

SELL-SWORDS OF MARS



BY H.M. 'DAIN' LYBARGER

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The sun beat down from the pink-tinted sky, and Jarket Jarul plucked off his helmet to wipe the sweat from his brow. Here, on the verge of the canal, the air was marginally cooler, but he could see shimmers of heat rising from the surrounding hills. Another hour's travel and he would be at the ancient bridges that spanned the Pi-Ramesh Canal. Even now, he could see them ahead, through the heat-haze. The single, threadlike blue-silver span that arched across the canal was a truly ancient bridge, made in the days when the canals were first dug, beautiful, delicate – and impractically narrow for the commercial traffic of the present era. Just beyond it was the heavy slab stonework of a slightly more recent bridge, still centuries old and packed with traffic. A single battered desert-runner jockeyed for position among the beast-drawn farm-carts crossing the canal on their way into Pi-Ramesh.

Suddenly, a piercing sound rent the morning air. Amplified to the point of pain, the note held for a breath, then changed to a falling tone that ended in a near-growl that thrummed deep in Jarket's chest. His mount reared, terrified, and he struggled to keep hold of its bridle, but his reactions were too slow, and Jarket was dumped into the dusty road as his jalf bolted away. As he rose to one knee, the two-toned cry rang out again. Crouching in the roadway, Jarket looked away from the skittish animal, seeking some view of whatever had startled it.

There, beyond the far bridge, was the source of that terrible sound – a great triple-legged fighting machine! As he watched, paralyzed in awe, another machine came into view, and then another! Grey Men!

Terror gripped Jarket Jarul's heart, for he had never seen the deadly artifacts of the Grey Men before – but all of Mars knew the tales of the destruction they brought. He scrambled to his feet, ready to flee, even though he knew not where to go.



But then, from each of the tripods came a new sound, a 'whooshing' noise unlike any he had ever heard before – and then, before his eyes, the bridges ahead were engulfed in flame! The mighty heat-rays of the Grey Men melted stone and steel alike, sending men, carts, and vehicles plunging into the canal below!

Jarket Jarul gulped breath, and felt the heat sting his lungs. He could see the wave of superheated air blasting toward him from the point of the attack. He drew another gulp of air, and sprinted for the canal! He dove from its metal-clad edge, and plunged into the water below, just as a wave of fire passed over the spot where he had been. His jalf, panicked and fleeing, was instantly incinerated.

Within seconds of the attack's beginning, it was over. Twisted metal and melted stone dammed the canal, and the blackened bits of men and animals drifted downstream with the now-trickling water. Beyond the wreckage, the hood of one of the great war machines lifted toward the sky, and the terrible hooting cry of the Grey Men sounded once more over the desolation.

SYNOPSIS

The PCs are mercenaries, seeking work among the lesser independent cities of Mars. Following up on rumors that the small city of Pi-Ramesh is suffering raids by desert nomads, they seek employment from the city's young Queen.

When an unknown enemy collapses a canal bridge creating a dam across Pi-Ramesh's only canal, the city's lifeblood dries up. A PC-led scouting force discovers that a sizeable force of Red Nomads is in the area – but the primitive weapons of the nomads could not have brought down the bridge...

The PCs discover that the Nomads are slave-soldiers of the Grey Men, and realize that a force of tripods is advancing upon the weakened city!

Ancient machines and aerial vessels belonging to the Queen of Pi-Ramesh are brought into play, but the implacable advance of the Grey Men is only slowed, not stopped.

The central citadel of the Grey Men is now surrounded by a vast thornpatch, caused by water leaking from the blocked canal. The armies of Pi-Ramesh must contend with the deadly flora and fauna of the thornpatch as they advance against the Grey Men.

The PCs have several options – attempt to destroy

the blockage in the canal, attempt to turn the Nomads against their inhuman masters, or attempt to gain control of some of the thornpatch-spawned beasts to use against the Grey Men. Some or all of these options may be explored. In addition, the opportunity may arise for the PCs to capture a heat-ray from the Grey Men, and to determine how to use it against its creators.

Ultimately, the combined Army of Pi-Ramesh will assault the Grey Citadel – but it will take a daring group of PCs infiltrating the danger-filled Citadel to bring its defenses down. The fate of Pi-Ramesh – and ultimately, perhaps all of Mars, lies in the balance!

ADVICE FOR THE GM

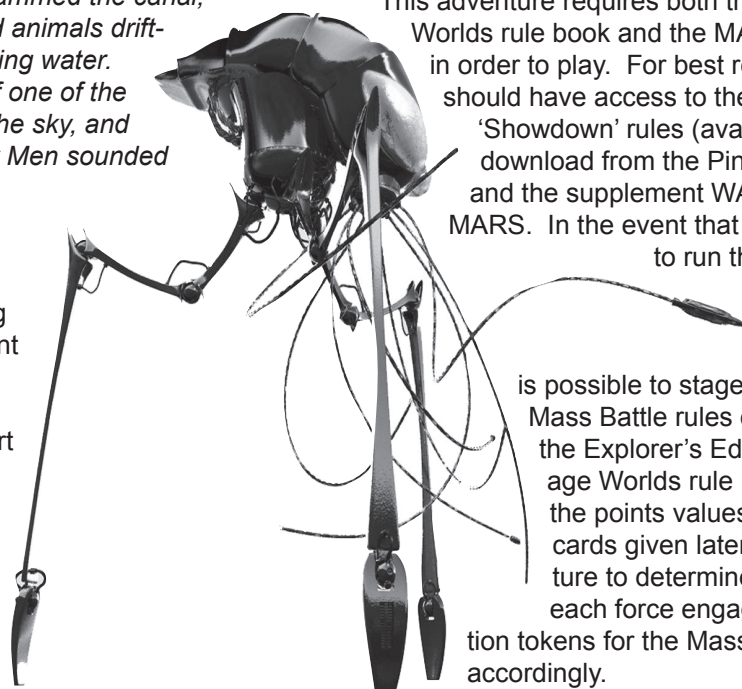
This adventure requires both the Savage Worlds rule book and the MARS setting book in order to play. For best results, the GM should have access to the Savage Worlds 'Showdown' rules (available as a free download from the Pinnacle website) and the supplement WARRIORS OF MARS. In the event that you do not wish

to run the larger encounters using the 'Showdown' rules, it

is possible to stage them using the Mass Battle rules on page 120 of the Explorer's Edition of the Savage Worlds rule book. Total up the points values from the unit cards given later in the adventure to determine 'army size' for each force engaged, and apportion tokens for the Mass Battle system accordingly.

Since this adventure makes liberal use of the Allies rules, it is important for the GM to 'personalize' the NPC troops appearing in each section. Give them names, backgrounds, personalities – to whatever extent it is possible, try to make the PCs care if these soldiers live or die. Once some tried and trusted NPCs have been established, it may occur to the players to split their forces in order to accomplish more within a limited amount of time. Encourage this! Allow players whose primary character has been deployed elsewhere to take over a group of NPC Allies accompanying another PC on a mission. For best effect run these events in parallel, cutting back and forth between the two scenes at tense moments.

Ideally, PCs for this adventure should have considerable combat abilities, and some of them should have the Skills Knowledge (Battle) and Pilot. The adventure works best for a group of at least three PCs, but can accommodate larger groups. The GM should make



A SUDDEN DRY SPELL

sure to read over the Mass Combat rules in the Savage Worlds rulebook, and the Aerial Combat rules on pages 90 through 97 of the MARS book before running the adventure, since both those subsystems feature prominently.

The scenes in the adventure are described in a linear fashion, but they do not necessarily flow from one to another in that order. Success or failure in an encounter or battle may cause the PCs to skip some scenes. A flow-chart showing the connections between the various encounters and battles is provided at the end of this PDF.

A SUDDEN DRY SPELL

Shortly after the PCs arrive in the city of Pi-Ramesh, seeking employment as mercenaries, the main canal running through the city suffers an inexplicable drop in water level. Unbeknownst to the citizens of Pi-Ramesh, a force of Grey Men has made an unprovoked attack on the city. They have collapsed a canal bridge upstream of Pi-Ramesh, blocking the canal almost completely. After a day or two, only a trickle of water is leaking through the dam.

As refugees from the attack begin to arrive in the city, an unclear picture of the events of that fateful day begins to emerge. Rumors are rife, but there are no living witnesses who saw the Grey Men's tripods.

The Grey Men's motives are obscure, and may not be revealed to the PCs until much later in the adventure. To the Red Men of Mars, Grey Men act according to their own alien desires, and the other Martian races have little skill at predicting what they might do, or why they might do it.

In truth, the city of Pi-Ramesh lies on a rich iridium deposit. Iridium is a rare material that the Grey Men use in the construction of their strange technology. It is the ultra-hard, silvery metal that armors their tripods, and its ductility makes it vital to the creation of their deadly heat-ray cannons. It is desire for access to the iridium that has inspired the Grey Men's attack on the city.

AUDIENCE WITH THE QUEEN

On the day following the canal failure, the PCs are called to the Palace in the Central Square of Pi-Ramesh, escorted into the Throne Room, and into the Queen's presence. The lofty ceiling of the Throne Room is supported by slim alabaster columns, and the walls are decorated with fan-like carvings of milk-white crystal. The throne, on its raised dias, is carved from a single such crystal, shot through with fine threads of gold. The throne-back rises to a height of a dozen feet, fanning out and curving gently forward into a translucent canopy over the cushioned seat. The youthful Queen Korva Tai sits curled beneath that canopy, pensive and worried.

The PCs must wait, standing alongside the members of the royal court as two of the Queen's ministers deliver their reports to her.

The Minister of Public Works reports that the low quantity of water in the canal is insufficient to refresh the city's reservoirs. "They will run dry in twenty days at the current rate of water usage." The Minister's already-dour expression becomes grim. "Majesty, even if we institute severe city-wide rationing, we cannot extend that time beyond sixty days."

The Minister of Trade, pinch-faced and pedantic, stands and addresses his Queen. "Majesty, in addition to the loss of trade with cities upstream, we have not received any further land-carried shipments of food from the outlying settlements in that direction. The reports of the bridge collapse are confused at best, but the descriptions of fire and explosion – and the fact that there have been no reported survivors from anywhere near the bridge – are most alarming."

The Queen, her expression grave, will call the PCs forward. Not looking at them, she will instead address the assembled Ministers and members of her court. "Our city has known peace throughout Our life. We have offered harm to none, and received no harm – until recently. The last two years have brought turmoil to peaceful Pi-Ramesh. We have been troubled by raiders from the deep deserts striking at our farms and plantations. Trade caravans and canal-barges have been attacked. The long peace has been broken, and Our soldiers, although brave, have little experience. For this reason, We have sent out a call for skilled mercenaries – and Our call has been answered." She will turn toward the PCs. "Will you swear fealty to Us, and vow to protect the city of Pi-Ramesh in time of war, upon your sacred honor?" PCs that approach, kneel, and swear fealty to the Queen will be given gold armbands, studded with small rubies, and bearing the three-lobed symbol of the city of Pi-Ramesh. After clasping the armbands upon them, she will draw each of them to their feet. "You wear the metal of Korva Tai, daughter of Jedan Tai, granddaughter of Taldan Tai, who became King of Pi-Ramesh by right of steel. Our honor is now in your care." The Royal Bodyguard will snap to attention as the Queen turns to ascend the throne. Standing at the edge of the dias, she will beckon forward General Mantius Bek, an elderly soldier. "General Bek, I give these valiant souls into your hands."

The General will cast a jaundiced eye toward the PCs, and lead them out of the Throne Room.

SCOUTING PARTY

General Bek will waste no time in assigning the PCs to the Pathfinders, Pi-Ramesh's scout troops. They will be ordered to patrol upstream along the canal, seeking the cause of the drought, and the truth (if any) to the

CONTACT!

rumors of explosions at the canal bridge. He will make it very plain that the PCs will have to prove their effectiveness to him in order for him to take them seriously.

The PCs will be assigned three units of Pathfinders for this mission. Refer to the unit cards at the end of the scenario for their stats. The men of all three units are young, fit, and confident. They wear their hair in the customary short forehead-to-nape crest favored by the Pi-Rameshi military. Pathfinder units generally deploy without senior officers, since they are trained for scouting and infiltration missions. Because they travel lightly, they are not issued with armor, but each soldier carries a rolled cloak, rust-red in hue, that can serve as a camouflage cover in the desert. The Pathfinders and the PCs will be issued cavalry-trained jalfs for the journey up-canal, and provided with five days rations of food. The expedition will be expected to draw their water needs from the trickle remaining in the canal-bed, in order to extend the supplies of stored water in Pi-Ramesh.

The main road to the canal bridges is on the south side of the canal. The PCs and their troops can make good time along it – they meet only a handful of travelers, all of them refugees from outlying towns or settlements who are headed into Pi-Ramesh because their water supplies are drying up.

Two days hard riding will bring the PCs to the spot where the bridges used to cross the canal. They are both collapsed, and a successful Notice roll will gain the PCs the information that some of the stonework

appears to be melted, as if by intense heat. A raise on the Notice roll will provide the additional detail that the melted stonework has flowed together, causing the collapsed rubble to be much more solid than it first appears to be. The heavy blocks cannot be dragged apart singly; they have become slagged together into a solid mass.

The collapsed bridges have dammed the canal almost completely. There are a few spots where water is leaking through, but the majority of the canal's flow is blocked – and that has caused an unusual (and potentially deadly) side effect: The backed-up water has overflowed the canal bed for several miles upstream of the dam, and begun to soak into the surrounding desert, particularly on the south bank, because of its lower elevation. The sudden arrival of moisture has caused a thornpatch to erupt – a thornpatch much greater in size than Mars has seen in millennia!

Consultation with the Pathfinders will indicate that the new thornpatch extends across what the Pi-Rameshi refer to as the Barrens of Harramat, all the way to the Darshan Hills in the distance. Crimson and lavender foliage spreads for miles ahead of the PCs, and strange animal noises can be heard within the jungle...

BATTLE: CONTACT!

As the PCs and the Pathfinders explore the edge of the vast thornpatch, they are set upon by a force of mounted Red Nomads!



NOMAD ENCAMPMENT

SETUP

The battle takes place near the edge of the thornpatch. Terrain for this battle should be generated on the 'Desert' terrain table.

Allow the players to position their PCs and the three squads of Pi-Rameshi Pathfinders (15 figures) near one short edge of the battlefield,

One unit of **Balmari Tribal Cavalry** (10 figures, mounted on jalfs) enter the battlefield from the opposite short edge.

SECOND WAVE

On the second turn, another unit of Balmari Tribal Cavalry (10 more mounted figures) enters from the same edge as the first. The Balmari will only fight until one unit fails a Morale check. As soon as that happens, both units will attempt to retreat off the battlefield through the edge they entered.

AFTERMATH

The battle ends according to the standard 'Showdown' rules, or earlier if the Balmari forces retreat off the battlefield.

If the PCs are victorious: They have the opportunity to follow the fleeing Nomads back to their camp. Go to the section titled Nomad Encampment.

If the PCs lose this battle: They will be compelled to retreat back toward Pi-Ramesh. Go to the section titled Temporary Withdrawal.

BATTLE: NOMAD ENCAMPMENT

The nomads are camped near the edge of the expanding thornpatch. A dozen tents are grouped in a circle around a communal fire-pit built of the local rust-red stone. Some of the tribe's jalfs are tethered nearby, the remainder of the herd is hobbled, but otherwise allowed to roam and crop at the mossy ground-cover.

SETUP

Terrain for this battle should be generated on the 'Desert' terrain table.

Place the encampment in a clear area near the center of the battlefield. The various tents should be clustered within a circle 24" in diameter. Treat the north edge of the battlefield as the southern border of the thornpatch. Surviving Balmari Tribal Cavalry from the previous encounter, Contact!, should be set up 24" in from one short edge of the battlefield. The PCs and their accompanying Pathfinders start at that short

edge. Set up 1 unit of Balmari Tribal Cavalry (dis-mounted) & 1 unit of Balmari Tribal Bladesmen within the perimeter of the encampment. They have heard the approach of their fellows and may take action on the first turn. The tribe's women and children will remain in the tents during the encounter.

ARMED RESPONSE

Another unit of Tribal Bladesmen are within the tents; they will join the fight when any figure which initially deployed inside the camp becomes engaged in the fighting. Their sudden appearance may turn the tables in favor of the Balmari.

If any of the nomad units breaks Morale, all the nomads will flee the battlefield, including the 30 noncombatant women and children within the tents. Treat the noncombatants as Mooks, per the rules on pg. 89 of the MARS book. They will fight only if attacked, using improvised weapons or daggers.

AFTERMATH

The battle ends according to the standard 'Showdown' rules, or earlier if all of the nomads retreat off the battlefield.

If the PCs forces win the battle: The Nomad forces will be depleted and they will scatter. This means that they will not take part in the initial assault on Pi-Ramesh. They will regroup and return to the Grey Men's service after the second battle generated by the section titled March of the Grey Men.

If the PCs and the Pathfinders are forced to withdraw: Or, if they decline to engage the nomad encampment, they can return to Pi-Ramesh early enough to warn the city's defenders. The city Militia will have time to build entrenchments. Make note of this on the Pi-Rameshi order of battle, then proceed to the section titled Sole Survivor.

