







# MARS

A SAVAGE SETTING OF PLANETARY ROMANCE

BY:

LIZARD

GARETH-MICHAEL SKARKA

WALT CIECHANOWSKI

AARON ROSENBERG

JESS NEVINS

COVER ART:

ERIC LOFGREN

INTERIOR ART:

IGOR KIERYLUK

A. NEMO

CHRISTOPHE SWAL

MARK MADDOX

GABE THOMAS

JONATHAN TIU

MATTHEW VASEY

JASON WALTON

K. YANNER

CARTOGRAPHY:

GREGOR HUTTON



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <i>White Apes, Red Dawn</i> ..... | 4 |
| Welcome to Mars.....              | 7 |

## ONE: MARS

|                                  |    |
|----------------------------------|----|
| Ancient Mars.....                | 9  |
| Modern Mars.....                 | 10 |
| Life On Mars.....                | 10 |
| Map of Mars.....                 | 14 |
| The Red Kingdoms.....            | 15 |
| The Ape Empire.....              | 23 |
| The Grey Expanse.....            | 24 |
| The Green Wastes.....            | 24 |
| The Dark Below.....              | 28 |
| The Dead Seas.....               | 29 |
| The Canals.....                  | 29 |
| Thornpatches.....                | 30 |
| Oases.....                       | 31 |
| The Polar Stations.....          | 32 |
| <i>Quest for Vengeance</i> ..... | 33 |

## TWO: CHARACTERS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Characters and Concepts.....                  | 36 |
| Making a Hero.....                            | 38 |
| Races of Mars.....                            | 39 |
| Red Martians.....                             | 39 |
| Green Martians.....                           | 42 |
| White Apes.....                               | 45 |
| Grey Martians.....                            | 49 |
| Synthe-men.....                               | 52 |
| Earthmen.....                                 | 54 |
| Other Races.....                              | 57 |
| Skills.....                                   | 60 |
| Edges.....                                    | 62 |
| <i>On The Shores of the Sunless Sea</i> ..... | 70 |

## THREE: GEAR

|                             |    |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Economics on Mars.....      | 73 |
| Armor.....                  | 74 |
| Weapons.....                | 76 |
| Vehicles.....               | 81 |
| <i>Out of the Sun</i> ..... | 83 |

## FOUR: SETTING RULES

|                          |    |
|--------------------------|----|
| Heroic Rules.....        | 87 |
| NPC Rules.....           | 89 |
| Airships of Mars.....    | 91 |
| <i>A Rare Find</i> ..... | 98 |

## FIVE: GAMEMASTERING

|                                 |     |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Sword and Planet.....           | 102 |
| Thematic Elements.....          | 104 |
| Creating Adventures.....        | 108 |
| Nonplayer Characters.....       | 111 |
| Random Adventure Generator..... | 112 |

## SIX: BEASTS OF MARS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Beastary.....                             | 118 |
| Making It Martian.....                    | 126 |
| <i>In the Clutches of the Greys</i> ..... | 132 |

## SEVEN: SLAVERS OF MARS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Introduction.....                           | 135 |
| Part One: A Simple Mission.....             | 142 |
| Part Two: Desolate Camps.....               | 147 |
| Part Three: Assault on the Radium Mine..... | 154 |
| Part Four: The Rescue.....                  | 157 |
| Part Five: Betrayal!.....                   | 159 |
| Dramatis Personae.....                      | 160 |
| More Adventure Seeds.....                   | 164 |

## EIGHT: ENCOUNTERS

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Encounter Tables.....     | 168 |
| Nonplayer Characters..... | 169 |

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| <b>MARS</b> Character Sheet..... | 178 |
|----------------------------------|-----|

**DISCLAIMER:** **MARS** is an original game set in the Planetary Romance genre. It is not based on, nor has any legal connection with, the work of any single author within that genre, whether in the Public Domain or otherwise. The details of the campaign world presented herein contains similarities to common elements of the Planetary Romance genre, but no relationship apart from those common similarities is implied, and none should be inferred.



# WHITE APES, RED DAWN

BY AARON ROSENBERG

"Arise, my fellows!" Cardem of Timor raised a might bellow. "Arise, and lay on arms!" His shout echoed from his lofty perch upon the ramparts, even as one long red arm gestured out, out beyond the town's sturdy metal walls, to the world beyond. The sun was just beginning to peer above the far horizon, its rays slowly transforming the darkened plains of Mars to fields of light. "Arise, and defend our homes and our loved ones!" Though powerful, his voice held a faint tremble, as of fear. "For the white apes attack!"

Nor was Cardem mistaken. The dawning light did reveal a white mass rapidly advancing upon the sturdy town, a mass that snarled and growled and chanted and roared and clanked even as it approached. A white mass that, as it grew nearer, was revealed as a wave of monstrous, white-furred beasts, though these beasts wore armor and bore arms and marched in perfect rhythm. The white apes of the northern jungle were upon them!

These fantastic beasts did live deep within the jungles, guarding jealously that rare place of verdant growth and abundant fruit and pleasing warmth. Yet this oasis upon the dry planet of Mars was not enough for the warlike creatures, and when the seasons did grow gentler, and the cold of the lands beyond became more bearable, then did the apes once more don their armor and gird on their weapons and march forth to rain down terror and ruin upon the lands beyond. All those towns within their range did know fear as the weather turned mild, for then surely they did face raids and charges once more.

And now that time had come again, as surely as the years did flow one into the other, and the white apes sent their war bands far and wide. Timor stood upon the outermost reaches of their campaign, and only a few times over the centuries had it been subjected to anything beyond a small, exploratory raid. Yet clearly something had



stirred the apes' ire, and now they did march even beyond their usual distance, for Cardem estimated fully two hundred of the massive white-pelted brutes now advanced upon his home.

Even now, in response to his call, his neighbors and kin moved to action. Stirred by his desperate call, the men poured forth from their homes, tugging their silkweave armor in place and buckling on bracer shields as they came, broadswords and battleaxes and bows in hand. A small band broke from the rest and made for the walls, clambering rapidly up the narrow steps and joining Cardem to array themselves along the ramparts. These were the Radium Guard, and each did possess one of those rare relics from the past, a radium gun—the deadly devices did emit a lethal beam at great range, and the guardsmen practiced frequently with other ranged weapons (the radium chips within the guns being far too valuable and rare to use for anything less than true need) against just such an occasion as this. Now they each drew their gun and steadied their arms upon the wall, selecting targets from among the charging horde below.

The apes had drawn closer now, close enough that Cardem's sharp eyes could discern more detail among their ranks. The martial beasts wore their customary legionnaire's armor, he noted, massive plates of metal shaped into thick breastplates, helmets, greaves, and bracers. No other creature upon Mars could function under such heavy armor, he knew, yet the white apes marched at a speed that equaled the fastest run of any red Martian, their burly forms unslowed by the protective weight they bore. Massive battleaxes and warhammers were raised high in their thick hands, and Cardem felt he could just make out the glint of blue from their eyes, deep beneath their heavy brows and heavier helms.

"Take aim!" Saren shouted from near at his right elbow. Under more peaceful circumstances Saren toiled as the town's foremost engineer, chief among those who still understood even a fraction of the science and mechanical genius their forefathers had used to fashion the great canals, create the radium guns, and build the sturdy town walls. But in times of need Saren served another role, that of captain of the Radium



Guard, and he leaned now over the wall, his own radium rifle set across the rampart, its gleaming metal stock braced firmly upon the edge, his sharp eye set hard against its barrel, the stock nestled solidly in the crook of his arm. "Get ready!" came his next bellow. All around Cardem, the Radium Guard drew a collective breath, each weapon held perfectly still, each barrel targeting another of the massive beasts closing the distance toward their home. "And—fire!"

Only three times in his life had Cardem heard the sharp whine and crack and boom of the radium guns, and each time the sound made him jump for all that he was expecting it. So it was now, as the scintillating beams shot forth from each barrel and lanced down into the raging horde below. Those rays of deadly light sliced through the apes' heavy armor as if it were not there, and each ape so touched fell to the ground, his life snuffed at once by the lethal radium bolt, dropping so rapidly that his fellows had no choice but to stumble over his heavy corpse. The first rank of the white apes collapsed in on itself as those still living attempted to push themselves back off their fallen peers.



Nor did Saren waste time in sending another volley of radium death down upon the fur-coated marauders. "Take aim!" he called a second time. "Get ready! And—fire!" The bolts burst forth again, and more white apes fell, their lives taken before they had even closed with their foes. Bellows of rage arose from the survivors, but the horde quit its advance, its orderly ranks broken by the sudden deaths.

One white ape in the center, massive even for his people, began snarling and shouting something in their guttural tongue, laying about him with his fists as if to pound his fellows back into position by sheer force. A red cape hung from his armor, and a mighty plume decorated his helmet—clearly the leader of this band.

Beside Cardem, Saren took careful aim, then loosed a third attack, an almost unprecedented use of the carefully hoarded radium rifle. Yet his decision bore rapid fruit, for the ape commander fell, the beam piercing him between the eyes and stealing his life away even before his body spasmed and fell, and all around him the other apes panicked at seeing their leader so quickly and decisively removed.

Now the town's gates did open, and the other men did pour forth, weapons raised and shouts of rage upon their lips. Seeing this sudden wave of angry red Martians, ready to defend their homes and families even unto death, and already suffering the loss of their own leader and many of their stoutest warriors, the white apes broke ranks completely. Many of them fled, running at surprising speeds back in the direction from whence they came. Others stood to fight, bellowing their anger and hatred as they braced themselves to meet the townsmen's charge, but the white apes were accustomed to fighting in strict military rows and coordinated attacks—left to stand alone, and onset by two or more red Martians at once, the apes' great strength and ferocity deserted them, and they quickly fell beneath swords and axes and hammers. Some stood stock still, frozen to inaction by the town's unexpectedly swift and deadly response, and were cut down where they stood, for the white apes still posed a threat and Cardem's fellows knew better than to leave any such foes unhindered.

At last the field was won. No white apes remained standing—those who had fled were now but dots upon the horizon, and the rest comprised a blood-spattered jumble of white fur upon the ground just before the town's walls. Saren nodded and straightened, gesturing for the other guards to holster their weapons.

"Well spied, Cardem," the guard leader complimented the sentry. "Your sharp attention allowed us to end this quickly, and with no losses of our own. You have served our town well."

Then Saren led his men down the steps, to help the others dispose of the bodies after first retrieving any items that might prove useful in future. Cardem nodded and returned his gaze to the scene below—his time as sentry was not yet done, and though the danger seemed past he was determined to stay alert and wary, lest the white apes returned in still greater force and attempted to catch them unawares. The sun had now risen fully, and its rays did beat down upon him, upon their town, and upon the carnage before it, washing all in its warm light. It looked to be a clear, red day.

# INTRODUCTION

## Welcome to Mars!

Not Mars as it is – airless, most likely lifeless, with only the faintest hints of what might have once been a damp, if not necessarily lush and living, world billions of years in the past. No, this is Mars as it should be and as it was once imagined to be – an ancient, dying, but not yet dead world, a world where a vast canal network reaches from pole to pole, bringing water and life to vast and fantastic cities. A Mars where albino apes run a vast empire in the last surviving jungle, a world where warrior tribes of Green Martians raid the outlying cities of the canal dwellers, a world where, in places dark and quiet and forgotten beneath the surface, ancient and terrible intellects plan dark and dire deeds.

It is a Mars of sky-corsairs, of duels with blade and blaster, of vile plots, fantastic inventions, daring rescues, arena battles, and spectacular stunts. It is a Mars where ancient cities can be discovered and their lost treasures plundered, a Mars where a trek across the dry sea bottoms can yield amazing discoveries, where terrible monsters roam the rocky wastes.

It is the Mars of pulp fiction and Saturday morning serials.

It is now yours.





# ONE. MARS



# ANCIENT MARS

Long before the distant ancestors of man came down from the trees, the folk of Mars had conquered their world. Millions of years ago, Mars was a rich, lush, wet, world, a world where graceful seacraft cut paths across deep and swelling oceans, a world where verdant jungles filled with exotic animals and plants sprawled over vast regions, a world of rolling lavender hills and rich, fertile, plains.

Across that wet and teeming world spread the nations and peoples of the Red Men of Mars (see **Races**). These nations were widely varied in size and culture, from tiny kingdoms barely a days walk across to mighty empires which spanned entire hemispheres. Some were blood-soaked tyrannies dedicated to the worship of dark gods or of power for its own sake; others were enlightened and noble kingdoms which valued learning and justice above all things. The nations rose and fell, forged treaties and went to war, waxed and waned over the course of millennia after millennia, while, far away, the distant ancestors of man slowly learned to walk erect, to chip stone, to coax fire from wood.

The red men spread, and in so doing, met rivals. From the rich jungles came the White Apes, cunning but primitive, who learned the ways of civilization from the red Martians and then turned on their benefactors with fang and sword, carving their own empires of discipline and strength in the crimson forests. From the wastelands, harsh and hard, came the Green Men, savage and brutal, who swarmed over the border cities in a flood of blade and blood, only to be beaten back to repeat the cycle in another generation. Rumors came to some kingdoms of something terrible beneath the ground, something strange and cold and alien, something which could arise in a night and lay waste to a nation before morning, but these were never confirmed. Despite these threats, and the constant give and take of war, the Red Men spread to rule the entirety of the globe, save for a few outposts and holdfasts here and there.

What happened next happened slowly. A drought here...a poor harvest there...a particularly long summer and a biting cold winter...few except the wisest saw the emerging pattern, and their predictions went unheeded. There had always been droughts or times of bad weather...perhaps this recent batch was longer or more severe than any ever recorded, but surely next year would be better...or perhaps the year after that...

It took centuries, but eventually, all of the nations of Mars came to understand that their world was dying. A shift in orbit, a change in the temperature of the sun, a tilting of the axis...many were the theories as to “why”, but the reality was inescapable – Mars was drying out. The oceans pulled back from their shorelines, leaving port cities surrounded by grounded fleets. Rivers became streams and streams became dry gullies. Swamps turned to deserts; jungles wilted to savannahs. The wastelands where the Green Men dwelled expanded, and their raids could no longer be turned back – first it was the border kingdoms which fell to their savage might, and then other, stronger, nations.

Desperation gripped the rulers and wise men of the oldest and most powerful kingdoms of Mars. Ancient enmities had to be set aside in the name of simple survival. The scientists of the greatest empires turned their combined intellect towards solving the problem, and the vast resources of the nations, hoarded and stockpiled over millennia, were poured into turning ideas into reality.

Eventually, an audacious scheme was settled upon – a network of canals would be built, reaching from the poles to the equator, to pump life-giving water to the cities and farmlands, to preserve and sustain the core kingdoms of Mars. The lands of the White Apes and the Green Men would be left to wither and die, and as for those Red kingdoms where the canal network could not reach...well, life is cruel sometimes.

The project took centuries, centuries during which life grew ever harder. The obsessive focus on building the canals took resources from all other pursuits. Art, music, literature, science, history...all were left to grow fallow, the province of



dreamers and dilettantes who were shirking their duty to the Great Project. By the time the canals were built, a millennia after they had first been begun, tens of thousands of years of culture had been lost or forgotten. The glorious past of Mars had become a thing of myth and legend, lost in abandoned libraries and tomes crumbled to dust. Only the harsh and dire present remained.

The canals worked. Where they touched, the kingdoms survived – though they were pallid shadows of their former glory. For generations, all of the Red Martians had been united in the building of the canals, to the exclusion of almost all other activities, and now, with that accomplished, a palpable sense of confusion and emptiness fell upon the nations. As often happens in such times, demagogues arose to fill the void, and Red Men of Mars, saved from death by drought, now faced extinction through war. This era has since become known as “The Age Of The Blood Canals”, and it marks the beginning of the ‘modern’ era of Martian history.

## MODERN MARS

Today, Mars is a world of dust and memories. Huge stretches of the planet are empty of civilization. The seabeds have become seemingly endless expanses of desert: Broad, windswept fields of sand and sun-bleached bone. The kingdoms of the red men, which once stretched from pole to pole, now cluster here and there around the globe, tied together tenaciously yet tenuously by the still-functioning canal network. Between these fragile flowers of life and civilization lies wilderness, barren, rocky, and harsh. Here is the domain of the green men, capable of surviving on what water than can forage from the deep pools or extract from the tough plants which still grow in the blasted wastelands. They rule the ruined and forgotten cities and all the places between, and they pen in the red men, who dare not venture too far from their walled cities lest they become victims of the roving marauders.

## GENERAL CONDITIONS

“Cold, and continued dry.” Such is the general weather report for Mars. The inhabited areas, mostly the northern and equatorial continental mass, reach highs of 60 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer and usually 0 to 20 below in the winter. (Despite this, the canals do not freeze). Rain is unknown. At best, during exceptionally moist climactic periods, there will be a damp fog or a thin drizzle, but such events are almost literally once in a lifetime, and are memorialized and celebrated as signs of good omen.

Ironically, the warmest region on the planet is the North Polar Jungle, but since this is held by the ferocious and disciplined white apes, the red men of the southern cities cannot easily move in, despite several brutal wars.

The southern half of Mars is dominated by the dead sea beds. Towards the south pole, the sea beds become a region of permafrost, but in more equatorial climes, some rare combinations of conditions can produce fertile oases.

## LIFE ON MARS

While the main focus of **MARS** is on high adventure and daring action, knowing a few basic details of what life is like on Mars adds vital verisimilitude. This sections contains a few tidbits about Martian life which can make the game come alive. The information here concentrates upon the Red Martian society, as the dominant species.

### FOOD

Most Martian food is plant-based. There is simply not enough arable land to raise too many meat animals, and most meat animals have other purposes, such as labor or transportation. Meat is generally eaten about once a week in small portions, almost as a garnish or side dish. Main courses with meat occur only on special holidays. When a thornpatch (q.v.) sprouts near to a civilized region, there will be a sudden influx of rare and exotic meats, as the animals which dwell in these strange regions do not exist anywhere

else on Mars. Those nations which are close to the Polar Jungle may also have more access to meat, but at the risk of angering the Apes.

### DRINK

Alcohol is as beloved by Martians as by humans, and considerable resources are devoted to producing it – though, as with many other aspects of life on Mars, there is often a dual purpose, with the same plant providing both food and the makings of a potent brew. Ancient wines found in the lost cities or in wrecks on the dry seabeds can command obscene prices.

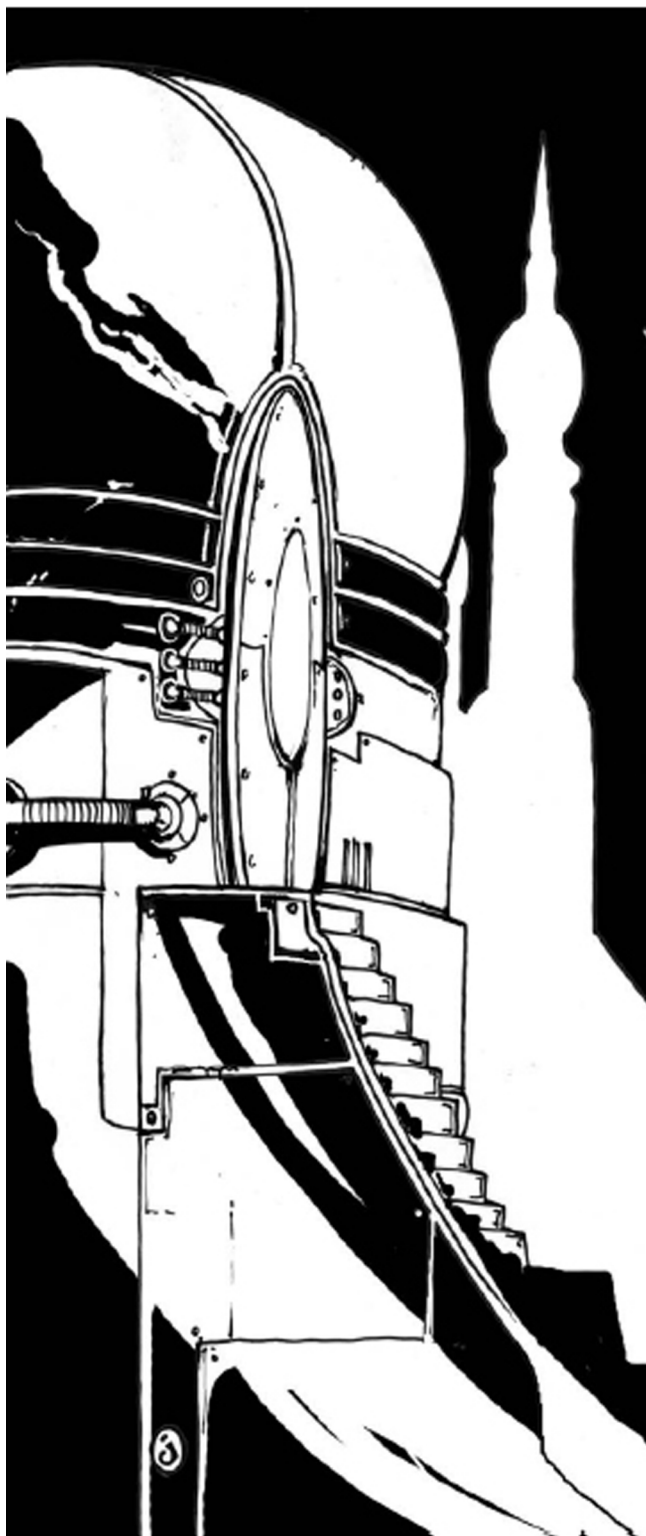
The Green Men of Mars are driven to an instant berserker fury by the merest taste of alcohol, which is why many carry skins of fermented barrelthorn juice with them into battle.

### GAMBLING

An ancient civilization, the red men of Mars have many games of skill, chance, or both. The most popular is *lavkal*, a game played with cards, which has some 2,000 known variants. It is loosely based on the most common Martian pantheon of gods, with winning hands based on matching the sets of gods who appeared in particular myths. Much of the strategy of the game involves bidding on unclaimed cards deposited in the center of the table. Other games include *villoj*, played with two 6-sided and two 8-sided dice, and *bovarl*, another card game with much simpler rules, usually played by children.

### TECHNOLOGY

The Red Martians are surrounded by past glories. Much of their technology is maintained by rote; the theory behind it and the knowledge needed to improve upon it are long gone. At one time, they commanded machines which could gouge mile-wide canals deep into the planet and which could grow Synthe-men to guard and maintain them; now, radium guns are handed down from father to son as priceless heirlooms and the militaries drill mostly with sword and bow. The great airships are kept in fine repair and new ones can be built so long as the *viazal* mines continue to operate, but the designs are rigidly defined and no one understands enough math or physics to improve upon them.



The great radium engines at the heart of every Martian city provide power to the buildings, power which is used to provide heat, light, and running water. These engines rarely fail, so long as they have fuel; if one breaks down, the city must be abandoned.

Martians do not have any means of wireless



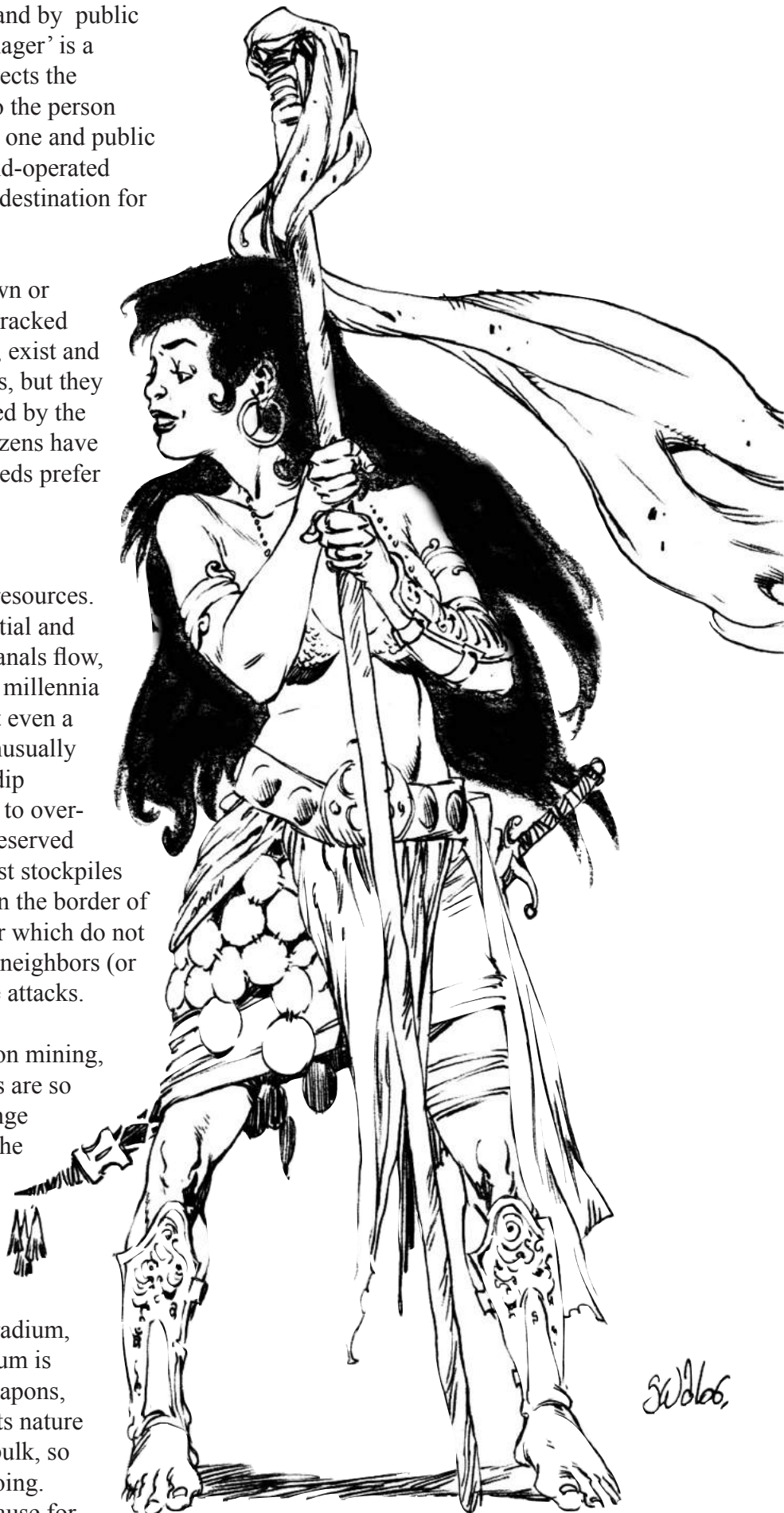
communication, but each city is linked internally by an imaging network and by public address systems. (The Martian 'imager' is a communication system which projects the translucent image of the speaker to the person being contacted; most homes have one and public access systems are available. Sound-operated mechanisms determine the proper destination for the call.)

Most local transport is by boat down or up the canals, or by riding beast. Tracked vehicles, powered by radium cells, exist and can be used to cross the wastelands, but they are rare and are generally controlled by the local government. Few private citizens have need for them. Those with such needs prefer more elegant personal airships.

### RESOURCES

Red Martian civilization requires resources. Food and water are the most essential and the most tenuous. So long as the canals flow, farming techniques perfected over millennia assure a steady supply of food, but even a slight drop in water levels or an unusually long winter can cause reserves to dip drastically low. Red Martians tend to over-farm, with the surplus carefully preserved and stored. Unfortunately, such vast stockpiles of food attract raiders, and cities on the border of the territories of the Green Men, or which do not maintain good relations with their neighbors (or strong standing armies), often face attacks.

Martian civilization also depends on mining, though to a lesser extent. The ruins are so vast that it is often easier to scavenge and recycle metals and ores from the crumbling outer cities than it is to dig for more. Thus, mines tend to focus on especially rare metals, especially those needed to maintain advanced and delicate technology, or the potent mineral radium, source of all power on Mars. Radium is consumed by power plants and weapons, and must be constantly replaced. Its nature is such that it cannot be stored in bulk, so the radium mines are constantly going. When one is depleted, it is often cause for



concern or even panic, unless a new supply is already known to exist. Brutal and sometimes genocidal wars are fought over dwindling supplies of the element. Many Red Martians will venture deep into the Green Wastes, the Dead Seas, or even, sometimes, the Grey Expanses in order to be the one to secure a new source.

The endless millennia of mining have left Mars riddled with huge and abandoned mines. Aided by mole-machines and other advanced tools, these ancient pits can reach very deep into the planet's mantle, often dropping down ten or more miles. Some of them reach into places which were ancient and lost when the Red Men were still primitive man-beasts, and there are things buried down there which can sense that a path of escape has been opened...

## HOLIDAYS

Red Martians, like most sentient beings, mark special occasions. While the many different red Martian cultures have different local holidays, a few events are so universal that nearly all societies practice them in one form or another.

*Hatching Week:* While there are exceptions, the mating cycles of the Red Men of Mars dictate that all eggs will be laid within a two-week period and will hatch within a one-week period roughly three months later. This week is a time of special joy and celebration. Females with eggs waiting

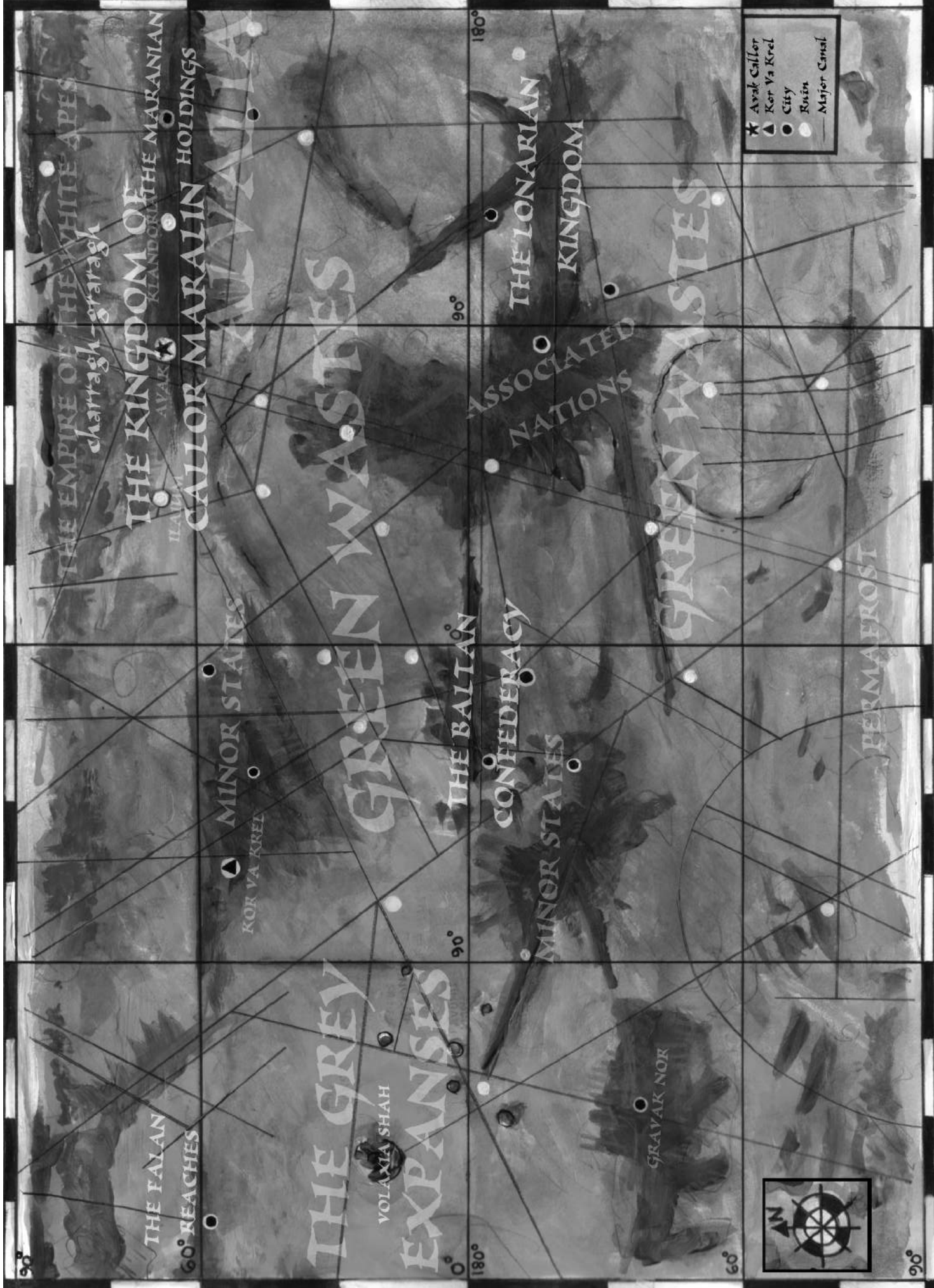
in the incubator rooms will wait patiently at the edges of the pile, until the distinctive cry of their own newly-hatched child is heard. Then she will run to claim it, and leave the room to present it to the father and the rest of her family. Little work is done by, or expected from, anxious parents-to-be during this time.

*First Name:* While other cultures celebrate an individual's day of birth, most Red Martian societies mark the day when a child speaks his own name for the first time, and celebrates this day annually. To the Martians, speaking one's own name is a declaration of one's own individuality, and so it makes sense to mark the anniversary of this day

*Water's Peak:* When the canals flood for the first time each spring, a three-day celebration is held. That this usually coincides with the onset of the mating urge means that the party tends to be a rather raucous and bawdy celebration of life and hope.

*First Flow:* The anniversary of the day the canals began to operate, pumping their bounty of life from the poles to the equator, is celebrated every year. This is a somber ceremony, as it exists to remind everyone of the centuries of labor and sacrifice which were required to create the vast network. It occurs in late summer.





- ★ Avak Callor
- ▲ Kor Va Krel
- City
- Ruin
- Major Canal





# THE RED KINGDOMS

Once, the Red Men of Mars ruled the planet from pole to pole, with only the most remote wilderness wholly in the hands of the Green Men or the White Apes, with the Grey Men a dread legend at most. Today, there are a but a handful of regions where the Red Martians still rule unopposed, tiny clusters of petty kingdoms holding off the encroaching forces of decay for as long as they can. So long as the water flows through the canals, these holdfasts of civilization will endure...

The largest still-civilized region is known as Alvalia, and it is located in the northern hemisphere of Mars, perilously close to the encroaching jungles of the white apes. It consists of the Kingdom of Callor Maralin, the Maranian Holdings, and the Falan Reaches. Southwest is the nation of Baltan and some minor states, and southeast, the Lonarian Kingdom and its associated nations. Separating these three clusters of nations is barren waste, home to dozens of ruined cities, roaming bands of Green Martians, and strange and deadly creatures.

## CALLOR MARALIN

Callor Maralin is one of the oldest nations on Mars today which still retains some knowledge of its true past and history. While most of the details are long lost, legends and tales discuss the grandeur and glory of Callor – its great kings, warriors, and scholars, the vast reaches of Mars which it once ruled, and the crucial role it played in establishing the planet-saving canal network. (It is worth noting that some other nations, most especially Baltan and Lonar, greatly dispute these claims)

Callor today is of course a weak and wavering shadow of its former glory, but it retains its dignity even when dressed in rags. Almost alone of the surviving major kingdoms, it maintains an active Academy, though it is more concerned with recovering fragments of lost knowledge than with making new discoveries. The great central city of Avak Callor, the heart of the Kingdom, has only a few areas of ruin. Trade is brisk and active along the central canal, and the Sky-Corsairs of Callor regularly fly to distant lands to engage in trade and diplomacy. The King of Callor even maintains an embassy among the White Apes, having earned their grudging respect during the Twelfth Long Summer War a generation past.

## THE MAP

A map of Mars is reproduced on the facing page. A few general areas are marked, along with some of the more important kingdoms mentioned in this book.

Generally, however, the map detail is left to the individual Game Master. The planetary romance genre began in an era before the proliferation of mapped fantasy worlds (a largely post-Tolkien phenomenon), the settings were detailed only as much as required by the needs of the tale being told. The Green Martian camp was located “many days from the citadel” for example.

The map features marked locations for unnamed cities and ruins -- the Game Master is encouraged to detail these areas as needed.

A full-color digital version of this map is included with the PDF version of this book, and a full-color 16 x 20 inch poster print is available for sale at the Adamant Entertainment website:

[www.adamantentertainment.com](http://www.adamantentertainment.com)

The King of Callor is chosen by an election of the Sapphire Council, a collective consisting of the top twelve nobles of the Kingdom. Nobility is inherited, though it is tradition that the eldest child of any noble family marry a worthy commoner – this tradition is credited with keeping the ruling class of Callor vigorous and wise, as well as “in touch” with the people they rule. The King or Queen, once elected, holds the position for life, save in cases of extreme madness or disability. The Sapphire Council retains an advisory role.

The current ruler of Callor is the aging King Mallion. A cunning and fierce general in his youth, his body is now broken and frail, but his spirit remains strong – perhaps too strong. Some feel it is time for a new ruler, but Mallion will relinquish neither his grip on life nor on the throne. Many, however, dread his eventual and inevitable passing, as his long reign has brought stability and certainty to Callor. Further, enemies of the kingdom will surely take advantage of the chaos and confusion of his passing to launch attacks or engage in malicious subterfuge.

The military of Callor is reputed to be among the finest remaining on Mars. Whereas many kingdoms, especially those with no neighboring foes, have stripped their armies down to ad-hoc militias or purely ceremonial units, Callor mandates a full year of service and combat training for all citizens. In addition to making sure every resident of the kingdom can be called on to come to its defense, it also builds a broad camaraderie among the people, strengthening the sense of unity and purpose which keeps Callor from sinking into the mire of languid despair which grips many nations. Perhaps 5% of those who complete their year of training go on to become lifetime soldiers.

This high level of military preparedness is a good thing, because it is generally believed Callor will soon be at war. Baltan has not launched any outright attacks and, indeed, maintains a public posture of goodwill, peace, and free trade, but several plots and schemes have been traced back to that corrupt and decadent land – all of which, very conveniently, lead nowhere near to the palace of Lady Villeral. It is generally believed

she is merely waiting for a sign of weakness or faltering – but may be willing to launch an invasion even if none such manifests.

Likewise, Lonaria poses an ever-growing threat. The High Theocrat has long condemned the ‘sin’ and ‘wickedness’ of Callor, and the temptation to expand the ranks of the faithful is one he is unlikely to resist for long.

Justice and law in Callor is swift and sure. There are no prisons as such. Crimes for which compensation can be made are punished by labor until three times such compensation has been earned. Crimes for which there can be no compensation are punished with a swift and painless death, unless the victim, or his family, pleads for mercy – in such a case, the criminal is assigned to labor for life in service to the Kingdom. Slavery as such does not exist – no criminals are ever “owned” by private citizens.

Avak Callor, often simply called Avak, is the largest city remaining in the Alvalia region and may be the largest still-populated city on Mars, though it is dwarfed by such ruins as Klandoria and Ilaium. The city is bisected by a grand canal, and divided into a dozen districts by as many lesser canals, all of which flow outwards to the surrounding rings of farmland before returning to drain back into the central waterway.

The city holds half a million people, including the farmers. Originally, it held ten times that many, but that was long ago. Rather than allow the city to fall completely into disrepair outside the densely populated inner zones, Avak mandates that its citizens contribute a certain amount of labor each year to trying to stave off the slow crawl of entropy. While this is a failing endeavor, it has greatly slowed the process of collapse and decay, to the point where Avak has only a few ruined zones, not endless miles of them.

The King’s Palace is a crescent-shaped building topped with three huge spires – two smaller ones at the ends of the ‘crescent’ and a large one in the center. This is not only the home of the king; it is the center of the government of Callor. It sits in the center of a large stone





plaza, which is a gathering place for the citizens when a proclamation is to be made or when, as occasionally happens, the people gather to make a request or a demand of their king. It is tradition that when the plaza is full, the king *must* appear to address or hear the people.

### *Callorian Characters*

Player Characters from Callor are likely to be enthusiastic, optimistic, and well-rounded. Callorian tradition and culture encourages pursuit of both mental and physical activities. Typical Callorian characters include explorers who wish to travel past the 'safe' canal routes into the lost regions; soldiers eager to prove themselves in battle for a worthy cause; low-ranking nobles seeking to distinguish themselves in advance of the expected demise of King Mallion; and scholars hoping to recover knowledge lost millennia past.

### BALTAN

Baltan, or the Baltan Confederacy, is the latest shape taken by the ever-shifting patterns of alliance and backstabbing which define the region. The folk of Baltan and its surrounding satellite kingdoms are said to eat deceit and drink treason; while this is a somewhat cruel exaggeration, it is not without reason that throughout the Red Martian territories, the word "Baltanish" is used where humans would use "Byzantine" or "Machiavellian".

Currently, the Baltan Confederacy is under the firm grip of Lady Villeral, a brilliantly cruel woman who had so meticulously managed her ascension that no one even noticed her until she walked into the power vacuum she had artfully arranged, 10 years ago. Since then, her considerable intellect and will have been turned to reinforcing and buttressing her position through webs of interlocking alliances and dependencies, so that anyone who could betray her would face too much hostility to ever ascend to power. She has also grown somewhat bored with rearranging



the pieces in Baltan, and has turned her gaze northwards to Callor, which she considers arrogant and overrated. Military conquest is difficult, so she prefers to try to corrupt from within.

Baltan is divided by the canals into several distinct regions, each of which maintains some degree of putative independence from central control, though the reality of this varies with the strength of the current ruler. Each region maintains its own military and is responsible for its own food supply, and there is constant tension between regions to keep any one from achieving too much power.

Wealth and power are everything in Baltan. Even the farmers constantly jockey for position and prestige. Every social level is dominated by a constant struggle to rise, or at least to stay in the same place. The Baltan claim this competition makes them strong; in reality, it often prevents them from cooperating to achieve any major goal. That said, those who do manage to rise out of the mire of Baltan society can be counted on to be iron willed, cunning, and determined to an extraordinary degree.

Most of the cities of Baltan are in ruins – but the ruins are inhabited. The well-maintained sections of the cities are reserved for the elite of the military, noble, and merchant classes. The rest of the populace must dwell in the slowly-collapsing outer ruins. If these masses chose to do so, they could rebuild and maintain their domiciles – or unite against their overlords – but the Baltanese love of personal advancement and the perception of all others as potential enemies prevents such movements from taking hold.

Within the maintained sections, Baltan has a decadent, lavish, beauty. Fine silks encrusted with jewels form the garments of both men and women, and everything from swords to serving trays is ornate and refined. Comfort and artistry are everywhere; almost nothing is allowed to be purely functional. The canal barges and airships of the Baltan elite are lavish and baroque creations, and if they are somewhat slower and

clumsier than the elegant simplicity of those of other nations, the Baltanese do not care.

Baltan is known for its many decadent delights. Slavery is common here, and anyone captured in the surrounding wastelands or convicted of a crime is likely to end up in chains. The fortunate slaves serve as personal aides to the powerful; most, however, are consigned to wretched labor in the radium mine or to battle to the death in the gladiatorial pits, which are second only to those of the Ape Empire in the grandeur and gore.

### *Baltan Characters*

Player Characters with a Baltan origin are likely to be clever, subtle, and devious – even if their motives are noble and pure, they will accomplish them by indirect means. Typical Baltan characters include a noble seeking the perfect ‘edge’ to guarantee his rise to power, a merchant looking to undermine his rivals by finding the only source of rare elements, a lowborn orphan who has mastered stealth and now sells his services to the highest bidder, and a skilled fighter whose lack of mental acuity means he hopes to ride someone else’s coattails to power and privilege.

## LONARIA

With the long, slow, death of their world ahead of them and the knowledge that their culture and race exist only by the dint of an immensely complex technological artifact, it is not surprising that the red men of Mars make much room in their life for spirituality. The ancient and revered gods and spirits of Mars form a vital part of daily life in all red Martian communities, but in Lonaria, this has reached extremes. The many diverse sects and faiths which can be found across the planet have been distilled down to a single, rigorous, catechism whose dictates and rules form the basis of all day-to-day existence. There is no distinction between church and state here; it is one and the same.

Five millennia ago, the Lonarian region was a rich and prosperous kingdom, similar in many ways to Callor, with libraries and academies, prosperous farms and fields, and a stable government. Then,

a plague swept through the area. It is not certain where it came from; the canal water is constantly filtered and purified. Some believed that mining operations may have opened up a sealed vault filled with the disease; others blame wandering merchants or canal gypsies. However, in the chaos, confusion, and fire which followed, a charismatic and cunning man named Balon Kollan blamed the people themselves. They had become distracted and had turned away from the faith of their ancestors, they had worshipped false gods, they had angered their ancestral spirits, and this was the retribution. However, since some were spared, it was clear this was just a warning – the gods would roll back their curse if the people would return to them. The educated scoffed – but the masses, in panic, listened. Within a month, the plague had run its course, and Kollan claimed that this was due to constant prayer and sacrifice. Despite the fact that many of the noble class survived the plague, Kollan was elevated to supreme power by popular acclaim.

Over the rest of his life, Kollan created the Codex Kollania, a holy tome which represented his version of the “true” Martian faith. This version actually drew from the teachings of many obscure and vanished cults, and preached a dour ascetism which had never been embraced by any widespread red Martian culture. Nonetheless, Lonaria adopted this version as its native religion, and soon, religion, government, and culture all became different facets of the same thing, wedded to a militant distaste for dissent. The libraries and learning centers of Lonaria were shuttered, their books and scrolls locked away where only the most elite of the priesthood could study them.

Lonar today is a fairly grim place. The inhabited regions are well-maintained, but stripped of all finery or art. The majority dwell in small apartment, each identically furnished based on social class and job. Life is lived according to fixed schedules for waking, eating, work, and constant religious devotion. Even the selection of mates is done by the Theocrats.

Relations with Callor and Baltan are equally chilly. Baltan is too distant to be too much of a threat, but their hedonistic decadence and

disdain for anything beyond short-term self-aggrandizement runs wholly counter to the Lonarian worldview. Callor, a place of free and open inquiry where many faiths are openly practiced is likewise loathed. Neither Callor nor Baltan are likely to launch invasions soon, but the constant fear of such is preached by the Theocrats. Many observers feel that if the weather turns fair enough to sustain a long march west or north, Lonar might just launch a pre-emptive strike.

#### *Lonarian Characters*

Player Characters with a Lonarian origin are likely to be heretical exiles -- the Lonarian faith does not encourage the traits common among adventurers -- although Lonar does send agents out among the unbelievers, to report back on the potential for invasion.

## THE RED NOMADS AND THE FALAN REACHES

While most of the red Martians clung to their cities and kingdoms, even as the borders contracted in the wake of the onrushing desert, a few either could not or would not do so. Some found their kingdoms excluded from the planned canal network and were asked to migrate to a foreign land. Some considered the canal network a monumental folly, doomed to failure. Other were simply caught up in the chaos and could not manage the migration before disaster struck them. From these disparate sources came the wandering red nomads of Mars.

The red nomads, like the green men, spend their time on the move. They are less suited to the harsh desert wastes than the brutal barbarians, but are much more intelligent. The two groups, thus, have reached a sort of parity – the intelligence and organization of the red Martians counterbalancing the numbers and ferocity of the green Martians so that neither race dominates the wastes.

There are thousands of red Martian tribes, usually composed of between 20 and 200 members. Every adult – male and female – is considered to be a warrior of the tribe, save for the crippled or the aged. Unlike the brutal greens, the red Martians care for all of the tribe who have not committed



some grievous sin against it. (Such criminals are either slain cleanly, or are simply abandoned and forced to fend for themselves in the wastes)

Nomadic red Martian females do not form nests, nor is there a common mating time. They have adapted to their new lifestyle. Each female who has laid an egg carries it with her, bound tightly to her body by a complex padded harness. While most eggs hatch only at night, when the tribe is camped, a rare few hatch 'on the march' – this is considered an omen of great things for the child.

While the nomads can be found all over Mars, a high concentration of the tribes are located in the area known as the Falan Reaches. The Reaches feature relatively abundant flora and fauna, and its proximity to the Grey Expanses to the south mean that it is largely shunned by the green men. There is even a permanent settlement of sorts -- a

ruined city, Tartessos, which the various nomad tribes have agreed to use as an open market where they can come together and trade.

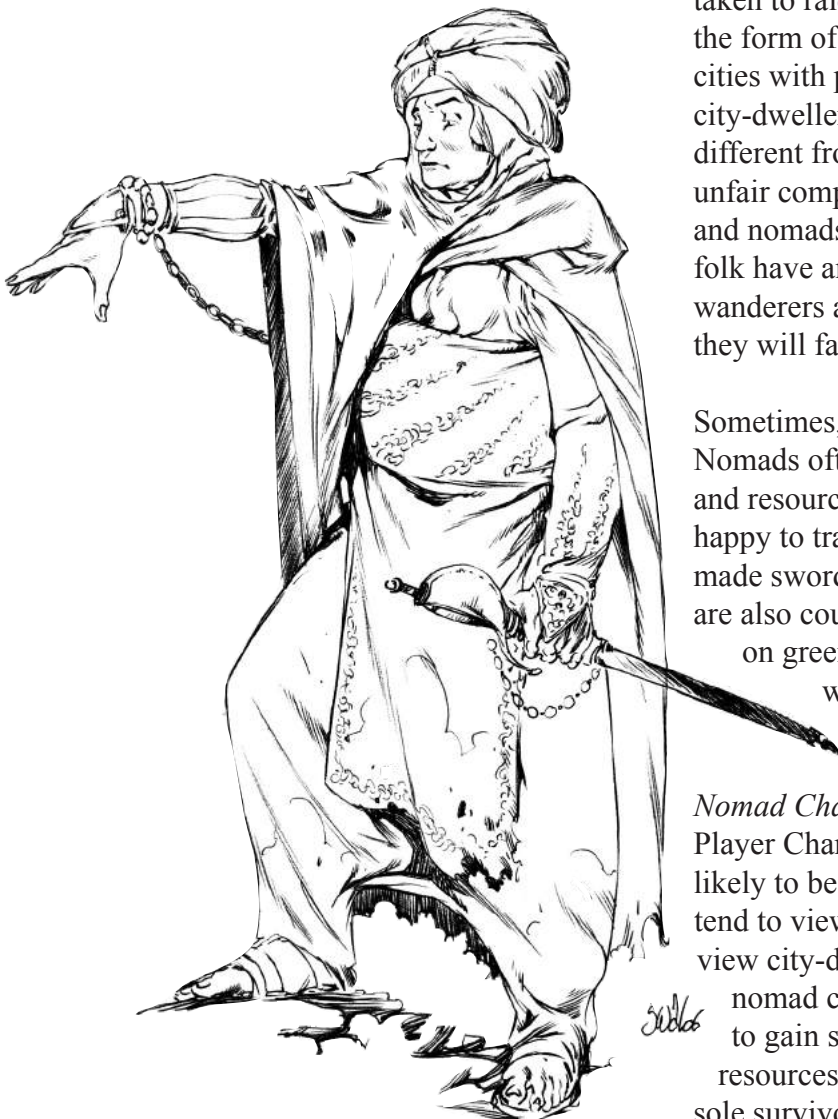
The various red tribes are not inherently warlike, but many find themselves competing for an oasis or a thornpatch, or falling to war over claims of who 'traditionally' owns some patch of good hunting land or who has the rights to use a particular ruined city as a campground. These squabbles can lead to anything from bloodless contests of speed and skill to 'champion duels' to out-and-out slaughter where not one member of the losing tribe is permitted to live.

In addition, there are sometimes battles between the city dwellers and the nomads. The nomads see nothing wrong with taking some portion of the harvest during the growing season, or of riding pell-mell across the fields. Some have even taken to raiding or demanding tribute – usually in the form of food and beverages – from outlying cities with poor armies. This has caused many city-dwellers to condemn the nomads as little different from the green Martians, a generally unfair comparison. Battles between city-dwellers and nomads are brief and bloody – if the canal folk have any kind of trained security force, the wanderers are quickly put to rout; if they do not, they will fall to the nomads primitive weapons.

Sometimes, relations are more peaceful. The Nomads often have access to a variety of treasures and resources they have little need of, and are happy to trade scavenged gold or gems for well-made swords or a functioning radium rifle. They are also couriers of news, providing information on green man migrations or other events which occur in the far wilderness.

#### *Nomad Characters*

Player Characters from the nomad tribes are likely to be hardy, practical, and efficient. They tend to view strangers with initial distrust, and view city-dwellers as soft and decadent. Typical nomad characters include young reds seeking to gain status among their tribe by seeking resources to bring back home; or perhaps the sole survivor of a massacre, seeking revenge.



## THE MARANIAN HOLDINGS

Some of the red kingdoms perished in the centuries of decline, unable to adapt to the changing face of Mars. Some kingdoms grew stronger by virtue of the new canal system, and some drew strength from their faith. The kingdom formerly known as Maran sought to ensure its survival through revolution, and the collective effort of its people.

As the reality of the dying world became unable to ignore, the people of Maran turned to their King for direction. The King, whose name has since been stricken from the historical record, did nothing, telling the people that they need not fear. When the crops continued to fail, and the citizens began to die of starvation, a group of students discovered that the nobles of Maran were stockpiling provisions for themselves. This was the spark that ignited the Maranian Revolution.

According to their official history, the citizens of Maran rose up and deposed the nobility of the kingdom, replacing them with a Citizens Council, comprised of representatives of each district. The noble families were executed, and their holdings distributed among the citizenry. Food and shelter was given to all Maranians, and a common defense was provided against incursions from green men, white apes or other red men. The former Kingdom of Maran became the Territorial Holdings of the Greater Maranian People (or simply The Maranian Holdings), a model of collectivism and stability.

According to the official statements of the Citizens Council, of course.

In reality, the Maranian Holdings are an isolationist police state, with a population barely more than slave labor, under the brutal control of First Citizen Enech, the Council, and the Secret Police.

The life of the average Maranian citizen is one of constant toil -- all food and goods must be produced within the borders of the Holdings themselves, as no travel or trade is permitted across its borders. As such the population works constantly to scrape by at the barest level of

subsistence. The day is filled with state-ordered work from dawn until dusk, broken only by meals and regular broadcasts of propaganda via the imaging networks, or in large rallies.

Order is maintained by the Secret Police -- there is a Maranian joke that says that a third of the population are Secret Police agents, and the other two-thirds are informants. Maranians often report disloyalty or dissention among their acquaintances, as many believe that such reports would mitigate in their favor should any report be made against them. Everyone is viewed with suspicion, and disappearances are a common fact of life.

The Maranian People's Army lives better than any member of the general population. They are given a more enriched diet, and receive the priority in repairs and maintenance of their facilities and equipment. The Holdings are not expansionist in any way, and so the army is entirely devoted to patrol of the Maranian border -- both to drive off any attempt to enter from outside (whether diplomatic, trade, raid or invasion), and to keep any citizens from leaving (and thereby harming the Holdings by reducing the labor force).

There are rumors that First Citizen Enech and the senior members of the Citizens Council enjoy lavish lives which would make the most decadent Baltan noble seethe with envy, but these rumors are dismissed as obvious attempts at sedition and nothing more.

### *Maranian Characters*

Player Characters from the Maranian Holdings must, by definition, be defectors, who escaped the border patrols and made it to the outside world.

## THE APE EMPIRE

The area surrounding the north pole of Mars, by dint of unusual volcanic activity and water-soaked soil, holds the sole remaining thriving jungle of Mars. Such a place would be home to the red men, save that it has already been claimed by the Empire of the Apes. From this northern holdfast, they strike south at the nearest red kingdoms, seeking expansion and tribute.

The Ape Empire (or *charragh-graragh*, as they call it) is a bastion of a primitive, but strong, civilization. They never mastered the advanced skills and techniques of the red men, but can wield iron swords with ferocious might and lethal discipline. The Empire is divided into provinces, each ruled by an Emperor appointed directly by the Emperor. The Emperor is responsible for all that occurs within his province, and the Emperor's personality directly influences the nature of the province. As Emperors change, so does the region they rule, sometimes subtly, sometimes grandly.

The Empire is fed by the canal networks, as they all flow through the polar jungle ring on their way to the rest of the northern hemisphere. Once, the apes tried to throttle the canals, to hold half of Mars hostage to their whim – and found themselves under assault by the Synthe-men, the guardians of the canals. Since then, they have let the water flow freely, and often take advantage of the canals on their wars of conquest.

None who dwell within a month's march of the Empire's borders sleeps securely. The Empire is aggressive, constantly seeking new land, and is stymied only by the logistics of supplying large armies. During warm seasons, when the fertile zone near the poles expands, the armies march south, conquering and demanding tribute; when the fields go fallow once again, the borders of the Empire retract.

At this point, the Ape Empire and the Kingdom of Callor maintain a steady peace, each respectful of the other's military might. The Empire sees Callor as a threat, however – their constant seeking after ancient knowledge might grant them the type of weapons needed to decimate the Empire, and

their closeness to the southern reaches of the polar Jungle makes an invasion logistically possible. For this reason, the apes make it subtly known to the enemies of Callor that should that kingdom be invaded, the apes will send legions south to harry and harass the Callorians on a second front. (They have made it far less clear that such legions will not withdraw once Callor falls, but will drive out the other invaders and hold it for themselves.)

### *Ape Characters*

Player Characters from the Empire are likely to be fierce and loyal, traits that are encouraged by Ape society. However, they are also prone to arrogance, viewing themselves as the masters of the sole remaining verdant area of Mars -- which they view as proof of their being a chosen people.





## THE GREY EXPANSES

During the rise of the red kingdoms, the “Grey Men” of Mars were nothing but nightmare and legend, stories told to frighten children or explain away any odd occurrence. Since the drying of Mars began and the canal network was completed, though, they have proven themselves terrifyingly real.

The main region of grey control is the area surrounding *volaxia shah*, the immense volcano whose peak rises 15 miles above the surface. For a hundred miles around the base, nothing moves or lives save that which the grey men wish to do so. The region is a zone of death for all intruders, a nightmarish realm of automated weapons systems and hideous abominations, the product of the grey men’s experiments in cellular vivisection.

