

MURDER ON THE ETHER EXPRESS



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Murder on the Ether Express

by Kieran Turley

The RMS Aetheria is the flagship of the Cunard Line's new class of inter-planetary ships. While other shipping lines focus on size, the Cunard Line has set its sights on those who want to travel at speed in comfort and style. Billed as one of the fastest ships in the system, the newspapers have dubbed it the Ether Express!

One of the Line's principal investors, Montague Harrington-Hyde, has turned the shake-down voyage into an exclusive party for his friends, business associates, and family.

The only problem is that someone on board is a murderer ...

Chapter 1

Background

The player characters find themselves aboard the RMS *Aetheria*, flagship of the Cunard Line's new class of luxury liners, and supposedly the fastest passenger ether ship ever built. (But the White Star's *Princess Alexandra* might challenge this claim...) Wealthy aristocrat *Montague Harrington-Hyde* used his influence with the Cunard Line to hold a party on the shake-down cruise and fill the vessel with people he hopes he can scam out of their fortunes. Harrington-Hyde is a fraudster who has spent decades swindling money from the aristocracy while maintaining a façade of wealth and nobility. But one can only hide behind codes of silence for so long, and a small cadre of determined lawmen from a dozen countries now close in on him, determined that he will pay for his crimes.

Harrington-Hyde is the initiating force behind this adventure and the eponymous murder victim. Montague Harrington-Hyde (Monty to his "friends") has two goals on this trip: firstly, he wants to squeeze more money out of his former victims so he can set himself up in a new life, and secondly, he wants to find a wealthy husband for his daughter so that he can use this to his advantage later. The fact that he discovers his daughter to be pregnant during the early part of the trip makes this second goal his top priority.

Note that this is not yet the *Aetheria*'s maiden voyage, but instead a shake-down cruise intended to check for faults and possible issues before it makes its glorious debut in a few months. As such, the ship isn't quite up to spec and you may describe minor imperfections or decoration that isn't 100% complete. Harrington-Hyde plays up these deficiencies, claiming that guests are "truly the first on board this mechanical marvel" or that they "are living life on the solar frontier". You can use this lack of finishing as an excuse to give away additional clues if your players are floundering. Examples of possible clues include bits of clothing caught on nails, half-glimpsed faces through missing panels, or conversations heard through unsealed pipe-works. The Line also intends to use this cruise as a speed test so that they can confidently claim the title of "fastest passenger-post ship" on its maiden voyage. For this reason, there is pressure on the captain to make sure the ship runs at its best speed for most of the voyage, and any delays will put him and the crew under significant stress. You can use this as another reason why the player characters have to hurry their investigation along.

Getting the Player Characters Involved

Character Recommendations

Nations: Any; should have no open (and known) enmity to the British Empire.

Player Characters: Any; Celebrities, Engineers, Moneymen, and Reporters fit perfectly, low-life Criminals and Survivors less so.

The player characters can be on board the *Aetheria* for any number of reasons, but they should either have a strong interest in crime-solving, or be invited on board with the express reason of keeping an eye on this unusual situation. This will allow the adventure to run more smoothly and allow the GM to focus on the multiple NPCs they will need to work with to make the scenario come alive. You can come up with your own reason for the PCs to be involved or choose from one of the following options:

- The player characters are guests of the Cunard Line; the Line doesn't trust Montague Harrington-Hyde's intentions and doesn't want the ship to get a bad reputation before it even starts out.
- The player characters are on their way to Mars for their own reasons and managed to get tickets either as a gift from a friend or from someone they are going to visit on Mars. This might work well with other adventures set on Mars like **London Bridge Has Fallen Down**, where the player characters' employer may pay their way.
- One of the NPCs on board might ask the player characters to join them using their spare tickets intended for a family member that has fallen ill or is otherwise indisposed.
- Wealthy player characters might get an invitation from Harrington-Hyde himself as he sees them as prime targets for a new scam or perhaps as a potential match for his daughter.
- Wealthy player characters might own a small stake in the Cunard Line and therefore might get complimentary tickets.
- The player characters might be contacted by the Harland and Wolff shipyard in Belfast and asked to keep an eye on the

shake-down cruise, either because they suspect a possible Fenian saboteur or because one of the player characters is a renowned engineer that the shipyard wants to impress. The shipyard is still somewhat responsible for the vessel until it is formally handed over at the end of the shake-down cruise.

- The player characters are asked by a friend in the judiciary or the police to keep an eye on Monty and to make sure that he doesn't go into hiding on Mars somewhere beyond their reach.

Plot overview

The adventure starts in media res with the player characters boarding the *Aetheria* at the Harland and Wolff "blueport" situated on the coast near Belfast in Northern Ireland. Of course, if you wish, you can have any number of encounters arranged for the player characters on the way there, either to keep more combat-oriented players entertained or to introduce some of the NPCs in advance. The ship's destination is the Martian state of Tossia, known for its complex relationship with the British Empire. Tossia enjoys excellent diplomatic relations with the United States government and has so far rejected political arrangements from other Earth nations for fear of putting their connections with the Americans in peril. The British Empire has been working for years to secure formal ties with the Tossians and negotiations are at a delicate point. Any player character with knowledge of politics or membership in an upper-class club knows about this, and that all things related to Tossia must be treated with the utmost care and diplomacy.

Rail journeys from Dublin, the most common port of entry, or steamship journeys from other locations can provide you with opportunities to flesh out NPCs or perhaps paint a picture of the tense political situation that exists in Ireland. The Fenians push for self-rule for Ireland using the barrel of a gun, committing acts of sabotage and assassination in an attempt to force the British crown to relinquish control. It has only been six years since Irish nationalists assassinated the Chief Secretary for Ireland, Lord Frederick Cavendish, and the murder is fresh in everyone's mind.

The month-long journey to Mars consists of an endless stream of distractions created by the ship's staff to keep the passengers entertained and happy. Meals are served at the usual times with smaller meals available at any time by passenger request. Walks along the vessel's extensive Promenade and time in the arboretum help to break the monotony, while a games room, library, and gymnasium offer all the modern entertainments. During this time the player characters get to know their fellow passengers

and probably get the feeling that Harrington-Hyde isn't the jolly old uncle he paints himself to be. The player characters should form friendships and make enemies; all of which the GM should use later in the adventure to add drama and tension to the murder and its aftermath.

At some point after the "Crossing the Line" event, a few hours before they reach Mars, the ship crew suffer from a terrible sickness which turns out to be sabotage intended as a distraction: a group of Fenians attempts to get to the ship's weapons locker and take over. Presuming that the player characters manage to stop the Fenians, they then discover that Harrington-Hyde has been murdered during the commotion.

The player characters, at the captain's behest or on their own initiative, investigate the murder and uncover a web of deception and suffering woven by Monty over the course of his long career. They eventually draw close to the murderer after many dead ends and red herrings, only to find them unconscious and their cabin ransacked by another passenger. The player characters can track this second would-be killer down and decide what they want to do about them and the stash of blackmail material they hold. By the end of the voyage, the player characters may have found a killer, saved a Martian ambassador from a lynch mob, recovered many highly-sensitive documents, and made several useful contacts.

Timeline of Events

- The player characters arrive at the Belfast Blueport and get to interact with the crew and passengers, forming some initial impressions.
- The player characters get to know the other passengers a little better with a few minor encounters and events chosen by the GM to suit the group.
- The Crossing the Line party gives the player characters and NPCs a chance to interact in a less formal and more fun way.
- More time passes. A day or so before the ship is due in Tossia, the Fenians strike, sabotaging the ship and attempting a takeover.
- During the chaos of the piracy attempt, Montague Harrington-Hyde is murdered.
- The player characters must investigate the murder and unravel the mess of confusing clues, including a potentially politically delicate situation with the Martian ambassador.
- Once the player characters determine the murderer (or earlier if they are unable to figure out the clues), they find them almost dead and must hunt down a second would-be killer.
- Final resolution of events: the killer is caught and the others vindicated.



Chapter 2

Arrival and Encounters at Port

The Belfast Blueport is Harland and Wolff's dock for their line of spacefaring ships. The dock is named for the azure glass used in the terminal building's windows, and is also a play on the phrase "wild blue yonder". The *Aetheria* is an impressive sight, falling a few feet short of the White Star Line's *Princess Alexandra* (by agreement with the shipyard who didn't want to annoy their best customer overly much) and following a similar design, but squeezing additional space in terms of width and height. The main terminal building dominates the local landscape, its sapphire-stained windows and copper fittings gleaming in the sunlight.

The area surrounding the *Aetheria* is a hive of activity with last minute checks going on, cargo being loaded, passengers being welcomed, and well-wishers looking on. A small orchestra plays a selection of jaunty tunes and relaxing melodies. There is a carnival atmosphere about the place and, despite a small security presence, it is shockingly easy to move around without being stopped and questioned. Horse-drawn carts carrying produce vie for space next to the carriages and barouches of the wealthy. Dozens of lines, either tethering cables or hoses pumping in water and air, make walking around the ship a perilous affair.

Depending on how you choose to get the players involved, they might be arriving on their own or in company. They might be seen off by agents of the police or the shipping line, and may get an introduction to the captain beforehand if they are expected to act in an official capacity. If they are arriving as passengers (or at least pretending to be), they are welcomed aboard by the ship's Purser, George Jones, at the reception. He sends a steward or two to deal with their cabin baggage, and orders the porters to take any cargo to the hold. George is a friendly fellow but under quite a bit of pressure, welcoming everyone and trying not to make too much small talk. He is very attentive to any special requests the PCs have, and tries his best to service them. George also hands them a small booklet containing all the information they might need about their stay, such as ship's watches, arrival and departure times, unusual elements of space travel such as magnetic shoes, and similar notes.



Use these encounters to give insight into the other voyagers and crew. You can run any number of these encounters, choosing the ones that you think will most suit your group, and give them the necessary clues to use later in the adventure. A good way to do this is to let each of your PCs have a single short scene on their own so that they can have a little time in the spotlight.

Stowaway

One of the player characters, who states they are watching the crowd or who makes the highest Perception check, notices a young man sneaking on board the ship. He is Liam Hanrahan, a teenager from Galway who is on the run from some very nasty criminals. He hopes to make a fresh start on Mars. If the player characters confront him quietly, he begs them not to reveal his presence. Optionally, before the player characters can act, one of the NPCs might spot the boy, and you can use the NPC's reaction to highlight their personality. This is a good time to give the PCs insight into their fellow passengers. For example, Father Ryan is likely to beat the young man and chase him away; Harrington-Hyde is likely to call the guards and have him thrown out; Dr. Girard might let the boy on board with a wink (only to later use him in some ploy); and Edward Harrows might just grin and ignore the whole scene.

Thief

A player character of your choice talking to an NPC or just watching the crowd spots a thief. This can be a pickpocket or someone snatching one of the hundreds of pieces of luggage being moved around by the porters. If the player characters manage to stop the theft and recover the goods, they make a friend for the voyage. Choose an NPC that you would like the player characters to be friends with, and make them the victim. Obvious choices might be those NPCs not directly involved in the murders, such as Mr. Combos or Captain Hess. Someone like Miss Harrington-Hyde

might be a good option to draw her father's attention to the PCs and to highlight her personality. This might also have the effect of showing her connection to Baron Dupont as he is very solicitous of her following the theft. Harold Worthington MP might also make an interesting choice of victim here, introducing the politician early in the story.

Staff Conflict

This scene serves to highlight either a crew member or a guest. A PC comes across one of the guests arguing with a crew member. At your option, the player character can come in during or after the conflict. If the argument is just coming to a close, the guest storms off and the player character gets to talk to the crew member in the aftermath. This conversation might

involve the PC discovering some request made by the NPC, such as Mr. Harrows demanding a stateroom with better access to the Promenade, or Lady Miller wanting to see the lifeboats. If you choose to make the encounter happen mid-disagreement, then the guest is still arguing with the crew member when the PC arrives. This conflict could involve an actual physical altercation, such as Arthur Ardior beating on a porter who dropped a suitcase, or something to reveal more about the NPC involved, such as Colonel Whistpole recognizing Peter Scanlon from a newspaper article and shouting about getting the captain involved to have him removed from the crew. Another option might be to have Alice St. George arguing with the porters regarding a bag that has gone missing—this would be her laudanum stash that was stolen between the train station and the port.

Strange Activity

A player character spots someone acting strangely around the external portion of the ether screw. The person is clearly skulking about, trying not to be seen, and fiddling with the machinery. This is Andrew Philips, the chief engineer. Andrew is subconsciously trying not to be seen as he works to double-check the connections. PCs approaching stealthily might hear him mutter to himself lines like “disparate accretion of matter on the etheric resonance hub” or “the possibility of external tampering exists, how many turns did I make last time?”. When confronted, the slightly addled engineer introduces himself and apologizes for any worry caused. If asked about his babbling, he claims he didn’t sleep much last night, being concerned about the maiden flight, and excuses himself as quickly as possible. Anyone examining the point where Andrew worked spots small arcane markings in chalk; the engineer’s personal shorthand notation regarding the work he has done.

The Fenians

The player characters come across a crew member accusing Joyce, the ship’s chief cook, of being a Fenian. The belligerent Joyce retorts by asking them if they believe that all Irish are Fenians. The crew member is clearly a bigot, but Joyce repeatedly puts them in their place. If the player characters don’t intervene, Joyce’s Fenian allies step in and tell the offending crew member he’s being an ass and should walk away before they need to be carried away. If the player characters step in before this, Joyce thanks them for their assistance and shrugs off the verbal assault, claiming she’s used to fools who don’t know the difference between an accent and a philosophy. Joyce is quite chatty, asking the player characters what they are doing aboard and playing the “victim” card to try to see if they’ll be a threat to her planned takeover.

The Benz Patent-Motorwagen

Baron Dupont can be seen directing a crew of workers maneuvering a massive crate marked “Benz Patent-Motorwagen”. The slightest bump makes the Baron really agitated and he treats the crate like a mother hen treats her chicks. If asked about the contents, Baron Dupont states that it is one of the new motor carriages which he plans to bring to Mars to show off as a mechanical marvel.

Astute player characters might notice the air holes drilled in the crate, which the Baron explains as “necessary ventilation for

the engine, to prevent decay of the delicate parts”. Anyone with a basic knowledge of mechanics spots this lie. If confronted, Baron Dupont takes the PCs somewhere private and explains the nature of what he is transporting: he claims it is an African rhino, asking them to keep this quiet. He says that while Harrington-Hyde has agreed to the cargo, the crew are unaware of its exact nature. He refuses to allow the PCs access to the crate because of the “delicate balance” of drugs required to keep the animal sedated. Peering through the holes only reveals a large organic shape covered in a tarpaulin.

Unfortunate Meeting

Elderly Mrs. Abigail Whistpole is on her own, her husband distracted with their luggage, and requires some help getting on board. If the player characters help her, she is very grateful to them, marking them as fine individuals to other guests and inviting them to high tea in the lounge when the voyage gets underway. Mrs. Whistpole is a respected member of society even if her fortunes have dwindled of late, and the other ladies on board the ship listen to her opinion of the PCs. While they help Mrs. Whistpole, she encounters Miss Harrington-Hyde who greets the woman warmly while Mrs. Whistpole blanks her completely. If asked later, she explains to the player characters that the Harrington-Hydes are not her type of people. She refuses to elaborate on this statement, stating “there are things a lady doesn’t discuss”. Miss Harrington-Hyde seems truly hurt by this snub and backs off to talk with someone else.

Old Friends

Lady Miller and Baron Dupont bump into each other in the reception, shortly after the Baron’s cargo is safely stowed aboard. Lady Miller, ever the one to flaunt convention, throws her arms around the Baron, calling him by his first name (Henri), and clearly making him uncomfortable despite his obvious pleasure at seeing her. A perceptive PC may notice a jealous glare from Miss Harrington-Hyde. Later, the player characters may spot Miss Harrington-Hyde and Miss St. George speaking like old friends. They both attended the same finishing school but Alice had to leave before their final semester due to her untimely father’s death and lack of funds. Nobody at the school knew what happened except the headmistress, and so Cecilia has no idea of her friend’s shift in fortune. Alice harbors resentment towards Cecilia, and a student of human behavior might spot this in her outwardly pleasant demeanor.

A Familiar Face

Choose an NPC that the PCs would reasonably have had a working relationship with. This could be a crew member or a guest, depending on the PCs’ background and social standing. Choose someone the player characters might have good reason to know and share common interests with. If the PCs are adventurous aristocrats, Lady Miller might be an appropriate choice; if they are political movers and shakers, Harold Worthington should work out well. Alessandro Baldini or Edward Harrows could make a decent choice for those who like to enjoy themselves. You can use this NPC to impart information on other NPCs and of course to flesh out their own background.

