	

Klystron beams have a maximum range of 16,000", or about 20 miles. Beyond that, they spread out and weaken to the point where they have no significant damaging effect. A klystron beam must either have Charges (representing a system-specific battery that must be recharged from the ship's power plant) or be bought to cost 0 END (meaning they're hooked directly into the power plant).

The basic klystron beam listed here is the American military version, a straight royal or navy blue bolt of energy. The options show the typical variations found in other nations' beams; sometimes a rocketship's engineers alter its klystron beams to function differently.

Game Information: *RKA 10d6, Increased Maximum Range (16,000", or about 20 miles; +½), No Range Modifier (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (375 Active Points); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees; -1). Total cost: 125 points.*

OPTIONS:

- 1) **Strong Klystron Beam:** Increase to RKA 12d6. 450 Active Points; total cost 150 points.
- 2) **Weak Klystron Beam:** Decrease to RKA 8d6. 300 Active Points; total cost 100 points.
- 3) **Civilian Klystron Beam:** The civilian klystron beam, installed on the ships of licensed prospectors and the like, is weaker and has a shorter range than military versions. Decrease to RKA 6d6 and Increased Maximum Range (2,250"; +¼) and remove No Range Modifier (+½). 157 Active Points; total cost 52 points.
- 4) **French Klystron Beam:** French klystron beams are a sort of bright burgundy color. Although possessing less raw power than the American version, they're modulated so that they cut through defenses more easily (in game terms, reduce the target's defenses by one-fourth or 3 points [whichever is less], unless those defenses are Hardened). Decrease to RKA 8d6 and add Semi-Armor Piercing (see *Dark Champions*, page 97; +¼). 330 Active Points; total cost 110 points.
- 5) **German Klystron Beam:** The German klystron beam fires a pulsed green bolt that lets the ship hit a single target multiple times, or target multiple targets in close proximity to one another. Decrease to RKA 8d6, add Autofire (4 shots; +½), and increase the cost of Reduced Endurance to +1. 420 Active Points; total cost 140 points.
- 6) **British Klystron Beam:** The yellow-gold colored British klystron beam incorporates technology that makes it particularly effective against energy shields. Decrease to RKA 9d6 (337 Active Points; total cost 112 points), and also buy as a naked Advantage Armor Piercing (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (112 Active Points); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees; -1), Only Works Against Energy Shields (-½) (total cost: 32 points). Total cost of weapon 497 Active Points, 144 Real Points.

7) **Italian Klystron Beam:** Italian klystron beams are sky blue. While it's noticeably less powerful than other nations', the Italian projector can maintain the beam on target for long periods of time to burn through all but the toughest defenses. Decrease to RKA 5d6 and add Continuous (+1) (262 Active Points; total cost 87 points) and also buy as a naked Advantage Penetrating (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (57 Active Points); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees; -1), Only Applies After Continuous Effect Has Been Maintained For Two Phases (-¼) (total cost: 17 points). Total cost of weapon 319 Active Points, 104 Real Points.

8) **Japanese Klystron Beam:** Japanese klystron projectors, which fire a purple beam, are built to cover a much larger arc of fire. Change Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees; -1) to 180 Degrees (-½). Total cost: 150 points.

9) **Russian Klystron Beam:** The Russian klystron beam is (appropriately enough) red. It uses the same writeup as the American beam.

10) **Dracon Klystron Beam:** The Dracon klystron beam is a sort of pulsating red, obviously different from the Russian beam. RKA 8d6, Increased Maximum Range (16,000", or about 20 miles; +½), No Range Modifier (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (300 Active Points); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees; -1). Total cost: 100 points.

SPACE TORPEDOES

Effect:	RKA 14d6, Indirect, No Range Modifier
Target/Area Affected:	Explosion, MegaScale (1 km hexes)
Duration:	Instant
Range:	8,045" (10 miles)
Charges:	12 Charges
Breakability:	136 DEF

Description: Space torpedoes are miniature rockets containing a powerful explosive charge. They have only half the range of a klystron beam (they self-destruct harmlessly when they reach that range, or if they miss their target), but are more powerful and release an explosion that covers such a vast area it may affect more than one ship. On the other hand, if the military officer who fired it isn't careful when he calculates his point of detonation, the explosion may catch his own ship, too!

A rocketship typically has space-torp launchers mounted at several points on its body. A system of pneumatic tubes shuttles the torpedoes between the launchers so they're fired from the most tactically advantageous one. Ships usually only carry a small number of torpedoes; having too many on board has proven dangerous — if an enemy attack happened to hit and detonate one, it would destroy the ship. Some warships are willing to take that chance, and stock up on space-torps.

Game Information: RKA 14d6, Explosion (+½), MegaScale (each hex of the Explosion is 1 km wide, deep, and broad; +¼), Indirect (always originates from ship, but can strike at any angle; +½), Indirect (can fire from any of sev-

eral points on the ship's body; +¼), Increased Maximum Range (8,045", or 10 miles; +¼), No Range Modifier (+½) (682 Active Points); OIF Bulky (-1), 12 Charges (-¼). Total cost: 303 points.

OPTIONS:

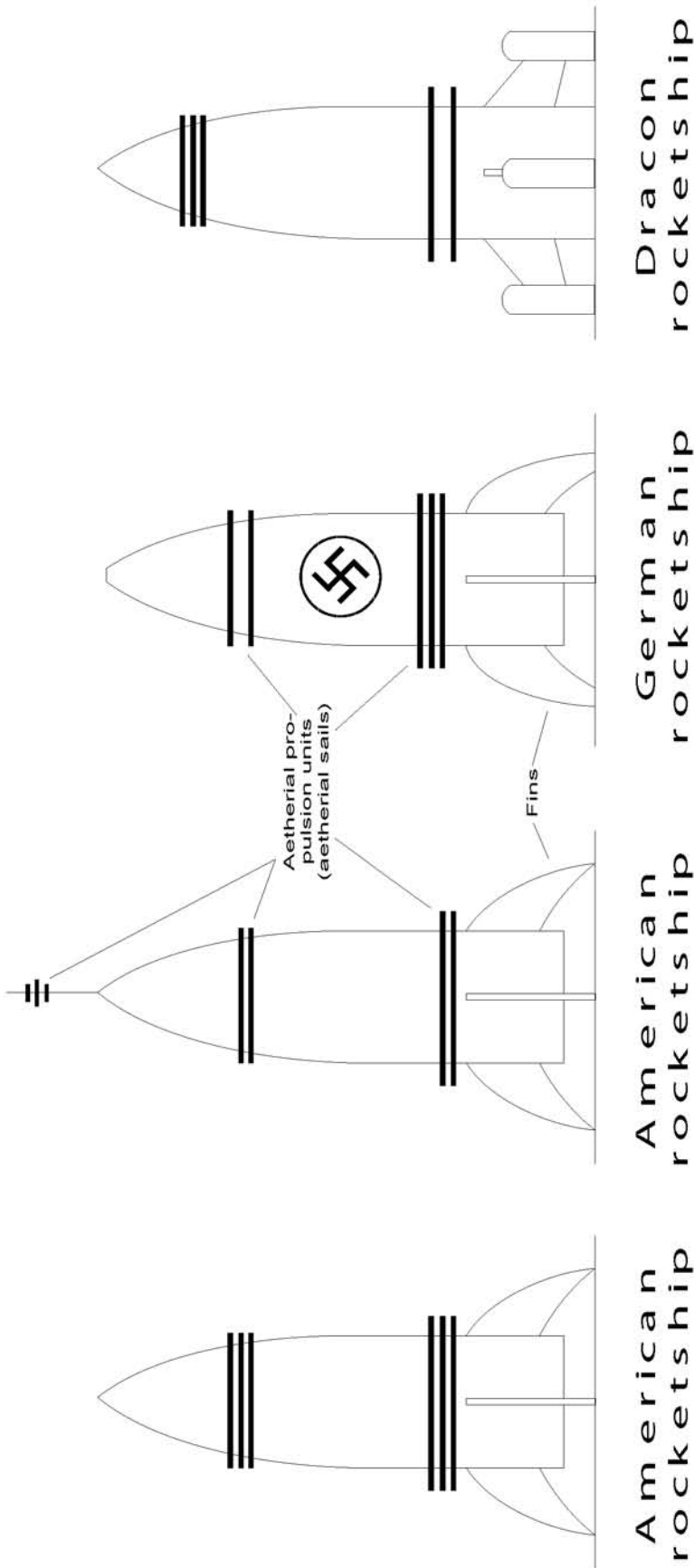
- 1) **Strong Space Torpedo:** Increase to RKA 16d6. 780 Active Points; total cost 347 points.
- 2) **Weak Space Torpedo:** Decrease to RKA 12d6. This also represents the standard Dracon space torpedo. 585 Active Points; total cost 260 points.
- 3) **More Or Fewer Space Torpedoes:** Some rocketships carry smaller or larger complements of torpedoes:
 - 4 torpedoes: 227 Real Points
 - 8 torpedoes: 273 Real Points
 - 20 torpedoes: 735 Active Points; total cost 327 points
 - 40 torpedoes: 787 Active Points; total cost 350 points
 - 100 torpedoes: 840 Active Points; total cost 373 points
- 4) **Dedicated Launcher:** Smaller ships, including one-man fighters, usually only have a single space torpedo launcher and fewer torpedoes. Remove Indirect (+¼) and decrease Charges to 4 (-1). 630 Active Points; total cost 210 points.
- 5) **Improved Torpedo:** This form of space torpedo creates an even larger explosion. Change to Explosion (-1 DC/2"; +¾). 735 Active Points; total cost 327 points.