While no red, white, or green man of Mars knows what lies within the volcano itself, many speculate it is the capital of the grey men – a massive metropolis of metal, powered by the roiling energy of the core of Mars itself, a hellish city of monsters and machines forever lit by the crimson light of the volcano’s core.

Elsewhere on Mars, the grey men have staked out other territories. Seemingly at random, the ground will explode upwards, revealing their towering walking machines. Lethal poisons and deadly rays scour the area of all life, with the machines relentlessly tracking down and killing any who escape the initial attack. And then – nothing. Once some predefined border is reached, the tripods stop, and neighbors are left unmolested. Sometimes, after days, months, or years, the machines will retreat, leaving behind nothing and allowing other races to once again dwell in the vacated spot. Other such regions are still held fast after centuries.

Areas where the grey men have held sway for a time slowly become devoid of all life. The soil becomes as dust, not merely dry, but both lifeless and incapable of supporting life. Where they reign, no life but theirs can thrive, and when they leave, they leave behind a void where life will never again take hold.

Overall, the territory held by the grey men is slowly growing. There is no obvious pattern to the expansion nor any seeming hostility aimed at one of the other races of Mars – the grey men seem oblivious to all other sentient life.

## THE GREEN WASTES

The name given to these regions is ironic, because they are mostly barren of plant life – and what plants do grow there range from lavender to crimson in hue. The name refers, rather, to the dominant animal life form – the green men of mars, the brutal savages who thrive in the harsh conditions.

Most of what is now wasteland was once part of the red men’s kingdoms. Only at the very borders of the lands, where the deserts of ancient Mars once stood, did the green men dare to come. Today, those border cities are long gone; the deserts have swallowed them, and many more, besides. The ruins are now the homes of the savages – they nest in them during the long, cold, Martian winter, and emerge to raid and war when the ground warms.

The Green Wastes hold more than violent death, however. They hold secrets – lore lost from the surviving red kingdoms may well be found here, forgotten in sealed vaults beneath the ruined cities. More tangible wealth is also known to exist here – as the waters receded and the kingdoms of Mars died, many cities were abandoned in haste when the green raiders appeared on the horizon. Vaults piled with gems and gold, armories still stocked with radium-pistols and shock-pikes, hangers where sky-corsairs wait to take off...all of these may still exist in the savage-haunted ruins. Reaching such places is not for the timid or the ill-prepared.

It might seem that the wastes are lifeless – but this is not so. While the dry expanses cannot support agriculture or civilization, there are still hardy plants which can suck water from the deepest reserves, melt it out of the permafrost, or catch it on the harsh winds. Then, there are creatures which prey upon the plants, and other creatures which prey upon them. The ecosystem





of the wastes is sparse and hard-edged, but it is not non-existent. The ability of many forms of Martian life to store water or to hibernate for long stretches of time makes some very unusual life forms possible, creatures which emerge to hunt only rarely and which have become things of terror and legend.

### THE RUINED CITIES

At the height of their power, the red men ruled all of the surface Mars, with the white apes and the green savages herded to tiny enclaves or unwanted barrens. Today, the canal network reaches less than a quarter of what was once the red domain, and only a small portion of even that tiny region is actively inhabited and protected. The rest is wilderness, but wilderness dotted with the remnants of glory.

There are thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of dead cities. Some are little more than mounds of rubble, barely distinguishable from random geological formations. Others are massive, crumbling, metropoli, still mostly intact, with the faded signs of stores leering mockingly out at the empty streets.

Few are utterly uninhabited, however – they may hold green Martians, red nomads, renegades and bandits, wild beasts, or even stranger things. Each is a mystery, and few who are wise tread the abandoned streets or venture into the seemingly empty buildings with abandon, lest their own souls add to the tally of ghosts which already haunt the crumbling ruins.

### THE RED KING OF THE GREEN MEN

Some 15 years ago, a man named Valish Borkan attempted to overthrow King Mallion of Callor. He had raised a small army of supporters and had planned a quick strike against the King and the Sapphire Council when all were sitting together. However, a traitor in his camp alerted the King, and the coup was foiled. Borkan's army was captured and most were killed, but Borkan managed to slip into the dank sewer passages beneath Callor and escape into the surrounding fields. There, he stole a volesh and rode out into the wastes beyond. It was assumed by all that he would die there, either at the hands of the elements or at the hands of the green Martians.



It was the latter which found him first. He killed a dozen with his radium pistol before the charges gave out; then he drew his ceremonial knife and continued to fight, even as they tore his flesh. The chieftain of the tribe was impressed with his courage, and decided to keep him as a slave – the tribe was currently well-fed, and so, could afford this luxury.

Borkan valued his own life above all things. The crippling wounds he suffered in his battle with the greens had left him unable to run, so, he realized he had to learn to survive among the savages. Mastering their primitive language was simple enough. He soon became able to give the chief solid advice – where to find water and meat, how best to defeat an enemy tribe by luring them into an ambush, and so on. By the time the tribe was settling in to winter in the ruined city of Kar Va Krel, the chief viewed Borkan as an invaluable aid.

Borkan then began to twist the chief's mind. The wily red Martian pointed out all manner of hostile and suspicious acts committed by the other tribal elders and leaders, the oldest and toughest of the brutes. One by one, the chief eliminated these threats to his power, until he found himself with only Borkan by his side.

Borkan then began the second phase of his plan. He taught the green men all he knew about metalworking and military discipline. He showed their few smiths and crafters how to improve the quality of their blades and armor, and showed their warriors how to amplify their strength by working together. Such alien ideas were often met with rage and anger from the primitives, but the chieftain of the tribe made short work of dissenters.

When the winter ended, the tribe moved out again, but it no longer roamed purposelessly. It moved to the well-known path of a smaller tribe, and set upon them, using the weapons and tactics taught to them by Borkan. The tribe slaughtered all of the warriors and young men, but captured the females and children. They then proceeded to do the same thing to several other tribes over the course of the wandering seasons. When it came

time to shelter again in the city, the population of the tribe had grown dramatically.

The children captured alive were raised as warriors of the tribe, and the eggs of the captured females were laid in the same places as the eggs of the tribe's native women, so that the children would not be marked in any way as to their origin. Both of these acts were grossly against ancient custom and tradition, but the promise of wealth and power mollified those who would protest (as did Borkan's earlier culling of all of the more intelligent and experienced tribal leaders). The green Martians never really valued tradition for its own sake, in any event – they followed tradition because no one suggested a better or different way to do things.

Year after year, the pattern continued, until the tribe was the largest green Martian band known. However, feeding such an army was nearly impossible – the difficulties of finding sufficient food and water were the primary controls on the size of any green Martian clan, and they were being reached. Thus, Borkan moved to the second phase of his plan. He had spent some time 'grooming' prospective replacements for the aging chief, and finally selected one. The chief was slain and eaten, and the new chief, thoroughly controlled by Borkan, took control.

The massive warband then marched on the nearest outskirts of the red Martian civilization. The canal dwellers expected nothing more than a quick skirmish which would send the primitives running, but they were wrong. Attacking in disciplined ranks and using complex flanking tactics, the green horde swept across the defenses of the city. They surrounded it and prepared to invade, while Borkan issued his ultimatum to the red Martian leaders – provide us food, in regular caravans, or be exterminated. Facing annihilation, the city agreed to pay this tribute.

The same tactics brought three other outlying cities under Borkan's control. Food caravans now flow to the city of Kor Va Krel, which is somewhat less ruined than it was. No red man other than Borkan has been permitted inside the city's bounds, but scouts and spies have

reported that there are forges and armories operating throughout the year, and that an entire generation of green Martians is being raised and trained as soldiers for Borkan's expanding army. Technically, Borkan remains the 'slave' of the current Chief, but even the simple-minded emerald brutes understand who their true chieftain is.

Borkan's plans are simple – he will continue to gather tribute from the fringes until his army is strong enough, then, he will march on Callor. Once he has conquered it, he will form a united force of red and green Martians, a planet-conquering army. His ambitions are grandiose, perhaps ludicrously so, but he has thus far achieved his goals.

## THE DARK BELOW

Mars is an ancient world, and it has been alive since the earliest days of the Solar System. Even as life slowly evolved on or near the surface, far more ancient creatures dwelled far beneath. It is possible they, too, once lived in the sunlight, only to be driven below by some catastrophe which occurred out of the memory of even the grey men; it is likewise possible that they have always dwelled in darkness. Down deep, where sunlight has never reached, there is a world mostly unsuspected by those above.

The cavern systems of Mars are vast and intricate. There are many odd connections between them, unexpected tunnels that connect two otherwise disparate structures. Such passages seem too convenient and too common to have come about purely by chance, but there is little sign of workmanship or the use of tools in their construction.

The underworld of Mars is very cold...but it is also wet. The water which once filled the surface fled to the poles...and down below. Here, miles below the surface, there is a constant cold dampness, the stone walls slick and moist at all times. In the endless dark, there is an equally endless din and echo of droplets, sometimes enhanced by the gurgling of a rushing stream or the roar of a waterfall. If there was light to see

them, there would be wonders here almost beyond description – a cascade of water down endless tiers of stone, rushing for well over a mile. A vast cavern of impossible size, holding within it an great, dark, and mostly still expanse of water – the legendary Last Ocean of Mars, the Dark Sea, the Black Waters. Within this unknown ocean dwell things too strange to name or describe, creatures whose minds are not merely cold and forbidding like the grey men, but impossible for any creature which knows the sight of the sun to fathom or comprehend. In the midnight gloom miles below the surface of the dying world, things sleep, and dream, and begin to stir...

## THE WHISPERING LORD

Every species produces freaks, sports, exceptions. It is such oddities which enable a species to advance, change, or adapt. Without variation, there is no evolution. Even the most ancient and stagnant of species can sometimes produce those who defy the expectations of their culture.

So it is even with the Grey Martians. Those cold and enigmatic beings, forever joined in a dark and silent purpose, sometimes produce one who does not fit, an atavistic throwback whose warped mind contains feelings beyond an icy malevolence towards all who still walk in the sunlight. These oddities have ambition, pride, and drive, and can conceive of, and lust for, a life beyond completing the Great Work in the dark and machine-filled caverns below.

Usually, such freaks are detected and found early in life, but some are especially canny, and hide their differences from their fellows until it is time to strike. One such was Wulushul.

Wulushul was assigned to work on the dissection of red Martian brains, a task which often sent him (suitably protected) to the surface in order to find appropriate experimental subjects. While there, he found some deep aspect of himself stirred by the sight of the broad crimson plains, the time-worn mountain peaks, and the glistening array of night stars. Secretly, he began to dream of something beyond the lightless caves and the ceaseless drone of the mechanisms. The old ambitions, the

ancient drive which had taken his most ancient of ancestors out to explore those sparkling lights, awoke in him.

He did not share this vision with the rest of his people. He hoarded the concept, as one might hoard a precious jewel, and he studied and pondered the concept when he was sure he was fully alone. One day, he could abide it no more. He took control of one of the tripods and fought his way to the surface. There, he found a wandering band of green Martian nomads. He slew a few, and then issued demands to the rest. They would be his slaves, and he would let them live. Otherwise, they would be exterminated.

As he roamed the surface, he took more slaves -- red and green alike. He took the survivors with him to a city he had found on an earlier trip, a lost metropolis known as Grava Nor. This city had the advantage of being located near an untapped vein of radium, as well as an underground lake which could provide water to keep the slaves alive.

The first task was the construction of a suitable palace, a place where Wulushul could leave the confines of the war machine and walk freely. Once this was done, he set his slaves to building all manner of machines. They did not understand the purpose of their labor, but obeyed their new lord's instructions.

## THE DEAD SEAS

The seas of Mars once covered most of the world's southern hemisphere, as well as forming a barrier between the dominant landmass and the northern polar icecaps. Today, they are empty. The southern sea, covering about half the surface of the world, is crossed by the canals leading from the south pole to the surviving civilizations of the central continent. It is a harsh, dry, wasteland, with few ruins or other remnants of civilization. Only on the mountain peaks -- once island chains -- do dead cities remain.

However, the sea bed offers other riches. As the oceans receded, they left behind lakes and pools, and in some places, there is water lying just below

the surface. Uncounted millennia of ancient life has made the seabottom soil rich and fecund, and in the deepest valleys and lowest rifts of the former oceans, life yet thrives. Renegades from the north, green Martians, and strange beasts all have staked out these small damp oasis.

Further, the long eons when the seas were full have left behind relics in the form of sunken ships, now exposed. Lost knowledge, ancient treasure, strange weapons, and more may be easily taken from these hulks, but such ships are also the lairs of bandits, renegades, or monsters.

## THE CANALS

An artificial construct visible from a distance of 20 million miles, the canal network of Mars is currently the single most advanced engineering project known on any world, making the Pyramids or the Great Wall of China seem like piles of mud. The existence of civilized life on Mars is due entirely to the canals, built by the distant ancestors of the current red Martians. That no red Martian civilization today could accomplish such a feat -- or even describe how it was done -- is a sad testament to how far the Martians have fallen. If the canals fail, they cannot be repaired. Currently, the canal system is remarkably self-maintaining, but the repair systems themselves may someday begin to break down.

The main canals, visible from Earth, are 1 to 5 miles in width, and run from pole to pole. When they near the cities, they explode in a webwork of smaller canals, running through and around the city proper, then reunite and keep going. Often, a city will cause a canal to branch into two slightly smaller canals, each going to other cities.

The canal depth varies with the seasons. In the warm summers, they are filled to overflowing. In the winter, only a thin trickle, barely 20% of the summer's flow, runs to keep the cities alive.

The canals themselves are made of a material called *lunivul*, which can no longer be manufactured, worked, or repaired. The metal is amazingly strong, does not rust, and seems



to 'heal' over time from what little damage it does accrue. The canals are as shiny and clean as they were when they were first built over 10,000 years ago. However, the metal is porous -- and this is essential to the functioning of the canals, as the water flowing through them seeps into the surrounding soil, creating broad fertile zones, especially around the cities, where the canals explode into webworks.

The ground for about 10 miles around each city is capable of supporting enough agriculture to feed the populace, and where cities cluster together, a sparse natural ecosystem can develop, surrounding the civilized regions with a thin, but vital, belt of wilderness. Up the canal routes, near the north pole, the leakage from the poles themselves, combined with the subsurface geological activity, create another belt of rich life. The canals are never blocked by weeds or plant life, nor do any fish or other forms of marine life swim in them. The water is always perfectly pure.

No other artifacts of luvial are known to exist. Rumors of such have led to the disappearances of more than a few treasure-hunters. Typically, luvial is alleged to be found in the most distant parts of the deep sea beds or in the heart of the Grey Expanses.

## THORNPATCHES

Life on Mars is tenacious. The survival of the various Martian species despite the cooling of their world is proof of that, but even the non-sentient life clings to existence with admirable will. As the Martian climate changed, evolution kicked into high gear. Plants adapted to long periods of drought -- sometimes decades or more. Many animal species developed the ability to excrete a sort of mucous which could dry to a tough husk, preserving the animal within for an indefinite period. The result was the appearance of an ecosystem which could sleep for years or decades, awakening in a frenzy of activity when water supplies increased.

Over the course of years, Mars occasionally has bouts of increased water. Rainfall never happens, but the deep permafrost sometimes thaws, creating a moister environment. When



this happens in a region, there is a sudden and dramatic explosion of life. In days, barren wasteland becomes filled with a mad tangle of crimson and lavender plantlike, mostly in the form of twisting thornvines. The vines can grow to as much as a foot thick in a matter of days. Once this occurs, animals which burrowed below ground and encapsulated themselves awaken, tearing out of their cocoons and bursting forth from the sandy soil. Ravenous with hunger, they begin a mad frenzy of feeding and mating, hoping to produce another generation before the wet times end and the new forest returns to dust.

These regions are known as thornpatches. They occupy anywhere from 1 to 1000 square miles of territory when they bloom, and they will usually last 4d4 weeks. They often spring up near or around abandoned cities, perhaps because the cities were originally built in regions with easy access to water. If word of one reaches civilization, it will set off a mad race. The lifeforms found in and around a thornpatch do not exist anywhere else on modern Mars -- they

are relics of an ancient era and are thus of much interest to everyone from farmers to scientists.

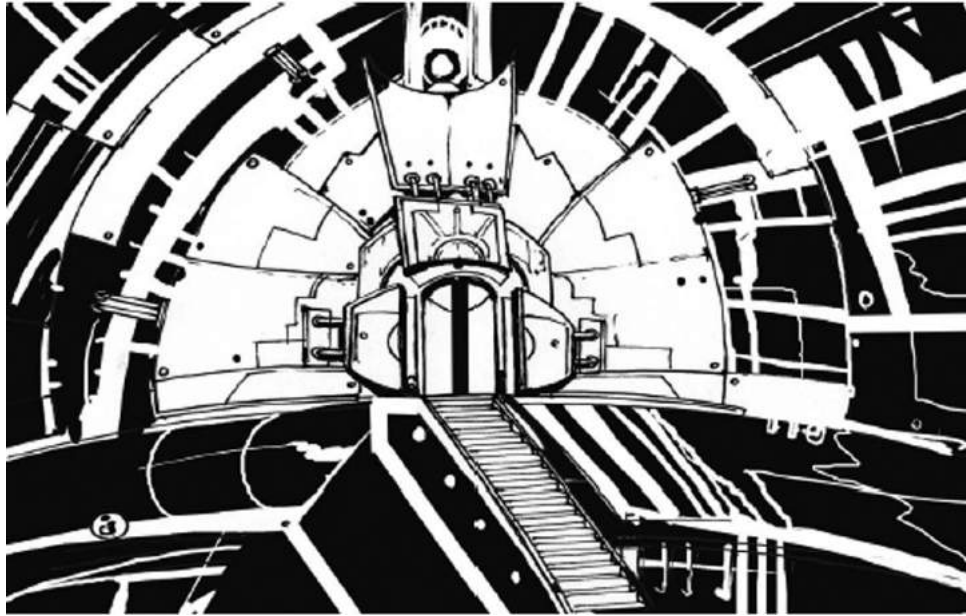
## OASES

Even rarer than thornpatches are oases – regions where the right combination of conditions produce and upwelling of groundwater from some forgotten underground source. Once this occurs, the dead soil around revitalizes, long-dormant seeds sprouting furiously. Such regions will be anywhere from a quarter mile to ten miles across, and may last for a few weeks to a few decades, depending on local conditions.

If an oasis is known to exist, it will attract all manner of beings. Unlike thornpatches, oases are not necessarily overrun with exceptionally hostile and toothy life forms. Most have only a few native animals, though some are known to harbor rather aggressive plants. A tribe of green men might make an oasis their home for a winter, rather than seeking out a ruined city at which to shelter. Renegades expelled from a red Martian nation might settle here, using it as a base from which to raid their enemies. If it is close to their territory, the white apes will claim it, and will begin to strip it of all worth before the shifting weather patterns render it to dust once again.

Often, an oasis is found by pure chance. They are so small, and the barren wastelands of Mars so vast, that many exist for years without being discovered, especially if they are far from the canals or the main caravan routes. Travelers exploring the dead seas or lost in the green wastes may count themselves blessed by the gods to find an oasis just when they need it most.

Of course, an inhabited oasis might well appear to be empty. The locals would hide to size up intruders, before deciding how best to attack in order to defend their home.



## THE POLAR STATIONS

The blood of Mars is water pumped from the poles, and the heart of Mars, therefore, are the polar stations. On each pole, there are hundreds of such. Each is a massive construct, perhaps a quarter mile high and a half-mile square, composed of shimmering silvery metal, unbreakable translucent blue glass, and crackling fields of orange energy. Each sits in the center of a never-frozen mile-wide lake, from which canals blossom.

The pumping stations are fully automated. No Martian – red, green, white, or grey – stalks though the halls or adjusts the machinery. That job is left, firstly, to the gargantuan thinking engines which sit below each station, massive conglomerations of gears and sparks, which analyze all the information received from the canal telesensors and respond appropriately, and, secondly, to the Synthe-men, the immortal and incorruptible guardians of the canals.

Each station consists of several key components. The tower serves as an observation post and a signal receiver, but, more importantly, it catches and condenses all liquid which is brought past it on the winds. The tower also contains powerful wind-driven turbines which serve to provide additional power to the mighty engines and pumps, reducing the strain on the power radium generators.

The base of the station, usually a large dome, contains the workshops and maintenance rooms which the synthe-men use to repair and replace worn out components. It also contains a section of living quarters, food supplies, and meeting rooms for red Martians who might come to oversee or improve the stations. However, these rooms are not accessible without proper authorization, and no one has provided that for centuries. The synthe-men dutifully keep the living quarters in perfect maintenance, waiting for the scientists or engineers which will never come.

At the heart of the dome is the interface to the calculating engine which maintains each station. Here, synthe-men can come to query the great mechanical mind, giving it questions in the form of complex patterns of wire and receiving answers in a terse, artificial voice which is obeyed unquestioningly. Red Martians will be allowed access to this room only if they can provide appropriate identification.

Beneath the dome is the great radium pile, an engine which can power the station for millennia, provided it is kept fueled and maintained. The heat surrounding the engine is so intense that even the synthe-men cannot work with it directly; here, mechanical men must do the job, controlled directly by the clockwork mind which guides the tower itself.

Lastly, there are the laser bores and the pumps. These drill down for miles, into the deep permafrost which has absorbed all the oceans of Mars, and bring up the precious life-giving water. This is then sent through countless purification filters and then sent out to the canals.

The tower is protected by armies of synthe-men soldiers, which will mercilessly kill any living being which approaches and which does not provide proper credentials. In addition, the towers hold a variety of offensive weaponry, from radium-cannons to missile launchers to somno-beams, all of which can and will be turned against foes.

Each tower is self-contained, but they are linked

by communication beams. Each one connects to the two or three nearest, and they pass along messages to their neighbors, and so on. Underground pipes link the towers as well, so that a drought in one region can be balanced by a surplus from the others. Should there be a conflict of needs, the mechanical minds resolve it based on the populations being served.

The north and south polar stations do not communicate, however. Though the canal grid is ultimately linked pole-to-pole, there are no connections by which the pumping stations can talk.

After tens of thousands of years, the pumping system still works magnificently. Less than one percent of the towers have failed, and those have had their duties easily subsumed by the rest of the network. However, the rate of failure has increased sharply in recent centuries. Nothing is immune to the ravages of time, and the chemical matrix which creates each new generation of synthe-men slowly degrades. Eventually, they will be unable to sustain themselves, or will be corrupted and debased by progressive errors in the matrix, and then the long, slow, and inevitable decline of the entire pumping network will begin.



# QUEST FOR VENGEANCE

BY JESS NEVINS

Toral Nal wiped the dust from his eyes and gripped his spear. In front of him, on the causeway leading up to GravaK Nor, the palace of the Grey known only as the Whispering Lord. Toral Nal's captain, Tarmos Kal, exchanged blows with a Green warrior. If Tarmos Kal fell, it was up to Toral Nal to carry on.

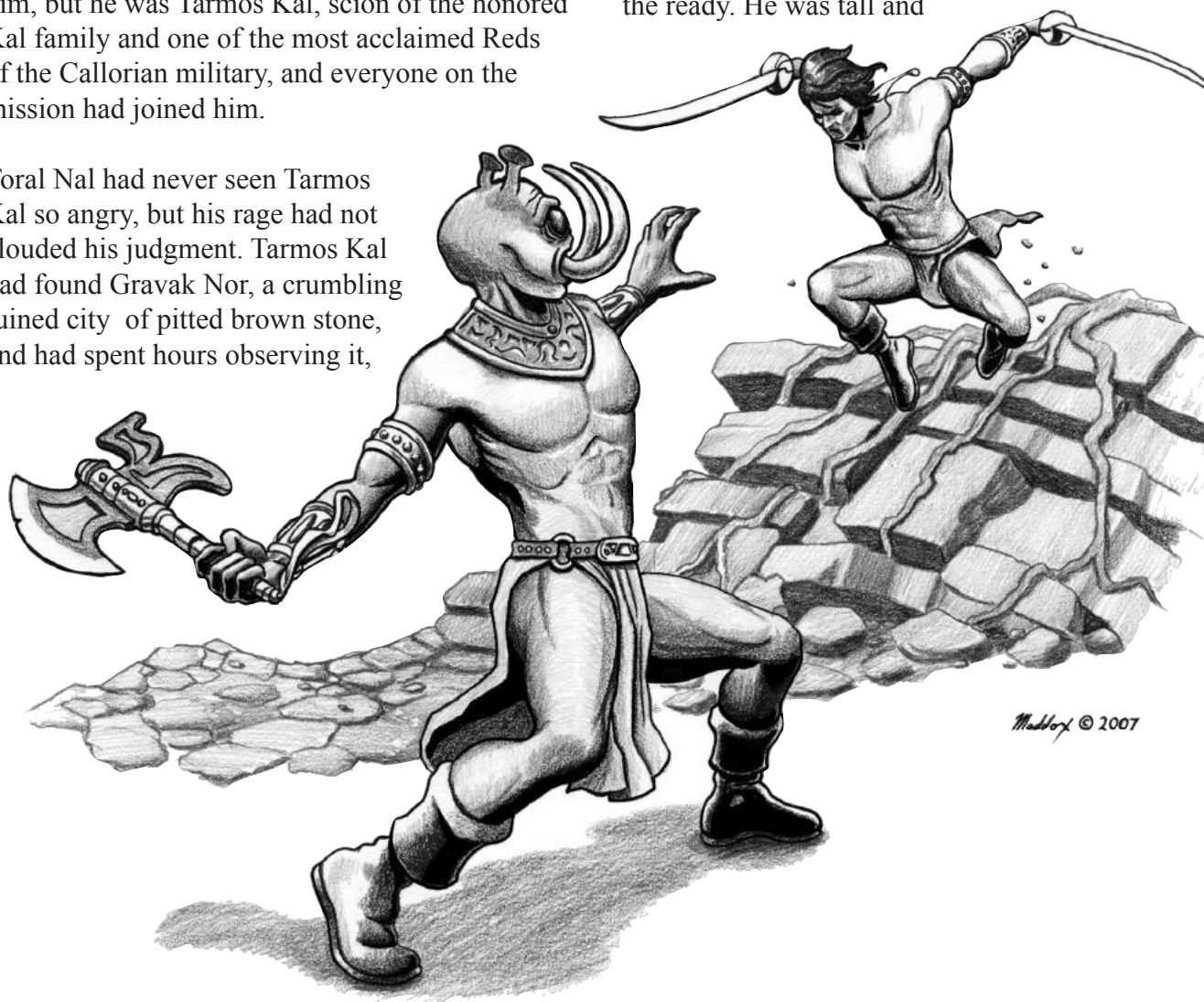
Toral Nal had been with Tarmos Kal on a diplomatic mission to the Baltan Confederacy when the news arrived: the dreaded brain-eater had captured the Callorian expedition to the Minor States—and Isvia Komar, Tarmos Kal's beloved, had been on that mission. Tarmos Kal had immediately left the Confederacy and set out for the ruins where the Whispering Lord was supposed to be. Tarmos Kal made it clear that no one on the mission was required to accompany him, but he was Tarmos Kal, scion of the honored Kal family and one of the most acclaimed Reds of the Callorian military, and everyone on the mission had joined him.

Toral Nal had never seen Tarmos Kal so angry, but his rage had not clouded his judgment. Tarmos Kal had found GravaK Nor, a crumbling ruined city of pitted brown stone, and had spent hours observing it,

and the Green warriors guarding its approaches, before attacking. Typical of Tarmos Kal, he had insisted on leading the charge up the causeway himself, and so far only his blade had touched Green steel and only his blade had tasted Green blood.

Toral Nal spat grey ash from his mouth and waited. The Green Warrior was too slow on a block, and Tarmos Kal's sword plunged into the Green's stomach. Tarmos Kal yanked the blade free and kicked the writhing Green from in front of him. Without watching to see the Green land at the base of the causeway, far below, Tarmos Kal shouted to the Greens in front of him, "Who next among you will die for your master?"

A massive Green strode forward, axe held at the ready. He was tall and



muscular even for a Green, and the jewels sewn to his belt and the tattoos on his hands and forearms indicated that he was a champion of his tribe. He spat, "My master will feast on your brain, Small One, but I, I shall enjoy your heart." And with that he thrust at Tarmos Kal, who easily blocked the blow and responded with a chop at the Green's knees.

Despite his size the Green was lithe and quick, and his mighty swings came fast and unpredictable, now at Tarmos Kal's face, now at his thighs, and now at his heart. Tarmos Kal barely moved his torso or legs, and blocked the thrusts simply by moving his sword, a heavy blade most Reds would have wielded two-handed, so fast that it blurred to the eye.

After several minutes of fighting, Tarmos Kal cried out "Hold!" and held up his left hand in the traditional peace-making gesture of the Callorians. The Green warrior stepped back and waited.

"What is your name? I have never yet fought a savage of your quality. I would know your name, so that I may honor it after your death."

The Green grinned with feral good humor. "I am Ban Thraxus, Chosen One of the Sacred Ancestors." With one hand he made a sacred gesture as he spoke, and the Greens behind him echoed his final words.

Tarmos Kal said, "I am Tarmos Kal of Avak Callor, Ban Thraxus. Once your people called me the 'Head Taker.'"

"Ah!" Ban Thraxus' smile grew wider. "Then the Sacred Ones have truly blessed me today! Your death will bring honor to our tribe, and avenge the blood you caused to soak the dust. No more talk, Head Taker—your time has come!" He brought his weapon around in a ready position.

Tarmos Kal nodded. "You are the greatest your people have sent up against me, Ban Thraxus—" and he leapt forward suddenly. Ban Thraxus' reflexive attack sent the axe biting into Tarmos Kal's side, where it skidded off ribs. At the same

time Tarmos Kal drove his sword through Ban Thraxus' body, "—and I will sing you a proper death rite."

The Green Martians cried out. Tarmos Kal winced at the wound in his side as the savage warriors approached, but did not attack. They picked up the fallen form of Ban Thraxus and, chanting a sonorous dirge, marched down the causeway.

Tarmos Kal strode to the door at the top of the causeway and kicked it open. Here, within the palace itself, the Whispering Lord was protected by the former nomads who now worshipped him as a fell god. To the Red faces inside, he roared, "WHO AMONG YOU WISHES TO GO TO HELL FIRST?"

# TWO: CHARACTERS





## CHARACTERS

The world of **MARS** should be one of high adventure, pulp action, and endless excitement. While there is ample room for role-playing, this is not a game of delicate and cunning plots slowly woven, nor of intricate personal revelation and self-discovery. This is a game of racing across a burning bridge, sword and blaster in hand, to take down the fiendish Baltannish Duke before he reaches the trigger of his solar bomb!

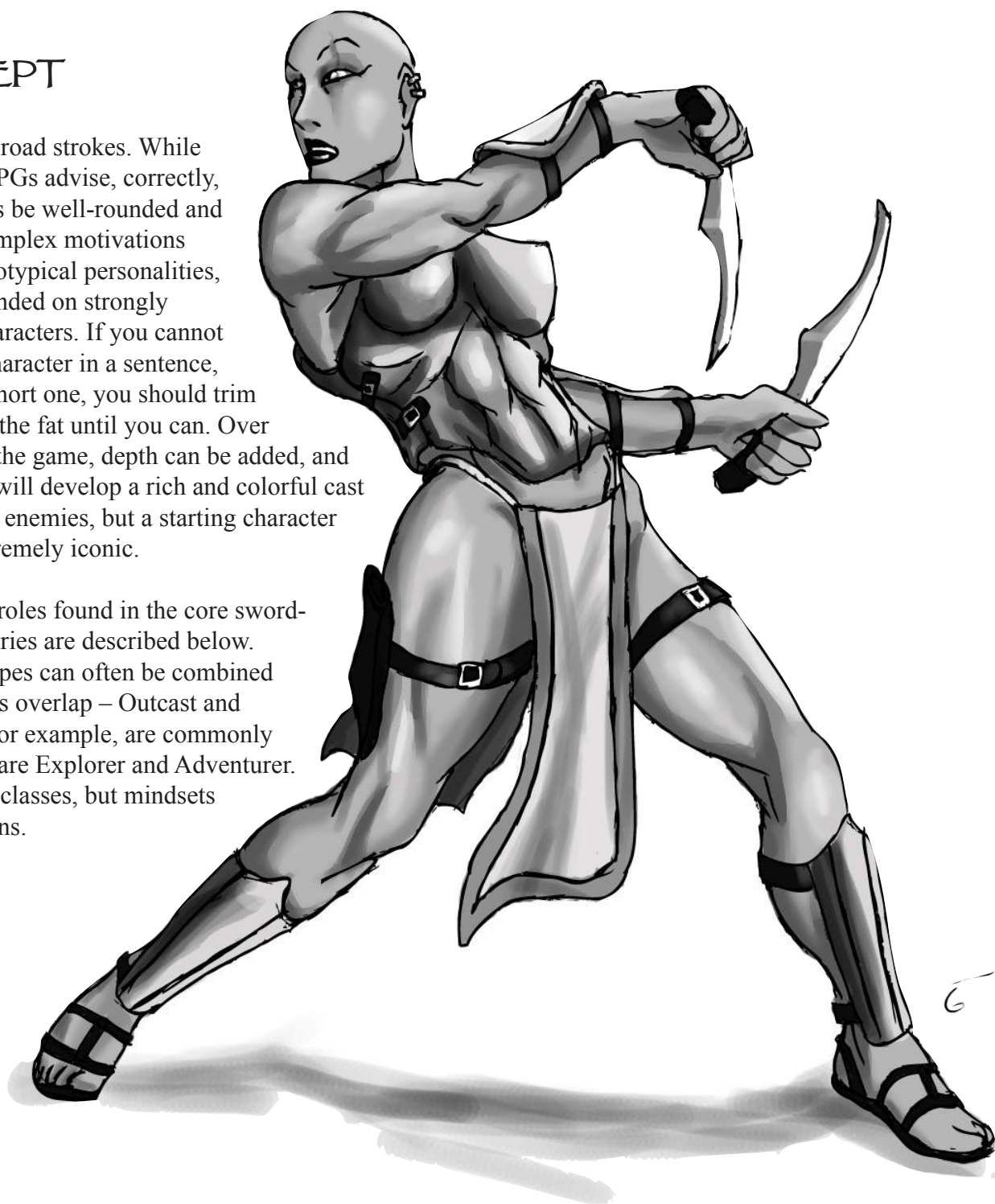
## CONCEPT

Two words: Broad strokes. While many other RPGs advise, correctly, that characters be well-rounded and deep, with complex motivations and non-stereotypical personalities, **MARS** is founded on strongly archetypal characters. If you cannot define your character in a sentence, preferably a short one, you should trim back some of the fat until you can. Over the course of the game, depth can be added, and the character will develop a rich and colorful cast of friends and enemies, but a starting character should be extremely iconic.

Some typical roles found in the core sword-and-planet stories are described below. These archetypes can often be combined and sometimes overlap – Outcast and Companion, for example, are commonly combined, as are Explorer and Adventurer. These are not classes, but mindsets and motivations.

## ADVENTURER

You're in it for the glory. You may not deliberately seek out adventure, but it will always seek you out, and, when it does, you will meet it head on. You charge into battle, sometimes with a plan, sometimes with simply a bellow of rage. You are not necessarily stupid or violent, and might well always offer the olive branch first – but if it is rejected, you are well prepared to use it as a club. A true hero of the genre does not like violence, but he or she is very, very, good at it.



## COMPANION

You tend not to be an adventurer in your own right, but you are a friend or a lover (or both) to one, and where they go, you go. Your skills often complement theirs, but tend to be more specialized. You may be a voice of reason against their impetuosity, or you may be the enthusiastic one who needs some gentle restraint lest you charge into a battle you cannot win. It is quite possible you are of a different race than your adventuresome friend – perhaps you saved his life, or he yours, or perhaps you have some other commonality that binds you across cultures.

## OUTCAST

You are not the same as your companions, nor are you the same as your own kind. Somehow, you were always different. A green Martian who thinks rather than fights, or a white ape who lacks brutish ambition. Somehow, you found your way into a band of those of another species, who were willing to accept you for what you were, not for what your people were. Always on the outside looking in, you are capable of great insight, as you see things from a unique perspective. This doesn't necessarily make you a navel-gazing philosopher, however – many outcasts are great and mighty warriors, having had to fight all their lives due to the crime of being different.

## EXPLORER

The world is a mystery to be solved, and you are the detective. Ancient cities, dark caverns, strange secrets hidden in timelost ruins – you are driven to see what no one else has seen. You are inherently discontent with stability; too long spent in one place wears down your soul. There is always one more mountain to climb, one more ruin to explore, one more road to walk down. You tend to be proactive, seeking out new places rather than waiting for adventure to come to you.

## DEFENDER

There is something near, dear, and valuable to you, and you will guard it against all threats. This may be a loved one, a city, or a principle, but no

matter what it is, caring for it is more important than your own life. This desire may often take you far from the thing for which you care – a threat to a city may come from half a world away, for example – but your passion is always central to your motivation. You will see little reason to adventure unless it somehow serves/protects/involves the thing you cherish, but the nature of the genre is such that being a defender is a full-time job; there is always one more enemy waiting for you.

## TRICKSTER

Lets face it, a lot of the world goes around with a stick up its collective...well, you know. Even when performing the most outrageous feats of derring-do, many of the people you travel with just take it all so *seriously*. You don't, or, if you do, you never let it show. While everyone else is carefully plotting a complex assault on the ruined city complex which houses the Whispering Lord, you sneak in, find his soaking tub, and fill it with itching powder. You trust to luck more than skill, though you are often very, very, skilled at what you do – so skilled that you can make it *seem* to be mere luck, as no one could be *that* good. You will dare to laugh in the face of the Green Man chieftain even as he sentences you to death by painful torture. You will cut the straps on the armor of the Emperor of the White Apes so that his entire suit falls off while he reviewing the legions. You will not endanger your friends, though, and will often gladly risk yourself for them --- but you'll do it with style and panache, and in a way no one will ever forget.

# MAKING A HERO

You will need a copy of the core **Savage Worlds** rulebook to create a character.

The steps to creating a character for **MARS** is exactly the same as that detailed in the core rules :

**Step One:** Choose a Race

**Step Two:** Define your characters' Traits (Attributes and Skills) and figure your Derived statistics

**Step Three:** Pick Edges and Hindrances

**Step Four:** Choose your Gear.

Player Characters for **MARS**, however, have an additional step added to character creation: a starting character begins with 10 Experience Points (enough for two Advances).

Two Advances keeps the Player Characters at the Novice rank (as described in the Advancement section of the **Savage Worlds** rulebook), but gives them a few additional customization options. Some Gamemasters (particularly those with advanced players who are very familiar with the planetary romance genre) may wish to start play with even more experienced characters, starting them at Seasoned, Veteran or even Legendary rank.





# RACES OF MARS

While Mars today is a dying world, it was once a world so vibrant and full of life that it spawned a plethora of sentient races. Three of these still roam the surface of the world in large numbers, while others have retreated to the shadows or have become things of legend.

Of the races below, the red men, the green men, and the white apes are all suitable as player characters, though individuals of the latter two will most likely be outcasts or renegades if they join up with members of other races. It is recommended that a group of adventurers be composed primarily of red men and earthmen, with at most one character who is a green man or a white ape. Alternatively, a campaign could focus entirely on a green tribe's fight for survival in the harsh wastes, or on the military campaigns of a squadron of white apes.

## RED MEN

The most advanced race on Mars are the red men. They are the builders of the canals which stretch across the planet, and while they are no longer capable of such feats, they still retain access to advanced technology, from lethal radium guns to the great sky-corsairs which float far above the sandy surface of the red planet. Their cities dot the planet, with massive towers and pylons straining to touch the dusky sky. Far more cities, though, lie in sprawling ruins, remnants of their empire at its long-ago height.

## PHYSIOLOGY

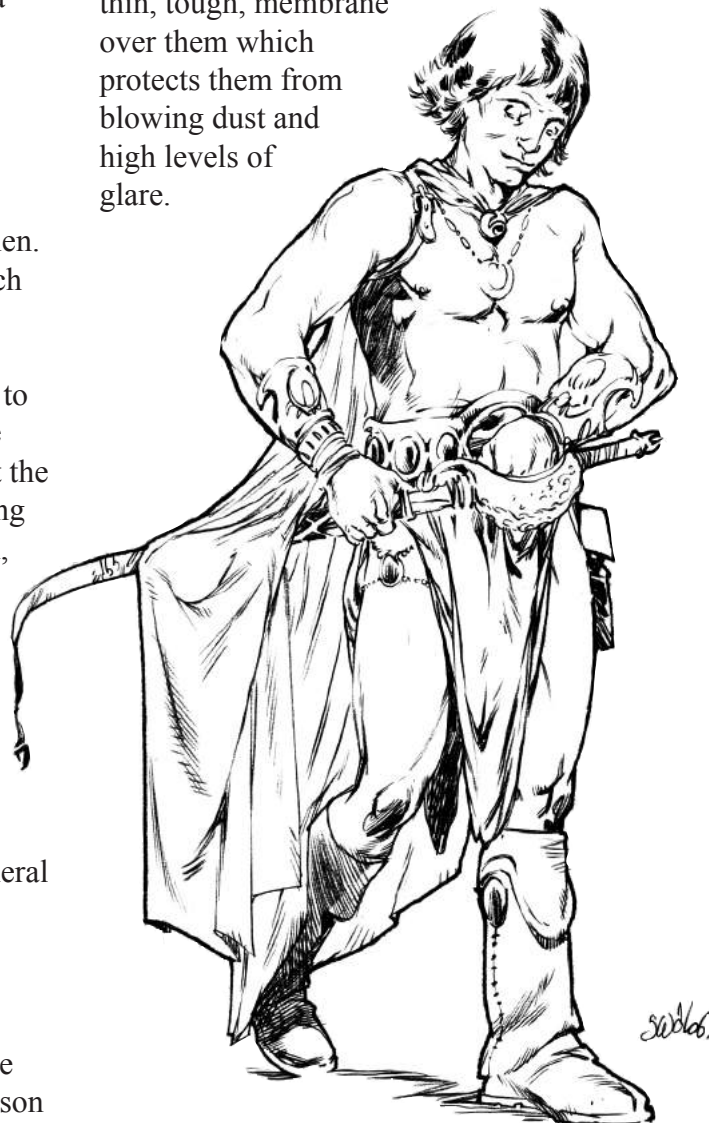
In appearance, the red men strongly resemble humans, having roughly the same range of heights and weights. It is very rare for any red man to be overweight, however, due to the general scarcity of food. The red Martian civilization survives, but it does not thrive – see below.

As the name indicates, the chief factor which distinguishes a red Martian from a human is the color of their skin. Their skin is generally crimson

in hue, with variants ranging from a light lavender to a brilliant, almost burning, scarlet. Their hair is usually black, turning grey with age, though other colors do occur rarely – blonde hair is the next most common, followed by brown and red. Their eyes are often blue, black, or grey, but are sometimes more exotically colored – green, violet, and yellow are rare but not unknown.

Red Martians males rarely have facial hair; among those who do, mustaches are more common than beards. Facial hair, if it exists at all, rarely begins to grow before middle age. Baldness is almost unknown. Body hair, on both males and females, is non-existent.

Many of the other differences are not externally visible. Red Martian skin is somewhat thicker and drier than human skin, locking in precious moisture. They do not sweat. Their eyes have a thin, tough, membrane over them which protects them from blowing dust and high levels of glare.



The most important difference, though, is that red Martians are egg laying mammals. While it is possible for Martians to mate at any time, there is a single period of roughly two weeks duration each year when fertility is at its peak, in early spring. (See “Holidays”, page 13) Shortly after this time, eggs are planted in a central incubator. Every Martian city has at least one such place, and the largest have several. Identifying the mother of any given egg is not needed; they can be identified with perfect accuracy by smell. The eggs are then left to grow and hatch, which occurs some six months after being laid. The newly-hatched Martians are then gathered up by their parents and taken home. If a mother dies while waiting for an egg to hatch, the orphan will be adopted temporarily by a volunteer and cared for until it can eat solid food; it will then be turned over to the father to be raised. (If both parents are dead, a relative or friend will usually take responsibility. There are no orphanages among the red Martians.)

A typical Martian female can produce one child per year and has about 20 fertile years in which to do so; however, the scarce food and harsh conditions of modern Mars cause most families to have no more than 2 children, keeping populations stable. A few highly expansionist cultures do produce very large families, but these societies often collapse under the weight of their own numbers before they can conquer their distant neighbors – large-scale war across the sands is a difficult endeavor.

Beyond that, the red Martians are very similar to humans – even to the point, strangely, of being interfertile with them. They can eat and digest the same foods and have very similar nutritional requirements. Their lifespans are marginally longer than that of humans – living to 100 (in Earth years) is considered typical, and elders of 140 are not unknown. With suitable makeup and clothing, a red Martian could pass unnoticed on Earth.

## CULTURE

It is as difficult to summarize red Martian culture as it would be to summarize all human culture. They have the same range of emotions and personality types, and there is no single, over-arching trait which defines them. They have dozens of wildly varying cultures, ranging from military dictatorships to peaceful agrarian societies. There are several major religions and many small cults or sects. They have a wide range of economic systems, though most have some form of private property ownership.

However, all the diverse cultures of the red Martians do share some common traits – they are wholly dependant on the canal network for their survival and they are all aware that their world is slowly but surely dying. These add a certain patina to all cultures, an overlay on top of the existing, highly varied, base. There is a strong sense of fatalism and a general malaise. Big dreams have no place in a dying world. Many individuals tend to turn inwards, to art, religion, or philosophy. Invention and creation are dying.

In addition, the frantic need to complete the canals (see “Ancient Mars”, page 9) and the bloody wars which followed created a gap in Martian history. The knowledge, lore, and culture of the pre-canal red Martians is known only in pieces and fragments. The greatest accomplishments of the species are locked behind a wall of time and war; all the current Martians can do is to look at the wonders left over and marvel at them. As the relics of advanced technology fail, the various kingdoms and empires and republics of Mars slowly sink into barbarism, the remaining functioning items becoming more akin to magical relics than advanced tools.

A few cultures, such as Callor Maralin (see page 15), defy this stereotype, and actively seek new knowledge or to recover old knowledge. Other cultures react to the sense of impending doom by waging war or by seeking solace and purpose in newly-forged religious beliefs. Most, though, seem to be merely “going through the motions”, carrying on the traditions of their ancestors simply because no one can proffer an appealing alternative.

There are a large number of Martian faiths, but most are variants on a single set of core beliefs: A pantheon of mostly-distant gods who oversee the major aspects of life, but do so in a mechanistic and generally detached manner, combined with a form of ancestor worship which holds that ones deceased family members can take an active role in one's life – either by interceding with the gods or by bringing luck or fortune to the living. A common practice in many faiths is for each family member to pen a small summary of their life and needs for the past week, and then to burn it at a family alter. Doing so transmits it to the ancestral spirits, who then read it. Other faiths hold that one's ancestors are always watching and that such rituals are unneeded.

## ADVENTURERS

Given the state of Mars today, it is interesting to note that there are still those who dare to do great things. Such individuals are somewhat atypical in most communities, but they are generally not ostracized for this; rather, they are lauded and admired for bringing back some of the spirit and drive which allowed the red Martians of old to conceive of, and then build, so magnificent a structure as the canal network.

Those who seek lives of excitement (or have such lives thrust upon them) are a highly varied lot. Some common types are:

- The young warrior who seeks to prove himself in real combat.
- The scholar whose quest for lore takes him from the comfortable but inadequate libraries.
- The merchant or trader looking for rare and precious items.
- The explorer who simply wishes to see what is out there.
- The cunning thief who finds the challenge to be more important than the reward.
- The driven individual seeking to redress a grievous wrong.

A single such person can, and often does, inspire others – old friends, lovers, or family servants will often find themselves drawn into a web of adventure.

## RED MARTIAN RACIAL TRAITS

Red Martians are the default race for player characters.

Red Martians receive a Free Edge as a starting character, as well as one skill of the player's choice at d6.

Like all who now live on the surface of the dying planet, Red Martians begin play with a d6 Survival skill for free.



## GREEN MEN

The green men of Mars are not nearly so advanced as the red men. They evolved at about the same time, but on opposite sides of the globe. While the red men were forced to use cunning and cooperation to defeat the many monstrous beasts of the red planet, the strong and powerful green men learned to rely mostly on brute force. Thus, they never evolved much beyond a primitive tribal culture.

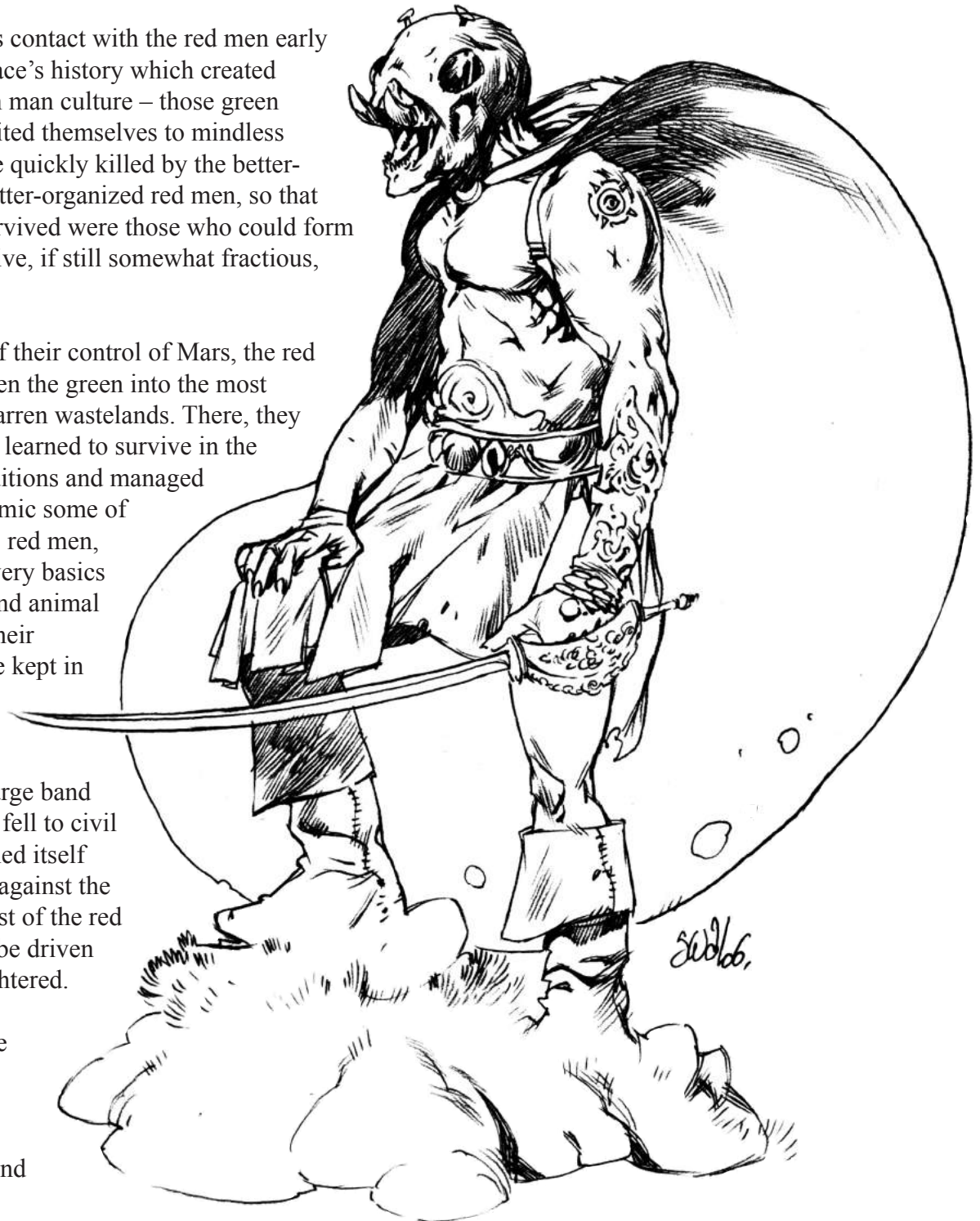
Indeed, it was contact with the red men early in the latter race's history which created modern green man culture – those green men who limited themselves to mindless violence were quickly killed by the better-armed and better-organized red men, so that those who survived were those who could form into cooperative, if still somewhat fractious, bands.

At the peak of their control of Mars, the red men had driven the green into the most remote and barren wastelands. There, they brutes slowly learned to survive in the harshest conditions and managed to crudely mimic some of the arts of the red men, learning the very basics of smithing and animal husbandry. Their numbers were kept in check by their very nature – any sufficiently large band of green men fell to civil war or launched itself in futile rage against the nearest outpost of the red men, only to be driven back or slaughtered.

Since the time of the canals, however, the green men have spread and

prospered. Already able to survive with little water, the retreating oceans and dying rivers merely expanded their territory. As the red men turned all efforts towards building the canals, their frontier cities fell to an emerald onslaught – and as the frontier receded, the tribes expanded.

Today, outside the islands of canal-fed civilization, all of Mars is wasteland, and all of the wasteland is claimed by the green men.



## PHYSIOLOGY

Unlike the red men, the green men differ from the men of Earth by far more than skin color. A typical green man is a hulking brute seven to eight feet tall, with massive tusks which can be used to inflict grievous wounds. In addition, the green men's hands end in sharp, tearing, claws, making an unarmed green man nearly as dangerous as an armed one – possibly more, as an unarmed one is probably hungry and desperate.

The skin of a green man is smooth, hairless, and somewhat hard and waxy, providing a mild form of armor. They are utterly hairless, and have the same eye protection as the red man. They are warm-blooded creatures, but they are not mammals – the females do not nurture the newly hatched young, who are hatched ready to eat anything the adults can eat.

The green men are omnivores, though they prefer meat when they can get it, and are not at all above cannibalism – indeed, it would be considered strange and wrong not to eat the corpse of a comrade who died of anything other than some form of disease.

The green men also lay eggs. In the wild, the family will carry an egg with them. Among the 'tribal' green men, the eggs are usually laid when the tribe is safely ensconced in a ruined city or other safe location. They are generally laid in random, concealed locations, and, when they hatch, the young must make their way to the adults of the tribe for protection. A female typically lays a clutch of 3 to 5 eggs, with the expectation 1 or 2 of those hatched will last long enough to find adults.

Green men mature very rapidly, reaching physical maturity after only one Martian year. They typically live for 40 or 50 Earth years, if they do not die by violence before then, which is a rare thing. A green Martian who has lived long enough to have his skin darken with age (a 40 year old green man has skin of deep olive hue) is a warrior to be feared, both strong and canny.

## CULTURE

There are two dominant forms of green man culture. The first, almost never seen on modern Mars, except in the jungles surrounding the north pole, is that of the solitary wanderer or small family band. The 'family' will exist just long enough to hatch an egg and teach the child the basics of language and survival, then break up into independent individuals once again.

Far more common on modern Mars is the tribe. A tribe is a band of between 20 and 100 green men, organized around the strongest fighter, who is the chief. There are few other political or social divisions -- there are fighters, and there are children too young to fight, and there are females. That is about it. The green men have very little concept of religion or spirituality beyond a crude form of sympathetic magic – eating the meat of a strong animal gives you some of its strength, making and smashing the image of an enemy will harm that enemy, and so on. A few of the smartest green men become something akin to shamans or witch doctors by careful manipulation of this belief.

There are no family bonds among the tribal green men. Mating is done by instinct and carries no emotional connotations. Children are raised by the tribe. Among the few remaining 'wild' green men, children are raised just until they can survive on their own; then both parents and children part to live alone, except when caring for an egg or a hatchling.

Tribes of green men keep a history of the most important events to impact the tribe, passed down orally. The language of the tribal green men has evolved over the years, becoming somewhat more complex and rich, while the original language of the nomadic wanderers remains extremely simple, capable of expressing only the most basic concepts. Some of the more daring (or foolish) scholars among the red men try to capture green men with a good grasp of their tribe's history, as such rote-learned lore can contain clues to lost cities or forgotten artifacts which the tribe may have come upon in generations past.

Since the fall of most of the red kingdoms, many of the tribes of green men have adapted the abandoned cities for their own use. During the warm Martian summer, the green men wander the wastelands seeking food or plunder. During the cold winter, they retreat to the cities, where they produce the next generation and practice what crafts they have mastered. The oldest cities are long since plundered, but tribes sometimes find a relatively recent ruin which can still yield up some treasures. (The green men have no economy as such, but they do love pretty gems and appreciate the worth of a well-made sword)

## ADVENTURERS

Few among the green men understand anything beyond fighting, eating, and mating. However, there are a rare few born every generation who aspire to more. These might be the forerunners of new, superior race, or they may simply be a strange quirk of genetics, but either way, they are distinct from their fellows. They ask questions, they seek answers. They are curious about who built the cities in which the green men spend the winters, and they ask why the tribes always war instead of uniting against their foes.

Such types often do not live past childhood, but those who are especially cunning, or simply as strong as they are smart, do. They can become tribal leaders, or, more often, they leave their bands and wander, seeking something they cannot easily identify. Many will lurk on the outskirts of the red Martian civilization, trying to learn from them. Sometimes, they will encounter red Martians in dire circumstances in the wastes, and offer aid in exchange for knowledge.

## GREEN MARTIAN RACIAL TRAITS

Green Martians are large, powerful and tough. They begin with a d6 in Strength and Vigor, and a +3 to Size and to Toughness. Furthermore, their natural maximum Strength is d12+3, and they can reach this with normal Level Ups without applying the Professional Edge (which can bump their Strength to d12+4 (professional) or d12+5 (expert).)

Green Martians do not normally known for their mental agility, and as such, Smarts requires two points per step to raise during character generation. In addition, Green Martian characters must dedicate two leveling opportunities to raising the attribute during game play.

Green Martians have natural weapons, doing Strength +1 damage with either their claws or their tusks.

A Green Martian's hard skin offers 2 points of Armor protection.

Like all who now live on the surface of the dying planet, Green Martians begin play with a d6 Survival skill for free.

Green Martians are considered a Large target -- all attacks made against them receive a +2 to hit.

