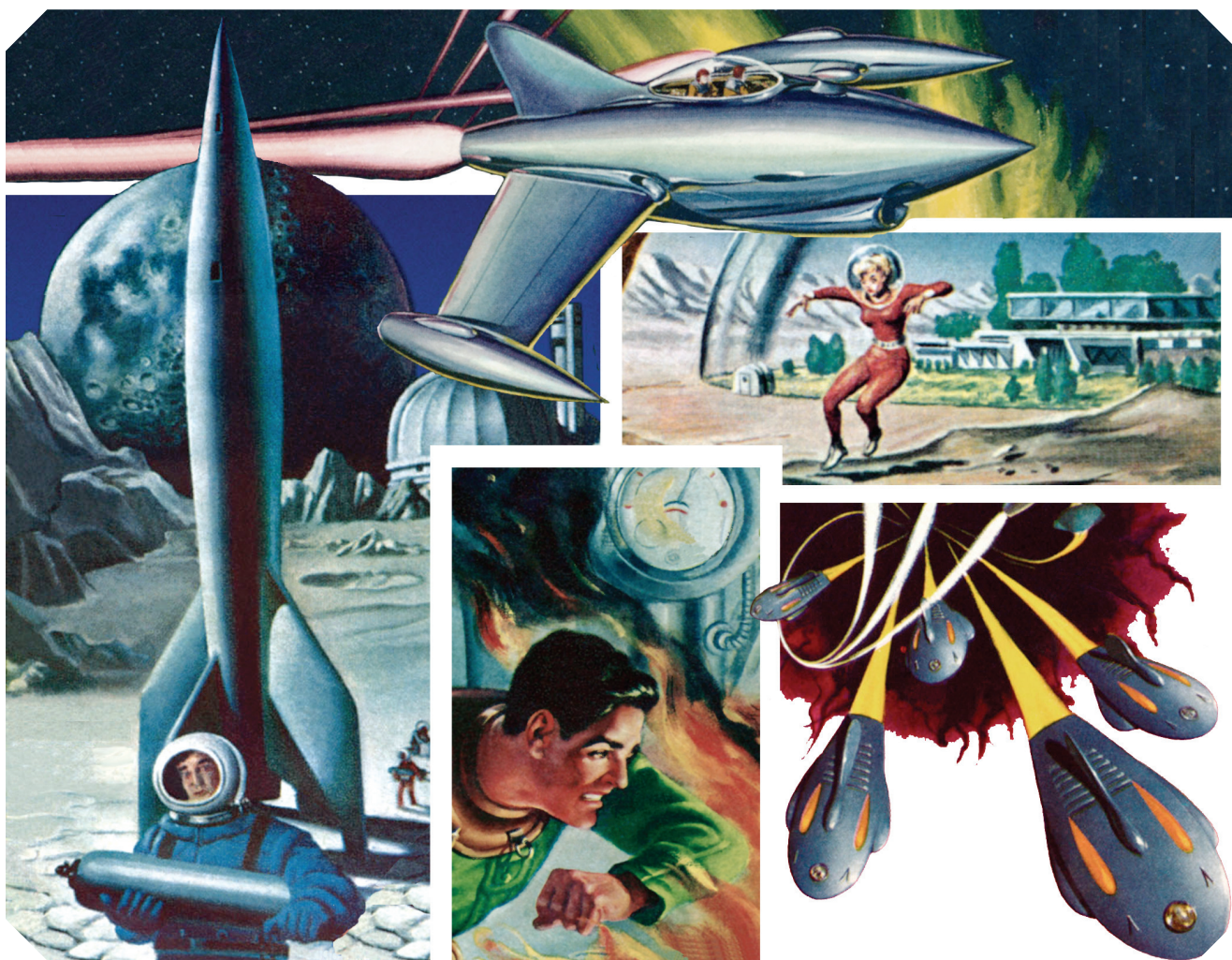


**GURPS**

Fourth Edition

# TALES OF THE SOLAR PATROL™



Written by LIZARD

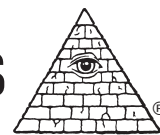
Edited by NIKOLA VRTIS

*An e23 Sourcebook for GURPS®*

**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

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# INTRODUCTION

Journey now to those thrilling days of . . . tomorrow!

There was a time when the future seemed bright. No giant megacorporations or corrupt tyrants ruled the world. Technology offered solutions, not new problems. The exploration of a new frontier was noble and glorious, not an excuse to exploit the natives and despoil the environment. The villains were evil, not misunderstood victims of propaganda. The heroes were heroic, not self-aggrandizing. People looked to the future and thought it would work.

That time – the future of the past – forms the setting for **GURPS Tales of the Solar Patrol**.

In terms of inspiration, *Tales of the Solar Patrol* draws from the films, stories, comic books, and radio shows of the 1930s to the 1950s, bracketed by *Buck Rogers* on one end and *Forbidden Planet* (and the launch of Sputnik) on the other. The focus is high adventure and excitement, with a special emphasis on uncynical optimism. The world of the future presents its dangers and hardships – it is not a utopia without cares – but it is a world where problems are solved and where there exist choices besides the lesser of two evils.

In this setting, much of what is now known about science is cheerfully tossed out the airlock: Many of the planets of the Solar System are inhabited. Space travel, though risky, is commonplace and comparatively inexpensive. Voice-command robots coexist alongside punch-card and paper-tape computers, and no one questions the apparent inconsistency. World-shaking inventions are put together from bailing wire and aluminum foil one week and forgotten the next, and technological change does not mean social change.

These tales come from a time when science offered boundless possibilities with no consequences or compromises, when

Europe and the United States experienced an unparalleled science-driven rise in the standard of living that seemed to have no end and no long-term costs. Once-incurable diseases were being wiped out. A single pill could cure illnesses that had once meant a slow and painful death. In one generation, mankind went from the horse and buggy to the jet plane, from muddy dirt roads to super-highways.

While the best science fiction of the era offered some cautions and warnings, the most popular saw the future as being “just like today, only better.” The airport would become the spaceport; the vacuum cleaner, the robo-maid; and the commonplace automobile would sprout wings and take to the skies. As science provided sufficient material wealth to remove the need for war, people would forget primitive and atavistic impulses, along with poverty, hunger, homelessness, and suffering. The nations of Earth would unite, once it became clear that Earth was but one planet among many and that humanity must stand together against whatever foes might come at us from the void.

Adventure would be everywhere on the high frontier, from the wagon-wheel space stations orbiting the Earth to the harsh and unsettled worlds of Mars and Venus (each capable of sustaining human life and already populated with races of their own – potential allies or enemies of mankind).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lizard has been a gamer since 1978 and a freelancer since 2000, with a special love of classic pulp fiction and related genres. He lives in Indiana with a loving wife and too many cats. This is his second **GURPS** product.

## About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of **GURPS** players. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by e-mail: [info@sjgames.com](mailto:info@sjgames.com). Resources include:

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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

# CHAPTER ONE

# BACKGROUND

*The claxon blared.*

Hikaru Matsui, commander of the Earth League Solar Patrol ship **Vigilant**, responded instantly. “Raise the nega-barrier! All atomic batteries, full charge! Astronavigator Hanley, full speed to intercept!”

Deep in the ship, mighty Tesla coils began to spark and glow, crackling with nearly inconceivable power as they tore and snatched at the very substance of space itself. Straining metal gave a faint shriek as the great craft veered from its default patrol route toward the small squadron of blips that had suddenly appeared on the astromat.

As the blips grew larger, Commander Matsui strode to the infomat. A thin stream of hole-punched paper spewed out. Able to read the code, the commander did not wait for the comm officer to translate it.

“As we thought. Pirates. Baron’s Brigadiers, from the looks of these engine signatures. But why are they so far out of their usual haunts in the Belt? You’d think the Jovian Overlord could keep this region clean, if only for his own protection . . .”

“Maybe they’re working **for** him, sir,” suggested Hanley.

Matsui nodded as he returned to his seat and fastened the belts. Space combat was invariably rocky. “All too likely. They’ll take anyone’s coin, and he’d be happy to have others do his fighting for him.”

“Three seconds to intercept!” Hanley began to shift the engines to battle mode, her hand deftly manipulating the array of levers and dials at her console.

“Forward batteries – acquire targets and fire at will!” Matsui barely finished the sentence before the **Vigilant** lurched violently. “Screen room – report!”

“Nega-barrier holding, Commander . . . barely. Whatever they’re using, it’s almost past the Tesla scale!”

“Then we’d better kill them fast.” Matsui watched with satisfaction as the violet beams of his own ship’s atomic guns neatly bisected one of the raiding craft. **If they’ve got weapons of that power, it’s certain someone else is funding them. Looks like a second Solar War is brewing, and I get to be on the front lines for it.**

He smiled.

**About time. I didn’t join the Solar Patrol to perform ore surveys.**

## YOUNG HEROES

The stars of the genre are the young – men and women in their late teens or early 20s, often with kid sidekicks. Although older “mentor” characters, especially scientists or senior officers, advise the heroes, youth and vigor prevail over experience and age.

Despite their juvenility, the characters in the genre are intelligent, educated, and physically fit. There are few classic “nerds” or “geeks” among them; characters exhibit equal skill in astronavigation and space-baseball, and they eagerly take on both physical and mental challenges. Likewise, people have little disdain for intellectual pursuits or “book learning” – indeed, disdain is more likely aimed toward those who can’t master science! In many ways, the genre reflects the ancient Greek ideal of the perfect mind in the perfect body.

In terms of game play, this means characters have a balance between physical and mental traits. Obviously, some lean more heavily toward one than the other, but there are few “dumb jocks” or “wimpy intellectuals.”

Though important, youth has its disadvantages. Even in the enlightened and tolerant 2050s, older and more experienced individuals often politely disregard the input and opinions of the young. (“Space pirates operating *this close* to Earth? Cadet Thompson, I appreciate your eagerness to defend the home world, but I think you’ve been watching one too many of those *Captain Dirk Belter* tri-vids. Don’t you worry about pirates attacking during the graduation ceremonies next week!”) Furthermore, reasons exist as to *why* adults dismiss the opinions of those of fewer years – they commonly have disadvantages such as Impulsive and Over-confidence, and their skill levels are low. The end of an adventure often features the older characters learning to respect the insights of youth, while the juveniles learn the value of experience and training.



In more serious and realistic takes on the genre, a major character arc is the transition of a youth into an adult, by setting aside his childish ways and taking on full responsibility. This can occur through a promotion to a command rank, taking on a mentorship role to the next generation, or surpassing

former teachers in some key capacity. Occasionally, the transition to adulthood is more dramatic – the revelation that a long-cherished belief is a lie, or the discovery that a role model has feet of clay.

## CLEAR MORALITY

The world of *Tales of the Solar Patrol* has no moral gray areas, complex dilemmas, and tortured anti-heroes. Good and evil are well defined, and heroes are heroic.

Abusive cops, drug-addicted fighter pilots, lying politicians, or corrupt senior officers (unless they have been spies or enemy agents all along, revealed dramatically at the end of a story) rarely appear. If a “good” person seems to perform evil deeds, he may be misguided, tricked, or manipulated by the real bad guys, or he may be a duplicate, robot, or mind controlled.



The government has few ulterior motives, and there is no default assumption of venal self-interest in political dealings. In *Tales of the Solar Patrol*, the Earth League works to liberate the Martian masses from their psionic rulers, because the people of Mars are virtual slaves and the Earth League promotes freedom. The League has no desire to strip Mars of rare resources or replace the existing independent government with a more tractable one, nor do Earth corporations seek to profit from the unrestrained expenditure of military hardware. Although the Earth League (and similar governments) is not composed of saints, nor is every employee and functionary a marvel of incorruptible uber-competence (that’s the Solar Patrol!), it is genuinely well intentioned and staffed primarily by individuals who are good at their jobs and good of heart.

Evil, meanwhile, is evil – not “misunderstood” or “a victim of propaganda.” The Overlord of Jupiter wishes to rule the entire System. He doesn’t talk about “liberating the people of Earth,” merely of conquering them. His own citizens live in constant fear and dread, and he likes it that way. He enjoys forcing wholly insincere displays of loyalty and love from the conquered populations of Jupiter, and the greater the depths of helpless hatred, the more it pleases him.

When corruption occurs, people consider it abnormal, shocking, and heinous. If the governor of the Mercury mines takes payoffs from a pirate gang to keep its leader out of the most dangerous parts of the Shadow Caves, the revelation is met with shock and dismay, not a cynical “it figures.”

Nevertheless, there exist a few archetypes and characterizations that push the bounds a bit. The roguish space pirate with a heart of gold – who steals only luxury items (not vital food or medical supplies), never kills a captive, and always accepts an honorable surrender – is still a villain and a criminal, but he is not utterly irredeemable. He may even side (briefly) with the heroes to battle a truly monstrous foe, and earn their respect as he leads them on a merry chase through the asteroid belts. A member of the Solar Patrol who has seen one too many comrades die may become vengeful and brooding, too willing to blast first and ask questions later, and disinclined to show mercy to a fallen enemy in a stressful situation. One of the Overlord’s many squabbling children may choose to aid the heroes in escaping her father’s dungeons, but not leave her parent or help the characters attack him.

Remember that characters can be good and still be flawed. They can be jealous, petty, arrogant, clumsy, boastful, or foolish. Evil characters can be honorable, trustworthy (in the right circumstances), intelligent, and merciful (when the situation warrants). Finding the right balance between the relatively straightforward moral creed of the genre and interesting characters is the key to a good *Tales of the Solar Patrol* campaign.

*The truth is . . . your father didn't die fighting the Overlord's fleet over Io. He crashed into the planet while fleeing the battle, leaving his companions to die. That's why I've been so hard on you, Thompson . . . I was afraid you'd turn out like your old man. I'm glad to say . . . you didn't.*

– From *Tom Grayson and the Terror from Titan*, pub. 2051

# HARD SCIENCE AND SILLY SCIENCE

The caliber of science in-genre varies greatly, from “utterly awful” (not even consistent within its own ludicrous premises) to “trying mightily.” Many works, especially in the later 1950s, when the space race was in full bloom, tried to be educational, incorporating as much real science as they could without voiding the plot. Though a character built a rocketship in his backyard, the rocket would obey the laws of inertia. Protagonists might provide some useful exposition to make the book seem “educational.” Other stories didn’t merely discarded scientific fact: It was hurled into an energy-producing wood-chipper. Spaceships traveled at the “speed of plot,” and such things as gravity and fuel never needed an explanation. Everyone spoke perfect English, even the bug-men from Venus.

*Back in my day, we didn’t have  
astronavigation calculators. We  
whipped out a slide rule and did  
the math ourselves!*

Game Masters who plan to design their own “tales of futures past” style campaigns should decide early where to set the dial on scientific accuracy. See *Variant Concepts* (pp. 7-8) for examples.

Regardless of accuracy, technological progress is an unquestioned good. Some people may have Quirk-level ludism (“Back in my day, we didn’t have astronavigation calculators. We whipped out a slide rule and did the math ourselves!”), but few ever imply that progress is not inherently desirable as an end in itself. If technology causes problems,

better technology solves them. “The problems of knowledge will not be solved by ignorance” is a favored maxim of the time. Themes about pollution, social disruption, displacement of workers, and the possibility of human extinction or the transformation of humanity into something else rarely show up.

## TALES OF THE SOLAR PATROL

In *Tales of the Solar Patrol*, scientific fact is not so much discarded as politely and lovingly set to one side. The planets are in the right places but differ greatly from what they are now known to be. In some cases, this borders on plausible – both Mars and Venus could be habitable if some changes had happened early in their planetary history, with Mars retaining more of its water and atmosphere, and Venus considerably less of the latter. The inhabited Jovian moons are more of a stretch, but a warmer Jupiter and some ages-ago terraforming might explain it.

The other major leap into pseudo-science in *Tales of the Solar Patrol* is the Tesla coil and its many spin-off technologies, such as the electron drive, the nega-barrier, and the atomic gun. Although pure fantasy, they derive from a single shift in reality – the existence of an “ether,” which can be tapped and manipulated in strange ways.

Other differences are the result of cultural change, not alternate rules of science. A series of accidents held back computer development. Enemies on other worlds united mankind. The need to keep a strong cultural identity as humanity spread to the stars led to a high degree of cultural conservatism and a clinging to “traditional” values, language, and so on, albeit in a tolerant and benign way, with more than lip service paid to ideals of fairness and equality.

## A POPULATED SYSTEM

In the pulp science fiction genre, every world is inhabited or settled. From the swamps of Venus to the strange environments of the Jovian moons, life and civilization exist everywhere. Depending on when the source media was produced and the scientific literacy of the writers, these inhabited worlds might represent settings close to what astronomy speculated, or they might be wholly ludicrous. Nonetheless, there were some common ideas throughout the literature, which this section describes.

Mars is old, dry, and ancient. There really are canals. Martian civilization is dying or decadent, in need of a fresh infusion of Earth culture. The Martians might be advanced, or they might have reverted to primitive tribalism among the ruins of their once-great civilization. Multiple species may live on Mars, sometimes warring, sometimes in positions of varied

dominance. Often, the Martians are implacably hostile and look on Earth, rich with resources and life, as a tempting target. At other times, the Martians are dying and desperate, with heroic Earthmen coming in to save their failing world.

Venus is wet and swampy. (A few of the more accurate stories realized it was a hellish desert world, but no writer realized just *how* lead-meltingly hellish until the 1960s.) It resembles a less-than-accurate version of the Mesozoic era, with dinosaurs and giant insects of all sorts. Islands might dot vast oceans filled with sea monsters, but more frequently, the planet has shallow seas and swampy terrain. The inhabitants may be human or humanoid, often reptilian or amphibious. (If there are mixed races, the inhuman ones dominate/control the human ones.)

The Moon, or Luna, has a lifeless surface. Even by the 1930s, it was well known that nothing could survive on the surface of the Moon unless it was very alien. However, below the surface, air and water fill vast cavern complexes, inhabited by strange aliens or humans (who emigrated from Earth in the distant past or who originally evolved on the Moon, with some moving to Earth when the Moon became uninhabitable). Usually, though, the locals are H.G. Wells-inspired aliens, not inherently warlike but highly suspicious of outsiders.

Few genre books had Jupiter or Saturn directly inhabited, though some speculated about super-worlds lying beneath the clouds. Many, however, made the moons of the gas giants, especially the largest ones, mini Earths. Despite the distance from the sun, they had breathable atmospheres and liquid water.

Mercury is an uninhabited, baking ruin, with the exception of a “shadow zone” between the broiling sun side and the eternally frozen night side where life is possible. (When the stories were written, it was widely believed that Mercury did not rotate, with one side facing the sun at all times.)

In *Tales of the Solar Patrol*, most of these archetypes are followed, with some variants. Mercury rotates but contains a habitable subsurface region. Luna has no native life. A psionic master race rules Mars, which supports several subject races.

Venus has two sentient species on it, neither human. The Galilean moons of Jupiter are inhabited and ruled by the enigmatic Jovian Overlord.

*“Gosh, Professor, Jupiter is awful far, isn’t it?”*

*“Why, yes, Billy! At its closest approach to Earth, Jupiter is still 365 million miles away.”*

*“Jeepers! How will we ever get there in time to stop the Overlord?”*

– *From Billy Astro and the Islands of Io, pub. 2051*

## VARIANT CONCEPTS

*Tales of the Solar Patrol* hews close to the source material and does not try to “update” it or “modernize” it, except in very minor ways. (Discrimination among Earth ethnicities does not exist; women are competent and not merely decoration or victims). The key conceits of the genre, especially the rightness of the 1950s American worldview and the optimistic vision of a united mankind under a just and fair government, are kept intact. Here are a few variations for GMs seeking something a little different.

### SOCIALLY REALISTIC

The socially realistic variant sticks with the setting as given – inhabited worlds aplenty, space pirates, and so on – but adds a layer of social realism. The Solar Patrol’s vaunted psychological profiling is less rigorous and accurate than their official policies would indicate, and bullies, brutes, and cowards lurk among their ranks. The Earth League has scandals and corruption, at least as much as any major government. There’s still considerable inequality on Earth, despite efforts to eliminate it. Dealings with Martian and Venusian natives are fraught with complexity and cultural misunderstandings, with humans often condescending to or dismissive of the “primitives.” More importantly, deeper character conflict occur. Right and wrong are not always clear, and heroes have multifaceted personalities, with more “negative” flaws. Alcoholism is no longer the province of the comic-relief merchant but might affect an astronaut who has to fly a crucial mission. Racism still remains among humans, and even though the law prohibits outright discrimination, individuals from minority groups encounter subtle forms of harassment, or carry resentments

and hostilities based on a presumption of it. The Earth League has dissidents and reactionaries, constantly pulling at it and hindering long-term policies. Efforts to protect against a presumed second assault by the Overlord are dismissed as “feeding the war machine” (while those who make such claims are condemned as spies, sympathizers, or cowards). In short, it’s a world a lot like reality, a messy and inconsistent place where people try to do the right thing but don’t always know what it is or are forced to make nasty compromises along the way. Atomic guns and Martian masterminds happen to be add to the mix.

### CYNICALLY REVISIONIST

An honest government? A military elite not filled with sociopaths? Primitives treated with respect and dignity? Wars against “evil overlords”? Feh!

In this variant, it’s all a bunch of hokey. The Earth League is not merely faced with occasional scandal and corruption, it’s a joke from the top down: A tyrannical, smiling Big Brother that ruthlessly suppresses dissent while preaching a “tolerance” that tolerates nothing except blind obedience to the social order. The Earth League created the Red Hive to provide an “enemy” to hate, and agents provocateur goaded them into their attacks. (Can it be a mere coincidence that the top cabinet members and the Earth League president were not in London when the first strikes occurred? Can it?) The Overlord of Jupiter merely acted to protect his borders against Earth imperialism, and his subjects love and adore him – tales of “atrocities” are exaggerated propaganda.

On Venus, the “Bugs” and “Lizards” are kept down, used as disposable labor in corporate foresting and harvesting operations if they are close to human settlements, and encouraged to war violently on each other if they are not. So-called scientific study camps are little more than medical experimentation centers, developing bio-weapons to aid in colonizing the planet. (Of course it will all seem like a tragic accident that a simple Earth virus mutated to become fatal to the natives – what a pity . . .)

The Solar Patrol is filled with the worst psychopaths the military can produce. Fiercely loyal to Earth (though not averse to lining their pockets), they happily kill traitors or enemies of Earth, real or imagined. In propaganda, they appear as sterling heroes, but in reality, they are thugs and bullies who think nothing of blowing up a pirate ship known to contain innocent hostages, or exterminating a colony of dissidents who they claim were pirates or Red Hive agents. They often head into Jovian space on “patrol,” seeking to provoke another outright attack, for the Earth League needs war to distract its citizens from problems at home. The League indirectly funds most pirates and smugglers.

Heroes in this setting might be formerly idealistic Earth League citizens who learn the truth and act accordingly; average folks trying to get by in a world of lies and propaganda; or eager, active participants in the crimes of the League.

## NO TESLA TECH

The setting remains the same – inhabited worlds abound – but there is no “Tesla tech,” atomic guns, or nega-barriers. Rather, ordinary reaction engines drive the ships that travel



between worlds. Technology is late TL8, and someone is more likely arm himself with a caseless ammo rifle than a laser gun. Ships have no artificial gravity, and space warfare is a brutal game of locking missiles and firing first, not a dance of rays and beams lighting the sky in neon. Combined with the social realism variant, this creates an interesting combination of realistic people using realistic technology to explore a wholly unrealistic solar system.

## HER MAJESTY'S ETHERIC PATROL

Because the “Tesla tech” is super-science, based on no known laws of physics, it might have been discovered at almost anytime . . . such as the 1860s. In this version, balloons lifted the first ethernauts to the upper atmosphere, where well-pitched wooden ships filled with cunning steam-driven air recyclers and guided by “etheric turbines” began to explore space. A century later, it is 1956, and the sun has not set on the British Empire. Newly crowned Elizabeth II oversees colonies on Venus, Luna, and the Belt; intrepid American industrialists seek to reap the wealth of the system; and scurvy rogues lurk in the void, eager to prey on the passing vessels of Her Majesty. Tech level is 5+2. *GURPS Steampunk* has plenty of ideas for devices and character concepts.

## Gender Roles in the Genre

It is a simple fact that the roles of women in much of the source material can be classified as “decoration,” “plot device,” or “reward.” That is, they either lounged around in slinky garments, were kidnapped so the hero had to go do something, or were rescued in the midst of other missions and instantly fell in love with the hero.

However, exceptions exist. Heinlein’s “juvenile” novels had a number of strong, independent female characters. Wilma Deering, Buck Roger’s companion, was a competent soldier in her own right. Most 1950s TV shows, passionately sexless, placed female characters in support roles where they kept their clothes on.

*GURPS* draws no mechanical distinctions between male and female human characters, and none are added or recommended for *Tales of the Solar Patrol*. The culture of the Earth League is one of equal rights for all under the law. How this works out in terms of cultural rights is up to the GM and the players.

The simplest thing to do is to wipe the sexism off the map. Ignore it completely, and assume that any character may be of any gender with no social repercussions. (The sexists out there get the Odious Personal Habit disadvantage.)

Another option allows for lingering sexism and 1950s attitudes without limiting player freedom. In this case, being a woman in a “man’s job” is considered a 1-point quirk. The character attracts some attention and comment, but she does not face serious discrimination once she’s shown she has the skills. She might be seen as unusually driven, or strangers might wonder why a woman has chosen so dangerous a job as the Solar Patrol, but most people accept her choice. Her teammates and co-workers always come to her defense if anyone challenges her qualifications.

The third option is to impose a 5-point Social Stigma on female characters who are acting outside the “acceptable” bounds of behavior. They need to struggle for acceptance not just from passing strangers, but also from their co-workers (i.e., other PCs). They face constant condescension from superiors and possibly disdain from other women. This style of play is only recommended if the game is expected to focus on some of the darker aspects of an idealized 1950s worldview, confronting and dealing with the contradictions of “fighting for freedom” in the midst of widespread prejudice.



## CHAPTER TWO

# THE WORLD OF THE PATROL

The year is 2056! The invention in 1966 of the electron drive, incorporating the Tesla coil, launched mankind outward into the Solar System. There, the nations of Earth found new allies and new enemies: the savage reptile-men of Venus . . . the many strange races of Mars . . . and the terrifying Overlord of Jupiter, emperor of its many moons! Earthers accidentally gave him the secret of the electron drive, allowing him to attempt to expand his reign across the whole system. In the

tragic war that followed, the First Solar War, the Solar Patrol was commissioned. Its mission – defend Earth from all enemies! After a long and bloody struggle, Earth forced the Overlord back to Jupiter, where he continues to scheme against the free peoples of the System. Yet no matter how cunning his plots, the daring men and women of the Solar Patrol will always foil them!

## TIMELINE OF THE SOLAR PATROL

**1943:** The U.S. Department of the Navy decides against funding the Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer (ENIAC) project.

**1945:** Budget issues and a management crisis at Bell Labs derail work into improved telecommunication switches. The transistor is never invented.

**1956-1964:** Humanity struggles to reach the stars, but both Soviet and American efforts to launch and sustain artificial satellites fail. No rocket design proves capable of carrying itself to orbit. The first primitive general-purpose computers appear to help solve rocketry problems, but they cannot fulfill the requirements of the space program.

**1964:** Researchers at Westinghouse find the long-lost notes of Nikola Tesla, detailing inventions and theorems never made public. A small project begins to test the designs, and the engineers perfect the Tesla coil, a simple device capable of drawing almost limitless energy from the ether of space.

**1966:** Using the Tesla coil for power, the electron drive is invented. The first craft to use the electron drive, a converted fighter jet, is launched from Edwards Air Force base in July of 1966, and it performs 10 Earth orbits before returning to land safely.

**1968:** The Soviet Union unveils its own electron drive program and promises to create a craft that can reach the Moon.

