AMAZING ADVENTURES

STARSIEGE

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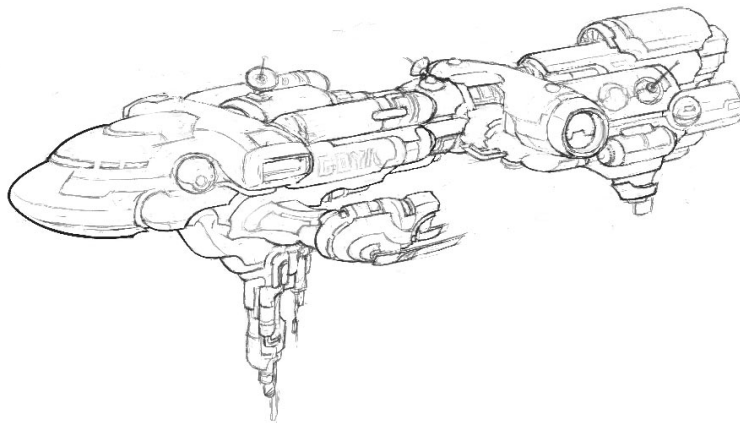## STARSIEGE

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Inspired by StarSIEGE: Event Horizon by Josh Chewning

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This one is for the fans who have waited a long time for the return of SIEGE Engine sci-fi gaming!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE THIRD YEAR OF THE JALEX-SOLAR WAR

Plasma bolts erupted all around as Capt. Miranda O'Malley bobbed and weaved her fighter through a gauntlet of Jalex fire. Her hands danced across the controls of the *cha-kûl* starcraft. Designed by the Titan colony in conjunction with their Decti allies for smooth operation and maneuverability combined with brutal weaponry, it was the ideal counter to the blunt weapons that served as the devastating Jalex warships. Still, even for a pilot of her abilities, this was a hell of an onslaught.

"Someone tell me how we get into these messes," she muttered.

The musical voice of her wingman, the Decti warrior Clental, came back over her comms: "You take unnecessary risks," he said.

"Clental, you know I love you," she barked back into the comms, "but who asked you, anyway?" She grunted and dove hard right. A plasma blast grazed the wing of her starfighter, and the entire ship rolled out of control for a second until she brought it back. "That was close."

"Too close, I believe is the saying you humans use," Clental clicked over the comm.

"Quiet, you," Miranda said. "I'm concentrating. I've got strange readings in Sector 3, near the Anuket River. This could be what we're looking for."

Another barrage of fire.

"Damn, I can't shake these things! How did they get this far into the system, anyway?"

Static, then: "Readings confirmed. Energy of both Jalex and… unknown configuration. Coming from a volcanic fissure exactly 5.2 kilometers east of the the mouth of the Anuket."

"If I'm remembering right, isn't that the site of one of those ancient ruins they found here?"

"Affirmative. It was a major archaeological dig, but the government is being secretive about what they have found there."

This was cause for alarm. What the Hell were the Jalex doing on Venus, and how did they even get set up there without the Alliance knowing about it? Miranda took her fighter into a sharp dive. "I'm going in fast," she said. "Hopefully I can lose them in the methane clouds. I'm going to try a barn burner."

"I would not advise that, Captain," Clental said. "If you die, the Knights of William St. John will be leaderless. And I…would most regret it."

"Noted. Just watch my six. I'm going in full burn."

Miranda's eyes flicked to her scanner and she caught Clental's ship execute a roll that would've been impossible for anyone but him or her, bringing him neatly behind their pursuers. He opened up with a barrage of his own, and two Jalex ships went up with quick bursts of flame that just as quickly vanished in the vacuum. Three other Jalex flipped to drive straight at him, while seven maintained their pursuit of Miranda.

She ducked, rolled, and pulled out every single trick she'd ever learned as a fighter jockey to stay one step ahead of them. Clental was right; she was responsible for the entire Knights squadron (and the larger society that most people didn't even know existed) and she hadn't groomed an eventual replacement. She really should stop taking risks like this.

But it was just too much to resist. Risk was who she was. Risk was in her blood, going back hundreds of years.

So she clenched her jaw, flexed her fists on the controls, and dove straight for a formation of methane clouds in Venus' upper atmosphere. If nothing else, it'd be a hell of a light show for the colonists and archaeologists below. She hoped the Jalex would follow her in, and her gambit was rewarded when all seven ships tore straight after her. They fanned out behind her in a V formation for the best shot at detecting her; something about the methane clouds in Venus' atmosphere interfered with scanners; no human or Decti scientist has figured out why, yet, and she was gratified to see the same apparently went for the Jalex.

If this didn't work, she knew, she could end up a lump of coal.

"Okay," she muttered. "Here goes nothing."

Miranda's fingers danced once more over the controls, arming a plasma missile, then releasing it without firing. She then cut her engines and pulled up sharply on the stick. Her ship went nose up, engines down, just meters from the falling missile. Then she punched her afterburners hard, blasting the missile, which detonated with a spectacular blossom, taking the entire cloud with it.

The plan was for Miranda to shoot up and out. Unfortunately, three of the Jalex ships caught her flicker in their scanners just in time to open up. Just as her engines flared, a barrage of fire caught the nose of her *cha-kûl,* sending her into an uncontrolled spin as the cloud detonated around her. She groaned as she fought the controls to no avail; there was no bailing out, at least not until she cleared the fireball. Worse, as she did clear the blaze, she discovered her cockpit was fused and wouldn't open. Then, out of the corner of her eye, she caught another *cha-kûl*—Clental's—also plummeting towards the ground with smoke pouring from its wings.

"This is going to suck," she muttered. "Clental, my love, you're on your own, for now."

The entire cockpit shuddered, then shuddered again. The shuddering turned into a rapid vibration that grew worse the more gravity took over. Miranda could feel the heat around her, even as she slowly, gradually managed to regain some basic semblance of control.

"Gods of Hell, I might just survive this," she muttered. Then she said to her ship, "Come on, baby, hang in there for me."

She pulled back; the fighter dove down. She fought it; it fought back. She cursed at it, and it groaned in response. But gradually, in increments of bare centimeters, Miranda O'Malley managed to get the nose up, just enough to…

The fighter struck the ground like a sledgehammer on concrete. The impact was brutal, to say the least, a painful jar that sent shockwaves up Miranda's spine and through her neck, and a head-splitting *BANG!* repeated by a series of additional banging and thumping noises as the ship bounced. The entire world spun around her; no, it was actually the ship spinning as it bounced like some sort of twisted carnival ride. Bits of metal shrieked as the ground tore through them, and she saw pieces of her precious ship fly off into the distance. She felt her chest

constrict, and sharp pains in her breastbone and ribs as she pounded time and again into her restraints. She was dizzy. She couldn't think straight. There was drool…or was that blood?

She had a single moment of clarity: *Isn't my life supposed to flash before my eyes or something?*

Then, without warning…everything stopped, and all was black for a few minutes. The universe came back into focus, along with a pounding headache and agony in every bone, muscle, and joint in her body. The hot Venusian air blew in her face; somewhere during the crash, she'd lost her canopy, which was what she'd wanted to do in the first place. She took a deep breath, wincing against the pain in her chest, just to see if she could.

"Thank gods for terraforming," she muttered, though Venus had been terraformed since long before Miranda was born. She tapped her commlink. "Clental. Clental, you there? You alive?"

The machine hissed and beeped. It had taken a hit in the crash. She shook her wrist and smacked it. Then, faintly: "I am here. I am alive. More or less."

"Do you need me to come to you? Are you in one piece?"

"I believe…I can walk. My fighter is also salvageable. Let us meet at the archaeological ruin."

A high-pitched whining sounded from above. Miranda squinted into the sky and saw several points of light, moving towards her relative position at a high speed.

"Fighters," she muttered, then said into her comm, "Sounds like a plan. We'd better hurry, though; we're going to have company, soon. With any luck I'll come across a ruined Jalex fighter between here and there, and maybe we can get some answers."

"Or more questions," cane the response.

"That's what I love about you," she intoned. "Always so optimistic."

She dug into her fighter, withdrew a survival pack and her sidearm, which she strapped on, then set off towards the fissure. She was, by her comm scans, about two miles away, a 45 minute walk, roughly.

She moved for about 15 minutes through the valleys and gulleys of Venus before, rounding a bend, she came across a smoking wreckage. To her surprise, however, the vessel wasn't a Jalex ship, but of earth make. It had definitely been upgraded with Jalex technology, but the basic design was of old Earth, the same class that was used during the Earth-Decti War about 50 years ago, before the misunderstanding came to light, and the two races became fast friends.

She drew her sidearm and moved in, on alert. Someone was in the cockpit, moving, but with a halting, jerking sort of gait. She was inclined to say they were badly injured, but she'd never encountered a Jalex in person so she had no idea how they moved. She kept her blaster trained on the shape, locked in, just in case, and approached from a rear angle.

She was about twenty feet from the ship, when she saw something that turned the blood in her veins to ice, sent a cold fist gripping her heart and squeezing. She stumbled, dropped to one knee, couldn't catch her breath. It was like something out of a nightmare. A ghost from a distant past she never knew, except in her darkest dreams, tales of bogeymen her grandfather used to tell her when she was a little girl.

"It can't be," she breathed. "It just can't be."

The symbol on the wing of the ship was the symbol of Yig, an ancient serpent deity worshipped by the archenemies of William St. John, centuries, and possibly millennia ago, a global crime syndicate known at the time as the Order of the Black Dragon.

Her head snapped up at a hissing sound. The canopy of the fighter had raised, and the figure within was trying to pull themselves out. By the basic form, it looked human. The fear and terror gripping her turned to rage, and Miranda leapt up and strode forward. She grabbed the pilot by the scruff of his neck and hauled him bodily the rest of the way out of the cockpit. He screamed in agony. His legs were twisted at awkward angles, and blood poured from a dozen wounds.

She tore his helmet off and was surprised again. He was so young, barely old enough to be behind the stick. He was actually crying from the pain. She estimated he didn't have long. Minutes, maybe, before he bled out. She leveled her blaster at him.

"Start talking," she said, "and I'll make it quick. What's with the Jalex tech on your ship, and where did you get 50-year-old designs to begin with? And you'd better have a good answer for this one: what's with the symbol of Yig on your wing?"

He managed a wry grin through the blood and tears. She kicked him in the ribs and he let out a half-human yowl of agony.

"Talk!" she screamed.

The young pilot coughed, a horrid, wet sound accompanied by a splash of bright, frothy red blood—the sign of a punctured lung. "You are a St. John. It is time, then. The Black Dragon," he rasped, "rises once more."

"The Order died out centuries ago," she spat. "You're lying. You uncovered something, some old book somewhere. You're trying to re-invent something but you have no idea what you're playing with!"

"Re-invented…nothing. And it's you who has no idea." He let out a gurgle, spasmed twice, then lay still. She watched the focus leave his eyes, until they were nothing but glassy mirrors, her face the last thing burned into the retinas.

"Son of a bitch," she muttered. "This is a goddamn nightmare."

She cast her eyes around, holstered her blaster, and set back off towards the ruin.

* * *

The trudge to the ruin felt like she was walking hundreds of kilometers, though in reality it wasn't nearly that many. It took about two hours to get there, checking in with Clental every few minutes to make sure both were still moving forward. The terrain was rugged, rocky, dusty, the sun beat down like a sledgehammer. Venus may have been terraformed, but even after decades it was still, as the fighter jockeys in her unit would say, hot as balls.

Christ, she thought. *My unit. I really hope they made it through okay.*

She was about an hour into her walk when the cyclopean ruin could be seen on the horizon. For the next half hour it never seemed to get closer. She took a pull on her canteen and kept on going. Check in with Clental once more. He was still moving, too. She could do this. She could do this. Her left leg and right shoulder burned like fire; she'd wrenched both during the crash landing.

Then it happened. As suddenly as the ruin had appeared on the horizon, it towered above her, then 15 minutes later she was within what she assumed was the city limits. What was left of the buildings made it hard to discern any sort of artistic pattern; millions of years of acid clouds and runaway greenhouse effect had done their work well. Still, there were faint carvings in some of the stones that appeared to be writing. Here and there, well-bleached bones could be seen that appeared human, but not human. Some were slender and elongated; others squat and broad. Some looked like children.

"What am I doing?" she grumbled. "I'm not an archaeologist. What do I think I'm going to find, here?"

"Come again?" Clental's voice crackled in her ear.

"Never mond, love," she said. "Didn't realize my comm was on. I was just grumbling to myself. I think I'm close to the eastern edge of the city. What about you?"

"Entering from the south."

"All right. Keep going straight in towards the center. I'll do the same. Hopefully we'll meet up somewhere along the way."

A clacking of falling stone made her jump. Her heart skipped a beat and she spun, drawing her pistol and pointing it towards the sound, but also towards nothing in particular. She cocked her head, examined the shaded area between two ruins that was probably once an alleyway. She didn't see anything.

Then, a quiet shuffling sound came from there, just for a second. Something like a sixth sense went off in her head, though she'd never classified as a syker, and she dove right, just as an energy bolt erupted from the alley. She rolled behind a pile of stone and brick. Another blast sent chunks of rock and dust flying. She popped up, squeezed off a few shots. Her own explosion of rock shards yielded a high-pitched roar from the alley and she saw it: an insect-like creature leapt back, revealed. Though she'd never seen one before, she knew from descriptions it was a Jalex warrior.

Shots fired from three more positions, all around her. She curled up into a ball behind the rubble, praying it would provide enough cover to keep her alive.

"Clental!" she shouted. "I've got hostiles. I'm pinned!"

"On my way," came the response.

"Just follow the sound of gunfire!" She popped up, took a bead, and squeezed off four shots. The Jalex in the alleyway squealed again and collapsed into a heap, its legs twitching in the air. She ducked down again as shots rang out around her.

"One down," she grumbled. "Lord knows how many to go."

She scanned the immediate area. About 50 yards away rose a structure that was, so much as she could tell, largely intact. Tents set up around the area indicated it might be the archaeological site, but she saw no movement. Fear, anger, rage, desperation and sadness welled up inside her all at the same time. Desperation won out, and she decided it was her best bet for cover. She kept her head down, took a breath, and dashed.

Again, bolts of green plasma erupted from all around. Somehow, impossibly, she ran the gauntlet. One blast took a chunk out of the shoulder of her flight suit, but missed the flesh under it. With each miss, a cloud of dust leapt into the air. That was good; it made it hard to see, and easier for her to move.

After what seemed like a week of running, she dove through an archway and hit the ground, the wind blasted out of her. Still, she managed to rise up and point her gun at the ruins around, scanning for signs of life. There was nothing. She rolled, put her back against a pillar, and peeked out. She could see the Jalex, now, moving from ruin to rubble pile, skittering around like gigantic bugs. Occasionally one would catch a glimpse of her and fire; she would fall back as a cloud of dust and rock would erupt too close to her.

Near as she could count, there were at least a half dozen, if not more. They moved like lightning, though.

The rage boiled up in her now. There was no way the Jalex should've ever infiltrated this far into the system. They'd even bypassed Earth. Because of course they had; Earth wasn't a threat and there was no reason to invade it until they'd taken out the colonies. Of course, now she knew there were traitors among humankind. The records of the Knights of William St. John were clear about the Order of the Black Dragon…the Order of Yig. Their motives were inscrutable, impossible to figure out beyond power and control, but inexorably evil.

Of course, it was the Order who allied with the Jalex, who somehow managed to help them get here. But why Venus? Why a barely habitable ball of rock that was largely an archaeological treasure but without much in the way of measurable resources? A staging ground for an invasion of the rest of the Solar system, perhaps? It made sense.

The firing had stopped. The silence was eerie; she could hear her own heart pounding in her ears. That was when she heard

it—no, felt it was more accurate: a faint hum, a vibration coming from somewhere behind and beneath her.

She yelped and jumped when the firing suddenly erupted again, but nothing came towards her. She rolled right and peeked around the pillar. There he was: Clental. He ducked and weaved between ruins, his biotech-enhanced Decti physiology enabling him to make moves that seemed impossible to her eyes. It was temporary, she knew; some sort of biochemical infusion that would wear off shortly.

She took a risk, stuck her head out, and called "Clental! This way!"

A shot came towards her, grazing her shoulder. She let out a cry and fell back. She rotated it; everything still worked. Add it to the inventory of injuries she was racking up. She popped back out, took a few shots. Clental was nearly to her. Just a few more seconds…

Then it happened. A green Jalex blast flashed, Clental let out a mechanical cry and dropped, a smoking hole in his side, a splatter of greenish ichor around him. She cried his name, started to come out, but he held up his hand, grunted, and launched himself the several feet to get behind the walls with her.

"Clental?" she said. "Clental, my God, baby, you're hurt!"

"Your assessment is sound," he said. "It's a bad wound."

"We need to find a way out of here," she said. "Something, somewhere…"

She looked around, tried to feel for the vibration. Then her eyes settled on a stairway, across the room they were in.

"There," she said. "If nothing else it might be a place to hole up."

Clental coughed; green blood came up with it. "Or," he said, "it could be a death trap. But it would seem our only option." He took her hand and made it to his feet. "You should know," he said, "that as I was making my way here I could see in the tents. Bodies. Slaughtered. We might not like whatever we find down there."

She was grim. "If they've murdered the archaeological team and they are down there, we have a duty to find out, survive, and report back."

He nodded, and they descended into the darkness below.

* * *

The stairs led to a winding tunnel under the ground, much better preserved than the buildings above. Bas-reliefs on the walls depicted fantastical creatures like the elves and dwarves and demons of ancient myth. They depicted dwarf-like creatures and giants digging tunnels into a vast tree, with worlds at the ends of each of its branches and roots. Strange ovals and runic writing were depicted at the end of each root.

Could this be the origin of all those ancient stories? Some sort of cultural memory influencing fantasy writers throughout the ages?

"This," Clental wheezed, "Would appear to be some sort of ancient temple."

"Yeah," she whispered. "But to what?"

They continued along the tunnels, which were lit by harsh electrical lighting set up, no doubt, by the archaeologists.

They turned a corner to find themselves facing a large double door. Miranda reached out and gave it a gentle push. Despite its size, the door swung open easily and she and Clental snuck in to find a buzz of activity in a vast chamber filled with equipment, boxes, pillars, and statuary, like some sort of obscene blend of ancient and modern.

Just then, a blast rang out and chunk of ancient stone exploded right beside Miranda's forehead, firing shards in all directions; one sliced her cheek and she let out a yelp. Next to her, Clental huddled and all but curled into a ball; his gleaming blue-grey skin shuddered as blood poured from a dozen wounds. The lights on his bio-electric implants blinked rapidly. While Miranda wasn't adept enough to interpret the readouts with any degree of exactness, she knew they were working overtime to keep the Decti alive, and her heart sank. She choked back tears and laid a hand on his cool, smooth, and slippery skin.

"Hey," she said. "We're going to get you out of here."

"One would hope," he coughed, and more blood appeared on his lips. "But this may be our last adventure together."

"Not this day," Miranda said. "You're going to live, and that's an order. We still have a wedding to plan."

"I do not believe," he coughed again, "That you get to order me on this issue. But if you wish us to survive, I recommend thinking of something fast."

She sneered. "Only one thing left to do, then. Go in guns ablazing."

She took up his gun in her left hand, hefted her sidearm in her right, and leapt from her hiding place, filling the air with a deadly rain made with a combination of explosive slugs and bioelectric pulses. She had no idea how long the Decti weapon would hold out when wielded by a human before running out of energy, but she hoped it was long enough to at least even the odds a bit.

Her enemies—mostly human traitors, mixed with a few Jalex—were fanned out around what appeared to be a giant oval mirror which stood at least ten feet high. It had an ornate brass frame covered in some sort of runic writing. They were caught off-guard by her sudden, brazen attack, and four went down in her first assault. That left at least ten more, and Miranda calculated her best chance of survival was to be right in their midst, where they'd be worried about shooting each other in the crossfire. It

was a desperate move; it put her in nearly as much danger as standing in the open, but it was the only play she had. She put her head down, bore down on the triggers of the two weapons to issue a further dragon-like belch of destructive force ahead of her, and charged.

Her goal was the figure near the back of the ranks, the one standing before the mirror who appeared to be reading those runic marks. The figure was lithe, slender; its gender or even species was impossible to determine. It wasn't Jalex; that it had two arms and two legs spoke to that. It wore a ballistic reflective armor trench coat which both disguised its body shape and deflected most of the shots coming its way, and was adorned in a metallic green mask in the shape of a serpent. She cried out the only name she had to call the figure, a name from the dim, dark past of the Knights of William St. John.

"Doctor Serpent!" she screamed.

The figure ceased its reading for just a moment, its head half-turned towards her, then it turned back to complete its efforts.

Miranda dodged and weaved through the web of fire laid down by the enemy, somehow, miraculously making it into the depth of their ranks. She didn't know whether it was her own rage that drove her, or just blind, dumb luck, but she made it to the enemy with just a few scratches to show for it. She holstered the Decti weapon and in the same, fluid motion, drew her vibro-sword, a wicked-looking blade hardened by electromagnetic pulses which gave it a diamond-keen edge.

The blade thrummed in her hand as she swept it across at the nearest Jalex warrior. The insectoid creature let out a strange, almost mechanical sound as green-yellow ichor shot from its throat where the blade made contact. She tore it free, and the creature went down. Its multiple limbs twitched and clattered, and then it lay still.

A sudden explosion of pain rocked Miranda's right shoulder; she let out a grunt and pitched forward. Her body armor had absorbed most of the blast, and the glow had just been a glance, but the pain still spun her head and the impact was enough to knock her face-first on the ground. She turned over to find an all-too-human opponent looming over her, a pistol trained on her.

"Traitor!" she spat.

"You're the traitor, *Knight*," he retorted. "The Order of the Black Dragon is resurgent, and with the help of our Jalex allies, we will….*UNGH!*"

A smoking hole appeared in his chest, and he dropped to his knees, wobbled for a moment, then fell sideways, his head making a sick, wet cracking sound as it struck the stone floor. Miranda risked a glance to her left, where Clental leaned against the pillar behind which they'd taken earlier refuge, a blaster implant on his own right arm smoking.

He nodded at her. She returned the nod and leapt to her feet, bowling forward with everything she had, with the full intent

of driving her blade through the heart of this pretender to the Doctor Serpent legacy. Centuries—possibly millennia—of hatred and enmity overcame her, and if she knew one thing it was that she would not allow the Order to rise again.

Just as she was about to drive the blade through its back, the masked figure calmly stepped aside, threw its arm forth, and grabbed her by the throat. Its grip was like a vise; she heard the whir of servos and knew that the arm that held her was cybernetic.

"You're…not….him," she choked. "You…can't…be!"

"Oh," the figure whispered in a mechanical, modulated voice tone, "But I am."

Doctor Serpent hurled her away. She struck a pillar in the ancient ruin and all the breath went out of her as she slid down to the ground. Enemies closed in, and then Doctor Serpent waved a hand before the gigantic mirror and a wave of energy issued forth. Everyone in the room froze, as if time ceased to exist, but Miranda and Doctor Serpent seemed unaffected by the burst. She pulled herself to her feet.

Doctor Serpent turned its head towards her slightly and grunted. "A miscalculation," it said. "I had hoped you would be outside the bubble and frozen with the rest."

"You can't have the Ring of Brass," she said. "I won't let you."

Doctor Serpent turned towards her once more, facing her fully this time. "So," it said. "You know what this is."

"We have records," she said, and trained her weapon on him. "I know what it is."

Doctor Serpent flicked its fingers, and the sidearm flew from her grasp.

"You have records," it pondered. "And yet, you keep them secret from the rest of humanity. You could make the entire galaxy better, control entire governments. If you know what this is, you know the whole of human history, and yet you, the Knights of William St. John, are content to allow humanity to forget. Earth has descended into a technologically-advanced state of barbarism, and here you are, proudly soaring among the stars with your 'enlightened' colonies that the poor people of Earth don't even know exist."

"We left," she shot back, "To save humanity. You said it yourself; Earth was beyond saving. The last war…we cut our losses and got out."

"But what if you could change it?" Doctor Serpent said. It swept its arm back towards the Ring of Brass. "This is a gateway to anywhere in time and space. All we have to do is learn to use it, and we can control everything. Just think; you could eliminate the man who fired the first shot of the last war, preventing it from ever happening. You could control the flow of history on Earth."

"Like a god," she said.

She could almost sense Doctor Serpent smiling behind its mask. "Like a god," it agreed.

"You're insane," she breathed, "and I'm going to stop you."

"I don't see how," it said. "You're not match for me one on one."

She took a few steps forward, then stopped dead as the mirror behind her shimmered to life, a sort of fog swirling within, shot through with blue, pink, and green lights. The fog shaded, and there, on the other side, she saw people, one of whom was Doctor Serpent.

"What the Hell?" she said.

There were others there, as well, two men and a woman who battled the Order of the Black Dragon in what looked like another world, a more primitive world, yet still one with a degree of technological advancement. One of them wielded what appeared to be a blade of fire; another a primitive energy blaster. A third was armed with old-style slug-throwing pistols. The scene all but mirrored her own. She didn't see a Ring of Brass, until it occurred to her that she was looking *through the Ring on the other side.*

"Yes," Doctor Serpent said. "Your meager 'teams' from the past, battling futilely against my vast organization. When I bring together the Order from every era together, no one will be able to stop us."

Just then, Miranda's eyes met those of the young man dressed in a sort of primitive black field uniform, and she noted an unmistakable resemblance.

"You," she breathed, "you're my ancestor."

"Incredible technology, isn't it?" Doctor Serpent hissed. "Now, since you won't join me, it's time for you to die. *Kneel.*"

An incredible wave of energy issued forth from Doctor Serpent, a mental force that weighed on Miranda's mind. She threw everything she had into fighting against its influence, took one step forward, then a second, then a third, staggering. At last, however, his power was too much for her to resist, and she found herself on her knees, unable to move.

On the other side of the mirror, the scene shifted again, as if of its own will…

Miranda couldn't move, couldn't fight against the onslaught of mental energy directed towards her. Doctor Serpent's will was like an iron fist, crushing her own. It sauntered towards her in a serpentine manner befitting its identity.

"What an auspicious way to return the Order to its former glory," Doctor Serpent whispered. "By destroying our centuries-old enemies, and the only real threat to our rise. You, the leader of the Knights of William St. John. You're going to die here, on Venus, in these ancient alien ruins. Your body will never be found."

"The Knights," Miranda choked out, "will continue."

"Perhaps," it said. "But you're their leader. They don't have your records. You knowledge. The legacy of William St. John will be snuffed out with your life. So now…you die."

Just then, Doctor Serpent's back arched and it let out a grunt of pain, as a blade of pure fire erupted through its body. A young woman, one of those Miranda had seen through the Ring of Brass, was there, suddenly. She was dressed all in black, lace gloves, lace dress, straight black hair, pale skin and deep, pale, vibrant blue eyes.

"What do you know?" she said. "I think I'm in the future."

She tore the blade free, and Doctor Serpent stumbled right to get out from between the two women. His hold on Miranda broken, she leapt to her feet and retrieved her weapon again.

"Hi," the young woman in black said. "I'm Sandra Stevens. I'm from the past. I don't think that will ever stop being cool."

Miranda kept her weapon trained on Doctor Serpent and moved to join Sandra. "Miranda O'Malley," she said, and fired once, twice, a third time. Each shot rattled Doctor Serpent's body, causing a convulsion and driving it back several steps. The body hit the ground and lay still. Then she grabbed Sandra and dragged her behind the altar in the ancient temple, exchanging fire with the Jalex and humans that still remained. Across the room, Clental also fired his weapon, but his shots were coming less frequently, and Miranda knew if they didn't get him medical attention soon…

She shook her head and buried the terror. Her and Clental were going to get out of here, and they were going to be married.

She turned to Sandra, confident that their cover provided them temporary safety. "So," she said. "The past, eh?"

Sandra was enraptured by the ancient carvings on the wall. "Uh-huh," she said. "2019. These carvings are incredible! I gather we're not on Earth—also something that will never stop being awesome—so where are we?"

"Venus," Miranda said, and risked a peek. It was a standoff for the time being.

"I'm sorry, Vewhat?"

"Venus," Miranda said. "When we terraformed and colonized here we found the ruins of a civilization here, millions of years old."

"These creatures," Sandra said. "Religion is kind of my thing, and these look like something out of a fantasy novel. Here, there are elves, and dwarves. Like, *classic elves and dwarves.* This here, some sort of red god figure. I can't read the writing. I'm not a linguist. But I think the people who lived here, they could've been the origins for some of our ideas of these creatures. They're fighting over that," she gestured towards the Ring. "This is incredible!"

Miranda popped up, squeezed off a couple shots at Order soldiers who had come too close and to make sure Doctor Serpent's

body was still there. It was. She ducked back down and said, "That's fascinating, but do you have anything that'll be useful to us right now? I need to get back to base and report this."

"I…can…help," came Clental's voice over her comms. "If…if we can…get out. Power core…from my fighter."

"Oh, you beautiful bioelectric amphibian!" she cried. "I could just kiss you!"

"Later," Clental said.

Miranda turned to Sandra. "That was my fiancée," she said. "He's across the room, and badly wounded. But if we can get to him, get out, we can blow this place sky high."

"Whoa," Sandra said. "I just came here to help. I have no intention of staying. I literally just joined the Brotherhood in 2019. This is my first mission with them. I've got a life back home. A foster mother, a girlfriend."

"Great," Miranda said. "Then you can activate the explosives before you go home. Just help me get to Clental. He's pretty badly wounded. I need to get him out of here."

Sandra thought for a moment, chewed on the inside of her cheek, then said, "I can do that. How far you think he is? Can we see him?"

Miranda peeked, and pointed. "I'd guess about 50 feet?"

"Perfect," Sandra said. "First things first." She leaned out, followed Miranda's indication to where what to her eyes was a grotesque melding of amphibious living tissue and artificial augmentation exchanged fire with the enemy. The creature was clearly wounded, and badly. She looked back at Miranda. "That's your fiancée? Not for me to judge, I guess. I've never tried this with a non-human before, so bear with me." She pointed at the creature Clental, and whispered a prayer. Within seconds, his wounds began to knit, and his skin flushed.

Sandra ducked back and said, "It's not much, just a minor healing benediction," she said. "But he's stable. Now for you." She reached out and touched Miranda on the arm. Miranda felt a strange sort of warmth pass through her body, followed by a supreme confidence.

"I can't guarantee you won't take fire," Sandra said, "But that should offset a lot of it. You have one minute. Go, and whatever you do, *don't shoot back.*"

Miranda didn't question. She dashed from her hiding place to Clental. As she ran, she noted out of the corner of her eyes that while the enemy was taking aim at her, they seemed inexplicably unable to pull their triggers. The few that did, their shots went wide. One actually shot an ally.

"Cute trick," she muttered.

For her part, Sandra took the opportunity and distraction to run full tilt towards the Ring of Brass. "This could be an absolute disaster," she muttered. "I really hope it takes me home and

doesn't drop me into some post-apocalyptic wasteland. Or outer space." She put her head down, dove through the Ring, and vanished in a flash of light.

Across the room, Miranda ran the gauntlet of a hail of blaster fire and made it to Clental. "The power core," she said. "And fast."

Clental produced it from inside his flight suit. It was a fist-sized ball, glowing green, and wired with a complex arrangement of wires and circuit boards, all of which ran to a pressure plate on top.

"I took the liberty of wiring it while I was walking here," he said. "Press a thumb to the pressure plate for two seconds, then drop it. It will have a five second delay."

"Wait here," Miranda said, and kissed his smooth, slick cheek. "I'll be back."

She wove through the maze of machinery, pillars, and stonework, looking for the right spot. At length she found it—a clear support pillar which if taken out should cause the whole ceiling to come down. Never one for religion, Miranda nevertheless closed her eyes and said a prayer. Then she pressed the button, tossed the power core, and ran. She grabbed Clental, who was recovered enough to run with support, and made for the exit.

The resounding *BOOOOM!!!!* Of the power core detonation deafened both of them as it reverberated through the halls. The entire structure quaked; dust filled the halls and behind

them the screams of their enemies mixed with the rumble of falling stone. Nevertheless, the two of them made it out of the structure and into the desert heat once more.

They stood and looked at the ruins. Clental made a disappointed clicking sound.

"Problem, love?" Miranda said.

"Indeed," he responded. "It is good that we stopped this new Doctor Serpent from obtaining that device, but it's also sad that we won't be able to research it ourselves. It could have been a source of unspeakable power, and one that could solve our jump drive crisis."

She nodded. "The good news is, we still may. That Ring was in an alcove. It may have been protected from the collapse. We'll need to get a team out here to excavate and see what we can find. Also, where there's one of those things, there has to be more. If nothing else we know there were Rings on Earth at some point, based on what we saw."

He grunted and took her hand. "I hope you're right. And what about Doctor Serpent?"

"I'd love to think they're dead," she said. "But somehow, given his history in the Brotherhood's records, I expect we'll see them again. Shall we see if we can find a ship and get off this rock?"

The two set off towards the nearest archaeological base camp as the hot sun beat down upon them.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome back to **Amazing Adventures,** and welcome back to **StarSIEGE!**

Back in 2008, Troll Lord Games released our first effort at a SIEGE engine science fiction game, and it was met with great excitement by the fans. The original game was an exciting take on a science fiction application of the SIEGE engine rules that included a number of innovative takes on the system. Unfortunately, for many fans the learning curve was a bit too steep coming from **Castles & Crusades,** and sales slumped somewhat. As a result, we at TLG let the original version of **StarSIEGE** lapse as we considered what to do with the product.

Flash forward a few years, and **Amazing Adventures** was released in 2012. This take on a modern version of the SIEGE rules was designed to be highly compatible with **C&C,** have a minimal learning curve, and still allow players to approach modern gaming with customizable characters and a feel that allowed a broad and open scope of play. It has been acclaimed for its versatility and ease of play. With the launch of the **Amazing Adventures Companion** and **Manual of Monsters** in 2015, both of which contained options and hints for sci-fi play, it wasn't long before fans were asking for a re-launch of **StarSIEGE** using a similar approach.

Well, here we are in 2020 and it seems that the approach used by **AA** is a perfect fit for the **StarSIEGE** line. It has always been our intent to re-release this game as we feel sci-fi and space opera gaming is a natural extension of fantasy gaming in general, and conceptually we love the idea. We hope you'll enjoy what we've done with it.

What This Book Is NOT

This book is, in the end, a supplement to the **Amazing Adventures** role playing game, and we do assume that you own a copy of that game to play. We have offered very basic character creation rules, a few classes to take you to level 3, and the streamlined rules of play so you can get up and running to try things out with just this book; however, when it comes time to get into the nitty gritty of things, bring in high technology, psychic powers, and the like, you'll definitely need access to the core rulebook. As you read you'll find out why, but it's important to let you know up front, while you can do some play with just this book, it's actually a genre book expansion for the **Amazing Adventures** role playing game.

What You'll Find Herein

This new **Amazing Adventures StarSIEGE** makes every attempt to retain the versatility and adaptability of the original rules set, while bringing the whole game in line with the SIEGE Engine as presented in C&C and AA. Yes, this means a return to class-and-level gaming, which we know some players will frown upon, but we ask that you give it a shot; you're going to find that ability checks, classes and levels work surprisingly well for modern gaming, especially in a system so straightforward and open as the SIEGE Engine.

Thus, while this new version of **StarSIEGE** is inspired and informed by the original, it is entirely its own game, rebuilt from the ground up. This is an effort both to offer the most compatible option to players, and to respect the ownership of the original game and its author. Hopefully our fans are understanding of that fact.

Certain elements informed by that game will be retained. You will find, for example, an optional skills system in here that you can add onto your games, which will allow a degree of character customization. The Generic Class Ability system from **Amazing Adventures** will also optionally be expanded so that you can swap abilities from any two classes, offering a complete level of character customization to build precisely the character you want, while still retaining the class-and-level core of the game.

A brief glance of what you'll find here:

Chapter One: Characters outlines the character classes you'll need for space opera gaming, as well as options for playing alien races. These have been held to broad archetypes of the kinds of characters you see in literature and films: races, for example, are things like the crab-men, the saurian, gray aliens, androids and the like, though guidelines will be in place to create new races specific to your campaign later on in the book.

For character classes, you'll find such staples as the gunslinger, the pirate, the psychic, the mercenary soldier, the noble, the scoundrel, the monk, and the techie-engineer. The beauty, however, of **Amazing Adventures** is that each class presents a broad archetype that you can use to get up and running with a space opera game quickly—no **new** character classes are needed; merely a new way to look at existing classes, especially with the customizability of Generic Class Abilities in play.

Also in chapter one you'll find a wealth of sci-fi equipment to outfit your adventurers, as well as the revised system for building equipment and gear specific to your campaign.

Chapter Two: Advanced Customization

Just as in the **AA** core rulebook, Chapter Two will present advanced customization rules that will allow you to tweak and build exactly the character you want from the broad archetypes in the first chapter. This chapter is expressly optional and is present for those who want more options for their character builds. In this chapter you'll find things like Generic Class Abilities, Skills, Traits and Backgrounds to create a unique persona from your character. Some of these will be reprinted from **Amazing Adventures** for ease of reference; others will be new to this sourcebook.

Chapter Three: Rules and Systems

Most of the rules you need to play are already contained in the **Castles & Crusades** or **Amazing Adventures** rulebooks. This chapter will contain new and expanded systems for such things as space battles both between star fighters and capitol ships, radiation exposure, surviving in a vacuum, computer hacking, and other star-faring concerns.

Chapter Four: Running the Sci-Fi Game

Chapter four will look at the different sub-genres of science fiction, the tropes involved in running them, and how you can bring them into your game. It will also contain general guidelines for the GM on how to run a science fiction or space opera game, constructing stories and campaigns, and more.

Chapter Five: Solar Burn

Chapter five will explore a brand new setting which gives you everything you need to get up and running with your own game. This setting is a gritty space opera setting with low pure fantasy elements, but a number of conceits (explosions in space, for example) to action-adventure gaming among the stars. In it, humanity has spread across the Solar System, with colonies on several different planets and moons. It's recovering from a war half a century ago with an alien race, which now exists in an uneasy peace with colonies of its own. When a brand new threat emerges from the Vast Empty, humanity and its uneasy new allies must join forces for the sake of all life in the galaxy.

What You Need to Play

StarSIEGE is not a core game unto itself; it is intended as a sourcebook for the **Amazing Adventures** role playing game. Thus, in order to use this sourcebook, you will need and a copy of the SIEGE Engine core rules. It is recommended to pick up a copy of the **Amazing Adventures** core rulebook, which is available directly from Troll Lord Games or from your favorite local game store. Those who have **Castles & Crusades** should be fine with a bit of intuition, imagination and improvisational skills, especially if you also have the **Game Master's Guide,** which has some science fiction options therein.

The differences between **C&C** and **AA** are exceptionally minor and it should not be difficult to intuit what is missing from one to the other. **AA,** however, offers a wealth of new modern character classes and equipment as well as additional rules options for such things as firearms and the like and extra Generic Class Abilities, Traits, Backgrounds and the like that will come in handy for building your character.

Don't Re-Invent the Wheel

One final note: the entire point of the **Amazing Adventures** rules set is that it's a multi-genre role playing game that just out of the core book allows for just about any kind of setting, just by applying a bit of imagination and thinking outside the box. When switching genres in any game, but especially in the SIEGE Engine, never re-invent the wheel. When you need a solution to a genre-related problem, the best approach is always the simplest approach, and the one that already exists within game. Just as any check defaults to an attribute when there's

not another system, almost any problem in the SIEGE Engine can be solved by using the mechanics already present.

In the **Amazing Adventures** core rules, for example, super science is modeled using the effects from magic spells as a jumping-off point. Why do this? Again, the spells offer a very broad and comprehensive list of things you can accomplish, and this in turn provides an outstanding base for creating technology using those effects. With spells you can create explosive devices, handheld scanners, rocket packs, healing technology, particle beam weapons, power packs, holographic projections, portable shelters, and even space-warp technology that allows for reality-bending effects. There's no reason to create an entire new and complex system for technology design, when the spell lists in the game give you everything you need already.

Remember, the entire point of AA is to handle any genre of play with few to no changes or additions. Thus, much of what you'll find herein will be some optional systems and suggestions, new hazards and obstacles, and advice on how to adapt your game to the tropes of science fiction. We hope you'll give it a chance, and we think you'll find it works very well.

With that in mind, as you delve into the depths of the unknown black void of space, think outside the box, know your game, and know what's there for you to use. Make the best use of it before inventing an entirely new subsystem.

I've Seen This Stuff Before!

Some of the material in this work previously appeared in the **Amazing Adventures Companion** and the **Amazing Adventures Book of Powers.** It has been included here for completeness, and to provide all of the necessary guidelines in one place, so it's not necessary to own (or flip through) multiple books to obtain all the information you need.

You will also, however, find that the vast majority of it is not a simple reprint, but has been greatly expanded upon and grown from its original entry, with more advice and greater descriptions of the sub-genres in question. In addition, a wealth of new material is included to aid the GM in building their science fiction milieu.

A FINAL NOTE

Please remember, finally, that this is an *early preview* of the StarSIEGE game. It is fully playable and complete as it sits, but in the future, we will be *greatly* expanding it with even more options, sample settings, adventures, equipment, ships, and subsystems, to really allow you to take your sci-fi **Amazing Adventures** games to the next level. We hope you enjoy this early look at the great things to come for genre gaming with the SIEGE Engine.

CHAPTER ONE: CHARACTERS

In this chapter we'll explore the different character archetypes that are commonly found in science fiction settings. First we'll explore new races and how they fit into your game. The example races presented are very generic presentations of the kinds of species often seen in space operas—lizard people, insect folk, cat people, etc. There will be guidelines in Chapter Six for creating races specific to your game, so you can let your imagination run wild!

Following races, you'll find archetypal character classes. These have been named using "space opera" terminology; however, you'll find that they are applicable to many different sub-genres of science fiction. In each class, we will include a suggested list of "re-naming" conventions for those wanting their character classes to match their chosen genre in name as well as in abilities. The Ace Pilot, for example, could be a wheel-man in a cyberpunk or alien invasion game. Likewise the Mercenary Soldier could in the aforementioned alien invasion game, be a resistance fighter. The Tech could be a starship engineer or a computer hacker.

ATTRIBUTES

Attributes represent a character's physical and mental traits. All characters have six attributes:

Strength (Str)

Dexterity (Dex)

Constitution (Con)

Intelligence (Int)

Wisdom (Wis)

Charisma (Cha)

Each attribute has a numeric score ranging from 3 to 18. Each attribute score also has a corresponding modifier, which is a bonus or penalty added to or subtracted from certain die rolls during the game as detailed throughout the rules.

There are two types of attributes: primary and secondary. Of the six attributes each character has, the player selects three to be primary attributes. The remaining attributes are secondary. The distinction is important when determining the outcome of many actions in **Amazing Adventures**. When a character uses a class ability, such as a hooligan attempting to pick a fat gangster's pocket or a raider tracking a rival archaeologist through a dark forest, an attribute check is rolled to determine if the action is successful.

Each class ability has an attribute check associated with it. If the class ability's associated attribute is one of the character's primary attributes, the character has a greater chance of successfully performing the task. The same principle holds true for the other aspects of the game in which an attribute check is required.

Attribute checks are explained in greater detail later. For now, just remember that the selection of primary and secondary attributes significantly affects the possibility of success for many actions in the game. Attribute checks associated with a primary attribute are significantly more likely to succeed than those actions performed with a secondary attribute.

The Six Attributes

STRENGTH: This attribute reflects physical strength, including the ability to lift or move heavy objects and make powerful attacks. The modifier affects melee combat and damage, and all checks for which strength is the primary influence. Characters can easily carry twice their strength, and can, for brief periods, military press 10x their strength and dead lift 15x their strength score in pounds.

DEXTERITY: This attribute represents a character's reflexes, manual dexterity and hand-eye coordination, including the ability to dodge and defend against attacks. The modifier affects armor class, ranged combat and all checks involving dexterity.

CONSTITUTION: This attribute reflects overall health, and also represents a character's ability to withstand pain, suffer physical damage, avoid fatigue and fight off sickness or poison. The modifier affects hit points, and it applies to all checks involving constitution as the prime attribute.

INTELLIGENCE: This attribute reflects mental aptitude. It represents a character's ability to learn quickly, apply that learning effectively and use deductive reasoning. The modifier affects the number of arcane spells a character can cast each day, the number of languages a character can learn and all checks involving intelligence as the prime attribute.

WISDOM: This attribute reflects depth of personal experience, the ability to make well-considered decisions, and represents a spiritual connection to a deity. The modifier affects certain types of spell casting, some psionic powers, attempts to turn the undead and checks involving wisdom as the prime attribute.