BATTLE: TEMPORARY WITHDRAWAL

Pursued by Red Nomads, the PCs must reach the relative safety of the canal. The nomads will herd them into a choke-point; the Wellor Gorge, a jagged and wind-swept rift in the Martian desert...

SETUP

The terrain for this battle should be generated on the 'Wellor Gorge' terrain table.

Pathfinders: Roll 3d6 and add 18. The PCs and the Pathfinders set up no further than that many inches away from one short edge of the battlefield.

SOLE SURVIVOR

Balmari Pursuers: Surviving Balmari Tribal Cavalry from Contact!, reinforced by 1 unit of Balmari Tribal Cavalry (drawn from those at the Balmari encampment), set up within 12" of that same short edge of the battlefield.

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The nomad cavalry will attempt to encircle the Pi-Rameshi forces, cornering them against the walls of the Gorge. Once they are pinned in place the nomads will strike and then circle away, allowing the city-dwellers to flee once again. This will be repeated, as the nomads whittle down the PCs forces, and drive them and their mounts to exhaustion. As normal when the Balmari are fighting on their own, if either unit breaks Morale, both units will disengage.

AFTERMATH

The battle ends according to the standard 'Show-down' rules, or earlier if the PCs manage to outrun the Balmari forces and exit the opposite short edge of the battlefield, or if the nomads are forced to retreat.

If the PCs drive off or outrun the nomads: The scouting party will arrive back at Pi-Ramesh early enough to warn the city's defenders. The city Militia will have time to build entrenchments. Make note of this on the Pi-Rameshi order of battle, then proceed to the section titled Sole Survivor.

If the PCs cannot defeat or outrun the nomads: The surviving PCs and Pathfinders will be harried and harassed by nomad cavalry the length of the battlefield, and for miles beyond it, until they reach the canal-edge. The Balmari never fully engage, but they keep pressure on the Pi-Rameshi forces, never letting them rest. Assign each PC one level of Fatigue. The nomads will break off their pursuit once they are within sight of the water. As the PCs and any surviving Pathfinders catch their breaths, proceed to the section titled Sole Survivor.

SOLE SURVIVOR

On their way back to Pi-Ramesh with their report, the Pathfinders encounter a dazed and near-dead Red Martian, lying in a shallow pool of water at the bottom of the nearly dry canal bed, near the northern bank.

Jarket Jarul survived the destruction of the canal bridges thanks to his quick thinking in diving into the canal – but the horrible energies released by the heat-rays boiled the water, scalding the Red warrior over much of his body. He is in dire need of medical aid, being reduced to a single Wound, and Exhausted as well.

Once treated, Jarket Jarul can recount to his rescuers the scene in the introductory fiction, revealing to the

PCs that the Grey Men are behind the attack on the bridges. It is imperative that this shocking news be brought as quickly as possible to General Bek!

METAL ASSAULT

Upon their return to Pi-Ramesh, the PCs will be summoned to General Bek's office in the Palace of War, the headquarters for Pi-Ramesh's small military. The General will receive them formally, and demand their report. Allow the players to make an account of their encounters with the Balmari nomads, and their discovery of the Great Thornpatch. The General will accept this information with interest; it is relevant, but not outside the range of his expectations. However, when they pass along Jarket Jarul's information about the Grey Men's attack on the bridges, General Bek will go pale. Up to this point, he has believed Pi-Ramesh to be facing only an escalation of the sporadic nomad attacks she has faced for months. Now he realizes that the danger is far greater than he had assumed.

General Bek will commend the PCs for their service to the Queen, and inquire if any of them have had experience fighting Grey Men. If any of the PCs have had prior experience of that sort, it provides an excellent excuse for that PC to be included in General Bek's senior staff meetings as an advisor.



METAL ASSAULT

"We have little time to lose. The nomads were close on your heels as you returned to the city. We must expect that an attack is imminent." The General will summon a messenger, and order entrenchments to be built around the outskirts of Pi-Ramesh. In addition, he will order two aerial gunboats, the 'Endeavor' and the 'Sojourn', to scout over the Great Thornpatch, and discover its extent. "Our city relies on her army for her defense – but we have more than that. Come with me. I want you to tell what you have discovered to the captains of our Aeronavy."

The General will lead the PCs (and Jarket Jarul, if he is with them) to a broad balcony, overlooking Pi-Ramesh's military sky-dock. A massive aerial dreadnought floats in the dock. On the far side of the dreadnought is a slightly smaller vessel, not floating. Rather, it is dry-docked, with heavy metal and stone supports beneath its keel. "This is the 'Warlord', the flagship of our fleet." General Bek will say with some pride. "Beyond it lies the 'Thunder', an ancient ram-ship".

The PCs will be escorted aboard the 'Warlord' by General Bek, where they will meet her Captain, Hajad Xalal, and the Captain of the 'Thunder', Quait Oscu in Captain Xalal's briefing room. The General will order the PCs to recount once again what they have learned about the Grey Men's attack on the bridges.

The 'Warlord' is 240 feet long, with 5 decks, counting the enclosed bridge. Heavy brazen fittings covered in engraved scrollwork cover her gunports, and the emitters for her lift-rays and propulsion-beams are elaborately decorated. From any reasonable distance, she seems incredibly formidable – but once they are aboard, knowledgeable PCs will notice that some of her gunports are empty, and there are any number of deck fittings and devices which have been polished to a high gleam, but which do not actually function any more.

Once the captains have been apprised of the situation, the General will assign the PC with the greatest experience as a Pilot to assist Captain Oscu aboard the 'Thunder'. Any PCs with experience fighting Grey Men will be assigned to the General's personal staff. The remainder will be placed with the Pi-Rameshi ground forces.

Captain Xalal of the 'Warlord' is anxious to meet the Grey Men in battle. "Being Captain of the 'Warlord' is a great honor, of course, but I sometimes pine for my old command, the 'Whisper'. Running the 'Warlord' is too much like flying a desk – we deploy only when the city is in peril." Pi-Ramesh's capital ships take to the skies only in dire necessity, because of their age and the expense of crewing such vast ships.

For the PC assigned to the 'Thunder', reporting for duty is like stepping into the distant past. The 'War-

lord' was built over a hundred years ago, but the 'Thunder' dates from an even earlier time. It's very name is a relic of a time when Mars still possessed something called 'weather'... Even more baroque in styling than its sister ship, the 'Thunder' dates from an age when aerial vessels on occasion committed ram attacks against their foes. It sports a massive, armored ram-prow designed for just this purpose. Bronze-colored rivets run in curving rows along the blade-like ram, giving it a brutal appearance. By necessity, the weight of the ram causes compromises with the vessel's maneuverability; the radium engines are under great strain just keeping the prow in trim, and the oversized lift-ray emitters beneath the prow shed as much heat as lift, these days...

During their tour of his vessel, Captain Oscu of the 'Thunder' mentions to the PC assigned to him that Ontes Lyr, the former Science Advisor to the Queen's royal grandfather, had spent most of his time keeping the 'Thunder' and the 'Warlord' in operation, before he had a falling out with the old King. Now they are both in poor repair, and dangerous to operate... "I'll take her into action, of course – but I'm not so confident about making it back..." Allow any PC conversing with Captain Oscu a Notice roll. On a success, the PC will observe that while Captain Oscu is no coward, he is jealous of Captain Xalal's position aboard a more powerful and more modern vessel.

AIR WAR

Almost before the PCs have had a chance to assume their new posts, the aerial scouts deployed by General Bek return with urgent news; an airship of unknown design is flying slowly toward the city, escorted by a column of troops on the ground! The scouts are less than an hour ahead of the attack – the PCs will have scant time to prepare.

In these dire circumstances, the Queen will have no choice but to deploy her precious air units: for the first time in her reign, the aerial dreadnought 'Warlord' and the aerial cruiser 'Thunder', those ageing relics of Pi-Ramesh's former glory, will take the field above the combined forces of the Pi-Rameshi Army!

This battle can be conducted either as a miniatures game using the 'Showdown' rules (as detailed below), or, if you prefer, it can be treated as an airship battle above an abstract encounter using the Mass Battle system. In that case, treat the three tripods as essentially stationary with regard to the air battle. On any turn, 1d3 of the tripods will fire at the Pi-Rameshi Aeronaval forces, while the others concentrate on the ground fighting.

SETUP (FOR 'SHOWDOWN' RULES)

The terrain for this battle should be generated on the 'Outskirts of Pi-Ramesh' table.

Grey Men: 1 'floating tripod' (180 points), 3 tripods, 6 units of Balmari Tribal Cavalry, and 4 units of Balmari Tribal Bladesmen (2228 points of surface units; 2408 total points) set up within 12" of one short edge of the battlefield. When fighting alongside the Grey Men, nomad units will not attempt to disengage en masse as soon as one of their units breaks Morale.

City of Pi-Ramesh: The 'Warlord', the 'Thunder', the 'Endeavor', and the 'Sojourn' (495 total points), 2 Units of Cavalry, 6 units of Pikemen, 6 units of Crossbowmen, & 2 units of the Queen's Own Radium Rifles (1568 points of surface units; 2063 total points) set up within 24" of the other short edge of the battlefield. The 'Endeavor' and the 'Sojourn' have only recently returned from their scouting mission, and have not yet been re-supplied. They have only enough radium charges for their cannons to fire each one 1d3 times, and their bomb racks are empty. The 'Warlord' and the 'Thunder' must start the battle at an altitude no more than their Climb rating. Other airships may deploy at any altitude. If time to complete the construction of entrenchments has been made available as a result of a prior encounter, allow the PCs to place zig-zag trenches up to a total length of 36" in their set-up area. Units within a trench count as being in Heavy Cover.

One of the PCs will be aboard the 'Thunder' as an assistant to Captain Oscu. Allow that PC to control the 'Thunder' and the 'Sojourn' during the battle. Any PC assigned to General Bek's staff because of experience fighting Grey Men (or because he or she possesses the Knowledge (Battle) Skill) will be with the General on the flag bridge of the 'Warlord'. That PC will handle the 'Warlord' and the 'Endeavor'. Allow the other PCs to select ground forces to which they have been attached, from among the Cavalry, the Queen's Own, or combined units of Pike and Crossbow.

The standard tactics of the Army of Pi-Ramesh is for units of Crossbowmen to be paired with units of Pikemen. The Crossbowmen line up in front of the Pikemen to fire, then retire behind the line of pikes for defense if they are attacked in melee. Cavalry skirmishes to protect the flanks of the army, and the Queen's Own Radium Rifles form a reserve which can be used to strike at weak points anywhere along the battle line. The squads of the Queen's Own are often assigned a Sand Runner for transport, so that they can be deployed quickly where needed. The units of the Royal Guard do not deploy into the field unless the Queen herself is present – they are her bodyguard, and charged with dying (if necessary) to protect her life.

MYSTERY AIRSHIP

The 'floating tripod' is a wide triangular vessel, with curving sides formed from iridium armor-plate. The rounded points of the triangle are capped with crystal domes which glow with a strong green light. Rays and sheets of that green light, flickering like aurorae, spread beneath the machine, seeming to hold it suspended in the air.

Just beneath each crystal dome lies the firing port of a massive heat-ray projector! With three such projectors, the 'floating tripod' has a three-hundred-sixty degree field of fire. The vessel can spin on its own axis rapidly enough to bring all three weapons to bear on a single target if necessary. The 'floating tripod' is also equipped with a bomb rack and a launcher which projects canisters of a deadly choking gas, which will quickly be dubbed 'black smoke' by Pi-Rameshi survivors.

Although it is impossible to tell from the outside, the vessel is so complex that it requires a crew of six Grey Men to fly it – a Commander, an Engineer, a Pilot, and three Gunner/Bombardiers. No one other than a Grey Man can fill any of these crew positions.

AFTERMATH

If the PCs succeed in destroying the 'Floating Tripod': The remaining attackers will have a more difficult time attacking the outskirts of Pi-Ramesh. Go to the section titled Holding the Line.

If the PCs forces fail to down the 'Floating Tripod': It will proceed to bomb Pi-Ramesh, as the attacking forces rampage through the outlying sectors of the city! Go to the section titled Bombardment!

BATTLE: HOLDING THE LINE

SETUP

This battle takes place near the site of the previous battle. 'Scroll' the terrain from the defender's half of the previous layout toward the attacker's end of the battlefield. Generate new terrain for the defender's end of the battlefield using the 'Outskirts of Pi-Ramesh' table.

Grey Men: The surviving surface units from Air War set up within 12" of one short edge of the battlefield.

City of Pi-Ramesh: The surviving ground units from Air War set up behind the line of entrenchments, or anywhere on the defender's half of the battlefield if there are no entrenchments. Aerial units may set up anywhere on the defender's half of the battlefield, at any altitude.

BOMBARDMENT!

AFTERMATH

The battle ends according to the standard 'Showdown' rules.

If the Pi-Rameshi forces win the battle: The PCs efforts have repulsed the initial attack of the Grey Men – but this attack was only meant to soften up Pi-Ramesh's defenses. Still, they have bought the city precious time. Go to the section titled Relics of War.

If the Grey Men's forces win the battle: The Grey Men have succeeded in weakening the city's defenses. Now, their assault upon Pi-Ramesh can begin in earnest! Go to the section titled March of the Grey Men.

ENCOUNTER: BOMBARDMENT!

The PCs who deployed with the ground forces must fight their way through the Grey Men's army to reach safety within the city, then assist in the evacuation of civilians as bombs and canisters of black smoke fall all around them.

SETUP

The terrain for this encounter should be generated on the 'Outskirts of Pi-Ramesh' table.

The PCs should be placed anywhere on the battlefield, inside buildings, ruins, or other structures within which they have taken cover. During the retreat, things have become confused. Units have lost cohesion and suffered further casualties. Each PC will be accompanied by 1d6-2 figures from the unit they led in the previous battle; the rest of their units have become scattered and are struggling to re-group.

EVACUATING CITIZENS

Place four clusters of 1d6 citizens each anywhere on the battlefield, huddling inside unoccupied buildings or ruins for cover if possible. Treat the citizens as unarmed Extras with a d6 in all relevant stats. All the citizens begin the encounter Shaken. Citizens on their own get no initiative cards; they are pinned down and will not move. Civilians contacted by a PC will act on that PC's initiative, as Allies.

As the PCs find the cowering townfolks, describe them in detail; a mother and her children, covered with masonry dust from their collapsed home; an injured man being helped along by an elderly woman; a young boy, wild-eyed with fear, searching for his family; etc. Personalize the ordinary victims of the bombardment as much as possible.

DEATH FROM THE SKY

Each turn, the 'Floating Tripod' high above will bombard the area. Roll 1d4 for the number of bomb attacks, and 1d6-3 for the number of Black Smoke attacks. Draw initiative cards for each separate bomb and Black Smoke canister, so that their impacts are interspersed with the PCs actions. The 'Floating Tripod' is not aiming these attacks; this is a carpet-bombing run. For each attack, locate its impact point by randomly generating a distance down the length of the battlefield, and a distance across its width. (If the battlefield is a standard 6' by 4' area, roll 1d6-1 for the number of feet and 1d12-1 for the number of inches down the length, then roll 1d4-1 for the number of feet and 1d12-1 for the number of inches across the width).

Aerial Bomb: Medium Burst Template; Damage 3d8, AP 2

Black Smoke Cannisters: Large Burst Template; all living creatures caught within the template must make a Vigor roll each round to hold their breath, or gain a level of Fatigue. This cumulative Fatigue can lead to death. The cloud counts as Pitch Darkness for all targeting and spotting rolls.

Most of the surviving structures on the battlefield are Toughness 10. Ruined buildings are Toughness 8.

AFTERMATH

If the PCs manage to rescue at least half of the citizens caught in the bombardment and get them to safety: Their efforts inspire some of the citizens they have rescued (and many others) to join the Pi-Ramesh Militia as volunteers. Add 5 units of Militia to the city's order of battle. The PCs will manage to re-join the scattered elements of their units, and prepare to defend the outskirts of the city against the enemy onslaught. Go to the section titled Holding the Line.

If the PCs fail to rescue at least half of the citizens: The death toll from the bombing raid will be severe. As word of the catastrophic bombardment spreads, there will be broader repercussions: The Queen will order the evacuation of as many citizens who are not essential to the city's defense as possible. Five units of Militia will be detailed to organize the evacuation and escort the refugees to safety. Those units will not be available for other tasks; mark them off the city's order of battle permanently. Go to the section titled March of the Grey Men.

RELICS OF WAR

RELICS OF WAR

When the PCs return to Pi-Ramesh to report to General Bek, he will accept their report, and commend them for their continued efforts on the city's behalf. Afterward, he will lead the PCs to a chamber underneath the Palace of War; a huge, echoing space that appears to have once held many large machines or vehicles. Now, it holds only three, covered in fine red dust that has accumulated over decades of disuse. General Bek will gesture toward the dimly visible hulks.

"Your efforts have granted us time to prepare our defenses. Once, Pi-Ramesh possessed the ability to forge mighty war machines of our own. These are the last of those machines. They were called 'Sand Masters', because nothing in the desert could stop their advance. You are foreigners who have chosen to serve my Queen. You do not know the people of Pi-Ramesh as I do. I show you these to make clear to you that Pi-Ramesh will fight – the spirit that created these machines lives on in our hearts, even if we can no longer build their like."