**1970:** On January 7, Neil Armstrong lands *Kitty Hawk* on the Moon. On January 9, the Soviet Luna 11 likewise lands, a few dozen miles away. Both sides claim large swathes of the Moon for their own.

**1971:** The first tiny lunar settlements – optimistically called “colonies” a couple of years early – are founded. New Plymouth, the American lunar “colony,” is sited at the Moon’s south pole. Lunograd, a Soviet outpost, is constructed in Copernicus Crater.

**1972-1975:** Tensions continue to rise and the Cold War heats up as the lunar colonies become firmly established and grow. The discovery of lunar diamonds sets off the Diamond Rush, and the first homemade electron-drive ships begin to launch. Primitive independent colonies and mining domes dot the lunar surface. Saber rattling on Earth increases dramatically.

**1976:** Both the Soviets and the Americans launch craft to Mars. These represent the second generation of electron-drive ships, with crews of a few dozen.

The ships set down on Mars within minutes of each other, after sending back clear photographs of cities, roads, and fields. Shortly after landing, both ships fall silent.

**1977:** In September, the U.S. and Soviet Union launch a joint fleet, consisting of several ships, most of which remain in orbit around Mars to enhance communication. This time, garbled and confused transmissions come through before the ground ship breaks off contact, letting the orbital craft know that some sort of contact with the natives has been made. As the orbital fleet ponders what to do and waits for orders from Earth, a small flotilla of strange Martian ships attacks. The resulting battle is a chaotic madhouse, as one of ships in the Earth fleet suddenly turns and opens fire on its comrades. The remaining ships turn to flee, destroying the Martian vessels in the process. The “traitorous” Earth ship then radios them to explain that they had been taken over by some sort of mind control.

**1977-1979:** The fear of a hostile “Martian menace” that maintains some degree of star-faring capacity eases international tensions. The United Nations is empowered to deal with the threat, and it forms the first true planetary space fleet. The organization charged with manning and operating this fleet is known as the Earth Patrol.

**1980:** A well-armed diplomatic mission is sent to Mars. From orbit, they attempt to contact the Martian government and demand the return of the crews that landed there (or their bodies), as well as apologies and concessions. The orbital fleet is attacked but survives by maintaining distance. During the confusion of the battle, stealth craft launch toward Mars, bearing the first Earth Marines, in the hopes of secretly landing agents who will not be instantly compromised.

**1980-1983:** The Earth-Martian War transpires. The inability of Earth forces to land on Mars en masse, and the inability of Martian forces to effectively battle in space leads to a stalemate, with an uneasy cease-fire negotiated over long-distance radio.

**1984:** The United Nations officially becomes the Earth League. A new headquarters is built in London.

**1996:** With Mars effectively locked up, the Earth League turns its attention to Venus. A fleet of exploratory ships lands and begins charting the planet. The atmosphere and magnetosphere of Venus makes advanced charting and mapping techniques unusable; Venus must be explored from the ground, relying on the technology of the early 20th century. It remains a planet with many mysteries even a half century later.

## The Red Hive

In the early 2000s, the peace of Earth was disrupted. A number of small factions, united in their disgust with egalitarian democracy, cobbled together a guiding philosophy based on such discredited thinkers as Nietzsche and Marx, forming a blueprint for a “perfect society” where everyone had a place and where the superior could rule over the weak. This clockwork culture became known as “the Hive,” and the term “Red Hive” came from their adoption of red as their signature color.

The Hive managed to build significant forces before launching their surprise attack on Earth League headquarters in London. They also struck simultaneously at the Lunar shipyards and at many key weapons depots and naval bases. By the end of the strikes, they revealed their significant fleet and demanded total control of Luna.

The resulting war lasted only two months, but it was viciously brutal, with hyperbombs and Tesla implosion fields ravaging cities. The death toll was in the hundreds of millions. Ultimately, the Hive was defeated. Most of their supporters surrendered; a small fleet, containing their leaders and some troops, disappeared into the trans-Jovian blackness. It is assumed they perished there, unable to reach Saturn and with insufficient supplies to survive a year. Rumors of a special hyper-Tesla coil or some other device that would let them reach Saturn abound, but no concrete proof has come forth.

Currently, the Red Hive is known as a nightmare of a generation past, though some pirate/raider groups claim to be carrying on their philosophy.

**1998:** The first Earth League colonies are established on the Great Plateau of Venus. Early contacts are made with nomadic lizardmen.

**2001:** The first asteroid belt colonies are founded. The Earth League builds long-range cruisers capable of reaching Jupiter.

**2002:** The Earth League makes first contact with the Jovian system. Patrol boats of the Jovian Overlord meet the Earth League ship *Athena* and give the crew a grand welcome.

**2003:** An Earth League ship, *Gagarin*, is reported lost in the jungles of Io, allegedly from mechanical failure. It is never recovered, despite the copious aid offered by the Overlord.

**2005:** The Overlord launches his battlefleet of electron-drive ships, which stream toward Earth and the Belt, Lunar, and Venusian colonies. Caught unaware at first, the Earth League suffers heavy losses.

**2005-2010:** The Solar War, an all-out battle between the Earth League and the Overlord, occurs. The Earth League forces the Overlord back to Jupiter and seizes the ocean world of Europa, from which it can easily strike at targets anywhere in the Jovian system. The Overlord issues a call for peace. Weary of war, the Earth League signs a treaty with the Overlord. The treaty calls for the dismantling of the Jovian electron-drive fleet and the secret of the gravitic vector, which allows Earth League ships to maintain artificial gravity on board.

**2006:** In light of the now-interplanetary nature of war and of human settlement, the Earth Patrol is renamed the Solar Patrol and charged with the defense of mankind.

**2015:** Contact is made with an intelligent insectoid species on Venus. Brush wars between the Venusian reptilian and the insectoid sentient races take on a new flavor with the addition of Earth-built weaponry. Smuggling begins to become a serious issue.

**2020:** After a decade of peace and progress, war once again wracks the Earth League. The terrorist organization known as the Red Hive launches a series of lightning strikes on key Earth cities, and it seizes control of the shipyards at Yeager Dome on Luna. The ensuing two-month war is the most brutal recorded. Tesla implosion fields and hyperbombs ravage the major cities of Earth. Yeager Dome is breached, killing nearly half a million in seconds. The final victory belongs to the Earth League, however, and the fleet of the Red Hive flee toward the outer system, chased all the way to the Tesla Line by the Solar Patrol. Their escaping fleet vanishes into the darkness beyond the line, and it presumably perishes there when their supplies ran out.

**2021:** The first ships to visit Mercury land to find a dismal vista.

**2026:** Baron Black begins raiding shipping along the Belt/Luna trading corridor. Others take up space piracy as well. The Shadow Caves are found on Mercury.

**2035:** Solar Patrol Marines, specially trained in infiltration and espionage, begin to establish a resistance movement in the Martian cities of Thoom, Kathar, and Val, seeking to strike against the Mind Masters without directly implicating Earth.

**2050:** The *Adventurous*, the largest ship ever built by Earth, is launched from the rebuilt Yeager shipyards. Its mission is to secure the ever-more-chaotic Belt region, where piracy grows extreme and there's rumblings of Jovian activity.

**2056:** The present day.

# INHABITED WORLDS

## MERCURY

The first ships landed on Mercury in 2021. While orbital probes had mapped the arid world decades earlier, it took a while to develop space suits that could endure the extreme heat of the surface. The first expeditions were scientific, as the tiny rock was an excellent place from which to study solar phenomenon. However, the discovery of the Shadow Caves in 2026 gave Mercury a new purpose.

Millions of years of turning from the blazing heat of the day to the endless chill of night has pitted and cracked the ground of Mercury. Below the surface, the ceaseless expansion and contraction has created a series of caves pervaded by a little water, oxygen, and life. Called the Shadow Caves, they seem to be an endless black expanse of thin, hot air and twisted, flesh-ripping knives of stone.

Mercury is rich in radioactive isotopes, especially uranium, with enough fissionables to power the System for as long as anyone can imagine. The extreme harshness of the planet made mining seem nearly impossible, until the Earth League decided that Mercury would be the perfect place to deposit the worst criminals of the System. While the traditional Earth League approach to crime is reform and recompense, there were always some criminals too hardened, twisted, or brutal to ever be returned to society, as well as some crimes that could never be compensated for. So the Mercury Mining “colony” became the last stop for the vilest of the System: pirates who butchered the helpless crews of the ships they caught; those who stole life-support gear from Lunar and Belt habitats and left the inhabitants to die; terrorists who targeted civilians; traitors to the Solar Patrol; and willing allies of the enemies of mankind. There are not many cruel and twisted enough to be shunted here – the population is rarely over 500 – the mere threat of it keeps at least some on the straight and narrow. The average life expectancy of a prisoner on Mercury is five years.

## VENUS

In early 1996, a fleet of exploratory ships launched from Earth in late 1995 reached the clouded world of Venus. While in orbit, they discovered that the atmosphere’s unusual properties hindered the use of radio. Communication from Venus to Earth was impossible, as were surface-to-orbit transmissions. After a few days of debate, it was agreed that a small landing party would penetrate the upper surface and return within a week. If the ship did not report back as scheduled, exploration would be halted until some means of breaking the static field could be found.

With less than 12 hours before the scheduled return to Earth, the *Celestia* broke out of Venus’ atmosphere with incredible tales, tales of a world of low swamps, shallow seas, and creatures that strongly resembled the best reconstructions of Earth’s extinct dinosaurs! They also reported that the haze of the atmosphere was due to large concentrations of atmospheric particles, which not only impaired normal vision but which scrambled infrared and radar as well. Mapping of the planet was going to be a long and tedious task.

The largest landmass on Venus is a flat region rising a few hundred feet above the shallow oceans and swamps that dominate the rest of the world. Christened the Great Plateau, it became the site of the first permanent research stations. Over the years, these stations expanded, traders began to appear, at first just selling goods to the scientists and their families, but soon seeking out native products that might be valuable elsewhere in the System. They found exotic woods, astounding flowers from which unearthly perfumes could be made, amber in shades of azure and crimson . . . and sentient beings.

## *The Salishal*

In 1998, a group of traders seeking plant samples for sale to a pharmaceutical concern made first contact with the Salishal, though they quickly became known as the Venusian Lizardmen. The Salishal were surprisingly non-hostile, though extremely cautious. Gestures and the like sufficed for the first round of trading: a rustproof machete for a collection of polished and cut red amber. Two months later, the first trained ethnologists and anthropologists made contact with the tribe, and slowly, communication improved.

When news of the Salishal reached Earth, considerable political debate ensued. Many proposals were barely disguised calls for conquest and colonialism, dressed up in words like “guidance” and “protection.” Others demanded the complete abandonment of Venus, despite ample evidence that much of the planet’s surface was not now, and never had been, Salishal territory. Ultimately, the desire for knowledge and the belief humanity would not repeat past errors won out, and the League adopted a policy of controlled settlement of uninhabited areas of Venus and limited commercial trade with the Salishal. Earth would not dump the lizardmen into a culture thousands of years ahead of their own, but the League likewise was not going to ignore so rich a planet, especially with Mars effectively cut off.

The policy remains in effect, and enforcement is a constant struggle. The Salishal do not necessarily *want* to remain cut off from the magical tools of the Beyond the Clouds People. Many unscrupulous traders are all too happy to defy the edict on trading directly with the Salishal, who buy up old-style rifles and other goods in exchange for amber, rare plants, and exotic animals.

Salishal society varies greatly, from extremely simple nomadic bands wandering the swamps to city-dwellers who have mastered clay baking and simple metallurgy. All Salishal culture is heavily based on bloodline and kinship, which they can easily detect by smell. Feuds between bloodlines last until one family or the other is wholly destroyed or the feud is settled by interbreeding, effectively turning two families into one.

## Salishal

14 points

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST+2 [20]; IQ-1 [-20]; HT+1 [10].

**Secondary Characteristic Modifiers:** HP+2 [4].

**Advantages:** Damage Reduction 3 (Flexible, -20%) [12]; Sharp Claws [5]; Sharp Teeth [1].

**Disadvantages:** Callous [-5]; Cold-Blooded [-5]; Enemy (Krik) [-10].

Salishal who regularly travel or adventure among humans also have Social Stigma (Primitive non-human race) [-10] and Low Technology 8 [-40], though many have bought off the latter to some extent.

## The Krik

The Salishal were, as it turned out, not the only thinking beings on Venus. Anthropologists had noted that they had a word that meant “Others like Us Not like Us,” which they puzzled over. The Salishal tribes fought among themselves, but all seemed to have a concept of another foe, an enemy that all Salishal hated and would destroy on sight. To a large extent, this enemy was dismissed as symbolic or mythical, something that was part of a common root religion – until exploration teams reached the smoking island chains of the Aphrodite Ocean and found the Krik.

The Krik were contacted in 2015, almost two decades after humans first landed on Venus, a testament to the difficulties of exploring this strange world. The first Krik encountered roughly resembled upright mantises. Eventually, explorers discovered that these were warrior-caste Krik, one of many different types. Krik had been seen before, in fact, but since those were scavengers and harvesters, and not intelligent, no real notice had been taken of them.

The Krik society strongly resembles that of hive insects of Earth, but several castes display signs of human-level intelligence and seem capable of varying degrees of independent thought. Contrary to what some would expect, the Queen of each hive is non-sentient – she is just a gargantuan egg-laying machine with no consciousness. The Warrior, Builder, and Leader castes exhibit intelligence, with the Scavenger and Drone castes being about as clever as the great apes on Earth.

The Krik are in a constant state of war with the Salishal, but they do not have a particular hatred for the Earthers, provided they stay out of the Krik’s way. Earth has decided on a strict neutrality policy in terms of the war between the two races, offering medical aid and basic utility goods to both but refusing to supply weapons or other advanced technology. Naturally, the same ethically challenged traders who defy the policy regarding the Salishal do so with the Krik as well, and an ancient, ritualized war has begun to change as the thunder of rifle fire echoes through the Venusian swamps.

Despite being insect-like, the Krik are warm-blooded, just one more oddity of Venusian biology.

Warriors are, basically, killing machines, attacking with their claws if unarmed or with blades made of sharpened exoskeleton, usually from their own discarded moltings. They are incapable of any actions other than rote defense of themselves or an area unless a leader commands them. Given a generalized task such as “guard this area” or “eliminate all Salishal in that village,” they can form strategies and plans, but without the initial order to accomplish the task, they would do very little. They can draw on the memories of their ancestors to guide them.

Leaders are fully autonomous beings, capable of independent thought, though they rarely engage in it unless pressed. A single Leader commands between five and 50 other Krik of lower orders. Though he defers to more experienced Leaders, jockeying for position happens frequently.

Leaders and Warriors are the only intelligent Krik likely to be encountered away from their hives. While some Salishal have given up their ways to live among humans, no Krik has ever abandoned the hives permanently.

## Krik Warrior

19 points

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST+3 [30]; IQ-2 [-40]; HT+2 [20].

**Secondary Characteristic Modifiers:** HP+4 [8].

**Advantages:** Damage Reduction 4 [20]; Extra Arms 2 [20]; Fearlessness 4 [8]; Hard to Kill 4 [8]; Racial Memory [15]; Sharp Claws [5].

**Disadvantages:** Bloodlust [-10]; Enemy (Salishal) [-10]; Hidebound [-5]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Slave Mentality [-40].

## Krik Leader

62 points

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST+1 [10]; DX+1 [20]; HT+1 [10].

**Secondary Characteristic Modifiers:** HP+1 [2].

**Advantages:** Damage Reduction 1 [5]; Extra Arms 2 [20]; Racial Memory [15]; Sharp Claws [5].

**Disadvantages:** Enemy (Salishal) [-10]; Hidebound [-5]; No Sense of Humor [-10].

## The Dinosaurs of Venus

One of the most amazing discoveries about Venus was that it was home to a variety of life forms that strongly resembled the dinosaurs of ancient Earth! Since the various species existed at widely disparate times in Earth history, but were mixed together on Venus, scientists assume this is a case of convergent evolution.

A few common dinosaurs are presented herein. For a more complete list (along with additional information on running a “high-tech meets large reptiles” type of campaign), see *GURPS Lands Out of Time* (for Fourth Edition) or *GURPS Dinosaurs* (for Third Edition).

### Brontosaurus

The most iconic sauropod, the brontosaurus is about 75 feet long and is a peaceful herbivore. Brontosaurus rely entirely on their size to survive, and have no real combat skills.

<b>ST:</b> 72	<b>HP:</b> 72	<b>Speed:</b> 5.25
<b>DX:</b> 9	<b>Will:</b> 9	<b>Move:</b> 5
<b>IQ:</b> 2	<b>Per:</b> 9	<b>Weight:</b> 18-36 tons
<b>HT:</b> 11	<b>FP:</b> 11	<b>SM:</b> +7 (10 hexes)
<b>Dodge:</b> 8	<b>Parry:</b> N/A	<b>DR:</b> 4

**Bite (9):** 3d+1 crushing. Reach C.

**Tail (9):** 10d crushing. Cannot Parry; Limited Arc, Rear Only. Reach 9, 10.

**Trample (9):** 8d crushing. Reach C, 1.

**Traits:** No Fine Manipulators; Quadruped; Wild Animal.

**Skills:** Running-10.

### Triceratops

The triceratops are herd animals and live on the lightly forested plains, where they spend their days grazing and walking. Salishal sometimes hunt them but mostly avoid them, as they are dangerous when angered.

Rarely, an aggressive bull triceratops will be exiled from the herd. These creatures are especially menacing. Though plant eaters, they are hostile and charge viciously at anything they see that seems big enough to kill. Humans are just about the right size . . .

<b>ST:</b> 47	<b>HP:</b> 47	<b>Speed:</b> 5.75
<b>DX:</b> 12	<b>Will:</b> 10	<b>Move:</b> 10
<b>IQ:</b> 2	<b>Per:</b> 9	<b>Weight:</b> 13,000 lbs.
<b>HT:</b> 11	<b>FP:</b> 11	<b>SM:</b> +4 (10 hexes)
<b>Dodge:</b> 8	<b>Parry:</b> N/A	<b>DR:</b> 4

**Beak (12):** 5d-1 large piercing. Reach C.

**Horns (12):** 6d+1 piercing. Cannot Parry; Limited Arc, Front Only. Reach C.

**Traits:** DR 6 (Head and Neck Only); No Fine Manipulators; Quadruped; Wild Animal.

**Skills:** Running-10.

### Tyrannosaurus

These vicious carnivores can run down prey at over 25 mph and tear it to pieces.

In combat, the tyrannosaurus bites and tears off a huge hunk of flesh, if the creature is too large to simply pick up in its mouth and chew. (It can do this with any creature of SM 0 or smaller; roll a Contest of Strength each turn to escape. Each turn the tyrannosaurus has prey in its mouth, it automatically inflicts 4d+1 impaling damage, with no targeting roll necessary.) It may also try to pin smaller prey under its clawed feet; Contest of Strength to pin, and the pinned victim takes 3d+1 cutting damage.

<b>ST:</b> 34	<b>HP:</b> 34	<b>Speed:</b> 7.00
<b>DX:</b> 13	<b>Will:</b> 12	<b>Move:</b> 17
<b>IQ:</b> 2	<b>Per:</b> 14	<b>Weight:</b> 5,000 lbs.
<b>HT:</b> 14	<b>FP:</b> 14	<b>SM:</b> +5 (12 hexes)
<b>Dodge:</b> 10	<b>Parry:</b> N/A	<b>DR:</b> 2

**Claws (13):** 3d+1 cutting. Reach C.

**Fangs (13):** 4d+1 impaling. Reach C.

**Tail (13):** 4d+1 crushing. SM +1; Cannot Parry; Limited Arc, Rear Only. Reach 7.

**Traits:** DR 4 (Skull Only); No Fine Manipulators; Wild Animal.

**Skills:** Brawling-13; Tracking-15; Running-12.

### Venusport

There's Ma's Bar and Grill in old Armstrong City on Luna . . . there's the Free Fall on Ceres . . . and then there's Venusport. With the second planet being a freewheeling frontier world, it's not surprising that the point of transfer between the rugged, isolated, and dangerous life of the frontier and the comforts

*You will never find a more  
wretched hive of scum and villainy.*

*– From Zagat's Guide to  
the System, pub. 2049*

and technology of Earth is a rough and tumble sort of place. What surprises some is the degree of it. Venusport seems determined to outdo its own legend, and the Earth League (and the Solar Patrol) seem content to ignore its excesses, perhaps on the grounds that such a place is a needed safety valve, or that it's convenient to have a lot of the scum of the system in one place, where it's simple to keep track of them. Finding a pirate in some tiny asteroid dive in the vastness of the Belt is challenging. Finding him flush with loot and spending it freely at some Venusport den of iniquity is, by comparison, effortless, and making sure he vanishes into a cell on the brig of a departing spaceship is easier still.

## EARTH

The Mother Planet, Earth, remains the most populous of all the worlds in the System, by a large margin. It is a peaceful and rich world, continuing to heal from the scars of war. Most of the inhabitants would never dream of leaving it (except for brief vacations or work-related excursions). They look with respect and confusion on those who abandon the warmth and comfort of the home world to carve out a life in the Venusian swamps, the Lunar caverns, or the flying mountains.

Earth is wealthy. This does not mean that everyone on Earth is rich – or even middle class – but there's plenty to go around, even if the distribution is still uneven. Mass poverty and starvation are gone. There are richer and poorer Political Zones, but none remain trapped in dire financial distress. There are no famines, no civil wars, no plagues, no refugee camps, no warlords, no people left abandoned and helpless after a disaster. There are poor individuals. There are lower-class areas. However, the kind of endemic, large-scale poverty that blighted so much of the 20th century has been wiped out in the 21st. It's not paradise or utopia, but it is far better than those of the 20th century might have imagined it would be.

Simply put, life on Earth in 2056 is an idealized vision of how the future was supposed to be all along. Megascrapers, all shining chrome and glistening glass, dominate the skylines of the large cities, reaching a mile into the air and surrounded by a ceaseless buzz of mini-helicopters. Broad highways, 16 lanes wide, reach through the cities, and traffic flows smoothly, effortlessly, and non-pollutingly along them. Outside the massive central cities sprawl parks, fields, and farms. Scattered among the greenbelts, there are carefully planned suburban communities of a few thousand apiece, enough so that people still know their neighbors and have a sense of pride in their hometown.

Workdays are brief – six hours is typical – and vacation time is plentiful, averaging six to eight weeks a year. Individuals have available a wide variety of hobbies and pastimes to amuse them, and with so much free time, most people have a particular hobby that they treat as a second job. Family and community are important, and many activities are group oriented. Sporting teams, bowling leagues, garden clubs – whatever the activity, people can find someone to do it with.

Physical labor is minimal. The “home of the future,” under the careful guidance of its owners, washes the dishes, cleans the rugs, launders the clothes, and cleans up after the cat.

Travel is cheap and easy. A family in the Minnesota Sector of the North American Political Zone might decide to take the kids to see Paris over the weekend, and do so with no more expense or difficulty than a 20th-century family might have had going to see Grandma in Wisconsin.

People tend to stick close to home because of ties to the community, not the expense of travel or moving. Even Luna is a relatively easy trip, no more complex than a flight from New York to Los Angeles would have been, and business travelers routinely commute to high orbit, which is where most of the heavy industry has been relocated.

The Earth League, a democratic, representative body that evolved out of the old United Nations, governs Earth. Every adult human in the Solar System has the franchise (granted at the age of 18), except those who are currently serving time for criminal offenses or who have been determined to be insane or otherwise incompetent.

The planet is divided into 10 major Political Zones, and each zone is subdivided into various Sectors. Representatives are elected based on Sector population for the Sector Congress, and equal numbers of representatives are elected for each Zone and sent to the Zone Congress. Legislation must pass both Congresses. The president is elected by the Zone Congress from among its members, and serves a single five-year term.

The Earth League can be described, in day-to-day operation, as “benignly bureaucratic.” It has several planets to run, many different needs to balance, and a fairly low tax base with which to work. The result is a well-meaning but overburdened bureaucracy. Even though most civil service workers try their best and care about their jobs, the average citizen looking to get a pet permit or correct an error on a tax return must descend into a polite, sincere, and well-mannered hell of forms, offices, red tape, infomat punch cards (which are invariably folded, spindled, and mutilated), and a general exhausting runaround. The system works, albeit slowly. In situations that matter for a large percentage of the population – the defense of the Solar System, responding to emergencies and natural disasters, providing for general welfare, education, and health care – things go smoothly. It is only in the day-to-day grind that the system shows its immense size and complexity.

The exact details of how the Earth League works, the scope and degree of regulation of daily life, and the like are left deliberately vague. Each GM may decide what an “idealized” government should be like and how much it should interfere in day-to-day life, how laissez-faire or regulated commerce is, and so on. One man’s perfect balance is another man’s oppressive tyranny/anarchist mess. Moreover, the whole point is to blast through the ether and battle space pirates; no one cares about the minutiae of daily life.

## *The Solar Patrol*

Fifty years ago, during the First Solar War, in what seemed at the time to be a symbolic gesture, the Earth Patrol was renamed the Solar Patrol. Since that time, the name has become synonymous with courage, dedication, competence, and honor.

The Solar Patrol is not a meatgrinder, taking earnest-but-foolish young men and women and turning them into fodder for an insatiable war machine. It is not an employer of last resort, an opportunity for those who can find no other employment to slip into the cracks of a bureaucratic machine until they can collect a pension. It’s not a short-term commitment, a way to pad a resume, or a means of

launching a political career. It represents the best humanity has, the concretization of the highest ideals of the Earth League.

## **Joining**

The Solar Patrol has two main avenues of entrance (though given the strict requirements, they are more like narrow alleys). The first is via the Solar Patrol Cadet Corps. All secondary schools throughout the Earth League offer a Patrol Cadet Program, and anyone of age 12 to 16 may volunteer for it. Entry to the Cadet Program is competitive but not overly harsh; the benefits of it are many, and the primary requirement is that a candidate be physically, mentally, and emotionally fit enough to not pose a danger to himself or others.

The Cadet Program occurs alongside regular schooling. Typically, it is expected cadets will spend one to two hours a day in special training and classes, which focus on astronomy, engineering, general science, and physical training. Body and mind are both sharpened and tested. As a rule, 75% of those who enter the Cadet Program complete it with at least a “Competent” score, and they are entitled to add “spcc” to their formal signatures. While this is a relatively minor honor – millions successfully graduate from the Cadet Program – it is still a source of pride and can occasionally open doors or grant a small edge when interviewing for jobs. Former Cadet Corps members form a large and dilute “Old Boys Club,” not nearly as close-knit as a fraternity or the like, but enough to merit a small favor here and there. In game terms, this can be purchased as Social Regard 2 (Only among other former cadets, -50%) [5].

Throughout the cadet-training process, the most promising candidates are noted and tested, often subtly and without their knowledge. For example, a student might find the monorail car that he rides home on every day suddenly filling with acrid smoke from an electrical fire. Unknown to him, the other passengers in his car are Patrol observers, often retirees or civilian associates, and they watch his reactions. Does he just rush to another car, heedless of any others who might need his aid? Does he try to assist the (seemingly) old and infirm man to safety? Does he take command and try to organize a safe evacuation? Without knowing he was ever tested, his actions might earn him a guaranteed commission, or it might cause him to never be accepted to the Patrol and never know why.

## **Tales of Sacrifice**

It is not just that being a member of the Solar Patrol means one might die in the line of duty; a significant body of the lore and custom of the Patrol implies that it is expected. “He stayed by his post” is considered the highest and greatest epitaph a Patrolman can receive. From the earliest stages of cadet training, the virtue of sacrificing all for the Mission is drummed into the heads of potential recruits.

Some Patrolmen go a bit beyond the mere willingness to die for the cause, and, subconsciously, place themselves in situations where they will have a chance to achieve this great honor. (See *Final Stand* on p. 39.)