Ambassador Harraxx Othotho of Tossia

The Tossian ambassador Harraxx Othotho arrives escorted by a company of British soldiers and a dozen or so secretaries and assistants. Though the Ambassador only brings two manservants with him, the rest of his entourage buzzes around him before the trip, making sure he has everything he needs. Any Martians among the PCs draw his immediate attention and he has a servant send an invitation for them to speak with him later that day. The Ambassador is very interested in other Martians' opinions of the humans. Othotho doesn't see Un'Nogo (see p. 27), who stays hidden initially. The player characters may spot Un'Nogo ducking out of sight when the Ambassador appears, with obvious fear in his eyes. Un'Nogo knows that Othotho could have him arrested for landing in Tossia, but he relaxes when he realizes the Ambassador doesn't recognize him. Othotho carries an unusual amount of very heavy baggage. You could have an NPC mention that the Ambassador is leaving the Tossian embassy under some cloud that has yet to be made public. In reality, Othotho planned to travel home later in the year but makes the trip early to visit a dying relative.

Encounters While Underway

After an initial settling in period, which includes formal meals and the passengers establishing a social pecking order, things settle down for the month-long voyage to Mars. The day to day monotony is broken by card games, meals, shuffleboard, a rather dry lecture by Ambassador Othotho on Tossian culture, regular walks, trips to the gymnasium, and special events in the games room. Monty uses this time to establish his credentials as a businessman and social mover and shaker, offering talks on his successful business ventures and the fresh possibilities to be found in exploiting the Martian economy and resources.

You should use this time to build up the relationships between the player characters and the NPCs. Romance, bickering, social climbing, and contact building should all help the PCs feel more at home on board ship and help them develop their backgrounds. Use the list of encounters below as a starting point but try to include your own encounters based on the player characters' reactions to existing NPCs. The encounters should serve to drop hints about the backgrounds of the NPCs and perhaps reveal their darker secrets. Use the time to build up some good red herrings before the investigation starts. The Crossing the Line party might prove particularly useful in breaking down social barriers between certain PCs and NPCs.

Meteor Shower

The *Aetheria* has the misfortune of encountering a meteor shower that strikes the ether propeller, causing a minor loss of power and blowing out some of the steam conduits. The damage is relatively minor but requires someone with technical skills to go outside the ship, determine the level of damage, and effect repairs. This is a chance for technical PCs to show off their skills. Medically trained PCs can help with the injured people (mostly crew), and those with good social and leadership skills can calm the nervous passengers. Performing any of these duties earns the PCs praise from the captain and the gratitude of everyone aboard. You can

have things get more serious by having the chief engineer and the doctor injured in the shower, thereby placing the player characters in the position of leading the repair and healing efforts. The event may throw a spotlight on some unusual comings and goings on board the ship; people who shouldn't know each other may be trapped together in rooms they shouldn't be in. Once the emergency passes, Harrington-Hyde and the captain put a spin on the meteor shower, emphasizing the strength of the hull, how a lesser ship might have been destroyed, and how heroic they all were.

Tapping in the Dark

Sounds from the sealed-off second-class deck attract the interest of the player characters. At the GM's option, investigating PCs can find one of the following: Miss Harrington-Hyde and Baron Dupont looking slightly disheveled; the Giles twins who found a secret way in; a tiny but vicious dinosaur accidentally brought on board with the Baron's cargo; or a broken steam pipe ready to explode if not repaired. The GM may wish to include something else here to suit their PCs' play style and interests.

Unexplained Attack

Use this encounter if you want to foreshadow the Fenian attack. One of the PCs finds the purser, George Jones, unconscious in a corridor. George didn't see who attacked him as he was struck from behind with something heavy. Padraig, the Fenian steward, attacked George and made a copy of his keys, pressing them into a clay block. If the player characters think to ask George, they might notice a scrap of clay or powder on the keys, which Padraig in his haste didn't wipe off. A difficulty 3 *Larceny* test successfully spots any residue and identifies its nature.

Gossip

With very little to do except talk, it is inevitable that gossip becomes a major source of entertainment among those on board. Truly interesting information isn't just handed out however, as the aristocratic code of silence keeps people from revealing too much. A player character must spend time gaining someone's confidence before they reveal what they know. Explain this to the players of the more socially gifted PCs, and let them try to build relationships to find out more about their fellow guests and crew. Choose a piece of information about one of the NPCs from Appendix 1 that you think another person could know, and let the PC discover this. Good examples might be Miss St. George's real financial situation, Scanlon's previous medical misadventures, or hints of Harrington-Hyde's brushes with the law.

Forbidden Romance

One of the PCs stumbles upon Mrs. Ardior coming out of Monty's stateroom with smudged make-up. She makes some flimsy excuse but later begs the PC not to tell her husband. Later in the voyage, Millie argues with Monty when he tells her that that evening was a once only event. If the PC keeps Mrs. Ardior's secret, they might become her confidant, perhaps hearing hints of Harrington-Hyde's dirty dealings, which Mrs. Ardior has overheard over the years.

Physical Altercation

Being cooped up in a small space – albeit a very luxurious one – inevitably leads to frayed tempers. Choose two NPCs, at least one of them with a more physical bent, such as Jeff Combos, Arthur Ardior, Captain Hess, or one of the crew members. This pair gets into a heated argument which spills over into a fist fight. For example, Ardior might accuse Harrows or Harrington-Hyde of inappropriate behavior towards his wife and begin swinging before he can be reasoned with. While fighting, one of the combatants may reveal some secret about the other or simply an uncomfortable truth.

Meeting of the Minds

The PC stumbles upon a clandestine meeting between two NPCs. This could be Miss St. George begging Scanlon or Dr. Girard for laudanum, Harrows and Scanlon grabbing a private moment together, Harrington-Hyde arguing with Harrows about his daughter, or any number of the other encounters that might reveal a little more about the NPCs. You can run this encounter multiple times using the information from Appendix 1 for inspiration. At least one of these encounters should include Harrington-Hyde arguing with an NPC he is blackmailing.

Social Scene

An NPC starts an awkward social scene by spouting strong religious, cultural, or political views at odds with the social conventions of the time. Father Ryan is an obvious choice here, as is Lady Miller or Mr. Harrows. If the player characters intervene with tact and diplomacy, they might earn the trust of one of the NPCs who might reveal a secret about one of the other NPCs known to them.

Staged Fight

Baron Dupont and Miss Harrington-Hyde stage a mock argument because her father is getting suspicious of their relationship. The two fabricate an excuse to fight, rehearse it on the second-class deck, and then begin the short fight some time later in the lounge. It ends with Cecilia calling him a ‘spineless worm’ and demanding that he never speak to her again. While the argument is only moderately convincing, the look of hurt on the Baron’s face is genuine.

Suspicious Behavior

The player characters may spot an NPC acting in a suspicious manner such as lingering in locations without a good reason or

eavesdropping at doors. The player characters might use their persuasion or intimidation skills to get the NPC to admit minor misdemeanors or to offer information in exchange for the PCs’ silence.

Martian Artifact

This encounter should be mandatory as it gives the NPCs on board a reason to suspect Ambassador Othotho’s involvement in the murder. Harrington-Hyde shows off a Martian artifact, announcing his intention to put it up for sale when he reaches Mars. The artifact isn’t all that valuable but is in fact an Obin-Tah, a family record stolen from the Ambassador’s house in London. The two get into a terrible argument with Othotho threatening Harrington-Hyde with all sorts of horrible deaths. A day before Monty’s death, Othotho quietly pays him a hefty sum of money for the object and stores it in his own stateroom.

Set a Thief

Apellex Un’Nogo can’t resist the array of finery on display and steals a few minor pieces of jewelry, hoping they won’t be missed. Unfortunately for him, he tangles with the wrong person when he steals Mrs. Jones’s ruby necklace. She can’t report the theft without possibly exposing herself, so Miss St. George contacts the player characters and asks them to find the thief, while keeping their investigation quiet to protect her reputation. Mrs. Jones lets slip, during the conversation, that Mr. Worthington used to deal in jewelry before he became an MP, but refuses to elaborate. Un’Nogo is not a great thief—hence his exile from Tossia—and a decent investigator might find clues like a Martian keepsake or distinctive four-fingered Martian handprint near the crime. The GM may decide to have the stolen items turn up in another PC’s or NPC’s cabin, thereby triggering accusations. Otherwise, the items are hidden as described later.

Crossing the Line

The Crossing the Line ceremony is a time-honored tradition among those travelling to Mars, inspired by the seafaring tradition of celebrating the crossing of the equator. Held at the trip’s midpoint, the etherfaring ceremony involves a ball, pranks, and presentation of a polished brass plaque to each passenger. Tradition holds that for the day everyone is considered equal, within reason of course, and servants (not crew) get a half-day off. Everyone lets their hair down for the day and the atmosphere aboard takes on a carnival-like air. This is an excellent time for lower-class PCs to pump the upper-class passengers for information.

1889

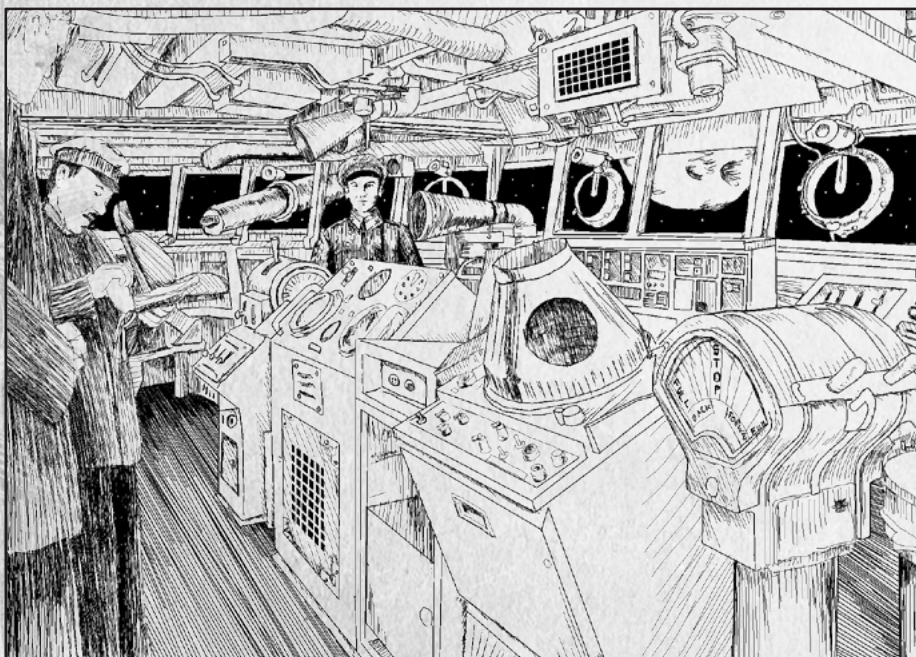
Chapter 3

Mating!

As the *Aetheria* approaches Mars, with mere hours of cruising to go and people preparing for bed, the Fenians strike. Their plan is to take over the ship and crash it into the *Foresage* orbital heliograph station, escaping by means of the liftwood launch in the cargo hold. The Fenians already have a copy of the purser's keys (see encounters in Chapter 2) and use them to gain access to everywhere they need to. Maura Joyce uses her position as cook to poison the crew and passenger food with a sleeping draft which takes effect as the PCs prepare for bed. The dose Joyce uses won't knock everyone out but is strong enough to make everyone very groggy and slow to react. The poison gives a -5 to all actions; each success on a *Body* roll reduces this by 1 to a minimum penalty of -1. Those with body scores of less than 2 sleep for at least 4 hours (such as most of the children and older passengers).

Once Joyce and her accomplices (Padraig and Colm) establish that the poison has taken effect, they move to the purser's office to recover the pistols stored there (none of them are comfortable with a rifle and so leave them there, taking the ammunition just in case). At the GM's option, they might interrupt Harrows and Scanlon mid-tryst, which might make for some awkward explanations later on. If the PCs have stored any useful weapons there, the conspirators may take them too.

Following the raid on the purser's office, the Fenians storm the bridge, overpowering the sleepened guards and taking the wheelhouse with little effort thanks to the help of their fourth conspirator, Thomas, who is stationed there. Once they secure the bridge, the conspirators lock in a course for the *Foresage* and, leaving Thomas behind to barricade the doors, start rounding up the passengers and crew. The Fenians vent steam into the passageways and dim the lights, making it difficult to determine their exact numbers and to establish who is who. They plan to lock everyone into the arboretum deck and leave them to die.



At this point, or beforehand if you feel they reacted especially quickly, the player characters get involved. The armed Fenians aren't that much of a threat to a combat-oriented party, but the drugging should slow down most people significantly and make things a challenge. If the player characters are too debilitated or not combat-oriented, give them other opportunities to be effective: perhaps a *Medicine* roll to reduce the effect of the drugs, or letting them use their social skills to encourage one or more of the Fenians to give up. The other NPCs on board might be able to help, but they shouldn't take attention away from the players. You can have favorite NPCs wounded to incite the PCs to greater action if you wish. Note that during this entire affair the crew and most of the servants are less than useless since they enjoyed a double-dose of drug in Joyce's cooking and most of them can't even stand up.

The entire takeover attempt is chaotic, with people losing each other in the steam-filled corridors and fleeing from the sounds of gunfire as the Fenians open fire on anyone that doesn't do exactly what they say. The likes of Jeff Combos relish this kind of event, but his gung-ho attitude only adds to the chaos as he opens fire on shadows in the steam fog. If your group includes particularly strong warriors, you can add additional Fenian agents, increase the skills of the existing agents, or perhaps have them use small explosive charges to wear down the players or put others in danger. Try your best to tailor the threat level to the skill of the PCs.

You can also use this time to inject an element of humor with people drifting by untethered as the gunfight blazes around them, personal items ricocheting around the cabins, and steam clouds making the mundane seem monstrous. You could also have half-drugged passengers inadvertently reveal secrets, appearing in their bedclothes.

Whatever happens, the player characters should eventually overpower the Fenians and calm things down. A few people have been badly injured but fatalities should be kept to a minimum. The Martian entertainer Un'Nogo suffers a nasty gunshot wound to the stomach, though Scanlon or one of the PCs can patch him up.

Once this occurs and people have had time to take stock of the situation, Miss Harrington-Hyde returns to her father's stateroom and "finds" her father's body. At this point, the next stage of the adventure begins.

Fenian Agents

Use the following attributes for the Fenian conspirators, adding appropriate cover skills for their positions. For Maura Joyce, add one to each of her Charisma, Intelligence, and Willpower attributes, and give her an additional point in her *Firearms* skill. The agents surrender if wounded and it looks like they will die. Maura Joyce, on the other hand, fights to the death and shoots herself rather than be taken; of course, a fast-acting group might be able to prevent this.

Primary Attributes

Body: 2 **Dexterity: 3** **Strength: 3**
Charisma: 2 **Intelligence: 2** **Willpower: 2**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 **Move: 6** **Perception: 4**
Initiative: 5 **Defense: 5** **Stun: 2**
Health: 4

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	3	3	6	(3)
Firearms	3	3	6	(3)
Melee	3	3	6	(3)
Intimidation	2	3	5	(2+)
Con	2	3	5	(2+)
Streetwise	2	3	4	(2+)

Talents

Alertness 1

Equipment

Uniforms, copies of the purser's keys, makeshift weapons

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Knife	1 L	0	7 L	(3+) L
Punch	0 N	0	6 N	(2+) N
Webley Mk I	3 L	0	9 L	(4+) L

Anatomy of a Murder Part 1

An hour after dinner, Harrows visited Harrington-Hyde's stateroom, and asserted that he couldn't have gotten Miss Harrington-Hyde pregnant. Montague confronts Cecilia with this information, and then strikes her when she admits Baron Henri Dupont is the father of her child. The Baron, in a rage after seeing Cecilia hurt, proceeds to Montague's stateroom just as the Fenian attack begins and bursts into Montague's stateroom, breaking the door down in the process. Harrington-Hyde was in the process of checking his blackmail material in his safe. Montague ridicules the Baron and tells him he'll just have to arrange for the baby to be "dealt with" on Mars before he marries Cecilia off to a Martian noble or some other convenient person. The Baron finally snaps and stabs Monty in the back with a poison dart he carries in case his dinosaur gets loose. The Baron then leaves the stateroom in shock at what he has done, absentmindedly taking a small sum of money from the open safe.

A few minutes later, Cecilia comes into the stateroom, takes the dart from her father's back, and throws it away. Unknown to Henri or Cecilia, the dart's poison interacted with the drugs in the meal prepared by Maura Joyce, becoming non-lethal. At this point, the Fenians started their attack. Before Cecilia could come back, Mrs. Whistpole entered the stateroom with the intention of shooting Monty and taking the blackmail material. She found the incapacitated Monty, checked that he was alive, then smothered him with a cushion before taking the blackmail material from the open safe.