DEFENSES

Rocketships have two things that protect them from enemy attacks. First, there's the ship's hull. Typically constructed of steel manufactured with aetherial technology to make it both stronger and lighter weight than regular steel, the hull provides the ship with physical integrity. Once it's breached, the interior components and occupants of a rocketship suffer damage and injury.

Second, most ships come equipped with energy shields. Projected around the ship by devices built into the hull, a shield ideally prevents the force of an attack from ever reaching the hull; failing that, the shield hopefully weakens the attack enough to prevent it from piercing the hull. A ship's shields use power from its power plant.

In game terms, a ship's hull is its DEF, and its energy shield is a Force Field bought to cost 0 END. Hull DEF typically ranges from 8-12, sometimes as high as 15 on military rocketships; Force Fields usually provide 5-15 additional points of PD and ED. The Force Field can be Hardened if desired, though this is rare. Dracon rocketships have the same average defenses as Human vessels.



ROCKETSHIP COMBAT

Combat in outer space is a dangerous and difficult thing — the least tactical error can leave a ship destroyed, or the ship itself stranded and the crew condemned to a slow death through starvation. A captain takes his ship into combat only after careful calculation and planning... or when circumstances force his hand.

Rocketship combat cannot take place at trans-light speed (*i.e.*, when a ship's using its FTL Travel). The aetherial energies that surround a ship moving that fast prevent klystron beams from functioning and cause space torpedoes to explode the instant they leave the launcher (causing significant damage to the launching ship). Naturally, all the spacefaring nations have scientists working hard to overcome these limitations; the scientist who succeeds is assured of wealth and fame.

Thus, ships must drop to normal speeds and use their rocket engines when they want to fight. This creates a tactical and logistical challenge: a ship that moves and maneuvers a lot is harder to hit... but uses a lot more of its precious fuel. Winning a battle does a ship little good if it lacks the fuel to attain aetherspeed or to land at its destination.

Beyond these parameters, and those imposed by the weapons and defensive systems themselves (see above), rocketship combat in the Aetherial Earth setting uses the standard *HERO System* vehicular combat rules. Ignore "realistic" aspects such as ship's gravity, G-force, vehicle Hit Location charts, and the like — this is Pulp Hero, after all! For dramatic purposes those considerations can get in the way of exciting adventure, so you can ignore them if you want to (just assume the ship's systems compensate for them). On the other hand, if your group really enjoys ship combat, you're welcome to expand on the rules as much as you like to come up with the right balance of Pulp-y action and detailed combat to suit you.

SHIPBOARD LIFE

Ships range from one-man scouts and fighters to enormous military cruisers, with just about everything in between cropping up at one point or another. In most Aetherial Earth campaigns, the most common ships will be mid-sized vessels, referred to by most space forces as "destroyers." They're usually Size 10-16 and have crews ranging from a dozen or less to about a hundred.

In ASTRA (and, under different titles and designations, other Human space navies), command of a ship rests in a Captain, whose word aboard ship is law but who's required to abide by ASTRA

rules and regulations (which are largely the same as those for the US Navy). The second in command, known as the Commander, is the ship's chief military officer. He's responsible for making sure the weapons crews know how to do their jobs, that the ship's weapons are in good order, that tactical doctrines are followed, and so forth. In battle the Captain may virtually cede control of the ship to the Commander, though many captains were once commanders themselves and see no need for that. The Commander also leads the ship's contingent of marines (if any), who function as a shipboard security force.

Besides the captain and the commander, other key ship's personnel include:

- the Pilot, who steers the ship and regulates its speed
- the Technical Officer, who's responsible for seeing that all scientific research conducted aboard the ship complies with Space Navy orders and regulations, performing investigations and research as requested by the captain, and in general bringing his scientific acumen to bear to help solve problems that confront the ship.
- the Ship's Engineer, whose duty it is to see that the ship remains in proper working order, to perform repairs and maintenance as necessary, and so forth. He may work closely with the Commander in combat situations, and the Technical Officer in scientific situations.
- the Medical Officer, who sees to the crew's health, patches up injured crewmen, and tries to cure the strange alien diseases crewmen sometimes contract planetside. He may work closely with the Technical Officer in some situations.

Besides these crewmen, most ships have a complement of lower-ranking aethernauts who perform the many jobs necessary to make a space journey as safe and comfortable as possible. ASTRA accepts women into its ranks, though it has had few women apply to join, and no senior officers are women.

ASTRA rocketships tend to be somewhat cramped most of the time, but not much more so than an aquatic navy ship. Aethernauts are intelligent, highly-trained people who tend to have high morale despite the sometimes difficult conditions of their jobs. For recreation they usually play board or card games. Fraternization between crewmen of different sexes is strictly forbidden by ASTRA regulations.

ROCKETSHIP DESIGNATIONS

Most nations name their ships (as do the Dracon), but use different initial designations for them. American ships are *USS* (for "United States ship"), while the British prefer *HMR* ("His Majesty's Rocketship") and the Germans use *RRS* (*Reich Raketeschiff*, or "Reich's Rocketship"). The French, Italians, and Japanese simply name their rocketships; the Russians use the designation *SKK* (for *Sov'yetskiy Kosmicheskiy Korabl'*, meaning "Soviet Rocketship"). If the Dracon have a ship designation system, Humans have yet to learn of it.

EXAMPLE SHIPS

Here are five example ships for you to use: an American cruiser; a German destroyer; a Dracon cruiser; a Human merchant rocketship; and a pirate rocketship.

ASTRA CRUISER

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
18	Size	90	64" x 32"; -18 KB; -12 DCV
100	STR	0	Lift 25 ktons; 20d6 HTH [0]
14	DEX	12	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
45	BODY	17	
12	DEF	30	See Tactical Systems
4	SPD	16	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12

Total Characteristic Cost: 165

Movement:	Ground:	0"/0"
	Flight:	100"/800"
	FTL Travel:	1 LY per Day

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Power	END
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	Power Systems	
63	<i>Rocketship Fuel:</i> Endurance Reserve (1,500 END); OIF Immobile (-1½) plus Endurance Reserve (10 REC); OIF Immobile (-1½), Limited Recovery (refueling at a fuel depot or through like means; -1)	0
	Propulsion Systems	
210	<i>Space Travel:</i> Multipower, 210-point reserve	
14u	1) <i>Rocket Flight:</i> Flight 100", x8 Non-combat; Costs Endurance (supplied by Endurance Reserve; -½)	21
2u	2) <i>Aetherial Sail Flight:</i> FTL Travel (1 LY per Day); Cannot Be Activated Until Ship Reaches 500" Or Greater With Flight (-¼)	0
-12	<i>Space Travel Only:</i> Ground Movement -6" (0" total)	
-2	<i>Space Travel Only:</i> Swimming -2" (0" total)	
	Tactical Systems	
125	Forward Klystron Beam: RKA 10d6, Increased Maximum Range (16,000", or about 20 miles; +½), No Range Modifier (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees; -1)	0
10	<i>Port And Starboard Klystron Beams:</i> As Forward Klystron Beam (total of 3)	0
303	<i>Space Torpedoes:</i> RKA 14d6, Explosion (+½), MegaScale (each hex of the Explosion is 1 km wide, deep, and broad; +¼),	

Indirect (always originates from ship, but can strike at any angle; +½), Indirect (can fire from any of several points on the ship's body; +¼), Increased Maximum Range (8,045", or 10 miles; +¼), No Range Modifier (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), 12 Charges (-¼) [12]

18	<i>Energy Shield:</i> Force Field (12 PD/12 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (-1)	0
	Operations Systems	

22	<i>Transplanetary Radio:</i> HRRP, MegaScale (range of 1 light-year, can scale down to a range of 1 km or less; +3½); OIF Bulky (-1), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group In Addition To Radio Group (-½)	0
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8	<i>Dynotronic Translator:</i> Universal Translator 18-; OIF Bulky (-1), Extra Time (takes a minimum of 1 Turn to translate speech; -1¼), Only Translates Spoken Words (-½)	0
	Personnel Systems	

18	<i>Life Support:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum)	0
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3	<i>Food Supplies:</i> Life Support (Diminished Eating: no need to eat); 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replaced from sources outside the ship; 3 Months; -0) [1cc]	
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20	<i>Cavorite Artificial Gravity:</i> Telekinesis (20 STR), Selective (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (-1), Only To Pull Objects Straight Down To The Floor (-1)	0
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9	<i>Medical Facilities:</i> Paramedics 12-	0
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3	<i>Medical Facilities:</i> SS: Medicine 12-	0
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Skills/Laboratories