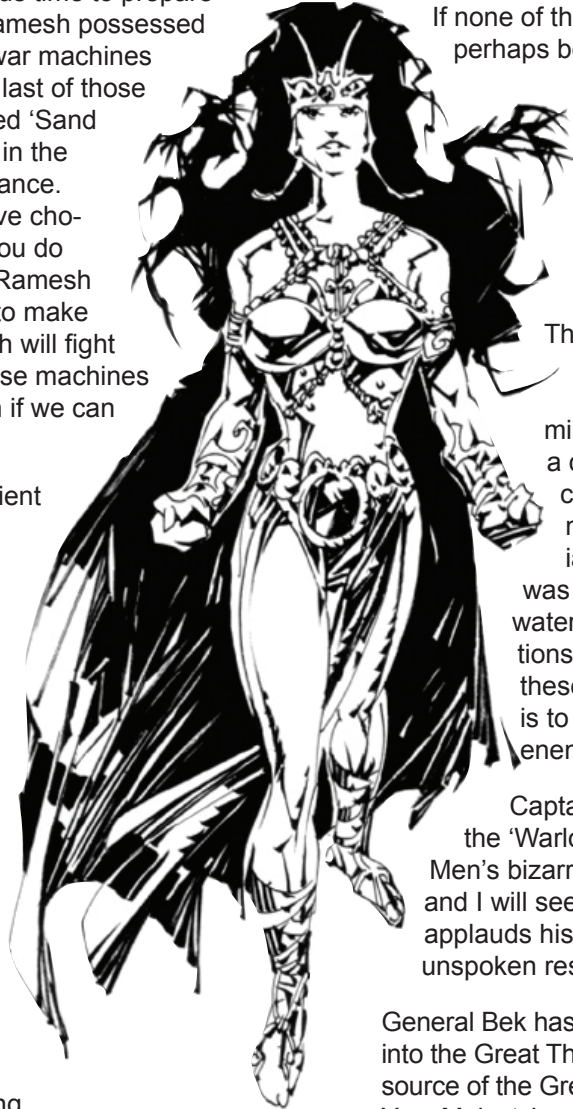
The Sand Masters are ancient relics, from wars long ago. They have been dis-used for half a century or more, but beneath the dust their hulls are still gleaming silver-blue. Each hull is a single-piece iridium casting, teardrop-curved and steeply sloping, with a narrow prow and a flattened stern. Within each vehicle's prow is a fixed-mount radium cannon! A clear bubble-canopy covers the driver and gunner positions above the weapon. The bubble is fitted with metal-rimmed doors on either side allowing crew access. Two slim armored projections extend low on each side of the hull. These protect the axles of the vehicle's four enormous tires, each nearly the height of the vehicle itself. The surface of each tire is covered with traction-lugs and sand-scoops, allowing the Sand Master to traverse nearly any terrain Mars has to offer.

General Bek's expression will soften, as he indulges in a rare moment of reminiscence. "I remember seeing the Sand Masters rolling along beside the Great

Canal, leading the parade of soldiers on festival days when I was just a boy..." He will shake off his reverie quickly, bringing back his customary scowl. "These are mighty war machines, and would be useful in the defense of our city – if they still worked. But their radium engines went dead years ago, and no one in Pi-Ramesh knows how to repair them any more."

It will require a success on a Repair roll and another success on a Weird Science roll to get each of the three vehicles back into operational condition. Each roll can be made at the end of a full day's effort working on the Sand Masters, and successful or not, each roll will require the expenditure of a radium capsule.

If none of the PCs have sufficient skill, they will perhaps become interested in tracking down someone who does...



TAKING THE WAR TO THE GREY MEN

The Queen summons the PCs, the senior Aeronaval Captains, and General Bek to the Throne Room. Her other ministers are not present – this is purely a council of war. Queen Korva Tai is concerned with the extent of Pi-Ramesh's military casualties (and civilian casualties, if the 'Floating Tripod' was permitted to bombard the city). "Our water supplies are constrained, our options are few. We cannot stand a siege in these circumstances. To fight defensively is to lose – yet we do not know where our enemies lair!"

Captain Xalal will be quick to point out that the 'Warlord' can bomb as well as the Grey Men's bizarre airship. "All I need is a location, and I will see it obliterated!" Captain Oscu politely applauds his fellow officer's élan, but obviously has unspoken reservations...

General Bek has a plan: "Very well. We must scout into the Great Thornpatch in order to discover the source of the Grey Men, either within it or beyond it. Your Majesty's sell-swords acquitted themselves well as scouts before; I propose that they lead this mission."

Queen Korva Tai will concur with the General's plan; a reconnaissance-in-force to find the location of the Grey Men's headquarters. It would be less-than-heroic for the PCs to demur at this point.

THORNPATCH RAID

BATTLE: THORNPATCH RAID

The following morning, General Bek will assemble the PCs and a mixed company of Pi-Rameshi ground troops on the parade ground in front of the Palace of War. "The first stage of going on the offensive is to discover the enemy's deployment. Your primary mission is just that; it is imperative that you find the source of the Grey Men, and return that information to Pi-Ramesh. As a secondary objective, disrupt the Grey Men's supply and communication chains if possible. Warriors of Pi-Ramesh, fight with honor!"

The march to the edge of the Great Thornpatch will take two days at least. The new growth extends southeast across what the Pi-Rameshi have always called the Barrens of Harramat – barren no more, as they are covered with a riot of scarlet and lavender vegetation! Entering the Thornpatch, the Pi-Rameshi soldiers will become nervous and disconcerted by the strange sounds and the closeness of the jungle growth. This is an experience of warfare far different than any they have previously known.

SETUP

The entire battlefield is considered thornpatch vegetation, apart from clearings, trails, or special features generated by the Thornpatch Terrain Table.

Nomads guard the Grey Men's territory. The Grey Men themselves appear to dislike the Great Thornpatch – they seem not to have anticipated its growth... This is a meeting engagement between the PCs forces and one such group of nomad guards.

Two units of Balmari Nomad Cavalry and three units of Balmari Nomad Bladesmen (488 points) set up within 24" of one long edge of the battlefield, near a clearing or path if one exists.

The PCs, one unit of Pathfinders mounted on jalfs, one unit of Pikemen, one unit of Crossbowmen, and one unit of Radium Rifles aboard a Sand Runner (414 points) set up within 12" of the opposite long edge of the battlefield, near a clearing or path if one exists.

Rogues: Roll on the Thornpatch Encounter Table.

As in prior engagements with the Balmari, if one unit of nomads breaks Morale, all of the nomads will withdraw, scattering and exiting the battlefield in any direction possible.

AFTERMATH

The battle ends according to the standard 'Showdown' rules, or earlier if the Balmari forces retreat off the battlefield.

If the PCs convince the nomads to withdraw: The victorious PCs continue to scout deeper into the thornpatch. Go to the section titled Enemies in Peril.

If the PCs lose the engagement: Their forces must retreat through the deadly thornpatch, becoming separated and losing their way in the process. Go to the section titled Jungle Warfare.

ENCOUNTER: JUNGLE WARFARE

Separated from their units and lost within the confusing tangle of vegetation, the PCs must make their way back to a safe location, but the Great Thornpatch is full of dangers. For every hour the PCs are within the thick tangle of foliage, roll on the Thornpatch Encounter table and conduct the resulting fight.

SETUP

The entire battlefield is considered thornpatch vegetation, apart from clearings, trails, or special features generated by the Thornpatch Terrain Table.

Allow the players to place their characters somewhere near the center of the battlefield, either in a clearing or on a trail, if any clearing or trail exists. The encounter presumes that the PCs have been able to join together, but that they are separated from their units. If you prefer, allow each PC to be accompanied by 1d6-2 soldiers from his unit as Allies. Alternatively, if you wish to increase the danger and confusion of this situation, run separate encounters for each of the PCs, as they have been separated from one another as well!

The opposition for the encounter will be placed according to the Thornpatch Encounter Table. Treat 'Rogue' creatures as additional opponents for this encounter, as there is no 'other side' for them to potentially engage.

ESCAPE FROM THE JUNGLE

Every hour, the PCs get the opportunity to find their bearings once more. A success at a Tracking roll will get the group headed in the proper direction once again. Failure means a return to the top of this section, and another random encounter within the Great Thornpatch. If you are running separate encounters for each PC, allow them to find one another even on a Tracking failure, so that the group gradually comes together. Once the PCs get their bearings, they will be able to re-group with the survivors from their units. On their way out of the thornpatch, they will encounter someone else who has been having a bad time of it in the jungle... Go to the section titled Enemies in Peril.

ENEMIES IN PERIL

ENCOUNTER:

ENEMIES IN PERIL

As the PCs break into a broad open area beneath a canopy of dense foliage, they spot the aftermath of a pitched battle: The clearing is approximately circular, and sixty feet in diameter. There are six Balmari Nomads lying either dead or wounded around the clearing. There are two jalfs and four other Nomads struggling in the tendrils of three cistan which are near the border of the clearing opposite the PCs entry. Use the stats of Balmari Nomad Cavalry for these unfortunate.

The leader of the nomad patrol, Prince Herev Kai Chira, is entangled in the tendrils and leaves of a cistan nearer the PCs, unconscious and obviously injured. He wears brightly-enameled jewel armor and a matching bracer shield, covered by a loose robe of mottled lavender and teal hues – reasonable camouflage amid the thornpatch vegetation. A finely-wrought radium pistol and a matching shortsword lie near his immobilized hands, obviously fallen from his grip. The branches and tendrils of the cistan show the effects of his struggle against it. A dead jalf lies nearby, wrapped in the hideous embrace of a fifth cistan plant.

This encounter presents the PCs with a moral dilemma. They may attack the nomads, or they may offer to aid them, and attack the cistan instead. If the PCs do nothing, or merely watch, it will be a matter of minutes before all the nomads are enwrapped by the cistan, and shortly after that they will all be dead.

There will be no immediate repercussions if the PCs do nothing. However, if the valuable weapons and gear of Prince Herev Kai Chira are in the PCs possession when they later meet the Chieftain of the Balmari Nomads, he will be ill-disposed toward them...

The PCs may make Tracking rolls to backtrack the path of the dead nomads. This will eventually lead them to the headquarters of the Grey Men. Proceed to the section titled Discovery of the Grey Citadel.

If, on the other hand, the PCs make an effort to rescue the Prince they will have gained the trust of the son of the Chieftain of the Balmari, and will have an advantage in their later dealings with his father.

If Prince Herev is rescued by the PCs, he will be puzzled, but guardedly grateful. In speaking as the Prince, play up the complex emotions he feels at this point: He owes the PCs a life-debt, now, and he is both ashamed and angry that that is so. He is grateful to the PCs for rescuing him, but his own warrior code would not have moved him to rescue them if the situation had been reversed, so their actions puzzle him deeply.

If engaged in conversation, Prince Herev will not directly reveal the location of the Grey Men's base to the PCs, but Success on an opposed Notice roll vs the Prince's Persuasion will allow a PC to gain some insight into its location just by observing the Prince's body language. When the Prince departs with his men, he will intentionally head them away from the Grey Men's stronghold, to conceal its location. Success on an opposed Smarts roll vs the Prince's Persuasion should give the PCs the necessary hint... Proceed to the section titled Discovery of the Grey Citadel.

BATTLE: DISCOVERY OF THE GREY CITADEL

Having struggled through the Great Thornpatch, and faced many of its perils, the PCs expedition has finally located the headquarters of the Grey Men! Breaking through the thick tangle of crimson foliage, the PCs will first spot signs of charring – jungle growth burned black and covered with powdery ash. Then they will catch sight of a vast silver-blue shape beyond the charred zone. The Grey Citadel resembles nothing any of the PCs has ever seen before – unless they have had both the misfortune of seeing Volaxia Shah and the good fortune to have survived that experience. It is a metal-sheathed cone, flat at the top, with an armored ring surrounding the flat surface. The ring has a series of triangular insets around its entire diameter – obviously gunports of some kind.

The thornpatch caused by the canal-dam has spread for miles in every direction, and has completely surrounded the Citadel. The Grey Men have used their heat-rays to burn back the dense growth for dozens of yards in every direction, leaving nothing but scorched sand and black ash behind.

SETUP

The Grey Citadel is represented on the battlefield by a circle 12 inches in diameter (the flat top of the cone) centered within a circle 24 inches in diameter (the base of the cone). Position the Citadel 24" in from one short edge of the battlefield. The remainder of the battlefield is thornpatch terrain, apart from clearings, trails, or special features generated by the Thornpatch Terrain Table. The area within 18" of the base of the Citadel itself is a blackened clearing, where the foliage has been burned away. The Grey Citadel is treated as an immobile vehicle for purposes of this adventure – refer to the included unit card for its capabilities.

Three tripods (387) stand sentry near the Citadel! Set them up inside the burned zone, equally spaced around the cone's perimeter. They are considered active guards for any PC Stealth attempts.

CRIMSON JUNGLE

The PCs and the military units surviving from the previous battle will enter the battlefield from the opposite short edge.

AFTERMATH

The battle ends according to the standard 'Showdown' rules, or earlier if the PCs withdraw from the battlefield.

If the PCs succeed in destroying all three of the defending tripods: They will have significantly reduced the fortress' defenses. They do not, however, have the force necessary to take the Citadel. Go to the section titled March of the Grey Men.

If the PCs withdraw from the field leaving at least one tripod active: They will be pursued. Go to the section titled Crimson Jungle.

BATTLE: CRIMSON JUNGLE

The PCs are withdrawing from the Grey Citadel, pursued by deadly and swift tripods!

SETUP

The entire battlefield is considered thornpatch vegetation, apart from clearings, trails, or special features generated by the Terrain Table. There will always be

at least one trail; if no trail comes up on the dice, add a trail just as if it were randomly rolled.

Allow the players to place their characters and any surviving units from the previous battle somewhere near the center of the battlefield, either in a clearing or on a trail.

The surviving tripods from the previous battle will enter from one short edge of the battlefield. To represent the fact that these tripods have had to travel different distances to reach their entry points, roll 1d10 for each. On turn one, each tripod cannot move further onto the battlefield than the number of inches rolled on its die. All of the tripods are considered to have moved at 20" per round for ACC / Top Speed purposes. After their initial entry, the tripods move normally.

Rogues: Roll on the Thornpatch Encounter Table

ESCAPE AND EVASION

The PCs and their troops, even if all mounted on jalfs, will have a difficult time outrunning the swift-striding tripods. Effectively utilizing the terrain features of the battlefield to delay or evade the tripods will be critical to the PCs survival. The PCs and their Allies may exit the battlefield across any edge except the tripod's entry-edge.



MARCH OF THE GREY MEN

AFTERMATH

The battle ends according to the standard 'Showdown' rules, or earlier if the PCs forces all withdraw successfully.

If the PCs and more than 50% of their starting forces manage to outrun the tripods: They can claim at least a moral victory: They have escaped from the clutches of the Grey Men bearing vital information: the location of the Citadel is now known! Proceed to the section titled March of the Grey Men.

If more than 50% of the Pi-Rameshi troops that start the encounter are slain: The PCs are considered to have lost, regardless of casualties inflicted: The PCs precipitous attack on the Citadel has roused the Grey Men. They advance their invasion timetable, and launch their attack on the City of Pi-Ramesh immediately! Go to the section titled March of the Grey Men. As shown on the flowchart, following a loss in this battle the March of the Grey Men battle generator is used twice consecutively, representing this advance in the Grey Men's timetable.

BATTLE: MARCH OF THE GREY MEN

This is a random battle generator. Each time the flowchart directs you to this section, roll on the table below to determine the Grey Men's current objective.

The location of the battle is determined from the list below.

1. Grey Citadel (surrounded by the Great Thornpatch)
2. Darshan Hills (currently covered by the Great Thornpatch)
3. Barrens of Harramat (currently covered by the Great Thornpatch)
4. Desert
5. Wellor Gorge
6. Canal-banks
7. Outskirts of Pi-Ramesh
8. Pi-Ramesh

The spearhead of the Grey Men's advance begins in the Barrens of Harramat. The first random battle of the adventure will take place there. The location of the spearhead is adjusted after each battle, according to the instructions in the Aftermath of a Random Battle section. The Grey Men have planned their advance to avoid the Great Thornpatch as much as possible, diverting south of the Barrens of Harramat into clear desert, then advancing up the Wellor Gorge to the edge of the dry canal. They will pull back along the same path if forced to do so.

SETUP

The terrain for the battle is generated from the appropriate table for its location.

Choose the Grey Men's starting edge at random by rolling 1d4. The Grey Men will deploy their forces within 12" of their starting edge (either a long or a short edge). The Pi-Rameshi forces will deploy within 24" of the opposite edge.

The Objective table indicates what forces the Grey Men will deploy for the battle, taken from their complete order of battle. The Pi-Rameshi forces are selected from the Pi-Ramesh order of battle by the PCs. There is one restriction: Units (including vehicles or airships) deployed to a battle generated by this section will be unavailable for deployment to the next battle generated by this section, even if they survive unscathed. This accounts for the necessity of travel time, rest, and resupply for the troops.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

If the Grey Men's objective is Scouting, their intention is to find and engage Pi-Rameshi forces in the area. The PCs victory condition for such a battle is to avoid casualties while inflicting casualties on the enemy. Use the standard 'Showdown' victory conditions.