Murder Most Foul

As things finally settle down and the exhausted passengers finally make their way to bed, a terrible scream echoes through the ship and once again people find themselves drawn from their cabins to uncover its source. The player characters find themselves at the open door of Harrington-Hyde's stateroom, where his corpse floats face-down a hand's breadth above the floor. After the initial chaos, the captain calls the player characters to his cabin and asks them to investigate the murder with all due haste.

The ship can't afford to suffer an unsolved murder on its maiden flight. The ship is due to make port in mere hours, a duration that the captain can extend by slowing somewhat. They have a hard limit of just under two days since the ship is carrying the royal mail and if the *Aetheria* can't prove its speed, the Cunard Line will lose the potentially very lucrative mail contract they've been trying for, possibly driving the Line out of the spacefaring business.

Once the ship makes port in Tossia, there are no local laws that prohibit the passengers from departing—and the murderer from getting away. The British government has virtually no pull here so they can't request the port authorities to detain or seal the ship until the murderer is found. The captain will not give the PCs free rein; they must maintain decorum and he won't allow them to lock up anyone without good reason. The captain is eager to get things back to normal as soon as possible and arranges free food and drink and as much entertainment as people can handle in order to distract the passengers from the terrible events.

The Murder Scene

Read the following aloud to the player characters:

The scene is a familiar one to the consumers of lurid penny dreadfuls or the works of Arthur Conan Doyle: the victim drifts on his side beside an open safe, a decorative velvet cushion before his face, wearing a silk dressing gown and slippers. A revolver floats beside the body, cocked and unfired. A half-dozen letters float around the stateroom.

Clearing the stateroom is almost impossible since Victorians tend to love a good murder and walk through the stateroom moving and examining things as they go. The PCs may need to be quite insistent in order to clear people from the stateroom. Even then, they draw quite a crowd of onlookers. Listed below are the most important parts of the murder scene and the rolls required to find the information. Give it out (aside from the perception information) only if the player asks to make a skill roll for the clue or examines the area.

The Door

- The door to the stateroom was forced open (*Perception* Difficulty 1)
- Someone shoulder-charged the door even though it wasn't locked (*Investigation* Difficulty 2 or *Larceny* Difficulty 2)
- The person who forced the door might have a bruise on their shoulder (*Medicine* Difficulty 2)

The Gun

- The gun hasn't been fired in years (*Investigation* Difficulty 2 or *Firearms* Difficulty 2)

- It is an old British army revolver, a Beaumont-Adams from the 1860s (*Firearms* Difficulty 3 or *Academics (History)* Difficulty 2)

The Safe

- The small safe is a private one brought on board by Harrington-Hyde himself (*Bureaucracy* Difficulty 1)

- The safe wasn't broken into (*Larceny* Difficulty 3 or *Investigation* Difficulty 4)

- The safe is one of the most secure models available (*Larceny* Difficulty 1)

- The safe contains a small scrap torn from a high value bank note, a jewelry box (containing Miss Harrington-Hyde's jewelry), and a shelf where something about the size of a large book rested until recently (*Investigation* Difficulty 3)

- A second shelf shows scrape marks and signs of something very heavy having been stored there (*Investigation* Difficulty 1). GM only: This was where Monty stored the Martian artifact until Othotho purchased it from him.

- The interior of the safe smells of leather (*Perception* Difficulty 3)

The Body

- Harrington-Hyde's face is a mask of shock with a hint of outrage (*Empathy* Difficulty 1 or *Investigation* Difficulty 2)

- Harrington-Hyde has no defensive marks and there is no obvious sign of injury (*Investigation* Difficulty 3, *Medicine* Difficulty 2)

- An autopsy would reveal more (*Medicine* Difficulty 1, *Investigation* Difficulty 1)

- The body has a tiny puncture wound on its rear-right shoulder with a distinctive blackening pattern around the wound, like a sunburst of blackened veins (*Investigation* Difficulty 3, *Medicine* Difficulty 3)

- Harrington-Hyde's watch is broken, showing the time of his fall (*Investigation* Difficulty 1)

- Harrington-Hyde has a rather impressive gold ring with his family crest stamped onto it on his right hand (*Investigation* Difficulty 1)

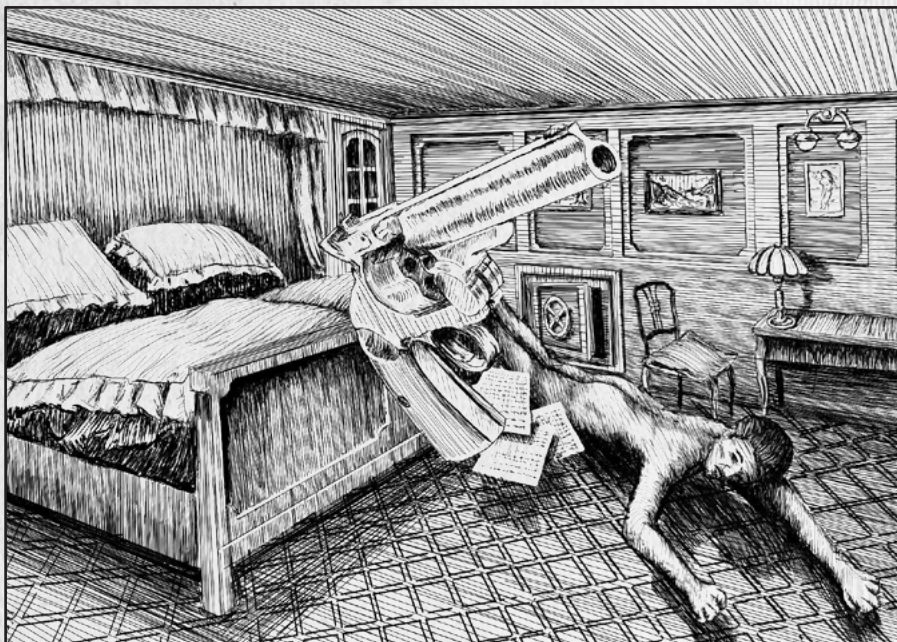
- Harrington-Hyde has some very light bruising on his ribs and chest made by Mrs. Abigail Whistpole kneeling on him while smothering him; there are also petechiae in the eyes, another sign of smothering (*Medicine* difficulty 3, *Investigation* difficulty 4)

Miscellaneous

- The cushion clearly matches a nearby couch

- There is a fresh cigarette butt under the couch (*Perception* Difficulty 3). Anyone who asks around or who has spent a lot of time with Harrows will match his brand.

- The letters scattered around the stateroom are anonymous and threaten Harrington-Hyde's life if he doesn't admit to the terrible crime he has committed. The penmanship is a little unusual (*Investigation* Difficulty 2 to tell that the author was left-handed)



and the writer is clearly either somewhat new to writing or not a native English speaker (*Investigation* Difficulty 2 or *Linguistics* Difficulty 1). GM only: The letters are from ship band leader Alessandro Baldini.

As ship's doctor, Peter Scanlon performs a basic examination and, while unable to determine the cause of death, can see the poison used resembles a plant toxin mentioned in his book on Martian botany. The toxin is known as the "assassin's executioner" because it acts so quickly that the would-be assassin is very likely to be caught. Someone reading the book can find out that the antidote to the toxin is anything that slows the patient's metabolism since the toxin's lethality is based on system shock; which is exactly what the Fenian poison did. This might take a few hours to discover, or less if one of the player characters has a specific knowledge of Martian biology or toxins. Alternatively, they can ask Ambassador Othotho, whose knowledge of Martian poisons is suspiciously thorough.

Communication

The *Aetheria* is close enough to contact the *Foresage* in orbit around Mars at this point in time. Therefore, the PCs could conceivably contact the Cunard Line or other groups and ask for information or help. Replies will be slow in coming, taking at least 4 hours since any message must be relayed from the *Foresage* to the *Harbinger* in Earth orbit, then to the surface, the reply going through the same steps in reverse. This form of communication is also not cheap and can be unreliable, so feel free to have messages lost, slowed, or garbled.

The Martian Question

The rumor that a Martian toxin was used in the murder casts suspicion on Ambassador Othotho, especially once people realize that the Martian artifact that Monty displayed quite openly in his stateroom is missing. See the Martian artifact encounter above for details of where the artifact actually ended up. Ordinarily, suspicion would fall to Un’Nogo because of his lower social status, but the Martian was performing on stage for the entire time and was shot during the attempted Fenian takeover, meaning he couldn’t have committed the murder.

If questioned about the toxin, Un’Nogo displays his masterful acting skills, claiming to be scared of the Ambassador. If pressed, he admits that Othotho may have been involved with a shadowy cabal of assassins called the Dark Tide. A Martian native or someone with knowledge of Mars who makes a *Streetwise* or *Larceny* roll of difficulty 3 can easily identify this as a fiction. Someone making an *Academics (Literature)* roll of difficulty 3 may recognize the name from a Martian children’s story. Un’Nogo has a *Con* skill rating of 7 for those interested in seeing if he is lying or not. Un’Nogo tells this story to as many people as possible, hoping to rile the people up against the Ambassador. An *Intimidation* roll of difficulty 4 (3 if the PCs have evidence) convinces the already-injured Un’Nogo to admit the truth.

If the player characters don’t clear the Ambassador’s name within an hour or two, a small mob forms and attempts to throw the Ambassador from an airlock. The group consists mostly of people who have heard Un’Nogo’s story second hand. Hard evidence or a difficulty 4 *Intimidation* or *Persuasion* check forces the crowd to disperse. The Ambassador has a receipt for the artifact’s sale, signed by Harrington-Hyde, which he shows if anyone bothers to ask.

Investigations and Interviews

The captain offers his office as a place where the player characters can interview potential witnesses and suspects. The captain also suggests a search of the crew quarters and public areas but won’t authorize a blanket search of the guest cabins, suggesting that the PCs request this themselves. He of course refuses to have his cabin searched under any circumstances, since he clearly wasn’t present during the murder and he has several witnesses to this effect.

The player characters may also decide to conduct interviews informally which suits most guests. The following list provides information on clues, alibis, and red herrings for each of the major cast members. You should familiarize yourself with these before the adventure starts so you can lay the groundwork for them before play starts.

Cecilia Harrington-Hyde

Miss Cecilia Harrington-Hyde provides an alibi for Baron Henri Dupont, claiming that he was with her in the arts and crafts room when the murder occurred, though she has enough wits to claim he’d deny this to preserve her honor. Mrs. Jones and Miss St. George can expose this as a lie since they took refuge in the arts and crafts room during the attempted Fenian takeover of the ship. Miss Harrington-Hyde has a black eye she claims she got from running into something during the chaos. A small laceration near

her eye matches the size and shape of her father’s ring. Someone inspecting it closely (perhaps with a *Medicine* or *Brawl* skill check, difficulty 3) can tell it was inflicted by a fist.

If asked about the contents of the safe, Miss Harrington-Hyde claims there was a small sum of money there, but not a lot. This is true as far as she knows, but the Ambassador added a significant amount of money to this pile the day before, something which Cecilia is unaware of. She also knows her father kept some important business documents in the safe but she only ever saw one page, a long list of names including Father Ignatius Ryan, Colonel Horace Whistpole, and Harold Worthington MP; all of whom she remembers because they had unusual titles added to their names.

Searching Miss Harrington-Hyde’s cabin reveals nothing incriminating beyond a few romance novels set on Mars and almost every book written by Jules Verne. PCs may also note that the Baron and Miss Harrington-Hyde’s relationship changes (if the PCs weren’t already aware of this): they get very close seemingly overnight.

Confronting Cecilia with overwhelming evidence of her involvement (such as her lies about where she was and her hiding of the dart) gets her to break down and confess to killing her father. She thinks the Baron poisoned Harrington-Hyde and confesses to the murder in order to protect him. Of course, Henri won’t allow the woman who is carrying his child to take the blame and confesses too.

Baron Henri Dupont

Baron Henri Dupont has vast quantities of a Martian sleep draft stashed in his luggage; although reluctant to admit it, he eventually explains that they are to keep the juvenile *Tyrannosaurus giganticus* that he has stashed in the hold drugged and docile. Hidden in the creature’s cage is the actual Martian toxin he uses to knock out Harrington-Hyde and a blow gun case with a missing dart. Opening the cage may release the beast, which hasn’t been dosed in a while and is both hungry and enraged by now. Stats for the creature can be found in Chapter 4; you can adjust these slightly to suit your group’s combat capability and the length of time since it was last drugged. The Baron hid the money he absent-mindedly stole inside a book in the library. The Baron spotted Mrs. Whistpole pass him in the corridor as he fled the scene of the crime but didn’t think anything of it; if asked specifically, he may mention passing a woman but that he was too distracted and the steam was too thick for him to see exactly who it was.

When asked where he was during the Fenian takeover, the Baron lies and says he was in the cargo hold checking on his car. If someone disputes this, he lies again and says he was visiting a friend and would like to keep it a secret for the sake of decorum. Baron Dupont is a terrible liar and the difficulty to see through his lies with *Empathy* is initially 2, dropping to 1 once his first lies come out.

Millicent Ardior

Millicent Ardior is conflicted about Harrington-Hyde’s death. On the one hand she misses him and mourns her one chance to get away from her husband, but on the other hand she can’t help but feel avenged for his spurning of her. If one of the PCs has gained her confidence earlier in the adventure, she might tell them that Monty was blackmailing at least one person on board. Millicent and Arthur were together in their cabin during the Fenian attack.

Arthur Ardior

Arthur Ardior is not shy about badmouthing Harrington-Hyde and he bends at least one of the PCs' ears about him. Arthur isn't bright enough to use a Martian toxin and he makes no bones about waiting to beat Monty to death if he could get away with it. Arthur did spot Baron Dupont leaving the library after the body was found, looking rather guilty.

Alice St. George

Miss Alice St. George is in a bad way following the Fenian attack. The Fenian drug combined with the laudanum in her system to knock her senseless. Mrs. Jones brought her to the arts and crafts room and barricaded the door while she worked to fix what she thought was an overdose. Though Miss St. George has recovered somewhat, she is still quite ill. A *Medicine* test with a difficulty of 3 reveals the source of her discomfort. Hidden in her baggage, Miss St. George keeps a bloodstained letter from Harrington-Hyde telling Alice's father James of his failed investment. This letter led to her father taking his own life a year ago.

Mrs. Daisy Jones

Daisy wears a few pieces of subtle jewelry that are far beyond her means, mementos of the life she once led. Daisy's accent tends to slip when she gets passionate or stressed; this will certainly happen if she is interrogated. She can confirm that she was in the arts and crafts room with Miss St. George when the Fenian attack occurred, and that she stayed there until the all clear was given. Daisy might point a finger at Mr. Worthington if the PCs put her under pressure, claiming that he has a shady background but refusing to elaborate further. Daisy also suspects that Cecilia is with child and is hiding it from everyone; she has seen it many times before and knows what to look for.

Edward Harrows

Edward Harrows's repeated arguments with Harrington-Hyde regarding his daughter might cast suspicion on him. Someone might also point out his habit of missing dinner from time to time. At those times he was meeting his new lover, the ship's doctor Peter Scanlon. Peter can vouch for this but really doesn't want to admit it as homosexuality was illegal and considered immoral at this time. Edward knows Cecilia is with child and, if pushed about his behavior, tells the PCs to seek the child's real father if they're looking for a killer.

Lady Darcy Miller

You can use Lady Darcy Miller to alibi an NPC if required. She is also very keen on taking part in the investigation and her interest and overly pushy desire to help might cause suspicious PCs to wonder why she is so determined to be involved. Once the dart used to stab Harrington-Hyde is found, Lady Miller can identify it as part of a set she gave to Baron Dupont while on safari a few years ago.

Colonel Horace Whistpole

The Colonel is in very poor health following the drugging and tries to avoid talking to the PCs entirely. He can't believe that his wife would have killed Monty but thinks that she might have stolen the blackmail material from his stateroom since she mentioned everything being okay shortly before the death became public. The Colonel alibis his wife though smart PCs may catch him in a lie since he claims to have only recently awakened (true) from the Fenian drugs. He is quite shocked if the player characters present him with the pistol found at the crime scene since it is his old service weapon. He doesn't question his wife overmuch since he doesn't really want to believe that she could hurt someone.

Mrs. Abigail Whistpole

Mrs. Abigail Whistpole claims to have been in her cabin when Harrington-Hyde was killed but this is a lie. Her husband alibis her, but since he was unconscious at the time he can't know for sure. A scrap of a letter addressed to "Horace", written in Harrington-Hyde's handwriting, can be found tucked under the bunk in her cabin; a piece of the material she destroyed. Mrs. Whistpole dumped the rest of the blackmail material into the toilet and while most of it is now in space, someone who reaches into the toilet can find a single piece of blackmail material on one of the NPCs of the GM's choice. She hid the leather case that held the blackmail material behind a table in one of the corridors but was seen doing this by the Giles twins. If pressed, she claims the children are lying because she fought with them about making noise outside her cabin a few nights ago.