9	Power: Aetherial Engineering 12-	
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3	SS: Astronomy 12-	
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3	SS: Biology 12-	
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3	SS: Chemistry 12-	
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3	SS: Physics 12-	
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Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 835

Total Vehicle Cost: 1,000

Value Disadvantages

20	Distinctive Features: ASTRA military vessel (Not Concealable; Causes Major Reaction [fear])	
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Total Disadvantage Points: 20

Total Cost: 980/5 = 196

GERMAN DESTROYER				
Val	Char	Cost	Notes	
13	Size	65	20" x 10"; -13 KB; -8 DCV	
75	STR	0	Lift 800 tons; 15d6 HTH [0]	
16	DEX	18	OCV: 5/DCV: 5	
40	BODY	17		
10	DEF	24	See Tactical Systems	
4	SPD	16	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12	
Total Characteristic Cost: 140				
Movement:		Ground:	0"/0"	
		Flight:	80"/1,280"	
		FTL Travel:	1 LY per 3 Days	
Abilities & Equipment				
Cost	Power			END
Power Systems				
55	Rocketship Fuel: Endurance Reserve (1,300 END); OIF Immobile (-1½) plus Endurance Reserve (10 REC); OIF Immobile (-1½), Limited Recovery (refueling at a fuel depot or through like means; -1)			0
Propulsion Systems				
175	Space Travel: Multipower, 175-point reserve			
12u	1) Rocket Flight: Flight 80", x16 Non-combat; Costs Endurance (supplied by Endurance Reserve; -½)			17
2u	2) Aetherial Sail Flight: FTL Travel (1 LY per 3 Days); Cannot Be Activated Until Ship Reaches 500" Or Greater With Flight (-¼)			0
-12	Space Travel Only: Ground Movement -6" (0" total)			
-2	Space Travel Only: Swimming -2" (0" total)			
Tactical Systems				
140	Port Forward Klystron Beam: RKA 8d6, Autofire (4 shots; +½), Increased Maximum Range (16,000", or about 20 miles; +½), No Range Modifier (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees; -1)			0
10	Starboard Forward, Port, And Starboard Klystron Beams: As Port Forward Klystron Beam (total of 4)			0
303	Space Torpedoes: RKA 14d6, Explosion (+½), MegaScale (each hex of the Explosion is 1 km wide, deep, and broad; +¼), Indirect (always originates from ship, but can strike at any angle; +½), Indirect (can fire from any of several points on the ship's body; +¼), Increased Maximum Range (8,045", or 10 miles; +¼), No Range Modifier (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), 10 Charges (-¼)			[10]
18	Energy Shield: Force Field (12 PD/12 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (-1)			0

Operations Systems	
22	<i>Transplanetary Radio:</i> HRRP, MegaScale (range of 1 light-year, can scale down to a range of 1 km or less; +3½); OIF Bulky (-1), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group In Addition To Radio Group (-½) 0
7	<i>Dynotronic Translator:</i> Universal Translator 16-; OIF Bulky (-1), Extra Time (takes a minimum of 1 Turn to translate speech; -1¼), Only Translates Spoken Words (-½) 0
Personnel Systems	
18	<i>Life Support:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum) 0
3	<i>Food Supplies:</i> Life Support (Diminished Eating: no need to eat); 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replaced from sources outside the ship; 3 Months; -0) [1cc]
20	<i>Artificial Gravity:</i> Telekinesis (20 STR), Selective (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (-1), Only To Pull Objects Straight Down To The Floor (-1) 0
9	<i>Medical Facilities:</i> Paramedics 12- 0
3	<i>Medical Facilities:</i> SS: Medicine 12- 0
Skills/Laboratories	
7	Power: Aetherial Engineering 11-
2	SS: Astronomy 11-
2	SS: Biology 11-
2	SS: Chemistry 11-
2	SS: Physics 11-

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 798

Total Vehicle Cost: 938

Value Disadvantages

25	Distinctive Features: German military vessel (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction [abject fear])
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Total Disadvantage Points: 25

Total Cost: 913/5 = 183

Description: German rocketships are largely like their American and British counterparts, though with some distinctive differences. The fins are slightly different in shape, and the nose tapers to a much blunter point. And of course, the prominent eagle-and-swastika on the side gives its affiliation away even to people who don't know much about rocketship design. This particular rocketship comes with four guns: two mounted forward (one on each side of the nose) and one on each side.

DRACON CRUISER			
Val	Char	Cost	Notes
16	Size	80	40" x 20"; -16 KB; -10 DCV
90	STR	0	Lift 25 ktons; 18d6 HTH [0]
15	DEX	15	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
40	BODY	14	
11	DEF	27	See Tactical Systems
4	SPD	15	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 151			
Movement:	Ground:	0"/0"	
	Flight:	85"/680"	
	FTL Travel:	1 LY per 2 Days	
Abilities & Equipment			
Cost	Power	END	
Power Systems			
53	Rocketship Fuel: Endurance Reserve (1,250 END); OIF Immobile (-1½) plus Endurance Reserve (10 REC); OIF Immobile (-1½), Limited Recovery (refueling at a fuel depot or through like means; -1)		
	Propulsion Systems		
180	Space Travel: Multipower, 180-point reserve		
12u	1) Rocket Flight:	Flight 85", x8 Non-combat; Costs Endurance (supplied by Endurance Reserve; -½)	18
2u	2) Aetherial Sail Flight:	FTL Travel (1 LY per 2 Days); Cannot Be Activated Until Ship Reaches 500" Or Greater With Flight (-¼)	0
-12	Space Travel Only: Ground Movement -6" (0" total)		
-2	Space Travel Only: Swimming -2" (0" total)		
Tactical Systems			
100	Forward Klystron Beam: RKA 8d6, Increased Maximum Range (16,000", or about 20 miles; +½), No Range Modifier (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees; -1)		
10	Port, Starboard, and Dorsal Klystron Beams: As Forward Klystron Beam (total of 4)		
260	Space Torpedoes: RKA 12d6, Explosion (+½), MegaScale (each hex of the Explosion is 1 km wide, deep, and broad; +¼), Indirect (always originates from ship, but can strike at any angle; +½), Indirect (can fire from any of several points on the ship's body; +¼), Increased Maximum Range (8,045", or 10 miles; +¼), No Range Modifier (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), 12 Charges (-¼)		
15	Energy Shield: Force Field (10 PD/10 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (-1)		

Operations Systems

22 *Transplanetary Radio:* HRRP, MegaScale (range of 1 light-year, can scale down to a range of 1 km or less; +3½); OIF Bulky (-1), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group In Addition To Radio Group (-½) 0

7 *Dynotronic Translator:* Universal Translator 16-; OIF Bulky (-1), Extra Time (takes a minimum of 1 Turn to translate speech; -1¼), Only Translates Spoken Words (-½) 0

Personnel Systems

18 *Life Support:* Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum) 0

3 *Food Supplies:* Life Support (Diminished Eating; no need to eat); 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replaced from sources outside the ship; 3 Months; -0) [1cc]

20 *Artificial Gravity:* Telekinesis (20 STR), Selective (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (-1), Only To Pull Objects Straight Down To The Floor (-1) 0

9 *Medical Facilities:* Paramedics 12- 0

3 *Medical Facilities:* SS: Medicine 12- 0

Skills/Laboratories

9 Power: Aetherial Engineering 12-

3 SS: Astronomy 12-

3 SS: Biology 12-

3 SS: Chemistry 12-

3 SS: Physics 12-

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 721

Total Vehicle Cost: 872

Value Disadvantages

25 Distinctive Features: Dracon military vessel (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction [abject fear])

Total Disadvantage Points: 25

Total Cost: 847/5 = 169

Description: Dracon rocketships are visually distinct from Human ships in several ways. First, instead of one large rocket port aft, they have four rockets, one mounted on the end of each fin (and the fins themselves are differently-shaped than those on human rocketships). Second, the forward aetherial sails are usually mounted closer to the tip of the nose than on Human rocketships. Third, the lines of the rocketship itself are more angular in places, unlike Human vessels which tend to be relatively smooth cylinders.