CHARISMA: This attribute represents strength of personality, willpower, leadership and attractiveness. It is the degree to which a character is able to influence others. The modifier affects other creatures' loyalty and reactions to the character, and all checks involving charisma as the primary influence.

Generating Attribute Scores

Characters are generated via a point-buy attribute system. At character generation, each attribute starts at 6, and the player begins with 45 points to spread amongst his or her ability scores. No single attribute can begin above 18.

Normally, attribute scores only increase or decrease during the course of a game as a result of magic, poison, curses or other extraordinary events. Should an attribute score change during game play, the modifier changes to correspond to the new score, if applicable. It is possible for an attribute score to fall below 3 or exceed 18 during game play. However, attribute scores for characters that fall outside of this range are rare, and are usually associated with monsters, high-level villains, powerful magical items or other entities controlled by the Game Master.

Optional: Random Generation Method

Some GMs and players like to randomly generate attributes. In this case, simply roll 4d6, keeping the highest three scores. Do this six times and arrange the scores as you see fit.

Optional: Getting rid of the Spread

In practice, the 3-18 spread for attributes only matters insofar as it generates a bonus or penalty to SIEGE checks. If players and GMs wish to get rid of the spread, it's possible to simply play with bonuses. In this case, all abilities should begin at -2, and players have 25 points with which to raise them. No ability can be raised above +3. If a player needs more points, she can lower one or more attributes to -3, gaining one point for each attribute lowered from -2 to -3.

Attribute Modifiers

Each attribute score has a corresponding modifier that can alter die rolls in the game. The modifier is a number added to (or subtracted from) a d20 roll when a character uses an attribute to take an action, make a saving throw or use a class ability.

For example: a character attempting to bend the bars of a prison cell would have his or her strength modifier applied to the roll. The amount of damage delivered to a foe is likewise affected by the attribute modifier. A positive modifier is called a bonus and a negative modifier, a penalty. Higher attribute scores have higher bonuses, and lower attribute scores have larger penalties. So, whether fighting a nasty fishman or hungry cave bear, or avoiding the charms of a femme fatale, attribute modifiers play a decidedly important role in the game.

Attribute Modifiers							
1	2-3	4-5	6-8	9-12	13-15	16-17	18
-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3

Primary and Secondary Attributes

There are two types of attributes in **Amazing Adventures**: primary and secondary. Primary attributes are those physical or mental abilities in which a character is particularly well trained or very experienced in using. Secondary attributes are those the character uses with only average skill. A player selects the character's primary attributes after choosing a class.

Player characters have three primary attributes. Each class has one primary attribute associated with it that cannot be changed. The player selects the others. For example, the primary attribute for the gumshoe class is strength. If the player chooses to play a gumshoe, this forms one primary attribute. The player may then select any two more primary attributes. The remaining attributes are considered to be secondary.

SIEGE CHECKS

As mentioned before, the distinction between primary and secondary attributes is important. Almost all non-combat actions (for which the Game Master deems a roll is necessary to determine success or failure) are resolved by an attribute check, or SIEGE check. To make a SIEGE check, a character rolls a d20, adds any relevant bonuses (usually attribute bonus and level), and attempts to equal or better a Challenge Class, or CC.

The CC is determined by adding the Challenge Base (CB) to a Challenge Level (CL) determined by the GM. Generally speaking, the CL will combine the hit dice or level of the opponent with any situational bonuses or penalties the GM feels appropriate.

Checks made against Primary Attributes have a CB of 12, while checks against Secondary Attributes have a CB of 18. This makes it significantly easier to succeed at a check if you have a Prime in the ability in question.

A character always adds their attribute bonus to a check, and in most situations, also adds their level, so a 3rd level character with a Dexterity of 16 (+2) would add +5 to their check. The only exception is if a character is attempting something that is expressly the purview of another class. In this case, they don't add their level.

For example, if Natalya the Fox, a Hooligan-Mentalist, is trying to slip past the sentries at a Nazi-fortified camp, she makes a Dexterity check for her Move Silently class ability. Since Dexterity is a Prime attribute for Hooligans, her Challenge Base for the check is 12. Let's say that the Nazis have an average of 4 Hit Dice, that means the CL for the check is 4. Adding 12+4 gives us 16 for the final Challenge Class; Natalya needs a 16 or better on her Dexterity check, adding her Dexterity and level (since moving silently is one of her class abilities) to slip unnoticed past the guards.

However, if Mackie Gleeson, a socialite, attempts the same check, she would add *only* her Dexterity and *not* her level, since moving silently is not a socialite ability, but is a hooligan ability. Anyone can try to move silently, of course, but only certain classes (which have the Move Silently class ability) are adept at it. Mackie is not adept, so she can't add her class level to Dexterity checks to try and sneak around.

Finally, if the GM decides that the sentries are exceptionally alert and actively looking out for spies, he may decide that they get to add their Wisdom bonus as well. In this case, the GM decides that they have a Wisdom score of 13, giving them a +1. This +1 could then add to the CL and make it a 5, for a total CC of 17.

A more thorough discussion of the rules and use of checks, called the **SIEGE engine**™, is located in the Game Master's section of the rules. For now, it is just important to understand that checks involving the use of a primary attribute are far more likely to be successful than checks involving secondary attributes.

LANGUAGES

Every character begins play with the ability to speak his or her native language. That is, the language that is common to the region from which he hails. American characters speak English; German characters speak German, etc. Beyond this, characters receive bonus languages equal to twice their intelligence bonus, which they can speak, read, and write fluently at the beginning of play.

Learning new languages is not something that can normally be done overnight. Characters should be encouraged to learn new languages during the course of play if they desire, but unless they retire for a year or so to study, they should not be allowed to read, write and speak the language immediately. For example, Quinton, who speaks only the Queen's English, travels with Erik, a Romany mentalist who speaks the Romany tongue fluently. The player tells the Game Master that Quinton is going to study the language while they travel; the Game Master may allow him to get by with the new language within a few months, but to not become fluent for several years of travel. Languages can be an important part of the game and can offer very challenging roleplaying obstacles if the Game Master is not overly generous in handing them out and the player is intrigued enough to unravel ancient societies' customs with halting words and hand gestures.

CHARACTER RACES

After you generate your Attributes, you'll want to choose a race. In a space opera game, not everyone will be a human being. The following species are presented as possible alien races that can be portrayed in a space opera or science fiction game. Which races are available in your game is entirely up to the GM, so be sure to talk with her about the game you'll be playing before you choose!

If none of these species fit your game, you can check out Chapter Six for guidelines on creating brand new species tailored to your exact needs.

When playing a nonhuman race, you will gain certain benefits not available to humans. Many, for example, gain the ability to see in dim light or darkness. Most gain bonuses (and penalties) to attributes. Some gain skill benefits; others, bonuses to ability checks.

In exchange for these special abilities, alien species gain only two Prime Attributes, as opposed to the three that humans get. One of these Primes is based on their class; the other is of the player's choosing.

Two of the races below, the Decti and the Jalex, are even further detailed in **Chapter Five: Solar Burn**.

HUMAN

Humans are the default species in most games. They are adaptable, tenacious and have a tendency to spread across the galaxy, be it in peaceful federations or militant empires. They are both good and evil, and the attitudes of any given species towards humans will depend on prior interactions.

Humans gain no special benefits or drawbacks, but they have three Prime Attributes, one of which is provided by their class, and the other two chosen by the player.

ANDROID

Androids are mechanical constructs, generally robots who are intended to perform menial tasks and free up human beings for other pursuits. In science fiction they fulfill many roles, from

advisors and valets to ship engineers and even warriors and assassins. They might look like mechanical beings, or they might be exceptionally human-like in appearance and action. Often they are somewhere in between. The specific strictures of the robots in your game are left to you and your GM to determine, but in general, an android possesses a generally humanoid body with two legs, two arms and an artificial intelligence. Androids gain the following benefits:

Ability Scores: +2 to Strength, Dexterity or Intelligence (Player's Choice); -2 to Wisdom or Charisma (Player's choice)

Move: 30 ft. per round.

Size: Medium

Primes: One determined by class, and a second chosen by the player.

Empathic Limitation: Androids cannot choose Charisma as a Prime attribute. If they choose a character class which designates Charisma as Prime, they must choose a different attribute (and as such, may be handicapped in performing certain abilities of their character class). If this is the case, they gain +3 to checks to use their class abilities, representing their training in mimicking human empathy, though their CB still remains 18 for Charisma checks.

Specialized Programming: An android character may choose any two Skills (See Chapter Two); this is their specialized programming. When making checks with that Skill, they are always considered to be using a Prime Attribute, even if the attribute in question is normally not prime. If the attribute in question is already Prime, they gain an additional +3 to checks when using the Skill (See "Skills" in Chapter 2). If the GM is not using Skills in the game, the Android should still gain two as part of this ability.

Crab-Men

"Crab-Men" are a species given this name by humans, based on their appearance similar to large, bipedal crabs. They have eye stalks, heavy chitinous shells, and long, visibly-jointed arms which end in huge pincers. A secondary set of arms with rudimentary hands appears below their claws, allowing them to manipulate tools. They hail from the star system of Al Tarf, or Beta Cancri, in Earth Terms, and speak in a series of clacks and whistles, making their own species name unpronounceable to the human tongue. They can form rudimentary human speech, just enough to make themselves understood, if necessary.

The primary goal of the crab-men is colonization and conquest. They are emotionless creatures who have a rigid and highly militant society. They seek to be the dominant lifeform in the galaxy and are dreaded by most other species as a result. It might be difficult, as such, to work a Crab-Man character into a campaign; doing so is left to the GM and player.

Attributes: +2 to Strength, -2 to Charisma, -2 to Intelligence

Move: 30 ft.

Size: Medium

Primes: One determined by class, and a second chosen by the player.

Natural Armor: Crab-Men have a chitinous shell that provides +2 to their AC.

Amphibious: Crab-Men can breathe in water as easily as they can breathe in air. They can also naturally swim at the same speed as their normal movement and suffer no penalties to act underwater.

Claws: Crab-Men have natural weapons in the form of their claws, which deal 1d6 damage.

Crab-Men and Spawn

Crab-men as presented originally in the **Amazing Adventures Manual of Monsters** had the horrific ability to implant hosts with eggs, which turn the host into a zombie, and then erupt as new crab-men. Player character crab-men, for obvious reasons, do not have this ability. This could be a means of working a crab-man into a campaign; perhaps they are outcast from their society due to being sterile…

The Decti

The Decti are a perfect marriage of biology and technology. They are a wise race, having learned a great deal from their own past mistakes. They tend to be very serene and calm at all times, but have a quiet sense of humor that their friends can learn to appreciate and enjoy. Decti are slow to make friends, but are fiercely loyal to those that they come to respect. They do have a disconcerting habit of recommending "upgrades" to the biology of others, which can be very uncomfortable for races like humanity, who value their unaltered form and view technology as a means to repair damage, not necessarily as a way to force evolution.

They are a warrior culture, viewing battle as a means by which they can test their enhancements; they value honor above all else, and do so un-ironically. Both personal honor and "face"— the way one is seen by others—are of utmost important to a Decti, and the sins of the father are often visited upon the son, and vice-verse. What one does, affects everyone with whom they are associated. That being said, the Decti have also learned from thousands of years of mistakes, and are also a cerebral race; paradoxically, while they value the challenge of combat and aren't ones to back down from a fight, neither do they rush into battle without just cause. They prefer to consider the consequences and negotiate when possible, though they are quick to take insult and they have been prone to make critical errors in judgment, such as the one that led to the Decti-Human war.

Because the Decti are constantly modifying and engaging in transhumanist (or trans-Decti-ist, as the case may be) pursuits, no two Decti look the same. They are, however, disconcerting to view by human standards because they

pride functionality over appearance, and their modifications, both biological and technological, can be grotesque to other species. They do, however, have a basically humanoid structure with two arms, two legs, and a roughly human-like face with eyes, nose, mouth, and ears (though sometimes they do have extra eyes, larger ears, or the like, depending on augmentation). Their biology is amphibious as opposed to mammalian, and they tend to generate a thin slime that keeps their skin moist when they are not in water. They prefer to be in or near water whenever possible, though they are also biologically adapted to extreme cold.

For more on the Decti, see **Chapter Five: Solar Burn**

Ability Scores: +2 to any ability score except Charisma (player's choice); -1 to Charisma; -2 to any one ability score except Charisma (player's choice).

Move: 30 ft. per round.

Size: Medium

Primes: One determined by class, and a second chosen by the player.

Twilight Vision: Decti can see in areas of dim light and natural darkness as well as in daylight, so long as there is at least light equivalent to starlight or moonlight present.

Bio-Technology: Decti characters gain gadget points as though they were a first-level Intelligence-based Gadgeteer (see **Amazing Adventures**). These gadget points must be used to purchase "gadgets" which form the various augmentations with which the Decti has been fitted. They may not be saved to purchase other gadgets down the line. These points do combine with any gained from the Gadgeteer class, should the player choose that class, and gadgets purchased as the class may be installed in the Decti as enhancements.

The Jalex

As the primary antagonists of *Solar Burn,* the Jalex are not 100% suited as a PC race. They are violent warriors who have no driving goal other than mass conquering, subjugation, and exploitation of the cultures they overrun. They are, in many ways, like a beehive with a locust mentality. That being said, this is an open setting, so it's not outside the realm of possibility that a Fifth Column may exist within the Jalex, which seeks to undermine their invasion and support the human-Decti alliance. A player character could be a member of this column, or could be an outcast from Jalex society—perhaps because they are "psychically dead" and cannot access the hive mind.

One thing that is certain: Player character Jalex *cannot access the greater Jalex hive mind.* They are individuals entirely, without access to the knowledge and wisdom of the entire culture. This leaves many bitter, angry, and lonely. Some aggressively seek companionship as a result, while others brutally push others away as a reaction. Regardless, PC Jalex have the following game statistics.

Jalex are an insectoid race, though their second set of limbs is all but vestigial; they support tasks requiring fine dexterity, but do not serve as a full set of additional arms or legs. They look like a humanoid variety of dragonfly, with iridescent body tones and vestigial wings (they do not fly); they are, to the eyes of human beings, strangely attractive in an inexplicable way, due to a combination of their shape, colorization, and the pheromones they exude.

They are vicious warriors who see combat and conflict as the only purpose they have in life. They are quick to anger, and slow to forgive even an imagined sleight. They have a disturbing tendency to consume their prey, right on the battlefield, and do so quickly (it takes one round to consume an entire human-sized body). They also eat several times their body weight in food daily, to maintain their high metabolism.

Jalex are also highly sensual creatures, constantly seeking new experiences in the physical realm. Much like Earth preying mantises, however, woe betide the one a Jalex chooses as a mate. The aftermath of such relations is often fatal, and sexual relations among the Jalex are separate from their egg-laying behavior. Jalex are hermaphroditic and biomorphic; their body can alter its own biology to be compatible with almost any species.

They fertilize their own eggs internally, but require mating with another to set off their own internal biological mechanisms to fertilize their eggs, which are then laid inside the body of a captive victim, who is held, usually in a drugged state, until the eggs hatch, at which point the young devour the victim within minutes. Sometimes, though not always, this victim is the same as the victim with whom they mated to fertilize their eggs.

For more on the Jalex, see **Chapter Five: Solar Burn**

As a player character, the Jalex have these game statistics:

Ability Scores: +2 to Dexterity, +2 to Charisma, -2 to Strength, -2 to Constitution.

Move: 35 ft. per round.

Size: Medium

Primes: One determined by class, and a second chosen by the player.

Twilight Vision: Jalex can see in areas of dim light and natural darkness as well as in daylight, so long as there is at least light equivalent to starlight or moonlight present.

Psychic Power: Jalex are natural psychics. Choose one psychic power from among clairvoyance, clairaudience, empathic transmission, empathy, mesmerism, psychic defense, telepathic probe, or telepathic communication. You may use that power exactly as a Mentalist of your level. If you play a psychic character (either a Mentalist or take the Wild Talent Generic Class Ability), this ability is in addition to your others.

Bio-Adaptability: You can use the *change self* spell once per day, though it does not change your clothing, weapons, or

equipment, only your basic body form. When you reach 4th level, you may use *alter self* once per day. Unlike the normal *alter self,* this ability allows you to assume the form and appearance of another species, though the species must still be bipedal and of your general size.

Rakshasa

Rakshasas are a feline race that has developed a proud warrior tradition. The native name of this species is unpronounceable to human beings, as their language is a series of yowls, growls, roars, and meows. As such, humanity has given them the name of a creature from our own mythology, a name the Rakshasa have come to respect.

Rakshasa appear in all ways as humanoid versions of great cats: lions, tigers, panthers, pumas, and the like, and seem to have come from a planet where cats evolved as the dominant form of life, as primates did on Earth. Their entire culture revolves around hunting and they tend to travel in Prides which are as tight-knit as any family or tribal unit, and which have a strict hierarchal structure. Rakshasas are fierce, aggressive and can seem extremely fickle to non-Rakshasa companions, but their loyalty to their Gang-mates cannot be questioned.

The nominal leader of a Rakshasa Gang is a male who dictates strategy and the overall activities of the group, but beneath the leader, females rule the roost. They are the fiercest warriors, the best hunters, and the male leader serves at their suffrage. If he displeases the females, they oust him in favor of a new leader—often violently.

Ability Scores: +2 to Dexterity, -2 to Charisma

Move: 30 feet

Size: Medium

Primes: One determined by class, and a second chosen by the player.

Twilight Vision: Rakshasas can see as clearly as day in natural darkness, so long as there is starlight or moonlight by which to see.

Feline Grace: Rakshasas gain +3 to all Dexterity checks.

Gray

Grays appear as short (4-5' tall) humanoid creatures that are extremely slender and possess large, egg-shaped heads, gigantic pupil-less black eyes, long and gangly limbs, and skin the color and texture of a marshmallow. They tend to go un-clothed and display no secondary sexual organs whatsoever. Their mouth is a small, thin line in their face and likewise, their nose and ears appear to be little more than holes in their heads (two nostrils and ear cavity openings without external ears). They are a mysterious race, whose purpose seems firmly rooted in science, though whether it is out of curiosity or an eventual plan for galactic conquest, none are certain. They act in secret and are ill-trusted by the rest of the galaxy.

Ability Scores: +2 to Intelligence, -2 to Constitution

Move: 20 ft.

Size: Medium

Primes: One determined by class, and a second chosen by the player.

Telepathy: Grays communicate telepathically. Thus, they are unaffected by effects that create silence and can always communicate so long as they can see the person with whom they are speaking.

Phase-Shift: Grays have an innate ability to telekinetically "jump" to an inch away from where they are, and back. This can have a disconcerting, blurring effect when they move, but it also grants them +1 to their Armor Class.

Saurians

Saurians are alien beings from the star system orbiting the star we know as Sirius. They are a military-minded race bent on galactic conquest. They possess a high level of technology, including FTL travel, and have all but exhausted the natural resources on their world. Thus, they travel the galaxy, stripping other worlds of their own resources to maintain their military-industrial complex. They have even destroyed entire stars, mining them for plasma.

Their general **modus operandi** when arriving on a populated world is to spy on the populace from afar, becoming educated in the native cultures. They then disguise themselves as the dominant species and appear as friends, offering miracle technology to help the species in question. Meanwhile they secretly harvest the world's natural resources, passing off the environmental changes as dangerous climate change which they are attempting to stave off. They also secretly harvest the population, eventually creating fear and paranoia and establishing a military dictatorship. Finally, when the world is nearly uninhabitable, they generously offer to transport the people to a new home…and the population is completely consumed, both culturally and literally. They are in the common view of other races cannibalistic, meaning that in addition to "lower animals," they consume other intelligent bipedal species for food. They also enslave other species to serve as soldiers in their ongoing war with the galaxy.

Some saurians don't believe in their people's activities and have formed an offshoot society, battling against the Galactic Fleet. These may be important allies or freelance independents in the galaxy, and can make ideal player characters.

Attributes: +2 to Intelligence, +2 to Strength, -2 to Charisma, -2 to Constitution

Move: 30 ft.

Size: Medium

Primes: One determined by class, and a second chosen by the player.

Amphibious: Saurians can breathe in water as easily as they can breathe in air. They can also naturally swim at the same speed as their normal movement and suffer no penalties to act underwater.

Bite: Saurians can bite their opponents for 1d4 points of damage, plus a type 3 neurotoxin (Con save CL 4, 1d6 primary and secondary damage plus paralysis). After biting an opponent it takes 1d6 hours for their poison glands to secrete enough poison to bite again.

Remoni

The Remoni are a silicone-based lifeform that live on a world that is constantly buffeted by severe electrical storms; they have, thus developed physiological adaptations to deal with these conditions, including the resistance to and generation of bioelectrical energy. They are a highly individualistic people and prone to severe mood swings, being exceptionally stoic one moment and raging over some slight (real or imagined) the next. They are a race of lusty creatures who embrace all that life has to offer, but woe betide one who accidentally insults a Remoni during a drinking binge.

Due to their unique bioelectric evolution, the Remoni have adapted to use biotechnology, which while it allows them a degree of space travel, tends to lack behind the purely scientific and technological advancements of other species. They are learning, as members of a big and dangerous galaxy, however, to catch up to this and over the past few decades their biotech has advanced by leaps and bounds. Some races are watching them carefully, concerned about what happens when a species advances too fast, too quickly…

Remoni are humanoid in appearance, with two arms, two legs, and a face, though their eyes sit somewhat low on their face, with a triangular ridge rising between them, just beneath which is a pair of constantly undulating nostrils, and a mouth that parallels the ridge, twisted into a constant and sharp frown, full of small, needle-like teeth. Their completely hairless skin is blue-black in color, somewhat shiny, and they possess grey eyes with no lids.

Ability Scores: +2 to Constitution, -2 to Wisdom

Move: 30 ft.

Size: Medium

Primes: One determined by class, and a second chosen by the player.

Twilight Vision: Remoni can see in areas of dim light and natural darkness as well as in daylight, so long as there is at least light equivalent to starlight or moonlight present.

Bioelectric Adaptation: Remoni are adapted to the electrical energy that buffets their planet. This allows them two benefits. First, they take only half-damage from any electrical-based effects and attacks. Second, they can generate a bioelectric shock that can fry electronics and damage opponents. This ability affects everything within a 5' radius of the Remoni and

deals 1d6 damage, plus the Remoni's level. Opponents can make a Constitution-based save for half damage. Electronics caught in the radius are destroyed (GMs may make exceptions for carried equipment by other characters and NPCs as is dramatically appropriate). The Remoni, however, immediately suffers Fatigue from using this ability (See **Amazing Adventures,** p. 167). Using it a second time results in Exhaustion. It is impossible to use it a third time until entirely recovered.

Fantasy Races in a Sci-Fi Game

There's no reason why, if the GM approves it, any of the fantastic races from **Castles & Crusades** couldn't fit into a science fiction game. An Elvish Imperium, Dwarvish Confederation, or Orcish Star Horde could all play a role in your campaign. You can also modify races as they sit, to reflect any sci-fi alien trope you like.

Consider, for example, elves that are completely emotionless, who have a bonus to strength instead of dexterity, and instead of weapon training, have the ability to issue a special attack: a nerve pinch that requires the victim to succeed at a Constitution save or fall unconscious for 1d6 x 10 minutes. All you have then to do is name your new race (which in this case looks quite familiar), briefly outline their planet and culture, and you're good to go.

The great thing about science fiction gaming is that the options are limitless; let your imagination run wild, and have at it!

CHARACTER CLASSES

The next step in creating a character is to choose a class, or broad archetype of the kind of character you wish to play. In **Amazing Adventures** the character classes are the Arcanist, Gadgeteer, Gumshoe, Hooligan, Mentalist, Pugilist, Raider, and Socialite. Each of these classes represents a very broad and general picture of a classic Pulp archetype. The Raider, for example, is the academic explorer who plumbs ancient tombs and temples for lost treasures. The Gumshoe is the hard-boiled detective or rough-and-tumble FBI agent battling organized crime.

StarSIEGE games do not require new character classes to play; most science fiction, space opera, and science fantasy archetypes can be modeled with the existing characters from **Amazing Adventures** as it stands. It's a good idea, however, to rename some of those character classes for flavor-purposes.

The standard **Amazing Adventures** classes which cover most archetypes in a sci-fi game, and suggested re-naming conventions, are as follows:

Bounty Hunter or Star-Cop: Gumshoe from **Amazing Adventures**

Gunslinger: As in **Amazing Adventures Companion**

Soldier: As in **Amazing Adventures Companion**

Monk: Pugilist from **Amazing Adventures;** Alternately, the **Monk** from **Castles & Crusades** can be used.

Noble: Socialite from **Amazing Adventures**

Pirate: From **Amazing Adventures Companion,** but changing seafaring abilities to starfaring ones.

Psychic: Mentalist from **Amazing Adventures**

Scoundrel: Hooligan from **Amazing Adventures**

Technical Engineer: Gadgeteer from **Amazing Adventures**

For the most part, these character classes, exactly as they sit, will function for a sci-fi game. Their class abilities transfer perfectly. In addition, characters like the Raider may fit as starfaring archaeologists seeking out ancient alien ruins and sites. There's plenty of room for this sort of character in space opera games. The Acrobat from the **Companion** may also suit as a different approach to the Scoundrel or Monk (and indeed, falls squarely between these two in terms of what it can do).

In the end, almost any character class you wish to include can be easily made to fit into your science fiction game. At the GM's option, the class may be re-named to better suit the genre, and any needed abilities tweaked. For the most part in science fiction, true magic will not be a part of the setting, and so the Arcanist may not be appropriate. In some games, especially those with a "Theocracy in Space" bent, there may actually be miracle-wielding clerics. In such games, the Arcanist may fit. It all depends upon the setting.

In **StarSIEGE,** we are providing four classes from which to choose, each of which can take you to third level. The **Amazing Adventures** core rulebook will allow you to choose from the full range of classes (and the Psychic is a must-have for many sci-fi games!) and take you to unlimited levels of play.

Earlier, we talked about re-naming character classes for a sci-fi game for flavor's sake. We have in each class included a parenthetical suggestion for an alternate name for the class. This parenthetical is simply a suggestion by way of showing you how classes can be re-skinned to better fit the flavor of your game, without changing the way the class works.

If these archetypes seem too broad and general, fear not! The **Amazing Adventures** core rulebook gives you a chance to customize that class to your liking through Generic Class Abilities, Backgrounds, Knowledge Skills, and Traits. For now, just choose the archetype that most closely suits your character concept; we'll build on that later.

Finally, given the wide variety of styles and sub-genres within sci-fi gaming, players should check with their GM to ensure that the class they wish to play is appropriate; not all such games feature mystical or supernatural abilities, and in such games the Arcanist and Mentalist are inappropriate, as may be the gadgeteer, depending on the amount of "super science the GM wishes to include.

Why Not the Psychic?

We realize it may seem strange not to include such an important archetype as psychics in a sci-fi game. The reason they're not in this book is quite simple: brevity. Psychics require a lot of additional rules to play with lists of effects, powers, and the like. Putting all of that into this book would vastly expand the size (and cost) and the goal is for this to be an introduction to play, which will then be used in conjunction with the core rules. So we're directing you there for those more complex archetypes.

The Gadgeteer (Engineer / Tech)

The gadgeteer is the consummate engineer and inventor who uses toys such as X-Ray scanners, "sizzle pack" miniature missiles, personal rocket packs, and "gravimetric inverters." Whether he soars in the blue skies with his rocket pack, takes down villains with his portable hover bike bristling with micro weapons, heals wounds with nanobots, or keeps the ship running with duct tape, good intentions, and techno-babble, this is the character whose very name screams SCIENCE!

Gadgeteers come in two varieties: those who spend long hours in a lab inventing new equipment with which they will battle the forces of evil, or those who have a special "Gadget man" that invents their equipment for them. In game terms, the difference is mostly flavor-based and will be dependent upon which attributes the character designates Prime, though there are advantages to both types of character. In either case, many gadgeteers often adventure for the sheer thrill of it. Others do what they do out of an overdeveloped sense of justice, or a need for vengeance against those who have wronged them or their loved ones.

Since gadgeteers are often on the front lines of the battle, working against time, Dexterity and Constitution are of paramount importance to these characters, but a quick wit and dashing persona are also invaluable to their pursuits, especially if they have a gadget man, so Wisdom and Charisma are also important. Those gadgeteers who invent their own toys will also want a high intelligence score.

Abilities

Gadgets: The gadgeteer has one primary ability—Science! This manifests in a number of specialized pieces of equipment, or gadgets, that become a permanent part of his arsenal. A gadgeteer may create these gadgets himself, or have a special scientist friend or sidekick (NPC) who equips him for his mission. If the gadgeteer creates his own gadgets, they cost more, but the gadgeteer is less likely to lose his source of equipment, and will have the ability to create gadgets "on the fly." These "instant" gadgets represent small pieces of equipment he happens to have on his person that he just thought he might need some day. These types of gadgeteer must choose Intelligence as one of their Primes and have either the Science or Mechanics background (if using Character Backgrounds from **Amazing Adventures**).

On the other hand, the gadgeteer receives a substantial reduction in cost for having a scientist who creates gadgets for him; in this case, however, he stands a chance of losing his contact through kidnapping, death, or even a disagreement, and cannot create "on the fly" gadgets. The gadgeteer with a weapons man must choose Charisma as one of his primes. The gadgeteer must choose at character creation which form of gadgeteer he is and may not change this decision.

Obtaining Gadgets: Gadgeteers gain their toys through the expenditure of "Gadget Points." To obtain a gadget, the gadgeteer must construct his equipment using the rules in **Creating Custom Equipment for Your Sci Fi Game** (see later, in the **Equipment** section). He then "buys" that spell at a cost based on its final value (see table below for gadget level vs. point cost); it then becomes a permanent gadget on his equipment list, and he can use it whenever he likes.

The gadgeteer begins play with 1d6+1 gadget points plus his Intelligence Bonus (if he creates gadgets himself) or his Charisma Bonus (if he has a scientist friend). Every additional level thereafter, he gains gadget points equal to 1 plus half his gadgeteer class level, rounded up.

A gadgeteer may save gadget points for use in purchasing larger gadgets down the line, or in the case of a self-creator (see below) to use on emergency gadgets but must spend a minimum of three points on gadgets at character creation. If the character does not have three points at character creation, he then must spend all of his starting points on gadgets with which to begin play. The cost to purchase a gadget is as follows:

Self-Created Gadgets: The cost to purchase a gadget based on its level can be found in the table below. For example, building a gadget that has a final value level of 3, costs 7 gadget points. Purchasing a zero- or first-level effect such as Arcane Bolt or Light costs two points (a first level arcanist could cast either of these spells).

Gadget Level and Costs, Self-Created

Gadget Level	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Point Cost	2	2	5	6	9	11	13

NPC-Provided Gadgets: Cost is equal to the gadget level, plus one. Thus, the same gun made for the character by his personal inventor costs four points (Fireball is a third-level spell).

On the fly Gadgets (Int): Gadgeteers who create their own gadgets can come up with emergency pieces of equipment on the fly. These gadgets may never duplicate any effect higher than that of a zero-level spell, cost three gadget points to create, and require the Gadgeteer to pass a CL 4 Intelligence Check. Once a gadget is created, it becomes a permanent part of the Gadgeteer's arsenal, just as if he had purchased it at character creation or upon achieving a new level. However, if the Gadgeteer chooses, he can decide at the end of the game session to have the on-the-fly gadget "break down," at which point he loses the gadget and regains the spent point. Only on-the-fly gadgets can break down to

get points back, and once the points are spent, they are spent for the entire play session.

Improving Gadgets: When a gadgeteer decides to create a new effect, there is no rule that states the effect must be installed in a brand-new gadget. For example, a gadgeteer at level one creates what he calls "Tesla Gloves," or gauntlets that allow him to unleash a jolt of electricity with a touch. By sixth level, he wishes to create a "Tesla Gun," enabling to unleash a torrent of lightning in a path. He can, if he chooses, install the Tesla Gun effect right into his existing gloves, giving him the option to use the effects in both. In general, only complimentary or similar effects should be installed together in a single gadget, but the GM has final say in whether a gadget can be improved in this manner.

Jury Rig (Int): The gadgeteer is a master of machinery. He has the ability to effect miraculous (if sometimes temporary) repairs on equipment that others might write off for junk. To perform this ability, the gadgeteer makes an Intelligence check at a CL determined by the GM, based on how wrecked the item in question is. In general, jury rigging an item takes either 15 minutes or 1 hour per level of CL added to the check, dependent upon whether the gadgeteer wishes a temporary or permanent fix. Thus, for a CL 5 repair, the jury rigging would take either 1 hour, 15 minutes for a temporary "quick fix," or 5 hours for a permanent repair. A quick-fix item requires constant maintenance, and the gadgeteer must make a Wisdom (not Int)-based saving throw every hour he wishes to keep the thing running, with a CL equal to that required to fix the machine in the first place. This represents his ability to keep a machine going through sheer determination, elbow grease, spit, and good intentions. If a Wisdom save is failed, the machine breaks down and cannot be repaired again.

In addition to taking longer, permanent fixes also suffer an additional +2 to the CL, representing the fact that it's more difficult to make it work for good than it is to get it running "for now."

Building and Running the Gadgeteer

Game Masters are advised to carefully adjudicate and monitor any gadgets purchased by this character, as some spells, when handed unrestricted to a player character, can result in serious game imbalance. A character, for example, who has the ability to create a Prismatic Sphere whenever she feels like it is nigh unstoppable. For this reason, the following guidelines are offered:

1. No gadget levels above sixth level be possible through this class, and a gadgeteer should not be able to purchase a gadget that reproduces effects of a higher level than one level below the level he currently is, with a minimum of 1 (i.e. a first- or second-level gadgeteer may purchase first-level effects, but no higher).

2. At the GM's option, the level limit for gadgets can be suspended at character generation, but it is recommended that no more than one gadget ever be owned that is higher than the gadgeteer's normal limit.

3. Any gadget that causes direct damage requires a normal ranged attack roll by the character, regardless of the effect in question. Thus, creating an explosive radium bolt gun with a homing effect still requires the gadgeteer to make a ranged attack roll with his gun (though the GM may allow a bonus to hit, say, +5, for energy bursts that home in on the target). Even area effect gadgets such as a grenade launcher even require such an attack roll; failure could mean the gadgeteer himself is in the burst area, having to make a Dexterity save for half damage!

4. All gadget effects should be properly restricted to avoid unbalancing the game, and the player should clearly name each gadget in his arsenal; never should a gadgeteer's player say, "I'm using my +5 pistol with the homing effect;" rather, he should say, "I pull out my homing-blast delta pistol."

   If the gadgeteer fails to describe his gadget properly and falls back on the generic descriptor for his effect, appropriate penalties should be put into play. Perhaps the gadget malfunctions temporarily to comical effect. Perhaps a penalty to any rolls associated with the gadget is imposed, until the proper terminology is used. Don't unduly harm the character with these, but hammer home the idea that flavor and mood are important to the game.

5. Finally, remember that the effects listed later are the beginning of creating a gadget, not the end. If a player wishes to do something that is not strictly defined in the list of effects, the GM should work to modify, add and alter the list of effects based on what is there to come up with a reasonable solution that's as accurate as possible.

   For example, if the player wishes to have, say, a robot snake monster, the GM may simply have the gadgeteer buy the different abilities he wishes the snake robot to have, and simply state that those abilities, instead of affecting the gadgeteer, are within the body of a robotic snake. The Snake's attributes would begin at 10 across the board; the gadgeteer could modify them by buying additional points, or lowering some attributes to raise others—since it's essentially an animal, for example, the gadgeteer might decide to lower its intelligence to 3, thus giving 7 points to distribute into the other 5 attributes. The trick here is to place fair restrictions on gadgets such that the class doesn't unbalance the game, while not restricting the gadgeteer's creativity.

   Likewise, in the case of on-the-fly gadgets, if an appropriate effect is not available but the player wishes to do something that is roughly the same power level and would make the game fun and interesting, roll with it!

Prime Attribute: Charisma or Intelligence (Dependent on the source of the gadgets)

Alignment: Any

Hit Die: d6

Weapons Allowed: Small melee weapons, medium melee weapons, handguns, and gadgets.

Abilities: Gadgets, Jury Rig

Level	HD	BtH	EPP
1	6 HP	0	0
2	d6	+1	2,601
3	d6	+1	5,201

THE GUMSHOE (BOUNTY HUNTER / LAW DOG)

In a science fiction game, the Gumshoe would be re-named the Tracker, the Officer, or would represent the legal authority of a given sector. These are the people who know how to track down the un-trackable, to find the un-findable, and to bring fugitives in. Usually they represent law enforcement but there are also those who ply their trades on the private market, working independently to find people and things that don't want to be found.

ABILITIES

Climb (Dexterity): This ability allows a gumshoe to climb up, down, or across a slope, wall, steep incline (even a ceiling with handholds) or unusually angled natural or man-made slope or incline that others might find it difficult or impossible to climb. When doing so, the gumshoe moves at one half the character's normal speed. A failed check means the gumshoe makes no progress this round. A check that fails by 5 or more means that the character falls and takes full falling damage. Nothing can be carried in the hands while climbing. Unlike a hooligan, the gumshoe must make climb checks even when climbing typical natural slopes and man-made inclines.

Cat and Mouse (Wisdom): The gumshoe can case a location or crime scene for clues and evidence, can track down the location of missing persons or wanted individuals within a given community, or trail a mark through a city, star system, or even galaxy. A successful cat and mouse check allows the gumshoe to find evidence at a crime scene, whether it's a matchbook pointing to a certain club, a hidden panel in a wall that opens to a cubbyhole with a ledger, fingerprints on a glass, or any other clue that others have miss.

Alternately, the gumshoe can use this ability to pick up a trail and follow it for a time through a combination of physical evidence and asking the right questions of the right people. The CL of this check generally depends upon the size of the community in which the gumshoe is searching, and its disposition towards the missing or wanted individual.

The size of the community in which the Gumshoe seeks the prey also determines the number of checks required to track down his quarry.

- A small, one stoplight town requires 1-2 checks.

- An average-sized town requires 1d4+1 checks before the gumshoe reaches the end of his search.

- A city increases the number of checks required to 2d4

- A metropolis requires 2d6 checks.

- To another planet within the same star system requires 2d6+2 checks

- To another star system requires 2d8 checks

- And so on, at the GM's discretion

Even then, "coming to the end of his search," does not necessarily mean that the gumshoe has captured her prey. It could possibly mean that the prey has fled to another community, though following a lead to its logical conclusion will always yield the most likely community to which the prey has fled, thus initiating a new round of checks when the gumshoe reaches the new area. The table below provides some suggested modifiers, but is not a comprehensive list of all possible adjustments.

Condition	CL modifier
One stoplight town; backwater planetary system	+0
Average town / planet	+2
Small city / populated star system	+4
Metropolis / Quadrant	+6
Galactic Scale	+8
Per three members in group sought	-1
Per 24 hours prey has been missing	+1
Prey laying low	+4
Community friendly towards prey or prey's class or affiliation	+3
Community afraid of prey or prey's class or affiliation	+2
Community lawful or good, prey chaotic or evil	-2
Community hostile towards prey or prey's class or affiliation	-3

Note that these checks should always lead to role playing opportunities, clues found, or NPC's with whom the character can speak to acquire information; never should an adventure boil down to a die roll and information handed out; it defeats the entire purpose!

Hide (Dexterity): Gumshoes can conceal themselves extremely well in urban environments. With a successful dexterity check, gumshoes can conceal themselves so well as to be unnoticeable by most passers-by. They cannot move and hide at the same time.

Gumshoes cannot hide themselves if being observed, even casually, before the attempt is made. If the observer is momentarily distracted, the Gumshoe can attempt to use this ability. While the observer looks away, the gumshoe can attempt to get to a hiding place of some kind. The attribute check, however, is at a -10 penalty because the gumshoe has mere seconds to find a suitable hiding spot.

Move Silently (Dexterity): The gumshoe is able to move silently in urban areas with a successful dexterity check. The gumshoe can move up to one-half the character's normal speed at no penalty. At more than one-half and up to the character's full speed, the character suffers a -5 penalty. It's practically impossible (-20 penalty) to move silently while running or charging. Gumshoes may attempt to use this ability in wilderness environs, but at an additional -5 penalty.

While the descriptions seem similar, hiding and moving silently are two different things. One is the ability to remain visually concealed, the other to move without sound. Gumshoes cannot hide and move silently at the same time until they reach 3rd level. At this level and beyond, a Gumshoe can attempt both but must make a successful hide and move silent check at-5. In this case, movement is reduced to one quarter the normal movement rate.

Take 'em Down: Gumshoes possess an extraordinary ability to combat their most common foes, criminals, due to intense training and study of the enemy's fighting techniques. When fighting hooligans, thugs, or other gumshoes, a gumshoe inflicts extra damage. This damage bonus is +1 at first level, with an additional +1 gained at every level beyond first. For example, a fifth level gumshoe would inflict an additional 5hp of damage for each successful hit against thugs, hooligans, or other gumshoes.

Precision Shot: A P.I.'s best friend is his snub nose, and one never knows when a shot that takes out a chandelier can save the day. At second level, gumshoes gain a +1 to hit with a handgun at ranges of less than thirty feet.

Face in the Crowd (Charisma): Beginning at third level, through quick changes of clothing and posture, the gumshoe can disguise or impersonate to blend into a crowd. This disguise is not complete; it is used to throw off a tail, stalk prey without being noticed, or other similar effects. Impersonating specific individuals is not possible with this ability, though affecting a change in gender, race, or even social class is possible. This effort requires 1d4 rounds to complete and can include an apparent change of height or weight no more than one-tenth the original (generally through standing straighter or on tip-toes, or slouching). The Game Master makes the character's check secretly so that the character is not sure if it is successful. The following modifiers are applied to a disguise check when appropriate.

Sex difference	-2
Race difference	-2
Species Difference	-10
Age difference	-2 per 10 years
Social class difference (higher)	-2 to -10 (GM's discretion)
Social class difference (lower)	+2 (it's easier to be a pauper than a prince)

Success indicates a disguise good enough to fool normal observers, though those actively looking for such a disguise may increase the Challenge Level of the check, perhaps significantly. As such, this ability is generally used to remain discreet and inconspicuous, rather than for any sort of actual impersonation.

Prime Attribute: Dexterity

Alignment: Any

Hit Dice: d10

Weapons: Small melee weapons, medium melee weapons, handguns, sub-machineguns, rifles and shotguns

Abilities: Climb, cat and mouse, hide, move silently, take 'em down, deadeye shot, face in the crowd.

Level	HD	BtH	EPP
1	10 HP	+1	0
2	d10	+2	2,001
3	d10	+3	4,501

The Hooligan (Scoundrel)

The archetypal ne'er-do-wells, these characters in a science fiction setting are most commonly described as "Scoundrels." They can be cat burglars, thieves in the night, pirates, or smugglers. They may be enforcers (or even bosses, at higher levels) for interplanetary crime syndicates, suave con-men, or common street thugs. They are rebels against the mainstream, be it with or without a cause.

Whatever their preference, the hooligan lives for the thrill of the chase, of pulling something off right under the noses of the authorities, and getting away with it. To perform these feats of daring, they must be exceedingly dexterous, nimble of hand and foot, but also must be quick-witted with sharp senses.

A slick combination of mental acumen and hand-eye coordination, the hooligan is a foe to be feared and an acquaintance never to be trusted. Hooligans tend to be chaotic or neutral in alignment, though there do exist thieves with honor that have their own code, though the distribution of abilities of this class makes practitioners of the shadow arts that are of a lawful and good persuasion rare beyond rare.

Abilities

Back Attack: In general, a hooligan avoids face-to-face combat if possible and prefers to use stealth to attack an opponent from behind, striking the back, lungs, kidneys, or another vital area. A hooligan who is thus able to attack an unaware opponent from the rear, gains a bonus to hit and to damage. To catch an opponent unaware, a hooligan must make a successful move silently check to sneak up behind the foe, or make a successful hide check while behind the opponent. A hooligan that succeeds in one or the other of these can make a back attack at a +4 bonus to hit. A successful hit inflicts double the normal damage.

When making a back attack, a hooligan must use a close-quarters melee weapon. This weapon must be shorter than the character's arm. A hooligan can only back attack living creatures that have a discernible anatomy. The hooligan must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot, and then must be able to reach it.

Case Target (Wisdom): Using this ability, the hooligan can determine information and weaknesses about a potential opponent or target through detailed observation and deductive reasoning. A hooligan must spend 1d3x10 minutes observing an opponent before a check is allowed. A successful check results in knowledge of the approximate level or Hit Dice of the opponent within 10%, alignment, hidden weapons or unusual items, distinguishing habits and mannerisms, and any other details that might not be apparent to normal observation. The Game Master must decide what the hooligan can learn about the target and deems appropriate to convey. If used on a location, the check can reveal security measures and weaknesses, location and disposition of guards, entry and escape points, etc.