Harold Worthington MR

There is virtually no hard evidence to link Harold Worthington to any wrongdoing as he has nothing to do with the first murder. He does however try to get involved in the investigation and conducts his own quietly. Being a criminal himself, he puts things together quite quickly and you can assume that he makes great logical leaps in order to root out the murderer before the player characters do. Harold wants the case containing the blackmail material and corners Mrs. Whistpole in her cabin while her husband is out playing cards (see *Anatomy of a Murder* Part 2 for details).

Father Ignatius Ryan

Father Ignatius Ryan keeps his stash of women's clothing hidden in a locked trunk in his cabin. He refuses to open this trunk under any circumstances. He cannot conceal his glee at the death of the "sinner" Harrington-Hyde and claims it was a punishment from God for his wicked ways. An account book in Father Ryan's desk shows transfers of funds from church accounts to Harrington-Hyde. Father Ryan may admit he was being blackmailed by Harrington-Hyde if he is pushed far enough, but this would take an *Intimidation* or *Persuasion* check with a difficulty of 4. Under no circumstances will he admit to *why* he was being blackmailed.

Ambassador Harraxx Othotho

The Ambassador has a book on Martian poisons in plain view on a shelf in his stateroom. This is for practical reasons since he's been the target of no less than three poisoning attempts in the past. He can also easily identify the poison used on Harrington-Hyde and notes that whoever used it clearly didn't know that the toxin only works if the person is awake and not suffering from a slowed metabolism. The Ambassador takes the attack on his stateroom in stride; he is used to being an outsider after his time in London and, as a judge, he has faced many threatening situations before.

Doctor Gaston Girard

Dr. Gaston Girard has a hefty sum of money hidden in his cabin which he intends to use as seed capital in his new business. He also has several notebooks filled with handwritten notes on producing painkillers and placebos. Girard gives little information if asked for his medical opinion on the case, and avoids real medical personnel if at all possible. If cornered on a medical matter, he blusters and tries to shout down those who claim he doesn't know what he's talking about, claiming they are ignorant fools.

Jeff Combos

Depending on how you want to use him, he can either collaborate or disprove an alibi for one of the other passengers or crew. He is surprised by Harrington-Hyde's death and happy to help out in an investigation, but sticks to his strengths which mostly involve muscle and intimidation. Combos's ego is a little bruised if he didn't manage to put up a good fight when the Fenians attacked.

Captain Alexander Hess VII

Like Jeff Combos, you can use Captain Alexander Hess VII to confirm or disprove other people's alibis. He may also point out that certain people were seen acting unusually, if you want to draw attention to a particular NPC.

Victoria and Victor Giles

The young twins spot Mrs. Whistpole hiding Harrington-Hyde's leather pouch and, if not contacted directly, they will eventually bring this to the PCs' attention.

Captain Klaus Nowacki

The letter from the White Star Line could ruin Captain Nowacki's career so he keeps it under lock and key in his safe. He doesn't conceal the mound of medical bills in his desk drawer, however. The captain refuses to allow his cabin to be searched, blustering as much as possible until the threat of contacting the shipping line is brought into play.

First Mate Simon Shaw

Mr. Shaw has an old British army service pistol and an incriminating newspaper clipping hidden at the bottom of his travel trunk. When he first sees the gun in Harrington-Hyde's stateroom, he worries that it may be his since it is the same model. If the crew cabins are searched, Simon may try to dump his pistol and newspaper clippings.

Chief Engineer Andrew Philips

The Chief Engineer's erratic behavior might draw the PCs' attention but he is a red herring as he had nothing to do with the murder. Andrew saw Miss Harrington-Hyde fiddling with one of the vents near her cabin during the Fenian attack. He is quite annoyed about it (nobody touches his ship) but only mentions it in passing. At some later time, if the PCs don't ask him about it, he goes to check on the vent and finds the poison dart.

George Jones

George Jones would never willingly betray a confidence, but a perceptive PC might spot his discomfort if he's asked about matters relating to the deck or access to his keys. A *Persuasion* check gets him to admit knowledge of a secret relationship between Baron Dupont and Miss Harrington-Hyde.

Alessandro Baldini

Ship band leader Alessandro Baldini is the author of the threatening notes sent to Harrington-Hyde. A check of the handwriting confirms this, as Baldini's left-handed scribing is quite distinctive. If questioned, Baldini claims he wanted Harrington-Hyde brought to justice, not murdered. His annoyance at the Englishman's death is quite genuine. Baldini was with his fellow band members when the Fenians attacked, and so has a concrete alibi.

3rd Officer Peter Scanlon

A cabin by cabin search reveals the book on Martian botany in the ship's doctor's cabin, which may raise some eyebrows, particularly the inscription from the author, which is written in a very informal and intimate manner. Peter Scanlon knows that Miss Harrington-Hyde came to him for something to help with nausea, but he assumed it was space sickness and only mentions it if the PCs say she may be pregnant.

Maura Joyce

If she still lives, Maura's casing of the ship may, at the GM's option, reveal to her some choice information about another passenger or crew member.

Apellex Un'Nogo

While Un'Nogo wasn't involved in the murder, he is a thief and some of his ill-gotten gains show up hidden in a hollowed-out leg in his bunk (*Perception 5* or *Investigation 3* to find).

The PCs need to determine that the dart didn't kill Harrington-Hyde but that he was smothered instead. This can be established by several NPCs (including the Ambassador and Scanlon), who tell them that the poison is not effective on drugged people, or by taking a look at the scene and realizing that the cushion is out of place and that the bruising may be from someone kneeling on him. Confronting Miss Harrington-Hyde and the Baron with the truth leads to a series of bumbling confessions. Finally, the Baron might realize that the woman he saw in the corridor was Mrs. Whistpole. The combination of old pistol, the hidden leather case, and the other clues should prove solid enough for a confrontation.

There is a balance to be struck between feeding information to the player characters and letting them figure it out on their own. While the Martian misadventure above may distract some groups, others might stay very focused. Some groups thrive on investigation and might require only a bare hint of clues, while others may require more help. Find the balance that best suits your group.

What if my investigators make Sherlock Holmes look like a dimwit?

It is quite possible that the player characters will figure out the true murderer very quickly. In this case, consider having a backup murderer. Mrs. Whistpole is then innocent and instead it was Father Ryan, dressed as a woman, who crept to Harrington-Hyde's stateroom and smothered him. Abigail still came to the stateroom, dropped the gun when she saw him, checked to see if he was alive, then left before he could recover. She recalls a scent of incense if questioned, which should point to the priest.

Chapter 4

You should run this chapter once the player characters figure out that Mrs. Abigail Whistpole is the murderer. The player characters make their way to her cabin only to find the door open and Mrs. Whistpole not breathing. She has been strangled almost to death. The attacker clearly meant to kill her and had ransacked the cabin looking for something. Read the following text aloud:

The cabin door swings open to reveal another tragic killing. Mrs. Abigail Whistpole's body floats in the cabin, surrounded by her ransacked and untethered belongings which drift around the cabin in a ballet of detritus.

The Body

- Abigail is not breathing but she is alive. A doctor can revive her with a successful *Medicine* skill roll, difficulty 3.
- Abigail has blood and skin under her fingernails: the elderly woman marked her attacker for all to see! (Difficulty 3 *Investigation* check to notice)
- The marks on the throat suggest a strong person with large hands (*Investigation* or *Medicine* Difficulty 3)

The Cabin

- Nothing has been taken, but the place has been ransacked by someone used to searching out all those little places people like to hide things in and think are secure (*Investigation* Difficulty 3 or *Larceny* Difficulty 2).
- The speed at which things are moving indicates that the murderer was here less than a few minutes ago. (*Science (Physics)* Difficulty 2).

Anatomy of a Murder Part 2

Mrs. Whistpole left her cabin with her husband and maid to take some air. She realized she had forgotten one of her gloves and decided to return to her cabin, leaving her maid to walk with her husband (he is still a little unsteady after the attack). Mrs. Whistpole disturbed Mr. Worthington as he ransacked her cabin, searching for the blackmail documents belonging to Harrington-Hyde. He strangled her (leaving her for dead) before fleeing when he heard the PCs approach. Knowing that the scratch marks on his face would mark him as the killer, he makes his way to the cargo hold. He intends to hide until the ship gets close enough to Mars for him to get away using the liftwood skiff or the parachute he stole from the emergency locker on the way. He assumes that Mrs. Whistpole is dead and therefore once his wounds heal and he gets down to the surface of Mars, he can get away scot-free.

The Final Conflict

If the player characters successfully revive Mrs. Whistpole, she confesses her part in Harrington-Hyde's death, taking all the responsibility upon herself, refusing to let anyone else take the

blame. She believes—incorrectly—that she is about to die. Mrs. Whistpole names Worthington as her attacker; she remembers him demanding to know where the “files” were. She assumes this to mean the material she stole from Harrington-Hyde’s office and destroyed. She told him as much but he didn’t believe her. Worthington, in the meantime, has made his way to the cargo hold to wait out the few hours until the ship enters the Martian atmosphere.

Worthington has a stolen pistol and, if he hears anyone coming down to the cargo hold, he releases Baron Dupont’s juvenile *Tyrannosaurus giganticus*. The dinosaur doesn’t have a lot of room to maneuver but can cause massive damage if allowed to rampage. The creature is starving and highly aggressive. If the Baron is with the PCs, he begs to be allowed to re-drug it to save his business venture. A player character skilled in handling animals might manage to turn the savage creature back on Worthington using their knowledge of animal behavior. The tyrannosaur’s gullet might be a fitting place for the criminal turned politician.

Worthington waits until the last minute before revealing himself. Wearing a space suit and a parachute, he peppers the PCs with bullets, aiming to kill. If it looks like he might be captured, he tries to escape into the airlock. It is up to the GM at this point to decide if the *Aetheria* is close enough to the atmosphere to allow a successful escape. If not, Worthington dooms himself to a slow death by asphyxiation and freezing.

Harold Worthington MR

Primary Attributes				
Body: 3	Dexterity: 4	Strength: 3		
Charisma: 3	Intelligence: 4	Willpower: 3		
Secondary Attributes				
Size: 0	Move: 7	Perception: 7		
Initiative: 8	Defense: 7	Stun: 3		
Health: 6				
Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	3	3	6	(3)
Con	3	5	8	(4)

Diplomacy	3	4	7	(3+)
Empathy	4	2	6	(3)
Firearms	4	4	8	(4)
Gamble	4	4	8	(4)
Larceny	4	4	8	(4)
Linguistics	4	2	6	(3)
Stealth	4	3	7	(3+)
Streetwise	3	5	8	(4)

Talents

Jack of All Trades, Quick Draw, Total Defense

Equipment

Upper-Class Clothing, Lock picks, hidden pocket with large sum of money.

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Punch	0 N	0	6 N	(3) N
Webbley Mk I	3 L	0	11 L	(5+) L

Juvenile *Tyrannosaurus giganticus*

Archetype: Dinosaur

Primary Attributes

Body: 6 Dexterity: 4 Strength: 8
Charisma: 0 Intelligence: 0 Willpower: 3

Secondary Attributes

Size: 4 Move: 12 Perception: 3 (5)
Initiative: 4 Defense: 5 Stun: 6

Health: 13

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	8	5	13	(6+)
Stealth	4	2	6	(3)
Survival	0	3	3	(1+)

Talents

Alertness 1

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Claw	4 L	4	13 L	(6+) L
Bite	5 L	4	14 L	(7) L
Stomp	5 N	4	15 N	(7) N



Chapter 5

Aftermath

What the player characters choose to do next is their decision. They have successfully uncovered two murderers (one would-be), fought a dinosaur in the cargo hold of an ether ship, and very likely shot or captured an MP. If Harold Worthington survives, he tries everything he can to get out of being charged but his reputation is shot and he loses his seat in Parliament and becomes the subject of multiple investigations. The PCs must decide what they want to do with Baron Dupont and Miss Harrington-Hyde; both want to start a new life on Mars and, surprisingly, Ambassador Othotho offers to help them get started. He heard Cecilia beg her father to sell him back his stolen property and he considers this a debt he must pay back.

There is also the question of what to do with Mrs. Abigail Whistpole. The law in this case is quite clear, but given that the ship is docking at Tossia and given the confusion regarding the actual cause of death, it might be possible to argue death by misadventure or to conceal the murder entirely. Captain Nowacki isn't entirely happy with the thought of having the *Aetheria's* maiden flight marred by a high-profile murder case and communicates with the Cunard Line to get their advice. Given the strange legal situation on Tossia, the Line has some flexibility and comes to Miss Harrington-Hyde with a strange offer: if she is willing to not press for a legal case, they will provide her with a substantial sum of money. Cecilia, already feeling bad for all

the misery her father caused, is happy to take the money and use it to create a new life for herself and Henri. She quietly offers Mrs. Whistpole half the money in recompense for the pain she suffered at her father's hands.

Depending on how the player characters handle this adventure, they might have made both enemies and friends. Any connections with the likes of Lady Miller or Ambassador Othotho can give rise to further adventures on Mars as Lady Miller chases treasure and the Ambassador affords the PCs a doorway into Martian political intrigue. If they save the Cunard Line's reputation by dealing with the situation quickly and diplomatically, they might be rewarded with further contracts or voyages in keeping with their skills and personalities.

If the player characters made enemies of any of the NPC on board, you could use these to drive further adventures or to add spice to later scenarios by having the NPC show up at an inopportune time. The Fenians in particular might make an interesting group to interact with; while scattered and somewhat disorganized, they have friends in surprising places and should word get out of the PCs' actions against them, it might make them a target for future revenge plots. Ideally, the Fenians would like to make the PCs an object lesson to anyone thinking of crossing them and at the same time strike a blow for Irish freedom. Kidnapping friends or family members of the PCs and forcing them to do something criminal in exchange for their release would be a good example of a typical plot.



Appendix 1: Dramatis Personae

Crew Roster

This is the crew's first voyage together and they are still establishing themselves as a team. Minor arguments are a common occurrence and the officers spend a lot of time straightening things out between crew members. Crew members in **bold** have entries in the appendix, the others are left for the GM to flesh out.

Officers: Captain (**Klaus Nowacki**), first officer (**Simon Shaw**), second officer (Bill Kentish), third officer and ship's doctor (**Peter Scanlon**), chief engineer (**Andrew Philips**), 2nd engineer (Harvey Scoggins), purser (**George Jones**)

Petty Officers: 2 bosuns (Leo Monaghan, Fred-eric Canning)

Crewmen: 2 cooks (**Maura Joyce**, Loretta Hynes), 1 pastry chef (Louis Valmont), 4 kitchen staff (Masie, Elizabeth, Matilda, Lucy), 2 technicians (Arnold and Burt), 10 stewards, 1 chief steward (Alexander Ganger), 8 seamen, 5 waiters, 5 maids.

Entertainment Staff: Band leader (**Alessandro Baldini**), 3 band members (**Apellex Un'Nogo**, Jack Darcy, Michael Higginbottom)

The *Aetheria* hosts over one hundred guests and crew. The ship's second-class deck is still undergoing finishing, so it is sealed off for the voyage but could hold an additional 50 passengers once complete. Most of the crew are British, with the exception of the waiting staff, who are mostly French or Italian. Remember that the people listed below are just a sampling of those on board, you should feel free to include NPCs of your own to suit your group and playstyle. The passengers consist of those with money or influence, so the player characters brush shoulders with counts and baronesses, businessmen, and military officers. This voyage is something special that few people ever get to experience and the whole thing plays rather like a month-long celebration. If you think one of the player characters listed below will negatively impact your game, simply replace them with someone you think will be better suited to your group.

Note that most people travel with at least one servant per adult (a valet for a man and a lady's maid for a woman) to help with daily tasks such as washing and dressing.

Mr. Montague Harrington-Hyde

Born of a modest aristocratic family but sent to the best schools, Montague Harrington-Hyde made friends with the "right sort of people" and as a young man made a vast fortune by leveraging and abusing these connections. Montague is a terrible snob with a knack for preying on the gullible and manipulating social conventions to his advantage. Harrington-Hyde appears to the outside world as an entrepreneur and a wealthy socialite, but his money comes from a string of scams concealed by the aristocratic





Mr Harrington-Hyde

code of silence. He is also a spendthrift and his supposedly incredible fortune is all but gone.

For years Harrington-Hyde has stayed ahead of the law and kept himself in a lifestyle a king would envy. But the police have finally caught on and, with enemies closing in on all sides, Harrington-Hyde needs to pull all his resources together and create a new life somewhere far from the reach of Earthly powers. Using his influence to

commandeer the maiden flight of the *Aetheria*, Harrington-Hyde invites a choice selection of his former victims on board so that he might tap their remaining resources and maybe just save his worthless hide. Even Monty's daughter is not immune to his schemes and he intends to use the innocent Cecilia as a pawn, marrying her off to a wealthy man and thereby accessing a new fortune through family ties.