Green Martians are Bloodthirsty, and suffer a -4 to their Charisma as a result.



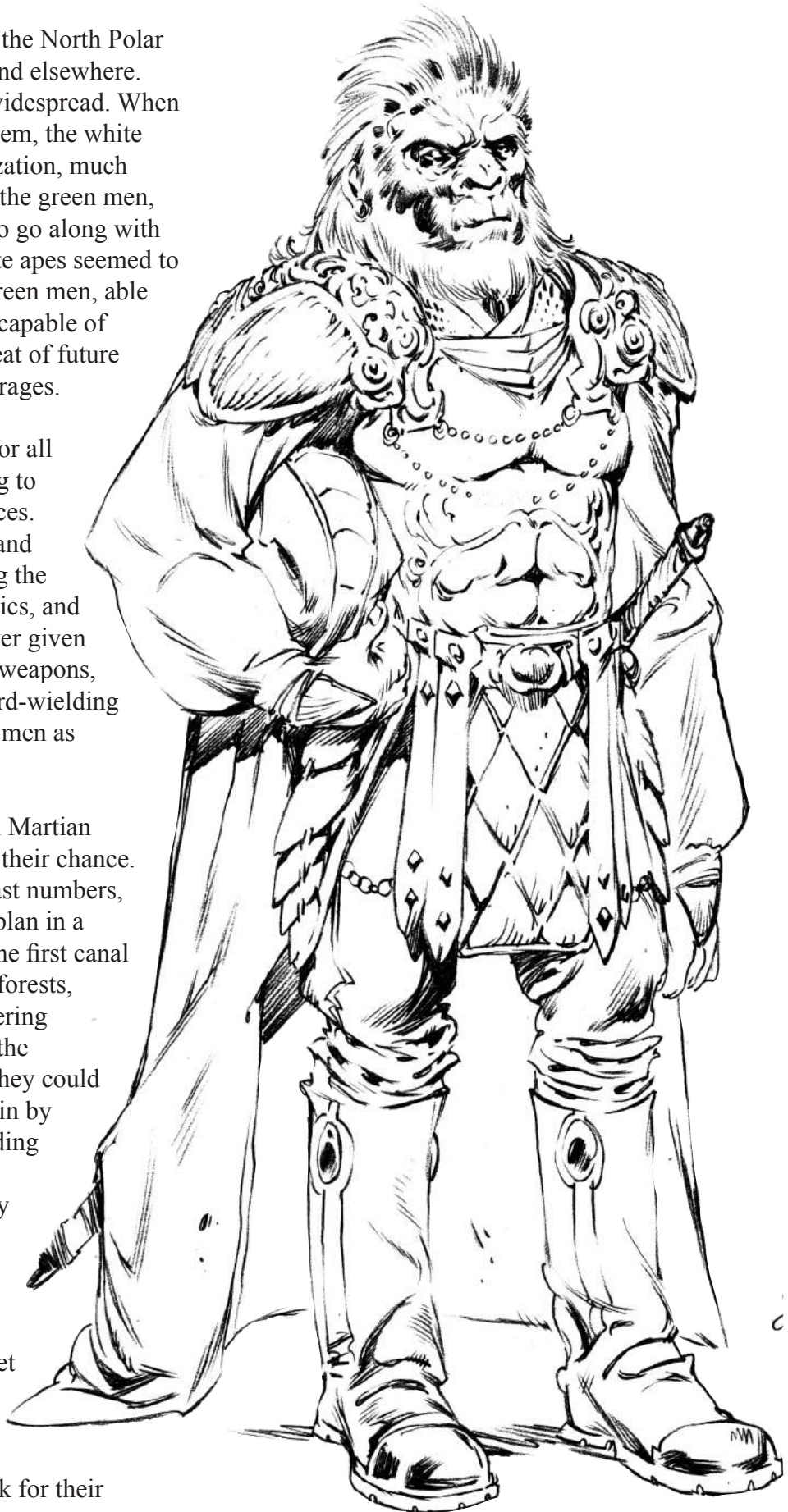
# WHITE APES

The white apes of Mars control the North Polar Jungle and are occasionally found elsewhere. Long ago, they were far more widespread. When the red Martians encountered them, the white apes had only the crudest civilization, much like the green men – but unlike the green men, they had cunning and intellect to go along with savagery and strength. The white apes seemed to be far more tractable than the green men, able to be taught complex tasks and capable of enough self-control that the threat of future punishment could deter violent rages.

Over time, the apes were used for all sorts of brute labor, from mining to construction to household services. They learned mining, farming, and many skills and crafts, including the rudiments of literacy, mathematics, and military tactics. (They were never given radium guns or other advanced weapons, but were often formed into sword-wielding units and sent against the green men as expendable infantry troops.)

When the great crisis hit the red Martian civilization, the white apes saw their chance. Sent to work on the canals in vast numbers, they were able to organize and plan in a way they could not before. As the first canal work reached the rich northern forests, they rebelled en masse, slaughtering their overseers and fleeing into the jungle with whatever supplies they could carry. The red men, stretched thin by the immensity of the canal building task, could not spare the forces needed to track them down; they limited themselves to setting guards on the canals to prevent further attacks. The white apes retreated further into the depths of the violet forests, and there set up their own civilization.

Millennia of enslavement had given them some framework for their



culture. Strict discipline, order, cooperation, and obedience to a powerful authority was the only lifestyle most had know, and with their red masters gone, they looked among themselves for new leaders. Their society flourished, to some extent, as the most charismatic or powerful drew followers to themselves. These small bands would then cluster around other bands, and so forth. A return to the original nomadic lifestyle was not tenable, given both the number of refugees from red Martian domination and the fact that, over millennia, the apes had become used to a certain degree of civilization. Carnivores, the apes became master breeders and ranchers, and they used the plentiful rock which could be found near the polar boundaries to construct their cities.

As Mars dried, the jungles contracted. Resources became scarce, and war was inevitable. Skilled imitators but poor creators, the white apes fought with swords and armor patterned after those of the red men. Eventually, the shrinking jungle and constant battle led to the creation of a single, unified, alliance of city-states, one which could organize the manpower (well, apepower) needed to continue to wring life out of the surrounding environment and even dream of expansion and glory.

The white apes today pose a serious threat to the dominion of the red men. Should they ever take and hold a major canal city, they will have a foothold from which they can begin to spread southwards. The white apes have numbers; the red men have superior technology, but the latter is slowly crumbling into disrepair and the knowledge to create it anew is long lost.

## PHYSIOLOGY

The white apes resemble the men of Earth much less than either the Red or Green men, but more than the Grey Men. They are huge, hulking, white-furred apes, akin to Earthly gorillas but somewhat larger and much shaggier, with massive jaws lined with razor-sharp teeth. Their hands are somewhat clumsier and thicker than those of the red men, but they do have grasping feet, and their clothing and armor are designed to take full advantage of this fact.

Their fur is uniformly white, with few mottlings or patterns other than those caused by disease. The color variation is limited – from a brilliant snowy white to a pale, dirty grey is as far as it goes. Their eyes are generally a brilliant and icy blue, with some individuals having grey or green tints.

Unlike the red and green men, the white apes are not egg-layers, but reproduce as mammals. A typical white ape female will produce one young every two years, with twins or triplets occurring rarely. (In such a case one of the babies will most likely be very weak, and will be left to die.)

White apes are fantastically strong, hardy, and agile. They can be very intelligent, but most are not – there is a strong streak of savage brutality within them which no amount of civilization can cure.

They are short-lived – a white ape is mature at 10, and old at 30. A wizened elder will be 50 or so, and will be losing hair along his head and neck. As white apes age, their savagery recedes and their wisdom grows – it was the enslavement by the red men which created the conditions for a sufficiently large population of barenecks to come to exist. This large population of clever and self-controlled older apes was capable of formulating and coordinating the complex plans required for rebellion and the establishment of a self-sufficient culture.

White apes are primarily carnivores. They can eat plants, especially fruits, as supplementary foods, but they will starve without a steady supply of meat.

## CULTURE

White ape culture is a strange blend of bestial savagery, cold discipline, and decadent decay. Apart from a few surviving bands of roaming savages far from the Jungle Empire, they dwell primarily in walled cities of marble and granite, all united under the rule of a single Emperor. The provinces of the Empire – each controlled by a dominant city-state – cluster around the canal network. They do not seek to control the flow of water down the canals, as their one attempt to do this proved disastrous, but they do make use of them. (The original settlements of the apes were far from the canals; they relocated once it became possible to do so.)

Social class in the Empire is everything, but social class is not fixed. Anyone can aspire to rise to the rank of Emperor, if they have the cunning and might to do so. Most such aspirants fail, of course, and their fate is death – either directly, or after a stint in the infamous battle-pits.

However, ambition is relatively rare among the apes. Most, especially those with some degree of wealth or social status to begin with, prefer to simply enjoy what they've got. The Empire is weakening, not from external forces (the red men have rarely pressed any attacks northwards), but from internal decay. Most of the apes prefer drunken revelry and mindless spectacle to the hard work of planning and orchestrating expansion.

The apes have a polygamous society, where a single male may maintain a harem of wives. The poorest or weakest of the apes have no wives; the majority can keep one, and the wealthy and powerful have two or more. Childrearing is considered “women’s work”, with young cared for solely by the mother. A father tends not to concern himself with offspring until they are six or so – it is then that training in some sort of professional skills generally begins.

For lowborn apes with any sort of ambition, the military is the primary destination – the problem is that there are no enemies, per se. However, the Imperators (mostly barenecks) know that an army of young and restless soldiers is a poor

thing to keep nearby, so, there are constant feints south, raids on the northmost red Martian cities, primarily to provide “something to do”. The northern jungle has begun to attract green men, and these provide “barbarian tribes” against which the disciplined ape centurions can test their mettle. The clash of ape and green man is spectacular – mindless savagery against savagery honed and disciplined to a brutal edge.

For there is still savagery beneath all the trappings of decadent imperialism. Simple disagreements among the apes, especially the hot-blooded young males, explode into brutal, bloody, battle. The apes idea of “entertainment” is cruelty – gladiatorial fights are invariably to the death, and spectacular and imaginative tortures are applied to criminals or captured prisoners or war. The more gruesome and depraved the scene, the more the primal heart of the white ape rejoices. Only the barenecks show any sort of restraint or decorum. In the few years they have between the ascent of wisdom and the collapse of the body from sheer age, they seek to create and preserve some sort of white ape civilization worthy of the name; thus, the cities of the Empire contains libraries filled with scrolls of art, philosophy, and ethics, which no ape reads or cares for until he is too old for it to do any good.

Surrounding each city-state is a swarm of grazing fields, mines, and quarries. The apes need iron for blades, stone for building, and meat for eating, and the majority of the citizens live painful, brutal, lives providing these things. There are sometimes orchards and farms as well – the potent wine (*grazag*) of the white apes comes from fruit which grows only in select areas.

The cities of the white apes are linked by roads, laboriously hacked through the ever-encroaching jungle. Maintaining these roads is another task which requires brute manual labor, along with considerable combat skill – the jungles teem with hostile animals and encroaching green men. Should the roads fail, trade between the cities, and the coordination which allows the Empire to function as a single political entity and not a squabbling collection of independent cities would be lost.



## ADVENTURERS

After the red men, the white apes are the most likely of the races of Mars to leave their home cities and explore the wider world beyond. A particularly ambitious Imperator might wish to retake some of the older, abandoned, cities. A glitch in the canals or a new plague might cause the local fields to grow fallow, forcing such a move. The green men might be growing more restless, leading to a crusade to wipe them from the region. A southern march might result in an unexpected conquest, and the apes will then need to keep and hold a red Martian city.

However, it is also possible for a white ape to leave his kind behind and seek his fortune on his own. The late-blooming wisdom of the barenecks sometimes appears early in life, and some apes combine ambition with a disdain for brutality, leaving them no means of ascent within their harsh society. An ape who committed a crime against a more powerful figure might choose to flee the Empire rather than end his life in the battle pits. Curiosity might drive a young ape to seek out the world beyond the northern jungles, to see what wonders wait to be discovered.

## WHITE APE RACIAL TRAITS

White Apes are fantastically strong, hardy, and agile. Their Strength, Vigor and Agility all start at d6. They are larger than the Red Martian, but not as large as the Green (+2 size and toughness)

Wisdom is only something that arrives with great age. A White Ape's Spirit requires two points per step to raise during character generation. In addition, ape characters must dedicate two leveling opportunities to raising the attribute during game play.

The heavy fur coat of the White Ape grants a +4 bonus on all rolls to resist the environmental effects of cold, but a -4 to resist the environmental effects of heat.

Clumsy: The hands of the White Apes are not as well developed for fine manipulation as those of the Red or even the Green Martians, so they suffer a -2 penalty on all rolls where fine manipulation is required, such as Lockpicking or Repair.

Prehensile Toes: White Apes can grasp objects with their feet. This grants them a +4 bonus on Climb checks. It also may grant other useful abilities at the Game Master's discretion – for example, a White Ape could dangle from a branch with his hands and perform a grapple with his feet. It does *not* permit any sort of extra attacks per round, under any circumstances, though it may allow a White Ape to attack with a weapon held in his feet if his hands are tied.

Like all who now live on the surface of the dying planet, White Apes begin play with a d6 Survival skill for free.

White Apes are Bloodthirsty, and suffer a -4 to their Charisma as a result.

# GREY MEN

The term “Grey Men” is grossly inaccurate, for the grey Martians are almost entirely unlike men in physical form or mental outlook – indeed, only the Living Brains are more alien in nature. The grey men have been creatures of legend and mystery since the earliest records of the red Martians, and even today, very little is known of them aside from rumors and fables. The following information, thus, is *not* known to most inhabitants of Mars – and, indeed, it might not be entirely true. The grey men are mysterious and strange, and Game Masters should feel free to alter any details in order to maintain the aura of strangeness.

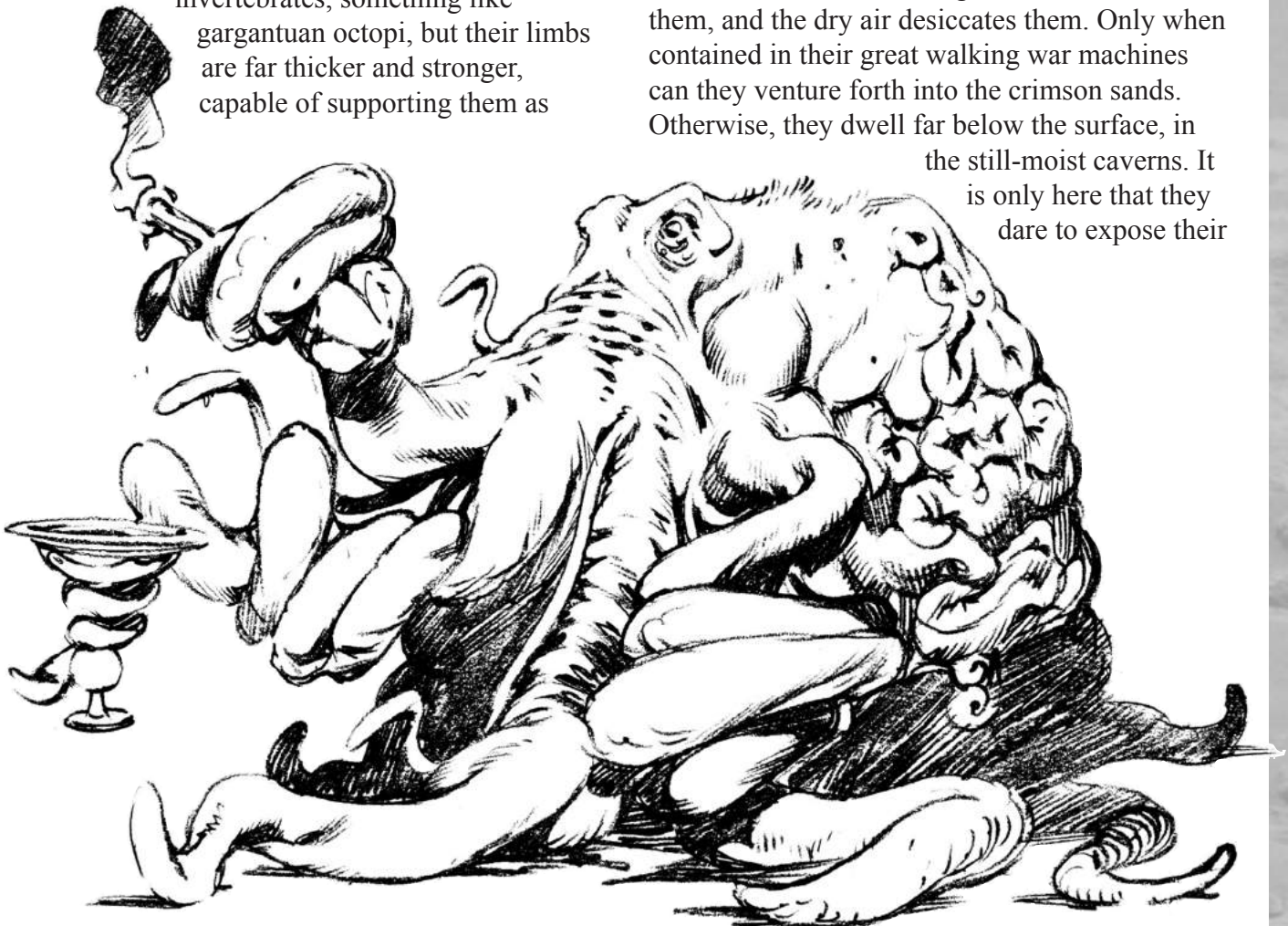
## PHYSIOLOGY

The grey men are roughly the same size of a typical red Martian or Earthman, but that is the extent of the resemblance. They are hexapodal invertebrates, something like gargantuan octopi, but their limbs are far thicker and stronger, capable of supporting them as

they travel on the surface of Mars. They have a cluster of eyes, ranging from 5 to 10 on any individual, which provide only poor vision. Their central body is roughly ovoid, with the brain – at least half again as large a human’s – located in the center. It is surrounded by a tough shell of cartilage.

Physically, the grey Martians are extremely weak. Even with their thick limbs and even in the light gravity of Mars, they move slowly. Their senses are poor. Their lifespans are very long, but their reproductive cycle is slow and sporadic, with precious few children born each year. They are hermaphroditic, and each is capable of producing offspring independently, but they prefer to exchange genetic material to produce more viable children. There is neither pleasure nor emotional attachment to this act; it means nothing more to the grey men than casual physical contact.

The grey Martians cannot live for long on the surface of Mars. The sunlight, weak as it is, burns them, and the dry air desiccates them. Only when contained in their great walking war machines can they venture forth into the crimson sands. Otherwise, they dwell far below the surface, in the still-moist caverns. It is only here that they dare to expose their



flesh, safe from the ravenous sun and the hatred of their enemies.

A typical grey Martian will live up to half a millennium, barring accident – and they greatly fear accidents. Everything a grey Martian does is cold, calculated, and precise. They take no unnecessary risks and think nothing of spending years or decades formulating a perfect plan.

Grey Martians coloration ranges from a very pale grey – almost a pallid white – to a deep, darker grey which is close to black. Some are solidly colored, while others have a patched or piebald pattern to them. The colors tend to fade with age, until the very oldest of the race are practically albino.

## CULTURE

The grey men of Mars are the second-oldest race to inhabit the planet. They were ancient and dying when the red Martians first evolved. Aeons ago, when the Earth was ruled by the giant reptiles, the grey men lived on the surface of a swampy, lush, Mars. There they built mighty cities and created craft which could leave the planet behind and carry them across the solar system and even to distant suns. This glory age is now not even a memory – only a handful of truly rare and almost incomprehensible artifacts remain to speak of it. Even the grey Martians themselves scarcely recall it, as that sort of life is now utterly foreign to them.

As the grey Martians evolved, their bodies became weaker even as their minds became more and more potent. They moved underground, carving out great cities and reshaping the underworld of Mars. The vast cavern systems which burrow through Mars today are due, in part, to their long-ago actions.

The grey Martians slowly lost all trace of emotion. Love, compassion, hatred, rage...all of these faded away, leaving only two things in their minds – cold, calculating, logic untempered by concepts of justice or mercy, and a frigid, terrible *envy* of all other life – life which still walks beneath the sun, which still has the capacity to feel.

There is only a single grey Martian society, and it is run by a sort of complex consensus. The lack of emotion also brings with it a lack of individual ambition, greed, or rebelliousness, so the goals of the society can usually be quickly decided upon, and the best individuals to fulfill those goals are appointed to do so. The greys do not have a hive mind, as such, but are in constant communication with each other. Individual personality traits tend to be muted, expressed mostly as odd quirks or as particular areas of special interest – one grey Martian might spend a century studying a particular type of red Martian pottery, for example, trying to figure out the practical purpose of the complex decorative swirls.

The grey Martians are extremely advanced, technologically. They have tapped into the molten core of Mars for their power, and their huge cities are run by gargantuan calculating engines the size of skyscrapers. Transport tubes buried miles below the surface link the major settlements. Food is produced in huge vats, a bland mash which provides the complete nutritional requirements. (However, the grey Martians are sometimes struck by a strange, atavistic urge for the flesh and especially blood of living beings. When this occurs, they will send a tripod out to the nearest red or green Martian settlement and capture a few dozen victims, who are taken below and devoured.)

Should the Martians need to leave their enclaves, they do so only in their legendary war machines. These are gargantuan tripods surmounted by an ovoid shell. The metal which composes them is virtually immune to damage – only the largest radium-cannons of the red Martians have shown even the slightest effect. Armed with a variety of weapons, the tripods are given a wide berth by all other inhabitants of Mars. Those few who do not flee them are found only as incinerated corpses, if they are found at all.

Though their numbers are dwindling, the Grey Martian's territory is expanding. Their plans are growing closer to completion, and they have a constant need for more resources. Thus, the regions they hold – known as the Grey Expanses – continue to spread across the planet.



## GREY MARTIAN RACIAL TRAITS

Grey Martians are unlikely to be player-characters, but are included here for Game Masters who wish to build detailed Grey NPCs, or as an extremely rare player option.

Grey Martians are extremely advanced technologically. They automatically gain the Arcane Background Weird Science, and start with a d6 in the Arcane Skill of the same name.

Grey Martians have developed their minds to the exclusion of all other concerns. A grey begins begin with a d8 in Smarts. Furthermore, their natural maximum Smarts is  $d12+3$ , and they can reach this with normal Level Ups without applying the Professional Edge (which can bump their Strength to  $d12+4$  (professional) or  $d12+5$  (expert).) However, a grey Martian's Agility and Strength requires two points per step to raise during character generation. In addition, ape characters must dedicate two leveling opportunities to raising those attributes during game play.

The tentacled form of the grey Martian is not suited to rapid movement. Their Pace is 3, instead of the usual 6.

Grey Martians are alien to every other race, both in appearance and mentality. They suffer a -4 Charisma modifier amongst all but their own species.

Grey Martians have poor eyesight, and suffer a -2 on all Trait rolls dealing with seeing anything more than 5" (30 feet) away.

When operating unprotected in any environment on the surface of Mars, a grey Martian must make a Fatigue-resisting Vigor check every 30 minutes. Operating within the sealed environment of a war machine or other invention prevents the need for this check.



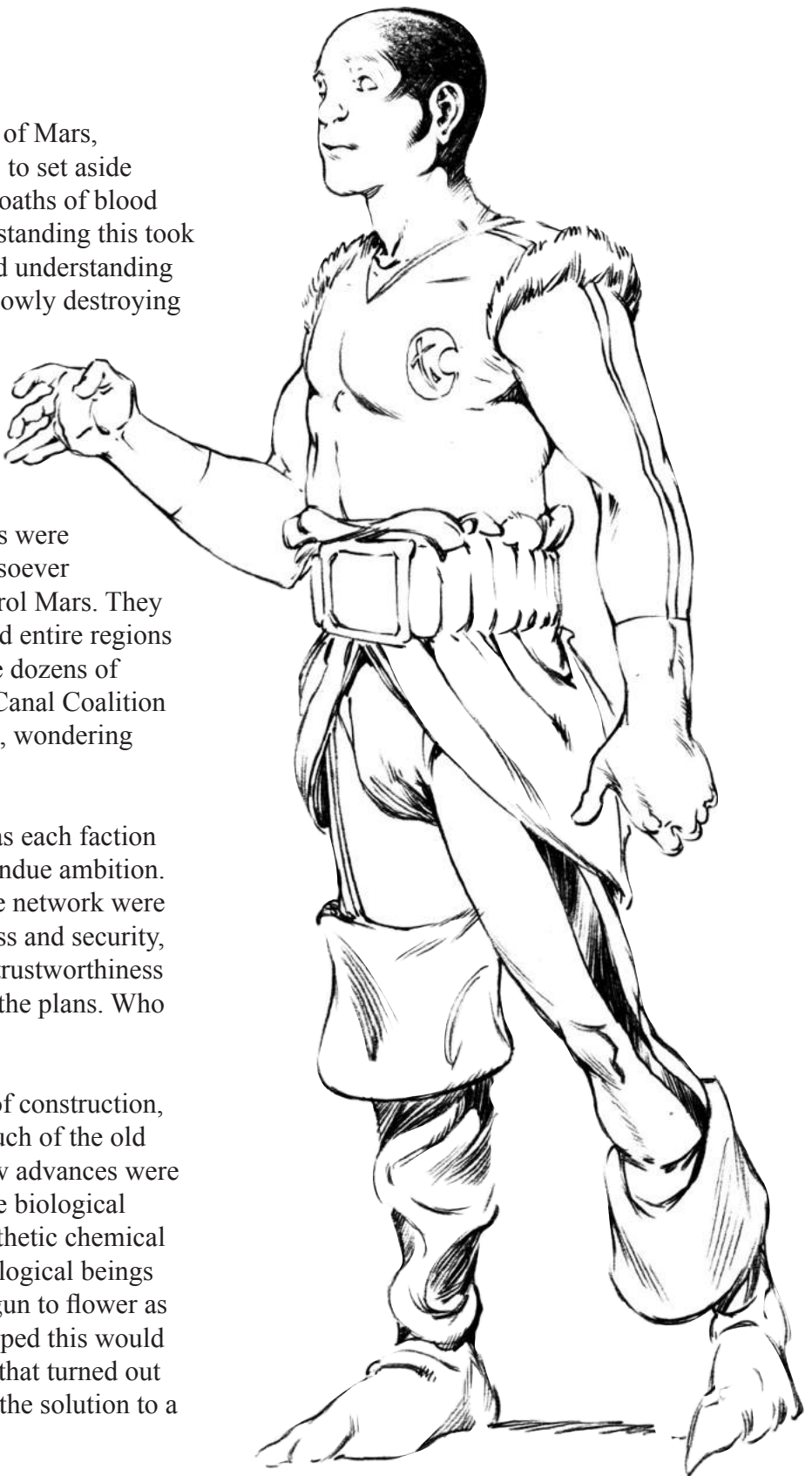
## SYNTHE-MEN

In order to build the great canals of Mars, the red Martians needed to unite, to set aside millennia of feuds and wars and oaths of blood vengeance. Accepting and understanding this took generations, just as accepting and understanding the ecological change that was slowly destroying the planet. Finally, though, it was done – all the varied empires of Mars were either united in their vision of the canals, or had been somehow nullified. However, this unity spawned another problem. Once the canals were built and the water flowing, whosoever controlled the canals would control Mars. They could starve their enemies or hold entire regions of the world hostage. Each of the dozens of kingdoms which comprised the Canal Coalition viewed the others with suspicion, wondering which would betray, and when.

Thus, work was painfully slow, as each faction watched the others for signs of undue ambition. A dozen plans of control over the network were drawn up, each promising fairness and security, but all rested, ultimately, on the trustworthiness of those who agreed to abide by the plans. Who would guard the guardians?

A century into the long process of construction, a new idea was born. Even as much of the old science was being lost, some new advances were still being made, especially in the biological sciences. The art of building synthetic chemical life, creatures akin to normal biological beings but wholly artificial, had just begun to flower as the great drying began. It was hoped this would lead to new sources of food, but that turned out to be a dead end. Still, it offered the solution to a different problem.

No Martian could be trusted with power over the canals – but *synthetic* Martians could! The overseers and controllers and maintainers of the canals would be a race of synthetic humanoids – synthe-men! Built to be as incapable of betraying their trust as a red Martian is of leaping



to Phobos, they would have no loyalty to any kingdom, or family, or religion, or ideology other than the preservation of the canals.

The plan worked. Today, it is the synthe-men who run the polar stations, who clear blockages,

who repair cracks or leaks, and who protect the network from all harm. Green raiders or white apes, mad scientists of blood-crazed warlords – all those who tamper with the canal network face an implacable, unstoppable, and utterly resolute foe.

## PHYSIOLOGY

Synthe-men are made, not born. They are grown in great crystalline vats, which are filled with a thick green liquid. Into this liquid is poured a blend of chemicals and a strange, netlike, substance known as the formative matrix. This matrix attracts and shapes the chemical stew, causing it form into the equivalents of organs, muscles, bones, skin – and mind. The brains of synthe-man is built according to precise specifications. It awakens from the vat alert and intelligent, knowing its designated function and all the skills needed to perform it.

Synthe-men are pale creatures, almost albino, and hairless. Their eyes are silver-grey. Their size and weight varies according to their task, but they are generally within the norm for the red Martians. They appear to be about 20 years of age when decanted, and show no signs of the passage of time until they pass their hundredth year, at which point, the chemical matrix begins to degrade rapidly, leading to an apparent age increase of ten years for every one which passes, until the system breaks down completely at about age 105 to 106. A synthe-man neither fears nor welcomes this death – it is simply something which happens. He would only be bothered if he was going to die with a vital duty unfulfilled and no one to replace him.

The synthe-men eat and drink much the same food as the red Martians, though they need smaller quantities and do not care about taste or variety. Their chemical bodies are immune to disease and highly resistant to poison. Their organs are strong and resilient, and many are fitted with redundancies.

## SOCIETY

Synthe-men live to serve. They cannot conceive of any other life, nor do they desire it. There is no long-smoldering resentment among the tireless maintainers of the polar stations, nor do they sit and dream of a better, or even a different, life. Their task *is* their life, and ill-guided attempts to ‘liberate’ or ‘emancipate’ them will most likely result in tragedy.

Synthe-men, in general, lack imagination or creativity. They are not incapable of free will or creative thought; they just have little need of it. Only if confronted with a crisis wholly beyond their built-in lexicon of situations and responses will they be forced to find new solutions to problems.

They do not have names – they have job designations and batch numbers. “Pipe Fitter FG56A1”, “Drill Maintenance GH678J”, and so on, are typical “names”. Their name and number is marked on their skin during their gestation, appearing on the back of the right hand. This marking contains complex photorefective cells, allowing it to be ‘read’ by various sensors which, in turn, control security within the polar pumping stations.

Synthe-men lack most emotions. They feel a vague pleasure at doing their job well, and feelings of guilt, shame, or sadness if they fail. They will react with cold but deadly force to those who seek to damage the canals or the pumps. Beyond that, they are ciphers. They do not have friends, not even among each other. They do not hate, or love, or carry grudges. They obey their orders to the best of their ability and that is all there is to it.



## SYNTHE-MEN RACIAL TRAITS

Synthe-men are Constructs. They add +2 when attempting to recover from being Shaken; they do not suffer additional damage from called shots; they never suffer from Wound Modifiers; and they are immune to disease and poison.

Every synthe-man was constructed for a particular purpose, and begins play with a free d8 in the relevant skill. In addition, the Trait that corresponds to that Skill starts at d6, and their natural maximum in that Trait is  $d12+3$ . They can reach this with normal Level Ups without applying the Professional Edge (which can bump the Trait to  $d12+4$  (professional) or  $d12+5$  (expert)).

Synthe-men are naturally Cautious, as per the Hindrance of the same name.

The specialization of the synthe-men comes at a price. The Trait *least connected* to the character's function (as agreed by the player and Game Master) requires two points per step to raise during character generation. In addition, synthe-men characters must dedicate two leveling opportunities to raising that Trait during game play.

## EARTHMEN

Sometimes called Terrans, Earthers, or Earthlings, it is often the case that men and women from the small green planet third from the sun find their way to the dusky sands of Mars. Such individuals may find their way there via a variety of means (See the Game Master section on the genre tropes for more information), but, once there, find a world both familiar and alien.

While there are no hard and fast rules, it is generally assumed that **MARS** occurs somewhere between 1850 and 1950, and any Earth characters will have appropriate skills. While a century passes on Mars with no noticeable change, quite a deal happened on Earth during that time.



## STRANGE POWERS

Mars is an alien world, and its food, water, atmosphere, or gravity may have odd effects on human physiology. Often, human visitors to Mars find themselves gifted with strange abilities, capable of doing things no Martian can. While these abilities will not make them gods among men (though they can be used to gull the superstitious), they will grant humans something of an edge and make them exceptional beings – well, even more exceptional than their oddly-colored skin or bizarre habit of giving birth to unshelled young.

If the Game Master chooses to grant such powers to humans, he must make several decisions.

*Fixed or variable?* Does Mars affect all Earthmen the same way, or do the strange forces of the Red Planet interact differently with each visitor? Either works well within the genre. The former is more useful when there are only a few Earthers mixed with mostly native-born PCs; the latter is preferable if the entire party consists of Earthmen, as it gives each one a unique ‘hook’.

*Instant or gradual?* Do the Earthmen discover their powers within seconds or minutes of their arrival on Mars, or does it take days, weeks, or even months before they manifest? It may be that the abilities appear first in moments of great stress or fear, perhaps based on when the Player Character first spends a Bennie to accomplish some necessary task. This decision is mostly one of storytelling aesthetics, but given the nature of the powers, not granting the abilities for some time may leave the human characters somewhat underpowered.

## THE POWERS

The Game Master should feel free to add to or expand this list. Each power costs a variable number of points. Generally, no Earthman should have more than 4 points worth of powers – these are designed to give Earthmen an exotic edge, not create the “Legion of Martian Superheroes.”

Please note also that the powers are primarily internal in nature. There are no laser eyes or

lightning bolts here. The Game Master may choose to add such abilities if he wishes, but they undermine the ‘feel’ of the game.

**Alien Mind:** The structures of the Earthman’s brain is odd and alien, rendering it highly resistant to powers designed to work on the minds of those native to Mars. The character gains a +2 racial bonus on all Spirit rolls against mind-affecting powers used by Martian natives.

*Cost:* 1 point.

**Commanding Presence:** Something about the character’s alien nature strikes an odd, almost subconscious, chord in the Martian psyche. Perhaps some long-vanished race of Martian Overlords came from Earth? No matter the cause, the character gains a +2 bonus to Charisma against Martians for each point spent.

*Cost:* 1 point/+1 bonus

**Disease Immunity:** The character’s immune system rejects utterly any strange Martian germs, granting him total immunity to all diseases on the Red Planet.

*Cost:* 2 points

**Efficient Digestion:** The character easily absorbs nutrition from Martian foods. He needs to consume only half the normal supply of food and water in order to live.

*Cost:* 1 point for 1/2 normal rations, 2 points for 1/3 normal rations, 3 points for 1/4 normal rations and 4 points for 1/5 normal rations.

**Enhanced Agility:** The character’s sense of balance is greatly enhanced by the lower gravity of Mars. He is able to bounce and tumble about with extraordinary agility. The Earthman’s Agility starts at d6.

*Cost:* 2 points.

**Enhanced Senses:** Though it might seem odd that eyes adapted for the brighter sun and ears adapted for the thicker air of Earth would somehow provide greater sensory capacity in the dim light and thin atmosphere of Mars, some quirk of physiology had made this precisely the case! The character starts with a d6 in the Notice Skill.

*Cost:* 1 point

**Exotic Senses:** The air, odd sunlight, or strange food of Mars has altered the character's senses, granting him access to new forms of perception like Infravision or Low-light vision.

*Cost:* 1 point

**Fearless:** Perhaps the very alien nature of the world makes the character feel, subconsciously, that it's all "not real", or perhaps the atmosphere stimulates the adrenal response. Either way, the character is very hard to scare, gaining a +2 on Guts checks.

*Cost:* 1 point for +2 on Guts checks.

**Figure of Legend:** The character resembles a prophesied figure, someone who is part of ancient lore and religion and is known to almost all those of Mars. Wherever he goes, his deeds are told and retold, with tales traveling ahead of him faster than would seem plausible.

*Cost:* 1 point for +2 to Charisma.

**Intuitive Knowledge:** Somehow, the character has an innate understanding of all things Martian. Perhaps it is a form of ancestral memory or a type of past-life regression; perhaps the knowledge was placed there by powers unknown. The character automatically knows at least 1 Martian language fluently, and also gains a +1 on all Common Knowledge checks directly related to Martian lore or history, but not sciences or technical subjects. (Thus, the character may know that Martians can build flying craft, but not the details of *how* to build them.)

*Cost:* 1 point to speak a single Martian language fluently and gain a +1 to all Mars-related knowledge checks; +1 to all Mars-related knowledge checks for each additional point.

**Mighty Thews:** The lower gravity of Mars has had a noticeable affect on certain aspects of the character's physiology. His jumping capacity is automatically 1" higher, and his encumbrance is calculated as if his strength was 1 die higher. This has no effect on melee combat. This ability can be taken twice.

*Cost:* 2 points

**Poison Resistance:** The character's exotic human physiology is capable of shrugging off the poisons and toxins of Mars, gaining a +2 to Vigor rolls against all poisons for each point.

*Cost:* 1 point per +2 to Vigor rolls against poisons, up to 4 points for +8.

**Superior Toughness:** The character can take a tremendous amount of damage, ignoring countless cuts, scrapes, and bruises which would fell a lesser man.

*Cost:* 2 points for +1 to Toughness

**Tough Hide:** The character's flesh and bone, formed under the crushing gravity of Earth, is dense enough to turn aside some of the weapons of Mars. The character gains 2 points of Armor protection against all melee weapons, bows, and crossbows, but not against radium guns and the like.

*Cost:* 4 points

**Truly Heroic:** The character has arrived on Mars for a *reason*, even if that reason is initially unknown to him. Somehow, some power or powers have conspired to place him here, and they are acting, behind the scenes, to see that he achieves whatever goal they have set forth for him. Because of this, he gains 1 extra Bennie as a starting character.

*Cost:* 2 points for an additional Bennie.

**Unfazeable:** The character can keep a clear head no matter what. Whether it is due to an unusual brain physiology or physical toughness, the character gets a +2 to recover from being Shaken.

*Cost:* 1 point for a +2 to recovery from being Shaken.

The Game Master should feel free to add to this list as he or she sees fit.

## EARTHMAN RACIAL TRAITS

In addition to any special powers agreed upon by the Game Master, Earthmen receive a Free Edge as a starting character.

Earthmen are, by definition, Outsiders.



## OTHER RACES

Mars is a world of myriad lifeforms, and the novels and stories of the planetary romance genre often added new races for the heroes to discover. Usually, these creatures can be designed as monsters, but if Game Masters wish to design them as playable races, they should use these guidelines (which feature in the **Savage Worlds Sci-Fi World Builder Toolkit** from Pinnacle Entertainment Group, and are used here with permission).

Take a look at the standard races in **Savage Worlds** and you'll see that they all have racial abilities. Even humans have one—they receive a free Edge. Rather than use these default templates, you may wish to make your own races. Once you have a basic idea of what the race is like, you can begin picking abilities.

All races begin with a free +2 Racial Ability. This is equivalent to a human's Free Edge. Additional positive abilities must be countered with an equal value of negative ones. A +2 ability, for example, may be countered by a single -2 ability or two -1 abilities. Individual Game Masters should decide on the maximum number of additional Racial Edge points allowed in their game, but 2 to 4 points is not unreasonable. This provides enough scope to make an interesting race, without unduly unbalancing the game.

The list below is a guideline. If you want something special or not listed, assign it a value based on existing examples.

## SAMPLE ABILITIES

### +3 Edges

- Free Seasoned Edge (regardless of requirements— except for those that require other Edges—you cannot take Improved Level Headed without having Level Headed first)
- Hardy (a second Shaken result in combat does not cause a Wound)
- The race begins with a d8 in one attribute and may raise it to a d12+2 during character creation. Through the Expert and Master Edges it may reach a d12+4.

### +2 Edges

- +1 Parry (warlike race)
- +1 Size (wide, tall)
- +1 Toughness (high gravity world, tough skin, weird physiology; not negated by AP weapons)
- +10 Power Points (Psionics only)
- +2 Armor (metal, stone, or crystalline skin; negated by AP weapons)
- +2 Charisma (charismatic, popular race)
- +4 bonus to resist the effects of heat, cold, or radiation (resilient, alien physiology)
- Aquatic (cannot drown in water, move at full Swimming skill, d6 Swimming)
- Base Pace 10 (lightning fast, multiple limbs)
- Construct (sentient mechanical men)

### **+2 Edges (Continued)**

- Free Novice Edge (regardless of requirements— except for those that require other Edges)
- Multiple arms (one extra non-movement action per limb, incurs no multi action penalty, price is per additional limb)
- Poison (victims that suffer a Shaken result from your natural weapons must make a Vigor roll or be paralyzed for 2d6 rounds)
- Start with a d6 in one attribute
- The ability to Fly (wings)
- Use of a single racial Power. The character has 5 Power Points usable solely for this Power. Power Points recharge at the rate of 1 per hour and are unaffected by Rapid Recharge. Power Points from other sources cannot be used with this power. This power represents a single psionic function, such as generating frightening hallucinations (fear), or a natural ability, such as generating a “smoke screen” (obscure) or a highly developed adrenal gland (quickness), for example. Psionic-type powers use Smarts; physical ones use Vigor as the arcane skill.

### **+1 Edges**

- +1 Reach (extendible arms, abnormally long arms)
- +2 bonus to resist the effects of heat, cold, or radiation
- +5 Power Points for use with a single racial Power (as described above)
- Burrowing, Wall Walker, or similar
- Free d6 in any skill
- Immune to poison or disease
- Keen Sense (+2 to Notice when using one sense)
- Low light or Thermal vision
- Natural Weapons (Str+2 in any one weapon or Str+1 with any two)
- Potent Poison (must have Poison, each level gives victims a –1 penalty to their Vigor roll)
- Semi-aquatic (gain Fatigue level every 15 minutes he holds his breath. On reaching Incapacitated, must make Vigor roll every minute or drown. Fatigue recovers one level per 15 minutes back in air)



### **–3 Hindrance**

- One attribute requires two points per step to raise during character generation. The character must dedicate two leveling opportunities to raising the attribute during game play.

### **–2 Hindrances**

- –1 Parry (peaceful race, clumsy)
- –1 Toughness (thin skin, exposed organs)
- –4 bonus to resist the effects of heat, cold, pressure, or radiation (poor physiology, thin skin)
- Dehydration (the alien must immerse itself in water one hour out of every 24. Those who don't are automatically Fatigued each day until they are Incapacitated. The day after that, they perish.)
- Major Hindrance (or equivalent effect)
- Pace 3 or less (d4 running die) (slug-like race, stubby legs, ultra fat)

### **–1 Hindrances**

- –2 bonus to resist the effects of heat, cold, pressure, or radiation (poor physiology)
- –2 Charisma (bad reputation, really ugly)
- Minor Hindrance (or equivalent effect)
- Pace 4—5 (stocky, short legs)
- Racial Enemy (–4 Charisma and the Bloodthirsty Edge when dealing with one other race)

## **EXAMPLE**

We'll use these rules to create the hideous Spidermen of Mars. We envision them as something like a centaur, but with the hindquarters of a spider, rather than a horse.

For their initial +2 Racial ability, we'll go with a base Pace of 10 (they scuttle very quickly). We'll also give them webbing -- the ability to cast webs (small burst template, Shooting roll with a range of 3/6/12-- anything caught in the web must cut or break free or suffer a -4 on physical actions. The webbing is Toughness 7), which we'll rate as being a +2 Edge.

We must pay for that with Hindrances: We'll give them two at -1 each: a -2 charisma (they're hideous, after all), and a Racial Enemy (the red Martians).



# SKILLS

The core skill system of **Savage Worlds** is used for **MARS**, with the following adjustments for the setting:

## BOATING

This skill governs the use of craft that operate on the canals of Mars.

## DRIVING

There are very few land vehicles on Mars. Most travel between red Martian cities is via the canals (using Boating), and long-distance travel is by airship (using Piloting). This skill governs the use of what land vehicles there are, whether animal-drawn carts, weird science vehicle inventions, or even the war machines of the grey Martians.

## GUTS

As a method of genre emulation, all player characters in **MARS** receive a free d4 in this skill during character creation.

## KNOWLEDGE

The following are some Knowledge focuses that are of specific use in **MARS**.

- Knowledge (Ancient History): the study of the long-forgotten cultures, kingdoms and technology of Mars, much of which is so buried and distorted by time, it is almost considered magical.
- Knowledge (Politics): the knowledge of who is in charge, where, and what relations are like between nations and local authorities. Very useful in the red kingdoms.
- Knowledge (Science): In keeping with the tropes of the sword-and-planet genre, this is a general catch-all skill -- there are no real specialties in this. This skill governs everything from the current scientific knowledge of the red Martians, to the lost technologies of ancient Mars.
- Knowledge (Languages): Each race on Mars speaks the language of the red Martians, which is referred to as High Martian. This skill

represents the ability to read and/or speak the racial languages of other species, in addition to High Martian.

Other Knowledge areas (Tactics, Medicine, etc.) as described in the **Savage Worlds** core rules are also permitted as well, and of course a Common Knowledge check will always be used in areas related to the character's background.

## LOCKPICKING

This skill not only governs the ability to bypass locks, but also to disarm traps as well (although Notice should be used to detect traps).

## PILOTING

This skill governs the operation of flying vehicles such as airships.

## REPAIR

This skill governs any situation where tools are used in the completion of a task, from construction to blacksmithing. When used for technological repair, characters without the Arcane Background: Weird Science suffer a -2 penalty for unfamiliarity (the secrets of the technological past are fading, after all), in addition to the -2 penalty for not having access to the correct tools.

## SURVIVAL

As stated in the Race entries, characters from the main races that exist on the surface of the dying planet (red, green and white Martians) gain a free d6 in this skill. Synthe-men are too specialized for this bonus, Earthmen too rare, and grey Martians too dependent upon their natural habitats.

## SWIMMING

The scarcity of water on Mars means that this skill is exceedingly rare -- it always costs 2 points per die type if it is equal to or less than the character's Agility, and 4 points per die type if it exceeds Agility. In addition, it is twice as expensive to Advance.

All other skills are as described in the **Savage Worlds** core rules.

## HINDRANCES

The core hindrances of **Savage Worlds** are used for **MARS**, with the following adjustments for the setting:

### DOUBTING THOMAS

There is no supernatural element to the core sword-and-planet genre, and so this hindrance makes no sense in a **MARS** game.

### ELDERLY

This hindrance is an indication of age within the norms of a character's species -- White Apes, for example are considered elderly at 30.

### ENEMY

In the interests of genre emulation, the Game Master should encourage the use of this hindrance as often as possible among the playing group.

### GREEDY

Mars should be about adventure, not shopping -- there is no real monetary system included in the game, because there's never much focus on the subject in the source fiction. A character could still be Greedy for treasure (technological items, jewels, etc.), but it is more a recipe for inter-party conflict than a good choice for character development, and thus should only be allowed at individual Game Master approval.

### POVERTY

Again, money isn't a factor in a **MARS** game, and so this hindrance makes no sense for the setting.

### YELLOW

This hindrance is inappropriate for the genre -- with the possible exception for use in the creation of snivelling cowardly non-player characters. A hero can never take this hindrance.

## NEW HINDRANCES

The following new hindrances are available:

### COCKY (MINOR)

The character is a braggart, and must spend the first round of any combat announcing how great he is, or what he's going to do to any and all opponents. This tendency to boast can be overcome by spending a Bennie.

A villain with this hindrance never delivers a finishing blow to a foe, but instead will always somehow leave the foe the opportunity to escape. (leaving them to die, placing them in a death-trap of some kind, or ordering their minions to handle it, etc.)

### STIGMA (MINOR)

The character has a visible signifier of some social stigma amongst his people: A criminal's brand among Red Martians, the tattoos of a disgraced Green Martian tribe, or the scars of a former slave, etc. He suffers -2 Charisma because of the stigma associated with the circumstance.

### XENOPHOBIC (MINOR/MAJOR)

The character has extremely negative views of all races other than their own, and will judge all members of those races based on his own prejudices. The character suffers a -2 Charisma when dealing with members of other races with the Minor version, and the penalty rises to -4 with the Major version.



## EDGES

The core edges of **Savage Worlds** are used for **MARS**, with the following exceptions and adjustments for the setting:

### BACKGROUND EDGES

#### ARCANE BACKGROUND

Arcane Background: Magic, Arcane Background: Miracles and Arcane Background: Super Powers are not used in this setting. Arcane Background: Weird Science is used, and Arcane Background: Psionics may appear in some campaigns, at Game Master discretion (see sidebar).

#### ARCANE RESISTANCE

The edge is not used in this setting.

#### BERSERK

This edge works as described in the core rules, with the following addition: a character can voluntarily go berserk by spending a Benny.

#### NOBLE

The Noble is a ruler, either by blood or by right. The Noble edge includes those born to power, and those who have earned it or had it granted to them. The noble is skilled at manipulating people, gathering resources, and giving orders in such a way as to have them obeyed.

It should be noted that nobility on Mars is not merely political power – it is a state of mind and of being. A Noble is not merely one who has a slip of paper decreeing their authority. Whether a steel-eye Ape general surveying his army or a slick Baltanese courtier entering a ball, a noble is born to command and has learned to master that birthright.

The pulp inspirations of **MARS** often featured strange powers of the mind, or ancient and arcane secrets from beyond time, but they were wielded by the *enemies* of the heroes – the heroes showed their superiority by triumphing over such outré forces with skill, cunning, and might, not by simply being better at wielding them than their enemies.

Psionics may be permitted to player characters with Game Master approval. All of the races of Mars may manifest such powers and have distinct attitudes towards them.

Red Martians have a longstanding hatred/fear of ‘mind witches’, dating to a period in the distant past when a group of psionically gifted Red Men attempted to carve out a massive empire by means of their psionic might. The resulting war destroyed most of the psionically gifted Red Martians, and over the ensuing ages, those who openly flaunted their abilities were likewise killed. Psionics are thus very rare among the canal dwellers, and there is still tremendous prejudice. The more ‘sophisticated’ kingdoms, such as Callor, will likely not kill a telepath or a wild talent outright as a matter of government policy, but specific individuals dwelling within the kingdom might decide to enact some ‘street justice’. There are persistent rumors that the nobility of Baltan includes many mind-readers among their number.

The nomadic Red Martians have adapted a more pragmatic attitude; if a psionic is born to them, it is considered both a curse and a blessing, and the individual is both revered and feared, leading to him living a lonely, isolated, existence. He is expected to use his powers to aid his clan, but he is otherwise barred from most clan activities. His spouse and children disown him, he has no say in clan decisions, and so on, but he is also given whatever luxuries the clan can manage to acquire, the finest foods gathered, etc. Many find the mixture of worship and revulsion to be both confusing and depressing, and flee their clan in a desperate search for those who will be more tolerant.



Nobles are most commonly found among the Red Martians and the White Apes. Green Martian society tends to be devoid of the concepts of politics and manipulation which underlie the Noble's purview – to a Green Martian, anyone who can beat you up deserves some respect, at least until you manage to get the drop on him. Some cynical observers have commented that this system is much less brutal and cruel than the twisted politics of Baltan.

A character cannot take this edge without Game Master approval. Since the "Rich" edge does not exist (q.v.), Noble does not bestow that additional edge -- although the effect should be reflected in game play. Noble characters should have no problems acquiring any form of equipment, up to and including an airship, if needed.

## RICH & FILTHY RICH

As stated earlier, **MARS** contains no in-game monetary system, since the original pulp fiction was not concerned with money. These two edges are not used in this setting.

## COMBAT EDGES

### ROCK AND ROLL!

There are no full-auto weapons in **MARS**, and so this edge is not used in this setting.

## POWER EDGES

### SOUL DRAIN

This edge only works with Psionic powers, not Weird Science.

Green Martians are grimly practical. If an ability or gift helps you kill more, fight better, or keep a good mate, it should be used. They are also superstitious, and a physically weak Green Martian who can manifest strange powers might well rise to a shamanic position, using his abilities to bully other, physically stronger, members of his tribe into providing him with food and mates. (Of course, there is no law which mandates psionic and physical might are mutually exclusive, and a Green Martian warrior who can use concussion or greater bioweapon on his foes will certainly attain high status in the tribe.

White Apes consider psionic individuals to be the property of the Empire and will draft any such into Imperial Service. Those who defy this order or who fail to serve well will be sent to the battle-pits. Those who manage to survive the rough training and sometimes brutal treatment at the hands of jealous or frightened co-conscripts will find that they have many opportunities. Once their position in the Ape Legions is secured, they can use their powers to advance themselves as far as their cunning and courage will take them, even to the throne of the Emperor himself.

Grey Martians only rarely produce the psionically gifted, but those with such powers are lauded. All Grays have a touch of telepathy, part of their racial heritage, and those who can transcend this basic ability with greater skills will quickly take on leadership positions. Player characters who venture into the grim and lightless depths of the Grey Martians will find that the ancient rulers of the shadow cities can see into their very thoughts and tear their souls apart with a whim. Sometimes, these powerful beings will enter into their walking machines and venture to the surface, their three-legged shells designed to allow their powers to work unhindered.

Synthe-men do not have psionic abilities, ever. Attempts to create a synthetic mind which could wield mental powers always ended in tragic failure.

## PROFESSIONAL EDGES

The following professional edgess are not used in this setting: Ace, Champion, Holy/Unholy Warrior, Mr. Fix-It, Wizard and Woodsman. All other core professional edges are allowed, and list of professional edges specific to **MARS** follows in the next section.

## NEW EDGES

The following new edges are available:

### COMBAT EDGES

#### DIRTY FIGHTER

**Requirements:** Seasoned

This edge is most likely known by villains, barbarians, pirates, and assassins. The character will do anything it takes to win a fight.

A Dirty Fighter is particularly good at Trick Maneuvers (see **Savage Worlds** section on combat), gaining a +2 bonus with them.

#### REALLY DIRTY FIGHTER

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Dirty Fighter

An improved version of the above edge. The character is a master of dirty tricks -- by describing the trick and spending a Benny, the character can automatically get the Drop on any single opponent, allowing the character to be on Hold, and giving a +4 to attack and damage if they choose to strike.

#### IMPROVED DEFENSE

**Requirements:** Agility d8+, Fighting d10+

The character is a master of defensive fighting. A character with this edge who performs the Defend action gains a +4 to his Parry (instead of just +2). He also subtracts 2 from any ranged attacks against him this round, as well as adding +2 to any attempts to evade area effect attacks.

## RIPOSTE

**Requirements:** Seasoned, First Strike, Fighting d8+

A riposte is when a swordsman turns a parry into a swift attack. Once per round, a character receives a free Fighting attack against an opponent who has failed a Fighting attack against him. The free attack is made at -2.

## IMPROVED RIPOSTE

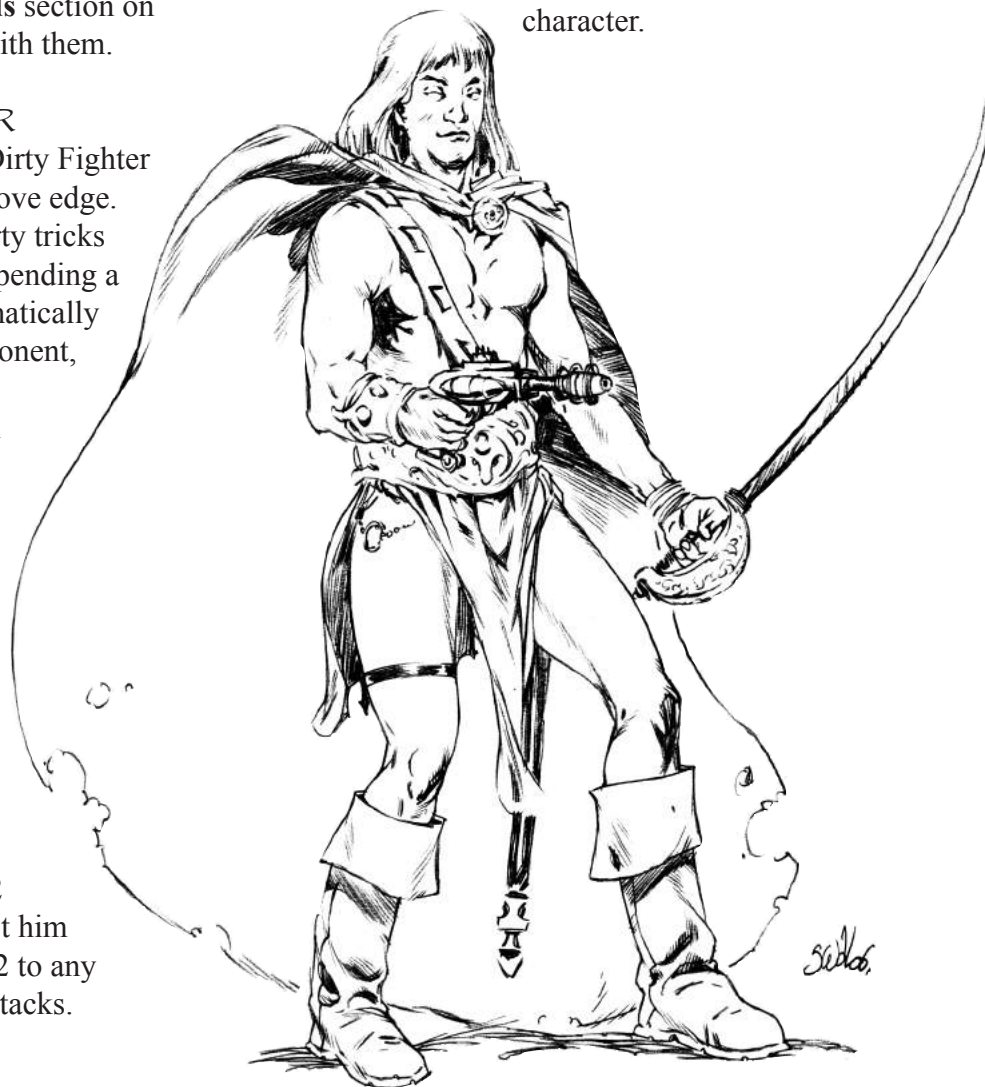
**Requirements:** Veteran, Riposte

As above, but the attack can be made with no penalty.