Climb (Dexterity): This extraordinary ability allows a hooligan to climb up, down, or across a slope, wall, steep incline (even a ceiling with handholds), or unusually angled natural or man made slope or incline that others would find impossible to climb. When doing so, the hooligan moves at one-half the character's normal speed. A failed climb check means that the character makes no progress. A check that fails by 5 or more means that the character falls from the currently attained height, and must suffer falling damage. Hooligans cannot carry anything in their hands while climbing. When climbing typical natural slopes and manmade inclines, such as a cliff faces or steep steps, a hooligan does not need to make an attribute check to climb the surface. It is only when climbing very sheer and difficult grades where there are few to no hand- or footholds that a check needs be made.

Hide (Dexterity): Hooligans use this ability to conceal themselves from others. A successful check means that the Hooligan is hidden so well as to be almost invisible. The hooligan can move up to one-half normal speed and remain hidden. Hide checks suffer no penalty in this circumstance. At more than one-half and up to full speed, the character suffers a -5 penalty to the check to remain hidden. It's practically impossible (-20 penalty) to hide while running or charging.

If the character is being observed, even casually, he cannot hide. If observers are momentarily distracted, though, the character can attempt to hide. While the observer averts its attention from the character, the character can attempt to get to a hiding place. This check, however, is at a –10 penalty because the character has to move quickly to the hiding place. A hooligan cannot hide if there is nothing to hide behind or conceal oneself with. Deep shadows can count as concealment at the Game Master's discretion.

Lingo: Hooligans often use a street language known only to those in the trade, called their lingo. Code words, hand signals, demeanor, and other signs comprise the lingo, which is often a pidgin version of a real language. The lingo can be used to convey complex ideas. The language may vary to some degree

both geographically and culturally, making the lingo unique to each region, city, or even within a city.

Listen (Wisdom): A hooligan can use this ability to listen intently and hear noises that others might not detect, even through an obstacle such as a door. Generally, a successful check at the character's CB indicates that the hooligan has detected some sort of noise. The hooligan can hear soft sounds, like a whisper or cat stalking, while outside or in the open and up to a range of 30 feet. It also indicates success if the hooligan is listening for sounds on the other side of a door, but the hooligan must be adjacent to the door. However, exactly what is heard is up to the Game Master's discretion as each case is unique. If listening through a stone wall, the hooligan suffers a -10 penalty to the check. For other materials, vary the penalty as appropriate. A hooligan can retry this ability once a round.

Move Silently (Dexterity): This ability allows a hooligan to move so silently that others cannot hear the movement. The hooligan can use this ability both indoors and outdoors. A hooligan can move up to one-half the character's normal speed at no penalty. At more than one-half and up to the character's full speed, the character suffers a -5 penalty. It's practically impossible (-20 penalty) to move silently while running or charging.

While the descriptions seem similar, hiding and moving silently are two different things. One is the ability to remain visually concealed, the other to move without sound. Hooligans cannot hide and move silently at the same time until they reach 3rd level. At this level and beyond, a Hooligan can attempt both but must make a successful hide and move silent check at-5. In this case, movement is reduced to one quarter the normal movement rate.

Open Lock (Dexterity): A hooligan can use this ability to open any sort of mechanical lock that would normally require a key to open. A successful check indicates the lock has been opened. This ability requires the use of a set of hooligan's tools, including picks, blank keys, wires or other appropriate tools. A hooligan may only make one attempt per lock. If that attempt fails, the hooligan cannot try to open the same lock again until gaining one more level as it is beyond the current ability of the hooligan to pick it. The CL to pick a lock is at the GM's discretion but generally equal to the level of the locksmith who created the lock to begin with.

Pick Pocket (Dexterity): A hooligan can use this ability, on a successful dexterity check, to remove the contents of a pocket or pouch (or otherwise take something from a person) without being noticed. Success may require the hooligan to cut the purse or pouch from the target.

This ability also allows the hooligan to perform "sleight of hand" maneuvers. A successful dexterity check indicates the hooligan has hidden or moved an item in such a manner so that observers are not aware of where the item has been hidden. Such typical maneuvers are hiding a coin, sliding a card up a sleeve, performing the shell game, and the like.

Traps (Intelligence): A hooligan may use this ability in three manners: finding, disabling or setting traps. Each use requires a separate attribute check and each check may be made only once in a given circumstance. The player must also describe how the actions are being performed to use this ability.

To find a trap, a hooligan spends time intently studying and searching an area to deduce possible trap locations. It takes one round to locate a trap in a specific area such as a lock or a doorknob, and one turn to locate a trap in a 10 by 10 foot area. A successful check indicates the hooligan finds one trap, if any are present. The trap discovered is the simplest or most obvious trap in the area. If multiple traps are in an area, multiple successful checks are required to find them all. A hooligan can find magical traps with this ability, although it may be much more difficult than finding mundane traps.

To disable a trap, a hooligan must first know its location. Once a trap is located, a successful check means the hooligan has disarmed the trap. The attempt can only be made once and failure indicates that the hooligan set off the trap. A hooligan can disarm a magic trap, although it may be much more difficult than disarming a mundane trap. In most cases, hooligan's tools are needed to disarm a trap. Generally, it takes 1d4 rounds to disarm a trap, depending on its complexity.

To set a trap, or to reset a previously disabled trap, a hooligan must make a successful traps check. If a hooligan is resetting a trap that was previously disabled, the hooligan gains a +5 bonus to the check. The amount of time required to set or reset a trap depends on the complexity of the trap, typically taking 1d4 rounds.

Prime Attribute: Dexterity

Hit Die: d6

Alignment: Any

Weapons: Small melee weapons, handguns, sub-machineguns, rifles and shotguns, explosives

Abilities: Back attack, case target, climb, hide, lingo, listen, move silently, open lock, pick pockets, traps

Level	HD	BtH	EPP
1	6 HP	0	0
2	d6	+1	1,801
3	d6	+1	3,501

The Socialite (Noble / Face)

The connected diplomat or wealthy debutante with money, power, and prestige to match his or her pretty face, this person has the looks, connections, and personal magnetism to open doors when guns are a bad idea. While many socialites come from rich families, not all are wealthy unto themselves. A socialite could be temporarily or permanently cut off from family funds from disgracing her family name or even just because her parents want her to learn to live on her own. Alternately, she could be "new money," an up-and-coming holo-film entertainer or the wife of a country-boy-turned-senator. In science fiction

settings, socialites are often corporate executives who are overseeing operations, or even those who have standing as a member of a family in a criminal empire.

Socialites adventure largely out of boredom and desire for excitement, though there are exceptions, young debutantes who want something of their own, not related to the reputation of their family (though most are not above exploiting their family name to get where they need to go). These tend to become adventurers and thrill-seekers, gathering allies to their side based on their charisma and self-confidence. The socialite makes the perfect "face" for a group, being the consummate diplomat and/or seductress.

Charisma is the most important attribute for socialites, as most of their abilities are based upon this attribute. However, Dexterity and Constitution help keep her alive in the perilous situations in which she may find herself, and Wisdom is of importance in knowing where her family and reputation hold influence, and in keeping herself and her allies safe from rash decisions.

Abilities

Charm (Charisma): The Socialite can attempt to charm another person to do her bidding. This ability works exactly as the spell Charm Person, save that the Socialite must make a Charisma Attribute check against a CL equal to the level or hit dice of the person she is attempting to charm. Her effective "caster level" for purposes of duration, effect, etc., is equal to her Socialite Level. At Fifth level, the socialite can instead of charming a subject, attempt to through subtle seduction and subliminal suggestion Command the subject as per the second level arcanist spell, if she desires. At twelfth level, if she so desires, she can attempt to Mass Charm instead of charming or commanding a single target. This ability can be used once per day at first level, twice per day at fifth level, three times per day at tenth level, and at fifteenth level, the socialite can perform this ability at will.

Connected (Charisma): The socialite (or her family) has friends and acquaintances everywhere. Whenever the PC's need help, information, a friendly face, or resources, the Socialite can attempt to call in a favor from one of these friends. This requires two checks. First, the Socialite must make a Wisdom Check to locate a friendly name or face in the current area where the PC's are adventuring. Failure means the socialite's family has no friends in this area. Second, the socialite must make a Charisma check to call in the favor. The GM determines the CL of this check based on the reputation of the socialite, the number of favors previously (and recently) called in, and other social factors at the GM's discretion. Success means the acquaintance is willing to help, but such help may (again, dependent upon social factors at the GM's discretion) come at a price.

Exalt (Charisma): This is the socialite's ability to inspire companions and listeners, allowing them to surpass their normal level of performance. Some socialites invoke this ability through oration, while others use battle cries or sheer acting and demeanor. With a successful attribute check, a socialite can help allies succeed at a task. The ally gets a +2 bonus on any action requiring an attribute check, including class ability checks, saving throws and standard attribute checks. This ability does not affect attack rolls. The allies must be able to see and hear the socialite, and must be within 60 feet. The Game Master may rule that certain uses of this ability are infeasible. The socialite can use this ability once per day per level, and can maintain the effect for a number of rounds equal to the socialite's level.

Embolden: At 3rd level, the socialite's confidence and fearlessness in the face of danger instills courage in their companions and followers. Any companions or followers within 30 feet of the socialite gain a bonus of +1 to strength, constitution, dexterity, and intelligence saving throws, and a +2 to wisdom and charisma saving throws. This ability can be used once per day and lasts a number of rounds equal to the socialite's level. This ability cannot be used in conjunction with demoralize or exalt.

Prime Attribute: Charisma

Hit Die: d8

Alignment: Any

Weapons: Handguns, Small melee weapons, medium melee weapons, archaic ranged weapons

Armor: Three-piece suit, fedora (men only), evening or formal clothes, long gloves (women only), safari gear, trench coat (men only), scarf (women only)

Abilities: Charm Person, Connected, Exalt, Embolden

Level	HD	BtH	EPP
1	8 HP	+0	0
2	d8	+1	1,901
3	d8	+2	3,801

Where's the Ace Pilot?

"But," I can already hear you saying, "Where's the ace pilot class for my starfighter jockey or that freighter pilot who can do a spice run in legendary time and distance?" Fear not, we've got you covered. If you wish, you can sacrifice a class ability from your chosen class, and instead pick up the Ace ability. See **Chapter Two** for more on Generic Class Abilities.

Alignment

The next step in creating your character is to determine their *Alignment,* or their moral and ethical outlook on the world and the cosmos. There are two aspects to alignment: law vs. chaos, and good vs. evil. Each axis also has a neutral area between the extremes. Every character falls somewhere along these lines, and the combination of these aspects defines their general outlook on life.

It's important to note that alignment *is not intended as a box in which to trap your player* with a rigid set of strictures; rather, it's a quick description to give you (and others) an idea of what to expect from your character. None of us are absolute, however,

and player characters will often vacillate between the extremes of alignment as they adventure. Choose the alignment that most closely matches your conception of your character and do your best to work with it.

In fact, in many science fiction games, characters operate in a space of moral gray zones, and rarely are things all that absolute. For that reason, alignment is a **completely optional descriptor** in a sci fi game and if you choose, you can eliminate it entirely. It won't have much effect on play if you do so.

The nine alignments are as follows:

LAWFUL GOOD: Characters of this alignment are dedicated to following the strictures of society, respecting law and order. They act for the benefit of others and society, placing great value on truth, honor and life.

LAWFUL NEUTRAL: Characters of this alignment place primary importance on ultimate order, structure and regulation of behavior. Good and evil are largely irrelevant for characters of this alignment because everything flows from the order of law.

LAWFUL EVIL: Characters of this alignment value structure and order, and they place no limit on attaining it, especially if the goal is to their own benefit. They do not value life or concern for others. Ultimately, they seek to impose their ideals on others through strict regulation.

NEUTRAL GOOD: Characters of this alignment have a healthy respect for both law and freedom, typically choosing a road betwixt the two in order to achieve benefits and mercy for all.

("TRUE") NEUTRAL: Characters of this broad alignment typically believe in a balance between law and chaos, and between good and evil. Some seek to maintain existing social institutions, while others simply wish to keep to themselves. Some neutral characters disdain the perceptions of other sentient beings, finding that truth lies in nature and its animals. Others follow their own code, which changes with the situation, tending to favor those that benefit them the most.

NEUTRAL EVIL: Characters of this alignment mirror those of neutral good, but they typically follow a road that benefits themselves instead of others.

CHAOTIC GOOD: Characters of this alignment view the greatest good as being attainable through freedom and individual liberty. Thus they place primary importance on individuality and liberty of action over that of any law or societal structure.

CHAOTIC NEUTRAL: Characters of this alignment value individual freedom. They have no qualms in achieving it by whatever means necessary, good or otherwise.

CHAOTIC EVIL: Characters of this alignment tend not to value anything, disdaining others and often seeking to destroy for their own selfish reasons. They seek power and the ability to wield it as they see fit.

SCIENCE FICTION EQUIPMENT

No adventurer is worth their salt without a blaster on their hip, and scanning for lifeforms is pretty tricky without a scanner. Keeping in touch with your companions requires a communicator. This is all established through your character's equipment.

The equipment tables here present the basics of equipment available in a sci-fi role playing game. In general, science fiction equipment and gear works just like modern gear. Much of it will be customized to the specific setting, but here we present some sample equipment from **Amazing Adventures Companion.**

Sci-Fi Weaponry

In the tables below, "Type" refers to whether the weapon is Ranged (R) or Melee (M). Under "Rec." the weapon is either powered by a magazine or a battery. The capacity is how many shots before recharging, replacement or reloading is required. For those GMs who want more variety, simply adapt the weapons statistics found in the expanded table in the **Amazing Adventures Companion** and change the flavor to make them represent varieties of projectile or energy weapons.

Why So Generic?

Many readers will note that the weapons in the table below are quite generic. This is because science fiction can take any number of forms and technology levels. In a traditional cyberpunk game, for example, all of the normal firearms from **Amazing Adventures** and the **Amazing Adventures Companion** may be present, but none of the energy weapons below. Some games might have blaster pistols while others have handheld beam weapons. In the end, the game statistics of the weapon are really what matters and it's left to the GM and players to "skin" the weapons. For this reason we present a few easy options to drop into your games without any work whatsoever; they should cover most of the varieties of weapons seen in various science fiction literature, films, and television.

If you need new vehicles, weapons, and items for your specific setting, check out the core book and the **Companion** rules, which contain long lists of weapons and vehicles. You can easily pick up any of these and re-name or adjust them to your game. Consider, for example, the idea that you want a whole range of hover bikes for your game, from heavy-duty trooper models to sleek racing bikes. It's simple to hit up the **Amazing Adventures Companion** and pull stats for the Indian Chief, The Harley Davidson, and the Ducati 916 and call these your military, security, and racing models, respectively. The stats don't change; only what the bike looks like does, and the fact that it hovers instead of sitting on wheels.

Always remember our cardinal rule: Don't re-invent the wheel. **Amazing Adventures** already provides a wealth of weapons, equipment, powers, spell effects, and vehicles that you can skin however you like to make them work within the context of your game.

In addition, see the section **Creating Custom Equipment for Your Game,** below, for a system to build new equipment and gear from scratch to your specifications.

WEAPONS

Weapon	Type	Range	Dam	Rec	Acc	RoF	Rcv	Cap	Notes***
Blaster Pistol	R	40	2d6	2	+4	3	Bat	15	Treat as fire
Blaster Pistol, Heavy	R	30	2d8	3	+3	3	Bat	12	Treat as fire
Blaster Carbine	R	100	2d8	3	+4	2	Bat	12	Treat as Fire
Blaster Rifle	R	200	2d10	3	+5	2	Bat	10	Treat as fire
Blaster Rifle, Sniper	R	500	4d8	4	+5	2	Bat	10	Treat as fire
Plasma Pistol, Light	R	30	2d8	2	+2	3	Bat	12	Treat as lightning
Plasma Pistol, Heavy	R	30	3d8	3	+0	2	Bat	10	Treat as lightning
Plasma Carbine	R	100	2d10	4	+3	3/A	Bat	50	Treat as lightning
Slug Pistol, Light	R	30	1d8	1	+3	4	Mag.	20	Physical projectile
Slug Pistol, Medium	R	30	1d10	2	+2	3	Mag.	10	Physical projectile
Slug Pistol, Heavy	R	30	1d12	3	+2	3	Mag	7	Physical projectile
Slug Rifle, Light	R	100	1d10	n/a	+4	1	Tub/ Mag	7	Bolt, lever, pump action, Physical projectile
Slug Rifle, Heavy	R	500	3d8	n/a	+4	1	Tub/ Mag	7	Bolt action, Physical projectile
Pulse Rifle	R	50	d12+2	3	+1	5/A	Mag.	100	May have mounted grenade launcher, Physical projectile
Grenade Launcher	R	10	3d6	5	+1	2	Tube	10	Damage to 10' radius area; Dex save for half*
Grenade Launcher, Heavy	R	20	5d6	N/A	N/A	1	Tube	5	Damage to 20' radius area: Dex save for half*
Particle Beam, Hand	R	20	d8	0	+2	A	Bat	50	See AA p. 150; these are treated as automatic weapons; all shots are burst or spray
Particle Beam, Rifle	R	100	2d8+2	0	+3	A	Bat	50	See AA p. 150; these are treated as automatic weapons; all shots are burst or spray
Vibro knife	M	n/a	1d8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Ignore 2 points of DR
Vibro sword	M	n/a	1d10	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Ignore 2 points of DR
Energy sword**	M	n/a	1d12	n/a	+2	n/a	n/a	n/a	Ignore 5 points of DR

* On a miss, roll a d8 for direction of miss, starting at 1 (straight ahead) and moving clockwise to 8 (ahead and left), and d4 for distance in 5 foot increments.

**Extremely rare and unavailable on the open market. Few are proficient. Any non-proficient user who suffers an imploding result on an attack roll hits themselves, suffering the imploding d6 die results in damage. Non-proficient users also cannot take advantage of the Accuracy bonus. Proficiency in this weapon is at the discretion of the GM.
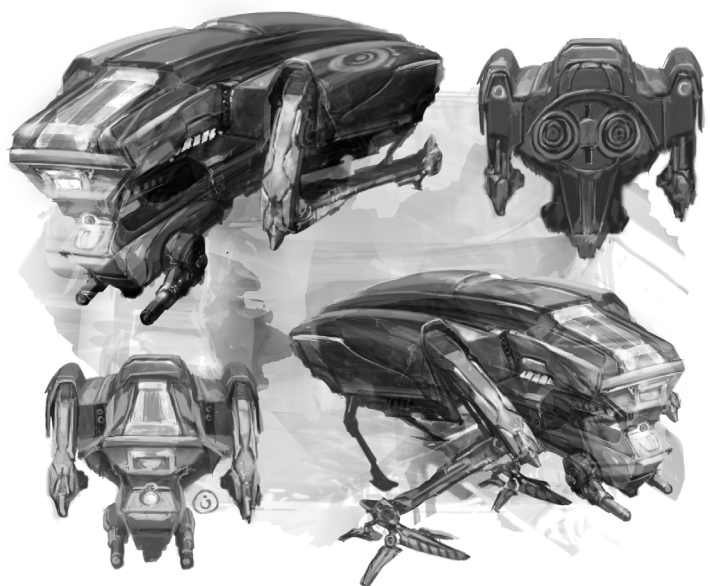
***The specific effects "treat as fire," "treat as lightning," and "physical projectile" possess is left to the GM. Some forms of armor may be more or less effective against specific types of damage.

Vehicles

Here are a few baseline mockups of generic science fiction vehicles. For more variety, up the various statistics of the modern and World War II vehicles found in the **Amazing Adventures Companion,** and give them a fresh coat of paint!

Science fiction vehicles will generally go much faster and have better handling than modern vehicles—make full use of that Expanded Attribute Chart when designing them. In addition, many science fiction vehicles might have special sensor packages that add an Accuracy bonus to weapons or a bonus to Intelligence or Wisdom checks for pilots to watch for enemies, scan other ships, etc. These would work just like the Dex and Con bonuses of vehicles, simply adding Int and Wis scores as well. Sensor packages are represented in the "Men" (Mental) column in the tables below, while targeting bonuses for weapons systems can be found in the footnotes. Note that sensor packages and targeting systems *do not combine.* Sensor packages are for scanning and navigation.

To determine the MR of vehicles in a futuristic setting, subtract the Dexterity bonus from 7, just as with modern vehicles

VEHICLES

Vehicle	Dex	Con	Men	Spd	MR	Cr	Mx	Al	AC	DR	HP	Weapons
Starfighter*	+5	+2	+4	30 (+7)	2	100	500	100	16	10	90	(2) Blaster cannons (3d8+5/A) (2) Torpedo cannons (4d6; 6 shots total)
Freighter**	+3	+3	+3	25 (+5)	2	85	500	50	16	10	100	(2) Blaster cannons (3d8+5/A)
Capital Ship***	-3	+10	+6	10 (+0)	5	50	500	20	18	15	250	(48) Blaster cannons (3d8+5/A) (20) Torpedo cannons (4d6; 6 shots total)
Shuttle, short range	0	+1	+2	20 (+4)	2	75	350	50	15	5	75	(2) Blaster cannons (2d6+6)
Troop Transport	0	+5	+2	20 (+4)	4	75	350	50	17	10	150	(2) Blaster cannons (3d8+5/A)
Giant Armored Ground Assault Vehicle (GAGAV)	+1	+5	+2	16 (+2)	5	25	40	12	22	20	220	(4) Blaster cannons (3d8+5/A) (2) Missile launchers (4d6; 10 shots total) (1) Main Cannon (5d8+10; one shot per 1d6 rounds
Hover Car±	+3	+2	n/a	25 (+5)	4	75	220	25	12	5	50	(2) Blaster cannons (2d6+6)
Hover Car, Sports Model±!	+5	+3	+3	30 (+7)	3	90	300	60	13	5	60	(2) Blaster cannons (2d6+6)
Hover Bike±	+4	0	n/a	29 (+6)	3	80	250	30	10	3	40	Blaster Cannon (2d6+6)
Hover Bike, Racing±	+5	0	n/a	30 (+7)	2	100	300	50	12	3	30	Blaster Cannon (2d6+6)
Hover Bike, Security and Military*	+5	+2	+3	30 (+7)	3	100	300	50	13	5	50	Blaster Cannon (2d6+6), (2) Missile launchers (2d10; 1 shot each)*Targeting sensors add an Accuracy value of +3 to blaster cannons and +4 to torpedo/missile launchers (if any).

**May have hidden compartments for smuggling. If so, add +5 to Hide checks (Intelligence-based) to conceal contraband.

***See also Vehicle Combat Rules in Chapter 3.

±Civilian models may not have weapons (GM›s discretion)

!Also police models

There are two sets of rules for vehicle combat, either of which you can adopt for your sci-fi game. The **Amazing Adventures** core rulebook has basic rules for vehicular combat, which are fast playing and generally get out of the way while you focus on the excitement and narrative of combat. For ease of reference, we have reproduced these in **Chapter Three** of this book.

The **Amazing Adventures Companion** features a set of advanced vehicle rules that sacrifice some of this simplicity, but allow a greater degree of freedom in what you can actually do with your vehicle, allowing for more detailed maneuvers, chases, and the like. The statistics in the table above will work for either set of rules you choose, with the basic rules using fewer statistics than the advanced, which will use all of the statistics above.

Armor

Formal armor may be in existence in science fantasy games, supplementing or replacing the normal **Amazing Adventures** Pulp Armor rules. You may, for example, have shock troops that are clad in gleaming energy-resistant armor, while your heroes gain their AC from their badass trench coat, cargo pants and fingerless gloves, not to mention that flashy leather holster that keeps their blaster bouncing on their hip.

Just remember, the two systems of armor are compatible, but do not combine. Characters gain AC either from armor or costume; never both. If a character wants to adopt a piece of armor as part of the costume, the GM should determine whether the base AC of the armor piece would benefit the character better, or whether it should provide a +1 or +2 "cool factor" to the overall costume-based AC.

In science fantasy or futuristic games, many types of armor may "soak" damage of a certain type. This occurs in the form of a variable damage reduction attached to the armor. These kinds of armors will have an AC bonus and a die code for DR. Whenever a character wearing such armor is shot or otherwise appropriately damaged, the die is rolled to see how much of the damage is soaked up by the armor, and how much gets through. Some armor types will only soak certain kinds of damage (bullet, energy, etc.)

If this proves to be too much bookkeeping, the GM can either have players roll each round instead of against each attack, or apply half the die code as a static value (i.e. a DR of d10 vs energy would change to DR 5 vs. energy. A DR of 2d6 vs. bullets would convert to DR 7 vs. bullets). In our example armor, this flat DR rating will be listed in parentheses next to the die code.

SCI-FI ARMOR

Armor	AC	Wt	DR	Notes
Armored Coat	+3	Lt	0	Combines with other light armor
Infantry Combat Armor	+7	Hvy	1d10 (5)	AC +5/DR halved vs. energy weapons or melee stabbing/slashing weapons.
Reflective Armor	+8	Hvy	1d12 (6)	AC vs. fire; AC +6/DR halved vs. slug-throwers and projectile pistols. AC +7/DR-2 vs. plasma
Star Marine Combat Armor	+6	Med	1d10 (5)	DR 0 vs. bladed melee weapons; DR halved vs. blunt melee weapons and impact damage (ie explosions). Helmet has HUD that adds +1 Accuracy to all weapons and low-light vision
Ballistic Vest	+2	Lt	1d6 (3)	DR 0 vs. bladed or energy melee weapons and ranged energy weapons; DR halved vs. blunt melee weapons.

OTHER TECH

This is just a basic rundown of a few very common items that may be encountered in a science fantasy setting. Using these ideas as a guideline, GMs can mine their favorite properties for other options and build an extensive equipment list. As mentioned earlier, the effects of many magic spells work wonderfully to use as a baseline for the functions of gadgets and technology, and the levels of these spells provide a rough estimate of just how powerful those effects are.

Sci-Fi Equipment

Item	Notes
Chameleon Suit	+5 bonus to hide and move silently
Data Pad	Tablet-like device that allows one to perform various computer-related tasks. Generally adds +2 to SIEGE checks related to computer use or cyber jacking. Specific size and functions at GM's option (some may be specialized)
Pulse Detonator	Thrown grenade-like weapon deals 4d6 damage to 15 ft. radius.
Sensor Suite (worn or cybernetic)	Various functions such as low light vision, dark vision, thermal imaging, targeting computers that increase accuracy of weapons, radiation detection, etc.
Handheld Scanner	This device allows the user to scan for various things in their environment: radiation, medical conditions, life signs, meteorological phenomena, and more. In general, using one requires an Intelligence check, at a CL set by the GM and based upon the type of phenomena being scanned for and the data interpolated. A failed check means the character has misread the data in some way. Range depends on the size and purpose of the device, from a few meters to hundreds of miles.
Medi-kit	Uses nanotechnology or bio-engineered bacteria to help treat illness and injuries; 1d10 uses; heals 1 hit die worth of damage per use or adds +5 to saving throws against poison and disease; alternately 1d4 uses can deliver the effects of a Lesser Restoration spell (AA p. 112), 1d6+1 uses delivers the effects of a Restoration Spell (AA p. 125) or 1d8+1 uses the effects of a Greater Restoration Spell (AA p. 106)
Communicator	Ear-bud, handheld device, or terminal that allows communication with allies and contacts. Short range communications are generally within 1d4 miles. Medium-range allows communications across a planet or with ships in orbit, and long-range allows communication within a star system or even across the galaxy.
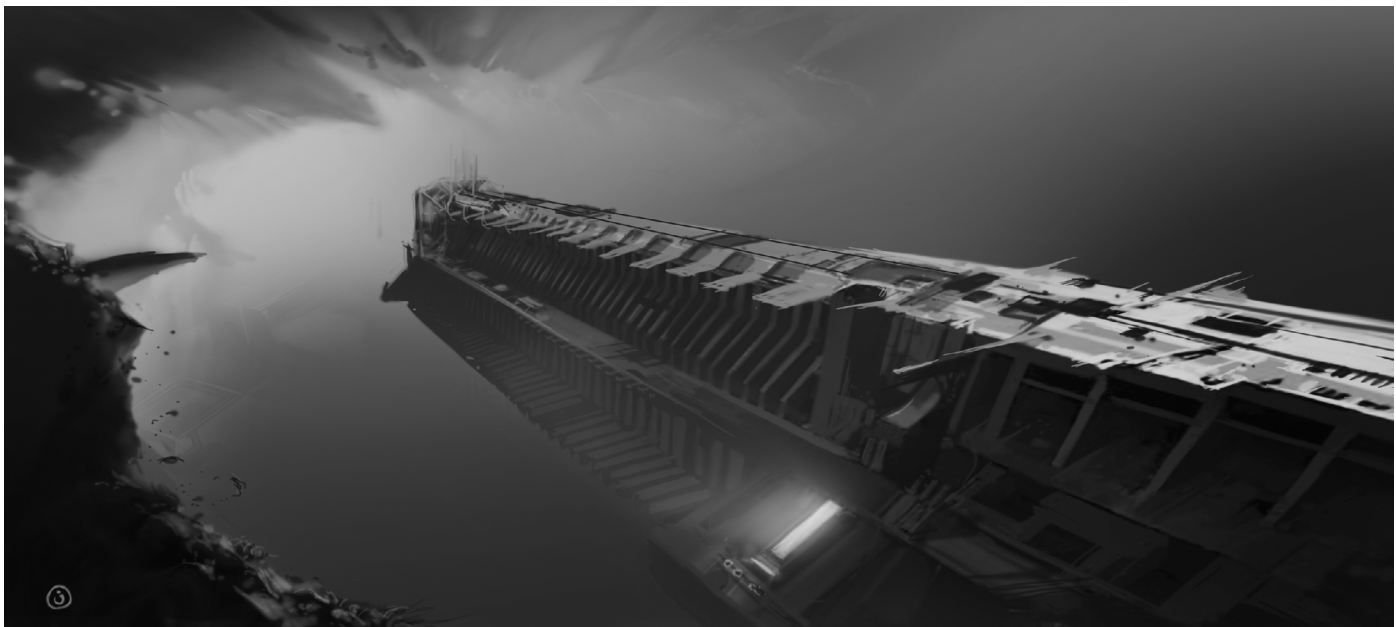
MODELING OTHER GEAR WITH SPELLS

Other gear can be created whole cloth by the GM, based on the trappings and limits of the setting at hand. One option is to simply create equipment from the ground up, designing it to be purpose-based for your setting and just inventing it whole-cloth. This is often the fastest way to create equipment, but may not be the best for inexperienced GMs who need more of a benchmark for balancing and adjudicating the effects equipment might have.

A second option is to look to the Gadgeteering rules from the **Amazing Adventures** core rulebook as inspiration to create custom equipment. In that book, Gadgeteers model their gadgets on various spell effects rather than using the effects below. You can take this approach as inspiration for the technology you want to use, and then adapt/skin the effects to suit your needs. The various "Detect" spells, for example, are ideal for modeling scanners, while something like a fireball spell is a good way to mimic a grenade launcher.

Healing spells of various types can be used to model nanotech, healing tanks, or other miraculous healing technology, with the right limitations. Perhaps in your setting, for example, limited uses of nanites allow for the healing of minor wounds, for which you use the cure light wounds spell. For more intensive healing, such as that provided by a restoration or heal spell, on the other hand, the wounded character may have to spend 1d4 days in a healing tank.

Matter transmat devices can be modeled via the teleportation or gate spell, and the dimension door or plane shift spells allows for specialized space-gates that permit interdimensional or otherworldly travel. Technology that synthesizes food or other items can be modeled via create food or drink or permanent image.

In the end, spell effects provide a perfect benchmark for various technological devices in a **StarSIEGE** game, but never feel tied to their specific uses and limitations. Use them as a starting point, and then model the exact technology you need from them. This can take some getting used to in the context of the game, but it provides an easy and fast reference for you to come up with game effects for technology on the fly, as well as building custom equipment for your game. Always remember, in the end, what Arthur C. Clarke said: "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."

CREATING CUSTOM EQUIPMENT FOR YOUR SCI-FI GAME

As mentioned earlier, creating equipment for a sci-fi game is, in many ways, a matter of re-skinning what you know or using spell effects to achieve "super science" levels. Often this can be done with hand-waving, and sci fi games tend to be so unique across the board, it's often left to the GM to determine what tech levels are available in their game and as such, what kind of equipment is available. A starfighter in one game may have FTL capability and energy beam weapons, while another may simply use thrusters, maneuverability, and fire projectile weapons.

In some cases, however, the GM may wish to have a benchmark for the level of power a specific piece of equipment or vehicle represents, or they may wish a more grounded system for gadgeteers looking to create equipment. For these situations, we offer this section on applying point-buy methods and values for equipment in your science fiction game.

The system herein is somewhat inspired by the original "Trappings" concept in the first edition of StarSIEGE, but is largely drawn and excerpted from **The Book of Powers.** For a more robust system for creating powers, be they technological or supernormal, check out that book for complete rules to apply to your game.

Step 1: What Does Your Gear Do?

The first step in creating a piece of technology, gear, or equipment for your game is to come up with a concept for it. What's it supposed to do? Is it a bioscanner that gives feedback on someone's heartbeat, blood pressure, and the like when scanned? Is it a motion scanner that detects movement within a given radius? Is it a weapon that fires poison darts, or an explosive that unleashes radioactive gas which then quickly dissipates? Determine what precisely you need from your gear, and jot down in general terms what it's supposed to do. Don't worry about specific bonuses and penalties or in game rule-based effects yet; we'll get to those. Before you can design rules for the gear you need to know what it is.

Step 2: Design the Effects

Next, again in general terms, put together the effects for your dream piece of gear, without thinking about the cost. Should it add +2 to hit when fired at range, and deal 8d6 damage in radioactive energy? Should it automatically detect the heat energy of any creature within 150 meters and a 180 degree range, even behind bulkhead walls? Is it a pair of goggles that give you +3 to Wisdom checks based on sight, and Darkvision? Should it enhance your speed so that you can race up to 60 feet per round, maybe hovering over the ground so you can even move across water? Should it allow you to phase your molecules so that you can pass through solid objects? Jot down the rules you have for it in your head.

Step 3: Match It to the System

The final step is the fun part (or the grueling part, depending on how you like to look at these things). Now you dig into the effects and try to match them as best you can to the statistics you wrote up. As you find abilities in the system, note the total cost for each, and when you're done, you'll have a final point value for the technology.

This point value serves two purposes. First, it's the effective level of the item for purposes of determining the Gadget Points a Gadgeteer would have to spend to purchase it (see below and the **AA Core Rulebook** for more on the Gadgeteer). Second,

it gives you a benchmark as to its general utility in game terms as compared to other pieces of equipment in your game. While no system is perfect, the end result of any piece of equipment you build should have *relatively* the same power as a spell that would accomplish a similar effect. The idea is to create a solid benchmark to tie the core of the system together—your gadget is roughly the same power as a 3rd level spell, so you now have the ability to throw that around at will. Do other characters have the same level of power? If not, it may be a good idea to limit it in some way.

Buying Multiple Levels of Value 0 Effects

Some effects have a Value of 0 when initially purchased. Buying multiple levels of these powers increase its level incrementally by 1 per purchase. Thus, if you buy a Level 0 effect 3 times, it becomes a Level 2 effect (0, then 1, then 2).

Combining Effects

There's no reason a gadget can't involve several different effects. If you want a suit of powered armor that increases your speed and strength, for example, you may purchase the movement and SIEGE check effects, combining the levels together to get a final value for your device.

Dealing with the Gadgeteer

The Gadgeteer can be the heart and soul of a sci-fi game if used properly. The Gadgeteer, after all, is your starship engineer or inventor who constantly has the exact gear you need for any given situation. Determining how to balance a gadgeteer in a setting that already has super-science, however, can be tricky. Here are some things to keep in mind if you have a Gadgeteer in your game.

Gadgets vs. Equipment?

One thing to consider is whether your final piece of technology is a gadget or just a piece of equipment. Is it fair to force your gadgeteer to spend points on a piece of equipment (say, a galactic transponder that lets them communicate across the solar system) when such equipment is commonly available to just about anyone in the setting? Of course not. GMs need to carefully pay attention to whether or not a given piece of technology should really cost points to purchase, or whether it should be available as common technology in your setting.

There are grey areas here as well: perhaps, for example, motion scanners do exist in your setting, but nobody in your player group has one that's portable enough to use, and they need one for the current adventure. It's certainly worth it to allow the gadgeteer to spend points to cobble one together, making it available to your group. It then becomes a standard part of their arsenal. However, should you later make such gear available to the group, it may behoove you to refund the points to the gadgeteer.

Equipment Budgeting

Another solution to keep the Gadgeteer relevant is for the GM to offer an equipment budget. Any character may purchase or build equipment for the setting up to a certain point value.

The group as a whole, in addition, may have a point value to purchase "group level" equipment. The Gadgeteer, then, has their own store of gadget points *in addition to* the standard budget. This means that while they might be reproducing gear that's commonly available, they'll have more of it than the rest of the group, and they'll be able to steadily and regularly increase their personal arsenal where others are at the mercy of the story to obtain more gear.

LIST OF EFFECTS

Below is a list of effects and their cost. Unless otherwise stated, an effect can be purchased multiple times to compound its effect. For example, an item that has a value of 1 point and adds +1 to all Strength checks can be purchased twice for a value of 2 and +2 to all Strength checks, or 3 times, at a value of 3 and adding +3 to all Strength checks, etc. Likewise, an item that grants enhanced speed as a movement effect may also see a second movement effect purchased that allows flight.

Remember, the value of the effect represents its power level, not its Gadget Point cost. Thus, the item above that adds +3 to Strength checks would in the end be a Level 3 power. See the Gadgeteer in the **Amazing Adventures** core rulebook for more information.

Finally, the list of effects here were borrowed and modified from the **Amazing Adventures Book of Powers.** Those looking to greatly expand the available types of effects they can use, and even add creatures like powered mutants to their game, are directed to check out that book.

Area of Effect (Value: 2)

The power modified by this effect, affects an area equal to 40 feet in diameter.

Armor (Value: 1)

The device provides an AC boost of +1 per level purchased. The AC can be either plates of hardened ceramic, reflective steel, a special alloy, or even a force field. You may purchase a maximum of AC +8 in this fashion.

Alternately, this power can provide a +4 to AC, but only for a total of 1 hour before needing to recharge for 8 hours. You must choose which form the AC bonus takes when you buy the power. If you take the +4/1 hour version, each level you buy doubles the AC (to a maximum of +8) or increases the duration by 1 hour. If you increase the duration to 6 hours, the AC benefit becomes continuous and doesn't need to recharge anymore.

Essentially, getting an AC of +8 continuously has a value of 8 regardless of which method you choose.

Cancelation (Level 3 Wisdom)

You may cancel out a given type of energy in an area equal to a 10 foot radius. You choose the type of energy or effect canceled out when you choose this effect. It could cancel out a specific form of energy (fire, cold, electricity, etc.) It could nullify super powers. It could cancel out psionic abilities. It could even create an area of zero magic or banish supernatural creatures. The exact nature of the gadget or power is up to the player and GM to describe: a gadget that cancels out electricity, for example, could generate an EMP. An ability that cancels out psychic powers or banishes spiritual entities could put out a psychic dampening field. A device or ability that cancels super powers could simply put off a "nullification field."

When used, this ability lasts for 1d6 rounds and then requires one hour to recharge. Those who might be directly affected by the field and able to resist (super-powered individuals, entities to be banished, arcanists, mentalists, etc.) are entitled a Wisdom save to resist the effect each round that they are caught in the field. Entities that are thus banished are simply banished; powered individuals and the like may make an additional Wisdom save every round to attempt to use their abilities.

Communication (Basic) (Value: 0)

This ability allows you to send and receive messages remotely. The base range is 1,000 yards. At its default level, this ability requires speech. It can be used to mimic such things as wristwatch communicators, mental communications and the like.

Alternately, you can communicate with a specific type of creature or other living thing with which you normally wouldn't be able to converse, such as a specific type of animal (dogs, cats, snakes, frogs, ants, bats, etc.) or even plants.

Communication (Enhanced) (Value: 3)

This ability functions exactly as Communication (Basic) but allows a communications range up to 10 miles. It does not require Basic Communication as a prerequisite. Alternately, at this level you can intuitively and directly communicate with a specific type of non-sentient machine that has some level of artificial intelligence (computers, modern cars, guidance and navigational systems, etc.) The exact game effects of communication with computers or machines is left to the player and GM to determine, but at least it should give a substantial bonus to any rolls made to use said machinery (those who can communicate with computers, for example, can find anything they like almost instantly and will gain huge bonuses on attempts to program or hack computer systems)

Communication (Supreme) (Value: 5)

This ability functions exactly as Communication (Basic) but allows for global communications. It does require Enhanced Communication as a prerequisite. Alternately, you can communicate with a broad range of creatures or objects with which you couldn't normally communicate (all animals, all plants, all machines).

Create/Remove Light/Sound/Flame (Value: 0)

With this ability the character can create light or sound in a radius of anywhere from five to ten feet, up to 100 feet away. This light or sound cannot be blinding nor deafening; it is at a moderate level and volume. The character can choose with each individual use of the power whether he wishes to create light or sound (this power grants the ability to do both). Sounds created can be of a broad range and variety, from white noise to murmuring voices, but cannot form actual words or distinct animal calls (though non-descript "animal noises" are possible).

In addition, the character can call into existence a small flame approximately the size of that created by a match or lighter.

Light, sound and flame created by this ability lasts for up to five minutes and then dissipates.

Alternately, the character can destroy, dampen or remove light or sound in an area the same size, creating a globe of darkness even in areas of bright light, or silence in a noisy room. Characters with this effect can also snuff out small flames such as those from lighters or candles.

The character must decide when he chooses this ability whether he can create or remove light, sound and flame.

Damage (Value: 1)

This device allows the character to make an attack that deals 1d6 points of damage of a specific type chosen when the attack is created. It can be any form of damage the character chooses, but is always the same kind of damage. It may be chosen multiple times; each time it is chosen the character either gains a second attack option of a different form of energy (though not an additional action) or an additional die of damage. No gadget may have more than 8d6 points of damage in this fashion. The attack has a range of 60 feet with a range increment of 30 feet. It has no accuracy bonus, no recoil and no rate of fire.

To create a melee attack with this ability, purchase it twice (for 2d6 damage) and then apply the reduced range limitation (see "limitations," below) twice. In such a case, the 15-foot range and range increment of 7 feet (round down to 5; melee range) simply represents the ability to throw the attack at a penalty.

Types of damage include:

- Blunt/Bashing
- Cold
- Force
- Fire
- Holy
- Lightning/Electricity
- Magic
- Necromantic
- Piercing (stabbing, arrows, bullets)
- Poison
- Psychic
- Slashing
- Sonic
- Subdual/Temporary (See "Subdual Damage" limitation)
- Unholy/Demonic

Damage Immunity (Value: 4)

Choose a specific type of damage listed under the "Damage" effect. While using the device, if you make a Constitution-based saving throw with a CL equal to your attacker's level and BtH bonus, you are immune to any damage of that type, regardless of the source. If you buy this effect twice (and apply it to the same type of damage), you need not make a Constitution saving throw; the effect is persistent and permanent.

In some cases the kind of damage from a given source will be obvious; in others it may be affected by different types of damage immunity or require a GM call. A fireball cast by an eighth-level arcanist, for example, would deal both fire and magical damage. An ancient artifact like Excalibur might deal 1d8 points of damage plus 1d6 points of holy damage; immunity to holy damage would ignore the 1d6 but not the 1d8 slashing.

Finally, in lieu of a damage type, the character can choose a damage condition, and become immune to that situation. Some specialized forms of damage and condition immunity include:

- Ability damage
- Critical hits
- Energy drain

Detect/Scan (Value: 0)

The device can detect, scan or sense a specific kind of energy or condition. Whether this is due to an ability to read a subject's aura, sense their biological rhythms or simply have a sort of sixth sense is up to the player to define.

Some examples of the detect/scan ability include:

- Lies
- Psychic phenomena
- Life/vital signs
- Movement
- Poison
- Water/edible plants

This ability has a range of 10 feet. For each level by which you increase this power, the range doubles.

Encase (Value: 5)

This ability allows the device to encase a target in another substance. The substance, conditions and means of encasing is determined by the player when this ability is chosen. For example, the player could decide that the target is turned to stone in the form of a living statue. They could decide that they can pull up a sealed room or cage from the very earth itself. Perhaps they can condense the moisture in the air into ice and encase the target in it. What if they can call upon roots, plants and vines to snake forth and ensnare, entangle and hold fast a target? The options are limitless, but for any given character there is a specific form of encasing that occurs and this doesn't change.