Harrington-Hyde spends his time on board ship socializing; at any time, he can be found talking to the rich and powerful. He mostly moves between the dining room, lounge, library, Promenade, games room, and smoking room. Once he finds out about Cecilia's pregnancy he pushes hard to find her a husband before her condition becomes obvious.

If one of the PCs has a high social standing and either money or connections, Harrington-Hyde does everything possible to befriend them, inviting them to stay in his various homes across the world and promising introductions to people of wealth and power. He offers a generous dowry to anyone willing to take Cecilia off his hands, a dowry he can't possibly pay but he hopes that a quick marriage with the help of the ship's captain will hide her pregnancy. Those of lower social class are given the cold shoulder, even if they have money; Harrington-Hyde, no matter how much danger he is in, cannot bring himself to overcome his terrible snobbery.

Appearance: Montague Harrington-Hyde is a slightly overweight but very well-dressed man in his late 50s. His light brown hair is plastered across his head in a pronounced comb-over and he tries to make up for this failing with impressive mutton chops.

Miss Cecilia Harrington-Hyde

Miss Cecilia Harrington-Hyde is Montague's daughter, a quiet and pleasant young woman who can be very charming and funny when away from her overbearing father. She is in love with Baron Henri Dupont, who has gotten her pregnant, and they plan on eloping together once the *Aetheria* gets to Mars. She is likely to make terrible decisions in her panic to hide her pregnancy and protect her lover. Montague finds out about the pregnancy early in the trip and threatens to kill Harrows, who Cecilia claims is the father in an effort to protect Henri. Later, she provides Henri with an alibi and even takes the blame for the murder if necessary, trusting that the courts might consider the death of her father and her "delicate condition" when sentencing. Cecilia tries to block attempts to autopsy her father, fearing that in-depth examination would reveal Henri as the killer.

Cecilia attended the best Swiss finishing schools and someone with a similar background may know her. She is used to having



Ms Harrington-Hyde

her decisions made for her but has somehow managed to keep a quietly independent streak. Cecilia avoids her father as much as possible, spending most of her time in the arts and crafts room and occasionally sneaking down to the second-class deck to meet up with Henri using keys she borrows from George Jones.

Cecilia has dined with kings and has impeccable manners. She is everything an accomplished young woman of the Victorian era should be. She also hides a wild streak that occasionally got her into trouble in school and landed her in her current situation. She really wants to get away from her father and live her own life for a while with Henri by her side as her companion and lover. Cecilia pretends to disdain Henri but the occasional smile slips out.

Cecilia has no real emotional connection with her father, having spent her years with nannies, governesses, and at boarding schools. He has always been a rather dark figure for her, a scary man who stepped into her life from time to time, bullied her and left her in the hands of strangers.

Appearance: Cecilia Harrington-Hyde is a pretty young woman with brown hair and notably large brown eyes. She is always impeccably dressed, something her father insists upon. She has a mischievous smile which she only rarely shows.

Baron Henri Dupont

The son of an old school friend of Harrington-Hyde and an explorer of no particular note. Baron Henri Dupont has a juvenile Venusian dinosaur in the hold that he plans to sell to the Martians as part of an organized hunt event. The Baron tells everyone he has a car in the hold and goes down regularly to drug the creature. A very straightforward, outdoors person, who is terribly uncomfortable cooped up in an ether ship. Unlike many of Harrington-Hyde's "friends", he has never been targeted by scams, mainly because Harrington-Hyde already sucked up all of his parents' money in a scam 15 years ago.

Henri has suffered near-constant low-level abuse from Montague since they first met; Harrington-Hyde berates Henri for his lack of manners, his low fortune, his social awkwardness, and his inability to find a wife. Montague has used Henri as a guide and a shill on numerous occasions, paying him a pittance for his trouble. This abuse has nurtured a genuine hatred of Harrington-Hyde. Henri feels that everything bad about his life stems from his involvement with Harrington-Hyde. About two years ago, Henri met Cecilia for the first time as she left her upper-class finishing school, and the two fell in love. Montague would never hear of Cecilia marrying "so low" and so the two concealed their relationship.

Henri's hatred of Montague and his desire to live a life with Cecilia have combined into a single unspoken thought: he must kill Montague Harrington-Hyde. He could never bring himself to do this under normal circumstances, until the day he saw Harrington-Hyde strike Cecilia. He then takes the dose of Martian poison he had on hand in case his *Tyrannosaurus giganteus* broke loose and injects Harrington-Hyde with it. Henri is wracked with remorse from the moment the needle enters Harrington-Hyde's body and he flees the scene of the crime almost immediately, absent-mindedly taking with him the money that Harrington-Hyde had handed him a moment before to hold.

Appearance: Baron Henri Dupont has short dark hair and tanned skin from his time spent outdoors. He is painfully bad at socializing and only truly happy away from society. He tries to



Sir Dupont

fit in, but apart from his title he really has nothing in common with his upper-class peers.

Mrs. Millicent Ardior

‘Millie’, as she is known to her friends, is a married woman and Harrington-Hyde’s sometime lover. She is desperately unhappy in her marriage and hoped that if she got a divorce Montague would marry her—but the fraudster had no desire to be tied to a “penniless wench” and told her so. Millicent is furious with him for spurning her and had him beaten up by her husband by claiming Montague made an inappropriate comment to her. The easily enraged Arthur was only too happy to beat up Monty but in a darkened street accidentally attacked Harrington-Hyde’s valet instead and nearly killed the man. She arrives on board ship with a cooler head and with the hope that Montague has changed his mind about them being together. If he hasn’t, then Millie can always prod her husband into action with another lie.

Millie isn’t the brightest star in the sky and she married a man even duller than her. The only thing she really cares about in this world is getting away from her husband and marrying Monty. She can sometimes manipulate her husband, but mostly when she tries it she ends up on the wrong end of his fists.

Appearance: Millicent Ardior is a woman in her late 50s and clearly a former beauty.



Mr. Arthur Ardior

Mrs. Ardior’s husband and Harrington-Hyde’s former university classmate has a borderline personality disorder. Paranoid, none too bright, and full of rage, Arthur beats his wife, alternatively terrifying and disgusting her. His own servants live in fear of him. Arthur hates Montague because he involved him in a fake gold mine scheme that made them a lot of money but made it look like Arthur was the one who planned it so he could blackmail him. Millie’s hints that Montague has been less than proper towards her have only blackened Arthur’s mood further. If Arthur found out the truth about Millicent’s infidelity, he would kill her and Montague without hesitation.

Arthur is on board because Montague demanded his presence; Harrington-Hyde expects Arthur to cough up a considerable sum of money in exchange for his silence regarding their previous dealings. Arthur is a volcano of rage and it takes very little for him to verbally abuse people, and only a little more for him to resort to fisticuffs. Mr. Ardior is quick to find fault with others, making dismissive blanket declarations about nations and peoples, and to blacken the name of anyone who he feels inferior to, which is pretty much everyone. Arthur doesn’t get a lot of recent trends and gets very angry when people try to explain them to him. He has a fragile ego and within a few days most people on board ship give him a wide berth.

Arthur can also be overly friendly with those he has just met, making people slightly uncomfortable when he uses very emotional language around them. This usually makes the person pull away and heightens Arthur’s feelings of rejection. Most of his “best friends” become dire enemies in a very short time.

Appearance: Arthur Ardior is a bald, ruddy-faced man with a barrel chest and broad shoulders. He is slightly shorter than

average with unusually large hands frequently balled up into fists as he tries to control his temper.

Miss Alice St. George

Young, broke, and orphaned, Miss Alice St. George travels to join her aunt on Mars, where she is to be married to a low-level official in the British colonial government. For a scion of a once noble and wealthy line, there could be no worse fate. Alice never knew her mother, who died in childbirth and doted upon her father, James. James took his own life a year ago when the investment that Harrington-Hyde told him was foolproof proved to be a scam and left him broke. Harrington-Hyde offered Miss St. George the trip in the hope of setting up a further scam involving her aunt. Alice lacked the funds to argue and felt that maybe she could use Monty’s generosity to somehow exact some kind of revenge for her father’s death, perhaps by involving his daughter in some kind of scandal if the opportunity presented itself. Alice knows Cecilia Harrington-Hyde from their finishing school and uses this relationship to strike at Harrington-Hyde if possible.

Alice is painfully aware of her shift in fortune and is on the lookout for a husband of means to support her in the way she has become accustomed to. If she can somehow secure a marriage before the ship docks in Tossia, then she might escape the life of boredom and drudgery that she sees ahead of her. Alice has a rather strong laudanum addiction and her supply was lost during boarding. Now she must beg the ship’s doctor for some of his limited stock, which results in her going through minor withdrawal symptoms during the trip. Someone with a suspicious mind may think the illness is morning sickness, which would make sense with her being sent to Mars, but this is not the case.

As the trip progresses Alice becomes increasingly desperate as time goes on and is likely to overstep the bounds of propriety in her attempts to secure her future. You may, if you wish, decide that Alice is willing to stoop to theft to gain the funds necessary to continue living her high lifestyle.

Alice’s aunt insisted that she be accompanied by Mrs. Jones, a professional chaperone. The old woman had no idea that the lady she hired was a fraud and used to be a professional escort. Mrs. Jones keeps a tight eye on Alice and does what she can to help her, hoping that as the young woman’s fortunes rise, so might her own.

Appearance: Alice St. George has curly, strawberry blond hair, pale skin, and a dazzling smile. Dresses well but her fashions are a few seasons out of date and some pieces are quite worn.

Mrs. Daisy Jones

Mrs. Daisy Jones is Miss St. George’s chaperone and claims to be a Welsh widow. This is a lie that hides an uglier truth: she is actually Jacqueline Calonne, a famous French actress and courtesan. Daisy retired from that career ten years ago and went into hiding when she fell afoul of a notorious European crime cartel. Her savings gone, Daisy managed to lie her way into her current position using her acting talents and hopes to make a new life for herself on Mars, perhaps using Miss St. George to secure this life.

Daisy is recognized by Worthington early in the trip. Worthington tries to convince Daisy to seduce Harrington-Hyde and steal the contents of the safe. Daisy refuses and Worthington reveals the truth of her background to Alice who, to Worthington’s surprise, finds the whole thing quite romantic. When Worthington threatens to reveal all to Alice’s aunt, Daisy casually mentions that she knows about his criminal past too and he backs off.

Following these events, Daisy and Alice become more like co-conspirators than mistress and servant. They can be found conspiring in corners and Daisy tells Alice tales of her wild days in Paris and London while they plot to seduce a wealthy man.

Appearance: With curly red hair and creamy skin, Daisy Jones could be mistaken for Alice's older sister or perhaps an aunt. Even without makeup and in her servant's uniform, this woman in her early 40s makes for a striking figure.



Mr Harrows

Mr Edward Harrows

This young American hedonist and all-around cad joins the cruise because Harrington-Hyde has blackmail material on him which he hopes to buy back in exchange for a large sum of money. Harrington-Hyde, however, would rather Harrows marry his daughter so that he can gain access to the American's family fortune and connections. Harrows and Harrington-Hyde argue more than once

before the latter's death, the former cajoling and threatening, trying to get Monty to accept money rather than being forced into a marriage he would hate.

Harrows is feckless and infamous for his wild lifestyle. He is also rude and arrogant in the extreme. The young man is likely to rub half the passengers the wrong way and to try his luck with any woman he thinks attractive. Harrows's father wants to see him settled down in a good marriage, but so far he has managed to avoid this fate. His father worries that his son's reputation will be so damaged that he will never make a good match.

Harrows is also a peeping tom, a vice that will likely cause him to be ostracized from good society. Harrows's father paid a considerable sum to hide one instance of this from public view and threatened to disinherit the young man should it happen again. Of course, it did happen again, and it was Harrington-Hyde this time who found Harrows out and covered it up. Now Monty has a powerful hold over the foolish young man, a hold he plans to exploit to its fullest.

Miss Harrington-Hyde's mendacious revelation that Harrows is the father of her child drives Montague into a frenzy as he believes that Harrows has done this to get back at him for the blackmail. Montague goes as far as to threaten the young man with death but holds back since Harrows is his best bet for finding Cecilia a good marriage. Harrows has a keen interest in theatre and the occult, spending time in the company of actors and famous occult figures such as Annie Horniman and William Stead. What neither Harrows senior nor Harrington-Hyde realize is that Edward is a closeted homosexual, hiding behind his reputation as a notorious womanizer. During the course of the voyage, he begins a relationship with the ship's doctor, Peter Scanlon.

Appearance: Edward Harrows is a dapper young man, always well dressed in the morning though he tends to look a bit disheveled by the time evening comes around. He is slim and pale with black hair and a winning smile.

Lady Darcy Miller

Lady Darcy Miller is an independent heiress with no close family who has chosen the life of an adventuress over that of a "mewling wife of some ignorant prig". Lady Miller spent her early life travelling with her businessman father until his death a few weeks

short of her 18th birthday. In the last five years Lady Miller has visited 6 continents, hunted dinosaurs on Venus, and taken on every challenge she could find. Lady Miller hopes to find new adventures on Mars, perhaps riding out with Hill or High Martians or discovering lost cities under the endless dunes.

Lady Miller doesn't take no for an answer, flaunts conventions, and wears shocking outfits like trousers and men's shirts. Nothing fazes her and she looks down on anyone who treats her like a delicate flower. She is boisterous and full of life, telling stories that would make most ladies blush. Lady Miller's money attracted Harrington-Hyde's attention a while back and he invited her on board in the hopes of selling her on some scheme on Mars, perhaps an expedition to a "lost city" or something similar which would require significant financial backing, most of which Monty would pocket for himself of course.

Lady Miller knows Baron Dupont from a safari they took together a few years ago. This relationship might draw withering gazes from Miss Harrington-Hyde. She spends a lot of time researching an "ancient Martian map" that Monty gave her which he claims leads to a vast hidden treasure, requiring only the services of a translator and access to one of the city-state archives to unlock.

Appearance: Lady Darcy Miller wears what she likes, only rarely wearing dresses or "civilized" clothing. Safari clothing is a staple of her wardrobe and she lets her curly brown hair run riot.

Colonel Horace Whistpole (Retired)



Col Whistpole

Colonel Horace Whistpole is a decent man who served in India for decades before coming home to Britain to retire a few years ago. A long time ago, Whistpole accidentally shot a fellow officer during a rebellion and Harrington-Hyde was there to witness the event. Harrington-Hyde helped to cover up the accidental killing and since then has held this over the guilt-racked Colonel. The Colonel's fortune is almost spent and he has had to move to more modest accommodations than his rank would suggest.

Only last year was Horace able to bring himself to tell his wife Abigail what happened. She was shocked and then disgusted by Harrington-Hyde's behavior. Horace sees everything that he has suffered since the accident as penance for his actions and takes it all on his own shoulders. He is close to the breaking point, however, and his wife senses this. If they are to keep what little money and honor they have left, something must be done. The invitation from Harrington-Hyde has made both Horace and Abigail very nervous and they are clearly unhappy to be aboard the *Aetheria*.

The Colonel, like many retired military men, likes to tell war stories and relate funny stories of his time in the colonies. He has an easy manner and people enjoy being around him, younger men and women being treated as favored nephews and nieces. The Colonel's health is not the best since retiring, as the cold English winters have taken their toll on him. He has a pronounced cough that never quite gets better.

Horace clams up around Montague and gets very quiet whenever he enters a room. The personality shift is quite jarring, even to those who are barely socially aware.

Appearance: The Colonel's clothing, while expensive, has clearly seen better days. He was once an imposing figure but time and worry have reduced him to a thin, balding shadow of his former self.

Mrs. Abigail Whistpole

Mrs. Abigail Whistpole comes from a distinguished military family. Her ancestors fought and died for any number of kings and lords down through the centuries. Having lost so many family members to wars, it is perhaps not surprising that Mrs. Whistpole hates the military. It is a testament to her love for her husband Horace that she married him at all. When Horace confessed his crime to her, she could see how difficult it had been for him and was filled with anger at Montague Harrington-Hyde for the years of suffering he inflicted on her husband.

When they got the invitation to go on board the *Aetheria*, it was Abigail who convinced her husband to go with a plan to confront Harrington-Hyde and make him hand over the blackmail material. She and Miss Harrington-Hyde have met a few times down through the years, Abigail playing the role of the favorite aunt. The two enjoy each other's company but in the last two years she has watched Miss Harrington-Hyde treat the young Baron Henri Dupont truly badly and can only imagine that it is her father's influence rubbing off. With that in mind, Abigail gives Miss Harrington-Hyde the cold shoulder on board the ship. Little does she know that Cecilia is just hiding her true affection for Henri from her imperious father.

