

FREE LEAGUE

MUTANT

YEAR ZERO



AD ASTRA



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YEAR ZERO

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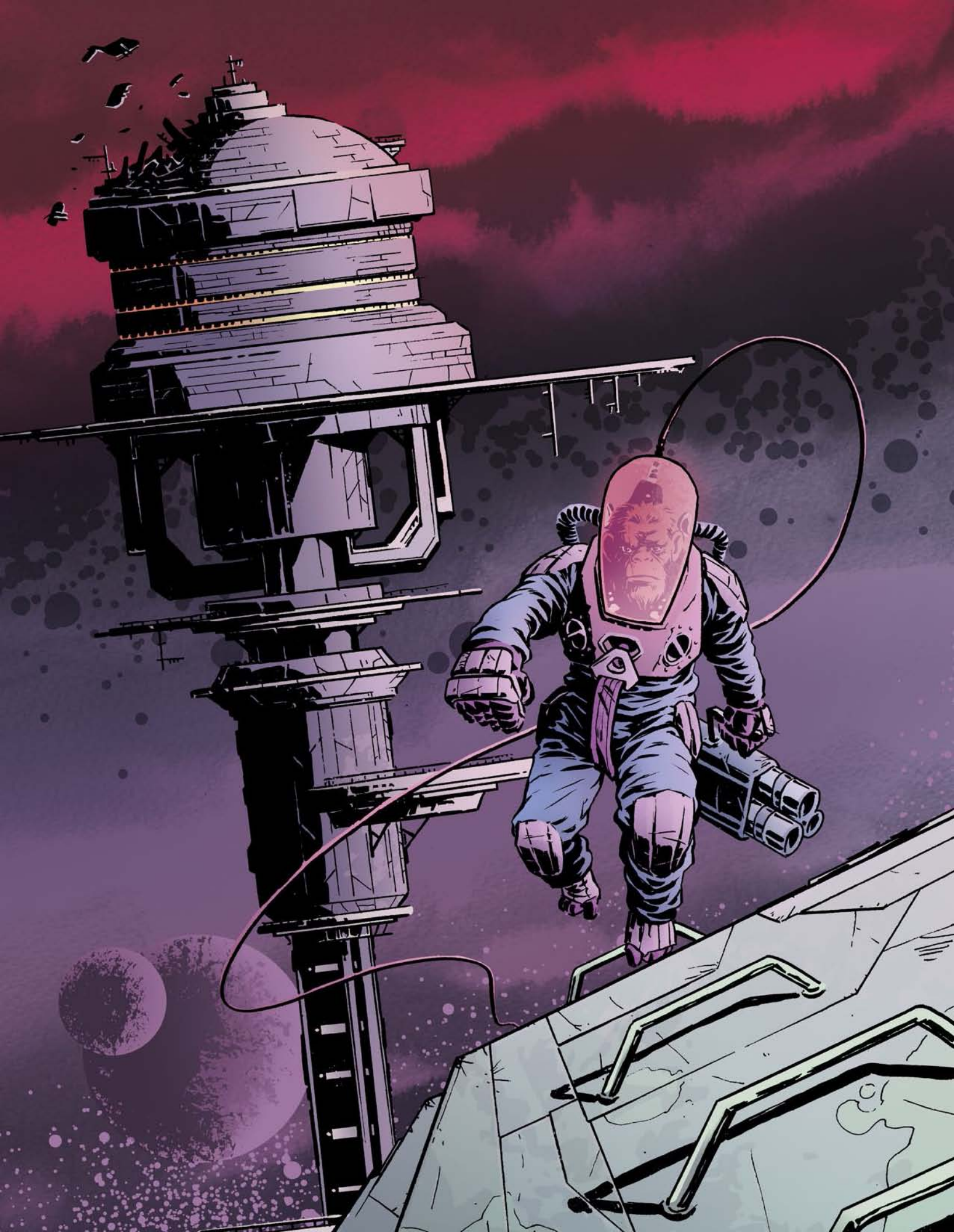
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TO THE STARS

Welcome to *Ad Astra*, a campaign module for *Mutant: Year Zero* that takes the player characters from the plague-infested surface of Earth into orbit, out into the solar system, and perhaps further still. *Ad Astra* can be played any time after *The Path to Eden* campaign in the core rulebook, either as a direct continuation of that story or after any of the other *Mutant* campaigns or zone sectors.

