

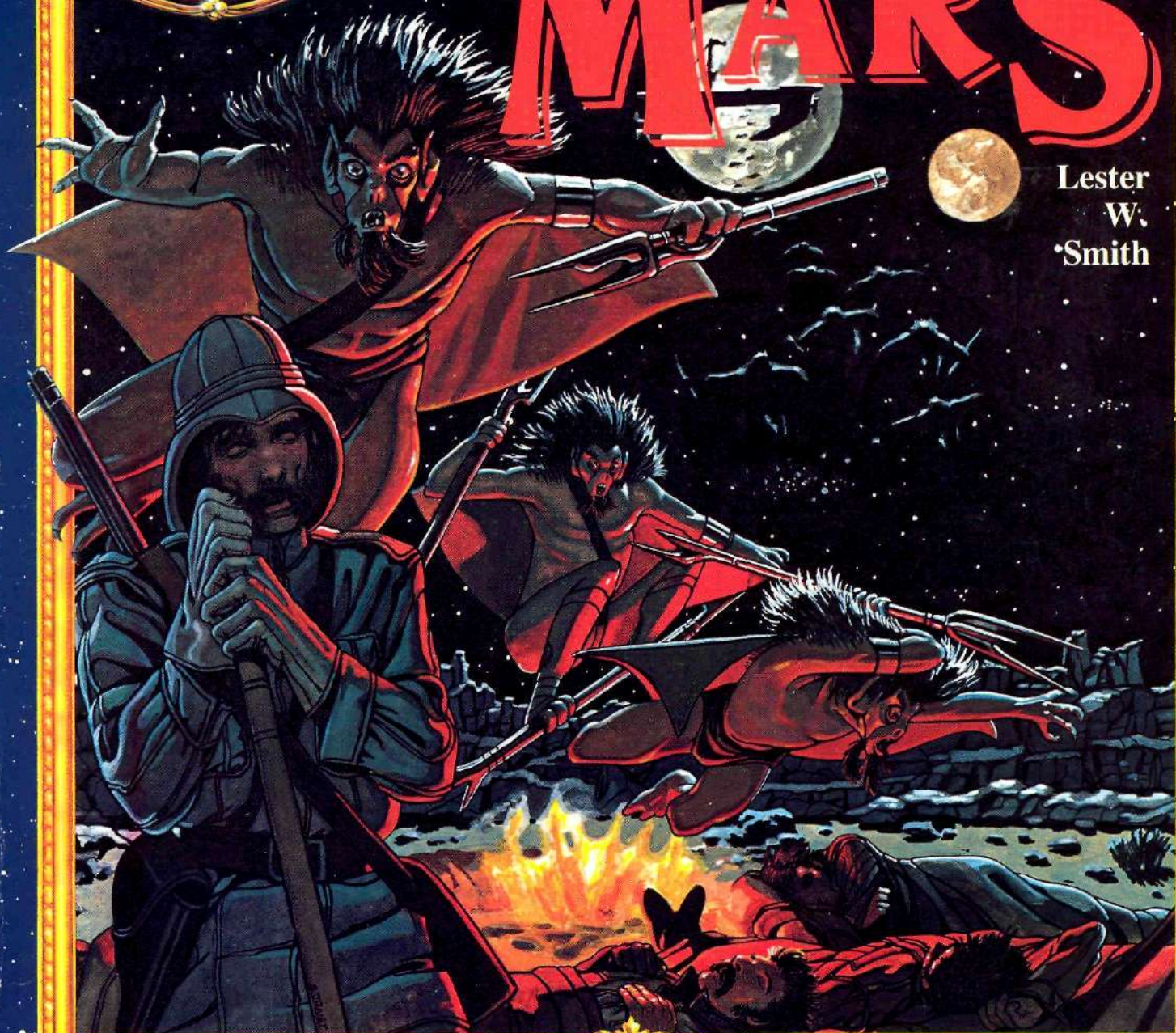
SPACE
TRADE MARK

BEASTMEN OF

1889

MARS

Lester
W.
Smith



An Ancient Treasure...
A Scheme for Vengeance.

GDW

A Secret Evil...
on 19th-Century Mars.

Science-Fiction Role Playing in a More Civilized Time.

Scanned, OCR'd
and Indexed
by





BEASTMEN OF MARS





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Introduction

HIGH IN THE Astusapes Mountains, home of the dreaded High Martians, often called the beastmen of Mars, King Hattabranx, lord of Kraag Barrovaar, strongest of the High Martian mountain fortresses, sits upon his throne and nurses his hatred for humans. At his ear whisper the hideous Worm Priests, devotees of a bizarre god that delights in death and pain.

On the western edge of the Astusapes, a clan of Queln, the savage skriff-riding Steppe Martians, has recently made its home. The clan has come to raid the *bhutan* spice trade of the Umbran League, despite the fact that the High Martians already pirate that trade. As a result, High Martian screw galleys and fierce Queln riders ply the same winds, inviting war between the two savage peoples.

East of the Astusapes, the Hashas-

sa, a peaceful tribe of the Wagon Masters of Meroe, struggle to settle the difference between their chieftain's two sons—differences that threaten to tear the clan apart. And to add tension to their troubles, the ruumet breehr herds that these nomads follow have strayed into the Astusapes, inviting retribution from the High Martians if the Hashassa follow the herds.

On the canals of the British Crown Colony of Syrtis Lapis, a young captain risks his future on a new barge design, hoping to make a name for himself and ensure profits. Not realizing his peril, he agrees to carry a handful of dangerous passengers to the cities of the north.

In the city of Syrtis Major, a group of human adventurers become entangled in thwarting a plot to rob an old man of his one chance for wealth. In so doing, they call down on their

own heads the wrath of a dark cult of assassins. As they struggle for their very lives, innocents are slaughtered before their eyes.

Deep in the bowels of the planet, an ancient evil plots, weaving these threads together into a twisted web that will draw the humans into its power. Do they have the fortitude to face that evil and break its unclean hold on them?

All this and more occurs in **Beastmen of Mars**, an adventure module for **Space: 1889**. The events in this book form a mini-campaign that should take the average group about five nights to play through if each chapter is played as a separate episode. Along the way, player characters will have chances to learn much about Mars, gain some wealth, and frustrate the plans of evil as it reaches into the heart of the British colony.

WARNING

In order to preserve suspense,
players should read no further.

Lester W. Smith

Synopsis

EPISODE ONE, "An Inauspicious Beginning," opens with the player characters in the Canal City of Syrtis Major, jewel of the British colony on Mars. While going about their business, the PCs become friends with an old Canal Martian who has made a living as a scholar, studying the writings of ancient civilizations. One day, the old scholar sends the player characters a note explaining that he has learned the location of an ancient tomb, and evil forces are trying to kill him for it. He asks the PCs to meet him at noon at a particular spot in Syrtis Major's bazaar quarter.

When the PCs arrive at the bazaar, they are just about to talk to the old Martian when an assassin strikes him down from behind and runs off with the map he has made. Chasing the assassin through the streets, the PCs finally retrieve the map, which shows them the location of an ancient tomb within the Astusapes Highlands. The group members set about making arrangements for a journey to the tomb, but they experience several failed attempts on their lives in the process. Eventually they acquire everything that they believe they will need and prepare to leave the city. As they square their ac-

counts at the hotel, they find that a note has been left for them—a note that warns of certain death if they proceed with their plans.

Episode two, "A Trip by Canal," deals with the canal trip from Syrtis Major to the borders of the Astusapes Highlands. The PCs can follow either of two main canal routes—one leads to Parhoon, a city just southwest of the Astusapes; the other leads through Haatt to Gorovaan, a city to the Astusapes' southeast. Regardless of the route they choose, the party will finally have to take a boat along the canal that stretches between Parhoon and Gorovaan, with the intent to disembark about halfway between those two cities and begin their way overland. Before they reach their intended unloading point, however, the ship they are travelling on is blown up, and the PCs barely escape with their lives.

In episode three, "An Overland Trek," the PCs crawl out upon the shore of the canal and find themselves stranded almost 100 miles from civilization, with nearly all their equipment gone. They begin an overland trek along the course of the canal, heading for the city they left just recently. Along the way, they are forced to hide from repeated

searches by a High Martian screw galley that has been sent to look for them. Then, a few days into their journey, they are discovered by a clan of Steppe Martians (one of two possible clans, both described in this book), who take them as hostages. There follows a period in which the PCs dwell and travel with the Steppe Martians, learning the culture of these people as they struggle to remain alive.

Eventually, the player characters leave the company of the Steppe Martians, possibly during an attack by High Martians, possibly in the company of a guide who will lead them into an ambush, or possibly relying solely on themselves. Whatever the course they choose, it seems inevitable that they will finally be discovered by the High Martian screw galley that has been dogging their heels.

In episode four, "Captives of the Beastmen," that screw galley carries the PCs to Kraag Barrovaar, where they are dragged before the bestial High Martian, King Hattabranx. After gloating over them for a bit, Hattabranx turns them over to the Priests of the Worm Cult for sacrifice to their bloody god. Just as the first of the characters is to be slain, a chill-



ing voice seems to speak from the very air, commanding that the characters be dropped into "Hell's Maw," a chasm from which no one ever returns. The Worm Priests obey, beginning to cast the bound heroes into the chasm. The episode closes as the first of the PCs is thrown over the edge.

In the final episode, "Guests of the Worm Lord," the PCs discover that the fall is not fatal and that they have entered an ancient underground complex unlike any they have ever seen before. A bit of exploration reveals that it is seemingly empty of any inhabitants, but there is one door that is mysteriously locked, preventing their entry into whatever lies behind it. Days pass as the characters explore, learning a few of the city's secrets but finding most incomprehensible. A multitude of emeralds abound, and the PCs can fill their pockets if they like. Finally, the mysterious door opens, and the PCs meet their host, the Lord of the Worm, self-styled god of the Worm Cult. This personage is so humanlike as to be nearly indistinguishable from Terrans, but he is a complete albino.

He is also obviously mad. Over the course of many days in his presence, the PCs learn much about the man. They find that he claims to be a member of a race of immortals, having discovered by their arcane sciences how to put aside death. But, paradoxically, he claims that all his companions eventually killed themselves to escape the maddening boredom of their existence.

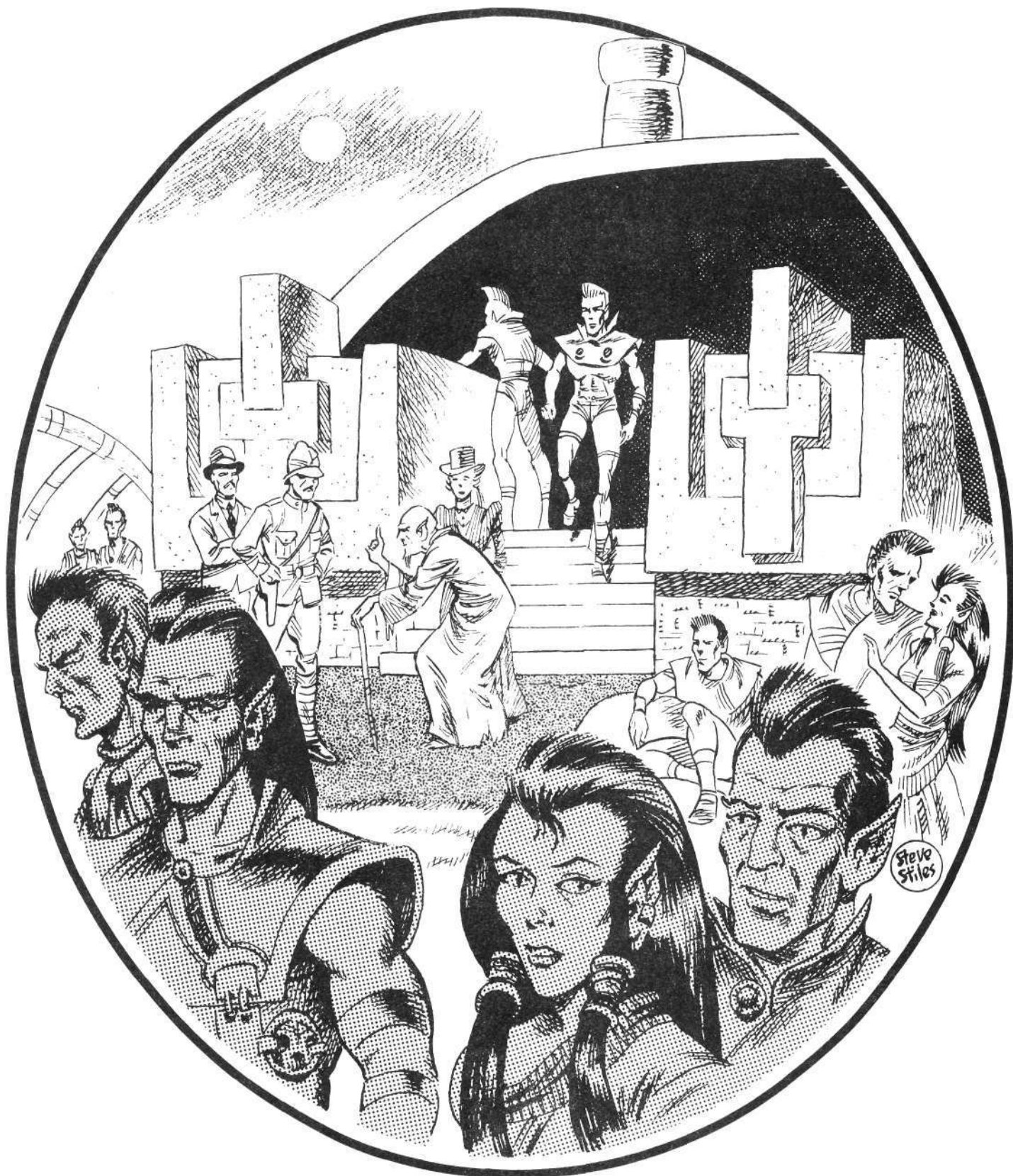
He shows the PCs much of the mechanisms that run his palace—those that provide light and communication with the Worm Priests are kept in perfect working order; all others have been left to fall into ruin. There is one small flyer the party might be able to squeeze into, but it looks dangerous.

The Worm Lord then reveals to the party members that it was he who lured them here, he who planted the reference to Haataneethra I's tomb, he who sent an assassin to slay the old Martian scholar, and he who had the boat blown up. He also instigated the search by the High Martian screw galley, and, of course, it was his priests who cast the group into the chasm and sent them on their way to

the underground city. His sole purpose for doing all of this: He had heard that people like himself were on Mars once again, and he wanted to meet them. Now that he has, he plans to dispose of them. He gives them five minutes to hide, and then he begins stalking them with an energy rifle.

Escape involves the PCs taking the flyer out of the cavern, whereupon it can be nursed along above the mountains, finally depositing the group a mere 50 miles from any of three nearby cities. Forced to leave the flyer, the group marches into the city and safety. If they organize a party to go get the flyer, they discover that it is gone, undoubtedly reclaimed by some minion of the Worm Lord. Without that evidence, no one will believe their incredible story, although their gems will be welcomed, and any scientist PCs may have learned something from the group's adventure.

If the group has retained the map to the tomb of Haataneethra I through all the adventures, the referee has an excellent beginning for a new adventure.



An Inauspicious Beginning

Teegok Quuglaani (Green NPC)



TEEGOK QUUGLAANI is a rather eccentric Canal Martian in his late-middle age. He has devoted his life to studying the writings and artifacts of the ancients, hoping to restore something of their knowledge to his race, to bring a renaissance of the science of the Seldons. Since Syrtis Major was once the seat of the Seldons' empire, it contains many ancient libraries and museums, and Quuglaani gravitated there to explore them.

Over the years, Quuglaani has scavenged enough knowledge to make a meager living as a scholar, but recently he discovered a map of an ancient temple, resting within the Astusapes Highlands, realm of the bestial High Martians.

What Quuglaani has no way of knowing is that the map is a fake and he a mere pawn in a game played by an ancient evil.

Quuglaani speaks Parhooni as his native language.

Attributes Skills

Str:	1	Fisticuffs 2
Agl:	3	Stealth 2, Marksmanship 1 (pistol, bow)
End:	2	Wilderness Travel 2 (foraging)
Int:	6	Observation 5, Science 3 (physics)
Chr:	5	Eloquence 4, Bargaining 2, Linguistics 3 (Son-Gaaryani, Khallan, Umbran)
Soc:	3	Riding 3 (ruumet breehr)

Motives: Knowledge, Friendly.

Appearance: Teegok Quuglaani is fairly old for a Martian, and the years have weighed heavily on him. Quuglaani's back is bent from age and poor posture. His complexion is pale from years of study indoors. His concentration-creased face is topped by white, shaggy hair, and his eyes are rheumy. His clothing is old, frayed, and faded, but clean.

Quuglaani's appearance belies the old man's sharp, if somewhat single-minded, intelligence. If his attention can be drawn from study, Quuglaani can prove an asset when cool, insightful thinking is needed.

THE PLAYER characters are in Syrtis Major for several days, with no airship at their disposal. If the group normally has an airship, it is in need of repairs, or the Worm Lord could plant a bomb on the ship and destroy it. But the less dramatic the reason for being stranded, the better.

The Worm Lord is using every means available to bring the characters to his city without revealing his existence to anyone except a few Worm Priests, and without revealing his true nature even to them. This requires that he work subtly but convincingly through fallible operatives over great distances, depending completely on their loyalty to the Worm Cult. It is only as the plot unfolds in later episodes that the more dramatic instances of his machinations should be revealed.

A MADMAN'S TALE

IN SYRTIS Major, the characters meet several local Martians. One such is Teegok Quuglaani, a historian/philosopher who has spent his life studying the writings of the ancients, hoping to learn something of their wisdom. Quuglaani is eccentric, making a meager living by repairing mechanical devices, telling stories of ancient civilizations, and settling philosophical debates in taverns.

As the story begins, one of Quuglaani's nephews brings a note from him to the PCs. The handwriting is shaky, as if the old fellow wrote it in a hurry and under some stress.

My friends—and such I trust I can call you—after a lifetime of eking out a living as a scholar, I have finally found something that will bring me great wealth: It is a very old book that contains references to the tomb of Haataneethra I, an ancient king who ruled over a combined kingdom of Parhoon and Gorovaan before the time of the Seldons. From clues provided in the text, I have been able to positively identify the present location of the tomb, where it has lain untouched for so many ages.

I made a map of the tomb's location, and ever trustful of my fellow citizens, I set out to seek backers for an expedition to the tomb, but none of my neighbors were willing to invest in such an undertaking. Most have been skeptical of the tomb's existence and have demanded to see my map before making a commitment, but I would not give all my secrets away. I only let them know that the tomb lies midway between Parhoon and Gorovaan, just within the Astusapes Highlands. At this, they turned away, fearing to enter even the edge of the demesne of Hattabranx, thug king of the High Martians.

Since that time, I have wracked my old brain for some means to finance an expedition that would search out the tomb, bringing me fortune enough to spend my last years in some comfort. But none has come to mind. Someone, however, has taken my map very seriously. My room above the Broad Street Inn was ransacked last night while I was visiting a relative. And this morning, while walking to the old palace to continue my studies, I was assaulted by a thief who would have slit my throat if a burly friend of mine had not happened by at that moment and chased him off.

I fear for my life. Someone else knows that the tomb exists and wants my map desperately. Although red men, you have treated me as a father, and I know that your race does not eschew adventure, else you would not have left your own planet. I ask you for but one thing: Please, meet me in Silk Merchants' Square in the city's Bazaar District at noon to talk with me about the map and tomb. I have chosen such a public place because I feel sure that no assassin would assault me there. Until then I remain your servant,

Teegok Quuglaani

QUUGLAANI'S NOTE

AN ENGLISH translation of the note the characters receive from Quuglaani is reproduced here.

THE RENDEZVOUS

WHEN THE PCs go to the Bazaar District to meet Quuglaani, they will find the streets crowded with people walking to and from market squares, but the traffic flows pretty smoothly. The market squares themselves are a much different story, with crowds of people travelling in every direction, and strolling vendors pushing wagons of foodstuffs, cookingware, clothing, carvings, and the like between more permanent tents. In these squares, the flow of several streets merge, and it almost seems that eddies form, as if each square were a pool and the crowds were water from the canals. Humans are at a disadvantage in the press, being shorter on the average than Martians.

As the PCs make their way toward Silk Merchants' Square (the open space at the upper left of the Chase Diagram), they find themselves looking down a long street into the opening of the square. They catch a glimpse of Quuglaani waving to catch their attention.

As the PCs watch, horrified, a Martian in a dark cloak steps up behind Quuglaani with a long dagger in his hand. He pulls Quuglaani back into the shadow of a doorway and plunges the dagger deep into the old Martian's back. Quuglaani stiffens, then sags, and his assailant lowers him to the ground, quickly searching his clothing. If the PCs begin to run toward the pair (the expected reaction), the assassin sees them coming and turns to flee.

If any PCs stop to help Quuglaani, they find the old Martian to be conscious but bleeding profusely from the wound in his back. Quuglaani keeps trying to raise himself on one elbow and tell the PCs that the assassin has his map. If any PCs seek to capture the fleeing assassin, they will find themselves in a hectic chase through the crowded streets of the Bazaar District.

USING THE CHASE DIAGRAM

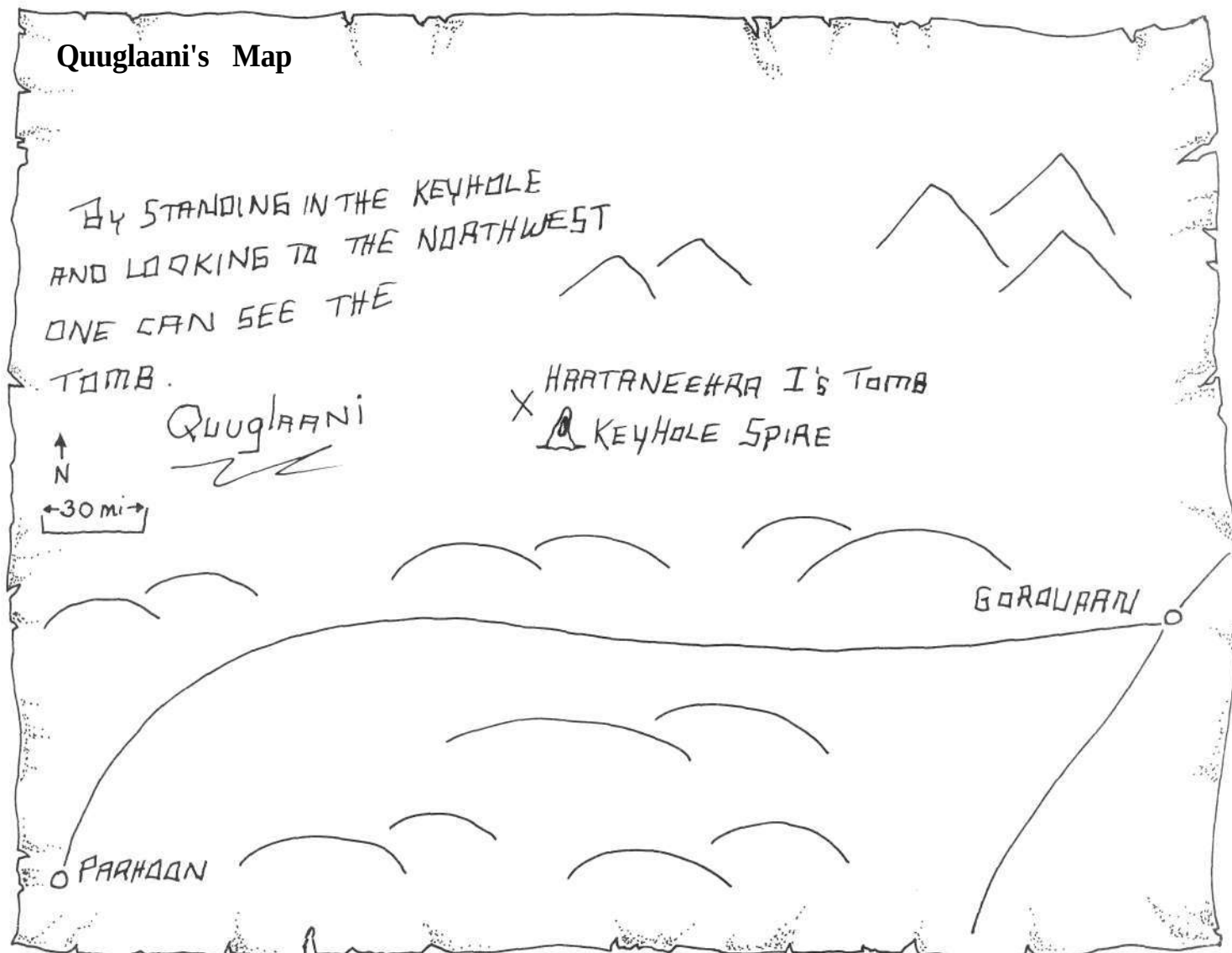
THE NEXT few pages of this book contain a Chase Diagram and a Movement Hazards Table to be used in administering this chase

scene. The Chase Diagram is a geometric street layout that can be used for any event that involves a pursuit through city streets. Superimposed over the diagram is a square grid for use in measuring movement during the chase. The squares in this grid (hereafter referred to as "spaces," to distinguish them from the market squares) each represent a space 10 yards across, so any characters sharing a space are within close combat distance. Moving vertically or horizontally on the diagram takes up 10 meters of movement per space; moving diagonally takes up 15 meters of movement. Diagonal

movement can only be made within the market squares, never in the streets.