If the Grey Men's objective is a Delaying Action, their intention is to pin down Pi-Rameshi defenders until the remainder of their forces catch up to deliver a finishing blow. The Pi-Rameshi victory condition for such a battle is to avoid the pin: The PCs gain 1 Victory Point for each Grey Men (or allied) unit or vehicle destroyed, and 1 Victory Point for each Pi-Rameshi (or allied) unit exited off their own entry edge. The PCs lose 1 Victory Point for each Pi-Rameshi (or allied) unit destroyed. At the end of the battle, if the PCs Victory Point total is positive, they have won the battle.

Random Battle Generator

2d6 Roll	Objective	Forces
2-6	Scouting	¼ of the Balmari Cavalry + 3 Tripods
7	Advance	Entire Grey Men force
8-9	Delaying Action	½ of the Balmari Cavalry, ½ of the Balmari Bladesmen + 6 Tripods
10-12	Flanking Attack	½ of the Balmari Cavalry + 3 Tripods

DECISIONS IN PI-RAMESH

If the Grey Men's objective is to Advance, they must move troops off the edge of the battlefield opposite their entry edge. The PCs must prevent this if possible. The PCs gain 1 Victory Point for each Grey Men (or allied) unit or vehicle destroyed, and lose 1 Victory Point for each Grey Men (or allied) unit or vehicle exited off the PCs starting edge. The PCs lose 1 Victory Point for each Pi-Rameshi (or allied) unit destroyed. At the end of the battle, if the PCs Victory Point total is positive, they have won the battle.

If the Grey Men's objective is a Flanking Attack, their intention is to strike at the unprotected flank of the Pi-Rameshi army and inflict casualties. Use the standard 'Showdown' victory conditions.

AFTERMATH OF A RANDOM BATTLE

Each time a battle generated by this section is won by the Grey Men, the spearhead of their forces moves one step closer to the city of Pi-Ramesh for the next random battle. Each time a battle generated by this section is lost by the Grey Men, the spearhead stays in position: The Grey Men's advance has been stalled. If the 'floating tripod' has been destroyed, or if the Balmari nomads are not presently fighting alongside the Grey Men, they will pull back one step closer to the Grey Citadel after a battle is lost.

After each random battle, proceed to the next section of the adventure as shown on the flowchart. If the Grey Men advance into the city of Pi-Ramesh itself, go immediately to the section of the adventure titled The End of The War, under the subheading 'If the PCs fail to save the city', and proceed from there...

DECISIONS IN PI-RAMESH

Returning to the city, the PCs will be brought immediately to a military council in the Throne Room. Queen Korva, General Bek, and Captains Xalan and Oscu of the Pi-Rameshi Aeronavy are present, surrounding a table strewn with maps and documents.

Depending on how the previous battles have gone, the mood in the room will vary between cautiously confident and grim. If the Army of Pi-Ramesh has suffered serious losses against the Grey Men, there will be an element of real fear in the room.

The Queen will conduct an open discussion of tactics, allowing the PCs to speak first, followed by the Aeronaval Captains, and then General Bek.

There are several options available to the PCs at this time: A diplomatic envoy might be sent to the Balmari Nomads, in an attempt to ally with them; an attempt might be made to break the canal-dam by using the 'Thunder's ram-prow'; an attempt might be made to contact the elusive hermit-scientist of whom the PCs

have heard, in the hopes of getting his scientific aid; if a tripod has been disabled or destroyed in a previous encounter, a raid on the wreckage might be staged in the hopes of stealing a heat-ray projector. Any or all of these might be proposed by the PCs; those options which are not brought up by the PCs will be brought up by the various NPCs in the scene.

Conclude the scene when plans have been laid for the PCs next mission.

As indicated on the flowchart, this section of the adventure acts as a nexus. For each of the side-missions the PCs decide to pursue, they will also have to deal with the broader military actions detailed in March of the Grey Men. These battles can occur between the PCs missions, or simultaneously with them, at your pleasure. If there are sufficient PCs, use the time pressure of the advancing Grey Men to encourage your players to split up and attempt to accomplish multiple goals at once.

When all of the side missions have been completed, or when the PCs have determined that time is running out and they must lead the forces of Pi-Ramesh against the Grey Citadel, proceed to the section titled Final Assault.

ENCOUNTER: BATTLE-FIELD RESUPPLY

The location of this encounter will vary, depending upon where a Grey Man tripod was put out of commission. Use the appropriate Terrain Table to generate the terrain features. The tripod itself lies in the center of the battlefield. It is heavily damaged and cannot be repaired in place, even by the Grey Men. One leg was ripped free of the hull by a blast of radium gun fire, leaving a jagged hole behind, big enough for a man to crawl through. The forward edge of the war machine's iridium armor dug deep into the soil as it toppled, and the articulated mount of the deadly heat-ray is buried in red sand.

As the PCs approach the wreck site, they discover that local wildlife has taken an interest in the wreck – a hunting swarm of 2d6 cazarn (use the stats on page 119 of the MARS book) will be prowling within twenty yards of the wreck. If the tripod is down in the thornpatch, make a roll on the Thornpatch Encounter table instead.

Crawling into the hole in the hull of the tripod is like crawling into the maw of a great beast. The environment inside is lit with a wan, greenish light, coming in through the tinted glass of the canopy above the driver's control-seat. Complex machinery is all around, much of it broken and leaking strangely colored fluids. Unlike human-built machines, this is not based on

BATTLEFIELD RESUPPLY

gears, levers, and push-rods. Instead, complex slotted discs and cams drive the legs of the tripod – or did, before it came crashing to the ground.

The Grey Man tripod driver is hiding in the wreckage, awaiting rescue. He is pinned down by both the blinding surface sunlight, and the local wildlife. The machine that made him a walking god upon the face of Mars is beyond repair. Now, to the extent that any of the Grey Men can, he is experiencing emotion for the first time – an emotion called fear.

Use the stats from the Unit Card provided at the end of this adventure for the Grey Man. He is armed with a radium pistol designed to be held with tentacles, and is in Heavy Cover behind the consoles and seating arrangements of the cockpit. He will fight to the death, and will attempt to detonate the tripod's radium engine rather than let his machine be captured! To set the self-destruct mechanism requires a success on a Weird Science roll. The radium engine will detonate six rounds later, with the force of an aerial radium bomb -- 6d10, AP 4 to everyone and everything within a Large Burst Template centered on the wreckage. This will destroy the heat-ray mount as well as all the other equipment inside the tripod. To stop the explosion, a PC will have to make a Weird Science roll with a Raise, because of the alien nature of the vehicle's controls. Once the self-destruct is set, the Gray Man will attempt to reach a safe distance from his vehicle before it explodes – he will move toward cover if any cover is available on the battlefield.

If the tripod driver is defeated, and the explosion of the radium engine is prevented, the PCs will still need to dismount the heat-ray. Removing it from the wreckage is the easy part, requiring only a success on a Repair roll. The beam projector itself weighs only twenty-five pounds, but it cannot be fired without being attached to a large energy source such as a vehicle's radium engine.

Once the PCs acquire the heat-ray, they will have to find a way to mount it for battlefield use. Depending on their preferences, they may choose to install it on one of the Pi-Rameshi airships, on a Sand Runner, or on a Sand Master if they have been able to acquire those vehicles. In any case it will require a raise on a Weird Science roll to mount the bizarre alien weapon and provide it with sufficient radium energy to fire.

ENCOUNTER: EMBASSY TO THE BALMARI TRIBE

The latest reports from the Pathfinders indicate that the main encampment of the Balmari nomads is currently within the Wellor Gorge, south of the Pi-Ramesh Canal. A small group (the PCs, for instance) might be allowed to approach the encampment under a flag of

truce. The Queen believes that sending a larger force might make diplomatic engagement with the Balmari much more difficult.

The encampment is just beyond a narrow stretch of the gorge, which provides a natural choke-point. As the PCs approach, allow them a Notice roll to spot the nomad archers in the rocks above. The Balmari tents are clustered in the shadow of the gorge wall, divided into family groups around separate cooking fires. A milling herd of jalfs occupies the sunlit center of the gorge, tended by watchful youths.

The Balmari will respect the tradition of the flag of truce, and will send a group of nomad warriors to escort the PCs delegation to the largest tent in the encampment, the tent belonging to Chira Kai Tez'ak, Chieftain of the Balmari tribe.

The Chieftain's initial posture toward the PCs will depend upon the PCs actions toward his son earlier. If his son was saved by the PCs, he will be Neutral toward them. If his son is dead, he will begin negotiations with a reaction of Uncooperative. If any PC is displaying the Prince's personal weapons, the Chieftain will be openly Hostile to the PCs, and will challenge the PC who bears his son's weapons to a duel immediately! The Balmari respect strength; according to their tradition, anyone who meets a Chieftain in single combat and slays him has the right to take his place. If the PC is victorious against Chira Kai Tez'ak, he will be treated as Chieftain by the remainder of the Balmari tribe!

Assuming that negotiations even begin, Chira Kai Tez'ak will tell the PCs of his tribe's recent history: "The Grey Lords pushed us out of the Darshan Hills many months ago, when they surfaced and constructed their great Citadel. They offered us radium weapons as a reward if we raided the city-dwellers of Pi-Ramesh." The Chieftain will not mention that those radium weapons have not as yet been provided – although it may be obvious to the PCs, given that none of the Balmari rank-and-file they have encountered have been armed with radium guns. An offer to arm the Balmari with radium weapons from Pi-Ramesh will go a long way toward getting an alliance with the nomads – give the PCs next Persuasion roll a +4 bonus.

The PCs can convince Chira Kai Tez'ak to break his alliance with the 'Grey Lords' if they can change his Reaction via Persuasion until he is Friendly toward them. If they can change his Reaction all the way to Helpful, he will agree to an alliance with the city of Pi-Ramesh as well.

If negotiations with the Chieftain go badly (i.e. his reaction drops to Hostile at any point), Chira Kai Tez'ak will demand that a PC face the tribes champion in single combat in order to earn the right to continue speaking with him. The champion, Toomal Kai Ros, is

THE HERMIT OF THE JAGARI WASTES

a formidable fighter. He will face a champion selected by the PCs from among their number in single combat.

Duels among the Balmari take place in a cleared circle in front of the Chieftain's tent, and are always duels to the death! There is one caveat to this – if Prince Herev is alive, he will be at his father's side during the negotiations. If a PC is about to be slain by the tribe's champion, Prince Herev will spring into the circle and stay the champion's hand, declaring: "Father, I owe these people a life; thus is my debt repaid!" Prince Herev's actions on the PC's behalf will sway the Chieftain's opinion somewhat. He will forgive them their recent social offenses and become Neutral toward them, reopening negotiations for one final attempt.

AFTERMATH

If negotiations break the alliance between the Grey Men and the Balmari tribe: Balmari forces become unavailable to the Grey Men for the rest of the adventure. Chira Kai Tez'ak will lead his tribe away from this embattled region, to more peaceful lands.

If the Balmari ally with Pi-Ramesh: Surviving Balmari forces on the order of battle can be deployed by the defenders of the city. If a PC becomes their Chieftain, it may be presumed that the Balmari tribe automatically becomes allies of Pi-Ramesh.

Regardless of the final disposition of the Balmari tribe, if Prince Herev was rescued earlier in the adventure, he will join with the PCs at this point – breaking with his father and his tribe, if necessary, in order to do so. Attach him to the PC who saved his life, or to the PC whose life he saved in the duel, as an Ally from this point forward. During discussions with Prince Herev about the Balmari's lifestyle, he will reveal that the tribe fears the 'silver tower' in the Jagari Wastes, because their jalfs are spooked and become uncontrollable if they get near it.

ENCOUNTER: THE HERMIT OF THE JAGARI WASTES

The PCs set out to follow up the rumors they have heard of a crazy hermit-scientist living in a silver tower in the desert south of Pi-Ramesh.

Ontes Lyr went into a self-imposed exile after a disagreement with Taldan Tai, the Queen's royal grand-sire. Ontes Lyr and Taldan Tai were rivals for the same woman's affection, long ago. When Lady Ariana chose to become Queen Ariana of Pi-Ramesh rather than a simple scholar's wife, Ontes Lyr left the city never to return.

THE SILVER TOWER

The tower of Ontes Lyr is two days ride southwest

of the city of Pi-Ramesh, in an area called the Jagari Wastes. It stands alone, jutting a hundred and fifty feet from the rocky desert like a skeletal finger of silver. If approached by day, it will seem abandoned, but if the tower is approached at night, faint blue lightning will be seen crackling around the top floors.

The tower is thirty feet in diameter at the base, tapering slightly toward its tip. Bulbous silver protrusions dot its surface in an irregular pattern – they are mirrored windows, but an observer from outside would have no way of determining that. As the party approaches the tower, their jalfs shy and become restive. Within fifty yards of the tower, it will require a success on a Riding roll to maintain control of a mount. Within thirty yards of the tower, even that will not be enough. When forced to that range, jalfs or other mounts will attempt to throw their riders and flee to a more comfortable distance.

The tower seems deserted, but it is not without protection. Two busharabul lie dormant in the sand near the tower's entrance. They will attack anything that moves within 6" of their lairs. Busharabul are described on pg. 118-119 of the MARS rulebook.

MEETING THE HERMIT

Ontes Lyr will hear the commotion caused by the PCs battle with the busharabul he has compelled to guard his doorway. He will observe from the upper floors for a few moments before intervening. A successful Notice roll will spot him peering out an open window using a strange instrument, if any of the PCs spare a glance for the tower during the battle. If any of the PCs are swallowed by a busharabul, or if one of the busharabul appears to be in danger of being slain, Ontes Lyr will hurry to the ground floor of the tower, and activate his sonic beast-control device. From within the tower, a faint but ear-drum-achingly shrill sound will be heard. The busharabul will immediately spit out any swallowed victims and retreat beneath the sand to their customary lairs. Allow the PCs a moment of confusion before Ontes Lyr addresses them through the closed door.

"Trespassers! Who are you? What do you want here?" His querulous voice will be more annoyed than fearful – but until the PCs convince him that they are not a threat, he will not open the door of his tower to them or invite them inside. When the door to the tower opens, the PCs will see Ontes Lyr, his hair and straggling chin-whisp beard in mad disarray, dressed in a worn linen robe with leather patches at the elbows, which parts as he walks to reveal the metallic brace around his bad leg. He holds a strange device – a metallic box with two curled trumpet-like projec-

THE HERMIT OF THE JAGARI WASTES

tions extending from the sides and angling forward. This is the sonic device he has invented to control desert beasts, but the PCs may initially react to it as a possible weapon. If they do so, Ontes Lyr will pick up on their caution and use it as such, gesturing with the device and keeping it pointed at the 'trespassers' in a defensive manner. He will continue with this charade until he decides to fully trust the PCs.

The upper floors of the tower are Ontes Lyr's workshop and home – with no particular division between these two functions. The technologist is haphazard when it comes to decorating his living quarters. The skulls of desert-dwelling beasts, strange rock formations, including incredibly ancient corals and fossil sea-shells, and peculiar machines or devices are stacked on shelves and tables throughout the tower. A holographic portrait depicting a young woman (who bears a faint resemblance to Queen Korva Tai) is prominent on one desk, next to sheaves of paper covered in crabbed writing. A recording device with a wand-like microphone sits on the floor, being used as a door-stop. A telescope-like instrument with a circular crystal display screen is positioned near one of the tall narrow windows, its lens aimed downward at the door to the tower.

BITTERSWEET MEMORIES

The elderly technologist is unused to having guests; it will take a little while before he begins to speak to the PCs. Once he begins, however, he will be voluble in his discussions of his studies and his inventions. He will avoid all discussions of his reasons for living alone in his tower, and of his reasons for leaving Pi-Ramesh in the first place.

Ontes Lyr's initial Reaction to the PCs will be Neutral. He is not interested in the plight of Pi-Ramesh, having turned his back on that city long ago. Now, he has no interest in anything beyond his experiments and his occasional journeys into the wastelands looking for antique technology. Persuasion attempts by the PCs will be necessary to convince him otherwise.

The offer of access to artifacts of the Grey Men, such as a captured heat-ray, might pique his interest. Give any PC making such an offer a +2 bonus to his Persuasion attempt.

A stronger lure would be a heartfelt plea based upon the fact that the young Queen Korva Tai is the granddaughter of the woman Ontes Lyr once loved. Plucking at his heartstrings in this way might sway the elderly technologist. Give any PC making such a plea a +4 bonus to his Persuasion attempt.

If the PCs can gain a Friendly reaction from him, Ontes Lyr will return to Pi-Ramesh with them. Once there, he can use his Weird Science skills to bring

BEAST ALLIES

Whenever the beast-control device is used in a region in or near the Great Thornpatch (The Grey Citadel, the Darshan Hills, the Barrens of Harramat, and the Canal-banks) roll five times on the Thornpatch Encounter chart to determine what beasts are stirred up. Presuming that the device has sufficient power points, the generated beasts will be Allies under the control of the device's user.

In situations where the Mass Battle rules are in use, treat the beast pack as a unit consisting of 1 Durvesh, 1 Kos'karg, 1 Rhondarva, 8 Shuraba, and a swarm of Vith, for a total of 107 points.

In either case, this 'unit' is exempt from the deployment restriction of not fighting in two consecutive battles; it is made up of different creatures each time.