MERCHANT SHIP			
Val	Char	Cost	Notes
10	Size	50	10" x 5"; -10 KB; -6 DCV
60	STR	0	Lift 100 tons; 12d6 HTH [0]
14	DEX	12	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
28	BODY	8	
8	DEF	24	See Tactical Systems
3	SPD	6	Phases: 4, 8, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 100			
Movement:	Ground:	0"/0"	
	Flight:	80"/1,280"	
	FTL Travel:	1 LY per Week	
Abilities & Equipment			
Cost	Power	END	
Power Systems			
55	Rocketship Fuel: Endurance Reserve (1,300 END); OIF Immobile (-1½) plus Endurance Reserve (10 REC); OIF Immobile (-1½), Limited Recovery (refueling at a fuel depot or through like means; -1)		0
Propulsion Systems			
115	Space Travel: Multipower, 115-point reserve		
8u	1) Rocket Flight: Flight 50", x16 Non-combat; Costs Endurance (supplied by Endurance Reserve; -½)		11
2u	2) Aetherial Sail Flight: FTL Travel (1 LY per Week); Cannot Be Activated Until Ship Reaches 500" Or Greater With Flight (-¼)		0
-12	Space Travel Only: Ground Movement -6" (0" total)		
-2	Space Travel Only: Swimming -2" (0" total)		
Tactical Systems			
12	Energy Shield: Force Field (8 PD/8 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (-1)		0
Operations Systems			
22	Transplanetary Radio: HRRP, MegaScale (range of 1 light-year, can scale down to a range of 1 km or less; +3½); OIF Bulky (-1), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group In Addition To Radio Group (-½)		0

7	<i>Dynotronic Translator:</i>	Universal Translator 14-; OIF Bulky (-1), Extra Time (takes a minimum of 1 Turn to translate speech; -1¼), Only Translates Spoken Words (-½)	0
Personnel Systems			
18	<i>Life Support:</i>	Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum)	0
3	<i>Food Supplies:</i>	Life Support (Diminished Eating: no need to eat); 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replaced from sources outside the ship; 1 Year; -0)	[1cc]
20	<i>Cavorite Artificial Gravity:</i>	Telekinesis (20 STR), Selective (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (-1), Only To Pull Objects Straight Down To The Floor (-1)	0
7	<i>Medical Facilities:</i>	Paramedics 11-	0
2	<i>Medical Facilities:</i>	SS: Medicine 11-	0
Skills/Laboratories			
3	<i>Power:</i>	Aetherial Engineering 9-	
1	<i>SS:</i>	Astronomy 8-	
1	<i>SS:</i>	Chemistry 8-	
1	<i>SS:</i>	Physics 8-	

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 263

Total Vehicle Cost: 363

Value Disadvantages

None

Total Disadvantage Points: 0

Total Cost: 363/5 = 73

Description: This character sheet represents a typical merchant rocketship with a crew of up to about a dozen. It's much slower than a military vessel, and has no armament, but compared to a cruiser or destroyer it has significantly more cargo space. By converting cargo holds to luxury berths and dining suites, you can change this to a small, ultra-expensive space cruise ship for wealthy patrons.

PIRATE ROCKETSHIP

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
12	Size	60	12" x 8"; mass 400 tons; -12 KB; -8 DCV
70	STR	0	Lift 400 tons; 14d6 HTH [0]
15	DEX	15	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
36	BODY	14	
10	DEF	24	See Tactical Systems
4	SPD	15	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 140			
Movement:		Ground:	0"/0"
		Flight:	80"/640"
		FTL Travel:	1 LY per 3 Days
Abilities & Equipment			
Cost	Power		END
Power Systems			
55	Rocketship Fuel: Endurance Reserve (1,300 END); OIF Immobile (-1½) plus Endurance Reserve (10 REC); OIF Immobile (-1½), Limited Recovery (refueling at a fuel depot or through like means; -1)		
	Propulsion Systems		
170	Space Travel: Multipower, 170-point reserve		
11u	1) Rocket Flight: Flight 80", x8 Noncombat; Costs Endurance (supplied by Endurance Reserve; -½)		
2u	2) Aetherial Sail Flight: FTL Travel (1 LY per 3 Days); Cannot Be Activated Until Ship Reaches 500" Or Greater With Flight (-¼)		
-12	Space Travel Only: Ground Movement -6" (0" total)		
-2	Space Travel Only: Swimming -2" (0" total)		
Tactical Systems			
140	Forward Klystron Beam: RKA 8d6, Autofire (4 shots; +½), Increased Maximum Range (16,000", or about 20 miles; +½), No Range Modifier (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees; -1)		
227	Space Torpedoes: RKA 14d6, Explosion (+½), MegaScale (each hex of the Explosion is 1 km wide, deep, and broad; +¼), Indirect (always originates from ship, but can strike at any angle; +½), Indirect (can fire from any of several points on the ship's body; +¼), Increased Maximum Range (8,045", or 10 miles; +¼), No Range Modifier (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), 4 Charges (-1)		
15	Energy Shield: Force Field (10 PD/10 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (-1)		

Operations Systems

22	<i>Transplanetary Radio:</i> HRRP, MegaScale (range of 1 light-year, can scale down to a range of 1 km or less; +3½); OIF Bulky (-1), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group In Addition To Radio Group (-½)	0
7	<i>Dynotronic Translator:</i> Universal Translator 14-; OIF Bulky (-1), Extra Time (takes a minimum of 1 Turn to translate speech; -1¼), Only Translates Spoken Words (-½)	0
	Personnel Systems	
18	<i>Life Support:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum)	0
3	<i>Food Supplies:</i> Life Support (Diminished Eating: no need to eat); 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replaced from sources outside the ship; 3 Months; -0)	[1cc]
20	<i>Artificial Gravity:</i> Telekinesis (20 STR), Selective (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (-1), Only To Pull Objects Straight Down To The Floor (-1)	0
7	<i>Medical Facilities:</i> Paramedics 11-	0
2	<i>Medical Facilities:</i> SS: Medicine 11-	0
	Skills/Laboratories	
5	Power: Aetherial Engineering 10-	
2	SS: Astronomy 11-	
2	SS: Biology 11-	
2	SS: Chemistry 11-	
2	SS: Physics 11-	

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 698**Total Vehicle Cost: 838**

Value Disadvantages

25	Distinctive Features: pirate rocketship (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction [abject fear])		
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Total Disadvantage Points: 25**Total Cost: 813/5 = 163**

Description: Pirate rocketships are usually custom-made vessels cobbled together from cheap commercial hulls fitted with stolen or salvaged weapons and other systems. They're not pretty, but they get the job done. Compared to a military ship they often have large cargo holds for carrying loot or prisoners.

Weapons

Military engineers have found ways to apply the new aetherial sciences to the development of personal weapons. While most soldiers, spies, and hunters on Aetherial Earth and her colonies still use ordinary firearms for most tasks, aethernauts employ the amazing new electric pistol.

ELECTRIC PISTOL

Effect: Energy Blast 8d6
 Target/Area Affected: One character
 Duration: Instant
 Range: 200"
 Charges: 12 Charges
 Breakability: 8 DEF

Description: The electric pistol is the standard firearm of Human aethernauts. It fires a beam of energy whose color and appearance vary from nation to nation, but whose basic effect in game terms is the same. The power for an electric pistol is provided by a disposable battery that's inserted in the grip, much in the same way a clip of bullets goes into a regular pistol; the battery has enough energy for twelve shots. Recharging the battery involves plugging it into an electrical socket for 30 minutes per Charge.

Compared to an ordinary gun, an electric pistol is more likely to injure or knock out a target than kill him — a blast from an electric pistol may inflict burns, and perhaps even broken bones or similar injuries, but a single shot rarely kills. This is an important consideration aboard rocketships, where a stray bullet might pierce the hull or damage sensitive equipment.

The basic electric pistol listed here is the American military version, which fires a straight royal or navy blue bolt of energy. The options show the standard variations found in other nations' pistols.

Game Information: *Energy Blast 8d6 (40 Active Points); OAF (-1), Beam (-¼), Strength Minimum (8, STR Min Cannot Add/Subtract Damage; -1), 12 Charges (-¼). Total cost: 11 points.*

OPTIONS:

- 1) **Strong Electric Pistol:** Increase to Energy Blast 10d6. 50 Active Points; total cost 14 points.
- 2) **Weak Electric Pistol:** Decrease to Energy Blast 6d6. 30 Active Points; total cost 9 points.
- 3) **Stronger Battery:** Some electric pistols have batteries with greater power. Change to 20 Charges (+¼). 50 Active Points; total cost 15 points.
- 4) **French Electric Pistol:** French electric pistols fire a bright burgundy-colored beam. They have a mechanism that allows the firer to tap the battery for more power, and thus a more powerful beam — though he can only do this a few times. Change to 12 Boostable Charges (-0). Total cost: 12 points.
- 5) **German Electric Pistol:** The German electric pistol fires a "bolt" of energy that consists of a series

of green rings following one after the other (much like a man blowing smoke rings, except the rings remain the same size and travel in a straight line). It has a wider muzzle than most electric pistols, giving it a distinctive profile. While the beam has slightly less power than the American pistol, it's more accurate. Decrease to Energy Blast 7d6 (35 Active Points; total cost 10 points) and add +1 OCV (5 Active Points; total cost 2 points). Total cost of weapon 40 Active Points, 12 Real Points.

6) **British Electric Pistol:** The British electric pistol has a yellow-gold beam. Like its rocketship counterpart, it's particularly effective against energy shields. Decrease to Energy Blast 7d6 (35 Active Points; total cost 10 points) and also buy as a naked Advantage Semi-Armor Piercing (see *Dark Champions*, page 97; +¼) (10 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only Works Against Energy Shields (-½), 12 Charges (-¼) (total cost: 4 points). Total cost of weapon 45 Active Points, 14 Real Points.

7) **Italian Electric Pistol:** Italian electric pistols fire sky-blue beams. However, the Italian pistol's beam resembles a sort of lightning bolt, rather than the straight beam fired by the American pistol. Although there's no scientific proof that the Italian beam is more effective or dangerous, many aethernauts consider it to be, so Presence Attacks that involve the weapon may be slightly more effective. It uses the same writeup as the American pistol.