This campaign features mutated animals and robots. Access to both *Mutant: Genlab Alpha* and *Mutant: Mechatron* is therefore recommended in order to play *Ad Astra*. *Mutant: Elysium* is not necessary but can provide a backdrop to life on a large space station, although the space stations in *Ad Astra* are far more run-down and dangerous than the enclave in *Mutant: Elysium*.

OVERVIEW

This book is divided into eight chapters. This first chapter describes the background to the *Ad Astra* campaign, as well as a couple of different routes the player characters can take to reach the space station Jotunheim as it orbits the Earth.

This is followed by five chapters describing a search across the solar system for the salvation of Jotunheim, the core engine of the ship *Ad Astra*, and the renegade Dirac Thirteen, as well as an epilogue that concludes the campaign.

Next comes a chapter with rules for playing *Mutant: Year Zero* in space, and finally a description of the rest of the solar system with ideas for further adventures.

BACKGROUND

Jotunheim was once a research station orbiting the Earth. Before the Enclave War, the station brought together some of the planet's most talented scientists to perform experiments that could not be done on the surface. It was in the weightless laboratories of Jotunheim that Jeremiah Atwood developed what became the Red Plague (see background in *Mutant: Year Zero*).

After the Red Plague came the world war, from which the enclaves and the Titan Powers emerged. The greatest of these was Mimir, and the growing space station Jotunheim became its headquarters. There people sought refuge from the dying Earth, and from there rocket ships set off into the solar system to Venus, Mars, the asteroid belt, and beyond.

JOTUNHEIM GROWS

Under Mimir's supervision, Jotunheim grew into a small city of rotating habitat rings, vacuum docks, and factories. To keep the growing city in orbit, its engineers developed the core engine - a

propulsion system that required no reaction mass and could therefore run indefinitely. The star city would live on forever; this was the golden age of Jotunheim.

THE ENCLAVE WAR AND THE FALL OF MIMIR

But over the years, tensions with the other Titan Powers grew, eventually sparking the Enclave War. Missiles rose from Earth's surface and warships fired their laser cannons at Mimir's facilities in orbit and further out in the solar system.

Mimir's fall was slow, but in many ways more complete than that of the other Titan Powers. The unforgiving nature of space quickly made Mimir's leadership realize that the situation was unsustainable. The empire was fractured, and they were convinced that even its crown jewel, Jotunheim, would not survive in the long run – that sooner or later, perhaps a hundred years into the future, it would plummet into the atmosphere.

PROJECT ASMEGIR

For this reason, Project Asmegir was initiated. Named after the people who in Norse mythology would populate the earth after Ragnarok, its purpose was the same as in the story. Eighteen cryobeds designed to stop human aging were set up in a secret chamber deep within Jotunheim. Eighteen individuals, nine men and nine women, were placed in these beds so their offspring would be able to repopulate the planet when the rest of humanity had died out.

To monitor the cryobeds, Mimir's scientists installed a central computer, ODIN, whose instruments could determine when Earth's surface was ready for repopulation. But as the decades went by and small errors in ODIN's programming accumulated, the central computer began to take on a life of its own. It was not a cheerful life – eventually the computer became convinced that the surface could never be repopulated and started to consider shutting down the cryobeds and turning off the chamber's air supply to put an end to humanity's misery.