Cadet training (and Patrol training in general) is not based on brutalizing and dehumanizing soldiers, breaking them down so that they can be rebuilt into a desired image. Rather, it focuses on strengthening the best within a candidate and suppressing, or destroying, the worst. Members of the Solar Patrol are not expected to obey because they've been conditioned to obey – they're expected to obey because they fully understand their duty and the correctness of their orders.

In any given year, about 1% of those who pass the Cadet Program are offered a commission in the patrol, and 75% of those accept it.

The commission does not make one a full Patrolman, though. An intensive two-year training program follows, with those who performed well in the Cadet Corps considered “very likely” to advance to Patrolman junior grade, with a 50% failure rate.

Those who did not partake in the Cadet Program are still able to join the Patrol, though it is more difficult. The Patrol is demanding and expects a lot of service out of each recruit, so the age window for volunteers is narrow – 16 to 24. Non-Cadet Corps volunteers receive a range of basic physical, mental, and psychological tests, as well as a background check, over a period of two days. If they pass these, they are sent to an intensive testing camp, which compresses the multi-year program of the Cadet Corps into three months of grueling hell. Those who make it through the program – 5% of admittees – enter the full two-year Patrol Training Course.

More rarely, experienced soldiers from other branches of the military are transferred to the Patrol. This can sometimes result in friction, as a general belief pervades the members that anyone good enough to be in the Patrol would have joined up directly; the rest of the military is a sort of “consolation prize” for those who failed to make the cut. Despite this condescending (and not wholly accurate) attitude, those who make such transfers are known for performing with honor and distinction, as well as serving the vital duty of keeping the Patrol from becoming too isolated and elitist.

### Patrol Grades

This table presents the grades of the Patrol, from lowest to highest, and their equivalent **GURPS** Ranks.

#### Rank Table

Title	GURPS Rank
Patrolman, Junior Grade	1
Patrolman	2
Patrolman, First Class	2
Junior Lieutenant	2
Lieutenant Second Class	2
Lieutenant First Class	3
Full Lieutenant	3
Captain	4
Fleet Captain	5
Major	5
Commander	5
High Commander	6
Admiral	6
High Admiral	7
Admiral of the Solar Patrol	8



## Gender and the Patrol

The Patrol accepts all into its ranks, male and female alike, but it does not make special allowances in the name of equality. Because of the harsh physical demands, more men than women join the Patrol, with a male/female ratio of 3:2. No discrimination exists in terms of assignments or ranks, and there are no special Women's Corps or Ladies Auxiliaries, as exist in other branches of the Earth League military. Those good enough to get into the Patrol are good enough to do anything the Patrol might require, and that is that.

See also *Gender Roles in the Genre*, p. 8.

By tradition, an officer must attain lieutenant first class to be granted command of a ship. If a Patrolman of lesser rank takes command in an emergency and distinguishes himself, a review board grants (depending on the circumstances) a retroactive promotion to LFC once the situation has been resolved. Such individuals are informally addressed as “LFC Pending (name)” while the senior officers do the (expected) paperwork. This is considered to be a great honor and compliment, especially if it comes from a captain or above – it is a sign the individual has shown himself fully worthy of command, even if his uniform does not reflect that fact just yet.

## LUNA

Rarely called “the Moon” any more except by the ignorant or the old-fashioned (there are too many moons of importance in the System for any one of them to be granted “the” status – at best, it should be referred to as “Earth's moon”), Luna is home to the oldest human settlements off Earth. New Plymouth Dome holds slightly over a million Lunarians (the term “Lunatic” is considered insulting if used by an outsider, but acceptable if used between Lunarians), and Luna in general has a population of 20 million.

Luna was first settled in the early 1970s. In the first few years, formal government-sponsored colonies were the norm, but by the middle of the 1970s, corporations, small subcultures, and even backyard mechanics found ways to get to there and settle down. The ease of converting standard jet airplanes to space-worthy (barely) vehicles triggered a gold rush of Lunar settlement, or, more specifically, a diamond rush.

### The Diamond Rush

In 1973, the mining shaft at New Plymouth, originally built to extract ores and ice deposits, began turning up something extraordinary. Some quirk of Luna – the low gravity, the composition of the ground, the constant bombardment of cosmic rays without an atmospheric filter, something – had caused Luna to produce diamonds of incomparable quality. They were generally larger and less flawed than Earth diamonds, but that was not the end of it. Lunar diamonds contain odd internal refractive structures that produce a slight but noticeable glow when exposed to sunlight or full-spectrum artificial light. Every shade of the spectrum is represented, and some have claimed (falsely) that “no two lunar diamonds are precisely the same color.”

This discovery set off a mad rush for wealth. Thousands sold everything they had to buy converted planes, modified diving suits, and airtight inflatable domes (with solar-powered air recyclers), and took off in search of wealth. The very lucky few actually struck a diamond node and grew rich. A slightly less lucky minority never found diamonds but survived the experience. The unlucky majority died or suffered permanent injuries.

## *The Outer Settlement Era*

Over a few years, the mining camps consolidated into more permanent colonies, and some prospectors began hunting more reliable, if less glamorous, ores – iron, tungsten, copper, and so on. Because it was easier to mine ore locally than to ship it up from Earth, Luna began to attract settlers seeking something other than pretty rocks. By the time the Mars War ended, as Earth became more and more peaceful, with the United Nations/Earth League gaining more traction and old national borders and ideologies fading, there were many who felt out of place in this brave, new, improved world. Religious fundamentalists, political ideologues, racial separatists and supremacists, ultra-nationalists, and many other square pegs felt that putting as much distance between them and an increasingly homogenous Earth would be best for all parties. Luna became part Gold-Rush California, part Ellis Island, and part Botany Bay. The ability to simply place a dome anywhere, set up hydroponics, and live in peaceful isolation, far from one's neighbors, made the ad-hoc system work. The Earth League maintained control over the major colonies and settlements, and it appointed judges and sheriffs to keep the general peace between the outer domes. Thinking, at the time, that a "safety valve" of this sort could help prevent the growth of powerful dissident movements that could undermine the nascent planetary government, the Earth League adopted a laissez-faire attitude toward what became known as "the Outer Settlements," referring to their physical distance from the larger, more formal colony domes and their philosophical distance from mainstream Earth opinions and values.

## *The Red Hive Strikes*

Unfortunately, the Earth League had miscalculated. The isolation of the Outer Settlements did not put an end to reactionary forces – it gave them a chance to organize and grow. A generation raised almost completely out of contact with Earth and mainstream values grew more fanatical and violent. Over time, the broad diversity of opinions found in the Outer Settlements began to narrow. The saner of the original settlers decided to live in places like New Plymouth or Yeager, and they found ways to fit their personal values in with the larger goals of a united and peaceful humanity. Others, though, became progressively

more hardened against the Earth League and all it stood for. Cobbling together a philosophy from bits and pieces of Marx, Nietzsche, and ultra-fundamentalist sects, they dreamed of a world of perfect order and harmony, without dissension, compromise, or ecumenicism, a world where there was a place for everyone – and everyone knew his place. (The fact their own existence was due to the Earth League's belief in tolerance and freedom was twisted into proof of the folly of such ideals – what kind of lunatic would let enemies live free and undisturbed?)

With agents in place throughout the Lunar colonies and in key locales on Earth, the Red Hive initiated a series of strikes and raids in 2020, capturing Yeager Dome (and its vital shipyards) and sending a rain of hyperbombs against London, where the Earth League was headquartered. With the Yeager fleet at their disposal, they swarmed the other major domes of Luna and seized control of the great cities of New Plymouth and Lunograd. Their demands were simple: Cede full control of Luna to the Hive.

The next two months were brutal. The Earth League, hampered by the fact the population of Luna were de facto hostages, could not respond with full force. The Hive had no such compunction. It took time for the Earth League to plan, organize, and implement a series of strikes on the domes that would take out the Hive's leadership and armament with a minimum of civilian casualties.

In the end, the remnants of the Hive seized a few dozen ships and fled for the outer reaches of the System, passing beyond Jupiter and, some would say, out of history.

## **Scientists, Mad**

Pirates in the Belt. The schemes of the Overlord. The lurking menace of the Red Hive. The threat of uprisings and civil war on Venus. The fear that the Mind Masters might someday strike back. With all this going on, the Earth League and the Solar Patrol certainly have a full schedule . . . but other threats crop up.

Science is lauded in 2056. It has ended famine; reduced poverty to the point where being poor normally means a lack of luxuries, not necessities; opened the System to exploration; and granted all citizens access to the accumulated knowledge of mankind via the town infomat booth. Nonetheless, a dark side remains. There exist those who prefer beating their plowshares into swords, those who take the gifts of science and turn them into dark and nefarious things, those who venture into realms of knowledge where no one was meant to go. While their motives are as disparate as their personalities, they have become known collectively as "mad scientists."

Most often operating from an isolated base in the Belt, Luna, or Venus, these individuals have a Vision and a Plan, and they care nothing for anyone who might get in the way. They use genetic engineering to breed monstrous soldiers. They take long-discredited theories and somehow make them work. They build mind-control beams, killer viruses, and mechanical men.

It is usually not possible to remove a mad scientist by simply blasting his lab from orbit. Invariably, human beings are the subject of the fiend's experiments, and such innocents must be rescued. Further, most of the devious and twisted intellects called to the path of madness think several steps ahead and are prepared to unleash their creations on the world via a deadman switch if they are somehow taken out before their plans can be fully realized.

The Overlord collects such madmen the way lesser beings collect butterflies, and he gives them all the equipment and subjects they may desire – until such time as he grows displeased with their failures or fearful of their successes and has them eliminated.



## Luna Today

Luna in 2056 is the largest industrial and shipbuilding center in the System. The iconoclast and the individualist still call it home, but it maintains this stance by encouraging open debate and expression of ideas in public – not by allowing isolated colonies to rule themselves. The old “Wild West” days of the first few decades of Lunar settlement have become a thing of romantic distortion (and the occasional documentary trying to set accounts straight). A portion of Yeager Dome has been preserved as a charred, half-molten ruin, a memorial to those lost in the first attacks of 2020, and a permanent reminder of the errors that allowed those attacks to occur.

## MARS

The Red Planet has long fascinated humanity. Of all the worlds in the System, this one always seemed most hospitable to life, and early observers saw “canals,” which had to be the work of sentient beings, not to mention areas of green that seemed to expand in the Martian spring and retreat in the Martian winter. Thus, it was only natural that the first long-distance electron-drive ships made a path for Mars.

The initial expeditions, launched in 1976, came from both the U.S.S.R. and the United States. The two ships were sent into space days apart and, to the slight disgust of their commanders back home, became fairly comradely over radio, the mutual bond of space exploration and adventure overcoming nationalistic hostilities. By the time the craft reached Martian orbit, the two commanders had agreed to land simultaneously at two points on the planet, so that neither nation could claim to have gotten there first. This angered a lot of people on Earth but pleased a lot more.

The first overflights showed clear evidence of cities, roads, agriculture, and so on – the world was obviously inhabited. Each ship set down a few miles from a major city, close enough to make easy contact but at no risk of landing on someone’s home.

Minutes after touching down, both ships fell silent.

People assumed that the Martians had killed the crews, but there was no sign of panic or struggle, and both ships went dead at the same time. Rather than assume hostility and launch a war, the governments involved decided to gamble that an unknown factor had damaged the transmitters or the engines. The U.S. and the U.S.S.R. next jointly sent a second expedition, with as much shielding and protection for vital equipment as could be built. More importantly, several craft would remain in orbit, to help monitor the landing situation.

The landing ship reported contact with the native people, though the transmissions were somewhat garbled and contradictory, sometimes changing in mid-sentence. Then all grew silent as well. As the orbiting ships considered their options and waited for Earth to reply (communications required 40 minutes to get through and back), a small flotilla of craft resembling metallic jellyfish appeared and began to attack the Earth ships. During the battle, the *Stalingrad* suddenly turned and began to shoot at the American *Grant* and the Soviet *Moscow*. The two ships pulled away, continuing to fire on the Martian ships while

defending themselves against their former ally. As the *Grant* and the *Moscow* destroyed the last of the Martian ships, the crew of the *Stalingrad* hailed the others and explained they had no choice – *the Martians had controlled them!*

This led, in short order, to a failed diplomatic mission to Mars and the start of the Earth-Martian War. The Martian Mind Masters (as they soon became known) had great power but limited range; long-distance weapons could fry their ships. On the ground, though, they could turn any group of infantry into a chaotic mess as they leapt from mind to mind, turning ally against ally or, once they learned how to speak and communicate in English or Russian, causing commanders to give false or confusing orders. While the “Martian menace” could be wiped out from high orbit, the military learned during the war that the majority of the Martian people were innocents under the control of the Mind Masters – bombing the cities would primarily kill the victims of the psionic elite caste.

After three years of war, a tentative cease-fire was reached. Mars remains officially off-limits to the Earth League to this day.

## Martian Life

Three known major races live on Mars: The *Vithaani*, which are genetically identical to humans; the *Hajuur*, which resemble humanoid felines; and the *Mind Masters*, which have no known racial name – the other Martian peoples refer to them as “the Lords,” “the Controllers,” “the Masters,” and so on.

## The Mind Masters

Scientists believe that only the Mind Masters are native to Mars. It is uncertain where the other races came from. Some posit a connection to the Jovian Overlord, as humans live on the moons of Jupiter as well. Others speculate that the Mind Masters took the humans in the distant past, or that an unknown human civilization achieved space travel millennia ago. The *Hajuur* also have no record of how they came to Mars, but they have no related or ancestral species on the planet.

The Mind Masters are little more than gargantuan jelly-encased brains suspended in a life-support medium dwelling inside a metal shell adorned with grasping tentacles. They live in great iron fortresses scattered around the world, with individuals constantly flying to various cities and outposts to check on the status of their domain. They do not seem to have ambitions of conquest, but they likewise do not relinquish even the meanest portion of the world they do control.

They are capricious and cruel in the extreme. They enjoy experimenting on their subjects, though there seems to be no end goal other than the cataloguing of the degrees of pain an individual can endure. They demand obedience but do not reward it; the most loyal and subservient *Vithaani* can be plucked for “experimentation” as easily as the most rebellious. Disobedience means certain death; obedience merely adds a slim chance for a reprieve.

The Mind Masters seem to possess great technology – their armored globes are but one example – but the Martian peoples enjoy little of this; they live an agrarian lifestyle using simple tools of wood and bronze.



The Mind Masters, in their natural forms, resemble man-sized transparent jellyfish or octopi, with six long, slender tentacles. Their immense brains are clearly visible through the gelatinous goo of their bodies. They are, however, rarely seen in this form, preferring to interact with the world entirely from within their iron spheres.

### *The Mind Masters*

115 points

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST-3 [-30]; IQ+3 [60]; HT-1 [-10].

**Secondary Characteristic Modifiers:** Will+4 [20].

**Advantages:** Extra Arms\* 4 (Extra-Flexible, +50%; No Physical Attack, -50%) [40]; Mind Control (Telepathic, -10%; Long Range, +50%) [70]; Mind Probe (Telepathic, -10%) [18]; Mind Reading (Telepathic, -10%) [27].

**Disadvantages:** Bad Smell [-10]; Bully [-10]; Callous [-5]; Cowardice [-10]; Invertebrate [-20]; Megalomania [-10]; Sadism [-15].

\* The Mind Masters have six arms; all have the same modifiers as the extra arms, which total to 0, so no additional points are charged.

### *The Vithaani*

The humans of Mars are genetically identical to Earth humans, and interbreeding is possible. They possess a mix of ethnic features, and they tend toward dark brown or reddish-brown skin, similar to that of Native Americans. Hair is usually long and straight, though in a variety of colors. Eyes are typically green, violet, or blue. Brown or black eyes are rare and considered exotic and ominous at the same time.

Culturally, they live in bronze-age city-states, each ruled over by a coterie of Mind Masters. They supplement their agrarian lifestyle with hunted game. While no competition for land or resources exists (the Mind Masters control everything), their overlords frequently force them to war as part of status experiments or games. Thus, they are skilled fighters, albeit with primitive weapons.

### *The Hajuur*

The Hajuur look similar to walking cats, but their DNA is definitely not of Earth. A nomadic people, they dwell in the vast, cold Martian deserts. They too are pawns and pets of the Mind Masters. The overlords often swoop in on a nomad band to pluck away a few for experiments, or set two tribes against each other for fun, or compel a group to attack a heavily defended Vithaani city just to see what will happen.

The Hajuur are carnivores, and so they spend most of their time hunting the scarce game in the desert. They are grimly fatalistic in outlook, and they form few close emotional attachments, as death can come at any time. With little access to metal, they have developed the use of their claws and teeth to an amazing degree. They have also created several advanced unarmed fighting styles envied by Earth martial arts masters. The few Hajuur that have been freed and brought to Earth have tried to teach some of these arts to humans.

### *Hajuur*

30 points

**Attribute Modifiers:** HT+1 [10]; DX+2 [20].

**Secondary Characteristic Modifiers:** HP+1 [2].

**Advantages:** Catfall [10]; Nictitating Membrane 2 [2]; Night Vision 5 [5]; Sharp Claws [5]; Sharp Teeth [1].

**Disadvantages:** Callous [-5]; Incurious [-5]; Social Stigma (Subjugated) [-10]; Stubbornness [-5].

Hajuur freed from Mars lose their Social Stigma but gain Low TL6 [-30] by default. Most such Hajuur spend months in training and education before they join League society, buying off some or all of this disadvantage.

### *The Underground*

The failure to liberate the enslaved Martian races has long been a thorn in the Earth League's side. Unable to win an open war, the Earth League has begun covert operations, one of the few areas where it acts in a less-than-open fashion. Highly trained members of the Space Marines are sent to the planet in small, stealthy ships, sliding past the Martian's physical and mental screens. Once on the planet, they make highly surreptitious contact with those few Hajuur or Vithaani engaged in active resistance against their controllers. The operatives then provide arms, other equipment, training, and, sometimes, escape. While the prospect of liberating the entire populace of Mars a handful at a time is ludicrous, the goal is to help create more future leaders of the rebellion by showing them how life can be when not under the psionic thumb of tentacled monstrosities. Some are especially grateful to their rescuers or enamored of life beyond Mars, and they end up joining the Solar Patrol or working for the Earth League in some other capacity.

Those in the underground live a dangerous life. They must be as secret as possible, avoiding all public places or locations where a passing Mind Master might scan their brain and realize they are not Vithaani. They cannot rely on Earth for any aid. They serve on Mars in two-year renewable shifts, following extensive training in language and culture. They work under a constant fear of death and mental evisceration, and they see only the smallest progress toward the goal of a free Mars.

## **ASTEROIDS (THE BELT)**

Between Jupiter and Mars, its borders vaguely defined, lies the asteroid belt, or simply, the Belt. With Luna becoming increasingly civilized with each passing day, this is where the true loners, iconoclasts, and misanthropes of the System go – along with miners, scientists, doctors, and homesteaders. The Belt is the borderland, the frontier. Constant danger and constant opportunity coexist here. The brave come to strike it rich and the foolish go to a cold and forgotten death, drifting alone and unknown between the flying mountains.

While a few scout ships made it to the larger asteroids in the early 1990s, it was not until just after the turn of the century that the long voyage to the Belt became inexpensive enough to launch large-scale settlement and exploration. The Earth League built the first Belt outpost, Ceres Station One, as a forward base with the intent of using it to launch scouts to the distant world of Jupiter.

Because of the difficulty and expense of hauling materials from Earth to the Belt, Ceres Station One (often simply called CS1) was designed as a bootstrap project, given just enough to get started. The 50 men and women sent there were assigned a difficult task: Create a self-sustaining industrial center using

just the limited tools and supplies they'd taken with them from Earth. In the event of emergency, all they had was a small lifeboat that they could aim toward the inner system and hope an Earth Patrol ship could find and reach them in time.

Mining pods scoured the nearby rocks for raw materials. Industrial smelters converted the metals and minerals into building supplies. The same craft that mined the local asteroids for metals burrowed deep into Ceres itself, creating open spaces where hydroponics could grow. The crew converted the Tesla coils from one of their ships to provide energy until the atomic generators could be fired up. A year went by, and the base grew ever larger and more complete . . . as did the population. Four children were born by the end of the first year of settlement.

Once CS1 was up to spec, Earth launched other ships, carrying more workers and engineers and a cadre of Earth Patrol pilots and shipwrights. With this influx of labor and supplies, the keel of the exploration ship *Athena* was laid down in early 2002, and its electron drive was first test-fired only six months later. On Christmas Eve 2002, it took off for Jupiter. (See *Jupiter and Its Moons*, p. 20, for more on that part of the story.)

While this was going on, people began establishing other bases throughout the Belt. The Earth Patrol tended to view the Belt as a shield around the inner system, and it wanted to secure it. While no one knew of any "alien" threats, or what Jupiter might hold, securing the Belt simply seemed like a good idea. It was.

Three years after *Athena* had been launched, the largest space warfleet in Earth history tore through the Belt. Without CS1, CS2, Pallas Base One, and Vesta Outpost, the fleet would have been past Mars before Earth got any warning. As it was, those four bases provided much needed information and firepower, taking out several of the Overlord's battleships and forcing him to hold back additional forces during the initial assault. As the Solar War dragged on, the remaining bases (Vesta was lost in 2006; CS2, in 2007) became the staging areas for the counterattack.

While Ceres Station Two has been rebuilt, the charred and blasted ruins of Vesta Outpost remain to this day as a monument to courage in the face of overwhelming firepower, and cadets of the Solar Patrol often make a pilgrimage there before their graduation.

After the Red Hive war, though, the Belt became more than a series of military outposts. While the population had been growing slowly from 2010 to 2020, it exploded in the next decade. Technological improvements and the human urge for "elbow room" drove thousands, then tens of thousands, to the Belt. The Belt was rich in metals, minerals, and radioactives – all the things Earth needed desperately. The more the Belt grew, the more the Belt needed, so more people came to fulfill those needs, and the boom cycle was on. Luna was metal-poor; Earth was protected against rapacious environmental destruction; Venus' thick fog turned industrial equipment to rusted goo (and the locals took a dim view of anyone draining their swamps). Therefore, the only source for raw materials to feed the burgeoning post-war consumer, military, and industrial demand was the Belt. "The asteroids are made of gold" was the saying, and while most found nothing but a sustenance living, enough struck it rich that the dream was kept alive.

Where wealth can be earned, those who prefer to take it can be found. While the first of the Belt pirates, the infamous and romanticized Baron Black, got his start in the late 2020s, the

"golden age" of Belt Piracy began in the 2030s and continues to this day. With stealthy ships, hidden bases, and spies in every mining consortium and shipping company, pirate fleets can strike suddenly along all the trade routes from the Belt back to Venus, loot and pillage, then vanish back into the ether. Pirate havens in the Trojan asteroids give them places to sell or spend their spoils. They rarely ask and never care who is doing the buying.

## *The Belt Today*

Over a million people live in the Belt. Roughly 100,000 of them dwell in Ceres City, a sprawling above- and underground complex that has grown up in a haphazard fashion around and between the four huge Ceres Station complexes. Ten thousand or so dwell on each of the other three major asteroids, about a thousand each on the next hundred largest asteroids, and the rest are scattered throughout the Belt.

The Belt is mostly inhabited by family groups or tiny companies, each of which has claimed one of the million or so asteroids of about a mile in size. These are mined for metals, radioactives, frozen gasses, rare minerals and crystals, and whatever else can be stripped from them. Some are used as nothing more than mines; others become homesteads, with domed farming settlements dotting the surfaces and underground passages providing massive amounts of living space.

Earth isn't crowded, but the huge megacities do not leave much room to stretch one's arms. Out in the Belt, anyone can have a mansion . . . if they aren't too concerned with the view.

## **Piracy and Romanticism**

In *Tales of the Solar Patrol*, space piracy is a criminal but romanticized affair. Pirates rarely kill unless actively resisted, and they then kill only armed combatants. A roguish swashbuckler might steal a kiss (and her Luna diamond necklace) from some rich merchant's daughter but nothing more than that. A timed distress beacon is placed on a crippled ship so that the Solar Patrol can find it and rescue it after the pirates have made their getaway. Pragmatic reasons exist for this: The Solar Patrol relentlessly hunts down pirates, and pirate fleets known to show mercy to their victims are less likely to be simply sent to the Mercury Mines or vaporized out of hand. A few of the cruelest and most notorious gangs are nothing but murderous swine, and they kill with no quarter asked or given. Nonetheless, most Belt pirates see themselves as thieves, not murderers, and act accordingly.

It doesn't need to be this way. In more realistic variants, pirates can be more bloodthirsty and vicious. They may raid mines and homesteads in the Belt, not just ships, and they may take to heart the motto that "spaced corpses tell no tales." The sudden detection of a hidden ship firing up its engines might cause brave men to grow weak, knowing full well the dire fate that awaits them if caught.

So many metallic rocks in one place make radio communication spotty, and the vast distances of the Belt means news travels slowly. Word of mouth, or short-range radio picked up by one rock and transmitted to another, are the main ways news gets around. In the isolated homesteads and the small trading centers (with populations of 100 to 500), reputation counts for more than money. The nature of the Belt is such that “clusters” of worthwhile rocks are separated by millions of miles of dust, void, and space junk, and each cluster is fairly autonomous. Belters come to the Belt to enjoy free and independent lives, but survival requires cooperation and community. It has been said there are only two laws in the Belt: “Help your neighbor, because it could be you next time” and “keep your hands to yourself.”

While pirates prefer to raid transport craft full of ore, a few target the miners themselves. Each cluster maintains a network of sensors and radio beacons to detect incoming raiders, and they issue an automated alert to all the nearby rocks if a dangerous-seeming ship is spotted. The local miners, farmers, and merchants respond to the signal by launching their craft, with mining laser-drills converted to short-range but powerful weapons and Solar War surplus atomic guns hastily duct-taped to the larger ships as the principal armament.

*Danger walks behind you, and  
one warning's all you'll get  
A good neighbor's a blessing, but  
a bad one is a threat  
Soon revealed the help or harm,  
soon revealed the lie  
Prey on us, and man or beast,  
you die!*  
– Leslie Fish, “Hard Land,”  
recorded 1996

Each cluster has a primary settlement at its heart, set up on the largest rock. Here, industrial corporations of Earth bargain for metals. Here, the farmers sell their crops to the miners. Here, everyone comes to blow off steam, swap news, and enjoy life on the System's edge. While no one wears cowboy hats (except a few folks from the American Southwest) and no horses live within a hundred million miles, the settlement still has something of an Old West feel to the place, in style and character if not in garb and technology.

## JUPITER AND ITS MOONS

Travel to Jupiter was a triumph of the Earth League. It took the most advanced technology, the bravest pilots, and several stepping-stone bases in the Belt to finally reach the distant, waiting giant . . . and, once there, Earth found the greatest enemy it would ever face – the mysterious and deadly Overlord of Jupiter's Moons!

It was in 2002 when the first Earth ship reached the gas giant. The crew of the *Athena* discovered that the four Galilean moons were surprisingly Earth-like, with rich ecosystems and easily breathable atmospheres. While examining the moons from high orbit, they detected a cluster of five odd-looking ships coming in on an intercept course. Prepared to either fight or run (the lessons of the Martian war were still fresh!), they were pleased when the craft stayed out of firing range and began to repeatedly broadcast a radio message. It was a series of mathematical equations, and it began the process of establishing a shared language. After a week of slowly learning the basics, it was clear the alien craft were not hostile and were requesting that the Earth ship land. No Earth radio could reach the mother world from this distance, so it was up to the fleet captain, who decided the chance for peaceful contact with an advanced alien race was worth the risk.

The ship landed at what is now known as the Gray Fortress on Ganymede, home of the Jovian Overlord. There they were treated as honored guests, but all noticed the casual cruelty of their host. Earth history was full of tyrants who smiled at those he could use and slew those he deemed unworthy, and the crew was not taken in by his protestations of friendship, especially when it became apparent he lacked the electron drive and was exceptionally interested in acquiring it. Since he made no outwardly hostile moves, though, basic terms for trade and diplomacy were established.