At its base level the encasing lasts for 1d6 hours and is non-fatal. Each level of power increase added doubles the existing time.

Combining this ability with Permanence means the target is forever encapsulated should they fail an initial saving throw to break free (usually Strength or Dexterity-based, at the GM's option). In this case, the encasing substance somehow maintains the body within, allowing (or forcing) the target to remain alive and possibly aware (which could drive them slowly mad) forever or until the process is somehow reversed. Adding the Damage power to Encase causes the target to slowly be crushed and/or suffocate, suffering the effect's damage per hour encased.

Energy Absorption/Negation (Value: 3)

The device can absorb or negate a certain type of energy, causing it to disperse harmlessly. The amount of energy absorbed with a successful Constitution check is equivalent to 3d6 points per round at the base level of this power. If the character is the subject of an attack, he automatically ignores the first 3d6 points of damage of the type of energy he absorbs in a round, after which he is entitled to a Constitution save to halve the damage of any further attacks or encounters with the energy type.

The real use of this power, however, is to draw energy from objects, obstacles and the like, to shut down machinery or other energy-powered obstacles.

Some examples of this power effect: the character who can absorb force energy, can shut down a force field if absorbs enough power from it. The base level of this power is more than enough, if the character chooses electricity, to shut down almost any machine. Characters with the ability to absorb and disperse heat can put out fires. Those who can absorb kinetic energy can stop physical attacks and even bullets, causing them to fall harmlessly to the ground.

Each level by which the character increases this power adds an additional 1d6 to the amount of damage he can absorb each round.

Combining this ability with Permanency means there is no Constitution roll required; the power simply works automatically.

Enhance Healing (Value: 1)

This ability, at its base level, has two effects. First, the character's base level of healing increases dramatically while using the gadget, which typically must be worn in some way—whether or not she rests, she heals double his level, plus her constitution bonus in damage every 24 hours. If she ever falls below zero hit points, she is entitled to a Constitution save every round (CL=current negative hit points) to immediately stabilize without medical aid.

In addition, she gains a pool of healing dice she can spend while resting to recover damage. This pool is equal to her current level, and her healing dice are of the same type as her hit dice. Whenever she is not engaging in strenuous activity, so long as she is not unconscious due to being below zero hit points, she can expend as many dice as she likes to immediately heal the resulting damage. This healing pool refreshes daily. This ability only affects wounds and physical damage (hit point loss); it has no effect on ability drain or damage.

By combining this ability with Permanency, the character need not make a saving throw to stabilize when below zero hit points; unless killed outright, she will always stabilize within one round of falling below zero. Likewise, she can expend healing dice even while incapacitated due to this massive damage.

Extra Attack (Value: 1)

This effect allows the character to make an extra attack per round with the device. It does not provide an additional action, but is applied to a specific attack. For example, a character may be a sword master who can attack twice with his sword every round, or it may increase the rate of fire for a ranged attack by one. Regardless of which attack form to which this effect is applied, the additional attack suffers a -4 penalty. This effect may be purchased up to four times, with a cumulative additional -4 to each attack. If applied to a ranged weapon, purchasing this ability four times allows fully automatic fire (see "Firearms," *Amazing Adventures* page 172).

Gravity Manipulation (Value: 3)

The gadget has the ability to use quantum mathematics and mechanics to alter the effect of gravity on a person or object's mass. This has the effect of increasing or decreasing its effective weight. When you choose this effect, determine whether you can increase or decrease gravity on an object. At its base level, you can accomplish several tasks, depending on which form of manipulation you choose.

- **Increase Gravity:** You may cause flying or levitating creatures to fall from the sky, suffering falling damage as standard. You may then, with a successful check each round, keep them from taking flight again, effectively grounding them. You may also immobilize a grounded creature, making it so heavy it is rooted to the spot and cannot move. This denies an affected creature its dexterity bonus to armor class and causes it to suffer -5 on all attacks due to fighting against the forces of gravity. Finally, you can cause objects, creatures or items to sink in liquid as though they were a stone. If you use this ability on yourself, you become exceptionally hard to move when you so choose; the CL to move you against

your will is equal to double your current level, plus your Intelligence bonus. Against overbearing attacks (*Amazing Adventures* page 173) your AC is 17 plus your current hit dice.

- **Decrease Gravity:** You can cause a creature (including yourself) to become more lightweight, either doubling its movement rate, granting it buoyancy so that it naturally floats on water, or even reducing gravity's effect to make the object, person or creature lighter than air so that they float like a hot air balloon. You have no special ability to move a lighter-than-air creature or object; you can simply cause it to levitate. This ability requires an Intelligence check to control the specific effect of gravity (how far the object levitates); for every ten feet away from you, the CL for this check increases by 2.

This ability has a maximum range of 30 feet and line of sight. Once an object or creature leaves your line of sight you can no longer control gravity's effect upon them. Likewise, for every 10 feet away from you they are, the CL for any checks to affect them increases by 1. Unwilling creatures naturally resist the effect, increasing the CL to use the power on them by their current level or hit dice.

By combining this ability with Permanency, you need not make an ability check to use the power; it automatically functions whenever you will it. Instead, unwilling targets can make a strength-based saving throw with a CL equal to your level and intelligence modifier to resist.

Healing (Value: 1)

The device can heal others who have suffered damage. At the basic level of this power, the gadget may heal up to 1d8 points of damage per day. This power may be purchased multiple times; each time it is purchased it heals an additional die of damage per day. When applied to a gadget, the device has limited resources—it is battery powered, uses nanotech, etc.—which must "recharge" or be refilled, taking 24 hours once the pool of resources is expended.

Partial Recharges

It's inevitable that a player will want to know how long it takes to partially recharge a gadget or power. It's entirely up to you as GM if you choose to allow this. If you do, the formula is fairly simple: time required for partial recharges should be based on the time for a full recharge, divided by the number of dice in its pool—a device that could heal 3d8 points of damage per day, for example, requires 3 hours per die to recharge.

Movement (Value: 3 per level)

You gain a special kind of movement when you use this device. Purchasing this effect multiple times may enhance a single type of movement the gadget possesses or may add an additional kind of movement. Certain abilities may require a

judgment call on the part of the GM. Is Parkour represented by brachiation or freedom of movement, for example? Either could be argued accurate. When you apply this ability, choose a form the following:

- *Brachiation:* You have the ability to move through trees, foliage or by some other means of swinging-style locomotion at your normal rate of speed. This could mean going branch to branch, leaping from tree to tree, or it could represent a city-bound hero with some sort of grappling line that allows him to swing through the concrete jungle.
- *Flight:* You gain a fly speed of 30ft. Each level by which you increase the power of this ability doubles your existing speed rating (30-60-120-240). In a high-level four-color game choosing this effect at power levels higher than 7 ("Enhanced Flight") could grant supersonic speeds, at the GM's option.
- *Freedom of Movement:* Move through normally impossible terrain, such as heavily-forested areas that are thick with brambles, or mountain passes choked with stone, too difficult for others to pass through, as though it were difficult (half movement) and through normally difficult terrain at normal movement.
- *Leaping:* Without a running start you can leap a distance equal to your strength bonus times ten in feet, and half that distance high. Getting a running start doubles the distance you can leap. Each level that you increase this power by increases the distance by a factor of 10 (Str bonus x 10, 20, 30, etc.)
- *Phasing:* Move through solid objects (though you suffer 5d6 damage if you end your turn inside an object).
- *Speedster:* Drastically increase your speed, to double its base value, as well as gaining +5 to initiative and an extra action every round of combat. Each level by which you increase this power doubles your existing speed again. At higher level games, choosing this ability at power levels higher than 7 ("Enhanced Speed") could grant running at supersonic speeds or faster, at the GM's option.
- *Spider Climb:* Crawl on sheer and smooth slopes that would normally be impossible to navigate, as though you were an insect.

Remote Viewing/Listening (Value: 2)

The device allows one to hear or see an area some distance away with absolute clarity. The character must have a direct connection to the area being viewed such as a camera which they view through a monitor at their present location. The base distance for the power is 1 mile. Each additional level added to the base doubles the current range.

This effect grants one remote sense (sight or hearing); not both. Purchasing it additional times allows the addition of one sense per additional time the effect is purchased instead of increasing the range, if desired.

Repair (Value: 0)

The device has the ability to instantly or rapidly affect repairs to mundane objects, either by regenerating molecules, patching holes, mending circuitry, etc. The character cannot make extensive repairs or rebuild destroyed objects, but can restore a leg to a broken chair, rejuvenate a broken or shattered object, fix a broken lock, etc. The base level of this effect allows repair of up to 5 pounds of simple material. Each level by which the power is increased adds an additional 5 pounds of material. Combining this ability with permanency allows the powered character to build gadgets as a gadgeteer, spending power points to create gadgets or to purchase super powers. Since gadgeteers have the Jury Rig ability, this effect is not appropriate to the gadgeteer character, save for a "fixit" gadget that perhaps grants Jury Rig to a Charisma-based gadgeteer.

Sensory Enhancement (Value: 0)

The gadget provides one form of enhanced senses. They may add +2 to Wisdom checks related to that sense. Alternately, they gain a new type of vision or sense. Choose from among twilight vision, duskvision, darkvision or tremorsense. Each additional time this ability is purchased provides a new form of vision. Blindsight is not available unless the character purchases all three other forms of vision or purchases enhanced touch, hearing and smell.

SIEGE Check Bonus (Value: 1 per level)

Your item provides a +1 bonus to a given SIEGE check (including saves). When you choose this effect, choose one attribute and when you are using the item, that attribute gains +1 to any checks. Thus, if you choose Strength, the item, when used gives you a +1 to all Strength checks.

Buying additional levels increases the bonus *or* allows the purchase of additional attributes. Each attribute must be purchased separately; thus, if you want +2 to Strength and +2 to Dexterity checks, you would need to buy four levels of this ability, at a total cost of 12 points. This effect can never grant more than +5 to the checks for any single attribute.

Silent (Value: 1)

This is a modifier to an existing effect. There are no sounds associated with the use of this device whatsoever. Ranged attacks are silent; communication requires no verbal queues, etc.

Sleep (Value: 1)

Whether it's via hypnosis, a special type of gas, pheromones or any other method, the device has the ability to put others to sleep. The base level of this ability affects 1d8 hit dice worth of creatures in a 30 foot radius and lasts for 10 minutes. It will affect only creatures up to 5 hit dice or levels. Each level added to the power increases the duration by 10 minutes, the radius by 10 feet, adds 1 hit die worth of creatures to the overall effect or increases the maximum hit dice of a single creature affected by 1.

Stun (Value: 0)

The character can generate a burst of energy that stuns opponents, inflicting -2 to attacks, AC and ability checks for 1d4 rounds. Each additional level added to this effect's power increases the penalty by 1, to a maximum of -10.

Subdual Damage (Value: 0)

The device can make an attack with a range of 30ft, Accuracy 0, RoF 1 which deals 1d6 points of subdual damage. Raising this effect to level 1 can add an additional attack at Rec -1, or can increase the damage to 1d8.

Targeting (Value: 1 per level)

Your item grants +1 to hit, either in melee or in ranged. You may purchase this ability up to a maximum of +5, and additional levels must be applied to melee *or* ranged, not both.

Vehicle Scale (Value: 5)

Your device works on a vehicle scale. This is generally applied to attacks and damage, which can now damage vehicles, and becomes prerequisite to install these weapons systems into vehicles. It is left to the GM's option how and if it applies to non-damaging effects.

POWER LIMITATIONS

When building powers, you can reduce the overall effective level of an ability using limitations. Each limitation placed on a power reduces its effective power level by 1 (with one exception; Weak Effect has a value of -3, but requires multiple features to take). However, unless it is comprised of only zero- or first-level effects, no power can have an effective level lower than 1. In addition, no power that deals real (non-subdual) damage can have a power level lower than 1.

A power that grants a homing blast, for example, would combine the effects Damage and Targeting, granting a blast that deals 1d6 points of damage to a range of 60 feet and gains +1 accuracy bonus. This would normally be a level 2 ability. Applying the reduced damage limitation would reduce the power to 1d4 points of damage and the power level to 1. Applying any other limitations would be pointless, as the power level cannot be taken below 1.

On the other hand, suppose a character wants to be able to wield an energy blade with which he is lightning fast. He might choose Damage and Increased Damage to boost the power level to 1d8, and Additional Attack to give him a second attack at -4. At this point he has a ranged attack dealing 1d8 damage with which he can attack twice, the second attack being at -4. This would be a Power Level 3 ability. Perhaps he then adds the Reduced Range limitation three times, reducing his range to under ten feet, which makes it basically a melee attack. Normally this would reduce the ability to Power Level 0, but since the minimum power level for a damaging ability is 1, the player has two choices: he could add an additional first-level effect (Homing, for example, or a second level of Increased

Damage), or choose the Subdual Damage limitation, allowing him to purchase his energy blade as a zero-level power, but it deals only stun damage.

Activation Time

The device takes time to activate. Whether it's a ritual, aiming, charging, what-have-you, when the character uses the ability it requires 2 rounds to use before going off. This limitation can be taken multiple times, doubling the existing evocation time with each level.

Malfunction or Misfire

On an imploding die result, the device malfunctions or spectacularly misfires. It does not function for at least 1d6 hours, and the user suffers damage from backlash equal to the imploding dice results (*Amazing Adventures* p. 164). This limitation can be taken a second time; doing so results in an imploding result on a natural 1 or 2 on the check die rather than just on a natural 1.

Poor Accuracy

The weapon has an Accuracy penalty rather than bonus. The penalty begins at -2; this ability can be taken multiple times, raising accuracy penalties by an additional -1 each time to a maximum of -5. If applied to an ability that has accuracy, the accuracy is reduced consequently. It cannot be stacked with the Homing effect.

Recoil

The weapon has a recoil penalty of an additional -2. This limitation can only be taken if the ability already provides multiple attacks. It can be taken multiple times, increasing the penalty by 1 each time, to a maximum of -5.

Reduced Damage

The damage die type for the device is reduced by one. Thus, d8 becomes d6, etc. d4 becomes d2, and d2 becomes 1 point of damage. Damage cannot be reduced below 1 point. This can also apply to healing abilities with a dice-based effect: a healing power that normally restores 1d8 only restores 1d6.

Reduced Range

Effective total range for the power is halved.

Slow Effect

The ability's effects work slowly over a period of rounds or even minutes. The GM and player should work together to determine the effective speed of the power, how often and in what proportion of its total effects it takes place, and the total appropriate reduction.

For example, a character with the ability to transmute flesh to stone might select this ability, stating it takes five rounds to work. The first round the target is slowed to 5 ft. movement. The second, they lose their Dexterity bonus to AC and cannot do anything but defend themselves. The third, they are paralyzed. The fourth their skin begins to harden and turn gray, and the fifth, they petrify completely. At any time before the fifth round, if the character's concentration is broken or she opts to do so, the power can be canceled, reversing in the same order at the same speed. The GM grants a 2-level reduction for this limitation.

Skill-Based

This limitation is only available in games using the optional *skill packages* subsystem (see **Chapter Two).** The device is directly associated with a specific skill: the SIEGE Check effect applies only when using that specific skill, for example, or the Attack ability requires a skill check instead of a standard attack roll with your BtH (and doesn't allow adding your level to the check). If it is unclear how an effect can be tied to a skill as a limitation, either the GM can make a ruling, or this limitation is simply not available for that effect.

Subdual Damage

All damage from your power is merely subdual damage. This limitation cannot be combined with the Subdual Damage effect.

Weak Effect (Value: 3)

Any positive numeric, variable effects of the device are halved, while any penalties associated with it (such as recoil) are doubled. Alternately, the hero suffers -2 to attempts to activate the power, or victims gain +2 to save against its effects. To take this limitation and gain the 3-point benefit, the device must have multiple numeric effects to reduce; otherwise, see reduced range, reduced damage, etc.

CHAPTER TWO: ADVANCED CUSTOMIZATION

Exactly as within the core **Amazing Adventures** rules, this chapter provides a number of optional systems to provide for full customization of characters in your science fiction game. Herein we will include a new Generic Class Ability: the Hacker or Cyber Jacker, as well as opening up every single class to the Generic Class Ability system, allowing for true customization of your class.

Following this, we will open up a new method of multiclassing, enabling you to pick and choose levels of individual classes to add abilities, at the cost of slower (and in some cases reduced) advancement, as well as at the cost of reduced effectiveness in both classes.

Included here as well is a complete skills system for the game, allowing you to better define the areas of specific expertise your character possesses, but without interfering with the open nature of the system.

Finally, we'll take a deeper look at vehicle combat, adding a few options for combat between starships such as obstacles in space, battles with capital ships, and how you can adapt existing rules to represent the unique aspects of fighting in outer space.

As with the same section of the **Amazing Adventures** core rules, everything in this chapter is considered expressly optional, and should not be assumed by players to form a part of the game. Always check with your game master to determine which, if any, of these options are in play. For the rules and systems surrounding the use of these options, see **Chapter Three.**

NEW GENERIC CLASS ABILITIES

Ace (Dexterity)

This character is either a classic wheelman or hot dog pilot. He can pull bootleg turns, storm barns, and work a vehicle like Van Gogh worked with color. Instead of adding either a vehicle's Dex bonus or his own when piloting, this character adds *both the vehicle's bonus and his own.* Note that if a vehicle has a penalty to an attribute, this still modifies the character's bonus as normal (See **Vehicle Combat rules, Chapter Three**). At fifth level, the character can treat any negatives to a vehicle's attributes as zero. At tenth level, the character adds an additional +1 to all rolls when piloting a vehicle.

Hacker/Cyber Jacker

Your character is expert at the use of computers and at hacking into computer networks. You can take down security, send, intercept or disable communications, pull down information and input programs. All you need to do is access a network portal and patch your terminal in, and you can run code that allows you to access, control and program other systems on the same network. In settings with wireless networks, you can do this at range, so long as you are within range of a WAN.

With this ability, you always treat abilities as Prime for the purposes of hacking or Cyberjacking, even if the ability in question is not normally Prime. If the ability in question is already prime, you gain an additional +3 to checks for hacking. This bonus combines with any bonuses from skills or class abilities.

In Cyberpunk games where you actually jack into a system and interact with it, you increase all mental attributes by +2 while in the system. Thus, if your Intelligence is normally 14, you will treat

it as 16 while jacked into a system, as well as treating Intelligence as Prime (or gaining a +3 to checks if it is already Prime).

For complete rules on hacking and cyberjacking, see **Chapter 3**.

Gadget / Powered

This character has a gadget or superpower that supplements their other abilities. It could be a cybernetic implant—an eye that gives them X-Ray vision, an arm gun. It could be a superpower like the ability to fly. It could be a long-range handheld scanner. The sky is the limit…to a point!

In game terms, you get 5 gadget points to use to build a gadget or purchase a power using the rules herein or in **Amazing Adventures** (or the **Book of Powers**). You may not "bank" these powers like a Gadgeteer; any you do not spend are lost. You may, if you choose, build multiple cheaper gadgets, so long as the total value does not exceed 5 points.

You may take this ability multiple times. Each time you take it, you gain another gaget.

TRUE CLASS CUSTOMIZATION

Science fiction characters are defined by what they can do, and each one, in their own way, seems to break the mold of expectation for who and what they are. This is part and parcel of what sci-fi is.

As such, another option for Generic Class Abilities is to allow characters swap out one or more abilities from their core class, with those of another class. Doing so works identically to generic class abilities; it simply opens up all classes and all abilities up to a swap. As with Generic class abilities, a character must have a roughly equivalent class ability to swap out, and the GM has final say.

In this way, for example, a Gadgeteer could swap out one level of Gadget Points and pick up the Hooligan's Stealth or Sneak Attack abilities in exchange, or even the Raider's Favored Weapon (which they might apply to their favorite gadget!). A Gumshoe might swap out Face in the Crowd to pick up the Socialite's Connected ability. Again, the GM must approve any such ability swaps, and is within their rights to demand additional swaps—a character wanting to pick up a combat ability for a non-combat ability, for example, may be required to sacrifice two or more non-combat abilities, to balance the scales.

In this way, characters can be completely customized to suit the player's desires. However, it's important to limit how many such abilities can be swapped. In no situation can a character of a given character class swap out more than half of their core abilities; otherwise they cease to be a member of their core class, and the GM must go through the hassle of figuring out a new experience progression for them.

Make no mistake, however: if not properly monitored and adjudicated by the GM, this option can lead to extremely powerful and even game-breaking characters. It's absolutely essential for the player and GM to collaborate on this option, and for the player to accept any limitations or requirements the GM places upon such a swap.

Finally, while arcanists and mentalists can always sacrifice a level of spellcasting or a psychic power to gain another class' ability, the reverse is not true. No class can gain spellcasting or psychic powers through sacrificing class abilities (though the Wild Talent Generic Class Ability from the **Amazing Adventures Companion** does allow for a degree of psychic power for non-mentalists). In the case of gadgeteer abilities, the degree of class ability that must be sacrificed for one level of gadget points depends on the gadget desired, and is left to the GM's discretion.

MULTICLASSING: INDIVIDUAL LEVELS

Another option for class customization is a new take on multiclassing. Characters may, if they desire, take a single level of a given class as they reach a level advancement point. This must occur at the point where they would achieve a new level in their normal class. In order, then, to reach their next level, they must achieve experience equal to the next level of the new class, plus 250 XP per level of the character.

Thus, if a hooligan reaches fourth level (7,001 XP), and decides to pick up a level of gadgeteer, they require 2,001, plus 1,000 (250 XP per level for each of his current four levels), for a total of 3,001 XP before they can advance another level. This means they must have a total of 10,001 XP before they can choose to level again as a gadgeteer, or return to hooligan. At this point the character is considered a fifth level character overall, but a fourth level hooligan and first level gadgeteer. This means that any general SIEGE checks made will see the character add +5 (full levels), while hooligan-specific SIEGE checks will add +4 (4 levels of hooligan) and gadgeteer checks will add +1 (1 level of gadgeteer).

If they return to hooligan, their advancement remains as normal, and they will need 14,001 to hit sixth level. However, the 3,001 XP they spent on gadgeteer *does not count towards this advancement;* it must be tracked separately. If they choose to advance again as a gadgeteer, they continue the slow advancement, requiring 5,201 plus 1,250, or 6,451 before they level again as a gadgeteer (at which point they again can choose where to advance).

In this system, the character uses the best BtH of any class the character possesses. In the case above, they would have the BTH of a fourth level hooligan, as it is superior to that of the first-level gadgeteer. The character gains all hit dice from all levels possessed—in this case, the first level hit points of the gadgeteer combine with the fourth level hit points of the hooligan.

Finally, choosing a single level of another class *does not grant the prime ability of the class.* This means that, for the example above, the character, though they must still determine whether they

are intelligence- or charisma-based, does not gain intelligence or charisma as a Prime, though if they already possess one of those abilities as Prime from choosing it previously, it does remain Prime. For many characters, however, this could mean having to make checks from their secondary class as secondary attributes, thus reducing their chances of success with these abilities.

SKILL PACKAGES

Skill packages have long been part and parcel of the SIEGE Engine. They made their first appearance as Skill Bundles in the original **StarSIEGE** rules as a sort of replacement for classes and levels. Another take on skills in the system appears in the **Castles & Crusades Game Master's Guide**, and yet another option for adding skills to your game can be found in **Victorious**, which also uses them to elevate the customizability of characters to the point where class becomes a secondary definer of the character.

Amazing Adventures core rules handle areas of specialized knowledge through Backgrounds and Knowledges, seeking to strike a balance between the simplicity of the SIEGE mechanics, and the ability to build customized characters while still respecting the core element of the class defining a character's base abilities.

We present here a new, streamlined means of handling skills in your game that is yet another optional bolt-on system, but should be adopted in a proper **StarSIEGE** game. This is because a character's specific and individualized skills and training come into play far more in science fiction gaming than they do in fantasy, pulp, and other settings. The system is designed to allow for plenty of options, but remain simple, streamlined, and elegant in practice, in the spirit of the SIEGE Engine.

If the rules herein are adopted for your game, it is suggested that they replace Backgrounds and Knowledges from the core **Amazing Adventures** rules, rather than be used in conjunction with that system. Otherwise, you may end up with a slew of fiddly bonuses to track, and that will just slow down the game. Alternately, feel free to adopt any other system for skills, be it from the CKG or **Victorious**.

Using Skills

Using skills is simple. Whenever a character wishes to undertake a given task, they make an attribute check as standard. Having a skill allows the character to add +3 to that task. There is no penalty for attempting a check when a character does not possess a skill.

Skills and the Ability Check

One of the core advantages of the SIEGE Engine is the ability check mechanic. Just about any situation you can imagine can be handled with a basic ability check, using the CL to determine difficulty. Since the system is so free form, it allows the GM to take into consideration a character's background, history, culture and training to customize each check for the individual player character. For this reason, skills have traditionally been assumed as part of any character's background, with players and GMs falling back on logic.

A raider, for example, is assumed on some level to be an expert on archaeology and anthropology as well as history, religion, and a wealth of similar scholarly topics. When the time comes for an ability check in one of these areas, the CL will likely be much lower for a raider than it would for, say, a hooligan.

Sometimes, however, you have a table where the players and GM want a more detailed and solid breakdown of the knowledges and abilities a character has, and that's where skills come into play. The trick, however, is to not allow skills to overshadow the basic ability check mechanic. Always remember that the first rule of the SIEGE Engine is, "Sure, you can try it."

Skills, Restrictions, Class and Level

Only under very rare circumstances should a skill ever represent something a character can't do. For example, not just anyone can attempt major surgery. I mean, they **can**, but there's a greater than 90% chance of killing a patient without proper training. Overall, though, there should always be a chance of success. Heck, even in the surgery example above, the GM would be within her rights to allow a shot at it, albeit with a CL of 20 or 30.

The major exception to this rule is that skills should not overshadow class abilities. Thus, while a character may have a skill representing their training in stealth or climbing, they still would not add their level to the check, unless they possess that talent as a class ability as well. The core rule still remains in play: when trying to do something that is the purview of another character class, even if you have skill training, you do not add your level to the check.

So therein lies the important warning and caveat: Skills can be a great way to enhance character abilities and define a character's background and career training, but they should never interfere with the open and free nature of the SIEGE Engine, nor should they render any character class impotent to perform their basic class abilities at a higher level than those who don't have said class abilities.

What If There's No Such Class in the Campaign?

That being said, what happens if, for example, there is no gadgeteer in your game, but there is a character who has an Engineering skill? Nominally engineering is the purview of the Gadgeteer, so other engineers wouldn't add their level. In this case, however, the engineer is not stepping on the toes of another character, so the GM may decide to allow adding level to a check.

If, however, a gadgeteer later appears on the scene as a new character, said engineer may have to accept no longer adding their level, reflecting the greater proficiency of the class-oriented ability. This, however, as with many aspects of the SIEGE Engine, is left to the discretion of the Game Master.

Doubling Up

What happens if, for example, a Hooligan decides to take skill proficiencies in Stealth and Locksmith? Do these skills augment

their stealth and lockpicking abilities? The answer is yes. Even if you already possess a class ability, taking a skill represents additional training that makes one even more expert than they already were.

What Skills Are Not

Skills should in no way function as a limiting factor on what characters can attempt to do in a StarSIEGE game. The SIEGE Engine is designed to be a broad and open framework for role playing and should always be kept that way; where other systems take the philosophy of, "If it's not on your sheet, you can't do it," the SIEGE Engine takes the approach, "If it's not expressly forbidden, you can always give it a go."

Skills, then, offer a means to express additional expertise in a given area, as opposed to a description of what a character does or does not know. For example, in a modern game, most adults can drive a car. If they have the driving skill, however, they are simply better at it than most people. Again, always apply common sense and determine whether a character can make an effort at an ability check, with skills adding a bit of extra bonus due to expertise beyond normal training and knowledge in the area.

Skills and Attributes

Skills are broken down, generally, under attributes, with each skill being a sort of "specialization" of a given ability score. Thus, your Dexterity will incorporate things like running, jumping, acrobatics, gymnastics, balance, coordination and the like, while Charisma represents interaction, seduction, smooth talking and intimidation. Most skill checks will be attribute (SIEGE) checks under the listed, associated attribute.

Skills with Alternate Attributes

In some situations, a GM may decide to call for an ability check where a skill applies, but falls under a different ability. For example, Survival is normally a Wisdom-based skill, but you could argue that Survival should be allowed to be used on an Intelligence check to identify whether or not a plant is poisonous or safe to eat. Medicine is normally Wisdom, but while performing surgery you may make a Dexterity check, but still apply Medicine to the roll. As with everything else in the SIEGE Engine, the best bet is to roll with it. If there's a question, allow the skill to ride, unless it's truly preposterous.

Combined "Special" Skills

In some cases, skills can be effectively combined to allow a character to perform amazing feats of deduction or physical skill. For example, a character who possesses Acrobatics, Jumping and Climbing may endeavor to attempt "free running," like parkour.

In such situations the GM may permit the purchase of a "special skill" with the prior skills as prerequisites, representing a combination ability, with an increased benefit from the component skills. This benefit should be just below the combined total bonus of all the skills. If it has a two-skill prerequisite, the special skill grants +4. If it has a three-skill benefit, the special skill grants +5, and if a four skill prerequisite, the special skill grants +6.

Thus, allowing a character to take Parkour, for example, as a skill would grant a +5 bonus when a character is attempting feats of free running, but in order to gain the skill the character must first possess Acrobatics, Jumping and Climbing skills.

The GM should work with the player to determine the exact circumstances under which the new Special Skill provides benefits.

Associated Skills

Sometimes, the GM may call for a skill check that a character does not possess, but the character may possess a tangentially related skill. For example, a biology check is called for, and the character doesn't possess that specific science, but does possess mortuary science, which includes knowledge of anatomy.

In such a situation, the player may request that their character make an "Associated Skill" check. Essentially, they make their normal check, adding half the bonus of the associated skill, rounded down. In this case, assuming the mortuary science skill is at its base +3 proficiency, the character would add +1 to the check since they have partial knowledge of the situation.

Starting and Learning Skills

Every character begins with one skill under each of their Primary Attributes. In addition, extra skills are gained based on the character class in question, with each class allowed a given number of starting skills that are restricted to certain ability scores.

Starting skills are as listed in the following table. Standard character class names are used, to allow for the broadest possible application of this system.

TABLE: STARTING SKILLS BY CLASS

Character Class	# Skills	Abilities
Acrobat	2	Str, Dex, Wis
Arcanist*	4	Con, Int, Wis, Cha
Archer	3	Dex, Wis, Cha
Duelist	3	Dex, Wis, Cha
Feral	2	Str, Dex, Con
Gadgeteer	4	Dex, Int, Wis, Cha
Gumshoe	3	Dex, Int, Wis
Gunslinger	3	Dex, Int, Wis
Hooligan	4	Any
Mentalist	4	Any
Pirate	3	Dex, Con, Wis, Cha
Pugilist	2	Str, Dex, Con
Raider	4	Any
Socialite	3	Dex, Wis, Cha

*Incl. Occultist (Companion) and Sorcerer (Book of Powers)

Gaining and Improving Skills

As characters increase in level, they have the option of improving their existing skills or gaining entirely new skills. At levels 4, 8, 12, 16, 20 and every four levels thereafter, characters may choose either one new skill, or can improve any two existing skills by +1 each.

New skills chosen are not restricted by ability as were initial skills, and may be chosen from any and all available skills. They should, however, be a rational choice. There's little reason a Pugilist from Long Island who grew up on the streets suddenly learns how to do surgery, for example. The GM has final say on whether a skill choice is appropriate when characters reach a level allowing for a new choice.

List of Skills

Below is a list of skills, a brief description of each, and the attributes under which they fall.

SKILL LIST

Ability	Associated Skills
Strength	Athletics, Climbing, Jumping, Swimming
Dexterity	Acrobatics/Gymnastics, Driving, Locksmithing, Piloting, Sleight of Hand, Stealth
Constitution	Control Breathing, Control Biorhythm, Endurance, Hard Drinking
Intelligence	Arcana, Engineering (Type), Forbidden Lore, History, Humanities (Type), Investigation, Knowledge (Subject), Nature, Science (Type)
Wisdom	Animal Handling and Husbandry, Insight. Medicine, Perception, Survival
Charisma	Deception, Intimidation, Performance (Type), Persuasion, Streetwise

Strength Skills

Athletics: Athletics represents feats of sheer power and muscle: lifting heavy objects, throwing items, and general sports-related tasks.

Climbing: The ability to climb a surface with available equipment and handholds. Combining this skill with Jumping and Acrobatics allows a character to attempt "free running" or parkour-like feats of strength and agility.

Jumping: Training in the proper techniques to jump farther and higher than most people.

Swimming: The self-explanatory ability to effectively move about while in deep water. Represents the ability to navigate both with and against currents, tread water and remain afloat in difficult conditions.

Dexterity Skills

Acrobatics/Gymnastics: This skill covers your attempt to stay on your feet in a tricky situation, such as when you're trying to run across a sheet of ice, balance on a tightrope, or stay upright on a rocking ship's deck. The GM might also call for an Acrobatics check to see if you can perform acrobatic stunts, including dives, rolls, somersaults, and flips.

Driving (Type): The skill to pilot land vehicles, from cars to motorcycles to go-carts. Most people know the basics of driving. This skill comes into play during vehicle combat or when trying to perform tricky or dangerous maneuvers. There are three types of Driving skill: civilian, commercial, and military.

Locksmithing: Locksmiths know how to bypass mechanical locks. They can create skeleton keys, pick locks, install locks, and even design locks. Certain character classes, by their nature, possess this skill.

Piloting (Type): This represents the ability to control and steer aircraft, starcraft, or watercraft. When selecting this skill, choose either aircraft or watercraft. Unlike driving, not everyone knows how to fly (let alone land) a plane. Those without this skill may suffer penalties or high CLs to attempt to maneuver air and watercraft.

Sleight of Hand: Whenever you attempt an act of legerdemain or manual trickery, such as planting something on someone else or concealing an object on your person, make a Sleight of Hand check. The GM might also call for a Sleight of Hand check to determine whether you can lift a coin purse off another person or slip something out of another person's pocket.

Stealth: Make a Stealth check when you attempt to conceal yourself from enemies, slink past guards, slip away without being noticed, or sneak up on someone without being seen or heard. Certain classes, such as Hooligans and Gumshoes, are already proficient in Stealth.

Constitution Skills

Controlled Breathing: This skill allows a character to hold their breath or otherwise control their breathing to stave off suffocation and drowning, or to avoid breathing harmful substances.

Control Biorhythm: Characters with this ability can "play dead" by slowing their heartbeat and breathing and holding stock still.

Endurance: Characters with this skill are adept at forced marches, running long distances and avoiding situations that result in fatigue and exhaustion, as well as going without sleep, food and water for extended stretches of time.

Hard Drinker: Unlike other skills, this one grants its bonus to saving throws against poisons and toxins, including alcohol.

Intelligence Skills

Arcana: This skill measures your ability to recall lore about spells, magic items, eldritch symbols, magical traditions, the planes of existence, and the inhabitants of those planes. This skill may only be available in settings in which magic and mysticism exist.

Engineering (Type): This skill represents knowledge of how things work, how to build and repair items, and the theory that goes into inventing items. When choosing this skill, the character must define the type of engineering they possess. The number and type of fields of engineering are many, so no comprehensive list is here, but a few examples include: aeronautics, chemical, civil, electrical, electronics, mechanical, nautical, starship. Gadgeteers are already, via the nature of their class and their Jury Rig ability, assumed to be proficient in all forms of engineering.

Forbidden Lore: This skill is identical to the knowledge skill outlined in the **Amazing Adventures** core rulebook, and carries all the same restrictions (i.e. it cannot be taken until a character encounters sanity-blasting forces). As with Arcana, this skill may only be available in settings with magic and mysticism.

History: History represents your ability to recall lore about historical events, legendary people, ancient kingdoms, past disputes, recent wars, and lost civilizations. In game terms, archaeology is rolled into history.

Humanities (Type): The humanities are those areas of specialization that deal with the human condition and society. Characters must define their humanities training as one of the following: Linguistics, Literature, History, Jurisprudence, Philosophy, Archaeology, Anthropology, Religious Studies, Ethics, History, Fine Arts, Applied Arts, Theology, Classics (myth and legend), Sociology, or a similar field.

Investigation: When you look around for clues and make deductions based on those clues, you make an Investigation check. You might deduce the location of a hidden object, discern from the appearance of a wound what kind of weapon dealt it, or determine the weakest point in a tunnel that could cause it to collapse. Poring through ancient scrolls in search of a hidden fragment of knowledge might also call for check using this skill.

Knowledge (Subject): This is a broad catch-all skill providing knowledge in a broad range of topics which are not listed here. If a character wants to invent a skill for their character that does not fall under the broad heading of any other skill, they should define it as a Knowledge skill.

Nature: Your Nature check measures your ability to recall lore about terrain, plants and animals, the weather, and natural cycles.

Science (Type): This skill represents training in a specific field of science. The type of science studied must be stated. There are countless fields of science, but a few suggestions include Psychology, Chemistry, Biology, and Physics. At the GM's discretion, certain fields may require even further definition—Physics, for example, could require clarification of Applied Physics, Theoretical Physics, Quantum Physics, etc.

Wisdom Skills

Animal Handling and Husbandry: When there is any question whether you can calm down a domesticated animal, keep a mount from getting spooked, or intuit an animal's intentions, the GM might call for a check using this skill. This skill also allows a general knowledge of animals, their breeds, behavioral patterns, interactions with others of species, instincts, habits, and the like.

Insight: Your Insight check decides whether you can determine the true intentions of a creature, such as when searching out a lie or predicting someone's next move. Doing so involves gleaning clues from body language, speech habits, and changes in mannerisms.

Medicine: A Medicine check lets you try to stabilize a dying companion or diagnose an illness. It also is used to perform complex medical procedures, given the right facilities and equipment.

Perception: Your Perception check lets you spot, hear, or otherwise detect the presence of something. It measures your general awareness of your surroundings and the keenness of your senses. For example, you might try to hear a conversation through a closed door, eavesdrop under an open window, or hear monsters moving stealthily in the forest. Or you might try to spot things that are obscured or easy to miss, whether they are orcs lying in ambush on a road, thugs hiding in the shadows of an alley, or candlelight under a closed secret door.

Survival: The GM might ask you to make a Survival check to follow tracks, hunt wild game, guide your group through frozen wastelands, identify signs that a pack of wolves lives nearby, predict the weather, or avoid quicksand and other natural hazards.

Charisma Skills

Deception: Deception determines whether you can convincingly hide the truth, either verbally or through your actions. This deception can encompass everything from misleading others through ambiguity to telling outright lies. Typical situations include trying to fast-talk a police officer or doorman, con a mark, earn money through gambling, pass yourself off in a disguise, dull someone's suspicions with false assurances, or maintain a straight face while telling a blatant lie.

Intimidation: When you attempt to influence someone through overt threats, hostile actions, and physical violence, the GM might ask you to make an intimidation check. Examples include trying to pry information out of a prisoner, convincing street thugs to back down from a confrontation, or using the edge of a broken bottle to convince a sneering vizier to reconsider a decision.

Performance (Type): Performance determines how well you can delight an audience with music, dance, acting, storytelling, or some other form of entertainment. When you choose this skill, choose a type of performance, i.e. singing, string instruments, woodwinds, comedy, acting, etc., with which you are proficient.

Persuasion: When you attempt to influence someone or a group of people with tact, social graces, or good nature, the GM might ask you to make a Persuasion check. Typically, you use persuasion when acting in good faith, to foster friendships, make cordial requests, or exhibit proper etiquette. Examples of persuading others include convincing a receptionist to let you into the corporate executive's office, negotiating agreements, haggling for prices, seducing someone you find attractive, or inspiring a group to action.

Streetwise: Your character has a knack for navigating the dark personalities of the mean streets. This means she knows exactly how to find information and talk her way into gangs, criminal organizations and the like. Where persuasion is a general seductive smooth-talking ability, Streetwise is called upon when trying to put together information on the streets, locate contacts, and gain knowledge about who is who and what is where.

INTRODUCTION

The rules of play for **Castles & Crusades Classic** are stunningly simple. This booklet contains all the information you need to play the game, for both players and Game Masters.

ATTRIBUTE CHECKS

The primary method of task resolution in **Castles & Crusades** is the Attribute Check, also called the SIEGE Check. Whenever something needs to be done whose outcome is in doubt or unclear, a check must be made to see if the character succeeds at his task. Every check has an associated attribute. Whenever one of these checks is made, 1d20 is rolled by the player, who also adds any appropriate attribute bonus and their level. So if a character is 3rd level and has a Dexterity bonus of +3, to make a Dexterity check they roll 1d20 and add +6 (+3 for their level and +3 for their attribute bonus).

Other factors such as Backgrounds, Knowledge Skills, and Traits may also add or subtract to this roll. If the final result is equal to or greater than a number generated by the Game Master, called the challenge class (CC), then the attribute check is successful.

The only exception to this is when a character is attempting something that is expressly the ability of another class. For example, if the character above is a Gadgeteer and they try to move silently, they do not add +3 to the die roll for being 3rd level. This is because moving silently is the purview of hooligans and gumshoes, who have it as class abilities, so only hooligans and gumshoes add their level to checks to move silently.

Generating the Challenge Class

The challenge class is a number generated by the Game Master that represents the degree of difficulty for performing that action. The challenge class is generated by the Game Master adding or subtracting the challenge level (CL) to the challenge base (CB), which is 12 if the ability score in question is Primary (Prime), or 18 if it is Secondary. The challenge level represents the degree of difficulty the Game Master believes appropriate for the action being taken. This usually ranges between 0 and 10, but can go higher. The sum total is the CC, and the player must roll higher than that to successfully perform the action. Remember, if the Attribute in question is Prime, the CB is 12, while if it is Secondary, the CB is 18.

Challenge Level and Hit Dice

When generating a challenge level for a check, the GM should always default to the level or hit dice of the opposing party. Thus, if a thief is trying to pick the pocket of a 5th level character, the CL is 5. If trying to sneak up on a 3 HD monster, the CL is 3.

SAVING THROWS

The only difference between a normal Attribute Check and a Saving Throw is that generally, an attribute check is made to attempt to do something, while a saving throw is made to attempt to avoid something happening. Regardless, the system is virtually identical: the player rolls a d20 and adds her attribute bonus, character level, and any situational modifiers against a CC set by the Game Master.

COMBAT

Much of the excitement in playing **Amazing Adventures** occurs during the character's combat with monsters. Whether a gadgeteer battling a horde of Nazi cultists, a gumshoe facing off with a nefarious crime boss or an arcanist facing down an ancient mummy, combat is often the climax of many roleplaying

sessions. Combat is also the nexus of many rules in **Castles & Crusades**. Managing combat is often a challenging affair as the Game Master must not only know the rules, but must also know how to apply the rules fluidly to maintain a sense of excitement through description and action.

To facilitate this, the rules for combat have been kept as simple as possible with much maneuver room left for the Game Master. The rules are designed to organize the action of combat. Yet, as the essence of combat is its narrative, they also enable the Game Master to manipulate the rules in support of the narrative. Narrative development is as equally important to the game as any combat's results. The rules of combat and its narrative development are discussed below.

Basic Outline of a Combat Round

When a combat occurs, each participant will want to take action. The most common action will be an attack on a foe, but might also include, for example, drinking a potion or casting a spell. To facilitate when a character or monster can act, combat is broken into a series of time measurements called rounds. Each participant in a combat generally gets one action each combat round.

Each participant acts during the round in an order established by the roll of a d10. This is called initiative. The character with the highest initiative acts first, and each character in turn performs an action until the last character with the lowest initiative roll has acted. If a character attacks during a combat round, the character's player rolls 1d20 to determine if the character hits the opponent. If the resulting number rolled plus the character's class bonus to hit and any attribute modifier totals are equal to or greater than the opponent's armor class, the character has successfully hit the opponent. A successful hit results in damage to the opponent. Monsters and non-player characters follow the same procedure and rules as characters, but the Game Master manages their actions. After all participants have acted once in the combat round, a new round begins.

The Combat Round

One combat round is ten seconds long. During this round, all the characters, monsters and non-player characters should get a chance to act. Generally, only one action is allowed, such as making a melee attack or casting a spell. The types of actions are discussed ahead.

It is important to remember that each round is an abstract measurement. The actions and activities that occur in a round are not meant to take place during specific seconds or segments. It should be viewed as a short range of time during which many things happen. Although each character or monster must wait their turn to act as determined by initiative, they do not necessarily act in that same order in a narrative sense. The moment of occurrence is not necessarily equal to the initiative roll. Abstract consideration of the combat round allows for a more fluid and expansive narrative.