Whenever the beast-control device is used elsewhere, roll once on the Desert Dwellers sub-table to see what beasts respond to the mechanism. You may instead wish to substitute a creature of your own devising. In addition, any Rogue beasts that are part of the set-up can be targeted for control by the device.

the Sand Masters back into fighting trim, and assist in repairs or modifications to the city's airships. The PCs will also gain access to his beast-control device, and (hopefully) come up with the idea of using it to control the thornpatch beasts as Allies in battle.

If the PCs fail to convince the old hermit to return to Pi-Ramesh, they may face considerable difficulties later on. More immediately, if they anger the irascible old man he will use his sonic device to enrage the bush-arabul outside the tower when the PCs exit...

ENCOUNTER: BREAKING THE DAM

The proposal has been made by some of the Queen's Ministers to fly the 'Thunder' up the dry canal bed, at low altitude, and use the airship's ram-prow to smash the barrier, releasing the pent-up water and relieving the strain on Pi-Ramesh's resources. Captain Oscu will scoff at the idea of flying such a mission – if pressed by General Bek, he will flatly refuse. Captain Oscu is more concerned with the prestige of his command than with the conduct of the war, and he will not accept what he will refer to as a 'suicide mission' – one

BREAKING THE DAM

that will leave him without a ship, even if he were to survive. He will hotly proclaim "It is my honor to command the 'Thunder', and I will not order my ship to its doom on a fool's errand!" General Bek will summarily dismiss Oscu from command and replace him with the PC who was previously assigned as Captain Oscu's aide – presuming that that PC is willing to command the mission.

Some members of the 'Thunder's crew may be discontent with the appointment of a foreign mercenary as Captain. Persuasion or Intimidation attempts against such unruly crewmen can provide an interesting subplot during the journey from Pi-Ramesh to the dam, should you wish to pursue it. Start the attitude of any such proto-mutineers at Uncooperative, and allow the PC Captain of the 'Thunder' (and any PCs accompanying him) to make attempts to win the crew over. Utilize the Aeronavy Crewman and Aeronavy Officer stats on page 169 of the MARS book to represent the ship's crew as necessary.

SETUP

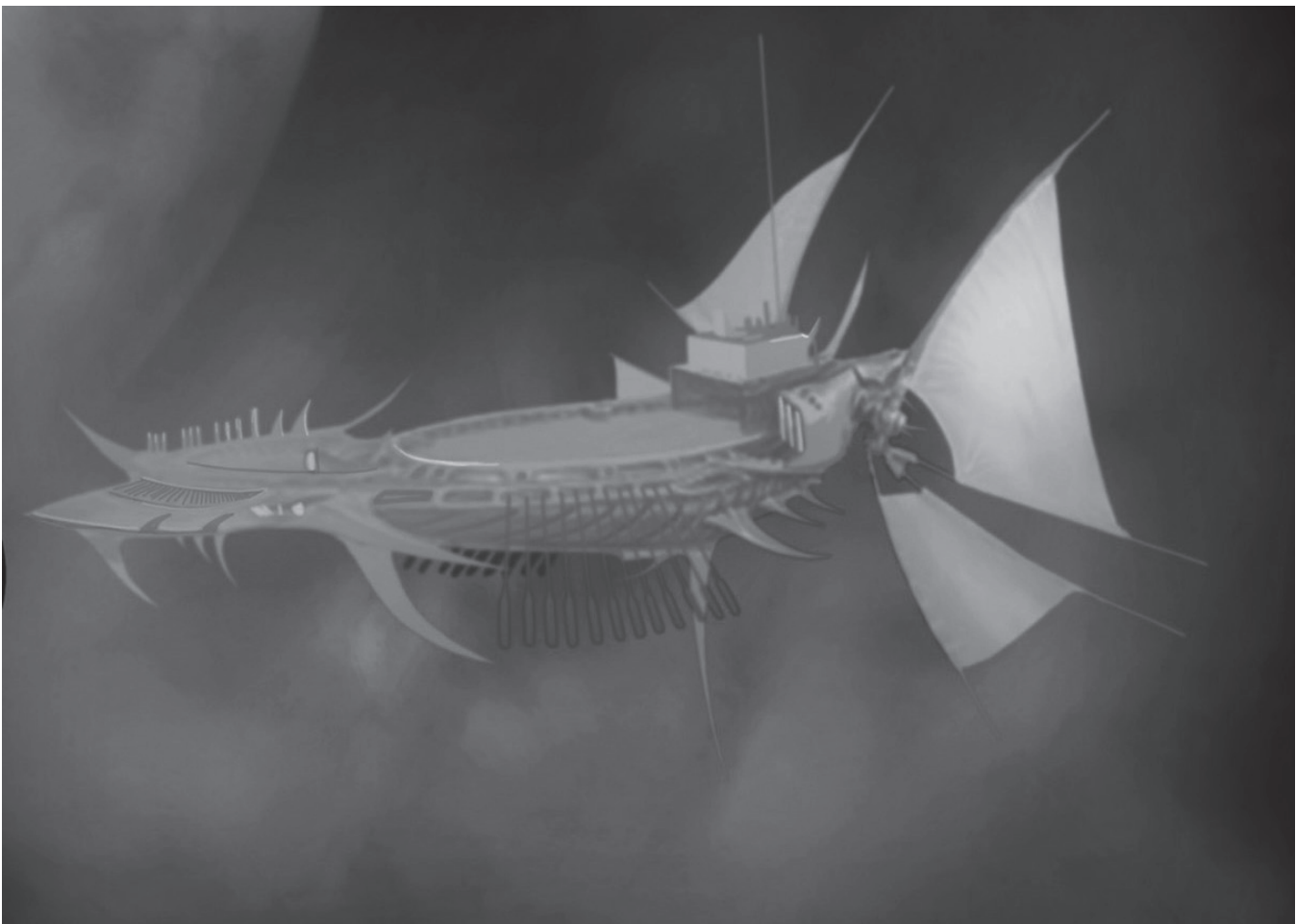
The canal is a straight channel 10" wide and 6" deep running from the center of one short edge of the battlefield to the other. The canal's metalled banks are an additional 1" wide on either side of the waterway. The collapsed bridges form a barrier across the full width

of the canal 4" thick beginning 18" in from the up-canal edge of the battlefield. The barrier rises 4" above the level of the canal banks. The canal is full of water beyond the barrier, and the battlefield on either side of the full canal is thornpatch terrain from the water's edge to the edge of the battlefield.

There are ruins of two small buildings on the south side of the canal midway between the canal and the long edge of the battlefield. The rubble from each covers an area approximately 6" by 6". Treat these as areas of Difficult Ground which also provides Medium Cover. North of the canal, at approximately the middle of the long edge of the battlefield is a patch of plant life formerly nourished by the water in the canal, 18" by 9" in size. Dry and dying now, it counts as Light Cover.

The 'Thunder' will enter from the short edge of the battlefield furthest from the barrier, at a speed and altitude selected by the PC in command.

Three Tripods block the way! Position three tripods anywhere between the edge of the thornpatch and the 'Thunder's entry-edge. They have been ranging around the area, causing destruction to terrify refugees. The more refugees from the outlying areas the Grey Men can chase into Pi-Ramesh, the quicker Pi-Ramesh's supplies will run out.



FINAL ASSAULT

HELL AND HIGH WATER

The 'Thunder' will have to run the gauntlet and survive the tripod's heat-ray fire in order to use its ram-prow against the wreckage blocking the canal. The ram-prow generates an additional 4d6 damage to the 'Thunder's normal collision damage. The barrier has a Toughness of 20(4).

If the 'Thunder' does not overcome the barrier in a single attack, it will become stuck in the tangled and melted bridge wreckage. In this eventuality, it may occur to the PCs to attempt to detonate the 'Thunder's radium engines in order to blow open the barrier. A success on a Weird Science roll is necessary to detonate the engines – a raise on the roll will allow the Weird Scientist to create a delay-timer so that no one has to stay behind to trigger the detonation manually. Evacuating the crew of the airship while under fire from the tripods will be extremely hazardous, as well.

AFTERMATH

If the dam is broken: Water flows again to the city of Pi-Ramesh! Improved morale in Pi-Ramesh increases the number of volunteers for the Militia. Add five additional Militia units to the city's Order of Battle.

If the dam remains intact: It is most likely that the wreckage of the 'Thunder' joins the bridge debris as part of the barrier. Surviving PCs and crew will have to make their way back to Pi-Ramesh on foot. If you wish, stage a pursuit encounter with the surviving tripods from this battle. The tripods will treat stranded crew in the same fashion as other refugees; mercifully.

FINAL ASSAULT

The PCs lead their combined forces against the Grey Men's Citadel! However, the Citadel's defenses are extremely difficult to overcome. Once the battle begins, the opportunity arises for a few members of the attacking force to sneak inside the Citadel, and shut down its weapons. That encounter may well turn the tide for the attack...

MASS BATTLE: VICTORY OR DEATH!

The Armies of Pi-Ramesh make a final assault on the Grey Men's base. Whether they have driven the Grey Men's advance back all the way to the Citadel, or whether they are making a daring flanking maneuver to circle through the Great Thornpatch and strike at the Citadel behind the Grey army's spearhead, this will be the climactic fight of the war.

SETUP

Since this engagement will bring out the total remaining Orders of Battle for both sides, it is unlikely that a gaming group will want to stage the battle using the 'Showdown' rules. However, if you have the available space, set up the battlefield as it was for the Discovery of the Grey Citadel section above. Additional space may be required to field all the troops and provide the necessary maneuvering room for flank attacks. Allow at least an additional foot of battlefield on every side, if possible.

It is presumed that, due to practical considerations, the Mass Battle rules will be used for this engagement, even if they have not been brought into play for any of the prior encounters with the Grey Men. Use the Force Tracker sheet provided at the end of the adventure to total the army values of the two sides. The more powerful side is given ten tokens, the other side is given a proportionate number.

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

After two rounds of battle, it will probably be obvious to the PCs that the Army of Pi-Ramesh, even reinforced by the fruits of their earlier efforts, is in trouble. The heat-ray projectors and black smoke canister launchers at the top of the Citadel are devastatingly powerful. At that point, Prince Herev (or another Nomad ally if Herev Kai Chira is no longer among the living) will offer up some information: "I know of a cave in the Darshan Hills; my people often used it to store supplies, before the Grey Lords came. When the Grey Lords began to build their Citadel, the cave filled with foul air and stinking smoke, driven up from its depths; I would wager that the cave connects to whatever chambers lie beneath the Citadel. The cave lies in the midst of the Great Thornpatch now, but I am sure I can still find the entrance..."

Any PCs who wish to attempt to invade the Citadel through the cave and attempt to shut down its defensive weapons will take part in the section of the adventure titled A Desperate Plan! Those PCs who are not involved in the raid will continue to take part in the final assault. Roll for their participation as normal.

AFTERMATH

The outcome of the final battle will seal the fate of Pi-Ramesh, one way or the other.

If the Grey Men are defeated here: They will abandon their attack on Pi-Ramesh as insufficiently cost-effective. They will attempt to find a more-accessible source of iridium elsewhere.

If the Grey Men are victorious and the armies of Pi-Ramesh lie shattered: The city will be left de-

A DESPERATE PLAN!

fenseless. The Grey Men will advance again, and Pi-Ramesh will soon be uninhabitable by Red Men; it will be a barren industrial hive-mine of the Grey Men!

ENCOUNTER:

A DESPERATE PLAN!

As the armies fight above, a raiding force of PCs enter a cave which leads into the heart of the Grey Citadel. Once inside, they hope to deactivate the Citadel's defensive armaments...

During this encounter, cut back and forth between the battle above and the raid below to emphasize the desperate drama of the situation. Ideal times for this are those moments when a player picks up the dice to make a roll – leave the roll as a cliffhanger moment, and cut back to the battle outside for the battle participation roll of one of the other PCs – then cut back to the action underground. Use this technique liberally to ensure that all the players get 'spotlight time' during this climactic encounter, and to ensure that the ebb and flow of the battle above puts pressure on the raiders below!

CAVE LAIR

Prince Herev is as good as his word; he will lead the PCs (and any Allies they wish to bring) to a cave entrance in the side of a jungle-choked ravine in the Darshan Hills. The entryway of the cave is a narrow passage, no more than a dozen feet wide, and sloping downward at a shallow angle. There is a slightly wider area thirty yards in. The PCs will have to proceed no more than two abreast until they reach the wide spot. Hiding in the dark within that wide spot is a durvesh, using the cave as a lair! It's keen senses will guarantee that it will be aware of the PCs approach long before they are aware of it...

DEADFALL!

Penetrating deeper into the cave, the raiders will pass sacks and chests stored in side-alcoves – the stockpile of goods belonging to the Balmari nomads. Dried food, sling and bow ammunition, and even chests of coins, gems, and valuable jewelry have been hidden here. Radium lanterns can be found among the spoils, but no other radium-powered devices, and no radium capsules. Prince Herev (or any other Balmari guide) will not object if the raiders avail themselves of necessary supplies here – but he will not countenance looting of his tribe's treasures, even if his tribe is still fighting alongside the Grey Men.

Passing beyond the storehouse area, the cave dives precipitously downward. There are signs of recent rock falls, caused, no doubt, by the Grey Men's exca-

vations. Allow the lead PC a Notice roll to detect the perilously loose rock above all their heads...

Passing the deadfall requires an Agility roll at -2. Any character who fails the roll triggers the collapse of a stretch of the cave's ceiling!

When the ceiling collapses, everyone in the area must make an Agility roll at -2. A success means that the character has managed to leap out of the way of the crumbling stone. Failure on the roll means that the character takes 2d10 damage from falling rocks, and must make a second Agility roll, this one at -4. Failure on the second roll indicates that the character has become trapped beneath the fallen stone! A trapped character may dig free with a Strength roll at -6. Still-mobile characters can dig the trapped character free with a Strength roll at -2.

CENTRAL SHAFT

Emerging from the cave, the PC raiders will find themselves on a narrow metal catwalk, 6' wide, encircling the central shaft of the Grey Men's Citadel. The shaft is over seventy feet wide (12 scale inches), and extends downward into the planet for an incredible depth. Other catwalks circle the shaft at intervals, connected by sloping ramps of slotted metal. Grey Men and strange machines move along this structure.

Broad platforms, each in the shape of a wedge one-third the size of the entire shaft, raise and lower within it, attached to trackways in the shaft walls. Sections of the catwalk slide radially around the shaft to open gaps for the wedges support pylons as the platforms pass. Each time a segment of the catwalk slides aside, it leaves a 12' gap which lasts for 30 seconds (5 combat rounds) before the segment slides back into place. Jumping the gap requires an Agility roll at -2; leaping onto one of the lift-wedges as it passes requires only an Agility roll.

Peering over the knee-height railings, the PCs will be able to see far down into the red-lit depths of the Grey Citadel, to the foundry levels where the massive tripods are constructed and repaired. Even as they watch, a huge war machine steps onto one of the lift-wedges, which begins to slowly rise, bringing it toward the aboveground Citadel.

Looking upward in the shaft, toward the three iris-doors that open onto the flat surface atop the Citadel, the PCs will be able to spot a glowing panel of glass or crystal, which appears to be a viewing window, dimly lit from within. They may surmise, correctly, that this is the Citadel's control center. It is six levels above the raider's entry-point, and three levels beneath the summit of the shaft.

The raiders dare not stay too long in one place; the

A DESPERATE PLAN!

catwalks on each level are patrolled by Sentry Constructs programmed by the Grey Men! These Sentries are flattened egg-shapes with three slender multi-jointed legs beneath. At eight feet tall, they resemble scaled-down versions of the mighty tripod war machines. Use the Mech (Sentinel) stats from pg. 150-151 of the SW Explorer's Edition book for these Sentry Constructs. They are armed with heat-ray projectors set to a diffused pattern (the mounted heat-ray attack used by Tripods, mentioned on pg. 82 of the MARS book). The Sentry Constructs patrol in groups of three, and will challenge anyone not bearing an appropriate tentacle-band for access to the zone and level they patrol. Naturally, non-Greys will be challenged even if they are carrying a tentacle-band.

RUNNING BATTLE

It is likely that attempts at stealth will eventually fail the PCs, and their mission inside the Citadel will devolve into a running battle. From that point onward, speed is of the essence. Once the horrible, two-note alarm of the Grey Men begins to sound, all the Sentry Constructs and all the Grey Men scientists, technicians, and soldiers will be on high alert!

CONTROL CENTER

The Control Center is a triangular room, fifty feet on a side. The side facing the shaft is curved, and from a point waist-high on a man to a point high overhead that wall is made of panels of thick glass, affording a view of the shaft and the lifting platforms. Facing that glass is a row of control panels which operate the lifts, and the three iris doors in the Citadel's roof. Along one of the other walls are similar control panels, set beneath six heavy circular screens which show flickering three-dimensional images of the exterior of the Citadel. These panels control the heat-rays and the black smoke launchers. Along the third wall are yet more control panels. These are set beneath three rows of small circular screens, each of which displays the viewpoint of one of the Sentry Constructs. If the raiders have disabled or destroyed some Sentries on their way to the Control Center, some of these screens will display only static.

The glass panels are Toughness 6(2), the consoles and equipment are Toughness 8. The display screens are Toughness 4.