8) **Japanese Electric Pistol:** Japanese electric pistols fire a purple beam whose width can be adjusted with a control on the pistol's grip. Decrease to Energy Blast 7d6 and remove the Beam (-¼) Limitation. 35 Active Points; total cost 11 points.

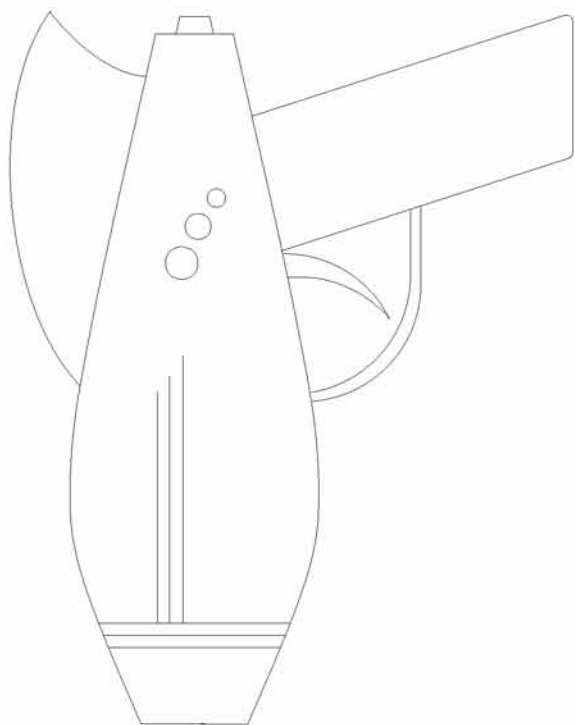
9) **Russian Electric Pistol:** Russian electric pistols have red beams. They use the same writeup as the American pistol.

10) **Dracon Electric Pistol:** Dracon electric pistols have pulsed red beams (*i.e.*, the "beam" is actually a series of pulses of energy in a straight line, obviously different from any Human beam). They use the same writeup as the Weak Electric Pistol, above.

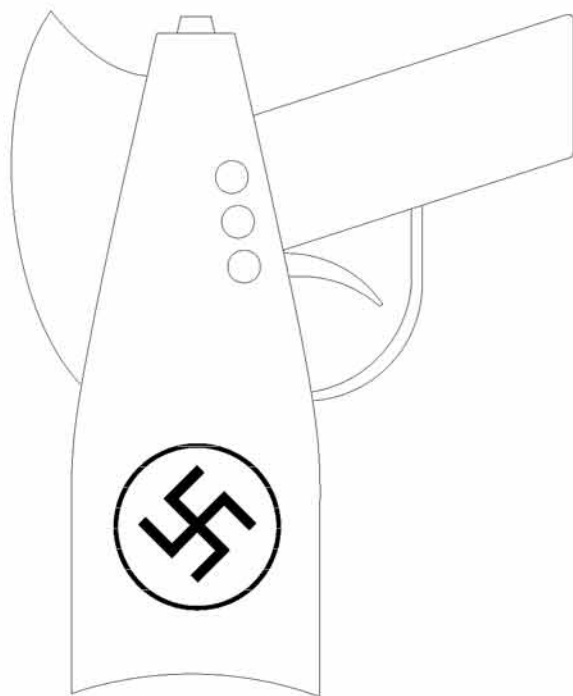
ELECTRIC SWORD

Effect: HKA 1d6, AP plus +2 STUN Multiplier and Penetrating
 Target/Area Affected: One character
 Duration: Instant
 Range: Touch
 END Cost: 0 for sword, 30 Charges for naked Advantages
 Breakability: 6 DEF

Description: ASTRA's aethernauts quickly discovered that on many of the worlds they visited, the native races still fought with weapons like swords, axes, and maces. Not wanting to find themselves trapped by a horde of primitive warriors with no energy left in their electric pistols and no other way to defend themselves, many of them began learning swordplay. (They often later discovered that being skilled with a blade was a good way to earn respect among alien warriors without necessarily having to kill them.) To give them a superior weapon to fight



Standard ASTRA electric pistol. Most other nations' pistols are basically the same, with some minor changes in appearance.



Standard German electric pistol, sometimes known as a "widemouth."

their enemies with, ASTRA developed the *electric sword*. Similar to a rapier, it's made of aetherial steel honed to a razor-sharp edge. Additionally, the hilt contains a battery that provides the power to surround the blade with a field of electrical energy that makes the sword almost irresistible, even by shield belts.

Game Information: *HKA 1d6 (up to 2d6 with STR), Armor Piercing (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (30 Active Points); OAF (-1), Strength Minimum (8; -½) (total cost: 12 points) plus +2 Increased STUN Multiplier (+½), Penetrating (+½) for HKA, 30 Charges (+¼) (19 Active Points); OAF (-1) (total cost: 9 points). Total cost: 21 points.*

Defenses

Aetherial science has given aethernauts their own form of personal defense: the shield belt. Other types of people can wear shield belts, of course, but since they're very expensive to manufacture and use, most governments only issue them to aethernauts.

SHIELD BELT

Effect: Force Field (8 PD/8 ED)
Target/Area Affected: Self
Duration: Constant
Range: Self
Charges: 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (1 Minute)
Breakability: 8 DEF

Description: A shield belt is a belt containing aetherial technology that can generate an energy shield big enough to surround and protect the wearer (including his personal effects, but not any large objects he might carry). A shield belt doesn't make the wearer immune to injury (in fact, he remains relatively easy to Stun or Knock Out), but does prevent him from suffering significant wounds from bullets or electric pistols.

A shield belt is a broad belt with a large, distinctive buckle containing the dial to turn it on and off. Its battery has enough power for one minute of continuous operation. To recharge it, plug it into an electrical socket for six minutes per second of power.

Game Information: *Force Field (8 PD/8 ED) (16 Active Points); OIF (-½), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge lasting 1 Minute (Easy to recharge; -¾). Total cost: 7 points.*

OPTIONS:

- 1) **Strong Shield Belt:** Increase to Force Field (10 PD/10 ED). 20 Active Points; total cost 9 points.
- 2) **Weak Shield Belt:** Decrease to Force Field (6 PD/6 ED). This is the type of Belt the soldiers of the Dracon Empire use. 12 Active Points; total cost 5 points.

Other Aetherial Technology

The discoveries made by aetherialists have led to many other amazing technological developments. Some of the most notable include:

DYNOTRONIC TRANSLATOR

Effect: Universal Translator 18-
Target/Area Affected: One character
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0
Breakability: 6 DEF

Description: Nearly every rocketship comes equipped with one of these devices, since they're invaluable aids to diplomacy and trade. A dynotronic translator is roughly the size of a cabinet radio and has wheels on the bottom so it can easily be moved. It "hears" spoken words and translates them into a language the listener can understand. It may require a large sample of a new speech before it can begin translating it, but so far it's proven able to render any alien speech into English (or French, Russian, German...).

Game Information: *Universal Translator 18- (29 Active Points); OAF Bulky (-1½), Extra Time (takes a minimum of 1 Turn to translate speech; -1¼), Only Translates Spoken Words (-½). Total cost: 7 points (or, for OIF Bulky (-1) shipboard version, 8 points).*

ROCKETPACK

Effect: Flight 12"
Target/Area Affected: Self
Duration: Constant
Range: Self
Charges: 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (30 Seconds)
Breakability: 5 DEF

Description: ASTRA and the other major space navies have corps of rocketmen — soldier-explorers who wear rocketpacks that allow them to fly. Based on advances in rocketry developed by Goddard and his colleagues, and powered by purified neptunium fuel, a rocketpack provides a total of 30 seconds of flying time — more than enough to skirt many obstacles, rescue falling people, and fight other rocketmen, but not enough for extended travel or battle.

Game Information: *Flight 12" (24 Active Points); OIF (-½), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge lasting 30 Seconds (neptunium fuel, Very Difficult to obtain; -1¼). Total cost: 9 points.*

OPTIONS:

- 1) **Strong Rocketpack:** Increase to Flight 15". 30 Active Points; total cost 11 points.
- 2) **Weak Rocketpack:** Decrease to Flight 10". This is the type of rocketpack most commonly found in the Dracon Empire. Where the Dracons get their neptunium (or equivalent fuel) remains unknown

to Humans. 12 Active Points; total cost 7 points.

3) **Improved Rocketpack:** One of the latest development in rocketpacks is a model that allows the wearer to expend extra fuel to go faster. For each extra second's worth of fuel used, add +2" of velocity (maximum of 4 seconds/+8"). Obviously a rocketman using this pack has to watch his fuel supply very carefully. Change to 1 Boostable Continuing Fuel Charge lasting 30 Seconds (neptunium fuel, Very Difficult to obtain; -1). Total cost: 10 points.

4) **Large Rocketpack:** The biggest impediment to the use of the rocketpack is the limited fuel supply. This version of the pack has a much bigger fuel tank, but at the cost of making the pack itself so bulky that it inhibits the wearer's ability to move and dodge. Change to OIF Bulky (-1) and 1 Continuing Fuel Charge lasting 3 Minutes (neptunium fuel, Very Difficult to obtain; -1). Total cost: 8 points.