The black areas represent blocks of buildings. Streets run between those blocks, and where they meet, they form intersections and large market squares. The square to the upper left in the diagram is the Silk Merchants' Square in this scenario, for instance.

As the chase scene is run, the referee should describe the streets, intersections, and market squares the player characters encounter. The players should not actually look at the diagram.





CHASE DIAGRAM MOVEMENT RULES

THE FOLLOWING RULES apply to character movement on the Chase Diagram. Note that the rules for the assassin (an NPC) differ from those for the player characters. This is intended to simplify things for the referee while making the chase scene very interesting for the players.

The Assassin's Movement

THE ASSASSIN'S movement is simplified in this encounter to make things easy on the referee. The assassin moves 30 yards per turn on open streets, where the traffic flow is pretty good, and 25 yards per turn if any part of the turn is spent in a square, where traffic flow is terrible. This translates into three spaces along the streets and two and a half through the market squares. If the

assassin does not have sufficient movement to enter a space, his excess movement is considered lost for that turn; movement cannot be saved from turn to turn.

The assassin's movement for the scenario has already been plotted—on turn one he is at position 1, on turn two he moves to position 2, and so on. The diagram is geomorphic, so when the assassin moves off any edge of the map from a lettered space, he enters on the opposite edge at the same letter.

By examining the path of the numbers in the diagram, the referee will be able to fully understand how movement is counted on the grid. Notice, for example, that when moving from position 13 to position 14, the assassin uses a full 25 yards of movement. He uses 15 to move diagonally one space and the remaining 10 to move vertically the final

space. On the other hand, his movement from position 22 to position 23 is only two spaces. This is because further movement would take him into the market square, lowering his movement rate to 25 yards, but since he has already used 20 yards for the turn, he has only five yards of movement remaining, which is not enough to enter another space.

If the PCs have not caught up with the assassin by the end of turn 45, he gets away by disappearing into a crowd in the blind alley where position 45 is indicated on the diagram, and from there into a locked retreat. If the PCs do catch up with the assassin before this time (enter the space he occupies), he will attack them in close combat. If the PCs win, they will find Quuglaani's map on the assassin after the fight. The assassin's statistics are listed with the Movement Hazards Table.

Player Character Movement

IN THIS PARTICULAR encounter, the PCs begin at the square marked "X" on the diagram. Each turn they can move 20 yards plus the roll of their Agility dice, as explained in the basic rules. Just as with the assassin, any movement not used in a turn is lost.

Each time a PC enters an intersection, he must make a Moderate saving throw versus Observation, Stealth, or Tracking, whichever is highest, to determine quickly which direction the assassin went. If he rolls successfully, he can continue chasing the assassin without hesitation. If he fails the roll, he must hesitate for a moment while searching the crowds for glimpses of the assassin or signs of his passing. In doing this, the PC loses five yards of movement

for the turn. If any of the PCs in the intersection roll successfully, they can point out the assassin's trail to the others with no loss of movement ("There he goes! Follow me.")- Notice that the assassin never loses any movement in an intersection, since he is familiar with the area and need not search for a trail to follow.

PCs also treat market squares differently than does the assassin. Unlike the assassin, the PCs do not simply lose five yards of distance when they spend part of the turn in a market square. Instead, each turn that a PC begins any movement in a market square, before he rolls Agility dice for movement, the referee should roll 2D6 on the Movement Hazards Table to determine an encounter for him. (Note that a separate hazard roll should be made for each such PC.) Each hazard is rated with a difficulty number, and if the PC does not roll that number or above successfully on his Agility dice, he loses all movement for the turn (the first hazard on the table can even end his pursuit of the assassin completely). After the player learns what the movement hazard is for his character, he can decide how many Agility dice to use on the saving throw. If the PC is successful at the saving throw, any Agility dice left over can be rolled for movement (added to the standard base of 20 yards, of course).

A few examples will help to make this all clear.

Example 1: Annie Fairbanks, a PC with an Agility of 6, begins the turn at position 2 on the diagram. Being outside of the market square, she need not roll for a movement hazard. She rolls her six Agility dice and gets a 31, for a total movement of 51 yards. Annie spends 10 yards to

move to the next space, an intersection. She rolls her five dice of Stealth to spot the assassin's path and succeeds with a roll of 12, so she continues on without losing any movement. Annie spends another 20 yards of movement to reach position 3, where she must make her Stealth roll again. This time she rolls a 17, and she can continue following the assassin, ending the turn one space away from position 4.

Example 2: Howard Hume, a PC with an Agility of 5, begins at position 11 on the diagram, two spaces outside of a market square. He rolls his five dice for distance and comes up with a roll of 21. Adding the 20 yards that every character has as a base, Howard finds that he gets 41 yards of movement, or four spaces. Howard's third space of movement brings him into a market square, but

since he did not begin the turn there, he need not roll for a movement hazard, but can continue on one more space, using his full movement for the turn.

Example 3: Mike Wilcox, a PC with an Agility of 3, begins a turn at position 14, inside a market square, and is headed for the mouth of a street one space away. Being inside a market square, he must roll for a movement hazard. The result is a 5, "Slick Spot," overall an easy hazard to avoid. Mike devotes one Agility die to avoiding it, saving his other two for movement. He rolls a 5 on his first die, easily avoiding the hazard, and rolls a total of 11 on his other two dice, gaining a final movement of three spaces (31 yards). Mike's gamble in only spending one Agility die on the hazard luckily paid off.





ENDING THE CHASE SCENE

THE ASSASSIN may avoid capture and escape with Quuglaani's map. In some ways this is best for the story because the players will now have to worry about a possible rival expedition to the ancient tomb. If this happens, the players will need Quuglaani to guide them there or make them another map, and even if he makes a second map, he will insist on going along on the expedition. In this case, the referee should treat the wound Quuglaani received from the assassin as serious, but not so serious that a little bit of medical help cannot heal him enough to accompany the PCs within a few days. The PCs can spend the intervening time purchasing supplies and arranging for canal passage north.

If the player characters succeed in recapturing Quuglaani's map from the assassin, Quuglaani is no longer necessary for the play of the adventure, although he might be of help. If the referee wishes, he can treat Quuglaani's wound as mentioned above, and Quuglaani can accom-

pany the PCs on the expedition to the tomb. However, if the referee prefers to have one less NPC to worry about, he can treat Quuglaani's wound as poisoned and therefore have the old Martian die. This might even increase the sense of drama surrounding the recapture of the map, and if any PC takes a wound from the assassin's blade, it will give that player something more to worry about. It is suggested, however, that the player's worry be needless; his character's wounds should not be poisoned.

Regardless of the outcome of the chase scene, the PCs should have to explain themselves to authorities who show up—although enough witnesses can be found to testify about the assassin's attack on Quuglaani that the PCs can be justified in their actions. And Quuglaani himself can testify as well, even if the referee has him die from a poisoned wound shortly thereafter.

If the player characters used firearms to try to stop the fleeing assassin, however, their actions will be closely scrutinized by the authorities.

THE ASSASSIN'S STATISTICS

QUUGLAANI'S assailant is a Canal Martian wearing a brown, hooded cloak that hides his face from view. If caught, he will draw a long dagger from under his cloak and engage in melee combat. He is a Trained Thief NPC, so he is physically oriented, has a Morale level of 9, a Close Combat skill of 2, and takes 4 hits to become unconscious or 8 to be killed.

The assassin has a poison capsule in his mouth, and if he is obviously going to lose the fight, he will bite on the capsule and die from the poison in two rounds. If the PCs best the assassin, they will find Quuglaani's map hidden under his cloak. If the assassin bests the PCs, he will be satisfied with leaving them unconscious while he makes good his escape.

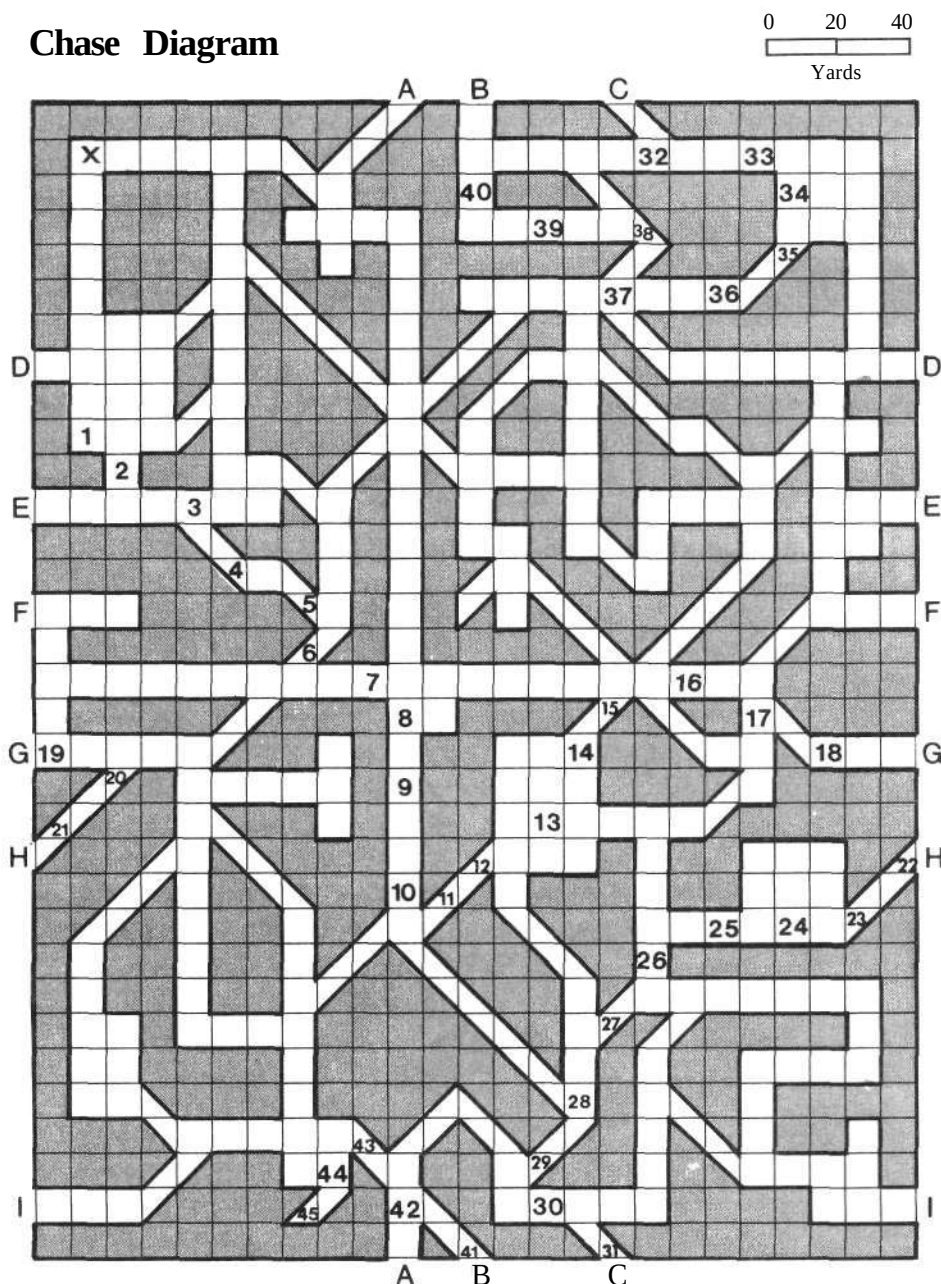
If they fired through the crowds, for example, they should be fined heavily and maybe even jailed. The British, in particular, will be very upset at such behavior since it adds more fuel to the fire of antihuman sentiment in Syrtis Major. At the very least, the PCs' firearms should be confiscated, although it will be easy enough for them to buy replacements later. If the PCs fired on the assassin while in close combat with him, they are somewhat more justified but will still be questioned thoroughly, delaying their expedition to the tomb.

Much of this depends upon the judgment of the referee. If the referee believes that the players acted irresponsibly in their use of firearms while pursuing the assassin, he should bring the ire of the British to bear on them. If they are fully convinced that someone else is headed for the tomb while their characters are delayed for questioning or jailed, it will make them more careful in their use of firearms in crowds in the future.

LARGER CHASE SCENES

THE DIAGRAM on this page can be used for other chases than the one included in this chapter. The diagram is geomorphic, so long chases can be run by allowing the characters involved to leave a map edge and return to the diagram from the corresponding point on the opposite map edge. In such cases, it is a good idea to keep track of how many times the characters have left a particular edge. For example, if a character begins at position 1 and travels to the right until he exits at point D on the right edge of the diagram, when he reenters the diagram at point D on the left edge, he will not be standing outside

Chase Diagram



the same market square as the one he left. In this case, the diagram represents two different parts of the city—the section the character began in and the section he ended in.

Since the players will not be looking at the diagram but will be relying on the referee's description of the intersections and squares they encounter, they should not be aware that the referee is using the same diagram for many adjacent parts of the city. If the referee would like to add

some variation, however, whenever a character leaves a diagram edge, the referee can randomly roll to determine at what point he reenters the diagram. To do so, roll 1D6 for the side to use: 1 means top, 2 means bottom, 3 or 4 means right, and 5 or 6 means left. Then roll 1D6 to determine which entrance to use: For the top or bottom, 1 or 2 means A, 3 or 4 means B, and 5 or 6 means C; for either side, 1 is D, 2 is E, 3 is F, 4 is G, 5 is H, and 6 is I.

MOVEMENT HAZARDS

Die

Roll Result

- | | |
|----|----------------------------------|
| 2 | City Guard, Difficult |
| 3 | Angry Gang, Mod. |
| 4 | Cut Canopy, Mod. |
| 5 | Slick Spot, Easy |
| 6 | Passing Figures, Easy |
| 7 | Small Wagon, Easy |
| 8 | Fallen Figures, Easy |
| 9 | Large Wagon, Easy |
| 10 | Tumbled Produce, Mod. |
| 11 | Startled Gashant, Mod. |
| 12 | Enraged Ruumet Breehr, Difficult |

MOVEMENT HAZARD DESCRIPTIONS

THE FOLLOWING section explains the Movement Hazards Table.

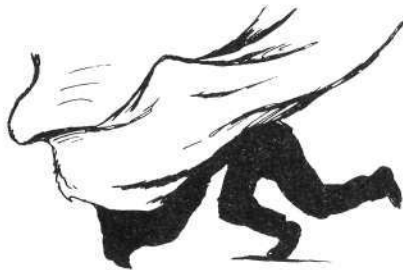


City Guard: Breaking through an opening in the crowds, the PC suddenly finds himself confronted by two of Syrtis Major's city guardsmen. They were patrolling the streets when their attention was suddenly drawn to the commotion caused by the assassin's passage. Both are physically oriented, Experienced Soldier NPCs with rifles and bayonets. They have a Morale level of 10, and each has a Close Combat skill of 3, a Marksmanship skill of 3 (rifle), and takes 4 hits to become unconscious or 8 to kill.

If the PC makes a Difficult saving roll versus Agility, he can avoid the guards while slipping through the crowd and continue his pursuit of the assassin. If he fails the saving throw, he is stopped by the guards, and the referee can role play the results. The guards will not be difficult to convince that the PC is innocent of wrong-doing (an Easy task versus Eloquence or Leadership), but during the time that the PC is explaining, the assassin will be getting away (this PC cannot pursue him any further).



Angry Gang: If this hazard is rolled, the PC has encountered a group of four Canal Martians who dislike humans and have been angered by what they perceive as the PC's cavalier attitude in running through the marketplace. If the PC makes a Moderate saving roll versus Agility, he can avoid the group and continue to pursue the assassin. If he fails the roll, he loses all movement for the turn in evading the gang.



Cut Canopy: As the PC runs through the marketplace, someone (the assassin, if he is close enough)

cuts a rope that holds a tent's canopy up, and it begins to fall on the PC. If the PC makes a Moderate saving throw versus Agility, he manages to avoid the falling canopy and can continue after the assassin. If he fails the roll, the canopy falls partially on him, and he loses his movement for the turn but can begin pursuit again at the beginning of the next turn.

If this result is rolled more than once, the referee may want to describe it as something other than a cut canopy, such as a tumbled barrel or a thrown bale of grasses.

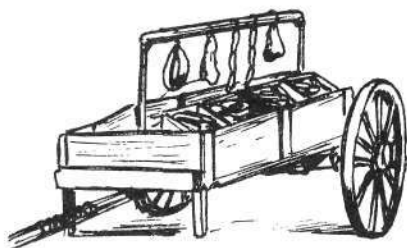


Slick Spot: Something slick is spilled on the pavement. It might be food, drink, or something worse. If the PC makes an Easy saving throw versus Agility, he sees it in time and leaps over it. If he fails the roll, he slips on the slick spot and falls, losing all movement for the turn.



Passing Figures: The crowd is unusually thick, with many women and children. If the PC makes an Easy saving throw versus Agility,

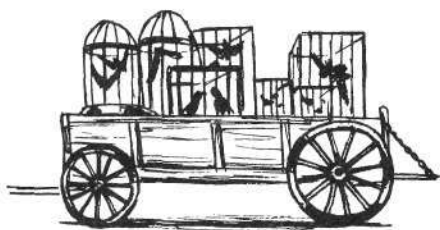
he is able to work his way around them. If he fails the roll, he must hesitate until they get out of his way, and he loses all movement for the turn.



Small Wagon: A strolling vendor and his cart are between the PC and the path of the assassin. If the PC succeeds at an Easy saving throw versus Agility, he can vault over the cart and continue on his way. Otherwise he runs into the cart, spilling its contents across the ground and losing all movement for the turn.



Fallen Figures: While trying to elude the PC, the assassin has knocked down a group of innocent bystanders. If the PC succeeds at an Easy saving throw versus his Agility, he sees a clear way around the pileup. If he fails at the saving throw, he becomes part of the pile and loses all movement for the turn.



Large Wagon: Moving slowly across the marketplace is a large

wagon loaded with bulky items for sale (barrels, furniture, cages of small animals, or the like) surrounded by a crowd of buyers. If the PC succeeds at an Easy saving throw versus his Agility, he is able to dive under the wagon or climb over it, slip through the crowd following it, and continue on his way. If he fails the roll, he must go the long way around the crowd, and he loses all movement for the turn.

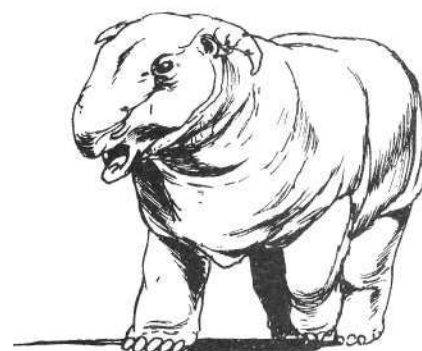


Tumbled Produce: Seeking to slow his pursuers, the assassin has knocked the supports from a produce stand, spilling fruits and vegetables onto the pavement. The stand's owner is trying desperately to pick them all up before the crowd can scavenge them, and the resulting press blocks the PC's path. If the PC succeeds at a Moderate saving throw versus his Agility, he finds a quick way around the back of the stand and can continue on his way. If he fails, he must force his way through the crowd, losing all movement for the turn.



Startled Gashant: Someone has brought gashants to the bazaar for

sale, and in the excitement caused by the assassin's flight, one has broken loose and is running amok. Some Martians are trying to chase it down, but most are running to avoid it. If the PC succeeds at a Moderate saving throw versus his Agility, he is able to find a quick way through the crowd. If he fails the roll, he is swept aside by the running Martians or confronted by the panicked gashant and loses all movement for the turn.



Enraged Ruumet Breehr: While fleeing the pursuing PCs, the assassin encountered a ruumet breehr and slashed it with his dagger as he passed by. The enraged beast began thundering through the crowded marketplace, and the PC has caught its eye. If the PC succeeds at a Difficult saving throw versus his Agility, he is able to melt into the crowd and avoid the angry creature. If he fails at the roll, he must spend the turn dodging its charges until the beast's handlers recapture it. All movement is lost for the turn.



A PAIR OF THWARTED MURDERS

THE CHASE SCENE at the bazaar should convince the players that Quuglaani's lost tomb of Haata-neethra I is genuine. They will likely wish to put together an expedition to search for the tomb, and since their flyer (if they had any) is out of commission, they will have to travel most of the way by canal. (The purchase of canal passage is dealt with in the next chapter.) The referee can allow the players to have their characters purchase or hire whatever they think is necessary for their expedition, even allowing them to acquire loans, if he desires. This time of buying and hiring can give the players a lot of enjoyment, and since they will eventually lose it all anyway when their boat travelling between Parhoon and Gorovaan explodes, the referee will not be saddled with the

responsibility of running an actual archaeological expedition in this adventure. Of course, while the PCs are out purchasing supplies, Quuglaani (if he is not dead already) will be healing as well.

During the few days that the characters spend making arrangements for the trip, their enemies will be busy. Two inept assassination attempts happen during this time. The purpose of the attacks is to further convince the players of the importance of the lost tomb. In each case, a player character is the target of the attack, even if Quuglaani is still alive. (If the players have a flyer and are stalling for time while it is repaired, these assassination attempts can be used to convince them to get underway quickly. But if all else fails, the servants of the Worm Lord who is orchestrating this plot would not hesitate to burn the player characters' flyer if necessary.)

The First Attack

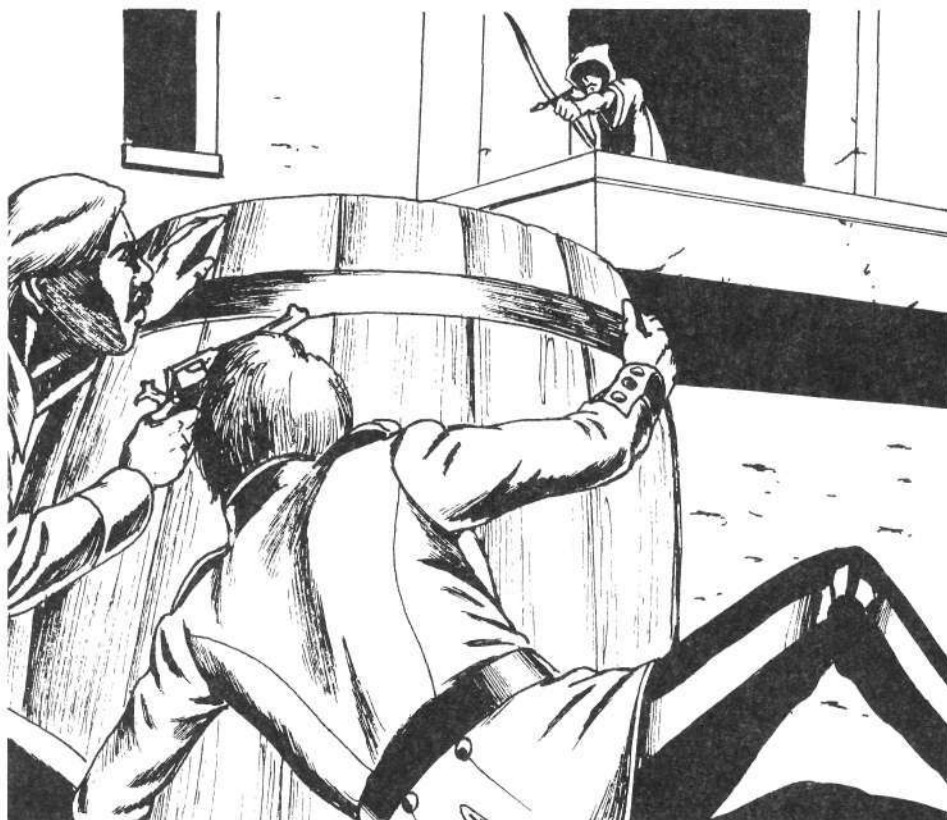
ONE DAY, while one or more of the player characters are out and about in the streets of Syrtis Major, they hear a short hissing sound, followed by a meaty "thunk." A Martian standing next to them in the street cries out in pain and tumbles over, an arrow transfixing him.