Surprise

Before combat begins, the Game Master determines if one or the other party is surprised. Surprise is a situation in which the adventuring party happens upon monsters and neither is aware nor expects the other. Surprise establishes who becomes aware first. The group that successfully surprises the other gains a free combat round in which to act. Those that are surprised get no action. After the surprise round, combat proceeds normally.

Surprise may involve a situation where two characters or groups are unaware of each other, or a situation where one group is attempting to surprise another. Before any surprise roll is made, the Game Master must determine if surprise is possible. A group that is aware of another's presence cannot be surprised. Situations often arise in which one group is not able to surprise another, such as if they have to pass over a hallway strewn with dead leaves that crack and pop when stepped on, thus warning the inhabitants of the room down the hallway.

Even in those instances in which surprise is possible, there is always a chance something could go awry and the surprise fails to occur. If a party can be surprised, a standard wisdom attribute check is made by the individual in the group with the best chance of succeeding at it, or by each member of the group individually. If the check is successful, that party or individual is not surprised. Failure indicates surprise.

When two separate parties could be surprised, both groups or individuals in the groups must make the wisdom check. If both groups fail the check, they are both surprised and nothing occurs as they stare at one another in a moment of stunned silence. Initiative would be rolled as normal to begin combat.

The chances for surprise can be mitigated by many circumstances. If a party is well hidden or camouflaged and awaiting a group of poorly perceptive thugs on a brightly lit road, the Game Master may decide to penalize the wisdom check for the thugs. In general, the bonus or penalty should remain within a range of -5 to +5, although it might be greater in extraordinary situations.

Returning to the example of Captain Spirit and the Nazi, suppose that Captain Spirit came upon a group of Nazis and they were unaware of his presence. He decides to leap off a narrow ledge into the Nazis, landing amidst them, reigning blows left and right as they scratch and claw to get away from his deadly blade. In such an instance, the Game Master would roll a wisdom check for the Nazis to determine if they are surprised. If surprised, Captain Spirit would get a free round to attack them. If not, Captain Spirit and the Nazis would roll initiative and combat would proceed.

Initiative

The order of action in a combat round is determined by an initiative roll. Every creature or character participating in the combat round rolls a d10 to determine their initiative each round. Those with the highest roll take their action first, and the actions of others descend from there. In the case of a tie, the one with the highest dexterity goes first. In the case of equal dexterity, a simultaneous action occurs.

This method of establishing initiative may seem chaotic at times, especially with large groups of creatures or characters. In those cases, the Game Master may find it necessary to require a group initiative instead, with the winning party acting before anyone in the opponent party.

There is one exception to initiative: when a creature uses a weapon with a reach of greater than 10 feet against an opponent with a weapon with less than a 6 foot reach, or when a large creature is fighting a medium or smaller sized creature. In the first round only, the creature with the more lengthy reach or of larger size is allowed to attack first, even if the creature with the shorter weapon or the smaller creature won the initiative roll. This rule only applies if the creature with the shorter reach or smaller creature approaches within ten feet. Such action counts as the action for that round for the larger creature or the one with the longer weapon.

For example, Callidus the Mighty draws his knife and charges a giant carnivorous ape who just crushed his companion with a small tree trunk. Screaming in a rage driven by revenge and loss, Callidus leaps forward to attack. He rolls a 9 initiative, and the ape rolls a 3. The ape is large and the fighter is medium. Thus, when the hero moves within 10 feet of the ape, the ape is allowed to swing first even though the fighter won initiative.

Combat Actions

In a combat round, characters can perform a wide variety of actions. Every possible action, however, can be categorized in one of the five types of actions that may be performed during combat, which all have a chance of failure. The five possible actions are attack, cast a spell, move, use an ability or use an item.

Attack

A character or monster is allowed one attack each round unless they possess a special ability allowing them to exceed the limitation. Attacks include melee attacks, either armed with a weapon or unarmed, and ranged attacks with a missile weapon. An attack allows a character or monster to move up to one-half their movement rate. Moving farther than one-half movement rate negates the ability to make an attack.

Improvised and Non-Proficient Weapons

Each character class has a list of weapons allowable to that class. These weapons are those in which a member of said class is typically proficient, or trained to use. That doesn't mean, however, that someone untrained in the use of longbows can't pick one up and fire off an arrow. It does, however, mean that lack of training will make it harder for him to effectively use the weapon. If a character attempts to use a weapon that is outside of his class's allowed weapons list, he suffers a -4 penalty to hit with that weapon, due to lack of training.

Move

If no other action is taken, a character or monster can walk a distance equal to their full movement rate. Full movement also includes jogging (twice the normal move rate) and running (quadruple the normal move rate).

Use an Ability

A character or monster may perform one class or special ability each round. Some abilities, like spells, take more than one round to complete. Some monsters can perform more than one ability per round. Ability may involve movement, but in most cases the movement will not exceed the normal movement rate. Otherwise, the Game Master retains discretion as to whether any ability use involves movement.

Use an Item

An item that is carried and readied can be used. The most common actions in this category are using or activating a magic item or piece of equipment. Such actions include, but are not limited to, drinking a potion, using a wand, casting a spell from a scroll, or throwing a grappling hook. In most cases, no movement will be involved or allowed when using an item. Readying an item is not difficult, as long as it is easily accessed. Usually, the item must be on a belt or hanging from a pack, and readying it should not take more than a few seconds. Whereas, if an item is in a backpack, it would take at least a round to take off the pack, dig through it, and retrieve the item. The Game Master and players must use common sense in deciding whether an item is readily available. In some cases, the Game Master may require the players to indicate on their character sheets which items are readily available or how and where an item is being carried.

Non-Lethal and Multiple Actions

There is of course another broad category encompassing non-lethal or otherwise mundane actions such as talking, standing still and doing nothing or picking up an item. Such actions typically have no chance of failure, however, so they are not considered combat actions.

No matter the type of action attempted, it is up to the Game Master to adjudicate how long any action takes and whether it can be performed in a single round. Most actions occur in a single round, or if they take longer, the rules for the specific action usually detail just how many rounds the action takes to complete. The Game Master may allow more than one action per round under special circumstances (if a character has a haste spell cast on him, for example). Also, some non-combat actions a character may take might not consume a full round.

This latter aspect is important and the Game Master must use common sense and reason to determine if an action takes a full round. Drawing a sword would not take a full round. Tossing someone an item may not take a full round. As a rule of thumb, simply think of how long such an action would take in real life. If it takes just a couple of seconds to perform a non-combat action, then the character should be allowed another action, be it combat or non-combat in nature. The Game Master can, and on occasion should, impose an initiative penalty for some of these actions.

Movement in the Combat Round

Once initiative or surprise is determined, each character or monster involved in combat is allowed an action. One allowed action is movement. Movement, like the combat round, is an

abstraction. It is a manner of establishing the distance that can be moved in a given period of time. Movement can be in a straight line, a curve or around a corner. Humans have a base movement rate of 30 feet per round.

Base movement rates for monsters are listed in each monster description in **Volume 4**. The listed rate is the distance in feet that can be moved in one combat round. Movement can be increased by jogging (double the movement rate) or running (quadruple the movement rate). Drop all fractions when figuring movement rates (minimum of 1 foot). To translate the movement rate into inches, hexes or squares, divide the movement rate by 5.

An attacker can move one-half their movement rate and still attack. No attack is allowed if a character exceeds one-half their movement rate. The only exception to this rule is when a charge is attempted. Charging allows for an attack and full movement, but the special rules for charging apply. The Game Master has the option of reducing the movement rate due to terrain, obstacles, injuries or other circumstances. Generally, the movement rate should not be reduced by more than three-fourths (0.75). The Game Master should always allow a character to move at least 5 feet in a combat round, unless the character is restrained or otherwise unable to move.

Charging

Charging is a special, movement-based combat maneuver. When charging, a character precedes a melee attack by jogging or running, with the intent of using the gained leverage and momentum to inflict greater damage on a defender. A successful charge attack results in a +2 bonus to damage inflicted, but imposes a -4 penalty to the attacker's armor class for the entire combat round. The charge must be announced prior to the character moving.

When charging, a character is considered to be jogging or running. The character must minimally move the full distance of their normal movement rate. The charge must be in a straight line. The total distance moved while charging cannot exceed the character's jogging movement rate. For example, Una the mentalist announces that she is going to charge a cultist standing across the room. Una's base movement is 30 feet, and thus, her jogging rate is 60 feet. As long as the cultist is at least 30 feet away, but no more than 60 feet, Una may attempt the charge maneuver.

When charging, the attacker suffers a -4 penalty to armor class for the combat round. The penalty applies even if the charge attack is not successful. The penalty also applies if the defender attacks first due to size or weapon length, or by ranged attack. If a defender scores a successful hit upon a charging character, the charge is negated. If a charge is negated, the attacker is still allowed their movement and attack, but a successful hit does not deal any extra damage.

Melee Combat

Melee occurs when two creatures engage in hand-to-hand combat. The attacker rolls 1d20 and adds the basic to hit bonus plus any strength modifier. A monster's basic to hit bonus is equal to its total number of hit dice (a 3d8 hit dice creature adds a +3). If the total is greater than or equal to the defender's armor class, the attacker has successfully hit the defender and inflicts damage as determined by the weapon used. Unarmed combat is a type of melee attack, but it is addressed separately below.

It is important to note that a melee attack, like the combat round and movement, is also an abstraction. Though a character usually makes only one attack per round, it should not be considered a single swing. A melee attack involves a series of parries and thrusts, along with attack and defensive maneuvers that sometimes result in damage to the defender. The damage could be from one blow or could be representative of a series of blows or fatigue.

There are many other bonuses and penalties which may affect a melee attack to hit roll. These include, but are not limited to, class ability modifiers, spell effect modifiers, and situational modifiers.

Ranged Combat

Ranged combat is much like melee combat except it occurs when an attack is made with a missile weapon against a defender some distance away. Dexterity is the attribute that modifies a ranged attack to hit roll. If the total of the 1d20 roll plus the character's basic to hit bonus and dexterity modifier is greater than or equal to the defender's armor class, the attacker has successfully hit the defender and inflicts damage as determined by the missile weapon used.

There are two types of ranged weapons: thrown and propelled. Thrown weapons are those whose momentums are dependent upon the strength of the character or monster throwing it. These include javelins, daggers, spears and the like. Propelled weapons are those whose momentum and thrust are dependent on the mechanism which propels them forward. This includes bows, stones from a sling and similar devices. When attacking with ranged weapons, the attacker's dexterity modifies the to hit roll. Additionally, a character's strength modifier is added to the damage of thrown weapons, but not propelled weapons.

Ranged weapons also have range increments, and they have a maximum effective distance equal to three times the listed range increment as detailed in the equipment list. The listed range increment is considered to be close range. Twice the range increment is medium range and three times the increment is long range. Medium range results in a -2 penalty to the ranged attack roll, and long range imparts a -6 penalty to the attack roll.

Ranged weapons that miss their target continue on their path and can potentially hit another target within close range. If the target of the attack is missed, the projectile continues in a straight line and can hit anything in its path. For each ten feet traveled within close range, the attack accrues a -1 penalty.

Firing into Melee

Attempting to fire a ranged weapon into melee combat is dangerous business. There is always a risk of hitting an ally when attempting such a maneuver. Make a roll to hit as normal, subtracting -3 for each ally or other creature currently in melee combat with the target. If the roll would normally hit the target, but misses due to the penalty imparted by allies, then the shot hits an ally or other combatant.

For example, Davis Harfoot, halfling thief, takes aim with his sling and silver bullets at a werewolf who currently happens to be in melee combat with Bucky's friends, the dwarf fighter Stephen and the human cleric Timothy. Because Davis has two allies in combat with the werewolf, he suffers -6 to hit. He rolls and scores a 21, which would normally hit the werewolf, but the -6 from his allies drops this to 15. Since he normally would've hit, and missed only because of the melee-based penalty, his bullet strikes an ally. Davis throws a die to determine which: odd for Steve, even for Tim. The result is odd, and Steve takes an unfortunate shot in the back. If Davis's original roll to hit before the -6 penalty had been less than 20 (meaning he'd have missed regardless), then the shot misses clean and nobody gets hit.

At the GM's option, such shots may only do damage if the original roll (before the penalty) would've defeated the ally's AC, but this adds an extra level of bookkeeping and can potentially slow down combat (however slightly).

Unarmed Combat

Unarmed combat is similar to armed combat, only the attacker is not using a melee weapon, but natural weapons instead, such as claws, hands, fangs or even the whole body. Many monsters employ unarmed melee attacks, as do pugilist characters. In most cases, the success of these attacks are determined as with a normal melee attack. The attacker rolls 1d20 and adds the basic to hit bonus plus any strength modifier. A (nonhuman) monster's basic to hit bonus is equal to its total number of hit dice (a 3d8 hit dice creature adds a +3). If the total is greater than or equal to the defender's armor class, the attacker has successfully hit the defender and inflicts damage as determined by the class ability or monster description.

There are also special unarmed attacks of an entirely different nature and effect: grappling, pummeling, overbearing and touch attacks. Each type follows the same basic principle but with different modifications to the to hit roll and damage inflicted. For example, characters who are not of the pugilist class who wish to punch or kick are attempting a pummeling attack.

Grappling

Grappling involves grabbing and holding a defender, as with classical wrestling or a snake constricting its body around its prey. Grappling is directed at holding an opponent and subduing them. The attacker rolls 1d20 and adds any strength modifier and his Base to Hit (BtH) bonus.

The armor class of a defender in an overbearing attack is different than normal. A standard armor class of 15 is used for all defenders, as armor has little effect on the capacity to defend against this type of attack. The armor class is modified by the strength and the dexterity modifier of the defender, as well as the size difference between the two opponents. For each size difference larger, add +2 to the defender's armor class. For each size difference smaller, a -2 penalty is imposed on the defender's armor class.

Should an attack be successful, the defender is held and cannot act except to attempt to break the hold. The defender is considered prone and defenseless. The defender can break the hold by making his own successful grappling attack.

Pummeling

Pummeling involves the use of fists, feet, knees, elbows or other body parts to inflict damage on an opponent with the intention of knocking them out or otherwise incapacitating them. The attacker rolls 1d20 to hit, adding any strength modifier plus any other modifier the Game Master deems appropriate. The Game Master may or may not deem the basic to hit bonus an appropriate modifier. If the total equals or exceeds the defenders armor class, the pummeling inflicts 1-2 hit points of subdual damage. Damage is modified by strength.

Overbearing

This type of attack is used to knock an opponent down. This is a tactic used in wrestling and other types of hand-to-hand combat, as well as when an animal charges and knocks someone over. The attacker rolls 1d20 to hit and adds any strength modifier or other modifier that the Game Master deems fit. The Game Master may or may not deem the basic to hit bonus an appropriate modifier.

As with grappling, a standard armor class of 15 is used for all defenders. For overbearing, however, only strength and size difference modifies the standard armor class. For each size difference larger add +2, and for each size difference smaller subtract -2.

If a hit is successful, the defender is knocked prone for the remainder of that round. An attacker cannot knock over a defender two sizes larger. In addition, the defender takes 1-2 points of subdual damage.

An attacker attempting to overbear suffers a -2 penalty to armor class because they are more exposed than usual. The penalty remains to their armor class for the combat round.

Touch Attack

A touch attack is one in which an attacker is simply trying to touch an opponent. This often occurs with spells that require a touch to be successful. With a touch attack, a standard armor class of 10 is used for all defenders, adjusted only by dexterity of the defender (or hit dice, if no Dexterity score is listed) and special modifiers resulting from, for example, magic items or spells.

Situational Modifiers

Situational modifiers are somewhat nebulous and, for the most part, those that the Game Master deems appropriate. There are often those situations which are impossible to set a rule or would

involve such complex rules as to fill up an entire tome. In these instances, the Game Master must use reason, common sense or narrative development to determine what modifier is applied to the to hit roll. For example, should a hooligan, after a long night of carousing, be barreling across town hanging out of his car window, driving with one hand and brandishing a Tommy gun with the other, decide to take a spray at a rival crime boss as he drives by, the Game Master must decide upon the appropriate modifier to the to hit roll (or an attribute check to determine if it is even possible to make the attack).

In general, combat to hit modifiers can be broken down into three categories: easy, difficult and heroic. For tasks that are easy, up to a +/-5 modifier should be imposed. Difficult tasks would range from +/- 6 to 10, and heroic acts would range from +/- 11 or above. The instance described above may seem ridiculous, but players attempt all manner of actions with their characters - something which should be encouraged. However, the Game Master is left with the task of deciding the modifier to be applied to a situation. What the hooligan in the example above is attempting is not heroic, but it most certainly is not easy. In this instance, the Game Master should probably err on the high side of difficult since the hooligan is inebriated. A -10 to the attack roll would not be unreasonable.

Some situational modifiers can be applied with regularity. These are listed below and can be used to help in making decisions about other unusual situations. Concealment includes those circumstances where nothing physically blocks an attack, but there is something that interferes with the attacker's accuracy. The other modifiers should be self-explanatory. The modifiers are cumulative. In all instances, attackers must know of a defender's presence, though not their exact location. Also, the Game Master should add to this list and keep track of decisions which are made in the game in order that they can be made with some regularity and consistency.

SITUATIONAL COMBAT MODIFIERS

Defender prone or blind:	+5
Defender prone and defenseless:	+10
Defender at lower elevation:	+1
Defender stunned or cowering:	+2
Defender invisible or attacker blind:	–10
Melee attack from mount or unstable platform:	–2
Ranged attack from mount or unstable platform:	–4
Ranged attack into melee combat:	–4
Defender 1/4 concealed (light fog):	–2
Defender 1/2 concealed (dense fog):	–4
Defender 3/4 concealed (near darkness):	–6
Defender completely concealed:	–10

Armor Class

Armor class is representative of a defender's ability to avoid damage. Armor class results from a combination of armor, dexterous avoidance of attacks, and ability to absorb the shock of a damaging blow or roll with it. Armor class takes into account an active defense (aware of the attacker), the armor worn and a general ability to withstand or avoid attacks. It does not represent armor alone. In Castles & Crusades it takes into account your character's signature outfit and the clothes she's wearing as well! Indeed, for game purposes, outfit is the primary determinate of armor class, as it is the most easy to quantify.

In game terms, the Armor Class (AC) of a character is the target number required to hit a character in combat. Armor class begins at 10. A person wearing "normal" clothing has a 10 armor class. Armor class can increase as much as modifiers allow. In rare cases, modifiers can result in an armor class less than 10, though never below 1. The following rules should be taken into account when determining the armor class of a defender. It is not an exhaustive list and the Game Master is encouraged to develop her own adjustments as needed.

Armor: Each piece of pulp clothing's adjustment is described in the equipment list. A trench coat, for example, has a +3 adjustment to armor class. This gives the individual wearing it a 13 armor class (10+3).

Shields: At some point, someone might grab a small chair or table, or trash can lid and hold it up to help fend off an attack. This is a primitive shield. Every shield has a +1 modifier to armor class, but the size of the shield determines how many opponents the +1 modifier applies against. Small shields only offer the adjustment against one attacker, medium shields against two attackers and large shields against three attackers.

Dexterity: Dexterity modifies a character's armor class if that character can physically react to an attack. Characters lose their dexterity modifier when they are surprised, unaware of an attacker or when they are restrained or otherwise rendered immobile. Dexterity does not apply, for example, when a character is attacked from the rear.

Cover: Characters will often take cover behind objects such as tables, doors, chairs or other structures in order to gain some protection. Cover confers an armor class bonus to the character as follows:

¼ cover: +2 AC

½ cover: +4 AC

¾ cover: +6 AC

Full cover: +10 AC

Although cover is primarily used as protection against missile or ranged weapons, it can also be used in melee combat. For example, when the arcanist Lady Raven finds her spells useless against a golem, she decides to jump behind a large column in an attempt to avoid being smashed by its massive fists. This action offers 3/4 cover from the golem's attacks. When cover is used in melee attacks though, the cover applies to both the attacker and defender until one or the other move out from behind it. In some cases, the Game Master may rule that the character seeking cover may not attack.

It should also be noted that a character engaged in melee combat has cover for purposes of firing at him with a ranged weapon. Each person with whom he currently battles provides 25% cover. If the missile misses the character by less than the cover bonus provided by the other combatants, at the Game Master's option, another combatant is struck instead.

Magic: There are numerous other modifiers that can be applied to armor class. Spells, magic armor and rings, or other unique items and situations can increase or decrease armor class. A character's condition, such as being stunned poisoned, or fatigued may affect the armor class. In general, magical rings, robes or other protective devices and spells affect armor class for touch attacks. Magical armors do not effect touch attacks.

Situation and Circumstance: There are innumerable situational modifiers which can also adjust armor class. These are too numerous to list, but the Game Master should always bear in mind the current situation or circumstances. For example, a rusted suit of armor may suffer a -1 to its overall armor class adjustment. It is, as always, incumbent on the Game Master to use common sense when making these adjustment. Always err on the side of safety. It is a game, after all.

Combat Maneuvers

Players try all manner of inventive actions during combat, from using chairs as shields, trying to dodge opponents blows or running haphazardly away from some monstrous beast. It is impossible to enumerate and describe all the possibilities and it is unproductive to try and do so. These generally fall into a category of combat maneuvers.

Some of the more common combat maneuvers and their effects are listed and described below. These rules can be considered optional as they are not necessary to gameplay. They are provided to allow the Game Master and players more options in combat and to introduce the concept of amending and adding rules to fit a group's style of play. They should be introduced slowly and with practice to insure that they meld with the style and tempo of play desired by both the players and Game Master.

Aim

A character might decide to take his time and get a very careful bead on his enemy before firing, in an effort to get a more accurate shot. In game terms, taking careful aim delays a character's shot until the end of the round, but confers a +2 to hit his target.

Dodge

In this case, a character can dodge up to three attacks in a round that originate from an attacker(s) which they are facing and are aware of. If dodging, the character sacrifices their action in that round. The character cannot attack, cast spells, move or use an ability or item. To dodge, the character makes a standard Dexterity check, and uses that check to replace their normal AC for the round. Armor bonuses to AC do not apply when dodging. A character can dodge every round should they desire.

A dodge can be declared at any time in a combat round as long as the character has not taken any other action.

Disengaging from Combat

Disengaging from combat is a dangerous maneuver since it exposes the character to attacks. If disengaging, a character can take no other action. The character is only allowed a movement, which is part of the two types of disengagement. Monsters and non-player characters can disengage from combat. They can also opt to follow those disengaging from combat.

A hasty disengagement is one in which the character or monster attempts to leave combat and expends all effort to do so. A character disengaging hastily may move as far as possible up to their maximum running distance, but they suffer a -2 to armor class and their opponent gets an attack against them as they run away. This is a free attack and does not count against the opponent's other action in the round, although the opponent may not make a second attack against the fleeing character. The armor class adjustment lasts throughout the combat round and applies to every attack against the fleeing character.

A fighting disengagement is a more carefully executed withdrawal from combat. By performing a fighting disengagement, the character moves one-half their movement rate or less away from their opponent and they can disengage from combat. The character suffers no penalty to armor class, but they cannot take any other action in the round.

Disarm

A character can disarm an opponent. The character must successfully hit an armor class equivalent of 18 plus the hit dice or level of the defender to successfully disarm them. For example, a Raider would need to hit an armor class of 23 to disarm a 5 hit dice creature or 5th level opponent. The defender receives a dexterity bonus to this armor class, if applicable.

Evade

This maneuver is a desperate attempt to avoid being hit and involves using all one's energies to dodge and parry blows but remains engaged in combat. The character doing this is allowed to evade one opponent they are facing. Evade confers a +4 bonus to armor class for that round against that opponent, but results in -2 to armor class against all other opponents.

Fighting Defensively

Fighting Defensively is a combat maneuver that allows a character to remain cautious while in combat, keeping his guard up and taking only the most well-considered attempts to injure his opponent. Fighting Defensively normally provides +2 to the AC of the character, while inflicting a -4 penalty to attacks the defensive character makes that round.

Flank Attack

This is an attack that takes places to one or the other rear sides of a defender. When using flank attack rules, they should be used consistently for monsters and characters alike. The

defender may or may not be aware of the attack, but in any case, is less capable of defending against the flank attack than those from the front. A flank attack confers a +1 bonus to hit.

Rear Attack

An attack to the rear of an opponent gives the attacker a +2 bonus to hit. The hooligan does not get this in addition to her back attack bonus, as it is already considered in her class abilities.

Two-Weapon Fighting

At some point, characters will attempt to fight with a weapon in both hands. This is a difficult skill to master, and it takes much experience to do it well. When using two weapons, the player must designate which hand is used for the primary attack and which is the off-hand attack. Typically, this is determined by the handedness of the character, either right handed or left handed. The character is allowed to swing with both weapons, thus gaining two attacks in a single round, but the attack with the primary hand is at -3 and the attack with the off hand is at -6. These penalties are affected by the character's dexterity modifier. The character's strength modifier only applies to damage inflicted.

Hit Points

Hit points represent the amount of damage, physical and mental, a character, non-player character or monster can take before passing out or dying. A character's hit points are a mere abstraction and are not a numeration of the character's physical being. It is generally a representation of the overall health of the individual. The higher the hit points, the healthier the individual.

Hit points are determined by a character or monster's hit die. There are several hit die types: d4, d6, d8 and d12. Class descriptions list the hit die type for that class. Monsters have various hit die types also. These are listed with the monster descriptions as given in **Volume 4**.

Hit points for the classes are acquired by level. At each level, the hit die type is rolled and added to the previous levels total. The constitution modifier is added or subtracted from this roll. At 10th level, all classes acquire hit points at a specified rate. Constitution modifiers are added to or subtracted from this. In all cases, a character gains at least 1 hit point for each level advanced.

Monster hit points are specified in the monster description. Monsters receive a number of hit die types for hit points. Some rolls are adjusted. For example, 3d6 indicates that three, six-sided dice are rolled and added together for that monster's hit point total. A 3d12+4 indicates that three 12 sided dice are rolled and 4 added to each die rolled.

In some instances, such as with a socialite's inspire ability, characters or monsters can gain temporary hit points. Temporary hit points are added to a character's current hit points. In combat, temporary hit points are the first to be reduced due to combat, spells or other instances in which damage occurs.

When all temporary hit points are gone, they are removed from the character's normal hit points. For all intents and purposes, temporary hit points act as real hit points as long as the spell or ability is in effect. The only exception is that temporary hit points cannot be healed or cured.

Hit points can be reduced by weapons, magical spells, exhaustion and poisons amongst other things. These are detailed in the following section. Once damage is taken, it must be healed for the hit points to be restored to their maximum level. Hit points can never be healed beyond what they were before taking damage.

In general, when 0 hit points is reached, the character or monster passes out. They are not dead, but rather incapable of acting while passed out due to blood loss and physical or mental damage. The character or monster is unable to act and is unconscious or gravely wounded. Those so wounded can do little more than crawl from the battlefield or call out for help. Those with 0 hit points recover consciousness in 1d6 hours, after which they can move at ½ their normal move rate, but cannot participate in combat, cast spells, turn undead or any other strenuous or demanding action. The full effects of magical healing of characters reduced to 0 hit points is immediate.

At –1 to –5 hit points, the character or monster is unconscious and grievously wounded. They require bed rest to recover, unless magically healed. A character so wounded must rest 24 hours before the process of healing begins, unless magically healed (See "Healing", p.[?]).

At –6 to –9 hit points, the character or monster is mortally wounded and loses one hit point per round after reaching -6 hit points. Aid administered to the wounds (as with the Medicine generic class ability or Knowledge skill; see Chapter Two) stops the hit point loss. This takes at least one full round, during which no hit point is lost. After 24 hours have passed, the normal healing process as described for -1 to -5 hit points begins.

At –10 hit points death occurs immediately. Only powerful and forbidden magic (or bribes to the Game Master) can remedy death.

Damage

If a hit is successful, damage is assessed for the opponent and its hit points are reduced. Damage delivered from a blow by a weapon depends on the weapon being used or as described in the monsters description. Damage is applied immediately. If a character or monster dies as a result of damage inflicted, it gets no opportunity to swing, cast spells or anything else. There are several categories of damage that need examining. From this, the Game Master should determine the type and nature of any damage inflicted on a character if not specifically described in the rules.

Damage takes its toll in a variety of ways: a sword cutting an arm, a club bruising an arm, a flesh wound from a hand crossbow, or simply physical exertion during the course of a difficult or long combat. The Game Master should not automatically assume

that damage causes flesh to be shorn from limbs and bones crushed. Four points of damage to a 3rd level fighter could simply be bruising on the arm, a series of small cuts or exertion. Alternately, it could be a mortal blow that fells a first-level magic user. In general, it is not wise to break bones, lop off limbs or inflict significant organ damage, as healing times for these types of wounds are significant and complete recovery often impossible. Being creative with the type of damage inflicted should enhance combat rather than detract from game play. Be sure to keep it that way.

Weapon Damage

The amount of damage inflicted is determined by the type of weapon being used or natural weapons such as the claws of a lion, the fist of a golem or the bite of a giant rat. Weapon damages are listed in the equipment chart. Damage from melee weapons is adjusted by the strength modifier, and other factors or adjustments if applicable. Natural weapons and their effects are described in the appropriate monster description or combat rule. Any modifications to damage are noted in the descriptions.

Subdual Damage

This type of damage is generally not fatal, though on occasion it can be. Subdual damage is more the bludgeoning one receives in a fist fight than the slashing, gashing bone breaking combat of swords and firearms. It may hurt and even knock one unconscious, but rarely draws blood and usually results in damage that heals quickly.

Subdual damage is usually caused in unarmed combat with natural weapons. However, many monsters use natural weapons that cause normal damage. If a monster's attack causes subdual rather than normal damage, the monster description will note it. Otherwise, damage from monsters should be considered normal damage.

An attacker can use weapons to deliver subdual damage but it does so at varying rates. When being used for subdual, weapons inflict normal damage, but it is mostly temporary damage. Minimally, these weapons deliver one point of normal damage.

All subdual damage delivers some normal damage. For every five points of subdual damage inflicted, one point is considered normal damage. Attempting to use bladed weapons to deliver subdual damage imparts a -2 to the to hit roll, as it is awkward to use these piercing and slashing weapons to deal non-lethal damage.

Subdual damage heals faster than normal damage as it is not usually fatal. It heals at a rate of 1 hit point per every 10 minutes. The normal damage inflicted as a part of subdual damage heals as previously described. At the Game Master's discretion, when a character reaches -10 hit points or more of subdual damage, they have taken severe enough bludgeoning damage to an internal organ to cause death or permanent incapacitation. Otherwise, they should be considered unconscious for 24 hours and do not begin healing until gaining consciousness.

Falling Damage

Falling damage occurs when a character or monster falls from a height of five feet or more. Falling can be very deadly and players should be made aware of the potential hazards of a fall prior to beginning a climb.

If a character falls from a height of six to ten feet, a dexterity check must be made. If the check is successful, the person falling takes no damage. If the check is not successful, the person takes 1d6 points of damage. From heights greater than ten feet, damage accrues significantly. For every ten feet fallen, the number of d6 used for damage increases by one. The damage for each 10 feet fallen is cumulative.

For example, if a character falls 18 feet, they take 1d6 damage for the first ten feet and 2d6 damage for the next 10 feet for a total of 3d6 damage. If a character were to fall from a height of 45 feet, they would take 1d6 damage for the first 10 feet, 2d6 damage for the second 10 feet, 3d6 damage for the third 10 feet, and 4d6 damage for the last 10 feet, for a total 10d6 points of damage.

Healing

Hit points heal at a rate of one point per day plus a character's constitution bonus, if any, so long as the character is resting, well fed, kept warm and the wounds tended to. After seven days, the rate of healing increases to include the character's level. After 14 days, the rate of healing doubles and after thirty days, it triples. Rates of healing can be adjusted by magical healing, herbs, diet, level of care or other factors the Game Master deems applicable.

If a character is below zero hit points, magical healing can only restore hit points to 0, after which healing proceeds normally.

For example, a hero is mauled by a werewolf and reduced to -1 hit points. Before healing begins, the hero must wait 24 hours. However, a local priest of goodly intent with knowledge of mystical healing decides to share the grace of his god with the gallant warrior, and casts cure light wounds. The cure is for 8 hit points, but the hero is only brought back up to 0 hit points. However, healing can proceed as normal thereafter and any further magical healing utilized will have full effect.

Attribute damage suffered via poison, disease, or a monster's special attack, will heal at one point per day.

Movement

Movement is a fairly abstract necessity in any game. The movements rates listed for characters, monsters and NPCs is an estimation of how far that creature can move at a normal pace in a ten second round. In general, jogging is twice that movement rate, while running is four times the movement rate. As this is a ten second movement rate, a full minute would be six times the movement rate. Movement outdoors equates to movement indoors. For movement outdoors, it should be noted that at an average walking pace for normal person is about 2 miles an hour.

Moving silently occurs as per class description. Moving silently does not mean that the character is moving without making a sound. Moving silently means that the character is attempting to move and make as little noise as possible. If successful, this means that the character has moved in such a manner that no one within hearing range has heard him. Some creatures have a more acute sense of hearing so adjustments to the roll might be necessary. For example, a wolf can hear better than a human, so the Game Master may want to adjust the challenge level by +2 or more. Further, it is easier to move silently in certain areas. For example, moving silently across a carpet is much easier than moving silently across a dry forest bed full of leaves and twigs, so adjustments can be made for this environment also if the Game Master chooses.

In much the same manner, moving while invisible does not mean the character cannot be detected. If the character makes noise, this can be heard. Further, all creatures smell and the odor of a sweating body can be detected. Bear in mind, many creatures use sonar or other abilities to determine the location of prey and this can reveal the presence of an invisible creature. An invisible creature does not leave a heat signature.

TIME

In Castles & Crusades, time is represented in two simple equations: a round is 10 seconds and a turn is one minute. This allows the Game Master a logical solution to the unfolding of events in combat or roleplay. That said, the Game Master should be flexible in his interpretation of the round. In normal circumstances, actions are pretty simple. Greg the pugilist attacks Sly the hooligan. Greg wins initiative and swings. Sly takes his swing. Both being high rollers they crack each other on the head. But throw in parrying, dodging, other combatants, the register of gunfire, spells and psychic powers; not to mention the shouting that innovative players do, the calls for help or curses upon the unlucky blade, the wounded and dying and it all adds up to one chaotic ball of action, consequence and inaction.

The Game Master has to be very flexible and willing to move with events and the actions of their players. Tracking off seconds of the round can slow the pace of a well run combat and disconcert players who are immersed in the cacophony of sound and sight described by the Game Master. Greg is struck hard by Sly, with what appears to be a mortal blow. On the next round, Greg tries to bandage his wounds, swing his meaty fist and trip Nard. Needless to say this is far too many actions. But if Greg wants to roll and throw up his sinewy arm to ward off the blow at the same time, though he's lost initiative, such an action would not be impossible and might earn him some bonus AC points from the Game Master.

Vehicle Combat

What's a pulp game without gangsters speeding by the hideout of a rival syndicate and blasting away with Tommy guns? Or hotshot pilots zooming to the rescue of their heroic mercenary squadron? In order to handle these elements, it's necessary to have in place a set of vehicle rules. Combat between two vehicles

works exactly the same as combat between two characters. A vehicle has Dexterity and Constitution scores, and AC and Hit Points, just like characters do. Vehicles also have a fourth Attribute, Speed. A vehicle's Speed (Spd) attribute works exactly like a Player Character Attribute, using the same table for bonuses and penalties. It's a rough representation of the real-world speed comparison between any two vehicles. It's not a direct conversion of actual miles-per-hour. If you really need to find out the mph (or kph, in Europe) of a vehicle, a web search should fix you up, fine. It shouldn't be necessary for this game.

Most tasks in vehicular combat are going to be resolved with Dexterity rolls by the driver or pilot of the vehicle. When piloting a vehicle, a character uses either his Dexterity score or the vehicle's, whichever is higher. However, if the vehicle has a negative Dexterity score, this negative acts as a penalty to the character's Dex.

For example, a player with an 18 Dexterity (+3) piloting a Motorcycle (Dexterity +2) would use his Dexterity bonus of +3 when making piloting rolls. However, that same character piloting a Ford Model T (Dexterity -1) would gain only +2 on piloting rolls, as the -1 reduces his own Dexterity.

Combat proceeds between two vehicles exactly as in normal combat, rolling a d10 and adding Dex bonus for initiative, and using d20 and Dexterity for ranged attacks from the weapon. In this manner, player characters can interact seamlessly with vehicle combat. Remember, the pilot of a vehicle uses his Dexterity score or the vehicle's, whichever is higher.

Firing from a Vehicle (Ground Vehicles Only)

Player characters in a car may attempt to fire their guns at other vehicles or at pedestrians on the street. To do this the players simply lean out the window and open up! This requires a Dexterity Save with a CL equal to the vehicle's Speed bonus (to avoid falling out!). If successful, the player characters may freely attack with any ranged weapons they have, albeit at a penalty equal to the vehicle's Speed Bonus.

Accelerating and Decelerating

A vehicle does not have to travel its maximum speed all the time. It may voluntarily reduce its speed to as low as 1 (if a ground vehicle), representing a dead stop. Each round, a vehicle may increase its speed attribute by 1d6 (for ground vehicles) or 1d8 (for aerial vehicles), all the way up to its maximum.

Deceleration can safely be performed at the same rate. However, a vehicle can "brake slam" to decelerate suddenly; this requires a Dexterity check by the pilot and a Dexterity save by the passengers, all at a CL equal to the vehicle's current speed bonus. Failing this save means taking 1d4 points of damage times the current speed bonus, from getting violently bounced around and hurled forward. Post-1949, wearing a seat belt negates damage from sudden stops.

When applying penalties based on the current speed bonus, apply speed penalties as bonuses.

For Example, Ricardo is engaged in a wild chase with the Feds. He decides to skid to a halt, and allow his boys to open up with their Tommy Guns. He makes his Dexterity Check to pull off the sudden stop. His car is currently traveling at a speed of 17, a +2 bonus. He makes his check at a CL of 2. He rolls and the result is 17, just barely successful. His boys also make their checks, so they take no damage. His car skids to a sudden halt, and is now considered to have a speed attribute of 1. The feds come speeding up. His boys, now at a stable platform, turn the -4 speed penalty of his car (the speed attribute of 1 is a -4 penalty) to a +4 to their rolls to hit the feds. It's much easier to fire from a set position than a moving one!

Λ Sense of Scale

In the interest of keeping things simple, vehicle combat does not take place on a different scale than character combat; some vehicular weapons just do a lot more damage, and some player character weapons are unable to damage vehicles. In general, for aircraft newer than 1950, a player cannot harm the aircraft with a handgun or any sort of archaic weapon. For tanks and artillery, only other tanks and artillery, or aircraft with bombs or rockets, can harm them. Any vehicle-mounted weapons other than machine guns suffer -6 to their to-hit roll when trying to target player character-sized targets.

Damage

When a vehicle hits 0 hit points, it's severely damaged, but not necessarily out of the action yet. It loses its Dexterity bonus to AC, but may make a Constitution save (CL = damage below zero the vehicle currently is) to keep going. When the vehicle hits -10 hit points, it's rendered inoperable. If it takes enough damage to reduce its hit points to its constitution score below zero, it's completely destroyed.

Vehicle Combat Maneuvers

Here are a few easy combat maneuvers that pilots can attempt, with rules for each and any restrictions or exceptions listed. Unless otherwise stated, these maneuvers take one standard action.

Playing Chicken

Two vehicles head straight for one another. After the game is initiated, both pilots must make a Wis save each round at a cumulative CL of 2 per round after the first. Pilots, if recognized by their foes, may also add their Reputation bonus (see below) to the CL of their opponent's check. Failure means one pilot or the other breaks off. While the two craft are heading towards one another they may freely fire upon each other at no penalty. The GM should secretly roll a d6; this is how many rounds before the vehicles must break off, or hit one another, destroying both vehicles and dealing 1d10 damage times the vehicle's Spd bonus to all occupants. Cars or aircraft may play chicken.

Kamikaze

While we're on the subject, if a player or NPC decides to be suicidal, they can simply drive their vehicle into another one. Make a Wisdom check. If you succeed, you've got the guts to pull this off. Make a Dexterity check opposed by your opponent's Dexterity check. If you win, you drive (or fly) your vehicle into your opponent, and both vehicles (and all occupants inside) suffer 1d10 damage times the ramming vehicle's Speed bonus to all occupants. A Constitution or Dexterity save halves this damage; in aircraft, a Dexterity save indicates you've managed to bail out (if you've got a parachute).

Bootleg Stop

This maneuver can only be performed in a ground-based vehicle. It's when a pilot attempts to skid to a sudden halt, turning his vehicle broadside as he does so, often to give passengers a chance to open fire on an oncoming vehicle, or to dive out, presenting that vehicle with an imminent collision. This maneuver calls for a brake slam, as detailed under "Acceleration and Deceleration," above, increasing the CL of the Dexterity check by double its normal brake slam level. Thus, for a car traveling at speed 15 (+1), the Dexterity check would be at CL 2. A car traveling at speed 16 (+2) would invoke a CL 4.

Success means the passengers immediately get one free action, be it to fire on their opponents or to dive out of the car! Oh, and the oncoming pilot had better hope he can decelerate fast enough to avoid hitting his target!

Bootleg Turn

This is when two vehicles are heading towards one another and one vehicle attempts to spin around and get into another's blind spot for a combat advantage. The attacker attempting the Bootleg makes a Dexterity Check, opposed by his opponent's Wisdom Check. If the opponent wins, the attacker is unable to bootleg. If the attacker wins, he's on the opponent's "six" (if in the air) or in his blind spot (if ground-based) and may make one round of free attacks, against which the attacker cannot defend (the vehicle loses its Dexterity bonus to AC). However, when a vehicle performs a bootleg turn his vehicle's current speed is immediately reduced by 3d6, to a minimum of 1.

EXPERIENCE & ADVANCEMENT

Experience Points

After characters defeat monsters or acquire treasure, they earn experience points (xp). The Game Master is free to award experience points in whatever manner desired, but the following is a recommended general method.

Monsters

The Game Master adds the value of all monsters (including human enemies) defeated or overcome on the adventure. Each monster has a base xp value, and a bonus can be given if a specific monster was greater than normal for its type. The total xp are then divided by the number of characters that defeated the monsters.

Story

The Game Master should assign an xp value to each adventure and award that total to each character who completed the

adventure successfully. An easy way to determine the story xp value is to compare the adventure to a monster of a hit dice that is challenging to the party. The Game Master can then award xps as if the party overcame that monster.

Roleplaying

The Game Master can also award specific characters xp bonuses for good roleplaying (or penalties for bad) in a specific situation or over the course of an adventure. A good range to award is 25 to 250 xps, depending on the level of the character.

Gaining Levels

Characters gain levels as they adventure. Gaining levels equates to becoming better and more experienced at one's chosen profession. With new levels, the character gains more abilities and greater chances of performing abilities successfully. Hit points increase as does bonus to hit.

To gain a level, the character must accumulate enough experience points to meet the next level's experience point progression (EPPs). The EPPs for each class are located in the appropriate class description. Experience points are gained by successfully completing an adventure, killing foes, successfully performing actions, collecting treasure and as rewards for good roleplaying. The Game Master awards experience points as described in the rules but always has the right to add or subtract experience points for whatever reason.

Monster experience points are located in the monster section of the **Amazing Adventures** core rules or the **Amazing Adventures Manual of Monsters**. Experience points awarded for treasure acquired is equal to the dollar value of all the treasure picked up in the course of adventuring. Optionally, the Game Master may not allow this or only some percentage of the treasure's value, as this may speed up the rate of level progression depending on the amount of treasure acquired. For experience points awarded for defeating monsters and roleplaying see the Bestiary. Bear in mind that the Game Master does not have to award this amount if the player did a poor job of roleplaying, but can if he wants to.

Once enough experience points are acquired to advance a level, the character must train for the number of weeks equal to the level reached before receiving the benefits of that level. For example, a 6th level arcanist, upon acquiring the experience points necessary to reach 7th level, must train for 7 weeks before receiving the benefits of that level. Once training is completed, the character gains the extra hit points, spells or abilities which that level confers upon the class.

SCI-FI SPECIFIC RULES

Below we'll find rules that are specific to your sci-fi game, such as vehicle combat, computer hacking, battle mechs, and more. The following rules cannot be found in the core **Amazing Adventures** rules, and were created just for this supplement, and we've separated them here for ease of reference.

COMPUTER HACKING AND CYBERJACKING

Hacking, quite simply, is breaking into a computer system to damage it, plant software, steal information, or perform some other nefarious purpose, **or** to battle others who take on such nefarious purposes. Hackers that use their powers to greed or negative ends are black hats, while those who use their powers for good are white hats.