SPACE SURVIVAL SUIT

Effect: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Low Pressure/Vacuum)
Target/Area Affected: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
Charges: 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (3 Hours)
Breakability: 3 DEF

Description: Sometimes bold aethernauts have to leave their ships and dare the icy wastes of space! To survive in the tellurian depths they need one of these suits. The exact design and appearance of a Space Survival Suit varies from nation to nation, but typically it consists of three components: a skintight full-body uniform (usually in the colors of the wearer's space navy); an oxygen tank worn on the back (the straps criss-cross the wearer's chest in an X shape); and a clear bubble-like helmet made of aetherglass. A Space Survival Suit provides enough breathing air for the wearer to remain in space (or, if necessary, in a poisonous atmosphere or underwater) for three hours.

Game Information: *Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Low Pressure/Vacuum), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge lasting 3 Hours (Easy to refuel; +0) (14 Active Points); OAF (-1). Total cost: 7 points.*

TRANSPLANETARY RADIO

Effect: HRRP, MegaScale (range of 1 light-year)
Target/Area Affected: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0
Breakability: 11 DEF

Description: Aetherial technology allows Humans to communicate over distances as far as one light-year! The transplanetary radio consists of a large console with various control panels, dials, speakers, and a viewing screen, flanked by two 6.5 foot (1") tall tower-like structures ringed with several

aetherial sail-like structures each. The user sits at the console, uses the dials to adjust the transmitting towers, and activates the transmission circuits. When the transmission's received, the viewing screen lights up and shows whoever's on the receiving end (he, in turn, can see who's broadcasting).

Using a transplanetary radio requires the Systems Operation Skill. Normal use doesn't require a roll, but characters may have to roll to overcome interference or other difficulties. Transplanetary broadcasts are so far limited to a 1 light-year range. Various nations have attempted to set up relay networks of stations to pass information quickly from distant colonies to Earth, but so far all of these efforts have failed for various reasons (pirates or space storms destroying broadcasting stations, traitors or enemy spies stealing the equipment, unexplained disasters, and so forth). Typically it takes an average of 1 day per 10 light-years to transmit a message over long distances.

Game Information: *HRRP, MegaScale (range of 1 light-year, can scale down to a range of 1 km or less; +3½) (54 Active Points); OAF Immobile (-2), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group In Addition To Radio Group (-½). Total cost: 15 points (or, for OIF Bulky (-1) shipboard version, 22 points).*

CHARACTERS

To get you started in the universe of *Solar Smith*, here are a few example PCs — Solar Smith and the crew of the *USS Hesperus* — as well as a handful of the adversaries they've faced.

The Crew Of The Hesperus

The *USS Hesperus* is one of the most famous ships in the ASTRA fleet — or infamous, depending on your perspective. The flagship of the new Hesperus class of cruisers, it's similar to the ship described on page 16, but has 50 BODY, a top speed of Flight 105", and a fourth (dorsal) klystron beam projector. It's crewed by the renowned Captain "Solar" Smith and his brave men.

CAPTAIN SOLOMON "SOLAR" SMITH

15	STR	17	DEX	16	CON	13	BODY
14	INT	12	EGO	20	PRE	14	COM
6	PD	6	ED	4	SPD	8	REC
32	END	35	STUN				

Abilities: Martial Arts (Fisticuffs), Running +1" (7" total), +2 Overall, Analyze Starship Tactics 12-, Climbing 12-, Combat Piloting 12-, Cramming, Deduction 12-, Electronics 8-, Fast Draw (Small Arms) 12-, Gambling (Card Games) 8-, High Society 8-, AK: Known Space 12-, KS: ASTRA 12-, KS: The Spacefaring World 12-, Lipreading 8-, Mechanics 8-, Navigation (Air, Space) 12-, Persuasion 13-, Power: Aetherial Engineering 8-, PS: Rocketship Captain 12-, Stealth 12-, Systems Operation 12-,

Tactics 12-, WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms, Ship's Weapons, Fringe Benefit: ASTRA Rank

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features (ASTRA uniform); Psychological Limitation: Pulp Hero's Burden; Psychological Limitation: Pulp Hero's Code; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: One of the youngest and most gifted men ever to captain an ASTRA rocketship — and also one of the most headstrong and inclined to “accidentally” disobey orders — Solomon Smith, better known by his nickname of “Solar,” is the epitome of a rocketship commander: insightful, bold, decisive, clever, well-educated, and tactically adept. Despite being the object of affection of numerous women due to his chiseled good looks, confidence, and fame, he's wholly devoted to his duty and his career, and refuses to abandon either for a woman until he feels his job's been done. He's tall, broad-shouldered, blonde-haired, and blue-eyed.

TECHNICAL OFFICER LT. JOSIAH “BROM” BROMWELL

10	STR	14	DEX	14	CON	12	BODY
20	INT	14	EGO	15	PRE	10	COM
4	PD	4	ED	3	SPD	6	REC
28	END	24	STUN				

Abilities: +1 with Intellect Skills, Cramming, Dynotronic Programming 13-, Deduction 13-, Electronics 13-, Inventor 13-, AK: Known Space 11-, KS: ASTRA 11-, KS: The Scientific World 11-, Mechanics 13-, Navigation (Space) 8-, Power: Aetherial Engineering 13-, PS: Technical Officer 13-, Stealth 12-, Systems Operation 13-, WF: Small Arms, Weaponsmith (Energy Weapons) 13-, Scientist and 20 points' worth of SSs, Fringe Benefit: ASTRA Rank

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features (ASTRA uniform); Psychological Limitation: Fascinated By Scientific Mysteries; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: The *Hesperus*'s expert on matters scientific, “Brom” Bromwell comes from a family of noted researchers, scientists, and inventors — “creatin’ things is in my blood,” as he likes to say. Science in general and his job in particular endlessly fascinate him; he often has to be ordered from the bridge or laboratory to keep him from working double and triple shifts, and more than once he's gotten the crew in trouble by his too-zealous investigation of scientific mysteries. But the help his knowledge provides, and the many times he's saved the crew's life, more than make up for that. He's of average height and build, and has a slightly pallid complexion, dirty blonde hair, and green eyes.

SHIP'S ENGINEER LT. MICHAEL O'SHEA

20	STR	16	DEX	18	CON	15	BODY
18	INT	10	EGO	15	PRE	10	COM
6	PD	4	ED	3	SPD	8	REC
36	END	34	STUN				

Abilities: Martial Arts (Fisticuffs with +2 DCs), +2 with Electronics, Mechanics, and Aetherial Engineering, Dynotronic Programming 8-, Electronics 13-, Inventor 13-, AK: Known Space 8-, KS: ASTRA 11-, KS: The Hesperus 13-, KS: Irish Folklore And Legends 11-, KS: The Scientific World 8-, Mechanics 13-, Power: Aetherial Engineering 15-, PS: Ship's Engineer 13-, Stealth 12-, Systems Operation 8-, WF: Small Arms, Weaponsmith (Energy Weapons) 8-, Scientist and 12 points' worth of SSs, Fringe Benefit: ASTRA Rank

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features (ASTRA uniform); Psychological Limitation: Loves A Good Fight; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: A first-generation Irish immigrant (with the accent and red hair to prove it!), Ship's Engineer O'Shea is also the biggest, toughest man on the *Hesperus* crew. Just ask him, he'll tell you — and if you don't believe him, he might just give you a pounding then and there to prove it. Despite his penchant for fighting, he's a top-notch ship's engineer, and Captain Smith and the *Hesperus* couldn't get along without him. Somehow he seems to have a knack for keeping the ship in flight and in good working order regardless of the beating it sometimes takes at the hands of enemies, strange space storms, and bizarre alien atmospheres. He's tall, strongly-built, and has green eyes.

PILOT SGT. CHARLIE MONTGOMERY

10	STR	18	DEX	14	CON	12	BODY
15	INT	10	EGO	13	PRE	12	COM
4	PD	3	ED	4	SPD	6	REC
28	END	24	STUN				

Abilities: +2 with Combat Piloting, Navigation, and Systems Operation, Combat Piloting 15-, Electronics 8-, AK: Known Space 13-, KS: ASTRA 11-, Mechanics 8-, Navigation (Air, Space) 14-, Power: Aetherial Engineering 8-, PS: Ship's Pilot 12-, Stealth 13-, Systems Operation 14-, WF: Ship's Weapons, Small Arms, Fringe Benefit: ASTRA Rank

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features (ASTRA uniform); Psychological Limitation: Sucker For A Pretty Face; Rivalry: Professional (other rocketship pilots); Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: One of the newest and youngest members of the *Hesperus* crew, Charlie Montgomery has already proven his worth several times by flying the ship out of meteor showers, battles, and other dangerous areas. There's no one in the fleet that's as good at the controls of a rocketship as he is, and he'll respond to any suggestion to the contrary with a challenge to a race. With his boyish good looks and charm, he often attracts the attention of young women — even alien women!