If the player characters involved look around, they will sight an assassin in a hooded, brown cloak standing on a balcony of an abandoned building nearby, drawing another arrow. If they run toward the building, the assassin will fire one more time, missing them and hitting another bystander; then he will flee. By the time the player characters reach the balcony, he will be gone.

If instead of looking around for their assailant, the player characters look for cover first, they will notice a barrel of trash and a gashant-drawn wagon both within a few yards. As they run for this cover, the assassin will fire once again, missing them. After they have taken cover, he will fire four more arrows toward their place of refuge. If they are hiding behind the wagon, he will fire the first of those four arrows into the gashant, causing it to begin running in panic, and drawing off the wagon.

If the archer gets an unbelievably good opening, such as a player character who just stands and stares at the hapless victim, he will put an arrow through the character's leg before running away.

Remember that the archer's purpose is not to kill or injure the player characters, but to convince them that their lives are in danger. It should seem to the players, however, that he was trying to kill their characters



and simply bungled the attempt.

If the referee wishes to allow the PCs to catch the archer, the archer has a poison capsule just like the assassin in the Bazaar District, and he will use it rather than be captured alive.

The Second Attack

DURING THE DAYS that the PCs spend preparing for their canal trip north, they will naturally need to eat. The referee can use these meals as an opportunity to bring the city of Syrtis Major more to life for the players, introducing their characters to its inhabitants and letting them sample its shops and inns. In particular, he should encourage them to frequent The Gored Roogie, an inauspicious little Martian establishment located in an abandoned tower in the British Quarter. This could even be the place where the PCs are staying, since it has rooms for rent on its upper floors. The Gored Roogie is very comfortable, with good food, good drink, clean beds, and low prices, all of which should be enough to ensure that the PCs frequent the place.

One evening, while the characters are having their meal in this inn, a jovial party of Canal Martians enters and swaggers up to the bar. The apparent leader of the group tosses a handful of coins on the counter and shouts, "Bartender, if you have that cask of Saardaari Spice Wine I ordered, please bring it out. And pour a round for the house—my treat."

The bartender goes to a back room to get the rare beverage. When he returns, he begins making his way among the tables, pouring glasses of the wine for everyone. Once the house has been served, he pours a

glass for himself as well and drinks it with obvious relish. A few minutes later, the leader of the group at the bar commands that another round be poured for the house, calling for a toast: "To my success!" This toasting continues for another two rounds, with other toasts being given, at which time the cask will have been emptied.

About 10 minutes later, the PCs begin to feel feverish and dizzy (unless they did not drink the wine). Looking around, they notice that the Martians seem to be in even worse shape. Martians begin stumbling around the room, falling off their chairs and clawing at their throats as if they cannot breathe. During this time, the PCs become so dizzy and nauseated that they cannot remain upright. However, although every Martian in the place is dying, once the PCs have vomited they begin to feel better, and within half an hour they feel almost normal once again.

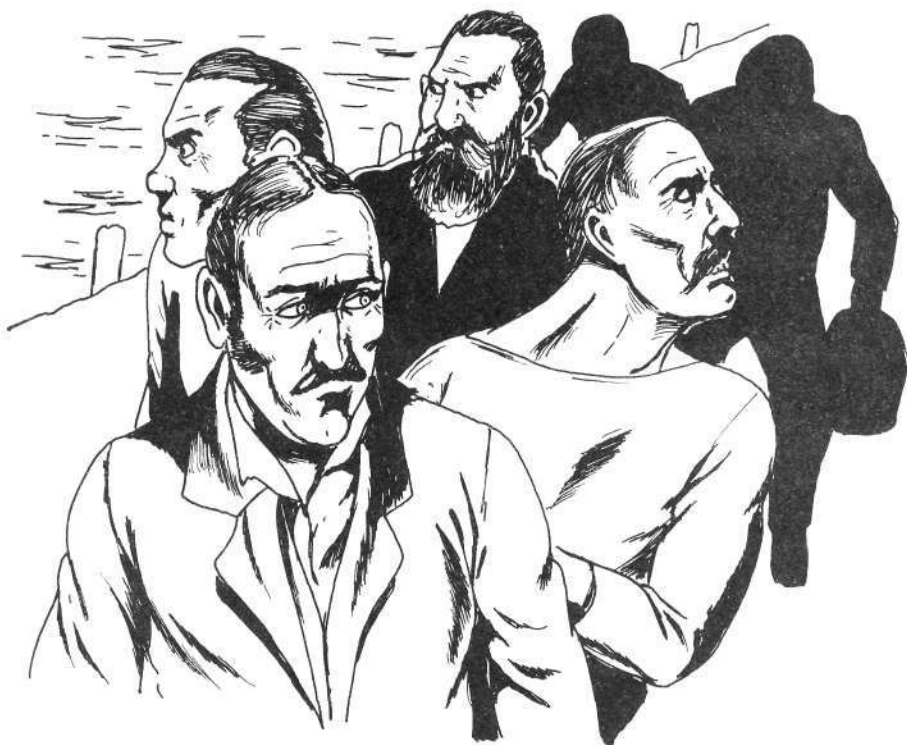
If the PCs go for help, a handful of the Martians in the tavern will be saved (one of these might be Quu-

glaani, if he was with them during the fateful meal). Otherwise, all the Martians will die. In either case, the bartender and the members of the merry party at the bar are beyond hope.

After the event has come to the attention of the city's authorities, the dregs of the cask will be tested, and it will be discovered that the wine was poisoned with macaava root, a rare plant that grows only in the foothills of the Astusapes Mountains and is used by the dreaded beastmen, or High Martians, who dwell in that region. Unknown to this point, however, was the fact that while macaava root is fatal to Martians, it only makes humans miserably ill.

If the player characters seek to find the place that the innkeeper purchased the cask from, they will discover that he kept no records of such purchases. If they somehow discover friends or relatives of the merry party that paid for the rounds, those people will not know where the group got the money that it was spending.





A JUSTIFIED PARANOIA

BY NOW, the player characters should certainly realize that there is a plot afoot to stop them from making an expedition to the tomb of Haataneethra I. (The referee knows, of course, that the plot is faked, in order to have the exact opposite purpose and firm the PCs' resolve to make such a trip.) It is likely that they will be much more careful in their dealings, perhaps almost paranoid, as they conclude any business that remains before they leave the city.

The referee can use this paranoia to good effect, making every eye that glances at them seem the stare of a murderer, every subtle noise behind them the step of an assassin. In particular, the group will probably be very wary of Martians in brown, hooded cloaks. In reality, the PCs *are* being watched, by the minions of the Worm Lord, but only to ensure that they begin their journey.

The PCs should be firmly convinced by this time that the map they have is extremely valuable. If the group tries to sell the map, they will not find any takers; no one they meet can be convinced that the map is real. The few people who might believe them on account of the story they can tell will, as a result, be too frightened to want any dealings with the map, and they will probably make it a point to avoid the PCs themselves, being fearful of dying like the people in The Gored Roogie.

If the group members try to talk to the British authorities or perhaps to their own nations' diplomats about the matter, the referee should have them spend a few days making appointments to see various officials as they work their way up the chain of command in the bureaucracy. Most of the officials they speak to should discount their experiences as coincidental, and these officials will show no interest in the map. If the referee desires, the player characters might

meet a minor official who is uninterested in the story the PCs have to tell until he hears about the map. At this point, he will become very interested and will ask repeatedly to see the map that has brought all this trouble. If the player characters let him look it over, he will attempt to confiscate it "for further study" but will give it back if the PCs become insistent. If Quuglaani is still alive, the referee should play this official as very determined to confiscate the map—Quuglaani can make another one. But again, the group now has another contender for the tomb to worry about.

A FINAL WARNING

AT SOME POINT close to the time that the group members are ready to leave Syrtis Major and begin their expedition to the north, the referee should have a written message delivered to them. The Worm Lord's agents will slip the message into their rooms if they have an opportunity to do so. If not, one of the agents will stop a Martian boy in the street outside the inn (or some other spot the group is at) and pay him a few coins to deliver the message to the PCs. The agent, of course, will slip away as soon as he is convinced that the message has been delivered, and the boy will only be able to describe him as a tall Martian in a brown, hooded cloak.

The message is scrawled on dirty parchment in English, as illustrated on the next page.

The parchment is not signed, but a poisonous insect is crushed against the bottom of the sheet.

With thoughts of this message in their heads, the player characters spend their last night in Syrtis Major.

HUMAN SCUM! YOUR BRUTISH RACE SHOULD NEVER HAVE COME TO MARS. SOME DAY, MAY IT COME SOON, YOU WILL BE DRIVEN AWAY AGAIN, LIKE BEGGARS BEFORE THE STEPPE TIGER.

KNOW YOU THAT THE TREASURE OF HAATANEETHRA I IS NOT TO BE SULLIED BY THE HANDS OF OFF-WORLDEES, THOSE WHO WOULD DEFILE HIS RESTING PLACE WITH THEIR BESTIAL HANDS. IF THE ANCIENT KING IS TO BE DISTURBED, IT MUST BE BY REVERENT MARTIANS WHO THEN USE HIS RIGHTFULLY WON WEALTH TO BUY ARMS AND DRIVE THE HUMAN CONTAMINATION FROM OUR WORLD.

IF YOU PERSIST IN YOUR PLANS TO LOOT THE TOMB, YOU WILL BE OPPOSED AT EVERY STEP. OUR GOAL WILL BE TO TAKE YOUR VERY LIVES FROM YOU IN SUCH PAIN AS YOU HAVE NEVER KNOWN. THREE TIMES NOW YOU HAVE THWARTED US, AND TWICE HAVE YOU ESCAPED OUR HOLY MINISTERS OF JUSTICE. YOU CANNOT HOPE TO CONTINUE DOING SO IN THE FUTURE.

ABANDON YOUR PLANS. DESTROY YOUR MAP. IF YOU ARE QUICK ABOUT IT, YOU MAY BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE HOLY MARS WITH YOUR LIVES. IF NOT, THE ADQER WILL STRIKE IN THE NIGHT, AND YOUR SUFFERING WILL BE INDESCRIBABLE.



A Trip by Canal

IN THIS CHAPTER, the player characters will take a boat trip from Syrtis Major, through Parhoon or through Haatt and Gorovaan, toward their destination on the southern edge of the Astusapes Highlands. The vessel they travel on will be the *Meepsoori Sprite*, captained by its owner and designer, Zoho Winiimolaak. Along the way, they will meet an enemy, a fool, and a red herring. Will they be able to determine which is which?

TAKING LEAVE OF SYRTIS MAJOR

SINCE THE PLAYER characters do not have any aerial transportation available to them in Syrtis Major and since overland travel from Syrtis Major to the Astusapes Highlands would be exceedingly slow, their best course of action is to buy passage by canal. If they believe that their enemies already have knowledge of the location of the tomb of Haata-neethra I, speedy travel will be of the essence. When they seek out passage in Syrtis Major's Harbor District, one vessel in particular should catch their attention, the *Meepsoori Sprite*, captained and owned by Zoho Winiimolaak, a young merchant of Meepsoor.

When the player characters meet him, Captain Winiimolaak has just recently arrived from Meepsoor, and he is planning a trip through the cities of Haatt, Gorovaan, and Parhoon before returning to Syrtis Major and then to Meepsoor. This journey is an experimental voyage to carry mail and fresh Meepsoori squash (something of a delicacy, but notorious for becoming overripe in transit) to the major cities of the British Colony in an attempt to drum up future business. But Winiimolaak has plenty of space left on board his ship, and he would be happy to take on passengers to help defray some of the cost of the trip. Also, it does not matter to Winiimolaak which direction he begins what will, for him, be a circular voyage, so he is willing to travel whichever route the player characters prefer, and he is free to take them all the way to their planned debarkation point midway between the cities of Parhoon and Gorovaan.

First Impressions

WHAT SHOULD first catch the player characters' attention about the *Meepsoori Sprite* is its obvious newness (although Winiimolaak will not admit it, this is the vessel's maiden voyage) and its unusual de-

sign, even for a Martian ship. Also, although Winiimolaak is a haggler, on this first trip he realizes that he must make some concessions in order to develop a clientele, and the opportunity to have humans use his ship will highly appeal to him—as a consequence, his charge to the PCs will be something of a bargain. But what should especially sell the PCs on the idea of shipping out with Winiimolaak is the short travel time that he assures them the voyage will take.

Most merchant vessels, being wind powered, average 35 miles per day and so require a little over a fortnight (two weeks) for the Syrtis Major to Parhoon trip. But the *Sprite*, by virtue of its rowers, almost assures a minimum travel of 30 miles per day, averages 40 miles per day, and can make the Syrtis Major to Parhoon trip in only 12 and a half days. In actuality, during seasons when the winds are particularly slack, a normal merchant vessel could take as much as 50 days to reach Parhoon from Syrtis Major. The *Sprite's* absolute maximum time would be just half that, or 25 days.

After the player characters have arranged passage on the *Sprite*, Captain Winiimolaak informs them that the vessel will ship out of Syrtis

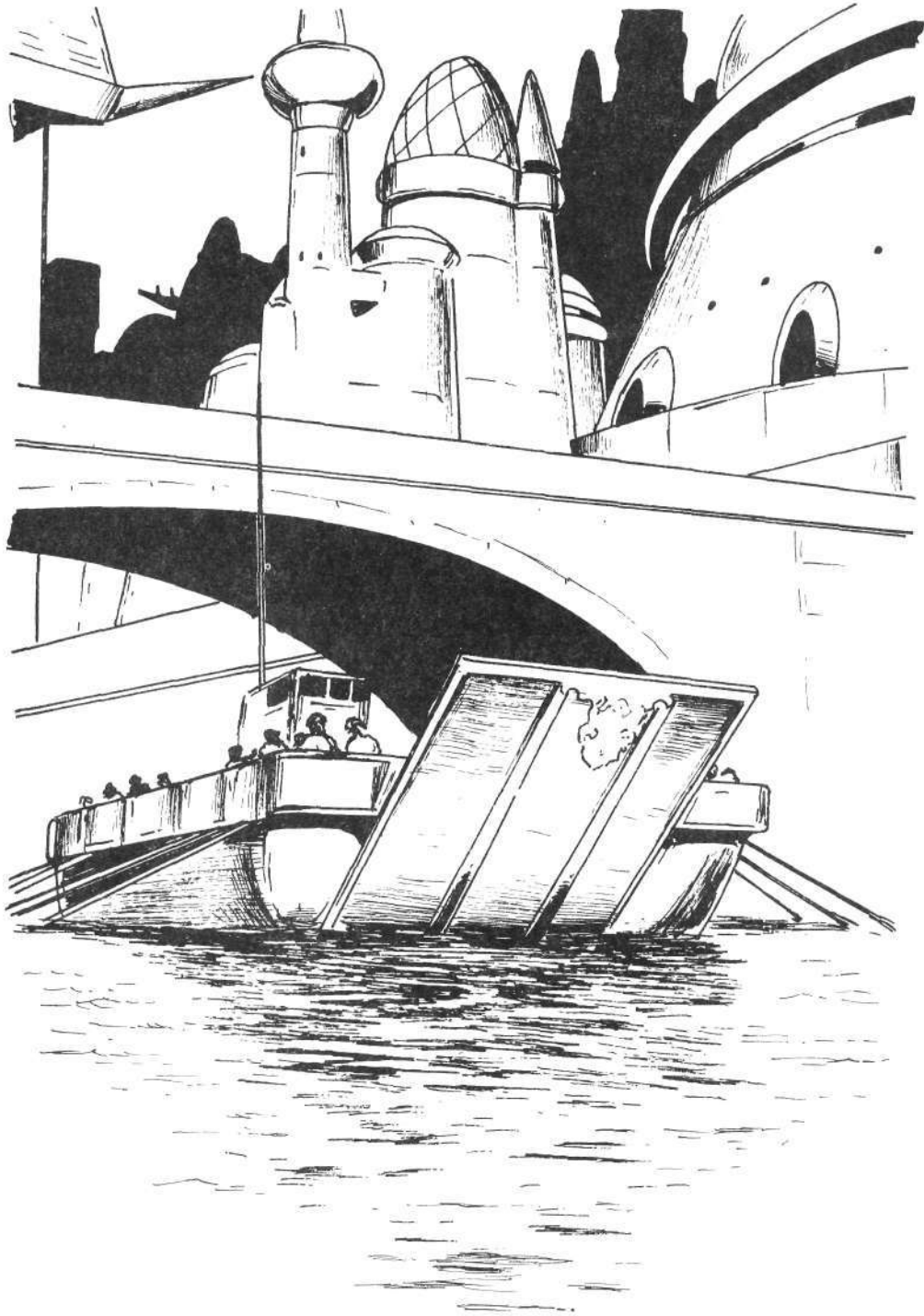
Major at dawn on the day they wish to leave on their journey.

Late Arrivals

ONCE THE player characters show up for their voyage on the *Sprite*, Winiimolaak and his crew show great care in loading any equipment they are bringing along, and he offers them berths in the cabin amidships. If the group has hired men for the expedition, those men will be berthed on the main deck, among the crates of mail, Meepsoori squash, and the like.

Shortly after the player characters get on board, another pair of passengers arrive, both Martians. One is dressed richly and is carefully groomed—the PCs catch a scent of expensive perfume from him. The other Martian is dressed in servant's clothing and wearily pushes a small cart loaded with baggage. The wealthy Martian has a merry manner, but any player character who succeeds at a Quick Roll against his Observation will note that the fellow's eyes have a cruel look to them. Apparently Winiimolaak has been expecting the pair because he welcomes them warmly and calls a crewman to help the servant with the baggage. If the PCs approach the captain and the wealthy Martian to introduce themselves, they will overhear that the new passenger bought his ticket just a few hours after they bought theirs.

Finally, just before the ship gets underway, a third passenger joins the journey. This fellow is a haggard looking Canal Martian in a stained gray cloak. He slips up to the end of the dock as the harbor workers are preparing to cast off the *Sprite's* lines, and he catches Winiimolaak's



attention, then spends a few moments in a rapid haggling session with the captain before getting on board. If the player characters approach the pair, they hear enough to realize that the fellow cites "personal business" as his reason for needing to book passage so suddenly, and he ends up

paying nearly three times the amount for his passage that the player characters each paid. This Martian immediately walks to the aft end of the *Sprite* and finds a seat on a crate in the shadows under the port rowers' platform, as far from the dock as is possible.

THE MEEPSOORI SPRITE

THE MEEPSOORI SPRITE is an unusual vessel, designed by the progressive mind of its captain and owner, Zoho Winiimolaak. In its construction, it is something like a typical merchant barge, being wide and squared off, with a shallow draft, an open deck, and a single sail. But unlike other barges, which are built to carry bulky cargoes over long distances at a relatively slow pace, the *Sprite* is intended to carry smaller, more perishable or precious cargoes

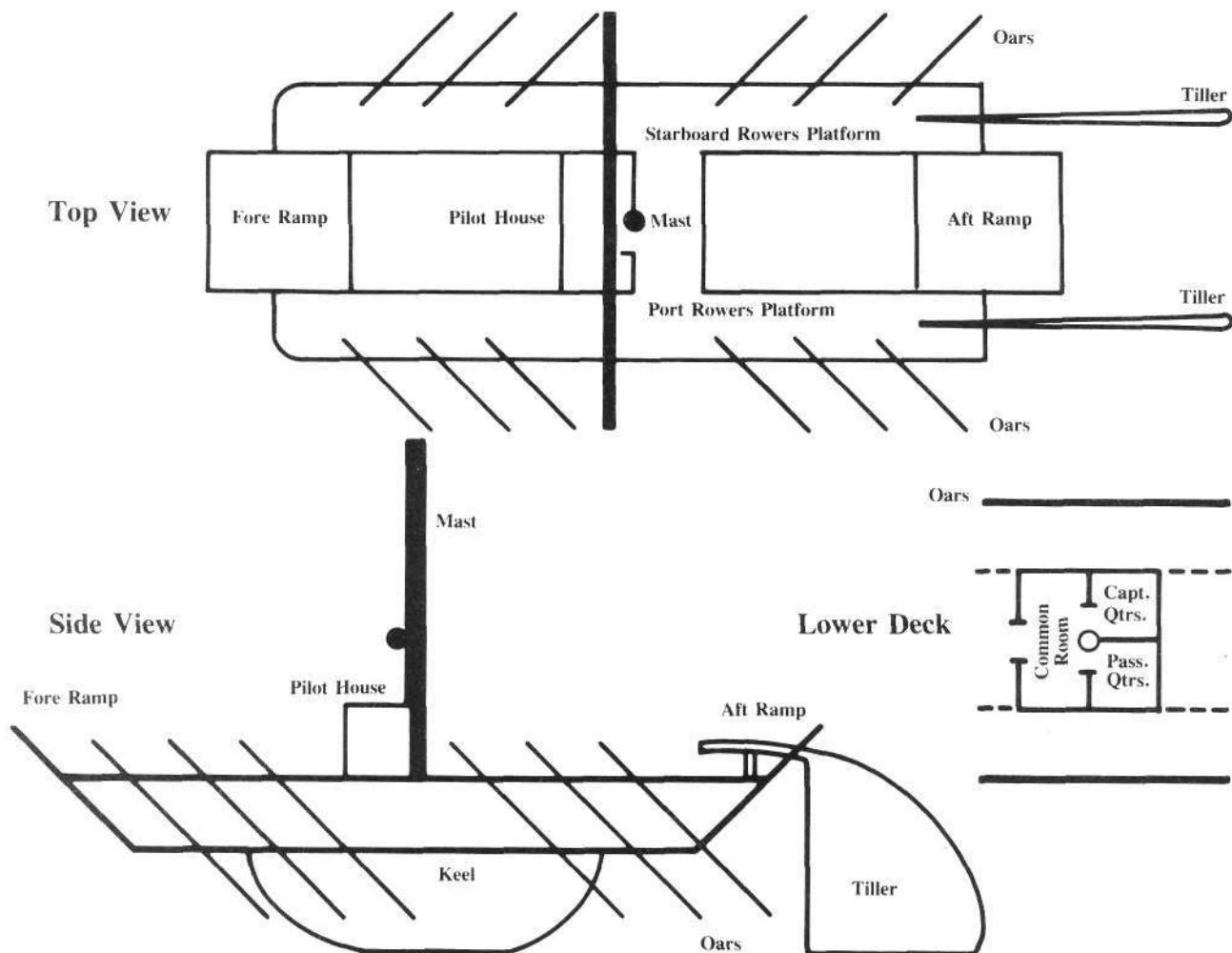
more quickly. To ensure this speed, the *Sprite* not only sports a sail for use when the winds are favorable, but it also has a bank of oars along each side for speedy travel when the wind is slack or against the vessel.

Typically, only military boats on Mars have rowers, often felons serving out a sentence, occasionally free men paid from a city-state's treasury. Winiimolaak's *Sprite* makes use of free men as well, and the cost of paying this crew is offset, in theory at least, by the higher prices that Winiimolaak can charge because of the

demand for the special nature of his service. In actuality, many of the captain's rowers are passengers who do not mind performing a bit of labor to pay for their passage.

The *Sprite's* shallow draft and small size also allow it to traverse many petit canals, bringing specialty goods that cannot be carried by caravan. Winiimolaak has put much effort into advertising the *Sprite* as an alternative to military vessels in the carrying of civilian mail, for instance. The speed of delivery has been a major selling point, and the

The Meepsoori Sprite Diagram



merchant captain hopes eventually to build a small fleet of ships like the *Sprite*.