THE FALL OF MIMIR





DR. REFAIM STEPS IN

Before ODIN could terminate itself and those in its care, a lucky coincidence saved the day. Jotunheim was by now a crumbling ruin. A certain Dr. Retzius had a few years earlier led an expedition to Earth's surface (see *The Path to Eden* in *Mutant: Year Zero*) and taken a group of top scientists with her. The space city was

falling apart. Large sections were already disconnected and known as the Dark Corridors. These sections included the secret chamber where ODIN watched over the timeless sleep of the Asmegir.

A young engineer named Refaim (page 94) happened to get lost in these winding corridors. Like many times before, Refaim was searching for technology from the glory days of Jotunheim. What he found that day would change the lives of both him and Jotunheim, and perhaps humanity itself.

Refaim stumbled into the hidden chamber and did not leave for two days. He spent that time in discussion with the disillusioned computer intelligence ODIN. Initially, Refaim shared ODIN's bleak view of humanity's future, but by the end of the two days an idea had taken shape. Refaim would build a starship, a spaceship that could take the eighteen Asmegir to another planet in another solar system, where the air was fresh to breathe. He even managed to convince ODIN of his plan. Now all that was missing was a suitable ship.



DR. REFAIM



THE ODINITES

THE ODINITES

Refaim initially kept his thoughts to himself, but soon started to involve some of his engineer friends in his plans. He brought them to the secret chamber and let them speak with ODIN. Those convinced called themselves the *Odinites*, and their numbers slowly grew. The Odinites were driven by a desire to reach the stars, but also by a firm belief that the mutants created by Dr. Retzius were abominations. Humanity's true salvation lay in the people that the leaders of Mimir had left in the cryobeds. Their true salvation lay in the stars.

After gathering a dozen close allies, Refaim took the next step. He turned to the people of Jotunheim with a promise and a request. He pointed out what everyone already knew: that their time on Jotunheim was coming to an end. The reactors failed, sections and corridors had to be closed due

to leaks, the old industries stood silent and still, and the space docks were empty. Without mentioning ODIN or the sleeping Asmegir, Refaim presented an alternative: the stars.

AD ASTRA AND THE EYE OF ODIN

Refaim managed to gather almost half the population of Jotunheim under his banner. He led them to the remaining ships, away from Jotunheim and out into the solar system, towards Jupiter. They called themselves the Shipwrights.

The Odinites had already chosen their destination: an abandoned gas refinery in the upper atmosphere of Jupiter. There they would build their starship and it would be called *Ad Astra*. They led a fleet to the gas giant and at the center of the fleet was Refaim's ship, the embryo of what would become *Ad Astra*. On his ship Refaim brought the

central computer ODIN, the cryobeds, and Asmegir – closely guarded secrets that few of the Shipwrights knew about.

The refinery was named the Eye of Odin, and perpetual gas clouds kept the station hidden from the outside world.

THE SECRET OF THE ODINITES

Refaim's followers were divided into two groups. The aging, non-mutated Odinites were the core, a brotherhood whose relationship with ODIN increasingly took on a religious character. The second and larger group was called the *Refiners*, a motley crew of mutants, mutated animals, and robots who also learned to worship the artificial intelligence.

Work on the ship went on for many years, led by the Odinites but mainly carried out by the Refiners. One thing was always unclear – who were the eighteen chosen to accompany the ship to the stars and represent the hope of humanity? The Odinites were firm in their assertion that they themselves had no intention of going. Instead, they hinted that the selection would be by lottery. The reason was simple – none of those who built the ship were supposed to go, and the Odinites did not want to reveal this because they (correctly) suspected that it would affect the Refiners' willingness to work.

The chosen Asmegir now rest in cryobeds on the *Ad Astra*, waiting for the ship to begin its journey to the distant star system Proxima Centauri. Actually, they are not waiting at all – their bodies have not aged since they were placed in the beds over a hundred years ago, and the Odinites have no intention of waking them before they reach their destination.

REFAIM'S SECRET

Refaim's biggest secret is that he himself is a mutant with the Telepathy mutation, as a result of the early experiments he conducted with Dr. Retzius before they parted ways. It is thanks to his mutation that he has managed to rally the Odinites and the Refiners around him.