## SWORD AND BLASTER

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Florentine

The character can fight with a melee weapon in one hand, and a ranged weapon in the other. He can make an extra Shooting attack, at any target, per round -- at a -2 to both the Fighting and Shooting attack. In addition, opponents subtrack 1 from any "gang up" bonuses they would normally receive against the character.



## IMPROVED SWORD AND BLASTER

**Requirements:** Veteran, Sword and Blaster  
As above, but the attacks suffer no penalty, and opponents are at -2 to their “gang up” bonuses.

## PRECISION STRIKE

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Fighting d8+  
The character is a master swordsman, capable of finding weak spots on his opponent. A Fighting attack from this character ignores 1 point of Armor (whether natural or crafted).

## IMPROVED PRECISION STRIKE

**Requirements:** Veteran, Precision Strike  
As above, but the attack can ignore 2 points of Armor.

## SPOT WEAKNESS

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Smarts d8+,  
Fighting d8+, Notice d6+  
The character is trained to spot and exploit the weakness of an opponent in a duel. If an opponent making a Fighting attack against the character rolls a 1, the character receives +1 to Fighting rolls against that opponent for the rest of the combat.

## WALL OF STEEL

**Requirements:** Veteran, Florentine  
The character is experienced with fighting off hordes of opponents. Foes facing this character never receive a “gang up” bonus against him.

## POWER EDGES

### BRILLIANT SCIENTIST

**Requirements:** Seasoned, Arcane Background (Weird Science), Smarts d8+, Repair d8+, Weird Science d8+  
The character is one of the brightest minds in his field. Each raise the character gets on his activation roll reduces the cost of the power by 1 Power Point. This edge applies to all inventions created by the character.

### FAILSAFE

**Requirements:** Veteran, Arcane Background (Weird Science), Smarts d10+, Repair d10+, Weird Science d10+



The character designs his inventions with failsafes to prevent malfunctions. The devices only ever fail on a critical failure. This edge applies to all inventions created by the character.

## PROFESSIONAL EDGES

### BRUTE WARRIOR

**Requirements:** Green or White Martian, Seasoned, Fighting d8+  
From the flashing blades of Baltanese fencers to the ‘sword and blaster’ style favored by the elite warriors of Callor, some would think that all combat on Mars is a dainty, almost, foppish, dance which seems only coincidentally to end with a spray of blood and slumping corpse. This is utterly false. Many on Mars forego such niceties and focus on raw, brute, power. Two races in particular – the Green Men and the White Apes



– produce combatants who are short on fancy maneuvers but long on sheer power. The best of these hone their crude talents by becoming Brute Warriors.

Brute Warriors, as their name implies, eschew finesse. While it is not required that they be stupid or cruel, it is a sad truth that many of them do embody both traits, as neither intellect nor ethics is necessary for them to do what they do best.

There are no brute warriors among the Red Martians. While there are many canal-dwellers who are quite strong, they are inculcated practically from birth with a culture which values sophistication and technique over raw force, and so, never really learn to release the pure rage which defines the Brute Warrior.

Brute Warriors reduce their Parry by 1, but receive a +2 on damage and a +2 to Toughness. If a Brute Warrior character chooses the Berserk edge, they can balance it with a Minor hindrance, rather than a major.

## CANALLER

**Requirements:** Red Martian, Novice, Agility d6+, Boating d6+

A small, but stable, culture of Red Martians dwells on the canals themselves – traveling up and down them, living by trading goods and information. Some of these are extended family units; others are wanderers who like the roaming lifestyle but who are not part of the “wild” Red Martian culture. Canallers are well-traveled and adaptable.

Canallers enjoy a +2 to Boating, as well as any Climbing, Survival, or Knowledge checks made in relation to the canals or boats. In addition, they get to use a d8 as their Wild Die for physical actions only when aboard a boat.

## CRIMINAL

**Requirements:** Novice, Streetwise d8+  
Every society has its malcontents and lawbreakers, but most Martian societies deal with them harshly. There are few ‘career criminals’

among any of the races of Mars, save those who are very skilled. Of course, ‘criminal’ is a relative term, and the aristocrats of Baltan have been plagued by more than one daring individual who seeks to distribute wealth from the high towers of the Nobles down to the huts of the Lowborn – after extracting a suitable percentage for his own operating expenses, of course!

A Criminal can make a Streetwise check in any city to find a needed item or resource. With a raise, they can get an excellent deal on it, perhaps even getting it for “free.” (Either through favors or through commission of a crime). With two raises, they’ve managed to come up with what is needed with more or less no strings attached (GM’s discretion).

## DOCTOR

**Requirements:** Novice, Smarts d8+, Healing d8+

Medical science on Mars ranges from the use of sophisticated instruments and healing rays to shamanic and tribal remedies to the rather brutally effective techniques of Ape ‘Surgeonaries’, whose battlefield operating tools double as effective hand-to-hand weapons. Given the proper training and time, though, a Martian healer is as effective as any on Earth.

The doctor adds +2 to his Healing rolls. In addition, they get to use a d8 as their Wild Die for any medically-related check.

## ENGINEER

**Requirements:** Novice, Smarts d8+, Repair d8+

With the technological knowledge of the Martian civilizations slowly fading into the past, those who can keep the ancient devices running are highly prized.

The engineer adds +2 to his Repair rolls. With a raise, he halves the time normally required to fix something. This means that if a particular Repair job already states that a raise repairs it in half the time, an engineer could finish the job in one-quarter the time with a raise.



## EXPLORER

**Requirements:** Novice, Smarts d8+, Knowledge (ancient history) d8+

The educated on Mars must deal spend each day living with the knowledge that much of their culture and history is forever lost. Everywhere they look, there are testaments to all that has been forgotten. Most simply sigh wistfully at the thought of what has been discarded and get on with rotely learning the few shards of wisdom which remain; a few, however, dare to try to recover that which has been lost. Explorers are not dusty academicians who never leave their cubicles; they seek out traces of ancient lore wherever it might be found, and if that means trekking across a thousand miles of dry seabed or penetrating the Emperor's Palace in the polar jungles, well, so be it.

Explorers get a +2 to all Knowledge (ancient history) rolls, as well as any Survival or Notice roll while "in the field."

## GUARDIAN

**Requirements:** Novice, Agility d8+, Fighting d6+, Notice d6+

This character is either a private bodyguard, or the captain of the household guard, or the chief watchman of the tribe -- in either case, a Guardian is someone who makes protection his specialty. He knows how to keep someone safe, and knows how to avoid trouble -- and when trouble cannot be avoided, he can protect a client through a variety of other means.

A character with this Edge must declare whom he is guarding at the beginning of any combat. As long as the guardian stays within 1" of the chosen person, any attack aimed at that person is automatically rolled against the guardian instead. A guardian can switch charges during a battle, but doing so requires an action as the guardian re-focuses his attention.

The character receives a benny each time he

takes a wound (not Shaken) while defending another character (Extra or Wild Card) during a specific encounter.

## FENCER

**Requirements:** Novice, Agility d6+, Fighting d8+

The art of fencing is primarily a creation of the Red Martians, although you may find members of other species who have taken to the style of combat. The fencers of Callor and Baltan are among the most feared among the Red Kingdoms, capable of astounding feats of skill with the blade.

Fencers gain a +1 Parry, and they gain a +1 to offset any Called Shot penalties. Both of these bonuses require them to be armed with a rapier, saber, or (GM's option) similar light weapon.

## MILITARY ELITE

**Requirements:** Novice, Fighting d8+,

Guts d6+, Knowledge (Tactics) d6+

Every Martian society maintains some means of defense against outside attack or internal dissent. Red, green, white, and grey alike all have defense forces which are well-funded and well-respected. Among the white apes, military service is especially valued, as the much feared albino legions actually do embody the virtues of discipline and service the white apes aspire to but rarely achieve. The Red Kingdoms all have their elite orders, such as the feared Sand Rangers of Callor.

Military Elite characters gain a +2 on all Guts and Knowledge (tactics) checks, and use a d8 rather than a d6 for extra damage when they raise on an attack roll.





## PRIEST

**Requirements:** Novice, Spirit d8+,

Knowledge (religion) d8+

Of all the Martian cultures, only the grey men are utterly devoid of religious or spirituality. The others all have some concept of gods, spirits, or an afterlife, and all have some individuals whose job it is to interpret the will of the gods, to minister to the spiritual needs of the people, and to preserve and related religious lore. From the great marble temples of the apes to the brutal shamans of the green men, religion is found across Mars.

Priests may spend a Benny to use their Spirit Attribute in place of the normal Trait die on any one roll he must make. The use of the Benny only applies to a single die roll.



## SKY-CORSAIR

**Requirements:** Red Martian, Novice, Agility d8+, Piloting d8+

The airships of Mars are one of the most spectacular remnants of the planet's former glory. Soaring the skies between Red Martian cities, the graceful vehicles are an awesome sight to behold.

The airships are crewed by a special breed of Martian. They alone keep the knowledge of operating the vessels alive. The skies call to a hardy, brave sort, more at home above the desert than on the sands -- The Sky Corsairs. This professional edge represents everything from ruthless sky-pirates to the haughty officers of the Callor Aeronavy.

A Sky-Corsair receives a +2 on all Piloting rolls. In addition they may also spend bennies to make soak rolls for any airship they control. This is a

Piloting roll at -2 (cancelling their usual bonus), with each success and raise negating a wound and any critical hit that would have resulted from it.

Any Sky-Corsair operating an airship's weapons in combat may modify his roll on the Critical Hit Table by 1 point either way, as he chooses. He does this after rolling the dice for the Critical Hit.

# TO THE SHORES OF THE SUNLESS SEA

BY JESS NEVINS

“This way! Hurry!”

Dotar Kal suppressed a snarl and maintained his pace, a speed which would have broken a lesser Red. The words of the Lonarian traitor, Sot Ne-Kollan, were pointless – the tunnel, cold, fetid, and slippery with centuries’ worth of undisturbed slime, had no turn-offs or exits, but twisted and turned in one direction. Nor were the surviving Reds of the expedition likely to allow themselves to slow. The guttural barks of the White Apes who pursued them had grown inexorably closer over the past six hours, and everyone knew what happened to those left to the mercies of the Apes.

Dotar Kal muttered a curse and vowed bloody vengeance on the Sapphire Council if he succeeded in returning to Avak Callor. The expedition had been a fiasco from the beginning. The Council had been gulled by Sot Ne-Kollan and his story: discontent with the grim Crimson Priests of Lonaria, flight across the Green Wastes, a crash-landing in the jungles of the Ape Empire, and the chance discovery of a tunnel which Sot Ne-Kollan claimed led directly to the (mythical, Dotar Kal was certain) Sunless Sea. Sot Ne-Kollan had hinted that what he discovered on those black waters would change the fortunes of all Callor Maralin, and further that, if only Avak Callor would officially shelter Sot Ne-Kollan, he would personally accompany an expedition to the tunnel.

*Glashgar dung*, Dotar Kal had thought, it’s either a delusion or a trap, but the Sapphire Council had believed Sot Ne-Kollan, and had dispatched Dotar Kal and a platoon of Sand Rangers to find the tunnel and confirm Sot Ne-Kollan’s claims. Sot Ne-Kollan boasted of how easy the trip would be and how quick their return, and before Dotar Kal had left the Council chamber the Councilmen

were already laying plans for an expedition to permanently claim the tunnel for Avak Callor.

But nothing had gone right. The tunnel’s location was farther inside Ape territory than Sot Ne-Kollan had admitted. A careless pilot had let the platoon’s airship drift too close to the jungle cap, and a volley of crossbow fire from snipers hidden in the trees had killed the pilot and brought the airship crashing into the jungle.

What followed was a running battle between the Sand Marines and the fury of the White Apes. Dator Kal salvaged the radium canons from the airship, and every Red in the platoon was an experienced warrior, but long after the magazines of the cannons were emptied and the bodies of dead Apes made a gory path across miles of jungle, the damned beasts kept coming. Stand-up fights, ambushes from the dark, crossbows fired from cover and nooses dropping from above—the Apes never let up, and by the time the platoon had reached the tunnel mouth, thirty-six hours after the crash, half of the Reds were dead.

Dator Kal shouted, “Lonarian! How much farther?”

The traitor responded, between pants, “Not... much...farther now!”

Dator Kal nodded and shouted, “Sodal Han! Bakkova Nal! Take rearguard—delay them as long as you can.”

Dator Kal heard their grunts of assent but did not look a farewell at either. They were sworn soldiers of Avak Callor, and knew that dying to save their comrades in arms, especially on a mission which would benefit all of Callor, was as honorable a death as a soldier could ask for.



The echoes of their radium pistols and the howls of dying Apes had faded when the tunnel swerved to the right and suddenly emptied onto black sands. The Reds stumbled, some tripping, and stood or squatted, gasping for air. Dator Kal nodded at his lieutenant, Hastor Vor, who arranged a squad of soldiers at the tunnel mouth, weapons at the ready. Dator Kal gave his surroundings a long look, and was impressed despite himself. The cavern was so big that the walls were lost in darkness. Still, dark waters stretched out to the horizon, their surface unruffled in the preternaturally still air.

The Lonarian clutched at Dator Kal's sleeve and pointed. "You see? You see?"

It was a dome, smooth and large, far off over the waters, almost lost in the dim half-light.

The Lonarian said, with such eagerness that he stuttered, "You see? It is the dome of the ships of the Yellow Martians! They are no myth!"

Before Dator Kal could respond bestial shouts came from the tunnel and were met by rifle fire. The White Apes had arrived.

Dator Kal whirled and drew his radium pistol and sword. He roared, "Come, soldiers of Avak Callor! Let us die with honor!"



# THREE: GEAR



# ECONOMICS ON MARS

The equipment lists provided herein contain no prices, nor Purchase DCs. Beginning characters should pick their starting equipment (with the GM's approval), and gather equipment, weapons and belongings as needed during the course of play. **MARS** should be about adventure, not shopping.

While the red Martian nations all have their own currencies, the necessity of trade has resulted in a common standard of coinage which can be used for inter-kingdom trade. There are regular fluctuations in trade rates, but, overall, rates of exchange are relatively stable and no pulp novel was ever titled "The Money-Changes of Mars", and thus, for game purposes, all red Martians can be assumed to use a single form of currency.

Tradecoins are made of relatively common copper, inlaid with silver designs and trace amounts of rare earths, which are intended to prevent forgery. Tradecoins are issued by local governments and are backed by stockpiles of gold, gems, or radium. They come in a variety of denominations. Value is distinguished by size and shape, as well as the nature of the rare mineral components.

The base unit of exchange is the octagonal *vash*. For purposes of comparison to other **Savage Worlds** games, it can be seen as the equal of a 21<sup>st</sup> century dollar or a fantasy 'silver piece'. The square *vashal* is equal in value to 1/10<sup>th</sup> of a *vash*, and the triangular *vashka* is equal to 1/100<sup>th</sup> of a *vash*. The round *alvash* is worth 10 *vash*, and is the largest-value tradecoin in common use. Purchases of bulk goods or high-value items are done using drafts against a bank account.

Because the coins have little intrinsic value, they are not of much use for trade with people outside the red Martian network of canal cities. Nomadic red Martians will sometimes accept them, knowing they can use them when dealing with the city-dwellers. Trade with other cultures is based on either the exchange of precious metals and gems or on pure barter. Of course, there is very little such trade – some of the white

apes will engage in commerce, and it is possible, albeit very rare, to negotiate with green tribes on occasion, but most active trade is between the red Martian cities.

The white apes have their own system of coinage, using copper discs of various sizes. The *churg* is the largest coin, and it is roughly equal, in terms of cultural value, to the *vash*. The *grarag* is the next largest, worth 1/5<sup>th</sup> of a *churg*, and the *kraag* is the smallest, worth 1/10<sup>th</sup> of a *churg* (or half a *grarag*).

The green Martians forge no coins; they trade shiny things for weapons or tools, or bully weaker tribesmen into working for them.

The grey Martians likewise have no coins; they have no trade with other races and resource allocation within their own culture is done by consensus and debate.

## ANCIENT STOCKPILES

During the early days of the Red Martian kingdoms, before the drying, there were many different economic systems, from purely-fiat currencies to the use of gold, silver, and platinum in coins. Much of this wealth was poured into the construction of the canals, but some of it remains. Green Martian raiders stole much, then left what they could not easily carry in odd caves and forgotten cities. Abandoned civilizations sometimes contain vaults filled with treasures almost beyond description – precious metals, rare gems, and exotic minerals filled the vaults of the ancient Martian kings. The rumor of such lost storehouses of wealth can send otherwise rational red Martians out into the harsh deserts in a desperate quest for untold wealth.

## ARMOR

Armor is not commonly worn on Mars – it is bulky and constraining in most cases, and the added weight is a burden when water must be carefully rationed. Against radium pistols and other modern weapons, it is often useless, and so, it has become of relatively little importance. Primitive warriors, especially green Martians, may wear some plates of metal, but most red

Martians will wear light cloth armors at most, preferring freedom of action and movement. In addition, the more skilled a warrior is, the more armor will limit his ability to perform the more delicate maneuvers and feints of combat; thus, it is often the case that ill-trained guardsman will don heavy suits of protective gear, while skilled fighters will wear little or nothing.

In addition, the various races of Mars are shaped very differently from one another. No race can easily wear armor built for a different race. In some cases, if the armor can be used, it is noted in the description. Note that many races use the same materials – for example, red Martians and white apes both use silkweave – but the finished suits are not interchangeable between races.

**Bracer Shield:** The bracer shield is still in common use today, as it is generally light and works well equally well against melee weapons and radium pistols. It consists of a heavy metal bracer to which is attached a small, reinforced shield. This adds a +1 to Parry, rather than providing an Armor Rating. This stacks with the bonus granted by Jewel armor. However, using a bracer shield prevents any weapon from being used in the off-hand.

**Ceremonial Plate:** This is heavy, full-body armor, rarely worn into actual combat. It is used by the palace guards or the equivalent in most of the Red Martian cultures. Huge, heavy, and overly ornate, it does provide considerable defense but at a grievous cost to mobility and speed. Anyone wearing it has their base Pace reduced by 1. Should someone be foolish enough to wear it during wilderness marches, they will suffer a -4 penalty on all Vigor checks to resist the effects of heat, hunger, and thirst, as well as a -1 to *all* skill checks after the first hour of wearing it each day.

**Chain Cloak:** The chain cloak is not just a cloak, but something more akin to a hooded robe, composed of thousands of strands of clinking, finely-woven chain links fastened to a few key support pieces. In combat, the metal chains help to entangle or dull weapon blows, providing some damage reduction, and the swirling cloud of metal confuses foes, making the wearer slightly more

difficult to hit (opponents receive a -1 to hit). However, the armor is extremely loud – it is quite impossible to use the Stealth skill while wearing it. Any attempt suffers a -5 penalty.

**Heavy Wire:** This is a heavier version of the Wireweave vest, used primarily in those red Martian cities where technology has declined to the point where melee combat among massed troops is common. It also has some ceremonial/ritual uses. It is a full body suit of Wireweave, overlaid with heavy plates on the chest, arms, and legs.

**Legionnaire's Armor:** This armor, found entirely among the White Apes and not easily worn by anyone other than them, is the heaviest armor in common, regular, use on Mars. It consists of a massively thick breastplate, a helmet, greaves, and leggings. The joints remain exposed, weakening protection but also granting considerable freedom of movement. Because of the many gaps in the armor, it is possible for a careful opponent to strike around the armor with an appropriate weapon. An opponent may choose take a -4 penalty to his attack roll and a -2 to penalty to his own Parry in order to 'strike at the gap'. If the attack hits, the armor is completely ignored.

Due to the shape and size of the armor, red Martians attempting to wear it suffer a -2 penalty on all attack rolls and a reduction in base Pace of 1.

**Jewel Armor:** This term is somewhat misleading. This form of 'armor' is so-named because the pieces which compose it are derived from early forms of jewelry, such as bracelets, torcs, and anklets, though the modern form is much heavier and contains (of course) no precious metals or stones. The armor does not protect against damage, but does deflect blows, granting a bonus to Parry. Green, red, and white Martians all produce some form of this armor.

**Pilot's Helm:** A lightweight metal helmet with a visor of transparent crystal, commonly worn by sky-corsair captains. It provides some modest protection from damage as well and does not hinder mobility in any way.



**Silkweave:** This armor is formed from chemically treated insect fibers, and is strong and light, so much so that it can easily pass for normal clothing. It is the most common armor in active use among the red Martians. Heavy silkweave has gone through additional treatment to stiffen in. Silkweave can come in almost any color, and is often dyed to match the colors of the wearer's house, clan, nation, regiment, or other group.

Green Martians lack the skill to harvest silkweave, but they can create patchwork suits by scavenging pieces of it from the corpses of red Martians. Such suits, usually made from differently-colored pieces of cloth, present an almost clown-like appearance.

White apes can and do harvest silkweave, though they are one of the few species to prefer heavier armor.

**Skull Helm:** A crude 'helmet' formed from the skull of a slain beast (or sometimes pieced together from the skulls of tribal enemies), this is worn by Green Martians who have the patience or memory to remember to suit up for battle.

**Vronag Hide:** The green Martians often skin the vronag vesh and use its hide for armor. By tradition, one cannot wear such armor unless one has killed the beast in single combat – and given the nature of the animal (see bestiary) this is no mean feat. Because of this fact, a green Martian wearing vronag hide armor gains a +2 bonus on all Intimidate checks against anyone familiar with the culture. (A green Martian seen wearing such armor who shows he could not possibly have 'earned' the right to it will be set upon by others of his kind and slaughtered.) The armor is bulky but offers good protection in combat, and green Martians tend not to be too concerned with agility anyway.

| Type               | Weight | Armor | Race/Culture       | Notes   |
|--------------------|--------|-------|--------------------|---|
| Chain Cloak        | 20 lbs | +3    | Red                | Opponents at -1 to hit                            |
| Ceremonial Plate   | 55 lbs | +5    | Red                | -1 Pace (see description)                         |
| Jewel Armor*       | 6 lbs  | --    | All                | +2 to Parry, +1 Armor vs Ranged Weapons that hit. |
| Legionnaires Armor | 70 lbs | +5    | White              | Gaps (see description)                            |
| Pilot's Helm       | 2 lbs  | +2    | Red                | Head only   |
| Silkweave          | 2 lbs  | +2    | Red, White         |   |
| Silkweave, Heavy   | 5 lbs  | +3    | Red, White         |   |
| Silkweave, Patch   | 8 lbs  | +3    | Green              |   |
| Skull Helm         | 4 lbs  | +3    | Green              | Head only   |
| Vronag Hide        | 40 lbs | +4    | Green              | +2 to Intimidation Checks                         |
| Wireweave Vest     | 12 lbs | +3    | Red (rarely White) |   |
| Wireweave, Heavy   | 20 lbs | +4    | Red (rarely White) |   |
| Bracer Shield      | 8 lbs  | --    | All                | +1 to Parry, +1 Armor vs Ranged Weapons that hit. |

**Wire Vest:** This is a medium armor found primarily among the red Martians. It cannot be manufactured by the white apes, though some individuals have managed to order custom suits made for them during times of peace. It is composed of thin strands of a strong, copper-based alloy, woven into a flexible suit of armor which covers the chest, groin, and shoulders. It is slightly restrictive, but not exceptionally so, and is often worn by elite troops, palace guards, and the like.

## WEAPONS

Mars remains a world locked in constant struggle, and the various races of Mars have developed many tools which they can use to eliminate enemies (or inconvenient allies, for that matter). The vast spread of technologies on Mars means that weapons range from wooden clubs to city-destroying heat-rays.

Oddly, gunpowder was never developed on Mars – sulfur is fairly rare, and so Martian technology bypassed it, leading to odd developments in the ways of war. Walled cities remained commonplace for protection against green Martian invaders, even after the radium rifle and the sky-corsair were invented. Due to the lack of a powerful, reliable ranged weapon until nearly the beginning of the canal era, primitive weapons have remained commonplace, and in many regions of Mars, are still used in ‘modern’ warfare.

Despite the high levels of technology, much Martian combat still takes place between warriors standing face to face. Part of this is cultural, and part is due to the scarcity of high-tech ranged weapons. Bows and crossbows are also in common use, but in many circumstances they must be supplemented by hand-to-hand weapons.

Over the millennia, Martian cultures have invented weapons roughly equal to nearly all the archaic weapons of Earth. They will have some stylistic variants and different names, but they will be effectively the same. The descriptions of the weapons (including any additional rules for their use) appear below, in the order that they appear on the weapons chart.

## MELEE WEAPONS

**Axe:** The Martian axe is an effective off-hand weapon or backup weapon, effective against armor (AP 1) and can be used to hook enemy weapons (+1 to Parry).

**Baltanese Dueling Blades (Primary and Off-Hand):** These weapons are rare and expensive. They are made only by the most experienced crafters in Baltan, and each pair is unique. (A Knowledge (ancient history) check can identify the origin of a given set.) They are specially weighted and balanced to be used in the two-weapon combat style beloved of the Baltanese nobility. The weapons, in the hands of a character with the Two Fisted edge, bestows a +1 to both attack rolls.

**Battleaxe:** The Martian battleaxe is a powerful weapon, ideal for dealing out deadly blows while mounted, but also well-balanced enough for melee on foot. It is viciously effective against armor.

**Broadsword:** This heavy, slightly tapered sword is intended for battle, and is the most commonly encountered military Weapon, finding use in the armies of most nations of Mars.

**Callorian Longblade:** The swordsmen of Callor are well famed for their skill and honor in battle. The Callorian Blade is issued to the greatest warriors of that kingdom, and is never passed on or sold (at least not legitimately). When the wielder dies, the blade is returned to the armory. To be issued a blade once used by a great hero is a tremendous honor. The blade is exceptionally strong (Toughness 18). In addition, the wielder, if he is rightfully issued the blade, gains a +2 to Intimidate checks against enemies of Callor and a +2 to Charisma among Callor or its allies. (Should the character be using a stolen or ‘found’ blade, and this is discovered, he will suffer a -4 on Charisma.)

**Club:** The simplest of all weapons -- a large bludgeoning implement. Most often used by the Green Martians, although occasionally White Apes use them as well.

## MELEE WEAPONS

| Type                     | Damage   | Weight | Minimum Strength | Notes  |
|--------------------------|----------|--------|------------------|--|
| Axe                      | Str +d6  | 2      | d6               | Parry +1, AP 1   |
| Baltanese Dueling Blades | Str +d6  | 4      | d6, Agility d8+  | +1 to Two Fisted attacks                                 |
| Battleaxe                | Str +d8  | 10     | d8               | AP 2   |
| Broadsword               | Str +d8  | 8      | d6               |  |
| Callorian Longblade      | Str +d8  | 8      | d8               | AP 2   |
| Club                     | Str+ d4  | 2      | d6               |  |
| Dagger                   | Str+d4   | 1      | -                |  |
| Draggar Bone Club        | Str +d10 | 20     | d10              | AP 2, -1 Parry, 2 hands, user must be Size +3 or larger. |
| Hatchet                  | Str +d4  | 1      | d6               |  |
| Pike                     | Str +d8  | 25     | d8               | Reach 2, 2 hands, cannot attack adjacent targets.        |
| Rapier                   | Str +d6  | 5      | d6               | Parry +1   |
| Short Sword              | Str +d6  | 4      | -                | Includes cavalry sabres                                  |
| Spear                    | Str +d6  | 5      | d6               | Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands                               |
| Warhammer                | Str +d8  | 8      | d6               |  |
| War Lance                | Str +d8  | 10     | d8               | AP 2 when charging, mounted only.                        |
| War Sword                | Str +d10 | 12     | d8               |  |

**Dagger:** The dagger is an all-purpose weapon and tool, carried by almost every surface-dwelling Martian. Most daggers have double-edged blades, making them more useful for stabbing than for cutting, but they are still short and handy enough to have many roles outside of combat.

**Draggar Bone Club:** The Green Martians lack much in the way of crafting, but over the ages, they have learned a few tricks and skills which have become rote enough to pass down to the tribe. One such is the making of the draggar bone club. Beginning with the thigh bone of the now extinct draggar, the Green Martians wrap hide

and metal fragments around each end, creating a massive weapon of impressive weight and lethality.

**Hatchet:** The hatchet is more of a carpenter's tool than a weapon, though it is often pressed into service in combat.

**Pike:** Pikes are extremely long spears, used by rank and file soldiers in formation. A pike is a special variety of reach weapon -- a character using a pike can attack opponents who are up to 2" away in melee, but cannot attack adjacent opponents. Pikes cannot be thrown.



**Rapier:** A thin-bladed sword, designed and used for fencing. The most common weapon used by Red Martians.

**Short Sword:** The short sword features roughly two-foot-long blade. It is handy, concealable, and can be used as a fencing weapon.

**Spear:** A long staff with a leaf-shaped blade at the end. The spear is a reach weapon (see **Savage Worlds** combat section for more details).

**Warhammer:** A heavy, one-handed hammer which looks a bit like a meat tenderizer -- and which deals devastating, crushing blows in combat.

**War Lance:** A weapon designed for use from the back of a charging mount. If used during a charge, the War Lance receives a +2 circumstance bonus to to Armor Piercing, and does double damage. If used on foot, the weapon is unbalanced, giving the character a -4 circumstance penalty to all attack rolls.

**War Sword:** The war sword is a massive two-handed weapon -- a relic of the Martian past, rarely seen on the battlefield today.

## RANGED WEAPONS

**Bow:** Used around Mars for hunting and combat, in countless cultural and racial variations. Some are longer, with greater ranges, some are shorter and designed to be used while riding a mount, etc.

**Crossbow:** A single-shot weapon which is easier to use than a bow, and so popular with armies where speed of training is critical. It has a single rate of fire and can carry a single loaded shot.

**Handbow:** A small but useful weapon, the handbow is a one-handed crossbow which can be drawn and fired much like a pistol. The Handbow has a single-shot rate of fire, and can carry a single shot. Traditionally, it is kept loaded, so that a shot can be let loose instantly.

**Handbow, Self-loading:** Though slightly bulkier than a 'manual' handbow, the self-loading handbow has a built-in quiver of 10 small arrows.

**Longsling:** This is a weapon commonly used by the nomadic red Martians. They all learn to use it from birth, but for other Martians, it requires a Fighting skill of at least d8. In addition to the devastating sling stones it can hurl with accuracy over surprising distances, it can be used as a sort of flail in melee combat by sealing it shut with a load of rocks inside. As a flail, it does Str +d6 damage. Sealing the rocks inside the sling takes 2 actions.

## RANGED WEAPONS

| Type                  | Range    | Damage  | RoF | Weight | Shots | Min. Str | Notes                   |
|-----------------------|----------|---------|-----|--------|-------|----------|-------------------------|
| Bow                   | 12/24/48 | 2d6     | 1   | 3      | -     | d6       |                         |
| Crossbow              | 15/30/60 | 2d6     | 1   | 10     | -     | d6       | AP2, 1 action to reload |
| Handbow               | 5/10/20  | 2d4     | 1   | 3      | -     | d6       |                         |
| Handbow, Self-loading | 5/10/20  | 2d4     | 1   | 4      | 10    | d6       |                         |
| Longsling             | 10/20/40 | Str +d6 | 1   | 3      | -     | d6       | see description         |

## RADIUM WEAPONS

| Type                       | Range      | Damage | RoF | Weight | Shots | Min. Str | Notes                |
|----------------------------|------------|--------|-----|--------|-------|----------|----------------------|
| Radium Pistol              | 12/24/48   | 2d6+2  | 1   | 5      | 10    | -        | AP3                  |
| Radium Pistol, Holdout     | 10/20/40   | 3d6    | 1   | 3      | 3     | -        | AP3                  |
| Radium Pistol, Double-cell | 12/24/48   | 2d6+2  | 1   | 6      | 15    | -        | AP3                  |
| Radium Pistol, Heavy       | 12/24/48   | 2d8+2  | 1   | 7      | 10    | d6       | AP4, see description |
| Radium Rifle               | 24/48/96   | 2d10   | 1   | 10     | 15    | d6       | AP4, see description |
| Radium Gun, Mounted        | 40/80/160  | 4d6+2  | 1   | 18     | 25    | d8       | AP4, see description |
| Grey Martian Heat Ray      | 60/120/240 | 3d10   | 1   | 25     | 100   | d6       | AP7, see description |

All radium weapons are Semi-Auto, and can be used with the Double-Tap edge.

### RADIUM WEAPONS

The most important advance in Red Martian weapons technology came roughly a century or so before the building of the canal network – the discovery of how to use radium to create a bolt of powerful destructive force. A small chip of the potent mineral, if subjected to an electric charge and the released energy channeled through an array of crystal lenses, produced a bolt which could travel further than any arrow and tear straight through armor. Inside of a decade, the cultures which had radium technology dominated those which did not – only the scarcity of the mineral and its many other uses kept it from replacing all other weapons. Instead, it was reserved for elite troops or for use on airships.

After the canal building age was done, radium became even rarer, as vast stockpiles were consumed in the construction of the canals and many mine sites were too distant from the water-giving network to be safely or profitably mined. Radium weapons became heirlooms, handed down from parent to child, and the charging

capsules which powered them became worth more than diamonds. Today, firing a radium weapon when it is not necessary to do so is considered an act of flagrant waste – the weapons are used only when no other will do, and to be issued one is a sign of great honor. Families have been torn apart over who would inherit them.

Radium weapons cannot be made by hand – the machining required is too fine – but neither are they produced in bulk. Runs of a few dozen to a few thousand are common, and there are some collectors who have tried to catalogue the countless variants. Functionally, most weapons of a given size and general design are identical, but there are any number of armchair weapons fanatics who will argue endlessly about extremely minor differences in accuracy, damage, ease of handling, and so on.

For game purposes, only a few broad types are necessary. Players fortunate enough to own a radium weapon should take the opportunity to create some distinguishing features for it, such as:

- How old is it?
- Was it used in any famous battles or owned by any legendary figures?
- Does it have any odd markings or accoutrements?
- What materials is it made of? Is the grip wood or metal? Are jewels or precious metals used in its construction?

**Radium Pistol:** The most common form of non-military radium pistol, there are hundreds of known models. All have in common the ability to fire single- or multi- shot bursts and a decent, if not spectacular, charge capacity.

**Radium Pistol, Holdout:** A tiny weapon, very easily concealed. It is designed to drain the charging capsule rapidly, holding but three shots before it is expired – but those shots are surprisingly deadly. Originally, such weapons were the province of spies, but they have since become the favored weapons of courtiers in Baltan and ne'er-do-wells up and down the canals.

**Radium Pistol, Double-Cell:** This is a fairly common variant on the standard radium pistol. It is built to hold two charging capsules. Due to some problems of design inefficiency, this does not give it twice the shots of a standard pistol, but it does provide a larger magazine.

**Radium Pistol, Heavy:** This sidearm stretches the definition of a 'pistol' considerably. As with the double-cell pistol, it requires two charge capsules, but it combines their energy to produce bolts of considerable power. Due to its size and weight, any user with a Strength of d8 or less will suffer a -2 modifier to Attack rolls when aiming at targets more than 12" distant unless they use both hands to steady the weapon.

**Radium Rifle:** This is a military weapon, issued to top soldiers. It rarely goes to the frontline fighters in a battle, unless victory is deemed close at hand, but is usually reserved for defense – once an enemy has been weakened by fighting through irregular units and city militia, they will be cut to ribbons by the powerful energy beams of the radium rifle.

**Radium Gun, Mounted:** The largest 'man portable' weapon in the standard Red Martian arsenal, this weapon cannot be fired while being carried, but must be set up. The swivel-mount allows fire in all directions, and the built in targeting gyroscopes improve the user's aim (+1 to hit).

**Grey Martian Heat Ray:** On the very rare occasions that Grey Martians exist their tripods, they will carry with them a version of their lethal heat ray. While these weapons use radium for power, they process it in a very different way than the radium weapons of the Red Martians do. The heat ray is perhaps the most deadly hand weapon on Mars, and few are the beings who can survive even a single bolt from it. Non-Grey Martians who somehow acquire one must take the Trademark Weapon edge, or suffer a -4 to hit when trying to use the alien device.

### Power Cells

Radium power cells are required to use any radium weapons – or, indeed, most advanced technology on Mars. They are valuable and rare, and cannot be recharged. A single cell can power a canal boat for a year or a gun for a few shots – most Martians will consider the latter use far more justifiable and will consider someone "wasting" a power cell on unnecessary combat to be a fool at best.

Those who have some legitimate use for radium weapons (guards, soldiers sent into a dangerous region, and so on), will normally be issued one, or at most two, such cells.)



# VEHICLES

While Mars is somewhat smaller than Earth, it is nonetheless a big place for those who must wander it on foot or on beastback. Over the ages, many forms of mechanized transport have been developed to allow the Martians to traverse their planet rapidly. This section lists some of those still in use.

Information on the Airships of Mars can be found in the *Setting Rules* chapter.

**Powered Canal Boat, Small:** This craft is typical of personal watercraft used by Martians to navigate canals within their home cities. A single radium cell will power it for 250 hours, often enough for six months or so of use by a typical city dweller.

**Powered Canal Boat, Traders:** This is a large craft used by merchants who roam up and down the canal network, buying goods and hauling them to distant cities. The merchant and his family typically lives on the boat, sleeping in whatever cramped quarters can be found amidst the variety of goods and cargoes typically piled on. Merchants of this sort normally deal in trinkets and gewgaws rather than bulk goods.

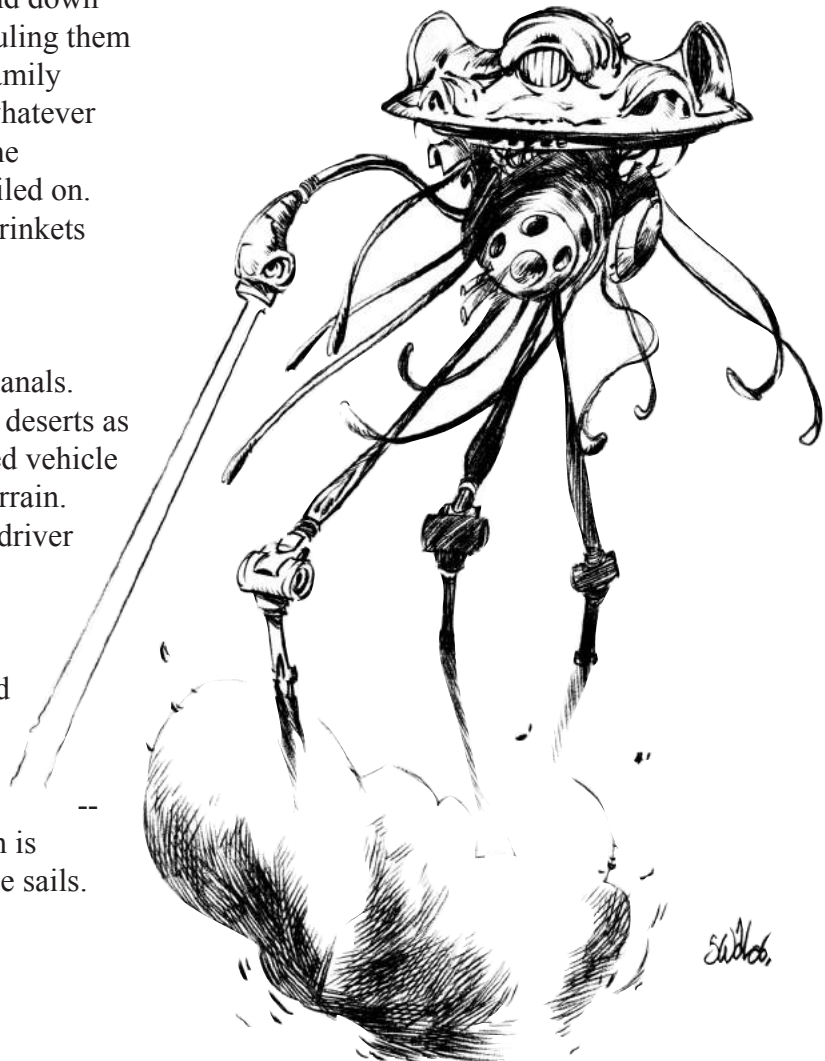
**Sand Runner:** Not all travel is by the canals. Many Martians need to travel across the deserts as well. The Sand Runner is a small, tracked vehicle which can handle itself on almost any terrain. The craft is very well balanced, and the driver gains a +2 handling bonus.

**Desert Sailer:** A more primitive method of travelling across the desert, often used by the Red Martian nomads, the Desert sailer is a large wheeled vehicle as large as a Trader's canal boat -- which is propelled across the desert sands by large sails.

**Bulk Wagon:** This craft is used to haul bulk goods from city to city. While the canals serve this purpose, it is sometimes better to take goods overland, either because the canal route is circuitous or because the goods themselves are not directly connected to the canals, such as metal from the mines. Bulk Wagons are often the target of Green Martian raiders, who do not usually need what is being hauled but who enjoy disrupting trade.

Bulk wagons are slow moving craft, and contain sleeping quarters for the drivers.

**Tripod:** This dreaded vehicle is used by the Grey Martians when they walk the surface world. It is a terrifying creation, capable of tremendous destruction and nearly impossible to destroy. It is not possible for anyone but the Grey Martians to pilot one.





Tripods are armed with a heat ray, which can fire in any direction. See the 'Grey Martian Heat Ray' entry for more information regarding the heat ray's damage, range, etc.

While mounted within a Tripod, the heat ray can also be set to fire in a broad beam.

This is a cone template attack, doing 2d10 points of energy damage to all targets within the cone. Targets within the cone may make an Agility roll at -2 to avoid taking damage from the attack.

## VEHICLES

| Type                        | Acc/TS | Toughness | Crew | Notes   |
|-----------------------------|--------|-----------|------|---|
| Powered Canal Boat, Small   | 2/12   | 10(2)     | 1+9  |   |
| Powered Canal Boat, Traders | 4/15   | 19(4)     | 1+20 |   |
| Sand Runner                 | 10/36  | 14(3)     | 1+9  | +2 handling bonus   |
| Desert Sailer               | 2/30   | 13(2)     | 2+20 | Requires 1 to drive, and 1 to handle sails.               |
| Bulk Wagon                  | 2/10   | 19(4)     | 2+9  | Most space given over to bulk cargo                       |
| Tripod                      | 20/40  | 22(5)     | 1+3  | Armed with heat ray, and often more Weird Science gizmos. |

# OUT OF THE SUN

BY AARON ROSENBERG



“Captain!” Jarem Yan turned quickly upon hearing the shout, and saw at once his crewman Voral gesturing hurriedly up into the sky. Training his own sharp black gaze in the direction Voral indicated, Jarem squinted, scanning the open skies for what might have created such a note of concern in the sky-sailor’s voice.

Then he spied it. A small black dot against the wide red sky, growing rapidly larger. Already it seemed to Jarem the shape took on a definite form, beyond that of a mere speck or blob, its edges growing sharper and more angular, its

forward shape similar to an arrowhead loosed in flight—

“A ship!” Jarem announced, his confirmation ringing out across their own. “All hands on deck! Weapons to the ready!” For the strange ship was approaching rapidly, its speed far too excessive for it to be merely another in the Callorian Aeoronavy. No, at such an angle and such velocity, there could be only one purpose behind this new vessel—conquest!

“Well,” Jarem vowed softly, one hand shifting to the rapier at his side, the other going to the butt



of the radium pistol hanging opposite it, “they will not find the *Vivid Spear* so easy a prey as they might have hoped!”

“What is it, beloved?” A new voice broke into his musings, and though its dulcet tones were ever welcome to his ear yet Jarem felt a spasm of fear to hear them now. Shifting about, he saw Lania Dar stalking toward him from the captain’s cabin, her glorious raven tresses billowing behind her in the breeze of the ship’s motion, her rich red skin aglow in the unfiltered light of these lofty heights, her beautiful features creased into a look of gentle concern. She strode the deck as if born to an airship, and truly these past days she had demonstrated as great an aptitude for sky-flying as any Jarem had ever seen. Already she could hold the ship on course or adjust its heading as well as many an experienced sailor, and she carried herself gracefully despite the ship’s motion or the winds that constantly tore at it, desperate to batter the sleek vessel from the sky.

“Another ship approaches,” Jarem informed her gravely, one arm rising to indicate the black shape that hung against the sky. It was now almost directly before the sun, and they both were forced to shield their eyes to gaze upon it for even a moment, a tactic Jarem knew was entirely deliberate. They would have great difficulty targeting the vessel if it could maintain such a position, while it could sight them at its leisure

and most likely was even now readying bombs to drop upon them as soon as they were close enough to assure accuracy. Then the occupants of that vessel could board them, kill any who had survived the bombings, and raid the ship at their leisure. Jarem studied the lovely form of the woman he loved and his grip tightened on his sword. They would never have his beloved Lania, not while still he drew breath to defend her life and her honor.

“Sky-pirates?” Lania asked, but her tone made clear the answer was already plain to her. “What must we do?” Again Jarem admired her courage and her calm. Many a hardened soldier or sailor in her place would have panicked, faced with such imminent danger, yet only the tightening of her lovely arched brows and the tight grip she laid upon his arm showed any hint of Lania’s concern.

“They intend to bomb us, no doubt,” Voral offered from his place beside them, and Jarem nodded.

“Of a certainty, that is their plan,” he agreed. “Yet they shall find that we are far from helpless, and that not all plans go to their creator’s liking.” Tilting his head slightly, Jarem addressed the rest of his crew, now assembled behind him upon the polished deck. “Make ready the radium guns! Bank the engines to half power! Begin a slow drift to the right—subtly, now! Let us give them no reason to suspect what we are about, so that

they may continue upon their course with every confidence of victory. Until the moment we snatch it from their very lips!”

The crew cheered quickly and hurried off to their appointed tasks, leaving only Jarem and Lania standing to observe their enemy’s approach. The pirate vessel was already near enough that Jarem fancied he could just discern its prow, and a hint of the figures crouching eagerly behind it. They would drop their bombs soon, he was certain of it.

But when they did, the *Vivid Spear* would not be quite where they expected. And then? Then these sky-pirates would learn what happened

to those foolish enough to cross the Callorian Aeronavy. And especially Jarem Yan, known far and wide as the Spear both for his ship and for the deadly speed with which he struck down his enemies.

“They are almost upon us!” Lania whispered beside him, the faintest hint of fear now echoing within her words.

“Aye,” Jarem agreed, squinting up at the sun. “Any second now, it will begin.” He gripped her hand tightly for an instant, then released it to draw his blade, his radium pistol already firmly in his other grip. Let the pirates come—they would find him ready.



# FOUR: SETTING RULES





# HEROIC RULES

## HEROIC SURVIVAL

**MARS** is a setting of planetary romance. This genre, also sometimes called ‘sword and planet’ is one filled with swashbuckling tales of adventure. The heroes are daring, and their exploits amazing --but for all the action, heroes seldom die, and many of the biggest villains keep coming back.

So in this setting, No matter how they are “killed,” Wild Cards will always survive. To reflect this, the following rules replace the usual **Savage Worlds** rules for Incapacitation. Heroes only ever suffer short-term injuries. At GM discretion, villains injuries can last longer, to be “healed off-screen” to come back another day.

Death for a Wild Card is possible in **MARS**, but it requires a Finishing Move against an Incapacitated victim, which is something only the truly villainous would ever consider.



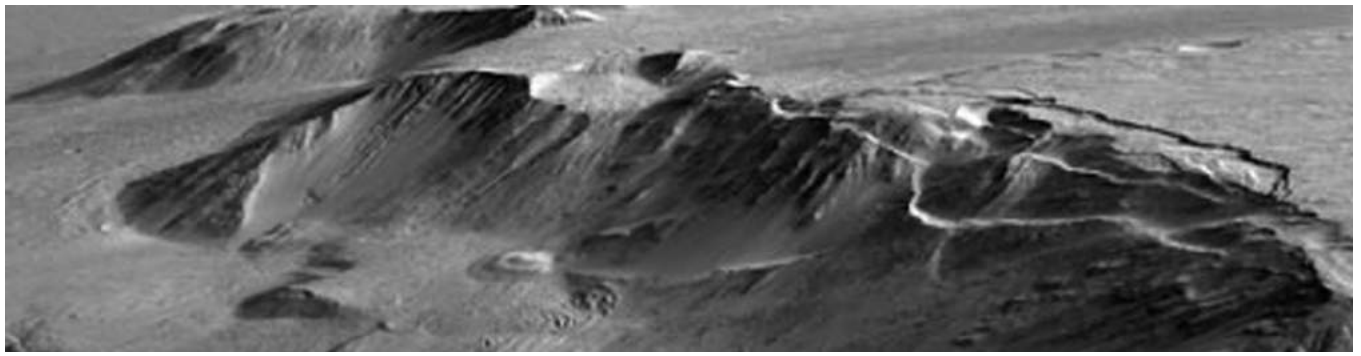
## INCAPACITATION

**Raise:** The victim is stunned. He still has 3 wounds, but is not Incapacitated. He is Shaken and suffers a temporary impairment as well. Roll 2d6 on the Injury Table in the **Savage Worlds** rulebook. The effects are short-term and cease when combat ends.

**Success:** The victim is unconscious. He regains consciousness with a successful Healing roll or after an hour has passed. Roll 2d6 on the Injury Table. The effects last until all wounds are healed.

**Failure:** The victim is unconscious. He regains consciousness with a Healing roll at -2 (one roll only) or after 2d6 hours have passed. Roll 2d6 on the Injury Table. The effects go away when all wounds are healed. With nonlethal damage, treat this as a Success except the hero is unconscious for 1d4 hours.

**Critical Failure:** The victim is in a coma. He regains consciousness with a Healing roll at -4 (one roll only) or after 1d6 days have passed. Roll 2d6 on the Injury Table. The effects go away when all wounds are healed. With nonlethal damage, treat this as a Success except the hero is unconscious for 2d6 hours.



## STUNTS

Bennies are a useful part of **Savage Worlds** play, giving players the ability to reroll in dramatic situations. In a **MARS** campaign, players should have access to more bennies than they would under the normal rules. This is addressed by stunts.

Any character who attempts a stunt action should be rewarded with a bennie.

What is a stunt action? A stunt action is any action which is performed in a flashier manner than one would normally observe. Get on board an airship before it lifts off from the platform is an action. Leaping from the back of a galloping Jalf onto an airship at the last second as it lifts off from the platform -- now *that* is a stunt action, and should be rewarded.

In game terms, a stunt is an action where the player purposefully makes the action more difficult for themselves. In the above example, the player would have had the option to get on board the airship, but instead announced that the character had gotten there too late, and instead described the stunt action. In a way, the player is taking on the role of the Game Master for a moment, changing the situation for his or her character in such a way that a more difficult solution is required.

A stunt action should always require a roll, at a minimum -2 penalty. The Game Mastere is the final arbiter of the roll penalty of a particular stunt action. Pulling off nearly impossible stunts (-6 or more to the roll) may even result in the hero earning more than one bennie, at the GM's discretion.

Why do the players need access to more bennies than normal? Read on.

## STORY DECLARATIONS

In addition to their normal usage as described in the **Savage Worlds** core rules, bennies can be used in **MARS** to make Story Declarations.

A player may spend a benny and declare certain details about the setting and the story. If the Game Master accepts it, it will be true. This gives the player the ability to direct small things in a story – usually something only the Game Master can do.

Declarations can't be used to drastically change the plot or to win a conflict. Declaring "The Green Martian drops dead of a heart attack" is not only likely to be rejected by the Game Master, but it wouldn't even be that much fun to begin with.

What this can be very useful for is convenient coincidences. For example, you can declare that the contents of a storeroom contain just the right chemicals you need to build a makeshift explosive, or you can declare what's hidden in your pockets or the fact that you know someone in a foreign city. Is there an interesting scene happening over there that your character might miss? Spend a benny to declare you arrive at a dramatically appropriate moment!

The key limit to Story Declaration is you cannot contradict previously established information... unless you come up with some plausible reason why that information was never true to begin with!

The GM has final say on Story Declaration, but generally, if what you propose makes the game more interesting, odds are in your favor.

If a proposed declaration isn't approved, you keep the benny, and the change doesn't happen.

# NPC RULES

## HENCHMEN AND MOOKS

**Savage Worlds** already features two character types: The Wild Cards (the players, important villains, monsters, etc.) and Extras (everybody else). In keeping with the planetary romance genre, **MARS** adds two additional varieties to this mix: Henchmen and Mooks.

Villains in **MARS** should be the equal (and preferably more powerful) than the player characters. They are the big threat, the focus of the adventure. As such, they are created as Wild Cards, as described in the core rules.

However, a villain will typically have one prized Lieutenant (occasionally more, but usually at least one). In **MARS**, we refer to this character as the Henchman. Henchmen are the “level bosses” of the game --they are usually encountered by the heroes long before they ever get to the villain...and often before they even realize that the Villain exists!

Henchmen are a step above your standard Extra, but a step below Wild Cards. They're useful for giving the heroes a tougher opponent, but without all the difficulty of facing another Wild Card. A Henchman is created as a normal Extra, but with the ability to use a Wild Die when rolling.

Mooks are another new type of character for **Savage Worlds**. They are the level below Extras. Mooks are the faceless cannon-fodder who get thrown at the heroes in combat. The villain will throw these at the heroes in an effort to slow their progress, with the off chance that one or more Mooks might get lucky and do some damage.

Mooks are just like Extras, but with the following special rules:

- Every Trait is average (d6).
- They only possess four skills, and each skill is rated at d6.

- They have no edges and no hindrances.
- Mooks are never Shaken. If you equal or exceed their Toughness, they're out of the fight. Mooks will willingly lay down their lives for the main villain. To reflect this, Any Mook within 1" of a villain becomes a pawn, sacrificing his life so his master can live. Any attack made against the villain is instead made against the Mook, as he leaps into the way of the attack, to protect the life of his master.

Mooks do not have to be limited to only the service of a villain. If a Game Master so desires, she can throw Mooks at the player-characters in any situation where a large-scale combat is called for. They could represent wave after wave of marauding Green Martians, or the gibbering cultists who worship the dark hidden gods of Mars, or even a criminal gang operating within a Red Martian city.





## AIRSHIPS OF MARS

The airships of Mars are the most valuable remnant of the ancient glories of the red planet. Without them, many Red Martian city-states would lose the ability to import goods from their distant neighbors, or would fall to invasion by Green Martian hordes or other armies. The airships perform a vital role in trade and defense.

For those nations who possess them, the airships of Mars represent power. For those individuals lucky enough to privately own one, they represent more than power. They represent freedom.

No detail is provided to explain the technology behind the airships - how they stay aloft, or what provides their propulsion. These details are best left a mystery -- the Martians themselves have forgotten, after all. Gamemasters are encouraged to come up with their own explanations, the discovery of which can form the basis of entire adventures.

## AIRSHIPS

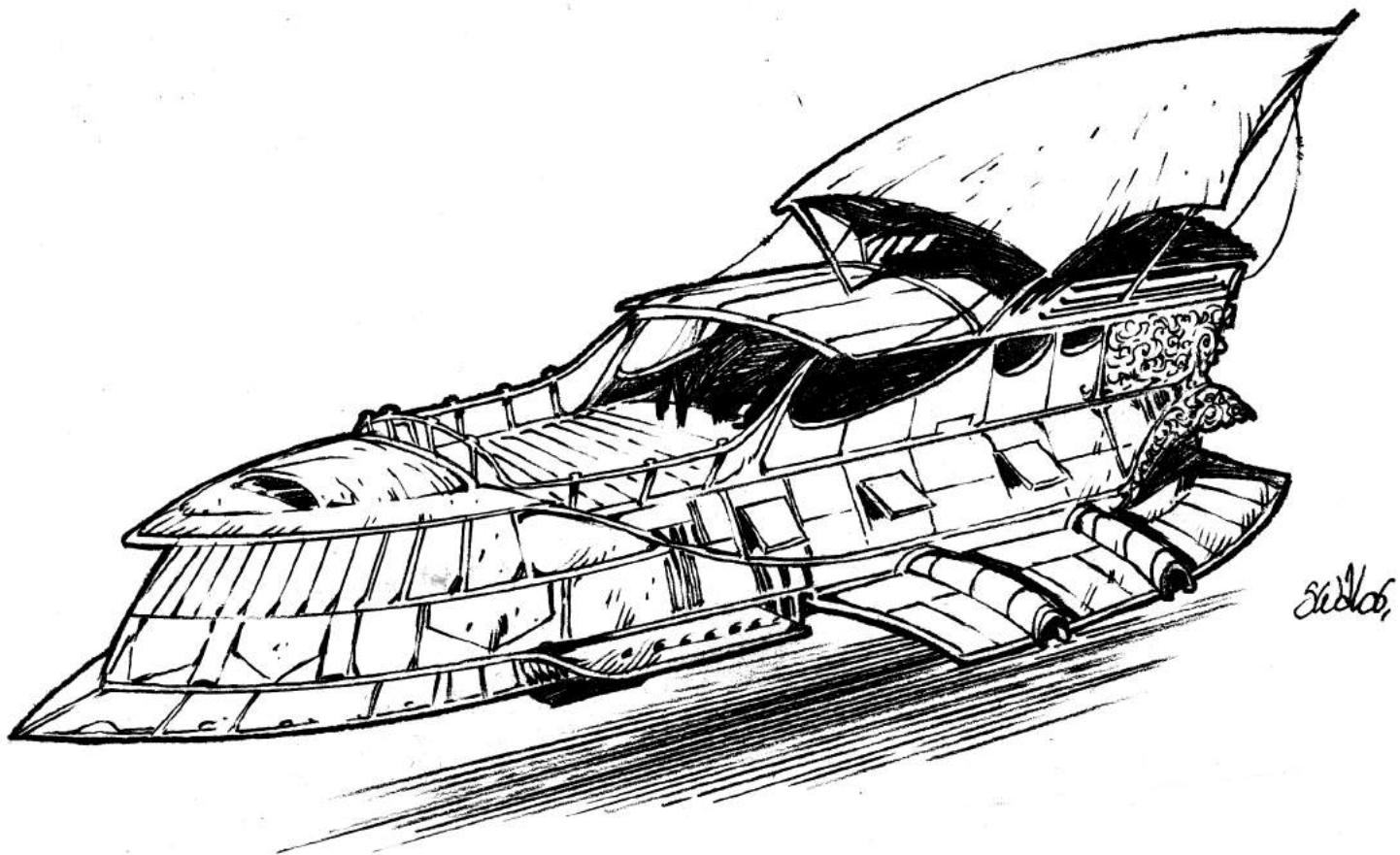
Airships are treated much like any other vehicle in the **Savage Worlds** rules.