The main deck of the *Meepsoori Sprite* lies just a few feet below the waterline. At either end of the ship, a sloped ramp rises from this deck, and the upper portion can be lowered to mate with dock edges or elevated during travel. The rowing platforms along each side are raised about five feet above the main deck, leaving space underneath for cargo. In the exact center of the ship, a single heavy mast rises, supporting a triangular sail. This mast is partly supported in turn by a set of cross beams that connect one rowing bank to the other, forming another small deck. Built around the mast is a cabin that rises from the main deck to the cross deck, allowing privacy for the captain and for particularly important passengers. A pilot house rests upon the cross deck itself, just above the cabin. The aft ramp is flanked on both port and starboard sides by a pair of long, wide-bladed tillers, which also serve to supplement the ship's small keelboard when the vessel is under sail. These tillers can be shipped to allow the aft ramp to be lowered for the loading of cargo too bulky to be carried past the cabin from the fore ramp.

Although the *Sprite* does not carry guns, as a military ship would, the raised ramps and rowing platforms help give cover to passengers and crew during the event of attack by raiders from water or land. The vessel's only protection from sky galleons is its speed, a less than ideal defense, but its small size makes it an unlikely target for most sky pirates, who would rather take a larger prize.

Zoho Winiimolaak (Experienced NPC)



ZOHO WINIIMOLAAK, a Canal Martian, is the captain and owner of the *Meepsoori Sprite*, one of the many merchant ships that ply the canals of the British Crown colony of Syrtis Lapis. Winiimolaak designed the *Sprite* himself, breaking with traditional lines in an effort to build a vessel that could carry small cargoes quickly from city-state to city-state, avoiding pirates by its speed rather than by armament.

Winiimolaak is a young man with a winning smile and an impressive stock of tall tales. He is also a very ambitious fellow, and he drives his crew hard. But complaints are few since he not only drives himself even harder, but also pays well, and he has a reputation for fair dealing that other merchant captains find difficult to match. As well, the *Sprite* is one of the fastest merchant boats in the British Colony, and members of the crew take great pride in serving on such a vessel. Winiimolaak's long-range plan is to build a fleet of such vessels to carry perishables and mail throughout the British Colony and neighboring regions that are not hostile.

Unfortunately, Winiimolaak's career, and possibly even his life, are soon to be sacrificed to the whims of an evil he does not even recognize.

Winiimolaak's native tongue is Meepsoori.

Attributes Skills

Str:	1	Fisticuffs, 1
Agil:	5	Stealth 4, Marksmanship 3 (bow 3, pistol 2)
End:	2	Wilderness Travel 2 (foraging)
Int:	4	Observation 3
Chr:	6	Eloquence 5, Linguistics 2 (Koline, Parhooni)
Soc:	3	Riding 2 (gashant), Piloting 4 (sailing vessel)

Motives: Mercantile, Honest.

Appearance: Zoho Winiimolaak is a young Canal Martian with pleasing features and an energetic, confident manner that wins him friends easily. Even his few enemies, who resent his mercantile successes and nontraditional outlook, grudgingly respect him. Winiimolaak wears comfortably worn but immaculately clean merchant captain's dress, with the addition of a bow and quiver of arrows that he always carries, almost as a trademark.

The young captain has a deep voice that is strong and pleasant, carrying his commands to the *Sprite's* crew well. He is something of a favorite among the ladies in the canal cities that his vessel frequents.

WHO'S WHO ON THE MEEPSOORI SPRITE

IT IS ONLY natural that the player characters should be suspicious of the recently arrived passengers, especially of the fellow in the stained cloak. As the days go by, the PCs will have opportunities to try to get acquainted with them all.

Baraak

THE LAST OF the passengers to arrive, Baraak (the only name he gives) is simply a thief who was caught in the act of burglarizing a wealthy home the night before the *Sprite* left town. Escaping his pursuers, he decided to move on to another city rather than risk being captured by the local police. He spent the early morning hours after the abortive burglary hiding in the dock area and chose to board the *Sprite* simply

because it was the first vessel to pull out.

Needless to say, Baraak will not readily admit this all to the player characters. Instead, he spends his time during the trip alone, rebuffing any attempts at conversation. When the ship reaches the first city in its journey to the Astusapes Highlands, Baraak disappears into that city and does not return. Unless the players state that their characters are being very careful about watching their belongings, after Baraak leaves they should notice a few things missing.

During the time that Baraak is on board the *Meepsoori Sprite*, the referee should play him as a red herring to draw the suspicion of the players away from Mynosii Aalum. Baraak's sudden arrival on the dock, his aloofness during the voyage, and his watchful ways as he sizes up the people and cargo on the *Sprite*, look-

ing for something to steal before he leaves ship at the next port, all should make him seem a logical enemy. This is especially true since the PCs have left Syrtis Major with a death threat hanging over their heads. Used properly, Baraak can add considerable tension to an otherwise peaceful voyage to Haatt or Parhoon.

If the referee needs attributes for Baraak, the character should be played as a Trained Thief NPC.

Mynosii Aalum and Sef

MYNOSII AALUM appears to be a prosperous merchant. If questioned about his line of business, he answers that he does not like to limit himself to one line or another, preferring to sell anything that will bring him a profit. If pressed, he mentions having sold books, agricultural products, and even weapons, but he gives no details.



If the player characters question Sef about his master, he is not able to give any more accurate answers, but he tries to think of something interesting to answer with. Sef is something of a simpleton, and he adores the attention that the group shows him in asking about Aalum. Unfortunately, in his zeal to please them, he tells stories that are absolute and total fabrications. He might begin by telling the PCs that Aalum sells precious gems and has millions of pounds sterling worth of them in his baggage, for example. Later, if it seems that the interest of the player characters is wearing thin, he will even tell them that his master is secretly a prince of Parhoon (the only city whose name Sef can easily remember) going to reclaim his throne from the British Regent-Commissioner.

In actuality, although Sef does not know it, Mynosii Aalum is a devoted follower of the Worm Cult and has served the sect several times in the past on missions of minor importance. This particular trip is something special for him, however. It is on this trip that he will have an opportunity to make a martyr of himself for the cause. Among Aalum's baggage is a valise that he carries with him at all times. Given the stories that Sef tells the player characters, they might suspect that the case contains gems or other precious items. In actuality, it contains five pounds of dynamite, which Aalum plans to use to destroy the *Meepsoori Sprite* while it is in transit from Parhoon to Gorovaan (or vice versa). The player characters will be stranded on the bank of that canal, where they can easily be captured by the High Martians.

Mynosii Aalum (Experienced NPC)



MYNOSII AALUM, a Canal Martian from Syrtis Major, seems a prosperous merchant. As such, he might not be expected to be very dangerous in a fight. But this Martian's appearance is deceiving in more ways than one. Aalum is not actually a merchant, although he has some talent at haggling. Instead, he is an operative of the Worm Cult, placed in Syrtis Major to act against the British (and humans in general). It was Aalum who sold the poisoned Saardaari Spice Wine to the owner of The Gored Roogie and hired the party to have it given to everyone in the inn while the player characters were there.

While Aalum appears too soft to be of much good in a fight, he has some training with his fists and with a pistol, and he has had occasion to use both in the past. Like all faithful members of the Worm Cult, Aalum believes that life is vain, and he only continues to live because it is not yet his time to die. The voyage of the *Meepsoori Sprite* has brought his end in sight, however, and Aalum looks forward to his death as he destroys the *Sprite* in a glorious explosion that will bring about the desires of his masters, the Worm Priests.

Aalum's native tongue is Parhooni.

Attributes	Skills
Str: 3	Fisticuffs 2, Close Combat 3 (bashing weapon), Throwing 2
Agil: 3	Stealth 2, Crime 3 (forger), Marksmanship 2 (pistol)
End: 3	Wilderness Travel 2 (foraging)
Int: 6	Observation 5, Science 2 (archaeology)
Chr: 3	Eloquence 2, Bargaining 3, Linguistics 2 (Koline, Umbran)
Soc: 4	Riding 4 (ruumet breehr)

Motives: Mercantile, Hatred.

Appearance: Mynosii Aalum is a middle-aged Canal Martian with a perpetual smile that does much to conceal the cruelty in his eyes. He dresses richly, as befits his appearance as a wealthy merchant, and he is always carefully groomed. Wherever he goes, he carries a leather valise with a brass lock, and it is in here that the most precious, or dangerous, of his belongings are carried. He is also closely attended by his fawning personal servant, Sef. When the player characters meet Mynosii, he has five pounds of dynamite in his valise with which he intends to destroy the *Meepsoori Sprite* before the voyage is completed.

Sef (Trained NPC)



SEF (he does not know his surname), servant to the evil Mynosii Aalum, is too stupid to be very evil himself. He has served Aalum for as long as he can remember, although he has vague recollections of living as a child in the poorest quarter of Syrtis Major. He is not large for a Canal Martian, but he is surprisingly strong, and he has a natural ability with his fists that may stun the player characters if they come against him in a fight. Even if arrows or bullets are flying, Sef remains seemingly oblivious to them, and this serves him well in close combat. In such situations, Sef will pick up anything at hand that can serve as a club and will use it to good effect.

Over the years, Mynosii Aalum has tried to train Sef in some petty types of crime, but he has been largely unsuccessful. If something were to happen to Mynosii, Sef would be devastated for a few hours, but he would then attach himself to anyone else who happened to be near and serve as a loyal servant to him instead. If Sef survives the explosion that Aalum sets off on the *Sprite*, one of the PCs may find himself saddled with a devoted follower. Note that Sef can swim, and he might even end up saving one of the players when the *Sprite* explodes.

Sef's native language is Parhooni.

Attributes Skills

Str:	5	Fisticuffs 4, Close Combat 4 (bashing weapon)
Agl:	3	Stealth 2, Crime 1 (pickpocket)
End:	4	Wilderness Travel 3 (foraging), Swimming 2
Int:	1	
Chr:	2	Eloquence 1
Soc:	1	Riding 1 (gashant)

Motives: Loyal, Eccentric.

Appearance: Sef is moderately sized for a Canal Martian, and he walks with a perpetual stoop that makes him seem even shorter. His face is broad and expresses his emotions transparently. Usually he has a vacuous smile, but he can look positively bestial when angry. Sef's limbs are thin but very strong, and his hands and feet seem overlarge for his body. He wears rough, workman's clothing that ranges from spotlessly clean (when reminded to bathe) to stained and greasy. Sef conveys a simple-minded desire to please, and he really loves to be around other people, especially when they let him join in their conversations.

RUNNING THE VOYAGE

THE REFEREE SHOULD administer the trip from Syrtis Major to Parhoon, or to Gorovaan by way of Haatt, using the Water Travel rules (page 116) in the **Space: 1889** rules book. Given these rules, the vessel may encounter inclement weather, but that will have no effect on travel. Also, since Captain Winimolaak's Piloting skill is rated at 4, he automatically avoids all Navigation Hazards (since the minimum possible roll on four dice is 4, exactly the number for success on the Easy task required to avoid Navigation Hazards). Because the vessel is travelling a canal, there is no chance of wilderness encounters either.

Since this part of the voyage is uneventful, the referee should not dwell on it overmuch, but he should play through each day's passage. Each day he should simply roll to see if the weather changes, then roll to see how many miles are covered, describe these effects to the players, and ask if they want to do anything in particular that day. If so, he can play out the results of their actions, then go on to roll the next day's passage.

The emphasis of play during this period of travel should be on the interactions of the passengers aboard the *Sprite*. Baraak will spend his time sizing up potential items to steal, interspersed with bouts of gambling with some of the crewmembers. Captain Winimolaak will divide his time between carefully overseeing the operation of the *Sprite* and entertaining his passengers. During the first several days, Aalum will walk about, sizing up the ship and deciding where his dynamite would do the

most damage. Finally, he chooses the hull near the base of the mast, close to his berth—he will not place the dynamite until just before it is needed, of course. After making a decision on that matter, he will content himself with reading most of the time, but he will also be willing to talk to the player characters periodically if they wish. His servant, Sef, will wander around the deck from person to person, thrusting himself into any conversations he finds going on, and making inane and pointless comments. If he cannot find anyone else to talk to, he will spend his time talking to himself, a habit that can be very irritating to those people near him.

The actual play of a few sample days might sound something like this:

Day 1: The referee rolls a 1 for encounter and a 6 for travel.

Referee: *The first day out of Syrtis Major the winds are strong, and the ship travels quickly up the canal toward Parhoon. As the Sun climbs the sky, looking remarkably smaller than it does from Earth, you slip past petit canals branching from the main*

watercourse, leading to fields hidden behind the levies. The blustery wind carries the smells of greenery across the water toward you, interspersed with the merry shouts of the Sprite's crewmembers as they work under the careful eye of Captain Winiirnolaak. Baraak is not to be seen—apparently he is still sheltering under the rowers' walk—but Mynosii Aalum is strolling around the vessel, looking it all over as if sizing up its capabilities. Sef is dogging Aalum's heels. Is there anything in particular you want to do today?

Players: Yes, we are going to go question Baraak.

The referee plays out that confrontation.

Day 2: The referee rolls a 4 for encounter and a 4 for travel.

Referee: *The next day, the wind drops off somewhat, but you still make pretty good time. You pass other vessels on either side, some heading for Syrtis Major, and others travelling in your direction instead. The captain is standing at the fore ramp, looking out over the water, a satisfied smile on his face. Baraak is in the stern, dicing with a couple of*

crewmen. Aalum and Sef are in the cabin, apparently arranging their berths more comfortably. Is there anything in particular you wish to do today?

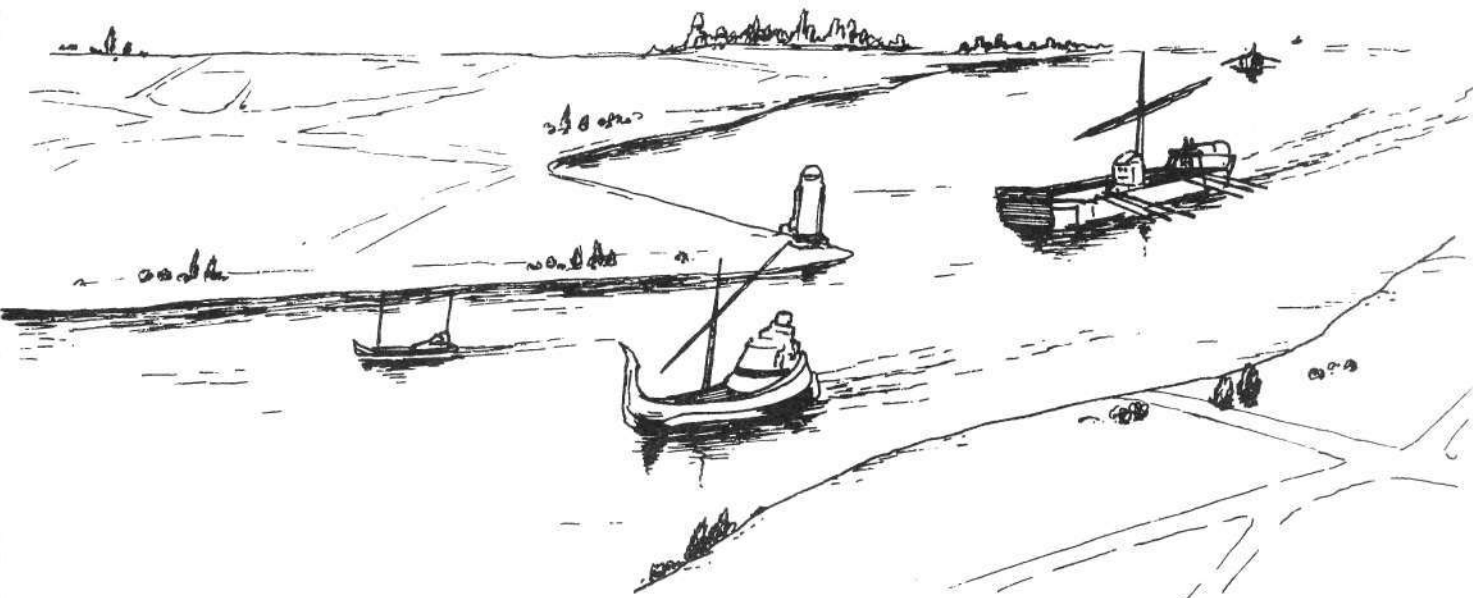
Players: Let's go check out what Aalum and Sef are up to.

The referee plays out that meeting.

Day 3: The referee rolls a 3 for encounter and a 1 for travel.

Referee: *The Sprite has made about 100 miles from Syrtis Major over the last two days. Today, however, the wind drops down to almost nothing, and Captain Winiirnolaak orders the first shift of crewmembers to the oar platforms. They line up along either side of the ship and run the oars out, then begin stroking in time to the captain's count. You notice that Sef is pulling an oar on the starboard side. That will keep him busy for a while. Baraak is standing by himself, looking over the aft loading ramp toward the city you left two days ago. Aalum is sitting on a crate of mail, reading a book. Is there anything you want to do today?*

Players: No, we'll just sit and enjoy the Sun, keeping an eye on Baraak, of course.



THE NORTHERN CITIES

AS THE *Meepsoori Sprite* carries the player characters toward their destination on the southern edge of the Astusapes Highlands, along the Parhoon/Gorovaanese Canal, it will have to pass either through Parhoon, or through Gorovaan by way of Haatt. Captain Winiimolaak will want to spend one day in each of these cities to conduct business. As has been mentioned before, Baraak will disappear into the first city that the *Sprite* enters, carrying off anything he believes he can get away with. It may be that the referee will want to have Captain Winiimolaak pick up other passengers as well.

In any event, the player characters will have only one day to spend in any of these cities before their ship pulls out again. If they want to sight-see in the city during that time, the referee can allow them to, but they will not have much time to explore. In order to aid the referee in running such an event, some description of Parhoon, Haatt, and Gorovaan is included here.



Parhoon

THE CITY-STATE of Parhoon is located in the northwest corner of the British Crown Colony of Syrtis La-

pis. It is accessed by two canals, one from Syrtis Major, some 500 miles to the southeast, and one from Gorovaan, 400 miles away, almost due east. The city is surrounded by hills, as it is near the point where the Aerian Hills give way to the Astusapes Highlands. Because of this, Parhoon lies almost 2000 feet in altitude above Syrtis Major, and it is just over 700 feet above the level of Gorovaan. Parhoon maintains an impressive series of locks and cranes in the first 200 miles of canal leading to Syrtis Major; after that, the canal is interrupted only by intermittent cascade pools. The route to Gorovaan is subject to raids by High Martians, along whose border it runs. Occasionally, the Queln even raid its western end, or the Wagon Masters of Meroe its eastern end. Because of this, military craft patrol the canal to help protect shipping, but periodic locks would be vulnerable to attack, leaving merchant vessels stranded at the mercy of the raiders. Fortunately, the ancient canal builders cut the Parhoon/Gorovaanese canal straight and level, relying on one series of locks on Parhoon's eastern edge to compensate for the cities' difference in altitude.

As a consequence, the route from Parhoon to Gorovaan is very impressive as it cuts deeply through the hills to either side. No farming is done along the sides of this canal—they are left as raw cuts through the native stone, revealing the strata of rock laid over the ages. The low flow channel of the canal remains near the center along most of the way, diverting to one side or the other only where breaks in the hills make good camping sites.

At one time in the distant past,

before the coming of Seldon's reign, Parhoon was a sister city to Gorovaan in the combined kingdom of Haataneethra I. In those days, Parhoon was the junior member of the two cities, a fact that rankles many Gorovaanis, whose city is now subject to Parhooni rule.

The manner in which this came about involves the coming of the British to Mars. They first arrived in 1872 on the outskirts of Parhoon, and this was the first city they visited. Initial relations were very friendly, and soon the British were established in their own quarter of the city, from which they conducted trade. Then, in 1878, the Anwaak of the city and his young son were assassinated, many say at the instigation of Gorovaani nobles. Queen Victoria assumed regency of the city, ruling in the name of the only surviving heir, a three-month-old infant. The year 1879 brought an invasion attempt by the Gorovaanis, who viewed Parhoon as their rightful property and feared that it was falling into alien hands. The British and Parhoonese fought well together, crushing the invasion forces and annexing Gorovaan to Parhoon. Needless to say, while Parhoon is a welcome home for the British, Gorovaan resents their interference.



Gorovaan

GOROVAAN LIES in the extreme northeast of the British Crown Colony on Mars, between the southern-

most reaches of the Meroe Badlands to the northwest and the Nilosyrtis Hills to the east and northeast. In elevation, it rests just over 700 feet below Parhoon, its neighbor 400 miles to the west, and nearly 850 feet above Haatt, its nearest neighbor to the south, just 200 miles away. Gorovaan is a city of three canals, however, and the third leads nearly 400 miles to Mylarkt in the Neith Steppe region, stepping stone to the cities of the Umbran League, from whence comes the only source of bhutan spice. All three canals run relatively level from Gorovaan to its neighbors. The canal to Parhoon has the majority of its locks at the Parhooni end, and Haatt is, in itself, a lock town placed primarily to maintain the locks that lead from Syrtis Major to Gorovaan. The route from Gorovaan to Mylarkt is broken by cataracts that depend upon slipways for passage around them.

Located as it is at the juncture of three canals, Gorovaan is an old city with an ancient tradition of economic and political power. It was this history, in fact, that prompted the Gorovaanese to attack Parhoon when that city's ruler was assassinated, hoping to reestablish a joint Gorovaani/Parhoonese unit once again. Unfortunately for Gorovaan, the presence of British at Parhoon prevented such an occurrence and turned the ancient tradition on its head by annexing Gorovaan to Parhoon after the abortive war.

Resting where it does, Gorovaan is a very populous city, and it is renowned for its long, graceful avenues and the impressive architecture of the towers that line them. Much of that beauty has fallen into decay, however. Historically, Gorovaan has

also been something of a center for art and science, but that tradition has slowly eroded over the ages. Present-day Gorovaan retains many evidences of its historic greatness, but its people have lost something of the fire that once drove them. Instead of creating new works of wonder, they seem content to boast about their former achievements.



Haatt

HAATT IS A much smaller city than Parhoon or Gorovaan, and its biggest business is charging tolls to vessels that use its extensive series of locks and crane points. Haatt lies approximately 375 miles due north of Syrtis Major, at a point where the cultivated lands of Meepsoor and Syrtis Major run up against the feet of the Nilosyrtis Hills. Approximately 500 feet separate Haatt and Syrtis Major in elevation, and most of this rise in altitude occurs within 25 miles to the south of Haatt. Gorovaan lies another 850 feet in altitude above the level of Haatt, and again, the majority of this difference occurs very close to Haatt, this time to the city's north-

east. This sudden rise of close to 1350 feet over the course of approximately 60 miles makes Haatt a natural location for a city. Not only does it serve to maintain the locks necessary for travel between north and south, it is also able to benefit from the energy of the canal water as it drops that distance. All the ancient locks and cranes depend on this water power for their operation.

Historically, Haatt has been largely uninvolved in the politics of the other city-states in its neighborhood. Its central location protects it from the High Martians of the Astusapes and the Steppe Martian raiders of the wilderness lands alike. Haatt's canal princes have usually been content to benefit from the canal traffic that their city's position brought them, but they have fought like cornered beasts when necessary to prevent the annexation of their city to another ruling power.

When news of the British arrival in Parhoon reached Haatt, its current ruling families feared that the red men would bring an end to the status quo. Therefore, when war broke out in 1880 after the annexation of Gorovaan by Parhoon, Haatt joined the forces fighting against the British, a move that proved to be unwise. With the ending of the war, Haatt's rulers once again retreated to an attitude of nonintervention in the affairs of others. The result has been that while Haatt is technically a part of the British Crown Colony of Syrtis Lapis, its rulers have retained their positions with the understanding that they report to a British governor. Haatt readily accepted these terms, unashamed to be subject to foreign rule as long as it means business continues as usual.

THE DROWNING OF THE SPRITE

EVENTUALLY, THE player characters will begin the last leg of their journey toward the tomb of Haataneethra I, travelling along the course of the Parhoon/Gorovaanese canal. The referee can read the following narrative description to them as they do so.