A year later, in 2003, the *Gagarin* went missing over Io. Allegedly, the ship experienced some sort of sudden mechanical failure; the Overlord reported that it was seen belching fire and smoke and crashing into the sea. Rescue and emergency teams scoured the jungles and seas of the volcanic archipelago world, but found no sign of the craft, not even wreckage. There was a great deal of suspicion, but no proof, and the Earth League was not willing to risk war across the void without hard evidence.

In 2005, the Overlord attacked. A fleet of electron-drive warships larger and more powerful than any seen before streamed outward from Jupiter. They seized the smaller military outposts in the Belt and executed the soldiers stationed there for “crimes against the Sovereign.” The larger bases on Ceres and Vesta fought back vigorously, taking out a few battleships while sending what information they could to Earth. Then the Overlord's fleet rushed to the inner system, giving Mars a wide berth and launching attacks on Earth, Luna, and Venus. Earth, caught off-guard despite the valiant efforts of the Belt bases, reeled from the assault.

In the end, logistics, resources, and courage undid the Overlord. He could not adequately maintain and supply his fleet over such distances; he had hoped for a blitzkrieg that would put him firmly in command of the inner system, but Earth proved tougher than he'd imagined. Further, Earth had deeper pockets and a more advanced infrastructure than he'd ever conceived of – his realm knew nothing of “private industry,” so he was quite unprepared when the factories of Earth quickly went from churning out pleasure cruisers and civilian transports to mass producing sleek, advanced warships. Lastly, his troops were motivated by fear, not love of their home world, and were used to dealing with broken and submissive populaces, not fierce patriots fighting for their home world with every aspect of their being.

## New Port Royal

To some, it is a myth. To others, it is a quest. To the elite of the rogues and pirates who roam the Belt, it is home.

If it really exists . . .

In the miner bars of Luna and the seedy dives of Venusport, folks whisper about a haven for the criminal, the scurvy, and the warped. The tales claim that it's a place the Patrol can't find, a place where the law cannot follow, a place where all misdeeds are ignored and all feuds are put on hold . . . a place called New Port Royal. Allegedly, it is an asteroid city, built into a rock a mile across, a city that has been cloaked from sight by unknown technology. Some claim the machine was found on an alien spaceship adrift in the void. Others suggest the device was stolen from the Overlord of Jupiter. Still others maintain that it was developed by the Earth League but then taken by its inventor before it could be deployed. The rumors change with the telling.

So do the rumors of its location, which place it all over the Belt – sometimes near to Mars, other times within a few days' flight of Jupiter. If the rumors were all true, the rock would need engines, making it the largest spaceship in existence, but that's quite impossible.

If New Port Royal exists, it would be a wild place, making Venusport seem like a peaceful hyper-suburb on Earth. There's speculation that it's ruled by a sort of Rogues' Parliament, composed of the leaders of the most powerful

and successful pirate bands, who are elected by the scum they rule and who only hold power so long as they have popular support.

In order for a place like New Port Royal to exist, a law of truce must be enforced. All feuds, disagreements, misgivings, and vendettas would need to be set aside within its steel walls, lest the entire enterprise collapse in a war of all against all. Those who broke this truce would be ejected from the city and given the Traitor's Brand, a symbol that would fade after a year's time. Those bearing such a brand would find themselves not merely outcast from New Port Royal, but shunned even in other pirate holdfasts.

What would a place like New Port Royal offer? Larger and better-equipped shipyards than any other such location. A neutral meeting ground for captains whose ships to negotiate a truce. A place for the wounded to rest and for the wealthy to flaunt their gains. A place for those weary of the pirating life – but wanted on every world in the inner system and half the moons of Jupiter – to retire in reasonable comfort. A chance to meet new crewmembers or seek a new ship to sign up with.

That's what it would offer if it existed. Which, of course, it doesn't. Indeed, the Patrol is rumored to have a half-dozen ships assigned to looking for it, just to prove that it doesn't exist . . .

The willingness of the Earth ships to die for their cause, or of one Earther to give his life for his friends, was something the Overlord simply could not conceive of. Over the months of the war, his fleet was diminished and pushed back. The Belt was reinforced, and the Overlord's ships were often caught between fleets launching outward from Earth and inward from the Belt. Then the counterattack was launched.

It was brief and bloody. The ever-paranoid Overlord had kept most of his native fleet home and not upgraded them to the electron drive. The Earth League, as they had with Mars, constrained itself to limiting the damage to civilian targets as much as possible. The result was a conditional surrender on the part of the Overlord, one that a war-weary Earth accepted. An Earth League base would be established on Europa, and the Overlord would destroy all electron-drive ships and turn over the secret of the gravitic vector, which would allow Earth craft to generate artificial gravity on board.

The situation remains the same to this day. The Overlord's hatred of Earth is absolute, but so is his fear of what they might do with a second attack. He has been reduced to scheming, plotting, and acting through proxies. Few foes of the Earth League, from the Red Hive to random space pirates, have not received some funding and resources from him – though never in a way that can be proven. The European base is considered a hell assignment, a tiny island of Earth League territory surrounded by hostile powers. The Earth League has refrained from actively opposing the Overlord on his own world, despite agitation to do so, at least covertly, as is being done on Mars.

**Note:** Throughout the text, the term “Jovian” applies primarily to the four inhabited moons and their shared political system. The actual gas giant is of minimal importance, as are the uninhabited moons.

### *The Overlord of Jupiter*

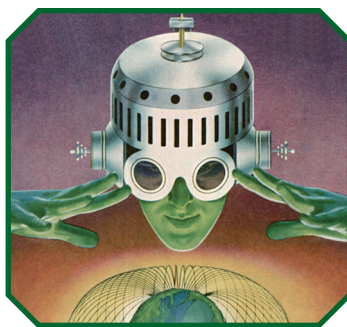
973 Points

The very phrase “the Overlord Of Jupiter” is enough to terrify. Mysterious, implacable, and alien, he rules four worlds with a literal iron fist, and he came close to adding Earth to his collection of planets. Even now, beaten and contained, he is seen as the greatest threat to peace in the system. But who is he?

Nobody knows.

All that can be determined is that he came to Io “in a furious storm of fire” an indeterminately long time ago . . . some scholars estimate it might be 10,000 or even 100,000 years. That he came from outside the Solar System is certain, but from what world, or even what galaxy, none can say but him . . . and he is not talking.

He is humanoid in shape and size, but he has never been seen without his suit of dull ebon armor. His gauntlets contain powerful lasers, and his look . . . can kill. Earthers visiting him for early diplomatic missions, before his true nature was known, were the first to see what one wag called his “look of disdain” – a devastatingly powerful burst of energy that can destroy an armored man in an instant.



## The Children of the Overlord

Despite never being seen outside of his armor, the Overlord has presented many individuals as his “children.” Male and female in almost equal numbers, all those that have been seen are in their late teens to late 20s, perfectly humanoid in appearance, uniformly attractive, and utterly power-mad. They are assigned to oversee rebellious provinces, lead a fleet in a surprise assault, or rule a section of a moon for a limited span. All claim they seek their father’s favor and will someday rule in his stead; most share his predilection for overly elaborate plans, and many followers die horribly when such plans go awry.

The exact nature of such “children” is unknown. Some speculate they are artificial beings or clones; others that they are adopted from the elite of the humanoids of the moons; and still others that they are, indeed, the genetic offspring of the Overlord and Jovian women. The truth may never be known, and the Overlord has planted clues supporting all three theories.

He lusts for power and surrounds himself with beauty. The bleak iron fortress that glowers down upon the Scab of Io is packed with art of all sorts, culled from around the four moons and, recently, from Earth (mostly stolen by pirates). He loves music and dance as well, and he can play the part of the charming host perfectly – it took him but a few days to learn enough Earth culture and language to be able to host a formal dinner to perfection.

Despite the vast armies at his command, and his retinue of elite Callistan guards, he enjoys personal combat. While he can use a small atomic blaster to great effect, his preferred weapon is his infamous monomolecular blade, a sword that he always carries.

Some have commented that, to the Overlord, all of the war and terror he causes is but a twisted game; he often ignores the simple and efficient course of action for the complex and dramatic. It seems as if he is acting a part for an unseen audience, playing a role. The death and suffering that follows in his wake is all too real, and for all his flourishes, games, and seeming blunders, he can kill quickly and efficiently whenever he decides the play is over.

**ST** 14 [40]; **DX** 15 [100]; **IQ** 16 [120]; **HT** 14 [40].  
Damage 1d/2d; BL 39 lbs.; HP 14 [0]; Will 21 [25]; Per 16 [0];  
FP 14 [0].  
Basic Speed 7.25 [0]; Basic Move 7 [0]; Dodge 10; Parry 0.

### Social Background

*TL:* 6+3 [0].

*CF:* Jupiter and its moons [0].

*Languages:* Jovian (Native) [0]; English (Accented) [4].

### Advantages

Absolute Timing [2]; Ally (Elite Guards; 75% of starting points; Constantly; Group: 6-10) [72]; Burning Attack 3 (Laser

Gauntlets; Armor Divisor 2; Damage Limitation, No Blunt Trauma, No Knockback; Gadget/Breakable, DR 6-15 or less, Size -5 or -6; Gadget/Can Be Stolen, Must be forcefully removed; Limited Use, 5-10 times per day) [12]; Burning Attack 8 (Look of Disdain; Accurate, +4; Armor Divisor 5; Limited Use, Once per Day) [92]; DR 15 (Armored Suit, Hardened, +1; Gadget/Can Be Stolen, Must be forcefully removed) [83]; Danger Sense [15]; Dark Vision (Gadget/Can Be Stolen, Must be forcefully removed) [23]; Doesn’t Breathe (Gadget/Can Be Stolen, Must be forcefully removed) [18]; Doesn’t Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn’t Sleep [20]; Extended Lifespan 1 [2]; Extra Life 1 [25]; Hard to Kill 4 [8]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Mind Shield 4 [16]; Rapier Wit [5]; Regeneration (Regular, 1 HP/hour) [25]; Reputation (Lord of the Four Moons) 3 (Almost Everyone; All the Time) [15]; Status 8 [40]; Unaging [15]; Very Fit [15]; Very Rapid Healing [15]; Voice [10]; Weapon Master (Monofilament Blade) [20].

### Disadvantages

Bully (12 or less) [-10]; Callous [-5]; Code of Honor (Overlord’s\*) [-15]; Frightens Animals [-10]; Jealousy [-10]; Megalomania [-10]; Overconfidence (6 or less) [-10].

\* Accept any challenge to a duel; always tell them your plans; never kill quickly when you can kill dramatically; treat even enemies with courtesy; let them live if they’ve outwitted you fairly.

### Skills

Acrobatics (H) DX+1 [8]-16; Administration (A) IQ+3 [12]-19; Area Knowledge (Jupiter) (E) IQ+5 [16]-21; Area Knowledge (The inner system) (E) IQ [1]-16; Beam Weapons/TL6 (Pistol) (E) DX+3 [8]-18; Beam Weapons/TL6 (Rifle) (E) DX+3 [8]-18; Cloak (A) DX+3 [12]-18; Connoisseur (Music) (A) IQ-1 [1]-15; Connoisseur (Visual Arts) (A) IQ-1 [1]-15; Current Affairs/TL6 (Politics) (E) IQ+2 [4]-18; Detect Lies (H) Per+2 [12]-18; Diplomacy (H) IQ [1]-16\*; Economics (H) IQ-1 [2]-15; Fast-Draw (Force Sword) (E) DX+1 [2]-16; Force Sword (A) DX+3 [12]-18; Force Sword Art (A) DX [2]-15; Gambling (A) IQ+1 [4]-17; Innate Attack (Beam) (E) DX [1]-15; Interrogation (A) IQ+1 [4]-17; Intimidation (A) Will-1 [1]-20; Leadership (A) IQ+2 [8]-18; Piloting/TL6 (Contragravity) (A) DX-1 [1]-14; Piloting/TL6 (High-Performance Spacecraft) (A) DX-1 [1]-14; Poisons/TL6 (H) IQ-2 [1]-14; Politics (A) IQ+1 [1]-17\*; Propaganda/TL6 (A) IQ-1 [1]-15; Public Speaking (A) IQ+1 [1]-17\*; Riding (Jovian Lizard-Horse) (A) DX-1 [1]-14; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ [1]-16; Science! IQ-2 [6]-14; Smuggling (A) IQ-1 [1]-15; Strategy (Air) (H) IQ-2 [1]-14; Strategy (Land) (H) IQ-2 [1]-14; Strategy (Naval) (H) IQ-2 [1]-14; Strategy (Space) (H) IQ-2 [1]-14; Tactics (H) IQ-2 [1]-14; Traps/TL6 (A) IQ-1 [1]-15; Weird Science (VH) IQ-3 [1]-13.

\* +2 from Voice.

### Techniques

Feint (Force Sword) (H) [2]-19; Ground Fighting (Force Sword) (H) [2]-19; Retain Weapon (Force Sword) (H) [2]-19.

## THE MOONS OF JUPITER

Jupiter has many moons, but only four are inhabited: Io, Europa, Ganymede, and Callisto.

## Io

Io is a harsh and beautiful world. About one-fourth of the planet's surface is taken up by what Earthers have uncharitably named the Scab – a massive region of basalt, obsidian, and twisting rock, strewn with active volcanoes and rivers of lava, forever shadowed under clouds of soot and surrounded by miles and miles of ash-gray seas. The rest of the world is a volcanic archipelago, with thousands of tiny islands, most less than a mile along their largest dimension, and countless semi-active volcanoes. Rich jungle foliage covers the older and larger islands, while many of the newer ones are just bare outcroppings of rock.

The Overlord makes his home in the heart of the Scab, keeping his Iron Fortress safe and stable by unknown means. The vast factories, workshops, and barracks that support his armies and space fleets surround it.

The inhabitants of Io are varied. The Scab is home to a silicate race, the enigmatic and unemotional Rock-men. The archipelagoes hold a humanoid race that maintains a peaceful existence, though they struggle to meet the Overlord's demands for tribute.

### The Rock-men of Io

Io's native race is a silicon-based life form, one that evolved in the magma pools and then moved out to the land. Slow moving and slow thinking, they gradually developed a culture and civilization. Skilled metallurgists and stonemasons, they greatly fear the seas and never ventured into the oceans, allowing the humanoid island dwellers to live in peace, until the coming of the Overlord. Now, the Rock-men are the Overlord's servants and form the bulk of his infantry. Their original native culture has been forgotten; now they only know how to serve the Overlord.

While silicon based, the Rock-men still need to eat, breathe, and otherwise perform the functions of life. Likewise, they have internal organs that can suffer damage.

Only in campaigns set primarily on Jupiter's moons would Rock-men be suitable as PCs; in such cases, they make fine "tanks" but do little else well.

### Rock-Men of Io

28 points

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST+3 [30]; DX-1 [-20] HT+2 [20]; IQ-2 [-40].

**Secondary Characteristic Modifiers:** Move-1 [-5].

**Advantages:** DR 4 [20]; Extended Lifespan 2 [4]; Lifting ST 10 [30]; Reduced Consumption 2 [4].

**Disadvantages:** Callous [-5]; Ham-Fisted [-5]; Hidebound [-5].

### Ionian Lizard-Horse (K'tharg)

This creature is a common riding beast across all of Jupiter's moons, but it evolved to scamper along the rough and sharp surface of the Scab. It is a sinuous creature, something like a thick-bodied, legged snake, with a long, whiplike tail used for balance. Riding it requires skill and coordination, as it is hideously fast and snaps its flexible body around rapidly in order to turn – or throw an unwary rider. It uses its tail to sweep away predators.

During the 2020s, several were imported to Earth, where they have become something of a status symbol for the idle

rich and have replaced ponies in the dreams of a certain class of young girls.

**ST:** 19  
**DX:** 15  
**IQ:** 2  
**HT:** 12

**HP:** 19  
**Will:** 10  
**Per:** 10  
**FP:** 12

**Speed:** 6.75  
**Move:** 10  
**Weight:** 1,000 lbs.  
**SM:** +2 (4 hexes)

**Dodge:** 9

**Parry:** N/A

**DR:** 2

**Bite (15):** 2d-2 crushing. Reach C.

**Tail (15):** 2d+1 crushing. SM +1; Cannot Parry; Limited Arc, Rear Only. Reach 2.

**Traits:** No Fine Manipulators; Quadruped; Wild Animal.

**Skills:** Running-18.

## Callisto

Callisto is a cold and harsh world, a world of snow-covered mountains, pine forests, ice-choked rivers and seas, and cold, harsh people. The bulk of the warriors of the Overlord come from this savage world, as the Callistans are people who love war for the sake of war – and once for the sake of honor and glory. The Space Marines of the Patrol often find kindred spirits in these rough-and-tumble fighters, and the two forces learned to respect each other during the Solar War. Legends abound about a second race that dwells on the world, a race of savage, shaggy, man-eating monsters that live deep in the frozen caverns and emerge only when the nights are coldest and blackest, but no one believes such tales.

## Europa

"By the infinite seas of Europa!" has become a bit of slang in the System, and with good reason: This pristine globe is mostly water. Unlike the shallow, island-dotted oceans of Io or the swampy muck of Venus, Europa's oceans are deep and barely cracked by land. Less than 5% of the surface area is covered by ground, and the bulk of that is the island of Tovlor, which has the distinction of holding precisely four square miles of Earth League territory.

## The Overlord and the Red Hive

Why didn't the Overlord launch a second attack when the Red Hive decimated Earth? Firstly, he was expecting the Hive to win, and he felt he could deal with them in a weakened state. Secondly, he had very little to attack with – he had barely any warships that he managed to hide from the Earth League after the first Solar War.

The Hive originally headed straight to Jupiter when they fled, since the Overlord has been their covert ally, but he wanted nothing to do with weak losers. He made it clear that if they tried to land, he would happily lend his support to the European base in shooting them down. Thus, they flew on past the Tesla Line out of desperation.

Various humans, who have become masters of working with local materials, inhabit the other sparse islands of Europa. Aside from a small number of real cities on Tovlor, which benefit from the Overlord's technological devices, the bulk of the population lives in TL1 or TL2 villages.

The most common form of housing is the *quaal* shell. A *quaal* is a shelled mollusk that grows to phenomenal size in the low gravity of Europa. When they die, their air-filled shells bob to the surface, where the locals harvest them. A typical *quaal* shell can house six to eight adults in cramped, but tolerable, conditions.

In addition to the humans, a race of water-breathing humanoids dwells on Europa; they offer fealty and subservience to the Overlord, but they cannot serve in his fleets or armies with ease, so they are mostly left alone. During the Solar War, the Earth Patrol foiled a scheme to smuggle battalions of mer-folk to Earth, where they would enter the oceans and attack coastal cities from there.

The European seas go down to depths of 10 miles or more, and no one has explored the dark reaches of the hadean depths, not even by the Overlord's men. Rumors and legends of mile-long monsters remain to be verified or debunked.

## Ganymede

Ganymede is a strange world, a world where the cracked and pitted surface is filled with lush life. Long ago, the

surface of Ganymede split and broke, forming a network of canyons and chasms. In these valleys and depths, rich life evolved, filling the cracks with green. The inhabitants are an agile, furred, and clever species that serves the Overlord as technicians and engineers of superlative skill. The surface regions of Ganymede are covered with mining pits and factories.

## Furred Folk of Ganymede

23 points

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST-1 [-10]; DX+2 [40]; HT+1 [10].

**Secondary Characteristic Modifiers:** Move+1 [5].

**Advantages:** High Manual Dexterity 2 [10].

**Disadvantages:** Cowardice [-10]; Extra Sleep [-2]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Short Lifespan [-10].

## BEYOND

Beyond Jupiter, little is known. Forces in the outer system render Tesla coils inoperative. Attempts to explore further are stymied. It is believed that immense and bizarre life forms dwell in the vacuum of the outer system. They cannot come too close to the sun, but ships that venture much beyond Jupiter's orbit are rarely seen again.

# THE RED HIVE

The Red Hive fled from Earth, were driven past Jupiter, and rocketed into the cold void beyond, to drift for weeks and then to finally die, their menace ended forever.

So the history goes.

The truth . . . may or may not be out there.

If the Game Master so wishes, the official story is the true story. No Red Hive remains. Skip to the next section.

On the other hand . . .

In truth, the Hive had some secrets of its own. It had developed powerful boosters to the Tesla coil, powerful enough to stabilize them in the tumultuous post-Jovian ether. It had tested these new ships – of little use in its feud with Earth – during the war, and it had reached as far as Saturn. There, scouts found that Titan, alone of all Saturn's moons, was, just barely, habitable. It was a harsh, cold, and unforgiving world with a few spots warm enough to survive on. Some of the Hive had plans to use it as a penal/mining colony for their enemies when they won. Instead, in desperation, it became the Hive's new home.

For a generation now, the remnants of the Hive have lived by one of the frigid lakes of Titan, in a single complex built from the remains of their escape fleet. A few thousand of them dwell there, and the older generation is beginning to age and die. They still look back at the distant sun and pinprick of light that is Earth, and they hate, and they plot . . .

They know that no military strike can succeed now – that opportunity is lost. But they do have tiny stealth craft that can cross the bleak void undetected, and they have a network of spies and agents, old loyalists who kept quiet during the war – just in case – to smuggle them from the Belt to Earth. There, their deep-cover agents slip slowly into positions of power.

None have yet infiltrated the Solar Patrol itself, at least not beyond the administrative and support structures, but Hive agents are in place throughout the Earth League government, on the boards of businesses, in all of the corridors of power. At this point, they are primarily engaged in gathering information and securing their positions. Their long-term plans are subtler. They intend to force, over time, a crisis of the Earth League, to find every weak spot in the social fabric, every point of strain and contention, and exacerbate them, while, at the same time, working to undermine and weaken the military, especially the Solar Patrol. One agent may make sure that inspections are performed in a lackluster fashion, while another one, placed in an industrial concern, may slip low-quality steel into the mix intended for front-line battleships. On the occasion such plots are uncovered, a plausible personal motive can always be found – the businessman was skimming profits, the inspector was bitter about being rejected for the Patrol, and so on. Since no one suspects the Red Hive still exists, no one looks for a larger pattern.

The Red Hive can be used to add a layer of paranoia, suspicion, and espionage to the game, giving it a different flavor than the norm. In keeping with the 1950s styling of *Tales of the Solar Patrol*, such scenarios should have echoes of the "Red Scare," as it was seen at the time – a real crusade against a real foe. Cynical or revisionist GMs might wish to place a modern spin on it: After the first real Red Hive agent is uncovered, a mad witch hunt against "suspected Hive infiltrators" goes off, undoubtedly targeting one of the PCs due to the actions of a relative during the Hive war. The PCs should have an opportunity to give a rousing speech about freedom and the need to defend it even in times of crisis.



# CHAPTER THREE

# TECHNOLOGY

The technology of *Tales of the Solar Patrol* is simultaneously far ahead of the real world and far behind. Space travel is commonplace, but telephones still have dials. A handheld atomic gun can tear tank armor to shreds, but a room-sized computer can barely outperform a modern pocket calculator. The tri-vid projector in the living room can still only pick up a dozen or so channels.

Quite simply, it is the world of the late 1950s with specific technology replaced but without most of the social changes or spin-off effects that accompany technological innovation. If a machine is invented to do one thing better or faster or cheaper, it does so just fine, but this doesn't create ripple effects or unintended consequences. Life goes on as it always has, with the

exception of the specific and limited alterations wrought by the machine.

The world of *Tales of the Solar Patrol* is considered to be Tech Level 6+3; the progress of technology paralleled the real world until the early 1940s and then veered off in strange directions. The Tesla devices – the Tesla coil, the atomic gun, the electron drive, and so on – are considered TL6+1 super-science, becoming progressively more refined as time goes on. If a GM wishes to set a *Tales of the Solar Patrol* game earlier than 2056, the world can be considered TL6+1 in 1970, with the first Lunar landing; TL6+2 in 2010, at the end of the First Solar War; and TL6+3 in 2050, when the *Adventurous* was launched from the Yeager Shipyards.

## LOOK AND FEEL

The technology of *Tales of the Solar Patrol* has a distinctive look to it, and the GM should keep this in mind offering descriptions.

Firstly, it's big, loud, and visible. Nothing has floating holographic controls or flat touch panels covered with colorful geometric symbols. Everything is obviously mechanical and analog. Joysticks, levers, and toggle switches control vehicles, especially spacecraft. Even though there's no physical connection between the thrust lever and the amount of power flowing to the electron drive, a pilot seeking to get more power out of the drive still shoves as hard on the lever as he can and holds it against the maximum setting. Why? Because it looks dramatic!

There are few wireless controls. A captain shouting an order down to the engineering deck uses a large microphone connected to his command chair by a thick black cord.

Everything is riveted, and the rivets are visible. Deckplates are made of metal and clang when the crew walks across them. The bridge has big windows, looking out into space, though some viewscreens may be built into the walls and consoles. Circular screens akin to radar readouts display the results of the scanners, and crewmen turn plastic knobs or adjust dials to control them.

Ships are cylindrical and sleek, and fly horizontally. They are most often finned, both to aid atmospheric landing and to avoid etheric disturbances. Weapons are mounted on the fins, in the nosecone, or in turrets located along the spine or sides of the ship.

Outer surfaces are smooth (other than the rivets). Few projections or "fiddly bits" mar the sleek lines of the craft.

Controls are labeled in clear English. A self-destruct button, for example, is prominently noted as such. Checking the readouts on panels of numeric gauges and dials or looking at the seemingly nonsensical patterns of blinking lights can reveal the status of any piece of equipment.

Much technology remains from the 20th century, as the 21st-century inhabitants don't replace things that work with something else merely because it is new. Pencil and paper remain the key tools of note taking. Office desks sport electric typewriters, though they are capable of making cards suitable for infomat storage from each page. Fire extinguishers, radios, and even telephones are all clearly recognizable, albeit with a few more buttons or some slight stylistic changes.

## THE FIVE KEY TECHNOLOGIES

Every grade-school student learns that the success and prosperity of the Earth League rests on five technological pillars, five great advances that, together, allow mankind to travel among the worlds and to defend itself against the many

threats which dwell among the planets. The five technologies are electron drives, Tesla coils, nega-barriers, atomic guns, and infomats.

## ELECTRON DRIVES

The electron drive is half of the secret of space travel. Producing tremendous thrust via accelerated hyper-electrons, it can propel a spacecraft at nearly unimaginable speeds, up to a respectable fraction of the speed of light itself. However, the power required is enormous, so much so that the drive would be a merely theoretical device, were it not for the Tesla coils.

## TESLA COILS

Tesla coils, based on the work of 19th- and early 20th-century super-genius Nikola Tesla, can suck the latent energy out of space itself and use it to power the mighty electron drives. The only weakness to the coils is that as the ether grows weaker, space becomes so turbulent and warped that the coils lose phase and begin to overheat. This limits space travel to roughly the orbit of Jupiter, at least until a reliable means of passing the so-called Tesla Line can be found.



## NEGA-BARRIERS

Thanks to other properties of the Tesla coils, a shield of powerful repulsive energy can be formed, protecting the starships of the Solar Patrol from the awesome energies of atomic guns.

## ATOMIC GUNS

Accelerating atomic particles and containing them in fields of stressed etheric energy can produce devastating beams of energy. Atomic guns can shred the strongest alloys as if they were metal foil, or slash a city apart from the safety of high orbit.

## INFOMATS

Truly the miracles of the 21st century, infomats exist through the System. Always implacable and sometimes terrifying even to the scientists who run and maintain their data stores, the large machines can process and integrate all manner of data, and some can aid mathematicians by performing as many as 10,000 calculations in a mere second!