There are six Grey Men technicians in the control room. Use the stats for the 'Floating Tripod' airship crew for these Grey Men. Two Grey Men are operating the control panels on each side of the room – by definition, this means that two of them are absolutely aware of the PCs positions and actions, since they are giving orders to the Sentry Constructs! Once battle is joined in the Control Center, the two technicians operating the Citadel's heat-rays and black smoke



launchers will be too busy fighting in person to fire their turrets in the battle above.

AFTERMATH

If the PCs are able to destroy the panels in the Control Center: The external weapons will fall silent, and the Citadel will be vulnerable. With the loss of the Citadel's weapons, the Grey Men immediately lose 2 tokens from their Mass Battle total. This may be enough to turn the tide!

In addition, if the PCs think of it, they may use the controls in the Control Center to open the iris hatches at the summit of the shaft. That would allow an attacking airship to drop bombs directly down the shaft and into the manufactory below, bypassing the Heavy Armor on the outside of the Citadel! It will take a raise on a Weird Science roll to figure out even the simple iris controls. (PCs wishing to fire the external weapons at the Grey Men will face more difficult challenges – the complex weapon and Sentry consoles cannot be operated by a humanoid with less than two raises on a Weird Science roll, and even then, targeting the weapons is at a -4 due to the strange imaging devices used to aim them.)

If the PCs are slain, captured, or driven out of the Control Center: the Grey Men will quickly re-establish control of the Citadel's external weapons systems. If the PCs managed to do significant damage to the consoles controlling the mounted weapons before they withdrew, the Grey Men will have to attempt repairs before they can fire the weapons again.

THE END OF THE WAR

ESCAPE

Regardless of the degree of success the raiders had in shutting down the Control Center, if they remain un-captured they must still find an exit from the hive-like Citadel. Returning through the cave is one option – but that requires fighting their way past six levels of alerted Grey Men and Sentry Constructs. Exiting through the summit of the Citadel is another, closer, option – but that will put them directly in the center of the battle raging above!

THE END OF THE WAR

IF THE PCS SAVE THE CITY

Engineers from Pi-Ramesh will be sent to rebuild the canal bridge, re-opening traffic with the farming towns that provide food for the city. The new bridge will be named 'Memory of Thunder' if the 'Thunder' was used to breach the dam, or alternatively it will be named in honor of any PC who fell in battle against the Grey Men.

There will be monetary rewards in the form of gold and gems for the PCs, awarded at a lavish ceremony in the Throne Room at the Palace. In addition, the PC with the highest Knowledge (Battle) skill will be offered the Generalship of the Armies of Pi-Ramesh, allowing General Bek to finally retire. The PC with the highest Pilot skill will be offered a Captaincy in the Aeronavy of Pi-Ramesh, and command of a new battlecruiser, the 'Child of Thunder' as soon as it is constructed. A PC with Weird Science skill will be offered the position of Royal Science Minister – and immediately tasked with designing and constructing the new battlecruiser, and arming it with the captured heat-ray! All other PCs will receive the Queen's heartfelt thanks and offers of permanent employment in the Pi-Ramesh military, as Captains or Lieutenants, according to their displays of heroism during the war.

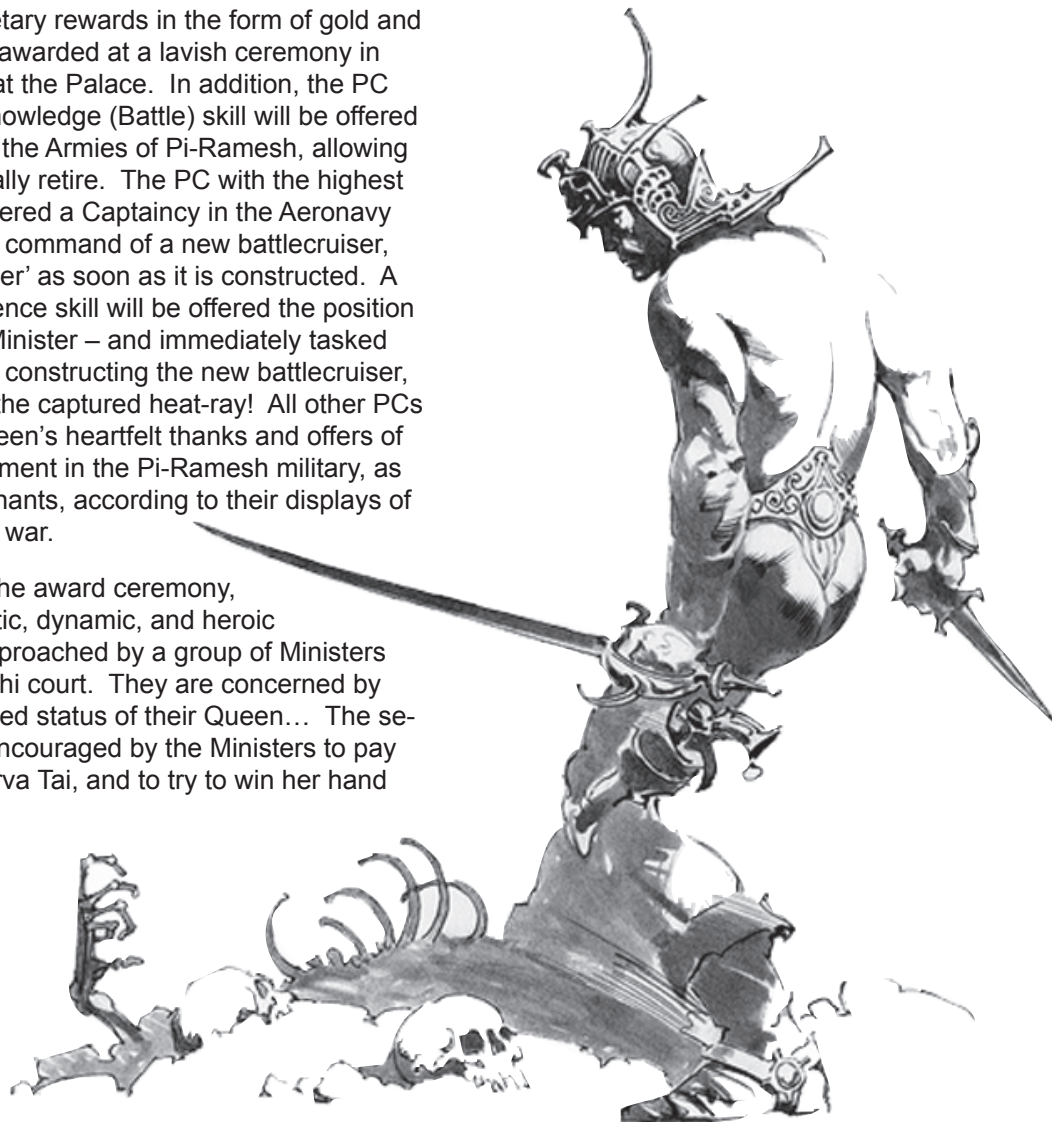
Immediately after the award ceremony, the most charismatic, dynamic, and heroic male PC will be approached by a group of Ministers from the Pi-Rameshi court. They are concerned by the continuing unwed status of their Queen... The selected PC will be encouraged by the Ministers to pay court to Queen Korva Tai, and to try to win her hand

in marriage – which may lead to a number of further adventures!

IF THE PCS FAIL TO SAVE THE CITY

With the Grey Men fast approaching, an evacuation of the city will be necessary. The PCs will perhaps be able to use the remnants of the Pi-Rameshi military to control panic and lead an orderly retreat of the citizens. They should be able to evacuate the Queen and at least some of the surviving populace before the city is overrun. If they have made allies of the Nomads, the people of Pi-Ramesh may be welcome among the Balmari tribe out in the wastes; otherwise, they will have to find refuge in some other city. Perhaps the PCs know of a ruin somewhere that might be made habitable...

With a rich source of iridium at their command, the Grey Men will be able to build many more war machines, and begin a phase of expansion centering on Pi-Ramesh rivaling that centered on the Volaxia Shah volcano! Soon, all of Mars will tremble before their onslaught!



VEHICULAR WEAPONS

VEHICULAR WEAPONS

In the MARS book, the vehicular weapon listings are associated with the Airship Battle rules; their targets are always other airships. In this adventure, such weapons will also be fired at troops on the ground, so their varying areas of effect will come into play. Be-

cause of this, the point values of those weapons must be re-evaluated, as shown in the table below. (The Grey Men's black smoke canister launchers, first appearing in this adventure, are included for completeness.) These point values have been used to determine the final point cost of the vessels and vehicles included in the Orders of Battle.

Vehicular Weapons						
Weapon	Short Range	Max Damage	ROF	AP	Special Features	Cost
Radium Gun, Mounted	40	26	1	4	Hvy Wpn (20)*	57
Grey Men's Heat Ray	60	30	1	7	Hvy Wpn (20)*	73
Standard Bomb		24	1	2	Medium Burst (10)	32
Radium Bomb		60	1	4	Large Burst(15)	79
Smoke Canister	50	Poison	1		Large Burst(15)	20



ORDERS OF BATTLE

ORDERS OF BATTLE

The following rosters are provided for the GM's use. During the adventure, check off any units which are destroyed. When an encounter calls for a variable set of forces, they can be totaled from the list.

For the GMs convenience, the list also includes notations for specific bonuses or penalties which can be gained during the adventure.

GREY MEN

- 27 Tripods with Grey Men drivers, $124+9=133$ points each
- 1 'Floating Tripod' with 6 Grey Men crew, $139+41=180$ points
- The Grey Citadel, 187 points

(3 Tripods are initially in the area of the Canal Bridges, 3 Tripods are protecting the Citadel from the depredations of thornpatch-born flora and fauna, and 3 Tripods are acting as ground-escort for the 'Floating Tripod'. The remaining 18 Tripods spearhead the Grey Men's march on the city of Pi-Ramesh.)

BALMARI NOMADS

- 12 units of Balmari Tribal Cavalry, 169 points each
- 8 units of Balmari Tribal Bladesmen, 50 points each
- 2428 points
- 6376 points (total) = 10 Tokens (4 of which are Nomads)

CITY OF PI-RAMESH

- 5 units of Pi-Rameshi Cavalry, 143 points each
- 12 units of Pi-Rameshi Pikemen, 98 points each
- 12 units of Pi-Rameshi Crossbowmen, 78 points each
- 10 units of Pi-Rameshi Militia, 48 points each
- 5 units of Pi-Rameshi Mounted Pathfinders, 76 points each
- 2 units of the Queen's Guard, 105 points each
- 4 units of the Queen's Own Radium Rifles, 113 points each
- 4 Pi-Rameshi Sand Runners, 49 points each (usually assigned as transport for the Radium Rifles)
- Aerial dreadnought 'Warlord', 186 points
- Aerial cruiser 'Thunder', 133 points
- 4 Aerial gunboats 'Endeavor', 'Free Spirit', 'Sojourn', and 'Whisper', 88 points each
- 5216 points = 8 Tokens

ADDITIONAL FORCES

- Entrenchments for the outskirts of Pi-Ramesh (gained after either Nomad Encampment or Temporary Withdrawal)
- 5 additional units of Pi-Rameshi Militia, 48 points each (gained after Bombardment!)
- 5 additional units of Pi-Rameshi Militia, 48 points each (gained after Breaking the Dam)
- 3 Sand Masters, 98 points each (gained after Holding the Line, but not operational until repaired)
- 1 Thornpatch Beast-pack, 107 points (gained after Hermit of the Jagari Wastes, useable only in or near the Great Thornpatch)
- Captured Heat-Ray, 73 points (gained after Battle-field Resupply)



Thornpatch Encounter Table

1d8	Creature	# Encountered
1	Durvash	1
2-3	Kos'karg	1
4	Rhondarva	1
5-6	Shuraba	1D8
7	Vith	1 Swarm
8	Roll twice, ignoring further rolls of 8	

Creatures generated by this table should be placed on the battlefield 2d8" from a random edge, but not within 12" of an already-placed unit. They will generally be treated as Rogues, per the 'Showdown' rules.

TERRAIN TABLES

Use the following tables to generate appropriate terrain for 'Showdown' battles, or standard Encounters. They are based on a standard battlefield size of 4' by 6'

If there is no specific location indicated for a terrain feature, place it on the battlefield randomly using the following technique: Begin in the center of the battlefield, and roll 1d12 to generate a 'clock direction'. Roll 3d12, and place the feature that many inches away from the

center of the table in the specified direction. Features that wind up 'off the map' may be placed near the edge or simply left off, at the GMs discretion.

In the case of linear features such as trails, make two direction rolls, and follow those directions to the edge of the battlefield. Those spots mark the points where the linear feature exits the mapped battlefield. Trails will meander between those points as they cross the battlefield, roads will run in a straighter line.

THORNPATCH TERRAIN

(Use this table for battles in the Darshan Hills and the Barrens of Harramat)

The entire battlefield is considered to be Difficult Ground for movement, and provides Light Cover due to the ubiquitous jungle foliage. All Notice rolls are at -2 due to the distracting sounds of the numerous insects and small creatures, as well as the confusing colors of the dense vegetation.

Roll 2d4 times on the following table to generate terrain:

Thornpatch Terrain Table

1d10	Feature
1	Hill
A 3d10" by 2d10" oval hill. Travel uphill counts as Difficult Ground, travel downhill is at the normal rate.	
2	Big Moss
A patch of moss-covered ground 2d6" in diameter. This plant initially appears to be an unremarkable pale blue moss covering otherwise open ground. Success on a Notice roll will reveal its true nature to an observer. It's adaptation as Mars became drier was to hoard water within its root systems whenever water was available. Bog Moss is a thin ground covering layer over a spongy mass of wormlike white tendrils which capture moisture. The tendril-mass can reach depths of ten feet or more. Creatures of Size 2+ attempting to cross a patch of Bog Moss must get a success on an Agility roll each round in order to move. Failure on the roll indicates that the thin mossy cover has torn through, leaving the creature caught in a damp mass of root-tendrils and clinging, syrupy mud. Vehicles which drive into a patch of bog moss become stranded. The operator must make a Driving roll at -4 to free the vehicle with careful movements. Digging a stranded vehicle free could take hours – longer than the duration of the encounter, in any case.	
3	Underground Cyst
Many thornpatch animals have the ability to encyst themselves during the dry times, and wait for moisture to return. An underground cyst is the size of a Small Burst, and is difficult to spot. Success on a Notice roll at -2 will reveal a cyst's presence to anyone who has already encountered one. Cysts will collapse under the weight of a Medium sized or larger creature walking over them. The victim of the cyst must make an Agility roll, or take one level of Fatigue due to minor damage or a twisted ankle caused by his sudden fall. This Fatigue can lead to Exhaustion, but not death. There is a 1-in-6 chance that a kos'karg is still lying torpid in the cyst! Add it to the encounter as a rogue unit. It will initially target the creature which awakened it.	

Thornpatch Terrain Table Cont.	
1D10	Feature
4	Puffballs
Puffball fungus grows in an area equal to a Small Burst. Any creature moving into the area triggers the puffballs to release their spores. The released spores are harmless, but the spreading cloud blocks the light in an area equal to a Large Burst. Treat this as Dim Lighting (-1). The spore cloud lasts for the duration of the encounter.	
5	Cistan
1d3 cistan are rooted in the area. See page xx for the stats of this creature.	
6	Monolesh
A single monolesh is rooted in the area. See pg. 122-123 in the MARS book for the stats of this creature.	
7	Blood-thorn hedge
A tangled thicket of lavender-and-black shrubbery, covered in serrated thorns each as long as a man's thumb. Blood-thorn grows in long hedges, and draws the moisture it needs for survival principally from the bodily fluids of the creatures it catches. The hedge is 1" wide, and is a chain of 1d4 segments each 3d4" long. Orient each segment on the battlefield using a d12 read as a clock-direction. Segments of a blood-thorn hedge will not grow across one another; reroll direction results that indicate such a cross-over. The hedge is Difficult Ground and provides Heavy Cover to units hiding behind it, and has a Toughness of 4. However, units in contact with blood-thorn or units which attempt to pass through the hedge suffer damage. The serrated thorns cause 2d6 damage, AP 2.	
8	Dense Growth
A patch of heavily-interlaced vegetation roughly 2d8" by 4d8" in size, which provided Medium Cover and counts as Difficult Ground. Vehicles attempting to pass through the dense growth must make Driving rolls at -4, or suffer a collision. Treat this as a collision with a soft obstacle, doing half damage to the vehicle based on its speed (1d6 per 5" traveled).	
9	Clearing
A roughly circular clearing 3d6" in diameter, treated as clear terrain.	
10	Trail
A clear trail 2" wide runs from one side of the battlefield to another.	

WELLOR GORGE TERRAIN

Gorge Wall

The gorge wall runs along one of the long edges of the battlefield, 4d6" in from the edge, meandering as it goes. The cliff-like wall is 6" high.