AETHERIAL ENGINEERING

The *Power: Aetherial Engineering* Skill represents the ability to work with, build, maintain, and modify aetherial propulsion units and other ship's technology pertaining to aetherial flight, which are subjects beyond the reach of the Mechanics Skill. It's the defining Skill for a ship's engineer, and many other crewmen on a rocketship have at least a passing familiarity with it as well.

MEDICAL OFFICER DR. ROBERT RICHMORE

10	STR	15	DEX	14	CON	12	BODY
15	INT	12	EGO	15	PRE	10	COM
4	PD	4	ED	3	SPD	5	REC
28	END	24	STUN				

Abilities: KS: ASTRA 11-, KS: The Medical World 11-, Paramedics 14-, PS: Play Chess 11-, SS: Biology 11-, SS: Alien Biology 8-, SS: Chemistry 11-, SS: Medicine 14-, SS: Surgery 14-, WF: Small Arms, Fringe Benefits: License To Practice Medicine, ASTRA Rank

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features (ASTRA uniform); Psychological Limitation: Hippocratic Oath; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: Bob Richmore studied medicine at Harvard and seemed destined for a lucrative medical practice, but threw it all away to join ASTRA. For him, the lure of space, strange new worlds, and the medical challenges of serving a rocketship crew meant more than money or fame. When he's not in the sickbay tending to some patient or experiment, he's usually engaging the dynotronic brain (whom he insists on calling "Sally" for some reason) in a game of chess; he wins about one game out of three. He has dark hair and eyes, and a well-groomed dark moustache.

CHAPLAIN SGT. FRANK "HICKORY" MCCOY

10	STR	12	DEX	13	CON	10	BODY
15	INT	14	EGO	18	PRE	10	COM
3	PD	3	ED	3	SPD	5	REC
26	END	22	STUN				

Abilities: Deduction 12-, Conversation 13-, High Society 13-, AK: Known Space 8-, KS: ASTRA 8-, KS: Christian Theology 14-, Oratory 13-, Persuasion 13-, WF: Small Arms, Fringe Benefits: Right To Marry, ASTRA Rank

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features (ASTRA uniform); Psychological Limitation: Devout Christian; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: One of the oldest (and, he would add, wisest!) of the Hesperus crewmen, Frank McCoy couldn't resist the temptation to leave his Tennessee parish behind to see the heavens with his own eyes. He sees to the crew's spiritual needs just as Dr. Richmore tends to their physical ones. It's a calling he's found himself surprisingly well-suited for... and if need be, he can wield an electric pistol as well as a Bible (though he strongly prefers discussion and diplomacy to violence). He smokes an old hickory pipe wherever he goes (except in zeppelins, of course!), so everyone calls him "Hickory."

Adversaries

Here are some of the enemies and rivals Captain Smith and the Hesperus crew have encountered during their careers.

KROGAN III, EMPEROR OF DRACON

13	STR	14	DEX	15	CON	14	BODY
20	INT	18	EGO	20	PRE	12	COM
5	PD	5	ED	3	SPD	6	REC
30	END	29	STUN				

Abilities: +1 Overall, Combat Piloting 8-, Conversation 13-, Deduction 13-, High Society 13-, AK: Dracon Empire 15-, KS: Dracon History And Culture 14-, Oratory 13-, Persuasion 13-, TF: Dracon Rocketships, Riding Animals, WF: Small Arms, Fringe Benefit: Head Of State, Money (Filthy Rich)

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted (various potential usurpers and rivals for the throne); Psychological Limitation: Proud, Arrogant, Headstrong, And Determined To Strengthen Dracon And Expand His Empire; Psychological Limitation: Dearly Loves His Children (well, most of them...); Social Limitation: Public Identity

Notes: Krogan III has been Emperor of Dracon for the past six years. He's expanded the Empire's boundaries to their greatest extent ever... and has no interest in stopping. The discovery of another space traveling race, Humans, has slowed but not stopped his plans; he must carefully analyze this new people and its capabilities before he can best decide how to conquer or destroy them. And make no mistake! — conquer them he will, despite the occasional setback dealt to him by that infernal Captain Smith. Krogan's eyes and hair are a deep, royal blue, giving him an even greater air of majesty than he'd otherwise possess.

PRINCESS ALURIA OF DRACON

8	STR	12	DEX	13	CON	10	BODY
15	INT	13	EGO	18	PRE	18	COM
4	PD	4	ED	4	SPD	5	REC
26	END	21	STUN				

Abilities: Acting 13-, Bribery 13-, Conversation 13-, Deduction 12-, High Society 14-, AK: Dracon Empire 11-, KS: Dracon History And Culture 11-, Persuasion 13-, Seduction 13-, TF: Dracon Rocketships, Riding Animals, WF: Small Arms, Fringe Benefit: Imperial Princess, Money (Wealthy)

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted (various rivals for the throne, potential suitors, and the like); Psychological Limitation: Determined To Get Her Way; Psychological Limitation: Attracted To Captain Smith; Social Limitation: Public Identity

Notes: Aluria, eldest child of Krogan III and heir to the throne of Dracon, is a young woman of surpassing beauty — an attribute equalled only by her cleverness. Growing up in the sometimes-dangerous atmosphere of the imperial court, she learned at an early age how to discern the motives of others, disguise her own when necessary, and manipulate people to serve her own ends. While capable of great kindness and sympathy (among

other things, she loves children and cats), she can be ruthless, pragmatic, and even cruel when necessary. She's developed a fascination with Solar Smith since their first meeting nearly a year ago, and has wondered ever since how she might win him to be hers. She's slender, with a well-developed figure and alluring green hair and eyes, and always dresses at the height of fashion (in fact, she usually *sets* the fashions on Dracon).

KAPITAN GERHARDT VON SCHADEL

18	STR	18	DEX	18	CON	15	BODY
18	INT	14	EGO	20	PRE	12	COM
6	PD	5	ED	4	SPD	8	REC
36	END	33	STUN				

Abilities: Martial Arts (Boxing, Fencing), Climbing 13-, Combat Piloting 13-, Deduction 13-, High Society 13-, Interrogation 13-, AK: Known Space 13-, KS: RRM 13-, KS: The Spacefaring World 13-, Language: English, Mechanics 8-, Navigation (Air, Space) 13-, Persuasion 13-, Power: Aetherial Engineering 8-, PS: Rocketship Captain 13-, Stealth 13-, Systems Operation 13-, Tactics 13-, WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms, Ship's Weapons, Contacts (among the Nazi High Command), Fringe Benefit: RRM Rank

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features (RRM uniform); Distinctive Feature (Heidelberg dueling scar); Psychological Limitation: Devoted To Hitler And The Third Reich; Psychological Limitation: Convinced Of His Own Aryan Superiority; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: Brilliant, incisive, clever, and cruel, Kapitän zur Raum Gerhardt von Schadel of the Reichsraum Marine is one of Captain Smith's most dangerous and devious adversaries. The scion of a noble Prussian family, he wholeheartedly embraces Nazi ideals and will do anything to advance the cause of the Third Reich in space. He likes nothing better than to beat the other Great Powers to a potential colony or overcome one of their vessels in a skirmish. His rocketship is one of the most advanced and best-equipped in the RRM, and his crew one of the most skilled, disciplined, and efficient.

DAI SA KASHIDA JIRO

10	STR	15	DEX	15	CON	14	BODY
15	INT	13	EGO	18	PRE	10	COM
6	PD	5	ED	4	SPD	6	REC
30	END	27	STUN				

Abilities: Martial Arts (Jujutsu), Combat Piloting 12-, Deduction 12-, High Society 13-, Interrogation 13-, AK: Known Space 12-, KS: ISP 12-, KS: Japanese History And Culture 12-, KS: The Spacefaring World 12-, Language: English, Mechanics 8-, Navigation (Air, Space) 12-, Persuasion 13-, Power: Aetherial Engineering 8-, PS: Rocketship Captain 12-, SS: Astronomy 11-, SS: Biology 8-, SS: Physics 11-, Stealth 12-, Systems Operation 12-, Tactics 12-, WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms, Ship's Weapons, Fringe Benefit: ISP Rank

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features (ISP uni-

form); Psychological Limitation: Will Do Anything For Japan; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: Captain of the *Ashikaga*, one of the largest and most powerful rocketships ever built, Dai Sa Jiro has been a thorn in Solar Smith's side on more than one occasion. Cultured and witty, ever ready with a bon mot or (bitingly) insightful comment, he can switch from urbane ship's captain to ruthless tactician in a heartbeat. His crew includes two scientists from Unit 731, and he often looks in on their experiments with interest.