A few short hours after leaving the city, rough hills arise on either side of the canal. In places, the canal cuts right through the center of a hill, exposing its rocky heart to the light of day. Where this happens, the stark slopes of the split hill replace the levies that normally line the canal to contain its waters during surge. The raw stone of these hills reaches all the way to the water's edge in bands of red, brown, and dusky yellow. Occasionally when the Sprite passes such a hill, you see spots where high water has washed out a soft layer of

rock, forming shallow caves or spilling shards of the more brittle layers above in treacherous slopes of scree.

Between these hills lie deep, rugged valleys, their bottoms hidden behind the canal's embankments. As the day passes by, you notice that some of these locations have docking places, with stairways that climb the levies leading to sheltered camping spots. Most of these camps are located on the southern shore, the water serving as a barrier to attack from the wilderlands to the north. But in other spots, the lay of the land forces the camps to be located beyond the northern shore.

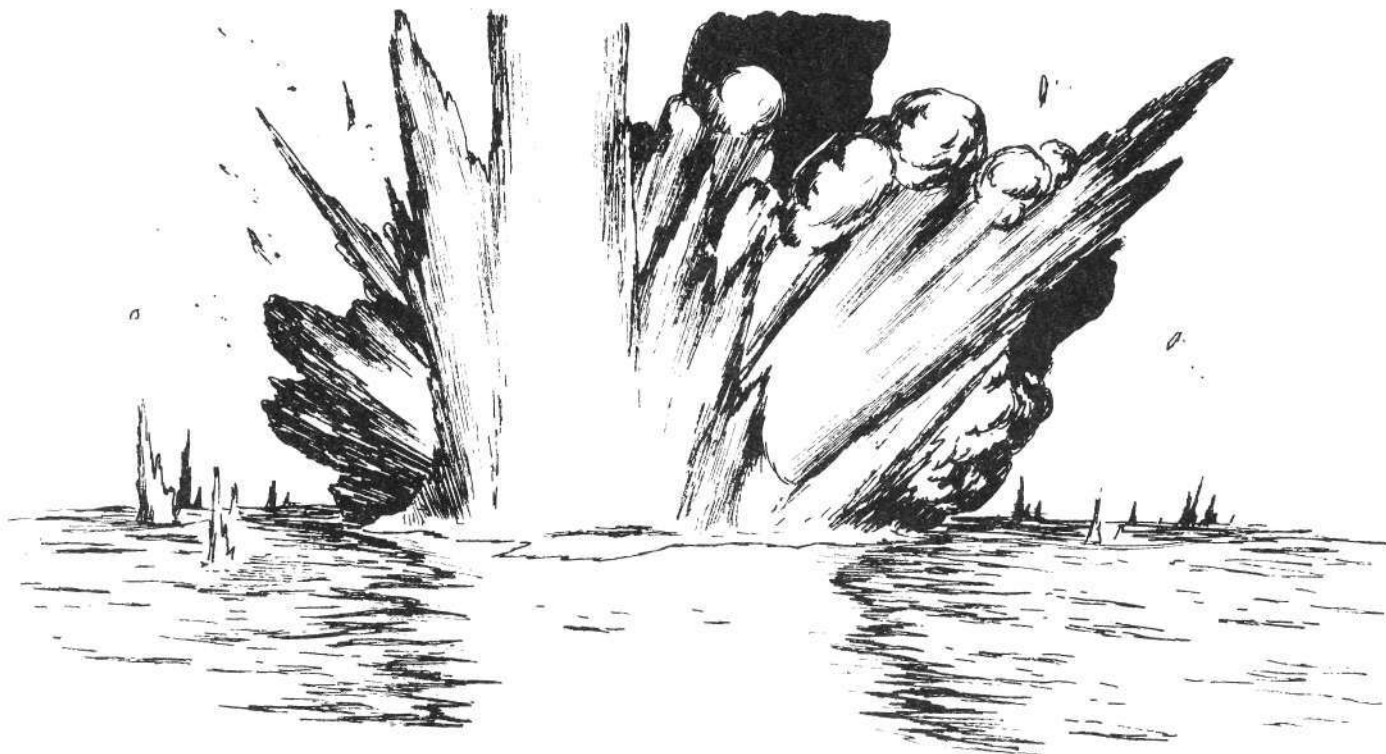
Watching the sunlight sparkle on the water of the canal, you continue on your journey.

A Sinister Plot

MYNOSII AALUM'S secret orders are to blow up the Meepsoori Sprite at such a time that the player characters will be cast up on the ca-

nal's northern shore and stranded at least 100 miles from the city they have left, but also a safe distance from Haataneethra I's tomb. A screw galley has been sent from Kraag Barrovaar to gather the PCs up afterward and bring them to the High Martian King Hattabranx. This screw galley can travel the length of the canal once each day, patrolling at a safe distance to the north, waiting for the Sprite to be sabotaged.

It is possible that the player characters, if they are particularly astute, may discover the dynamite in Mynosii Aalum's valise before he has an opportunity to use it. If anyone attempts to take the dynamite away from him or if they steal it while he is unaware, Aalum will fight to regain it, giving himself away as an enemy in the process. If this occurs, the Sprite's voyage will continue to the player characters' debarkation point, where they can disembark and begin their trek toward the tomb.



It is most likely, however, that the player characters will not discover Aalum's dynamite. In this case, Aalum will choose a time during an evening when a northern campsite is near to perform his sabotage. He will wait until he can have the cabin to himself so as to set his valise at the base of the *Sprite's* mast and light a short fuse. Aalum will remain quite near the dynamite, sheltering it from discovery until it explodes. If necessary, he will command Sef to help him defend the door to the *Sprite's* cabin in order to prevent anyone else from entering.

When the dynamite explodes, it tears a ragged hole nearly six feet in diameter through the *Sprite's* hull, blasting the cabin to flying splinters and freeing the mast to fall across the port rowers' platform. As the mast falls, it rips the cross deck free and crushes the rowers' platform, tipping so far to the port side that the waters of the canal rush over the vessel's side. Of course, all the cargo on the deck slides toward the port side as well, knocking crewmembers off their feet and crushing some of them in the process.

The player characters themselves are dumped into the night-darkened canal and must swim to shore. Each should make an Easy roll versus their Swimming dice to see if they make it to shore without difficulty. If they fail their roll, the referee may assume that they have been struck by a piece of debris and stunned. Stunned characters and characters with no Swimming talent must make an Easy roll on their Agility dice to grab a large plank or other floating item and dog-paddle to shore. If they fail this roll, they are washed up on shore unconscious and must make a Moderate

roll on their Endurance dice to recover. Failure at this roll means that the character dies.

If a swimming character wishes to try to save a character who cannot swim, he must make a Moderate roll on his Swimming dice. Success means that he tows the other character to shore safely; failure means that he loses the other character in the water. If the swimming character rolls below a 4 in his attempt, he should be treated like a stunned character, as mentioned above.

If the player characters are all particularly bad at Swimming, the referee may wish to have them towed to shore by crewmembers rather than let the adventure end with their ignominious deaths.

When the time has come for Aalum's sabotage to take place, the following narrative section can serve as a guide to the referee in describing to his players what transpires.

The Sprite is gliding peacefully as the Sun sinks behind the hills to the west. In the gathering dusk, Captain Winiimolaak stands at the barge's fore ramp, peering intently ahead, watching for the docking place that the vessel will stop at for the night. No other vessels are within sight on the canal's dark waters.

With a rapid wave, the captain signals to his tillermen to bring the Sprite to bear on the quarter he is pointing out. They respond nicely, and the ship begins a slow turn to the north, then straightens once again at Winiimolaak's signal. The sail is lowered, and the Sprite coasts smoothly toward the north shore, now about 100 yards away.

It is a peaceful scene, despite the undercurrent of tension to be felt at spending the night on the canal's

northern shore, on the edge of lands that lead to the High Martians' borders. Nearly everyone is on deck, taking in the sight of the lowering hills toward which the Sprite is drifting. Mynosii Aalum is not in evidence, however, but his servant Sef stands just 10 feet from the cabin door, making it likely that Aalum rests inside.

Suddenly, the still night air is torn apart by a thundering explosion that shakes the Sprite from stem to stern. Chunks of wooden planking fly through the air as the cabin's port side and rear disappear in an immense cloud of sulfurous smoke. A flood of dark water rushes out of the cabin door, carrying small items in its flow, and the mast groans as it begins to topple to port. Its first small sway soon gains momentum, and it crashes through the port rowers' platform, splitting the Sprite's hull to the waterline. The ship begins to list to its port side as the weight of the mast drags it over, and on the tilting deck, crates break their moorings and begin sliding rapidly toward the vessel's injured side, carrying a few crewmembers with them. Before your horrified eyes, a Martian sailor is crushed to death between a particularly large crate and the Sprite's hullside.

As you clamber across the deck, avoiding falling cargo and searching for something to cling to, the Sprite lurches once again, throwing you into the waters of the canal. The chill, dark waters close over you, but you fight desperately back to the surface. Ahead, you can see the dark shoreline; around you the air is filled with men's cries for help. Marshaling your flagging strength, you begin to swim.



An Overland Trek

IN THIS CHAPTER, the player characters leave the Parhoon/Gorovaanese canal and begin an overland trek through the desolate hills on the border of the Astusapes Highlands. To their surprise, they will soon have more company than they might wish for.

IF THE SPRITE WAS SAVED

IF, IN THE LAST chapter, the player characters thwarted the plans of Mynosii Aalum to destroy the *Meepsoori Sprite* and were able to continue their canal voyage to their planned debarkation point, they will start this chapter by beginning an overland journey toward the location of the tomb. Unknown to them, however, the High Martian screw galley *Moon of Woe* is patrolling the area, searching for the party.

Having looked for the wreckage of the *Meepsoori Sprite* and not found it, the captain of the *Moon of Woe* has justly concluded that the agent planted on the *Sprite* has failed in his mission. With King Hattabranx's permission, the Worm Priests at Kraag Barrovaar provided the *Moons* captain with sealed orders in case of such an occurrence, orders that reveal the location of a "site of historical importance" (the tomb of Haataneethra I) "that the party of humans will be seeking." Reading the orders, the captain finds that he is commanded to capture the party members before they find the site.

The party arrives at its debarkation point late in the afternoon of the day after the *Sprite* was to be destroyed.

It takes them the rest of the day to unload, set up camp, and generally get things in order. The *Moon of Woe* reaches the Parhoon/Gorovaanese canal and begins looking for the nonexistent wreckage of the *Sprite* late in the morning of that same day, and by the time the player characters are unloading at their debarkation point, the *Moon* has given up that search, moved near the site of Haataneethra I's tomb, and moored for the night. The next morning, as the PCs prepare to begin their ground search for the temple, the *Moon* begins its aerial search for the PCs.

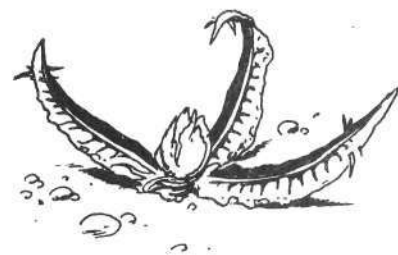
Just before noon on this day, as the player characters' party winds its way between a couple of hills, the *Moon of Woe* is seen on the horizon through a break in the hills. It is rapidly approaching the party. If the group attempts to hide, have one of its members make a Difficult test against Fieldcraft to conceal everyone from the vessel's sight. If this character is successful, the *Moon* passes over them unsuspecting and continues toward the canal, then turns and begins a return trip. The group loses an hour of travel time while waiting for the *Moon* to pass over.

Every 1D6 hours, the *Moon* will appear again in its search. Each time, the party must make another Fieldcraft roll to avoid being discovered, and each time the group loses another hour of travel as it hides. Each hour of travel lost cuts the distance the party covers that day by one mile.

Since the *Moon of Woe* is concen-

trating its patrol on a line between the tomb site and the PCs' debarkation point at the canal, if the party members diverge from that path, they will suffer less chance of discovery. Instead of rolling 1D6 for the number of hours between appearances of the *Moon*, the referee should roll 1D6 + 2. If the party members diverge from this path, however, they are subject to discovery by the Queln or the Wagon Masters of Merroe, as explained later.

If the *Moon of Woe* discovers the player characters' party (because the group's Fieldcraft roll was failed), it will drop to very low altitude and begin sending out flying parties to capture the humans in the group. Martians in the player characters' group will be killed without a second thought, but the humans will simply be beaten senseless and carried off. It takes two flying Martians to carry a single human back to the ship. If the flying Martians are driven off, they will return 24 hours later with replacements and, if the referee deems it necessary, reinforcements as well. Of course, they will have to search for and find the player characters' party once again before launching any new attacks.



IF THE SPRITE WAS DESTROYED

IF THE PLAYER characters did not thwart Mynosii Aalum in his mission to destroy the *Meepsoori Sprite*, after the explosion they are cast up on the northern shore of the canal about midway between the city they recently left and their planned debarkation point. The referee should allow them to salvage enough food stores from the wreckage to feed them for two weeks. Other items may be salvaged as well, if the referee desires (in particular, each of the player characters should be provided with a weapon, whether it be a firearm, a bow and a few arrows, a machete, or something else). The PCs must now decide whether to trek back to the city, push on toward the tomb, or wait on the banks and try to flag down a passing canal ship.

Regardless of what course they choose, the High Martian screw galley, the *Moon of Woe*, will show up at the wreck site about two hours after sunup, searching for the group. If the player characters have not chosen a course of action by the time the *Moon* arrives, someone in the group will have to make a Formidable roll versus Fieldcraft to succeed in getting everyone hidden. If this person is successful, the *Moon* will patrol overhead for about two hours, searching for signs of the group, then begin a search pattern that alternately reaches first toward the city and then toward the tomb. Once every 2D6 hours, the *Moon* will appear over the player characters' group again, and a roll versus Fieldcraft will have to be made by someone in the party to prevent the group from being spotted. If the party is travelling, this roll

is merely Difficult, since the player characters are able to use the rough terrain well, and the *Moon* is only in the immediate area for an hour. If the party is waiting on the banks, trying to flag down a passing canal ship, the roll to avoid detection by the *Moon* is Formidable, since the canal sides provide much less cover and the *Moon* is hidden by the embankments until it is nearly overhead, leaving the party less time to hide.

LIKE FLIES TO HONEY

THE ACTIVITY of the High Martians' *Moon of Woe* does not go unnoticed by other races. Canal vessels see it, of course, and report it in the next city they enter, but the sky fleets of that city are not sent to drive off just one lone High Martian ship. More importantly, though, the *Moon* is watched by the jealous eyes of certain Steppe Martian nations. In particular, the skril-riding Queln to the west of the Astusapes Highlands and the Wagon Masters of Meroe to the east note the *Moon's* search pattern and divine that something of value is to be gained along the Parhoon/Gorovaanese canal.

Tribes from both these nations move closer to the canal to discover what that something is. If the player characters are not somewhere on the route running directly from their planned debarkation point to the tomb of Haataneethra I, whether they have diverted from that route to avoid the *Moon of Woe* or are making their way back to a city, or whatever other reason they might have, there is a good chance that they will be captured by one of these clans. If they are to the west of the route, they will encounter the Queln; but if they are to the east of the route, then they

will encounter the Wagon Masters.

If the player characters are travelling west, the first chance of encountering a Steppe Martian clan will occur two days after the PCs begin their overland trek if they are travelling west, or four days after they begin their trek if they are travelling east. Each day after that time, the referee should roll 1D6. On a roll of 6, the group will encounter Steppe Martians that day (unless, of course, they are first captured by the crew of the *Moon of Woe*). The referee can choose at what point during the day this event should occur, but obviously it should take place between the times that the *Moon of Woe* appears overhead, since the Steppe Martians will not risk moving while the *Moon* is near.

When the encounter with the Steppe Martians occurs, the referee should have the player characters make a Difficult roll versus Observation. If everyone fails the roll, the group walks into an ambush and is surrounded. If anyone succeeds, the group discovers the Steppe Martians before they can be discovered in turn. In this case, the players have a choice of whether to approach the Steppe Martians and ask for aid or attempt to evade them. Attempts to evade require someone among the player characters to make a Formidable roll against Fieldcraft. Failure at this roll means that the Steppe Martians spot them and begin pursuit. Success at the roll means that the player characters' party can avoid the Steppe Martians for that particular encounter. Once the Steppe Martians first show up, however, the players will encounter them again every 2D6 hours thereafter (even if this makes the encounter at night).

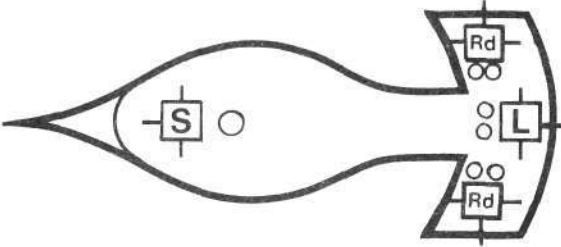
IF THE GROUP
REACHES A CITY

IT IS POSSIBLE, but unlikely, that the player characters might make it all the way to a canal city without being discovered by High Martians or Steppe Martians. If this occurs, the referee has a choice to make—

he can either have the Worm Lord give up in his attempts to capture the player characters, or he can invent another plot to bring them to the Worm Lord. If the Worm Lord gives up his attempt, the players can still seek out the tomb of Haataneethra I, and the referee can simply roll for random encounters as they resume their trek. If the Worm Lord tries once more, his plot should involve delaying the player characters until the Worm Priests can convince King Hattabranx to send a screw galley out once again. Using the events in this module as a guideline, the referee should be able to come up with such a plot without much trouble.

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3

300TONS

4

Bridge C H T S O

Deck

Maneuver

Screw
4
3
2
1

Hull
Hits

H		
M		
L		
VL		

Marines



THE SKRILL-RIDING QUELN

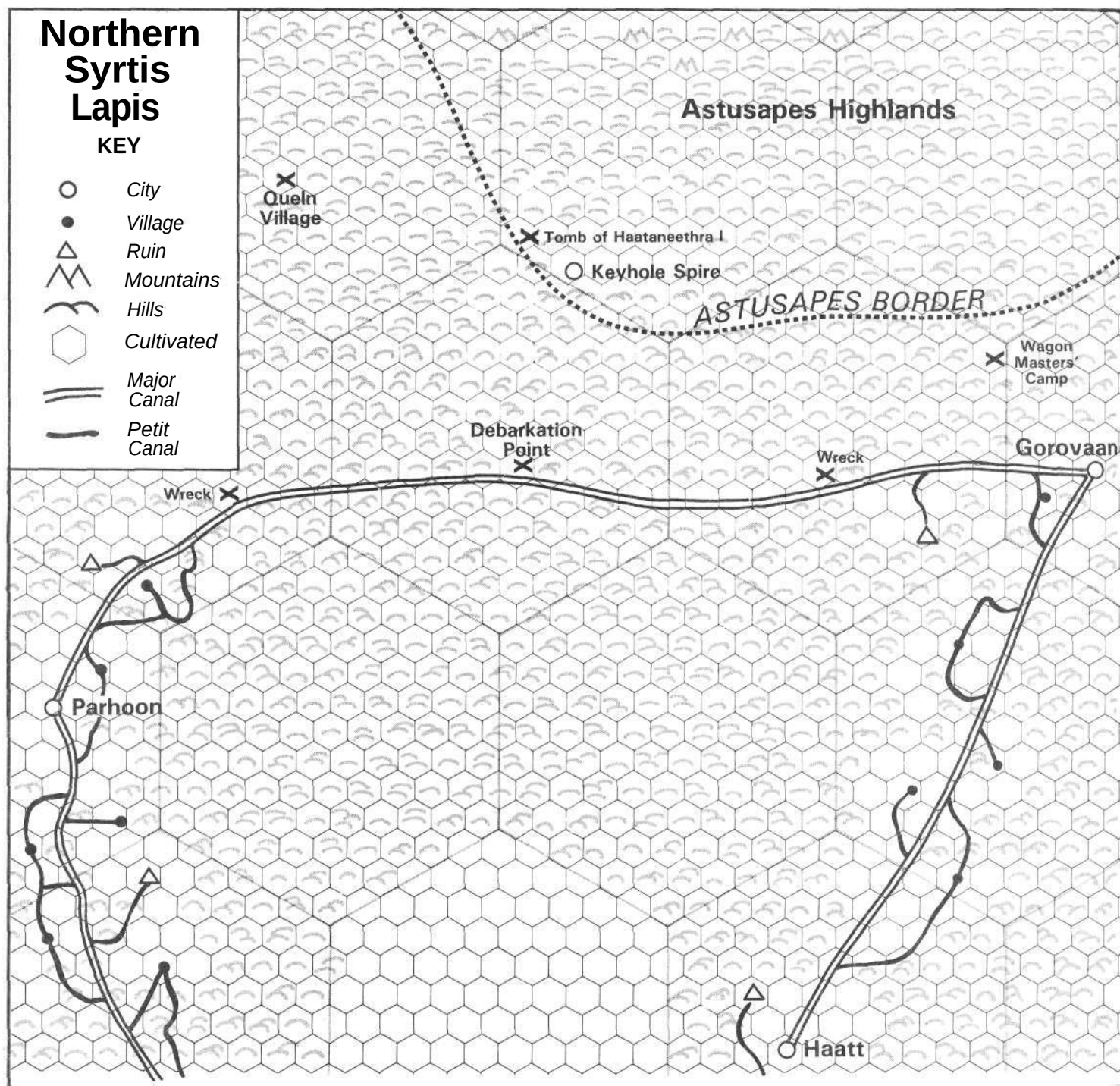
PAGES 174 and 175 of the Space: 1889 rules book contain a basic description of the Skrill Riders of Mars. The particular clan that the player characters encounter is, of course, the clan mentioned as settling into the Astusapes Highlands recently and raiding the spice trade. At the

time of this adventure, the clan is dwelling in the western portion of the Astusapes region.

QUARRY OF THE QUELN

LIVING AS CLOSE to the High Martians of the Astusapes as they do, these Quelns are very aware of the movements of the High Martian screw galleys. That one would be pa-

trolling dangerously near to cities of the British Colony indicates that something very valuable is to be gained there, and that something is obviously mobile. The fact that the something is valuable is what first puts the Quelns on the player characters' trail, but that value also prevents the Quelns from performing a typical raid on the party, killing most of its



members, looting the group, and carrying off a few prisoners. The *rithall* (skylord) of this clan is very astute, and before leading the raid, he commands that whatever is found when the Queln search the patrol area of the *Moon of Woe*, no one is to be killed unless it is deemed to be absolutely necessary.

Setting out on their skroll mounts, the Queln work their way quickly south to the canal and begin a hunt of their own. Whenever they spot the *Moon of Woe* approaching, they land and hide in any craggy places available, so as not to give away their presence to the High Martians. If the player characters are surprised by the Queln or if they attempt to evade them and fail, leading to pursuit, the skroll riders will dive their mounts toward the PCs' group, fight to disarm its members, then try to drag them over their saddles and carry them away. If a skroll rider gets a player character across his saddle, the referee should emphasize to the player the unstable position his character is in and inform him that any further struggle is likely to result in his character falling from the back of the skroll.

Any members of the PCs' party who fights particularly effectively or heroically will draw the attention of several Queln riders who will take it as a point of honor to personally capture this person. The riders will not hesitate to have their mounts grasp the character in their razor sharp talons—because of the care the riders are taking to capture the party members alive, however, the skroll will use both sets of talons to hold the character, rather than holding with one set and continuing to attack with the other.

Krraghar Rithall (Veteran NPC)



KRRAGHAR RITHALL (Krraghar *skylord*) is clan leader of a tribe of Queln. He is renowned among the tribe as the best skroll rider, since he must defend his position yearly in a deadly flying competition. Krraghar is a consummate warrior chief—fearless in danger, savage in battle, ruthless in parley, and arrogant in dealing with his inferiors. As prisoners of the Queln, the PCs can expect from the rithall exactly the treatment that they merit in his eyes. If they act like weaklings, he will treat them as such. But if they demand respect and can back up that demand as warriors, the rithall will treat them as equals.

Krraghar has nothing personal against humans. As a product of his culture, he respects strength and fierceness. He views humans as another race to do battle with for the treasures Mars produces, such as the bhutan spice of the Umbran league. If humans can protect their treasures, the rithall respects them as worthy adversaries. If they cannot protect them, he views them as weaklings to be plundered by the strong.