Roll 1d4 times on the following table to generate additional terrain:

Wellor Gorge Terrain Table	
1D6	Feature
1	Gorge Wall
If this terrain is rolled randomly, it represents the other edge of the gorge; it runs parallel to the other long edge of the battlefield. This represents a narrow point along the gorge's length, where the walls are sometimes only a few yards apart. Re-roll any further Gorge Wall results.	
2	Sand Pit
A sand pit is a treacherous area of collapsing dust-like sand, 3d4" in diameter. Characters attempting to cross a sand pit must make an Agility roll to avoid being pulled under by the fluid-like dust. Failure on the roll means that the character has sunk waist-deep in the sand pit, and is trapped. Each round, a trapped character may make a Strength roll at -4 to pull out of the sucking sand, but failure means that the character sinks deeper. Three rounds of struggling will cause a trapped creature to be pulled completely under! Once under the sand, the victim can no longer free himself and must make a Vigor roll each round or suffer a level of Fatigue. An Incapacitated character dies in a number of rounds equal to half his Vigor. Trapped characters may be rescued by throwing them a rope or through other means. Vehicles which drive into a sand pit become stranded. The operator must make a Driving roll at -4 to free the vehicle with careful movements. Digging a stranded vehicle free could take hours – longer than the duration of the encounter, in any case.	

Wellor Gorge Terrain Table Cont.

1D6	Feature
3	Soft Sand
A rough oval or circular patch of soft sand, 2d6" in diameter. Soft sand counts as Difficult Ground.	
4	Razor Sand
A circular patch of razor sand, 2d6" in diameter. Some of the sand on Mars is made up of nearly-microscopic jagged particles. Units falling prone for any reason in a patch of Razor Sand will find that the irritatingly sharp sand works easily into their clothing. Exposure to Razor Sand causes one level of Fatigue, due to the minor cuts and abrasions it causes. This Fatigue can lead to Exhaustion, but not death.	
5	Lichen Tufts
This is a patch of lavender and salmon-colored growth 6" wide and 2d6+6" long that grows in the shadows at the base of the gorge wall. It counts as Light Cover. Locate the patch a random distance along the length of the battlefield.	
6	Cave Lair
This is a hollow within the gorge wall, used as a lair by a desert-dwelling creature. Locate the cave entrance a random distance along the length of the gorge wall. If any unit moves within 8" of the entrance, the creature within will be disturbed. Roll on the Desert Dwellers sub-table below to determine what creature(s) use this cave as a lair. Add the resulting creatures to the encounter as Rogue units, entering the battlefield from the cave mouth, and initially targeting the unit that triggered their entrance.	

CANAL-BANKS TERRAIN

CANAL BANK

The canal bank extends along one long edge of the battlefield. Allow 4" of water and another 1" of the smoothed edge of the canal-lining material.

CANAL-ROAD

The canal-road is a well-paved road that runs parallel to the canal- bank, 6" away from the edge. It is 5" wide, giving ample room for traffic in both directions.

Roll 2d4 times on the following table to generate additional terrain. None of the generated terrain will overlap the canal or the canal-road (with the exception of a Canal Dock):

Canal Banks Terrain Table

1D6	Feature
1	Canal Dock
A floating pontoon-dock fastened to the canal edge, 2" by 4", next to a 4" by 4" one story building. The dock is positioned at a random point along the canal-edge's length.	
2	Minor Road
A minor road branches off from the canal-road, and runs to the opposite long edge of the battlefield.	
3	Small Building
This is a building that fits within a 6" circle, with 1d3 stories.	
4	Vegetation
A patch of plant life nourished by the water in the canal, 3d6" by 3d6". It counts as Light Cover.	
5 or 6	Irrigated Field
An irrigated field of crops, 3d6" by 3d6" in size. It counts as Medium Cover. Roll one die. On any Even result, the irrigated field is saturated with water, and also counts as Difficult Ground.	

OUTSKIRTS OF PI-RAMESH TERRAIN

Roll 4d4 times on the following table to generate additional terrain:

Outskirts of PI-Ramesh Terrain Table	
1D6	Feature
1	Small Building
This is a building that fits within a 6" circle, with 1d3 stories.	
2	Building
This is a building that fits within a 12" circle, with 1d6 stories.	
3	Ruined Tower
The tower is 12+1d10" in diameter, and at least part of its structure reaches 1d12 stories in the air.	
4	Rubble
Rubble from collapsed structures nearby fills an area 1d10" by 1d10". Treat the rubble as both Difficult Ground and Light Cover.	
5	Road
A road 4" wide crosses the area, running straight from one side of the battlefield to the other. Roll one die. On an Odd result, the road runs from one short edge to the other. On an Even result, the road runs from one long edge to the other.	
6	Open Foundation
The opening is a pit 1d6 stories deep and fitting within a 12" diameter circle, partially filled with rubble. Climbing rolls are required for any individual moving into the area, but it provides Medium Cover to units within it. Vehicles may not enter or cross the pit.	

DESERT TERRAIN

Roll 1d6 times on the following table to generate additional terrain:

Desert Terrain Table	
1D6	Feature
1	Sand Pit
A sand pit is a treacherous area of collapsing dust-like sand, 3d4" in diameter. Characters attempting to cross a sand pit must make an Agility roll to avoid being pulled under by the fluid-like dust. Failure on the roll means that the character has sunk waist-deep in the sand pit, and is trapped. Each round, a trapped character may make a Strength roll at -4 to pull out of the sucking sand, but failure means that the character sinks deeper. Three rounds of struggling will cause a trapped creature to be pulled completely under! Once under the sand, the victim can no longer free himself and must make a Vigor roll each round or suffer a level of Fatigue. An Incapacitated character dies in a number of rounds equal to half his Vigor. Trapped characters may be rescued by throwing them a rope or through other means. Vehicles which drive into a sand pit become stranded. The operator must make a Driving roll at -4 to free the vehicle with careful movements. Digging a stranded vehicle free could take hours – longer than the duration of the encounter, in any case.	
2	Dunes
A 3d10" by 2d10" oval sand dune. Travel uphill counts as Difficult Ground, travel downhill is at the normal rate.	
3	Soft Sand
A rough oval or circular area, 2d6" in diameter. Soft sand counts as Difficult Ground.	
4	Drum Sand
Drum Sand is a Martian dune formation which is unstable. It initially appears to be a normal dune, 3d10" by 2d10", roughly oval in shape. When walked upon or otherwise disturbed, the sand shifts, collapsing with a loud noise. Units entering an area of Drum Sand for the first time must roll Agility at the end of their move. Failure indicates that the Drum Sand collapses, causing the units to fall prone and slide 1d6" down the slope. In addition, the loud sound may attract unwanted attention from local wildlife. Roll 1d6. On a 5 or 6, roll on the Desert Dwellers sub-table below to determine what creatures are attracted. Add the resulting creatures to the encounter as Rogue units, entering the battlefield from the edge nearest the patch of Drum Sand on the following turn.	

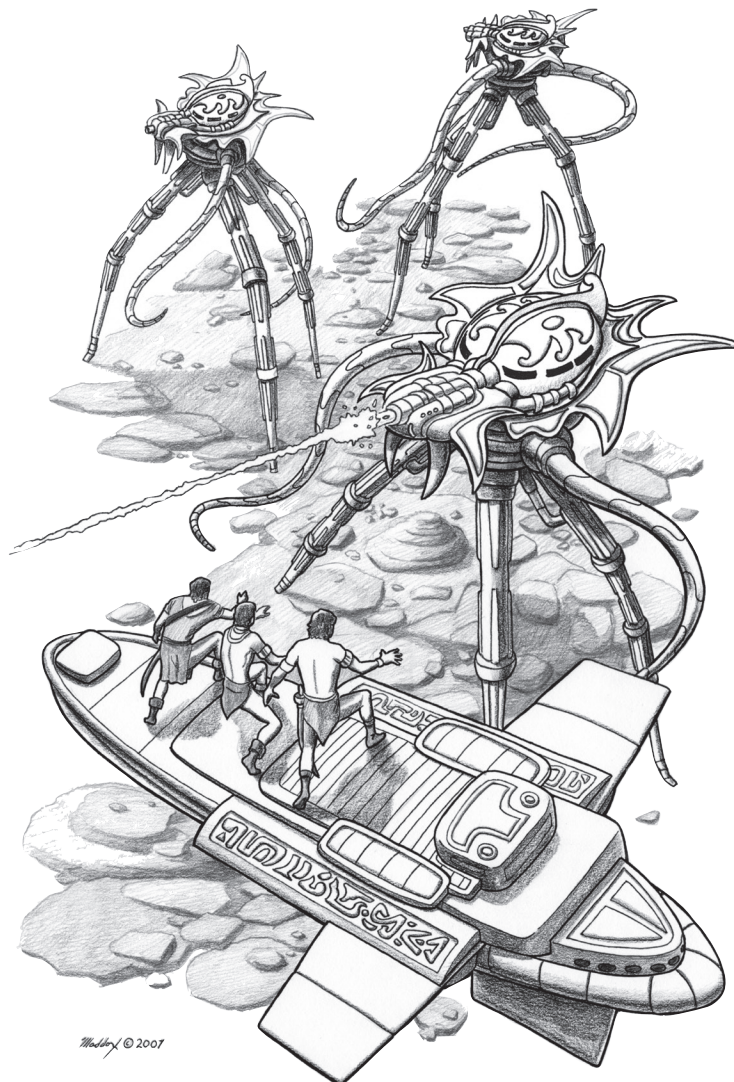
Desert Terrain Table Cont.

1D6	Feature
5	Razor Sand
A circular patch of razor sand, 2d6" in diameter. Some of the sand on Mars is made up of nearly-microscopic jagged particles. Units falling prone for any reason in a patch of Razor Sand will find that the irritatingly sharp sand works easily into their clothing. Exposure to Razor Sand causes one level of Fatigue, due to the minor cuts and abrasions it causes. This Fatigue can lead to Exhaustion, but not death.	
6	Rock Outcrops
A scattering of large rocky outcrops or boulders, 1d6 in number, all within a circular area 12" in diameter. Each rock is large enough for a large creature to hide behind, and provided Heavy Cover.	

DESERT DWELLERS SUB-TABLE

Desert Dwellers Sub-table

1D4	Creature	# Appearing	Page Reference
1	Cazarn	2d6	pg. 119 of the MARS book
2	Glashgar	1	pg. 121 of the MARS book
3	Vronag Vesh	1	pg. 124 of the MARS book
4	Xill	1	pg. 125 of the MARS book



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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

KORVA TAI

Young Queen of Pi-Ramesh. Queen Korva is a slender girl with long blonde hair, caught back in an elaborate coiffure. The crown of Pi-Ramesh is an airy structure of gold and iridium wire, set with an array of tiny diamonds, yet it seems to sit heavily upon her brow. Korva Tai is seldom seen in the same gown twice, as befits her station. In Pi-Ramesh, the Queen traditionally wears only white garments, but the Royal wardrobe displays an amazing variety of styles and cuts in that single color.

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d8 Strength: d8 Vigor: d6
Skills: Fighting: d4 Guts: d8 Intimidation: d10 Notice: d6 Persuasion: d6 Riding: d8
Charisma: +2 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances:
Edges: Connections, Noble
Gear:

MANTIUS BEK

General of the Army of Pi-Ramesh. General Bek is a frail man, long past his prime – but in that prime, he must have been a formidable warrior. The remnants of that can be seen in his carriage and demeanor. His hair is an iron grey brush cut in a strip across his scalp from brow to nape, a fashion common among Pi-Rameshi ground-troops.

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d8 Strength: d6 Vigor: d4
Skills: Fighting: d4 Guts: d8 Intimidation: d6 Notice: d10 Persuasion: d8 Riding: d8 Knowledge(Battle) d8
Charisma: 0 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 7(2)
Hindrances: Elderly
Edges: Command, Weapon Master, Master of Arms
Gear: Silkweave (Armor +2), Battleaxe (Str+d8), Radium Pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, AP3)

HAJAD XALAL

Captain of the aerial dreadnought 'Warlord'. Captain Xalal is a dynamic individual, seldom to be found sitting still, with dark hair and a thin moustache. Although he wears his hair in the braided crest favored by the Pi-Rameshi naval tradition, his crest is not high, allowing him to wear a helmet with ease.

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d8 Spirit: d8 Strength: d8 Vigor: d6
Skills: Fighting: d6 Guts: d6 Intimidation: d6 Notice: d6 Persuasion: d8 Riding: d8 Pilot: d6
Charisma: +2 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 7(2)
Hindrances: Vow
Edges: Connections, Command
Gear: Silkweave (Armor +2), Pilot's Helm (Armor +2, head only), Rapier (Str+d6), Radium Pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, AP3)

QUAIT OSCU

Captain of the aerial cruiser 'Thunder'. Captain Oscu is a refined and haughty individual, his pale blonde hair braided into the tall, elaborate crest worn by Pi-Rameshi naval officers. The elaborate gold décor on his battle-harness bespeaks both his competence and his pride concerning it.

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d10 Strength: d8 Vigor: d6
Skills: Fighting: d6 Guts: d4 Intimidation: d6 Notice: d8 Persuasion: d6 Riding: d8 Pilot: d8
Charisma: 0 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 7(2)
Hindrances: Arrogant
Edges: Nerves of Steel, Steady Hands
Gear: Silkweave (Armor +2), Rapier (Str+d6), Radium Pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, AP3)

JARKET JARUL (WILD CARD)

Last survivor of the Grey Men's attack. In his previous life, Jarket Jarul was a freelance outrider – a mercenary caravan-guard, who spent his days traveling from city to city escorting trade caravans and providing protection from bandits. That all changed when he faced the Grey Men's heat-ray. Now his face and body are covered with burn-scars, and his spirit is all but broken.

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d4 Strength: d6 Vigor: d4
Skills: Fighting: d4 Guts: d8 Intimidation: d6 Notice: d6 Persuasion: d6 Riding: d8 Driving: d6
Charisma: -2 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Ugly (heavily scarred), Phobia (Major) of Grey Martians
Edges: Quick, Hard to Kill
Gear: Rapier (Str+d6)

TOOMAL KAI ROS (WILD CARD)

Tribal champion of the Balmari Nomads. Toomal Kai Ros is lean and muscular, with glinting dark eyes. He moves with the grace of a hunting durvesh, and his copper-red skin is marked with a series of old scars, testament to his willingness to engage in vicious close fights.

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d8 Spirit: d6 Strength: d8 Vigor: d8
Skills: Fighting: d10 Guts: d8 Notice: d10 Shooting: d6 Stealth: d4 Intimidation: d12 Riding: d6
Charisma: 0 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 7 **Toughness:** 6
Hindrances: Vow
Edges: Two-Fisted, Riposte, Dirty Fighter, Really Dirty Fighter
Gear: Jewel armor, Broadsword (Str+d8), longslings (Range 10/20/40, Damage STR+d6)

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

CHIRA KAI TEZ'AK(WILD CARD)

Cheftain of the Balmari Nomads. He wears the metal bands and jewels of a nomad chieftain, and a fine embroidered robe over his warrior's harness. His salt-and-pepper hair is braided and coiled around his head beneath the sun-cloth that shades his weathered features.

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d8 Spirit: d8 Strength: d8 Vigor: d6

Skills: Fighting: d6 Guts: d6 Notice: d4 Shooting: d6 Stealth: d6 Intimidation: d6 Riding: d6

Charisma: 0 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Stubborn

Edges:

Gear: Shortsword (Str+d6), longslings (Range 10/20/40, Damage STR+d6), Radium Pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, AP3)

HEREV KAI CHIRA(WILD CARD)

Prince of the Balmari Nomads. Prince Herev is young, dynamic, and handsome. He wears highly polished and brightly enameled jewel armor with a matching bracer shield, and a fine robe. His long hair is bound into braids with silk strips, and wrapped around his head in the fashion of his tribe.

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d8 Spirit: d8 Strength: d8 Vigor: d8

Skills: Fighting: d6 Guts: d6 Notice: d6 Shooting: d6 Stealth: d6 Intimidation: d6 Riding: d6 Persuasion: d8

Charisma: +2 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Stubborn

Edges: Attractive

Gear: Jewel armor, Bracer shield, Shortsword (Str+d6), longslings (Range 10/20/40, Damage STR+d6), Radium Pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, AP3)

ONTES LYR

Archaeo-technologist and recluse. Ontes Lyr is tall and thin, and his years scouring the wastelands have not been gentle to him. His skin is liver-spotted and he walks with difficulty; his right leg is encased in a brace constructed of slim metal rods and wire-weave straps. He has sparse grey hair, and unlike most Red Martians, he wears a wispy chin-beard.

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d10 Spirit: d4 Strength: d4 Vigor: d4

Skills: Fighting: d4 Guts: d8 Intimidation: d6 Notice: d12 Persuasion: d6 Riding: d8 Repair: d8 Weird Science: d10

Charisma: 0 **Pace:** 4 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Elderly, Lame

Edges: Arcane Background (Weird Science) Power Points: 20; Rapid Recharge, Beast Friend, Detect/Conceal Arcana

Gear: Sonic Beast-control projector; Hand-held 'Ray Detector' that senses the emissions of Weird Science devices.

Special Note: If one or more of the PCs possess the Weird Science Edge, feel free to reduce some of Ontes Lyr's abilities. Play him as not only physically feeble, but feeble-minded as well: His memory is not what it once was, and the PC Weird Scientists will have to rise to the challenge of getting Ontes Lyr's inventions working.



CISTAN

Cistan are carnivorous plants found primarily in thornpatches. They are twisted bundles of woody brown stems, covered in lavender and pale yellow leaves. They have no discernable sense organs, but they maintain an awareness of their surroundings via hair-like tendrils along the edges of their leaves. The tendrils sense air currents and vibrations caused by animals moving nearby. When the cistan senses food within its reach, the stems uncoil with lightning speed, wrapping around their prey, and injecting them with a paralyzing agent. The paralyzed victims are then drawn inward and slowly drained of fluids by sucker-like organs on the fleshy undersides of the cistan's leaves.