Generally speaking, computer hacking is a basic computer use SIEGE check based on intelligence. In some settings, however, hacking can be far more involved, especially in cyberpunk settings where cyberjackers and cowboys ride the digital range, battling one another in virtual space. Let's look at the two systems required to handle these different approaches to hacking.

Basic Hacking

Basic computer hacking is a simple SIEGE Check. The hacker logs into a system and makes an Intelligence check against the system, whose CL is set by the GM and is dependent upon the defenses you face, and any other hackers trying to battle you for control. In general, if there is another hacker present, the CL is equal to their hit dice and Intelligence modifier. If it is the system itself you are battling, the CL is equal to the hit dice of the original programmer.

If the hacker succeeds, they get in and find what they need. If they fail, they are locked out of the system. They may try again, at the GM's option, but may be infected with malware, the sysadmin may be alerted to their presence, the CL may climb, or any combination of these or other unpleasant consequences.

Advanced Hacking: Hackers in the Network

Some settings have more complex networks, into which the hacker can project their consciousness to actually explore. Variously called the Web, the Matrix, the System, the Range, or any other name, these settings are part and parcel of a Cyberpunk-style game, but may exist in Space Opera or other settings as well.

While within the Network, hacking takes the form of actual combat between the Hacker and the enemy programs, firewalls, or intrusion countermeasures set up to stop them.

One of the biggest problems when dealing with computer hacking, especially in a cyberpunk setting, is that in genre, it's a major part of the stories. Descriptions and portrayals of what it's like **inside the network** are vivid, exciting, and interesting. At the gaming table, that can also be true…for the person playing the hacker. For everyone else, it can end up being drawn out and boring as they watch the hacker have all the fun.

On the other hand, boiling it down to a few dice rolls can shortchange the hacker, who is playing their character for a specific experience. It's important to strike a balance between these two. Part of this is knowing when to simply boil a hack

down to a die roll, to keep the game moving, and when there is room for a full inside-the-network experience.

If the character is simply trying to break into a facility so that their allies can infiltrate and conduct a heist, a few die rolls may be sufficient. On the other hand, if there is an ongoing combat, the character may be inside the network while their allies are battling in the real world. In such a case, ongoing in-network descriptions can be worked into the events in initiative order as with any combat.

Likewise, in the former example, perhaps the hacker manages to unlock a building for their allies to enter, while at the same time being under assault from a lethal firewall. The GM can switch dynamically back and for the between the PC's allies attempting to pull off their heist (and perhaps wondering why they've lost hacker support) and the hacker within the system. As with all things, be sure to maintain a balance in play.

Ability Scores

When in the network, the cerebral hacker becomes far more efficient than they might otherwise be: they substitute mental abilities for physical. Intelligence becomes Dexterity, Wisdom becomes Strength and Charisma becomes Constitution.

Whenever a SIEGE check is made inside the Web or a Network which would normally require a physical ability check, use the appropriate mental ability instead. Combat uses Wisdom and Intelligence bonuses rather than Strength and Dexterity.

Within the system, the hacker has their normal hit points, but adds their level times their highest mental ability bonus to their hit points. Thus, if the Hacker's highest mental ability is Intelligence 18 (+3) and they are fifth level, they will add +15 Virtual hit points while in the network. The Hacker's Virtual AC is ten plus level, plus Intelligence bonus.

The Hacker's Program Suite: Virtual Spells

The hacker has virtual attacks and programs they can apply and employ while within the system. In game terms, while in the system, they should be able to cast virtual spells as though they were an Arcanist of the same level as their character level. They gain virtual MEP equal to a spellcaster of their level, and an equivalent number of spell slots. They need not prepare spells in advance, however; they can choose any spells they like on the fly, but each spell they choose uses up one spell slot. Once spell slots are used, the effects they can call upon while in the system are complete. Virtual spells require no material components to cast.

As one of these spells, the hacker is required to take arcane blast, representing their basic "attack program" that they use to muscle through enemy firewalls.

The GM may include other challenges in the system which use non-attack-based spell effects; finding information, for example, may require a Detect spell, while overcoming a given "Trap" based firewall in a system might require Hold Portal or the like.

Enemy Programs, Firewalls, and Intrusion Countermeasures

The GM will need to construct "enemy programs" within the network that simply work as monsters, using standard stat blocks. These programs are firewalls or other intrusion countermeasures designed to stop exactly what the cyber jacker is trying to do: invade and manipulate information they are not cleared to access.

In fact, to the hacker, they may actually appear as various creatures or aliens—the inside of the system may appear somewhat like an MMO, Virtual Reality program, or interactive movie. Alternately, it may appear simply as lines of code that are unreadable to anyone but a hacker. It's left to the GM what the inside of the system looks like in their milieu. In any case, the easiest way to create an enemy program is simply to choose a monster from **Manual of Monsters** or the **Castles & Crusades Monsters & Treasure** and "reskin" it as an intrusion countermeasure. In some cases, adding a certain amount of Spell Resistance may be wise, to represent the system's defenses against the hacker's programs (virtual spells).

The hacker, once jacked in, must then engage in combat to get what she wants, using her program suite against the intrusion countermeasure or firewall's special abilities. Some intrusion countermeasures are intended to simply eject a foreign hacker from a system; in this case losing the battle (being reduced to zero hit points in the system) sees the hacker pushed out and disconnected, with future connections cut off or at least at a greatly increased CL.

Some are injurious, meaning that the hacker is ejected as above, and suffers feedback that does physical damage equal to half their total hit points, as well as being locked out, as above.

Some firewalls are deadly. Such firewalls deal real damage at a rate of one point of damage in the real world per point of damage dealt in the system. When it comes to these firewalls, bonus Virtual hit points are subtracted first; the hacker suffers no damage in the real world for damage dealt to Virtual hit points. After Virtual hit points are gone, however, the damage suffered is real, and death in the system means death in the real world.

The worst of these programs will actually lock the hacker **inside** the system, requiring an Intelligence saving throw with a CL equal to the Firewall's Hit Dice to log out and disconnect. At the GM's option, the firewall may follow the hacker, acting as malware that affects their systems and causing any sort of permanent damage the GM feels is appropriate, usually depending on how badly injured the hacker was before escaping the system.

CYBERNETICS AND BIOWARE

Cybernetics and bioware augmentations are modeled with the Gadgeteer character class. Most characters with such augmentation will be created as Gadgeteers, whether it be single, multi-, class-and-a-half, or custom level options.

Another option is for the GM, when circumstances allow, to simply award gadget points to player characters, which will allow them to "build" specific augmentations in the same manner as a gadgeteer (that is, they spend the awarded gadget points to purchase spell effects that go along with the augmentation they've received, be it a limb, organ, eye, ear, etc.)

This can also be done, as mentioned above under True Class Customization, by sacrificing one or more class abilities to gain gadget points for the purpose of having a cybernetic augmentation.

LASER GUNS AND ENERGY WEAPONS

If your sci-fi game uses laser guns or other forms of energy weapon, you must decide how exactly these weapons work. There's a difference, for example, between weapons that fire a bolt of energy or plasma, and those which unleash continuous particle beams or streams of focused light.

In general, the rules for handheld energy weapons do not change from the standard firearms rules in **Amazing Adventures;** the only difference is the trappings (energy vs. projectiles). The one rule that should remain in place is that particle beam or continuous-energy weapons should be treated as automatic weapons that *cannot be set to single-shot.* That is, every shot from a particle beam weapon is, at minimum, a short burst, and can be anywhere up to a hose or spray.

Weapons that fire bolts of plasma (or another, fictional form of energy) can fire single-shot, and if the GM chooses, may have burst or full-auto settings. In short, these work just like guns in the core rules. And indeed, creating a broad range of weapons can be accomplished for your setting simply by adopting the statistics for firearms from the expanded list in the **Amazing Adventures Companion,** and re-describing them as energy weapons. Remember that weapon statistics in this game are fairly standardized, enabling you to adopt specialized stats for your sci-fi weaponry in a flash just by referencing what is already there.

Physics

Dealing with issues of physics in outer space is difficult at best. We know that in outer space, there is generally no drag and momentum is unlimited, because of the lack of gravity and other forces acting against the ship—which of course, then, changes as one gets closer to planets, within star systems, near nebulae, and the like.

Theoretically, you can perform outstanding maneuvers in a spaceship with zero G-force to create dangers with which the pilot must contend. That being said, while issues of gravity, lift, and drag are not an issue to starfighters, it can be very hard to get one's head around these concepts, for purposes of running a role playing game. As such, it is generally best to treat starfighter combat exactly as any aerial combat. In short, even if you are trying to run a hard sci-fi game, assume that your starships are designed to fight in space, and operate the way an F-15 vs. a MiG-29 would within the atmosphere.

FTL Chases and Tracking

The starship statistics in **Book One** do not include information on FTL drives; this is because the technology of faster-than-light travel varies wildly from setting to setting. Therefore, it must be left to the game master to determine the "mechanics" of defeating relativity in their setting. A few actual, "real world" theories for doing so are discussed in **Chapter Four**, for you to use as inspiration and a jumping off point.

The one thing you must consider, however, is whether it's possible to engage in chases while in FTL travel, or whether it's possible to track a ship through this sort of travel. Often, this forms a plot point—a ship with a "jump drive" is generally not track-able once the drive is engaged, but somehow, the enemy devises a means to do it. A ship that travels through a wormhole cannot usually be chased, but advanced technology suddenly allows not only chasing, but firing weapons within the wormhole, something that the laws of physics in your setting declare normally impossible.

If you do allow chases and maneuvering within whatever means of FTL travel you have, the mechanics are quite simple: simply grant each ship a score and bonus for FTL maneuvering and speed, just as their Dexterity score functions for normal space maneuvering. Ability checks are made as standard, using the FTL ability instead of normal dexterity or speed.

Capital Ships

Capital ships are the aircraft carriers and battleships of space combat. These ships, in general, are slow and ponderous, and function as flying bases of operations. They are not something that a single fighter can take down, and in general serve as a set piece for a battle, or an objective, rather than as a main participant in the battle itself.

Capital Ship Statistics

Much like starfighters, capital ships will need to be customized to the setting at hand—their size, crew complement, and abilities can vary wildly from setting to setting. That being said, a basic capital ship that can serve as a model or jumping off point for you is as follows:

Vehicle	Dex	Con	Spd	MR	Cr	Mx	Al	AC	DR	HP	Weapons
Capital Ship	-3	+10	10 (+0)	5	50	500	20	18	15	250	(48) Blaster cannons (3d8+5/A) (20) Torpedo cannons (4d6; 6 shots total)

Capital ships will also likely have a complement of starfighters which can be launched to defend them. These ships will have standard stats, and the GM will decide how many squadrons of starfighters are present (and how many fighters are in a given squadron).

Running the Gauntlet

Capital ships will have similar types of armaments as starfighters will—cannons and missiles—but could have dozens, or even hundreds, of gun emplacements, spread across the ship. Generally speaking, in order to approach a capital ship, a fighter will need to run a gauntlet through its cannons. This requires a piloting roll with a CL equal to the number of guns that have the fighter within their firing arc. That is to say, if twelve guns can currently target the fighter, the fighter will need to make a CL 12 piloting check to fly through their arc undamaged.

Achieving a piloting check equal to half the CL means taking half damage. Thus, for the CL 12 piloting check, if the fighter achieves at least a CL 6 result, they take half damage. A failure at CL 5 or below means taking full damage. When getting hit with a solid barrage of weaponry like this, the fighter's DR does not apply to each individual cannon shot; rather, halve the DR, then multiply it by the number of hits taken, and apply the total to the total damage taken.

Assume that the starfighter has DR 10, and again, is being hit by 12 cannons. Half of 10 is 5, multiplied by 12. The fighter will reduce damage taken by 60 points. If it makes its CL 6 check, 5 multiplied by 6 is a DR of 30.

Guns from a capital ship deal flat damage equal to the average damage of their weaponry, times the number of guns firing. Assuming the capital ship above has cannons that deal 3d8 damage, they deal 13 damage per cannon. This means a starfighter attempting to approach the capital ship above, and failing their piloting roll, would suffer 156 points of damage, which would be reduced by 60, for a total of 96 damage, potentially enough to destroy the fighter. If they make their CL 6 check, they will take 78 points of damage, which will then be reduced by 30 to 18 damage, likely a survivable hit.

As an advanced option, the GM can set the CL based on the number of guns, and reduce the damage by one increment per CL of a piloting check. Thus, for the CL 12 gun, a pilot that makes a CL 3 check takes damage from 9 guns (12-3=9). This option keeps combat much more dynamic, but also requires more record keeping, while potentially increasing options for starfighter survival. Calculating DR for fighters remains the same in this system—half the standard and multiply by the number of cannons striking the ship.

Starfighters can attempt to limit the damage from a capital ship by taking out cannons or ordnance. Doing so requires flying into the firing arc of the weapons with an associated piloting check. From there, the pilot must attack the ordnance or cannons to be disabled. In general, cannons have an AC of 15 and 25 hit points, while ordnance is shielded with an AC of 18 and 35 hit points. Damage done to ordnance and cannons does not count against damage to the ship itself, but reduces the amount of weapons that can be brought to bear.

In general, consider that any given capital ship has four "firing zones" of 45 degrees each. With one quarter of all weapons being able to fire within a given firing zone. Calculate attacks from cannons and ordnance separately. For simplicity's sake, assume right front, left front, left rear, and right rear, with the firing arc covering all three dimensions (above and below as well as straight on).

Destroying a Capital Ship

Destroying a capital ship is no different than destroying any other ship or object: reduce its hit points to zero, and it's out of the fight. The GM can invent spectacular effects for the ship going down—perhaps it slowly crashes into a moon. Perhaps it breaks up in space as escape pods launch like a swarm of bees from it.

At the GM's option, for every 10% of the capital ship's hit points lost, it must make a Constitution save, with a CL equal to 1 per 10% loss. This Constitution save is treated as Non-Prime for the ship, with a CB of 18. A failed check means that some system or another has gone down, at the GM's discretion. Perhaps one of the ship's ability scores or stats is reduced by 1d4. Perhaps its shields are damaged, reducing its DR by the same percentage as hit points lost (in increments of 10%). Perhaps its weapons systems go down, reducing the number of cannons or ordnance that can fire. Perhaps cascading explosions cause **more** damage to the ship. The options are limitless, and the GM is encouraged to be cinematic.

Crews can attempt to repair damage to ships damaged in this fashion; this requires Intelligence, Wisdom, or Dexterity checks at the same CL as the ship's last Constitution save, with the exact ability used dependent on the specialty of the character attempting the repairs, and the type of repairs being made. Such repairs, however, require 1d6 rounds to get the damaged system back up and working. A gadgeteer can always attempt to Jury Rig repairs on a ship to get it running quickly.

Hazards in Space

Space, contrary to popular belief, is **not** a great big empty void. It's actually quite full of…things. These things get even worse when you throw in human and alien races littering the cosmos. When engaging in starship combat, the GM can throw in any number of obstacles and hazards that can get in the way and even pose serious risks. Some of these hazards can also be used as plot points—a colony ship on the way to its final destination can run afoul of one of them and have to deal with the (critical) consequences in order to achieve their destination.

Asteroids, Moons, and Space Junk

Asteroids and moons can present real danger in space, as can general space junk. After all, we all know the odds of successfully piloting a starship through an asteroid field! While moons and asteroids are self-explanatory, Space junk occurs when ships literally dump garbage in space, when derelict or destroyed vessels are left afloat, when satellites or exploratory vessels shut down, or any other foreign objects that essentially qualify as litter float around in space. In general, when these

items are in the way, a piloting check is required with the size of the object, its proximity to the ship, the speed of the ship, and other factors playing in, as per the rules for avoiding obstacles in **Amazing Adventures.**

Black Holes and Gravity Wells

Black holes and gravity wells exist in space, and are highly dangerous because they are not necessarily visible. While a larger ship such as a freighter, colony shop, or capital ship may be able to detect and avoid them, starships in the midst of a battle can be caught and sucked in. At the outer range of these systems, the ship may see its acceleration reduced, or its overall speed slowed. At closer ranges, piloting checks may be required to escape the object's pull, while getting too close may actually tear the ship (and its pilot) apart!

White Holes

White holes are the opposite of black holes. These theoretical singularities actually push matter away. It's not possible to approach them, as the closer one gets, the greater the thrust from the object, until it reaches infinite thrust at its event horizon. These objects can theoretically be used to accelerate a ship, increasing its acceleration rate or current speed. The degree by which the ship would be accelerated depends on how close it gets to the event horizon, which requires a piloting check. However, again, the thrust is so strong as one gets too close, that it will damage and even destroy a ship.

Nebulas and Gas Clouds

Nebulas and gas clouds are another space hazard, which can also potentially be a resource. A nebula is a massive interstellar cloud of various ionized gasses as well as dust and particles. Flying through a nebula could potentially be highly dangerous to a spacecraft due to the ionized nature of the gasses within (as well as the particles that occupy it). At very least, when flying through a nebula, a ship's sensors may become useless, meaning the pilot is flying blind. At worst, the ship could suffer systems or physical damage from ionic discharges or EMPs (see below).

High-Power Electromagnetic Pulses

Space is a hotbed of energy. Electromagnetic pulses from stars and other bodies are common occurrences, and a ship that is subjected to a very powerful EMP could see its systems disabled. A ship that is exposed to a high power EMP must succeed at a Constitution check with a CL equal to the level of the EMP; failure means that one or more systems simply stop working and must be repaired before they will function again.

Cosmic Radiation, Antimatter Particles and Solar Flares

Much like nebulae and EMPs, cosmic radiation, solar flares, and even particles of antimatter can damage a vessel. These energy bursts (or clouds) can be treated in one of three ways, at the GM's discretion. First, they can make an attack roll to see if they strike the ship, dealing anywhere from 2d6 to 10d6 damage, which bypasses the ship's damage reduction. Second,

if the ship flies through such a cloud, it could be forced to make a Constitution save against the damage, suffering no or half damage on a success, depending on the power level of the obstacle. Finally, a pilot who detects such an obstacle can be required to make a piloting check to avoid it just as any other obstacle, suffering full damage on a failure.

Random Projectiles

Momentum is infinite in space, at least until an object enters the gravitational pull of another object. This means that when you fire a missile at another object and miss…that missile doesn't stop. It just keeps going. A ship can, at any time, be struck by some random bullet or missile that was a miss in a prior space battle. The GM can simply make an attack roll, and on a miss, the characters in their vessel are aware that something just zinged past and nearly struck them at a high velocity. A hit means full damage dealt.

BATTLE MECHS

The idea of giant robots (usually piloted by humans) standing up to fight these monsters is not new, but was popularized in the United States over the past few years in cinema. In truth, most of the rules you need to mimic mechs in **Amazing Adventures** are already built into the Gadgeteer rules.

There are two different approaches that can be taken to mechs: making them as vehicles, or building them as gadgets.

Mechs as Vehicles

The first is that the GM can build them as vehicles, making them available to the players, and then using the vehicle combat rules to run battle. If doing this, simply assign your mech a suitable weapons package, cruising speed, maximum speed, ability score bonuses, armor class and hit points, and you're ready to go! Building a mech as a vehicle is likely the easiest and most straightforward way to create them.

The key thing you'll have to account for, again, is balancing saving throws and the like. Attack rolls should remain standard—your characters will make attack rolls against the AC of the monster, as normal. Saving throws, however, can be tricky when you're dealing with creatures with such high levels of hit dice.

In the end, divide the number of hit points your mech has by 5. The resulting total is the bonus you add to any saving throws the mech needs to make against a creature's attacks or abilities. This number should, as with creatures, be a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 20. While in the mech, unless otherwise stated, the pilot always saves as the mech.

Using Gadget Points

Mechs can also be built—or more accurately, customized—by using gadget points. When spending points to build a mech or power armor, all aspects of the vehicle must be purchased—size, armor class, attacks, and other abilities.

Power Armor/Mech Size

A base battle mech carries a cost of 1 gadget point for a medium-sized suit of power armor, plus two points per size level above that, to a maximum of 12 for gargantuan. See the size table under the *kaiju* section for the size progression.

Speed

Such suits have a speed of 30ft, plus 10ft per level of size above medium. Purchasing the *haste* spell doubles existing movement.

Hit Points

A mecha has base hit points of 5d8 at medium size. At large size, it has 5d10. At huge size, the mech's hit points are 5d12. Add 5 HD for each size level above huge—10d12 for giant, 15d12 for massive, and 20d12 for gargantuan. If the gadgeteer purchases increased constitution for the mech, add +1 hit point per hit die, per 2 points of constitution purchased. Do not add constitution bonus for the pilot's hit points.

Power Armor Attributes

The power armor at its base form has no ability scores of its own; all saving throws and bonuses are based on the pilot's own ability scores if the save or check is based on Strength, Dexterity, Intelligence or Wisdom, or based on an assumption of an ability score of 12 (+0) for Constitution and Charisma.

Increased ability scores can be added via the *enhance ability* spell, which adds +4 to any ability score you wish, per gadget point spent, to the mech.

For example, a pilot with a strength of 15 in a medium-sized power armor uses his Strength bonus of +1 for all checks. Buying

enhance attribute and applying the +4 to strength increases the pilot's strength to 19 while he is in his armor; he now has a strength bonus of +3.

Alternately, a pilot with a constitution score of 15 in medium-sized power armor uses an assumption of 12, since he cannot apply his own con score to the mech's constitution. If he purchases *enhance attribute,* the mech's constitution increases to 16, for a bonus of +2.

Increasing wisdom and intelligence scores in a mech represents sensor packages or computer databases that aid in information, optics, hearing or the like. An increased charisma score would simply affect the intimidation factor or impressiveness of the armor itself.

In any case, it is within the GM's rights to rule that with any given effect, the pilot may have to use their own ability score. For example, if an opponent uses a spell against the mech that requires a charisma save to avoid the effects, the charisma save may have to come from the pilot, without applying the intimidation factor from the mech's increased charisma.

Base these decisions on common sense. Does the effect, mystical or otherwise, affect the pilot's mind or body directly, regardless of them being inside the mech? If so, use the pilot's ability scores instead of the power armor's.

Armor Class

The base Armor Class for a gadget-built suit of power armor is 15; each gadget point spent adds +3 to the AC, to a maximum AC of 20 for Medium and large, 25 for huge and giant, and 30 for massive and gargantuan suits.

Attacks and Special Abilities

Mechs built in this manner have only a slam attack. At medium size, this attack deals 1d6 damage. At large, it deals 1d8. At huge it deals 1d10, at giant, 1d12, at massive 3d6 and at gargantuan 4d6.

All other abilities must be purchased using gadget points. These are added to your power armor in exactly the same manner as any gadgets.

Sensor packages can be mimicked via various *detect* and divination-style spells.

Attack forms are mimicked by modifying damage-dealing spells. If, for example, a character wishes a mech with missiles, they would purchase *fireball* at whichever level of damage they want to deliver. Rail guns and energy weapons can be mimicked by modifying *arcane bolt*, *lightning bolt,* or other direct-damage-dealing spells.

By making use of the gadgeteering rules, just about any kind of mech or power armor you can imagine can easily be built. Of course, the costs can be significant in terms of points. For this reason it's often best for the GM in such games to create mechs and make them available to players for piloting against the *kaiju.* That being said, if a gadgeteer character wishes, they can take any existing gadgets they own and install them into a mech at

no cost other than what they spend to buy the mech or power armor.

For example, a gadgeteer has a Tesla gun modeled after *lightning bolt* that deals 6d6 damage. He wishes to build a mech to fight a *kaiju* threat. He has 12 gadget points banked, so he chooses to build a gargantuan-sized battle mech. At its base level, this mech has AC 15, a slam attack of 4d6, and a move of 80ft.

Transforming Mecha

There's one final aspect of mechs to address: the ability of some to transform into multiple configurations. To create a mech like this, use the *polymorph* spell. Each purchase of this effect grants one additional form.

In addition, an additional form does not innately grant any special abilities; they must be purchased separately. However, since abilities are restricted to only one given form, any abilities applied to that form are at half cost.

This can be somewhat tricky, and it might be best to provide access to a functional vehicle into which additional power armor abilities can be added rather than requiring all abilities to be bought completely separately. It would be prohibitively expensive, for example, to build both a robot and an F-15 fighter jet, and then combine them into one mech.

If, however, the player begins with an F-15, they can purchase *polymorph* to then create a robotic form that is built *into* the F-15. All abilities they purchases for this robotic form are at half cost because they can only be used while the aircraft is in robotic form.

While in the F-15 form, the vehicle has all the normal abilities of an F-15 fighter, including its machineguns, missiles, speed, and the like. While in the robotic form, it has only the abilities purchased for the robotic form.

An ability can be made to be available in multiple forms, but costs 1.5 times its base cost for being available in two forms, increasing by .5 for each additional form—thus, for a transforming mech that has three forms, making an ability available to all three forms would cost twice its normal value.

It is left to the GM to determine the value of making conventional vehicle weapons (an F-15's missiles and machineguns, for example) available in robotic form.

Creating independent, artificially intelligent robots on this scale is somewhat outside the realm of these rules, but one simple guideline is to create a character as normal, build the robot as a gadget (using the Gadgeteer character class as its base), and then simply combine the character and robot. In essence, you would build a Powered character, adapting the guidelines herein for power armor and mechs to the abilities available, and simply state that your character is a robot.

Damage Scale

Mechs deal *kaiju* scale damage. They cannot be harmed by normal human-sized weapons, though vehicle scale weapons

such as those from the aforementioned F-15, or tanks, will deal damage. At the GM's discretion, personal weapons designed to affect vehicles may be useful, such as a tripod-mounted .50 caliber machinegun or a LAW rocket.

Ace and Gadget Mechs

Since gadget mechs use ability scores differently than standard vehicles, characters with the ace generic class ability who pilot a mech should simply double the bonus they receive for any dexterity-based checks with the mech.

For example, a mech has *enhance attribute: dexterity,* increasing the dexterity score of the pilot by +4. The pilot has a dexterity of 16, and the ace generic class ability. For a normal pilot, the dexterity would be treated as 20, for a +3 bonus. For the ace, the bonus is increased to +6.

The Reverse-Engineering Method

In many cases, since having mechs available to characters in games of this type becomes requisite to the campaign itself (mechs tend to be part and parcel of a given setting); it's often best for the GM to design a single, archetypal mech for their game, and then reverse engineer the point value. This point value can then be provided to players for the purpose of designing their own mechs.

This, then, allows everyone to have personalized mechs that are roughly equal and balanced, while still allowing gadgeteer characters to add a bit of extra customization and continue to shine. It is highly recommended that for *kaiju* and mech games this approach be taken, as well as for any games that use mechs as a standard part of the setting.

KAIJU

Kaiju films have a vast following in the East and the West, and recent films have explored the idea even further of humans creating gigantic battle mechs to take on invasions of these creatures. **Amazing Adventures** can handle such battles very well, with just a few rules tweaks and new subsystems, and **StarSIEGE** seems the best vehicle for including these gigantic monsters.

Kaiju is a transliteration of a Japanese word that means, roughly, "strange beast." Originally used to refer to creatures from ancient Japanese legends, and interestingly first appears in an ancient Chinese text called *Classic of Mountains and Seas*. It was adopted by the Japanese to refer to paleontological creatures, creatures from cryptozoology, and creatures of myth and legend.

Its use in reference to giant monsters comes from a Japanese film genre of the same name. Undoubtedly the most famous of these films are those produced in Japan with the aforementioned giant aquatic lizard; however, films that can be considered *kaiju* films have been produced all over the world, and even *King Kong* can be considered a *kaiju* film. In the 1950s and 60s there were a number of B-scale horror films produced in the United States by filmmakers like Roger Corman, which involved gigantic

creatures—often reptiles or insects—that were generally irradiated and grew to massive size.

In the most purely technical form, a gigantic beast is a *Daikaiju,* while a human-sized *kaiju* monster is a *Kaijin.* This rules set will use the term *kaiju* to refer to *Daikaiju* exclusively, for the sake of brevity and to appeal to "common usage."

Kaiju and Gaming

In their most basic sense, *kaiju* are simply giant monsters. This means that if you throw your adventure-oriented modern characters up against, say, a Tyrannosaurus Rex, that's technically a *kaiju.* Certainly a gigantopithecus ape, like *King Kong,* is a Kaiju. However, we usually think of these creatures having more alien features and powers, and we almost always think of them as far larger than a T-Rex. So the first step is to make your creature in some way strange and alien. There are several ways to do this. The first is to take a mundane creature and increase it to gargantuan size—the size of a building. The smallest of these creatures should be at least as tall as a house, while the largest approach the size of small skyscrapers.

There are three different paths to take to create *kaiju* for your gaming scenario. The first is to simply re-skin a dragon or elemental. The second is to build a kaiju from an existing animal. The third is to build your kaiju from scratch.

Using Dragons

One very fast way to create *kaiju* for your game is to simply use the tables for dragons in the **Castles & Crusades Monsters & Treasure** book. Dragons are already massive creatures, and some of the most ancient already have over 30d12 hit dice. Remember that *kaiju* are not supposed to be creatures you can just shoot with a .45 and take down.

Of course, using dragons as *kaiju* presents its own set of problems. Do you want your creatures to have magic? Do you want them to be able to speak languages? These are decisions you must choose. Languages are easy enough to simply drop from the equation, and lowering a dragon's intelligence to a more bestial state is also not of major consequence. Magical abilities can be more problematic, as they form the core of many dragons, and these monsters are more firmly grounded in pulp science fiction, where aside from some psychic powers, magic usually doesn't appear.

That being said, it may be possible to use the magical abilities of dragons and re-skin them as powers in much the same way as gadgeteers do in **Amazing Adventures.** Simply choose fewer spells that the dragon knows and increase usage.

A green dragon, for example, is stated to have one, first-level wizard spell for each of the first four age categories, and one, second-level spell for its final four age categories. This works out to four first-level and four second-level spells at category 8. Instead, you could choose to give it one first-level spell (shocking grasp) that it can use four times, and one second-level spell (shatter) that it can use four times. You then skin these spells as special abilities—the *kaiju* can generate a bio-electric field around itself that deals damage to all who approach it, and

its scream is so thunderous and/or piercing that it shakes the ground and causes damage to all in the area.

In this manner, Dragons make outstanding and near ready-made *kaiju.* You can even simply change the way it looks to represent any kind of alien-looking creature you like.

Using Elementals

Much like dragons, elementals make for outstanding *kaiju* right out of the box with just a couple very basic changes. As they are listed in **Monsters & Treasure,** elementals have d8 hit dice. To make them *kaiju,* increase their hit dice to d12 and give them 16 or more. Any attacks the elemental has see the die type of that attack increased by one step and double the dice. Thus, an Earth Elemental of 16+ HD normally has a slam for 2d10 damage. A *kaiju* Earth monster would have a slam for 4d12 damage.

Energy Healing

Some *kaiju* actually feed on certain types of energy. At the GM's option, a *kaiju* can have the "energy healing" feature. Whenever targeted by a type of energy that is their source of feeding, a kaiju heals damage suffered on a 1:1 basis. For example, a *kaiju* that feeds on electricity who is the target of a 10d6 electrical attack, would instead *heal* 10d6. *Kaiju* that heal in this manner can exceed their normal hit point maximum.

If the GM chooses to give energy healing to a *kaiju,* they should also consider giving a corresponding energy weakness feature, a type of energy that deals double damage to the creature in question.

Since the SIEGE Engine doesn't strictly categorize damage types, the GM should be willing to be fluid with the kinds of damage that "count" for these features. If you wish more guidance, the **Amazing Adventures Book of Powers** does discuss types of damage in more detail.

Using Animals and Other Monsters

Animals and other monsters in the **Monsters & Treasure** book require two extra steps to get the basic abilities of the creature, but beyond that are similar to the method for using dragons and elementals. The extra steps required include increasing the hit dice of your monster or animal when you raise them to the gargantuan status of a *kaiju,* and determining their Armor Class.

Animal Kaiju Hit Points

To determine the hit points of your new *kaiju,* take whatever creature you're using as a base, change its hit dice to d12, and apply a multiplier based on the scale below to tell you how many hit dice to use. This multiplier is determined as follows: Subtract the creature's original size from the final size, and the resulting number is the multiplier you apply to the original creature's hit dice. Treat all creatures as having 1 hit die for these purposes. While an ant in normal situations has 1 hit point (at best), when determining the size for a *kaiju* ant, treat it has having 1 HD.

For example, you're creating a *kaiju* ant. The ant is diminutive in size. You're taking it to Gargantuan. Subtracting the ant's size step of 1 from the Gargantuan step of 19: your ant has 19d12 hit points.

Let's say you are doing the same thing with a large dog or a wolf, which has 2d8 hit dice and is size small. Subtracting 7 (for small) from 19 leaves you with a multiplier of 12. 12x2=24; the *kaiju* wolf has 24d12 hit dice.

What about a gigantic elephant? Elephants are already giant sized, step 13. Raising them to gargantuan sees us subtracting 13 from 19, for a final result of 6. Elephants already have 7 hit dice. Multiplying that by 6 leaves us with a *kaiju* that has a whopping 42d12 hit dice—a worthy challenge indeed!

Table 1: Animal Kaiju Hit Dice Multiplier

Step	Size
1	Diminutive (insects)
3	Tiny (mice)
5	Little (Rodents, cats, small dogs)
7	Small (large dogs and creatures up to 4' in height)
9	Medium (humans, gorillas)
11	Large (Grizzly bear, horse)
13	Giant (Elephant)
15	Huge (Tyrannosaurus Rex)
17	Massive (Blue whale/Diplodocus)
19	Gargantuan (Kaiju)

Animal Kaiju Armor Class

To determine your animal's AC, simply add 10 to its existing AC, and set the minimum kaiju AC as 20.

A Note about Insects

As a quick note, a common ant is used above as an extreme example of an insect. Any time you can, you might be better off to start with an available "giant" sized variety. Using a giant ant as your starting point for a kaiju would yield you a creature with 24d12 hit dice (giant ants are small creatures with 2d8 HD normally) and an AC of 26, much more fearsome than 19d12 and AC 20.

Monster and Animal Attacks and Abilities

Again, as with Elementals, increase the damage die type of any special ability your creature has by one step, and double the dice. In this case, however, the *minimum* die type for damage is d6. Thus, a giant ant's acid sting, when the creature is elevated to *kaiju* status, deals 2d6 damage for the stinger, plus 2d6 damage for the acid it injects, as opposed to the normal 1d2/1d4 damage.

In this manner, most creatures from **Monsters & Treasure** or the **Amazing Adventures Manual of Monsters** can be used to simulate kaiju. Imagine a gargantuan-sized Ankheg, a massive Arrowhawk, a gigantic Hellhound, an even more gigantic Kraken, or a fearsome massive-sized Aboleth emerging from the water.

Damaging a Kaiju

Guns, swords, knives, clubs, and even grenades are useless against kaiju! Handheld guns and human-sized weapons, even turret- or tripod-mounted machineguns do no damage to *kaiju*. They are simply too massive for puny human weapons to have any effect. Ordnance from tanks, missiles and the like may deal some damage…but such weapons may also be just as likely to heal and recharge the *kaiju* (see below).

The only weapons that can damage *kaiju* are those of other *kaiju*, or battle mech scale weapons, which we will deal with in the next section. At the GM's discretion, some vehicle-scale weapons such as the missiles from an F-15, tripod-mounted minigun, a tank cannon, or the like, may deal damage to *kaiju*.

Kaiju Scale Damage and Humans

There are two schools of thought on how damage from a *kaiju* affects humans. In a standard **Castles & Crusades** or **Amazing Adventures** game, human-sized characters can damage dragons, and survive attacks from dragons. The tropes of a *kaiju* story, on the other hand, are vastly different. While the specifics of scale-based damage are left to the individual GM to determine, it's recommended that just as human-sized weaponry can't damage these creatures, *kaiju*-scale damage to normal humans results in instant death.

Alternately, you can multiply all *kaiju* scale damage by ten or more when a human is the victim of an attack, depending on how much of a fighting chance you wish to give your heroes.

Kaiju and Saving Throws

When talking about creatures with such a massive scale, the issue of attack rolls, checks and saving throws becomes somewhat problematic. Normally in a SIEGE Engine game, a creature adds its full hit dice to every roll. For *kaiju*, we're dealing with creatures that could have over 40 hit dice. It is suggested, if for no other reason than keeping math to a minimum, that massive-sized scale creatures add half their hit dice to attacks and saving throws, with a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 20.

In addition, the CL for saving throws against these monsters is set to between CL 10-12, at the GM's option. Of course, simply going with the core massive numbers is a legitimate possibility, and would further remove giant monsters from the realm of people.

CHOOSING YOUR STYLE OF PLAY

The first thing you'll need to do when building your sci-fi campaign is decide what kind of game you want to run. Is it a planetary romance like Edgar Rice Burroughs' Barsoom tales? Is it the high-flying space opera of George Lucas, or the Flash Gordon serials of the 30s? Is it exploration of the galaxy in a Gene Roddenberry-influenced universe? Is it the hard science fiction of Isaac Asimov, the tech noir of Philip K. Dick, or the full-on cyberpunk of Gibson? Perhaps it's a space western set in a single, vast star system with dozens of planets and hundreds of moons that have been terraformed by a humanity fleeing a devastated Earth.

Another form of science fiction is the classic alien-invasion story. You could run a campaign like the classic *War of the Worlds,* with aggressive invaders attacking the planet. You could also run a more insidious invasion—the alien visitors who proclaim to be peaceful travelers, but who secretly want something from our planet, be it natural resources, slave labor, or to use us as food. Even stark isolationist horror can be explored, with a troubleshooting team visiting a remote colony that, upon arriving, they discover has been ravaged by an unknown, alien threat, and now they, too, are cut off from support and must survive the menace and escape with their lives.

Many games, in fact, will be some mix of all of the above. Let's start by examining some of the different, most popular, sub-genres of science fiction, and what each involves. After this, we'll look at the tropes of vehicles and technology in a science fiction game, and then explore the themes of a sci-fi game, how to think about using current sociopolitical issues in your games, and how to deal with issues of respect and boundaries at your table.

PLANETARY ROMANCE, OR SWORD-AND-PLANET

Sword and planet stories fall under the genre of science fantasy, a pulp style of sci-fi that flourished in the late 19th century through the early mid-20th century, and are perhaps best demonstrated by the Martian, Venus, and Moon tales of Edgar Rice Burroughs, but many other authors have tackled the genre over the years, including Robert E. Howard, Otis Kline, C.L. Moore, Leigh Brackett, Lin Carter and Michael Moorcock.

The "Science" in science fantasy is passing at best—it's a trapping that rarely holds up under real-life scientific scrutiny. In this type of story there are space ships and energy weapons, both beam and bolt-style. There may be laser swords and mystic powers. Not only is there sound in space, but ships rocket back and forth with rumbling and roaring engines, screaming laser cannons and spectacular explosions.

There is always a reluctant and roguish hero who is called to adventure through no choice of his own. There are princesses who are beautiful, deadly and capable, but may need rescuing anyway.

In many ways, this type of story takes the elements of all those above, from weird west to steampunk to swords-and-sorcery, and combines them together with a veneer of flashy technology layered on top. Here are some of the elements involved in creating a science fantasy game with **Amazing Adventures**.

In a planetary romance, or sword and planet story, the hero is whisked away from Earth to another world, through various mystical or technological means. The character may find their

way to the alien world through astral projection, or it may be through an unexplained "scientific" apparatus that transports them bodily from one place to the other.

Superhuman Protagonists

While on the alien world, the character often finds that they can breathe and survive, much to their surprise, but may have vastly different physical or mental capabilities than they did at home. They can run faster, jump higher, hit harder, and think faster than they are used to. Many heroes in a planetary romance tale become superhuman.

Culture Shock

Despite their heightened abilities, heroes in these stories are fish out of water. They are often completely overwhelmed by culture shock and can often end up in a lot of trouble because of not understanding the new society into which they have been thrust. The differences between the societies of the alien world and earth are one of the main themes of a planetary romance. The initial stories in these sagas generally explore the new world and describe the various peoples, creatures and cultures while establishing various political and intrigue-based sub plots which are then detailed in later tales. The hero inevitably winds up playing a major role in these plots, sometimes rising to lead a tribe, kingdom or even the world.

Most cultures in sword and planet tales are broad and varied. There is almost always a human analog, whose inhabitants resemble humans in every way except perhaps for one minor detail: they may, for example, lay eggs instead of giving live birth, but in all other ways seem human. Their cultures range from enlightened to pseudo-medieval, to decadent and corrupt, depending upon the needs of the story, and there may be multiple human(ish) societies, with different levels of technological and cultural advancement.

These human-esque societies serve as a stark contrast to purely alien ones. These species not only live in barbaric societies, but often have starkly demonic or non-human features: great tusks, multiple limbs, wings, bulbous or multiple eyes, or any other number of monstrous features mark them as alien. Their cultures tend to be savage, but honorable (unless they are the villains of the piece, in which case they might have no honor in the eyes of the hero).

Technology vs. the Naked Blade

One of the more important tropes of the sword and planet tale is the idea that while advanced technology exists—often in the form of flying vehicles and pulse or directed energy weapons—the protagonist and villains still often end up using swords, blades and their bare hands to do battle.

In some of the earliest examples, the rationale for this was a simple universal code of honor on the alien world: one never battled against a man using a more advanced weapon. In other examples of the sword and planet tale, the hero is either denied access to technology or simply prefers "the old ways."

In the end, it is the qualities of a warrior that define the characters in sword and planet tales. Even beyond physical and combat prowess, a stringent code of honor and ethics, chivalry and the desire and will to do what is right in the face of overwhelming evil are what mark these characters.

Fantasy with Technological Trappings

Those wishing to use **Castles & Crusades** to run science fiction will find no better option than a planetary romance tale. These stories very much tend to be traditional fantasy tales set within the trappings of a science fiction setting. That is, you'll be on a clearly alien world, but swords, sorcery, and mysticism exist alongside technology, and the stories are very much in the epic fantasy vein. When running a planetary romance campaign, keep the fantasy elements high, but always leave a reminder in place that this is an alien world with alien cultures and some level of super-science technology in place.

SPACE OPERA

Buck Rogers… Flash Gordon… Those world-famous and genre-defining epic films by George Lucas… The great space sagas of Gene Roddenberry… Glen Larson's military drama pitting human fugitives against their metallic enemies in a mad flight across the stars… all of these fall into the realm of science fantasy.

In space opera, "epic" is the key word. These are stories of grand heroics where galactic and planetary empires war against one another, with the main characters either championing one side or simply caught in the middle. Space operas represent human dramas.

Consider the farm boy from the desert planet called upon to exercise mysterious powers to re-establish an ancient order of mystical knights, and overthrow an evil galaxy-wide empire. Think on the ragtag fugitive fleet of human vessels being chased across the stars by a relentless cybernetic enemy bent on destroying all of humanity. What about the roguish crew of a freighter caught between the frontier outskirts of a terraformed star system, and the advanced-yet-corrupt central planetary alliance, with the heroes just trying to eke out a living in the middle? There is also the idea of the noble crew of a gigantic starship dedicated to exploring the galaxy and meeting new forms of life wherever they go, while spreading the ideals of a benevolent and enlightened planetary federation which may or may not be showing the beginnings of corruption from within.

All of these examples should be starkly familiar to fans of science fiction and fantasy, and they demonstrate a wealth of different concepts for a space opera campaign. What they have in common are great, galactic (or at least system-wide) governments, heroes that come from common origins, human (or alien) drama, and personal stories. These stories then come peppered with a healthy dose of action, adventure, roaring space battles, intrigue and excitement. There are as many (often more) fantasy elements in a space opera as there are science. It doesn't matter how a ship's faster-than-light technology works—that can be handled with technobabble that makes only passing sense at best.

Physics Don't Always Apply

The laws of physics don't always apply in Space Opera. In these stories, there is sound in outer space and we needn't think too much on how that works. Ships explode spectacularly regardless of the amount of oxygen present to feed the blast. Laser guns fire bolts of plasma (which incidentally travel much slower than bullets) or visible particle beams that are comprised of particles that don't actually exist but have science-y sounding names.

Psychic and even mystical powers may be accepted to exist, even if they may not be commonplace. There are lightning staves and plasma swords that are made up of energy that is somehow shaped and restricted into a limited form, and yet doesn't burn everything with the heat of a star. Psychics or mystical priestly orders may be required to use their mental powers to activate space-folding gates for interplanetary travel—powers which require specially farmed chemical substances.

Imaginary Technology: Technobabble

Going hand in hand with the lack of real-world physics, technobabble is a huge part of space opera. There are types of energy and matter that don't even exist in our world's physics. Chronoton particles, graviton particles, or any other type of "-on" particle can be concocted as an explanation for weapon energy, starship power, or dangerous radiation. Ships use imaginary terms like "Buffer panel," "primary sensor web dish," "quadricalcite crystals," and "anti-grav hyperdrive" to define operations. GMs running a space opera game would do well to check out any of the (many) technobabble and jargon generators online and pull up a list of possible terms that they can work into their game as needed, to maintain the mood and feeling, and even to provide context for engineering characters who would like to know what, exactly, they're fixing (and what it does!)