Abigail spends most of the trip trying to come up with a plan to get the incriminating papers back but it isn't until late in the trip that she seizes on the opportunity provided by the Fenian attack to confront him head on with her husband's old service pistol. She has no intention of actually hurting him, just frightening him a little with a few gunshots hidden by the Fenian shots. When Mrs. Whistpole arrives in Monty's stateroom, she finds him unconscious on the floor and all the old anger and hatred about what he did to her husband overcomes her. She places a pillow over his face and smothers him to death, then takes the leather case with all the blackmail material Monty has and leaves.

A short time later, Worthington, who saw her near the stateroom during the attempted takeover, figures out that she must have taken the blackmail material and attacks her in her cabin while her husband Horace is in the lounge playing cards. Worthington doesn't find the blackmail material; Mrs. Whistpole destroyed the file on her husband and was planning on reading the rest before deciding what to do with them. She was sensible enough not to keep the files in her cabin, and instead stashed them in an unfinished duct near her cabin.

Mrs. Whistpole spends most of the trip moving between the arts and crafts room and the arboretum deck. She is a remarkable painter and her starscapes and images of the Earth and Luna are quite breathtaking. She gives away her work to anyone who expresses an appreciation for it. Mrs. Whistpole worked for a time in a field hospital during the early days of the British Raj and has quite a bit of medical knowledge that she sometimes drops into conversation.

Appearance: A grey-haired woman in her late 60s, Abigail Whistpole has a slim figure and walks slowly with a walking stick. She is actually quite spry and doesn't need the stick but finds that people take her more seriously when she brandishes it.

Mr. Harold Worthington MR

Harold Worthington is a wealthy man who owes the core of his wealth to some very dirty dealings in his past. He came from



penniless gentry but made his money smuggling opium before moving into more honest businesses and finally getting elected to parliament. Harrington-Hyde has evidence proving Worthington's past and could expose him at any time. Having an MP in his pocket has proved very useful in quashing legal issues in the past but as Harrington-Hyde's crimes built up, Harold found himself in danger of exposure from both the blackmail material and the crimes he was helping to cover up.

Eventually this reached a point about a month ago where Harold decided that he had to deal with Montague once and for all. He sent an assassin to kill Monty but, as luck would have it, he only succeeded in killing Harrington-Hyde's bodyguard. Undeterred, Harold formulated a new plan to lure Monty to some isolated place and kill him there himself. The trip on board the *Aetheria* came at an opportune time; clever use of airlocks enables the dumping of bodies, Tossia is a legal nightmare that makes it impossible to prosecute anyone, and lastly there are so many people on board with a reason to hate Harrington-Hyde that nobody would suspect a respected MP.

Worthington is a planner: he spends a great part of the voyage walking the ship, staking out the various cabins and walkways, testing the airlocks, and so on. He makes sure to be seen talking to all the right people and is always present at events, quietly enjoying festivities with a little smile on his face and a glass of something in his hand.

Appearance: Harold Worthington is of seemingly average build but hides corded muscle beneath his Savile Row suit. He has a neat moustache and a neatly trimmed head of curly brown hair.

Father Ignatius Ryan

An infamous Roman Catholic priest, notorious for his speeches on abstinence in all things and for advocating the most brutal punishments for homosexuality and other forms of "sexual deviance", Father Ignatius Ryan cleaves to a hyper-conservative faction of the Catholic Church which has arranged raids on places known for their "debauchery" such as Montgomery Street in Dublin. The priest's fiery rhetoric and violent actions have made him a lot of enemies within and outside the church. He goes to Mars with the twin intention of proselytizing and letting things quiet down in Britain for a while. Father Ryan remembers fondly his time punishing "the godless savages" in the colonies and hopes for more of the same on Mars.

Father Ryan has access to significant funds from his order, and it is this money that drew Harrington-Hyde's attention to the contentious priest. Ignatius is a closeted cross-dresser, a fact that Harrington-Hyde has used in the past as leverage against the priest, much to Father Ryan's shame and rage. Father Ryan knows he is in a precarious position: if Harrington-Hyde were to expose him, he would lose the support of his order and likely be defrocked. The church is the only home that Ignatius has ever known and he will not give it up willingly.

Appearance: Father Ryan has short white hair, balding on top, with a face that spends most of its time contorted in outrage. When not wearing one of his many frocks, he puts on a black cassock with a catholic priest's dog collar.

Ambassador Harraxx Othotho of Tossia

Ambassador Harraxx Othotho is a Tossian diplomat, one of a small group sent to Earth as part of a cultural exchange. After two years on Earth, Othotho has developed a certain phobia about being touched by humans and does everything he can to distance himself from everyone aboard, only leaving his stateroom when required by his duties or good manners. The Ambassador refuses to allow any more than one person into his quarters at a time and has one of his two servants (Alkaq and Broqin) clean up after each of them.



Othotho carries a staggering amount of baggage with him, which mostly consists of diaries of observations and a small mountain of human textbooks. These books are destined to be the initial endowment of a Martian Human Studies library. Othotho is a former judge and once exiled one of the ship's entertainment staff, Apellex Un'Nogo, from Tossia. Othotho does not recognize the former criminal, something that might come back to bite him later when Un'Nogo tries to frame him for Harrington-Hyde's death.

Anyone taking the time to get to know the Ambassador finds him to be a decent man with a wicked sense of humor honed by years of work as a judge. Othotho is very down to earth and enjoys games of strategy, the more complex the better. The Ambassador's collection of Martian games is quite impressive and he has managed to collect a few human ones to add to his collection such as chess and go, which he finds similar to an unspeakably ancient Martian game inspired by flood control.

During the course of the voyage, Harrington-Hyde produces a "genuine Martian relic" which he hopes to sell to one of the people on board. What he doesn't realize is that the relic is an Obin-Tah stone, a family ancestry record which happens to belong to the Ambassador's family and which was stolen from his townhouse in London. The Ambassador is furious and demands the return of the item. Monty offers to sell the item to Othotho, which the Ambassador takes as a dire insult. He responds by threatening Harrington-Hyde with the "curse of his ancestors" before storming back to his stateroom.

Appearance: The Ambassador is slim for a Canal Martian and wears gloves and goggles at all times. He has a small scar across his mouth from a failed assassination attempt back when he was a member of the judiciary. Othotho speaks English with a thick Texan accent since he learnt it from an American teacher; his time in London has tempered this somewhat.

Doctor Gaston Girard

Dr. Gaston Girard is a French-Canadian doctor who specializes in alien medicines. He claims to know all manner of alien treatments from across Mars and Venus; making a fortune selling his services to anyone who can afford them. This is the first time that he has left Earth, and most of the remedies and tonics he peddles are painkillers or placebos. Gaston isn't even a doctor, just a skilled amateur who unfortunately killed a few patients in the past. There are warrants outstanding for him in England, Germany, Canada, and America under different names. Gaston is also a petty thief and steals from other passengers.

Harrington-Hyde knows the truth about Gaston and hopes to blackmail him into handing over some of the vast sums of money

he has made. What Harrington-Hyde doesn't realize is that Gaston is a master of changing identities and evading the police and so really doesn't care if Harrington-Hyde exposes him as he will simply vanish into the night. Gaston hopes to find a totally new market for his potions and lotions on Mars; he plans to sell "human medicine" to the Martians.

At some point during the cruise, Dr. Girard puts a business proposition to the Martian ambassador but finds himself thrown out of Othotho's stateroom; the Ambassador has been a judge for too long to be fooled by a simple trickster. This treatment annoys Gaston and he makes sure to add his voice to any that wonder about the Ambassador's guilt in the murder.

Appearance: Gaston Girard is a handsome man with a small scar above his eye which just adds to his roguish look. He walks with a slight—faked—limp and carries a silver-tipped cane and a medical bag.

Mr. Jeff Combos

Jeff Combos is an American adventurer on his way to Mars, seeking to make a new life for himself. He has worked as a troubleshooter for the Cunard Line in the past, and they asked him to come along in case of any possible issues. Being American, his slightly rough manners are somewhat overlooked by the upper class who just shake their heads and mutter "Americans".

Combos's pair of silver-plated Colt Peacemakers is his pride and joy and it pains him to leave the pistols in his cabin. He spends most of his time on board ship in the smoking room or stalking the corridors like a trapped animal. He becomes increasingly unstable over time and jumps at any opportunity to engage in physical challenges, either bets or bar fights.

The attempted takeover of the ship by the Fenians is Combos's idea of heaven and he rises to the challenge with great gusto.

Appearance: Jeff Combos is lantern-jawed, with broad shoulders and a rumbling Texan accent. He dresses in quality clothing and is always clean-shaven, though otherwise not so good with his hygiene, smelling of inferior cigars. Combos tends to loom over people he speaks with and claps these people painfully on the shoulder when he tells what he considers a funny story.

Sean Ó Mathúna

Sean comes from a wealthy family based in Cork city in Ireland. One of their main interests is a small trading company which led him to a passion for airships and later the other planets of the solar system, particularly Mars.

While Liam O' Connor was raising funds for the construction of the *Fenian Ram*, Sean was swept up in the fervor and signed on as crew. He survived the destruction of the *Ram* but was gravely injured. His left side took the brunt of the damage: his leg was shattered, his arm and back scarred by shrapnel. To this day he walks with a noticeable limp. The whole misadventure shook sense into the young man and he left the Fenians under something of a cloud.

Sean now captains a privateer (with a Tossian letter of marque) acting against British and Belgian interests on Mars. He managed to wangle a ticket for the shakedown cruise through a contact in the Cunard Line and plans to use the knowledge gained during the voyage to hijack the ship at a later date. While on board, Sean claims to be a former military man but anyone with a naval background can tell that he's lying after a short conversation.

Sean doesn't know the other Fenians on board and will lend a hand in fighting them off if required. He also stands up for the Tossian ambassador on general principles if suspicion falls on him. You can use Sean to help with Martian cultural knowledge if the characters are unfamiliar with it. You can also use Sean as a red herring, as he spends much time mapping the ship and taking notes when he thinks nobody is watching.

Sean appears rather grim-faced on first meeting, but this mask slips from time to time, showing his kind nature. He has a great love of his adopted Martian home and truly despises the colonial powers' actions against the natives there.

Appearance: Sean walks with a pronounced limp and moves his left arm stiffly. A few small shrapnel scars on the left side of his face add to his roguish charm and he keeps his dark hair and moustache neatly trimmed.

Sean Gentry

Sean is a one-legged ex-serviceman who won the contract to operate the Lounge on board the ship. He spends most of his time in the bar, listening to people talk and training the steward who will run the place for him once the ship moves into regular service.

Sean is a former sergeant in the British armed forces who mustered out after losing his leg. He runs a down-and-dirty public house in Syrtis Major—*The Heroes Press*—which he uses as a front for various nefarious dealings. Sean has set himself up as a reputable fence for stolen goods and, because of his military connections, has so far had the authorities turn a blind eye to his operations.

Often underestimated, Sean likes to lull people into a false sense of security before he seals the deal with a masterful stroke of genius. Sean intends to use this new business to help smuggle items and people to and from Mars; this expansion could catapult him to the "big time". If you wish, you can have Sean recognize Harold Worthington and greet him warmly as Harry, only to have Worthington blank the man.

Appearance: Sean is clearly uncomfortable in his gentleman's clothing and would much rather be back on Mars running his criminal empire. He understands appearances and does his best to appear well turned out, but he's clearly a little out of his depth in terms of manners and dealing with the upper classes. He does his best to keep quiet and not attract attention.

Emily Constance Marie Peregrine (née Chatsworth), Countess of Danforth

The Countess is a rather unique and eccentric figure who travels the solar system aboard "The Duchess of Argyll", a lavish ether flyer built by her husband, Edmund Death Whately Peregrine, 12th Earl of Danforth, a renowned inventor. The countess holds regular salons on board her ship, seeking out guests who are interesting to talk to or involved in interesting things while also being capable of behaving in polite society and not overtly criminal.

The Countess was born in 1848, the daughter of the Duke of Barrington, and is the same age as her close friend, Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll (fourth daughter of Queen Victoria). She and Louise share many interests, including the women's rights, travel, and the arts. Perhaps it's not surprising that the Countess herself was awarded the Barony of Nepenthes, the sprawling estate on Mars bordering the hill country on the trade route between Syrtis Major and Meroe, also known as the spice region.

The Countess is returning to Mars from a season in London while her husband carries out a refit of her ship on Mars. The countess spends her time on board arranging social gatherings like those she would normally hold on board her own vessel. During these events the Countess may accidentally stumble across hidden secrets or provoke reactions the characters can use later. A keen student of human behavior, the Countess may notice something that the characters might find useful.

Appearance: The countess is a striking woman in her early 40s, fit from a life spent traveling the solar system and carving a home out of the wilderness. With her blonde hair, a ready smile, and sparkling blue eyes, the beautiful Lady Danforth possesses all of the charm, wit and grace required to deftly manage the myriad personalities her salons attract and the delicate situations they sometimes engender.

Baron-Captain Sandor Bagosy KoK Kriegsmarine

A veteran of the Seven Weeks' War of 1866, Sandor saw his first action at the age of seventeen at Lissa. After Lissa he spent a decade in the International Anti-Slaving Patrols off of East Africa, and then a large chunk of his career was spent on land in various colonial endeavors, as the commander of local garrisons and leader of various expeditions. He has just been promoted to the command of a small gunship fitted out for long-range exploration of the solar system, something he's always dreamed of, and awarded a small plot of land on Mars as a reward for his service. His wife and child have already gone ahead with the family servants while Sandor was delayed dealing with details of his promotion. His ship awaits him on Mars and the *Aetheria* was the first passage he could get.

Captain Bagosy is a member of an ennobled but relatively poor family. His grandfather fought against the Austrian Empire and was killed in action. His father, Janos, remained loyal to the crown, and attempted to save the family's fortune by enrolling Sandor at the earliest opportunity in the military. Bagosy is an honest, hardworking, competent officer, with a wry sense of humor. He often spends his off duty time reading and hopes, when he retires from the military, to take up archaeology as a profession.

Bagosy has a low tolerance for those born to high station or those promoted beyond their ability through favors or money. For this reason, he despises many of the nobility on board the ship and does nothing to hide this. The Captain neither drinks nor smokes, something that draws a suspicious eye from most gentlemen and officers; after all, if a man has no obvious vice he must have a hidden one. In reality, Captain Bagosy is a recovering drunk, having indulged as a young man as a result of his exposure to violent combat.

Bagosy is friendly enough to outsiders, unless they be feckless nobles, smugglers, slavers, or other ne'er-do-wells. Bagosy hasn't seen his family in months and is very lonely, lavishing his attention on his Transylvanian Hound, Claudius. You can use the dog to find clues that might otherwise go unnoticed such as bloodstains or scraps of clothing.

Appearance: Baron-Captain Bagosy stands six feet tall with broad shoulders and a perpetual five o'clock shadow. A dueling scar runs down his right cheek, a reminder of a sabre duel. Bagosy wears spectacles to correct his nearsightedness and wears his uniform well, though it is slightly worn from use and exposure to the elements.

Captain Alexander Hess VII

As a captain in the Russian Imperial Navy, Captain Alexander Hess VII has continually pushed for larger ether ships to compete with the other colonial powers. He is a gifted military commander and is popular with his men on Mars. He was recently called back to Russia to speak with his superiors in a political move that they hoped would dissipate his growing following. As a member of the lower aristocracy, Captain Hess has become used to this kind of discrimination but it still angers him.

Taking the RMS *Aetheria* to Mars is a deliberate move to avoid "accidents" happening to him while returning to his command. The captain also wants to spend some time examining the ether propeller and engine works of such a large vessel. He is mildly paranoid and anyone speaking in a Russian accent feeds into this. He has an interest in engineering and military history, bonding with any PC that shares these interests. Potential friends had best beware, however, as the captain is continually on the lookout for intelligence that could be of use to the Russian Empire.

Hess stays out of the way when the takeover attempt occurs, helping by keeping other passengers safe but not getting directly involved in the conflict. Captain Hess is a drinker and hedonist, spending much of his time in the smoking room drinking and gambling. He takes an instant dislike to Jeff Combos and the two take pains to avoid one another.

Appearance: Captain Hess is a short yet powerfully built man with a neatly trimmed black moustache and beard. He has a most impressive pair of bushy eyebrows which curl upward, giving him a fierce countenance when he wishes.

Victoria and Victor Giles

These 11-year-old twins are the son and daughter of Colonel Samuel Giles, currently stationed on Mars. The children lost their mother a month ago to illness, and their father has sent for them to come to him on Mars. The children are still in mourning for their mother but also very excited to travel in an ether ship and to see Mars. The children are accompanied by a governess, Mrs. Seacombe, but they run rings around her and spend most of the time hiding from her and having "adventures". Both children are very curious and anyone that gives them any time finds themselves in the middle of an interrogation about what they do, why they are on board, and what they plan to do on Mars. Both children are fans of the Sherlock Holmes stories and are completely enchanted when an actual murder mystery happens in front of them.