All airships of a given size have roughly the same general stats, as shown in the table on the next page, though individual airships may vary from this standard profile.

An airship is described by the following statistics:

**Width/Length/Height** in standard **Savage World** scale inches.

**Acc/Top Speed** is the vehicle's Acceleration and Top Speed in inches per round. The Top Speed of vehicles is set for battlefields (not the open highway, where they can usually double their speed). More importantly, they're adapted to work well on the table-top. This means they're not entirely realistic, but work well for the game.



**Climb** is how many inches an aircraft can climb each round. See the Aerial Combat rules for more details.

**Toughness** is the vehicle's base durability Armor, which is already figured in to its Toughness (in parentheses).

**Crew** details how many sailors a ship needs, as well as how many passengers it can carry. Operating a vessel with less than the crew listing results in penalties on all die rolls for operating the ship: Operating with three-quarters to one-half of the crew listing results in a -2 penalty, and operating from one-half to one-quarter of the crew listing results in a -4. It is impossible to operate an airship with less than one-quarter of its crew listing.

For example: A Large airship operating with only 6 crew would be at a -2 to all rolls. With only 3 crew, that penalty would be -4. A Medium airship cannot be run by less than 2 people.

**Base Maneuver** covers how the airships are rated for their maneuverability in the air. For more information on maneuverability, see the section on Aerial Combat later in this chapter.

When outfitted for war, a ship can carry a certain number of weapons determined by its size. The **Hard Points** listing details the maximum number weapons a ship may carry. Normally, Martian airships carry two sorts of weapons: Mounted Radium Guns, and bomb racks. More information on these can be found in the section on Aerial Combat later in this chapter.

Airships must carry their own supplies, and most haul goods between markets. A ship may carry **Cargo** weighing up to the listed value. Additional passengers can be carried instead of cargo at a rate of 1 person per 200 lbs.

## AVERAGE AIRSHIP STATISTICS BY SIZE

|                           | Small           | Medium    | Large   | Huge     | Gargantuan | Colossal  |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------|---------|----------|------------|-----------|
| <b>Acc/<br/>Top Speed</b> | 25/200          | 25/200    | 20/180  | 20/180   | 16/160     | 15/150    |
| <b>Climb</b>              | 25              | 20        | 20      | 15       | 15         | 10        |
| <b>Toughness</b>          | 10(2)           | 14(2)     | 16(4)   | 20(4)    | 22(4).     | 24(5)+    |
| <b>Crew</b>               | 1 (+1)          | 2 (+18)   | 8 (+36) | 24 (+60) | 100 (+100) | 200+      |
| <b>Base<br/>Maneuver</b>  | Perfect         | Good      | Average | Poor     | Clumsy     | Clumsy    |
| <b>Hard Points</b>        | 2               | 3         | 5       | 8        | 12         | 16+       |
| <b>Cargo</b>              | <b>250 lbs.</b> | 1000 lbs. | 5 tons  | 25 tons  | 100 tons   | 400 tons+ |
| <b>Width</b>              | 1               | 4         | 7       | 10       | 14         | 20+       |
| <b>Length</b>             | 3               | 12        | 21      | 30       | 40         | 60+       |
| <b>Height</b>             | Top Deck        | 2 decks   | 3 decks | 4 decks  | 5 decks    | 6 decks + |

# AIRSHIP COMBAT

Travel through the aerial realm is a dangerous proposition. Not only does a traveller face the potentially deadly creatures that call the skies of Mars home, but there is the danger of encountering an enemy airship or marauding pirate as well.

Combat in the air is a nasty, brutish, and short affair. One devastating hit can send a combatant tumbling from the sky to meet his end. A blow that would only stagger a warrior on the ground can be the strike that ends an aerial battle.

In battle, one member of the crew must be designated as the captain. The ship moves on the captain's action card. Piloting checks are made by the character who is piloting (which may also be the captain, or another character), and all combat rolls are made by the character operating a particular weapon.



## COMBAT SCALE

If you use miniatures and a combat map to keep track of battles, ships can pose a slight problem in terms of scale. They are generally large enough to take up the entire space represented by a map that uses the standard **Savage Worlds** scale. To counter this, consider scaling the map up so that each inch on the map is equal to 4 yards, or even more. What you lose in fine detail you gain in usability. When ships close or a melee erupts, use the smaller scale to represent the action or zoom in on one smaller section of the battlefield.

## ABSTRACT MOVEMENT

The aerial movement rules work best with miniatures and a battlemat. However, if you prefer to game without these tools you may prefer to use an abstract system of determining each combatants relative position. At the start of each round, the captain of each airship makes a Knowledge (Tactics) check. These checks are modified as per the table below:

| Maneuverability | Modifier |
|-----------------|----------|
| Perfect         | +4       |
| Good            | +2       |
| Average         | +0       |
| Poor            | -2       |
| Clumsy          | -4       |

Then determine initiative as usual. When a combatant takes its action, it may choose to gain the benefit of attacking from the rear arc of any opponent who rolled lower on its Dexterity or Ride check.

While this rule removes some of the realism and tactical options from aerial combat, it does allow you to quickly resolve combats in the sky without ignoring the rather large advantage a highly agile flyer has over a slower opponent.



## TACTICAL MOVEMENT

Airships move on their captain's action card. Piloting consumes the pilots action unless he's stopped, though he may take other actions as well at a standard multi- action penalty. Passengers act on their own initiative as usual.

Airships have an "Acceleration" value that tells you how many inches per turn they may increase their current speed, up to their listed Top Speed. A vehicle can decrease its speed by twice its Acceleration (or more in a Hard Brake—see the sidebar on Maneuvers).

The player controlling the airship decides his speed at the beginning of his action, and moves it that many inches. The vehicle remains at that speed until the airships next action, so record the current speed somewhere for the next round and in case it hits something. Note that in **MARS**, the "Speed Kills" rule from the **Savage Worlds** core does not apply.

A vehicle can move up to half its Top Speed in reverse. Piloting rolls made while in reverse suffer a -2 modifier.

## MANEUVERS

The following are common maneuvers that may be performed by airships. The penalty to the Piloting roll is listed in parentheses. If the maneuver is failed, move the airship to the point of the maneuver, then roll on the Out of Control Table to see where it actually ends up.

**Evasive Maneuvers** (-2): Making the airship harder to hit by actively avoiding fire. A successful roll gives enemies a -2 to hit, with an additional -2 for each raise on the roll.

**Hard Brake** (0): The airship decelerates up to three times the normal Acceleration.

**Maneuver** (?): This one covers most everything else a pilot might try to do, not covered specifically by these rules. If the roll is failed, the airship goes out of control as usual.

**Obstacle** (-2 or more): Pilots trying to fly through tight obstacles—narrow canyons, over or beneath other airships, etc.—must make a Piloting check. The standard difficulty is -2, but really tight spots might call for a -4 or greater penalty. If the roll is failed, the vehicle hits the obstacle and suffers collision damage as usual.

**Ram** (Opposed): Though we have to move airships in turns on the table-top, they're actually moving simultaneously in the "real world." For that reason, when one car rams another, we give the defender a chance to get out of the way—even if it's not his turn. When this happens, the two pilots make opposed Piloting rolls. If the attacker wins, he's managed to ram his foe and damage is calculated normally. If the defender wins, he must move his vehicle just out of the way in any direction (including changing altitude).

**Tight Turn** (0): The vehicle can double its usual turn rate.

**Pop-Up** (0): Airships are Vertical Take Off and Landing (VTOL) vehicles, capable of hovering in place. An airship can hide behind cover, rise, attack, and then descend again—usually before the stunned enemy can react. This maneuver simply allows the pilot to ascend above an obstacle and then descend again in the same move, so that he's only vulnerable to opponents with Hold actions. It takes a Piloting roll to ascend and fire in time to descend again. If failed, the craft simply stays at its firing altitude or fails to fire—pilot's choice.

**Power Dive** (0): A pilot can enter a controlled power dive by making a Piloting roll. If failed, he must roll on the Out of Control table. If successful, the airship descends up to 40" per round.

## OUT OF CONTROL

| 2d6   | Effect  |
|-------|---|
| 2     | Roll Over: The vehicle experiences a Plummet and Instability (q.v.). Any unsecured equipment and 1d10 unsecured crew or passengers fall out of the vessel as it rolls.  |
| 3-4   | Plummet: Move the airship 2d6" in the direction of the maneuver, or 2d6" away from a damaging blow. Roll a d12, read it like a clock facing, and point the vehicle in that direction. Check for altitude loss on the table below. |
| 5-9   | Instability: Move the airship 1d6" left or right (in the direction of a failed maneuver, or away from a damaging attack).   |
| 10-11 | Drop: Check for altitude loss on the table below.   |
| 12    | Going Down: The airship experiences Instability, and enters into a power dive, descending up to 40".  |

| 2d6  | Altitude Change |
|------|-----------------|
| 2    | Down 4d10"      |
| 3-4  | Down 3d10"      |
| 5-6  | Down 2d10"      |
| 7-8  | Down 1d10"      |
| 9-11 | No change.      |
| 12   | Up 1d10"        |

Unlike the standard **Savage Worlds** vehicle rules, airships on Mars do not use the turn template while moving. An airship is able to turn in one action based on its Base Maneuverability as follows:

| Base    | Max Turn (degrees)         |
|---------|----------------------------|
| Perfect | Any                        |
| Good    | 90° for every 20" of speed |
| Average | 45° for every 20" of speed |
| Poor    | 45° for every 20" of speed |
| Clumsy  | 45° for every 40" of speed |

For example: a large airship with average base maneuverability can make a 45° for every 20" of speed. If the airship is travelling at 50, and wants to change course to come back around opposite to their initial heading, that would require 4 turns (180 degrees). At their current speed, the airship is capable of turning 90° this action (2 turns

for each 20" of speed), which means they will complete their turn on their next action.

## COLLISIONS

Collisions are very deadly in **Savage Worlds**. The damage to the vehicle and its passengers is 1d6 for every 5" of its current speed (round normally). If an airship moving at 40" per turn hits a mountain, for instance, it suffers 8d6 damage, as does anyone on board (and the mountain, for that matter).

Increase the damage if an airship hits another object moving toward it. This is called "relative speed." If two fliers ram into each other at a speed of 12, for instance, their relative speed is actually 24 and each flier suffers 4d6 damage. Similarly, a vehicle moving away from an attacker subtracts its speed from the ramming vehicle's.

## LOSING CONTROL

Failing a Piloting roll causes a vehicle to go “out of control.” When this happens, roll 2d6 on the Out of Control Table. Resolve any additional movement immediately. Anything in the way gets smashed—check out the collision rules on the previous page if that happens.

## ALTITUDE

As combatants swoop and soar in the sky, they change their altitude and attack each other from above and below. Unlike ground battles, air combats are fought in a fully three-dimensional environment. This aspect of battles in the air can cause a lot of headaches for determining ranges between two combatants. As such, these rules largely ignore up and down movement, since the planetary romance genre stories were never concerned with realism during battle scenes.

Simply fight battles on a two-dimensional grid as normal. Allow combatants to fly over each other while moving. If a combatant flies straight up or down, note the distance between the flier and the level plane represented by the combat map. For example, if a combatant flies 50 feet below the battle, note that down. Any combatant shooting at an opponent that has flown up or down uses the greater of the range between the two figures on the flat plane or the distance between the target and the two-dimensional plane of the battle.

While this is far from realistic, it is a simple way to quickly account for vertical movement. Game Masters who wish to figure actual ranges using the Pythagorean theorem are more than welcome to do so.

Should an airship hit the ground while out of control (see table), it suffers damage normally for its current speed (1d6 per 5” of movement, rounded down). Add in half the number of inches descended that turn when figuring speed as well. Damage for anyone on board the aircraft when it hits is figured as usual.

A pilot can try to save his airship — even if it is wrecked — by making a crash landing. This is a Piloting roll at -4. If he makes it, roll on the Out of Control Table (ignoring further altitude loss

results) to see where the craft ends up and halve the damage for the landing. If the roll is failed, the craft takes damage as usual.

Should an aircraft hit the ground and not be wrecked (due to a sudden altitude drop and a low damage roll), finish any movement from the Out of Control Table, then reduce the airship’s speed to 0.

## ATTACKS

Airships have hardpoints, each of which can be mounted with a single weapon. Each weapon is assigned a firing arc, either rear or forward. The exception to this are bomb racks, which are mounted ventrally, to drop bombs on targets below. Weapons may only fire into the ship’s arc to which they’re assigned.

Combat between airships and their crews works much like regular combat, with only a few exceptions. Below are a few modifiers to remember during airship combat.

| Situation      | Bonus/Penalty |
|----------------|---------------|
| Evasive Target | -2 or more    |
| Target size:   |               |
| Small          | -2            |
| Medium         | --            |
| Large          | --            |
| Huge           | +2            |
| Gargantuan+    | +4            |
| Colossal       | +4            |

Dropped bombs are resolved with a standard attack roll, and can only target objects below the airship. Missed attack rolls result in deviation from the targeted point. Roll a d12, read like a clock face, and proceeding clockwise, determine the direction of the deviation. The distance of the deviation is determined by rolling 1d8 and adding 1 inch for every 30 inches of current airship speed.

For example, a ship travelling at a speed of 40 misses a bombing attack roll. The Game Master rolls a d12 and gets a 3. The deviation distance is rolled, getting a 4 on the d8, to which the GM adds 1 for the speed of the airship. The bombs fall 6" off-target to the right.



The captain does not normally control a ship's weapon. Instead, the crew controls and fires them. As the crew takes casualties, the captain may assign sailors to one weapon or another to keep them fully manned.

## DAMAGE

Damage that equals or exceeds the airship's Toughness forces the pilot to make a Piloting roll or go Out of Control (roll on the Out of Control Table). Each raise on the damage roll also inflicts a "wound." Each wound caused to the craft inflicts a -1 penalty to the Pilot's Piloting skill rolls until someone repairs the damage. The attacker also scores a critical hit for each wound inflicted, and rolls on the Critical Hit Table to find out exactly what happened.

When a vehicle takes its 4th wound, it is automatically wrecked. A wrecked airship plummets 20" toward the ground immediately on being wrecked, then 40" per round afterward.

Characters may repair their airships given sufficient time and at least some basic tools. This requires a Repair roll minus the damage modifier, and takes 1d6 hours per wound level the vehicle has suffered. The loss of technological knowledge on Mars means that this Repair roll must be made at a -2, unless the character has the Arcane Background (Weird Science) edge.

Wrecked airships, however, can never be repaired. The knowledge to rebuild a vessel from such massive damage has been lost to the past.

## CRITICAL HITS

2d6

### Effect

- 2 Scratch and Dent:** The attack merely scratches the paint. There's no lasting damage.
- 3 Engine:** The engine is hit. Acc/Top Speed drop by one quarter.
- 4 Locomotion:** Whatever furnishes propulsion (rockets, sails, depends on the design) has been hit. Halve the airship's Top Speed immediately.
- 5 Controls:** The control system is hit. Until a Repair roll is made, the airship loses the ability to (d6 roll) Climb (1) Turn left (2-3) Turn right (4-5) or Descend (6)
- 6-8 Chassis:** The airship suffers a hit in the body with no special effects.
- 9-10 Crew:** 2d6 casualties among NPC crew or passengers. They may recover after the fight. If the roll is doubled, a PC or other Wild Card is hit. Subtract the armor value of the ship if the victim was below decks.
- 11 Weapon:** A single weapon is destroyed and may no longer be used. If there is no weapon, this is a Chassis hit instead.
- 12 Wrecked:** The airship is wrecked and begins to crash (see damage section).

## AIRSHIP WEAPONS

| Type          | Range     | Damage | RoF | Weight | Shots | Min. Str | Notes |
|---------------|-----------|--------|-----|--------|-------|----------|-------|
| Radium Gun    | 40/80/160 | 4d6+2  | 1   | 18     | 25*   | -        | AP4   |
| Standard Bomb | dropped   | 3d8    | 1   | 50     | 6*    | -        | AP2   |
| Radium Bomb   | dropped   | 6d10   | 1   | 30     | 1     | -        | AP4   |

\* Each weapon can carry double the ammunition by using an additional hardpoint.

## CHASES

Airship chases can be run using the standard **Savage Worlds** rules.

## BOARDING ACTIONS

To successfully launch a boarding action, two ships need to be brought alongside each other and secured. If the defender is willing to accept a boarding attempt, this may be considered automatic as the attacker closes range.

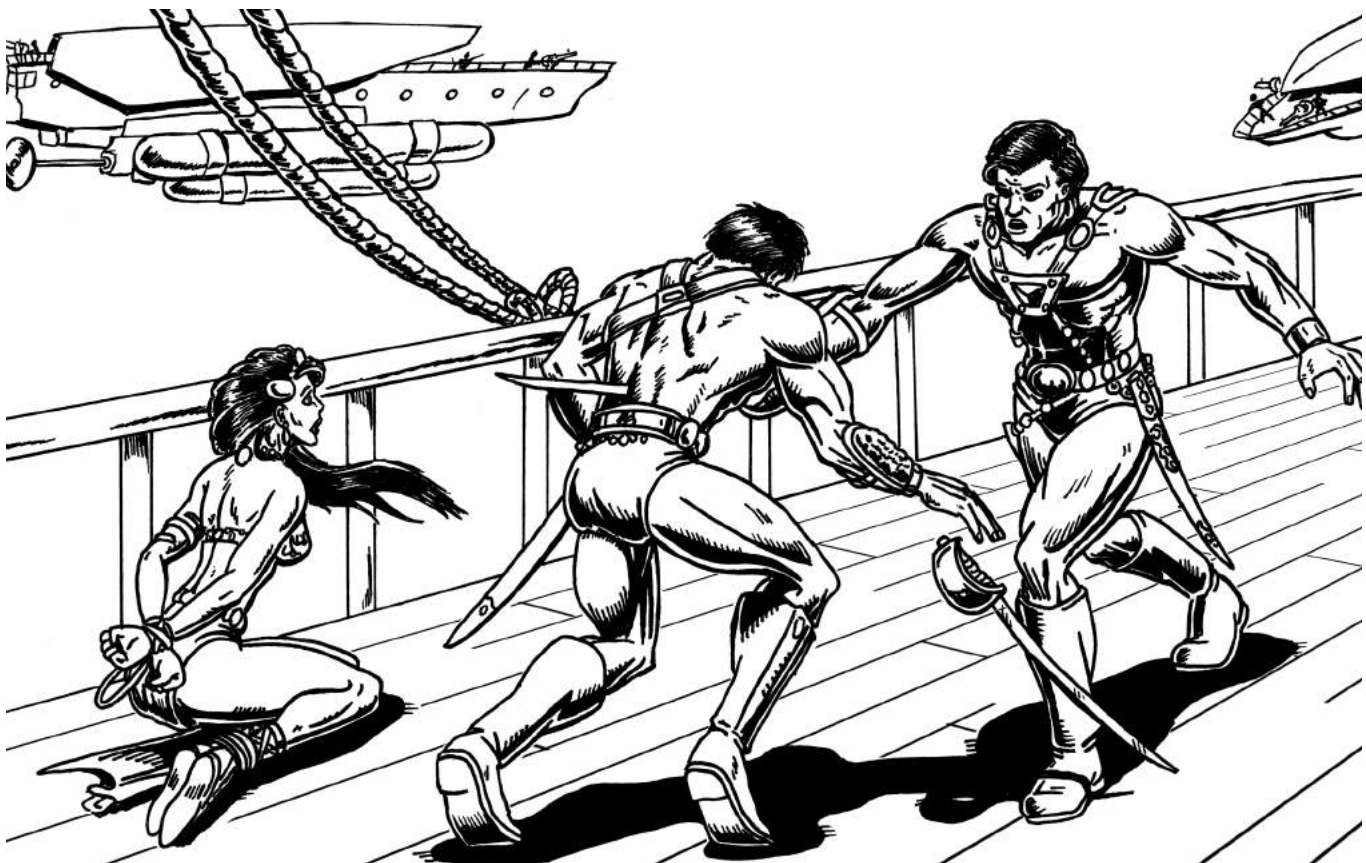
However, few crew are willing to accept an attempted boarding action. As the attacker draws close, grappling hooks are thrown, all attempting to snare the defender's ship and draw it close enough for the attacker's men to cross over and begin to board. The defender meanwhile, will be firing ranged weapons as they try to keep the attacker's head down, all the while severing the ropes and chains that are bringing the two ships together.

If the defender wishes to resist the attempt, both they and the attacker make opposing Knowledge (Tactics) checks. The attacker's check is modified as follows;

| Circumstance                                       | Modifier |
|--|----------|
| Vessels 2+ size classes apart                      | -4       |
| Vessels 1+ size class apart                        | -2       |
| Attacker's crew size larger than defenders         | +2       |
| Defender's vessel is not a warship                 | +2       |
| Attacker's vessel is a warship                     | +2       |
| Every additional ship attempting to board defender | +2       |

If the defender wins the check, the boarding action has been successfully defeated before it began – the ships are not bound together and both may move freely in their next action. If the attacker wins the check, he has ensnared the enemy ship and may now immediately launch a boarding action.

Boarding actions can be carried out using the Mass Combat system in the core **Savage Worlds** rules.



# A RARE FIND

BY AARON ROSENBERG

“Truly, this place is a wonder, a treasure trove yet untouched!” The red Martian muttered to himself, his soft words still loud enough to carry across the ruins of what must once have been a grand plaza.

He turned and gazed about him as he spoke, quick grey eyes absorbing every detail of his surroundings: the precise stonework of the buildings facing the wide square, their blocks crafted each to the other as if poured from a mold and fitting so closely barely a chink between them could be spied; the more intricate workings of the plaza itself, a vast mosaic of flowing geometric shapes his mind could barely interpret yet which he suspected would form a staggering beauty when viewed from above; the rubble that littered what had once been an elegant space of clean lines and artful simplicity.



His gaze drank in the broad etched signs still displayed above the buildings, their wording faded over many years but perhaps still legible once cleaned of dust and sand and debris. His eyes flickered to the spaces below those signs, where windows had once barred the interior from intrusion, and to the dark shadows lurking within them, promising goods and materials and devices left behind when the city was abandoned and perhaps waiting there still.

What he did not see, however, was potentially of far more importance. For he failed to notice a hulking shape concealed in a narrow alley between two buildings. A shape that crouched down in the shadows, heavy broadsword clasped tightly in one clawed hand, wide eyes narrowed in concentration, tusks aquiver with barely contained excitement.

Ratosh could scarcely believe his luck. His tribe had only returned to this ancient city days before, the chill in the air warning that winter once again approached and that they had best seek shelter before the true cold returned to bite deep through even their thick green hides. He and several of the others had been dispatched this very morning to scout the abandoned regions beyond where the tribe had established its traditional winter nest, seeking food and anything else



that might prove useful. But Ratosh had never dreamed he would come across a red Martian! Here, in this very city!

He eyed the man hungrily—the stranger was tall and well-formed for one of his race, and would provide enough meat for the tribe to feast well through the night. He had but to deliver the body to the womenfolk, and they would handle the mundane chores of cleaning and preparing the flesh. Ratosh himself did not stoop to such domestic tasks. He was a male, a mighty warrior of his tribe. To him fell the natural male tasks—hunting and gathering.

And now he was on the hunt.

The red Martian was on the move, and Ratosh rose silently to his feet, careful not to let his naked blade scrape the near wall as he stood to his full, towering height. His dark cloak billowed about him, its thick folds providing additional cover here in the shadows, and his heavy booted feet made no sound as Ratosh inched back. He knew he must take pains not to spook the red Martian, for then another of the tribe might find the man and claim the kill for himself. Ratosh had spied the intruder first, and this victory belonged to him.

He thought for a moment the red Martian was going to enter the very alley where he stood, but at the last the man turned, instead, to the building just before it. He studied the building's front even as Ratosh studied him in turn. Ratosh noted the

artfully dyed but faded silkweave armor, the worn short sword and matching dagger, the handbow, the coil of rope, the sturdy pack. This man was clearly a seasoned explorer, well accustomed to travel and no doubt capable of defending himself against common dangers. Ratosh knew he would have to be careful. He far outweighed the man, and had superior strength and reach, but the red Martian would be faster, quicker with his blades. If given a chance to bring that speed and agility into play, the contest might go poorly for Ratosh. He would have to make this quick and count on surprise and force to carry the encounter.

A hurried glance around the corner showed no sign of the crimson stranger, and at first Ratosh thought the man had somehow escaped during his momentary distraction. Then he caught a flicker of movement within the building, a puff of dust billowing up from the floor as if its centuries-long slumber had been rudely disturbed. Ratosh smiled, baring his tusks. The man had gone inside! Now he would be trapped, and that made him easy prey.

Hefting his broadsword, Ratosh moved stealthily around the corner. Then he brusquely shouldered his way through the building's narrow—for one of his stature—door, his bulk filling the space beyond. The red Martian was in here somewhere, of that Ratosh was sure. And only one of them would emerge alive.



# FIVE: GAME MASTERING





The world of **MARS** should be one of high adventure, pulp action, and endless excitement. While there is ample room for role-playing, this is not a game of delicate and cunning plots slowly woven, nor of intricate personal revelation and self-discovery. This is a game of racing across a burning bridge, sword and blaster in hand, to take down the fiendish Baltannish Duke before he reaches the trigger of his solar bomb!

This section of **MARS** discusses many of the tropes, themes, and concepts of the 'Planetary Romance' genre, and the things that a Gamemaster should know.

## SWORD AND PLANET: THE PLANETARY ROMANCE GENRE

Sword and planet? Planetary Romance? What do these terms mean?

The genre originally called planetary romance developed out of the adventure fiction of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, specifically tales of exotic adventure in foreign lands or "lost worlds", where civilized men travelled across strange lands encountering savages and "alien" cultures. Eventually, writers began to mix that genre with the growing popularity of science fiction, replacing the foreign land with far-off worlds, and the "alien" cultures with true aliens.

Perhaps the first example of this genre was *Lieutenant Gullivar Jones: His Vacation*, by Edwin Lester Arnold (published in the US, and perhaps better known, under the title *Gullivar of Mars*). The novel, published in 1905, featured a soldier from the Southern US, who is transported to Mars by means of a magic carpet, where he becomes involved with a Martian Princess and has a series of adventures on the Red Planet. Sadly, the reception to the book was lukewarm at best, which led Arnold to stop writing fiction. However, *Gullivar of Mars* was the obvious inspiration for a far more popular tale.

The serialized adventure *Under the Moons of Mars* (later retitled *A Princess of Mars*) appeared in All-Story Magazine in 1911. The author, Edgar Rice Burroughs, is often credited with popularizing the genre. The story was published as a novel in 1917, and also featured a Southerner transported to Mars via supernatural means, the love interest of a Martian Princess, and similar trappings to Arnold's story, but Burroughs' tales of Barsoom (the natives name for their home planet) presented the romantic image of a noble race struggling on a dying world, populated by a myriad of bizarre creatures and savages bent on their destruction. His hero, John Carter, is a far more dynamic character than the rather hapless Gullivar, which, along with his brisk plotting and thrilling adventures, made *A Princess of Mars* a popular success, spawning ten additional sequels up to 1943.

The popularity of the genre led other authors to explore it. One such author was Otis Adelbert Kline, who debuted his series set on Venus, starting with *Planet of Peril* in 1929. There are apocryphal stories of a feud between Kline and Burroughs, with the latter apparently incensed at the imitation -- but the only evidence for this is that Burroughs decided to write his own series set on Venus within a few years of Kline's publication, and then Kline wrote a new series set on Mars directly after Burroughs released his Venus tales. (Kline's *Swordsman of Mars* and *Outlaws of Mars* have now been reprinted in their unabridged format for the first time since their 1930s debut, and are available from Paizo Publishing's Planet Stories imprint.)

In the 1960s, there was a revival of the genre when the Burroughs Mars books were reprinted (along with dozens of other pulp tales) in paperback format. These reprints were a hit, leading publishers to mine the past heavily, reprinting Kline, Arnold and other authors. Given the popularity of these old stories, it was inevitable that they would spawn a new breed of planetary romance.

The 1960s revival is the source of the term "Sword and Planet" -- echoing the term "Swords and Sorcery", also coined during that period to



refer to the fantasy tales of writers like Robert E. Howard (who, in fact, also worked in the planetary romance genre -- a single story, *Almuric*, published posthumously and edited by his literary agent... Otis Adelbert Kline).

Just as the swords and sorcery revivalists began to write their own stories within the genre (Fritz Leiber's tales of Fafrd and the Gray Mouser, Michael Moorcock's Elric series, etc.), so too did new tales of planetary romance appear, under the new banner of sword and planet.

The sword and planet tales are more directly imitative of the earlier planetary romances, specifically those of Burroughs. Michael Moorcock, for example wrote a trilogy of Burroughs pastiches in 1965 -- *Warrior of Mars* (aka *City of the Beast*), *Blades of Mars* (aka *Lord of the Spiders*) and *Barbarians of Mars* (aka *Masters of the Pit*) -- featuring his Eternal Champion archetype, this time in the person of "Michael Kane", an earthman who is teleported to the Red Planet. (Again, these have also been reprinted in recent years, first by White Wolf in the 1990s, and most recently by Paizo via Planet Stories).

Lin Carter placed his sword and planet series on Callisto, the moon of Jupiter, which he describes as having a tropical environment. Starting with *Jandar of Callisto* (1972), the series ran for eight books, featuring earthman Jonathan Dark-- known to the inhabitants of Callisto as "Jandar" -- as he contends with monstrous creatures, savage insect men, barbarian hordes, sky pirates in flying ships, and the dangerous Mind Wizards of Kuur while seeking to rescue the beautiful princess Darloona.

More authors decided to play in the sword and planet sandbox, into the 1970s. Gradually, though, through the 70s, the genre began to dry up as writers moved on to other tales, or series evolved away from the roots of their initial inspiration.

John Norman's *Gor* series began, in *Tarnsman of Gor* (1967) as a Sword and Planet pastiche, but as the series has progressed through 27 (!) books, they've moved further from their initial

inspiration and more into explorations of the author's philosophies and sexual fantasies.

The longest series, which began in the sword and planet genre and continued publication until 1998, are the "Dray Prescott" books, written by Kenneth Bulmer under the pseudonym Alan Burt Akers. The series, which began with *Transit to Scorpio* in 1972, continued through fifty-three novels!

## THEMATIC ELEMENTS

Every genre has certain basic elements which help define it. If you see horses, ten-gallon hats, and six shooters, it's most likely a western. (Or an episode of *Firefly*.) If there's huge space-dreadnoughts, starfaring rogues in battered tramp freighters, and mysterious psychic powers, it's most like a space opera. (Or, er, an episode of *Firefly*.) If there's spandex costumes, dramatic speeches, flowing capes, and laser-beam eyes, it's most likely superheroes (and *not* an episode of *Firefly*). The planetary romance genre also has its own tropes and identifying characteristics, some of which are discussed here:

### RUINED CITIES

The world of **MARS** is an ancient one, and it has left behind many forgotten relics. Ruined cities are discussed in some detail on Page 26. This section discusses their thematic use. A ruined city should exist as a reminder of past glories forgotten, or of ancient treasures to be rediscovered. It provides a bridge between past and present, should figure heavily in stories about discovery or exploration.

### ROMANCE

The term 'Planetary Romance' is somewhat multi-layered. On the one hand, a 'romance' in the classical, literary, sense does not necessarily mean erotic love; it once simply meant 'novel' or 'story'. 'Romantic' literature is literature about ideals and archetypes, not about mundane realism, and there does not need to be any sort of 'love story' associated with it. To some extent, this is



what the term 'romance' means in the genre name. However, the genre is *also* known for romance in the more common usage – a boy, a girl, and a horde of slaving monsters come to kill them all.

In the traditional source works, the female in the romance is often helpless or fawning, and exists solely to be kidnapped/threatened/used as a pawn. This is one of the few areas when an injection of some more modern sensibilities might be in order. If both romantic partners are player characters, then, the kidnapping, etc, duties should be fairly shared between them. If a romance develops between a PC and an NPC, the NPC might be a bit more of a victim, but should also be someone *worthy* of the efforts and love of the PC.

Romance is a powerful motivator. Once smitten, a hero (or heroine...) in the genre will go to any extreme for their love. Often, a simple glance is enough to send hearts racing and blood boiling and clichés swarming. A hero might catch only a glimpse of a fair maiden as she is hustled into an unmarked sky-corsair by masked strangers, and that single peek will be enough to send him questing half across the planet to rescue her. (She will, in turn, love him. There are few unrequited romances in the genre, at least once derring-do has entered the picture; no one would be willing to reject someone who has just risked their life, often multiple times, for them.) There are, however, sometimes triangles where two prospective lovers will battle together to rescue their mutual love, who must choose only one of them; as a helpful coincidence, the one who is rejected will most likely have met some other partner during the course of the adventure.

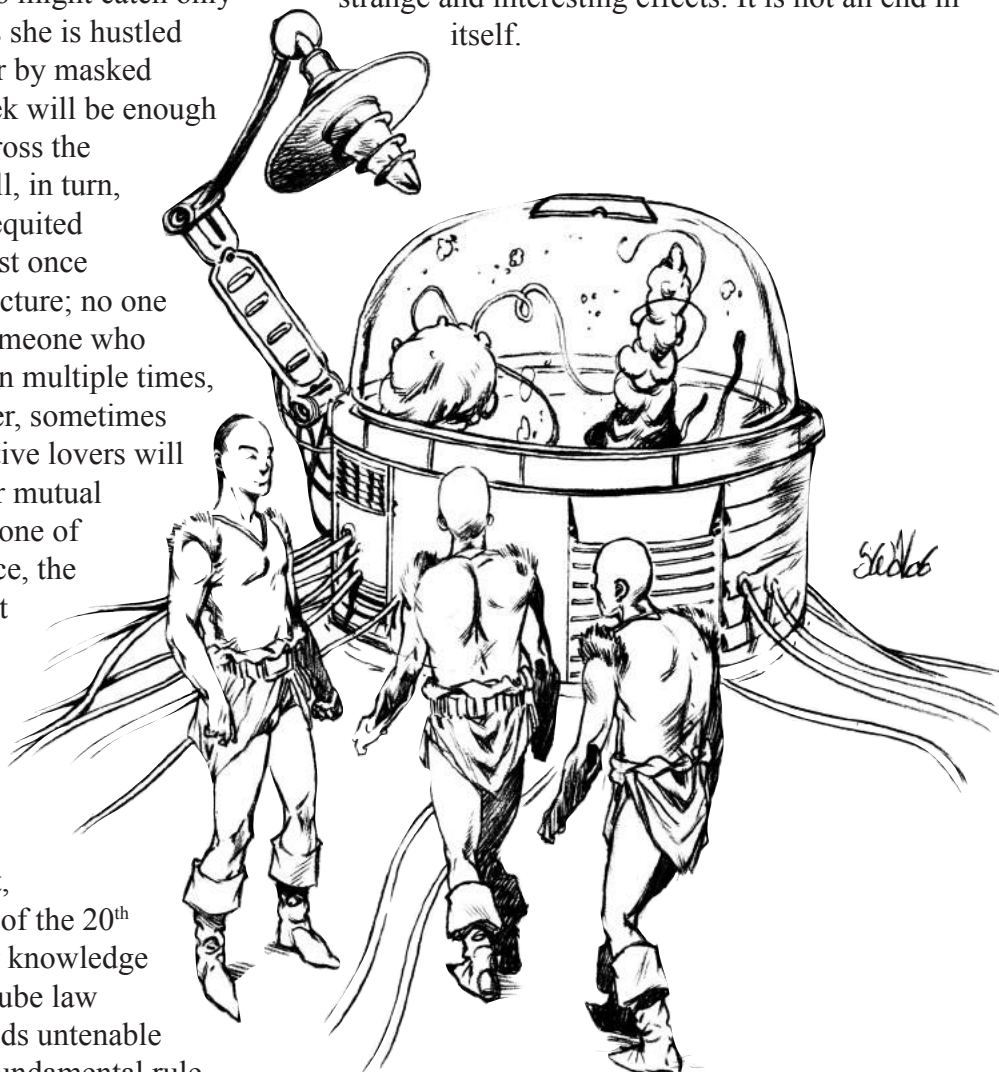
## WEIRD SCIENCE

Forget all you know...at least, anything from the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Even older knowledge – such as the whole square/cube law which renders giant arthropods untenable – should be cast aside. The fundamental rule

of the genre is that almost anything is possible, if a convincing bit of technobabble can be flung out.

Technology tends to develop in isolation. That is, there are flying ships, but most land transport is animal powered. Melee weapons are commonly used, despite the existence of powerful radium guns. There are computers, of a sort, and intra-city communication networks, but no radio or long-range means of fast communication. A lone inventor can create a miraculous device in a few days of work, but he will never mass-produce and sell it.

Very few problems are solved by purely technological means. The proper response to a giant robot is to shoot it or leap onto its back and drive your sword into its one vulnerable spot, not to attempt to reconfigure the plasma emitter to produce anti-baryon particles. Technology is purely an enabling mechanism, an excuse for strange and interesting effects. It is not an end in itself.



Some specifics:

*Evolution happens at fantastic speeds:* Not overnight, but in the thousands of years it took for Mars to dry, many species evolved or adapted to the changing conditions, producing such phenomenon as the thornpatches.

*Creatures of any size and shape can exist:* There is no need to worry about muscle density or how a giant insect breathes. They simply exist, and that's that.

*Interbreeding is possible:* A human and a Red Martian ought to be unable to produce any offspring – but they can. There is no need for a complex explanation for this – anything which looks humanoid and is sexually attractive can mate with a human.

*Primitive styles, advanced results:* Robots seemingly made of gears and vacuum tubes can out-perform the best microchipped machines 21<sup>st</sup> century science and engineering can produce. A radium pistol is far deadlier than any attempts at building a man-portable laser. Martian technology looks clunky and baroque, but is nonetheless extremely advanced.

*Limited cultural impact:* The science of **MARS** has only a minimal effect on the cultures of the world – just as magic in other d20 games does not fundamentally alter the feudal tropes. Thus, fairly primitive social structures exist side-by-side with flying ships, ray guns, and gargantuan thinking machines.

*Lone Genius:* There are few think-tanks, research programs, or massive investments in R&D on Mars. Almost all 'new' science is the result of a lone, often mad, genius whose iconoclastic inventions are rarely understandable by anyone else. Even if there is a determined project to produce a specific device, it will require a lead scientist of extraordinary skill to do the actual work – everyone else is basically window dressing.

(This often leads to the *kidnapping* of some known genius, which in turn leads to adventure!)

## GRAND SCHEMES

Just as the characters are broad, so, too, are the plots. Even if an adventure at first seems to be purely personal (helping a soldier in the guard find out why his fiancée has vanished mere days before they were due to be wed), it will quickly unfold into a planet-spanning epic. (The fiancée is not a Callorian merchant's daughter as she claims, but is the scion of a powerful family in Baltan, who were planning to marry her off to an elderly and cruel (even by Baltan standards) man, and as the players discover this, they will also learn that this man gained his own power by means of ancient devices found in a newly-discovered city far to the south, devices which will allow Baltan to launch a massive assault on Callor itself!)

The goals of villains should be vast, even if they are not evident at first, and the deeds of the heroes should be equally spectacular. Any incident, no matter how seemingly minor, can be a piece in a larger puzzle.

That said, these are not games of tedious deduction and careful plotting. By all means, players should be required to think through puzzles or make leaps of insight, but the main role of such exercises is to lead them, relatively quickly, to the next stage of the adventure. Solving puzzles merely opens the doors; the real 'adventure' is in what is found behind it. Game Masters should bear this in mind, and consider that, in genre, the most ludicrous coincidences can occur. Accidentally overheard conversations, dropped notes, the sighting of a familiar face among the henchmen of the villain, and so on, are all proper. It may well be that the expenditure of an Action Point to justify such a lucky break is required, or the Game Master might just decide to let the players have one 'for free', if it keeps the game moving.

## STRANGE VISTAS

Every adventure should have a visit to someplace

spectacular and unexpected. The long history of Mars, the endless parade of mad scientists, the strange experiments by the Grey Martians, unusual atmospheric phenomenon, and many other things have left their mark on the planet.

Some examples can include:

Forests of glass or crystal, either living 'silicon trees' or ancient woodlands somehow transformed.

Areas where the sand is so fine it is like a liquid, with sailing ships skimming across it.

Cities built of ice blocks on the poles.

Entire Red Martian cities sunken into caverns, the inhabitants unaware that there

are any survivors on the surface.

Former deep-sea rifts, now immense canyon systems which are just humid enough to support strange and exotic life.

Boneyards which stretch for miles, filled with the skeletons of immense and extinct beasts.

Relics of the Glory That Was Mars – huge statues which bracket the entrance to a cavern. A relief, carved in stone, which tells the history of a now-vanished Martian kingdom and which stretches for miles along a cliff face. An airship of immense size, many times larger than the grandest aerial dreadnoughts still available, crashed into the desert wastes.





# CREATING ADVENTURES

This section of **MARS** takes a look at how you go about designing adventures. For Game Masters looking for a little bit of quick inspiration, we've also included a random adventure generator to help you produce the outline of an adventure in just a few minutes, leaving you time to flesh it out as you see fit.

Keep in mind: The golden rule of an exciting and successful sword and planet adventure is to keep the adventures fast-paced with plenty of action.

## ADVENTURES AND CAMPAIGNS

An adventure is a collection of scenes or encounters, linked together to form a single story. Tales within the sword and planet genre tend to focus purely on the main events, rather than the extended journeys or random encounters to get from scene A to scene B, and neither should your adventures.

Adventures should always have a definite conclusion, a closing scene that draws a particular tale to a close. However, adventures in **MARS** don't have to be stand-alone events, with no relationship to what has gone before or what will come next. Adventures can exist within a greater framework of connected stories, which is known as a campaign.

You can think of a campaign as being like a series of planetary romance novels -- each novel usually stood on its own, but together as a series they told a longer story (often of one character's adventures on a particular planet -- but you can make your campaigns about anything you wish))

Once you're ready to start designing adventures, you need to decide whether your adventures will be scripted, situational, or some mix of the two.

## SCRIPTED ADVENTURES

Scripted adventures are interactive stories, where players can make choices along the way, but generally speaking the main thrust of the plot advances more or less intact regardless of what they do. Huge, world-spanning plots usually

follow this path -- the players can affect the outcome of individual chapters of the tale, but the big events draw the players up in the action. This allows a Game Master to tell incredible stories, but also requires more work as you have to plot out each step in the saga.

The drawback of scripted adventures is that they can often make players feel as though they are being railroaded -- along for the ride and helpless to do anything except sit back and watch as events unfold. A Game Master has to walk a fine line between dragging the players through a story of events they merely witness, and giving the players opportunity to control enough of what happens that they feel connected to it.

## SITUATIONAL ADVENTURES

Situational adventures are much easier to run if you're able to think on your feet as you won't have quite as much preparation. It's sort of like improvisational jazz -- in reality, the musicians have a collection of riffs that are well-practiced, which they link together on the fly through brief improvised sequences. If it's done well, it comes off as a seamless whole.

In a situational adventure, you present a set up and then just let the heroes deal with it however they choose. Say the heroes learn of a series of disappearances within a Red Martian city. What do the heroes do about it? Do they start investigating, looking for clues, or do they spot a pattern and lurk around the area, waiting for whatever is happening to happen again? Because these adventures give players' characters greater freedom to roam, you'll need to outline most of the people, places, and things near the adventure area, as well as a few staged encounters to toss in as needed. Think of these as your practiced riffs, which you throw into the improvisational mix to help things move along.

## THE PLOT

Every adventure is a story, and all stories need a plot -- otherwise they're just a collection of unrelated events. Most adventures can get by with a brief summary of the main focus of the story, taking up just a couple of lines. For longer adventures, it's better to break the plot down into



distinct parts, and then give each part its own summary.

For example, our earlier example have its plot summarized as follows:: “A series of mysterious disappearances are occurring within a Red Martian city. In fact, the victims are not victims at all, but converts to a new religious cult, and have left behind their former lives to join up with the cult leader at his encampment in the desert. The heroes discover that the cult plans to sweep across the face of Mars once they have amassed a large enough force. Can the heroes stop The Fanatics of Mars?” There you have it -- a brief summary that could lead to an adventure to rival the best of the classic sword and planet stories.

## THE VILLAIN

Every story needs a villain. It might be a Green Martian chieftan, a Lonarian religious zealot, a haughty Baltan Queen, or a bloodthirsty sky pirate. Ideally, the main villain of an adventure shouldn't appear directly until later in the tale -- perhaps even waiting until the climax of the

adventure to reveal themselves. Having them oppose the heroes via their henchman or other plots is an excellent way to build suspense for the eventual unveiling.

Remember as well that villains don't have to die at the end of the adventure. Having a major villain return in some future adventure, especially when the heroes believe them to be dead, can be very effective. Judicious use of bennies and the survival rule described on page 87 can save a villain for later use. Game Masters shouldn't overuse this option -- recurring villains should be the characters that the players love to hate.

## LOCATIONS

Locations are as important as the plot.

As we discussed in the previous section, strange vistas are a big part of the theme of the sword and planet genre, and you should echo this theme in your adventures.

Locations add excitement to the adventure. A battle on the pitching deck of an out-of-control

airship, with the danger of falling and the time limit of having to get off the vessel before it crashes, not only adds excitement to what could otherwise be just another combat scene, but presents heroes with a tactical challenge as well.

With the use of bennies to add declarations, players will probably add some details to the location. The Game Master may not have thought about these features while designing the adventure, but if they fit the location and let the heroes do something dramatic, there's no reason why it shouldn't be included. This way, the entire group will craft the setting, making your version of Mars unique to your campaign.

### ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

Adventures should generally be built around 3–4 scenes. This should give you enough material to last for a typical session, and bring the adventure to a suitable close at the end of play.

Of course, there's nothing stopping you from designing longer adventures. You just have to create more scenes and add a suitable cliffhanger ending, leading to the next session's play.

Every scene should have some sort of conflict, whether in the form of combat, a chase sequence, or interaction with an NPC.

### THE HOOK

A “hook” is the method used to get the heroes involved in your adventure. Hooks can be as simple as a patron giving the characters orders (“We want you to recover the priceless artifact which was stolen from our chambers”), related through rumor (“The cavern is said to be the location of the Dome of the Yellow Martians”), or actually involve the heroes (they arrive at a city just before it is placed under siege by a Green Martian horde).

### IN MEDIA RES

That's Latin for “starting in the middle of things.” It means that you begin the adventure straight into the action, with just a little prelude description. The heroes might be engaged in a battle against vicious beasts, or blasting their way clear from an White Ape slaver raid. This method is very useful

for getting the players straight into character, and it grabs their attention from the start.

The action doesn't even need to be connected to the main plot of the adventure, either -- a short unrelated action sequence can be used to simply set the mood -- Consider the pre-credits teaser sequences in the James Bond films as an example.

### THE MIDDLE

The middle of the adventure largely depends on what has been happening during play. Ideally, there should be one or two scenes that advance the plot in a logical fashion.

For example: say that the hook of the adventure is that the heroes are asked to serve as bodyguards for a Red Martian noble, who does not feel that he can trust any member of his household. We would most likely start strongly, in media res, with a combat against a group of assassins trying to kill the noble.

From there, the next logical scene would have the heroes investigating the household, interacting with NPCs and learning the backstory -- why doesn't the noble trust his own household, and who would want him dead, and why?

Perhaps a chase would make a good follow-up to that scene, as one of the noble's sons panics upon hearing that the heroes are questioning people, and he tries to escape before they get to him. Game Masters should vary action and non-action scenes whenever possible.

From there, who knows what happens next?

### THE CLIMAX

The climax is the finale of the story, where all of the pieces come together. The scene should also feature the main villain of the plot, giving the heroes the opportunity to defeat him. (Although again, using the Survival rules, it's possible that the villain may return to plague the heroes another day!).

The climax should be the toughest challenge faced by the heroes during the adventure.



Nothing is worse than struggling through adversity, only to reach the end... and have it turn out to be easy. There's a reason that the term "anticlimax" exists, after all.

Unlike some games where the difficulties of encounters are set by strict formula, geared to the strengths of the heroes, MARS is not designed that way. The Game Master should design encounters to fit the needs of the plot. If they appear to be too powerful for the heroes, the players will be forced to come up with ways to overcome the greater threats -- clever tactics, inspired ideas, and true heroism.

## NONPLAYER CHARACTERS

Mars is more than just the physical setting -- the deserts, the lost cities, the hidden jungles. It is also the various beings that live there, represented by the nonplayer characters (NPCs) created by the Game Master to interact with the heroes.

As stated in other Savage Worlds settings, Game Master's Rule #1 when it comes to NPCs is: Don't "design" them!

Don't create your NPCs with the character creation rules. Just give them what you think they ought to have in their various skills and attributes, give them suitable Edges (don't worry about meeting the requirements) and move on. The game is supposed to be easy for you to set up, run, and play. Don't sit around adding up skill points for NPCs when you could be designing fiendish traps and thinking up nasty special abilities for your monsters!

There are plenty of sample NPCs in Chapter Eleven, ready for you to include in your adventures. You can also use them as guides to help you create your own NPCs.

### PERSONALITY

The most important part of any Nonplayer Character is not the statistics, but their personality. Jot down a note or two about any NPCs the party is likely to come across so you'll have

some ideas. Some GMs find it useful shorthand to identify the prominent NPCs in their stories with actors or characters from film, television, books, or comics. Knowing that you've based the Red Nomad chieftan on King Leonidas from *300* will make it a bit easier to get a handle on not only his mannerisms, but his character as well. (Although if he starts yelling "*THIS! IS! MAAAAAAAARS!*", that's probably a bit too much of a give-away.)

Adding these extra touches to NPCs not only makes it easier for the Game Master to portray them, but also serves to make them stand out and be remembered by the players as well. That way the Nomad becomes a memorable character that they may seek out again in future adventures, rather than just a one-shot generic placeholder that they forget about by the next scene. Not every NPC needs this kind of depth of course, but those that do add a level of realism and continuity to your game.

### MAKING VILLAINS

Villains are the most important part of any sword and planet adventure. Mars may be populated by some nasty monsters, but the true focus of the plot should be a dastardly villain.

In keeping with the tropes of the sword and planet genre, there are no areas of grey when it comes to the morality of NPCs. There are heroes, and there are villains. Any NPC that appears to be grey is going to be a character that will eventually be revealed as a hero or villain (think Han Solo)... although if they're *actually* Grey, that's probably a good indication that they're a villain!

When designing a villain keep in mind their motivation. Why are they doing this? Every villain should have a reason that drives their actions, otherwise they are not fully fleshed out as a character. The random adventure generator (which follows), contains some ideas for villainous motivations.

# RANDOM ADVENTURE GENERATOR

The following series of tables allows a Game Master to create the bare bones of an adventure, ready to be fleshed out with additional details. Think of it as an inspiration generator.

It is especially useful when the heroes decide to ignore your planned adventure and go off in their own direction. A few rolls on the Random Adventure Generator can help you come up with a new story in a few minutes and get them straight into the action.

Just follow the steps below, and see where it leads.

## 1. VILLAIN

The villain is the main nemesis of the heroes. He is the spider at the centre of the web and usually only encountered at the climax of the adventure. The villain should be a fully developed Wild Card, at least equal in power to individual heroes, if not the whole party.

| d6 | Result        |
|----|---------------|
| 1  | Avenger       |
| 2  | Corrupter     |
| 3  | Destroyer     |
| 4  | Mad Scientist |
| 5  | Warlord       |
| 6  | Zealot        |

**Avenger:** Seeks revenge for a perceived wrongdoing either against them personally or against their cause or beliefs.

**Corrupter:** This villain works through subversion rather than brute force.

**Destroyer:** Destroyers are seeking to bring something (or someone) to a permanent end.

**Mad Scientist:** An unpredictable foe who has unusual powers. This category can also be used for villains with Psionic powers.

**Warlord:** A warlord is a militaristic villain, seeking to conquer by force. Note that he differs from a destroyer -- pure destruction is not the goal, but rather domination via military means.

**Zealot:** Whatever this villain's cause (it could be political, military, or religious for example), the zealot has an unswerving, fanatical belief in it.

## 2. GOAL

The villain's goal represents his primary motivation. His Hindrances should be chosen based on his nature (as determined on the previous table) and his goal. A villain may have more than one goal, but there should always be a primary goal, which the other goals assist. Think of the others as sub-plots.

| d6 | Result          |
|----|-----------------|
| 1  | Destroy/Conquer |
| 2  | Discovery       |
| 3  | Greed           |
| 4  | Kidnap/Steal    |
| 5  | Power           |
| 6  | Revenge         |

**Destroy/Conquer:** A villain may be out to destroy someone or something. Alternately, he may seek conquest rather than outright destruction. A cultist who wants to overthrow a Red Martian kingdom and reestablish worship of the old gods can be a conqueror.

**Discovery:** The villain seeks to discover something of value. This may be a lost technology, a weapon, a Lost City, or even forbidden knowledge.

**Greed:** There's more to greed than money. Seeking political favors, rare minerals, or knowledge can just as easily lead to villainous activities.

**Kidnap/Steal:** Kidnapping involves an abduction -- taking someone as a hostage or to interrogate them. Stealing usually involves an object rather than a person.

**Power:** Gaining a political position or acquiring sensitive information can bring a villain power as



easily as conquering a kingdom or discovering an ancient artifact.

**Revenge:** Revenge takes many forms, from simple humiliation to murder. It usually involves methods similar to one of the other goals, but is aimed at a specific target for a personal reason.

### 3. HOOK

The Hook determines how the heroes get involved in the adventure.

| d6 | Result              |
|----|---------------------|
| 1  | Caught up in Events |
| 2  | Mistaken Identity   |
| 3  | Motivation          |
| 4  | Old Friend/Enemy    |
| 5  | Patron              |
| 6  | Rumor               |

**Caught up in Events:** Through no fault of their own, the heroes find themselves thrust into the action. Starting this way may leave the heroes confused as to what is happening, thus

encouraging them to investigate.

**Mistaken Identity:** The heroes are mistaken for someone else (including the possibility of being accused of some crime they did not commit), or mistake someone else.

**Motivation:** Heroes have Hindrances and sometimes those Hindrances drag them into adventures. Game Masters should use the Hindrances of the PCs.

**Old Friend/Enemy:** An old acquaintance seeks out the heroes, for good or ill.

**Patron:** Someone approaches the heroes with a job offer. The patron could even be the villain!

**Rumor:** Rumors circulate quickly on Mars. A rumor can come in the form of an overheard conversation or a piece of evidence.

### 4. LOCALES



Exciting locales make interesting battle-grounds and scenic backdrops. Roll once or twice per episode.

| 2d6   | Result                |
|-------|-----------------------|
| 2     | Villain's Lair        |
| 3-5   | Ruin/Lost City/Temple |
| 6-7   | Settlement            |
| 8-9   | Exotic Land           |
| 10-11 | Wilderness            |
| 12    | The Dark Below        |

**Exotic Land:** An exotic land is one foreign to the majority of heroes. The Ape Empire, for example, would be an exotic land for a group of heroes with no Apes among them -- and of course the Dead Seas of the southern hemisphere are exotic to pretty much everyone.

**Ruin/Lost City/Temple:** Mars is a dying world, and there are countless ruins in every part of the globe.

**Settlement:** The adventure takes place among the comforts of civilization -- and somewhere there are lots of innocents.

**The Dark Below:** The adventure takes place in the caverns below the surface of Mars.

**Villain's Lair:** Much of the adventure takes place in the villain's headquarters. Roll again to see where the base is located.

**Wilderness:** An adventure set outside a settlement or ruin of some kind is considered to be in the wilderness.

## 5. VILLAINOUS HENCHMEN

Villains sometimes operate with henchmen (see Chapter Four), though not always. Roll once per adventure. Henchmen should generally be encountered in the early scenes—save the major villain for the climax.

| 2d6   | Result          |
|-------|-----------------|
| 2-3   | Beast           |
| 4-5   | Combat Veteran  |
| 6     | Psion           |
| 7-8   | Right -Hand Man |
| 9     | Mad Scientist   |
| 10    | Spy/Seducer     |
| 11-12 | Thugs           |

**Beast:** The villain has one or more beasts at his disposal. See the next chapter for choices, or create a new one.

**Combat Veteran:** Combat veterans are masters of warfare and should be able to take down any individual hero in a fair fight. They may not be capable in other areas, but they are deadly duelists.

**Psion:** The villain's henchman is gifted with strange powers of the mind.

**Right Hand Man:** The villain's most trusted lackey is usually a jack-of-all-trades. He can fight, talk, and get his way out of trouble. He is also fanatically loyal to his master.

**Mad Scientist:** The villain has a master of Weird Science at his disposal.

**Spy/Seducer:** The villain's henchman is a master of deception. Blackmail, bribery, control, seduction, and secrets of all kinds are the tools of this servant.