Epic Fantasy with Technology

Similar to planetary romance, in many ways, a space opera game is not much different than an epic fantasy one, only on a much grander scale and with even more trappings of high technology. Whereas planetary romance is largely a high fantasy game with reminders that one is on an alien world, a space opera game travels between worlds, operates on a galactic scale, and the fantasy trappings take second stage to the technological trappings (as fantastical as they themselves may be).

Instead of two warring kingdoms on opposite ends of a continent engaging in castle sieges using ballistae and mounted cavalry, the two opposing empires may be on different planets in neighboring star systems, and star fighters may be the order of the day. Instead of a command tent, the general of an operation sits on board a gigantic capital ship or mother ship and oversees his troops using sensors and long-range communication devices.

A clever GM can create a space opera by slapping together the tropes of a fantasy game, a World War II era game with dogfighting aircraft, and a 16th-century pirate game with huge warships ponderously battling on the open sea, and stick it all into outer space.

"Hard" Science Fiction

Hard science fiction is rigidly and strictly based in real scientific theory. There's very little in the way of "technobabble" in hard sci-fi, and what there is, is carefully constructed to match real science. This means that many such stories don't involve fantastical technology like hyperdrives that can allow one to travel at multiples of the speed of light, made-up terms like chronoton particles, or specialized (entirely fictional) crystals that allow a specific matter/antimatter blend that permits the folding of space.

In many hard science fiction games, if there is FTL travel at all, it will often be using some sort of wormhole gate, painstakingly explained in terms of its actual technological function. More often, these stories deal with colony ships and cryogenically-frozen travelers. Many of the works of Isaac Asimov are hard science fiction; his rules of robotics, in fact, have become part and parcel of the philosophy of real-world AI developers.

Unfortunately, because of exactly what hard science fiction is, it's difficult at best to provide a comprehensive list of trappings or information on how to run such a game. For the most part, this is left to those who are intensely knowledgeable about past and current issues of applied, theoretical, and dimensional physics. Such games, however, can be great fun when run by a GM who really knows their stuff and is willing to build it into an interesting world.

One of the biggest aspects of hard sci fi is that it often deals directly with the idea of shining a mirror on humanity. Much of it will take current social issues, and project them into the near or distant future, positing what happens if they get out of hand (or if they work out as they should).

For the most part, much of the most popular sci-fi of the past several decades have mixed hard sci-fi with space opera tropes. These settings offer the use of real-world technology and physics theories with ideas like fantastical FTL travel to examine what happens, for example, when humanity learns to progress to the stars and explore new worlds, new life, and new civilizations that populate the galaxy. In the end, it's your game so feel free to take ideas from actual physics and run with them. The key when blending real scientific theory with space opera tropes is to make sure that you remain internally consistent. Once you establish **how** a technology works, it **must always work the same way.**

Naming Conventions: Solar System vs. Star System

One easy bit of realism you can keep in mind in your games is the difference between "Solar" system and star system. Technically speaking, the term "Solar system" refers only to *our system of planets.* The name of our star is Sol, so our planetary system is the Solar system. While many sci-fi settings refer to Earth as Terra or Earth, in the designation commonly used to denote other astral bodies, Earth is designated as Sol 3, just as the third planet in the Alpha Centauri system would be Alpha Centauri 3, though it would very likely have its own name given by the inhabitants, just as we call our world Earth.

As such, other systems of stars and planets would simply be called planetary systems, or more appropriately, star systems. It might seem a nitpick, but in a lot of science fiction games, nitpicks matter, if for no other reasons than to maintain the flavor and spirit of what you're doing.

CYBERPUNK

Cyberpunk and its precursor, tech noir, are a grim and gritty approach to science fiction which combine a dystopian future controlled by corporations and greed, with the elements of the hardboiled detective stories of the 1930s. The technologies used in these types of story, though quite advanced from our current era, are more recognizable to readers than the fantastic starships and heavy blasters of space opera.

In a cyberpunk game, heroes use guns that fire bullets—though said bullets may be non-lethal gel or plastic rounds, or could be very high-end armor piercing bullets unlike any we have today. They hack into computer networks to conduct industrial espionage, though the hacking usually involves plugging the brain directly into the computer.

In this sense, much cyberpunk does fit into the trappings of "hard" science fiction. It deals with cybernetics that look like advanced versions of the prosthetics, VR, and AR we have today. It deals with computer hacking, wireless networks, and the greed and untouchable corruption of corporate society. There's very little that is purely fantastical about cyberpunk, and for many, it's the easiest form of hard science fiction to run.

Running a cyberpunk game using **Amazing Adventures** requires few to no adjustments. The GM can easily put a fresh coat of paint on existing firearm statistics, renaming them to fit the setting. Armor types from those in Chapter One can easily be adopted.

The biggest thing to add, system wise, is the ability to hack into computers. The computer hacker can be created using the

Hacker / Cyber Jacker Generic Class Ability in Chapter 2. In a Cyberpunk game computer systems are used for everything from building security to employee records, secret formulae, communications and even news.

If desired, the GM can concoct visuals for what the Web looks like when a jacker is plugged in, and can enhance computer hacking rules by allowing the character to purchase suites of cybernetic combat programs. Such characters would be built as gadgeteers with the hacker generic class ability. Gadget points would be spent building a suite of hacking programs (using spell effects as standard).

Of course, cybernetics and augmentation are essential to a cyberpunk game. These things are easily handled within the contest of **Amazing Adventures.** Cybernetics and biotech can be modeled using the gadgeteering rules, with cyborg characters possessing levels of the Gadgeteer class, either as single-class Gadgeteers, or using the multi-class or class-and-a-half rules to combine augmentation with another class. Your classic "street samurai" character could easily be modeled using the Fighter from **Castles & Crusades** combined with the Gadgeteer to mimic their augmentations.

Mentalists are eminently appropriate in a cyberpunk or tech noir game. Certain sub-genres of cyberpunk may even incorporate fantasy elements, allowing the use of Arcanists and even non-human races imported from **Castles & Crusades**. In the end, almost every character class can be used largely unmodified in this genre; it is only up to the GM which elements to include in your game.

TECHNOLOGY

The first thing to establish in a science fiction game is the level of technology you are going to use. Pistols may, in such games, include anything from projectile weapons that hurl radioactive plutonium or explosive rounds to handheld beam weapons to blasters that shoot ionized bolts of energy. Rifles can include projectile-firing pulse rifles to two-handed particle beam

weapons. Blades can include energy swords or enhanced "vibro" weapons (using whatever definition of a such weaponry the GM wishes to cook up).

VEHICLES

Vehicles are part and parcel of sci-fi in general, and space opera games in particular, and you will need to create examples of base ships, Starfighters, and even land-based vehicles from hoverbikes to repulsor-lift sports racers. Using the existing vehicle combat rules, cooking up statistics for these should not be an issue: the GM need simply assign stats and go.

Huge, ponderous mother ships and capitol ships may not be as statistically detailed as starships; these should at least, however, be given Armor Class, DR, hit points and weaponry for various sections, with the GM cooking up effects for damage to areas like the bridge, engineering, weapons and the like, expanding upon the rules in **Amazing Adventures** and in **Chapter 3** of this book. They will usually be heavily armored, with shields and devastating weaponry. The GM can cook up bonuses for crew expertise and targeting sensors to define the BtH bonus for their weapons, and run them off the cuff. In essence, when it comes to battle, these vehicles are incredibly formidable but are generally all but stationary targets.

As mentioned in **Chapter 3,** these base ships will generally be the object of a battle rather than an active participant. That is, PCs will be assigned to either protect or take out one of these ships, which will take a role in defending themselves (firing weapons and launching ships) but will otherwise not be rapidly flying around and dogfighting.

Faster than Light Travel

FTL travel for ships is also part and parcel of science fantasy games. It is beyond the scope of this book to provide full rules for FTL travel—especially since how it works varies wildly between books, films, and television series. It is left to the discretion of the GM what the top speed is for faster-than-light ships and whether they work by warping space, dropping into an alternate hyperspace dimension, or use a form of "jump drive" which teleports ships across vast distances.

Indeed, in some space opera settings there is no FTL travel and characters instead rely on cryogenic stasis to make long trips. Whatever your setting calls for, cook up rules for long-distance travel and run with it! In general, all you are really going to need to know is how fast ships can go, and what the degrees of hyper-speed are. A general convention is that a ship going faster than light cannot be tracked or followed (at least, not easily) so it can easily become flavor more than anything else.

For your information and inspiration, here are some "real world" theories of faster than light travel you can adapt for your games. These explanations are gathered from very complex theories and ideas, many of which haven't even been tested. As such, they are necessarily brief, but the core concept of each is listed, and you can feel free to research or flesh them out as you like for your setting.

Alcubierre Warp Drive

Currently being investigated by NASA, this form of FTL travel is derived from a subset of Einstein's equations. We know from general relativity that gravity warps spacetime. We also know from relativity that there is a "cosmic speed limit" of just below the speed of light; that is, no object in normal space can achieve or exceed the speed of light. In order to violate this cosmic speed limit, one doesn't move the ship, but rather, moves the space. As space bends around the still ship, the ship can then change position. To normal eyes, the ship might appear to move at hyper speeds, when in actuality, it's space that folds and shifts around it.

Many science fiction stories that use folding space, warp drives, or jump drives are making use of different visualizations of Alcubierre Warp Drive.

The Wormhole Drive

Anyone who has seen a sci-fi movie is familiar with the idea of a wormhole. This theory looks at the idea of punching a hole in the universe and coming out on the other side. The idea is to generate a controlled singularity, or black hole, and use that to bend a tunnel through spacetime, ending up somewhere else instantaneously. The problems with this theory are many—not the least of which is the idea that nothing can actually escape a black hole, so how does one come out on the other side? One answer to this is the idea that the other side of a black hole may be a white hole, a hypothetical region in spacetime in general relativity where matter cannot enter, but may be expelled.

Often, science fiction properties that make use of "jump gates" or otherwise take advantage of travel through wormholes or other tunnels in space, are using visualizations of this concept.

Mass Dampening

With the discovery of the Higgs boson particle, entire new avenues of thought in theoretical physics have arisen. Mass dampening takes advantage of the fact that we now understand how to control the property of mass in matter. This means that theoretically, we could use the Higgs to manipulate mass, and dampen the mass of a spaceship. This means that as the spaceship approaches the speed of light, its mass could be controlled so that it doesn't increase along with the speed, and thus, thrust would still be able to remain constant and the cosmic speed limit exceeded—in theory.

However, in this theory, we have yet to address the fact that time dilation still happens, meaning relative time still speeds up as you reach the speed of light, so while you would think you're traveling super-fast, in reality everything around you in normal spacetime is aging by many years…

EM Drives

Very little is known about this theoretical concept for FTL travel. Ostensibly, it functions by producing thrust without propellent, simply by bouncing electromagnetic fields around. In theory, this could generate the infinite thrust needed to get to the cosmic speed limit, but not exceed it—the speed limit is still in place, but this would get you as close as possible under general relativity.

Again, however, as speed increases, time begins to dilate, so the issue of travel vs. the passage of time remains a problem with the EM drive theory.

Quantum Acceleration

The field of Quantum Mechanics opens up entirely new realms that can essentially work around or defeat general relativity. The concept of quantum acceleration says that it's possible for matter to exist slower or faster than the speed of light, but not at exactly the speed of light. Thus, if it was possible to get to 0.9999999999999999999… the speed of light and then somehow skip over the speed of light to 1.000000000000…0001 the speed of light, you could achieve FTL travel. According to quantum physics, it's possible to actually "phase" through the singularity that is the speed of light, and then exist at faster.

The real problem with this idea is that quantum physics has yet to address the issue of how the quantum world exists within the macro world. That is, while quantum physics work in their own "space," they don't work in the physical world the rest of us inhabit. If, however, quantum physics could be made to work in regular space, quantum laws may even be able to solve the issue of time dilation—no one knows for certain, however, as much of quantum theory is still, in fact, theoretical.

Quantum Probabilities

Another theory based in quantum mechanics, quantum probabilities are along the same lines as quantum acceleration, but instead of jumping over the speed of light, it uses the quantum space to manipulate the probability of simply appearing somewhere else, at the quantum scale. This theory says that if you can make quantum laws exist in the physical space, you can quite literally "pop" an object from one place to the other, just by increasing the probability of that happening until it does. This may not necessarily require increasing the odds to 100%

— after all, even at a 10% chance of something happening…it can happen. Quantum mechanics is crazy stuff.

The ever-popular works of Douglas Adams make use of quantum probabilities to hilarious results.

Interstellar Power

Another question to consider is, how are your starships powered? Certainly good old-fashioned gasoline or rocket fuel aren't going to do the trick for travel between the vast distances of outer space. You may, in a space opera game, simply invent a special kind of radioactive crystal that generates constant power unless it burns out, or you may be more interested in going a bit more "hard" with your energy and power. To that end, here are some actual theories on how we might power spacecraft. Some are more widely accepted than others, and some are even fringe theories that have been rejected by mainstream science. All, however, offer fun options for a sci-fi game.

Generation of power, however, is different than *storage and use* of power. The first section we'll look at here will deal with methods of generating power for a ship, and the complications with ongoing generation. The second section will examine methods for storing and using power once it is generated.

Power Generation

Solar Power

Solar power is the most common idea for powering a ship, and best of all, it's unlimited and free, if you have the panels to collect it. Whether these panels are on the ship, or in the form of vast sails that can be expanded, solar cells can generate power for a ship. The problem is that the efficiency of these cells diminishes exponentially based on how far from the source of radiation you are. That means when you're between star systems, there isn't much power to be had. Technology would be needed that would allow the enhancement or concentration of stellar winds into useful power.

Nuclear Fission

This is good-old-fashioned nuclear power. We're all familiar with it; it powers much of the Earth right now. By splitting atoms, heat is generated, which can be gathered to power turbines, which in turn power a ship. There's tons of different ways to accomplish fission, but the end result is the use of heat under thermodynamics. Most fission reactors use water or another working fluid, which could be liquid CO_2 or liquid metals. In an emergency, this radioactive fluid could then be used as rocket fuel. The problem with fusion, at least in a modern sense, is that it is massive and not suited well to smaller craft, and it generates large amounts of radioactive waste that can be devastating over years of exposure, or in the nightmare situation of a core meltdown. On the up side, it could theoretically power a large spacecraft for centuries, and even with a theoretical technology called a breeder reactor, create its own fuel and work indefinitely.

Nuclear Fusion

The holy grail of power. It uses the same idea of creating heat to generate energy, but since it works by putting atoms together instead of tearing them apart, it is cleaner and doesn't generate the waste and dangerous radiation that fission does. It does, however, consume fuel faster. On the up side, the byproducts are water and CO_2, which could be used as additional resources on ship. The issue, much like with fission, is that it requires a large facility, so it wouldn't do for smaller ships like cargo vessels or fighters…unless in your universe it's been shrunk down.

Power Beaming

Nicola Tesla envisioned the idea of wireless power transmission and dreamed of a net of electricity covering the world that anyone could tap into for any reason. Taking this idea to an extreme, entire star empires might have developed the means to generate power and beam it into space, possibly via firing high-powered lasers which are captured by the ship and converted to energy. RF (radio frequency) energy is another option. The down side to this kind of power is that ships would be dependent upon proximity to power generator stations. Still, even the smallest ships could make use of this power.

Bioelectric Power

Imagine a starship entirely powered by thousands of electric eels, each of which generates up to 800 volts of power that can be sustained for over an hour! The idea is more than a little far-fetched with lots of complications (feeding the eels, for example), but in a science fiction sense, animals that generate their own powerful bio-electric field could be farmed to serve as generators. These creatures, perhaps could be fed water, waste, or garbage to sustain them, and prodded or encouraged to generate electricity that could power a ship.

Power Storage

Some of the power generation methods above (solar power, beamed power, bio-electric power) have complications in terms of constant power generation. They require some means of backup or energy storage to use during those times when the creatures aren't generating electricity, there's no star nearby, or you can't access a power beaming station. That's where power storage comes into play.

Batteries

The most obvious form of power storage is batteries. We already have rechargeable batteries in our society, and electric cars are powered by lithium-ion and other types of these. An entire bank of batteries can capture and hold generated energy to power the ship during periods when constant power is not available (or as a backup in power outages).

Hydrogen Fuel Cells

Much like batteries, hydrogen fuel cells can store energy. Their advantage is that while batteries eventually lose a charge and the ability to even hold a charge, these can be regenerated or refueled. All you need is hydrogen energy, which you just put into the cell. The cell generates water as waste, which you need to extract and replace with more hydrogen. These cells are both a power generation *and* a power storage method, which create a closed-circle system that is, theoretically, unlimited in potential.

Capacitor Banks

If you need to let all stored energy out at one time, capacitors are an ideal solution. While they may not, as such, be great for powering your ship in the long term, they are ideal for things like generating a singularity or warp drive, or for a weapon. Slow release capacitors don't exist in our world, but there's no reason that scientific advancement couldn't have developed capacitors that can be set to "bleed" energy for ongoing power.

Inductors

Inductors are like capacitors, only they store magnetic, instead of electric, energy. The applications for this are many, but a means by which the magnetic energy is converted back into electricity or heat would be required to use it to power most technology.

A MIRROR ON SOCIETY

All of the information above gives you the tropes and mechanics to get your sci fi universe up and running. There is, however, one key factor to much of science fiction (perhaps not as much with science fantasy or sword-and-planet tales, but much) that you should always keep in mind with your game.

Take your inspiration from the real world.

Science fiction, its core mission and idea from the very first science fiction novel (arguably Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*) was to shine a light on society, a mirror darkly, if you will, to our world. The best science fiction converts the issues we face into entertainment and seeks to educate, but without getting up on a soap box and preaching. It's certainly a delicate balance to walk, but it is important to
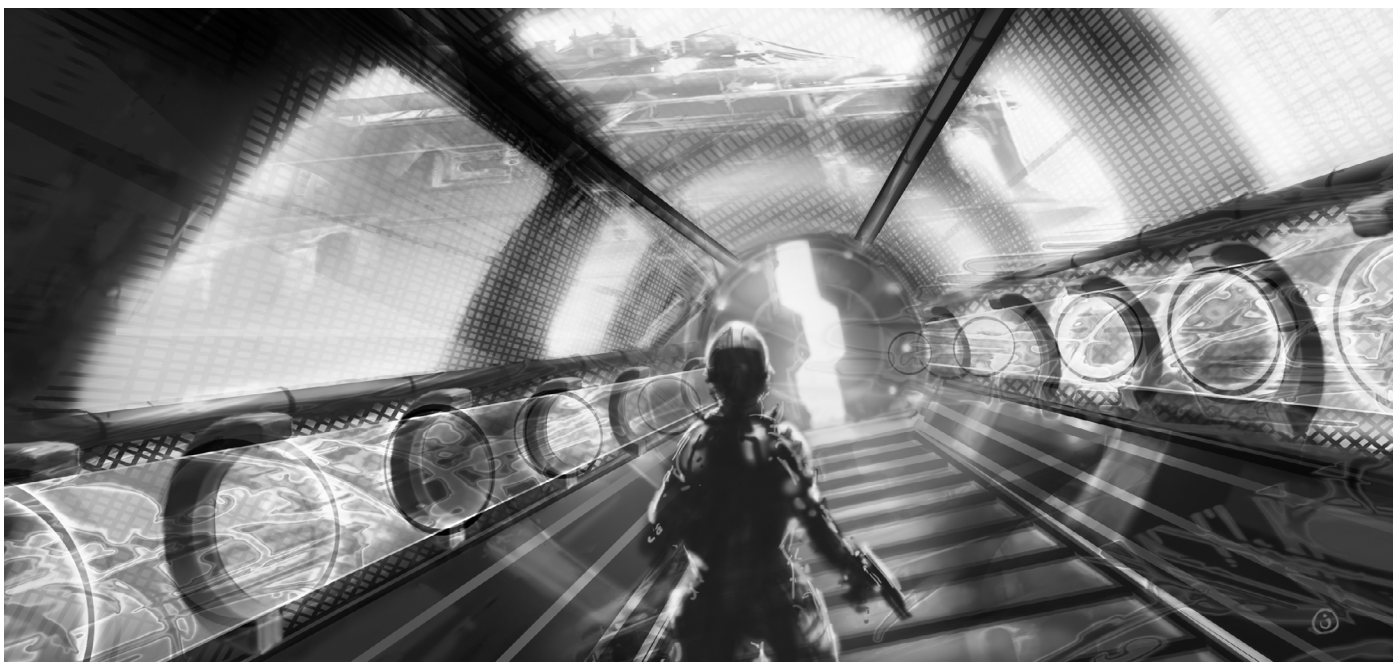
sci-fi. Thus, as you look for inspirations for your alien species, planetary confederations, and advanced or primitive cultures, feel free to make them subtle (or obvious) metaphors for the things we deal with today.

Consider the world we live in, in the early 21ˢᵗ Century: war, immigration issues, terrorism, domestic violence, racism, sexism, gender identity, corporate greed, international politics and economics, resurgent diseases we thought were gone, the drug epidemic, and all these dark ideas make for outstanding inspiration for your sci-fi enemies and obstacles to overcome. On the other hand, there are wonderful things as well: we can communicate with friends across the world instantly, we are exploring new ways to live responsibly while respecting the environment. We are learning new ways to respect other people even as we fight against those who seem to have no respect for others. All of these can be tweaked, twisted, compressed, or exploded to form an integral part of your world.

Respect Your Table

It's vital, however, that you respect your table. Be sure that when you dive into these societal issues, that the people at your table are okay with the themes you're exploring. Sexism and racism, in particular, are very sensitive topics (as they should be) for many people, and as such may be off-limits at your gaming table. Discuss with your group any issues that they absolutely are not comfortable exploring. Check back in with them every so often as you play to be sure that everyone is still enjoying themselves, and there aren't any uncomfortable areas from which you should pull back.

This, in the end, is simply common respect for your friends and fellow gamers.

Sci-Fi and Cultural Appropriation

By the same token, beware of issues of cultural appropriation, which in science fiction can be a real danger. You may wish to base one of your alien races on the idea that, for example, the Hindu gods were actually ancient aliens that traveled the cosmos. In so doing, be careful not to engage in cultural appropriation of Indian culture. It's important to understand that cultural appropriation *does not mean taking inspiration from another culture.* What it means is inappropriately and disrespectfully adopting ideas of other cultures, without understanding or respecting them.

It can seem a tricky prospect, and it is—the Earth has seen so many cultures, and even one you make up off the top of your head can seem like it was stereotyped from another, just by coincidence. It does happen. Sometimes it's unavoidable. In the end, it's just a factor of being careful and responsible.

If you want to take inspiration from a real-world culture for your aliens, that's fine. The world is full of interesting and rich cultures, and the literal thousands of mythologies that have shaped our world are the root of our greatest stories. In so doing, however, just be sure you take the time to learn about the culture and avoid the broad stereotypes. You might even, in researching, learn about *more* interesting aspects of the culture to adapt. In the end, cultural appropriation is about misuse, stereotyping, and disrespect.

Always remember: gaming is about having fun with your friends. You can explore difficult societal issues, but before you go full dark, make sure everyone's okay with it. Avoid negative stereotypes, and know that everyone has different buttons, with some more easily pushed than others. It can be a difficult line to walk, and as the GM you have to be prepared to step back if necessary.

CHAPTER FIVE: SOLAR BURN

Solar Burn is a complete science-fiction setting for you to explore, or to adapt as a jumping-off point in designing your own setting. The setting is space opera in nature, with a hard and gritty feel taken from war stories. At the core of the setting are three species: humanity, who has long since colonized our entire solar system, but is just now beginning to explore interstellar travel; the Decti, a species who half a century ago invaded and touched off a devastating war, but who now live in uneasy peace among us; and the Jalex, a newly emerging threat to the system, who have forced humanity and the Decti into an uneasy alliance to save the future of both.

This setting combines elements of a number of types of science fiction as discussed in **Chapter Four,** but is removed from pure hard sci-fi through its playing fast and loose with technology and scientific theory. It is also kept relatively broad and open, so as to allow you to build upon the themes and ideas herein to create your own unique take on this classic interstellar warfare trope.

THE HISTORY OF THE FUTURE

Several centuries ago, humanity faced what at the time was the greatest crisis it had ever seen. The planet was ravaged by war, addiction, terrorism, disease, and strive. It began with a global pandemic that affected over half the population. Society collapsed gradually, over a period of months, as the infection rates only grew, businesses lost solvency, suicide rates soared, and crippling fear overtook the populace.

In the end, tired of waiting for the final fall, people flooded the streets. There was fighting in the streets of almost every city across the world, and within days, society was two steps beyond the brink of collapse. Thousands of years of historical records were lost in those times, as was much knowledge. It was during these times that an international coalition of scientists worked together, furiously searching for a solution to the problem, or an escape. Their names have been lost to history, but these brave men and women developed two vital technologies: quantum travel that enabled approaching the speed of light without time dilation, and rapid terraforming technology that would function at the atomic level.

Using this technology, and funded by a few independent billionaires who saw the writing on the wall, they undertook expeditionary missions, first establishing a base on the moon, and then reaching out to Mars. From there, other regions of the solar system saw expeditions, and the scientific coalition grew, gathering colonizers from hand-picked representatives of humanity and establishing outposts on many areas of the system, even stretching as far as the moons of Jupiter.

Unfortunately, as these hand-picked representatives of humanity left the world, what was left were those without the knowledge, skills, or morality to hold up, and this expedited the collapse of society. Before long, Earth became a savage war zone with humanity degenerating to a state of near-barbarism. Meanwhile, the knowledge of the scientists was scattered among the many colonies of the solar system, which gradually generated their own cultures and barriers.

Much history and technology was lost, all while vast technological advancements in travel, communication, and the like were uncovered. What knowledge remains of human history is "common knowledge" and of surface-level at best; humanity remembers that Ancient Egypt, Rome, Greece and the like existed, but conflates mythology with fact. They remember there were World Wars, but the events of these wars are often confused and mixed up.

Humanity can build repulsor-lift vehicles and starfaring technology, can rearrange the makeup of moons and planets at

the sub-atomic level, but much of the technology to build a basic motor car has been forgotten. As such, the technological and cultural knowledge of humanity is a bizarre mish-mash of lost artifacts with high-end future tech.

Eventually, some semblance of order was restored, but so much had been lost…

THE COLONIES OF HUMANITY

A large portion of Humanity has escaped the war and degradation of the planet Earth by colonizing the Solar System. Each of these colonies has its own culture, its own system of government, and its own ideals and way of life, but all are bound by ironclad treaties of mutual respect and defense. Each colony is bound to provide its own military, which forms a part of the Solar Defense Forces, coming together to defend humanity against any threats.

The mutual interests of the Colonies are overseen by a corporate-style Board made up of elected officials from each Colony, which meets regularly to discuss the current state of affairs, work to maintain equity between the Colonies, and generally resolve disputes. The Board meets on rotating colonies, so each gets a chance to host on a regular basis.

EARTH

Earth, the homeworld of humanity, is barely aware that planetary travel is possible. For many, simply eking out a daily existence is a challenge. In many ways, the socio-political-economic uprisings of several centuries earlier led to a societal collapse and an utter dystopian society. World governments rapidly lost power along with the confidence of the people. Meanwhile, corporations grew ever more powerful, slowly taking control over the void left by the impotent world powers.

Today, the corporations all but run the world, while the streets are like a barely-contained anarchy. Police are almost fully militarized and entirely privatized, run by the corporations. Their efforts to keep the peace are brutal and all-too-often, final. They act as judges, jury, and when necessary, executioners with little oversight or restriction.

Few small businesses exist, and those that do are constant targets of gangs, organized crime, and corporate bullying. Success in one of these businesses means barely being able to keep a roof over one's head and food on the table. That being said, work for one of the corporations isn't much better, with the threat of "downsizing" constantly looming.

Criminal syndicates run the streets and back alleys, dealing in everything from human trafficking to drugs, racketeering, and contraband on the black market. Some of the highest living individuals are corporate espionage teams who work to sabotage and undermine other corporations. The level of technology on Earth itself is "day after tomorrow" level tech: cybernetics exist, wireless networks are ubiquitous and people pay a premium to get lost in highly addictive virtual reality gaming and forget their everyday lives. The drug problem is worse than

ever, and computer hackers use augmented and virtual reality to navigate the Range, the colloquial name for the current iteration of the World Wide Web and corporate intranets. The Range is as anarchic as the outer world, with no oversight and no cybersecurity firms working to combat terrorism. In many ways it's as though the Dark Web took over the World Wide Web. Anything can be found, few people can be traced by the authorities, but everyone is the target of hackers and malware.

Virtual reality is the primary means by which people access the Range, with each person creating a custom avatar. The majority of people are equipped with a cyberjack which allows them to plug their brains directly into the Range; these jacks are provided at no cost by the corporations as a "Bread and Circuses" approach to controlling the populace, one which the masses have embraced wholeheartedly.

Many people have become addicted to the experience, and hundreds of thousands have died from logging on and simply failing to logout to eat and drink. It is easy to lose time within the Range, which is why dedicated Jackers (the modern name for computer hackers) always have auto-disconnect alarms that either forcibly pull them out or at least, let them know when it's time to jack out.

To deal with the problem of rising rates of Range Death, the corporations have offered a typically corporate solution: they have begun selling technology that allows for the conversion of human waste into processable nutrients, which are then delivered to the wearer intravenously. When the waste can no longer be recycled (usually after several days), the user is forcibly removed and reminded to consume more solid food. They can then jack in again. This ensures that the person who logs in won't die from forgetting to eat or drink, and thus die of starvation or thirst.

These people have become colloquially known as Range Zombies, and they can be seen plugged into wall outlets in alleyways, homeless and destitute, staring catatonic into space, their muscles all but atrophied save for moving about to find food and water every few days (usually at a corporate-sponsored food processing bank) and utterly uncaring.

Small-scale regional nuclear exchanges have occurred, some deliberately and some accidentally, some between nations trying to reassert power over corporations, some between corporations. As such, there are swaths of the world in former conflict hot spots that are currently uninhabitable from fallout. While most of the world remains functional, these exchanges have wrought massive changes on a climatarian scale, with sea levels up by tens of feet, many former coastal areas underwater, and global temperatures up. Cancer levels, as well, are off the scale as the entire planet has been bombarded with radioactivity, which has seen negative genetic effects on much of the populace.

The last nuclear strikes were over 50 years ago and everyone seems to have learned their lesson since then, but the damage has been done. Today, corporate espionage is conducted by surgical strike teams and dedicated Jackers who engage in stealing secrets, destroying projects in development, and kidnapping or outright murdering line developers and CEOs.

Many feel that if you have the talent and skill to pull off being a member of a freelance corporate strike team, that's the real way to live in relative comfort. Still, it's a life of constant danger and threat.

Earth is not a good place to be, but for most people, it's simply the reality of day to day life. It has become the very definition of the haves and have-nots, with nothing in between.

Perhaps the closest anyone gets to peace are those who live in the wilderness, off of the "grid." These people live a pioneer-style life, hunting, fishing, and farming to make ends meet. They are also, however, always at risk from roving bands of bikers and gangs looking to raid for what they need, and even the most peaceful of farmers conduct occasional raids of their own, infiltrating cities or attacking gangs to steal things like power cells, ammunition, and even food and entertainment.

The Knights of William St. John

The only group that exists on both the Earth and throughout the colonies is a group whose legacy dates back literally thousands of years, into the long-lost mists of Earth's history. This group, the Knights of William St. John, are descended from the original Brotherhood of William St. John (see **Amazing Adventures** and the **Brotherhood of William St. John** sourcebook) and are dedicated to the same mission as ever: exploration and standing up for truth and justice in the face of encroaching darkness.

On Earth, the Knights monitor humanity and look for ways to subtly guide it back to some semblance of true civilization, but understand that it's a daunting task at best. They fight against corporate corruption and bullying, always keeping their existence a complete secret. One of their most formidable agents on Earth is the cybernetic private investigator, Dan Davenport. It is Davenport's mission to track activities on Earth and stay in touch with the greater group on the Colonies. Davenport has an emergency means of egress to Luna, in case things get too hot on Earth. Thus far he has not needed to use it.

On the colonies, the Knights hold a more open identity, forming part of an elite unit among the Colonial Defense Forces. Led by Commander Miranda O'Malley with her Decti wingman and fiancée Clental, they have racked up more successful missions in the Solar-Jalex War (see below) than any other squadron. They have also discovered recently that an age-old enemy of the Knights has resurfaced: The ancient Order of the Black Dragon, led by Doctor Serpent.

The Dragons have allied with the Jalex and seek to overthrow the colonies, then stretch their hands out to Earth. It is possible that the Order has its current roots within the Earthbound corporate ecology, and Miranda's greatest fear is that they will reveal the existence of the colonies to the corporations, potentially setting off the most devastating conflict the Solar system has ever seen.

Luna

The moon was the first colony, of sorts, established by the scientific conglomerate that sought to escape the dystopian world that the Earth had become. Somehow, they managed to pull off the feat, with the help of a few billionaire futurists who saw the writing on the wall, and even more miraculously, kept their technology out of the hands of the corporate ecology and warlike world governments.

The Luna colony is small, and the people who have lived there for several years aren't capable of returning to earth, because their muscles and bones have adapted to the lower gravity of the moon. It's also contained in a number of biodomes, which increase the energy of the sun while filtering out excess UV rays to create a relatively temperate means of existence, where plants grow and life is simple, egalitarian, and focused on being the technological epicenter of solar travel. Most of the records of the first scientific expeditions are kept here, which makes the moon the most important power base among the colonies. Being at the relative center of the colonies, it's also well-defended.

Mars

Mars was the first true colony established using the quantum terraforming technology, and by any metric, it has been a success. The availability of water both at the poles and beneath the surface allowed for the re-creation of a true atmosphere and oceans, and it in many ways looks like a second earth. Transmutation of elements within the planet, while its size remained constant, have increased its mass to near that of Earth, so most colonists here can easily, if they choose, move between earth and the colony without much trouble.

Along with Venus (see below), Mars has become an archaeologist's paradise, as the remains of ancient civilizations, possibly millions of years old, have been found beneath the surface of the planet, and there are ongoing efforts to decode the ruins left behind and learn about the strange race that once lived here, a race that, by all indications, was somewhat technologically advanced, but never achieved space travel.

Venus

The second planet terraformed by colonists, Venus represented both a great success among colonists, and one of the greatest archaeological mysteries ever discovered. Venus had all of the necessary components to offer an ideal Earth-like setting, but had fallen victim to two cataclysmic events in its history: something "flipped" the planet on its axis, causing it to rotate in the opposite direction of other planets, and a runaway greenhouse effect that utterly destroyed its ecosystem. Due to one, both, or neither of these situations, the planet also lost its magnetosphere.

None of these were insurmountable when quantum mechanics were applied, and within a generation, Venus was once again completely habitable, with an atmosphere, Earth-like seasons and temperatures, oceans, continents, and the like.

What was astonishing to scientists, once we were able to land on Venus, was the leftover signs of massive planetary habitation to the tune of billions of people. There were apparently a multitude of different intelligent species sharing this world, living together both in harmony and in war. Though long cast to

ruin, the remains of this ancient world (thought to be millions of years gone) are still scattered across the world to be unearthed, studied, and puzzled out.

Though the inhabitants seemed to have technology bordering on Renaissance-era at best, they also seemed to have individuals who could access the quantum realm to produce astounding effects thought of by the population as magic. In this ancient world, actual sorcery was their version of science, and theories exist that there was "bleed through" between this world and Earth, leading to many of Earth's ancient myths and legends. Work to interpret their languages is in its barest stages, but the closest linguists can come so far is that the planet's inhabitants referred to their world as "Aihrde."

Even more miraculous have been the discovery of several large "gateways," gigantic brass rings surrounded with runic inscriptions. At first the function of these gateways was uncertain, though they were discovered to be in remarkably good condition, compared to the rest of the remains, and appeared to give off low levels of EM-band radiation.

Eventually, one of these "Rings of Brass" was accidentally activated by a researcher, who was pulled through, to end up outside of a similar ring…in the rainforests of South America. Current theory is that these rings could be used to travel almost anywhere once the secret to their control is determined, but that if there was not a second ring on the other side, such travel would be one-way. Research to capture this technology is actively ongoing.

The original Ring on Venus was temporarily lost after the re-emergence of the Order of Yig, an ancient criminal sect led by a mysterious figure named Doctor Serpent. The Order sold out to the Jalex for reasons as yet unknown and aided them to infiltrate deeply into the Solar system. They managed to take out the entire archaeological team investigating the ruins of Aihrde on Venus, and set up an operation to study the Ring of Brass themselves.

Eventually, the Knights of William St. John discovered the Jalex infiltration, and after a vicious battle above the planet, Captain Miranda O'Malley and her wingman and fiancée, Commander Clental, took down the operation with impossible help from a past member of the Brotherhood of William St. John who traveled through the Ring of Brass. They buried the entire operation, and the Jalex infiltration was eventually rooted out and Venus reclaimed. Work to excavate the ruins and recover the Ring has just begun.

Ceres

The Ceres colony is largely a mining colony whose sole responsibility is to farm and mine the Asteroid Belt for resources, which are then shipped to all of the other colonies. It has by and large become massively successful, and while it could put a stranglehold on resources necessary to life in the Solar System, it doesn't, as the inhabitants of this colony are largely dependent on others for things like agriculture, art, and entertainment. While the Ceres biodomes (similar to those on

the moon) could sustain agricultural activities, the colonists are so focused on mining that no agricultural efforts have been undertaken.

Io, Europa, Ganymede, and Callisto: The Galilean Colonies

The four largest moons of Jupiter have been terraformed in a very similar way to Mars, increasing their mass, while still keeping them balanced so that their orbit of Jupiter is not compromised. They are colloquially referred to as the Galilean Colonies, after the name for the group of former moons they inhabit.

The story of the Galilean Colonies is also the story of a completely altered Solar system. The first step taken, after decades of study regarding the potential effects on life throughout the system, was to use quantum physics to ignite the core of Jupiter and establish a constant fusion reaction. In short, Jupiter was turned into a small star, so that now, most planets in the Solar system see two stars in the sky when they look up. The ignition of Jupiter doubtless contributed to the ecological runaway on Earth, but the colonies determined that humanity would survive on its homeworld, and were somewhat disdainful of the way society had collapsed, so they truthfully considered such negative effects acceptable to the overall prosperity of the species.

Because of Jupiter's ignition, Mars, too, has benefitted from a much more Earth-like climate. Further, the gravitational pull of the new star drew a veritable storm of asteroids from the Asteroid Belt to strike its various moons, increasing their size and mass until the four largest grew to near the size of Mars. These increased-mass moons were then subjected to quantum terraforming and reclassified as planets. When they had stabilized, colonization began.

Today, these colonies host three billion souls overall; they thrive and are a center of arts, culture, and manufacture for future-tech that will hopefully lead humanity beyond the Solar system, as well as being major centers of manufacture for weapons of war and the Solar Defense Forces. In almost every way that counts, they are the new center of human society.

These four colonies have formed a confederation of sorts, sharing resources and communications, and being governed by a representative parliament formed of elected officials from each colony, who come together once per standard Solar Year (which is still 365 days, to provide a common frame of reference among all colonies) to address any issues of governance needed. Other colonies have worried that this alliance could overshadow that agreed upon by all colonies, but as yet it has not become an issue.

Indeed, they have recently offered olive branches to the other colonies, from Venus to Titan, and suggested the creation of a formal Confederation and shared government—essentially, offering these planets the opportunity to add their own representatives to the parliament, and act as one system-wide government, which would learn from the mistakes of Earth, and be forward-facing, looking towards exploring the universe at large. While this system-wide government has not yet become formalized, with the recent war against the Decti, and the

ongoing war against the Jalex, it is looking likely to be ratified and become reality.

Titan

The farthest colony from Earth is on Saturn's moon of Titan. Unfortunately, the small size of this moons as compared to the planetary colonies means humans from this colony suffer the same issues as those on the Luna colony—they cannot visit worlds with higher mass or gravity without suffering serious penalties to their strength, and even eventual death, as they have adapted to the lower gravity of their colony world.

It is also a military giant, as the outermost line of defense against invaders. The natural resources provided by the gas giant Saturn offer a wealth of elements that are essential to building and powering spacecraft, as well as providing heat and other resources to various planetary worlds.

As such, the populace of Titan have evolved a sort of warrior culture where honor and "face" are highly prized. They have adopted a sort of clan structure, where intelligence, physical prowess, and wisdom are equally prized, and family units mean a great deal.

If one combines ancient Norse culture with that of the Plains cultures of ancient Native Americans, and adds elements of the Samurai, this is what Titan's culture looks like to the outsider. It's one of complex social mores and strata, where victory and success equate to upward mobility, and the only things looked down upon are laziness and sloth. They are highly advanced in their production of weapons, and provide some of the best warriors in the Solar Defense Forces.

Fortunately for the rest of the Colonies, they respect humanity above all else, which has held them back from moving against any of the others; they take great pride in their role as caretakers of humanity, though they do tend to look down on less militant societies. They also tend to have a powerful bigotry against alien species, which has caused problems in the tentative and tenuous relations between humanity and the Decti, who are also a warlike culture that value honor and bravery above all else.

THE DECTI-HUMAN WARS

About fifty years before the campaign begins, the Solar system saw its first major threat from an alien species known as the Decti. The Decti are travelers with interstellar transport capabilities, able to traverse vast spaces at faster-than-light speeds through their quantum jump drive capabilities.

The war between humanity and the Decti was long and brutal, and humanity was very nearly subjugated by this species, who simply "appeared" one day in the middle of the Solar system, and unleashed an attack on humankind. At first, humanity had no idea what the reason for this attack was, or what brought these invaders to the Solar system, it later became clear that the Decti, intergalactic explorers who were fleeing from their own devastated star system, had detected the detonation of Jupiter, and thought that the human race was creating weapons of mass

destruction. Viewing humanity as an imminent threat (as well as offering a wealth of resources that the Decti could claim), they attacked in a pre-emptive strike.

The war was devastating to both species and lasted for twenty five standard years, with humanity advancing its military technology by leaps and bounds after the brutal first strike from the Decti, which decimated the outer colonies. Over the ensuing two-and-a-half decades, battles went back and forth, with technologies being developed and wiped out, generations being lost, and deep-seeded hatred of one another seething and growing hotter with each passing year.

Eventually, it was the Decti who called a halt to the conflict, even as they were beginning to press further into the Solar system. This occurred because Decti agents, having infiltrated human colonies with a strategy of destroying humanity from within, learned of the history of humanity, the reasons for detonating Jupiter, and their colonization efforts. The Decti saw in humanity a species at a turning point, who could either achieve true greatness from the tragedy of societal collapse on their homeworld, or the same sort of barbarism that destroyed the Decti's own system.

One day, the entire Decti fleet materialized around Titan—a culture they had come to greatly respect for their bravery in war—and sued for peace, offering a formal apology, assistance in rebuilding the human colonies, and restitution in the form of guidance in developing new technologies and resources. All they asked in return was license to establish their own colonies, and mingle with humanity as co-habitants of the Solar system.

Titan reached out to the Galilean Colonies, who sent representatives to discuss the proposal. Knowing that humanity could not survive a prolonged conflict, the colonies accepted the offer, and ever since, have lived side by side. It has only been two decades since the war ended, and bitterness, resentment, and bigotry still exist on both sides, but humanity and the Decti are slowly building a joint society, which may form the beginnings of a galactic federation, if it succeeds.

THE DECTI

The Decti are a roughly humanoid race who may have begun, millions of years ago, very similar to humans. Over the years, however, a movement took root in Decti society which if it occurred on Earth would be referred to as transhumanism. The Decti began to practice cybernetic augmentation, genetic manipulation, and bioengineering to "force" evolution. Because of this, they have become a society that "grows" biotechnology, which forms the basis of all of their advancements, from weaponry to star travel and beyond.

Unfortunately, the Decti became so obsessed with becoming "more," that they forgot to focus on the basics. They allowed their planet, and eventually their entire star system, to be stripped of all of its resources, they lost the ability for agriculture and food farming, and even caused their own star to nova. They were forced to flee their star system, taking with them all of the advanced biotechnology they had developed.

Upon fleeing their system in a number of vast fleets, the entire Decti civilization met in deep space to discuss their next step. Some factions were militant and insisted that they should continue their ways; after all, what were resources for but to be exploited, and there was a vast galaxy out there to exploit. They could take what they wanted, and move on. Another faction, which comprised the majority, advocated changing their ways, finding a new system to establish colonies, and starting over, seeking a balance between transmogrifying their species and building a sustainable society.