# KEY TECHNOLOGIES IN DETAIL

## ATOMIC GUNS

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, lasers were used as personal and shipboard weapons, as the discovery of the Tesla coil enabled the construction of the compact power sources that made such weapons feasible. By the end of the Jovian war, though, researchers had discovered new applications of the etheric field: It could contain hyperaccelerated particles and

then decay the field in a controlled manner, releasing them monodirectionally. In short, it created a beam weapon of unimaginable power.

The first atomic guns, much like the first cannons, were massive weapons that required full crews to operate them and that were notoriously unstable. The etheric fields could break down, either slowly (releasing deadly, invisible radiation) or instantly (causing a terrible explosion). “The Ballad of the *Richenbacher*” tells the true tale of a crew that stayed at their guns and kept them firing even as the radiation leaks tore their bodies apart from the inside.

Over time, the technology evolved and stabilized. It’s been boasted that the engineers of the current atomic guns would happily sleep on top of them during the heat of battle, so secure are they that there will be neither leaks nor explosions. Indeed, the technology has advanced so far that atomic pistols and rifles have become available (as of 2041), finally banishing the old laser beam to the realm of collectors and criminals.

Use of shipboard atomic guns requires the Gunnery skill. Normal combat application is straightforward – aim and shoot. A skilled gunner can get some “tricks” out of the guns, however.

### Pinpoint Beam

**Average**  
*Default:* Electronics Operation/TL (Atomic Guns)-4

*Prerequisites:* Electronics Operation/TL (Atomic Guns); cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

## The Human Touch

One important factor in *Tales of the Solar Patrol* is that very little is automated or unmanned. Factories make use of tremendous machines, of course – this is a massively industrial world – but the machines all have human operators and require constant human intervention to work optimally. No computer systems guide them, and there are no factory floors where only a foreman and some techs oversee a wholly automated production process.

Moreover, few unmanned probes exist, and certainly no robot explorers. If a planet needs mapping, humans fly ships over it and keep an eye out for interesting oddities. If exploration is required, a landing party goes down. Men (and women) do all the work, reap all the glory, and suffer all the pain. Nothing is done by simply pushing buttons or running simulations – only hands-on experience matters and only the judgment of living humans, on-site, counts.

The technology of the Earth League certainly *could* build automated systems, but for various reasons, only mad scientists pursue these lines of research. A mix of cultural blind spots, lagging technology, and deliberate choices keeps the world of the Solar Patrol a totally “hands on” experience.

By adjusting the focusing elements of the gun and carefully regulating the power flow, a talented operator can cause the gun to generate an exceptionally tight beam of energy. This beam can punch through even a supercharged nega-barrier. If the skill check is successful, the Armor Divisor of the gun increases by 1. If the skill check fails, the gun beam is dispersed or unfocused, resulting in an Armor Divisor of 0. If the skill check critically fails, the gun burns out, rendering it useless until repaired.

## NEGA-BARRIERS

The nega-barrier, sometimes called the nega-screen or the force field, is the most powerful defensive technology ever invented. It uses an offshoot technology of the Tesla coil to “harden” space, providing a powerful defense against most forms of attack. Only atomic guns have the power to pierce the nega-barrier.

The skill Electronics Operation (Force Shields) is used to manipulate and control the nega-barrier in combat. Simply turning on the barrier and hoping for the best is a standard skill check, but talented operators know how to squeeze every ounce of performance from their screens.

### Focus Nega-Barrier

#### Average

*Default:* Electronics Operation/TL (Force Shields)-4

*Prerequisites:* Electronics Operation/TL (Force Shields); cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This technique allows the operator to deliberately weaken part of the nega-barrier in order to enhance another part, ideally the part currently being shot at. With a successful skill roll, the operator can borrow up to three-fourths the DR from one facing of the ship and add half of the amount “borrowed” to another facing. With an additional -4 to the roll, he can do this to an additional facing (i.e., “borrow” from two and enhance two). Aside from the obvious risks (a ship firing on the weakened facing), this action unbalances the nega-field and can cause the field generators to short out. If this is done more than two rounds in succession, any failure on the roll causes the nega-barrier generators to fry, resulting in the shields dropping until they can be repaired.

### Nega-Barrier Overload

The nega-barrier cannot keep reflecting energy all day. Even if nothing leaks past the barrier, the constant pounding slowly weakens the etheric matrix. Every hit lowers the total DR by 1/10 of the damage done; so long as the barrier remains up, this “heals” back at 1/20 of the DR of the screen per second.

*Example:* The corsair *Black Jack's Lady* finds itself in battle with the Patrol ship *Resolution*. The *Resolution* has screens with a DR of 650. The corsair has weak lasers, doing a mere 8d×5(2) damage, but it does have four of them and skilled gunners. Four bursts hit, doing average damage – 140 points each. These beams fail to penetrate the nega-barrier at all, but they do 560 points of total damage, dropping the DR by 56 points, to 604. A few more such volleys, and the beams will indeed break through. Of course, the *Resolution's* atomic guns will

destroy the corsair long before this happens, but if a large enough pirate fleet attacks . . .

## INFOMATS

The infomat is one of the marvels that has become so commonplace it's barely noticed. Dozens of them dot the cities of the Solar System. Anyone with a question need only place a quarter-sol in the infomat, key his question on a punch card, and presto! The amazing machine searches through hundreds of volumes of encyclopedia, dictionaries, and other references to produce a clear and concise answer in mere minutes. Onboard ships, infomats serve to provide access to the stored knowledge of mankind and to analyze and interpret sensor data.

Resorting to an infomat for general research of basic, easily defined facts (“What is the average rainfall in North Dakota for the past 20 years?” “What is the text of the Treaty of 2010?”) is commonplace to any citizen of the Earth League over the age of 10 or so. It is a part of the cultural background, much akin to dialing a phone or changing the channel on the tri-vid.

Using an infomat requires a Computer Use (TL6+3) check, as the question must still be “carded in” in the correct format, and the possibility of error always exists. Basic requests should get a bonus of +1 to +4 on the check. Extremely complex requests that require the infomat to search multiple databases and cross-correlate information might have a penalty of -1 to -4, to simulate the increased chance of formatting the punch cards incorrectly. The infomat has poor “error checking” features, and it treats a malformed request in an indeterminate fashion, either spitting out an error message or a stream of useless data.

Data on the infomats comes from public sources and qualified reference works – general citizens do not contribute it. There are no Web pages, Usenet groups, wikis, or anything remotely akin to them, other than mailed newsletters and local clubs where people gather to talk of common interests.

The infomats contain vast quantities of knowledge. Public infomats hold all the data found in the reference section of a good-sized public library, including indexes of periodicals (though not the periodicals themselves), encyclopedias, and dictionaries. They can consolidate, edit, and filter information to meet user requests. Non-public infomats contain data relevant to their users' needs – for example, the Solar Patrol has every Patrolman's records and history, the flight logs of every ship, all regulations and guidelines, and so on.

### Hacking Infomats

Infomats consist of a user interface (resembling a phone booth with a keyboard and punch-card slot) plus a data store (which is a massive collection of coded information and systems to scan and process it). Several infomat booths could be hooked up to any given data store. It is possible, though difficult, to alter the connection, to “hack” a public infomat to, say, read from the data store of a bank or military base. This is a Computer Hacking (6+3) skill check, with penalties ranging from -1 to access non-public, but non-secure, data stores (such as the academic records of a university) to -6 to access highly secure data stores (such as the Solar Patrol records base). This requires physically altering the connections and rewiring parts of the booth, so accomplishing this necessitates total access to the booth and 1d hours of time.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# EQUIPMENT

Despite the strong belief that humans matter more than machines, the Earth League knows that it is tools that permit them to travel the deadly void and confront whatever they might find there.

Care and respect for one's equipment is drilled into the heads of every Patrol cadet. Those who dwell on Luna or the Belt are borderline fetishistic about maintaining and updat-

ing their gear. A single failed tool can mean a quick and painful death.

The powerful industrial machine of the 21st century produces an immense variety of luxury goods and useful tools. This section lists a few items that found in the setting of *Tales of the Solar Patrol*, those that are most of use to adventuring characters or that are most likely to be encountered in daily life.

## SPACE SUITS

No one who travels the black emptiness between worlds would do so without a space suit close at hand. Because space travel is so common, space-suit training occurs from a young age as part of regular schooling. Any Earth League citizen knows the basics of how to put on a suit. By Earth League law, all ships must have suits for all passengers, plus 10% – to account for damaged suits, unexpected visitors, and other contingencies.

### SPACE SUIT DESCRIPTIONS

*Space Suit:* Dozens of marginally different space suits are available in the System, and more than a few barroom brawls have erupted over the merits of the AstroTuff versus the Starglider brands. The reality is that all are identical for game purposes. Twenty-first century suits are light, flexible, and tough, with a minimum of complicated equipment to get in the way. They are loose fitting and composed of thin, silvery cloth,

but seal completely with minimal effort. They come in a variety of standard sizes, though individuals who are Very Fat might need to squeeze a bit to get in one. (Commercial ships tend to carry extra-large suits just in case.) The helmet is a clear plastic bubble that contains a speaker grill, with controls for the radio located on the outside, just about where the ear would be. The back of the suit has two oxygen tanks, each good for 4 hours, which can be swapped out by a single user in 6 seconds or by a partner in 2 seconds with a successful Environment Suit/Vacc Suit skill check.

*Boarding Suit:* The Solar Patrol and others who expect rough-and-tumble combat use a boarding suit. Such suits provide only minimal protection from atomic guns, but they are quite effective against knives and old-fashioned gunpowder weapons. They share the functionality of the space suit.

*Commando Suit:* This is a heavy suit, with hard plastic implants to provide additional reinforcement. It is still considered flexible armor for purposes of blunt trauma, though.

### Space Suit Table

TL	Armor	Location	DR	Cost	Weight	LC	Notes
6+3	Space Suit	Full Suit	5	\$2000	15	4	[1]
6+3	Helmet	Head	4	\$500	5	4	
6+3	Boarding Suit	Full Suit	10	\$12000	20	4	[1]
6+3	Commando Suit	Full Suit	15	\$20000	25	3	[1]

#### Notes:

[1] Flexible armor.



## WEAPONS

No matter the high ideals of humanity, no matter how much they might desire to live in peace with their fellow beings, there continues to be those who do not share such

aspirations. The 21st century is a dangerous place, and everyone must be prepared to defend his life, land, or planet with vigor – and with guns.

## Weapon Table

See pp. B268-271 for an explanation of the statistics.

### BEAM WEAPONS (PISTOL) (DX-4, other Beam Weapons-4, or Guns (Pistol)-4)

TL	Weapon	Damage	Acc	Range	Weight	RoF	Shots	ST	Bulk	Rcl	Cost	LC	Notes
6+1	Mark I Laser Pistol	3d burn	4	250/500	3.75/0.5	3	100 (4)	6	-3	1	\$2,500	3	[1]
6+2	Mark II Laser Pistol	3d+3(2) burn	5	300/600	3.5/0.5	3	150(4)	5	-2	1	\$5,000	3	
6+3	Atomic Pistol	4d+4(3) burn	4	400/800	4.0	3	100(3)	5	-3	1	\$6,000	2	[2, 3]
6+3	Heavy Atomic Pistol	5d+5(3) burn	4	350/700	5.5	3	75(3)	6	-2	2	\$7,500	2	[3]
6+2	Gooper	–	3	100	4.0/1.0	1	10(5)	4	-3	2	\$1,500	4	[4, 5]

#### Notes:

[1] A primitive and outdated weapon, most likely owned by the desperate and the poor.

[2] The standard sidearm of the Solar Patrol

[3] Atomic pistols can be set to any level of damage up to their listed maximum. Adjusting this takes 1 second. Regardless of the setting, each discharge consumes a full charge.

[4] Binding; see the weapon's description.

[5] The standard sidearm of police and civilian guard forces.

### BEAM WEAPONS (RIFLE) (DX-4, other Beam Weapons-4, or Guns (Rifle)-4)

TL	Weapon	Damage	Acc	Range	Weight	RoF	Shots	ST	Bulk	Rcl	Cost	LC	Notes
6+1	Mark I Laser Rifle	4d burn	4	400/800	11.0/0.5	3	75(4)	7	-4	1	\$3,500	3	[1]
6+2	Mark II Laser Rifle	6d(2) burn	5	600/1200	9.0/0.5	3	100(4)	6	-4	1	\$7,000	2	[2]
6+3	Atomic Rifle	7d(3) burn	5	800/1600	8.75	3	100(3)	6	-4	2	\$10,000	2	[3]
6+3	Atomic Assault Rifle	8d(5) burn	4	700/1400	9.5	10	300 (6)	8	-4	2	\$20,000	1	[3, 4]

#### Notes:

[1] A primitive and outdated weapon, most likely owned by the desperate and the poor.

[2] Mark II laser rifles can be “dialed down” in intensity, to do any damage up to their maximum. Adjusting this takes 1 second. Regardless of the setting, each discharge consumes a full charge.

[3] Atomic rifles can be set to any level of damage up to their listed maximum. Adjusting this takes 1 second. Regardless of the setting, each discharge consumes a full charge.

[4] Issued to Space Marines and Solar Patrolmen if they are heading into full-on infantry combat. Rarely carried except on specific missions that require this kind of lethal overkill.

## WEAPON DESCRIPTIONS

*Mark I Lasers* were standard issue from around 1975 to 1995. The pistol forms are unusually long barreled. The general design is that of gunpowder weapons, with a few highlights of chrome and crystal.

*Mark II Lasers* were the dominant personal weapons from 1995 until the early 2040s, and they are still commonly found, though few new ones are being manufactured. These weapons follow the same design aesthetic as the Mark Is, but with more accouterments, such as power readouts and intensity settings.

*Atomic guns* became available for personal use in 2041 and quickly dominated the military and authorized civilian markets. Atomic guns, in either pistol or rifle form, are distinctly

different from older laser and gunpowder weapons. They tend to be molded entirely in smooth, chromed metal, with an ovoid acceleration chamber and a thin barrel. The grip has a variety of controls placed on it, all easily manipulated when holding the gun in a standard combat stance.

*Goopers* fire a chemical that becomes a sticky, entangling mass of threads on contact with air. This is a Binding-12 attack, so the grapple effect is ST 12 and the DR of the binding is 4. This is the preferred sidearm for all non-military personnel who are unlikely to face heavily armed opponents. A gooper has a similar design to a revolver, except that the material is an ultra-hard greenish plastic, and the “bullets” are chemical cartridges two inches long and an inch thick.

# SPACESHIPS

The world of *Tales of the Solar Patrol* is one where travel between planets is almost a century old and has become almost commonplace. Almost . . . because the bleak void of space can never be truly tamed or conquered. Thin walls of alloy and plastic are all that stand between a man and swift, certain death. A million parts – gears, tubes, pumps, coils, and

switches – must be kept in perfect working order; or they will fail, turning a spaceship into nothing but a metal coffin, drifting forever in blackness.

Modern spaceships vary in detail but share general design trends. They are primarily cylindrical, with decks arranged along the long axis of the cylinder; the craft fly horizontally.

Artificial gravity provides 1G of constant “downward” pull, unaffected by the ship’s motion, except during times of combat or stress.

## DECKS

Traditionally, ship functions are assigned to different decks. While “deck” can be literal, referring to a single level that stretches the length of the ship, in most cases it is figurative, with the actual layout of the ship’s interior not being so constrained. The term is a holdover from the earliest days of space travel, when thrust-induced gravity made ship designs more limited and where most “decks” were literally just that.

Most craft have the following decks.

### Command

The command deck is the topmost deck, and the main bridge is placed in either the front or middle of the ship, forming a distinct bulge. Thick alloy-glass windows surround the command center, and multiple viewscreens show data from the ship’s cameras and sensors. On advanced craft, an infomat is present on the bridge, constantly spitting out streams of punch-tape data that a trained science or sensor operation officer can read as if it were simple handwriting. The captain, astronavigator, pilot, and chief tactical officer all have bridge stations, and most are manned at all times. Even with small crews, one person is on duty while the ship is in flight.

### Engineering

The heart and soul of the ship. The engineering deck occupies most of the rear of the ship, where the engines are, but it can stretch forward quite a bit, especially if there’s a lot of machinery to take care of. The chief engineer works here and often practically lives here – many crews swear that their Chief never leaves the deck, not to eat, not to sleep, not ever. He’s a simply one more piece of installed machinery, albeit a slightly more mobile and often more profane one.

The engineering deck can be the most dangerous place on the ship. The power of the electron drive and the space-tearing forces of the Tesla coil can be only barely controlled by modern technology. A single error can unleash devastating energies. Even if everything goes right, the tools and equipment found on the deck can be deadly to the unskilled or careless. Anyone on the engineering deck is assumed to belong there and know what he’s doing.

### Crew

The crew deck is where the crew eats, sleeps, and relaxes while off duty. On most ships, quarters are spartan but functional, with a small lounge or two for games. Even officer’s quarters are barely larger than those of the crew are. Small personal touches are permitted in private quarters, provided they don’t violate regulations or pose a hazard.

### Passenger

Only commercial or transport ships carry passengers. While military transport craft have grimly utilitarian passenger decks, consisting of nothing but rows of bunks or simple safety hammocks, commercial liners boast of accommodations

akin to those of the great ocean liners of Earth – at least for the rich. For business travelers, cramped cabins are the order of the day, and for the poor seeking a new life out in the Belt, steerage class remains the only option.

Passenger decks are sealed off from the rest of the ship, with access to other decks through a small number of controlled and monitored hatches. To most crews, passengers are at best a necessary evil, and keeping the “groundies” from poking their fingers into the wires or pushing random buttons is a constant struggle.

### Cargo

As far as many ship’s crews are concerned, the main difference between the cargo deck and the passenger deck is that the crates don’t whine as much. Cargo decks are usually large areas with secondary doors that can open to permit rapid unloading of containers or the easy entry of forklifts and other vehicles. Depending on design, cargo decks may be topmost (to permit crane access) or bottommost (to allow swift “rollout” of cargo). Military vessels that must dispatch their cargo on war-torn battlefields choose the latter design; commercial vessels that land at ports choose the former. (This can be very relevant when a party’s trader is forced to land in the jungles of Io, and removing the crates of food supplies from the top hatch becomes highly problematic . . .)

### Weapons

While a ship’s weapons are placed all over the ship, fire control is centralized, with larger vessels devoting a deck to it. On small ships, the command deck handles the guns. Many ships with large crews have dedicated gunners; smaller ships make do, grudgingly, with infomat-guided weapons fired from a central panel. All ships allow a human gunner to step into the gunport and take control if needed. Machines can never replace a man!

### Maintenance

This is not a deck, per se, but all ships have access passageways and crawlspaces allowing engineers to reach any part of the ship. Cramped, narrow, filled with exposed wires, dripping chemicals, and radiation leaks, the maintenance corridors are not good places for claustrophobes. It is often required, especially during combat, for crew to make the dangerous journey along these passageways. Characters who are Fat suffer a -4 penalty to all Dex-based skills while in the tiny tubes; characters who are Very Fat cannot enter them at all. (These penalties assume a normal human body frame as the base.)

*Electron drive to maximum!  
Atomic guns to full charge!  
Nega-barrier up! All hands,  
prepare for battle!*

## Boarding Combat

“Commander MacAdam . . . I have a question.”

MacAdam turned and looked back at Cadet Waverly. He gestured, and the other cadets stopped their mock duels to listen.

Waverly paused, then continued. “I was . . . well, Sir, meaning no disrespect, but I think all this knife training is a waste of time.”

“You do?”

“Yes, Sir. I know the whole line . . . how atomic guns can’t be used on spaceships, because of the danger . . . but I spent all night running simulations on the infomat, figuring the tensile strength of the metal and the energy output of the guns, and you just can’t shoot through a ship’s hull with a sidearm! It’s not possible! We’re wasting our time learning to fight with knives!”

“And did you also factor in the tensile strength of the astronav console?”

“Um . . . no . . . I . . .”

“How about the conduits that run from the electron drive to the Tesla coils and all other ship systems? Did you work out what happens when one of them is hit with the force of an atomic gun?”

“I didn’t . . .”

“How about the refraction index of a type-3 hull, versus the default energy signature of an atomic gun? Did you work that out?”

“I . . . uh . . .”

“Well, if I’m going to change the training regimen that the Patrol has used for 30 years because you happened to notice something no other person in the Patrol ever has, I’m going to need some more facts! So get back to that infomat and report to me on the effects of a standard issue atomic gun on



each and every primary component of a *Murphy*-class patrol frigate! You will do this during all otherwise unassigned time until you finish or until I decide your research is complete enough. Now, go! The rest of you . . . resume combat stances! On my mark!”

### *Atomic Guns on Spaceships*

Firing an atomic gun in the close, equipment-packed quarters of a spaceship is just a bad idea . . . even if the energy isn’t powerful enough to breach the outer hull. If there’s no intention of recovering the ship, there’s less risk, but even so, most spacers go hand to hand when battling on a vessel. To simulate this, consider the following table.

On any miss, roll 1d on the table below. Add the amount of the miss to the roll.

- 1-2 – Minor piece of equipment hit. Sparks fly. No one is hurt.
- 3-4 – Lighting system ruptured. This section of the ship is now dark.
- 5 – Life-support control box struck. This section of the ship loses temperature control.
- 6 – Air system struck. This section of the ship does not receive fresh air.
- 7 – Refraction! The beam bounces, striking a random target for half damage.
- 8 – A pipe or tube carrying dangerous material has been struck and explodes, doing 3d damage to all within 2 yards of the target of the shot.
- 9 – Airlock controls hit. An airlock (possibly not noticed until this point) begins to cycle open incorrectly. In 10 seconds, this section of the ship will be exposed to space.
- 10 – A vital piece of equipment, such as the astronav, has taken heavy damage and must be repaired before the ship is usable.
- 11+ – Overload! The beam has struck a power coupling that was fully charged with energy from the Tesla coils. The resulting explosion does 5d damage to everyone within 10 yards and causes a hull breach.

## SPEED AND TRAVEL

The speeds at which crafts of 2056 travel would astound those who once marveled at jet planes, but the System is still an immense place. Safe cruising speed for the latest craft is 600,000 mph, or 0.1c. This is enough to make a journey to Mars (when it is at its average distance from Earth) in one week. Trips to the outer system take considerably longer.

The speed limit, as it were, has several effects.

Firstly, if a ship is not close by, rescue or aid is difficult. Patrolmen, Belters, merchants, and pirates all realize that if anything goes wrong, they’ll have to fix it themselves. Everyone who spends time in space is expected to know the basics of spaceship maintenance and piloting, enough to stay alive after a minor emergency and aim the ship in the right direction if there’s any thrust at all.

Secondly, because the Patrol is responsible for the entire System, from Mercury to the Belt (as well as keeping a close eye on the Overlord), it has a lot of ships scattered through many regions of space. This improves the chances of a craft responding to a distress signal before it is too late. Such “dark patrols” (so named because weeks can pass without seeing anything other than the starry void) can be nerve-wrackingly dull, and every effort is made to give crews planetside or near-planetary duties after enduring one for more than a few months.

Acceleration and deceleration are rapid; a ship can reach full cruising speed in an hour and brake in less than five minutes! The reactionless thrust of the electron drive allows for hairpin turns and quick stops.

## Travel Times Table

From	To	Time	Notes
Earth	Luna	2 hours	[1]
Earth	Mars	2-18 days	[2]
Earth	Belt	12 days	[3]
Earth	Jupiter	25-50 days	[2]
Earth	Venus	2-12 days	[2]
Earth	Mercury	6-16 days	[2]

### Notes:

[1] The bulk of this time is spent on reaching orbit and basic travel procedures; the actual electron-drive flight takes mere minutes. Note this does not include time waiting for boarding, disembarking, and so on; travelers should allot four to five hours for commercial flights from Earth to Luna.

[2] Minimum and maximum times. For game purposes, the average can be used.

[3] Minimum time from Earth to the nearest notional "edge" of the Belt. Reaching a specific asteroid can take many times longer, depending on where it is relative to Earth's orbit. Barring a plot-dependent reason to set a distance, roll 3d-3 and add that to the travel time listed in the table to reach a given target.

## Electron Drives to Maximum Burn!

Although ships have a *safe* cruising speed of roughly 0.1c, they can be made to go faster. Any competent engineer can coax 10% more speed out of the engines without any undue risk, with a Mechanic/Electron Drives-2 roll, made once per



day of "running warm." A failure results in a drop of speed to 75% of normal and requires a Mechanic/Electron Drives roll to bring it back up to full speed (this takes a day of typical work). A critical failure means a drop to 10% of speed and requires two repair rolls.

Beyond "running warm," there's "running hot." Running hot is dangerous – it not only poses a risk to the engines, but also to the crew. It violates, of course, Solar Patrol regulations, but Boards of Review tend to look the other way if the action was justified and lives were on the line.

"Running hot," otherwise known as "maximum burn," turns the engines up far beyond their rated stress and safety levels. Hard radiation tears through the damper shields, and components designed to last for years degrade in hours. The ship rattles and shakes and seems to want to tear itself apart, as the engineer desperately works to keep everything together just long enough.

Running hot increases ship speed dramatically. A Mechanic/Electron Drives roll at -4 begins the process. If this roll fails normally, it can be tried again; if it critically fails, the engines have been badly damaged and are reduced to 10% of their normal speed, with repairs required as for running warm. If the roll goes well, for every 2 points by which the roll succeeded, the speed is *doubled*, so a roll that succeeded by 8 points would result in a ship blazing along at *16 times* safe rated capacity – and "blazing" is an all too appropriate term! (The ship cannot exceed 32 times normal speed, no matter how good the roll.)

Firstly, to maintain such speeds, a Mechanic/Electron Drives roll at -1 must be made every four hours to keep the engines going. If this roll fails, the engines shut down completely, and it takes at least a day to repair them back to 10% capacity, which is as fast as they will ever go until a fully equipped base or port can be reached. On a critical failure, the engines overload, destroying the ship – the crew has 1d minutes to make it to the lifeboats.

Secondly, the drive leaks hard radiation throughout the ship. The engineering deck gets the worst of it – anyone on the deck (and this *must* include the engineer maintaining the drive!) suffers 10 rads per day. Those on other decks pick up five rads per day. This occurs even if the drive is running hot less than a full day. The radiation from an overheating electron drive is insidious, as this is the same technology that (when properly controlled) powers the atomic gun; all PF is halved. (The effects of the ships interior structure is figured into the above amount. On particularly large ships (cruiser size and bigger), a merciful GM might concede that the command deck or parts of the crew deck are far enough from the engines and grant PF 2 (PF 4, then halved).

Further, the stresses on the ship itself cannot be overstated. For each four hours of travel, the ship suffers 1d points of damage, ignoring DR. If the ship is reduced to 50% of its hit points by this damage, hull leaks begin to appear.

When the destination is reached, the engines must be cooled down safely. Once again, a Mechanic/Electron Drives roll is made at -2. A success means the engines have not only been safely cooled down, but they can still function at 25% capacity. A normal failure indicates that the engines are burned out and useless masses of molten metal and plastic. A critical failure means the engines explode, destroying the ship entirely, with 1d minutes of warning to make it to the lifeboats.



## Spacecraft Table

See pp. B462-463 for an explanation of the statistics.