**Thugs:** Low-grade lackeys-- soldiers or toughs of some kind.

## 6. TWISTS AND TURNS

A good sword and planet adventure should have a few twists in it. Ideally, there should be one or two twists and turns per episode. To increase the length of an adventure, make extra rolls.

| 2d6 | Result           |
|-----|------------------|
| 2   | Double-Crossed   |
| 3   | Unexpected Foe   |
| 4   | Trap/Ambush      |
| 5   | Rescue Ally      |
| 6–8 | Creature         |
| 9   | Natural Hazard   |
| 10  | Unexpected Ally  |
| 11  | Shock Revelation |
| 12  | Discovery        |

**Creature:** Some sort of creature makes a sudden appearance in the adventure at any unexpected time. See the next chapter for choices, or create a new one.

**Discovery:** Many secrets lie buried across Mars. Maybe the heroes find a document revealing the villain's plan or discover an inscription that leads to another adventure.

**Double-Crossed:** At some point, a key figure in the adventure switches sides. This works both for and against the heroes, depending on who it is performing the double-cross.

**Natural Hazard:** At some point in the adventure, the characters are hampered by the forces of nature. Rockslides, sand storms, marsquakes, electrical storms -- The Game Master is free to be as inventive (or cruel) as they like.

**Rescue Ally:** At some point during the adventure, an ally of the heroes ends up in the villain's clutches. Kidnapping the ally may be a distraction to cover the villain's actions elsewhere, or it may advance the villain's main goal directly.

**Shock Revelation:** Something important is revealed during the adventure. Such Shock Revelations do not have to be bad—though they often are! Perhaps an NPC declares her undying love for a hero or maybe the group discovers a clue that suggests an old and trusted friend is secretly in league with the villain.

**Trap/Ambush:** Traps range from simple pits to complex traps involving moving walls. This could be set by the villain, or merely an ancient device stumbled upon by the heroes. Ambushes are fairly self-explanatory (again, this may be an ambush completely unrelated to the villains plans).

**Unexpected Ally:** Maybe the natives rise up against the villain and join the heroes, or perhaps the old man they met earlier in the adventure turns out to be a retired swordsman who just can't sit back and watch the villain get away with his foul plot. Either way, someone or something comes to the heroes' aid at a crucial moment.

**Unexpected Foe:** Maybe the villain turns out in fact to be someone the heroes weren't expecting ("The old man was the villain all along!"), extra henchmen join a desperate battle at a crucial time, or some innocent looking animal turns out to be a vicious killing machine.

## EXAMPLE ADVENTURES

Let's take a look at using the tables to create the bones of a couple of adventures. For the purposes of this example, I'll assume that the heroes are a group of red Martians, in service to the kingdom of Callor Maralin.

I start by determining the villain and the villain's goal. A couple of quick dice rolls, and I get a 5 and a 2 -- A Warlord, whose goal is Discovery.

For the hook, I roll a 5 -- A Patron.

I decide to roll twice for locales, giving me a 5 (Ruin) and an 8 (Exotic Land).

For the henchman, I roll a 7 (right-hand man), and I decide on a single twist for this, getting a 7 (Creature).

Giving some thought to my results, I decide that the heroes are given a mission by King Mallion to proceed to the Dead Seas -- Daxon Vesh, a criminal exiled from Callor has set himself up as a warlord by claiming to be the long-prophesied warrior who will lead the Nomad tribes to become

the masters of Mars. He has gathered a fairly large following, and King Mallion's spies inform him that Daxon is marching his rag-tag army to the site of the Lost City of Zinj (on what was once the shores of the Dead Seas), where he believes he will discover a cache of powerful war machines -- perhaps even strong enough to rival the dreaded Tripods of the Grey Martians!

The heroes must find the Lost City before Daxon, and prevent him from becoming even more of a threat. They are given an airship (so that they may travel faster than the Nomad army), and set out for the Dead Seas.

Daxon is not entirely helpless, of course -- his henchman, Korad Zen, commands a corps of cavalry who take to the air on the backs of flying lizards, and attack the heroes.

The climax will occur in the ruins of the lost city, where the heroes and villains alike will discover the city does not contain a cache of war machiness, but instead a horrific beast that has turned the ruins into its lair!

Let's try another. For the villain and the goal, I roll a 4 and a 6 -- a Mad Scientist, seeking Revenge.

For the hook, it looks like we're dealing with a case of (2) Mistaken Identity. I go with a single location roll this time, getting a 6, meaning this adventure will take place in a Settlement. The villain has a (5) Combat Veteran as a henchman. I decide on two twists this time around, getting a 2 (Double-cross) and a 3 (Unexpected Foe).

The heroes are accused of murdering a diplomat in the court of the king. The first scene will be devoted to them attempting to prove their innocence -- and the Game Master should improvise along with whatever defense the heroes come up with (after all, this is just an excuse to get them involved).

As the players investigate further, a Baltan ambassador to the court tries to thwart them at every turn -- yet the ambassador has a rock-solid

alibi for the murder, and any direct accusation of him will lead to him challenging the accuser to a duel.

The ambassador is in the employ of Kohzan, a mad scientist who blames King Mallion for the death of his wife. He has perfected a mind control device -- the murder of the diplomat was a test run to see if the mind control of the subject would hold up to stress.

The subject? King Mallion's own daughter, Lanora, Princess of Callor.... and tonight, Kohzan will have her murder her own father in front of the entire court....

Sounds exciting, right? That's sword and planet.



# SIX BEASTS OF MARS



Mars today holds but a fraction of the life forms it once held, but those which have survived are extraordinarily tough. Many have evolved strange defenses and unique abilities which enable them to survive in the harsh environment. Others simply seem to be evolution experimenting desperately, throwing out all manner of freaks and monsters in the hopes of finding the true successors to the dying life forms of the past.

The following creatures represent the more “interesting” life forms of Mars – the more banal creatures are left undocumented. Mars has all manner of small furry herbivores, but adventurers do not need to concern themselves with such.

The general goal of adventuring in **MARS** is *not* to “kill them and take their stuff”. The goal of an adventure may be to rescue a kidnapped princess, discover the secrets of a lost city, prevent a green man horde from swarming over a frontier city, or stop a crazed scientist from unleashing his army of synthe-men on the planet. It is rarely about kicking down the door and killing the monster.

That said, battling strange and powerful creatures is a fundamental part of the genre. Such creatures might be mere brutes looking for a meal, or they may be pets or servants of the opposition. Battles in the arena are also commonplace.

Monsters are best used as follows:

*As part of the environment:* There are reasons why most Martians stick to the cities – the wilderness is hostile. Anywhere there is enough water for the red men to survive, there are other creatures. The constant threat of attack from Busharbal or Vronag Vesh should remind adventurers that traveling into the wilds is, in fact, an *adventure*.

*As guardians:* Much of Mars lacks sophisticated technological defenses. There are no remaining electrical locks or security scanners in the ruined cities (well....almost no), but there are often people living there who have things to guard. Trained animals serve as excellent guardians -- they can be taught to tell friend from foe, to bellow an alert, and to gut opponents.

*As pets/servants:* The image is classic – the arch villain, seemingly alone in his throne chamber as the heroes burst in, laughs maniacally, pulls a lever, and unleashes a hideous monster upon the heroes! He will, naturally, stay to watch the slaughter rather than making good his escape while he can.

## BUSHARBAL (SANDSQUID)

*The sands are quiet and soft. Suddenly, they explode into a cloud of stinging, blinding, dust. All around, dark shapes writhe and twist, reaching for any moving being and grabbing it. At first, it seems as if many creatures are attacking, but as the sand settles, it becomes apparent it is a single immense creature, it's six tentacles forcing helpless prey into its ravenous maw...*

The sandsquid is a classic example of Martian adaptability. As the seas of Mars became lakes and swamps, the ancestors of these predators learned to survive in the thick muck at the bottom; as even this dried, the creature adapted to the fine sands of the ocean beds. Over the millennia, it has learned to move inwards, through the softer silt which surrounds the canals or along the paths of dried rivers. It is a dangerous threat to isolated travelers or even small bands of green or nomadic red Martians. Those which strike at the canal cities are usually killed or driven off by a mix of sheer numbers and powerful radium rays.

The creature somewhat resembles an earthly squid, but there are key differences. Its body is supported by a powerful internal cartilage shell, giving it the strength to move about on land as well as resistance to most melee weapons. It has six tentacles, all of equal length. The tentacles lack suckers, but are fantastically strong. The creature is usually reddish brown in hue, making it difficult to see in the Martian deserts even when it is not hidden underground.

### Combat and Tactics

The sandsquid lurks underground, waiting until its

senses either a single being or, if it is very hungry, a small group. It waits until they are just above it, then attacks. It will try to swallow one victim, then dive underground until it is dead, then repeat the process if there is more food and if it was not wounded. A victim who manages to carve his way out of the sandsquid may well still 'drown' in the thick sand underground.

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d12

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12

**Special Abilities:**

- **Ambush:** The busharbal attacks from beneath the surface. The sandsquid makes an opposed Stealth roll versus the target's Notice. If the sandsquid wins, it gains +2 to attack and damage that round, or +4 if it gets a raise. If the victim wins and was on Hold, they may try to interrupt the attack. Victims who are successfully ambused are grabbed by the creature's maw, and may make an opposed Strength roll each round to break free.

- **Pull You Under:** Starting the next round after a successful ambush, the sandsquid pulls the victim under the sand. The victim may make an opposed Strength roll to break free. Use the drowning rules in **Savage Worlds** core book to simulate the effects of being pulled under the sand.

- **Size +4:**
- **Teeth:** Str +d6
- **Tentacles:** Str +d4

## CAZARN (DESERT WASP)

*The domed ruin on the horizon comes into clearer focus as you approach. With dawning horror, you realize that it is not a ruin at all, but an enormous insect nest, and even now, the air is filled with the roaring buzz of the desert wasps, as they pour forth like a cloud to descend upon your hapless band...*

The cazarn, or desert wasp, is a massive insect, roughly the size of an Earth canine. They are found in the deep wilderness (for no race is foolish enough to build settlements near a cazarn nesting area), and survive by hunting anything that wanders into their territory.

### Combat and Tactics

The cazarn hunt in flights of 2d6 (although disturbing a nest could result in facing many, many more). They attack from the air, stinging foes until no further threat remains.

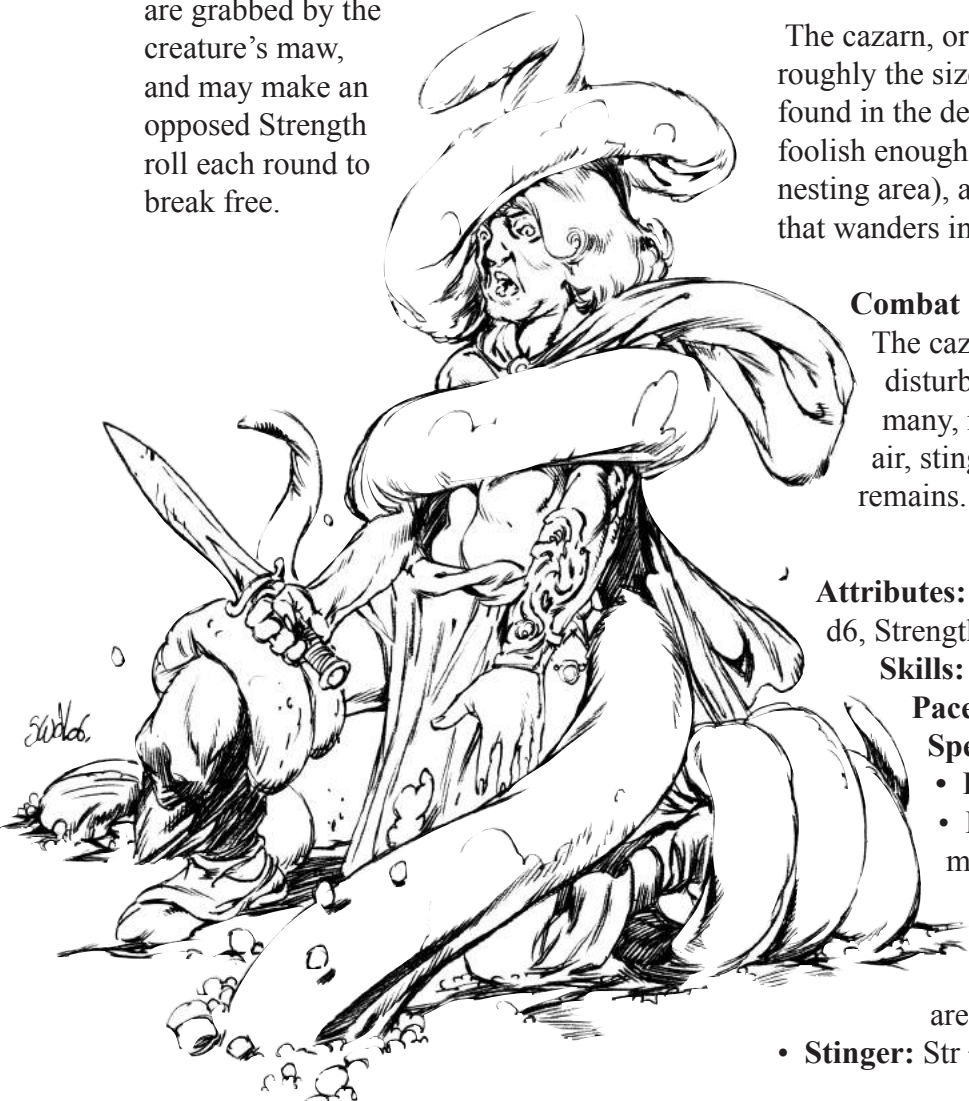
**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

**Pace:** 1; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

**Special Abilities:**

- **Flight:** Pace 8.
- **Poison:** Victims of a sting must make a Vigor roll or be paralyzed for 2d6 rounds.
- **Size -2**
- **Small:** Attacks against cazarn are -2 due to their small size.
- **Stinger:** Str +2, AP1





## CHU'GRAHK (NIGHTLEAP)

*It seems to be nothing more than dappled shadows in the lavender jungle, a trick of light and wind as the distant sun sinks below the horizon. But the light and the wind do not flicker from tree to tree, do not show glints of white fang and yellow eye, do not suddenly burst from the thick undergrowth to rend flesh to ribbons and crush bone to splinters...*

The white apes of the northern jungles have many names for this beast – night prowler, shadowed teeth, dark claw. It is feared by any who must travel deep into the twisted woods alone or in small groups.

In form, it is much like a massive six-limbed cat, with a row of small, sharp, horns along its back. Its fur is dappled lavender and purple, with a lighter underbelly of soft pink. Its eyes are solid orbs of yellow, with no pupils.

### Combat and Tactics

The nightleap hunts mostly during the evening and night, hence its name. It will follow potential prey for some time, waiting until one victim is alone. It will then pounce, rake, and otherwise try to do maximum damage in the minimum amount of time, and drag the body back to devour at its leisure.

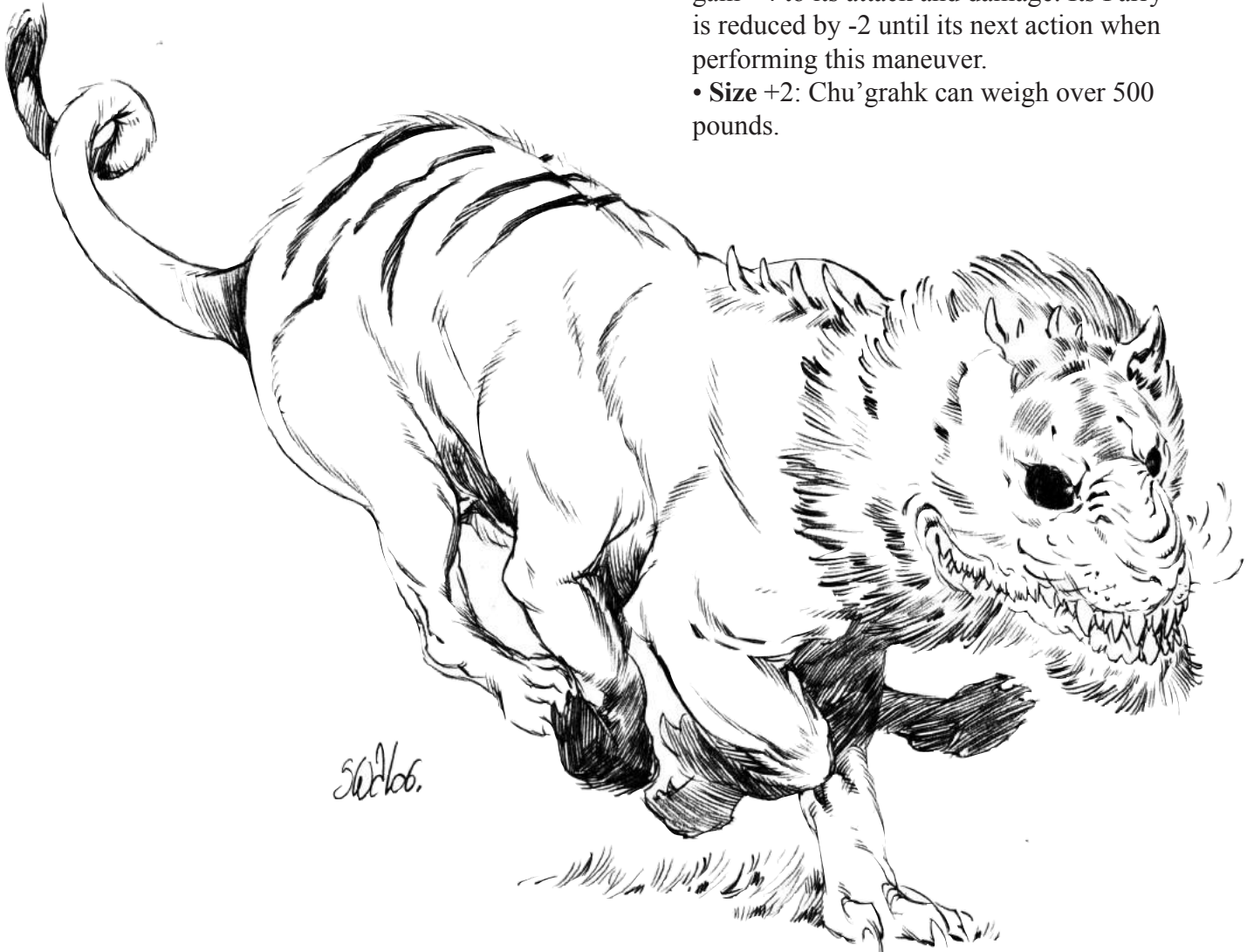
**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8

**Pace:** 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

### Special Abilities

- **Fleet Footed:** Nightleaps roll a d8 when running instead of a d6.
- **Bite or Claw:** Str +d6.
- **Improved Frenzy:** Chu'grahk may make two Fighting attacks each action at no penalty.
- **Low Light Vision:** The Nightleap ignores penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Pounce:** The Chu'grahk can leap 1d6" to gain +4 to its attack and damage. Its Parry is reduced by -2 until its next action when performing this maneuver.
- **Size +2:** Chu'grahk can weigh over 500 pounds.



# GLASHGAR

## (HORNED DRINKER)

*It bursts out of cover with considerable speed, its six thin legs a blur as it races across the dusty sands. A pale lavender in color, with fine scales shimmering in the sunlight, it charges towards its prey. As it closes, it lowers its head, so that the three foot long horn upon its head become a deadly spear, aimed at the heart of its prey...*

Some might call this beast a “Martian Unicorn”, but it is not a creature of grace and beauty. It is a vicious and cunning predator which relies on speed more than brute force, and which has a unique and somewhat grisly method of feeding. It lacks claws, and its mouth is oddly atrophied, with only vestigial teeth, but it sports a vicious horn. Close examination of the horn shows that it is hollow, though very strong, and contains many fine grooves and holes. Once a living creature has been impaled, the glashgar drinks their blood, draining them through its horn. This process can ultimately leave the prey a desiccated husk. However, at certain times, the glashgar will not completely drink its full. Instead, it will implant an egg within the impaled victim, one which will eventually hatch into a new glashgar. (The beasts meet and mate as is normal for Martian mammals, but the female then holds the fertilized egg in her horn until a suitable host is found.

### Combat and Tactics

The glashgar prefers to attack solitary prey, so it has time to fully feed. While it can feed on freshly-killed corpses, it prefers to drain living beings. It will skulk quietly behind potential food, waiting until one being is alone, and then charge. If attacked by multiple opponents, it will stab and withdraw its horn, but if facing a single foe, it will seek to impale and drain.

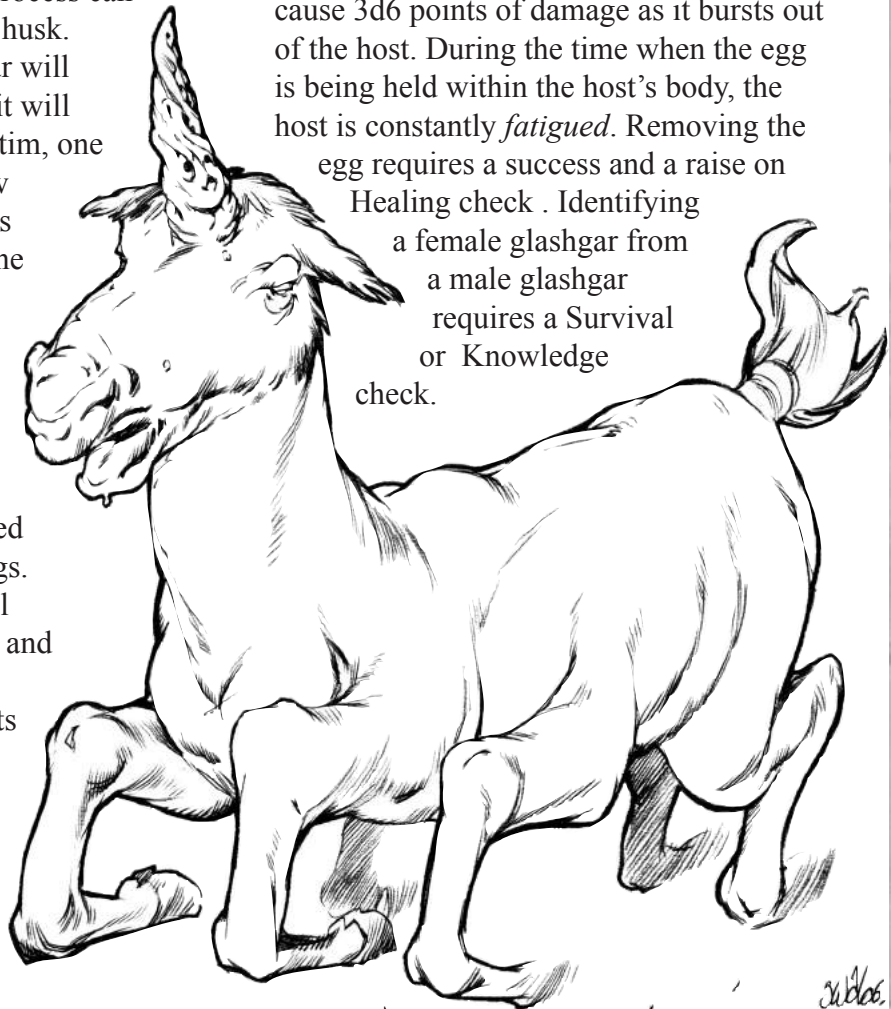
**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d4, Guts d6, Notice d6

**Pace:** 10; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 8

### Special Abilities

- **Fleet Footed:** Glashgar roll a d8 when running instead of a d6.
- **Kick:** Str.
- **Horn:** Str +d4, AP1
- **Size** +2
- **Blood Drain:** Anytime a target takes damage from the glashgar's horn, it may be impaled if it loses an opposed Strength check with the creature. If this occurs the glashgar can cause an automatic wound per raise on the check. This continues for as long as the victim is impaled. An impaled creature can seek to pull itself off the horn with another opposed Strength check.
- **Egg Implantation:** A female glashgar may choose to implant an egg in a victim. The target must be impaled, no additional wounds are caused. The act of implanting the egg causes no additional pain. After 2+1d4 weeks have passed, the glashgar egg will hatch, and the newborn beast will cause 3d6 points of damage as it bursts out of the host. During the time when the egg is being held within the host's body, the host is constantly *fatigued*. Removing the egg requires a success and a raise on Healing check. Identifying a female glashgar from a male glashgar requires a Survival or Knowledge check.





## JALF (STEED)

*"Faster, boy!" you urge. You feel the surge forward as your trusty Jalf speeds its gallop, leaning its horned head into the wind and kicking up sand in its wake.*

The Jalf is the most common mount found on Mars. It has been domesticated by the Red Martians, the White Apes, and the Green Martians. It is a quadruped, but what it lacks in extra legs, it makes up for in sturdiness.

### Combat and Tactics

A Jalf's primary weapons are the two thick horns that grow from its head. When threatened, it will lower its head and charge, much like an earth rhinoceros.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d8, Notice d6

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

### Special Abilities

- **Horns:** Str +d4
- **Gore:** A Jalf can gore their opponents with their horns. If they can move at least 6" before attacking, they add +4 to their damage total.
- **Size +2**
- **Sturdy:** +2 to all Fatigue checks.

## MONOLESH (DREAMLURE)

*The image is clear – it is the one you seek, your missing love, the Lady Alashoh. She looks to you pleadingly, her long absence from you making her even more lovely than you had remembered.*

*Eagerly, you run to her, not bothering to wonder how she came to be in this desolate oasis far from the lost city to which you know she had been taken. In the heady warmth of her embrace, you do not notice your skin and flesh being torn away be acid until it far too late to escape the embrace of the hungry plant...*

The dreamlure is a psionic plant creature which dwells in the northern jungles, in oases, and in thornpatches. It is mindless, but it can instinctively probe the minds of passersby, creating an image of the thing they most desire – a lost love, food, a desperately needed weapon or tool, and so on. Once the victim has been lured close, the creature grabs him with its vines and pulls them into its flower-like central body, where they are digested and eaten.





## Combat and Tactics

The dreamlure is non-sentient. It instinctively creates an alluring image and then attacks the first creature to get within range of its vines. Once it has swallowed one being, it will not attempt to swallow another until it has finished digesting the first, but it will kill all others targets in range, in order to eat them later.

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

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d6, Psionics d10

**Pace:** 0; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

## Special Abilities

- **Illusion Lure:** The dreamlure selects, randomly, a single victim who passes within 10". It plucks from his mind the image of that which he is currently seeking and then creates that illusion. The target must make a Spirit roll opposed to the dreamlure's Psionics check, or be compelled to walk towards the lure, utterly convinced it is real and desirable. All others who get within 10" of the plant see the same thing as the chosen victim, but they are not victims of psychic compulsion. Each also gets to make an opposed Spirit roll as well. If they fail it, they perceive the illusion as real, but they can ponder the logic of it freely. If they succeed, they see a dim shadow of the illusion, and clearly see the dreamlure.
- **Vines:** A successful Fighting attack from the dreamlure means that the target is wrapped up in vines, and being pulled into the plant's maw. The entangled character cannot move away, but may fight and try to break free (the Vines are Toughness 9).
- **Swallow Whole:** A dreamlure can try to swallow a size 3 or smaller opponent by on the round following a successful vine attack. The swallow is a Fighting attack at +2. A swallowed creature takes 2d8 points of acid damage per round from the dream lure's interior. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by using a weapon (the plant's petals are Toughness 9). Once the creature exits, oozing sap closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out.

## SHALAG (FLYING JAW)

*At first, they appear to be dark dots in the sky, barely visible against the distant setting sun. Then, suddenly, they appear, a swarm of serpent-like creatures with outsized heads and hideously sharp, inward-pointing teeth. As the swarm moves among the towers and minarets of the canal city, the red folk rush inside, slamming windows and grabbing for weapons. The slow or the unfortunate who remain outside are doomed...*

The shalag is thankfully rare in the modern Martian world. Its eggs are sometimes found in briarpatches, and, when they hatch, a new swarm is born and let loose on the world. Rarely, a swarm will lay eggs in a stable oasis or in the fields around an abandoned canal city – in such a case, the threat becomes perennial to anyone who dwells nearby.

A shalag lives its entire life in the air, flying by means of a subconscious telekinetic power. It resembles a six foot long, wingless, snake, about four to six inches thick, but its head is grossly outsized for its body – its immense jaws can open to at least eight inches in diameter.

## Combat and Tactics

The shalag is a mindless eater. It will flay at a target, tear out a goblet of flesh, and fly on to swallow it before returning for another bite. It will do this until it is sated or until it is driven off.

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d6, Notice d12,

**Pace:** —; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

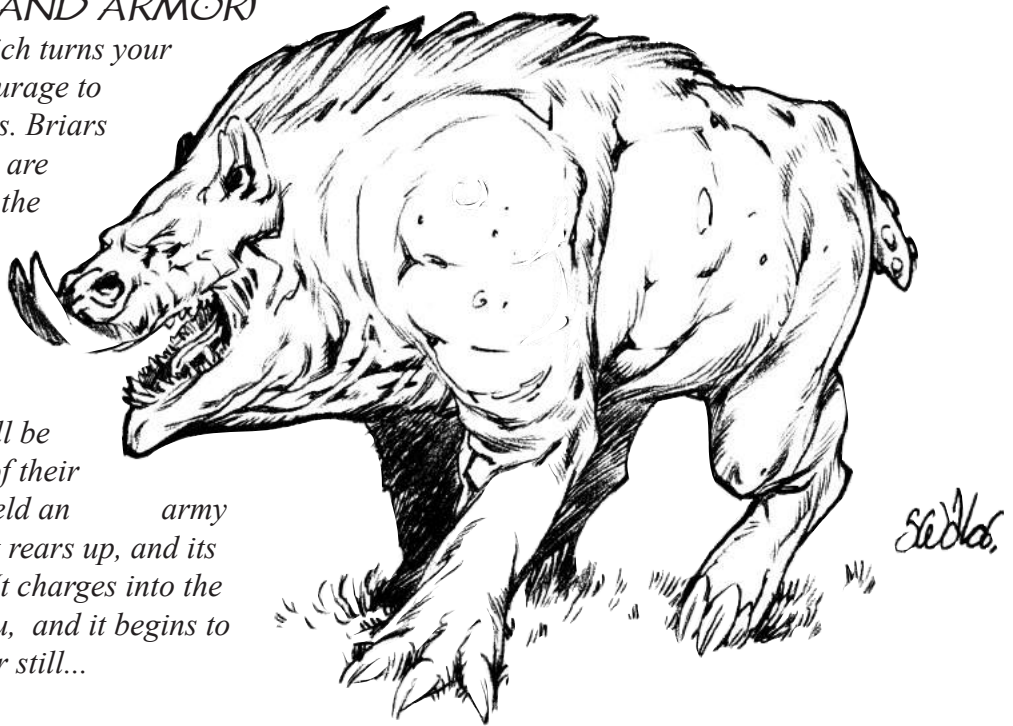
## Special Abilities

- **Flight:** Pace 24, Climb 6
- **Bite:** Str+d8.
- **Feeding Frenzy:** Once they've scented blood (Notice roll), all shalags present go into a feeding frenzy and add +2 to their attack and damage for the rest of the fight.

# VRONAG VESH

## (BEAST OF TEETH AND ARMOR)

*There is a bellowing roar which turns your bones to powder and your courage to cold ash. The ground trembles. Briars as thick as a strong man's leg are torn aside like dried reeds as the monstrosity emerges from the thornpatch. It is a nightmare in violet and grey, a four-legged creature covered in folds of skin so thick and hard it might as well be rock. Its teeth are wriggling of their own accord, as if its mouth held an army of warriors waving swords. It rears up, and its forelegs show mighty claws. It charges into the knot of soldiers in front of you, and it begins to cause the sand to grow redder still...*



The vronag vesh might not be the single most lethal creature on Mars, but it is deadly enough. It is a carnivore, and always hungry, though it is capable of sustaining itself for a surprisingly long time on a single kill. It is thankfully rare on Mars today. It survives near the few oasis or where thornpatches bloom.

A few have been kept, and bred, at great cost in life and livestock, in some of the red Martian cities. It is also known that a few green Martian tribes have held vronag's captive, where they worship it as a god and feed it prisoners (and the elderly and weak) in the hopes of gaining the blessings of its might.

The hide of the vronag can be used to make heavy armor. Such armor is sometimes worn by the green men as signs of prowess in battle. Red Martians will make such armor as ceremonial garb, but will rarely wear it into battle.

### Combat and Tactics

The vronag vesh is a simple-minded brute with few natural predators. It is used to prey much smaller than itself, as well. It prefers to charge into the thick of its enemies, gnawing on one while it uses its claws to decimate the others. It will usually open with a bellow, in order to keep

foes from fleeing before it can finish slaughtering them. If grievously wounded, it will flee combat, but it will try to take some morsel with it in its mouth before it does.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+5, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Intimidation d12, Notice d8, Stealth d8

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 15 (2)

### Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Tough scaly skin.
- **Bellow:** The vronag vesh can let loose with a bone-melting bellow of noise. This affects all creatures within 6" -- it is an opposed Intimidation roll vs the victim's Guts. If the victim fails, they are paralyzed with fear for 1 round.
- **Bite:** Str+d10.
- **Claws:** Str +d6
- **Large:** Attackers are +2 to attack the creature due to its size.
- **Size +6:** Vronag Vesh average 25' in length and weigh half a ton.

## XILL (CAVE SCORPION)

*The hideous creature scuttles out of the cave opening. Its multifaceted eyes glitter in the sunlight as it reaches forward with massive pincers. You level your radium pistol, hoping desperately to get off a killing shot before the wickedly-barbed tail lashes out, its tip glistening with foul poison....*

The xill is a massive scorpion. It usually makes its lair in caves, which allow it easy prey when hapless individuals come along looking for shelter. It also is a regular feature in the gladiatorial arenas of the Ape Empire, although its ability to climb often makes it as much a danger to the audience as to the gladiators in the arena.

### Combat and Tactics

A xill will lie in wait until a creature comes within 5" of its lair, at which point it will rush out and attack first with its pincers, maneuvering for the perfect opportunity to strike with its poison stinger.

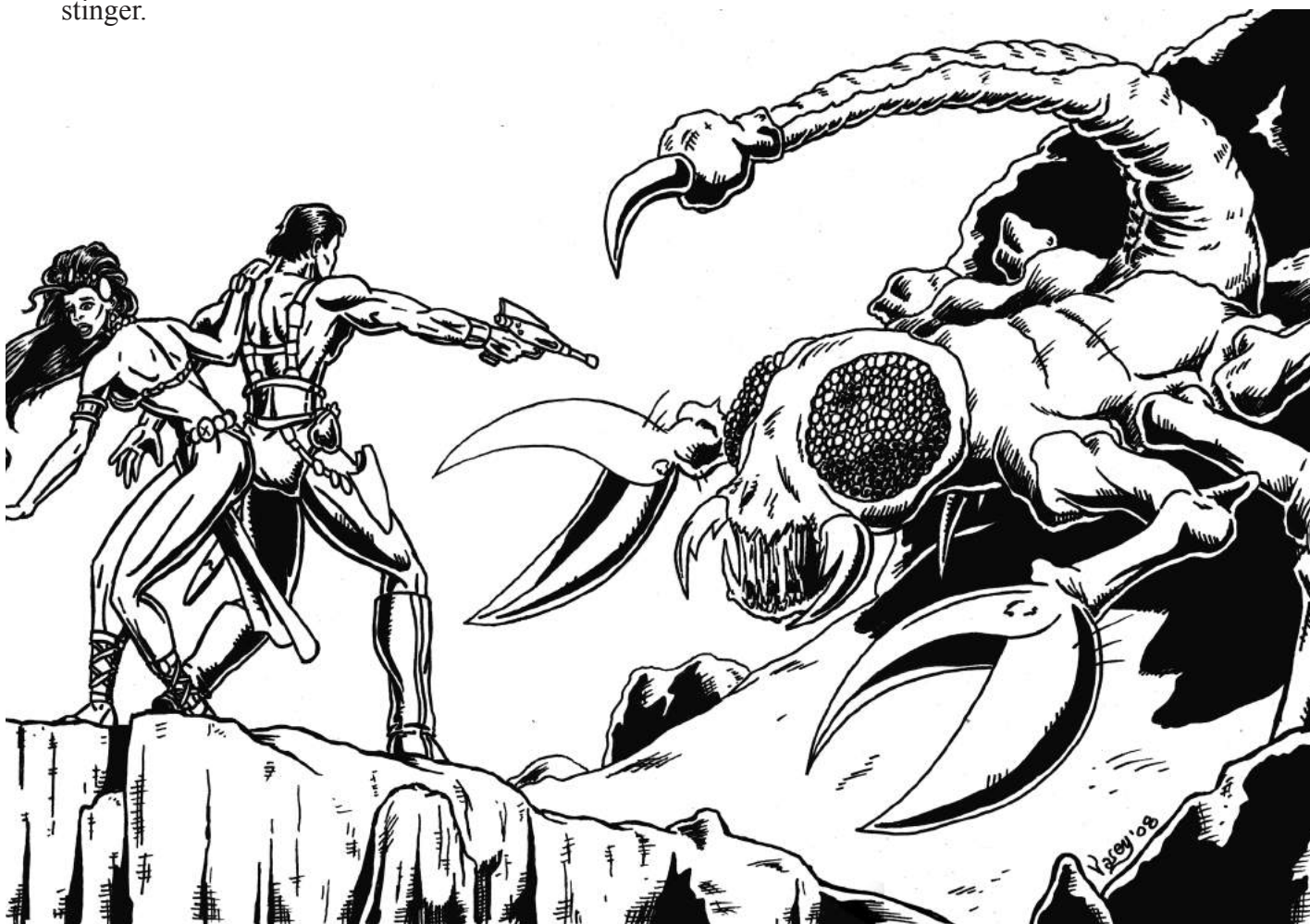
**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d8  
Strength d10, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d8,  
Stealth d6

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

### Special Abilities:

- **Armor** +2: Thick carapace.
- **Pincers:** Str+d6.
- **Poison Stinger:** Str, AP1. Victim must make a Vigor roll at -2. If the roll succeeds, the stung area swells and is numb. Victim is *exhausted* until healed. If the roll fails, the victim is incapacitated and must make a second Vigor roll or die in 1d6 rounds.
- **Wall Crawling:** A xill only makes a climbing check under the most adverse conditions. It can crawl on vertical surfaces at Pace 4.
- **Size** +2





# MAKING IT MARTIAN

Many **Savage Worlds** products contain creature statistics suitable for use on Mars; the problem is that they may be all too recognizable. This can throw some players ‘out of genre’. Further, Mars is a world with a full ecosystem (albeit one ravaged by planetary drought), yet filling this book with creatures which are basically normal animals “but *from Mars!*” would be wasteful.

However, with a small bit of work, it is possible to “Marsify” almost any creature. Begin with the write-up of any **Savage Worlds** creature, and then use the “Marsifier” below.

## Step 1: Number of modifications

Roll 1d4+1 for the number of changes to the base creature.

## Step 2: Determine modification type

For each modification, roll on the following table to determine the type.

| d% Roll | Type             |
|---------|------------------|
| 01-05   | Base Type Change |
| 06-20   | Skin Change      |
| 21-35   | Movement Change  |
| 36-40   | Special Ability  |
| 41-55   | Attack Change    |
| 56-60   | Size Change      |
| 61-00   | Cosmetic Change  |

## Step 3: Determine specific modifications

Roll on the appropriate sub-table to determine the specific modification

## BASE TYPE CHANGE

The Martian creature’s overall type is different from that of the base creature.

| 2d10 Roll | Result            |
|-----------|-------------------|
| 2-6       | Plant             |
| 7-12      | Elemental (Earth) |
| 13-20     | Construct         |

**Plant:** The creature is some variety of fungus or plant. They instantly gain the following Monstrous Abilities: Fearless, Hardy and Regeneration (Slow).

Such creatures are considered to have a ‘cosmetic’ modification, so no additional roll is required (though one can be made if desired, of course). Plant creatures may look as follows:

- As the original creature, except composed of a network of vines and brambles.
- As the original creature, but formed of wood, with thick bark and leafy ‘fur’ or ‘hair’.
- As the original creature, but a deep purple or violet. It resembles an animal save for the coloration and the fact it ‘bleeds’ a thick sap.

Plant creatures are very rare on modern Mars. They will be found only in the North Polar Jungle, or rarely in thornpatches or oases.

**Elemental (Earth):** The creature is formed of silicon, not carbon. This is a recent evolutionary jump on Mars, made in response to the lack of water. It is possible this is the result of a project begun during the drying days – some scientists, unconvinced of the canal plan, worked in secret to create the beginnings of silicon based life, giving it the capacity to adapt existing carbon-based genetic material for its own use.

The creature gains the following Monstrous Abilities: Armor (randomly roll 1d6 points of armor), Burrowing and Elemental.

**Construct:** Many Martian civilizations created ‘beasts’ of metal and gears, powered by radium cells. As the cells died, so did the beasts, but a rare few remain, powered down for millennia and only recently re-awakened. Others use solar panels or stranger means of surviving. Many ancient Martian life-forms are known to day only by their replicas in bronze and crystal.

The creature gains the Construct Monstrous Ability, as well as a +3 to Toughness.

After a construct is slain, anyone may make a Weird Science check to extract the radium power cell from the body. It is considered to have enough power to provide half the normal shots of a radium weapon. Thus, it will provide 5 shots for a heavy radium pistol. If the roll is failed, there is a 2 in 6 chance (roll) that the cell was badly damaged during the removal attempt and will explode, doing 1d6 points of damage per Size modifier of the creature in a 15' radius. Anyone in the blast area can make an Agility check to take half the damage.

Constructs have a variety of appearances, depending on the culture which created them.

- Creatures seemingly formed of liquid metal, with all mechanical parts hidden.
- Baroque and beautiful constructs of silver, bronze, and quartz, glowing with an internal blue light.
- Lumbering and clunking things of grey metal, with loud grinding gears and the stench of oil and steam.

## SKIN CHANGE

The outer surface of the creature is different from that of the base creature.

| Roll d% | Result       |
|---------|--------------|
| 01-05   | Chameleon    |
| 06-20   | Thick Fur    |
| 21-30   | Slick        |
| 31-45   | Scales       |
| 46-60   | Armor Plates |
| 61-65   | Acidic       |
| 66-70   | Sticky       |
| 71-75   | Elastic      |
| 76-80   | Padded       |
| 81-90   | Luminescent  |
| 91-95   | Distorting   |
| 96-00   | Roll twice   |

*Chameleon:* The creature's skin shifts in color in order to match the background. It gains a +4 to Stealth rolls, and may hide even if there is no cover or if it is being directly observed.

*Thick Fur:* The creature is extremely hairy and well-protected from the cold. This grants a +4 bonus on all rolls to resist the environmental effects of cold, but a -4 to resist the environmental effects of heat. Such creatures tend to lair near the polar regions or only come out during the long Martian winters.

*Slick:* The creature's skin exudes a slimy mucous which makes it very difficult to grab or hold. All attempts to grapple the creature suffer a -4 penalty.

*Scales:* The creature is covered with scales, akin to a Terran reptile. This provides it with an Armor of 2.

*Armor Plates:* The creature has extremely thick and heavy armor plates, like a turtle. It gains Armor 4, but it loses 1 from its Pace (5 from flying Pace)

*Acidic:* The creature's skin exudes a potent corrosive acid. Any metal weapons which touch it take 2d6 points of damage, against the objects Toughness. Any unarmed attack against it results in the attacker taking 2d6 points of damage. If the creature is grappled, the grappling character takes 3d6 points of acid damage for each round the acidic creature is held.

*Sticky:* The creature's skin exudes a sap-like substance which can hold weapons fast. If an attack would hit the creature (whether or not it does damage), the attacker must make an opposed Strength check to pull the weapon free. Otherwise, it remains stuck to the creature's hide. If the creature is grappled or it grapples a character, an opposed Strength check is required to break free or to end the grapple, in addition to the normal grapple checks. Anyone who makes an unarmed attack and is stuck is considered to be grappling the creature.

*Elastic:* The hide of the creature is extremely flexible and springy, making it very difficult to cut. The creature is considered to have Armor 2 against cutting or piercing weapons.

*Padded:* The creature has a thick layer of fat or muscle or the like underneath its skin. This helps to cushion it against blows. The creature is considered to have Armor 2 against blunt weapons or other crushing impacts.

*Luminescent:* The creature's skin glows brightly, and often produces whorls and vortices of light when it is struck in combat. Such brilliant flares make it difficult to hit in close combat, giving attackers a -1 penalty on Fighting rolls. However, the creature suffers a -4 on all Stealth checks, and Shooting attacks made at Medium range or greater get a +2 to hit, as the creature is easy to target.

*Distorting:* The skin of the creature has some truly exotic properties that warp and refract light. The beast is not always where it seems to be. All attacks against it suffer a -4 penalty.

## MOVEMENT CHANGE

The creature either gains a new mode of movement or is much faster in one of its old modes of movement.

| Roll  | Result      |
|-------|-------------|
| 01-15 | Flight      |
| 16-60 | Ground      |
| 61-80 | Burrowing   |
| 81-85 | Swimming    |
| 86-90 | Brachiating |
| 91-95 | Teleporting |
| 96-00 | Speed       |

*Flight:* If the creature could not fly, it now can. It gains a flight speed equal to 150% of its best Pace. If the creature already has flight, its speed increases by 50%.

The means of flight can be wings, gas bladders, psionic levitation, or anything else which seems appropriate.

*Ground:* If the creature has no ground movement, it gains it at Pace 6 for Size 0 or smaller creatures, and +1 for every 1 points of Size above that. If the creature already has ground movement, its ground speed increases by 50%.

*Burrowing:* If the creature has no burrowing movement, it gains the Monstrous Ability of the same name.

Burrowing can be accomplished by hard ground-digging claws, exuding an acid which dissolves the ground, psionically 'phasing' through the dirt, and so on.

*Swimming:* If the creature has no swimming movement, it gains the Aquatic Monstrous Ability and a Swimming skill equal to its Agility. If the creature already has swimming movement, its swimming speed increases by 50%.

This modifier is very rare on Mars. Creatures with swimming will either be small canal-dwelling creatures, inhabitants of some of the marsh-lakes of the Northern Jungle, or things which dwell in the wet places far below the planet's surface.

*Brachiating:* Only creatures which dwell in the Northern Jungle, or in very large oases, will have this modification. Reroll otherwise. This allows the creature to move very rapidly among the treetops, by swinging on large arms, by jumping swiftly from branch to branch, or otherwise using the foliage to propel itself. The creature cannot use this ability if it is on the ground, though it can make an Agility check to reach low-lying foliage as a standard action and then take a move action through the trees.

If the creature has no brachiating movement, it gains it at Pace 4 for Size 0 or smaller creatures, and +1 for every 1 points of Size above that.

*Teleporting:* This ability is a consequence of mutation, deliberate modification, or psionic power. The creature can move by blinking from point to point, covering no ground. It can instantly escape from any grapple. It teleports as a regular action (though it can take only one per turn) and can act immediately upon completing the teleport. It gains a +2 to attack any creature immediately after the teleport, due to the suddenness of its appearance. It cannot teleport into any location it cannot see.



Base teleport distance is 8". If this modification is rolled again, increase the base distance by 3".

*Speed:* An existing movement mode is increased by 50%. The Game Master should pick an appropriate movement mode.

## SPECIAL ABILITY

The creature gains an Edge of the Game Masters choosing (ignoring requirements if desired).

## ATTACK CHANGE

The creature either gains a new attack mode or improves an existing attack in some manner.

| Roll  | Result      |
|-------|-------------|
| 01-15 | Claws       |
| 16-25 | Bite        |
| 26-35 | Slam        |
| 36-45 | Gore        |
| 46-50 | Sting       |
| 51-55 | Tentacle    |
| 56-60 | Reach       |
| 61-80 | Poison      |
| 81-85 | Paralysis   |
| 86-90 | Penetrating |
| 91-94 | Fast        |
| 95-00 | Wounding    |

*Claw:* The creature gains a claw attack at Str +d4 damage. If the creature already possesses a claw attack, increase the bonus damage by 1 die type.

*Bite:* The creature gains a claw attack at Str +d4 damage. If the creature already possesses a bite attack, increase the bonus damage by 1 die type.

*Slam:* The creature gains a slam attack (Fighting vs Agility) which does Str+d6 damage. If the creature already possesses a slam attack, increase the bonus damage by 1 die type.

*Gore:* The creature has tusks or horns which give it a gore attack. If the creature can move at least 6" before attacking, they add +4 to their damage total. If the creature already possesses a gore attack, increase the bonus to +6.

*Sting:* The creature has a stinger attack which does Str+d4 damage (and may include Poison

(q.v.) for the cost of another change slot).

*Tentacle:* The creature now has 2d6 tentacles, which give them a tentacle attack of Str +d4. If the creature already possesses a tentacle attack, increase the bonus damage by 1 die type.

*Reach:* Although the creature's base size does not change, one of its natural weapons becomes a reach weapon. This might indicate that a creature has gained a giraffe-like neck, allowing it to bite targets far away, or extremely long limbs so that it can use its claw attacks against more distant targets. The game master should choose a natural attack which seems appropriate. The attack becomes Reach 1, with a +1" every additional time this modification is rolled.

*Poison:* One of the creature's natural attacks (ideally, one which does piercing or slashing damage) gains poison. Roll 1d4 for the strength of the poison, and then roll below for the poison's effect:

| Roll | Effect   |
|------|--|
| 1-3  | Immediate Fatigued   |
| 4-5  | Immediate Exhaustion   |
| 6-7  | Paralysis 2d6 minutes  |
| 8    | Exhaustion +Incapacitation in 2d6 minutes, Fatigued on success.        |
| 9    | Incapacitation Exhausted on success.                                   |
| 10   | Vigor roll or Incapacitated, death in 1d6 hours. Exhausted on success. |

If this modification occurs twice, either increase the poison strength or the make the effect one step higher.

*Paralysis:* One of the creature's natural attacks inflicts paralysis. Vigor roll made at -2. The target will be paralyzed for 2d4 rounds.

*Fast:* The creature gains the Fleet Footed edge.

*Wounding:* The damage from one of the creature's attacks causes grievous wounding. A raise on the damage roll does two wounds, rather than one

(meaning that a two-raise roll could outright kill a Wild Card).

## SIZE CHANGE

The creature is significantly larger or smaller than the base creature. Roll a 1d6. On a 1-3, the creature is smaller. On a 4-6 it is larger. Roll 1d8 and either add or subtract that from the creature's base size, and check the results on the Size chart in the **Savage Worlds** core book.

Game Masters may consider altering Attributes for severe size changes.

## COSMETIC CHANGE

The creature changes in appearance from its normal form. Roll on the following table(s):

| d% Roll | Result         |
|---------|----------------|
| 01-25   | Color Change   |
| 26-50   | Limb Change    |
| 51- 75  | Sensory Change |
| 76-00   | New Feature    |

*Color Change:* Creatures can gain new colors, new textures, and so on to distinguish them from their Earthly counterparts.

| Roll | Color  |
|------|--|
| 1    | Green  |
| 2    | Blue   |
| 3    | Purple                                       |
| 4    | Black  |
| 5    | Light Grey                                   |
| 6    | Dark Grey                                    |
| 7    | Brown  |
| 8    | Yellow                                       |
| 9    | Red  |
| 10   | Orange                                       |
| 11   | Violet                                       |
| 12   | Azure  |
| 13   | Lemon  |
| 14   | White  |
| 15   | Crimson                                      |
| 16   | Lavender                                     |
| 17   | Tan  |
| 18   | Spotted (Roll for base color and spot color) |
| 19   | Striped (Roll for base                       |

color and stripe color)  
20 Multi-hued (1d4+2 colors)

*Limb Change:* The creature gains, or loses, some limbs. These limbs cannot be used for additional attacks, nor do they offer any other mechanistic benefit. They are purely 'for show'. Limbs gained should be appropriate to the creature – a four legged creature may gain more legs, while a creature which uses grasping hands, like a chimp, might get extra arms. Tails are always appropriate. Loss of limbs likewise causes no impact – a creature may become bipedal due to loss of legs, or even become a 'roller'. Natural attacks will somehow remain the same – a single limb might have multiple claws on it, for example. At the Game Master's discretion, attack types might change – claw attacks become gore attacks if a creature loses its forelimbs, for instance.

| Roll  | Result   |
|-------|--|
| 1     | Gain 1 arm or leg                                    |
| 2-3   | Gain 2 arms or legs                                  |
| 4-8   | Gain 1d4+1 arms or legs                              |
|       | Lose 1 arm or leg                                    |
| 10    | Lose 2 arms or legs                                  |
| 11-13 | Gain 1d4 tentacles or feelers                        |
| 14    | Gain a second head                                   |
| 15-16 | Gain a tail, or existing tail splits into two tails. |
| 17    | Limbs gain additional joints.                        |
| 18-19 | Limbs are lengthened                                 |
| 20    | Limbs are shortened                                  |

*Sensory Change:* The creatures sensory organs are visibly different. This doesn't impact its effectiveness in any way. If the creature lacks a specific sensory organ, reroll or adapt as needed.

| Roll | Result  |
|------|---|
| 1    | Compound Eyes   |
| 2    | Multiple Eyes (1d4 more than standard)                |
| 3    | Enlarged Ears   |
| 4    | Smaller Ears  |
| 5    | Eyes on stalks  |
| 6    | Multiple mouths (no change in number of bite attacks) |
| 7    | Snout/Trunk   |

- 8 Shifted senses (Ears on torso, or eyes on tail, for example)
- 9 No visible nose
- 10 No visible ears
- 11 Solid-colored eyes
- 12 Multi-colored eyes

*New Feature:* The creature gains some body part or addition which has no direct mechanical effect.

| Roll | Result  |
|------|---|
| 1    | Frill/Sail along back                                     |
| 2    | Small spines  |
| 3    | Bony outcroppings at joints                               |
| 4    | Thick Fur   |
| 5    | Tail (or loses tail, if it already has one)               |
| 6    | Second head   |
| 7    | Elongated tongue  |
| 8    | Webbing between toes/fingers                              |
| 9    | 1d4 horns on head   |
| 10   | Spiked/clubbed tail                                       |
| 11   | Head frill  |
| 12   | Scaled patches  |
| 13   | Mane/Beard  |
| 14   | Wattles   |
| 15   | Mouth/Nose replaced by beak (or the reverse)              |
| 16   | Slimy coating   |
| 17   | Antennae  |
| 18   | Hooves  |
| 19   | Protruding fangs or tusks (no effect on any bite attacks) |
| 20   | Roll Twice  |

## EXAMPLE

We'll now use the "Marsifier" on a creature from the **Savage Worlds** core book -- the Large Bear (kodiak, grizzly, etc.)

Rolling 1d4+1 for number of modifications, we end up with 4 modifications. Rolling for each type we get: Multiple eyes (4 more than standard); Limb change (gain 2 arms), Attack change (Gore) and Special Ability (I decide to give this creature Improved First Strike).

The revised stat block for the new creature is:

## GOMMOG

### (ROCK DEMON)

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d10, Notice d8, Swim d6

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

### Special Abilities

- **Improved First Strike:** A gommog gets an automatic free Fighting attack against any foe that moves adjacent to it. This automatically interrupts the opponent's action, and does not cost the gommog an action if the gommog is on Hold or has not yet acted this round.

- **Crush:** Gommog use their weight to pin their prey and rend it with their claws and teeth. A gommog that hits with a raise has pinned his foe. The opponent may only attempt to escape the crush on his action, which requires a raise on an opposed Strength roll.

- **Claws:** Str+d6.

- **Bite:** Str+d6.

- **Gore:** A gommog can gore their opponents with their horns. If they can move at least 6" before attacking, they add +4 to their damage total.

- **Size +2:** These creatures can stand up to 8' tall and weigh over 1000 pounds.





# IN THE CLUTCHES OF THE GREYS

BY JESS NEVINS

Ashok Tam, last Prince of ruined Tor va Nor, strained against his bonds and screamed curses against his gag. He, his wife, his sister, and his sister's husband and child—all that was left of the royal families of Tor va Nor—had been hunting levlavin through the farms which made up the border between the southern Minor States and the Green Wastes when a horde of ragged Reds swarmed them. Ashok Tam and the others were quickly overwhelmed, stripped of their weaponry, bound, and taken away.

For two days and nights the Reds had carried them south, never pausing to rest. Ashok Tam was horrified to see how the Reds never stopped running, even when the thinnest and weakest of them were clearly laboring. The strange

metallic hoods which covered the Reds' heads pulsed with lights and, Ashok Tam thought, somehow controlled them, and kept them running beyond what they should. When a Red fell over, obviously taxed beyond his limits, his or her legs kept pumping.

Then the Reds had entered a cave and carried them down a tunnel. For half a day they had marched through the darkness, until they emerged into a cavern, lit a soft green and filled with instruments and machinery whose purposes Ashok Tam could not even guess at. But Ashok Tam could also see platforms covered with restraints, strange bladed instruments near and above the platforms, and blood stains on the floor of the cavern, and he quickly divined what he and



his family had been brought here for.

Straining against the ropes that bound them, and thrashing about, did Ashok Tam and his family no good, and they were quickly placed on the platforms, buckled in, and gagged. Then the Reds withdrew to the cavern walls.

A monstrosity appeared. A grotesque, wrinkled grey body with eyes, it seemed to walk by means of large, thick tentacles. It was followed by two others, smaller but otherwise the same, and they assumed positions around the table on which Goza Tus, Ashok Tam's sister, was restrained.

As Ashok Tam watched, horrified, the monstrosities rapidly operated the instruments around Goza Tus, got the blades on one spinning, and then cut the top of her head off. Ashok Tam and the others screamed with rage and fear, but the grey monstrosities ignored them and with a surprising delicateness removed Goza Tus' brain, which they deposited in a strangely-shaped translucent jar.

Ashok Tam's anger was almost overwhelming, but a part of him couldn't help but wonder if these abominations were the dreaded Grey Men. *It cannot be! These monsters are not even Martian!*

But he knew they were, and the knowledge filled him with further anger and fear. That the Tripods should be piloted by creatures out of a nightmare somehow made it worse than if the Tripods' masters looked like Reds or Greens.