THE FALL OF JOTUNHEIM

Not everyone followed Refaim and his Odinites to Jupiter. About a hundred of Jotunheim's inhabitants

stayed behind, led by the last station chief, Sastria. As the decades passed, Jotunheim's contact with both the returnees on Earth in Command Center Delta (see *Mutant: Year Zero*) and the Shipwrights on Jupiter became increasingly sporadic.

Now Jotunheim's time is almost up. When Refaim and the Shipwrights left, they took with them, in addition to the computer ODIN and the sleeping Asmegir, everything they felt they needed to build their ship. The most important of these is the core engine that has kept the giant space city in orbit. The core engine is advanced technology from the old days, which nothing on Jotunheim can replace. Without it the station has been sinking further and further in its orbit around Earth, and the lowest workshops have already come loose and begun a fiery death spiral into the atmosphere.

Everyone who was able escaped in the last spaceships and the only ones left are those who through apathy, stubbornness, or inability have failed to leave, led by the aged station commander Viktor Sastria. They are joined by the involuntary crew of the rocket that just arrived from Earth – probably the one the player characters are passengers on.

REFAIM'S SPEECH ON JOTUNHEIM

Look out the south window. What do you see? A poisoned Earth. A contaminated Earth. An Earth we left behind. Many of you were born here on Jotunheim. The Earth that some want to return to, the Earth that no longer exists – it was never yours.

Now look out the north window. Can you see it glittering? Diamonds against black velvet. See the star in the bottom corner? That's Proxima Centauri. Our scientists tell us that a planet circling that star is much like Earth, as it once was. That star is yours. That planet is yours. You are children of the stars! Join me in building the ship that will take us there!

Ad Astra Per Aspera!