The children's explorations of the ship may uncover something unusual and PCs befriending them might find them to be a useful source of information.

Appearance: The twins both have curly blond hair. Victor wears a navy sailor suit and Victoria wears a navy dress with a white pinafore on top.

Captain Klaus Nowacki

The captain of the *Aetheria* is the half-German, half-Polish Klaus Nowacki. He is a very experienced officer, formerly of the German Ether Navy, who has seen more than one battle in the skies of Mars. The captain joined the Cunard Line three years ago with



the understanding that he would command their new flagship when it was ready. Captain Nowacki is very proud of his ship and doesn't take well to criticisms or unfavorable comparisons. Pointing out that the *Princess Alexandra* is slightly longer guarantees a venom-laden glare and a cold shoulder. On the other hand, asking questions that allow the captain to boast about his vessel's capabilities such as its speed and handling warm him up immediately.

The captain's son, Andreas, is very ill. The White Star Line has offered Captain Nowacki a hefty sum of money to pay for Andreas's treatment, in exchange for him somehow disabling the ship and making it look bad on its maiden voyage later in the year. Captain Nowacki keeps the letter with the offer in his cabin but doesn't intend to take the White Star Line up on their offer. He is getting desperate regarding his son and the normally pragmatic and suspicious man might be taken in by one of Doctor Girard's miracle cures.

Captain Nowacki is a little reserved in larger groups (he's quite shy but hides it well) and dislikes being questioned when he gives an order. He is soft spoken and quite charming when talking privately. He carries himself with a certain sadness and a skilled alienist can tell that he carries a burden. While Andreas's sickness is not part of the plot, a player character with a medical background might, at the GM's option, be able to come up with a cure for the boy's malady.

Appearance: Klaus Nowacki is a slim man with curly blond hair and watery blue eyes. He only smiles in private, but when he does he leaves the recipient feeling somewhat blessed.

First Mate Simon Shaw

A real talker, the crew members joke that Shaw even talks in his sleep. Shaw acts like a big brother to everyone on the ship, joking with the kitchen staff one minute, discussing technical matters with Chief Engineer Philips the next, and chatting with guests about the best marketplaces in Tossia after that. Shaw is always on the move, barely spending more than a few minutes in one place before moving on to the next. He's clearly either the busiest man alive or he's trying to stop people from getting too close.

Shaw is Anglo-Irish and a former Fenian who left the organization after participating in the assassination of a British army officer in Cork, eight years ago. Since then, Shaw has spent a long time trying to forget about his crime. He keeps the pistol he took from the officer and a newspaper clipping of the crime report hidden in his suitcase. He knows Maura Joyce from his time with the Fenians and recognized her on sight; she recognized him in return and blackmails him to help her take over the ship.

Appearance: A strapping man with a round face and a bald pate. Shaw smiles easily and rubs his bald head when thinking or worried, which is often since Joyce arrived on board.

Chief Engineer Andrew Philips

Andrew Philips is a soft-spoken Scottish man who has the respect of the crew and officers. His job is to keep the ship's technical parts running smoothly and he takes it very seriously. He suffers from terrible insomnia and can be spotted at all hours walking the ship. His lack of sleep and slightly paranoid nature combine to convince him that there is something wrong with the ship's ether propeller. As the trip progresses, Philips becomes increasingly unreliable and unstable. As it happens, Philips's fears aren't entirely unfounded: the ship's ether propeller is one of the fastest ever

built but it is temperamental and must be constantly monitored to maintain its performance.

By the time the Fenians strike, Philips is already on the edge. Following these events, he tears apart various ship systems, hunting for bombs or other sabotage. A skilled alienist or doctor can get Philips to calm down, perhaps prescribing sleeping medication or just getting him to talk through his obsessive behavior. If the PCs do nothing to calm him, Philips is one of the first to accuse the Martian Ambassador of murdering Montague Harrington-Hyde.

Philips's strange notes written in chalk on bare-metal parts of the ship might also cause the player characters to wonder if he's lost his mind. At the GM's option, Philips's night-time wanderings may allow him to spot something unusual like a clandestine meeting, something being hidden, or a person out of place.

Appearance: Andrew Philips stands a little over six feet tall with dark hair and a neatly trimmed moustache. He smooths his moustache when thinking or when feeling nervous. Given his job, this often leads to small oil smears on the side of his face.



Mr. George Jones

George Jones is the ship's purser, responsible for managing both guest relations and the hotel side of the ship. Jones serves as the liaison between the officers and the guests, though on a ship this size it is a fairly easy job compared to the ocean liners he is used to working on. Jones is a nervous man, originally from Wales, and very eager to please everyone. PCs can play on this eagerness, getting Jones to agree to all manner of requests if they phrase it with enough authority or persuasion. For example, weapons brought aboard must be locked up, but a quick word to Jones might get him to waive that restriction.

Aside from the welcome each passenger receives, the player characters are likely to encounter Jones as part of the investigation as he has access to every location on board ship thanks to his set of skeleton keys. He also holds the keys to the weapons safe, kept in his office. Guests can store valuables in a series of strongboxes in his office. Jones's eagerness to please leads him to lend his keys to Cecilia, who uses them to open the 2nd-class deck for her illicit liaisons with Henri.

Appearance: George Jones is lightly built, prematurely balding, with a nervous smile and a habit of drumming his fingers together when talking in public. He wears an impeccable suit which he constantly picks imaginary lint from.

Mr. Alessandro Baldini

The Italian band leader, Alessandro Baldini, is a smooth-talking charmer who can play a stunning array of instruments with practiced ease. He wasn't meant to be on the shake-down cruise but called in a favor from the captain in order to join as band leader. Baldini is an incredible entertainer with a soft spot for beautiful women and an honorable streak that he can ill afford.

A little over a year ago, Alessandro's younger brother Francesco was working at a club and got into a fight over a woman with Harrington-Hyde. Francesco was killed by Harrington-Hyde but the court ruled that the latter acted in self-defense—after he pulled a few strings with Harold Worthington MP. Alessandro doesn't

want Montague dead, he wants him to confess to the crime of murder. Baldini and his band spend most of their time playing in the lounge or the arboretum, depending on the time of day.

Appearance: Alessandro Baldini is a rather dashing, clean-shaven Italian man with dark hair and eyes. He is notably short but very charming and has an incredible singing voice. He takes immense pride in his appearance and doesn't take insults regarding his height well.

Baldini stares hatefully at Harrington-Hyde whenever they are in a room together. Harrington-Hyde has no idea who Baldini is or why he dislikes him. During the voyage, Baldini slips threatening but ambiguous notes under Harrington-Hyde's door which demand that he confess his crimes and clear his conscience.

Miss Maura Joyce

Maura Joyce is the chief cook on board the *Aetheria*—and a Fenian agent from Cork. She recognized Simon Shaw from their time working together years ago and is now blackmailing him to help her in her plot. Maura was sent by her Fenian masters to capture the vessel and use it to ram the *Foresage*, the British heliograph station above Mars, in the hope of drawing more British troops to Mars and leaving Ireland open for a fresh rebellion.

Maura and her three accomplices (a steward, Padraig, and two seamen, Colm and Thomas) have stashed firearms and some smoke bombs in the cargo hold and plan to use these to take over the vessel. Should these weapons be uncovered, the Fenians arm themselves with kitchen knives or steal weapons from other sources such as Mr. Combos's pistols or the PCs' weapons. Getting into the ship's weapons locker is a last resort.

Maura's father and older brother were mistakenly shot by British troops seeking runaway prisoners. This event radicalized the previously apolitical young woman and she soon joined the Fenians, at first hiding agents and later becoming one herself. Maura has killed before and has almost no qualms about killing again. Though she spouts republican rhetoric, she is really fueled by a thirst for revenge.

Maura fights in a good-natured way with the French pastry chef Louis Valmont, whom she finds both infuriating and somewhat attractive. Louis is one of the few people who truly don't care about nationality, race, or religion. Growing up amongst radical terrorists and religious fanatics, Maura can't help but find him interesting.

Maura takes the time to get to know every part of the ship, flirting with officers to access areas and find out more information. She knows a lot about ether ships for a cook, something that someone might notice if they spend time talking to her.

Appearance: Maura Joyce is extremely short and wiry, with dark auburn hair in loose curls. She has a wicked sense of humor and a crooked smile that many find appealing. Maura's clothing is usually stained by the meals she spends most of her time preparing.

Mr. Apellex Un'Nogo

Apellex Un'Nogo is a Canal Martian entertainer, thief, and opportunist who has spent time travelling to find new and exciting forms of music and entertainment. He plans to bring these back to Mars and make his fortune as a "human cultural expert". He knows Ambassador Othotho from the older man's time as the Martian version of a judge. Othotho exiled Un'Nogo from Tossia because of repeated thefts and pickpocketings. The Ambassador

does not recognize Un’Nogo but the younger man sees the events on board ship as a means to get revenge on Othotho.

Un’Nogo has spent the last few years on board ships from the White Star Line, until his habit of relieving guests of their valuables was discovered and he was quietly fired to prevent a scandal. During the voyage, Un’Nogo tries to keep his impulses in check but can’t help stealing a few items of jewelry that catch his attention.

Appearance: Appellex Un’Nogo is a typical Canal Martian, with slightly larger ears than normal and a lopsided smile.

3rd Officer Peter Scanlon

Peter Scanlon hails from Birmingham, England, and gets some teasing from his fellow officers for his strong Midlands accent. Scanlon has a medical background, practicing as a surgeon for three years until a botched operation on a member of the aristocracy left him unable to find work in that field. A friend managed

to get him a job with the Cunard Line and Scanlon took well to the navigation skills required of his new post.

Scanlon hopes to make 1st officer someday (he doesn’t want the responsibility of being captain), and the Line is pleased to have a qualified doctor on board that they don’t have to pay extra for, albeit one with a “history”. Scanlon’s skills are likely to help in the investigation as he is not averse to performing an autopsy if required. He is currently reading a book on Martian plant life sent to him by the author, an old friend from medical school. During the course of the voyage, Scanlon starts a secret homosexual relationship with Edward Harrows and they snatch time together whenever they can.

A guest may, at the GM’s option, recognize Scanlon from the newspapers and complain loudly about “that butcher” being allowed on board.

Appearance: Peter Scanlon is a tall, clean-shaven, sandy-haired man who speaks only infrequently and hunches slightly to hide his height. He is academically brilliant, writes terrible poetry, and is more than a little socially awkward.

Appendix 2: Life Aboard Ship

The Crew and Watches

Life on board ship is divided into seven “watches”. Most of these are 4 hours long, except for the first and last dog watches, which are 2 hours each (16:00 to 18:00 and 18:00 to 20:00, respectively). The crew cycle between these watches and organize their schedules accordingly. The passengers don’t really experience these watches.

Clothing

Goggles are mandatory for everyone on board ship, but while the crew wear them at all times, the upper-class passengers tend to ignore this rule with the exception of the Martian ambassador and the few military men on board. Everyone wears dining goggles at mealtimes because scrubbing stray food particles from the

eyes would be undignified. All crew wear a pair of heavy gloves on their belts in case of issues with the steam pipes that weave through most portions of the vessel.

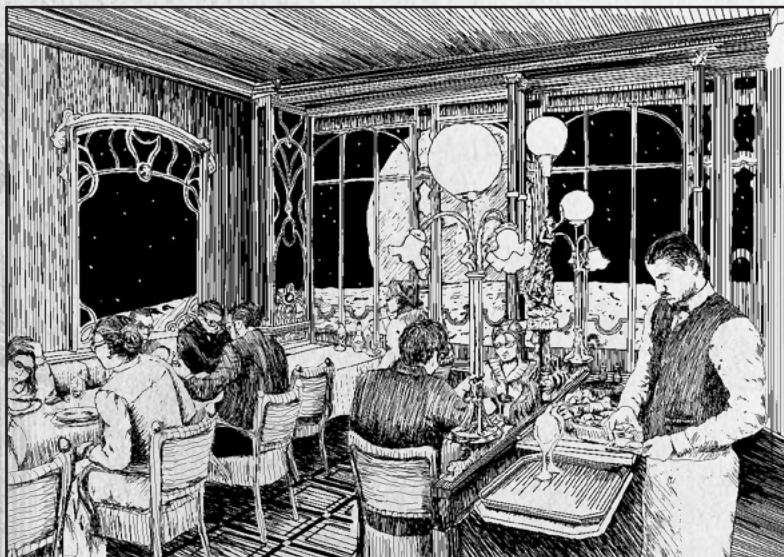
The “zero-gravity” environment requires everyone to wear magnetic shoes in order not to fly about. In addition to footwear, most garments contain either magnetic fasteners to keep them from flying around, or are carefully “pinned and lined”. Pinned and lined clothing is tailored with fine silken threads or “lines” (akin to the guy lines of a tent) to prevent it from flying around in an unseemly manner. Many women wear magnetic boot straps that attract metal beading sewn into the hems of their dresses.

For more information about zero-gravity on board an ether flyer and related optional rules, see the *Space: 1889 core rulebook*, page 135.

Eating and Bathing

Dining can be tricky in zero-gravity but a person of good breeding finds a way. Liquids are served in sealed containers and nearly everything is magnetized in some way. Sandwiches are pinned to cork-lined plates and the cooks avoid preparing foods that flake or crumble overly much. Tables in the main dining rooms contain foot-pump-operated vacuum devices to whisk away unwanted food particles.

Bathing in zero-gravity is achieved with the Browne-Wallace patent-pending “bathing mask and lavador tank”. The apparatus consists of an upright brass tank with a watertight opening on top, a viewing porthole, and a built-in breathing tube (complete with nose plugs). The would-be bather enters the tank, closes the entry port, and places the mask on their face. A servant then turns on the water which fills the tank with



warm, scented water, and allows the bather to clean themselves. Afterwards the water is drained away and the bather exits the tank. The potential for drowning, scalding, and other horrible deaths is not lost on most bathers.

Reculiarities

The first thing that many passengers notice about the vessel's public areas is that they contain a great deal of plants. This was a conscious decision on the part of the designers to improve air quality and, as recommended by a leading alienist, to improve morale. The stewards who have to water the copious number of plants joke that those get more attention than the crew.

Distractions

Between the many facilities offers by the *Aetheria* (see Appendix 3) and the program of concerts and talks, there is little need for further distractions. This said, the passengers take time to create their own distractions according to their interests. Mr. Harrows, for example, organizes semi-regular séances which prove very popular, especially when he tries to contact an ancient Martian spirit. A treasure hunt arranged by Miss Harrington-Hyde draws some attention, and a riddle contest hosted by Colonel Whistpole turns into a surprisingly competitive event.

Appendix 3: The RMS Aetheria

The RMS *Aetheria* is the first of its class, a massive trans-system ship intended to enable the rich and powerful to move in complete luxury between the inner planets. The ship exceeds previous vessels in size and offers luxuries that up to now were only dreamt of on ether ships—aside from perhaps the rival White Star's flagship, the *Princess Alexandra*. In a break from tradition, the *Aetheria* was laid down in the Belfast-based Harland and Wolff shipyard; traditionally the maker of the White Star Line's vessels. This turnaround has annoyed the White Star Line and made both the Cunard Line and Harland and Wolff a little paranoid. The flyers advertising the *Aetheria* take pains to mention that it is faster than the White Star Line's *Princess Alexandra* (though this is not proven yet), while the *Alexandra*'s flyers mention its greater length.

Note: the ship's RMS designation stands for Royal Mail Ship, denoting that the vessel carries mail for the Royal Mail Service between Earth and Mars. If the *Aetheria* proves its enhanced speed, it will divert a significant amount of Royal Mail business away from the White Star Line, hence the rival line's desire to see it fail.

Locations

Steering Bridge

Also known as a wheelhouse, this bridge contains the controls for maneuvering the ship as well as its primary navigation equipment. Interestingly, it is sealed and lacks windows to the outside, being enclosed inside the Navigation Bridge. This design is thought to keep the pilots focused. The bridge usually has one officer and one crewman present at all times as pilots, and is locked from the inside as a precaution against piracy, mutiny, or passenger dissent.

Navigation Bridge

This room contains the navigation charts and secondary equipment and is outfitted with a series of portholes spaced in order to maximize fields of vision. Two powerful telescopes help with distance viewing. The Navigation Bridge encloses the Steering Bridge in a design inherited from ocean-going vessels. Orders from the officers on the Navigation Bridge are relayed to the pilots in the Steering Bridge. A single crewman stands guard outside the Navigation Bridge; a duty that nobody enjoys since it is very boring and impossible to shirk because of all the officers passing

by all the time. The Navigation Bridge brings together elements of a traditional bridge and a chart room.