Within minutes the Greys had killed the other captives and taken their brains. Ashok Tam ignored the hot tears streaming down his cheeks and concentrated on freeing himself, but despite his anger and strength he could not break the straps which held him, and when the foul-smelling Grey loomed over him, circular blade gripped in one tentacle, he prepared his soul for death.

The blades whirled and then spun to a stop as the Grey shuddered and reeled backwards. The two smaller Greys went rigid, their eyes protruding, as they stared at the third, who fell to the ground and began spasming. When his flailing become

so violent that it drew blood, the smaller Greys retreated to the rear of the cavern.

The Grey jerked, uttered a high-pitched scream, and then went limp. Its head, or what Ashok Tam thought was its head, split, and a...thing...crawled from it, covered in blood and brain. It was the length of a Red's arm, roughly worm-shaped, but with legs to crawl with and a toothed maw on one end. Its mouth opened and closed once, and then it scurried away from the Grey's body.

The two smaller Greys uttered a series of whistles and squeaks and then fled from the cavern in the opposite direction as fast as their tentacles could carry them.

A day later Ashok Tam had succeeded in freeing himself. He burned the bodies of his sister and the others and said the traditional rites. After a cleansing dust bath, he inspected the cavern and found, as he suspected, the radium pistols the Greys had left behind. With one in each hand, he began his quest for vengeance.

# SEVEN: SLAVERS OF MARS





# INTRODUCTION

“Slavers of Mars” is a five-part Plot Point campaign for beginning characters. As such, it is suggested that the characters be made under the default assumption of an exclusively (or almost exclusively) Red Martian party. Earthmen are also welcome, but a group made up of Green Martians or White Apes will have a tough time getting an interview in Part One.

As an introductory series, it is assumed that the player characters will be gathering for the first time. The steward that hires them in Part One is looking for mercenaries, so almost any character concept will fit within the context of this adventure. With a little work, the Game Master should be able to accommodate any mercenary character, or at least dissuade a player from playing something that won't work.

Alternatively, some or all of the PCs could be sky-corsairs in the employ of Crimson Jayde. If the entire party is part of her crew, then Part One begins aboard the *Glashgar*, with Crimson Jayde announcing the mission and introducing Haiden, a desert scout hired by Lord Keldar.

The adventure starts in Yarvalla, a small city in the Kingdom of Callor Maralin, but by filing off the serial numbers a Game Master can use any Red Martian city.

## PREMISE

Lord Keldar has a problem. His daughter, Mallora, is completing her missionary work with a Red Martian nomad tribe. The time has come to extract her, but Lord Keldar has fallen on hard times economically. He cannot afford to lose any of his airships or personnel, even for his own daughter. He must rely on mercenary aid to retrieve her and protect her on the homeward journey. He has instructed his steward to make the arrangements.

Unfortunately, a rival lord, Lord Tarask, has bribed a desert scout, Haiden, to arrange for Mallora to be kidnapped. Lord Tarask has been chipping away at

Lord Keldar's business for several years now, and a ransom for Mallora will dissolve Lord Keldar's business for good. The player characters will go into the wastes, retrieve Mallora, and unknowingly deliver her into Lord Tarask's hands.

Even putting this wrinkle aside, the heroes will soon find out that nothing on Mars is easy. After surviving a pirate attack, the heroes arrive at the Red Nomad site to find it in ruins, destroyed by slavers. They will have to do some legwork to discover Mallora's whereabouts. Once they find her, they will have to fight their way out of the wastes.

Of course, Lord Tarask's forces are waiting for them just outside Yarvalla's gates...

### What is Lord Keldar's business?

The exact nature of Lord Keldar's business is left up to the Game Master, based on his needs for future campaigns. Obviously, if the heroes manage to evade Lord Tarask's plot and return Mallora safely, they will have Lord Keldar's eternal gratitude. While he might not have a lot of coin to throw around, Lord Keldar can certainly be of assistance in other ways.

The default assumption is that Lord Keldar is a meat merchant. While meat is a highly prized luxury on Mars, Lord Keldar belongs to a consortium that was importing meat from various hunting grounds. Unfortunately, the White Ape Empire has recently expanded into one of the prime territories, driving the already high cost of meat up and making it even more difficult for Lord Keldar to procure. Lord Tarask has his own animal farm, and is almost able to undercut Lord Keldar's prices. If Lord Tarask only waited a few more months, he'd probably price out Lord Keldar anyway, but Lord Tarask is shortsighted and doesn't want to give Lord Keldar the opportunity to get back on his feet.

### Why is Mallora in the wastes?

The Keldar family is deeply religious. While they do pay homage to other gods, the Keldars consider

Faina, the Provider, as their personal deity. One of Faina's dictates is that her followers spend a year outside of the city walls, doing missionary work. Mallora has chosen to live with a nomad tribe, ministering to their needs. Mallora has physician training and uses her skills to heal in return for food and shelter.

## SYNOPSIS

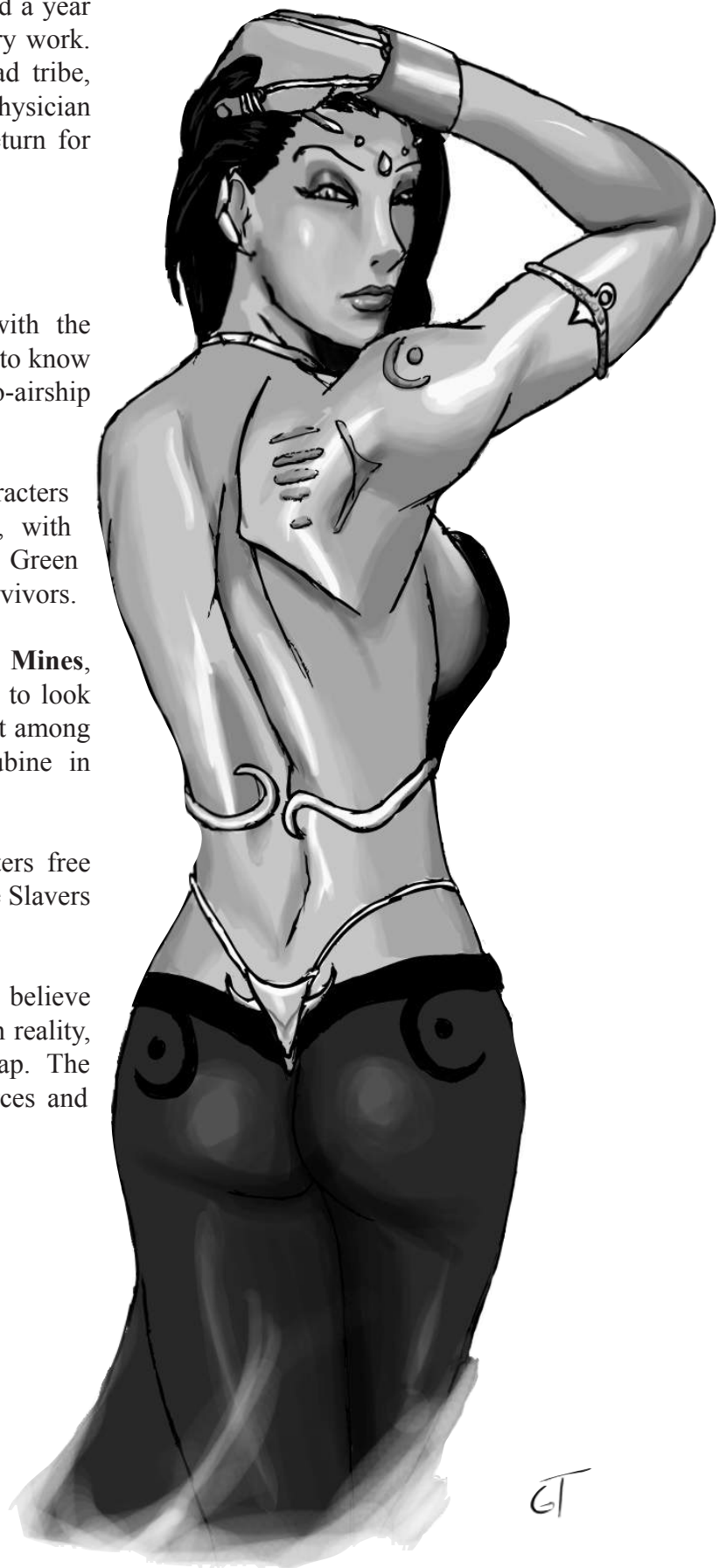
**Part One: A Simple Mission** deals with the characters accepting employment, getting to know the crew, and bonding in a little airship-to-airship combat.

In **Part Two: Desolate Camps**, the characters find the remains of the Nomad camp, with Mallora missing. They fend off some Green Martian scavengers and question some survivors.

In **Part Three: Assault on the Radium Mines**, the characters break into a Radium Mine to look for Mallora. They discover that she is not among them, but living as an enslaved concubine in another Nomad camp.

In **Part Four: The Rescue**, the characters free Mallora and start their journey home. The Slavers may make one last assault against them.

In **Part Five: Betrayal!**, the characters believe that they are returning to a safe haven. In reality, their desert scout is leading them into a trap. The characters must defeat Lord Tarask's forces and get Mallora home.



# PART ONE: A SIMPLE MISSION

Lord Keldar orders his steward, Markon, to hire mercenaries to go into the Green Wastes, find Mallora, and return her home safely. In addition to the heroes, Markon has hired an airship, the *Glashgar*, to ferry them, and a desert scout, Haiden. Haiden knows the land and the movements of the Nomad tribes.

Once the expedition is underway, the *Glashgar* is attacked by pirates! This will be the first of many tests for the fledgling heroes.

## THE GATHERING

Steward Markon is tasked with hiring escorts for a journey into the Green Wastes to retrieve Mallora, only child of Lord Keldar. Since Markon believes this to be a relatively straightforward task, almost any able-bodied Martian will do.

Markon is short for a Red Martian. While not quite a dwarf, he is rather rotund and has a balding head that he keeps covered with a fez-like cap. He wears high quality clothes, and is escorted by Galtar, a large, bald, well-muscled Red Martian armed with a wicked-looking sword and radium pistol. Markon does all of the talking, and any backtalk or threatening words from others will result in a stern, warning gaze from the red giant.

Markon will travel through all of the usual places of recruitment in the small city of Yarvalla. Yarvalla exists on the outskirts of Callor Maralin, and unusual noises from its radium generator over the years have kept the population small. Still, Yarvalla sits on the outer edge of the Kingdom, making it a convenient place for travelers to stop to and from the Green Wastes.

The Game Master should place the player characters according to their occupations. For amusement, the heroes can be sitting in the classic setting of a tavern, although it is more appropriate to have Markon and Galtar approach them at their current jobs, such as on the docks, in repair shops, or in a local guild. Characters operating as part of a sky-corsair crew can either be one of Crimson Jayde's crew or a member of another crew that's awaiting repairs on their airship, freeing up availability for a side job.

Markon will *not* approach a non-Red Martian (although he may make an exception for an Earthman) unless one is part of a package deal with one or more Red Martians. Markon has even more prejudice than usual for members of other races, as he's lost a lot of family to Green Martians and a favorite cousin to the White Apes. Markon will never speak to a non-Red Martian directly.

## THE PITCH

Markon's pitch is simple. His master (Markon remains vague during the pitching process) is looking for able-bodied men to escort his daughter out of the Green Wastes. Payment is in real meat, enough to feed each hero for a week (enterprising characters will realize the value of this, even if they won't eat it themselves).

Markon will answer any questions to the best of his ability while not compromising identities. Transportation will be provided, and payment is made upon Mallora's safe return (this is non-negotiable; Lord Keldar cannot afford to pay them anything right now, as he's awaiting a meat shipment from the north). Markon expects that the heroes may encounter trouble with Green Martians and pirates, which is why he's looking for bodyguards.

If the heroes accept his offer, he will give them an invitation to Lord Keldar's residence the following evening. They should arrive by nightfall.



## DINNER DETAILS

Lord Keldar lives near the center of the city. Characters making a Common Knowledge check will notice that Lord Keldar has employed many cost-cutting measures in the maintenance of his home. His ceilings look like ornate sculptures, but close inspection reveals a painted design. The servants perform multiple duties so there is no need to hire more.

The characters will be lead from the grand foyer to the main dining hall by door-greeter/butler Shaina. Shaina offers them fruit and wine as she waits for all of the invited characters to arrive. Markon will not make an appearance during this time. There is a small shrine with a statuette of a naked woman holding a bow in one hand and a sickle in the other. Characters making a Knowledge (religion) check will recognize her as the goddess Faina, the Provider (simply asking Shaina will also garner this information).

Shaina will introduce the heroes to Haiden, a desert scout. Haiden is red even by Red Martian standards, having spent most of his life out in the wastes. Haiden is a wiry man that looks a decade older than he really is, thanks to years of sand beating against his face. Haiden is jovial and has many stories to share about his exploits in the Green Wastes, especially against Green Martians and sand creatures. An opposed Notice vs Persuasion roll will reveal to the heroes that Haiden, while telling true stories, is doing a lot of embellishing.

Once the characters have gathered, Shaina will escort them to their seats. The heroes, of course, are not expected to sit until Lord Keldar has; any breaking this protocol will be gently reminded about it by Shaina.

Markon will enter after the heroes and announce Lord Keldar. Lord Keldar will then enter, a tall man with a regal bearing. He wears the symbol of Faina, an amulet of a golden sun and sickle, around his neck. He invites the heroes to sit with him and insists that they be fed before any business is discussed.

The dinner is not fancy, but portions are ample. Dinner begins with a savory root soup, followed

by fried vegetable balls on a bed of greens. The main course is bound to whet the heroes appetites, a vegetable stir-fry over rice with chunks of real meat! Afterwards, a chilled desert is served.

After dessert, Lord Keldar gets down to business. One of the duties of a servant of Faina is to spend a year out in the wastes doing missionary work after one has completed their studies. Lord Keldar's daughter, Mallora, has undertaken this duty. She went into the desert and joined the Sardai tribe, a group of Red Martian nomads that were used to hosting a missionary of Faina. A year has now past, and Lord Keldar is ready to bring her home.

Characters making a Knowledge (ancient history) check will note that Sardos was once a Red Martian city. When the canal plan was announced, the leaders of Sardos scoffed until it was too late. Its people were forced to become nomads, but kept their city name. They are now the Sardai, the people of Sardos.

Unfortunately, the Yavalla meat market has been suffering of late, and Lord Keldar can't afford to send any of his own staff out to retrieve her. Instead, he is forced to hire independent aid. He reiterates Markon's offer to them; each character will receive a week's supply of meat to return his daughter to him.

Lord Keldar then introduces Haiden. Haiden is a desert scout and tracker that has kept an eye on Mallora for Lord Keldar over the last year. While he has not seen her for a couple of weeks, Haiden is an expert in the region where Mallora's tribe roams. He knows the movements of the various Red Martian Nomad tribes as well as concentrations of Green Martians. Haiden is certain that he can lead the expedition to Mallora within a week.

Assuming that the heroes accept the mission, Markon will hand each character a small scroll with Lord Keldar's seal. The scroll is a letter of authorization. Each character must present this scroll to the captain of the *Glashgar* in the southward port at dawn. With that, Lord Keldar thanks them for their assistance and begs them to get some sleep.

## SUSPICIOUS MINDS

Some players might suspect Haiden early on, especially if there is another expert tracker in the group of player characters. Should the players start to investigate Haiden and discover his treacherous intent, don't panic. Simply allow the scene to play out and allow Haiden to be discovered. If necessary, Markon will hire a new, unbiased tracker and the adventure will still play out as planned. The heroes simply won't be met by Lord Tarask's forces for the final battle.

Also see the Plot Complications section at the end of this Chapter for suggestions on leaving Haiden out.

## WELCOME TO THE GLASHGAR

The *Glashgar* is a large airship with a wooden sculpture of a glashgar (a winged predator -- something like a flying tyrannosaur) rising from clouds on the bow. A radium gun is hidden in the open mouth of the sculpture. The airship is in serviceable condition, although there are many signs of wear and tear and patchwork repairs.

As the heroes arrive, the crew of the *Glashgar* is loading supplies from the dock to the ship. They are being overseen by the first mate, a Red Martian named Scarlon. The captain of the *Glashgar*, Crimson Jayde, stands on the open deck. A Green Martian stands mutely beside her. Crimson Jayde looks amused by Scarlon's angry outbursts as he tries to ensure that the ship is ready to "sail" within the hour.

The heroes are allowed to walk up the gangplank, but they cannot enter the vessel without handing their scroll to Crimson Jayde. A couple of crewmen armed with rapiers wait at the edge of the gangplank to deal with troublemakers.

If everything is in order, Crimson Jayde introduces herself (simply as "Captain Jayde") and orders one of the crew to show the characters to their quarters, which consists of a small room strewn with hammocks. She'll ask them if they have airship experience, and any that do will be rewarded for

helping with the crew duties (the nature of the reward is left to the Game Master).

## CASTING OFF

The first day aboard the *Glashgar* is relatively quiet. The desert air is still, the only breeze coming from the movement of the airship. This would be a good time for the PCs to get to know each other and the crew. As "independents" go, Crimson Jayde's crew has a definite happy-go-lucky "pirate" vibe. They are pleasant to be around and, when not working, indulge in games of chance.

The Game Master should feel free to introduce a random encounter at any point during the airship journal (See Chapter Nine: Encounters).

On the second day, the Martian winds kick up. The winds start light, reaching severe by nightfall. Crimson Jayde tries to pilot around it, but she warns the crew to prepare for a windstorm. The heroes are pressed into service helping to tie things down and secure loose items. Game Masters should describe characters on the top deck getting battered with sand.

On the third day, the *Glashgar* hits a windstorm that progresses into a full-blown hurricane by mid-afternoon. If a player character is piloting the vessel (possible, if they've made a good impression on Jayde and her crew during the tip), the Game Master should have them make Piloting checks at -4. Failure will indicate the ship going out of control, as per the vehicle rules -- although Jayde herself will step in and prevent the ship from being wrecked, if the die rolls come to that.

Describe the violent rocking of the ship, sudden drops and gains in altitude, and small items breaking free and bouncing around the lower deck. Heroes that go to the top deck will have to be lashed to the deck to avoid being flung off it. After a couple of hours, the winds die down. The *Glashgar* has weathered the storm.

## SKY CORSAIR ATTACK!

On the fourth day, the winds have dissipated. Haiden plots a course through a small mountain range. All is well until the *Glashgar* winds its way

around a mountain...and comes face to face with two sky corsair vessels.

The sky corsair vessels are medium size, but each carries 15 crewmen. The *Glashgar* is larger, but its crew is outnumbered. One of the sky corsair vessels uses a signal flash to order the *Glashgar* to surrender and prepare to be boarded. Crimson Jayde will have nothing to do with that.

She orders a signal flash of their surrender, then tells her crew to be prepared for the “blood drinker surprise.” The crewmen carefully and covertly keep their weapons nearby as the two sky corsair ships approach. Once the lead ship gets close enough, Crimson Jayde reveals the surprise: the hidden radium gun fires.

The Game Master should play out the battle as he sees fit. The smaller vessels will attempt to board, wanting to procure the *Glashgar* for themselves. Crimson Jayde won’t fire the radium gun again (too wasteful), but her crewmen are hardly incapable of handling themselves. Crimson Jayde will ask the heroes for aid, and this is a perfect opportunity to get the players familiar with airship battles and the boarding rules.

The enemy sky corsairs will fight until the tide turns against them; then they will attempt to flee. Crimson Jayde will not pursue them too far, as her primary mission is to get the heroes where they need to be. She will, however, loot any ruined ships, and will take any captives prisoner (see “The Game”, which follows).

### SKY CORSAIR CREWMEN

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Piloting d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Swimming d6

**Charisma:** -2

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

**Hindrances:** Greedy (Minor), Illiterate, Mean

**Edges:** Dirty Fighter

**Gear:** Knife (Str+d4), rapier (Str+d6)

### SKY CORSAIR CAPTAIN

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

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Piloting d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d8

**Charisma:** +0

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

**Hindrances:** Greedy

**Edges:** Connections

**Gear:** Rapier (Str+d6), knife (Str+d4), radium pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+2),

### SKY CORSAIR SKIFFS

These quick craft are designed to get in close for boarding and escaping quickly. Each vessel is armed with a single radium gun.

**Acc/Top Speed:** 25/200

**Climb:** 20

**Toughness:** 14(2)

**Crew:** 2 needed, carries 15

**Manueverability:** Good

**Armament:** Radium Gun (360 swivel)

**Cargo:** 1000 lbs

**Width:** 3

**Length:** 10

### THE GAME

Once the *Glashgar* has crossed the mountain range, it touches down. Crimson Jayde will order any prisoners to be offloaded. She informs them that she needs replacements for the crewmen she lost, and that she’ll replace them with some of the prisoners. The prisoners may decide amongst themselves who gets to stay, and the others will be released with enough water for two days. Haiden will direct them towards the nearest settlement, but warns that there is an unusually high concentration of Green Martians in their way.

Crimson Jayde orders the ship to rise to a safe altitude while the prisoners decide who stays and who leaves. To help them with their decisions, Crimson Jayde orders that their swords be dropped to the ground.



The Game Master should dramatically describe the action. A few pirates choose to leave and separate from the rest. There are more pirates that wish to stay than there are slots, so the pirates first attempt to play games to determine the winner. Frustration and fear almost immediately drives some pirates to grab swords and duel for the available slots. This degenerates into a bloody battle to the death. (If the Game Master wishes, he can use this scene to give the players some practice with the combat system, giving each a pirate or two to run).

Crimson Jayde has no intention of allowing maimed or brutal pirates to become part of her crew. When the fighting is over, she drops the water and wishes them luck. She then orders the *Glashgar* to catch up to the pirates that chose not to stay and offers them a second chance. Haiden confirms that they will surely die if they don't join. Crimson Jayde regains 75% of her losses in this manner.



# PART TWO: DESOLATE CAMPS

Around noon on the fifth day, Haiden tells Crimson Jayde that they are getting close to the Sardai camp. The *Glashgar* flies over a field of orange water-weeds (see sidebar). Haiden grows concerned, as he should be seeing signs of Red Nomad life at this point. The field is only half-cultivated. When they arrive at the location of the camp, there is nothing but barren plain. Haiden looks frustrated.

The *Glashgar* touches down at the supposed Sardai site. A Notice check will reveal a group of 25 mounds just off to the side of the “camp.” A Knowledge (religion) check will mark them as burial mounds. (see “Red Nomad Burial Ritual” box text on the next page).

While Haiden wishes to pursue the tribe, Crimson Jayde suggests that they cultivate some of the water from the water-weed, since the journey is now going to be a bit longer than planned. Haiden agrees, and the heroes are pressed into service to essentially pull weeds (albeit carefully, as tearing a stem from the root will drain the water).

While pulling the weeds, the heroes will be attacked by a pack of Thares. Surprise rules apply. There should be one Thares per hero.

## THARESH (FINBACK)

Thares have a rough, hairless hide, strong jaws, and a large sail that runs down the spine. As its feet are webbed, the Thares never uses its claws in combat. Thares often leap more than they run. Combining this with the extra joints in its limbs, the Thares moves so awkwardly (some say “wrongly”) that it actually makes them difficult to predict their movements (and, therefore, to hit).

## WATER-WEEDS

Water-Weeds are a prized plant amongst the Red Nomads. In Earth terms, they resemble orange straw and grow to about a foot in height. Water-weeds produce their own water, which sits in the center of the straw. Properly cultivated, a small bundle of water-weeds can provide enough water for a Martian for a day.

Water-weeds have a side-benefit. Martian animals come to graze the water-weeds, making it a good hunting ground and a dangerous place to be. While Red Martians primarily go into a field of water-weeds for the water, Green Martians use it to hunt.

When cultivated, water-weeds need to be used almost immediately, as they quickly dry out. A Red Nomad tribe that finds a patch of water-weeds will normally stick around until the patch is used up. Some tribes take the seeds and plant them elsewhere. While this has the potential to turn a nomad tribe into an agrarian community, the Red Nomads find it safer not to plant the water-weeds in the same place twice. Water-weeds grow quickly, allowing for a full harvest within a month.



**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8,

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

**Special Abilities:**

- **Berserk:** Tharesh go berserk if they sense intruders in their territory. While Berserk, its Parry is reduced by 2 but it adds +2 to all Fighting and Strength rolls, and its Toughness.
- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Strange Movement:** Attackers at -1 to hit a Tharesh.

## THE SECOND CAMPSITE

With no tracks to follow, Haiden suggests that they take the *Glashgar* in the direction they were heading. After a day's flight, the flat plain gives way to broken ground. Haiden suggests that this would be a likely area for shelter, and his instincts are confirmed as tents come into view. Crimson Jayde suggests doing a fly-over before setting the *Glashgar* down on smooth ground.

The small campsite looks abandoned. A number of tents have been blown over and there are no Red Martians about. Overall, the camp looks as if it should've held 50 people, which is far less than the 200 Haiden expected.

Crimson Jayde asks if the Sardai might've moved on again, but Haiden does not believe so. Still, he'd like a closer look. Crimson Jayde orders the *Glashgar* to touch down a half mile from the site. Haiden asks the heroes to accompany him to the Sardai camp.

On the way in, a Tracking roll will reveal tracks in the sand, heading in and out of the camp. The tracks look like Green Martian tracks, and they're over a day old.

Heroes examining the tents will notice that most of them are spattered with blood. There are also slash marks. A character making a Knowledge (tactics) roll will notice that most, if not all, of the slashes

## RED NOMAD BURIAL RITUAL

The Green Wastes are a harsh environment, and Red Nomads need to be ready to move at a moment's notice. Often, this is preceded by a violent encounter, usually with a Green Martian tribe. Many times, the Red Nomads need to move while some of their number is away, hunting, gathering, or scouting. The tribe needed to come up with a way to let their wayward comrades know where they've gone, as a single windstorm can wipe away tracks in an instant.

Most Red Nomad tribes revere the Wayfinder, a Martian Deity that was once a sea goddess (actually a composite of a number of sea deities). With the end of the seas, the Wayfinder became the goddess of oases and other water sources (the Red Nomads pray for guidance to lead them to a new water source). According to legend, a Red Nomad tribe had to flee after a pack of vicious creatures found their camp (the nature of the creature varies with each tribe). Many of the hunters were out of camp hunting these same creatures. The Wayfinder visited the tribal shaman and told her to bury the dead in the direction they were going, using the center of the camp as a guide. The tribe did as commanded. The Wayfinder then visited the lead hunter and told him the plan. Using the mounds, the hunters found their way back to the tribe.

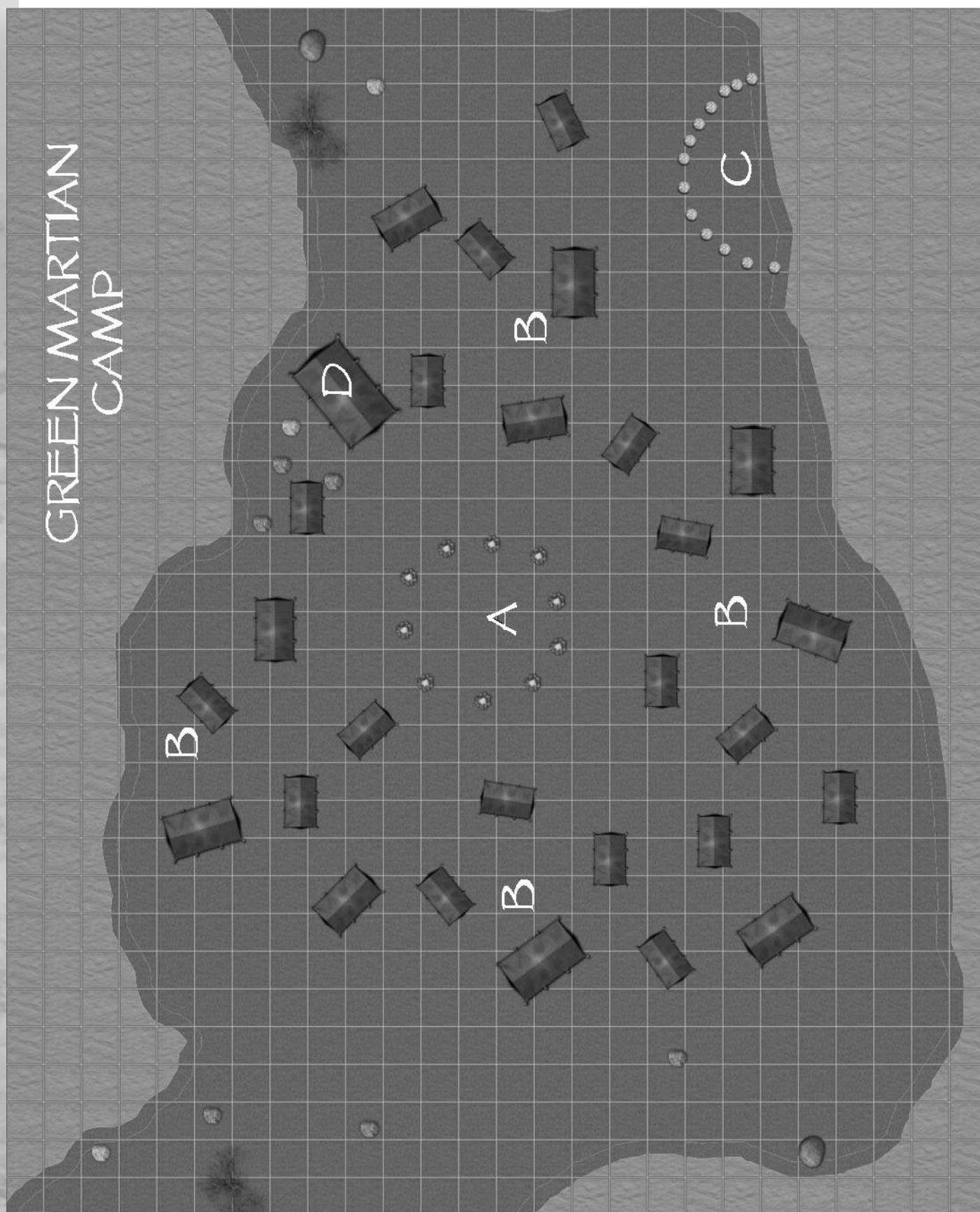
could not have been made by Green Martians. The cuts are too low and precise. An Investigate or Notice roll will reveal a couple of burns from a radium gun. A raise on the roll will reveal that the radium burns are not recent, and actually have sand over them. This suggests that the Sardai were previously attacked by someone else (possibly the reason for their first move).

## SURPRISE!

A couple of Green Martians are still in the camp. They were cunning enough to believe that perhaps not all of the Nomads perished, and they laid in wait for any scouts or wanderers to return. They



# GREEN MARTIAN CAMP



see an opportunity with the arrival of the heroes.

The Green Martians are hiding, waiting until one of the heroes gets too close. The Game Master should choose a character at random and have them make an opposed Notice check against the Green Martian's Stealth check. If the character fails, he is surprised for the first round. The Green Martians leap into action and attack. They fight to the death.

## GREEN MARTIAN SCAVENGERS

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6,

Strength d12, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d6,

Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Survival d8,

Stealth d6

**Charisma:** -4

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 9

**Hindrances:** Bloodthirsty

**Edges:** —

**Gear:** War Sword (Str+d10)

## FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

With the lack of any Red Martian bodies, the heroes will probably want to follow the Green Martian tracks out of the camp. There are some Red Martian tracks, probably captives, going with them. The tracks are heading away from the storm into semi-protected broken land. Finally, making a Common Knowledge roll will reveal that the scavenging Green Martians probably wouldn't wander far from the tribe.

Crimson Jayde will not participate in the hunt for Green Martians. With a storm coming, it is too dangerous to launch the airship, and she will not lose valuable crewmen to find a Green Martian tribe, especially when it's likely that the Green Martians will attack the *Glashgar*. She'll need all hands to protect the ship from both the storm and possible attack. Besides, she was hired to ferry around the heroes, not get involved in their disputes.

Haiden, on the other hand, volunteers his services. He is upset that his advice has led to a dead end, and he wants to make amends by finding any survivors (he also has a vested interest in finding

Mallora. A contested Notice vs. his Persuasion will reveal that Haiden has a personal interest. He will shrug it off as pride).

## GREEN MARTIAN CAMP

The Green Martian camp is about four miles away. It is almost sunset as the PCs arrive. The camp is built within a long-dried out riverbed. If the PCs don't suggest it, Haiden will mention that it would probably be suicide to charge in while the sun is still in the sky.

There are a number of Green Martian sentries wandering around the perimeter of the camp, usually in groups of two or three (the exact number should be left to the Game Master). If the heroes are spotted, they will have to deal with the sentries quietly or they will alert the rest of the camp. Being spotted really only becomes an issue if the heroes are trying to slip past. It is actually easier to travel up the river bed, as it provides partial cover (the bed is between three to six feet deep). There will only be a couple of sentries at the edge of camp.

Green Martians come in all shapes and sizes. There are forty in this particular tribe. Obviously, creating a unique stat block for each of them would be a major headache for the Game Master (not to mention the author!). Go ahead and use the Mook rules for most of these Green Martians, throwing in an occasional Extra using the Scavenger stat block on this page for especially tough specimens. Green Martians will be armed with a variety of weapons, including Battleaxes (Str+d8), Spears (Str+d6) Broadswords (Str+d8) and War Swords (Str+d10).

## CAMP LEGEND

There are about forty Green Martians in and around the camp. The GM should keep a tally of how many are killed. Obviously, the GM should also feel free to adjust the number as necessary, but keep in mind that the PCs are supposed to be discouraged from making a full frontal assault.

### A: The Circle of Fire

The Circle of Fire is a large circle roughly 4" in diameter. It sits in the center of camp. At night, it is lit by ten torches. The circle is used for combat and

cooking (see “Playing with their food,” below).

### **B: Green Martian Tent**

These tents usually hold two Green Martians (male or female or both). In “mixed” tents, there is often an egg. A small stash of trinkets can also be found, the newest looking like they were taken from the Sardai.

### **C: The Cage**

The Cage holds the survivors of the Green Martian attack on the Sardai. There are 20 prisoners, and only five are men. The cage is made of wood, with a Toughness of 10. The cage is guarded by two sentries. The deadbolt-style lock can be disabled with a Lockpicking roll.

Should the characters get to the cage, the prisoners will plead for release. Nearby sentries may hear them (Notice check), so the heroes will need to quiet them quickly. The best chance the heroes have of helping them escape is during the coming storm, unless they can provide a suitable distraction.

## **SARDAI PRISONERS**

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

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

**Charisma:** +0

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

**Hindrances:** Loyal

**Edges:** —

**Gear:** None

### **D: The Chieftain’s Tent**

The Chieftain’s tent is constantly guarded by two sentries. The Chief rarely leaves the tent, preferring the company of two Green Martian women. His tent is open on one end to allow a view of the Circle of Fire.

## **CHIEFTAIN**

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Survival d8, Stealth d6

**Charisma:** -4

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 10

**Hindrances:** Bloodthirsty

**Edges:** No Mercy

**Gear:** War Sword (Str+d10)

## **PLAYING WITH THEIR FOOD**

At nightfall, an interesting sport takes place. Prior to dinner, a prisoner is chosen to be eaten. He is lead to the Circle of Fire. A champion is chosen from the Green Martians by the Chieftain. Each is given a dagger and must battle each other to the death. The Green Martians within the camp gather around to watch. Should either combatant step beyond the torches, they will be needled and prodded back into the circle. The winner gets to live another day, while the loser is cooked and eaten (a fire is built in the center of the arena after the combat is over).

A character that makes a Knowledge (religion) check will recognize the combat ritual as a bastardization of an old Rite of Combat practiced by some ancient Red Martians in honor of Umar, the god of might. The Rite was used to settle disputes. The ten poles represented the rest of the pantheon watching in judgment, and after the combat (which was rarely to the death) an animal was sacrificed to be eaten as a formalization of settling the dispute. The Green Martians have copied the ritual but lost the significance.

The sentries also watch the gladiatorial battle. This distraction offers the heroes a better opportunity to get to the captives in the cage (Area C). Even the sentries guarding the cage take a few steps away to get a better view (the combats rarely last long, and the prisoners have yet to see a Red Martian win).

## **THE COMING STORM**

The Martian winds kick up during the combat. It’s not enough to cause trouble, but the heroes know that the storm isn’t far behind. This provides a perfect opportunity to get to the prisoners, as the storm will provide cover during an escape.

The storm will rage for two hours before passing through. Heroes are advised to find a safe place to



shelter themselves. Once the storm has passed, the *Glashgar* will come looking for them (they are the last-minute cavalry if the characters can't quite elude the Green Martians).

## PRISON STORY

At some point, the PCs should communicate with the prisoners. This could either be a whispered conversation while caged, quick conversation during the escape, or a more relaxed conversation aboard the *Glashgar*.

Two weeks ago, a Barudai (another Red Nomad tribe) trade caravan came to the Sardai. Since the Barudai were bringing fresh water from their oasis, they were welcomed with open arms. During a feast, slavers attacked. The Barudai showed their true colors and fought the Sardai from within as the slavers attacked. The slavers took all of the able-bodied men and women that they could, as well as Mallora. Some slavers were overheard talking about delivering them to a radium mine. The Sardai tribe was left with the wounded and a few hunters that weren't in camp during the attack.

For better protection, the remains of the Sardai headed toward the broken lands. Unfortunately, they were unaware of a nearby Green Martian settlement. Two days ago, the Green Martians attacked. They ate the wounded and the small children immediately, saving the healthy specimens for ritual feasts.

Haiden listens to their story with great interest. He knows of only one radium mine in the region. It is run by a Baltan, Lord Arkon. The mine is located within the Ashghar mountain range. From here, it's only a three-day flight.

## PRESSED INTO SERVICE

Crimson Jayde will allow the Red Nomads to stay aboard her ship providing that they can make themselves useful. She will offer to drop them off to another Red Nomad tribe or Red Martian city at the earliest opportunity.

## CAPTURED! NOW WHAT?

It is entirely possible (and perfectly suited to the genre) that the heroes will get captured by the sentries. In fact, if a fight is going badly, it is a good idea to have the Green Martians allow the heroes to surrender. It provides them with new fodder for the Circle of Fire.

Since the heroes had the audacity to attack the Green Martian camp, their action is seen as a challenge to the Chieftain's authority. The Chieftain will challenge one of them to a duel in the Circle of Fire. This provides an opportunity for an "Indiana Jones" moment, as a character with a radium gun will have an opportunity to shoot the Chieftain down before he closes. Still, the combatants are limited to the area within the circle. The battle is to the death.

Should the player character win, he will be considered the new Chieftain. If the hero wins, but allows the Chieftain to live, the Chieftain will grant him any reasonable terms (such as freeing the prisoners and allowing everyone to leave). In either case, it won't be long before another strong Green Martian bellows a challenge (if given permission to leave, the heroes will soon find themselves pursued after a few minutes). The sandstorm will hopefully provide cover.

# PART THREE:

## ASSAULT ON THE RADIUM MINE

The flight to the Radium Mine will be largely uneventful, although the Game Master can add a random encounter if he or she feels the players need some mood-setting.

### LAST STOP

On the second day towards the Asghar mountain range, the *Glashgar* passes the Voruni Red Nomad tribe. Crimson Jayde suggests that they stop and barter with the water and goods that they have. Most of the Sardai (assuming there are any aboard the airship) will take this opportunity to join the Voruni tribe.

### PREPARATIONS

Crimson Jayde will invite the heroes into the map room. Haiden is already there, scrutinizing the maps. The mine actually sits near the far side of the range, dumping radium into the waiting cargo hold of a Baltan airship. It is likely that other Baltan airships will be in the area as well. The best chance the heroes have of entering the mine is an abandoned shaft entrance in the center of the range. The *Glashgar* will have nowhere to land, so the heroes will have to rappel down and climb into the shaft. The *Glashgar* will remain in the area as long as it can.

### LANDING ZONE

The third day is relatively calm, with only a light wind. As the *Glashgar* enters the mountain range, however, the winds between peaks are whipped into a frenzy. The landing just got more difficult.

A Notice roll reveals the location of the old mine

shaft entrance. It is filled with rubble and the once smooth landing spot is broken and cracked.

With the wind whipping around, the airship can't get above the drop point without risking a crash. The heroes will have to make an Agility roll in order to clear the distance safely. An additional Agility roll will be necessary to remain on one's feet. Failure on either roll means that the character slipped off the side of the landing.

Crimson Jayde will suggest that the heroes tie themselves to the *Glashgar* in case they fail. The heroes will then need to make Climb checks back up the rope to try again. Haiden volunteers to go with the heroes.

### CHORAK ATTACK

Just beneath the landing site is a chorak (bleeding hawk) nest. The activity disturbs them, and they attack the same round as the heroes are jumping across (possibly gaining surprise). There is one chorak per character (including Haiden).

A chorak looks like a large hawk with a scaly hide. Their most disturbing feature is their inner eyelid, which enables them to see while keeping sand from their eyes. The inner eyelid makes it look like the chorak does not have eyes at all, only skin. The natural cleaning capability of these eyelids also makes it look like these "non-eyes" are constantly bleeding (the reddish sand-colored fluid makes it almost look like blood).

The chorak remain close to the characters, making it difficult for the *Glashgar* crewmen to get a clear shot at them. Chorak fight to the death.

### CHORAK:

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

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d12+4, Stealth d8

**Pace:** —; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 3

### Special Abilities:

- **Blind:** When attacking larger prey (such as characters), choraks go for the eyes. If the chorak scores a raise on its Fighting roll, it has hit the character's face. The

character must make an Agility roll. On a failure, he suffers the One Eye Hindrance until his wounds heal. A roll of 1, regardless of Wild Die, results in him gaining the Blind Hindrance for that time. If the Chorak scores two raises, the Hindrance is permanent.

- **Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Flying:** Flying Pace 8".
- **Size -2:** Chorak measure up to 3' in height.
- **Small:** Attackers suffer a -2 penalty to attack rolls because of the beast's size.

## INTO THE MINE

It takes about three man-hours of work to clear the entrance. This shaft has not been used in a long time, and it shows. Once inside, the shaft is completely dark. The floor is slippery (Agility check for every round to keep your feet), but the slope is gentle. PCs that make a Notice roll will see telltale signs of light sources and tracks, all ripped out centuries ago.

The slope continues for half a mile. Finally, the corridor opens into a large circular room, about 5" radius. In the center is a circular shaft about 2" radius. This was obviously an elevator of some sort, but the equipment is no longer here.

Haider will suggest rappelling down. As he prepares to get the climbing ropes ready, a lusker (huge spider) climbs out of the shaft.

Luskers look like huge spiders with a gray-white spiny carapace. They are deceptively quick.

### LUSKER:

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

**Skills:** Climbing d12+2, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Notice d10, Shooting d10, Stealth d10

**Pace:** 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

#### Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Poison (-4):** The bite of the Lusker causes instant paralysis for those who fail their Vigor roll. It lasts for 2d6 minutes.
- **Webbing:** Luskers can cast webs from

their thorax that are the size of Small Burst Templates. This is a Shooting roll with a range of 3/6/12. Anything in the web must be cut or broken free (Toughness 7). Webbed characters can still fight, but all physical actions are at -4.

- **Wall Walker:** Luskers can move on vertical or inverted surfaces at their full Pace.

## DOWN THE SHAFT

Dropping light down the shaft will reveal a long plunge, perhaps a thousand feet. Curiously, there seems to be a bottom to the shaft, and it's made of metal. When the characters manage to go down there, the bottom will be revealed as the small elevator. The ancient remains of a skeleton lies atop it.

The heroes will have to make a few Climb checks (there are holes where a safety ladder used to be fastened, providing hand and footholds) to get to the elevator (the Game Master should cut down on the number of Climb checks; one every 200 ft should be enough).

Interestingly, there are no pulleys or other means of support for the elevator. The shaft is literally just a hole. A Notice roll will reveal large holes in the sides of the shaft. These are asymmetrical, and a character who makes a Track roll (or perhaps an appropriate Knowledge roll) will realize that they are Lusker nests.

At the Game Master's option, the characters can be subject to further Lusker attacks on the way down to the elevator. In fact, a group of Luskers descending the shaft could provide a sense of urgency for the heroes to get the access door open. The Game Master should be careful, however, not to soften them up too much.

## THE ELEVATOR

The elevator itself is a cylinder about 2" tall and 2" in diameter. There is an access hatch at the top, but it is rusted shut from centuries of neglect. It takes at least one raise on a cooperative Strength roll to wrench it free (at which point it simply snaps off the hinges). Alternatively, it can be cut open -- the hatch has a Toughness of 12.



The elevator's interior looks like the inside of a hollow metal cylinder, which is exactly what it is. A handrail lines the inside of the wall, and a control mechanism sits next to a metal door. The control mechanism is similar to that of an airship. A Piloting roll will enable a character to operate the elevator.

## GOING DOWN

Presumably, the heroes will want to go deeper into the mine. Haiden will definitely suggest this if the heroes seem more interested in going back up. The elevator will travel at a brisk pace down the mine shaft. Anyone not holding the handrail must make an Agility roll or be thrown to the ceiling (suffering 1d4 points of damage). A Game Master with a mean streak may have a Lusker sitting atop the elevator. While it is too big to climb through the access hatch, it could scratch and nibble on any character that was sucked up to the ceiling.

After a few minutes, the elevator stops. A Smarts roll will reveal that the heroes are now several miles within the mountain, perhaps even ten. The elevator glides to a stop, unceremoniously slamming any characters that were plastered on the ceiling onto the floor. Spinning the small wheel on the door opens it into another cavern.

## JOURNEY TO THE PIT

The burrowed out corridor leads deeper into the darkness. A Notice roll reveals the sound of machinery echoing in the corridor. The heroes are close.

After walking about 500 yards, the corridor opens into a large cavern with a deep crevice dropping down out of sight. The heroes can feel warm air coming from the depths. Lighting this room causes the native rogun to take flight.

The rogun aren't fighters. Their natural instinct is to flee, but the insects they feed off of have hard carapaces. As such, the rogun have developed rather nasty serrated teeth that they use to strike predators as they take flight. The Game Master should have 1d4+1 rogun attack each character as they fly past, lighting up the cavern like giant fireflies.

## ROGUN (TORCH BAT):

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

**Skills:** Fighting d6

**Pace:** —; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 2

**Special Abilities:**

- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Flying:** Flying Pace 8".
- **Size -2:** Chorak measure up to 2' in height.
- **Small:** Attackers suffer a -2 penalty to attack rolls because of the beast's size.
- **Luminescent Skin:** The Rogun's skin glows brightly, giving attackers a +2 to Shooting attacks at Medium or greater range.

The next problem the heroes face is crossing the chasm. Judging by the marks in the ground near the edge, there must've been a bridge or other apparatus to cross the 3" distance. Now, there is nothing but air. There are stalagmites on the floor, allowing for ropes to be affixed, but someone will still have to figure out a way across.

Falling need not lead to instant death. If the characters are tethered together, a slip may only cause a temporary inconvenience. Also, as a natural (rather than artificial) chasm, there are bound to be ledges and things jutting out for a character to land on (or, for a pulpier feel, the character could get snatched up by a giant flying beastie and freed as the other characters attack it).

## THE OTHER SIDE

Another corridor is burrowed through the wall on the other side of the cave. The machinery noises are louder now, and emanate from deep down the corridor.

A Notice roll will reveal that there are booted footprints on the floor. Bits and pieces of Lusker and Rogun carcasses are also strewn about. A hero with the the Track skill may make a roll to determine the number of different types of footprints on the floor (see below). The footprints go to the edge of the ledge and back.

The footprints are the mark of Exterminator Robots

created ages ago. Unlike the more modern Sythenmen, these did not decay after 100 years. They were designed of more durable stuff. Unfortunately, their programming has dulled over the centuries, such that they remember only a simple order, "kill within this area."

The Baltan miners decided that the Exterminators were more useful alive than dead, as the dim warriors kept the mountain creatures away from the mines. As a precaution, the Red Martian miners walled them in, but they needn't have bothered. The Exterminators do their job, killing creatures and keeping them away from the mine. Unfortunately, these Robots can't distinguish between creatures and intelligent life. The heroes are fair game.

There should be approximately one Exterminator per character. The robots fight to the death.

## EXTERMINATOR

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d6, Repair d6

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

### Special Abilities:

- **Spinning blades:** The Exterminators arms end in whirring cuisinart-style blades, Str+d6.
- **Electro-shock:** The Exterminator is able to launch an electrical discharge once every three rounds. The blast has a range of 4", and does 3d6 damage.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken, Wild Cards suffer no Wound penalties, no additional damage from called shots, not affected by disease and poison.
- **Immunities (Psionics):** Robots are immune to psionic powers which influence or interfere with them mentally. Some physical powers (telekinesis for example) may effect them depending on the trapping.

## THE GATE

Once the heroes get past the Exterminators, they will need to go through the gate constructed to keep the robots away from the mine. The machinery echo is very loud here.

The gate is simply columns of iron bars with a door built into it. A Lockpick check should pop the lock. The bars themselves are Toughness 12. About 100 yards down the corridor from the gate turns slightly. Light illuminates the curve from the other side.

## THE PIT

Once the heroes traverse the 100 yards and make the turn, the last 50 feet are illuminated. The heroes can see a ledge beyond, with a metal guardrail. If they venture out, they will find themselves in a massive chasm with many rings of levels both above and below them. The sound of machinery hums, scratches, and clangs from below. The sound of whips cracking and barked orders also fill the chasm.

The ring that the heroes are on is abandoned. So are all of the levels above and two rings below them. These levels have already been mined for all their worth. The chasm is illuminated by small, hovering lights, remnants of an ancient technology.

Further below, the hero can see armed Red Martians ordering Red Martian slaves to dig out the small amounts of radium ore found in the broken rocks dispensed by ancient burrowing machines. It is a long, laborious process. Two medium airships hover in the center of the chasm below. One floats three levels down, gathering the deposited radium. As the heroes watch, the airship floats into a tunnel, presumably to a larger airship waiting outside. The other looks more official, with a well-adorned administrator barking orders from the deck. He has four guards with him.

## SLAVE DRIVER

### (Red Martians)

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Piloting d4, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

**Charisma:** +0

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

**Hindrances:** Mean

**Edges:** —

**Gear:** Whip ( Str +1, Range 2, If a raise is rolled defenders parry is at -2 until untangled), Short Sword (Str +d6)

## OVERSEER

(Red Martian)

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Torture) d10, Notice d8, Riding d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Street-wise d8

**Charisma:** -3

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 6

**Hindrances:** Habit (excessive cruelty), Mean

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes, Level Headed

**Gear:** Whip, ( Str +1, Range 2, If a raise is rolled defenders parry is at -2 until untangled), Rapier (Str +d6), Jewel Armor

## OVERSEER'S BODYGUARD

(Red Martian)

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Piloting d6, Riding d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d8

**Charisma:** -2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** Mean

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes

**Gear:** Silkweave armor, Pike (Str+d8), Rapier (Str+d6)

## BALTAN MINING SKIFF

There are two medium skiffs in the shaft. They have identical statistics. For the mining skiff, there are two slave drivers aboard. The Overseer's skiff has the Overseer and his four bodyguards aboard.

**Acc/Top Speed:** 25/200

**Climb:** 20

**Toughness:** 14(2)

**Crew:** 2

**Manueverability:** Good

**Armament:** None

**Cargo:** 1000 lbs

**Width:** 3

**Length:** 10

## DESCENDING THE PIT

Each ring level is approximately 12 feet high. Small burrowing machines bore into the walls and a slave or two follows behind, sifting through the debris and collecting the precious ore. Some of the overseers carry handheld ore detectors that tell the machines where to dig. There is one armed guard per three slaves. Any given level has about 10 guards and 30 slaves, give or take a couple.

For all of the technology, climbing from level to level is done through a system of ladders. This keeps slaves from escaping to other levels simply by removing them. There are no ladders on the level that the heroes are on. They will have to climb or jump down.

The heroes are in no real danger of being seen on the current ring or the first two below, providing that they aren't drawing attention to themselves. Once they get on the last unmanned level, they will have to make Stealth rolls to avoid being seen.

Haiden will recognize one of the slaves, an older man with long hair and a scraggly beard, as one of the Sardai. Specifically, he was a veteran hunter named Aken. Aken works with two younger male slaves and have only a single guard. Luckily, there are no other lodes nearby, so if the heroes can quietly overpower the guard they will gain a few moments with Aken.

How the heroes overpower the guard is up to them, using their ingenuity. As long as the guard goes down in the first round of combat, he will not be able to raise the alarm (a good plan would be to grapple the guard and clamp his mouth shut while another character incapacitates him). Aken and company won't be able to help (they are prostrate sifting through rubble), unless the combat enters the third round.



## SARDAI MINERS

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

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

**Charisma:** +0

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

**Hindrances:** Loyal

**Edges:** —

**Gear:** None

Aken can reveal that Mallora never came to the mine. Borast, Chieftain of the treacherous Barudai tribe, took a liking to her and paid the slavers to keep her as a concubine. Aken presumes that she is still with the Barudai.

## GETTING OUT

The simplest thing for the heroes to do is to go back the way they came before they are spotted (or to go back a little more quickly if they are). Trying to free the slaves is simply too great a task for so few of them. Aken has accepted his fate, for the Sardai have effectively been destroyed.

Still, if the characters want to mount a small scale rescue operation they could free a handful of slaves and maybe commandeer one of the airships. Unfortunately, the only airship exit leads to a huge Baltan airship outside (a sympathetic Game Master may give them another tunnel out). The administrator has the ability to call the ship for reinforcements, which will be two or three skiffs filled with soldiers. If the heroes stir up enough trouble and take down enough guards, the slaves may revolt on their own. The heroes could give them knowledge of their escape route, and perhaps there are others.

If the heroes do return the way they came, the Game Master may wish to throw another lusker or two their way. The elevator can be ridden to the top of the shaft.

The *Glashgar* is waiting for them outside. If the heroes managed to alert the Baltanese to their presence, the *Glashgar* might have to evade a huge

Baltanese airship as it winds its way out of the mountains.

Haiden knows where the Barudai are currently camped. It is an oasis about four days flight away (toward Callor). If the heroes did alert the miners, then Crimson Jayde will insist that they move quickly before the Barudai are warned.

## BALTAN CREWMAN

(Red Martians)

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Piloting d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** —

**Edges:** —

**Gear:** Silkweave, Short Sword (Str+d6), Crossbow (2d6)

## BALTAN CAPTAIN

(Red Martian)

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Tactics) d10, Notice d8, Piloting d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Survival d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** —

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes, Two Fisted

**Gear:** Silkweave, double-cell Radium pistol (2d6+2), Baltanese Dueling Blades (Str+d6, +1 to hit).

## BALTAN AIRSHIP

**Acc/Top Speed:** 20/180

**Climb:** 15

**Toughness:** 20(4)

**Crew:** 24 (+60)

**Manueverability:** Poor

**Armament:** 5 Radium guns (1 aft, 1 port, 1 starboard, 2 forward), 3 bomb racks

**Cargo:** 25 tons

**Width:** 10

**Length:** 30

# PART FOUR:

## THE RESCUE

In the penultimate part, the heroes finally get the chance to rescue Mallora from the Green Wastes. Unfortunately, the slavers are also in the area, giving the *Glashgar* a ship-to-ship battle as the heroes struggle to return to civilization.

### DROPPING IN

While the heroes are reasonably certain that Mallora is in the hands of the Barudai chieftain, there is no reason to sneak in unannounced. The Barudai have no reason to suspect the heroes of mounting a rescue operation, especially since the *Glashgar* is not a Callorian vessel.

If the player characters think to mention this, Crimson Jayde will readily agree to drop her vessel near the camp. She'll simply say that she is interested in bartering for fresh water (which isn't a lie). If she plays her cards right, she may even get to take some of the water aboard before they have to make their escape. Haiden knows what Mallora looks like, and once her location is verified the heroes can spring into action.

### BARUDAI OASIS

The Barudai camp surrounds an oasis. The Barudai are a large tribe of about 400. The oasis is a large pond of water surrounded by almost a quarter of a mile of fertile soil (the Barudai would never pitch a tent atop the fertile ground; every square inch is being farmed). The Chieftain's tent sits at the edge of the oasis. The largest concentration of tents surround it.

One interesting thing of note in the oasis is the number of manufactured (especially Baltan) goods. The Barudai look much better equipped and dressed than other red nomad tribes. The tools used in farming the soil are also brand new. It's

pretty obvious that someone is bestowing a great number of gifts on the Barudai (i.e. the Slavers).

As the *Glashgar* descends on the oasis, observant characters will notice another large airship docked nearby, flying no flag. Characters that correctly guess that this is the slaver ship may have cause for alarm. The *Glashgar* won't be able to escape without a fight. Characters that suggest turning away will be overruled by Crimson Jayde, as she is certain that her ship has already been seen and she doesn't want to make any suspicious course changes.

### WELCOMING COMMITTEE

Should the *Glashgar* touch down reasonably close to the Barudai camp, it will be approached by a few Barudai merchants and buyers. The cargo hold has a number of items that Captain Jayde's crew has gathered over the last year or so, and Crimson Jayde is perfectly willing to trade for fresh water, vegetables, and other goods.

### SLAVE AUCTION

The Slave ship, *Wayfinder*, is owned and operated by a Baltan priest, Brother Vosk, and his second-in-command, Tyrek Vonn. The Slavers are conducting a slave auction just outside their airship. Tyrek Vonn runs the auction, parading Red Martians in chains up onto the makeshift auction platform. The slaves come in all shapes and sizes; men, women, and even children. None have problems attracting bidders. It's a sickening sight to behold.

The Slavers will be very interested in Crimson Jayde, her crew, and her passengers. Brother Vosk will attempt to share a drink with some of them in the hopes of learning why they are here. The Barudai don't sit along any trade routes.

### SPOTLIGHT

Chieftain Borast is sitting near the auction, enjoying the show. He has two wives, Karna and Fellen, sitting with him. Mallora sits at his feet, leashed by the neck like a pet. Interestingly, Karna, not Borast, holds the leash.