Attributes: Agility: d4 Smarts: d4(A) Spirit: d8 Strength: d10 Vigor: d8

Skills: Fighting: d8

Pace: 0 **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilites:

- **Attack-stems:** Str+d6, Reach 1
- **Poison:** Victims must make a Vigor roll at -4, or be instantly paralyzed for 2d6 minutes.
- **Suckers:** Str+d4
- **Large Cistan are sprawling tangles of vegetation, 8' to 12' across**
- **Plant:** Called Shots do no extra damage. Piercing attacks such as bullets or arrows do only half damage. Not subject to Tests of Will.

DURVESH(WILD CARD)

Durvesh are large, eight-legged beasts with plush blue-tinted fur. Their bodies ripple with layered muscle, and their wide jaws are filled with jagged, constantly-regrowing teeth. A row of seven bead-like black eyes arches between their sharp erectile ears, giving them superior peripheral vision. Because of their size, Durvesh seldom have to move quickly, but they are capable of considerable speed in a sprint.

Attributes: Agility: d6 Smarts: d4(A) Spirit: d8 Strength: d12+4 Vigor: d8

Skills: Fighting: d8 Guts: d8 Stealth: d6 Intimidation: d8 Notice: d8

Pace: 8 **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 14(2)

Special Abilites:

- **Bite:** Str+d8, AP 1
- **Armor:** +2
- **Hardy**
- **Large**
- **Size:** +6 Durvesh are approximately 20' from jaws to tail.

KOS'KARG

Kos'karg are large, dangerous beasts native to thornpatches. They are remarkable for the three sapphire-like orbs that serve them for eyes, and for their shovel-like horned snouts. Their translucent quartz teeth and powerful jaws make the bite of a kos'karg extremely powerful. Rows of sharp crystalline spines extend down their backs and sides, reflecting the colors of the thornpatch vegetation. Kos'karg are remnants of an earlier age of Mars, when water was more plentiful. Since that day, they have evolved a biological mechanism that allows them to become torpid with dehydration; their tissues literally crystallize. A kos'karg can survive for centuries buried beneath the sand, waiting for the return of water. When exposed to moisture once more, the kos'karg returns to active life – usually with a voracious appetite.

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d6(A) Spirit: d6 Strength: d6 Vigor: d6

Skills: Fighting: d6 Guts: d10 Intimidation: d8 Notice: d10

Pace: 8 **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 9(2)

Special Abilites:

- **Bite:** Str+d4, AP 2
- **Armor:** +2
- **Berserk:** When a kos'karg is Shaken it goes berserk, gaining +2 to all Fighting and Strength rolls. Its Toughness gains +2, but its Parry suffers a -2 reduction.
- **Burrowing (4")**
- **Elemental (silicon-based biology)**

RHONDARVA

Rhondarva are sinuous creatures with six legs that splay out sideways from their long narrow bodies. Their reptilian heads house long jaws with double rows of needle-like, toxin-coated teeth. Rhondarva are fast predators, and they have no need for camouflage; their brilliant emerald scales stand out starkly against the crimson and lavender foliage of Martian thornpatches.

Attributes: Agility: d4 Smarts: d4(A) Spirit: d6 Strength: d10 Vigor: d10

Skills: Fighting: d8 Guts: d6 Intimidation: d8 Notice: d6

Pace: 8 **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 9(2)

Special Abilites:

- **Bite:** Str+d6
- **Poison:** Victims of a rhondarva bite must make a Vigor roll at -2. Success means that the victim feels dazed and disoriented, but there is no mechanical effect. On a failure, the victim becomes immediately Exhausted.
- **Armor:** +2
- **Fearless**

SHURABA

Shuraba are thornpatch-dwelling creatures, resembling in some respects bright crimson squid. Their long tapering bodies are about the size of a human arm, but their tentacles can extend much further. They use their tentacles to swing from branch to branch in the dense thornpatch foliage, camouflaged by their coloration. They drop suddenly on unsuspecting prey, using their powerful tentacles to strangle and silence their victims.

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d4(A) Spirit: d6 Strength: d12 Vigor: d12

Skills: Fighting: d8 Stealth: d12 Notice: d8

Pace: 6 **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities:

- **Brachiating:** Pace 4
- **Beak:** Str+d6
- **Tentacles:** Reach +1, Str+d4
- **Size:** -2

VITH

Vith are small Martian insects, lozenge-shaped and covered in a series of overlapping chitin plates. Their undersides are covered with several hundred tiny legs, which can propel the creatures at great speed. Their coloration varies from brilliant blue to deep indigo, and their exoskeletons are valued by Red Martians as the source of a royal blue dye. Vith are quite rare, be-

ing found only in the thornpatches which occasionally erupt from the Martian deserts. The corrosive fluid they secrete makes collecting vith for the dye industry hazardous – their tendency to swarm when startled makes it potentially fatal.

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d4(A) Spirit: d10 Strength: d6 Vigor: d10

Skills: Notice: d6

Pace: 9 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 11(4)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4**
- **Swarm:** The swarm covers an area equal to a Medium Burst Template. Parry +2; because the swarm is composed of dozens of small creatures, cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area-effect attacks work normally, and a character can stomp to inflict his Strength as damage to the swarm each round. Vith swarms can be escaped by diving into water, if open water is available. Vith can swim, but only to escape danger. In water, they no longer constitute a viable swarm.
- **Bite:** Vith swarms inflict many tiny bites every round to their victims, hitting automatically and causing 2d4 damage to everyone in the template. Damage is applied to the victim's least-armored location. (Victims in completely sealed suits or vehicles are immune.)
- **Acidic:** Vith exude a potent corrosive. Metal objects touched by the swarm take 2d6 damage applied against the objects Toughness. Unarmed attacks against the swarm result in the attacker taking 2d6 damage.



UNIT CARDS

PI-RAMESHI OFFICER

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d8, Shooting d6
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5
Abilities: Alertness, First Strike, Command
Gear: Rapier (Damage Str+d6, Parry +1), Dagger (Damage Str+d4),
Cost: 10

PI-RAMESHI CROSSBOWMEN (9+1 OFFICER)

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d6
Strength: d6 Vigor: d6
Skills: Fighting: d6 Shooting: d6
Pace: 6 **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 5
Abilities:
Gear: Crossbow (Range 15/30/60, Damage 2d6, AP2, 1 action to reload), Axe (Damage Str+d6, Parry +1, AP 1)
Cost: 10@ (68+10 for unit)

PI-RAMESHI PATHFINDERS (5)

Attributes: Agility: d6 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d6
Strength: d6 Vigor: d8
Skills: Riding: d6 Fighting: d6 Shooting: d8
Survival: d8
Pace: **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 6
Abilities:
Gear: Axe (Damage Str+d6, Parry +1, AP 1), Handbow (Range 5/10/20, Damage 2d4)
Cost: 8 + 13 for jalf (30 for unit, 79 for unit mounted on jalfs)

QUEEN'S GUARD (7+ 1 OFFICER)

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d8 Spirit: d8
Strength: d8 Vigor: d8
Skills: Fighting: d8 Shooting: d8
Pace: 6 **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 9(3)
Abilities: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, First Strike
Gear: Wireweave Vest (+3 Armor), Rapier (Damage Str+d6, Parry +1), Dagger (Damage Str+d4), Heavy Radium Pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d8+2, AP4),
Cost: 18@ (95+10 for unit)

PI-RAMESHI CAVALRY (7+1 OFFICER MOUNTED ON A JALF)

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d6
Strength: d6 Vigor: d6
Skills: Riding: d6 Fighting: d6 Shooting: d6
Pace: 6 **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 5
Abilities: Alertness, First Strike
Gear: Broadsword (Damage Str+d8), War Lance (Damage Str+d8, AP2)
Cost: 10@ + 13 for jalf (120 + 10 + 13 for unit)

QUEEN'S OWN RADIUM RIFLES (7+ 1 OFFICER)

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d8 Spirit: d8
Strength: d8 Vigor: d8
Skills: Fighting: d8 Shooting: d8
Pace: 6 **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 8(2)
Abilities: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, First Strike
Gear: Silkweave (+2 Armor), Broadsword (Damage Str+d8), Radium Rifle (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d10, AP4)
Cost: 20@ (103+10 for unit)

PI-RAMESHI PIKEMEN (9+1 OFFICER)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d6, Shooting d6
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5
Abilities: Alertness, First Strike
Gear: Wireweave Vest (+3 Armor), Broadsword (Damage Str+d8), Pike (Damage Str+d8, Reach 2, 2 hands, cannot attack adjacent targets)
Cost: 13@ (88+10 for unit)

PI-RAMESHI MILITIA (7 SOLDIERS +1 OFFICER)

Attributes: Agility: d6 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d6
Strength: d6 Vigor: d6
Skills: Fighting: d6 Shooting: d6
Pace: 6 **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 5
Abilities:
Gear: Shortsword (Damage Str+d6), Spear (Damage Str+d6, Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands)
Cost: 7@

PI-RAMESHI MILITIA OFFICER

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d6
Strength: d6 Vigor: d6

Skills: Fighting: d6 Shooting: d6

Pace: 6 **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 5

Abilities: Command

Gear: Shortsword (Damage Str+d6),
Spear(Damage Str+d6, Parry +1, Reach 1, 2
hands)

Cost: 9 (39+9 for unit)

SAND RUNNER

ACC / Top Speed: 10/36

Toughness: 14(3)

Notes: +2 Handling Bonus

Crew: 1+9

Cost: 49

'WARLORD'

ACC / Top Speed: 16/160 **Climb:** 15

Toughness: 22(4)

Notes: 6x Mounted Radium Guns (Range
40/80/160, Damage 4d6+2, AP4), 2x Bomb Racks
(Damage 3d8, AP2)

Crew: 100+100

Cost: 186

SAND MASTER

ACC / Top Speed: 6/12

Toughness: 20(4)

Notes: Four-wheel Drive, Sloped Armor -2,
Mounted Radium Gun(Range 40/80/160, Damage
4d6+2, AP4)

Crew: 2

Cost: 98

'THUNDER'

ACC / Top Speed: 20/180 **Climb:** 15

Toughness: 20(4)

Notes: 4x Mounted Radium Guns (Range
40/80/160, Damage 4d6+2, AP4), Ram-prow

Crew: 24+60

Cost: 133

BALMARI TRIBAL CAVALRY (10)

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d6
Strength: d6 Vigor: d6

Skills: Riding: d8 Fighting: d6 Shooting: d6

Pace: 6 **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 5

Abilities: Alertness, First Strike

Gear: Broadsword (Damage Str+d8), Bow (Range
12/24/48, Damage 2d6), War Lance (Damage
Str+d8, AP2)

Cost: 10@ + 13 for jalf (169 for unit)

AERIAL GUNBOATS 'ENDEAVOR', 'FREE SPIRIT', 'SOJOURN', 'WHISPER'

ACC / Top Speed: 20/180 **Climb:** 10

Toughness: 16(4)

Notes: 2x Mounted Radium Guns (Range
40/80/160, Damage 4d6+2, AP4), Bomb Rack
(Damage 3d8, AP2)

Crew: 8+36

Cost: 88

BALMARI TRIBAL BLADESMEN (10)

Attributes: Agility: d8 Smarts: d6 Spirit: d6
Strength: d6 Vigor: d6

Skills: Fighting: d8 Shooting: d6

Pace: 6 **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 5

Abilities:

Gear: Broadsword (Damage Str+d8)

Cost: 7@ (50 for unit)

UNIT CARDS

GREY MEN TRIPODS

ACC / Top Speed: 20/40

Toughness: 22(5)

Notes: armed with Heat-ray (Range 60/120/240, Damage 3d10, AP7)

Crew: 1+3

Cost: 124

GREY CITADEL

ACC / Top Speed: 0/0 Climb: NA

Toughness: 25(5)

Notes: Heavy Armor, armed with 3 x Heat-rays (Range 60/120/240, Damage 3d10, AP7) and 3x Black Smoke Canister Launchers (Range 50/100/200, Damage Special)

Crew: 50

Cost: 187

GREY MAN TRIPOD DRIVER

Attributes: Agility: d4 Smarts: d8 Spirit: d6

Strength: d6 Vigor: d6

Skills: Drive: d6 Fighting: d4 Shooting: d6 Weird Science: d6

Pace: 3 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 5

Abilities: Arcane Background (Weird Science), Bad Eyes

Gear: Radium Pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, AP3)

Cost: 9

GREY MEN FLOATING TRIPOD

ACC / Top Speed: 20/100 Climb: 10

Toughness: 19(2)

Notes: Sloped Armor +2, armed with 3 x Heat-rays (Range 60/120/240, Damage 3d10, AP7), 1x Bomb Rack (Damage 3d8, AP2), and 1 Black Smoke Canister Launcher (Range 50/100/200, Damage Special)

Crew: 6+6

Cost: 139

GREY MAN FLOATING TRIPOD CREW (6)

Attributes: Agility: d4 Smarts: d8 Spirit: d6

Strength: d6 Vigor: d6

Skills: Drive: d6 Fighting: d4 Shooting: d6 Weird Science: d6

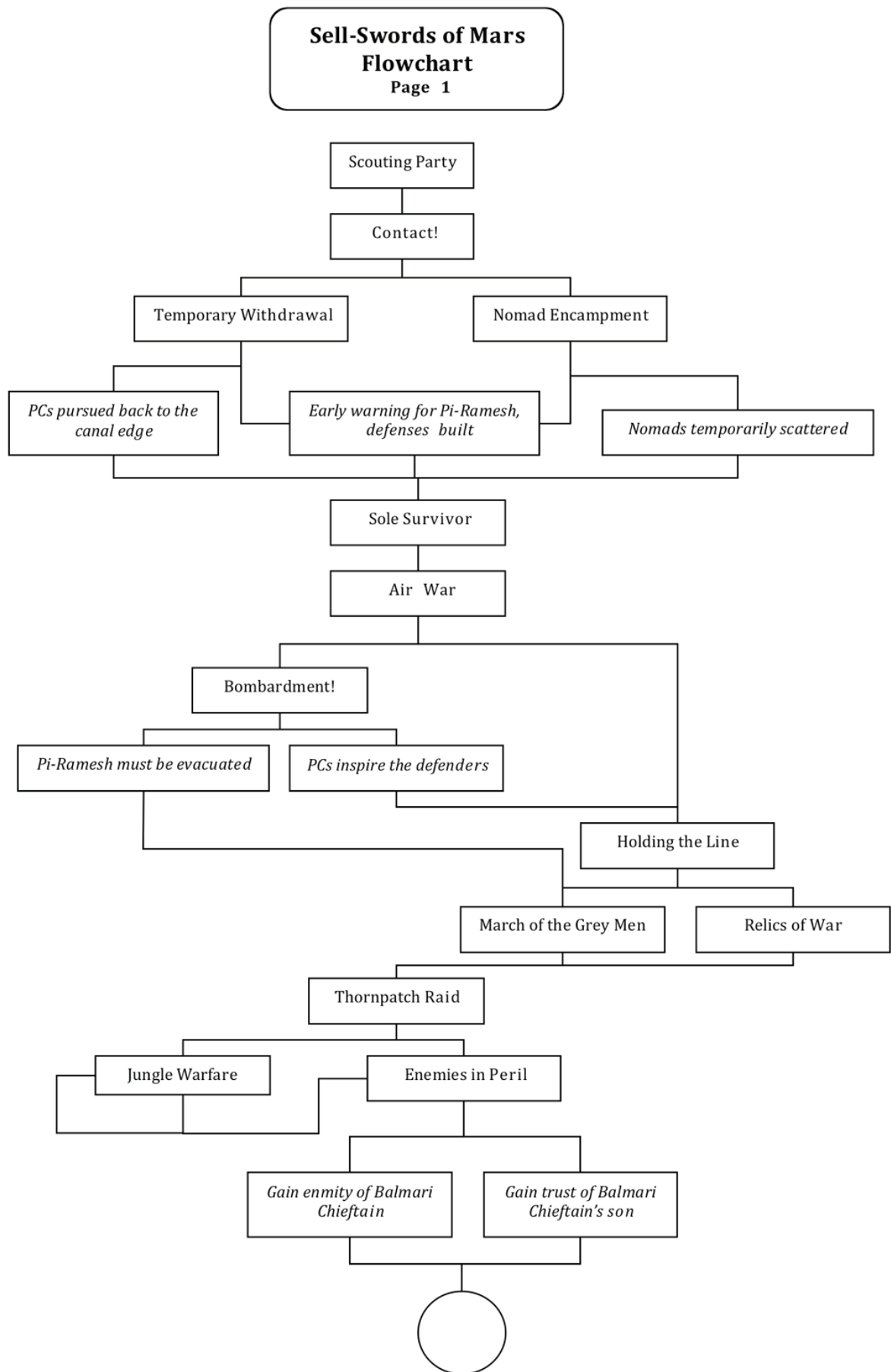
Pace: 3 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 5

Abilities: Arcane Background (Weird Science), Bad Eyes

Gear: Radium Pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, AP3)

Cost: 9@ (41 for unit)

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