### PILOTING/TL (HIGH-PERFORMANCE SPACECRAFT)

TL	Vehicle	ST/HP	Hnd/SR	HT	Move (G)	LWt.	Load	SM	Occ.	DR	Cost	Locations
6+3	Patrol Ship	250	+4/3	13	0.1c/(2G)	10,000	200	+8	10+2ASV	100	\$90M	3tWi2Rr
6+3	Lifeboat	100	+1/4	13	0.05c(1G)	100	5	+3	1+10ASV	50	\$5M	-
6+3	Patrol Cruiser	400	+2/2	14	0.1c/(2G)	30,000	500	+10	50+50ASV	125	\$200M	5tWi2Rr
6+3	Corsair	225	+5/4	12	0.1c(2G)	8,000	300	+8	8+20ASV	95	\$80M	2tWiRr
6+3	Sky-Scourer	200	+5/5	12	0.1c(2G)	8,000	100	+7	10ASV	90	\$80M	WiRr
6+3	Pacifier	150	+5/4	12	0.1c(2G)	7,500	75	+6	6+5ASV	75	\$60M	4t2Rr
6+3	Conqueror	500	+1/3	13	0.15c(2G)	40,000	750	+11	100+250ASV	150	\$400M	11tWi2Rr
6+3	War Sphere	125	+6/6	14	0.1c(2G)	150	8	+4	4ASV	100	\$50M	-

## TYPICAL CRAFT

### Audie Murphy-Class Patrol Ship

The *Murphy* class is the backbone of the Solar Patrol, which has hundreds of these ships in service. Each ship is named after a soldier who was revered for his bravery and courage in battle, usually an enlisted man or a low-ranking officer. The *Murphy*-class ships have a crew of three to 10, depending on mission, with simple scout or border missions having the fewest and missions into known hostile space having the most. Solar Patrolmen are expected to be diverse enough in their skills that a small number can effectively run a ship under non-combat conditions. (They are also expected to make a good showing of themselves if non-combat conditions cease being so . . .)

The *Murphy* ships are assigned to all parts of the System, from mapping asteroids in the Trojans to rescuing stranded hunters on Venus to helping transfer freed Martians from the clutches of their psionic masters. They are small, agile, multi-purpose ships that can be quickly fitted with specialized equipment to suit their current mission profile. Many have been in service since the 2020s, shortly after the Red Hive assault, and have been lovingly . . . maintained . . . by one engineer after another, each adding his own special touches that would drive the original designers insane if they knew about them.

The typical model mounts two forward atomic guns and a spinal turret gun, as well as a powerful nega-barrier generator. It can handle itself well in combat against most pirate vessels or raiders, but it needs support if it participates in warfare against larger ships.

The atomic guns are rated as 10d×5(4) burn, and the nega-barrier provides DR 550.

### Lifeboat

The standard-issue lifeboat is found on every ship, save for the most decrepit or ancient. A lifeboat is not designed to reach a world, but to keep people alive until rescue can come, although it can land on planets if one happens to be near. This doesn't come cheap, but given the long waits for rescue in deep space, it can be worth it.

A typical lifeboat has five cramped, low bunks; a small command center near the prow; and the best air, food, and water recycling systems 21st-century technology can provide, which can sustain existence for 100 man-days (one man for 100 days,

two for 50 days, and so on). The tiny craft also includes an emergency radio beacon with a million-mile range, a small electron drive to propel the craft, and a simple infomat to assist with emergency mathematical calculations. There are few other utilities, as every erg of available power is used to keep the life-support gear functioning as long as possible.

### Patton-Class Patrol Cruiser

The *Patton* class is typical of the Patrol's heavy warships. It maintains only a small fleet of these, but it keeps them in top condition and staffed with the best crews, as they will be rushed to the front lines in any real war. Each is a sleek, slightly flattened cylinder, with the main body forming an aerodynamic surface enhanced by a broad delta wing and a large tailfin, which also mounts a turret. The *Patton* class is capable of landing on planetary surfaces, the largest vessel that can do so, allowing it to be retrofitted as a troop carrier if need be.

The ship contains few luxuries. It is a warship from bow to stern and does not exist to ferry around VIPs or provide a plaything for some admiral. Despite the current state of peace, the ships are always kept in a ready condition and can launch into a fight in less than 15 minutes.

In battle, the ship is a terrifying combatant. Each wing mounts an atomic-gun turret, with the guns rated at 15d×5(4) burn damage. The ship also has a hyper-focused forward-firing gun in a fixed mount, rated at 15d×5(6) burn, and a series of smaller turrets along the spine, intended to take out minor targets, rated at 10d×5(4) burn. The ship's nega-barrier provides DR 800.

### Corsair

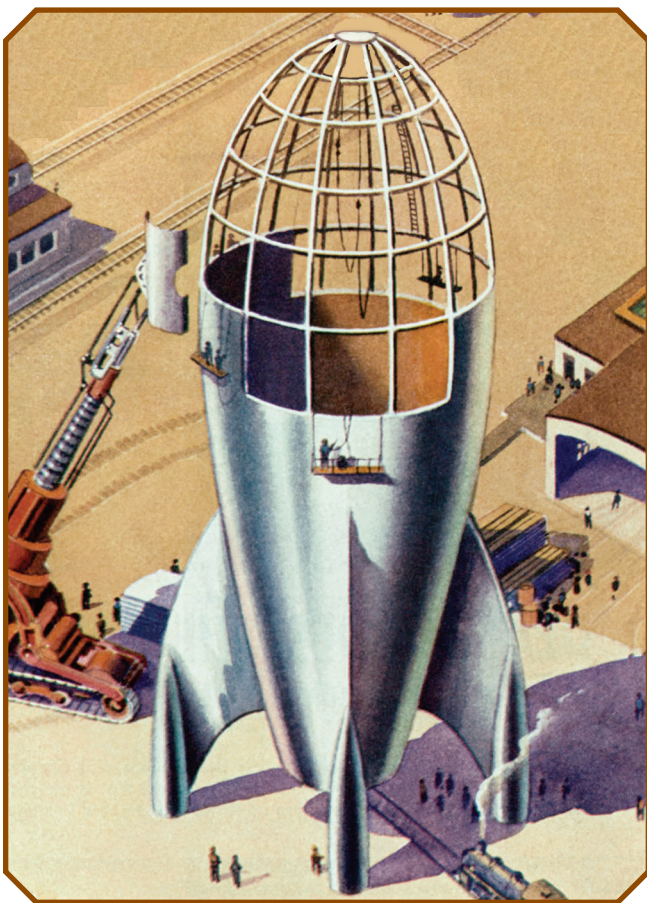
With hundreds of different corsair designs, it can be argued that no two are alike. Most begin life as discarded civilian transport vessels or decommissioned Patrol ships that somehow got "lost" on their way to the scrapyards. Hauled into asteroid dry-docks, these craft are stripped down and rebuilt by some of the best – and least ethical – engineers in the System. The new ships emerge as swift, deadly raiding craft, piloted by pirates and held together by bailing wire, duct tape, and a thousand heathen prayers to the Old Man of the Void.

A typical corsair, to the extent such a beast exists, is intended to frighten unarmed merchantmen, haul cargo, and evade pursuit. It is not built to stand and fight the Patrol, unless it happens to catch a Patrol ship that has been crippled or otherwise rendered suboptimal.

It is not designed for long operating times: Typically, a pirate ship leaves its hidden base, finds a merchant convoy or lone courier ship, attacks it, and returns with the booty and stores it, for later sale on the black market. Such a raiding run normally takes two to three weeks, at most, and this is a good thing, as the refitted ships are desperately cramped, with poor life support and few luxuries. (Because of the need to run boarding operations, there's far more crew onboard a corsair than the hull was ever designed to hold.)

Corsairs are often armed with discarded laser turrets, but the richer and more successful pirates are now starting to mount older atomic guns – the ones well-known for slowly killing their crews (though the captains usually disguise this fact . . .).

A typical corsair has two dual-barrel lasers in a forward mount, doing 8d×5(2) burn.



### *Jovian Sky-Scourer*

This is the backbone of the Overlord's local defense fleet. The sky-scourer is a small ship, with a crew of 10 stuffed into cramped quarters during its patrols of the moons and the space surrounding Jupiter. It is a very long, very thin craft, a finned needle of doom.

Its missions range from quick patrols and interceptions to long-range sweeps of surrounding space. It is designed exclusively for space operations, however, and is useless for troop transport or leveling dissident towns. As with most ships of the Overlord, it is considered expendable, focusing more on

offense than defense – the Overlord feels this encourages crews to kill the enemy before they can be killed themselves.

Sky-scourers mount a single powerful atomic gun in their nose. This gun does 10d×5 (4) burn.

### *Jovian Pacifier*

Called “the Shadow of Terror” in the various tongues of Jupiter, this craft focuses on destroying ground targets from the air. It is not equipped for long-range flight and normally has missions lasting less than two weeks. Its weapon systems primarily fire downward; in space combat, gunners suffer a -4 to aim weapons.

The Pacifier is a flat, disc-like craft, with guidance fins and weapon emplacements set so as to make the craft's shadow resemble a clawed monster, descending from the sky to devour the unworthy.

It has four atomic guns, relatively weak for space combat but deadly to villages or armies on the ground. Each does 7d×5(4) damage and can be aimed independently.

### *Jovian Conqueror*

The ship that defined the Solar War to many was the Conqueror, the primary long-distance attack craft of the Overlord. Vast and implacable, the Conqueror represented all the technological might of the Overlord combined with the stolen science of Earth.

A crew of 100 mans each ship, from its permanently over-charged electron drives (so that no drive crew survived more than six months in the glowing inferno that was the engineering deck) to its multitude of atomic-gun turrets. In addition, 250 elite soldiers were stationed on board, ready to be dropped onto any ground target that survived the blistering assault or to be sent to swarm over a crippled enemy vessel to seize it for the glory of the Overlord. Its only weakness was its subpar nega-screens, another example of the Overlord's somewhat unconventional approach to boosting fighting spirit.

Since the war, the entire Conqueror line has allegedly been destroyed. More than few, slightly modified, have been seen in the hands of the most powerful pirate bands (the Overlord claims these were captured from him during the war). Moreover, rumors constantly crop up about new models being sighted far beyond Jupiter's orbit. The Overlord dismisses such claims as outright lies or as sightings of pirate vessels.

The Conqueror mounted the following weapons: a forward-firing nose gun, with 12d×5(4) burn; four wing-mounted turrets, with 10d×5(4) burn; three spinal turrets, with 10d×5(4) burn; and six light turrets in a “belt” around the center of the ship, with 6d×5(4) burn.

### *Martian War Sphere*

The war sphere, rarely seen in recent decades, is the sole known remaining ship of the Mind Masters. (It is speculated they once had a massive space fleet.) It holds a small number of the beings, and it can carry them into Martian orbit – possibly further, but this has never been observed. It has heavy defenses but no offensive weapons – the inhabitants rely on controlling the crews of other craft.

The exact nature of the field surrounding the ship is unknown, but it acts a nega-barrier for game purposes. It has a DR of 600.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# CHARACTERS

## ARCHETYPES

### SOLAR PATROL

The guardians of law and justice in the Solar System, the Patrol encompasses many functions, from civil engineering surveys to front-line naval combat. While the system is not currently at war, there is constant danger from the Martian Mind Masters, the Emperor of Jupiter, Belt pirates, and the rumored Red Hive renegades lurking somewhere beyond the Tesla Line.

To be a member of the Solar Patrol is to be one of the best – and to know it. This does not mean Patrolmen are inherently arrogant, obnoxious, or condescending (though many find it hard to hide their pride in their position). It does mean they are coolly confident in their abilities – and they expect other people to be, too. They are used to being obeyed in a crisis, because they're usually right.

The Solar Patrol has a wide variety of specializations. There are pilots, gunners, medics, engineers, and scientists. Occasionally, a civilian specialist in a field not normally needed by the Patrol – such as an anthropologist or a historian – is assigned to work with a crew. This can cause some friction, as there is a slight distrust of “outsiders” and a worry that, in a crisis, the adjutant will not do his part or will panic and place others' lives at risk.

Campaigns involving members of the Solar Patrol are likely to be high-adventure, cinematic affairs. Most PC groups crew an *Audie Murphy*-class frigate (see p. 33), with NPCs filling in whatever gaps there may be. With the system on the edge of war in 2056, the Patrol is needed in plenty of places. One week, they may track down the traders who are shipping stolen atomic guns to the Salishal on Venus. The next, they may search deep in the lunar caverns for a politician's kidnapped son. After that, it's off to the Belt to take on a pirate gang that has been making life difficult for miners. Even simple exploratory and mapping missions often turn into high adventure, as it seems every empty bit of space contains someone or something that doesn't want to be found.

### SPACE MARINES

The Space Marines are few in number, but these implacable soldiers are always first in to a known hostile situation. Whether freeing slaves from the gladiator pits of the Red Planet, or raiding the narrow corridors of a pirate-infested asteroid, where there's danger, the Marines are there.

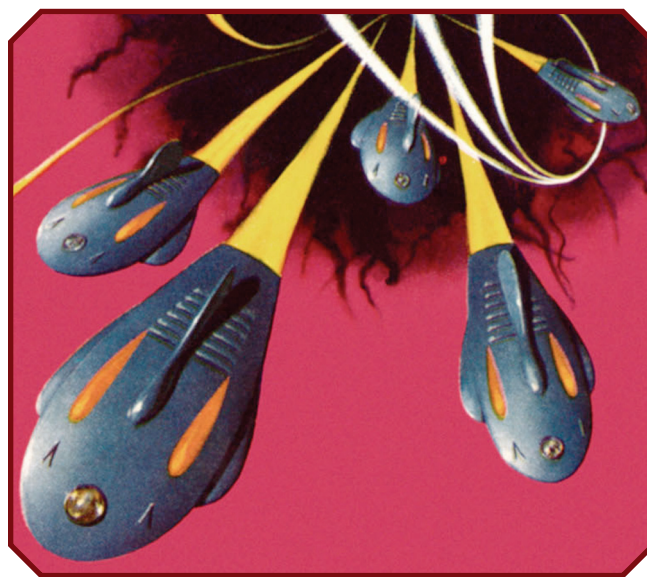
Space Marines are only sent into situations known or likely to be very high risk. They don't do survey missions or go looking for missing merchants. They are combat specialists, and

combat is what they do. Most larger Patrol ships have a small Marine contingent on board, and small ships expecting trouble often include a Marine officer to handle security.

The Space Marines, despite their name, are primarily man-to-man combatants. A few ships are assigned to the Marine Corps as training or transport vessels, but Marines are not the primary crews of most warships. Their job begins when the pirates board, or when the great hatches cycle open and they race out into the frozen forests of Callisto, or when the enraged Krik warriors have smashed down the last barricade and are flooding into the unprotected human city.

An all-Marine campaign is solidly goal oriented: Secure this point. Take down this pirate lord. Retrieve the stolen prototype weapon from the asteroid fortress. Marines live hard, fight hard, and die quickly. Such a campaign will most likely have a high PC turnover rate.

Due to the nature of their work, Space Marines tend to have slightly less rigorous psych screenings than the rest of the Patrol. They are larger, louder, cruder, and more prone to flaws like *Bad Temper* or *Bloodlust*. This does not mean the Space Marines employ raving psychotics. There's a difference between being on the edge and being off the deep end. Space Marines who cannot maintain the high standards of the Patrol are booted out – and such disgraced Marines with a grudge against the Earth League often find employment as mercenaries or run their own gang of freebooters.



## TRADERS

Humanity's spread throughout the Solar System has generated a need for trade on an epic scale, and those willing to risk it all for that one big score always can be found. Organics from Venus, raw materials from Luna and the Belt, sophisticated consumer goods from Earth itself . . . all of these things move in the graceful dance of commerce. A trader must contend with greedy rivals, murderous pirates, and, worst of all, the nigh-incorruptible officers of the Solar Patrol, who make sure all taxes are paid and all laws (even the "silly, pointless, and annoying" ones) are obeyed.

## PIRATES

Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of Venusian Rum! There's so much wealth flowing around the system that no one will miss a little bit of it! The diamonds from Luna, big as a man's fist . . . the rare perfumes of Venus . . . military-grade atomic guns being shipped to the outpost stations . . . all this and more waits for the man (or woman) with the guts and the guns needed to take it! Besides, the Jovian emperor pays good bounties on Patrol ships that mysteriously disappear.

# DESIGNING CHARACTERS

## ADVANTAGES

In the highly cinematic setting of *Tales of the Solar Patrol*, characters are expected to stand out from the crowd. Many advantages are allowed; some are almost required for certain archetypes. All supernatural and exotic advantages are not permitted, with the exception of those granted by racial templates. The baseline setting has no telepaths or other psychics (other than the Mind Masters of Mars), and no commonplace genetic engineering or cyberware exists. Mad scientists may create mutant monstrosities or fuse metal onto flesh, but these are not generally options for player characters.

### *Allies*

Very appropriate for the genre. Loyal sidekicks, scientist mentors, and even highly skilled pets are all fitting companions for PCs. Ally groups are less common, but the Marine captain posted as chief of security to a Solar Patrol destroyer has his squad with him as often as not.

### *Animal Empathy*

A lot of wilderness can be found in *Tales of the Solar Patrol* – Venus and most of the Jovian moons, for example, contain plenty of wild animals. If the campaign is likely to take place in these environs, this advantage may come in handy.

### *Blessed*

While many characters may have a religious faith, no divine presence exists that will affect the mechanics of game play in this setting.

*In the harsh environment of the Belt and Luna, a stranded traveler can expect to find a hot meal and a change of oxygen when he needs it.*

### *Claim to Hospitality*

Current and former members of the Solar Patrol feel a great camaraderie to each other. Barring a specific reason for personal animosity, a Patrolman can expect some limited aid and shelter from another. Likewise, in the harsh environment of the Belt and Luna, a traveler stranded far from home can expect to find a hot meal and a change of oxygen when he needs it. Both of these should be considered 5-point advantages.

### *Claws*

Other than the Hajuur of Mars, this advantage is non-existent among player characters, though it is possible some mad villain's henchmen might have been fitted with artificial or even bioengineered natural weapons.

### *Clerical Investment*

In the context of the genre, religion is respected but vague and ecumenical. Chaplains can be found in the Solar Patrol and other Earth League forces and organizations. Most characters strive to be on their best behavior around members of the clergy, even if they are not especially devout otherwise.

### *Common Sense*

A good advantage for leaders, who are often known for being a bit more practical and sensible than their overeager colleagues.

### *Cybernetics*

Other than the most basic limb and eye replacements (designed to look as organic as possible), cybernetics are not a major part of the genre. Occasionally, a victim of a mad scientist's experimentation may implant clanking, obvious, oversized machine parts into his body and go insane at the realization that he is now a monster who can never love or be loved. Other than that, there's really no place for this advantage.

### *Damage Resistance*

The big, hulking brawler types (and battle-hardened Space Marines) may have a level or two of this as an innate ability, up to DR 2.

## Daredevil

Incredibly prevalent in the genre.

## Extra Life

This is surprisingly common for arch-villains. “No one could have survived that!” is, in the genre, a lie along the lines of “The check’s in the mail.” Often no mechanical explanation can be found for a villain’s return to life (at least a plausible and internally consistent one), and the villains revel in this gleefully. (“You would like to know how I survived that explosion, wouldn’t you, Captain Daring? Well, I think I shall keep that my secret for now! Bwahahah!”)

Especially lucky heroes might have this ability as “plot immunity.” By genre convention, they must show up just as their comrades are mourning their death and sobbing, “I wish it had been me, instead!” Taking a few minutes before appearing in order to prepare a witty quip (“Hey, so do I!”) is acceptable.

## Gadgeteer

Regular members of the Solar Patrol sometimes have this, especially engineers. This is a genre where education and knowledge are as respected as physical might, set in a time when it was assumed that astronauts and other space explorers would need to maintain their own ships. Thus, any character might plausibly have the 25-point version. The 50-point version is best reserved for kid geniuses and absentminded but brilliant older scientists.

## Illuminated

One of the features of the genre is its straightforward honesty. Almost everything is exactly what it appears to be. In the default setting of *Tales of the Solar Patrol*, the only real “conspiracy” is the Red Hive infiltration of the Earth League. Unless the GM wishes to add more twists, turns, plots, and factions (thus changing the tone of the game greatly), this advantage really has no place.

## Legal Enforcement Powers

All members of the Solar Patrol over the rank of lieutenant should buy the 5-point level of this.

## Metabolism Control

This is a rare ability in genre, but every so often, a character with an “exotic” or “foreign” background (or one who has close friends or contacts in such areas) might have learned “ancient secrets” permitting this advantage.

## Power Investiture

Within the context of the genre, no supernatural powers of either good or evil exist. Therefore, this advantage is nonexistent.

## Rapier Wit

Heroes and villains frequently have this. If a character can match the Overlord of Jupiter in a duel of both swords and words, he might well not toss the hero into the acid pit . . .

## Serendipity

Stunningly common in genre. If the heroes are lost in the swamps of Venus, and they find a hunting camp, the leader of the expedition *always* is one of the characters’ relatives.

## Social Regard

Members of the Solar Patrol normally have this at 1 point (see the template). Some may choose to buy it up; this reflects their ability to parley their position in social situations. Others with high levels of Social Regard include war heroes, explorers, and Earth League politicians.

## Special Rapport

Twins in the genre typically have this, but it is rare otherwise.

## DISADVANTAGES

**GURPS** characters are defined as much by their weaknesses as by their strengths. This section discusses particular disadvantages that may be especially appropriate or inappropriate for a *Tales of the Solar Patrol* campaign. As a general note, none of the supernatural or exotic disadvantages are appropriate for human characters. Non-humans with such disadvantages are discussed under *Templates*.

## Addiction/Alcoholism

This is appropriate for many characters. Space pirates love their Venusian Rum, and many characters smoke tobacco. Harder and more exotic drugs are rare but do exist. Common drugs in the *Tales of the Solar Patrol* setting include:

- **Alcohol:** -15 points.
- **Tobacco:** -5 points if the campaign is set primarily in the Belt or Jupiter; -1 point otherwise.
- **Caffeine:** Many engineers and mechanics are caffeine addicts. This is a -1-point addiction.
- **Rainbow Petals:** Made from a psychoactive plant found on Venus, this drug is Hallucinogenic (-10), Expensive (-10), Highly Addictive (psychologically), and Illegal. It places the user in a state of deluded euphoria, where everything seems enhanced and perfected. Surfaces glitter and gleam, everyone is beautiful or handsome (treat all characters as being one appearance level better with regard to the character on the drug), and so on. Crashing back to reality can be devastating.
- **Accelerene:** A legal, but controlled, medical drug, accelerene greatly enhances reflexes and is sometimes issued to combat pilots. While using the drug, the character has an effective +2 DX for two hours. Afterwards, the character has severe shakes, resulting in a -1 DX for four hours. Accelerene addicts are commonly found in the Belt; most are washouts from the Earth Navy. Accelerene is Expensive (-10) and illegal.

The culture of the System accepts alcohol and tobacco addicts with only minor social disapproval; addicts to harder drugs are considered pitiable and are treated with contempt. Friends who see one of their own starting down such a path intervene directly if they feel it is necessary.

## Amnesia

PCs don't typically have this, but NPCs who don't remember that they used to be a high admiral in the Solar Patrol until they were kidnapped, mind-wiped, and left for dead in the undercity of Ceres are surprisingly common.

## Bad Temper

Appropriate for pirates, most soldiers, and even some members of the Solar Patrol.

## Berserk

This is not normally acceptable for Patrol members.

## Bloodlust

Rarely seen in Patrol members, though it can manifest during times of extensive battle. Common in the genre is Focused Bloodlust (-5 points) where the character's hatred is limited to a single group of people ("The Red Hive butchered my family on Luna during the 2020 uprising! I've sworn never to let one of them escape my sight alive!").

## Bully

In most cases, heroic PCs with this disadvantage manifest it via intellectual, rather than physical, bullying.

## Clueless

This is most commonly found among absentminded professors or natives from Mars or Venus.

## Code of Honor

This is extremely prevalent in genre, even for villains! The following are popular codes of honor.

*Code of Honor (Solar Patrolman's):* The mission is everything. Never abandon a comrade unless the mission demands it. Never take an innocent life if there is any alternative that allows completion of the mission, including sacrificing your own. Accept an honorable surrender. Women and children first! Treat prisoners fairly. Obey the law. Tell the truth. Fight bravely. Respect and honor the traditions of the Patrol. -15 points.

*Code of Honor (Villain's):* Honor your word if it is freely given – so long as you are not betrayed! Treat a skilled opponent with respect. Grant a swift and merciful death to a fallen foe. Let no insult go unavenged. Never allow a traitor to live! -5 points.

*Code of Honor (Trader's):* Fulfill the letter of the contract. Do not use force against a competitor – just out-bargain them! No mercy for pirates or raiders. Never tell an outright lie about your goods, but selective omissions are acceptable. -5 points.

The Soldier's, Pirate's, and Professional's codes from *GURPS Basic Set: Characters* (p. B127) are all appropriate in the genre.

## Compulsive Behavior

Most forms of this disadvantage work best for asteroid miners, pirates, and merchants, as opposed to the upstanding

members of the Solar Patrol. Those who do have such traits tend to have them only at the Quirk (-1) level, such as "constantly tinkering with the engines."

## Curious

Many individuals in the genre have this, and it's how they get into trouble! It is especially appropriate for younger characters, such as cadets.

## Dependents

Oddly rare in genre, with the exception of a lover who is in near-constant need of rescuing. It is also possible to have a scrappy kid who is constantly underfoot or sneaking onto spaceships bound for the most deadly reaches of the System. Parents or other relatives, or children of one's own, are rare in the source material.

## Duty

Astoundingly common – it is part of being a member of the Solar Patrol, after all! Even those not in the Patrol can be motivated by Duty – duty to the Earth League, duty to one's Venusian Clan, even duty to the Overlord of Jupiter. Heroes and villains alike often owe fealty or obligation to some higher power. Only rogues, scoundrels, and rugged individualists call no man master.

## Fanaticism

Both heroic and villainous characters could have this, but it is not required. The Patrol tries to filter out those whose loyalty and sense of duty could grow to the point where they put an idealized myth of the organization ahead of the spirit of the Patrol's ideals and values, but this doesn't always work. Many of the elite followers of the Overlord are fanatical in their devotion, as well those of as the Red Hive.

## Gluttony

Pirates, merchants, and the comically tubby ship's engineer are all likely to have this disadvantage.

## Ham-Fisted

In addition to the standard use, there is a special variant of this called "Engineer's Hands." Traditionally, engineers and other mechanical types are large, hulking, and often clumsy folks, seemingly lummoxes . . . until they go to work on the delicate machinery of the electron drive. Purchased with a -40% limitation, "Only for non-technical work," the disadvantage is worth 3 points for -3 to all other fine manipulation tasks and 6 points for a -6. The character suffers the penalty on all fine manipulation skills except those directly related to fixing, maintaining, or building machines.

## Impulsiveness

Painfully common in the genre, among characters of all types. This is an action-based setting, and standing around yammering won't stop the Overlord's new fleet of war cruisers, which are even now riding the ether toward an oblivious and defenseless Earth! Time to do something!

## Increased Life Support

None of the official alien races have this advantage, and it is recommended for genre fidelity than no GM-created races do either. Everyone breathes the same air, likes the same gravity, and can digest the same foods, though tastes vary greatly. Never mind the scientific implausibility of this; it's just the way things are.

## Intolerance

While the ideals of the Earth League are opposed to this, it remains a part of humanity nonetheless. Public displays of intolerance are considered rude and unseemly, but it is easy enough to hide. It is especially common to be intolerant of the "bugs" and "lizards" of Venus, as they are clearly non-human primitives.

## Lecherousness

A girl (or guy) on every world, and a dozen more in the Belt! Popular archetypes include the charming rogue with a bevy of lovers or the Patrolman who is all too easily swayed by a pretty face. While the genre rarely moves beyond relatively chaste kisses, a strong layer of sexual subtext still exists.

## Loner

Very common for Belters, who often consider anyone closer than 1,000 miles to be "too close."

## Megalomania

While the Jovian Overlord seems to be the canonical example of this disadvantage, there are infinitely many mad scientists and would-be petty tyrants out there in the system, each with his own "perfect" scheme to rule the universe.

## Sadism

This is completely unacceptable for "heroic" characters, and even most run-of-the-mill villains do not have it. The space pirates just want money, and they might even make victims "walk the airlock," but they won't torture anyone.