Communications Station

This small room contains the controls for the ship's signaling mirrors and its telescopes, used to view the stations in orbit above Mars and Earth and to communicate with nearby ships.

Boiler Room

This large but cramped chamber contains the solar boiler and its controls. Most of the space here is taken up by the boiler, its steam and water pipes, and the support structures of the mirrors.

Engineering

Another cramped chamber, containing the ether screw and the various controls needed to run it.

Engineering Monitoring Room

A small chamber between Engineering and the Boiler Room, used to monitor the technical systems of both areas. A crewman and a technician are usually on duty here at any one time. This is another unpopular duty since the designers sacrificed space in favor of the passenger areas.

Water Closet

These are luxurious and decorated in the most modern styles. A special chemical-vacuum system whisks away matter and smells almost instantly. Uses almost no water, despite the name.

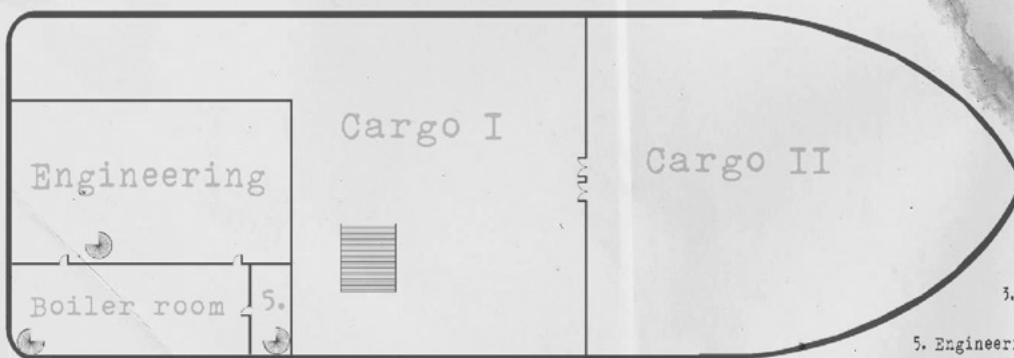
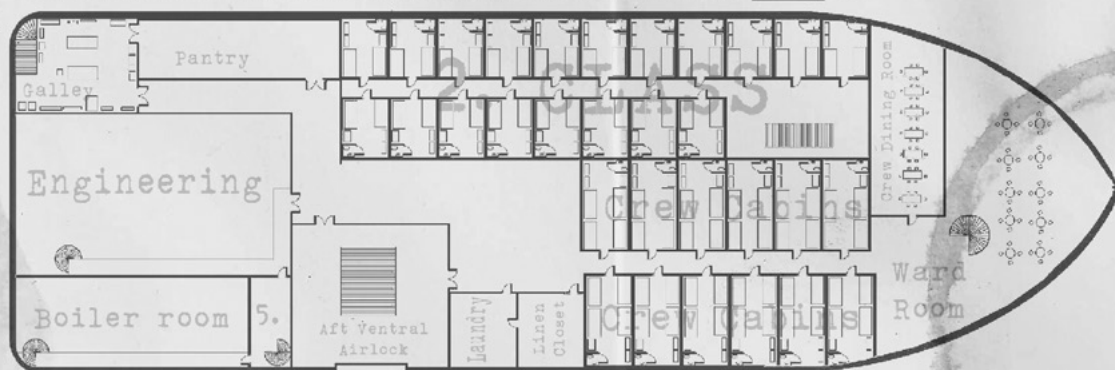
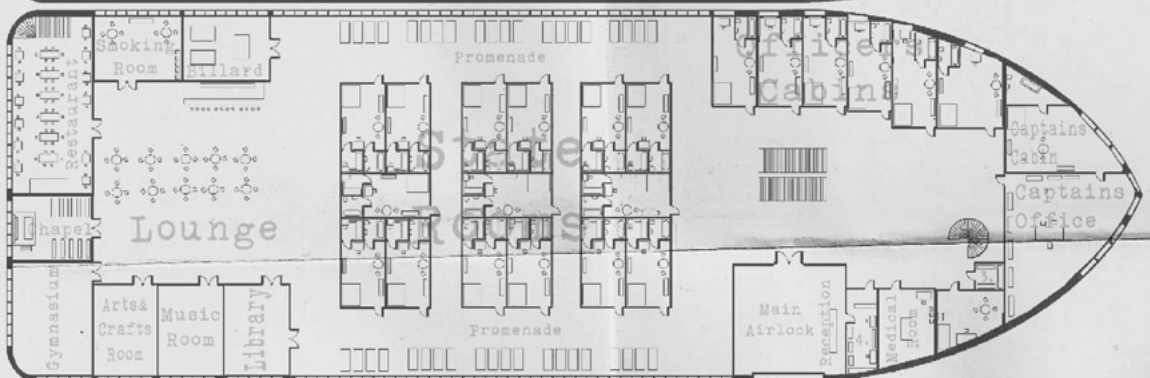
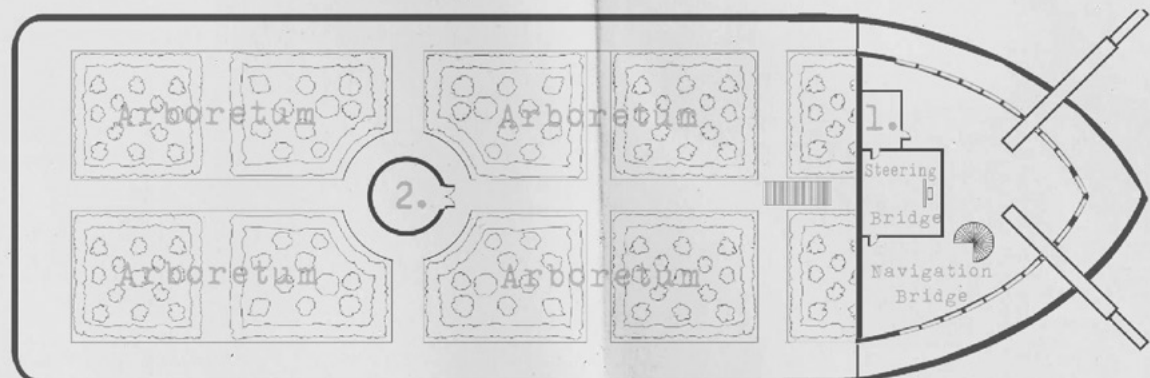
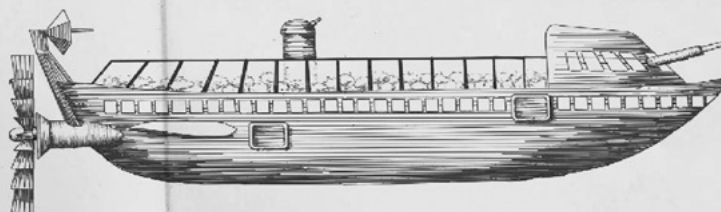
Bathroom

Bathing in zero-gravity can be tricky, but the modern enclosed baths complete with air "bathing masks" result in a relaxing and comfortable experience. Passenger staterooms (as well as the captain's cabin) have their own bathrooms and are appropriately decorated. The officers share a bathroom while the crew share another. The captain insists on regular bathing for all crew, something that doesn't sit well with some people.

Galley

A large room filled with activity most of the time but calming down during the night. A single member of staff stays here most of the time to cater to special requests by passengers.

ROYAL MAIL SHIP AETHERIA



- 1. Communications Station
- 2. Observatory
- 3. Emergency Storage
- 4. Purser's Office
- 5. Engineering Monitoring Room

Pantry

A series of interlinked cool rooms and larders used to store food. Only the cooks have unrestricted access to these rooms, though all the staff spend time here in the course of their duties.

Ward Room

The officers' mess and recreation room. All the ship's officers spend at least some of their free time here playing cards, telling stories, or listening to gramophone records.

Captain's Office

The captain spends much of his time, when on duty, between this room and the Navigation Bridge.

Captain's Cabin

A room as well-appointed as the best of the passenger staterooms.

Officers' Cabins

Six small but private cabins, each with a small writing desk, locker, and bunk, as well as a small personal water closet. The petty officers share a single cabin, slightly larger than the standard one.

Crew Cabins

These rather cramped cabins each have four bunks and a single water closet.

Crew Dining Room

The crew and petty officers share this dining room which doubles as a club of sorts. It can get quite loud at times but the captain believes that it is good for morale. The band frequently plays saucy or risqué songs that they aren't allowed to perform for the guests.

Main Airlock

This is the ship's main point of entry and the first glimpse the passengers have of their new home away from home. With this in mind, the airlock is beautifully decorated with a marble floor carved with the image of the solar system, and walls covered with paintings of landscapes from Venus, Mars, and Mercury.

Reception

Just inside the main airlock is the reception desk, where most passengers receive their welcome and cabin details. The reception floor consists of a star field mosaic while the walls are glass, opening onto the arboretum deck. Sweeping grand stairs bring passengers up to the main deck.

Aft Ventral Airlock

This less salubrious entryway is intended for cargo and crew. The airlock leads up a ramp directly into the aft cargo hold.

Emergency Storage

In case of emergency in space, nobody is expected to survive. This small room contains 30 tightly-packed silk parachutes, enough for less than half the people on board. This is because the experts estimate that, in case of emergency, thirty people would be lucky to make it to this room. Besides, the space was needed for the cabins.

Laundry

A small room with equipment for cleaning and pressing clothing and bed linen. Steam from the boiler is channeled here to make the process possible. Nobody likes spending too much time in here, so it makes an ideal place to stash goods or to meet in secret. The maids take turns to do the daily laundry here.

Linen Closet

A tiny room used to store bed linen and towels. Traditionally a place for clandestine liaisons and hiding stolen goods; in this adventure the Linen Closet is blessedly free from strange encounters.

Medical Room

This room is locked most of the time and only Scanlon and Jones have the key. The room contains a well-stocked medicine cabinet and could be made ready for minor surgery at short notice. For two hours each morning, the room is opened as a barber shop.

Purser's Office

This office is George Jones's kingdom. It contains 20 lockboxes for guest use and a large safe for the Royal Mail the ship carries. The ship's weapons locker is also located here, containing six Webley Mk I revolvers, two Lee-Metford rifles, and enough ammunition to reload each weapon twice. There is no real expectation of trouble and these weapons are still in their original storage boxes.

Chapel

This small sanctuary plays home to Church of England services on Sunday, usually led by a staff member. Father Ryan insists on also holding Roman Catholic mass there every day for the few members of the faith on board. Father Ryan also holds temperance meetings there which are poorly attended at best.

Gymnasium

A state of the art gymnasium with rowing machines, static bicycles, parallel bars, and punchbags. Special motorized resistance machines help the passengers and crew to keep their muscle tone during the long voyage. Most people using the gym do so in their normal clothing and nearly everyone on board comes here for at least a few minutes every day to maintain their muscle tone in the zero-gravity environment.

Dining Room

This marvel of modern dining includes vacuum pipes for cleaning up the occasional messes that are a natural part of life in weightlessness, chairs with belts for holding the diners in place, and a huge variety of specially-constructed serving cups, plates, bowls, etc., intended to make maintaining decorum easy in this tricky environment. While passengers are required to wear goggles on board, few do, except in this room where the risk of stray particles is much higher. Dining goggles are the latest in zero-gravity haute couture. The band typically plays classical music here during dinner.

Library

This tightly-packed room contains an impressive collection of books, both modern and classical. One wall is filled by reference books focusing on the planets, the Martian language, and ether travel, while the other walls are lined with everything from high literature to modern novels and recent magazines and newspapers. Two heavy tables with seats enable a dozen or so people to sit and read or study in comfort. Most of the time, the room only has a few occupants, most of them checking out the digest versions of the London newspapers made available through heliograph while within range of Earth. Ambassador Othotho passes some time in here, reading the few human books that he hasn't yet devoured during his time in Britain.

Observatory

The equipment stored in this room consists of three telescopes, a basic orrery, a half-dozen pairs of binoculars, and wall-mounted star charts. Some NPCs enjoy stargazing and this room provides everything such a person could want. At the GM's option, the player characters might spot some upcoming threat using the instruments here, thereby gaining the captain's favor.

Lounge

One of the stewards mans this bar at all times, bringing the guests whatever tipple they desire. Special sealed containers with straws prevent messes. The lounge serves as the social hub for the ship's female guests, where they drink, eat, read, and discuss matters important to them on a daily basis. The ship's band plays here during the day, alternating with the arboretum deck. They play in the dining room later in the evening.

Smoking Room

This room is the sole province of the male guests, a place where they can relax, enjoy a cigar, and play at cards. Drink orders are brought in from the bar in the Lounge. Captain Hess spends most of his time here and anyone coming in has a good chance of being shanghaied into his seemingly endless Preferans game (a Russian trick-taking bidding card game, which the Captain will happily teach to all newcomers). The room is beautifully decorated with stained glass panels showing scenes from the Greek epics.

Arts and Crafts Room

This room contains art supplies and crafting materials to enable guests to carry out their hobbies in space. The Arts and Crafts Room plays host to regular seminars on diverse topics during the course of the voyage.

Games Room

A specially-modified magnetic billiards table dominates this room, which is rarely unoccupied. This is, once again, a very male-dominated room, where women are only welcome at certain times.

Music Room

This soundproofed room provides a range of instruments and ship musicians offer classes here on a regular basis. Sheet music for classical and modern songs sits on shelves lining one wall.

Promenade

A looped walkway that surrounds the entire passenger deck. The walkway enables four people to walk side by side in comfort and offers incredible views of the stars. Deckchairs are provided for those who want to sit and watch the stars go by (the ship rotates very slowly about its long axis so that the view changes constantly).

A magnetic shuffleboard court at one end offers a pleasant diversion for those who enjoy that game. Deck quoits and other games such as chess can be rented from the purser. Those wishing to experience "flight" can remove their shoes here between 11am and noon each day; at that time the area is cleared and an experienced instructor gives lessons in moving in zero-gravity.

Staterooms (30)

Each of these luxuriously-appointed, wood-paneled rooms offers either views of the ship's exterior or opens onto the Promenade. The stateroom configuration varies by the number and size of beds but all are roughly the same size, with a bedroom, en-suite bathroom and water closet, parlor, and servant's quarters.

Second-Class Deck

The second-class is currently sealed off from the public but can be accessed by putting pressure on the ever-accommodating Mr. Jones. Unlike many ocean liners, the *Aetheria* does not carry third-class or steerage passengers, though the second-class cabins are designed to be split up with retractable walls for such a purpose. The deck is a pitch-black maze of half-completed walls and exposed pipework.

Arboretum Deck

This massive deck supplies some of the ship's oxygen and fresh food. It also serves as a delightful place to walk as its green-lined paths prove to be wonderfully distracting. A pair of crewmen with some gardening experience spend time tending to the plants. A small herb and vegetable plot gives passengers a break from the monotony of tinned food. Snake plants, money plants, and Gerbera Daisies are among the most common plants here, chosen for their ability to product oxygen and reduce pollutants. Because of the weightlessness, most plants grow into fascinating weird shapes.

Cargo Hold

The cargo hold contains two compartments. Weight is carefully balanced between the two. First-class cargo and Royal Mail not stored in the purser's office are usually stored in the fore cargo hold while other cargo is usually placed in the aft hold. A metal grating separates the two holds and is locked during flight. Dispensation from the captain is required to be left alone in the cargo decks. Baron Dupont's dinosaur can be found in the aft cargo hold in a crate marked "Benz Patent-Motorwagen". The deck also plays home to some ship's stores and replacement parts. A small kennel area hosts pets that passengers don't want to keep in their cabins. Lastly, the cargo hold contains a small liftwood launch capable of carrying four passengers. The launch is intended as a luxury for the captain and as a convenience for upper-class passengers requiring special embarking and disembarking arrangements.



Everything Jules Verne could have written.
Everything H. G. Wells should have written.
Everything Arthur Conan Doyle thought of
but never published – because it was too fantastic.

SPACE 1889

Murder on the Ether Express

The RMS *Aetheria* is a marvel of modern etheric engineering capable of incredible interplanetary speeds and, if the owners are to be believed, the fastest civilian ship in the solar system. Of course, this brash claim requires proof and the adventurers have been lucky enough to secure passage on the ship's shakedown cruise, during which the vessel and her crew will be put through their paces.

They are not alone, however. The wealthy aristocrat Montague Harrington-Hyde has commandeered the ship for one of his famous business parties where, if rumor is to be believed, fortunes are made and lost. This isn't the only thing they need to worry about, as the competition eyes the *Aetheria* with jealousy, and the Tossian government sent one of their ambassadors along for the ride.

Can they navigate the world of the aristocracy and rub shoulders with the elite without causing a stir or making the front page of *The Times*? With sabotage, political skullduggery, and maybe a murder or two in the cards, can they even survive this ship of secrets?

Murder on the Ether Express is an adventure for a veteran Gamemaster and players who are interested in an adventure based on investigation and social interaction.



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