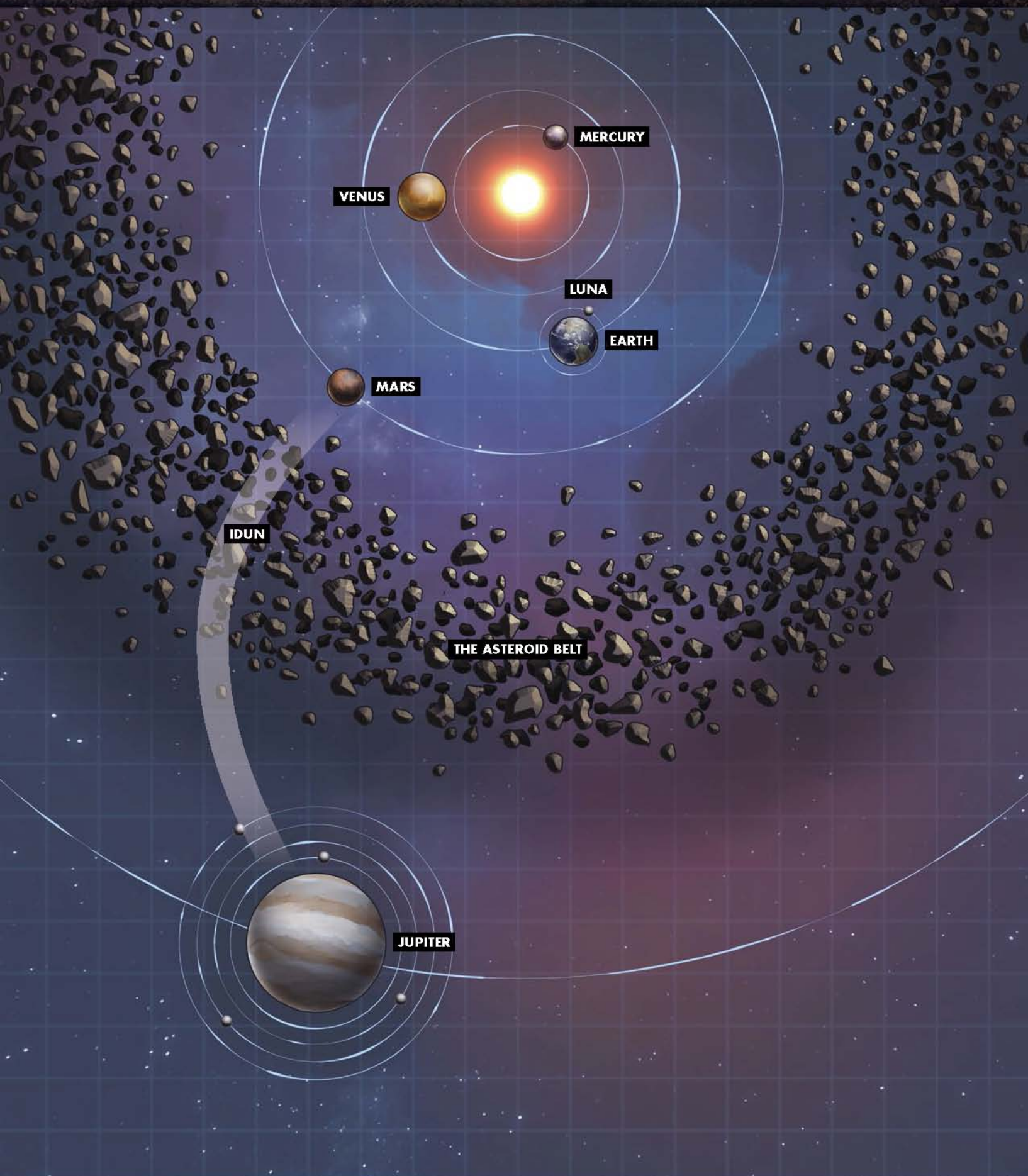


THE FALL OF JOTUNHEIM

THE SOLAR SYSTEM

What was once the Titan Power Mimir has long since broken down into factions scattered across the inner parts of the solar system. Here is a brief overview of the solar system. For more details, see chapter 8.

- ❑ **Mercury:** Mercury is the site of an ancient solar observatory where the descendants of scientists are still issuing solar storm warnings to the solar system.
- ❑ **Venus:** Floating in the upper atmosphere of Venus are the sky cruisers – zeppelins riding the planet's powerful thermals. Death-defying expeditions make their way down through the boiling sulfuric acid of Venus' atmosphere to the withering heat of the surface to retrieve technology and other items from Mimir's old mines.
- ❑ **Luna:** Luna is home to Moonbase Selene, which was once almost as bustling as Jotunheim itself. Its inhabitants now live in the iron grip of the robot APEX, which has proclaimed itself Emperor of the Moon and Protector of the Sea of Tranquility and the Five Lagrange Points.
- ❑ **Mars:** Mars has been partially terraformed and populated by a specially developed type of human called the Children of Dust who can live in the thin atmosphere at the bottom of the Mariner Valley. A space elevator connects the surface of Mars to an orbiting spaceport.
- ❑ **The Asteroid Belt:** The asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter is littered with hundreds of old mining stations, transshipment ports, shipyards, and smugglers' dens. Some are abandoned, others are inhabited, including by pirates and wreckers. Most notable among the space pirates is the Rust Fleet, a loosely organized fleet led by the pirate queen Verika, constantly on the lookout for defenseless space stations to plunder.
- ❑ **Jupiter:** In the upper layers of Jupiter's atmosphere, old refineries are floating in the hydrogen winds with the help of giant balloons. Hovering near one of these refineries is Refaim's life project – the nearly completed starship *Ad Astra*.
- ❑ **Saturn:** Further out in the solar system there are fewer settlements, but on Saturn's largest moon, Titan, there is a distant gold rush for hydrocarbons in the methane lakes, with prospectors flying biplanes through the thick but cold atmosphere.



THE SITUATION

Now to the more immediate situation. Jotunheim is about to slowly descend into the atmosphere. The *Ad Astra* is nearing completion under a gas refinery in the upper atmosphere of Jupiter. Any day now she will begin her maiden voyage to the stars. But at the same time a rocket takes off from Earth's surface with a group of mutants on board, setting a cascade of events in motion.