Haiden picks her out in an instant. If Haiden is dead, then Mallora is recognizable due to an uncanny resemblance to her father. If the heroes seek an audience with Borast, he will introduce his wives but ignore Mallora. If asked about her, Borast will shrug and say that she's a gift.

## BORAST

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

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Piloting d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d8

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** Greedy

**Edges:** Connections

**Gear:** Heavy Silkweave, Broadsword (Str+d8), knife (Str+d4), holdout radium pistol (Range 10/20/40 Damage 3d6)\*,

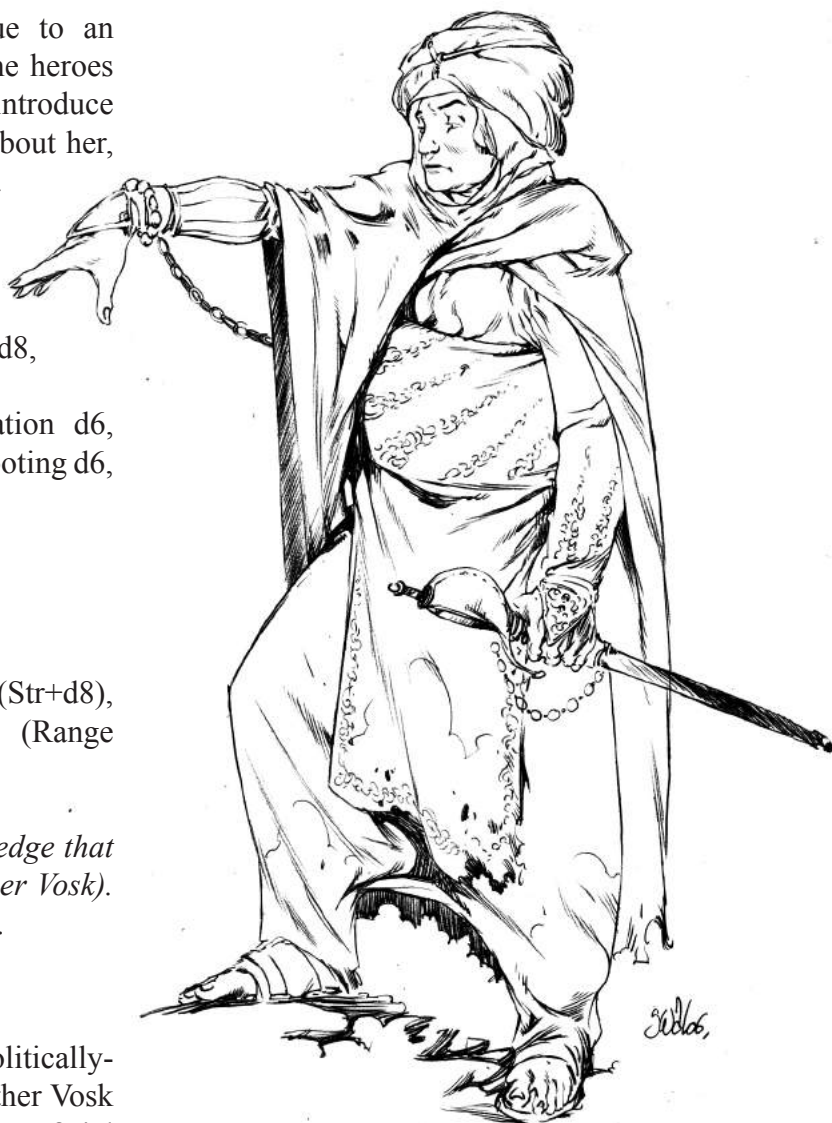
*\*Borast does not make it common knowledge that he has a radium pistol (a gift from Brother Vosk). He will use this surprise to his advantage.*

## PLAYING POLITICS

There is an opportunity for charismatic, politically-minded heroes to shine in this scene. Brother Vosk and Chieftain Borast have an equally beneficial arrangement. Borast leads Vosk to new nomad tribes and helps with their subjugation, while Vosk provides Borast with protection, slaves, and manufactured goods. This arrangement, however, will not go on in perpetuity.

Heroes that manage to get Vosk to proffer his opinion on the slaves should realize that Vosk doesn't see the Barudai any differently than the other Red Nomad tribes. At some point, he'll come for them as well.

If the heroes can convince Borast of this, they may find an unlikely ally against the slavers. While he is loathe to give up Mallora, Borast will order an attack on the grounded slave vessel if he believes that it is in his best interest.



## MOUNTING A RESCUE

The heroes may mount the rescue attempt in any manner they wish. Stealth is probably the best option, perhaps with a bit of sabotage on the *Wayfinder*. Perhaps the PCs could out-con Tyrek Vonn into taking the slaver ship elsewhere.

The brute force approach is probably not a good idea. While the Barudai tribesmen are not much of a challenge individually (the Game Master should use the Mook rules), there are a lot of them. If the heroes are going to attempt this, their best shot would be to have the *Glashgar* swoop in low, allow the heroes to get out and snatch Mallora, and then take off before the Barudai can mount a concerted counterattack.

Mallora won't go easily at first. She is aware of five other Sardai slaves in camp, and she'll insist



on saving them. The heroes will probably have to talk her out of it, or perhaps they may decide to rescue all of the slaves -- perhaps not the smart thing to do, but definitely the most heroic.

### BARUDAI TRIBESMAN

(Red Martian Nomad -- Mooks)

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** —

**Edges:** —

**Gear:** Spear (Str+d6), Broadsword (Str+d8), Crossbow (2d6)

## AIRBORNE ASSAULT!

Assuming that the *Wayfinder* isn't disabled, Brother Vosk will take off after them. He has a faster ship, and it won't be long before they catch up. Worse, there is a storm ahead. It will only slow the *Glashgar* down.

The slavers will only fight until it looks like they can't win. At this point, they break off. Whether the heroes decide to definitively end their slave trading days is up to their own moral concern.

## SO WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE STEALTH APPROACH?

Absolutely nothing. If the heroes prefer docking the *Glashgar* out of sight and running a commando raid into the camp, then go for it. The heroes might even wish to walk in as wandering merchants to leave their mode of egress as a surprise.

In any case, the heroes will still need to identify and extract Mallora. This will probably lead the slavers to follow them, which may still set up a battle between the *Wayfinder* and the *Glashgar*.



# PART FIVE: BETRAYAL!

In this final part of the campaign, the heroes are confronted by Lord Keldar's nemesis. Haiden is revealed as a traitor, and the heroes must battle to keep Mallora and themselves alive.

## A PERFECT STORM

On the way back to Yarvalla, Haiden mentions to Crimson Jayde that there is an underground oasis along the way. She could recoup some of her losses for the extended length of the mission by collecting the water (the additional complications actually worked in Haiden's favor; he didn't have to resort to more drastic means to divert the *Glashgar*). Jayde readily agrees.

Unfortunately for Jayde and crew, there is no oasis. One of Lord Tarask's airships is waiting for them just beyond the broken land where the oasis purports to be. In addition, another storm is coming. Crimson Jayde orders the ship forward, hoping to take advantage of the sheltered locale. She's flying right into a trap.

## ILL WINDS ARE BLOWING

The *Glashgar* is racing a hurricane to see who can get to the oasis first. It looks like the airship will win, but not by much. Crimson Jayde is barking orders to Scarlon, who barks them to the rest of the crew. The *Glashgar* drops low to the ground.

Any character on the open deck can make a Notice roll. Success means that he sees someone out on the rocks, glancing in the *Glashgar*'s direction.

Should this be brought to Crimson Jayde's attention, there is little she can do. It could be anyone; red nomads, green martians, or even another ship. With the hurricane almost on top of them, Jayde can't risk turning away. They'll have to deal with whoever it is. Jayde orders the crew to prepare weapons as they approach the rocks.

Haiden will get worried if he hears this. A prepared Jayde might overcome Tarask's forces. Haiden begins an internal debate in his head whether it is better to leave things as they are or try to abscond with Mallora before the battle. Any heroes in Haiden's presence during the discovery can make an opposed Notice vs Persuasion against him. Success indicates that Haiden seems to know something he isn't telling (this check can take place at any time before the *Chalnoth* makes its presence known. If cornered, Haiden will relate a story of how he saw a ghost the last time he was trapped in a hurricane.

## RIDING OUT THE STORM

The sky darkens as the *Glashgar* comes to rest. Powerful winds rip across the ship, causing it to sway and rock. Crimson Jayde orders everyone to stay below deck until the storm passes.

Haiden has other ideas. He attempts to get to the surface deck (if cornered, he'll explain that he needs to tell Jayde something about the oasis). Once there, he holds up a blue strip of cloth. He's announcing to a small group of soldiers in a nearby cave to board the ship and take Mallora.

The soldiers quickly climb aboard the vessel. Heroes that make a Notice roll will become aware of quick footsteps on the surface deck. Ten soldiers are aboard, making their way to Mallora's quarters.

If the heroes intercept them, they should be able to hold off the soldiers until the *Glashgar* crew can join them. If they decide to warn Jayde first, then the soldiers will kidnap Mallora and be running across the sand when Jayde and the heroes spot them. The heroes will have to chase them down (Jayde won't risk her crew in this storm). Should the soldiers get this far, Haiden will be with them. He will be shot with a radium gun by one of the soldiers just as he enters the cave.

## COMMANDOS (Red Martians)

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Piloting d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** —

**Edges:** —

**Gear:** Silkweave, Rapier (Str +d6), Radium pistol (2d6+2)

## UNDERGROUND ROUTE

The “cavern” is actually a natural tunnel between the *Glashgar*’s resting place and the *Chalnoth*. If desired, the heroes and Crimson Jayde can use this tunnel to mount their own attack against the *Chalnoth*. The tunnel is guarded, so the heroes will have to quietly deal with the two sentries before assaulting the enemy airship.

## THE FINAL BATTLE

Once the storm passes, the *Glashgar* will find itself face to face with the *Chalnoth*. The captain of the enemy vessel offers Crimson Jayde an opportunity to hand over Mallora and the heroes and leave safely. He also “outs” Haiden as the traitor (the captain will find it amusing to watch Haiden get torn apart by the *Glashgar* crew).

Obviously (and correctly), Crimson Jayde doesn’t trust him. She answers with her radium cannon and the sky battle is joined! The *Chalnoth* fights until the tide turns against them. Lord Tarask will attempt to turn this into an indictment against Crimson Jayde for “attacking his vessel.” Any captured soldiers will be loathe to admit to the kidnapping absent great persuasion.

### CHALNOTH CREWMAN

(Red Martians)

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Piloting d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** —

**Edges:** —

**Gear:** Silkweave, Short Sword (Str+d6), Crossbow (2d6)

### CHALNOTH CAPTAIN

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Taunt d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8+; **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** Arrogant

**Edges:** Quick, Florentine, Riposte, Sword and Blaster

**Gear:** dagger (Str+d4), heavy radium pistol (2d8+2), rapier (Str+d6), wireweave vest

## THE CHALNOTH

The *Chalnoth* is a Callolean merchant vessel modified with two mounted radium guns. The GM should subtract any commandoes/crewmen that were defeated on the ground from the crew total.

**Acc/Top Speed:** 20/180

**Climb:** 20

**Toughness:** 16(4)

**Crew:** 8 (+36)

**Manueverability:** Average

**Armament:** 2 Radium guns (forward)

**Cargo:** 5 tons

**Width:** 7

**Length:** 21

## A GRATEFUL FATHER

Once Lord Tarask’s forces have been defeated, it will be smooth sailing to Yavalla. Lord Keldar is anxious; the heroes have been gone a lot longer than they were supposed to be. Markon will be waiting at the docks for any news.

Lord Keldar will be thrilled if the heroes bring Mallora to him. He will be especially happy if they have evidence that Lord Tarask tried to kidnap her. He will gladly pay his reward to the characters and throw another in another half-week of fresh meat in gratitude. The heroes will be invited to stay for Mallora’s big “Entry into Adulthood” feast.

## VARIANT ENDINGS

There are a number of ways that Lord Tarask’s forces can use to acquire Mallora from the *Glashgar*. This final chapter need not play out as



above (especially if one of the plot complications is used). You'll have to assess the situation and choose the ending that works best for your group.

If, for example, you want to end with a big airship battle, then you might not want the "commando raid" to take place (as it could lead to diffusing the situation without the battle). In contrast, if you felt that the final battle with the slavers was enough airship-to-airship combat for one evening, you might want to bulk up the "commando raid" as a full ground assault by Tarask's forces.

You're in control. Choose the ending conflict that works best for you and your players.

## EPILOGUE

Depending on the outcome of the adventure, the Game Master will have many strands to build future adventures around. Some possibilities are outlined below.

Assuming the characters succeed, they now have a Lord as a friend, possibly to call on for favors later. If Mallora found one of the heroes attractive, there may even be a courtship in the works (a courtship that certain enemies might wish to disrupt).

By the same token, they have made an enemy of Lord Tarask. This can't be helped, as Lord Tarask was going to kill them anyway. In the near future, the heroes may have to dodge assassins or other forms of trouble as Lord Tarask vies for revenge.

Depending on how she was used in the adventure, Crimson Jayde could also become an ally. She may even offer them positions aboard the *Glashgar* if she feels that they've sufficiently proven themselves.

Lord Arkon of Baltan will also be out for the characters if they disrupted operations at his mine. He'll certainly beef up security and try to find other sources of slave labor. The heroes have cost him a lot of money, and he'll want revenge.

## COMPLICATIONS

### A QUICKER ADVENTURE

There are a number of ways to make the campaign shorter, and turn it into a single adventure, if necessary. The easiest way is to drop the slaver angle: the Sardai were attacked by the Green Martians. Mallora is a prisoner in the Green Martian camp (a devious Game Master may even have her entering the Circle of Fire as the heroes approach). After rescuing her, the heroes still encounter Tarask's crew on the way back.

If desired, the Green Martian chapter can also be ignored. The heroes find the remainder of the Sardai tribe intact, and they tell them of the abduction (which leads to the mine or, for a shorter adventure, the Barudai).

### AN INSIDE JOB

Game Masters wishing to add an extra layer of intrigue may have the steward, Markon, be in league with Lord Tarask. Markon has seen the writing on the wall and believes that Lord Keldar will have to dismiss him, leaving him with little opportunities elsewhere. Lord Tarask has offered him job security.

This option works especially well if there is a scout/tracker/nomad in the party and the inclusion of Haiden seems too forced or convenient. With Markon as the traitor, the heroes will still have to fight their way through Tarask's forces in Part Five. Markon will simply tell Crimson Jaydee to meet Lord Keldar's vessel outside the city (and it will be Tarask's ship, not Keldar's, waiting there).

### CRIMSON TREACHERY

Crimson Jayde could also be a traitor. This works well if Haiden was discovered, killed, or absent from the adventure, and Markon is still played straight. Lord Tarask has offered Crimson Jayde an incredible reward if she changes course and delivers Mallora to him at the last moment.

In this case, Haiden (or any PC making a Notice or Piloting roll) will realize that the *Glashgar* is not taking a direct route back to the city. The airship will instead confront a waiting Tarask vessel, ready

to hand over its cargo. The heroes will have to fight their way through and make it back to Yarvalla on foot.

#### A DIFFERENT SHADE OF CRIMSON

Game Masters that wish to add more spice to the adventure can make Crimson Jayde an Earthwoman. Her background remains the same; she remembers nothing before wandering out of the Grey Expanse. Game Masters wishing to pursue this option can add Earthman options to her from the chapter on character creation.

A Crimson Jayde from an Earth culture may have a non-firearm weapon from that culture (any firearms have probably long run out of bullets). A Japanese Jayde might wield a katana, while a Southern Belle from the American South might have a cavalry saber. Her accent would also be different, and her speech might be peppered with the occasional Earth word.



# DRAMATIS PERSONAE

## MALLORA

Mallora is an attractive young woman just blossoming into adulthood. Her sandy blonde hair is clipped short (easier to manage in the wastes). Mallora is very religious, wearing the symbol of Faina around her neck and trying hard to live by her code, that others come first. As a result, Mallora rarely speaks first and asks for nothing. While not happy as a concubine, she submits out of concern for other Sardai slaves. When freed, she will request that any Sardai remaining be freed with her. A Sense Motive check, of course, will reveal the scared child beneath.

Having studied as a healer, Mallora is of little use in combat. She will need to be protected. Should any particular PC take on the job, it's possible Mallora may fall for him. Assuming that he is suitable, Lord Keldar would have no objections to the match (and, indeed, may be insulted if he rejects her).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d4, Guts d6, Knowledge (religion) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d8

**Charisma:** +2

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

**Hindrances:** Code of Honor

**Edges:** Noble

**Gear:** None

## HAIDEN

Haiden is a thin, wiry man with a full mustache and beard (“It protects my face from the sand,” he says). His weather-beaten face makes him look middle-aged, even though he is still a young man by most standards. Haiden feels uncomfortable in the confines of the city, preferring the open land of the Green Wastes. In the wastes, he is rarely seen without his silkweave cloak.

Haiden is not necessarily an evil man, just used to looking out for himself. Selling out a rich merchant’s daughter was easy; Mallora will still be rescued from the wastes and taken back to her comfortable city. It will just cost her father a little more to get her back. He doesn’t understand city folk anyway. In the wastes, he’s as reliable as they come, as working together is necessary to survive.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Survival d10, Tracking d10

**Charisma:** –2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** Greedy, Mean

**Edges:** Block, Command, Really Dirty Fighter

**Gear:** Knife (Str+d4), Broadsword (Str+d8), silkweave

## “CRIMSON” JAYDE

Still a young woman, Crimson Jayde already has enough stories woven about her to go toe-to-toe against any airship captain. Legends say she just walked out of the Grey Expanse with her Green Martian bodyguard in tow. She had enough money to purchase her own airship, and she hired a seasoned crew and captain to hunt for relics. Crimson Jayde got her nickname when one of her scavenging forays attracted the attention of a glashgar. The glashgar killed the captain and four of the crew before Jayde and Tosk finally brought it down. Jayde was covered in the glashgar’s blood, earning her the nickname “Crimson.” Jayde renamed her ship in honor of that event and finally became its true captain.

Adding to Jayde’s mystery is her devastating beauty, with dark green eyes and long raven hair that cascades down her back. She speaks with a slight Baltan accent, although she hates the Baltan government with a passion. When not wearing her silkweave armor (which she only dons for anticipated combat), Jayde wears comfortable, revealing clothes that accentuate her “attributes.” She has a fun, flirty personality darkened only by Tosk, who never remains far from her.

Jayde plays at being a merchant, but she is really a sky-corsair. She normally attacks Baltanese cargoes and sells the wares to Callor and independent kingdoms. Jayde is also fascinated with Grey Martian artifacts, and will go out of her way to acquire them.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Tactics) d10, Notice d8, Piloting d10, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Survival d6

**Charisma:** +2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** Arrogant, Loyal, Code of Honor

**Edges:** Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, Hard to Kill, Hold the Line, Level Headed, Natural Leader, Sky Corsair

**Gear:** Rapier (Str+d6)



## TOSK

Nothing is known about Tosk's background. He never speaks, although he understands others perfectly. Tosk communicates through simple gestures. He is fiercely loyal to his captain, and will protect her at any cost. There is a nobility about him that is absent in most other members of his race. He also seems deeply spiritual, meditating whenever Jayde is indisposed. This gives the impression that Tosk never sleeps.

The fact that Tosk came from the Grey Expanse has led some to speculate that he was experimented on by the mysterious Grey Men. Feeding this is the fact that Tosk feels no affiliation with the rest of the Green Martian race, and indeed will have little to do with them. Others chalk this attitude up to haughty superiority. Whatever the case, Tosk is unique and a feared combatant.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Piloting d6, Shooting d8, Survival d8, Stealth d6

**Charisma:** -4

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 10

**Hindrances:** Bloodthirsty, Loyal

**Edges:** Berserk, Marksman

**Gear:** War Sword (Str+d10), Radium Rifle (2d10)

## FIRST MATE SCARLON

Scarlon used to be in the Baltan navy when he was captured by Jayde's crew. He accepted the offer to join and has worked his way into Jayde's confidence.

Scarlon is a short, stocky, bald man with a bellowing voice. When excited, he utters religious phrases that would be considered blasphemous in Baltan.

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Tactics) d10, Notice d8, Piloting d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Survival d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** Code of Honor

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes, Two Fisted, Florentine

**Gear:** Silkweave, Radium pistol (2d6+2), Baltanese Dueling Blades (Str+d6, +1 to hit).

## GLASHGAR CREWMAN

The stat block below is for a typical crewman.

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Piloting d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** —

**Edges:** —

**Gear:** Rapier (Str +d6), Silkweave

## THE GLASHGAR

The *Glashgar* is Crimson Jayde's airship. A slightly modified merchant vessel, a mounted radium gun is hidden in the sculpture of the head of a glashgar. Jayde enjoys using it as a surprise.

**Acc/Top Speed:** 20/180

**Climb:** 20

**Toughness:** 16(4)

**Crew:** 8 (+36)

**Manueverability:** Average

**Armament:** 1 Radium gun (forward)

**Cargo:** 5 tons

**Width:** 7

**Length:** 21

## BROTHER VOSK

Brother Vosk is a fanatically devout follower of the Baltan faith -- reaching a level of fervor nearly approaching that of the Lonarians. Due to his interpretation of the sacred scriptures, Vosk truly believes that the Red Nomads were cast out of civilization for their sins (after all, their cities did fail) and that it is their destiny to serve those that are still in the gods' good graces. He has adopted Ghandar, the Illuminated One, as his personal deity (Ghandar's symbol is a lantern).

Brother Vosk is a slightly pudgy man with thinning hair and a wispy mustache. He dresses in the garb of the Wayfinders, a now defunct group of missionaries that used to go into the wastes to preach. Brother Vosk now believes that the Red Nomads are beyond repentance.

It is Vosk's money that finances the slavers. Tyrek Vonn is the junior partner. The *Wayfinder* is Vosk's airship.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d12, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Religion) d10, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

**Charisma:** -6

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 11; **Toughness:** 9

**Hindrances:** Bloodthirsty, Delusional (Red Martians were cast out for sins), Mean

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes, Dirty Fighter, First Strike, Florentine, Improved Block, Improved Frenzy, Level Headed, No Mercy, Quick, Priest.

**Gear:** dagger (Str +d4), twin hatchets (Str +d4), Silkweave

## TYREK VONN

Tyrek Vonn is a dashing young man with short blonde hair and a dazzling smile. While Brother Vosk believes that the Red Nomads are ordained to servitude, Vonn simply sees economic opportunity. Lord Arkon pays them well for new slaves.

While Vonn will not turn on Brother Vosk, he won't save him either. If the going gets tough, Tyrek Vonn looks out only for Tyrek Vonn.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (economics) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6, Taunt d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8+; **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** Habit (excessive cruelty)

**Edges:** Block, Frenzy, Precision Strike

**Gear:** Rapier (Str +d6), Silkweave

## WAYFINDER CREWMAN

The crewmen of the *Wayfinder* are Baltan. Many of them are former soldiers or merchant crewmen.

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Piloting d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** —

**Edges:** —

**Gear:** Rapier (Str +d6), Silkweave

## THE WAYFINDER

Brother Vosk's vessel is a large airship, used for shipping slaves. While not armed, the *Wayfinder* is fast for its size.

**Acc/Top Speed:** 22/200

**Climb:** 25

**Toughness:** 15(3)

**Crew:** 8 (+36)

**Manueverability:** Average

**Armament:** none

**Cargo:** 5 tons

**Width:** 7

**Length:** 21

## ADVENTURE SEEDS

The following are a selection of adventure possibilities:

### THE KIDNAPPING

Capture and ransom are a major part of a Baltanese politics, and many a Callorian has found themselves dragooned off to Baltan, only to be rescued in a suitably dramatic fashion. Now, however, the Baltanese are claiming that the scion of a powerful merchant household was taken by *Callorians*, and they want her back.

### PLAGUE

It is one of the greatest fears of all who dwell on the canals – something has gone wrong. The water has gained a greasy, noxious, taint, and all who drink from it are weakened and feverish. No one has died yet, but it is just a matter of time... and plans are being drawn up to go to war over stockpiles of pure water. How did the synthe-men allow this to happen?

### THE WELLSPRING

Nomadic Red Martians are telling tales of a spring which has appeared far out in the desert, gushing tremendous amounts of fresh water. At first, this was dismissed as just another oasis, destined to die in a few years, but the size and scope of it are defying all expectations. Now the various nomadic tribes have begun to settle around the spreading new rivers, and warfare is starting to become more commonplace. Green Martians are moving in to attack, as well, and canal dwellers are starting to abandon their cities and move with an almost cult like fascination towards this legendary spot. Is this spring truly a natural phenomenon heralding the rebirth of Mars, or is it something far more sinister?

### THE GREEN CRYSTAL

The Lonarian Theocrats have long been stymied in their plans to ‘save’ the rest of the planet by the difficulties in raising a large army and the heavy losses a war of salvation would incur. However, somewhere deep in their archives, an acolyte found plans for a terrifying super-weapon, a radium blaster which could level a city block,

apparently misfiled ages past under “Rites For The Blessing Of Cheese”. Lonaria has – barely – enough radium to make the weapon, but it requires a special lens – an emerald the size of a man’s head, which is rumored to have become a sacred icon for a large Green Martian tribe located in a ruined city on the shores of the dead southern sea. Lonar has dispatched its best to go and fetch this emerald; others have dispatched their best to make sure it never happens. (Or to destroy the plans at their source; either one works...)

### HAIL, CE’GRAHG!

Ce’Grahg, the Grahg-gor of a province of the Ape Empire, was always ambitious, but too cunning to risk outright war. Now, that has changed. Armed with powerful weapons and incredible armor, his legions have conquered two nearby provinces and he has made no secret of the fact he plans to march all the way to the capital and seize control of the entire Empire. The weapons his forces use project beams of fearsome energy, utterly unlike radium guns, but very close to the dreaded heat-rays of the Grey Martians. Did he discover a cache of their tools, or are they somehow controlling him for their own purposes?

### THE CULT OF THE GREY

The Grey Martians are the past...and perhaps the future. A strange cult has taken hold among the cities of the canal dwellers, one which preaches that the Grey Martians are waking from their long isolation beneath the sands and will soon rise to conquer the entire surface of Mars. They will exterminate all the other races of Mars – save for the few faithful who will become honored servants of the tentacled masters.

### THE ALLIANCE

Something unthinkable has happened – Red Martian nomads have, somehow, worked out a treaty with several Green Martian bands, and the combined forces have turned into a devastating raiding army! Something is driving them in a path of destruction that is leaving ruined cities behind them and terrified cities ahead. How did they ever manage to work together? Who is leading them? Do they have a purpose?



## THE VANISHED

Every year, the Dry Fang tribe of Green Martians raids the farms of Falish, a small Red Martian city near to the Windplains. This year...they didn't. Not a one was seen. Scouts who headed to Cruvash Nar, the ancient ruin the Dry Fang's called home, found a scene of massacre – hundreds of Green Martians slaughtered. They were not merely killed, but horribly mutilated. Most showed signs of having died under prolonged torture. No other tribe of Greens would have done this; nor would Red Nomads, nor even the White Apes. Who did this, why, and will they be coming to Falish next?

## NIGHT OF THE LIVING MARTIANS

Terror grips the streets of a small Martian city -- the dead have risen from their graves! The corpses shamble through the city, feasting upon the flesh of the living. The victims rise and join the horde. This is an opportunity for Game Masters to mix Survival Horror and the Sword and Planet genre. What is behind this horrific occurrence? The unspeakable rites of a cult dedicated to the service of long-dead gods of millennia past? An experiment in Weird Science gone horribly wrong? Or are the Grey Martians up to something?

## THE MASTERMIND

Xuur, a Red Martian scientist, has perfected a method of transplanting brains. He has offered this service to the very wealthy, as a way for them to cheat death by having their minds swapped into a younger body. Naturally, the younger people would not want to be swapped into an old body, so Xuur has been killing them -- simply scooping out their brains and offering their bodies to the rich. This is how the heroes become involved, investigating the sudden personality shift of an ally, or perhaps even being abducted themselves -- but it gets worse. Xuur has been using the discarded brains of his "donors", and is creating a Master Mind a device of incredible psionic power, driven by

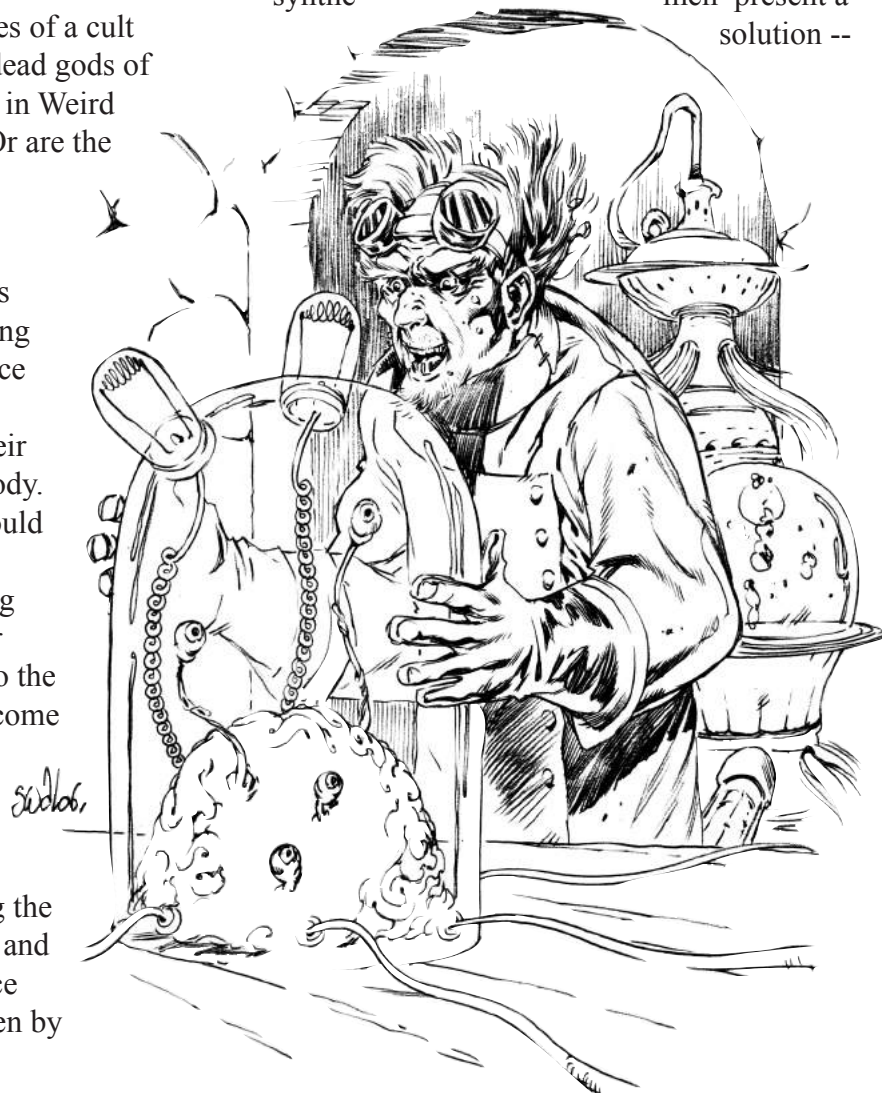
the brain matter of dozens of his victims. Can he be stopped? And what happens when the Master Mind achieves awareness and decides that it should become the Master of All Mars?

## YELLOW MEN OF MARS

A new race makes its presence known, rising up from the myth-enshrouded expanses of the Southern hemisphere. The Yellow Martians are on the move, and have decided to bring the Red Planet under their heel. Are their intentions noble, or are they just another conquering army? This gives an opportunity for a Game Master to develop another major Martian race, bringing in whatever genre influence you wish.

## THE MOONS OF MARS

Panic races across the surface of the Red Planet, as the Polar Stations begin to fail, one by one. The synthe-men are helpless to stop the disaster, and most scientists estimate that the canals will dry up within a year or two at the most. The synthe-men present a solution --



however, it seems impossible. The synthe-men tell a tale nearly lost to myth -- the designers of the canal system created a master control, and placed it where it could not be interfered with: On the moons of Mars. One device left in a great temple on Phobos -- and if that device is brought to a chamber on Deimos, the system will restart, the Polar Stations will return to operation, and Mars will be saved. The only question is: How do the heroes travel to the Moons of Mars, when the knowledge of how to do so has been lost over the centuries?

### THE GAMES OF MARS

The heroes, along with other 'specimens' from across the Red Planet, are abducted by a previously-unknown people. They, like many Martians, are fond of the abstract tactical game, *zha*, which is analogous to the Earth game, chess, albeit with more varied methods of attack. However, these people (either a new culture of Red Martians, or perhaps a new race created by the Game Master) prefer to play the game with slave gladiators engaged in actual combat. The heroes must fight for their lives on the game board, and then perhaps lead their fellow pawns in rising up against their masters!

### THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

How would the heroes react if their homeworld was invaded by Earthmen? Whether via a "Stargate"-style teleporter, Victorian science-fiction 'aetherships', or 1950s fins-and-chrome rockets, Earth has come to Mars in force. (Perhaps in retaliation for the attempted Grey invasion of Earth, as described by H.G. Wells?) This allows Game Masters to put a spin on the typical "invaders from outer space" tale, making the Earthmen the villains! This could be especially interesting if the playing group contains an Earthman who had been transported to Mars years earlier, and had since "gone native." Where would his loyalties now lie? With his fellow humans, who now offer him a chance to return home? Or among the Martians whom he has fought alongside for so long?





# EIGHT: ENCOUNTERS





# ENCOUNTER TABLES

Each day within the game, the Game Master can check for a random encounter. The Game Master draws a card from the action deck. If it's a face card, an encounter occurs.

Roll on the appropriate encounter table for that area of Mars. If a Joker comes up, roll twice – the heroes run into two things at once.

Obviously, these are just shorthand idea-sparkers from which the Game Master can develop detailed encounters

## GREEN WASTES

| d20 Roll | Result                 |
|----------|------------------------|
| 1        | Sandstorm              |
| 2-5      | 2d6 Green Martians     |
| 6-7      | 2d6 Red Martian Nomads |
| 8-9      | Ruin                   |
| 10       | Oasis                  |
| 11-14    | Creature               |
| 15       | Expedition             |
| 16-17    | Green Martian camp     |
| 18       | Red Nomad camp         |
| 19-20    | Natural Hazard         |

## GREY EXPANSE

| d20 Roll | Result               |
|----------|----------------------|
| 1-3      | Natural Hazard       |
| 4-9      | Creature             |
| 10-13    | Ruin                 |
| 14       | 1d3 Tripods          |
| 15       | Survivors            |
| 16       | Entry to Dark Below  |
| 17-18    | Slaves plus 1 Tripod |
| 19-20    | Willing Servants     |

## RED KINGDOMS

| d20 Roll | Result                |
|----------|-----------------------|
| 1        | Noble and d8 servants |
| 2        | d8 Law Enforcement    |
| 3        | d8 Soldiers           |
| 4        | d8 Thugs              |
| 5        | d6 Thieves            |
| 6        | Duel                  |
| 7        | Priest                |
| 8        | d12 Cultists          |
| 9        | Crime                 |
| 10       | Celebration           |
| 11       | Entertainers          |
| 12       | Natural Hazard        |
| 13       | Government official   |
| 14       | Ambush!               |
| 15       | Mistaken Identity     |
| 16       | Patron                |
| 17       | Creature!             |
| 18       | Merchant              |
| 19       | Sky-corsair           |
| 20       | Enemy                 |

## POLAR JUNGLES & APE EMPIRE

| Roll  | Result           |
|-------|------------------|
| 1-4   | 2d6 Ape Soldiers |
| 5-10  | Creature         |
| 11-12 | Natural Hazard   |
| 13-14 | Ruin             |
| 15-17 | 2d6 Ape Citizens |
| 18-19 | Ape Settlement   |
| 20    | Non-ape NPCs     |

# NONPLAYER CHARACTERS

The section that follows is filled with generic Extras for use by the Game Master as common allies and foes for the heroes to encounter in their travels. While the list is long, it is far from exhaustive.

The archetypes featured herein should suit most needs, and can be altered slightly to suit a particular Extra that you have in mind. In addition, we've included a group of more detailed Wild Card characters that are ready to be plugged into your individual **MARS** campaigns.

## RED MARTIANS

### ASSASSIN

Assassins are hired killers, usually working for an employer, although they can also be fanatics devoted to a particular cause.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Shooting d6, Streetwise d6, Throwing d6

**Charisma:** +0

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

**Hindrances:** Various

**Edges:** Alertness, First Strike

**Gear:** dagger (Str+d4), short sword (Str+d6), crossbow (Range 15/30/60, Damage 2d6, AP 2)

**Special Abilities:**

- **Poison:** The quickest way to kill someone is with poison. A typical poison requires a Vigor roll at -2 or take an automatic wound.

### AERONAVY CREWMAN

The Aeronavies of the Red Kingdoms are among their most prized assets. The average crewman is skilled and loyal.

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Piloting d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** —

**Edges:** —

**Gear:** Rapier (Str +d6), Silkweave

### AERONAVY OFFICER

The officers of the Aeronavy are leaders of men, and highly admired in Red Martian culture.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Tactics) d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8+; **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** Code of Honor

**Edges:** Quick, Command, Natural Leader

**Gear:** dagger (Str+d4), heavy radium pistol (2d8+2), rapier (Str+d6), wireweave vest

### CITIZEN

Most of the population of the Red Kingdoms lead simple lives as crafters, shop owners, laborers, and farmers. They have few skills beyond their trade and little interest risking their necks.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d4, Guts d4, Knowledge (one trade) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d4

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances & Edges:** —

**Gear:** Knife (Str +d4), tools of the trade

### CITY GUARD

These are average watchmen. They are competent and brave, but not suicidal.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

**Charisma:** +0

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

**Hindrances & Edges:** —

**Gear:** Rapier (Str+d6), dagger (Str+d4),  
Spear (Str.+d6)

## NOBLE

Some nobles are decadent and cruel, concerned only with living a life of luxury. Others are wealthy merchants, skilled in business, or courtiers who act as advisors to a higher authority. The following stats represent an average Noble.

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

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8,  
Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d8  
**Charisma:** +2

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

**Hindrances:** Various.

**Edges:** Command, Connections, Noble

**Gear:** Rapier (Str+d6)

## SOLDIER

Representing the rank-and-file of the army of any particular Red Kingdom.

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

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

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** Loyal

**Edges:** Alertness, First Strike

**Gear:** Broadsword (Str+d8), Spear (Str+d6) or  
Pike (Str+d8), Silkweave. Some elite troops will  
be armed with Radium Rifles (2d8+2).

## THUG

Strong and not particularly smart, thugs are hired muscle. Most operate in gangs, where they can rely on their fellows for support. Tougher thugs have the Combat Reflexes and Frenzy Edges, as well as one or more die extra in Strength, Vigor, Fighting, and Intimidation.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6,  
Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6,  
Notice d6

**Charisma:** -2

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

**Hindrances:** Mean

**Edges:** —

**Gear:** dagger (Str+d4), Club (Str+d4) or Axe  
(Str+d6)

## PRIEST

Representative authority of the various Red Martian religions. The stats below represent a Lonarian zealot.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit  
d10, Strength d6, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d8,  
Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Religion) d10, Notice  
d6, Persuasion d8

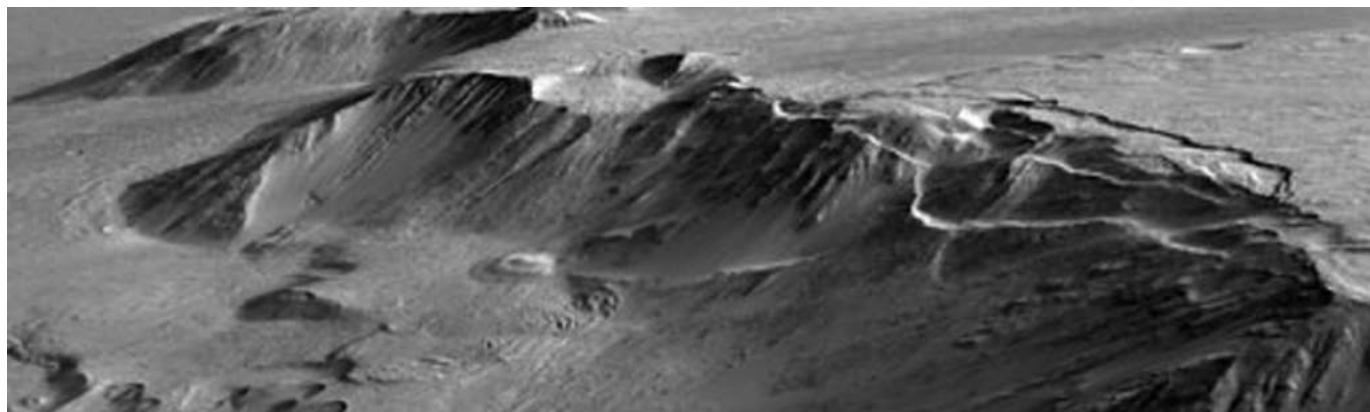
**Charisma:** +0

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

**Hindrances:** Various

**Edges:** Priest, Command, Inspire.

**Gear:** dagger (Str +d4)





## GREEN MARTIANS

### TRIBAL WARRIOR

The average Green Martian, wandering the Wastes with his Tribe. Big, Green, Bloodthirsty and violent.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Survival d8, Stealth d6

**Charisma:** -4

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 9

**Hindrances:** Bloodthirsty

**Edges:** —

**Gear:** War Sword (Str+d10)

### BRUTE WARRIOR

The elite berserker warriors of the Green Martian tribes.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Survival d8, Stealth d6

**Charisma:** -4

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 11

**Hindrances:** Bloodthirsty

**Edges:** Brute Warrior, Berserk

**Gear:** War Sword (Str+d10 +2)

### TRIBAL CHIEFTAIN

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Survival d8, Stealth d6

**Charisma:** -4

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 10

**Hindrances:** Bloodthirsty

**Edges:** No Mercy

**Gear:** Battleaxe (Str+d8)



## WHITE APES

### APE SOLDIER

The most commonly encountered White Ape outside of the Polar Jungles, marching across Mars in the Imperial Expeditionary Legions.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Climbing d8, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d4

**Charisma:** -4

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 11

**Hindrances:** Clumsy, Bloodthirsty

**Edges:** Prehensile toes, No Mercy

**Gear:** Broadsword (Str+d8), Spear (Str+d6) or Pike (Str+d8), Legionaire's Armor (5)

### APE GENERAL

Marching at the head of the mighty Ape armies, the fearsome Generals of the Legions are among the most feared warriors on Mars.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Tactics) d8, Notice d6, Riding d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

**Charisma:** -4

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11

**Hindrances:** Clumsy, Bloodthirsty, Loyal

**Edges:** Command, Hold the Line, Level Headed, Frenzy, Inspire

**Gear:** Broadsword (Str+d8), Legionaire's Armor (5)

This section includes a variety of Wild Card non-player characters for your **MARS** campaign. These characters are designed to be “plug-and-play,” to be easily inserted into any **MARS** campaign.

## TARNAK TORELL, THE WAYFINDER

Tarnak Torell was a young Baltanese noble with a promising future. His father had an iron grip on a city-state on the edge of the Confederacy and his well-disciplined troops kept the green tribes at bay. He was also a favourite of Lady Villeral, so much so that other nobles rarely challenged him. As an only child, Tarnak Torell stood to inherit his father’s position with little trouble.



Most of Torell’s youth could be described as “wasted.” Under the watchful eyes of his father’s guard, Torell explored and enjoyed a reckless, hedonistic lifestyle with little consequences. When Torell did get into too much trouble, his father would simply make the problem go away and give Torell a stern, ultimately pointless lecture. It was whispered in some circles that the elder Torell might have to arrange an accident for his son for fear that the Lady’s favor might be revoked.

One day, Torell found religion. Whether he had heard rumors about his possible demise or not Torell was receptive to the words of a minor cult leader. While the elder Torell had some concerns, even he admitted that his son was starting to see the world through different eyes and becoming less of a problem. The young Torell was a quick study, and his carefree personality gradually morphed into a friendly, pleasant one. Torell was becoming an inspiration amongst the nobility and the elder Torell was said to be proud of his son’s progress.

Unfortunately, Torell’s future did not lay with his father’s position. Without telling anyone, Torell donated all of his wealth to various charities and, after leaving a note for his father, Torell left the city with the cult and wandered into the Grey Expanses. The elder Torell sent a military force after him, but no one returned. Sadly, the elder Torell concluded that his son was either dead or soon would be.

Except that Torell didn’t die. A year after his disappearance, he wandered out of the Grey Expanses and into a local red nomad tribe. Calling himself the Wayfinder, Torell carried the message of a lush land inside the Grey Expanses. The road to this paradise is fraught with dangers, and not everyone that would take the journey would make it to this hidden, verdant paradise. While most of the tribe mocked him, a few decided to follow the Wayfinder back into the Expanses.

After this event, the Wayfinder became something of a legend amongst the Red Nomads. When he returned a few months later, inviting more Red Nomads to join the previous group in paradise, so many joined him that the decimated tribe was forced to integrate into others for survival, spreading the

promise of the Wayfinder even further. Subsequent appearances by the Wayfinder have only grown the legend and attracted more and more followers. Of these followers, only the Wayfinder himself returns.

The Wayfinder is a charming red martian with a youthful, though weather-beaten face. He carries a radium pistol beneath his traveling cloak, a relic of his last life. He is also skilled with a rapier, but he hasn't carried one since he left his old life. He really believes that the planet is dying due to man's sins, and only those that repent can enjoy the gods' garden. He allows his arguments to make his points and will not coerce anyone into following him. The Wayfinder's appearance in a red nomad camp or small settlement will throw the populace into chaos, with some eager to follow him and others worried about how the camp will survive after he leaves.

Note: Suspicious players may believe that the Wayfinder's paradise is too good to be true. Given that it is located in the Grey Expanses, "paradise" may be a trap, with the Wayfinder as an accomplice or unaware pawn. It is also possible that the Wayfinder's words are true, and a small fertile area does exist within the dangerous terrain. The exact nature of this paradise is left to the Game Master. It could be a real oasis, a grey man pantry, or some other horror (perhaps the most horrific notion is that it does not exist at all; the Wayfinder is insane and believes that he is leading the faithful to paradise, rather than a quick death while traveling through the Grey Expanses).

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

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d12, Knowledge (Religion) d8, Knowledge (ancient history) d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d12, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Survival d10

**Charisma:**+2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** Code of Honor

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes, Two Fisted, Florentine

**Gear:** Silkweave, Radium pistol (2d6+2), Staff (Str+d4), handwritten passages from a forgotten (fake?) religious text.

## COMMODORE LYTON ORSENE

Green Man tribes are a constant threat to Red settlements on the outskirts of the cities. Sometimes, the menace is so great that Red merchants or minor nobles desire to clear the Green threat out by any means necessary. Such men turn to Commodore Orsene.

Commodore Lyton Orsene is red man that owns a small fleet of airships lead by the flagship *Sky Wolf*. Legally, Commodore Orsene's fleet is treated like a nomadic red city; it has its own laws and treaties with the various red empires. With this autonomy, Commodore Orsene is free to contract with local red communities to rid an area of green men. The Commodore's methods are brutal but effective. He has the tactical genius, bloodlust, and arms to get the job done (often a single radium bomb will do the trick). His reputation has dubbed him "the Exterminator."

Unfortunately, Commodore Orsene is not an honest businessman. He always has hidden costs built into his contracts, and "unforeseen circumstances" usually increase his final fee. Many settlements are unable to meet this price and have it extracted from them in other ways (the Commodore has, on occasion, wiped out an entire red settlement. After all, without his assistance the green men would have anyway, correct?). Those that attempt to plead their case in the nearest city usually find their words falling on deaf ears. The Commodore provides an excellent service, and the greater nobles can afford to pay him what he wants.

Adding to the Commodore's mystique is that no one really knows his background. He claims to be an ex-military officer and he does seem well-schooled in military culture and tactics. No red imperial records, however, contain any mention of a Lyton Orsene (or any Orsene). Some have noted that Orsene is similar to Orsenai, a green god of death.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d10,



Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Tactics) d12, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Piloting d10, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Survival d6

**Charisma:** +2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** Overconfident, Vengeful

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes, Command, Hard to Kill, Hold the Line, Level Headed, Natural Leader, Sky Corsair

**Gear:** Rapier (Str+d6), Radium Pistol (2d6+2)

### THE SKY WOLF

**Acc/Top Speed:** 20/180

**Climb:** 15

**Toughness:** 20(4)

**Crew:** 24 (+60)

**Manueverability:** Poor

**Armament:** 4 Radium guns (1 port, 1 starboard, 2 forward), 4 bomb racks (2 standard, 2 radium)

**Cargo:** 25 tons

**Width:** 10

**Length:** 30

## KRO SARN, IMPERIAL GLADIATOR

In a former life, Kro Sarn was a Callorian soldier in a northern city. He followed orders and fought well, and soon Kro found himself rising through the ranks. Unfortunately, love caused his downfall. Kro Sarn was in love with the daughter of a minor noble. Kro had some noble blood himself (he joined the military because his older brother stood to inherit the family fortune) and was a suitable match for his love. She returned his affections, much to the chagrin of another minor noble that vied for her. Unfortunately for Kro, his rival had great influence within the army, and Kro found himself on a suicide mission against a white ape incursion. He was believed to be killed.

Kro, however, survived. Baktar the Strong, a white ape captain, watched Kro fight and was suitably impressed. When Kro finally did fall, Baktar intervened and insisted that Kro's wounds be tended to. Baktar took Kro as a slave and entered him into the local gladiator arena. Kro received white ape

gladiator training both on and off the arena. While he was initially lacking in skill and victories, Kro's novelty value kept him alive until he could develop his abilities. In short order, Kro became a fearsome combatant in the arena.

While he misses the civilized world, Kro is an effective gladiator and enjoys the thrill of the battle. He pines for home, but the irony is that he would probably be more uncomfortable and out of place in a red city than in a white ape arena. Still, Kro is likely to aid any red man foolish enough to end up in the hands of the white apes.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+1, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d10, Tracking d8

**Charisma:** -2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 9

**Hindrances:** Ugly

**Edges:** Block, Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Frenzy, Improved Nerves of Steel, No Mercy, Brute Warrior, Berserk, Quick, Two Fisted

**Gear:** Battleaxe (Str+d8), or whatever other weapon is given to him in the gladiator arena.

HEY, I THOUGHT RED  
MEN COULDN'T BE  
BRUTE WARRIORS!

Ordinarily, red men are too civilized to take the Brute Warrior Edge. Kro Sarn, however, is a special case. He has spent years adapting to the brutal white ape arena and has learned to shed his cultured ways in order to survive.

# THE RANCHER

Small settlements of red men are found just inside the Grey Expanse. While still hardy folk, they are provided with water and other goods that they could never afford on their own. Other red nomads and green tribes have learned to steer clear of these settlements, for those that do are never heard from again. These settlements are guarded by a grey man and his tripod.

Known to his own people as the Rancher, the grey man has convinced the settlement leaders that he has a plan to return Mars to its former glory and he needs the assistance of the strongest and most intelligent red men amongst them. Every season, an elaborate gaming event is held to name the strongest, most intelligent, and wittiest members of the settlements. The Rancher watches these games and takes the winners away for a better life.

Unfortunately, the Rancher lives up to his name. He is actually herding the red settlers like cattle and the winners of these games are simply food.

The Rancher weakens the settlements to keep them dependant on him...he takes their best warriors, leaders, and thinkers. Those that are left have an almost religious fervour for their three-legged metal guardian and don't question his orders.

**Attributes:** Agility d4, Smarts d12, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d4, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Science) d10, Knowledge (Ancient History) d10, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Weird Science d10

**Charisma:** -4

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

**Hindrances:** Arrogant, Poor Eyesight

**Edges:** Arcane Background (Weird Science)

**Gear:** Radium Rifle (2d8+2), Tripod

**Gizmos:** Force Field Generator (*Barrier*), Mind Control Ray (*Puppet*) and Stun Gun (*Stun*).



## TANESH RIGOL

Decades ago, Tanesh Rigol was a living legend, a fearless archaeologist and scavenger that would boldly go where even green men feared to tread and come back with relics of a lost age. He was a celebrity amongst his people and enjoyed the limelight, even if it only came after long months of research and intense weeks in the field.

Unfortunately, Tanesh is no longer that young man. His hair is thin and grey, his skin is stretched over creaking bones, and he gets around with the aid of a cane (his left leg never healed properly after a green man attack). Still, his brain is as sharp as ever, and Tanesh still enjoys looking for forgotten ruins. Nowadays, he does the research and hires others to do the field work.

Tanesh normally hires a group after he has conducted all preliminary research. He chooses and outfits an expedition according to the perceived needs of such expedition. As an old man with vast wealth, it is not unheard of for Tanesh to allow the hired group to keep anything they find, so long as Tanesh gets the credit and an opportunity to examine interesting finds (in many cases, should Tanesh wish to keep a piece, he will pay the group for it). Needless to say, Tanesh makes an excellent patron for an adventuring party.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d6, Knowledge (ancient history) d10, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Survival d10

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Elderly

**Edges:** Noble, Explorer

**Gear:** Hold-out Radium Pistol (3d6)

## KOVASH KORAK

Kovash Korak is the Red Martian's nightmare -- A Green Martian capable of organizing. Over the past few years, he has conquered surrounding tribes, and yet, instead of killing his defeated enemies, he has made them part of his own tribe. The tribe has grown so large now that smaller groups of Green Martians no longer fight against it, but travel across the Wastes in order to join up.

As Korak's power grows, his eyes turn towards the outlying Red Martian city-states. He knows that his tribe has grown so large that they cannot be supported by wandering and scavenging. They gave up their nomadic existence a year ago, settling in the shattered ruins of an ancient city, but Korak knows that his people require water and food in abundance, and that is something that can be found in the city-states of the hated Reds.

Even now, the border states wait in terrified anticipation for the roar of the largest Green Martian army that has ever been gathered, and the clever Green at its head, Kovash Korak, prepared to wet the sands of Mars in a tide of blood.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Piloting d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d8, Survival d8, Stealth d6

**Charisma:** -4

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 10

**Hindrances:** Bloodthirsty, Loyal

**Edges:** Command, Natural Leader, Inspire

**Gear:** War Sword (Str+d10), Radium Rifle (2d10)



## THE BLUE SWAN

Amela Breen has an interesting occupation for someone that lives in Lonaria. While the Lonarians profess a deeply religious creed, there are many members that still need an outlet for their baser urges. Amela Breen, as the Blue Swan, covertly provides this, and as a result, the courtesan is one of the most knowledgeable and powerful people in Lonaria.

Amela takes her name from a legendary bird that once swam in the canals. Every so often, someone will claim to see the extinct bird. Amela has taken the name as a disguise, leaving a dyed blue feather as a calling card. She is a gorgeous woman, capable of affecting different accents and applying cosmetics to emulate exotic features that titillate her clients and victims.

Amela has a special affection for anyone that flaunts convention, especially if it rankles the establishment. Such individuals can always count on the Blue Swan as an ally. The Lonaran government has a price on her head, but no one has ever been able to describe the Blue Swan enough to mount a search (there is an urban legend that, on the day after the government issued a warrant for her arrest, the Chief Theocrat awoke with a blue feather on his pillow).

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (politics) d10, Knowledge (secrets) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Shooting d6, Stealth d8.

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

**Hindrances:** Curious, Wanted

**Edges:** Very Attractive, Level Headed, Charismatic, Connections.

**Gear:** dagger (Str+d4)



## JONGOR OF PTAH

Jongor is a bodyguard from the Baltan city of Ptah. Baltanese bodyguards are unique -- not only do they act in the traditional role, defending their master from harm, but the Baltanese have extended that definition to include pre-emptive action on the part of their employer. Baltanese bodyguards often act as professional duelists, defending their master's honor, and, on occasion, as assassins (in those matters where the defense of their employer's interests should remain a private concern).

Jongor is a much-sought-after commodity in the Baltan Confederacy. A merchant or Lord who hires him often sees his arguments resolved and interests protected even without using the lanky bodyguard.

Jongor is sure never to stay in the employ of one master for too long -- he has an aversion to being "kept." Plus, he knows that his value lies in being available for hire, with wealthy Baltanese bidding for his services. His prices would not continue to soar ever higher, should he find himself corralled in one particular stable.

Jongor's weapon of choice is a pair of heirloom Baltanese dueling blades, perfectly balanced. It is whispered in the chambers and streets of Baltan cities that his blades make no sound at all, either when being drawn, or while in use.

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Tactics) d10, Notice d8, Piloting d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Survival d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** —

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes, Florentine, Guardian, Fencer

**Gear:** Silkweave, double-cell Radium pistol (2d6+2), Baltanese Dueling Blades (Str+d6, +1 to hit).




























# MARS

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

RACE: \_\_\_\_\_

## ATTRIBUTES

|          |   |   |   |   |   |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|
| AGILITY  |  |  |  |  |  |
| SMARTS   |  |  |  |  |  |
| STRENGTH |  |  |  |  |  |
| SPIRIT   |  |  |  |  |  |
| VIGOR    |  |  |  |  |  |

CHARISMA: \_\_\_\_\_

PACE: \_\_\_\_\_

PARRY: \_\_\_\_\_

TOUGHNESS: \_\_\_\_\_

## HINDRANCES

---

---

---

---

## EDGES

---

---

---

---

---

---

## SKILLS

## GEAR

## POWERS



# MORE MARS COMING YOUR WAY!

THE ADVENTURE IS JUST BEGINNING! ADAMANT ENTERTAINMENT WILL BE SUPPORTING MARS WITH A FULL LINE OF PDF AND PRINT RELEASES -- ADVENTURES, GAME AIDS AND SUPPLEMENTS, COMING SOON. VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR NEWS!

[WWW.ADAMANTENTERTAINMENT.COM](http://WWW.ADAMANTENTERTAINMENT.COM)



**ADAMANT**  
ENTERTAINMENT