## Space Sickness

Since most modern ships have gravitic generators, this disadvantage is not severe, but there are times when the gravity can cut out (especially in combat), and those are the worst times to suffer this affliction. No one in the Earth League military, including the Solar Patrol, can be *known* to have this disadvantage, so anyone with it should have a Secret as well.

## NEW DISADVANTAGE

### Final Stand

10 points

You are more than just willing to die for the cause – you yearn for the chance, though you'll never admit it publicly (lest the psych boys find you and deny you your opportunity for glory!). Any time you have a chance to sacrifice yourself nobly in the pursuit of a mission – to save a comrade or to

*Some Patrolmen are more than just willing to die for the cause – they yearn for the chance!*

accomplish an order of the Patrol – you must make a self-control roll or choose to give your all for the greater good. This only applies in situations when your death would offer at least some advantage over other means of solving the problem (though it need not be the *only* means!) or would otherwise look "heroic," as opposed to "stupid." (No one wants to be remembered in the history books as an example of what not to do.) Furthermore, you must act so as to not take others with you. If you think piloting your ship directly into the maw of the Overlord's Neutronite Cannon is the best way to save the Fleet, you do so only after conking your co-pilot on the head and tossing him into a lifeboat.

## SKILLS

The world of *Tales of the Solar Patrol* is one where anyone may be called on to do any task at any time. It is a world where competence is one of the most highly regarded of virtues, a world where the idea that a comic bumbler would be admired for his "good heart" in spite of his lack of talent is anathema. If you can't do the job right, get out of the way and let someone who knows what he's doing handle it!

Most of the normal *GURPS* skills are appropriate in *Tales of the Solar Patrol* and need little modification. All magical skills are forbidden. All skills with /TL are assumed to be learned at Tech Level 6+3, the default level for the setting. Only if a character has some unusual background (usually a native of Mars, Venus, or one of Jupiter's moons) can he normally know skills at a different default.

### Anthropology

Some possible specializations include: Earth Humans, Belters, Vithaani, Hajuur, Krik, Salishal, and each of the Jovian races. (Humans on Luna and Venus have not really developed their own cultural quirks in the same way Belters have.)

### Archaeology

Of little use on Earth, archaeology is often needed when exploring Mars or Jupiter, as both worlds are rich in ancient ruins and lost cities.

### Armoury

Atomic guns are considered small arms or heavy weapons; nega-barriers are considered force shields. Use of this skill by humans with Mind Master tech imposes a -4 modifier; with the technology of the Overlord, a -1, as most modern Earth tech uses knowledge learned during the Solar War.

### Artillery

All atomic guns are direct-fire weapons, so this skill is rarely used in modern warfare.

## Artist

This skill is common at the IQ-2 level. The easy pace of life for Earth dwellers in 2056 contributes to the pursuit of hobbies, so many people have a small bit of skill in this area.

## Astronomy

This skill is vitally useful for when the astromat is on the fritz and the ship's drifting in space. Relying on this skill also provides an opportunity to insert educational content into the midst of the ray guns and rockets.

## Beam Weapons

This skill is used for atomic guns and old-fashioned lasers, both of which are commonplace in the setting.

## Bioengineering

While genetic engineering technology is possible in 2056, the Earth League has never developed it. Without computerized gene sequencing and the like, it would be very poor at it. Mad scientists, the Mind Masters of Mars, and those toiling for the Jovian Overlord might have this skill.

## Bow

Humans may pick up the Sport version of this skill; some who have spent time among the primitive folk of the System might well have it as a combat form.

## Brawling

This skill is commonplace among Belters and pirates. Solar Patrolmen and Space Marines are given formal combat training.

## Computer Hacking/TL

This is Infomat Hacking in *Tales of the Solar Patrol*; see *Infomats*, p. 27.



## Computer Operation/TL

This is Infomat Operation in *Tales of the Solar Patrol*; see *Infomats*, p. 27.

## Computer Programming/TL

Infomats are not programmable in the classic sense; each is purpose-built, though often with wide parameters and capable of solving a variety of problems. "Programming" an existing infomat is often a matter of adjusting internal relays and half "tricking" the machine into doing something other than its primary function. The GM decides whether a given infomat can

be made to perform a task it wasn't built to do (for example, turn a sensor-analysis infomat into an astronavigation unit). Penalties should range from -1 to -6. Note that an infomat terminal, such as those found in most public places, cannot be anything but a terminal; a character can only redirect its data source.

## Driving/TL

Hovercraft are the most common ground vehicles on Earth. On Venus, tracked vehicles or boats are used. On Luna, tube trains flow below the surface and wheeled or tracked vehicles bump along above.

## Electronics Operation

To manipulate and use a nega-barrier in combat, a crewman Electronics Operation/Force Shields. Matter transmitters, parachronic, psychotronic, and temporal technologies do not exist in the *Tales of the Solar Patrol* setting.

## Enthrallment

This semi-magical use of the storytelling skill does not exist in the genre.

## Environment Suit

It is assumed that *all* people who have grown up in the Earth League have this at DX-1; "suit drill" is part of every elementary school. Not knowing this skill is a Quirk worth -1 point.

## Esoteric Medicine

The "native healing arts" of Venusians or Martians fall under this skill. They are about as effective as First Aid on members of their own species. When used on humans, this skill suffers a -4 modifier, except when practiced by the Vithaani.

## Free Fall

While all Earth ships built since the First Solar War have artificial gravity, this skill is still vital for anyone who plans to frequently travel in space. Belters spend a lot of time in 0G, as they often use older ships or work outside their vessels. Furthermore, as a matter of style, it's the technically inaccurate but so much more romantic "zero gravity" in *Tales of the Solar Patrol*, not "microgravity" or "free fall."

## Gunner

This is the skill used for firing ship-mounted weapons. Atomic guns and missile launchers are both direct-fire systems.

## Guns/TL

Gunpowder arms went out of fashion more than 50 years ago as military weapons or personal sidearms, but they are still common as hunting weapons, as collectors' items, or in the hands of pirates or others who can't afford better. Many stockpiles of old guns find their way to the Venusians, in defiance of Earth League law.



## Lasso

It is amazing how many folks from the Texas Sector still practice this skill, and how often a Solar Patrol crew includes at least one such individual, who often feels compelled to yell out, “Yee-hah! Let’s get them space-farin’ varmints!” at far too many opportunities.



## Melee Weapon

Even in the age of atomic guns, survival frequently depends on a length of sharpened steel. Boarding actions are usually fought with sabers and short blades. The fogs of Venus can corrode the delicate mechanism of an atomic rifle, forcing an adventurer to battle a swamp stalker with a hunting knife. The Overlord of Jupiter has spared the lives of those who can last even five seconds with him in a sword fight. The Solar Patrol offers training in the basics of Knife and Shortsword (Boarding Sword), but characters may have had the opportunity to learn other weapons.

## Merchant

Obviously, this is the core skill for any trader-type character.

## Navigation

In *Tales of the Solar Patrol*, Navigation (Space) – the art of finding one’s way in the spatial void – is termed “astronavigation,” and the person who does it is the “astronaut.” The main tool that aids in this, an astronavigation infomat, is often referred to as the “astronav unit” or the “astromat.” Equipment modifiers apply as normal; it is considered the mark of an expert astronaut if he can plot a course for home without an astromat to aid him. Some have trained to learn to find their way by the stars alone.

## Unaided Navigation

Hard

*Default:* Navigation-10

*Prerequisites:* Navigation; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This technique represents finding one’s position in deep space merely by studying the stars, as well as plotting a course to a destination without any mechanical aid at all. An extraordinarily difficult skill to master; few ever have an unaided roll equal to their normal Navigation roll, but any experience in this can be life-saving in an emergency.

## Paleontology

Many of the creatures living on Venus strongly resemble Earth’s extinct dinosaurs. This skill can be used with a -1 modifier as Biology on that world.

## Physics/TL

The physics of the universe of *Tales of the Solar Patrol* are not entirely those of the real universe; world jumpers suffer a -4 penalty on advanced (post-Newtonian) uses of this skill until they are acquainted with How Things Work Here.

## Piloting/TL

This skill is vitally important in *Tales of the Solar Patrol*; while not every character needs it, it’s a bad idea to have only one character in the party who can fly the ship. Most Solar Patrol craft are considered Aerospace vehicles, as they can land on a planet’s surface. Those without such capacity are considered high-performance spacecraft. Flight packs are also common in the setting.

## Propaganda/TL

Government agents or spies most often possess this skill. Members of the Solar Patrol are straightforward and honest, and dismiss “spin” and “polish,” even when it’s in their own benefit.

## Religious Ritual

Every chaplain has this skill, and it’s considered good form to know how to give last rites to a comrade, even if faith traditions aren’t shared. Captains can perform weddings, often a happy ending to a harrowing series of adventures. No magical or mystical benefits accrue from this skill.

## Riding

Mounts on Earth are the province of the wealthy and are for sport or recreation, but on Venus, Mars, and Jupiter’s moons, riding beasts of all sorts are commonplace.

## Shiphandling

Craft in *Tales of the Solar Patrol* are considered spaceships for purposes of this skill. Any Solar Patrolman with a rank of lieutenant first class must have this skill at IQ-2 if he expects to be granted command, and most have it much higher. Of course, massive water-going vessels travel on the oceans of Europa and Io (TL3 and TL1, respectively), and players might find themselves aboard them for a time . . .

## Smuggling

Pirates, merchants, and some upright characters under the eye of unscrupulous authority all might benefit from this skill.

## Survival

A surprising amount of untamed wilderness exists in the 21st century. Even Earth has allowed large portions to revert back to a state of nature. It’s quite possible for those who can cheerily traverse the black gulf between worlds to find themselves lost and hungry on a “simple” nature hike gone awry. Anyone planning to spend time on Venus or the Jovian moons had better master this skill, or be good friends with someone who has.

## Weird Science

Very appropriate for the setting. There’s no telling when someone will come up with a breakthrough that will allow ships to pass the Tesla Line . . . or even travel between the stars themselves! Almost any invention is possible with a good roll and a bit of luck. Attempting to understand many of the Overlord’s devices is covered by this skill.

# TEMPLATES

## SOLAR PATROLMAN

147 points

Attention, Earth! Attention! This is Patrolship *Argus*. The Overlord has a massive fleet plowing the ether barely six hours behind us! We are burning engines at triple capacity to get this message to you. As a consequence, the interior of this ship will be lethally radioactive by the time you get this. Do not attempt to board. Do not attempt to board. Repeat message: Attention Earth . . .

Duty. Honor. Loyalty. These words are engraved on your soul (and possibly tattooed on your arm, a souvenir of that night in Venusport.) You dedicated yourself to becoming a member of the Solar Patrol, and after years of effort and struggle, you made it. Now you proudly wear the uniform, and you go where your captain tells you to go, to wherever the Earth League needs you. You do not wish for war, but, if it comes, you're good at it. You have few companions outside of the Patrol, but your shipmates are friend and family combined, and you will give your life for them, as they would for you. You may be cheerful or grim, sullen or friendly, but you are first and foremost a Patrolman, and that is all you ever want to be.

**Attributes:** ST 11 [10]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 11 [10].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 13 [4]; Will 13 [10]; Per 13 [10]; FP 12 [6]; Basic Speed 5.5 [0]; Basic Move 6 [5].

**Advantages:** Rank 1 [5]; Fearlessness 1 [5]; Fit [5]; and Legal Enforcement Powers [5]; ● 15 points chosen from among Status 1-3 [5/level], Rank 2-4 [5/level], Acute Senses 1-4 [2/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Damage Resistance 1 [5], Daredevil [15], High Pain Threshold [10], Indomitable [15], Rapid Healing [5], Single-Minded [5], or Social Regard 1-4 [5/level].

**Disadvantages\*:** Code of Honor (Patrolman's) [-15]; ● -20 points chosen from among Charitable [-15], Curious [-5†], Dependents‡ [up to -20], Guilt Complex [-5], Honesty [-10†], Impulsiveness [-10†], Overconfidence [-5†], Secret§ [-5 to -20], Selfless [-5†], or Truthfulness [-5‡].

**Primary Skills:** Beam Weapons (Pistol) (E) DX+3 [8]-14 and Piloting (High-Performance Spacecraft) (A) DX+2 [8]-13; ● 16 points chosen from among Gunner (E) DX+3 [8]-14; Armoury, Electronics Operation, Leadership, Mechanic, Navigation (Space), or Spacer, all (A) IQ+2 [8]-13; or Engineer (H) IQ+1 [8]-12.

**Secondary Skills:** 16 points chosen from among Boxing, Climbing, Driving, Free Fall, or Vacc Suit, all (A) DX+1 [4]-12; Electronics Operation, Machinist (A) IQ+1 [4]-12; Astronomy, Chemistry, Diplomacy, Geology, Interrogation, Law (Solar System Patrol), Mathematics, Tactics (H) IQ [4]-11; or Survival (any) (A) Per+1 [4]-12.

*This is the Patrolship Argus.  
The Overlord has a fleet behind us!*

**Background Skills:** 4 points chosen from among Boating or Stealth, both (A) DX [2]-11; Fast-Draw (E) DX+1 [2]-12; Area Knowledge (The Solar System) or Infomat Operation, both (E) IQ+1 [2]-12; Performance (A) IQ [2]-11; or Cryptography or Physician, both (H) IQ-1 [2]-10.

\* Because Patrolmen are, by definition, *in* the Patrol, they do not get extra points for their Hazardous Duty. It's simply part of the campaign background.

† Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

‡ Patrolmen have an astounding number of spunky kid brothers, overzealous cousins, and danger-prone fiancées.

§ An amazing number of genuinely upright and honest members of the Solar Patrol carry with them some secret shame, be it a lone act of cowardice in their youth, a brother who is a notorious pirate, a breach of the honor code at the Academy, or some such.

## Lenses

**Solar Patrol Officer (+24 points):** *"Thompson, get on those atomic guns! I need them working now! Jenkins, patch that damn atmo leak now! The rest of you . . . ready arms and prepare for boarding actions!"* You lead men into battle in the blackest pits of the void, or through the swamps of Venus, or in the forests of Europa. They count on you to keep them alive, and you count on them to do their duty. You know that, in a crisis, you will give your life to see them to safety or to see your mission accomplished. You are not cruel or tyrannical, but you must keep some distance to maintain respect and avoid the pain that comes when someone under your command perishes in the line of duty. You feel as much as any man, but you keep your feelings hidden. The pain of command is a pain you must bear alone. You gain Crewman (E) IQ+3 [8]-14, Leadership (A) IQ+2 [8]-13, and Shiphandling (Starship) (H) IQ+1 [8]-12. You must also take Navigation (Space) (A) IQ+2 [8]-13, as well as buy Rank up to 2 at a minimum. You may then select one other primary skill from the list.

**Space Marine (0 points):** *"Sir, there's about a dozen of Grevin's men holed up in the cave. They've got atomic gun emplacements covering the entrance, and they're all hiding behind murder holes with a clear shot at anyone who comes in. The senator's daughter is also being held deep inside. I recommend a frontal assault. Let's show those pirates what it means to mess with the Marines! Wa-hoo!"* You're a rough, tough hombre, the best of the Solar Patrol, first into battle, often the first to die. You grew up on tales of glory from the Solar War and the Red Hive insurgency, and you dreamed of someday scribing your own name into history. The second-best day of your life was when you were offered a commission into the Patrol; the very best day was when you made Marine. Now you volunteer for any dangerous duty, and while you know you should yearn for peace, a part of you wishes the Jovian bastard would stop playing coy and just launch an all-out war. Raise ST and HT to 12; drop IQ to 10. Take Beam Weapons (Rifle) instead of Piloting. You may choose Bad Temper [-10] or On the Edge [-15] as disadvantages, though you do not have to.

# PATROL CADET

54 points

Sir! The Solar Patrol was first commissioned in 2006, Sir! The correct power ratio for maximum burn on a Type-4 electron drive is 4.1 to 3.5, Sir! The square root of 1,567 is 39.585, Sir!

You are young, eager, and excited. The Patrol has accepted you into the Cadet Training Program . . . but that's only the first step! Not everyone admitted makes it to the Corps, and you're determined to be one of the few who can don the uniform of a Patrolman. You're still learning, though, and you're apt to make mistakes, or allow enthusiasm and overconfidence to get you in over your head. Still, with your training buddies by your side and your native talent, you're fairly likely to survive whatever mess you might get yourself into.

*Sir! The Solar Patrol was first commissioned in 2006, Sir!*

**Attributes:** ST 9 [-10]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 11 [10]; Per 11 [10]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

**Advantages:** Higher Purpose (Get a commission) [5]; • 15 points chosen from among Status 1 [5], Acute Senses 1-4 [2/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Daredevil [15], Fearlessness 1-4 [2/level], Fit [5], High Pain Threshold [10], Luck [15], Rapid Healing [5], Single-Minded [5], or Social Regard 1 [5].

**Disadvantages:** Social Stigma (Minor) [-5]; • -15 points chosen from among Charitable [-15], Curious [-5\*], Fanaticism [-15], Honesty [-10\*], Impulsiveness [-10\*], Overconfidence [-5\*], Selfless [-5\*], Stubbornness [-5], or Truthfulness [-5\*].

**Primary Skills:** Beam Weapons (Pistol) (E) DX+1 [2]-12 and Piloting (High-Performance Spacecraft) (A) DX [2]-11; • 4 points chosen from among Armoury, Electronics Operation, Leadership, Mechanic, Navigation (Space), or Spacer, all (A) IQ [2]-10; or Engineer (H) IQ-1 [2]-9.

**Secondary Skills:** 4 points chosen from among Boxing, Climbing, Driving, Environment Suit, or Free Fall, all (A) DX [2]-11; Electronics Operation or Machinist, both (A) IQ+1 [2]-11; Astronomy, Chemistry, Diplomacy, Geology, Law (Solar System Patrol), Mathematics, or Tactics, all (H) IQ-1 [2]-9; or Survival (Per) Per+1 [2]-11.

**Background Skills:** 2 points chosen from among Boating or Stealth, both (A) DX-1 [1]-10; Area Knowledge (The Solar System), Infomat Operation, Performance, all (E) IQ [1]-10; or Cryptography or Physician (H) IQ-2 [1]-8.

\* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

# SCIENTIST

64 points

Interesting . . . did you notice the runes carved on those lizardman spears? They're almost identical to the futhark patterns! This could indicate some form of trans-species cultural

awareness, or possibly an undocumented stellar transport, or . . . Hey! They're throwing spears at us!

With infinite mysteries in the System, you are determined to ferret out at least some of them. You are well-educated, demonically intelligent, and quick-witted. Unlike many of your academic colleagues, you prefer to get out into "the field" to do your work, no matter the risk. You may be distracted by the possibility of a new discovery and be overly willing to place yourself (and your allies) at risk in order to get to it, but you also can solve puzzles or unravel enigmas that stymie lesser minds. You can be arrogant and condescending at times, but you are often more than willing to teach and explain if anyone wants to listen.

It is assumed you do a lot of field research; this is reflected in the background and secondary skills.

**Attributes:** ST 9 [-10]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 10 [0].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 9 [0]; Will 13 [0]; Per 12 [-5]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

**Advantages:** 20 points chosen from among Perception +1 [5], Will +1 [5], Artificer [10], Common Sense [10], Eidetic Memory [5] or Photographic Memory [10], Gizmos 1-2 [5/gizmo], Intuition [15], Intuitive Mathematician [5] or Lightning Calculator [2], Language Talent [10], Mathematical Ability [10], Single-Minded [5], Unfazeable [15], or Versatile [5].

**Disadvantages:** -35 points chosen from among Absent-Mindedness [-15], Bad Sight (Mitigator) [-10], Callous [-5], Clueless [-10], Code of Honor (Professional) [-5], Curious [-5\*], Delusions† [-5, -10, or -15], Easy to Read [-10], Fearfulness 1-2 [-2/level], Indecisive [-10\*], Klutz [-5] or Total Klutz [-15], Loner [-5\*], Oblivious [-5], Post-Combat Shakes [-5], or Unfit [-5] or Very Unfit [-15].

**Primary Skills:** Select either Science! IQ [24]-13 or 24 points chosen from among Anthropology, Astronomy, Chemistry, Diagnosis, Engineer, Geology, Linguistics, Naturalist, Paleontology, Pharmacy, Sociology, Veterinary (H) IQ+1 [8]-14; or Biology or Physics, both (VH) IQ [8]-13.

**Secondary Skills:** 8 points chosen from among Free Fall or Vacc Suit, both (A) DX+1 [4]-11; Infomat Operation (E) IQ+2 [4]-15; History (H) IQ [4]-13; Swimming (E) HT+2 [4]-12; Hiking (A) HT+1 [4]-11; or Observation, Search, or Survival, all (A) Per+1 [4]-13.

**Background Skills:** 2 points chosen from among Beam Weapons (Pistols), Jumping, Knife, or Knot-Tying, all (E) DX [1]-10; Climbing or Riding, both (A) DX-1 [1]-9; First-Aid (E) IQ [1]-13; Cooking (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; or Fishing (E) Per [1]-12.

\* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† "Humans are actually aliens," "Atlantis colonized Venus," "Luna is the home of a secret race of superhumans," or some other "fringe" theory.

*This could indicate some form of trans-species awareness, or . . . Hey! They're throwing spears at us!*

# ENGINEER

74 points

Vell . . . you zee . . . if ve reverse the polarity of ze neutron vlow, it might cause a . . . how do you say it . . . Ah yes! A 'big boom.' Ve do it like zo!

Machines talk to you, you talk to them, and that's how you like it. You are most comfortable with a greasy wrench in your hand, and you can make any engine purr like a kitten . . . or roar like a lion when the race is on and the void gets the hindmost! You are often ill at ease in social or formal situations – people just don't work as cleanly and smoothly as machines. You might be well-educated or just have an amazing “knack” for machinery. People often underestimate you and think you're just a dumb lug . . . until they see what you can do with a smoldering piece of hardware anyone else would have given up for dead.

Engineers very often have Gadgeteer at the 25-point level and can take it at the 50-point level in the highly cinematic *Tales of the Solar Patrol* setting, if they have enough points.

*If ve reverse the polarity of ze neutron vlow, it might cause a . . . how do you say it . . . Ah yes! A “big boom.”*

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 10 [0].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

**Advantages:** 20 points chosen from among Artificer [10], Common Sense [10], Eidetic Memory [5] or Photographic Memory [10], Gizmos 1-3 [5/gizmo], High Manual Dexterity 1-2 [5/level], Intuition [15], Intuitive Mathematician [5] or Lightning Calculator [2], Less Sleep 1-3 [2/level], Mathematical Ability [10], Radiation Tolerance\* [5 or 10], Sensitive Touch [10], Single-Minded [5], Unfazeable [15], or Versatile [5].

**Disadvantages:** -30 points chosen from among Alcoholism [-15], Bad Back [-15], Clueless [-15], Curious [-5†], Easy to Read [-10], Light Sleeper [-5], Loner [-5†], Missing Digit [-2], No Sense of Humor [-10], Oblivious [-5], One Eye [-15], Phobia (Agoraphobia) [-10†], or Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** One Engineer (H) skill at IQ+1[8]-13 or two Engineer (H) skills at IQ [4]-12 each or two Mechanical (A) skills at IQ+1 [4]-13 each; ● 8 points chosen from among Infomat Operation (E) IQ+2 [4]-14; Armoury, Electrician, Electronics Repair, or Machinist, all (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Infomat Programming (H) IQ [4]-12; or Physics or Weird Science (VH) IQ-1 [4]-11.

**Secondary Skills:** 4 points chosen from among Beam Weapons (Pistol) (E) DX+1 [2]-12; Free Fall or Vacc Suit, both (A) DX [2]-11; Electronics Operation or Explosives, both (A) IQ [2]-12; (A) IQ [2]-12; or Chemistry (H) IQ-1 [2]-11.

**Background Skills:** 4 points chosen from among Brawling or Knot-Tying, both (E) DX+1 [1]-12; Driving or Piloting

(High-Performance Spacecraft), both (A) DX-1 [1]-10; Area Knowledge (the Solar System), Carpentry, First Aid‡ (E) IQ [1]-12; or Scrounging (E) Per [1]-12.

\* This is somewhat cinematic and can be disallowed. However, some engineers seem to be surprisingly tough after all those years in the drive room . . .

† Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

‡ Accidents happen . . . a lot.

# PIRATE

85 points

Avast, ye merchants! Stand by and heave anchor! Er . . . well, you don't have any anchors . . . er . . . just open your airlocks and prepare to be boarded! Did I say 'arrrr' yet? Oh? Okay . . . Arrrrr!

There's plenty of wealth flying between the worlds, and you are all too happy to claim your share of someone else's labor. You probably don't consider yourself a bad person . . . a criminal, sure, but you try to leave your victims alive and safe, if somewhat poorer. You stand by your crew and are loyal to your captain . . . at least until you see a chance to command the ship yourself. You can hold your own in a fair fight, but you really prefer an unfair one. In your mind, you're a romantic individualist, the last holdout against the peaceful, vapid, insufferable niceness of the Earth League and the Solar Patrol. In the minds of your victims, you're a common thug who should be tossed out the nearest airlock.

**Attributes:** ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 6 [5]; Basic Move 6 [0].

**Advantages:** 20 points chosen from among Allies [up to 10 points], Alternate Identity (Illegal) [15], Charisma 1-3 [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Contacts [up to 10 points], Damage Resistance 1 [5], Daredevil [15], Hard to Subdue 1-4 [2/level], Rapier Wit [5], Smooth Operator [15], Voice [10], or Zeroed [10].

**Disadvantages:** Enemy (Law Enforcement of the System; Large Group; Appear 6-) [-15]; ● -20 points chosen from among Addiction (Alcoholism) [-15], Bad Temper [-10†], Bloodlust\* [-10†], Bully [-10†], Code of Honor (Pirates) [-5], Compulsive Behavior (Gambling or Carousing) [-5†], Delusion (Minor; “I am a dashing bold adventurer!”) [-5], Greed [-15†], Impulsiveness [-10†], Jealousy [-10], Lecherousness [-15†], Miserliness [-10†], One Arm‡ [-20], One Eye‡ [-15], One Hand‡ [-15], Overconfidence [-5†], Sadism\* [-15†], Secret§ [-5 to -15], Selfish [-5†], or Trickster [-15†].

*Stand by and heave anchor!  
Er . . . well, you don't have any  
anchors . . . er . . . just open your  
airlocks! Did I say “arrrr” yet?  
Oh? Okay . . . Arrrrr!*

**Primary Skills:** Beam Weapons (Pistol) (E) DX+3 [8]-15; ● One of Knife or Brawling, both (E) DX+3 [8]-15; ● 16 points from among Beam Weapons (any) (E) DX+3 [8]-15; Piloting (High-Performance Spacecraft) or Piloting (Low-Performance Spacecraft), both (A) DX+2 [8]-14; Armoury, Electronics Operation, Lockpicking, Mechanic, Merchant, Navigation (Space), Smuggling, or Spacer, all (A) IQ+2 [8]-12; Engineer (H) IQ+1 [8]-11; or Carousing (E) HT+3 [8]-14.

**Secondary Skills:** 6 points chosen from among Gunner (E) DX+1 [2]-13; Axe/Mace, Cloak, Environment Suit, Free Fall, or Stealth, all (A) DX [2]-12; Escape or Pickpocket, both (H) DX-1 [2]-11; Area Knowledge (The Solar System) (E) IQ+1 [2]-11; Explosives, Fast-Talk, Interrogation, Leadership (A) IQ [2]-10; Counterfeiting (H) IQ-1 [2]-9; Observation or Search, both (A) Per [2]-10; or Detect Lies (H) Per-1 [2]-9.

**Background Skills:** 2 points chosen from among Forced Entry (E) DX [1]-12; First Aid (E) IQ [1]-10; Freight Handling, Gambling, Holdout, or Traps, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-9; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-10; or Urban Survival (A) Per-1 [1]-9.

\* Not recommended for cinematic pirates.

† Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

‡ At the GM's discretion, any pirate with any of these disadvantages may be given a parrot.

§ Being a wanted pirate is not a secret, but things like "brother is a captain in the Patrol," "deserter from the Marines," or "led a mutiny against my former captain" are all good possibilities.

*You are truly discerning!  
These lunar diamonds do seem  
flawed . . . Hey! Put the gun  
down! We can make a deal!*

## TRADER

65 points

Ah, you are truly discerning! Yes, these lunar diamonds do seem flawed, but, in fact, what you are perceiving is what expert gemologists call 'hyper-crystallization,' where the structure of the gem is folded inwardly upon itself, resulting in a very rare . . . Hey! Put the gun down! We can make a deal!

Buy low; sell high. It's not a guideline to you – it's a religion. Let others slave away for 30 hours a week at some Earth-bound desk job, earning only enough for a large home, plenty of food, and a comfortable retirement! For you, great wealth comes with great risk, and the chase is almost as important as the reward. You've managed to get yourself a merchant ship – or a job on one – and your gift of gab and head for figures have helped you to stay alive, whether you are dodging pirates, creditors, or angry customers. You're as honest as the day is long; though you won't say on which world. The big score – the ultimate deal – is hanging just out of reach, but you know you'll catch it soon.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 10 [0].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

**Advantages:** 20 points chosen from among Business Acumen [10], Charisma 1-3 [5/level], Contacts [up to 10 points], Empathy [15], Indomitable [15], Intuition [15], Language Talent [10], Merchant Rank 1-3 [5/level], Rapier Wit [5], Sensitive [5], Serendipity [15], Smooth Operator [15], Social Chameleon [5], Status 1-3 [5/level], Wealth (Comfortable) [10] or (Wealthy) [20], or Voice [10].

**Disadvantages:** -25 points chosen from among Alcoholism [-15], Callous [-5], Chummy [-5], Combat Paralysis [-15], Compulsive Spending [-5\*], Cowardice [-10\*], Gluttony [-5\*], Greed [-15\*], Hidebound [-5], Jealousy [-10], Lecherousness [-15\*], Miserliness [-10\*], Selfish [-5\*], or Unfit [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Merchant (A) IQ+2 [8]-14; ● 16 points chosen from among Current Affairs (Business and one other specialty) at (E) IQ+3 [4]-15 each (8 points total for two skills); Administration, Connoisseur, Fast-Talk, Public Speaking, or Smuggling, all (A) IQ+3 [8]-15; Accounting, Diplomacy, Finance, Law (Inner System Contract), all (H) IQ+2 [8]-14; Body Language or Observation, both (A) Per+3 [8]-15; or Detect Lies (H) Per+2 [8]-14.

**Secondary Skills:** 4 points chosen from among Guns (Pistol) (E) DX+1 [2]-11; Piloting (High-Performance Spacecraft) or Piloting (Low-Performance Spacecraft), both (A) DX [2]-10; Spacer (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Gambling, Leadership, Mechanics, or Navigation, all (A) IQ [2]-12; Mathematics (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; or Sex Appeal (A) HT [2]-10.

**Background Skills:** 2 points chosen from among Knife (E) DX [1]-10; Free Fall (A) DX-1 [1]-9; Gesture or Panhandling (E) IQ [1]-12; Hazardous Materials or Holdout, both (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; or Urban Survival (A) Per-1 [1]-11.

\* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

## CALLISTAN WARRIOR

67 points

By the frozen beard of my grandfather's wife! I swear by every ancestor I have and every descendant I shall breed that I will no longer be a thrall to the Overlord! With all of my line past and future as my witness, I cast my lot with these strange warriors from beyond the sky, for they have more courage in one finger than can be found in all of my people who have chosen to kneel before our so-called master!

Most folk of Callisto serve the Overlord with eagerness. He talks to them of honor and glory and sets them on his foes. You, however, see through the lies. No honor exists in fighting solely because someone else orders you to. No glory can be found in killing helpless children or pathetic old men. Certainly, no pride comes from groveling and bending the knee to an armored lunatic who plays silly games with captives and rules by a madman's whims! When the chance came to sneak onto one of the ships of the Overlord's enemies, you did so; then, for the first and last time, you willingly knelt and swore service – service to this strange "Patrol" that dared to defy the Overlord. Their customs are alien; their food is strange, but their hearts are those of true warriors, and that is all that matters.

*With all of my line past and future as my witness, I cast my lot with these strange warriors!*

**Attributes:** ST 12 [20]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 13 [2]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.5 [0]; Basic Move 6 [5].

**Advantages:** 20 points chosen from among Catfall [10], Danger Sense [15], Fearlessness 1-3 [2/level], Fit [5] or Very Fit [15], Hard to Kill 1-3 [2/level], Hard to Subdue 1-3 [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Rapid Healing [5] or Very Rapid Healing [15], Recovery [10].

**Disadvantages:** Low TL [-5 levels; -25]; ● -15 points chosen from among Bad Temper [-10\*], Berserk [-10\*], Bloodlust [-10v], Bully [-10\*], Code of Honor (Soldier's) [-10], Clueless [-10], Enemy (Loyal agents of the Overlord; Large Group; Appear 6-) [-15], Intolerance (Non-“Warriors”) [-10], Missing Digit [-2], No Sense of Humor [-10], On the Edge [-15\*], One Eye [-15], or Overconfidence [-5\*].

**Primary Skills:** Shortsword or Broadsword (A) DX +2 [8]-13; ● 16 points chosen from among Brawling, Knife, or Shield (any), all (E) DX+3 [8]-14; Axe/Mace, Bow, Spear, or Two-Handed Axe/Mace, all (A) DX+2 [8]-13; or Tactics (H) IQ+1 [8]-11.

**Secondary Skills:** 4 points chosen from among Fast-Draw (any), Knife, Shield (any), all (E) DX+1 [2]-12; Area Knowledge (Jupiter and moons) (E) IQ+1 [2]-11; or Survival (any) or Tracking, both (A) Per [2]-13.

**Background Skills:** 2 points chosen from among Climbing or Throwing, both (A) DX-1 [1]-10; Armoury/TL4 (A) IQ-1 [1]-9; Swimming (E) HT [1]-12; Intimidation (A) Will-1 [1]-9; or Fishing (A) Per-1 [1]-11.

\* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

## Lenses

*Salishal Warrior (+14 points): “Hairy men came from sky; bring spear that throws fire and rock-that-does-not-break. Others of Walk-Softly-on-Reeds tribe scared. I not scared. I want to know. I see hairy men die to teeth-that-slither-in-water or sicken from plague. I know they are not spirits. I know fire-throwing stick is just like our pointed throwing stick, only made with more cunning. I go to hairy men city. I will learn their cunning.”* You are a rarity – a Salishal who has left his home tribe to live among humans. You might be an outcast, a criminal, the sole survivor of a Krik massacre, or someone who wants to learn the secrets of the “Sky Spirits.” You have probably figured out the “hairy men” are not spirits or gods at all but are painfully mortal, and you are contemplating ways to use this knowledge. Depending on how your first encounters went, you could be a sort of “mascot” to a Solar Patrol ground crew, an eager student of a xeno-anthropologist, or the terrifying pet thug of a Venusport crime boss. Apply the Salishal racial template (14 points; see pp. 11-12) and change Area Knowledge to Venus. Remove Enemy as a

possible disadvantage; the Krik hunt the Salishal, and this is part of their racial profile.

## BELTER

89 points

Feh, this is easy. You can tell by the way it tumbles which way it will fly. That big one there – the one near the size of Everest – it’s going to careen off that other one in ‘bout 30 seconds, bouncing away just slow enough that we’ll zip through the empty space ‘tween ‘em at full burn. ‘Course, if’n I’m wrong, we’ll be a metallic smear for some other guy to find and salvage. Yee-haw!

Void and rocks.

That’s what life is to you – the emptiness of deep space, and the mountains that drift through it. You may have a small homestead somewhere, or you may live in your ship. You claim you’re looking for that “one big score,” an asteroid filled with Belt sapphires or rich in radioactives, but, to be honest, the hunt is an end in itself. As long as you mine enough copper and iron to buy rations and keep the drill in good repair, you’re content.

Unless, of course, something goes wrong – a pirate raid taking your ship and leaving you adrift in a lifeboat, or a Jovian warfleet massacring the small community you love. Then you might be tempted to leave the Belt and take up a different cause . . .

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 11 [10].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 12 [10]; Per 12 [10]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

**Advantages:** 20 points chosen from among Absolute Direction [10], Claim to Hospitality (Other Belters) [2], Common Sense [10], Danger Sense [15], Fearlessness 1-3 [2/level], Fit [5], G-Experience [1 to 5], High Manual Dexterity [5], Indomitable [15], Intuition [15], Merchant Rank 1-3 [5/level], Radiation Tolerance [5], Single-Minded [5], Talent (Artificer) [10], Unfazeable [15], or Wealth (Comfortable) [10] or (Wealthy) [20].

**Disadvantages:** -25 points chosen from among Bad Temper [-10\*], Callous [-5], Clueless [-10], Curious [-5\*\*], Easy to Read [-10], Greed [-15\*], Jealousy [-10], Loner [-5\*], Miserliness [-10\*], Lame† [-10 to -20], Oblivious [-5], Paranoia [-10], Selfish [-5\*], or Stubbornness [-5].

*That big one is going to careen off that other one in ‘bout 30 seconds, bouncing away just slow enough that we’ll zip through the empty space ‘tween ‘em. If’n I’m wrong, we’ll be a metallic smear.*



**Primary Skills:** Prospecting and Piloting (Low-Performance Spacecraft), both (A) IQ+1 [4]-12; ● *One* of Beam Weapons (Pistol) (E) or Knife, both DX+3 [8]-13; ● 16 points chosen from among Brawling (E) DX+3 [8]-13; Free Fall or Vacc Suit, both (A) DX+2 [8]-12; Electronics Operation, Merchant, Navigation (Space), or Smuggling, all (A) IQ+2 [8]-13; or Engineer (H) IQ+1 [8]-12.

**Secondary Skills:** 8 points chosen from among Boxing (A) DX+1 [4]-11; Area Knowledge (The Solar System), Gambling, or Spacer, all (E) IQ+2 [4]-13; Fast Talk or Mechanic, both (A) IQ+1 [4]-12; or Astronomy or Geology, both (H) IQ [4]-11.

**Background Skills:** 4 points chosen from among First Aid (E) IQ+1 [2]-12; Cooking, Hazardous Materials, or Machinist, all (A) IQ [2]-11; Carousing (E) HT+1 [2]-12; or Scrounging (E) Per+1 [2]-13.

\* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† Such Belters spend almost all their time in 0G.

## EXPLORER

105 points

Now, the thing is, if that's a red-crested Ioan clawbeast, we're safe . . . they're not aggressive except when they're mating. You know the beast is in a mating frenzy if the claws are fully extended from the sheathes and the crest is inflamed and wriggling . . . Yes, wriggling just like that. Hand me my atomic rifle. Quickly!

The vastness of the System calls to you – from the misty, dinosaur-filled swamps of Venus to the craggy, deadly rocks of the Scab on Io. You yearn to see what no one else has seen; and

there's still plenty to find. Much of subsurface Mercury remains locked away, Venus is filled with mysteries, and even the moons of the Overlord hide lost secrets. If you are especially courageous, you might even risk your freedom of thought to examine some of the abandoned cities of Mars. Of course, you also revisit places, especially when someone needs a guide.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 12 [20].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Dmg 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 12 [0]; Will 13 [5]; Per 13 [5]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 5.75 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

**Advantages:** 20 points chosen from among Absolute Direction [5], Allies [2 to 5], Animal Friend [5], Charisma 1-2 [5/level], Cultural Adaptability [10], Daredevil [15], Fearlessness 1-3 [2/level], Fit [5] or Very Fit [15], Perfect Balance [15], Rapid Healing [5], Reduced Consumption [2], Resistant (Disease) [10], Social Chameleon [5], or Outdoorsman [10].

**Disadvantages:** -35 points chosen from among Absentmindedness [-15], Code of Honor (Naturalist's)\* [-5], Curious [-5†], Delusions‡ [-5 to -15], Dependents [-1 to -5], Greed [-15†], Impulsiveness[-10†], Intolerance (All "savages")§ [-5], Obsession [-5†], Overconfidence [-5†], Stubbornness [-5], or Xenophilia [-10†].

**Primary Skills:** Area Knowledge (E) (any two worlds) at IQ+2 [4]-14 each, and 16 points chosen from among Hiking (A) HT+2 [8]-14, Linguistics (H) IQ+1 [8]-13, Naturalist (H) IQ+1 [8]-13, Stealth (A) DX+2 [8]-13, Survival (A) Per+2 [8]-15, or Tracking (A) Per+2 [8]-15.

**Secondary Skills:** 4 points chosen from among Beam Weapons (any) (A) DX[2]-11 per weapon, Boating (A) DX[2]-11, Jumping (A) DX[2]-11, Knife (E) DX +1 [2]-12, Observation (A) DX[2]-11, Riding (A) DX[2]-11, Search (A) Per [2]-14, Traps (A) DX[2]-11, or Weather Sense (A) IQ [2]-11.

**Background Skills:** 2 points chosen from among Cooking (A) IQ-1 [1]-10, Gesture (E) IQ [1]-11, Packing (A) IQ-1 [1]-10, Poisons (H) IQ-2 [1]-9, Riding (A) DX-1 [1]-10, Running (A) HT-1 [1]-10, Vacc Suit (A) IQ-1 [1]-10, or Veterinary (H) IQ-2 [1]-9.

*You know the beast is in a mating frenzy if the crest is inflamed . . . Yes, just like that. Hand me my atomic rifle. Quickly!*

\* Treat the wilderness with respect; do not exploit either natives or animals; respect the traditions of the species you encounter; kill animals only in self defense or for food, never for sport.

† Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

‡ The explorer could be questing for anything that he is unlikely to find, from the Fountain of Youth to "rubies the size of a man's head."

§ In the Earth League, this likely results in Odious Personal Habit (Bigot) [-5] as well, if the intolerance is shown publicly.

# CHAPTER SIX

# CAMPAIGNS AND PLOT HOOKS

The scope for adventure in the System is vast. Entire campaigns can be set in the wilds of Venus, fighting pirates in the Belt, swashbuckling among the Jovian moons, or leading the Martians to freedom. In time, a single game might allow for all

of these things! The following are a few ideas to help a GM get started, broken down by general campaign type. It should be trivial to convert an idea from one type of campaign to another.

## PATROL CADETS

Based on characters built on 75-100 points, plus 30 in disadvantages, this campaign focuses on young, idealistic, and almost suicidally overeager members of the Cadet Training Program. With two years to prove themselves worthy to join the Patrol, the characters often do anything legal (or maybe even risk bending a few trivial “safety” regulations) to show they have the right stuff! Any typical “schoolboy adventures” can be used as a template, when given a science-fictional flare. A few clichés need to be controlled in order to keep flavor – the Patrol doesn’t allow in psychopathic bullies or students whose only qualification is a rich parent, for example. Some justification may be in order for these archetypes – the bully is a talented sociopath who has managed to hide his nature from the boys in the psych labs but who reveals it to those he thinks are helpless; the spoiled rich brat also happens to have the skills

and abilities needed to make a good Patrolman, if he’d just lose his sense of privilege.

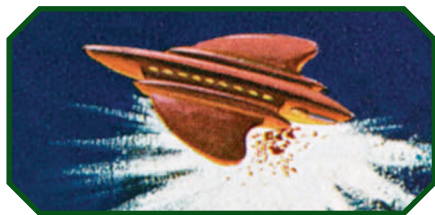
Patrol cadets are often exposed to real danger. Even if their instructors are standing by to pull them out of the fire, things can and do go wrong. A “controlled” engine breakdown suddenly gets out of control; a “safe” section of the Belt hides a pirate base; a rare Luna-quake collapses supposedly stable tunnels.

NPCs include instructors, other cadets of the same age, senior cadets, and non-Patrol friends and family. Cadet campaigns are set on Earth or in orbit (with the occasional training exercise in the Belt), allowing for more interaction with the folks back home . . . at least until that glorious day when the PCs graduate, with full honors, and become true members of the Solar Patrol!

## THE SOLAR PATROL

Based on 150-250 points, this can be considered the “default” mode for the game – the book is, after all, called *Tales of the Solar Patrol*, not *Tales of the Belt Miners*. The PCs are the crew of a Solar Patrol ship, most likely an *Audie Murphy*-class frigate (see p. 33), and the campaign focuses on their missions and adventures. This can make designing scenarios easy for GMs, as there is no need to come up with complex rationales for why the PCs are risking life and limb – they were ordered to!

The campaign can be episodic, with the PCs finding themselves on Venus one week and on Jupiter the next, the “downtime” being ignored.



Alternatively, it can be a true epic saga, with each adventure serving as a chapter in a Saturday matinee serial, leading to a final exciting showdown – and a sequel serial opening soon.

Because all characters are members of the Solar Patrol, care must be taken to individuate them and give them niche protection. Don’t be afraid to indulge in broad-stroke characterization: the burly, hard-drinking, hard-working engineer; the lady’s man astronomer; the overly serious and pragmatic commander; the curious and absent minded scientist; the hard-bitten Space Marine whose preferred solution to problems is to open the gunports. Finer details can be filled in later.

In a campaign like this, the character’s ship is an NPC in its own right; it should be given quirks and traits, and the crew’s quarters ought to be detailed – the knickknacks and souvenirs they own, the pin-ups on the walls, and so on.



Adventures can be divided into two sorts – *proactive*, where the characters are ordered to go somewhere and do something; and *reactive*, in which a seemingly routine mission becomes suddenly dangerous due to a new discovery. The latter grant

more scope for roleplaying, as the PCs debate how to handle the situation. Ideally, their first solution will not be to “call for backup.”

## PIRATES

Of course, a campaign can be set on the other side of the law . . .

In such adventures, the PCs are nefarious rogues scouring the system for wealth. These scenarios feature a lot of space combat and boarding actions, as well as opportunities for roleplaying in pirate holdfasts (such as New Port Royal; see p. 21)

If a pirate campaign is just an exercise in drink and debauchery, it will soon devolve into a “race to the bottom,” as the PCs try to top their last caper for depravity, violating the spirit of the source material and all boundaries of taste. Therefore, it is best that piracy be a means to an end – an end not achievable by other means.

Should the GM wish to go with a Second Solar War campaign (see below), then pirate PCs can become privateers,

given letters of marque from the Earth League and empowered to harass the Jovian Overlord from the outer Belt to the mines of Mercury!

Other possibilities include a pirate who was wronged by a corrupt corporation or trading empire and seeks to regain what is his by attacking the ships and holdings of that target, killing few while doing tremendous amounts of property damage. Alternatively, a Jovian campaign could focus on a native-born rebel against the Overlord, flying a stolen ship and with a crew composed of the many races of Jupiter.

Pirates can range from semi-realistic scoundrels of 100 points up to dashing ne'er-do-wells of 250 points – just make sure their enemies are fitting foes!

## SECOND SOLAR WAR

In the official *Tales of the Solar Patrol* setting and timeline, the Jovian Overlord is in a state of fiendish plotting, never quite finalizing a scheme to launch a second assault on the inner system. It is very simple, though, to say that, by 2055, one of his plots succeeded; his hidden fleet of super-dreadnoughts was revealed to a terrified system. By 2056, the Second Solar War was going full tilt, with battles raging across the System!

The exact scope of such a war is up to the GM and what areas he wishes to explore. The calamity has a few possible ramifications.

Most, though not all, of the Belt pirates side with Earth, placing loyalty to their home world above their greed – at least for the moment. Many are given letters of marque and told that full pardons might be granted if they destroy enough of the Overlord's ships.

The Mind Masters, weary of Earth spies, agree to an alliance with the Overlord, and a few of these telepathic monsters join his fleet! Of course, both sides plot to betray the other . . . the only question is *when*.

Venus, underpopulated and with restricted technology, is conquered. The Overlord begins massive industrialization of the primitive world, along with the enslavement and conscription of the Salishal and the Krik. The human Venusians disperse into the swamplands after Venusport is burned, becoming guerilla warriors against the Overlord's forces.

The Solar Patrol is struck hard, as the Overlord's main fleet made its appearance known with a sudden raid on the Patrol's primary fleet base, crippling large numbers of battleships and killing many of the senior crews. The Patrol is mostly reduced to raw recruits in frigates and a few battle-hardened, formerly retired commanders trying to keep the whole thing going in the face of overwhelming opposition.

Earth – comfortable, fat, and complacent after a generation without outright war – is politically torn. Many in the Earth League look to find some “reasonable compromise” and wish for “peace in our time.” Those who insist that the only answer to atomic guns is bigger and better atomic guns are derided as warmongers and reactionaries, while those who look for alternatives are mocked as cowards and traitors.

Radio jamming and attacks on broadcast satellites and responder drones make communication through the System almost impossible, ship crews are on their own, and commanders must make split-second decisions without clearing them with the brass. It's a time that creates heroes . . . and corpses.

Some in the Earth League think that the ultimate solution is a mass landing on the Scab and the seizure of the Gray Fortress – a military operation that would make D-Day look like a schoolyard squabble. In secret, plans for J-Day are made; spies and counter-spies battle over them, while the soldiers of the Patrol and the Marines prepare for the greatest battle in human history.

Solar soldiers can be raw recruits of 75 points or legendary Space Marines of 200-250 points.

*Some think that the ultimate solution is a seizure of the Gray Fortress – a military operation that would make D-Day look like a schoolyard squabble.*

# TRADERS

Trade sustains the System. While pirates seek to plunder, merchants seek to produce (and avoid being plundered). The competition for profitable routes and rich rewards can be brutal, and sometimes, the brutality is not limited to verbal spats at the bargaining table. The prospect of a big payoff can cause even the mildest of men to contemplate violent or treacherous action – surely, no one would be *hurt* if the electron drives of a rival went offline for a few hours; they'd just miss their buyer . . .

In this style of campaign, the PCs are the crew of a small merchant vessel, a tramp steamer of the starlanes, making their way from world to world and deal to deal, one step ahead of rivals, pirates, and even the Solar Patrol.

Trade in the System goes something like the following.

Venus exports organics – wood, perfume flowers, pharmaceutical chemicals, foodstuffs, amber, and native arts – and imports high-tech gear and raw metals.

Earth exports advanced tech and packaged foods, and imports raw materials and luxury items.

Luna exports lunar diamonds, other crystals (used in manufacturing), and some high-tech goods, especially spaceships. Luna has the largest shipyards in the System. It imports everything needed for survival – food and water, primarily, as well as luxury tech.

The Belt exports raw metals, radioactives, and rare gems (such as the legendary Belt sapphires), and imports, like Luna,

nearly everything else. Despite the Luna mines, the Belt is the source of most of the industrial raw materials for Earth. If Belt shipments stop, the economic machinery of Earth stops.

All of this trade is taxed, at what merchants consider to be exorbitant rates. Further, the Earth League has the temerity to declare some trade illegal, denying the Salishal and the Krik the right to lasers to use against each other. Other regulations are equally odious, so it often becomes necessary to break a few laws if one wishes to make an “honest” profit. Many merchants, thus, engage in smuggling on the side. Many pirates do likewise, so the barrier between “honest trader” and “scurvy dog” is not nearly so clear as some think.

A merchant campaign is typically about chasing “the big score” – and not getting it. Should the PCs manage to make some money, it should be lost due to necessary engine repairs, a pirate raid, or a sudden bill for back taxes. Of course, small victories and advances must be allowed – the engines are upgraded, the pirates are hunted down and captured (sadly, without their loot), and the tax bill is pared down after the merchant ship smuggles an important politician out of a Jovian prison – but if the PCs ever become really rich, why would they keep risking their lives in space? Where's the fun in that?

Merchant campaigns are more enjoyable when the players have to sweat it out; 75-125 points should be about it.

# SPACE MARINES

A Space Marine game is akin to a Solar Patrol game, but more militarily focused. The Patrol runs exploration and scientific missions, conducts “feel good” civilian outreach, and serves to support emergency and rescue services throughout the System.

The Marines fight.

In the current state of relative peace throughout the System (but see *Second Solar War* on p. 49), the main focus of the Marines is battling pirates in the Belt, along with some defense of Venusian colonists against hostile Salishal and Krik bands. Marines are sent into Belt strongholds to clean out raiders in their nest, especially when there's a good reason to not simply

blast the rocks from orbit. They are used as commandos to rescue hostages or invade the sub-Lunar fortresses of mad scientists. They guard the mines of Mercury. They run the covert missions on Mars, as well as maintaining orbital Jovian bases . . . just in case the Overlord tries something.

Ideally, though, a Marine-focused game should ramp up the level of war, using the Second Solar War concept but focusing on a squad of Marines battling the Overlord across the System. It also shares many aspects of a Solar Patrol campaign, such as the need for individuation and niche protection among primarily combat-oriented characters.

Space Marines start at 125 points and just go up from there.



# BIBLIOGRAPHY

There were countless works written and produced in the pulp science fiction genre. This bibliography provides a small sampling of the seminal works.

## BOOKS

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*Armageddon 2419 A.D.* (Philip Frances Nowlan, original published 1928). This is the book upon which the *Buck Rogers* comics and television series was based.

*Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* (Philip Frances Nowlan, 1994). A full-color reissue of comic book that had been offered as a premium.

*Lucky Starr* (Isaac Asimov, originally published 1950s). Under the pseudonym Paul French, Isaac Asimov wrote a series of books about his version of space rangers.

Heinlein Juveniles (Robert A. Heinlein, various dates). Heinlein wrote a series of science-fiction novels specifically for young adults, including *Rocket Ship Galileo*, *Space Cadet*, *Red Planet*, *Between Planets*, *The Rolling Stones*, *The Star Beast*, *Tunnel in the Sky*, *Time for the Stars*, *Citizen of the Galaxy*, *Have Space Suit – Will Travel*, *Farmer in the Sky*, *Starman Jones*, and *Podkayne*.

*Wings Over Tomorrow: The Collected Science Fiction of Philip Francis Nowlan* (Philip Frances Nowlan, 2005). A collection of work by the man who brought the world Buck Rogers.

## DVDs

*Buck Rogers* (Ford Beebe and Saul A. Goodkind, directors, 1939). A collection of the original serials.

*Captain Video: Cliffhanger Collection* (Spencer Gordon Bennet and Wallace Grissell, directors, 1951). Touted as the first television show to be adapted to the big screen, this set follows some of the exploits of Captain Video as he and his rangers travel among the planets, bringing freedom and justice.

*Flash Gordon: Box Set* (Ford Beebe, director, 1936-1940). A collection of the three original *Flash Gordon* serials.

*Rocky Jones, Space Ranger Collection* (Hollingsworth Morse, director, 1954). A selection of half-hour episodes of from the *Rocky Jones* television series.

*Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* (Kerry Conran, writer/director, 2004). This modern movie presented in the campy 1930s science-fiction movie style is set on Earth, but it can provide inspiration for planet-bound *Tales of the Space Patrol* adventures (and it might be easier to find than other titles listed here).

## WEBSITES

Buck Rogers: [www.buck-rogers.com](http://www.buck-rogers.com).

*Captain Future* Wikipedia entry: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Captain\\_Future](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Captain_Future).

Flash Gordon: [www.flashgordon.ws](http://www.flashgordon.ws).

Roaring Rockets: [www.slick-net.com/space/](http://www.slick-net.com/space/).

*Space Opera* Wikipedia entry: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space\\_Opera](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space_Opera).

*Space Opera Serials* Wikipedia template: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Space\\_opera\\_serials\\_1930-1960](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Space_opera_serials_1930-1960).

Solar Guard Academy: [www.solarguard.com](http://www.solarguard.com).

*Tom Corbett, Space Cadet* books by Carey Rockwell: [www.gutenberg.org/browse/authors/r#a8081](http://www.gutenberg.org/browse/authors/r#a8081).



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