1. The rocket from Earth arrives on Jotunheim and gives rise to a new optimism. Was Dr. Retzius right? Is it possible to live on the surface?
2. Station Commander Sastria sends a message that he hopes will reach the Eye of Odin. He asks them to return the core engine, since it is now worth staying.
3. The message is intercepted on the Eye of Odin by Telegrapher Dirac Thirteen, who confronts Refaim with it before escaping with ODIN's circuits.
4. A hunt for Dirac Thirteen, ODIN, and the core engine begins, stretching across half the solar system.

DEPARTURE FROM EARTH

At the end of *The Path to Eden*, the PCs find themselves in Command Center Delta where Dr. Retzius continued her mutant experiments (see *Mutant: Year Zero*). At that point the players can choose to leave Earth and end the campaign in a space

HUMANS, MUTANTS, ANIMALS, AND ROBOTS

Dr. Retzius' experiments to create new types of humans that could withstand the poisoned Earth began in orbit. She brought some of her experiments down to Earth, but others remained on Jotunheim. From there, mutated humans and animals have spread throughout the inner solar system. Robots can also be encountered everywhere.

capsule heading for "a city of glittering metal". That city is the Jotunheim space station and the rocket's autopilot will automatically take them there. *Ad Astra* begins when the rocket lands on Jotunheim, see *Arrival* below.

If the PCs kept playing after *The Path to Eden* or have other reasons for not being at Command Center Delta, a launch site can be inserted as a zone sector into any campaign. Ideally, Command Center Delta can still be used, but if it has already been played, a rocket can be added to another zone sector. Examples of published zone sectors that can be used include:

- o **The Nova Cult** (*Mutant: Year Zero*). The missile in the bunker is the rocket and the PCs can run inside to escape the Nova Cult or simply stumble upon it, accidentally closing the hatch and activating the rocket.

THE AD ASTRA AND THE CORE ENGINE

Ad Astra is the ship that will carry humanity to the stars. It is Refaim's life's work and will soon be ready for departure. The ship is over 200 meters long and contains everything needed for the century-long journey to Proxima Centauri, including cryobeds for the eighteen future colonists.