A brief civil war broke out then, with the militant faction seeking to seize control. Eventually, they were driven off to parts unknown, to continue their ravaging ways and splitting off from their race. This militant faction has never been heard from since, but the Decti secretly fear the day their prodigal children return.

It was the supposedly peaceful Decti faction that went to war with the Solar colonies, however, having misinterpreted the detonation of Jupiter as a threat to surrounding systems and the act of a violent and militant race. Upon realizing their mistake after a long and costly war, they made peace with humanity and since have sought to guide the human colonies as they look to the future.

Decti Technology

Even Decti ships are grown from biomass, and then augmented with practical technology. In a very real way, Decti vessels and weapons are cyborgs. They are powered by bio-energy that the vessels themselves generate, while feeding on stellar winds. They use bio-electric capacitors to absorb energy, which is unleashed in devastating particle beam blasts, and can generate explosive pulses which generate controlled singularities that destroy everything in a given range, before collapsing in upon themselves.

This does not mean that Decti have all of their weapons and technology built in. They still do recognize the utility of being separate from some of their equipment; as such, they use handheld scanners and weaponry, which still functions as biotech and interfaces with their biology. In game terms, these weapons work exactly the same as particle beam weapons (see **Chapter Two**) which unleash a charge of bio-energy; instead of batteries, they simply run out of charge, which the weapon then must regenerate over time (if a weapon runs out of charges, it takes 1d12 rounds to recharge). "Built-in" weapons that form a part of the Decti can be purchased as part of the gadgeteer class' power points using their Bio-Technology racial ability.

THE JALEX-SOLAR WAR

About two standard Solar years ago, another threat emerged on the scene. The Jalex, an insectoid species who travel the galaxy as conquerors and subjugators, also had detected the detonation of Jupiter and sent spies to observe. They monitored the entire Decti-Human conflict, and waited for the outcome to end, intent on easily conquering the survivors and forcing them into servitude under their empire.

When the war ended, surprisingly, with the Decti suing for peace, the Jalex stood back to see what would happen. Ten years after the armistice, they became satisfied that the alliance not only would bear fruit and not fall apart as they'd hoped, but could potentially become a threat to their intended galactic dominance. They began to draw up plans for invasion.

Now, less than 20 years after the end of the Earth-Decti War, the Jalex have arrived and unleashed a brutal invasion of the Solar system, with no quarter asked nor given, and the colonies, still in the throes of recovery from their last war, are forced into another galactic conflict. This time, however, they have powerful allies at their side.

This is the situation in which the player characters currently find themselves: they are representatives of one or more colonies (human or Decti), fighting for their very survival against a brutal enemy bent on nothing less than their complete subjugation. On Earth, the populace continues to exist in misery, unaware of the conflict in the skies above, while the colonies desperately race to come up with new ways to combat this enemy which attacks in swarms of suicidal glee and seems to have no end of soldiers with which to overrun the colonies.

New Technologies

Fortunately, the close, if strained, collaboration between Decti scientists and human engineers have produced powerful new weapons of war. As humans are unable to operate Decti starships, and Decti have been unable to operate human starships, a hybrid version of starfighter has been developed which has become the standard superiority fighter of the Human-Decti Alliance forces in the war. These fighters are called *Cha-kûl* class fighters, after a Decti term that roughly translates into "Peace through War." They are built for sleek maneuverability, speed, and brutal weaponry.

Cha-kûl Class fighters have the following statistics.

Decti/Jalex Starships

Vehicle	Dex	Con	Men	Spd	MR	Cr	Mx	Al	AC	DR	HP	Weapons
Starfighter	+6	+3	+3	35 (+8)	1	125	550	100	17	10	100	(2) Bioelectric cannons (3d10+3/A) (2) Singularity Cannons (10d6; 5 shots each)*
Freighter	+4	+3	+2	30 (+7)	2	100	500	75	16	10	150	(2) Bioelectric cannons (2d10+5/A)
Capital Ship	-3	+9	+6	15 (+1)	4	50	500	20	18	15	250	(60) Bioelectric cannons (3d10+3/A) 20) Singularity cannons (10d6; 10 shots each)

**Damage to 200-meter radius; ignores damage reduction; Ship con save for half damage)

Vehicle	Dex	Con	Men	Spd	MR	Cr	Mx	Al	AC	DR	HP	Weapons
Cha-kûl Starfighter	+7	+4	+5	37 (+9)	1	150	570	150	20	15	110	(2) Bioelectric cannons (3d10+3/A) Quantum Missiles (5d10+2); 6 shots total (2) Singularity Cannons (10d6)* Advanced controls, optics and targeting**

*Damage to 50-meter radius. Each fighter may only fire its Singularity Cannon once. After firing, the fighter must succeed at a DC 18 Constitution save (with +3 proficiency bonus added) or lose power for 3 (1d6) rounds. On a miss, the target suffers half damage and may save for 1/4 damage. On a natural 1, the cannon fails to go off, but the shot is still expended as normal, including the need for the fighter to make a save to avoid losing power.

**Roll 1d6; on a result of 6, The pilot can add both their dexterity and the fighter's dexterity bonuses to all piloting rolls for the round and add the ship's Men bonus as well as the pilot's own attribute bonuses to all attacks.

THE JALEX

The Jalex are an insectoid species of conquerors, who ravage the galaxy seeking to extend their control as far as they possibly can. So vast is the Jalex empire, in fact, that no one even knows where their original homeworld is, or what their means of government is. They make vague references to a Divine Leader, or a God-Queen, who communicates telepathically with the entire hive. They are both connected to one another by a psychic net, enabling them to act perfectly in concert, but still have individual personalities and can act independently as they desire.

What makes the Jalex even more of a threat is that they treat subjugated races as resources to be exploited; they strip planets dry, and use their subjects as both food, and as birthing pods for their young, laying hundreds of eggs in a living body, which hatch in mere days, devouring their host when they do. These eggs grow to adulthood within weeks, educated continuously by the shared knowledge of the hive mind.

Jalex Technology and Tactics

Jalex technology is roughly equivalent to that of the Decti, and their ships use the same statistics, though it is not biological in nature, and they tend to overwhelm their opponents with numbers. Instead of singularity generators, they use nuclear bombs which deal the same damage to the same radius, but do not ignore DR. Always assume that for every human or Decti ship in a conflict, there are at least two Jalex.

Further, Jalex always act in perfect concert and coordination. They should seem to have an eerie grasp on strategy and tactics, and always have an answer to whatever the heroes devise, forcing them to think outside the box and creatively to get out of any given situation. This is a factor of their hive mind, a psychic net that connects all Jalex to one another at all times. If this psychic net could somehow be

Jalex FTL technology makes use of wormhole generators, and they must access jump gates which they construct in space in order to travel great distances—otherwise, the trip is always one-way. This is why it took them decades to arrive in the Solar system, though they are currently building jump gates outside of Pluto that will allow them to freely travel to our region of the galaxy from their other holdings. Jalex also possess holo-emitters and are bio-adaptive, meaning they make for perfect spies and infiltrators. They are as insidious as they are overtly threatening.

STORIES IN SOLAR BURN

The *Solar Burn* setting offers a wide variety of options for stories to tell, depending on what kind of game the GM wishes to run. Let's look at a few different approaches to such a campaign.

Earth-Based Cyberpunk

The world of Earth in the setting is very much a classic cyberpunk setting. Characters could be engaged in corporate espionage between megacorporations, they could portray members of street gangs, or even a vigilante group whose purpose is to defend the innocent from the corrupt.

Working the greater aspects of the setting could come into play as the PCs hear rumors of off-world colonies and a secret consortium of scientists that abandoned humanity to its fate. A corporation might employ the PCs to steal information, plans, or technology that turns out to enable interplanetary travel. They might also, in their misadventures, encounter one of the Rings of Brass and find themselves on Venus.

They might also run afoul of Jalex agents seeking to undermine Earth itself while creating a base of operations to destroy the colonies, and thus find out about what's going on in the Solar system, or even meet a stranded Decti in need of help getting off-world before they are discovered. The possibilities for a Cyberpunk game that still has an effect on the greater picture are endless.

The Classic War Story

The PCs are a part of the Solar Alliance military, standing against the Jalex invaders. This campaign could take any number of forms, and could involve rousing space battles, planetary strike force encounters, liberating or conquering outposts, or any number of other missions. War stories are big on action, drama and pathos. They should be full of great victories, crushing defeats, and the very personal pain of loss. Work to build up character relationships and interactions, and give a PC the spotlight of having a beloved companion die in their arms. Put them in situations that seem insurmountable, take away their resources, and let them use their mind and wits to escape, while still finding victory over an horrific enemy.

War stories need to juxtapose over-the-top heroics with stark horror and deep emotion. Consider the heroes landing in an enemy zone to unleash a ground assault, but as soon as the doors open, their allies' heads explode as an enemy who was supposed to be nowhere near the landing zone unleashes on their ships. The fight to take the landing zone is a brutal, bloody grind with explosions all around and barely surviving.

The PCs then have to fight their way through injury, loss of resources, tired, desperate, injured, and hungry, all to take one zone that may or may not be strategically important. In the midst of this, one lone child is crying, holding onto the hand of her dead parent, while explosions land around her. Can she be saved? What happens with her if the characters do save her? Each step forward can seem like it leads to two steps back, but somewhere in there, a pyrrhic victory occurs, and that means the world. One victory leads to another. Characters die, and new ones arrive on the scene. Strategies rise and fall, and slowly, one step at a time, they make progress against an horrific enemy.

War stories can also vacillate between massive battles and small, intimate actions. The characters might form a fire team assigned to take out a very specific target, rescue a hostage or ally, or capture a town by taking out a warlord. They might be assigned to capture a traitor or rogue element in their own forces—a captain who has gone off the rails and is torturing and abusing prisoners, ignoring directives to the contrary. There are literally thousands of war movies you can watch that can easily be adapted to your game, both sci-fi war movies and historic war movies. In the end, what will make it science fiction is the trappings you choose to apply.

One example of a classic war story has the players "planet hopping" from place to place, fighting through the Jalex forces to try and uncover their strategies and greater motivations. Eventually, the Solar Alliance discovers that the Jalex are building the Jump Gate outside of Pluto, and the heroes must undertake a daring mission to destroy the gate, which of course is guarded by a devastating super-weapon, a fleet-killer that they have to find the weakness and destroy before they can get to the gate itself…

Espionage Adventures

War stories can also take a deeper, more interpersonal nature, as the heroes have to undertake espionage-style raids to undermine the Jalex. Such stories could involve the Jalex Fifth Column, which seeks to help the heroes by offering military secrets and technology. The characters could be the very ones who discover the plans to build the Jump Gate or superweapon, and they have to obtain the plans and smuggle them out so that the Alliance can undertake a mission. Perhaps they also uncover the Jalex agents that have infiltrated Earth, and they must return home to root out the threat, while keeping the secret of the colonies from the corporations that would exploit such technology to the detriment of humanity as a whole.

In fact, what if the Jalex are partnering with one or more corporations, presenting themselves as an ally and offering vast technology and the prospect of exploiting the entire galaxy, in exchange for the opportunity to take down the human colonies from within? The PCs have to undermine this alliance, before it not only takes down the Alliance, but before the Jalex turn on their corporate ally dupes, and take over all of humanity.

Another espionage scenario involves the heroes entering a Jalex colony ship to hopefully rescue human colonists which have been kidnapped and are being used either as food or incubators. Can they get the colonists out in time, and worse, can the Jalex eggs be removed safely, without destroying the innocent victims into which they've been implanted?

Extraterrestrial Archaeology

Colonists on Mars and Venus have unearthed the remains of ancient civilizations, with the one on Venus in particular being enticing due to the presence of the Rings of Brass. For more on the Rings of Brass, see the **Castles & Crusades Codex of Aihrde**, which may also give some insight into the kinds of ruins and ancient civilizations that the colonists find. What if the PCs are scientists researching one of the Rings, or archaeologists delving into the ancient civilizations and they stumble across a threat that after millions of years, is now awakening to unleash a brand new threat on the galaxy?

Alternately, what happens if they actually work out how to use, control, and build Rings of Brass? This could allow for near instantaneous travel to anywhere in the multiverse, which would give the Alliance a distinct advantage against the Jalex, but which could also be potentially captured and exploited by the Jalex, or by human or Decti agents who have unsavory interests, possibly tied to the corporations on Earth, or by other factions among the Alliance seeking to take advantage of a delicate situation to extend their own influence or power base.

These remains found on Mars and Venus are alien, and the GM should never forget that. That means that any number of secrets could be unveiled there, which could open the door to greater capabilities among humankind (psychic powers, even magic), or a darker take, unlocking the doors to the Deeper Dark, where ancient entities of unfathomable power and sanity-blasting horror awake. What happens when the PCs unlock an ancient vault deep in the heart of Mars, only to discover that the stars are right, and something even worse than the Jalex is about to come forth…?

Finally, what if the Rings of Brass or another means of technology allows humanity and their Decti allies to take the fight to the Jalex? What if they can finally attack the Jalex homeworld itself, and defeat a galactic empire that has been a blight on the entire galaxy? In this story, humanity enters the Galaxtic community as heroic saviors and liberators, alongside their Decti allies, and witnesses the birth of a true Galactic Confederation of Systems from a desperate final gambit to survive.

Survival Horror

Survival horror stories are also very possible in the setting of *Solar Burn.* As war ravages the solar system, the PCs can become trapped and separated from support and help in any number of ways. Perhaps they are on a mission to deliver aid to or investigate loss of contact with a remote mining outpost in the Asteroid Belt, and they are shot down or otherwise crash, only to find the miners decimated by an unknown horror. As they try to discover where the colonists went, or what happened to them, while racing to repair their ship or get word to the Alliance, they discover that the Jalex have brought in a new weapon: a creature that is fast, deadly, and always hungry. A creature with horrific natural weapons which functions as an apex predator among the Jalex which even terrifies that species, but now has been unleashed upon humanity.

What if, in the course of their struggle to survive, they discover that human corporate interests are responsible for the creature being brought here. What if they encounter a lone Jalex, who may have been responsible for the creature's transport, but who now represents their only real hope of survival, and who is eager to defect to the Alliance…if they can get it out alive and safely.

Into the Future...

What happens if the Alliance discovers the means to conduct interstellar travel? Perhaps the Decti have this capability, but for whatever reason it is entirely incompatible with human biology, so humanity has been working to find their own means of generating a jump or warp drive. At some point in your campaign, they do, in fact, uncover the technology. Do they flee the colonies to seek solace elsewhere, or do they use the technology to win the war, and then seek to expand humanity's influence to the stars, exploring unknown new worlds, making first contact with new civilizations, and…you know how the rest of that goes.

Alternately, what if the Decti suddenly vanish, leaving behind only a token military force in support, and no information about where they went, or why? The PCs are left to struggle in the absence of their tentative allies. Perhaps the Decti have gone for reinforcements; after all, they have other branches of their own civilization out there. Perhaps they've gone to prepare a new colony to which they intend to guide humanity, hidden from the Jalex. Perhaps they have simply decided to abandon humanity to its fate.

What if the children of the Decti return? What are they like? Do they still call themselves Decti, or have they adopted an entirely different name to go with their purely warlike culture. They could be allied with the Jalex, a purely warlike offshoot of the Decti race. They might be temporary allies, of the opinion that nobody gets to destroy the Decti but them. They could form a third faction in the war, which takes on an entirely new tenor. Finally, they could be contrite, seeking to reunify with their parents, and they discover a desperate situation, flying in as saviors to give the Alliance a last, fighting chance for survival against this overwhelming foe.

These are just a few of the potential stories you can run in a *Solar Burn* campaign. The details of the colonies are left vague to allow you to flesh them out as you like, to build your own societies, drama, and interactions among the human, Decti, and Jalex forces, while providing for a galaxy of adventures.

THE KNIGHTS OF WILLIAM ST. JOHN

The Knights of William St. John are an elite force working for the colonies. They are neither formally part of the colonial armed forces, nor entirely separate from it, but they are 100% loyal to the human-Decti alliance. As an organization, they are the direct descendants of the Brotherhood of William St. John, as presented in the **Amazing Adventures** core rulebook, the **Amazing Adventures Companion,** and the forthcoming **Brotherhood of William St. John** sourcebook.

The Order of the Black Dragon, too, as presented in those books, has resurfaced, complete with Doctor Serpent. The Dragons have sold out to the Jalex in a bid to sell human technology to their enemies and spread their nefarious influence throughout the galaxy. The statistics for Doctor Serpent remain largely as they are presented in the **Amazing Adventures Companion,** though the Doctor may have one or more cybernetic enhancements in this era.

The major players in the Knights in **Solar Burn** are Commander Miranda O'Malley, Captain Clental (her Decti second-

in-command and fiancée), and Dan Davenport, a Private Investigator and spy who lives on Earth and reports to the Knights the status of events there. It's a foregone conclusion that there are other members of the Knights, and membership in this organization could well become a plot point for player characters, giving them a mission and a support line in their exploits.

For more about the Brotherhood of William St. John, its history and exploits, see the **Amazing Adventures** core rulebook and **Amazing Adventures Companion,** as well as the forthcoming **Brotherhood of William St. John** sourcebook.

Captain Miranda O'Malley

I do this because I have to, because it's in my legacy. There are hundreds—maybe even thousands—of years of the Knights of William St. John behind me, and my own lineage, I understand it, goes right back to William St. John himself, the gods only know how many years ago. When the wars devastated the Earth, when we had to once again crawl out of the primordial ooze and re-establish ourselves, we lost a lot of history and nobody really remembers Earth that Was. The Knights have records, of course, but the time stamps are all messed up. So I know what happened, but not how long ago it was, and nothing of the Dark Times when everything went black.

Now I'm among the leaders of the Colonies, those that left that blasted husk of a shithole planet behind to start over and save humanity. I have agents back on Earth, of course, keeping an eye on things, but one day we hope to elevate everyone above that and reach further into the stars.

First, though, there's the Jalex to deal with, and now that bastard Doctor Serpent, returned after so many years, thrown in the lot of his Black Dragons with the enemy. Yeah, things went great for awhile and now they're all going to pot. But that's what we do, and as long as I've got Clental, everything will work out.

Name: Capt. Miranda O'Malley

Class/Level: Raider* 5

Alignment: NG

Abilities: Str 9 Dex 16 Con 9 Int 16 Wis 15 Cha 16

Primes: Dex, Int, Wis

AC: 17

Costume Description: Flight suit, light ballistic vest, armored jacket

Hit Dice: 5d10

Hit Points: 41

Class abilities: Ace* cryptolinguist, legend lore, traps, resist elements, two-fisted*, weapon finesse*

Fate Points: 9d8

Backgrounds*: Military, Academic

Languages / Knowledges*: English, Decti, Jalex, German

Traits*: Aggressive, Reckless

Gear: Heavy blaster, data pad, handheld scanner, emergency survival kit, communicator, vibro knife

Appearance: Classical beauty with chiseled features, slender and lithe build, wavy shoulder-length light brown hair tied back at the neck, piercing gray eyes.

Commander Clental

Humans confound me even after years of working side-by-side with them. They are illogical; they attack when they should withdraw and run when they should attack. They are ingenious, but so very shortsighted. Yet they fascinate me. I find myself drawn to them, and

even have fallen deeply for my Commander, Miranda, whom I have chosen and accepted as my life-mate. We will be the first interspecies pairing between human and Decti, and it's a strong step towards cementing the relations between our species.

Still, we first must defeat the Jalex and restore peace to the system. Then, perhaps, we can complete work on the jump gates that will enable us to explore and colonize further. The discovery of the brass ring on Venus will be a big step in this direction, but it has also elevated the stakes of the war.

Still, the Jalex are naught but a plague, feeding on the life of the galaxy. They have no honor. We have fellowship, we have honor, and we have strategy. We shall win the day.

Name: Cmdr. Clental

Class/Level: Gadgeteer 5

Alignment: CG

Abilities: Str 12 Dex 16 Con 14 Int 18 Wis 15 Cha 8

Primes: Constitution, Wisdom

AC: 17

Costume Description: Flight suit, gloves, boots

Hit Dice: 5d8+5

Hit Points: 28

Racial Abilities: Twilight Vision, Bio-Technology

Class abilities: Gadgets (Self-created), On the Fly Gadgets, Jury Rig

Gadget Points: 7+7+2+3+3+4 (26 total; 7 from Decti; spent 22, banked 4)

Fate Points: 8d8

Backgrounds*: Military

Languages / Knowledges*:

Traits*: Abrasive, Detached

Gadgets: Nanite healing (1d8+1; can use 3x/day), Arm-mounted lightning gun (3d6; range 100 ft; unlimited use), Scanner (Life signs, radiation), chameleon (invisibility; 1/day)

Gear: Heavy blaster, data pad, handheld scanner, emergency survival kit, communicator, vibro knife

Appearance: Blue-gray skin, sharp amphibious features, smooth skin with slime coating

Dan Davenport

The name's Davenport. I solve problems.

For a price, that is. A fella's gotta keep a roof over his head, and

upkeep on these cybernetic bits ain't cheap. Neither is livin' outside of the corps. Keep the wetwork, though. I'm a P.I., not a hitman.

And the thing about us gumshoes? We're good at keepin' secrets. And the one I got's a doozy.

See, I'm not yer average shamus. I got me a gig with the Knights of William St. John. Haven't heard of 'em? There's a reason for that. We're pretty much the last hope for this sad excuse for a planet. We know about the off-world colonies the Big Brains set up out there all quiet-like. I could ditch this joint and go up there, too... but my job's down here dirtside, makin' sure the corps don't learn how to manage that little trick.

One of these days, I'll be done with this job. Maybe settle down on my own little corner of Venus or Mars.

That day ain't today.

Name: Dan Davenport

Class/Level: Gumshoe 5

Alignment: CG

Abilities: Str 13 Dex 14 Con 10 Int 15 Wis 16 Cha 13

Primes: Dex, Int, Wis

AC: 15

Costume Description: Trenchcoat, rumpled 2-pc. Suit, black gloves, loose tie, fedora

Hit Dice: 5d8

Hit Points: 23

Class abilities: Climb, Cat and Mouse, Hide, Move Silently, Gadget / Powered (Sacrificed Face in the Crowd), Precision Shot.

Fate Points: 10

Backgrounds*: Mean Streets

Languages / Knowledges*: English, Jalex, Decti, Chinese

Traits*: Detached, Plucky

Gear: Cybernetic Eye allows scanning life signs to detect illness, lies, etc., for 10 minutes (Wisdom check required to gain information) or to gain Darkvision for 30 minutes. Each minute he uses detect subtracts 3 minutes from Darkvision. After use, the eye requires 8 hours to recharge. Also has handheld scanner/tablet computer, interplanetary communicator, pulse pistol (2d8 force damage; ROF 3; Acc +2, Rec -3), lockpicks (electronic and manual)

Appearance: Soft-featured, bald, with a trusting, friendly face that fits into just about any crowd. Wears a very typical P.I. outfit—trench coat, 2-pc. rumpled suit, gloves, fedora.

STARSIEGE 84

APPENDIX: THE STARSHIP WARDEN IN STARSIEGE
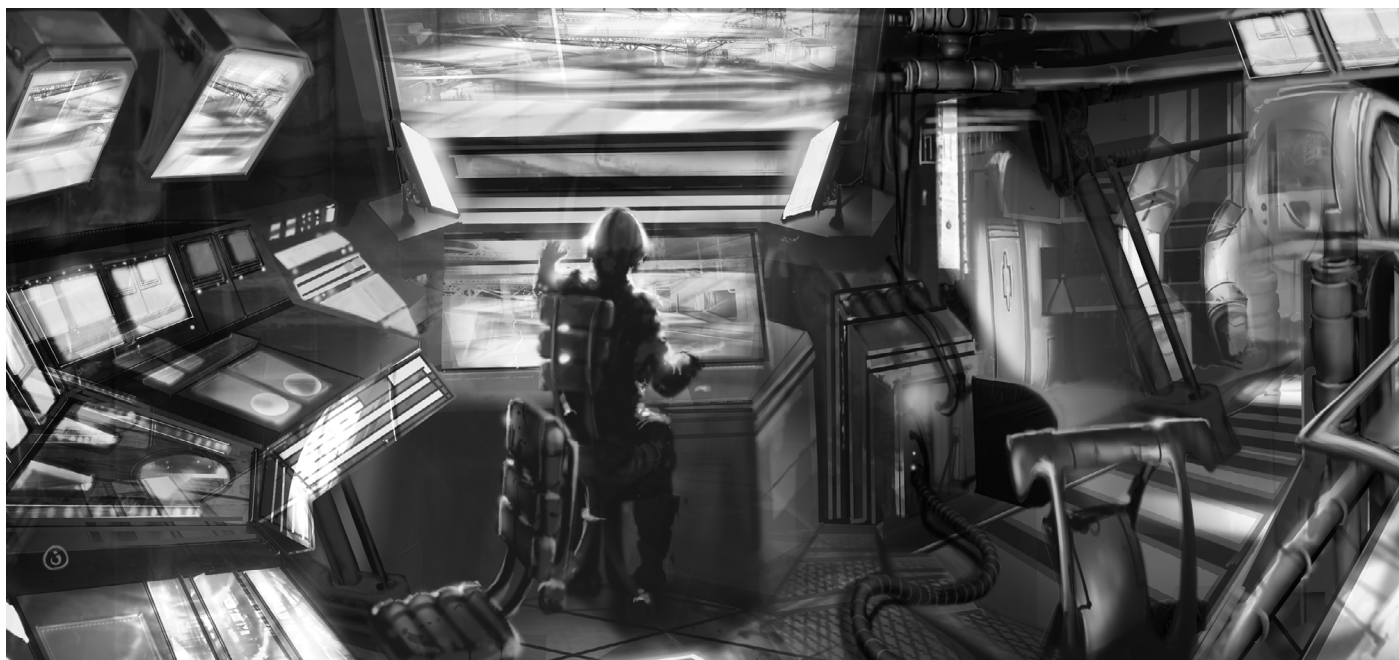
INTRODUCTION

The publication of the SIEGE Engine version of James M. Ward's **Starship Warden** is a landmark for Troll Lord Games. The Starship was the setting for the very first science fiction role playing game ever published, entitled **Metamorphosis Alpha,** and having it join the Troll Lord Games multiverse is an exciting development indeed. Naturally, it's an obvious pairing to match it up with **Amazing Adventures** and **StarSIEGE,** and this appendix is an effort to do exactly that.

What Is the Starship Warden?

The Starship Warden was a colony and exploration ship that spans miles in length, the size of a city unto itself, and launched sometime in the 24th Century. At some point in time as it traveled, a disaster happened, destroying over 90% of the crew and passengers, and leaving the ship functional, but irradiated and adrift in space. The ship is a treasure trove of danger, technology, monsters, mutants, aliens, and thrills.

In many ways, it is very much a dungeon crawl in space, a sci-fi version of the archetypal megadungeon.

It's also a natural and easy fit with StarSIEGE and the Solar Burn campaign setting herein. Let's break down how to handle rules variants, work the starship into your campaign, and some adventure hooks to make it happen.

What If I'm not Using Solar Burn?

There's no rule that says you have to play in Solar Burn. It's simply the sample setting included herein, which made it logical to attach the Warden to it. If you're not playing in that campaign setting, there are plenty of adventure hooks and ideas in the **Starship Warden** book to bring the ship into any campaign you

like. Some of the adventure hooks posted below may even work with a broad range of campaign settings.

Even if you're not using Solar Burn, however, this appendix has a great deal of utility. You can, for example, look at the rules adaptations herein, as understanding how they fit with the SIEGE Engine, **Amazing Adventures,** and **StarSIEGE** may well be very useful for your game.

RULES OF PLAY

Starship Warden provides an overview of the SIEGE Engine rules, but is designed by and large to be a self-contained work. As such, there are a few clarifications that need to be addressed to use it with other SIEGE engine works like **StarSIEGE.** First things first: when using **SW** with **Amazing Adventures StarSIEGE,** any time the rules presented there conflict with those in **AA,** the **Amazing Adventures** rules take precedence

Certain issues have been glossed over (for reasons of brevity) in the **SW** rules. These include:

Prime Attributes

Humans have 3 Prime Attributes. One is designated by their character class, while the other two are freely chosen. Non-humans, including mutants and aliens, have 2 Prime Attributes, one chosen by their class and the other chosen freely.

Ranged Combat

SW provides basic rules for ranged combat. **Amazing Adventures** and **StarSIEGE** have expanded rules for firearms that include rate of fire, accuracy, and recoil and allow for multiple shots to be made with firearms. It's recommended that these rules be adopted.

The weapons listed in Appendix C of **Starship Warden** do not include ROF, Acc, or Rec scores. GMs (or Starship Keepers, in the parlance of that book) will need to add these scores. There are three ways to do this. First, you can compare the weapons therein to the firearms charts in the core **Amazing Adventures** rulebook, the **Amazing Adventures Companion,** or right here in **StarSIEGE** and apply whatever ratings you feel most closely match the weapons in **Starship Warden.** Second, we provide some basic ratings for light, medium, and heavy pistols and rifles here which you can apply as needed.

Finally, you can simply use the sci-fi weapons right here in this book, which may be the easiest way to handle the issue and indeed may be recommended. If nothing else, the weapons on board the Warden are obscenely powerful, with laser pistols that dole out 10d6 damage on a shot. Using the weapons herein or applying the statistics below would significantly reduce the power level of the weapons on board, and make for a far more survivable expedition by your crew.

On the other hand, leaving the weapons on board the Warden as powerful as they are makes the setting truly threatening and terrifying—your players will legitimately be afraid to dive wholesale into battle when they know they could suffer 60 points of damage in a single shot from a security bot aboard the Warden, and they may (properly) seek other options to resolve their exploration goals.

Such an approach also makes the technology aboard the Warden more attractive to salvage teams looking to provide their side with an edge in the Jalex-Solar War. In the end, it's left to you as the Game Master to determine the level of lethality and threat you want the Warden to represent.

Pistols

Light: Rof 3, Acc +3, Rec -1, Damage 1d8

Medium: Rof 3, Acc +2, Rec -2, Damage 1d10

Heavy: Rof 3, Acc +1, Rec -3, Damage 2d6

Rifles:

Light: ROF 3 (Semi-auto) 3/A (fully auto) or 1 (breach, bolt, or pump), Acc +4, Rec -3, Damage 1d10

Medium: ROF 3 (Semi-auto) 3/A (fully auto) or 1 (breach, bolt, or pump), Acc +4, Rec -4, Damage 2d8

Heavy: 1 or A (heavy machineguns), Acc +5 (sniper models) or 0 (machineguns), Rec n/a, Damage 3d8

Black Powder Weapons

Black powder weapons are significantly different in **SW** than in **AA.** It is recommended to use the rules for black powder weapons in the **Amazing Adventures Companion,** though if you do not possess that work, the statistics in **SW** will serve your game just fine.

For more on firearms in **Amazing Adventures** see the core rulebook, and in Chapter 3 of this work.

Turning Undead

SW includes a section on turning undead to address the use of Clerics and Paladins from fantasy settings like **Castles & Crusades.** If you include such characters, these rules are fine. For turning undead without these classes, there is a *Turn Undead* spell in **Amazing Adventures** which is accessible by Arcanists and Occultists (and which could be used to build a "positive energy gun" or the like by a gadgeteer.

Vision

Starship Warden includes new types of vision: Infra-red vision and Ultra-violet vision. It's left to the GM whether to add these to the existing duskvision, darkvision, etc. of **Amazing Adventures** and the SIEGE Engine in general.

Other Conversions and Additions

Starship Warden lists a number of other conversions and additions, such as mental combat, radiation, variant poison rules, mutations, tech levels, and weapon classes which aren't a normal part of **Amazing Adventures** or the existing SIEGE Engine products. These have been converted from the originally **Metamorphosis Alpha** rules that drove the **Starship Warden** in its original incarnation, to work with the SIEGE Engine.

Most of these require rolling on tables and matrices to some degree. It's left to the GM to determine which of these to incorporate into their games, and how. Many can add a wonderful additional level of play, but can also increase bookkeeping and complexity to varying degrees.

At very least, they can serve as a point of reference for GMs to make judgments on how such issues can fit into their game.

Mutations and Primes

It should be noted that if a human character gains a mutation during play, this does not rob them of one of their Primes. If, however, a character wishes to begin play as a mutant, they should gain, say, 1d4 mutations, and in exchange they gain only 2 Primes exactly as a nonhuman character would.

Game Masters who wish a more mechanical means of introducing mutations, particularly those which impart special powers, can consult the **Amazing Adventures Book of Powers**, which has a comprehensive power system for your game.

THE STARSHIP WARDEN IN SOLAR BURN

Introducing the Starship Warden into your **Solar Burn** campaign can bring a high level of excitement and drama to the campaign. The Starship itself was built, according to the text, in the 24th Century, which puts it roughly 300 years past our modern day. The world of Solar Burn is set an indeterminate number of years beyond that. The book has an extensive section on the "science" behind the workings of the Starship—most of which are largely compatible with the theories and ideas presented herein.

Much of the technology presented in Solar Burn functions on the idea of quantum technology. The reason this is done is that we know very little at this point in time about the theoretical physics of the quantum universe, but we know that it doesn't follow the laws of physics as we know it and that near-magical effects can be accomplished (theoretically) through quantum physics.

This fits seamlessly into the idea of the Starships "graviton" particle. This particle could easily be drawn from the quantum world and harnessed to create the gravity drives on the ship. It can also very easily be a lost form of tech that was widely used in the 24th century, then lost in the wars, pandemics, and disasters that followed on Earth a few hundred years ago. This might actually be a better option, as it makes the Starship completely alien to the humans, Jalex, and Decti of Solar Burn. They won't know what this ship is or how it works, as it's old, lost technology that has been completely replaced by new and different developments.

A third possibility is that the Jalex and/or Decti understand graviton particles and may be surprised to discover that Earth once had this technology.

Other forms of technology discussed in the book—plasma, cryogenics, nanotech, cloning, etc., are all perfectly compatible with that which exists in Solar Burn.

Introducing New Aliens

As the Starship Warden book states, both mutants and aliens exist on the Warden. Humans have already encountered two alien species—the Jalex and the Decti—so we know we are not alone in the universe. Other aliens aboard the Warden could easily form a gateway to introduce new species into the galaxy and even the conflict. Will they side with the Human-Decti Alliance or the Jalex? Or will they form a third, wildcard faction in the war?

Several other alien species—the Grays, the Crab-Men, and the People of the Worm—all can be found in the **Amazing Adventures Manual of Monsters**, and could be species aboard the Warden, or could be introduced in other ways at the option of the GM. **Amazing Adventures** assumes that these species have been on Earth at least since the 1940s and potentially as far back as Ancient Egypt, so it's possible they've all been present all along.

What Killed the Warden?

Part and parcel of the adventure and mystery that encompasses the Starship Warden is what killed the crew? The book never answers this question and instead posits that it should be left to you to determine for your game. This opens up huge doors for a Solar Burn campaign. What if the disaster that killed the crew has also at some point in time visited the Jalex and/or Decti? They may wish to harness its power, or get rid of the ship altogether lest the same disaster strike the Solar System. We know that the Decti were the victims of an apocalyptic disaster at some point in their own history—it's not a far stretch to tie it to the little piles of white powder aboard the Warden.

Like the authors of that book we're not going to definitively answer the question for you here, but the key idea here is that after hundreds of years being gone, the Warden suddenly shows up again with 99% of those on board reduced to little piles of white powder. What happened to them, and is it a threat to the entire system? Is it an impending apocalypse that could force an end to the war and require the Humans, Decti, and Jalex to work together, or will it drive a wedge further between the participants of the war?

Arrival of the Warden

The first thing to address in using the Warden with Solar Burn is to bring it into the picture. The key to doing this is the use of artifacts that have existed ever since the very beginning of **Castles & Crusades,** and even before then, as far back as the very origins of the world of Aihrde itself: the Rings of Brass.

Venus and Aihrde

One key event has recently occurred in the war, which has made the inner planet of Venus a major staging point: the discovery of the remains of an impossibly ancient civilization there, one which was destroyed millions upon millions of years ago and somehow survived all those thousands of millennia of acid rain and clouds, leaving buildings, writings, and even artifacts behind.

These ruins are the remains of the world of Aihrde, which once housed a thriving civilization of magic and wonder, of elves and dwarves, gods, dragons and monsters. That civilization died out ages upon ages past when its own moon fell out of orbit and smashed into he world, flipping the planet on its axis and killing billions. After this, the shift in the planet caused a runaway greenhouse effect that choked out the remaining population.

In one of these ancient ruins, the human-Decti Alliance have uncovered a device known as a Ring of Brass. For many millions of years the Rings of Brass served to those who could control them as gateways throughout time and space. They exist spread across both Venus/Aihrde and Earth as well as Mars, which also once housed a vast civilization. Their secrets and even their existence, however, have been lost for centuries and have only recently been rediscovered with the discovery of the Ring on Venus.

The Rings and Jump Gate Technology

The Ring was first discovered by traitorous humans working for an ancient criminal empire known as the Order of the Black Dragon. Their efforts to activate and control the ring were thwarted by the Knights of William St. John—Miranda O'Malley and Clental, with help from other incarnations of the Brotherhood throughout the ages. A look at how this happened can be found in the introductory fiction of this work.

Now the ruins and their ring are under the nominal control of the Alliance, but the Black Dragon have sold out to the Jalex, who are obsessed with capturing the Ring, which could give them the ability to rebuild or even improve upon the Jump Gates which would allow them to call in reinforcements.

Creating Jump Drives

The race has been on ever since its discovery to use the power of the Ring to create jump gates that would allow interstellar and potentially even intergalactic transport. Expeditions have also been sent to uncover other Rings on Earth (no one is aware of the ones on Mars just yet).

As for the Ring found on Venus, it has been buried, but excavations are underway in hopes that it is still intact. The ancient writings in alien alphabets of the ruins are still being deciphered and studied, but one word has been uncovered in relation to the Rings: Trottigen. This word has been mistakenly believed to be the energy that powers the Rings—in reality it's the name for the ancient race of giants who first excavated the dimensional tunnels that the rings access, once known as the root-tunnels of the World Tree.

For more on the Trottigen and the Rings of Brass on Aihrde/Venus, see Troll Lord Games' **The Codex of Aihrde.**

In truth, the quantum realm is one of vast, snaking tunnels that allow those who know how to traverse them to access the whole of space and time. The secrets to truly unlock these tunnels and travel throughout time and instantly to other worlds and dimensions have been lost to the mists of history, save for happy (or fatal) accidents every once in a great while. Still, it is not beyond the intellect of sapient species to learn how to use these tunnels to travel throughout the known universe, effectively exceeding the speed of light, while remaining in one's own relative time.

In the end, then, the key to using these ancient magical devices which scientifically tap into the quantum realm, is to create miniature Rings of Brass within the engines of ships. This would result in Trottigen drives, allowing the ships to access and traverse the Quantum Root Tunnels of the ancients and travel to distant planets and galaxies, making trips that would once have taken years in just weeks. Other options currently in development are Void Drives that create black holes through which to transport vessels, but all experimentation with these so far has been disastrous.

Another form of dark energy that has been discovered deep in the heart of Venus, trickling through the Rings of Brass, is the Umbra, which seems to be connected to some infinite well of darkness. Fans of the Aihrde cosmology will know that the Umbra is related to the disembodied consciousness of Unklar, though this hasn't been uncovered yet by the denizens of the Solar Burn setting. All they realize now is that the dark energy of the Umbra could potentially be harnessed for vast power, but it seems to get weaker the further away from Venus one gets.

So how does all of this tie into the Starship Warden?

The Warden Returns Home

Somewhere floating deep in space, on the farthest reaches of the Solar System and undiscovered by Jalex, Decti, or humans, a gargantuan Ring of Brass impossibly floats, anchored by unknown means. Its origins are impossible to fathom, completely unknown and lost to history. Who built it? There's no evidence that the Venusian civilization ever had space travel, and yet, somehow, it's there. As with the other Rings, this Ring has sat cold and inactive for eons beyond count.

One day recently, perhaps as a consequence of activating the Ring on Venus, this Ring sprang to life, just for a moment, and when it faded once again, there was the Starship Warden. The Warden itself, not possessed of FTL drives, hurtled through space at sub-light speeds, but had been spewed forth at great velocity, and without gravity to act upon it, it eventually found its way back into the system proper.

This set off another aspect of the war—the Jalex and the Alliance were curious as to this new invader. The Jalex first moved to fire upon the Warden, but its external defenses kicked in, destroying several squadrons of Jalex fighters in the process. It was later discovered that so long as no hostile actions were taken against the ship, it was possible to approach and even dock with it. As mentioned on page 5 of the **Starship Warden** book, entry points to the Warden can be found on Decks 1, 8, 9, and 17. Expeditions have been sent to explore the ship at several of these points by both the Alliance and the Jalex, all seeking to uncover the secrets of this mysterious vessel.

Thus, the Starship Warden joins your game set in the Solar Burn campaign setting.

Adventure Hooks

Any number of the adventure types listed in the Solar Burn setting could work with the Starship Warden. Here's a few ideas.

- **Survival horror**: the heroes are trapped in a room with insane security droids closing in. To make matters worse, a slow leak in the hull is gradually draining the air out of the section and depressurizing the area. The heroes have to overcome the droids, escape, and get back to their ship.
- **Hunters hunted**: the heroes run across a superior force of Jalex explorers and are now on the run. Can they find equipment, allies, or solutions to overcome their foes and escape with their lives?
- **Battle lines drawn**: the Solar Alliance has taken a portion of the ship and the Jalex another. Battle lines are drawn as the war rages anew within the Warden, complicated by the other denizens of the ship.
- **An edge in the war**: A former expedition radioed in about having found a serious piece of technology that might change the entire face of the war, but then something horrible happened. The last broadcast that was heard was screaming, followed by, "don't let them get it!" What is the technology, and what happened to the last expedition? Was it the Jalex, or something sinister within the Warden?
- **Records of Earth that Was**: The Warden is a potential treasure trove of information, records, documentation, and technology from centuries ago which has been lost due to the wars and apocalyptic events that wiped out great swaths of history. Perhaps the Warden is even the

answer to what happened all those years ago. The heroes are sent in to find out.

- **Mutants and aliens ascendant**: The Warden opens, and ships emerge from it, carrying mutants, aliens, and humans recently arisen from slumber. What secrets do they carry, and are they friend or foe?
- **Earth finds out**: Somehow or another, the megacorps on Earth are able to discover the Warden's return—perhaps it sends out an automated signal to its home base—and through that, they discover the existence of the Solar Colonies. What happens when they decide to build their own ships and investigate the situation?
- **Another apocalypse**: The Warden hurtles through space, completely out of control, and is set to collide with Earth. The resulting blast would be apocalyptic in scale and it's questionable whether Earth could survive another disaster on that level. Can the heroes stop it, and if not, what happens when it hits Earth? An earth-bound campaign could see the Earth miraculously surviving the crash with little damage as the Warden impacts in a very remote area, but the megacorps send teams out in droves to stake their claim on the potential new source of power and technology. And what happens to the denizens of the Warden after the crash?
- **Basic research and exploration**: The simplest adventure hook for the Warden combines all of the above on some level. The heroes are a fire and archaeological team sent in to explore the Warden, figure out what it is, where it's from, and bring back anything of value they find. Of course, the Jalex are doing the same thing…

AFTERWORD

There you have it! The first look into our new approach to science fiction gaming with the SIEGE Engine. We have greatly expanded the character customization options for **Amazing Adventures** and tried to show how this toolkit game can really be used, with a little outside-the-box thinking, to manage a game in just about any genre you like, including the many varied sub-genres of science fiction. Whether you're looking to run high-flying space opera, sword-and-planet fantasy romance, hard-boiled cyberpunk noir, or purely science-based adventures with colony ships and the laws of robotics, this game can handle the job.

We are hoping that in the not-too-distant future, we'll be able to present even more expansive sourcebooks and resources for gaming in a wide variety of genres from post-apocalyptic to steampunk, horror and beyond, but this book that originally came about in celebration of our A-MAY-Zing Adventures month is kicking things off as a sort of gift to the fans, who have been waiting for the return of StarSIEGE. As this, and other genre books, continue development, we hope to bring you an entire world of action, excitement and adventure. Stay tuned for swashbuckling renaissance adventure, gritty hardboiled noir, wild (and weird) West, post-apocalyptic adventures in a wasteland of devastation, horror (cosmic, survival, gothic), and even more. We are looking forward to big plans, but it all depends on you. Keep spreading the word, and above all, go! Play!

—Jason Vey, May 2019

OGL

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Beyond the next horizon lies the unchartered future where science and fiction merge, a line beyond which lies a stellar wilderness defined by our own imagination.

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