Krraghar rithall speaks Queln as his native language.

Attributes	Skills
Str: 3	Fisticuffs 2, Close Combat 3 (<i>khivatt</i> —pole arm)
Agl: 2	Stealth 2, Marksmanship 2 (bow)
End: 4	Wilderness Travel 5 (foraging)
Int: 4	Observation 3
Chr: 3	Eloquence 2, Linguistics 1 (Koline)
Soc: 5	Riding 7 (flying skroll), Leadership 3

Motives: Proud, Arrogant, Aggressive.

Appearance: Krraghar rithall, like all Hill Martians, is somewhat shorter and hairier than members of the Canal Martian race. This is especially true in respect to the Queln, among whom the lightest and lithest typically make the best skroll riders.

The rithall is very stern looking, especially when dealing with underlings, and his face and torso are crossed by numerous old, puckered scars. The upper third of his left ear is missing, having been bitten off by his skroll when he was training it. Krraghar dresses virtually the same as any other Queln warrior—in rough skins and a heavy cloak. But even from a distance, he can be distinguished from other members of the clan by the great number of rings and armbands that he wears, tokens of raids he has made.

CAPTIVES OF THE QUELN

ONCE THE MEMBERS of the player characters' party have all been captured, the Queln begin a days-long journey to their village located in the hills to the north. This trip, which would normally take only two days, is lengthened to four days, both because the skrill must carry the added weight of the PCs' party members in their flight and because the Queln riders must evade the *Moon of Woe* in its continued search for the player characters. Finally, however, the player characters spot the village lying in a sheltered hollow between the hills. At this time, the referee can read to them the following narrative description.

The Martian Sun is low over the dry hills as your captors direct their mounts to descend. The chill winds raised as the skrill soar at the higher altitudes begin to give way to hot air rising off the desert pavement. The skrill labor to slow their plummet, and you begin to smell a strong, sweaty odor coming from their hides. Their riders screech commands to them, and the skrill perform a dizzying bank, drop rapidly, and swoop toward a hollow in the hills.

Striving to keep your last meal down as the skrill perform their aerobatics, you catch sight of a cluster of hide tents set in a rough circle—in the circle's center is an open, wooden framework dome nearly 10 yards high and 20 yards across its base. Standing about in this makeshift village are the wives and children of your captors, protected by a few young warriors.

The scene grows larger as you rapidly approach it. Suddenly, the wings of your skrill snap as they cup

the air, slowing the great beasts to a stall just a few feet above the sand. There is a lurch, and you are on the solid ground once again.



WITHIN THE QUELN VILLAGE

IMMEDIATELY AFTER landing, the rithall calls a handful of the young warriors who were left at the village to come and guard the prisoners while the riders care for their skrill. Each rider tethers his beast and rubs it down thoroughly before allowing it to graze. During this time, the women and children collect to look the captives over, peering at them between the glowering guards.

By the time the riders have finished with their mounts, the Sun has fully set, and they gather in a wide circle around a communal firepit where a great deal of food and drink is laid out. They feast themselves, boasting and laughing (and teasing the children) for several hours, during which time the prisoners are given neither food nor water. When the feast begins to wind down, Krraghar rithall gives another command, and the prisoners are led into

the circle to stand before him and the elders for questioning.

The rithall first ceremonially complements any of the player characters who demonstrated great bravery or ferocity in the fight in which his warriors captured the group. He then begins his interrogation with the matter-of-fact question, "Why should I let you live?"

Negotiating With the Rithall

THE REFEREE WILL need to keep Krraghar rithall's personality and motives firmly in mind while role playing this confrontation between the rithall and the player characters. Krraghar wants to know what value the player characters hold for the High Martians, and he will not accept attempts to draw him away from the subject. He will, however, entertain offers to negotiate for the information he wants, and he will be faithful to any terms he agrees to, but he will use the fact that the PCs are his prisoners fully to his advantage in such negotiations. His best deal is likely to be release from captivity with weapons, food, and water, in exchange for the map that the group possesses.

Note that this negotiation should be role-played fully. The referee should not allow a player whose character has a high Bargaining skill to simply get the group off the hook by a lucky roll of the dice. Emphasize to the players that this is not so much a bargaining situation, as if the two sides were dickering over the price of a gashant, as it is a negotiation process between two races which have had little contact with one another in the past. What is important in this situation is cleverness and coolness under pressure.

Keeping Silence Before the Rithall

IF, INSTEAD of negotiating, the player characters simply refuse to tell the rithall what he wants, he will respect silence from them as brave warriors, but he will make them justify that silence by purchasing it in single combat with a clan champion. The combat will be fought on the ground with khivatts, the short spears common among the Queln, and it will halt when either contestant becomes unconscious. Each character who wants to maintain silence, PCs and NPCs alike, will have to pass through this ordeal. Any individual who is defeated by his opponent may still maintain his silence, but he will be kept as a slave of the clan. Any individual who bests his opponent will be allowed to maintain his silence and will be given weapons, food, and water, and will be released from captivity to find his way back to civilization. Characters so released will be allowed to remain with the clan if they desire (possibly to stay near enslaved characters).

Optional Ordeals

IF THE REFEREE desires, he can emphasize the savagery of the Queln and their great respect for bravery by replacing the single combat event above with an ordeal of pain. In this ordeal, characters who remain completely silent in the face of torture will be greatly respected and may even be adopted into the clan. The referee should be careful to emphasize the respect given to stoic warriors and not dwell upon the tortures themselves, which in any event will only consist of such things as running a gauntlet (running between a dou-

ble line of warriors who strike at the runner with wooden rods as he goes), enduring a day staked out in the Sun, or being branded on the shoulder with a Queln warrior's mark. None of these should do any permanent damage to the character or even leave any scars (other than the branding).

Ordeals and NPCs

IT IS POSSIBLE that the player characters' group may consist of some NPCs from the wreck of the *Meepsoori Sprite*. One of these NPCs might give away the secret of the player characters' map (if he knows of it) rather than go through an ordeal. The referee will have to use his own judgment in deciding if this is the case, but it is important that the PCs be questioned first, so that they will have a chance to bargain with or impress the rithall before an NPC spoils it all. Even if an NPC does give away the party's secrets, the rithall will treat the PCs in whatever manner they have earned.



ESCAPE FROM THE QUELN

THE PLAYER characters and their companions can escape from the Queln village in one of several possible ways. They may negotiate or do battle for their release, as de-

scribed above. Possibly the players will be able to suggest another way out of their dilemma, such as overcoming their guards and slipping away at night.

If no other manner of escape presents itself, however, the referee should keep in mind that the High Martians in the *Moon of Woe* are still searching desperately for the player characters, and as the days go by, their searches will range in an ever-wider pattern. Eventually, the *Moon* will find the Queln village. When this happens, the High Martians, discovering the presence of the player characters in the village, will begin an attack on the village in order to take the hostages for themselves.

The attack should occur near sundown, giving the player characters a chance to escape into the surrounding hills during the ruckus. The *Moon of Woe* will hover about 75 feet above the ground and begin bombarding the village, hoping to generate confusion while it sends flying parties to search for the player characters among the tents. The Queln riders will assault the *Moon* itself, attempting to overcome the crew and fire the ship, thus destroying the High Martians' means of retreat. Because of the ferocity of both groups of antagonists, the battle will be long and bloody.

The referee can play up the drama of this event by having the escaping PCs run into a few Queln riders, and just when it seems that all hope is lost, a party of High Martians drops upon the Queln, allowing the PCs to run a bit farther. They are then discovered by a group of High Martians, and as they fight them off, the High Martians are attacked by several Queln riders, and so on.



Photho Nhe (Experienced NPC)

PHOTHO NHE is the aged chieftain of the Hashassa clan, a tribe of the Wagon Masters of Meroe. He has served as chieftain for three decades, and during that time he has developed a belief that the best interests of his clan are more often attained through negotiation than through violence. This view has made him very popular among the older members of the Hashassa clan, who have thrived in peace during the chieftain's rule. But it has drawn the disdain of the younger Hashassas, who prefer a more direct approach to gaining their ends.

Chief among these young men is a son of Photho, the eldest of twins (by less than 10 minutes). This son's name is Tycuus, and he is a favorite among the youths because of his prowess as a warrior. Unfortunately, Tycuus, while he craves the position of chieftain, is not terribly bright, and he demonstrates no talent for handling the day-to-day problems that make up the bulk of a chieftain's work. His brother Myya, on the other hand, is well known for his wisdom and insight, but he is scorned by Tycuus, who outshines him in all martial skills. Photho, as chieftain, has chosen Myya as his successor, though it grieves him to affront Tycuus so.

Besides the languages listed below, chieftain Nhe also speaks his native Meroen.

Attributes Skills

Str:	1	
Agf:	2	Stealth 1, Marksmanship 1 (bow)
End:	3	Wilderness Travel 4 (foraging), Fieldcraft 4
Int:	5	Observation 5
Chr:	4	Eloquence 3, Bargaining 4, Linguistics 2 (Koline, Umbran)
Soc:	6	Riding 5 (ruumet breehr), Leadership 6

Motives: Steady, Frugal, Wise.

Appearance: Photho Nhe is perhaps the oldest Hill Martian that the player characters will ever meet, and he looks it. His hair is completely white, even on his shoulder hump, his noble face is lined with the many years of his service, and his flesh hangs loosely on him. But Photho's startling yellow eyes and his quick and easy smile still reveal the clarity of mind that this old Martian possesses. Photho typically dresses in white, homespun robes, like his forefathers, rather than in imitation of the Canal Martians, as most of the Hashassa dress.

THE WAGON MASTERS OF MEROE

TO THE EAST and north of the Astusapes Highlands, yet west of the Nilosyrts Hills, lies a region of arid hills called the Meroe (pronounced "Meh RO eh") Badlands. Great herds of ruumet breehr roam these hilly wastes, and following the migrations of these lumbering beasts are clans of Hill Martians known as the Wagon Masters of Meroe. The Wagon Masters' name arises from the huge, carved wagons in which they dwell, pulled by teams of domesticated ruumet breehr. Each of these wagons serves as home to one or more families. At night, when the herds of ruumet breehr settle to sleep, a clan's wagons are drawn into a circle, and a bonfire is built in the center to provide light for the evening's festivities and to keep malevolent spirits away from borders of the camp.

Since very few natural predators can threaten a ruumet breehr and since even those that can tend to avoid whole herds of the great beasts, the Wagon Masters have a constant source of food and materials in the herds. Thus, despite the relentless travel involved in their lifestyle, Wagon Master clans tend to lead very stable lives, with few worries (other than the occasional steppe tiger). They perform some trade with the cities that border their region, mainly of ruumet breehr hides, wild spices, and medicinal herbs (for which the Queln are famous). But the Queln own too little to tempt raids by the High Martians of the Astusapes, whose attention is held by the richer Canal Martians of the Umbran League.

QUARRY OF THE WAGON MASTERS

AT THE TIME that the *Meepsoori Sprite* sets out on the Parhoon/Gorovaanese canal with the player characters aboard, the Hashassa tribe of the Wagon Masters of Meroe have followed their herd of ruumet breehr to the extreme southern end of the Meroe Badlands and then just over the border of the Astusapes. That the ruumet breehr have travelled into traditional High Martian territory is a matter of some concern for the Hashassas, but there is simply nothing to be done but pray that the herd will soon change its collective mind and return to the north.

The activities of the High Martian screw galley, *Moon of Woe*, have caught the eye of the Hashassas, and curiosity, coupled with some fear of

attack, has prompted Photho Nhe, the chieftain of the tribe, to send a small band of eight young warriors by gashant to spy out what has drawn the *Moon* into their area.

This band is captained by Photho's son Tycuus, with the aid of Tycuus' twin brother Myya. The two youths have some personality conflict, since Tycuus, who is minutes older than Myya, wants to succeed his father as chieftain of the Hashassa, but Myya is perceived by his father to be the more suited for the job.

If while avoiding the *Moon of Woe*, the player characters roam to the west of the line leading between the tomb of Haataneethra I and their intended point of debarkation from the *Meepsoori Sprite*, they stand a chance of encountering this reconnaissance party. This is especially true if the *Meepsoori Sprite* was

destroyed halfway to that debarkation point. Each day of travel, the referee should roll 1D6; on a 1 or 2, the PCs will encounter the Hashassas' recon party that day. The specific time of the event is left up to the referee, but it should be at some point between the *Moon of Woe*?, appearances overhead in its search for the PCs, since the Hashassa youths spend such times hiding as well.

When the event occurs, the referee should have one of the player characters roll a Routine task versus his Observation to detect the Hashassas before the PCs can be detected in turn. If the player character fails in his roll, the Hashassas spot the PCs' group and halt to parley. If, instead, the PC succeeds in his roll, the players have the choice of whether to reveal themselves to the Hashassas or not.



MEETING THE WAGON MASTERS

ONCE THE PLAYER characters have met the reconnaissance party sent by the Hashassa, some hot debate will arise between the two sons of Photho Nhe as to what should be

done with the humans and their companions. Tycuus is all for treating them as prisoners, but Myya argues that they should be received as guests. Both young men agree that the PCs and their friends should be taken to the clan to talk with their father. After much discussion, it is

finally decided that the PCs' group should be escorted back as something less than friends but more than hostages. The PCs will be allowed to keep any possessions that they might be carrying, but the Hashassas will form their gashants into a ring around them, and the PCs will not be offered a ride.

As can be deduced from the map, the trip to the Wagon Masters' camp will take more than a week of travel, especially since the High Martian screw galley, *Moon of Woe*, is patrolling the area, forcing the Hashassa youths to hide the group often. When the player characters finally reach the Wagon Masters' camp, the referee can read the following narrative description to them.

Tycuus Nhe (Veteran NPC)



TYCUUS NHE is the captain of the eight young men sent on foot as a spying party by the Hashassa clan of the Wagon Masters of Meroe. His father, Photho Nhe, is the clan chieftain, and as the eldest of two sons (by a little less than an hour), Tycuus believes it his own destiny to become chieftain when his father dies. Almost all clan members of his age agree, but Tycuus' father has said that his younger son, Myya Nhe, is more suited for the responsibility.

Tycuus cannot understand this, since everyone recognizes that he is a great warrior, much better than his more studious brother. Besides, he has the right as firstborn. Unfortunately, Tycuus, while being a charismatic leader among the young men of the clan, is not very bright, and his father fears that he will not be able to judge wisely in clan matters that do not require a warrior's solution.

Tycuus speaks only his native Meroen.

Attributes Skills

Str: 4	Fisticuffs 3, Close Combat 4 (pole arm)
Agl: 5	Stealth 4, Marksmanship 5 (bow)
End: 3	Wilderness Travel 4 (foraging), Fieldcraft 3
Int: 1	
Chr: 3	Eloquence 2
Soc: 5	Riding 6 (ruumet breehr), Leadership 4

Motives: Aggressive, Driven, Leader.

Appearance: Tycuus is an extremely handsome young man by Hill Martian standards, and he is well liked by other clan members his age. His hair is very dark, almost as black as that of Shistom, a legendary hero of the Wagon Masters. His skin is clear, his teeth strong and even, and his eyes a penetrating yellow that is widely recognized as a sign of great bravery. Tycuus' dress, like the dress of his companions, is a rough equivalent of Canal Martian fashion in Mylarkt and Gorovaan.



Laboring up yet another scrub-covered hill, the mid-morning Sun beating down on you, you pause for

a moment to wipe the sweat from your face. Taking a deep breath of the Martian air, you are surprised to detect a faint scent of wood smoke. It is obvious that the gashants smell it too, because they begin pulling at their reins like a mare that sights its barn. Tycuus frowns belligerently at you and growls a command in his native tongue. Myya translates, "He says, 'Let's not stand here; the camp is just over this hill.' " Resolutely, you resume your march.

When you crest the hill, you halt again, this time in awe of the view. Below you lies a broad plane dotted with the greatest number of ruumet breehr you have ever seen; nearly 100 of the beasts must be scattered over it, grazing on the tough, dry grasses that sprout from the sun-baked soil.

At the edge of the plane lies another startling sight, a ring of the dark, wood-floored, walled, and roofed wagons that serve as home to the Hashassa. Although the sizes of these conveyances vary, most are nearly 25 feet high, at least that wide, and 30 to 40 feet long. They are supported on 12-foot-tall wheels, making their undersides about six feet above the ground, and their long tongues have harnesses for as many as six ruumet breehr. Every inch of the wagons' outer surfaces are covered with intricate carvings, some representing fables or moral tales, but most simply grotesque faces to keep malevolent spirits at bay.

Again Tycuus growls a command and urges the group forward. Myya, however, bows in his saddle, smiles, and tells you, "Welcome to the homes of the Hashassa." He nudges his gashant and begins to descend the hill.

Myya Nhe (Trained NPC)

MYYA NHE is somewhat smaller than his brother, Tycuus, and he is less skilled at arms. He is also much less outspoken than Tycuus and much more observant. Many have been the times that a small fact noticed by Myya and passed along has saved Tycuus from running headlong into misfortune. But Tycuus accepts those hints so naturally that he soon forgets their origin.



Myya and Tycuus were born as twins, a very unusual occurrence among the Hill Martians, but Myya was birthed slightly less than 10 minutes after Tycuus, and so is technically the younger brother. Photho, father of Tycuus and Myya, and chieftain of the Hashassa clan of the Wagon Masters of Meroe, believes the younger son to be most fitted to take his place as chieftain upon his death. Unfortunately, Tycuus, as eldest, believes that the right to rule the tribe belongs to him. Photho and Myya accept this attitude resolutely, but Photho constantly sends the brothers out together, hoping that Tycuus will eventually recognize his younger brother's wisdom. Tycuus, however, refuses to recognize anything except his own superiority at arms.

Myya Nhe speaks Meroen as his native tongue.

Attributes	Skills
Str: 2	Fisticuffs 2, Close Combat 2 (pole arm)
Agl: 3	Stealth 3, Marksmanship 3 (bow)
End: 1	Wilderness Travel 3 (foraging)
Int: 6	Observation 6
Chr: 4	Eloquence 4, Bargaining 3, Linguistics 3 (Koline, Parhooni, Umbran)
Soc: 5	Riding 4 (ruumet breehr), Leadership 5

Motives: Cautious, Wise, Fair.

Appearance: Myya Nhe, although somewhat smaller than Tycuus in stature, nonetheless shares many of his brother's characteristics. His hair is lighter than Tycuus', but his skin is as clear, and his yellow eyes are as startling. Where Tycuus' gaze is impressive in its ferocity, however, Myya's impresses the viewer with its frank intelligence and insight.

Like Tycuus, Myya dresses in imitation of the fashions of Gorovaan and Mylarkt, cities to the east of the Meroe Badlands. But while Tycuus dresses to draw attention to himself, Myya chooses clothes of simple style and pattern, resulting in an effect of understated elegance.

GUESTS OF THE WAGON MASTERS

WHEN THE PLAYER characters arrive at the Wagon Masters' campsite, Photho Nhe, chieftain of the Hashassa and father to Tycuus and Myya, gives them great welcome and is very interested in hearing whatever the PCs might care to divulge about the High Martians' interest in them. If the PCs give no reason at all for the beastmen's pursuit, or if they try

to make it seem as if they have no idea what the *Moon of Woe* is searching for, they will have to do some fast talking to convince the old chieftain. However, he will not press them, even if he doubts their tale. How much he trusts their story will have an effect on how fully the PCs are welcomed into the clan, though.

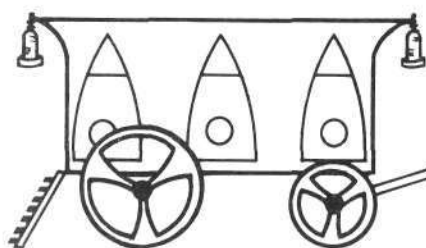
Shortly after the player characters join the Hashassa, the ruumet breehr begin to migrate back to the north. The clan follows them, of course, so

while the PCs are guesting with the Hashassa, they will be travelling further from the canal cities to the south and deeper into the Meroe Badlands.

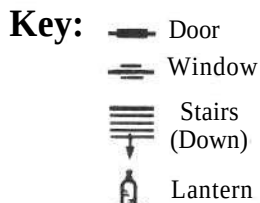
This can be a very profitable time for the PCs in terms of experience. During their stay with the Wagon Masters, the PCs can pick up some excellent knowledge of how to live off the land in this region, since the Wagon Masters are very knowledgeable about such things. If the PCs spend a week or two, the referee might want to simply have each of them raise their Wilderness Travel (foraging) skills by one point.

Of course the presence of the player characters in the clan and the fact that the High Martians are searching for them rapidly becomes a focal point in the conflict between the chieftain's two sons, and between the supporters of each, as well. Tycuus and his followers want to take action and either chase the PCs away or turn them over to the High Martians. They insist that the player characters' presence in the Hashassa camp is bound to bring trouble, either from the High Martians or from the PCs themselves. Tycuus does not trust the PCs at all; he cannot speak any languages that they know, and that fact not only enforces the distrust he has for them, it also secretly embarrasses him by pointing up an area in which his brother outshines him. Myya and Photho both view the player characters as curiosities and as a potential tie to the British and other humans on Mars. They consider it a point of honor that the humans are guests of the tribe, and they insist that it would be shameful to turn them out into the prairie or give them over to the High Martians as captives.

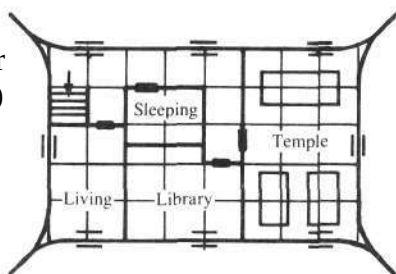
Hashassa Wagon



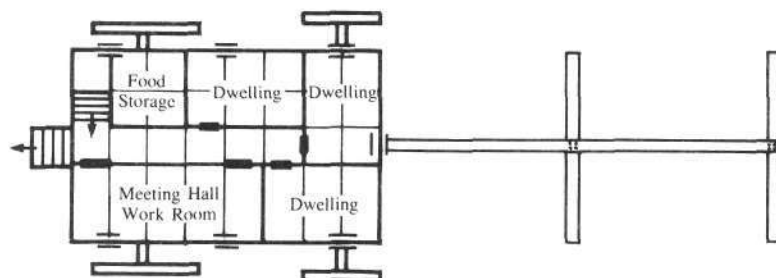
Side View



Upper Floor
(Main Family)



Lower Floor
(Secondary Families)



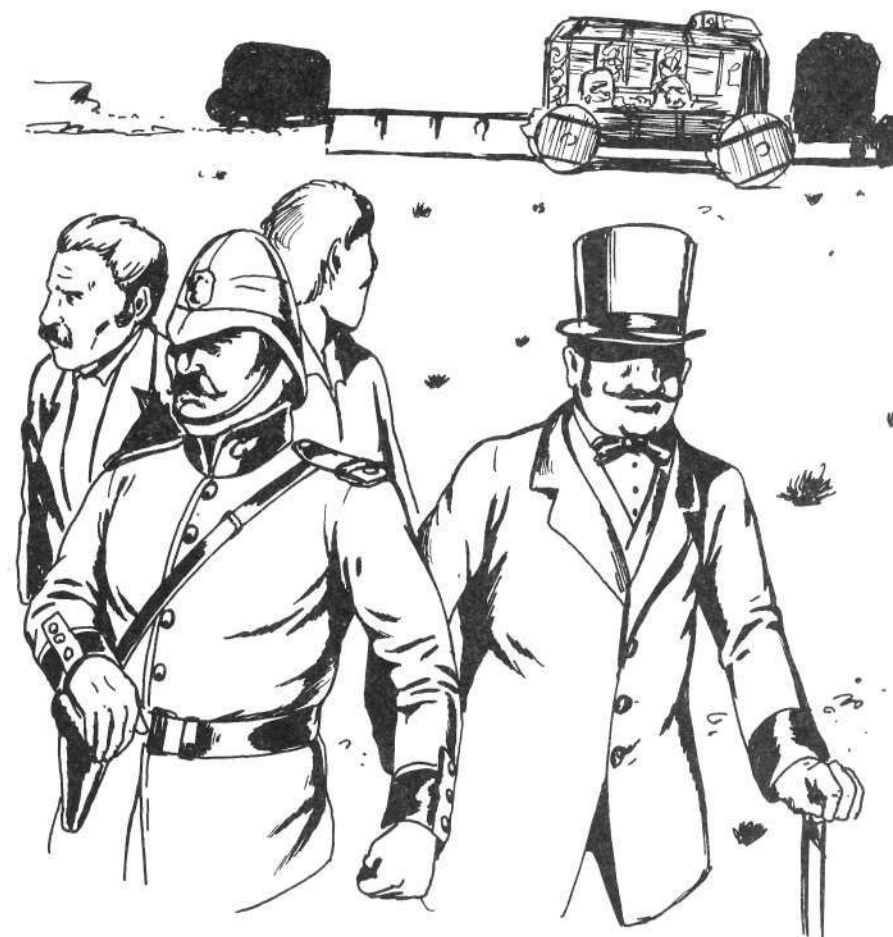
TAKING LEAVE OF THE WAGON MASTERS

EVENTUALLY THE player characters will either desire to leave the Hashassa, or, if the referee wishes, they will be forced to leave by Tycuus' followers. When this leave-taking occurs, the referee will have to be careful that the PCs are started on the next leg of their journey to the Worm Lord. This can be brought about in one of several ways.