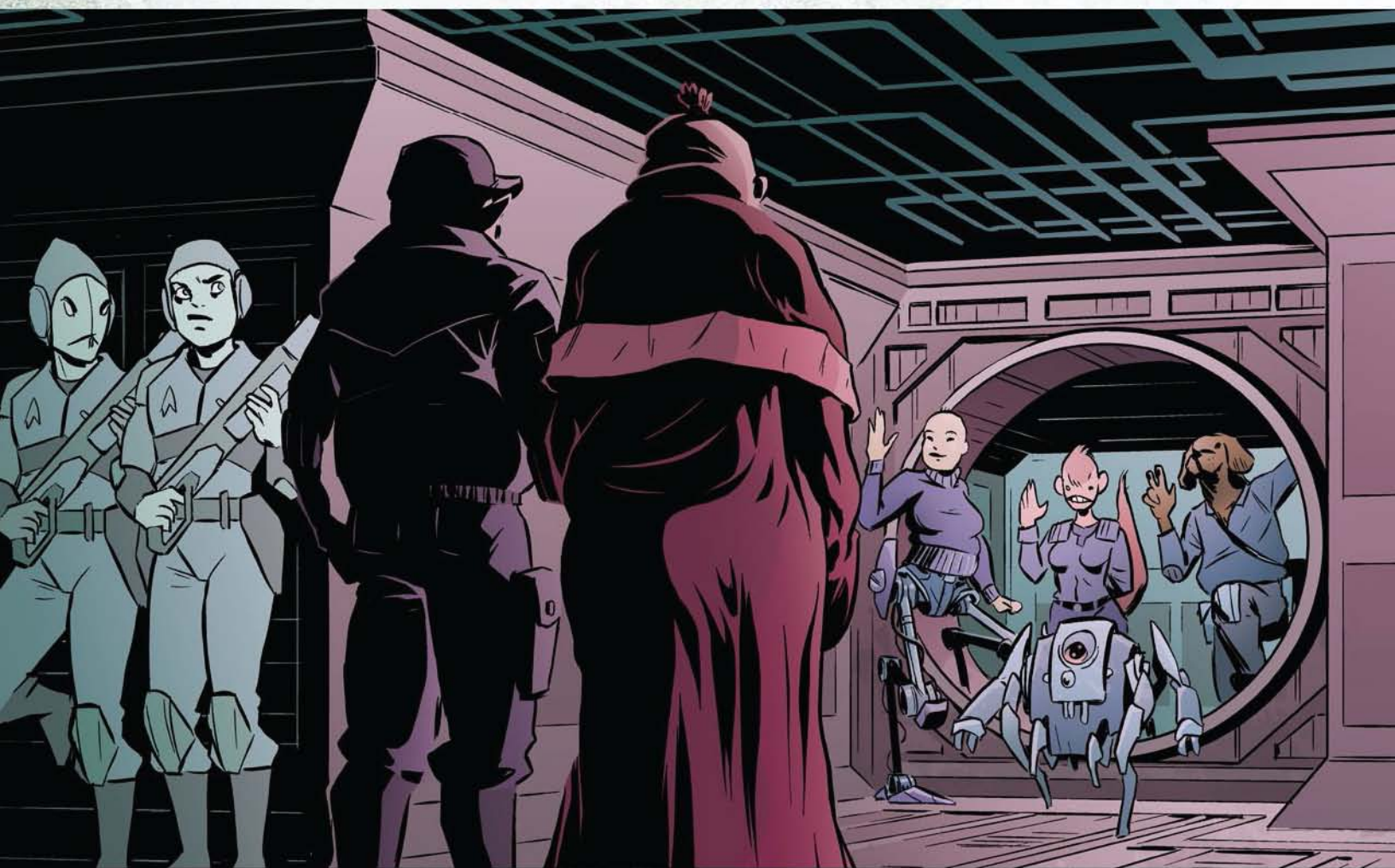
The ship also contains the core engine, a silvery cylinder about ten meters long and three meters in diameter. It was developed by Mimir's top engineers when Jotunheim

had grown so large that the existing thrusters could not handle the course corrections that kept the station in orbit.

The core engine can convert energy directly into momentum, without reaction mass. It is a marvel of physics and engineering. No one knows how it was built and there is only one in existence – the one Refaim took from Jotunheim to build his starship. Without the core engine there is no *Ad Astra*, but without it Jotunheim will not last much longer either.



- ◻ **Biobunker VII** (*The Gray Death*). Add the event “The Secret Rocket”. In this event, Minerva (either reprogrammed or after the death of Proteus) instructs the PCs to wait in the “shelter” (inside room #9, the server room) while she takes care of the rest of the bunker by overloading the reactor. The shelter is actually a rocket capsule and Minerva initiates the launch.
- ◻ **Lair of the Saurians** (*Zone Compendium 1*). A hatch in the submarine leads to the rocket capsule and as the PCs enter, the hatch closes behind them and the capsule is launched.
- ◻ **The Oracle of the Silver Egg** (*Zone Compendium 1*). The silver egg is in fact a capsule from Mimir, and the GM may decide when it is dramatically appropriate for the entire capsule to take off for Jotunheim.
- ◻ **Oil Fields of the Ancients** (*Zone Compendium 2*). The oil rigs were originally built by Mimir before being taken over by Noatun. One of them has a built-in escape pod in the form of a rocket that is launched to Jotunheim through one of the platform’s legs. The pod’s existence is an open secret, but its destination is not. Xerxes’ subordinates are now considering using it since they have lost contact with Noatun, although Xerxes forbids it.
- ◻ **Cryolab Delta** (*Mutant: Elysium*). The Gray have a rocket ready for escape in the event that Emergency Protocol Omega is triggered (e.g. in room #17, the garage). Creon convinces the PCs to flee, but is himself shot while closing the hatch to the capsule, which is then activated.
- ◻ **Mechatron-7** (*Mutant: Mechatron*). A launch site can be placed anywhere in Mechatron-7. A final order card could be issued: *Evacuation Order – Evacuate immediately through the nearest emergency exit*. It turns out that the nearest emergency exit for the PCs leads straight into the space capsule which is launched.