KAPITAN RAKHILA SEpanova

12	STR	16	DEX	16	CON	14	BODY
20	INT	15	EGO	20	PRE	16	COM
5	PD	5	ED	4	SPD	5	REC
32	END	28	STUN				

Abilities: Acting 13-, Bribery 13-, Combat Piloting 12-, Conversation 13-, Deduction 12-, Fast Draw (Small Arms) 12-, High Society 13-, AK: Known Space 12-, KS: KKUK 12-, KS: The Spacefaring World 12-, Language: English, Mechanics 8-, Navigation (Air, Space) 12-, Persuasion 13-, Power: Aetherial Engineering 8-, PS: Rocketship Captain 12-, Seduction 13-, Stealth 12-, Systems Operation 8-, Tactics 12-, WF: Small Arms, Ship's Weapons, Fringe Benefit: KKUK Rank

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features (KKUK uniform); Psychological Limitation: Self-Centered; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: That rarest of rarities — a female rocketship captain (!) — Rakhila Stepanova was born to an old Russian naval family and dreamed of one day going to sea, but the stars captivated her still more. When space travel became possible, she used her family's influence to obtain a position in the Russian Space Academy, and her own native intelligence and talents to get the best grades in her class... and, eventually, her own ship, the *Flowers Of February*. Since then she's established an enviable record for finding new planets and advancing the cause of the Soviet Union in space. But she's no patriot — her interest lies more in feathering her own nest and increasing her own power than in serving her Communist "masters."

CAMPAIGNING



Here are a few notes and suggestions for campaigning in the universe of Solar Smith, together with a GM's Vault containing secret information for the GM's eyes only.

CHARACTER CREATION

Solar Smith characters are typically built on 75 Base Points + up to 75 points from Disadvantages. They're automatically subject to the Normal Characteristic Maxima rules and get no Character Points for this. In the standard campaign, they're all members of ASTRA serving aboard the same ship, and thus have access to a lot of ASTRA resources, but the GM could instead run a campaign featuring a mix of aethernauts from several nations, a group of free-lance explorers and scientists in search of adventure and new planets, or even a ship of Robin Hood-like pirates.

PLOT SEEDS

By now you've probably got plenty of ideas of your own for Solar Smith adventures, but in case you don't, here are a few plot seeds to get you started.

Strange New Worlds: The classic Solar Smith scenario is simply described: the PCs discover a new world that seems suitable for colonization. Some other nation — usually Germany, Japan, Russia, or Italy — also has a claim to the world, or wants it regardless of the primacy or legitimacy of claims. The PCs have to explore the planet, dealing with both the dangers it presents (hostile atmosphere, hostile plants and animals, hostile natives...) and the efforts of the rival crew to sabotage their efforts or even kill them. It's a mix of exploration, action, and diplomacy in space, and it's the sort of thing Solar Smith characters thrive on!

Dracon Rex! The other classic Solar Smith plot is equally simple: Emperor Krogan III of Dracon has come up with another scheme to conquer or destroy Earth. The PCs not only have to stop him, they have to do it in a way that doesn't involve falling prey to Princess Aluria's romantic intentions... unless, of course, they can reform her.

Alternately, Krogan's forces may have invented or discovered a device that gives the Dracons a significant tactical advantage against Earth. The PCs have to destroy it (or better yet, steal it) to keep Earth safe.

Crusoes On Canopus: While pushing back the frontiers of Human space, the PCs wind up stranded on the gigantic planet Canopus. There's no help of rescue — if they're going to get home, they've got to do it themselves. They must make a great journey from their landing site to the largest city on the planet, along the way interacting with tribes hostile and friendly, dangerous beasts, and all other sorts of threats.

The Eleventh Planet: Directly opposite Earth from the Sun is another planet — an eleventh member of the Solar System. This fact having just been discovered, the PCs must race against the other Great Powers to be the first to get there and claim what could be a second Earth... and deal with whatever dangers it may hold.

Gone Native: The PCs' ship crash-lands in a remote, unexplored part of Venus. To get back to civilization, the PCs have to join a tribe of Venusians, learn to ride zarks, help their new friends fight against enemy tribes, and so forth. And who knows what else they may discover?

Journey To The Center Of Mars: Areologists have discovered that there's a vast network of caverns under one part of Mars that may lead virtually to the center of the planet. Could there be remnants of the supposed ancient Martian civilization down there somewhere... or at least examples of its technology? It's John Carter meets Otto Lidenbrock as the PCs go on the most fantastic spelunking expedition ever!

The Power Of The Dracon: Where does the Dracon Empire get its equivalent of neptunium fuel? If the PCs could find that out and either (a) take advantage of it, (b) cut the Dracon Empire off from it, or (c) both, that would be a major tactical advantage in mankind's ongoing maneuverings with the Dracons.

Rebels Against The Empire: One great way to weaken the Dracon Empire, or at least distract it, would be to foment unrest on its colony worlds. The PCs are assigned to do just that by aiding and assisting a rebel movement on one of the Vegan planets.

The Transplanetary Broadcasting Network: Previous attempts by Humans to set up a "relay network" of transplanetary radio stations so they can transmit messages over dozens of light-years quickly have failed for one reason or another. Now the government has assigned the PCs to try again... and perhaps to figure out why all the previous attempts went wrong.

Zeppelins... In... Space! The PCs get to take part in the wars on Jupiter, typically by crewing one of the zeppelins sent there by the US to fight against German, Japanese, Italian, and Russian aggression. Along the way they have to cope with Jovian internal politics, traitors within the races the US is helping, storms, and other threats.

THE GM'S VAULT

This section contains additional and/or secret information about the galaxy of Solar Smith that's for the GM's eyes alone. If you're playing in, or plan to play in, a campaign based on the Solar Smith setting, do not read this section!!

The GM's Vault is organized by page number. If the Vault doesn't comment on some part of the main text, it's usually safe to take what's written there as accurate (or as left for each GM's individual interpretation). As always, you're free to change anything in this Hero Plus Adventure to suit your own preferences or campaign.

PAGE 5 — MARS

The Martians were indeed once a more advanced civilization. Over a hundred thousand years ago the Martians had a highly sophisticated society and science. They could even travel in space for short distances, and visited Earth but paid it little attention because its natives were "so primitive." Ecological changes that rendered the Martian climate more arid, coupled with various political and religious upheavals, caused Martian civilization to collapse. The survivors reverted to a more primitive lifestyle, living in towns and villages clustered along the canals and in still-verdant regions. Today, thousands of years later, the Martians know nothing of their former greatness, except in dimly-remembered tales of great antiquity. There are many ruins of the old Martian civilization on Mars, just waiting for Human explorers to find them... and, perhaps, encounter the dangers that might lurk within. Those who avoid or defeat these dangers may find amazing technological treasures, ancient Martian artifacts — or nothing of value beyond knowledge.

The Martians do have a religion. They worship a small pantheon of deities led by "the One," the greatest and most powerful of gods. The Cydonian Face is a great shrine to the One. The Martians keep their religion secret because their priests (who, as a group, remain in hiding from mankind, either by going in disguise among lay Martians or by living in secret temples) have informed them that if Humans learn of the gods, the Martians will incur the gods' displeasure. A Human who uncovered proof of Martian religion or religious beliefs would become world-famous on Earth.

Phobos, the largest and closest of Mars's two moons, is actually a disguised artificial object — a space station created by the ancient Martian spacefarers. So far the protective devices they set in place have fooled Human explorers into thinking Phobos is a chunk of worthless rock. Inside may lurk a surviving colony of advanced Martians, Martian science run

amok thanks to a hundred thousand years of neglect, or anything else you feel like throwing at your players.

PAGE 6 — JUPITER

The religion of the Lailags doesn't just involve sacrificing Jovian animals. Some darker sects, who remain hidden and secretive for obvious reasons, sacrifice Jovians of other races to their three gods. They've also sacrificed Humans, when they could safely get their hands on them; some Purple priests claim that the gods look with particular favor on Human sacrifices.

PAGE 8 — SATURN

The main text states that Saturn has no life, but this is wrong. The planet's size has kept Humans from finding the hidden, decadent Saturnians, who dwell far underground. A race of powerful psychics, the Saturnians nearly destroyed themselves and much of the Saturnian environment, and eradicated all life on the planet, in a series of psionic wars thousands of years ago. The survivors retreated to subsurface enclaves where their powerful technology keeps them alive and well. Many of them sleep a sleep of strange Saturnian dreams for decades or centuries at a time; others prefer to remain awake and active as much as possible. If unleashed on the Solar System by some unwitting German or British exploratory expedition, they could pose a serious threat to Humanity.

PAGE 8 — TRITON

As Triton's odd geology and orbit should suggest to attentive PCs, it's not a natural satellite. Most scientists who realize this simply conclude that it was "captured" by Neptune and was perhaps originally just a large asteroid that drifted out of the asteroid belt somehow. In fact, as the Russians have discovered, it's some sort of rocketship. The Russians have only barely begun to explore the ship located deep inside the mantle of ice and rock that have somehow built up all around it. They're having trouble determining the function of various parts of the ship, can't read the builders' script, and have lost more than a dozen highly-skilled scientists to mysterious "accidents." If they ever figure out what's really going on, they may gain technology and weapons that make Russia the most powerful nation on Earth and in space... or they may unlock a peril that could threaten Humanity's very existence.

PAGES 8-9 — MERCURY, URANUS, PLUTO, AND MINERVA

These four worlds, particularly the fictional tenth planet Minerva, are left open for the GM to do with as he sees fit. They could harbor long-lost solar civilizations, the ruined colonies of space explorers from other galaxies, races of intelligent animals or fungi, or just about anything else that suits the GM's plans. They could also be largely unknown planets for the PCs to explore and tame without having to go too far from home.