First, the referee can simply have them found by the *Moon of Woe*. It is best, for dramatic purposes, that the *Moon* not discover them at the Hashassa camp. A High Martian attack on the Hashassa camp is likely to make the players feel guilty that Photho and Myya's friendship to their characters has been repaid so poorly, and such an attack also vindicates Tycuus' warnings about the danger of sheltering the player characters, encouraging a peaceful people to become more warlike.

Instead of finding the player characters with the Hashassas, then, the *Moon* should discover them shortly after they leave the Hashassa camp. The referee can use the same guidelines as were given in the *If the Sprite Was Saved* section on page 35.

Alternatively, the referee can use a secret minion of the Worm Lord in the Hashassa tribe to trick the characters into the High Martians' hands. This minion is a solitary fellow who has been prone to make solo hunting forays in the past. On one of these trips, he fell in with the High Martians and joined the Worm Cult. The priests of the cult sent him back to his tribe as a spy, and now that the player characters have arrived, he actually has something to



report. Shortly after the PCs join the Hashassa, this young Hill Martian leaves on another of his trips. While gone, he reports to the High Martians of the PCs' presence, not realizing their importance to the Worm Cult. The Worm Priests decide that it would take too much to convince King Hattabranx to attack the Hashassa, so they send their young agent back to the tribe to bring the PCs to them.

When the PCs decide that it is time to leave the Wagon Masters, this fellow volunteers to serve as a guide to lead them safely back to Gorovaan, or wherever, through the Meroe Badlands. In reality, however, he will lead them right into the waiting clutches of a High Martian party sent by the Worm Priests to lay in ambush.

Last, if the referee desires, Tycuus himself could carry the player characters away with the help of some of his supporters. He would wait until such a time as his father and brother were gone to look at the herds, or were otherwise occupied, before striking. Then he would begin a journey toward the Astusapes Highlands, searching for the *Moon of Woe* to turn the PCs over to the High Martians. Along the way, it is even possible that the PCs could escape him, beginning another desperate race across the hills, pursued by both Tycuus and the *Moon*.

However the referee chooses to get the player characters into the clutches of the High Martians, it should remain a great mystery to the PCs why the High Martians want them anyway.



Captives of the Beastmen

IN THIS CHAPTER, the player characters finally become captives of the dreaded beastmen, the High Martians of the Astusapes Highlands. They are brought before the High Martian King Hattabranx as prisoners. After gloating over them for a short time, he turns them over to the Worm Priests. The Worm Priests, in turn, cast the PCs into a bottomless chasm as a sacrifice to their insane god.

IN THE WILDERNESS

IF THE PLAYER characters were captured by either the Queln riders or the Wagon Masters of Meroe during the last chapter, they will have travelled somewhat north of the point at which they left the *Meepsoori Sprite*. If they then escaped from one or the other of those tribes of Steppe Martians, they will find themselves facing a long overland journey back to the more civilized lands to the south. During this time, they will have to pass either very near to, or even through, the Astusapes Highlands.

To run this portion of the adventure, the referee should keep track of the player characters' progress on the small-scale map included in the last chapter, and he should roll for dai-

ly encounters from the Mars Wilderness Encounters Table on page 209 of the **Space: 1889** rule book, using either the Hills or Mountain columns, depending on which is appropriate.

When using the Hills column, the referee should treat results of Nomad Hunters as sightings of the *Moon of Woe*, which has been searching for the PCs. When using the Mountain column, any result of High Martian Galley should also be treated as the *Moon of Woe*. The High Martian Hunters result on the Mountains column and the Bandits result on the Hills column should both be treated as a clan of High Martians that is subject to some king other than Hattabranx.

If the *Moon of Woe* captures the player characters, they will be chained as galley slaves until the *Moon* returns to Kraag Barrovaar. If, instead, a clan of High Martians subject to some king other than Hattabranx captures the player characters, the clan will put them to work as slaves in the liftwood groves that it tends. However, human prisoners are extremely unusual (the only other recorded instance of humans being held by the High Martians of the Astusapes was the capture, by ves-

sels of King Hattabranx, of the United States envoy to the Oenotrian Empire, Mr. Sidney Boynton, and his daughter Elizabeth). Therefore, word of the capture will be sent to the clan's king, and Hattabranx, guided by the Worm Priests at his kraag, will bargain for the humans to be sent to him.

All this passing of word and bargaining will take about two weeks to complete, leaving the PCs as slaves in the liftwood groves. During this time, the PCs can learn quite a lot about growing and using liftwood. Any of the PCs who succeed at a Formidable roll versus their Observation will learn enough to increase their Trimsman skill by one point. Characters who make a Difficult roll against Linguistics will also gain one point in Gaashwaan, the pidgin language used between High Martians of differing clans.



IN THE HANDS OF HATTABRANX

FINALLY, WHETHER they are captured near the tomb of Haata-neethra I, taken from the village of the Queln riders, betrayed from the Hashassa clan of Wagon Masters, retrieved from the liftwood groves of a minor clan of High Martians, or plucked from the hills in their attempt to return to the canal cities to the south, the player characters will be carried by the *Moon of Woe* back to

Kraag Barrovaar to stand before King Hattabranx. The *Moon* will land atop the mesa that houses the kraag, and the PCs will be unchained from their places at the ship's turncrank. Their hands will be bound behind them with rawhide strips, and they will be linked together with chains at the neck, then led single file into the upper level of the kraag.

As their eyes adjust to the dimness inside, broken only by widely spaced torches, the group members will discover that they are standing inside an

immense cavern, at the top of a huge shaft nearly 25 feet across, with a treacherous narrow stairway spiraling down around its periphery. Their guards will prod them toward the stairway. Walking as they are, with hands bound behind their backs and linked at the neck, the group members can expect to have some trouble negotiating this stairway. The referee should emphasize to them just how steep it is, how narrow the steps are, and how deep the drop is if they stumble. As they start down



KING HATTABRANX is the ruthless leader of the High Martians of Kraag Barrovaar, the strongest kraag to be found in the Astusapes Highlands. While many High Martian kings rule in the Astusapes, none rival Hattabranx in power or in reputation. Hattabranx's High Martian clans make their livelihood by dominating the shipment of liftwood from the Astusapes and by raiding the bhutan shipments of the Umbran League.

A firm devotee of the Worm Cult, Hattabranx can be considered slightly mad. Some of this madness finds its outlet in his hatred for the "red men." In particular, Hattabranx thoroughly hates the British, who cheated him of two human captives (a United States ambassador to Oenotria and his daughter)

King Hattabranx (Veteran NPC)

whom he had taken in a raid on the *Summer Wind*, a Canal Martian merchant kite. The British lured enough of Hattabranx's ships away from the kraag that they were able to land a rescue party and steal the hostages back. For this affront, Hattabranx can never forgive them.

At Worm Priests' instigation, King Hattabranx has again set out to capture humans—adventurers who have strayed near his territory while on an expedition to an ancient tomb.

Hattabranx also speaks Gaashwaan, the pidgin language used between High Martian clans.

An.	Skills
Str: 1	
Agl: 3	Stealth 3, Marksman-ship 3 (bow)
End: 5	Wilderness Travel 4 (foraging)
Int: 2	Observation 1
Chr: 4	Eloquence 4, Linguistics 3 (Syrian, Umbran, English)
Soc: 6	Leadership 5, Pilot 4 (cloudship)

Motives: Sadistic, Arrogant, Hatred.

Appearance: Like all High Martians, King Hattabranx is shorter and more hunched than either Canal Martians or Steppe Martians. He is also hairier and more bestial in form. In Hattabranx's case, this bestiality is emphasized by the effects of the passing years, which have left the king stooped and wizened. His coarse, black hair is grizzled and spotted with gray, and his eyes burn with hate, especially when confronting humans.

Hattabranx clothes himself in the finest outfits obtained from raids his ships conduct, but the effect of those well cut clothes is ruined by the spots of grease and filth that have accumulated on them. Hattabranx also wears a twisted golden necklace, the symbol of his authority, and bears a heavy, spiked scepter that could well serve as a mace. The player characters encounter him in his throne room, which stinks of discarded food scraps, sweat, and blood.

the stairs, the referee should have each player make a Difficult saving roll against his character's Agility dice to keep him from stumbling. Before they make this roll, the referee should stress to the players that if any of the characters fail this roll, they will stumble and risk pulling the other party members off the stairs as well. In actuality, if any of the party members fail the roll, a High Martian guard flying nearby will steady them before they fall.

After travelling downward for a vertical distance of about 10 yards, the group will be led off through tunnels on the next level. As they walk, they will see multitudes of High Martians, interspersed with numerous Canal Martian and Steppe Martian slaves, all bustling about on business of one kind or another. None of them look very clean, particularly the High Martians. For their part, the Martians that the player characters pass will stop and stare in some surprise at the presence of humans in the kraag.

After a walk of about five minutes, the player characters enter the throne room of Kraag Barrovaar. The referee can read the following narrative description at this time.

The first thing that strikes you about Kraag Barrovaar's throne room is the stench that wafts out of it. The odor carried in the stone-chilled air consists of approximately equal parts of rotting scraps, rancid grease, ancient torch smoke, and hairy, unwashed bodies.

The ceiling of the room is just over 10 feet high, and its sheer rock surface seems to hang threateningly overhead, certain to collapse at any minute. The walls are nearly 60 feet from side to side, and the dingy tap-



estries hung carelessly upon them do almost nothing to dampen the harsh echoes that haunt the corners. A few oil sconces on gilded stands scatter dim light on the scene, throwing hulking shadows about the room.

Directly across from the entrance you came through, you spot a handful of the beastmen busily engaged in conversation. In their center a grizzled old High Martian sits on a gilded throne, a heavy golden necklace hung about his withered shoulders. His bestial head raises, and piglike eyes spot you where you stand. At once, a wicked smile comes unbidden to his lips.

"Ah, I see my guests have arrived," he croaks in Umbran. "I will be with you in a moment. Please, be seated."

Your guards strike your legs with their spears, knocking you to the rocky floor. King Hattabranx grins malevolently, then turns his attention back to his counselors.

THE INTERVIEW

WHEN HATTABRANX returns his attention to the player characters a few moments later, it is only to gloat over their predicament. The

"interview" is actually little more than an impassioned speech about how the British have thwarted him in the past and how he will repay them in the future. Hattabranx asks the player characters nothing about what they were doing in the Astusapes Highlands. He seems completely uninterested in them as individuals, viewing them merely as the first sufferers of his vengeance. Partway through his tirade, he reveals to the group members that they are not going to be held as hostages, so they need not think that someone might buy their freedom. Neither are they to be added to the slave force of Kraag Barrovaar, nor are they to be imprisoned in some dank hole in the kraag's dungeons. Instead, he reveals, the player characters and their companions are to be turned over to the Priests of the Worm Cult for sacrifice to their bloodthirsty god.

Hattabranx hopes by this cruel revelation to elicit some sign of fear from the player characters. If he succeeds, he laughs wickedly as they are marched away. If he fails, however, he simply scowls at them and sourly orders the guards to take them out of his sight.

A SHORT INCARCERATION

AGAIN THE PLAYER characters are led to the main shaft and started down its narrow stair. This time, however, they continue all the way to the bottom, a distance of some 200 feet. From here they can see the black mouths of six different tunnels leading off into the heart of the rock.

Their guards choose one of these tunnels and lead the group down it a short distance to a series of iron-barred cells cut into the rock. The members of the group are separated and cast into various cells (the referee can determine randomly who will end up with whom), and the doors are locked. The guards then exit the same way they came, leaving the player characters in darkness.

SACRIFICES TO THE WORM GOD

SEVERAL HOURS pass by before the light of torches can be seen approaching once again. As the group watches, a troupe of High Martians in robes, carrying torches and spiked maces, comes into view. There are approximately four of these priests for every member of the player characters' party.

The priests unlock the cells and lead the party back toward the main shaft. Once there, the head priest

leads the group into another of the tunnels sprouting off from the shaft's floor. The procession escorts the player characters down a long, confusing array of tunnels, making a bewildering number of turns and choosing cross tunnels seemingly at random. All the tunnels appear empty of slaves or High Martians; not even the echo of a voice finds its way here from the populated regions.

Eventually, the procession halts before a heavy brass door, much tarnished with age. The head Worm Priest intones a long and complicated speech in a guttural language the player characters have never heard, then draws a huge brass key from beneath his robe and unlocks the door. The procession leads the prisoners within.

Inside, the player characters discover an almost perfectly hemispherical cavern approximately 10 feet high at its center. The walls and ceiling are of a glossy black stone, carved intricately with minute characters. The floor is of a dull black stone polished almost completely smooth, and grooves are worn in it by the feet of generations of Worm Priests performing ritual ceremonies. In the center of the room, surrounded by a deep trough cut into the floor, looms a dark gray slab eight feet long by four feet wide by three feet high.

Both slab and trough show sinister stains.

Again the procession stops, and the head priest intones another prayer. Then he moves to the head of the slab and signals for a prisoner to be brought forth. One of the group of prisoners, an NPC if possible, otherwise a PC chosen at random, is unchained from the others, and his clothes are rent to his waist, exposing his chest. He is carried to the altar and laid upon it. The head Worm Priest draws forth a wicked-looking brass dagger and intones another prayer, then prepares to cut the victim's throat.

If, during any part of this scene, the player characters put up a fight, the ceremony will be halted while the priests bring the prisoners under control. The referee should explain to the players that there are four priests for every member of the player characters' party, and the player characters are bound besides. It is an easy enough task for the Worm Priests to prevail and hold the prisoners still, without knocking them unconscious. In the struggle, however, the player characters might be pulled to the floor. The referee should understand that it is not important that the PCs be able to see the sacrifice but only that they are able to hear the interruption soon to take place.



A CHANGE OF PLANS

JUST AS THE high priest prepares to cut the first victim's throat, a crackle of static reverberates in the room, drawing everyone's attention. Even the priests look surprised. There is a hum of power, and then a painfully loud voice springs from the very air, commanding, in gracefully pronounced Umbran, "I crave the taste of *living* flesh this once! Kill them not, but cast them into Hell's Maw!"

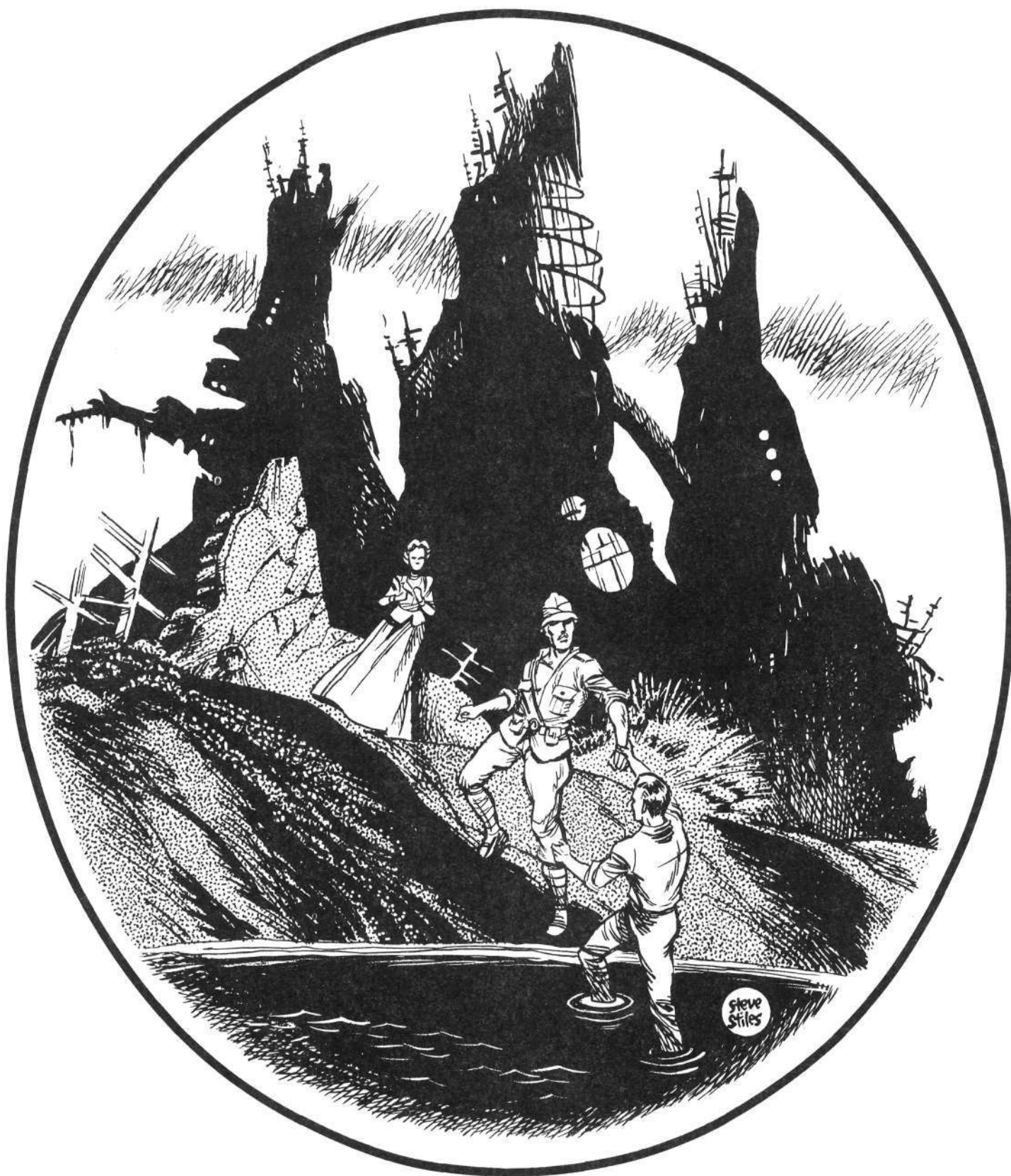
The hum disappears with another crackle of static, and the chamber is silent once more. The High Martian priests are frozen as if stunned, and their eyes are wide with awe. Then the head priest collects himself and barks a command to the others. The prisoners are once more linked together and are then led out of the chamber.

Pausing in the tunnel outside the door, the head Worm Priest once more chants a prayer before locking it, but this time he mumbles the words in a rush. Finally he finishes and turns to lead the group down the tunnels once again.

This time the party marches even further than before, ever deeper into the rock. In some places, dust is settled on the tunnel floor; in others, water trickles from the ceiling, forming stalactites and stalagmites that threaten to block the tunnel. After nearly half an hour of walking, the group comes out on a narrow ledge in a gigantic natural cavern. The ceiling disappears into blackness, and a gaping chasm opens at the group's feet, its bottom lost in darkness. From the dim echoes, the players can guess that the cavern is truly immense.

Again the Worm Priests seize the player characters and their companions. They separate the link between the first one and the rest, cut his bonds, lift him up in their arms, and, without a word of warning, cast him off the ledge into the chasm. One by one, each of the other party members is loosed and cast into the chasm as well.





Guests of the Worm Lord

IN THIS CHAPTER, the player characters at last meet the Worm Lord whose machinations have brought them to the Worm Cult.

A TERRIFYING FALL

AFTER ALL MEMBERS of the player characters' party have been cast into the chasm by the Worm Priests, the referee can read the following narrative description to them.

Cast off the ledge into Hell's Maw, you find yourselves plummeting helplessly through the darkness. The wind rushes past you as you hurtle toward the chasm's unseen bottom. As your velocity increases, the very speed of the wind begins to drown out any external sounds, and even breathing becomes very difficult, as if you were facing into the most ferocious gale.

After several minutes of time measured only by your frenzied heartbeats, you feel a sudden jerk, as if you had struck some spongy material and were passing through it. No tactile sensation accompanies this feeling of resistance, however. But you can easily tell that the momentum of your fall is slowed. It is almost as if you are being repelled by some sort of magnetism, if a magnet could repel flesh and blood. A few seconds

later you pass through the bottom of this resistant region and begin free-fall once again. But before you can accumulate any speed, you hit yet another layer of resistance. In all, you encounter a dozen of these layers, and each slows your fall somewhat more.

Then, without warning, as you pass through the bottom of the last layer, light blazes around you, as if you tore through a veil. Blinded, you plummet another 50 feet or so into deep water. The breath is knocked out of you as you strike the water's surface and dive deeply down. You begin a panicked struggle to regain the surface, but even in your extremity, a small corner of your mind rejoices already that it was not a stony floor you struck. Against all hope, you are alive!

HAPPY LANDINGS

THE WATER THAT the player characters and their companions drop into is in the kidney-shaped pool at the center of an ancient underground complex (details about this complex follow later in this section). In order to pull themselves from the pool, each player character should make a Difficult roll with his Swimming dice. Those who fail regain the

surface but are too exhausted to reach the pool's edge, being barely able to hold their heads above water. Those who succeed pull themselves onto the shore, and as they see their companions reaching the surface, they can also rescue those who failed the roll.

Finally, after everyone is out of the water and shivering on the pool's edge, the player characters can take stock of their surroundings. What they discover is a large cavern, filled with dark metallic buildings and lit by overhead strips that are suspended from the cavern ceiling above. The air in the cavern is a bit chilly and stale, and dust lies inches thick nearly everywhere.

If they examine the pool they have fallen into, they will discover that a withered body is lying on the bottom (about 30 feet down), dressed in a strange robe of metallic cloth and held down by chains of dark metal, very similar to the metal walls of the buildings around them. The skin of the body is very pale, almost white, but other than that, the drowned person appears to be quite human.

Further examination of the pool will reveal a current of fresh water coming from the pool's bottom, apparently from slits that can be dimly perceived in the floor.

AN ABSENT HOST

KLEUHT NA VRISS, the solitary dweller of the underground complex in which the player characters find themselves, is busy with other matters when the group drops in, so the player characters will have several days to explore the underground complex in which they find themselves. It is very important in running this portion of the adventure,

however, that the referee have a firm understanding of na Vriss, even before the player characters encounter him.

Kleuht na Vriss is the last living member of a race of almost human people who dwelt on Mars eons ago, long before Mars entered its present archaeological age and the present-day Martian races evolved. Na Vriss' race was highly advanced in the sciences, and one of its greatest discov-

eries was the secret of near immortality. After undergoing this medical treatment, the cells of a person's body would cling to life past all expectation. The effects of aging were nullified by the constant rejuvenation of those cells, meaning that bodies no longer wore out with the passing of the years. This same rejuvenation would repair the most grievous injuries. Only if food, water, or air, the necessities of life, were withheld

Kleuht na Vriss, Lord of the Worm (Elite NPC)

his alienness and familiarity with the technology of the ancients.

In fact, Kleuht na Vriss is a member of that long-vanished race, proof that Mars and Earth are following similar geological ages and evolution of species. Whether na Vriss himself has been alive for all those ages is uncertain, but he has obviously been alive for a very long time, and his lifespan has shaped his mind to such an alien viewpoint as to make him be considered insane by humans.

Na Vriss knows a number of dead languages in addition to those below.

<i>Att.</i>	<i>Skills</i>
Str: 3	Fisticuffs 4, Close Combat 6 (edged weapon)
Agl: 5	Stealth 4, Marksmanship 6 (pistol), Mechanics 6 (electricity)
End: 6	Swimming 5
Int: 5	Observation 4, Science 6 (physics)
Chr: 4	Eloquence 4, Theatrics 2, Linguistics 5 (High Oenotrian, Son-Gaaryani, Parhooni, Umbran, Khallan)
Soc: 6	Piloting 6 (sky vessel), Medicine 3

Motives: Arrogant, Mad.