ARRIVAL ON JOTUNHEIM...

Through the tiny portholes of the space capsule, you see the city hanging weightlessly beneath the stars – massive, sprawling, gleaming. A myriad of metal shapes connected by tubes and wires, like a huge mobile hanging over Earth, the cradle of humanity.

Your capsule knows where to go, its small thrusters pushing you onward through the maze of wires and ladders. Drawing closer, it becomes clear that there is something wrong with this star city. You float past large holes, torn wires, and cracked satellite dishes. It seems the Apocalypse reached all the way to the heavens.

A sudden jolt is felt throughout the ship as it docks at a port on the side of one of the giant floating metal buildings. A wheeze in the cabin turns into a howl that ends in a hiss, and the change in pressure makes your ears pop. The capsule door opens to a metallic chamber. Through a speaker you hear a raspy old voice that reminds you of the Elder back at the Ark.

"Welcome to Jotunheim, spacefarers. Enter the airlock, but leave your weapons in the capsule."

If the PCs are carrying visible weapons, Sastria repeats his demand that any weapons be left in the space capsule and will not open the inner airlock door until everyone shows that they are unarmed. Anyone with **JURY-RIG** or an equivalent skill can force the inner airlock door open with a successful roll, but in that case the people on the other side will have their weapons aimed at them.

Once inside, the PCs are greeted with a mixture of reverence and suspicion. PC number of guards, armed with scrap rocket launchers (page 121), eye them suspiciously while Sastria forces a nervous smile and extends an open hand. He is very curious about what the visitors from Earth have to say.

When (if) the PCs prove themselves to be reasonably harmless, they are invited to Sastria's residence in the housing module (page 25). Sastria asks who they are, what they know about Dr. Retzius and, above all, what they know about the surface of Earth and whether it is possible to live there. What the PCs tell him about the Arks, the possibility of survival on the surface, and the success and

death of Dr. Retzius, sets off the chain of events that makes Sastria send an emergency message to the Eye of Odin.

PLAYING AD ASTRA

Ad Astra is a campaign that takes the PCs on a quest through the solar system. During the introduction the PCs gain access to a spaceship which, in theory, they can use to go wherever they want. In practice, the plot brings them to the asteroid belt, Mars, and Luna (in any order) and finally to Jupiter. The PCs can of course choose to visit other places as well, but the clock is ticking.

CAMPAIGN PRINCIPLES

Ad Astra has a number of principles that can complement or in some cases replace those of the *Mutant: Year Zero* core game.

1. **Space Is Dangerous:** The only thing standing between you and certain death is a thin metal wall many decades past its expiration date. One mistake, one careless maneuver or air pump malfunction, and you are dead.
2. **Your Spaceship Is Your Home:** The ship is the player characters' hearth and home, so they better take good care of it.
3. **Involuntary Spacefarers:** The player characters did not ask for this. They are not ace pilots or space enthusiasts. Circumstances forced them into this situation, and they will have to make the best of it.
4. **Everything Runs Out and Everything Breaks:** The air supply runs out, the rocket fuel depletes, engines break down and reactors leak. Everything has seen better days, everything is patched and mended, and it is impossible to bring enough of any resource.
5. **Without the Core Engine, All Is Lost:** Jotunheim is dropping faster and faster into the atmosphere. The player characters must return with the core engine and save the space station.

NEW RULES

More background on what it is like to play *Mutant: Year Zero* in space, including rules for space travel, freefall combat, and new roles, can be found on page 101.