Appearance: The Lord of the Worm, Kleuht na Vriss, is almost human in appearance. He is just under six feet tall, and although extremely thin, he is within normal human ranges. His features are nearly human in shape, size, and arrangement. The only abnormality is a long and rather pointed chin, which adds an alien quality to his wide, thin-lipped smile. What fully separates his appearance from standard human is the color of his skin and hair—both of an almost ivory hue. As well, na Vriss' eyes are completely black, and no iris or pupil can be discerned against the sclera. In moments of stress, it is also revealed that na Vriss' eyes have a nictitating membrane, also ivory-colored.

Na Vriss dresses in a tunic, trousers, and sandals, all made of some amazingly flexible metallic cloth that seems to repel any soil. He usually carries a fist-sized emerald in his left hand, and he strokes it meditatively, as if it were a pet, while his strange blank eyes stare seemingly into infinity.



KLEUHT NA VRISS claims to be the unseen god of the Worm Cult, and his vast knowledge of ancient sciences, coupled with his unnerving alien grace, lends credence to this statement. His race is indeterminate—his strange eyes mark him as something other than human, yet his human features mark him as something other than Martian. He claims to be the last remnant of a race that dwelt on Mars millions of years ago, before the evolution of the flying High Martians and their cousins, the Steppe Martians and Canal Martians. Na Vriss claims to have lived those millions of years himself, most of them in the underground complex where the PCs discover him. While this seems impossible, it is difficult to offer any other explanation for

would the cells cease their activity, and even then they retained a spark of life that could be rekindled by proper medical treatment.

In effect, then, a person could be drowned, suffocated, starved, electrocuted, or dismembered, and still be brought back to life. Only by total destruction, such as cremation, could a person's complete and final death be brought about. (Note that this means the bodies the player characters will find at various places in the complex could be brought back to life, assuming knowledge of the proper medical procedures were available.)

This longevity did not ensure a person's happiness, however. A multimillionaire can have more money than he can spend in a lifetime and still worry about losing it to misfortune. In some ways, he becomes more cognizant of the hazards that his fortune can fall prey to. In the same way, a person who is *almost* immortal can become more obsessed with mortality than a person whose eventual death is certain. Mortals may fear the withering sickness; immortals fear the passing of the universe into darkness.

As well as bringing a morbid fear of death, the near-immortality of these ancient people also brought them more years than their minds could hope to contain. As the ages passed, new knowledge crammed out old knowledge in the fevered brains of these men and women. Eventually they began to forget their own histories, even their own names. A hopeless sense of lostness began to set in, and one by one they began to pass into insanity. Eventually their mental suffering became so intense that their minds became set on the



only means of escape possible to them—irrevocable death. Like a bitter joke, immortality drove them to suicide. A very few—the bodies that the player characters find in the complex, for example—have chosen something other than complete destruction, hoping against hope that they might awake in later ages to happiness.

Kleuht na Vriss is the only remaining member of his race, which is to say that he is the only member who has not yet destroyed himself. Unfortunately, he is as hopelessly mad as any of his race has ever been. It

is he who created the Worm Cult with its insane precepts, for example, proof enough of his madness. In person, however, na Vriss usually seems completely oriented to reality.

But one other thing betrays na Vriss' insanity, and that is the fact that while the man is brilliant, his brilliance is marred by forgetfulness and fits of whimsy. It was in a fit of whimsy, for example, that na Vriss first conceived of his plot to bring Terrans to his underground abode. It is forgetfulness that keeps him absent for the first few days that they are there.

SOME BASIC FACTS

AFTER THE PLAYER characters crawl out of the pool that they dropped into, they will have several days to explore the underground complex that they find themselves in. The referee will need to know some basic facts about the complex to best run this period of exploration.

First, the place is so ancient that almost all materials involved in its making have disintegrated over the ages. Only the strange metal that the buildings' walls are constructed of has stood, unchanged, through time. If the player characters try to test this metal in some way, such as by attempting to scratch it with a rock, they will discover that it is harder even than diamond. Inside these buildings, the original furnishings have all decomposed into dust, even items of such metals as copper and iron. Outside the buildings, the exterior paint has disintegrated and fallen to join the rock dust on the cavern floor.

Fortunately for the player characters, none of the accesses to these buildings are locked, except for the gate to the wall separating the power station from the rest of the complex. The electronic machinery in these buildings also still works, being constructed of some solid-state circuitry that the player characters will be unable to fathom. From this machinery the PCs can get food, clothing, and even some information, as will be explained below.

The bodies that the player characters find are all dressed similarly, and all are of the same race as na Vriss. Each body is withered and dried, but the skin is incredibly tough, rather than fragile or papery, and the bones

hang together rather than tumbling apart. All of these people are not dead in the same sense of the word as a human would be dead, but they can only be revived by ancient medical techniques that Kleuht na Vriss has almost forgotten. Of course, if he wished, na Vriss could certainly find the information in one of the computing machines located in the compound.



LEARNING FROM THE ANCIENTS

IT IS ENTIRELY possible that the player characters could learn something from their exploration of this underground complex, especially if they make a point of viewing the displays of the computers in the library or laboratory, or if they watch the hologram programs at the assembly hall. As well, a Chemist player character might be able to learn something in the chemistry lab, and an Engineer character might be able to learn something from the heavy equipment in the laboratory's milling room. Skills that might be improved in this way include all Mechanics, Engineering, and Science skills.

Because of the ancient languages used in the computer displays, the player characters will not be able to understand the verbal content, and in general, the sciences of na Vriss' race are so advanced as to be nearly unrecognizable to humans. Nonetheless, they might be able to pick some clues out of the visual content of the files they stumble upon. In each case, the referee should first have a player make a Formidable saving throw versus the skill that he would like his character to improve, to determine if the character knows enough about the skill to even recognize its mention in the alien sources. If the player succeeds at this roll, his character has a chance to learn something new. To determine if he actually learns something, the player should roll 1D6, and if he rolls higher than the level his character has in that skill, his character gains one point.

Note that because of the time required to study the alien sources, each character can only improve one skill in this way.

Inventor characters should also be given more research dice as a result of their experiences in the underground complex. The number and type of dice to be awarded is left to the referee's discretion.

EXPLORING THE UNDERGROUND COMPLEX

A DIAGRAM OF the underground complex is included on page 59. Descriptions of the individual buildings are given on the next two pages, with the exception of the power plant which is locked off from the player characters and in which Kleuht na Vriss is occupied for the first few days that the player characters are exploring.

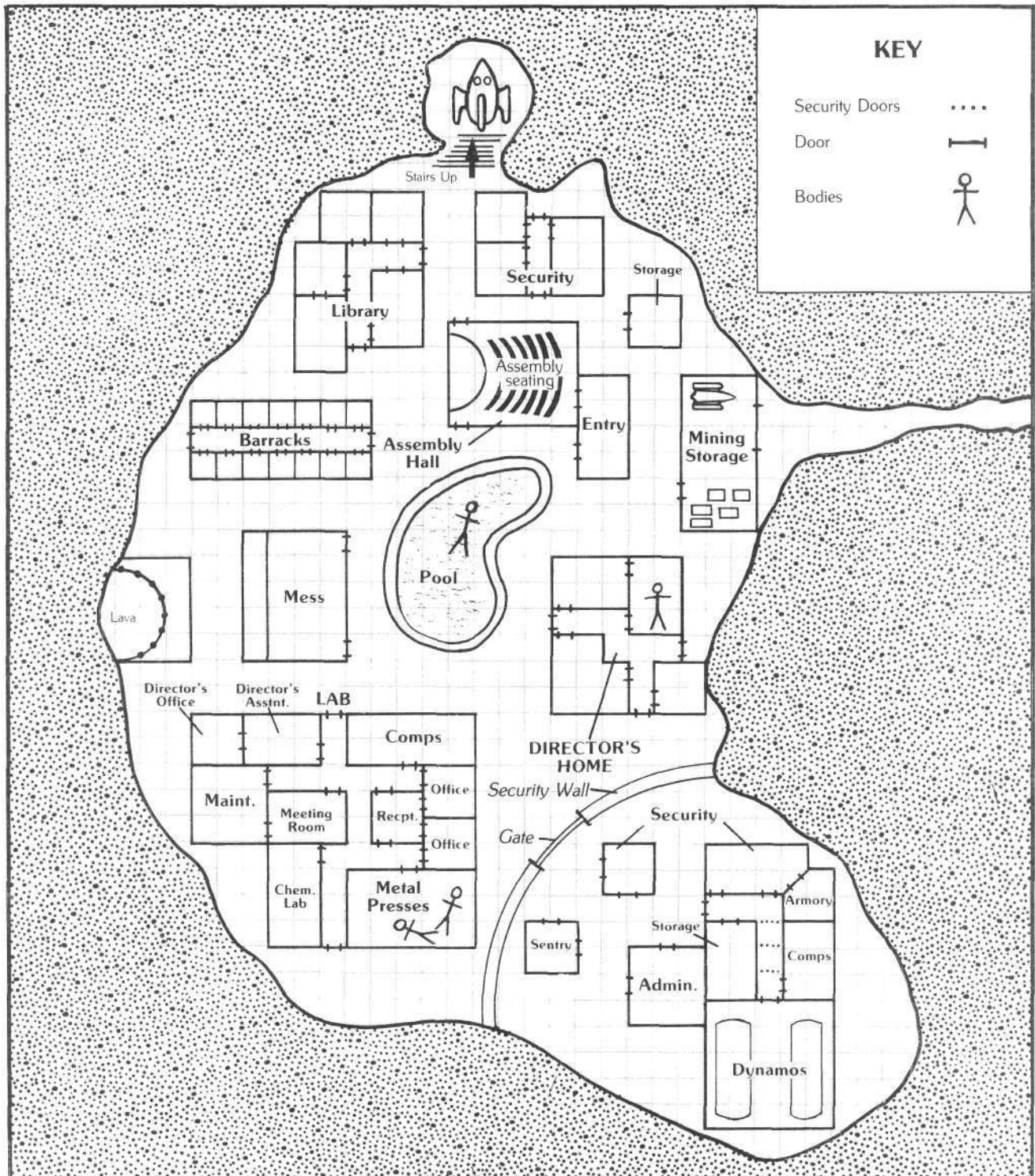
The Power Plant

BEHIND THE IMMENSE wall which seals off the southeastern end of the cavern, there lies a large building guarded by two small security offices. This building houses the incredibly advanced dynamos

that provide power to the cavern. Huge computers are located here as well, and Kleuht na Vriss has connected them to communicators located at various spots in the territory surrounding Kraag Barrovaar above. It is through these communicators that na Vriss keeps contact with the

most important of his Worm Priests.

In order to ensure the proper operation of this equipment, na Vriss has to spend much of his time doing maintenance work, and to simplify matters, he moved his personal belongings into the building long ago, making it his permanent home.



THE BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

THE FOLLOWING descriptions will help the referee run the adventure as the player characters explore.

The Pool

AS WAS MENTIONED earlier, the pool into which the player characters fell after being cast into Hell's Maw is about 30 feet deep, and it has a fresh current flowing into it from the bottom. What appears to be a human body is lying on the floor of the pool, dressed in strange silvery clothing and weighted down by untarnished metal chains. If the player characters somehow manage to bring this body back to the surface for examination (30 feet is awfully deep to try to dive to the bottom), the referee should describe it following the description of na Vriss, with the exception that this body is female.

The Mess Hall

DIRECTLY TO THE west of the pool is a fair-sized building with only one room inside. Along the entire inner west wall of this room stands a complicated-looking machine with its front completely covered with buttons and horizontal slots. This machine is a food converter—using electricity supplied by the power plant and an interior stock of organic compounds somehow held in stasis, the machine makes food to the operator's order.

Unfortunately, the signs and pictures that used to inform the operator of what buttons provide what items when pushed have all disintegrated with the passage of time. The player characters can safely eat and drink whatever the machine provides for them, but each time they use it, it is anybody's guess as to what sort of food it will serve.

The Lava Building

JUST BEHIND THE mess hall stands a smaller building built into the rock wall of the cavern. If the player characters open the door, intense heat and a sulfurous stench will come boiling out, originating from a deep crevasse in the floor. The interior of the building is lit fitfully by the glow of a river of lava that lies at the bottom of that crevasse, about 20 feet down. Many of na Vriss' people permanently ended their lives in that river of lava.

The Laboratory

SOUTH OF THE mess hall and the lava building stands a huge structure that houses a great deal of laboratory equipment. Na Vriss still comes here sometimes to experiment, when the urge takes him, and he has kept it stocked with glassware and chemicals. In the milling room, another seemingly human body can be found lying prone on the floor, headless, next to a massive press. The ram of the press is fully depressed, as if the person stuck his head in the machine and crushed it.

The Gate to the Power Plant

STRETCHING ACROSS the southeast corner of the cavern is an immense, floor-to-ceiling wall with one centrally located gate. Despite any efforts on the part of the player characters, the gate will remain locked until Kleuht na Vriss deigns to come out and speak to the PCs several days after they have arrived.

The Director's Home

TO THE EAST of the central pool stands a building that used to be the home of the director of this com-



pound. It is impossible to determine exactly what the rooms inside were originally intended for since all of the furnishings have disintegrated with age. In the northeastern room, however, the body of a male of na Vriss' race hangs from a wire noose. The noose is apparently of the same metal as the walls.

The Mining Shed

NORTHEAST OF THE director's home stands a building accessed by 20-foot-wide sliding metal doors. The back wall has another set of similar doors which open onto a mine shaft that runs back as far as the player characters care to walk. Inside the shack are two small drill cars at the northern end (neither of which works any longer) and a stack of metal crates at the south end. Most of these crates are empty, but one is chock full of exquisite emeralds of all sizes.

The Assembly Hall

JUST NORTH OF the pool stands a building that was once some sort of theater or playhouse. The floor slopes downward toward a stage resting at the west end, and although all of the seats have rusted away, the floor is tiered in such a way as to suggest they once existed. In the other room of this hall a few controls are located on one wall, and if they are manipulated, the player characters can call up a whole host of hologram dramas at the stage end of the hall.

The referee should consider the effect of 3D holograms on 19th-century PCs when describing their appearance. It will seem as if real figures have sprung into existence, but experimentation will prove them to be intangible.

The Security Building

TO THE NORTH of the assembly hall is located what used to be the security building. On its eastern side is an office, and on its western side are two large cells, one of which contains the bodies of two more of na Vriss' ancient companions, both female. Although the player characters have no way of knowing it, these two individuals starved themselves to death. They locked themselves into the cell to ensure that they would not change their minds in a moment of weakness.

The Storage Shed

EAST OF THE assembly hall and the security building is a small storage shed. Absolutely nothing is left inside it.

The Ether Flyer

UP A FLIGHT of steps, in a small shaft that leads upward to a pinpoint of light, stands a strange conveyance that looks much like an ether flyer. If the player characters board it, they will discover that its interior has rusted away, with the exception of the control panel. If they fiddle with the controls, the flyer's engine will respond weakly, as if its batteries are nearly dead. The referee should explain to them that in their best estimation, only a very desperate person would try to fly the thing unless it had a complete overhaul and they were fully familiar with its controls. A complete overhaul is, of course, out of the question.

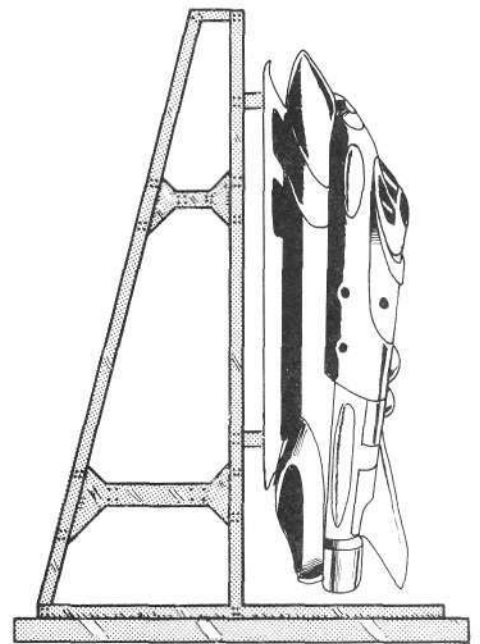
The Library

IN THE NORTHWEST corner of the cavern is a library of sorts. Each of the rooms here has large wall units

that will call up alien-looking references on almost any topic. From poring over the pictures and diagrams included, the player characters might be able to learn something about almost any subject imaginable. Because the languages in which these subjects are recorded have long since died away, it will be impossible for the PCs to call up information except in a random method.

The Barracks

SOUTH OF THE library is located a long building with a central hall running its length; both sides of the hall are divided into 10-foot-square cubicles. The best guess that the PCs might make about this building is that it served as some sort of barracks.



MEETING THE WORM LORD

AFTER A FEW days have passed, the player characters will have begun to grow bored with their surroundings. They cannot tell the passage of time while they are here, and each day will become another cycle of waking, eating, and sleeping, interspersed with attempts to decipher the strange dramas in the assembly hall and the incredible files in the various computers. The PCs begin to fancy themselves to be caged rats provided with all the food and water that they need, but with no stimulating events to make them feel alive. They may even begin to feel that they understand why the fellow in the eastern building hung himself.

Then one day, the great gate of the southeastern wall opens, and out strides a living representative of a race that the player characters have only found deceased examples of. Kleuht na Vriss walks to the pool in the center of the cavern and calls out in perfect Parhooni for the party members to come speak with him.

DAYS OF REVELATION

OVER THE COURSE of the next few days, na Vriss first explains to the party members all about the underground complex that they find themselves in. He identifies the purpose of each building and describes how it was furnished in the past, and he tells tales of the people who dwelt there. The referee can make up all this information as he goes, not bothering to even be consistent in his descriptions, since na Vriss' memories of such things are scrambled.

Next, na Vriss tells the group all about his people. He explains that they found the secret of immortality

and describes how it eventually drove them all mad. The referee should draw heavily on the description of na Vriss earlier in this chapter for this information, but again, if an inconsistency or two occur, there should be no cause for alarm.

After that, na Vriss asks the player characters all about their race and planet. If they know anything about Venus, he questions them about that planet as well. With each revelation they make, he nods his head and makes such comments as, "Aha," and, "I should have guessed as much," and even, "So you see, the planets really are following similar evolutionary patterns—you and I are not so different as one might imagine."

CONFESSION

AFTER THE explanations above have been made, na Vriss excuses himself and returns to the power plant, locking the player characters and their companions outside once again. A few minutes later, loudspeakers crackle to life all over the complex, and na Vriss begins to speak over them, revealing less savory truths to the group.

First, na Vriss explains to the group that he established the Worm Cult as his eyes, ears, and hands on the planet's surface. He has, of course, had no face-to-face dealings with the Worm Priests, preferring to remain a spiritual force in their minds rather than a physical one.

Then na Vriss confesses to the player characters that nearly everything they have experienced since they first set foot in Syrtis Major has been his doing. He explains this all matter-of-factly and without any sense of gloating.

Na Vriss tells them that it was he who had the book with references to the tomb of Haataneethra I planted where Teegok Quuglaani would find it, rightly judging that the old Martian would have to go to humans to find backing for his venture. It was na Vriss who sent the assassin after Quuglaani in order to firmly convince the group of the information's value. Likewise, he arranged the two purposely failed attempts on the player characters' lives, both the archer and the poisoned wine. It was na Vriss who sent Mynosii Aalum to have someone order a cask of Saardaari Spice Wine in the inn the humans frequented, arranging it so that Aalum, in his guise as merchant, would have a stock of the rare wine on hand when the landlord went to purchase it. And, of course, it was na Vriss who had Aalum poison the wine with macaava root, since na Vriss knew from his own testing that the poison was not fatal to humans. Finally, it was agents of na Vriss who left the threatening note in the PCs' room.

Once the group members left Syrtis Major, Mynosii Aalum was sent along to destroy whatever ship they took, stranding them by the Parhoon/Gorovaanese canal where they could be picked up by the *Moon of Woe*. The *Moon*, of course, was also sent out by Hattabranx at the instigation of the Worm Priests, at na Vriss' order as Lord of the Worm. The time the player characters spent with the Steppe Martians (if they spent any time with them), na Vriss admits, was the one point at which they strayed from his care. Of course, with enough goading of the High Martian Worm Priests, he was able to rectify this mistake.

Following his indirect instructions, Hattabranx turned the group over to the Worm Priests, and, of course, it was na Vriss who interrupted the sacrifice with the command that the PCs be cast into Hell's Maw.

With all this confessed, na Vriss then proceeds to tell them why he went to all the trouble. He explains, "I had heard that there were men come to Mars who looked much like my own race, you see, and I wanted to have a chance to look them over, to decide if my theory about the parallel evolution of the worlds was correct. And, of course, it was."

DEATH SENTENCE

NA VRISS has one more thing left to explain to the player characters: Now that his curiosity has been satisfied, they have to die, of course, to keep his secret safe. To give them a sporting chance, he states that he will let them have five minutes to hide among the buildings, and then he will come hunting them with an energy rifle. This energy rifle is a relatively light weapon that fires a focused beam of radiation, so it has no kick (required Strength of 1). It has virtually unlimited shots, does 6 wounds, and requires a save of 1. As well, it has no trigger mechanism, being fired by its owner's mind, so even if the PCs manage to capture one, they will not be able to use it.

It is not very heroic for the player characters to flee at this point, but things are definitely stacked against them. They have only their bare hands as weapons while the Worm Lord has an energy rifle, and their lives are mortal, while he is nearly immortal. Given the circumstances, flight is probably the wisest choice they can make. The referee should

use all his skill in emphasizing the tension and drama of the moment as the immortal madman begins to stalk them through the city streets.

(If the group members come up with some plan other than flight, the referee should allow them to attempt it, but he should stress the danger of na Vriss' weapon. In particular, it might be possible for the PCs to lure na Vriss into the lava building and push him in, although this is likely to be very dangerous, particularly as the Worm Lord, while mad, is no fool.)

ESCAPE

EVENTUALLY, THE group members should come to the realization that the only way out of the underground complex is to use the alien flyer standing in the shaft north of the cavern. As they fire the thing up, it shakes and shivers, as if something were about to fall apart, but it begins to leave the ground, albeit slowly. Through the portholes, the group can see Kleuht na Vriss running toward them, and he seems, for the first time since they met him, to be visibly upset. His normally dispassionate face is twisted in rage as he helplessly watches the flyer begin to inch its way upward. Just before he disappears from view, he raises his energy rifle to his shoulder and fires. A searing beam of light lances into the flyer's side, and the hull pings with heat, then the flyer is climbing rapidly up the shaft.

Whoever is flying the craft should have to make a series of three saving throws versus their Piloting (Aerial Flyer or Interplanetary Ether Flyer) skill, as the shaft the flyer is in twists and turns. The referee should explain that the speed control

does not seem to be working properly, and the flyer continues to accelerate as it climbs. The first turn that the flyer must pass requires a Routine roll; the second requires a Difficult roll; and the third requires an Impossible roll. If the rolls are passed, the flyer narrowly misses colliding with the shaft's side, and the pilot can be congratulated on his handling. Whenever a roll is failed, however, the referee should grimace and describe how the flyer collides with the wall, tearing loose hull plates, then continuing on its way. No matter how poorly the pilot rolls, the vessel will not crash, but the players should believe that it is about to fall apart at any minute. Finally, the flyer will launch itself out of the shaft and into the open air.

EPILOGUE

ONCE THE FLYER is out of the shaft, the pilot can turn it toward Parhoon, Gorovaan, or Mylarkt. The vessel will carry the group to within 50 miles of any of those cities before making its last gasp and dropping to the ground. The PCs will have to march that last 50 miles. Upon reaching their target city, if they mount an expedition back to the crash site, they will discover that the flyer is gone.

No one will believe their story about an ancient immortal living beneath Kraag Barrovaar, but if the PCs have been careful, they will have come out of the adventure with some increases in skills, a few pocketfuls of emeralds, and a map to an ancient tomb. Of course, the PCs will also have the Worm Lord's revenge to worry about. Both map and Worm Lord's revenge can serve as starting points for new adventures.

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